

# Mountain View VOICE



Class from  
the past

PENSTYLE | P.29

NOVEMBER 24, 2006 VOLUME 14 NO. 48

INSIDE: WEEKEND | PAGE 21

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## CSA readies for a new year

HOMELESS OR HUNGRY  
RESIDENTS GET A LIFT  
FROM LOCAL AGENCY

By Daniel DeBolt

Last week, a group of local schoolchildren got a tour of the Community Services Agency after donating canned goods.

“Don’t think the food is just going to sit somewhere,” said Laura Schuster, director of nutrition and health education programs, pointing to large bins full of donated food. People who need it will be picking this food up. “They are going to cook it and they are going to enjoy it,” she said.

In a nearby room, people were doing just that. The space resembles a small grocery store, except that the goods are free for those with financial difficulties. The homeless can fill up a paper bag with a meal, and heat up food in a microwave. But most members of the diverse crowd there were selecting items from the shelves — bread, cereal, vegetables, fruit and canned goods — to bring home.

The food program is one example of the CSA’s efforts to help those who are struggling to make ends meet in Mountain View. The agency specializes in providing assistance to the working poor and the homeless, especially in emergencies.

The agency faced its biggest emergency just a few months ago, when a fire on Latham



*Donna Labrado of Mountain View adds some persimmons to her basket while shopping in the market available to low-income people at the Community Services Agency.*

Street displaced 30 people from 19 apartment units. All residents were provided housing and given help finding new homes with the help of CSA and the Red Cross.

The organizations split the first month’s rent for the displaced. Children also got new toys, which CSA happens to stock for such emergencies.

During the December holidays, an upstairs section of CSA’s Stierlin Road office becomes a makeshift store, full of free toys for financially qualified families, said assistant director Maureen Wadiak.

The rest of the building is devoted to managing the

requests of people who come through the front door, or receive help from their homes — including senior citizens, who with a little aid from CSA are able to live more independent lives.

Case workers from CSA have been known to arrive at seniors’ homes, pull out their laptops and hook up to Google WiFi to help seniors enroll in online government assistance programs. They

► See **HOLIDAY FUND**, page 8

### INSIDE

*Ken Graham, CEO of El Camino Hospital, says the hospital’s pharmaceutical troubles have been fixed — and ECHO wasn’t the problem. See page 5.*

## City hits wall in union talks

RETIREE HEALTH CARE  
IS MAJOR STICKING  
POINT FOR SEIU; OTHER  
LABOR GROUPS AGREE

By Daniel DeBolt

Over seven months of talks, negotiations with three of the city’s four unions have snagged on one problem: retiree health benefits.

In previous years, union negotiations might have been concluded in one day. But city manager Kevin Duggan said current talks have been going on “unusually long” with three unions: the 65-member Firefighter’s Association; the Service Employees International Union, which represents 160 service and maintenance workers; and the newly formed Eagles, which represents over 200 City Hall workers that previously were unrepresented.

All three unions — which collectively represent over half of the city’s 600 employees — are trying to protect their increasingly expensive retirement health care benefits at a time when cities are under heavy pressure to set aside huge sums to cover such costs far into the future. In the case of the SEIU, talks have apparently reached an impasse, with a mediator being called in to help.

Those on both sides of the negotiating table are worried.

“We spend our careers exposing ourselves to things we are protecting others from,” said John Miguel, president of the Firefighters Association. He said he had seen several firefighters suffer severe health problems, such as cancer, linked to firefighting.

“For me it’s absolutely ridiculous we wouldn’t have our health protected by the city as it’s been in the past.”

A critical issue for cities across the nation is a new federal law, Government Accounting Standards Board Statement 45, which requires cities to report how money will be put away for lifetime retirement health care. Mountain View has already decided to put away money for newer employees while it continues to pay current retirement expenses directly from the city budget.

A 2004 actuarial report said the city needs to come up with

► See **UNIONS**, page 10

## District, teachers ratify contract

By Alexa Tondreau

After going three years without an increase, Mountain View Whisman teachers settled for a 5 percent pay raise last week, with no cuts in benefits.

In addition, teachers are especially happy about winning more preparation time for fourth and fifth grade teachers, who oversee larger classes than the lower grades.

The district board rati-

► See **TEACHERS**, page 9

INSIDE

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# gratitude

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As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.

*~John F. Kennedy*

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# Voices

A R O U N D T O W N

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

## Should the 49ers move to Santa Clara?



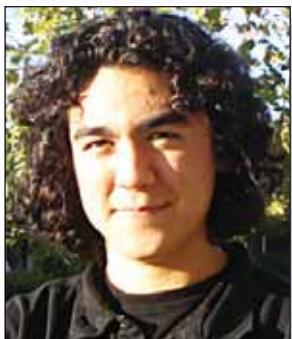
*"As a fan, no; but as a team decision, yes."*  
**Anthony Frank, Mountain View**



*"I don't care because I don't like them."*  
**C.J. Smith, San Ramon**



*"No, I don't want that to happen because it always turns out bad. For example, the Raiders are still given a hard time for moving to Los Angeles."*  
**Jay Jackson, Fremont**



*"They should stay in San Francisco because it's where they've always been. It just doesn't make any sense to me as a fan."*  
**Noah Azarin, Palo Alto**



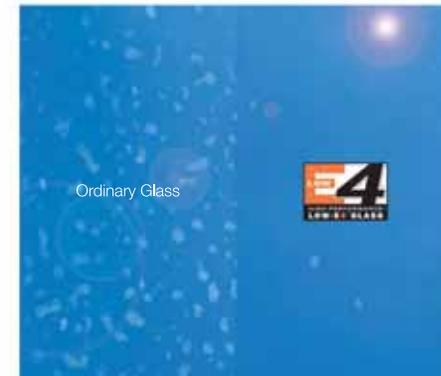
*"I am a fan. They should move because then they would be closer to where I live."*  
**Julio Aguirre, Mountain View**

Have a question for **Voices Around Town**? E-mail it to [editor@mv-voice.com](mailto:editor@mv-voice.com)

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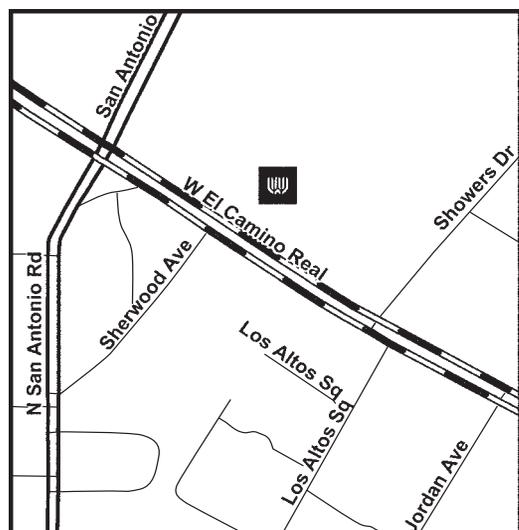
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■ QUOTE OF THE WEEK

*“All the talk about ECHO distracted us from the real issue. We had to go down another couple of layers to find it.”*

— KEN GRAHAM

CEO OF EL CAMINO HOSPITAL, ON WHY THE HOSPITAL HAD BEEN INSPECTED BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

■ CRIMEWATCH

**VANDALISM TO CHURCH, 586 ESCUELA AVE., 11/17**

According to police, at 10:07 p.m., Eliezier Lopez parked his vehicle in front of a church on Escuela Ave. Police say he was on drugs and picked up a baseball bat and hit the front door of the church. The glass on the door broke and Lopez drove away.

An officer noticed Lopez' vehicle at the 500 block of Rengstorff Avenue and tried to arrest him. Lopez fought back for a few minutes, police say, but ultimately gave in. He was arrested and booked on charges of vandalism, narcotics and resisting arrest.

**AUTO BURGLARIES, 11/17**

In the middle of the night on Friday, Nov. 17, in the neighborhoods including Chatham, Ivan, Glenborough, Fairbrook, Chesley and E. Dana, there were 10 vehicles burglarized. The burglars broke into the cars by smashing the car windows, and they took anything that was easy to access. Stolen items included electronics such as laptops, iPods and cameras. Police are reminding residents that items left in visible sight are an invitation to burglars.

■ POLICE LOG

**ATTEMPTED SUICIDE**

900 block E. Middlefield Rd., 11/19

**AUTO BURGLARY**

- 60 block Lola Ln., 11/14
- 1400 Village Ct., 11/16
- 100 block Chatham Way, 11/17
- 700 block Glenborough Dr., 11/17
- 3300 block Ivan Way, 11/17
- 1200 block Fairbrook Dr., 11/17
- 200 block Chatham Way, 11/17
- 1400 block Village Ct., 11/17
- 800 block E. Dana St., 11/17
- 350 block Chesley Ave., 11/17
- 850 block E. Dana St., 11/17
- 1500 block W. Middlefield, 11/17
- 1500 block N. Shoreline Blvd., 11/17

**BATTERY**

- 2000 block Old Middlefield Way, 11/17
- 50 block W. El Camino Real, 11/18
- Central Expressway/San Antonio Rd., 11/6
- Collins Ct./Del Medio Ave., 11/19

**COMMERCIAL BURGLARY**

- 1500 block Grant Road, 11/14
- 2300 block Garcia Ave., 11/16
- 80 block Maude Ave., 11/19

**DOMESTIC DISTURBANCE**

- 200 block Easy St., 11/16
- 1800 block Fordham Way, 11/17

**GRAND THEFT**

- 500 block Drucilla Dr., 11/14
- 1900 block Colony St., 11/14
- 50 block Logue Ave., 11/14
- 60 block West El Camino Real, 11/14
- Hilton Hotel, 11/18
- 750 block N. Shoreline Blvd., 11/18
- 80 Church St., 11/19

**STOLEN VEHICLE**

- 1000 block Terra Bella Ave., 11/15
- 2300 block Carol Ave., 11/15
- 50 block Showers Dr., 11/15

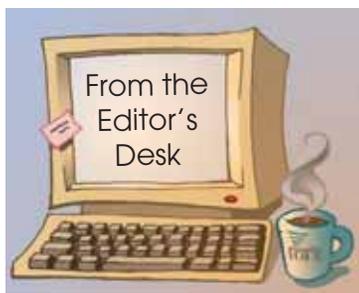
**VANDALISM**

- Castro School, 11/15
- 3500 block Truman Ave., 11/16
- Escuela Ave./Latham St., 11/17
- 800 block Devoto St., 11/18
- 2400 block W. El Camino Real, 11/18

■ CORRECTIONS

A city council story last week incorrectly reported that council member Tom Means voted against the first motion on the Cuesta Annex in support of Plan B. Means actually voted for the motion in the 3-3 vote before it was modified, after which it passed 6-1.

A story last week on “Team Orange,” a group of local engineers designing a computer-driven vehicle, misstated their Web site. The correct Web address is [www.urbanlegend.com](http://www.urbanlegend.com).



## The thrill of victory

By Don Frances

**T**HE HOLIDAY SEASON means sports, and on the local level, sports means kids on the soccer fields.

What soccer fields, you ask? Because there aren't enough fields to go around for all of our young players? Never mind that now — the holidays are also about forgiveness.

Anyway, I've been getting requests from parents and coaches to run some sports-related announcements. Here are a few:

■ The Mountain View girls AYSO U19 division team won the area 2A division championship 1-0 on Nov. 12, after a hard-fought battle against Portola Valley. The "Blue Too" team has a 9-1-1 record, and parents cite teamwork as the girls' strongest asset.

■ The MVLA U10 Dynamite Soccer team recently took first place in the Gold Division at the NorCal Cup, beating out 27 other U10 girls teams from throughout Northern California.

■ It's tryouts time next weekend for the MVLA Revolution, the Class 3 CYSA girl's soccer team, which is seeking talented players born after July 31, 1994. To find out more, including time and location, contact Alan Carr at (650) 948-3318 or alan.carr@coherent.com.

■ In non-soccer news, National Junior Basketball, or NJB, has recently selected players for its 2006 All-Net teams, and several young athletes from Mountain View will represent the league's "Foothill-SLAM division." There isn't enough room to list them all, but congratulations to you kids, who've brought honor to your respective schools, including Graham and Crittenden middle schools and Huff Elementary. ▀

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



VERONICA WEBER

*Nine-month-old Nanceen Galli plays in the living room of her Mountain View home on Friday. The house on Mercy Street was completely restored in 2005 using "green" and eco-friendly building materials.*

## Mercy Street home a winner

RENOVATED HISTORIC HOUSE BEATS OUT 16 OTHERS FOR MAYOR'S AWARD

By Daniel DeBolt

**W**hen Ann and Michael Galli were looking to buy a home, stripping an old house down to the studs and replacing the foundation wasn't exactly what they had in mind. But somehow that's what happened, and their home on 1090 Mercy Street was recently given a Mayor's Award for the effort.

To restore the century-old house, Michael Galli, 45, left his Internet marketing business temporarily and immersed himself in the project.

"I asked lots of questions," he said.

He worked on it from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.

► See **HOUSE**, page 16

## Honor to the city

AFTER THREE-YEAR HIATUS, MAYOR'S AWARDS RETURN TO CELEBRATE MOUNTAIN VIEW'S BEST

By Daniel DeBolt

**A**dozen local programs, projects and businesses were celebrated last week for their exceptional achievements and contributions to the city of Mountain View.

This year's Mayor's Awards, which honored 12 awardees under two broad categories — "Social Program" and "Physical Project" — were handed out by Mayor Nick Galiotto last Thursday, Nov. 16 in a ceremony at the City Hall rotunda. Awardees included the improved Alta Vista high school, the Casa SAY home for runaway and homeless youth, and Peninsula Youth Theatre.

"We think it's good every so often to do this

► See **AWARDS**, page 16

## Graham: Hospital is back on track

EL CAMINO CHIEF SAYS POOR COMMUNICATION, NOT COMPUTER SYSTEM, LED TO PROBLEMS

By Alexa Tondreau

**K**en Graham has had an eventful six months as the new CEO of El Camino Hospital.

"Forty-five minutes on the job my first day, inspectors came in," he told the *Voice* during an interview last week.

And while those inspectors from the state Department of Health gave the hospital a thumbs-up on their first visit, Graham said, a subsequent inspection one month later led to an investigation into the hospital's pharmaceutical services.

That inspection finally came to an end earlier this month, with a letter from Deborah Romero, a manager of hospital operations at the state department, stating that "El Camino Hospital now meets the Medicare conditions of participation for a provider of hospital services."

It continued, "Therefore, this office will not proceed with a termination action."

In two separate surveys of the



Ken Graham

► See **EL CAMINO**, page 15

## Katz: Measure C is unfair, invalid

SARATOGA LAWYER JOINS GARY WESLEY IN COURT AGAINST FOOTHILL-DE ANZA

By Alexa Tondreau

**T**rial proceedings began Tuesday afternoon in San Jose as Aaron Katz and the Foothill-De Anza College District battled over Measure C, a \$480 million bond passed by

voters in June.

Also challenging the validity of the measure is Mountain View attorney Gary Wesley, speaking on behalf of Melvin Emerich.

Wesley and Katz, who is representing himself, responded to Foothill-De Anza's "validation lawsuit" filed by the district in June shortly after the election. A validation lawsuit essentially challenges anyone who might seriously dispute the measure to come forth and oppose it in court.

The case is being tried in front of Judge Randall Schneider in San Jose Superior Court. Tuesday was largely taken up by pre-trial proceedings regarding a host of legal matters, including whether Katz should have the right to try the issue in the first place — namely, can a non-resident property owner like Katz be legally disqualified from voting on a measure that results in property taxes.

Katz has filed several similar lawsuits, including against

the Mountain View Whisman School District and the El Camino Hospital District. Voters in both districts had passed tax measures where he would have to pay them as a property owner — even though as a Saratoga resident he couldn't vote on them. Katz claims that's unfair.

His lawsuits so far have paid off: Earlier this year, Katz collected \$200,000 in a settlement with El

► See **KATZ**, page 6

## NASA-Ames readies satellite experiment

MOFFETT FIELD LAB ENLISTS STUDENTS' HELP IN TESTING E. COLI IN SPACE

By Amber Cleave

A tiny satellite carrying living experiments designed in labs at NASA-Ames is slated to be launched into orbit around the earth early next month.

As currently planned, NASA's GeneSat-1 satellite will hitch a ride aboard a Minotaur 1 rocket fired from Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia. The plans call for launch on Dec. 11 between 7 and 10 a.m.

The only living passengers on the flight, and its principle payload, will be live organisms cultivated in the NASA-Ames labs at Moffett Field. A harmless strand of E. coli bacteria will be stowed in a miniature laboratory aboard the shoebox-sized satellite, and the mission is to study how space affects these microbes.

Although just 22 pounds, this mini-satellite has the ability to provide life support, deliver nutrients and perform analytical procedures to detect any genetic changes to the E. coli.

The bacteria will be monitored by NASA, with the help of Santa

Clara University students, for roughly 96 hours. The students will also help control the spacecraft from the mission center at Moffett Field.

"We are monitoring the bacteria to shed light on the effects of near-weightlessness on microscopic organisms. Eventually we will be able to understand how the human body is affected," said Bruce Yost, GeneSat-1 mission manager.

NASA estimates that the satellite will remain in orbit for about a year. By January 2008, the satellite will re-enter the earth's atmosphere and burn up.

The primary reason to launch this satellite is to prove that biological research from space can succeed. If the E. coli survive the launch, then this study demonstrates a low-cost, effective and easy way to monitor the affects of space on living organisms.

The ability to understand how space flight affects the human body is the secondary purpose of sending this satellite into orbit.

"Future studies in space can be performed on bone tissue and

muscle cells if this mission succeeds," said John Bluck, of the public affairs office at NASA-Ames.

Graduate and undergraduate students from Santa Clara's mechanical, electrical and computer engineering departments helped with the project. They were instrumental in developing the ground control systems, including work with the radio link and refurbishing the large antennae that communicates with the satellite once it is launched. Their efforts will help send controls and analyze data while GeneSat-1 is in orbit.

Several graduate students from Santa Clara also helped with the development of the actual satellite. Chris Kitts, head of Santa Clara University's Robotics Systems lab, said the knowledge gained will be applied to their graduate theses.

"It's a wonderful experience for the students," said Kitts. "They are learning so much and it's very cool." ▀

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

## KATZ

► Continued from page 5

Camino, and \$60,000 in a settlement with the West Valley-Mission Community College District.

But Judge Schneider put Katz's voting complaint aside, referring to legal precedent on the matter. He said he felt the previous ruling "seems to dispose of the issue," leaving Katz to join Wesley in challenging the specifics of Measure C itself.

Sean Absher, an attorney representing Foothill-De Anza, supported that approach, saying that "Fundamentally we are talking about whether the Measure C bonds are valid. Mr. Katz wants to go far afield from that, and he shouldn't be allowed to do it."

Katz and Wesley's case against Foothill-De Anza will primarily rest on his assertion that the funds provided by Measure C are not going to be spent in accordance with the listed expenditures in the written language of the measure. Katz said the district needed to provide the full text to voters of all detailed expenses.

"The underlying issue is that there is no list of special projects. There is no list. It's a hidden list," Katz said.

The trial began Tuesday afternoon with the first witness — Mike Brandy, the district's vice chancellor of finance — called to the stand.

Katz and Wesley's examination of him took the entire afternoon, and dissected the nuts and bolts of the district's intended use of the money. Of particular concern for Katz was a clause in Measure C that allows only for "improvements of a permanent nature." Katz questioned whether money spent on technology that may be out of date in five or six years can constitute permanency.

Brandy responded that "We don't know what the computers 10 years from now will look like, but based on our professional judgment we purchase technology." He added that "purchasing technical equipment is an authorized use" in the language of Measure C.

Katz also took issue with money that would be spent on

a fleet of new vehicles to replace the old ones.

"Where is the bond description does it say you are going to buy \$5 million in vehicles?" he asked.

Brandy testified that the vehicles conformed to funds allocated in the measure for equipment and maintenance, likening them to the "tools of a carpenter."

Brandy was scheduled to continue testifying on Wednesday, after the *Voice* went to press, and Martha Kanter, chancellor of the district, was expected to be called to the stand as well.

Although the trial was expected to last two full days, it could take considerably longer for the judge to hand down a ruling. ▀

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

## COMMUNITY BRIEFS

### MVHS CLUB HOSTS TALK ON DARFUR

A Mountain View High School club is hosting a free talk on the ongoing genocide in Darfur, featuring two big speakers.

The discussion is put on by Glasnost, a club of about 20 students. The speakers are Michael Kevane, a Santa Clara University professor who specializes in Sudan, and Silvestro Akara Bakhiet, a Sudanese refugee.

The event is in the school's theater Thurs., Nov. 30 at 7 p.m.

### COPS AND GOBBLERS

A collaborative effort by Mountain View police and local agencies helped more than 150 families receive food for the holidays as part of the annual "Cops and Gobblers" event.

The event was last Sunday, Nov. 19, and more than 100 community members and police officers helped to fill the holiday baskets with Thanksgiving specialties and food staples.

— Amber Cleave



**Artistic KITCHEN DESIGN**

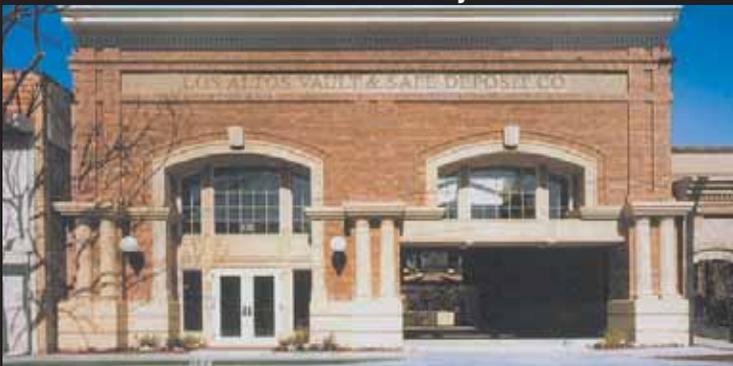
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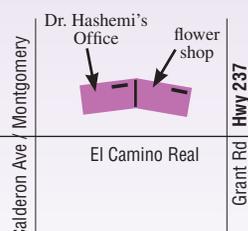
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# Sleuthing the universe

SAGAN CENTER SCIENTISTS COMB SPACE — AND HARSH CLIMES OF EARTH — FOR SIGNS OF LIFE

By Kathy Schrenk

For Dale Anderson, the quest to discover what life exists on other worlds means delving into the fiercest regions of our own.

Anderson, with his colleagues at the new Carl Sagan Center for the Study of Life in the Universe, hopes to help answer one of humankind's most essential questions: Are we alone in the universe?



Scott Hubbard

Many of the scientists at the Sagan Center, part of Mountain View's Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) Institute, spend time looking through telescopes and studying data received from satellites and space probes. But Anderson does most of his work far from Mountain View, above the Arctic Circle. He dives into water locked beneath thick sheets of frozen ice to study the microscopic creatures that live there. In learning how those beings survive, he hopes to figure out if, and how, creatures could live — or could have lived — in the frigid climes of Mars.

SETI leaders founded the Sagan Center to create a central entity for top scientists there and elsewhere who are working on this search for extraterrestrial life, said former NASA-Ames chief Scott Hubbard, who heads the new center.

This move to get the 50 or so Sagan Center "principal investigators" under one umbrella comes at a crucial time, as NASA is cutting funding to such efforts by half, Hubbard said. One of his main goals at Sagan Center chair is to raise funds from corporations and individuals to keep the search going.

SETI research is the kind that takes lots of patience and has to be looked at from numerous angles, Hubbard said. "Our goal in creating this center is to provide a long-range strategic view. Our scientists need stability for the long haul."

The center will need to raise several million dollars over the next few years to make up for the shortfall in funding from NASA, Hubbard said. This would allow the center to build a new lab for looking at extraterrestrial organics — carbon material that comes into Earth's atmosphere on the backs of meteorites.

In that vein, another Sagan

Center researcher, Mark Showalter, studies the atmospheres of Jupiter and other far-off bodies. His goal is to see if there's any evidence there that would point to similar planets in other stellar systems. "As far as we know, in order to have life you have to have planets," he said.

Showalter gets a lot of his data from the Hubbell Telescope and spacecraft like Cassini and New Horizons. The New Horizons craft is on its way to Pluto and will pass Jupiter in four months, hopefully providing plenty of interesting information for Showalter's research. "I am a lucky guy," he said. "I get to work with some of the most sophisticated devices ever created."

Such high-level research can have applications beyond the search for extraterrestrial life, Hubbard said. For instance, some of the information from devices that take images of outer space can be transferred to help understand our home planet. One Sagan scientist is working with multispectral imaging — looking at infrared light — to study changes in microscopic organisms in the San Francisco Bay, Hubbard said.

Anderson's work with "extremophiles" — organisms that exist in very hot, very cold or otherwise inhospitable climates — could be of interest to pharmaceutical researchers, Hubbard.

"Let's say a biotech company can sequence the genes for an organism that can exist in high ultraviolet or high radiation; that could turn into some kind of medical therapy for you and me," Hubbard said.

Other researchers are looking into protecting Earth from the kind of asteroid collision that wiped out the dinosaurs. Still others are trying to predict earthquakes.

Such research can seem abstract, subjecting scientists and their parent organization to ridicule in Congress when they ask for government funding, Hubbard said. "We need this [donated] money to follow out-of-the-box but interesting ideas."

As a grad student at Cornell University more than 20 years ago, Showalter knew Carl Sagan, and he thinks the famous astronomer would approve.

"The man has quite a legacy and he certainly inspired me to go into astronomy," Showalter said. "Working at a place that honors his memory is really a privilege." ▀

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# About the Holiday Fund

**V**oice readers who want to increase the impact of their charitable donations this season can give to the Holiday Fund, which helps arrange dollar-for-dollar matching grants that can double the size of contributions to six local nonprofit agencies.

This year, the Wakerly Family Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation will match, to the extent possible, all contributions to the Voice Holiday Fund

on a dollar-for-dollar basis. Last year, Voice readers gave \$23,000, which after the matching grants created a total contribution of \$46,000, or \$7,600 for each of the six nonprofit agencies.

This year, all funds received will be held by the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, and be dispersed to the six nonprofit agencies in February or early March. No fees are assessed by the foundation, so that 100 percent of every contribution will go to the nonprofit agencies.

## How to Give

*Your gift helps children and others in need*



Contributions to the Holiday Fund will be matched dollar for dollar, to the extent possible, and will go directly to the nonprofit agencies that serve Mountain View residents. Last year, readers contributed \$23,000, which was matched dollar for dollar for a total of

\$46,000, or \$7,600 for each agency.

No administrative costs are deducted from the gifts, which are tax-deductible as permitted by law. All donations are shared equally by the six recipient agencies listed here.

*This year, the following agencies will be supported by the Holiday Fund:*

- **THE COMMUNITY SERVICES AGENCY OF MOUNTAIN VIEW AND LOS ALTOS.**  
Assists homeless families and seniors with short term housing and medical care; the CSA shelter is a cooperative effort between 17 faith communities in Mountain View and Los Altos.
- **THE COMMUNITY HEALTH AWARENESS COUNCIL**  
Serves Mountain View, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills and seven school districts. Offers school-based programs to protect students from high-risk behaviors, such as drug and alcohol abuse.
- **MOUNTAIN VIEW ROTACARE CLINIC**  
Provides uninsured community residents with medical care and medications and is frequently the last resort for this underserved clientele.
- **DAY WORKER CENTER OF MOUNTAIN VIEW**  
Provides a secure place for workers and employers to negotiate wages. Serves 50 or more workers per day with job-matching, English lessons and guidance.
- **THE SUPPORT NETWORK FOR BATTERED WOMEN**  
Operates a 24-hour bilingual hotline, a safe shelter for women and their children and offers counseling and other services for families facing this problem.
- **COMMUNITY SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND ARTS**  
Provides hands-on arts and music projects in the elementary classrooms of the Mountain View-Whisman School District. Nearly 40 percent of the students are low-income and 28 percent have limited English proficiency.

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NICHOLAS JENSEN

**Bill Hurwick**, a volunteer with the Community Services Agency, adds packaged chicken breasts to a cooler in the small market available to low-income residents of Mountain View, Los Altos and Los Altos Hills.

## HOLIDAY FUND

► Continued from page 1

also assist seniors with other needs, such as transportation.

CSA also administers a nutrition program at the senior center near Rengstorff Park, providing not only good food but an excuse for social activity and music.

Wadiak said 92 percent of the 198 clients in CSA's senior independent living program were able to remain independent last year. She called the program cost-effective and humane compared to nursing homes.

Other programs include a one-time emergency assistance program for families to help pay rent. CSA is also helping to pioneer the "housing first" model, which works with homeless people on a case-by-case

basis, providing them with housing and then helping them find a job or government assistance to become independent. Wadiak said the program has shown more success than shelters and other programs where the homeless have too many opportunities to fall through the cracks.

CSA is currently accepting toys for the holidays, which will become available to families on Dec. 9. Toys can be donated until Dec. 14.

"It's about educating people," Wadiak said of the organization. "People tend

**"They are going to cook it and they are going to enjoy it."**

LAURA SCHUSTER

to forget."

"You guys should be really proud for helping us," Schuster said, as the kids walked down the hall at CSA towards the door. ■

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## ■ OBITUARIES

### WILBUR C. COMER

Wilbur C. Comer, who lived in Mountain View for nearly half a century, passed away Nov. 3. He was 91 years old.

Comer was born in Michigan but lived all over the country. He lived in Mountain View from 1953-2000, and worked as an engineer for KSFO radio, a radio operator for Pan American, and a video engineer for Ampex in Redwood City. After retirement he moved to University Retirement Center in Davis.

Comer was an avid ham radio operator and talked with other code users all over the world. He and his wife, Anita, loved the outdoors. They backpacked, camped and traveled, and their favorite spot was Porcupine Creek in Yosemite.

Comer is survived by his brother, Robert; his sister, Barbara; his first wife, Lois; his wife of 50 years, Anita; his daughter, Charlotte; his grandson, Jeff Cossins; two great-grandchildren; and many other close friends and relatives.

### MARIA V. ROSITAS

Maria V. Rositas passed away in her Mountain View home on Nov. 8. She was 84.

Rositas was born in Texas on April 9, 1922. She moved to Mountain View in 1945 along with her parents and siblings. She was a 25-year Mountain View Community Service Volunteer and Foster Parent. She was also an avid gardener who was revered and admired for her beautiful rose garden.

Rositas is survived by her children and their spouses: Helen Luna and her husband Paul; Ricardo Rositas; Yolanda Cortinas; and Susan R. Martinez. She is also survived by 12 grandchildren, 17 great-grandchildren and five foster children.

A vigil service was held for Rositas on Nov. 13 at the Mountain View Chapel of Spangler Mortuaries, and a funeral Mass was held on Nov. 14 at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Mountain View.

Donations can be made to the American Cancer Society in Rositas' name.

### GERALD 'JERRY' FRANCIS MCKINNEY

Gerald "Jerry" Francis McKinney, a veteran of two wars, passed away peacefully in his home on Nov. 8. He was 88.

McKinney was born on Aug. 3, 1918, in Iowa. He had a 20-year career in the U.S. Navy and was a veteran of World War II and the Korean War. In 1961, McKinney and his wife moved to Mountain View and he lived here until his death. McKinney worked for 21 years as a senior buyer for procurement services at Stanford University.

He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Dolores; three children, Michael, Michele and Patti; and two grandchildren.

### 'CARLOS' NEMESIO GARCIA PINEDA

"Carlos" Pineda, a longtime resident of Mountain View, passed away on Nov. 17.

He is survived by his wife, Maryann; six children, Carl, Joseph, Tony, Roland, Nick, Lourdes, Leia; and four grandchildren.

Visitations were held on Nov. 21, and a funeral Mass was held on Nov. 22 at St. Joseph Church in Mountain View.

### WILLIAM JAMES NEWMAN

William "Bill" James Newman, a decorated WWII veteran, passed away unexpectedly in his home on Nov. 15. He was 83.

Newman was a B29 radar operator during WWII. He completed 21 missions "over the hump" from China to India and received a Flying Cross, Air Medal, two Oak Leaf Clusters and a Purple Heart. Newman worked at the Cupertino Post Office upon retirement in 1983.

Over the past 60 years, Newman was very active in the American Legion. He was regularly in parades in Los Altos, Mountain View and San Jose with the legion's "locomotive," a small school bus that was converted into the 40&8's symbol.

Newman is survived by his wife of 61 years, Margery; a son, Kenneth; a daughter, Katherine; two granddaughters; a sister-in-law, Ginger; brother-in-law, Bill; and many nieces and nephews.

A memorial service will be held this Friday, Nov. 24, at 11 a.m. at American Legion Post 558, located at 347 First St., Los Altos. Donations can be made to the Boland Nurse's Training Scholarship Fund of the 40&8 Society, Voiture Nationale, 777 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, Ind., 46204.

## TEACHERS

► Continued from page 1

fied the contract with the Mountain View Educator's Association on a 5-0 vote.

With the raise, teachers' salaries for 2006-07 will range from \$44,610 to \$82,315 a year, and the district will continue to pay for health insurance for employees and their families. Additionally, teachers under contract for the 2005-06 school year will receive a \$500 bonus.

Overall, the contract will cost the district an additional \$782,800 this year and \$808,700 for the next two years.

Negotiations for the contract began in April. Gloria Valdez, co-president of the association, says that "the general sense is that the contract reflects good progress."

"There is a feeling of 'Yeah!' after so many years of not getting a pay raise," Valdez said.

It has been three years since teachers in the district received a raise. Valdez said the new contract is only good for one year, and that the teachers will have to go back into negotiations again this April.

Gloria Higgins, board presi-

dent, said Monday, "Basically, I am very pleased that we could offer teachers a pay raise."

She added that although not all of the details have been worked out, she was "also really pleased that they will get two prep periods."

As part of the contract, fourth

***"I think one of the most positive things to come out of the negotiations is the release time."***

GLORIA VALDEZ

and fifth grade teachers are being allotted two 45-minute periods per week to give teachers more time for lesson planning, grading and other duties.

Stephanie Totter, administrative services director for the district and one of the lead negotiators on the contract, explained that the preparation periods, called "release time" in the contract, are meant to give

teachers "additional relief."

Totter says that fourth and fifth grade teachers have 27, 28 or 32 students per class — considerably more than teachers in the kindergarten through third grades, who have a maximum of 20 students per classroom.

Additionally, fourth and fifth grade teachers must teach more content than those in the lower grades. Valdez says fourth and fifth grade teachers "work a longer day than anyone else."

"I think one of the most positive things to come out of the negotiations is the release time," Valdez said.

The district anticipates providing the preparation periods at the start of December, after scheduling has been ironed out.

Negotiations in the school district take place yearly, when the teachers' association is able to pick three contract articles to negotiate. Every three years the entire contract is up for renegotiation. This coming April will mark a three-year negotiation process, when the district and association will review the entire contract for teaching staff. ■

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

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## UNIONS

► Continued from page 1

\$43.8 million to solve the problem, but the number will likely change in future studies. Since the *Voice* first reported on this problem in March, the city has put away an additional \$15 million towards retirement health benefits, for a total of \$25 million, leaving \$18.8 million left to be funded.

Miguel, of the firefighters union, said cities similar to Mountain View have not slashed benefits in response to the new law. He listed San Jose, Milpitas, Redwood City and Santa Clara as municipalities that either have or will ratify contracts without cuts to retirement health care.

In October, Palo Alto completed six months of talks with 600 SEIU-represented employees. Retirement health benefits were cut for all employees who have not worked for the city for at least 20 years — a significant cut considering the turnover rate, said Mountain View finance director Bob Locke. Mountain View requires its employees to work 15 years to receive full retirement health benefits.

According to senior building inspector and SEIU representa-

tive Richard Ames, talks reached an impasse last month between his union and Mountain View, and a mediator was brought in to help. Mountain View had offered a two-tier plan to SEIU employees in which lower seniority workers would receive a lump sum of money for retirement benefits,

**“It’s a situation where new employees have one level and old employees have another. Typically that leads to labor unrest.”**

RICHARD AMES, SEIU

instead of a guaranteed percentage. Higher seniority workers would continue to have 80 to 100 percent of retirement health care costs paid under that proposal.

“It certainly is a significant decrease in benefits and certainly not taken very well by the membership,” Ames said. “It’s a situation where new employees have one level and old employees

have another. Typically that leads to labor unrest.”

### Negotiations ‘a moving target’

The SEIU and the firefighter’s contracts expired in June. Talks began beforehand in April, to no avail.

As the *Voice* went to press, both the SEIU and the firefighters had finished separate talks with the city after a month-long break. Miguel said the offer for a lump sum may no longer be a sticking point for the firefighters.

“Things change each time we negotiate,” he said. “It is a moving target each time we go in.”

Union officials often advocate that the city dip into its reserves to deal with such problems. Locke said the city has \$19.6 million in general fund reserves which are for annual emergencies and at least \$9 million more in other reserves that have liabilities attached to them and are earmarked for specific uses. The city’s annual operating budget is \$150 million. The city’s average cost for retirement health care, per retiree, was \$4,800 last year.

The city has one of the best credit ratings in the state, and Locke wants to keep it that way by protecting reserves. The city

has been doing actuarial reports since 1991, which is unusual, and has found health care costs increasing in every report. From 2001 to 2004, health care costs per individual increased by 100 percent, Locke said.

### Penny saved, penny earned

The intention of GASB 45 is for cities to save money on retirement health benefits in the long run. Saved money can earn interest or be invested in funds similar to the way pensions are funded, which means more benefits per tax dollar.

What types of funds cities decide to use for their retirement health benefit dollars is a big question. Soon the state’s giant pension fund, CalPERS, may provide retirement health benefit funds to cities. A large percentage of pension benefits paid by CalPERS comes from money generated by compounding interest and CalPERS investments, which include real estate and stocks.

Locke said the city may end up joining CalPERS’ health benefit program, but expressed caution. He said that with so many changes going on with retirees’ health care and accompanying laws it may not be smart to com-

mit to anything.

Only municipalities that participate in its health benefits program have been promised CalPERS’ new retirement health benefits program, which leaves Mountain View out, since it has avoided the CalPERS health benefits program because of its cost, Locke said.

“It wouldn’t be smart to make these decisions long term,” Locke said. “I’m advising all cities: Don’t be in a hurry to make these decisions. You may not want millions of dollars in a trust fund if it’s not needed.”

Miguel said he would like to see the city put the money into a large trust like CalPERS, so that it would earn more than the 5.5 percent the money is earning now.

Earlier this year, SB-1729 was vetoed. That measure would have allowed all California cities to receive retirement health benefit funds from CalPERS (which stands for California Public Employees’ Retirement System). In his veto message, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger promised that the framework for a better solution would be drafted by the state, one that would not have “unintended consequences.” ▀

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



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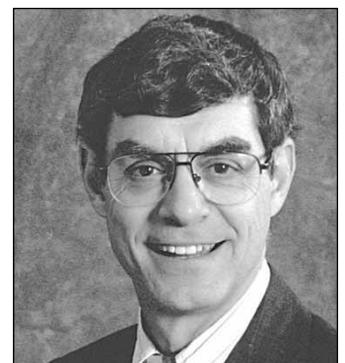
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# EPA tells RAB about TCE in the MEW

By Daniel DeBolt

An extensive EPA-commissioned report has found that the vapors from the toxic chemical trichloroethylene can be stopped from seeping into Mountain View homes and businesses by using plastic membranes and filling cracks in building foundations.

The report, made public at the recent Moffett Field Restoration Advisory Board meeting, assessed the intrusion of trichloroethylene, or TCE, into buildings and homes on the MEW superfund site, an area bordered by Middlefield Road, Ellis Avenue and Whisman Road which has a TCE plume in its groundwater.

There are no buildings that currently have unsafe levels of TCE vapors intruding, the study found, although in the past at least one home at Whisman Station had high levels in a cellar which were addressed with a ventilation system.

In the MEW area, 1,400 air samples were taken from 16 homes and 30 commercial buildings. Across Highway 101 at Moffett Field, another 1,400 samples were taken from new commercial buildings and 42 homes, excluding the now vacant Orion Park and the new Wescoat housing development.

Lenny Siegel, director of the Center for Public Environmental Oversight, was supportive of the techniques used in the study.

"This is the most exhaustive study on commercial buildings with vapor intrusion," he said. "It shows engineering controls work. The critical question is how long does it work?"

The engineering controls in use in the MEW include filling cracks and using vapor barriers in building foundations and ventilations systems that push out TCE vapors.

Siegel raised concern about plastic membranes used for vapor intrusion, which sometimes tear during construction and may be vulnerable to damage in earthquakes.

Siegel appeared to push for more permanent solutions. He said the levels of TCE measured in the outdoor air, 1.5 micrograms per cubic meter, may soon be deemed hazardous if the Environmental Protection Agency takes the lead from the recent report on TCE by the National Academy of Sciences.

The EPA's Alana Lee said her agency disagreed that the air was measured at 1.5 micrograms of TCE per cubic meter. She said the measurements were in the .2 to .5 micrograms-per-cubic-meter range and has said in the past the levels are safe.

But Siegel said that even the levels mentioned by Lee could be hazardous, noting that the EPA said in 2003 that .017 micrograms per liter was hazardous, before changing its position.

While the amount of TCE in the ground at the MEW has reduced by 75 percent since it was first measured in the 1980s, it is typical for the last of the TCE to linger at a site for many years, said Elie Haddad of Locus Technologies, the firm hired by the EPA to conduct the study. The chemical was used by local circuit board manufacturers and machine shops before and during the 1970s.

There are barriers in place to prevent TCE from flowing to drinking water sources, and "pump-and-treat" systems have been in place for over a decade to clean the groundwater. But there is "doubt that any technologies will bring it down in any time frame," Haddad said. ■

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

## ■ CITY BRIEF

### COUNCIL TO RECONSIDER AFFORDABLE HOUSING DOWNTOWN

On Nov. 28 at 7 p.m., the city council will reconsider a plan for affordable housing on one of three city-owned lots downtown.

The council deadlocked months ago on a plan to build affordable housing on a lot on Bryant Street near City Hall. But the opposing three members favored use of another city-owned lot on Evelyn Avenue just east of Castro Street. That spot is currently being used for overflow parking from the Caltrain train station, but a new structure is in the works to

improve parking there.

Since the deadlocked vote, Mayor Nick Galiotto said he would reconsider use of the Evelyn Avenue site, which may give the Evelyn Avenue plan the additional vote necessary for approval.

The project would be built using in-lieu development fees the city has collected. Several nonprofit affordable housing developers have expressed interest in building the housing.

During the recent city council election, several candidates expressed interest in the idea of building a grocery store at the Bryant Street lot.

— Daniel DeBolt

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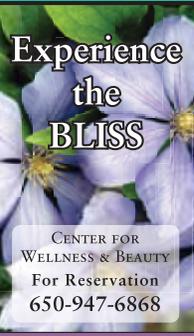
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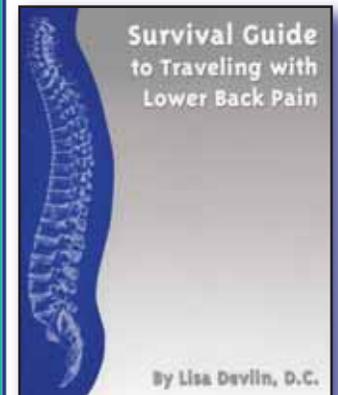
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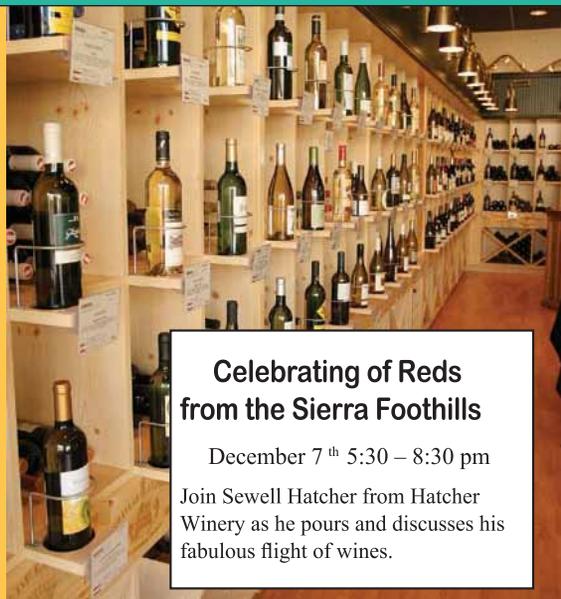
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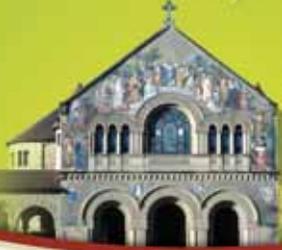
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**SWAT team members** get ready to enter the Palo Alto Bowl on Saturday, Nov. 18. The Palo Alto Bowl had an attempted holdup at 8:45 a.m., in which the bowling alley manager was shot in the neck.

NORBERT VON DER GROEBEN



## Manhunt underway for bowling alley shooter

YOUNG MAN SOUGHT IN BLOODY ROBBERY ATTEMPT AT PALO ALTO BOWL

*Palo Alto Weekly*

A manhunt backed by \$15,000 in reward money is underway for a 25-year-old suspect in last Saturday's brazen attempted robbery at the Palo Alto Bowl, police said late Tuesday afternoon.

As of press time, police were still searching for Michael Paul Davis as the prime suspect. He is considered armed and dangerous.

Police say Davis entered the bowling alley at 8:45 a.m. and told a 22-year-old woman working there to lie on the floor. Soon after, bowling alley manager

Harvey King, 60, arrived and was shot in the neck. He was in critical condition following surgery at Stanford Hospital.



Davis

The robbery attempt and shooting resulted in police from five jurisdictions surrounding the bowling alley for more than six hours Saturday, during which time they rescued the 22-year-old woman, who had been hiding inside.

Anyone with information should call Detective Robert Bonilla at (650) 329-2558, or persons wishing to remain anonymous can call the Palo Alto Police Department tip line at (650) 329-2190. ▀

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# El Camino prepares new cancer center

By Alexa Tondreau

El Camino Hospital has approved plans to build a \$2.62 million cancer center that will group most services for cancer patients in one location.

The center is to open this spring in the Melchor Pavilion, next to the main hospital. The funds will be used to purchase new medical and office equipment. The center is designed to house doctors and specialists in close proximity, so that patients can easily navigate from one phase of treatment to another.

Shymali Singhal, the newly appointed director, said the center is meant to improve cancer patients' overall experience by making the transition from diagnosis to treatment and recovery a much smoother road.

"It's a very disconcerting experience," Shymali said. "There is a swarm of doctors and appointments, and it can be very inconvenient. We think the best thing for patients is to localize the

experience."

El Camino CEO Ken Graham added that "the idea is to make it more convenient and to get rid of time delays. We want to get information to patients more quickly and take out the anxiety of waiting and delays."

The cancer center will house all phases of cancer treatment, from tests and X-rays to radiation and chemotherapy, and Shymali said there will also be services for end-of-life care and dignity.

Once you're diagnosed with cancer, she said, "you're never really out of the woods. We are going to work on survivorship and following up with patients."

The center is being created with community outreach in mind as well, and it plans to vigorously "screen and identify people at risk," Shymali said.

"Risk reduction is the best way to prevent cancer. We want to educate people by teaching about cancer prevention in schools, to nurses and to patients." ▀

## EL CAMINO

► Continued from page 5

hospital, conducted in May and early August and reported in the *Voice*, a team of health experts found the hospital's pharmacy was not meeting Medicare's required standards for participation.

For his part, Graham says he was aware of problems in the hospital's pharmacy "during the interview process." Graham came to El Camino after 12 years as president and CEO of Overlake Hospital in Bellevue, Wash., and says that his top priority has been fixing the pharmacy problem.

"We really had to buckle down and deal with this issue," he said. "It had the full attention of the board and medical staff, and it was pretty intense to work shoulder-to-shoulder to apply all of our resources to the problem. It was a great team effort."

Graham said problems at the hospital were not caused by the hospital's newly installed online records system, ECHO, as was previously speculated. When ECHO was installed in March, a steep learning curve led to concerns that doctors' medication orders were not being correctly processed by nurses and medical staff.

While Graham admits that "ECHO has been a challenge for the hospital," he says that "human factors" were the root cause of the pharmacy problem and not the state-of-the-art technology.

"All the talk about ECHO distracted us from the real issue," he said. "We had to go down another couple of layers to find it."

The hospital hired an outside pharmacy team, Cardinal Health, to review their pharmaceutical operations, and instituted a series of audits, checks and reviews. The survey results from the Department of Health also provided the hospital with important information.

The conclusion reached by all, Graham said, is that poor communication and relations between pharmacy staff, doctors and nurses, as well as between management and staff, caused the reported issues in the pharmaceutical services.

"There were a lot of new people [on staff], he said, "and relationships drifted. It was a matter of getting people to look each other in the eye."

He said the winning strategy was an increased emphasis on professional communications. Pharmacy staff and management now participate in weekly meetings to review specific cases and procedure. There is also a new policy at the hospital that has several members of the pharmacy staff making the rounds to assist doctors and nurses.

As for ECHO, Graham said, its increased efficiency has actually helped to make the hospital run smoother.

"It's been fixed and heavily improved," he said. "It has made the hospital stronger and safer." ▀

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**HOUSE**

► Continued from page 5

every day, nearly cutting off social contact with everyone but his new neighbors. It took 13 months and 6 days — and \$200,000 — to complete the restoration, which entailed jacking the house up and replacing the foundation. Galli dug the basement deeper while he was at it, and added a front porch.

His work seems to have paid off: The house on Mercy Street topped 16 other candidates to win the local honor of Outstanding Remodeling Project.

“I got to admit, the Mayor’s Award was a nice feeling,” Michael Galli said. “To go through all this work and to be recognized.”

The house was originally built by a Mountain View mayor in 1916 (who also built 10 other homes in the neighborhood). Since then termites had eaten through the outer frame of the house, an ugly, lowered foam ceiling was installed, and the foundation started to sink on one side.

The Gallis didn’t cut corners in reconstruction. The new house’s wood, for instance, was approved by the Forest Stew-



VERONICA WEBER

Michael and Ann Galli chose to go “green” when restoring their 1916 Mountain View home, and added this front porch in the process.

ardship Council. The backyard landscaping is designed to cut water use. There is a solar-powered attic to remove heat in the summer, extra insulation in the walls, and low-VOC paint.

The house was completed in June 2005, seven months before the couple’s daughter, Nanceen (now 9 months old), was born. Once it was finished, 75 people gathered there for a celebration.

“There’s lots of nice people here,” Michael Galli said about his downtown neighborhood.

At points during the restoration, he said, his wife would remind him that all the hard work would eventually pay off. He sometimes doubted it, but not anymore.

The new interior was decorated by Ann Galli, who runs a home staging business. She put vivid colors on the walls, and the floors are FSC-approved Brazilian walnut. ▀

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

**AWARDS**

► Continued from page 5

particular mayor award program to give some emphasis and recognition to those enhancing quality of life in Mountain View,” Galitto said.

The Mayor’s Awards have been given periodically since 1969, the last time being in 2003. The organizations and buildings receiving the award were singled out by a jury of 13 people selected by the mayor from local businesses and firms, city commissions, schools, neighborhood associations and the community at large.

**Social Program winners Peninsula Youth Theatre**

received the award for Outstanding Social Contribution for its youth drama program. The 14-year-old program is praised for its family-friendly performances, low cost and efforts to reach out to underprivileged youth.

**The AVID program** at Los Altos High School received the award for Outstanding Educational Contribution. AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) focuses on providing access to four-year colleges.

**The PACT Art Focus program** also received an award for Out-

standing Educational Contribution. Mountain View Whisman School District’s Parent-Child-Teacher (PACT) program is an “alternative elementary school” stressing parent participation. Since 2000, Art Focus has provided hands-on learning opportunities in the arts and innovative teaching methods.

**The CAT Program** at Mountain View High School received the Outstanding Youth Development Program award. In partnership with the Mountain View-Los Altos and Mountain View Whisman districts, freshmen serve as tutors to Crittenden Middle School sixth graders.

**The Free Music and Art for Preschoolers program** at the Community School of Music and Arts (CSMA) also received the Outstanding Youth Development Program award. Starting at Castro School last year, the program has provided a hands-on introduction to the arts for young children in an effort to build a strong foundation for development. Its bilingual program was created in partnership with the Arts Council Silicon Valley and FIRST 5 Santa Clara County.

**Casa SAY**, a program of EHC LifeBuilders, received the Out-

► See **AWARDS**, next page

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**AWARDS**

► Continued from previous page

standing Human Services Program award. Since 1977, Casa SAY has provided a home for runaway, homeless and foster youth in Santa Clara County, and provides counseling and instruction for youth and their families. In 2003 it was restored by volunteers to make it a welcoming, stylish home.

**Mesa de la Comunidad** received the Outstanding Program Promoting Tolerance, Inclusivity, and Involvement award. Started in 2005 in response to proposed school closings, it has advocated for the underrepresented, Latinos in particular, to bridge the divide between them and civic, business and educational organizations. The group offers sports and educational programs.

**VOX Design Group** received the Outstanding Environmental Contribution award. Forrest Linebarger's company produces homes that are 50 percent more energy efficient than traditionally built homes by using "green" design methods. (Linebarger shares his knowledge in a regular column in the *Voice's* Home & Garden section.)

**Physical Project winners**

**San Antonio Place** received the Outstanding Architectural Design award. The 120-unit development offers affordable housing for people earning 15 to 45 percent of the county's median income. Budgetary and design challenges were overcome to provide a building praised by the panel.

**The home at 1090 Mercy Street** received the Outstanding Remodeling Project award. The Galli family house has been remodeled with environmentally friendly materials which capture the home's original style and character.

**Alta Vista High School's new campus** received the Outstanding Landscaping and Site Plan award. In January, the school opened a new campus with significant changes, including open landscaping and 16,499 square feet of new structures providing sports, computer and library services.

**Alza Corporation** received the Outstanding Environmental Enhancement award. Alza completed a power plant last month that will make electricity from landfill-generated methane gas at Shoreline. The gas is turned into electricity for the company's main buildings, with the remainder going to public use. The plant will heat Alza's water as well. The project is also expected to reduce the release of 17.3 million pounds of carbon dioxide annually. ■

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- YOUR LETTERS
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The Voice is published weekly by Embarcadero Publishing Co. and distributed by U.S. Mail to residences and businesses in Mountain View.

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### EDITORIAL THE OPINION OF THE VOICE

## The health care conundrum

How long will California cities, including Mountain View, be able to pay for their retirees' lifetime medical benefits in a time when health care costs are increasing at double-digit rates year after year?

That question was bad enough for cities to contemplate even on a pay-as-you-go basis, but now, new federal accounting rules require that the lifetime medical coverage, estimated to cost \$43.8 million in Mountain View, be paid up front.

That is why the city and three of its unions have struggled to agree on a new contract, despite the city's relative financial health. In this case the two sides appear to be very far apart:

■ From the city's perspective, the only way to avoid the open-ended liability of lifetime health benefits is to put a limit on costs by providing retirees a monthly or annual lump sum to pay for their own care each month. This would control the city's outlay, making it possible to predict retirement expenses year after year.

■ In the union's view, imposition of a "two-tier" system drastically pushes their benefits backwards, and public safety employees, especially, believe the city owes them lifetime benefits in return for the risks they take during a career of fighting fire or crime.

It is this "rock and a hard place" predicament that causes the two sides to continue to disagree on a contract, and that could set a precedent for years to come. It may be small comfort, but Mountain View is hardly alone among cities that will be forced to come to grips with this issue. Menlo Park, for example, recently declared an impasse in its bargaining talks with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

Another issue creeps into the calculation here: the city's pristine credit rating, which could be in jeopardy if the health care crisis is ignored. Mountain View finance director Bob Locke told the Voice that cities with outstanding debt and good credit ratings should be concerned about the new accounting rules.

In our view, both sides in this chess game are going to have to give a little. Unions must recognize that local governments can no longer afford to pay lifetime health benefits without a cap on costs. Taxpayers simply won't stand for it.

By the same token, cities need to reassure workers about their health care benefits and explain the necessity for ending unlimited lifetime coverage. A successful model policy could come from anywhere, including the federal government.

We strongly believe that sooner or later, carte blanche retirement benefits for municipal employees will come to an end. It may take a year or two, but public employees are going to have to face the same cutbacks in retirement benefits that have already hit private industry, and fall back on Medicare after retirement age.

### LETTERS VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

#### MORE TEEN-ONLY GYMS NEEDED

Editor:

As a pediatrician, I read with interest your Nov. 10 article, "Teen-friendly workout." The article presented an innovative concept that I feel should be expanded to other communities in the Bay Area.

Pediatric and teenage obesity is a serious crisis in our country. Recent studies show that 15 to 20 percent of U.S. kids 12 to 19 years old are overweight, and these numbers continue to rise.

Multiple factors play a part in this growing problem, especially the increasingly sedentary lifestyle of our kids. "Overtime Fitness," the teen-centered sports club in Mountain View, is a great concept that incorporates fun and physical activity in an environment that is safe and geared toward promoting healthy lifestyles in teens.

However, this is an expensive option requiring initiation and monthly fees; many patients that I care for who are in need of this exact type of environment cannot afford it. Several of my patients are not offered physical education in school and also don't feel safe walking, running, or playing sports in their own neighborhoods.

"Overtime Fitness" is an outstanding concept and

should be expanded to neighborhoods that are underserved. Offering similar, more affordable programs such as this would greatly benefit the health of all Bay Area teens and play a critical role in helping us prevent diabetes, high blood pressure, and other health problems associated with obesity.

Latasha N. Williams, MD  
Lucile Packard  
Children's Hospital

#### ADVICE AFTER MEASURE C'S DEFEAT

Editor:

Now that the election is past us and Measure C (the pay raise for Mountain View city council members) has gone to defeat, let's hope that the current and new council can move on and act on some of the suggestions that have been made, including:

■ Remember that the council is a policy-making group and should rely more on commissions to give them recommendations.

■ The council should be more specific about their goals to allow for realistic workloads for both staff and council.

■ The council should plan more effective and efficient meetings and study sessions with specific goals, and then

▶ See LETTERS, page 20



## ■ GUEST OPINION

## Money matters, even in local elections

By Bruce Karney

The recent city council election was the first time since 1996 that every candidate running for a four-year term was a non-incumbent. Without incumbents to distort the picture, the election was a wonderful natural experiment about the power of money in politics.

The correlation between the amount candidates spent before Nov. 1 and the votes they got on Election Day was 0.92. As the graph below shows, there's almost a perfect straight line from John Webster, who spent \$1,959 and got 2,920 votes, to Margaret Abe-Koga, who spent \$15,763 and got 9,715 votes. (Vote counts are still incomplete. My figures are the ones available as of Nov. 17.)

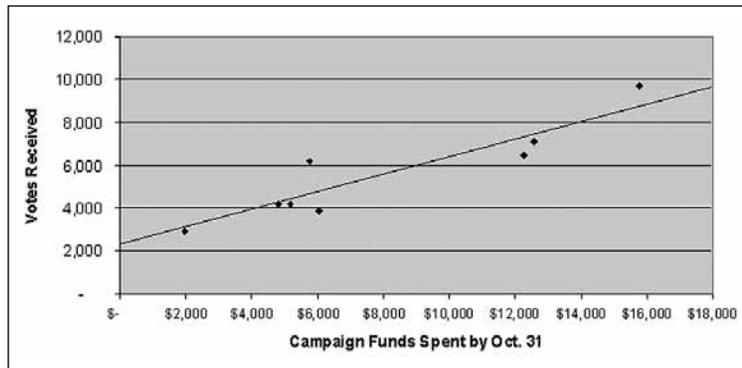
With only one exception, candidates finished in exactly the same order as the amount of money they spent. Kal Sandhu was the exception. He was fourth in spending but finished seventh at the polls.

First-place finisher (and top spender) Margaret Abe-Koga spent 25 percent more than runner-up Ronit Bryant, but got 37 percent more votes. A likely reason why Margaret did so well is that she started her campaign earlier. She had raised \$10,708 by June 30, and no other candidate had gotten more than \$1,000 in contributions by then.

Fourth-place finisher John Inks (currently 294 votes behind Jac Siegel) still had \$4,492 of unspent funds on Nov. 1. Had he put that money to good use in October, in my opinion he would have come in second, not fourth. If he runs again, I predict he'll make sure to spend everything he's got before Halloween.

Of course, the candidate with the fattest wallet doesn't always win. Laura Brown in 2002 and D.K. Lu in 1998 are examples of big spenders who didn't prevail, and Greg Perry won in 2002 on a shoestring budget. But these cases are exceptions, not the norm.

So, my perspective is that the winners didn't win because they were anti-growth or pro-growth, anti-squirrel or pro-squirrel. They won because they raised and spent the most money. It didn't matter whether they spent money they raised from others, like Abe-Koga, or if they spent mostly their own money, like Bryant and Siegel. Almost all of the variation in



GRAPH BY BRUCE KARNEY

votes is explained by money and money alone.

If this makes you mad — and I think it should — and you wish things could be different, then the next time a campaign finance reform initiative like

Proposition 89 comes up, vote for it!

*Bruce Karney was a city council candidate in 2002 and is an advocate of campaign finance reform. He lives on Bush Street.*

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## Viewpoint

### LETTERS

► Continued from page 18

come to a decision.

■ The council should eliminate or minimize out-of-state meetings such as National League of Cities and Conference of Mayors, which have minimal effect on Mountain View.

These are some of the areas that the new council should confer on during the upcoming planning and goal-setting meetings. Perhaps this will help them spend less time and still be effective community leaders.

Art Takahara  
Foxborough Drive

where for playing field sites. Although some organized sports enthusiasts may initially be disappointed, I believe that they too will come to appreciate this price-less asset to our community. Hopefully, the newly elected council will give priority to funding much-needed open space for communities in the north of the city, such as Monte Loma.

Now it's time for Los Altans to put their money where their mouth is, and fund their fair share of sports facilities for our youth.

Christine Crosby  
Woodleaf Way

### SMOKERS UNFAIRLY TARGETED

Editor:

Apparently, based on the latest TV public service ads, if I light up in Silicon Valley, all the citizens east of the Rockies will die from lung cancer.

But people who have never been anywhere near second-hand smoke still die from lung cancer.

Smoking is addictive. Smoking is bad for your health. What about alcohol? Alcohol is bad for your health. Alcohol kills those in the proximity of a drunk driver.

I think it's time every smoker reading this should call his or her local ACLU office and demand action.

Dale Zamzow  
San Jose

### GRATEFUL FOR WORK TO SAVE THE ANNEX

Editor:

While once again enjoying the site of the great blue heron this afternoon, I was reminded that the people of Mountain View owe a debt of gratitude to Kevin McBride and his wife, Justine, for spearheading the successful campaign to save Cuesta Park Annex as open space.

Together with their team of activists, which included local artist Bob Schick and council member-elect Jac Siegel, they were able to motivate normally reticent citizens like me to attend meeting after meeting to voice our support for keeping the park natural. Thanks also to the city council for making the right decision in looking else-

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## Trade food for fun

AMAZING DECOR OUTSHINES THE MENU AT TRADER VIC'S

By Sheila Himmel

For a holiday party, Grandma's birthday, or meeting colleagues for drinks, Trader Vic's at Dinah's Garden Hotel in Palo Alto is an inspiration. But just so you know, the food falls short of the decor.

Everywhere you look is a gorgeous or fascinating piece of art from the collection of Dinah's owner Ray Handley, founder of Folk Art International. Wild face-masks and village story boards aren't just slapped up on walls or protected under glass. They surprise you, right next to your table and in alcoves. Stylish lighting promotes the tropical mood.

Each room has a different personality. The barn-high main dining area features an open kitchen, a Gauguin print, and a Gauguin-like mural of Polynesian Eden. Up a step is a smaller and more elegant room that can hold private parties. A covered wraparound porch beckons outdoor diners, even in winter. The lounge is friendly and comfortable, the deep-red bar itself made



VERONICA WEBER

Trader Vic's bartender Jeff Fairbanks mixes together a Mai Tai, which was created by the restaurant's founder at the original Oakland location in 1944.

► See **TRADER VIC'S**, page 22

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**TRADER VIC'S**

► Continued from page 21

of African railroad ties, and the bar menu has depth. Be sure to visit the restroom downstairs.

Longtime Bay Area residents may remember Trader Vic's as enchanted Tiki rooms. This one has class.

Just keep your culinary expectations set at C-plus, fair to middling. As at Disneyland, you go to Trader Vic's for a little trip away from the everyday.

Somebody will be there to greet you, and if he's seating people when you arrive, somebody else will jump into action. Servers tell you their names and make a solemn pledge to be your server that night. That may put your mind at ease, but they are more earnest than efficient, and overeager to sell drinks. On one visit, our server asked twice in 10 minutes if we wanted another Mai Tai.

On the other hand, the drinks are strong and well-blended. One or two Mai Tais and who cares if the pork chop is tough? Even if you're going to say no, take a tour of the tropical drink menu, including the Scorpion Bowl and other drinks for four people.

The historic Mai Tai (\$8.50) has levels of flavor, with Jamaican rum, orange Curacao, Orgeat and fresh lime over a 15-ounce glass of chipped ice. Even though rock candy syrup is added, the Mai Tai doesn't taste sugary. This drink was invented in 1944 at the original Trader Vic's in Oakland. The Palo Alto Vic's opened in late 2001, on the bones of Dinah's Shack.



VERONICA WEBER

Trader Vic's Cosmo Tidbits for Two platter pictured with the classic Mai Tai.

After drinking in the tropical breezes, the wise diner sticks to Tidbits & Finger Foods. Trader Vic's was an early adopter of the communal style of eating now known variously as grazing, small

plates, and tapas.

Cosmo Tidbits for Two (\$16), if eaten by only two people, could be called dinner. A stout raised stand, kept warm by a flame beneath, presents two juicy barbecued spareribs and three slices of barbecued pork from the Chinese wood-fired oven, three deep-fried prawns butterflied and coated in Japanese bread-crumbs, and three fried wontons filled with crab and cream cheese. The wontons fly under the name Crab Rangoon. A butterfly-shaped dish offers Chinese hot mustard and tomato cocktail sauce, but you don't really need them. What you do need is the hot towels provided for sticky fingers.

In the Starters section, history buffs will want to get a Cosmo Salad (\$9) and Bongo Bongo soup (\$8). My companion had gone to Trader Vic's in Oakland as a child, and was startled to find radicchio rather than limestone lettuce supporting the creamy Cosmo's artichokes, celery and mushrooms. Bongo Bongo soup features fresh spinach, creamed with oysters.

Entrees were so-so. Trader Vic's clearly uses quality fish and meat, but sometimes mistreats them. The Chinese wood-fired oven that night was erratic, producing a very smoky and

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About the Eggs Hawaiian, you have to ask, \$18? Two eggs ordered over-medium were a little runny, although fresh and fried in butter. The slab of grilled ham was thick but dry, saved by a topping of grilled pineapple and banana. "Bedspring" potatoes are curly fries, which don't play well with eggs. Also for your money you get fresh fruit.

Both dishes support Himmel's Theory of Brunch: In most cases you should have the lunch items.

And Trader Vic's has a lot of them. Sunday brunch includes Tidbits & Finger Foods, soups and salads, full-blown entrees like Calcutta Curry Lamb (\$19), a burger (\$9) and sandwiches like the lobster club (\$16).

Bottom line: Go to Trader Vic's for the occasion, not the food. Or go after a visit to the New Guinea Sculpture Garden at Stanford for a blessed day of Oceanic art. ■

salty pork chop (\$26) and thick pieces of duck breast (\$26) that ranged from incredibly tender to tasteless.

Seared ahi (\$26) was our best choice, but it came with a strange rice cake, mushy in the middle.

The Trader Vic's menu cruises all over Asia and the Pacific Rim, including Indian and Thai curries, which can be ordered vegetarian, as well as the vegetarian Singapore noodles.

This summer, Trader Vic's started serving Sunday brunch, an opportunity to enjoy the surroundings in daylight. Banana-coconut-macadamia nut pancakes

(\$15) were very good, half an inch high with crisp edges. Powdered sugar and toasted coconut make the Maui pineapple syrup almost unnecessary, although at these prices you may want to drink it.

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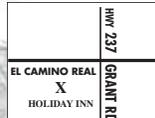
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500083Y-05 09/06

MOVIE TIMES

**A GOOD YEAR (PG-13) ★★**

Century 16: 11:25 a.m. Century 20: 4:55 & 7:35 p.m.

**BABEL (R) ★★★1/2**

Century 16: 12:45, 4:05, 7:25 & 10:25 p.m.; Fri. also at 9:55 a.m.  
Century 20: 11:30 a.m.; 1, 2:30, 4:05, 5:35, 7:05, 8:35 & 10:10 p.m.

**BOBBY (R) ★★**

Century 16: 11:05 a.m.; 1:50, 4:35, 7:20 & 10:05 p.m.  
Century 20: 11:50 a.m.; 2:20, 4:55, 7:30 & 10 p.m.

**BORAT! (R) ★★★1/2**

Century 16: 11:40 a.m.; 1:45, 2:45, 3:45, 4:55, 5:55, 7, 8, 9:10 & 10:10 p.m.; Fri. also at 9:35 a.m. Century 20: 11:50 a.m.; 12:50, 1:55, 3, 4, 5:05, 6:15, 7:10, 8:20, 9:20 & 10:20 p.m.

**CASINO ROYALE (PG-13) ★★★1/2**

Century 16: 11 a.m.; 12:30, 2:20, 3:45, 5:40, 7:10, 9 & 10:30 p.m.; Fri. also at 9:15 a.m. Century 12: Noon, 12:50, 1:40, 2:30, 3:30, 4:20, 5:10, 6, 7, 7:50, 8:40, 9:30 & 10:30 p.m.

**DECK THE HALLS (PG) (NOT REVIEWED)**

Century 16: Noon, 2:30, 5:05, 7:30 & 9:55 p.m.; Fri. also at 9:40 a.m.  
Century 20: 11:35 a.m.; 12:20, 1:10, 2, 2:50, 3:45, 4:30, 5:25, 6:20, 7, 7:45, 8:40, 9:25 & 10:05 p.m.

**DEJA VU (PG-13) ★★★ Century 16: 11 a.m.; 12:25, 1:55, 3:25,**

4:50, 6:20, 7:45, 9:25 & 10:40 p.m.; Fri. also at 9:20 a.m. Century 12: 11:45 a.m.; 1:20, 2, 2:50, 4:30, 5:20, 5:55, 7:40, 8:15, 9 & 10:35 p.m.

**THE DEPARTED (R) ★★★1/2 Century 16: 1 & 6:45 p.m.;**

Fri. also at 9:50 a.m. Century 12: 2:15 & 5:50 p.m.

**FAST FOOD NATION (R) ★★★1/2**

Century 20: 11:30 a.m.; 2:15 & 10:15 p.m. Palo Alto Square: 2:15, 4:50, 7:40 & 10:20 p.m.; Sat. & Sun. also at 11:40 a.m.

**FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS (R) ★★★ Century 20: 11:40 a.m. & 8:25 p.m.**

**FLUSHED AWAY (PG) ★★★ Century 16: 11:30 a.m.; 1:35, 3:40, 5:45**

& 7:50 p.m.; Fri. also at 9:20 a.m. Century 12: 12:05, 2:20, 4:50, 7:20 & 9:40 p.m.

**FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION (PG-13) ★★★1/2**

Century 20: 11:45 a.m.; 1:50, 4:10, 6:15, 8:20 & 10:25 p.m.  
Aquarius: 1, 3:45, 4:45, 6:05, 7:05, 8:10 & 10:15 p.m.; Sat. & Sun. also at noon.

**THE FOUNTAIN (PG-13) 1/2 Century 16: 11:50 a.m.; 2:40, 5:15,**

7:40 & 10:15 p.m.; Fri. also at 9:25 a.m. Century 12: 12:20, 1:50, 2:40, 4:40, 5:30, 7:10, 8, 9:50 & 10:25 p.m.

**THE GUARDIAN (PG-13) ★★1/2 Century 20: 11:25 a.m.; 2:20 & 5:15 p.m.**

**HAPPY FEET (PG) (NOT REVIEWED) Century 16: 11:15 a.m.;**

12:40, 2, 3:20, 4:40, 6, 7:15, 8:45 & 9:50 p.m.; Fri. also at 9:30 a.m.  
Century 20: 11:20 a.m.; noon, 12:40, 1:20, 1:55, 2:45, 3:15, 3:55, 4:35, 5:15, 5:55, 6:40, 7:25, 8, 8:30, 9:10, 9:55 & 10:25 p.m.

**LET'S GO TO PRISON (R) (NOT REVIEWED)**

Century 16: 10 p.m. Century 12: 11:55 a.m. & 9:20 p.m.

**LITTLE CHILDREN (R) ★★★ Guild: 1:20, 4:10, 7 & 9:50 p.m.**

**LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE (R) ★★★ Aquarius: 2:15 & 9:20 p.m.**

**THE PRESTIGE (PG-13) 1/2 Century 16: 4 & 9:45 p.m.**

Century 20: 2:40 & 5:30 p.m.

**THE QUEEN (NOT RATED) ★★★ Century 20: 12:15, 2:35,**

4:50, 7:15 & 9:35 p.m. Palo Alto Square: 2, 4:30, 7 & 9:30 p.m.; Sat. & Sun. also at 11:30 a.m.

**THE SANTA CLAUSE 3: THE ESCAPE CLAUSE (G) (NOT REVIEWED) Century 20: 11:35 a.m.; 2, 4:25, 6:50 & 9:05 p.m.**

**SAW III (R) (NOT REVIEWED) Century 20: 8:10 & 10:30 p.m.**

**STRANGER THAN FICTION (PG-13) ★★**

Century 16: 11:20 a.m.; 2:25, 5, 7:35 & 10:20 p.m. Century 20: 11:55 a.m.; 1:15, 2:25, 3:50, 5, 6:25, 7:50, 9 & 10:20 p.m.

**TENACIOUS D: THE PICK OF DESTINY (R) (NOT REVIEWED)**

Century 16: 12:15, 2:50, 5:20, 7:55 & 10:35 p.m.; Fri. also at 9:45 a.m.  
Century 12: 12:10, 2:45, 5:15, 7:45 & 10:20 p.m.

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)

SPANGENBERG THEATRE: 780 Arastradero Road, Palo Alto (354-8263)

For show times, plot synopses and more information about any films playing at the

Aquarius, Guild and Park, visit [www.LandmarkTheatres.com](http://www.LandmarkTheatres.com)

★ 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

**A GOOD YEAR ★★**

(Century 16, Century 12) Max Skinner (Russell Crowe) exists on an adrenaline high of buy and sell. He's the golden-boy financier for whom millions are mere pocket change. Then, voila: A bit of Max's ancient history rears its ugly head. A beloved yet long-lost uncle (Albert Finney as Henry) who "drank and shagged his way to a lonely and loveless end" has left a crumbling wreck of a French chateau and its attending vineyards to his absentee nephew. Max smells a profit and wants to unload the place for maximum dollars despite the pleadings of the chateau's demonstrative vigneron (Didier Bourdon). Enter the surprise American daughter (Abbie Cornish) who could spoil the sale, and you've got yourself a twisty little vino-soaked comedy. Or at least the makings of one. To quote "Sideways": quaffable but far from transcendent. *Rated: PG-13 for language and some sexual content. 1 hour, 58 minutes.* — J.A.

**BABEL ★★★1/2**

(Century 16, Century 20) On a remote Moroccan mountain, a young goat herder mindlessly fires his father's newly acquired rifle at a tour bus. The bullet hits an American passenger (Cate Blanchett), whose distraught husband (Brad Pitt) exhibits the same mix of fear and entitlement as his fellow Western travelers. In San Diego, the couple's Mexican nanny (Adriana Barraza) gets word that they won't return in time for her to attend her son's wedding across the border. Having cared for their two children since birth, she decides to take them with her. Her gun-toting, easily startled nephew (Gael Garcia Bernal) makes the return trip complicated. They, too, are stranded in a wilderness. Meanwhile, a deaf Japanese teen (Rinko Kikuchi), desperate for love, wanders through the neon wasteland of Tokyo. Her widowed father (Koji Yakusho) was the former owner of the gun that started the disaster-chain of events. Director Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu criticizes the way of the gun and the clash of cultures in a world where bad things happen to good people. *Rated: R for violence, some graphic nudity, sexual content, language and some drug use. In English and French, Spanish, Japanese, Berber, Arabic and Japanese sign language with English subtitles. 2 hours, 22 minutes.* — S.T.

**BORAT! ★★★1/2**

(Century 16, Century 20) Batten down the hatches and hide the children because Borat is coming to town. That's Borat Sagdiyev, a sex-crazed, single-monikered, obscenity-spouting Kazakhstani reporter for a state-owned TV network who's crossing the U.S. of A. in search of the pulse of mainstream America. As Borat (comedian Sacha Baron Cohen) zigzags his way across the country, he interviews all manner of unsuspecting Americans eager to help a foreigner in need. No one is immune to Borat's outrageous antics thinly masquerading as "charming" misunderstandings. Throughout the film, Borat's humor crosses every line of decency and taste: scatological, anti-Semitic, sexist and pervasively offensive. But it's damn funny for most of

its short running time. Credit Baron Cohen with the guts to go out on a comic limb with this vulgar yet courageous fish-out-of-water tale and wacky mockumentarial adventure that's destined to become a cult classic: plucky, uproarious and totally uncompromising. *Rated: R for obscenities and nudity. 1 hour, 22 minutes.* — J.A.

**CASINO ROYALE** ★★☆☆ 1/2

(Century 16, Century 12) The verdict is in: The deliciously brooding Daniel Craig is an edgy and eclectic James Bond, deftly grabbing the reins from uber-Bond Sean Connery. This go-around, James is tackling the money man for the world's most notorious terrorists. Le Chiffre (Mads Mikkelsen) is a

criminal mastermind with an unquenchable thirst for hard currency. A series of explosive events lead Bond and the creepy Le Chiffre to face off in a high-rollers poker showdown at the luxurious Casino Royale in posh Montenegro. Aiding Bond in his quest to vanquish evil is British treasury agent Vesper Lynd (Eva Green), a brainy beauty who will shape Bond's heart and his future with calculated charm. From Africa to Lake Como, Prague to the Bahamas, the beat is positively heart-pounding. "Casino" is pure testosterone pleasure. *Rated: PG-13 for violent action, torture and some nudity. 2 hours, 24 minutes.* — J.A.

**FAST FOOD NATION** ★★☆☆ 1/2

(Century 16, Century 12) This unflinching expose into the dark underbelly of the All-American burger is a thought-provoking cinematic meal. Director Richard Linklater masterfully opens the film with a happy-go-lucky family enjoying a bite at the local fast-food eatery, Mickey's (a fictional chain that resembles McDonald's). The father lifts the bun of his burger and the camera pans down into the patty. It's time to learn what else we bring to the table with that circular hunk of meat. Cut to Mexican couple Raul (Wilmer Valderrama) and Sylvia (Catalina Sandino Moreno) as they illegally cross into the United States where Raul is ushered to work at the nearby meat-processing plant. Across the country, executive Don Henderson (Greg

Kinney) is reveling in the success of "The Big One," Mickey's latest marketing masterpiece. But there's a problem with the popular burger and Don is sent to the processing plant to uncover the source. The disturbing climax — filmed at an actual slaughterhouse — may make the picture hard to swallow, but the importance is undeniable. You'll never look at a hamburger the same way again. *Rated: R for disturbing images, strong sexuality, language and drug content. 1 hour, 46 minutes.* — T.H.

**LITTLE CHILDREN** ★★★★★

(Guild) Todd Field's adaptation of Tom Perrotta's exacting novel of dubious adult behavior is a dark and delicious treat. "Children" opens

with the idyllic picture of innocence as toddlers navigate the local playground under the eyes of their pretty suburban mothers. On closer inspection, the women are snide and snippy gossip-mongers, waxing less than rhapsodic about sex, marriage and things that go bump in the night. Enter Brad Adamson (Patrick Wilson), dubbed "The Prom King," a handsome, married Mr. Mom whose devotion to his own little guy is exceeded only by his studly good looks and his delightfully puzzling background. Not one for standing on ceremony, free-spirited mom Sarah Pierce (Kate Winslet) gets to the bottom of Brad's daily appearance at the park by striking up a conversation. A

► Continued on page 27

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Chris Moynihan, Harry Shearer, Catherine O'Hara and Parker Posey in "For Your Consideration."

## Consider it done

'FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION' TREADS OLD GROUND FOR DIRECTOR CHRISTOPHER GUEST

By Jeanne Aufmuth

■ MOVIE REVIEW

Christopher Guest knows a good spoof when he sees one. Unfortunately he's seeing them in every conceivable nook and cranny, and his shtick is getting stale.

His latest effort, "For Your Consideration," touches on a topic that's rife with comic pos-

sibilities: the nauseating egos of the film business. At stake is a low-budget indie project called "Home for Purim," an intimate drama about a Jewish family's troublesome reunion at the celebration of their dying matriarch's favorite Orthodox holiday.

The "Purim" players are fringe celebs, a motley crew of wannabes and used-to-bes desperate for a break. One little mention on an obscure movie blog is all it takes to start tongues wagging that faded star Marilyn Hack (Catherine O'Hara) may be crafting an Oscar-worthy performance. That tiny flame is fanned into a wildfire of publicity, and suddenly everyone who is anyone is talking about "Purim."

Naturally the cinema gods smell big box office — with a few minor changes to broaden the film's appeal. Good bye Purim, hello Thanksgiving!

Guest trots out the likely clichés with chaotic delight: the Ebert and Roper-like film critics fiercely defending their cine-turfs, the "Entertainment Tonight"-ish hosts (Guest regulars Fred Willard and Jane Lynch) perpetuating water-cooler gossip, and the slick-as-oil studio head (Ricky Gervais as Sunfish Classics President Martin Gibb).

Despite fluent performances by Guest's crew, "Consideration" has a brackish been-there-done-that quality, a tired air of familiarity and distinct lack of sparkle.

Of course there are moments: the "Purim" theme sung round

► Continued on next page

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► Continued from page 25

tiny spark becomes a brushfire and ultimately a raging inferno of love and lust. "Children" reads like a contemporary fantasy, a stark adulterous reality with darkly curling comic edges. Original, challenging and resonant. *Rated: R for language, nudity and sexual situations. 2 hours, 17 minutes.* — J.A.

**LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE** ★★★  
(Aquarius, Century 20) The Little Miss in

question is sunny 7-year-old beauty pageant hopeful Olive Hoover (Abigail Breslin), a darling dumpling whose grandpa (Alan Arkin) is coaching her in a flashy talent number. Life is not a bowl of cherries in the Hoover household. Dad Richard (Greg Kinnear) struggles to get his shaky motivational speaking career off the ground, pushing his nine-step, no-excuses tutorial with forced brio. Mom Sheryl (Toni Collette) flutters over an eccentric brood that also includes Sheryl's brother Frank (Steve Carell), fresh from a suicide

attempt over the loss of his gay lover. All systems are go when Olive unexpectedly nabs a spot in the penultimate Little Miss Sunshine competition, kick-starting familial frenzy. The gang is packed into a last-legs VW van in Albuquerque, headed for Redondo Beach, California. The ensemble acting is first-rate, every player coming through with vibrant characterizations that mesh with thespian ease. "Sunshine" can be safely crowned a comic winner. *Rated: R for language and sexual content. 1 hour, 41 minutes.* — J.A.

**THE QUEEN** ★★★★★  
(CineArts, Century 20) Helen Mirren is perfection as Queen Elizabeth, not the

be-wigged and Tudored version but the contemporary royal for whom a stiff upper lip is the order of the day. That credo is put to the test when Princess Diana is killed in a dramatic car crash inside a dark tunnel in Paris while being pursued by paparazzi. Newly elected British Prime Minister Tony Blair (Michael Sheen) is between a rock and a hard spot, anxious to spit-polish his image with a face of public concern yet clashing with the ritual-bound world of his Queen. Blair and Her Royal Highness do emotional battle while a staid Prince Philip (James Cromwell) staves off reality by stalking an elk that's furtively roaming his summer estate. What ensues is a captivating fic-

tional account of real events that transpired in August of 1997. Mirren deserves every year-end award available for her spot-on portrayal of a reigning royal caught between the crosshairs, forced by a country in mourning to put protocol aside and break with long-standing tradition. *Rated: PG-13 for language and adult situations. 1 hour, 43 minutes.* — J.A.

► Continued from previous page

the holiday table; O'Hara's mystifying Hollywood transformation; and Willard gaily interviewing actors who have been snubbed by, not nominated for, an Oscar. Best of all is the marvelous O'Hara, whose hopeful anticipation is so palpable it hurts.

Guest claims to be forgoing his flip mockumentary style in favor of a more linear narrative. You

wouldn't know it based on his gang's familiar meanderings and character co-dependence. He is a gifted director, and needs to move on. ▣

MOVIE NOTES

**Stars:** \*\*1/2  
**Rating:** PG-13 for language and adult themes  
**Run Time:** 1 hour, 26 minutes

MOVIE CRITICS

S.T.-Susan Tavernetti,  
J.A.-Jeanne Aufmuth, J.S.-Jim Shelby,  
T.H.-Tyler Hanley

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