

Mountain View VOICE



The good
old days

IN BUSINESS
| P.21

FEBRUARY 1, 2008 VOLUME 16, NO. 4

INSIDE: WEEKEND | PAGE 15

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DANIELLE VERNON

SOGGY PUPPY:

Dozer, a 1-year-old pit bull mix, plays at Shoreline Dog Park on a rainy afternoon last Friday. The rains continued off and on throughout the week.

'Mr. White Boy was in the Norteños'

STABBING SUSPECT'S FATE A SHOCK TO LOCAL MOM, WHO KNEW HIM AS A BOY

By Daniel DeBolt

Except for a few bumps in the road, Jacob DeWitt had a normal upbringing in Mountain View, say local residents who knew him. When he was a boy, his dad coached the local Little League team and his mom baked cookies for parties at Landels Elementary School.

Today, the 19-year-old sits in jail, accused of stabbing a young man gangland-style on Escuela Avenue in early January. It's a contrast that Muriel Sivyer-Lee, whose sons grew up with DeWitt, can't get her head around.

"I was surprised," Sivyer-Lee said, upon hearing of DeWitt's alleged crimes. "Mr. White Boy, with beautiful blue eyes and long eyelashes, was in the Norteños. I don't

know how Jacob went from playing baseball on the Rockies with his dad to stabbing someone in the side."

According to police, DeWitt and fellow Norteño gang member George Oseida, 21, attacked the victim on Sunday, Jan. 6 at 3:30 p.m. outside his apartment complex on the 600 block of Escuela Avenue, stabbing him repeatedly in the torso and punching him in the head. When the attackers left, the



Jacob DeWitt

victim, whose identity is being withheld, went to a neighbor who called police. He says he did not know his attackers.

Police determined the attack was gang-related, and the victim later identified

DeWitt and Oseida in a photo line-up. The two suspects were arrested Jan. 14 during a car stop on the Highway 85 off-ramp to Moffett Boulevard.

Police spokesperson Liz Wylie said DeWitt was a registered gang member, a status relatively difficult to attain but made possible by his record as a juvenile. She said he also has numerous tattoos on his arms and legs, some displaying his gang affiliation.

In fact, Wylie said, Mountain View police were so familiar with DeWitt that officers were able to guess his identity — and quickly assemble the photo line-up — based on his description. The victim, who is recovering from multiple stab wounds, identified DeWitt as the one



George Oseida

School districts see budget storm coming

MOUNTAIN VIEW WHISMAN
COULD LOSE \$3 MILLION
UNDER GOVERNOR'S
PROPOSED CUTS

By Casey Weiss

Local school officials say they are hoping for the best and planning for the worst as they assess what could happen if the state slashes the education budget as promised by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

At a board meeting last week, officials of the Mountain View Whisman School District estimated they would lose up to \$3 million if the state legislature passes the governor's proposed budget.

Chief financial officer Craig Goldman laid out the initial budget assessment during the meeting. The district hopes to raise revenue by renewing a local parcel tax and renting out classrooms to summer camps, he said — but if the governor's proposal passes, cuts to school programs cuts would be inevitable.

► See **SCHOOLS**, page 12

Means: Say what you mean

NEW MAYOR CALLS FOR CONCISE
MEETINGS, CLEAR DIRECTIONS
FROM COUNCIL MEMBERS

By Daniel DeBolt

When incoming Mayor Tom Means told the *Voice* what his goals were for the year, he didn't talk about fixing major problems like transportation, crime or housing. He said he simply wanted to make sure council meetings didn't run late into the night, and that the council spoke with clear direction.

► See **STABBING**, page 8

► See **COUNCIL**, page 11

INSIDE

GOINGS ON 24 | MARKETPLACE 26 | MOVIES 18 | REAL ESTATE 30 | VIEWPOINT 13

Mary Marley



SUNNYVALE ■ Spacious and updated home with 5 bedrooms, 3.5 baths, LR and DR, eat-in kitchen, large family room and lovely yard with pool. Excellent Cupertino schools. **\$1,100,000**

Cheryl Okuno



SANTA CLARA ■ Great investment opportunity near Santa Clara University. Convenient location near shopping, freeway and bus lines. 2bd/1ba with HW floors. **\$750,000**

Stephanie Schley



SANTA CLARA ■ Highly desirable Park Plan III in beautiful Rivermark! Bright and spacious 3bd/2.5ba end-unit is in one of the most sought after locations in Rivermark! **\$799,000**

Cheryl Okuno



SANTA CLARA ■ 4bd/2ba home, 1760+/- sf. Remodeled kitchen with top-of-the-line appliances, granite counters, hardwood floors, double-paned windows, + remodeled baths. **\$825,000**

Mona Sander



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Julian Cervantes



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Cheryl Okuno



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Kathy Bridgman



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Voices

A R O U N D T O W N

Asked in Downtown Mountain View. Pictures and interviews by Nicole Baldocchi.

What is your favorite movie and why?



*“‘Godfather.’
It’s a classic.”*

Paco Ruiz, Mountain View



*“‘Ocean’s Eleven’ —
I thought that was great.”*

Rebecca Bell,
Mountain View



*“‘Gone with the Wind’
because I love the way
Vivien Leigh played
Scarlett O’Hara.”*

Aminah Powell,
Brisbane, Australia



*“‘Philadelphia.’
I don’t know, I just like it.”*

Yalchin Helvaci,
Mountain View

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Brain Injuries: Rehabilitation and Support

Tuesday, February 12, 2008

6:30 – 7 p.m. (resource information tables)

7 – 9 p.m. (panel presentation)

Norman Banks, M.D., PAMF Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

Vicky Fukuhara, M.S., CCC-SP, CCM, Rehab Without Walls

Donna Schempp, LCSW, Family Caregiver Alliance

Clara Roa, Program Director, Peninsula Stroke Association

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Local News

CRIME WATCH

ROBBERY, 900 BLOCK W. MIDDLEFIELD RD., 1/23

A 15-year-old was walking on Middlefield Road near Moffett Boulevard when he was suddenly attacked from behind. The suspect, also 15, held a knife to the victim's throat and stole his iPod. He then ran off.

Officers later located him by matching the description given by the victim, and discovered that he had the victim's iPod with him. He was arrested for robbery.

ROBBERY, WELLS FARGO BANK, CUESTA DR., 1/25

An unidentified man entered the bank and handed the teller a note demanding money. He then left on foot; it is unknown if he got into a vehicle.

The suspect was described as a black male in his 20s, about 5 foot 8 inches to 5 foot 10 inches tall, with a thick build. He was wearing a champagne-colored leather cap, a brown suede jacket and thick prescription eyeglasses.

POLICE LOG

AUTO BURGLARY

100 Block E. El Camino Real, 1/22
1900 Block Grant Rd., 1/23
1300 Block San Domar Dr., 1/24
400 Block Showers Dr., 1/25
400 Block Showers Dr., 1/25
400 Block Showers Dr., 1/25
200 Block View St., 1/26
600 Block Showers Dr., 1/27
YMCA, 1/27
700 Block Mariposa Ave., 1/28

BATTERY

400 Block Ortega Ave., 1/23
Wal-Mart, 1/26
2000 Block California St., 1/28

COMMERCIAL BURGLARY

2500 Block California St., 1/22
2600 Block California St., 1/22
2500 Block Old Middlefield Rd., 1/23
600 Block Showers Dr., 1/24
2400 Old Middlefield Way, 1/25
900 Block N. Shoreline Blvd., 1/26
500 N. Shoreline Blvd., 1/26
2500 Block Charleston Rd., 1/28
600 Block Clyde Ave., 1/28

EMBEZZLEMENT

2400 Block Old Middlefield Way, 1/24

GRAND THEFT

24Hour Fitness, 1/22
200 Block Mariposa Ave., 1/23
500 Block Showers Dr., 1/23
100 Block N. Whisman Rd., 1/23
700 Block Castro St., 1/25

MISSING PERSON - ADULT

1100 Block Terra Bella Ave., 1/23

MISSING PERSON - JUVENILE

800 Block San Veron Ave., 1/28

PETTY THEFT

Costco, 1/22
700 Block W. Middlefield Rd., 1/23
1800 Block W. Middlefield Rd., 1/23
100 Block Castro St., 1/24
1200 Block Dale Ave., 1/24
2600 Block Fayette Dr., 1/24
Costco, 1/25
Wal-Mart, 1/25
Costco, 1/25
500 Block Franklin St., 1/25
Target, 1/25
800 Block Alice Ave., 1/26
600 Block S. Rengstorff Ave., 1/26
200 Block Castro St., 1/26
900 Block San Leandro Ave., 1/27

ROBBERY

900 Block W. Middlefield Rd., 1/23
Wells Fargo-Cuesta Dr., 1/25
Rite Aid-Grant Rd., 1/25

STOLEN VEHICLE

1500 Block N. Shoreline Blvd., 1/23
200 Block S. Rengstorff Ave., 1/24
1500 Block W. Middlefield Rd., 1/27

SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES/PERSON

1000 Block Wentworth St., 1/22
2200 Block Rock St., 1/23
2600 Block W. El Camino Real, 1/24
600 Block Mariposa Ave., 1/25
Century 16 Cinema, 1/26
900 Block W. El Camino Real, 1/26

VANDALISM

1400 Block N. Shoreline Blvd., 1/23
Alta Vista, 1/24
4300 Block Collins Ct., 1/24
1000 Block Washington St., 1/26
2400 Block Charleston Rd., 1/27

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Classic pincer movement

By Don Frances

LAST REMINDER: The Rotary Club will hold its annual Crab Feed this Saturday, Feb. 2, from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Mountain View Buddhist Temple. Something like 400 people are expected to attend.

Also, the club's online silent auction — which has been humming along since Jan. 18, offering everything “from exotic vacation getaways to donated items guaranteed to delight and surprise” — will culminate with a live auction at Saturday's event.

According to club organizers, both auction and crab feed are fundraisers designed to help the club carry on its good works, typically local grants and scholarships, and sometimes much more.

To order Crab Feed tickets online, go to <http://mvrotary-crabfeed.eventbrite.com>. To put in your bid on the online auction, go to www.mvrotary.cmarket.com. Or just show up Saturday at the Buddhist Temple, 575 N. Shoreline Blvd.

THE OBAMA people warn that they'll be out canvassing Mountain View this Saturday, so if you're against “change” and “hope,” you better have your ripostes ready.

As for me, I'll be issuing my ripostes in the polling booth Tuesday, where I'll cast (among other things) a “no” vote for all state propositions, as always.

IN OTHER voting-related non-news, the “American Idol” judges appear to have finally lost their minds. Great singing talents are cast aside, while mediocre kooks are sent to Hollywood with accolades. What's going on?

Personally, I think they're getting bored, and are ready to tank the show over it. ■



NORBERT VON DER GROEBEN

Rene Ake, a handyman with Avenidas, changes light bulbs in a home in Los Altos on Monday.

Help around the house

CITY'S BLOCK GRANTS GO TO AVENIDAS, WHICH IN TURN FUNDS HANDYMAN PROGRAM FOR ELIGIBLE SENIORS

By Nicole Baldocchi

A senior day care center is collaborating with the city of Mountain View to provide free handyman-type work to senior residents who qualify.

The City Council has given Avenidas a \$30,000 grant to renew its handyman program, which has been going strong for several years. Through the program, Avenidas — which operates senior

centers in Mountain View and Palo Alto — sends workers to do minor repairs and modifications in the homes of senior citizens, improving comfort, accessibility and safety for the residents, said Avenidas spokesperson Kari Martell.

“We would like to complete 300 jobs and help people make their residences safer and more accessible,” said Martell of the organization's goals.

Normally, such services cost \$37 per hour plus a contractor's fee, according to the Avenidas' Web site. For eligible seniors in the Mountain View and Palo Alto areas, the service is free. To be eligible, seniors must have an income not exceeding a certain amount per number of residents in the household (see chart). Each household is limited to \$2,000 worth of

► See **AVENIDAS**, page 6

■ NEWS BRIEFS

SNOW DUSTS SURROUNDING HIGHLANDS

Several inches of snow fell on Bay Area hills and mountains late last week, adding to powder already there and making a wintry scene for the mountains around Mountain View.

A snow advisory for elevations above 2,000 feet was issued last Thursday in the North Bay, East Bay, and Santa Cruz Mountains, according to the National Weather Service. The inclement weather held fast throughout much of the following week.

Snow in the Santa Cruz Mountains caused the California High-

way Patrol to close several strips of state highway, including on Highway 9 and Highway 35, said CHP Officer Jim Covello. Caltrans crews had to plow Highway 17 to keep at least one lane open.

ANOTHER ELDERLY MAN LOST, FOUND

An elderly Mountain View man suffering from mild dementia went missing last Wednesday morning and was found later that day, according to the Mountain View Police Department.

Etuat Tava, 72, was found at approximately 5:15 p.m. on Jan.

23. He is now safe with his family, according to department spokeswoman Liz Wylie. Tava had last been seen leaving his house in his truck at 6:30 a.m. The truck was later found near the intersection of Church and Franklin streets.

The previous week a Sunnyvale man, also elderly and suffering from dementia, disappeared and was found on the same day in Mountain View. In that incident, Sut Yue, 88, disappeared Wednesday, Jan. 16, from in front of the downtown Post Office. He was found at few hours later at Wal-Mart on Showers Drive.

— Bay City News

■ EDUCATION

District readies programs for English learners

MOUNTAIN VIEW WHISMAN ADDRESSES ACHIEVEMENT GAP FOR LATINO STUDENTS

By Casey Weiss

As the Mountain View Whisman School District continues to see a steady increase in English language learners — and a consistent achievement gap among these students — teachers in the district have begun efforts to combat the trend.

Central to the efforts is the district's English Language Learners Committee, which formed in September to address the needs of these students. Committee members have been observing programs in other districts and say they've identified a lack of adequate developmental materials and teacher training. In response, the committee has begun piloting its own development materials.

According to the state, more than 40 percent of Mountain View Whisman's students are English language learners (ELL). The total number has grown by over 500 students in the last five years alone.

“Teaching English as a second language requires different skills than teaching mathematics and basic reading,” said Judy Crates, who heads the ELL Committee. “Teachers haven't been taught these skills.” Crates said it's important that the committee have a consistent program from grade to grade.

Under the direction of the committee, district teach-

► See **LATINO**, page 6



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■ SEEN AROUND TOWN

Blue heron at Cuesta Annex



Eric Sibley of Begen Avenue photographed this great blue heron in the Cuesta Park Annex on Jan. 26. The heron, he wrote, "is one great argument for maintaining an open space preserve."

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.

AVENIDAS

► Continued from page 6

modifications and minor repairs per year.

Avenidas' current handyman program officially began Jan. 1, organizers said, and will run through June 30. The council will decide on April 22 whether or not to approve another grant for the program. The grants are derived from CDBG, or Community Development Block Grants — federal money allocated to state and local governments to improve conditions for lower-income residents. ▀

E-mail Nicole Baldocchi at
nbaldocchi@mv-voice.com

■ INFORMATION

To make an appointment with a handyman or check eligibility, call (650) 289-5426. Applicants must make no more than the yearly income below, based on number of residents per household:

Residents per Household Total Income Limit

# RESIDENTS	TOTAL INCOME LIMIT
1	\$59,400
2	\$67,900
3	\$76,400
4	\$84,900
5	\$91,650
6	\$98,450
7	\$105,250
8	\$112,050

LATINO

► Continued from page 5

ers have started implementing 30 minutes a day of curriculum aimed specifically at English learners. The district also provided teachers with additional resource materials, and plans to hold an all-day training exercise on English language development in March, according to Assistant

Superintendent Mary Lairon.

The committee has surveyed the resources offered elsewhere to ELL students, looked at their test scores for the last seven years, and is now working with teachers to observe programs in Redwood City, San Jose and Santa Clara.

"Our Hispanic English language learners weren't doing as well. When we looked at the test scores it became clearer," Crates said. "We looked at student progress to see what areas were successful and

what is keeping students from being successful."

Crates, a former principal of Bubb Elementary and Graham Middle schools, hopes that with lessons learned and changes implemented, the district's ELL students who start as beginners in English will become fluent within five years. ▀

E-mail Casey Weiss at
cweiss@mv-voice.com



PHOTO COURTESY NANCY LIPPE

Mentors, coordinators and scholarship recipients of MVLA Community Scholars recently gathered for the group's "Winter Bookstore Party" at Books Inc. on Castro Street. Left to right: Margot Liptsin (scholar), Laurel Korwin (scholar), Eric Petersen (Books Inc. manager), Donna Vo (scholar), Laurel Brock (MVHS college and career center coordinator), Krystal Stackhouse (scholar), Vicki and Pete Laboskey (mentors), Reeta Gheewala (mentor) and Nancy Seeman (mentor).

A shot at college

MVLA COMMUNITY SCHOLARS PROVIDES FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, MENTORS AND MORE

By Casey Weiss

Los Altos High School graduate Guadalupe Garcia says he would not be a student at California State University, East Bay without the one-on-one mentoring, seminars and scholarships he received from MVLA Community Scholars.

Since it began in 2000, the organization has offered financial assistance and programs for 127 underserved students in the Mountain View-Los Altos high school district. Currently, MVLA Community Scholars has 64 students in the program, and three graduated this December.

"I definitely know that the program has helped me get into college and stay in college," Garcia said.

Each year the program provides 12 to 15 participants with scholarships averaging \$3,000 a year for all four years of college. These scholarships supplement the money students already receive from colleges and state grants. All the scholars also work while attending school,

and are paired up with an adult mentor who stays in frequent touch, helping students manage their time and money.

"Our purpose is to make college achievable," said Nancy Lippe, director of the program.

Most students stay in California, attending UCs, CSUs and community colleges, but some have attended out-of-state private schools such as Cornell University.

Scholar Yamrot Alemu, who just graduated from Santa Clara University with a biology degree, said the program was crucial in helping him cover finances. "As a science major, the books were really expensive. It helped me to pay for my books each quarter," he said.

MVLA Community Scholars, which is sponsored in part by the charitable Los Altos Community Foundation (LACF), chooses its applicants based on financial circumstances, characteristics and readiness. Lippe said most participants have had a difficult past. One of the program's first graduates, for example, was kicked out of his house during high school, but attended college, became a journalist and now covers presidential elections for the *Washington Post*.

"With the support of a broader community, these students, who

face so many challenges, are more likely to succeed," Lippe said.

In addition to financial and mentor support, MVLA Community Scholars offers summer and winter workshops and socials for students, requiring freshmen to attend a seminar before they start college. Most recently, the organization began offering a cooking-for-college class, where mentors teach students how to shop on a budget while eating healthily.

The program was created in 2000 by former MVLA Superintendent Rich Fischer, LACF founder Jim Strand and Rich Freeland of the MVLA High School Foundation. Although LACF once funded the program entirely, scholarship money now comes from private donors, mostly Mountain View and Los Altos residents.

Applications for upcoming scholarships will be made available Feb. 15 and are due April 17. For those wishing to donate, Lippe is currently raising money for scholarships for the 2008-09 school year. To find out more, visit www.mvlacommunity-scholars.org.

E-mail Casey Weiss at cweiss@mv-voice.com

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Mountain View Whisman School District



(K-8) ENROLLMENT

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LocalNews

STABBING

► Continued from page 1

who held the knife and Oseida, a San Jose resident, as his accomplice.

The two face charges of attempted murder, with a gang enhancement charge of up to 10 years each. DeWitt faces additional charges for allegedly using a deadly weapon to induce bodily harm. A court date in the case is scheduled for Feb. 13 at 9 a.m. in the Palo Alto courthouse.

Police believe the attackers saw the victim as a rival Sureño. "For gang members, believing somebody might be involved with a rival gang is often reason enough," Wylie said.

According to deputy district attorney Leigh Frazier, DeWitt faces up to 19 years in prison if convicted. Oseida, who Frazier said has two other "strikes" on his record — both for assaults, including one with a deadly weapon — faces life in prison.

As to how often a white person is a member of a Latino gang, "It's not unheard of, though it's not the norm," Frazier said. She said three of her last 25 cases in the DA's gang unit involved whites who are members of either the Norteños or Sureños — the predominant Latino gangs in Mountain View.

According to Sivyer-Lee, DeWitt's parents were divorced and struggling, but worked hard and remained involved in their son's life. His mother baked cookies for classroom parties at Landels, and his dad coached the boy's Little League team, she said. Sivyer-Lee's two sons attended Landels and Graham Middle School with DeWitt.

While DeWitt was at Graham, his mother suffered a stroke, leaving her temporarily paralyzed, Sivyer-Lee said.

But Sivyer-Lee puts much of the blame on Graham itself, where she says too many kids, missing something at home, have been introduced to gangs. It's something she claims she's witnessed as both a parent and a substitute teacher.

"After living here 28 years I think the middle schools are our biggest problem, and I think they continue to be," she said. "I was a substitute teacher. I swore I would never ever come back to this school because of the lack of respect" from students.

"I think that's going to be an ongoing challenge for the district. I see it getting worse and worse."

(To deal with gang activity, Graham and Crittenden middle schools hired full-time gang prevention officers in 2006.)

Sivyer-Lee said the stabbing incident made her ask herself, "What prevented my kids from going down that road as well?"

"Parents have to be overly protective these days," she continued. "You give them an inch and they take a mile. Especially a boy who is determined to do what he wants to do."

As for her sons' old friend, Jacob DeWitt, "His life is ruined now." ■

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Cate Collings, MD, El Camino Hospital Cardiologist

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County gets \$12 million for home-buyers

Bay City News

Santa Clara County has received \$12 million in state mortgage assistance funds to help first-time buyers purchase a home, county officials announced Monday.

The funds will be used to provide Mortgage Credit Certificates to qualified first-time homebuyers. The certificates allow qualified buyers to receive a federal income tax credit of up to 15 percent of the interest they pay on their mortgage.

"Housing is one of the biggest issues facing working families in Santa Clara County," Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors Chairman Pete McHugh said in a statement. "Through the Mortgage Credit Certificate Program, residents can increase their buying power by reducing the amount of federal taxes taken out of their wages."

In order to qualify, applicants cannot make more than \$94,500 for up to a two-person household or \$108,675 for a household with three or more people. The home purchase price cannot be larger than \$630,000 for a new home or \$570,000 for an older home.

More information about the program can be obtained by calling the county's Office of Affordable Housing at (408) 441-4323.

OBITUARY

JOHN M. STEINWINDER

Mountain View resident John M. Steinwinder passed away on Jan. 20. He was 86 years old.

Steinwinder, a 50 year veteran of police work, is survived by relatives James and Myra, John (in China), Chris and Marian, Timothy, Tammy and Kenny, and his beloved great-granddaughter Sierra.

A viewing was held Saturday, Jan. 26 at Cusimano Family Colonial Mortuary, 96 W. El Camino Real in Mountain View.

"He kept us laughing," family members stated. "Remember him with a smile."



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■ CITY BRIEFS

**MAYFIELD MEETING
POSTPONED TO FEB. 12**

After hearing complaints from residents about a conflict with this Tuesday's election, the city has rescheduled the upcoming Mayfield hearing to Feb. 12.

Following its "fork in the road" decision last year to move ahead with the high density, 450-unit Mayfield project at 100 Mayfield Ave., the City Council must now decide whether to approve the first phase of the project: 42 homes along the project's border with the Monta Loma neighborhood.

The council will also decide on the project's master plan. Both aspects have already been approved by zoning administrator Peter Gilli.

**MEET THE MAYOR
TUESDAY MORNINGS**

Continuing a tradition of past mayors to listen to the concerns of residents, new Mayor Tom Means is holding regular office hours with residents at Le Boulanger every Tuesday morning from 8 to 9:30 a.m. The bakery is located at 650 Castro St.

— Daniel DeBolt

COUNCIL

► Continued from page 1

That was the subject of his first study session on Jan. 15, when the mayor and member Matt Pear made the case for shorter meetings. One reason they gave was that parents with children who had business before the council should be able to get home at a reasonable hour. But other members disagreed with their approach, saying they didn't want to limit public input.

Clarity, Means' second issue, came up on Jan. 22, when the council discussed preferred design features for small-lot housing developments zoned R3. Means and Pear hoped to give clear direction to a room full of developers with R3 projects. But the message differed among the council members.

To council member Jac Siegel and the slower-growth majority, the direction was, "We want quality, not quantity." When the *Voice* talked to Means a few days later, the message he got was that the council majority was too hard to please and often vague, using terms like "quality" and "walkability" in their directions to developers.

"You are being kind to say they are slow growth — they are no growth," Means said off the cuff in an interview Monday. He con-

tinued, "You can never figure out where they are coming from or where they're going."

Council member Jac Siegel disagreed, saying that for all the projects rejected last year, the reasons were clear.

"I think we're totally consistent," Siegel said Tuesday. "I don't want to get into a squabble with the mayor, but I think it's a lack of understanding."

What's baffled Means is that some council members who seemed to oppose high density housing are now saying they will support it if it's well designed and fits into the neighborhood.

"I'm not necessarily against numbers and density," Siegel said. "Some of them could be good projects if they were thought up better."

But Siegel added that with projects built to the maximum density, "usually something goes wrong somewhere." He wants developments that make people "want to stay in Mountain View, five to 10 to 20 years or more — not just provide a box to live in. That isn't what our community is about. I really want to keep in Mountain View the character that it has."

Bryant agreed, saying, "I am not against high density, I'm just against bad design. I feel it's possible to be very clear what good design is."

Bryant said her idea of good

design is described by the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, which provides checklists that developers use to acquire LEED certification. Developers can get points for maximizing open space, development density and "community connectivity." Increasingly, LEED is being talked about in Mountain View as the gold standard for environmentally friendly development, though some developers say its requirements increase the cost of housing.

This year is sure to be filled with discussion about standards for housing design as the housing element of the General Plan is discussed through 2009 and the planning department asks the council for clarification on certain project types — such as last week's R3 housing discussion.

Bryant says she is looking forward to a discussion at some point about adding housing in an area she's focused on: El Camino Real. She and member Laura Macias would like mixed use housing and retail developments along the street frontage there, though the idea has been criticized because many of the lots are deep and oddly shaped.

**'Hawthorne Park'
developer complains**

Bruce Burman of KMJ Urban Communities was disappointed

to read the minutes for the Nov. 6, 2007 council meeting, which he believes incorrectly summarized the council's direction on his project at 450 N. Whisman Road. He was especially concerned with the conclusion of the minutes, which stated that "the council directed the applicant to reduce building heights to 27 to 28" feet.

In fact, there was no summary or clear direction at all, according to a recording of the meeting, Burman claims.

"The meeting was notable in fact that there was no summary or specific direction to the applicant," he wrote in a letter he presented to the council at the Jan. 22 meeting.

The letter underscored Means' concerns about a lack of clear direction from the council, forcing city staff members to "read the tea leaves" after a meeting in order to write the minutes concisely.

"I was a little surprised by the developer's summary," Bryant said. "The general trend had been clear. Summarizing it in the end might have been useful — we'll be going in that direction. These are study sessions, not decisions made." ■

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



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SCHOOLS

► Continued from page 1

"We need to keep in mind this is an unexpected result," Goldman said. "The deficit is real and it is not likely to get better before it gets worse."

The governor declared a fiscal emergency in early January, proposing to cut 10 percent of funding from each state department and \$4.8 billion from the public schools during the next year and a half. The proposal would also close up to 43 state parks, slash prison budgets and release nonviolent offenders early.

Mountain View Whisman administrators and board members agreed that although the proposed cuts were still under negotiation, the district should be prepared.

"What did the governor do? He got everyone's attention," Goldman said. "When everything is said and done, there will be a lot of politicking."

Since the budget proposal is still uncertain, the district has not yet planned specific cuts. But during the board meeting, Goldman discussed reducing costs through strategic student transfers, and shifting spending to better use state resources. He said the district will be tougher about approving transfers, which can cost money by schools to hire more teachers for additional students.

"These are going to be hard times; these are going to be emotional times," Goldman said. "Everything is on the table. There is nothing off limits."

While the governor's proposal will hurt all public schools, Mountain View Whisman is certain to be hit harder than the Mountain View Los Altos High School District, which is funded primarily through property taxes. Mountain View Whisman receives funding from both property taxes and the state to meet the basic aid guaranteed

by Proposition 98, which the Governor's proposal would suspend.

The high school district's business superintendent, Joe Witt, said the district is currently in a "wait and see mode," but he estimated that it could lose between \$240,000 and \$830,000.

Though facing steeper cuts, Mountain View Whisman administrators are taking a similar approach. Goldman told everyone in the crowded school board room that the district was "planning, not panicking." With the governor and state politicians still negotiating, Goldman said, there should be a revised state budget in May, and as talks continue the district will provide a vehicle for community input.

"I am real confident we will get through this," said Superintendent Maurice Ghysels.

New parcel tax measure

Before the governor announced his budget cut proposal, the Mountain View Whisman school board had already started planning to renew its parcel tax, which currently raises \$1.7 million a year by taxing property within the district's borders.

While it will not solve all the district's money issues, school board members hope the parcel tax will help keep existing programs running. The board is scheduled to decide at its Feb. 7 meeting whether to adopt a measure to renew the tax. If approved, the measure would then go onto the June 3 ballot.

Originally passed by Mountain View voters in 2004, the tax is determined by property size, with a cap of approximately \$1,000. The new proposal would change the duration of the tax from five to eight years, and would increase tax rates. ▀

E-mail Casey Weiss at
 cweiss@mv-voice.com

EDUCATION BRIEF

MVLA PASSES DISTRICT GOALS

During its regular meeting Monday, the board of the Mountain View-Los Altos Union High School District unanimously adopted three-year district goals to improve student academic performance, recruit high-quality employees and provide financial transparency and stability.

The district plans to start

addressing these goals in July by expanding its advanced classes, offering additional programs for adult students and providing more health care options for employees injured on the job.

The priorities have not changed much since last year, when the board adopted goals for 2007-08, but these extend from 2008 to 2011.

— Casey Weiss

Viewpoint

- EDITORIAL
- YOUR LETTERS
- GUEST OPINIONS

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Member, Mountain View Chamber of Commerce

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■ EDITORIAL THE OPINION OF THE VOICE

Make City Hall high tech

The city of Mountain View, home of Google and a host of other leading high-tech companies, is lagging behind in providing the latest technology for its citizens and City Council members when they attend council meetings.

In one of the few cities in the country wired for WiFi, it is not possible to watch council meetings on a computer. You can easily search the minutes and staff reports of previous meetings online, but you cannot watch or listen to video or audio recordings — which you can do in other cities like San Jose.

Inside the council chambers, life goes on much as it did in 1991, when the facility was built and the first President Bush was in office. Evidence of that era is widely available:

■ Projection Screen: The interface to the current screen is clunky, requiring a city staff member to hook it up; a laptop outlet on a new podium would greatly improve the process.

■ History: The city's Web site only offers agendas and staff reports from past meetings, and minutes can be up to three months behind.

Residents should be able to download videos or audio recordings of entire meetings, which also should be available as podcasts.

■ Touch screen monitors for council members: Today members press a button and their votes are displayed on a lighted board, and recorded by hand by the city clerk. Touch screen monitors could tally votes, allow public speakers to queue up to speak and view items projected on the big screen.

■ Double podiums: Two high-tech podiums, instead of one, could speed transition from speaker to speaker, and with an outlet for laptops, provide easy access to a document camera or the big screen monitor.

■ Better sound: Any upgrade of the council chambers should include an improved sound system, one of the most frequently mentioned shortcomings of the chambers.

Just like any homeowner facing a remodel, the council will have to decide how much it wants to spend, and what improvements are truly going to smooth communication with constituents. And, as with any technology, whatever is purchased today eventually will be obsolete.

But we believe the council should not shy away from spending some real money — \$1 million would not be out of the question — to modernize the council chambers, a crucial interface to its tax-paying public. With more than 600 employees and \$86 million in annual general fund revenue, the city cannot afford to skimp on making itself as open and accessible to the public as technology will allow.

The council should not shy away from spending some real money — \$1 million would not be out of the question — to modernize the council chambers, a crucial interface to the public.

■ LETTERS VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

CITY'S SPRINKLERS ARE CAREFULLY CONTROLLED

Editor:

On behalf of the city of Mountain View, I wanted to offer a response to the observations regarding sprinklers running during the recent storms (Letters to the Editor, Jan. 18). I wanted to assure our community that the city has an established policy and ongoing commitment to water conservation, and shares the concerns expressed about preserving water.

In 1993, Mountain View was one of the first cities to install a central irrigation control system that communicates with irrigation controllers via wireless technology. The system allows one operator to make weekly adjustments to irrigation run times for 165 separate irrigation controllers based on the weekly evapotranspiration rate. Evapotranspiration is the total amount of water loss through evaporation and plant transpiration.

Use of our central irrigation control system has saved millions of gallons of water over the years. The same system allows the Parks Division to turn off all the controllers in the event of rain from one location.

The unfortunate incident of irrigation running on Castro

Street the evening of Jan. 3 was due to a faulty antenna. A signal to shut off all the controllers was sent out, but not received by this one unit. As soon as the city was made aware of the problem, it was immediately repaired.

The city encourages residents to call the Parks Division at (650) 903-6326 for irrigation concerns. All calls will be addressed as quickly as possible.

Bruce Hurlburt,
Acting Parks Manager

PROP 93 KEEPS THE GOOD LEGISLATORS

Editor:

Although term limits do remove some legislators who should be outed, in the long run, term limits are counterproductive. Let's hope that a majority who vote Feb. 5 agree, and vote yes on Proposition 93.

Progressives and liberals who don't vote yes on Prop 93 will be helping to pull the rug out from under those incumbents working for much-needed reforms. Reforms, such as universal single payer health care and increasing and equalizing educational opportunities for minorities and others at the bottom

► See **LETTERS**, page 14



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ViewPoint

GUEST OPINION

Prop 93 is good public policy

By Mike Kasperzak

I was disappointed to see that the *Voice* opposes Proposition 93, which seeks to modify California's legislative term limits ("Endorsements," Jan. 25).

Prop 93 is, simply put, good public policy. Unfortunately it does come with a "stink factor," but that does not make it a bad proposition.

While term limits have increased the turnover in the legislature and made it possible for a more diverse group of Californians to serve, it exacts a heavy toll on our state. Turnover is so high in the Assembly that the only people that really know what is going on are the professional staff and paid lobbyists. Is that what we really want?

Furthermore, as everyone has acknowledged, newly elected members of the Assembly begin almost immediately to turn their attention to their future Senate races, rather than focus on the job at hand. Additionally, a six-year term causes our legislators to look at the short term, rather than the long term.

Should Prop 93 pass, legislators' maximum time in Sacramento would be decreased from 14 to 12 years. They could of course spend

the entire time in one house, something they cannot do now.

However, there is no guarantee that even those members who got the "sweetheart" deal will get re-elected. Voters still matter. It is entirely possible that Speaker Fabian Nunez' constituents will be so upset with him that they won't vote for him again. And if

essentially have a safe seat for their entire term, be it six years in the Assembly or eight in the Senate. Few potential candidates from the incumbent's party will challenge the incumbent. After all, most voters can hold their breath for six years.

But, if a member of the Assembly could serve for 12 years, I believe we would see more competitive races within the party to ensure we have the best legislators. Twelve years is a long time to give anyone a free ride, which is what our current system does.

So in the end, good policy should trump the shenanigans of our legislature. Had they excluded themselves from Prop 93, I think everyone would be supporting it. If it passes, and each of them is re-elected (which is not a given), they will face increased competition and will ultimately be termed out. But in the meantime, Californians will gain with a legislature that has some experience and long-term accountability.

Vote yes for Prop 93, and if you don't like your legislator, don't vote for him or her in June. ▀

Mike Kasperzak is a former Mountain View City Council member. He lives on Morton Court.

**Californians
will gain with a
legislature that has
some experience
and long-term
accountability.**

they do, isn't it their right? After all, he may be doing a good job for the people he represents.

Another argument in favor of Prop 93 is the fact that the ability to serve for 12 years should encourage more competitive elections. True, we need redistricting reform, but until we get it, there will always be safe seats. Once someone wins an election, they

LETTERS

► Continued from page 13

of the income pecking order, usually take one or more decades to get passed.

Sally Lieber, our Assembly member who will be termed out if Prop 93 is defeated, has been especially effective as a social reformer and as a much-respected leader in the Assembly. She and a number of her colleagues, including Assembly members Loni Hancock and Mark Leno, and Sens. Elaine Alquist, Sheila Kuehl, Christine Kehoe and Joe Simitian, are being termed out just when their influence and experience is peaking.

Term limits — an undemocratic fad — should be replaced by public financing of elections, fair redistricting, instant run-off voting (ranked voting) and a system using proportional representation.

Legislators such as Lieber provide the experience and leadership needed to enact critical structural and social reforms that limiting terms won't. Vote yes on Prop 93.

Fred Duperrault
W. Middlefield Road

PROP 93 ANOTHER WAY TO RIG THE SYSTEM

Editor:

In 2006, state legislators promised to offer voters a redistricting plan that would eliminate gerrymandered districts and create competition for seats. There has also been talk of providing public funds for campaigns instead of allowing special interest groups to provide private funds and expect special favors.

No state legislator has lost a re-election bid in California for many years because the system is rigged. Now, instead of offering real reform, incumbent state legislators have proposed Proposition 93 in order to extend their uncontested reign for another 4 to 6 years. Just say no.

Gary Wesley
Continental Circle

OBAMA'S MESSAGE HITS HOME

Editor:

Thank you for printing your explanation, analysis, and endorsements for two proposi-

tions that will be on our California primary ballot on Feb. 5. Of course our city's voters will be voting with the rest of the state in the Presidential Primary that day, too.

We have the opportunity in that primary to achieve powerful change under unlikely circumstances by voting for the insurgent candidacy of Sen. Barack Obama. Voters of my generation hark back to the electrifying campaigns and work of John F. Kennedy, Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., when they hear Obama speak. Young voters see a campaign of ideas and ideals that help them have faith in politics. The last thing we want is to trade one batch of status quo politicians for another.

Yes, we like Obama's policies, especially his opposition to the war in Iraq from the very beginning, but even more we like Obama's ability to work with Democrats, Republicans and Independents to make the changes our country needs. Obama's messages of hope and unity have won me over.

Ellen Wheeler
Brookdale Avenue

■ RESTAURANT REVIEW

The ballad of a big cafe

IN PALO ALTO, FORMER FANNY & ALEXANDER STRAIGHTENS UP, FLIES (MOSTLY) RIGHT AS B412

By Sheila Himmel

The word bistro usually, and rightfully, refers to a small cafe or a small nightclub. Downtown Palo Alto's new Bistro 412 bursts the envelopes of both categories.

In a town where outdoor dining practically always means the sidewalk, the former Fanny & Alexander offers a charming protected garden. The patio is tented for winter, and mainly used for parties. There's also a

full bar out there.

When Siegfried Mueller bought Fanny & Alexander three years ago, he wanted to smooth the abrupt transition that occurred every night when the place went from dinner to dance club. Also, he wanted to fill a gap he saw in fine dining, American-style, in Palo Alto eateries.

At the moment, Mueller is also the chef, and he does well.

But Bistro 412 (B412 is the club

► See **BISTRO 412**, page 16



VERONICA WEBER

The inside of Bistro 412 features brick walls, crown molding, black couches and a warmly lit interior.



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If you would like to be listed in DINING ON THE TOWN please call Britt Callaway at the Voice at 964-6300



VERONICA WEBER

The colorful Chinese chicken salad at Bistro 412 in Palo Alto.

BISTRO 412

► Continued from page 15

name) is just a little confusing.

One day, two women looking for lunch walk in and check out the menu. They're intrigued but don't know where to go. Straight-ahead are cloth-covered tables on the dance floor, there's a handsome bar to the right, lounge seats with a few

diners to the left. The would-be customers look confused, and walk out.

Which is too bad. Two other women, my friend and I, had a very good lunch that day at Bistro 412.

A stellar spinach salad (\$7) was plump with herbed goat cheese, pear tomatoes, toasted pine nuts and crisp bacon driz-

► Continued on next page

DINING NOTES

Bistro 412
412 Emerson St., Palo Alto
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► Continued from previous page

zled in balsamic vinaigrette.

My friend and I split the salad and a half-pound Angus hamburger (\$11), which comes with garlic fries, and called it a day. Lightly toasted buns enfold crisp iceberg lettuce, threads of red onion, slices of tomato, the juicy burger and tangy blue cheese. It's a dribbling, delicious mess.

Coffee was dark and rich, but cold. Big oops.

Except for the coffee and our distance from other people, lunch was delightful. On a return trip, a weeknight, again the place was close to empty. A hungry half-dozen were drinking at the bar, but they were waiting for their table at Evvia, the popular contemporary Greek restaurant next door.

Again, the food and service were very good. A basket of fresh Acme sour batard bread came right away. The multi-cultural music of Pink Martini happened to be the soundtrack while I nursed one of B412's specialty cocktails, a pink martini made with vodka, triple sec and pomegranate liqueur. Music ramps up as the night goes on.

The bar menu offers drink-appropriate foods like popcorn shrimp and mushroom crostini, ranging from \$8 to \$12. The waiter suggested filet-wrapped grilled asparagus (\$12), glazed in soy and garlic, on a bed of baby greens.

Soup of the day was chicken-tortilla (\$7), a tasty bowl of

The would-be customers looked confused.

tender chicken with crumbled tortilla thickening the soup. The bowl itself was hot, as was the plate it sat upon. Bistro 412 minds the details like that.

Mild, miso-glazed halibut (\$24) rests on warm soba noodles in soy vinaigrette, enlivened by chilies and scallions. Bok choy accompanies.

Our only mistake was the item described as: Pork tenderloin medallions with caramelized onions and fingerlings in a green

peppercorn pineapple sauce \$22. Which did not prepare me for three perfectly fine medallions buried in sweet, creamy lava. The potatoes had the job of lightening up this dish.

Maybe I should've had the vegetarian entree, eggplant napoleon (\$16). Or one of the chicken, beef or lamb dishes. B412 doesn't have a big menu, but it has a little of everything.

That includes a DJ every night, and karaoke Wednesdays, beginning at 10 p.m., and no cover charge until 11 p.m. The indoor dining tables are covered in white cloths, but they are light and temporary, easily moved to make way for dancing. It's just a little weird to eat and pay for fine food while sitting on patio furniture on a dance floor.

When the weather gets better and the tent comes off, go directly to the patio. ■



VERONICA WEBER

The pan roasted chicken with a whole grain mustard sauce and served with mushroom risotto.

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MOVIE TIMES

27 DRESSES (PG-13) ★★1/2 Century 16: 1:25, 4:35, 7:35 & 10:15 p.m. Fri.-Sun. also at 10 a.m. Century 20: 12:20, 1:40, 3, 4:20, 5:40, 7, 8:20 & 9:40 p.m.

ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS (PG) ★★★ Century 16: 1:40, 4, 6:45 & 9:10 p.m. Fri.-Sun. also at 11:15 a.m. Century 12: 12:45, 3:30, 7:05 & 9:40 p.m.

ATONEMENT (R) ★★1/2 Century 16: 12:55, 4, 6:55 & 9:15 p.m. Fri.-Sun. also at 10:05 a.m. Century 20: 1:30, 4:25, 7:15 & 10:15 p.m.

THE BUCKET LIST (PG-13) ★ Century 16: 1:35, 4:10, 6:50 & 9:15 p.m. Fri.-Sun. also at 11:05 a.m. Century 20: 12:10, 2:35, 5, 7:25 & 9:50 p.m.

CHARLIE WILSON'S WAR (R) ★★1/2 Century 16: 1:55, 7:20 & 9:55 p.m. Century 20: 12:25, 2:55, 5:30, 8 & 10:30 p.m.

CLOVERFIELD (PG-13) Century 16: 1, 3:15, 5:35, 8:05 & 10:20 p.m. Fri.-Sun. also at 10:30 a.m. Century 20: 12:05, 1:05, 2:15, 3:15, 4:25, 5:25, 6:35, 7:35, 8:50, & 10 p.m.

THE DIVING BELL AND THE BUTTERFLY (PG-13) ★★★★★ Palo Alto Square: 1:35, 4:25 & 7:15 p.m. Fri. & Sat. also at 10:05 p.m.

ENCHANTED (PG) Century 20: 12:30, 3:05, 5:40 & 8:15 p.m.

THE EYE (PG-13) Century 16: 12:05, 2:45, 5:15, 7:50 & 10:25 p.m. Century 12: 12:30, 2, 3, 4:30, 7, 8, 9:20 & 10:30 p.m.

THE GOLDEN COMPASS (PG-13) ★★★ Century 20: 1:10 & 3:50 p.m.

HANNAH MONTANA & MILEY CYRUS: BEST OF BOTH WORLDS DISNEY 3D (G) Century 16: Noon, 2:25, 4:50, 7:15 & 9:40 p.m. Fri.-Sun. also at 9:45 a.m.

HOW SHE MOVE (PG-13) Century 12: 12:35, 2:55, 5:15, 7:40 & 10:10 p.m.

I AM LEGEND (PG-13) ★★★ Century 20: 12:15, 2:45, 5:20, 7:55 & 10:25 p.m.

JUNO (PG-13) ★★★ Century 20: Noon, 12:55, 3:25, 5:45, 6:50, 8:10 & 10:35 p.m. Aquarius: 1, 3:30, 6, 8:20 & 10:40 p.m.

THE KITE RUNNER (PG-13) ★★★ Century 20: 7:10 & 10:05 p.m. Palo Alto Square: 1:30, 4:20 & 7:20 p.m. Fri. & Sat. also at 10:20 p.m.

MAD MONEY (PG-13) Century 16: 4:30 p.m. Fri.-Sun. also at 11 a.m. Century 12: 12:55 & 7:35 p.m.

MEET THE SPARTANS (PG-13) Century 16: 1:10, 3:25, 5:40, 7:55 & 10:15 p.m. Fri.-Sun. also at 10:45 a.m. Century 12: 12:40, 1:30, 3:10, 4:20, 5:25, 7:30, 8:10, 9:50 & 10:25 p.m.

MICHAEL CLAYTON (R) ★★1/2 Century 20: 1:20, 4:15, 7:05 & 9:55 p.m.

NATIONAL TREASURE: BOOK OF SECRETS (PG) Century 16: 12:50, 3:50, 7:05 & 10:10 p.m. Century 12: 12:50, 4:10, 7:25 & 10:20 p.m.

NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN (R) ★★★★★ Century 16: 3:30, 3:35, 7:10 & 10:05 p.m. Century 20: 1:35, 4:40, 7:30 & 10:20 p.m.

THE ORPHANAGE (R) ★★★★★ Century 20: 2, 4:55, 7:40 & 10:10 p.m.

OVER HER DEAD BODY (PG-13) ★★1/2 Century 16: 12:15, 2:40, 5:05, 7:30 & 10 p.m. Century 20: 12:25, 2:45, 5:05, 7:25 & 9:45 p.m.

PERSEPOLIS (PG-13) ★★1/2 Aquarius: 12:15 2:45 5, 7:30 & 9:45 p.m.

THE PIRATES WHO DON'T DO ANYTHING: A VEGGIE-TALES MOVIE (G) Century 12: 12:25, 2:35, 4:50, 7:10 & 9:20 p.m.

RAMBO (R) (NOT REVIEWED) Century 16: 12:35, 3:05, 5:30, 8 & 10:30 p.m. Fri.-Sun. also at 10:10 a.m. Century 12: 1:10, 2:15, 3:45, 4:40, 6:15, 9 & 9:45 p.m.

STRANGE WILDERNESS (R) Century 16: 12:10, 2:35, 5, 7:40 & 9:55 p.m. Century 12: 1, 4, 7:20 & 10 p.m.

SWEENEY TODD: THE DEMON BARBER OF FLEET STREET (R) ★★ Century 12: 3:30 & 10:15 p.m.

THERE WILL BE BLOOD (R) ★★★★★ Century 20: Noon, 2:20, 3:20, 6:45, 9:15 & 10:05 p.m. Guild: 1, 4:30 & 8 p.m.

UNTRACEABLE (R) ★★ Century 16: 1:30, 4:20, 7 & 9:30 p.m. Century 20: 12:10, 1:25, 2:40, 3:55, 5:15, 6:30, 7:50, 9:10 & 10:25 p.m.

THE WATER HORSE: LEGEND OF THE DEEP (PG) Century 20: 12:35, 3:15, 5:55 & 8:35 p.m.

Note: Screenings are for Friday through Monday 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)

★ 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

27 DRESSES ★★1/2

(Century 16, Century 20) Perpetual bridesmaid Jane Nichols (Katherine Heigl) eats, sleeps and breathes the elusive enchantment of weddings. Jane is such a fan that friends and acquaintances look to her for all manner of arduous nuptial planning. To make matters worse, this sincere singleton toils in the taffeta ghet-to while nurturing an unhealthy crush on her clueless but hunky boss George (Edward Burns). Salvation arrives in the form of Jane's sister Tess (Malin Akerman), a flighty supermodel who's just what the doctor ordered for support and distraction. At least that was the plan. Tess and George fall head over heels on sight, leaving Jane with a clunky finish to her fantasies and yet another invitation to duty as a not-so-merry maid. Enter Kevin (James Marsden), a cynical journalist who meets Jane at a friend's wedding and considers her plight perfect fodder for his "Commitments" column. There's nothing new to this Cinderella story that telegraphs its routine complications with blithe indifference to its formulaic forerunners. Fortunately the conventional elements are cobbled together with perky panache. And then there are the dresses — 27, to be exact. They're frilly testaments to the romantic secondary and homage to the nice girls who don't always finish last. *Rated: PG-13 for language and mature themes. 1 hour, 47 minutes.* — J.A.

ATONEMENT ★★1/2

(Century 16) Pre-war England has never looked as lush as in Joe Wright's intensely crafted romantic drama. Based on Ian McEwan's exceptional novel of the same name, "Atonement" reflects a simpler, easier time. Glamorous Cecilia Tallis (Keira Knightley) lives in the lap of luxury on her family's country estate, feigning casual indifference to the attentions of the housekeeper's handsome son, Robbie Turner (James McAvoy). The vivid imagination of Cecilia's younger sister, Briony (Saoirse Ronan), sets narrative elements in motion. Briony, a willful sprite who spends hours at her typewriter churning out histrionic theater, discovers Robbie and Cecilia in a compromising position and, feeling slighted by a discovery far beyond her ken, tells a shocking lie with devastating consequences for all. In the grand tradition of such epic historical romances as "The English Patient," "Atonement" is one of the year's finest films. *Rated: R for war violence, language and mature themes. 2 hours, 2 minutes.* — J.A.

THE BUCKET LIST ★

(Century 16, Century 20) Even A-list heavyweights Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman can't save this terminal tearjerker from itself. Edward Cole (Nicholson) is a cantankerous health-care mogul who owns the hospital where he's being treated for inoperable cancer. Cole is forced to share a room with dying auto mechanic Carter Chambers (Freeman).

Weekend

Chemo treatments and close quarters offer the pair of grumpy old men plenty of opportunity to share their disappointments and their dreams, which flow like lifeblood once both are handed fatal prognoses of a year. What would you do with unlimited resources and 12 months to live? Cole and Chambers buddy up on a kicking-the-bucket wish list that includes skydiving, race-car driving and such wonders of the world as the Taj Mahal. Under the leaden direction of Rob Reiner "Bucket" plays like molasses on meds: slow, superficial and sapped of any spark that might be generated by lifestyles of the rich and famous, or decades of dramatic experience in front of the camera. *Rated: PG-13 for language and mature themes. A mercifully brief 1 hour, 37 minutes.* — J.A.

THE ORPHANAGE ★★★★★

(Century 16, Century 20) Adult orphan Laura (Belen Rueda) has purchased the cavernous mansion where she spent her childhood, planning on turning it into a home for disabled youngsters. It doesn't take long before her precocious son Simon (Roger Princep) is chattering on about an imaginary playmate and his clever, insidious games. Eerie moments mount up: a visit from a deranged social worker who knows too much for her own good; a treasure hunt gone sorely awry; and, after an angry exchange in which Simon discovers he is adopted, his disappearance. Laura will not accept the loss of her son and determines to locate him by delving into the realm of the supernatural, much to the consternation of her anxious husband (Fernando Cayo) who's convinced she's losing her mind. The living co-exist with the dead with spine-tingling synchronization as Laura straddles both worlds in an effort to save Simon and unravel the mystery buried in the walls of her old home. Through the efforts of a police psychologist (Mabel Rivera) and a creepy medium (Geraldine Chaplin), treacherous secrets are revealed. Saturated in anxiety and dread, this contemporary chiller is the real deal. *Rated: R for violence, some bloodshed and mature themes. 1 hour, 45 minutes. In Spanish with English subtitles.* — J.A.

PERSEPOLIS

★★★★1/2
(Aquarius) The Iranian-born Marjane

Satrapi partners with underground comic artist Vincent Paronnaud to illustrate her eventful life in cinematic form. The film offers the unique perspective of growing up female in Iran during the Islamic revolution and suffering through the war with Iraq. Daily life is a study of contradictions. Marjane (voiced by Gabrielle Lopes), the only child of loving Marxist parents (voiced by Catherine Deneuve and Simon Abkarian), quickly learns that one can speak and behave differently at home than in public. A saucy grandmother (voiced by Danielle Darrieux) reinforces many of the life-must-go-on themes. To ensure her safety, Marjane's family sends her to boarding school in Vienna, one of many rites of passage that position her as an outsider. Edifying and entertaining, "Persepolis" paints the personal within a political framework. The one-of-a-kind animated feature shouldn't be missed. *Rated: PG-13 for mature thematic material including violent images, sexual references, language and brief drug content. In French with English subtitles. 1 hour, 35 minutes.* — S.T.

THERE WILL BE BLOOD

★★★★★
(Guild) Paul Thomas Anderson plays true to form in this raw, original work loosely based on Upton Sinclair's sprawling 1927 novel "Oil!" Daniel Day-Lewis, and only Day-Lewis, possesses the essential gravitas to pull off what is sure to be an award-winning turn as Daniel Plainview, a wily wildcatter in the turn-of-the-century west. As a crude oil hustler, Plainview travels from town to town plundering the land for the rich black pitch that will ultimately make him a millionaire. Plainview pins big hopes on Sunday Ranch, a parcel of parched land that can be had for \$6 an acre by virtue of a cunning snow job on the Sundays themselves, not to mention an entire community of skeptics and the Sundays' sermonizing son, Eli (Paul Dano). The townsfolk ultimately rally round the plan, hoping for a giant strike that will see them rolling in dough. But raping the land reaps its own kind of hell. Visceral, volatile and epic. *Rating: R for extreme violence and language. 2 hours, 38 minutes.* — J.A.

UNTRACEABLE ★★

(Century 16, Century 20) Diane Lane plays her dues as FBI cyber crimes agent

Jennifer Marsh, a struggling single mom who routinely busts hackers specializing in high-end tech and low-end porn. Things take a nasty turn when Marsh and dogged co-worker Griffin Dowd (Colin Hanks) uncover KillWithMe.com, complete with live streaming video of a kitten tortured to death by starvation. And it doesn't stop there: the sicko's next victim is seen bound and shackled with the Web site's name carved on his chest. Each hit on the site ups a super dose of anti-coagulant, virtually assuring a fatal bleed-out as online gawkers clamor for their gory fix. Marsh and Dowd rush to dismantle the sophisticated and seemingly untraceable site while the perpetrator invites the whole world to help him execute more unwitting prey in unspeakable fashion. "Untraceable" unsettles on so many levels, most notably the aura of reality that pervades the killer's ability to manipulate the Internet and hack into confidential files to suit his deadly needs. "Untraceable" hits its mark with unforgettable visuals laden with potential for undesirable nightmares. Life is too short for long-term exposure to relentless agony and distress, even in the guise of entertainment. *Rated: R for language, violence and disturbing images. 1 hour, 45 minutes.* — J.A.

MOVIE CRITICS

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

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Wednesday, February 13, 7 - 8 p.m.

Sunnyvale Council Chambers, 456 West Olive Ave

Presented by Meredith Saito, MS-CCA, board certified audiologist.

**For more information or to reserve your space, visit
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Healthy Family Meals: Makeover Edition Free Parent Workshop Series

Tuesday, February 5, 7 - 9 p.m.

Palo Alto Medical Foundation Mountain View Center

701 E. El Camino Real

Presented by Pat Sampson, M.D., and Dalia Perelman RD

**For more information or to reserve your space, visit
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Classes and Support Groups



Feeding Your Preschooler

Tuesday, February 12, 7 - 9 p.m.

Palo Alto Medical Foundation Mountain View Center

701 E. El Camino Real, Third Floor Conference Rooms

Cost: \$20

**For more information or to reserve your space, visit
caminomedical.org/healtheducation or call 650-934-7373.**



Healthy Skin

Monday, February 11, 6:30 - 8 p.m.

Palo Alto Medical Foundation Mountain View Center

701 E. El Camino Real, Third Floor Conference Rooms

Cost: \$20

**For more information or to reserve your space, visit
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