

Alamo kids shine onstage

'Whiskers!' brings 'Velveteen Rabbit' to life > **page 17**

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Goodbye to band director

Dr. Lawrence
Anderson passes
on the baton

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Danville

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Supes cut social services

Residents share
poignant stories
to no avail

> **page 5**

A hunker-down Christmas

Recession forces folks to re-evaluate their holiday plans **PAGE 12**



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We go to the Christmas tree lot. This year we are going to Blackhawk. We make sure the whole family goes together and we always get a Noble Fir.

Nancy and Carson Phillips
mom



We just went to the tree lot. It's on the car. We went to the Rotary lot on Alcosta Boulevard because the schools get some of the proceeds. We always do it within the first week after Thanksgiving. We like the Noble Fir because the branches are thick and they hold the kids' ornaments well.

Deena and Paige Collier
Retired deputy sheriff and preschooler



Our family goes to Sebastopol every year and we cut it down. The kids play and we go to the Apple Farm after. This will be our seventh year.

Steve Bergstad
owner of Bergie's Burger Stop



I went to the tree lot this year. I have seven children and when they were young we would drive to Marsh Creek Road and cut it down. Now it's just me so my tree is 6 feet tall. I decorate it with family memorabilia.

Shelley Donohue
sales associate

COMPILED BY PATTY BRIGGS

ABOUT THE COVER

For many families, including in the Danville area, there may be fewer presents under the tree this year. For those who have lost their jobs or even their homes, it will be an especially difficult holiday season. Illustration by Claire Nobles with thanks to Charles Schulz.

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QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“ Foreclosure doesn't really pay any attention to where you are. Just your ability to pay. ”

—Sandy Hathaway of the Bay Area Crisis Nursery.
See story, page 12.

Combs is Business Person of Year

Remax Realtor Joe Combs, the Combs Team, was awarded the Alamo Chamber of Commerce Business Person of the Year Award during the annual Tree Lighting Ceremony on Sunday.

“Joe Combs was selected from among nine nominees for this prestigious award,” said Chamber President Rich Wood of Epaynow.com. “His contribution to the Alamo Chamber and the Alamo community over the years has been exemplary. Joe has been the driving force behind our annual scholarship raffle, and is a past president and membership chair of our organization.”

Combs serves as the chairman of the board of the San Ramon Valley YMCA and has been instrumental in raising the \$3.1 million required to build its new facility. He also has been involved with the Danville Area Chamber of Commerce, where he has served as a board member for the past five years as well as on the Golf Tournament, Business Showcase and Marketing Committees. He and his wife Nancy comprise the Combs Team.

Christmas at the museum

Santa Claus will be at the Museum of the San Ramon Valley from 10 a.m.-1 p.m., tomorrow, Dec. 13, and Saturday, Dec. 20, a chance for children to share their Christmas wishes and for mom and dad to take photos. He will be in the gift shop, which is also offering shopping opportunities.



Ethan Casillas meets with Santa at the Museum.

This is the first Christmas to buy the book “Vintage Danville: 150 Years of Memories,” sponsored by the Town of Danville in celebration of its sesquicentennial this year. Authors Beverly Lane and Laura Grinstead will be at the museum tomorrow to personally inscribe books and to talk about their experiences writing the book, which is \$35 plus tax.

The gift shop also offers other unique items, including miniature wooden historic Danville buildings by artist Gary Winter.

Home Tour raises money to help girls

It takes a village to put on a holiday home tour, and more than 100 Danville-Alamo AAUW members are volunteering as docents in the five area homes that are open from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. today and tomorrow. Tickets are available at Leku Eder, 178 E. Prospect Ave., Danville, or Design Concepts, 3135 Danville Blvd., Alamo (Yardbird's Shopping Center), on the days of the tour. The ticket is a map with the home addresses; they can be visited on either day and in any order.

From the profits of last year's tour, AAUW was able to provide a total of \$8,500 for six college women who grew up in this area, as well as sending six middle school girls to a week-long residential summer camp held at various universities to further their interest in math and science, at a cost of \$4,500.

Home tour tickets cost \$35; \$25 for seniors. For questions, contact Mary at 831-1784. Peasant and the Pear, Piatti's, Pascal's and Esin Restaurant are all offering specials to AAUW Holiday Home Tour ticket holders.

Budget crunch hits Contra Costa County

Human services departments see heavy cuts, more to come

by Geoff Gillette

In an effort to slow or stop the financial hemorrhaging in Contra Costa County, members of the Board of Supervisors voted on Tuesday to amend their budget to reduce spending by \$18.5 million. Caught in the crossfire of what is necessary and what can be provided are children and the elderly, as more than 200 positions throughout the county will be lost.

At their Dec. 9 meeting, supervisors were brought face to face with the people who would be most affected by these cuts. More than 270 people packed into the board room in Martinez, with better than 100 of them asking for time to speak to the board and plead with the supervisors to find another way.

New County Administrator David Twa outlined that the situation for Contra Costa County stems

from many factors, one of them the state of California's massive deficit and the efforts of lawmakers to balance the budget. "As you know," he explained, "what happens too often is these things roll down hill."

As lawmakers reduced the funding for many local agencies and projects, it has created a greater demand on the county to provide funding, and with revenues drying up that is becoming a greater and greater challenge. And it's only

going to get worse. Twa is forecasting that assessed property values next year will continue to decrease, as much as 8 percent.

As a result, Twa said he plans to meet with all department heads in January to examine the possibility of consolidation of services. In February he will be back before the board with further cuts in the area of \$10 million to \$24 million.

► Continued on page 8

16 running for town council in Alamo

Election scheduled for March 3

by Dolores Fox Ciardelli

It's final. The deadline passed at 5 p.m., Friday, Dec. 5, and 16 people are running for the five town council positions in Alamo.

The town of Alamo will come into existence only if residents of the census-designated area vote to incorporate. The election is March 3.

The candidates and their listed occupations are as follows:

- Diane M. Barley, banker
- Bob Connelly, retired commercial banker
- Dennis Johnson, business owner
- Vicki Koc, community volunteer
- Karen McPherson, manager, telecommunications
- Steve Mick, retired university administrator
- Vishwas (Vish) More, retired chief engineer
- John W. Morrow, retired/engineer/manager
- Kevin G. Morrow, insurance professional
- Randy Nahas, engineer/property manager
- Karl K. Niyati, retired hospital administrator
- Joseph "Joe" A. Rubay, businessman
- Grace Schmidt, retired administrator
- Roger Smith, business/property owner
- Brad Stribling, retired electronics executive
- Brad Waite, CEO mortgage banker

In the March election, if incorporation passes, the two candidates with the most votes will serve four-year council terms; the three candidates with the next most votes will serve two-year terms. The council members will choose among themselves for the first mayor, which will be a rotating position.

The deadline to file papers to run for the position was Dec. 5, then Dec. 6-15 is the public review period for the candidates' statements of qualifications. On Dec. 11 the Secretary of State will conduct a drawing of the letters of the alphabet to determine the order in which candidates will appear on the ballot.

Write-in candidates can take out papers from Jan. 5-Feb. 17. Absentee voting will begin Feb. 2. ■



PHOTOS BY GEOFF GILLETTE

Alamo lights up for the holidays

Cold weather didn't dampen the festive spirit at Sunday's Alamo Tree Lighting Festival, sponsored by the Alamo Chamber of Commerce. The festivities were attended by more than 200 people including little wide-eyed youngsters anxious to tell Santa their Christmas wishes.

Master of ceremonies Mark Curtis thanked the dozens of volunteer workers and merchants that supplied the free refreshments and the school choral groups for their performances and presented Santa Claus to the crowd.

All during the festivities 20-some tables were busy handing out food and drink along with two tables designed to entertain youngster with craft activities.

—Frank Thornburgh



Danville sees shift in building permits

As town nears build-out, more permits sought for remodels

by Geoff Gillette

Even as the economy began its downturn and home prices staggered and fell, the building boom in Danville was shifting away from new home construction and into renovations.

Danville Development Director Steve Lake said that the town's annual report showed an expected decrease in new home construction coupled with more sales of permits geared toward residential modification.

"We're moving from being largely new single family dwellings to modifications of existing single family dwellings. We're seeing an increase of activity on remodels and additions," he said.

Over the past seven years there has been a dip and subsequent climb of building permits sold in town. The highest level in the past seven years was in 2000-01 when 85 new residential permits were sold. The current year is on track to be the lowest of the seven, with only 24 permits estimated.

Lake said there are several factors involved. The economy has an effect, as does the housing market. Build-out is also becoming more of a factor, as the number of available lots in town continues to dwindle.

"There's a certain number of undeveloped sites, but how they develop is a big question. They don't always go forward as anticipated," he explained.

Commercial development is also expected to show some increases in the year ahead. "I expect to see

a jump in commercial permits this year as we bring the Danville Hotel project online and other active projects as well," said Lake.

At this point, development revenues remain relatively stable in Danville since as one area slumps, another shows an increase. "So far this year our revenue projections and budget vs. actual is on course. Our expenditures are on target as well," Lake said. "We're where we want to be. Towards the end of the year we'll see what happens but for now we're doing OK." ■

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MARIAN BLISS

Band member John Horn presents a plaque of appreciation to Dr. Lawrence Anderson and Jan Anderson at the Christmas concert after they announced their retirement.

Passing the baton

Director Anderson leaving Danville Community Band

At the conclusion of the Christmas concert by the Danville Community Band on Sunday, Director Dr. Lawrence Anderson informed the audience that he was passing on the baton. After eight years, Anderson and his wife Jan, who was business manager and publicity director, are retiring from their active roles although they have been elected to the board of directors.

"I felt it was time to turn it over," said Lawrence Anderson later this week. "We're just taking a less active role."

He had told the band members at their last practice and they surprised him with a huge plaque and photo of the band. Mayor Newell Arnerich presented him with a proclamation from the Town of Danville.

"Larry is going to be artistic director," said Jan Anderson. "He will direct from time to time and play the clarinet in the band."

The Andersons founded the band in 2001 after they moved to Danville and felt it needed a community band. Anderson, a native

"It's been a fun ride for us but we're tired."

—Jan Anderson,
wife of retiring band director
Dr. Lawrence Anderson

of Lafayette, had previously been Director of Bands at UC Davis.

The Christmas concert last week drew more than 750 people, said Jan Anderson, the biggest ever except for when the band performed "That's Entertainment!" at the Leshner Center for the Arts in June.

Associate Conductor Robert Calonico is the new director of the Danville Community Band. He is also Director of Bands at UC Berkeley.

"It's been a fun ride for us but we're tired," said Jan Anderson. "We want to travel more, do some personal things, while we're still young enough." ■

TAKE US ALONG



Ruins and the Weekly

This group took the Weekly to the ancient Library of Celsus in Ephesus near Kusadasi, Turkey, including (l-r) Dick and Katie Radler, Alan Cotton, Cathy Fisch, Don Callahan, Ira Fisch, Judy Burke, Joanne Cunningham, David Burke, Jerry Cunningham and Cyndy Cotton.



Leku Eder in all its holiday finery. Owner Jeanette Ugarte said in decorating, she tried to work with clean lines accentuating the Craftsman-style building. To see pictures of the other winners, go to www.danvilleweekly.com.

Danville business with biggest 'bling' wins

Decorating contest makes downtown shine

by Geoff Gillette

Danville residents who went downtown the day after Thanksgiving for the tree-lighting ceremony got more than they bargained for when they saw that many of the downtown businesses had lit up as well.

It was part of the Storefront Holiday "Bling" contest, sponsored by Mechanics Bank, as well as the Danville Area Chamber of Commerce and the Town of Danville. Chamber President and CEO Melony Newman said the contest was designed as a way to get the downtown businesses to get into the season. "It's really meant to help inspire the holiday spirit and get our businesses to decorate."

Mechanics Bank Office Manager Jessica Smith agreed. "It's an incentive for our business owners to be a little more creative in decorating their businesses."

The contest began Nov. 28 with judges walking through the town and looking at all the decorations. Criteria for judging included elegant window displays, storefront lighting and holiday style. The only caveat on the contest was that sidewalk decorations would not be part of the judging.

Judges were Smith; Mechanics Bank Assistant Vice President Tony Kallingal; then-mayor Candace Andersen; and Chamber Board President Elaine Cortez Schroth.

On Dec. 8, Newman, Smith and Town of Danville Economic Development Director Jill Bergman gave out awards to the top three businesses. First Place went to Leku Eder at 178 E. Prospect Ave., for its beautiful display, featuring white lights and Chinese lanterns.

Owner Jeanette Ugarte was sur-



Danville Area Chamber of Commerce President Melony Newman (left) and Mechanics Bank Office Manager Jessica Smith (right) present the first-place certificate and \$1,000 check to Leku Eder owner Jeanette Ugarte.

prised to receive the first prize award of \$1,000.

"I'm thrilled. This is really good." She said her lighting scheme was designed to work with their building. "We used these clean beaded lights to accentuate the Craftsman building."

Ugarte said the task of putting up the lights was made more challenging by the fact that it is an older building. "There is no master switch, so getting all those lights on is a major thing without blowing the fuses."

Second-place honors went to Sideboard. The restaurant, at 411 Hartz Ave., incorporated many strings of lights as well as an illuminated sign spelling out the restaurant's name.

Owner Ford Andrews said he got the sign from one of his regulars. "It came from some people who dine here on a regular basis. They do big displays for all the major

holidays. They had all the letters and loaned it to us for our decorations." Sideboard received \$500 for its first runner-up finish.

Further down Hartz Avenue, the beautiful blue cross on the door to Chateau de Sable, as well as the trimmings along the walkway leading into the day spa and salon at 551 Hartz Ave., netted it third place and a check for \$250.

Owner Richard Hee was all smiles when presented with the award by Smith and Newman. "This is all new to us and it's exciting for this to happen," he said.

This year marks the first time the contest was held, but gauging by the response and the degree of "bling" that hit Danville, it won't be the last.

Jill Bergman said she was pleased with the great response and hopes residents will come downtown to shop and see the beautiful light displays. ■

PHOTOS BY GEOFF GILLETTE

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Arnerich continues Mayor's Mornings

by Dolores Fox Ciardelli

Newly installed Danville Mayor Newell Arnerich broke bread with a long table of constituents at 7:30 a.m., Friday, Dec. 5, at Father Nature's restaurant and kicked off the event by having the guests introduce themselves. Then he told about the winners of the Community Service Awards, which had been given out three days before.

"We had one award for 24 years of service—that's a first," he said. The award went to Councilman Mike Shimansky, who served on the Parks Advisory Commission starting in 1984, then Parks and Leisure

Services in 1986, and on the Town Council after being elected in 1989. (For a complete list of awards, go to www.DanvilleWeekly.com.)

Arnerich also told about the financial straits of the town, explaining its reserves are in good shape, thanks to careful planning and a five-year budget whereas some towns leverage their money with bonds.

"Here everyone penny counts," he said. "We have self-inflicted discipline. ... We do projects after we've saved money."

"It is incumbent on us to spend money that is 'set aside,'" he added. "We do our part to help the local economy."

Town Manager Joe Calabrigo noted that Danville has only tapped its operating reserve fund once in 26 years.

"Our credit rating is AA-plus," said Arnerich.

The next Mayor's Morning will be held at 7:30 a.m., Friday, Jan. 9, at Father Nature's on East Prospect in Danville. Most of the events will host a special guest, such as another elected official, said Arnerich.

The morning gatherings are free and open to the public. They are now in their third year, having begun in December 2006 under Mayor Mike Shimansky and continued last year with Mayor Candace Andersen. ■

Budget crunch

► Continued from page 5

"It is bleak, it is difficult. There are no easy solutions for this year or next year," Twa said. "We're trying to balance the needs of our employees with the need to provide services as the economy continues to decline."

Officials looked toward the area of Employment and Human Services as an area to cut because that department receives less state and federal funding, forcing the county to make up the difference. Department Director Joe Valentine examined their budgets, looked at positions that were both staffed and unstaffed, and offered a proposed reduction in the workforce.

The plan will call for deep cuts in Child Protective Services and Adult Protective Services. A total of 200 positions will be eliminated, with layoffs occurring as of Dec. 31.

"This is the most painful proposal I've ever submitted in my entire career," Valentine stated.

The supervisors briefly looked at the possibility of a mandatory furlough for all non-emergency county personnel in order to save money, effectively shutting down county government a few days during the year and forcing employees to take unpaid leave on those days. However, the furloughs would have to receive union approval.

Public comment on the resolution lasted more than three hours, with each speaker allotted two minutes. Many spoke of the work done by the social workers employed by the county, the lives they've saved, the children they've protected. And they spoke of how cutting back on their departments will put the children and the seniors in the county at risk.

Under the proposed cuts, Adult Protective Services would see its workforce reduced from 14 caseworkers to five. APS worker Valorie Van Dahl said the cuts come at a time when caseloads are continuing to increase. Van Dahl said one of the most profound problems they are facing is financial abuse.

Van Dahl said that each year seniors in California lose \$4.8 billion in cash and assets. In Contra Costa County she said that amount would be around \$134 million. "Most of the people this happens to are good people," she said. "They are lonely, they are befriended, and



Danville resident David Mitchell addresses the Board of Supervisors. A long-time foster parent, Mitchell credited the services provided by Contra Costa County as the best of the best.



Lisa Dye took her children out of school to attend Tuesday's Board of Supervisors meeting. She told the board that without the services provided by the county, foster children and others requiring social services would be seriously affected.

they become victims."

David Mitchell, a 69-year-old Danville resident, called on the board to rethink cutting funding for the foster care system in Contra Costa County, calling it "the best of the best." Mitchell and his wife have fostered 400 children over 39 years and he said the county's program has become the model for the rest of the nation.

Some spoke about how the system saved their lives, others talked of the lives they've seen changed, some brought pictures of their families.

After the public comment finished, board members briefly discussed the furlough option before voting 5-0 in favor of the cuts. District 3 Supervisor Mary Piepho said even though board members

appreciated the words of all those who spoke, in the end they had little choice but to approve the spending cuts. "We can't spend money we don't have. And we're not getting it locally, and we haven't been getting it from the state for years."

Piepho said part of the problem is that the state has continued to mandate programs and services but is only funding them at the 2001 level, which has created a funding gap that has grown to \$33.2 million annually.

"The gap keeps increasing each year," she explained, "and we've been backfilling it, but we just can't backfill anymore."

"If we're flat now and we're going to lose another 2-8 percent next year, you're going to keep seeing these efforts and actions," she added. ■



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Diablo Views

BY DOLORES FOX CIARDELLI



A motherless child

At first I thought it might be a temporary problem. After all, Flaky Flix had disappeared from the grocery store shelves only to reappear again, shorter and fatter but basically the same.

Then I noticed that not just the Iced Raisins were missing from the cookie aisle in the grocery store; there were no longer any Mother's Cookies. There must be a shortage, I thought, kind of like when anchovies disappeared awhile back. But, no, the checker verified my worst fears: Mother's Cookies is out of business; it closed its doors in October.

I know economic times are bad, but this was unexpected. I would miss, in this order: Iced Raisins (refrigerated), Flaky Flix, and those little pink and white frosted circus

animal crackers with sprinkles. I'd never tried any of the others so now I'm feeling guilty that I have forced Mother into ruin. If only I had been more supportive, bought several packages a week instead of one every few weeks.

Growing up in the 1950s in San Jose we never had store-bought cookies in our house. My real mother did the baking, and it was always chocolate chip cookies or peanut butter. She also baked cakes and cupcakes and pies. Anything bought in a bakery was exotic to my sister Diane and me, not to mention pre-packaged cookies from the supermarket. Except for those little boxes of animal crackers you can hang on your wrist by a string—they were a special treat if I had to suffer through the week's shopping.

Girl Scout cookies were another exception to this rule since Diane and I were both Scouts, and my mother was her troop leader. But this was seasonal and we bought only a few boxes. Except for the year that Diane's friend Peggy proudly reported she'd sold 50 cases when in fact she'd sold 50 boxes. We all bought extra cookies that year because Peggy's furious father said she'd have to buy and personally eat each one she didn't sell.

My Aunt Marie and Uncle Bill in San Francisco always had a touch of glamour about them—not only did they live in "the city" but they always had store-bought cookies in their cupboard. Today we would call my aunt a career women—she was in accounts receivable at PG&E—but then she was regarded as someone who'd never been blessed with children so she might as well work. This did not leave her time to bake for her nieces.

Eventually I took over the baking of the chocolate chip cookies at home. After all, a gal needs some prowess in the kitchen. I added peanut butter cookies after getting married, since they were—and still are—my husband's favorite. It was as an Air Force wife after my husband was drafted that I discovered the joys of buying packaged cookies—they were just so darned cheap at the commissary that it didn't make sense not to buy them. And this led, eventually, to my love of Iced Raisins.

Going on the Internet to read about the closure of Mother's Cookies, I saw that some packages were still available by mail order. Alas, no Iced Raisins. I was surprised at the variety of cookies the company had made—I'd never noticed. I also learned that Mother's Cookies was started in Oakland in 1914 by a newspaperman named N.M. Wheatley as a one-man operation,

so the story goes, and it expanded in 1949. The Mother's brand was sold to a Belgian company by 1991 but the product was still baked in Oakland. It closed the Oakland bakery in 2006 and had several owners before it filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in October, citing the rising cost of raw materials and fuel. The 60 truck drivers who distributed Mother's Cookies in California were laid off overnight.

Then I spotted a recent AP story with a wondrous headline: "Kellogg buys Mother's Cake & Cookie Co.'s recipes." The story said Kellogg plans to reintroduce Mother's most popular cookies, naming the iced animal crackers, sandwich cookies and wire cut cookies. I can only hope it will also bring back Iced Raisins.

See you in the cookie aisle.

—Dolores Fox Ciardelli
can be e-mailed at

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Incorporation is fiscally vital

Dear Editor:

The independently produced Comprehensive Fiscal Analysis (CFA) of Alamo incorporation is a conservative document. It reports the audited, county-certified costs, including law enforcement, that Contra Costa County presently spends on services to Alamo and adjusts those costs for inflation for 10 years.

It adds the state-required 10 percent surplus and conservatively adds another 10 percent contingency to protect against any low cost projections.

It itemizes the revenues reported by the state and the county that would come to an incorporated Alamo, adjusting those revenues

for inflation at a lower rate than the inflation rate for costs.

It shows healthy nest egg in all funds for the new town—general fund, roads fund, and parks fund—for 10 years.

It is the only state-managed CFA ever performed on a community looking to incorporate in Contra Costa County.

Contra Costa County, Alamo's present local government, recently disclosed a \$1.7 billion unfunded liability for employee benefits. It must cut services and dramatically increase revenue-generating development in the unincorporated areas to struggle to stay fiscally afloat.

In the current economic climate, I will vote, for fiscal reasons, to incorporate Alamo.

*Jeanne Tate,
Alamo*

EDITORIAL • THE OPINION OF THE WEEKLY

Try eGiving to charities

Every day we are faced with new ways that the economic downturn is affecting people.

Gordon Getty cancels his 74th birthday bash, and the evening's limousine service finds its biggest contract of the year kaput, not to mention the caterer and all its personnel, the entertainers, and everyone else who would have been involved.

Individuals decide to give less or nothing to their favorite charities without realizing that other donors are also cutting back. And this is at a time when people need food banks and other help more than ever. Now is probably a time to increase donations if at all possible.

Stand! Against Domestic Violence, which serves the county with hotlines and emergency and interim shelters, says that not only have contributions fallen but its services are needed more than in good economic times. It reports that since fall 2007:

- Emergency calls to its crisis line have doubled;
- Requests for emergency shelter are up 20 percent; and
- Requests for victim assistance from police, hospital and BART stations have increased eight-fold.

"It's no secret that funding has become significantly more challenging during the past couple of months with the economic downturn," said Gloria Sandoval, Stand! executive director. "But we're relying on the fact the compassionate local residents value our services and will continue to support the life-saving work of Stand!"

One way to help others without a financial output is to sign up for Scrip. The schools have been soliciting their communities for decades to benefit them this way while buying groceries and other everyday purchases, although the actual paper scrip is a thing of the past. Now anyone can go online and enter Stand! or any other worthy organization, put in a credit card or a discount store card such as Safeway and have a portion of purchases automatically donated. The Web site is www.escrip.com and nonprofit groups to benefit can be found by ZIP code. The ZIP code for Stand!, by the way, is 94520.

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The Danville Weekly encourages comments on our coverage or on issues of local interest. The deadline is 5 p.m. Monday for that Friday's edition.

Submit Letters to the Editor of up to 250 words to editor@DanvilleWeekly.com or mail to 315 Diablo Road, Suite 100, Danville, CA 94526. Include your name, address and daytime phone number so we can reach you. We reserve the right to edit contributions for length, objectionable content, libel and factual errors known to us. Anonymous letters will generally not be accepted.

Submitting a letter to the editor or guest opinion constitutes a granting of permission to the Danville Weekly and Embarcadero Publishing Co. to also publish it online, including in our online archives and as a post on Town Square.

For more information, contact Dolores Fox Ciardelli, editor, at 837-8300, ext. 29.

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Community Pulse

POLICE BULLETIN & LOG • OBITUARIES • BIRTHS & WEDDINGS

POLICE BULLETIN

Joyride lands Danville teens in trouble

The time honored teen tradition of doing donuts—where the driver spins the wheels of an auto forcing the car to swing around and around in circles—ended with a pair of Danville teenagers sitting in the back of a police car.

Danville police Lt. Mark Williams said shortly after midnight, Saturday, Dec. 6, that an officer was driving near John Baldwin Elementary School when he noticed a pair of autos parked with their engines running in the parking lot.

When the two vehicles left the premises, the officer pulled them over to determine what they were doing at the school so late. On approaching the auto, the officer noted that the undercarriage of one of the vehicles was coated with mud and wet grass. When he asked the driver, a 17-year-old Danville resident, why it was there, the driver admitted that he had been doing donuts on the sports fields behind the school.

A second officer was called to watch over the youths while the first officer went behind the school to check out the damage. On his return, the officer placed the driver under arrest for felony vandalism.

A search of the car turned up a backpack containing a controlled substance, as well as a quantity of marijuana packaged for sale. A 15-year-old passenger admitted the backpack was his and was arrested on charges of possession of a controlled substance and possession of cannabis for sale.

Estimates on the cost of repairing the damaged sports fields were not available at press time.

Williams said since the teens were cooperative and this was a first offense, both were remanded to the county's juvenile diversion program. He said that they will most likely have to make restitution for the damage as well as perform community service as part of the diversion program.

If the youths do not complete the diversion program, the case then goes to the juvenile court system.

—Geoff Gillette

POLICE LOG

The Danville Police Department made the following information available from its incident summary report:

Tuesday, Dec. 2

- Identity theft on Dunhill Dr. at 2:07 p.m.
- Auto burglary on Valle Vista Dr. at 3:01 p.m.
- Misdemeanor hit-and-run on Fostoria Way at 6:24 p.m.
- Grand theft on Diablo Rd. at 9:01 p.m.
- Vehicle traffic stop, arrest, on Diablo Rd. at 10:47 p.m.

Wednesday, Dec. 3

- Suspicious circumstances on Rockhaven Lane at 2:33 a.m.
- Accident, property damage, on Hartz Ave. and Railroad Ave. at 11:15 a.m.
- Accident, property damage, on Hartz Ave. and E. Prospect Ave. at 11:37 a.m.
- Warrant, arrest, on Park Hill Rd. at 1:02 p.m.
- Accident, major injuries, on Podva Rd. and Podva Lane at 4:13 p.m.
- Accident, major injuries, on Montego Dr. and Ocho Rios Dr. at 4:13 p.m.
- Misdemeanor hit-and-run on 300 block of Hartz Ave. at 6:21 p.m.
- Identity theft on Cedar Hollow Dr. at 7:03 p.m.

Thursday, Dec. 4

- Petty theft from vehicle on Romae

- Ct. at 6:07 a.m. and 7:35 a.m.
- Auto burglary on El Pinto at 8:28 a.m.
- Forgery of fraudulent documents on 100 block of Hartz Ave. at 8:44 a.m.
- Auto burglary on Fountain Springs Cir. at 10:43 a.m. and 11:03 a.m.
- Auto burglary on El Pinto at 1:35 p.m.
- Minor in possession of alcohol on 3400 block of Camino Tassajara at 6:02 p.m.
- Party disturbance on Scout Pl. at 11:03 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 5

- Suspicious vehicle stop, arrest, on Brookside Dr. at 12:23 a.m.
- Vehicle traffic stop, arrest, on Hartz Way and River Rock Lane at 12:28 a.m.
- Vehicle traffic stop, arrest, on Diablo Rd. and northbound I-680 on ramp at 1:52 a.m.
- Petty theft on Lily Ct. at 9:59 a.m.
- Credit card fraud on La Gonda Way at 10 a.m.
- Vandalism on Brookside Dr. at 12:21 p.m.
- Misdemeanor hit-and-run on Front St. at 1:25 p.m.
- Accident, property damage, on Town and Country Dr. at 3:40 p.m.
- Drugs violation on Brookside Dr. at 3:38 p.m.
- Vehicle traffic stop, arrest, on Sycamore Valley Rd. and Tunbridge Rd. at 12:28 a.m.
- Accident, property damage, on

- northbound I-680 off ramp and El Pintado at 7:41 a.m.
- Misdemeanor hit-and-run on Phoenix St. at 10:24 a.m.
- Misdemeanor hit-and-run on Fostoria Way at 11:32 a.m.
- Credit card fraud on 3400 block on Camino Tassajara at 11:48 a.m.
- Credit card fraud on 3100 block of Stone Valley Rd. at 12:11 p.m.
- Petty theft, shoplift, arrest, on Fostoria Way at 7:25 p.m.
- Misdemeanor hit-and-run on Diablo Rd. at 7:45 p.m.
- Misdemeanor hit-and-run on 300 block of Hartz Ave. at 8:38 p.m.
- Petty theft on Western Star Pl. at 8:42 p.m.
- Trespassing on Brookside Dr. at 9:42 p.m.

Saturday, Dec. 6

- Misdemeanor driving under the influence (DUI), arrest, on Camino Tassajara and Sycamore Valley Rd. at 6:28 p.m.
- Misdemeanor hit-and-run on Diablo Rd. at 7:56 p.m.
- Misdemeanor hit-and-run on Paraiso Dr. at 8:48 p.m.
- Vandalism on Brookside Dr. at 8:52 p.m.
- Battery on Franciscan Dr. at 8:52 p.m.
- Petty theft on San Ramon Valley Blvd. at 9:03 p.m.
- Vehicle traffic stop, arrest, on Camino Tassajara and Conejo Dr. at 10:46 p.m.



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The Rev. Scott Farmer, Community Presbyterian Church

A hunker-down Christmas

Recession forces folks to re-evaluate their holiday plans

by **Meghan Neal**

The holiday season is here once again. But for many families in the Danville area, the celebrations will be toned down this year. Some will have fewer presents under the tree, or perhaps forgo the six-hour drive to see the cousins. But others, who have lost their jobs or even their homes, face an especially difficult holiday season.

News of the current economic crisis is ubiquitous. Here in Danville and Alamo though, folks tend to be hush-hush about financial woes, leading some to falsely assume that the crisis has skipped right over the Diablo Valley.

“We think we’re Teflon. We’re not Teflon,” said Patricia Briggs, a real estate appraiser with Einstein Appraisal Services in Danville. “Every month it gets worse and worse and worse, and people are suffering.”

According to Robert Combs, a Danville Realtor and member of the Danville Planning Commission, there were just more than 200 cases in 2008, as of November, of Danville homeowners issued a notice of default for failing to make mortgage payments.

Approximately 43 of the 200-plus default cases resulted in foreclosure, according to HdL Coren & Cone, a company that does consulting and tracking for the Town of Danville.

That’s about 20 percent. The other 80 percent either worked something out with the bank or was able to somehow liquidate the house on their own, estimated Town Manager Joe Calabrigo. Danville has about 15,500 housing units, said Calabrigo.

“I think it’s fairly safe to assume that our (foreclosure) numbers are up, as they are everywhere,” said Calabrigo, adding that defaults and foreclosures are lower in Danville than most other towns in the county. “Our numbers certainly are the low-

est in the Tri-Valley,” he said. In east Contra Costa County the numbers are in the thousands.

“It’s kind of taboo here. They don’t talk about it,” Briggs said. “What happens here is people define foreclosure or bad mortgages with poverty, and it isn’t about poverty anymore, it’s about business sense.”

It’s not a question of how much money you make, it’s a matter of how far you’ve leveraged your assets, using them as credits to allow for more spending, she explained. Many families had good jobs bringing in a healthy income, so they could afford a big house, nice car and get used to a certain lifestyle. But if one piece of the puzzle goes, the rest falls apart with it.

“It’s not that they can’t afford their lifestyle, but they can’t afford to lose a job,” said Briggs. “It’s like the house of cards that slowly falls down.”

One family she met had two children, ages 4 and 6. The mother was a mortgage broker and the father was president of a big company. Both were laid off. They found themselves stuck with a \$2 million house and no income. They went through their savings while searching for employment, and ended up losing their home to foreclosure and moving in with the kids’ grandmother.

“They lost their dream house, jobs and all their savings,” said Briggs. “This was a very successful family that lost everything.”

“Everybody is in this mess together, and it’s terrible,” she added.

On the other hand Danville does have its fair share of fiscal conservatives. Those that didn’t extend their consumer debt further than they should have were better prepared to withstand the financial crisis, said Danville 2008 Mayor Candace Andersen.

“I’m finding a lot of families who have always lived conservatively. So they’re not using their

house as a piggybank," she said. "So though their 401K may not be what it used to, they're still making ends meet."

She advocates fiscal preparedness.

"I think living within one's means is a unique concept to many. Again, it's the old 'if you don't have the cash in the bank then don't buy it,'" she said. "Interest is something that should be earned, not paid."

But it's easy to get wrapped up in achieving a certain image or status. Many people in Danville and Alamo identify with their wealth, said Briggs.

"It's definitely about the look, and the house is part of the look," she said. "They always have to have one up on the Joneses."

With foreclosures rising, what your neighbor is doing can have an entirely different effect on families, by bringing down home values. Often the bank will sell foreclosed homes for far less than what they're worth. This drives down the values of nearby homes.

In Danville the housing market is still strong enough that most of the foreclosed homes are selling, said Andersen. You don't see abandoned houses and buildings lining the streets like in some other towns in the Bay Area.

According to DataQuick, a real estate information resource, as of October this year home sales in Danville have declined about 28 percent.

Home values are down 4.3 percent. Alamo folks are a bit better off. The median home price, \$1.3 million, is slightly higher than this time last year, and sales have actually increased.

"Danville is an attractive place to live because of our schools, parks and community," said Andersen. "People still want to move here." Those who are in a position to purchase a home are using the foreclosures and weak housing market as an opportunity to buy.

But for the hundreds of families who are losing their homes, it's not about numbers or percentages. Particularly for those without relatives or a support system nearby—where do they turn?

"If you don't have a place to live, even if you have a job, how do you do the basic things? You know, take a shower, get ready for work. ... How do your children survive?" said Sandy Hathaway, community relations coordinator at the Bay Area Crisis Nursery.

The crisis nursery offers a safe place for children to stay whose parents have been foreclosed on. It doesn't provide housing for the adults but gives them the opportunity to focus on solving the problem without having to worry about the child's care.

Hathaway said she has seen people come to the nursery who never thought they'd find themselves in this kind of situation.

"Foreclosure doesn't really pay any attention to where you are," she said. "Just your ability to pay."

Ideally, a financially responsible person should have enough saved to live for several months even if they lose their job, said Andersen. But in today's job market, with widespread layoffs, it could take longer than that to find employment.

The unemployment rate in California is at 8.2 percent, up from 6.8 percent six months ago, according to U.S. Department of Labor statistics. Mervyns going out of business hit the area hard, and many large corporations—Yahoo! and Washington Mutual—are laying people off in droves. Retailers who count on sales from the holiday season are entering December with their hearts in their throats.

"It's unprecedented," said Andersen. "I am seeing more people be laid off than I've previously

seen in any time. I think all of us know someone who's been laid off."

Attendance at the popular Job Connections program held by Danville's Community Presbyterian Church has nearly doubled over the past several months, said CPC pastor Scott Farmer.

"We've had to find more rooms, more space," he noted. "We've outgrown their rooms."

The program's membership of about 2,400 people act as an extended networking tool to help people find jobs and contacts.

"We're one of the largest and most reputable professional networking groups in Northern California," said Job Connections director Dean Tracy. "When you get down to the fine print, it's really about developing a sense of community where people can feel safe, where they can feel welcome, where they can feel supported."

About 100 to 200 people meet each week on Saturday mornings.

"When the mortgage meltdown started happening, obviously we had a lot of people coming from different banks," Tracy said. "Right now I would say it's across the board."

"One of the things I have said early on is it doesn't matter where you are in the corporate food chain when you've lost your job.

When you come to our program, you're all making the same amount of money: zero or unemployment," he said.

Danville resident Shashi Dosaj is a member of the program and has been looking for a job for almost a year. She has a masters degree and has held senior level positions in the high tech industry. She said these days it's all about who you know. It's not as simple as sending out your resume and expecting a call back.

"Boy, it has changed," she said. "It's not easy trying to land a job anymore."

Unemployment is a very real problem, and it's affecting people living in Danville just as much as anywhere else, she said.

"They're living there because they could afford it, and they could afford it because they have good jobs. But when the layoffs come they don't look at where you're living," she said. "When layoffs come, layoffs come."

What really worries people is getting to the point where there are more people that need jobs than there are jobs available. When will we hit the bottom of this financial crisis? CPC and other resources around the community are offering people support through the difficult time. Farmer said the church encourages people to have hope that good things can come from this downturn.

"People are reassessing their priorities for what they're doing. Why they're alive. Why they have families. Why they're working. What their wealth is for," he said.

Danville Mayor Newell Arnerich noted at his recent installation that during tough economic times it's important to take care of your family and your neighbors, including shopping at stores in town.

Andersen, too, encourages everyone to support local businesses and come to downtown Danville to shop. But she noted that being forced to scale back spending and get back to the basics isn't necessarily a bad thing.

"Going for a walk can be just as fun as going to a theme park," she said.

She suggested giving a homemade Christmas gift this year—a poem or picture. That can be even more thoughtful than a big shiny toy.

"Certainly when we live in an affluent community there's a tendency to want to have what your neighbor has," Andersen said. "But I think people are recognizing that's not what makes you happy." ■



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 Jan, 9, Feb. 6, March 6, April 10, May 15, June 12,
 July 10, Aug. 12, Sept. 11

Alamo kids shine in 'Whiskers!'

Musical brings 'Velveteen Rabbit' off the page and onto the stage

by Susan Astbury

Just like in the story about the toys in the nursery being a family, the 15 cast members of "Whiskers!" who range in ages from 5 to 60 have all become close. Most of them return each year not only to act but to enjoy being part of a unit working toward a goal of putting on a production to delight children and adults.

Galatean Players Ensemble Theatre is staging "Whiskers!" for the 14th year at the Leshner Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek, starting tomorrow. The musical is based on Margery Williams' classic, "The Velveteen Rabbit," first published in 1922, the story of a rabbit on a search for "real."

Caroline Altman, who wrote the book, lyrics and music for "Whiskers!," is director of education for the San Francisco Opera Guild, a teacher, singer and actor.

"It is told from the toy's perspective," Altman said. "Most of the story takes place in the nursery where the toys come to life. ... It addresses many of the difficult transitions that we face growing up. That's why this is a universal story for all ages."

"This is a multi-generational production," she added. "There is enough humor in the story for little kids to understand—and giggles for adults, too."

Returning to the stage for this year's production are Alamo residents Grace Berchdorf and Makayla Cook, both 8, and Jason Dunning, 15.

"Once the children perform in the production, they are asked back," said Artistic Director Kathryn G. McCarty. "Some of the children stay with us from the time that they are 8 years old until they are 17. Some of the kids have done the show for 10 years." McCarty, who is also a teacher, plays the role of Skin Horse.

Grace Berchdorf, a third-grader at Rancho Romero Elementary, is appearing in the musical for the second year.

"My mom directed 'Whiskers!' last year," said Grace. "I saw the show for five years, and I decided that I wanted to be in it. So I asked my friend Makayla if she wanted to do it with me and she said yes."

"My favorite thing about performing is that I like being with a lot of my friends," Grace added. "The most difficult thing is the movements that you have to do while you are singing the songs. You really have to act like the character you are playing and not like what you act like."

"Last year my head really itched in one part. I wasn't supposed to move but I just had to itch it anyway."

"One thing that I like about being in the show is that I watch everyone else and I can get to know other people's parts, too," said Makayla, who also attends Rancho Romero.

This is her second time in the production as well. Both Grace and Makayla play Tin Soldiers.

"Sometimes the older people in the show help us out with if we forget our blocking or our lines," said Makayla.

Grace comes from a theatrical background, explained her mother Laura Berchdorf.

"Grace's grandmother is the founder and artistic director of Onstage Theatre (in Pleasant Hill)," she said. "I am a director and playwright but I haven't wanted to push our kids into the arts. Grace did a performance at Rancho Romero and was really scared to get up in front of people but once she did it she thought it was fun."

Makayla has been singing since she was 2.

"She used to sing in front of the family with a towel over her head," recalled her mother Jodi Cook. "Makayla didn't mind people hearing her voice but she didn't want them to see her face. Performing in 'Whiskers!' has been an amazing confidence boost."

Jason Dunning, a sophomore at Monte Vista High, is performing in "Whiskers!" for his fourth year. This time he plays the Train.

"I did a lot of plays when I was younger and I met the director, Kathy McCarty," he recalled. "She asked me to be



The cast rehearses for the upcoming production of "Whiskers!" by the Galatean Players Ensemble Theatre with Alamo resident Makayla Cook at right. Below, Grace Berchdorf plays a Tin Soldier in the play while Jason Dunning, in the production for the fourth year, plays the Train.

Story for all ages

What: "Whiskers!" a musical

Who: Galatean Players Ensemble Theatre

Where: Dean Leshner Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek

When: Dec. 13-Dec. 20

Tickets: \$8-\$15; call 943-SHOW (943-7469).

Senior, group and school discounts are available.

Other: galateanplayersensemble.homestead.com/whiskers.html lists times and has questions for discussion

in 'Whiskers!' and I've been in the show ever since."

Juggling rehearsals twice a week and on weekends and keeping up with homework sometimes poses a challenge. All three young actors agree they have to be organized and do their homework right after school. And they also have other activities.

Jason's current passion is writing.

"One summer Jason wrote a 240-page book," said his mother, Rhonda Dunning. "So I signed him up for a writing program called 826 Valencia in San Francisco. I drive him there every Monday night and he spends two hours working with a mentor/tutor."

All three of the young actors from Alamo agree that they want to be in "Whiskers!" again next year.

"Makayla will absolutely do the show next year. One day she has high hopes of being the Velveteen Rabbit," said Jodi Cook.

"Whiskers!" is a sweet story that a lot of children already know, said Artistic Director McCarty.

"It's the story of a little boy who has a velveteen rabbit and what it's like to grow up," she said. "This production brings the story off the page and onto the stage. Our



production has the same moral to it as the book but with a slightly different twist."

Director McCarty and author Altman met almost 15 years ago and became close friends.

"Kathy and I have been supportive of one another's works over the years since we met in 1994," said Altman. "Kathy's passionate and enthusiastic about people working together no matter what level. A result of that is a wonderful loving community in the production." ■



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Presenting the Past

BY BEVERLY LANE



“SAN RAMON VALLEY, ALAMO, DANVILLE, SAN RAMON” BY BEVERLY LANE AND RALPH COZINE

Blackhawk Museum in the 1980s

The Blackhawk Museum is a destination for visitors to the San Ramon Valley. Its classic automobiles and display of Ken Behring’s international wheelchair donation project are regularly featured in publications. During December the extraordinary European Train Enthusiasts provide an elaborate model train that delights young and old alike.

The Wine Guy



Spaghetti dinner demands red wine

2005 Beringer, Founders Estate, Merlot

The stress of my first official review! Having studied statistics throughout college, the first thing I realized when I was going to write a review was that I would need some criteria or a baseline on which to review all of the wines.

So here’s what I like in wine:

- A wine that smells nice
- A wine that is smooth—I don’t want a bitter or harsh taste
- A wine that tastes as good at the start as at the end
- A wine that does not over power me with an aftertaste
- Most importantly, a wine that makes me want to open another bottle right away

The wine: 2005 Beringer, Founders Estate, Merlot—available at Safeway for approximately \$15.

The situation: I had a long day at work (it was a Wednesday). My wife, the kids and I were having spaghetti for dinner—and I had the urge. So I grabbed the wine, a pen and paper and started the review.

The wine had a decent smell to it—I could actually pick out the smell of some fruit. I thought it was cherry, my wife thought it was blackberry—but it was a bit fruity. The sweet smell got the wine off to a good start.

Initially I found the wine strong so I let it breathe for a while—and sure enough it smoothed right out. This wine needs at least 20 minutes to open up. (There is a

trick for those who can’t wait that long—it is called a “Venturi Wine Aerator”—I bought mine at BevMo for about \$40.) Once that was done, the wine seemed to have a much more consistent taste.

The wine had a nice strong start and finish. The one problem I felt was it did not leave much of a taste in my mouth at all. I found I kept taking sips to refresh my memory of the flavor. You don’t want a wine with a potent aftertaste, but some lingering flavor is always nice.

The most important criteria: Would I grab a second bottle right away? For two reasons the answer was no. First and most importantly, the wine was good—but not great. Second, it was a week night. Work the next day would have been a lot longer had I opened a second bottle of anything.

I probably would pair this wine with a meat instead of spaghetti. I found the wine to be a bit strong for pasta, but it would work well with chicken or pork. Definitely not with fish.

Buy again factor: My wife liked the wine. As Forrest Gump says: “If Mom ain’t happy, ain’t nobody happy.” So I guess I am buying the wine again. The next time I buy this wine, I would probably make this the second bottle of the night rather than the first. I always want to have a great wine first.

Don Colman, the Everyday Wine Guy, lives in Danville and can be reached

at everydaywineguy@hotmail.com



BY DR. FRANKLIN UTCHEN

Holidays can be deadly for your pets

Serious accidents involving pets are always tragic, but especially so at holiday time. Every holiday season we see several pets seriously injured or poisoned due to avoidable hazards.

AVOID holiday food items that could cause problems for your pet:

- Alcoholic beverages
- Chocolate (baker's, semi-sweet, milk chocolate)
- Coffee (grounds, beans, chocolate covered espresso beans)
- Moldy or spoiled foods
- Onions, onion powder
- Fatty foods
- Salt
- Yeast dough

Plants

- Lilies that may be found in holiday flower arrangements could be deadly to your cat. Many types of lily, such as Tiger, Asian, Japanese Show, Easter, Stargazer and the Casa Blanca, can cause kidney failure in cats.
- Poinsettias are generally over-rated in toxicity. If ingested, poinsettias can be irritating to the mouth and stomach, and may cause mild vomiting or nausea.
- Mistletoe has the potential to cause cardiovascular problems. However, mistletoe ingestion usually only causes gastrointestinal upset.
- Holly ingestion could cause vomiting, nausea, diarrhea and lethargy.

Hazards around the Christmas tree

- Christmas tree water may contain fertilizers, which, if ingested, can cause stomach upset. Stagnant tree water can be breeding grounds for bacteria, which can also lead to vomiting, nausea and diarrhea, if ingested.
- Electric cords. Avoid animal exposure to electric cords. If they were chewed, they could electrocute your pet. Cover up or hide electric cords, never let your pet chew on them.
- Ribbons or tinsel can get caught up in the intestines and cause intestinal obstruction. This requires immediate surgery and is life-threatening.
- Batteries contain corrosives. If ingested they can cause ulceration to the mouth, tongue and the rest of the gastrointestinal tract.
- Glass ornaments can cut the tissues of the gastrointestinal tract if ingested.

Medications

Remind holiday guests to store their medications safely. Keep all prescriptions and over-the-counter drugs out of the reach of your pets, preferably in closed cabinets. Pain killers, cold medicines, antidepressants, vitamins and diet pills are common examples of human medication that could be potentially lethal even in small dosages.

During the holidays, many veterinary clinics have limited office hours.

In some cases, pet owners try to medicate their animals without their veterinarian's advice. Never ever give your animal any medications unless under the directions of a veterinarian. Many medications that are used safely in humans can be deadly when used inappropriately. Less than one regular strength acetaminophen tablet (325mg) can be fatal to a cat. A single ibuprofen tablet can cause potentially life-threatening intestinal ulcers in dogs.

Other winter hazards

- Antifreeze has a pleasant taste. Unfortunately the chemical responsible for this taste, ethylene glycol, in even very small amounts can be lethal. As little as one teaspoon of antifreeze can be deadly to a cat; less than four teaspoons can be fatal to a 10-pound dog. Any antifreeze ingestion must be considered extremely dangerous. Thoroughly clean up any spills, store antifreeze in tightly closed containers and store in secured cabinets. Automotive products such as gasoline, oil and antifreeze should be stored in areas that are inaccessible to your pets. Low Tox brand antifreeze contains propylene glycol and is recommended to use in pet households. Propylene glycol is a safer form of antifreeze.
- If you think your pet has consumed antifreeze, contact your veterinarian or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center (1-888-4-ANI-HELP) right away!
- Liquid potpourris are popular

household fragrances commonly used during the holiday season. Pets are often exposed to liquid potpourri by direct ingestion from simmer pots or spills, or by rubbing against leaky bottles or simmer pots containing the potpourri, or from spilling the containers upon themselves. Oral exposures result following grooming. Exposure of pets to some types of liquid potpourris can result in severe oral, dermal and ocular damage.

- If you travel to the snow this winter remember that ice-melting products can be irritating to skin and mouth. Depending on the actual ingredient of the ice melt and the quantity, signs of ingestion would include excessive drooling, depression, vomiting or even chemical imbalances in the blood.
- Rat and mouse killers are used more commonly during colder weather. When using rat and mouse bait, place the products in areas that are inaccessible to your companion animals.

ALWAYS be prepared !!!!

Your animal may become poisoned in spite of your best efforts to prevent it. You should keep telephone numbers for your veterinarian, a local emergency veterinary service, and

the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center (1-888-4 ANI-HELP) in a convenient location. If you suspect that your pet has ingested something poisonous, seek medical attention immediately.

ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center

The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center, an operating division of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), is a unique, emergency hotline providing 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week telephone assistance to veterinarians and pet owners. The center's hotline veterinarians can quickly answer questions about toxic substances found in our everyday surroundings that can be dangerous to animals. The phone number of the center is 1-888-4-ANI-HELP (1-888-426-4435) and the Web site is www.apcc.aspc.org.

—Dr. Franklin Utchen, shown with his dog Tory, has been practicing veterinary medicine in the San Ramon Valley since 1989 and currently co-owns Bishop Ranch Veterinary Center & Urgent Care. For questions or comments e-mail bishopranchvets@yahoo.com.



The art of origami

Leku Eder to feature enchanting Asian-inspired art

Artist Daniel Brooks' love of fashion, fabrics and Japanese symbolism shows in his original origami creations, which will be on display next week at Leku Eder in Danville.

The store, located on East Prospect, is holding a champagne reception from 1-7 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 18, to celebrate Brooks' unique collages, which integrate origami, often cranes and kimonos. The crane is the symbol of a long and happy life while the kimono signifies work and prosperity.

Brooks, a native Californian who has resided most of his life in Grass Valley, studied music and the arts at San Jose State University. He was enchanted with Asian art as a young man and began to master the craft of origami.

The crane and the kimono have provided Brooks with unlimited inspiration, and he uses them to express beauty, energy and serenity in his collages. He uses the simple materials of paper, string and mat board to form his three-dimensional works.

Brooks works in his studio near the Empire Mine State Park in Grass Valley. During the past few years, he has enjoyed increasing success with his art work, which is now in many private collections and has been shown at galleries in Northern California and Lake Tahoe.

The reception at Leku Eder is a chance for local residents to experience his Asian-inspired pieces. ■

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Calendar

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Art

'So This is Christmas' Yoko Ono presents "So This is Christmas: The Artwork of John Lennon" from noon-9 p.m., Friday, Dec. 12; 11 a.m.-7 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 13; and 11 a.m.-6 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 14, in downtown Walnut Creek at the corner of Mt. Diablo and Locust St. Cost is a \$2 donation to benefit the Food Bank of Contra Costa County and Solano County. Call 676-7543 or visit www.foodbankccs.org.

Art and Artists of the San Ramon Valley Enjoy a visual preview of the art exhibit "Art and Artists of the San Ramon Valley" at 2 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 8, at the Danville Library, Mt. Diablo Room, 400 Front St. The exhibit will run from February through May at the Museum of the San Ramon Valley. Call 837-4889.

The Art of Origami Discover the Art of Origami with Daniel Brooks from 1-7 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 18, at Leku Eder, 178 E. Prospect Ave., Danville. This event is free. Call 820-8012.

Auditions

'Twelve Angry Women' Danville-Alamo Branch of AAUW will host auditions for "Twelve Angry Women," a remake of "Twelve Angry Men" during the first week of January. For information, call Lynn at 324-0143 or Susan at 820-9071.

Clubs

'Finding Your Voice' California Writers Club Tri-Valley Branch will offer

writers of all genres the opportunity to learn about their craft and share their work from 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 20, at Oasis Grille, 780 Main St. Guest speaker is B. Lynn Goodwin, author of "You Want Me to Do What: Journaling for Caregivers." Cost is \$21 for members; \$27 for non-members, including lunch. Reservations are required by calling Fred at 462-7495 by Dec. 17.

Business Development Network BDN is a group of professionals that share resources and develop business through relationships. It meets 7:45-9 a.m., the second and fourth Thursday of each month at Denny's, 807 Camino Ramon, Danville. Call 648-8316 or visit www.bdndanville.com.

Danville Job's Daughters Job's Daughters International is an organization for young ladies (minimum age 10 for full membership) who enjoy dances, sleepovers, parties, social events, snow trips and more. The girls develop confidence, good character, life-long friendships, moral and spiritual values, and leadership abilities. The group meets at 7 p.m., the second and fourth Tuesday of every month, at the Danville Grange Hall, 743 Diablo Rd. Call 829-8505 or email IOJD247@yahoo.com.

Danville Library Book Club Join the Danville Library Book Club, which meets at 11 a.m. the third Thursday of every month at the Danville Library, Mt. Diablo Room, 400 Front St. The December selection is "Wailing Wind" by Tony Hillerman. Call 837-4889.

Delta Nu Psi Delta Nu Psi provides packages to troops in the War Zone. The group collects donations before the third Friday of every month in front of Longs Drug Store in Alamo and before the third Saturday at Lunardi's

in Danville. It puts together the packages on the third Wednesday of every month. For information, e-mail Alicia at deltanupsi@comcast.net.

Diablo Valley Quilters' Guild The Diablo Valley Quilters' Guild meets at 7 p.m., the third Wednesday of each month at the Danville Congregational Church, 989 San Ramon Valley Blvd. Guests are welcome (\$2 donation). Annual membership fee is \$30 (\$20 for seniors 65+). For information, call Dianne at 837-1863.

Kiwanis San Ramon Valley San Ramon Valley Kiwanis meets from noon-1:30 p.m., every Thursday, at Round Hill Country Club, 3169 Roundhill Road, Alamo. Meetings include networking, lunch and a guest speaker. For information, visit its Web site at www.kiwanis-srv.org or call 244-1227.

Moms Club of Danville-Tassajara Come join a support group for stay-at-home moms. It meets at 10 a.m., the last Tuesday of every month; moms with children of all ages are welcome. Dues are \$28 per year. E-mail Angeline at hal2006@att.net.

Mt. Diablo Genealogical Society The society meets from 1:15-3 p.m., the third Thursday of every month except August, at the California Savings Building, Rossmoor Shopping Center, Tice Valley Blvd. and Rossmoor Parkway, Walnut Creek. Guest speakers are at each meeting.

Mt. Diablo Macintosh Users Group Get questions answered, solutions for problems, share experiences and explore new Mac developments. Club meets at 7:30 p.m., the third Monday of every month, at the Alamo Safeway Community Room. For information, call 837-1111 or 829-5501.

WEEKEND PREVIEW



'Welcome the Holidays'

The 140-voice Blackhawk Chorus will present a dazzling concert of holiday music at 7 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 13, at the Dougherty Valley Performing Arts Center, 10550 Albion Rd., San Ramon. Music selections will include Handel's Hallelujah Chorus, a touch of the '50s and '70s, and a few traditional holiday carols and songs. Tickets are \$21 for adults and \$16 for children. Call 973-ARTS (973-2787) or visit www.sanramonperformingarts.com.

Sons in Retirement Branch 128 Sons in Retirement hosts a luncheon every third Wednesday of the month, at the San Ramon Golf Club, 9430 Fircrest Rd., San Ramon. The luncheon will include a social hour, buffet lunch and a program of local interest. Cost for lunch is \$20; no dues or membership fees. Call 828-5688.

Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 75 The organization meets at 7:30 p.m., every second Thursday of the month (except December), at Danville Veteran's Hall, 400 Hartz Ave., Danville. The next meeting is Thursday, Jan. 8. For information, call Post Commander Tony Carnemolla at 932-4042 or visit www.vfw.org.

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Concerts

'Evening at the Pops' San Ramon Symphonic Band opens its 22nd season with "An Evening at the Pops," 8 p.m., Friday, Dec. 19, at Dougherty Valley Performing Arts Center, 10550 Albion Rd., San Ramon. Tickets are \$5 for adults; students and children under 12 are free. Visit www.sanramonperformingarts.com or call 973-ARTS.

'Winterfest' Contra Costa Wind Symphony presents "Winterfest" at 7:30 p.m., Monday, Dec. 15, at the Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, 49 Knox Dr. The concert will feature holiday music, traditional carols and an audience sing-along. This concert is free.

Community Chorus Holiday Concert Bring the entire family to the San Ramon Community Chorus Holiday Concert featuring multi-cultural holiday music and dance at 7 p.m., Friday, Dec. 19, at the San Ramon Community Center, 12501 Alcosta Blvd. This concert is free. Visit www.sanramonperformingarts.com.

Contra Costa Children's Chorus Winter Concert San Ramon Choir and the Honors Choir, from Contra Costa Children's Chorus, presents its Winter Performance at 7 p.m., Monday, Dec. 15, at Front Row Theater at Dougherty Station Community Center, 17011 Bollinger Canyon Rd., San Ramon. The concert is free. Visit www.sanramonperformingarts.com.

Danville Girls Chorus Winter Concert Danville Girls Chorus presents its Winter Concert at 11 a.m., Saturday, Dec. 13, at Canyon Creek Church, 9015 S. Gale Ridge Rd., San Ramon. Tickets are \$10; \$5 for children. Call 837-2624 or visit www.danvillegirlschorus.com.

Jazz at Peace Bassist Fred Randolph will perform at Jazz at Peace at 5 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 14, at Peace Lutheran Church, 3201 Camino Tassajara, Danville. He will perform pieces from his new CD. This concert is free. Call 648-7000 or visit www.peacejourney.org.

San Ramon Symphonic Band Holiday Concert San Ramon Symphonic Band will host a Holiday Concert at 8 p.m., Friday, Dec. 19, at Dougherty Valley Performing Arts, 10550 Albion Rd., San Ramon. Tickets are \$5 for adults; free for students with an ID and youths under 12. Call 973-ARTS (973-2787) or visit www.sanramonperformingarts.com.

Events

Guitar Hero Tournament Fundraiser Join Best Buy Brentwood for a fundraiser to benefit STAND! Against Domestic Violence, from 7-9 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 13, 6600 Lone Tree Way, Brentwood. Beginner bracket winner receives \$50 Best Buy Gift Card. Advanced bracket winner receives \$100 Best Buy Gift Card. There is a \$10 entry fee. Visit www.standagainstdv.org or call 603-0110.

Holiday Welcome Home Ceremony Valley Military Heroes on holiday leave will be honored at a special ceremony from 1-3 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 27, at AT&T, 2600 Camino Ramon, San Ramon. If you know an honoree from San Ramon, Danville, Dublin, Blackhawk or Alamo, call Janet Pedersen at 973-2532.

Open Houses at the Flower Shop Alamo Flower Company is holding Holiday Open Houses to benefit the Alamo Tree Lighting Fund, by donating 10 percent of all pre-holiday orders placed during the Open Houses. The open houses will have good cheer, holiday libation, refreshments and drawings, from 4-7 p.m., Fridays, until Dec. 19, at the shop, 3000 Danville Blvd., #1, Alamo. The events are free and open to the public. Call 836-1456.

Fundraisers

Food for the Hungry Gatetree Church is collecting canned food items on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings until Dec. 21, to be distributed through the Contra Costa Food

Bank. A barrel will be located in the church lobby for canned items. E-mail thgatetreechurch@sbcglobal.net.

Tell Me A Story Children's Home Society of California presents "Tell Me a Story," a holiday event for children of all ages featuring a storybook brunch with songs, storytelling and a special visit from Santa, at 10:30 a.m., Saturday, Dec. 20, San Ramon Marriott, 2600 Bishop Dr. The cost is \$30/adults and \$15/children. Call (510) 267-1860.

Garden/Home Tours

AAUW Holiday Home Tour The Danville-Alamo AAUW Holiday Home Tour will take place from 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Friday-Saturday, Dec. 12-13, previewing homes in Danville, Blackhawk and Alamo. Cost is \$35 (\$25 for seniors 65 years and older); visit Design Concepts, 3135 Danville Blvd., Alamo, or Leku Eder, 178 E. Prospect Ave., Danville. Call Mary at 831-1784 with questions or e-mail mixfamily2@sbcglobal.net.

Health

African Drumming Circle Drumming has been shown to boost immune system functions and metabolism. Come and experience this fun way to get "good vibrations" from 4:30-5:30 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 18, at the Wellness Community, 3276 McNutt Ave., Walnut Creek. No rhythmic or musical ability is required. This event is free to cancer patients and their family and caregivers. Call 933-0107.

Natural Relief from Colds and Ear Infections Learn about homeopathic remedies and simple home care tips to ease the symptoms of colds, flu, ear infections and more from 7-8 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 15, at Elephant Pharm, 1388 S California Blvd., Walnut Creek. This event is free. Call 826-3858.

Holiday

'A Christmas Carol' The grumpy old Ebenezer Scrooge, a wealthy businessman, takes a different look at life when he is visited by three spirits, at "A Christmas Carol" at 2 p.m., Saturday-Sunday, until Dec. 14, at Front Row Theater at Dougherty Station Community Center, 17011 Bollinger Canyon Rd., San Ramon. Tickets are \$16; \$13 for youth under 12. Visit www.sanramonperformingarts.com.

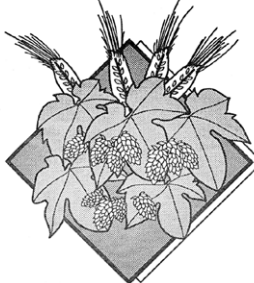
Christmas Chainsaw Art Sloat Garden Center will host Glenn Sievert from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. (shows are every other hour), Saturday-Sunday, Dec. 13-14, at Sloat Garden Center, 828 Diablo Rd., Danville. Sievert will demonstrate his chainsaw art. This event is free. Hot chocolate and apple cider will be served. Visit www.sloatgardens.com or www.chainsawsculpting.com.

Draeger's Holiday Reds Wine Tasting Draeger's Market is kicking off the holiday season with Norman's Picks for Holiday Reds from 2-5 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 13, at Draeger's, 3454 Blackhawk Plaza Circle, Danville. Cost is \$7-12. Visit www.shopblackhawkplaza.com.

Guitars and Saxes Christmas If you love jazz you can't miss this season's best jazz show by Guitars and Saxes Christmas at 8 p.m., Saturday, Dec.

20, at the Dougherty Valley Performing Arts Center, 10550 Albion Rd., San Ramon. Tickets are \$39. Visit www.sanramonperformingarts.com.

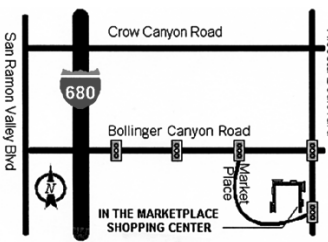
Hanukah Celebration Beth Chaim Congregation will host a Hanukah celebration starting at 7 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 21, at Beth Chaim Congregation, 1800 Holbrook Dr., Danville. There will be a live band, dancing, wine tasting, kid's crafts and a Latke Contest.



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Contact Dave Paulus at 552-7373
Or dpaulus@netapp.com



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Danville Rehabilitation is the leading short-term recovery center where we make every effort to ensure that each patient receives the finest care and personalized service. Danville Rehab is committed to being involved with the best doctors in the area. As such, we are pleased to announce Dr. Bakul Roy as our newest attending physician at Danville Rehabilitation.

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Refreshments will be served. Other local faith communities are invited to help light the Menorah. Call 736-7146 or visit www.bethchaim.com.

Holiday Events at Blackhawk Plaza Blackhawk Plaza will host numerous holiday events including Photos with Santa from 11 a.m.-7 p.m., until Dec. 23 and from 11 a.m.-6 p.m., Dec. 24; Live Holiday Music from Dickens Carolers from 4-7 p.m., Thursdays and from 1-4 p.m., Saturdays, until Dec. 20; and a Pet Night with Santa from 5-7 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 16; all at Blackhawk Plaza, 3480 Blackhawk Plaza Circle, Danville. Call 736-2751.

Holiday Tea and Fashion Show Start the holiday season with a festive Holiday Tea and Fashion Show benefiting East Bay Children's Charities: Hospice Comfort for Kids, Family Stress Kinship Program and Vestia Children in Foster Care, from 11:30 a.m.-3 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 13, at the Alamo Women's Club, 1401 Danville Blvd., Alamo. Cost is \$40. Call 820-7203.

Menorah Lightings Celebrate the Holiday of Chanukah with a Grand Menorah Lighting of Contra Costa's Largest Menorah, from 4-6 p.m., on the First Night, Sunday, Dec. 21; and Eighth Night, Sunday, Dec. 28, at the Broadway Plaza Fountain, Walnut Creek. Fun for the whole family with face painting, balloons, donuts and music. Visit www.JewishContraCosta.com or call 937-4101.

Kids and Teens

'The Frog Prince' Danville Library Foundation will host Fratello Marionettes "The Frog Prince" at 4 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 16, at the Danville Library, Children's Reading Room, 400 Front St. This event is free. Call 837-4889.

Elf Workshop Town of Danville will host an Elf Workshop for children with two different sessions, from 9:30-11 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 13, at the Veterans' Memorial Hall, 400 Hartz Ave., Danville. Cost is

\$5 for residents; \$6 for non-residents. Call 314-3400.

Kids Circle and Teen Talk The Wellness Community will host a program for families with school-age children when a parent has cancer from 10 a.m.-1 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 13, at the Wellness Community, 3276 McNutt Ave., Walnut Creek. Each workshop has an activity-based group for children, a support group for teens, and a group for parents. This event is free. Call 933-0107.

Milk and Cookies with Santa Blackhawk Plaza will host Milk and Cookies with Santa at 3 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 13, at Blackhawk Plaza, 3480 Blackhawk Plaza Circle, Danville. Santa's elves will sing carols and perform a puppet show. Kids will enjoy free holiday crafts and photos with Santa. Families are encouraged to bring a non-perishable food item for donation. Call 736-2751.

Literary Events

Panel for California Writers Club Mt. Diablo Branch, California Writers Club, will meet at 11:30 a.m., Saturday, Dec. 13, at Zio Fraedo's, 611 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill. Cost is \$20 for members; \$25 for non-members. Different books will be featured. Call 376-3631.

Miscellaneous

Adopt a New Best Friend Tri-Valley Animal Rescue (TVAR) offers wonderful animals for adoption every Saturday and Sunday, excluding most holidays. On Saturdays, from 9:30 a.m.-1 p.m., dogs and cats are available. For dates and times and other information, call TVAR at 803-7043 or visit its Web site at www.tvlar.org.

Free Computer Instruction The Danville Library is offering free computer instruction on Word, Excel, Powerpoint or the Internet by appointment only. To make an appointment,

visit the Danville Library Information Desk or call 837-4889

Recycle for Breast Cancer Recycle for Breast Cancer is open seven days a week accepting free dropoffs for computers, monitors, cell phones, laptops, servers and TVs, at 31 Beta Ct., Suite C, San Ramon. Call 735-7203 or visit www.recycleforbreastcancer.org.

The Energy Primer for Kids The Energy Primer for Kids is a 25-page booklet of simple facts pertaining to current energy issues and is useful for adults that are evaluating energy related claims of politicians. For a free copy, write to Synergy Institute, P.O. Box 561, San Ramon, CA 94583. A speaker is available for groups wishing to hear about the global warming propaganda. Call 837-7612.

Political Notes

Potluck Dinner Party The McNerney Campaign Thank You Party and TVDC Meeting (nomination of 2009 officers) will host its seasonal potluck dinner party from 6:30-9 p.m., Monday, Dec. 15, at IBEW Hall, 6250 Village Pkwy., Dublin. Guest speaker is Leonardo Cerda. This event is free; wheelchair accessible. Call 451-4303 or visit www.trivalleydems.com.

Seniors

Danville Senior Citizens Club The club meets from 9:30 a.m.-2 p.m., every Monday at the Danville Veterans' Memorial Hall, 400 Hartz Ave., for line dancing exercise, bingo, mah jong and more. New members are welcome. Membership is \$12 a year. Call Patricia Graber at 443-0268.

Monday Classes for Seniors Join the for Chinese brush painting, calligraphy, Yuan Ji Dance, lectures, karaoke, line dancing and Yoga at the Alamo Women's Club, 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m., every Monday, Golden Crane Senior Center, 1401 Danville Blvd., Alamo. A \$20 annual registration fee required.

For specific class times, visit www.goldencrane.org.

Prime Time Prime Time for seasoned citizens meets from 9 a.m.-1 p.m., every Tuesday, at Community Presbyterian Church, 222 W. El Pintado, Danville. Activities include line dancing, English handbells, ceramics, wood carving and more. A home-cooked meal is served at noon for \$3. Rides are provided by County Connection Link for \$3.50 round trip; call Gloria at 837-5229. For information, call Ruth Ann at 820-6387.

St. Isidore's 'Young at Heart' Join this group for a meeting from 11:15 a.m.-2 p.m., the third Tuesday of every month at St. Isidore's Ministries Center, 440 La Gonda Way, Danville. Optional Mass starts at 11:15 a.m.; lunch starts at 11:45 a.m. Nonprofit bingo follows. This event is free, but reservations are appreciated by calling 820-4447.

Valley Oak Respite Center Activities for Seniors Valley Oak Respite provides an interactive program for frail seniors and those afflicted with Alzheimer's or related dementias and physical disabilities, from 10:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, at Danville Congregational Church, 989 San Ramon Valley Blvd., Danville. The cost is \$30 per session, which includes a morning snack and beverage; participants should bring a bag lunch. For information or an application, call Carmen McCarthy at 945-8040, ext. 53.

Spiritual

'Meditation in the Christian Tradition' San Damiano will host Barbara Hazzard who will present "Meditation in the Christian Tradition" from 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 13, at San Damiano, 710 Highland Dr., Danville. The day will include introductory talks, walking and sitting meditation, and time for questions and brief sharing. Cost is \$75, including lunch. Call 837-9141, ext. 315.

'Standing on the Threshold' San Damiano will host a weekend retreat,

"Standing on the Threshold," from Dec. 30-Jan. 1, at San Damiano, 710 Highland Dr., Danville. There will be a study of the power and choices of thresholds. Cost is \$205 for a private room; \$175 for a shared room. Call 837-9141, ext. 315.

Children's Christmas Presentation Gatetree Church will host a children's Christmas presentation at 7 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 20, at Gatetree Church, 101 Gatetree Dr., Danville. Tickets are \$.25 collected by the children for donation to Precious Souls Ministry Nigeria orphan fund. Call 820-9477 or visit www.gatetrechurch.org.

Simbang Gabi (9-day Advent Mass) St. Joan of Arc's Filipino Community invites everyone to "Simbang Gabi" (Misa de Gallo) at St. Joan of Arc Parish, at 7 p.m., Dec. 16-23, and at 5 p.m., Dec. 24, at 2601 San Ramon Valley Blvd., San Ramon. Fellowship and refreshments follow after Mass in the multipurpose room. This event is free. Visit www.sjasr.org or call 525-6821.

Sports

Danville Little League Registration Player registration for Spring 2008 is open for all league ages. Registration may be completed online at www.danvillelittleleague.net. Click on the "Register Online" tab on the left and follow the step by step application process. Registration deadline is Wednesday, Dec. 31. E-mail webmaster@danvillelittleleague.com.

SRVGAL Registration Ongoing Player registration is now open for the 2009 spring fastpitch season. Visit www.srvgal.org to register. Due to the economy, they have extended the \$50 early bird discount through the end of the year.

Tassajara Valley Little League Sign-Ups Sign up for Tassajara Valley Little League baseball now through Wednesday, Dec. 31. Visit www.eteamz.com/tvll. For information, call 837-3716.

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Sharks finish season undefeated

Mustang Sharks U-16 Boys Division 3 ended their season undefeated by beating their hometown rivals, Mustang United, 2-0, on Nov. 3. The team also secured a win against the Mustang Spartans on Nov. 9 with a score of 7-0 and rounded out their league record 11-0 by shutting out the Livermore United, 2-0, on Nov. 10. The Sharks will be taking their team to the Association Cup in March after the high school season ends.

The Sharks invincible defensive line led by goalkeeper Austin Anderson with Stephen Armstrong, Rory Clancy, Derek Morefield, Kyle Slinger and Kevin Trisko kept their opponents to a total of seven goals the entire season with only one goal (a penalty kick) scored against them in the past seven games.

The offense led by Capt. Spencer Kitchen showed great consistency all season, averaging five goals per game with a total of 59 scores. Midfielders Michael Bluestein, Jacob Clark, Angel Ordaz, Casey Sbrana, Josh Smiley, Mikhail "Tree" Torru and Spencer Weberski showed great range of ability, and forwards Jordon Giusti, Rhys Tong-Jones, Renee Patino and Zuheir Tleimat displayed tremendous finesse all season.

Team members are (front row, l-r) Angel Ordaz, Rene Patino, Rory Clancy, Derek Morefield, Michael Bluestein, Spencer Kitchen, Casey Sbrana, Jacob Clark, Austin Anderson, (back) Coach Steven Hoffman, Stephen Armstrong, Zuheir Tleimat, Kevin Trisko, Jordon Giusti, Mikhail Torru, Rhys Tong-Jones, Spencer Weberski, Kyle Slinger and Coach Ziad Tleimat.



Spice Girls win tournament

The Spice Girls won the GU12 division of the Mustang Soccer Dick King Tournament on Nov. 9, with a 1-0 score over the Ladybugs at Sycamore Valley Park in Danville. The Spice Girls' Serena Prince scored the only goal of the game. Both teams played their hearts out in this defensive contest. The Spice Girls advanced to the Crossroads Tournament in Dublin and represented the Mustang Soccer League on Nov. 22-23.

Team members are (front row, l-r) Emma Rupley, Samantha Wanket, Emily Duffield, Mary Duffield, Kelly VanderWerf, Claire Simpson, Rianna Last, (back) Head Coach Christian Arno, Serena Prince, Gauhar Jaffer, Emily Geranen, Sophie Hagen, Caitlin Khorey, Savannah Behm and Assistant Coach Tom Wanket. Not pictured: Alyssa Coons and Kylie McCann.

SAN RAMON VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS WRAP-UP

San Ramon Varsity Football

The San Ramon Valley High Wolves' 2008 varsity football season came to a close Saturday, Dec. 6, when they went up against the Pittsburg Pirates in the North Coast Section semifinals. The Wolves put up a good fight, but lost, 49-24.

San Ramon's strategy offensively was to beat them with the pass. This strategy, however, was quickly shut down by Pittsburg's high-powered defense, which picked off SRVHS quarterback Joe Southwick five times. Southwick completed 24-of-44 passes for 448 yards and three touchdowns.

Byron Gruendl had 10 catches for 112 yards, Bryce Peterson had four catches for 106 yards, and Brett Trimble had five catches for 145 yards. San Ramon ended its season with a 9-4 record.

—by Kaity Ferretti



San Ramon Valley High Wolves at the last game of the season Nov. 14 are No. 13 Dan Pierce; No. 42 Bryce Peterson; No. 9 Mark Huntley; No. 5 Jordan Newell; No. 20 Daniel Davis; and No. 21 Justin Berger. They lost in the NCS Division I semifinals against Pittsburg, 49-24.

MONTE VISTA HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS WRAP-UP

by Lizzy Hearne

Winter season to begin

Now that fall is coming to an end and winter is just arriving, it's time for a new season of high school sports. During this winter season, men's and women's soccer, men's and women's basketball, and wrestling will all compete for a top spot in East Bay Athletic League, striving for the ultimate goal of becoming NCS champions. Pre-season has already begun, and the competition looks fierce.

Men's Varsity Soccer

Men's soccer kicked its season off extremely well. On Dec. 5 and 6, the Mustangs played in the Winter Classic Tournament, fighting their way to the consolation game but falling short in the end when they lost to Amador Valley High, 1-0.

Last Monday, the team played Berkeley High at home, dominating it, 4-0. Goals were scored by juniors Brad Bridwell and Brett Jacobs, and seniors Chris Moon and Mitch Stein. Captains Jess Chavez, Parker Doliber and Kevin Vaughan hope to lead their team to a successful and victorious season.

Women's Soccer

The Monte Vista women's soc-

cer team has come into this season full force. With the fresh players picked up this year, women's soccer is working hard and dedicating a lot of time to defeat the tough competition in EBAL.

The Mustangs' first league game is at 6 p.m. Dec. 12 at home vs. Foothill High. The next day, Saturday, Dec. 13, they will be challenging Clayton Valley away, at 2 p.m. Seniors Amanda Owens, Mel Buich, Cori McGovern, Dani Shrakamp, Taylor Gonzalez and Chloe Langon hope to come out on top during their last year of high school soccer.

Men's Basketball

Men's Basketball is working toward another dominating season, in hopes of repeating last year's extremely successful season. Coach Bill Powers and captains Brian Barbour and Mark Appel are pushing their team harder than ever to win EBAL this year.

"We are expecting to improve every game and be a top team in Northern California. We are shooting to win state," said Barbour.

The first home game for the men's basketball team is at 7 p.m. Dec. 12 against Oakland Tech. The following Tuesday, the Mustangs will take on Oakland High at home.

"Expect greatness," says Zack Ertz, a senior, one of the top players on the team.

Women's Basketball

Last season, Monte Vista women's basketball finished second in NCS, losing in overtime to Berkeley High School, one of the top teams in the state. This year they hope to go all the way.

"This is the deepest and most talented team we have ever had and I hope we accomplish the high expectations we have for ourselves," said Niveen Rasheed, current captain, along with Amil Amin. During preseason alone, the Mustangs will compete in the Las Vegas, the Mitty and the Castlemont tournaments. Official league games will begin in the middle of January.

Wrestling

The Monte Vista Wrestling team is putting all its effort and time in improving for the season. Coaches Crowe, Rickhart, and Ormsby are training the team to defeat any opponent who comes along. On Saturday, Dec. 6, the team competed at a tournament at Freedom High School. Michael Ormsby, son of one of the coaches, placed second in the competition, with a record of 4-1. Ian Gaspar, Brandon Dobrec and numerous others placed third.

"It was a tough tournament, and we weren't the best, but it helped improve our skills, that will hopefully lead us to victory in the future," said junior Ian Gaspar.

PREP SCHEDULE

Thursday-Saturday,
Dec. 11-13

Women's Basketball
Santa Rosa Tournament

Friday-Saturday, Dec. 12-13

Men's Basketball
John May Holiday Classic at
Dougherty Valley

Saturday, Dec. 13

Women's Soccer
San Ramon Valley vs. Newark
Memorial 11 a.m.

Men's Soccer
San Ramon Valley vs. Hayward, 1
p.m.

Wrestling
Bill Martel Wrestling Invitational at
Northgate, 9 a.m.

Monte Vista "A" at Castro Valley;
Monte Vista "B" at College Park

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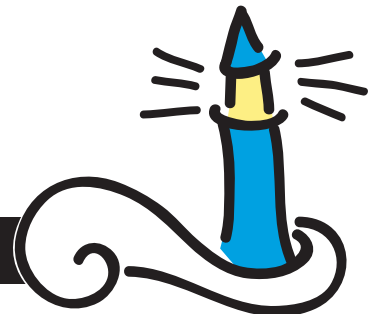
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East Bay, Auction - Estate Clean Out,
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Livermore, 980 Cromwell St, May 24
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Pleasanton, 4684 Black Ave, Nov. 8,
8-1

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Pleasanton, 3 BR/3 BA - \$839,950

Pleasanton, 4 BR/2.5 BA
Open Sunday 11/16/08 1-4. This home is priced to sell! Warm and cozy, 2209 sq ft., hardwood floors, tile and custom cabinets in kitchen, newer windows and doors, crown molding and baseboards. Expanded great room with wood burning fireplace, parklike yard with view of Pleasanton Ridge. Walking distance to award winning schools. Great location!!! www.3803MuirwoodDr.com Keller Williams Tri Valley Realty

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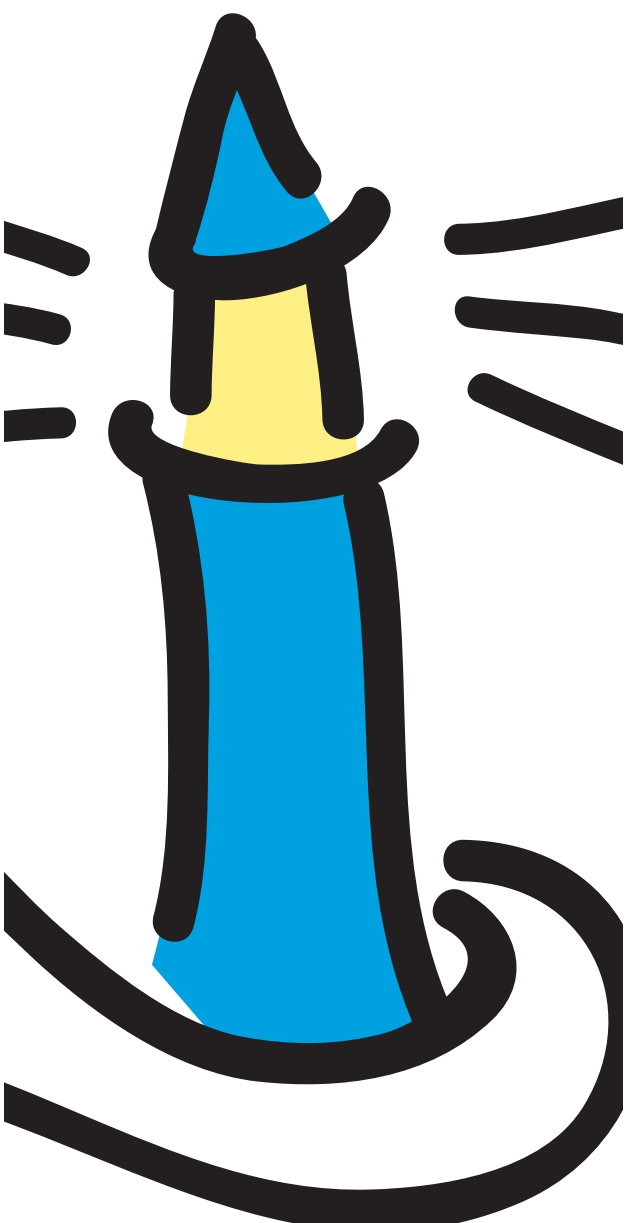
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PET OF THE WEEK



Hoping for a home
"Hey Santa, we know what we want for Christmas!" said 2-year-old Melba and 3-1/2-year-old Wowie. Both dogs are Chihuahua/Terrier mixes who would love to have a home of their own. Melba (right) is 7 pounds of playful energy who knows how to fetch and needs a well-matched playmate. Melba is a brown and white spayed female, an excellent little watch dog, and she is recommended for households with children older than 12 years of age. Learn more about Melba at www.eastbayspca.org and look for adoptable dogs at the SPCA's Tri-Valley adoption center. Wowie is an 11-pound neutered male who likes kids and enjoys playing with other dogs of similar size. He and Melba are getting along famously. Visit Melba, Wowie and their many friends at the East Bay SPCA Tri-Valley Adoption Center, 4651 Gleason Drive in Dublin, open from 1 to 8 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, and 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday through Sunday. Call 479-9670.

CATHERINE HANSEN RUSH



Economic slowdown stalls remodeling

The residential remodeling market continued its slump during the third quarter of 2008, according to the National Association of Home Builders' Remodeling Market Index.

In a report released last month, the NAHB reported that the current market conditions indicator declined to 33.5, from 41.8 in the last quarter. Future expectations of remodeling work also slid to 27.7 from 38.0 in the second quarter. Both these indices rest at historic lows since the start of the RMI in 2001.

The RMI measures remodeler perceptions of market demand for current and future residential remodeling projects. Any number over 50 indicates that the majority of remodelers view market conditions as improving. The RMI has been running below 50 since the final quarter of 2005, implying decreasing remodeling expenditures since that time.

"Remodelers reported another drop in major home improvements and expectations for future work have also declined," said NAHB Remodelers Chairman Lonny Rutherford, a remodeler from Farmington, N.M. "A slight increase in minor remodeling projects for owner-occupied home suggests customers are cutting back on home

improvement spending."

Nationally, current activity for major additions and alterations shrank to 29.38 (from 43.18 in the second quarter) during the third quarter, while minor additions and alterations slowed to 38.51 (from 42.89). Maintenance and repair dropped to 30.92 (from 39.06).

"The remodeling market declines follow the pattern of the home building slowdown to a lesser degree," said NAHB Chief Economist David Seiders.

The remodeling market is tightening due to more home builders taking on remodeling work, creating a more competitive marketplace and flattening out calls for bids and appointments for proposals.

Regionally, current market expectations fell in the third quarter, with the South dropping to 31.5 (from 40.1 in the second quarter), the Midwest to 36.2 (from 52.9), and the West to 36.1 (from 42.4). The Northeast increased slightly to 32.9 (from 32.8). The Midwest, however, increased to 52.9 (from 44.1).

All measures for future expectation (calls for bids, amount of work committed for next three months, backlog of remodeling jobs, and appointments for proposals) declined.

—Jeb Bing

HOME SALES

Source: California REsource

This week's data represents homes sold during November 2008

Danville

- 1163 Blue Spur Circle** Shapell Homes to M. & M. Danial for \$1,150,000
- 10 Discovery Court** M. & M. Lambourne to J. & T. Bennett for \$1,330,000
- 2311 Genoa Street** Lennar Homes to E. Tarassov for \$1,119,000
- 336 Harper Lane** Thomas Trust to B. & G. Peterson for \$950,000
- 8 Hunters Terrace** Virtualbank to R. & K. Wilson for \$2,050,000
- 424 Marsanne Court** Lennar Homes to T. & K. Khatua for \$1,130,000
- 15 Narcissus Court** S. Salimian to K. & M. Liu for \$720,000
- 900 Richard Lane** Chu Trust to C. Collins for \$780,000
- 309 Sutton Circle** F. & M. Zbacnik to J. & J. Higgs for \$540,000
- 327 Sutton Circle** J. & J. Matthews to J. Epperson for \$620,000
- 617 Sycamore Circle** Thomas Trust to J. & S. Ramos for \$425,000
- 300 Windchime Drive** Lasalle Bank to T. & K. Knox for \$781,000

Walnut Creek

- 463 Beacon Ridge Lane** T. Stiffler to P. Patt for \$702,000
- 141 Camrose Place** T. Stotka to R. & M. Kearsley for \$875,000
- 1874 Cannon Drive** S. Shiota to F. Wilson for \$383,000
- 366 Caroni Street** Byram Trust to S. & S. Buhler for \$839,000

- 281 Castle Glen Road** Bondurant Trust to D. Maffeo for \$525,000
- 1421 Conejo Way** Madix Trust to B. & C. Estadt for \$630,000
- 2837 Grande Camino** Oconnell Trust to M. & M. Konrad for \$709,000.00
- 9 Los Banos Court** Terry Trust to R. Udipi for \$435,000
- 1826 Lynvale Lane** A. Shvets to Fung-A-Ling Trust for \$270,000
- 450 North Civic Drive #207** Medallion Limited to M. Gurtovoy for \$235,000
- 2729 Ptarmigan Drive #2** Goldston Trust to Garrett Trust for \$400,000
- 912 Quiet Place Court** G. Lawler to C. & J. Rogers for \$600,000
- 1433 Ramsay Circle** Glass Trust to B. & P. Madix for \$740,000
- 2604 Saklan Indian Drive #6** Pickler Trust to Grupenhoff Trust for \$770,000
- 150 Sharene Lane #211** Wachovia Mortgage to C. Kuzma for \$245,000
- 1623 Sunnyvale Avenue** GMAC Mortgage to L. Lee for \$411,000
- 4403 Terra Granada Drive #4A** Jenson Trust to J. Waxman for \$340,000
- 1840 Tice Creek Drive #2412** Rothberg Trust to Lewis Trust for \$345,000
- 4340 Walnut Boulevard** B. Simhayoff to D. Harrison for \$869,000
- 2657 West Newell Avenue** R. & P. Martin to M. Vail for \$650,000
- 1500 Whitecliff Way** Timken Trust to M. Amani for \$855,000
- 1044 Woodstock Court** J. & I. Matek to H. Alshurafa for \$710,000

SALES AT A GLANCE

This week's data represents homes sold during November 2008

Danville

Total sales reported: 12
 Lowest sale reported: \$425,000
 Highest sale reported: \$2,050,000
 Average sales reported: \$966,250

Walnut Creek

Total sales reported: 22
 Lowest sale reported: \$235,000
 Highest sale reported: \$875,000
 Average sales reported: \$569,909

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 Sun 1-4 REMAX Accord 699-3122

455 Linden Way \$950,000
 Sun 1-4 Prudential California Realty 249-0301

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 Sun 1-4 Dani Peel, Hometown GMAC 998-9692

1021 Crellin Road \$725,000
 Sun 1-4 Jim Lavey, Allied Brokers 846-3755

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1368 Royal Creek Court \$1,288,888
 Sun 1-4 Brigitte Huntemann, Keller Williams 260-2508

4931 Monaco Drive \$969,900
 Sat/Sun 1-4 Gene & Cindy Williams, Keller Williams 243-0900

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