

Mountain View VOICE



Trend setter
Stan Skokan was selling electric cars in the 1980s
IN BUSINESS | P.25

MARCH 2, 2007 VOLUME 15, NO. 9

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NORBERT VON DER GROEBEN

CHEERING SECTION: Mountain View High School students cheer on their team during the first round of CCS boys basketball Division II on Wednesday, Feb. 21, against Gunn High School. Mountain View lost to Gunn 62-46.

Freestyle Academy doubles its ranks

MVLA INCREASES ENROLLMENT FOR PROGRAM'S SECOND YEAR
— BUT A FEW SEATS STILL REMAIN OPEN

By Alexa Tondreau

The Freestyle Academy has already begun enrollment for next year, and owing to its ongoing popularity, school officials decided to more than double its class size, from 30 to approximately 64.

Even with the increased number of seats, Mountain View-Los Altos officials were surprised to learn this week that enrollment for Freestyle, which started Feb. 16, didn't immediately reach maximum capacity. As of press time, about 10 more spots were open for incoming juniors.

"We were resting on our laurels a little bit, thinking that this is going to be a piece of cake," said Gordon Jack, Freestyle's program coordinator. "We were under the

assumption that we wouldn't have to recruit."

But recruit they will, and Jack now plans to make several presentations to sophomores at Mountain View High School

"We were under the assumption that we wouldn't have to recruit."

GORDON JACK

— situated just a stone's throw away on the Truman Avenue main campus — to highlight the various projects students are

working on.

He also has encouraged current Freestyle students to make an effort to speak to their peers about why they like the program so much.

"They are great evangelizers," he said.

Proof of the students' devotion to the program is in the numbers, as only one of the 30 Freestyle students to return next year has opted to leave the program in order to pursue extracurricular interests, Jack said.

The afternoon program is reserved for juniors and seniors from both Los Altos and Mountain View high schools, who study film, digital photography, sound engineering and Web

► See **FREESTYLE**, page 10

Council tears into Mayfield project

NEW MEMBERS CALL FOR MORE PARK SPACE, LESS DENSITY; DEVELOPER SAYS CHANGES MAY KILL PROJECT

By Daniel DeBolt

Council-watchers were shocked Tuesday night by a City Council openly critical of the Mayfield project, with some members saying its eight large condo buildings would look like "fortresses" and that the developer should increase park space and reduce the number of units.

In return, sharp words also came from developer Toll Brothers, which spent more than two years getting the 26-acre site re-zoned for a high-density, 530-home project in the face of significant neighborhood opposition.

"It is not clear that there is a majority of the council in favor of the project without major changes," said city manager Kevin Duggan to everyone in the chambers at the end of Tuesday's study session, assembled to discuss the recently submitted master plan for Mayfield.

Council members who spoke in clear opposition to the master plan were Mayor Laura Macias and newly elected members Jac Siegel, Ronit Bryant and Margaret Abe-Koga, who called for more park space, more heritage trees and fewer units than the proposed 519. (The remaining 11 units would be inside Palo Alto's borders.)

Toll Brothers spokesperson Kelly Snider repeated a cautionary message about the financial viability of the project several times, saying that fewer units or more park space would "push us towards the tipping point of non-

viability," and make it "difficult to move the project forward."

Siegel shot back.

"I think it's an absurd project as it's proposed," he said, after declaring he had "no baggage" connected to the project as a new council member. "It's going to hurt the entire area." He added that if Toll Brothers needed more than 500 units the developer "should look in a different area."

Siegel invoked an image of grid-locked streets when he talked about San Antonio Road, Central Expressway and nearby Rengstorff Avenue as already having some of the worst traffic

► See **COUNCIL**, page 12

Spanking bill gets a rewrite

LIEBER'S MEASURE DIES, BUT SPIRIT LIVES ON IN NEW, NARROWER PROPOSAL

By Daniel DeBolt

With her anti-spanking bill lacking support, former Mountain View mayor and current state Assembly member Sally Lieber announced last Thursday she is sponsoring a new bill to ban specific acts of corporal punishment to anyone under 18 in California.

"The votes are simply not there," Lieber said about her harshly criticized anti-spanking bill that stirred national

► See **LIEBER**, page 8

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

Mary Marley



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Voices

A R O U N D T O W N

Asked in Downtown Mountain View. Pictures and interviews by Zunaira Durrani.

Do you listen to satellite radio?



"No I don't. I briefly considered buying it because I don't like a lot of the music on terrestrial radio. I don't want to pay a monthly fee for satellite radio. At work, you can get Internet radio stations for niche music."

Vishal Srivastava, Atherton



"I bought an XM satellite receiver for \$5 and am going to subscribe to the service. I drive long distances and satellite radio picks up everywhere. I used to listen to The Al Franken Show, which is available on one of the channels."

Mike Allen, San Francisco



"We've just moved to Mountain View and are still settling down, so we are thinking about subscribing for it a month down the line."

Shweta Singh, Mountain View



"My only problem with satellite radio is that there is only Howard Stern to listen to."

Deek Pilaka, San Jose



"I've heard of it but never thought of getting it. I only listen to radio in the car and my commute is really short."

Bindi Pankhudi, Sunnyvale

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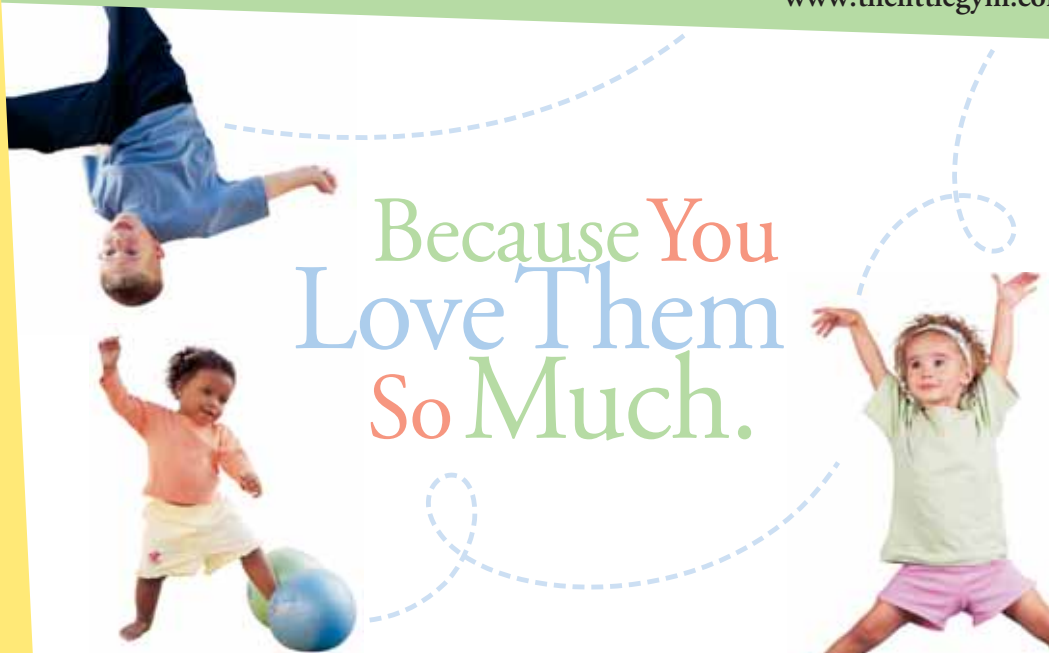
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OnRecord

■ QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“[It’s] kind of ridiculous that you can’t bring food into a park — or be attacked.”

— **DEBBIE ALLARD,**

MOTHER OF A 4-YEAR-OLD GIRL WHO WAS
ATTACKED LAST WEEK BY A SQUIRREL AT CUESTA PARK

■ CRIMEWATCH

BURGLARY/CONSPIRACY, 112 N. RENGSTORFF AVE., 2/25

On Sunday at 12:48 p.m., two men parked their car outside Walgreens on N. Rengstorff Avenue. One of them walked in, collected several items from the racks, and left without paying for them, and the two men sped away.

According to police, officers tracked the car on El Camino Real, stopped it and arrested 21-year-old Thomas Bryan and 40-year-old David Hughs. Both suspects were booked at the main jail. All stolen items were recovered, police said.

ATTEMPTED ROBBERY/ KIDNAPPING, 190 SHOWERS DR., CALTRAIN STATION, 2/21

Last Wednesday at 5:27 p.m., a 15-year-old boy was walking near the train station on the north side of the Showers Drive sidewalk when he noticed a white pickup

truck approaching with two men inside. The truck pulled up to the curb on the opposite lane, and the driver called out to the boy and asked him for a cigarette. When the boy took out a cigarette, the driver pointed a handgun at him, demanded all his possessions and told him to get in the truck.

The boy managed to escape from the area and report the incident. The suspects have not yet been located. The driver was described as a Hispanic man with a scar on his right forearm, between 21 and 26 years old, 5 feet 9 inches tall, weighing 235 pounds with black hair, brown eyes and wearing a black baseball cap, black-and-gray T-shirt, and gray sweat pants. The passenger in the truck was described as a white man, approximately 30 years old, with blonde hair and wearing a tan-colored baseball cap.

■ POLICE LOG

ATTEMPTED ROBBERY

100 block Showers Drive, 2/21

ATTEMPTED SUICIDE

400 block Del Medio Avenue, 2/25

AUTO BURGLARY

700 block Continental Circle, 2/23

1200 block Dale Avenue, 2/23

Century 16 Cinema, 2/23

300 block Hope St., 2/25

BATTERY

600 block Calderon Avenue, 2/21

800 block High School Way, 2/23

COMMERCIAL BURGLARY

100 N Rengstorff Avenue, 2/21

100 block N Rengstorff Avenue, 2/25

DISTURBANCE

Charleston Road/Independence Avenue, 2/24

1900 block Hackett Avenue, 2/25

DOMESTIC DISTURBANCE

300 block Del Medio Avenue, 2/23

1900 block San Luis Avenue, 2/24

400 block Del Medio Avenue, 2/25

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

1100 block Karen Way, 2/23

FORGERY

300 block Castro St., 2/23

GRAND THEFT

200 block Ada Avenue, 2/21

IDENTITY THEFT

200 block Hamilton Avenue, 2/22

3400 block Churin Drive, 2/23

PETTY THEFT

200 block E Middlefield Road, 2/21

500 block Showers Drive, 2/21

2600 block California St., 2/22

300 block Escuela Avenue, 2/23

Mervyns Department Store, 2/23

2000 block Montecito Avenue, 2/24

2000 block Montecito Avenue, 2/24

Sears Department Store, 2/24

Rite Aid Grant Road, 2/24

RESIDENTIAL BURGLARY

1900 block Plymouth St., 2/22

STOLEN VEHICLE

1600 block Hollingsworth Drive, 2/21

1600 block Hollingsworth Drive, 2/22

1500 block N Shoreline Boulevard, 2/24

SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES/PERSON

1100 block Boranda Avenue, 2/21

400 block Tyrella Avenue, 2/23

800 block Runningwood Circle, 2/24

TRESPASSING

Hotel Lodge, 2/22

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From the Editor's Desk

Thoroughly community theater

By Don Frances

WHO CAN ARGUE with kids getting up onstage and acting out for art's sake? Nobody. Which is why Peninsula Youth Theatre is one of the better organizations in Mountain View.

PYT has been around since at least 1992, putting on several productions a year — not to mention its many “Pizzazz” and “Stories on Stage” productions, which the group added in '98 — and usually sticking to fun stuff such as “Guys and Dolls,” “The Music Man” or “Annie.”

(Note to board of directors: keep it that way, so the kids learn to *love* theater first and *do* theater second.)

Their latest endeavor is “Thoroughly Modern Millie,” which starts next weekend. Set in the 1920s, “Millie” — adapted from the 1967 film — is the story of a bumpkin with big dreams in the big city. The cast is composed entirely of locals between the ages of 8 and 20.

The show runs March 10 to 18 at PYT's home base, the Center for the Performing Arts across from City Hall. Tickets are \$18 for adults, \$15 for those under 12 or over 62. Call (650) 988-8798 or visit www.pyt.net for more info.

MEANWHILE, intrepid Gaelic duo Four Shillings Short is returning to St. Joseph's next Sunday, March 11 to lead another Irish Mass. And as singer Christy Martin (who also plays dulcimer, mandolin, sitar, bodhran, etc.) noted, the Irish Mass is a St. Joseph's tradition now in its 20th year, making this one a milestone.

All are invited — Catholics, folk music fans and everybody else — but get there early as the pews fill fast. The Mass begins at 11:30 a.m. at St. Joseph's, 582 Hope St. ■

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



NORBERT VON DER GROEBEN

Pat Bellamy shows a quilt during a class at the Mountain View Senior Center. Bellamy teaches two quilting classes through the Mountain View-Los Altos Adult School, and is a member of the Peninsula Quilters Guild.

A stitch in time

QUILTERS SHARE KNOWLEDGE, CAMARADERIE AT MOUNTAIN VIEW SENIOR CENTER

By Carol Blitzer

Warning: Quilting can become addictive. How else can one explain that the weekly beginning quilting class taught at the Mountain View Senior Center has been ongoing for years, with the same folks repeating the class, quarter after quarter?

Pat Bellamy not only teaches beginning quilting there, but also Quilting Techniques, designed for more experienced quilters. She welcomes everyone with an interest to either of her classes (or to a third one held at the Sunnyvale Senior Center). Her informal teaching style sets the tone for an afternoon of working on projects, learning new techniques and ideas, and sharing expertise.

Bellamy offers easier projects in the beginning



NORBERT VON DER GROEBEN

class, and covers the basics, but, she said, “People sign up more based on schedule. After a while, people are reluctant to change because they've

► See **QUILTING**, page 13

Squirrels fight back

ANOTHER CHILD SCRATCHED LAST WEEK IN CUESTA PARK

By Daniel DeBolt

Just as it was being announced the city had trapped its first squirrel at Cuesta Park, one of the ill-reputed critters attacked once more — this time jumping on a 4-year-old's face as her mother and a park ranger looked on in horror.

“The report is true,” confirmed Dave Muela, community services director.

Santa Clara resident Debbie Allard told the *Voice* that she had read about Cuesta Park's squirrel problem but was unaware just how quick and quiet the squirrels could be.

“I didn't realize the chips would be a problem,” she said. “You are not supposed to bring any food into the park, which is kind of ridiculous that you can't bring food into a park — or be attacked.”

While her daughter played on the Cuesta Park playground last Thursday, Allard opened her purse to remove something. Then, while her back was turned, the squirrel took the bag of chips and ran off to eat them under the cover of the children's play structure.

A nearby park ranger saw what happened and confronted Allard. As the two spoke and watched the squirrel eat the chips, Allard's daughter, Hayley, ran towards to squirrel, possibly thinking it would run away as squirrels do in other parks.

But that doesn't always happen at Cuesta. As the ranger and Allard looked on, the squirrel jumped on

► See **SQUIRRELS**, page 14

Police trainee filed harassment suit

CITY OFFICIALS MUM ON 2005 ACTION AGAINST DEPARTMENT

By Daniel DeBolt

A long-running sexual harassment lawsuit filed by a former police department trainee was considered by the City Council in closed session last week, but no comment was made after the meeting and other city officials refused to comment.

Court records obtained by the *Voice* show

that Jennifer Izzarelli filed a report on April 28, 2005 with the state Department of Fair Employment and Housing, naming “numerous individuals” of the Mountain View Police Department.

Izzarelli was terminated from the training program in the fall of 2004 after one year, but alleges she was let go in retaliation for reporting sexual harassment. She is seeking damages and

attorney's fees, and says the firing has hurt her ability to find work in the field.

The managers she reported the problems to did not bring disciplinary action against the accused officers, she said.

Details of the incidents were not included in the court records, probably because the case has yet to make it to trial, but one allegation is that sexual advances were made on Izzarelli

► See **LAWSUIT**, page 14

dreams
**What ~~assets~~
do you have?**

Namely, what do you want to do in the years ahead? Maybe join the Peace Corps? Make your own movie? Start a new business, perhaps? Or maybe you're not even sure.

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■ SEEN AROUND TOWN

Sharp-shinned hawk on a backyard fence



This sharp-shinned hawk visited Marti Wright's backyard on Feb. 13. Wright, who lives on Sunnyview Lane, said these hawks are small, fast-flying and feed mainly on small birds.

The one pictured "missed when taking off after the birds that took flight from our feeder," Wright noted.

If you have a photo taken around town which you'd like published in the Voice, please send it (as a jpg attachment) to editor@mv-voice.com.

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Downtown going green for Arbor Day

By Zunaira Durrani

Free arts, music and eco-friendly activities will mark Arbor Day at the Pioneer Memorial Park on Mar. 10 in downtown Mountain View.

Come rain or shine, the festivities will start with reading presentation at 10:15 a.m. at the Mountain View Library, said City Parks Section manager Bruce Hurlburt.

Outdoor fun will kick off with a tree planting in the Pioneer Park at 11 a.m. Community members

and children are invited to enjoy a range of arts and crafts, including face painting and a guided tree walk.

Also, a lively bluegrass group called 'Bout Time will perform in the courtyard at City Hall. Complimentary hot dogs and drinks will be served.

Public and volunteer-run environmental agencies will set up booths to offer information on growing trees, composting and recycling.

"The Santa Clara County Mer-

cury Recycling Team will host a booth where you can exchange your old mercury thermometers for new non-mercury thermometers. A tree climbing demonstration by the city of Mountain View's Forestry Division is also scheduled," Hurlburt added.

Pioneer Memorial Park is located between City Hall and the Mountain View Public Library on Church Street. For more information, contact the Forestry and Roadway Landscape Division at (650) 903-6273. ■

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COURTESY PHOTO

Drive-by gaming

GOOGLE WIFI PLUS XBOX PLUS JEEP EQUALS
FUN FOR LOCAL COMPUTER WIZARDS

By Zunaira Durrani

Working late one evening at Microsoft's Mountain View offices, multimedia specialists Jake Ludington and Brandon Wirtz were waiting for video to encode. To kill time, they thought about taking their Xbox 360 console out for a spin.

"Playing games on the corporate network is discouraged, so we decided to see if we could get Google's WiFi to work with the Xbox," said Wirtz.

For 27-year-old Wirtz and 33-year-old Ludington, who work on Internet Protocol Television at Microsoft, wiring an Xbox inside Wirtz's new Jeep Wrangler turned out to be a feat. Together with Rose Maynes, a colleague, Ludington and Wirtz came up with a creative solution.

On the night of Feb. 16, they bought a 23-inch high-definition TV along with a mounting kit. The next morning, the three assembled their \$4,000 setup in the Jeep. Using zip ties, they secured the HDTV to the back of the passenger seat, and plugged in the Xbox 360, a camera, and a laptop already connected to Google WiFi.

It took them three hours to finish the job, but Wirtz was proud of their "ultimate" drive-by gaming setup.

"The Jeep Wrangler 4-door is much sexier than the 'Mom-mobile' minivan that you would typically find wired for video," he said.

Wirtz got behind the wheel as Maynes went online to connect with the Xbox Live community for gamers.

"At 12:30 p.m., Rose joined Xbox Live's Major Nelson (Larry Hryb in Seattle) for a game of Tom Clancy's Rainbow 6 Vegas. They played for about 30 minutes, and then she went looking for people to play Uno with," Wirtz said. For safety reasons, he did not exceed 35 miles per hour with anyone sitting

in front of the LCD screen.

Wirtz slowly drove his friends from the Microsoft office on La Avenida Avenue towards low-traffic areas in town. Their stops included Perimeter Road, Charleston Road, Bryant Street and Central Expressway.

Documenting the drive-by Xbox feat for friends and blog readers was a priority, so Ludington shot a video of Maynes shooting terrorists as she chatted away with her gaming counterparts. The games, Rainbow 6 Vegas and Uno, were selected because built-in video software allowed Maynes' gaming partners to see her and the changing scenery behind her.

The team found that Google WiFi connectivity was stable overall. "The WiFi held up really well. We had a few dropouts, but most of the time it worked really well," said Wirtz.

"At one point in the video, you have Rose playing Uno, with four people having a conversation and watching each other," he said. "Take the Uno portion out of that, and you have a video conference happening live from the road. Imagine being able to have a meeting from Caltrain. Or giving a presentation on your cab ride. Or watching a presentation at least. As long as you create boundaries between work and personal life, having tools to make both more flexible is a huge advantage."

Wirtz describes himself as a "farm boy gone geek," and his colleague Ludington is a tech writer and the author of "Easy Digital Home Movies." Gaming is a passion for both.

A video of the gaming trek through Mountain View is available on Ludington's blog at www.jakeludington.com/xbox/. Wirtz said more than 10,000 people have viewed the video so far. ▀

E-mail Zunaira Durrani at zdurrani@mv-voice.com

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LIEBER

► Continued from page 1

debate. "California will continue to allow a parent or a caregiver ... to spank with an open hand, on the buttocks, to the point of injury to a child," she said.

The new bill is designed to make child abuse prosecutions easier, and cracks down on specific actions — including the use of a rod, shoe, belt, switch or stick — of corporal punishment to those under 18. The bill also targets burning, cutting, kicking, hitting with a closed fist, interfering with a child's breathing and, for children under 3, vigorous shaking.



Sally Lieber

The actions will not be specifically prohibited by the new bill, but it will create a "rebuttable presumption" that they are not justifiable, Lieber said, which puts the burden of justifying physical punishment on parents. Lawyers reportedly are skeptical that the bill will add much to current law, but some say it could make it a little easier to prosecute child abusers.

Lieber said she was not fazed by the negative controversy over her proposed ban on spanking children under 3, and said she was pleased to see that newspapers accompanied their critical editorials with articles on non-violent parenting.

"I don't mind negative attention at all, I just want to draw attention to [the issue]," Lieber said.

Recently termed-out council member Mike Kasperzak, who plans to make a run for Lieber's seat this year, said raising the issue is a good thing, but he wasn't sure if that area of the law required additional legislation. He said the spanking bill was "overly intrusive" on the rights of parents.

"Abuse is illegal," Kasperzak said. "It would seem to me and a prosecutor that spanking a child to the point of injury is in fact child abuse. I think people have

been prosecuted for lesser stuff. People have been prosecuted for leaving their kids home alone."

"The enforcement of the bill is going to be really difficult," Kasperzak said. "Unless a child is taken to the emergency room because of abuse — but again that would be abuse."

Speaking in support of the new bill at Thursday's press conference in Sacramento was Scott Juceam, whose 15-month-old daughter was shaken to death by a caregiver in the family's Roseville home. The caregiver is currently considering a plea bargain offer to serve 11 years in state prison.

"Shaking children and abusing children — those days are over," Juceam said. "This woman behind me is catching flack for proposing laws to protect our children. We are going to get this passed — this is a no-brainer. We are going to be back again and again and again."

Lieber has equated the fight to ban spanking and corporal punishment to the difficult fight to ban domestic violence — laws which are now taken for granted.

After Lieber introduced her anti-spanking bill, a few experts came forward to say a spank to a child can sometimes be a good idea, so long as the parent

is not doing it out of anger. One reporter at the press conference told Lieber, "Sometimes a smaller woman doesn't have the hand strength to discipline a 14-year-old son," and asked if it would then be OK to use an implement

instead of a hand to spank him. "If a parent is still relying on a stick or a rod and that child is 14, that parent needs to get some help," Lieber said.

She later added that, "It is much more successful in the long run to command respect than to command fear."

Lieber is a Mountain View resident who has no children. She recently announced that when her term as speaker pro tem in the state Assembly expires at the end of the year, she will take on incumbent Liz Kniss for the District 5 seat on the county Board of Supervisors. ▀

"I don't mind negative attention at all, I just want to draw attention to [the issue]."

SALLY LIEBER

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

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NEWS BRIEFS

SHERIFF GIVEN GRANT TO MONITOR SEX OFFENDERS

The Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office has been awarded almost \$1 million in state grant funds to better ensure the registration and tracking of sex offenders across the state.

The Sheriff's Office will receive \$953,250 to train 11 Northern California sheriff's agencies to monitor, investigate, pursue and apprehend repeated sex offenders, Gov. Schwarzenegger's office announced last Thursday.

The funding was provided by the state Office of Emergency Services and will help fund the Sexual Assault Felony Enforcement (SAFE) program of the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office, which will provide training to the other sheriff's departments.

Funds will be used to train at least one new SAFE program team member from Contra Costa, Humboldt, Marin, Monterey, San Benito, Santa Cruz, Del Norte, Lake, Mendocino, Napa, and Solano county sheriff's agencies on how to track and monitor sex offenders.

— Bay City News

CORONER IDS TRAIN VICTIM

The man who was killed by a train in Mountain View on Feb. 13 has been identified by the Santa Clara County Coroner's office as Bradford Mills, 48, of Lincoln, Calif.

Mills was struck by a southbound train operated by Caltrain under Highway 85 at about 7:50 a.m. that morning. The precise cause of death has not been officially determined.

— Palo Alto Weekly

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| MEET THE AUTHOR: JANE HELLER |

Some Nerve: A Novel Way to Approach Hospital Volunteering

Presented by the El Camino Hospital Auxiliary



Thursday, March 15
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Author Jane Heller who recently released her 13th novel, *Some Nerve*, will be coming to Cupertino to speak about her personal journey to volunteerism in a health care setting.

Some Nerve is the story of a journalist who becomes a hospital volunteer to get an interview with a reclusive celebrity. Along the way the journalist discovers the wonderful gifts of volunteering at a hospital.

Please join the El Camino Hospital Auxiliary for this fun and informative lecture. The author will sell and autograph her latest novel after the lecture. For more information about Jane Heller and her work, visit www.janeheller.com.

Refreshments will be served. Valet parking will be available for \$7.00 or you may self-park for free.

Registration is required to ensure enough seating, but there is no fee for the lecture. To register call the El Camino Health Line at (800) 216-5556.

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FREESTYLE
 ▶ Continued from page 1

design, and additionally it fulfills students' English requirement. Associate Superintendent Brigitte Sarraf said the district chose to increase the size of the junior class because of the program's highly successful first year. "We're extremely pleased with the progress," she said. "The students are so happy."

As the program currently stands, about one third of students come from Los Altos and the remaining two thirds from Mountain View. The district has wanted a more even balance of Los Altos and Mountain View students in the program, and so Jack went to Los Altos High earlier this month to recruit.


His effort was successful. Currently, 30 students from Los Altos High have enrolled for next year, and 26 from Mountain View High. Jack said he isn't worried about being able to fill the remaining spots because of the effectiveness of the recruitment. Within three years, he hopes to see the program grow even more, with a total of 120 students enrolled. He said he also hopes to see the educational opportunities at Freestyle expand. Jack foresees more involvement from companies and organizations outside of the school, like Google or local nonprofits, and wants to have students connected to mentors. ■

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

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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

ROTARIANS SEEK SCHOLARSHIP APPLICANTS

The Rotary Club of Los Altos is currently accepting applications for its 2007 Community Service Scholarships. High school seniors who attend one of the seven eligible secondary schools — including Mountain View High, Los Altos High, St. Francis High and Foothill College — and who plan to continue their education at an accredited post-secondary school or college, are encouraged to apply by the April 18 deadline.

Scholarships are \$800 for community-college bound applicants and \$2,500 for students attending four-year institutions. Applications can be found on the group's Web site, www.losaltosrotary.org, or at eligible high school counseling offices.

CSMA KIDS' ARTWORK SHOWING IN SAN JOSE

From March 6 to April 1, the Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose will display an eclectic mix of artwork from Mountain View's Community School of Music and Arts. The "Discover Art with CSMA" exhibit will present the work of kindergarten through fifth-graders made in art programs at CSMA.

The exhibition features drawings, paintings, sculpture, ceramics, masks and collages created by more than 250 children. All of the work was created during the 2006-07 school year in classes taught by CSMA's professional art educators and practicing artists.

The exhibition is open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sundays from noon to 5 p.m., at the Children's Discovery Museum, 180 Woz Way, San Jose. Cost is

\$7 for everyone between 1 and 59 years old; \$6 for visitors over 60; and infants and members are free.

SPACE TALK AT FOOHILL

As part of the Silicon Valley Astronomy Lecture Series, astronaut and scientist Janice Voss of the NASA-Ames Research Center will present "Searching for Earth-like Planets: NASA's Kepler Mission" on Wednesday, March 7 at 7 p.m. in the Smithwick Theater at Foothill College. Admission is free.

In November 2008, NASA is scheduled to launch the Kepler Mission to search for Earth-like planets around distant stars. Dr. Voss, who is the science office director for the project, will describe the design and expected results from the four-year mission.

Visitors must purchase a campus parking permit for \$2 (eight quarters). Parking lots 1, 3, 5 and 6 provide access to the theater. Foothill College is located on El Monte Road off Interstate 280. For more information, visit www.foothill.edu or call (650) 949-7888.

— Alexa Tondreau

CITY SEEKS TENNIS PLAYERS FOR ADVISORY BOARD

The City Council voted Tuesday to create a five-member tennis advisory board, which means the city will be accepting applications to fill the seats.

The city is looking for two men, two women and one youth to sit on the board, which will meet three times a year to advise the city on all things tennis related. A tennis organization that already works closely with the city, Friends of Mountain View Tennis, endorsed the plan.

— Daniel DeBolt

Student holds tech party for 250

MICROSOFT HELPS THROW BASH TO EXPLAIN NEW VISTA SOFTWARE

By Alexa Tondreau

Perhaps setting the standard for Silicon Valley high school achievement, a Mountain View High student threw a party last weekend for 250 people with the goal of explaining computer software.

Junior Alina Libova was mastermind and host of the Microsoft Windows Vista party at Foothill College, held last Saturday morning. Organized with the help of local Microsoft personnel, the event was an opportunity for students to learn more about the operating system with a series of workshops and lectures geared towards various levels of tech-savviness.

Libova, 17, who said she "definitely spends a lot of time around computers," was inspired to host the event after fielding numerous questions from friends about the recently released Vista.

She said she figured a party — complete with computers, food, drinks and a band — would be a fun way for her friends to explore the Vista system. The party was originally slated for about 50 people, but by the time Saturday rolled around, community interest had dramatically increased through word of mouth and some Web advertising.

"It just kept growing and growing," Libova said. Numbers climbed to 250 people by lunchtime, and Libova said there was huge diversity in terms of age, from young children to parents.

Libova was able to manage the event with the help of some key contacts in the community. "Everyone I approached was extremely helpful," she said.

Libova takes computer classes in her spare time at Foothill, and her programming professor helped to secure several classrooms and the use of a parking lot.

Microsoft public relations manager Doug Free, who Libova had met at a Microsoft tech-fest and kept in contact with, gave her the company's financial backing and support to get the event off the ground.

Free, a Mountain View resident who works at the local Microsoft campus, stressed that "This wasn't a big, fancy Microsoft event. This was Alina's party, and we were happy to help out."

The party featured a variety of workshops and seminars led by Microsoft personnel and consultants from other high-tech companies, ranging from serious — "Performance Enhancement in Vista" — to more fun — "Cool Vista apps" and "Gaming in Vista."

Libova said participants were encouraged to choose the workshops based on interest and technical proficiency, and there were opportunities to learn about things other than Vista, like how to make your own screensaver.

For her part, Libova spent most of the time "running around making sure everyone was having fun."

A barbeque lunch was provided with Free's help, and a Bay Area band called Sinclair played in the parking lot. Microsoft also kicked in 100 free copies of the Vista program and covered parking fees for attendees.

Although the company had never before participated in a student-led event of this sort, Free said, "The fact we can do this kind of thing is very satisfying."

Free made it clear that the incentive behind the company's involvement boiled down to one key element: Libova. He even brought his 7-year-old daughter to the party just so she could meet her.

"I wanted to show her that girls can do this. It's about girl power, and Alina had it going on," Free said.

Libova, whose father is a computer architect at Polaris Wireless, lists her interests as computer games, network security, ice skating, robotics and investing.

She sees her involvement in computer technology as a permanent part of her life. She has already taken several computer classes at Foothill and said she plans to pursue a double degree in computer science and economics in college.

From there, the future is wide open.

"Maybe I'll start my own company afterwards," she mused. ▀

It's about girl power, and Alina had it going on."

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This map from Toll Brothers' master plan shows the developer's current proposal for the Mayfield site, with 519 housing units on the Mountain View side and 11 on the Palo Alto side.

COUNCIL

► *Continued from page 1*

in the city. He said he preferred that the site remain office space.

Bryant and Macias criticized the large four- and five-story buildings near the corner of Central Expressway and San Antonio Road, saying they looked like "fortresses," and Macias said she preferred the row houses closer to the project's border with the Monta Loma neighborhood.

Abe-Koga may provide the anticipated swing vote to move the project forward or stop it altogether.

"Overall the plan looks good, but when you start adding the new streets, things change," she said. Several new streets were expected to connect, but didn't in the master plan. She said she had always believed the maximum of 530 homes was too high, and that it was doubtful the proposed 519 on the Mountain View side would fit.

She added that the project offered a rare opportunity for more park space in a neighborhood famously lacking parks, and that the city's \$5 million in park funds could help with that goal.

Member Nick Galiotto reminded the council that if the

city were to pay for more park space it would mean less space for homes and, in turn, less park space would be required from developers.

Council member Matt Pear responded to criticism from Siegel, Bryant and Macias that the project was not "smart growth." They said people would have to get in their cars to go most places, but Pear countered that Safeway and San Antonio Center were only blocks away, not to mention the San Antonio train station.

Elna Tymes, who lead the Monta Loma Neighborhood Association last year against the project, was cheered by Tuesday's meeting.

"This is evidence of the new slower-growth council," she said. "We were not expecting this, but I think there were smiles all over as the council proceeded to tell Toll Brothers there was not enough park space, not enough trees and too much traffic, all the things we've been saying for over a year. I do think it represents a significant shift."

City staff said Toll Brothers planned to retain 108 of the site's 243 heritage trees, but only 69 would be unmoved. Toll Brothers said it planned to spend \$1 million relocating trees, but Macias and Siegel said they didn't believe trees could be saved that

way. However, a majority on the council favored saving 29 additional trees.

Toll Brothers hopes to have a more complete master plan approved in the fall. Homes on the Monta Loma border, representing the first of several phases, were the only ones covered in detail Tuesday.

City to hire BMR administrator

Busy city staff will get a break now that the council decided to hire a new staffer at \$136,000 a year to administer the city's Below Market Rate housing fund, which now sits at \$13 million.

Affordable housing advocates characterized the move as a step forward, but council member Matt Pear said there needed to be more discussion about whether subsidized housing did much to fix the city's affordable housing problem. He and member Tom Means opposed the idea in a 5-2 vote.

The funds are collected from housing developers that choose not to include affordable housing in their projects. The city so far has allocated \$7 million of the \$13 million towards a family housing development on Evelyn Avenue. ▀

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

Sears lease extended three more years

HOME DEPOT SAYS PLANS TO MOVE INTO SPACE AT SAN ANTONIO CENTER REMAIN ON TRACK

By Daniel DeBolt

Rumors circulating last week that Home Depot was giving up its plans for a store at the San Antonio shopping center probably had their basis in a surprise move by Sears to extend its lease there for three more years.

The extended lease came

despite a several-week going-out-of-business sale at Sears, during which much of the store's merchandise was marked down.

Kathy Gallagher, a Home Depot spokesperson, wrote an e-mail to the *Voice* last week assuring that Home Depot's plans have not changed, but acknowledged that Sears had signed a temporary lease extension. Sears is no longer closing March 15, as originally stated, and has taken down its "store closing" signs.

Mike Couch, property man-

ager at San Antonio Center, said the owners and Sears have signed a "multi-year" lease extension to ensure that the shopping center is not without an anchor store while Home Depot goes through the city's planning process. The alternative, property owners said, was to have the 150,000-square-foot space lie dormant for months or even years on end.

Home Depot representatives plan to meet with city staff next week as part of the ongoing planning process for the site. ▀

QUILTING

► Continued from page 5

bonded with the group."

Years after she started quilting in Mountain View, Diane Tortolano comes all the way from San Jose to participate. "I'm a slow learner," she joked, noting that she's recently enticed her sister into taking a class in Sunnyvale. "I come back here because I like the gals here, and the new building," she said.

"For rank beginners, this is marvelous," said Ronnie Luber, a Mountain View quilter for 13 years. "It's very social, and you always learn something."

Luber had sewn all her life, but finds quilting far different from making clothing or mending. "Initially quilting was done out of necessity. It evolved to artistic work," she said.

Her friend Judi Wilson was quietly working on a "charm" quilt, which will ultimately be made of more than 500 different fabrics. Her cathedral-window pattern is all hand-sewn — but in small enough pieces that she can take it on airplane trips. She said she's been quilting for 16 years.

"I have nine grandchildren, and I've made a lot of blankies," she said.

Wilson said she's happy to share her knowledge with the newer quilters, and acknowledges a vested interest: "The more addicts, the more fabrics are available." She said she's delighted quilting has caught on with hobbyists; one class member even brought in a map of Northern California showing the locations of fabric stores within a few hours' drive.

Artistic history

Bellamy didn't start out as a quilter, although her grandmother practiced the craft, and her mother did a little. But she taught art in a Sunnyvale middle school for 10 years before opening up The Dollhouse Factory in Menlo Park, which she owned for 20 years.

■ INFORMATION

What: Quilting classes at the Mountain View Senior Center

When: The next beginner classes are Thursdays, 1:30 to 4 p.m., from March 15 to May 21. The next "Quilting Techniques" classes are Mondays, 1:30 to 4 p.m., from March 19 to May 24.

Where: Mountain View Senior Center, 266 Escuela Ave., Mountain View

Cost: \$84, or \$20 for seniors 55 and up, plus a \$3 materials fee payable to the instructor

Info: Call (650) 940-1333 or visit www.mvlae.net. For information on local guilds, visit www.scvqa.org or www.peninsulaquilters.org.

"All along I was interested in fabric crafts," she said, pointing out that even dollhouses required furnishings, as well as doll clothes.

By 1992, she had joined the Peninsula Quilters Guild "and got really involved, just as I was afraid I would." She also took on responsibility for the California Living Building at the San Mateo County Fair. By the mid-1990s, she was teaching quilting at quilt shops and serving as president of the guild. Since 1998, she's been teaching quilting through the Mountain View-Los Altos Adult School.

With a minimum of 15 quilters in each class, Bellamy says "it's nice to have experienced quilters in class to help explain. If you have to explain, it helps you learn yourself, and reinforces what you've learned."

A key part of the three-hour class is "show and tell," where each participant shares what they've done that week, and what obstacles they've encountered. Class members chime in with encouraging words, often reinforcing that what the student sees as an error cannot be perceived by anyone else — at least not

without a magnifying glass. Sometimes people bring in fine examples of quilts, such as those using a bird theme.

Special projects

In her classes, Bellamy introduces special tools that come in handy, such as a miniature iron that can get right into points.

One February afternoon, Bellamy was demonstrating binding techniques used to finish off stained-glass, paper-pieced tulip wall hangings. For the project, she suggested attaching the fabric with iron-on interfacing, then pinning on iron-on bias tape (the "lead" in the pattern) and ironing it tight, before sewing the parallel black lines with a double-pointed needle.

She also hands out info sheets, with step-by-step instructions that quilters keep in a class binder. One quilter noticed that her fabric wasn't sticking to the iron-on interfacing. Bellamy explained that if you wash the fabric, then toss a fabric-softener sheet into the dryer, it may not stick. "The hand-out sheet warned us about that," another quilter said.

Palo Alto Sylvia Alderman has been coming to class for five years. "I'm still learning things. You work on things like color," she said, pointing to her friend's duck project. "This duck didn't look like a mallard," she noted, so her friend changed the shape of the beak, as well as the feather colors.

When Pnina Griss retired and moved to Mountain View, she picked up quilting as a hobby. "I always liked to work with fabrics. I like quilting because you don't have to fit it on a person — and you can use math skills," she said.

Many of the class quilters are also members of local quilting guilds, which meet monthly for speakers, sponsored classes or "quilt 'til you wilt" sessions. ▀

This story originally appeared in the Palo Alto Weekly, the *Voice's* sister paper.

photo: Lyn Healy

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"My back and leg are killing me. Every time I try to lift a roll of carpet, it feels as though someone is driving a dagger into my hip and pouring hot lead down my leg."

Ernie was a carpet installer, and years of lifting and working bent-over had taken their toll. His MRI's revealed massive disc and joint degeneration. The surgeons he consulted were not optimistic about the outcome of surgery, given the extent of damage to the discs of L4 and L5 that had protruded and were pressing against the nerves causing his pain.

This was clearly a case for Spinal Decompression, a method of reducing the pressure on the disc, reducing the bulge and allowing the nerves to heal.

The outcome? Ernie was able to return to his work with zero pain. He lifts and installs carpet, water skis, surfs, and feels *"Fabulous!"*

Call to schedule a no-charge consultation. Feel free to bring any MRI's, X-rays or lab studies you may have. Please mention MV-10.

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LAWSUIT

► Continued from page 5

by male officers.

According to the plaintiff's state-

ment, a captain in the department told her he did not have to explain why she was fired because she was an "at will employee," however, "the real reason why I was fired

was that I had complained about harassment and discrimination.

"During my training," she wrote, "Mountain View officers and fellow students subjected

me to a sexually hostile work and training environment. ... I complained about some of the problems and was retaliated against because of my complaints."

Izzarelli filed suit against both the city and Evergreen Valley College. The case against the city has been delayed while the college argued in court that it was not liable for the alleged incidents, even though Izzarelli attended the training program through the school. In November, Judge Neal A. Cabrinha ruled that the college could not be held responsible for the alleged harassment.

City officials declined to comment about the current status of the case, with only city manager Kevin Duggan giving a very brief synopsis on the record before deferring to the city attorney, Michael Martello, who did not return calls by press time.

Izzarelli's attorney, Charles Roe, also did not return repeated phone calls. One city official told the *Voice* that the case could be dropped. ▣

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

SQUIRRELS

► Continued from page 5

Hayley's face and jumped away, leaving scratches to both cheeks and her forehead. Allard said Hayley's eye was barely missed.

The attack brings to 13 the number of reported squirrel attacks on people, mostly children, at Cuesta Park since May 2006.

"We didn't expect Hayley to jump in there," Allard said, adding, "I'm not going to try to take food from a squirrel."

After months of consulting with a local wildlife biologist and the Department of Fish and Game, the city has announced plans to capture a small group of squirrels — about five or six — that it believes have become unusually aggressive. Earlier last week, the city's exterminators trapped the first one using a baby stroller as a decoy. The squirrel will be euthanized off-site with chloroform gas by Clarke Pest Control.

"In my mind it [the latest incident] reinforces the actions taken thus far," Muela said. "Park visitor safety continues to be our No. 1 priority. We continue to need the public's help in not feeding the squirrels."

The city has posted signs in several languages to create a no-food zone in the children's play area and has installed squirrel-proof trash cans. All the attacks have happened near the children's play area.

When the decision was announced in September to trap the squirrels, it was widely reported — and hotly contested by animal rights groups like People for Ethical Treatment for Animals, who threatened a lawsuit.

No new attacks or squirrel captures were reported by press time. ▣



Frank Galli, Chief of Medical Staff



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Don Frances

Staff Writers

Daniel DeBolt

Alexa Tondreau

Intern

Zunaira Durrani

Contributors

Angela Hey

Sheila Himmel

Forrest Linebarger

Elaine Rowland

Kathy Schrenk

Photographers

Norbert von der Groeben

Marjan Sandoughi

Design Director

Raul Perez

Assistant Design Director

Katie Cvitkovich

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editor@MV-VOICE.com

E-mail Classified

ads@MV-VOICE.com

E-mail Circulation

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■ EDITORIAL THE OPINION OF THE VOICE

Squirrel trouble just won't go away

It has been about four months since it came out that the city has a raging squirrel problem on its hands at Cuesta Park, where children are being attacked by animals foraging for food. So far, despite a major effort, a sure solution remains elusive.

The problem, as probably everyone knows by now, occurs when parents give children snack food inside Cuesta Park's children's play area. That's when the squirrels — or a certain group of them — pounce, grabbing the food and often scratching the youngsters in the process. It happened again only last week, when a 4-year-old girl chased a squirrel who had grabbed a bag of chips from her mother's purse, and wound up with several scratches on her face as a result.

The city has responded to this delicate situation very carefully, using signs and park rangers to warn parents about bringing food products into the play area, and at the same time taking action to trap and euthanize the most aggressive squirrels.

But despite the city's efforts, only one squirrel has been trapped so far. Even the stepped-up presence of park rangers isn't a perfect solution: Last week's attack took place while the mother was talking with a park ranger (her back was turned to the open purse).

Meanwhile, the city is taking its lumps on animal protection Web sites that staunchly oppose euthanasia of the errant squirrels for any reason. But trapping and relocating the squirrels is apparently not an option, because it violates state Fish and Game laws.

Dave Muela, the city's community services director, continues to make the most sensible suggestion: that parents totally refrain from bringing snack foods to the park, even if they are concealed in a purse or backpack. If we can break the squirrels' obviously learned habit of foraging for food among the strollers and backpacks of mothers and their young children, the attacks will surely go away.

But if we can't, or won't, do that, the squirrels will be trapped and euthanized — as many as it takes, city leaders say, until the park is made safe again. No one wants to see the squirrels disappear entirely from Cuesta Park. After all, they are part of the park's ecosystem, as well as its charm. And their (peaceful) presence provides a small nature lesson to children seeing them for the first time.

But that lesson will continue to go awry if people keep bringing food to the park. So far, none of the reported attacks have resulted in serious damage. But eventually, one of these tiny squirrels could create as much pain and havoc as the larger animals we associate with real danger.

■ LETTERS VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

COUNCIL OFF BASE IN BMR DECISION

Editor:

I was dismayed at the City Council's decision to forge ahead with plans to use BMR funds for "one-time" relocation assistance for the residents being displaced on Evandale ("Dustup over BMR funds," Feb. 23).

I do not disagree with wanting to help those who are not being given much in the way of assistance from the developer — in fact, I applaud it. However, I don't believe this is the best way to assist them.

Though the council has stated this would be a one-time-only decision, I don't believe this will be the case. This decision will pave the way for others to expect and insist the same options in the future. I believe it will also take away any incentives for developers to provide assistance to tenants they are relocating since the city will do it for them.

I agree with council member Ronit Bryant (the only one to dissent from this decision) who suggested the city utilize other funds in this situation and use an

organization with an infrastructure already in place, such as the Community Services Agency, to assist those being relocated.

Let's not have an "act now and worry about the consequences later" approach to this, no matter how good a cause this may be. I believe this is the mentality that many of those who ran for council (and won) last year made an argument against. Let's take a step back and look at the entire situation, not just focus on the moment.

**Alicia Crank
California Street**

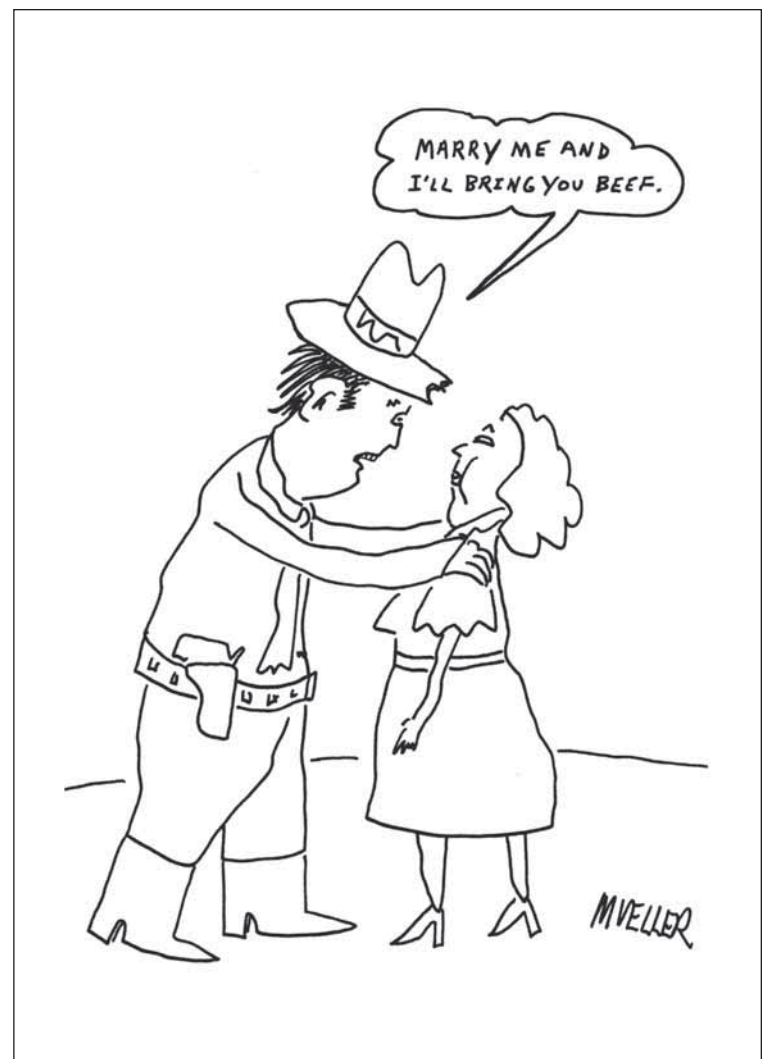
(Crank is a member of the city's Human Relations Commission.)

CHLORAMINE BILL A GOOD IDEA

Editor:

Thank you for the excellent Feb. 9 article regarding Assemblyman Ira Ruskin's proposed bill to study the effects of chloramine in the local water supply ("Local legislator seeks study on chloramine"). Your article helped me focus on the severe, unrelenting skin rashes covering

► See **LETTERS**, page 16



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Viewpoint

LETTERS

► Continued from page 15

most of my body, which heretofore have defied explanation.

After reading your article, I contacted the Citizens Concerned About Chloramine (CCAC) and received a great deal of information about isolating the cause of my skin problems and tips on dealing with them. The rapid improvement in my condition convinces me that chloramine in my tap water is the major contributor to these problems.

I am grateful for being made aware of the excellent work being done by the CCAC, and I totally support the effort by Assemblyman Ruskin to have the state study the chloramine issue. The *Voice* has done me a great service by making me aware of this issue.

George Popaduk
Los Altos

HUNDREDS HAVE CHLORAMINE SYMPTOMS

Editor:

Thanks for your Feb. 9 coverage of the chloramine issue. Citizens Concerned About Chloramine has heard from over 400 people in the Bay Area who believe that their skin, respiratory and/or gastrointestinal problems are caused by chloramine in Hetch Hetchy tap water, and that these problems abate when exposure to Hetch Hetchy tap water is avoided.

CCAC has also heard from hundreds more in other parts of the U.S. See www.chloramine.org for further information.

Jeff Hoel
Palo Alto

KUDOS TO SCHMITZ FAMILY FOR HOSTING FARM

Editor:

I know that we will all miss the farm — the Pumpkin Patch each fall, the Christmas tree lot, and the fresh corn all summer long. I applaud the efforts to save some of the heritage of Mountain View, but the farm that everyone fell in love with over the years will not be back.

It was the Schmitz family that made the farm what it was and a place people loved to visit. Their hard work and passion is what gave it its charm and made it a magnet for children throughout the area every fall.

The people of Mountain View and the surrounding area owe a big debt of gratitude and a huge thank you for giving all of us something special for all these years.

Thank you to the entire Schmitz family!

Phil Roemer
Doverton Square



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■ RESTAURANT REVIEW

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■ RESTAURANT REVIEW

Go fish

MENLO PARK LANDMARK
COOK'S SEAFOOD IS PLANNING
ITS NEXT 79 YEARS

By Sheila Himmel

Takeout dining has gone way beyond cardboard cartons. You can get just about any food to go, but the highest order of the species has to be cracked crab: recently alive, boiled in-house, and sold immediately. Cook's Seafood in Menlo Park has it year-round.

Until the end of June, the live crab is local Dungeness. At Cook's you can pick up the whole meal, with clam chowder, chilled wine, coleslaw and fresh Acme sourdough bread. The cooked crab recently was the same price as live, \$6.99 a pound — not cheap. Purists want to boil their own, but Cook's cooked version is fabulous, and cracked into manageable pieces. You may still need narrow spoons or forks to reach every crevice.

Cook's Seafood, a restaurant and a market, has



NORBERT VON DER GROEBEN

The Matte's order of halibut fish and chips from Cook's Seafood Restaurant and Market in Menlo Park.

► See **COOK'S**, page 18

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DINING NOTES

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COOK'S

► Continued from page 17

been located for 79 years in the same spot. El Camino Real has moved, but not Cook's. In about a year, owner Mike Crumrine hopes to begin expansion that will knock down the closed Arby's across the parking lot and double the restaurant's seating. "I'll be here another 79 years," says Crumrine, whose father, Roy Crumrine, bought Cook's in

1963. Founder Bill Cook opened it in 1928.

Cook's specializes in fried fish and seafood. No question they are best eaten on the premises, hot, but research shows that the Cook's fried oysters do just fine when taken home and reheated in the oven.

The current restaurant seats 16 outside and 64 inside, in booths and tables with wooden teacher chairs which you can move around to accommodate your party.

Steakhouse fries are hot and crispy outside, creamy inside.

The restaurant also sells Acme rolls (50 cents apiece), should you want to upgrade from the oyster crackers that come with chowder and cioppino, or the saltines with seafood salads.

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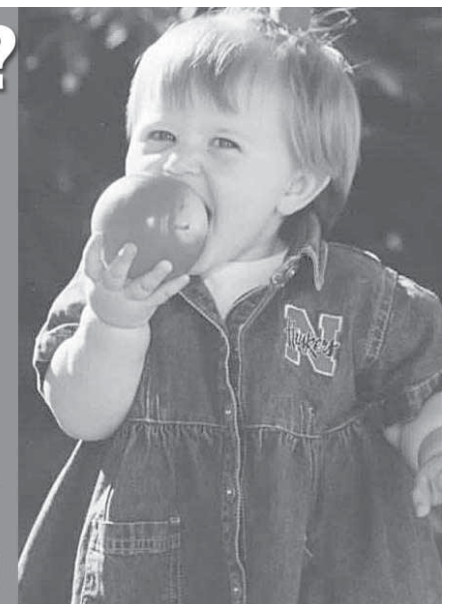
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NORBERT VON DER GROEBEN

Anna Hernández works the counter at Cook's Seafood Restaurant and Market.

surable pieces of clam. The less satisfying cioppino (\$9.29 a pint) is doomed by overcooked tuna in dull tomato soup.

The seafood Louis salads come with a cup of velvety mayo-ketchup dressing that is just right for crisp iceberg lettuce, half a hard-boiled egg and a decorative tomato.

I'd go for the fried fish. Cook's now uses a corn-canola blend with zero trans-fats. Not that deep-frying is ever going to be advised by your cardiologist, but it is a great way to enjoy the fish,

**"I'll be here
another
79 years."**

MIKE CRUMRINE

which basically steams inside, and absorbs very little oil.

If local halibut (\$8.99) is available, get that. There may also be local flounder (\$6.99) and

swordfish (\$8.99).

Fried oysters are plump and juicy, lightly coated in bread-crumbs and not too greasy. Other choices from the fryer, in alphabetical order, include: calamari, catfish, clams, prawns, scallops and sole.

Cook's isn't all that visible on El Camino. Now that Arby's Restaurant is gone, look for the Mermaid Inn, on the other side of Cook's.

Also, now that Arby's is gone, the whole parking lot is your oyster. ❏

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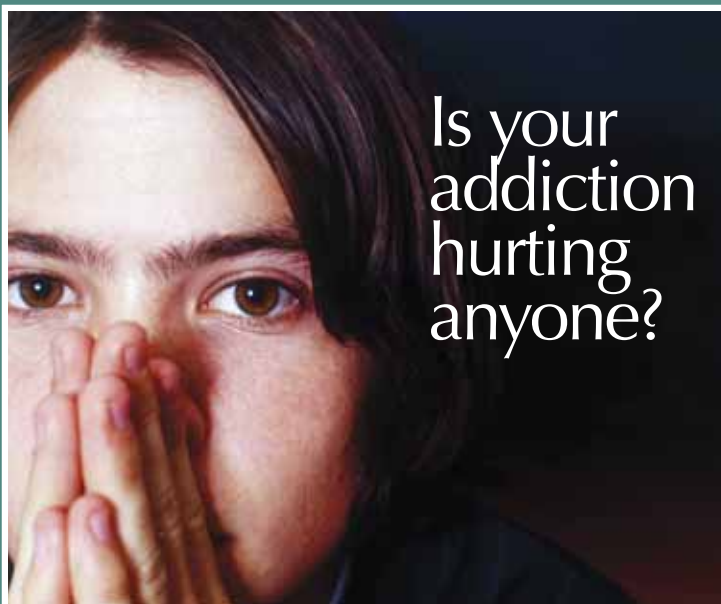
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Fastrada
(Carrie Madsen)
and Lewis
(Andrew Ceglie)
in "Pippin."

NANCY FITZGERALD

So sweetly decadent

FOOTHILL'S 'PIPPIN' A GLITTERING SPECTACLE OF SMOKE AND MIRRORS

By Caitlin Berka

The musical "Pippin" is sort of like a caramel meringue from the fudge counter at Harrod's: delightfully pretty, exquisitely delicious, wrapped up in crinkly cellophane with a ribbon.

But after it's gone, you're left feeling empty and a little sugar-shocked.

Fortunately, this is exactly the message the show tries to convey as it follows the life of the eldest son of King Charlemagne in his quest for meaning and fulfillment.

Style mimics content in this gloriously self-indulgent collaboration between composer Stephen Schwartz (of "Wicked" fame) and the incomparable Bob Fosse. "Pippin," now playing at Foothill Music Theatre, plays out partly like a Punch-and-Judy jester show, partly like a variety hour, and partly like an orgy at a discotheque. Full of anachronisms and self-referential mumbo-jumbo, it manages to be meta-theatrical in its best moments and self-conscious in its worst. It may never find ultimate unity, but that's kind of the point.

Pippin (Nathan Baynard), a whiny adolescent searching for his purpose in life, comes home from school to find his father the king (Doug Baird) embroiled in a battle with the Visigoths. Pippin sets off for war to prove his worthiness to take over the throne, but discovers his conscience along the way, and ends up shirking his inheritance in the name of his "true calling."

What follows is an onslaught of experimentation and self-reflection, aided by a band of vaudevilian chorus members who pop up to offer advice or distraction, until Pippin finally realizes what he wants out of life ... or does he?

Though it takes place in the

THEATER REVIEW

Dark Ages, "Pippin" is so steeped in the era of its creation that parts of it seem dated. The costumes and dance moves are pure '70s camp. The music is mostly mediocre and flashy. Everything is infused with a very Brechtian sense of alienation; the audience is made fully aware that this is purely for show.

For this reason alone, the intimate performance space at the Foothill College Playhouse is the perfect setting. It lets every overstated facial expression and flourish of choreography be seen. The sometimes garish lighting, combined with the glitzy costumes and deep primary colors of the set, gives everything an air of unreality. That makes the surprising ending that much more effective.

In one scene that comes remarkably close to "A Clockwork Orange," three of the ensemble members tap dance to saccharine elevator music while stylized battle scenes take place in the background. The screen on the back wall displays war statistics from the Visigoths, Vietnam, and finally Iraq. Subtlety, apparently, is dead.

INFORMATION

What: Foothill Music Theatre presents "Pippin"

Where: Foothill College Playhouse, 12345 El Monte Road, Los Altos

When: Through March 11, Thursday-Saturday at 8 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m.

Cost: \$24 general, \$22 for seniors, \$18 for students, and \$10 for children under 12

Info: Call (650) 949-7360 or go to www.foothillmusicals.com

Despite an experimental and sometimes abstruse script, the actors give laudable performances. Baynard's nebbish interpretation of Pippin is right on, if a bit shrill and grating at times. He is the embodiment of indecision, a rash idealist whose dreams end up falling flat as he is unprepared to take on reality. His balladic "Corner of the Sky" was slightly off key and included some weird flapping gestures, but was perfect in terms of character development.

The true star of the show, however, is Rudy Guerrero as the Leading Player. A talented dancer and convincing actor, he exudes confidence and competence as he steers the direction of the plot like a puppeteer, walking the line between master manipulator and crazed control-freak with care and poise.

Doug Baird's Charlemagne is perhaps the most realistic character, and his performance definitely stands out in the play's contrived, insular world.

There are also some wonderful supporting performances, notably from Coco Dolenz as Berthe, Pippin's hedonistic grandmother who gets a cute, upbeat song about living for the moment. Carrie Madsen as Fastrada, the wicked stepmother, is delightfully bitchy. Her sniveling son Lewis (Andrew Ceglie) inserts some hilariously creepy Oedipal undertones into his dance numbers.

When all is said and done, nothing is really resolved in "Pippin" — but perhaps that's as it should be. Despite an overly self-conscious concept, a schizophrenic narrative, and a weird bit with a duck that I still don't understand, it is a show worth seeing and worth pondering. And maybe, just maybe, it really is built to last. ■

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11	12	Fresh From the Sea Pacific Salmon 7:00-9:00PM \$34 13	Headache, Neck & Back Pain Solutions 7-9PM FREE 14	Culinary 101 week 2 of 4 7:00-9:00PM \$34 15	Global Passport: Dublin Pub Grub 7:00-9:00PM \$34 16	17
18	19	Local Asparagus 7:00-9:00PM \$34 20	Healthy 30 Minute Meals 7:00-9:00PM \$34 21	Culinary 101 week 3 of 4 7:00-9:00PM \$34 22	Global Passport: Spanish Tapas 7:00-9:00PM \$34 23	Indian Food Made Easy 11AM-1:00PM \$15 24
25	26	Healthy, Simple Chinese Favorites 7:00-9:00PM \$34 27	Classic Desserts 7:00-9:00PM \$34 28	Culinary 101 Graduation! 7:00-9:00PM \$34 29	Vegetarian Haute Cuisine 7:00-9:00PM \$34 30	Mrs. A's Famous Mexican Cuisine 11AM-1:00PM FREE 31

Natural Strategies for a Sluggish Thyroid
Thursday, March 1, 7:00-9:00 pm **FREE**
Learn natural strategies for common symptoms of Sluggish Thyroid including fatigue, weight gain, constipation, cold hands/feet, ridged nails, hair loss, brain fog & metabolism problems.

Cooking with Kids: Healthy After School Snacks (Hands-on)
Saturday, March 3, 11:00 am- 1:00 pm **\$29**
Big City Chefs' warm and knowledgeable chef will show kids how to make delicious after-school snacks they'll love to eat and share.

Cooking with Tofu (Vegetarian)
Tuesday, March 6, 7:00-9:00 pm **\$34**
Chef Darrell of Big City Chefs shows you how to cook with different types of tofu in ways you've never imagined! Dishes include Caesar Salad with Eggless Dressing, Pad Thai with Tofu and Vegetables, and a Mocha-Chocolate Tofu-Mousse-and-Berry Parfait.

Culinary 101: Week 1 of 4 (Hands-on)
Thursday, March 8, 7:00-9:00 pm **\$34**
Join chef, Linda Taylor, a Highest Honors graduate of the New York Restaurant School who has cooked at Gracie Mansion. This course will teach students how to cook with the right tools, techniques and tricks to allow everything to come out at the right time.
Lesson 1: Kitchen Tools & Knife Skills, breakfast

Global Passport: A Night in Morocco
Friday, March 9, 7:00-9:00 pm **\$34**
Explore one of the most unusual and diversified cuisines in the world, Moroccan cuisine, as Big City Chefs' professional chef takes you on a culinary journey through the bounty of Moroccan spices, traditions, and traditional dishes.

Cooking with Kids: Healthy Meals For Kids (Hands-on)
Saturday, March 10, 11:00 am- 1:00 pm **\$29**
Get ready for hands-on fun as Big City Chefs brings together kids and food in a session of easy meals that will teach kids several fundamentals of cooking and introduce them to delicious and healthful ingredients.

Fresh from the Sea: Pacific Salmon
Tuesday, March 13, 7:00-9:00pm **\$34**
Chef Darrell of Big City Chefs will show you how to fillet and clean local salmon, cure your own gravlax, poach salmon, and create smoked salmon mousse.

Headache, Neck & Back Pain Solutions
Wednesday, March 14, 7:00-8:00 pm **FREE**
Join Dr. Vikki as she discusses simple ways to ease headache, neck, and back pain.

Culinary 101: Week 2 of 4 (Hands-on)
Thursday, March 15, 7:00-9:00 pm **\$34**
Lesson 2: luncheon & light dinner: soups and salads, Cream of Fresh Tomato Soup with Cheese Croutons, Greens with Toasted Goat Cheese and Candied Nuts, and Apples Baked in Puff Pastry with Caramel Sauce

Global Passport: Dublin Pub Grub (Hands-on)
Friday, March 16, 7:00-9:00 pm **\$34**
Just in time for Saint Patrick's Day, an evening of hearty, authentic Irish pub fare that you'll be sure to make again at home. Big City Chefs will show you how to make Traditional Irish Soda Bread, Guinness-Braised Beef Stew, and a Strawberry and Bailey's Fool.

Local Asparagus Harvest
Tuesday, March 20, 7:00-9:00 pm **\$34**
Chef Darrell of Big City Chefs will showcase fresh, Delta region asparagus in delicious, versatile dishes to enjoy all season long. Menu: Cream of Asparagus Soup w. Cognac, Truffled Asparagus in Puff Pastry, and Creamy Spring Risotto w. White Asparagus & Pancetta.

More Healthy Thirty Minute Meals
Wednesday, March 21, 7:00-9:00 pm **\$34**
Join Big City Chefs as we make weeknight cooking fun, easy, and healthy, with Artisanal Tuna Nicoise Sandwiches, Marinated Flank Steak with Traditional Chimichurri and Salsa Verde Sauces, and an Easy Garlic and Tomato Bouillabaisse Fish Stew.

Culinary 101 : Week 3 of 4 (Hands-on)
Thursday, March 22, 7:00-9:00 pm **\$34**
Lesson 3: everyday dinner basics. Includes: Southern Fried Chicken Tenders, Cream Biscuits and Pecan Pie.

Global Passport: Spanish Tapas
Friday, March 23, 7:00-9:00 pm **\$34**
Small-plate "tapas" provide the perfect backdrop to conversation. Big City Chefs introduce some of Spain's traditional dishes: Chicken & Chorizo Paella, Gambas al Ajillo (Garlic Shrimp w. Sherry), and Spanish "Tortilla".

Indian Food Made Easy!
Saturday, March 23, 11:00 am- 1:00 pm **\$15**
Indian food made easy with premixes, pre-measured to minimize prep time and get the perfect taste.

Neighborhood Chinese Favorites (Hands-on)
Tuesday, March 27, 7:00-9:00 pm **\$34**
Join Chef Darrell of Big City Chefs as he prepares authentic favorites weeknight simple but party special: Steamed Shu Mai Dumplings & Dipping Sauce, Sweet & Sour Shrimp, and Vegetarian Fried Rice.

Classic Desserts
Wednesday, March 28, 7:00-9:00 pm **\$34**
Ron Kent teaches two easy to prepare, classic French doughs and an American classic. We will make Chocolate St-Honore Cake, Cream Puffs w. Fresh Strawberries, Pear Frangipane Tart, and Tarte Tatin, and Blackberry Lime Crisp.

Culinary 101: Week 4 (Hands-on)
Thursday, March 29, 7:00-9:00 pm **\$34**
In the final class, Linda teaches Party Food, followed by graduation! Features: hot & cold finger foods, savory and sweet treats, easy cheesy platter, and wine pairing. Students may bring a guest to graduation.

Haute Vegetarian Cuisine
Friday, March 30, 7:00-9:00 pm **\$34**
Big City Chefs' chef will teach unique, interesting dishes for both vegetarian and non-vegetarian gourmets. Menu to be determined by the freshest produce available at Whole Foods during the week of class.

Mrs. A's Famous Mexican Cuisine
Saturday, March 31, 11:00 am- 1:00 pm **FREE**
Leah Aguayo of Mrs. A's Famous Salsa Buena teaches fun and simple Mexican Cuisine! Includes: Cheese Enchiladas, Beans, Beef & Chicken Fajitas, Salad, Spanish Rice, Tortillas, and Guacamole

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MOVIE TIMES

THE ABANDONED (R) (NOT REVIEWED) Century 20: 8 & 10:30 p.m.
AMAZING GRACE (NOT RATED) ★★1/2 Century 16: 11:05 a.m.; 1:50, 4:45, 7:35 & 10:20 p.m. Century 12: 1, 4, 7:10 & 10 p.m.

THE ASTRONAUT FARMER (PG) ★★ Century 16: 11:30 a.m.; 2, 4:40, 7:10 & 9:50 p.m. Century 20: 11:55 a.m.; 2:30, 5, 7:30 & 10 p.m.

BECAUSE I SAID SO (PG-13) ★★1/2 Century 12: 1:45 & 7:25 p.m.

BLACK SNAKE MOAN (R) ★1/2 Century 16: 11:20 a.m.; 2:25, 5:05, 7:50 & 10:30 p.m. Century 12: Noon, 1:30, 3, 4:20, 6, 7:30, 9 & 10:30 p.m.

BREACH (PG-13) ★★★ Century 16: 11:15 a.m.; 1:55, 4:30, 7:25 & 10 p.m. Century 20: 11:40 a.m.; 2:25, 5, 7:40 & 10:15 p.m.

BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA (PG) (NOT REVIEWED)
Century 16: 11:40 a.m.; 2:15, 4:35, 6:55 & 9:15 p.m. Century 20: 11:30 a.m.; 12:55, 1:55, 3:15, 4:35, 5:45, 7:10, 8:10, 9:35 & 10:30 p.m.

CHARLOTTE'S WEB (G) ★★1/2 Century 12: 11:35 a.m.; 2:20, 4:50 & 7:20 p.m.

CHILDREN OF MEN (R) ★★1/2 Century 12: 4:35 & 10:05 p.m.

DADDY'S LITTLE GIRLS (PG-13) (NOT REVIEWED)
Century 12: 12:35, 3 & 5:30 p.m.

THE DEPARTED (R) ★★★1/2 Aquarius: 3:15 & 9:15 p.m.

DREAMGIRLS (PG-13) ★★★ Century 16: 6:45 & 9:45 p.m.
Century 20: 1:10, 4:15, 7:15 & 10:05 p.m.

GHOST RIDER (PG-13) (NOT REVIEWED)
Century 16: 11:10 a.m.; 1:45, 4:20, 7 & 9:35 p.m. Century 20: 11:45 a.m.; 1:05, 2:30, 3:50, 5:15, 6:45, 7:50, 9:20 & 10:25 p.m.

HANNIBAL RISING (R) (NOT REVIEWED) Century 12: 9:55 p.m.

HAPPILY N'EVER AFTER (PG) Century 20: 12:05, 2:15 & 4:40 p.m.

HAPPY FEET (PG) Century 12: 11:40 a.m.; 3:20 & 6:30 p.m.

THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND (R) ★★★1/2 Century 20: 1:15, 4:25, 7:35 & 10:25 p.m. Aquarius: 1:30, 4:15, 7 & 9:45 p.m.

LETTERS FROM IWO JIMA (R) ★★★1/2 Century 16: 11:55 a.m.; 3:30, 6:50 & 9:55 p.m. Century 20: 12:25, 3:35, 6:50 & 9:55 p.m.

THE LIVES OF OTHERS (R) ★★★
Guild: 2:30, 5:30 & 8:30 p.m.; Sat. & Sun. also at 11:30 a.m.

THE MESSENGERS (PG-13) (NOT REVIEWED)
Century 20: 7:20 & 9:40 p.m.

MUSIC AND LYRICS (PG-13) ★★★ Century 16: 12:15, 2:45, 5:15, 7:45 & 10:15 p.m. Century 12: 12:10, 2:45, 5:15, 7:55, 9:10 & 10:25 p.m.

NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM (PG) (NOT REVIEWED)
Century 20: Noon, 2:35, 5:10, 7:45 & 10:20 p.m.

NORBIT (PG-13) ★★ Century 16: 11 a.m.; 1:35, 4:10, 7:05 & 9:45 p.m.
Century 20: 12:20, 2:55, 5:25, 7:55 & 10:35 p.m.

THE NUMBER 23 (R) ★ Century 16: Noon, 2:40, 5, 7:40 & 10:05 p.m.
Century 12: 11:55 a.m.; 2:30, 5, 7:40 & 10:10 p.m.

PAN'S LABYRINTH (R) ★★★1/2 Century 20: 11:35 a.m.; 2:20, 4:55, 7:35 & 10:10 p.m. Palo Alto Square: 1:30, 4:20, 7:20 & 10:10 p.m.

THE QUEEN (NOT RATED) ★★★ Century 20: 12:10, 2:40, 5:05, 7:25 & 9:45 p.m. Palo Alto Square: 2, 4:30, 7 & 9:30 p.m.; Sat. & Sun. also at 11:30 a.m.

RENO 911!: MIAMI (R) (NOT REVIEWED)
Century 16: 11:45 a.m.; 1:50, 3:55, 6, 8:05 & 10:10 p.m. Century 20: 11:50 a.m.; 12:45, 1:50, 2:50, 3:55, 4:50, 6, 7, 8:05, 9:15 & 10:20 p.m.

THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW (R) (NOT REVIEWED)
Guild: Sat. at midnight.

TWO WEEKS (R) (NOT REVIEWED) Century 12: 11:45 a.m.; 2:15, 4:45, 7:15 & 9:50 p.m.

VENUS (R) ★★1/2 Century 16: 11:25 a.m.; 1:40 & 4:05 p.m.

VOLVER (R) ★★1/2 Aquarius: 12:30 & 6:30 p.m.

WILD HOGS (PG-13) (NOT REVIEWED) Century 16: 11:35 a.m.; 12:30, 2:20, 3:15, 4:50, 5:40, 7:15, 8:10, 9:40 & 10:35 p.m. Century 12: 11:30 a.m.; 12:20, 1:10, 2, 2:50, 3:40, 4:30, 5:20, 6:15, 7, 7:50, 8:50, 9:40 & 10:20 p.m.

ZODIAC (R) (NOT REVIEWED) Century 16: 11 a.m.; 12:45, 2:30, 4:15, 5:55, 8 & 9:25 p.m. Century 20: 11:40 a.m.; 12:50, 2, 3:05, 4:10, 5:20, 6:30, 7:40, 8:55 & 10 p.m.

Note: Screenings are for Friday through Tuesday only.

AQUARIUS: 430 Emerson St., Palo Alto (266-9260)
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- ★ 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



AMAZING GRACE ★★1/2
(Century 12, Century 16) Michael Apted helps a sincere but dry re-telling of the fight for the abolition of slavery. In late-18th-century England, antislavery pioneer William Wilberforce (Ioan Gruffudd) is nearing physical and emotional collapse from his all-consuming cause. As he also suffers from severe colitis he's forced to retire to the country home of generous benefactors for some R&R. Said patrons also double as match-makers and William is surreptitiously thrown together with spirited admirer Barbara Spooner (Romola Garai). The fight for antislavery is an uphill battle that divides friends and creates enemies. William is assured the support of future Prime Minister William Pitt (Benedict Cumberbatch), but butts heads with evil opponents Lord Tarlton (Ciaran Hinds) and the crafty Duke of Clarence (Toby Jones). William's bill is repeatedly defeated, but with the help of a few strategically placed revolutionaries — not to mention the love of a good woman (cue the violins!) — he is ultimately victorious. The climax is a groundswell of tear-inducing virtue that leaves "Grace" on a high, if not amazing, note. *Not rated but could be PG for mature themes and some violence.* 1 hour, 58 minutes. — J.A.

THE ASTRONAUT FARMER ★★
(Century 16, Century 20) Director Michael Polish offers one small step for man, if you can take one giant leap and suspend your disbelief about a farmer who wants to launch a rocket from his barn and orbit the earth in it. Billy Bob Thornton plays the Texas astronaut-farmer named Farmer, a surname contributing to the excessive amount of too-cute touches. Trained as an aerospace engineer and Air Force pilot, Farmer had to abort his plans to become a rocket man due to family obligations. Now he's back at the ranch with wife Audie (Virginia Madsen), 15-year-old son Shepard (Max Thieriot), a pair of daughters (Jasper and Logan Polish) and a home-built spacecraft sharing the barn with the horses. Although the bank plans to foreclose on the farm in 30 days, Farmer primarily worries about coming up with \$50,000 to buy the 10,000 pounds of high-grade fuel needed for lift-off. The film's most honest moments take place at the Farmers' dinner table, where parents and siblings interact with warmth and spontaneity — finally showing the right stuff. *Rated: PG for thematic material, peril and language.* 1 hour, 44 minutes. — S.T.

THE LIVES OF OTHERS ★★★★★
(Guild) Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck (say that 10 times fast) crafts a personal drama about the nightmarish

► Continued on next page

■ **BOLLYWOOD** CALLING

South Asian influence seen at Cinequest Film Festival

By Pooja Bhardwaj

Mira Nair's "Namesake," featuring Bollywood stars Tabu and Irfan Khan, was the opening night film of this year's Cinequest Film Festival on Feb. 28 in San Jose.

This was no small feat, since Cinequest is one of the largest and most influential independent film festivals held in the Bay Area, and this year it showcased two South Asian films — "The Namesake" and "Outsourced."

Based on Jhumpa Lahiri's Pulitzer Prize-winning book, "The Namesake" is a deeply intimate film about the immigrant experience and identity, the clash of cultures and the tangled ties

between generations.

It is a tale of an immigrant couple, Ashoke (Irfan Khan) and Ashima (Tabu), who relocate from Calcutta to New York to start a new life. Ashoke, an engineer by training, adapts far better to their new life than his wife, who resists American customs and pines for her family in Calcutta.



It is their son Gogol, named after the famous Russian author, who struggles the most to define himself and come to terms with his Bengali identity in an American landscape.

Director Mira Nair ("Monsoon Wedding," "Salaam Bombay") is no stranger to capturing cultural details, and her deeply observant and intimate style is both melancholic and reflective. Nair's storytelling is ably supported by beautiful cinematography and keen production design.

The casting is superb: Khan and Tabu make an appealing couple whose deep but gentle love for each other is touching. Kal Penn ("Harold and Kumar go to White Castle") as Gogol performs with great sensitivity and confidence. Meanwhile, "Outsourced," a

comedy by director John Jeffcoat, will be screened this Saturday, March 3 at Cinequest.

This is a fish-out-of-water story about a company man who, after learning that his entire department is being outsourced, agrees to travel to India to train his replacement.

Todd (Josh Hamilton) heads the sales department of a company that sells cheap novelty products. When he learns of his department's outsourcing, his only option is to agree to the long journey.

Alone in a foreign land, poor Todd is met with a group of young Indian workers mystified as to why anyone would want the useless products his company sells. Rescue comes in the form of the beautiful Asha (Ayesha Dharker), who quickly assumes the role of showing Todd that he must understand the people and their culture before he can inspire them. ▣

Pooja Bhardwaj is co-founder of the South Asian American Films and Arts Association, and is a member of the Voice's advertising staff. She can be reached at poojab@saafa.org. If you'd like to read more about Bollywood films, e-mail us at editor@mv-voice.com.

■ **MOVIE** NOTES

Movie: "Namesake"

Run Time: 122 minutes; English, Bengali and Hindi with English subtitles

Opens in theaters: March 9

Movie: "Outsourced"

Run Time: 98 minutes; English

Shows: March 3 at the Cinequest Film Festival

Visit www.cinequest.org for more information

► Continued from previous page

years of East Germany's creative cold war. The German Democratic Republic circa 1984 is still a place of exploitation and evil. Loyal dramatist Georg Dreyman (Sebastian Koch) is the darling of the regime, churning out cultural hits while others of his ilk are shunned or worse. Such political allegiance isn't above suspicion, according to Stasi officer Gerd Wiesler (Ulrich Muhe), whose unwavering belief in his country's political philosophy clouds his judgment and steeps him in paranoia. Thus when the ruthless Secret Police officer attends a performance of Dreyman's new play he determines to expose the chinks in the playwright's Socialist armor. A thrilling and compelling work extremely worthy of its nod for a Best Foreign Film Oscar. **Rated: R** for violence, language and mature themes. In German with English subtitles. 2 hours, 17 minutes. — J.A.

THE NUMBER 23 ★

(Century 16, Century 20) Jim Carrey goes serious in this contrived psychological thriller that will give viewers at least 23 reasons to wish they had done something else with their time.

Walter Sparrow (Carrey) is an animal-control officer who seems to enjoy a tranquil life. Things begin to tailspin for Walter when his wife (Virginia Madsen as Agatha) randomly comes across a weathered book — entitled "The Number 23" — that she believes her playful hubby will embrace. As Walter immerses himself in the amateurish novella about a tattooed detective named Fingerling (also Carrey) and his growing obsession with the number 23, Walter begins to notice unsettling similarities between himself and the story's protagonist. Life imitates art as Walter's behavior grows erratic and he, too, becomes obsessed with the number 23 and the mysterious author. The biggest flaw with "23" is its insipid screenplay. The trailers and title promise a supernatural thriller along the lines of "The Sixth Sense," but Schumacher and company deliver a senseless dud. **Rated: R** for violence, disturbing images, sexuality and language. 1 hour, 35 minutes. — T.H.

■ **MOVIE** CRITICS

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

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