

Mountain View VOICE



**In the
scrum**
HEALTH
& FITNESS
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DECEMBER 11, 2009 VOLUME 17, NO. 49

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Building owners slapped with 'compliance permit'

NON-CONFORMING STRUCTURES MAY COST LANDLORDS A BUNDLE UNDER NEW COUNCIL RULES

By Daniel DeBolt

Under requirements approved Tuesday by the City Council, property owners caught with buildings that seriously run afoul of city

building codes will now have to pay for the time officials spend getting them to comply.

The City Council approved the new "compliance permit" and fees in a 6-1 vote, with council member John Inks and a dozen property owners sharply opposed.

City attorney Michael Martello made the case for the permit, showing pictures of homes, motels and industrial buildings that he said are a danger to tenants and neighborhoods — "powder kegs" that, under the right conditions, could burn down a city block or fall down in an earthquake, he said. Possibly the city's most puzzling case ever, Martello said, is a 100-year-old house at 313 Higdon Ave. that was reconfigured into an eight-unit apartment building.

Martello said the permit would recover the staffing cost for hours worked by the fire marshal, zoning administrator, planning director and building official in "situations where staff have to figure out if (the building owner) can have what they already built."

In his opposition, Inks said the permit would "incentivize" code enforcement officers to go out and find major violations to bring in revenue. He added that city officials already get paid a salary.

"To be clear ... this is about raising money," he said, adding that similar permits and fees in other cities have led to "further noncompliance" and the "collapse" of code enforcement efforts, which led to the neces-

Jazz great, Rengstorff descendant

DAVE BRUBECK
HONORED BY BARACK
OBAMA, FRIENDS OF
RENGSTORFF HOUSE

By Daniel DeBolt

Dave Brubeck, one of five entertainers celebrated by President Barack Obama on Sunday at the 32nd annual Kennedy Center Honors, isn't just a jazz legend: He also happens to be the great grand nephew of Mountain View pioneer Henry Rengstorff.

Sunday's widely reported event (which is scheduled to air Dec. 29 on CBS) drew numerous celebrities and luminaries to Washington, D.C. as the nation's highest honors were bestowed on Robert De Niro, Mel Brooks, Bruce Springsteen, opera singer Grace Bumbry, and Brubeck.

A few weeks previously, following a September con-

► See **BRUBECK**, page 8

► See **COUNCIL**, page 16



MICHELLE LE

Partners for New Generations mentor Sue Russell, right, picks up student and mentee Karina Topete from Alta Vista High School.

Someone to watch over me

PARTNERS FOR NEW GENERATIONS, A HOLIDAY FUND
RECIPIENT, HELPS STUDENTS GET A LEG UP

By Dana Sherne

Bill Crawford will never forget the gift he received, upon his retirement five years ago, from a student he had mentored years earlier.

The former Mountain View police officer unwrapped his gift — a Norman Rockwell print of a boy talking with a police officer — and asked his mentee why he got him that.

"He says, 'I wouldn't have graduated from high school if it hadn't been for you, plain and simple,'" Crawford recalled.

Crawford is a mentor with Partners for New Generations, or PNG, an organization that for 13 years has matched community members with students of all ages. PNG has some 50 tutors and 100 mentors working with students in



"I wouldn't have graduated from high school if it hadn't been for you, plain and simple."

FORMER MENTEE

elementary, middle and high schools in Mountain View and Los Altos.

Some of the students have academic problems, or prob-

lems at home. But some simply "want to be with a stable, successful adult who can be their friend, be someone they can talk to. Someone who is a support for them," said Linda Waub, a coordinator of the organization.

The more mentors PNG has, the more students they can help, says Carol Dorshkind, a coordinator in charge of recruitment.

The mentors take their students out to lunch, to museums, hiking, or they simply walk around and talk. The idea is to make students feel comfortable so that they can openly talk to someone who wants to help them succeed.

Crawford compares being a mentor to being a train's helper engine.

► See **PARTNERS**, page 15

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

Ginny Zachow



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Voices

A R O U N D T O W N

Asked in Downtown Mountain View. Pictures and interviews by Dana Sherne.

Has your opinion of Tiger Woods changed after learning about his affairs?



"Yeah, I feel sorry for him, but he's still a good player of golf if you think about sports."
Ceryl Susilo, Mountain View



"Oh yes. I was never a big Tiger Woods fan to begin with, so this gives me another reason not to like him."
Tim Walsh, San Carlos



"No, I'm not really following Tiger. His wife's the only one who should really care, and he's paying for that."
Paul Askounis, Cupertino



"Actually it has. I was kind of surprised with all the behind the scenes things going on for a married man."
Fred Safahi, Woodland Hills



"Maybe a little. I think it's a personal issue and I think people spend too much time on it when there are more important things in the world to focus on."
Maureen Monterosso, San Jose

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POLICE LOG

BATTERY

3500 Block Truman Ave., 11/30
200 Block Castro St., 12/2
300 Block Escuela Ave., 12/3
200 Block Mariposa Ave., 12/3
1 Block West El Camino Real, 12/3
600 Block Showers Dr., 12/6
200 Block Escuela Ave., 12/6
400 Block Bryant St., 12/6

ASSAULT WITH DEADLY WEAPON

1100 Block Castro St., 12/3

AUTOMOBILE BURGLARY

100 Block Del Medio Ave., 12/1
2600 Block California St., 12/1
Bryant St. & Villa St., 12/1
200 Block Apricot Ln., 12/1
Bryant Ave. & Truman Ave., 12/1
800 Block Wake Forest Dr., 12/1
1500 Block North Shoreline Blvd., 12/6
700 Block Continental Cir., 12/6

COMMERCIAL BURGLARY

1900 Block California St., 11/30
1900 Block California St., 11/30

TERRORIST THREATS

300 Block Escuela Ave., 12/2
200 Block Escuela Ave., 12/2

DISTURBANCE

600 Block West Evelyn Ave., 11/30
800 Block North Rengstorff Ave., 12/2

DISORDERLY CONDUCT - ALCOHOL

600 Block Rainbow Dr., 11/30
300 Block Moffett Blvd., 12/1
1800 Block Higdon Ave., 12/2
200 Block Castro St., 12/4
500 Block North Shoreline Blvd., 12/6
Bush St. & Villa St., 12/6

NARCOTICS POSSESSION

900 Block North Clark Ave., 11/30
Old Middlefield Way & Sierra Vista Ave., 11/30
500 Block North Shoreline Blvd., 12/1

UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE

California St. & Palo Alto Ave., 12/6

POSSESSION OF MARIJUANA - LESS THAN ONE OUNCE

600 Block Franklin St., 12/4
200 Block Hope St., 12/5

POSSESSION OF DRUG PARAPHENALIA

1500 Block North Shoreline Blvd., 11/30

POSSESSION OF MARIJUANA

Bryant St. & Villa St., 12/4
2600 Block North Shoreline Blvd., 12/4

INDECENT EXPOSURE

1100 Block Castro St., 12/2

RAPE

1800 Block Miramonte Ave., 12/2

GRAND THEFT

500 Block Del Medio Ave., 12/1
500 Block Mountain View Ave., 12/1
1700 Block Wright Ave., 12/4

PETTY THEFT

600 Block Showers Dr., 12/2
400 Block San Antonio Rd., 12/2
Crittenden School, 12/2
Easy St. & East Middlefield Rd., 12/2
2600 Block Fayette Dr., 12/3
600 Block Showers Dr., 12/3
300 Block Showers Dr., 12/3
1100 Block Boranda Ave., 12/4
2500 Block California St., 12/5
500 Block West Middlefield Rd., 12/5
600 Block Showers Dr., 12/6
Mountain View High School, 12/7

PETTY THEFT WITH PRIOR

600 Block Showers Dr., 12/4
700 Block East El Camino Real, 12/4
400 Block San Antonio Rd., 12/5

IDENTITY THEFT

1000 Block Villa St., 12/2
900 Block Sierra Vista Ave., 12/7

THEFT BY FRAUD

1300 Block Dale Ave., 12/3

The Mountain View Voice is published every Friday by Embarcadero Publishing Co. 450 Cambridge Ave, Palo Alto CA 94306 (650) 964-6300. Application to Mail at Periodicals Postage Rates is Pending at Palo Alto, CA and additional mailing offices. The Mountain View Voice is mailed free to homes and apartments in Mountain View. Subscription rate of \$60 per year. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Mountain View Voice, 450 Cambridge Ave, Palo Alto, CA 94306.

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Manifesto

By Don Frances

PERSONALLY, I thought our war against the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had already been won fair and square.

Yet it seems the battle rages on. On the national stage, for example, Obama's (or just anybody's) attempts at much-needed health care reform are disparaged daily as "socialist."

The slur is so common these days that its use has leaked into Mountain View's conversations as well. Last week, for example, a certain "Concerned Citizen" of the Shoreline West neighborhood wrote the following on the Voice's Town Square:

"Let me get this straight, I pay my rent and also somebody else's rent? Isn't that socialism?"

In this case, Concerned was concerned about the City Council's recent enthusiasm for an affordable housing project on Evelyn Avenue. ("Affordable housing" is a misnomer, if you ask me, since the units could still go for well over half a million dollars each. Also, funding for this project has already been collected over the years from developers working on other projects.)

But my favorite part of this post by Concerned — and the reason I'm reprinting it here — was his invocation of the very spirit of capitalism, which is synonymous with the history of Silicon Valley:

Socialism did not create the light bulb, the transistor, television or anything else, capitalism did that. In 1956, Shockley Semiconductor Laboratory, at 391 San Antonio Road, Mountain View, was the first company to work on silicon semiconductor devices in what came to be known as Silicon Valley. Silicon Valley was not a product of Socialism.

Low income housing is a "nice" word for a tenement or slum.

So if I dropped out of high school

► See **EDITOR'S DESK**, page 8



Gabriel and Amber Rosas pass by the tree inside City Hall during a holiday event on Wednesday, Dec. 2. The city uses an artificial tree for its interior display under the rotunda.

JAMES TENSUAN

The Christmas tree conundrum

'THY LEAVES ARE SO UNCHANGING' — ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY'RE PLASTIC

By Kelsey Mesher

Last week the city of Mountain View erected its lighted tree in the City Hall rotunda: a tall noble fir, the symbol of a new holiday season. It's a faux noble fir, however, and city officials say they've been using the same artificial tree for the past several years.

Though the city reuses its tree each December, thousands of individual residents go the traditional route, opting to buy live trees that were recently cut and

sold in lots around town every holiday season.

Don Beeson, owner of Grandpa's Christmas Trees and Grandpa's Pumpkin Patch, has been selling trees out of the San Antonio Shopping Center parking lot for the past six years, and in Palo Alto for "many, many, many years" before that. He says he sells about 1,000 trees, give or take, at his Mountain View location each year.

The "hardest" tree, said Beeson, is the noble fir. It is also the slowest grower and the most expensive.

Most nobles for sale on Grandpa's lot are between eight and 10 years old, and go for \$10 per foot.

"The grand fir, that's kind of a flat needle tree — it's the most fragrant of all the trees," he said. "But they're also the most fragile of all the trees."

Douglas firs are slightly more durable than the grand firs, and they're the cheapest because they're the fastest growers, he said. A typical douglas fir takes only four to five years to mature.

► See **TREE**, page 12

Chamber launches 'Green University'

SERVICE HELPS LOCAL BUSINESSES GET CERTIFIED BY COUNTY

By Daniel DeBolt

The Mountain View Chamber of Commerce hopes its new "Green Business University" will encourage small companies to tackle the sometimes intimidating task of becoming a certified green business.

"I hope it will bring out a lot of ideas for saving energy maybe I hadn't thought of," said Paul Kraus, owner of Goodco Printing in Mountain View. He said he hopes to save money on

his utility bill and benefit from ongoing promotions of green certified businesses.

The Chamber is now taking applications from small- and mid-sized businesses, both in and out of Mountain View, to be trained in lunchtime sessions once a month for six months. At the end of the program, which costs \$150 per company, participants will be officially recognized as green businesses by Santa Clara County and will be listed in a directory of green businesses,

among other benefits.

The classes begin Jan. 7 and take place on the first Thursday of the month. Talks will be given by local green business experts, including the city's environmental coordinator, Steve Attinger.

So far the Chamber has had five businesses apply for the program, leaving 10 slots open at press time.

Oscar Garcia, the Chamber's CEO, said Mountain View's is

► See **GREEN**, page 8

Police nab suspect in Stevens Creek Trail assault

By Kelsey Mesher

Mountain View police have arrested the man they believe is behind last week's attempted sexual assault of a jogger on Stevens Creek Trail, and behind at least two other recent attacks as well.



John Detches

John Detches, 32, a transient out of San Jose, was arrested at approximately 4 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 6, on three counts of assault with intent to commit rape and one count of kidnapping.

His arrest comes a week after 27-year-old Mountain View resident Crystal Stokes was attacked while jogging on the trail near the Dana Street overcrossing. Stokes successfully fought off Detches, who allegedly had grabbed her and attempted to haul her into some bushes off the trail. The attacker in that incident fled on a green bicycle and police were unable to locate him.

Following the Nov. 29 attack, police have been conducting investigations and combing through reports involving Stevens Creek Trail, and found that a Nov. 12 report of suspicious circumstances had several similarities. In that incident, a 24-year-old woman had been grabbed by the shoulders by a man while she was jogging on the trail. Another interview with the victim revealed that the victim had elbowed the man in the stomach, and that he had fled on a bicycle. The physical description matched that of the Nov. 29 attacker.

Meanwhile, another woman in her 20s, having seen media reports of the Nov. 29 attack, contacted Mountain View police to report a similar incident that happened to her on Nov. 25. She told police she was grabbed by the arm by a man while jogging on Stevens Creek Trail. When she pulled away and

► See **ASSAULT**, page 9

■ SEEN AROUND TOWN

Backyard pheasant



"I've attached a photo of pheasant we saw in our backyard on Golden Way," wrote Lisa Twardowski. "He hung around long enough for me to get a few photos and let my child see him up close, before flying up to our fence to ponder where to go next."
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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Foothill-De Anza district names new chancellor

LINDA THOR COMES FROM 60,000-STUDENT COLLEGE IN TEMPE, ARIZ.

By Chris Kenrick

Linda Thor, president of Rio Salado College in Tempe, Ariz., will become chancellor of the Foothill-De Anza Community College District on Feb. 16, the board of trustees announced Monday.

Thor was named after a national search to replace former chancellor Martha Kanter, who resigned in June to become U.S. Undersecretary of Education, overseeing postsecondary education. Thor will be the sixth permanent chancellor since Foothill-De Anza's founding in 1957.

"Passion for education is what we look for in any college leader," board president Betsy Bechtel said. "Linda Thor's driving passion is student success, and that is evident in every conversation with her. I am confident she will help us continue to advance our commitment to quality education for every student. We are very pleased to have her join us."

Since Thor became president of Rio Salado in 1990, the "col-

lege without walls" has used technology to serve more than 60,000 students a year.

About half of Rio Salado's students are long-distance learners. Others attend classes at more than 10 campuses spread across a wide geographic region around Phoenix.

Foothill-De Anza serves about 44,000 students a year.

"Linda Thor has an extensive record of innovation and has presided over remarkable growth and development at Rio Salado," said Dolores Davison, co-chair of the chancellor search committee and president of the Foothill College Academic Senate. Davison cited Thor's "leadership in fundraising, developing partnerships and collaborations, and technological innovation."

Thor holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from Pepperdine University, a master's degree in public administration from California State University, Los Angeles, and a doctorate in education in community college administration

from Pepperdine. She has taught as an adjunct faculty member in graduate programs at Pepperdine, UCLA and Northern Arizona University. And she has worked in community college administration since 1974, becoming president of West Los Angeles College in Culver City in 1986.

Thor is on the board of EduCause, a nonprofit association focused on using technology to advance higher education, and is a member of the Leadership Circle of the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment.

Her salary will be \$260,000 a year — the median for presidents of large community college districts — and her contract runs through June 2012.

"I am honored and excited to be named the next chancellor of the Foothill-De Anza Community College District, one of the nation's premier community college districts," Thor said.

"As a native Californian, it will be gratifying to again serve the people of my home state." ▀

Spartan runners take rare state title

SENIORS ROWE AND MYJER LEAD THE WAY TO CROSS COUNTRY VICTORY

By Kelsey Mesher

The Mountain View High School boys cross country team has brought home a state championship title — the first such title of any sport in Spartan history — after the California Interscholastic Federation state meet on Saturday, Nov. 28.

“It’s really cool, the boys deserve it,” said Evan Smith, head coach. “They worked extremely hard for years, basically.”

Senior Garrett Rowe led the team with a fourth place finish in the 5k race, clocking in at 15:06. He was followed by senior Ian Myjer (15:17) who took sixth, and junior Parker Schuh (15:45), who placed 23rd. Senior Alex McGuiirk (16:08) and sophomore Aubrey Myjer (16:10) placed 46th and 52nd, respectively, securing the five scores counted toward the Spartans’ win.

Senior Chris Wells (16:42) and junior Bryan Crook (16:54) also ran for Mountain View in the meet.

Though the Spartans were favored to win, Smith said, McGuiirk and Aubrey Myjer passed about 30 runners in the last mile to secure the title.

“They dedicate their summers to just putting in a ton of mileage, and they do some very, very difficult workouts,” Smith said of the team. “Sometimes they get

injured because they are working so hard, but we basically rode that balance of not too much work and not too little work, and it all worked out.”

“I’m extremely proud of our team,” said Principal Keith Moody. “It’s a major accomplishment when you can win at that level. Just winning in your region is impressive, but to win at the state level is phenomenal.”

According to Smith, Rowe will run for Princeton next year. Myjer is still deciding, but plans to continue running in college as well.

As for next year’s team, “It’s impossible to replace Garrett and Ian, but I do think we’re going to be competitive,” Smith said.

“Both the boys and girls cross country programs have been very good for a number of years,” said Dan Navarro, who served as athletic director for 10 years. He added that each team has won several regional competitions recently. He said Mountain View is known for having good runners.

“The cross country team is a very tight knit group of kids,” he said. “They have parties together, and they really, really enjoy running together. I think that’s part of why they’re so successful.”

E-mail Kelsey Mesher at kmesher@mv-voice.com

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7 p.m.
(4) STANFORD vs. (13) MICHIGAN

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BRUBECK

► Continued from page 1

cert at the Fox Theatre in Redwood City, Brubeck met with two board members of Friends of the Rengstorff House, who later posted on the group's Web site that they were impressed with Brubeck's knowledge of his Rengstorff ancestry.

His great grand uncle, Henry Rengstorff, was a German who came to California during the Gold Rush and eventually settled on 164 acres of what is now Mountain View's Shoreline business district.

Rengstorff built a ship landing on the Bay at what is now Shoreline Park, which fostered early development of Mountain View in the late 1800s. His 1867 home — the city's iconic Rengstorff House — still stands at Shoreline Park, where it was restored in the 1980s after being moved from its original location farther south on Shoreline Boulevard (then Stierlin Road).

The last family owner of the Rengstorff House, from the 1920s to the 1950s, was opera singer Perry Askam, a cousin of Brubeck's and one of several Rengstorff descendants who were musically talented. When

they met him at the Fox Theatre, Friends of the Rengstorff House board members Ginny Kaninski and Mary Boudrias gave Brubeck a picture of Askam and a CD of his performances, some recorded as far back as the 1930s. The CD is among the memorabilia sold at the Rengstorff House.

In a thank you letter, Brubeck said he hoped to visit the Rengstorff House next time he's in the area. The Friends of the Rengstorff House promise that the home's piano will be in tune.

Brubeck has been designated a "living legend" by the Library of Congress. As a pianist, composer and band leader, he helped bring jazz to the mainstream after World War II, writing several jazz standards and the songs for "This is America, Charlie Brown," among numerous other accomplishments. He is also known for the Dave Brubeck Quartet's "Take Five," a mega-hit written by his longtime collaborator Paul Desmond.

Brubeck still plays today at age 89, and his birthday coincided with Sunday's event.

During the ceremony, President Obama said that when his father took him to see his first jazz concert as a boy, it was to see Brubeck. "I've been a jazz fan ever since," he said. ■

EDITOR'S DESK

► Continued from page 1

because I was lazy, then the people who worked hard owe me a living? That is not the values that my parents taught me. If I wanted something, I had to earn it, have always done that and always will. Lazy people and low achievers can move to some third world socialist country if they want a free ride off of people who have to work for a living.

I couldn't agree more, Concerned. The truth is I see socialism (and lazy people, for that matter) everywhere I go.

I see it every time I drive on one of these socialist roads, built

by taxpayer money. The whole state's filthy with them.

Or when the socialist firefighters douse the flames consuming my neighbor's house — what is this, Russia?

Or just by hanging around Shoreline Park, a socialist enterprise built atop a former landfill. Nice park, comrades!

As for the lazy people, they're easily found at Shoreline Park, lolling around with the geese. Some are on the roads, too, neglecting to use their turn signals.

And a few are leaving comments on Town Square. You know them when you see them. ■

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

GREEN

► Continued from page 5

the first chamber to help businesses clear the hurdles of going green — a challenge the Chamber experienced first hand when it was recently green certified. Garcia said the process can be "intimidating."

"What the county does is they give you the information and say 'Here's the checklist, go do it,'" Garcia said. By trial and error,

Chamber representatives learned many tips along the way, such as how to get certain green upgrades at a free or discounted price.

The chamber's upgrades included more efficient light bulbs, a low-flow toilet, faucet aerators and increased use of recycled paper. "It saved us more money than it cost us to do," said David Stevens, Chamber program and events manager.

For more information, visit www.chambermv.org and www.greenbiz.ca.gov. ■

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ASSAULT

► Continued from page 5

yelled, he fled on a bicycle.

Armed with this information and looking for a single attacker, officers patrolling the trail found a man matching the physical description of the suspect.

"We've been out on the trail nonstop," said police spokesperson Liz Wylie. "We've had bike patrol officers out there, motorcycle patrol officers out there."

"They pretty much stumbled upon him and he already had a small misdemeanor warrant" out for his arrest, she said. "We kind of used that to get him into the Police Department."

Stokes positively identified Detches from a photo lineup. After taking a statement from the suspect, Wylie said, further evidence "presented itself." She said police now believe the previous two incidents to be attempted assaults, and that there are likely more women who have had run-ins with Detches.

"We're pretty sure there's a bunch of woman out there," she said, adding that police "want to know about all of them to make the case even stronger." Anyone with information is urged to contact police at (650) 903-6344.

'A fluke thing'

Stokes later said that she only jogs about once a month, making it seem all the more unlikely that she would have to fight off an attack by a strange man in the middle of

the day.

Looking back on the incident, "It's kind of a fluke thing," she told the *Voice*.

Stokes said she was only about a mile from home when she jogged past the man who attacked her.

"He was just standing on the side of the trail ... just a regular guy," she said. "I didn't even think twice about running by him."

But then, "He just reached out and bear hugged me to his chest and picked me up like a little baby," she said. Stokes, a five-foot-three personal trainer with a slight build, said her arms were pinned near the attacker's face, "where my hands couldn't flail."

"Initially I thought it was a joke, that a friend had set me up," she said, but then the attacker began to walk with her toward a nearby ravine.

"That's when I kind of went a little crazy," she said. "I grabbed his jaw and pulled it really, really hard and then he backed up back to the road and let me go." He fled on his bicycle, and she resumed running.

Though shaken up that day, Stokes still intends to use the trail: "I still don't feel intimidated, because I feel that the chances of it happening (again) are so slim," she said. "I still want to go out alone."

Next time, she said, she might bring her cell phone. And she thinks it's a good idea to tell someone where you're going.

As for the arrest, "I think it's awesome," Stokes said. "I have to say, I've not really worked with police much at all, and I was so, so impressed with the Mountain View Police Department." ■

■ NEWS BRIEFS

POLICE: SCHOOL WORKER EXPOSED HIMSELF TO STUDENT

Police are trying to obtain a warrant to arrest a 21-year-old "noon duty aide" at Graham Middle School who allegedly exposed himself to a 13-year-old girl in an empty classroom on Tuesday afternoon of last week.

"She immediately ran from him," said police spokesperson Liz Wylie. "He did not try to attack her or touch her."

The girl reported the incident right away to Graham Principal Gretchen Jacobs, Wylie said, and "school (authorities) went to look for him and he was gone." The man, a Mountain View resident, remained at large until Thursday afternoon when, according to Wylie, he came into the Police Department and gave a statement.

Because indecent exposure is a misdemeanor, she said, police cannot arrest him without a warrant. Though authorities requested a warrant from the District Attorney's office Friday, they were told there was not enough evidence to issue one. Police are continuing to investigate.

District officials said the man has been placed on administrative leave, and that administrators are trying to protect the victim's privacy and have offered her counseling.

— Kelsey Mesher

RAIL AUTHORITY RESCINDS PART OF EIR

The California High-Speed Rail Authority board last week rescinded its approval of an environmental impact report on a section of the high speed rail project between the Bay Area and Central Valley.

The board took the action on Thursday, Dec. 3 at its meeting in Sacramento because of a court ruling in October that found its analysis was insufficient for a 36-mile stretch of the proposed line between Gilroy and San Jose on the Pacheco Pass. The ruling stemmed from a lawsuit filed in 2008 by opponents of the project, including the cities of Menlo Park and Atherton.

— Bay City News

ESHOO OPPOSES AFGHAN TROOP SURGE

Calling Afghanistan "the graveyard of nations," Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Palo Alto, announced last week her opposition to President Barack Obama's plan to increase the number of U.S. military troops in that country.

While acknowledging the difficult situation inherited from President Bush, Eshoo said the Afghan government is a corrupt and unreliable partner to the U.S. Her full statement is available at eshoo.house.gov.

— The Almanac

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TREE

► Continued from page 5

All of Beeson's trees are grown on a 50-acre farm in Estacada, Ore., where the climate is ideal for evergreens. They cut the first crop the day before Thanksgiving, and ship the trees down the day after. "We bring them as the season goes, as we need them, so they stay

nice and fresh," he said, adding that larger distributors may start cutting trees as early as October.

"If you cut them too early, then once in a while you have a problem with them."

Regardless of where you purchase a tree, he said, the best practice is to run a hand up the branch: Healthy trees that are freshly cut will have soft, pliable bristles.

To keep the tree fresh through

the season, have the seller cut off at least an inch from the base of the trunk. Also, use a stand with water, and add a teaspoon or two of sugar to help break down the sap that comes out of the tree.

The greenest tree

According to Forrest Linebarger, a green architect and CEO of Mountain View's VOX Design Group, there has been a long debate over whether real or synthetic trees are more environmentally friendly.

Although it may seem counterintuitive, he said, many close to the issue believe it is more sustainable to purchase a live tree each year than to use the same plastic tree repeatedly.

That's because fake trees "take a lot of energy to produce," he said. "They're almost all made of PVC plastic, and there is a fair amount of BPA in it, which is a chemical that has been found to have some health concerns in animals."

Linebarger cited a 2008 Environmental Protection Agency study that claimed PVC breaks down after about nine years,

► Continued on next page

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Holiday Shopping Ideas

As we shop for gifts for our family and friends this holiday season, let's not forget that there are members of our community who are unable to fill their cupboards and buy their children a simple doll or toy truck.

Community Services Agency is the organization that feeds those in need from Mountain View, Los Altos and Los Altos Hills. They are in desperate need of food this holiday season. Please help them by shopping locally for canned food and other nonperishable items and dropping off a box or a few bags of groceries at their Food and Nutrition Center, 204 Stierlin Rd, Mountain View. Shopping and dropping off the groceries would be a wonderful family project to get everyone in the spirit-of-giving.

And our Mountain View Police Department has its annual "Cops That Care" program again this year. Please shop locally for toys, clothing or gift cards and drop off the unwrapped items at the Police Department, 1000 Villa Street in Mountain View before December 19. The Cops That Care program is expecting more children than usual this year and toy donations are lower than usual this year so your help is extremely important.

Shopping locally helps local businesses stay profitable, keeps Mountain View residents employed, saves gas and whenever you shop in Mountain View 1% of the sales tax on your purchase goes directly back to the city budget to support our parks, trails and facilities.

For more ideas on places to go and things-to-do this holiday season go to www.ilovemv.org

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BETTER WATCH OUT

Santa rallies the kids into song at the Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony downtown last week. The festivities included arts and crafts, choir performances and playing in the snow.

► Continued from previous page

meaning older plastic trees could cause contamination in the home. A small percentage even have traces of lead, he said.

"It takes about 20 years for the (environmental) footprint to be equal between an artificial tree and a natural tree," he said, so buying a small live tree each year is preferable — so long as it was grown relatively close to where it was purchased.

"But there are greener way to go," he added, such as using a tree from the yard that might be cut down anyway, or buying a potted tree and planting it after the holidays.

The latter suggestion comes with a warning: "Most conifers grow quite large and fairly quickly." Those with less space might want to go with a smaller species, such as a spruce. ▣

E-mail Kelsey Mesher at kmesher@mv-voice.com



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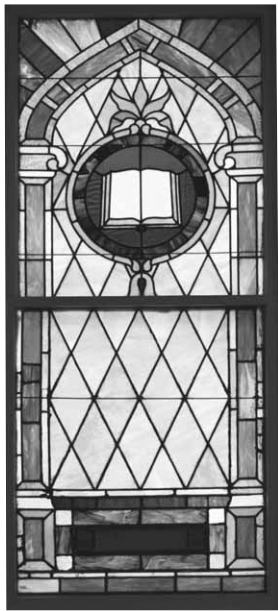


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Christmas Day

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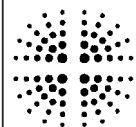
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PARTNERS

► Continued from page 1

“You got a train going up a grade (that) can’t pull up all those cars, so you put a helper engine in there,” he said. “Get the train up to the top and the helper engine goes away and the train goes on its way because it got over the hill. That’s what mentors are all about.”

Partners for New Generations is among this year’s *Voice* Holiday Fund recipients, and will use the money donated by *Voice* readers (and doubled through matching grants from local foundations) to pay for the initial training that mentors get before working with students. Often the money goes toward educational events — classes, speaking engagements and training on motivation and teen brain development — that PNG sends its mentors to.

During training, Waub warns mentors to put their ego aside, as some mentors may never see obvious results from the relationships they foster. Others, like Crawford, may not know the effect they had until years later.

Claire Donohoe, who has been

mentoring one girl throughout her high school years, says it’s been wonderful watching the girl, now a senior, achieve.

Donohoe, a Mountain View resident, takes her mentee to ballet and gives her tours of Mountain View. But mostly, she says, they just walk and talk. The key, she says, is to let the girl feel secure enough in the relationship to learn from Donohoe’s past experiences and to ask advice when she needs it.

Tuck Younis, police chief of Los Altos, says he tries to be a sounding board for his mentee, an 18-year-old interested in police work. They talk about the student’s goals and aspirations, as well as the challenges he faces as he grows up.

Younis jokes that he may get more out of the program than his mentee. Mentoring helps him to see intervention in a new light.

“So much of my work has obviously been the criminal element of prevention and intervention, but it’s usually on a much more community-driven scale, where this is with an individual,” he said. “I saw it as an opportunity to give back.”

E-mail Dana Sherne at dsherne@mv-voice.com

“Much of my work is usually on a much more community-driven scale, where this is with an individual. I saw it as an opportunity to give back.”

TUCK YOUNIS

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as permitted by law. All donations will be shared equally with the seven recipient agencies listed here.



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COUNCIL

► Continued from page 1

sity of giving property owners an "amnesty" period.

Member Ronit Bryant said that she was "shocked" by opposition from Inks.

"I don't think we're incentivizing code enforcement officers," she said. "I have much deeper trust in our staff."

Inks pointed out that small businesses were already being hit with fines for "petty" violations, such as a \$500 fine on the Milk Pail Market for selling pumpkins in the parking lot.

Speaking for a dozen property owners, Charles Gardyn, owner of the La Costena building at Rengstorff Avenue and Old Middlefield Way, said that by requiring the compliance permit, there is an "automatic presumption a violation exists" which makes the code enforcement officer the "accuser, prosecutor, judge and jury all rolled into one. For all practical purposes there is no due process."

He added that there is no limit on the fees, and that the building owner can be "denied use of his property and his livelihood."

Martello said businesses could still choose to fight violations in court, and that the new permit was directed at those who wanted to comply voluntarily but needed to be "shepherded" through existing processes.

The ordinance was clearly "a positive thing" to member Jac Siegel and most of the council.

"This is meant to help, not be a penalty," Siegel said. If permits had been pulled in the first place, "you would have paid for it anyway. Now we're saying we're not going to penalize you for coming in; let's do it right."

The issue was less clear to council member Mike Kasperzak.

"You can't look at this picture and say, OK, this makes eminent sense," Kasperzak said, adding that "part of me is saying, 'Question authority.'"

Member Tom Means said the council had not had a philosophical discussion about what

services should be paid for with fees, though the council recently supported more "cost recovery" to deal with an ongoing deficit. "If a reference librarian does extra work for somebody, should we charge them?" Means said.

Steve Rasmussen, owner of the Milk Pail Market for 35 years, said that it would be helpful if there was some way to "mediate" the tension between property owners and the code enforcement department. After the meeting he said it is easy to believe that "You can't fight City Hall."

Council member Laura Macias suggested the city have "a general ombudsman that (property owners) can always call. We can't expect residents to know the process as well as we do, that's just unfair," she said.

Senior assistant city attorney Jannie Quinn suggested there be a project manager for each compliance case. The council also decided to review the new practice in a year.

Ten staffers retire

On Tuesday, 10 retiring senior staffers — including the city attorney, heads of the library and public works department — were recognized for their service to the city.

Those retiring at the end of the year are city attorney Michael Martello, library director Karen Burnette (who will temporarily run the library part time), public works director Cathy Lazarus (to be temporarily replaced by assistant Mike Fuller), employee services director Kathy Farrar (who has served the city for 38 years), street supervisor Gerald Pollock (called an "unsung hero" for his efforts to keep the city pothole-free), water quality technician Dorothy De Campo, executive assistant to the city attorney Vivian Crabtree (known for her "unflappable confidence"), parks section manager Jack Smith, meter service worker Roland Lopez, and fleet services manager Steve Miller.

In most cases the positions will remain temporarily unfilled, saving the city money as it faces a several million dollar deficit and possible staff cuts next year. ■

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

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Neighbors split over Minton's project

OLD MOUNTAIN VIEW GROUP ELECTS THREE NEW MEMBERS OPPOSED TO EVELYN AVE. PROPOSAL

By Daniel DeBolt

Members of the Old Mountain View Neighborhood Association filled the City Council chambers to the brim Thursday night and elected three write-in candidates who oppose a controversial apartment project that would take the place of Minton's Lumber and Supply.

It was the first contested election in OMVNA's 17-year history, whose previous elections have always been quiet, sparsely attended affairs.

This time was different, with Noam Livnat, outgoing OMVNA chair, spending considerable time trying to prevent "tiffs and scuffles" outside the council chambers as neighbors debated the Minton's project while waiting for another presentation to wrap up.

Once people finally poured into the chambers, many had to crowd around behind the council dais. Livnat calmly spoke about how the neighborhood association had been carefully built over 17 years into something "precious," and that he hoped it would remain "active and effective" for many years to come.

Three of eight steering committee positions were contested and won by write-in candidates endorsed by the newly created Minton's Redevelopment Neighborhood Alliance, or MiRNA, which opposes the 214-unit apartment development. MiRNA's Laura Lewis (147 votes) was elected chair over Hugh Donagher (84 votes), MiRNA-endorsed Robert Cox (144 votes) was elected secretary over Joan Carlin (84 votes), and MiRNA's Carter Coleman (127 votes) was elected treasurer over incumbent Aaron Grossman (101 votes).

All three winning candidates said their experience and skills as managers or executives in the tech industry would help them run the neighborhood association, which is known for its annual ice cream social and star gazing nights, and for hosting a City Council candidate debate every two years.

Lewis, the new chair, said she had experience running community associations, and that in the debates about the Minton's project on the OMVNA Yahoo group, she "took the high road, as I always have." She said living in Mountain View with her

children is often "magical" and "a lifestyle, something you live and breathe."

MiRNA's opposition was partly in response to a letter sent to the City Council from the steering committee's existing members expressing interest in "exploring even higher density" than what has been proposed for the apartment project on Evelyn Avenue. (The committee later clarified that it had no position on the project.) On its Web site, MiRNA says that it seeks to "preserve the character" of the neighborhood.

MiRNA hopes the outcome of the OMVNA election will be seen by the City Council as a mandate against the Minton's project. The three candidates had been campaigning with a flier about themselves and the Minton's project, and through postings on the OMVNA Yahoo group.

MiRNA candidates claim that the Minton's project is too large, at nearly three times the density allowed by the precise plan for the block, which is why it requires a variance. Parking and traffic impacts on the neighborhood are a big concern, and an official parking and traffic study for the project will be released in the coming weeks.

Developer John Moss of Prometheus Real Estate Group said going lower in the density would make the underground parking garage financially unfeasible. He says the site is unusually well suited for an environmentally friendly, smart-growth project because of its proximity to the train station and downtown.

"A site like this comes up literally once every 100 years," Moss said.

MiRNA also had concerns about how the elections are run under OMVNA bylaws, with the association's steering committee controlling who is on the ballot through a "nominations committee." Coleman said some candidates objected to being asked to be write-ins on the ballot.

Bruce Karney, active for many years in OMVNA, took responsibility as the nominations committee chair for what he admitted was a flawed process. Karney said it was the first year in the group's history that there were more candidates than positions on the committee. He said filling the positions usually requires some recruiting.

More information is available at omvna.org and at mirnagr.p.com.

No public loo in train depot remodel

By Daniel DeBolt

In the coming weeks, interior construction is scheduled to begin on a wine bar inside the city's "train depot," a replica 1888 structure located in the middle of Centennial Plaza near the train station. But due to cost and space constraints, city officials say, the building will not be equipped with public restrooms as originally planned.

In an e-mail, the city's real property manager Dennis Drennan explained that there will now be only one restroom in the building, intended only for customers of Savvy Cellar wine bar, which signed a lease with the city in July for the 1,100-square-foot "ticket office" space in the building.

"While the building was initially 'rough-plumbed' for two restrooms, cost and space con-

straints reduced the number of restrooms to one," Drennan wrote. Also noted that "The nature of the ABC permit held by Savvy Cellar restricts (customers) to those 21 and older."

That means train riders and downtown visitors — except for those over 21 willing to buy some wine or food during Savvy Cellar's normal business hours — will have to look elsewhere for a bathroom.

Savvy Cellar had hoped to open its doors on Nov. 1, but delays ensued as the city faced some technical difficulties in ensuring that the building had adequate water and electrical systems for the wine bar and two other tenants of the building. Bank of America has an ATM there, and the Valley Transportation Authority uses a portion as a break room for bus and light rail operators.

Drennan said that the train depot, reconstructed in 2002, was not built to house a retail tenant. After installing some new wiring, water meters and electrical panels, the issues are "all solved now" and a building permit could be issued in the "next week or so." Interior construction could begin anytime after that.

Managed by Jennifer Ayre and Brent Harrison, Savvy Cellar already operates a store in Redwood City (open in the late afternoon and evenings only) and maintains a Web site at www.savvycellar.com. The company plans to serve wine and "light foods," as well as offer wine tasting classes and wine by the bottle.

They will be paying the city \$30,000 a year to lease the space, and the city is giving them \$225,000 to improve the interior of the building. ■

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Published every Friday at
450 Cambridge Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94306
(650) 964-6300
fax (650) 964-0294

E-mail news and photos to:

editor@MV-Voice.com

E-mail letters to:

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The Voice is published weekly by Embarcadero Publishing Co. and distributed free to residences and businesses in Mountain View. If you are not currently receiving the paper, you may request free delivery by calling 964-6300. Subscriptions for \$60 per year, \$100 per 2 years are welcome.

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■ EDITORIAL THE OPINION OF THE VOICE

Homeless now have a champion

In today's economy, as jobs vanish and medical bills mount, thousands of people — who just months or weeks earlier might have been providing for their families and making ends meet — are finding themselves on the street. Because of this, Mountain View homeless advocates say, the need for a shelter here is one of growing urgency.

There are many reasons why the city lacks a shelter. Among those reasons, surely, is the fact that there has never been a charismatic champion here who could convince enough people that such a shelter was necessary and doable. Until now.

Enter Jess Santana, an 86-year-old homeless resident of Mountain View. Santana can be extremely convincing when he talks about creating a shelter here — a cause he took up just over a year ago. These days he spends most of his waking hours talking to anyone who will listen, bending their ears about why there should be a place in Mountain View for the homeless.

And his arguments ring true. For example, why not convert a former county work furlough building, which until a couple years ago had housed 118 low-security inmates, into a homeless shelter? The building, at 590 East Middlefield Road, is for sale, but so far no viable bid has been received. With more than 30,000 square feet and individual rooms for its occupants, it would make a perfect shelter, says Santana, who has already named it Silverado after the pickup truck that is now his home.

Santana says there are other options, including a building at 685 Clyde Ave. that looks promising, but he has yet to gain traction with the city and county officials who can make things happen. Supervisor Liz Kniss is on his list, and could conceivably help with the former work furlough building. (Standing in the way is the fact that the county hopes to sell the building for millions of dollars, and recently even turned down a \$6 million offer, hoping for more.)

But Santana believes he has an ace in the hole: A bill recently approved by the State Senate requires the city to zone an area for a homeless shelter within a year of adopting the housing element of its new General Plan, which could happen here in 2010. This means that if the city is truly serious about adopting a new General Plan, it will have to at least find a location for a homeless shelter, if not actually build one.

Jess Santana already has picked up some supporters along the way, including a real estate agent who has been helping him identify promising sites. We hope anyone else who feels they can help will contact him. He has coffee at Burger King every morning at 6:30, or he can be reached on his cell phone, (650) 518-3100.

*Jess Santana
can be extremely
convincing.*

■ LETTERS VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

LAST OPTION FOR PLAYING FIELDS

Editor:

I support the Audubon Society financially, but I think it's wrong to oppose building an athletic field at the proposed Shoreline location ("Does city give a hoot about owls?" Nov. 27). There is an acute shortage of athletic field space in Mountain View, and the problem will only worsen as more housing gets built.

You might have noticed that Eagle Park is often closed to sports uses. That's because the park simply can't handle the number of people (kids and adults) that want to use it for sports. Other smaller parks sometimes get closed for the same reason.

The question of where Mountain View might build athletic fields has been under discussion for a number of years, and it boils down to this: The Shoreline location is the only possibility left after many others have been eliminated. Believe me, there is a long history here.

If you are not involved with youth or adult sports, you might not be aware of the scarcity of field space, but the problem is real and there are no alternative locations available. If you think there are alternatives, look into the history I referred to.

Vince Leone
Richard Court

LEAVE OWLS BE, BUILD ELSEWHERE

Editor:

I am very much for playing fields. I also am for the owls. It was only a few years ago, I could actually find them in several places that are now gone.

Mitigation is a great idea, but it is backwards. Why fix two locations, a new one for owls, and a new one for fields? The owls already have their place. Instead use the mitigation site for the fields. Then it would be only one project, with fewer chances of screwing up the precarious owls.

Meanwhile, there have been several large areas in Mountain View that went to houses rather than playing fields, just adding to the problems. Was that too hard to see? Let's investigate why housing without playing fields went ahead. Where was the balanced approach to growth — or did the politicians know they would get what they wanted by creating the problem so the wise old owls can try to solve it?

John P. Nichols
Charleston Road

'SEASTEADING' IDEA A SCAM

Editor:

I found the article about Patri Friedman's "seasteading" venture very amusing ("The biggest idea

► Continued on next page



Viewpoint

► Continued from previous page

ever floated," Nov. 27). "Mostly I'm a libertarian," he claims; yet his "business" is operating from a rent-subsidized office, using \$500,000 donated by a millionaire who apparently has nothing more socially useful to spend his money on.

In fact, Patri's ideas are vintage Friedman (grandpa Milton, that is): Rather than learning to get along, we can each be islands unto ourselves, with no responsibility for anyone else. What if I want my island to be where Patri's is, or want to dump my waste into his water, or pollute his air? I'm sorry Friedman feels he can only live with "like-minded" folks. Maybe he'd better think about moving to another planet!

In the meantime, why won't those "wealthy tech executives" look around at the people who are truly needy and hurting right now in our own area, and try to help instead of supporting this "seasteading" scam?

Jonathan Clark
Mountain View Avenue

TIME TO COMMENT ON PEDESTRIAN PLAN

Editor:

I'd like to encourage all who care about walking issues in Mountain View to contribute their comments for the city's first Pedestrian Master Plan. As the deadline for comments is Dec. 15, time is short.

Only by ensuring that all voices are heard will the Pedestrian Master Plan best reflect considerations that are specific to our city.

An impressive amount of pedestrian-related data has been compiled and provided to those developing the plan through last year's Walkability Workshop, through the Mountain View mayor-appointed Environmental Sustainability Task Force, and, ongoing, through the city of Mountain View Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee. Therefore, a great foundation already exists for you to enhance with your contributions.

The city is also updating its General Plan, so information in the Pedestrian Master Plan can significantly affect details in the General Plan, including those that cover long-term land use, transportation, circulation and sustainability planning.

Pedestrian Master Plan forms are available at the City Hall rotunda, at the library, and at the Senior Center. For more information and an online interactive map, see www.mountainview.gov/pedestrian.

Bruce England
Whisman Station Drive

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