

# Mountain View VOICE



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IN BUSINESS | P.29

APRIL 6, 2007 VOLUME 15, NO. 14

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## Probe begins at MV Whisman

DISTRICT'S CEO RESIGNS  
AS STATE AUDITORS  
LOOK INTO ALLEGATIONS  
OF INFLATED SALARIES

By Alexa Tondreau

At the request of Superintendent Maurice Ghysels, auditors from the California State Teachers Retirement System arrived at Mountain View Whisman's district offices Monday to investigate allegations of a scheme to inflate the salaries of outgoing school officials.

The audit begins two weeks after it was announced that one

of the accused, chief financial officer Rebecca Wright, would be stepping down at the end of the school year. Despite the close timing, "One does not have anything to do with the other," said the district's human resources director, Stephanie Totter.

According to the allegations, brought by an anonymous letter sent to district officials and news outlets last November, Wright and Totter conspired to inflate the final compensation of former Superintendent Eleanor Yick and former Associate Superintendent Modrite Archibeque, and in return received a salary increase during the 2005-06 school year.

The letter alleged that Yick and Archibeque added nearly \$18,000 in health benefits — and, in Yick's case, an additional \$3,500 in phone and mileage expenses — to inflate their final year's salary. Retirement is based on final year's salary, and the higher salaries would result in thousands more in retirement benefits per year.

A prepared statement issued by the district this week did not indicate the reason for Wright's March 22 resignation notice. On March 28, one week later, the district announced that Craig Goldman, principal of Huff Elementary School, would replace her as CFO.

Totter, when asked about speculation that Wright was stepping down due to the alleged retirement fraud and the impending investigation, said that was absolutely untrue.

"There is no connection," she said. "First of all, [the investigation] has not been resolved. Once they give Dr. Ghysels the findings, those allegations will be addressed."

Totter said Wright has been open with the district about her plans to leave, and gave them



SAM TENNEY

Springer School third graders Melanie Knickerbocker, Megan Bioucchi and Hunter Lai look for birds while on an environmental field trip to the Baylands Nature Preserve in Palo Alto.

## The Baylands experience

SANDPIPERS, STILTS AND A TASTE OF PICKLEWEED ENTHRALL YOUNG FIELD TRIPPERS

By Alexa Tondreau

Spring was out in all her glory on a recent Friday, as a group of third graders from Mountain View's Springer School traveled out to Baylands to take in the sights.

Thirty Springer students

were taken on a morning nature hike through the salty marshes and grasslands of the natural preserve, nestled along the Bay in Palo Alto. The trip was made possible by Environmental Volunteers, a 35-year-old Peninsula nonprofit created to foster an appreciation of nature

among young students.

The group, which estimates it has taken nearly 250,000 students on field trips in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties, is hosting a fundraiser later this month to raise and renovate the preserve's

► See **BAYLANDS**, page 8

## Study: More lucrative to save farm

By Daniel DeBolt

The Mountain View Farmlands Group came to Blach Intermediate School in Los Altos last Sunday to present a study they hope will end all doubts that preserving a third of the Grant Road farm isn't just a pipe dream, but something potentially very profitable.

"The study I think really confirms what we believed all along," said Farmlands Group member Vicki Moore. "We're trying to convince the City Council that without a doubt this is fair financially."

The study — an economic feasibility study done by Bay Area Economics, a giant in the field — estimates the total site value

at \$49 million if SummerHill Homes carries out its current plan for 55 homes at an estimated \$1.4 million each. Instead, the Farmlands Group is proposing 48 larger homes be built on smaller lots to make room for a five-acre farm. Those homes would sell for \$1.8 million each,

► See **FARM**, page 10

## Trustees smile on unions

LABOR CONTRACTS  
APPEAL TO  
FOOTHILL-DE ANZA

By Alexa Tondreau

Although it was touted as an informational meeting, the Foothill-De Anza board of trustees left no doubt Monday that they intend to adopt a project labor agreement, or PLA, which will impose union law on campus construction projects totaling nearly \$500 million over the next several years.

The five-member board expressed unanimous support

► See **UNIONS**, page 18

► See **PROBE**, page 19

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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.

## Where do you go for the great outdoors?



*"To the beach. Fresh air, sun and water."*

**Leeann Wibol**, San Diego



*"I go to different parks. I like the Mission City Memorial Park. I also love the Cuesta Park because it's big and beautiful."*

**Frouzan Sobhanipour**, Mountain View



*"I live in Marin County and it has lots of hiking trails. The Marin Headlands overlooking the Golden Gate Bridge and the Pacific Ocean is my favorite."*

**Pat Goss**, Tiburon



*"Sometimes I go to Golden Gate Park. It's very green, calm and pretty quiet there."*

**Susan Boeckmann**, San Francisco



*"I go to the Fisherman's Wharf."*

**Karen Cheng**, Taiwan

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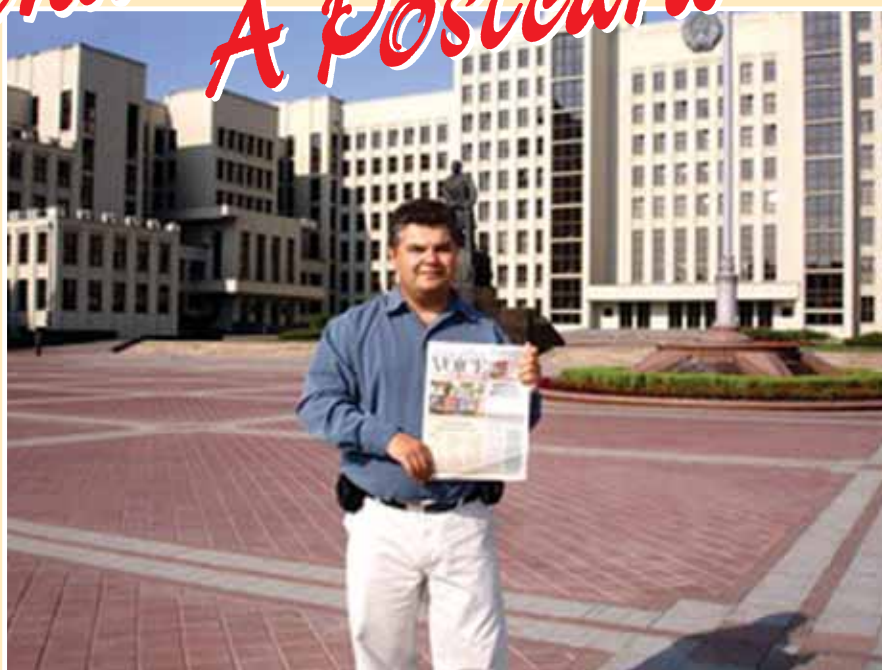
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*Photo of Kirill Yurchenko in the  
city of Minsk, Republic of Belarus.*

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**CRIMEWATCH**

**ATTEMPTED ARMED ROBBERY, 209 E. MIDDLEFIELD RD., 3/30**

On Friday at 7:40 p.m., an adult male entered Carl's Jr. on Middlefield Road and walked behind the counter towards an employee. He pointed a semiautomatic handgun at the employee and demanded cash.

At this point, a car stopped in front of the drive-thru window. The suspect, seeing the car approach, fled the scene without stealing anything. He is described as a Hispanic male in his mid 20s, 5 feet 7 inches tall and about 150 pounds. He was wearing a black hooded sweatshirt and dark sunglasses at the time.

clerk. After taking the cash and liquor, the two men managed to escape in a vehicle waiting outside the store with a driver. Later, Palo Alto police reported they had located a vehicle matching the description. When they stopped the vehicle, all three suspects tried to flee. The police were able to locate and arrest two suspects, both 25 years old.

**BRANDISHING A WEAPON / DRUNK IN PUBLIC, 893 LEONG DR., 4/1**

On Sunday at 2:22 a.m., a male suspect at the King of Clubs Bar became involved in a fight with the bar's patrons, including women. He left the bar but returned later with an air-powered BB handgun. The bar's patrons were able to take the gun and hold him until police arrived. The suspect is 24-year-old Anastacio Morales, who was arrested on charges of brandishing a weapon and drunken behavior in public.

**ARMED ROBBERY, 275 MOFFETT BLVD., 3/31**

On Saturday at 9:26 p.m., two armed men wearing masks entered a liquor store and demanded cash and liquor from the store

**POLICE LOG**

**ATTEMPTED SUICIDE**

Google, 3/30  
900 block Jason St., 3/31  
900 block W. El Camino Real, 4/1

**AUTO BURGLARY**

500 block Showers Dr., 3/27  
500 block N. Shoreline Blvd., 3/30  
900 block W. El Camino Real, 4/1  
900 block San Leandro Ave., 4/2  
1000 block Space Park Way, 4/2  
900 block San Leandro Ave., 4/2  
100 block Space Park Way, 4/2

**BATTERY**

1400 block Plymouth St., 3/27  
1900 block Colony St., 3/28

**DISTURBANCE**

100 block E. El Camino Real, 3/30

**DISORDERLY CONDUCT**

Ortega Avenue / Towne Circle, 4/1

**DOMESTIC DISTURBANCE**

Moffett Motel, 3/28  
300 Sierra Vista Ave., 3/31  
300 block Escuela Ave., 3/31  
200 block California St., 3/31  
600 block Leong Dr., 4/1  
500 block Chiquita Ave., 4/2

**DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE**

Central Expressway / Pajaro Avenue, 3/30

**GRAND THEFT**

1100 block Sladky Ave., 4/1  
Bernardo Avenue / El Camino Real, 4/2

**IDENTITY THEFT**

500 block Escuela Ave., 3/27  
800 block San Veron Ave., 4/2

**PETTY THEFT**

1100 Castro St., 3/27  
Rite Aid, 3/31  
Mervyns, 3/31  
100 block Miramonte Ave., 4/2  
200 block Moffett Blvd., 4/2  
Old Middlefield Way/Sierra Vista Ave., 4/2

**ROBBERY**

200 block E. Middlefield Rd., 3/30  
Ross Store, 3/30  
Safeway, 3/31  
200 block Moffett Blvd., 3/31

**STOLEN VEHICLE**

200 block Kirtoe Dr., 3/28  
Highway 101 / Moffett Boulevard, 3/30  
800 block E. El Camino Real, 4/2

**SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES/PERSON**

Nob Hill Foods, 3/27  
1300 block Park Dr., 3/27  
Crisanto Ave. / S. Rengstorff Ave., 3/28  
Wal-Mart, 4/1  
200 block Carol Ave., 4/2

**TERRORIST THREATS**

Bryant St. / Villa St., 3/28

**TRESPASSING**

700 block Castro St., 3/27

**VANDALISM**

Wal-Mart, 3/27  
2200 block California St., 3/28  
1800 block California St., 3/31  
900 block San Marcos Cir., 4/1  
300 block N. Rengstorff Ave., 4/2  
200 block Fairchild Dr., 4/2

**Please join us for two great events!**

**FREE showing of the film – The Secret**

*Interactive discussion to follow*

**Friday, April 13 ~ 7:00pm**

**Law of Attraction Workshop**

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**SPEAKING UP  
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## They do run run

By Don Frances

**E**LLEN CLARK stopped in last Friday to let us know how this year's Zimbabwe Run went. The event, held March 25 at St. Joseph School, was described in Clark's typically high-spirited fashion:

"Incredible! A blast!"

Anybody who's met Clark knows she has a lot more energy than most people her age. In fact she has more energy than most people *my* age, including me.

Clark, 60, taught P.E. at St. Joseph for 15 years, and obviously hasn't slowed a whit in retirement. She even carries a sports whistle around, as though ready to send you on a lap around the bleachers at any moment.

Happily, her considerable energies are dedicated to good causes, including the Zimbabwe Run. The event, now in its eight year, managed to raise \$25,000 last month. That money will go directly to the Makumbi Children's Home — which houses 90 kids, more or less, at a given time — to help pay salaries and purchase necessities. (Last year the orphanage used some of its Zimbabwe Run money to buy three cows and dig a well.)

Also, 490 pairs of shoes were collected this year, and Clark said these will go to needy kids throughout the entire country of Zimbabwe.

Back here at home, Clark's event seems to have taken on a life of its own. Featuring music, games and other activities, the Run (officially the "Run for Zimbabwe Orphans") is much more than just a run.

That hasn't stopped Clark from competing, however. This year she took third place.

**BOB LAMPKIN** handles circulation for this newspaper, which is why he's in closer contact with your U.S. Postal Service than the

► See **EDITOR'S DESK**, page 17

## The buzz on Dana Street

**F**irst squirrels, now this. At noon on Monday, the sidewalk in front of Dana Street Coffee Roasting Company was overwhelmed with a swarm of bees as big as the store front, said owner Nick Chaput. Customers ran for cover before the bees — apparently an entire hive — eventually settled into a corner of one of the outdoor table umbrellas.

"It is crazy," said one cafe employee. "I can't have this. I have to bring this table inside tonight."

The area was roped off, and Chaput was told that it could take anywhere from two hours to two days for the swarm's scouts to find a new home. So a beekeeper was called in to remove them — "alive, of course," the employee said.

— Daniel DeBolt



DANIEL DEBOLT

**Honey with coffee:** Aaron Bratton, an employee at the Dana Street Coffee Roasting Company, points at the umbrella where a hive of bees took up residence Monday. Below: The hive, shown here up close, was gone by Tuesday.



## Cops: Downtown assault racially motivated

### MOUNTAIN VIEW MAN ARRESTED ON HATE CRIME CHARGES

By Zunaira Durrani

**P**olice say a Hispanic man was accosted in downtown Mountain View last month by a strange man thrusting a knife at him and shouting a torrent of racial slurs.

The incident occurred just after 11 a.m. on March 28. The 28-year-old victim was standing on Wild Cherry Lane behind Castro Street when a white male suddenly approached him,

according to Mountain View Police spokesman Jim Bennett.

"The victim said the suspect was unprovoked when he came towards him and began shouting remarks based on the victim's ethnicity," Bennett said. "The suspect then produced a knife and began pointing at the victim in stabbing motion. When a witness drove near the scene, the suspect left on foot. The victim was not injured."

The victim reported the incident to police, who searched the vicinity and located 26-year-old Cody John Davis, a Mountain View resident. The victim identi-

fied Davis as the attacker.

Bennett said that when Davis was being booked at the police station, he continued to yell racial slurs at the Mountain View police officers who were also of Hispanic origin.

"The suspect was booked on charges of criminal threats, brandishing a weapon, battery and resisting arrest," Bennett said.

"This is the first hate crime reported in Mountain View in 2007," he added.

E-mail Zunaira Durrani at [zdurrani@mv-voice.com](mailto:zdurrani@mv-voice.com)

### ■ CITY COUNCIL

## 'Good news' budget

By Daniel DeBolt

**I**n an unusually short meeting, city manager Kevin Duggan and city staff proposed a "good news" 2007-08 city budget Tuesday night, kicking off a series of hearings before a final budget is approved in June.

The city's positive financial state is evident in the fact that the general fund is up 7 percent for this year's budget, an increase of \$5.8 million from last year. Property taxes alone are expected to increase \$1 million.

"It's certainly an improvement to what we've been facing," Duggan said.

This is the second year in a row the city has been able to add back to city services since the dot-com collapse shrank tax revenues every year from 2000 to 2005. During that time, 66 city employees were laid off and the general fund shrank by 15 percent.

This year nearly every city department has named its funding priorities to recoup some of those losses. Among the most substantial proposed increases, Duggan said, go to the police department, even though it took some of the smallest cuts during tough budget times. The department is receiving an extra \$600,000 for more staffing and training.

By comparison, the fire department's requests total an increase of less than \$200,000, and the library would receive an increase totaling \$22,500, \$10,000 of which goes to the police department for security.

The building inspection department could also receive a sizeable increase, with over \$400,000 in requests, mostly to offset the increased demand for building inspection and plan checks due to increased development in the city.

The largest increase, however, is to fund employee pension and cost-of-living increases that are a result of last year's union negotiations with the Eagles and the SEIU. The cost: \$3.9 million.

Council member Jac Siegel got

► See **COUNCIL**, page 12

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■ SEEN AROUND TOWN

## Spring Swing



Monta Loma resident William Murphy sent this photo of two kids on swings enjoying the balmy spring weather (and some cotton candy) on a recent Saturday in March.

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](mailto:editor@mv-voice.com).



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Deadline for submitting an application is April 16, 2007.

## Let Us Hear From You...

Letters to the editor and guest columns are welcome.

Mail your comments to:

**THE VOICE**

P.O. Box 405, Mountain View, CA 94042

MountainView  
**VOICE**

# Medical group poised to open doors

NEIGHBORS ASSURED THAT NOISE IMPACT WILL BE SLIGHT

By Alexa Tondreau

With the grand opening of Camino Medical Group's new campus just weeks away, construction crews are moving out after nearly two years of work, to be replaced with a bustling scene of doctors, patients and other personnel.

The group estimates that it serves nearly 200,000 patients on a yearly basis, which has a few residents in the Americana Apartment Complex — just across the street — wondering if there is cause for concern.

Bindi Pankhudi, who has lived there for two years, said she worries about the number of

cars that will drive in and out each day, and has had conversations with neighbors who hold similar concerns.

"I think there is going to be a lot more noise," Pankhudi said. "It could be worse than the construction noise."

But Cynthia Greaves, CMG spokesperson, doubts it.

"Compared to wrecking balls, backhoes and dump trucks, they should hardly notice," she said of the traffic noise.

Issues with traffic were considered from the beginning, Greaves said, because the city required a traffic flow study prior to approving a permit to work on the site.

"We've met or exceeded guidelines to make sure things work well," she said.

Greaves added that the traffic coming into the facility will be going in a "reverse commute" direction that should help nullify congestion for nearby residents.

"Our neighbors will be coming home as we're going home," she said. "And there's a traffic light to keep things running smoothly."

The 130 doctors at the facility will be arriving between 7 and 8 a.m. at a "gently staggered pace" and leaving in the same manner, she said.

The clinic will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday. The facility's urgent care clinic, open to all patients — not just CMG affiliates — will also operate on the weekends from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Some support groups and classes will be offered

on the evenings and weekends, but even maximum attendance at these meetings is expected to cause little traffic.

Greaves said the early morning hour of operation during the week is meant to accommodate patients who have to get blood drawn at the clinical laboratory, which must be done before they eat. But traffic noise should be minimal in those waking-up hours, she said.

An employee cafe on site will ease traffic during lunch, and the 1,100 spaces at the two-level parking structure should assure that residents won't vie for street parking with CMG patients.

Pankhudi, who said she would consider moving if noise and traffic "gets really bad," also wondered about noise from ambulances and delivery trucks.

Greaves said just one or two ambulances a

month would stop at CMG, with most of them going to El Camino Hospital's emergency room. CMG specializes in outpatient services and will coordinate with the hospital for

patients who require procedures with overnight stays.

Delivery trucks will visit regularly, but "they will go to the delivery dock which is on the Highway 85 side of the building," Greaves said. "The Americana residents will be buffered from that noise by the two-level parking garage and landscaping."

And of course, there are bonuses to be had when living across the street from a top-notch medical facility.

"It definitely feels good to know that in case of an emergency or if I'm sick, I can go across the street if I really need to," Pankhudi said.

She mentioned that it will also be nice to no longer find her parked car covered in dust and dirt from the construction site.

Greaves predicted that daily life will return to normal once the clinic is up and running.

"We understand that this large construction project has imposed noise on the residents of the Americana, and we very much appreciate their patience. We look forward to sharing their nice, quiet neighborhood with them," she said. ▽

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

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## Events & Lectures

**"Mindful Eating: Changing Behaviors That May Lead to Eating Disorders"**

Tuesday, April 10, 7 – 8:30 p.m.

Elyse Robin, R.D., PAMF Nutrition Services

Learn how eating disorders can develop from disordered eating behaviors like dieting or overeating, and how to change those habits into mindful eating for good health.

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

**"Increase Your Activity Level for Your Heart's Sake"**

Monday, April 23, 3:30 – 5 p.m.

Robin Wedell, R.N., Cardiac Therapy Foundation of the Mid-Peninsula

Join us for a discussion about the benefits of exercise for patients with diminished cardiac function and how to develop a plan to become more active. No more excuses! The weather is getting better.

## Classes

**"Taking Charge of Your Body," Mondays, April 16 – May 21, 6 – 8 p.m.**

This six-week course will focus on healthy living and managing your lifestyle through exercise and healthful eating.

**"Good Nutrition and Feeding Practices for Toddlers," Wednesday, April 18, 10 a.m. – noon**

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

**"What You Need to Know About Warfarin," Wednesday, April 25, 2 – 4 p.m.**

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

**"Supermarket Wise," Thursday, April 26, 2 – 4 p.m.**

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

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

PAMF's specially trained volunteers will provide advice and answer questions about the advance health care directive form. No cost.

## Support Groups

Cancer (1st & 3rd Tuesdays) • Diabetes (1st Wednesday) • Multiple Sclerosis (2nd & 4th Mondays) • Sleep Apnea (1st Thursday) • Alcohol and Drug Education (Every Tuesday) • Healing Imagery for Cancer Patients (Apr. 11 & 25)

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



**Springer School** third graders Arad Massoodi, Megan Biocchi, Hunter Lai and Elizabeth Yoon examine the marshes of the Baylands Nature Preserve in Palo Alto.

**BAYLANDS**

► Continued from page 1

Sea Scouts base, which once acted as a meeting place and training ground for young amateur sailors.

“We try to get them to learn about the environment and love it, so they will protect it,” docent Marilyn Horner explained, as she waited in the Baylands parking lot for the students to arrive.

“We want them to be stewards of the

environment,” added volunteer Bobbie Callison.

Consisting of 2,100 acres, the Baylands preserve extends out for about as far as the eye can see. It contains creeks, sloughs and large areas of freshwater and saltwater marshland, and is home to 150 species of birds, including the endangered clapper rail.

Chirping birds commanded the attention of one small group of third grade pupils as they wandered around, stopping

to listen to black-necked stilts, western sandpipers and marsh wrens, to name just a few of the birds seen during the outing.

“It’s kind of like a love song,” Horner explained to the students. “They have to practice a lot. The male bird who has the best song, he gets the best lady bird.”

Unobtrusive paths and docks allowed the students easy access to various reaches of the preserve, and a wide array of wildlife.

The students examined underground holes made by jackrabbits, and observed the thousands of barnacles clinging to a dock on the marsh. They also received a short lesson in the photosynthesis of aquatic grass, and even got to eat some pickle weed, which they reported lived up to its name.

Third-grade teacher Rachel Zierdt said the trip was a nice contrast to everyday life on the Peninsula.

“It’s so congested out there,” she said. “It’s lovely to get the children in nature. What’s neat is that it’s right here in our backyards.”

Zierdt said the hike is intended to correspond with classroom curriculum, including a unit on the Ohlone Indian tribe, whose members once lived in the lands now constituting the preserve.

“You can show them all the pictures you want,” she said. “But this makes it concrete and real. It’s a wonderful resource.”

Started in Palo Alto in 1972, Environmental Volunteers currently has about 150 docents. The group conducts field trips for the purpose of teaching natural science

in a variety of locales, including Stevens Creek County Park, the Los Trancos Open Space Preserve and the Fitzgerald Marine Preserve in Moss Beach.

Themes for the trips range from marine ecology to earthquake geology and preparedness. One popular trip, called “nature in your neighborhood,” examines the ecological life in suburban and urban settings around students’ schools.

“It’s good to get them looking around,” Horner said of the students. “You really need to show it to them in order for them to appreciate it.”

The 30 young naturalists seemed to fully appreciate it, right up to the moment when they had to get back on their school bus.

“Oh my gosh,” said one, taking a last look. “Look how beautiful it is.” ■

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

**■ INFORMATION**

**What:** “Wild Crush II: A Wine Affaire,” a fundraiser hosted by Environmental Volunteers. The event includes a tasting of local wines, gourmet dinner and live auction. Proceeds will go to raising and renovating the Sea Scouts base at the Baylands Preserve.

**Where:** Quadrus Center, 2400 Sand Hill Road, Menlo Park

**When:** Saturday, April 28, 6:30 p.m.

**Cost:** \$175 per person

**Contact:** Call (650) 961-0545 or visit [www.evols.org](http://www.evols.org)



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## FARM

► Continued from page 1

for a total site value of \$43 million. On top of that, an \$8 million tax deduction would be added if the remaining five acres were put into an easement. That makes for a total of \$51 million — \$2 million more than in SummerHill's plans, according to the "conservative" report.

The farm was recently vacated and the sisters who own it, Pauline King and Betty Moore, have expressed no interest in preserving any part of it. But according to the study, there is much to be gained for the sisters if they do decide to preserve a third of the farm.

Moore also said that President George W. Bush's 2006 tax cuts for the wealthy could mean a better profit now compared to before if the sisters sign off on a tax deductible easement. The easement would restrict the land to farming by a nonprofit, such as Full Circle Farms in Sunnyvale, and would become a permanent addition to the deed for the property.

**"Where possible the city should support efforts ... to preserve agricultural lands if they become available."**

CITY'S GENERAL PLAN

The Farmlands Group recently received a letter from the sisters' attorney saying there would not be enough benefit for the owners to follow the plan to preserve five acres. Moore said she is not convinced the attorney, who lives in Atlanta, knows all the facts.

The study cost more to commission than Moore was willing to admit, and she said the group is still trying to raise funds to pay for it. Bay Area Economics has provided studies for monumental projects in the region, such as San Jose's gargantuan Coyote Valley project and the conversion of the Presidio military base in San Francisco.

Mountain View's general plan, written in 1992 after several years of work, calls the Grant Road farm and the Francia orchard on Whisman Road valuable assets to be preserved if possible.

"Where possible the city should support efforts by other agencies, private organizations or nonprofits to preserve agricultural lands if they become available," the general plan states. "Some

► Continued on next page

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► Continued from previous page

possible methods of preservation are long-term conservation easements, donations by property owners, partnerships with private or public agencies, formation of a nonprofit association, and partial acquisitions.”

City attorney Michael Martello said the City Council could initiate zoning of the site to include five acres of agricultural land. Residents could even do it through a referendum to voters, like Home Depot did with the old Emporium site years ago.

But no one can force the sisters to sign an easement or allow the land to be farmed, Martello said — it could simply sit unused indefinitely. Even so, the council could make the use and the easement a condition of approving the project.

The Farmlands Group’s vision is to have a fruit stand, year-round farming and educational programs. Several nonprofit organizations have expressed interest in participating, and 1,200 people have signed a petition for preservation. Several companies, agencies and the city of Los Altos also have endorsed the group’s plan.

Mayor Laura Macias is one of four council members who say they are at least open to the idea. The others are Jac Siegel, Margaret Abe-Koga and Ronit Bryant.

Council member Tom Means has said he doesn’t think a farm is the best use of the land. If it was, there would be more farms in the area, he said.

Macias told the *Voice* she was surprised at how organized the group was.

“We have a lot of data,” Macias said. “This decision is something we should dive into and not be afraid of.”

On May 8, the City Council will hold a study session on the annexation process, as the land is still part of the county and would have to be annexed for the city to change its zoning to residential.

Council member Matt Pear made a motion at the end of Tuesday night’s council meeting to restrict city staff from considering the Farmlands Group’s proposal for May 8. Means withdrew a second for the motion after Elaine Costello, community development director, made it clear that staff wasn’t going to be studying outside proposals for the meeting, only the annexation process and the existing pre-zoning for complete residential use.

Siegel said the community would have the opportunity to make its case for zoning alternatives during public comment on May 8. ▀

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



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## Whisman project likely to be scaled back

By Daniel DeBolt

After recent study sessions on the large housing development proposed for the Whisman area, it has become apparent that the density of the project is more likely to be 700 to 800 homes, not the 1,260 talked about last week.

"Obviously density is going to drop," Mark Kroll, president of Regis Homes, the site's developer, told the *Voice* earlier this week.

Mayor Laura Macias described the City Council's direction on the project as "radical surgery." As a result, the average housing density on the site could be the same or less than neighboring Whisman Station, said Mike Wiley of Regis Homes. Though Regis has plans for multi-story stacked flats on the northern end of the property, there will likely be single family homes on

its southern border at a lower density than Whisman Station, in accordance with council's direction.

The council indicated last week that it would like to drop the nine-acre Francia family orchard from the development, which would likely have been a site for 200 of the project's homes as well as 1.2 acres of park space.

The developers originally proposed 7.2 acres of park space, including a 1.5-acre park at the Webex company site, which is not likely to develop anytime soon. The remaining 4.5-acre park on Ferguson Drive may also be cut since it was made clear that park space will be limited to what is provided by the city's park dedication requirements.

But there may be hope for a larger regional park at the Francia site, which the Francia family has not aggressively attempted to develop. According to city staff, the fact that

the property is covered by the Williamson Act and zoned for agriculture would not prevent its use as a park, but is an obstacle for housing development.

The council had expressed interest in building as much as 37,000 square feet of retail, but according to the staff report, a reduction in density may mean less retail space can be supported by the project.

After receiving some general guidelines, Regis Homes plans to seek community comment on details, such as where to put a "residents only" recreation center or what do with a small portion of the 10-acre Kalcic property, a slice of barren land that is the only part of the development on the west side of the light rail tracks.

More than 1,200 homes may still be studied in the environmental impact report to estimate the project's maximum impact. City staffers are also studying alternative park locations at the site.

"There needs to be a very substantial amount of community input as this neighborhood is shaped," Kroll said. "That process needs to start as soon as possible." ▀

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

## COUNCIL

► Continued from page 12

some laughs when he asked if there was any money budgeted to improve the microphones in the council chamber.

Duggan also proposed how to divvy up the unusually high unallocated balance of \$32 million this year. The city proposes that \$6.6 million of it go toward funding retiree health care. This would drop the debt below \$12 million, continuing to chip away at the 2004 estimate of \$43 million.

As residents clamor for more parks, the city proposes adding \$3 million out of the \$32 million to an open space reserve, which could be combined with a \$6 million park fund to buy park land. There are some caveats for the \$6 million, however, because some of the money can only be spent in the neighborhoods it was collected from, Duggan said.

Of the remaining \$32 million, \$11 million would go to a capital improvement reserve, \$2 million would reimburse attorneys fees for the Shoreline lawsuit, and the rest goes to miscellaneous annual expenses, such as equipment replacement and maintenance.

The 115-page narrative budget report can be seen at the city clerk's office or on the city's Web site at [www.ci.mtnview.ca.us](http://www.ci.mtnview.ca.us). ▀



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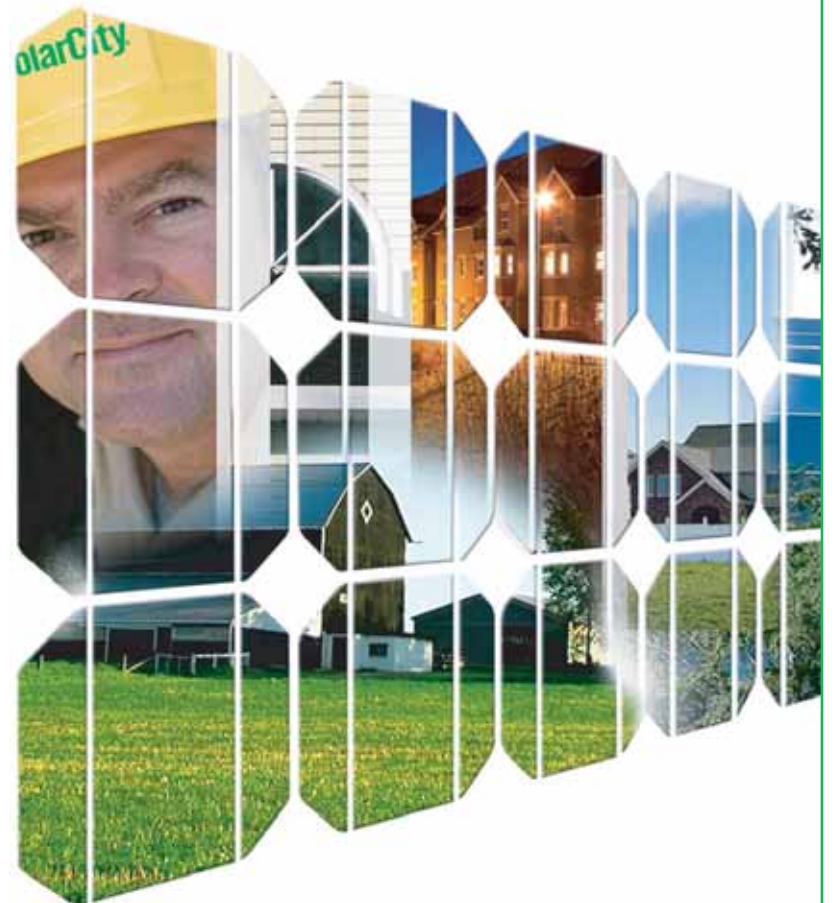
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# Water District lends help to county's migrating fish

Bay City News

While this winter's prolonged dry weather and below-average rainfall won't likely impact Santa Clara County drinking water supplies, experts are suggesting that wildlife might soon feel the heat if water levels stay low through spring.

Five of the county's 10 reservoirs—Uvas, Chesbro, Almaden,

Guadalupe and Stevens Creek — will almost certainly see low levels of water this summer, according to the Santa Clara Valley Water District.

Most likely to feel the affect from the recent lack of rainfall will be migrating steelhead trout, which visit swollen spring creeks each year as they make their way to sea from March through May.

Officials began taking special

steps last week to keep creeks and streams wet for longer this season in an effort to encourage the migrating fish to go about their business.

Hoping to encourage threatened species of steelhead trout to migrate to the Pajaro River and into Monterey Bay in the next several months, the water district has begun increasing water releases from the Uvas Reservoir.

Steelhead trout migrate out of Uvas Creek to the Pajaro River annually through May, according to water district senior project manager Scott Akin. The migrations coincide with storms that raise creek levels and provide an outlet over barriers for the fish.

"With higher water releases we are attempting to mimic a spring storm event," Akin said.

According to a recent statement from the district, water levels in Uvas Creek fell to around 4 percent in February, causing the district to significantly cut the amount of water released from Uvas Reservoir in order to ensure that, with the current available water supply, the creek can remain wet for longer.

But without significant amounts of rain since early Feb-

ruary, Uvas and several other district creeks are expected to go dry this summer, which would likely result in a loss of wildlife.

"We want to give maturing steelhead trout the best chance of making their migration to the ocean," said Tony Estremera, chairman of the water district board of directors. "This exercise will help preserve the generation of steelhead which can be expected to return to spawn in two to three years."

In addition to Uvas Creek, other Santa Clara creeks expected to "dry-back" this summer from the lack of rainfall are Alamitos and Guadalupe creeks in the Guadalupe Watershed, Stevens Creek in the Lower Peninsula Watershed and Llagas Creek in South Santa Clara County.

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# County streamlines food stamp red tape

Bay City News

Santa Clara County has launched a new pilot program streamlining the food stamp application process for the chronically homeless and working poor families, according to a county statement.

The program, launched in February, is one of several initiatives to improve services to chronically homeless individuals and the working poor families in the county by eliminating lengthy application processes and adding outreach.

The initial pilot program looks to admit a total of 100 people, according to Kathy Buckovetz from the Department of Employment and Benefit Services. If successful, the program could be the

*“They don’t have bus tokens to go back and forth.”*

SUPERVISOR DON GAGE

standard application process by mid summer, Buckovetz said.

“It’s a hardship for a homeless person and working poor family to make multiple office visits. They don’t have bus tokens to go back and forth, which is especially difficult for the north county and south county clients,” said Supervisor Don Gage.

One way the process has been sped up is by allowing applicants to interview by phone, cutting out time- and money-wasting journeys.

For chronically homeless applicants, outreach workers from partnering agencies are trained by the Social Services Agency’s Department of Employment Benefits to identify and refer eligible individuals to the pilot program.

These trained outreach workers are also able to assist with filling out the “hardship waiver,” which requires documents such as a birth certificate. By satisfying the hardship waiver, applicants can get food stamps within three days, and sometimes the same day.

To qualify for the hardship waiver, applicants will have to display hardships related to financial, schedule, travel or other difficulties, Buckovetz said.

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**COMMUNITY BRIEFS**

**YMCA ORGANIZES  
'HEALTHY KIDS DAY'**

The El Camino YMCA is organizing the 16th annual Healthy Kids Day for next weekend in Mountain View.

YMCA is inviting families to "Put play in your day" with games and exercises designed around maintaining a healthy lifestyle. A range of activities has been planned throughout the day, including tug-o-war, watermelon toss, jump rope and a hula hoop contest.

Visitors will also be able to get their blood pressure and fitness assessed, enjoy a bounce house or browse through arts and crafts on display. A dance and karate demonstration is also planned for young people. All events are free and open to the public.

The 16th annual YMCA Healthy Kids Day will go from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, April 14 at the El Camino YMCA, 2400 Grant Rd., Mountain View. For more information, call the El Camino YMCA at (650) 969.9622 or e-mail Rachel Kinney at [rkinney@ymcamidpen.org](mailto:rkinney@ymcamidpen.org).

**ST. FRANCIS HIGH  
PRESENTS 'GREASE'**

St. Francis High School students are directing and starring in the musical "Grease" this April.

The St. Francis Drama Production will feature students between the ages of 14 and 18 in a production which is also choreographed and directed by students.

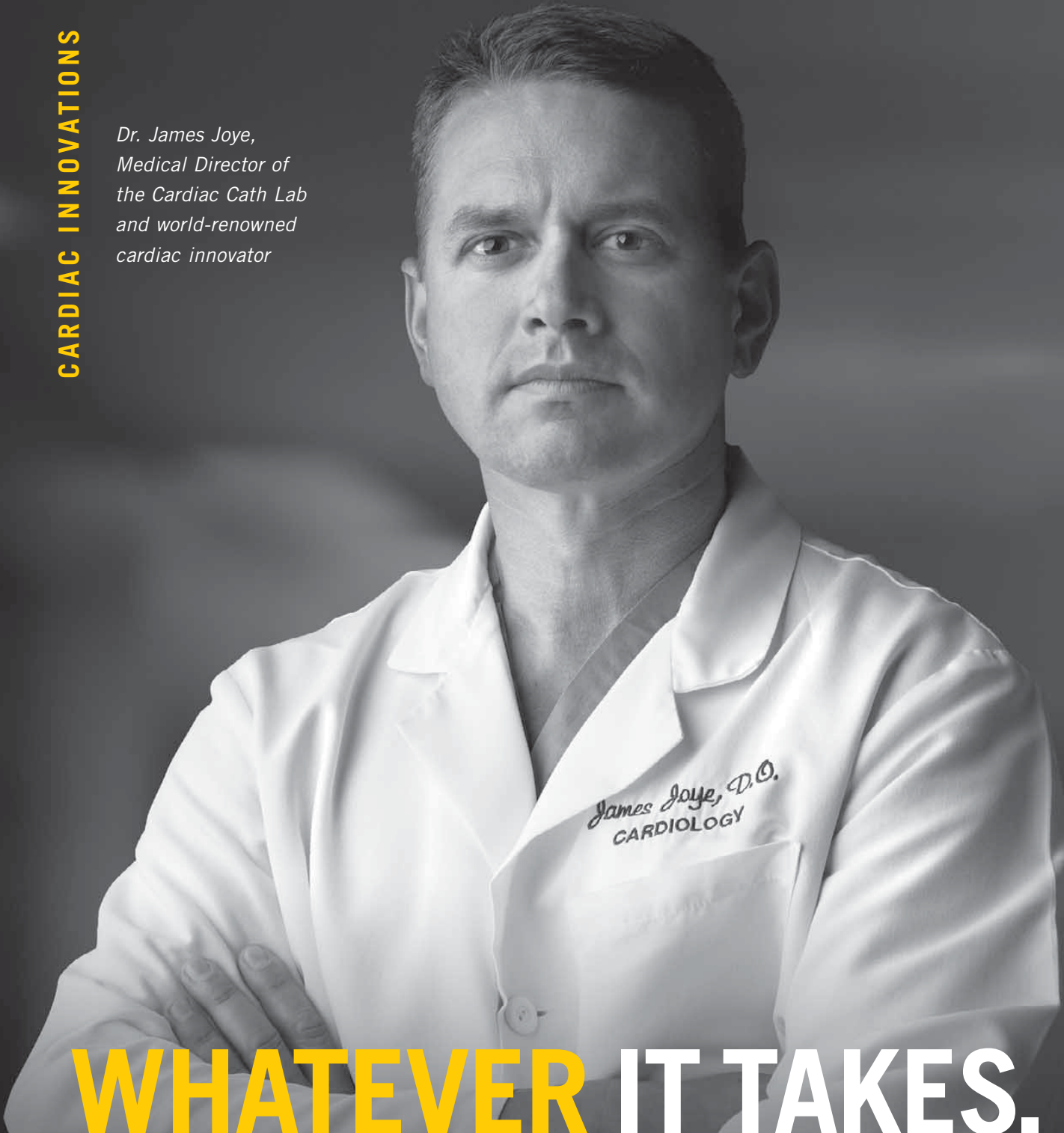
"Our theater program is unique because we not only teach students to be great theater artists, but also great leaders," said drama director Laura Rose.

St. Francis will present "Grease" on April 20-21 and 26-28 at the Raskob Gym Theater, Saint Francis High School, 1885 Miramonte Ave., Mountain View. Showtime is 7:30 p.m., and tickets are \$10. For more information, call St. Francis Drama Production at (650) 968-1213, ext. 244.

— Zunaira Durrani

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**EDITOR'S DESK**

► Continued from page 5

average person.

So Lampkin attended the installation of Mountain View's new postmaster, Debra Powell, last Friday, March 30 at the Carrier Annex on La Avenida. He said he joined at least 100 people in welcoming the first in female postmaster to take over in Mountain View since the late 1800s.

Powell replaces former Postmaster Kenneth Baker, who passed away recently, and whose widow was in attendance.

The postmaster, Lampkin noted, normally works out of the main branch downtown, and "basically is there to make sure that everybody does their job. She is the person between the public and the post office."

"THE WORKERS from the Day Worker Center of Mountain View would like to give back to the Mountain View community by volunteering for a community project," explained Craig Sherod in a recent e-mail. Sherod, who serves the Center as a member of its board, says they are asking the public's help on an intriguing and novel idea:

They are seeking the public's ideas, he wrote, "for a project that requires mostly labor to accomplish (there is not a lot of budget for expensive materials). Do you know a community or neighborhood space that needs cleaning, painting, gardening, or other labor-intensive attention? Please send your ideas by April 30 to csherod@comcast.net or call the Day Worker Center of Mountain View at (650) 903-4102."

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



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**Bulging Disc**

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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!"*

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COMMUNITY DAY EVENT



**Free Skin Cancer Screening**

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If you have had the following, this screening is for you:

- Excessive exposure to the sun
- Many moles or atypical moles
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**UNIONS**

► Continued from page 1

for the labor agreement, after nearly two hours of presentations and public testimony from both sides of the heated debate.

"We're as unified on this as we ever get on anything," said Hal Plotkin, board president.

The trustees will make an official motion to approve the item at an April 30 meeting when they will discuss contract details, including the formation of a construction trade apprenticeship program in the district, a stipulation mandated by local union representatives.

As much as any argument, trustees said, the educational component of the agreement appealed to them, particularly in light of figures presented by Neil Struthers, chief executive officer of Santa Clara County's Building and Construction Trades Council, which represents several labor trade unions.

Struthers said in his presentation that 50 percent of the construction work force in California is set to retire in 10 years. The labor trade unions hope to use apprenticeship programs "to win back young people who

are passing over our industry because they've been told, 'You don't want to do that,'" Struthers said.

He added that the apprenticeship program properly trains students to be eligible for the most advanced construction work.

Trustee Laura Casas Frier agreed with Struthers on the

**"We're as unified on this as we ever get on anything."**

HAL PLOTKIN

potential for a labor deficit.

"This is a very true statement," she said. "We're in a crisis for skilled workers, and it behooves us to have an educated and competent workforce in our district."

But the evening's hot-button issue came down to money, both in the form of the prevailing wage paid to construction workers, and whether PLA contracts inflate construction costs.

Of the former, Struthers said, "This is really the issue at stake here tonight."

He and dozens of laborers from the construction trades spoke of incidents where non-union contractors allegedly underpaid them or didn't pay any benefits. The prevailing wage in California is roughly \$30 per hour, depending on the trade.

The meeting often seemed to shift away from the support and opposition of PLA contracts to the more general and historical debate of union versus non-union.

"Guys like myself always got taken advantage of by non-union outfits," Adrian Martinez said. He currently belongs to Local 393 of the plumbers union.

Struthers said that by underpaying employees, non-union contractors had the ability to underbid union contractors on projects. A PLA, he reasoned, provided "a level playing field."

But for those on the other side of the argument, a PLA guaranteed the exact opposite.

As part of a PLA's stipulations, non-union contractors must pay workers' health and welfare benefits to union trusts funds, in addition to benefits they provide through their own benefits packages, and would also be required to pay union dues and fees. Double costs in this area

dissuade non-union contractors from bidding.

Nicole Goehring, government affairs director for the local chapter of Associated Builders and Contractors, told the board that PLAs "are non-competitive and discriminatory."

But Struthers shot back.

**"Guys like myself always got taken advantage of by non-union outfits."**

ADRIAN MARTINEZ

"Clearly it's illegal to limit competition in the state of California," he said, adding that "the Supreme Court ruled in 2001 that they are not anti-competitive."

In terms of overall project costs, Goehring and others argued that when non-union contractors drop out of the bidding process, remaining contractors can inflate the price of their lowest bid, making project costs rise overall, sometimes by as much as 20 percent.

Studies show conflicting numbers on that notion, as do examples of local projects that used a PLA.

In the Oakland Unified School District, evidence shows that after a PLA was put into place, the lowest bid came in at \$437,000 more than when bidding occurred without one. But in the East Side Union High School District in San Jose, district official Rick Reyes told trustees the presence of a PLA had not raised costs on their project and had provided an overall positive experience.

"We really don't have any major issues," he said. "It's been very quiet and easygoing."

Reyes' comment refers to the element of the PLA which provides a no-strike clause, strict guidelines for work rules, hours and overtime pay, as well as establishing a labor management committee to oversee the whole process.

Trustees seemed to be swayed by this component of the contract as well.

"I think we have enough reasons that make sense for us to go ahead and adopt a PLA," trustee Betsy Bechtel said. ▀

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

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**PROBE**

► Continued from page 1

time to adequately search for a replacement.

"I knew she had been thinking of it," Totter said. "In her life, it was time to move on. She's looking at new opportunities." Wright, 51, was a 10-year employee of the district and will continue in her position until the end of the school year. She could not be reached for comment by press time.

A spokesperson for the California State Teachers Retirement System, or CalSTRS, said the auditors will review all relevant documents, such as contracts and payroll reports. Auditors routinely conduct interviews, but district personnel reported that no staff interviews were scheduled.

The investigation was scheduled to last through Thursday. Results could take several more weeks to be released.

Totter said that towards the end of the school year the district intends to plan "some activity in recognition of [Wright's] contributions."

Wright served the district through several critical stages in the past decade, including the much-contested closure of Slater Elementary School last year and the passing of the \$1.6 million parcel tax in 2004. She also saw the district through its litigation with Aaron Katz, who sued in 2005, claiming the parcel tax was illegal because not all property owners were eligible to vote. Katz lost his case in the Santa Clara County Superior Court.

Goldman started his career in education in 1990 as a fifth grade teacher in Burlingame. Previously, he worked as an attorney, representing banks and other financial institutions. He reopened Huff in 1998.

"We are very excited about him joining us at the district office," Totter said. ■

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

Let Us Hear From You



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- YOUR LETTERS
- GUEST OPINIONS

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

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## ■ EDITORIAL THE OPINION OF THE VOICE

# Squirrel outcry ends with a whimper

In the heady realm of unwanted pests, the Cuesta Park squirrels are hardly in the same league as the marauding bears at Yosemite or mountain lions in Palo Alto.

But for a city like Mountain View, any out-of-control pest at a popular city park must be dealt with in a hurry, especially one that is threatening and biting young children in order to make off with their snack food.

The immediate diagnosis of the problem was simple: Take away the food source and the squirrels will go away. But city officials ran up against a determined bunch of squirrels, as well as many recalcitrant parents who ignored the large signs placed in the park warning visitors to avoid feeding their squirrels.

The drama put city administrators in such a bind that at first they authorized the use of “body-crushing” steel traps hidden in the trees. But when that story made the national press, the city backed off the deadly traps. After more study, officials decided to use live traps and off-site euthanasia — a strategy that ultimately proved successful.

There is no guarantee it will last, but for the last few weeks no squirrel attacks or incidents have been reported at the park. The city has confirmed that at least nine of the squirrels were caught and euthanized after jumping into a decoy baby stroller in the playground area.

All this seems to prove the theory that there were a few “bad apples” in the Cuesta Park squirrel population that needed to be removed if children were to be able to continue to use the park safely. It also shows that when it comes to dealing with wildlife, sometimes the most politically incorrect methods are still the most viable ones. (Relocating the squirrels, an option some called for early on, is prohibited by the state Department of Fish and Game.)

It seems that things have settled down once again at Cuesta Park. It's now up to the park's users to keep it that way by not bringing food into the park, which could embolden the squirrels once more. The ultimate success will come when the city can stop putting rangers on patrol, and trust park users to help keep the play area free of renegade squirrels.

## ■ LETTERS

VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

### WHISMAN NEEDS SCHOOLS, NOT COFFEE SHOPS

Editor:

In last week's article about the proposed Whisman housing project (“Green light on Whisman project”), it was reported that “several [City Council] members made comments about how nice it would be for residents to at least have a coffee shop nearby.”

I can't say I'm surprised that no one on the council has a clue as to what the Whisman neighborhood has and doesn't have, but there are three coffee shops near the corner of Whisman and Middlefield — two Clocktowers and Roger's Donuts. As a content patron of all three, I don't know if we need any more.

What the neighborhood does not have is an elementary school since the school board decided to close both nearby schools, Whisman and Slater. This has left a wide swath of Mountain View — the entire area north of Central Expressway and east of Shoreline Boulevard, where about a quarter of the elementary students reside — with no neighborhood school. Meanwhile the area south of El Camino, with fewer students, has two elementary schools as well as a

middle school.

Moreover, the neighborhood, already short on park space, has little or no access to the school playgrounds as the schools have been rented out to private concerns. The school board did, it must be said, take pains to preserve “Whisman” in the name of the district. Personally, I'd rather have the schools than either the name or the coffee shop.

**Gary Rosen**  
Murlagan Avenue

### WHY NOT ASK BEFORE CALLING AUTHORITIES

Editor:

This letter is directed to my anonymous neighbor who called the FBI, EPA and any other government agency that might need to be alerted to something terrible going on in my backyard.

Actually, I'm exaggerating, but they did call the city code enforcement cops on me, who came strolling onto my private property and into my backyard uninvited to see what was going on.

You see, I happen to have the oldest pool in Mountain View in my backyard, and I was having its fiberglass replaced after 21 years of wear and tear. I must

admit the smell was not pleasant, although the work was done in three hours.

All the neighbor had to do was come over to my house and ask what the smell was. I would have invited him/her into my backyard so that they could've witnessed for themselves that I wasn't cooking up a batch of crystal meth.

We have enough Big Brothers in this world to have to worry about our “friendly” neighbors calling the cops on us. We've got

burglaries going on all around us and cars being stolen from right in front of my neighbor's house, if you really want something to worry about.

I thought we were supposed to be looking out for one another. Isn't that what this quaint neighborhood that everybody is dying to get into is all about? Hey, friendly neighbor, get a life.

**Muriel Sivyler-Lee**  
Velarde Street

► See **LETTERS**, page 22



■ GUEST OPINION  
VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

## A golden opportunity

COUNCIL MUST PROVIDE GUIDANCE FOR TWO KEY DEVELOPMENT SPOTS ALONG EL CAMINO REAL

By Gene Lee

By coincidence, two redefining developments are currently before the city of Mountain View, giving us a once-in-a-generation opportunity to effect a unified vision for the continued development of the El Camino Real corridor from Castro Street to the San Antonio shopping center.

The first is at the southwest corner of Castro and El Camino Real, where a landmark building recently burned down. The precise plan for this corner should be revised to encourage a redevelopment that complements both the distinctive Washington Mutual building and the office building and plaza on the northwest corner. The mini-park on the northeast corner provides an inviting entrance to downtown Mountain View.

In the past, the city has declined to tackle the planning for the southwest corner, because the small parcels under many individual owners made a large project difficult and unlikely. Today things have changed. The most prominent parcel on the corner is empty, and plans for rebuilding will come before the city. Also, many of the parcels have been bought up by a couple of major owners on the corner.

Additionally, the city owns the large parking lot behind the buildings on the corner. For these reasons, now is the time to update the precise plan for the southwest corner to complement the standard set by the buildings on the other two corners.

The second opportunity is at the San Antonio shopping center, where the historic anchor tenant Sears will eventually be leaving. The character of the redevelopment of the Sears site is critical to the future of the shopping center as well as to the entire corridor from San Antonio to Castro.

The shopping center is also hobbled by multiple ownerships of the parcels. While the owners have made efforts to coordinate the traffic patterns, the shop-

ping center as a whole still feels disjointed. A new business on the Sears site should promote the unity of the shopping center, especially the foot traffic between stores. (Unfortunately, the Home Depot would be an island within the shopping center. Sears' departure has been postponed for three years, giving Home Depot additional time to negotiate the city's review of its redevelopment proposal.)

San Antonio Center was once a major shopping center attracting shoppers from many miles away; today it is overshadowed by larger, more attractive shopping centers. The character of the next tenant on the prominent Sears site will determine the direction that the entire shopping center will take when the next buildings come up for redevelopment.

These two redevelopment projects will determine the future character of the El Camino Real corridor that connects them. They — along with the shopping center at El Monte Avenue — can set a high standard for all future projects in the corridor. A negative outcome, especially at the San Antonio Center, would have negative repercussions all the way to the shopping centers at Grant Road.

The San Antonio Center is the western gateway into Mountain View. The Castro-El Camino Real nexus is the gateway to downtown Mountain View. Gateways are not merely boundary markers. Gateways make a statement about the pride of the community one is entering.

Improvements to both sites have long been goals of the city. Events have presented today's City Council an unprecedented opportunity. The council and city staff must step up to the task of revising the precise plans to give direction to the developers. Let this task be a challenge for you.

*Gene Lee was a member of the Environmental Planning Commission from 1980-84. He lives on Ernestine Lane.*

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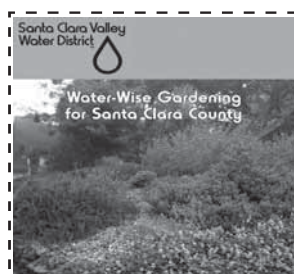


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## Viewpoint

### LETTERS

► Continued from page 20

#### COMMON GOOD BEATS INDIVIDUAL GOOD

Editor:

In the sea of words being written about "smart growth" in housing and the desire for more parkland, I found it refreshing to read the recent guest opinion by Elna Tymes, who used a tone of factual persuasion rather than a strident assertion of rights and demands ("Smart growth doesn't mean no growth," March 23).

Employing a quieter voice is more productive because almost every side of the housing issue in our city comes down to the author's order of priorities to implement a list of "needs." My interpretation of the priorities of this author are as follows: 1) Lower density and slower growth

in housing units than at present; 2) More below-market-rate housing, and; 3) More transit-oriented housing.

I don't infer that transit-oriented housing is not important to the author, but when push comes to shove, it comes out number three.

We all agree that these three needs are real and beneficial to us all. But I would contend that having more parkland and slowing development of more dense housing is simply not as important as more transit-oriented housing. Desirable — but not as important.

No question, individual homeowners (myself included) benefit from slow growth and more parks. The reality is, on the housing issue, we need to place the common good above the individual good. By doing so, we all end up with more.

Allen Price  
Velarde Street

#### EDUCATORS ON COURSE WITH NEW TRUSTEE

Editor:

A few weeks ago, I had the pleasure of witnessing the effective and respectful process used by the Santa Clara County Board of Education and their superintendent, Dr. Colleen Wilcox, to select a new trustee.

When their colleague, Bill Evers, accepted an appointment to the U.S. Department of Education, the board was faced with filling the vacancy mid-term. The members efficiently decided to advertise for applicants to fill the remainder of Mr. Evers' term and then appoint a new member.

This procedure produced three excellent community leaders with a history and interest in education. The board got written and oral comment from members of the public about all three candidates, interviewed all three, and then voted to approve Palo Alto parent Grace Mah as the newest member of the county board.

I endorsed Bill Evers when he ran for this seat, and I endorsed Grace Mah when she applied to fill his seat. I believe she brings the same characteristics to the board that Mr. Evers did — intelligence, independence and integrity.

Ellen Wheeler  
Brookdale Avenue

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■ RESTAURANT REVIEW

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## A touch of Provence

INVITING CAFE BRIOCHE SERVES PLEASING FRANCO-CALIFORNIA FARE

By Dale F. Bentson

Where better to while away a lazy spring than in the south of France? If you can't go, do the next best thing: a dinner at Cafe Brioche in Palo Alto.

The decor is as bright and inviting as any bistro in Avignon, Arles or Aix-en-Provence. The food is delicious and wallet-friendly. Colorful table linens, stenciled walls and attentive service make Cafe Brioche a prime destination for breakfast, lunch or dinner. There are a half dozen tables outside for street-side dining as well.

At Cafe Brioche, the bread basket alone ignited our taste buds. The French bread was crusty

and spongy-fresh on the inside. The accompanying creamy butter was studded with garlic and olive bits. An olive oil cruet was perched atop the table, in case we preferred dipping to slathering.

We started one dinner with the crispy Brioche beignet fritters (\$8). The puffy, deep-fried pastries were stuffed with roasted butternut squash, spiced walnuts, arugula and Roquefort cheese, which unified the other ingredients as it melted. A dipping sauce of sage aioli complemented.

The plump prosciutto-wrapped prawns (\$10) with lemon aioli were delectable. The salty ham integrated well with the plump, briny crustaceans, and the lemon garlic sauce inte-

grated the flavors.

I liked the lightness of the oyster mushrooms (\$9). Crusted in cornmeal and sesame seeds before deep frying, the oysters came with a creamy horseradish dipping sauce.

Deep-fried calamari (\$10) were fresh ringlets of mollusk dredged in parmesan cheese and served with harissa mayonnaise. Harissa is a spicy North African condiment made from chiles and spices. This version is milder cousin.

Cafe Brioche calls it Salade Parisienne (\$8) while the same salad is called Salade Lyonnaise in other restaurants. I suppose it depends on where the chef's

► See **CAFE BRIOCHE**, page 24



SAM TENNEY

Steamed mussels at Cafe Brioche in Palo Alto.

Sports Page

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## CAFE BRIOCHE

► Continued from page 23

roots are. Nevertheless, it's a grand salad of frisee, lardons (bacon) and croutons with a poached egg on top. A light vinaigrette mixes with the egg to coat the lettuce. The lardons and croutons add a salty crunch.

According to manager Malek Kaci, the hazelnut-crusted salmon (\$19) is one of the most popular dishes on the menu.

The delicious fish was thick-cut and just cooked through. The merlot-blackberry sauce, however, overwhelmed the delicate salmon flavor. I could taste little but the syrupy reduction. It was the only dish that was even mildly disappointing.

The mussels (\$14) were fat and luscious. The heaping bowl of bi-valves was wash in a sauce of white wine, cream, saffron and shallots — perfect to mop up with a hunk of French bread. A tempting basket of French fries accompanied.

No meat is more evocative of Provence than duck breast (\$21). Cafe Brioche grilled its duck breast and served it with a green peppercorn-cassis sauce. It was the perfect sauce for the rich-flavored, tender dark meat. The generous portion came with potatoes and

steamed vegetables.

I loved the beef short rib (\$20). It's hard to go wrong with slow-cooked, fall-off-the-bone beef that had simmered for hours with cipollini onions and mushrooms and was served under a thick blanket of brown sauce.

Cassoulet (\$18) hails from the Toulouse area of Southwest France where it evolved as a peasant dish from scraps of meat, beans and tomato sauce. Today, there are as many variations as there are distinct cooking regions in France. I had not seen a version quite like Cafe Brioche's.

Usually, the meats are shredded or chopped and incorporated into the stew itself. Here, a smoked pork chop, duck

► Continued on next page

# dining town

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► Continued from previous page

confit and a meaty sausage were roasted atop the bean stew. It was a mouthwatering presentation. Duck confit is a Toulousian byproduct of the cassoulet, a way of cooking and preserving meat in its own fat.

Vegetarians need not miss out. There are three tempting entrees designed for non-carnivores: eggplant with polenta, squash with lentils and puff pastry stuffed with vegetables. All are \$15.

One evening, a sweet elderly lady and her aide ordered the double-cut pork chop (\$18) with braised parsnips, onions and tart cherries in a fig-merlot sauce. She raved to everyone around her and took most of the large portion home. It looked delicious, and certainly pleased her. ■

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## public hearing

topic: **water utility enterprise report**

who: The Santa Clara Valley Water District Board of Directors

what: **public hearings on proposed groundwater charges 2007-08**

when: **Tuesday, April 10, 2007, 9:40 a.m.**

Santa Clara Valley Water District Board Room  
5700 Almaden Expressway, San Jose  
(one block south of Blossom Hill Road)

**Monday, April 16, 2007, 7:00 p.m.**

Morgan Hill Community and Cultural Center  
Hiram Morgan Hill Room  
17000 Monterey Road, Morgan Hill

why: The Santa Clara Valley Water District has prepared a preliminary Water Utility Enterprise Report documenting financial and water supply information which provides the basis for recommended groundwater charges for fiscal year 2007-08.

The report includes financial analyses of the District's water utility system; supply and demand forecasts; future capital improvement, maintenance and operating requirements; and the method to finance such requirements.

The Water District will hold two public hearings to obtain comments on the report. The report will be available at the hearings.

Based upon findings and determinations from the public hearings, the Water District Board of Directors will decide whether or not a groundwater charge should be levied, and if so, at what level, in which zone or zones for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2007.

All operators of water-producing facilities within the District or any person interested in the water District's activities with regard to protection and augmentation of the water supply may appear, in person or by representative, and submit comments regarding the subject.

For more information on the public hearings, please visit our website at [www.valleywater.org](http://www.valleywater.org).

Reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate persons with disabilities wishing to attend this public hearing. To RSVP for the meeting, request accommodations for disabilities or for additional information on attending this hearing, please contact the Clerk of the Board Office, Santa Clara Valley Water District, (408) 265-2600. Interpreters for this hearing can be arranged. Please call (408) 265-2607, ext. 2270 at least three days prior to the hearing.

Este aviso es para informarle sobre una reunión pública del Distrito de Aguas del Valle de Santa Clara (Santa Clara Valley Water District). Estamos convocando al público a que nos den sus comentarios para ayudarnos a planificar este proyecto. Si necesita servicios especiales para personas con discapacidades, un intérprete en español o más información sobre la reunión, por favor llámenos al menos tres días antes de la reunión al (408) 265-2607, extensión 2297.

Thông báo của Nhà Cấp Nước Santa Clara Valley (Santa Clara Valley Water District) về buổi họp dành cho công chúng. Chúng tôi đang thu thập ý kiến của công chúng để giúp chúng tôi lập kế hoạch cho dự án này. Xin liên lạc với chúng tôi ít nhất ba ngày trước buổi họp nếu quý vị cần các giúp đỡ đặc biệt cho người khuyết tật, hay nếu quý vị cần thông dịch viên tiếng Việt, hoặc nếu quý vị muốn biết thêm chi tiết về buổi họp. Xin gọi cho chúng tôi ở số (408) 265-2607, số chuyên tiếp (ext) 2632.



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Presentation Skills	7/23-7/27	8/6-8/10
Computer Booster	7/30-8/3	8/13-8/17

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### MOVIE TIMES

**300 (R) ★★★1/2** Century 16: 11 a.m.; 1:55, 4:40, 7:25 & 10:15 p.m. Century 20: 11:40 a.m.; 12:55, 2:25, 3:35, 5:05, 6:25, 7:50, 9:10 & 10:30 p.m.

**ARE WE DONE YET? (PG)** Century 16: 11:55 a.m.; 2:30, 5, 7:30 & 10 p.m. Century 20: 11:40 a.m.; 12:45, 1:55, 3:10, 4:35, 5:40, 7:05, 8, 9:20 & 10:15 p.m.

**AVENUE MONTAIGNE (PG)** Aquarius: 2:45, 5, 7:15 & 9:30 p.m.; Sat. & Sun. also at 12:30 p.m.

**BLADES OF GLORY (PG-13) ★★** Century 16: 11:10 a.m.; 12:10, 1:30, 2:35, 3:55, 4:55, 7:10, 7:55, 9:35 & 10:20 p.m. Century 20: 11:50 a.m.; 12:35, 1:20, 2:15, 3, 3:55, 4:45, 5:35, 6:30, 7:15, 8:05, 9, 9:40 & 10:20 p.m.

**BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA (PG)** Century 20: 11:35 a.m.; 1:55 & 4:20 p.m.

**DEAD SILENCE (R)** Century 20: 9:55 p.m.

**FIREHOUSE DOG (PG)** Century 16: 11:05 a.m.; 1:40, 4:20, 7:05 & 9:45 p.m. Century 12: 12:30, 1:50, 3:10, 4:30, 5:50, 7:10, 8:30 & 9:50 p.m.

**GRINDHOUSE (R)** Century 16: 11 a.m.; noon, 3, 4, 7, 8 & 11 p.m. Century 12: Noon, 1:20, 2:40, 4, 5:20, 6:40, 8, 9:20 & 10:35 p.m.

**THE HILLS HAVE EYES 2 (R)** Century 20: 10:05 p.m.

**THE HOAX (R) ★★★1/2** Century 16: 11:15 a.m.; 2:15, 5:05, 7:50 & 10:35 p.m. Century 20: 11:35 a.m.; 12:50, 2:15, 3:30, 4:55, 6:15, 7:35, 9:05 & 10:25 p.m.

**THE LAST MIMZY (PG)** Century 16: 11:20 a.m.; 1:50 & 4:15 p.m. Century 20: 11:45 a.m.; 2:20, 4:40, 7:10 & 9:35 p.m.

**THE LIVES OF OTHERS (R) ★★★★★** Century 12: 9:25 p.m. Guild: 3, 6 & 9 p.m.; Sat. & Sun. also at noon.

**THE LOOKOUT (R) ★★★1/2** Century 16: 12:15, 2:45, 5:15, 7:45 & 10:10 p.m. Century 12: 12:05, 2:30, 6, 7:30, 8:40 & 10 p.m.

**MEET THE ROBINSONS (G)** Century 16: 12:25, 2:55, 5:30, 8 & 10:30 p.m. Century 20: 11:30 a.m.; 12:20, 1:10, 2, 2:45, 3:40, 4:30, 5:20, 6:15, 7, 7:50, 8:40, 9:30 & 10:15 p.m.

**MEET THE ROBINSONS (IN DISNEY DIGITAL 3D) (G)** Century 16: 11:30 a.m.; 2, 4:30, 7 & 9:30 p.m.

**MISS POTTER (PG) ★★★1/2** Aquarius: 2:15, 4:30, 6:45 & 9:15 p.m.; Sat. & Sun. also at noon.

**THE NAMESAKE (PG-13) ★★★** Century 20: 11:25 a.m.; 2, 5, 7:45 & 10:30 p.m. Palo Alto Square: 1:30, 4:25, 7:20 & 10:20 p.m.

**PAN'S LABYRINTH (R) ★★★1/2** Century 20: 6:50 & 9:30 p.m. Palo Alto Square: 1:35, 4:20, 7:10 & 10 p.m.

**PREMONITION (PG-13) ★★** Century 12: 12:20, 3:30 & 7 p.m.

**PRIDE (PG) ★★★** Century 20: 11:45 a.m.; 2:20, 4:45 & 7:15 p.m.

**THE REAPING (R)** Century 16: 11:40 a.m.; 2:25, 5:10, 7:40 & 10:05 p.m. Century 20: Noon, 12:40, 1:25, 2:25, 3:05, 3:50, 4:50, 5:30, 6:20, 7:20, 7:55, 8:45, 9:45 & 10:20 p.m.

**REIGN OVER ME (R) ★★★** Century 16: 6:50 & 9:50 p.m. Century 12: 11:55 a.m.; 2:55, 6:50 & 9:45 p.m.

**THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW (1975) (R)** Guild: Sat. at midnight.

**SHOOTER (R) ★★1/2** Century 16: 12:45, 3:45, 6:45 & 9:55 p.m. Century 12: 1:40, 4:45, 7:40 & 10:25 p.m.

**TMNT (PG)** Century 16: 11:25 a.m.; 1:45, 4, 6:55 & 9:10 p.m. Century 12: 11:50 a.m.; 12:40, 2:15, 3, 4:40, 5:15, 7:20 & 9:35 p.m.

**WILD HOGS (PG-13) ★★** Century 16: 11:35 a.m.; 2:20, 4:50, 7:15 & 9:40 p.m. Century 12: 12:15, 2:50, 5:25, 7:55 & 10:20 p.m.

**ZODIAC (R) ★★★1/2** Century 20: 11:55 a.m.; 3:15 & 6:45 p.m.

*Note: Screenings are for Friday through Tuesday only.*

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

**CENTURY CINEMA 16:** 1500 N. Shoreline Blvd., Mountain View (960-0970)

**CENTURY PARK 12:** 557 E. Bayshore Blvd., Redwood City (365-9000)

**CENTURY 20 DOWNTOWN:** 825 Middlefield Road, Redwood City (369-3456)

**CINEARTS AT PALO ALTO SQUARE:** 3000 El Camino Real, Palo Alto (493-3456)

**GUILD:** 949 El Camino Real, Menlo Park (266-9260)

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

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

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

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

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



### MOVIE REVIEWS

#### BLADES OF GLORY ★★

(Century 16, Century 20) Two celebrated male figure skaters — child prodigy Jimmy MacElroy (Jon Heder of "Napoleon Dynamite") and "lone wolf" Chazz Michael Michaels (Will Ferrell) — are at the pinnacle of their profession. The two very different men are heated rivals, a discord that culminates with a violent melee at the World Championships. The embarrassing clash gets both skaters banned from the sport for life. Flash forward three-and-a-half years. MacElroy works the ice-skates department of a shoe store while Michaels drunkenly performs for a children's ice show. Things perk up when MacElroy's self-professed stalker (Nick Swardson) finds a loophole in the skating rule-book. MacElroy can return to competition in pairs' figure skating, and who better to team with than his one-time rival? Soon MacElroy and Michaels are making nice and training under MacElroy's coach (Craig T. Nelson) in hopes of winning championship gold. Ferrell fans will find flashes of hilarity in "Blades," but DVD is a better outlet for these silly skaters. *Rated: PG-13 for crude and sexual humor, language, a comic violent image and some drug references. 1 hour, 33 minutes.* — T.H.

#### THE LOOKOUT ★★★1/2

(Century 12, Century 16) A tragic accident sets gears in motion in this tightly crafted thriller that speaks to the notion of second chances. Playing fast and loose with Daddy's car lands teenage hockey star Chris Pratt (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) in a world of hurt, mentally and emotionally impaired by a severe head injury. Four years later Chris exists on a steady diet of meds and does time at a Life Skills Center in Kansas City. His promising athletic career is a distant memory, as is his status as the resident golden boy. These days Chris toils as the night janitor at the local bank, where he hopes to work his way up to teller if he can keep track of the count. A chance meeting with ex-schoolmate Gary Spargo (Matthew Goode) drastically alters the landscape. Perhaps the meeting wasn't a stroke of fate after all. Once immersed in Gary's insular web, Chris finds himself ensnared in some ambitious but felonious plans. And his struggle is compelling; he's torn between a desire to do the right thing and a desperate need to regain his diminishing independence. Gordon-Levitt effortlessly steals the show, blessed with the It factor in spades. Well worth a lookout. *Rated: R for language, violence and mature themes. 1 hour, 39 minutes.* — J.A.

#### THE NAMESAKE ★★★

(Century 20, CineArts) No one seems better suited to transform Jhumpa Lahiri's touching prose into film than director Mira Nair ("Monsoon Wedding"). The narrative unfolds differently than the story in the best-selling

## Weekend

2003 book. Starting more dramatically with the tragic train crash that spares bookworm Ashoke's (Irrfan Khan) life in 1974 India, Sooni Taraporevala's script initially favors the male point of view. Then time leaps forward to the awkward meeting between Ashoke and Ashima (Tabu), whose parents have arranged for their marriage. When asked if she will be lonely living halfway around the world from her family, the shy beauty looks at her future husband and replies, "Won't he be there?" Humor and humanity go hand in hand, as the newlyweds embrace each other and life in America. Capturing the nuances of such a complex, textured novel is impossible. Nair conveys its spirit, creating a moving saga that speaks to anyone caught between cultures. *Rated: PG-13 for sexuality/nudity, a scene of drug use, some disturbing images and brief language. In Bengali, Hindi and English with English subtitles. 2 hours, 2 minutes.* — S.T.

### MOVIE CRITICS

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

### MOVIE REVIEWS

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[www.PaloAltoOnline.com](http://www.PaloAltoOnline.com).

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