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**Fall Real Estate**

# The Almanac

THE TOWN NEWSPAPER FOR MENLO PARK, AHERTON, PORTOLA VALLEY AND WOODLAND

OCTOBER 16, 2013 | VOL. 49 NO. 6



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Section 2



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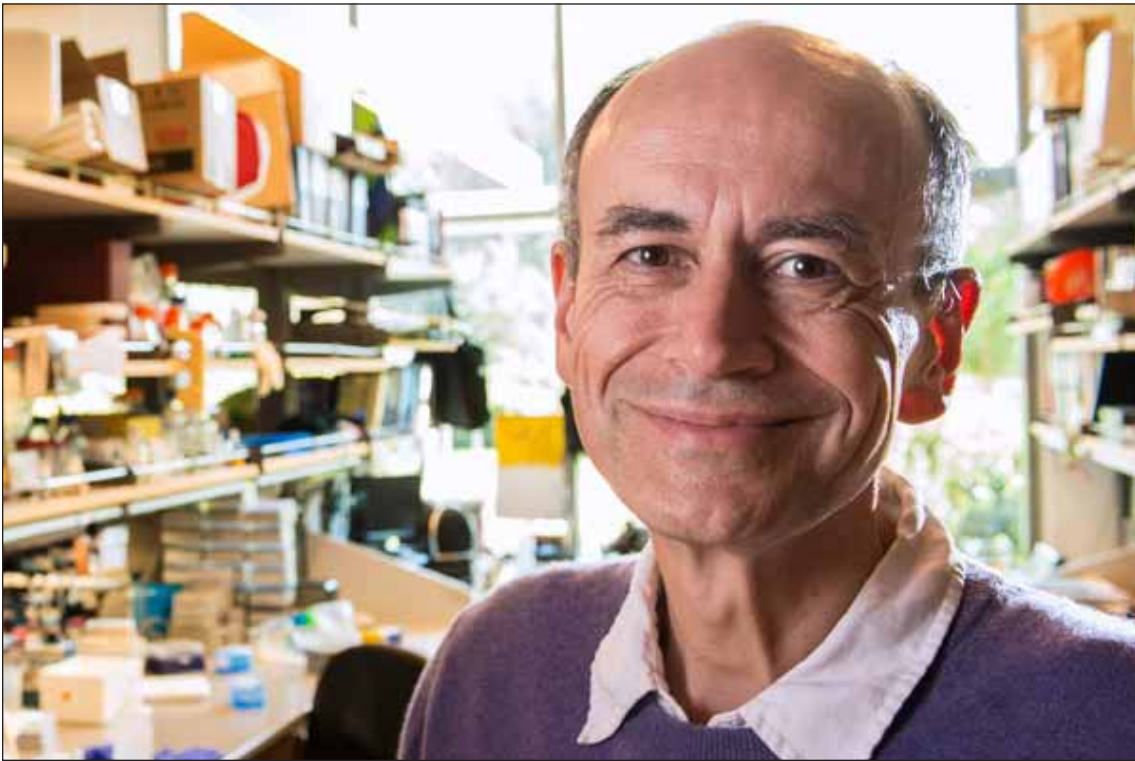


Photo by Steve Fisch/Stanford News Service

**Menlo Park resident** Thomas Sudhof was one of the winners of the 2013 Nobel Prize in medicine.

## Menlo Park resident wins Nobel Prize in medicine

Menlo Park resident and Stanford University neuroscientist Thomas Sudhof was at a conference in Baeza, Spain, when he got the news Oct. 7 — he won the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.

He shares the \$1.2 million prize with two others “for their discoveries of machinery regulating vesicle traffic, a major transport system in our cells.”

“I’m absolutely surprised,” he said. “Every scientist dreams of this. I didn’t realize there was a chance I would be awarded the prize. I am stunned and really happy to share the prize with James Rothman (of Yale University) and Randy Schekman (of the University of California at Berkeley).”

The German-born Sudhof, a professor of molecular and cellular physiology at the School of Medicine, explores how neurons in the brain communicate with one another across gaps called synapses.

“We’d like to understand how synapses come to learning on a larger scale,” he told the Stanford School of Medicine’s communications office in a phone conversation this morning. “How are the specific connections established? How do they form? And

### Thomas Sudhof studies how nerve cells communicate with each other

what happens in schizophrenia and autism, when these connections are compromised?”

A representative of the Nobel committee called Mr. Sudhof on his cell phone after first trying his home in Menlo Park. His wife, Lu Chen, a Stanford associate professor of neurosurgery and psychiatry and behavioral sciences, gave them his cell phone number.

“The phone rang three times before I decided to go downstairs and pick it up,” Ms. Chen said. “I thought it was one of my Chinese relatives who couldn’t figure out the time zone.”

Mr. Sudhof “has patiently but relentlessly probed one of the fundamental questions of medical science — perhaps the fundamental question in neuroscience: how nerve cells communicate with each other,” said Lloyd Minor, dean of the Stanford School of Medicine. “The answer is at the crux of human biology and of monumental importance to human health.”

The other two Nobel winners also have Stanford connections. Mr. Rothman is a former Stanford professor of biochemistry and Mr. Schekman earned his doctorate at Stanford under the late Arthur Kornberg, who won the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1959.

— Palo Alto Weekly staff



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# Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

## Board OKs shift of East Palo Alto students to M-A

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

If Menlo-Atherton High School has room, students from East Palo Alto (in the Ravenswood City Elementary School District) now have the right to request a transfer to M-A without having to participate in the lottery associated with the open-enrollment program.

Unlike their Ravenswood classmates from the Belle Haven neighborhood of Menlo Park, who have long been assigned to M-A, East Palo Alto students since the early 1980s have been bused to Woodside and Carlmont high schools in keeping with a judicial decree

intended to desegregate those schools.

The board of the Sequoia Union High School District voted 4-1 on Oct. 9 to all but end the busing.

The change in regulations comes just in time for eighth-graders in the class of 2014 to make decisions about where to go to high school in the fall of 2014. The change also gives East Palo Alto eighth-graders a privileged position that, while not at the head of the line into M-A, places them before eighth-graders applying for M-A through the Sequoia district's open-enrollment program.

The new regulation does not

affect the longstanding guaranteed transfer to M-A afforded to 10 to 15 households in the Las Lomas Elementary School District currently assigned to Woodside High.

Board member Carrie DuBois voted against the change, repeating her longstanding argument that it requires Ravenswood students to make a choice, thus favoring students with the wherewithal to make an informed choice. Ravenswood students may have difficulty blending into the M-A culture, she added, and described M-A as "the most tracked school in our district."

She asked for an interim step,

possibly including alternative schools for the kids who can't succeed at a comprehensive high school. "The kids from Ravenswood actually deserve a plan and (to) have all the wrinkles worked out," she said. "I don't want to repair the car while we're driving down the freeway."

Since early 2013, when the notion of ending the busing began to gather momentum on the Sequoia board, members of the Ravenswood community have been adamant in lobbying for such a change — though they would have gone further and made the assignment to M-A automatic for all students

from East Palo Alto.

School is a constant in the lives of Ravenswood students, one Ravenswood parent told the board. "It's not fair," she said. "For them to have to travel in a bus for two hours is not great. ... Consider the fact that those kids are our future and just because they're poor ... what is rich? I've seen a lot of wealthy people with very bad manners."

"I know it has been a very difficult thing to move forward," said Gloria Hernandez, the Ravenswood superintendent. "But you're doing the

See **BOARD OKS**, page 8

## M-A tries to calm fears about school changes

By Barbara Wood

Special to the Almanac

Parents anxious about the effects of projected enrollment growth on Menlo-Atherton High School peppered Sequoia Union High School District Superintendent Jim Lianides and Menlo-Atherton High School principal Matthew Zito with questions at an informational meeting at Hillview Middle School in Menlo Park on Monday, Oct. 7, attended by more than 100 people.

The two tried to soothe community fears that anticipated growth in the district and changes in the boundaries of attendance areas could affect their children's experience at Menlo-Atherton, the public high school that the Las Lomas and Menlo Park City School districts feed in to.

"You're just not going to see much of a difference from what you see today," said Principal Zito, promising the "socio-economic or racial makeup of the school," will remain similar to what it is today.

"If you appreciate what the school offers ... it simply isn't going to be different," he said. "We can maintain that same culture and the kind of attributes that draw people who want to attend the school," he said. "Your kids' experience of the campus should be fundamentally the same as it is today."

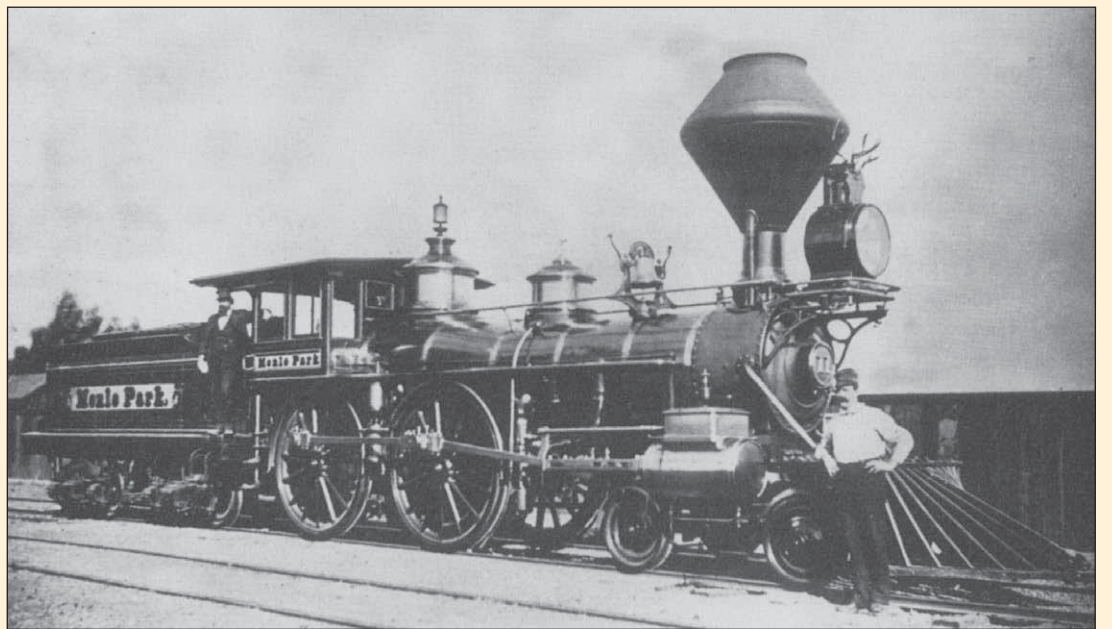
He promised the school would continue to have the same number of advanced placement (AP) courses as it does currently, with additional sections of each course. Menlo-Atherton will need to add some teachers, classrooms, bathrooms and additional athletic teams, to accommodate the additional students, he said.

The plan presented by the two administrators would end the long-distance busing of students from East Palo Alto to Woodside and Carlmont high schools by including all of East Palo Alto in the Menlo-Atherton attendance area. The move would be balanced by removing from the Menlo-Atherton attendance area some number of students from North Fair Oaks, who would instead be assigned to Sequoia and Woodside high schools.

Some North Fair Oaks parents spoke at the meeting and said they would like to remain in the Menlo-Atherton attendance area. Superintendent Lianides said he is meeting with a few parents from North Fair Oaks this week and hopes to hold a larger informational meeting in the area soon.

Superintendent Lianides' presentation showed that currently 516 students from the Ravenswood School District are in the Menlo-Atherton attendance area, 666 students from the

See **M-A CALM FEARS**, page 8



California State Railroad Museum

**Tracks** of the San Francisco and San Jose Railroad reached Menlo Park in 1863. The caption for this photo in the book, "Menlo Park, California: Beyond the Gate," says the rail line ushered in an era of prosperity for the community. The authors are Michael Svanevik and Shirley Burgett.

## Menlo Park celebrates rail history

Caltrain is kicking off a year of festivities celebrating 150 years of continuous commuter rail service on the Peninsula with a community festival in Menlo Park on Saturday, Oct. 19, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The events will take place at the Menlo Park train station at 1100 Merrill St. in Menlo Park and will include a re-enactment of a historic picnic that took place in October 1863 near Menlo Park.

According to Caltrain, the San Francisco and San Jose Railroad completed the line to

San Jose in January 1864, but management invited notables, including Governor Leland Stanford, for a VIP train ride when construction was about two-thirds complete. Caltrain says it will re-create that picnic with a cast of costumed re-enactors and a 19-century-style band.

The re-enactors are scheduled to arrive by train at 12:14 p.m.

A train stop shelter opened in Menlo Park in 1863, and the current structure was built in 1867, according to Frank Helfrich of the Menlo Park Historical Association.

Other activities on tap for the Oct. 19 event include informational booths, model railroads and exhibits, and displays including a Wells Fargo stagecoach, a vintage bus and a replica of the transcontinental railroad's golden spike.

There will be Moveable Feast food trucks, ice cream, face painting and family fun activities.

Among those scheduled to speak are Menlo Park Mayor Peter Ohtaki, Caltrain's board chair Ken Yeager, state Sen.

See **RAIL HISTORY**, page 8

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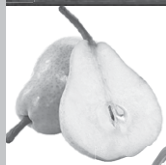


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**'State of Menlo Park' talk; city signs sister city deal**

■ BRIEFS

Menlo Park Mayor Peter Ohtaki will present the annual State of the City speech on Thursday, Oct. 17, at 5:30 p.m. at the Stanford Park Hotel, located at 100 El Camino Real in Menlo Park.

During the event, the city will sign a "sister city" agreement with Galway, Ireland, with Galway's mayor, Padraig Conneely, in attendance.

Members of the Menlo Park Historical Association have been working for months to bring the two cities together. What's the connection? In Galway sits a neighborhood called Menlo Park, the former home of Dennis Oliver, who later came to the United States during the 1800s and with his brother-in-law, D.C. McGlynn, erected an arched gate in what became known as Menlo Park, California.

**'Oughta Be a Law'**

Menlo Park resident Dan Hilberman earned a certificate of recognition from State Senator Jerry Hill, D-San Mateo, for suggesting a law that allows those who vote by mail to verify that their ballot was counted. Sen. Hill presented the certificate to Mr. Hilberman at Cafe Zoe on Friday, Oct. 11.

The new law, which takes effect on Jan. 1, 2014, requires county election offices to establish a system allowing vote-by-mail voters to know whether their ballot was counted, or why it wasn't.

Counties may choose whether to notify voters by phone, online or in person. Sen. Hill noted that the 2012 general election in California was the first time a majority of California voters cast mail-in ballots.

**Kepler's meeting**

To celebrate the end of its first year as a restructured business, Kepler's Books and

Magazines will hold a "state of the bookstore" community meeting on Monday, Oct. 21. The bookstore intends to make this an annual event, according to representatives. Snacks will be provided.

The meeting starts at 6:30 p.m. at the bookstore, located at 1010 El Camino Real.

**Bike harassment**

Menlo Park is considering whether to implement a bicyclist anti-harassment ordinance at the request of the Bicycle Commission, which was scheduled to discuss the matter at its Oct. 14 meeting.

A bicyclist anti-harassment ordinance, similar to laws passed in Los Angeles and Sunnyvale, would make it illegal for a motorist to intentionally force or attempt to force a bicyclist off the road with the intent to injure or distract the cyclist, according to Menlo Park Transportation Manager Jesse Quirion.

The ordinance wouldn't preempt criminal charges, but could make it easier for a cyclist to file a civil lawsuit against a motor vehicle driver, he said.

**Track Caltrain**

Caltrain has launched a website as well as a smartphone application to let people track train departures in real time, thanks to GPS units mounted on the trains and the operating control system.

A box on the right side of the home page, caltrain.com, allows users to select a station and see departure times for the next three trains in both directions. Departure times for individual stations are displayed on the corresponding station page.

**Portola Valley holds Harvest Festival**

Portola Valley will hold its first Farmers' Harvest Festival from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 17, at the Town Center, 765 Portola Road in Portola Valley.

There will be a pumpkin patch, Webb Ranch "train," a playground and a pumpkin-

carving demo. The event will occur during the farmers' market, which will have rotisserie chickens, empanadas, organic popsicles, SF Whisk food truck, music and crafts.

Go to [tinyurl.com/Harvest-107](http://tinyurl.com/Harvest-107) for more information.



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# Portola Valley: 4 seek 3 seats

By Dave Boyce  
Almanac Staff Writer

## VOTER GUIDE

This story on the Portola Valley Town Council race is one of a series of stories on the Nov. 5 election.

A residential community that is cohesive and vibrant may, over time, settle on a particular word or two to describe itself. In Portola Valley, one such word is “rural.” The word appears 41 times in the general plan.

This town is just off an eight-lane freeway, about equidistant from San Francisco and San Jose, and home to many high-technology innovators, but it also sits against the wild and forested Santa Cruz mountains. It is about as rural as you can get without leaving Silicon Valley.

Town government has been instrumental in crafting regulations that promote environmental protection and construction that is subservient to the land.

In the November election, four candidates — two incumbents and two challengers — are running for three seats on the five-member Town Council. The Almanac began its interviews by asking the candidates for their takes on this word.

“If you drive through Portola Valley and compare it with driving through other towns on the Peninsula, you’ll see how we’re different,” said Councilwoman Maryann Derwin.

“It doesn’t look gentrified. It didn’t (in 1970) and it doesn’t now,” said challenger Bud Eisberg.

It means natural and “as undisturbed as we can make it,” said challenger Craig Hughes. “Not medieval rural England, but allowing people to live lives that make sense in the modern world.”

Portola Valley used to be dirt roads, agriculture and graz-

ing livestock, said Mayor John Richards, referring to his youth there. “We’re maintaining the rural look, I think, as much as possible ... better than almost any town in the region.”

On the importance of maintaining a rural lifestyle in Portola Valley, then, the candidates agree. What about other topics?

All of the candidates empathized with concern from local merchants’ about food trucks moving in on their territory on occasion. Three candidates — Mr. Eisberg did not have an opinion — were open to the idea of a skateboard facility for teens, provided it is located so as not to be an annoyance to neighbors. And all the candidates spoke highly of volunteering to serve in a representative government.

As one of his priorities, Mr. Eisberg spoke in favor of a “less activist” government with a focus on safety, public works, fiscal responsibility, and “helping our schools where we can.” The other three candidates spoke of keeping the town on the path it’s been on for its first 50 years.

### Being regional

The Almanac asked the candidates if Portola Valley has a role in regional issues.

There are benefits to regionalism, said Ms. Derwin, the council member most active regionally. With her contacts, she brought together two congressional representatives to question the FAA recently about

overflight noise from air traffic, she said, and arranged to squelch a proposal for a traffic light in Ladera.

Mr. Richards noted the importance of being at the table with respect to airplane noise, and cited the town’s role in maintaining the health of the San Francisquito Creek watershed and open spaces for outdoor recreation.

The town is looked to by other towns for guidance with regard to green building, Mr. Hughes said. “We can lead by example, to some extent.” Ms. Derwin, he added, is well connected regionally.

“I think we should focus our efforts in the region to things that affect Portola Valley,” Mr. Eisberg said, “not things that we cannot control or have an effect on. We should have discussions with communities like ourselves.”

### Open government

The council was accused in 2012 of not being open about plans to buy a former nursery at 900 Portola Road. The transaction was part of the town’s effort to address a state mandate that communities make good-faith efforts to plan for construction of homes affordable to people of low and moderate incomes to cope with a projected statewide housing shortage.

The effort was neither hidden nor open. State law allows councils to discuss prices and terms of real estate transactions in private. The nursery address appeared on the council’s agenda for seven closed sessions between July 2009 and October

See VOTER GUIDE, page 12



**Incumbent Maryann Moise Derwin**, 60, has volunteered for many positions in San Mateo County, including the boards of the City/County Association of Governments, the affordable-housing authority, the county library and the poet laureate task force. She’s been on the council for eight years, serves on a committee with Woodside on protection against wildfire, and was an active volunteer in Portola Valley schools.



**Challenger Arthur C. “Bud” Eisberg Jr.**, 69, is a retired airline pilot with more than 20 years of volunteer service to the town, including about 10 years on the Architectural and Site Control Commission as well as committees concerned with public works, affordable housing and creek restoration at Town Center. His other interests as a volunteer include sports, scouting and model airplane Flight Night at Town Center.



**Challenger Craig R. Hughes**, 39, is an entrepreneur and executive and founder of five software companies, a four-year member of the Architectural and Site Control Commission, and a parent of two children in Portola Valley schools. He is affiliated with the symbolic systems program at Stanford University.



**Incumbent F. John Richards**, 63, is an architect and came to Portola Valley as a kindergartner. He volunteered for the Peace Corps and served in Venezuela and Nicaragua for two years. In his four years on the council, he was involved in bringing to town summer concerts, the farmers’ market, new green building standards and engagement on the issue of affordable housing.



## REAL ESTATE TRENDS

by Samia Cullen

### THE RISK OF SELLING WITHOUT A REAL ESTATE PRO

When real estate markets are on the upswing and demand is high, sellers may wonder if they should sell their home by themselves in order to avoid paying a realtor commission.

Following are some of the many considerations that you should take into account before you decide to sell your own home.

1. **Pricing your home.** Pricing a home is an important component of the selling process. A connected local agent has information that is not yet available to the public and has the expertise to avoid pricing mistakes.

According to the National Association of Realtors, in 2012 homes sold using an agent sold for 20% more than those sold by the owner.

2. **Marketing your home.** Having a marketing plan and properly executing that plan is more crucial than ever to get the best price when selling a home.

An agent will advise you on what needs to be done to make your home appeal to the broadest group of potential buyers and maximize the sale price.

Statistics show that 90 percent of homebuyers used the Internet during their home search in 2012. Without a savvy listing agent, your property will not appear on the top sites where buyers search, thereby greatly limiting your pool of potential buyers.

3. **Handling the transaction.** A good agent knows how to navigate the legal requirements and other issues related to selling a home and help protect you from being sued after the deal closes.

The agent can also help you evaluate the offers that you receive, negotiate the terms of the contract and make sure that the transaction stays on track until escrow closes.

4. **Time commitment.** Sellers with busy schedules may be hard pressed to find the time needed to respond to buyer inquiries effectively. A dedicated professional agent has the ability to timely respond to potential buyers.

Selling a home is a big undertaking. Homeowners should fully investigate and understand what it is involved before deciding to sell their home on their own.

If you have a real estate question or would like a free market analysis for your home, please call me at 650-384-5392, Alain Pintel Realtors, or email me at scullen@apr.com. For the latest real estate news, follow my blog at www.samiacullen.com

# M-A tries to calm fears about school changes

continued from page 5

Menlo Park City School District and 345 from the Las Lomas School District.

With boundary changes that move all Ravenswood district students into the Menlo-Atherton attendance area, plus anticipated growth, Menlo-Atherton is projected to have (by the year 2020): 1,138 students from Ravenswood, 957 students from the Menlo Park City School District and 498 students from Las Lomas.

The numbers do not reflect the fact that each year some students from each attendance area transfer out of Menlo-Atherton to other district high schools while other students transfer in, leaving the totals the same but slightly changing the home districts of students, Superintendent Lianides said.

Superintendent Lianides said that two-thirds of the projected growth at Menlo-Atherton is expected to come from Menlo Park with one third from the Ravenswood district.

Without the boundary changes, Superintendent Lianides said, the district's projections show by 2020 an additional 348 students at Menlo-Atherton High School, bringing it to 2,416 students; and 336 more Woodside High School students, bringing it to 2,013 students. Carlmont High School would grow by 477 students to 2,652 students and Sequoia would grow by 420 students to 2,448.

One of the strategies the

district hopes to use to ease the overcrowding would be the development of two small alternative schools that would draw students from the entire Sequoia Union district.

Superintendent Lianides said that the district's facilities task force is looking at the possibilities. "These schools would not have an attendance area but would be located in strategic areas so they could draw from wider communities," he said, adding they would be "voluntary in nature but very attractive."

"These are still very much in the initial phase," Superintendent Lianides said. The district would have to pass a bond measure, buy land and plan the schools. He said the schools would likely be

located near where the district has the largest enrollment growth, which includes Menlo Park, Belmont and Redwood Shores. "The location of these campuses would be strategic," he said.

Superintendent Lianides said that a tentative attendance area map will probably be presented in November but not formally adopted until summer. That means that attendance areas for 2014-2015 will not be changed; but that changes could go into place by the 2015-16 school year.

The planned changes should make the district's schools better, Superintendent Lianides said. "The whole goal at the end is that the student experience in 2020 will be better than the student experience today." ■

**'Socio-economic or racial makeup of the school' will be similar to what it is today, principal says.**

## RAIL HISTORY

continued from page 5

Jerry Hill, and San Mateo County supervisors Warren Slocum and Adrienne Tissier.

Admission is free. To RSVP, contact Jayme Ackemann at [ackemannj@samtrans.com](mailto:ackemannj@samtrans.com)

## History of commuter rail

Caltrain provided this brief history of the Peninsula commuter rail line: The railroad known today as "Caltrain" is the oldest passenger railroad in the West in continuous operation.

Constructed by the San Francisco & San Jose Railroad, the railroad subsequently was absorbed by the Southern Pacific, which operated the Peninsula

Commuter Service for more than a century. A transition to public ownership began in the 1980s, first under the state of California, followed by a three-county agency called the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board, which has owned and operated Caltrain since 1992.

There are seven Peninsula rail depots on the National Register of Historic Places. From north to south, they are: Millbrae, Burlingame, San Carlos, Menlo Park, Palo Alto, Santa Clara and San Jose Diridon. Four of them were built in the 1800s.

Those interested in the history of the Peninsula rail can follow the Twitter feed @SFSJRailroad or check the Facebook page: SFSJRailroad.



Seth Weil, third from the left, is shown with fellow teammates at the World Rowing Cup event in Lucerne, Switzerland.

## Local wins gold in rowing for USA

In his first year on the U.S. Rowing Team, Seth Weil, 26, has already won medals twice for his country. In July the Menlo Park native won gold in the Men's Four at the Samsung World Rowing Cup II in Lucerne, Switzerland, his first international competition.

The same team, including members Mike Gennaro, Henrik Rummel and Grant James, also took bronze at the World Rowing Championships

in Chungju, South Korea, in August.

As a member of the U.S. Rowing's senior national team, Weil will represent the U.S. at the highest level of international competition, including the 2014 World Cup II in France and the World Cup III in Switzerland. Meanwhile, he will continue his training in Princeton, where he lives with a host family along with a teammate. He ultimately

hopes to compete in the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio.

Weil began rowing in 2005 while a student at UC Davis, where he trained for six years. He is a graduate of Menlo-Atherton High School, where he was a member of the robotics team that placed third at a national competition. He also played first trumpet for the Advanced Jazz Band and traveled with them through Europe.

## Board OKs shift of EPA students to M-A

continued from page 5

right thing."

Parents from the Las Lomas district had regularly expressed concern about the regulatory change, and did so again before this vote. Parent Larry Kelmar said he had concerns about the speed with which the board was making the decision. A strategic plan should come first, he said.

Planning done by the Las Lomas community, he said, took six months and included a consultant to help address questions like "What?" and "How?" in crafting a plan. "If you don't have a plan, you really don't have that North Star to guide you," he said.

Ravenswood advocates were pleased, however. The M-A community will benefit, one advocate said. "I think we are very rich," she said of the Ravenswood community. "I think we all need to move forward together. Our children bring with them an incredibly, incredibly rich culture. I want all the community to embrace the richness of the Ravenswood students."

Ellen Mouchawar, an Atherton resident, non-practicing attorney and insistent advocate

for the Ravenswood community, spoke warmly about a Menlo Park parent who, Ms. Mouchawar said, recently visited a Ravenswood school and asked the principal how she (the parent) could get involved.

Ahead of the vote, the board members explained their positions.

**The school board voted to all but end busing of East Palo Alto kids to Woodside and Carlmont.**

Allen Weiner referred to apples and oranges in comparing the relevance of the East Palo Alto enrollment policy to strategic planning, which the board is facing in response to a projected enrollment surge in the Sequoia district of at least 22 percent by 2020.

Allowing East Palo Alto students into M-A addresses a historical inequity and won't affect the nature of M-A, Mr. Weiner added. What could affect it is the coming enrollment growth

from the Menlo Park and Las Lomas school districts, he said. But in the years ahead, he added, "it won't be us and them, but us and us."

"We can't wait," board member Alan Sarver said, "until this long-term (strategic plan) is right and complete before taking action. The Ravenswood community has said again and again and again how urgent it is to put in place an appropriate interim step for much more of the community to attend Menlo-Atherton High School."

"It is also," he added, "very fundamentally, the opportunity for us to be extending opportunity and partnership in building up student expectations, to open doors of opportunity, to improve outcomes of Ravenswood students and improve outcomes of M-A. And that's why I can't vote strongly enough for this (policy change)."

"If we have the opportunity to take corrective action to correct a long-term inequity," said board President Chris Thomsen, "we should take it. The (new policy) is not perfect, but we have chance to move forward in a positive direction and we should take it now." ■

# More yellow fever mosquitoes are found in Menlo Park

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

Three adult yellow fever mosquitoes (*Aedes aegypti*) and 14 larvae have been trapped in Menlo Park since late August, according to the San Mateo County Mosquito and Vector Control District.

As of Oct. 11, inspectors had examined 1,101 homes and collected 246 samples of larvae, district representatives told the Almanac. Yellow fever mosquito eggs were found at four locations, in addition to the first egg found on Aug. 23 at the Holy

Cross cemetery off Santa Cruz Avenue.

*Aedes aegypti* is a 1/4-inch black and white mosquito, more commonly found in the southeastern United States than in California. It typically bites during the day and can potentially transmit several viruses, including yellow fever, although the risk of transmission is "extremely low," according to the county.

Officials urge residents to eliminate all standing water from their yards and homes, and reduce the chance of being bitten by:

- Applying insect repellents containing DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR 3535.

- Checking that doors and windows have tight-fitting screens, and eliminating any holes.

- Reporting neglected swimming pools to the San Mateo County Mosquito and Vector Control at 344-8592 or the Santa Clara Vector Control District at (408) 918-4770.

- Wearing long sleeve shirts and long pants when possible.

- Placing mosquito netting over infant carriers, cribs and strollers. ■

# Staff, union propose police contract

By Barbara Wood

Special to the Almanac

## ■ ATHERTON

The town of Atherton and its police department, operating without a contract since Sept. 30, have agreed on a tentative contract that would create a two-tiered pension plan for new hires and require current employees to pay their own share of their pension costs — an expense that will be partially offset by a 5 percent salary increase over the three-year contract.

The contract also eliminates the requirement in previous contracts that the town pay its police department employees based on a survey of local police agencies. The new contract says the town will continue to make the annual survey but will not have any obligation to pay employees at the 70th percentile of surveyed agencies.

"The Town is no longer governed by what other agencies do with respect to how we compensate our staff," City Manager Rodericks said in a report to the City Council.

The tentative agreement, which will come before the council at its regular meeting on Wednesday, Oct. 16, would save a significant amount of money for the town, Mr. Rodericks said.

The Atherton Police Officers Association represents 22 employees, five of them non-police officers. APOA President John Mattes said the association members unanimously approved the contract on Oct. 7, but that he did not want to comment further until the con-

tract has been approved by the council.

In a press release posted on the town's website, Mr. Rodericks said that the agreement achieves the policy priorities set by the council.

Those priorities include eliminating the requirement that the town pay for retiree health-care costs for new hires; establishing a "cafeteria-style" health-care plan for current employees, who will share some of its costs; setting up a new pension tier with lesser retirement benefits for new hires; and having employees pay a share of their pension costs, which the town had previously paid.

The new contract also changes the way salaries are determined, and doesn't contain cost-of-living salary adjustments.

Mr. Rodericks' staff report for the Oct. 16 meeting says the town should save 7.6 percent on salaries and benefits with a combination of a 5 percent reduction in health insurance costs and money saved by having employees pay their share — 7 percent of their salaries — toward their pension costs over the contract period. A 5 percent salary increase over that same period is intended to partially offset that new employee expense.

Newly hired police officers will have their pensions figured at a rate that starts at 2.7 percent (times the number of years served) of their highest salary over a three-year period, with retirement eligibility at age 57. Previously, pensions were fig-

ured on a formula that gave 3 percent (times number of years served) of the highest one-year salary, with officers eligible to retire at age 50. New civilian police employees will receive 2 percent (times number of years served) of salary at age 62 instead of the previous 2 percent at age 55.

As always, employees who retire at an earlier age will receive a smaller pension, Mr. Rodericks said. Newly hired officers may retire beginning at age 50, but the percentage of pay (times years worked) drops to 2 percent. Civilian police employees can retire as early as 52, but the percentage drops to 1 percent.

Pensions for new employees will be capped at 120 percent of the compensation that would be subject to Social Security taxes at the time of retirement, now \$132,120. (This is a formula, only. Police do not pay Social Security tax.) Annual increases in pensions based on the consumer price index (CPI) will be allowed.

Regarding the pension savings that will be realized under the new contract, Mr. Rodericks gave the following example:

The average sworn officer working for the town has 9 years of service and is 41 years old. With an existing mid-range \$100,000 a year salary, if that officer retires at age 50 with 18 years of service to the town of Atherton, he or she would receive a pension of \$4,500 per month, or \$54,000 per year (3 percent of \$100,000 times 18).

See **POLICE CONTRACT**, page 10

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## Plaza focus of Commission review

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

■ MENLO PARK

As they debated and discussed their way through a third night of reviewing the downtown/El Camino Real specific plan, the Menlo Park Planning Commission took a closer look at how to ensure the community gets the sort of public plaza on Middle Avenue that it wants.

The plaza, which was incorporated into the specific plan, is also part of a proposed eight-acre, mixed-use development by Stanford and John Arrillaga along 300 to 500 El Camino Real that includes 199,500 square feet of office space, 10,000 square feet of retail, and up to 170 apartments.

The current proposal would put car lanes within the Middle Avenue plaza for site access; the

university has agreed to work alongside the city in designing the plaza. Stanford has also said it will make a “substantial contribution” to construction of a pedestrian and bicycle crossing under the railroad tracks to allow easier access to Burgess Park from El Camino Real at Middle Avenue.

In a letter to the city sent Oct. 4, Stanford’s associate director of real estate development, John Donahoe, said the driveway will be put alongside the Middle Avenue plaza — not through it. Access to parking underneath the complex is critical to making the apartments and retail viable, he wrote, and vehicular access was included in development of the specific plan at several points, including the

environmental impact report.

He asked that decisions regarding the plaza’s design wait until the city completes a traffic study, expected to be finished by year’s end.

At this point the Planning Commission has not made any formal recommendations regarding the specific plan, but has taken a series of straw votes regarding possible modifications.

A straw vote taken during the Oct. 7 meeting went 4-0 in favor of the Planning Commission using architectural review to reach a satisfactory design and layout of the plaza. Commissioners Katherine Strehl and John Onken were recused; Commissioner Ben Eiref was absent.

Although he supported the informal motion, Commissioner Henry Riggs at first suggested an alternative that stated the commission would not compromise the plaza for the sake of driveway access, saying that he “would not expect that you’ve seen the best (design) and would not accept that we have seen the best.”

The second straw vote, at 2-2, proved more problematic, with commissioners Vince Bressler and John Kadwany voting that the commission should be able to modify building breaks in the southeast El Camino Real section of the specific plan to facilitate creating a satisfactory design for the bike and pedestrian undercrossing and the Middle Avenue plaza.

Commissioners Katie Ferrick and Henry Riggs dissented.

“I don’t want to mess up the building breaks in the whole section,” Ms. Ferrick said, while reiterating her support for the undercrossing.

The Planning Commission’s specific plan review will continue at its next meeting, scheduled for Oct. 28, with a focus on traffic and mobility for pedestrians and bicycles throughout the specific plan area. Any formal recommendations the commission then decides to make will go to the City Council for review and possible approval. ■

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### POLICE CONTRACT

*continued from page 9*

Officers hired under the new retirement plan would receive \$3,000 per month, or \$36,000 per year (2 percent of \$100,000 times 18), if making \$100,000 per year and retiring at 50 with 18 years of service.

Go to [tinyurl.com/Report-109](http://tinyurl.com/Report-109) to see the staff report. ■

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#### VOTER GUIDE

*continued from page 7*

2010, all resulting in nothing to report to the public, according to the minutes archive. The council also met in urgent closed session in March 2011 — after a deal to buy the nursery site fell through with Windmill School after 18 months of negotiations, property owner John Wu told the Almanac.

An Almanac story in April 2011 drew attention to the possibility of the council's interest in the property for affordable housing. Town officials announced this intention in June 2012, and one month later conducted a community meeting to begin a "robust process" to include the sale of two town-owned properties and plans to use the proceeds to buy 900 Portola Road. Designs for the site would not be available, they said, because it was unclear how many houses a developer would have to build to make a profit.

Neither Mr. Hughes nor Mr. Eisberg were involved in all that, but both said they would focus on more communication with the public should they be elected. (Mr. Hughes said he has attended three council meetings since announcing his candidacy in August; Mr. Eisberg has followed the proceedings by reading the agendas and minutes online, he said.)

The "unknown density" at 900 Portola Road was a problem, said Mr. Eisberg, who lives in the immediate neighborhood. "A lot of it boiled down to 'nobody likes surprises,'" he said, adding that he would not have objected to four homes.

"Windmill School (a private preschool that was trying to buy the site) showed site plans and elevations and asked for our support," he said. "I don't think every neighborhood would have supported a school next door."

Mr. Hughes said the council could have conferred with Windmill, and could have erred more on the side of openness. "There's a difference between the legal requirements (regarding prices and terms of real estate transactions) and the need to let people know what's going on," he said. The state's open-meeting law "does not restrict one-way communication," he said.

Mr. Hughes said he hopes to explore whether Portola Valley is complying with the intentions of affordable housing mandates. "I think it's a discussion we should have," he said.

"If I were to do (the affordable housing initiative) all over again, I would have knocked on doors," said Ms. Derwin, who was mayor in 2012. "I think we should have talked to the neighbors." Neighboring communities are not making similar efforts to actually build the housing, she noted. "I think among affluent communities, we are a little better than (others). We have a social conscience."

Mr. Richards, who as mayor in 2013 appointed an ad hoc committee to look into affordable housing in town, described it as "really important for the social diversity of the town" and something that would make a "more interesting" town. "I can't help but think we're excluding those people now," he added. ■

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Interested residents may request information and applications from the Town Clerk's Office, Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM-12 noon and 1-5:00 PM, at Woodside Town Hall, 2955 Woodside Road, by telephone at (650) 851-6790, or through the Town's web site at [www.woodsidesidetown.org](http://www.woodsidesidetown.org), What's New. Deadline for applications is Tuesday, October 22, 2013, 5:00 p.m.

# Transitional kindergarten debate

■ Las Lomitas district doesn't offer it, but state says it's mandatory.

By Barbara Wood  
Special to the Almanac

In June 2012 Phil and Christie Kiekhaefer moved from Redwood City to Menlo Park, downsizing their family of four into a tiny two-bedroom, one-bath rental they owned, because they felt the Las Lomitas School District would provide a superior education for their children.

Their daughter started kindergarten a few months later and is now in first grade. They planned that their son, who will be 4 in November, would attend a private preschool before entering the Las Lomitas district's new transitional kindergarten program next fall.

In 2010, such two-year kindergarten programs were written into the state Kindergarten Readiness Act, which moved the date by which children must turn 5 in order to enter kindergarten from Dec. 2 to Sept. 1, making the change a month at a time over three school years. Last year, the first year in which the eligibility date was changed, only 4 percent of California districts that had any eligible children did not have a two-year kindergarten, a study by the American Institutes of Research found.

Unfortunately for the Kiekhaefers, the Las Lomitas School District is one of that 4 percent. The family did not realize this earlier, Mr. Kiekhaefer said, because while the district website had a link to information on transitional kindergarten, it led only to an error message.

Mr. Kiekhaefer figures the lack of a program means they will have to pay at least \$15,000 to send their son to one more year of preschool, an expense not in the budget they used to help them decide on the move to Menlo Park.

Next year, the Menlo Park City School District may also drop its two-year kindergarten program, which the California Department of Education's website says is mandatory. "Each elementary or unified school district must offer transitional kindergarten and kindergarten classes for all children eligible to attend," the site states on its "frequently asked questions" page.

The school districts' lawyers answer that question differently, however.

"The CDE website seems to conflict with what the law says," said Eugene Whitlock, San Mateo County deputy county counsel and legal adviser for the Las Lomitas district. "The law

doesn't say that it's mandatory," he said.

Of course, a judge could, he said, have a different interpretation. "If you go to court or you get sued, you never know what might happen," he said.

Mr. Whitlock said the Legislature should clear up the law. "Because of the confusion and different interpretations, the best thing for the Legislature to do would be to go back and clarify ... if it is mandatory," Mr. Whitlock said.

Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian, who was a state senator at the time, was the author of the Kindergarten Readiness Act. He does not agree with Mr. Whitlock.

"The clear intent and expectation is that TK (transitional kindergarten) is required in

every K-12 school setting," he said. "That is borne out by the clear direction on the California Department of Education website."

Supervisor Simitian said he does not think the Kindergarten Readiness Act would have passed without the two-year-kindergarten provision, because it would have meant the parents of 125,000 students born before the date California had used for admission for 60 years would have suddenly found that their children had one more year at home.

However, Supervisor Simitian said, he does understand the local districts' incentive to not follow his law. The changed admission date means fewer

See KINDERGARTEN, page 15



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**KINDERGARTEN**

*continued from page 13*

entering kindergarteners for Las Lomitas for three years while the program phases in. Those class sizes will remain smaller the entire time the children are at the school.

“It is regrettable, but perhaps understandable, that districts dealing with an enrollment crunch would be looking for any way to manage their growing enrollment,” he said.

Both the Las Lomitas and Menlo Park districts are facing growing enrollment that is overcrowding schools.

While all the elementary school districts in the Almanac’s circulation area also use attorneys from the county counsel’s office, and, according to Mr. Whitlock “the office gives the same advice to all our schools,” they are each taking the advice differently.

In the Portola Valley School District, which has two schools and 656 students, Superintendent Lisa Gonzales said they have three children in their transitional kindergarten program this year and “a well-trained, credentialed teacher who provides a nurturing environment for our youngest students,” who share a classroom with one-year

kindergarten students. The district has no plans to drop the program, she said.

In Woodside, the smallest local district, with one school and 451 students, the two-year kindergarten class has 16 students, who have their own classroom. Woodside allows any child to attend the two-year kindergarten who the teachers and parents think would benefit from the two-year program, regardless of birthdate.

In the Menlo Park City School District, with four schools and 2,926 students, there are 30 children in a transitional kindergarten program, which, like Portola Valley, incorporates the two-year kindergarteners into one-year kindergarten classrooms.

Next year, however, when the Kindergarten Readiness Act says children born between Sept. 1 and Dec. 2 would be eligible for two-year kindergarten, the district “does not anticipate enrolling students in a two-year Kindergarten program unless State funding to provide an extra year of Kindergarten for them becomes available, or other circumstances change,” the district website says.

Not having a transitional

See **KINDERGARTEN**, page 16

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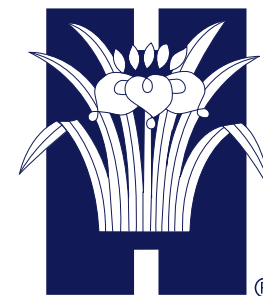


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CALENDAR

Visit [AlmanacNews.com/calendar](http://AlmanacNews.com/calendar) to see more calendar listings

Authors & Talks

**James Franco** discusses "Actors Anonymous." Oct. 27, 2 p.m. \$20. Menlo-Atherton Performing Arts Center, 555 Middlefield Road, Atherton. Call 650-324-4321

**Simon Winchester** discusses "The Men Who United the States: America's Explorers, Inventors, Eccentrics and Mavericks, and the Creation of One Nation, Indivisible." Oct. 28, 7:30 p.m. Free. Kepler's Books, 1010 El Camino Real, Menlo Park.

**'Maxed Out: American Moms on the Brink'** Katrina Alcorn discusses memoir. Oct. 23, 7:30 p.m. Free. Kepler's Books, 1010 El Camino Real, Menlo Park.

**Anne Firth Murray**, discusses "From Outrage to Courage: The Unjust and Unhealthy Situation of Women in Poorer Countries and

What They Are Doing about It." Oct. 17, 7:30 p.m. Free. Kepler's Books, 1010 El Camino Real, Menlo Park.

**Avi Tuschman**, discusses "Our Political Nature: The Evolutionary Origins of What Divides Us" Oct. 24, 7:30 p.m. Free. Kepler's Books, 1010 El Camino Real, Menlo Park.

**Docent Lecture** explores David Hockney artwork, on display at de Young Museum in San Francisco. Oct. 26, 2-3 p.m. Free. Woodside Library, 3140 Woodside Road, Woodside. [www.smcl.org](http://www.smcl.org)

Concerts

**'In the Spirit of Hope'** Italian tenor Pasquale Esposito performs opera arias, Neapolitan songs, original compositions. Oct. 27, 7:30-9:30 p.m. \$35. Nativity Church, 210 Oak Grove Ave., Menlo Park. Call 408-528-6308.

**Master Sinfonia Concert** Oct. 19, 7:30 p.m. \$15-\$25. Free for youth under 18. St. Bede's Episcopal Church, 2650 Sand Hill Road, Menlo Park. [www.mastersinfonia.org/season.aspx?c=Concert1](http://www.mastersinfonia.org/season.aspx?c=Concert1)

**Redwood Symphony** performs Dr. Seuss's "The Sneetches," a life lesson on thwarting prejudice and bullying. Oct. 26, 3-5 p.m. \$10-\$25. Canada College Main Theatre, 4200 Farm Hill Blvd., Woodside. [redwood-symphony.org](http://redwood-symphony.org)

**The Pop Ups in Concert** Atherton Library hosts children's musical group. Oct. 20, 3-3:45 p.m. Free. Atherton Library, 2 Dinkelspiel Station Lane, Atherton. Call 650-328-2422. [www.smcl.org](http://www.smcl.org)

Kids & Families

**Halloween 'Bark For Life' Walk** Celebrate Halloween by trick-or-treating through Holbrook-Palmer Park. Oct. 26, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Free (donations accepted). Holbrook-Palmer Park, 150 Watkins Ave., Atherton.

**'Surfing Magician'** Doug Hofkins entertains with comedy-magic show for ages 4 and up. Oct. 21, 4-5 p.m. Free. Atherton Library, 2 Dinkelspiel Station Lane, Atherton. Call 328-2422.

**Origami for Children** Menlo School students teach children how to make origami Jack-o-lanterns. Ages 3 and up. Oct. 23, 3:30-4 p.m. Free. Atherton Library, 2 Dinkelspiel Station Lane, Atherton. Call 328-2422.

Et Alia

**'Cyberbullying'** "Submit the Documentary: The Virtual Reality of Cyberbullying" will screen at Sacred Heart Prep in Atherton as part of the United Nations Film Festival. Panel discusses topic. Oct. 21, 4-6 p.m. \$10; Free for seniors and students. 150 Valparaiso Ave., Atherton.

**'En Plein Air' Painting in the Garden** Maxine Pottier is teacher. Ages 12+. Registration required. Oct. 19, 9:30-11:30 a.m. Free. Woodside Library, 3140 Woodside Road, Woodside.

**Luau at Little House** Live traditional Hawaiian dancing, music and dinner. Oct. 17. Dinner is 5-7 p.m.; dance is 7-9 p.m. \$15. Little House, 800 Middle Ave., Menlo Park. [www.penvol.org/littlehouse/culture.cfm](http://www.penvol.org/littlehouse/culture.cfm)

KINDERGARTEN

continued from page 15

kindergarten could decrease the size of next year's kindergarten classes in the Menlo Park district by 25 percent because children born between Sept. 2 and Dec. 2, who would have been admitted to a transitional kindergarten under the new law, and to regular kindergarten under the previous cut-off date, will not be allowed to attend their school.

Menlo Park district board president Terry Thygesen said the board will make a final decision on whether or not it will have a two-year kindergarten next year some time before the enrollment period for the 2014-15 kindergarten class opens early in 2014.

In Woodside, where the school currently has three one-year kindergarten classes and one two-year class, Superintendent Beth Polito is a champion of the two-year program. She believes it could save the district money because it will reduce the number of children who repeat a grade as well as those who require expensive special services.

"Hopefully it's (fewer) referrals for early intervention. It's (fewer) referrals for special education services — if you can get them right at the beginning for two solid years."

Even if a judge says the program is not a legal requirement, the district would keep it, she said, "if I had anything to do with it." Why? "Because it's the right thing to do for kids."

Supervisor Simitian said that parents in the districts not offering the two-year kindergarten have limited options. "They can either persuade their board to provide the program that every other district in the state is providing," he said, "or they can litigate, or they can ask the state Legislature to reconfirm the fact that (transitional kindergarten) is a requirement."

Mr. Kiekhaefer said he's tried to get the Las Lomas board to revisit the issue. He asked Las Lomas board president Richard Ginn to put a discussion about transitional kindergarten on the board agenda, but, he said, Mr. Ginn told him he would not.

Mr. Ginn said that because he has been advised the program is not mandatory, he sees no reason for the board to discuss it. The program, he said, is unfair because it gives 25 percent of students, those who under the new cut-off date would be the oldest in their classes, an extra year of public school. "That doesn't seem like something I want to do in my district — take one-fourth of the kids and give them an extra year," he said. ■



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# Woodside Community Theatre stages 'The Producers'

By Kate Daly  
Special to the Almanac

New faces will be appearing in "The Producers" the last weekend in October and first weekend in November as Woodside Community Theatre (WCT) stages its 11th annual musical since the group reorganized back in 2003.

Mel Brooks wrote and composed the show after writing and directing the popular film with the same name in 1968.

The female lead in the Woodside production, Jessica Whittemore, "is brand new to us; she's a fabulous, over-the-top Ulla," says co-producer Mark Bowles. She showed up on the last day of auditions and won "a really competitive contest with four other ladies," he says.

He has a theory on why the theater group is attracting fresh talent. "A community theater like ours goes through a maturation process as our reputation gets (better) known, and as long as we don't screw up, we get a wider group of people trying out," he says.

Audiences probably won't recognize the actor playing the main role of has-been Broadway

producer Max Bialystock. Dan Demers directed WCT's "The Drowsy Chaperone" in 2010, but this is his debut on-stage performance with WCT.

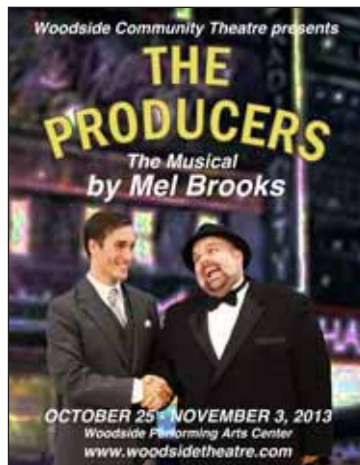
His sidekick and accountant, Leo Bloom, is played by a familiar face, however. Matt Waters appeared as Rolf in WCT's "Sound of Music" last year. More recently he played Curly in Portola Valley Theatre Conservatory's "Oklahoma!" last March.

Mr. Waters teaches middle school math at Woodside School, and is heading right into another community production in December — Hillbarn Theatre's "Mame."

Since WCT rehearsals have been at Woodside School and Woodside Village Church just across the street, the schedule has worked out well for him.

Maddie Rostami of Menlo Park found her way to WCT through a Portola Valley Theatre Conservatory connection. She teaches classes there, is a senior at Menlo-Atherton High School, says she's "really excited" to be making her debut in WCT's ensemble.

A couple from Portola Valley, Torrey Rothstein and Fiona Ryan, joined the cast of "Sound of Music" last year, and have



several bit parts this year.

Some of the other performers have longtime connections to Woodside.

Along with her husband Darrell, Darlene Batchelder is appearing in her eighth WCT show. She used to perform at Woodside High when she was a student there. In this show, she is in the ensemble and plays one of the older ladies Bialystock and Bloom seek to take advantage of when the men attempt to produce a big flop and their show, "Springtime for Hitler," unexpectedly becomes a smash hit.

Is a Broadway parody appropriate for every age? Batchelder

personally recommends the musical for kids 10 and older because "it's really rude and crude; it's funny."

Mr. Bowles says the musical "has some bathroom jokes and off-color humor, but it's pretty ridiculous. There's something to offend everyone in a light-hearted and fun way."

He is joined by two co-producers. Claudia McCarley went to Woodside High. She plays Shirley in the show and is part of the ensemble. Donna Losey was a Woodside School parent with Mr. Bowles and Ms. Batchelder, helped with shows there, and then became a drama booster when her children went on to perform in productions at Woodside High.

Two other Woodside High drama boosters, Nancy Krosse and Lyndesay Adams, are in the ensemble. Ms. Krosse also appears as one of the older ladies.

Another Woodside High drama booster, Karen Patrick, is teaming up with former Woodside School teacher Liz Matchett to organize the costumes.

Once again, two Woodside brothers, Akio and Steve Patrick, are working behind the scenes. Akio is technical director and

set designer. Steve is head of set construction. Their kids are in college now after attending both Woodside schools.

Richard Gordon of Woodside is back as musical director, leading a full live orchestra.

Kristen Pfeiffer returns as choral director this year. Don Coluzzi is doing the lighting again.

Joan Rubin of Woodside is one of the original volunteers going back to when George Sellman directed the shows. She's helping run spotlights. Her grandson, Alex Rubin, is in the ensemble.

Two newcomers this year are Erica Wyman as artistic director and Joe Duffy as choreographer.

"The Producers" opens at Woodside High Performing Arts Center at 199 Churchill Ave. on Friday, Oct. 25 at 7:30 p.m. and continues on Oct. 26 and then Nov. 1 and 2 at 7:30 p.m., with two matinee performances on Sundays, Oct. 27 and Nov. 3 at 2 p.m.

Visit WoodsideTheatre.com for more information and tickets. Tickets will also be sold at the door and by calling (800) 838-3006.

The prices are \$15 for children, 18 and under; \$25 for seniors, 62 and older; and \$28 for adults. ■

## Woodside artist at Pumpkin Festival

Dr. Vicki Coe Mitchell of Woodside will display her paintings at the 43rd Half Moon Bay Art & Pumpkin Festival on Sunday, Oct. 20. She will sell original paintings, as well as limited edition Giclee prints, canvas grocery bags, and cards of coast-inspired paintings, many of which are scenes from her cottage at Martin's Beach in Half Moon Bay. Dr. Coe Mitchell is an anesthesiologist at Stanford Hospital with Associated Anesthesiologists of Palo Alto.



## 'Tosca' captivates with outstanding cast

By Renee Batti  
Almanac News Almanac

Italian grand opera isn't known for happy endings. Death is as important a character as the opera's star singers, often stalking one or more of them until he coaxes from their lips their last sweet, tragic song. It's all part of the fun.

When I find myself regretting the demise of a truly odious character — as I did in the case of the Baron Scarpia in the West Bay Opera production of *Tosca* now being staged at the Lucie Stern Theatre — I know something extraordinary is taking place. Composer Giacomo Puccini kills off his villain at the end of Act II in this magnificent three-act opera, but so extraordinary is the voice and stage presence of Philip Skinner in the role of Scarpia, Rome's chief of police, that I feared Act III could only be a let-down.

My fears were groundless, because Mr. Skinner is only one in a cast of stand-out lead performers. Stacey Stofferahn as Floria Tosca, a celebrated singer, and David Gustafson as her lover, the artist Mario Cavaradossi, carries Act III to a rousing conclusion, with Mr. Gustafson delivering a glittering *E lucevan le stelle*, and the duo entrancing



Photo by Otak Jump

**Stacey Stofferahn** is Floria Tosca and **David Gustafson** is Mario Cavaradossi in West Bay Opera's *Tosca*, being staged through the weekend.

### REVIEW

the audience with *Ah! Franchigia a Floria Tosca* and *O dolci mani* — a captivating display of sweet passion preceding their own demise.

Although Ms. Stofferahn seemed a bit unsteady in certain vocal registers on opening night, her singing in general offers a richness in color and impact, and her Tosca throbs with vitality. Mr. Gustafson and Mr. Skinner electrify in their performances of the two men circling the beautiful Tosca, one simmering with

love, the other, lust.

This is West Bay Opera's sixth production of this *verismo* masterpiece, which premiered in Rome in 1900. In addition to treating the ears, this production features fine acting befitting the high-octane theatricality of the story, based on a work by French playwright Victorien Sardou.

Jose Luis Moscovich directs and conducts the orchestra; Richard Harrell is stage director. The opera is sung in Italian, with English supertitles.

West Bay Opera, based in Palo Alto, proves over and over again that you don't have to go to San Francisco to see superbly staged opera. To opera lovers — and those who are curious about this enchanting art form — *Tosca* calls.

Go to [AlmanacNews.com/arts](http://AlmanacNews.com/arts) to read the full review. ■

## Atherton burglary, prowler reports

Atherton police are advising residents to take precautions to protect their property in the wake of two prowler reports, a residential burglary and an auto burglary, all of which took place on Friday, Oct. 11, police said.

In the residential burglary, someone used a rock to shatter a side-door window of a home in the 200 block of Atherton Avenue, possibly between 9:30 p.m. and midnight, police said. Someone entered the unoccupied house and appears to have gotten away with a "liquor bottle," police said.

Earlier that afternoon at about

3:30 p.m. on Fairview Avenue, a resident reported seeing a man leaving the property. Later, at 11:15 p.m., police received another prowler report, from a residence on Linda Vista Avenue. The stranger disappeared behind a building, but a motion-activated flood light came on that illuminated the area. Witnesses described the suspect as a white adult male wearing a black hooded sweatshirt and dark pants.

In the auto burglary, on Carolina Lane, someone entered an unlocked vehicle parked in a residential driveway, according to a report submitted at 7:49 p.m.

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The Almanac, established in October 1965, is delivered each week to residents of Menlo Park, Atherton, Portola Valley and Woodside and adjacent unincorporated areas of southern San Mateo County. The Almanac is qualified by decree of the Superior Court of San Mateo County to publish public notices of a governmental and legal nature, as stated in Decree No. 147530, issued December 21, 1969. ©2013 by Embarcadero Media Company. All rights reserved.

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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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**Email** your views to: letters@almanacnews.com and note this it is a letter to the editor in the subject line.

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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

## Portola Valley candidates of like mind

Few California communities can look back on nearly 50 years of keeping developers at bay and maintaining something like a rural lifestyle in the midst of a metropolis. Portola Valley residents, and their elected officials, pride themselves on their “rural” ethic and maintaining a town that would still be recognizable to someone visiting from half a century ago.

There are four candidates, two incumbents and two challengers, for three seats on the Town Council. This is an opportunity for the voters to reaffirm those 50 years of effort. It’s not as if a change of direction is needed. The well-to-do residents now and in the future will still come for the excellent schools and will be able to afford the large homes and meet the stipulations of the town’s assertive green building code.

After interviews with all four contenders, we found that the two incumbents, Maryann Derwin and current mayor John Richards, and newcomer Craig Hughes, would best reflect the town’s philosophy and continue its environmental tradition. The fourth candidate, Bud Eisberg, said he favored a “less activist” government with a focus on safety, public works, fiscal responsibility and to “help our schools where we can.”

Ms. Derwin has a regional sensibility and says that active regional participation, occasionally stepping outside Portola Valley borders, is important when you need a favor — like substantive action to reduce airplane noise and improving the bicycle lanes

at Alpine Road and Interstate 280. Mr. Richards and Mr. Hughes did not disagree.

On the issue of affordable housing, all candidates said they would support a small complex if a site was found, although most doubted that would happen in the town, given that proposals to build it are regularly beaten back. Earlier this year, the council was in talks to purchase the Al’s Nursery property for just such a complex. The neighbors objected, complaining about the council’s alleged lack of transparency on the project. The council acted within the law, but could have been somewhat more forthcoming. After a six-month community investigation into the issue of what to do about state mandates on this type of housing, the next time this comes up will surely be more engaging for all.

Portola Valley, whose residents recently funded one of the most environmentally sustainable town centers in the nation, is a rural community that discourages fences, keeps out tall buildings, and requires commercial ventures to attract in-town traffic. It’s a going and healthy concern by any measurement. And all the candidates support the town’s active use of volunteers for many community jobs as well as a general plan designed to keep alive the commitment to rural living.

In our view, Maryann Derwin, John Richards and Craig Hughes are the best choices to keep all this going and we urge residents to vote for them on Nov. 5.

**EDITORIAL**

The opinion of The Almanac



Portola Valley Archives

### Our Regional Heritage

The Boos family of Searsville enjoy a picnic in the 1880s. Maria Chrysthania Valencia Boos, seated at left, was a granddaughter of Maximo Martinez and Damiana Padilla. The white-haired man standing at the right is Guadelupe Valencia, Chrysthania’s father. A local newspaper reported that, “Dancing, the chief amusement of the evening, was kept up till morning.”



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4496	India Jaipur	Rust/Beige	7.11 x 9.11	\$4095	\$1950
4484	India Rajasthan	Beige	7.11 x 10	\$5705	\$2650
4479	India Rajasthan	Gold/Ivory	7.8 x 9.8	\$2745	\$1350
1132	India Tabriz	Blue/Ivory	7.11 x 10	\$7525	\$1990
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1248	India Agra	Ivory/Red	8.2 x 10.1	\$6175	\$1650
3764	India Kashan	Navy/Gold	7.11 x 9.7	\$5795	\$2750
2157	India Serapi	Light Gold	7.11 x 9 x 10	\$3315	\$1350
4116	Persian Baktiari	Multi	7.4 x 10	\$4805	\$2650
6991	India Soumak	Light Blue	8 x 9.10	\$2045	\$990
535	India Tabriz	Navy	7.8 x 9.10	\$3810	\$990
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884	India Agra	Red/Ivory	12 x 17.11	\$12,900	\$4950
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# SOUTHERN CHARM AND GRACIOUS ENTERTAINING

**G**raceful wrought-iron gates part to reveal a drive, arched over with greenery, while wind stirs the trees that surround this timeless estate, located on just under two acres, on one of Atherton's most desirable cul-de-sacs. Built in the early 1930s, the 6-bedroom, 6-full, and 2-half-bath main residence was completely remodeled in the 1990s, yet retains all of the charm of a gracious Southern mansion. A self-contained guest house adds versatility. The grounds include sweeping lawns, a loggia, swimming pool, a separate spa, a reflecting pool, and a tennis court. Enjoying breathtaking views of the western hills, this elegant home offers all of the amenities of modern living.



## 98 SUTHERLAND DRIVE ATHERTON

- 1.98 extremely private acres at the end of a cul-de-sac
- Six-bedroom, two-story main residence of approximately 7,860 square feet
- Two-bedroom, three-bath guest house of approximately 1,800 square feet
- Seven-car attached garage
- Pool, spa, and tennis court set in magnificently landscaped formal gardens
- Custom playhouse
- Award-winning Las Lomas School District

**OFFERED AT \$14,995,000**

[www.98SUTHERLAND.COM](http://www.98SUTHERLAND.COM)

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