



The Almanac

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

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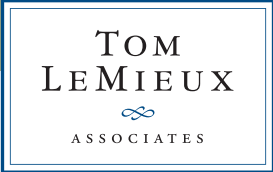


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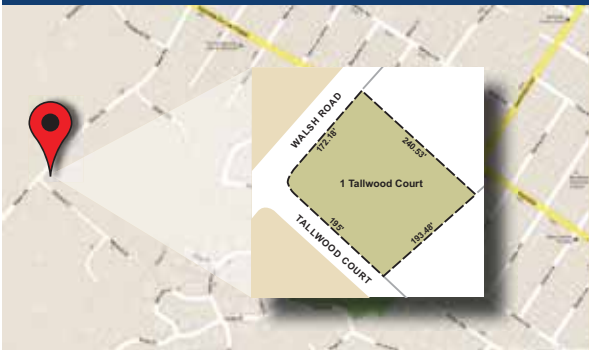
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Steering kids away from drugs

Couple recognized for 10-year effort.

By Renee Batti
Almanac News Editor

Programs designed to help steer kids away from drugs, such as Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.), can be only as effective as the people who work face to face with the kids.

Over the past 10 years, about 2,000 local elementary school children have come face to face with two individuals, working through the Atherton Police Department's D.A.R.E. program, who have engaged them in projects and activities designed to build character and good judgment — essential, they say, to giving young people what it takes to reject self-destructive behavior such as substance abuse.

At a recent Atherton City Council meeting, Police Chief Ed Flint saluted those individuals — a longtime married couple — saying: “There are D.A.R.E. programs, and there are D.A.R.E. programs. And then there's the Bruce and Ruth Potts program.”

The chief and City Council were honoring the couple as they prepared to retire and wrap up their decade of work in the schools; they presented Bruce and Ruth Potts with a proclamation commending work that “prepared our future leaders ... with the empowerment to stand tall and away from drug abuse.”

“I've seen (D.A.R.E. programs) in three or four other jurisdictions,” Chief Flint said, addressing the couple. “But the level you guys have taken it is absolutely amazing.”

“I know the time they put into it — most of it is unpaid,” he said. It will be a challenge for staff to find their replacement, he added, “because people like (them) are very rare.”

Chief Flint told the Almanac that he'll be working to find new leadership for the program,



Michelle Le/The Almanac

Bruce and Ruth Potts in their Redwood City home.

“but right now we don't have anybody to fill those shoes.” Officially, Bruce Potts, a reserve police officer, headed the program. But “Ruth did an awful lot of work behind the scenes,” Chief Flint said.

The resolution was presented to the Pottses in February, but Mr. Potts didn't actually hang up his hat until mid-April, when he made a final appearance in a classroom at St. Joseph's School.

‘The level you guys have taken it is absolutely amazing.’

POLICE CHIEF ED FLINT

That act constituted his second “retirement.” He joined the Atherton police department as a reserve officer in 2001 after serving as a full-time police officer in San Carlos for 31 years. During his San Carlos tenure, Officer Potts began leading that department's D.A.R.E. program in 1996.

After Officer Potts' first retirement, Atherton's police chief at the time, Bob Brennan, recruited Mr. Potts to run the local D.A.R.E. program, he said, adding that he began classroom visits in 2002.

Begun in 1983, D.A.R.E. is

a nationwide program that, according to its website, gives kids “the skills they need to avoid involvement in drugs, gangs, and violence.” Those skills, however, go far beyond being able to utter the word “no.”

“I ask kids, ‘who has control of you?’” Mr. Potts says. “I tell them, ‘you are the only person who controls your life, and there are consequences to every choice you make.’”

The course involves lessons on bullying, self-esteem, and developing the tools to be firm with friends who encourage drug, alcohol and tobacco use, Mr. Potts says. “I tell them that it's not going to be someone standing on a street corner in a black coat who's going to be trying to get you to take drugs. It's going to be your friend.”

The Pottses organized art and essay contests and other activities, including a popular hotdog cookout, to keep kids engaged with the program. Every year, the City Council would move a regular meeting to Holbrook-Palmer Park to accommodate the large number of parents and other community members who came out to watch the art contest awards presentation.

“My wife has been an integral part of all this,” Mr. Potts

See **STEERING KIDS**, page 6

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Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

Schools 'maxed out,' says board president

■ School board reviews options for expansion on O'Connor School site.

By Barbara Wood
Special to the Almanac

The Menlo Park City School District's Board of Education met April 30 to learn more about options for the future use of its O'Connor School site in the Willows neighborhood, but ended the day with a sobering discussion of what to do in the meantime with more and more students entering the district each year and additional classroom space non-existent.

The board members also continued to not rule out letting the current tenants of O'Connor — the German-American International School (GAIS) — stay at the site, 275 Elliot Drive in Menlo Park, for an additional year.

The fall 2013 enrollment in the district's three elementary schools is expected to increase by 82 students. "We are completely maxed out at the schools," said board president Terry Thygesen after the meeting. "The campuses are completely and totally built up."

Until students can move to the O'Connor campus, which could happen at the earliest in August 2014, the district is considering short-term fixes including using the board's meeting room as a classroom, transforming multi-purpose rooms into classrooms, and sending students in the transitional (two-year) kindergarten program to whatever district schools have the most room.

Board members also asked the

district's principals, who were listening to the discussion, to try to come up with innovative ways to squeeze more kids into existing spaces. They promised, however, to provide enough teachers to keep the student/teacher ratios within district guidelines.

'The campuses are completely and totally built up.'

TERRY THYGESEN,
SCHOOL BOARD PRESIDENT

Those short-term fixes may well be in place as long as three years because among the options being considered by the board is either a major renovation of the existing O'Connor

school or a new school on the site, to be ready for students in August 2016.

Another option the board is considering — squeezing the construction, planning and a bond measure into two years — did not get much support from board members, but would have allowed students to occupy the O'Connor site in August 2015.

On April 9, the board voted unanimously to terminate the German-American International School's lease of the O'Connor site in June 2014 because the district needs more room for its rapidly expanding student population.

The private school could be allowed to stay an additional school year if the board adopts one of the three-year options, Ms. Thygesen said, but might have to adjust its school year

so construction could begin in May 2015.

Only one of the options the district is considering — a minor reworking of the existing O'Connor School as a kindergarten and first-grade only school — could be done without asking district voters to approve a bond measure to pay for construction or renovation.

That means the district will have to act fairly quickly even if the board decides to take three years to complete the project.

The board will meet again on May 13 to adopt a timeline and narrow down the options that will be considered. Ms. Thygesen said the board wants to hear which option the community prefers. The board is also asking for input on the configuration of

See **MAXED OUT**, page 8

Where to put the students?

■ Growth projections have high schools examining options, including new boundaries, more classrooms.

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

Facing projections of a 22 percent rise in overall enrollment in local public high schools over the next eight years, officials from the Sequoia Union High School District want to hear from district parents in community meetings this month about where to put the students, and whether and how to redraw boundary maps that connect schools to neighborhoods.

The projected increases, district officials say, stem from enrollment surges in elementary and middle schools in three Peninsula communities: Menlo Park, San Carlos and Belmont-Redwood Shores. At Menlo-Atherton High School, which has 2,009 students in the current school year, enrollment would grow to 2,600 students by 2020, an increase of 29 percent. Woodside High would see its population of 1,710 students grow during the same period to 2,080, a 22 percent rise.

If students were distributed evenly among the four comprehensive high schools, each school would average 2,400 students in the 2020-21 school year,

according to current projections. New boundary maps would be a near certainty because of the uneven impacts of this expected growth. For example, under current boundaries, Menlo-Atherton High School would be expected to provide space for 2,600 students by 2020, space the school does not have. Woodside High, which has a capacity for 2,200, and would have 2,080 in 2020, well below the average but also well above its current enrollment of 1,710.

In a recent discussion, the Sequoia district board agreed that each school will have to get "reasonably close" to the average. Any boundary redrawing should be done with careful attention to special programs and demographic diversity, the board said.

The district does not have the necessary \$200 million for a new campus, Superintendent James Lianides told the board. Voters in 2008 approved \$165 million for capital improvements by approving Measure J, but the current balance is about \$9 million. A new bond measure could pay for more classrooms, and

See **GROWTH PROJECTIONS**, page 8



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

Holding pipes, protesters march toward Facebook headquarters in Menlo Park on May 1 to speak up against Mark Zuckerberg's alleged ties to political ads supporting the Keystone XL pipeline.

Pipeline protestors target Zuckerberg

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

It wasn't blatant civil disobedience, but private property did get walked on. About 40 protestors asserted themselves on May 1, and Facebook and the Menlo Park police cooperated, allowing them to stand in the lush grass on a hot day at the entrance to the company's Menlo Park headquarters at Willow Road and Bayfront Expressway.

Framed by Facebook's iconic logo, the protestors, who said they were with groups opposing the Keystone XL pipeline, complained to passing Bayfront Expressway traffic about Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg's alleged ties to ads supporting the pipeline.

Those ties are a little complicated. Mr. Zuckerberg recently led the formation of a lobbying group — called FWD.us — that's pushing for comprehensive immigration reform.

That group has subsidiaries that are paying for ads for politicians that back the Keystone XL pipeline and more oil drilling. The idea is to support politicians who could be key votes for comprehensive immigration reform.

The Keystone XL pipeline project would bring oil extracted from tar sands in

See **PIPELINE PROTESTERS**, page 8

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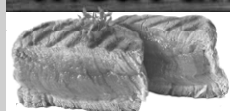
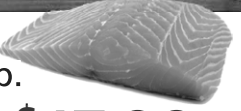
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Fired gymnastics instructor says she's filed complaint

By **Sandy Brundage**

Almanac Staff Writer

The public doesn't know the results or how much it cost, but it now knows that on April 29, Menlo Park got the final report of the investigator hired to look into allegations of harassment and a toxic workplace environment within the city's gymnastics program, and that this doesn't appear to be the end of the matter.

Michelle Sutton, the popular gymnastics instructor whose termination rests at the center of the uproar, isn't waiting around for the city to release the report. She said she filed a complaint this week with the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH).

"I foolishly thought I would be reinstated, and so delayed filing the claim and seeking employment," Ms. Sutton said. She has now found a teaching position with Gold Star Gymnastics in Mountain View.

City Attorney Bill McClure confirmed Menlo Park got the investigator's final report on April 29, after receiving a preliminary draft about two weeks ago. He had not yet gotten the invoice, so did not know the cost of the investigation. Nikki Hall, the San Francisco-based attorney hired by the city to conduct the review, has not yet responded to the Almanac's inquiry about the bill.

The city attorney has said the report will not be disclosed to the public, and, according to Ms. Sutton, not to her either. The Almanac asked the DFEH for a copy of her complaint and whether the person making the allegations is entitled to see the investigator's report, but the agency hadn't responded yet.

Soon after the firing, City

Manager Alex McIntyre initially said he had reviewed the circumstances of the instructor's firing to his satisfaction. However, he hadn't talked to instructors who alleged that a gymnastics program supervisor bullied and harassed staff, including Ms. Sutton.

The week before she was fired, Ms. Sutton asked the city's human resources department and union representatives about filing a harassment complaint against supervisor Karen Mihalek. On Feb. 12 she was fired and said she was told that a parent's complaint led

to her termination. The complaint, emailed publicly to program management and to the City Council on Jan. 30, described the instructor as unprofessional in how she had asked the parent to step away dur-

ing a child-only class. The Almanac found no documentation of any reprimands or other performance issues in her personnel file. Legally, however, Menlo Park isn't required to document disciplinary actions for at-will employees such as Ms. Sutton, although many employers do as a safeguard.

Another instructor, Chris Ortez, quit in protest over her firing and later told the city manager and the council that Ms. Mihalek held "none-too-discreet contempt" for Ms. Sutton and reportedly had a history of complaints filed by at least two female staff members "who have been harassed, intimidated, and/or otherwise bullied by her."

The city has declined to comment on the allegations, citing employee confidentiality. ■



Michelle Sutton

'I foolishly thought I would be reinstated, and so delayed filing the claim and seeking employment.'

MICHELLE SUTTON

STEERING KIDS

continued from page 3

says, noting that it was Ruth who took care of all the photography, graphics, and powerpoint duties for such presentations, and who documented

classroom activities with her camera.

In retirement, the Redwood City couple will be spending much more time at Ruth's family ranch, homesteaded in 1889 in Humboldt County, they said. ■



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Police to add surveillance tools

■ Belle Haven substation on track to open this year.

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park landed on a list no one wants to be on, according to a consultant hired to review the police department's operations. The number of reported collisions in the city, based on traffic volume, has ranked roughly in the top third of the state in recent years.

The review, carried out by Belcher, Ehle, Medina & Associates for about \$25,000, focused on the internal workings of the police department, according to consultant Steve Belcher. "I've done a number of these studies; they came out better than many."

The consultants conducted more than 40 interviews with city staff and employees at other law enforcement agencies that work closely with Menlo Park police, such as the district attorney's office, but did not interview community members.

The police department is already taking steps to improve traffic safety by increasing patrols. "(This is) fair warning that the enforcement will be picking up in the very near

future," Menlo Park Police Chief Robert Jonsen said during the April 29 council meeting.

Detection

Along with changes in patrol strategy, the department is looking to enhance its capabilities for data collection and spotting crimes in progress. Chief Jonsen told the Almanac that he'd met with representatives from East Palo Alto on May 1 to talk about expanding the neighboring city's ShotSpotter gunfire-detection system to cover Belle Haven in Menlo Park.

"It's just a matter of adding

within the next six months. The 900-square-foot substation would be staffed at least part-time during regular hours, along with officers rotating through while on patrol, and cost the city an estimated \$100,000 per year, according to police staff.

License-plate readers

As for data collection, mobile automated license plate readers, such as those used by the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office and East Palo Alto, run hundreds of plates a minute within a 360-degree arc, according to Chief Jonsen.

While some jurisdictions mount readers at fixed intersections, Chief Jonsen said the mobile option offers advantages. "You can move around all over the city, to different places and different

hotspots."

The department plans to start with one reader and maybe go to three — one per patrol beat — in the future, according to the chief. The data would likely be retained for at least one year. Representatives from the Sheriff's Office, which started using the readers about five years ago, said their agency uses five readers, purchased by the vehicle theft task force, and keeps the information for up to one year. ■



'(This is) fair warning that (traffic) enforcement will be picking up in the very near future.'

MENLO PARK POLICE CHIEF ROBERT JONSEN

a few antennas," he said. Further down the road the system may add surveillance cameras, something the chief said he'd like to see implemented in other parts of the community as well, perhaps at access points to Menlo Park. Training officers to wear body-mounted cameras is already under way.

Belle Haven's new police substation, to be located in a strip mall at Hamilton Avenue and Willow Road, is on track to open

Greater surveillance raises privacy issues

The American Civil Liberties Union has been keeping an eye on how law enforcement agencies handle the data they gather.

Chris Conley, an attorney whose work with ACLU Northern California focuses on privacy and technology, said the best practice is to keep the data for as short a period as possible and to limit access. Tiburon, for example, keeps information from automated license plate readers for only 30 days unless it relates to a specific criminal investigation.

"The law enforcement value of old records not retained in connection with any specific investigation is extremely low, while those records continue to pose a privacy risk to individuals," he said.

Attorneys investigating wrongful convictions for the Innocence Project had a different take. Some told the media that old data helps determine whether the right person was arrested for a crime.

Retention isn't the only issue raising concerns with privacy advocates. Menlo Park, like many other agencies using automated license plate readers, would pool its data with other jurisdictions that could access the information with a username and password, said Menlo Park Police Chief Robert Jonsen.

Compiled data can function as a type of GPS tracking without a warrant.

In effect, that compiled data can function as a type of GPS tracking without a warrant. Mr. Conley said that poses a privacy risk because the data lets law enforcement construct a comprehensive record of someone's activities — for example, is a car regularly seen at a health clinic? How about a protest or church service or job fair

or speed dating event?

"These issues are exacerbated if information from (automated license plate readers) is shared with other agencies or combined with other data sources to build an even more detailed record of innocent Californians' legitimate and even constitutionally protected activities," he said.

Chief Jonsen said he understands the concerns, but the courts have held that there's no expectation of privacy for vehicles on a public street. Officers already run plates manually, and log the inquiries; automation makes the process faster and captures more plates.

"The readers have been really valuable, in my past experience; that would apply up here as well," said the chief, a 26-year veteran of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. "Sometimes we don't know about a crime for weeks or months, and it would be a shame to not have the data."

— Sandy Brundage

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



Should I Sell My Home?

Dear Monica: We moved from Menlo Park to San Francisco a few years ago to be closer to my husband's job and we have rented our Menlo Park house during that time. Our tenants are moving out in August and we are trying to decide whether to rent it again or sell it. It is still our primary residence but if we rent it longer than three years we will have to move back in to the property in order to qualify for the \$250,000 per person capital gains exclusion. Would you recommend we sell it now or rent it again? Susan B.

Dear Susan: The best way to make this kind of decision is to look at the issue as one part of your total personal and financial plan. Ask yourself some questions such as: how long do you think your husband will be in his present employment? Do you think

you will ever want to live in your old house again? What would the financial consequences be for you if it stopped being your primary residence and became instead a rental property?

If you think there is a good chance you will want to move back to your house, you shouldn't sell it now because it may cost you more to buy or rent a new home in the future. The real estate market has risen significantly in the past year and should be stable and rising for the foreseeable future. If you cannot see yourself ever moving back to your home then decide if it would enhance your investment portfolio to maintain it as an investment. The rental market is strong and the property could generate significant cash for you. Talk to your financial advisor to understand the tax and other consequences of selling and then make your decision accordingly.

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



Presented by
Mark Schmidt
Licensed Optician

PROJECTING AN IMAGE

It hardly comes as news that people have been known to don a pair of glasses to change the way people perceive them. Perhaps the most common example of this quick image change involves wearing a pair of horn-rimmed glasses to make a person look more "serious" or "intellectual." A pair of eyeglasses with thick black frames, such as those worn by Buddy Holly, also denotes an air of "cool." These bold glasses have been used by celebrities and non-celebrities alike to lend

some gravity to their appearances. The most curious recent example of this fashion involves high-visibility court defendants, who have been urged by their attorneys to wear glasses so that they will look more innocent.

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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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Public invited to comment on police contract issues

By Renee Batti
Almanac News Editor

■ **ATHERTON**

With labor talks set to begin soon, Atherton's city manager said he will follow Menlo Park's example and schedule a public discussion of issues that residents think the town should consider as it negotiates a new contract with the local police union.

The discussion will be on the City Council's May 15 agenda, said City Manager George Rodericks.

The session will also provide a chance for residents to get up to speed on issues related to the contract talks, such as the police department's current staffing and funding, and the town's financial situation, including its multi-million-dollar unfunded liability resulting from post-retirement employee benefits.

Mr. Rodericks said staff will prepare a report with pertinent information, modeled on the five-page report presented by Menlo Park staff before that city's council held its April 23 special meeting to allow residents to comment on upcoming labor negotiations.

The public discussion could be a lively start to what is likely to be a contentious period of negotiations. The Atherton Police Officers' Association (APOA) recently set a less-than-friendly tone in a letter mailed to residents that some have criticized as threatening and inappropriate.

The letter warned of a potential police officer exodus from town if the council insists on salary and benefit reductions similar to those

imposed earlier this year on non-represented staff. It encouraged residents to send their opinions to the council, concluding, "Please let them know you support us."

Mr. Rodericks said he's heard from several residents who were concerned with the letter's content, which planted the seed for scheduling a public discussion on the matter. He and the council also received a formal request from resident Peter Carpenter to hold a meeting, before negotiations begin, that would give the public a chance to discuss objectives the council has set for the labor talks. Mr. Carpenter attended the Menlo Park meeting, and commended that council for holding it.

"The (APOA) letter brought up a lot of things" that residents have questions about, Mr. Rodericks told the Almanac. "I felt that because of upcoming negotiations and comments from Peter Carpenter about the Menlo Park (meeting), we should at least (provide) the public an opportunity to comment."

Mr. Rodericks said he spoke with Mayor Elizabeth Lewis about putting the session on the May 15 agenda, and "she had no problem with it."

The "kick-off meeting" between the town and the APOA is expected to be held the first week of May, Mr. Rodericks said. "During the first meeting we expect to set ground rules and expectations for future meetings."

The current police contract expires Sept. 30. ■



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

Protesting against Mark Zuckerberg's alleged ties to political ads supporting the controversial Keystone XL pipeline, Patricia Paisley (left) gives two thumbs down as Natalie Fowler (center) speaks to the press outside of Facebook headquarters in Menlo Park on May 1.

Pipeline protestors target Zuckerberg

continued from page 5

Alberta, Canada, down to the Gulf Coast for refining.

Role of FWD.us

The FWD.us subsidiaries, representing the conservative and liberal positions are, respectively, Americans for a Conservative Direction and the Council for American Job Growth. The ads they funded, one for Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-South Carolina, and one for Sen. Mark Begich, D-Alaska, do not mention immigration reform.

The ad from Americans for a Conservative Direction in support of Sen. Graham addresses his opposition to the Obama administration's handling of three issues: health care legislation, stimulus spending and energy independence, including the president's initial opposition to the Keystone pipeline.

The ad for Sen. Begich was paid for by the Council for American Job Growth and expresses support for drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the construction of a natural gas pipeline, protec-

tion for the U.S. fishing industry and a federal mandate for a balanced budget.

FWD.us spokeswoman Kate Hansen said via email that both groups, although funded by FWD.us, are independent entities.

And the absence of any mention of immigration reform in either ad? "That's incorrect about the ads not featuring immigration," Ms. Hansen replied. "In fact, Americans for a Conservative Direction ran an ad featuring Sen. Marco Rubio that ran across six states." ■

MAXED OUT

continued from page 5

the school, be it a kindergarten to fifth-grade school, a kindergarten and first-grade school, or a third-to fifth-grade school. The school could also be set up as a "school of choice," offering special programs such as Spanish immersion, gifted and talented classes, or arts or science and math programs designed to attract students from the entire district.

If the board chooses an option that requires passage of a bond measure, board members seemed to favor an election this November. That means, they said, that community members willing to head a campaign committee for the bond measure will need to be on board soon. The last date the board could approve putting a bond measure on the November ballot is Aug. 9.

Projected costs and construction duration (but not planning time) for the three options are:

■ Minor renovations and additions of portables to the existing school for a K-1 only school, \$3 million, five to six months.

■ Major modernization and addition of new buildings to the existing school to allow K-5 or other configurations, \$9 million, 10 to 12 months.

■ New school, \$22.2 million, 12-13 months.

Construction would start in the summer of 2014 at the earliest.

The district has \$3 million that would pay for minor renovations, part of the proceeds from the last bond measure passed by district voters.

Go to tinyurl.com/MPS-427 to download the presentation given to the board by Ahmad Sheikholeslami, the district's director of facility planning and construction. ■

Growth projections challenge high schools

continued from page 5

that option did come up during the discussion.

Another critical consideration for the board: the competing priorities of keeping a community of middle-school students together versus offering students and parents a choice in schools. The board sounded agreeable to a choice of two high schools per middle school, although some members said they preferred one. Morgan Marchbanks, the assistant superintendent for educational services, said that of 31 East Palo Alto parents she interviewed, all wanted a choice in high schools.

The district has scheduled community meetings in May to solicit comments from the public. An April 23 letter to school families from Mr. Lianides lists six meetings, including one at

Meetings

The Sequoia Union High School District is planning community meetings to discuss expected enrollment growth and options for dealing with it. The two local meetings will be at:

■ **Menlo-Atherton High School** in the Performing Arts Center at 7 p.m. Monday, May 13.

■ **Woodside High School** in the Performing Arts Center at 7 p.m. Wednesday, May 29.

M-A on Monday, May 13, and one at Woodside on Wednesday, May 29, both at 7 p.m. in the school performing arts centers.

On hand to lead the meetings will be Mr. Lianides and two board members. The first meeting is in Redwood City at 7 p.m. Tuesday, May 7, at Sequoia High School, 1201 Brewster Ave.

Growth projections

"Because our future students are currently attending school in our partner elementary districts, we believe the study is quite accurate in its projections," Mr. Lianides says in the letter. "We look forward to your input and to sharing the demographic information, which makes it necessary to look at our 30-year-old boundaries and prepare for the future."

Current students or siblings of current students would not be affected by changes in boundaries, the board said. Board President Chris Thomsen suggested draft maps for the community meetings to reduce the abstraction of the issue.

The projections assume that the district's four charter schools will continue their current enrollments, but the projections do not account for new students from housing in the planning stages or now being built. ■



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

Practice run

Firefighters James Lennon, center, and Ross Frazee, right, both of the Menlo Park Fire Protection District, were two of the participants from around the county in a wildfire drill held in Woodside on Friday, May 3. The Woodside Fire Protection District hosted a day-long event that included a staging area at the Menlo Country Club, a neighborhood evacuation in the Woodside Glens, and a full-scale battle with a mock wildfire off Marva Oaks Drive.

Commission backs housing plan update, with changes

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

■ MENLO PARK

Menlo Park got a step closer to updating its housing plan on April 29 after the Planning Commission recommended rezoning four sites as potential locations for high-density housing development.

The sites are:

- Gateway Apartments at two locations: the 1200 block of Willow Road and the 1300 block of Willow Road. Both sites are owned by the Mid-Peninsula Housing Coalition (78 units total).

- Hamilton Avenue East located in the 700 and 800 blocks of Hamilton Avenue (216 units).

- A site in the 3600 block of Haven Avenue (540 units).

A fifth site, which could provide 60 units on the Department of Veterans Affairs campus in the 700 block of Willow Road, is also on the list, but does not require rezoning as part of the housing plan update.

The update is a part of a lawsuit settlement over the city's failure to comply with state housing law for the past 10 years.

To catch up, Menlo Park has identified sites where zoning changes could allow construction of about 900 new housing units, with 454 units dedicated to affordable housing. The settlement also requires the city to provide zoning incentives for developers to build affordable housing, including within the new downtown/El Camino Real specific plan. That doesn't mean the units will appear, however.

A developer could still decide to forgo any added benefits by choosing not to build affordable units, City Attorney Bill McClure said. "Unless (a developer) includes affordable housing, it doesn't give him anything."

Menlo Park has also proposed allowing the construction of secondary, or granny, units. The Planning Commission discussed several design points, such as the number of bedrooms allowed, wall heights and minimum yard size, and the city may decide to re-evaluate the standards after 10 granny units have been built.

Traffic management

The Haven Avenue properties in particular led the commissioners to focus on how to make the new housing developments on the east side of the city feel like part of Menlo Park.

"I think the city needs to accept responsibility for helping the Haven properties integrate better," including through better community coordination of public transit, Vice Chair John Kadvanly said.

The commission voted unanimously to include a policy directive in its recommendations to the City Council to support the formation of a transportation management association (TMA), which would help people living in the Haven properties get to their jobs and downtown.

Mr. Kadvanly told the Almanac that if the city transportation

department is "transportation hardware," then the association is the "transportation software," coordinating all transportation modes from pedestrian to bike to shuttles and all public transportation, but focused on the Bayfront area and its emerging housing and office spaces.

Adina Levin, a new member of the Transportation Commission, said San Mateo and Mountain View have recently set up similar associations.

"Interestingly, both of these descend from the same highly successful TMA in Emeryville that was started in the mid-90s," she said. "It started with a single shuttle route serving an office development, and grew to provide 1.4 million shuttle trips per year connecting to BART and local shopping." The same people who set up the Emeryville program are working on the San Mateo and Mountain View counterparts as well, she said.

A transportation management association can reduce vehicle trips for large employers such as Facebook, but also for residential developments and small businesses, according to Ms. Levin.

Planning Commission members say they hope to see a Menlo Park association created in 2014. Whether that would be as a new division of the city's transportation department or an autonomous entity remains to be determined. The City Council will have a chance to comment on the proposal when it reviews the housing element update on May 21.

Go to tinyurl.com/MP-HEU to review staff reports and other associated documents for the housing update on the city's website. ■

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Ex-college IT director sentenced to prison

Bradley John Witham, 42, a former IT director for the San Mateo County Community College District, was sentenced to state prison for three years on April 26 after pleading no contest to forgery and embezzlement charges.

Prosecutors had accused Mr. Witham and an accomplice in the district's IT department, Mark Anthony Bustos, also 42, of embezzling \$350,000 from the district over six years, beginning in 2006.

Prosecutors said the two men had engaged in "dozens of online transactions" using the district's credit card to purchase electronic gear, including computers, computer accessories and software, and then selling the gear in online auctions and

on Craigslist. Prosecutors had also accused Mr. Witham of submitting three forged receipts to be reimbursed for Apple iPhones and a bunk bed set.

Mr. Witham had resigned his job and was traveling in Australia when Mr. Bustos informed him of an investigation by the district attorney's office, a situation Mr. Bustos discovered after hacking into the district vice chancellor's email account, prosecutors said.

Mr. Witham is an Australian citizen and turned himself in, Assistant District Attorney Morley Pitt said.

In a plea bargain conditioned on no more than five years in prison, Mr. Witham pleaded no contest in February to three counts of felony forgery of

documents and one count of embezzlement of public funds by a public official, District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe said. Prosecutors had asked for a six-year maximum.

At the sentencing hearing on April 26, Superior Court Criminal Presiding Judge Jonathan Karesh allowed Mr. Witham 368 days of credit for time already served in jail, where he has been on bail of \$1 million. The sentence included additional penalties of \$560 in fines, DNA registration, and restitution of at least \$49,091, with an additional amount to be determined by the state through the Department of Corrections, prosecutors said.

Mr. Bustos also pleaded no contest in February, but to one count of felony identity theft. With no objection from prosecutors, Mr. Bustos was sentenced to three years probation with the condition that he also serve 90 days in the county jail.

Honors for Christopher Sauer

Christopher Sauer of Portola Valley has been named a semifinalist in the U.S. Presidential Scholarships Program. A senior at Menlo School, Christopher,

son of Karen Peterson and Gerry Sauer, will be attending Stanford University in the fall. Earlier in the academic year, he was a semifinalist in the Intel

Science Talent Search and a semifinalist in the Siemens Competition in Math, Science & Technology. He is also an Eagle Scout from Troop 64 in Portola Valley.

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Two teens arrested on burglary charges

Two teenagers spotted running away from a blaring burglar alarm were arrested by Menlo Park police on April 29.

Officers arrived at a home in the 1000 block of Del Norte Avenue after receiving a report that an alarm had activated around 9:40 a.m. They found a door to the home kicked in, and caught the teens — one 13 and the other 15 — attempting to flee, officers said. The suspects were carrying a laptop, two packs of cigarettes and a lighter stolen from the home, police said.

The boys, both Menlo Park residents, were booked into Hillcrest juvenile facility on counts of burglary, conspiracy and possession of stolen property, police said.

The investigation continues. Police ask that anyone with information contact Officer Felicia Byars at ffbyars@menlopark.org or 330-6300.

Katherine Strehl named to Planning Commission

Katherine Strehl, Menlo Park's newest member of the Planning Commission, barely had time to catch her breath before attend-

BRIEFS

ing her first meeting in that official capacity.

The City Council appointed Ms. Strehl on April 30, less than a week before her first Planning Commission meeting on May 6. She replaces termed-out commissioner Jack O'Malley.

Previously serving on the Transportation Commission, Ms. Strehl owns KS Public Affairs Consulting, which handles public relations for the California High-Speed Rail Authority. She has also served as communications manager for BART.

Her term on the Planning Commission runs through April 30, 2017.

Drug dropbox opens at Little House

A dropbox to dispose of old medications is now open at Little House Activity Center at 800 Middle Ave. in Menlo Park.

"Many residents know that they cannot flush or throw away their old medications because it can negatively impact water and soil quality, causing problems for people and wildlife. However, there was not a local location in Menlo Park to take these medications," said Rebecca Fotu, the city's environmental programs manager.

Little House is open Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

M-A celebrates life of Jose Mayen

A burial service was held Monday, May 6, in Menlo Park for Jose Felix Mayen, 23, a 2009 graduate of Menlo-Atherton High School who was injured in an automobile accident on the San Mateo bridge on April 24, and died a day later.

The service was held at Holy Cross Catholic Cemetery, at the corner of Santa Cruz Avenue and Avy Avenue in Menlo Park. Immediately following the burial service, there was a celebration of his life at the Performing Arts Center's Cafe at M-A High School, 555 Middlefield Road in Atherton, according to Cristina Garelli, who posted information online on behalf of the family.

In 2009, Jose Mayen received a Rotary Club of Menlo Park scholarship to study environmental science at Canada College.

Ms. Garelli said that Mr.

Mayen had "propelled himself from humble beginnings to enroll as a student at U.C. Berkeley," and was on his way there when the accident happened on the bridge. He had found he had a flat tire and stopped on the side of the bridge to wait for his father, when a vehicle struck his car.

He leaves behind his parents, two younger siblings, and a long-term girlfriend.

"Jose was a brilliant student and a positive person — an example in our community of someone who applied himself with earnestness and hard work to everything he did," said Ms. Garelli. "His heartbroken family needs help to pay for his memorial and burial. The cost is about \$15,000, which is nearly impossible for them to absorb. Any community support would mean so much to them. They deserve to know that their son was valued and

that people care. Donations of any size will be so appreciated.

Go to tinyurl.com/Mayen-562 for more information.

According to the California Highway Patrol, the collision on the bridge was reported around 7:20 a.m. on April 24 on eastbound state Highway 92 just east of the high rise and involved three vehicles. CHP Officer Art Montiel said Mr. Mayen was driving a Toyota Corolla that had stopped in a right lane on the bridge. A BMW station wagon driving behind him rear-ended the Toyota and was then rear-ended itself by a silver sedan, Officer Montiel said.

Mr. Mayen was taken by ambulance to Eden Medical Center in Castro Valley, where he died the next day.

Crippen and Flynn Chapel, 400 Woodside Road in Redwood City, is handling the arrangements.

POLICE CALLS

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

WEST MENLO PARK

Forgery report: A resident with a business account at Bank of America reported losses of approximately \$40,000 from numerous unauthorized electronic withdrawals between October 2011 and December 2012, April 25.

WOODSIDE

Theft report: In two reports from

addresses along Portola Road, residents said that mailboxes grouped in rows had been forced open, leaving at least one mailbox that no longer closes, and with mail left "all over the ground." At least one mailbox was missing altogether from the corner of Home and Portola roads, April 23.

MENLO PARK

Commercial burglary report: Someone pried open the exterior and interior doors to the Sand Hill Road offices of private equity firm GI Partners and stole three laptop computers for a loss estimated at \$5,100, April 29.

Residential burglary reports:

■ Police report arresting a San Jose man who had been seen stealing a bicycle from an apartment carport on Middle Avenue. The bicycle's owner had witnessed the theft, followed the suspect while phoning police, and then identified the suspect after the arrest, April 26.

■ Police, responding to a burglar alarm at a residence on Del Norte Avenue, said they chased and arrested two teens, 15 and 13, and found property from the residence in their possession. The youths were booked into the Hillcrest juvenile facility in San Mateo on conspiracy and burglary charges, April 29.

■ After forcing open the front door of a residence on Hedge Road, someone stole a laptop computer and Apple iPad tablet for a total loss estimated at \$2,500, April 29.

■ Someone entered a residence on Ringwood Avenue by forcing open a rear door, then stole a laptop computer, a Nintendo video game console and jewelry for a total loss estimated to be \$1,150, April 26.

Auto burglary report: A backpack containing clothing, books and a Kindle digital book reader were stolen from a house on Greenoaks Drive after a screen was cut, May 1.

Theft reports:

■ Someone stole the catalytic converter from underneath a vehicle parked at Facebook Corp. at 1 Hacker Way for a loss estimated \$950, May 1.

■ A woman is missing her wallet and an Apple iPhone, an \$820 total loss, after forgetting that she left her purse in a shopping cart in the parking lot at Safeway supermarket at 525 El Camino Real, May 2.

■ Two women in a four-door silver Mercedes Benz absconded with two cell phones after pulling up next to two girls on Pope Street, asking to borrow first one phone from the girls, then another after saying that the first one didn't work, for a total loss of \$700, April 29.

■ Someone stole a bicycle valued at \$300 from an unlocked garage on Middle Avenue, May 1.

■ About \$40 in coins and a digital device were stolen from an unlocked vehicle parked on Hamilton Avenue for a total loss of \$130, April 28.

■ A woman in the Santa Cruz Avenue business district reported missing a wallet valued at \$83 and containing canceled credit cards, April 26.

Fraud report: A 19-year-old woman on Del Norte Avenue told police that she wired \$1,900 via Western Union to pay for a car she bought, but never received, through Craigslist, May 1.

PORTOLA VALLEY

Disturbance report: Responding to an anonymous phone call complaining about 20 or so people who were yelling and making noise in front of a residence on Possum Lane, deputies found 10 individuals heavily intoxicated and two showing evidence of having been fist fighting. No one wanted to press charges and most of the visitors left by taxi, April 27.

ATHERTON

Residential burglary reports:

■ Someone ransacked an Almondal Avenue house and stole two Apple iPads for a total loss estimated at \$1,200, April 22.

■ Police do not yet have a list, but several items were stolen from a house on Greenoaks Drive after a screen was cut, May 1.

Theft reports:

■ Two unlocked vehicles on Fairview Avenue were pilfered for one black Louis Vuitton purse valued at \$3,000, a pair of gold Oakley sunglasses with a value of \$500, and a \$50 black jacket, April 22.

■ A black and silver Marin men's bicycle with an estimated value of \$399 was stolen from Menlo-Atherton High School at 555 Middlefield Road, April 23.

■ Several dwarf plants of unreported value were stolen from a home on Prado Secoya, April 19.



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Can a green town coexist with artificial grass?

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

■ PORTOLA VALLEY

In a town whose general plan puts determined and repeated emphasis on preserving the natural environment and the town's rural character, is there room in that vision for a playing field covered in artificial grass? That's the question facing the Portola Valley Town Council on Wednesday, May 8.

The Woodside Priory School has applied for permission to replace its nonstandard running track with a standard quarter-mile oval, and received a green light from the Planning Commission in March to use artificial grass on the track's interior field, currently natural grass. It was a close 3-2 vote, with the majority citing pri-

vate property rights and two years of poking at the project, but a public outcry over a conflict with the vision embodied in the general plan and zoning laws led the council to decide to review the commission's decision.

The council meets at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 8, in the Historic Schoolhouse and will consider three options, according to a staff report:

■ The council can find the

artificial surface consistent with the "general purpose and intent of the town's zoning ordinance and general plan" and allow the Priory to go ahead immediately. This option would include council approval of the school's conditional use permit (CUP) and the project's environmental documents, which establish a less-than-significant impact from a 2.5-acre field of artificial grass.

■ The council could find inconsistency in the above criteria, still approve the environmental documents, but add a condition to the CUP requiring that the field be natural grass. The council's decision would be final in 30 days.

■ The council could order a revision to the environmental documents, have the revision circulated for public comment, and add a condition to the CUP requiring a natural grass field. Final action would likely be delayed until at least July, staff said. ■

Amy Arbretton joins Hewlett Foundation

Amy Arbretton, an expert in nonprofit evaluation, has joined the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation as evaluation officer in its Effective Philanthropy Group.

Ms. Arbretton comes to the Menlo Park foundation from Public/Private Ventures, a national social policy research

foundation, where she was a senior research fellow and director of its California office.

Ms. Arbretton holds a doctorate in education and psychology, a master's degree in developmental psychology, and a bachelor's degree in psychology, all from the University of Michigan.



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Symphony gives concert in Menlo

Silicon Valley Symphony, directed by Michael P. Gibson, will present its final concert of the season at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, May 18, at Trinity Episcopal Church, 330 Ravenswood Ave. in Menlo Park.

Organist Lothar Bandermann will present the world premiere of his composition, "An American Experience." Organist Margaret Martin Kvamme will play Saint-Saens' Symphony No. 3, the "Organ Symphony."

The concert will also be presented at 7:30 p.m. Friday, May 17, at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Palo Alto. Tickets are \$20 for general admission and \$15 for students and seniors when purchased at the door.

BRIEFS

Kick for a cause

Kuk Sool Won of Menlo Park Martial Arts and Character Development Academy hosted its fifth annual Kick-A-Thon on April 20 at the Arrillaga Family Recreation Center in Menlo Park to benefit Lucile Packard Children's Hospital and the Menlo Park Martial Arts Scholarship Program.

More than 40 students performed repeated single-, double- and triple-kick drills for an hour. The students had gathered pledges for the Kick-A-Thon and family members were on hand to count the kicks. At the end of the hour, the students had completed a total of 93,500 kicks and raised \$9,607. The youngest participant, age 3, completed 100 kicks.

Gregory Starling joins Community Corps

Gregory Starling of Portola Valley is one of 160 men and women who have pledged to perform 10 months of national service as part of the Atlantic Region's 19th class of the National Civilian Community Corps, an AmeriCorps program.

He may work with such organizations as Habitat for Humanity, the American Red Cross and the Nature Conservancy.

Mr. Sterling, who heard about AmeriCorps at a college career fair workshop, will graduate from the program on Nov. 14 with an education award of \$5,550.

Growing up in Portola Valley, he attended Corte Madera and Ormondale schools and was a member of the first graduating class at Summit Prep. He graduated from California Lutheran University with a degree in criminology.

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Friends celebrate Scooter's B-day

The author is a longtime friend of Wilson Farrar.

By Julie Mickelson

Wilson Farrar's horse, Scooter, turned 29 on Sunday, April 28, and Wilson did what she's done the past five years: She threw him a party, with 100 or so people attending, in Portola Valley.

Celebrants received glass bubbles and horseshoes with inspiring messages, even a wishing well to toss them in. The party celebrated Scooter and how he has inspired Wilson since he came into her life:

Wilson rescued the horse about eight years ago from her then-landlord in Saratoga who planned to put him to sleep because he was old and un-ridable. Fortunately, the landlord was willing to sell



Photo by Julie Mickelson
Wilson Farrar with Scooter at the horse's 29th birthday in Portola Valley on April 28. Ms. Farrar is holding a can of Pellegrino and Scooter is chewing on it.

Scooter to Wilson (for \$1) and let her take over his care, which she and her friends have been doing ever since.

It's been an amazing ride for them, including the time when the roof blew off the Saratoga house, and Scooter and Wilson had to find another place to live (with a barn to rent) in a matter of days. Somehow they did. She currently rents a small place with a barn in Portola Valley, where the party was held.

In their eight years together, Scooter has become friends with many, many people, including students from around the world. Wilson invites groups of young entrepreneurs over to learn about life and to meet Scooter. Between the two of them, they demonstrate the value that pets (whether a dog, cat or a horse) bring to our lives.

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Facebook gives \$20,000 to school fire-safety fund

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

On a mission to connect school fire alarms to fire stations, the new nonprofit Ring the Bell Fund collected \$20,000 from Facebook on May 1.

The social media company is challenging others to match its donation.

"From the moment we learned about Ring the Bell Fund's mission, we wanted to help," said Tom Wirth, a Menlo-Atherton High School graduate who now serves as Facebook's facilities operations manager and board member of the Ring the Bell Fund. "Their commitment to keep our schools and communities safe aligns with Facebook's interest in being a good neighbor. We also want to encourage other businesses, community partners, and potential donors to help fund this need across the state."

The Ravenswood City School District will be the first to benefit from the donation. Menlo Park Fire Protection District director Virginia Chang Kiraly created the nonprofit late last year in the wake of two fires at local schools (Beechwood School and Belle Haven Elementary) within 13 months. She also studied the issue as foreperson of the 2008-09 San Mateo County civil grand jury.

"Parents all over California assume that our schools are equipped with automatic

sprinklers and monitored fire alarms. Many are not and don't have to be legally," Ms. Chang Kiraly said. "There are gaps in the current state legislation that leave our schools vulnerable to fires and other safety issues that could cause a school fire."

As the Almanac reported in September, state law doesn't require monitored fire alarms or sprinklers in portable classrooms like those Beechwood has used since 1986, despite long-standing efforts by both the fire district and former state assemblyman Ted Lempert.

The Beechwood fire burned for hours before a neighbor called it in. The blaze wreaked an estimated \$400,000 in damage to the private K-8 school. A monitored alarm that alerted the fire protection district could have had firefighters there within minutes, according to Fire Chief Harold Schapelhouman.

The Ring the Bell Fund launch, held at Facebook's Willow Road headquarters, featured a panel discussion on how to improve school safety and ways the nonprofit could fill the funding gap. Participants included Mr. Lempert, Fire Chief Schapelhouman, East Palo Alto Police Chief Ron Davis, and Ravenswood City School District Superintendent Maria De La Vega.

Ms. Chang Kiraly expressed appreciation for community partners, such as Facebook and Alston & Bird, which has provided legal services. ■

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Photo courtesy of Rebuilding Together

Rebuilding Together

Nearly 100 volunteers from DPR Construction and Rebuilding Together started renovating the clubhouse of Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula at 401 Pierce Road in Menlo Park on April 27. The club recently got permission from the city to add 747 square feet of new space to its second floor. DPR prebuilt several sections and brought them to the work site. Organizers said it was Rebuilding Together's biggest volunteer effort to date.

Friends of Edgewood Park celebrate anniversary

The Friends of Edgewood Park will celebrate their 20th anniversary from 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday, May 11, at the Bill and Jean Lane Education Center at Edgewood Park, 6 Old Stage Coach Road off Edgewood Road in Redwood City.

Opening ceremonies, with state Sen. Jerry Hill and county Supervisor Don Horsley, begin at 1:30 p.m. Refreshments, including a birthday cake, cookies, and granola bars, will be served starting at 2 p.m.

Family entertainment will include a puppet skit, craft stations, treasure hunt, and a reading of a new children's book, "Frisky Finds a Home" by Carol Hankermeyer.

Kiwanis Club helps mothers

The Kiwanis Club of Menlo Park has established a program allowing families to honor their mother on Mother's Day through donations to save mothers and their newborn babies from suffering from neonatal tetanus.

Kiwanis International and UNICEF have teamed up to wipe out neonatal tetanus through the Eliminate Project, whose goal is to give immunization shots to 61 million at-risk women of childbearing age in undeveloped countries.

Through Mother's Day, anyone may make a donation to the project to honor a mother and the honoree will receive an acknowledgment card. Donations should be sent to the Menlo Park Kiwanis Foundation.

AROUND TOWN

P.O. Box 322, Menlo Park CA 94026, with Eliminate Project designated as recipient and the name and mailing address of the person to be honored.

Republican dinner

The San Mateo County Republican Party Central Committee's Lincoln Day Dinner will take place Friday, May 10, at the BPO Elks Lodge, 229 W. 20th Ave. in San Mateo. No-host bar begins at 6 p.m. with dinner at 7 p.m.

Featured speakers are Jim Brulte, chairman of the California Republican Party, and Ruben Barrales, former deputy assistant to President George W. Bush, and now president of Grow Elect, which focuses on recruiting and electing Latinos.

Dinner is \$49 per person.

Visit smgop.org or call 931-4596 for more information.

Food drive

The 21st Stamp Out Hunger food drive will be held across the country Saturday, May 11. To take part, residents are asked to place a sturdy bag of non-perishable or canned food items by their mailboxes before mail is delivered that day.

Letter carriers will collect the items and deliver them to a local food bank.

Last year the Bay Area Stamp Out Hunger food drive collected more than 1 million pounds of food for those in need, with 270,000 pounds going to Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties.

Landscaping class

A free water-efficient landscaping class, titled "Secrets of drought-tolerant landscaping," will be held from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, May 11, in

the Arrillaga Family Recreation Center at 700 Alma St. in Menlo Park.

Those attending will learn how to create water-efficient and low-maintenance landscape using California native plants. To register, call 349-3000.

Mitchell Johnson art

"Mitchell Johnson: Color and Shape," an exhibit of the paintings of Mitchell Johnson of Menlo Park, is on display at the Community School of Music and Arts in Mountain View through Sunday, May 26.

Mr. Johnson holds a master's degree in fine arts from the Parsons School of Design in New York City. He divides his time between his studio and his favorite painting locations in Italy, France, Cape Cod and Denmark.

His paintings can be found in more than 700 collections, including the New Mexico Museum of Arts and the New Britain Museum of American Art. He is married to author and chef Donia Bijan.

Mr. Johnson's work is shown at the Community School of Music and Arts Mohr Gallery, Finn Center, 230 San Antonio Circle, Mountain View.

Party at Rosewood

Rosewood Sand Hill will hold its annual outdoor party launching the summer pool season from 6 to 9 p.m. Friday, May 17. The event will include eight specialty cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, a DJ and dancing. The entrance fee of \$25 per person will benefit the Center for a New Generation at the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula.

'We love horses' essay contest

Strideaway Farms in Portola

Valley is hosting a "We love horses" essay contest. There are two categories: individual for children, ages 6 to 12; and family pairs (a child and parent or sibling). Winners will receive the chance to attend one of two "We love horses" days at Strideaway Farms.

Submission deadline is Monday, May 20. The essay should contain 50-500 words and be submitted with the full name and age for each entrant, and a parent's email address. Writers of the first 40 essays received will be invited to one of the "We love horses" days and will receive a \$25 Strideaway Farms gift certificate.

Send essays via email to welovehorses@strideawayfarms.com or mail to 288 Old Spanish Trail, Portola Valley, CA 94028.

Filoli volunteers

Filoli will hold its semi-annual new volunteer recruitment meeting at 9:30 a.m. Saturday, May 18, at the Filoli Visitor & Education Center, 86 Canada Road in Woodside. Those attending will learn about the many ways to volunteer at Filoli in such areas as house and garden, nature education, the garden and gift shop, public relations and the cafe.

Register by email at volunteer@filoli.org.

Gaming careers

Gaming career adviser Brice Morrison will lead a gaming career program at 1 p.m. Saturday, May 11, at the Atherton Library, 2 Dinkelspiel Station Lane in Atherton.

Mr. Morrison will discuss how games are made, the industry market, different gaming career paths, and how to make your own games. A question-and-answer period will follow his presentation.



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Motorcyclist dies in crash

A motorcyclist was killed Saturday night, April 27, in a solo-vehicle accident on Highway 84 (La Honda Road) at Fox Hill Road in Woodside. The Sheriff's Office identified the rider as Christopher Robenalt, 46, of San Mateo.

Deputies arrived at the scene shortly after 7 p.m. and found medics attending to a prostrate rider. A crashed blue Yamaha motorcycle was resting against a tree about 30 feet down an embankment, the Sheriff's Office said.

Ten minutes after the deputies arrived on the scene, medics declared the rider dead, the Sheriff's Office said.

Men grab girl's backpack

A 15-year-old girl walking along Merrill Street snatched her backpack away from two

BRIEFS

men who tried to steal it shortly before 6 p.m. on April 29, according to Menlo Park police.

The men grabbed the backpack from behind, but after a tussle, the girl reclaimed her property, police said. She lost \$10 and a debit card during the struggle.

One suspect was described as a stocky Hispanic man in his late 30s, 5 feet 9 inches tall, with a crew cut and mustache, wearing a white T-shirt and white shoes, with light jeans and a brown belt.

The other suspect, a stocky Hispanic man in his early 40s, standing 5 feet 8 inches tall with a crew cut, had a mole on his left cheek. He wore dark jeans, white shoes and a white T-shirt, police said.

Dimitrije Postich, 80, scientist

Dimitrije Mita Postich, a resident of Portola Valley since 1972, died unexpectedly on April 27. He was 80.

Mr. Postich was born in Belgrade, Yugoslavia. He attended the University of Belgrade, earning a master's degree in electrical engineering in telecommunications and electronics. He immigrated to the United States at the age of 27.

In 1969 he met his future wife, Zlata. They were married in 1971 and built a home in Portola Valley.

A scientist and private pilot, Mr. Postich served as president of the Saint John's Serbian Orthodox Church board, vice president

OBITUARY

of the Serbian National Defense, member of the First Serbian Benevolent Society, the "Dusan Silni" Historical Society, and many other organizations.

He is survived by his mother-in-law Vera Solovkov, sons Mark and George, two grandchildren, and a niece and a nephew. His wife, Zlata, died in 2011. A private memorial gathering will be held in San Francisco.

Donations may be made in his memory to Saint John's Serbian Orthodox Church, 900 Baker St., San Francisco, CA 94115.

John M. Geaghan

Hero for the Ages

John M. Geaghan, decorated World War II U.S. Army veteran and Chevalier of the Legion of Honor of the French Republic, died April 17. A resident of Menlo Park, he was 89. His death was due to complications of heart disease.

Mr. Geaghan was named a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor by decree of the President of the French Republic, Mr. Nicholas Sarkozy, in 2009. As explained by L'Ambassadeur to the United States, Pierre Vimont, in a letter to Mr. Geaghan: "The Legion of Honor was created by Napoleon in 1802 to acknowledge services rendered to France by persons of great merit". He wrote, "This award testifies to the President of the French Republic's high esteem for your merits and accomplishments. In particular, it is a sign of France's true and unforgettable gratitude and appreciation for your personal, precious contribution to the United

States' decisive role in the liberation of our country during World War II". Mr. Geaghan was presented the medal by then consul general of France, Pierre-Francois Mourier, in 2011 during a private ceremony with his family in San Francisco.

Mr. Geaghan, the first born American in his family, was raised in Bangor, Maine. He was awarded a scholarship to attend the Millard Military School in Washington, D.C. After completing the year, he enlisted in the 101st Army Yankee Division and served as a combat infantry platoon sergeant in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia. Under General Patton, he served in the Battle of the Bulge. His heroism won awards including: the Silver Star; a Bronze Star medal, a European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign medal and two purple hearts, among others. As the citation was written in 1945, for "heroic achievement in connection with military operations against an armed enemy near Sarre-Union, France on 3 December 1944":

"As he proceeded along a road to accomplish his mission, he observed a friendly vehicle loaded with much-needed ammunition coming up another road, separated by one hundred and fifty yards of open terrain from his own position. The driver of the vehicle was apparently unaware that the building in Sarre-Union formerly used as an ammunition dump was at the moment in enemy hands, and that at the road junction directly ahead of his vehicle lay a concealed enemy Mark V tank. With utter disregard for his own safety, Staff Sergeant Geaghan ran across the intervening exposed terrain under hostile machine gun fire and stopped the driver just one hundred yards before the hidden enemy tank. At

this point the enemy armored vehicle opened fire and wounded the driver. Despite the enemy tank fire, Geaghan successfully managed the escape of both driver and vehicle from the dangerous position. His courage under fire, strong initiative and unusual devotion to duty reflect the highest credit upon Staff Sergeant Geaghan and the armed forces of the United States."

Following his service, and recovery from injuries, he graduated from Boston College in 1949 and Harvard Law School, Class of 1952. He always enjoyed the practice of law and was highly principled in his daily life. He practiced admiralty law for several years in Boston, and then joined Raytheon Company, where he served as Deputy General Counsel. He practiced a wide spectrum of corporate law in the Boston area for 38 years, from submarine manufacturers to consumer aircraft, from consumer appliances to installations of the

first electronic airlines reservation systems. He was a member of the bar in five states. He was active in, and appointed to serve on committees of the American Arbitration Association, local and national bar associations. Prior to relocating to Menlo Park in 2003, the Geaghans lived for 47 years in Lexington, Mass and were active in Harvard's Pierian Club.

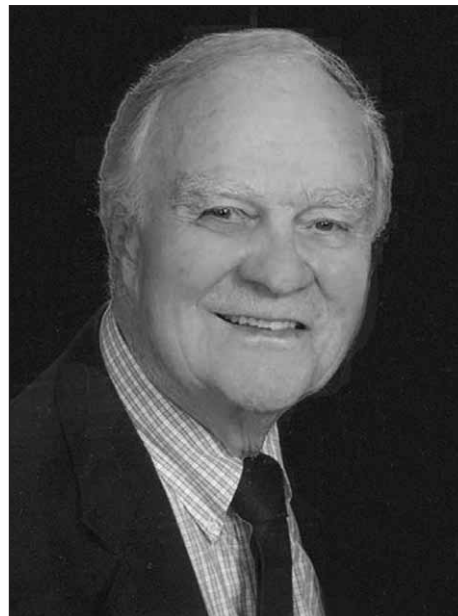
"My father rarely spoke of his experiences in the war," his daughter commented. "He had an amazing appreciation of his life and never forgot

that most of his friends and fellow soldiers had died in battle. He has been described by others as one of the happiest people they have ever met, which is our experience with him as husband to my mother, father, brother to his 5 siblings and grandfather to four. His mind, his memory and his selflessness were extraordinary."

Mr. Geaghan is survived by his wife of 60 years, Maureen Geaghan; a daughter Dr. Sharon Markham Geaghan, a professor at Stanford University School of Medicine; her husband David Breiner; four grandchildren, Charlotte, Meredith, Julia and Beatrix Geaghan-Breiner, all of Menlo Park, Ca.; and a sister, Catherine Meyers of Wilton, CT.

Epitaph on my Ever Honoured Father
by Robert Burns

O YE whose cheek the tear of pity stains,
Draw near with pious rev'rence, and attend!
Here lie the loving husband's dear remains,
The tender father, and the gen'rous friend;
The pitying heart that felt for human woe,
The dauntless heart that fear'd no human pride;
The friend of man- to vice alone a foe;
For ev'n his failings lean'd to virtue's side



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Perry Blackmon

October 13, 1942 - April 2, 2013

Perry Blackmon, 70, a 38-year resident of Portola Valley, died at home in the presence of his family on April 2, 2013.

He was born October 13, 1942, in Southern California and grew up in Modesto, CA. He moved to the Bay Area in 1970 and to Portola Valley in 1975.

He was a lifelong student and completed a PhD in psychology in 1995. He specialized in treating chronic pain and co-founded a clinic located in Redwood City.

He is survived by his wife of 49 years, Joan Blackmon; three sons, Jon Blackmon (Marie) of Portland, OR, Ryan Blackmon of Belmont, CA, and David Blackmon (Victoria) of San Jose, CA; and nine grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held Saturday, May 25, at 1:30 p.m. at Valley Presbyterian Church, 945 Portola Rd., Portola Valley.

Memorial donations may be made to Mission Hospice, San Mateo. Link: www.missionhospice.org

PAID OBITUARY

PAID OBITUARY

CALENDAR

Go to AlmanacNews.com/calendar to see more calendar listings

Community Events

Peninsula Volunteers Decorator Show House 2013 Visit Woodside's The Horse Park, with 20 rooms styled by design-

ers. Free parking and shuttle plus "Meet the Designer" evenings. May 4-24, Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. \$35. The Horse Park, 3674 Sand Hill Road, Woodside. Call 650-381-9933. www.penvol.org/

Talks/Authors

'A Look at Interfaith Conflicts' Little House hosts a talk on religion and interfaith conflicts. May 21, 6-7:30 p.m. \$9. Little

House, 800 Middle Ave., Menlo Park. Call 326-2025, ext. 222.

'Eat, Drink, Talk and Swap Books - Mystery Edition' Kepler's event with food, wine and books. Bring a favorite mystery book. May 18, 6:30 p.m. \$25. Kepler's, 1010 El Camino Real, Menlo Park. Call 650-324-4321. www.brownpapertickets.com/event/364053

'Human Evolution' Advances in DNA

sequencing have made possible learning the complete genome sequence of Neanderthals. Dr. Ed Green of UCSC will discuss contrasting their genome with humans' to discover what evolutionary changes have happened in humans' recent past. Parking directions: Parking directions: <http://bit.ly/U1dido>. May 11, 6-7:30 p.m. Free. SRI International, International Building, Menlo Park.

Actor James Franco in conversation with his mother, author and actress Betsy Franco, discuss his new book "A California Childhood." May 13, 7 p.m. \$20. Kepler's, 1010 El Camino Real, Menlo Park. Call 650-324-4321. www.brownpapertickets.com/profile/210588

Francine Toder After retiring from private practice and the faculty of UC, Francine Toder began to think about retirement and meaningful ways to spend her newfound time, as well as positive aging in general. She will discuss her book, "The Vintage Years: Finding Your Inner Artist After Sixty." May 16, 7:30 p.m. Free. Kepler's, 1010 El Camino Real, Menlo Park. Call 650-324-4321.

Exploration of Mars Dr. Lori Fenton gives overview of Curiosity Rover mission on Mars. May 15, 7-9 p.m. Free. Smithwick Theater, Foothill College, 12345 El Monte Road, Los Altos Hills. www.foothill.edu/ast

Isabel Allende will discuss her newest novel, "Maya's Notebook." May 14, 7:30 p.m. \$15. Kepler's, 1010 El Camino Real, Menlo Park. Call 650-324-4321. www.brownpapertickets.com/event/354901

Jaron Lanier, a computer scientist, musician, and digital media pioneer, discusses his book, "Who Owns the Future?" May 15, 7:30 p.m. \$10. Kepler's, 1010 El Camino Real, Menlo Park. Call 650-324-4321. www.brownpapertickets.com/event/357454

Jill McCorkle discusses "Life After Life," about the capacity for self-discovery at any age. May 8, 7:30 p.m. Free. Kepler's, 1010 El Camino Real, Menlo Park.

Lee Smolin discusses "Time Reborn: From the Crisis in Physics to the Future of the Universe." May 10, 7:30 p.m. Free. Kepler's, 1010 El Camino Real, Menlo Park.

Kids & Families

Artist Patricia Bulitt presents "How My Grandmother Found a Story in a Plate." May

11, 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m. Free. Woodside Library, 3140 Woodside Road, Woodside.

Author Jeanne DuPrau discusses "The City of Ember," about a city built as a refuge for the human race. May 17, 7 p.m. Free. Kepler's, 1010 El Camino Real, Menlo Park. Call 650-324-4321. www.keplers.com

U-Me Carnival, sponsored by Red Tricycle and Scholar Share, features musical guests The Raytones (11:30 a.m.) plus HiFive Sports, Joanna's Face Painting, and U-Me Art Adventures. All ages welcome. May 19, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Free. Fremont Park, University Drive & Santa Cruz Ave., Menlo Park. Call 650-257-7511. www.u-meplace.com/events

Sports

AYSO soccer registration All children born between Aug. 1, 1994, and Jan. 31, 2009, are encouraged to join AYSO's fall league. Registration begins at midnight May 1, with walk-in registration at Hillview Middle School on May 11 and May 18 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Registration also available online. Hillview Middle School, 1100 Elder Ave., Menlo Park. <http://ayso.org/resources/registration.aspx>

UPHA Chapter 1 Horse Show features top American Saddlebreds, Hackney Ponies, and Morgan horses competing under saddle and in harness. May 9-12, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Free. The Horse Park at Woodside, 3674 Sand Hill Road, Woodside. uphachapter1.com

Teen Activities

GLAM Night at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church Middle- and high school girls (grades 6-12) are invited to a night dedicated to talking about issues and struggles that girls face. Dinner, dancing, speakers and discussions. May 10, 6-9:30 p.m. Free. The Cafe at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church, 700 Santa Cruz Ave., Menlo Park. Call 650-330-7558. www.mppc.org/glam

Et Alia

Adolescent Counseling Services hosts "Spring Sounds" benefit with dining, dancing and bidding on silent and live auctions, in an indoor parking lot decorated with

Continued on next page

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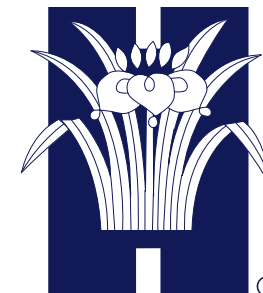
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WEDNESDAY, MAY 15
6:30-8:30pm Registration & light dinner at 6:15pm.

SATURDAY, MAY 18
9:30-11:30am Registration & light breakfast at 9:15am.

Call us at 650.230.2900 or go online to register today!

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SILICON VALLEY'S ULTIMATE REMODELING DESIGN WORKSHOPS

Kitchen and Bath: May 15
Re-fresh, Re-place or Re-design: May 18

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For anyone considering a remodel, this class will take you through what factors you need to consider before embarking on your project.

- Understand the different levels and types of remodeling. Are you wanting to "freshen up" a room or two, or start from scratch and re-design the entire space...or possibly a little of both?
- Hear about the top five things to think about and consider when planning a remodel -small or large.
- Determine whether or not you need a permit and find out more about current code requirements.
- Get an inside peek into the remodeling process, regardless of project size, from a professional Construction Project Manager and the President of Harrell Remodeling (who is also a General Contractor).
- And...budgets, scheduling, time tables, contracts and so much more!

Atherton event benefits San Francisco Symphony

The Mid-Peninsula League of the San Francisco Symphony will celebrate "An Evening in Paris" with cocktails, floral displays, fine dining and musical entertainment on Sunday, May 19, at the Menlo Circus Club, 190 Park Lane in Atherton.

This is the third year the gala will be held at the Circus Club. For many years, the league's major fundraiser was a garden tour. The difficulties of staffing and finding homeowners willing to open their gardens to the public led members to look for a new format, which has proved a winner.

Andrea Palmer of Menlo Park and Jane Hartman of Burlingame are co-chairs of this year's gala, which begins at 5 p.m. During the cocktail hour, guests will visit tables with floral displays for sale, as well as auction items, ranging from "secret packages" to gourmet dinners in private

homes. A mime and strolling musicians will add to the Parisian atmosphere.

During dinner in a "Paris Bistro," a live auction will feature such items as a photographic safari in South Africa.

Proceeds from the event benefit the San Francisco Symphony and its education and community outreach programs, including "Concerts for Kids." For 22 years, the league's docents have prepared students in the second- and third-grade in the Ravenswood School District with weeks of music listening and training before attending "Concerts for Kids" performed by the San Francisco Symphony. The children's concert tickets and bus transportation are paid for by the Mid-Peninsula League.

Tickets to the benefit are \$190 per person with reservations due by May 10. For more information, call 321-3718.

Continued from previous page

a collection of cars and barrels of wine. May 18, 6:30-11 p.m. \$180. Auto Vino, 205 Constitution Drive, Menlo Park. Call 650-424-0852. www.springsoundsevent.org/

Artist Open Studio Jan Schachter's Studio hosts open studio featuring artists Jan Schachter, clay; Peggy Forman, drawings on clay; Nina Else, ceramic sculpture; and Susan Else, fiber sculpture. May 11-12, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Free. Jan Schachter's Studio, 190 Golden Hills Drive, Portola Valley. Call 851-3754. janschachter.com

Tai Chi Woodside Library hosts Tai Chi in the garden, weather permitting. Instructor Ben Dineen leads 60-minute class, open to all ability levels. May 17, 10-11 a.m. Free.

Woodside Library, 3140 Woodside Road, Woodside.

Peninsula Symphony closes 2012-2013 season with composer Lee Actor's "Piano Concerto" with soloist Daniel Glover. May 17, 8-10 p.m. Student/Youth: \$20; Senior: \$35; Regular: \$40. Fox Theater, 2215 Broadway St., Redwood City.

Silicon Valley Symphony, conducted by Michael Paul Gibson, features the pipe organ in Saint-Saëns' "Organ Symphony" by Margaret Martin Kvamme, organ soloist; Elgar's "Enigma Variations," and "An American Experience" by Lothar Bandermann. May 18, 7:30-9:30 p.m. \$20 General; \$15 Senior/Student; children 12 and younger free with adult. Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, 330 Ravenswood Ave., Menlo Park. Call 415-287-6002.



REVIVING THE SCIENCE/STATECRAFT DIALOGUE

NPR Science Friday host Ira Flatow and a distinguished panel discuss how the relationship between scientists and politicians can be improved to benefit public policy.



Ira Flatow

Award-winning public television show *Newton's Apple*; reporter for CBS and CNBC; host of *Science Friday*

Christopher Field

Lane Professor for Interdisciplinary Environmental Studies, Stanford University; Heinz Award winning global ecologist

Adam Lowry

Co-Founder and Chief Green-skeeper, Method home care products; former climate scientist, Carnegie Institution for Science

Jane Lubchenco

Former Director, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA); Heinz Award and MacArthur Fellowship recipient

Thursday, May 9, 5:30 pm
Cemex Auditorium
Knight Management Center
Stanford University

Free and open to the public. Seating available on a first-come, first-seated basis.

This event celebrates the 40th anniversary of Stanford's Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve. For more information: <http://jrpb.stanford.edu>

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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 223-6507.

Viewpoint

IDEAS, THOUGHTS AND OPINIONS ABOUT LOCAL ISSUES FROM PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITY. EDITED BY TOM GIBBONEY

Tough decision on adding school site

Trustees of the Menlo Park City School District are going to have to decide, probably by May 13 or soon after, when to take over the O'Connor School site in the Willows and whether to build a completely new campus or refurbish and add classroom space to the existing building.

Leased from the district by the German-American International School since 1991, O'Connor would provide desperately needed classroom space to accommodate runaway enrollment growth. Projections show that the district's three elementary schools will have a net increase of 82 students when doors open this fall. Such a huge influx would require four new classrooms if the current class size in the lower grades is continued.

Two of three possible actions to accommodate this tide of new students would require the district to seek voter approval of a bond issue to upgrade O'Connor. A third option, to simply make cosmetic changes to the school, could be accomplished with the \$3 million the district has on hand that was left over from an earlier bond issue.

Here are the options the board will consider:

■ Go all out and build a totally new school from the ground up with 16 to 20 classrooms (360-400 students) for \$22.2 million.

■ Undertake a less ambitious school renovation with 14 classrooms (280-300 students), including six portables (four

classrooms, a library and art/music room) for \$9 million.

■ Use \$3 million in funds left over from a previous bond issue to make cosmetic changes and add six portables (four classrooms, library and art/music room).

A demographic study will be a key driver of the board's decision. With enrollment at 2,791, which is up 40 percent since 2000, school district staff members say enrollment could continue to rise to between 3,000 and 3,300 in the next decade. Such a scenario would argue for building a bigger school, rather than seeing the mid-level choice fill up in just a few years.

Scenarios provided by the district show several possible configurations for O'Connor, including: a K-5 neighborhood school; a K-1 school; and a "school of choice"

that could serve programs such as K-5 Spanish immersion, the arts, or science and technology.

All options for the site except that of making cosmetic changes and adding six portable classrooms would require a bond measure approved by district voters, which should not be a problem in a city where residents have always supported ballot measures to improve the schools. This time should be no different. A rejuvenated school at the O'Connor site would be a big boost for the Willows neighborhood and finally give students and parents a school easily accessible by walking or biking. But the district has to hope that the runaway student enrollment comes to an end soon.

EDITORIAL

The opinion of The Almanac

LETTERS

Our readers write

Watch out for buses on Grand Boulevard

Editor:

At a recent Menlo Park City Council meeting, though residents protested the horrendous traffic impacts expected from Stanford's proposed 8-acre development, no one mentioned a scheme just as calamitous for our main thoroughfare.

In fact, few may realize there's a devilish plan afoot to get us out of our cars once and for all: the Grand Boulevard Initiative (GBI) — a euphemism for, among other things, two permanent bus-only lanes on El Camino Real.

Interestingly, however, both Stanford's Steve Elliott and city staff cited the Stanford project's "fit" with the Grand Boulevard Initiative as a "benefit." Really?

Consider, if the GBI folks really wanted to improve Peninsula transit, they'd be focusing on our east-west connectivity. After all, in addition to Caltrain, we have buses running north/south on El Camino.

But this plan is not primarily about transportation, it is about changing our lives, both

by urbanizing our suburbs, and by making driving practically unfeasible. Otherwise, why is the plan also espousing high-density zoning for one quarter mile on either side of El Camino?

Here's a quote from the GBI Principles: "Amend General Plans and implement zoning and Specific Plans that facilitate increases in density, particularly around transit stations and key intersections." In GBI logic, more people crammed into tight spaces near bus routes means more riders. So, instead of the buses serving the needs of the community, the community is being reconfigured to serve the needs of the buses!

That is, of VTA and SamTrans under the umbrella of the GBI, partnering with the usual suspects: special interests, developers, and bureaucrats who relish the opportunity to foist their pipe-dreams on an unsuspecting public. Peninsula cities have representatives at the GBI table. Mayor Ohtaki represents Menlo Park on the GBI Task Force. Maybe it is time to tell him what you think of the plan. Otherwise, get ready to queue up and wait for the bus.

Cherie Zaslowsky,
Menlo Park downtown

Continued on next page



Atherton Heritage Association

Our Regional Heritage

Lyn Needham Hauser holds the flight goggles and helmet she wore when flying open cockpit biplanes while training with the Army Cadets. In 1940 she was one of five women chosen at Stanford University to receive flying lessons in preparation for World War II.

LETTERS

Our readers write

Continued from previous page

Ag-gag laws aimed at whistle-blowers

Editor:

“Despicable, unconstitutional, ridiculous, immature, idiotic, and mendacious.” And that’s just how Tennessee newspapers characterized the state’s “ag-gag” bill now awaiting the governor’s signature.

“Ag-gag” bills criminalize whistle-blowing that exposes animal abuses, unsafe working conditions, and environmental problems on factory farms.

Instead of encouraging whistle-blowing and preventing these violations, ag-gag laws ensure that consumers and regulatory authorities are kept in the dark.

Our government must never restrict our right and obligation to know where our food comes from.

Visit mfablog.org for a recent update on the status of ag-gag bills.

Malcolm Davidson
Encinal Avenue, Menlo Park

Passing on appreciation of heirloom plants

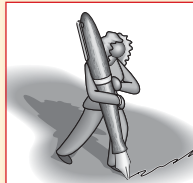
By Anne Hillman

In the joint Spring Real Estate special section, the Palo Alto Weekly and the Almanac ran an excellent article by Kate Daly titled, “Big Estate Prices — Slow Sales.” She quoted several prominent real estate agents who described the current market, its challenges, and their strategies to entice local buyers and those from other parts of the world. Agent Ken DeLeon commented, “What’s kind of surprising, is how young these buyers are, in their late 30s and 40s.”

His remark reminded me that several years ago, a young couple in their early 30s bought a large local property formerly owned by Dr. Cuthbert Hurd (1911-1996). Mr. Hurd, a computer scientist and entrepreneur, was instrumental in helping IBM develop its first general-purpose computers, but his real passion was botany. He had spent a lifetime breeding and nurturing native plants, in particular, a rare form of *Arctostaphylos* now prized as the Hurd manzanita. He had huge mature specimens of the gorgeous yellow-blossomed California *Fremontia* on the property, also known as flannel flower. One of

its subspecies is already a federally listed endangered species. These trees were glorious. They were wild. They belonged.

The buyers were a delightful couple and like any of us, had their dreams about the land they’d purchased. When I asked how they liked the manzanita, they said, “Oh, we cut them all down. They were just weeds.” They also cut down a 30-foot high *Fremontia* at the entrance to the driveway. They didn’t know. Perhaps no one had told them about the rarities they’d inherited.



GUEST OPINION

I don’t think we can expect the young — often exceedingly busy with their families and their work — or buyers of any age who’ve never gardened here, whether they’re local or from other regions or continents, to understand the nature of the land they will inhabit. They need to be educated about how to sustain and care for its many gifts.

The late Mabel Crittenden, a local author of several guides to the wildflowers and trees of east and west, tended countless wild species in her garden. She gave me a wild penstemon that has exploded into bloom every year

for the past decade (unlike the hybrids, which need frequent replacing). After her home was put on the market, I longed for the courage to ask for some of her plants, and wondered how her garden fared after her home was sold; last week, I learned that her entire collection of botanical treasures had been turned into a very large lawn. How local gardeners would have longed for an opportunity to take those rare plants home. Perhaps if agents were to make new homeowners aware of treasures like these, their local garden clubs might have an opportunity to transplant them before a new landscape was installed.

Few properties in this amazing Bay Area are without a tree or plant or other wildlife that needs tending. If, when we listed our homes for sale, we also passed down information about the living species around our homes, then perhaps our hardworking real estate agents would be able to inform their clients. And then, along with the bottle of champagne, their parting gift to a satisfied buyer might be one of Mabel Crittenden’s Guides to native California wildflowers and trees.

Anne Hillman is the author of “Awakening the Energies of Love” and “The Dancing Animal Woman.” She lives on Alamos Road in Portola Valley

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- Approximately 3,910 square foot main house with five bedrooms and four and one half baths
- Living room, formal dining room, family room/kitchen with breakfast area
- One bedroom, one bath guest house (approximately 612 square feet) with loggia and outdoor fireplace
- Beautiful landscaped garden with patios, lawn and mature perimeter trees
- Lot size of approximately .50 acre
- Excellent Menlo Park schools

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