



A local hero page 9



Two new police captains page 9



RHSAA scholarship winners page 9

East Palo Alto Today



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East Palo Alto and Belle Haven

May - June 2008

Vol. 2 No.14

Inside News



Dr. Henry Louis Gates tells of a 90 year old dream.

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Saying goodbye to University Palms

By Christina Luce
EPA Today Contributor

In December 2007, 12 tenants and 10 small businesses on the 5-acre property at the corner of University Avenue and Donohoe Street received notice that the city

had approved the land for a multi-million dollar redevelopment project, and they would have to relocate.

Five months later, Guillerma Gonzales and Maria Miranda, former respective owners of El Galope Taqueria and Angel's

Beauty Salon, locked up their shops for the last time.

When they were interviewed, neither one had much hope for relocating her business. "How do I feel?" asked Gonzales. "Mal."

I don't know what to do anymore. We have nowhere

to go."

The property in question, formerly known as University Palms and owned by Palo Alto developer Owen Byrd, was first approved by the city for redevelopment in 2003. Last continued on page 12



Photo courtesy of Alexandra Ponce

Youth volunteers from various local organizations work to clean an East Palo Alto park during Youth Services Day. To learn more about what they and other student volunteers did on this day, read the story on page 4 of this issue titled, Youth serve East Palo Alto.

Viviendas untenantables

Por Michelle Parris
trans. Alvaro Huerta
EPA Today Contributors

La Agencia de Enfortamiento de Inmigración y Aduanas (ICE) del Departamento de Seguridad Nacional ha estado ejecutando redadas argumentablemente inconstitucionales involucrando el arresto y remoción de inmigrantes indocumentados a lo largo del Área de la Bahía.

Estas redadas hacen parte de lo que llaman el programa "Operación Retorno al Remitente"

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Illegal dwellings

Michelle Parris
EPA Today Contributor

As the demand for housing in East Palo Alto has persisted and grown in recent years, property owners have searched for ways to make maximal use of their investments. This has driven many owners to rent out parts of their property not typically used for human habitation, such as the garage of a home.

Under proper procedures, a landlord would have the unit inspected before renting it to ensure that it is safe for use as a home. The

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Rents are spiraling up

By Francisco Preciado
EPA Today Contributor

The city of East Palo Alto is a city that has always struggled with lots of issues. Currently there is a very big struggle going on with Page Mill Property tenants here in East Palo Alto. Page Mill Properties owns about 65% of the apartments here in East Palo



Photo courtesy of Alvaro Alvarez .Sign during rent protest

Alto and has been raising the rent of the tenants more than the Rent

Stabilization Ordinance's (RSO) legal limit, which is 3.2%. In December of 2007 during the holiday season, approximately 1400 tenants of Page Mill Properties received notices of rent increases. They have raised the rents on tenants with increases of up to 47%. Page Mill Properties

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When you can't pay your mortgage

By Shirley Hochhausen and
Michelle Munoz
EPA Today Contributors

The experience of losing a home to foreclosure has become increasingly common as the subprime lending crisis continues to unfold. An estimated 3 million families with subprime loans made during 1998 - 2006 will lose their home to foreclosure over the next few years. If your family is among the millions facing the prospect of foreclosure, there are some things you can do. You may be able to save your home by re-negotiating your loan with the lender. Before calling your lender, prepare yourself. Be realistic about your goals and think about the situation from the lender's point of view. Prepare to persuade the lender that if they work with you, you are serious about keeping your home and keeping up with payments.

Be ready to describe what caused you to fall behind in your payments, what current financial resources you may have as

well as debts or essential expenses (such as food, utilities, insurance, or child support). It is also important to prepare a short statement about your plans for the future, describing how you are willing to alter your spending and, where possible, explore alternative sources of income.

Your goals in negotiating will depend on your particular circumstances. For some homeowners, a temporary delay in payments may be a viable option; ask the lender for a moratorium on payments for the period of time you think you will need to "take a break" from payments.

For others, a permanent restructuring of the loan may be a better option, such as lowering the interest rate or lengthening the term of the loan so that the amount of your monthly payment is decreased. If your home is presently worth less than the amount of the mortgage you should be prepared to tell the lender what comparable homes in the area are selling for. Ask that the amount of the mortgage be reduced to the fair market value of the property. If your mortgage

has an adjustable rate and the interest rate rose sharply, ask that you be given the introductory rate for a longer period of time, for instance five years. If you can make future payments, but fell behind and can't catch up on paying the arrears, negotiate with the lender to add the arrears to the end of your loan and extend the payments at the end.

What if none of these ideas work for you and you believe you simply cannot afford to stay in the house? If you decide that you cannot afford to stay in your home there are still options for you to consider. Your lender may agree to let you sell the house for less than the amount that is owned on your loan, with the sale proceeds going to the bank to pay off your loan. This is known as a short sale. You may decide to allow the home to go into foreclosure because that option will provide you with the best financial outcome.

Not being able to pay your bills and the prospect of losing your home are major stressors and people do rash things

when they are under stress. Step back; this isn't the end of your life. You can handle this situation if you don't act in haste and don't hide from the problem.

Do not give any money to a business or individual who says they will deal with your mortgage company. This is a scam and will only put you further behind on your mortgage payments. Do not agree to put the title to your home in another persons name in order to benefit from their good credit. This is known as a mortgage foreclosure rescue scam.

There are a lot of things to consider when you can't make your mortgage payments, and it always helps to have another point of view. Don't make this decision on your own; consult a credit counselor and discuss your options. Credit Counselors are available for free. Try the California Consumer Counselors at (800) 777-7526 or find another HUD certified counselor by calling: (800) 569 - 4287, or the local HUD Palo Alto Office: (888) 332 -3332. Credit and mortgage counselors are experts in helping

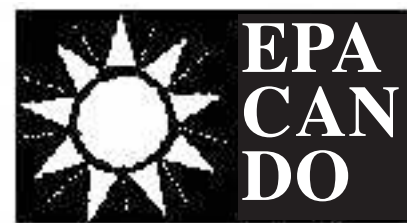
you understand your options. If you think you were tricked when you got the loan or would like someone to review an agreement you are about to make with a lender, contact a lawyer. Consult with a friend you trust and ask for their advice and support. When you know whether a lender will work with you and have consulted with a credit counselor, mortgage counselor or lawyer, you are ready to make an informed and reasoned decision and do what is best for you and your family.

Shirley Hochhausen is a lawyer who teaches at U.S.F. Law School and works with **Michelle Munoz**, a Stanford Law Student at Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto.

You can contact Shirley at S_Hochhausen@hotmail.com.

[The information in this article does not constitute legal advice. Please contact Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto at (650) 326-6440 if you need a lawyer and cannot afford one.]

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Community News Briefs

Status Report on Foreclosures in East Palo Alto



Wilbert Lee

Housing Services Director Wilbert Lee presented a memorandum to the East Palo Alto City Council on the status of foreclosures in the City of East Palo.

In his report, which he delivered on May 6, he said

that based on information obtained from EPACANDO, there were 180 foreclosure filings in the City of EPA.

A total of sixty percent of the foreclosure filings resulted in the bank foreclosing on 108 properties between January 2007 and February 2008.

Lee said that the banks are auctioning properties to the highest bidder and in some cases buyers are actually negotiating with the bank's asset managers to acquire the houses.

It is not likely that this problem will go away anytime soon. It is quite possible we will see more foreclosures in the City and throughout the

bay area and California in 2008 and well into 2009.

Lee said that a map in EPACANDO's office indicates that the foreclosure notices and actual foreclosure are fairly even dispersed throughout the City.

EPACANDO is currently offering a Foreclosure Intervention Program.

For more information about the program, see the organization's "free help" offer on pages 2 and 14 of this issue of EPA Today.

An important decision for renters

The Rent Stabilization Board of East Palo Alto held,

City of East Palo Alto

what was described as a contentious public hearing Wednesday, May 28. For William Webster, a longtime housing advocate in the city, the meeting constituted the most important public hearing in the history of the Rent Stabilization Program.

The hearing was designed to get the East Palo Alto community's input on proposed changes to Section 1600 of the Rules and Regulations through which the Rent Stabilization Ordinance is implemented.

Currently, Section 1600 is at the heart of the dispute

involving rent increases that are causing deep concern and hardship for many of East Palo Alto's renters. At issue is the annual percent rate at which rents can be increased for the city's apartment dwellers.

The State of California adopted the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act of 1995 which stipulated the rent increases. Many local housing advocates say the current increases levied by Page Mill Properties, the largest rental firm in the city, goes too far (See cover article in this issue called Rents are spiraling up.).

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City child care agency wins asthma award

By Henrietta J. Burroughs
EPA Today

The East Palo Alto Head Start day care center was one of two child care centers honored as an Asthma Friendly Child Care Site. The award was given to the child care agency for implementing a number of measures to reduce environmental risks that act as asthma triggers.

The award was given by the San Mateo County Asthma Coalition and the East Palo Alto Task Force in Commemoration of World Asthma Day on Tuesday, May 6.

The award was also given to the Serramonte Head Start center which is located



From left Krista Ward, Advocacy Coordinator with Breathe California (presenting the award); Lupe Ibarra, Site Supervisor at East Palo Alto Head Start program; Christina Oliver, Family Advocate at East Palo Alto Head Start program

in Daly City.

The award was particularly relevant to the East Palo Alto community, since the city has one of the highest rates of asthma in San Mateo County.

According to information released by Breathe California, "Asthma is a

chronic lung disease caused by inflammation of the airways. Exposure to certain "triggers" can cause an asthma attack, which can lead to coughing, wheezing,

shortness of breath, and in extreme cases, even death.

Approximately 14% of all San Mateo County children suffer from asthma. Nationally, asthma is the cause of 10 million missed school days and carries a cost of \$10.7 billion each year. While there is no cure for asthma, most people can learn to control their asthma to lead full and active lives"

"Children spend many hours each day in childcare and school settings, making it critical for staff to take steps to protect the health of those with asthma," said Krista Ward from Breathe

California, which helps coordinate both of the local asthma groups. "These Head Start sites have made it a priority to help monitor and manage their children's asthma symptoms, maintain good indoor air quality, and effectively communicate with the children's parents and health care providers."

For more information on asthma, contact Breathe California at (650)994-5868.

Information is also available at the organization's website located at: <http://www.breathecalifornia.org> and at <http://lungsrus.org>.

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Youth serve East Palo Alto

By Amelia Kolokihakaufisi
EPA Today Contributor

Global Youth Service Day was on Saturday, April 26. The Youth Development Team of Public Allies Silicon Valley organized and created a day to provide youth an opportunity to give back to the community.

A part of the YCS Family Service Day and Community Fair at Cesar Chavez Academy, this off-site project was focused specifically on youth ages 13-19. Months of planning culminated in an event involving graffiti cleanup, sanding and painting park benches and tables, and making T-shirts at Martin Luther King Jr. Park in East Palo Alto.

Nestled in the back of the

Gardens Neighborhood, the park has been plagued with a series of vandalism. Local youth gangs, graffiti their insignia on the playground, tables, walls, and including the new mural created by the East Palo Alto Mural Art Project. Their break-ins to the snack shop have also cost the City huge amounts of money.

Two of the Public Allies placed with the City's Community Services Department, witnessed the aftermath of these events on a consistent basis. Sometimes, having to clean up the mess created by the



Photo courtesy of Alexandra Ponce
Volunteers painting a park bench.

break-ins with their students from the East Palo Alto Youth Advisory Council (E-PAY-AC). It was no question in their mind, then, when it came time to pick their service project for Global Youth Service Day.

Over 50 participants came to serve on Saturday. In teams, some would sand the tables while others removed large spray-painted letters on the snack-shop building. After the picnic tables were sanded and primed, they were painted. Two of the tables were designated just for graffiti and was painted a different color. Positive mes-

sages, like 'Jesus Loves You' were written on them in hopes that it would invoke other positive sayings. Time will tell to see if those attempts will prevail.

As they finished their duties, students got the chance to design their own t-shirts as a souvenir. Even after all these activities, their day of service did not end there.

After asking students in E-PAY-AC 'what is something they would change in their community?' One of the most common answers would be, 'the trash!' It's everywhere. So, after activities at the park finished, participants then marched their way over to Cesar Chavez Academy to join the celebration there. Armed with garbage bags and gloves,

everyone picked up trash along the streets on their path. Two drummers helped motivate participants in the hour-long walk and cleanup.

Fortunately, upon arrival at the YCS Family Service Day celebration, food, drink, and merriment awaited these hardworkers! The Public Allies Youth Development Team hopes that youth see now how they can take an active part in cleaning up their neighborhood, literally and symbolically. Doing something positive, however small, can create change when everyone pitches in and contributes.

Amelia Kolokihakaufisi is Youth & Young Adult Coordinator for the City of East Palo Alto.

Making Cinco de Mayo smoke-free

By Elias Nunez
EPA Today Contributor



On Sunday, May 4, East Palo Alto hosted its annual Cinco de Mayo event. We celebrated with lots of good food and festivities, and this year we had an extra reason

to celebrate—because this year, for the first time ever, it was smoke-free!

I am part of a program, Youth Promotores, which is a project of El Concilio of San Mateo County. I joined Youth Promotores because I like to help keep my peers and others from using tobacco or being harmed by secondhand smoke. I want to make positive changes in my community.

We saw how those who go

to community events are affected by secondhand smoke and cigarette butt litter and we worked to change that. We concentrated our efforts on the Cinco de Mayo event because it is one of the most popular events in East Palo Alto. More than 1,500 people attend, and most of them are residents. It represents our culture and our community. Because of that, we didn't want this event to be associated with

exposure to secondhand smoke, or having my friends or siblings exposed its harmful effects.

In a recent survey we conducted at an event nearby we found 85 percent of the 150 people surveyed had been bothered by second hand smoke, and 97 percent were in favor of that event being smoke-free. We all agreed; a smoke-free Cinco de Mayo policy is a great way for us



Courtesy of Youth Promotores
A picture of a young woman sitting at a booth at the event

to help keep people from being harmed by second-hand smoke.

With support of the San Mateo County Tobacco Education Coalition and working closely with the Comite Latino of East Palo Alto, who puts the event together, we helped plan and assist with the event. With their support, we helped pass a non-smoking policy for the Cinco de Mayo event. And the event on Sunday was a success!

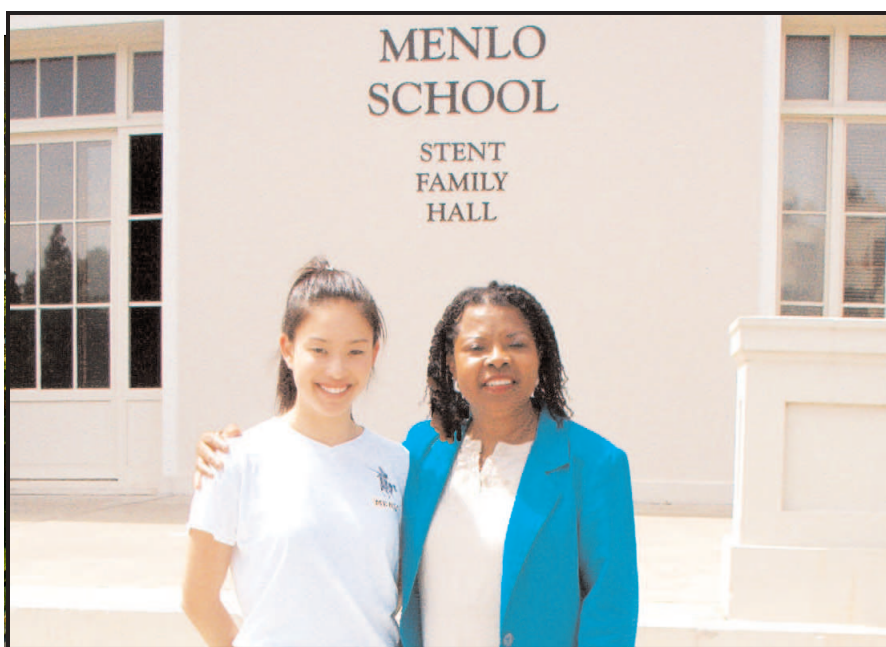
Smoke-free policies are a good solution in addressing secondhand smoke. On the day of the festival we enforced the policy by putting up signs around the event and hosted an informational table to educate people about the importance of having the event be smoke-free.

We also gave out cessation materials to help those who want to quit smoking. Adults must remember youth learn from their

behavior. I want to help prevent my peers from smoking and help show them it's not cool or okay. I am very glad that this year people could enjoy Cinco de Mayo without the dangers of second-hand smoke.

Elias Nunez is a member of Youth Promotores a program that is a project of El Concilio of San Mateo County and a partner with the San Mateo County Tobacco Education Coalition

Menlo School recognizes HENRIETTA BURROUGHS for her inspiring devotion to the East Palo Alto community



Menlo School student Dana Tom and Henrietta Burroughs



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Working for Obama in Philly- a personal story

By Stewart Hyland
EPA Today Contributor



Stewart Hyland holds Obama banner with another volunteer

My time spent in Philadelphia campaigning for Senator Barack Obama was great fun and hard work. Sen. Obama has inspired many different kinds of people across the states and his campaign is so well grounded that once folks have been sparked by his message of change and hope, then they can plug into his message and put it to work for his campaign.

How did I get plugged in? Beginning in January 2008, I was invited by longtime East Palo Alto housing activist Elizabeth Jackson to work on the local campaign here in EPA by going door to door

(precinct walking). Although Sen. Obama did not defeat Sen. Clinton in California, we did win our congressional district CD-14 for Barack. In the weeks that followed, I joined others at the Obama headquarters located on El Camino Real in Palo Alto. A lot of EPA community leaders have also volunteered; phone banking, precinct walking and even running for the coveted delegate positions to attend the Democratic Convention coming up this August in Denver.

After a volunteer training session, I stated to those around me that I would love to work for Sen. Obama in one of the upcoming elections in another state. One of the trainers said she had tickets for Pennsylvania and thought I would be a good fit for the Philly campaign team. A quick check with my wonderful wife and I started packing.

In Philly, Phoebe and John Schellenberg, a very generous couple, offered housing to me and eight other Obama-

niacs for a 7-day campaign. Not only did they open their home to us, but they also shared their computers and provided car service to the campaign offices as well as to the train station. I learned how to use the regional rail and subway to get from their home in West Philly to North Philly (near Temple University).

While Philadelphia is a big, old city with many historic

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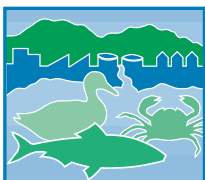
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From the Editor's Desk

Serving our country

In this issue of East Palo Alto Today, we have highlighted on our cover and in a feature article on page four written by Amelia Kolokihakauifisi, how young people are volunteering throughout East Palo Alto and Belle Haven on various projects to improve the quality of life for community residents. Current statistics show that volunteerism around the country is at an all time high.

Even President Bush pointed to this fact in several recent commencement addresses that he made. On May 31, he urged the graduating seniors at Furman University in Greenville South Carolina to give back to their communities.

He said, "Strengthen this rising culture of responsibility in America by serving others, contributing to our civic life, and being accountable to yourself and your families....Our country needs corporate responsibility, as well as personal responsibility. So if you enter the business world, be honest with your shareholders, be truthful to your customers, and give back to the communities in which you live. And all of us have a responsibility to be good stewards of the environment."

Those are much needed and noble words that we all should live by. Earlier on May 28, in speaking to the graduates of the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado, Bush acknowledged that they, too, were worthy volunteers for their country.

To them, he said, "We understand that free societies are peaceful societies, and that people who live in liberty and hope do not turn to ideologies of hatred and fear.... Each of you is a vol-

unteer who stepped forward to accept the burdens of war, knowing all the dangers you would face upon graduation. You willingly risk your lives and futures so that our country can have a future of freedom and peace."

His remark about free societies being peaceful societies made me wonder. Is it that poor and minority communities that are experiencing high crime rates are not peaceful societies because they are not free societies? Well, if they are not peaceful societies, it is not because of the efforts of the multitude of volunteers who are working daily to positively change the face of those communities.

Pres. Bush delivered different speeches to the graduates of Furman and to the graduates of the military academy about volunteerism. The military graduates got an address emphasizing the precision of war and how that would lead to less wars and less risk of their dying.

Certainly, we think that it would show how much we've evolved as a nation and as human beings when our president can deliver an address to military graduates that focuses on how they, like other graduates can use the discipline and skills they've developed to peacefully improve the quality of life for those around them.

Wouldn't it be great when we get to a point in our evolution as citizens of our nation and as citizens of the world when no one is trained how to use high powered military weapons



Henrietta J. Burroughs

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Photo courtesy of Alexandra Ponce
Carlos Chavez who works at the Community Development Institute in East Palo Alto paints a park bench during this year's Global Youth Services Day on April 26.

Letters in East Palo Alto Today

Mobile Home Parks

Dear Editor

East Palo Alto mobile home residents are being challenged on all fronts. Our preferred lifestyle, for a variety of reasons, is in jeopardy. Mobile home park living offers low income affordable housing for seniors, veterans, young families, and down-sizing empty-nesters, etc., living in close proximity to family, jobs and other amenities, including doctors and health care.

Two very important things to understand about mobile home owners:

1. We are -- first of all -- Homeowners. We own our mobile homes.
2. Secondly, we rent the spaces our mobile homes occupy within a park.

When East Palo Alto was incorporated, the very first order of business was the passage of the Rent Stabilization Ordinance. One could say that that was the number one priority for the establishment of the community -- affordable rents..

One of the two remaining parks in East Palo Alto, Creekside, is facing a com-

plete park closure, and the other, Palo Mobile Estates, is involved in a forced conversion to purchase individual spaces. Neither of which bodes well for mobile home residents.

Both situations are at present involved in litigation regarding the City's passage of two separate ordinances; one dealing with mobile home park closures, and the other regulating the conversion from a rental mobile home park to individually resident-owned lots or spaces park.

Statewide, Proposition 98 on the June 3rd ballot, in the guise of Eminent Domain, would do away with rent stabilization ordinances, preempting local government jurisdiction. Thus, not only in East Palo Alto, but all over the state of California, the 100+ cities with affordable housing rent regulations are at risk.

Proposition 99, true Eminent Domain without the rental restrictions, is also on the June 3rd ballot. If it gains a majority vote, it negates Proposition 98. Local jurisdictions know

what's best for local communities, not at the state level.

Vote NO on 98 -- YES on 99

Chet Smith
East Palo Alto

Writing Contest for Latinas

Dear Editor

Please let your readers know that Latinitas Magazine is launching a National Writing Contest through June 30, 2008 seeking feedback from Latina youth ages 14 to 24 on "What it is to be Latina." Top contest winners will be awarded with Dell DJ Mp3 players and with publication in the nationally-acclaimed LatinitasMagazine.org. Latinitas Magazine launched five years ago as the first digital magazine for U.S. Latina youth as a vehicle to counter the lack of positive media portrayals of Latina youth.

For more information, contact:
laura@latinitasmagazine.org

Laura Donnelly
Latinitas Magazine

EPA Today's Policies & Principles

In order to better serve the communities of East Palo Alto and Belle Haven, East Palo Alto Today has made the commitment to operate with high professional standards and to adhere to a strict code of ethical conduct. The principles and policies stated herein serve as an agree-

ment with our readers, advertisers and all others within our service area.

East Palo Alto Today is dedicated to conscientious journalism. We maintain this commitment by seeking and reporting the truth, acting with integrity, and serving the public interest. We will report the news thoroughly

and accurately and include multiple perspectives without favoring one over another.

We will hold ourselves accountable to common standards of decency, treating our colleagues, news sources, and the public with respect.

East Palo Alto Today

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Opinion

The ideas expressed on this page are solely the views of the individual authors who do not represent East Palo Alto Today's Board or staff.

Keeping parks for the future

Supervisor Rose Jacobs Gibson
EPA Today Contributor



San Mateo Co. Supervisor
Rose Jacobs Gibson

There is something truly special about a beautiful public park. Well maintained open space invites all of us to gather with our family and friends and be part of our community. Urban tree programs and community landscaping enhance our neighborhoods, compliment our local schools, increase our property values and build a sense of community. Recreation programming supports positive lifestyles and keeps our youth and senior populations healthy.

Just as beautiful public

parks and open spaces bring us together, unkempt parks keep us apart. Without a common space, we are less likely to gather, exercise, and enjoy the wondrous beauty of our communities. Without good parks, we cannot offer programming designed to keep our teens safe and off the street,

keep our seniors vigorous and healthy, and combat the epidemic of obesity.

Unfortunately, many of our parks are not being used or maintained to their full potential. That's why I joined my colleagues on the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors and voted to place Measure O -- "Parks for the Future" on the June 3rd ballot.

Measure O would secure a new and dedicated revenue source to support local parks and recreation. The revenue would come from a 1/8th of one cent increase in the sales tax and is projected to raise \$16 million per year. The cost to the aver-

age person is just an additional \$18 per year, and your investment of less than \$2 per month will help fund activities and programs, capital improvements and acquisition, and necessary maintenance and operations. Most importantly, each jurisdiction will have the flexibility to determine how funds should be used best to improve their parks.

East Palo Alto would receive approximately \$315,000 a year for 25 years if Measure O is passed by a two-thirds YES vote on June 3rd. City officials have said that funds would be used to make upgrades at Jack Farrell, Martin Luther King,

and Bell Street parks. The improvements would include a concession building with storage, bathrooms and meeting/program spaces, a performance stage, additional parking, creation of a regulation sized soccer field, public bathrooms, and the refurbishment of the children's playgrounds.

Regardless of what the City chooses to do, the money raised by this measure will provide new dollars for our parks. Specific language within the measure prevents jurisdictions from reducing their normal park budgets if they receive funds

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Urban renewal and gentrification

East Palo Alto Struggles to Retain a Balance and Build a Healthy Food System

By Wolfram Alderson
EPA Today Contributor

Sociologist Ruth Glass coined the term "Gentrification" in 1964 to describe a process of urban development wherein the influx of wealthier individuals into cities or neighborhoods replaces working or lower-classes already living there. The term "gentrification" derives from "gentry," referring to people of "good breeding or high social position." Glass states that "Once this process of 'gen-

trification' starts in a district it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working-class occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed."

The City of East Palo Alto, a "city on the move," is now facing the challenge of trying to build a strong basis for economic development while simultaneously preserving minority-owned businesses that sometimes find it difficult to keep up with the pace of urban



Wolfram Alderson

renewal and the complexities of redevelopment. Municipalities and planning agencies engaged in economic development struggle to maintain a balance

between the needs and interests of diverse stakeholders in the community. Redevelopment efforts often result in winners and losers, and bay area organizations like Urban Habitat argue that social justice issues are a vital part of the redevelopment equation. Local advocacy groups such as YUCA are concerned that large amounts of investment capital flowing into East Palo Alto may have the result of pushing working-class people of color out of the city,

rather than supporting urban revitalization for the benefit of long-time residents. The issue of displacing the working poor has ramifications that impact housing, jobs, education, environment, health care and all aspects of urban life.

One example of these ramifications is how the food system that serves more than 30,000 residents of this community factors into the redevelopment process.

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Focusing attention on the truth and acting strategically

Editor's Note: The following article is part of a letter that Dr. Eric Oberle wrote following the February 25 decision this year by a San Mateo Superior Court Judge who overturned the East Palo Alto City Council's temporary ordinance which froze the rents on the city's rent controlled apartments. Read his entire letter at epatoday.org

By Dr. Eric Oberle
EPA Today Contributor

I think the thing to do in light of the ruling is for the City Council to make a series of recommendations to the Board. They should be like this:

1. The board should move to update all of its certificates in keeping with the Costa Hawkins
2. All rules and regulations that need to be updated to clarify the interpretation of Costa-Hawkins on the original Rent Stabilization Ordinance should be updated.
3. The City will for its part do everything to ensure that the Board has proper legal counsel and representation

to minimize any legal claims against this necessary revision.

It should be emphasized that the existing practice of the Rent Board has been in essential agreement with all state laws, including the Petris and Costa-Hawkins Acts. The major upshot of the decision was simply to declare the Urgency Ordinance superfluous.

It should be understood that Page Mill Properties was not forced into this lawsuit by the so called "banking" (or backdating) issue. Rather, it was the cherry-picking problem that caused the crisis, at least conjoined with a willful campaign on Page Mill's part to misconstrue the status of certificates in units whose tenancy

began after the 1996 effective date of Costa-Hawkins.

What is cherry-picking? What Page Mill did in the late months of 2007 was to seek to actively exploit the long-standing ambiguity within the rent board system: starting in 1995, when the Costa-Hawkins Act went into effect, the city had relied upon landlords to properly report all vacancies and initial base rents in order to revise the certificates.

In cases where the tenancies predated the passage of Costa-Hawkins (and therefore the certificate maximal rent was still valid), ARAs were by contrast simply applied to the certificates. This situation meant two things.

First, due to limited

staffing issues, the units that had had vacancies since 1995 were on an "honor system" to report their initial rents properly, but if they did not, the Rent Board office would simply assume that the pre-1996 tenancy was still valid.

Second, when tenants who had post-1996 tenancies received their certificate annually, they became used to thinking it was de facto meaningless, because no landlord had in the past ten years tried to raise the rent up to the certificate amount.

Instead, landlords in EPA had, with the help of the rent board office, properly interpreted Costa-Hawkins to allow for only an annual use-it-or-lose-it adjustment off their initial base rent. Page

Mill Properties, seeing the short staffing available to the city, basically went to the Rent Stabilization Office and sought out every certificate it could where the stated maximum was above the current rent and had new certificates issued.

Breaking with all past practices of the Rent Board and all past landlords, they then proceeded to use these "cherry-picked" certificates for the basis of their claims to increase rents.

They then went to court to defend the validity of the certificates. The judge said, indeed, the certificates are valid as issued, but the Court said nothing that indicated that rents could therefore be increased in the way Page Mill has maintained.

Lifecycles

A new start at Start Up

Being around business owners was not something new for Oscar Dominguez. His mother founded and operated a successful garment finishing business in El Paso, Texas, where he was born and raised.

Dominguez moved to the Bay Area to attend Stanford University. After earning a Bachelors degree in

Political Science, he worked various positions in customer service, operations and in sales and sales management positions in local businesses before deciding to pursue a Masters in Business Administration.

While in the MBA program at San Francisco State University, Dominguez

served as a mentor for severely emotionally disturbed children, rekindling his passion for social service that he discovered as an undergraduate volunteer working with East Palo Alto and Redwood City youth.

Upon earning the advanced degree, he became a business consultant for the Mission



Oscar Dominguez

Economic Development Agency, assisting low and moderate income Spanish-speaking clients to launch and grow businesses.

Today, he is a Program Manager for Renaissance, working to expand both the scope and reach of the Start Up office in East Palo Alto. He is married, lives in San Bruno and believes in "spreading the wealth" every day.

To find out more about Start Up and how to launch or grow a business, see the organization's ad and contact information on page 10.

Gail Ortega takes the helm at Built to Last

By Christina Luce
EPA Today Contributor

Longtime community activist Gail Ortega said farewell to the students and faculty of Menlo College, where he served as Director of Multicultural Services and Community Service for the past 8 years.

On April 18, the day of his departure, members of the Menlo community gathered in the Russell Center Great Room to honor Ortega and express their appreciation for his inspired and dynamic leadership.

"It was truly moving, having so many people come up to tell me what my work means to them," Ortega said. "I loved those students."

Ortega left his post at Menlo College to focus his efforts into his position as Executive Director of the Built to Last Collaborative (BTLC), a volun-



Gail Ortega

tary youth tutoring program which he helped found in 2006. The collaborative was founded in cooperation with Menlo College, AmeriCorps and fellow members of the BTLC Advisory Board. According to Ortega, the BTLC Board consists of "some great minds." Included on the board are state and city officials, school board members, community leaders, activists and educators.

An initial \$50,000 AmeriCorps development grant supported

BTLC's beginning stages. In May 2007, BTLC won another \$1 million AmeriCorps grant to be spread across the next three years.

The program targets Ravenswood District students transitioning to the Sequoia Union High School District by assigning trained tutors to coach them at a 10-to-1 ratio beginning in the 9th Grade.

"Seventy three percent of the kids coming from the Ravenswood District never graduate from high school," said Ortega. "We're working to change that."

Ortega and BTLC see this staggering "educational gap" as one of the most pressing issues facing the community.

Ortega had his own educational challenge at 16 years old, while attending the U.S. Department of Labor's Job Corps program, which provides

free training for young people wishing to learn a trade, earn their GED, or land a higher-paying job.

"I was having a lot of trouble back then, and decided to turn things around at the Job Corps. Up until then, I'd never for once in my life thought anyone had it worse than I did," he said.

Ortega was in for a shock. After finishing (in 2 days) a copy of The Autobiography of Malcolm X: As Told to Alex Haley given to him by a Job Corps leader, he tried to share it with the other kids in the program. That's when he discovered that almost none of them could read.

"About 80-90% of them were totally illiterate. I couldn't believe it," he says.

From that day on, Ortega committed himself to community activism. At 18 years old, he wrote a proposal that helped create the Black Studies Department at the University of Utah. At 22, he became an Executive Director at Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America (OICA), a community-based vocational training program for youth. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, he worked with youth in various capacities, from education to job training to mental health.

But, looking back at this time, Ortega said that many of the causes he supported didn't progress as he had hoped, and he "was running out of intellectual gas" for new ideas. That's when the opportunity at Menlo College presented itself to him.

After decades spent working on the streets, Ortega said that accepting the position at Menlo was "like going from the front lines to the General's Quarters."

He said that the time he spent out of the trenches allowed him to participate in a fresh exchange of ideas with scholars who had different intellectual, social and personal perspectives.

"Here, I could sit down for lunch with a political scientist, an economist, a sociologist, a philosopher, and a psychologist - all at one table. A wealth of new ideas and strategies were born, which have helped me to tackle the problems being addressed by the BTLC."

"Gail has a servant's heart; he's dedicated to serving those underserved by society," said Larry Moody, Vice President of the Ravenswood District's Board of Education, BTLC Executive Committee member, and Director of Urban Ministries at MPPC. "Throughout his life, he's demonstrated a commitment to the journey of young people. He's one of the smartest guys I know, and he's great at bringing different talents to the same table."

Moody and others helped Ortega to set up a crucial meeting of community stakeholders to discuss the enormous failure and drop-out rate among former Ravenswood students. "We challenged the Sequoia District to verify the statistics. We got it out on the table, and there were a lot of great discoveries," Moody said.

Talking about BTLC, Moody said, "Now, we're about 85% there. It's going great; we have a presence at Menlo Atherton and Claremont already, and have developed community partners to provide facility space. But we still need to develop a larger database of tutors to draw from."

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Lifecycles

Guillermo Yanez: a local hero

By Dana Tom
EPA Today Contributor

Saturday, March 22nd was simply another day at St. Francis State beach in Half Moon Bay for East Palo Alto resident and frequent surfer, Guillermo Yanez, until he heard desperate cries from the ocean.

"I heard a man screaming for a lifeguard, and when I turned around, I saw him dragging a child out of the water," said Yanez. The 6-year-old child, who was caught in the high tide was saved, but Yanez noticed someone else floating in the ocean.

"She looked like a towel or a bag bobbing in the water, but then I saw her arm," said Yanez. Leaving his dog on the beach, he ran to the water and rescued the unconscious woman, pulling her onto the shore to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation.



Guillermo Yanez

"I'm not a doctor, but I thought she was dead," Yanez said, reflecting on the "shock" that he experienced as he attempted to save the life of Sanchita Tiwari, 33. After a minute of CPR, Yanez revived Tiwari, and a helicopter arrived to take her to Stanford Medical Center hospital, where she remained for a week.

"I'm glad I was prepared because it's always good to know what to do in those situations," said Yanez, who

received an advanced lifeguard certificate at Foothill College in Los Altos Hills as a student.

"In a time like that, few people actually react," he added, also claiming that no one else reacted to save the woman and the child that day at the beach. "If you don't react, someone could die."

Yanez is the nephew of Betsy Yanez who serves as a boardmember for several East Palo Alto agencies. Yanez, who surfs regularly at this beach, is not a stranger to this type of situation. On February 27, 1991, he and another man saved three girls and their father, when the family was pulled out to sea by strong tides. However, Yanez said that, compared to the 1991 rescue, the recent incident was much more shocking because the victim was unconscious.

Two weeks after her hospitalization, Tiwari suggest-

ed that Yanez and his family have breakfast with her husband and child to thank him for his heroic efforts.

They had their breakfast celebration in East Palo Alto at Yanez' home on a beautiful Sunday this past April. Tiwari's father also called Yanez from India to thank him for saving his daughter's life and he invited Yanez to visit him in India at any time.

"I feel great, and I am really glad I was there. I've never revived a person in my life, but I just did what I did without having to think," he said.

Yanez added that every adult should take a basic safety course, particularly with the summer season approaching.

"If you have a family, you must learn how to do this kind of stuff," said Yanez. "If anything, do it for your kids because this could happen to anyone. It's just a matter of being prepared," he said.

Dana Tom is a student at Menlo School in Atherton, CA



Sanjay Tiwari holding Saini Tiwar, Betsy Yanez, Sanchita Tiwar and Guillermo Yanez.

An annual worthy affair brings scholarship awards

The Ravenswood High School Alumni Association, Inc. held its 16th annual scholarship dinner dance Saturday, May 31 at the Bay Café in Palo Alto.

During the event, which is held to raise scholarship funds for deserving college-bound high school seniors, the association honored

Charles Jones, who is the owner of Jones Mortuary in East Palo Alto.

Martha Hanks, one of the founders of RHSAA said that Jones was honored for the years of support he has given to the association and to the East Palo Alto Community.

In addition to honoring

Jones, five students were also honored as this year's RHSAA scholarship recipients. They are James Edwards, Mayra Garcia, Chelsea McLaughlin, Daisy Rodriguez and Danny Sparks.

As one of the requirements for their scholarship award, the students had to

write an essay about "The Greatest Challenge Facing Our Society Today."

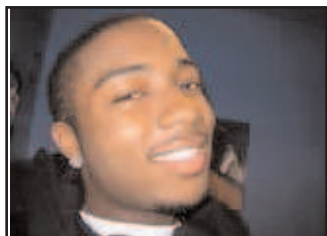
Each student received a one thousand dollar scholarship award.

Since its inception, RHSAA has distributed over \$45,000 in scholarship funds to worthy graduating, college bound high school

seniors who lived in East Palo Alto or the Belle Haven community of Menlo Park.

To see the complete list of scholarship recipients since RHSAA's inception, go to www.epatoday.org and click on story about "Winners."

See RHSAA's on the web at: <http://ravenswood.sequoialumni.net/>



James Edwards
Sequoia High School



Mayra Garcia
Eastside College
Preparatory School



Chelsea McLaughlin
Eastside College
Preparatory School



Daisy Rodriguez
Eastside College
Preparatory School



Danny Sparks
East Palo Alto Academy
High School

New police captains added to the EPA Police Department

By Christina Luce
EPA Today Contributor

On April 17th, East Palo Alto Chief of Police Ronald L. Davis announced the new appointments of Carl Estelle and John Chalmers as East Palo Alto's newest police captains.

Captain Estelle and Captain Chalmers now serve as Area Commanders under the East Palo Alto



Captain Carl Estelle and Captain John Chalmers Police Department's new Area Command structure.

Carl Estelle, 46, native of Chicago, Illinois, brings 11 years of experience at the

California Department of Justice (DOJ), Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement, and 12 years with the Oakland Police Department (1985-1996).

At the DOJ, Estelle worked as a Special Agent, Field Training Officer, Range Master, and became a Special Agent Supervisor in 2000. From 2003-2006, Estelle worked as a Task Force Commander.

In 2007, he transferred to

the Sacramento headquarters to assist the Director and Deputy Director of the Division of Law Enforcement, as well as to supervise the Attorney General's security detail.

Prior to his April 2008 official appointment, Captain Estelle was assigned in August 2007 as interim captain of the East Palo Alto Police Department.

John Chalmers, 50, has served in various supervisory

positions at the East Palo Alto Police Department over the last 18 years, including those pertaining to patrol, criminal investigations, and the new Professional Standards Division (PSD).

Chalmers served most recently as acting captain and Area Commander of the department. A graduate of the Supervisory Leadership Institute (SLI), Captain Chalmers holds both a bachelor's and master's degree.