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MOVIES | 29



NATALIA NAZAROVA

Justin Harper and Nikki Mensick live with their dog in a unique house-on-wheels that's temporarily parked in Mountain View.

Couple keeps on truckin'

AMID RVS, A RUSTIC CABIN ON WHEELS MAKES A PIT STOP IN MOUNTAIN VIEW

By Kevin Forestieri

Anyone heading down Latham Street in the past week has probably noticed it. Among the RVs that line both sides of the road is a hulking wooden structure

attached to a green 1940s truck. The peculiar home is a relic of the past with a long history in the Bay Area, and the proud owners say they've spent months and thousands of dollars to bring it back to its former glory.

Justin Harper and Nikki Mensick, the young couple living inside the truck-mounted house, pulled into Mountain View a little over a week ago after a challenging 80-mile

► See **TRUCK**, page 8

School board approves teacher pay increase

MOUNTAIN VIEW WHISMAN TEACHERS SUPPORT 8 PERCENT SALARY HIKE

By Kevin Forestieri

Teachers in the Mountain View Whisman School District can rejoice, after school board members unanimously approved a new contract that includes a major pay increase across the board, along with a guarantee that class sizes will be reduced in the coming years.

The contract gives all teachers an 8 percent salary increase for the 2016-17 fiscal year, effective July 1, placing the salary range at \$56,384 to \$104,041, based on number of years served in the district and level of college education. The pay increase will cost the district an estimated \$1.7 million in the first year.

The district and the teachers' union, the Mountain View Edu-

cators Association, reached a tentative agreement on the contract in June, but the association only recently voted to ratify the agreement. Emily Zapata, the association's new president, told board members at the Aug. 18 meeting that teachers overwhelmingly supported the contract, and 99 percent of the members voted to

► See **PAY INCREASE**, page 10

Teen drug abuse on the rise in county

By Kevin Forestieri

It's never a slow day for Adolescent Counseling Services (ACS). The nonprofit's Palo Alto office is routinely packed during its late afternoon hours as teens and their families flood in to seek substance abuse treatment and counseling. And it's only a matter of months before another big wave of new cases comes rolling in.

"It's always after the first dance, the first progress report and the first sporting event," said Connie Mayer, director of outpatient services for ACS. "That's when we're most busy for substance abuse."

ACS is not alone. Officials from hospitals, nonprofit mental health organizations and local law enforcement in the North County area say they are seeing increasing numbers of teens and young adults routinely drinking alcohol and taking prescription and illegal drugs, prompting concerns that cultural and legal changes could be paving the way for more substance abuse. Mental health experts warn that these risky behaviors could also be a misguided attempt to self-medicate because of deeper problems, like depression and anxiety.

Seth Ammerman, an adolescent and addiction medicine specialist at Lucile Packard Children's Hospital, said he's been seeing an "unfortunately high" number of teens each year struggling with substance abuse across Santa Clara County, with alcohol and marijuana taking the lead as the two major abused drugs of choice. More troubling, Ammermann said, is recent research over the last two years that shows a strong link between early drug use and

substance abuse disorders.

The most recent county-wide survey on teen drug use comes from Project Cornerstone, which operates out of YMCA of Silicon Valley and surveyed 16,214 high school students back in 2011. Of the respondents, 44 percent of seniors and 28 percent of juniors reported drinking alcohol at least once in the last 30 days, and 47 percent reported said they had smoked marijuana in the last year. Nearly one-third of the seniors reported getting drunk in the last two weeks, and one in four reported drinking and driving in the last year.

More recent surveys from the Mountain View-Los Altos High School District from the 2013-14 school year shows that 26 percent of juniors drank alcohol at least once in the 30 days prior to the survey — of which 11 percent reported "binge drinking" — and 17 percent reported smoking marijuana at least once over the same time period. The survey did not include seniors.

Drug use is higher at Los Altos High School across the board, where 21 percent of juniors reported smoking pot in the last 30 days, 31 percent reported drinking alcohol and 3 percent reported taking prescription medication to get high.

Organizations like ACS and the Community Health Awareness Council (CHAC) in Mountain View are seeing the results, as students flock to both mental health nonprofits in the North County area seeking substance abuse treatment. Veronica Foster, a therapist at CHAC, said parents start to see warning signs of drug

► See **DRUG ABUSE**, page 16



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"It's my daughter's first year in high school, and for her, it's the people."

Sunshine Reyes, Mountain View



"The pressure of realizing you needed to learn new material and be tested on it."

Chris Landis, Mountain View



"Being around all the people and the pressures of high school."

Sam Reitter, Mountain View



"I hated waking up early."

David Guardado, Mountain View



"I liked going back to school."

Stephanie Goehringer, Mountain View



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Water System Flushing

The City of Mountain View will begin flushing the water system north of Cuesta Drive on August 15, 2016. Flushing helps to maintain water quality by removing accumulated sand and sediment from water lines. Signs and barricades will be posted in neighborhoods the day before flushing begins. Flushing north of Cuesta Drive is anticipated to be complete by the end of November 2016.

If you would like more information about the City's water system flushing program or have questions or concerns while City personnel are in your neighborhood, please contact the Public Services Division at (650) 903-6329 or visit the City's website at www.mountainview.gov.

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CRIME BRIEFS

AIRB&E

Mountain View police are warning residents that a growing number of criminals are using Airbnb as a way to burglarize homes in the Bay Area, and cite a recent heist in the Old Mountain View neighborhood.

At the beginning of August, police say, 35-year-old David Lefevre rented an apartment on Calderon Avenue through Airbnb, and canceled the reservation shortly before he was scheduled to stay there. Soon after the cancellation, the apartment was burglarized and several items stolen, according to police.

The residents of the home called police on Aug. 11 after Lefevre allegedly opened a credit account and tried to purchase a new iPhone at a local AT&T store. Detectives went to the store, found Lefevre and arrested him after reportedly finding a majority of the items stolen from the apartment in his car. Lefevre was arrested on charges of residential burglary, identity theft, possession of stolen property and fraudulent use of a credit card. He was booked into Santa Clara County Main Jail on a \$145,000 bail.

Police are advising residents to avoid leaving anything valuable in homes that they rent out through Airbnb, including jewelry, portable electronics and personal, important documents including passports and Social Security cards. Anything valuable in the house should be stowed away in a safe attached to the floor of the home. Residents are also advised to meet with the temporary renters ahead of time and verify their identities with a driver's license.

► See *CRIME BRIEFS*, page 10

POLICE LOG

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1400 block Plymouth St., 8/16

AUTO BURGLARY

1000 block Boranda Av., 8/17
1100 block N. Rengstorff Av., 8/17
100 block E. El Camino Real, 8/17
500 block Showers Dr., 8/19
1000 block Space Park Way., 8/19
San Antonio Rd. & Terminal Blvd., 8/20
1300 block Montecito Av., 8/22

BATTERY

2700 block Katrina Way, 8/17
900 block N. Shoreline Blvd., 8/20
100 block Bryant St., 8/21
200 block Castro St., 8/22

BRANDISHING A WEAPON

E. El Camino Real & Grant Rd., 8/17

COMMERCIAL BURGLARY

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2400 block Leghorn St., 8/19

GRAND THEFT

100 block N. Rengstorff Av., 8/16
100 block N. Whisman Rd., 8/20

RESIDENTIAL BURGLARY

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CLARIFICATION

In last week's story "Landlords rattled by specter of rent control," apartment owner Linda Curtis was quoted as saying "It never occurred to me that the Tenants Coalition would get this on the ballot." Curtis has since clarified that her remark was, "It never occurred to me that a tenants' coalition would get this onto the ballot," and was not specifically about the Mountain View Tenants Coalition that is spearheading a rent control measure on the Nov. 8 ballot.

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NATALIA NAZAROVA

Christophe Lécuyer speaks about the dirty legacy of high tech in Silicon Valley at the Computer History Museum on Aug. 17.

Chronicling the dirty side of 'Techville'

'FROM CLEANROOMS TO DIRTY WATER' TRACES POLLUTION HISTORY OF SILICON VALLEY

By Mark Noack

The pioneering work of Silicon Valley on microprocessors, computers and circuits may have bestowed the region with abundant wealth and jobs, but it also carries a darker legacy.

By one measure, Santa Clara County remains the most polluted region in the United States, largely from groundwater contamination caused by the area's former semiconductor factories, said Christophe Lécuyer, a historian at the Université Pierre et Marie Curie in France.

Lécuyer, who earned his doctorate in history from Stanford University, has made a career out of chronicling the history

of Silicon Valley. In the popular narrative, that history has largely been told from the perspective of technological innovation and prosperity, Lécuyer said, explaining that he wanted to trace the area's environmental damage.

In an Aug. 17 lecture delivered at Mountain View's Computer History Museum, Lécuyer charted decades of pollution caused by general negligence and recklessness among many of the South Bay's iconic corporations, including Intel, IBM and Fairchild Semiconductor.

Going back decades, semiconductor and chip manufacturing were considered "clean" industries, and often cities categorized them as light manufacturing, he said.

"It wasn't uncommon to see middle-class families living right across the street from semiconductor factories in Mountain View and elsewhere," Lécuyer said. "These firms gave a very low priority to worker safety and environmental protection."

Manufacturing computer parts requires huge quantities of toxic chemicals. Semiconductor production used arsine and phosphine — gases that previously had been weaponized in World War I trench warfare — as well as industrial solvents such as trichloroethylene and trichloroethane.

It was later revealed that some firms, such as IBM, had

► See **TECHVILLE**, page 11

Stevenson school gets another campus overhaul

NEW PLANS WOULD TACK AN EXTRA \$5 MILLION ONTO ALREADY OVER-BUDGET PROJECT

By Kevin Forestieri

The Mountain View Whisman School District spent months considering five options for building new facilities for Stevenson Elementary, home to the district's parent participation (PACT) program. But

soon after the board endorsed an alternative, district officials are saying that a total revamp of the plan is needed to house the district's preschool and deal with traffic concerns.

Before the summer break, school board members voted in favor of a \$35 million construc-

tion plan that would involve swapping the locations of the district office and Stevenson, and building new facilities for the PACT program, including its own multipurpose room and library. The plan also included new facilities and renovated classrooms at Theuerkauf. Stevenson, Theuerkauf and the district office share a site at San Pierre Way and San Luis Avenue.

The decision marked a major commitment of close to \$10 million above the original budget allocation to keep Stevenson and

► See **STEVENSON**, page 6

Big turnover for Mountain View school board

THREE SEATS UP FOR RE-ELECTION, BUT ONLY ONE INCUMBENT IN THE RUNNING

By Kevin Forestieri

Four candidates will be facing off this November for seats on the Mountain View Whisman School District's board of trustees, following the deadline to file with the county last week. Two of the three incumbents up for re-election this year, Steve Nelson and Bill Lambert, declined to run again, meaning a big change in the five-member board is ahead.

Incumbent José Gutiérrez, who was appointed in August last year, as well as district residents Laura Blakely, Peter Darrah and Tamara Wilson, will be competing for three seats on the board. This election comes at a critical time for the school district, as election winners will get to weigh in on significant policy decisions including new school attendance boundaries, the opening of Slater Elementary, the soon-to-expire Measure C parcel tax and ongoing plans to close the achievement gap.

The board has also been a hotbed of controversy over the last four years. A recent audit of the district found that the board runs ineffective meetings, gets caught up on facilities issues instead of addressing student achievement, is fraught with hostility and has strained relationships with district staff and the greater community.

Laura Blakely

Parent and long-time Mountain View resident Laura Blakely was one of the first candidates to throw her hat in the ring, filing her candidacy for the school board earlier this month. A lawyer working with the Mountain View-based law firm GCA Law Partners, Blakely moved into Mountain View in 1992, and to her home in Old Mountain View in 2002.

Though both of her two boys have left the Mountain View Whisman School District and moved onto high school and college, Blakely said she remains engaged and involved with the school district. She said she is passionate about Mountain View schools and the diverse group

of students who live in the city, and said the roughly 37 percent of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch provide both a challenge and an opportunity for the district.

"My heartstrings are here in the Mountain View community, and there's real challenges here," she said.

Blakely, 56, has served various roles on site councils and PTAs, and as well as president of the Mountain View Educational Foundation. She was one of a group of parents to head the Share Shoreline campaign, which lobbied the city of Mountain View to share annual property tax funds diverted away from schools by the Shoreline Regional Park Community special tax district. Blakely helped campaign for multiple parcel tax measures, and co-chaired the Measure C parcel tax campaign in 2008 — a measure that won by a landslide.

As a board member, Blakely says she wants to close the achievement gap and challenge all students in the district. She said she is confident in the new top staff running the district, including Superintendent Ayinde Rudolph, and is "cautiously optimistic" about the new strategic plan and the direction the district is headed. Now that the five-year plan is in place, she said, it's time to actually execute it.

"It's time to roll up our sleeves and get to work," Blakely said.

Another major priority, she

► See **SCHOOL BOARD**, page 14



Tamara Wilson



Peter Darrah



Laura Blakely



José Gutiérrez

LET'S DISCUSS:

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STEVENSON

► *Continued from page 5*

Theuerkauf as completely separate campuses.

During the summer months, however, district officials found that the approved plan had multiple problems. Local residents voiced concerns that having Stevenson's parking lot entrance on Montecito Avenue could cause traffic-flow problems on the street during pick-up and drop-off hours, and traffic studies required by the state could cause major delays.

Perhaps most importantly, the school district needs to make room on the campus for the preschool program now located at Slater Elementary. Earlier this year the board committed to a plan to build a new school at the Slater site, which is home to several classrooms run by the district's preschool program and Santa Clara County. The plan prompts a need to vacate space at Slater by early 2018 and find a new home for the classrooms.

The new plan, presented to the board last week, calls for Stevenson and the district office to remain more or less where they stand today, with a row of preschool facilities locat-

ed along Montecito. The design also includes a new district office building; the old plans had the district office moving into the existing portable buildings at Stevenson.

Richard Terrones, the school's architect, told board members that there are extra benefits to the plan. The previous design had a "panhandle" of classroom facilities that abutted the neighboring field, making it difficult to fit a full-size soccer field without bumping into school buildings. It also means that the district can get greater use out of Stevenson's portable classrooms during the construction phasing.

The improvements to the new school design won't come cheap. Early cost estimates show that construction at Stevenson, Theuerkauf, the district office and the preschool campus is going to tally up to over \$40 million — over 50 percent more than the original budgeted amount for the shared campus. Most of the cost increase comes from the addition of the new district office building and the preschool, said Todd Lee, the district's construction manager.

The cost overrun is the latest in a series of pricey additions

to the original \$198 million Measure G school bond budget, which faced a deficit of over \$41 million once Slater Elementary was tacked onto the list of construction projects.

The school board agreed in June to throw in everything but the kitchen sink to fund the difference, including the entire project contingency fund, future developer fees and future lease revenue from the German International School of Silicon Valley, Google and Action Day Primary Plus, all of which operate facilities on district-owned land.

Getting the budget back in the black will also require the district to use what's called a Certificate of Participation — an additional financing tool that will shore up an extra \$30 million — in order to pay for construction, which will later have to be paid back in an annual payment of \$2 million from an still-undetermined source.

With all of these revenue sources combined, the district estimated in June that it had about \$4.9 million left over, which could just about cover the costs incurred by the new Stevenson plans. ▣

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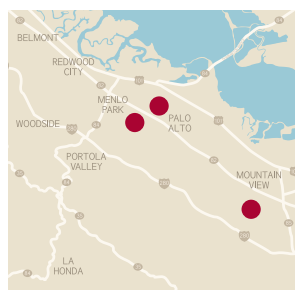


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TRUCK

► Continued from page 1

journey from Stockton to the Peninsula, using their white SUV to tug the 20-ton vehicle over the Altamont Pass. Since then, Harper, 23, said he's been fielding inquiries every day about their eye-catching abode: Does the truck actually work? Do you really live inside?

The answer is yes to both questions. Earlier this year, Harper and Mensick, 23, found themselves strapped for cash and unable to pay for rent or put down enough money on an RV to live in. While traveling through Stockton, they came across the wooden home and bought it from the owner for \$2,000.

To call it a fixer-upper would be an understatement.

"When we bought it, it did not work at all. The engine had two or three inches of rust, the pistons didn't work, we had to replace the ignition," Harper said. "When we first got it running, we got to 5 mph, tops."

It hasn't been easy, and at times the couple say they reached a tipping point trying to deal with all of the quirks and problems the truck has. At one point, Harper said, a piece of metal had gotten lodged in the gears of the rear differential, or "pumpkin," of the



Nicole Mensick and Justin Harper inside their truck-mounted home, which has a loft bed, shower stall and two sinks, on Aug. 23.

truck. The gigantic, 500-pound piece of machinery caused him all manner of grief, he said.

"That was about the worst thing I had to do in my entire life," he recalled.

Neither of the two homeowners are mechanics or had much experience working with cars, but that didn't stop them from going on a months-long journey

to rehabilitate the ancient truck. Along the way, Mensick said, they've tried to trace the history of the one-of-a-kind truck and figure out where it's been over the last 50 years.

As best they can determine, the vehicle was originally a 1948 truck used to carry lumber in Willits, in Mendocino County. In the 1960s, a woman by the name of Alice decided to convert the vehicle into a home on wheels, using pallets and old shipping crates to build a cabin mounted on the truck.

"She actually raised four kids in here while she was in San Francisco," Harper said, standing inside the home. "The truck could be spotted in the Tenderloin district."

Some of the stories have been pretty dramatic. Harper said one of the truck's owners got into a gun fight with police, and during the violent standoff, decided to kill himself in the small loft area of the home. Harper pointed to two small round holes in the home's exterior that he believes are bullet holes from the incident.

The couple named it "the Aquarius," because of the era when it made its debut, and the fact that they bought it on Jan. 20 — the start of the month associated with the astrological sign Aquarius.

The interior of the home is surprisingly spacious, with a floor plan similar to modern micro housing. It has a kitchen area, two beds, two sinks and a shower that Harper expects they'll be able to use when they get hold of a water pump. Along the walls are shelves with dozens of Mason jars full of preserves, including hatch chilis, strawberry syrup, honeysuckle and orange oil. Bowls of fruits and vegetables line the shelves of the cabin.

While it may seem a little crowded, Harper said it beats living in their 4Runner that's parked across the street, which he said was cramped by comparison.

"This is like a mansion to us," he said. "We get to finally sleep with our legs out."

Despite its strange appear-

ance, the couple say they have properly registered their home with the DMV, which classifies the Aquarius as a "house car" under California's vehicle code. Mountain View police have not hassled the couple about their vehicle, but they said they were essentially run out of Stockton by law enforcement, getting bothered as many as eight times a day. On one occasion, Harper said, two deputies showed up with guns drawn and banged on their door.

"Stockton was the worst. We would get interrupted by police at night," Harper said. "They told us we were a burden on society and not welcome."

Harper recounted one bizarre situation where he and Mensick narrowly escaped having their home towed by Stockton police. They were struggling to get the engine warmed up on the border of the city as the tow truck was en route. Mensick said she used their SUV to tow their house car and out of the police's jurisdiction before the tow truck could arrive.

"I've never pulled anything with the 4Runner before, let alone 20 tons attached by a strap," Mensick said.

Previous attempts by police to tow the Aquarius proved fruitless because the tow trucks they sent out were unable to haul the massive load of steel and wood.

Harper and Mensick are staying among the many people who have taken up residence on Latham Street. Several other RVs and mobile homes are parked along Latham and Crisanto Avenue, along with other Mountain View roads bordering shopping plazas, parks and commercial areas. Many of the residents say they are living in vehicles out of necessity, because they can't keep up with the rapidly rising cost of living in the Bay Area. Overshadowing the Aquarius is the Avalon Towers apartments, where the rent on a one-bedroom apartment starts at \$3,360 a month.

Mensick, who grew up in Palo Alto and attended Foothill College before getting kicked out of her home, and Harper, who hails from the small town of Chandler, Texas, said that they vastly prefer living in their own wooden cabin to blowing thousands of dollars a month and worrying about making the rent. All the major investments on the truck, Harper said, make them feel as if they're putting money down on property they actually own.

"There's just so much pride in ownership," he said.

The couple has launched a Gofundme page (gofundme.com/2hh56rg) to help pay for some of the improvements to the truck, as they consider where to head to next. ▣

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PAY INCREASE

► Continued from page 1

ratify the agreement. District staff later commented that they had never before seen support for a contract at that level.

Under the contract, the district will also be required to work to reduce class sizes for kindergarten through third grade, aiming for a ratio of 24 students to one teacher. To reach that goal, four new teachers will need to be hired, costing the district an estimated

\$320,000.

Music teachers in Mountain View's middle schools also scored a victory, as the contract added a \$200 stipend for every day they spend at overnight music performance trips.

The tentative agreement reached in June came after months of tough negotiations, prompting teachers to show up in force at board meetings to call for better compensation amid the skyrocketing cost of living in the Bay Area. In April, former teachers' union presi-

dent Jonathan Pharazyn told the *Voice* that the union and the district were on the verge of impasse, and that the district hadn't budged from its offer of a 3 percent raise. The union's offer was a 10 percent salary increase.

The district's concession could stem in part from the brighter financial outlook for Mountain View Whisman. In May, Chief Business Officer Robert Clark told the board that the projected property tax increases over the next three

years are probably too conservative, and that they are now expecting to see an 8 percent increase in property tax revenue in the coming fiscal year, followed by 7 percent and 5 percent in the subsequent years. Board member Steve Nelson said he believes the improved financial picture allowed the district and the board to better justify the sizable salary increase this year.

Despite the big pay increase, teachers still do not receive stipends for having a master's

degree or doctorate, a practice that is common throughout the county. District officials say that the stipend pay is already rolled into the existing salaries, but teachers' union representatives have argued that it makes the district an anomaly and could act as a disincentive for prospective teachers. Regardless, Pharazyn told the *Voice* in an email that he was proud of the work that the union accomplished this year. ■

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CRIME BRIEFS

► Continued from page 4

BB GUN PULLED

A 29-year-old San Jose man was placed under citizen's arrest last week after he had allegedly pulled a BB gun following a traffic incident on El Camino Real in Mountain View.

The victim told police that he was driving down the 800 block of El Camino Real on Aug. 17 around 5:30 p.m. when the suspect, later identified as Henry Nolasco, cut him off, according to police spokeswoman Katie Nelson. Nolasco then pulled out what appeared to be a gun before driving off, the victim told police.

Using a description of the car Nolasco was driving, Sunnyvale police were able to track down and stop him in Sunnyvale a short time later. The gun he was carrying turned out to be a BB gun, Nelson said.

Nolasco was placed under citizen's arrest for brandishing a replica firearm.

CHAIRS THROWN IN BAR

Police are searching for a man who allegedly threw chairs at a bartender at the Sports Page Bar last week, and later hit the bartender in the face.

The bartender called police on Aug. 16, shortly before midnight, and said he had told the man to leave the bar after he began yelling at another patron, according to police spokeswoman Katie Nelson. Both men involved in the argument became "aggressive" after they were asked to stop, and one of them allegedly threw bar stools at the bartender.

He later struck the bartender in the face, though the bartender was not injured, Nelson said. The man police are seeking left the bar in what was described as a dark blue car.

—Kevin Forestieri

TECHVILLE

► *Continued from page 5*

known for decades that these chemicals were hazardous, but that information wasn't shared with workers or neighboring residents. In fact, most firms in the 1960s and 1970s had little to guide them in identifying safety hazards. Typically, toxic chemicals were recognized by the smell.

Dangerous incidents were commonplace, such as fires, chemical spills and injuries. State records cited by Lécuyer show that Santa Clara County's early tech companies had an "illness" rate three times higher than the average for all other industries in California. The state's classification for illness included acid burns and chemical inhalation, which were the main causes for reported illnesses in the county.

This callousness also took a toll on the environment. There were about 250 chemical tanks throughout Silicon Valley that had little monitoring and were routinely leaking — or were sometimes dumped intentionally — into the groundwater, Lécuyer said.

If Lécuyer's story has any heroes, they were a group of women, including Amanda Hawes, Patricia Lamborn and Robin Baker. They were largely working on behalf of organized labor to identify the chemicals that were being used and how they were affecting public health. They helped launch local advocacy groups including PHASE and the Elec-

tronics Committee on Occupational Safety and Health.

In the 1970s federal industrial regulation was basically nonexistent. During the decade, policymakers created the Environmental Protection Agency and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, but it took years for those agencies to begin significant enforcement in Silicon Valley.

Around 1980, the problems became impossible to ignore. An article series by Susan Yoachum of the Mercury News put a spotlight on safety lapses in the semiconductor industry and spurred government intervention as well as a wave of lawsuits by injured workers. The Sunnyvale Fire Department found 900 violations during a survey at a Signetics plant, Lécuyer said.

Under scrutiny, the corporations implemented new safety measures, such as double-piping for all hazardous chemicals and regular toxic monitoring. New safety training was introduced and companies created chemical response teams.

Nevertheless, many companies soon came to realize they had a bigger problem on their hands. Fairchild Semiconductor officials learned that a solvent tank in San Jose had leaked more than 40,000 gallons of solvents into the groundwater, and other companies soon made similar reports.

While the authorities were notified of this, no action was taken until many residents in the area began linking the

contamination to birth defects and health problems.

In a sense, the Bay Area was "fertile ground" for the public to demand accountability and regulation. Facing public pressure, the EPA set up 19 Superfund sites in Santa Clara County — the most Superfund sites in any single county in the United States, Lécuyer said.

"For the EPA, in some ways Santa Clara County is the most polluted region in the U.S.," he said. "With the pollution of these aquifers, it's never going to be (back) to the way things were in the 1960s."

It really depends on how you measure pollution, said Lenny Siegel, a Mountain View councilman who spent decades involved in environmental advocacy and contributed documents for Lécuyer's research. The South Bay is among the worst for solvents like TCE contaminating groundwater; however, other areas in the country are far worse for air pollution and petrochemicals, he said.

One unique aspect of the local dust-up over toxic hazards was that Silicon Valley became a model for community engagement, regulation and various techniques for remediation, Siegel said. Vapor-intrusion venting was first tested out here, and to this day more new methods of purging contaminants are being piloted in the local Superfund plumes.

"The EPA used this area to try out new things," he said. The cleanup efforts "didn't just have an impact here on the companies, it set the standard for engaging the public." ▣

■ **COMMUNITY BRIEFS**

NO ELECTION FOR MVLA

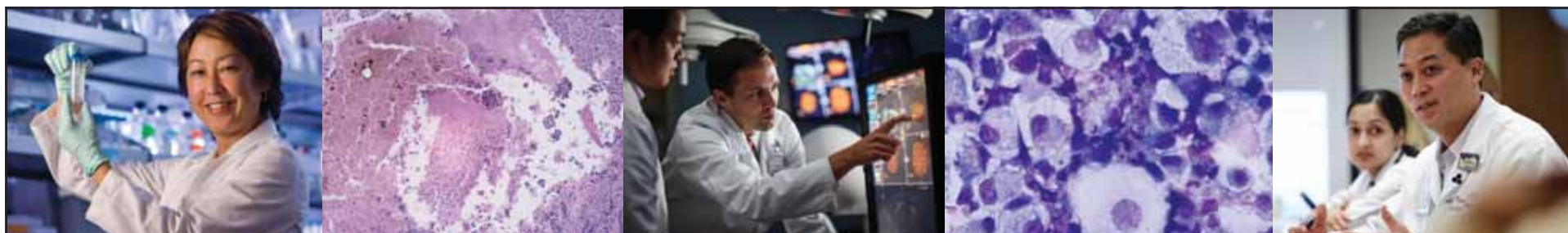
Voters won't be weighing in this November on who joins the Mountain View-Los Altos High School District board of trustees. Only two candidates filed for the two seats up for re-election by the Aug. 17 deadline, leaving it an uncontested election.

Incumbent Phil Faillace, along with district parent Sanjay Dave, will begin their terms on the board later this year. Current board member Susan Sweeley, whose term expires this year, did not file for re-election. Both Faillace and Sweeley have served long terms on the board, with Sweeley completing her fourth term and Faillace completing his fifth term.

Dave has been involved in both the Mountain View-Los Altos High School District and the Mountain View Whisman School District in recent years. In 2014, he ran unsuccessfully for the high school district, and in August 2015 he sought an appointment to the Mountain View Whisman board of trustees.

The district rarely has elections, with only two contested bids for the school board since the 1990s. The November 2014 election was something of an anomaly, when seven candidates entered the race for three seats.

—Kevin Forestieri



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SCHOOL BOARD

► Continued from page 5

said, is repairing the relationship between the school board and the community. Blakely said she believes the board has been very dysfunctional over the past few years, and that there are a lot of lost opportunities when there is distrust in the community. Principals need to feel comfortable attending board meetings, she said.

Blakely said she is familiar with the district's budget cycle, has attended many board meetings and believes she won't face with a difficult learning curve if elected.

Peter Darrah

If there's a committee or task force run by the Mountain View Whisman School District, Peter Darrah's name is probably on it. Over the last decade, Darrah has been serving on district-run committees with a close eye on the district's budget, construction of new facilities and pro-

posed changes to the city's school boundaries.

Darrah, 48, is a computer engineer who manages a team of chip designers for AMD in Sunnyvale. Both of his children, ages 15 and 17, are out of the district, but he said he's still as involved as ever and has a good sense of what's going on in Mountain View's schools. One of his close connections to the district is his wife, Amy, who teaches first grade at Landels Elementary.

Darrah narrowly lost his bid for the school board in the November 2012 election, and sought appointment to the school board last August, but was passed over in favor of Gutiérrez.

One of Darrah's main goals is making sure parents throughout the district are confident about sending their children to their neighborhood school. Data from last year revealed that only one-third of parents from multiple regions of the city requested their own neighborhood school for

kindergarten. Darrah said he doesn't think the school district should clamp down on intra-district transfers, but should instead work towards making every Mountain View school more appealing.

"I want no parent to hesitate to send their child to any school in the district," Darrah said.

Overall, Darrah believes it will take a long, collaborative effort to address the achievement gap, and that all students — from well-heeled and working-class families alike — should be taught to their full potential.

"I think it's important that every child get the best education they can get, rather than everyone having the same school at the end of the day," he said.

Over the last year, the district has set a lot of plans in motion, drafting a new strategic plan, committing to opening a school at Slater Elementary, and building new facilities at all of the school sites. It's essential, Darrah

said, to make sure all of these major undertakings are done right, and for the board and district staff to hear loud and clear from all the school communities affected.

"There are good ways to reopen Slater, and there are poor ways to reopen Slater," Darrah said. "You need to all be on the same page in order to do something as bold as open a new school and have it go well."

Other top issues for Darrah include successfully renewing the Measure C parcel tax, which makes up a big chunk of the district's total funding, and supporting teachers so they don't have to make long commutes every day just to get to work.

José Gutiérrez

The only incumbent in the race, Mistral parent José Gutiérrez was selected out of a field of 11 applicants last August to serve on the school board, following the resignation of then-board president Chris Chiang. A member of the Castro community who is fluent in Spanish, board members said they chose him from the broad field of candidates for his much-needed perspective on the school board.

Though he was chosen as a representative of Castro, Gutiérrez said he has striven for the last 12 months to listen to and acknowledge the voices of all the communities in the Mountain View Whisman School District. His votes on critical decisions, he said, should always be based on the interests of the district as a whole.

"If you don't try to get to know everyone in the community, then you aren't really doing your best to represent those voices on the board," Gutiérrez said. "You have to be inclusive, you have to understand that diversity. I can advocate for Castro, but I can advocate for everyone."

Gutiérrez said it's no secret that he jumped on the board at a challenging time, as communication occasionally breaks down into hostile confrontations between his fellow board members.

"It's a challenge, and it's a handful. Looking at the YouTube videos (of the meetings), you just wonder to yourself, 'Is this really happening?'" he said. "And the answer is yes, it is."

Despite the rough ride, Gutiérrez said he hasn't shied away from the school district, and feels as ready as ever to continue serving on the school board. He said he believes there's positive change on the way, in part because Superintendent Ayinde Rudolph has offered the district a vision for the future and positive energy for the school community.

One of Gutiérrez' top issues going into the campaign is early childhood education, which he

believes is an integral part of addressing the achievement gap. He said more children need to be enrolled in preschool or some type of pre-kindergarten program to ensure students aren't starting school on an uneven footing.

Gutiérrez, 46, has a child in sixth grade at Graham and a child in third grade at Mistral. He works for the law firm Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP.

Tamara Wilson

After careful consideration, Huff parent Tamara Wilson announced her bid for the school board last week, saying that it's important for the Mountain View Whisman School District to keep moving in a positive direction and support school communities throughout the city.

Amid the major, recent decisions by the school board to open a new school and consider new school boundaries to re-balance enrollment, Wilson said she believes the school board needs to do what it can to adopt a plan that is both equitable and fair, and doesn't leave any neighborhood feeling like it got short-changed. She said the district also needs to have a finger on the pulse of new development being proposed and approved throughout Mountain View, and that it's been interesting to see just how little school district staff communicates with city planners regarding residential development in the pipeline.


Outside of planning for school facilities and future enrollment, Wilson said it would be one of her top priorities as a school board member to listen to feedback from parents and teachers about what they need to improve education on the ground level. She said the recent contract between the district and the teachers' union, which called for an 8 percent raise and smaller class sizes, was a step in the right direction.

Wilson, 43, has a strong background in science and teaching. She studied climatology in graduate school and currently works as a research geographer at the U.S. Geological Survey in Menlo Park. She participated in a program on learner-centered teaching and tutored students with learning disabilities through a program called Strategic Alternative Learning Techniques.

Since joining the district, Wilson has volunteered at Castro through the Reading Partners program, which provides one-on-one tutoring with at-risk students. She also helped lead an effort at Huff Elementary to start a recycling program for used markers. ▀

Email Kevin Forestieri at kforestieri@mv-voice.com

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Peter deCourcy Hero, Silicon Valley philanthropist

By Sue Dremann

Obituary

The man who was instrumental in helping tech tycoons channel their millions to charitable giving, Peter deCourcy Hero, has died, his family has confirmed. He was 73.

Hero died in Portland, Oregon, on Sunday, Aug. 21, of esophageal cancer, according to an email Monday from Emmett Carson, CEO of Silicon Valley Community Foundation.

When Hero, a Stanford University MBA graduate, took over the Community Foundation of Santa Clara County in 1988, he inherited an organization with a mere \$9 million in assets, according to a 2000 Fortune Magazine story about his work. By the time he stepped down as president and CEO in 2006, the organization was shepherding \$1.2 billion, said longtime associate Greg Avis, a partner at Summit Partners, who was chairman of the foundation's board.

Hero told Fortune that Silicon Valley's young millionaires and billionaires initially did not have a culture or a tradition of charitable giving. Up until then, philan-

thropists on the eastern seaboard served as models of philanthropy, and their style of donations largely entailed giving away their money through bequests and gifts at the end of their lives.

So the former executive at Spice Islands and president of the Maine College of Art spearheaded a sea change in philanthropic giving.

"A big part of what he believed was that if your worth didn't have social impact, then what was the point? He was a catalyst for modern-day philanthropy in Silicon Valley," his son, Chris Hero, said.

Rather than restricting donated monies for designated purposes, such as college endowments, the Community Foundation staff set about to acquire "unrestricted" funds that could be used for any charitable purpose, Avis said.

"Peter was a visionary. He was very likeable and an excellent fundraiser," Avis said.

Hero started his job with the foundation when the tech industry was taking off, his son said.

Someone had to help create a culture of giving with the new wealth, using it to address the area's most pressing concerns, such as affordable housing and poverty.

"It struck me how all of those issues have come back to the forefront with this latest cycle. He taught people to not look at these issues as a drag onto our society but an opportunity to bring the whole society up," he said.

Silicon Valley executives and heads of philanthropic foundations Monday remembered Hero as a dynamic and creative person who was dedicated to helping Silicon Valley executives realize ways to make the most of their giving. He was on the board of directors of the Skoll Foundation.

"Peter will forever be my hero and original philanthropic mentor. Always innovative and entrepreneurial himself, he went along with the idea of using pre-IPO stock to establish the eBay Foundation at what was then Community Foundation Silicon Valley," said Jeff Skoll, first president of eBay and founder of the philanthropic Skoll Foundation.

Sally Osberg, Skoll Foundation CEO, said that Hero's pioneering role in cultivating an innovative culture for philanthropy in Silicon Valley was in a class by itself.

"He liked to say that we're not attracted to problems here, we're attracted to solutions — and no one saw those solutions as clearly as Peter," she said.

Hero re-branded the Community Foundation of Santa Clara County as the Community Foundation Silicon Valley, then oversaw its 2006 merger with San Mateo County-based Peninsula Community Foundation to become Silicon Valley Community Foundation. Avis recalled that without Hero the groundwork would not have been laid for the merger. He was magnanimous — first working to make the merger possible and then stepping aside.

"It was his baby, and he was willing to part with it for the greater good of the community," Avis said.

Hero then served as special adviser to current CEO Emmett Carson until his retirement in 2008.

Hero grew up on the East Coast and attended Williams College. He received his Masters in Business Administration from the Stanford University School of Business.

After Silicon Valley Community Foundation, he went on to become the founder and principal of The Hero Group, which focuses on social invest-

ment and high-impact philanthropy. The company created a social-impact investment option for the National Philanthropic Trust, a three-year strategic plan for Stanford University's d.School, strategy for a \$30 million National Forest Endowment Fund for the Portland nonprofit Ecotrust, and worked with Santa Clara University to bring together Silicon Valley donors in a two-year philanthropy initiative.

"He never stopped working, partially because he never lost his curiosity of how he could make a positive impact in the community," his son said.

His latest and greatest passions were his two granddaughters.

"He was a super-devoted grandfather. He was on the board of Sesame Street for many years, which came in handy for baby gifts," his son said.

Hero is survived by his wife, Bonnie, of Portland, Oregon; his children Christopher, of San Francisco, Alexander, of Mountain View and Molly, of San Jose; daughter-in-law Amy Hero, of San Francisco and son-in-law Chris Richman, of San Jose; grandchildren Harper Hero and Isla Richman and his brothers Andrew Hero, of Houston, Texas and Girvin Peters, of Los Altos. ▀



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M25

DRUG ABUSE

► Continued from page 1

abuse — poor grades, getting in trouble with the law and skipping school. Social and recreational use can easily turn into habitual, regular use, Foster said, and they start to lose control as drugs become part of their lives. Most of the kids she sees are using marijuana, she said, but there's a rising concern about harder, more addictive drugs.

"Prescription drug abuse is about to blow up in Santa Clara County," she said. "So many kids are fishing through their medicine cabinets."

While the Project Cornerstone study had a massive sample size and gave local educators and health experts a clear picture of substance abuse among high school students, Ammerman said that the survey does a poor job of documenting substance abuse involving more serious drugs, including prescription

and street drugs, which is less common but of particular concern to him.

"I'm seeing kids personally in my mobile clinic who are using a variety of different drugs and poly-substance use," he said. "Not that they necessary have an addiction, but it's obviously very worrying if they are using coke or meth," he said, referring to cocaine and methamphetamine.

Along with local health experts, law enforcement agencies are seeing a similar rise in drug use. School resources officers at the Mountain View Police Department say that marijuana use is going through the roof, and party drugs including Ecstasy, or MDMA, are becoming more common among teens.

Ease of access, and a general acceptance that marijuana is okay to use and could be on the verge of becoming legal in California has helped to push up drug use, according to officer Bobby Taylor. As more medical mari-

juana dispensaries open up shop in San Jose, he said, more pot and edible marijuana products are making their way to Mountain View schools and into the hands of students.

"There's so much more of it out there," Taylor said. "That's why there's an exponential increase in access. Everyone knows someone who has a (medical marijuana) card."

While a marijuana legalization bill will be on the state ballot this November, police say recent new laws have already helped to increase drug use among school-aged students. Proposition 47, which passed in 2014, bumped felony charges for drug possession down to misdemeanors, meaning teens caught with marijuana, methamphetamine, cocaine, psychedelic mushrooms or concentrated cannabis products can get a citation and never make the trip to county jail, said Sgt. Ken Leal of the Mountain View Police Department. Kids are more likely to slip back into their substance abuse habits, Leal argued, if there are no clear consequences for their actions and all they get is a court date to show up months after getting caught with drugs.

Last year, the Mountain View Police Department arrested or cited 35 people under the age of 18 for drug-related charges, mostly for possession.

A mental health connection

While it's debatable what cultural and legal changes could be cultivating teen drug use, there is consensus that mental health problems and substance abuse often go hand in hand. Foster, who runs the outpatient substance abuse program "Well Within" at CHAC, said teens struggling with depression will often turn to drugs as a way to self-medicate.

"That's what they're coming in for — the drugs — but there's always something else," she said.

The same is true for students coming to El Camino Hospital for mental health services. Michael Fitzgerald, director of behavioral health services at El Camino Hospital, works with teens through the hospital's ASPIRE program, and said youths often turn to drugs as a way to cope with anxiety, stress and depression. The connection is so strong that the hospital offers a dual-diagnosis program for young adults with mental health and substance abuse problems.

"Kids use drugs to feel different," Fitzgerald said. "They don't like the way they're feeling, maybe they have a lot of anxiety, and they end up using them to cope."

Through ASPIRE, which teaches high school students how

to work through mental health problems and manage stress, Fitzgerald said the goal is to teach students that drugs are a poor coping mechanism that isn't really worth the risk of addiction and the legal trouble drugs can bring.

"In learning how to regulate their emotions, they eventually learn there's less of a need for the drug, and they realize it's ineffective," he said.

The knee-jerk reaction is to focus on the drug use itself, rather than the root cause, said Philippe Rey, executive director of ACS. He said the organization started out as a mental health clinic, and eventually took a greater focus on the substance abuse that often comes with with mental health illness.

Drugs are not the problem, Rey said, it's what the drugs are masking, and the rising substance abuse among teens indicates mental health is a problem among kids and young adults in the Bay Area. He blames the continued stigma associated with talking openly about mental health as one of the root causes for the problem.

"In Silicon Valley especially, if you look around there's this sense of 'not good enough, never good enough.' There's success in this area, and everyone on the surface appears to be successful — the money, the houses, the cars," he said. "But we are human, we have weaknesses, and we forget that and get to a point where we completely burn out, or it's too late."

A dearth of data

Tracking drug use among teens in Santa Clara County is becoming an increasing challenge. The Project Cornerstone survey, which is still used by health experts in the area, is about five years old, and more recent surveys only show drug use for individual school districts.

Part of the problem is that many school districts and county agencies are no longer participating in the California Healthy Kids Survey, a consistent and comprehensive school climate survey conducted every two years. Participation in the survey was mandatory from 2003 to 2010 in order for school districts to receive Title IV funding, also known as the Safe and Drug-Free School and Communities program. But when the federal program ended, many districts in the state dropped the survey, leaving a patchwork of drug use data with an incomplete picture of just how widespread drug and alcohol abuse is in Santa Clara County.

The lack of data is striking. Earlier this year, hospitals on the Peninsula and the South Bay put together the 2016 Community Health Needs Assessment, which documents all of the major health problems facing the region. The

report cited rising teen marijuana and methamphetamine use as a primary concern among community members, but it was based on data from the last county-wide California Healthy Kids Survey from 2007 to 2009.

Greg Austin is the director of health and human development at WestEd, and was part of the team that created the California Healthy Kids Survey. He said participation fell in 2010, but it was encouraging to see how many school districts continued to administer the survey without any real mandate. New state requirements to monitor school climate are also encouraging school districts to come back into the fold, and conduct the study as often as every year.

"We're back to the same level, and maybe even a little higher," Austin said. "The survey has long been considered the premier state survey in the country for school climate."

Despite the rebound, the Mountain View-Los Altos High School District won't be participating. Superintendent Jeff Harding told the *Voice* in an email Tuesday that the district has discontinued participation with the California Healthy Kids Survey.

Abstinence only?

One of the tricky questions facing substance abuse therapists is whether to adopt an abstinence model and tell teens not to take drugs at all. In working with youth here in the North County area, Mayer said it can be difficult to talk about "harm reduction" and bringing down drug use, because the question immediately becomes how much drugs can they use and get away with it. Through the outpatient therapy program at ACS, students are asked to "work with them on trying to clear their brain," Mayer said, and need to commit to at least 30 days of abstinence.

But striving for abstinence may not be the right direction. Foster told the *Voice* that trying to stop teens from taking drugs entirely does not work. The best strategy, she said, is teach youth about what the substance abuse represents in their lives — whether it's their attempt to combat depression, or whether it's a result of negative influence from peers — and help bring down the drug use to a less harmful level. And so far, it seems to be working.

"Our job is to get them to recognize the potential dangers and the facts, and it's up to them to make the choice," she said. "And many times, you do see them change. I've see kids come in who are suicidal and don't want to live, and now they are off in college, thriving, and in relationships." ■

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A poignant pair at the Pear

THEATER COMMEMORATES ANNIVERSARIES WITH 'THE GUYS' AND 'VEILS'

By Karla Kane

Theater Review

It's been nearly 15 years since the devastating terrorist attacks of 9/11, though for some, the painful memories are as fresh as ever. Mountain View's Pear Theatre, celebrating its own 15th anniversary, kicks off its new season with a pair of shows, running in repertory; plays that highlight the strength of humanity in times of crisis.

"The Guys," by Anne Nelson, is based on a true story and takes place in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the Twin Towers. Nick, a New York Fire Department captain, is charged with writing the eulogies for his fallen comrades, who served with him as first responders. Joan, a New York journalist (played by Pear's artistic director Diane Tasca), is feeling powerless and unable to help her community in a tangible way. The two "jump tracks," Pear director Christian Haines said, and join forces, hashing out the eulogies together and trying to find some way to heal.

"She finds that she has a necessary skills that can help out in the post-9/11 recovery phase and he finds that he has the powerful feelings and descriptions in his own heart that truly make a great eulogy," Haines said. "It's really a touching story about people who would not normally meet, meeting each other and helping each other out."

Haines said the events of 9/11 still loom large in American culture.

"For the actors in the play and myself, you still kind of feel like it just happened," he said.

"I think it's really important to remember it, so that we can commemorate it and then remind ourselves on how we got to where we are now, to reflect on how we, as a country have changed," he said.

9/11 impacted the way in which Muslim-Americans — and Muslims across the globe — are viewed and treated. It's the perspectives of two very different Muslim women — one American, one Middle Eastern — that form the narrative of the Pear's second play, Tom Coash's "Veils."

"Veils" takes place 10 years after 9/11, in the lead-up to the Arab Spring uprising in 2011 Egypt. Intisar, a veiled African-American Muslim student who, having sometimes felt out of place in her own Philadelphia life, comes to Cairo's American Egyptian University for a year abroad. She both clashes and bonds with her roommate Samar, an Egyptian student who does not cover her head with the hijab and associates Western culture with the freedom and adventure she craves. While the two have differing opinions on the controversial Islamic tradition of veiling, they come together to create a blog that discusses the practice, and find themselves swept up in the imminent revolution.

The play explores "how stereotypes from the U.S. and the West affect the people who live (in the Middle East), and how one tries to put its values on the other," director Vickie Rozell said. A veiled woman, she explained, is not necessarily a conservative one.

"You can have a very modern person who happens to choose to wear modest dress; this is how they honor their religion," she said. "People tend to assume that people who wear the hijab are either being forced to wear it or that they are not intelligent, or backwards, which is not true. It's not true all over the world, and it's especially not true in the United States."

Playwright Coash lived in Egypt for four years and said he was tired of seeing Middle Eastern women continually stereotyped in Western media.

"The women we knew were doctors, artists, professors, economists, archaeologists, etc. Smart, strong women who were very cosmopolitan. Why don't we see these women in the news? I also felt that the subject of veiling is one of those subjects that everyone seems to have a strong gut reaction to but don't know anything about," he said.

The play started out as a one-act at the University of Sharjah in



RAY RENATI

Amani Dorn and Naseem Etemad play college roommates with different opinions on expressing Muslim identity in "Veils."

the United Arab Emirates, where Coash was a visiting artist.

"It was very intimidating to sit in an audience of veiled women watching a play I had written about veils. They loved it, and even if they didn't necessarily agree with everything in the play, they loved that we were talking about their issues," he said.

"One of the recent reviews in London ended with the reviewer describing going home on the subway after the show and sitting across from three women wearing hijabs. He was amazed and glad to say that in looking at them now he had a whole different perspective than he would have had 90 minutes before," he added.

The Pear team has benefited from the insights of two Muslim consultants (a veiled woman and a self-described liberal Muslim man) and Rozell said she's been doing extensive research, with the hope that local audiences who may not know much about modern Muslim communities will come away with a better understanding.

"People need to get used to seeing people in veils and not worry about why they're wearing a veil. It means they are expressing their religion and doesn't mean anything else about them. That's a lot of why this play is so important to me," she said. "The only way to break down stereotypes is to show a different view."

Many stereotypes that Muslims fight intensified after 9/11, Rozell said, and both "Veils" and "The Guys," while not directly

related, explore the impact of major world events on a human scale.

"You can't do a play about all Muslims but you can do a play about two young Muslim women ... in hopes that people can start to go, 'Oh, these people are not nearly as different from me as I thought they were,'" she said. "One of the things theater does is teaching about the universal by looking at the specifics." ▣

■ INFORMATION

What: "The Guys" and "Veils"

Where: Pear Theatre, 1110 La Avenida St., Mountain View

When: Aug. 26-Sept. 18, performance dates alternate between the two shows

Cost: \$10-\$32

Info: Go to thepear.org



CITY OF MOUNTAIN VIEW

NOTICE OF CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER APPROVAL OF THE CITY OF MOUNTAIN VIEW 2016 WATER SYSTEM PUBLIC HEALTH GOALS REPORT ON WATER QUALITY

You are hereby notified that on Tuesday, the 6th day of September 2016, at the hour of 6:30 p.m. (or as soon thereafter as the item can be heard), the City of Mountain View City Council will accept public comments and consider APPROVAL OF THE MOUNTAIN VIEW 2016 WATER SYSTEM PUBLIC HEALTH GOALS REPORT ON WATER QUALITY. Additional details will be provided at the meeting:

Tuesday, September 6, 2016
6:30 p.m. (or as soon thereafter as the item can be heard)
Mountain View City Hall
500 Castro Street
Mountain View, California

The report providing information on this item to the City Council will be published on the City's website (www.mountainview.gov) on or about August 30, 2016. If you have any questions, please contact Alison Turner at (650) 903-6329. Comments may also be e-mailed to waterquality@mountainview.gov.



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Measure V: fair to landlords, a necessity for renters

by Steve Chandler

Guest Opinion

The effort to bring rent control (Measure V) to Mountain View has been a source of hope and inspiration for many of the hardest-working families of this city, who live under constant fear of losing their homes to an unaffordable, unpredictable rent hike.

The Mountain View Tenants Coalition, which is behind Measure V, is grateful to landlords who keep rents reasonable. Rents have skyrocketed 80 percent in the last seven years, leaving little question about the need to stop other landlords from hurting our families and our community with price gouging on rents.

Landlords can rest assured that landlords are making decent money in 12 other California cities with rent control, and many have stricter limits on rent increases. This year a landlord could raise rents around 2.7 percent under Measure V. In San Francisco, by comparison, the 2016 limit on rent increases is 1.6 percent, and investors still line up to the buy rent-controlled properties there.

Measure V was crafted by experts using best practices, ensuring fairness for landlords. It allows rent increases just to pay for building maintenance. To ensure a fair return, landlords will be able to raise

rents by up to 2 percent every year, or up to 5 percent, depending on inflation (typically 2 to 3 percent a year).

Rent increases can be banked when a landlord skips a year. And rents can be reset at market rates whenever there is a vacancy (required by state law). The overall impact is dignity and stability for renters and negligible impacts to property values, as was found by rent control expert Stephen Barton in a recent study paid for by the city of San Mateo, where a similar rent-control measure is on the ballot.

Some landlords claim that rent control leads to building neglect, but the opposite is true. Over the last year the code enforcement department checked 136 Mountain View apartment complexes, a total of 2,000 homes, and found 70 percent of the rental units had code violations.

Measure V empowers tenants to fight this by allowing decreases in rents if buildings are neglected. And if conditions are unsafe due to mold or rodent infestations, families do not have to fear retaliatory evictions or rent hikes if they seek help from code enforcement. That is because, under Measure V, valid reasons for evictions would be required, such as non-payment of rent or criminal activity.

Mountain View deserves adequate housing development without displacement. If a landlord manages to get City Council approval to demolish his or her rent-controlled buildings and build luxury condos, the city can mitigate that by requiring a "right of return" for displaced tenants, and by requiring that rent-controlled units are replaced one-for-one by affordable homes, as Berkeley does. The city can also discourage it by charging significant tenant relocation expenses to developers. To give such policies a chance, we must elect City Council candidates who care about renters this November: Lucas Ramirez and Kacey Carpenter.

The Tenants Coalition urges you to vote for Measure V because our City Council's "business as usual" approach is failing. Schools can't retain experienced teachers (the Mountain View Whisman School District has lost 100 teachers since 2015). Local businesses can't retain good employees. Families are living in RVs or under a state of anxiety.

One way or another, our whole community is affected by skyrocketing rents, perhaps even the landlords who now threaten to demolish or neglect their buildings if Measure V passes.

Steve Chandler is a Mountain View renter and is treasurer of the Mountain View Tenants Coalition.

LETTERS VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

IDEAS FOR EFFECTIVE RENT CONTROL PROGRAM

A better way to approach rent stabilization would be to advocate for a rent control mechanism that:

- 1) Includes apartments built since 1995.
- 2) Includes trailer park spaces.
- 3) Bases the allowable rent increases on how far above or below fair market value an apartment is.

No. 3 would work more fairly, instead of basing increases on a percentage formula that would forever reward the greedy landlords with higher annual increases and punish the good landlords with much lower annual rent increases.

This is obviously because the same percentage of a lower number is always lower than that same percentage of a higher number, which keeps the highest rents growing much faster than the low rents ever can. This "percentage

formula" will allow the highest rent increases to target those tenants already being overcharged the most. If their rents are already over the top, no further increases should be allowed for a while, and then at a very low rate. And rents that have not gone up, as costs to the providers have, need more room for increases, gradually, perhaps by some set amount based on fair market value comparables.

Older buildings have major maintenance hits, and housing providers who have kept their rents consistently low have smaller margins to handle these hits. Remember, squeezing landlords reduces housing providers overall: those coming into the business, and especially those who can afford it least, due to their low rents. Why should we risk reducing cheaper available housing, especially the lower-priced, older units (which might just get sold off) and/or apartments rented out

by those who have kept their rents the lowest? Aren't those the very ones that it behooves us to keep?

For the first two changes listed above, modification of state law and/or other codes is required, possible, and very important.

We must start now to perfect a more fair, evenly applied rent-control formula that includes mobile home parks and newer apartments. At least have the cut-off year for allowing rent

► See **LETTERS**, page 22





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LETTERS

▶ *Continued from page 20*

control (1995) moved forward a year, each year.

Further development of an innovative rent-stabilization formula, as I've suggested above, would be more beneficial to both tenants and housing providers as it would reduce, not increase, tenant displacements that a bad formula unintentionally causes. We have seen this in other cities. I urge voters to avoid locking in a city charter amendment, so a more equitable, less damaging concept can be developed and perfected through a city ordinance.

Linda Curtis
Cuesta Park

ciple of "normal wear and tear," even if the tenant is negligent in maintaining the property.

Making Measure V a charter amendment that will require a vote for any changes is a bad idea. While I admonish the City Council for not getting ahead of this issue in a meaningful way, I think letting the council make some tweaks, if needed, is preferable to the current measure proposal, which will require a citywide vote if changes are needed.

I had a civics teacher in high school who said it's better to vote no for a measure that has some good points than vote yes and be stuck with the bad ones. I'd like to see both rental measures go back to the drawing board.

Steve Fishman
Serena Court

BOTH RENT MEASURES NEED IMPROVEMENT

Going on the Mountain View Tenants Coalition website, I found the ballot statement, but no text of proposed Measure V. I'd like to see a better-crafted measure than the one presented. It seems to benefit those who have a place to live, but what about those who want to move into Mountain View where the rents may seem very high?

As I understand it, only a certain portion of the renters in Mountain View will benefit from Measure V. If you are renting a single-family home, duplex, condo or in-law apartment, your rent will not be controlled and you may still have to pay rising rents well above the 2 to 5 percent listed in the ballot statement.

All units built after Feb. 1, 1995, are exempt from Measure V. I guess the assumption is that if you are able to afford a newer, higher-priced rental or a small in-law apartment, you don't need any kind of rent relief.

I think that landlords have a moral responsibility in raising rents, but it's an investment on their part with the expectation that they hopefully make money on the deal through rental income and/or the eventual sale of the property. It is the risk they take, and if the economy falters or rents don't go up enough to pay the mortgage, they could lose their shirts.

Landlords deserve a fair shake as well. They may not be fully protected if a tenant moves out and has trashed the house beyond the amount of the security deposit. The property owner does have legal recourse, but it may be more expensive than just paying out of pocket for the needed repairs. Long-term tenants may be protected under the prin-

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY ISSUE NOT NEW

I have owned property in Mountain View for over 40 years — and my family before me for about the same.

About 20 years ago I had a sign on the front of the family home that read (in part), "Affordable housing is an issue." No one on the Mountain View City Council cared, so I also listed some mayors' names — those I thought cared more about extra city income than housing affordability.

Now, 20 years later, four members of this City Council want to place a rent-control measure on the ballot — and one council member, Chris Clark, even states it is to give the City Council more control.

City councils have always had almost full control over rents, and utility bills, and zoning and population growth for jobs — and they take money from developers. You figure out who to vote for — outsiders, please.

Donald Letcher
Rengstorff Avenue

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