

# Mountain View VOICE

AUGUST 31, 2007 VOLUME 15, NO. 35

INSIDE: WEEKEND | PAGE 17

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'Emma' gem!

P.20



## City takes on new shade of green

COUNCIL VOTES IN SUPPORT OF HIRING COORDINATOR TO OVERSEE CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVES

By Daniel DeBolt

Mountain View put itself on the green map Tuesday when the City Council took major steps toward an environmental sustainability program.

After allocating \$173,000 to the cause in May, the council now wants to hire a full-time staff coordinator, form a citizen task force and take a baseline measurement of the city's greenhouse gas emissions. Because

**THE STATE OF THE CITY IS STRONG. P.5**

Tuesday's meeting was a study session, a regular-meeting vote will be required to formalize the actions.

Despite past meetings where it seemed there was not enough support for hiring a coordinator to oversee a serious sustainability program,

this time member Jac Siegel provided the key vote, joining Ronit Bryant, Margaret Abe-Koga and Laura Macias.

Members Nick Galiotto, Matt Pear and Tom Means were also supportive of most of the program's short-term goals, just not hiring a coordinator. Pear said it wasn't likely to be a "temporary position," as other members pitched it, and would cost the city money over the long term.

Council member Nick Galiotto said the task force should "germinate" the ideas for the program before the coordinator is hired, rather than have the coordinator "set the agenda."

"What I'm looking for is a freshness, a non-city-regimented look," Galiotto said.

But without the coordinator, city manager Kevin Duggan said, the city didn't "have the staff, quite frankly," to run a citizen task force.

Galiotto pointed to actions taken by residents on their own, such as the recent group purchase of solar panels, which showed how much talent there could be on the task force.

Bruce Karney, the organizer of the group purchase from SolarCity which lead to 118 newly solar-powered homes, predicts that interest



MARJAN SADOUGH

Garon Bolden, 10, raps at The Riekes Center Studio in Menlo Park.

## Castro student's knack for rap

TEN-YEAR-OLD'S HIP-HOP ALBUM ALL ABOUT 'MAKIN' THE GRADE'

By Susan Hong

Inside a red-walled recording studio at the Riekes Center in Menlo Park, 10-year-old Garon Bolden bounces to the beat of a song he wrote called "Makin' the Grade."

"Got an 'A' last week on my spelling test / If you listen in class you can do your best," he rapped. "I don't need a gat / I don't need a blade / Got to keep my mind on makin' the grade."

Rap music is often associated with gangs and drugs, but for Garon, rap is a way to reject that lifestyle and offer a more positive expression of life, said his father Greg. Writing lyrics this summer was also a way for the Castro Elementary School student to find his place in the world.

"Rapping makes me feel good

and makes me feel excited," Garon said.

It may also make him feel successful: His second song, "We Love the Ladies," is being considered for airplay by two Bay Area radio stations, KMEL and Wild 94.9.

Greg Bolden said that while other members of the family are gifted athletes, Garon seemed more gifted musically. He wanted to give his son an outlet that would help shape his identity and give him confidence, and rap seemed the obvious choice.

Garon has a natural penchant for music, his father said. He plays piano and often can be found singing songs by Dr. Dre or Snoop Dogg. Unlike those rap artists, however, Garon takes a more uplifting tone:

"It's true you know / Read a

book, and your mind will grow / Be smart / Don't be a fool / Be on time, and pay attention in school."

Before he began recording, Garon brought a book about bats to the studio earlier in the summer and practiced reading to different beats put together by his Riekes teacher, Rahman Jamaal. After the young rapper was comfortable speaking the written word to music, he and his father sat down to write lyrics.

Jamaal says rap can help kids improve their reading and writing skills.

"It improves linguistic skills because it applies the creative half [of the brain] with the linguistic half," he said. Kids natu-

► See **RAP**, page 6

## Pros, cons of new site

SOME OF DAY WORKER CENTER'S NEIGHBORS WORRY ABOUT CRIME, BUT OTHERS SEE OPPORTUNITY

By Daniel DeBolt

Opponents and supporters of placing the Day Worker Center at a downtown church made their points at a crowded hearing last week at Trinity United Methodist Church.

About 70 residents, many affiliated with the center, attended last Thursday's hearing. Some argued that the center would not be a good fit in the neighborhood, while others were strongly supportive.

► See **DAY WORKER**, page 10

► See **COUNCIL**, page 10

INSIDE

GOINGS ON 22 | MARKETPLACE 23 | MOVIES 21 | REAL ESTATE 28 | VIEWPOINT 12



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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 does Labor Day mean to you?



*"Time off school. I want to go to the beach, hopefully someplace around Santa Cruz."*

**Tania Garcia**, Mountain View



*"At this point, it just means that it's time for another holiday. Unfortunately, I'll be finishing up some work this weekend. It would be nice to take the day off, but it doesn't look like it's going to happen this year."*

**Jim McCoy**, Campbell



*"A chance to do something fun. I'm going to go to a different city and do something I've never done before."*

**Misty Enriquez**, Mountain View



*"Labor Day doesn't mean much to me anymore — I'm retired!"*

**Jeff Schuler**, San Jose



*"Nothing special comes to mind. Time to party like a rockstar."*

**Rachael Lewis**, Mountain View

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**Street Closures & Parking:**

Castro Street will be closed to traffic from Church Street to Evelyn Avenue for each evening. Public parking garages are located at California/Bryant, and Villa/Bryant streets.

**Getting There:**

Both Caltrain and Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) light-rail stop at the corner of Castro Street & Evelyn Avenue

**Attractions include:**

- Farmers Market with seasonal produce
- Live entertainment along Castro Street
- Activities for the kids - facepainter, board games, and chalk art

For more information call the City of Mountain View at (650) 903-6311 or the Central Business Association at (650) 964-3395

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# When we set out to change the community, we started by changing ourselves.



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## LocalNews

### ■ CRIMEWATCH

#### **ANNOY OR MOLEST CHILD, 200 BLOCK PETTIS AVE., 8/26**

A 14-year-old girl was locked out of her house and banging on the door to get in when a man approached her and tried to talk to her. When the girl tried to ignore him, the man grabbed her hand and put his arm around her shoulders. The frightened girl pretended to call 911 on her cell phone and the man walked away. She then actually phoned police about an hour later when her sister returned home and she was safe inside the house.

The suspect is described as a black male

adult, about 6 feet tall, in his late 20s or early 30s, with a dark complexion and short hair. He was last seen wearing a dark hooded sweatshirt and baggy pants.

#### **ROBBERY, 1900 BLOCK OLD MIDDLEFIELD WAY, 8/23**

A 7-Eleven store was robbed at gunpoint by a tall black man with a blue handkerchief over his face. After collecting money from the cash register, he fled in a light-blue Pontiac Grand Am driven by a second man. The car had no license plate and has not been traced.

### ■ POLICELOG

#### **BATTERY**

400 Block Del Medio Ave., 8/24  
800 Block E. El Camino Real, 8/26  
100 Block Space Park Way, 8/27

#### **BURGLARY/AUTO**

100 Block Crestview Dr., 8/26  
800 Block Montgomery St., 8/27  
2500 Block Grant Rd., 8/27

#### **BURGLARY/COMMERCIAL**

300 Block Fairchild Dr., 8/25

#### **BURGLARY/RESIDENTIAL**

200 Block Monroe Dr., 8/27

#### **CORPORAL INJURY TO SPOUSE**

100 Block Crestview Dr., 8/24  
W. Dana St/Hope St., 8/26  
1100 Block Castro St., 8/27

#### **DISORDERLY CONDUCT**

250 Block Castro St., 8/24  
Molly Magee's, 8/25  
Shoreline Amphitheatre, 8/25  
E. El Camino Real/Sylvan Ave., 8/27

#### **DISTURBANCE**

200 Block Colony St., 8/24  
2200 Block California St., 8/27

#### **DOMESTIC DISTURBANCE**

00 Block Paul Ave., 8/22  
500 Block View St., 8/25  
Klein Park, 8/25

#### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

100 Block Jasmine Ct., 8/27

#### **DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE**

Castro St/Villa St., 8/24  
Independence Ave/Leghorn St., 8/24  
1600 Block W. El Camino Real, 8/26

#### **GRAND THEFT**

300 Block Villa St., 8/24

#### **IDENTITY THEFT**

100 Block Villa St., 8/24

#### **NARCOTICS POSSESSION**

Central Expressway/N. Whisman Rd., 8/22

#### **PETTY THEFT**

200 Block Monroe Dr., 8/24  
Ross Store, 8/24  
2400 Block W. El Camino Real, 8/24  
200 Block Plymouth St., 8/26  
400 Block San Antonio Rd., 8/26  
400 Block Moffett Blvd., 8/27

#### **POSSESSION OF DRUG PARAPHENALIA**

200 Block Montecito Ave., 8/26

#### **POSSESSION OF MARIJUANA**

100 Block Rock St., 8/26

#### **POSSESSION OF STOLEN ITEM**

1900 W. El Camino Real, 8/27

#### **ROBBERY**

1900 Block Old Middlefield Way, 8/23  
W. Dana St/View St., 8/25

#### **SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE**

1000 Block Space Park Way, 8/22

#### **SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES/PERSON**

300 Block Easy St., 8/23  
300 Block Easy St., 8/27

#### **UNDER INFLUENCE OF COCAINE**

100 Block Villa St., 8/22  
800 Block Washington, 8/24  
Fairchild Dr./National Ave., 8/26

#### **VANDALISM**

900 Block N. Rengstorff Ave., 8/22  
500 Block Del Medio Ave., 8/27  
800 Block E. El Camino Real, 8/27  
1900 Block Montecito Ave., 8/27

### ■ CORRECTION

Last week's story on the recently released state achievement tests, "Local middle schoolers lag in STAR tests," gave incorrect numbers for seventh grade proficiency levels in math at Mountain View Whisman. Rather than declining, as the *Voice* reported, proficiency levels for seventh graders improved over the previous year

— from 40 to 45 percent — after taking Algebra 1 scores into account.

The story also focused strongly on declines in test scores, but did not put those numbers into context. It also underemphasized gains made by students at other grade levels.

The *Voice* regrets the errors.

## Toddler left in hot car

CARETAKER ARRESTED FOLLOWING DRAMATIC SAVE DOWNTOWN NEAR LIBRARY TUESDAY

By Melody Dye

A 2-year-old girl was left in a locked vehicle Tuesday afternoon as temperatures climbed, police said, forcing rescuers to smash the vehicle's windows to retrieve her. The toddler was unharmed, and her caretaker was arrested following the incident.

The Mountain View Fire Department received a call at 12:49 p.m. Tuesday that a baby had been left unattended in a vehicle near the Mountain View Library. When rescuers arrived, they found the 2-year old girl secured in a child seat with all the windows rolled up, sweating profusely.

Firefighters quickly smashed the car's windows to get her out. The girl was then transported to a local emergency room by ambulance.

Police waited at the vehicle for the girl's caretaker to return. When she finally did, nearly half an hour later, she was arrested and booked on charges of felony child endangerment.

The girl was given a clean bill of health, and reunited with her mother at the hospital, police said.

Tuesday's temperatures reached a high of 86 degrees, peaking in mid-afternoon. ■

E-mail Melody Dye at [mdye@mv-voice.com](mailto:mdye@mv-voice.com)

Back next week



MARJAN SADOUGHI

The 450 units in Orion Park have lain empty since 2005, when its military families were relocated.

## Moffett's ghost town

ORION PARK'S STORY IS ONE OF TOXINS, FOOT-DRAGGING AND FAILED HOUSING PLANS

By Daniel DeBolt

Part 2 of 3

It seems like something out of a science fiction movie. Two years ago, the 450-unit Orion Park military housing complex was filled with families going about their busy lives.

Cut to the present day: Nothing but vacant houses and empty

streets. Though the properties are in good condition, there's not even a "For sale" sign out front.

It's an eerie scene which begs the question, "What happened here?"

The short answer: The mili-

tary moved its units stationed here, and the families were dispersed to other locations. And despite Silicon Valley's housing shortage, the site's 450 units will never again be used due to a toxic gas that is leaching from underground, and has been detected

► See **ORION**, page 9

### ■ EDUCATION

## MV High's new angle on math

ALL FRESHMEN MUST ENROLL IN GEOMETRY REGARDLESS OF MATHEMATICS BACKGROUND

By Susan Hong

Educators at Mountain View High School are taking a new approach to teaching mathematics, requiring all freshmen to enroll in some form of geometry class regardless of their previous math experience.

The new rule is an effort to break the cycle of below-grade-level performance for many of the ninth graders coming in from the Mountain View Whisman School District. Even students who failed or skipped Algebra I in middle school will skip it again in ninth grade and go straight to geometry — though they'll also take a supplemental hour of pre-algebra math, administrators said.

If those students successfully complete geometry and their supplemental course, they will proceed to Algebra I in 10th grade. All other students will proceed to Algebra II in 10th grade.

Ideally, all ninth graders should

► See **MATH**, page 8

## State of the city: rapid growth

By Daniel DeBolt

With residential and corporate developers beating a path to their door and companies like search-engine giant Google firmly entrenched at Bayshore, the state of the city looked decidedly rosy to Mayor Laura Macias and city manager Kevin Duggan during a two-hour presentation Monday.

The city's annual report was brimming with good news, including another year of increased revenues and numerous capital improvements, such as an \$18 million parking garage, a \$19.8 million water tank and a \$16 million senior center.

To top it off, the city's population is expected to increase 10 percent in the next 10 years, possibly a conservative guess since there are currently 3,400 housing units in the pipeline.

"I can't think of another city that has gone through all the changes Mountain View has," said county Supervisor Liz Kniss before the presentation Monday.

Duggan started the presentation by showing off the Mountain View Senior Center, which opened last year and has been so popular its parking lot reaches capacity daily. He also talked about Devonshire neighborhood park, which opened last year, and mentioned plans for Sierra

Vista park, which were formalized Tuesday.

The eight-million-gallon water tank under Graham Middle School's sports field got some attention, with a series of photos showing the various phases of construction during the city's award-winning-partnership with the school district.

While on the subject of water, Duggan explained a \$15 million plan to restore the city's water pipes in conjunction with Palo Alto. He didn't forget the replastering of the Rengstorff Park pool.

"We take pride in the little things and the big things as well," Duggan said.

City staff couldn't resist adding some music to a series of photos showing construction of the Bryant Street parking garage from the top of the building across the street. The music: Strauss' theme used in "2001: A Space Odyssey."

"I bet you've never seen a presentation for a parking garage like that," Duggan joked.

Longs Drugs is expected to open on the first floor of the structure this fall.

Macias' presentation touched on several highlights from the past year, and on plans for the coming year. For example, last year Mountain View became

► See **CITY**, page 11



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■ SEEN AROUND TOWN

*Beautiful sunrise*



*As summer wears on and the earth gets dustier, the sunrises and sunsets grow more brilliant. This sunrise was taken "very early one morning" by Dotti Cinchon as she drove on Highway 237. "Thank goodness the windshield was clean," she wrote.*

*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.*

**RAP**

► Continued from page 1

rally tend to gravitate toward music, he said, so putting words to music can make reading and writing fun.

Greg Bolden agreed. His son's rapping, he said, greatly improved

his linguistic skills and fostered other abilities as well.

"There's a complete transformation," he said. "His confidence level has grown dramatically."

Rap can have a good influence in children, according to Jamaal.

"It's best to think of hip-hop as a form of cultural expression

because it deals so much with language," he said.

Those interested in learning more about "Making the Grade" can contact Garon Bolden at (650) 279-4197 or rb4mepls@aol.com. ■

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

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*Your Everyday Farmer's Market*

# The soprano

LOCAL SINGER, AUDITIONING ON A WHIM, IS SELECTED FOR PRESTIGIOUS OPERA PROGRAM

By Melody Dye

A Mountain View High junior is fast becoming the voice of her generation — at least when it comes to opera singing.

Laura Wise was chosen earlier this summer to attend the Washington National Opera Institute for Young Singers, a selective and prestigious program designed to train young voices for professional work in opera.

Wise, now 16, has been singing since she was 11 and doing classical voice work since she was 13. She was selected from well over a hundred singers who auditioned nationally. This year, only 28 students made it into the three-week program.

At the institute's most recent program, which ran in June and July at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., Wise and other students studied operatic

sang with Opera San Jose, she was dumbstruck by the sound as she waited backstage.

"Opera caught and held my attention because it expresses emotions in such a beautiful way," she said.

Wise, a soprano with a broad vocal range, has studied art songs but has not yet attempted arias. With their breathless runs of sixteenth notes, arias require a certain level of stamina that can be taxing on a young voice. Art songs, often simpler and less demanding, serve as a good preparation for the kind of vocal acrobatics that arias require.

In fact, the audition guidelines for the institute explicitly state that students are not

to perform arias. Wise gladly paid heed, showcasing a selection of Italian and Russian art songs she'd performed at her recital. She had a particular affinity for

the Russian piece, she said.

Wise was exuberant about her time at the institute. She was thrilled to have met such a cross-section of people who, like her, have devoted their lives to the art form.

It's funny, she said, that while some people "had had a lot of recital experience, others had never even seen an opera." She thought she fell somewhere in the middle.

Now that her stint at the institute is up, Wise is unsure whether she will pursue a career in opera.

"I'm testing it out right now," she said. "It's such a demanding career and you have to develop yourself so much. It takes a lot of confidence and such a powerful voice; I don't know yet if I could work my voice to that point."

E-mail Melody Dye at [mdye@mv-voice.com](mailto:mdye@mv-voice.com)



Laura Wise

*"Opera caught and held my attention because it expresses emotions in such a beautiful way."*

LAURA WISE

classics and took classes in singing, drama and movement. For the aspiring singers, it was a chance to be coached and mentored by vocal instructors of the highest caliber, and to meet other students who share their passion for opera.

Wise said she auditioned on a lark, sending in a tape her father had made at one of her recitals.

"I didn't have any expectations," she said. "I knew that there were a lot of people auditioning, many older and more experienced. When I did get that letter, I was entirely surprised. ... I hadn't wanted to get my hopes up."

Wise has performed with the Cantabile Youth Singers and the children's chorus for Opera San Jose. She said she's always liked music, but that opera particularly resonates with her. The first night she



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Learn the techniques of infant massage to relax and soothe a baby, to relieve the temporary discomforts of gas and soreness of vaccination sites, and to stimulate a baby as he or she grows into an active child.

- Thursdays, September 6-27
- \* REFRESHER CHILDBIRTH CLASS**

This is an excellent refresher course on labor and delivery techniques, including how subsequent labors differ from the first, as well as sibling and family adjustments.

- Saturday, September 8
- \* IS MEDIA THE OTHER PARENT?**

Tom Robinson, MD, from the Lucile Packard Children's Hospital Center for Healthy Weight and Rebecca Randall from Common Sense Media discuss the effects of media on the health of our children and practical ways parents can guide their children towards a better understanding of media messages and productive lifestyle. Please call (650) 724-3783 to register for this free event.

- Tuesday, October 2

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



CALL TODAY TO SIGN UP FOR CLASSES (650) 723-4600



**MATH**

► Continued from page 5

start high school prepared to take geometry, said Barry Groves, superintendent of the Mountain View-Los Altos High School District. But nearly a third of all incoming students from MV Whisman enter high school with seventh-grade-level math skills or below, according to Associate Superintendent Brigitte Sarraf.

By contrast, only 6 percent of students from the Los Altos School District enter high school with below-grade-level math skills, according to district officials.

Educators believe holding back Algebra I a year will give struggling students more time to acclimate themselves to math concepts, get used to high school, and mature in their thinking.

“Algebra is much more abstract than geometry, and many of these students have as their preferred learning style a much more hands-on approach,” Sarraf said. “Geometry lends itself to a hands-on

approach much more than algebra.”

Sarraf said students who fail Algebra I in middle school often take the same course repeatedly, and that the new approach is an attempt to break that cycle:

“We have tried a number of interventions and we have not yet stumbled on a silver bullet. There may not be a silver bullet,” Sarraf said.

**Only 6 percent of students from the Los Altos School District enter high school with below-grade-level math skills.**

At Los Altos High, students who failed algebra in eighth grade will go into a ninth grade “algebra enhanced” course — a two-hour course integrating pre-algebra concepts such

as percentages, addition and division with algebra. If students successfully complete this course, they will proceed into geometry in 10th grade as has traditionally been the case.

Administrators plan to closely monitor both high schools to see which model produces better results, Sarraf said. ▣

E-mail Susan Hong at [shong@mv-voice.com](mailto:shong@mv-voice.com)

**On the natural order of mathematics**

PROFESSOR SAYS COURSES MUST BE TAUGHT IN SEQUENCE; DISTRICT DISAGREES

By Susan Hong

Educators hope that Mountain View High’s new approach to teaching math will work for lagging students because, in the words of MVLA Associate Superintendent Brigitte Sarraf, “Algebra is much more abstract than geometry, and many of these students have as their preferred learning style a much more hands-on approach.”

At least one educator, however, questions that logic.

“I can think of nothing more abstract than a proof in geometry,” said R. James Milgram, a Stanford University mathematics professor and co-author of the California mathematics framework.

“Mathematics is the most hierarchical subject that any student in their schooling [can take].

What you learn in third grade is essential for the core material in fourth grade. Likewise the fourth grade material is essential for fifth grade. And you have to master fourth grade to have a reasonable chance in fifth grade. It goes on all the way through Algebra II,” he said.

“You can’t skip pieces,” he added. “It’s just a measure of desperation. It won’t work and it can’t work.”

The sequence of math topics has been refined and developed over many years, Milgram said, so concepts students learn in Algebra I are building blocks to geometry.

Sarraf disagrees. She said the familiar sequence of math topics — from Algebra I to geometry to Algebra II — is primarily a creature of the U.S. educational system. Other countries use different models, she said.

Ultimately, the high schools are taking on the burden of teaching children math subjects that they should have learned earlier, both Sarraf and Milgram said. They agreed that remediation should not be handled at the high school level.

“It’s much easier if you are in the first, second, third grade to help students catch up, to help students overcome being behind, than waiting to catch them up on seven, eight or nine years of missing standards,” Sarraf said.

The high school district is working closely with MV Whisman to fix the problem, Sarraf said. She noted that many of the students who fall behind in the elementary school district have moved in from other states or districts or are English language learners. ▣

**Mountain View 24/7**  
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**MV Whisman sets down strategic goals**

By Susan Hong

Math emerged as the top priority as trustees, school principals and key administrators from the Mountain View Whisman School District crafted a new strategic plan Tuesday.

“Algebra is the gatekeeper for kids entering and being successful in college,” Superintendent Maurice Ghysels said. “We need to improve in mathematics. We have a lot of opportunity to improve math in our district.”

With eighth graders demonstrating lower proficiency levels than in years past and the high schools changing their math curriculums to remediate struggling ninth graders, district educators are well aware of their responsibility to adequately teach their students math.

“The preparation of our eighth graders is a reflection on the entire K-8 spectrum. We must exit students meeting state expectations,” one team member wrote on a goals-chart board.

Recruiting diverse and qualified teachers who reflect the demographics of the student body also placed highly on the group’s list.

“It’s very hard to do anything with student achievement if you don’t have highly qualified staff,” said Stephanie Totter, assistant superintendent for human resources and student services. Teachers who speak Spanish can serve as role

models for the children and offer more assistance to the district’s large number of Hispanic students, she said.

Educators outlined four “big rocks” under which all district strategic initiatives must be aligned: math achievement, English-language learner achievement, Continuous Improvement implementation, and “response to intervention” — a look at how efficiently the district spends its money.

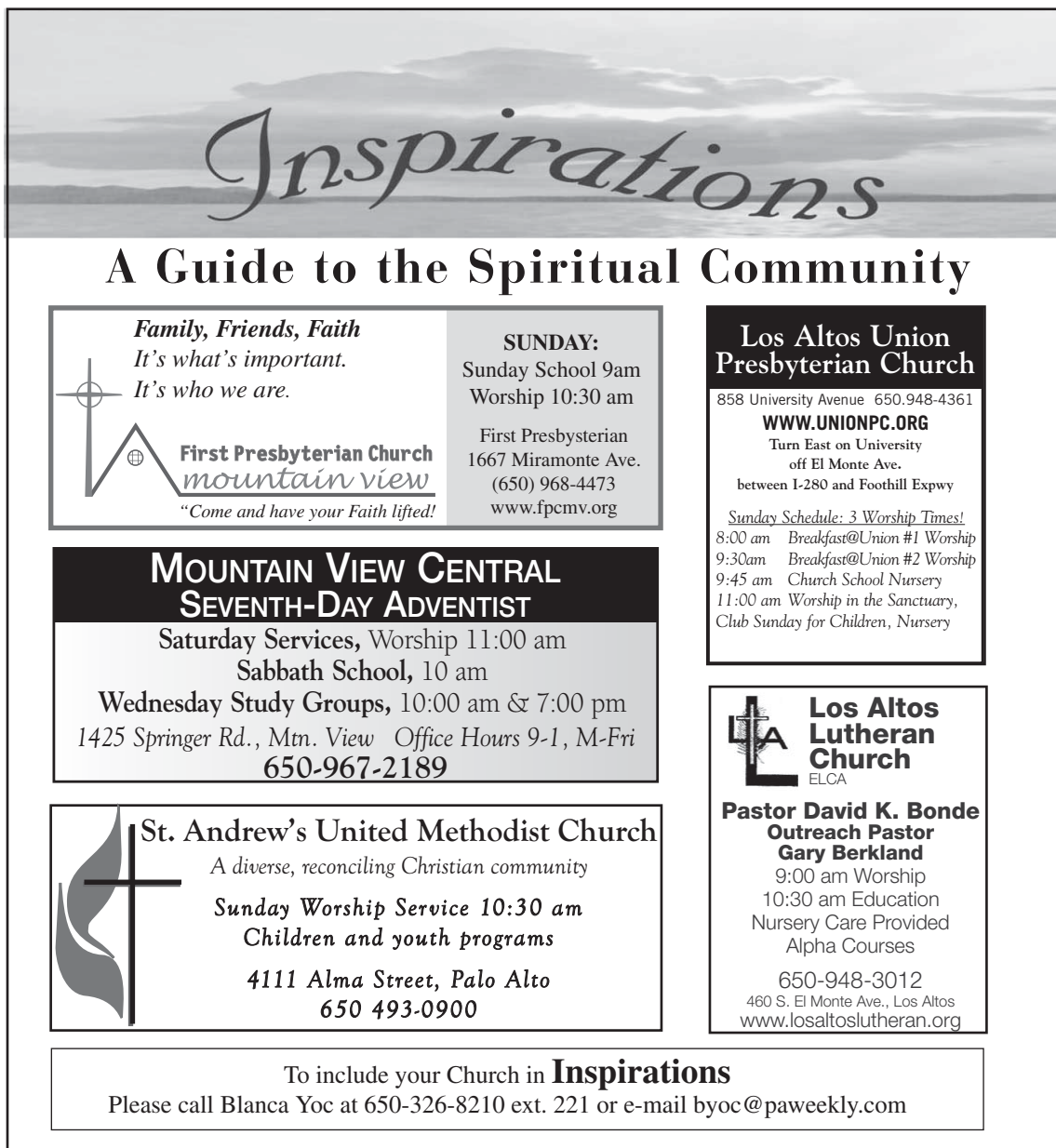
The district plans to “get control of special education expenses,” the group agreed, because special education intervention programs are currently using a substantial portion of district funds. Also, the district needs to be more careful in identifying students as disabled, administrators said.

Group members also agreed to place high priorities on accelerating English-language learner skills, increase parent participation and ensure that all personnel receive adequate Continuous Improvement training.

Elementary schools are facing crowding issues, administrators said, leading to a pledge to optimize space at the school sites.

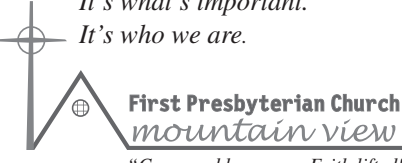
The goals will set the district’s focus for the next three to five years. Trustees, administrators and principals will adopt final strategic plan goals in a few weeks. ▣

E-mail Susan Hong at [shong@mv-voice.com](mailto:shong@mv-voice.com)



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**ORION**

► Continued from page 5

in four units of the complex.

Built in the 1950s, the 72-acre complex at Moffett Field was home to Navy, Army, Air Force and National Guard families. Before the last residents moved out last year, trichloroethylene vapors had been detected in several homes at three times the allowable limit. The chemical, called TCE for short, is a known carcinogen once used as an industrial solvent.

In 2002, a reporter from the *Voice* came across Sylvia and Eric Russel, two Orion Park residents who believed their daughter's skin rashes were caused by playing in the sandbox at Orion Park. Doctors said it was eczema, but "How do you get eczema in the summer?" asked Sylvia, whose husband, Sgt. 1st Class Eric Russell, was a computer programmer for the Army.

The couple said the Army did not pay them enough to move elsewhere. Other Orion residents told the *Voice* they were not concerned and that they had been told what the risks were.

Military families are not likely to be as vocal about living above toxins as civilians, said Lenny Siegel, a local expert on military base cleanups. On only one occasion did a member of a military family come to a meeting on the issue, he said.

Siegel said it was odd that pollution wasn't found at the site until the late 1990s, long after other Superfund sites were discovered across Highway 101. If NASA's findings are correct, the TCE contamination may have been there for many decades.

Despite criticism from the EPA, NASA and the Moffett Field Restoration Advisory Board, the Navy refused to test the air inside the homes at Orion Park until 2004, insisting that a computer program told them the homes were theoretically safe from TCE vapors. In 2004, the Navy finally tested the

indoor air of 22 vacant homes at Orion, three of which were found to have unsafe vapor levels (On Tuesday, the EPA said it found four homes with unsafe levels).

The Navy claimed the TCE vapors were coming from the outdoor air instead of out of the ground. Siegel called that argument a "sleight of hand."

While various agencies wrangled over the TCE contamination, new purposes were considered for the site. During San Francisco's bid for the 2012 Olympics, Orion Park was a favored site for the Olympic Village, with dreams for a world-

class housing development there.

"It's our first choice," said Bay Area Sports Organizing Committee spokesperson Tony Winnicker in 2002. This prompted later concerns that the world's top athletes would have lived atop a Superfund site.

The idea never came to fruition, of course, and the 2012 Olympics was awarded to London.

Military housing developer Clark Pinnacle also had plans to build new homes on the site, but backed out, according to a 2005 report. In 2003, Rafael Muniz, Clark Pinnacle's project manager,

explained that "we don't know enough about the environmental issues at Moffett to know what the legal liability would be or how the financing would be affected."

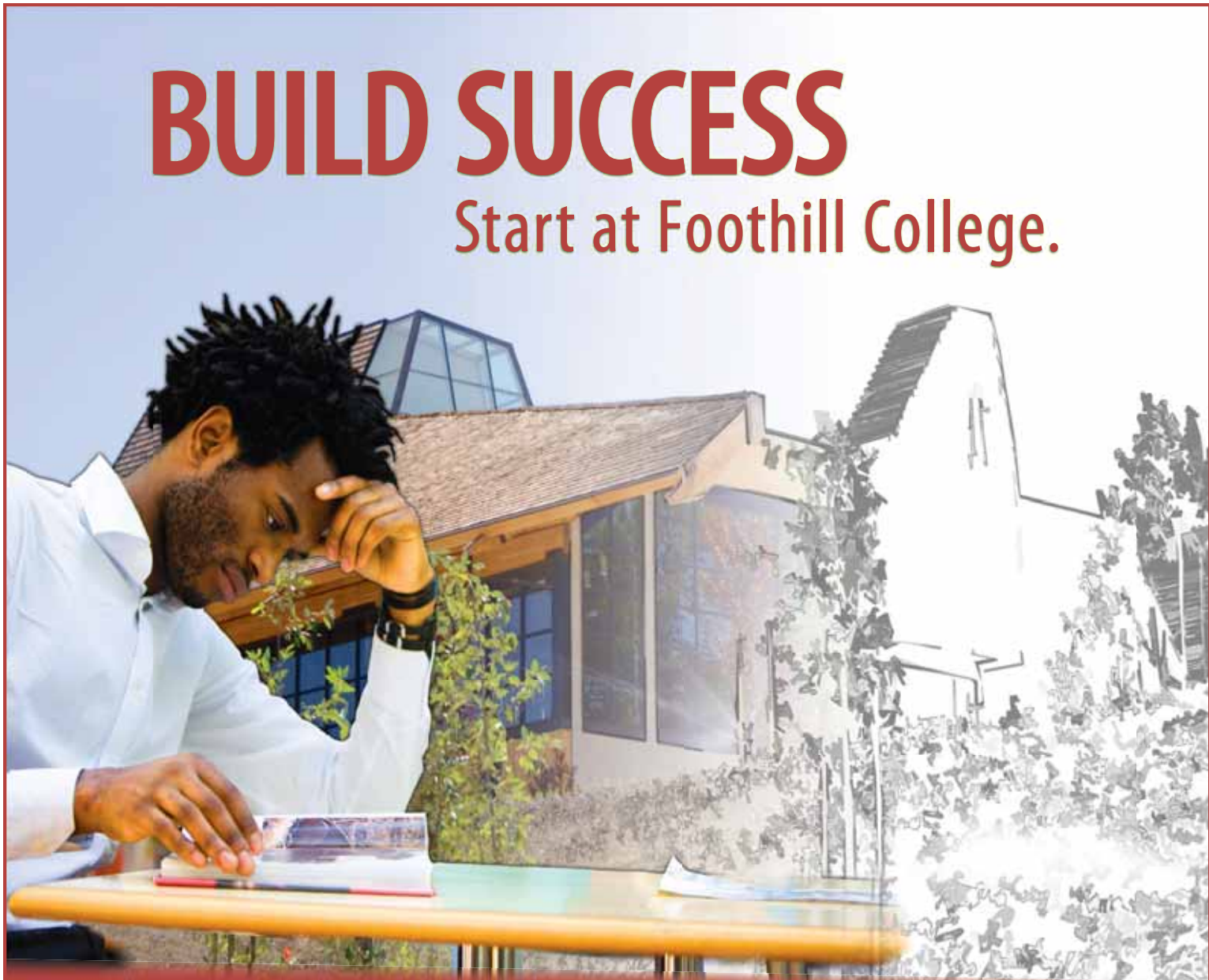
Half of the property will soon become a training center for Army reservists, but watchdogs still believe the other half could become housing if the proper mitigations are taken.

NASA believes the sources of the TCE may have been a former dry cleaner and a farm's septic tank that predated the housing. There is no evidence that the source is the so-called "MEW" Superfund

site across Highway 101, though Navy studies have claimed this. Under Superfund law, Siegel said, the Navy will likely end up with the bill to clean the site.

Until something is done, the multi-million dollar toxic mess is migrating slowly to NASA property across the street. At the very least, NASA has asked that a barrier be installed around the plume's perimeter to stop it from moving any farther. ■

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## DAY WORKER

► Continued from page 1

Officials of the church, at the corner of Hope and Mercy streets, decided several weeks ago to offer its fellowship hall to the Day Worker Center, which is being forced to leave its home at Calvary Church on Escuela Street.

Some residents gingerly stated their concerns at the hearing, citing concerns about property values, crime and whether the church should house undocumented workers who may or may not pay taxes. Day Worker Center board members and staff fielded questions, and proponents reassured neighbors that the site is only temporary.

One neighbor said he was concerned that the presence of day workers inside the church and on the street would affect the value of his home. Those present were assured that the workers would not be loitering outside.

"It's a problem," the neighbor said. "By putting the Day Worker Center here you are hurting me and my wallet. I beg of you to look for another location. I hope you don't take it the wrong way."

One church member explained that the church had been wrestling with how it could contribute to the community for several years, and that "One thing we do have to offer is this space. It's a good, solid gift to the community."

Some neighbors didn't see it that way.

"I'm sitting here next to people who have lived here for 60 years," one neighbor said. "What makes you think we would welcome these gifts?"

But just as many neighbors seemed to sup-

port the use of the site, with one saying she would be "proud to have it here."

"I would like to see this community open up their hearts so these people can have what we have," said neighbor Jeannie Ortiz.

Another neighbor expressed frustration that the center would add to problems she has experienced — her car had been vandalized and trash was left in her yard.

Police Officer Tony Lopez said he knew there would be questions about crime.

"From a crime standpoint, there is no impact," because there was no day worker-related crime at the old site, he said.

Board member Steve Olsen said peer pressure is strong for the workers to not loiter or damage the center's image, "because we know if we don't take care of things we'll be out on the street."

One selling point for the new site is that day workers could help with repairs to the aging church buildings. Trinity United has had to close down its nursery playground after finding used syringes and drug paraphernalia in the sand box. Proponents said the workers could work on that and other much-needed repairs to the church. On a recent Monday morning, day workers were seen working in the playground area.

"These people are here to make an honest living," said Beby Wells, who teaches English at the center.

Despite the reassurances, one neighbor was still upset.

"We have tried to make our concerns known and it seems like we're just spitting in the wind," he said. "I pay state taxes, I pay federal taxes." He asked whether the work-

ers were documented and if they paid taxes, because, "if not, I'm not sure this is a good thing."

He concluded by saying, "just find a place you are welcome."

This led to a wave of responses from board members, center supporters and day workers themselves, who said workers often pay income taxes but aren't likely to get any benefits from them. They also pay sales taxes and contribute benefits to the economy that everyone enjoys, said Matt Tompkins, office assistant for the center.

As for traffic concerns, neighbors were told that day workers will primarily come on bike to the center because they don't qualify for driver's licenses. Contractors' trucks are a rare sight, they said, and customers are usually homeowners who come in a steady trickle.

Over the years the center has operated under "benign neglect," board member John Rinaldi said, because nearly every other day worker center in the state gets significant help from their city governments. Board members hope the city of Mountain View will step in when \$200,000 in yearly funding dries up from the Silicon Valley Community Foundation and various Catholic charities.

"I believe that in this moment, this is the right place to be," said center director Maria Marroquin.

Associate city planner Melina Dennis told residents the city must approve an application for the site. A yet-to-be-scheduled zoning administration hearing will provide the public with another chance to speak on the issue. No City Council hearing will be necessary. ▀

## COUNCIL

► Continued from page 1

in the task force will be overwhelming.

"There needs to be a process for deciding which of the hundreds of people who will want to be on this task force will be selected," Karney said.

A presentation from PG&E helped lend credibility to the cause, and council members learned that over 50 percent of the state's energy now comes from non-carbon sources, including wind, solar and 24 percent from nuclear power.

The Sierra Club, the League of Women Voters and individual residents spoke in support of the city's short-term goals. A workshop is scheduled for Sept. 7, where a computer program will be used to calculate the city's baseline emissions from transportation, buildings and other sources.

Means reiterated concerns that the program be voluntary to ensure its popularity. Possibilities for the future include a construction and demolition ordinance that could encourage green building practices, and the recycling of old building material. The city staff has also proposed a water-efficient landscaping ordinance.

Pear remained pessimistic, but said he hoped the coordinator would be skilled at obtaining grants, which other members said would be abundant for cities going green.

Last week, the city was certified as a "green business" by Santa Clara County. ▀

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CITY

► Continued from page 5

the first city in the country to have free WiFi Internet access citywide thanks to Google. Only last week, Google announced that 15,000 people use the system every month, with a 10 percent increase every month.

Other highlights include:

■ The city recycled an unprecedented 74 percent of its garbage last year.

■ The Police Activities League was re-launched.

■ The Charleston Plaza shopping center opened. ("We don't put all of these near Palo Alto on purpose," Duggan joked.)

■ The city saw an unprecedented influx in commercial development applications and a rise in commercial property values.

■ A master plan was approved for over 400 homes at 100 Mayfield Ave.

■ Plans for housing moved forward at the Grant Road farm and Satake nursery sites.

As for the coming year, Macias said community gardens are slated to open on the Hetch Hetchy right-of-way near Beatrice Street, and that a bridge over Moffett Boulevard would connect the last section of the Stevens Creek Trail that currently requires a street crossing. Also:

■ A new maintenance facility will replace portables at Shoreline Park.

■ The city's 17-year old fire truck fleet will be replaced.

■ Cuesta Annex could see a history museum, preserved oak trees and other passive uses.

■ The city will adopt a new focus on after-school programs and other youth-oriented services.

■ The Stevens Creek Trail tunnel under El Camino Real will be completed by the end of the year, with trail construction continuing to Sleeper Avenue in 2008.

■ Updates are expected for the city's General Plan. "Remember to participate in that," Macias said. ■

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

■ MOUNTAIN VIEW BY THE NUMBERS

3,400 homes are now in the development pipeline

1,600 of Google's 10,000 employees live in Mountain View; 2,000 live in San Francisco

39,000 of Mountain View's 73,000 people are employed, down from 45,000 in 2000

60 percent of Mountain View's residents rent their homes

1 to 2 percent of the city's open space has been lost to recent development

5,000 to 6,000 businesses are located in Mountain View; 110 of them are biotech

17 years is the tenure of city manager Kevin Duggan, who "apparently doesn't want to leave," said Supervisor Liz Kniss

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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

# Good call on new mini-park

The City Council had a choice last week: Approve purchase of a badly needed mini-park at the end of West Dana Street north of Shoreline Road, or back out of the deal at the behest of neighbors fearful of badly-behaving teens from the neighborhood.

We believe the council made the right call, opting on a 4-3 vote to pay \$1.6 million for the property, despite concerns of nearby residents that a park could bring nothing but trouble.

Park supporters must concede that current conditions in the neighborhood, including illegal activities, justify (in the short term) some hesitancy in acquiring the park site. And those conditions are what convinced Mayor Laura Macias and council members Jac Siegel and Ronit Bryant to vote against buying the property.

But despite hearing spirited testimony in opposition from neighbors, a majority prevailed on a 4-3 vote. It was a good call for many reasons, not the least of which is that opportunities to purchase such infill parcels of property do not come around very often. To pass up this parcel simply because of short-term problems with unruly young adults strikes us as short-sighted in the extreme.

Instead of backing away, the prevailing four council members said they would attempt to immediately clean up any current misbehavior in the neighborhood. That is a good first step, and more will have to be done to make this L-shaped lot, with limited access and sightlines, into a safe and viable park.

Residents who opposed the park were concerned that police would not be able to prevent nighttime criminal activity due to the poor visibility and access. The nearby Victory Outreach halfway house for gang members was another reason cited by opponents, who are concerned that the park would become a haven for gang activity.

These are valid concerns that should be addressed immediately by the city, whether the park purchase goes through or not. But there are other ways for the city to address these problems, including making a strong effort to purchase the corner parcel that would turn the park into a square shape.

We would urge the neighbors who fear criminal activity to work together with police and the relevant city departments to design a well-lighted space that would benefit the entire neighborhood. During last week's hearing, council member Matt Pear noted that some years ago a similar crime-laden spot in his neighborhood was cleaned up by residents, who used video cameras to record gang activity at the park.

West Dana property owners could do the same, in cooperation with the Police Department. If gang members and other nefarious characters hear that criminal activity will not be tolerated, it is likely that many, if not all, will avoid using the park as their personal fiefdom. Such an effort would require a working commitment from neighbors, but in the end it will be more than worth the price.

## ■ LETTERS VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

### EDITORIAL MISSED THE POINT ON CI

Editor:

Last week's editorial, "School's new paradigm could come with a price" appears to miss the point of the Continuous Improvement (CI) program instituted by Mountain View Whisman Superintendent Maurice Ghysels.

The purpose of CI is to give teachers and students more effective communication and feedback tools. Rather than placing the inmates in charge of the asylum, as your editorial implies, I believe the district's goal is to improve the quality and quantity of feedback that teachers receive, enabling them to better implement their lesson plans.

Good teachers, the sort found throughout the district, have always sought ways to better engage their pupils, and Ghysels and his excellent staff have deployed a tool with the goal of accomplishing exactly this.

I have not witnessed a proliferation of "corporate-world jargon" on my children's campus; rather, I have seen engaged, involved educators with a new arrow in their quiver. The early adopters of the CI methodology are among our district's best and brightest, and should be applauded for choosing to take on this extra workload for the benefit of their students.

I do not believe that CI is a fundamental change in the curriculum. Rather, if CI lives up to its early promise, our teachers will receive more useful feedback from their classrooms, and our kids will directly benefit from better-informed teachers. Educating our children is not a "one size fits all" proposition.

Since taking the helm as superintendent, Ghysels has worked tirelessly to improve the educa-

tional experience for the children of Mountain View. He is a skilled educator and a true leader within our community. I commend his creative approach and willingness to innovate. I have every confidence in the success of CI under his direction.

Mike Cobb  
Nilda Avenue

### DISTRICT SHOOTS THE MOON WITH CI

Editor:

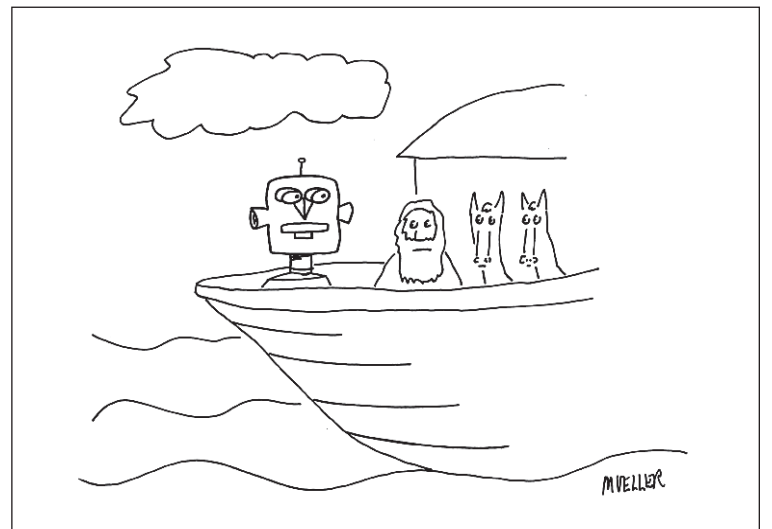
NASA could learn a thing or two from our local school district. They've gone to the moon at a very low cost with their "Continuous Improvement" education concept. When did the district trustees and teachers decide they needed their students help to do their job? Are the teachers really buying this fairy tale or is it a district song-and-dance solo?

I find the CI concept placing far too much emphasis on the K-8 student's ability to see their own needs more clearly than an education professional. Instead, the very best schools seem to take the confident position, "We have something valuable to teach you. You may even enjoy learning this material. Now let's get to work." By contrast, MV Whisman seems to be chasing butterflies in "uncharted territory" with a tennis net.

Geez, Louise, stop with the corporate jingles and fads. Education isn't rocket science. It's much more important work that takes dedication, persistence and love. There are already great techniques and practices in abundance — ask any teacher. Someone needs to drop the anchor on this boat before it sinks.

Allen Price  
Velarde Street

► See **LETTERS**, page 15





# Schools got short shrift in *Voice* coverage

By Barbara Saxton

I have lived in Mountain View for almost a quarter century. My husband and I own a home here, our two children attended local elementary and high schools, and I have taught language arts at Crittenden Middle School for the past seven years.

As a community member and reader of the *Voice*, I am trying to figure out what my local community newspaper hoped to accomplish with 1) a front-page article highlighting the fact that, on average, Mountain View Whisman seventh and eighth graders' CST proficiency levels fell on 2007 achievement tests ("Local middle schoolers lag in STAR tests," Aug. 24), and 2) an editorial warning that all of our students could "pay a high price" if recently adopted "Continuous Improvement" systems "fail to meet expectations" ("School's new paradigm could come with a price," Aug. 24).

As our schools re-open for what we hope will be a hugely successful year, could you have been more negative?

I am not disputing the district-wide numbers in the front-page article. I do wish, however, that the *Voice* had taken the time to point out that some of our schools' scores in fact improved from previous years. This is a local newspaper, and residents would have liked to see how their neighborhood schools performed, not just the averages for seventh and eighth graders.

I also agree with our school board president, Fiona Walter, that overall declines in eighth grade English and math performance are "scary." Equally scary, however, is a failure of our community newspaper to acknowledge any of our district students' hard work, and their many successes.

Yes, many of our students do not score in the "proficient" categories, but many second language students (and their teachers) sweat blood just to move up one category (from "far below basic" to "basic") on tests that are designed for native English speakers. Watching students bravely giving their all every spring testing period, then getting told that moving up to any territory less than "proficient" means nothing: That's truly scary.

Also, why do our many middle school students who achieve proficiency, or who move up to advanced status in math or language arts, get no press at all? Eighty percent of my eighth grade language arts students scored proficient or advanced on the 2007 CST; as a reward, they read in their local paper how "local middle schoolers lag." Did the *Voice* even notice that Castro Elementary and Crittenden's scores actually went up last year? That's huge, but apparently not worth any ink.

As for Continuous Improvement, I am one of the teachers who has been trained. To be honest, I initially viewed the program as another expensive educational flash in the pan.

After only five days' immersion in the program, and after implementing some of the system in my own classrooms already this year, I am very excited and optimistic about the program's potential. Superintendent Maurice Ghysels and our current school board members should be commended for their foresight and bravery, not chastised in our local newspaper for contributing to the "privatization" of our public schools.

As someone who spent 20 years in the corporate arena before becoming a teacher, I can tell you that schools, CI notwithstanding, are a long way from being run like businesses, and thank goodness for that!

Likewise, thinking of our students as "customers and stakeholders" is not "distasteful or dangerous," as stated in your editorial. Giving students too little responsibility for setting, achieving, and articulating their goals (even at a very young age) is what's problematic. CI techniques help administrators, teachers and students find the common ground and expectations that will enable classrooms to run smoothly and efficiently.

Please continue to publish articles and opinion pieces about our schools. I only ask that your reporting be as fair and complete as possible, and that pessimism be withheld until more information is available.

Barbara Saxton lives on San Marcos Circle.



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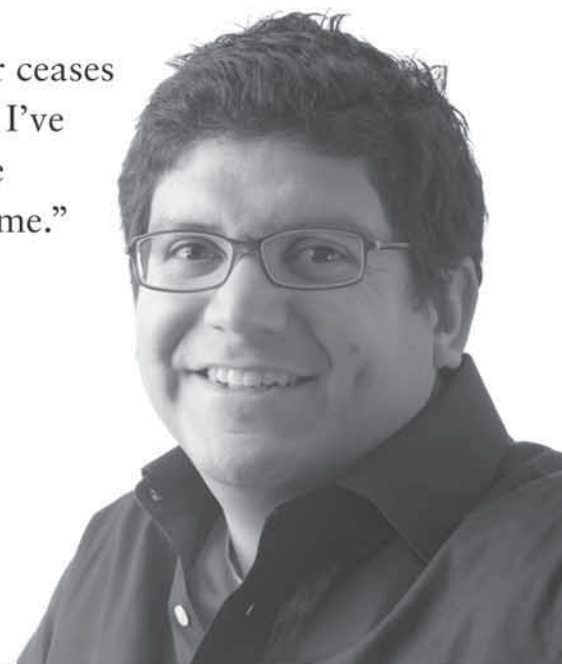





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## Continuous Improvement deserves a chance

By Craig Stephens  
and Beverly Smolich

The *Voice* editorial of Aug. 24 (“School’s new paradigm could come with a price”) is needlessly cynical about “Continuous Improvement” as a strategy for improving student performance in the Mountain View-Whisman School District.

As parents who have been deeply involved in local schools for years, we know that we have capable, hard-working teachers, administrators, parents and students in MVWSD. But our district, like most in California, faces enormous challenges in working with an increasingly diverse student population, in an educational context where resources are often limited and state and federal standards are constantly evolving. The results can seem disheartening.

So, if business as usual isn’t giving us the results we want, is it unreasonable to try a new approach? There’s no question that Superintendent Maurice Ghysels is trying to shake things

up. But Silicon Valley was built by individuals and companies who shook up the establishment, and in doing so literally changed the world. Dr. Ghysels seems to have been paying attention. CI may not be a panacea for the problems of public schools, and it almost certainly won’t work perfectly in every classroom — but if it simply lives up to its name, we’ll be heading in the right direction.

It is hard for us to see CI as the potentially radical threat the editorial implies. Teachers will not be compelled by CI to subordinate their years of experience to “the whims of children.” CI does not eliminate the teacher as the primary guide in a child’s educational experience, but it does try to encourage children to take a more active role in directing their education, as a motivational tool. Most parents would agree that kids are more enthusiastic about activities they have had some role in choosing or designing.

Finally, thinking of students and parents as “customers” and

“stakeholders” is not necessarily a bad thing. Our school system exists to serve the educational needs of its students. The business analogy should not be stretched too far — a school system that behaved like the local Target store, changing its merchandise to keep up with every fashion trend, would be hopelessly ineffective. But the customer/stakeholder terminology serves as a reminder to teachers and administrators to always be aware of student needs and parent concerns.

From a practical standpoint, such language also tacitly acknowledges that public schools are competing with private schools, which explicitly recognizes students and parents as “customers.” That’s just one of the many challenges our public school system faces.

CI may not be a cure-all, but we are happy to support a superintendent and school district that are willing to boldly move forward.

*Craig Stephens and Beverly Smolich live on Anna Avenue*

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**The High Holy Days**



## Clearing the air on flood basin

WATER DISTRICT HAS BEEN UP-FRONT WITH ITS PROPOSAL FOR CUESTA ANNEX

By Beau Goldie

In an opinion piece last month, Robert Schick presented some of his concerns regarding the proposed Cuesta Annex flood basin ("Flood basin editorial is all wet," July 13). While we appreciate Mr. Schick sharing his opinion, the Santa Clara Valley Water District would like to clarify and correct several of his points.

Mr. Schick refers to "presentations in private" to the Mountain View City Council, Chamber of Commerce and the *Mountain View Voice*. All presentations by Water District staff to the City Council and to the Chamber of Commerce have been made during open regularly scheduled meetings.

Mr. Schick is accurate in stating that the Water District has reached out to the public. We recently held two scoping meetings on May 16 and May 19. The meetings were announced in major local newspapers and invited 11,000 residents local to the project area.

The purpose of these meetings was to listen to the community's

issues and concerns on the conceptual project alternatives. The district is trying to gather many points of view, issues and options on the project to fully inform its board of directors.

The district will be scheduling additional meetings for the public later this winter to present the proposed project in a draft environmental impact report. At these meetings we will be seeking comments on the proposed project, which will have more details than the conceptual alternatives presented in May. These meetings will also be publicly announced via letter and newspaper.

District staff is also available to meet with any groups to discuss the project and identify concerns, issues or other options.

We believe that the district's concept for flow detention at Cuesta Park and Cuesta Annex can work with the City Council's accepted Concept B master plan. The district is always willing to work collaboratively with community members to develop site details to address everyone's objectives for

the park and annex.

In this era of declining budgets and the need to accomplish more benefits for the public with fewer resources, it is vital to develop solutions that serve more than one purpose. Cuesta Park and Annex can be a wonderful natural and historic amenity and provide flood protection for more than 3,000 Mountain View and Los Altos properties and residents.

With the proposed project, the community has the opportunity to not only receive flood protection but the removal of 1.3 miles of concrete, preservation of 1.6 miles of creek, enhancement of more than eight acres of habitat, and addition of .4 miles of trails in the city of Mountain View.

More information on the Permanente Creek Project can be found online at [www.valleywater.org](http://www.valleywater.org) or by calling the project manager, Afshin Rouhani, at (408) 265-2607, Ext. 2616.

*Beau Goldie is deputy operating officer of watershed operations for the Santa Clara Valley Water District.*

## LETTERS

► Continued from page 12

### KUDOS FOR CI INITIATIVE

Editor:

I am encouraged to see the Mountain View Whisman district commit to engaging students in a process that builds character as they learn at a personal level that will last for a lifetime.

Gaining system-wide alignment between administrators, teachers, parents and students on vision, goals and the process of learning will increase the possibility of superior results. The "whims of children" will be managed by professional educators willing to appreciate that actually listening to their students can inform them of barriers to improvement.

Anyone who views the video about CI provided at the MV Whisman Web site should be able to tell that those involved in the program are excited about its potential. Congratulations to Ghysels and the MV Whisman board for their initiative to take the district far beyond what California Standards and No Child Left Behind can ever hope to achieve.

As a volunteer tutor at Mountain View High School, I look forward to MV Whisman's students bringing their new skills of learning and involvement to the next level in the educational system.

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