

Mountain View VOICE



**BURGER
BATTLE**
WEEKEND | P.19

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City backs study of new rail stop

HIGH SPEED TRAINS WOULD BE A WELCOME SIGHT FOR MANY SPEAKERS AT COUNCIL MEETING

By Daniel DeBolt

The City Council showed renewed interest in high speed rail Tuesday, voting 5-2 in favor of studying a station in downtown Mountain View despite effectively killing off the idea two weeks ago.

The council voted to have the California High Speed Rail Authority consider the possibility of a Mountain View station

for the trains, which will pass by most Peninsula cities at 125 miles per hour along the Caltrain corridor. Previously, Ronit Bryant had voted against the study and member John Inks had abstained. This time, only Jac Siegel and Laura Macias remained opposed.

The Rail Authority has indicated that if Palo Alto rejects preliminary plans for a Peninsula stop at University Avenue — a distinct possibility given that council's apparent reticence — the agency would look to Redwood City and Mountain View as alternatives.

About a dozen members of the public spoke about high speed rail in front of the council Tuesday, many of them downtown residents who warned the city might be passing up a major opportunity. As one downtown resident put it, "The council needs to take the time to make an informed decision so we don't have any regrets."

Many likened it to the early days of the Southern Pacific railroad when some cities, made the mistake of allowing the train to pass them by.

In fact, said downtown resident Bruce Karney, the train station is "the very reason downtown Mountain View is where it is," and why there is no longer any real evidence of the original center of town near El Camino Real and Highway 237.

The item found its way back on the council agenda Tuesday after the issue surprised some council members on Feb. 24. At that meeting, the Rail Authority told council members that unless a rail-stop study was specifically



MICHELLE LE

THE ADVOCATE:

Maribel Zavala, a mother of three children in the Mountain View Child Development Center, enters the Mountain View Whisman school district offices to demand that trustees find new space for the YMCA-run preschool. The district ended a 21-year lease with the preschool, prompting dozens to protest. **See story, page 11.**

Owners seek shelter from 'CS' regulations

THEY TELL COUNCIL OLD MIDDLEFIELD WAY IS IN BIG TROUBLE DUE TO ZONING RULES

By Daniel DeBolt

Likening the Commercial Service zone along Old Middlefield Way to a dying coral reef, property owners of offices, repair shops and commercial supply houses appealed to the City Council on Tuesday for some relief from the city's land use regulations there.

The owners found a sympathetic ear in the council, which directed city staff to study the problem.

"I don't think it is often that we get that many landowners to

► See **CS ZONE**, page 9

► See **COUNCIL**, page 9

School layoffs begin as budget hits home

By Casey Weiss

Budget reductions have begun to take their toll on local students, programs and staff, nearly a month after the state Legislature approved over \$8 billion in cuts to public education.

Earlier this week the Mountain View-Los Altos High School District, and the Los Altos and Mountain View Whisman elementary school districts, passed budgets for the remainder of the school year, transferring funds and dipping into reserves as they prepare for millions in cuts through 2010.

The Los Altos district also sent out pink slips to 45 employees, and the high school district decided to mail preliminary notices to its full-time Adult

School teachers, warning they could be laid off before the start of the 2009-10 school year.

Among the state budget cuts are more than \$1 billion over

Among the state budget cuts are more than \$1 billion over the next 17 months from special programs

the next 17 months from special programs, such as arts and English language programs. Locally this means \$2 million from the high school district through 2010, mostly in adult education

cuts; and \$500,000 from LASD, although trustees there already decided to slash over \$2 million to prepare for more cutbacks in upcoming years.

But the Mountain View Whisman School District faces the largest cut of all: \$2.6 million through 2010. As a revenue limit district, it receives most of its funding from the state, unlike the other two districts which rely on local property taxes for funding.

Administrators say these numbers are still uncertain as they wait for California voters to approve some of the budget decisions in a special election in May. The state will also receive additional funds from the federal stimulus package, but administrators still do not know how

► See **SCHOOL BUDGET**, page 10

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

Mary Marley



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Helena Berber



MOUNTAIN VIEW ■ Lovely 3bd/2ba home with many upgrades! Kitchen with granite counters + new appliances, refinished hardwood floors, new paint, + updated bathrooms. **\$875,500**

Kathy Bridgman



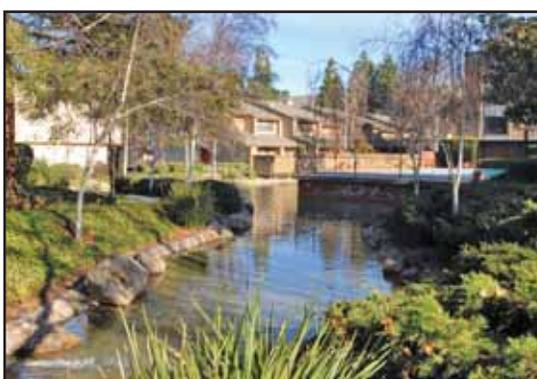
MOUNTAIN VIEW ■ Turn-the-key and move into this 3bd/2.5ba single family home in "The Crossings." Bright and spacious with numerous upgrades. Los Altos School District. **\$749,000**

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Voices

AROUND TOWN

Asked in Downtown Mountain View. Pictures and interviews by Andrea Nott.

How have the California state budget cuts affected you, or have they?



"I go to De Anza, and I think they've raised prices. I know it's hurting the community colleges."

Jennifer Harper, Los Altos



"My kids go to school now in Washington, and I don't notice a difference. I think it's the same for all the states now."

Ana Savinovic, Mountain View



"Not directly, but indirectly they affect everyone and I'm not happy about it."

Kathie Altknecht, San Jose



"I didn't notice [the cuts], but it's a tough time for our retail store. We're all in the same boat."

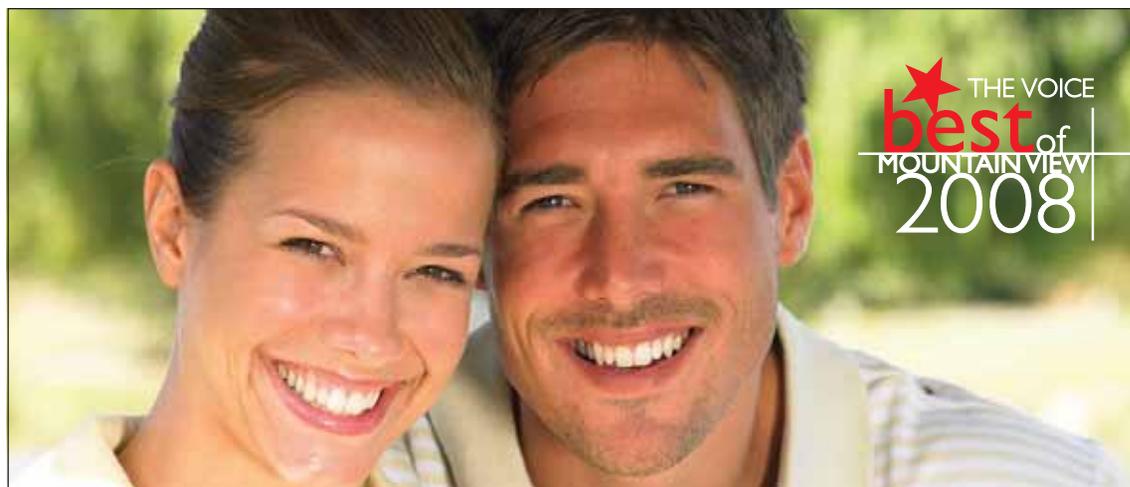
D.C. Wong, Fremont



"No, I haven't noticed that it has affected me. I go to Homestead High School."

Marshall Dunford, Los Altos

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- * WHAT ALL PARENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT EATING DISORDERS**
 Adolescent medicine specialist Dr. Rebecka Peebles will discuss body image and how it relates to eating disorders in our children, including common myths and facts surrounding preteens and adolescents.
 - Tuesday, March 24
- * GRANDPARENTS SEMINAR**
 Designed for new and expectant grandparents, this class examines changes in labor and delivery practices, the latest recommendations for infant care and the unique role of grandparents in the life of their grandchild.
 - Sunday, March 29
- * INFANT AND CHILD CPR**
 This 2-1/2 hour course provides an opportunity for new parents, grandparents and other childcare providers to learn the techniques of infant and child CPR and choking prevention. Infant and child mannequins provide hands-on training.
 - Saturday, April 4
- * NEW FAMILY PROGRAM**
 This program features a selection of support groups designed to help families throughout the first nine months after birth, offering something for everyone. Enrollment includes participation in Mother & Baby Mornings, Dads' Nights, Working Mothers' Groups and Couples Coffees.
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 700 block E. El Camino Real, 3/4
 2100 block Junction, 3/4
 700 block Continental Cir., 3/4
 700 block W. Middlefield Rd., 3/4
 1400 block Gilmore Cir., 3/4
 100 block Alley Way, 3/4
 800 block Heatherstone Way, 3/5
 700 block Continental Cir., 3/5
 400 block Sierra Vista Ave., 3/5
 100 block Villa St., 3/6
 500 block Ortega Ave., 3/7
 1200 block Farley St., 3/7
 500 block Cypress Point Dr., 3/8
 200 block Grant Rd., 3/8
 200 block Easy St., 3/8
 200 block Easy St., 3/9

COMMERCIAL BURGLARY

1300 block Grant Rd., 3/2
 200 block San Antonio Rd., 3/3

RESIDENTIAL BURGLARY

2100 block Sunnyview Ln., 3/2
 600 block Rainbow Dr., 3/3
 300 block Tyrella Ave., 3/8
 300 block Oak St., 3/8
 900 block Heatherstone Way, 3/8
 900 block Heatherstone Way, 3/9
 300 block Franklin St., 3/9

BATTERY

400 block Lotus Ln., 3/3
 700 block W. Middlefield Rd., 3/6
 1600 block Villa St., 3/9
 2200 block Showers Dr., 3/9

DISTURBANCE

Lozano's Car Wash, 3/7

DISORDERLY CONDUCT

Monte Carlo Club, 3/2
 200 block Castro St., 3/7
 Molly Magee's, 3/7
 200 block Castro St., 3/8
 W. El Camino Real/S. Shoreline Blvd., 3/8
 Wheel Works, 3/9

GRAND THEFT

Walmart, 3/4
 500 block Ortega St., 3/5
 500 block Castro St., 3/6
 200 block E. Dana St., 3/8
 El Camino Hospital, 3/8
 El Camino Hospital, 3/9
 2100 block Landings Dr., 3/9
 Chiquita Ave./Villa St., 3/9
 24 Hour Fitness, Showers Dr., 3/9

PETTY THEFT

2300 block Jane Ln., 3/2
 2400 block Grant Rd., 3/3
 Lucky, 3/3
 1200 block La Avenida, 3/3
 Taco Bell, 3/3
 600 block San Antonio Rd., 3/3
 Walmart, 3/4
 Graham Middle School, 3/5
 200 block E. Dana St., 3/5
 Sears Department Store, 3/5
 900 block W. Middlefield Rd., 3/5
 Walmart 3/6

PETTY THEFT

Sears Department Store, 3/6
 100 block E. Middlefield Rd., 3/7
 Sears Department Store, 3/7
 Walmart, 3/7
 400 block San Antonio Rd., 3/8
 Sears Department Store, 3/9

IDENTITY THEFT

200 block Showers Dr., 3/4

STOLEN VEHICLE

300 block Escuela Ave.,
 1900 block California St., 3/2
 200 Central Ave., 3/4
 700 block Continental Cir., 3/4
 600 block Mariposa Ave., 3/5
 500 block S. Rengstorff Ave., 3/5
 300 block W. El Camino Real, 3/6

VANDALISM

200 block S. Rengstorff Ave., 3/2
 1900 block W. El Camino Real, 3/3
 400 block Chiquita Ave., 3/3
 200 block S. Rengstorff Ave., 3/3
 700 block Continental Cr., 3/4
 1200 block Dale Ave., 3/5
 Lavenida/Stevens Creek Trail, 3/6
 2000 block W. El Camino Real, 3/6
 100 block Pioneer Way, 3/7
 100 block E. El Camino Real, 3/8
 600 block Palo Alto Ave., 3/8
 1000 block Linda Vista Ave., 3/8
 1400 block W. Middlefield Rd., 3/8
 1000 block Linda Vista Ave., 3/9
 1400 block W. Middlefield Rd., 3/9

SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

1100 block Nilda Ave., 3/2

ROBBERY

1700 block Miramonte Ave., 3/2

CRIMINAL THREATS

600 block Escuela Ave., 3/2

SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES OR PERSONS

300 block Walker Dr., 3/3
 St. Stephen's Green, 3/6

RAPE

200 block San Antonio Cir., 3/3

SHOPLIFTING

2400 block Charleston Rd., 3/3
 400 block San Antonio Rd., 3/4

DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Hwy. 237/Sylvan
 1900 block Latham St., 3/4

TRESPASSING

200 block Central Ave., 3/4

SALE OF MARIJUANA

700 block Continental Cir., 3/4

POSESSION OF A CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE

1900 block W. El Camino Real, 3/9



Wide world

By Don Frances

NOW THAT “the honeymoon is over,” and people are practically ready to blame Obama for the recession, is it too late to drag out one last remembrance from Inauguration Day?

This one is unusual in that it involves people from faraway lands, as they sat here, on the Peninsula, watching the Inauguration take place across the country. It was sent in by Susan Wildeboer, a local child care coordinator for Cultural Care Au Pair, and titled “Thoughts on America in View of Obama’s Inauguration.”

“As the Inaugural Balls were underway in Washington, D.C.,” she wrote, “a group of au pairs, who provide child care for families in Mountain View and Los Altos, met in my living room for our monthly au pair meeting. Attending were au pairs from Austria, Brazil, Colombia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Mexico and Sweden.

“These young women are here through a program sponsored by the U.S. State Department and live with American families providing affordable child care. Since they are able to truly experience life in America, especially during this historic time, I was curious to know their thoughts about the election and Inauguration, and how the U.S. is perceived in their home countries.”

Wildeboer went on to ask the au pairs a series of questions, and recounted their various answers, which provide insight into how our politics affect the larger world. Among the Q&A’s:

“What did you think about the U.S. and its people before you came here and what do you think now?”

Livia (Brazil): “Here was a place where everything is perfect and magical. Now I see it is so much easier here than Brazil, but

► See **EDITOR’S DESK**, page 6



COURTESY PHOTO BY CURT FUKUDA

Assembly member Paul Fong honored Mayor Margaret Abe-Koga as his 22nd District Woman of the Year for 2009, with a surprise visit to her office Friday.

Mayor Abe-Koga named ‘woman of the year’

By Daniel DeBolt

Mayor Margaret Abe-Koga was paid a surprise visit last Friday by state Assembly member Paul Fong, who honored her as “woman of the year” of the 22nd state assembly district.

Abe-Koga was talking to Human Relation Commissioner Chris Clark in the third floor office at City Hall when half a dozen Asian-American community leaders, staffers for Fong and Fong himself showed up with

flowers to make the announcement. The mayor said she had no idea it was coming.

Fong says Abe-Koga is not just the first Asian-American woman to be mayor of Mountain View, but also an important leader in the local Asian-American community.

“I’ve been out in the community a long time,” Fong said. “I know a star when I see one.”

He said he’s watched Abe-Koga since she got her start in politics in her early 20s, when he was campaign manager for Michael

Chang, the first Asian American to be elected to the Cupertino City Council. Abe-Koga helped bring in the vote for Chang after Fong put her in charge of a precinct. She has continued to work with Chang as associate director of the Silicon Valley Asian Pacific American Leadership Institute at De Anza College.

Fong says he plans to give the award every year in State Assembly District 22, which encompasses Mountain View, Sunnyvale, Cupertino, Saratoga, Santa Clara and Milpitas. ■

Council members point to \$37M in reserves

By Daniel DeBolt

After a presentation from the city manager last month about the seriousness of the city’s budget problems, some council members say they’re concerned that residents might have gotten the wrong message.

In his presentation, city manager Kevin Duggan said the city’s widening \$6 million general fund budget gap could mean cuts to the \$89 million general fund next year. And the city has already implemented a hiring freeze.

Still, finance director Patty Kong confirmed that the city has \$37 million in “uncommitted” reserves that could be used in

“The argument is, ‘What are we saving all this money for?’ It’s a rainy day, and it’s pouring.”

MAYOR MARGARET ABE-KOGA

budget emergencies, including a \$22 million general fund reserve and millions more in reserves for capital projects and a \$5 million “rainy day fund.”

“The argument is, ‘What are we saving all this money for?’” said Mayor Margaret Abe-Koga. “It’s a rainy day, and it’s pouring.”

If the council chooses to use its reserves, city officials say, the members had better do it wisely. Without budget cuts, Kong said, the city’s general fund deficit could grow to \$19.6 million by 2018-19.

“Certainly in this challenging economic time it’s good to have adequate reserves,” Duggan said. “I think the key is, we’ll

► See **CITY BUDGET**, page 8

Pricy equipment stolen from T’Works

TWO POLICE REPORTS ACCIDENTALLY FILED AFTER \$20,000 THEFT

By Casey Weiss

About \$20,000 worth of sound equipment was stolen from TheatreWorks after a show in early February, and police say an internal mix-up led to two police reports being filed in the case.

Two large speakers, two small speakers and power cords, all belonging to TheatreWorks, were taken from the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts on Feb. 9 or 10. The crime occurred soon after TheatreWorks finished its last performance of “Twentieth Century” at the MVCPA.

Employees noticed the equipment was missing on Feb. 10, and according to police spokesperson Liz Wylie, two police reports on the crime have been filed — one at the time and another last week. She said the mix-up was leading to some amount of confusion.

“The fact of the matter is that the case was reported on time initially and is being investigated by a detective,” Wylie told the *Voice* in an e-mail. “The new case never should have been reported and is a duplicate.”

TheatreWorks managing director Phil Santora said the theater company had been talking to police and to MVC-PA employees about the theft since it occurred. He said TheatreWorks was in the process of moving equipment out of the arts center when the crime occurred. Staffers are still trying to replace the equipment.

The case has been sent to the MVPD’s Property and Financial Crimes Unit, Wylie said, but she added that it will be a difficult one to solve because so many people have been near the crime scene.

“Too many people have access to the back areas of the theater and the speakers to be able to successfully print anything,” she said. ■



CITY-WIDE GARAGE SALE
at Homes
May 2, 2009

COMMUNITY YARD SALE
at Rengstorff Park
May 9, 2009



Register by April 17
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■ SEEN AROUND TOWN

Fiery sunset



"This is the view from my front yard looking across the street at sunset on Nilda Avenue," wrote Kathryn Carpenter of Nilda Avenue. The photo was taken "after one of the storms on March 1. ... It looks like there is a fire or the sun is rapidly approaching Earth."

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

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■ NEWS BRIEFS

ANOTHER MILD QUAKE SHAKES SOUTH BAY

The U.S. Geological Survey reported that an earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 3.5 struck Sunday morning in the South Bay about 10 miles north of San Jose.

According to the USGS, the earthquake struck at about 7:50 a.m. and had a depth of 5.2 miles. The quake was centered about six miles east of Milpitas and seven miles north of Alum Rock.

Two other small quakes hit the same region a week ago. Meanwhile, the USGS reports

that another earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 2.1 struck Monday morning in Sonoma County.

— Bay City News

TEEN SHELTER REOPENS

Homeless teens have gone through two holiday seasons without a North County shelter. But now the former Casa SAY teen shelter has reopened as Quetzal House.

The converted home at 509 View St. was reopened in May 2008 as a six-bed group home for teenage girls. Because of new federal funding and

licenses obtained in February, the shelter has opened two additional beds which are available short-term to runaway girls or boys brought in by police or overwhelmed parents.

There are two staff members at the house at all times, and teens in the program attend regular schools and receive counseling alongside family members.

The original Casa SAY had been in operation since 1977. Former operator EHC Life-Builders closed it in October.

— Daniel DeBolt

EDITOR'S DESK

► Continued from page 5

not perfect; it is just like any other country that has a lot of political problems and a lot of things it needs to change."

Has this experience changed you or your thoughts about the U.S.?

Hannah (Germany): "The youth in Germany are not very interested in politics. When I go home I think I will be more interested, something has changed in my mind since being here."

What do you think about the Inauguration?

Vicky (Denmark): "It is so interesting that Obama is such an icon for people and especially for young people. ... We are only

5 million people in my country and 2 million people showed up for the Inauguration here!"

For more information about the local Cultural Care Au Pair program, contact Susan Wildeboer at susan.wildeboer@lcc.cultural-care.com.

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

Middle School girls got game

STUDENTS HELP DESIGN 'SUPER SECRET,' A PRE-FACEBOOK OPTION FOR PRE-TEENS

By Andrea Nott

The girls at Girls Middle School had a super secret tool on hand during their recent week of outside-the-classroom learning.

Super Secret is an online game currently in its beta testing phase after a year and a half of development. In it, gamers choose an avatar, cruise around in a fantasy world, chat with friends and "grow up" from age 11 to 18, gaining privileges along the way from owning a pet to voting.

This start-up company's goal, according to their mission statement, is "To become the leading site for tweens: a place that's loved by tweens and trusted by their parents."

Administrators at Girls Middle School, or GMS, like the game because it fits well with their plans for Intercession Week, a time when the school asks parents, relatives and friends in the community to help lead the girls in a week of non-academic, hands-on learning. Meanwhile, the school's tweens had a good time learning about how a computer game is made and playing and contributing to a social networking game.

For their part, parents were pleased to hear that the game is protected and controlled, said Allyson Campa, mother of a GMS sixth-grader and chief marketing officer at the San Francisco-based company.

"Now the computer is a social tool," Campa said, explaining that Super Secret is designed to be a social networking primer for kids, before they are fully exposed to Facebook or MySpace. The company believes there's a gap between the online games for younger children and the age when it would be appropriate to start using a

less protected site.

"The most important thing about [Super Secret] is that the players remain anonymous and never give personal information," said Campa.

Dani Gonzales, a sixth grader at GMS, got a chance to help put the finishing touches on the game when she signed up to be a tester during Intercession Week.

"I never really knew how a computer game was made before, and it's cool to know that I designed some of the stuff when I see it online," Gonzales said.

Gonzales was the perfect girl for the job because she has been looking for an online game that wasn't a "boy game," she said. What's a boy game? "You know, guns and shooting, racing and battles."

What really excited Gonzales was watching a drawing she made of an ice cream sundae transformed by a graphic artist into a prize within the game, right before her eyes. She loves art, she said, and takes a flash animations class once a week at Community School of Music and Arts to work on graphic design and animation.

Ultimately, Super Secret got some testing done with its target audience. "We listen to what they want and deliver it. In fact they are our secret weapon," Campa said.

Intercession Week, held once a year, or twice a year for sixth graders, is a non-academic learning period at the school. Peter Koehler, assistant head of school, said this kind of week is common in independent schools.

"It allows for action-learning, experiential learning, and gives the girls a chance to explore," Kohler said. "They learn by doing." ▀

E-mail Andrea Nott at anott@mv-voice.com

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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

CITY OF MOUNTAIN VIEW

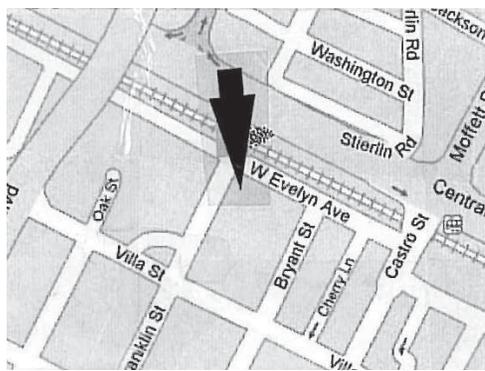
PUBLIC NOTICE

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP ON A
PROPOSED DOWNTOWN AFFORDABLE FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

Thursday, March 19th
7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Senior Center Social Hall
266 Escuela Avenue, Mountain View

The purpose of the workshop is to share preliminary information on a proposed affordable family development downtown and to get community input. The project would be developed by ROEM Development Corporation on the City-owned property at the southeast corner of Evelyn Avenue and Franklin Street, which is currently being used as a temporary parking lot.

It is anticipated that the new family development will consist of 40 to 50 rental units that are affordable to families earning around 50 percent of the county median income (e.g. \$53,000 for a family of four). Preference in renting the units will be given to families who either live or work in Mountain View. For additional information please contact Adriana Garefalos in the Community Development Department (650)903-6379 or adriana.garefalos@moutainview.gov.



Site of Proposed Downtown Family Development

**DAY WORKER CENTER
GETS \$30,000 FOR
THEATER PRODUCTION**

The Day Worker Center of Mountain View has received a \$30,000 grant from the Silicon Valley Community Foundation in order to put on a theater production.

The Worker Center received the money to put on "La Espera," a show designed to tell the stories of day laborers and recent immigrants and the issues they face.

The grant comes from a total of \$1.3 million from the Community Foundation aimed at helping immigrants on the Peninsula. While much of that money goes to eight groups providing legal aid to immigrants, "12 organizations will receive grants for multi-faceted arts and communications programs that deepen understanding of immigrant communities," a Foundation press release says.

(See page 14 for story on larger grants.)

**SOAP BOX DERBY
RETURNS FOR
RALLY RACE**

Soap Box Derby cars will return to the Dana Street overpass in front of Landels Elementary School this

Saturday and Sunday for a special "rally race."

Unlike the big derby held every summer on Dana Street in which winners go to the nationals in Akron, Ohio, the rally race is just one in a series that pits locals against racers from all over the West Coast.

Russ Parman, father of local derby winner Alison Parman, said some racers are making a serious run at this race to gain points. They do the same at many others races around California in order to go to Akron.

The races will begin at 9:30 a.m. each day and run until 4 or 5 p.m.

**CITY TO CELEBRATE
ARBOR DAY ON
SATURDAY**

Kids and tree lovers will be out at Pioneer Park this Saturday, March 14, where the city will plant a tree, demonstrate the proper way to climb one and give a guided tree walk, all with live music and free food and activities for children.

The event goes from 10:15 a.m. to 1 p.m., with a ceremonial tree planting at 11 a.m. Pioneer Park is located behind City Hall at 500 Castro St.

— Daniel DeBolt

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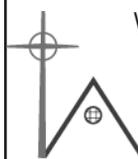
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CITY BUDGET

► Continued from page 5

just have to use them wisely."

Duggan estimates that there will be a period of three years when the city's revenue growth will not match budget growth. And once revenues begin to increase, it will be only enough to match projected budget growth, not pay back any debts or reserves used in the interim.

"I'm just encouraging everybody to see we're in this situation for a while and we need to be cautious and strategic in how we respond to it," Duggan said.

Abe-Koga and council member Laura Macias say the deficit estimates are high. When budgeting, the city assumes that every one of its employee positions is filled. With a hiring freeze on for months, the city has at least 40 vacant positions, more than half of which are paid for through the general fund, Kong said, equaling about \$1 million in savings.

However, city officials say they have yet to calculate acceptable revenue projections for sales and property taxes for next year, and Duggan said next year's estimated deficit is likely to get larger, not smaller.

Abe-Koga says that Mountain View has been "super conservative" compared to most cities in setting up reserves, adding that Saratoga and Campbell have no reserve policies. Kong says nearby cities have general fund reserves of 15 to 20 percent on average, but according to the City Council's own policy, Mountain View must keep 25 percent of the general fund as a reserve. In the current budget, that equals \$22 million.

Macias noted that local nonprofits and neighborhood groups are overly worried about losing small city grants. Such fear is "not the attitude we should be encouraging," she said. ▀

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

COUNCIL

► Continued from page 1

asked for in the city's official comments, a stop could never happen in Mountain View. At that time, the council voted 3-3 with one abstention. So Mayor Margaret Abe-Koga put it on this week's consent calendar to clarify the council's position.

Before the council officially supported the idea, several members expressed concern that an environmental study could allow the Rail Authority to build a station in Mountain View whether or not the city eventually decided against it.

City attorney Michael Martello said the concern was valid "theoretically," but transportation and policy manager Joan Jenkins said it was unlikely.

"If we say, 'Never mind, we don't want a station,' they [the Rail Authority] will take that

every seriously," Jenkins said.

Council member Siegel expressed concern that a high speed rail station would irreversibly change the character of the city's much-loved downtown and lead to high density development. Macias added that there wasn't enough room for a station in downtown Mountain View, and that Palo Alto already has a \$200 million station plan in the works. She also said the whole purpose of a high speed train is to offer an alternative to gas-guzzling airline flights.

Member Tom Means said Mountain View is "strategically" a better location than Palo Alto because the downtown station has light rail, major bus lines and freeways nearby.

And there were visions of new city development. Karney, also the city's former Environmental Sustainability Task Force chair, envisioned a light rail extension to Google's headquarters and a new impetus for the hotel and con-

vention center the city has been attempting to build for years.

Council member Bryant said she wrestled with the issue before changing her position in favor of the study. She is concerned about the impacts high speed rail would have on the downtown — even without a station — and was worried that the city would not have enough pull with Caltrain and the Rail Authority to ensure that the station and the city's needed grade separations — at Rengstorff Avenue and Castro Street — will be designed appropriately.

"Those concerns would be hugely increased with the option of a station included," she said, adding that there is "almost no information out there about what a station requires."

For others, the decision was much easier.

"We owe it to future generations to at least study the concept," said council member Mike Kasperzak. ▀

to happen again in our lifetimes."

City attorney Michael Martello explained that the 2001 City Council direction wasn't a new policy, but that for years the Planning Department mistakenly interpreted language in the CS zone, previously known as the CG zone, to mean that commercial (including offices) and retail uses were allowed. But actually the zoning ordinance said "commercial retail," he said, which is exemplified by places like Kelly Paper and Baron Park Plumbing Supply.

So several restaurants and non commercial retail stores went in, and large office buildings were built mistakenly, such as the Kobza building on the corner of Rengstorff and Old Middlefield Way.

"To me that seems like a pretty big mistake," Means said, pointing to the Kobza building.

The owner of the building, architect Dennis Kobza, said he built it 23 years ago.

"We're talking about fairness here," Kobza said, adding that he pays \$1,700 for a conditional use permit every five years to stay in his own building.

Owners of a small TV repair shop on Rengstorff Avenue complained that business is down significantly after the city told them to remove signs from sidewalk. Now, he said, they can't pay their conditional use permit, which allows them to sell the TVs they repair.

Property owners also said they want more "flexibility" in what is allowed in their buildings, as they can't afford to rebuild them to suit the current zoning requirements. Charles Gardyn, owner of the La Costena building at Rengstorff

Avenue and Old Middlefield Way, said many small businesses that will fit in some places can't afford the studies the city is requiring for conditional use permits in the CS zone.

"I've had to forgo rent for months," said building owner Russ Chagal. "I've had tenants have to move out after they were shut down," by the city.

The Peninsula Youth Theater had slightly different concerns. PYT rents an industrial building on Old Middlefield Way, as it is affordable and located in the only zone that allows them to construct theater sets.

"If the zoning changes, where would we go?" asked executive director Karen Simpson. "Because there is no place else."

Council member Jac Siegel shared the concern that the areas zoned CS were already relatively small, with a small area on Yuba Drive being the only alternative to Old Middlefield Way for construction- and repair-related businesses. But, he said, "If we don't do anything we're essentially putting them [office owners and retail stores] out of business, and I don't think that's right."

The council found difficulty zeroing in on what exactly should be done, but voted to have the Planning Department study whether it is possible to provide some emergency relief for the owners. The area will be studied in depth for the ongoing update to the city's General Plan, which guides future development in the city. ▀

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

CS ZONE

► Continued from page 1

show up and say 'Something is not working here,'" said council member Tom Means.

About a half dozen property owners talked about having major problems bringing in tenants since 2001, when the city cracked down on the dot-com real estate boom in the neighborhood. At that time, the council wanted to prevent auto shops and other lower-rent uses from being pushed out of the area, but the owners say the dot-com bust quickly solved that problem. Today, they say, the policy has backfired, causing new office buildings to remain vacant for years while strict parking regulations and expensive conditional use permits are threatening the existence of small retail businesses.

"The dot-com scare never happened, it was a chimera," said property owner Gary Cook.

Council member Mike Kasperzak was on the City Council in 2001, and says there were several auto shops seeing their rents raised at the time. Many said outcry from Larry's Autoworks almost single-handedly brought about the change after his landlord wanted to raise rents to \$6 a square foot to bring in offices, even as nearby auto shops were paying 70 cents a square foot. Larry's eventually moved to Leghorn Avenue, and his old building remained vacant.

Times have changed, Kasperzak said, and "another dot-com real estate boom is probably not going

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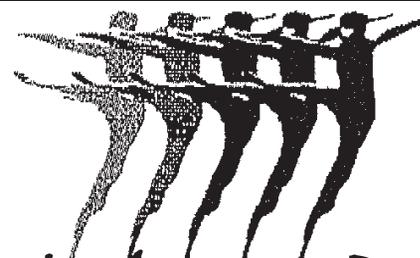
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SCHOOL BUDGET

► Continued from page 1

much of this funding the local schools will receive.

MVLA pink slips

At their meeting on Monday, high school district trustees voted to send out pink slips for the next school year to all Adult School full-time teachers, putting them on notice that they could be laid off within the year.

The district faces \$2 million in reductions over the next 17 months, and approximately \$1.3 million of this will come from the Adult School, which offers re-training, English language instruction and also General Education Development (GED) programs for students who have not finished their high school education. Those cuts comprise about 20 percent of the Adult School's budget.

While most districts send out pink slips to let teachers know they will be laid off, the high school district is using pink slips as a preliminary warning that some of the 29 full-time permanent teachers could lose their positions, administrators said. Trustees will not make final cuts

until later this spring.

Director Laura Stefanski and district administrators are looking to reduce classes offered in the spring and increase some fees and class sizes. But, she said, "Everything is on the table."

Trustees govern both the high schools and the Adult School, but funding for the two programs comes from different sources. The high schools rely on property taxes, while the state pays for most of the Adult School programs.

Superintendent Barry Groves said the high schools would be spared major cuts if budget proposals are passed by California voters in May. The district currently is transferring funds in order to keep programs running, and administrators will also use money the district did not spend this year.

MV Whisman in bind

The budget cuts leave the Mountain View elementary district short \$2.6 million for the next 17 months. The district will not receive money for special programs or \$1.8 million of daily attendance money, funds normally given to revenue limit districts for each student attending the schools. And it will not be allotted cost of living adjust-

ments as prices rise for health care and benefits.

The district will rely on its parcel tax, parent donations and reserves to make it through the year, and special programs, such as music and art, will be reduced depending on budgets allotted from the state.

Administrators say there will be no layoffs of full-time teachers this spring. Chief financial officer Craig Goldman said the district has a list of top priorities with core academics, district initiatives and extracurricular activities at the top.

This spring, trustees also must pass a budget for next year, and Goldman said the district will once again rely on reserves. Trustees could also transfer unused money and talk with the Parcel Tax Oversight Committee and Mountain View Educational Foundation about using funding for different programs than before to fill the budget gap.

The district has not yet decided about layoffs for certified staff.

LASD fires 45

Forty-five employees in the Los Altos School District will be let go this spring as the district tries to deal with over \$2 million in cuts through the 2010-11 school year, administrators decided last week.

The district, which serves hundreds of Mountain View residents, will make cuts totaling \$2.3 million over the next two years, including \$500,000 from special programs and \$800,000 in one-time cuts. Board members decided on the cost-cutting measures during their March 2 meeting.

Los Altos schools will see \$500,000 in reductions through 2010 — significantly less than expected. But, assistant superintendent for business services Randy Kenyon said, the board is now preparing for 2010-11, when the schools could face millions in cuts.

"It's not just a one-year problem," Kenyon said.

The trustees cut employees and budgets in the physical education departments, libraries, science programs and district office staff. The district will transfer money from unused funds and will "restructure" certain programs, such as English language development and summer school, saving the schools a projected half-million dollars.

Administrators said pink slips will be sent out to certificated staff by March 15, and to classified staff by mid-April. ▀

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

EDUCATION BRIEF

TICKETS ON SALE FOR MV WHISMAN FUNDRAISER

Academy Award winner Michael Westmore, Oscar in hand, will be present at this year's annual fundraiser for the Mountain View Whisman Elementary School District, which takes place later this month.

Westmore, who won a 1986 Academy Award for Best Achievement in Makeup for his work in "The Mask," gets top billing at the Mountain View Education Foundation Monte Carlo Night and Silent Auction. This year's theme is "Hollywood," and for an extra \$10 guests can hold Westmore's Oscar trophy and take a picture with it.

Organizers and school administrators say the fundraiser is particularly important now as the district faces \$2.6 million in state cuts through 2010. The foundation hopes to raise \$300,000 for music, arts and other programs in the district.

The event is 6:30 to 11 p.m. on March 21 at the Computer History Museum. Tickets are \$30, and free child care is available during the event at the YMCA on Grant Road. For more information, call (650) 526-3100, ext. 1030 or visit www.mvef.org.

— Casey Weiss



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Dozens picket district over preschool eviction

THEY ASK TRUSTEES TO HELP FIND A NEW HOME FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

By Casey Weiss

Nearly a hundred protestors converged on the Mountain View Whisman Elementary School District last week, waving signs and shouting "Save our school" in an effort to find a new home for the Child Development Center, an affordable preschool for low-income families.

The families began demonstrating about an hour before the district's regular board meeting was scheduled to begin on Thursday, March 5, marching, chanting and demanding that trustees help find a new space for the preschool. After the meeting began, four speakers made their case to the board.

Administrators responded by saying they were already moving in that direction, having planned a meeting with city officials and YMCA executives to address the issue.

For 21 years the Mountain View Child Development Center, a state-funded program run by YMCA of the East Bay, has been providing low-cost or free preschool and child

care services from the district-owned Stevenson campus on San Pierre Way. In January, trustees voted to end the district's lease with YMCA and move the district's parent participation program, PACT, onto the campus. The preschool must be out of the Stevenson campus by June 30.

The move left some low-income families fearing they would be without affordable child care, prompting them to go to the board for help. They immediately began organizing the demonstration, and parents, siblings and former students visited the school earlier last week to make signs and plan the event.

"This is the beginning of the children's education," parent Victor Reyes told board members during a public comments session at Thursday's meeting. "No one knows, maybe they are the



MICHELLE LE

For more photos, visit www.MountainViewOnline.com

future presidents, doctors, lawyers. Please listen to us."

"We need your help," parent and protest organizer Fernanda Brant told trustees. "We cannot afford to lose this school."

Craig Goldman, the district's chief financial officer, said administrators not only were working with city officials and YMCA representatives, but were looking into the idea of making the preschool a district program. Mountain View Whisman currently has preschools

on some of its school sites, including Castro Elementary.

"We are going to explore alternative facilities," Goldman said. "We want to be open to different possibilities."

Goldman said the joint meeting between the district, city and YMCA is scheduled for Friday, March 13 and will be a closed meeting. ▣

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

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Major effort to help immigrants get legal help

SILICON VALLEY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION AWARDS \$1.4 MILLION IN GRANTS TO ASSIST LOW-INCOME IMMIGRANTS

Bay City News

The Mountain View-based Silicon Valley Community Foundation is awarding a series of grants it says will produce more consultations and shorter waiting times for low-income immigrants in need of legal services in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.

The foundation will award nearly \$1.4 million to eight legal services groups and 12 cultural communication programs as part of its campaign to integrate the region's burgeoning immigrant population.

Manuel Santamaria, grant-making administrator for the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, said the awards reflect the organization's belief that empowering the growing foreign-born population is critical to the region's long-term success.

"Silicon Valley, including San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, is really a microcosm of immigrants," he said. "How do we work together to create a new paradigm of social justice?"

Legal services and community cultural programs form two parts of the organization's three-pronged immigration approach, he said. The foundation will seek proposals for its third focus, adult English language skills, in May.

When the Peninsula Community Foundation and the Community Foundation of Silicon Valley merged in 2006 to form the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, staff set about determining a new set of priorities that unified both organizations, Santamaria said. Through conversations with local groups, the foundation discovered that Silicon Valley's legal aid resources were overwhelmed after the last large-scale immigration reform, back in 1986. While a proposed federal overhaul stalled in Congress in 2007, Santamaria said the region should be prepared when President Obama's administration moves on this issue. Currently the region's need for legal aid far outpaces

the existing resources, Santamaria said.

Collaborative Resources for Immigrant Services on the Peninsula, or CRISP, received \$250,000, the largest of the grants. This money will expand the aid the organization can give to immigrant children and their families.

Other groups, including the International Institute of the Bay Area and the International Rescue Committee of San Jose, received smaller grants to add caseworkers that are accredited by the federal Board of Immigration Appeals.

Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County received two grants, totaling more than \$174,000. These funds will help expand legal aid in its centers in San Jose and Gilroy, training and accrediting two more immigration specialists, as well as planning for a collaborative group of local immigration service providers.

The non-legal grants, totaling \$630,000 of the \$1.4 million, are intended to deepen the public's understanding of its immigrant communities and help bridge the gap between these individuals and public policy makers, Santamaria said.

These include \$60,000 to the San Mateo County sheriff's office to establish community partnerships in Redwood City's North Fair Oaks neighborhood, and \$75,000 to Asian American Recovery Services in Santa Clara to support Vietnamese integration programs using theater and media campaigns, according to the release.

The foundation selected the grant recipients from a total of nearly 70 proposals. Santamaria said his team was looking for organizations they believe will be operating in the community for years to come, as well as groups "providing some niche services to niche communities" that could benefit from additional funds.

"We're invested in these strategies for the long haul," he said. ▀



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County offers pharmaceutical drop-boxes

Bay City News

Santa Clara County launched a pharmaceutical drop-off program last week that allows residents to dispose of controlled substances at 13 mail-box-style containers throughout the county.

The new service allows the anonymous drop-off of any controlled substance or other pharmaceutical in an effort to keep drugs from being flushed or thrown away and entering into water systems or otherwise harming the environment.

While the program launched last Thursday to notify residents of the new service, the 13 containers placed near Santa Clara Valley Medical Center and Valley Health Center pharmacies and three sheriff's office locations had been collecting pharmaceuticals for the previous 10 days, according to Zachary DeVine of Integrated Waste Management.

Residents made aware of the drop boxes have already left nearly 100 pounds of drugs, DeVine said.

In addition to prescribed narcotics such as Vicodin, Oxycotin and Codeine, the drop boxes allow for expired over-the-counter medicines, and even illegal drugs, no questions asked. Sheriff's officials will collect the drugs from the locked boxes and incinerate the contents, officials said.

The program was mandated by state law and is a collective effort between the sheriff's office, the Department of Environmental Health, and the Santa Clara Valley Health and Hospital System.

At a news conference last Thursday, county Supervisor Liz Kniss commended the drop-off program as a way to protect the environment and keep residents safe.

"This is about safety," Kniss said. "This is about being able to drop your drugs off [and] not have to worry about where they ended up."

Kniss and the other supervisors directed the county departments to develop the program. She cited a 2002 U.S. Geological Survey study that found pharmaceuticals, hormones and chemicals in natural water sources throughout the country as one of the reasons to implement such a program. Another is child safety.

County officials say they hope to work with cities to increase the number of drop boxes to as many as 35 receptacles. Currently, the closest one to Mountain View is the VHC at Sunnyvale, 660 South Fair Oaks Ave. Call (888) 334-1000 for more. ■

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■ WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

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■ EDITORIAL THE OPINION OF THE VOICE

Where's the line on toxics?

Long after the toxic solvent known as TCE was used and discarded at numerous local industrial sites, its remnants can still be measured in the groundwater beneath our residential subdivisions.

And although federal, state and local governments have worked at monitoring the ubiquitous chemical at larger sites, including at Moffett Field, few efforts are being made to clean up TCE at Mountain View's smaller sites, such as a residential development at 505 E. Evelyn Ave.

So far, no housing project has been turned down due to TCE concentrations, although some mitigation, such as the use of airtight membranes beneath foundations, has been used to keep TCE vapors from seeping into homes.

Anyone trying to determine what danger might exist from TCE — or get the problem addressed — is bound to run into red tape. That's because the state's Department of Toxic Substances Control and the Regional Water Quality Control Board both work to clean up small Brownfield sites, while the federal Environmental Protection Agency is responsible for larger Superfund sites. The problem is exemplified on Evelyn Avenue, where the DTSC is responsible for 505 E. Evelyn, while the RWQCB is responsible for 525 E. Evelyn, which is also zoned for housing.

It would make sense that one agency be responsible for cleaning up these neighboring properties, as they may share the same TCE plume. One water board employee told the *Voice* that the merits of the two-agency system have been debated in Sacramento off and on for decades.

All the agencies involved in monitoring TCE say their goal is to bring it down to a level of five parts per billion. Yet the DTSC signed off on the project at 505 E. Evelyn, where TCE has

been measured at 21 parts per billion. And the agency seems to have no plan to remove the TCE there, even though a National Research Council report says it can cause developmental problems in humans, including congenital heart defects.

Bureaucratic issues aside, the presence of any toxic chemical under a housing site is bound to raise concerns for homeowners. Recently, a young couple looking to start a family backed out of a deal to buy at 505 E. Evelyn upon discovering the disclosure of TCE in a 150-page binder created by the developer.

"Is it worth freaking everybody out? — I don't know," Elaine Zimmerman told the *Voice*. But it freaked out her and her husband enough to decide not buy a row home despite its agreeable price. And it's certainly easy for a potential homebuyer to get mixed signals, as groundwater concentrations at housing development Whisman Station, for example, have been measured at 100 parts per billion or more. (A vice president of Shea Homes, which is building the Evelyn Avenue properties, said their homes are not at all dangerous and meet every regulatory requirement.)

We think all of the many agencies involved in monitoring TCE in Mountain View should work together, first developing a plan to rid the area of TCE as much as possible. This is a straightforward goal that our two primary state agencies should be able to support, especially given today's need to conserve all water sources.

In addition, we believe potential homeowners should be able to obtain clear answers about TCE at one Web site, and to learn what concentration of the chemical may be seeping under a new subdivision. Our state agencies should make sure that all questions homeowners might have are answered in an easily accessible way.

The many agencies involved in monitoring TCE in Mountain View should work together.

■ LETTERS VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

CSMA GRATEFUL FOR HOLIDAY FUND SUPPORT

Editor:

As executive director of one of the nonprofit organizations that benefits from the *Voice's* Holiday Fund campaign, I want to express our great appreciation to the newspaper and to the generous residents of Mountain View for their support this year.

A donation to this annual fund benefits the Community School for Music and Arts in two critical ways. Obviously, it helps us in a measurable, quantifiable way to continue to provide arts education programs and financial aid to community students and families who study at our

Finn Center as well as in our local school programs. Of equal value is what the Holiday Fund donations represent: Recognition of the important work that hometown nonprofits do and a willingness to dig deep, even in tough economic times, to ensure that such services continue.

The level of giving to this year's fund tells me that Mountain View residents understand the critical, day-to-day role that nonprofit organizations fulfill in their lives. Many thanks.

Jeffrey W. Walker,
executive director
Community School of
Music and Arts

► See **LETTERS**, page 17



LETTERS

► Continued from page 16

AN IDEA FOR FEEDING THE HUNGRY

Editor:
I read the letter from Janet Hayter about the shortage of fresh food for the CSA food bank (Letters to the Editor, Feb. 27). What if, after the close of the Mountain View Farmers Market every Sunday, leftover produce was sold to the CSA at a slightly reduced price?

This would get good quality produce to people who would otherwise not be able to afford it. The farmers would be paid by the people who shop at the market making donations for the CSA. Shoppers' contributions would be a donation, and the farmer's contribution would be a slight reduction in the price they normally charge.

This would support our local farmers while also providing produce for local folks who cannot afford it, and everyone involved could feel good about helping our neighbors.

Toni Smith
Tyrella Street

CITY HEAVY HANDED IN COLLECTING BILLS

Editor:
As a former 12-year resident of Mountain View, I am writing today to express my concern regarding the overzealous manner in which overdue utility bills are handled.

In my case, I recently moved to San Luis Obispo and am only occasionally in Mountain View to pick up mail at my townhouse there. Knowing this, in January I filed a request with the company Mountain View uses to handle automatic bill paying. (I believe I didn't pay sufficient attention to the amount of time the company claims it needs.)

In any event, and to make a long story short, when I returned to my house on Feb. 8 I found that even though I was not even one bill behind, my water had been turned off. A 48-hour notice was on the gate. I had to go to the Police Station and pay the \$107.24 bill plus \$60 (\$40 late plus after-hours fee) to get my water turned back on.

■ TOWNSQUARE

ON UWINK RESTAURANT CHAIN'S FINANCIAL PROBLEMS

That corner of Castro and California is cursed! I really hope that uWink can stick it out, though.

GSB, a resident of the Castro City neighborhood

It's not the location, it's the food, the experience, and the hours.

The food is bar food at best, the vaunted interactive video games aren't even as good as some of the lamest casual Internet games, and the place isn't even open during much of the day.

Try making the food something more than frozen stuff heated up. Try making some decent interactive games (BW3's had better trivia and interactive games in 1995).

And remember, you can't make money if you aren't open. It's one of the best

places to watch sports with all those TV screens, but it often isn't open when East Coast games are on.

TJ, a resident of the Old Mountain View neighborhood

Food is OK, but way overpriced — especially for our current economic times. I had friends also remark about the hours being limited. The monitors should be embedded in the table and not sticking up, invading your view of the people across from you. The games weren't functioning very well (a lot of glitches) when I was there. ... I agree with someone else who posted that the location is the worst. Westfield Valley Fair or Santana Row would have been great locations.

Krista, a resident of the Cuesta Park neighborhood

I disagree with most of the comments here. We love going there with our kids (5 and 7). We all have fun playing the games together (yes, they are simple, but simple can still be fun), the kids are actually occupied the whole time so we can eat at a reasonable pace, and the food is priced around the same as Chili's food (and IMHO, better!), so I don't know why people are complaining.

And why is downtown Mountain View the "wrong place" for this restaurant? It adds some great diversity to downtown's dining options and we've seen a lot of people having fun with the group games, and having fun is what downtown Mountain View is all about.

We will be crushed if this restaurant doesn't succeed here.

Catherine, a resident of the Old Mountain View neighborhood

This seems a strange way to treat a resident homeowner with a 12-year record of good payments. When this policy comes up for review I hope you will consider any or all of the following suggestions:

Have an automatic call service alert the owner that the water is about to be turned off; wait until the owner owes at least more than one pay period's worth of bills; provide for deposits that would be available in case a payment is missed or lost; take a credit card number to be used in case a payment is missed or lost.

Todd Katz
San Luis Obispo

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Hospital should check with community first

■ GUEST OPINION

MISGUIDED LOS GATOS PURCHASE COULD PUT EL CAMINO ON UNSTABLE FOOTING

By Duncan MacMillan

El Camino Hospital needs to be much more candid about potential expenses surrounding its purchase of the Community Hospital of Los Gatos, and do it now, not later.

And to test whether the tax district is willing to go down that path, El Camino should conduct a professional survey to get a sense of taxpayer views.

If the initial purchase is a failure and El Camino decides to cut its losses as soon as possible, the hospital will be out to the tune of about \$100 million. The stated selling price for the Los Gatos hospital facility (land and building only) is \$45 million. At their Feb. 11 board meeting, El Camino officials revealed that they now expect there will be \$20 million in "start-up" costs for systems and the hiring and training of new staff. Add the \$10 million to \$20 million in near-term seismic work that is required to meet the state's 2013 interim mandates, and those three items amount to \$85 million and counting.

If "successful," or if El Camino then can't get out of continu-

ing the anticipated hemorrhage at Los Gatos, the hospital will need to finance its tear-down or full-seismic retrofit to 2030 standards, as is now being done for its Mountain View facility.

Is the current district, which includes Mountain View, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, parts of Sunnyvale and a little bit of Cupertino, going to be expected to foot the bill for Los Gatos?

Another troubling factor in El Camino's decision is its reliance on outside consultants.

That additional new bond measure will be over \$200 million, plus interest. It would seem that the tax district would need to be expanded to include the rest of Cupertino, Los Gatos, Saratoga and points east. Otherwise, how would El Camino ever get taxpayer approval for a \$200-million bond issue?

At the Feb. 11 board meeting, it was reported that Los Gatos has an average daily census of just 38 patients and yet the El Camino board says Los Gatos will increase the El Camino service area by 66

percent or more. If the Los Gatos physicians are as valuable for the future growth of El Camino as has been repeatedly stated, why can't they generate a patient census of more than 38 beds? It seems those physicians have already found competing hospitals that they like for their patients.

El Camino should be able to attract more patients and physicians to its brand-new, seismically safe Mountain View facility without the expense and risk of acquiring Los Gatos, an outdated, money-losing, tiny and failing hospital.

Another troubling factor in El Camino's decision is its reliance on outside consultants. What consulting firm wrote that thick report that board chair David Reeder waved at the February board meeting? How much were they paid? El Camino CEO Ken Graham has indicated that these consultants will help El Camino's staff and operate the new Los Gatos hospital. This would appear to be a conflict of interest.

Should we worry that consultant-heavy El Camino will be trying to reactivate two hospitals at the same time, in September 2009? Let the taxpayers be warned. Better, let them decide now, because they will certainly be asked to pay later.

Duncan MacMillan lives in Los Altos Hills.



Larry's Knows...

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KNOCK! KNOCK! IS NO JOKE

Vehicle manufacturers determine the octane requirement of an automobile engine largely on the basis of the mechanical compression ratio inside the cylinders. While high-compression engines generally require premium fuel, engines with lower compression can make use of regular gas. The reason for this is because there is more heat and pressure inside a high-compression engine, and fuels with lower octane values (which ignite more readily) can cause a dangerous condition called "detonation." This premature ignition inside the cylinders places enormous strain on pistons, connecting rods, and bearings. Basically, detonation occurs when the fuel ignites prematurely before the piston is in the proper firing position. On the other hand, burning high-octane fuel in a low-compression engine is a waste of energy.

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Pezzella's version of the classic Parisian burger, made famous by Linda's Drive-In.

MICHELLE LE

■ FOOD REVIEW

Battle of the burgers

AMADILLO WILLY'S, PEZZELLA'S UNVEIL COMPETING VERSIONS OF A MOUNTAIN VIEW CLASSIC: LINDA'S PARISIAN BURGER

By Daniel DeBolt

There were other Mountain View drive-ins that people remember, such as Spiveys, which had the Cadillac burger, and Johnny Macs, which had the Big Mac before McDonalds did.

But the Parisian burger of Linda's Drive-In stood out. Put it this way: if a local high schooler were to cut school in the 1960s and 1970s, there were two popular options — hit the beach or grab a Parisian burger at Linda's Drive-In.

Linda's Drive-In is long gone, demolished in about 1985 to

make way for the Wolf Camera that exists now at Escuela Avenue and El Camino Real. But its beloved burger is being replicated at two local restaurants: Armadillo Willy's in Los Altos and Pezzella's Villa Napoli in Sunnyvale.

Recently, a *Voice* writer sat down with his uncle Geoff, who ate Parisian burgers regularly as a teenager in 1960s Mountain View, to see which version is truest to the original.

People who remember the Parisian burger agree that it

► See **BURGERS**, page 20

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BURGERS

► Continued from page 19

was two beef patties, American cheese, a French roll bun (from a bakery called "Parisian," hence the name) and a glob of "special sauce" made from ketchup, mustard, dried onions, celery seed and pepper. Tater tots were served on the side. Still, those same people can disagree strongly

week across all nine locations. Berwald says he used to eat the burger "practically every day for lunch, and sometimes go back for dinner" while attending Cubberly High School (class of 1966) just over the Mountain View border in Palo Alto. "I always remembered that taste," he says. He had his friend Rusty, the pickiest eater he knows, give the final seal of approval on the sauce. The bun and the sauce are

*After many years of mystery,
the sauce recipe is readily
available now on the Internet*

ly about their favorite burger. "Everybody remembers something different," said Pat Pezzella, who owns Pezzella's with his brother Vince. "One guy said, 'The burger is great, but there's something wrong with the sauce.'"

"What is it?" Pat recalls asking him.

"It was yellow."

"It was never yellow, what's the matter with you?"

"Another guy said, 'I remember the bun, it was oval,' Pat continued. "Where do you guys come up with this stuff?"

The Pezzellas moved from Brooklyn in 1956 and attended Mountain View High School (then located downtown) in the late 1950s. Since the summer of 2008, they have been serving the Parisian at their 52-year-old restaurant, a fairly upscale place that looks like an Italian villa.

Meanwhile, in late 2008 John Berwald unveiled his own version of the Parisian at his Armadillo Willy's chain of restaurants. Already, he said, it's outselling any other new dish. At the Los Altos location, 104 Parisian burgers sold in the first day, while 2,300 sold in the first

probably the trickiest parts to replicate. After many years of mystery, the sauce recipe is readily available now on the Internet, although the restaurant owners spent months perfecting theirs. Berwald had a sourdough bun custom made by Le Boulanger bakery, while Pezzella's uses the bakery they've used for years to cook the restaurant's bread.

The verdict

A Parisian burger was purchased from both restaurants and placed side by side on the table. Armadillo Willy's charged \$7.25, while Pezzella's charged \$10.80.

Geoff started with the Pezzella's version.

"Except for the roll, it's good," he said, later explaining that the roll was more like an Italian Ciabatta roll than the crispy-shelled French roll he remembered. "A lot of it is the roll and the sauce," he said. "This is a light, fluffy bun — that's not what the Parisian Burger was at all."

"But it's good as far as burgers go," Geoff concluded, ranking Pezzella's over any other local burger, even Clarke's.

Then he tried the Armadillo

► Continued on next page

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Armadillo Willy's version, with tater tots.

MICHELLE LE

► Continued from previous page

Willy's version, which has a roll crispy enough to shine.

"That's more like it," he said. "Armadillo Willy's pretty much nailed it."

For Geoff, it was Armadillo Willy's by a nose. Though it had less meat (one patty instead of Pezzella's historically correct double patty), the bun was more like sourdough, and it had more sauce with a "heavier" and "spicier" flavor to it. It also came with crispier tater tots.

Armadillo Willy's was closer by price, too. After all, Linda's was far from fancy. One former restaurant supervisor remem-

bers using his whole arm to mix large batches of the sauce in a vat the size of a garbage can.

But Armadillo Willy's is serving the burger for a "limited time only" and Pezzella's may keep it around for the long run. And there's not doubt Pezzella's makes it with a certain degree of appreciation for Mountain View. Chefs Ralph and Maria Pezzella are in their 40s now, but both remember the Parisian burger "distinctly."

"They do it with a little bit of love because they remember it," Pat Pezzella said. ▀

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

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Weekend

MOVIE TIMES

THE CLASS (PG-13) ★★★★★ Guild: 2:15, 5 & 8 p.m.

CONFESSIONS OF A SHOPAHOLIC (PG) ★★★

Century 20: 12:20, 2:55, 5:20, 8 & 10:35 p.m.

CORALINE (PG) ★★★★★1/2

Century 16: 1:55, 4:20, 7:05 & 9:30 p.m.

Century 20: 2:20, 4:45, 7:20 & 9:45 p.m.

THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON (PG-13)

★★★★1/2 Century 16: 12:10, 4:05 & 8:05 p.m.

DOUBT (PG-13) ★★★

Century 16: 11:35 a.m.; 2:20, 4:55, 7:35 & 10:10 p.m.

FIRED UP (PG-13) (NOT REVIEWED)

Century 20: 11:50 a.m. Fri.-Tue. & Thu. also at 4:40 & 9:40 p.m.

FROST/NIXON (R) ★★★★★ Century 16: 1:50 p.m. Fri.-Tue. & Thu.

also at 7:15 p.m. Century 20: Tue. & Wed. at 2:15 & 7:35 p.m.

HE'S JUST NOT THAT INTO YOU (PG-13) ★★1/2

Century 16: 12:45, 3:55, 7:30 & 10:20 p.m.

Century 20: 11:25 a.m.; 2:25, 5:30 & 8:30 p.m.

THE INTERNATIONAL (R) (NOT REVIEWED)

Century 16: 11:25 a.m.; 2:15, 5, 7:45 & 10:25 p.m.

Century 20: 11:35 a.m.; 4:55 & 10:15 p.m. Fri.-Mon. & Thu. also at 2:15 & 7:35 p.m.

JONAS BROTHERS: THE 3D CONCERT EXPERIENCE (G) (NOT REVIEWED)

Century 16: 11:30 a.m.

Century 20: 12:10 p.m.

THE LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT (R) (NOT REVIEWED)

Century 16: 11:50 a.m.; 2:25, 5:10, 7:55 & 10:30 p.m.

Century 20: Noon, 1:10, 2:35, 3:45, 5:10, 6:25, 7:50, 9:10 & 10:25 p.m.

THE METROPOLITAN OPERA: MADAMA BUTTERFLY ENCORE (NOT RATED) (NOT REVIEWED)

Century 16: Wed. at 7 p.m. Century 20: Wed. at 7 p.m.

MISS MARCH (R) (NOT REVIEWED)

Century 16: 11:15 a.m.; 1:30, 3:45, 6, 8:15 & 10:30 p.m.

Century 20: 11:20 a.m.; 1:30, 3:45, 6, 8:15 & 10:40 p.m.

PINK PANTHER 2 (PG) (NOT REVIEWED)

Century 20: 12:10, 2:45, 5, 7:25 & 9:50 p.m.

RACE TO WITCH MOUNTAIN (PG) ★★

Century 16: 11:20 a.m.; 12:35, 1:45, 3, 4:10, 5:25, 6:35, 7:50, 9 & 10:15 p.m.

Century 20: 11:30 a.m.; 12:45, 2, 3:15, 4:30, 5:45, 7, 8:10, 9:30 & 10:35 p.m.

THE READER (R) ★★★★★1/2

Century 16: 12:50, 3:40, 7 & 9:55 p.m.

Century 20: 12:10, 2:45, 5, 7:25 & 9:50 p.m.

SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE (R) ★★★★★

Century 20: 11:15 a.m.; 2, 4:50, 7:40 & 10:30 p.m.

Aquarius: 1:15, 4, 6:45 & 9:30 p.m. Thu. at 3 & 9 p.m.

STREETFIGHTER: THE LEGEND OF CHUN-LI (PG-13) (NOT REVIEWED)

Century 20: 2:15 p.m. Fri.-Tue. & Thu. also at 7:10 p.m.

TAKEN (PG-13) ★★★

Century 16: Noon, 2:30, 5:05, 7:25 & 9:50 p.m.

Century 20: 12:35, 3:20, 5:35, 8:05 & 10:20 p.m.

TWO LOVERS (R) ★★★

Aquarius: 2:30, 5, 7:30 & 10 p.m.

TYLER PERRY'S MADEA GOES TO JAIL (PG-13) (NOT REVIEWED)

Century 16: 11:20 a.m. Fri.-Tue. & Thu. also at 4:40 & 10:05 p.m.

Century 20: 12:15, 2:50, 5:15, 7:45 & 10:10 p.m.

WATCHMEN (R) ★★★★★1/2

Century 16: 11:10 a.m.; 12:15, 1, 2, 2:45, 3:45, 4:30, 5:30, 6:15, 7:10, 8, 9, 9:45 & 10:35 p.m.

Century 20: 11:15 & 11:40 a.m.; 12:05, 12:50, 1:40, 2:40, 3:05, 3:30, 4:20, 5:05, 6, 6:30, 7, 7:55, 8:45, 9:30, 10 & 10:30 p.m.

THE WRESTLER (R) ★★★

Century 20: 11:55 a.m.; 5:15 & 10:40 p.m.

Note: Screenings are for Friday through Tuesday only.

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

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



MOVIE REVIEWS

THE CLASS ★★★★★

(Guild) Director Laurent Cantet's drama looks like a documentary but isn't one. Shot in cinema-verite style and starring actual French high school students, the film fuses fiction and fact. Francois Begaudeau adapted his autobiographical novel about teaching in the multi-racial 20th arrondissement of Paris into a screenplay — and plays the French-language teacher named Francois. The film has a slice-of-life feel, as though a fly on the wall captured the complexities of teaching and learning in today's ethnically and economically diverse classroom. Like an exceptional teacher, "The Class" presents complex ideas in a clear, accessible and entertaining way. Cantet's success in tackling such sensitive, topical subject matter earns top marks. *Rated: PG-13. In French with English subtitles. 2 hours, 8 minutes.* — S.T.

CONFESSIONS OF A SHOPAHOLIC ★★★

(Century 16, Century 20) "Confessions" is more cautionary tale than comedy. Although ingenue Isla Fisher shines in her leading-lady debut and serves up plenty of laughs, the film's resonant message about credit, debt and over-spending proves a dramatic and apropos undertone to an otherwise formulaic chick flick. Rebecca Bloomwood (Fisher) is a journalist who aspires to write for popular fashion magazine Alette. In order to climb the corporate ladder, Rebecca scores a job at a financial magazine where she struggles with the subject matter and swoons over British-born editor Luke Brandon (Hugh Dancy). Despite Rebecca's newfound fame and a looming romance with Luke, her daunting vice — shopping uncontrollably — constantly derails any potential for genuine happiness. *Rated: PG for some mild language and thematic elements. 1 hour, 52 minutes.* — T.H.

CORALINE ★★★★★1/2

(Century 16, Century 20) Writer-director Henry Selick's delightfully imaginative toon delves into another dreamscape. His dark vision conjures a look similar to "The Nightmare Before Christmas" but falls squarely on spunky Coraline Jones. The animated adaptation of Neil Gaiman's 2002 horror novel is a creepy cautionary tale. Eleven-year-old Coraline (voiced by Dakota Fanning) and her workaholic parents have just moved into a Gothic old house. Coraline is bored, and her parents (voiced by Teri Hatcher and John Hodgman) shoo her away. She finds a small door that leads to an alternate version of her home. Be careful what you wish for: "Coraline" doesn't serve up sweet dreams for small children. Beware. And enjoy. *Rated: PG for thematic elements, scary images, some language and suggestive humor. 1 hour, 40 minutes.* — S.T.

DOUBT ★★★

(Century 16, Century 20) There is no doubt that Philip Seymour Hoffman, Amy Adams and Viola Davis are the

three best reasons to see John Patrick Shanley's adaptation of his Pulitzer Prize- and Tony Award-winning drama. Their nuanced, naturalistic performances help counter Meryl Streep's more mannered turn that rings so false at the end. Shanley's examination of moral issues is another reason to catch the battle between Sister Aloysius (Streep) and congenial Father Flynn (Hoffman), whom she suspects of pedophilia. No evidence exists that the priest has behaved inappropriately with the parochial school's first black student (Joseph Foster). The narrative construct teeters on the concept of reasonable doubt — and the blindness of those making unjustified accusations. Or are they? *Rated: PG-13 for thematic material. 1 hour. 44 minutes.* — S.T.

HE'S JUST NOT THAT INTO YOU ★★1/2

(Century 16, Century 20) Is he into you or not? That's the perennial question nagging this pithy romantic comedy that keeps its troubles airy and close to the surface. Based on the relationship book of the same name, "Just Not Into You" tangles its large cast of characters and storylines into virtual knots, then tries to unravel them with advice swapping and a kind of misery-loves-company pleasure. An if-beautiful-people-aren't-working-it-no-wonder-I'm-suffering-too kind of vibe. Playing a hopeless idealist, Ginnifer Goodwin is a surprising spark amidst the A-list cast that includes Jennifer Aniston and Ben Affleck. *Rated: PG-13 for language and sexual situations. 2 hours, 7 minutes.* — J.A.

SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE ★★★★★

(Aquarius) In present-day Mumbai, Jamal Malik (Dev Patel) sits on the hot seat of India's "Who Wants to be a Millionaire?" game show, poised to win the elusive grand prize of 20 million rupees. Refusing to believe that Jamal is coming by his answers honestly, the police get involved, punctuating their brutal torture tactics with questions on how a simple chai server from India's poorest slums came by such arcane knowledge. With serendipitous charm, flashbacks detail Jamal's rise through hardscrabble poverty to survival of the fittest. *Rated: R for violence, language and disturbing images. 1 hour, 56 minutes. In English and Hindi with English subtitles.* — J.A.

TWO LOVERS ★★★

(Aquarius) Joaquin Phoenix plays Leonard Krador, a thirtysomething New Yorker who lives and works with his parents (Moni Moshonov and Isabella Rossellini). Recent suicide attempts — and the loss that caused them — hover over Leonard like dark clouds, but he perks up when he meets Sandra Cohen (Vinessa Shaw), an attractive young woman who takes an obvious interest in him. Spurred on by her parents and his, the two strike up a relationship, but in short order, Leonard meets Michelle Rausch (Gwyneth Paltrow), a flighty and stunning upstairs neighbor with a reckless way about her. Since Michelle's recklessness extends to devotedly dating a married man (Elias Koteas), Leonard becomes the pursuer rather than

the pursued, and so he finds himself in a conundrum. Should Leonard love the one he's with, or win the one he loves? "Two Lovers" heartbreakingly explores our romantic delusions, and the tragedy of always wanting more than we can have. *Rated: R for language, sexuality and brief drug use. 1 hour, 40 minutes.* — P.C.

WATCHMEN ★★1/2

(Century 16, Century 20) The year is 1985. Superheroes, once the bastions of freedom, have been forced by the government to hang up their capes and cowls. The last of the hero groups has disbanded and its members have gone their separate ways. Only the enigmatic and violent Rorschach (Jackie Earle Haley) refuses to abandon his crime-fighting lifestyle. Rorschach is determined to solve the mysterious homicide of fellow vigilante The Comedian (Jeffrey Dean Morgan), who is badly beaten and tossed from a high-rise by a shadowed assailant. As Rorschach investigates the brutal murder, other do-gooders are brought into the fold: the nearly omnipotent Dr. Manhattan (Billy Crudup); tough gal Silk Spectre (Malin Akerman), the sincere but soft Nite Owl (Patrick Wilson) and brilliant billionaire Ozymandias (Matthew Goode). "Watchmen" is a cinematic achievement that is certain to take on cult status — a superhero epic with guts. *Rated: R for strong graphic violence, sexuality, nudity and language. 2 hours, 43 minutes.* — T.H.

■ **MOVIE CRITICS**

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

■ **MOVIE REVIEWS**

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