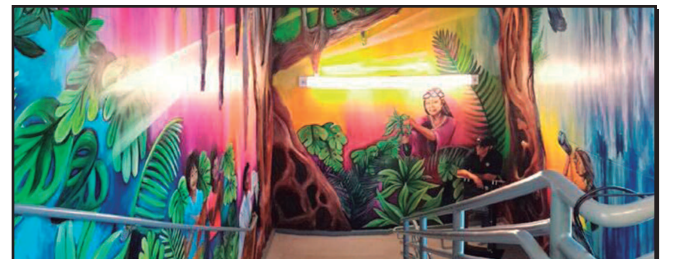




Beautification event well received



Saying farewell to Brent Butler



Mural Music and Arts program unveils mural

# East Palo Alto Today



Providing news that is relevant, informative and critical

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East Palo Alto and Belle Haven

April 2016

Vol. 10 No.52

## Federal officials visit East Palo Alto

By Henrietta J. Burroughs

The local press and the leaders of various community organizations attended a panel discussion designed to highlight some of the health problems in the East Palo Alto community that could affect student learning.

The panel discussion was held on March 23 at the East

Palo Alto YMCA to give U.S. Secretary of Education, John King, an up close look at how the city's educational and health organizations are dealing with the critical link between health and education.

Dr. J. Nadine Garcia, the deputy assistant secretary for minority health and the director of the Office of Minority Health at the U.S. Department



Photo by H.J. Burroughs  
Sec. of Education, John King, and Dr. J. Nadine Garcia listen to speakers.

of Health and Human Services accompanied King on

his visit. It was Garcia's second visit to the city since De-

ember 2015.

During the panel discussion, the two heard from 10 participants who shared some of their views and personal experiences. The panelists included: Mayor Donna Rutherford, Dr. Luisa Buada, CEO, Ravenswood Family Health Center, Dr. Gloria Hernandez-Goff, the superin-

continued on page 14

## Senior housing complex gets underway



Photo by H.J. Burroughs

Local officials join some of the funders, agency staff members and other community leaders at the groundbreaking ceremony for the new senior housing complex now being built in East Palo Alto.

By Henrietta J. Burroughs

Even the ceremony's participants considered the event an auspicious occasion. The sun was shining after several days of rain and the weather appeared perfect for the groundbreaking that was scheduled to occur. After all, it was St. Patrick's Day and, wearing a touch of green, Father Lawrence Goode, from the St. Frances of Assisi Church, gave the opening blessing. It seemed that after Father Goode spoke, Robert Jones, EPA CAN DO's executive director, could hardly contain his excitement.

He told how the University Avenue Senior Housing project, the focus of the groundbreaking event, was the fulfillment of a dream that started eight years ago and

how it developed from EPA CAN DO and Midpen Housing's partnership.

Matt Franklin, Midpen Housing's executive director, said that the senior housing project would be a wonderful home for 42 seniors. He said that during their collaboration, the two agencies were trying to build a beautiful community in a healthy and vibrant environment that would be within easy walking distance to neighborhood amenities.

Franklin pointed out that seniors were now 15% of San Mateo County's population and their rate of growth was accelerating such that by 2030 their numbers would grow by 90%. But, over 30% of seniors are vulnerable, with many already paying 70% of their income on housing.

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## RCSD seeks to make major repairs

By Elizabeth Real

For the past 50 years, schools in the Ravenswood City School District have not seen much change.

Buildings, for the most part, have not received as much maintenance as they should have.

The District's Superintendent, Dr. Gloria Hernandez-Goff, is aware of the issue. She stood before East Palo Alto's City Council on March 1, 2016 to share her findings and her plans to resolve the issue.

"When I first started here in



Photo by Ravenswood City School District  
This photo shows some of the roof repairs that are needed.

July of 2013, I was somewhat surprised," Hernandez-Goff said about seeing the conditions of the school buildings.

"Every other district that I've worked in has had a facilities master plan," said the superintendent. "I found out that we

didn't have a current one."

After that discovery, the district set out to conduct an extensive audit. Hernandez-Goff explained that the audit looked at "school buildings, plumbing, electrical, windows, roofing, all the infrastructure needs that might be something that needed repair."

Mehendra Chahal, Director of Maintenance Facilities for the district, held up a thick binder and stated that the notes inside were from just the very first evaluation. "We

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### Inside

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# Spring Festival and Grand Opening

Cooley Landing Education Center

# Festival de la Primavera Y Gran Inauguración

del Centro de Educación de Cooley Landing



**Saturday, April 16**  
**Sábado 16 de Abril**  
**10 am – 3 pm**

**Cooley Landing Park**  
**Ravenswood Open Space Preserve**  
**East Palo Alto**

### IN ENGLISH

Join the City of East Palo Alto and the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District for a FREE fun-filled spring festival and the grand opening of the new Education Center at Cooley Landing Park by Ravenswood Open Space Preserve.

**GRAND OPENING CEREMONY at 11:00 am with Congresswoman Jackie Speier (District 14), Assemblymember Rich Gordon (District 24), Supervisor Warren Slocum (District 4), Mayor Donna Rutherford and Midpen Director Nonette Hanco (Ward 5).**

### EN ESPAÑOL

Únase con la Ciudad de East Palo Alto y el Distrito Regional de Espacios Abiertos de la Península Central (Midpen) en un festival GRATUITO lleno de diversión primaveral y la gran inauguración del nuevo Centro de Educación (Education Center) en Cooley Landing Park.

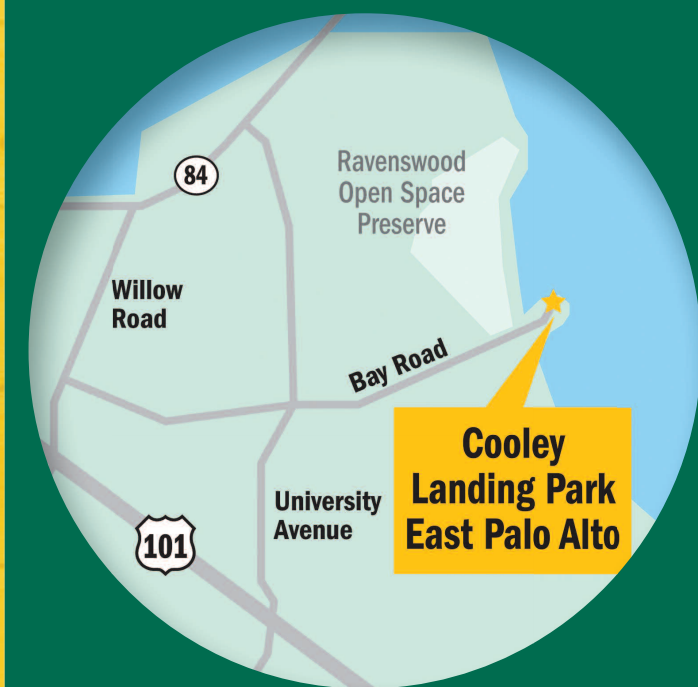
**LA CEREMONIA DE INAUGURACIÓN será a las 11 a.m., con la Congresista Jackie Speier (Distrito 14), Miembro de Asamblea Rich Gordon (Distrito 24), Supervisor Warren Slocum (Distrito 4), el Alcalde Donna Rutherford y Midpen Director Nonette Hanco (Ward 5).**

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# Community News Briefs



Photo courtesy of Luis Guzman

City residents joined by Council member Carlos Romero prepare to plant a tree on their block

## Beautification event well received

The East Palo Alto Kavanaugh/Gloria residents gave their thanks and support for the Kavanaugh environment beautification event that was held on Saturday April 2.

Attendees at the canopy.org tree planting, cleanup with CLEAN ZONE-EPA and chain-link fence removal took the opportunity to make needed improvements to their neighborhood.

At the end of the event, the neighbors and volunteers held a BBQ block party and several agencies including the Menlo Fire CERT-EPA, Ecumenical Hunger Pro-

gram, California Conservation Corps, Sustainable Silicon Valley and Habitat for Humanity Greater San Fran shared information regarding community services. The day was a success thanks to you.

Event organizers said that they are looking to a future follow up event with even greater support and they wanted to thank those who came out to beautify the neighborhood.

## City Council renews contract with ShotSpotter

The East Palo Alto Police Department has been getting valuable help over the past few years—from residents, community groups, and a special tool.

On March 1, 2016, the City Council authorized the annual contract with ShotSpotter Inc., a citywide gunshot detection and location system.

According to East Palo Alto's documents, in 2006, Mayor Patricia Foster and Councilmember David Woods met with congressional leaders in Washington, DC. They sought funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Program and the Bureau of Justice System. One of their initiatives included "an anti-gang project." After receiving recognition from United States Senators Boxer and Feinstein as well as Congress Member Eshoo, the ShotSpotter system was installed in East Palo Alto.

Since then the ShotSpotter system has been a valuable tool for authorities. Even when community members do not report gun activity, the system is able to detect the event and notify authorities. It has provided rapid responses and is able to pinpoint the location of the event and ultimately, the victim.

Using the ShotSpotter system is just one of the many ways in which the City of East Palo Alto has taken action towards reducing crime in the community.

by Elizabeth Real

## New select committee on south bay aircraft noise

U.S. Representatives Anna G. Eshoo (CA-18), Sam Farr (CA-20) and Jackie Speier (CA-14) today announced the formation of the new Select Committee on South Bay Arrivals. The Select Committee consists of 12 local elected officials, who will be responsible for developing regional solutions to address aircraft noise.

The committee will accept public input, review FAA proposals, and make recommendations on issues identified in the FAA's Initiative with a focus on airplane arrival issues that primarily impact the South Bay Region. According to Eshoo, "Establishment of this Select Committee is a critical step to address airplane noise that is plaguing our constituents.

New flight paths implemented by the FAA have generated an alarming increase in noise impacts across my entire Congressional District. Large, small, urban, and rural communities have been affected, and the majority of noise complaints in my District involve arrivals at SFO. The Select Committee on South Bay Arrivals will work with the public and the FAA to expedite solutions to this problem.

"Importantly, the Select Committee will have representation from the three Congressional Districts and the three affected counties. This is a regional problem which calls for regional solutions. Simply shifting noise from one community to another is not an option."

Each of the three Congressional Districts has four appointees on the committee, which includes San Mateo County Supervisor Dave Pine and Vice Mayor Larry Moody.

Both Pine and Moody were appointed to the committee by Congresswoman Jackie Speier, who also chose Mayor Donna Rutherford as an alternate on the

# County of San Mateo to study San Carlos airport noise

By Michelle Durand

The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors today directed staff to study noise at San Carlos Airport and bring back a more refined list of strategies to ease its impact on residents, particularly in the communities of East Palo Alto, Atherton, North Fair Oaks and Redwood City.

The Board heard from

more than 60 speakers Tuesday at a packed study session held to decide whether to go forward with further analysis of the noise and options to ease its impacts. Both mandatory and voluntary measures may be considered.

Public Works staff will look at data and speak with the community and pilot associations to an attempt to re-

fine the recommendations to the Board. In April, the Board of Supervisors will be updated with a more focused list and in June it will consider possible adoption of the final recommendations.

The San Carlos Airport, which is owned and operated by the County of San Mateo, is home to approximately 500 aircraft and more than 25 avi-

ation-related businesses generating more than 130,000 flights annually. Flights have increased 13 percent since 2012 but noise complaints have increased significantly, leading to the establishment of an Airport Noise Working Group by Board President Warren Slocum and Supervisor Don Horsley.

The group developed a

series of voluntary noise reduction procedures including a voluntary curfew but they have not substantially eased community concern.

The County also recently launched a new airport noise complaint online reporting tool.

Michelle Durand is the chief communications officer for the San Mateo County Manager's office.

## 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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto: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

# Local youth learn about sea rise and climate change

By Marina Psaros

**What is sea level rise? What is at risk in San Mateo County?**

**What can we do to prepare?**

Thanks to funding from San Mateo County's Board of Supervisors, high school students from Woodside High and Redwood High are learning about these topics through a pilot of the Youth Exploring Sea Level Rise Science (YESS) program.

The YESS program empowers youth to engage directly in climate change solutions. Through an experiential education program that incorporates cutting-edge classroom curricula with hands-on science, high school students explore why sea level rise is happening and how their lives will be impacted. They collect their own data; create digital storytelling products; and contribute meaningfully to local science and policy decisions. YESS allows those who will be most impacted by climate change – young people – to have a voice on the issue and to spark a broader conversation about risk and resiliency.

On a field trip in January, over 70 students from Woodside High and Redwood High



Photo courtesy of the YESS Project

Redwood High students take a field trip to Cooley Landing.

joined local artist Christina Conklin on a field trip to Cooley Landing to learn firsthand about the history, ecology, and future flood risks in the area (INSERT ONE OR MORE PICTURES HERE?). Students, parent chaperones, and teachers enjoyed the experience, commenting afterward that it was “a great walk”, they “learned a lot”, and had fun. Several participants also noted the environmental justice aspects of sea level rise planning in the area: as one student wrote, “I think that the low income deserve better. We want EPA to be safe.”

In several Bay Area counties, local government agencies are currently developing plans to address sea level rise. In San Mateo County, the sea level rise planning initiative is called SeaChangeSMC. Right now, SeaChangeSMC is con-

ducting a vulnerability assessment to understand which communities and assets are at risk of future flooding. The vulnerability assessment will be released in early fall of this year, and will form the basis of an adaptation plan. The work that students do through the YESS program is linked to these planning projects, thereby giving the students a rare opportunity to work with municipal officials and impact real-world projects.

As a part of YESS, students from Redwood High in East Palo Alto will give a presentation to the Board of Supervisors on May 10. The presentation will focus on the environmental justice aspects of sea level rise. Interested individuals are invited to attend. More information will be available on the San Mateo County Board of Supervisor's

web page ....<http://sanmateo.siretechnologies.com/sirepub/meetresults.aspx>

The YESS program was originally funded by the California Coastal Commission, and pilots have taken place this year with over 200 students in 7 high schools in San Mateo, San Francisco, Marin, and Oakland.

County Board of Supervisors also allocated \$12,000 to the program late last year. Project staff hope to expand the program in the 2016 - 2017 school year, to reach at least 600 students in San Mateo, San Francisco, Marin, and Oakland.

**Marina Psaros** is the YESS Project Director and CEO of Coravai.

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# Youth club serves hundreds of community youth



Photos courtesy of the Youth Club

There is certainly no mistaking how much fun these three children are having.

By Youth Club Staff

Hiding behind the St. Francis of Assisi Church on Bay Road in East Palo Alto is Catholic Charities Youth Club at St. Francis of Assisi (“Youth Club”), a program that operates academic and recreational support activities year-round for the youth of East Palo Alto. Over the past decade, more than 600 youth have participated in one or more of Youth Club's programs: an after-school homework tutoring center that supports more than 50 elementary and middle-school grade youth; a six-week summer program that supports more than 100 3rd-7th graders; and a Saturday college-bound program called BE THE FIRST! which introduces junior high and high school students to the

local universities, colleges and junior colleges in the area. The Youth Club opens its doors whenever youth are not in school, closing the program only eight days a year.

The Youth Club has evolved since its inception in 2004 when Father Goode and Les DeWitt founded the St. Francis of Assisi Boys Club to keep young boys away from the streets and in a safe environment. In 2009, Youth Club membership grew from 17 to 36 when it welcomed female members and changed its name to St. Francis of Assisi Youth Club. That same year, with the support of their newest staff member, Mar Y Sol Alvarado, and the guidance of a retired local educator, Cloe Kamprath, an academic curriculum was developed to support literacy and math for their summer

program. During that first summer, 60 youth registered and participated in the academics pilot program.

Mar Y Sol Alvarado grew up in East Palo Alto and attended Ronald McNair Middle School. She realized the importance of role models and mentors in her own life as she grew up in the community. “I come from a very humble background. I was raised by a hardworking mother that focused on putting food on the table rather than asking how we were doing academically,” said Mar Y Sol. “But I was blessed to have mentors and role models that helped me navigate my path to college.” While completing her master's degree in sociology with an emphasis in criminology from

San Jose State University, Mar Y Sol made it her mission to have all Youth Club members understand the importance of education, having dreams, and self-advocacy.

Now Mar Y Sol serves as Youth Club's Program Director and takes pride in her staff being from East Palo Alto. “I am so proud that each one of my staff members has either graduated from college or is on a path to completing their college degree,” said Mar Y Sol. “It is important for our youth to see themselves in the faces of the people that support them academically. I want them to understand that if our staff can do it, they can too!”

This year the Youth Club underwent some exciting changes. The program was chosen by Catholic Charities

to become part of the agency to expand its presence in San Mateo County. The Youth Club is proud to be a part of Catholic Charities which serves at-risk individuals and families, regardless of their faith traditions, in San Mateo, San Francisco and Marin Counties. In addition, the Rich May Field was recently completed at the Youth Club and now serves as the backyard for Youth Club members. The project was a result of many years of persistence, determination and private fundraising led by the Rich May Foundation to honor a young EPA police officer killed in the line of duty. What was once rocks, weeds and dirt is now a beautiful, regulation-size, multi-purpose field.

The Youth Club currently has an estimated 90 percent high-school graduation rate for its members. The program supports 8th-grade students with their transition to high-school and students are encouraged to complete their application to college-bound after-school programs, such as College Trak and Foundation for a College Education. Each year the number of college applicants has in-



Look this way! Now smile for the camera. Well, everyone did look.

continued on page 15

# Third design workshop completed

By Vidolorosa Stanley

At the very end of a table covered in print outs of architectural designs, sat a nine-year-old boy doodling passionately away on post-it notes. Carefully observing those around him, he alternated between drawing lines and taking in a closer look at his subjects before making any additions to his illustrations. He was also participating in a community charette – or workshop – for a future arts center. His mother – and 32 other community members – sat with him at the table. This child chose to attend the charette because he had a zest for drawing and learning, and a dream of becoming an architect. On this particular day, he was sitting in an architect design workshop for an art center that he could one day, in the near future, use! In this moment, the East Palo Alto Youth Arts and Music Center (YAMC) was beginning to elevate the promises of its mission statement: to increase opportunities for East Palo Alto youth to amplify their talents, realize their potential, and impact their world through the arts.

On March 10, 2016, East Palo Alto residents, artists and youth leaders gathered



Photo by Lauren Dyer

Community residents are hard at work as they discuss potential designs for the new youth arts and music center.

for the third in a series of design and planning workshops for the East Palo Alto Youth Arts and Music Center Project's (YAMC) future building. The first, took place at the Live In Peace Studio and YAMC space on Bell St., and the second meeting was on February 6th, over at Green St. The purpose of these workshops is to engage the community in the design and vision of the future center. The architect team together with the landscape and sustainability team, presented five different design principles and three different concepts that were inspired by recommendations made by community members during the two previous meetings. The goals of the March 10th session were to discuss and review the three potential

architectural design approaches, discuss the appropriateness of the designs to East Palo Alto, and to give direction to the architectural team in order to develop an approach representative of the YAMC mission and the community's desires and needs.

Five design principles for the YAMC Project emerged from the first two meetings.

These key design principles guide decision and direction of the building:

1. An Inviting and Welcoming Place for All;
2. Place-Keeping and Community Catalyst;
3. Engage the Bay & Maximize Landscape;
4. Enhance the Street and Make Art Visible Flex' ability

continued on page 13

# Sam's Pop up Cafe is a winner for many



Photo by H.J. Burroughs

Timothy Russell joins a happy group at Sam's Pop Up Cafe.

By Henrietta J. Burroughs

Just walking through the door, it quickly became apparent, from the people milling around and from the hubbub of activity, that a festive event was underway.

The event's sponsor, the Renaissance Entrepreneurship Center (REN), was holding its first annual cookoff, featuring five of its food business entrepreneurs. The five had attended REN's business workshops and were showing off their edibles during a food showcase called Sam's Pop Up Café. The cafe was named after Sameer Ishwar Murarka and sponsored by his memorial foundation.

Those attending the event were busily sampling the food from the booths the five chefs had set up to highlight their food specialties and their services.

Cheryl Fulton presented Cheryl's Shortbread, James Simon featured his Put It on the Grill BBQ, John Cannon presented his Save Your Soul BBQ, Annabel Santos, highlighted her Las Picosita Azteca and Jorge Flores showed off his Don Polvoron Bakery.

All of the sights, sounds and tastes captivated the senses, the result of REN's organized effort to have something for everyone.

Adding to the festivities, REN held a brief ceremony to explain the event, during which its CEO, Sharon Miller, thanked REN's staff, consultants and sponsors and gave a special thanks to Murarka's family for the grant it gave to support the event carrying his name.

Murarka's mother, Ragini Shah Murarka, said that when her son passed away in 2012, he had many

dreams, one of which was to open a restaurant. Believing in education, the family has used their son's memorial foundation as a vehicle for giving grants to schools and colleges. But, since Murarka "was such a free spirit," his mother said that the family looked for something else to keep his memory alive. During their search, they read about the pop up cafes in Atlanta, read about Renaissance's work and contacted REN staff members to give rise to the idea for Sam's Pop up Café.

The event featured introductory comments from Tim Russell, the program director of REN's office in East Palo Alto, remarks from the featured chefs, raffle prizes and music by Ray Star's Trio.

The attendees were given cards to rank the chef's and gave their highest ranking to Don Polvoron's Bakery, followed by Cheryl's Shortbread. As Sam's Pop up café ended, quite a few of the attendees walked away with a raffle prize.

For more information on the featured chef's and the Renaissance Entrepreneurship Center's classes, contact Cheryl Rasmussen at crasmussen@rencenter.org or at 650-321-2193 ext. 1103.

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**Crystal Rasmussen**  
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# From the Editor's Desk

## What a damning revelation!

Did you read last month about the interview that was done with John Ehrlichman, who served as President Richard Nixon's domestic policy chief in the late 1960's? In speaking with Don Baum, the journalist who recently released his 1994 interview with him, Ehrlichman spoke about Nixon's 'War on Drugs.' He said, 'You want to know what this was really all about...The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and black people. You understand what I'm saying.



Henrietta J. Burroughs

'We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities.

'We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news.

'Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did,' Ehrlichman said.

Well, there you have it. According to Ehrlichman, Nixon unleashed a sinister policy that did what it was meant to do. It undermined all of the civil rights legislation that was passed in 1965, that was pivotal in granting African Americans access to equal opportunity in education, housing, employment and other major areas. How? It devastated black and brown communities.

As it turns out, Nixon's 'War on Drugs' became the forerunner of and led to many of the problems that we see today in our inner cities, in our penal system and in our criminal justice system.

But, by 1980 and the Reagan administration, with the so-called backlash in full swing against much that had been achieved because of that legislation, it was apparent that a fundamental shift in the country had occurred: all of the anticipated progress for minorities in this country stalled and in some cases came to a halt.

What happened? In 1971, Nixon signed the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act and, shortly afterwards, the Drug Enforcement Administration, which implemented harsh laws for drug users. These caused the arrests of more than 250,000 people, most of whom were African

American, led to the intentional criminalizing of minorities in the U.S.

It was a war on drugs and crime that became an integral part of the political presidential campaigns through the 80's and 90's. In 1988, President George H.W. Bush's Willie Horton ads featured an ex-felon convicted of murder, who rapes someone during his weekend furlough/ The ad became legendary for its association of crime with race and how being tough on crime can play a major role in winning an election.

Time magazine named the Willie Horton ad one of the top 10 campaign ads of all time. Bush's campaign manager, Lee Atwater, later apologized for creating it as he struggled unsuccessfully with brain cancer. Now, we know the role the 'War on Drugs' played in the mass drug arrests that led to the incarceration of so many people of color. We know how over the years, it affected and still affects the East Palo Alto community, for instance.

Where does this knowledge lead us? Is it liberating? Well, having a sense of history sometimes allows us to understand where we are, as a culture and as individuals within the culture, and how we arrived at this place in time. But, knowledge alone is not enough. For example, understanding the Vietnam War did not enable us to avoid the Iraq War.

With an election year upon us, maybe having insight into how some of our past presidents operated to get into power can assist us in seeing through the empty slogans and false promises of some of the current candidates. We know what can really happen at the seat of power, where groups of people can be used for insidious purposes with one or more groups pitted against each other.

History shows us that racial and religious baiting never turns out well for anyone, even for those who employ the tactic. Will we ever learn the lesson? Will we ever recognize that, as a human race, we'll either make it together or none of us will make it at all? Given some of the other things he said before dying, I think even Lee Atwater would agree with that thought.



Photo by H.J. Burroughs

The construction of University Square is going up, up and up on University Avenue in East Palo Alto.

## Letters in East Palo Alto Today

### The pervasiveness of racism, income inequality

Dear Editor

As evidenced by actions in Alameda, San Mateo, Mountain View, Redwood City and other cities, rent control is a hot topic throughout the Bay Area. When the San Jose City Council gathers to vote April 19, people assume the main issue at hand will be rent control—but the reality is that racism, income inequality and the wage gap are front and center. The council will be deciding whether to stand with people or business. They will be choosing between preventing the next wave of homelessness and the wrath of the Tri Valley California Apartment Association. They will be choosing between creating a diverse and affordable San Jose or a segregated one. And this is why the Bay Area needs to pay attention.

I've attended nearly every Apartment Rent Ordinance (ARO) meeting and know that the strong showing of tenants in the beginning has dwindled over time. It's certainly not because of a lack of need or interest. It's because landlords have belittled, bullied, photographed, badgered and shouted down tenants, dismissed the moderator, and repeatedly attacked the Housing Department—with some of the most egregious attacks coming from landlord representatives on the ARO Advisory Stakeholder Committee (AASC).

Racism slowly started to bubble to the surface, coming to a full boil during the last few meetings, including the Housing and Community De-

velopment Commission (HCDC) meeting that nearly filled council chambers. Landlords said "I don't want the filth and crime of East Palo Alto here in San Jose." They said renters "just want to live for free." They showed up in a Trump campaign hat. They said "I\* work hard for my money." They repeatedly made references to gangs and drug dealers. Landlords and property managers seem quite comfortable using this coded language and their AASC leaders, Josh Howard and Roberta Moore, do nothing to curb or denounce this behavior.

And it doesn't stop there. Ms. Moore and San Jose Councilmember Johnny Khamis are trying to sneak the same "Crime Free Multi-housing" proposal into the rent control argument that was soundly defeated by HCDC. San Jose Mobile Home Landlord Commissioner Graves broke ranks in leading the fight to defeat the proposal that many domestic and child abuse professionals agree would have the same detrimental effects on these groups as it has in other cities that have passed similar proposals. Although Khamis knows this, he still persists in pushing this proposal through, regardless of the devastating effects it will have on women and children, predominantly in minority communities. Between the racism expressed by landlords and the racial disparities in SJPd's policing, a program like Crime Free, which evicts tenants for an arrest—not a conviction, seems dubious at best. Build-

ings that "opt-in" are likely to end up charging higher rents and be more Eurocentric than those that don't, creating a segregated San Jose, which may be the underlying, unspoken objective. A situation akin to Menlo Park and Belle Haven.

As of 2014, there are 63,000 children in single parent homes in San Jose according to KidsCount.org. According to the same site, there are also 21,000 low income working families with children in San Jose. In an economy where Caucasian women are still paid 78 cents for every \$1 a man makes, Latina women are paid 56 cents and African American women are paid 64 cents, the wage gap is a very real issue. Women, particularly single parents, have disproportionately suffered under current rent control that allows for an 8% increase each year. When a Latina is paid nearly half that of a Caucasian male, it's unlikely that she's given an 8% raise every year, yet landlords have repeatedly said they "need" that 8% rent increase because the cost of doing business goes up. Much like the cost of childcare, health insurance, basic groceries, etc. has gone up for the 6.7% of single mothers in Belle Haven.

So, will the council stand for the poor and provide tenants with a Just Cause ordinance to ensure that tenants are evicted for a Just Cause rather than "just 'cause" as they are now? Will some councilmembers continue to impede renter's rights by sid-

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### East Palo Alto Today

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# Opinion

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

## Turning the page on America's chronic disease crisis

By **Kenneth Thorpe**

After rising steadily for decades, U.S. life expectancy has flat lined for three consecutive years, according to a new report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The study also finds that chronic conditions like heart disease, cancer, stroke, and kidney disease remain among the leading causes of death in the United States

Our country requires a new strategy for improving the health and longevity of Americans. In particular, our leaders need to focus on reforms aimed at combatting chronic diseases through prevention, medical innovation, and improved access to care. By elevating these three priorities, policymakers can help make 2016 the beginning of the end of America's chronic-disease crisis.

Chronic conditions represent the single largest threat to health in America. According to the CDC's latest statistics, roughly half of all adults suffer from at least one chronic disease. In 2014, seven chronic conditions were responsible for nearly 65 percent of all deaths.

Not surprisingly, these diseases also are the main driver of our nation's rising health spending. About 86 percent of all healthcare spending goes towards treating patients with chronic conditions.

The good news is that policy strategies for reducing the death, suffering, and cost associated with chronic disease are within reach. What's required is a renewed emphasis on three core principles.

First, policies must incentivize all actors in our health sector -- from insurance providers to physicians, employers, and individuals -- to

focus on prevention.

For instance, individuals suffering from a chronic illness -- or at risk of developing one -- could receive tax deductions for healthy behaviors like joining a gym, just as they would for owning a home.

Similarly, employers could receive tax credits for establishing wellness programs for their workers. While the Affordable Care Act established a grant program that helps small businesses set-up wellness initiatives, a permanent federal tax break doesn't yet exist.

Policymakers must also work to promote the development of better treatments, like the recently released hepatitis C medications that boast cure rates of 90 percent or more. More innovative treatments like these could be a game changer in the battle against chronic disease. But that depends on a policy environment that fosters innovation by pro-

tecting the incentives research scientists need to develop the next series of breakthroughs.

Finally, expanding access to care is essential to any chronic-disease policy strategy. Lawmakers can start by addressing the lack of physicians across the country. According to one recent analysis the nation could face a shortage of 90,000 doctors by 2025, making it even more difficult for chronic-disease patients to manage their illnesses.

On this front, economic incentives could go a long way. New doctors who practice in underserved areas or who go into less popular specialties might be eligible for student-loan-repayment packages or other financial benefits.

Just as important, leaders need to help preserve programs like Medicare Part D, which are already providing chronic disease patients with

access to the care they need.

By making it easier for seniors to adhere to their drug regimens, Part D has dramatically reduced hospitalization rates among enrollees. Research shows this effect is especially prevalent among patients with congestive heart failure and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Chronic disease is a massive problem -- but a solvable one. Through policies that promote prevention, innovation, and access, our political leaders can turn the page on a chronic disease epidemic that has plagued our nation for too long.

**Kenneth Thorpe** is professor of health policy at Emory University and chairman of the Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease.

## Misunderstanding democracy

By **Michael Uhila**

Can Democritus the Greek originator of democracy explain to us what is true democracy? Wait, he's dead so let me try. If you trust in democracy, you put your trust in voting and a voting system that theoretically is supposed to work for the voters.

The same voting logic applies to how an American Idol contestant becomes the winner and how President Obama got in the White House. I could be wrong about democracy because I didn't create it, Democritus did. I'm not an idealist with a better plan. I'm just an observer with questions and I'll instigate the debate, posing questions like: Is America a land where citizens vote for Democrats and hope to one day live like Republicans?

Are there old liberals and

young conservatives smoking weed in a Taco Bell parking lot laughing at us? Should we take Shakespeare's advice and just kill all the lawyers? Is the prison population an indicator of how civilized we are? Is America just divided into corporations: Hollywood and media?

Wait! Back to democracy and not so fast with your answers. It's a democracy and it's up to voters and when it's a popularity contest, anything can happen. It's supposed to be fair, because the majority wins. Is voting rigged like wrestling matches or is it one big slot machine that gives you a Trump, Bush, Sanders, Clinton or some dude that works at 7/11? You tell me.

In theory, democracy or *témōkalatī* as a Tongan would say it, is based on popularity and it's not that simple. You might say I'm an immi-



**Michael Uhila**

grant and I can't vote so it doesn't affect me. You might ask, "How does that apply to me?" Those politicians that get voted in work on policies that deal with the country you came from so you're indirectly affected, because you have family there. Those politicians that get voted in pass bills, make propositions like three strikes laws and tax you to pay for the free education some kid in East Palo Alto finds boring. Kids listen

up. Your public education is not free and your bill is being picked up by a taxpayer. It gets complicated and there's more to it.

Let's start locally in East Palo Alto. Let's say Danny Democrat wants to be the next mayor of East Palo Alto. He must fit the criteria, put on his cheap Armani suit and talk like a billionaire with a panhandler budget. He'd have to be a certain age. He'd have to be a registered voter and not be a felon. Let's say he qualifies. So what's next? He gets out there and campaign. He gets sponsorships and paid endorsements to publicize his campaign. He'd have to show up to all those meetings. He'd have to shake hands with all the "powerful" people around East Palo Alto. He'd want to take pictures with different races of people and show he

can socialize with the common folk. He might even speak Spanish to target a Latino vote and say "Si se puede". He'd have to have press conferences at City Hall where he can air his agenda. He might want to show up at Jones Mortuary and ask about cremation prices. He might be having breakfast at IKEA with the Ravenswood school superintendent. He'd do his campaign and make some promises to people that he's going to do something for them.

He might make an appearance at the Media Center for his public service announcement. He goes around town making appearances at St. Francis church, buys food for kids at McDonalds,

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## Humanizing science helps

By **Edward Guilliano, Ph.D.**

Washington just made a new commitment to science. The 2016 federal spending bill increases financing for the National Institutes of Health by almost \$2 billion, a nearly 7 percent increase. Science spending at NASA and the Department of Energy will receive similar bumps, and the National Science Foundation's budget will jump by 1.6 percent.

This is welcome news, as these agencies and the researchers they support all



**Edward Guilliano, Ph.D.**

across the nation have been treading water for years.

But revolutionary innovation depends on more than robust financing. It also requires doctors, engineers,

and researchers to embrace the humanities. Indeed, all of the world's biggest challenges demand critical thinking, empathy, cultural literacy, and creativity. These skills are cultivated through an education that embraces the humanities.

Notably, most American colleges and universities mandate that about a third of an undergraduate's coursework include a broad range of non-major courses. These distribution requirements help ensure that students are exposed to diverse ideas be-

yond their own field of study.

The most successful tech companies depend on employees who had this grounding in the humanities. Apple's late-CEO Steve Jobs famously noted, "It's technology married with liberal arts, married with the humanities, that yields us the results that make our heart sing."

Other examples abound. Consider Katie Hall, the chief technology officer at WiTricity, a start-up developing wireless energy technology to power and charge phones, appliances, and electric cars.

When Hall witnessed the company's experimental technology, she instantly recognized an opportunity to help people whose lives depend on implanted medical devices. Hall and her team partnered with a medical device manufacturer to develop a heart pump that can be recharged wirelessly, eliminating the need for intrusive operations to switch out old pumps.

This way of thinking -- the desire to improve the human experience through science -

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# Lifecycles

## Saying farewell to Brent Butler - city department head gets glowing tributes



Photo by H.J. Burroughs

Council members, city staff and community members gather for a farewell photo with Brent Butler, shown kneeling third from left, before he travels to his new job in Thurston County, Washington .

By **Henrietta J. Burroughs**

If the large turnout at his going away party was any indication of what

his colleagues and other community members thought of him, then Brent Butler was well-respected, both for the

views he espoused and for his contributions to the City of East Palo Alto.

This sentiment was expressed many times during the luncheon that was held on March 30 to wish him farewell.

Butler was leaving the city after seven years of service, with many wishing him the best and some even inviting him to one day return as a city staff member.

Butler resigned from his position as East Palo Alto's planning and housing manager in March to become the resource

stewardship director for Thurston County in the State of Washington.

For his part, Butler, who was a strong advocate of city policies that encourage walking, biking and the adoption of healthy behaviors that would lead to personal improvements and to a healthier city, said that during his time with the city, walking in the city became more acceptable. He stressed that more needed to be done to close the health disparities that exist between East Palo Alto residents and their affluent

neighbors in nearby cities.

He also commented on the wage gap that exists and stated that one needs more than twice the minimum wage to live in the Bay Area and health and housing are critical components, because, "If you can't supply housing, you can't improve health."

As his colleagues stood to share their thoughts about his service to the city and the impact that he had on them personally, one could not

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## Honoring area leaders for their local contributions

The East Palo Alto City Council issued five proclamations at its council meeting on Tuesday, April 5.

The city issued a proclamation to officially recognize the Grand Opening of the Cooley Landing Education Center and the 2016 Spring Festival on April 16, 2016.

Another proclamation was issued to proclaim April 22,

2016 as Earth Day.

A third one recognized and celebrated the 100th anniversary of the San Mateo County Mosquito and Vector Control District and to declare the week of April 17 through April 23, 2016 as West Nile Virus and Mosquito and Vector Control Week.

The other two proclamations were given to two indi-

viduals to recognize the work being done within the community to improve the health of city residents and to improve educational and employment opportunities for young men and women of color.

To this end, proclamations were given to Luisa Buada and to Carl Davis, Jr.

**The City of East Palo Alto  
Recognizes and Thanks  
Ms. Luisa Buada  
For Her Many Years Of Service to  
The East Palo Alto Community**



Photos by H.J. Burroughs  
Luisa Buada stands with members of the city council holding her proclamation.

**The City of East Palo Alto  
Recognizes  
The Silicon Valley  
Black Chamber of Commerce**



Carl Davis, Jr. shows the proclamation he received from the City of East Palo Alto. Council member Carlos Romero is not shown here.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that I, Donna Rutherford, Mayor of the City of East Palo Alto, and on behalf of the City Council, hereby recognize and thank Ms. Luisa Buada, for her humanitarian leadership and efforts in serving the people of East Palo Alto.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that I, Donna Rutherford, Mayor of the City of East Palo Alto, and on behalf of the City Council, hereby thank the Silicon Valley Black Chamber of Commerce for its creative and innovative ways to edify our youth and potential and current business leaders of color in Silicon Valley, and we wish everyone continued success for many more years to come!



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# Lifecycles

## Remembering Mrs. Cora Catherine Lewis - the mother of East Palo Alto activist David Edward Lewis

Sunrise December 8, 1929 - Sunset February 12, 2016



Cora Catherine Lewis

Cora Catherine Lewis was born on December 8, 1929, to Dave and Irene Earl Collins in Wilkinson County Mississippi.

She departed this life on February 12, 2016.

Cora Lewis was the youngest of 10 sisters and brothers, Dave (Jack) Collins Jr., Lewis C. Collins, Rufus

Collins, Nora John Collins, James Collins, Nancy Manual, Laura Edwards, Rosie Lee Castor, and Eva Green.

Mrs. Lewis accepted Christ early in life and was a member of the St. Francis Catholic Church in East Palo Alto. She later left the Catholic faith to help build and develop the Faith Missionary Baptist Church founded by Rev. Purty, where she served until her health began to fail her.

During her early years she lived in Monroe Louisiana with her aunt and uncle. After graduating from high school, she moved to

San Francisco, California. There she was united in marriage to Mr. Eddie Lewis.

One son was born from that union, David Edward Lewis. Both her husband and son preceded her in death.

She attended San Francisco City College where she earned a degree in Nutrition. After she graduated from college she was employed by Stanford Hospital. There she was one of the Head Dieticians of the main hospital for over 30 years.

After retiring from Stanford Hospital, she was very active in many programs, as well as caterings at Faith Mis-

sionary Baptist Church in E. Palo Alto, and other organizations. Until her health failed, you could always find her in her home entertaining and cooking.....she really loved to cook.

She leaves to cherish her memory, three grandchildren, David Leeshon Lewis, Shy-vonne Lewis, and Zachmy Lewis, six great-grandchildren: Durell Lewis, Courtney Lewis, Lelani Lewis, Kenji Whatley Jr. and Josiah Lewis. Cora Lewis is further survived by a host of nieces and nephews, and a faithful daughter-in-law, L Tanya Lewis

## Senior housing complex

continued from page 1

So, Franklin concluded that we had a wonderful opportunity to create and, together, we were on our way with the senior housing project to creating a community that represents the best of East Palo Alto.

Following Franklin, San Mateo County Supervisor Warren Slocum said that it was an honor for him to be at the event representing East Palo Alto. He commended those who worked on the project and said nobody ever gave up. They kept their eyes on the prize.

Slocum recognized Mayor Donna Rutherford, Vice Mayor Larry Moody and Councilmember Ruben Abrica, the three East Palo Alto council members who were present at the event, for their leadership.

In speaking about the site, itself, he said, This is just a dirt lot with some furry things sticking up. In a very short time, this will be called home.

When Mayor Rutherford spoke, she said that since her daughter, DeMaris, worked for Midpen Housing, she had to reclude herself whenever Midpen Housing was under consideration by the council.

Having lived in East Palo Alto since 1968, she shared that some of the changes she saw ere sad, since so many residents had to leave East Palo Alto. "But, on the up note, the senior housing project will keep some

here.

East Palo Alto's City Manager, Carlos Martinez, admitted that "Putting together a project like this has a lot of challenges, but thanks to Midpen and EPA Can Do, it all came together.

Martinez said that his mother is 98 years old and he understood the role of seniors and how important it is to provide them with safe and affordable housing.

Even the major funders of the housing project were recognized at the event with presentations given by Fiona Hsu, the manager of community development finance at Silicon Valley Bank; Barbara Evers, Senior vice president and community investment officer at the Boston Private Bank & Trust Company. In some of the closing remarks made before the groundbreaking,

Chris Pope, Midpen's project manager, said, in quoting children's author, Dr. Seuss, "It's not what is, but what can become." Shortly afterwards, the groundbreaking started in earnest with all of the major participants in hard-hats with shovels in hand.

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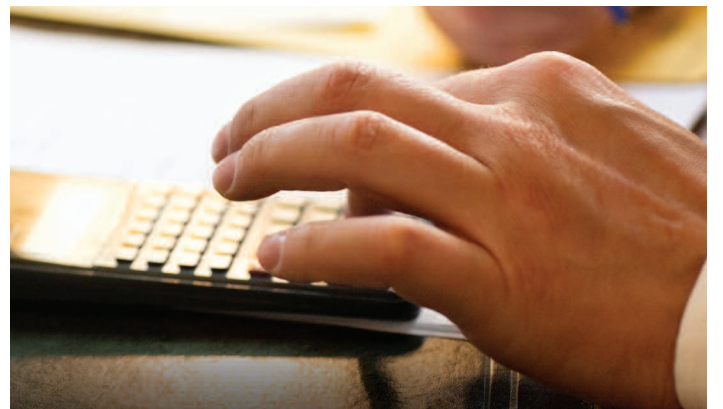
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1805

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[www.epatoday.org/treasured\\_memories/index.html](http://www.epatoday.org/treasured_memories/index.html)

# Technology - the Great Equalizer for underrepresented groups

By Juan Antonio Cuautle

In early March, Treehacks had a hackathon at Stanford University. I was away unavailable in Los Angeles, but it was circling in the back of my mind nonetheless.

To my delight and frustration, coding, design, UI/UX and all aspects of tech, have become my magnificent obsession over the last couple of years. When I'm having lunch with a friend, it's on my mind. When I'm running on the treadmill, it's on my mind. When I'm watching the latest blockbuster movie, it's on my mind. I literally think it about tech and it's place in the world every, waking moment.

My magnificent obsession has been building for some time. I remember when soared to new heights. It was during September 2014 when President Obama asked communities around the United States to accept the challenge to "implement a coherent cradle-to-collegeandcareer strategy for improving the life outcomes of all young people." To me, with how technology is being integrated in all aspects of life, it was the equivalent to President Kennedy's famous remark, "My fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." Do you ever think about how technology is consuming the world?

While in Los Angeles, I couldn't help but think of the hackathon I had the privilege of being in the front row seat for the previous weekend. It had empathetic, highpowered corporate executives interested in diversity, vibrant minds of the future, and a world boxing champion as the "halftime show." AND it happened on Super Bowl Saturday.

Frankly, I remember that day more vividly than any moment from the Super Bowl. Do you know why I couldn't get that day out of my mind?

It was a monumental event: the first ever Silicon Valley Black Youth Hackathon.

## Oneofakindhackathon

Silicon Valley has been leading the way in technology for how many decades now? And yet it took until January 30, 2016 for the first ever Silicon Valley Black Youth Hackathon to happen. All thanks to the efforts of President and Executive Director of The Silicon Valley Black Chamber of Commerce, Carl Davis Jr., his committee, and all the local sponsors and supporters who worked for several months to bring this vision to fruition. God bless them for the efforts in introducing the value and importance of technology to kids from underrepresented minority groups

This hackathon was unlike any other I've ever been to. It had training workshops, software development competitions, mentoring, networking,



Photo courtesy of Kiwoba Allaire and the SV Black Youth Hackathon. Kiwoba Allaire, the political liaison and diversity lead at Rocket Fuel, and Carl Davis, Jr., the CEO of the Silicon Valley Black Chamber of Commerce celebrate with other participants at the SV Black Youth Hackathon, which took place in Redwood City in March 2016.

presentations, awards and cash prizes. What other hackathons do you know that has all that?

The Silicon Valley Black Youth Hackathon was uniquely structured over two weekends. On the first weekend, over 150 high school, college, and young professional adults ages 16-24 from all over the San Francisco Bay Area came together to form teams. Using STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) and business principles, they had to choose between two predetermined app challenges:

1) Help the San Francisco Bay Area African American community use technology to enhance opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship, and education.

2) Help increase awareness of fitness activities, events, and exercise in African American communities.

Thanks to the graciousness and hospitality of GSV Labs in Redwood City, CA, the kids got a chance to work overnight on their chosen idea over a 36 hour period on January 30 and 31st. If that doesn't scream startup life, I don't know what does.

Have you ever tried working on software? I am. Let me tell you, it's insanely frustrating. Tack on littletonosleep and a tight deadline, and you have a recipe for burnout and quitting. Or as the winning groups proved, that same recipe can yield perseverance and tangible product

A hackathon provides an opportunity for intense collaboration and hyperfocused creation. It's the opportunity to build something from nothing. What I love about the idea of hackathons is that it's problem solving at it's purest: shut up and show me something.

While politicians, academics and keyboard warriors can debate endlessly on problems, coding is about creating imperfect solutions that can be implemented today. What if that somethingfromnothing can change the world?

After the prejudging stage, 30 kids were left standing from

the original 150 that entered the competition. In their groups, they would have one week to work on their software ideas. They would hold presentations for highlevel executives the following weekend on February 6, 2015 at Rocket Fuel Inc. in Redwood City, CA.

## Local tech superstars

This presentation day is the day I can't get out of my head. There were so many standout moments, I don't even know where to begin.

One of the day's treats was getting the chance to have Intel Vice President Michael Greene and Microsoft Corporate Vice President of Education Marketing, Tony Prophet speak. Sure Michael Greene and Tony Prophet aren't as world renowned as Mark Zuckerberg or Larry Page, but they're very damn well a Sheryl Sandberg in my book. In fact, literally after finishing his talk and taking a few fan photos (yes, tech folks have fans too), Tony had to make his way to the airport to catch a flight for his next business meeting!

These two gentlemen were highly charismatic and elegant speakers. They spoke about their origins in tech and line of work with such passion and gusto. I couldn't get enough. I was enthralled with their talks, imagining myself one day standing in front of a room of kids, telling them "how I made it." I wonder if any of those kids were envisioning themselves as future tech leaders?

When I looked around to see what the room full of kids were doing, to my pleasant surprise, they weren't on their phone or goofing around; they were actually paying attention to Michael and Tony.

Do you know how hard it is the even get the attention of people for more than 140 characters? If it doesn't involve seminaked "models" posing, celebrity gossip, or cute animals acting like humans, it's incredibly hard to hold people's attention today. And yet these kids were hanging onto Michael and Tony's every word like they were President of the United States.

## The champ is here

And then someone made a grand championship fight entrance that even President Obama himself would stand and cheer for. That someone was 6'7, 215 lbs of pure muscle, current WBC World Heavyweight Boxing Champion Deontay "The Bronze Bomber" Taylor.

Keep in mind that this was Super Bowl Saturday. And the Big Game was being played 40 minutes away at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara. If you're the current heavyweight champion of the world, you have a buffet of options on Super Bowl Saturday. I'm pretty sure they include partying with Hollywood celebrities, music celebrities, sports celebrities, or some variation of all three. And yet, on Super Bowl Saturday, the champ Deontay Taylor chose to come to Rocket Fuel to speak to the kids. Anyone who forgoes the pleasures of shortterm gratifications for the benefit of kids they don't even personally know, is a hero in my book.

I thought it was hard to top Michael and Tony's individual talks, but the champ proved me wrong. His story resonated with me so much that at some points, I thought he was talking about my life. He spoke about real struggles, vulnerable emotions and ambition dreams that made him easy to identify with. The fact that he spoke in a simple and real fashion kept the audience captivated from start to finish. It was an epic 20 minute talk about positivity, selfbelief and faith.

Three key themes that struck me the most from Deontay's talk were about 1) speaking it into existence, 2) making tough decisions and 3) dedicating yourself to your craft.

Deontay made it a point to keep reiterating the importance of positivity.

## "I can do this."

"I'm going to be somebody someday." "I can and I will."

"Anything is possible."

Why did Deontay choose these phrases as triggers for us?

Remind yourself to keep

going

Let's face it, coding isn't "cool" to most everyday people. In fact, I dare you to go tell one of your friends you're going to start learning how to code. Chances are most of them will laugh at your efforts. They'll tell you not to do it; that you can't do it; that it's a waste of time. People will make fun of you before they offer a helping hand. You'll be lucky if you find someone who'll support you in doing something that hasn't been done before. I know that was true for me. All I kept getting hit with over and over again was endless negativity. I was sick of it. And I thought these people were my friends?

When you're fed all this negativity day in and out, you'll start to doubt yourself. You'll almost convince yourself that other people are right about your dreams. In the face of all this negativity, you'll be tempted to quiet your voice. Don't do it. Don't let anybody stop you from speaking positivity into existence. They might be your friends and they might mean well, but their fears don't have to be your fears. If you're trying to do grand things, you'll have to be deaf to the negativity people will feed you. It's their unconscious way of testing your patience and mental strength.

That's why Deontay kept emphasizing those positivity triggers when you're left all alone, you'll need those words to remind yourself to keep going. Your words will become your most powerful bond. If you say you're going to do something, do it. If you make a promise to yourself, you owe it to yourself to keep it no matter what. If you keep speaking positivity you'll become positive yourself. With positivity will come newfound confidence. Being positive will literally keep your mind in a positive state when all the world wants you to enter a negative state.

Do you want to know one beautiful thing about coding?

**Coding is writing it into existence.**

Right place, right time

Deontay drilled the message about making tough decisions home when he candidly spoke about having an unplanned pregnancy at 19 years old. Deontay distinctly remembered going to the doctor for a regular check up and being told that his daughter would be born with spinal bifida, a birth abnormality where there's an incomplete closing of the backbone and membranes around the spinal cord.

The doctor gave him two options, you can go through the process of a long and complex journey of treatment, or you can terminate the birth right here, right now and go about your life and try to fulfill your dreams without this burden.

Almost instantaneous, Deontay shook his head and said,

# Technology

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"No. We're going to do this."

Deontay felt he needed to quit college in order to start working as soon as possible. He worked everything from Red Lobster, to IHOP, to driving a beer delivery truck to support his daughter. During this stressful time period, he kept thinking how in life, we make wrong decisions and right decisions. While most people would have terminated at the words of "spinal bifida," he felt giving his daughter an opportunity at life was the right thing to do.

As an outlet from stress and work, Deontay walked into a boxing gym one day. In the land of rapid fire speed bags, jumping rope and fighters hitting punching bags, something click inside him. It all just made sense to him. He felt like heaven was shining a light on him on that day. For the first time in his life, he felt like he was in the right place at the right time.

A few weeks ago, I decided I wanted to learn more about coding specifically how to do it myself. Initially I was beyond pissed off. Here I am in startup land handling the marketing, branding, social media, business development, content generation, product development, R&D, sales and now I have to learn how to build the software too?

That's BS. I can only do some much.

But the more I thought about it, the more learning to code made sense. No one knows the product better than me, why not learn the bridge to take this product from wireframes to the App store? This thought kept coming to me, "Why didn't you think of this sooner?"

I did think of sooner. But so many other people tried to convince me to find a technical co-founder instead or to outsource the coding. Believe me I tried repeatedly, only to be left disappointed, drained and alone. I spent so much time and energy doing that, that I never circled back on the idea of learning to build the product myself. It wasn't that I was afraid to learn, I just never bothered actually loading up a computer and trying to learn how to code.

When I walked into Street-Code Academy in East Palo Alto, CA on January 19, 2016 and heard the rousing speech by program Director, Olatunde Sobohemin, it all made sense to me. I finally felt at home.

Now that I've been learning about software programming for a few weeks, you know what? It's not that bad. It's actually pretty fun. AND BUILDING THINGS IS BEYOND COOL.

Learning to code is just like learning anything new in life: you suck at it initially, you get frustrated, you get stuck and you go mad as you go around in circles. But do you know what happens if you stick with it and make it through all these

brick walls?

You get better.

I have nothing to lose by trying to learn to code. But I'll lose everything waiting for someone else.

### Hard work always wins

Deontay's final point about dedicating yourself to your craft highlighted his deep belief in impeccable work ethic hard work always wins. He attributes his success to willingness. He was simply willing to go through mud to get what he wanted in life. He was willing to do what other people wouldn't do to ensure success for himself and his family. If that meant riding a bike to work while his friends laughed at him, so be it. If it meant working two jobs and sleeping in your car, so be it. If it meant skipping a few meals so your daughter can eat, so be it.

Deontay's mental strength is as impressive as his 360 boxing record. I love his on-liner, "It's not about who has it right now, but who has it in the end." It perfectly encapsulates his long held belief in himself, his faith, his determination, his patience and his work ethic.

Instead of our youth just being users of technology, what if we could instill them with the confidence and skills to design and create their own games and apps? What if we encouraged them to pursue technology that other people will want to use tomorrow?

### Technology is everywhere.

When's the last you looked around a Starbucks? Every kid, teenager, and adult is glued to their phones. What if more underrepresented minority groups can learn how that type of technology works? What if they leveraged those acquired skills to better their communities? How many people would they impact with just one idea?

Make no mistake, brave, bold and stubborn entrepreneurs are the reason for some of the world's greatest moments. Want to have a car magically pick you up in two minutes? Uber's been fighting the government and taxi companies since day one. Oh, you love that supercomputer in your pocket? Thank goodness Steve Jobs had the resiliency to bounce back and stick to his vision. Want to avoid ludicrous hotel fees? Good thing the Airbnb founders survived the rough patch of losing money for endlessly consecutive months. Imagine if all those people gave up along their tech journey. Where would we be today with their creations?

Every entrepreneur thinks about quitting and giving up. True entrepreneurs have the patience, guts and stubbornness to hang on just a little bit longer. They don't wait for the world to catch up, they pave the way when no one is looking. They piss people off. They work while most people are sleeping. They sacrifice time, energy and relationships so

other people can have better lives. They move fast and break things

What if the kids at the Silicon Valley Black Youth Hackathon are now on a path to becoming future worldclass coders? What if the next Airbnb, Uber, or Facebook founder was in that room? He or she may or may not be in that room, but they're sure as hell not going to be found partying in clubs or spending time with "Netflix and chill."

We have a higher probability of finding them on one the winning hackathon teams. The Healthy Hackers, Dab Run, Jamii, or the allgirl team, Sistah's Who Code, are something special. In just one week, they were able to design, develop, and sell a panel of high level executives from Microsoft, Intel, and Rocket Fuel on their ideas and creations. They got those judges excited. Those kids are a perfect example of the untapped human capital that exists in all communities, especially those from underrepresented minority groups.

### The great equalizer

Why is it people of color, and especially African Americans, are underrepresented in everything great, but overrepresented in everything dreadful? Why do we keep shortchanging them? Contrary to popular belief, these groups of people can do more than shoot hoops, catch footballs and run fast. If we're going to continue being the world's greatest problem solvers and be the breeding ground of innovation, we need to eliminate that limited way of thinking.

Projections suggest that 120 million highskilled job applicants are needed by 2020. Additionally, the entrepreneurs of the future will need to possess skill set in Science, Technology,

Engineering and Math disciplines (STEM). It's critical we prepare future generations to thrive in the new global economy technology is creating. It's our duty to empower underrepresented minority groups to be a significant part of those applicants and future entrepreneurs.

Technology has the power to be the great equalizer. Like it or not, we're all already in the race. We can't afford to waste all this untapped human capital as a country. We can either take part in the solution and get involved now or wait and fall behind. The Silicon Valley Black Youth Hackathon was a crucial step in the right direction.

If the goal of Silicon Valley Black Youth Hackathon was to increase the interest of technology and computer programming related activities in underrepresented minority groups, while developing economic, entrepreneurship and employment opportunities within the community, you only had to look at the proud faces at Rocket Fuel Inc. to know they were wildly successful.



Photo courtesy of Kiwoba Allaire and the SV Black Youth Hackathon Participants in the hackathon proudly display their awards.

Whether those kids won prize money or not, they know what results are possible when preparation and hard work meets opportunity. They saw first hand the value of networking and what kind of doors technology can open.

I read all the time that more and more companies are looking to import tech talent from overseas. I think it's a fantastic opportunity for immigrants, but let's not forget to develop talent that's literally in the backyard of Silicon Valley. I mean, East Palo Alto is literally two miles from the Facebook headquarters. Who knows what hidden gems are waiting to be discovered in underrepresented minority groups?

We're all winners when more and more kids become passionate about tech. Only time will tell what planting those seed inside the

minds and hearts of the kids involved in the first ever Silicon Valley Black Youth Hackathon will yield for the future. My hope is more people will proactively take part in helping more kids learn and appreciate the value of technology. If we don't, who will?

The Silicon Valley Black Youth Hackathon was sponsored by The Silicon Valley Black Chamber of Commerce, Intel, Microsoft, Black Enterprise, UNCF, AT&T, #YESWECODE, Rocket Fuel Inc., California Alliance of African American Educators, Bay Area Tutoring Association, Street Code Academy, CodeWritingKids.com, Innovation, Jack and Jill of America, Silicon Valley Center for Entrepreneurial Development, National Black MBA, and San Francisco, Santa Clara County Alliance of Black

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# Mural Music and Arts program unveils mural at Ravenswood Family Health Center

By Marina Yu

On March 22, 2016, Ravenswood Family Health Center celebrated its long history of collaboration and service to the East Palo Alto community at a ceremony to unveil a new mural within its new state-of-the-art community health center. The evening kicked off with remarks from Danny Caseña, Director of Community Outreach, and Tefferi Mogus Brook, Executive Director, at the local arts non-profit, Mural Music & Art Project.



Photos courtesy of RFHC CEO Luisa Buada stands with Danny Caseña and Tefferi Mogus Brook

Following these remarks, Luisa Buada, CEO of Ravenswood Family Health Center, spoke about the diverse Native American, Latino, and African influences present in the mural. Intended to celebrate the rich history and diversity of East Palo Alto, the mural's abun-

dance of symbolism and imagery evokes many parallels between the interdependence of flora and fauna in the Amazon jungle, and Ravenswood's relationship with the community.

The mural in many ways depicts the nature of Ravenswood's close collabo-

ration and community building in East Palo Alto, the essence of which is represented by the new clinic that houses the mural. Located in the stairwell of the clinic and spanning two floors, the 1,500 square foot mixed media mural is the result of close collaboration between Ravenswood Board and Staff; the Mural Music & Art Project artists, and the investigative process led by youth from East Palo Alto, who together envisioned, and planned the gorgeous artistic depiction of the complex ecosystem of the Amazon jungle.

From the cascading waterfall that symbolizes sustainability, the roots of the Amazonian Ficus tree symbolizing strength and fortitude, the large jaguar symbolizing protection and power, to the multitude of wildlife representing diversity,

transcendence and resilience, the mural is in many ways a representation of the community pillar that Ravenswood has become. The mural also displays the figure of a curandera, or healing shaman, which was painted to resemble Luisa, and to celebrate her central role to increasing access and quality of care to East Palo Alto residents.

As Ravenswood moves forward, this new mural will continue to provide a reminder of the strength and resiliency of the people of East Palo Alto, and that strong communities, like the ecosystem of the Amazon jungle, are built upon sturdy roots and diverse collaborative relationships.



Photo courtesy of the Ravenswood Family Health Center. This brightly colored 1,500 square foot mixed media mural sits in the stairwell of the Ravenswood Family Health Center.

## Letters to the editor

ing with business like Mountain View? Will the councilmembers facing huge rent control and just cause issues in their districts similar to Redwood City, with the eviction of nearly 500 people from 216 rent-controlled units at The Reserve and rental abuses in the Santee area, introduce a promised anti-

displacement proposal and support both a progressive revamping of rent control and a Just Cause ordinance?

And will Mayor Liccardo, a close ally to business and developers, listen to campaign coffers or the cries of the people from Santee, The Reserve, Poco Way and countless homeless encampments saying San

Jose's current rent control is outdated and a Just Cause ordinance in addition to an anti-displacement ordinance is necessary. Here's hoping San Jose becomes a leader in the rent control and just cause movement, rather than joining Richmond, Alameda and other cities in forcing residents to take it to the ballot box.

As Michelle Alexander, author of "The New Jim Crow" recently said in an interview "our politicians are pretending to serve two masters, the people who elect them and the people who fund them. Unfortunately, for millions of people who cast their votes every year, they rightfully wonder whether

continued from page 6

their politicians are responding more to the people who fund their campaigns...than the people who have elected them." Time will tell if San Jose's electeds and also other city electeds will stand with the literal landlords or with the people.

**Shaunn Cartwright**  
Local community activist

## Humanizing science

- is often inspired by the humanities.

At the Yale School of Medicine, for example, students must take a trip to a museum to study paintings. The requirement is designed to improve observation and empathy.

Likewise, my school, New York Institute of Technology, runs a quarterly photography contest for our medical students designed to help them to think creatively and build sensitivity.

Practicing observation and enhancing creativity helps strengthen connections to patients, which improves overall care and ensures patients get healthy faster.

A study published in the Archives of Internal Medicine, for example, determined that lung cancer patients responded more positively to the directions of physicians who were empathetic. Another tracked 20,000 diabetic patients and found that those cared for by compassion-

ate physicians had significantly fewer complications from diabetes.

NYIT also offers a minor in medical humanities so undergraduates can approach medicine and public health from a humanities perspective.

Students have responded enthusiastically. One of our aspiring doctors observed, "As a physician, it is often forgotten that people are people and they have their own sto-

ries. Physicians look at patients based on their vitals and diagnoses. These classes have taught me to look at everything holistically, from their culture to their financial situations."

If STEM fields are about exploring essential physical truths, the humanities are about developing the capabilities for such inquiries. They discipline the mind for reason, critical analysis, and expressive communication.

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Of course we need science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to plumb the mysteries of the universe on both the macro and nano scales. But we need the humanities to engage and inspire. Everyone needs to feel the power and beauty of the human experience, especially the scientists who design our future.

**Edward Guiliano, Ph.D.**,  
is president of New York Institute of Technology.

# Support the East Palo Alto Today newspaper

The East Palo Alto Today newspaper is published by the East Palo Alto Center for Community Media, a nonprofit agency that was formed in January 2003 to create media outlets in East Palo Alto and provide the type of positive, relevant information about the community that is not easily found elsewhere. If you like what you see in East Palo Alto Today, then we ask that you enable us to serve the community better. You can do this by completing the partnership card below and mailing it with your tax deductible donation which will go directly to the center's media efforts. You can read more about the East Palo Alto Center for Community Media online at [www.epamedia.org](http://www.epamedia.org). You can also donate to the center at the EPA Today and the EPA Media websites. Please contact us if you have any questions. We look forward to hearing from you.



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Yes, I am interested in becoming a partner with the East Palo Alto Center for Community Media. Please accept my tax-deductible donation as a personal contribution \_\_\_\_\_ or as a contribution on behalf of my organization \_\_\_\_\_.

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\*The East Palo Alto Center for Community Media is a tax-exempt nonprofit corporation.

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Please check the appropriate box: if you would like to  volunteer at the center, if you would like to  advertise in East Palo Alto Today, if you are interested in  writing an article, opinion piece or letter to the editor. Also let us know if your agency or business would like to be  a distribution site for East Palo Alto Today. Call (650)289-9699.

# Youth football organization is more than just football

By Jeffrey Austin

“We are more than just football.” This mantra is printed boldly on most of the promotional materials printed by the Mid-Peninsula Athletic Association.

In today’s youth development environment there are no greater impacts to be had than youth sports programs. Our city is fortunate to have many youth sports organizations that get this concept. The EPA Boxing club, to RYAA youth soccer, PSA basketball, EPA Razorhawks rugby all are doing great work to develop character in the youth of East Palo Alto. There is one program in particular that is unique and on the “cutting edge” of youth development. This not for profit organization is the Mid-Peninsula Athletic Association (Mastodons). The MPAA is an unlimited weight football program for young people girls and boys ages 5-14 years of age.

The MPAA has for the last 4 years been testing a total wellness element to its program. This program is designed to address possible mental wellness issues caused by traumatic occur-



Photo courtesy of MPAA

rences that have occurred in the lives of its young participants. The administrators of the MPAA and its President Tyler Barker have always since the inception of the organization in 2010 been about the development of young people to be successful in all areas of their lives. They realized early that mental wellness is a part of the success equation and cannot be overlooked when dealing with our young people.

In 2012 the programming director of the MPAA collaborated with the Behavioral Health and Recovery Services department of the county of San Mateo as well as the substance Abuse and Mental Health department in Washington Dc as well as members of the city Council of East Palo Alto to address an

issue that for the most part goes undetected in young people, that is the affect that traumatizing events may have on the cognitive behavioral patterns of our children. Traumatic occurrences left unresolved can lead to problems in the classroom, at home and in social settings. It many times can lead to PTSD, depression, anxiety and suicide.

The MPAA utilizing the information garnered from many meetings with experts in the field of mental health developed the Life’s Playbook programming element of the MPAA youth sports program. This program attempts to identify the number of traumatic occurrences that have occurred in the young participant’s life and when they occurred. Once these

occurrences have been identified then the young person is monitored in all areas of their lives starting with surprise visits from coaches and members of the MPAA staff to classrooms, teachers are notified to possible challenges and then a wraparound blanket of love and concern are offered and administered to the young person to give them a well-rounded and qualified support group to get through many life’s challenges.

The surveys of participants have garnered that of the young people surveyed 73% of them had witnessed are been part of traumatic occurrences in their lives. The national average for this kind of survey is only 44%. The MPAA realizes that the scope of youth sports programs is not primarily to fix problems, but they have taken a firm stance that the influence that our coaches and administrators have on the lives of not only our players but their families as well is worth being

considered and early intervention service. This is what we do. We pay attention to our young people and try with all of our might to make sure that we are doing our part to assure their long term success.

All members of the MPAA staff as well as volunteers since last year are being trained in the Youth mental health First Aid Program. This program helps to raise awareness of issues that may occur on the football field and in practices. This program has been endorsed by President and First lady Obama as ne of the best ways to bring attention to the dire need for mental health services in our schools and with all those that work with children. The MPAA is proud to offer this service to our young people and their families and we hope that this will be something that is adopted eventually be all the youth sports organizations in our city. If you or your organization would like to know more about Life’s Playbook Programming please contact Jeff Austin Programming Director of the MPAA at disciple0633@gmail.com

## Third design workshop

& Change-ability for Growth. The Concepts presented and discussed included:

The Elevated Village concept was framed by ideas including a) “Front Porch,”

which serves as a welcoming space and is modeled by the active use of front lawns in EPA, b) a “Collaborative Sanctuary” space for individual identities and cultures to

collaborate under one roof, and c) “Active Ground” for improvisation and spontaneous performances. The Cabinet of Curiosity concept presents itself like series of stack ed

boxes that provide views of activities and draw in participation from the community. The Treehouse Community concept was inspired by

EPA’s roots as a farming city, and a is hybrid of both the Elevated Village and the Cabinet of Curiosity. With tons of natural ventilation and views, this concept brings in the opportunity for the city to have a sky garden.

During the presentation of these concepts, there was lots of time set aside for discussion. Community members were seated at four different tables, and representatives of the architectural, landscape or sustainability team joined each group.

Every person was invited to give input whether it was providing feedback on what they did or didn’t like, or expanding on these ideas. For each concept, participants discussed their answers to prompts that enabled individuals to voice the needs of

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their community. The following questions were emphasized at the workshop:

1. How does the arrangement of different activities meet the needs of the public & youth? (How could it be improved?)

2. What makes this concept feel inviting and welcoming to you?

(What might make it more welcoming?)

3. How does this approach achieve our design objectives? (Please give a few examples.)

The community architecture design workshop concluded at 9 PM with an event debrief and much enthusiasm for the future of the East Palo Alto Youth Art & Music Center.



### BOARDS & COMMISSIONS

**ATTENTION RESIDENTS OF EAST PALO ALTO: YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

**APPLICATIONS** are being accepted for seats on the following City of East Palo Alto’s Boards, Commissions, and Committees.

➤ **MEASURE C OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

(2 regular unexpired terms, each term-ending June 2017). Meet at 6:30 p.m. on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of each month at the YMCA, 550 Bell Street, East Palo Alto, CA.

➤ **PLANNING COMMISSION**

(3 regular unexpired terms each term-ending May 31, 2019 and 1 alternate unexpired term ending on May 31, 2017). Meet at 7:00 p.m. on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of each month in the City Council Chamber, 2415 University Ave., East Palo Alto, CA.

➤ **PUBLIC WORKS AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

(4 regular unexpired terms-ending May 31, 2019 and 1 alternate unexpired term ending on May 31, 2017). Meet at 7:30 p.m. on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month in the City Council Chamber, 2415 University Ave., East Palo Alto, CA.

➤ **RENT STABILIZATION BOARD**

(2 regular unexpired terms - ending May 31, 2018 and 1 alternate unexpired term ending on May 31, 2017). Meet at 7:00 p.m. on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month in the City Council Chamber, 2415 University Ave., East Palo Alto, CA.

➤ **SENIOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

(5 regular unexpired terms - ending May 31, 2019 and 2 alternate unexpired terms ending on May 31, 2017). Meet at 1:30 p.m., every other month in the City Council Chamber, 2415 University Ave., East Palo Alto, CA.

**QUALIFICATIONS:** Applicants must be residents of East Palo Alto and be 18 years or older. It is required that applicants familiarize themselves with the purpose of the advisory bodies during the application process.

**APPLICATION PROCESS:** Applications are available in City Hall, 2415 University Avenue, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor or you may download an application at <http://www.ci.east-palo-alto.ca.us/DocumentCenter/View/2576>. Applications must be received at the Office of the City Clerk at City Hall, 2415 University Ave., 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, no later than **April 8, 2016 by 5:00 p.m.**

The City Council will review all applications and will conduct interviews at the special City Council meeting, date to be determined. For more information contact Deputy City Clerk, Terrie Gillen, at (650) 853-3127.

**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**

# Misunderstanding

continued from page 7

tells people that it's up to them to bring change to the community and he can do it for them. Yes, he's on the popularity trail for your vote and he'll gladly accept your donation to support his campaign. If he gets more votes than anyone else. That's a popularity contest and how democracy on a local level works. You voted and he had the most votes and those votes put him in office.

Let's go back to President Obamas campaign in 2008. He was Senator Obama, a black guy with a "funny name" from Chicago or Hawaii. I wasn't sure where he's from because he was unknown to me. He got around the nation by shaking hands, begging for money and smiling for the cameras. That's a popularity contest, with fundraising and media coverage. People liked him and his slogan was, "Help is on the way."

It had a nice ring to it but it also implied that the American people were helpless and we need Obama to help us pathetic losers. He even came to East Palo Alto and riled up people to vote for the "Help is on the way" guy. He looked presidential and his rhetoric was cool. He kept shaking hands, with smiles and waving to you like you were buddies.

Then he got nominated. He got voted in and eight years later? We got a black man that became president twice and that's unprecedented. Some say he ain't all the way black. Nevertheless. President Obama has a different look from his predecessors George W, Bill, George, Ronald, Jimmy, Gerald, and all the way back to George Washington. 42 white guys in consecutive order were presidents

## Cast your vote on Election Day!

white guys and America ain't just white people. It's all kinds of people and President Obama helped the helpless for two terms. In reality, even the president of the United States isn't guaranteed job security because it's a four-year gig and he has to get voted in for another four year term but that's all he gets. What's the bottom line here? Democracy can get you a job but it won't keep you there.

It's a popularity contest with terms and conditions. There's rules, laws and constitutional rights that a candidate must abide by. It's about people pleasing and not people pleasing. It's tricky and it's all about votes. You can't even get a refund on a vote, like change your mind at the last minute. Once your vote is in. It's in. It's not about the most peaceful, virtuous, handsome or intelligent candidate. It's up to the voters to decide.

The most popular one wins and you might have to sit through all their lip service to convince you that your vote counts. That process works on a national level as well as a local level in East Palo Alto. Your vote counts, but on the national level the Electoral College supersedes the popular vote. What? College electoral? For real? The Electoral College can just snuff out the popular vote on the na-

tional scene. This has me questioning the democratic process. I've never really understood the Electoral College vote or democracy in America, so I never voted and still don't. So, either I'm crazy or the system is crazy. Maybe we both are or maybe the Steel Pulse album True Democracy has a message we can draw from.

I remember as a kid helping politicians in their campaign around East Palo Alto and my mother getting mad that they didn't do what they promised they would do for us Pacific Islanders. I remember my mother dragging me to a rally in Sacramento back in 1986 because of a protest against Governor Deukmejian. As a kid I remember thinking. I don't know these politicians, but I don't like what they're doing. From then till now, I became skeptical of politicians and never trusted their word nor the democratic process.

In the movie Magnum Force, Clint Eastwood is confronted by another cop for being righteous and that the system just needs to have cops kill criminals without the court system. Dirty Harry's rebuttal. "I hate the g----- damn system but until they come up with something better, I have to work with what we got." I feel the same way with democracy and whenever I meet politicians I respect that they're humans trying to do their best, despite the fact I can't stand the system and I don't really want to vote for them either. My vote basically would approve of any pending crime that the candidate could commit. That's giving them power and an opportunity that could be abused. Henceforth. I don't vote and there's a logic to it that is as

simple as I didn't condone any politicians getting voted in East Palo Alto or the White House.

When I met former Vice President Al Gore back in 2003 and he shook my hand twice. I told my co workers that's a politician that will shake your hand again, because you might be the one vote that matters the most. Al Gore is a cool guy but I didn't vote for him or Obama. I don't vote and don't care to either because I'm a skeptic. Nothing wrong with a skeptic and maybe I'm cynical because I've watched it happen since I was a kid. It's not that I don't like democracy, it's just that it all seems like a gamble and I don't like to gamble either. Democracy is more convoluted than a plot from the Mulholland Drive movie and yet it seems to be the best form of government for the United States. Fair enough, I'll just roll with it and you can vote.

The democratic process is above my understanding and voting is a mix of probabilities with human failure. There can be ballots being tallied incorrectly and it makes me question the system. I heard candidates on ballots that were not supposed to be on the ballot, because they were from the previous ballot like Pat Buchanan was. I remember Tom Brokaw saying that one candidate won the race which dissuaded a majority of the voters to not vote which made another candidate win the popular vote. I've heard of recounts of ballots go haywire and people who voted that were dead. What? They were still registered voters who cast a ballot, but died before the final count. Does that mean a dead person's vote counts? Seems like a dead end

to me. Let's ask Democritus. Wait he's dead, too.

Democracy is wacky and your vote seems more and more like a gamble than a popularity contest. You have the right to vote and the right to NOT vote. Fair enough. I'm not better than anyone, because I'm a part of this democracy just as you are. All this is my opinion not to make you do anything but debate why you vote and do you really believe that these politicians are going to do what they say. That's up to you. You got your opinion and I got mine. Are you a Democrat or a Republican? It doesn't matter to me, because they're selling their promises for our vote and I ain't buying it. As Henry Ford once said, "You can't build a reputation on what you're going to do." Maybe my standards are too high and I can't stand all the deception that goes on in a democracy, but if you understand human nature than deception will continue with or without democracy.

I'll roll with it and I'm not an idealist because that would imply I got something better and I don't. I'm just exercising a constitutional right for my freedom of speech to say that democracy is wacky, and I'm not a communist either. For fun, let's see who's on our democratic slot machine for 2016: Bush, Clinton, Sanders, Trump or some dude that works at 7/11. I think it's hilarious and it's what keeps the red, white and blue on the American flag that was made in Korea. What? Democracy, I love you today, hate you tomorrow and I still don't understand you. Do you understand democracy?

## Federal officials

tendent, Ravenswood City School District, Priscilla Chan, the CEO of the Primary School, Delayzio Amerson, the executive Director, East Palo Alto YMCA, Jazmine Lax, a parent (from New Creation Home Ministries), Marco Duarte, a parent (from Ravenswood City School District), Katherine Brown, a parent (from Ravenswood Family Health Center), and two parents from The Primary School, Lita Angelina and Laura Saldana.

Several of the parents talked about how difficult it was for them to get adequate services for their children.

One of the parents, Katherine Brown, said that she has two children and a full time job and felt that it was important for parents to feel empowered. She shared how even the process of applying to the Ravenswood Family Health Center was intimidating for some parents.

Another parent, Laura Saldana, bemoaned the fact that there were no special education programs in the Ravenswood City School District for her autistic child, who was very intelligent academically.

Mayor Rutherford men-

tioned that when she was on the school board, "It was like a revolving door, where teachers came and went." But she felt luck that her three children had teachers who stayed in the school district.

During her remarks, she said that East Palo Alto needed an infrastructure that would support computers in all the homes in the city and she praised the city nonprofits for being a real asset to the city. "There is no amount of money that can replace them," she said.

He said that Pres. Obama had proposed a path that would over the next decade to get free access to Pre-K for four year olds. He said he would like to go further and get to three year olds as well. He thought that, as challenging as the idea might be, it had bipartisan interest and the idea would be a rich return on investment, since if we could get to students early, it would go along way to forestalling some of the problems that they might have later in life.

Secretary King told his listeners that he understood the concerns the panelists expressed and he specifically addressed some of the issues they brought up with regard to special education.



Photo by HJ Burroughs  
Audience members and participants listen intently to the discussion.

He admitted that while there are Medicaid dollars that could be used for special education, the process of obtaining the money is difficult for some districts and states to navigate, because of the combination of state and federal laws that could make access to the needed money difficult.

In light of these challenges, King said that the Obama administration is attempting to make access easier, since the highest needs districts have significant special aid needs and significant populations of English learners.

"If we don't insure adequate resources at the federal level and at the state level, then we know it is very hard for districts to respond to students' needs," he said.

Secretary King was partic-

ularly interested in what the community is doing to reach students who had experienced trauma and what schools are doing to make sure that the teachers are properly trained in handling their special needs.

Superintendent Hernandez-Goff said that the Ravenswood City School District is collaborating with state and county officials to upgrade its over all resources and the district's referral process. She said, "It is a process that is in progress." She highlighted the district's health and wellness mindfulness programs which it is offering to its students through the district's collaboration with the Sonima Foundation

After hearing the panelists, Secretary King shared that like Asst. Sec. Garcia, he was only here because of the

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difference that schools had made in his life. He said that he lost both of his parents as a child, losing his mother when he was eight and his father when he was twelve and people could have given up on him, They could have said, "Here's an African-American-Latino male student with a family in crisis. What chance does he have? But, they didn't do that. They invested in me. They saw hope in me. The New York City public school teachers saved my life. They are the reason that I'm alive today. What I'm inspired by in this conversation that this is a community where folks from government, community based organizations, health care providers, educators to philanthropy. Folks are coming together around trying to save lives, to create a path to opportunity for our kids. This is what the President and the First Lady are deeply committed to and certainly what the administration is committed to and I deeply appreciate that.

After hearing the last presenter, Mercedes Brown, share some of her experiences, Secretary King thanked everyone for coming out.

# Community Calendar

**StreetCode - Techfest's Two Day Event**  
**April 8, 2016 @4-7pm** 763 Green Street. Free performances, food and admission,

**April 9, 2016 4-7 pm** at 550 Panama Mall, Stanford D, School. Free for EPA residents. Register at [Streetcode.us](http://Streetcode.us)

**Begin Line Dancing at Little House - April 13, 2016**

Beginning Line Dancing is a fun class for active adults of all ages! Class features music from Swing/W (Country Western), Latin Ballroom and Zydeco traditions and forms. This low-impact class is for those who want to learn classic line dances, taught at a leisurely pace.

To Register: [www.penvol.org/littlehouse](http://www.penvol.org/littlehouse) or (650) 326-2025  
 Venue: Little House, The Roslyn

G. Morris Activity Center • 800 Middle Avenue, Menlo Park, CA 94025

**Spring Festival and Grand Opening of Cooley Landing - April 16, 2016**

The City of East Palo Alto and the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District will host a Spring Festival and Grand Opening of Cooley Landing's

new Environmental Education Center.

The event will start at 10 a.m. and include a grand opening ceremony with East Palo Alto's mayor and other elected officials at 11 a.m. There will be nature walks, community booths, art displays, food and kid's activities. The event is free and open to all ages.

See more community calendar events at the website for the East Palo Alto Today newspaper [www.epatoday.org](http://www.epatoday.org)

## School repairs

started looking at how can we do these repairs and fix some of this stuff," he said. "A lot of the ADA compliances at the school sites were not up to date...parking lots were sinking in, the sidewalks were sinking in," he described. "At some school sites, we also had some gas leaks, which you probably heard of on the news. Gas leaks were repaired over the winter break."



Photo by Ravenswood City School District  
 Pothole needing repairs

During the presentation, it was explained that the Facilities Master Plan is a long term process. It would take about \$300 million over the course of many years to complete.

The board would like to gain feedback from the community to determine which issues should be given priority. School Board Trustee, Ana Pulido, explained that even though a lot of their goals require a long process, their top priority is to provide a warm, dry, and safe environment for

continued from page 1

it, even if they do not have children in the district. Before the board decides on whether to call an election, they urge the community to share their thoughts. The plans could be delayed if the board does not receive strong enough support from the community.

A preliminary survey conducted February 17-23, 2016 found that the measure was well received. 84% of voters said they would vote "yes" on the measure. Despite voters having mixed favorability of the District and local schools, the survey found that 91% agreed that local schools are warm, safe, and dry.

The informative presentation was given in an effort to maintain "transparency," said Pulido. The board hopes to gain support for the measure in order to improve schools.

"I'm a product of the school system here," said council member Lisa Gauthier, "I had

## Talking with Henrietta Diversifying the High Tech Community



Photo courtesy of Talking with Henrietta  
 From left, Juan Antonio Cuautle, Carl Davis, Jr., show host Henrietta J. Burroughs, Olatunde Sobomehin and Kiwoba Ala- laire are shown on the set of the Talking with Henrietta television show after the taping of their discussion on March 24, 2016.

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

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

and 11 a.m.  
 Get more information about this show on the East Palo Alto Today website at [www.epatoday.org/tv.html](http://www.epatoday.org/tv.html).

the pleasure of going to Brentwood and the classroom looked the same as when I was there, so you can tell that there hasn't been a lot of change in order for our children to keep up with the re-

gional area, we have to do something about it."  
 The Facilities Master Plan is available at the district office or online at [www.ravenswood-school.org](http://www.ravenswood-school.org).

## Saying farewell

help but be impressed by the list of accomplishments that were cited.

Council member Ruben Abrica acknowledged Butler's role as a driving force in keeping the city focused on its strategic goal to create a healthy and safe community.

Council member Carlos Romero noted that Butler had made a noticeable difference in the way city residents live and he listed the different areas in which he had an impact.

Romero was the first to begin a list that was picked up by others, which grew to include Butler's contribution to the city's housing element, its pedestrian over-crossing, the bike transportation plan, the city's climate action plan and his regional transportation advocacy, his participation as a city-staff liaison on the planning commission and his participation on the city's senior advisory committee.

William Webster, a long

time city activist, commended Butler for his approachability and candor.

Regardless of whatever crisis was occurring in the city, Webster said, "I could always talk with Brent. He would level with you about what the problems were. He had the ability to make your inquiries welcome. He could have a candid

d i s c u s s i o n

about very sensitive subjects. You can't solve problems if you can't be candid about them."

Webster said that in his experience over the past 30 years, Butler was someone who was unique.

When one considers all

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of the praise that was given to Butler during his farewell lunch, Webster shared a conclusion with which others might have agreed when he said, "The people he'll be working with will be very fortunate. The people he will be working with are very blessed."

## Youth club

creased and, currently, the Youth Club has past students in local Community Colleges, UC Merced and UC Santa Cruz (not sure what this sentence is saying).

California's Department of Education reported that the local school district has only a 17 percent literacy rate among its schools and a 50 percent high school drop-out rate. More than 50 percent of our participating youth come from Cesar Chavez Academy, one

of the lowest performing schools in the Silicon Valley area. The Youth Club focuses on engaging and supporting our youth and their parents on education achievements. During the school year, youth are supported with homework tutoring and independent learning using technology to advance literacy and mathematics skills. Consistent volunteer support from local retirees, St. Patrick seminarians and high school students is a key

factor in the success of our program. The Youth Club is a dynamic environment that continues to grow and thrive. Participating members express happy smiles as people tour their program and confidently introduce themselves to visitors.

The program registers youth on a first-come, first-serve basis, giving preference to families that were previously enrolled. The cost is \$10 per month, per child during the school year and there is no

charge for the Saturday program. The summer program fee is set each summer, based on program support. Monthly parent meetings are held to share important information about educational opportunities and local community activities. This Fall, the Youth Club is hosting a Health and Wellness class for parents, sponsored by the Sonima Foundation.

As the program continues to grow, the Youth Club has now

expanded to Cesar Chavez Academy, occupying three classrooms after school to better support the 60 youth enrolled in the program. The Youth Club also has ambitious plans for their 2016 summer program placing a greater focus on academic achievement. To learn more about Catholic Charities Youth Club at St. Francis of Assisi, contact Mar Y Sol Alvarado at [malvarado@CatholicCharitiesSF.org](mailto:malvarado@CatholicCharitiesSF.org)

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