

Mountain View VOICE



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the world through
infrared-colored
glasses
A&E | P21

AUGUST 24, 2007 VOLUME 15, NO. 34

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Back so soon

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL
COMES EARLY FOR
KIDS IN ELEMENTARY,
HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICTS

By Susan Hong

As the first day of school unfolded Monday at Mountain View High School, some of the nearly 1,750 students may have asked themselves why they were back so early.

The not-so-simple answer: Several years ago the high schools moved first-semester exams to before the winter break, allowing students and families to enjoy the break instead of worrying about finals. The move caused the second semester to run longer.

This year, the district started school earlier to equalize the number of instructional days between the two semesters. So Mountain View and Los Altos high schools started a week earlier for the 3,400 students who, equipped with back packs and cell phones, chatted with each other as they lugged text books and musical instruments. The students will finish second semester one week earlier too.

Mountain View Whisman schools also ushered in 4,300 students on Tuesday, a few days earlier compared to last year, said Mary Lairon, associate superintendent.

At Landels Elementary School, lines

► See **SCHOOL**, page 10



NORBERT VON DER GROEBEN

Juana Montes De-Oca ties Hector Giovanny Puga's shoes before he starts kindergarten at Landels Elementary School on Tuesday.

Local middle schoolers lag in STAR tests

By Susan Hong

California's 2007 achievement tests show proficiency levels falling in both major subjects — math and English-language arts — for Mountain View Whisman's seventh and eighth graders.

The scores for Standardized Testing and Results, or STAR, released last week, showed

declines for students in the third, seventh and eighth grade levels. By seventh grade, only 38 percent of students met California proficiency standards in math, down from 40 percent last year.

In English-language arts, eighth grade proficiency levels fell to 45 percent, down from 51 percent last year. Grades two through seven were steady or saw modest gains.

"It's scary," said school board president Fiona Walters about the decline in eighth grade math and English performance.

No one knows exactly why the numbers have fallen.

Assistant Superintendent Mary Lairon pointed out that while proficiency levels

► See **STAR**, page 11

Council splits on Dana St. park idea

CRIME, SAFETY CONCERNS
NOT ENOUGH TO DERAIL
PURCHASE

By Daniel DeBolt

The City Council wrestled with compelling arguments against a neighborhood park at the end of West Dana Street, eventually voting by a slim margin Tuesday to purchase the space anyway.

The council voted 4-3 to buy an L-shaped, 4-acre property at 15767 West Dana Street for \$1.6 million. Council members Jac Siegel, Laura Macias and Ronit Bryant opposed, wanting to explore new affordable housing for the property, which is now occupied by several tenants.

Neighbors said the odd-shaped lot would be hard for police to patrol and only add to the crime problem in the area. At the same time, they said, it would eliminate some of the city's older, more affordable housing stock.

The police department says officers have not had problems at other mini-parks in the city, but neighbors say those other locations are more visible. Neighbors also complained about the Victory Outreach halfway house for gang members on nearby Pettis Avenue. Other homes on and around Mariposa are favorite places for the city's most troubled youth to hang out at night, and a mini-park would just make it more convenient for them, they said.

"I want to sell my house and get the hell out of here," said one longtime resident of Pettis Avenue, who says cops have chased people through his side yard. "Parks? We got parks! If you want to spend

► See **COUNCIL**, page 12

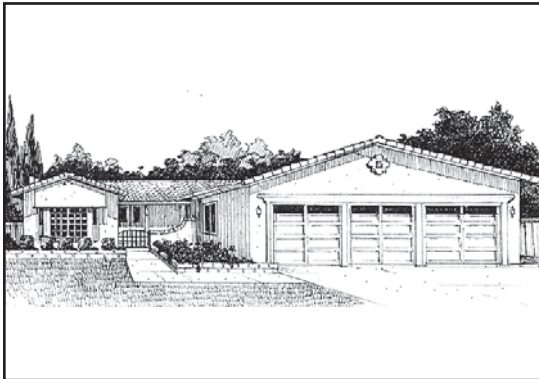
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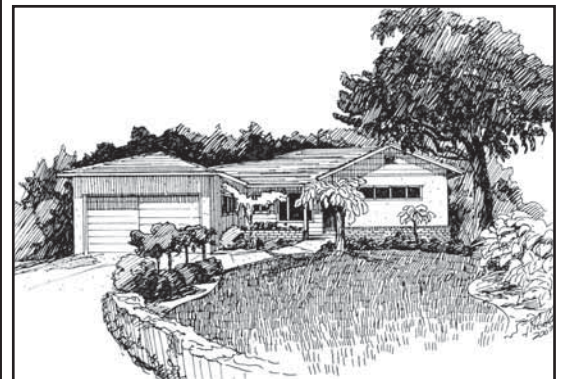
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Voices

A R O U N D T O W N

Asked in Downtown Mountain View. Pictures and interviews by Melody Dye.

What do you think should be done to improve our schools?



"Honestly, I'm pretty happy with how things are and I've certainly already paid enough in bonds. Instead of feeding more money into the system, I think people should become more involved with our local schools to benefit the community."

Ariana Menhenett, with **Alina** and **Kayla**, Mountain View



"It's really hard to make American friends because my native tongue is Korean, but I wish I could be friends with everybody. I think it would be good if there were a program so we could all get to know each other better."

Steven Kwak, Sunnyvale, with **Quan Tu**, Redwood City



"I'd put recycling bins in every classroom ... and get better teachers. Some of the teaching at my school is pretty terrible."

Stephanie Kuborsy, Mountain View



"Well, I would have to say first of all that you can't hardly get any better than the Los Altos School District. But I would say that for California in general, it would help if high schools were smaller."

Sue Detro, Los Altos



"I think all schools should have open campuses, so we can be free to go off campus to eat for lunch. And I'd like it if some of the teachers had a sense of humor about things. There aren't nearly enough good teachers or enough funny ones."

Steve Winds, Mountain View

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Your Everyday Farmer's Market

New VTA Service Delivery

VTA is streamlining and realigning old routes, upgrading community and express bus service, and increasing mid-day and off-peak service on popular routes in an ambitious and comprehensive effort to build ridership.

We released a draft plan earlier this spring and asked for public comments. Then we took into consideration over 800 letters, e-mails, comment cards and phone calls which assisted us in revising the original plan and balancing community needs with service designed for higher utilization.

Here are some of the highlights, based on public input, we are making in Palo Alto:

- **Creation of two community bus routes featuring lower for adults, youth, senior, medicare and persons with disabled fare**
- **Continued service to Stanford Shopping Center, Gunn High School, the VA Hospital, the Charleston Road area and new developments on Fabian Way**
- **A VTA pledge to study shuttle and community bus services in Palo Alto**

The revised January 2008 Service Plan is scheduled for consideration by the VTA Board of Directors at its August 30, 2007 meeting.

For more information, visit www.vta.org. You can also call (408) 321-2300, TDD only (408) 321-2330. From the 650 area code and South Santa Clara County toll area (800) 894-9908.



07/08-6023

CRIMEWATCH

SEXUAL BATTERY, 500 BLOCK N. SHORELINE BLVD., 8/20

A woman was shopping in Safeway when a man brushed his arm against her buttocks as she bent down. Startled, she demanded an explanation. The man apologized and said it was an accident. Several minutes later, in a different aisle, he again came up behind her and groped her. The outraged woman decked him in the chest and called for security, at which point the man fled.

He has yet to be located. He is described as a short Hispanic male, about 5'3" and 130 pounds and in his late 20s. He has short dark hair and a very dark complexion.

ion. He was seen wearing a red T-shirt, tan shorts and white shoes.

POSSESSION OF DANGEROUS OBJECTS, PLYMOUTH ST./N. RENGSTORFF AVE., 8/15

An officer was flagged down by a middle-aged woman when she and her male companion ran out of gas. When the attending officer ran a records check, he found that the woman was on probation for drug violations. A search of the car revealed two crack pipes, a billy club and three steak knives. Both the man and woman were arrested and booked at the local jail.

POLICE LOG

ASSAULT

200 Block Jason Way, 8/20

IDENTITY THEFT

1000 Block Varsity Ct., 8/16

BATTERY

1900 Block Montecito Ave., 8/14
400 Block Castro St., 8/16
1300 Block Villa St., 8/17

PAROLE VIOLATION

900 Block E. El Camino Real, 8/16

BURGLARY/AUTO

100 Block Crestview Dr., 8/14
800 Block E. El Camino Real, 8/15
300 Block Hope St., 8/19

PETTY THEFT

200 Block Palo Alto Ave., 8/14
2400 Block Bayshore Pkwy., 8/15
100 Block E. Dana St., 8/15
W. El Camino Real/Mariposa Ave., 8/16
400 Block San Antonio Rd., 8/16
Amphitheatre Parkway, 8/16
Google, 8/17
4300 Block Sylvan Ave., 8/17
Wal-Mart, 8/17
300 Block Higdon Ave., 8/20

BURGLARY/COMMERCIAL

500 Block Showers Dr., 8/14
500 Block Castro St., 8/16
500 Block Showers Dr., 8/19

CORPORAL INJURY TO SPOUSE

1900 Block W. El Camino Real, 8/20

POSSESSION OF CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE

600 Block W. El Camino Real, 8/20

DISORDERLY CONDUCT

700 Block W. Dana St., 8/14
Dale Ave./E. El Camino Real, 8/14
2200 Block California St., 8/15
600 Block Showers Dr., 8/15
200 Block Castro St., 8/17
1200 Block La Avenida, 8/20
200 Block S. Rengstorff Ave., 8/20

ROBBERY

600 Block Showers Dr., 8/18

SUICIDE AND ATTEMPT

1800 Block California St., 8/19

DISTURBANCE

200 Block San Luis Ave., 8/15
800 Block Leong Dr., 8/19
Residence Inn, 8/20

SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES/PERSON

2600 Block Casey Ave., 8/15
600 Block Showers Dr., 8/16
500 Block Walker Dr., 8/19

DOMESTIC DISTURBANCE

Escuela Ave./Villa St., 8/17
700 Block Continental Cl., 8/19

THEFT BY FRAUD

100 Block E. El Monte Ave., 8/15

GRAND THEFT

500 Block Showers Dr., 8/14
100 Block La Avenida, 8/14
1900 Block Rock St., 8/15
2200 Block W. El Camino Real, 8/16
1600 Block Plymouth St., 8/16
Inigo Way/La Avenida, 8/16
600 Block Showers Dr., 8/20
500 Block Showers Dr., 8/20

UNDER INFLUENCE OF COCAINE

W. Middlefield Rd./N. Rengstorff Ave., 8/19

VANDALISM

Whisman School, 8/14
100 Block Permanente Way, 8/15
3100 Block Nita Ave., 8/17
300 Block Bryant St., 8/20
100 Block E. El Camino Real, 8/20

CORRECTIONS

■ Last week's review of Los Charros Restaurant and Cantina ("Portions fit for a cowboy") incorrectly stated that the restaurant does not have a kids' menu. Los Charros does offer a kids' menu.

tion, "The AC paradox," used an incorrect term for units of power. The amounts should have been in gigawatts, not gigahertz.

■ Forrest Linebarger's column in last week's Home & Garden sec-

■ Last week's front-page story "Paradigm shift at MV Whisman" misspelled the name of the company Synopsys.



Calling all volunteers

By Don Frances

AMID THE Rancho San Antonio open space, just off Cristo Rey Road, lies Deer Hollow Farm, and Gail Nyhan wants you to know that farm organizers are seeking volunteers to help around the place.

Nyhan is putting together an orientation at the library downtown, and training at the farm itself will be held soon after.

Deer Hollow is run by the city and supported financially by the city, the open space preserve, Santa Clara County and a nonprofit called Friends of Deer Hollow Farm. It's free to the public, open most days, and hosts several field trips per week from schools around the region.

"It's a gem," Nyhan told me — and only "15 minutes from Mountain View."

She added that "Many children from Mountain View come and also from around Santa Clara County. It's really fun and I love it, I've done it for three years" as a community volunteer.

Though Nyhan is a retired teacher, she emphasizes that volunteers need no prior teaching or other experience to help out at Deer Hollow.

"We give them complete training and a manual. And they get to shadow the experienced people," she said. The volunteers, she added, will "lead small groups of children around the farm or in the woods or in the Ohlone village — we have a replica Ohlone village there."

Prospective docents are invited to attend an orientation on Thursday, Sept. 6, from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. in the Community Room of the Mountain View Library, 585 Franklin St. Training will be held at Deer Hollow Farm on Sept. 18, 19, and 20 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Call (650) 903-6430 for more info or to sign up.

► See **EDITOR'S DESK**, page 6



MARJAN SADOUGHI

A view of Orion Park housing complex from Stevens Way and Moffett Boulevard in Mountain View.

Army's Orion project raises some eyebrows

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF MOFFETT TRAINING CENTER ARE BEING DOWNPLAYED, CRITICS CLAIM

By Daniel DeBolt

Part 1 of 3

The Army's plan for a huge new training center at Moffett Field is drawing heavy criticism from local watchdogs, who say it fails to properly address the impacts of air pollution and TCE contamination.

Last month, the Army released a "draft finding of no significant impact" for its planned combat training center

at Moffett. The 213-page report, authored by Tetra Tech for the Army, has drawn a volume of formal comments rarely seen for Moffett projects, said Bob Moss, co-chair of the Moffett Field Restoration Advisory Board.

The project will raze the vacant 360,000-square-foot Orion Park housing complex on Rte Jones Road — which only two years

ago was home to over 150 families — and replace its northern half with a 270,000-square-foot training center that will house 413 full-time employees and up to 735 reservists every weekend.

The solvent TCE is carcinogenic enough that the city of Mountain View has expressed concern about exposing construction workers to its vapors.

The groundwater beneath the site has long been known to be polluted with trichloroethylene, or TCE, an industrial solvent which can leak harmful vapors into the air. (The groundwater is not used as tap water.) Members of the advisory board almost universally dispute the Army report's claim that little more than ventilation systems in the

buildings will be needed to mitigate toxic vapor intrusion.

Who exactly is responsible for cleaning up the TCE is an age-old question, but advisory board members say the Army should make sure the large buildings don't get in the way of clean-up efforts. They also request that

a long-term plan to monitor indoor air in the complex be put in place.

Meanwhile, the Environmental Protection Agency wants assurance that there will be vapor barriers in building foundations, something being used at the Whisman Station housing development. Unsafe levels of TCE vapors have been found in several homes at Orion Park, Moss said, and there are even concerns about its presence in

► See **ORION**, page 12

Gangster to stand trial in triple shooting

Bay City News

An admitted Mountain View gang member could face life in prison when he stands trial on charges he shot three people, including a pregnant woman, over a drug dispute in East Palo Alto in December, a San Mateo County prosecutor said Monday.

Cruz Magana Valencia, 22, was held to answer by a San Mateo County Superior Court judge on three counts of attempted murder with an enhancement for criminal street gang activity and the use of a firearm resulting in great bodily injury, Deputy District Attorney Joe Cannon said. He will be arraigned in superior court on Sept. 5 to set a trial date.

On the night of Dec. 22, Valencia and two other men allegedly burst into the home of a 23-year-old pregnant woman, her boyfriend and a male roommate on West Bayshore Road, according to East Palo Alto police.

Valencia then allegedly shot all three, reportedly in retaliation for an argument over a large amount of methamphetamine, according to Cannon. One of the male victims is a former member of a rival gang, Cannon said.

All three shooting victims were hospitalized and survived, as did the woman's unborn child, which was only days old. During an earlier portion of Valencia's preliminary hearing on July 19, the woman testified that she was due to have her child on Aug. 13.

Though Valencia does not currently face charges regarding the unborn fetus, he could still face up to 75 years to life in prison if convicted, Cannon said.

Valencia, who according to Cannon is also facing charges for a series of robberies in Santa Clara County, remains in custody on a no-bail status in San Mateo County Jail. ▣

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SEEN AROUND TOWN

Sunset on Shoreline Lake



This photo of a beautiful sunset on Shoreline Lake — “captured as two boaters paddle their way across the lake” — was taken by C. Armando Aird of Space Park Way.

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EDITOR'S DESK

► Continued from page 5


MEANWHILE, the Community Health Awareness Council is seeking a bit of help during this year's Art & Wine Festival.

Have I mentioned the Art & Wine Festival? Well it's coming right up — Saturday, Sept. 8 and Sunday, Sept. 9.

Anyway, CHAC's Monique Kane told me the group plays a special role during the festival which is beneficial to all parties: “Every year the Chamber of Commerce asks CHAC to manage/run the parking lots for them at the Art & Wine Festival. What happens is that our volunteers work three-hour shifts collecting \$5 from each car, and all the proceeds go to help us serve kids and families.”

To help out with this, contact Monique at (650) 965-2020, ext. 13. Last I heard the slots were filling fast — so call soon for an easy way to contribute to one of this city's finest nonprofits.

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



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 Jean Slocum at (650) 473-1179

Locals take chloramine fight to EPA

By Daniel DeBolt

In an effort to help dozens of Peninsula residents, including 30 from Mountain View, who say their sensitivity to chloramine has caused skin rashes and respiratory problems, Congresswoman Anna Eshoo is pulling strings to allow them to speak with the Environmental Protection Agency's state office.

"Constituents have raised their serious concerns about chloramine," said Eshoo, D-Palo Alto. "I think it's important for the EPA and the Public Utility Commission to hear directly from them and I am facilitating this. The use of chloramine as a disinfectant in public water should be guided by sound science showing that it is both safe and effective."

Chloramine replaced chlorine as the disinfectant for Hetch Hetchy tap water in 2004. The switch had been recommended by the EPA to reduce the carcinogenic byproducts of chlorine.

Since then, however, more than 400 Bay Area residents have reported allergic reactions to chloramine, including skin rashes, respiratory problems and inflamed digestive tracts, according to the Menlo Park-based Citizens Concerned About Chloramine.

That group's president, Denise Johnson-Kula, said the goal of the meeting, scheduled for Aug. 27, is to start a discussion with the EPA about providing a "waiver" to local water agencies allowing them to go back to chlorine use — despite whatever effects that may have on byproducts in the tap water.

On the Peninsula, this could put responsibility for the problem back into the hands of the local water provider, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, which has said its switch to chloramine was prompted by EPA recommendations.

The group has joined forces with others from as far away as Vermont to build a national movement to stem the disinfectant's use until studies can be done on its health effects. The renewed effort came after a California bill to study chloraminated tap water, authored by Assemblymember Ira Ruskin, failed for the second year in a row this summer.

The groups celebrated one of their first victories two weeks ago, when a handful of residents in Pennsylvania were able to delay a switch to chloramine by the Pennsylvania-based American Water Company. Opponents said proper

studies of its health effects had not been conducted.

One-third of the country has already converted to the disinfectant, said Kula. Water agencies, meanwhile, say some places have used chloramine since the early 1900s with no problems.

The EPA recommended that water agencies switch to chloramine to reduce trihalomethanes, a carcinogenic byproduct of chlorine disinfection. But the byproducts of chloramine are even more dangerous, according to Dr. Michael Plewa, professor of genetics at the University of Illinois, who recently published a study on tap water disinfection byproducts.

In an e-mail to the *Voice*, Plewa stated that the byproducts of chloramine are "much more toxic" than chlorine's — and that these byproducts are found in California water supplies. He recommends that water agencies switch back to chlorine.

Whether chloramine itself can be linked to people's health problems has yet to be studied. David Ozonoff, MD, a professor of public health at Boston University, says that question is definitely worth looking into.

"A close temporal relationship between the treatment change and the complaints of water users strongly suggests that one is the cause of the other," he wrote in a letter to Vermont-based People Concerned About Chloramine.

"Without a more detailed study of the matter it is not possible to say this definitively, but it is plausible that something about the treatment change has caused this. Water chemistry is complicated and sometimes produces unexpected and untoward results. The complaints are notice to look into the matter."

Such chemistry may have affected water supplies in Los Altos, where lead content is regularly tested. Following the introduction of chloramine, water in several homes was found to contain lead levels over the public safety limit, possibly due to the way chloraminated tap water reacts with the lead-soldered plumbing in older homes.

Greg Hosfeldt, business manager of the Mountain View Public Works Department, said 24 random water samples were taken from Mountain View homes and wells after the switch to chloramine in 2004. Lead levels were not found to be over the maximum level, he said. The city is slated to test its water again in September.

More information can be found at www.chloramine.org. ■

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City to host cop records workshop

By Daniel DeBolt

According to a recent survey, getting public records from police departments in Santa Clara County can be a challenge. A workshop Aug. 31 in Mountain View is intended to improve the situation.

The workshop is being held by Californians Aware, a non-profit that recently audited 261 law enforcement agencies around the state for their ability to produce public records as required under the California Public Records Act. Two-thirds of state agencies got an F grade, including six in Santa Clara County, when they failed to provide police reports and other public records in a timely manner to newspaper reporters posing as members of the public.

While Mountain View wasn't included in the audit, the results were compelling enough for Jennifer Sudano, MVPD records supervisor, to respond when local departments were asked to host the county-wide workshop.

Emily Francke, executive director of Californians Aware, said the goal is to teach police how to go about providing information to the public "without breaking the law." Departments are supposed to follow the California Public Records Act when dealing with records requests.

Francke said police often make the mistake of requiring that information requests are put in writing, or that the requester give identifying information.

"We truly believe it works against the agency when they, without thinking, act in a very closed way," Francke said. "They usually aren't trying to hide anything. They are usually trying to be overly cautious. It usually ends up making the public think they are trying to hide something."

So far, dozens of law enforcement officers have signed up for the workshop, including the police departments of San Jose, Campbell, Los Altos, Palo Alto and the county sheriff's department.

Ten employees of the Mountain View Police department will attend, according to MVPD spokesperson Liz Wylie, including the records department and the dispatch department, which handles requests for transcripts of 911 calls.

City council members may also attend, though Wylie said the event is closed to the public. ■

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

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NORBERT VON DER GROEBEN

Left to right: is Amy Chang, Angelina Boyrak, Tyler Thomas and Jessica Villarreal wait in line to enter kindergarten at Landels Elementary School on their first day Tuesday.

SCHOOL

► Continued from page 1

of first graders crisscrossed with third graders as students marched around the playground following their teachers. The school gathered around a circle to listen to the principal and sing the school song.

"I'm proud to be a Landels lion," they sang, "It's great to be a Landels lion. ... Every kid and every teacher, all of us together, Landels is the place for me."

The children looked happy to be back at school.

"I want to be in this school forever. I want to be in the first grade forever," said Sylvia, a first grader.

At Mountain View High, students had more conflicted feelings about returning to school — mostly because they knew they would also have to return to homework.

"It's bittersweet," Stephanie Yanaga, 15, said about her first day back as a sophomore. "It's nice to see everyone again, but then I have to go to class. I have to work now and use my brain," she said.

"You have to wake up early, that's the worst part," said Priscilla Purro, 15. During the summer, she said, she got used to waking up in the afternoon.

"You start off to a new year, meet new people and get to hang out with friends," Serenna Amador, 15, said

as she held two thick books.

CI's first day

Zoe, a fifth grader at Landels Elementary School, pensively wrote three rules in her notebook on her first day of school Tuesday.

"Don't throw water. Don't throw rocks. Don't interrupt when other people are talking."

Another student wrote: "Don't sneak out of the classroom."

She and 29 classmates sat in groups of six and read their self-written rules out loud. Their teacher, Pam Allan, directed the class as the students interacted.

"The idea of the rules is this is going to help us be a good learn-

► Continued on next page

EDUCATION BRIEFS

MORE LOCAL GRADS ATTEND UC SCHOOLS

Mountain View High School saw a 22 percent increase in the number of graduating seniors attending University of California schools this fall, according to administrators. Los Altos High School saw a 15 percent increase.

The increase is partially due to an increase in the total number of graduating seniors from both high schools.

Of the 404 Mountain View High graduates this year, 122 said they planned to attend a UC school, with 27 going to UC Berkeley and 26 to UC Davis. Two planned to go to Stanford, one to Cornell, and one to the University of Pennsylvania.

At Los Altos High, of the 399 graduates, 10 said they planned to go to UC Berkeley, 15 to UC Davis, and 24 to UC Santa Cruz.

Two students planned to attend Harvard, one to Yale, and two to John's Hopkins University.

NEW WEB PROGRAM AIDS COLLEGE RESEARCH

The Mountain View-Los Altos Union High School District is now offering a free Internet research tool whereby students can find what they need to know about particular colleges.

For example, students interested in applying to a particular college can find out how many students from their own high school have been accepted, see their average GPA and SAT scores, and in that way gauge their likelihood of gaining admission.

SCIENCE, ENGINEERING VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Project RE-SEED, which stands

for "Retirees Enhancing Science Education through Experiments and Demonstrations," is looking for volunteers to help improve their middle school science education program.

Ideally, RE-SEED is looking for people with expertise in the areas of science, engineering, technology and math who want to help kids in grades six through eight better appreciate science. The program's goal is to prepare middle school students for careers in science and technology.

Volunteers will help in the classrooms and labs. In the past, volunteers have developed experiments and demonstrations to enhance curriculum.

For more information, contact coordinator Peter Muller at (650) 303-6893 or pklusm@mac.com.

— Susan Hong

► Continued from previous page

er,” she said to her class. “Think back to your second grade,” she said. “Some of you have some good rules,” she added.

Tuesday’s class was Allan’s first time implementing Continuous Improvement, Mountain View Whisman’s new educational approach. About 80 percent of the teachers at Landels began using CI this year, Principal Phyllis Rodgers said.

Students in Allan’s class eagerly raised their hands and stood up in front of the class to present their group’s rules.

“It’s cool to make your own rules, but then you have to go by the rules that you make,” Isabella Wenneberg, 9, said. She had done her own rule-making before, she said.

“One time I had to make up a game in five minutes,” she said. “It was at a birthday party.”

Allan called the notion of students making their own rules “the affinity design.” Eventually, she said, the students collectively will choose their top eight most

important rules. Allan said she can’t arbitrarily throw out rules — such as no sneaking out of the classroom — but she and her class will discuss whether one rule may be more important than another. By consensus, the students will then select the most important rules, Allan said.

She also plans to convert the rules into more positive affirmations, such as “be respectful” and “share with your friends,” she said.

After the students choose their most important rules, Allan, two additional fifth grade teachers, and the principal will consolidate the rules from all fifth grade classes and make a master ground rules list, she said.

The students then promise to abide by the rules by signing their names to them.

“They have a say in the choice of the rule and have a say in ranking them. These are rules that help me be a learner,” Allan said. ▀

E-mail Susan Hong at shong@mv-voice.com

STAR

► Continued from page 1

were mixed this year, overall the district performed better than the state average in English-language arts, with eighth graders scoring four points higher than the state average.

Even so, “math’s an issue,” said Superintendent Maurice Ghysels. “I’m not satisfied with the numbers.”

Walters concurred, though she noted that California has the strictest standards in the country.

The STAR program, given annually, tests all California students at grades two through 11 in English-language arts, mathematics, science and history/social science. Scores fall into five categories: advanced, proficient, basic, below basic and far below basic. The state goal is to have all students score at a proficient or advanced level, according to STAR program materials.

The district continued to see huge achievement gaps. Latinos scored two to three times worse than their white and Asian classmates. African-Americans improved slightly, but still trailed more than 20 points behind whites and Asians.

About 48 percent of the district’s students are English language learners, Lairon noted.

Holding back students who test below proficient is not a consideration for administrators because California exit exams allow students to graduate from high school with an eighth grade

proficiency in math, administrators said.

“The percentage of kids not graduating from middle school is very, very low,” Walters said. She added that “Our teachers wouldn’t promote kids if they didn’t believe that the kids wouldn’t be served by the high school.”

“In general, expectations need to rise. With that said, if you look at retention at eighth grade, that’s a conversation with site principals, with the families, what’s in the best interest of kids.”

Ghysels said he plans to have the district use Continuous Improvement methodologies this year to assess the data and decide what schools need to do to improve scores. To meet California and federal standards, the district is currently developing a new district-wide math program that will adopt California standards’ textbooks, he said.

Part of the new math program will include integrating more math-based projects in subjects such as English and social studies, Ghysels added.

“We have to believe that every kid can get to the highest levels,” he said.

Lairon will be heading up a new ad-hoc math team to address proficiency concerns. The team is scheduled to present its solutions in May 2008.

“We want every child to be successful and that’s what we’re about,” Lairon said. “We’re committed to every student.” ▀

E-mail Susan Hong at shong@mv-voice.com



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ORION

► Continued from page 5

the outdoor air.

The solvent is carcinogenic enough that the city of Mountain View has expressed concern about exposing construction workers to its vapors, according to a comment letter written by Kevin Woodhouse, assistant to the city manager.

The Army's report claims that the source of the TCE plume is the so-called "MEW" Superfund site across Highway 101. But NASA, the EPA and other agencies say there is evidence to the contrary, and the source of the plume is still under investigation.

Lenny Siegel, an advisory board member and director of the Center for Public Environmental Oversight (CPEO), has said the responsibility to clean up the TCE will likely fall on the Navy, which has left Moffett Field.

Siegel accused Tetra Tech of repeating its prior false reports "downplaying exposures likely to cause chronic health problems." He said the

report "reflects Tetra Tech's conflict of interest, because the [environmental analysis] cites another, problematic Tetra Tech study prepared for the Navy."

Global warming may also be a factor. In CPEO's official comments, Peter Kraus wrote that a predicted five-foot rise in sea level during the lifespan of the buildings could raise groundwater levels — which are now five to 12 feet below ground — leading to more toxic vapors emanating from the soil.

Army spokesperson Don Sundius told the *Voice* a year ago that the main use of the Army's new facility would be to train Army reservists in the medical field. But it would also be used for more of the psychological operations and civil affairs work already being done at Moffett. Plans include a weapons simulator, but no real weapons will be used at the site, which is across the street from the NASA child care center.

Despite the criticisms, the Army is seeking a silver certification for green building

from the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. Woodhouse said the city is offering use of its recycled water program.

The Army said in its report that it is required by federal law to "initiate all realignments not later than Sept. 15, 2007, and complete all realignments not later than Sept. 15, 2011."

Moss and Siegel say the Army is also obligated to file an official environmental impact study. While they may not be legally required to, politicians like Congresswoman Ann Eshoo have held the military's feet to the fire in the past over environmental studies and may do so again, Moss said.

The Army had previously backed out of scheduled presentations to the Restoration Advisory Board about the project. Moss said the Army probably thought there would be little opposition, but "that's not the way things work around here," he said. ■

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

COUNCIL

► Continued from page 1

your money give it to the police, they need it!" he shouted to council members.

RoseMary Sias Roquero, a board member of the Mountain View Whisman School District, said she was concerned that, "as good as the police may be," visibility in the park would be a problem.

Council members vowed to fix the crime problem in the neighborhood "immediately."

Neighbors said that as police patrol the new park while driving down Mariposa Avenue, they would not be able to see the whole area, as roughly a third of it would be tucked behind homes. That last third could be seen from the end of West Dana Street, but neighbors said police would find it inconvenient to back in and out of the small cul-de-sac.

Council member Matt Pear said he watched the city open Klein Park from his house on Ortega Avenue, which he said was "Gangland USA" during the 1990s. Neighbors used video cameras to get gang members to stop hanging out at the park.

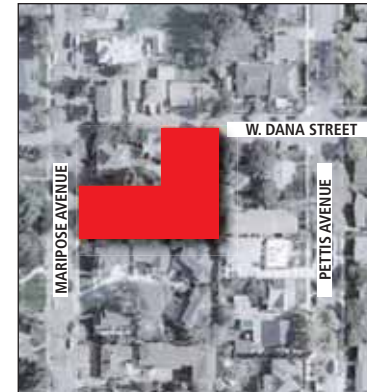
Police, for their part, recommended a different approach: lights for the park at night, something no mini-park currently has.

Nick Perry, the author of a pictorial history of Mountain View, submitted his own proposal: Close Dana Street between Pettis and Palo Alto Avenue and turn the half-acre street area into a park.

Perry, who has a master's degree in city planning, said the street section had no homes facing it and

would have little impact on traffic — a "textbook" opportunity, he said, for the city to create a park without spending money.

The council, however, had little to say about the idea, though three



members ended up endorsing alternative plans.

Macias explained her opposition to the motion, saying good leadership should be able to "turn on a dime" in response to the public's concerns — in this case concerns about crime and affordable housing. Siegel said the city should explore buying the view-blocking corner lot before park designs are drawn.

Other members said they had to consider the needs of the entire neighborhood. Neighbors were told that the "charming" old homes on the site would have to go anyway due to age and code violations. Council member Ronit Bryant said the city had been looking for a park property in the neighborhood for at least six years. ■

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

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COUNCIL BRIEFS

ABAG COULD GIVE WHISMAN HOMES A LIFT

The City Council voted Tuesday to give 600 to 800 planned homes along Ferguson Drive a potential boost from the Association of Bay Area Governments FOCUS program, which provides financial incentives and technical assistance to large neighborhoods that are examples of "smart growth."

Added together, the already-completed Whisman Station and not-yet-approved South Whisman projects total 90 acres, making the area a candidate for the program. Incentives could include money for public facilities and help with development studies.

Meanwhile, the city's Environmental Planning Commission devoted its last two meetings to the South Whisman project, taking a tour of the site and discussing the need for a good plan for pedestrian access, trees and landscaping on the 38 acres. The top concern of neighbors continues to be housing density.

COUNCIL WAVERS ON MAYFIELD TUNNEL

A long tunnel under Central Expressway could connect 495 homes at 100 Mayfield Avenue to the San Antonio train station, but concerns raised about women's safety in the tunnel could kill the project.

Despite those concerns, the council voted on Tuesday to spend \$75,000 for a feasibility study.

"A lot of people seem to be afraid of a long tunnel," said council member Jac Siegel, who said he was hesitant about spending millions for a project "that may not yield anything." Council member Tom Means said he also was leaning against the idea.

Mayor Laura Macias was its biggest proponent, saying the city should take its commitment to transit-oriented development very seriously, even if it means building a bridge over Central Expressway instead. However, she said, the bridge is an idea no one has expressed interest in.

— Daniel DeBolt



Larry's Knows...

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HEAD-GASKET FAILURE

White smoke from an exhaust pipe (even after the engine warms up) is likely due to the presence of either motor oil in the radiator or water/antifreeze mixture in the motor oil, indicating failure of the head gasket. Most head-gasket failures are due to either general or localized overheating of the engine. Thus, it is a mistake simply to replace the head gasket and not explore the cause of the overheating. Areas that deserve a check include a broken water pump belt, an inoperative engine fan, a clogged radiator, or a leaking coolant hose. Sometimes, a clogged coolant passage in the cylinder head or head gasket can also cause localized overheating that leads to a blown gasket.

Have you noticed white smoke coming from your exhaust

system? If you have, at Larry's AutoWorks, we recommend that you bring your car, truck, or SUV to our technicians right away so that we may examine and inspect your vehicle, including your head gasket. Located at 101 Freeway on Leghorn between San Antonio and Rengstorff in Mountain View. Take the Rengstorff exit south, then right on Leghorn. We have years of knowledge and expertise which means that we can better serve you. We pride our selves on our personal service, and caring technicians. Call us if you have any questions.

HINT: The head gasket is positioned between the engine block and the cylinder head.

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Melody Dye

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E-mail Classified
ads@MV-VOICE.com

E-mail Circulation
circulation@MV-VOICE.com

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■ EDITORIAL THE OPINION OF THE VOICE

School's new paradigm could come with a price

It isn't often that a school district steps out of the traditional educational mold and adopts a totally new concept of teaching.

But that is exactly what Mountain View Whisman did last week with "Continuous Improvement," an operational system perhaps best suited to a corporate setting.

The new approach is entirely the creature of Maurice Ghysels, superintendent of the elementary school district, whose idea has won the unanimous support of the five-member board of trustees, as well as an apparent majority of the district's teaching staff.

As described in last week's *Voice*, MV-Whisman teachers are currently undergoing training for the Continuous Improvement system, also known as CI. There are many unusual facets to CI, including:

- All students in grades K-8 take responsibility for their own education by creating mission statements and setting personal goals;

- Students create a personal binder to track their academic progress and lead (rather than sit out) parent-teacher conferences twice a year;

- Students work with teachers at the beginning of the school year to set ground rules on what they think makes a good teacher.

The idea in all this is to change the top-down learning model prevalent in most classrooms today, and to make students feel more invested in their own education.

Obviously, it's too early to know how effective CI will be. But it is certain to be influential, and an assessment of its potential pros and cons may be helpful for parents.

On the plus side, students will be given a greater voice in the classroom — apparently to the point of calling teachers' lesson plans into question — which is sure to make them more engaged. It is expected that, as a result of increased student interest, test scores will rise, although it is too early to know when or by how much.

On the minus side, the district is adopting a relatively experimental technique that has been tried by only a small handful of school districts around the country. We worry that this system may put many years of teaching experience behind the whims of children who, by definition, have no experience.

We have another, more abstract concern as well: CI is rife with corporate-world jargon, going so far as to refer to students and parents as "customers" and "stakeholders."

We find this distasteful and potentially dangerous, because using these words blurs the distinction between the business world and our public education system. By getting people to accept this rhetoric, the district takes a step toward the privatization of public schools, intentionally or not.

More to the point, students are not customers. And despite the old adage, they aren't always right.

In his remarks to teachers attending the CI introductory meeting last week, Ghysels said, "I think it is really neat that we are in uncharted territory, and with your help we'll get to the other side."

Parents can only hope that he is right. CI is an entirely new approach, and if it fails to meet expectations, some 3,500 students could pay a high price for this experiment.

■ LETTERS VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

FEATHERED FRIENDS VS. MAN'S BEST FRIEND

Editor:

Your article about the geese at Shoreline was very timely ("Goose lavatory" at Shoreline Park," Aug. 17). We were out there hiking recently and spoke about how bad the situation had become.

About two weeks ago we were in Incline Village at Lake Tahoe and I happened to see a notice on the bulletin board at Incline Beach thanking volunteer dog owners for helping to clear the area of the geese. Apparently people signed up at certain times to bring their dogs (preferably large ones) to chase the geese off, and it appears to have worked.

Perhaps this might be worth a try at Shoreline. It's also convenient that there is a dog park in the area, so perhaps some owners would be willing to sign up for different times to have their dogs chase the geese. Worth a try.

Glenis Koehne
Sunnyvale

ing if the situation requires it.

I have not bicycled in Munich, but did I mention my bicycle bell was obtained in Bern, Switzerland some years ago and that it remains my most valued bicycling possession, as well as one of the most utilized?

Most walkers and bikers are courteous and aware of other traffic, but I remain steadfast in my claim that some distracted pedestrians are at least as much to blame as the hurtling bikers hither referred to. Walking groups have no more right to block the entire pathway than have careless high-speed bikers who startle walkers from their quiet appreciation of nature's beauties.

In fact, I too appreciate nature's beauty. Many times you will encounter me off my bike beside the path (not on it) observing and photographing a nearby hawk, goose, egret or pelican. The homeward ride is my time to de-stress, and I would no more consider using El Camino Real than would Chambreau.

Steve Roselle
Barbara Avenue

BIKERS, WALKERS MUST STRIKE A BALANCE

Editor:

If I have offended reader Mike Chambreau with my previous week's letter, it was not my intention (Viewpoint, Aug. 10 and 17). Rather, I had hoped to strike a balance of responsibility between pedestrians and bicyclists at Shoreline Park.

Let me assure Chambreau that I always yield to pedestrians when passing or overtaking them by slowing, announcing, going around as necessary, and gladly yielding all the time they require to become aware of my presence. Yes, even dismount-

WARNING ON LASD'S 'ZERO TOLERANCE'

Editor:

School is back in session, and we urge all LASD parents to educate themselves about district disciplinary policies.

When our son was involved in a disciplinary action last May, we were caught unaware. We were unfamiliar with district policy and knew very little about the California Ed Code or state Zero Tolerance policies. Because suspension and expulsion happens infrequently in LASD, and we think it can never happen to

▶ See **LETTERS**, page 14



From saris to blue jeans

AS INDIANS BECOME MORE WESTERNIZED,
SOME WORRY THEY'RE LOSING THEIR IDENTITY

By Chitra Singla

In August 1947, India emerged bold and triumphant from the shackles of British rule. Today, 60 years later, Indians have traversed boundaries and scaled new heights in technology, medicine and business.

From the land of snake charmers to the intellectual capital of the world, from cultivating land to stirring the e-revolution, from bullock carts and camels to satellite launch vehicles, India has come a long way. However, as Indians embrace the modern world and make rapid strides in their fields of interest, there is a section of their very own society which accuses them of having lost their identity to the influence of the West.

"Namaste" is responded to with "Hi baby"; your Maruti car gets replaced by an SUV; saris make way for figure-hugging jeans and dal-chawal gets upstaged by pasta ... so reads a *Times of India* article, on the eve of Indian Independence Day. There are similar stories making the rounds. All of them seem to question the Indian quotient, in the wake of liberalization and multi-nationalization.

But is Indian-ness just about food, fashion and lingo? Or is it a sentiment that delves deep in the heart of every Indian? As an Indian living here in Mountain View, I am inspired to get a perspective from local residents of Indian descent. Let's find out what Indian-ness means to them.

First, let me introduce my husband, Anurag Singla. He's a software engineer from India. Indian-ness, to him, "means more than carrying forth the Indian traditions. Indian-ness to me is to

work towards the development of India, and lead it to new grounds of advancement."

This may already be happening: A graduate of the Indian Institute of Technology, Anurag says he has always received praise and appreciation from his American peers for the quality of engineers produced by the IITs.

To Ashish Garg, a resident of Mountain View with a Ph.D. in computer science who works for a network security start-up, the spirit of India is embodied in its "culture, tradition, values, family and respect for elders."

Over on Castro Street, Chitra Sharma holds forth on the subject. Chitra, who holds a master's degree in electronics, feels that "India-ness is not about saari, ghagra or dhoti-kurta; it's about unity in diversity, spirituality and values, and being aware." She fondly recalls how she amazed a Catholic American lady with her splendid recitation of Sanskrit shlokas.

Every Indian that I spoke with in Mountain View seems to echo some version of this sentiment, which runs deeper than an American accent, flashy cars and sexy jeans. Ashish is "motivated to learn the very best," from his American peers, he said. Anurag likes Americans for their "professionalism, excellent education system and research facilities."

Adopting best practices from the West does not make these people any less Indian. It only means they're open to new vistas, and interested in excelling at whatever they do.

Chitra Singla is a marketing and communications professional living on Continental Circle. She has lived in the U.S. for over a year.

LETTERS

► Continued from page 13

us, it is important that parents gird themselves with information.

The ACLU has put together a detailed, easy-to-read resource for students and parents, which fully explains suspensions and expulsions, at www.aclunc.org/youth/publications/asset_upload_file431_2976.pdf. Information on the state ZT policy can be found at www.cde.ca.gov/lr/ss/se/zero_tolerance.asp.

While school boards may cover a number of infractions with their ZT policies, a district's policies may not supersede state policy.

We hope that all LASD staff, students and parents/guardians have received a copy of the district's discipline and ZT policy as part of the "back-to-school" packet. If not, those materials can be requested from the superintendent's office. Go over the policies with your students and make sure they understand the possible consequences of their actions.

And encourage LASD trustees to educate themselves as well. Students, parents, staff, administrators and trustees all benefit when everyone's on the same page.

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■ RESTAURANT REVIEW

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Mid-priced passage to India

WITH FILLING, FLAVORFUL FOOD, PALO ALTO'S DARBAR EARNS ITS PLACE AMONG THE YEARLY FAVORITES

By Sheila Himmel

When Pargat Dhillon opened a little Palo Alto storefront in 1995, Darbar joined a small band of Indian restaurants between here and San Jose. Now there are hundreds, from little chaat houses serving snacks over the counter to the upscale fusion palaces, about which Dhillon says, "They don't know much about Indian food."

Today, Darbar often wins Best Indian Restaurant, and not because of its location on

an edge of downtown Palo Alto. You could happen to walk by on your way to the train station, but then you'd have the train to catch. I had only driven by for many years.

Darbar takes its place on the Best Of list because of the restaurant's special features: value, good service and a wide-ranging menu that does chicken particularly proud. Lamb, less so.

The North-South Indian menu takes a vegetarian-centric approach. There are 15

► See **DARBAR**, page 16



NORBERT VON DER GROEBEN

Venkat Viswarathan has lunch at Darbar Indian Cuisine on Monday. Darbar is a veteran restaurant in downtown Palo Alto.

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DARBAR

► Continued from page 15

vegetarian entrees, a handful of fish/seafood entrees, and 10 lamb/chicken dishes. Even the categories take the vegetarian point of view. Lamb and chicken come under the heading "Non-Vegetarian Entrees," and the traditional combination dinners are labeled "Thali (Non-Vegetarian)" and "Thali (Vegetarian)."

At dinner, each table starts with complimentary fried potato slices and two palate-tingling sauces. The rich red chile sauce is less spicy than the green one, mint-cilantro.

Darbar's small wine list includes appropriate Californians like Fetzer Gewurztraminer and four from India's Sula, topping out at \$22 a bottle. All are available by the glass, \$3.50 to \$5. Our server opened the bottle and poured each of the three of us a taste. I'm not sure, but I think he would have kept trying new bottles until we were all satisfied.

Darbar's loyal fans are used to this level of service. If they want a dish that's not on the menu, the chef makes it for them.

Back at the table, tandoori mixed appetizers (\$8.95) were transferred from a sizzling metal platter to a serving plate. This is a nice touch. The food doesn't continue to cook, and diners don't have to steer clear of hot metal. Juicy prawns and tender chunks of chicken, white meat and dark, bode well for tandoori entrees. Only the lamb sausage lacked oomph.

Mixed bhajias (\$5.95), a sample of fried appetizers, were hot, crisp and lightly coated eggplant, potatoes and chilies. Your vegetables may vary.

South India's stuffed pancakes are pretty good, too, with crunchy edges. The lamb-filled kheema masala dosa (\$6.95) gets mentioned a lot. My resident dosa fan prefers the texture of the vegetarian masala dosa (\$5.95), stuffed with mashed potatoes and peas.

In the rich North Indian rice dish of lamb biriani (\$13.95), chunks of lamb were a little dry.

A better choice, lightly breaded fish curry (\$13.95), harmonically merged a mouthful of herbs and spices in thick gravy.

Portions are generous, especially on the combination dinners served on round thali platters. The non-vegetarian thali features good-sized bowls of lamb curry (in a gravy that was totally different from fish curry), minced lamb balls in a milder curry sauce, and rich butter chicken with shreds of tender

► Continued on next page



Plain rice, Aloo Gobhi, Chana Mashla, butter chicken and Tandoori chicken from Darbar Indian Cuisine.

NORBERT VON DER GROEBEN

► Continued from previous page

breast meat in tomato sauce. The supporting cast includes steaming basmati rice, a large fritter stuffed with chopped lamb, smaller fried pakoras (oozing cheese or vegetables like cauliflower and eggplant), thin lentil soup, flatbread, lentil crackers, cooling cucumber-yogurt raita,

sweet chutney, spicy pickles and, for dessert, soupy rice pudding.

For one of Palo Alto's few lunch bargains, the weekday buffet is no secret. Wait till 1:30 p.m. and you can have it to yourself, with Darbar's veteran chef still bringing out fresh reinforcements to 15 dishes. Even on the buffet table, tandoori chicken legs stood up nicely. ■

■ DINING NOTES

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Weekend

MOVIE TIMES

2 DAYS IN PARIS (R) (Not Reviewed)

Aquarius: 2:30, 4:45, 7:15 & 9:40 p.m.; Sat. & Sun. also at 12:15 p.m.

ARCTIC TALE (G) (Not Reviewed) **Century 20:** 12:35, 2:45 & 5:05 p.m.

BECOMING JANE (PG) ★★1/2 **Century 20:** 1:45, 4:40, 7:25 & 10:05 p.m.

THE BOURNE ULTIMATUM (PG-13) ★★1/2

Century 16: 12:55, 3:40, 6:55, 7:40, 9:35 & 10:25 p.m.

Century 20: 12:20, 2, 3:05, 5, 5:55, 7:45, 8:45 & 10:30 p.m.

DADDY DAY CAMP (PG) (Not Reviewed)

Century 20: 12:30, 2:55 & 5:20 p.m.

DEATH AT A FUNERAL (R) ★★1/2 **Century 20:** 12:05, 2:25,

4:45, 7:10 & 9:35 p.m. **Guild:** 12:30, 2:45, 5, 7:15 & 9:30 p.m.

EL CANTANTE (R) ★1/2 **Century 12:** 7:15 & 10:25 p.m.

HAIRSPRAY (PG) ★★1/2 **Century 16:** 12:50, 3:50, 7:05 & 9:50 p.m.

Century 20: 1:50, 4:55, 7:35 & 10:10 p.m.

HARRY POTTER AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX (PG-13) ★★1/2

Century 16: 12:30, 3:35, 6:50 & 9:55 p.m.

Century 12: 1:20, 4:40 & 7:50 p.m.

I NOW PRONOUNCE YOU CHUCK AND LARRY (PG-13) ★★

Century 12: 12:45 & 3:35 p.m.

ILLEGAL TENDER (R) (Not Reviewed)

Century 16: 1:20, 4, 7:35 & 10:15 p.m. **Century 12:** 12:30, 1:50, 3:10,

4:30, 6, 7:20, 9 & 10:20 p.m.

THE INVASION (PG-13) ★★1/2

Century 16: 12:30, 1:40, 3:05, 4:20, 5:30, 7:15, 7:55, 9:40 & 10:20 p.m.

Century 20: Noon, 1:15, 2:30, 3:45, 5, 6:15, 7:30, 8:50 & 10:05 p.m.

KNOCKED UP (R) ★★1/2 **Century 20:** 7:25 & 10:25 p.m.

THE LAST LEGION (PG-13) (Not Reviewed) **Century 20:** 12:10 & 5:40 p.m.

LIVE FREE OR DIE HARD (R) ★★1/2 **Century 20:** 2:40 & 8:10 p.m.

MR. BEAN'S HOLIDAY (G) (Not Reviewed) **Century 16:** 12:20,

2:40, 5:15, 7:50 & 10:10 p.m. **Century 12:** 12:40, 1:40, 3, 4:10, 5:30, 7,

8:20, 9:30 & 10:35 p.m.

THE NANNY DIARIES (PG-13) ★1/2 **Century 16:** 1:15, 4:30, 7:30

& 10:05 p.m. **Century 20:** 12:10, 1:40, 3, 4:30, 5:50, 7:20, 8:40 & 10:10 p.m.

NO END IN SIGHT (NOT RATED) ★★1/2

Aquarius: 1:45, 4:15, 6:45 & 9:10 p.m.

NO RESERVATIONS (PG) ★★1/2

Century 20: 12:15, 2:50, 5:15, 7:50 & 10:25 p.m.

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: AT WORLD'S END (PG-13) ★★1/2

Century 20: 8:35 p.m.

RATATOUILLE (G) ★★1/2 **Century 16:** 1:30, 4:15 & 7:05 p.m.

Century 20: 2, 4:50, 7:40 & 10:20 p.m.

RESURRECTING THE CHAMP (PG-13) (Not Reviewed)

Century 20: 1:30, 4:30, 7:20 & 10:20 p.m.

RUSH HOUR 3 (PG-13) (Not Reviewed)

Century 16: 12:35, 2:55, 5:10, 7:20, 9:30 & 10:15 p.m.

Century 12: 12:35, 1:30, 4:20, 6:15, 7:40 & 10:10 p.m.

SEPTEMBER DAWN (R) (Not Reviewed) **Century 12:** 12:50, 3:40, 7:10 & 10 p.m.

SICKO (PG-13) ★★1/2 **Century 20:** 7:05 & 9:55 p.m.

THE SIMPSONS MOVIE (PG-13) (Not Reviewed) **Century 16:**

12:35, 2:50, 5:05, 7:25 & 10 p.m. **Century 12:** 1:10, 3:30, 5:45, 8 & 10:15 p.m.

STARDUST (PG-13) ★★1/2

Century 16: 1:05, 4:10, 7:10 & 10:05 p.m. **Century 20:** 1, 4, 7 & 10 p.m.

SUPERBAD (R) (Not Reviewed) **Century 16:** 12:45, 2:15, 3:55, 4:55, 7,

7:45, 9:45 & 10:30 p.m. **Century 12:** 1, 2:15, 4, 5:15, 7:30, 8:30 & 10:30 p.m.

TRANSFORMERS (PG-13) ★★ **Century 12:** 2:55 & 8:40 p.m.

UNDERDOG (PG) (Not Reviewed) **Century 16:** 12:40, 2:45 & 4:50 p.m.

Century 20: 12:25, 2:35 & 4:45 p.m.

WAR (R) (Not Reviewed) **Century 16:** 12:25, 3, 5:30, 8 & 10:30 p.m.

Century 20: Noon, 12:45, 1:30, 2:25, 3:10, 3:55, 4:50, 5:35, 6:20, 7:20,

8:05, 8:50, 9:45 & 10:30 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)

For show times, plot synopses and more information about any films playing at the Aquarius, Guild and Park, visit www.LandmarkTheatres.com

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

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



MOVIE REVIEWS



THE BOURNE ULTIMATUM

★★★1/2

(Century 16, Century 20) As amnesiac super-agent Jason Bourne, Matt Damon successfully fronts a full-throttle action thriller that's the culmination of a smashing trilogy. As always Bourne is on the run, intent on avenging the loss of his victims and trying in his own immutable way to apologize for his past. Seems Bourne's brainwashing is backfiring: In snatches of memory he's re-living his past, those murky days when his average Joe was on the cusp of enduring high-profile CIA assassination training. Those recollections kick-start a mission as Bourne seeks to reclaim himself from himself. Paranoia runs rampant; scene after scene is fraught with kinetic hypertension. As Bourne closes in on his reality he butts up against the powers that be and continually and satisfyingly beats them at their own game. *Rated: PG-13 for intense action and violence. 1 hour, 53 minutes.* — J.A.

DEATH AT A FUNERAL ★★1/2

(Guild) One expects decorum at a funeral, but the outrageous events that unspool in director Frank Ozís wickedly funny comedy provoke more laughter than if the upper-crust British family depicted were at a birthday celebration. The ensemble cast members play their parts with a seriousness befitting the solemn occasion. The inappropriate and uncontrollable laughter you hear will be your own. The structural idea is simple: Gather a group for the funeral of a beloved man. Toss in a mysterious stranger and a bottle of hallucinogenic pills mislabeled as Valium. So when Martha (Daisy Donovan of iMillions!), the niece of the deceased, unknowingly gives her nervous boyfriend Simon (Alan Tudyk of iKnocked Up!) a tablet of acid, he starts to behave in the most peculiar ways. But before his trip can become a one-note affair, the stranger (Peter Dinklage of iThe Station Agent!) complicates matters by revealing a big secret. The actors have perfect comic timing, and their deadpan reactions to shocking developments are exercises in understatement. This is comic subtlety rarely seen any more. *Rated: R for language and drug content. 1 hour, 30 minutes.* — S.T.

EL CANTANTE ★1/2

(Century 12) Hector Lavoe was the voice of his people, introducing a new sound with trombonist Willie Colon and the Manhattan-based recording company Fania Records in 1967. Despite the Latin flavor, the rise and fall of Lavoe replays the same old song of so many music leg-

ends: humble beginnings; talent paired with a lucky break; drug addiction; marital problems; and an untimely death. The source of the salsa sensation's pain and musical inspiration are never clear, and the times seem divorced from historical context. Marc Anthony easily slides from an affable young man to the passionate singer fronting Colon's raw, up-tempo sound. When he belts out the Ruben Blades-authored title song or a medley of Lavoe hits, the screen sizzles. Jennifer Lopez often adds heat, swinging her hips while squeezed into a red dress. But their spark alone can't sustain a feature-length film favoring style over substance. *Rated: R for drug use, pervasive language and some sexuality.* 1 hour, 56 minutes. In English and Spanish with English subtitles. — S.T.

THE INVASION ★★1/2

(Century 16, Century 20) The latest cinematic space invaders tale is more of a commentary on modern America than a sci-fi screamer. Despite excellent chemistry between stars Nicole Kidman and Daniel Craig ("Casino Royale"), "The Invasion" lacks the necessary fear factor. A disastrous spaceship crash leaves America mourning — and the ship has also brought back an alien spore that infects human beings, sapping their emotions and free will. Psychiatrist Carol Bennell (Kidman) teams up with her doctor friend (Craig) and a scientist (Jeffrey Wright) in hopes of avoiding infection as the virus spreads. Meanwhile, Carol's son (child actor Jackson Bond) may hold the key to a cure. This film comes when unrest over American politics is at a high, and it makes no apologies in pointing out recent trespasses (the Iraq War, the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina). It's contemporary, but not compelling. *Rated: PG-13 for violence, disturbing images and terror.* 1 hour, 33 minutes. — T.H.



NO END IN SIGHT ★★1/2

(Aquarius) Not one of the incessant stream of Iraq war documentaries enraging like "No End in Sight," an on-point expose of the movers and shakers who paved our way into the conflict. Charles Ferguson — technology millionaire turned filmmaker — doesn't waste time dwelling on the humanity or violence of the current situation, but rather focuses on the unfathomable decision-making that determined a path to chaos. Talking heads inspire outrage by merely recounting the facts: A series of Middle East experts executed the Bush administration's policies, only to watch the entire operation go up in virtual flames. Most disheartening is that diplomatic and military experts are shown to be summarily replaced by political pundits whose arrogance in the face of dread and uncertainty is nauseating and horrific. Sobering and stunning. *Not rated but*

could be PG-13 for mature themes and language. 1 hour, 42 minutes. — J.A.

SICKO ★★★★★

(Century 20) "Sicko" looks at the lucky Americans, the 250 million who have private health-care insurance. Applying the Michael Moore method of documentary filmmaking, the director combines humor with tales of personal tragedy — and then veers into audacious, unexpected territory. The folksy fire-brand again puts himself in front of the camera, making his position clear: His nonfiction film functions as a personal essay that includes pointed commentary,

offers a politically charged vision and raises big questions. As Moore's most brilliantly structured work, "Sicko" starts off with ordinary Americans whose claims and coverage have been denied for ridiculous reasons. Then doctors and industry insiders testify about how insurance companies maximize profits by keeping benefits from the premium-paying patients. Eventually the rabble-rouser throws his questioning back at us: "Who are we? A nation that dumps its own citizens like garbage on the curb because they can't pay their medical bills?" *Rated: PG-13 for brief strong language.* 1 hour, 56 minutes. — S.T.

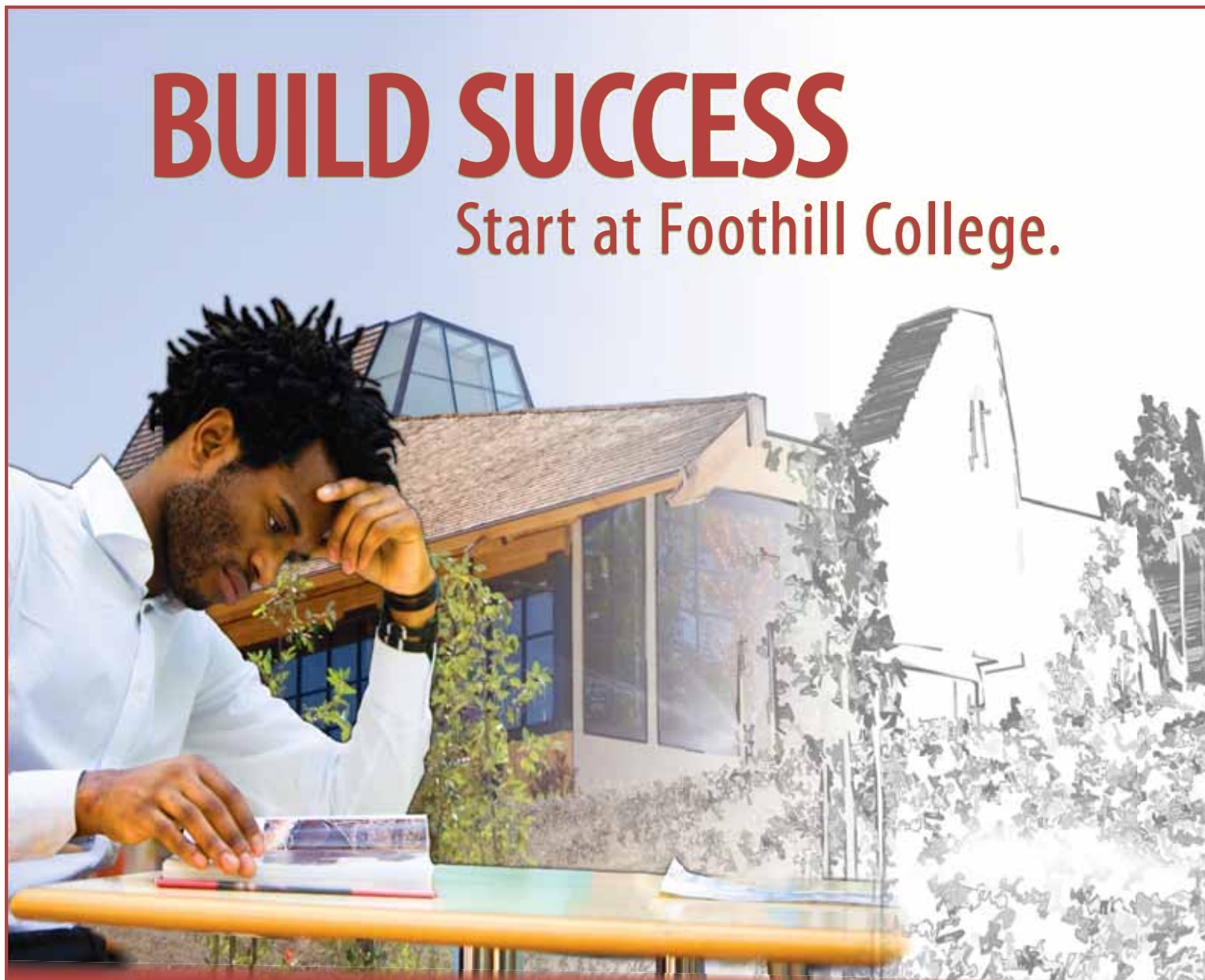
STARDUST ★★1/2

(Century 16) You know you're destined for superfluous sap when lovesick pup Tristan Thorne (Charlie Cox) woos the fickle Victoria (Sienna Miller) by promising to gift her with a real star. The fallen star appears in the form of a beautiful and poised enchantress called Yvaine (Claire Danes). A gaggle of evil witches led by eldest sister Lamia (Michelle Pfeiffer) seeks to cut out the star's heart so they can ingest it and prolong their tenuous hold on a fleeting youth. As Tristan and Yvaine attempt the return trip home they encounter all manner of men, including the fearsome Captain

Shakespeare (Robert De Niro), a ruthless marauder who secretly loves poetry and dressing in women's clothing; and a merciless trio of princes who need to claim the star to mount the throne that will rule their kingdom. The result is a bloated, mixed bag of triumphs and failures. Not your mother's fairy tale, but it could be yours. *Rated: PG-13 for violence and mature themes.* 2 hours, 5 minutes. — J.A.

■ **MOVIE CRITICS**

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



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