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The Richard May Athletic Field page 7



Local church honors community leaders page 3

# East Palo Alto Today

Providing news that is relevant, informative and critical



East Palo Alto and Belle Haven

Special Winter Edition 2010 - 2011

Vol. 6 No.25

## EPA develops a climate action plan

By Russell Averhart  
East Palo Alto Today

The City of East Palo Alto is joining an ever increasing number of California communities who are developing plans to address climate change at the local level. Although climate change is a global problem, city leaders in California, the U.S. and abroad are increas-

ingly recognizing that it will affect our communities and pose risks to public health, safety, and welfare. It is also at the local level that many strategies to both adapt to the changing climate and combat its progression are best enacted.

Climate change is defined as the increase in the average temperature of Earth's near-surface air and

oceans since the mid-20th century.

Recent surveys of the levels of concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, including carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide, demonstrate that these gases are increasing rapidly. Hence, the scientific consensus is that the planet is warming, that human activities are contributing to greenhouse gases in the atmos-

phere, and that these changes play a big role in the current warming. The effects include forecasted include increased frequency and severity of heat waves, drought and extreme weather events, and sea level rise caused by accelerated melting of the polar ice cap.

In response to the threat, the

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Photo courtesy EPA Today  
Part of the East Palo Alto city logo  
State of California approved the AB 32 – the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006. AB 32 requires the California Air Resources Board

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## Working together for a healthier community



This photo shows some of the facilitators and coalition members who attended the East Palo Alto Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition (EPAS APC) retreat, which was held at the Costaño Elementary School on Saturday, January 29, 2011. The retreat was convened by One East Palo Alto and was designed to address some of the substance abuse issues confronting the East Palo Alto community. The meeting was held between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. This photo was taken when the meeting ended.

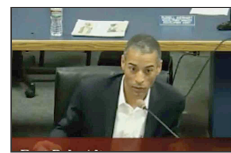
Photo courtesy of Art Lim

## City attorney responds to charge of racism

By Richard Hackmann  
East Palo Alto Today

The City of East Palo Alto has responded to accusations from Council member Peter Evans that the City's policy of electing a Mayor and Vice Mayor is "racist and evil." In a formal statement issued by East Palo Alto City Attorney Vincent Ewing on December 12, claims of a "racist and evil" pol-

icy are dismissed as faulty and legally inaccurate by Ewing citing numerous sources. Ewing explains that the criteria for selecting a new Mayor and Vice is clearly stated as a process that occurs by a vote of the five elected council members and "Noting in the City's Municipal Code, nor in the government code vests you [Councilmember Evans] with an 'electoral or civil' right to be voted



Vincent Ewing

into the position of Mayor by your fellow council members."

As originally covered by the

EPA Today newspaper on Dec. 8, the controversy surrounding the election of a new Mayor began at the Dec. 7 East Palo Alto City Council meeting when Council member Evans read aloud a written statement of his objections to the City's policy towards electing a Mayor and Vice Mayor as his own election to that position looked

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## Non-profits reinvent model for ending poverty

By Kail Lubarsky  
East Palo Alto Today

Menlo Park, Calif. On January 10, 2011, Mayors Rich Cline of Menlo Park and Carlos Romero of East Palo Alto along with Council Member Ruben Abrica, attended a ceremonial ribbon cutting at JobTrain. The occasion marked the

one year partnership between Single Stop USA and JobTrain. Since January 2010, the national not-for-profit Single Stop USA, has had tremendous impact at JobTrain, Silicon Valley's long-standing vocational training organization that serves more than 6,000 economically disadvantaged individuals each year and helps them find

sustainable employment.

JobTrain partnered with Single Stop to expand the scope of its services and programs even more. In its first year of operation at JobTrain, Single Stop helped more than 700 Bay Area residents reclaim their lives through access to social service programs such as affordable healthcare, housing,

food stamps and legal aid – to highlight just a few of the free critically-needed resources offered. The value of such services rendered in 2010 total \$1.7 million in benefits and tax-credits.

In just a single year, the JobTrain Single Stop partnership has literally prevented hundreds from

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### Inside

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- News Briefs
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- TV Listings
- Youth News

# East Palo Alto City Council holds Annual Strategic Planning Retreat

This is a special report for East Palo Alto Today

By ML Gordon  
East Palo Alto Today

The East Palo Alto City Council held its Annual Strategic Planning Retreat on Tuesday, January 18, 2011, in the Community Room at City Hall. The retreat was facilitated by Marilyn Snider, Snider & Associates and was scribed by Kara Tauboi.

During the first 90 minutes of the retreat, management staff joined the Council to address "The Strategic Planning Elements" which included the "SWOT" Analysis, (Internal Strengths, Weaknesses, External Opportunities and Threats) a recap of the City's Mission Statement, Core Values, Three Year Categorical Priorities and the Goal under each of the six Categorical Priorities.

Mayor Carlos Romero opened the retreat welcoming



Photo courtesy of East Palo Alto Today

This picture shows some of the city council members and the city staff members who attended the East Palo Alto City's Council's one day retreat on January 18, 2011.

those participating and introduced Snider, who has facilitated previous council retreats. At Councils December 14, 2010 and January 11, 2011 meetings, the Agenda provided an opportunity for citizens to comment and provide input on the City Council's six categorical priorities.

The EPA Today newspaper conducted a survey, available on its website, allowing an opportunity for residents and those who do business in East Palo Alto to respond and make their voices known about how they feel about

Councils categorical priorities.

A small number of residents were in attendance, during the retreat, and provided public comment toward what they thought should be included in the priorities.

The Council spent much of the afternoon identifying goals for each of the categorical priorities, which M L Gordon, City Manager is charged with working with staff to identify objectives to accomplish the goals. Council brainstormed many goals for the six priorities; and, Snider facilitated a process for council

members to narrow the list to no more than six goals under each priority.

The Categorical Priorities and the Goals under each are as follows: (Please note the Priorities and Goals are not listed in any particular order)

### Enhance Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness

Present a plan for re-implementation of the Public Safety Commission

Adopt and implement the Emergency Preparedness Plan

Adopt and implement an aggressive anti-graffiti ordinance

Implement a motorcycle police patrol

Provide an alternative source of potable water for use in emergencies (i.e., a new well)

### Enhance Economic Vitality

Complete the Specific Plan for the Ravenswood Business District (RBD)

Commence the EIR for the Ravenswood Business District Specific Plan

Design Bay Road Phase II

and storm water infrastructure improvements

Identify strategies for promoting businesses.

### Increase organizational effectiveness and efficiency

Restructure the organization Hire appropriate staff, reducing time to fill vacant positions

Increase the visibility of Department heads and the work of their departments

Update the City's policies and procedures including hiring a consultant

Complete the online automation of the Rent Stabilization Program Automate online licensing, permitting and form processing (e.g., job and commissioner applications)

### Improve Public Facilities and Infrastructure

Implement Phase II of the Runnymede Storm Drainage Project.

Complete design and commence construction of the street

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# Ravenswood Family Health Center receives major grant

By Kathleen Alexander  
East Palo Alto Today

Out of 231 applicant organizations, Ravenswood Family Health Center was one of only 6 community health centers in the nation to be awarded a major 3-year grant by the Health Resources and Services Administration, an agency under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

The grant was given to RFHC so that it could expand its chronic disease prevention and management services through the use of paraprofessional community Health Navigators. RFHC will receive \$1,177,881 over three years to implement this work.

Given such a competitive process, there were several factors that favored RFHC in the grant application process. First, in its multi-ethnic services area, half



Photo courtesy of the Ravenswood Family Health Center Patients of the Ravenswood Family Health Center attend one of the centers healthy cooking demonstrations.

of the residents live at or below 200% of the federal poverty level and poverty correlates with higher rates of chronic disease.

Third, the Ravenswood Family Health Center has a strong track record. "We have a solid foundation to build on," says Belinda Hernandez, Director of Health Education, Prevention and

Behavioral Health Programs. "We spent the past three years developing the framework and the curriculum for our Chronic Disease Prevention Program.

But with 2,351 chronic disease patients in 2009 and only 4 Health Navigators on staff, the Chronic Disease Team was outnumbered 500 to 1. Since many

of our patients deal with multiple stress factors in addition to their chronic disease, they need intensive case management in addition to education. With this grant we will add 6 new Health navigators and an RN educator over three years."

Second, according to RFHC's Chronic Disease Manager Will Cerrato, "RFHC is one of the only community health centers in the country that has a trained Health Navigator team solely dedicated to provide outreach, prevention and patient-centered chronic disease management services."

RFHC offers a full complement of chronic disease support services for patients from one-on-one education and case management to group workshops, cooking demos, Stanford Chronic Disease Self-Management designed training of patients who be-

### Looking at the figures

Area-wide chronic disease rates (based on San Mateo County-wide averages) for the 11,411 adults below 200% FPL are all higher than comparable county-wide rates for the general population, including rates for diabetes (13.8% versus 8.2%), hypertension (32.3% versus 26.1%), heart disease (6.1% versus 5.2%), asthma (11.1% versus 9.7%) and overweight/obesity (63.3% versus 56.7%).

come peer educators.

Kathleen Alexander is the director of communications and marketing for the Ravenswood Family Health Center.

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License: AL-10-1106 AZ-020217517 CA-0203030 07-22-02010844 LA-20-212 PC-07-0300407 SC-10-0300407 GA-10-0203030 IL-02-03030 IL-03-03030 IN-02-03030 IN-03-03030 IN-04-03030 IN-05-03030 IN-06-03030 IN-07-03030 IN-08-03030 IN-09-03030 IN-10-03030 IN-11-03030 IN-12-03030 IN-13-03030 IN-14-03030 IN-15-03030 IN-16-03030 IN-17-03030 IN-18-03030 IN-19-03030 IN-20-03030 IN-21-03030 IN-22-03030 IN-23-03030 IN-24-03030 IN-25-03030 IN-26-03030 IN-27-03030 IN-28-03030 IN-29-03030 IN-30-03030 IN-31-03030 IN-32-03030 IN-33-03030 IN-34-03030 IN-35-03030 IN-36-03030 IN-37-03030 IN-38-03030 IN-39-03030 IN-40-03030 IN-41-03030 IN-42-03030 IN-43-03030 IN-44-03030 IN-45-03030 IN-46-03030 IN-47-03030 IN-48-03030 IN-49-03030 IN-50-03030 IN-51-03030 IN-52-03030 IN-53-03030 IN-54-03030 IN-55-03030 IN-56-03030 IN-57-03030 IN-58-03030 IN-59-03030 IN-60-03030 IN-61-03030 IN-62-03030 IN-63-03030 IN-64-03030 IN-65-03030 IN-66-03030 IN-67-03030 IN-68-03030 IN-69-03030 IN-70-03030 IN-71-03030 IN-72-03030 IN-73-03030 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# Community News Briefs

## World Series Trophy comes to East Palo Alto

The San Francisco Giants' World Series Trophy will be on public display in East Palo Alto on Tuesday, February 15, from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the newly remodeled Youth Activity Center in the East Palo Alto YMCA located at 550 Bell St. in East Palo Alto.

The East Palo Alto T-Ball & Pitching Machine baseball



Photo of trophy courtesy of S.F. Giants

organization has a Junior Giants program for children ages 4-18 years old and the Junior Giants program is sponsored by the World Champion San Francisco Giants!

The public is invited to attend the free February 15 event.

- Deloris Farrell

[Editor's note: On the recommendation of the city's Community Services Department, the East

Palo Alto City Council adopted a resolution at its meeting on February 1 to endorse and support the city's hosting of the 2010 Commissioners Trophy of the World Series Champion, the San Francisco Giants.

The resolution was passed with three votes. David Woods was absent from the meeting and Council member Peter Evans abstained from voting. The resolution mandated that the city spend no more than fifteen hundred dollars towards the event.

You might be eligible for a

## home modification

Due to a dramatic decline in home prices and the rising rate of unemployment, many homeowners across the nation are not able to repay their mortgages.

Additionally, many banks and lenders have taken advantage of borrowers in crisis and created mortgages that are initially affordable but increase dramatically over time. East Palo Alto residents have been particularly subjected to such mortgages. The Office of the California Attorney Gen-

eral began an investigation of bank loans in an effort to aid borrowers in or facing default. Specifically, the Attorney General investigated the Pick-A-Payment mortgage loan offered by Wachovia and World Savings Bank/Golden West.

Wachovia and World Savings Bank/Golden West are two former financial institutions now owned by Wells Fargo. Wachovia and World Savings Bank/Golden West used to offer the "Pick-A-Payment" continued on page 15

# Rolling out the 211 hotline in San Mateo County

By Karen Zamel  
East Palo Alto Today

Finding essential and sometimes life-saving services can be daunting during trying times, especially for people who need those services the most. Often, the toughest part for those in need is knowing where to start.

When San Mateo County is officially added to the United Way's information and referral network, residents in all 12 Bay Area counties will be able to dial 211 and be connected with health and human services 24/7.

Call center operators, available around-the-clock at the 211 hotline number, will have the ability to give callers information that will enable them to find food, housing, health care, senior services, child

care, legal aid and much more.

According to Anne Wilson, the CEO of the United Way of the Bay Area, the 211 resource is designed to help residents navigate the maze of government and non-profit agencies that serve their counties. Wilson noted that people, without 211 now, often call several agencies before getting through to the correct service, while many give up before finding the help they need.

While the service is also available online at <http://211bayarea.org>, United Way representatives say that the real value of the service is that it gives callers the ability to speak with someone who is trained to help them assess and identify the best possible resources available.

"If you're in any type of crisis, you can reach a person who can



The above photo represents the trademarked image of the 211 logo.

help you. If you're hungry, received an eviction notice...reaching a live, caring person who can listen is sometimes the most important place to start. Our call center team is highly training in how to ask the right questions, assess the situation and help," said Maria Stokes, spokesperson for United Way of the Bay Area. She noted that the service is confidential and

that callers can get assistance in 150 different languages.

United Way initiated the Bay Area 211 project in 2006 with the County of San Francisco as the inaugural county. At the time, the goal was to aggregate various other information and referral services and simplify access throughout the region. Now, with the Congressional designation of 211 as the community information number, the coordination of many different agencies, and a planned five-year county-by-county roll out, the goal of having a Bay Area 211 has become a reality. In San Mateo County, the last county on the United Way's Bay Area to-do list, the 211 project was launched in Beta in October and is publicly available now.

Currently, United Way funds or operates the service for all 12

counties. The Bay Area 211 project will be officially launched in San Mateo County in early February. With the program's geographic expansion and the struggling economy, the volume of calls to the 211 call center is increasing rapidly. While 2010 statistics are not yet available, call volume skyrocketed by 59% from 2008 to 2009. More than 50% of those calls were from residents needing shelter or food. Since the need is so great, United Way is working to make the 211 hotline service available state-wide. Currently the service is up and running for 27 out of 58 counties in California.

Karen Zamel is a communications professional who served as communications director to former State Assemblymember Ira Ruskin.

# How does East Palo Alto compare?

By Karen Zamel  
East Palo Alto Today

The East Palo Alto City Council will continue to examine and discuss its six priorities for the year:

- A. Enhance Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness
- B. Create a Healthy and Safe Community
- C. Enhance Economic Vitality
- D. Increase Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency
- E. Improve Public Facilities and Infrastructure

F. Increase Communication and Enhance Community Engagement

The City Council is planning to determine action steps related to the priorities. As with any set of priorities or goals, the key will be in the specificity of how the priorities are implemented and how progress is measured.

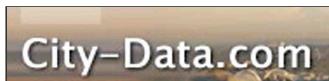
There are important opportunities for potential improvement in each of the six categories. For example, a decreased annual crime rate would impact public

safety (cited in priority A), while reduced obesity contributes to a healthy community (priority B). Increased high school and college graduation rates can affect economic vitality (priority C), while an objective measure of public facilities might be the number of parks available to families in the community.

This kind of data – and many other annual indices – is aggregated for all cities in the state (and country) at city-data.com. Data is gathered

from public reports and documents. While the website has published very little data for 2010, detailed statistics are available for years up to 2009.

The chart below is an example of how some East Palo Alto's priorities might be quantified – and how various and randomly selected cities in Northern and Southern California, with a similar population of around 30,000 residents, stack up.



2009 Statistics from city-data.com  
Unemployment data - as of April 2010

City	Location	Population	Crime Rate—U.S. Avg is 319.2 incidents per 100,000 residents	Unemployment as of April 2010	Graduation Rate For Population 25 Years and Older	Adult Obesity Rate
Atascadero	Northern CA	28,307	169.3	8.2%	88.4%	21.5%
Bell	Southern CA	36,664	229.3	15.5%	35.1%	20.4%
East Palo Alto	Northern CA	33,899	519.4	21.1%	48.2%	16.9%
Hollister	Northern CA	34,413	256	21.3%	72.3	22.9%
San Carlos	Northern CA	27,424	129	6.3%	94.6	16.9%
Walnut	Southern CA	30,607	116.2	5.8%	88.8%	20.4%

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# EPA turns down governor's key budget proposal

By **Henrietta J. Burroughs**  
East Palo Alto Today

The East Palo Alto City Council voted unanimously to approve a resolution that opposed Governor Jerry Brown's budget proposal, which would eliminate redevelopment agencies throughout California.

The four to nothing vote was taken at the council's regularly scheduled meeting in the council chambers on Tuesday, January 18. Council member Peter Evans was absent from the meeting.

The joint resolution that was approved was supported by the East Palo Alto City Council and the East Palo Alto Redevelopment Agency. Carlos Martinez, the city's redevelopment agency division manager, made the staff recommendation that the council approve the resolution opposing Brown's proposal, because he argued that, if implemented, the proposal to eliminate redevelopment



Photo courtesy of The Media Center  
East Palo Alto City Council members sit during their January 18 meeting, during which they voted on the state budget proposal.

agencies "would practically wipe out the East Palo Alto Redevelopment Agency's balances in both its capital and affordable housing fund."

Martinez recommended that the city's Mayor Carlos Romero and the Vice Mayor, Laura Martinez, who is also the chair of the city's redevelopment agency, submit the resolution and an accompanying letter to Gov. Brown and to California State Legislators explaining why the City of East Palo Alto is opposed to Brown's proposal.

In making his case for the city

resolution and the letter, Martinez pointed out that the East Palo Alto Redevelopment Agency (RDA) was created on January 4, 1988 for the purpose of abating blight in the city's redevelopment project areas.

Martinez said that the city had improved two of three areas in the city designated for development under RDA requirements: University Circle (UC) and the Gateway 101 Project Area. The third area, the Ravenswood Business District, is currently under study and the RDA is awaiting the council's ap-

proval of a specific plan for the area.

In the past the State of California took \$3.3 million in redevelopment agency funds from East Palo Alto during the 2009-2010 fiscal year. In the 2010-2011 fiscal year, the State of California will take \$671.251 from the city in an effort to close its own budget deficit.

In proposing a complete phase out of city redevelopment agencies throughout California by July 2011, Governor Brown's proposal would go further in making cuts than any previous administration in Sacramento.

It might have come as a surprise to some who attended the city council's meeting to hear Mayor Romero respond to Martinez's approach to the issue by saying that while he understood the reasons for Brown's proposal, the jury was still out as to any long term negative effects that the proposal might have. He said that some people already think that

Brown's proposal might not be so bad, since it might "democratize" the redevelopment process in some California cities.

Romero supported his remarks by pointing out that some redevelopment agencies are not held accountable for their use of redevelopment funds and that it was not a given that phasing out redevelopment agencies throughout the state would end how redevelopment is conducted in East Palo Alto.

In the end, after its extensive discussion of the issue, the city council approved the joint resolution opposing the governor's proposal. The council decided to send the governor and the state legislature a letter with its resolution and it agreed to create a payment schedule to get state reimbursement for East Palo Alto's past and existing redevelopment projects.

# Options to use to avoid foreclosure

By **Armando Arroyo**  
East Palo Alto Today

In today's troublesome economy many home owners are finding it difficult to navigate the plethora of options that face them when dealing with a looming foreclosure.

Often home owners, who are facing the possibility of losing their home, do not know how to overcome this type of loss? Fortunately, there are options for those who wish to find a solution.

If you are one of those individuals that are facing a foreclosure try these options.

One potential solution is the loan modification option available under the Home Affordable Refinance Program (<http://makinghomeaffordable.gov/>). The loan

modification allows the home owner to stay in their home, their current interest rate can drop, and partial loan balance can be deferred. The loan modification option is meant for home owners and not investors.

A second alternative can be the short sale solution. A short sale is a sales transaction in which the seller's mortgage lender agrees to accept a payoff of less than the balance due on the loan. A third solution is Deed-in-Lieu of Foreclosure.

Servicers may also offer to accept a deed-in-lieu of foreclosure through which a homeowner voluntarily transfers ownership of the property to their servicer. Many servicers require homeowners to try to sell their home before they

will accept a deed-in-lieu.

Please note if you have attempted to modify your loan with your lender and you have been denied there is also the Home Affordable Foreclosure Alternatives (HAFA) Program.

When considering this option you must attempt to modify your loan, if you are denied then you can enter into an agreement releasing you the homeowner from all future liability after the property is sold.

You may also qualify for a \$3,000.00 (three thousand dollars) in relocation assistance after closing.

Keep in mind when choosing one of these options it is best to talk to a realtor who can help you better navigate your situation. Lastly, the worst thing one can do

is let the foreclosure happen and not do anything about it. The negative impacts with a foreclosure are always far worse than a short sale or loan modification.

Be proactive and talk to a great realtor who can help you before it is too late.

**Armando Arroyo** has been long active in the East Palo Alto community. He is currently a realtor with CasAmerica Realty. He can be reached at (650)961-1382.

To get more details about his services and get additional contact information, see below.

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armando@casamericarealty.com  
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# Protesters ask help us not hurt us

By Diana Reddy  
East Palo Alto Today

Offended by the plans of large corporate banks to distribute \$143 Billion in executive bonuses at year's end, thirty clergy and lay leaders from Peninsula Interfaith Action (PIA) gathered today to express their outrage outside the historic Bank of America branch in downtown San Mateo. PIA leaders are affronted by the stark contrast between these bonuses and the suffering that families and communities are experiencing from the economic collapse that was caused by these same banks.

"This simply is not fair," says Diana Reddy, veteran PIA community leader. "The current recession has devastated thousands of Americans, and the irresponsible practices of banks are largely to blame. As people of faith, we are offended that these banks are paying such excessive bonuses while doing so little to relieve the pain in our communities. We believe banks should do more to help us, not hurt us."

The current recession has reached deep into people's lives. \$17 trillion in wealth has been wiped out in the past few years. Eight million jobs have been lost. Many millions of homes have



been foreclosed - 600,000 in California just last year. Record losses of tax revenue have left local governments unable to provide vital services. Small businesses cannot get loans. Thousands of people have been left homeless and without enough to eat.

PIA believes that banks have done far too little to mitigate the pain they have caused. For example, the banks could go much further in modifying residential mortgages to help people stay in their homes. Instead, homeowners pursuing loan modifications enter a nightmarish world where they cannot get a live person on

the phone, paperwork is lost, and they are put on hold until it is too late to save their homes.

In the coming months, PIA will pursue a campaign to promote bank accountability and encourage banks to invest more in the communities where they do business. Pastor Amy Zucker Morgenstern of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Palo Alto said, "We as taxpayers have made the sacrifice to fund a huge stimulus so that the banks would have the liquidity to make more loans to our communities. Instead, they're turning that money into profits and bonuses. They came to us asking for a handout,

but that's not what we're asking from them. We're asking for more loans, loan renegotiation, and simple human dignity." PIA plans to meet with banks to get an overview of their current practices, with emphasis on help to home owners, access to credit for small businesses, and support of community programs, and with special interest in banks' current best practices that PIA can champion and promote to other banks.

Founded in 1997, Peninsula Interfaith Action (PIA) is a powerful and respected community organization that focuses on identifying and developing long-lasting solutions to a wide range of local issues. Working with thirty faith-based communities throughout the Peninsula, PIA professional community organizers develop community leaders to take an active role in shaping public policy decisions important to lives going forward. A member of

the PICO national network, PIA focuses on policies at the local, state, and national levels in areas such as healthcare, education, affordable housing, public safety, and immigration reform. To learn more about PIA, visit [www.pico-apico.org](http://www.pico-apico.org).

Diana Reddy, who is with Peninsula Interfaith Action (PIA) and is quoted in the article, can be contacted by email at [diana.94062@yahoo.com](mailto:diana.94062@yahoo.com)



Two protesters hold signs in front of the Bank of America in San Mateo, CA.

Spanish article on page 14

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From the Editor's Desk

# The importance of choices: No Cause for Indictment revisited

Years ago, when I was working as a journalist in New York City, I wrote a freelance article about Ron Porambo. Porambo a journalist, whom I admired, had just written a book called No Cause for Indictment. It was a book that detailed the intentional murders of 26 black men, women

and children by the Newark, New Jersey Police and the National Guard. The murders happened during the racial disturbances that took place in Newark, New Jersey in the aftermath of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



Henrietta J. Burroughs

No Cause for Indictment told how each of the accused police officers and guardsman was found innocent, even though there was overwhelming evidence that showed that they had committed the crimes for which they had been accused. In detailing each death and the role played by each officer in the murder that was committed and the failure of the justice system to convict the murderer, "No Cause for Indictment" was so detailed and revealing that it could be compared to the Pentagon Papers and with some of the exposés of Wikileaks.

When I read the book, I was so impressed with it and with the investigative television news reports that Porambo did that I pitched an article idea to the editor of MORE Journalism Review, a magazine in New York, proposing that Porambo and his book be the subject of an article in his publication. My article idea was accepted and I went on to write a feature article for the publication on Porambo. My article was titled, A Cause for Indictment, and it told the story about Porambo, his family and the writing of his book. In the process of writing the article, I had a chance to visit Porambo and his wife Carol. They were an inter-racial couple, who lived in New Jersey with their three children. I liked them and I trusted them. In fact, I let my own son Kwame, who was a toddler, spend the night with their children.

Several years later, I moved to the West Coast and lost track of them. For some strange reason I thought about Porambo this New Year's Eve and decided to Google him to see what had happened to him and I could not believe what I discovered.

How often has it been said that life is stranger than fiction? Several of the articles that I found online reported that Porambo died this past October as a convicted

felon serving a life sentence for murder. The articles I pulled up said that he had become so embittered and so turned off by the journalistic establishment because his book did not win a Pulitzer Prize or receive the recognition that he felt it deserved, that he turned to a life of crime. He began robbing drug dealers and taking their money to support himself and his family. Instead of robbing the rich, he started robbing the criminals and he ultimately killed a drug dealer. In the end, Porambo miraculously survived being shot three times in the head and he spent 30 years in prison where he was accidentally suffocated this past October on an orange that he was eating.

Needless to say, reading this about a journalist, whom I knew personally, whose work I had admired, and about whom I had written, was an enormous shock.

The investigative reporting Porambo did was truly admirable. No Cause for Indictment was simply an amazing, eye-opening book that exposed racism, police corruption and a judicial system that seemed to work in tandem with corrupt officials.

Writing his book took personal bravery and personal sacrifices. He, obviously and justifiably, had high expectations for it. If his book did not get the exposure, attention and the merit that it deserved, I can understand his bitterness with the journalistic profession, with the system and with the world.

Even when I wrote about him, he had been shot and shot at several times and he was in and out of jail for charges that were designed to frighten and harass him.

In many ways, Ron Porambo was a marked man and he probably realized it. You don't get good nor do you get revenge by doing evil. When it comes to evil and wrongdoing, no one wins, at least not for long. Months before his death Porambo acknowledged that his life of crime was a mistake.

There were so many more articles that Porambo could have written. When I met him, he was doing investigative television reports for a show called the 51st State, a news show that I, too, later joined as a television news reporter. There were also more

continued on page 15



Photo courtesy of Eric Lutkin  
This photo shows the musicians and vocalists who performed in a concert presenting the "Music by African American Composers: Yesterday and Today." Standing left to right, Deanne Tucker, Joshua McGhee, LaDoris Cordell, Yolanda Rhodes, Susan C. Brown, Victoria Ehrlich and Carol Somersille. The concert, in which they performed, took place at the Eastside College Preparatory School's Performing Arts Center on January 30, 2011.

## Letters in East Palo Alto Today

### Help save your neighborhood

Dear Editor,  
500 people - in danger of losing their homes. 500 people have lost their homes.

That means renters have been forced to move. Affordable homes lost the community becomes unstable. Children have to change schools. Households become overcrowded. Families have to commute to low wage jobs.

The bank created loan documents which tricked homeowners into loans which reset into high interest payments, and securities which inflated homes then prices deflated.

The government bailed out the banks and gave billions to help people in foreclosure.

But the banks are not required to help. The banks are continuing to swindle people out of their homes. (They have been and continue to receive high profits - interest from homeowners, but refuse to modify loans.

Support your neighbors by asking federal, state, local

entities to prioritize seniors to keep them in their homes.

Change the federal program -hamp - to require lenders to modify loans, bankruptcy courts to allow modifications - interest reduction. Underwater mortgages balances should be reduced - less costly for banks and helps people stay in their homes.

Empower unemployed homeowners by giving temporary jobs - train as housing counselors. Create programs that provide equity loans - deferred payments, etc.

Tiombe Jama  
tiombay@gmail.com  
East Palo Alto

### Drinking contaminated water

Dear Editor,  
San Bruno has 5 wells. Millbrae is going to open their recycled water plant this year. Millbrae is planning on putting their recycled water underground. What do you think that will do to San Bruno's water? Using recycled water for landscapes and golf courses on the surface, contaminates the underground aquifers,

because water flows down. The water additives and disinfectants are toxic and corrosive. Drinking something carcinogenic and so corrosive it disintegrates metal from the water pipes, that's not what I would call pure. Metal in the brain causes neurological problems and other health issues like holes in babies' hearts. Hillsborough's fire house had 5.7 ppm for lead and 74.5 ppm for copper in 2005 after Chloramine was added to the water.

Get the MSDS reports for the 12 water chemicals from Gina.Markou@acwd.com Gina is the Alameda County water board secretary.

Goggle: Does organochlorines cause breast cancer?

ACWD buys the 59 tons of fluorosilicic acid for the Hetch Hetchy water drinkers. It is the toxic waste product from the phosphate fertilizer industry. Senator Jackie Speier prescribed this waste product for the peninsula's fluoridation chemicals. It also contains lead and arsenic and the ACWD water board defended the lead and arsenic in the fluorosilicic acid. Google:Agenda 21 Depopulation part II. Speier is not a doc continued on page 10

## 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.

**East Palo Alto Today**

**Publisher:** East Palo Alto Center for Community Media  
**Editor-in-chief:** Henrietta J. Burroughs

East Palo Alto Today is published bimonthly;  
Address all letters to: East Palo Alto Today  
321 Bell Street, East Palo Alto, CA 94303  
(650)327-5846, ext 311 (phone) (650)327-4430  
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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  
 The three articles below were reprinted from East Palo Alto Today on Facebook, which can be found on the EPA Today website [www.epatoday.org](http://www.epatoday.org)

## Building a Field of Dreams: The Richard May Athletic Field

By Les DeWitt  
 East Palo Alto Today

The Rich May Athletic Field is proposed to be installed behind St. Francis of Assisi Church, which is located in the midtown neighborhood of East Palo Alto. This field is important to the youth of East Palo Alto in several ways. First, it will be a state-of-the-art turf field that kids will be able to use in all weather conditions. It will be a regulation size field for soccer, and it will be able to accommodate youth football, rugby and general field running and exercise activities. It will serve many types of athletic and fitness purposes for our kids. It will be utilized first

and foremost by the Ravenswood City School District during the weekdays from 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. After that, it will be available for scheduling by community youth groups such as the Ravenswood Youth Athletic Association, the Police Athletic League, the Razorbacks, the Greyhounds and many others. It is a project that is aimed squarely at the city's youth for their benefit.

Secondly, its importance lies in the psychological empowerment of having a first class facility in one's own neighborhood. The same turf



Les DeWitt

that is in many major college football stadiums, and the same brand of lights (Musco) that illuminate Yankee Stadium will exist right in the heart of East Palo Alto's midtown and it will be a field that will belong to the youth of the community. There will even be signs that state that this is a partnership with the U.S. Soccer Federation. The community building potential in this is mind boggling.

We adults were all kids once upon a time and when we reflect back to a smooth grass field, perfectly groomed and regulation size, it was like

the greatest thrill just to be on the turf. Having the Rich May Athletic Field will be magic for the city's young athletes. It is a project that will lift their hearts, minds and dreams to what the possibilities might be to their lives. When you are a young athlete your future is often shaped by those early childhood dreams.

This is a project that will be a community collaboration between church and school district land partners, between a private family foundation and community athletic groups, between the city's recreation department and the city's police. Its a project that calls together a community in a positive and inspiring fashion.

This project needs to be supported. Obstructive measures by those who want traffic studies, parking studies, noise studies and environmental impact reports need to be heard and respected. But their requests have to be put in perspective. This is a youth athletic field being installed upon a dirt lot. It is behind a church and next to a school. Over two million dollars will be spent to build, to improve and to beautify this space of roughly two acres. Redwoods trees will be planted, grassy berms will outline the field, and a park like community area will be at the entrance. It will liter-

continued on page 10

## Nothing is free: Why I oppose the soccer field

By Sharifa Wilson  
 East Palo Alto Today

We have all heard the adage "Nothing is free," and it's true. After having spent 12 years serving on the city council, being involved in thousands of hours negotiating and considering proposals; I KNOW this to be true.

My years of experience serving as Mayor and Vice - Mayor have taught me to ALWAYS look closely at FREE OFFERS. Take some time to think it through. Don't just think of the immediate circumstances and consider the long-term effect.

First, let me make it clear that

I recognize the need for and the desire to provide a field for the children. But that is NOT what we will get!

When this project was first introduced to the community, it was a soccer field for the students of Cesar Chavez, the kids who participate in the St. Francis Boys Club, and the AYSO soccer teams. Students would use it 7:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and after school the soccer league would have it available. The soccer league would use it until around 7 p.m.

This sounds reasonable, but over the past year as this project is being presented, we are learn-



Sharifa Wilson

ing more about the details. These details have raised a number of issues, traffic and parking.

At the last planning commission meeting the Rich May con-

sultant described a very different project. The soccer field for "the kids" has now become a regulation size Soccer/Adult Rugby field. The plan is to operate 7:30 a.m. until closing at 9:30 p.m. EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR.

According to one of their board members they intend to RENT the field. So what was sold, as a benefit to the community has now become a MONEY MAKING FOR THE BOARD? There potentially will be hundreds of people driving in from outside coming across Bay Road to the field.

Everyone who lives here knows Saint Francis Church is a

vibrant church with a large, growing population who attend service regularly. At least three evenings a week the church parking lot is FULL because of the activities. Church members parking along our blocks impact the surrounding streets. Imagine adding hundreds more cars to that site. Where will they park?

What will be the impact of the intersection of Palo Verde and Bay Road? Currently cars can make a left from the church onto Bay Road. Imagine hundreds of cars, kids, parents, and bikes all leaving

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## Why bring a new elementary school to EPA?

By Evan S. Kohn  
 East Palo Alto Today

As we approach the end of 2010, it's hard not to wish it a speedy close, since the year was filled with growing unemployment, a lingering recession, and massive state budget cuts. But sometimes, endings can also bring on new beginnings—and even new hope—to communities.

One such beginning is Rocketship Education, a network of K-5 elementary public schools. In January, Rocketship will submit an application to the Ravenswood school board in East Palo Alto, with the intent to open a free, public elementary school in fall 2012.

As the name Rocketship implies, students in Rocketship schools make progress—fast. Rocketship's first school opened in the fall of 2007, and it already out-performs neighboring low-income schools in San Jose, but also wealthier schools, such as the Palo Alto Unified School District.

In 2010, Rocketship Mateo

Sheedy Elementary and Rocketship Si Se Puede Academy ranked #5 and #15 on the state's Academic Performance Index (API), ahead of more than 3,000 California public schools that serve 70+ percent low-income students.

Why does the API score matter? High scores such as Rocketship's mean that kids are learning, and learning just as well as if not better than their peers in wealthy communities. Ninety percent of Rocketship students have demonstrated math proficiency, and 80 percent have demonstrated English language arts proficiency, compared to just 54 and 36 percent of students, respectively, in other neighborhood schools. On the other hand, low scores engender scrutiny and even intervention from the state, and can place a school or district on the state's Program Improvement List—a list of schools and districts not making Adequate Yearly Progress.

Two crucial ingredients form

the basis for Rocketship schools' success: strong community building, and a recognition that every child learns differently.

Regarding community, Rocketship focuses on building relationships with parents and families so that they can participate in every aspect of school life. Each year, Rocketship teachers visit students and families at home to learn more about each child's culture, environment and context. Throughout the year, teachers communicate frequently with parents so that parents can support their children's progress at school. Many parents hold at least one full-time job, so Rocketship schedules school events to occur outside of working hours in order for more family members to become part of the school community.

Rocketship encourages stu-



Evan Kohn

dents to celebrate their own culture and to make it a part of the schools. For example, in the second grade ancestry project, Rocketship students write family histories, invite grandparents and elders into classroom discussions, and draw pictures of family timelines. Parents and families are also part of important school decisions, such as naming their new school and teacher recruitment and hiring.

The other ingredient to Rocketship's success is a focus on individualized learning and a commitment to help every child succeed academically. Rocketship's unique "hybrid school" makes this commitment a reality, through a combination of highly effective teachers in the classroom and individual student time on computers in a "learning lab," or with tutors for additional support.

Daily time in learning lab allows children to master basic skills, and learning lab sessions are calibrated to adapt to each student's specific needs.

Intensive 1:1 time in learning lab also means that teachers spend more classroom time on high-level critical thinking skills, project-based learning and group social skills. Frequent assessments allow Rocketship teachers to monitor student progress and tailor individual learning plans.

Working together with the community, Rocketship envisions making a big impact in East Palo Alto. In 2009-2010, through the Tinsley Program, 893 students opted to attend schools in seven surrounding districts instead of Ravenswood. Year after year, this program reaches its cap, with many more families applying than there are seats available. Rocketship wants to bring back these students and provide an excellent

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# Lifecycles

## City interested in oral histories and pictures

By Brent Butler  
East Palo Alto Today

The City of East Palo Alto's Planning Division and Community Services Departments are working together to collect visions of the past through oral histories, pictures, and questionnaires to draft a new guiding plan for the City, which establishes goals and policies to create parks, open space, flood storage, jobs, and improve circulation for pedestrians and bicyclists as well as vehicles.

This plan, commonly called the Comprehensive or General Plan ("Plan"), would be the city's guiding document throughout this decade, and perhaps the next.

While the Plan is required



Brent Butler

to have seven elements, including Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Open-Space, Conservation, Safety, and Noise, ours contains an optional Economic Development element in response to the community need for jobs, and the city's need for income to provide services, such as parks, and open space.

This process was inspired by the documentary, 'Dreams

of Our City,' and further informed by the 'lessons learned' from other large planning initiatives, such as the rebuilding of London after World War II, as well as through the realization that East Palo Alto is unique with one of the most youthful populations in San Mateo County, averaging 27 years (See the City's Housing Element online, <http://www.ci.east-palo-alto.ca.us/planningdiv/index.html>).

Through an intergenerational exchange, the City hopes to share the knowledge and experiences of the City's senior citizens with others for the purpose of fully informing the process of refining the City's vision. Oral histories are short stories, frequently video-

taped or written documentaries, which convey a sense of past experiences.

The City is particularly interested in jarring people's memories of events through photos from three eras; from as far back as the 1890s to 1920s; from the great depression to the war years, and through to the periods of large in- and out-migration after the wars.

If you send us pictures, don't forget to say who is in them, when they were taken, and what buildings or historical events are pictured.

Through these pictures we'd like to capture a glimpse of history, such as how you moved around, be it by foot, bus, bicycle or street-car; what public projects and buildings

you liked, and didn't such as tunnels and bridges, open spaces, farms and schools; and which events were significant for you from community protests, block parties and socials, to gathering places such as wedding halls, barber shops, funeral parlors, and sport stadiums.

Generations today may wish to incorporate some of the ideas that these pictures convey, so please share what you wish.

Please submit your pictures to the Community Services Department, 2277 University Avenue, East Palo Alto, or by e-mail to [mokelo@cityofepa.org](mailto:mokelo@cityofepa.org).

**Brent A. Butler** is the Planning Manager for the City of East Palo Alto.

## Taking a morning bicycle tour



Photo courtesy of Liz Song

Public Works Manager Brent Butler on the right talks with the participants who attended the city's early morning bike tour.

By Henrietta J. Burroughs  
East Palo Alto Today

East Palo Alto's Mayor Carlos Romero, its Community Services Director Meda Okelo and at least 9 other residents joined the city's Public Works Manager Brent Butler on a bicycle tour of several areas in East Palo Alto and in the

surrounding area.

The tour, which took place on January 8, was designed to obtain feedback from city residents on two existing pedestrian overcrossings, and the proposed locations for a new pedestrian/bicycle overcrossing to better connect the east and west sides of East Palo Alto.

In addition to the city officials,

the tour included two East Palo Alto teachers who were concerned about ensuring that the city's school children would be provided safe access to the schools on both sides of the freeway by the proposed pedestrian overcrossing.

A test survey was taken during the tour that will be used to solicit ideas about the East Palo Alto community's needs and concerns.

As a follow up to the bicycle tour, the public works department is inviting local residents on a five-hour shuttle bus excursion to view area pedestrian overcrossings that are too far away to access by bicycle or on foot.

To accommodate residents who are mobility impaired, the city is trying to better understand how a bridge or underpass could meet their needs. The tour will take

place at 10 a.m. on Saturday, February 12, 2011 at City Hall (rain date, March 5, 2011).

Butler said, "The goal is to gather input on the best design for a Pedestrian over/undercrossing (POC), either at Clarke Avenue or Euclid and to consider additional options, such as reusing an existing tunnel, which was closed many years ago. Several underpasses may also be visited as part of this tour as well. If interested, send an e-mail to, [bbutler@cityofepa.org](mailto:bbutler@cityofepa.org), to ensure that the city has enough seating to accommodate all who are interested in participating.



Photo courtesy Liz Song  
East Palo Alto city officials, from left: Community Services Director Meda Okelo, Planning Commissioner Bernardo Huerta and East Palo Alto Mayor Carlos Romero are shown during the bicycle tour on January 8, as they listen to Public Works Manager Brent Butler, who is not shown in this photo.

## Remembering Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

By R. Kali Azariah  
East Palo Alto Today

On January 16th, friends of the First Methodist Church of Palo Alto gave recognition to the day Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. was born. Following remarks by the Master of Ceremonies Hon. LaDoris H. Cordell, speaker, author and television journalist, Belva Davis gave the keynote address. Davis speech was titled, "Is the Dream Attainable in these Challenging Times?"

In presenting her speech, Davis introduced her just released book discussing her memoir *Never in My Wildest Dreams: A Black Woman's Life in Journalism*.

In her book she recounts interviews with world leaders, including Fidel Castro and three

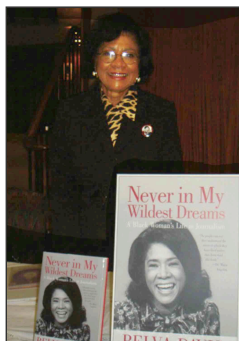


Photo courtesy of R. Kali Azariah  
Belva Davis is shown with her new book: *Never in My Wildest Dreams*

U.S. presidents.

She also discusses the reports she gave on explosive stories, including the rise and fall of the Black Panthers, the Jonestown massacre, and the Moscone/Milk murders.

Davis has received countless

awards for her contributions to the field of journalism. These awards include national recognition from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, San Francisco State University and the National Education Writers Association.

Davis received the Northern California Chapter of National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences' highest lifetime achievement award, the Governor's Award, in 1996. Davis is also well known for her work as a labor activist, vice president of the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, and for being active within the community.

Joining the celebration were sisters of the Bay Area Links who recognized 50 years of sisterhood. The goal of the Links for their golden anniversary year is "to be cognizant of our mission, to revisit our purpose and to celebrate

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### Too Toxic To Trash

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