

Mountain View VOICE



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ARTS & EVENTS | P.33

DECEMBER 8, 2006 VOLUME 14 NO. 50

INSIDE: CLASS GUIDE | PAGE 37

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Colleges prevail in Katz lawsuit

JUDGE REJECTS CLAIMS
AGAINST FOOTHILL-
DE ANZA'S MEASURE
C, BUT LITIGANTS SAY
THEY'LL APPEAL

By Alexa Tondreau

Residents of the Foothill-De Anza Community College District passed Measure C back in June; six months and one lawsuit later, the district can begin to issue the measure's \$480 million in bonds thanks to a ruling Monday in Superior Court.

Judge C. Randall Schneider ruled in favor of the college district following a two-day trial over the district's validation lawsuit, a "come one, come all" suit

that requires Measure C opponents to challenge it in court or give up the opportunity.

"The objections of defendants and cross-complainants are overruled, and the district bonds are validated," Judge Schneider concluded in his 30-page ruling, which covered a wide range of complaints from the litigants — Saratoga attorney Aaron Katz, who owns property in Mountain View, and Mountain View attorney Gary Wesley, representing Melvin Emerich.

The two parties now have 30 days to appeal the ruling, which at least one party says it will do — potentially causing the district to hold off further on issuing the bonds.

Katz and Wesley had claimed in court that Measure C was not in compliance with Proposition 39 of the California Constitution, which permits a school bond measure to be approved by as little as 55 percent of voters as long as it includes certain "accountability" provisions and a list of the specific school projects to be financed.

They claimed Foothill-De Anza did not provide a thorough and accurate list of funded projects to voters and were going to misappropriate funds. But in his ruling, Judge Schneider found that "The ballot proposition for Measure C contained a list of specific projects to be funded which satisfied all requirements under California law."

In a written statement, Foothill-De Anza Chancellor Martha Kanter said that "Judge Schneider's broad ruling validates the election process and the bond issuance." She added, "We complied with all of the requirements of Proposition 39 related



NORBERT VON DER GROEBEN

JOY TO THE WORLD: Members of the Mountain View High School Madrigals perform at the City of Mountain View Community Tree Lighting celebration at Civic Center Plaza on Monday. Santa, council members and hundreds of residents were in attendance.

■ CITY COUNCIL

Thumbs-up predicted for condos

HUNDREDS MAY
LOSE THEIR HOMES
ON EVANDALE

By Daniel DeBolt

By all indications, the city council is likely to approve a development project next week that would displace 250 people from their homes at 291 Evandale Ave. in order to make way for a large condominium

► See **EVANDALE**, page 8

Success in tackling homelessness

AS WINTER GETS COLDER, CSA SAYS NEW SHELTER PROGRAM IS WORKING

By Daniel DeBolt

When the city's church-based Alpha Omega homeless shelter closed earlier this year, church members, some of whom helped start the program 17 years ago, expressed mixed feelings about its ending.

But a new "housing first" Alpha Omega program has since been established, and officials say it's already served nearly double the number of homeless people the old shelter did in a year.

"Its going wonderfully well," said Tara Chua, Alpha Omega homelessness services director for the Community Services Agency. "We are able to serve a

■ INSIDE

Despite the shelters available, at least one homeless man in Mountain View says he'd rather be on his own. See p.12

bigger population than we did in the past. The client case load has more than doubled."

The program does that by providing more than just a walk-in shelter: homeless people who qualify can receive their own housing, as well as assistance in finding a job or in getting government aid.

Maureen Wadiak of CSA said the new program has found hous-

ing for 65 homeless people in its first five months. In previous years, the Alpha Omega program served 37 to 42 homeless people, some of whom "fell through the cracks" as they battled unemployment, addictions and domestic violence. The agency is still tracking the success of the new program, which is part of a growing trend to provide the homeless with housing instead of relying solely on temporary shelters.

The Alpha Omega shelter that closed in March was started by local churches joining forces. A unique system was adopted, with the shelter moving to a different

► See **HOMELESS**, page 12

► See **KATZ**, page 6

REDEFINING QUALITY SINCE 1990
Reading between the emotional line makes the difference between finding a house and a home.

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Dottie Monroe



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Sharon & Marcella



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Jerylann Mateo



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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.

What do you want for Christmas?



"I would like to go on a European vacation."

Loida Lizarburu (pictured with son **Josh**), Mountain View



"Stuffed animals and puzzles."

Sarah Peace, Los Altos



"I would like for everyone to be happy."

Petra Barton, Mountain View



"The new Who CD."

Chris Olson, Mountain View



"I would like a Lomography Colorsplash Camera."

Zoe Ridolfi-Starr, San Jose

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■ QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“The ballot proposition for Measure C contained a list of specific projects to be funded which satisfied all requirements under California law.”

— JUDGE C. RANDALL SCHNEIDER,

IN HIS RULING AGAINST AARON KATZ, GARY WESLEY AND MELVIN EMERICH IN THEIR CASE CHALLENGING FOOTHILL-DE ANZA'S MEASURE C, WHICH PASSED IN JUNE.

■ CRIME WATCH

RAPE, FORMER HEWLETT PACKARD/MAYFIELD SITE, 12/03

Palo Alto Police responded to the report of a woman wandering in traffic on San Antonio Road on Sunday morning. Once out of traffic, she told police that she was the victim of sexual assault. She said she left the Cubberly School Homeless Shelter sometime after 5 a.m. and was walking on foot with a group of people. She left the group and walked through the HP site when a male member of the group followed her. The man sexually assaulted her while on the site outside of the buildings.

After the assault, the woman was able to flee the area. The man who attacked her described as a white male adult who is tall

with a thin build. He was wearing a gray hooded sweatshirt, blue jeans and white tennis shoes.

ARMED ROBBER, CLARKE'S CHARCOAL BROILER, 615 W. EL CAMINO REAL, 11/30

After Clarke's Charcoal Broiler had closed at 9:26 p.m. Thursday, two men, one carrying a sawed-off shotgun, entered the place and conducted a take-over-style robbery.

The men ordered the employees to the ground and took cash from the registers, as well as cell phones and other personal items from the employees. They promptly left on foot. There were no injuries and the case is still under investigation. Both suspects were reported as being tall black men in hooded sweatshirts.

■ POLICE LOG

AUTO BURGLARY

1700 W. El Camino Real., 11/28
1300 block Pear Ave., 11/29
1300 block Pear Ave., 11/29
300 block Easy St., 11/29
300 block Easy St., 11/29
300 block Easy St., 11/29
10 block Beverly St., 12/02
100 block Chetwood St., 12/03

BATTERY

Lozano's Carwash, 11/29
70 block Palo Alto Ave., 12/02

DOMESTIC DISTURBANCE

1400 block Isabelle Ave., 12/01
20 block Monroe Dr., 12/02

GRAND THEFT

2000 block W. Middlefield Rd., 11/27
2400 block Bayshore Pkwy., 11/29
900 block Miramonte Ave., 11/29
1100 block Miramonte Ave., 12/01
20 block San Antonio Circle., 12/02

STOLEN VEHICLE

500 block Showers Dr., 11/29
2000 block California St., 11/29
200 block Castro St., 12/03

VANDALISM

100 block W. Middlefield Rd., 11/27
1200 block Dale Ave., 11/27
1700 block Evandale Ave., 11/29

COMMERCIAL BURGLARY

10 block E. El Camino Real, 11/28

■ CORRECTION

In last week's council story on affordable housing for Evelyn Avenue, the *Voice* incorrectly reported the type of housing

that was approved. The council approved family homes, not efficiency studios, at its Nov. 28 meeting.

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Jammie session

By Don Frances

NORMALLY, PAJAMA parties are held in the home, and involve young people. That's why the one being held this weekend at a local architectural firm is so great:

"For the past five years our firm, Spectrum Fine Homes, Inc., has hosted a Pajama Party as our annual holiday event," wrote Susan Davis. "We call this holiday open house a 'pajama party' because our guests are asked to bring a pair of new PJs for a child, which we then donate to the Mountain View Community Services Agency."

Then Davis explained that she and her husband Bob, the owners of the firm, "wear PJs during the event, and frequently our guests show up in their jammies, too — making this a very casual, fun, and funny holiday event." On top of all that, the party "is open to the community."

Grownups in pajamas, hosting a holiday party at their own business, opening it to the public and serving a charitable cause — this is why I love America.

Davis added that she and her husband are 30-year residents of Mountain View, and have owned Spectrum Fine Homes — a residential remodeling firm focusing on green building — for almost 20 years.

The 5th Annual Pajama Party is this Sunday, Dec. 10, from 1 to 5 p.m. Spectrum is located at 188 S. Whisman

► See **EDITOR'S DESK**, page 18



Dr. Tracy Ferea

NORBERT VON DER GROEBEN

Prepared for the worst

BIOLOGIST FORMS COMPANY TO FIGHT BIRD FLU

By Alexa Tondreau

Dr. Tracy Ferea, Mountain View resident and biologist, is worried about avian bird flu. So worried, in fact, that this summer she decided she could no longer sit idly by and wait for the worst to happen.

Ferea founded Bird Flu Smart, a grassroots, Mountain View-based company consisting of

Ferea and seven volunteers who want to prepare the public for what she believes will be the deadly onslaught of an avian flu pandemic.

As founder and director, Ferea brings to Bird Flu Smart a scientist's perspective coupled with a survivalist approach. Her research in microbial genomes

► See **BIRD FLU**, page 17

Navy wants lid on comments

PUBLIC INPUT ON HANGAR ONE REPORT MAY HAVE TO BE SUBMITTED IN WRITING

By Daniel DeBolt

When the Navy announces whether it wants to demolish or save Hangar One this spring, a meeting will "probably" not be held to receive public comments, the Navy's Rick Weissenborn said this week.

Public comments will be received in writing only, he announced.

"There are a lot of people out there that if you tell them, 'Write a letter,' are going to feel disenfranchised," said Steve Williams, an advocate for saving the historic hangar which once housed one of the world's largest

School chiefs: Hills idea a dud

GROVES JOINS PEERS IN CALLING PROPOSAL BAD FOR EVERYONE, INCLUDING LOS ALTOS HILLS

By Alexa Tondreau

The Los Altos Hills redistricting effort, which took another step forward this week, is bad policy and "no longer even necessary," according to a statement released Monday by Mountain View-Los Altos Superintendent Barry Groves and two of his peers.

Groves joined Superintendent Tim Justus of the Los Altos School District and Superintendent Mary Frances Callan of Palo Alto Unified in denouncing the recent moves by Los Altos Hills, which has sought to carve out its own district ever since a rift over the closure of Bullis Elementary School.

Groves and other educators released the statement (printed on page 21) to local newspapers such as the *Voice* and *San Jose Mercury News* just days before the County Committee on School Organization was scheduled to hear the Town Council's proposal for reorganization. (The Thursday hearing took place after *Voice* went to press.)

Their statement says the effort to form a new kindergarten-through-eighth grade district in the Hills is

counter to current education policy trends in the state and nation — and that it poses "enormous negative consequences."

A school district designated exclusively for Los Altos Hills would "serve as clear precedent to reverse 75 years of state policy," the statement read.

Large districts, it continued, "have the resources to provide the robust mix of programs and services California public school students deserve."

Beyond policy issues, the superintendents expressed concern over "drastic changes to an education system that has served the area well for decades."

The redistricting effort would exclude Los Altos Hills students from attending Loyola Elementary School and Egan and Blach middle schools. In an interview with the *Voice*, Groves said he doesn't think Los Altos Hills' residents would really want such a drastic change.

"At best it's unclear right now that they understand the situation and the unintended consequences," of the redistricting, he said. Groves added that he thinks many of the residents purchased homes in the Hills in large part because of the excellent public schools offered there.

At the high school level, it is still

► See **LOS ALTOS HILLS**, page 19

"At best it's unclear right now that they understand the situation and the unintended consequences."

BARRY GROVES,
MOUNTAIN VIEW-LOS ALTOS
SUPERINTENDENT

Wayne Army, deputy assistant secretary of the Navy, wrote a letter in response to Eshoo's questions, stating that, "We believe that offering the community an opportunity to respond in writing is the best means for complete and thorough consideration of their input."

When the Navy announced it wanted to demolish Hangar One

► See **HANGAR ONE**, page 19



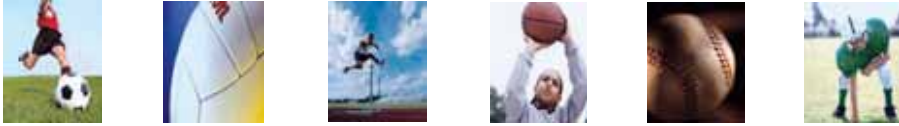
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KATZ

► Continued from page 1

to Measure C, [and] our detailed list of bond projects is valid.”

Foothill-De Anza attorney Sean Absher seconded Kanter's sentiment, saying he was “pleased with the well-reasoned decision.”

Katz used a different approach in this lawsuit, after years of filing lawsuits based on another contention: that he shouldn't have to pay a district's taxes when, as a Saratoga resident, he was not allowed to vote on the measure.

Previous Katz suits led to settlements of \$200,000 with the El Camino Hospital District and \$60,000 with the West Valley-Mission Community College District, based on his agreement to drop legal action.

Katz wouldn't comment directly on the ruling in the Foothill-De Anza case, but did say in an e-mail to the *Voice*, “It's people like Mr. Emerich, Mr. Wesley and I that helped found this country because if the system doesn't work for us, it certainly won't work for you.”

He continued, “You should be reveling in a system that allows objectors to be heard as opposed to ridiculed.”

While Katz would not comment on whether he will appeal the decision, Wesley said he and Emerich were “certainly going to look into the appeal,” and believed that “all parties intended to appeal.”

The Foothill-De Anza validation lawsuit has “priority” ranking in the county's Superior Court in order to get it through the system more quickly.

“Anyone can sue over a traffic accident,” Wesley said. “This case involves a lot more money and special interests.”

**“It would be
like selling
junk bonds.”**

GARY WESLEY

Although in her statement, Kanter said the district will “move ahead to sell the bonds to renovate and construct our college facilities,” Wesley thought it unlikely that they will do so while the appeals process is

still ongoing.

“Their problem is that the bonds won't sell at a reasonable rate of interest if there is the prospect of an appeal pending. It would be like selling junk bonds.”

An official appeal in this case has to be filed 30 days after the court's judgment is filed, and it could take six months to a year for the appeal process to run its course. ▀

E-mail Alexa Tondreau at
atondreau@mv-voice.com

■ OBITUARY

MIYUKI NAKANO

Miyuki Nakano, a Mountain View resident, passed away on Dec. 2 in Mountain View. She was 90 years old.

Born in 1916 in Centerville, Calif., Nakano was married for 29 years and widowed by the late Megumi Nakano in 1969.

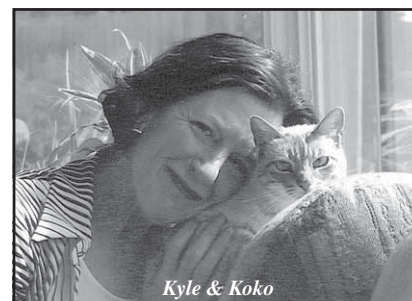
She is survived by her sisters, Eleanor Kubo and Hisaye Shiki; her children, Bud Nakano, Peggy DuBios, Lois Banks, Phyllis

Nakano and Dale Nakano; five granddaughters, Renee, Erin, Bubbles, Lynette and Pamela; and one great-grandson, Louie. She is preceded in death by siblings George Nakamura, Kiyoto Nakamura and Mutsuye Sasaki.

A funeral service was held on Thursday, Dec. 7 at the Mountain View Buddhist Temple. Inurnment services will be held on Friday, Dec. 8 at 10:30 a.m. at the Alta Mesa Cemetery in Palo Alto.

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PA Bowl suspect in custody

SWAT TEAM USED TEAR GAS IN 12-HOUR SUNNYVALE STANDOFF

Bay City News

After a 12-hour standoff, SWAT team members fired tear gas canisters into a Sunnyvale home last week to flush out the man wanted in connection with the November shooting and attempted robbery at Palo Alto Bowl.

The man, Michael Paul Davis, had barricaded himself in the home last Friday, Dec. 1, and was negotiating with authorities by telephone for "many hours," said Palo Alto police Capt. Dennis Burns.

"At approximately 3:15 a.m., chemical agents were fired into the home to induce the suspect to come out," Burns said. He said Davis, 25, crawled out of a garage window and was taken into custody without incident by members of the SWAT team.

His arrest capped a three-week manhunt for the suspect in the Nov. 18 incident, during which Harvey King, the bowling alley manager, was shot in the neck. Originally listed in critical condition at Stanford Hospital, King has been released and is recovering.

After last Friday's arrest, Davis was handed over to Palo Alto police and booked into Santa Clara County jail on attempted murder and robbery charges. He had been wanted on a \$1 million warrant.

Palo Alto and Sunnyvale police had located Davis at the home after following several leads during a nearly two-week-long investigation, Burns said.

A janitor at the bowling alley, 52-year-old Roosevelt Reed, was arrested on a parole violation the Sunday after the robbery attempt. He has been accused of being an accomplice to Davis and letting him into the bowling alley before it opened.

On the day of the shooting, officers from five jurisdictions cordoned off the bowling alley, blocking traffic on El Camino Real for more than six hours until they were able to rescue a young woman who had been hiding inside. ▀

Palo Alto Weekly staff contributed to this report.

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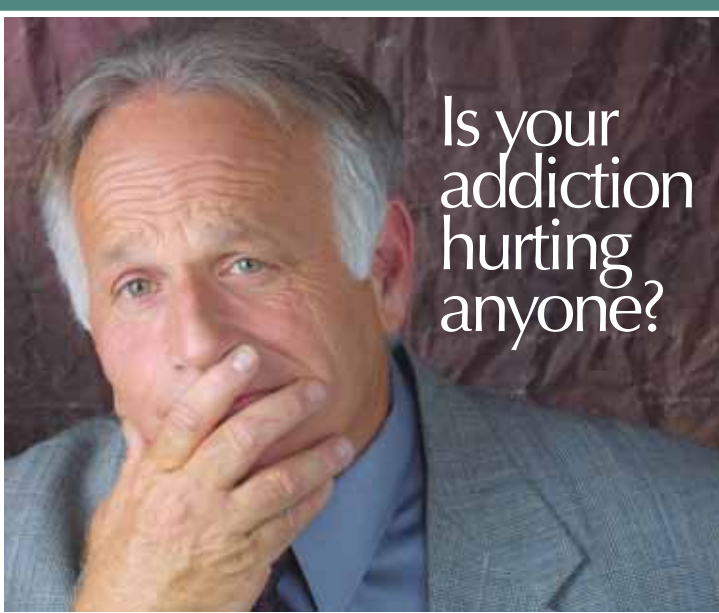
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500083Y-05 09/06

This apartment complex at 291 Evandale Ave. could be cleared for new condos if the council approves the proposal next week.

KARNA KURATA



EVANDALE

► Continued from page 1

complex.

The Summer Hill Apartments, at the northern end of Whisman Road near Highway 101, are a rare nook of cheap housing in the city, with rents in the \$900 to \$950 range for two- to three-bedroom apartments. If approved, the development would replace the 64 apartments there with 144 condos of 1,100 square feet each. The new units are expected to sell for \$500,000 or more.

City council member Laura Macias has raised concerns about whether Summer Hill residents have been notified about the potential changes in their native language. During a recent visit to the mostly Latino complex, four of the seven residents contacted by the *Voice* could not speak English. A 10-year resident of the complex, Rigo Basquez, said the only notice residents received came several months ago and was printed in English.

Basquez said residents knew the apartments would eventually be torn down and that they would have to move. "We just know we will, but we don't know when," he said. He added that rumors about the proposed development have circulated for three years.

Ganzalo Gama, another resident, said he and his large family rent a unit for \$900 a month, and

Gama said he doubts it will be easy to find new housing for that price elsewhere in the city. "We got jobs here," he said. "We would still like to live in this city."

For years the city council has wrestled with the growing popularity of "condo conversion" developments, which are lucrative, but cut into the city's affordable housing.

"When we are displacing people that are the working poor, I don't think that's the right direction to go," Macias said.

Macias said she hopes the council will come up with a policy to address increasingly common "condo displacements" when the new city council sets goals in January. Among the suggestions she has are to set requirements for how residents are notified and come up with a way to make sure residents are compensated for moving expenses. She said she has seen widely varying compensation offers, from nothing to \$1,000 per unit.

Compensation for each unit at Summer Hill Apartments will reportedly be \$500, along with a full deposit refund, free advice on renting and a free subscription to a rental guide.

Three council members, Mike Kasperzak, Tom Means and Greg Perry, have already expressed support for the project. The council will vote on the proposal after a public hearing Dec. 12 at 7 p.m. on the second floor of City Hall.

An environmental impact report said benzene vapors in the soil were above the legal limit on the approximately three-acre site, and a staff report said a vapor barrier will be installed under the parking garage to stop vapors from intruding into homes.

The complex is also right across the street from the superfund site called the MEW — within Middlefield Road, Ellis Avenue and Whisman Road — and trichloroethylene has been found in the groundwater there. However, that groundwater is not used for drinking water, and vapors have not been detected in the soil.

Last September, the city's planning commission recommended re-zoning the site to R4, which would allow a maximum of 178 units on the 2.97-acre site. Part of the justification for the high density zoning is its location on the No. 35 bus line and proximity — about a half mile — to light rail.

But Macias criticized labeling the decision as an example of "smart growth," because it's not near major transit corridors or grocery stores. The nearest store is a 7-11 on Middlefield and Whisman roads.

The property owner, Sal Teresi, and his architect, Salvatore Caruso Design Studios, could not be reached by press time. ■

E-mail Daniel DeBolt at ddebolt@mv-voice.com

■ CITY BRIEFS

SCHWARZENEGGER ENLISTS CITY STAFFER

Thanks to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, economic development director Ellis Burns has a new job on top of his duties for the city: He has been selected to serve on a task force to help remove the red tape around broadband technology.

"This is a great recognition for Ellis and the city," said Kevin Duggan, city manager.

Burns, 57, has worked for

Mountain View since 1991. He is well connected in the business and technology community and will be asked to give input on opportunities to increase broadband use.

GRAHAM RESERVOIR RIBBON-CUTTING DEC. 16

The marvel under Graham Middle School's playing fields, an eight-million-gallon, \$12 million reservoir that will increase the city's water supply in an emergency, will have its

dedication ceremony Dec. 16.

The reservoir already received an award from City and County magazine, which gave the award to the city earlier this week at the national League of Cities conference.

The ceremony will be from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Graham Middle School, 1185 Castro Street. After a ribbon-cutting, the track and field will be officially ready for use. Entertainment and food will be provided.

— Daniel DeBolt

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3	4	5 Secrets to Permanent Weight Loss 6:30-8:30 p.m. \$10	6 Gluten-free Baking 6:30-8:30 p.m. \$28	7 Holiday Truffles 6:30-8:30 p.m. \$28	8	9 Kids Holiday Cookie Decorating 1-3 p.m. \$25
10	11 Crab Crackin' & Sampling 6:30-8 p.m. \$10	12	13 Stress Reduction for the Holidays 7-8 p.m. FREE	14 A Night in Oaxaca 6:30-8:30 p.m. \$29	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24 Happy New Year! 31	25 Merry Christmas! STORE CLOSED TODAY	26	27	28	29	30

5 Secrets to Permanent Weight Loss

Tuesday, December 5th, 6:30-8:30 p.m. \$10

Do you suffer from fluctuating weight, being overweight or thyroid problems? Join Jenny C. Lee, L. Ac. in her discussion of 5 Secrets to Permanent Weight Loss. Jenny will talk about how to lose weight and increase your energy level leaving you feeling in better health.

Gluten-Free Baking

Wednesday, December 6th, 6:30-8:30 p.m. \$28

Join Kathleen Levitt as she teaches us how to prepare tasty and gluten-free treats! This class will feature hands-on participation, demonstration, and delicious sampling. Items include:

- Corn Cakes with Black Bean Salsa
- Stuffed Cherry Tomatoes
- Endive Boats
- Holiday Chocolate Torte
- Clementine Cake
- Sugar Cookies

Holiday Truffles, Truffles, and More Truffles...

Thursday, December 7th, 6:30-8:30 p.m. \$29

Instructor: Ron Kent (www.oaxanfoods.com)

Have a great time learning the fine art and technique of

making chocolate truffles and confectioneries. Experience how to temper chocolate, hand dip center, and use several different kinds of molds. We will make over ten varieties of confectioneries using a variety of methods to flavor the ganache. You will learn the very best recipes for fabulous chocolate truffles; Amaretto Truffles; Ivory Truffles (with white chocolate centers); Crème de Menthe Truffles; Bourbon-Pecan Truffles; Milk Chocolate; Cappuccino Truffles; Rum-Raisin Truffles; Rocky Road and more.

Kids Cookie Decorating

Saturday, December 9th, 1:00-3:00 p.m. \$25

Have fun with cookies! Join Hallie, our Bakery Chef, as she shows us fun and easy ways to decorate festive sugar cookies. Both parent and child are invited to participate. Items on the agenda include decorating sugar cookies and multi-colored chocolate dipped sandwich crèmes (first you'll dip the sandwich crèmes, and then you'll decorate them). Learn how to create fun and festive cookies during the holiday season! Each child must be accompanied by his or her parent/guardian.

Crab Crackin' Class

Monday, December 11th, 6:30-8:00 p.m. \$10

Join Mario Guerrero and our Seafood Team as they show us the proper and fun way to crack crab! After

cracking crab, students will be invited to dip the crab in various butters to taste and enjoy. If you're a crab lover, this class is for you. People of all ages are invited to join us!

Stress Reduction for the Holiday Season

Wednesday, December 13th, 7:00-8:00 p.m. Free

Learn a simple practice that you can do through the holidays to relax, quiet your mind and body and feel better fast. Instructor Dana Ben-Yehuda, M.AmSAT, teaches you to undo everyday stresses using the Alexander Technique.

A Night In Oaxaca

Thursday, December 14th, 6:30-8:30 p.m. \$29

Instructor: Ron Kent (www.oaxanfoods.com)

Experience some of Mexico's extraordinary and surprisingly subtle flavor combinations with Oaxacan expert chef Ron Kent. He will guide you through an elegant menu that will include Tiny Hors d'Oeuvres Tamales; Antojitos of Molotes with Chorizo and Potatoes, topped with Black Beans and Fresh Guacamole; Braised Red Snapper Fillets Wrapped in Banana Leaves with Hoja Santa Leaves; Spanish Rice; and "Popocatepetl" Mexican Chocolate Lava Cake. Quench your thirst with Agua de Horchata.

The only means of support

SUPPORT NETWORK CARRIES ON LONELY STRUGGLE AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

By Amber Cleave

“There are three times more animal shelters than there are shelters for women,” said Chata Alfaro, executive director of the Support Network for Battered Women. “Every time I say that statistic it makes me sick to my stomach.”

Still, it could be argued things have improved since 1978. Back then, when the Support Network began — with one woman and one phone in a rented church room — domestic violence was barely reprimanded by society, and there were almost no legal avenues for women.

It was in that environment that Geri Catherine Rivard, the founder and mastermind behind the organization, dedicated her life to helping give women the support, strength and help they needed get out of violent and abusive situations.

The Support Network for Battered Women has since grown to help thousands of women and children every year. In 2000, the Sunnyvale-based nonprofit served 985 clients and responded to 5,405 calls throughout the Bay Area, including in Mountain View. That same year, the shelter housed 113 women and 133 kids. Currently, the shelter (its exact location is undisclosed) can house eight families at a time.

The list of programs and aid offered by this charitable group is long. Topping that list is the shelter itself, created for women and children suffering from domestic violence and abuse in Santa Clara County. But the group also offers drop-in services designed to foster community support among battered women; the only 24-hour toll-free English-Spanish hotline in Northern California; a Victim’s Advocacy Program; and much more.

“We are trying to reach out further,” Alfaro said, speaking of the group’s new Teen Dating Violence Prevention Program

implemented at three Bay Area high schools. In that program — which touts the slogan “Love Doesn’t Hurt” — several teens at the schools take a 10-week training course and spread the word of healthy, functional relationships around campus. Some schools have even presented a skit designed to raise awareness about domestic violence and abuse.

Alfaro was hired three months ago as the new executive director for the Support Network, and brings a strong multicultural and multilingual element to the program. She says she believes an alternative perspective is important because different cultures handle domestic violence in different ways, and women in some cultures feel they need to “save face” and hide the violence.

“This is common in many cultures, including the Asian culture — not just the Latino culture,” Alfaro said.

Another program, La Familia, offers preventative services in local Latino communities by encouraging women to inform family and friends about the occurrence of domestic violence. The program currently functions in the Columbia neighborhood in Sunnyvale, but the word is spreading, and many Latino women are reaching for its benefits.

Alfaro says any money raised through the *Voice*’s Holiday Fund will go to client services and the Domestic Violence Continuum of Counseling Program, which provides ongoing counseling.

“I really believe in this cause and we appreciate the community’s continual support,” Alfaro said.

For more information on the Support Network, call the office at (408) 541-6100, or visit www.snbw.org. The group’s crisis line is (800) 572-2782. There is also a “National Violence Domestic Hotline” at (800) 799-7233.

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

About the Holiday Fund

Voice 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.

FUND DONORS

Holiday Fund Donations through Dec. 5 are \$5,232 from 30 donors.

Weeks of Nov. 20 thru Dec. 5

Anonymous (11)..... \$1,495
Ben DeBolt..... \$50
Barbara and Tom Lustig..... \$300
Stephen and Ruth Anderson..... \$250
Anthony and Wendy Chang..... \$500
Rudolph and Jane Bahr..... *
James and Marilyn Lane..... \$250
Linda Cook..... *
Ron Stephens..... \$200
Silvia Newark..... *
Ed Perry and Laurie Bonilla..... \$400
Anne Johnston..... *
Ed Taub..... \$72
Bruce and Twana Karney..... \$100

Mary and Christopher Date..... \$250
Dan Shane..... \$100
Carmel Mould..... *
Xinh Huynh..... *
Greg Fowler and Julie Lovins..... *
Randa Mulford..... *
John and Rada Ford..... *
Karen DeMello..... *
Linda and David Williams..... *
Tom and Betty Zeidel..... *

In Memory/Honor:

Rudolph and Jane Bahr in memory of Kate Wakerly; James and Marilyn Lane in memory of Mildred Moellinger; Ed Taub in memory of Constance Gish; Greg Fowler and Julie Lovins in honor of Anne Bakotich; Linda and David Williams for the Community Services Agency (MV-LA).

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Inspirations

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9:45 am Church School Nursery
11:00 am Worship in the Sanctuary,
Club Sunday for Children, Nursery

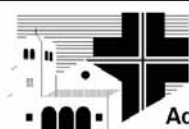
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10:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist with Choir and Casavant Organ

December 10, Santa Lucia Festival

5:30 p.m. Potluck Smörgåsbord, 7:00 p.m. Santa Lucia Program

December 17, Lessons and Carols

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Homeless, but not hurting

AFTER 12 YEARS CAMPING AT STEVENS CREEK, MOUNTAIN VIEW MAN SEES NO REASON TO CHANGE

By Daniel DeBolt

Vaun Nelson, 63, may be homeless, but he has lived in the same spot along Stevens Creek in Mountain View for 12 years. He is a quiet, easygoing man who has made the decision to live this way even though there are alternatives for him.

"This is all I know," he said.

Nelson is admittedly an alcoholic. He said he was married for 22 years and held steady jobs at the San Francisco shipyard, Standard Oil and various electronics companies. That was 20 years ago, he says, and he hasn't seen his daughter in many years.

"It's all gone now," he said.

He emphasized that many people have tried to help him, but somehow nothing seems much better than the life he has found in his tent under some trees in "mellow Mountain View," as his friend Matteo put it. (The *Voice* chose not to disclose the location of Nelson's home.)

Nelson prefers to be homeless here. He said he's heard what it's like in other cities with "people killing each other," and he doesn't want any part of it. Even here, however, he's had to deal with a few "crazies" camping near his home over the years. One pulled a knife on him because he wanted some of the bicycle parts Nelson was collecting. Nelson told him to just take the parts.

His friend Matteo was visiting when the *Voice* first found the site. Matteo has found housing in San Jose, but keeps in contact with many of the homeless in

the area. He's one of many in a network who help Nelson if he winds up injured or in some other trouble.

If Nelson needs a sleeping bag, Matteo will tell someone in local community services, such as the Community Services Agency. One San Jose social worker recently got Nelson a copy of his birth certificate so he could receive Social Security money. With that money, Nelson says, he could afford housing in the area, such as the \$250 for a room in Palo Alto.

"But I'm so used to this I don't want to go," Nelson said, adding he'd rather spend it on booze.

Across from Nelson's camp is a small shack made out of discarded doors, tucked away under a pepper tree. This is where Harold, "the man of doors" lives. Harold has housing somewhere else, Nelson said, though he still stays in the area, as do several others who have moved on to housing. But Nelson is the only one who stays in the area regularly.

He pointed across from his camp to another stand of trees.

"A friend of mine died over there," he said. "He just drank himself to death. Next thing I know a garbage truck will show up and take everything I own."

It was just last month that Nelson was given a four-day-notice to clear out. "They could do it anytime they want," he said. "A Bobcat scoops everything up and dumps it into a garbage truck."

"What part of 'give me a break' don't they understand," Matteo said.

► See **NELSON**, next page

HOMELESS

► Continued from page 1

church every month.

"It gave our people a much greater appreciation for what homelessness is like," said Jim Gaderlund, pastor at Foothill Covenant Church near Mountain View High School. "They are people you can care about."

The new program provides the homeless with greater assistance in finding a home, negotiating a lease and acquiring the skills needed to stay housed.

Just as they did with the old program, the homeless must go through an interview process to receive help. There are waiting lists for much of the housing, which is in affordable housing developments such as San Antonio Place in Mountain View or in surrounding cities. Chua said rents range

from \$100 to \$700 a month.

Some homeless people — such as Vaun Nelson, profiled in this issue — say they're so set in their ways that they don't even want shelter.

"You'll find that's going to happen a lot," Chua said. "Those who are homeless for a number of years tend to be content with their situation."

Large portions of the homeless population are the newly homeless, living in their cars or on people's couches, Wadiak said. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the fastest growing homeless population is families with children, partly because of the decreased buying power of low-wage jobs and the lack of affordable housing. ▀

E-mail Daniel DeBolt at
ddebolt@mv-voice.com



VERONICA WEBER

Vaun Nelson stands alongside Stevens Creek near his camp site. Nelson has been homeless in Mountain View for 12 years.

NELSON

► Continued from previous page

Before Nelson got Social Security, he used to “can” for money, meaning collect cans for recycling.

“I can get a \$1.90 for a pound of cans,” Matteo said. “How much does it cost to fill your gas tank?”

The two rely on bicycles for transportation. Nelson has a trailer he uses for carrying cans. Matteo said he found the trailer on the side of the road.

But ever since Nelson started to get a Social Security check he’s gotten lazy, he said. He

used to try and get out everyday to go canning, but now he finds himself at home more often listening to his Walkman radio.

Even though the weather’s turned cold, Nelson is still wearing his open-toed sandals. After 12 years he’s learned to adjust to the cold weather.

“I’ll get through it,” he said. “I’ll just put on a couple more layers of socks.”

But the thought of housing with a microwave and color TV is still “dangling” in his head.

“I’m thinking about it hard, man,” he said. ▣

E-mail Daniel DeBolt at ddebolt@mv-voice.com

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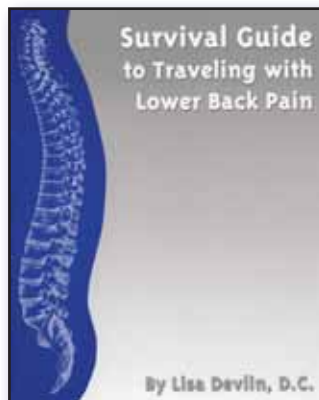


Holiday Gift Guide

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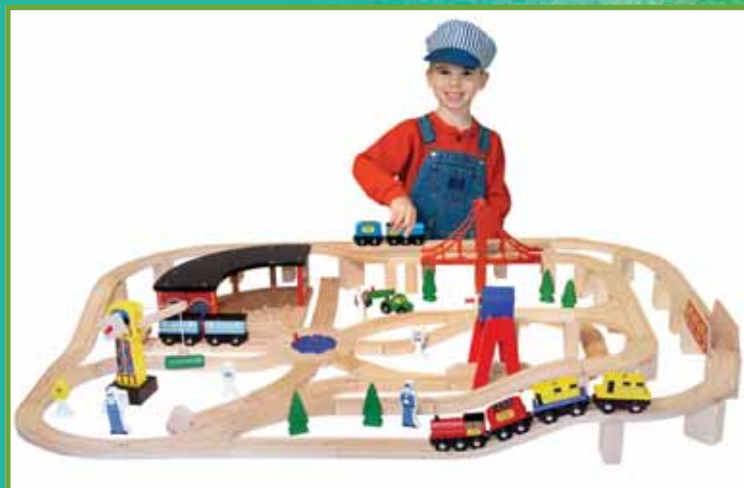
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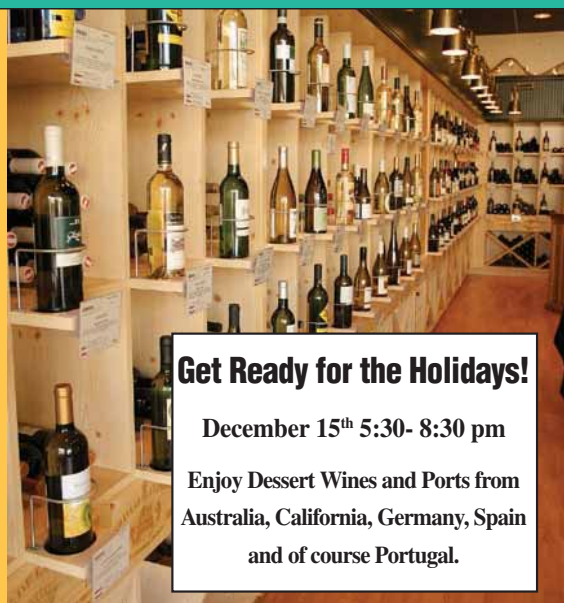
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- 1 package (12 ounce) semisweet chocolate bits
- 1 cup chopped walnuts

Combine marshmallow creme, sugar, evaporated milk, butter, coffee powder and salt in medium-size saucepan. Bring to a full boil. Boil five minutes over medium heat, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Add chocolate bits, stirring until chocolate is melted and smooth. Stir in 1/2 cup nuts. Pour into foil-lined 9-inch square baking pan. Top with remaining nuts. Chill for at least two hours or until firm. Cut into squares. Cover tightly and store in refrigerator.

TOFFEE BARS

- 1 cup butter
 - 1 cup brown sugar
 - 1 egg yolk
 - 1 teaspoon vanilla
 - 2 cups sifted flour
 - 1 cup semisweet chocolate bits
 - 1 cup chopped walnuts
- Cream butter, sugar, egg and vanilla. Add flour, mix well. Stir in chocolate bits and nuts. Pat into ungreased 9-inch by 12-inch pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 18 to 20 minutes. Cut into bars while warm. Cool.



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Left: Nuns and monks at the Dolma Ling nunnery debate Buddhist doctrine for upcoming exams.



Right: Candles are lit at the butter-lamp shrine.

DIANA REYNOLDS ROOME

View of a different mountain

By Diana Reynolds Roome

Editor's Note: Diana Reynolds Roome, a Mountain View resident and longtime contributor to the Voice, has been traveling in India and Nepal, retracing steps she took there many years ago and discovering much that has changed.

DHARAMSALA, India — The mountain I see from the grounds of the Tibetan Buddhist nunnery where I'm staying is crowned

with an early sprinkling of snow. As the sun comes up behind its sharp profile, it sparkles under the blue sky. At around 9,000 feet, this is a mere foothill in the Dhauladar section of the Himalayan range, which stretches for thousands of miles east towards Afghanistan, west towards Everest and Bhutan, and north to Tibet.

This is the direction that matters most to the nuns here (called *anila*), as well as to the 100,000 Tibetans living in exile in Dharamsala.

Many know these mountains only too well, having traveled over them on foot or by yak from Tibet, a journey that takes weeks and is fraught with dangers.

They come to escape a foreign occupation that has marginalized most of them in their own country. Some have been imprisoned — for demonstrating, or just for owning pictures of their spiritual and secular leader, the Dalai Lama.

Here in Dharamsala, even though it's not their country, they can live close to the Dalai Lama (though he is often abroad, teaching Tibetan Buddhism and promoting understanding and peace — he visited Mountain View and gave teachings at Shoreline Amphitheatre in May 2001). His yellow and red monastery, Namgyal, sits atop a hill here, surrounded by colorful prayer flags.

Beneath the monastery, the

town of Dharamsala is a maelstrom of activity, with Indian and Tibetan street stall holders, cows, beggars, monks (sometimes on motorcycles), tourists, automobiles, and dogs jostling for passing space among strong odors of exhaust, incense, cow dung and cooking oil. Just smile at a Tibetan, and you're likely to be asked to join in a cup of salt-butter tea or a plate of steaming momos — dumplings stuffed with vegetables or buffalo meat. Or you might find yourself charmed into buying — as I did recently — a carved image of the Buddha, an intricately painted *thanka* (devotional image), or a striped Tibetan apron traditionally worn by married Tibetan women.

Life is calmer here at Dolma Ling nunnery, which was completed last December and inaugurated by His Holiness. Kalij pheasants swoop from tree to tree with their long tails sweeping behind them, and mynah birds, with bright yellow eyeliner, whistle cheekily. Orange lantana, scarlet hibiscus and bougainvillea grow everywhere. However, the nuns, in maroon robes and with shaven heads, have been up since 5 a.m., attending *puja* (prayer session) with melodious chanting in the *gompa* (temple) under a magnificent wall painting of the Green Tara, the female emanation of the Buddha of compassion.

Today they are preparing for exams — but that doesn't mean

sitting at desks. Instead, they're out in the spacious courtyards, stamping and clapping their hands to emphasize obscure points of Tibetan Buddhist philosophy. Until recently only monks have practiced this form of debate, but nuns are now taking on many of the same academic challenges. For the exams, they will have to engage in rigorous argument against an opponent on points of Buddhist doctrine.

Many were expelled from their nunneries in Tibet or had few educational opportunities there, so the chance to learn here is precious. The nuns also learn English and computer skills, as well as carrying out more practical duties such as cooking, cleaning, milking the cows, or making handicrafts to sell. I've already bought handmade incense, little embroidered bags, and Christmas decorations in the form of *vajras* or dharma wheels (Buddhist symbols) from their small shop.

Watching the smiles on the nuns' faces, it's hard to believe that many suffered severely under the Chinese communist regime in Tibet — prison, destruction of nunneries, deaths of friends by torture or execution — and risked their lives getting out. (More about the Tibetan Nuns Project, a nonprofit that is helping to support and educate Buddhist nuns in exile, can be found at www.tnp.org.)

If I go through a gate at the back of the nunnery, I can walk up the hill and see the locals — members of the indigenous Gaddi people — starting their day. Farmers are harnessing their oxen to plough the terraced slopes before planting wheat or rice. Women cross the crystal clear streams (tempting but hazardous to drink) as they carry huge bundles of animal fodder on their backs.

But just now I'm off to breakfast in the nunnery dining room. With any luck there'll be chapatis and cheese, fruit, *tsampa* (roasted barley flour mixed into a kind of cream of wheat with butter tea), and yogurt from the cow — which got loose yesterday and danced over the grass, leaving a cow-pat offering just outside the butter-lamp shrine. ▣

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BIRD FLU

► Continued from page 5

at Stanford puts her in a better position to understand the nature of a virus than many others — and has led her to believe that the chance of an outbreak is extremely likely.

In an interview with the *Voice*, Ferea said it's in a virus's basic nature to evolve and spread. Right now, she said, the H5N1 flu strain in birds could mix with a flu strain carried by a human host, creating a virus as easily transmittable among humans as the common cold.

"The flu is notoriously mutable," Ferea explained. "It's like throwing dice. The more times your throw them, the more likely something will occur, and right now we are throwing the dice in Asia."

Believing that an outbreak is nearly inevitable, Ferea wants to help arm the local community with the necessary tools to stay healthy during a time of widespread illness. She has passed out thousands of fliers to the local library and to neighborhood associations near her Rex Manor home. Recently, she gave a lecture on the matter to a local entrepreneurial group, and she posts updates on the disease on her Web site, www.birdflumart.com.

The underlying message of her community outreach, Ferea said, is: Be prepared.

Ferea believes every house-



NORBERT VON DER GROEBEN

Dr. Tracy Ferea sports a respiratory mask and goggles that she thinks will be essential to protect against avian bird flu.

hold should have an all-purpose pandemic preparedness kit that will help protect a family for two weeks. Bird Flu Smart offers such a kit, containing a host of supplies that act as a barrier to the virus. The kit includes 20 masks, 100 quality latex or nitrile gloves, eye goggles, and 21 hospital-grade germicidal wipes.

Reportedly, of the 258 confirmed cases of avian bird flu, 154 have resulted in death, putting the mortality rate of the virus at over 50 percent. To put this in perspective, Ferea cites the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic, considered the worst pandemic of the 20th Century, which had a mortality rate of 2.5 percent.

Santa Clara County's health officer, Dr. Martin Fenstersheib, has predicted that in the event

of a pandemic, 25 to 35 percent of the population — 400,000 to 600,000 people in the county — will become ill.

Ferea recommends that families store enough bottled water and non-perishable foods to last two weeks, as well as extra quantities of prescription drugs if needed.

For Ferea, personal responsibility will be the key to survival, even if it sometimes leads to an awkward exchange.

"My daughter went to the doctor to stock up on extra medication prescriptions," she said, "and he told her she was just being really paranoid. But I think this is something people really need to think about. People need to be talking to their doctors and government officials. Prepare a little bit every day, or once a week." ▀

City drafts its own plan of action

By Alexa Tondreau

Mountain View's first responders are also ready for the worst, with Michael Young, the city's interim fire chief, working to prepare residents in case of an avian bird flu pandemic.

After close collaboration with the county Department of Health to develop an emergency plan, Young said Mountain View is "really trying to make a major outreach effort. It's really important."

Although individual preparation is the key component to the effort to fight off a pandemic, the city does have a plan in place should an outbreak occur. In the wake of the first reports of avian bird flu sickness, Young said, the city will set in motion a plan to keep essential social services, like the fire and police departments, staffed and running.

Next, "social distancing" will be implemented, with the city urging all sick persons, even those not yet diagnosed with bird flu, to stay home from work,

school and any social activities. Young said the criteria for a sick person to stay home are if "they are actively coughing and have a fever." He also said respiratory masks are best used by the sick in order to keep infectious germs to themselves.

And because "health care systems will be overloaded very quickly," Young said, Mountain View is developing plans for interim care centers. Currently the city wants to use the gyms at Graham and Crittenden middle schools, Senior Center on Escuela Drive, and the Community Center on Rengstorff for patient treatment and vaccination. There is also talk of using the large parking lots at Shoreline for "drive-through vaccinations."

As always, citizens looking to brush up on their emergency preparedness skills can take the city's Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) course. The 18-hour course — provided over one weekend or spread out over seven weeks — features training in fire control, search and rescue, basic first aid, and

principles of emergency management.

Meanwhile, Young said, "We'd really like folks to get one of our brochures," because the county health department takes the avian flu threat very seriously — and "is way ahead of most of the state" on its preparation plan.

Prepared by the county, the brochures include instruction on how to isolate and care for sick family members in the home, how to prepare a pandemic flu emergency kit, how to distinguish between pandemic and seasonal flu, and more.

Residents can find the brochures at any of Mountain View's fire stations, as well as at the Police and Fire Administration Building at 1000 Villa Street and at City Hall on Castro Street.

For more information on the CERT training and pandemic preparedness, visit the city's official Web site at www.ci.mtnview.ca.us. ▀

E-mail Alexa Tondreau at atondreau@mv-voice.com

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Bay City News

Santa Claus creates quite a stir each year as thousands of people, naughty and nice, try to contact him directly at his alleged home in the North Pole.

While Santa is rumored to have elves helping him with the gifts he leaves for children under Christmas trees aplenty, postal workers at 325 S. Santa Claus Lane in North Pole, Alaska also find themselves doing his bidding each year, postmarking and moving letters the white-haired gentleman neglected.

"If it says 'Santa,' if it says 'Noel,' if it's a page that's ripped out of a Christmas coloring book without any postage, they send it here," North Pole post office branch manager Donna Mathews said.

Mathews says the North Pole is inundated with around 100,000 letters each year, in many languages. If postal workers around the country look at letters thinking, "I don't know what it says but it looks like it might be associated with Christmas," said Mathews, "they send it to me."

To assuage Santa's workload, postal workers are asking people wishing to receive the North Pole postmark on their letters to mail the stamped, addressed envelope

inside another envelope to: North Pole Christmas Cancellation Postmaster, 5400 Mail Trail, Fairbanks, AK, 99709, before Dec. 15.

Beginning in 1912, letters addressed to Santa were turned over to volunteers or charities that attempted to respond to them. However, today the volume of letters is such that sometimes responding to all letters is impossible.

Debra Cornelius, a customer service employee at the post office in Fairbanks, says she is already receiving 8,000 "Dear Santa" letters per day. She said residents of North Pole, Alaska live in Christmas' happy shadow year-round, with candy canes adorning the outside of the post office and Christmas decorations up all year.

"Did you not know this is where Santa lives?" Cornelius asked. "Of course reality comes along too fast for all of us, so if that little cancellation helps to prove that there is a Santa, we are OK with that."

In the Bay Area, volunteers wishing to respond to the 30,000 letters Santa receives should contact the San Jose post office at (408) 723-6110, the Oakland post office at (510) 251-3373 or the San Francisco post office at (415) 371-5160. ■

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BIRD FLU

► Continued from page 5

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(By the way, there's a New Orleans/Katrina-relief component to all this, which I don't have room to go into. Visit www.lakewoodbeacon.org for more.)

The Davises hope to collect at least 100 pairs of pajamas this year, and Susan Davis said "We try to focus on the larger sizes as they are the ones in shortest supply." So come wearing pajamas (as opposed to whatever else it is you wear to bed) and carrying a pair as well. ■

Don Frances can be reached at dfrances@mv-voice.com.

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HANGAR ONE

► Continued from page 5

in May, dozens of people were turned away from a packed public hearing attended by some of the Navy's top officials, said Bob Moss, co-chair of the Moffett Field Restoration Advisory Board. Moss said the Navy called it a "required meeting" then, and wonders why a meeting is not required this time.

"When I get a Navy letter saying it is required, I would assume they are doing it because they have to, not because they are being kind hearted," Moss said.

Weissenborn said federal laws do not require a public meeting for the revised environmental evaluation and cost assessment.

The Navy said the revised plan was scheduled to be released in late spring, but Moss said he can't imagine it would be done before summer, and wanted to alert Hangar One advocates who may be on summer vacations if the Navy releases it late without warning.

After it's released, the public will have 30 days to comment — and the Navy may not be as inclined to lengthening the period to 60 days this time around. ▣

E-mail Daniel DeBolt at ddebolt@mv-voice.com

LOS ALTOS HILLS

► Continued from page 5

up in the air where Hills students would go, but Groves said the Los Altos Hills Town Council is pushing for one of two options: either a split between Palo Alto and Mountain View-Los Altos school districts, or all students going to Palo Alto.

If all Los Altos Hills' students were to attend high school in the Palo Alto Unified School District, Groves said, it could spell disaster for MVLA, because the district would lose upwards of 200 students and \$4.2 million in funds.

Groves said a substantial loss of this sort would result in "the layoff of lots of staff." He said that "85 percent of the school budget is in staff, and we'd make cuts from there."

The statement also addresses the initial impetus for the redistricting movement, which was the closing of Bullis Elementary in 2003. With the "multi-million dollar redesign and modernization effort to reopen Bullis School" underway and scheduled for 2008, the superintendents wrote, there is not longer any reason for redistricting.

"It has taken on a life of its own, however, heedless of the enormous negative consequences at stake for the

local communities, the county, and the state," they wrote. "Given these consequences, it is now time for the County Committee to step in and to stop this effort before it goes any further." ▣

E-mail Alexa Tondreau at atondreau@mv-voice.com

"It has taken on a life of its own."

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E-mail Circulation

circulation@MV-VOICE.com

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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The Mountain View Voice is mailed free upon request to residents in Mountain View. If you are not currently receiving the paper, you may request free delivery by calling 964-6300. Voluntary subscriptions at \$30 per year, \$50 per 2 years, are welcome from residents of Mountain View. Subscription rate for businesses and for residents of other communities is \$50 per year, \$80 per 2 years.

■ EDITORIAL THE OPINION OF THE VOICE

A good move on affordable housing

With its affordable housing bank account overflowing with cash from developers of large condo and other projects, the city council did the right thing last week when members unanimously agreed to provide a valuable piece of property for a new family housing project at Evelyn Avenue and Franklin Street downtown.

The decision broke a logjam on the six-member council over the project's location. Previously the members deadlocked over whether to use the 1-acre site on Evelyn or a slightly larger site nearby at Bryant and California streets. But Mayor Nick Galiotto, along with council members Mike Kasperzak and Laura Macias, switched their support, leading to a unanimous vote for the Evelyn site.

By pledging the property and an additional several million dollars, the council continued the city's crucial support of subsidizing affordable housing. The last such project to be completed was in 2005, when 120 efficiency studio units at San Antonio Place became available.

With a projected 50 units of family housing, the Evelyn Avenue project will likely cost less, leaving the city with a significant balance in its "below market rate" fund, which topped \$10 million this year. And it is likely that the fund will grow substantially in the next few years, as more than 3,000 units, already approved, are built.

Perhaps that money will finally be put to good use, as incoming city council members Margaret Abe-Koga, Ronit Bryant and Jac Siegel said during the campaign that the BMR funds should be used now, rather than held until a perfect project comes along.

At one point earlier this year, council member Greg Perry made an attempt to repeal the BMR regulation. That attempt failed, but if the BMR fund is allowed to grow on and on — with developers forever opting to pay the city fees rather than including affordable units in their projects — maybe he had the right idea. After all, money in the bank isn't helping our poorer residents obtain housing.

But that would be unfortunate: The best option is to collect BMR funds, then spend them appropriately.

In other Peninsula communities, BMR funds are used to provide low-interest loans to families whose income qualifies them for the units. If developers here choose not to build such units, the city should expand its options and include subsidized loans for qualified home buyers. City attorney Mike Martello told the Voice this week that a simple city council resolution could start the process.

The best option is to collect BMR funds, then spend them appropriately.

■ LETTERS VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

MONEY CORRELATION IS A LOGICAL ERROR

Editor:

I am writing in regard to the Nov. 24 guest opinion by Bruce Karney ("Money matters, even in local elections"). Mr. Karney reported on the very strong statistical relationship between the amount of money spent by city council candidates and the number of votes received and concluded that "almost all of the variation in votes is explained by money and money alone." His statement that this result should make readers mad implies that he thinks that the amount of money spent caused people to vote for some candidates over others.

I believe that Mr. Karney has made a logical error in confusing correlation with causation. As a psychologist and behavioral researcher who used to teach research methods to undergraduates, I found this error to be very common and tricky to clarify.

Two things can be strongly related in a statistical sense, but not have a direct causal relationship. One way that can happen is when a third variable causes both observed outcomes. For example, it may be that the most highly regarded candidates were also the most effective at fundraising, so both the money spent and the votes were caused by the characteristics of the candidates.

There could be many other possible explanations, but I would argue that none of them, nor Mr. Karney's hypothesis, can be confirmed or ruled out by the observed correlation.

Eve Carlson
Awalt Drive

FAMILY HOUSING APPROVED, NOT STUDIOS — AND IT'S ABOUT TIME

Editor:

No doubt others were distressed, as I was, to read on the front page of the Dec. 1 Voice that the city council voted unanimously to designate the Evelyn site for 50 efficiency studios.

My distress was due to the designation of "efficiency studios" (single room occupancy) when, indeed, the housing was supposed to be affordable housing for low income families (earning up to \$54,000 for a family of four).

Fortunately, the council voted for family housing.

Compelling evidence abounds that new housing units that are affordable for families earning \$54,000 or less have not been built in Mountain View for decades. Thus our service sector of relatively low-paying jobs continues to find itself short of employees who cannot afford housing here, and, increasingly, cannot afford to commute from affordable housing far distant to those low-paying jobs here.

Housing is deemed affordable by the Dept. of Housing and Urban Development if it does not exceed 30 percent of the family income (including rent and utilities or mortgage, HOA fees, utilities, taxes and insurance).

I am pleased that the council agreed unanimously to go ahead with affordable family housing.

Joan MacDonald
Emmons Drive

► See **LETTERS**, next page



■ GUEST OPINION

Los Altos Hills secession movement is a bad idea

By Barry Groves, Tim Justus
and Mary Frances Callan

On Thursday, Dec. 7, the town of Los Altos Hills moves forward with a school reorganization proposal that has enormous consequences not merely for its residents, but for Santa Clara County — and perhaps the entire state. The Town Council has asked the Santa Clara County Committee on School Organization to approve on that date its controversial plan to secede from the Palo Alto Unified School District and the Los Altos Elementary School District, and to form a standalone kindergarten-through-eighth grade district serving the Hills alone.

Los Altos Hills, the secessionists argue, deserves its own school district with its own identity, just like other similar towns such as Woodside, Atherton, and Los Gatos. So they want the County Committee to carve out a new school district reflecting their town boundaries. In reality, however, virtually no California municipalities are served by their very own, dedicated school district. Woodside schoolchildren attend no fewer than five school districts; the town of Atherton is served by four school districts, Los Gatos by five.

There is a strong reason why California doesn't have individual school districts for each community. And establishing a standalone Los Altos Hills School District, which wouldn't even meet the state minimum size requirements for a new district, would serve as clear precedent to reverse 75 years of state policy.

In the 1930s, when California bore less than one-sixth of its current population, the state had more than 3,500 school districts. Today, that number has dropped to less than 1,000 districts. This reduction is not accidental; it is the result of decades' worth of fiscal and statutory policies adopted to promote the consolidation of smaller entities into larger, more efficient organizations that have the resources to provide the robust mix of programs and services California public school students deserve, while generating student enrollments of sufficient size and diversity to prepare these students for their futures.

These priorities take clear precedence over municipal boundaries, as evidenced locally by the numerous communities served by multiple school districts, including those mentioned above. These municipalities maintain strong community identities despite the multiple school districts providing their educational services.

The proposal in question isn't just bad policy, however. Splitting away from LASD and PAUSD would force drastic changes to an education system that has served the area well for decades. Los Altos Hills residents would be excluded from attending LASD's extremely high-performing schools such as Loyola Elementary, or Egan and Blach Intermediate schools. PAUSD Hills residents would lose access to the exceptional educations offered at Nixon Elementary and Terman Middle School, and would be locked out of Gunn High School, identified by Newsweek recently as one of America's 100 finest high schools. This is

clearly a high price to pay for the experiment in local control offered by the reorganization.

The secession movement began in 2003, in reaction to the LASD's decision, after long and open deliberation, to close Bullis Elementary School in Los Altos Hills. A promise was made at that time to re-open it as a neighborhood school as soon as possible. And that moment arrived in the spring of this year. A thoughtful and comprehensive multi-million dollar redesign and modernization effort to reopen Bullis School is already well underway, with the re-opening now set for August 2008, less than 20 months away.

So the reorganization movement, which was founded on the principal of "returning public education to the Hills," is no longer even necessary. It has taken on a life of its own, however, heedless of the enormous negative consequences at stake for the local communities, the county, and the state. Given these consequences, it is now time for the County Committee to step in and to stop this effort before it goes any further.

The County Committee on School Organization was scheduled to consider the Los Altos Hills Reorganization Proposal Dec. 7 at the Santa Clara Office of Education at 4 p.m.

Tim Justus is superintendent of the Los Altos School District; Barry Groves is superintendent of the Mountain View-Los Altos Union High School District; Mary Frances Callan is superintendent of the Palo Alto Unified School District.

voted to change the general plan and zoning district from "mobile home" to R2 or R3 to permit the closing of mobile home parks and loss of badly needed affordable housing. This is a sad display of favoritism toward park owners.

It should be noted that as vice mayor and now as mayor, Mr. Swegles is employed as manager of one of Sunnyvale's larger parks. This gives an appearance of conflict of interest.

Also disturbing is the fact that 400 acres had been specifically designated for mobile home use only. However, in order to comply with park owners' desire to close their parks, the 400-acre rule was deliberately violated

with the closure of Oasis Mobile Home Park and violated again with the recent announcement of the closure of Flick's mobile park. This is an almost unbelievable display of arrogance by the city council and Mayor Swegles.

The amount of park closures in Sunnyvale during the past 11 years exceeds any city of comparable size in California.

By contrast, the protection offered mobile home residents in Mountain View is outstanding, with no park closures and loss of affordable housing in over 12 years. Mountain View is truly a city that cares.

Al Steutzel
E. El Camino Real

LETTERS

► Continued from previous page

SUNNYVALE ACTING SHAMEFULLY TOWARD MOBILE HOME PARKS

Editor:

The closing of Oasis Mobile Home Park in Sunnyvale earlier this year, and the recent announcement of the closing of Flick's mobile park (the sixth closure in recent years), are further examples of the disgraceful loss of affordable housing for seniors.

Twice in the period of one year, the Sunnyvale City Council and Mayor Ron Swegles have



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Weekend

MOUNTAIN VIEW VOICE

- RESTAURANT REVIEW
- MOVIE TIMES
- BEST BETS FOR ENTERTAINMENT



The new Whole Foods Market in Los Altos features a huge section of prepared foods including oven roasted meats and vegetables.

NICHOLAS JENSEN

RESTAURANT REVIEW

Whole lotta foods

SHOPPERS DAZZLED BY AMAZING DISPLAYS AT NEW WHOLE FOODS IN LOS ALTOS

By Sheila Himmel

Whole Foods burst into the Los Altos-Mountain View borderland on Sept. 13, with grocery features rarely seen around these parts.

The flattering lights and zig-zag traffic patterns feel like Vegas, baby. You and the apples look marvelous, but good luck shopping without spending way more time and money than you'd planned.

This Whole Foods has ample parking, most of it underground. To soften the blow of separating us from the sight of our cars, Whole Foods offers drive-up service. The checker gives you

a number to match the plastic bin your groceries go in, and you swing by the handy pickup station. Lug no more.

The scope and beauty of take-out and made-to-order foods make most other markets look like Piggly Wiggles.

One night at the new Whole Foods, a teenager's first words were, "I've never seen so much food in my life!" Few supermarkets have the ability to astonish a teenager.

Still, three tours of Whole Foods' swank Prepared Foods section yielded surprisingly little to love.

At lunch, my companion

► See **WHOLE FOODS**, page 23

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NICHOLAS JENSEN

The new Whole Foods Market in Los Altos features a huge section of pre-packaged salads and soups.

WHOLE FOODS

► Continued from page 22

ordered a barbecued beef satay (\$7.95) while I went to the sandwich area, picked out a smoked turkey panini (\$6.99) and took up the counterperson on her offer to grill it. By the time his satay was ready, my panini had gone cold.

A quicker route would have been through the retro cafeteria line of steam-table all-stars like turkey Trazzini and tamale pie. Pizza slices also stand ready, but they have a tired look, born out by a flat taste.

The hot food station offers good beef brisket (\$12.99 a pound, weighed before the gravy

gets there) and the hefty Whole Meal Deal (\$9.99 for meat and two side dishes, but they have to be vegetables). Macaroni and cheese (\$6.99 a pound), and chicken from the tandoor oven also are good options.

In the refrigerated section of Prepared Foods, autumn toasted couscous (\$5.99 a pound) is Thanksgiving for vegetarians. Butternut squash, dried curries and cranberries integrate the chewy couscous balls. A tangy dressing with sherry vinegar and fennel brings it together.

Parsnip pancakes (\$5.99 a pound) are crisp, and a small amount of seared tuna with ginger

► See **WHOLE FOODS**, page 24

DINING NOTES

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<p>Hobee's Restaurants 2312 Central Expwy. Mtn. View. 650/968-6050 Voted Best Breakfast/Brunch 9 years in a row!</p>	french	pizza
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<p>Chef Chu's 1067 N. San Antonio Road, on the corner of El Camino, Los Altos. 650/948-2696 Zagat Review: "Gold Standard in Fresh Chinese Cuisine."</p>	<p>Le Petit Bistro 1405 W. El Camino Real, Mtn. View. 650/964-3321 Casual and cozy French restaurant. 15 tables.</p>	<p>El Paso Cafe 1407 El Camino Real, Mtn. View. 650/961-8858 Fax: 650/961-3439 (Between Rengstorff and Shoreline) Happy Hour 2:30pm - 6:30pm.</p>
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WHOLE FOODS

► Continued from page 23

(\$16.99 a pound) is all you need. Takeout containers list ingredients to anticipate all allergies, down to the sea salt and black pepper. They also come with an owner's manual: "Our clear containers are NOT microwave safe. Our black containers ARE microwave safe. Our soup containers ARE microwave safe."

In the sushi section, the Tsunami Combo (\$9.40) is fresh and filling.

The salad bar (\$7.49 a pound) has something for everyone, from fresh fruit to falafel. And unlike the rest of the store, it is very well organized.

A man on a cellphone: "I'm in the food court area. Where are you?"

That person may have been looking for organic chicken soup,

which turned out to be next to the frozen dog food.

A display marked "Buy Local" featured fennel and cippolini onions from Hollister, next to asparagus from Peru and chestnuts from Italy.

However, hot soup is easy to find in the seafood section, the meat department, and in Prepared Foods. We tried carrot-ginger, clam chowder and black bean. Each was either bland or salty.

A few final hazards to avoid at the new Whole Foods: flabby seafood salads including ceviche (\$10.99 a pound); creme brulee (\$4.49); knife-resistant shallot-dressed Brussels sprouts. In eggplant Parmesan (\$6.99 a pound), slabs of eggplant were thick and bitter.

While enjoying the sights, try to keep in mind that just as everything isn't cheap at Costco, everything isn't healthy at Whole Foods. ■

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SPEAKING UP
SINCE 1992

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MOVIE TIMES

- APOCALYPTO (R)** ★★★★★ Century 16: 11:25 a.m.; 12:50, 2:35, 4, 5:45, 7:10, 9 & 10:20 p.m. Century 20: 11:40 a.m.; 12:40, 1:40, 2:45, 3:45, 4:45, 6, 7, 8:05, 9:10 & 10:10 p.m.
- BABEL (R)** ★★★★★1/2 Century 16: 12:45 & 9:15 p.m. Century 20: 11:35 a.m.; 2:30, 5:30 & 8:30 p.m.
- BLOOD DIAMOND (R)** ★★★★★ Century 16: 11:20 a.m.; 12:40, 2:40, 3:50, 5:55, 7:20, 9:20 & 10:30 p.m. Century 20: 11:25 a.m.; 12:25, 1:25, 2:35, 3:35, 4:35, 5:45, 6:45, 7:55, 9 & 9:55 p.m.
- BOBBY (R)** ★★ Century 16: 1:50, 4:35 & 7:15 p.m. Century 20: 11:50 a.m.; 2:20, 4:55, 7:40 & 10:05 p.m.
- BORAT (R)** ★★★★★1/2 Century 16: 11:40 a.m.; 1:45, 3:50, 5:50, 8 & 10:05 p.m. Century 20: 11:50 a.m.; 1:55, 4, 6:15, 8:20 & 10:20 p.m.
- CASINO ROYALE (PG-13)** ★★★★★1/2 Century 16: 11:05 a.m.; 12:30, 2:20, 3:45, 5:40, 7:05 & 9 p.m. Century 12: 12:10, 1:30, 3:40, 5:20, 7:10, 8:40 & 10:25 p.m.
- DECK THE HALLS (PG) (NOT REVIEWED)** Century 20: 11:25 a.m.; 1:45, 4:20, 6:55 & 9:15 p.m.
- DEJA VU (PG-13)** ★★★★★ Century 16: 1:05, 3:55, 6:50 & 9:45 p.m. Century 12: 12:20, 4, 7:30 & 10:20 p.m.
- THE DEPARTED (R)** ★★★★★1/2 Century 16: 10:15 p.m. Century 12: 11:30 a.m. & 10:10 p.m.
- FLUSHED AWAY (PG)** ★★★★★ Century 12: 12:30, 2:40, 5:30, 7:50 & 10 p.m.
- FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION (PG-13)** ★★1/2 Century 20: 2:40, 4:45 & 7 p.m. Aquarius: 2:55, 5:05, 7:35 & 9:50 p.m.; Sat. & Sun. also at 12:50 p.m.
- THE FOUNTAIN (PG-13) 1/2** Century 12: 2:30, 4:50 & 7:25 p.m.
- GUADALUPE (PG) (NOT REVIEWED)** Century 12: 11:45 a.m.; 2:20, 5, 7:40 & 10:15 p.m.
- HAPPY FEET (PG) (NOT REVIEWED)** Century 16: 11:15 a.m.; 2, 4:40, 7:25 & 10 p.m. Century 20: 11:20 a.m.; 12:35, 2, 3:05, 4:30, 5:40, 7:05, 8:10, 9:30 & 10:30 p.m.
- THE HISTORY BOYS (R) (NOT REVIEWED)** Century 20: Noon, 2:30, 5:05, 7:35 & 10:10 p.m. Palo Alto Square: 2:15, 4:45, 7:30 & 10:10 p.m.; Sat. & Sun. also at 11:35 a.m.
- THE HOLIDAY (PG-13) (NOT REVIEWED)** Century 16: 11 a.m.; 12:30, 2:15, 3:40, 5:20, 7, 8:30 & 10:10 p.m. Century 12: Noon, 1, 1:55, 3:10, 4:10, 5:10, 6:20, 7:20, 8:20, 9:30 & 10:30 p.m.
- LITTLE CHILDREN (R)** ★★★★★ Guild: 1, 3:40, 6:30 & 9:20 p.m.
- NATIONAL LAMPOON'S VAN WILDER: THE RISE OF TAJ (R) (NOT REVIEWED)** Century 16: 11:30 a.m. & 9:55 p.m. Century 12: 2:50, 5:15 & 7:45 p.m.
- THE NATIVITY STORY (PG)** ★★ Century 16: 11:10 a.m.; 1:40, 4:20, 6:55 & 9:25 p.m. Century 20: 11:30 a.m.; 12:45, 2, 3:10, 4:30, 5:35, 7, 8, 9:25 & 10:30 p.m.
- THE PRESTIGE (PG-13) 1/2** Century 20: 11:45 a.m. & 9:10 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 & 9:35 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. & 1:55 p.m.; Fri.-Mon. also at 4:25 p.m.
- SHUT UP AND SING (R) (NOT REVIEWED)** Century 20: Fri.-Mon. at 6:50 & 9:05 p.m. Aquarius: 2:35, 4:45, 7 & 9:15 p.m.; Sat. & Sun. also at 12:30 p.m.
- STRANGER THAN FICTION (PG-13)** ★★ Century 16: 4:05 & 6:45 p.m. Century 20: 11:55 a.m.; 2:25, 5, 7:30 & 10 p.m.
- TENACIOUS D: THE PICK OF DESTINY (R) (NOT REVIEWED)** Century 12: 11:55 a.m. & 9:50 p.m.
- TURISTAS (R) (NOT REVIEWED)** Century 16: 12:15, 2:45, 5:10, 7:55 & 10:25 p.m. Century 20: 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:50 & 10:15 p.m.
- UNACCOMPANIED MINORS (PG) (NOT REVIEWED)** Century 16: 11:50 a.m.; 2:25, 4:45, 7:35 & 9:50 p.m. Century 12: 11:40 a.m.; 12:40, 2, 3, 4:30, 5:40, 7, 8 & 9:20 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

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

For show times, plot synopses, trailers and more movie info, visit www.mv-voice.com and click on movies.



MOVIE REVIEWS

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.

BOBBY ★★

(Century 16, Century 20) One of the iconic images of 1968 is U.S. Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, sprawled on the kitchen floor of the Ambassador Hotel after being gunned down by Sirhan Sirhan. The 42-year-old presidential hopeful had just delivered his victory speech for the California primary in the hotel's ballroom. Revisiting the routine day leading up to the peace-and-justice politician's assassination, screenwriter-director-actor Emilio Estevez doesn't shadow Bobby Kennedy, the heir apparent of his older brother's Camelot. Instead he focuses on the dozens of campaign supporters and hotel employees whose lives touched and exploded with a bang shortly after midnight on June 5 in Los Angeles. A cross between a Robert Altman ensemble piece like "Nashville" and the classic "Grand Hotel," the star-studded drama moves at a fast clip. The reel rendition fails to capture the reality of the times but conveys an earnest message against violence, as timely today as almost 40 years ago. *Rated: R for language, drug content and a scene of violence. 1 hour. 51 minutes.* — S.T.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

★★1/2 (Aquarius, Century 20) 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. "Consideration" touches on a topic that's rife with comic possibilities: the nauseating egos inherent in the film business. The project in question is a low-budget indie by the name of "Home for Purim," an intimate drama about a Jewish family's troublesome

► See **MINI REVIEWS**, page 26

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MINI REVIEWS

► Continued from page 25

reunion at the celebration of their dying matriarch's favorite 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 over a rumor that faded personality Marilyn Hack (Catherine O'Hara) may be crafting an Oscar-worthy performance. That tiny flame of thespian glory is fanned into a wildfire of publicity; suddenly everyone who is anyone is talking about "Purim." Guest is a gifted director with a devoted group of talent willing to take one for the team. He needs to move on. *Rated: PG-13 for language and adult themes. 1 hour, 26 minutes.* —J.A.

THE FOUNTAIN 1/2

(Century 12) Nothing works in Darren Aronofsky's disappointing science-fiction fantasy. Pretentious rather than profound, the movie plays like a repetitive loop forever delivering the same information. Alluding to Genesis and the biblical Tree of Life that offers immortality, Aronofsky's script sets up three stories with the same actors, themes and visual look. Hugh Jackman takes on triple roles: a doctor conducting medical research with monkeys and Guatemalan tree bark in hopes of curing his wife's (Rachel Weisz of "The Constant Gardener") brain tumor; a Spanish conquistador searching for the Fountain of Youth at Queen Isabella's (Weisz's) bequest; and a Buddhist eating small chunks of the dying Tree of Life and floating through the cosmos in a bubble. It's even sillier than it sounds. Aronofsky may have tried to construct the cinematic equivalent of meditation, hoping to encourage a transformation of consciousness in the viewer. But enlightenment comes in the realization that this feature contains about 20 minutes of thematic and emotional sustenance. *Rated: PG-13 for some intense sequences of violent action, some sensuality and language. 1 hour, 36 minutes.* — S.T.

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 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

► Continued on page 28

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Mayra Serbulo in a scene from Mel Gibson's "Apocalypto."

'Apocalypto' now

By Jeanne Aufmuth

MOVIE REVIEW

Mel Gibson combines his infamously twisted sensibilities and mammoth talents to create a bold and visionary telling of the tragic downfall of the Mayan civilization.

"Passion of the Christ" meets "The Naked Prey" in this ambitious morality tale of violence and greed and a culture on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

The film begins by establishing the Mayans as fun-loving, intimate folk with a deep sense of family and innate spiritual beliefs. Soon enough their idyll is shattered by a vicious attack at the hands of the Holcane Warriors, ruthless predators who torch their village, rape their women and take the men captive.

The Mayans, whose descriptive monikers (Cocoa Leaf, Curl Lip, Flint Sky, etc.) reflect their colorful identities, gather strength from chaos thanks to the fervor of their beliefs. Leading the pack

is charismatic tribesman Jaguar Paw (Rudy Youngblood) whose father is brutally murdered before his eyes and who manages to conceal his pregnant wife and young son before setting off on his tortuous death march.

Their destination is a Mayan city of great splendor where gaily painted warriors rub shoulders with loud-mouthed slave traders and tattooed shanty-folk. Mayan pyramids are being erected stone by stone as grisly human sacrifices are made to appease the gods and ostensibly put a stop to the scourge of famine, plague and rot that's destroying an entire society.

Corrupt rulers govern with an iron fist and never miss a chance to eviscerate and maim in the name of an unforgiving deity. It's here that Gibson's gifts are most evident; his visualization is so audacious that it positively smol-

ders with cinematic fever and the putrid stench of civilized decay.

At this juncture, "Apocalypto" segues into an intense manhunt, an epic pursuit fraught with unbearable tension and the cunning art of the stalk. It's an intrepid action-adventure, a heady adrenaline rush that never loosens its grip on a palpable dread that accelerates with blistering force.

Performances are remarkably on-point considering the assemblage of indigenous unknowns and a mood established primarily through facial expression and body language. And

what faces: chiseled, proud and infinitely expressive.

Youngblood is a daunting hero, all sinew and primal heat with a sultry-sweet sensitivity. The Holcane are a different story, monsters of mindless fury with an insatiable thirst for the kill. The magnificent skeletal structure of Raoul Trujillo will inspire nightmares long after the lights have come up.

Underscoring all is the nuance of despair — and Gibson's not-so-subtle allusions to contemporary politics and rage, which leave the movie open to inevitable negative

interpretations. The violence is outrageously gory but never gratuitous, perfectly in keeping with the anguish of a disintegrating civilization and the survival of the fittest.

Vivid, provocative and utterly breathtaking. **M**

MOVIE NOTES

Stars: ****

Rating: R for extreme violence, bloodshed and nudity

Run Time: 2 hour, 16 minutes.

In Mayan Yucatec with English subtitles

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► Continued from page 26

curling comic edges. Original, challenging and resonant. *Rated: R for language, nudity and sexual situations. 2 hours, 17 minutes.* — J.A.

THE NATIVITY STORY ★★

(Century 16, Century 20) The timeless tale of Jesus, Mary and Joseph comes to cinematic life thanks to sweeping cinematography, exquisite costuming and a fantastic score. Unfortunately, the film is also about as exciting as an afternoon nap. The story is familiar even to atheists. The Virgin Mary (Keisha Castle-Hughes) is betrothed

to Joseph (Oscar Isaac), a humble and honorable carpenter. Uneasy about her arranged marriage, Mary finds solitude in a nearby grove where she is visited by an angel (Alexander Siddig as Gabriel) who informs her that she will bear the child of God and name him Jesus. Life is tough for the young peasant girl. Forced to wed a man she doesn't love, impregnated by a deity and all but ostracized by the suspicious townsfolk. But Joseph's love for Mary runs deep, and a dreamtime visit by Gabriel encourages Joseph to support his wife wholeheartedly. Together Mary and Joseph set out for Bethlehem — Joseph's native land — by order of the vicious King

Herod (Ciaran Hinds), who is desperately trying to quash a prophecy that would threaten his power. People curious about the *original* Christmas story or eager for a dramatic re-telling of the birth of Jesus will appreciate this visually impressive feature. But don't buy a ticket if you're prone to dozing. *Rated: PG for some violent content. 1 hour, 41 minutes.* — T.H.

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 fictional 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.

■ **MOVIE CRITICS**

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

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■ HIGHLIGHT

"A CHRISTMAS CAROL"

Charles Dickens's classic presented by Peninsula Youth Theatre. By PYT Artistic Director Dexter Fidler. Dec. 15, 9:30 and 11 a.m.; Dec. 16, 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. \$5-\$7. Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, 500 Castro St., Mountain View. www.pytnet.org

SPECIAL EVENTS

ARTIFACTORY HOLIDAY FAIR Fine crafts by local artists. Dec. 8-10, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Hoover House, 1120 Hopkins, Palo Alto.

HOLIDAY OPEN STUDIO Hosted by Pigs Wings and Promises. Pet related items, flying pigs, journals, fabric art, jewelry, photography, treasure boxes. Artist include Jaki Ernst, Stephanie North, Susan Charles, and the team of Hud-Stone Images. Saturdays and Sundays, through Dec. 10, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Free. Pigs Wings and Promises, 247 Velarde St., Mountain View. Call 965-0869. www.pigswingsandpromises.com/

MODEL TRAIN SHOW The West Bay Model Railroad Association's Christmas Show Dec. 8, 7-10 p.m.; Dec. 9, noon-6 p.m.; Dec. 10, noon-5 p.m. Model Trains will be operating plus railroad artifacts and photos on display. Free; donations accepted. West Bay Model Railroad Building, 1090 Merrill St., Menlo Park. Call 322-9335.

THE HERITAGE OF CHRISTMAS Sun., Dec. 10, 7:30 p.m. A musical concert including an 80-voice choir, a 40-voice girls' chorus, a bell choir, and other instrumentalists and soloists; directed by Russell Hancock with James Welch on the organ. Free. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1105 Valparaiso Ave., Menlo Park.

ART GALLERIES

"FLOWERS, FRUIT AND FUNGI, TREES AND TRAVEL" Photographs by Dawn Ishimaru Frazier on display through Jan. 13. Free. Little House, 800 Middle Ave., Menlo Park. Call 326-2025. www.peninsulavolunteers.org

"MERRY ART AT MAIN" Holiday show features contemporary art and fine crafts by 23 artists. Through Dec. 23. Holiday hours: Mon.-Fri., 11 a.m.-4 p.m.; Sat.-Sun., 10 a.m.-3 p.m. The Main Gallery, 1018 Main St., Redwood City. www.themaingallery.org

"SERIGRAPHS AND DRAWINGS" Presented by artist Susan Trubow. Landscapes of the Mendocino coast. Thu.-Sun., through Dec. 31. Free. 1870 Art Center Gallery, 1870 Ralston Ave., Belmont. Call 261-1086. www.1870artcenter.org

"WINTER SALON" 30 artists present contemporary art and fine crafts for Holiday shopping. Wall art, jewelry, sculpture and ceramics created by local artists. Through Dec. 24. Hours: Mon.-Sat., 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Gallery 9, 143 Main St., Los Altos. www.gallery9losaltos.com

ART 21 Bruni, known for painting jazz and folk singers, including Bay Area natives Dave Brubeck, John Lee Hooker and Jerry Garcia. On display through Dec. 31. Hours: Wed.-Sat., 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Art21 Gallery, 3145 Alma St., Palo Alto. Call 566-1381. www.art21.us

ART21 Artist Kate Curry shows her latest work of sky scenes on display through Jan. 30. Art21 Gallery, 539 Alma St., Palo Alto. Call 566-1381. www.art21.us/539_Alma/curry_panel.htm

ARTSYNERGY GROUP SHOW Nine members display through Dec 22. Pacific Art League, 668 Ramona St., Palo Alto.

SPIRIT DANCERS AND TREE DWELLERS Ceramic Sculptures by Jean Prophet and watercolors by Floy Zittin. Through Dec. 30, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Free. Viewpoints Gallery, 315 State St., Los Altos. www.viewpointsgallery.com

STEPHEN ACHIMORE: COLOR FIELD PAINTINGS Features abstract paintings of New York-based artist. Tue.-Sat., 11 a.m.-6 p.m. through Jan. 27. Free. Stellar Gallery, 539 Bryant St., Palo Alto.

AUDITIONS

PENINSULA POPS ORCHESTRA OPENINGS For advanced players of all instruments. Rehearsals Tuesdays, through Dec. 31, 7-10 p.m. Call for appointment. Gunn High School, 780 Arastradero Road, room M1, Palo Alto. Call 856-8432. www.peninsulapops.org



MESSIAH SING-ALONG: *Handel's masterpiece under the direction of Gregory Wait, music director of Schola Cantorum, with the musicians of Redwood Symphony. Dec. 11, 7:30-10 p.m. \$16/\$2 facility use fee. Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, 500 Castro St., Mountain View. Call 903-6000. www.mvcpa.com*

"SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS" Auditions open to ages 8 to high school. Presented in celebration of the Palo Alto Children's Theatre's 75th Anniversary. Dec. 12-13, 3:45-6 p.m. Palo Alto Children's Theatre, 1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto. Call 463-4930.

BENEFITS

GRAD NIGHT FUNDRAISER Sponsored by Mountain View High School. Sat., Dec. 9, 9 a.m.-noon. 20% of purchases before noon will be donated to help with graduation funds. Books, Inc., 301 Castro St., Mountain View.

SUPPORT AMIGOS The Peninsula chapter of Amigos de las Americas is selling grapefruit and poinsettias to help with costs of working and living in Latin American communities. \$20 box of grapefruits/ \$15 each poinsettia. Through Dec. 9. E-mail a_krigel@hotmail.com or call for more information. Call 387-6288.

CLASSES/WORKSHOPS

"UNLOCK THE EQUITY IN YOUR HOME" Wed., Dec. 13, 1 p.m. Lunch and an informative workshop with Merrian Nevin and Jim Galli of Coldwell Banker. Free. Los Altos Senior Center, 97 Hillview Ave., Los Altos. Call 917-6855.

A NIGHT IN OAXACA Learn to make Tamales. Dec. 14, 6:30-8:30 p.m. \$45. Whole Foods Market, 4800 El Camino Real, Los Altos. Call 559-0300. www.oaxacanfoods.com

FAMILY JEWELRY MAKING Designing, stringing beads and basic wire-bending techniques will be covered. Dec. 12, 10 a.m.-noon. \$40. Community School of Music and Arts at Finn Center, 230 San Antonio Circle, Mountain View. www.arts4all.org

COMMUNITY EVENTS

A MUSICAL SOLSTICE A candlelit, participatory winter solstice ritual. Choral music by Joan McMillen, sung by Voices of the Coming Tribe. Dec. 10, 7:30 p.m. Free; donations accepted. Unitarian Universalist Church, 505 E. Charleston Road, Palo Alto. Call 858-2436.

ANNUAL HOLIDAY SOIREE Holiday decorations, food, caroling, parlor games, seasonal reading and father Christmas. Dec. 10, 6-8 p.m. Call 968-3110 for reservations or send check, payable to Friends of 'R' House to 3070 N. Shoreline Blvd, Mountain View, CA 94043. \$18. Rengstorff House, 3070 N. Shoreline Blvd., Mountain View. www.r-house.org

ONE WARM COAT DRIVE Hosted by The Girl Scout Troops of Encinal Elementary School. Dec. 4-8. Donations of coats are needed. Encinal Elementary School, 181 Encinal Ave.,

Atherton. Call 321-7140.

CONCERTS

"A CHANTICLEER CHRISTMAS" Chanticleer, a capella ensemble performs a yuletide concert. Features renditions of Gregorian chant, medieval and Renaissance music, contemporary classics and carols. Dec. 12-13, 8 p.m. \$44/\$40. Memorial Church, 459 Serra Mall, Stanford. Call 725-2787. livelyarts.stanford.edu

"CEREMONY OF CAROLS" By Benjamin

Brittan's. Performed by the Church of the Epiphany Chancel Choir with Emily Bender and Mari Marjamaa, soloists, Janice Ortega, harpist, and Todd Troutman, organist. Dec. 10, 3:30 p.m.; 4:30 p.m. congregational Christmas carol singing. Reception to follow concert. Free will offering Church of the Epiphany, 1839 Arroyo Ave., San Carlos. Call 591-0328 ext. 101. www.churchoftheepiphany.org

"SNOWFALL" Presented by San Francisco Concert Chorale. An evening of carols and Christmas classics, featuring Dan Levitan on harp, including Rutter's Dancing Day, and Wood's Carol from an Irish Cabin. Dec. 10, 7 p.m. \$15 advance/\$20 at the door. All Saints' Episcopal Church, 555 Waverly Ave., Palo Alto. Call (415) 840-0675. www.sfconcertchorale.org

20 HARPS FOR THE HOLIDAYS 8th annual holiday concert presented by Harpeggio Studios. Program includes classical and holiday music, harp solos and ensembles, our studio ensemble of more than twenty harps, and guest artist John Metras on the cross-strung harp. Sponsored by LAUMC. Dec. 9, 4-6 p.m. \$10-\$15. Los Altos United Methodist Church, 655 Magdalena Ave., Los Altos. Call (408) 366-8810. www.harpeggio.com

A CHRISTMAS ORATORIO CELEBRATING CHRIST'S LIFE A 60-voice choir with instrumentalists Dec. 9, 7:30-9 p.m. \$10. Ananda, 2171 El Camino Real, Palo Alto. Call 323-3363. www.anandapaloalto.org

CELTIC, RENAISSANCE AND MEDIEVAL MUSIC CONCERT Four-part vocal and instrumental harmonies, Broceliande will bring Celtic favorites. Dec. 9, 8-10 p.m. \$12 advance/\$18 at the door. East West Bookstore, 324 Castro St., Mountain View. Call 988-9800. www.eastwest.com

FOOTHILL SYMPHONIC WINDS FALL CONCERT "REJOICE" The Foothill Symphonic Winds, David B. Adams, conductor. Program features music by Shostakovich, Milhaud, Holsinger, Burkhart, Hazo, van der Roost, Leroy Anderson, Percy Grainger. Dec. 10, 2:30 p.m. \$10-\$5. Cubberley Theatre, 4000 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto. www.windband.org/foothill

GUNN HIGH SCHOOL WINTER CHORAL CONCERT Featuring the Treble Choir, the

► Continued on next page



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SNAKES ON CARS

Many vehicles are equipped with a single drive belt that is used to drive multiple accessories (alternator, water pump, air-conditioning compressor, etc.) instead of having a separate belt drive for each accessory. This so-called "serpentine" belt gets its name from the way it snakes around the various pulleys. The advantage to having the serpentine belt is that it is simpler and generally easier to replace than the multiple belts in older vehicles. However, if the serpentine belt were to fail, there would be an interruption in power to all accessories driven by the belt, including some critical ones. Thus, it is very important to regularly check the condition of this important belt and replace it when recommended.

Serpentine belts are depended on for many of the accessories, including crucial ones such as power steering. With this in mind the professional mechanics at Larry's AutoWorks, located just off the 101 Freeway on Leghorn between San Antonio and Rengstorff in Mountain View, recommend that you routinely have your vehicle's belt(s) inspected to prevent complete belt failure. Every car our customers bring to us for service has a technician who is factory qualified and trained on that vehicle. Keep that in mind.

HINT: A screeching noise coming from beneath the hood of your vehicle may be a sign of a loose belt.

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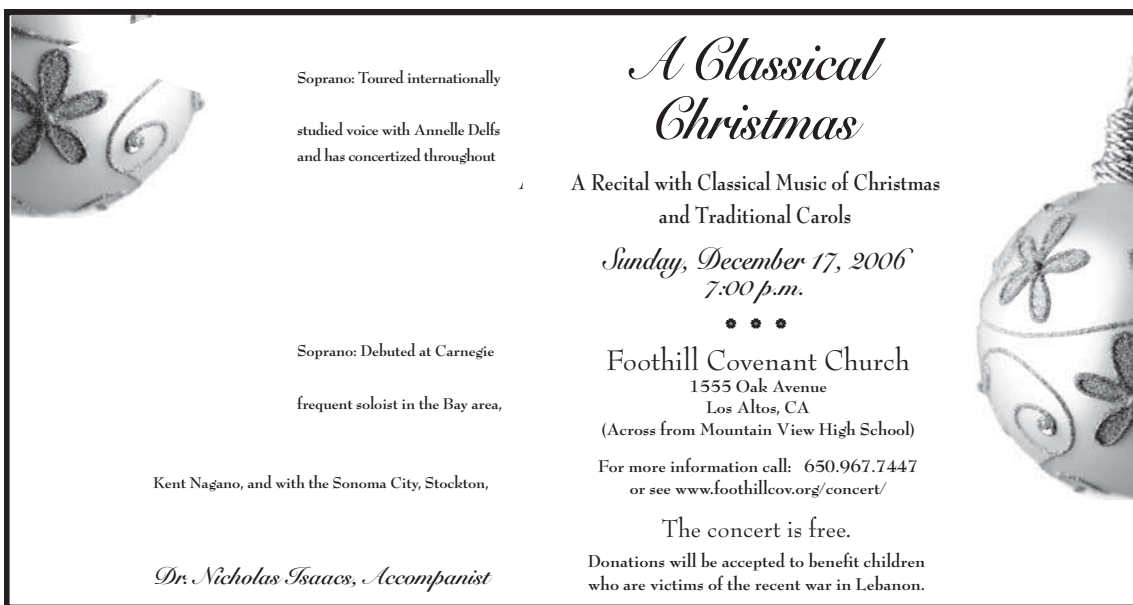
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A Recital with Classical Music of Christmas
and Traditional Carols

Sunday, December 17, 2006
7:00 p.m.


Soprano: Debuted at Carnegie
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Kent Nagano, and with the Sonoma City, Stockton,

Foothill Covenant Church
1555 Oak Avenue
Los Altos, CA
(Across from Mountain View High School)

For more information call: 650.967.7447
or see www.foothillcov.org/concert/

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who are victims of the recent war in Lebanon.

Dr. Nicholas Isaacs, Accompanist



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- * INFANT AND CHILD CPR**

The new Family and Friends Infant CPR program is a two-hour interactive class conducted by a certified instructor. The information in this class is specific for babies up to one year of age and includes presentation, video, text, practice on infant models and a certificate of completion.

- Thursday, December 7
- * MULTIPLES BREASTFEEDING SEMINAR**

If you're expecting twins or more, this seminar can help you plan for the challenges of breastfeeding multiples. A certified lactation consultant will lead the discussion and answer questions. This seminar is only offered every 2-3 months, so sign up today!

- Thursday, December 14
- * BECOMING GRANDPARENTS**


Designed for new and expectant grandparents, this class examines the changes in labor and delivery practices, the latest recommendations for infant care and the unique role of grandparents in today's society.

- Wednesday, December 20
- * NEW FAMILY PROGRAM**

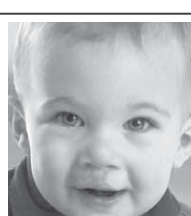
This series of classes is designed to help families throughout the first nine months after birth, offering something for everyone. Enrollment includes participation in Mother-Baby Mornings, Dads' Nights and Working Mothers' Groups.

- Ongoing Weekly and Monthly Sessions

Call (650) 723-4600 or visit www.lpch.org to register or obtain more information on the times, locations and fees for these and other courses.



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▶ Continued from previous page

Concert Choir and the Chamber Singers under the direction of William Liberatore. Thu., Dec. 14, 7:30-9:30 p.m. \$5/\$3 students. Spangenberg Theater, 780 Arastradero Road, Palo Alto. Call 269-4194. www.gunn.pausd.org

HORNS FOR THE HOLIDAYS Quadre, performs seasonal music for four horns and band with local students. Quadre partners with Mountain View public schools for the holidays. Dec. 12, 7-9 p.m. \$15 adults/\$7 students/seniors. Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, 500 Castro St., Mountain View. Call 969-4242. www.quadre.org

PALO ALTO PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA CONCERT I Sat., Oct. 21, 8 p.m. Faure: Suite from Pelleas et Melisande, Op. 80 Lalo: Cello Concerto in D minor; Thomas Shobotham, soloist Dvoak: Symphony No. 8 in G major, Op. 88. \$16/\$14/\$7 Cubberley Theatre, 4000 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto.

PENINSULA POPS "JOLLY HOLIDAY" SHOW The Pops with conductor Kim Venaas features holiday music made by Bing Crosby, Mel Torme and the Grinch. Guests the Bay Bells Handbell choir. Tickets available online. Dec. 9, 7:30-9:30 p.m. Adults \$20/seniors \$16/students \$10/kids free with adults. Spangenberg Theater, 780 Arastradero Road, Palo Alto. Call 856-8432. www.peninsulapops.org

PENINSULA WOMEN'S CHORUS FALL/WINTER CONCERT "Carols, Lullabies, Landscapes" St. Patrick's Seminary showcases the PWC's rich choral sound. Aleatoric voices accompanied by handbells. Dec. 10, 4-6 p.m. \$20 general/\$15 students/seniors. St Patrick's Seminary, 320 Middlefield Road, Menlo Park. www.pwchorus.org/concerts.html

SCHOLA CANTORUM AND MENLO BRASS Sun., Dec. 10, 4-6 p.m. 100 voices of Schola Cantorum with Menlo Brass Quintet present Brian Holmes' nostalgic "Now is the Time," and arrangements of Christmas music, and carols. Dec. 10, 4-6 p.m. \$22/\$18 for seniors and students. Los Altos United Methodist Church, 655 Magdalena Ave., Los Altos. Call 254-1700. www.scholacantorum.org

THE NEW CHOIR Christmas carols from Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas. Dec. 9, 8-10 p.m. \$12-\$20. St. Mark's Episcopal, 600 Colorado Ave., Palo Alto. Call 330-0414.

WOODSIDE VILLAGE BAND 20TH ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CONCERT Sat., Dec. 9, 3 p.m. Program includes seasonal works by Holst, Irving Berlin, Leroy Anderson, and others. Free. Woodside Village Church, 3154 Woodside Road, Woodside. Call 851-1642. www.windband.org/woodside/

DANCE

"SNOWFLAKE BALL" Thu., Dec. 14, 7 p.m. Music by Mike Johnson and the Sound Wizards. Formal attire. Tickets at the door. \$7. Little House, 800 Middle Ave., Menlo Park. Call 326-2025. www.peninsulavolunteers.org

"THE NUTCRACKER" Presented by Western Ballet. Featuring choreography by Gonzalo Espinoza, with students of the School of Western

Ballet and guest artists Katherine Wells, Travis Walker, Ramon Moreno and Olivier Munoz. Dec. 8, 7 p.m.; Dec. 9-10, 1 and 6 p.m. Adults \$23/children/seniors \$18. Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, 500 Castro St., Mountain View. Call 903-6000. www.mvcpa.com

ENGLISH COUNTRY DANCING Traditional and modern set dances to live music. Beginners welcome; no partner required. \$9. First, third and fifth Wednesdays, through June, 8-10 p.m. Flex-It Studios, 425 W. Evelyn Ave., Mountain View. Call 493-6012. www.bacds.org/series/english/mountain_view/

VINTAGE DANCE PARTY Dec. 10, 4 p.m. \$15. Presented by The Varsity Dance Club. A holiday vintage dance party, with live music by Paul Price's Society Orchestra, featuring singer Ann Gibson. Refreshments, dance lesson included. Palo Alto Masonic Center, 461 Florence St., Palo Alto. www.PaulPriceOrchestra.com

ENVIRONMENT

NATURE THROUGH A LENS Amateur photographers and docents Frances Cleveland and Jack Zirker lead a 2-mile photography hike along trails near Horseshoe Lake. Dec. 9, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Free. Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve. www.openspace.org

EXHIBITS

"BOUNTIFUL BOWLS, PLATTERS OF PLENTY" A collection of distinctive serving pieces. Tue.-Sun., 9 a.m.-9 p.m. through Dec. 24. Free. Palo Alto Art Center, 1313 Newell Road, Palo Alto. Call 329-3168. www.paacf.org

"CLASSIC AND TIMELESS TOYS" Palo Alto Sport Shop and Toy world and the Museum of American Heritage present "Classic and Timeless Toys," an exhibit featuring over 75 classic toys of the 20th century. Learn the history of toys and the story behind their inventions. Fridays-Sundays, through Jan. 28, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Free. Museum of American Heritage, 351 Homer Ave., Palo Alto. Call 321-1004. www.moah.org

"RAIL GARDENERS RUN TRAINS" Fridays-Sundays, through Dec. 10, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. The Bay Area Garden Railway society will present a double track garden gauge layout. Museum of American Heritage, 351 Homer Ave., Palo Alto. Call 321-1004. www.moah.org

"SLIDING SCALE" By Gail Wight. Objects of scientific research and the larger field of science in a new light. Mice eat through a representation of their genome, butterflies struggle to escape their pins, and beetles tell their stories. Through Dec. 10. Hours: Tue.-Fri., 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sat.-Sun., 1-5 p.m. Free. Thomas Welton Stanford Art Gallery, 419 Laseun Mall, Stanford. Call 723-3404. art.stanford.edu

ANN MCMILLAN, OPEN STUDIO Includes oil and pastel landscape and figurative paintings. Dec. 9-10, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Free. Open Studio, 328 Aldean Ave., Mountain View. Call 438-2752. www.amgallery.net

OPEN STUDIO Recent works by Ann McMullan Dec. 9-10, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Oil and pastel landscape and figurative paintings. Free. Open

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SPECIAL PLACES, INTIMATE SPACES Palo Alto photographer, Nancy Wong, exhibits landscapes from her travels, florals and candid people shots. Through Dec. 10, 9 a.m.-10 p.m. Free. Books Inc., Cafe, 301 Castro St., Mountain View.

FAMILY AND KIDS

PACT SCHOOL COFFEE NIGHT Accepting K-5 students. Dec. 13, Jan. 9, 7-9 p.m. Free. Starbucks, 750 Castro St., Mountain View. www.pactschool.net

THE SIPPY CUPS LIVE IN "ELECTRIC STORYLAND" Sun., Dec. 17, 2 p.m. The Sippy Cups present a blend of rock music, juggling, comical stunts and characters, giant puppets, and audience participation. \$18 adults/\$12 kids 1-12/babes-in-arms free. Mountain View Center for the Arts, 500 Castro St., Mountain View. Call (415) 335-4422. www.thesippycups.com

LIVE MUSIC

BROCELIANDE HOLIDAY CONCERT Christmas and Yuletide show Dec. 9, 8-10:30 p.m. Reservations suggested. \$12 advance/\$18 at the door East West Bookshop, 324 Castro St., Mountain View. Call (510) 569-0437. www.broceliande.org

ON STAGE

"DANNY AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA" Red Lantern Theatre presents John Patrick Shanley's drama about two lonely and defensive people that forge an unlikely connection in the Bronx. Dec. 7-9, 14-16, 8 p.m.; Dec. 17, 7 p.m. \$10-\$15. Pear Avenue Theatre, 1220 Pear Ave., unit K, Mountain View. Call 274-6721. www.redlanterntheatre.com

THEATREWORKS' "STUDENT SPEAK: THE PLAYWRIGHT'S PROJECT" Producing eight plays written by Gunn High School students. The program gives emerging young writers the opportunity to "speak up" about their lives and their communities. Plays will be staged by local professional actors and directors. Dec. 11, 7 p.m. Free. Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, 500 Castro St., Mountain View. www.theatreworks.org

TALKS/AUTHORS

"YOUR ANGELS GIFT" By Angel Mediator Genevieve Vulser. Dec. 11, 7:30-9 p.m. Free. East West Bookstore, 324 Castro St., Mountain View. Call 988-9800. www.eastwest.com

ADVANCED SEARCH MARKETING Advice and tips for search marketing. Dave Roth, Yahoo Inc., Barbara Coll, WebMama, Massimo Burgio, Global Interactive. Wed., Dec. 13, 6-9 p.m. Members free/\$15 for non-members/add \$5 for onsite registration. Google Inc., 900 Alta Ave., Mountain View. <http://www.webguild.org>

RAPID PAIN ELIMINATION: HEALING CHRONIC PAIN AND FIBROMYALGIA Elijah will demonstrate "Freeing," a structural bodywork, that reconstructs the spine and the musculoskeletal system. Dec. 12, 7:30-9 p.m. Free. East West Bookstore, 324 Castro St., Mountain View. Call 988-9800. www.eastwest.com

SOULS ON SAFARI With Sean O'Laire, a story-teller priest. Dec. 14, 7:30-9 p.m. Free. East West Bookstore, 324 Castro St., Mountain View. Call 988-9800. www.eastwest.com

MORE LISTINGS

For a complete listing of local events, see our website at www.PaloAltoOnline.com.



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