



Spread holiday cheer with simple do-it-yourself gifts | Page 10

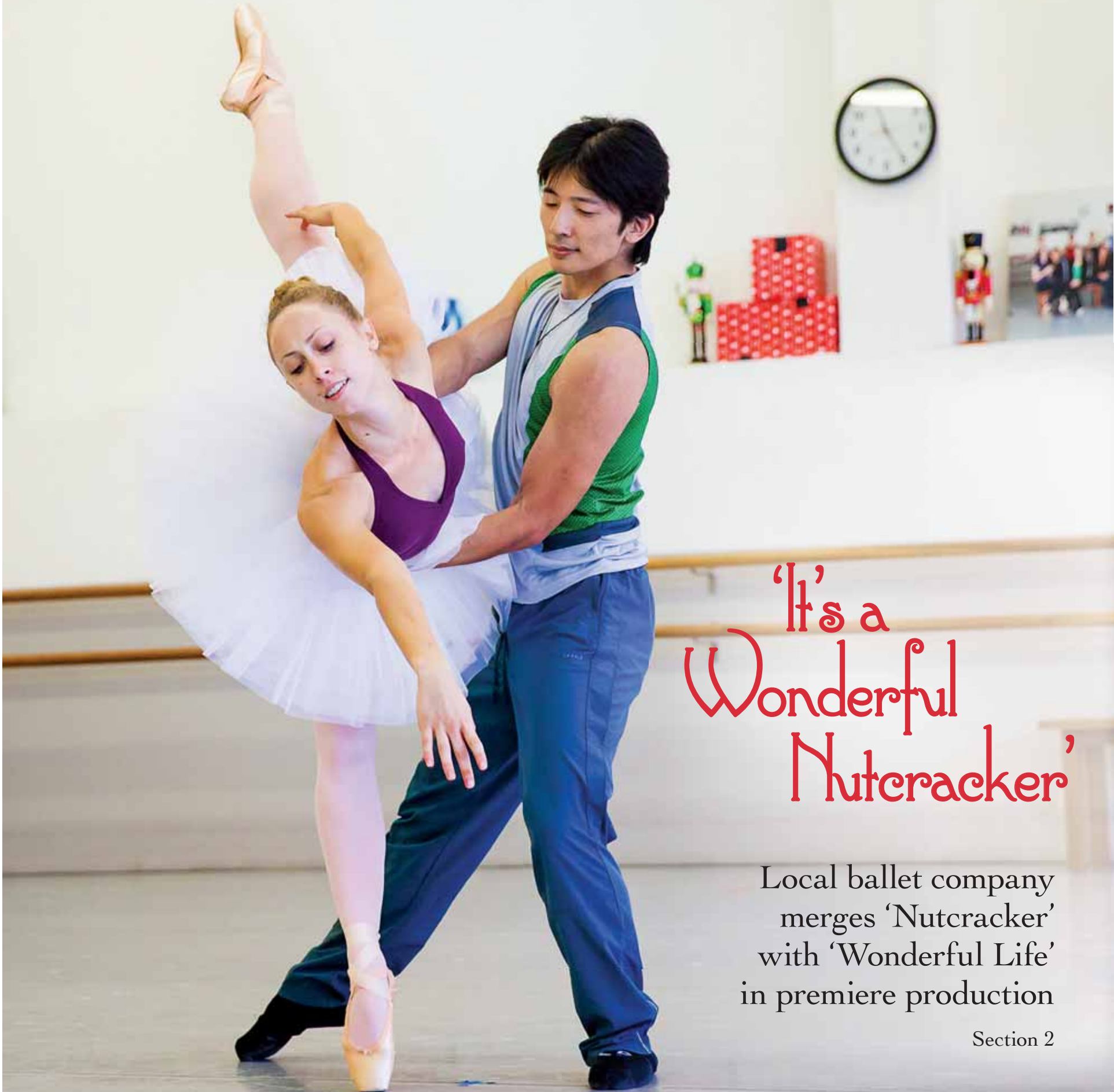
The Almanac

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

DECEMBER 9, 2015 | VOL. 51 NO. 14



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Section 2



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File photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

Angel Heart Cakes co-owners Debbie Umphreys, left, and Chris Rivera whip up Angel Heart cakes at Studio Cakes in Menlo Park in this 2010 phot, before they had opened their brick-and-mortar bakery at Marsh Manor near Atherton.

Angel Heart Cakes changes hands

By Elena Kadvany

FOOD & DRINK

Angel Heart Cakes bakery, located at Marsh Manor Shopping Center near Atherton, is changing hands after four years.

“Yes, the rumors are true. It’s time to hang up our aprons and pass the baton to a new owner,” owners Chris Rivera and Debbie Umphreys, both Menlo Park residents, wrote in a Facebook post.

Ms. Rivera said in an interview that they made the decision to sell after feeling like the ever-consuming task of running a bakery was becoming too much. Their days started at 6 or 7 a.m. and ended at 6 or 7 p.m., she said.

They stopped selling wholesale earlier this year “because it was so consuming” and to focus on weddings and corporate orders.

“It was a labor of love,” Ms. Rivera said of the bakery. “We

loved building it from nothing and if anything, it taught us that you can do anything you set your mind to, but we were naive, too. I don’t think we realized what it would take.”

The two are passing the keys to the space at Marsh Manor shopping center (located at 3700 Florence St off Marsh Road) to Tal Waizer, who will run a new bakery called Eva Sweets.

Ms. Waizer moved to the Bay Area in 2007 from Israel, where she learned to bake, according to InMenlo. She opened her own shop three years later, also named Eva Sweets, in Cupertino. The bakery’s website describes it as a “euro-style homey baking company with an ever expanding variety of sweet and indulgent pastries.” All pastries are made to order with fresh, locally sourced ingredients.

Ms. Rivera said they found Ms. Waizer through a broker who is “in the business of selling bakeries.” Ms. Rivera and Ms. Umphreys are giving all of their recipes to Ms. Waizer — “everything from quiches to Dacquoise cakes to all the 27 flavors of angel food” — so she can still sell some Angel Heart Cakes staples.

“We wanted to make sure it went to someone that would keep it running,” Ms. Rivera said. “A lot of bakeries are acquired (by) someone without business sense and they run it into the ground. My husband designed that space. We take great pride in it being a beautiful kitchen and we wanted to make sure it was someone who could sustain and improve it.”

Ms. Rivera and Ms. Umphreys opened their popular bakery — dedicated to all-things-angel-food cake — in February 2011. (They had started a commercial baking business together a few years prior.) The foundation and

See **CAKES**, page 6

‘It was a labor of love.’

ANGEL HEART CAKES OWNER CHRIS RIVERA

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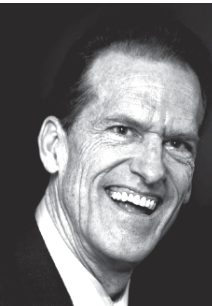


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Local News

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Photos courtesy of Menlo Park

From left: Justin Murphy, Menlo Park's new public works director; Nick Pegueros, now permanent administrative services director; and Jim Cogan, housing and economic development services manager.

Changes in Menlo Park city executive staff

By Kate Bradshaw
Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park City Manager Alex McIntyre announced three high-level management changes Dec. 2.

Justin Murphy, formerly assistant community development director, has been promoted to public works director, with a salary of \$165,000.

Nick Pegueros, who has been the city's interim administrative services director since August, will take that role on a permanent basis, with a salary of \$174,000.

Finally, Jim Cogan, the city's economic development manager, will take over responsibility for the city's housing programs. He will have the new title of housing and economic development manager and a salary of \$127,431.

Mr. Murphy has worked with the city of Menlo Park for 18 years. As public works director, he will oversee the city's engineering, maintenance and transportation and capital improvement projects and coordinate infrastructure and development projects with the planning and building divisions.

According to Mr. McIntyre, project management is one of Mr. Murphy's strengths. Mr. Murphy will be stepping into the role once filled by Chip Taylor, recently rehired to Menlo Park as assistant city manager. Mr. McIntyre said he hopes shuffling of employees between departments will lead to interdepartmental "cross-pollination," with increased awareness of the others' roles.

Mr. Pegueros has more than 15 years of public service experience, including working in San Bruno's finance department and as administrative services director for Los Altos. He involuntarily resigned as town manager of Portola Valley in August, and has worked as Menlo Park's interim admin-

istrative services director since then, overseeing the city's finance, human resources and information technology activities.

Mr. McIntyre said it has been a challenge to find well-qualified executive-level employees to fill public service jobs, given Menlo Park's booming economic climate. Faced with a fairly shallow candidate pool, he said the city is trying to be innovative and stretch capable staff members into new roles.

Mr. Cogan said he is excited to begin leading the city's housing program. He said he has 10 years of experience working on city housing issues, especially as chief of staff for the City Council in San Jose, where he helped facilitate the construction of thousands of affordable housing units. During that time, he said, he gathered a substantial "Rolodex" of affordable housing contacts.

"What I'm looking forward to about the assignment is getting to engage with nonprofit and for-profit affordable housing developers," he said.

The city has not had a full-time leader of Menlo Park's housing department since its housing and redevelopment department was dissolved by the state in January 2012, Mr. McIntyre said. The city tried to continue the work of the housing department by subdividing it into several other departments, but Mr. McIntyre said centralizing it once again seemed a timely move, given the city's current scale of affordable housing projects. Menlo Park currently has at least 187 below-market-rate units under construction or recently completed, with more negotiations expected soon.

Mr. Murphy and Mr. Pegueros will start their new roles on Jan. 4.

The city is still searching for a human resources manager and finance manager. ▣

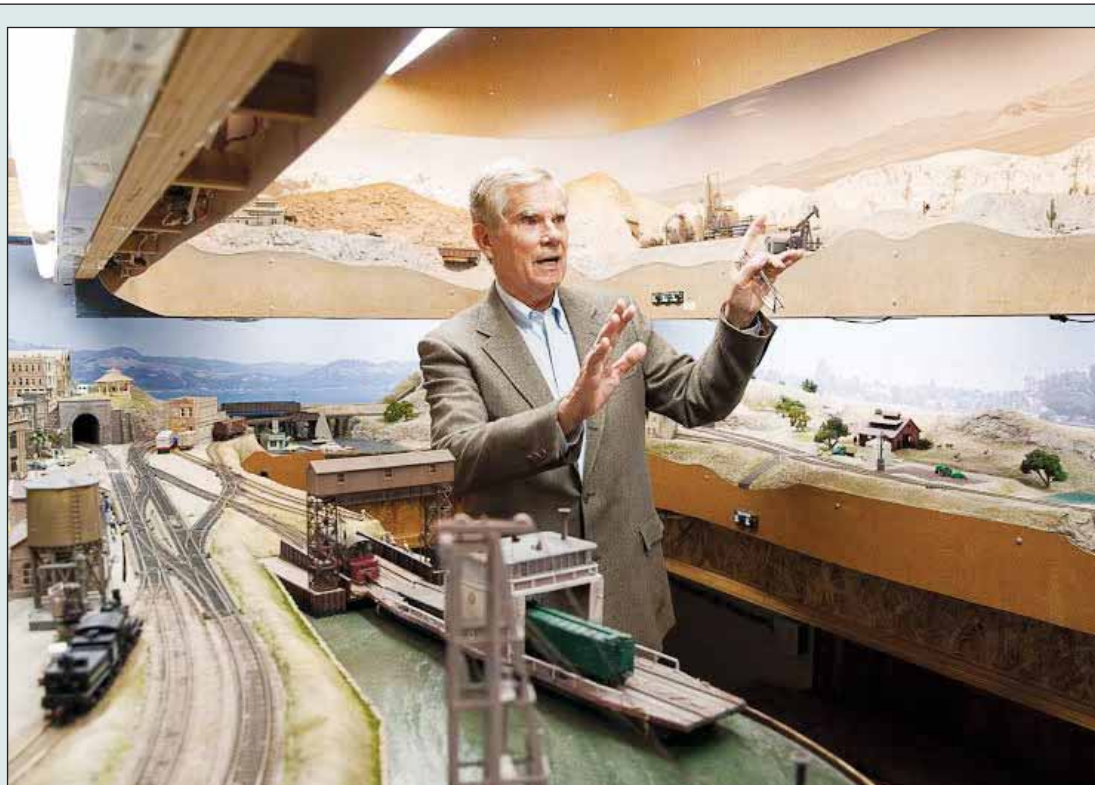


Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

Tom Shanahan at home in Woodside with his extensive HO-scale model railroad setup of his own design.

Mayor steps down after one term

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

Woodside mayor and retired private-sector financial officer Tom Shanahan is leaving the Town Council after one four-year term. Leaving with him will be his uncommon skill at running meetings, his outspoken Libertarian viewpoint, and his abiding sense of humor.

"I would say that it had its ups and downs," Mr. Shanahan said of his time in local government.

He quickly found himself in sync with the town administration on the handling of public finances, he said. And on policy issues in general, he said he enjoyed interacting with his council colleagues and with the public.

Adjudicating residents' appeals, such as over house plans rejected by the Planning Commission over architectural or construction matters, was painful, Mr. Shanahan said. Decisions calling for technical knowledge, given his business and economics background, left him without a frame of reference and feeling less than confident, he said.

As mayor, by all appearances, he had confidence to spare. "I tend to be willing to take charge," he said. "I enjoyed being mayor only because I felt I had the ability to guide the pace of the meeting and help structure the conversation to shape actionable ideas."

"It's a management challenge," he said when asked about his approach to meetings. "My attitude is, 'How am I going to get through this?'" He said he would study the agenda with the town manager days ahead of the meeting, thinking through each item and its possible outcomes.

"He runs a great meeting and he's very

WOODSIDE

thoughtful," said Councilwoman Deborah Gordon. "I think he has been a delightful person to work with, and I certainly did not expect that coming in," she said in a comment on the chasm between her politics and Mr. Shanahan's. "I will miss him."

The public, town volunteers and Town Hall staff are all "really going to miss" Mr. Shanahan, Planning Director Jackie Young said. His manner was firm but inclusive, and supportive of and encouraging to the continuous improvement of town processes, she said. "The icing on the cake, though, is his quick wit," she said.

Humor is part of his personality and an effective management tool, Mr. Shanahan said. People (like himself) who have strong views and aggressive styles can use humor to temper what may be perceived as intimidation, he said. "If you can get people in groups to laugh about something, it can take some of the emotion out of the discussion," he said.

Horse district

The District 3 seat on the council is seen, by some, as appropriate for a "horse person," Mr. Shanahan said. He plays polo and is on the board of the Horse Park at Woodside. He was asked to run in 2011 and did, unopposed, out of a sense of obligation to Woodside's equestrians, he said.

Asked for his views on government, Mr. Shanahan said he prefers small government and local funding. "So much of federal government spending is transfer payments among the

His manner was firm but inclusive, planning director says

See **MAYOR**, page 6

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Woodside mayor steps down after one term

continued from page 5

middle class — from young to old, from non-college people to college students, from city-folks to farmers — rather than transfers of spending power to people below the poverty line,” he said. “(It’s) much better, in my view, to be done at state or local levels or left undone so that people can decide for themselves.”

In setting policy, listening is key, Mr. Shanahan said. “I was used to the pace of private enterprise and it is often a challenge to listen to testimony at these public forums,” he said. Listening can be “like watching ice melt,” but government should not be run like a business, he said.

“Office holders should understand that the purpose of government is not necessarily efficiency, but to make sure that everybody gets a hearing,” he said. Governments have power to compel action, so “you’ve got to be damn sure that the people on the losing side get a chance to make their case,” he said.

If that last point sounded lawyerly, it’s worth noting that Mr. Shanahan had been accepted to law school and business school at Harvard University. At the time, he was finishing up a two-year hitch in the U.S. Army as a first lieutenant in Vietnam.

He grew up in Pasadena, has a bachelor’s degree in economics from Stanford University and a master’s degree in business from Harvard. He conducts 10-week seminars at Stanford to talk about “the interaction between Silicon Valley emerging companies and Wall Street capital-raising and merger/acquisition activities.”

An auxiliary building at Mr. Shanahan’s home houses an extensive HO-scale model-railroad setup of his own design. This small world has panoramic

photo backdrops for imaginary representations of Woodside, the Peninsula, San Francisco, Monterey and the Central Valley. Among the points of interest: a cafe in Woodside, San Francisco painted-ladies-style homes, Fort Ord, a cotton company, an oil refinery and a ghost town.

Climate change?

The Woodside council recently approved a climate action plan, but only after a majority vote removed references to Woodside’s climate-change-related goals and federal government statements as to why climate change is happening and what its impacts are likely to be. In the majority were Mr. Shanahan and council members Dave Burow, Anne Kasten and Peter Mason.

Asked to explain his vote, Mr. Shanahan said the council should not associate itself with conclusions that global warming is or is not happening. “I did not want to see the council step into a recitation of facts,” he said. “Some people don’t accept those facts.”

In an email, he elaborated: “From my reading, my current opinion is that climate change is a fuzzy concept and that the degree of human contribution to it is fuzzier still. Based on current information, I would be extremely cautious in formulating public policy and public spending in response to poorly understood concepts of ‘climate change.’”

Asked whether the council has leadership obligations on this matter, Mr. Shanahan replied: “No. I don’t believe in leading my community. People are entitled to the quiet enjoyment of their property. I don’t see the Town Council as taking a leadership role in public policy beyond the boundaries of the town.” ■

CAKES

continued from page 3

inspiration was Ms. Umphreys’ grandmother’s angel-food cake recipe. The bakery also grew to sell cupcakes, cookies, pots de creme, tarts, granola, scones and other treats.

Angel Heart Cakes took home best bakery and dessert in the Almanac’s annual Readers’ Choice competition the past three years, from 2013 to 2015. The two said goodbye to customers and introduced the new

owner at the bakery on Dec. 1.

“I think we just feel like paying it forward ... with somebody young and very talented to take over from what we did,” Ms. Rivera said. “We’re very excited to see all the changes at Marsh Manor in the time we’ve been there with all the new businesses. That was part of our goal, to help re-energize the mall. We just recognize it’s time to step down ... we needed to pass the baton.” ■

Go to AlmanacNews.com/blogs to see Elena Kadavy’s Peninsula Foodist blog.

Surf Air co-founder sues airline, investors

By Barbara Wood
Almanac Staff Writer

It appears it is not only the Peninsula residents who live under the flight path of Surf Air who are angry with the small commuter airline that uses the San Carlos Airport as one of its destinations.

One of Surf Air's co-founders, David Eyerly, has sued the company and its investors for at least \$125 million, saying they forced him out and took the equity he had been promised.

In the lawsuit, filed in Los Angeles County Superior Court on Nov. 12, Mr. Eyerly says he came up with the idea for Surf Air, which flies in and out of small California airports, offering unlimited flights for a monthly fee. He founded the company in November 2011 with his brother, Wade Eyerly, but after the two brought in financial partners, he was forced out, he says.

In addition to Surf Air, the lawsuit names financial backers Anthem Venture Partners and William Woodward; Velos

Partners and Raj Ganguly; and Base Ventures and Erik Moore.

The lawsuit says Surf Air is "a successful, rapidly growing airline" and currently valued at more than \$1 billion. "It is projected to grow seven-fold and in the next five years will be worth multiple billions of dollars," it says.

That growth has worried local residents, who have been protesting the noise made by Surf Air's Pilatus PC-12 single-engine turboprop planes since soon after the airline began flying into San Carlos. As the airline has grown, the number of flights in and out of San Carlos has steadily increased, as have complaints.

According to Charles Sipkins, speaking for Surf Air, the company "will always defend itself against meritless litigation and is confident this case will ultimately be dismissed." Mr. Sipkins, former chief communications officer for Sony Pictures, has a public relations firm that handles corporate communications and crisis management.

The lawsuit says that David

Eyerly came up with the concept for the airline, which started flying in and out of San Carlos in June 2013, while he was a student at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Florida. In addition to having passengers pay a monthly subscription fee, he wanted to use small airports that do not require TSA screening.

The lawsuit says that David

Eyerly spent two years getting FAA approval for the concept. "The FAA told Dave it had never seen" the regulations Surf Air operates under "used in the way he was proposing," the lawsuit says.

The lawsuit claims that David Eyerly was forced out by board members representing the company's financial backers, first from his position

as Surf Air's chief operating officer, and then as a board member. He left, it says, after being promised he would retain a 12.5 percent stake in the company, but later found he had only a .75 percent stake.

Later his brother, Wade Eyerly, and other early employees were also forced out, the lawsuit says.

The lawsuit asks for damages "believed to be in excess of \$125 million" plus punitive damages. ■

Santa to visit local fire stations

Santa may be known for bringing gifts, but this year his "elves" are also collecting them at the Woodside Fire Protection District's three open houses on Wednesday, Dec. 16, from 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Families are encouraged to bring new unwrapped toys for the Toys for Tots program when they visit with Santa and check out the fire engines at Station No. 7 at 3111 Woodside Road in Woodside; Station No. 8 at 135 Portola Road in Portola Valley; and Station No. 9 at

4091 Jefferson Ave. in Redwood City.

Firefighters will serve guests cookies and hot cocoa.

Battalion Chief Emil Picchi says they collect toys year-round and store them in a Redwood City warehouse affectionately called "Toyland," but December is when the spirit of giving shifts into high gear.

Several hundred volunteers take the wish lists that have been formally gathered at various locations, such as the Fair Oaks Community Center, and then meet at Red Morton

Community Center to sort through truckloads of toys and match them with recipients.

After the presents are wrapped, they go back to Toyland in time for Santa to deliver them by cars, vans and engines driven by personnel from Woodside Fire Protection District, Redwood City police and fire departments, San Carlos Fire Department, and the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office.

Hundreds of deliveries are scheduled for Dec. 15, 17 and 18.

— Kate Daly



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Barbara Snow retires after 42 years with Menlo Park district

By Barbara Wood
Almanac Staff Writer

Barbara Snow started working for the Menlo Park City School District in 1973 — before many of the parents of current students were born.

Since 1980, Ms. Snow has worked in the office at Oak Knoll School, most of those years as the office manager. When students return from winter break in January, however, Ms. Snow won't be at her desk. She'll be enjoying retirement.

She says she's looking forward to a more flexible schedule, "just having lunch and taking walks when I want to — that's going to be fun."

She's also looking forward to "being able to take a

vacation that is not in the month of July," she says. "I've never really been out of the country. I think we'll do some international travel a little bit."

Ms. Snow is going to miss what she calls her "family" at the school, the staff, the parents and the students who come in "to give you a hug." The students "come in when they're not feeling good, or they've been hurt," she says, but also just to say hello.

Instead, she'll spend more time

with her other family: her parents who are 94 and 91, her two children, and her 8- and 10-year old grandchildren, who live in Southern California. She plans to "watch their games and their plays and everything else I've never been able to do."

Ms. Snow was skeptical when she was told being a grandmother "is just the greatest thing in the world." Then came Ryan and Ella, and, suddenly, those claims were "understated," she says. Being a grandparent is "the best thing in my life," she says.

Ms. Snow's parents, Mary and Bob Hagman, moved to Menlo

Park when she was in the sixth grade. They still live in the Sharon Heights home they moved into all those years ago. Back then, their home was one

of the first on the street and the old Sharon Mansion still loomed over the neighborhood, Ms. Snow says. Mr. Hagman was the architect of the nearby St. Denis Church.

Ms. Snow says that when she started working at Oak Knoll, the school had only around 300 students. Now, it has 750. "It changes all the time," she says. "I can't keep up with the technology."

The typing and shorthand she learned while majoring in child



Photo by Michele Le/The Almanac

Office Manager Barbara Snow "has always had a special way to make everyone feel connected and important," says Oak Knoll School Principal Kristen Gracia.

Principal Kristen Gracia says she is 'sad to think about our school without her bright face and welcoming hugs.'

development and minoring in business at California Polytechnic State University have become a little outdated, she says.

Oak Knoll Principal Kristen Gracia says she is "sad to think about our school without her bright face and welcoming hugs." Ms. Snow, she says, "has always had a special way to make everyone feel connected and important."

Ms. Snow says she will miss the school, a lot. "It's the luckiest place to be," she says. "You just get to enjoy the kids and enjoy the parents. Those are the two things I love the most."

She will also miss the infinite variety of the job. "I would just hate to have a job that you went to and you were behind a desk all day," she says. "In 42 years, I've never had two days that were the same."

Ms. Snow lives in Redwood City with her husband, Richard, who works for United Airlines. She says she's worried she may just find herself in the car in the mornings, ready to make her usual commute.

Over the years, she says, Oak Knoll has become a better and better place to work. "You can come in in the morning with

a thousand problems on your shoulders ... and you can be here for 10 minutes and don't have another thought" about them, she says. "There's so much positive feelings going through the office."

She has told Principal Gracia: "It's too bad you can't make this really miserable for me so it will be easier to say goodbye."

On Monday, Dec. 14, from 2:55 to 4 p.m., the school community will be able to say goodbye to Ms. Snow on the upper playground, or in the gym if it rains. Parents, students and alumni are all invited to attend, sign a memory book and have refreshments. ■

Menlo Park's new mayor has his hands full

By Kate Bradshaw
Almanac Staff Writer

The new mayor of Menlo Park says the city is at a unique moment, when community processes, such as the city's general plan update, and development projects, including those proposed by Stanford University and Greenheart Land Co., are on the verge of being implemented.

"The community process works," said Councilman Rich Cline, elected by his fellow council members Dec. 1 to a one-year term with the title of mayor.

The time it took to go through the bottom-up process in generating the city's El Camino Real/downtown specific plan has enabled Menlo Park to

think "boldly" about what the city's future should look like, he said.

With so much on the city's plate, Mr. Cline said he will focus on moving ahead with projects that are in the works — including a revision of the city's general plan — rather than launching new initiatives.

The general plan review includes revising zoning in the city industrial M-2 zone, located east of U.S. 101. Among his top concerns for that area are planning for flooding and handling emergency response. As for drought concerns, he said he would support using grey or recycled water where possible, especially for commercial purposes.

Referring to the traffic that paralyzes the city's arteries dur-

ing peak hours, he spoke optimistically of partnerships with local companies and institutions — such as Facebook, SRI and Stanford — to share ideas about how to create more effective alternatives to commuting by single-occupancy vehicles, including the possibility of an electric trolley, such as the city of Monterey has.

He said he favors "smart" traffic signals that can better coordinate traffic, and apps and technology to more effectively monitor and measure traffic.

Acknowledging that the city has no control over schools, he said one of his concerns is that Menlo Park children "do not share the same educational opportunities."

He said he'd like to see Belle Haven Elementary School and

Willow Oaks School incorporated into the Menlo Park City School District, but recognizes the obstacles that would have to be overcome: sacrifices on both sides, short-term dilution of services, and even potential short-term impact on home values.

This is the third term as mayor for Mr. Cline, who has been on the council since 2006. As mayor, he will represent the city of Menlo Park at ceremonial and public functions and preside over council meetings. He said he hopes to make council meetings more efficient.

The council followed its tradition of rotating the title of mayor among council members who have served at least one year, with priority going to whoever has not been mayor for the longest time.

Councilwoman Kirsten Keith, who was elected vice mayor for

a year by her fellow council members, will serve as mayor in Mr. Cline's absence. ■



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

Rich Cline was elected mayor by his fellow council members for a third time.

Filmmaker fights bullies one screening at a time

Iknew he'd be victimized," the father of a bullying victim said onscreen as 30 people in the Hillview Middle School auditorium in Menlo Park viewed the documentary, "Bully," on Dec. 2.

The father in the film was mourning the loss of his son, who had died by suicide related to bullying. Throughout the film's 98 minutes, five families' stories unfolded, showing the lives of children deeply affected by bullying. It depicted the story of a gay teen, a child with special needs, and children who were bullied because they did not fit in with their peers.

After the screening, Lee Hirsch, the film's director, took the stage to answer questions. He said that after the 2011 film's initial success and impact, he started The Bully Project, what he calls a "pop-up nonprofit." His activism to combat bullying emerged because "the film was galvanizing people in ways that wouldn't happen naturally," he said.

He realized the film could have even more impact if it were to come with a toolkit of ideas and strategies for parents and schools to use to address bullying.

Go to thebullyproject.com for more information.

After the film, Mr. Hirsch fielded questions from parents for nearly an hour, asserting that while there are some things parents can do to help kids who may be facing bullies, schools must take seriously the task of preventing and stopping bullying.

When he pointed out that there were no administrators present (the film presents a somewhat unflattering view of some school administrators), parents leapt to the defense of the local school administrators, saying that Menlo Park has been

proactive at addressing bullying in its schools.

Just like schools provide some kids with free or reduced price lunch to ensure they are all getting at least one meal per day, Mr. Hirsch argued, they should take similar actions to provide social and emotional support, ensuring that all children have at least one adult at the school who knows what's going on in that child's life.

Cyberbullying, he said, should not be treated as a separate

condition from "relational," or in-person, bullying. He said cyberbullying is most toxic and harmful when it extends from the online realm to in-person interactions among peers, so both need to be addressed together.

Finally, the evening was not complete until at least one audience member suggested a tech solution to the problem, in this case recommending a platform for people to rate schools based on their safety from bullies. ■



Filmmaker **Lee Hirsch** offered advice to parents after a screening of his documentary, "Bully," in Menlo Park.



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Goodbye, Sunset

Sunset Publication Corp. permanently vacated its offices Friday, Dec. 4.

It sold its Menlo Park properties in December 2014 to Embarcadero Capital Partners, and will relocate its offices to two new sites.

Editorial and business operations will move to Oakland's Jack London Square. The test garden beds and kitchen will move to Sonoma and share space with Cornerstone Sonoma, which contains gardens, wine-tasting, art galleries and outdoor event space.



Gift in a jar

Spread holiday cheer with simple do-it-yourself presents

by My Nguyen
photos by Veronica Weber

The holiday season can be hectic, and sometimes gifts can fall through the cracks until the very last minute. But no need to panic. Below are four easy — and thoughtful — last-minute gifts ideas using a common household item: a mason jar.

Holiday hot chocolate in a jar

Keep your loved ones warm this holiday season with a cup of rich hot cocoa. Layer the dry ingredients (hot chocolate powder, dry milk powder, powdered sugar, mini marshmallows, crushed candy canes and chocolate chips) in a

mason jar for a fun and festive gift. Add a miniature bottle of Baileys Irish Cream for a “spiked” hot cocoa.

What you'll need:

- One 32-ounce mason jar
- Five packets of hot chocolate
- 1 3/4 cups of dry milk powder
- 3/4 cup of powdered sugar
- Crushed candy canes
- Mini chocolate chips
- White mini marshmallows
- One miniature bottle of Baileys Irish Cream (optional)

Pour the cocoa powder into the bottom of the mason jar. Then add a layer of dry milk powder and powdered sugar, followed by a layer of chocolate chips and crushed candy canes. Top everything off with the marshmallows and seal the lid. Tie the miniature bottle of Baileys and a gift tag to the neck of the jar with twine.

Festive M&M cookies in a jar

Whether it's sugar, gingerbread or shortbread, cookies evoke warm Christmas memories, so how about gifting a co-worker or neighbor a mason jar filled with pre-measured dry ingredients so they can turn the contents inside the jar into a batch of delicious holiday treats?

What you'll need:

- One 32-ounce mason jar
 - 1 1/2 cups of all-purpose flour
 - 1 teaspoon of baking powder
 - 1/2 teaspoon of baking soda
 - 1/4 teaspoon of salt
 - 1 cup of red and green M&Ms
 - 1/3 cup of brown sugar
 - 1/2 cup of granulated sugar
- Combine the flour, baking powder,

baking soda and salt in a bowl and pour into the bottom of the mason jar. Then pour the brown sugar and granulated sugar on top of the mixture. Top everything off with the M&M candies.

Now, it's time to decorate the jar. Cut a 6 1/2-inch-diameter circle of red fabric and place it over the opening of the jar and seal the opening with the lid. Tie a colorful ribbon around the outside of the lid and add a festive label to the front of the jar. Lastly, include instructions (see below) on how to make the cookies.

Instructions:

Pour the contents of the mason jar into a bowl and stir. Add 1/2 cup of melted unsalted butter, one beaten egg and 2 teaspoons of vanilla extract. Stir until everything is combined. Chill the dough for 30 minutes. Roll the dough into small balls and place them on a lined baking pan. Bake at 350 degrees for eight to 10 minutes.

Relaxation in a jar

Bath salts are a wonderful and relaxing gift for any woman in your life — mom, sister-in-law or best friend. Add peppermint extract to the bath salts for a refreshing and festive scent.

What you'll need:

- One 32-ounce mason jar
- 12 cups of Epsom salt
- 4 cups of baking soda
- Peppermint oil
- Red food coloring

Combine the Epsom salt and baking soda in a large bowl. Add 15 to 20 drops of peppermint oil and stir. Add more or less depending on your preference.



Divide the bath salts in half, put one half in a separate bowl and add 10 drops of red food coloring. Next, layer the two kinds of bath salts in the mason jar so the contents resemble a candy cane. Seal the lid and tie a gift tag to the neck of the mason jar with red-and-white twine.

Gift card in a jar

Gift cards are great last-minute gift options but sometimes they feel a little impersonal. Instead of stuffing the gift card in a generic card holder or plain white envelope, gift the gift card in a





Michele Colucci stands next to her Christmas tree adorned with official White House ornaments in her Woodside home on Dec. 2.

Of tinsel and memories

Local residents create Christmas trees that reflect experiences, histories

by Sue Dremann / photos by Michelle Le

When the Christmas season begins, Palo Alto resident Nicole Macuil always remembers the most beautiful holiday tree she has ever seen: An exotic white and turquoise Christmas tree at a friend's house that has become the basis of her holiday tree goals and one she always wished to emulate, she said.

"My dream was to someday have a beautiful tree that when people came to my house, they would be left in awe like I was when I saw that tree," she said.

Macuil's tree today is covered in golden butterflies, and she has named it "Dreams do come true." She is one of thousands of local residents for

whom the Christmas tree takes on special meaning. Beyond the twinkling lights, golden garlands and store-bought baubles, there are personal messages. Some are steeped in age-old cultural traditions; others, such as Macuil's, become the hub of new traditions for transplanted immigrants.

"The Christmas tree was always special. Every year, my mom and I put up the tree. I couldn't wait. It was like a comfort. It wasn't complete until I put a present underneath. I would purposely wrap anything just to put things under the tree," she said.

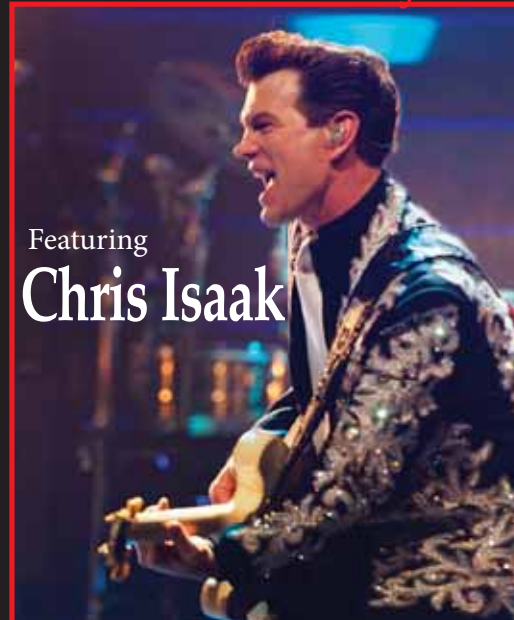
But the tree is about more than Christmastime; it is also about relationships, Macuil said.

"We both loved art and we are creative. It was about getting to bond with my mom," she said.

When Macuil married and had children, she sought out the biggest, tallest, fattest tree she could find and afford. Her first tree had pine cones on it, but during a trip to a Big Lots store, she found the golden butterfly ornaments that became the basis of her special tree. As Macuil decorated her tree, she kept returning to the store to buy more of the

See CHRISTMAS, page 12

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An official White House ornament hangs on Michele Colucci's Christmas tree.

CHRISTMAS

continued from page 11

golden-winged creatures.

"I think I went back 30 times that day. Now I think the tree has 60 butterflies all over it, and when I look at it, it's the tree that totally describes me," she said.

Every year she adds something new: a garland, a gold ribbon, a star, the handmade angels given to her by her neighbor.

Macuil's daughters are 2 and 3 years old now. This Christmas she hopes to pass down another tradition, the one in which they can help decorate, as she did with her mother.

"It's that bonding and making everything beautiful — it's the thing that brings Christmas to the house," she said.

Barron Park neighborhood resident Winter Dellenbach's family traditions have carried over from Europe.

"My husband's family has been doing this back into (their) time in Germany: They have a 7- to 8-foot candle-lit tree, hung with fresh tangerines and old German wooden ornaments," she said. "We light the tree ... and later light the Advent cake on Christmas Eve. The room is only candle-lit for evening, with the evening lasting as long as the candles do."

Family and friends are served glugg, a mulled wine, with raisins and almonds in each cup for fertility.

For Palo Alto Patricia Karmin, tradition includes passing on ornaments in her family.

"When we were children, every year we were given a special ornament to hang on the tree. Each of our collections were kept in separate boxes after the holidays. When the four of us grew up and began our adult lives, those boxes went with us to

our new homes. It made Christmas more special," she said.

"As we hung the old beloved ornaments — even the ones that became tattered or worn after 20-plus years — it brought back the memories of each Christmas we shared together," Karmin added. "Most of us carried that tradition along to our own children; those without children passed their ornaments to a special niece/nephew or child that we knew, and just kept some as keepsakes."

Karmin still has her red Santa Claus rattle ornament from her third Christmas, she said.

"Yes, his 'fur' trim is falling off, and the face paint is chipped, but it brings back the memories of our lives growing up at home and the happy events we all shared," she said.

Woodside resident Michele Colucci's tree is filled with a collection of official White House ornaments that are issued every year. She used to own and operate a chain of political memorabilia stores on the East Coast, and her sister worked as the special assistant to the president for domestic policy for a few years.

"So between her work and my retail stores, I've collected all the White House ornaments over the years," she said.

Colucci carried the official collectible ornaments from people who had received them along with personal notes from the first ladies or presidents.

"It's a wonderful collection and is reflective of the presidency back to 50 years ago," Colucci said. There's the first family sleigh ride; the presidential train car; the first presidential automobile, and many collectibles of the first family's pets: from Fala, Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Scottish terrier, to the Clintons' Socks, the cat."

But like Macuil, perhaps the most precious parts of her tree are the most personal.

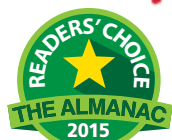
When Colucci moved from Southern California, her ex-husband would not let her bring any of the ornaments she had acquired over the years from her family, so the rest of the tree was decorated in paper airplanes her sons had created in all sorts of colors, she said.

"Though not the most expensive or all that extravagant, it's still the best tree ever for us," she said.

Christmas tree traditions carry on in some families long after the holiday is done.

"We always took our tree down on 12th night (Jan. 6)," Karmin said. "This became the last holiday party for us and our friends, complete with cookies, hot chocolate, music and much laughter. A good way to wrap up the season and begin the New Year." ❏

Palo Alto Weekly Staff Writer Sue Dremann can be emailed at sdremann@paweb.com.



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GIFTS

continued from page 10

homemade snow globe.

What you'll need:

- A 32-ounce mason jar
- A plastic gift card (without the card holder)
- Hot glue gun
- Glitter
- Miniature ornaments
- Water
- Ribbon


Make a line of hot glue on the inside of the jar lid, where the gift card will go. Stick the gift card into the line of hot glue, so that it is standing up and let it dry for 15 minutes. Put some glitter and three miniature ornaments in the bottom of the mason jar and fill with water. Screw the lid to the jar and tie a ribbon around the bottom. The gift card is unaffected by the water, and the cashier can always manually type in the numbers if the gift card doesn't scan. 

Digital Editor My Nguyen can be emailed at mnguyen@paweekly.com.

Local places to shop:

Jars: Mason jars can be purchased at local cookware shops like Sur La Table in Palo Alto or crafts stores like Michaels in Mountain View. You can always find second-hand glassware on the cheap at Goodwill thrift stores (there are locations in Palo Alto and Mountain View).

Hot chocolate: Want to kick your hot chocolate gift up a notch? Trader Joe's in Palo Alto offers a tin of Trois Chocolats, which features three blends of cocoa: salted caramel, winter spice and espresso. Teuscher Chocolates & Cafe at Stanford Shopping Center sells a mix of their famous hot chocolate to be crafted at home.

Bath salts: Epsom salts are very inexpensive and can be purchased at Mollie's Stone or Country Sun Natural Foods in Palo Alto. 

Ribbons and labels: Paper Source and Letter Perfect in Palo Alto sell festive labels and decorative ribbons to jazz up your mason jars.



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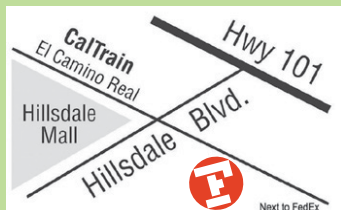
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Beware the city's high-tech highwayman

By Michael Cassidy

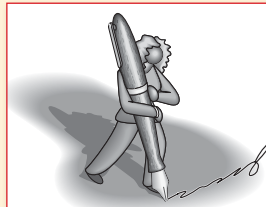
I stomped the brakes at a yellow light and stopped just short of the crosswalk along El Camino Real at Ravenswood. I should have cruised through the intersection. But I panicked. I had received notice of a traffic violation caught by a red light camera a few weeks earlier, and didn't want to risk another outrageous fine.

I admit: I was guilty. I turned right on red without coming to a full stop. The amount of the ticket, however, was surprising — \$490.

I wrote the mayor of Menlo Park, Catherine Carlton, to say the fine was high for a first offense and an otherwise clean driving record. Ms. Carlton stated she was opposed to the red light cameras but the City Council had unanimously approved them. She said I could go to a meeting to speak to the council, but she was unsure whether her colleagues would change their minds.

In the packed San Mateo county traffic court, dozens of people thought, as I did, the judge might reduce their fine. The judge announced he could reduce everyone's fee by \$90 only if they attended traffic school. I decided traffic school wasn't worth saving \$90

and paid the full fine. As far I could tell, everyone with a red light camera violation had turned right. I didn't hear of any maniacs who ran the red light at 100 mph.



Michael Cassidy lives in the Fair Oaks neighborhood of Menlo Park. He can be reached at mccassidy18@gmail.com.

GUEST OPINION

Menlo Park should admit the cameras are about revenue, not safety (tinyurl.com/Almanac07-17-13). The city states the cameras are intended to "increase voluntary compliance of motorists stopping for red lights." If safety were the primary concern, there would be a giant sign, clearly warning motorists. Instead, there is a tiny sign reading "photo enforced."

What about a guy driving drunk at insane speeds? He doesn't get caught if he clears the green light. The city's website also unequivocally states the cameras do not violate privacy. But seeing film and photos of yourself and

your passenger might make motorists feel otherwise (tinyurl.com/MPRed-LightCams490).

Fortunately, I could pay the ticket without a major impact on my monthly bills. Low-income residents, however, would certainly feel the pain of a \$490 ticket. A cleaning woman leaving an Atherton mansion might lose a few days' pay for rolling through an intersection at 3 mph.

Most alarming is that a city of only 30,000, where two-bedroom homes sell for over a million dollars, would need to extract more revenue from its citizens. If the City Council is addicted to the revenue, what is stopping council members from finding other ways to fine and tax residents? Perhaps facial recognition technology will someday allow jaywalking cameras on Santa Cruz Avenue.

According to local media reports, other Bay Area cities have banned red light cameras. If everyone who's opposed to the cameras contacts the City Council and the mayor, they might decide the pressure isn't worth the additional revenue. In the meantime, I will wait in the right-turn lane while the light is red. I'm not turning until it's green and I don't care if you're honking.

LETTERS

Our readers write

County needs independent police review office

Editor:

On April 13 of this year, a bailiff drew his loaded firearm in a courtroom while in recess at the Hall of Justice in Redwood City, and aimed it at a custodian.

News accounts allege that the bailiff, a deputy sheriff, after a verbal exchange between them, made "menacing remarks" to the custodian, followed the custodian around the courtroom aiming the gun at the custodian and asking him if he wanted some "South Carolina justice." (This event happened nine days after a white police officer killed a fleeing black man in North Charleston, South Carolina.) News articles also report that the deputy sheriff said he was "checking the sights on his newly issued handgun ..."

The deputy sheriff has been charged with a misdemeanor, and placed on administrative leave.

The district attorney is reported to be uncertain about the facts of the case. Given the seriousness of the allegations, particularly occurring in a hallowed hall of justice — where one should feel safe with officers present — the facts have to be determined. Given that this case is so internecine, it should be handled by an independent body and forum, not the District Attorney's Office. Further, quotes in the media by the district attorney suggest some confusion about whether he owes his fiduciary responsibility to the public, and not just to the accused.

The nation is at unrest about declining trust in the criminal justice system, particularly within city and county law enforcement departments. A lack of transparency has become the mantra. It is hoped that the county Board of Supervisors is monitoring this specific case, and considering the establishment of an

independent police auditing office in the county, as has been pioneered by the city of San Jose.

Henry Organ
Euclid Avenue, Menlo Park

Woodside Bakery patron hopes for reprieve

Editor:

We were shocked and disappointed to read in the Nov. 25 Almanac that our favorite restaurant, Woodside Bakery and Cafe, is threatened with imminent closure by the owner of the property.

For well over 20 years, even before the Sweyers took over the business, WB&C has been our "go to" spot for relaxed dining on the cozy patio, delicious food, wine and their unmatched bread, friendly staff and affordable prices.

Before we moved to Portola Valley 20 years ago, we often drove to Woodside Bakery from Palo Alto. Nowhere else did we find a country getaway so close by. Now, when our grown children come to visit,

or when we want to eat out with friends in a spot where we can have a conversation, Woodside Bakery is where we go.

Now it feels as if part of our home is being snatched out from under us. Surely the owner, whose businesses we have thus far patronized, can afford to be supportive of a restaurant that contributes so much to our community.

We were at Woodside Bakery and Cafe a few nights ago, and heard a rumor that the restaurant may be allowed to remain past Jan. 15. We certainly hope so. Perhaps this will give the owners of the business and the property some time to work out some kind of solution so that our beloved restaurant won't disappear from its rural spot.

Judy Lurie
Ohlone Street, Portola Valley

Teacher firing process worked as intended

Editor:

Your bias against teachers having protection from

incorrect or misguided termination is blatantly on display in the cover article, "Painful Process" (Dec. 2, 2015). Buried is your acknowledgment that the incidents provoking the charges "sound much less serious" when an impartial observer, or panel, reviews the charges.

If anyone ought to be held responsible for the errors of judgment mentioned, it is this teacher's mentor, supervisor, or other, who failed to define clearly and guide properly the correct behavior and dispatch the undesirable actions that have been "going on for years." Yet, his principal testified that the teacher had been observed more than "800 times" — repeat 800 times — without him ever witnessing inappropriate conduct!

My conclusion, after reading the entire article, is that there is some unspecified animosity against this teacher that resulted in the superintendent's decision to begin the dismissal process. Perhaps an unintended consequence is that the truly negligent, the administrators, will receive closer scrutiny of their decisions — decisions that waste taxpayers' money, subject

many to an unwarranted loss of time, diminish respect for the teaching profession, and bring disdain on a process designed to do what it did: prevent a teacher from being discharged wrongfully.

*Jeff Colflesh
Placitas Avenue, Menlo Park*

Maximize sun's warmth by trimming your trees

Editor:

The days and nights are getting colder. Fall is the time to give each tree on our individual properties major haircuts! Not a light trim, but *major cut!* It doesn't matter if they shed all of their leaves in the winter. They still need to be shaped.

Why waste electricity and gas to heat our homes when we can depend more on the warm rays of the sun during the day? Tree trimming can be expensive, but if they are kept under control in the first place, homeowners can do a lot of the work themselves.

How can we help each other live in the most conservative way we can when it comes to our natural resources?

*Jackie Leonard-Dimmick
Walnut Avenue, Atherton*

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**PLANNING COMMISSION
December 16, 2015
6:00 PM**

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Jacques Benkoski VARI2015-0007 & VARI2015-0008
117 Glenwood Avenue Planner: Corinne Jones, Assistant Planner

Review and approval/denial of Variances to setback and height requirements, to permit additions to a non-conforming main residence that encroaches into the front, side and both side setbacks.

2. Craig Adams and Anne Myong VARI2015-0005 & VARI2015-0006
623 Southdale Way Planner: Sage Schaan, Principal Planner

Review and approval/denial of Variances to setback and height requirements, to permit additions to the main residence which encroach into the east side and the rear (north) setbacks. This project was continued from the December 2, 2015, meeting.

All application materials are available for public review at the Woodside Planning and Building Counter, Woodside Town Hall, weekdays from 8:00 – 10:00 AM and 1:00 – 3:00 PM, or by appointment. For more information, contact the Woodside Planning and Building Department at (650) 851-6790.



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Admissions Open House

Sunday, December 13th | 1:00pm - 3:30pm

RSVP: kehillahrams.eventbrite.com or

to our Admissions Director, Marily Lerner, mlerner@kehillah.org

3900 FABIAN WAY, PALO ALTO | 650.213.9600 | KEHILLAH.ORG



List with DeLeon Realty
before December 15, 2015 for the
Spring 2016 market and you will receive:

- a \$1,000 gift card to The Home Depot.
- 25 hours of handyman time.
- a special pre-marketing plan* for your home, including:
 - exposure on DeLeon Realty's *Spring Showcase* website.
 - inclusion in DeLeon Realty's newsletter (65,000 copies).
 - inclusion in newspaper inserts (64,500 copies).
- our industry-leading marketing plan, including:
 - full-page newspaper ads.
 - Google & Facebook ads.
 - Chinese newspaper & radio ads.
 - 12 or 28-page custom brochures.
 - a professional-quality video.
 - a 3-D tour.

This is in addition to the complimentary services we provide to all our sellers, including:
free property inspection | free pest inspection | free staging**

*Pre-marketing for Spring Showcase will roll out the first week of January 2016.

**Includes all fees associated with design, delivery, set-up, de-staging, and the first month of furniture rental.

Disclaimer: This offer applies to listings with a signed listing agreement between Nov. 1, 2015 through Dec. 15, 2015. This is a limited-time offer for homes which will be listed to the MLS by May 1, 2016. Past listings and transactions are excluded from this offer.

650.488.7325 | www.deleonrealty.com | CalBRE #01903224