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East Palo Alto Today

Providing news that is relevant, informative and critical



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East Palo Alto and Belle Haven

April 2009

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Evictions soar in East Palo Alto

By Henrietta J. Burroughs
East Palo Alto Today

Between the high rate of housing foreclosures and the high rate of apartment evictions, many residents in East Palo Alto are having a very difficult time.

There is also another type of eviction taking place. It is called post foreclosure eviction, and it occurs when a tenant rents from a homeowner whose house is foreclosed upon.

All three types of evictions are occurring at very high

rates throughout the city.

Shirley Gibson, a housing attorney with the Legal Aid Society of San Mateo County, assists tenants who are facing eviction.

Gibson said that evictions filings just this year at the San Mateo County court are up

40% over what they were in the same period in 2007 and 2008.

Candace Greenberg, the executive director of the Community Legal Services of East Palo Alto (CLS) said, "Evictions can happen in less than 30 days."

Greenberg said that it is critical for all people who are facing eviction to seek legal assistance, since they might be entitled to stay in their homes.

Since many people are now falling victim to mortgage foreclosure scams, it is especially important that people seek the free legal housing assistance that they can get from organizations such as EPA CAN DO and the Community Legal Services of East Palo Alto. There has been an ongoing battle in East Palo Alto against the rent increases that have been made by Page Mill Properties, a corporation that owns more than 60 percent of the apartment buildings in the city, making it the city's largest single landlord.

Many of those fighting the Page Mill Property increases claim that the company's current rent increases are adding to the high rate of apartment evictions.

Jon Frohnmayer, the volunteer attorney program coordinator for CLS in East Palo Alto released figures to East Palo Alto Today which showed that in the first three months of

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Photo courtesy of the epa-tenants.org website
One local resident is shown moving his belongings from an East Palo Alto apartment complex.

Economy top issue nationally, locally

By Henrietta J. Burroughs
East Palo Alto Today

Each day, one has only to turn on the radio or read the news headlines to see the devastating effect, the economic downturn is having on businesses and families worldwide.

The number of foreclo-

sures mount daily and cut-backs and job layoffs are affecting all sectors.

An Associated Press-GFK poll released on April 23, 2009 showed that 90 percent of Americans said that the economy was the most important issue facing the country today.

The poll stated that 65 percent of the American public felt

that it was difficult for them to get ahead.

While nearly 80 percent of those polled said that the high federal debt would harm future generations in today's economy.

In spite of all of the bleak news, the same poll showed that nearly 50 percent of the public feel that under Presi-

dent Barack Obama's administration, the nation is on the right track.

The AP-GFK poll shows the president's approval rating ranges between sixty four and sixty seven percent.

On the local scene, the country's economic downturn

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EPA needs to do more for businesses

When Renaissance Start Up presented to the East Palo Alto City Council the findings of a study it had made on the state of small businesses in the city, there was a mix of good news and bad news.

The findings given to the council during its April 21 meeting came from a Small

Business Capacity and Needs Assessment that was conducted during the fourth quarter of 2008. The findings were presented by Renaissance/Start Up's Executive Director Kimberly Carlton and Oscar Dominguez, the program manager.

Council members lis-

tened attentively as they were told that of the 20 small businesses surveyed, the data collected showed that the types and sizes of the businesses surveyed were broad, ranging from single-person operations to those with more than 25 employees.

Only 30 of the 48 busi-

nesses surveyed in a 1999 study were still open and operating in East Palo Alto last year. Most of the businesses surveyed employed five or fewer people, and a majority of the small businesses rent or lease the space they occupy.

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Putting autism's pieces together

By Debby Armstrong
EPA Today Contributor

The statistics on autism are worrisome. One in every 150 children is diagnosed with the disability, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That means 1.5 million Americans have some form of autism, and that number is on the rise.

Autism is a developmental disability that occurs when the brain has trouble functioning properly. It affects a child's ability to speak, learn and communicate with others. Doctors don't know exactly what causes it, but symptoms are often noticeable by the time a child is three years old.

Right now, there is no cure for autism, but early intervention can help. Children who are diagnosed at a young age and visit a doctor regularly for treatment show improvements in learning and communication skills. While some parents may be concerned about the safety of vaccines and whether there is a link to autism, the American Association of Pediatrics continues to

recommend that children receive their immunizations to protect them against childhood diseases.

In recognition of Autism Awareness Month, First 5 San Mateo County offers the following information to help parents understand autism and connect them to the resources they need.

Early Warning Signs

Autism is complex and can be difficult to diagnose because it affects each child differently, but there are signs that parents should look out for – like the ones below. As soon as you notice symptoms you should take your child to a doctor or health care provider.

*Eye Contact. Autistic children make little or no eye contact.

*Speech. Look for late speaking or no speaking at all. Some autistic children have trouble expressing needs or do not respond to verbal communication.

*Relationships. Sometimes autistic children have difficulty relating to other people, prefer to be alone or don't like to cuddle.

*Play. Children are active and creative, so take note if your child doesn't play. Also keep in

mind that autistic behavior sometimes includes unusual play patterns like spinning objects over and over again.

*Extreme Behaviors: Watch for extreme behavior like too much laughing or crying for no reason, tantrums and sensitivity to pain (or lack of it). Sometimes autistic kids don't have a natural fear of danger, and are fixated on certain objects for a long time. Repetitive movements like hand-flapping also can be an early sign of autism.

The Sooner, The Better

Since there are no specific medical tests for autism, it's important that parents, caretakers, teachers and health care providers pay close attention to a child's communication behavior and development.

Screenings for autism can take time, so it's a good idea to get started as soon as symptoms are noticed.

*Early Intervention. Research shows that early intervention reduces the effects of autism. By starting treatment at an early age (0 to 3) when the brain is developing, children can make great progress by the time they start kindergarten.

*Treatment. Autistic children benefit from programs that help develop their communication, social and mental skills. According to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, some of the most common treatment options include speech therapy, diet and treatments that focus on improving relationships.

Resources Available to Help

If you have concerns about your child's development, don't wait – talk to your doctor or health care provider about getting an autism screening. The following services can also help:

*California Department of Developmental Services. For children under age 3, call 1-800-515-BABY (2229) and select the "Early Start" extension number. For children between ages 3 and 5, call First 5 California at 1-800-KIDS-025 for screening services and information on whether your child can receive free special needs assessments.

*The Autism Society of America (ASA). The Autism Society of America has chapters

throughout California and provides information on symptoms and treatments. For more information, visit www.autism-society.org.

*Kit for New Parents. This free resource, a \$75 value, includes educational DVDs, guide books and brochures with parenting information, advice and useful tips including developmental milestones from ages 0 to 5, and warning signs that your child might need to be tested. To order a Kit, call 1-800-KIDS-025 or contact First 5 San Mateo County.

First 5 San Mateo County encourages all parents to be aware of their child's development and share any concerns with a health care professional. For more information on parenting resources or other First 5 San Mateo County programs, please call (650) 372-9500 or visit www.first5sanmateo.org.

Debby Armstrong is the executive director of First 5 San Mateo County

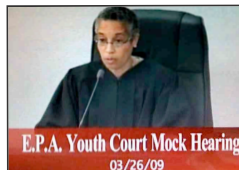
Youth Court Mock Hearing keeps it real

By Michael Uhila
EPA Today Contributor

On March 26, the East Palo Alto Youth Court held its mock hearing at City hall and they did keep it real. The room was filled with supporters, community members, the media and people who were curious about what was going on.

The balliff commanded all members at the hearing to rise as the Honorable Judge LaDoris H. Cordell presided. It felt much like a real hearing with the exception of the titles people held on both sides.

On one side, there were the advocates for the respondents, who are commonly known in court proceedings as "The Defense." On the other side there were the advocates for the community, who are commonly known in court as "The Prosecutors."



E.P.A. Youth Court Mock Hearing
03/26/09
Judge LaDoris H. Cordell

The hearing involved a respondent who was charged with possessing a marijuana joint on school grounds. Since the possession of marijuana is a common violation on school grounds across the nation, having the case made the mock hearing seem close to reality.

During the trial, the tension felt in the room added a little drama to the trial. Holding the East Palo Alto Youth Court at City Hall only added to the roles the young people per-

formed in the hearing.

Judge Cordell was a judge in Santa Clara County for 19 years, so she has an authoritative presence when she presides which helps suspend any disbelief one might have that the court is not real.

She began by asking the jurors whether they knew the respondent. All of the jurors said that they could be fair and impartial even though four of them said that they knew the respondent.

So, a jury of six of the defendant's peers was sworn in. They were there to be objective, scrutinize both sides, determine the truth, find justice

and ensure that this would be a fair hearing.

In my mind, Judge Cordell was there to state the rules and to let both sides play.

On one side we have the

advocates for the community Sunia Sanft and Lejon Harris ready to prosecute to the maximum of the law. On their side

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Community News Briefs

State of the City

Mayor Ruben Abrica will present the State of the City Address the first week in May. The presentation will be made in the East Palo Alto City Hall chamber. Abrica said the invitations to the event were in the mail.

An agreement between the City of East Palo Alto and Page Mill Properties

During the April 21 city council meeting Acting City Attorney Valerie Armento announced that two previously scheduled rent board hearings to decide on Page Mill Properties' 13 petitions for rent control exemption would be "held in abeyance" or halted.

In explaining the agreement to East Palo Alto Today, Armento said David Taran, the CEO of Page Mill Properties requested a meeting with Mayor Ruben Abrica.

His request led to a joint meeting which took place on April 21, the day of the council meeting. The meeting included Taran, Page Mill's General Manager Jim Shore, the firm's attorney Christine Griffith, Mayor Abrica, East Palo Alto's City Manager Alvin James and lawyers from East Palo Alto.

Armento said the group met to see if the issues that separated the parties could be resolved and to explore whether the two parties could work together productively.

Several hours after the meeting Armento received a call from Griffith saying that 12 petitions related to the exemption request would be with withdrawn.

One petition had all ready been discussed by the rent board

What does this mean? Armento replied, "I think everyone wants to work

productively, but productively means different things to different people."

In expressing her belief that it's better to be positive than negative, Armento said, "I think it's a good will gesture."

A new city attorney

Vincent Ewing received an official welcome from Mayor Abrica as he made his debut at the April 21 council meeting as East Palo Alto's new city attorney.

Ewing received his B.A from UCLA. He was a Visiting Law Student at the University of Pennsylvania and he received his J.D. from Howard University where he served as the associate editor of the Law Journal.

He has had experience as a litigator in private law practice for a firm in Pasadena. He was a litigator in criminal and

civil law cases for the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office:

As an attorney in the Santa Rosa City Attorney's Office, his work involved litigation, land use, contracts, economic development and housing issues.

He is affiliated with the California Bar, the U.S. District Court and the National Bar Association.

Newly released education study

The study which was released the on April 21 is titled, "Effects of the California High School Exit Exam on Student Persistence, Achievement, and Graduation.

It is described as the most detailed analysis of the effects of the California High School Exit Exam to date. The author of the study concludes that the policy of requiring all graduating students to take the exam

has lowered the graduation rates of low-achieving students of color and of girls by 15-20 percentage points. The study concludes that the California High School Exit Exam policy has had no positive effect on students' academic achievement.

For more information about the report please contact: Institute for Research on Education Policy & Practice Stanford University 520 Galvez Mall, 5th Floor Stanford, CA 94305 Tel: 650.736.1258 Fax: 650.723.9931

Email: irepp@suse.stanford.edu

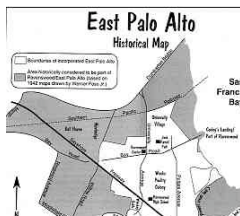
The above information about this newly released education study was supplied by Gail Ortega, who is the executive director of Built to Last which is located in the Onetta Harris Community Center in Menlo Park, CA.

Examining East Palo Alto's past and present

By Thomas Williams
EPA Today Contributor

Youth United for Community Action (YUCA), held a workshop at one of the DLA Piper conference rooms at its headquarters in University Circle on March 28.

This event was one of three workshops that YUCA has held to get the East Palo Alto community involved in the effort to have the community's voice heard within the planning process of the redevelopment of the Ravenswood Business District.



Map courtesy of the City of East Palo Alto

By having informational workshops which discuss different redevelopment areas, YUCA is trying to pass on to community members the

knowledge its members have gained from the research they have done about the East Palo Alto community.

The goal is for YUCA to enlighten community members about the city's past, so that they can be more mindful of the redevelopment process.

At the workshop on March 28th, there were several areas that were discussed: Gateway 101, where the Ravenswood High School and Cooley Apartments once stood and the University Circle Area, where Whiskey Gulch was located.

Now both areas have been replaced with developments that "improve" the image of East Palo Alto.

Heated discussions arose within the workshop, as to whether the two new redevelopments are examples of gentrification.

The community members who attended the workshop discussed the pros and cons of the developments and shared whether they were happy with the redevelopment projects. Most workshop attendees answered "No." However some did say that there were

some benefits that came out of the developments.

YUCA will be have three more workshops on other redevelopment areas, such as University Square, the housing complex across the street from the 49er Academy. During its next workshops, YUCA's goal is to increase the community's concern for what goes on in the city.

Thomas Williams is an East Palo Alto high school student who helped organize and lead several of YUCA's previous informational workshops.

City, County & State Government Meetings & Contacts

East Palo Alto City Council
The City of Council meets the first and third Tuesday of each month at 7:30 pm in the Council Chambers, East Palo Alto City Hall, 2415 University Avenue; (650) 853-3100 or Fax: (650) 853-3115. Website: www.ci.east-palo-alto.ca.us

East Palo Alto City Council Members

Ruben Abrica- Mayor
(650) 321-4001

David E. Woods Vice Mayor
(650) 853-1907

A. Peter Evans
(650) 321-1009

Carlos Romero
(650)328-4363

Laura Martinez
(650)714-5337

East Palo Alto Boards, Commissions, Committees

Planning Commission
Second and Fourth Monday

Rent Stabilization Board
Second and Fourth
Wednesday

Public Works & Transportation Commission
First and Third Wednesday

Youth Advisory Committee
First Thursday of each month

Senior Advisory Committee
Meets first Monday of each month 6:30p.m. - City Hall.

Menlo Park City Council
The Menlo Park City Council holds meetings every Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. at the City Council Chambers located at 801 Laurel Street. You can subscribe to receive the agendas and minutes by e-

mail when they are published. An agenda is posted in advance of the weekly meeting, and past agendas and minutes are filed by the date they were held. If you have questions about an agenda please call the City Clerk at 650.330.6620.

Menlo Park City Council Members

Heyward Robinson
Mayor
(650) 208-1512

Richard Cline
Vice Mayor
(650) 228-5166

John C. Boyle
(650)906-7163

Kelly J. Fergusson
(650) 327-4533

Andrew M. Cohen
(650)327-5332

Menlo Park Boards, Commissions, Committees

Arts Commission
Bicycle Commission
Environmental Quality Commission
Housing Commission
Las Pulgas Committee
Library Commission
Parks and Recreation Commission
Planning Commission
Transportation Commission

San Mateo County Bd. of Supervisors

Supervisor Rose Jacobs Gibson, Fourth District

The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors meets on March 3, 17, 31, & April 14, 28 2009 in the County of San Mateo Hall of Justice & Records 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063. Roll call at 8 a.m. 9 a.m.

Regular & Consent Agenda Items.

State Officials

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: 916-445-2841
Fax: 916-445-4633
Email: governor@governor.ca.gov

Assembly Member Ira Ruskin

District Address
5050 El Camino Real
Ste.117
Los Altos, CA 94022
650 691-2121

Senator Joseph S. Simitian

District Address
160 Town & Country Village
Palo Alto, CA 94301
(650) 688-6384

Cooley Landing's potential future

A natural treasure at the eastern end of Bay Road, in East Palo Alto

By Carlos Martinez
EPA Today Contributor

Ownership History

Back around 1848, Isiah Woods built his home, wharf and dairy in the area now known as Cooley Landing. From 1868 to 1932 Lester Cooley turned the area into an active port and commerce center trading and moving goods from local merchants to the growing San Francisco area. In 1932, the Wellar Realty Company, based in Oakland acquired the property, and used it as the South County dump, bringing garbage and debris, filling portions of the Bay. The county dump was closed and in 1960, Mr. Schoof bought the property to open his business, Palo Alto Boat Works, where he maintained and repaired small boats for water craft enthusiasts in the area. Around 1998, the Peninsula Open Space Trust, (POST) purchased the property from Mr. Schoof, at the Packard Foundation's request, with the intention of eventually "...prepare Cooley Landing to become a public recreation park". POST transferred Cooley Landing to the City in 2006.

A part of Cooley Landing transferred to the City

The piece of land bought and

transferred by POST to the City is only the middle portion of the area known as Cooley Landing, located at the eastern terminus of Bay Road. The site is within the jurisdictional boundaries of the City of East Palo Alto. The property is a narrow strip 127 wide and about 1,660 feet long, running the length of the middle of Cooley Landing, with an area of approximately 6.62 acres. Approximately half of the parcel is submerged in the Bay, and half is above water. The parcel was transferred to the City with a deed restriction, limiting its use to "...activities involving environmental education and/or passive recreational activities, nature study, enjoyment of views, natural habitat and environmental protection and related uses." Furthermore, the deed states, "No activity or use that degrades or is likely to degrade the scenic and natural character of the property shall be permitted."

The natural environment and jurisdictional boundaries around Cooley Landing

The lands North, East and South of the city owned parcel at Cooley Landing, are located within the boundaries of the City of Menlo Park. To the North of the city property at Cooley Landing, there is an



Map courtesy of the City of East Palo Alto's Redevelopment Agency

old dredge that was destroyed by fire in 2008. The dredge was used by Mr. Schoof to periodically dredge the area to maintain access to a deep water channel, located within 500 feet of the edge of the existing boat launch. The water channel connects Cooley Landing to the bay maritime network, and at one time, it is believed that it was able to accommodate ferry traffic. The parcels adjacent and immediately North, West and South of the city site are owned by the

Mid-Peninsula Regional Open Space District, (Mid-Pen), who own and manage the Ravenswood Open Space Preserve, this 373-acre preserve is comprised of two non-contiguous areas located south of the Dumbarton Bridge and adjacent to San Francisco Bay. The larger area is located near and north of Cooley Landing within the boundary of Menlo Park. The marsh attracts a variety of migrating birds including sandpipers, dowitchers, and avocets.

Great blue herons, white pelicans, and egrets are also common. MidPen is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to purchase, permanently protect, and restore lands forming a regional open space greenbelt, preserve unspoiled wilderness, wildlife habitat, watershed, view shed, and fragile ecosystems, and provide opportunities for low-intensity recreation and environmental education.

South of Cooley Landing is
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Evictions

2008 CLS dealt with 14 evictions.

Frohnmayer said in a written report, "In the first three months of this year, we've

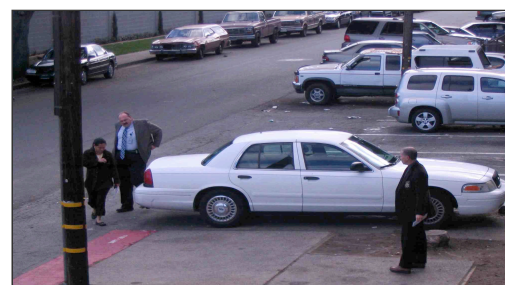
dealt with 25 evictions -- 11 normal evictions and 14 post-foreclosure evictions. So, you could say that our eviction rate has doubled, with the in-

creases attributable largely to foreclosures."

In response to those critics who attribute some of the rise in evictions to Page Mill Properties' rent increases, Sam Singer, a spokesperson for Page Mill Properties issued a written statement in which he said, "There were very few evictions over the course of the last year at Woodland Park.

The data that is being provided by a local tenants group is simply false.

Out of the 1,700 units, there were only approximately 20 evictions last year. It is important to note that we have improved the lives of our tenants by removing drug dealers, gang members others who have threatened the safety of our existing tenants. We continue to take pride in making our community safer and increasing the quality of life for our residents. Since Page Mill took over the property and installed security lighting and fencing for our tenants, crime rates have gone down significantly in our neighborhood. We encourage people to visit our website at www.woodlandparkcommunity.com and see firsthand the



Picture courtesy of the Fair Rent Now Coalition
Photo shows a San Mateo County Sheriff's Deputy and an apartment manager escorting a tenant during her eviction from her apartment.

improvements we have made in our community."

Reporter Ed Mendel, who is described as having covered the Capitol in Sacramento for nearly three decades, wrote an article which appears online at <http://calpersions.com/2009/02/02/calpers-pushing-out-the-poor/>.

Mendel's article is titled "CalPERS: pushing out the poor." In the article, Mendel talks about his interview with Russell Schaadt, Page Mill Properties portfolio director. Mendel states:

"In the last six months, Schaadt said, Page Mill has only evicted about 60 tenants

for non-payment of rent. He said about 15 or 20 of them are still in their units because they signed legal agreements to pay off back rent."

The information attributed to Schaadt seems to be at odds with the information given to East Palo Alto Today by Singer.

It was not possible at the time of this writing to ask Singer about the quote concerning Schaadt. But there does appear to be a conflict.

Critics of Page Mill Properties point to similar conflicts in some of the company's materials which also raise questions about the company's veracity.

continued from page 1

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COMMUNITY TRUST
CREDIT UNION OF EAST PALO ALTO

“I’m too young to die.”



That’s a common thought, especially for anyone who looks and feels healthy. But did you know the second leading cause of cancer death in men and women 50 and older is colorectal cancer? And did you know you could have the early stages of this deadly cancer and not know it?

A simple procedure called a colonoscopy could easily save your life with early detection. We apologize if this message is upsetting, but we believe it’s far better to face reality than to die from a disease that can be detected early and successfully treated.

We urge you to see your doctor and discuss a colonoscopy soon. And please check the list to the right for any of these symptoms. You may be young, but you’re not too young to die.

If you are uninsured, we can help. For more information please call Strides for Life at 650-348-5800.

Colon Cancer Checklist

- *A change in bowel habits*
- *Constant tiredness*
- *Blood in stool*
- *Unexplained weight loss*
- *Diarrhea, constipation, vomiting*
- *Unexplained anemia*
- *Narrower than normal stools*
- *Feeling that the bowel does not empty completely*
- *Abdominal discomfort*



Sequoia Hospital

A member of CHW

www.SequoiaHospital.org



Strides for Life

Colon Cancer Foundation

www.stridesforlife.org

From the Editor's Desk

A Measure of Insanity

Earlier this month, I taped a television show with guests who discussed East Palo Alto's Parole Reentry Program. Eight parolees participated in the program and they shared why they entered the program and what it meant to them.

After taping the show, I've had more time to think about the impact the city's parolee program is having on the lives of those who are a part of it.



Henrietta J. Burroughs

As one parolee said on the show, "We all make mistakes and everyone deserves another chance." It is difficult for me to understand why when even the most hardened criminal is released from prison, society would deny that person the very resources and opportunities that he or she could use to become a productive member of society.

In all too many cases, this is exactly what happens when parolees are released. It is difficult for them to find meaningful employment because few employers are willing to hire those who have been convicted of felonies. They are also denied government housing for the same reasons.

How are people expected to re-enter society and turn their lives around when they are denied the most important things they need that would enable them to do exactly what is being requested of them.

It clearly makes no sense. How can anyone be expected to move beyond their past when they must declare their past at every turn and have it held against them?

It came as a surprise to me that one audience member on the show said that not every ex-prisoner is ready for the parolee program, and he cited murderers, rapists, child molesters and robbers as examples. Well, there are people in these categories who have been released from prison, and they are walking among us. They might not be eligible for the parolee program.

I don't know what the eligibility requirements are, but it oc-

curred to me that maybe the logic that could be used to shut them out of the parole program should be reversed. The people who pose the greatest threat should get the most assistance.

The people who are most at risk for returning to a life of crime should be given the most incentives to do otherwise.

After all, shouldn't they be given the most exposure to counseling, positive resources and opportunities. The people who are most at risk for returning to a life of crime should be given as much encouragement as possible and the most access to as many support networks as possible.

Yes, I know all too well that you can't make people do what they don't want to do, but you can, as a minimum, provide them with options and alternatives. Rather than shutting people out, shouldn't we be offering people who feel shut out, disadvantaged and ignored a way in. People who feel accepted and a part of things, don't have feelings of anger and alienation that they take out on other people.

Somehow, it is to those who have the greatest need that society gives the least. Those who are the poorest lack the resources to move up, so is it any wonder that the poor become poorer. If you deny people basic opportunities, basic access to jobs, education and housing, then what type of lives are they most likely to pursue? There is a reason that certain crimes are highest in poorer communities?

It has been established that punishment in penal institutions does not work. It does not make for better citizens. But the right program just might lead to the desired result.

Everyone connected with the East Palo Alto Parole Reentry Program needs to be commended for establishing a program that's making a positive impact on many lives and on

continued on page 8



Photo courtesy of Meda Okelo
Youngsters are shown at the AI Julian Meet -- the local Hershey's Track and Field Games which took place in Cesar Chavez School in East Palo Alto on April 18, 2009. The kids found a way to have fun while they were also keeping fit. See story on page 8.

Letters in East Palo Alto Today

Dream Act Support

Dear Editor

I am writing to ask you to contact the Senators and Representatives of your state to ask them to support the DREAM Act. This request is for everyone, especially those of you who live in UTAH, HAWAII, ALASKA, OREGON, WASHINGTON, TEXAS, AND IDAHO.

The DREAM Act is proposed law that would allow young men and women who came to the United States when they were children to legalize their immigration status.

If the DREAM Act passes, then youth who meet the following criteria will be eligible for a temporary green card:

- * Older than 12 on the date the DREAM Act passes
 - * Came to the U.S.A. before age 16
 - * In the U.S.A. for at least five years continuously
 - * Still younger than 35
 - * Graduated from high school or earned a general equivalency degree (G.E.D.)
- Each year about 65,000

youth who live in the United States, including some Pacific Islanders, are blocked from pursuing their dreams because they are undocumented, even though they have spent nearly all their lives here. This is a tragic situation and must be fixed.

An earlier version of the DREAM Act almost passed in October 2007. Now is the time. Please do not let this opportunity pass by. Contact your Senators and Representatives now and spread the word to your friends and family.

Most members of Congress prefer to be contacted by e-mail through their official web sites or by telephone.

Please tell your Senator(s) you support the DREAM Act.

To find your Senator(s) and their contact information, visit <http://www.senate.gov>

Please tell your Representative you support the American Dream Act. To find your Representative and his or her contact information, visit <http://www.house.gov>

George Taufui Halaholo, MS Orinda, CA.

Economic Impact

March 27, 2009

To Our Partners:

At the request of the Board of Ravenswood Family Health Center, I am writing to inform you that RFHC is making necessary expense adjustments in response to a reduction in anticipated revenues over the next months as the economy continues to contract.

We have already experienced extended delay of up to 3 weeks in receiving Medicaid reimbursements from the State of California with additional delays planned for the month of June. In addition, we have also been informed that there will be a reduction in some grant awards. The combined effect has created both a cash flow and a projected revenue shortfall if we do not act promptly.

Given these forewarnings, our board met this week and approved an 8% reduction in

continued on page 8

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 agreement 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 the other.

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

We are committed to maintaining our independence by avoiding partnerships, investments or business relationships that would compromise the integrity of our news reports

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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.

Effect of downturn on Ravenswood Schools

Maria de la Vega

As you are likely aware, California's new state budget makes severe cuts to funding of our state's schools. Despite being one of the world's largest economies, California is now last in the country in per-pupil funding.

The coming school year (2009-10), and the following year, will pose considerable challenges to the Ravenswood school district. Across the district, the budget for 2009-10 must be reduced by \$1.8 million. Our commitment is to keep cuts as far from the classroom as possible, but we know some services and



Maria De La Vega

staffing will be affected by the required budget reductions.

None of the challenges that lie ahead, however, alter this:

- Education is key to the success of our students. Education is the critical equalizer that puts our children's dreams within reach. To ensure that the children of Ravenswood receive the needed education and skills to fulfill their dreams requires the full support of our

schools and the community.

- With the capable, student-driven leadership at the helm, dedicated faculty and professional support staff in the schools, and an engaged, supportive community, the Ravenswood City School District will meet the current challenges head-on. At the same time, progress will continue to be made in empowering students – through a quality educational program – to make positive choices, to achieve their personal best, and to be productive, responsible members of society.

You can help. Our foundation is seeking monetary donations that will go directly to

meeting the needs of students. You can adopt a school, or purchase uniforms for students in need. Any support you can provide will be invaluable in helping the schools in your community to weather this current financial crisis. Please contact, Charley Scandlyn, Foundation Director for the Ravenswood City School District, at (650) 329-2800 ext. 60147 or charley@ravenswoodef.org

On behalf of the Ravenswood students and our schools, please accept our appreciation for any support you are able to provide during these critical and financially challenging times. Please

visit our website at: ravenswood.k12.ca.us for continuing updates. Respectfully,
Maria M. De La Vega
Board Members:
Larry Moody, President
John Bostic, Vice President
Sharifa Wilson, Clerk
Saree Mading, Member
Marcelino López, Member
María M. De La Vega
Superintendent
Ravenswood City School District

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Can a water transportation system renew East Palo Alto

By Charles Ivan King
EPA Today Contributor

As we witness yet another marvel of modern transportation, and the promise High Speed Rail purports to bring for the Bay Area, it may be prudent to take a look back in time at the effects modern transportation had on the City of East Palo Alto and how this city can use transportation for its benefit now to move boldly into the future.

"A port town to rival San Francisco," is what Elijah Wood offered on his Ravenswood development on the San Francisco Bay, which

became the foundation for the City of East Palo Alto. In the 1850's, Mr Wood was so confident about the promise his tiny town held that he even had plans for Ravenswood to be the last stop for the Inter-continental Railroad.

When the railhead was located in Oakland, all rail traffic bypassed Ravenswood to serve and create prosperous cities along the line from San Jose to San Francisco. With the port abandoned and rail hopes faded, Ravenswood /East Palo Alto suffered its first major transportation disappointment on the road to city hood.



Charles King

The fledgling city being of a resilient nature shifted focus to become a leading agriculture and poultry hotspot, both of which relied heavily on the road transport of goods to help make Runnymede possible. Construction on Bayshore Highway began in the 1930's and with it came the promise

of free flowing traffic for automobiles and trucks along the industrial corridor between San Francisco and San Jose.

For a while, perhaps, Bayshore Highway may have been a great solution for Runnymede and East Palo Alto, but soon this same highway, on its road to becoming a freeway, would bring to the city its second major transportation disappointment. Although the highway brought revenue to the not yet incorporated city, it would ultimately cut through the heart of Whiskey Gulch, East Palo Alto's commercial center and be renamed "Bloody Bayshore."

"Bloody Bayshore" was one of a few sites in the area where drivers, thick with alcohol, would pile themselves behind the wheel of fast moving automobiles, enroute to a certain end.

Along with the freeway, East Palo Alto also earned a dubious, albeit negative distinction among peninsula cities. As plans for the expansion of Bayshore Freeway moved forward, businesses on both sides of the road were forced to close or move destroying completely East Palo Alto's commercial hub.

Transportation set the

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A high hidden cost to pay for inefficiency

Marcia Perez
EPA Today Contributor

On Thursday, April 9th I was taking a walk with my daughter at Costaño Elementary School. We were milling around the wet play ground and splashing in the rain puddles. We saw that one of the buildings was gutted with the walls torn down.

We stopped to take in the site. Not far from the worksite was a large garbage bin overflowing with brand new text books. I thought to myself, "No way. They are not throwing all these new books away. The bin said "Refuse" and the books were exposed to the elements and at that moment it was raining.

The school district could not possibly be storing the books for safe keeping because they were outside in the rain and high winds, in a garbage bin next to all the other school garbage waiting



for pick up. I sifted through the books and found hundreds possibly over a thousand brand new algebra, basic math, history and science text books. Also included were multiple copies of novels, workbooks and various children's books.

There was an entire set of encyclopedias. I looked through the math and science work books. They were brand new and never touched. Not a thing wrong with them. The last time I checked algebra did not change much year-to-year. I was angered by such incredible inefficiency. Such a travesty to our children and wasting of our hard earned tax

dollars should not go unmentioned.

The Ravenswood City School Board is ultimately responsible for this excessive and unnecessary waste. They allowed over ordering and under utilization of precious and scarce resources. If this is what they do in the open with text books where is all the other hidden waste.

The current school board may not have ordered the books but they are the ones sitting in power while the books were thrown in the garbage. The books could have been given to the any number of programs that work with kids after-school struggling with their homework.

They could have gone to the Boys and Girls Club Center for a New Generation program, Bayshore Christian Ministries, JobTrain's Sassy program, Built to Last, College Track, etc. They could have been offered to parents dedi-

cated enough to their children's education to work with them at home. They could have been offered up to other struggling schools in Oakland or Richmond.

They even could have been put up for sale on E-Bay just to see if the school could raise some extra funds. There are any number of resourceful ways the books could have found a better home other than the landfill. I took out two sets of algebra books to work with my children at home.

I also pulled out a complete classroom set of science fair books and took them to my daughter's school in Palo Alto. The teacher was very happy to rescue the books and said that the children had been asking for individual science projects to work on at home and that she was about to create the next science unit for them.

The teacher stated, "The books are perfect and the children would immediately start

using them next week for their own classroom science fair." How ironic is that?

The most underfunded school district in the area dumped books one of the most affluent school districts in the area is now going to use. And we wonder why our kids can't get a decent education around here. I do not regret for one second transferring my child out of this district. I am sure the anger will be aimed at me, the messenger. The school board's energy would be better spent taking responsibility for its actions, or lack thereof. The Board needs to take a hard look at its budget, fix their wasteful educational delivery system and focus on the unmet needs of our children before we can afford them the luxury of throwing away thousands of dollars in books. SHAME ON YOU RAVENSWOOD CITY SCHOOL BOARD.

Lifecycles

Papa : A community tribute to Thurman Smith

By Charmaine Hall
EPA Today Contributor

On March 19, 1929, something spectacular happened to a couple by the name of Knowledge and Pearlee Smith. They birthed a son named Thurman Smith.

But little did they know how significant his name would be or how great a man he would become. They would have never imagined how many people he would reach in so many ways.

Thurman Smith is my grandfather. Papa is what we call him and he has done just as much for me as he has for family members and the com-

munity. Papa is involved in numerous community based programs, from being on the board at the women's club to volunteering at the senior citizen building. He is a role model for the young and the old; he tries to instill meaning and purpose into them and teach them the rights and wrongs of life.

For the older people he



Thurman Smith with his wife, daughter and granddaughters

shows that you can still do everyday duties and not just sit around and get old. He is always on the streets of East Palo Alto - by foot, bike, or car.

On March 21, 2009 his family had a surprise roast for him to honor his eight decades in this world and to have as many laughs as possible at his expense.

We decided to go with a roast to show people that just because you're 80 doesn't mean you have to sit down and have crying sessions about the life of someone, like it is the end of the world. We wanted it to be a time of joy and laughter and if there were any tears they were tears of happiness and not sorrow.

We gathered up as many family members and friends as

we possibly could to celebrate. We even had Goro Mitchell (CDI ED) act as interference to keep Papa from being suspicious about what was going to take place.

In honor of our grandfather we had shirts made with his picture on them and souvenirs of champagne bottles for the guest to take home with his picture on them as well.

At the event we had guests come up and share their humorous stories about times they had enjoyed spending with him. In this we found out that my grandfather had a pet name for my grandmother "Sweet Baby," we all got a kick out of that, THANKS AARON STRONG,

Our contribution to Papa was having a cake made with his trademark suspenders, button up shirt, and pants with a belt on it. We also had shirts made with different little funny sayings on them too.

We all had a blast surprising him with family and friends that he hadn't seen for a while as well as giving him gifts that he



Thurman Smith

did not expect to receive. It was nice to see him in utter shock as to what had occurred and how we went about it without him knowing.

It was definitely not as hard as he thought because he is always out and about in the community giving his helping hand to others who he feels needs it more than he does.

Even with us showing our support and appreciation to him, he was still in his generous mood and decided to donate all the leftover food from the event to feed the homeless.

This was not a shock to us, but it was a gesture that he and his sister do all the time. We were just unaware of it.

After all that is said and done, if you ever happen to see this gentle but intimidating man know that he is the kindest and most warm hearted person you will ever meet.

Even if he is in your presence for only a few minutes, he leaves a lasting impression on everything and everybody he comes into contact with. You will definitely know that it is him because he will have a story to tell, a smile on his face and a toothpick in his mouth.

The Smith family would like to send thanks to all who attended and contributed to this magnificent event. To those of you who could not attend, you really missed out on a good one.

EPA's annual track and field games

There could not have been a nicer day on which to hold the sixth annual Al Julian Track Meet.

The weather was warm and balmy. To anyone watching, it was as clear as a bright, sunny day that the athletes were ready to do what was being demanded of them.

They had traveled to Cesar Chavez School from



Photo courtesy Meda Okelo

Redwood City, Cupertino, Union City and other East Palo Alto neighborhoods prepared to complete - to run, to jump, to throw and to team up in relay races.

Many who might not have been ready to give their hearts to the game were certainly there to give their utmost.

Those who excelled were presented awards from East Palo Alto's Vice Mayor David Woods, and they stood on the platform to accept their prize.

The games are known outside of East Palo Alto as the Hershey's Track and Field Games



Photo courtesy Meda Okelo Vice Mayor David Woods hands ribbons to the winners.

The local meet was named in honor of Al Julian, a retired PE teacher in the Ravenswood City School District. It is sponsored by Division 34 of KIWANIS International, the City of East Palo Alto, and

the Ravenswood City School District and coordinated by Kiwanis Club of East Palo Alto.

Millions of youngsters across America and Canada have participated in the games since their inception. The games are sponsored by USA Track and Field, Athletics Canada, the National Recreation and Park Association and the Hershey Company.

To Our Partners

continued from page 6

support staffing. By limiting staffing cutbacks to support staff, RFHC will be able to maintain the same level of effort in the delivery of patient care. Tasks and functions that were done by those who are leaving will have to be redistributed among the remaining staff. We are committed to ensuring that there is no compromise to the quality of care.

Through this difficult period, the RFHC Board and the management team is firmly committed to ensuring above all that there will be a continuity of care for our patients. At the same time, we are determined to maintain financial stability by balancing revenues and expenses.

So, until the economy is back on track, we will work with a lean staff and avail ourselves of volunteer help whenever appropriate.

We all share the same hope, that the recovery will come sooner than later.

With best wishes,

Luisa Buada
Chief Executive Officer

Melieni Falemaka Talakai
Chair, Board of Directors


A Measure of Insanity

Continued from page 6

one community.

What affects the least of us, sooner or later affects all of us, psychologically, emotionally, physically or economically. None of us is immune from the forces of life.

The more positive programs we can create to help as many people as possible, whatever their circumstances, the more positive results will come back and spread to all of us. To think and do otherwise reflects a measure of insanity.



"We will save the natural world in order to save ourselves." —E.O. Wilson

E.O. Wilson

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