

# Mountain View VOICE



**Insect aside**  
Local photographer's series at CPA mixes beautiful, blighted  
**A&E | P.24**

OCTOBER 6, 2006 VOLUME 14 NO. 41

INSIDE: WEEKEND | PAGE 21

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VERONICA WEBER

**SPARTAN VICTORY:** Mountain View High School outperformed Los Altos in the year's annual game, beating their rival for a 21-7 win. From left, MVHS students Larisa Zdepski, Scott Bishop, Kendall Preston and Becca Zacanti cheer for from the stands. **See story, page 17.**

## Governor vetoes El Camino bill

LIEBER SAYS SHE'LL TRY AGAIN NEXT YEAR TO DECLARE HOSPITAL A PUBLIC ENTITY

By Alexa Tondreau

Amidst the frenzy of September's last-chance legislation signing in Sacramento, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger chose not to pass a bill authored by Assembly member Sally Lieber to declare El Camino Hospital a public entity.

Assembly Bill 759 would have declared El Camino to be subject to the same laws that any public institution must follow. Lieber wrote the legislation in response to a lawsuit brought against El Camino by the Service Employees International Union 715, which charged that the hospital was

withholding its financial information from the public.

The governor's written response explained that the bill "presents a clear violation of the separation of powers" because of the ongoing litigation between the hospital and the union and the fact that the court has not yet ruled on the outcome. Schwarzenegger went on to say that the bill would "deny the hospital the ability to present evidence" to justify its actions.

An official hospital statement said officials there were "gratified" by the governor's decision, and noted that they planned to continue "to operate according

to the highest standards of openness and transparency."

Lieber said she was undaunted by the setback, and that after January she will "bring the bill back up and continue to work on this issue." This failure, she said, is "just a step in a series of steps. Minimum wage took three years. It will take a couple of tries on this one."

► See **LIEBER**, page 11

**Schwarzenegger said the bill "presents a clear violation of the separation of powers."**

## City trapped in squirrel debate

DECISION TO KILL CUESTA PARK RODENTS ERUPTS INTO CONTROVERSY

By Daniel DeBolt

Recently announced plans to trap and kill aggressive squirrels at Cuesta Park has resulted in visceral reactions, including public outcry, talk of lawsuits and, ultimately, a delay from the city.

The city estimates that there have been seven incidents of squirrels scratching or biting people since May, with three bites in the last 30 days. At least four of those incidents involved children, said Dave Muela, community services director.

As a result, plans to curb the rodents' population at Cuesta were put into action last week, as squirrel-crushing traps were placed in the trees around the children's play area.

"I don't imagine we're going to be removing every squirrel in Cuesta Park," said council member Mike Kasperzak. "But we have a duty to do something."

Whether that includes using the traps remains to be seen. City manager Kevin Duggan said Tuesday that the city is still considering other options and that the traps installed in the trees have not been set yet.

The latest victim was Andrew Packard, 4, who was bitten and scratched two weeks ago while reportedly carrying a muffin. He received precautionary rabies shots. The city could not provide records of all the squirrel attacks by press time.

The city has been quietly trying to deal with the problem since an attack on a child in May. Animal rights advocates were frustrated that they did not know about the city's troubles before a solution was "sold" to the city, as Henry Coletto, a former county game warden, put it.

Duggan said the city tried to use a "live and let live" approach,

► See **SQUIRRELS**, page 12

## Little Blue alarm bells

Former game warden Henry Coletto now works with the Little Blue Society, one of many groups stepping into the fray over Mountain View's squirrel-trapping plans. The Peninsula-based group has asked the city to hire it on a consultation basis to come up with a long-term solution to its problem.

As for the idea of thinning the squirrels' numbers, it won't work, according to the group's president, Mary Paglieri. Paglieri cited studies that say killing off an animal population often results in

► See **SQUIRREL ALARM**, page 13

### GOOD EATS

**Mountain View's own Chez TJ**, known locally for its fine French food, has hit the big time: The restaurant was given a star by the 2007 Michelin Restaurant Guide, making it one of only two South Bay eateries to be so highly ranked. **See full story, page 7.**

**For a look at recent changes** in the dining scene along Castro Street, **see InBusiness, page 29.**

INSIDE

GOINGS ON 33 | MARKETPLACE 35 | MOVIES 25 | REAL ESTATE 42 | SPORTS 17 | VIEWPOINT 18



**Susan Sims**



**MOUNTAIN VIEW** ■ Wonderfully updated 3bd/2ba ranch-style home featuring a spacious, open floor plan. Terrific neighborhood with top Los Altos schools. Large corner lot.  
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**LOS ALTOS** ■ Well maintained, tastefully updated 4bd/2ba home. Spacious, light-filled master with newly remodeled bath. Pool + patio for entertaining.  
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**Betty Rooker**



**MOUNTAIN VIEW** ■ Very luxurious, spacious 3 bedroom, 2.5 bath Mediterranean-style home in Cuernavaca's resort like atmosphere. Updated kitchen + gorgeous HW floors.  
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**Jack Earl**



**SANTA CLARA** ■ 3bd/2.5ba town home with no common walls. Formal dining room, gourmet kitchen, hardwood floors, + separate family room Private yard.  
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**SUNNYVALE** ■ Cathedral ceilings add to the spacious feeling of this wonderful open floor plan. 3bd/2ba with great curb appeal nestled in a quiet cul-de-sac.  
**\$1,099,000**

**Mary Marley**



**SUNNYVALE** ■ Remodeled 3bd/2ba Cherry Chase home with gourmet kitchen, spacious master suite and large family room. New cottage with a full bath & kitchen.  
**\$1,050,000**

**Judy & Jana Faulhaber**



**MOUNTAIN VIEW** ■ The neighborhood adds charm to this inviting 3bd/2ba home with refinished HW floors. Front yard has been professionally landscaped.  
**\$1,068,000**

**Margit & Monika**



**MOUNTAIN VIEW** ■ New 6bd/3ba home in the heart of downtown Mountain View. Exquisite finishes and amenities, gourmet kitchen, crown moldings + high ceilings.  
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**Cindi Kodweis**



**MOUNTAIN VIEW** ■ Lovely, pristine 2bd/1.5ba town home in Cypress Point Woods with deck overlooking the greenbelt. One-car detached garage, tennis courts + pool.  
**\$599,000**



# Voices

A R O U N D T O W N

Asked in downtown Mountain View. Pictures and interviews by Amber Cleave.

## What should be done about the squirrels in Cuesta Park?



*"Attacking squirrels? I never thought I'd hear the day. Killing is probably the cheapest way to solve the problem, but I'd say they should be moved."*  
**Jake Griswold, Mountain View**



*"I definitely don't think that they should be killed. Maybe they should close off the park and stop feeding the squirrels for a while. They have their own food resources. Humans should know better than to feed the squirrels."*  
**Danielle Clark, Mountain View**



*"I think that humans are the problem because they are feeding the squirrels. People should stop feeding them and be sure to put their trash in the trashcans."*  
**Angela Trillo, Mountain View**



*"They should be trapped and relocated, but definitely not killed."*  
**Melinda Gilstrom-Ryback, Sunnyvale**



*"Move 'em or shoot 'em; either one."*  
**Jason Wiles, San Jose**



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## Community Health Education Programs October 2006

Web site • [www.pamf.org](http://www.pamf.org) E-mail • [publicaffairs@pamf.org](mailto:publicaffairs@pamf.org)

### Events & Lectures

**"Diagnosis and Treatment of Male and Female Infertility"**  
Tuesday, Oct. 10, 7 – 8:30 p.m.  
Lillian Swiersz, M.D., PAMF  
Reproductive Endocrinology  
Andrew Epstein, M.D.  
PAMF Urology

Join us to hear a discussion of the causes, diagnostic testing and treatment options available to couples seeking medical intervention to improve their chances for a successful pregnancy.

**"Urinary Incontinence"**  
Friday, Oct. 13, 10 – 11:30 a.m.  
Elizabeth Vaughn, P.A.  
PAMF Urology

Urinary incontinence is a common and treatable condition affecting people of all ages. The speaker will address the different type of incontinence, the symptoms, evaluation and treatment options.

**"What's New in the Treatment of Heart Failure"**  
Monday, Oct. 23, 3:30 – 5 p.m.  
Aria DiBiase, M.D.  
PAMF Cardiology

Discussion of heart failure treatment available today as well as what is currently being investigated in ongoing research.

Hearst Center for Health Education, Level 3, Jamplis Building, Palo Alto Medical Foundation, 795 El Camino Real, Palo Alto. RSVP to (650) 853-4873.

### Classes

**"Supermarket Wise,"** Tuesday, October 10, 2:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Learn techniques for making healthier food choices in a local supermarket with tour dietitian Karen Ross, M.S., R.D.

**"Good Nutrition and Feeding Practices for Toddlers,"** Saturday, October 21, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

This class will address parental concerns regarding nutrition and feeding practices. It should be attended by parents or caretakers only.

**"What You Need to Know About Warfarin,"** Wednesday, October 25, 2 – 3 p.m.

Learn what warfarin is, why you are taking it and how you can help yourself.

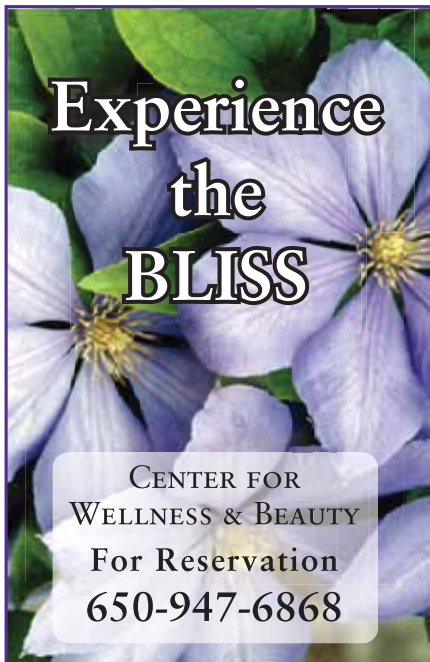
**"Advance Health Care Directives,"** call for available dates and times.

PAMF's specially trained volunteers will provide advice and answer questions about the Advance Health Care Directive form. Free.

### Support Groups

Cancer (1st & 3rd Tuesdays) • Diabetes (1st Wednesday) • Multiple Sclerosis (2nd & 4th Mondays) • Sleep Apnea (1st Thursday) • Alcohol and Drug Education (Every Tuesday) • Healing Imagery for Cancer Patients (Oct. 4 & 18)

For information on class fees and to register, call the Education Division at (650) 853-2960.



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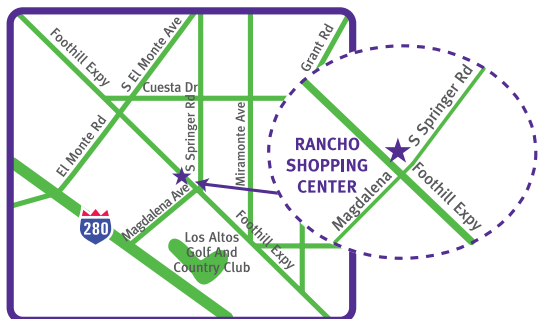
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NICHOLAS WRIGHT

## The 92-year-old dynamo

STEVIE CARR AN ONGOING INSPIRATION AT CITY HALL

By Amber Cleave

Maybe it's a result of her storied life, but at 92, Vera "Stevie" Carr still has the contagious enthusiasm usually attributed to youth.

Born in 1914, Carr lived a lifetime of adventures. She met Gen. George Patton during World War II, attended the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles, saw Ted Williams play baseball, and flew to Algiers in the nose of a bomber.

Carr has lived in Mountain View for about a decade, but before that she lived and traveled all over the world. She spent nearly 15 years in Oahu, Hawaii, where both of her children were born, and has lived in Washington, D.C., Boston, New Jersey, and was stationed in Sicily while she worked for the Red Cross during World War II.

"The Red Cross, in their efforts to prepare me for the seedy accommodations overseas, put me up overnight at a hotel in the Red Light District of Washington, D.C.," Carr once told a co-worker. "As it turns out, the accommodations overseas weren't that bad."

Carr has held several different volunteer positions for the city and is thought of as a "volunteer extraordinaire." She's also a part-time paid employee, and has worked in City Hall, the police and fire departments, city services and the senior center. The people she works with at the city are forever discussing interesting anecdotes

and tales about her.

"She is completely classy, sophisticated, and in with the times," Erika Murillo, a co-worker, said of the woman she considers a grandmother figure.

Carr's daughter, Tish Carr, refers to her as "Queen Mum." She says her mother's tenacity and vivacity are innate to her nature. "Nothing has been able to bring this woman down. Her optimistic outlook on life is her most contagious and admired attribute," she said.

A ballet dancer into her 70s, Carr makes an effort to stay as physically fit as possible. She has always been a go-getter, which is why she began working for the city in the first place: When she moved here 10 years ago she wanted to get to know the city she would call home.

Many friends say that Carr is the most influential and inspiring person they ever met.

"Her wisdom helps every one she touches. The city is fortunate to have her," said Sue Turner, a legal secretary and close friend. As put simply by city employee Darlene Joyner, "Everyone loves her." ▣

E-mail Amber Cleave at  
acleave@mv-voice.com

*Editor's Note: Snapshot is an effort to give Voice readers an inside look at the people who make Mountain View one of the liveliest cities on the Peninsula. Watch for future installments in this space.*



## Squirrel story goes nuts

By Don Frances

**L**AST WEDNESDAY I made a final check on the wires before sending the *Voice* to press. And there it was, topping the list on Bay City News: Vicious squirrels are attacking children in Mountain View.

As a former writer and editor for Bay City News, I can tell you this is one of the more astonishing stories they've ever filed. I once reported from the scene when a blimp fell on a seafood restaurant in Oakland, but that didn't hold a candle to this.

So it was no surprise to see the story take off from there. One week later, a Google search shows it's been picked up as a news oddity by media outlets all over the country.

All of them, however, seem to have overlooked an important detail: This is National Squirrel Awareness Week.

Can you believe that?

The exact timing of the special week is up for debate. According to the *Washington Post* it began last Sunday, but a bizarre Web site calling itself Scary Squirrel World ("Patriots, git yer whack-in' sticks") says it's "the second week in October," adding that "there seems to be disagreement as to when the second week in October starts. We say it begins on the Sunday after the first full week. ..."

Whatever the case, the time couldn't be better for a few squirrel facts, courtesy the aforementioned *Post* blurb:

Squirrels come in 365 species, mate twice a year, and haven't evolved in about 37 million years. Even stranger, their sweat glands are on their feet, their

► See **EDITOR'S DESK**, page 10



VERONICA WEBER

Eddie Cornego finishes up the flooring in the community room of the new Senior Center last Monday.

## Final touches on Senior Center

NEW \$16 MILLION FACILITY OFFERS MORE SPACE, EQUIPMENT AND OVERALL QUALITY

By Alexa Tondreau

**T**he new Mountain View Senior Center will open its carefully wrought doors to the public in only a few days, after being housed at an interim facility for more than a year.

The 25,000-square-foot structure, located alongside Rengstorff Park at Escuela Avenue and Villa Street, opens Oct. 16, boasting more space, more state-of-the-

art equipment and a high level of attention to quality and detail.

"We built it to be one of the nicest senior centers in the Bay Area," Mountain View senior project manager Frederick Fallah said.

The center is open to anyone over the age of 55 and will provide a variety of activities and leisure space all day Monday through Friday, and on Monday and Wednesday evenings. Traditionally, 100 people a day show up at

the center, from Mountain View and its neighboring communities, and that number is expected to rise at the larger facility.

The city council approved the project two and a half years ago, after determining that the old building was not earthquake-safe or fully equipped for disabled users. Council members chose the overall design and were presented

► See **SENIOR CENTER**, page 14

## Body found near Landels Elementary

DEATH OF PALO ALTO MAN AN APPARENT SUICIDE, POLICE SAY

By Daniel DeBolt

**A** Palo Alto man was found dead along Stevens Creek trail near Landels Elementary School last week, alarming neighbors and parents whose children at the school were put into a precautionary lock-down.

Eric Soderstrom, 45, was found dead at 1:17 p.m. last Wednesday, Sept. 27 (after the *Voice* went to press), from what police believe to be a self-inflicted gunshot wound. A small handgun was found at the scene, and a suicide note was

found at his Palo Alto residence, police said. Members of his family have been contacted.

"It appears to be a suicide," said Joanne Pasternack, a police spokesperson.

Police said a person affiliated with Landels — originally said to be a teacher, but those reports were unconfirmed — found the body on the trail about a fifth of a mile north of the school near Central Expressway. Police said a bike that was parked there hadn't moved over a period of time, and that the person, noticing the bike, began to look around.

Immediately after the discovery, Landels Elementary went into a lock-down, with students and teachers staying in their

classrooms until the nature of the discovery could be ascertained by police. A letter from Landels principal Phyllis DeMattos went out to parents that afternoon, stating that "There was a police emergency on the Stevens Creek Trail. As a precautionary measure Landels went into a lock-down."

The letter went on to describe the incident as "a medical emergency that had no criminal element. ... If your children come home and ask any questions please assure them that they were never in any danger."

In her letter, DeMattos praised the school's response. "I am proud of the students and teachers for performing such an exemplary lock-down measure," she wrote.

■ CITY COUNCIL

## Protection proposed for old bordello

By Daniel DeBolt

**C**ouncil member Greg Perry doesn't want there to be any excuse for the former brothel, dog track and speakeasy at 655 Eunice Ave. to be torn down, particularly as a result of a city ordinance.

But because it was built by gangsters, the old Wunderman house isn't exactly up to code. So Perry plans to propose a modification to city law so that historic structures that aren't registered historic landmarks will have extra protections from city inspections.

The city was about to make its final approval Sept. 26 for annexing the property, but stopped short of taking control of the land from the county because of Perry's concerns. He's scheduled to make his proposal Oct. 10.

Under current ordinances, Perry said, if the city were to annex the property it could

► See **WUNDERMAN**, page 6

E-mail Daniel DeBolt at [ddebolt@mv-voice.com](mailto:ddebolt@mv-voice.com)



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## Camino Medical Group

A Division of the Palo Alto Medical Foundation

### South Asian Heart Smart New class!

Learn lifestyle modifications to help you avoid diabetes and heart disease.

Oct. 11 or Nov 8, 6-8 p.m.  
Fee: \$25

### Mind-Body Stress Management

Three-week session on mindful awareness and stretching to balance work, family and life issues.

Oct. 16, 7-9:00 p.m.  
Fee: \$100 plus \$25 materials fee.

### Feeding Your Toddler

Class covers the parent's role in establishing healthy eating patterns, feeding dynamics, toddler nutritional needs.

Oct. 18, 7-8:30 p.m. Fee: \$15

### Sibling Preparation

Hands on class to include "expectant siblings" in preparation for a new baby.

Oct. 21, 9:30-10:45 a.m. (ages 3-5), 11-12:30 p.m. (ages 6 and up). Fee: \$25

Community Based, Not For Profit

## OnRecord

### QUOTE OF THE WEEK

*"We always dreamed that one day we would have a star."*

— GEORGE AVIET,

OWNER OF CHEZ TJ, ON THE RESTAURANT'S NEW RANKING BY THE 2007 MICHELIN RESTAURANT GUIDE

### CRIME WATCH

#### PUBLIC DRUNKENNESS, 200 BLOCK CASTRO STREET, 10/1

Police were called to Molly McGee's as the bar closed at 1:55 a.m. early Saturday. After leaving the premises, 15 to 20 persons began fighting in front of the bar. Three people were arrested for being drunk in public.

#### ASSAULT WITH A DEADLY WEAPON, ESCUELA AND LATHAM STREETS, 9/27

At 11:47 p.m. on Wednesday, a 21-year-old male was brought to El Camino Hospital with a head injury. The young man had been attacked by a large group while walking in Castro Park earlier that evening. Police say they have reason to believe

the attack was gang-related. There are currently no suspects.

#### COMMERCIAL BURGLARY, 1900 BLOCK COLONY ST., 9/27

On Wednesday at about 7:30 p.m., a man was seen atop an abandoned building, with a white van parked behind a fence near the building. Someone noticing the strange scenario called police to report it.

When the officers arrived, they saw movement inside the building and then saw the white van speed away. Police stopped the van and found air conditioning equipment and copper wiring, which the man had stolen from the business. The suspect was arrested.

### POLICE LOG

#### ATTEMPTED SUICIDE

Central/Stevens Creek Trail, 9/27  
2000 block Latham St., 10/1

#### AUTO BURGLARY

100 block E. Middlefield Rd., 9/28  
800 block N. Rengstorff Ave., 9/28  
800 block N. Rengstorff Ave., 9/28  
200 block Fairchild Dr., 9/28  
100 block Flynn Ave., 9/29  
Del Medio Ct./Montelena Ct., 10/1  
2600 block Bayshore Pkwy., 10/1  
Broderock Way/Terminal Blvd., 10/1

#### BATTERY

Evandale Ave./Piazza Dr., 9/29  
Jennifers Taqueria, 9/29  
200 block Castro St., 10/1  
500 block Showers Dr., 10/2

#### COMMERCIAL BURGLARY

Valero, 9/30  
200 block Polaris Ave., 9/30  
2600 block Bayshore Pkwy., 10/1  
1000 block Miramonte Ave., 10/1  
600 block Showers Dr., 10/2

#### DOMESTIC DISTURBANCE

Latham St./Showers Dr., 9/28  
1800 California St., 9/29

#### STOLEN VEHICLE

300 block Villa St., 9/27  
300 block Flynn Ave., 9/28  
900 block E. El Camino Real, 9/28  
1100 block Nilda Ave, 9/28  
200 W. Evelyn Ave., 9/29

#### VANDALISM

500 block S. Rengstorff Ave., 9/28  
2400 block W. El Camino Real, 10/1

## WUNDERMAN

► Continued from page 5

prevent the Wunderman family from "extending the useful life of the building," such as restoring its roof or electrical system.

Alan Wunderman and his mother, Gilda Wunderman, were pleased to hear the news that their house could receive additional protections. Gilda had concerns when

the city first approached her earlier this year to annex the property, but thought they had now been addressed.

"I hope it passes," she said of Perry's proposal.

In the 1970s, the Wunderman family fought off annexation by a more hostile city council that wanted to see the house demolished because of its past. The excuse used was that the house violated city building codes. ■

# Chez TJ wins a star

By Amber Cleave

The 2007 Michelin Restaurant Guide brings more prestige and focus to downtown Mountain View dining, as it recently rated Chez TJ with one star.

The review stated, "Chez TJ cossets diners in a series of intimate rooms inside a Victorian-era house off the main street in Downtown Mountain View. Christopher Kostow's talented and playful touch updates French classics. The well-informed waitstaff describe each dish in detail. The place is a local institution and a favorite

for birthdays, anniversaries and other special occasions."

Over 700 restaurants in the Bay Area were scrutinized by Michelin, and only 29 restaurants received stars. Chez TJ, located at 938 Villa St., is the only restaurant in Mountain View to be honored so highly, and it shares the new ranking with only one other restaurant in the South Bay — Manresa, located in Los Gatos, which received two stars from Michelin.

Together, these two restaurants boost South Bay dining's standing nationwide.

The owner of Chez TJ,

George Aviet, states that this is a dream come true. Since the restaurant opened in 1982, a star from Michelin has always been a goal. When he travels in Europe with his wife and family, he said, they use the Michelin Guidebook to help them decide where to dine.

"I dedicate this honor to my partner, Thomas McCombie. He passed away 14 years ago, but we always dreamed that one day we would have a star," Aviet said. He also gave appreciation to "our wonderful chef, Chris Kostow, who always delivers the highest quality of food, and big dreams; this moment has finally been achieved." ▣

E-mail Amber Cleave at [acleave@mv-voice.com](mailto:acleave@mv-voice.com)

## COMMUNITY BRIEFS

### WORKER CENTER HOSTS HEALTH WEEK EVENT

The second annual Binational Health Week begins Oct. 6, with Mexico, Canada and 50 counties around the U.S. participating to spread health education to Mexican immigrant workers.

The week offers seminars, health insurance sign-ups, teen workshops on sexually transmitted diseases, day worker health assessments, health education activities and screenings for Mexican and Latino immigrants and their families. All of these events will be held in cities within Santa Clara County, and they are supported by the Public Health Department of Santa Clara County, Consulado General De Mexico in San Jose, and the Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior.

In Mountain View, the Day Worker Center will host a Health and Safety Day on Wednesday, Oct. 11, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Medical diagnostics and general information about health care and disease prevention will be offered free of charge, and brochures, guidance and counseling services will be provided throughout the day.

The Day Worker Center is located at 1880 California St. For more information on Health and Safety Day or on the center, call (650) 903-4102.

### LEAGUE SPONSORS FOUR ELECTION FORUMS

Through a series of forums this month, the League of Women Voters will showcase local candidates and discuss statewide propositions on the Nov. 7 ballot.

The first forum is Monday, Oct. 9, at 7 p.m., when three candidates competing for two open seats on the Los Altos Hills Town Council will speak. That forum will be held at the Los Altos Hills Council Chamber.

Then on Tuesday, Oct. 10, at 7:30 p.m., candidates contending for open seats on the county Board of Education will appear for a discussion. The forum will be held in the Baltic Room of West Valley College, located at 14000 Fruitvale Ave., Saratoga.

Mountain View's turn comes on Wednesday, Oct. 11, at 7 p.m., when county and city candidates take the podium. Candidates for the office of county District Attorney will speak, along with the eight contenders for three open seats on the Mountain View City Council. The forum will be held at the Mountain View City Council Chambers, 500 Castro St.

Lastly, on Tuesday, Oct. 17, at 7 p.m., 13 state measures on the Nov. 7 ballot will be discussed. They cover such issues as transportation funding, parental notification, a tax on oil producers and eminent domain. This forum will be held at Congregation Beth Am, 26790 Arastradero Road, Los Altos Hills.

More election information by the League of Women Voters can be found at [www.smart-voter.org](http://www.smart-voter.org).

— Amber Cleave

### PACT, BUBB WALKATHONS THIS FRIDAY

The theme this year is "Bubb Cubs Soar Together" when Bubb Elementary School holds

its annual walkathon event this Friday, Oct. 6, from 2 to 7 p.m. The walkathon is one of two such events being held that day.

The event will include walking laps, a silent auction, prizes and food. Students set personal goals for the number of quarter-mile laps they walk, and collect pledges from parents and the community.

The event is sponsored by the Bubb PTA as a way to raise funds to better Bubb students' education, including music and arts classes and field trips. Its "Soar Together" theme was developed as a way to foster an inclusive spirit for the school's first-year attendees, most of whom transferred from Slater after it was closed down last year.

Meanwhile, the PACT school, an alternative K-5 on the grounds of Castro Elementary, will also have a walkathon Friday, from 2 to 5 p.m. on the Castro campus. The walkathon was an annual tradition at Slater, and when PACT moved from the Slater campus to Castro, it decided to bring the traditional fundraiser along.

The event's theme this year is "Fitness and Fun." Students will walk laps at the school field and will be provided with healthy snacks along the way. At certain lap milestones, students will also be presented with small prizes. The money collected from pledges will go towards the Castro PTA.

Local businesses that helped to donate food and prizes include Diddam's, House of Bagels and Round Table Pizza.

— Alexa Tondreau

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## CSA at the forefront

GROUP GETS  
INNOVATIVE WITH  
A VARIETY OF  
SOCIAL SERVICES

By Alexa Tondreau

The Community Services Agency wants local families to spend more quality time together, and on a recent Monday evening, to promote this cause, it invited about 40 low-income families to a healthy dinner.

A nonprofit organization providing assistance to more than 6,000 "at-risk" residents in the area, CSA started its "Family Day" with an hour of group exercise, including basic calisthenics and an obstacle course.

Besides the exercise and healthy food, CSA wanted to call attention to the importance of quality family time. Research shows a correlation between families sitting down together for meals and children avoiding the pitfalls of smoking, drinking or using drugs.

"A lot of times, both parents work, and from the hours of 5 to 7 p.m. they stick the kids in front of the television set, where they get exposed to a lot of awful cop shows," CSA nutrition programs director Laura Schuster said. "Eating together is a great way for parents to get to know their children and know what they're up to."

The event is just one way the diverse group helps locals in need. While Family Day targeted low-income families living in the Mountain View and Los Altos areas, many of CSA's programs target those who are truly homeless. According to recent estimates, there are between 250 and 300 homeless people in Mountain View.

Living in cars and garages, beneath overpasses, and in temporary shelters, many homeless people remain out of sight. Tom Meyer, CSA's executive director, says most local residents remain unaware of the problem.

"People get surprised when they hear because so many of [the homeless] are so invisible."

CSA offers a variety of services to provide assistance to the homeless. One of the most popular, Alpha Omega, was completely restructured in the last six months in order to better serve the community.

While it previously operated as a rotating church shelter, providing care to a very small number of carefully pre-screened clients, now Alpha Omega offers information, housing referrals and case management to drop-in clients numbering in the hundreds.

This structure better conforms to the national "Housing First"

model, developed originally in the large urban settings of Philadelphia and New York City, where it met with success. In 2005, Santa Clara County adopted the same principles, detailed in its "10-Year Plan to End Homelessness."

"The basic premise," Meyer explained, "is to get people into housing first, and then to follow with the services."

In the previous version of Alpha Omega, "The more the program went on, the more limited it became," said the Rev. Matt Broadbent, CSA board member and minister of Foothills Congregational Church. "I think it will be better now, and will serve more of the homeless community."

While many of the homeless persons that CSA supports are chronically without shelter, CSA also provides relief to those who have been temporarily displaced from their homes. CSA helped 19 families who had to vacate their homes because of the Latham Avenue apartment fire on June 13.

In a letter to the *Voice*, Trish Bubenik, executive director of the Palo Alto area chapter of the American Red Cross, described turning to Meyer at CSA when she learned that the displaced families would not be able to return to their homes anytime soon. Bubenik wrote that "CSA responded quickly to my call for assistance" and "extended motel housing through the weekend, helped clients locate affordable apartments, and opened its Food Closet."

Bubenik said she cherishes the cooperation between CSA and her group. "This partnership represents the best in community spirit," she wrote. "Your local Red Cross thanks CSA." ▀

### ■ VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Community Services Agency relies heavily on volunteers from the community, and is currently looking for additional community members willing to lend a helping hand.

Alison Hopkins, CSA volunteer director, said the group is looking for "volunteer drivers to pick up donated items from designated local stores in Los Altos and Mountain View, Monday through Friday."

Hopkins also identified a need for volunteers at CSA's Food Center, to help with "weighing, sorting and stocking food in our on-site Food and Nutrition Center." Both morning and afternoon shifts are available.

Interested parties can contact Hopkins at (650) 964-4630.



# What Every Parent Needs to Know About Eating Disorders

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- \* On Wednesday, October 11 from 7–8:30 pm in the Lucile Packard Children's Hospital Auditorium, please join Comprehensive Eating Disorders Program Directors Dr. James Lock and Dr. Cynthia Kappahn to learn more about important eating disorder signs and symptoms as well as the very latest treatments. Call (650) 724-3783 to register for this session.

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OBITUARIES

**ALEC MATTHEWS**

Alec Matthews, a centenarian and World War II veteran, died Sept. 23 in the comfort of his Mountain View home at the age of 101.

Born in 1905, Matthews experienced most of the 20th century and the onset of the 21st. He learned how to surf on the original wooden long boards in Waikiki during the 1920s, graduated from Washington State during the 1930s, and was a lieutenant in the Navy during WWII. He met his wife Peggy at Moffett Field in 1943, and they were married two years later. She died in 2002.

Matthews worked at Owens-Illinois until he retired in 1970, and he was an active member of the community through such

organizations as the Masonic Lodge, SIRS and the Peninsula Symphony Association. He was also an avid golfer into the late 1990s.

He is survived by his niece, Mary-Margaret Anderson, grandnephews Brett and Scott Spencer, and cousins who live in Washington State.

A memorial service was held at the Mountain View Chapel of Spangler Mortuaries on Sunday, Oct. 1. The family suggests donations be sent to the Peninsula Symphony Association or to Pathways Hospice Foundation.

the age of 84.

Frye was born in Peoria, Ill. During World War II he was a staff sergeant in the Marine Corp, and served at Guadalcanal. He had many different careers throughout his lifetime, including owner of the Villa Street grocery for 10 years, manager at Colonial Mortuary, and employee for Lockheed Martin and Eastman Kodak.

Frye was called "The Walking King" for his countless hours spent walking the area. He lived most of his life a resident of Mountain View, and many members of his family still reside in the area.

He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Virginia Frye; their three children, Larry, James and Debra Frye; his grandson Joey Guarnera II; and four siblings in Illinois.

Upon his request, no services will be held. Contributions may be sent in his memory to the El Camino Dialysis Services, 2505 Hospital Dr., Mountain View, 94040.

**HAROLD H. FRYE**

Harold H. Frye, "The Walking King of Mountain View," passed away on Saturday, June 24, at

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**EDITOR'S DESK**

► Continued from page 5

teeth never stop growing, and they can run 20 miles an hour.

Pretty scary, actually. With its breakaway speed and tree climbing prowess, this ancient, buck-toothed, sweaty-footed creature can pretty much attack at will. Luckily, for the most part, it only wants your nuts.

(Joking aside, there's a child in San Jose who suffered through rabies shots as a result of a squirrel bite. Please show some sense: Don't feed the squirrels.)

**NOW MORE THAN EVER** we need the help of Wildlife Rescue. The Palo Alto-based animal rehabilitation company is holding its annual fundraiser on Oct. 13, and the event, at Thomas Fogarty Winery, will feature (besides fine wine and food) a kestrel, a gopher snake, a great-horned owl and a red-shouldered hawk, according to volunteer Yiwei Wang.

To find out more about the dinnertime event, or to donate, visit [http://wildliferescue.ws/news/annual\\_gala/](http://wildliferescue.ws/news/annual_gala/).

**AS NOTED** tangentially in this week's A&E story (page 24), Mountain View-based Peninsula Open Studios is doing good work around here, including helping a local photographer show her

► See **EDITOR'S DESK**, next page

**LIEBER**

► Continued from page 1

El Camino has long contended that Lieber's bill is a shill for the union, and that its only real effect would be to allow SEIU to unionize the hospital through "agency shop," meaning that employees must become dues-paying union members whether they want to or not. Last month, hospital spokesman Jon Friedenberg told the *Voice* that the SEIU wanted to "impose agency shop on our employees without their consent."

An election to determine agency shop status was held three years ago, and the union narrowly lost. The SEIU has been pushing for another election ever since, and Friedenberg says Lieber's bill would throw the election in the union's favor.

Meanwhile, the California's Public Employment Relations Board, which oversees the collective bargaining status of public employees, recently ruled that El Camino employees could hold

another agency shop election — but the veto of AB 759 could prove a setback to that ruling.

El Camino Hospital has both a district board with publicly elected directors and a nonprofit hospital board, and there has been contention, and confusion, over when the hospital must follow public agency rules. In 2005, the *Voice* filed its own suit against El Camino requesting that the hospital release salary information for its highest paid employees.

Gayle Tiller, SEIU's spokesperson, thinks that the hospital is clearly a wholly public entity, saying "If it looks like a rose and smells like a rose, then it's a rose."

As for Schwarzenegger's veto, she said, "It is clear that the governor's anti-union bias played out here." ■

E-mail Alexa Tondreau at [atondreau@mv-voice.com](mailto:atondreau@mv-voice.com)

**EDITOR'S DESK**

► Continued from previous page

work at City Hall. This weekend in Palo Alto, she and 11 other artists will become a Gang of 12 at the Great American Framing Company.

"The event starts off Friday, 10/6, 6 to 9 p.m. with a 'meet the artist' reception," wrote Kathy Sartain. It continues though Saturday and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. both days, and "will include photography, painting, hand-made jewelry, pottery, mosaics and sculpture."

I asked Sartain how POS has affected the local art scene, and she answered that "Since the office is local I think Mountain View artists are attracted. Currently POS has our art exhibited at Printers Inc. on Castro Street through Oct. 8, and I know lots of people have stopped in."

The Great American Framing Company is located at 229 Hamilton Ave. For more info, visit <http://peninsulaopenstudios.org>, e-mail [info@peninsulaopenstudios.org](mailto:info@peninsulaopenstudios.org), or call (650) 327-4521 or (650) 302-4733. ■

Don Frances can be reached at [dfrances@mv-voice.com](mailto:dfrances@mv-voice.com).

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## SQUIRRELS

▶ Continued from page 1

but that didn't work.

"In this particular circumstance, the squirrels have become so habituated to human food [that] their level of aggressiveness has become very problematic," Duggan said.

City staff made the decision to install the traps with recommendations from the state Department of Fish and Game. The action did not require a public hearing or city council approval.

Reports that the 4-year-old's mother, San Jose resident Jennifer Packard, plans to sue the city could not be confirmed. Packard is rumored to be seeking compensation for her son's medical expenses. There were also threats — though no known filings — of lawsuits from animal rights activists should the city go ahead with the plan.

On Monday, city attorney Michael Martello said he didn't know of any lawsuits on the squirrel issue, from any party, yet.

**Squirrel-crushers**

Following the initial attacks, and before the decision to trap the squirrels was made, park rangers increased patrols in the park, Muela said. He said they talked to more than 100 people,



**A gray squirrel** sits on a wooden fence in Cuesta Park on Monday. Rangers warned parkgoers that feeding the animals makes them more aggressive.

NICHOLAS WRIGHT

many of whom were observed feeding squirrels, and warned them against doing so.

The attacks continued, however, and so the traps were brought in. Right now they are not armed — but once they are, the cylindrical wire cages will act like mousetraps, crushing the squirrels once they're tripped.

Clark Pest Control was hired for the extermination job. Officials said the company was paid \$2,500 for the first month of

implementing the traps.

A spokesperson for People for Ethical Treatment of Animals compared the traps to clamp-type traps outlawed by the state in 1998, which can maim an animal or cause it to die slowly. Martello said they were recommended by the Department of Fish and Game.

As for Fish and Game, Coletto, the former Santa Clara County game warden, blasted its recommendation to kill the squirrels without a proper site

evaluation. He said the person who wrote to the city recommending the traps, Lt. D.J. Kelly, had stepped out of his law enforcement role, and that the department's wildlife biologists should have been allowed to make the call.

In a letter to the city after phone conversations with city staff, Kelly recommends "removing them from the park by the use of traps and euthanizing them in a humane manner."

Steve Martarano, a Fish and

Game spokesperson, said the controversy was a good thing, because a discussion definitely needed to happen about the squirrels. He added that wildlife biologists were likely involved in the recommendation to kill the squirrels.

"What are you supposed to do?" Martarano said. "We don't like exterminating animals. It's not the animals' fault, but they end up suffering."

**Story has legs**

Nearby resident Lorien French is a stay-at-home mother whose children were Andrew Packard's age a few years ago. The squirrels at Cuesta Park weren't as aggressive then, she said.

French said she sees people feed the squirrels at the park regularly, and thought that euthanizing the squirrels "in a pain-free way" wasn't a bad idea, but that crushing them was inhumane.

Animal rights advocates have been much more pointed. City council members say they have been receiving angry e-mails about the traps from all over — including one from Poland.

PETA representatives said they were preparing a letter for the city as the *Voice* went to press.

▶ See **SQUIRRELS**, next page

THE ROUNDTABLE AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESENTS

## ANXIOUS TIMES: SEEING BEYOND A WORLD OF PERPETUAL THREATS

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The final decade of the 20th century was a time of great optimism. The fall of the Iron Curtain, expansion of the European Union, and the technology revolutions of the 1990s promised to unite diverse people.

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Dr. Lucy Shapiro, *Ludwig Professor of developmental biology and cancer researcher*

George P. Shultz, *former Secretary of State, Ford Distinguished Fellow, Hoover Institution*

Jerry Yang, *co-founder, Yahoo!*

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**SQUIRREL ALARM**

► Continued from page 1

the species bouncing back with even greater numbers.

Earlier this week, Paglieri sent an e-mail to the city concerned over second-hand information that dead squirrels were hanging from the traps Tuesday. The traps were seen in the trees Monday morning, but the city said they wouldn't be set for three to four days after installation.

She later withdrew her concern after she talked to the city, telling the *Voice* that the people who called her must have been very emotional.

Paglieri says people should simply shoo the squirrels away by making loud noises, and that next year their population will decrease if they are given less food. She added that the animals will travel "as far as it takes" for a meal.

"During this time of year food can be scarce," she said.

— Daniel DeBolt

**SQUIRRELS**

► Continued from previous page

They said they normally don't file lawsuits over situations like this, but that the action leaves the city open to lawsuits if an endangered species is killed unintentionally.

"Taxpayers deserve better," said Stephanie Boyles, a wildlife biologist for PETA. "We don't want [the squirrels] to die in a cruel and needlessly painful way. We need to find the underlying source, and that is people feeding them."

News watchers around the country are talking about Cuesta Park squirrels. Besides local print and TV news, papers and other outlets across the country have picked up the story. In Reno, a TV station's Web site declared, "Aggressive Squirrels Prowl Mountain View Park."

The story has reached into local classrooms as well — from De Anza College to local elementary schools.

"It's amazing the legs something like this gets," Kasperzak said.

Back at Cuesta Park, three park rangers were seen on patrol Sept. 29, and signs were prominently placed near the children's areas with a picture of a squirrel and the words, "Recently a squirrel attacked a park patron. Please do not feed squirrels as they have become aggressive, particularly where there is food." ■

E-mail Daniel DeBolt at [ddebolt@mv-voice.com](mailto:ddebolt@mv-voice.com)

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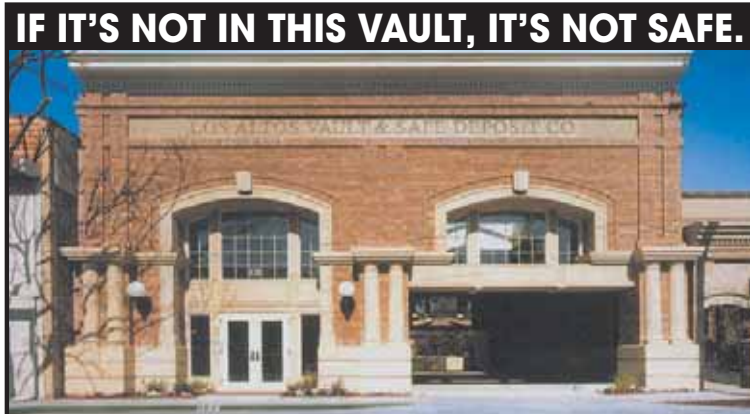
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**Cesar Rojas** paints the beams under the Senior Center and front entryway. The vaulted roof gives the center a lodge-style effect.



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**SENIOR CENTER**

► Continued from page 5

with different themes, among them ranch style, modern and a style reminiscent of a ski lodge.

The council voted unanimously for the lodge theme, so the new facility has high vaulted wood beams, earthy tones and large fireplaces that are deeply reminiscent of an old-style lodge like the famous Ahwanee Hotel in Yosemite.

"We designed it to bring warmth and to feel cozy," Fallah explained, "and there was a lot of attention to colors and materials."

Designed by BSA Architects of San Francisco and costing a

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VERONICA WEBER

**Above:** Senior Recreation Coordinator Lauren Merriman gives a tour of the arts and crafts room inside the newly constructed Senior Center in Mountain View. The center is scheduled to open Monday, Oct. 16.

**Right:** Silhouetted against Stained glass windows, Eddie Cornego applies flooring in the community room.

total of \$16 million from the general fund, the center's many rooms have notably high ceilings, with a series of skylights and plenty of overhead lighting. This sits well with Jim Cochran, a former city council member who regularly participated in a wood-cutting class at the old center and sits on the project's senior advisory committee.

"We were there to represent the users of the facility and bring in a different point of view. From some of our comments they changed the style of the roof lighting to make it better and more uniform."

There are artistic touches throughout the center, motivated by Mountain View's designation of 1 percent of construction costs to fund artistic design. East Coast artist Charlotte Paul created two sets of large stained-glass windows with a colorful tree design that are placed in the two main halls. In addition, a gate on one side of the property has an intricate ginkgo leaf motif by artist Roy Holmberg.

Besides being aesthetically

pleasing, the center is equipped with features to ensure safe and easy mobility for disabled patrons. They include wide doors, hand railings along the walls and a pull cord in the restrooms that allows patrons to sound for help.

With the new digs come a host of new activities for the center. Seniors can take arts and crafts classes, watch a matinee movie in the screening room, exercise on nearly \$25,000 worth of equipment or take yoga in the dance studio. There is also a conference room for free legal counsel and health insurance advocacy, a game hall with pool and ping-pong tables, and a technology lab with 15 new computers.

"We will be able to expand our offerings. Until now, we haven't had the ability to do all those things," said Lauren Merriman, the senior recreation coordinator.

For those who just want to relax, the main hall has plenty of comfortable seating by a fireplace that will crackle with heat in the winter — and above which is mounted a

large-screen television.

Because the center has only two full time staff members, it relies heavily on outside help, such as Adult School instructors from the Mountain View-Los Altos School District and volunteers from the community. The Community Services Agency of Mountain View will continue to serve a hot lunch every day, utilizing the facility's new industrial-sized kitchen. And the Second Harvest Food Bank will offer seniors a brown bag grocery program once a week.

The center will be available to the general public to rent on the weekends for wedding receptions or parties. But mostly, the center is for the seniors, the majority of whom have never seen the new facility.

The city council will hold a dedication ceremony at the center on Friday, Oct. 27, and an open house for the general public will take place on Saturday, Oct. 28. ▀

E-mail Alexa Tondreau at [atondreau@mv-voice.com](mailto:atondreau@mv-voice.com)



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**Los Altos wide receiver Benjamin Kohl** attempts to avoid a tackle from Mountain View defensive back Jordan Gilstrap during the game at Foothill College on Friday. Mountain View won the game, 21-7.

VERONICA WEBER

# One for the Spartans

AGE-OLD RIVALRY WITH LOS ALTOS 'KEEPS SWINGING BACK AND FORTH' — BUT THIS TIME IT'S ALL MOUNTAIN VIEW

By Alexa Tondreau

For years, large crowds have gathered under the lights to watch Mountain View and Los Altos high schools battle it out on the football field. Undeniably, this year was owned by the Spartans.

The Spartans (3-1) managed to outperform the Eagles in every significant way — running, passing and defense — resulting in a final score of 21-7 at Foothill College last Friday night.

“It was frustrating for us,” Los Altos head coach Jeff Kalb said, “That was the feeling I got from the players on the bus ride back — frustration.”

Mountain View halfback Brandon Hamilton scored within the first five minutes of the game. Hamilton, a senior, has nine touchdowns so far this season, with a total of 497 rushing yards. Quarterback Jeffery Jalaba, a junior, scored with 1:34 remaining in the first quarter. A two-

point conversion on the second touchdown ended the first quarter with a solid 14-0 lead for the Spartans.

The Eagles’ defensive line rallied in the second quarter. Notable performances came from returning seniors Yousef Saadeh and Robert Guadagnini. Yousef leads the team with five sacks this year — three in this game alone — while Guadagnini managed an impressive 11 tackles for a season total of 21.

But the Eagles (also 3-1) missed a critical opportunity to score, when at the end of the second quarter they failed on a 20-yard field goal attempt.

“We made some mistakes that were really costly,” Kalb said. “There were things we needed to do that we didn’t.”

Still scoreless in the second half, the Spartans revived their efforts in the third quarter with a fumble recovery at the 15-yard line by junior Shane Cooney. With 11:54

on the clock, halfback Brandon Hamilton scored, giving the Spartans a commanding 21-0 lead.

The Eagles gave fans something to cheer about when newcomer quarterback Daniel Young, who is the team’s passing leader with 416 yards this season, threw for Los Altos’ first touchdown with 11:34 left on the clock.

If there was a chance for a Los Altos comeback, it would have been in the fourth quarter, when Jalaba fumbled and the Eagles recovered the ball at the 29 yard line. But the Spartan line held strong, most notably with a power tackle from senior Leshawn James.

“They were a little more battle-tested,” Kalb explained, “and it was a wake-up call for all of us, from the coaching staff to the players.”

The longstanding rivalry has afforded both sides their share of glory, said Mountain View head coach Dan Navarro, who has been with his team for 20 years.

“In terms of the history of this game, Los Altos won for many years. Then Mountain View won for awhile, and it keeps swinging back and forth. There’s been [winning] streaks of years for both teams,” Navarro said.

Friday night at least, Moun-

tain View’s running game was especially strong. Navarro says he expects senior Hamilton, who last year was voted De Anza Division junior of the year for rushing 1,300 yards, to have 100 yards a game this season.

But Navarro also indicated that there was room for improvement.

“We could have thrown the ball a little better, and do some better blocking.”

Mountain View has just 34 players this year, making it smaller in size compared to other teams in the division, which typically have around 50. The Spartans have been in a perpetual state of limbo over the years between De Anza and the El Camino Division, which is easier overall and where the Spartans found themselves undefeated two years ago. Navarro describes the vacillation as the basic evolution of the team.

“When we have a good team, we go back up, and then we have seniors graduate and we get beat and we go back down. It’s a back-and-forth. But we don’t have the numbers or the size to consistently compete in De Anza,” he said.

If the Spartans were to lose a player, it could spell disaster in getting to the playoffs, and the team’s health and athleticism will be critical for this season’s success.

Meanwhile, the Eagles, playing in the El Camino league, started the year with a new coach, the third in as many years. Kalb says that “as far as the team goes, the kids are learning about each other and adapting to my style. It’s a matter of trust.”

Kalb thinks the division title will come down to Los Altos and Saratoga, and the two are slated to play this Saturday. ▣

E-mail Alexa Tondreau at [atondreau@mv-voice.com](mailto:atondreau@mv-voice.com)



VERONICA WEBER

**Mountain View High School** students Danny Brown (left) and Mitchell Goulette sport their team’s black and gold colors.

# Viewpoint

- EDITORIAL
- YOUR LETTERS
- GUEST OPINIONS

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### ■ EDITORIAL THE OPINION OF THE VOICE

## The squirrel situation

We can't recall a more contentious problem than what the city is facing now over the safety of a rambunctious squirrel population in Cuesta Park. At this writing, the city has documented seven cases of aggressive squirrel behavior, including five of young children being bitten or scratched.

For the city, the issue boils down to the unfortunate choice of either trapping and killing the squirrels or attempting to educate park users who could be attacked by the hungry rodents. It is a lose-lose situation for the city, which after conferring with the state Department of Fish and Game decided to set traps that will entice the squirrels to a quick, if not necessarily humane, death. (As of press time, city officials continued to say that while traps had been installed in Cuesta Park's trees, no decision had been made to activate them.)

The city's well-publicized dilemma has attracted regional and national attention from animal rights activists, who are threatening to bring lawsuits down on the city.

According to city officials, the problem is caused by humans feeding the squirrels. Like any animal that is given regular handouts, the squirrels now expect a free lunch from every park visitor, and when none materializes, you have a hungry, and often angry, critter on your hands.

Now the city is embarking on an education program at the park, warning visitors not to feed the squirrels, and in addition, making sure garbage containers are squirrel-proof.

But that doesn't save the city from its dilemma: It can try to rid the area of the problem squirrels, drawing the ire of animal lovers. Or it can continue with education and other, milder means, leading to criticism that it isn't doing enough to protect its citizens.

But there are other options. As far as we can tell, no biologists or other wildlife experts have been directly consulted. Different animals follow different patterns of behavior and reproduction, and the city should educate itself in developing a humane and long-term way of alleviating the problem. If, after investigating the problem fully, the city settles on removing the animals, it should consider ways to trap and painlessly euthanize them.

Another possible option for the city is to close the portion of the park that is causing the problem. By doing so, perhaps the squirrels could be weaned of human food, and park users would have more time to be educated about the dangers of feeding squirrels.

For now, the traps hang in the trees around Cuesta Park. Though not yet armed, they're designed to crush the animals once triggered — hardly a humane ending to a problem originally caused by unthinking humans.

### ■ LETTERS VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

#### CUESTA PARK WILDLIFE IS OUT OF HAND

Editor:

By now everyone must have heard about squirrel attacks in Cuesta Park. People who feed them must be educated about how easily they can turn these animals into pests. No wild animals should be fed, and it isn't cute to have squirrels eat out of your hand or pigeons landing all over you. Many of the folks feeding the squirrels are non-English-speaking, so the rangers should walk the path near the 'Y' swimming pool where many seniors and people new to the city are feeding them.

Let's not get sentimental here: These are wild animals, not to be tamed. The city should be allowed to cull them by whatever humane means they can, as it is already out of hand.

Margaret Turner  
Bonita Avenue

#### GRANT FARM PLANNERS LEFT OUT SOME DETAILS

Editor:

It seems the organization in favor of retaining the farm on Grant Road has overlooked the city's plan for that area.

Back in the 1980s when the owners of the farm, Paul and Anne, were still with us, the city of Mountain View presented a solution for a serious traffic problem we in the Waverly Park area have: turning right or left from Levin Avenue onto Grant Road. Because the Levin-Grant

intersection is too close to the Covington-Grant intersection to install a traffic signal, the city proposed a different solution.

The solution, we were told, was that when the farm was sold the city would put a left dogleg on Levin Avenue, cutting across the farm so that it met Covington. That would allow Levin to share the same traffic signal as Covington. The triangle of land created by diverting Levin to the left was to be deeded to the owners of the farm.

Dominick Garofano  
Preston Drive

#### WIN-WIN FOR THE FARM

Editor:

Our family resides in the "pumpkin patch" neighborhood off Grant Road. While we were saddened by the thought of losing the wonderful farm and holiday destination, we had always assumed that development into single-family homes was inevitable. Indeed, we took great comfort in the fact that at least it was Summerhill Homes that would develop the property. We have seen their developments in Palo Alto and elsewhere; their homes are well-designed and elegant. Under the circumstances, we viewed efforts to save the farm as mere "pie in the sky."

However, the latest proposal discussed in last week's *Voice* ("Effort begins to save the farm") has brought us hope.

► See **LETTERS**, next page



LETTERS

► Continued from previous page

The proposal would maintain part of the land for a working farm while still enabling owners Pauline King and Betty Moore, and Summerhill Homes, to profit adequately from the property.

Preserving farmland on the site presents a unique opportunity to continue to teach our children about where our food comes from and the importance of our environment. Furthermore, we would all continue to benefit from the easy availability of organically grown and locally grown produce. Seeing hundreds of children enjoy the mini-train and the holiday cheer would continue to bring seasonal joy. Finally, maintaining a financially viable farm there would keep us all in touch with Mountain View's roots in this era of development and urbanization.

We hope all parties concerned will give this new proposal serious consideration.

**Beth Van Schaack  
and Brent Lang**  
Levin Avenue

**ANNEX WORKSHOPS  
FELL BY WAYSIDE**

Editor:

An important issue from the first community workshop on Cuesta Annex seems to have been missed. The group for which I was spokesman thought it was important to minimize expenditures in the southern part of the city — both capital and maintenance costs — so that the city's resources could be used in the northern areas, where the parks and recreation needs are greatest.


Also missing was the near-unanimous objection to paving over any part of the Annex for parking. It seems that the Parks and Recreation Committee members focused more on their meeting, which was packed by sports-field enthusiasts, rather than on the two workshops, which voted for the two options that the committee prioritized last.


Judging by their naive questions, it seems that most committee members had not studied the consultants' report, and were more influenced by the impassioned pleas of the sports enthusiasts, many of whom do not live in Mountain View. The meeting ran very late, and several of the attendees, who supported retaining a natural environment, did not get a chance to speak. I trust that the city council will take more account of the deliberations of the community workshops.

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## Viewpoint

■ GUEST OPINION

# Cuesta Annex needs playing fields, not dead weeds and trees

By Jim Cochran

Last week's editorial indicates that the *Mountain View Voice* has accepted the myth that the Cuesta Annex has some kind of historical value ("Can we avoid dueling park uses?").

In fact, its history is one of disuse and the idling of millions of dollars in Parks and Recreation fees collected from developers — such as the developer of The Crossings — over the past 20 years. Sprouts from dead and dying fruit trees do not make for a historic orchard. The Franzia orchard on Whisman Road might be historic, as might the nursery on Marilyn Avenue, but not Cuesta Annex.

How can you say that "turning any part of Cuesta [Annex] to playing fields is a mistake"? Park and Rec fees from new housing development in other parts of Mountain

View were used to pay for most of this property. Those residents at least deserve a community facility where their children can participate in sports. They do not need more sidewalks and trees that duplicate what we already have next door in Cuesta Park.

The recreation plan that is currently in process is needed — but it is not needed for determining that we need more playing fields. Those hearings and investigations have already been completed and we do need more playing fields. Other than Cuesta Annex, the only suitable space was found to be a six-acre piece of land on Shoreline Park. That land should be developed, but it is not expected to solve our field space needs. The study also considered converting the informal space at Whisman School to formal playing fields, but that would

merely remove informal field space and deny the neighborhood people their green space.

We know how that works at Monta Loma school. Our grass playing area is now being scheduled for team sports every weekend which removes much informal play from our neighborhood. Are you suggesting that we should get in our cars, drive three miles, then walk around Cuesta Annex to toss the frisbee and kick a ball?

You noted that "many were said to be Los Altos residents" when describing those that testified in favor of playing fields at a recent workshop. That's to be expected, since our youngsters have played on Los Altos and Sunnyvale fields, as well as our own. Field shortage in one area affects us all. If you want to advocate for equal investment based on

population, then suggest that our Recreation Department screen leagues for their percentage of Mountain View residents to assure that there is balance.

I have confidence that our city council will do what's best for the entire city. I believe they will see that our teams need more playing space, and the Cuesta Annex property can provide two or three fields for these healthful sports. They will see that we don't need new sidewalks winding through dried weeds and shabby trees. If we need that, then they can designate a portion of Cuesta Park where staff will stop watering and caring for the trees. The sidewalks are already there.

*Jim Cochran is a former council member and mayor of Mountain View. He lives on Thaddeus Drive.*

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■ RESTAURANT REVIEW

■ MOVIE TIMES

■ BEST BETS FOR ENTERTAINMENT

■ RESTAURANT REVIEW

## Burma on terra firma

SOUTH PALO ALTO SAYS HOORAY FOR GREEN ELEPHANT GOURMET

By Sheila Himmel

Let's say a neighborhood shopping center needs a new restaurant. The once-OK but recently awful Chinese joint is gone. The center has good places for coffee, ice cream, and groceries, but it needs a sit-down restaurant for lunch and dinner.

It needs Burmese!

If focus groups or marketing gurus had been consulted, Burmese cuisine wouldn't have made anybody's Top 25, but Green Elephant Gourmet is exactly what South Palo Alto's Charleston Shopping Center was missing. Also surprising, it is the owners' first restaurant.

I stumbled, literally, into Green Elephant on July 22, a scorching Saturday night deep into the heat wave.

I wasn't reviewing, just desperate for cool air. Green Elephant had been open exactly two days.

Maybe 10 other customers ate there that night. But the food, decor, and service by owners Christina Win and Michael Maung were so nice that I knew I'd be back when they really get going.

They're going now. On a recent Thursday night, Green Elephant was almost full, with neighbors happily bumping into each other once again.

You don't have to be a South Palo Altan to enjoy Green Elephant Gourmet. It is easily accessible on Middlefield Road, half a mile from San Antonio, and therefore, Mountain View. Parking is a snap.

Nor do you have to know a thing about Burmese food. Green

Elephant also has loads of familiar Chinese restaurant dishes, from wonton soup to fried rice and kung pao chicken.

But if you want to know, Burma, now called Myanmar, draws culinary influences from neighboring India, China and Thailand, particularly. Seafood and freshwater fish, rice and noodle dishes are

► See **GREEN ELEPHANT**, page 22

*Vegetarian samosas and pumpkin pork are just some of the specialty dishes at the Green Elephant Gourmet.*

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Lin Dip mixes together a tea leaf salad, while owner Michael Maung looks on at the Green Elephant Gourmet Burmese restaurant in Palo Alto.

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**GREEN ELEPHANT**

► Continued from page 21

fundamentals. Green Elephant's short life has stoked customer interest in Burmese food. Win and Maung are working on a separate Burmese menu of about 30 items, including a multi-course Burmese family dinner, and fuller descriptions of each dish. For now, here's a handful of dishes to look for, and a couple to skip. Definitely get a salad (\$7.25). Starring ginger, mango, tofu or

Burmese tea leaves as the main players, the Burmese salads appear as little artworks on your table. The server carefully spoons supporting ingredients into the central pile of chopped iceberg lettuce. In the tea leaf salad, they include fried garlic, chopped tomatoes, sesame seeds and peanuts. Mango salad features fresh, juicy slices of mango with dried corn kernels, dried ginger, fried coconut, sunflower seeds and ginger powder. Ginger lovers, go directly to the pickled ginger salad.

The Burmese soup called On

Noh Kauswer (\$7.50) is subtle and smooth, like a slightly spicy cream of tomato, but with egg noodles at the bottom of the serving bowl and lots of tender pieces of chicken. Coconut, onion, cilantro and lemon add tang and texture.

On the current menu, the Burmese dishes aren't clearly marked, except for curries. At the top of each protein type is a curry dish, and each curry is a little different. Burmese curries are closer to Thai than Indian in flavor and firepower. They highlight rather than dominate.

All the curries we tried were excellent. Green Elephant curry beef (\$10.50) features lemongrass, yogurt, bay leaves, onions and garlic. With prawns (\$12.95) there are tomatoes, and the prawns stay juicy. Chicken curry (\$9.50) dabbles in fish stock.

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VERONICA WEBER

A golden Buddha greets diners at the Green Elephant Gourmet Burmese restaurant.

and vegetables kept warm on a metal plate.

Even the mixed vegetables (\$7.95) are something special, with your choice of sauce. Get hot garlic sauce. Burmese hot is pretty subtle, unless you ask for hotter.

The Burmese noodle dish called Nan Gyi Dok (\$7.50), chicken and rice noodles in coconut sauce, also is assembled at the table.

Jasmine rice cooked with coconut milk (\$2.00) is the Burmese style, and it's richly rewarding. Green Elephant also has plain rice and several fried rice dishes.

The one Chinese dish we tried, orange beef (\$10.50) hit the sweet and spicy spot. The orange peel was like chewy candy, the beef tender and plentiful, even for the price. A border of steamed broccoli flowerets made it seem healthy.

On the down side, mango

chicken (\$9.50) should have been called mango bell peppers, for all the chicken in attendance. Maybe the Burmese samusas (\$4.95) are crisper now. And the dish called Poodi (\$7.95), potato curry served with mu shu pancakes, packs enough carbs to fuel a hike up Mount McKinley.

The wine list is short and well-intended, with a food-friendly Riesling and a Pinot Noir.

Green Elephant's decor is also welcome. It's a little formal, with white tablecloths and art glass on the tables. A red arch and bamboo trunks fence off the dining room.

For dessert, you face a fork in the road. Green Elephant's fried bananas (\$3.50) are light and crispy, with bananas cooked through. Or you can go next door and get the traditional South Palo Alto treat: Rick's Ice Cream. ▽

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### DINING NOTES

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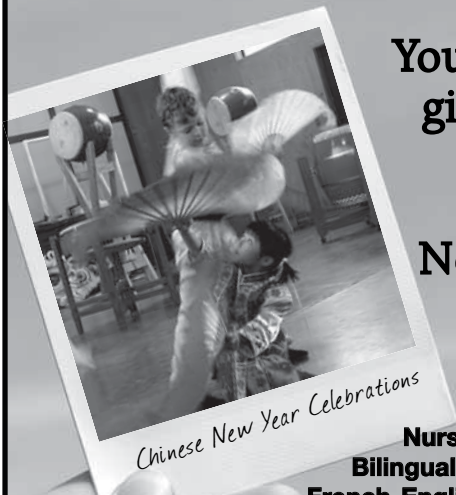


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"California Dogface Butterfly," 2005, D. Cichon

## The perfect specimen

MOUNTAIN VIEW PHOTOGRAPHER SHOOTS NATURAL  
WONDERS AGAINST BACKDROP OF URBAN DECAY

By Amber Cleave

The photography of D. Cichon embodies an unavoidable juxtaposition of modern life: the risks versus the benefits of what humanity is doing to the earth.

Staring at her photographs of vibrant butterflies and mysterious beetle specimens, viewers notice that the backgrounds seem deliberately unfocused. These back-

grounds — generally of urban degradation, such as a toxic waste dump in Alviso or a Dumpster in Amsterdam — are all photos which Cichon, a Mountain View resident, took during her many travels. She then re-shot the images with the insects sitting on them, creating a juxtaposition of beauty and destruction intended to illustrate what she calls "the universal dilemma."

"The universal dilemma is that these beautiful wonders of nature are threatened almost everywhere [that] technology is improving life for man around the world. My work seeks to remind people of this delicate balance between preservation and progress," Cichon said of the motivation behind her art.

The theme drives her current exhibit, a series of 20 large-scale archival pigment prints titled "Urban Entomology." The series (supported in part with funding from the Peninsula Community Foundation) is on display at the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts through Oct. 23.

After pinning the insect specimens to the background photographs, Cichon re-photographed them using a special 126 megapixel camera from Trillium Press, locat-

ed in Brisbane. The result is an extraordinarily detailed insect that immediately draws the viewer's attention. She then mounts the photos in museum-style shadowbox frames to imitate real-life specimens, and to underscore the notion that these natural wonders soon will be seen only in museums.

Cichon feels that she was born a photographer — since the age of 5, she says, she showed a knack for it. She grew up in a small town in New Jersey where her father, a doctor, was paid in tomatoes, corn, chicken and eggs. She herself considered medical school while attending UC Berkeley, but "My artistic interests were strong, and I knew I couldn't give up art to be the type of dedicated doctor that my father was," she said.

Cichon believes that butterflies and insects are the perfect vehicles for her artwork, not only because they are wondrous beauties of nature, but also because they are sensitive to toxins, making them an early indicator of the state of our environment.

While technology helps people in numerous ways, Cichon proposes that those benefits need to be weighed against the potential consequences. Examples may be found in nutrition, such as the unexplained illnesses which she believes are due to additives in food.

"Aspartame is addictive and leads to overindulgence," she says of the sugar substitute. "It contributes to obesity, diabetes and many other illnesses, especially in children. These illnesses weren't as

prevalent prior to the mass marketing and wide scale consumption of these chemicals." Cichon sees here another paradox which human technology created, and which humans must now grapple with.

Although her main passion is art, Cichon still loves researching medical and scientific subjects of interest. And she is already contemplating her next artistic venture: large paintings based on electron microscopy of drugs and chemicals.

"This is one more way that I can get people to look at a seemingly beautiful image, yet hopefully encourage them to think about the consequences that might be hidden underneath the apparent beauty," Cichon said. ▀



"Rhino Beetle," 2006, D. Cichon

### ■ INFORMATION

**What:** "Urban Entomology," a series of photographs by Mountain View resident D. Cichon

**When:** Through Oct. 23. The lobby is open on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 12 to 1 p.m., and one hour prior to every public performance.

**Where:** Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, 500 Castro St., Mountain View

**Cost:** Free

**Info:** Visit [www.contemporaryartsgallery.com](http://www.contemporaryartsgallery.com), or call the Center at (650) 903-6565

**Also:** Cichon will be showing smaller images in the "Urban Entomology" series as part of Peninsula Open Studios in Palo Alto Oct. 7 and 8 at Great American Framing Company, 229 Hamilton between Ramona and Emerson streets. Visit [www.peninsulaopenstudios.org](http://www.peninsulaopenstudios.org) for more information.

MOVIE TIMES

- ACCEPTED (PG-13)** Century 20: 12:50, 3:10, 5:35, 8 & 10:30 p.m.
- ALL THE KING'S MEN (PG-13) ★½**  
Century 20: 1:30, 4:25, 7:20 & 10:15 p.m.
- AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH (PG) ★★★½**  
Century 16: 11:25 a.m. & 1:40 p.m.
- BARNYARD: THE ORIGINAL PARTY ANIMALS (PG)**  
Century 20: Noon & 2:35 p.m.
- THE BLACK DAHLIA (R) ★★★** Century 16: 4:20, 7:05 & 9:40 p.m.  
Century 20: 11:35 a.m.; 2:15, 5, 7:45 & 10:25 p.m.
- THE COVENANT (PG-13)** Century 20: 10:05 p.m.
- THE DEPARTED (R) ★★★½** Century 16: 11:15 a.m.; 12:15, 1:15, 2:30, 3:30, 4:30, 5:45, 6:45, 7:45, 9 & 10 p.m. Century 12: Noon, 1:05, 2:15, 3:20, 4:25, 5:30, 6:40, 7:55, 8:55 & 9:55 p.m.
- THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA (PG-13) ★★★**  
Century 20: 11:35 a.m.; 2:20, 5:15, 7:40 & 10:10 p.m.
- EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH (PG-13)**  
Century 16: 12:20, 2:50, 5:20, 7:50 & 10:15 p.m. Century 20: 11:55 a.m.; 1:10, 2:30, 3:35, 4:55, 6, 7:20, 8:30 & 9:45 p.m.
- EVERYONE'S HERO (G)** Century 20: 12:40, 3, 5:10, 7:25 & 9:30 p.m.
- FLYBOYS (PG-13) ★★** Century 16: 3:45 & 6:50 p.m.  
Century 12: 12:45, 4:10, 7:10 & 10:20 p.m.
- GRIDIRON GANG (PG-13) ★★★** Century 20: 1:25, 4:15, 7:05 & 9:50 p.m.
- THE GUARDIAN (PG-13) ★★★½** Century 16: 1, 4, 7 & 10:10 p.m.  
Century 20: 11:30 a.m.; 12:45, 2:30, 3:50, 5:30, 7, 8:30 & 10 p.m.
- HALF NELSON (R) ★★★** Palo Alto Square: 3:25 & 7:35 p.m.
- HOLLYWOODLAND (R) ★★★** Century 16: 11:35 a.m.; 2:15, 4:55, 7:40 & 10:20 p.m. Century 20: 11:55 a.m.; 2:40 & 10:15 p.m.
- THE ILLUSIONIST (PG-13) ★★★** Century 16: 12:25, 2:55, 5:25, 7:55 & 10:30 p.m. Century 20: 11:25 a.m.; 1:50, 4:20, 5:20, 6:50, 7:50 & 9:25 p.m.
- JACKASS: NUMBER TWO (R)** Century 16: 11:20 a.m.; 1:30, 3:35, 5:50, 8:05 & 10:25 p.m. Century 20: 11:45 a.m.; 12:55, 2:20, 3:25, 4:35, 5:50, 7:05, 8:05, 9:15 & 10:20 p.m.
- JESUS CAMP (PG-13) ★★★½** Aquarius: 3, 5, 7:30 & 9:40 p.m.; Sat. & Sun. also at 1 p.m.
- JET LI'S FEARLESS (PG-13) ★★** Century 16: Noon, 2:20, 5:10, 7:30 & 9:50 p.m. Century 12: 12:10, 2:35, 5, 7:35 & 10:05 p.m.
- KEEPING MUM (R)** Century 16: 12:05, 2:25, 4:45, 7:15 & 9:30 p.m.
- THE LAST KISS (R) ★★** Century 16: 12:45 & 9:45 p.m.  
Century 20: 12:05, 2:30, 5:05, 7:35 & 10 p.m.
- LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE (R) ★★★** Century 20: 11:40 a.m.; 12:30, 2:15, 2:55, 4:40, 7:10, 9:35 & 10:30 p.m. Aquarius: 2:10, 4:30, 7 & 9:20 p.m.
- OPEN SEASON (PG)** Century 16: 11:30 a.m.; 12:35, 1:35, 2:45, 3:40, 4:50, 6, 7:10, 8:10, 9:20 & 10:20 p.m. Century 12: 12:05, 1, 1:35, 2:25, 3:10, 4:05, 4:40, 5:35, 6:15, 7, 7:45, 8:25, 9:10, 10 & 10:30 p.m.
- PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST (PG-13) ★★** Century 20: 12:35, 3:45 & 7 p.m.
- PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE (NOT RATED)**  
Stanford: Fri. & Sat. at midnight; Sat. & Sun. at noon.
- QUINCEANERA (R) ★★★½** Palo Alto Square: 1:30, 5:40 & 9:50 p.m.
- SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS (PG-13) ★★** Century 16: 12:10, 2:35, 5:15, 7:35 & 9:55 p.m. Century 12: 12:20, 1:15, 2:45, 3:50, 5:10, 6:20, 7:30, 8:40 & 10:15 p.m.
- THE SCIENCE OF SLEEP (R)** Century 20: 11:50 a.m.; 2:25, 4:55, 7:30 & 9:55 p.m. Palo Alto Square: 2, 4:30, 7:10 & 9:45 p.m.; Sat. & Sun. also at 11:30 a.m.
- STEP UP (PG-13)** Century 20: 4:45, 7:15 & 9:45 p.m.
- TALLADEGA NIGHTS: THE BALLAD OF RICKY BOBBY (PG-13) ★★★** Century 20: 5:25 & 7:50 p.m.
- TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE: THE BEGINNING (R)**  
Century 16: 11:40 a.m.; 1:45, 3:50, 5:55, 8 & 10:05 p.m.  
Century 20: 12:10, 1:15, 2:25, 3:20, 4:30, 5:30, 6:45, 7:45, 9 & 9:55 p.m.
- THE U.S. VS. JOHN LENNON (PG-13) ★★★**  
Guild: 2:20, 4:40, 7 & 9:30 p.m.; Fri.-Sun. also at noon.

Note: Screenings are for Friday through Tuesday only.

**AQUARIUS:** 430 Emerson St., Palo Alto (266-9260)  
**CENTURY CINEMA 16:** 1500 N. Shoreline Blvd., Mountain View (960-0970)  
**CENTURY PARK 12:** 557 E. Bayshore Blvd., Redwood City (365-9000)  
**CENTURY 20 DOWNTOWN:** 825 Middlefield Road, Redwood City (369-3456)  
**CINEARTS AT PALO ALTO SQUARE:** 3000 El Camino Real, Palo Alto (493-3456)  
**GUILD:** 949 El Camino Real, Menlo Park (266-9260)

- ★ Skip it
- ★★ Some redeeming qualities
- ★★★ A good bet
- ★★★★ Outstanding

For show times, plot synopses, trailers and more movie info, visit [www.mv-voice.com](http://www.mv-voice.com) and click on movies.



MOVIE REVIEWS

**ALL THE KING'S MEN ★**  
 (Century 20) Director Steve Zaillian makes a cinematic muddle of Robert Penn Warren's 1946 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, not to mention the memory of the 1949 Oscar classic. Sean Penn is surprisingly monotonous as low-rent traveling salesman Willie Stark, hand-picked by shady operator Tiny Duffy (James Gandolfini) to enter the Louisiana governor's race as a power-to-the-little-people dark horse. Stark's populist platform is pro-hicks, taking a sympathetic stand for the disenfranchised have-nots. Duffy's agenda is opaque at best: putting Stark on a soapbox in order to garner votes for the wealthy incumbent. Stark finally realizes he's a sacrificial sap, and — in the film's only truly powerful scene — delivers an impassioned oration that gives goose bumps. Once elected, Stark all too swiftly transforms from teetotaling family man into a madly gesticulating demagogue intent on destroying the state of Louisiana in the name of the little people. Sloppy where it should be slick: what a letdown. *Rated: PG-13 for violence and partial nudity. 2 hours, 8 minutes.* — J.A.



**THE BLACK DAHLIA ★★★**  
 (Century 16, Century 20) Brian De Palma returns to the screen with a vengeance, wreaking melodramatic havoc with a grisly tale of L.A.'s most notorious unsolved murder. Corrupt cops, desperate starlets and shady motives make up this oddly contemporary pulp-fiction homage to the black-and-white crime thrillers of the 1940s and '50s. Cut to a pair of decorated L.A. cops (Josh Hartnett as Dwight "Bucky" Bleichert and Aaron Eckhart as Sgt. Lee Blanchard) who are high on life, giddy with the power of partnership and the love of a beautiful woman. Their ostensibly neat romantic triangle is a snaky stack of masked emotions involving ex-call girl Kay Lake (Scarlett Johansson), formerly rescued by and living with Blanchard yet torn between the two men. The mood goes pitch black when a Hollywood ingenue (Mia Kirshner as Elizabeth Short) is found brutally murdered, cut from ear to ear and carefully dismembered. Bleichert and Blanchard investigate in earnest noir fashion, drawn deep into a complex web of lies and deceit. There's something irresistible about this convoluted puzzler, a bracing who-dunnit-ness that has its female leads to thank for its sleazy fancy. *Rated: R for extreme violence and some language. 2 hours, 1 minute.* — J.A.

**FLYBOYS ★★**  
 (Century 16, Century 12) Had "Top Gun" been directed by a curator at the

► Continued on next page

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Kevin Costner in "The Guardian."

## Smoke on the water

COSTNER, KUTCHER  
CLASH IN COAST GUARD  
DRAMA 'THE GUARDIAN'

By Jeanne Aufmuth

Kevin Costner turns in a fine performance in this passable actioner that treads the salty waters patrolled by the United States Coast Guard.

Costner is Senior Chief Ben Randall, the most decorated swimmer in the history of the USCG. When a tricky at-sea rescue goes fatally awry, Ben gets cold feet and reluctantly accepts a position training the next wave of top guns in the Guard's A-school.

Among the freshman plebes is an idealistic candidate determined to topple Randall's high-water marks. Jake Fischer (Ash-ton Kutcher) is a cocky state swim champ with more attitude than brains.

The duo is oil and water from the get-go, relentlessly testing each other to the limits of their endurance and patience. Not surprisingly, the pair ultimately teams up on a dangerous rescue mission, forced to defend each other's lives with nautical know-how. Cue Poseidon's violins.

Although "Guardian" lays

and sexual humor, language, drug references and brief comic violence. 1 hour, 45 minutes. — T.H.

### THE U.S. VS. JOHN LENNON

★★★

(Guild) Musical icon John Lennon gets his day in the sun in this unflinching documentary about the far-reaching power of celebrity. Lennon circa late '60s was a principled and sanctimonious superstar drunk on his own clout. Once he hooked up with Yoko Ono, Lennon developed a powerful urge to say and do whatever he felt. This was the very fact that caused the U.S. Government to sit up and take notice: a flopsy-haired hippie with the authority to sway the masses using little more than a word or a public appearance. One can't deny that Lennon was a brilliant musician/songwriter. His fierce stand against injustice and his eager intelligence is to be admired but, personally, his smug attitude rankled then and it rankles now. That's the essence of this absorbing documentary — the impassioned sentiment that both illuminates and provokes. *Rated: PG-13 for mature themes and language.* 1 hour, 39 minutes. — J.A.

### MINI REVIEWS

► Continued from previous page

and "Napoleon Dynamite" into a cinematic blender and hit frappe in hopes of making a delicious shake. They ended up with a tasteless one. *Rated: PG-13 for language, crude and sexual content, and some violence.* 1 hour, 40 minutes. — T.H.

### TALLADEGA NIGHTS: THE BALLAD OF RICKY BOBBY

★★★ (Century 20) Will Ferrell brings his daredevil comedic style to the speedway for this hilarious send-up of NASCAR and America's zeal for velocity. Here Ferrell plays Ricky Bobby, a Texas racecar driver literally born for the sport (his mother gave birth in the backseat of a speeding car). Ricky is the envy of the racing world. His lifelong best friend and fellow driver (John C. Reilly as Cal Naughton Jr.) consistently helps him win, he enjoys an enormous mansion and gorgeous trophy wife, and even Dale Earnhardt Jr. asks for his autograph. Things tail-spin for Ricky when French driver Jean Girard (Sacha Baron Cohen of "Da Ali G Show") arrives to challenge the egomaniacal champ. The actors each do their part to rev up the silly fun, whether it's Reilly's goofy "shake and bake" slogan, Cohen's absurd French accent or Ferrell's graceless physicality. Finally the scorching summer offers moviegoers fuel for the funnybone. *Rated: PG-13 for crude*

down the clichés with a trowel and follows an all-too-familiar pattern (think "Officer and a Gentleman," "Top Gun," etc.), the energetic performances and a neat twist at the end breathe some life into an otherwise stale genre.

Kutcher's arrogant swagger is positively delicious, oozing with youthful bonhomie. Costner lends the project some dignity by maintaining his steely cool at junctures both hackneyed and stirring.

There's a better film here, buried under an excess of training scenes and misguided pro-

fundity. Indeed, the film could have been trimmed by half an hour, allowing for both deeper character development and tighter scripting. But director Andrew Davis aims true with his rescue scenes, churning ocean and emotion with a flair for good theater. ■

### MOVIE NOTES

Stars: \*\*1/2

Rating: PG-13 for language and adult themes

Run Time: 2 hours, 16 minutes

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### MOVIE CRITICS

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