



**Celebrating
East Palo Alto Today's
10th Year!**



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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

Fall 2015 - January 2016

Vol. 10 No.50

EPA said goodbye to its city attorney

By Elizabeth Real
East Palo Alto Today

The City of East Palo Alto is looking for another city attorney. During the East Palo Alto City Council's meeting on January 12, 2016, the council authorized its City Manager, Carlos Martinez, to seal an agreement with Ralph Andersen & Associates to begin the recruitment process for a new city attorney.

John Nagel, who was the

city's attorney, submitted his resignation on December 8, 2015. He joins the City of Sunnyvale's legal counsel. His last day with East Palo Alto was on Friday, January 15.

Nagel previously worked as assistant attorney for the City of Vallejo before becoming East Palo Alto's city attorney in 2013.

During its January 19 meeting, the East Palo Alto City Council approved a motion to appoint Valerie Armento of Atkinson's Farasyn

firm as interim city attorney. Armento served as East Palo Alto's interim city attorney on several previous occasions over the past few years. Marc Hynes was also approved to serve as interim city attorney whenever Armento is absent.

The city staff reported during the council's January 12 meeting that it had reached out to twelve recruiting firms in order to find a permanent replacement for Nagel. Four of the firms responded that they would not be available and the



Vice Mayor Larry Moody, Mayor Donna Rutherford and Council member Carlos Romero stand with City Attorney John Nagel at the East Palo Alto City Council meeting on January 12, 2016

remaining seven firms had other contractual agreements that would keep them from participat-

ing. Ralph Andersen & Associates was the only firm to respond continued on page 11

City residents lag with regard to health insurance



Photo courtesy of smchealth.org

The County of San Mateo Health System, along with other state and federal health departments, is urging the public to sign up for health insurance under the Affordable Care Act. The signup deadline is January 31. If individuals and families do not have health insurance by this time, then they will fined.

By Edward Perez
East Palo Alto Today

U.S. Congresswoman Jackie Speier was set to give a talk on Saturday, January 8, at the health care enrollment fair hosted by the Ravenswood Family Health Center in East Palo Alto. The congresswoman had a memorial to attend later that day and was unable to speak as she had planned.

Speier had intended to talk about the importance of having health insurance and the fact that a large number of East Palo Alto residents are uninsured.

Fortunately, Speier's representatives were able to work with EPA Today to get in touch with the Congresswoman. Speier told EPA Today that the number of

uninsured residents of San Mateo County dropped from 11% to 6%, yet the percentage of uninsured East Palo Alto residents increased. It's a matter that needs to be addressed because, on average, East Palo Alto residents live to the age of 61, while other residents of San Mateo County live, on average, to 75 years of age.

Speier stressed that many resources are accessible to East Palo Alto residents to help them acquire health insurance. She emphasized that residents with a salary of \$60,000 and below are eligible for Medi-Cal, which is California's Medicaid program.

Medi-Cal provides health care services to low-income continued on page 15

Parents want better schools

By Elizabeth Real
East Palo Alto Today

Are East Palo Alto schools failing to prepare their students for high school and ultimately college? Many parents and students themselves seem to think so, which is why they have petitioned for a KIPP public charter school.

Last December, many students and parents gathered at a public hearing in the Ravenswood City School District to express their opin-

ions about the quality—or lack of quality—of the education that students are receiving in the District's schools.

The group of petitioners was backed by Innovative Public Schools, a non-profit that works specifically with parents. The group helps the parents get organized as they push for new and better school options in the community.

"I have two children here in East Palo Alto," said Joel Ortega, a parent leader, during the public hearing. "When

my son went to Eastside College Prep in sixth grade, I cried because he was so far behind. If you can do something, do it," he urged.

Maria Elena Mendoza, another parent leader, said: "The statistics show that many of our children will not graduate from high school and even fewer from college. That's why 1,000 students leave the district to find a better education."

Yesenia Rodriguez, who

continued on page 14



Photo courtesy of Innovative Public Schools

Joel Ortega speaks to the Ravenswood City School District Board in December 2015

Inside

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East Palo Alto gets a senior housing complex

By Edward Perez
East Palo Alto Today

If you've walked or driven down University Ave in East Palo Alto, you might have noticed a new construction project underway near Cooley Avenue.

The new development will be a housing project for seniors and it is being built at 2358-2580 University Ave. Its construction started with the demolition of 8 houses that sat on the site. The center's location is considered ideal due to its proximity to the existing East Palo Alto Senior Center, the Ravenswood Family Health Center, the East Palo Alto branch of the YMCA, and the U.S. Post Office on Bay Road.

The MidPen Housing Corporation and the East Palo Alto Community Alliance and Neighborhood Development Organization (EPA Can Do) initiated the senior housing project more than eight years ago. The project is designed



to have 41 bedroom units; 36 will be single bedroom units and 5 will be double bedroom units.

Representatives from both non-profit organizations, which focus on providing affordable housing for targeted residential areas, presented the overall plan and goals for the senior housing project to the East Palo Alto Senior Advisory Committee and to the East Palo Alto City Council.

During their presentations, MidPen Housing and EPA Can Do stressed that the most important goal for the project is to "increase the supply of high-quality afford-

able senior housing in East Palo Alto."

Thirty residents, who lived in the 8 properties under demolition, were gradually relocated. Robert Jones, the executive director of EPA Can Do could not disclose the current whereabouts of the tenants to protect their privacy, but he assured EPA Today that relocation for the tenants was his organization's top priority during the 8 years it took for MidPen Housing and EPA Can Do to acquire the properties.

A presentation titled, Residential Anti-displacement and Relocation Assistance that was

made to the East Palo Alto City Council on July 28 addressed this specific issue.

The presentation stated, "relocation assistance owed to the eligible residents of the existing eight units is expected to be higher under state and federal law that would have been owed under the City's ordinance."

The report noted that only six of the eight households were eligible for relocation assistance under state and federal law

Grounds for ineligibility for relocation assistance

The report added that the ineligibility of the two households was determined by Title 25 of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition because "their tenancy began after ... Midpen and EPA Can DO acquired the property." The households signed to acknowledge their ineligibility to assistance in relocating prior to occupying the units. Mid-

Pen and EPA Can do however provided each household with housing referral assistance and a \$7,500 stipend.

Since the acquired households will be replaced with a center for senior housing, there will be total loss of zero affordable residential units, the report stated. So, the report concludes the senior housing project accomplishes one of its fundamental goals: to fulfill the need for replacement housing.

The senior housing project was approved by East Palo Alto's Planning Department on January 26, 2015 and the city council unanimously added its approval the following February.

Construction on the project started this past December and it is slated to be completed in the spring of 2017. Jones said that the project should take approximately 14 months to complete.

The East Palo Alto City continued on page 16

San Mateo County Sups elect new president

By Henrietta J. Burroughs
East Palo Alto Today

San Mateo County Supervisor, Warren Slocum, was unanimously elected president of the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors at its annual rotation on Tuesday, January 5, 2016.

During the election, the board also chose Supervisor Don Horsley, who represents District Two, as board vice president.

Slocum, who was elected to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors in 2012, represents District 4, which includes Redwood City, East Palo Alto, part of Menlo Park - east of El Camino Real --and the unincorporated community of North Fair Oaks.

In his acceptance speech,

Slocum said, "It's clear to me that our overarching challenge is how to build and sustain livable communities on the Peninsula. By that, I mean communities in which prosperity is broadly shared, children have the opportunity for success and are prepared for the jobs of tomorrow, resources are used in a sustainable way and people are civically engaged."

Slocum made his remarks during a program held at Cañada College that featured a reading by San Mateo County Poet Laureate Caroline Goodwin and performances by Ballet Folklórico del Circulo Cultural and H2O, East Palo Alto's hip hop orchestra.

During his presentation, Slocum spoke about the past as well as the future.



Photo courtesy of the County of San Mateo
Supervisor Warren Slocum is shown speaking to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors on Jan 5, 2016

In speaking about the future, Slocum listed housing, transportation and quality of life issues as his priorities.

He stressed that he would focus on ending veteran homelessness in 2016, invest in water infrastructure to stave off flooding and he stated that he would give serious reconsideration to the Dumbarton Rail Corridor project to bring

rail across the bay.

Also on his list of priorities were "industry partnerships to build sustainable communities and community engagement, particularly with the Latino community."

While reaffirming his commitment "to the noble idea of a county government working for a better future for all people," Slocum cited some of the

board's and the county's past accomplishments.

These included investments in affordable housing, the closing of a half-mile gap in the Bay Trail, funding additional mental health services, closing nine illegal massage parlors and increasing funding for emergency shelters and social service programs.

Slocum thanked outgoing president Supervisor Carole Groom for leading the past year with what he described as a "steady hand."

The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors will meet again in February on Tuesday, February 9 and 23 at 9 am.

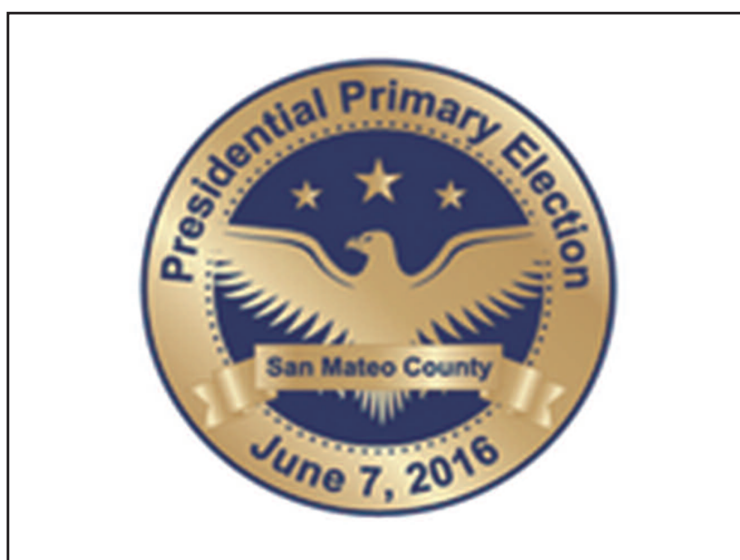
Get more information about the county schedule with the location of the meetings on page 3 of this issue.

Signatures in-lieu of filing fee period now open

By SMCo Clerk's office
East Palo Alto Today

San Mateo County Chief Elections Officer & Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder, Mark Church, announced the opening of the Signatures In-Lieu of Filing Fee period for the June 7, 2016 Presidential Primary Election.

The Signatures In-Lieu of Filing Fee period allows candidates running for an office that requires a filing fee to submit a petition containing signatures of registered voters from their district to reduce the cost of the filing fee.



Graphic courtesy of www.shapethefuture.org

The number of signatures required to fully cover the fee varies by office. Each signature is assigned a value, based on the office, and each valid signature gathered will reduce the filing fee by the assigned value, explained Church.

Additionally, these signatures can be used to fulfill the nomination signature requirement during the Declaration of Candidacy period, he added.

Candidates running for judicial offices will have from January 4, 2016 until February 10, 2016 to collect signatures and candidates for voter nomi-

nated offices will have from January 4, 2016 to February 25, 2016 to collect signatures. Interested individuals must pick up their Signatures In-Lieu of Filing Fee Petitions at the San Mateo County Registration and Elections Division, 40 Tower Road, San Mateo, CA 94402.

For more information regarding the Signatures In-Lieu of Filing Fee period, filing fee, and candidate filing, contact the Candidate Filing Officer, Michael Lui, at 650.312.5238 or mlui@smcare.org.

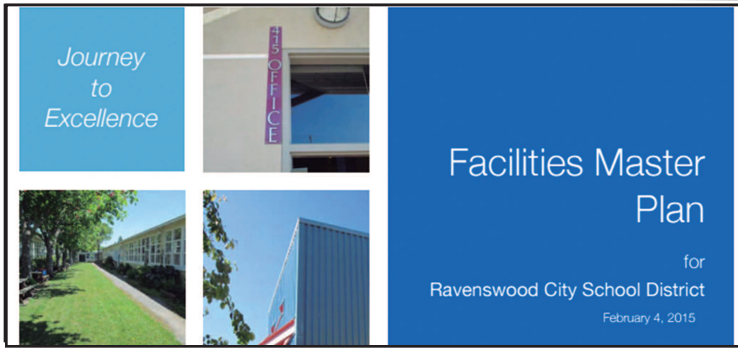
Information may also be found at www.shapethefuture.org.

Community News Briefs

Issues before the Ravenswood City School District

The Ravenswood City School District held its first school board meeting of this year on January 14. Board members received an update about some of the issues within the district. A primary issue on the board's agenda was the gas leak that forced Costaña Elementary School to shutdown and go into last December's winter break early.

An official spoke at the meeting and said all of the underground pipes beneath the school have been repaired and inspected. PG&E gave its official approval indi-



Graphic courtesy of the Ravenswood City School District website

cating that the leak is under control. The board heard that the school is ready to continue normally while meeting the district's standards of dry, safe, and warm.

The district is now shifting its attention to the roofing on the district's schools since many of them are in danger

of leaking. Board members heard that repairs will begin this summer and an effort will be made to repair as many roofs as possible.

Another issue that the school district faces concerns an outstanding debt regarding its bond program. The school district has racked up

a debt of almost \$8,000,000. With the help of the firm Orrick, Herrington, & Suttcliffe, the district bond counsel, a resolution was proposed during the board meeting to "authorize the issuance, sale and delivery of the Ravenswood City School District 2006 General Obligation Refunding Bonds" and its "Facilities Financing Authority Revenue Bonds." These bonds add up to nearly \$30,000,000. It is hoped that the resolution will help make it easier for taxpayers and the district by providing a reasonable interest rate.

-by Edward Perez

Ethics award given to East Palo Alto's former city manager for her service to EPA

Magda Gonzalez, East Palo Alto's former city manager, received the Cal-ICMA Ethical Hero award in 2015 for upholding high ethical and professional standards while working in East Palo Alto.

The award was presented to her during the City Managers' Department Conference of the League of California Cities.

Gonzalez is currently the city manager of Half Moon Bay. On the City of Half Moon

Continued on page 10

Facebook gives bonuses to move closer

By Henrietta J. Burroughs
East Palo Alto Today

Many city residents are expressing concern about ongoing news coverage reporting that Facebook is giving its employees a \$10,000 bonus if they move within ten miles of Facebook's Menlo Park campus.

These reports of housing bonuses given to Facebook workers only intensify existing fears of gentrification taking place in the city.

The fears are supported by the continuing foreclosures in East Palo Alto and increasing home prices in the city.

According to www.city.com, the average home in East Palo Alto in 2013 was \$659,394. Now houses are selling for more than \$800,000 and one

house on Donohoe Street is selling for more than one million dollars.

With more cars on the road, commutes are getting longer and longer, especially in Northern California.

The latest U.S. Census report shows that the San Francisco Bay Area has more commuters than anywhere else in the country, who travel at least 50 miles and 90 minutes one way to work.

The nationwide average for a commute to work is 24.3 minutes one way, and it is estimated that Americans are averaging approximately 100 hours a year just traveling to and from work.

With these kind of statistics, it is understandable that an

employer might want employees to find housing closer to their place of employment.

However, with the ongoing shortage of affordable housing and with East Palo Alto still having some of the lowest housing prices, tech workers with housing bonuses make the acquisition of affordable housing in the city even more difficult

So, Facebook's reported housing bonus for its employees only exacerbates an already tight housing market.

In commenting on the bonuses, Rev. John Liotti, chief executive officer of Able Works, told one reporter, "A lot of local families are going to get hurt."

City, County, State & U.S. Government Meetings & Contacts

East Palo Alto City Council

The East Palo Alto City 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

Donna Rutherford
Mayor
(650) 327-7926

Larry Moody
Vice Mayor
(650) 644-9110

Ruben Abrica
(650) 380-4987

Lisa Gauthier
(650) 387-4584

Carlos Romero
cromero@cityofepa.org

East Palo Alto Agencies, Boards, Commissions, Committees

Planning Commission
Second and Fourth Monday

Rent Stabilization Board
Second and Fourth Wednesday

Public Works & Transportation Commission
Third Wednesday

Youth Advisory Committee
First Thursday of each month

Senior Advisory Committee
Meets first Wednesday of the even numbered months from 1:30p.m.-3:30p.m. - City Hall.

East Palo Alto Sanitary District
The East Palo Alto Sanitary District office is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 12 noon and re-opens from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. for service. Regular Board Meetings are held

the first Thursday of every month at 7:00 pm.

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. For questions about an agenda, call the city clerk at 650.330.6620.

Menlo Park City Council Members

Richard Cline - Mayor
Cell:(650) 207-1677

Kirsten Keith- Mayor Pro Tem
Cell:(650) 308-4618

Catherine Carlton
Residence:327-5332
Cell:575-4623

Ray Mueller
(650) 776-8995

Peter I. Ohtaki
(650) 328-0300

Menlo Park Boards, Commissions, Committees

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

San Mateo County Board of Supervisors

Supervisor Warren Slocum 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. 650 691-2121

State Officials

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

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

State Senator Jerry Hill
District Address
1528 South El Camino Real
San Mateo, CA 94301
(650) 212-3313

U.S. Government

U.S. Congresswoman Jackie Speier
San Mateo Office
155 Bovet Rd, Suite 780
San Mateo, CA 94402
Phone: (650) 342-0300
Phone: (415) 566-5257
Fax: (650) 375-8270

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Flood insurance purchases are surging

By Mary Simms
East Palo Alto Today

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) today released new data on National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Policies, showing an increase of more than 20,000 new NFIP Policies written in California during the month of November 2015.

There is a 30 – 90 day period for new policies to be reported to FEMA and the latest available data, released today, shows an increase of 28,084 new flood insurance policies purchased in California from August 31 – November 30, 2015.

“Flooding is the most costly and devastating disaster we face as a nation,” said FEMA Region 9 Administrator Robert Fenton. “The major increase in flood policies show Californians are taking the threat seriously and taking powerful steps to protect their families and property. Those who may need and not have a flood policy should act today, as policies generally take 30 days to go into effect.”

The 12% increase is the first of its kind in recent history. The previous reporting period showed that policies increased 3% from August 31 to October 31. During that timeframe, 7,181 new federal flood insurance policies were written in



California.

“We are encouraged by the number of Californians that are becoming financially prepared for the flooding that is expected from El Nino,” said Janet Ruiz, California Representative for the Insurance Information Institute. “It is crucial to protect our families and homes by preparing for catastrophes ahead of time.”

FEMA administers the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and works closely with more than 80 private insurance companies to offer flood insurance to homeowners, renters, and business owners.

In order to qualify for flood insurance, the home or business must be in a community that has joined the NFIP and agreed to enforce sound floodplain management standards.

Flooding can happen anywhere, but certain areas are especially prone to serious flooding. Many areas in California are at increased flood risk from El Niño, as a direct result of

wildfires and drought.

Residents should be aware of a couple things: You can't get flood insurance at the last minute. In most cases, it takes 30 days for a new flood insurance policy to go into effect. So get your policy now.

Only Flood Insurance Covers Flood Damage. Most standard homeowner's policies do not cover flood damage.

Get all the coverage you need. Your agent can walk you through the policy. Know your flood risk. Visit FloodSmart.gov (or call 1-800-427-2419) to learn more about individual flood risk, explore coverage options and to find an agent in your area.

Flood insurance covers flood, but there are other affects from flooding that may apply to you. Damage from mudflows is covered by flood insurance; damage from landslides and other earth movements is not. Speak to your agent.

NFIP is a federal program and offers flood insurance which can be purchased through private property and casualty insurance agents. Rates are set nationally and do not differ from company to company or agent to agent. These rates depend on many factors, which include the date and type of construction of your home, along with your building's level of risk.

FEMA's Region 9 office in Oakland, CA has established an El Niño Task Force and is working with the California Office of Emergency Services with the mission of preparing the Region

and its partners for the impact of El Niño.

The task force is evaluating the core capabilities needed to protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from any flooding that occurs across the region this winter.

Last month, the FEMA Region 9 Office released its

Draft Severe El Nino Disaster Response plan and convened a regional interagency steering committee meeting in Northern California to exercise the plan. agement team.

Visit Ready.gov for more preparedness tips and information and follow FEMARegion9 on Twitter.

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Public Fax Center, Utility Payment Center
Gift Stop & Jewelry

OPEN MONDAY THRU FRIDAY
10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

City house fire displaces families on New Year's Day



Photo courtesy of the Menlo Park Fire Protection District. This photo shows the washing machine where the fire originated.

By Edward Perez
East Palo Alto Today

Early New Year's Day, firefighters rushed to the scene to put out a fire that broke out inside an East Palo Alto residence.

A report of the fire was made to the Menlo Park Fire Protection District (MPFPD) at 7:48 am, and Engine 2 of the East Palo Alto station was deployed to the house at 156 Verbena Drive.

Once Engine 2 arrived, it reported “a working structure fire with heavy visible fire to the side and rear of the home.” A first alarm fire was declared and four fire engines, a ladder truck, and 18 fire personnel arrived on the scene. The team managed to bring the fire under control within ten minutes.

Firefighters also managed

to evacuate all 8 occupants from the single story home. The Red Cross assisted four of the occupants, and the other four were taken in by neighbors. Sadly, one of the four dogs belonging to a family in the residence died after firefighters were unable to resuscitate it.

According to fire officials, the fire was caused by an exterior clothing dryer. Once it started, the fire spread horizontally underneath the floorboards to the inside of the structure. It, then, extended into the attic space of the house. Seventy thousand dollars was estimated in structural damage, and an additional estimate of \$50,000 in content loss resulted for a combined loss of \$120,000.

The house was converted into three separate living

spaces, an illegal practice that is common in East Palo Alto. Fire Chief Harold Schapelhouman said “illegal home conversions are common in East Palo Alto, where we often find multiple families and occupants living in very small converted structures.

“These fires can present a significant rescue and fire-fighting challenge and a risk to the occupants and our personnel, depending upon how significantly they are illegally modified.”

Schapelhouman told EPA Today that the occupants of the residence would not be facing a penalty for their illegal conversion of the residence. He added that there is “just more work and cost involved, depending upon what isn't code legal.”

He also stated that there is a strong potential that the conversion contributed to the fire in the first place and the home's owner will need to bring the home back up to code to reoccupy it.

Schapelhouman stressed that converted units carry many risks and that policies and limitations are applied to converted units to ensure the safety of the residents.

Many city residents disagree with the fire chief and think that the policies regarding garage conversions are

outdated and the penalties for not meeting them are absurdly high and unjust.

East Palo Alto City Council member Ruben Abrica said that city officials must take responsibility to ensure that building and fire codes are not being violated. City offi-

cials have not supported the displacement of residents, who violate city conversion codes. They seem to simply want residents to comply with housing regulations.

A December 17, 2015 city council agenda report ad-continued on page 15

Local realtor-area specialist



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- Need to purchase a home?

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Helping East Palo Alto homeowners go green

By Bruce Naegel and Marianna Grossman
East Palo Alto Today

Why are Chris and Lea Martinez so happy? On Halloween, Grid Alternatives (GA) and Sustainable Silicon Valley (SSV) helped this family install free solar energy panels on their roof.

The Martinez family will save money on their utility bill and be contributing to a greener community at the same time. Sustainable Silicon Valley is working with community members and organizations in the City of East Palo Alto to help them become a Net Positive commu-



All photos by Bruce Nagel
Chris and Lea Martinez stand in front of their house.



This team shows how the panels are brought up to the roof and positioned for installation.

nity by finding ways to save energy and water and helping residents access free solar energy systems.

One organization is the Ecumenical Hunger Program (EHPCares) where SSV is helping audit and upgrade the energy and water efficiency their offices and to install solar energy there, as well.

Grid Alternatives provides free solar systems through funding from State and Federal grants, donated labor and parts, as well as corporate and individual donations to benefit low income families. They also provide job training and team building, so companies and organizations that want to participate can learn new skills and help their

neighbors at the same time.

If your roof is 10 years old or newer and you meet income qualifications, you might be able to participate in this program. SSV is also organizing home energy and water audits so residents can find out how to save money and protect the environment at the same time. If you want to find out more, contact Violet Wulf Saena, program manager for SSV's Net Positive East Palo Alto program.

She can be reached at vwulf@sustainablestv.org or 800-668-0718 x548

The Installation Process

The installation was finished in 2 days. First the safety equipment is installed

to ensure the safety of the workers. This is either a set of rails on the roof or safety harnesses depending on the nature of the roof. Then the mounting rails are installed into the roof surface, carefully aligned to ensure the solar cell arrays will easily mount on the rails. In many cases the rails are put onto multiple parts of the roof to maximize output. Then the electrical meter for tracking solar output is installed.

On the second day, the wiring is completed along with any further installation of mounting hardware for the solar panels. The solar panels are installed and testing is done to validate the system is up and running.

There are still inspections required to put the system into operation. by the utility and the city, an operation that is usually completed shortly.

Delivering Materials

First the truck arrives with all the hardware required for the installation. The components are tested before they are installed. Grid Alternatives has installed hundreds of installations.

Once materials are unloaded, the next step is to install the safety guards around the roof. After the safety infrastructure is in place, the next step is to install the rails that will support the solar panels.

Getting Panels On The Roof

The panels are brought up to the roof and positioned for installation. Teamwork is needed in getting the panels up to the roof.

The panels are then secured into place and the installation is secured with the proper hardware. Finally, the installation is checked for proper connections and positioning.



The truck carries all of the hardware that is required for the solar installation on Chris and Lea Martinez' house.

You have the power to give the greatest gift of all

By Ayanna N.S. Anderson-
East Palo Alto Today

Like many of you, I relish the holiday season as "the most wonderful time of the year." I feed on the frenzy of all-things holiday—the décor, the zesty smell of pine, the bright lights, the music (yes, I do turn my radio dial to all-holiday music station for the entire month of December), and of course... ..the gift-giving.

I think about all of the people who I care about, and ponder what would be the perfect gift for them—a decidedly personalized gift to let them know that I am paying attention to what they like, and to show them my love and affection.

As you can imagine, trying to

find everyone on your holiday list "the perfect gift," is not only labor-intensive, it can be emotionally exhausting as well. This week, a dear colleague of mine sent a lovely holiday card that puts the concept of gift-giving into a more meaningful perspective. The message reads: Give the Greatest Gift at the Holidays Consider the list Consider the gift It's perfectly wrapped It's made with love What is it? It's your legacy Give the gift of you

Indeed, during every holiday season, we must give pause to provide hope to the thousands of people right here in the Bay Area who are waiting for an organ transplant that will help

them lead healthy and productive lives. We must also honor those who have given the gift of life to countless others. Have a conversation with a loved one today about organ and tissue donation and, if you have not yet signed up as a donor, please consider doing so. Give a gift that will change a life forever.

Give a gift that's good to give anytime of the year.

For more information on how you can register as an organ and tissue donor, or to join our mission to save and heal lives, please visit: donornetworkwest.org

Ayanna N.S. Anderson is the Senior Community Development Liaison – West Bay at Donor Network West in San Ramon

the
Wish
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Movie & Pizza Night

Donor Network West wants to bring the message of saving lives to your health and youth ministries during a special **FREE** pizza and movie night. Along with showcasing the film, "The Wish," we will facilitate a lively discussion on organ and tissue donation, and the need for more registered donors. Preview at <http://donatelife.net/thewish/> To schedule a movie night at your church, contact Ayanna Anderson, aanderson@dnwest.org

If you missed planting trees with Canopy in MLK Park on Martin Luther King, Jr. day, you can join in on another Canopy event that's coming up soon:

EPAPA Campus Clean-up Day
Saturday, February 6, 2016

Time: 9:00 am to 12:00 pm
Location: East Palo Alto Phoenix Academy,
1039 Garden St, East
Palo Alto, CA 94303, United States

Join Canopy at East Palo Alto Phoenix Academy's Campus Clean-up Day to care for trees planted by Canopy in 2011. The day will consist of tree planting and young tree care including weeding, mulching, and some watering.

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From the Editor's Desk

What can we learn from El Chapo?

When Mexican drug lord Joaquín Archivaldo Guzmán Loera, better known as El Chapo, was recaptured by Mexican soldiers and marines this year on January 8, the event made news around the world. After all, Guzman was infamous as the head of the Mexican Sinaloa Cartel and was considered the "most powerful drug trafficker in the world" and the "biggest drug lord of all time," with a net worth of more than \$1 billion.



Henrietta J. Burroughs

His cartel is reportedly responsible for waves of violence that led to the murder of tens of thousands of people in both Mexico and the United States, not counting victims, throughout the world who might have died because of his cartel.

Most people who are up on the news already know that an interview that Guzman gave to actor Sean Penn might have played a major role in his recent arrest. After viewing many of the news articles and video clips about Guzman's life and recapture, there are several things that stood out for me.

In one article, I read that as a child in Mexico, Guzman dropped out of school in the third grade and went to work with his father on a cattle ranch. So now, how often have we heard that children, even in the U.S., who can't read by the third grade, face a high risk of getting involved in criminal activities and becoming incarcerated. The importance of a child's performance in the third grade was recognized in one of EPA Today's online blog posts that was made in 2009. See the post at <http://www.epatoday.org/forum.html> and scroll to the Oct. 25, 2009 blog post.

In a video clip of his now famous interview with Penn, Guzman was asked how he got involved with crime and drugs. He replied, very simply, that there were no jobs when he was growing up. Unfortunately, this appears to be an all too familiar story. What do many young people in America's poor areas do when they can't get mean-

ingful jobs? What do many formerly incarcerated people do when they can't get meaningful jobs? Too many of them turn to criminal activities.

Statistics show that many of the formerly incarcerated and the currently incarcerated were non-readers in the third grade?

What do members of these groups do? They find whatever ways they can to make money. Even in the U.S., many see the drug trade as a way out of poverty.

If we are to learn anything from Guzman and the piles of data about young people and crime, then it's way too obvious that we need to make sure children in the U.S., in Mexico and around the world have access to educational opportunities as well as equal access to meaningful and well-paying jobs.

It might be a broad generalization, but some social observers point out that many youth who are attracted to ISIS are unemployed and disaffected members of the societies in which they live. Even some of our country's leaders support giving young Palestinians and other Arab youth in war-torn countries more access to education and jobs.

There are other things that I could say about Guzman and the connection with unemployment and crime, but, there is something I need to point out, as a journalist, about Penn's interview with Guzman.

Penn was roundly criticized by journalists, around the world, who took issue with the fact that he gave El Chapo his article to review before it was submitted for publication in Rolling Stone magazine.

Every journalist, who has been professionally trained, knows that journalists do not give the people they interview their articles to review. Why? People have a way, understandably, of changing

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Photo courtesy of the Menlo Park Fire Protection District

The fire that started in the secondary unit of this East Palo Alto house on New Year's Day damaged both the unit and the house so severely that its residents had to be relocated. See the story on page 4 of this issue.

Letters in East Palo Alto Today

Where is EPA on the Fire Board?

Dear Editor

We attended the January 19 meeting of the Menlo Park Fire Protection District's Board of Directors and we were concerned by much of what we heard at the meeting as it pertains to East Palo Alto and Belle Haven.

The district provides fire protection services to EPA as well as Menlo Park and Atherton. Conversation initiated by district board member Chuck Bernstein revealed that of the three cities and towns Atherton is the only one to have some sort of emergency evacuation plan in place in the event of flooding. Not even simple steps, like publicizing information to communities on safe areas to go in case of flooding, have been taken.

Can it be true that in EPA, a city where homeowners are obligated to buy flood insurance, the city council and emergency management have not come up with an emergency evacuation plan? We heard that it's the same situation in Menlo Park. Where does this leave EPA and Belle Haven? Where does this leave the homeless, who should be included in the plan yet did not seem to warrant a mention from the board, who instead referred obliquely to "people near creeks"?

Although it's the cities and towns and not the district that creates emergency plans, we were disturbed to see that only one of the five board members seemed concerned about this issue. We were also disappointed to see that of the five member board serving EPA as

well as Atherton and Menlo Park there was only one person who wasn't Caucasian on the board and no one who represented the communities of EPA and Belle Haven. This absence was keenly felt during the discussion of emergency planning, and during presentation of the district's annual report in which repeated references to "the other side of 101" were made.

We were also disturbed that the board was entertaining a report from a consultant on various ways to raise revenue from the public they serve, whether it be from parcel taxes or similar programs. Our concern stems from the fact that neither the consultant nor any board member spoke of ways to ensure that any potential new taxes levied on the communities in EPA, Menlo Park, and Atherton would be levied in a way that was equitable and fair. Analysis in the district's annual report repeatedly noted that the much of district's resources was going to EPA and Belle Haven. We would certainly hope the board is not considering a special tax that unfairly burdens these communities in order to address an imbalance that does not exist.

The Fire District's next board meeting is on February 16 at 7pm, at 300 Middlefield Road in Menlo Park.

The next East Palo Alto City Council meeting is on February 2 at 7:30pm, at 2415 University Avenue in East Palo Alto.

The next Menlo Park City Council meeting is on January 26 at 7pm, at 701 Laurel St. in Menlo Park
Shaunn Cartwright and James Lee Han are local activists.

Smoke-Free Multi-Unit Housing

Dear Editor:

On November 11, 2015, U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Julián Castro joined Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy to announce a proposed rule to make the nation's public housing properties entirely smoke-free, stating, "We have a responsibility to protect public housing residents from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke, especially the elderly and children who suffer from asthma and other respiratory diseases." The proposed rule would lessen existing disparities in secondhand smoke exposure between low- and higher-income residents. However this just applies to public housing agencies and would not protect the majority of San Mateo County residents. Breathe California applauds this proposal and calls upon local elected leaders throughout the county to go even further by joining the San Mateo area movement that is clearing smoke from all multi-unit housing including apartments, condos and townhouses.

Any two units sharing walls, ceiling or floors also share the consequences of a neighbor's smoking habit: inhaling smoke through windows, doors, vents and electrical cracks. A troubling consequence of living next to someone who is addicted to nicotine in combustible cigarettes (or in electronic smoking devices which emit toxic aerosols) is the risk of waking up in a fire. A Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

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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

San Mateo County ends the Fatherhood Collaborative

By Joe Albowicz
East Palo Alto Today



Joe Albowicz

The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors ended the Fatherhood Collaborative in December. This committee's purpose, much like the county's successful Commission on the Status of Women, was intended to help guide the county on policy, program and legislative change to help foster positive fatherhood initiatives.

The county's new plan is to form a Fathers Task Force. The task force is going to span multiple county departments such as Child Support, Housing and Probation. The county intends to have a "laser-like" focus on addressing the needs of at-risk fathers.

I know from first-hand experience that every father walking into San Mateo County Family Court is at-risk. Dads are at-risk of being removed from their children's lives. Dads are at-risk of being removed from their children's lives (See <https://joealbowicz.wordpress.com/2015/06/07/the-gender-parenting-gap/>). Dads are also at-risk of excessive child support awards. Or to put this another way,

children are being deprived of time with their dads.

Children are at-risk of their dads being able to stay financially solvent and in good standing in society.

Children are at-risk of having their parents embroiled in endless, bitter and costly litigation. Our kids need dad's house just as much as mom's house, and the system needs to become more aware and sensitive to this and the need for peace. It is common knowledge that the system is flawed and biased, and this sad reality is statistically documented in both custody and child support statistics.

Since the county's new Fathers Task Force includes child support as a stated component, I call on the county to start there and re-

ally dig in and advocate for true progressive change. In California, we have an enormous \$18+ billion child support arrears; in other words California's dads owe \$18 Billion. The State of California has studied this part of the child support problem, and the conclusions are shocking:

- ⌚ Ninety-five percent of California's Child Support Arrears are uncollectible.
- ⌚ Owed by poor men of color who do not have the means to pay.
- ⌚ Long term debt that includes large amounts of Interest owed.
- ⌚ Child support orders are too high relative to ability to pay child support.
- ⌚ Unrealistic incomes are often imputed
- ⌚ An oppressive interest

rate of 10 percent per year do not allow dads to catch up.

⌚ Twenty-seven percent of arrears is interest.

⌚ That's an eye-popping \$5,000,000,000 worth of excessive interest charges against an already financially strained group of poor men of color. (For more details, see http://www.urban.org/research/publication/examining-child-support-arrears-california-collectibility-study/view/full_report).

Child Support is determined by state law and policy. I have read various studies by the State's Administrative Office of Courts and the Department of Child Support Services. The county of San Mateo participates in various state-wide studies

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Sea Change San Mateo County: The challenge of sea level rise to our communities

By Dave Pine and Don Horsley
East Palo Alto Today

Many readers by now have heard of "king tides" - the highest high tides of the year which occurred last week. These high tides, which happen when there is alignment of the gravitational pull between sun and moon, give us a glimpse of the future with sea level rise.

While king tides bring higher water to the shoreline, storms also elevate water levels. The decrease in barometric pressure during a storm causes ocean waters to rise. Add in wind and waves, plus a high tide, and water levels today can rise by three and a half feet in San Mateo County.

According to the best available scientific projections for California, sea levels could increase by up to two

feet in the next 35 years, and by up to five and a half feet by the end of the century. San Mateo County is especially vulnerable to rising seas.

The Pacific Institute has calculated that the county has \$25 billion of assets at risk from sea level rise, more than any other county in California, and approximately 115,000 people residing in areas that could be flooded.

Moreover, our county has the most contaminated or hazardous sites at risk from sea level rise in the state, with about a quarter of the state's sites located here.

Although the prospect of an increasingly wet future is daunting, the news isn't all doom and gloom. Our county



Dave Pine

is a leader in preparing for sea level rise, and the work that we are doing now could serve as a model for other communities.

The County is currently conducting a vulnerability assessment, funded by the California Coastal Conservancy, to identify the assets that are at risk from flooding and erosion today and in the future. This planning process, called SeaChangeSMC, is a multi-year effort to develop strategies for preparing for sea level rise and extreme storm events.

It is crucial for everyone to learn as much as possible about the potential impact of sea level rise. That is why the

Board of Supervisors authorized funding for the Youth Exploring Sea Level Rise project that will educate young students about this topic.

During last week's king tides, science students from Redwood City, Half Moon Bay, and Woodside high schools participated in a new service learning program to gather data and information that will help the County's planning process.

Along with Assemblymember Rich Gordon, we will be hosting SeaChangeSMC's first public workshop on Saturday, January 30th starting at 10 a.m. at Genentech's beautiful campus in South San Francisco.

This family-friendly event



Don Horsley

will provide an excellent opportunity to learn about the sea level rise and flooding risks facing our community and what is being done about them.

Please join us, along with the rest of the SeaChangeSMC team, for this important conversation about the future of our communities.

To register for the event, go to: <http://seachangesmc.com/events/openhouse/>.

Dave Pine and Don Horsley serve on the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors.

20 things you don't hear people say in East Palo Alto

By Michael Uhila
East Palo Alto Today

We have too many A students in our school district.

I'm going to convert my garage into a vagabond dormitory.

How many cars can we fit on University Avenue on Tuesday night?

More hush money please?

It's a great place to

work and a better place to go to church.

I've been reading Robert's Rules of Order.

Let's make bumper stickers that says "I'm Dumbarton Bound."

We need more barbecue pits.

I won the PAL market customer of the year sweepstakes.



Michael Uhila

We're a city on the move, so when are you moving out?

Breakfast at Ikea for everyone!

This library is a great place to socialize.

I love driving from work in East Palo Alto.

Developing the undeveloped

Four Seasons, Three Brothers Tacos, two McDonalds and one mortuary.

I'm so happy I have to pay more for my water bill.

Let's work together.

Bart Simpson for mayor!

How's that clean up going after ROMIC left?

Michael Uhila is an East Palo Alto resident, who has been a contributor to East Palo Alto Today, since it was launched in January 2006. Last November, he was accepted at the Monastic Training at Gampo Abbey, Western Buddhist monastery, in Nova Scotia, Canada

Lifecycles

A few community highlights from Fall/Winter 2015

The East Palo Alto community participated in many memorable activities last year. Here are photos from just a few of the events that occurred during the 2015 fall and winter season.



Photo courtesy of Brother Jaye Studio(<http://www.brotherjaye.com>) Marie Davis, the former president of the San Mateo Chapter of the NAACP is shown at the 41st Annual Bethune-Height Recognition Luncheon. The luncheon is sponsored by the **National Council of Negro Women** and it was held on October 31, 2015 at the Arrillaga Family Recreation Center in Menlo Park. Rosemary Steele, the pres. of the East Palo Alto section of the NCNW was one of the MCs.



Rotary of East Palo Alto Bayshore celebrated its 50th Anniversary at the Middlefield Community Center on September 12, 2015. Ramesh (Kali) Azariah was the MC, along with the club's president, Elizabeth Jackson. Many were recognized during the evening for their community contributions, and then the partying began.



In the photo to the left, Black Infant Health Program Director, Bernestine Benton, Council member Larry Moody and UC Cooperative Extension Emeritus, Gloria Brown, stand with Dr. J. Nadine Gracia, 2nd from rt., who is the deputy assistant secretary for minority health and the director of the Office of Minority Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Dr. Garcia visited the **San Mateo County Black Infant Health Program** and the **Ravenswood Family Health Center** on December 4, 2015



Several East Palo Alto police officers are shown cooking breakfast for East Palo Alto seniors on December 3, 2015 at the special holiday breakfast that the **East Palo Alto Police Department** sponsored at the East Palo Alto Senior Center.



JobTrain's culinary students made holiday cookies for San Mateo County inmates in Redwood City. More than 6,500 of their cookies were picked up from JobTrain by the Service League on December 21 and delivered to the inmates on Christmas day. Don't they look proud of what they've done?



Martha Hanks was honored for her contributions to the community during the **American Muslim Foundation EID festival**, which was held on December 19, 2015 in Palo Alto.



The **Rotary of East Palo Alto Bayshore** scored, again, in December with a music donation event it co-sponsored with the Cupertino Rotary and IvyMax.

Musical instruments were collected by Cupertino high school students and donated to young musicians and schools in East Palo Alto. Musicians from **Live in Peace** performed at the event.

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Lifecycles

Remembering Mrs. Juanita Meadows: East Palo Alto's oldest resident



This photo shows Mrs. Juanita Meadows being honored in 2010 by former East Palo Alto City Council member David Woods.

The death of Mrs. Juanita Meadows came as very sad news for many East Palo Alto residents. Mrs. Meadow's death was announced at the September 1, 2015 East Palo Alto City Council meeting and mentioned in the Spring-Summer 2015 EPA Today.

On May 18, 2010, Mrs. Meadows, who was known as Mother Meadows, by many community residents, was officially honored by the East Palo Alto City Council as the oldest city resident.

Ms. Meadows was also honored on May 21, 2010 by over 100 seniors and friends who attended the first annual Older Americans Month Elder Award celebration luncheon at the East

Palo Alto Senior Center.

When asked in 2010 for her secrets of longevity, Mother Meadows advised that all, who wanted to live a long life, should be kind to others seek forgiveness from others, forgive others willingly and wholeheartedly for any transgressions and refrain from allowing one's body to be the temple for anger, resentment, jealousy and any negative emotions or feelings. Believing in the use of natural products, Mother Meadows also advised that one use herbs.

Mother Meadows was known for her independence and could be seen driving herself around the city and on other errands nearby.

Read more about Mother Meadows in the May-June 2010 edition of East Palo Alto Today. See the article titled, Honoring East Palo Alto's oldest resident on page 9 at: http://epatoday.org/may_june_2010/may_june_2010_pgs9_16.pdf.

Her presence will be remembered.

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What can we learn from El Chapo?

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their quotes and arranging information to favor themselves.

A journalist's job is to produce news stories that provide truthful information as objectively as possible. A journalist is not a public information officer or a public relations specialist, whose job is to present clients in the best possible light.

Journalists work in the public interest. They are given the mission to find out what happened, to whom it happened, why, when and how and report this information, letting readers and their viewers draw whatever conclusions they'd like to make.

I've had community members tell me that there are obviously things officials don't want us to know. For the journalist, these are the very things that people should know. For example, what was the Michigan governor's office hiding concerning the poisonous chemicals in the City of Flint's water system? Why were the Chicago police holding back the video showing the murder of 17-year-old Laquan McDonald? What didn't the city and the police want the public to see? Why was it that a local reporter had to sue the City of Chicago before getting the video of

McDonald's shooting released? We know now that the police and Chicago's city officials didn't want the public to know that McDonald was shot 16 times; 15 times while he lay on the ground.

In many ways, journalists are agents of change. While they are not infallible, their job entails that they be honest and truthful.

Guzman's recapture shows in so many ways the power of information - on the lives of those who give it, for those who report it and on the lives of the people who receive it. Guzman had his own reasons for giving his fateful interview, which, ironically, reaffirmed some of the prevailing research that shows what society needs to do to cut down on crime, violence and incarceration.

Guzman's recapture also gives us insight into how news is gathered and what should happen behind the scenes when news is written and presented to the public.

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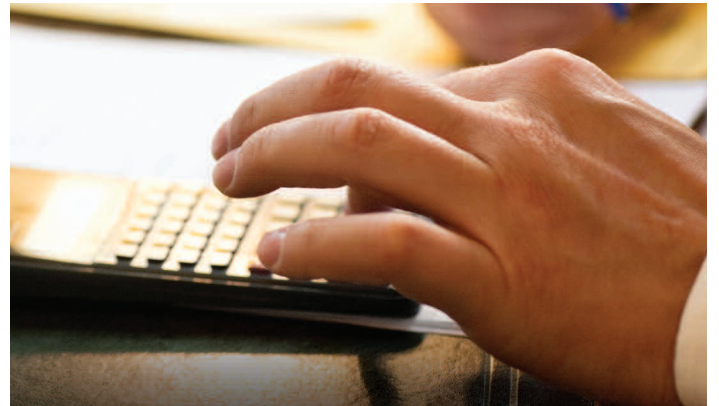
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Community News Briefs

Bay's website, the city manager's page features Gonzalez' award and it states, "This distinguished award recognizes ICMA members who have served in the local government profession with dignity, honor and integrity and have demonstrated exceptional ethics while carrying out their duties in local government."

The description continues that Gonzalez "was recognized for her dedication and commitment to improving the professionalism in East Palo Alto, California, during her two years as manager there." The inscription on the presentation reads: "For Upholding the Highest Standards of

Ethical Conduct as Prescribed by the ICMA Code of Ethics."

In its March 2015 issue of Public Management magazine, ICMA - the International City/County Management Association - noted that Gonzalez' "continued focus on finding the best course of action for the city and bringing that information to the council's attention was often met by the council's lack of support without stating legitimate reasons. She also was publicly criticized for performing what professional city managers view as their role in a council-manager form of government. The council decided



Photo courtesy <http://icma.org> Magda Gonzalez, city manager of Half Moon Bay, is shown receiving the Cal-ICMA award in Jan. 2015.

not to renew her contract."

Council member Lisa Yarbrough Gauthier, who was East Palo Alto's mayor last year, wrote a personal letter to PM magazine, which was published under the headline, Setting the Implications Straight.

In the article, Gauthier

wrote, "I feel compelled to address some of the implications raised by the article.

"The article implies that the city council of East Palo Alto did something illegal or unethical by not renewing the former manager's contract. This tacit assertion is wrong and irresponsible, and it is uncharacteristic of ICMA's professional standards."

Gauthier continued: "The city council did welcome and listened to the manager's professional advice; however, the role of the council is to make policy decision and the council is not compelled to accept staff's policy recommendations... Members of our community expressed concern to the council about her advice,

continued from page 3

especially in the areas of the enforcement of the city's rent stabilization and just cause for eviction ordinance and tenant protection ordinance.

"The city has been fiercely challenged and has successfully defended its rent stabilization and just cause for eviction ordinance multiple times in the courts. The council is committed to defending the implementation of this ordinance in order to protect residents' rights, especially in light of the intense housing crisis that exists in Silicon Valley, and there is nothing unethical or illegal about the council listening to the concerns of our residents."

Residentes se quedan atras

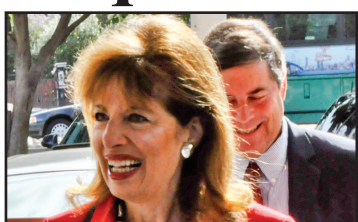
Por Edward Perez
East Palo Alto Today

Congresista Jackie Speier del 14 distrito del congreso, iba dar un discusión el 8 de enero sobre el seguro de salud en un evento organizado por Ravenswood's Centro de salud de familias.

El evento tenía el objetivo en registrar a muchos residentes de la ciudad de East Palo Alto para el seguro de salud.

La congresista no pudo dar su discusión porque tenía que ir a un funeral ese día.

Afortunadamente, representantes de Speiers podían hablar con East Pal Alto Today y ponernos en contacto con la congresista.



Congresswoman Jackie Speier

Speiers iba hablar sobre la importancia de tener seguro de salud y quería arreglar el problema en cual muchos residentes de East Palo Alto no tienen seguro de salud.

Speiers le dijo a EPA Today que el numero de individuos sin seguro de salud en el condado de San Mateo ha bajado de 11% ha 6%, pero que el problema sigue en East Palo Alto. Es un problema que tiene mucha importancia porque típicamente los

residentes del condado de San Mateo viven a los 75 años pero los residentes de EPA típicamente viven a los 61 años.

Speirs dice que hay muchos programas dedicado a ayudar a la gente encontrar seguro de salud. Dice que residentes con un salario bajo de \$60,000 son elegibles para Medi-Cal. Medi-Cal es el programa de Medicare para residentes de California.

Otro programa que menciona Speirs fue Covered California. La congresista dice que Covered California es programa que ayuda residentes encontrar seguro de salud que les conviene más. Según su página de web, "Covered California es donde puedes encontrar seguro de salud de alta calidad bajo el acto de Patient Protection and Affordable Care." Registros comenzaron el año pasado pero acaban el 31 de Enero. Puedes registrar para Medi-Cal durante todo el año.

La mayoría de residentes de EPA no saben de preventive care. Es su sitio de web, dicen que bajo el acta Affordable Care, su familia puede

recibir servicios importante sin cobros. Estos servicios incluyen exámenes de la presión de tu sangre, diabetes, y exámenes de colesterol. También incluyen exámenes de cáncer, ayuda

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Cooley Landing art is on display



Photo courtesy by Elizabeth Real

The community quilt was on display at the Palo Alto Arts Center. The list of some of the community members who contributed are on the right.

By Elizabeth Real
East Palo Alto Today

They say a picture is worth a thousand words, but how many words is a stitched painting worth?

Linda Gass, who is known for her stitched paintings, raises awareness about environmental issues through art. She has continued her resi-

dency with the Palo Alto Art Center and on November 19, 2015 the artist hosted an exhibit showcasing her work that was inspired by East Palo Alto's Cooley Landing.

Gass explored the active life that exists in Cooley Landing, including tiger sharks, small crabs, birds, and plants. Her land art installation illuminated the changes to the shoreline.

After months of work, Gass was ready to display her creations.

The walls inside the studio were decorated with pictures and written information that explained Gass' project with Cooley Landing.

Guests were entranced with Gass' detailed stitching that flawlessly outlined terrain across the silk fabrics.

An exhibit of Gass' art as well as the community quilt can be viewed through January 22, 2016.

Gass presented a lecture on January 13, 2016 that was held at the Palo Alto Art Center located at 1313 Newell Road in Palo Alto.

In discussing her work, Gass said, "Much of the artwork I'm showing is a true collaboration with the community."

Elizabeth Real started as a 2015 summer intern at East Palo Alto Today and she is now a regular contributor to the newspaper.

COOLEY LANDING COMMUNITY QUILT TOP, 2015

Hand-painted silk and dyed silk, stitched together
Courtesy of the artists

Artist Linda Gass created a set of seven silk painting designs inspired by participant observations at Cooley Landing. Community members then painted those designs with liquid silk dyes during the "In-the-Gallery" portion of Linda's residency. Creators of each silk painting are acknowledged in the diagram and list below.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
A	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	A10	A11
B	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	B9	B10	B11
C	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	C10	C11
D	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7	D8	D9	D10	D11
E	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	E11
F	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10	F11

- | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| A1. Candy Bandung | B1. Elizabeth Real | C1. Julia Nelson-Gal |
| A2. Kimberley Rodriguez | B2. Nia Taylor | C2. Lily Cho |
| A3. Zeenat Dhillon | B3. Judy Dauberman | C3. Bryan Diaz |
| A4. Cathelen Corrado | B4. Anushi Kumar | C4. Betsy Colby |
| A5. Pat Foster | B5. Paola Maciel | C5. Wendy Meluch |
| A6. Alice Chang | B6. Jessica Sanchez | C6. Semizi Tutavake |
| A7. Mia Reynaga | B7. Kristyn Crouse | C7. Stara Dhillon |
| A8. Liz Legorreta | B8. Parnea Karimi | C8. Judith Content |
| A9. Lily Lee | B9. Saara Doke | C9. Priya Abani-Doke |
| A10. Anhely Pacheca | B10. Shiom Acielberg | C10. Camilla Divie Brown |
| A11. Charlie Diaz | B11. Puneet Dhillon | C11. Cherlyn Rodriguez |
| D1. Nia Porter | E1. Elizabeth Diaz | F1. Audrey Struve |
| D2. Tonnia Allen | E2. Larisa Ulrich | F2. Nathalia Arias |
| D3. Hahn Ng | E3. C. W. Belleville | F3. Karla Mejia |
| D4. Beverly Brunelle | E4. Adeline Anderson | F4. Yajaira Villanueva |
| D5. Nitin Kumar | E5. Melissa Baten Caswell | F5. Roxana Bravo |
| D6. Evan Tutavake | E6. Olga Gutierrez | F6. Amber Rodriguez |
| D7. Rob Steiner | E7. Cathy Taylor | F7. Holli Cho |
| D8. Marc Struve | E8. Maya Oskus | F8. Edwin Cabrera Gonzalez |
| D9. Diana Carranza | E9. Kai Porter | F9. Trish Mulvey |
| D10. Liselle Yoo | E10. Lisa Dorn | F10. Lee Martin Jones |
| D11. Henry Natou Diaz | E11. Diana Legorreta-Bravo | F11. Alicia Landa |
- The artist also wishes to acknowledge the following volunteers who helped make this community quilt possible: Emily Cohen, Fe Goldberg, Lauren Baines, Nia Taylor, and Trish Mulvey.

EPA said goodbye to its city attorney

to the city with a full proposal. Given the urgency of the matter, Martinez advised the city council to approve the agreement with Ralph Andersen & Associates during its meeting. Mayor Donna Rutherford, Vice Mayor Larry Moody and

Council member Carlos Romero agreed and unanimously approved the motion to enter into an agreement with the firm. The mayor expressed her gratitude towards Nagel saying, "We really appreciated all of your work, all of the long

continued from page 1 hours, your legal advice, your detailed directions to the council." "I'm glad you were able to hang with us for as long as you did. I think you did wonderful work," Councilmember Romero said jokingly, "Watch out because you might be

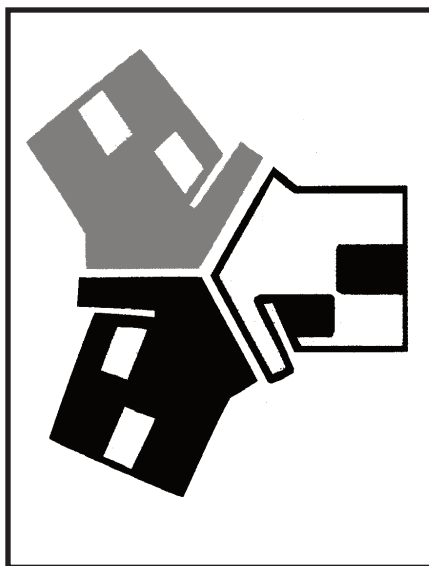
coming back." "I want the community to know that when we went through our selection process, it was by unanimous decision that you assume the role," Vice Mayor Moody said. "I think you have absolutely done well by us." In responding to the coun-

cil, Nagel said, "The last two years have been a very exciting and fulfilling time for me. People say unique all the time, but I think East Palo Alto truly deserves, unique." The city expects to take four-to-six months to find a new city attorney.

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"This was funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Fair Housing Initiatives Program, Grant No. FH700G14018."

Understand how diabetes could affect your vision

By Alexa Popplewell
East Palo Alto Today

Diabetes, one of the leading causes of blindness, is growing at an alarming rate with a 32% increase in new cases over the past decade. California reports the greatest number of new cases of diabetes annually.

With the Central Valley having some of the highest diabetes rates in California, it's important to understand how diabetes could affect your vision.

In California, one in seven adults has diabetes (13.8%) and of those, 38% of cases go undiagnosed.

Fresno County has the



Photo of sugar cubes courtesy of pixabay.com

seventh highest number of diabetes diagnoses of all 58 counties in the state.

Fresno County also has the distinction of the sixth highest rate for obesity in California. Obesity increases a person's risk of diabetes by

four times.

Diabetes is a serious condition with serious implications for one's health. Specific to eye health, diabetes can lead to:

Glaucoma – Glaucoma occurs when pressure builds up in the eye. This pressure will cause damage to the optic nerve, which may result in blindness.

Cataracts – Cataracts are a clouding of the lens of the eye resulting in impaired vision.

Diabetic retinopathy – With this condition, capillaries in the back of the eye leak fluid into the retina. This damage to the blood vessels in the retina can cause blindness.

"Often times there are no symptoms in the earliest stages of diabetes-related eye conditions," explains Dr. Brian E. Cavallaro, M.D., with EYE-Q Vision Care.

"This underscores the im-

portance of regular eye exams to detect possible threatening conditions because treatments are most effective if initiated early on, before any loss of vision."

Prevention

Prevention is the best defense to keep your eye health on TRACK:

T – Take your diabetes medication as prescribed by your doctor

R – Reach and maintain a healthy weight to limit your risk factor for diabetes

A – Add more physical activity to your daily routine

C – Control your blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol – even through this holiday season!

K – Kick the smoking habit

Alexa Popplewell is with EYE-Q Vision Care located in the Central Valley. For additional information visit eye-qvc.com or call (559) 486-2000.



Photo courtesy of the U.S. NIMH Library

A Look At

DIABETES & OUR EYES

In California & the Central Valley

Diabetes, one of the leading causes of blindness, is growing at an alarming rate with a 32% increase in new cases over the past decade. California reports the greatest number of new cases of diabetes annually. With the Central Valley having some of the highest diabetes rates in California, it's important to understand how diabetes could affect your vision.

DIABETES IN CALIFORNIA

1 IN 7

ONE in SEVEN adults in California has diabetes (13.8%).¹

38%

Are Undiagnosed²

62%

Have Been Diagnosed²

DIABETES IN THE CENTRAL VALLEY

1/2

OF THE TOP 10 COUNTIES

California has 58 counties. HALF OF THE TOP 10 counties in diabetes diagnoses are from California's Central Valley.

6

Fresno County is the 6th highest county in obesity in CA.

7

Fresno County is the 7th highest county in diabetes in CA.

Anthony Browder continues his talks in East Palo Alto



Anthony Browder

By Jason Auzene
East Palo Alto Today

I had another informative afternoon with one of the great cultural His(Our)storians of our time – Anthony Browder.

This time, Browder's lecture was held at Faith Missionary Baptist Church on Runnymede Street on December 12, 2015.

A group of us have been meeting there for the past 6 months in an attempt to begin the reversal of the Miseducation of the Negro (a must read book written by Carter G. Woodson) by learning

what schools and churches did not teach us – being an African/man in the mirror view of African history, which comprise the missing pages of world history, according to Dr. John Henrik Clarke.

At his last lecture, Brother Browder focused on the Holy Days (the Winter Solstice) and how Christmas is used to explain astrotheology, the study of the sun, moon and stars and the stellar procession through the heavens.

Browder explained that people first studied the heavens to know when to plant their seeds, when to harvest their crops and when the flood waters were coming.

They were able to know the four seasons and the four cardinal points of the sun, which are March 22 – Vernal Equinox (day and night are equal, 12 hours of light and 12 hours of dark), June 22 – the Summer Solstice (longest day of light of the year), September 22 - Autumn Equinox (day and night are equal), December 22 - Winter Solstice (shortest day/longest night of the year).

According to the Nativity story (1) The son is born. (2)

The son was born on December 25. (3) He was born to a virgin. (4) Three wise men came bearing gifts. (5) They were following a star. In studying the Winter Solstice, we learn of the birth/rebirth/raised elevation of the sun on December 25.

According to the creator of the heavens, on June 22, the sun reaches its highest point in the heavens where it stays for three days and then starts its decline until it reaches December 22, when the sun reaches its lowest point in the heavens (It dies and winter takes over).

It again lies there for three days until December 25, when it starts its climb back to its heights. On December 25, the days get longer by minutes.



Photo courtesy of pixabay.com

The sun is born/reborn/raised erection (Light conquers darkness.).

As for the story of the virgin: If you count back 280 days, which is the normal human gestation period of a pregnant woman, from December 25, you will come to the Vernal Equinox (March 21), which represents the cosmic heavens being impregnated. This is the time for us to plant seeds into mother earth, which will then bear fruit. The three wise men represent the three stars of Orion's Belt and Sirius was the star they were following.

I challenge everyone to re-search the Winter Solstice and all the cardinal points of the sun from a Kemetic/African point of view and you will find this a very old story – a story which has been told for thousands of years. It is a story that brings affirmations and credence to many of us about our earliest times.

Africans have been celebrating the birth of the sun since the beginning of time. Because our ancestors understood the creator, they studied the heavens, the sun and what the two represented to life, as well as, all the other life elements (air, earth, water, fire).



Photo courtesy of pixabay.com

All the major religions have a common core belief system that goes back to the SUN.

There is so much more to learn. I hope I whetted your appetite to do further research about what you have just read. Remember, this is a study of the process of the sun as it moves throughout the heavens.

So if you have a question or would like a greater understanding of the process, I would suggest that you start with the books I have researched for this article. They are:

Hotep Family, By Amenja Baka SaraHotep
The Astrological Foundation of the Christ Myth by Malik H. Jabbar and Nile Valley Contribution to Civilization (pages 75-81) by Anthony Browder

San Mateo County ends the Fatherhood Collaborative

and research in areas that are critically important to at-risk dads, including child support. Or, to say it more simply, the county is in a position to look into this problem and advocate for a proper state-wide solution.

My hope is that the newly formed Fathers Task Force will seriously look into and advocate for policy change in the area of child support and the other issues facing at-risk dads.

There are many flaws with the current child support system, but a good place to start is to stop ordering low-income dads to pay child support that they cannot ever hope to pay.

It is good that the county will be continuing the popular father oriented events such as Dad and Me at the Park, and Dad and Me at the Library.

It was also great to hear the board publically state its

intentions of advocating for at-risk dads.

I believe that children do best when both parents are doing well and are highly engaged in their daily lives. I believe that the county's board of supervisors shares this view. My hope is that the new Fathers Task Force will be a great success advocating for at-risk fathers.

I call on the board and county staff to have the

courage to dig deeper into the child support issues and other problem's facing at-risk dads and do the hard but critically important advocacy work that is needed to improve the lives of fathers.

Do it for the kids; half of them will be dads one day!

Joe Albowicz is a concerned San Mateo County resident.

[Editor's note - See an award-winning 2011 inter-

continued from page 7

view with two former leaders of the Fatherhood Collaborative on Talking with Henrietta.

The show is called, "Strengthening the Bonds between Fathers and their Children."

It can be seen on YouTube at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8zjv_e2sCg&feature=youtu.be. More information can be found at www.epatoday.org/tv.html].

A profile of Ruben Abrica, the first Latin mayor of East Palo Alto

By Elizabeth Real
East Palo Alto



Ruben Abrica
Photo courtesy of the City of East Palo Alto website

Most people who interview Ruben Abrica ask about his government work. After all, he is one of the founding members of the City of East Palo Alto, he served as the city's first Latino mayor, and has continued to help the community as a city council member. One thing that surprises him is that he's never asked why he is still involved in politics. A lot of people, he pointed out, lose faith in the American government due to all the controversial injustices seen on the news. He, however, is not one of those people.

Abrica was born in Mexico and he spent most of his childhood living in Tijuana. For the first ten years of his life, he was the only child in the family. His father was absent, so his grandmother helped raise him while his mother worked in the United States.

"My grandmother always used to vote," Abrica remembered, "She knew it was important to vote." In fact, he

the former mayor told a heartwarming story from his childhood that sparked his interest in serving the community. "When I was in third grade in Tijuana, I became aware, through an incident, that no one in my family had made it past the second grade," he remembered. His uncle, Tio Chepo, who had become Abrica's father figure, moved to Tijuana.

Tio Chepo was quiet and serious, but he "had a nice way about him," Abrica described. Tio Chepo had gotten a job with a furniture factory and he would even take Abrica with him to work sometimes. One afternoon, Tio Chepo came in looking for his nephew. "He said he wanted to talk to me. First I thought, 'oh, maybe I did something wrong.'" His uncle, however, had an important question for young Abrica: "I noticed he had a little notebook and a pencil. He asked me if I could teach him to read and write."

"It takes a lot of courage for people to say 'I don't know.' Most of the time we're going to

try to avoid it, especially as an adult," Abrica reflected. During the initial campaign to establish East Palo Alto as a city, Abrica commended those who were active despite not having a higher education. A lot of the people on the first committee didn't know how to read or write, but they were still there trying to help. Abrica explained that he knows how difficult it is for people who can't read and write.

After the incident with his uncle, he knew he would always keep going to school and he realized that even though he was only in third grade, he was already helping. His grandmother had him help neighbors read letters. For those who feel that they don't have much to offer, he had this to say: "At any point in time, you are already able to help those who have less. You don't have to wait to be a super-something. Wherever you are right now, you can already be of help even though you need help. You already have something. Pass it on."

As an immigrant from a low-

income household himself, Abrica is not blind to the challenges that young people in East Palo Alto face. He moved to southern California in 7th grade to live with his mother. As he entered high school in the U.S., Abrica explained that he was automatically placed in the lowest classes because he had not mastered the English language yet. He laughed as he remembered that the reason he was not allowed to take French was because he didn't speak English well enough. For a Spanish speaker, however, French is actually not that difficult to learn since both languages share similar grammatical structures and are of Latin descent.

After he was denied the French course, he was denied the Algebra course, too. Again, he felt that his intelligence was being measured by his Mexican descent and lack of English words. Luckily, he remembered that his middle school teacher had said, "make sure they give you Al-

continued on page 15

Ruben Abrica, el primer alcalde Latino de East Palo Alto

Escrito por Elizabeth Real
EPA Today

La mayoría de las personas que entrevistan Rubén Abrica le hacen preguntas acerca de su trabajo gubernamental. Al final, él es uno de los miembros fundadores de la ciudad de East Palo Alto, se desempeñó como primer alcalde latino de la ciudad, y ha continuado ayudando a la comunidad como un miembro del consejo de la ciudad. Una cosa que le sorprende es que nunca le han preguntado por qué él todavía está involucrado en la política. Una gran

cantidad de personas, el dijo, pierde la fe en el gobierno de los Estados Unidos debido a todas las injusticias controversiales vistas en las noticias. Él, sin embargo, no es una de esas personas.

Abrica nació en México y por la mayor parte de su infancia vivió en Tijuana. Durante los primeros diez años de su vida, él era el único niño en la familia. Su padre estaba ausente, por lo que su abuela ayudó a criarlo mientras su madre trabajaba en los Estados Unidos.

"Mi abuela siempre se encargaba de votar" Abrica

recordó, "Sabía que era importante votar." De hecho, años después se enteró de que su abuela era amiga del alcalde de su ciudad natal, La Unión de Guadalupe en Jalisco, México.

La importancia del voto resonó con él a lo largo de los años. Todavía le sorprende completamente que East Palo Alto alcanzó el estatus de ciudad por unos pocos votos. "Ganamos la elección por sólo 15 votos!" Exclamó antes de subrayar que "cada voto realmente cuenta."

Cuando se le preguntó que le ha mantenido su motivación

todos estos años, el ex alcalde contó una historia conmovedora de su infancia que despertó su interés en servir a la comunidad. "Cuando estaba en tercer grado en Tijuana, me di cuenta, a través de un incidente, que nadie en mi familia había completado más allá del segundo grado," recordó. Su tío, el tío Chepo, que se había convertido en la figura paterna de Abrica, se mudó a Tijuana. Tío Chepo era muy tranquilo y serio, pero él "tenía una manera agradable sobre él," Abrica describió. Tío Chepo había conseguido un trabajo con una fábrica de muebles y

a veces se llevaba a Abrica con él a trabajar. Una tarde, Tío Chepo llegó en busca de su sobrino. "Él dijo que quería hablar conmigo. Primero pensé, 'oh, quizás hice algo mal.'" Su tío, sin embargo, tenía una pregunta importante para el joven Abrica: "Me di cuenta de que tenía una pequeña libreta y un lápiz. Me preguntó si le podía enseñar a leer y escribir."

"Se necesita mucho valor para que la gente pueda decir 'no sé.' La mayoría de las veces vamos a tratar de evitarlo, especialmente como adulto," Abrica refleja. Durante

City residents lag



Courtesy of the Covered California website

individuals and its coverage includes families with children, seniors, those with disabilities, youth in foster care, pregnant women and low-income individuals with specific diseases such as tuberculosis, breast cancer and HIV/AIDS. More

information can be found on the California Department of Health Care Services website at <http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/>

Speier also mentioned Covered California, which she said was an important tool residents can use to find health insurance that suits them best.

Covered California is described on its website as "the place where Californians can get brand-name health insurance under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act."

The website also states, "It's the only place to get federal premium assistance to help you buy private insurance from [specific] companies That means you may qualify for a discount on private insurance, or get health insurance through the

state's Medi-Cal program."

Enrollment for Covered California began on November 1, 2015, and it will end on January 31. However, enrollment for Medi-Cal is open year round.

Speier pointed out that East Palo Alto residents are often unaware of preventative care.

The Human Health Services website at: <http://www.hhs.gov/health-care/about-the-law/preventive-care/index.html> provides information about preventative services.

One section of the website states, "Under the Affordable Care Act, you and your family may be eligible for some important preventive services — which can help you avoid illness and improve your health

— at no additional cost to you."

These services include blood pressure, diabetes, and cholesterol tests; many cancer screenings; counseling to quit smoking, losing weight, nutrition, depression, and alcohol abuse; vaccinations; counseling, screenings, and vaccines to ensure healthy pregnancies; flu and pneumonia shots.

The website also notes that "This preventive service provision applies only to people enrolled in job-related health plans or individual health insurance policies created after March 23, 2010. If you are in such a health plan, this provision will affect you as soon as your plan begins its first new "plan year" or "policy year" on

continued from page 1

or after September 23, 2010."

Speier recommends that East Palo Alto residents, especially, access the resources available to help them find appropriate health insurance. According to the Congresswoman's website, uninsured individuals may face a fine -- "the greater of either: 1% of your household income that is above the tax return filing threshold for your filing status, or your family's flat dollar amount, which is \$95 per adult and \$47.50 per child, limited to a family maximum of \$285."

In other words, individuals and families without health insurance can face a fine that amounts to a minimum of one percent of their household income or one that could reach a family maximum of \$285.

'Be Rich' community outreach gives, serves and loves

By Evelyn Powery
East Palo Alto Today

New Beginnings Community Church (NBCC) launched several "Be Rich" initiatives to give, serve and love the local Bay Area community this holiday season.

"We were excited to partner with East Palo Alto Charter School (EPACS) and Ecumenical Hunger Program (EHP) again. I was blown away by the response of the congregation. We were able to give away \$30,000 and provide over 1,300 volunteer hours.

With our food drive, we have donated over 3,300

pounds of food for Second Harvest Food Bank.

In December, NBCC made a substantial impact in the community by beautifying the campus at EPACS and helping set up the holiday distribution site at EHP.

Activities at EPACS included gardening, painting walls and murals, carpentry and other beautification projects.

When asked about the day, EPACS Principal Sharon Johnson said, "I am so grateful today for all the support from everyone that was here. This church community is so



Photo courtesy of NBCC

optimistic and warm, and wraps their arms around our school. It really means a lot to us to know that we have a community supporting us on this vision and mission. It will

mean a lot to the students."

At EHP, volunteers cleaned the warehouse and food closet, sorted toys, groomed the campus, and decorated for the holidays.

NBCC presented donation checks at both locations.

"The check was definitely a surprise!" EHP Executive Director Lesia Preston commented. "It just filled my heart with joy to know that people care so much. It is a touching experience to work with so many lovely people and just to see

how much generosity is around me. We are going to be able to help many families."

Pastor Hurmon Hamilton, senior and founding pastor of NBCC summed the weekends up well: "I believe one major reason NBCC exists is to be transformative in the local community. One way to do this is to release the power of unconditional generosity." Through its "Be Rich" initiative, NBCC hopes to do its part to help build a hunger-free and healthy community.

Evelyn Powery is the NBCC Director of Transforming Communities.

Parents want better schools



This photo shows participants at an Innovate Public Schools meeting that took place in East Palo Alto in October 2015.

also spoke as a parent leader at the meeting, expressed

similar comments. "We have informed ourselves and seen

the statistics—I want a better option so we don't have to go outside our community."

KIPP public charter school alumna, Emani Lewis, shared her positive experience, saying, "Too many jaws drop when I say I graduated from Spelman College and we need to figure out how to get more students that look like me to and through college. When I think about what got me through, I think about my KIPP college advisors, my family, and the amount of support KIPP provides."

Then, she asked an important question: "If these were your kids, where would you want them to go?"

The general message from the community members at the meeting was that the schools need to improve in order to prepare students for the future and they would like the city's school children to have educational opportunities available in East Palo Alto.

According to Sierra Jenkins, the director of development and communications at

continued from page 1

Innovate Public Schools, a petition has been submitted to open a new charter school in 2017. "They are on a deadline," Jenkins said of the Ravenswood City School District, "the vote is definitely going to be in January." If the district does not approve the new charter school, then an appeal will be filed.

EPA Today reached out to the school board for comment, but did not receive a reply. The next school board meetings will take place on February 11 and 25, 2016.

Padres quieren mejores escuelas

Por Elizabeth Real
East Palo Alto Today

¿Están fallando las escuelas de East Palo Alto en preparar a sus estudiantes para la escuela secundaria y la universidad? Muchos padres y alumnos parecen pensar que sí y es por eso que han solicitado para una escuela pública charter KIPP.

En diciembre de 2015, muchos estudiantes y padres se reunieron en el Distrito Escolar de Ravenswood para expresar sus opiniones sobre la calidad de la educación que los estudiantes reciben en las escuelas del Distrito. El grupo de peticionarios fueron apoyados por Innovative Public Schools, una organización sin fines de lucro que trabaja específicamente con los padres. El objetivo del grupo es ayudar a los padres a organizarse para poder demandar opciones nuevas y mejores para las escuelas de la comunidad.

Después de ver el trabajo que Innovate Public Schools llevo a cabo en Redwood City, algunos padres de la comunidad de East Palo Alto se interesaron en mejores opciones para sus propios hijos. Los padres luego se comuni-

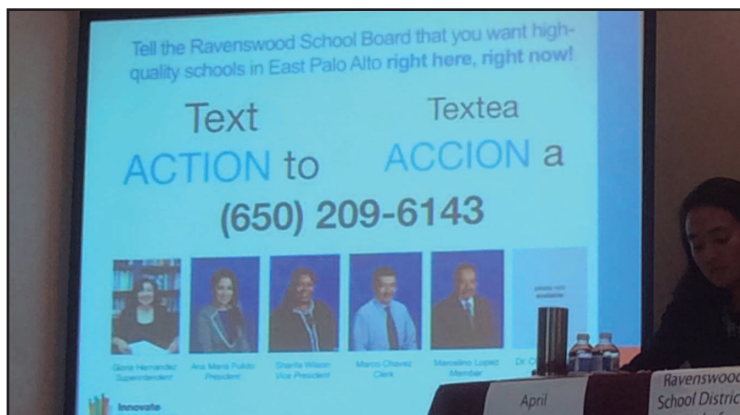


Photo by East Palo Alto Today

A screen shot taken from the October 2015 KIPP presentation that was made at the St. Francis of Assisi Church in East Palo Alto in October 2015.

caron con KIPP Bay Area Schools, que proporcionan escuelas charter públicas de preparación universitaria. Actualmente KIPP tiene escuelas en comunidades de bajos ingresos en

Oakland, San Francisco, San Lorenzo, San José, y Redwood City.

"Tengo dos hijos aquí en East Palo Alto," dijo Joel Ortega, uno de los padres líderes, durante la audiencia pública, "Cuando mi hijo entro a Eastside College Prep en el sexto grado, lloré porque estaba muy atrasado. Si pueden hacer algo, háganlo," instó.

María Elena Mendoza,

otro líder de los padres, dijo: "Las estadísticas muestran que muchos de nuestros niños no se graduarán de la escuela secundaria y aún menos de la universidad. Es por eso que 1.000 estudiantes dejan el distrito para encontrar una mejor educación."

Yesenia Rodríguez, quien también es líder de los padres, expresó comentarios similares. "Nos hemos informado nosotros mismos y vimos las estadísticas. Quiero una mejor opción, para que no tengamos que ir fuera de nuestra comunidad."

Una ex alumna de una de las escuelas públicas charter

de KIPP, Emani Lewis, compartió su experiencia positiva. "Demasiadas bocas caen abiertas cuando digo que me gradué de Spelman College y tenemos que encontrar la manera de que más estudiantes que se parecen a mí logren a llegar a la universidad.

Cuando pienso en lo que me llevó a través, pienso en mis asesores KIPP universitarios, mi familia, y la cantidad de apoyo que KIPP ofrece."

Luego, Lewis hizo una pregunta importante: "Si estos fueran sus hijos, ¿a cuál escuela quisieran que vayan?"

El mensaje general de los padres en la reunión de la junta escolar era que las escuelas de la ciudad tienen que mejorar para poder preparar a los estudiantes para el futuro y piden que las oportunidades para que sus hijos sean disponibles en East Palo Alto.

Según Sierra Jenkins, directora de desarrollo y las comunicaciones de Innovate Public Schools, una petición se ha entregado que pide que abran una nueva escuela charter en East Palo Alto en 2017. Si el distrito no aprueba la nueva escuela

charter, a continuación, se iniciará un recurso de apelación.

EPA Today intento de comunicarse con el distrito por sus comentarios, pero no recibió respuesta.

El Distrito Escolar de Ravenswood tenía previsto votar sobre el asunto durante su reunión el 14 de enero 2016, pero la votación se pospuso. La votación muy probablemente llevará a cabo en febrero, cuando el consejo escolar se reúne de nuevo. El distrito debe tomar una decisión antes del 20 de febrero 2016.



Emani Lewis is shown speaking at the December 2015 RSCD board meeting.

City house fire displaces residents

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dressed issues regarding secondary units in East Palo Alto. It stated that zoning standards are one of the primary issues with secondary units.

The report pointed out, "Many of the City's zoning regulations are more than thirty years old and are in need of updating.

Furthermore, the zoning standards are inconsistent in some instances with current building and the fire code requirements.



Photo by the MP FP District Firemen work in the back-yard of the burning house.

Mayor Donna Rutherford

heard city residents comment on the current building and fire code requirements when she attended a meeting on July 20, 2015. During the meeting, some residents addressed their concerns over the penalties they are facing because of code violations that they think are unfair.

They pointed out that they were facing city fees similar to those levied on commercial buildings.

"I need to see that in black and white, because I don't believe that," Rutherford responded. "I will ask the city manager to show me that in black and white.

"I don't want to believe that because it's so unfair that if you're saying that for my property, I have to pay the same amount a commercial property pays. It's not true, my property is not commercial," said Rutherford.

To read more on the secondary unit issue within East Palo Alto, see the article titled, "East Palo Alto residents fed up with 'unfair' garage conversion policies" in the 2015 Spring-Summer issue of East Palo Alto Today

Edward Perez was an intern in East Palo Alto Today's 2015 Summer Journalism Intern Program. He is currently a sophomore at the Univ. of Dayton.

East Palo Alto's Mastodons are bringing in the trophies

By Jeff Austin
East Palo Alto Today

There is a new game in town. It is called unlimited weight football. The western half of the United States has been united by Snoop Dogg, the rapper in the form of the Snoop Youth Football League. This league is unique and is undoubtedly going to make a dent in the way that youth football is being played.

Locally, the Mid-Peninsula Athletic Association Mastodons have been playing unlimited weight football for some time now. Five years to be exact.

In those five years, the Mastodons have produced an array of championship trophies which take up the living room of President Tyler Barker's house, causing his wife Judy to threaten to move him out of the home.

She is just kidding for she is a diehard Mastodon fan as well!) Actually, all of her chil-



dren have participated in the Mastodon program in one way or another. "We are one big family", complete with challenges and obstacles.

The Mid-Peninsula Athletic Association has struggled and continues to provide solid activities for the development of youth in East Palo Alto and East Menlo Park.

The 2015 Mastodon foot-

ball campaign was truly exciting. With four of the five levels of mastodon participating teams making the playoffs.

Two of the teams ended up in the championship games for the northern California division of the SYFL. Both fell a little short on their bids to advance to the Super Bowl games which were held in Los Angeles California and

attended by Snoop.

Not discouraged at all with the season, president Tyler Barker said "Our boys hustled, hit and never quit.

Because that is what we do, we are proud of our guys our coaches, parents, fans and our organization as a whole. We will be back to do it all again in July of 2016. Go mastodons!"

As the programming director of MPAA, I think that it is imperative that in the light of the issues surrounding youth football and the sport in general, that our community understands that Mastodon football is more than just football.

The MPAA takes a youth development perspective on

youth sports that is unique to youth sports organizations.

We focus on mental, physical and moral principles that make the development of our players into productive citizens and great student athletes.

Our coaches and staff are trained in youth mental health first aid and are required to attend at least one coaching clinic per season which is facilitated by USA Football.

These clinics and trainings only enhance the possibility of getting our young people prepared to be successful not only on the field but in life as well. WE are proud and we are committed to these principles of youth development.

To learn more about the Mastodon Youth Football Program, call Jeff Austin 650 518-2206, or Tyler Barker at 650 906 1954 for more information. or email us at: mpaamasotodons@gmail.com

Abrica

gebra." Abrica later realized that his teacher had seen students being treated this way in the past and was determined to get incoming freshman into the appropriate classes.

Unfortunately, the school still lacked confidence in the young Mexican student—even after he had gotten straight A's. Abrica explained that he was asked to speak to the school psychologist.

Apparently, the school was skeptical about his intelligence. His grades were cross-referenced with all his teachers and he was even asked to take tests (presumably, IQ tests). Abrica chuckled at the ridiculousness of the situation. His intelligence was no

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joke, though. He graduated with a B.A. degree from Occidental College in Los Angeles, spent a year at the University of Montpellier in France, did graduate work in linguistics at the University of California at San Diego, and went on to receive his M.A. in Education from Stanford University.

Once the Stanford graduate became involved with the soon-to-be City of East Palo Alto, he became more aware of the issues that residents faced.

Housing issues, for example, were prominent. "I went through every single apartment on the west side two or three times," he said. "I started finding out how abusive some of the managers and landlords

were," he recalled.

As he rallied to get people involved, Abrica felt a sense of responsibility to help the community. Many of the residents that he spoke to did not have a college background, many didn't speak English, and as mentioned before, many couldn't read or write. The people of this new city motivated him even further.

Abrica made sure to mention that people can find motivation within themselves, too.

"Sometimes other people are not looking out for you because they don't care or because they can't," he said, "Nobody ever sat down with me to say 'Can I help you with your homework?' because

they couldn't." Abrica seemed confident that everyone can find something that they're passionate about and that they, too, can pursue it. "You just have to find something in you," he emphasized before offering some reassurance, "You have it."

The city council member has not lost his faith in the community or in the American government. He said that he cares about people and he firmly believes that there are good politicians out there, who do care about people. As he continues his work with the City of

East Palo Alto and as he continues to hear the stories of community members, Abrica hopes that young residents will remember that they have the power to help—even if they're only in the third grade.

When he was in high school, Abrica went back to Mexico to visit his Tio Chepo. "I saw him with his pen and his little notebook. He now had become a supervisor," he smiled proudly. "It made me cry."

Elizabeth Real was raised in East Palo Alto and she is a regular contributor to the East Palo Alto Today newspaper.

It's 2016! This year East Palo Alto Today celebrates its 10th year serving the East Palo Alto and Belle Haven communities

Join us in planning the celebration of East Palo Alto Today's birthday with a "Media Day" event. We'll have communications workshops along with awards and prizes for writing enries by children and adults alike. The East Palo Alto Center for Community Media, which sponsors the East Palo Alto Today newspaper, is looking for partners. So, if you're interested in helping to plan Media Day and in partnering with the center, let us know.

Call (650) 289-9699

Make Extra Money

Would you like to make some extra money by renting your garage for the storage of an antique/classic car that will not be driven for 6 to 8 months?

If so, please call Jason at (650) 630-0442

Community Calendar

Free At Last's 22nd Anniversary Celebration

January 29, 2016 @5-6pm
Hors d'oeuvres and entertainment 6-7pm Main Speaker Reverend Mary Frazier & David Lewis Award: Dorsey Nunn, Co-Founder of Free At Last 7:30pm 12 Step Meeting. 1796 Bay Road in building #3. For more information, go to <http://www.freeatlast.org/>

Benefit Concert at Eastside College Preparatory School
January 30 and 31, 2016
The African American Com-

posers Initiative presents its seventh annual benefit concert at the Performing Arts Center of Eastside College Prep on Saturday and Sunday, January 30 and 31 at 3 pm.

Eastside Prep is located at 1041 Myrtle Street, East Palo Alto. All ticket proceeds benefit the school. Tickets - \$5 seniors and students, \$20 general - are available online: <http://aacinitiative.org/upcoming.php>

Ideas In Motion – Play 60, Play On Challenges - January 31, 2016

The hack-a-thon will bring to-

gether more than 150 talented African American youth and young adults ages 16 – 24 from high schools, colleges, clubs and companies for an opportunity to compete in a technology challenge. On January 31, the hack-a-thon will be held at the East Palo Alto YMCA. See <http://blackchamber.com/hackathon/index.php>

Meet artist Rick Lowe, the 2016 Mimi & Peter E. Haas Distinguished Visitor, at Stanford University - February 04, 2016 - 5:15 pm reception, 5:45 pm Pres. Obama appointed

Rick Lowe to the National Council on the Arts in 2013; in 2014 he was named a MacArthur Fellow. Meet Lowe at the Mimi and Peter E. Haas Distinguished at McCaw Hall | Frances C. Arrilaga Alumni Center 326 Galvez Street The event is free and open to the public; RSVPs are required. Go to <http://web.stanford.edu/dept/haas/outside/DVLecture2016RSVP.fb>

See more community calendar events at the website for the East Palo Alto Today newspaper www.epatoday.org

East Palo Alto gets senior housing complex

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Council approved a \$700,000 funding commitment toward the project's estimated \$22 million cost. In addition to the city's funding commitment, the project also received a \$5.4 million commitment from San Mateo County and it might be eligible to borrow \$2.5 million from the San Mateo County Section 8 program. It could possibly qualify for up to \$15 million from the California Tax Credit Allocation Committee's (CTCAC) Low Income Housing Tax Credit program.

While there are commu-

nity members who will question the value of displacing residents in East Palo Alto to build housing projects, there are others who will argue that the displacement of a couple of East Palo Alto residents, who will be looked after by project developers to ensure a comfortable relocation, is worth the costs.

The project's supporters say that the senior housing project will impact East Palo Alto in a positive way, since it will provide comfortable and affordable housing for seniors and keep them as members of the community.

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alert was sent to First Responders about e-cigarette fires.

It is time for local communities to prevent the public health and safety hazards of smoking and e-cigarette vaping in multi-unit housing.

All residents of San Mateo County deserve protection from drifting pollutants and fire hazards from neighbors.

Tanya Stevenson, EdD, MPH, President & CEO, BREATHE CALIFORNIA, Golden Gate Public Health Partnership

Talking with Henrietta
Choosing the Top News Stories of the Year - 2015



Photo courtesy of Talking with Henrietta
From left, Odette Alcazaran Keeley, Gennady Sheyner, show host Henrietta J. Burroughs, and Sue Dremann are shown on the set of the Talking with Henrietta television show after the taping of their discussion on January 14, 2016.

This show can be seen on Channel 30 on the Midpeninsula and on the Internet until Saturday, January 30, 2016 at the days and times below.

- Sundays@5 p.m.
- Tuesdays@8 p.m.
- Wednesdays @ 2 a.m. and 11 a.m.
- Thursdays@8 p.m.
- Fridays@3:30 a.m. and 12 p.m.
- Saturday at 10 a.m.

Get more information about this show on the East Palo Alto Today website at www.epatoday.org/tv.html.

Ruben Abrica

la campaña inicial para establecer East Palo Alto como una ciudad, Abrica elogió los que estaban activos a pesar de no tener una educación superior. Muchas de las personas durante el primer comité no sabían leer ni escribir, pero estaban todavía allí tratando de ayudar. Abrica explicó que él sabe lo difícil que es para las personas que no saben leer y escribir.

Después del incidente con su tío, decidió que siempre seguiría yendo a la escuela y se dio cuenta de que a pesar de que estaba solo en el tercer grado, que ya estaba ayudando. Su abuela le pedía que le fuera ayudar a los vecinos a leer sus cartas. Para aquellos que sienten que no tienen mucho que ofrecer, él dijo lo siguiente: "En cualquier punto en el tiempo, ya son capaces de ayudar a los que tienen menos de ustedes. Usted no tiene que esperar a que sea un súper-algo. Donde quiera que esté en este momento, ya puede ayudar a pesar de que usted también necesita ayuda. Ya tiene algo. Pásalo."

Como un inmigrante de un hogar de bajos ingresos sí mismo, Abrica conoce muy bien algunos de los problemas que muchos de los jóvenes en East Palo Alto tienen. Al entrar a la



Council member Ruben Abrica is shown with other East Palo Alto city council members on January 19, 2016 after the council honored East Palo Alto Police Officer Robert Weigand for going beyond the call of duty in responding to a domestic violence case. Some of Weigand's family members can also be seen in the photo.

escuela secundaria, Abrica explicó que la escuela le dio las clases más bajas automáticamente porque todavía no había dominado el idioma de inglés. Le dio riza al recordar que la razón por la que no se le permitió tomar el curso de francés era porque él no hablaba inglés bastante bien. Para un hablante de español, sin embargo, francés en realidad no es tan difícil de aprender, ya que ambos idiomas comparten estructuras gramaticales similares y son de ascendencia latina.

Después de que se le negó el curso de francés, se le negó el curso Álgebra también. Una vez más, sintió que su inteligencia estaba siendo medida por su

ascendencia mexicana y la falta de palabras en inglés. Por suerte, se acordó de que su maestro de secundaria había dicho: "asegúrate de que te den la clase de Álgebra." Abrica se dio cuenta después de que su maestro ya había visto este tipo de discriminación contra los estudiantes en el pasado y estaba decidido a conseguirles las clases apropiadas.

Por desgracia, la escuela aún no le tenía confianza a el estudiante mexicano, aunque había recibido las mejores calificaciones. Abrica explicó que le pidieron que hablara con el psicólogo de la escuela. Al parecer, la escuela era escéptico acerca de su inteligencia.

Revisaron todas sus califica-

ciones con todos sus maestros e incluso le pidieron que tomara otros exámenes (presumiblemente, pruebas de coeficiente intelectual). Abrica le dio riza sobre lo ridículo que estuvo la situación.

Su inteligencia no era una broma, sin embargo. Se graduó con un B.A. de Occidental College en Los Ángeles, estuvo un año en la Universidad de Montpellier en Francia, hizo estudios en lingüística en la Universidad de California en San Diego, y recibió su Maestría en Educación de la Universidad de Stanford.

Una vez que el graduado de Stanford se involucró con la ciudad de East Palo Alto, él se hizo más consciente de los problemas que enfrentan los residentes. Problemas de vivienda, por ejemplo, eran prominentes. "Pasé por cada apartamento en el oeste dos o tres veces," dijo. "Empecé a enterarme que algunos de los propietarios eran muy abusivos," recordó.

Abrica sentía un sentido de responsabilidad para ayudar a la comunidad. Muchos de los residentes con los que él habló no tenían una educación universitaria, muchos no hablaban inglés, y como se mencionó antes, muchos no sabían leer ni escribir. La gente de esta nueva

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ciudad lo motivaron aún más.

Abrica se aseguró de mencionar que la gente puede encontrar la motivación dentro de sí mismos, también. "A veces la gente no los está cuidando porque no les importa o porque no pueden," dijo, "Nadie se sentó conmigo a decir '¿Puedo ayudarte con tu tarea?' Porque no podían." Abrica parecía seguro de que todo el mundo puede encontrar algo que les apasiona y que ellos, también, pueden conseguir la motivación. "Sólo tienes que encontrar algo en ti," dijo antes de ofrecer cierta tranquilidad, "Usted lo tiene."

El concejal no ha perdido su fe en la comunidad o en el gobierno estadounidense. Él cree firmemente que hay buenos políticos por ahí, como él, que se preocupan por la gente. Mientras continúa su trabajo con la ciudad de East Palo Alto y mientras continúa a escuchar las historias de los miembros de la comunidad, Abrica espera que los residentes jóvenes recordarán que ellos tienen el poder de ayudar, incluso si están solamente en el tercer grado.

"Fui a visitar," Abrica recordó. Durante la escuela secundaria, regresó a México para visitar a su tío Chepo. "Lo vi con su pluma y su pequeño cuaderno. Se había convertido en un supervisor," sonrió con orgullo. "Me hizo llorar."