

Tax Measure

Over 15 members of the community stood before Mayor Abrica, Councilwoman Rutherford, and Councilman David Woods to state their suggestions and concerns. Councilwoman Pat Foster and Vice Mayor Peter Evans were not present,

Jose Garcia, a member of PIA, was one of the many supporters of the parcel tax who attended the meeting. Garcia wore a small, purple sticker, which all supporters of PIA wore. He sat silently clutching his restless, four year-old daughter as the city council made the final amendments to the measure.

"We are asking the city to bring more programs for our young people," said Garcia. "I think this will reduce the crime rate and the whole city will benefit from it."

Garcia has lived in East Palo Alto for 16 years, along with his wife and four children, two of whom are 15 and 14 years old. It was his concern for his teenagers that brought him to the meeting and made him a staunch supporter of the tax measure and the 70/30 division of the

funds.

He was happy the Council decided to include the measure on the ballot but was disappointed that only 50% would be funding youth programs. "We are not asking for more than the community requires," he said.

Caroline Cervantes, an 18 year-old member of PIA agrees with Garcia.

"50% of our youth are dropping out of high school! The community wants a solution, we are voters and we pay taxes and we know what we want," she told the Mayor and the City Council as the room burst into applause.

Cervantes was there with several other adolescents who support PIA and the tax measure. Several held signs that read "More Community Programs" on one side and

“
...property taxes
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- Rigoberto Zamora 25-
year resident of East Palo
Alto

the fraction "70/30" on the other.

"I am a mother and I had to go out of the city to get the programs my children needed," said East Palo Alto resident, Bunnie Finley. She also spoke to the City Council about the need for city sponsored programs to stop youth violence.

"Just last week, I saw fellas on Bay Road getting ready to shoot each other," Finley continued.

"We want our children back, we don't want the streets to run them. All we ask is \$2 a week!"

Some residents, however, were not disappointed with the 50/50 split. On the contrary, they were upset that the tax measure made it on to the ballot at all.

"I feel that the property taxes are too high and too many for us to continue caring for our children," said Rigoberto Zamora who has been living in the city for 25

years. "I don't agree with the parcel tax that could be introduced...as low-income families, we need as much of our paychecks to go to our families as possible."

Resident Luella Parker, member of the Garden Block Club, said that she would not mind an increase in taxes if it would improve the standard of living but she admitted that she doesn't "feel good about this situation."

"I don't need PIA to help me make up my mind," she said. "I like the youth but I don't want to raise my taxes for these non-profits...we have qualified [city officials] to make programs, we don't need PIA."

R.B. Jones also disapproved of the amount of funding the non-profits would receive if the measure passes.

He asked, "What can any of these people offer our kids beyond a summer job?" He was referring to the non-profit and religious organizations that would receive funding through the parcel tax. "I suggest a measure that would give all of the funding to the

police department... you are guaranteeing failure for both [programs] by putting both of them in the same measure," he said.

Measure K, a measure which also proposed raising taxes to increase crime prevention programs, failed to pass during last year's elections. Now, residents of East Palo Alto will have until November 9 to take their final stance on the new measure and cast their votes in favor of or against the parcel tax.

"These children need love and we need to give it to them from their own city," said Finley, who closed her eyes and shook her head when the city council decided to decrease the percentage that would go to non-profits if the measure passes.

Pastor Baines of St. Samuels Church of God in Christ, which is located on East Bayshore, agrees with Finley. He said, "I hear people say that children are our future, but I believe they are our present. If we don't care for our children now, we won't have to worry about a future."

Penisoni

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varios programas noticieros de televisión, donde ella habló de su sobrina y expresó su pena sobre las muertes repentinas.

El hijo de 26 años de Tina y de Sione, Senetuli Penisoni, estaba programado para ser condenado este mes en la corte superior del condado de San Mateo por asesinato en primer grado junto a Ricardo Arana, quien también fue hayado culpable por el crimen. Penisoni y Arana fueron acusados del asesinato de Ortega Barnes, quien murio en un tiroteo en la calle de Wisteria en East Palo Alto, en marzo del 2004.

Los abogados también han acusado a Senetuli de tres asesinatos atentados. Cuando lo condenen, es probable que enfrente una sentencia de cadena perpetua. La condenación de Senetuli fue pospuesta hasta el 17 de septiembre. Sus abogados de defensa hicieron una petición para recibir los nombres de los miembros del jurado, de modo que puedan ser entrevistados formalmente.

Según el abogado de Arana, Savas Loukedis, Penisoni tiene derecho a una condenación retrasada porque el jurado no habló con la defensa inmediatamente después de publicar su veredicto, como se debe hacer. El abogado dijo que el equipo de la defensa de Penisoni quiere hacer una investigación formal en cuanto a cómo llegaron a tomar su decisión los miembros del

jurado. Si nueva información revela que el jurado llegó a tomar su decisión de alguna manera injusta o incorrecta, el juez tendrá que concederles a Penisoni y a Vargas otro juicio.

Según tres miembros del jurado que estuvieron presentes en la corte el 18 de julio, el alguacil escoltó al jurado fuera del juzgado tan pronto como el veredicto fue dado, por razones de seguridad. Estos miembros del jurado acordaron a continuar discusiones con la defensa, "como medida de cortesía."

En una entrevista telefónica antes del juicio de julio, el abogado de Penisoni, Phillip Johnson, dijo que la defensa planeaba "... pedir otro juicio basado en lo que [sentían] era evidencia nueva."

El abogado acusador, Sean Gallagher, y los tres miembros del jurado que atendieron el juicio del 18 de julio dijeron que la probabilidad de que una investigación adicional pueda destapar "cualquier cosa nueva o cualquier cosa de interés," es muy pequeña.

Algunos dicen que el juicio de Penisoni y Arana fue injusto, porque los miembros del jurado eran de San Mateo, y es probable que tenían nociones preconcebidas del crimen relacionado con pandillas en East Palo Alto. Se alega que Senetuli era un miembro de la pandilla de la calle de Sacramento, que ha ganado mala fama en la comunidad despues del asesinato del oficial de policía Richard May en enero de este año. La defensa pudo solicitar a la corte para cambiar el juicio a un conda-

Que Hacer si Su Hijo es Arrestado

1. **Conteste todad las preguntas básicas**
Es un crimen mentir pero no hable mas de lo necesario.
2. **Es importante hablar con un abogado inmediatamente**
Tiene derecho a un abogado. Llame a los siguientes telefonos si no puede pagar por un abogado.
SAN MATEO BAR ASSOCIATION:
(650) 369-4149
COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES IN EAST PALO ALTO
(650) 326-6440
3. **Traiga documentos positivos**
Traiga cartas de maestros, trabajos, o líderes religiosos al juicio. Ésto ayudará a las autoridades a decidir si el joven tendrá que ir a la carcel o si puede servir su tiempo por medio de horas de servicio comunitario.
4. **Mantenga a sus hijos en la casa**
Conosca sus opciones, trate que su hijo salga en libertad condicional en vez de ser mandado a una carcel.
5. **Como padre, usted tiene derecho a un interprete**

do donde la pandilla de Sacramneto es menos conocida, de modo que él pueda recibir un juicio justo.

El único testigo contra Penisoni y Arana, Luis Vargas, también ha sido criticado. Según un artículo periodístico de marzo, los abogados defensores culparon a Vargas y a dos otros del asesinato. Acusan a Vargas de haber mentido para evitar ser condenado.

También existen acusaciones de racismo . Un miembro del jurado anónimo dijo, "podríamos estar ciegos todos y llegar a la misma conclusión. Nuestra decisión fue basada terminantemente en la evidencia qué fue colocada frente a nosotros. En nuestras discusiones, discutimos solamente la evidencia." Sin embargo, un informe reciente, lanzado por el con-

sejo nacional sobre el crimen y la delincuencia (CNCD) demuestra que acusan a los isleños pacíficos de crimen desproporcionadamente en el condado de San Mateo. De 12 personas cargadas con crímenes que pueden recibir la pena de muerte en el condado de San Mateo durante el 2001 y el 2002, 9 eran isleños pacíficos. Jovenes de otras minorías también son sobre-representados en el sistema criminal de San Mateo. El informe también indicó que las prácticas injustas pueden resultar de política aparentemente neutrale.

Durante un juicio de seis semanas, por ejemplo, los miembros del jurado reciben \$15 al día. "Es lo que cuesta un almuerzo," dijo un miembro del jurado. A menudo, son los jubilados o los ricos quienes pueden cumplir con

sus deberes cívicos. Alguien encargado del cuidado de un niño, por ejemplo, no podría tomar seis semanas para formar parte de un jurado. El resultado es que muchos de los residentes de East Palo Alto no son escuchados por los miembros del juzgado.

Algunos grupos dicen que el sistema escolar público de San Mateo es un contribuidor a la sobre-representación de los jovenes minorías en el sistema juvenil de la justicia. Citan el hecho de que estos jovenes tienen índices más altos de suspensión y expulsión, salidas antes de graduarse, y bajas calificaciones que sus compañeros anglo sajones.

En el informe de CNCD, aparece que el condado de San Mateo está procurando remediar esta situación, centrándose en la reducción de de los estudiantes de la minoría. El informe recomendó que las escuelas públicas se esfuerzén por diversificar la composición étnica de los estudiantes para acomodar a la variedad cultural y lingüística.

Un amigo cercano de la familia de Penisoni, Michael Uhila, dijo que aunque la sociedad tiene un papel importante en la cultivación de la violencia relacionada con pandillas, la cosa más importante es ayudarlos a encontrar actividades creativas para ocupar su tiempo y energía.

Uhila dijo que, " tiene que haber algo para mantener a los muchachos ocupados y para utilizar sus talentos. Cuando los padres están trabajando, sus hijos tienen tiempo para hacer males."

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Renters

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November election, the proposed initiative, labeled the City of East Palo Alto Drug and Violence-Free Homes Act, would substantially modify existing rent-control laws, making it possible for a landlord to evict a tenant on "any basis permitted by the landlord's rental agreement with the tenant and applicable state law." Incorporated in the amendment is a provision meant to keep landlords from simply clearing out their properties to make way for higher rent-payers. Following the eviction, the landlord would have to notify the Rent Stabilization Board of the event, and could not increase the rent on the next tenant for 12 months thereafter.

However, a further provision of California State law nullifies this local provision: the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act of 1995 states that when a tenant whose rent has been gradually increased under rent control is evicted, the landlord can charge whatever amount he or she desires to the next tenant. The proposed initiative would make it easier for landlords to evict tenants and State law would enable them to be replaced with higher paying renters.

Supporters of the initiative claim that its purpose is to make it easier to evict drug dealers and other criminals from rental units. However, opponents believe that it directly attacks the City's "good cause for eviction" policy; thus undermining one of the city's fundamental founding provisions passed by general election in 1984, shortly after incorporation in 1983.

Opponents point out that current law provides clear pathways through which drug dealers can be evicted, and that, therefore, there is no need for an amendment. They claim the drivers of the initiative are using the "anti-

drug dealer label" to unfairly gain support in a community that has long fought drug-related activities and associated violence, but that, in fact, this is not the true purpose of the initiative. They urge landlords to use current legislation to its full extent to get rid of drug dealers, instead of supporting an initiative that would put the innocent at risk.

"I hope it doesn't pass. They are ruthless down there at Rosetti's apartments."

-Geneva Whatley

Under the proposed new law, if a tenant were renting month-to-month—and many East Palo Alto residents are—the landlord could evict him by simply not renewing the lease and giving the tenant a 30-day notice to vacate, warned William B. Webster, long-time EPA resident and 14-year member of the City's Rent Stabilization Board. If the tenant refused, the landlord could have the tenant forcibly removed by the police.

"The unjust eviction initiative strips the residents of East Palo Alto who rent of the additional civil rights they enjoy as residents of East Palo Alto", said Webster. "The fact is that the initiative would give any landlord carte blanche to evict any renter for any reason or no reason whatsoever."

The controversial initiative is driven by R. S. Jones, who works with William J. Rosetti, a San Francisco-based realtor who owns and operates several hundred rental units in East Palo Alto. Jones, a former mayor of East Palo Alto, was sentenced in 2000 to 27 months in federal prison on counts of tax fraud, bribery, and mail fraud, as reported in the July 8th edition of the Palo Alto Daily News.

Mr. Jones solicited the assistance of 3 East Palo Alto residents in sponsoring the ballot initiative: Jorge Luis

Miranda, 39, the maintenance supervisor for Mr. Rosetti's West Park apartment complex, Geneva Whatley, 67, and Ola Mae Parker, 77. Both Mrs. Whatley and Mrs. Parker expressed their surprise at learning their names appeared as sponsors to the initiative. They said they did not read or fully understand the initiative's language and thus did not know what they were supporting.

"If I knew then what I know now, I would not sign it again", said Whatley of the eviction initiative. "It wasn't explained to me, with all that fast talking; I was told something different."

Whatley, who has suffered the scandal of her uninformed decision and hopes that no one is "done wrong", concluded: "I hope it doesn't pass. They are ruthless down there at Rosetti's apartments."

In fact, Jones' ambitions for the coming election do not end with this eviction measure. He is also supporting a second initiative—not without its own dose of controversy—calling for a property tax to benefit the Police Department, but which conflicts with a similar city-proposed initiative. Details about it are provided in the box to the right.

On Thursday July 6th, city officials sent two sealed boxes containing approximately 2,200 signatures of local voters in support of the initiatives to be verified and approved by the county. With only 1,000 signatures needed for the initiatives to be placed on the November ballot, many foresee that voters will most likely have to face this crucial decision in the coming months.

During a meeting held that same Thursday with representatives of the Rent Stabilization Board and other concerned community members, the city's mayor Ruben Abrica called both Jones-driven initiatives a "smokescreen" which could lead to widespread evictions and the weakening of the city-spon-



Former Mayor of East Palo Alto, R.B. Jones.

A SECOND INITIATIVE

A second initiative, also supported by Mr. Jones and called the East Palo Alto Violence Prevention and Public Safety Act, is being placed on the November ballot as well. This property-tax measure would impose a 10-year parcel tax on property owners in the city. The amount of the tax would vary depending on the use of the property--\$75 per year for homeowners, \$40 per year per individual apartment unit, and approximately \$300 per year for commercial properties depending on their size. These amounts appeared in a June 7th report prepared by Michael Lawson, East Palo Alto City Attorney. The money raised would be used to fund police services and programs ranging from officer training to school safety and domestic violence intervention.

If placed on the ballot in November, this initiative, will compete with the Council's own crime-fighting initiative to benefit the Police Department and the much-needed expansion of youth programs in the city. The city-sponsored measure is being drafted as an improvement and reiteration of Measure K, which in 2005 election earned 55% of the votes but not the 66 2/3% required to pass a property tax. Measure K was designed to raise funds for both Police and Youth Alternative Programs. Stewart Hyland, a long time community activist and youth advocate in East Palo Alto had hoped that the measure sponsored by PIA and the City of East Palo Alto would have been an improvement on Measure K.

"We care about the destruction caused by drug-related crime because of the havoc it has wreaked upon our children and grand-children. EPA parents and young adults, along with education and law enforcement officials agree that our young people, especially older teens need alternatives to the lure of street life but have few options here in town", Hyland said.

"It would be a real tragedy if our residents would not be able to pass the very much needed parcel tax measure because we could not gather the 66% because our votes have been split."

Mr. Hyland's concern is that, because both measures similarly benefit the Police Department, voters will not be able to distinguish between the purpose of two and consequently neither will garner sufficient support to pass in the election. Furthermore, the City Council's proposed parcel tax measure would benefit Youth Programs, whereas the private measure would not. A split vote may well leave the city's youth in the dust.

In a recent telephone interview, Mr. Jones said, "We believe that children are not the perpetrators of crime in the city of East Palo Alto. Statistics show that most rapes, shootings and robberies are committed by people who are 18 and over."

"We want all the money to go to the police department," he said, "because we are concerned with public safety."

sored tax initiatives which would benefit the city's youth. Alarmed at the prospect of the measures passing, Abrica noted that "we need a rent law now more than ever", referring to the threat posed by gentrification and the prospects of developers converting their properties to more profitable condominiums.

When asked about the threat of condo conversion and its relation to the eviction initiative, City Attorney Lawson declined to comment.

Living and renting in East Palo Alto has long been possible because of the tenant protection laws against rent increases and eviction without

good cause. The Rent Stabilization and Good Cause for Eviction Ordinance, passed by general election in 1984 and modified at a second election in 1986, protects renters—which comprise the majority of the City's residents—from unjustified and arbitrary eviction by landlords who wish to gain larger profits from their properties by renting to a more affluent demographic. This Ordinance is now threatened; it will be up to the voters—renters and homeowners alike—to decide whether they will allow a modification to this law and the repercussions many claim it will carry with it.

Leveraging East Palo Alto's Economic Strength

By Kaara Baptiste
EPA Today Contributor

East Palo Alto has a great amount of buying power. A recent analysis of Census data, compiled by The Community Development Institute's (CDI's) applied research program, Empowerment Research! (ER!), found that EPA consumer expenditures will total over \$500 million dollars in 2006.

Underlying the strength of these numbers, however, is the fact that a lot of EPA's dollars do not remain here.

The phenomenon of a continual draining of community consumer dollars into other communities, known as consumer leakage, has long been an issue for EPA.

At one point in the 1990s this leakage was measured as being a \$76 million annual lost from the community. It appears this phenomenon might have lessened only slightly but EPA's dependency on outside businesses continues.

The most recent delayed effort to bring a supermarket to East Palo Alto and the imminent closure of the near-

est market, Albertson's in Palo Alto's Edgewood Plaza, highlights this persistent issue.

EPA residents often cite better quality, lower prices, reliability and non-existence as the reasons they shop outside of the community. If there aren't stores here to cater to basic needs, like pharmacy or supermarket, what other option do they have?

It is clear that residents have the means to financially support their community. But there are not enough outlets to do so. Many have

expressed a desire for redevelopment that better serves their needs.

As a response to these requests, the Community Development Institute created the Leadership Institute East Palo Alto (LIEP), a new program that is geared towards informing and training the community to get more involved in the issues that affect it.

The LIEP recently sponsored a two-part public forum that was designed to discuss economic development in East Palo Alto and look at ways community

members can pool their resources and work with the City to encourage development that will be of use to all of the city's residents.

The forum was originally scheduled to take place over two Saturdays beginning August 5th. Much of the work of the forum took place on Saturday, August 12.

The forum was extended to Saturday, August 19. To get more information about the forum or LIEP, contact Valicia Saucedo at 650-327-5846 ext. 314 or Kaara Baptiste at 650-327-5846 ext. 313.

EPA Today's Youth Page

Local Organization Helps Students Afford College

By Natalie Rios and Seanteonna Johnson
EPA Today Contributors

In 1929, Pearl Moulden, a resident of Palo Alto, gathered a few of her friends and started a club. Her new group called itself the Excelsior Club. The members first came together based on their mutual interest in "literary self-improvement."

After a few meetings, however, the group's focus

changed and its members decided to dedicate their club to helping local youth achieve their dreams of a higher education.

The group later changed its name to the Community Activities Committee (CAC), in order to better reflect its new interests and commitments. Following its new priorities, the CAC gave its first scholarship of \$50 to an African American student in 1934.

This past June, the CAC held its 77th annual Scholarship Award Ceremony at the

Covenant Presbyterian Church in Palo Alto, and it gave away \$11,000 in scholarship money which it divided among 22 students.

Today, the CAC's scholarships are given to benefit students of underserved communities and they are available to minority students of various races and backgrounds.

For the past few years, the CAC has awarded scholarships to a minimum of twenty students, chosen from schools in the Sequoia and Palo Alto school districts. This year, the recipients of the awards represented seven different schools: Carmont High School, Gunn High School, Menlo Atherton High School, Palo Alto Senior High School, Redwood High School, Sequoia High School, and Woodside High School.

In order to receive a CAC Scholarship, students must first complete and submit applications that are reviewed by the Scholarship Committee. Award recipients

are chosen based on their need for assistance, academic merit, and their desire to achieve a higher level of education.

In their brochure, the CAC states that its scholarships are specifically directed towards students "who [lacking the necessary funds], might decide otherwise not to go to college." The whole emphasis, according to the brochure, "is on encouraging a borderline group to try for something higher, to equip themselves for better jobs, more secure places in society."

In order to provide scholarships to needy students, the CAC holds various fundraising activities such as an annual bazaar and white elephant sales.

Over the years, CAC has been so successful in its fundraising efforts that it has been able to increase its donor base significantly. Next year, the group expects to increase both the amount of money for each scholarship and the number of award recipients.

Students and families who wish to learn more about this scholarship opportunity can send requests for information, or tax-deductible donations to: Shirley Lowler, Treasurer, CAC



CAC members left to right: Shirley Lowler, Charlotte Nasr, Lily Quan and Helen Hymes



Mr. & Mrs. Fletes stand with their daughter Christina, a 2006 CAC award recipient who is going to the University of Berkeley this fall.

2588 Dell Avenue
Mountain View, CA 94043
Congratulations to the 2006 CAC Scholarship Recipients

- Carmont High School: *Mary Halapio*
- Gunn High School: *Jodi Chan and Jre Hunter*
- Menlo Atherton High School: *Kyra Brown, Sammetra Daniels, Hector Fajardo, Sharana Majabir, Jahmal White*
- Palo Alto Senior High School: *Brianna Clay and Alejandra Martinez*
- Redwood High School: *Barbara Balcita, Kimberly Bannister, Jessica Harrison, Lorraine Landa, Donald Pressley*
- Sequoia High School: *Iris Bustos, Jeannette Salazar, and Giselle Williams*

Woodside High School :
Christina Fletes, Derek Perez, and Hanna Song

Editors note: When this article was written, Seanteonna Johnson was working with EPA Today as an intern sponsored by the Summer Employment Program (SEP). Seanteonna graduated from the SEP program this past Friday, August 3.

Natalie Rios is still working with EPA Today as a summer intern. Natalie is an East Palo Alto resident who is currently a sophomore at Stanford University. Natalie received a CAC scholarship in 2003 when she graduated from Palo Alto High School in Palo Alto.

Junior Giants Offers Youth A Healthy Alternative

By Natalie Rios and Seanteonna Johnson
EPA Today Contributors

Summer break can be risky for the children of East Palo Alto. Many have no summer school to attend and no plans to keep them occupied. Most clubs, sports teams, and after school programs in the city close every year around the middle of June. After that, children are often left to their own devices.

Ray Askew, an East Palo Alto resident who often serves as a team coach, sees this as a circumstance that could lead children and adolescents into trouble.

"We have to show these kids that there's something else to do besides violence, besides getting into trouble," he said.

Enter the Junior Giants Program in East Palo Alto. The program began in 1991, when founder Gene Tate recruited Askew to help in his efforts to start a baseball program for children of all ages, skill levels, and economic backgrounds.

"We started seeing that we had a lot of kids going onto Little League with no experience," said Askew. "Other



Ray Askew (center) sits with a few of the Junior Giants he coaches during weekly practices and games.

cities have programs that start earlier and their Little Leagues were more advanced than ours."

Askew and Tate began with a team of T-ball players and a group of kids who played using a pitching machine.

After many fundraising efforts, which included car washes and yard sales, they were able to attract the attention of the San Francisco Giants who went on to sponsor the Junior Giants of East Palo Alto by providing funds, as well as coaching and

game workshops for all of the participants involved.

The Junior Giants accept players from 4 to 18 years of age, with every three years being a different level.

Participants are asked to register beginning in June but registration continues through July.

The standard fee is \$25 per participant but Askew recognizes the difficulties the fee could raise for some families.

"We have never turned a kid away for lack of money," said Askew. "One of the pur-

poses of this team is to get kids off the street and give them something to do and money [isn't an issue]. This is a free team [if you can't afford it] and the 16-18 year olds can get the entire uniform for free...minus the shoes."

Originally, the Junior Giants began as an effort to improve children's baseball skills and provide them with a healthier alternative to spending the summer sitting in front of a television set.

But, it soon became obvious that the program grew to become a way of fighting delinquency.

According to Askew, their current baseball field in Jack Farrow Park used to be "a hotbed for crime and drugs" but ever since the Junior Giants began using the field 10 months out of the year, the incidents of violence have decreased.

"The whole community benefits from this [program]. If your kid is doing something in a positive vein, than you don't have to keep running after them...we try to make this a family organization so the older people help the younger people, but the young people also have something to teach the old people," said Askew.

Askew remains optimistic about the direction the program is headed.

"I see us expanding," he said. "We were even contacted to help with the development of Costano's baseball field but that is still being decided...this year, we had our first Babe Ruth league with 18 players, which is pretty good for our first year. We got to help these kids because if we don't, what do we expect them to do?"

Interested in joining or volunteering for the **Junior Giants**? Call their offices at **(650) 322-5440**.

For information on Natalie Rios and Seanteonna Johnson, see above note.

See page 20 for more sports information and signup dates this month

English Language Learners are "Talking with the Police"

A visitor to the Nuestra Casa ESL Program's level one class on any given Thursday evening during the past couple of months may have been surprised by a sight not often observed on the streets of EPA: uniformed police officers and Latino immigrants joking and laughing together and spending time getting to know one another.

The Nuestra Casa ESL Program, an English as a second language program for immigrants in East Palo Alto, bases its curriculum around the specific everyday needs of English learners and their families. Program participants are encouraged to voice their needs and concerns within the safe community of the ESL class. So when Nuestra Casa teacher Vanesa Ieraci continued to hear stories of miscommunication, mistreatment, and misunderstanding in learners' encounters with police, she knew the issue needed to be addressed. The following stories were written for Chief Davis by ESL participants and exemplify the experiences of many Latino immigrants with the Police in EPA:

"We Latinos who don't speak English are so scared of the EPA police officers. I don't know what to do if the police stop me, I don't even want to speak because I am afraid I am going to be arrested or deported. We are scared of the police. That is why we never complain when police officers constantly treat us badly. We keep very quiet, even if the police are being unfair to us. The officers know that. They know we are scared and they can do whatever they want with us. That is



"Talking with the Police" program participants on a tour of the EPA Police Department.

why I think it is important you know this, Chief. Maybe you can tell the officers to treat us a little better."

"We don't want to 'break the law' by driving without a license but we need to go to work so we can feed our families. We need to take our kids to school, go to buy groceries..."

Please tell your officers I am not a criminal. All I do is work two jobs to feed my family. Please tell your officers to be kind if they stop me—that would help us a lot. Thank you for listening to me, Chief!"

"I work late as a janitor. I was driving and a police officer stopped me. Because I couldn't speak English, I waited. More and more police officers were coming and surrounding me.

They made me feel very scared, and the officers treated me as if I was a dangerous criminal...just because I could not speak English. Chief, I think we need more Spanish-speaking cops or more Spanish translators"

Ms. Ieraci responded by heading up a collaboration with the East Palo Alto Police Department in which learners studied a special ESL curriculum called "Talking with the Police" and police officers made weekly visits to the ESL

class to teach students about police practices, answer questions, practice conversations with the students, and engage in a cultural exchange.

Program participants learned important information about their rights, what to do when stopped by an officer, common police procedures, how to prevent and report crime and domestic violence, and many other essential topics.

The police officers, in turn, learned which issues are of most importance to the Latino community, increased their cultural competence, and were able to clear up some misunderstandings that have contributed to local mistrust of police. The program culminated in a tour of the East Palo Alto Police Department and a graduation ceremony where participants received diplomas.

Ms. Ieraci says she was inspired by Martin Luther King's words, "People hate each other because they fear each other, and they fear each other because they don't know each other," and by her belief that the ESL classroom needs to not only serve as a means for immigrants to learn English but to also learn how to live in the United States.

She stated, "In this cyni-

cal modern age when a great many people believe that conflict is the base of all human interaction, I was happy to be a part of the "Talking with the Police" program. People in the program seemed to see through to the clear truth that understanding is the base and that cross-cultural communication is what builds that base."

This innovative collaboration has resulted in increased communication between the Latino community and the local police and has helped to remove barriers to trust and cooperation. ESL learners reported that they feel more confident approaching police officers now that they understand their own rights and the role of the police. One learner stated that she used to think that police officers were unfriendly, but now she realizes that "they may actually be friendly, but for their own protection they can't offer you their hand."

At the "Talking with the Police" graduation event Chief Ron Davis stated that the EPA Police Department benefited even more from the program than the ESL learners and that a major challenge of a police chief, particularly in a city such as East Palo Alto, is that officers demonstrate cultural sensitivity.

About the Nuestra Casa "Talking with the Police" program he stated, "There is no program or training that we could have done to accomplish this [cultural sensitivity] like this program has done. Hopefully it will be the beginning of a long-term friendship." East Palo Alto ESL learners hope so, too.

Estudiantes de Inglés están "Hablando con la Policía"

Un invitado a la clase de inglés del primer nivel del Programa de Inglés de Nuestra Casa a lo mejor se hubiera quedado sorprendido cualquier jueves por la tarde durante los últimos meses al ver algo que no mucho se ve en las calles de EPA:

policías e inmigrantes Latinos bromeando y platicando juntos y conociéndose mejor.

El Programa de Inglés de Nuestra Casa, un programa para inmigrantes en East Palo Alto, tiene un programa de estudio que está basado en las necesidades específicas de los participantes y sus familias. El programa anima a los participantes a que manifiesten sus preocupaciones y necesidades dentro de la comunidad segura de la clase de inglés. Así que cuando maestra Vanesa Ieraci se dio cuenta de muchos casos de malos

entendimientos, falta de comunicación, y maltrato entre las experiencias de sus estudiantes con la policía sabía que tenía que tomar acción. Los siguientes relatos fueron escritos para el Jefe de Policía Davis por los estudiantes de inglés y demuestran ejemplos típicos de las experiencias de muchos inmigrantes Latinos con la policía en EPA:

"Nosotros Latinos que no hablamos inglés tenemos miedo a los agentes de policía de EPA. No sé que hacer si me para un policía; ni quiero hablar porque tengo miedo que me vayan a detener o deportar. Tenemos miedo a la policía. Por eso no nos quejamos cuando los policías siempre nos tratan mal. Nos quedamos callados aun cuando los agentes no son justos. Ellos lo saben. Saben que tenemos miedo y

que pueden hacer lo que les da la gana con nosotros. Por eso pienso que es importante que usted lo sepa, Jefe. Quizás usted puede decir a los agentes que nos traten un poquito mejor."

"Nosotros no queremos 'romper la ley' al manejar sin licencia pero necesitamos ir a trabajar para alimentar a nuestras familias. Tenemos que llevar a nuestros niños a la escuela, ir a comprar comida...Por favor diga a sus agentes que no soy un criminal. Lo único que hago es trabajar dos trabajos para alimentar a mi familia. Favor de decir a sus agentes que sean amables si me paran-eso nos ayudaría mucho. Gracias por escucharme, Jefe."

"Trabajo tarde como janitor. Yo estaba manejando y me paró un policía. Porque no podía hablar inglés, me esperaba. Llegaron más y

más agentes y me rodeaban y me hicieron sentir mucho miedo y me trataron como un criminal peligroso-sólo porque no podía hablar inglés. Jefe, pienso que necesitamos más agentes que hablan español o mas traductores."

La señora Ieraci respondió por manejar una colaboración con el Departamento de Policía de East Palo Alto en la cual los participantes estudiaron un programa de estudio especial que se llama "Hablando con la Policía" y los agentes de policía visitaron semanalmente a la clase de inglés para dar charlas acerca de las funciones de la policía, contestar preguntas, practicar conversaciones con los estudiantes, y tomar parte en un intercambio cultural. Los participantes del programa aprendieron información importante acerca

JUST ANOTHER THOUGHT...

Words burning through my skull
so you know I write them down
It's addictive like a drug or sum
money I just found
Gotta have it and gotta get it
done
Lyrical Genius at work, come
and get some
I lead a trail, but is it in the right
direction
I always ask myself, but never
answer the questions
Look up at the stars, does mine
really glow?
Physically young but mentally
grown
I'm at the end of my wits
Who cares about the future all I
want is a new whip
Material mentality then suddenly
I switch
I'm from the slums, but intellec-
tually rich
It's not easy being me, matter of
fact, it's a bitch
I want my momma to live worry
free
But a part of me wants to be
making G's
A new day... A new dialogue
Is it really true that two rights
can make a wrong?
Hurry now call the coroner
I'm feeling colder than a Russian
foreigner
Close my eyes cuz its time to
sleep
Attempt to survive until the end
of the week

-JUICE

I'm from East Menlo Park or
better known to those who sit
high in regards to our communi-
ty, the Belle Haven Community.
I mean im not too sure what to
tell you other than im one of
the hundreds of struggling
youth, whom everyday fight
against adversity in order to find
themselves. Raised on the
exact same street I still live on, I
grew up in the wrong and con-
tinue to find a way to starigten
my path. Some look up to me
and others look down on me,
either way, eyes are on me. I'm a
member of Ghetto Made, a
rythm and poetry (rap) group.
The group members are Ra4real,
Juice, and Beat and we represent
all those with or without thier
own voice from the G to East
Menlo.

de sus derechos, que hacer si la policía les parara, los procedimientos comunes de la policía, como prevenir y reportar un crimen o violencia domestica, y muchos otros temas esenciales. Los agentes de policía por su parte aprendieron cuales son los asuntos mas importantes para al comunidad Latina, aumentaron su competencia cultural, y pudieron resolver algunos malos entendimientos que han contribuido a que hubiera una falta de confianza en la comunidad hacia la policía. El programa terminó con una gira del

Alquiler

droga" injustamente para obtener el apoyo de una comunidad que ha luchado por mucho tiempo contra las actividades y violencia relacionadas al uso de la droga, pero que, en hecho, no es éste el propósito verdadero de la iniciativa. Insisten que los propietarios usen la legislación actual para liberarse de traficantes, en vez de apoyar una iniciativa que pondría a gente inocente en riesgo de perder sus hogares.

Bajo la nueva ley propuesta, si un arrendatario alquila su casa de mes-a-mes (y varios residentes de East Palo Alto lo hacen) el propietario podría simplemente no renovar el arriendo y darle al arrendatario un aviso de 30 días para desocupar la casa o apartamento, advirtió Guillermo B. Webster, residente de EPA y miembro del Consejo de la Estabilización de Rentas de la ciudad desde hace 14 años. Si el arrendatario se rehusa a dejar su el hogar, el propietario podría llamar a la policía para sacarlo de cualquier manera.

"La iniciativa injusta del desahucio les quita a los residentes de East Palo Alto los derechos civiles adicionales que ellos gozan como residentes de East Palo Alto," dijo Webster. "El hecho es que la iniciativa les daría permiso a los propietarios para desahuciar a cualquier inquilino por cualquier razón o por ninguna razón."

La iniciativa polémica fue introducida por R.B. Jones, que trabaja con Guillermo J. Rosetti, un vendedor de bienes raíces basado en San Francisco, quien es dueño de varias unidades que alquila en East Palo Alto. Jones, alcalde anterior de East Palo Alto, fue condenado en el año 2000 a 27 meses en la prisión federal. Lo condenaron por cuentas de fraude de impuestos y fraude del correo, y soborno, según lo divulgado en un periódico local.

"East Palo Alto es la única ciudad donde la única razón por la cual un dueño puede desahuciar fácilmente a alguien es porque no están

UNA SEGUNDA INICIATIVA

Una segunda iniciativa, también apoyada por el Sr. Jones y llamada La Medida para Seguridad y Prevención de la Violencia en East Palo Alto, también podría estar en la balota de noviembre. Esta medida impondría un impuesto de diez años ante propietarios de la ciudad. La cantidad del impuesto variaría dependiendo del uso de la propiedad -- \$75 cada año para los dueños de una casa, \$40 cada año por un apartamento, y aproximadamente \$300 cada año para las propiedades comerciales dependiendo de su tamaño. Estas cantidades aparecieron en un informe del 7 de junio y fueron preparadas por Michael Lawson, abogado de East Palo Alto. El dinero juntado sería utilizado para financiar los servicios y los programas del departamento de policía, que se extienden desde el entrenamiento para los oficiales hasta la seguridad de las escuelas y a la intervención de la violencia doméstica.

Si es colocada en la balota de noviembre, esta iniciativa competiría con una iniciativa, apoyada por el consejo, que recaudaría fondos para el departamento de policía y la extensión de los programas contra la violencia para la juventud de la ciudad. La medida, patrocinada por la ciudad, es la medida es descrita como una versión mejorada de la medida K, que en las elecciones del 2005 ganó el 55% de los votos pero no los 66 2/3% requeridos para pasar un impuesto territorial. La medida K fue diseñada para recaudar fondos para el departamento de policía y los programas alternativos para la juventud. Stewart Hyland, activista de la comunidad y abogado de la juventud en East Palo Alto, esperaba que la medida patrocinada por PIA y la ciudad de East Palo Alto sería mejor que la medida K.

"Nos importa la destrucción causada por el crimen relacionado con la droga porque les ha causado tanto mal a nuestros niños y nietos. Los padres de EPA y los jóvenes, junto con funcionarios de la educación y de la aplicación de ley, estamos de acuerdo que nuestra gente joven, necesitan alternativas a pasarse en la calle pero tienen pocas opciones aquí en nuestra ciudad," dijo Hyland.

"Sería una tragedia verdadera si nuestros residentes no pueden pasar ésta medida de impuestos tan necesaria solo porque no podemos recolectar el 66% de los votos que se necesitan."

La preocupación del Sr. Hyland es que, porque ambas medidas benefician semejantemente a el departamento de policía, los votantes no puedan distinguir entre el propósito de las dos y por lo tanto ni una ni otra gane suficientes votos para pasar en la elección. Además, la medida de impuestos propuesta por el Consejo de la ciudad beneficiaría programas para los jóvenes, mientras que la medida privada no lo haría. Si los votantes lo deciden, a la juventud de la ciudad se puede quedar sin nada.

En una entrevista reciente, Sr. Jones dijo, "creemos que los niños no son los autores de los crímenes en la ciudad de East Palo Alto. Las estadísticas demuestran que la mayoría de las violaciones, de las balaceras y de los robos son cometidos por gente mayor de 18 años."

"Quisiéramos que todo el dinero sea para el departamento de policía," dijo él, "porque nos preocupa la seguridad del público."

pagando la renta." Dijo Jones en una entrevista reciente. "Es un proceso muy largo para desahuciar a alguien que es sucio, desordenado, y esta destruyendo una vecindad."

Él dijo que su medida propuesta, a la que él llama la medida para la "causa justa para el desahucio" proporcionaría una lista específica de las violaciones que permitirían que un propietario más fácilmente desahucie a un inquilino, violaciones que tendrían un impacto negativo en la comunidad.

Jones solicitó la ayuda de 3 residentes de East Palo Alto para el patrocinio de la iniciativa: Jorge Luis Miranda, 39, el supervisor de mantenimiento para el complejo de apartamentos West Park de Rosetti,

Ginebra Whatley, 67, y Ola Mae Parker, 77. La señora Whatley y la señora Parker expresaron su sorpresa en aprender que sus nombres aparecieron como patrocinadores de la iniciativa. Dijeron que no leyeron la iniciativa y que no la entendían completamente y no sabían así lo que apoyaban.

"Si supiera entonces lo que ahora sé, no lo firmaría otra vez", dijo Whatley de la iniciativa del desahucio. "No me la explicaron, solo hablaron rápidamente. Me dijeron algo diferente."

Whatley, que ha sufrido el escándalo de su decisión mal informada y espera que "nadie sea perjudicado", concluyó: "Espero que no vaya a pasar la enmienda. Son despi-

adados allí en los apartamentos de Rosetti."

Cuando se le pregunto al Sr. Jones sobre la confusión evidente de los tres miembros de la comunidad, él dijo que "se les habló a esta gente. Si esta gente es muda, estúpida, o fue engañada, también lo son el resto de las 2000 personas que firmaron la petición, y también lo soy yo." Él dijo que expresaron confusión porque ellos, "... se asustaron de la prensa irrespetuosa... que los acosaron."

Las ambiciones de Jones para la elecciones que vienen no terminan con esta medida del desahucio. Él también está apoyando una segunda iniciativa-con su propia dosis de controversia- para que un impuesto territorial beneficie

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al departamento de la policía, algunos dicen que esta iniciativa está en conflicto con una iniciativa similar que ha propuesto la ciudad. Los detalles sobre las iniciativas se proporcionan en la caja a la izquierda.

Durante una reunión, ese mismo jueves, con los representantes del Consejo de la Estabilización de Rentas y otros miembros de la comunidad en cuestión, el alcalde Ruben Abrica de la ciudad llamó a ambas iniciativas de Jones "cortinas" que podrían conducir a los desahucios extensos y al debilitamiento de las iniciativas patrocinadas por la ciudad que beneficiarían a la juventud de la ciudad.

Abrica observó que "ahora necesitamos una ley del alquiler más que nunca," refiriéndose a la amenaza de los reveladores que podrían convertir a sus propiedades en condominios más lucrativos.

Cuando se le pregunto sobre la amenaza de la conversión a condominios y de su relación a la iniciativa del desahucio, el abogado Lawson de la ciudad declinó comentar.

El vivir y el alquilar en East Palo Alto ha sido posible debido a las leyes de la protección del arrendatario contra aumentos del alquiler y el desahucio sin buena causa. La Estabilización de Alquiler y la Buena Causa para la Ordenanza del Desahucio, leyes pasadas por la elección general en 1984 y modificadas en una segunda elección en 1986, protegen a inquilinos -quienes forman la mayoría de los residentes de la ciudad- del desahucio injustificado y arbitrario por los propietarios que desean ganar beneficios más grandes de sus características propiedades, alquilando a un demográfico más afluente. Esta ordenanza esta amenazada; estará en manos de los votantes y si permitirán una modificación a esta ley y las repercusiones que, muchos dicen, llegarán con ella.

"Hablando con la Policía"

Departamento de Policía y una ceremonia de graduación en la cual los participantes recibieron certificados.

La Señora Ieraci dice que tomó su inspiración de las palabras de Martin Luther King, "Las personas se odian porque se temen, y se temen porque no se conocen", y también de su creencia de que la clase de inglés debe no solamente servir para aprender inglés sino también para aprender como vivir en

los Estados Unidos. Ella dijo, "En estos modernos tiempos cínicos cuando muchas personas creen que el conflicto es la base de todo intercambio humano, me dio mucho gusto ser parte del programa "Hablando con la Policía". La gente que tomó parte en el programa pudo ver la clara verdad de que el entendimiento mutuo es la base, y que la comunicación entre culturas es lo que hace esa base."

Ésta colaboración innovadora ha resultado en mejor comunicación entre la comunidad Latina y la policía local y ha ayudado a quitar barreras a la confianza y la cooperación. Participantes reportaron que ahora se sienten más confianza en acercarse a un agente de policía ya que entienden sus propios derechos y el rol de la policía.

Una de las participantes dijo que antes creía que los agentes de policía no eran

amistosos, pero ahora entiende que "ellos si son amistosos, pero no pueden dar la mano por su propia protección."

En el evento de graduación del programa "Hablando con la Policía," el Jefe Ron Davis dijo que el Departamento de Policía de EPA se benefició del programa aun más que los estudiantes y que un gran desafío de ser jefe de policía, especialmente en una ciudad como East Palo Alto,

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es que los agentes demuestren sensibilidad cultural.

Acerca del programa de Nuestra Casa "Hablando con la Policía" él dijo, "No hay otro programa o entrenamiento que pudiéramos hacer para lograr ésta [sensibilidad cultural] como este programa lo ha hecho. Espero que esto puede ser el principio de una amistad de largo plazo." Los estudiantes de inglés están de acuerdo.