Danville native on a mission

Orthodontist is treating dental pain for soldiers in the Mideast ➤ **page 15**

Fresh and uneasy

Informational pickets protest carpenter wages

➤ **page 5**

Vol. IV, Number 35 • January 2, 2009 www.DanvilleWeekly.com

Danville WEEKLY

Mailed free to homes in Danville, Blackhawk, Diablo and Alamo

Meeting Obama

Danville Marine sees president-elect in Hawaii

➤ **page 7**

VOYAGE OF RECOVERY

Danville woman among those pioneering new treatment in China for a cure to her inherited disease **PAGE 12**

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Streetwise

ASKED AROUND DOWNTOWN DANVILLE

Q: Is there a New Year's resolution that you did not keep?

Every year I tell my cousin I am coming out to Hawaii to visit and I never go. It's stupid because everything is paid for yet I still don't show up. I should surprise him and just show up this year.

Jan Noonkester
secretary

I have not missed a resolution yet. I am committed to following through. For instance, this year I am going to take tango dance lessons. You will see me on "Dancing with the Stars" next year representing Danville!

Pat Murphy
salesperson

I don't do New Year's resolutions because I always do what I say and I don't want to have to do it.

Walt Macor
owner of Walt's Danville Service

To be more patient. I am the most impatient person ever. I like to get things done quickly and when it does not happen, I get annoyed.

Kelsey Beaty
production analyst

I have been promising myself to run with the bulls in Pamplona every year and so far it has not happened. My new tennis shoes should inspire me to run fast and so this may be the year. All I need now is some Kevlar shorts. Wish me luck.

Kurt Hoseley
college student and really fast runner

COMPILED BY PATTY BRIGGS

ABOUT THE COVER

Joanne Loveland is all smiles with two of the doctors at the Jiang Xiao Shan hospital in Hangzhou, China. Loveland spent four weeks at the medical facility undergoing stem cell treatments to combat the effects of Ataxia. Photo courtesy of Joanne Loveland. Cover design by Lili Cao.

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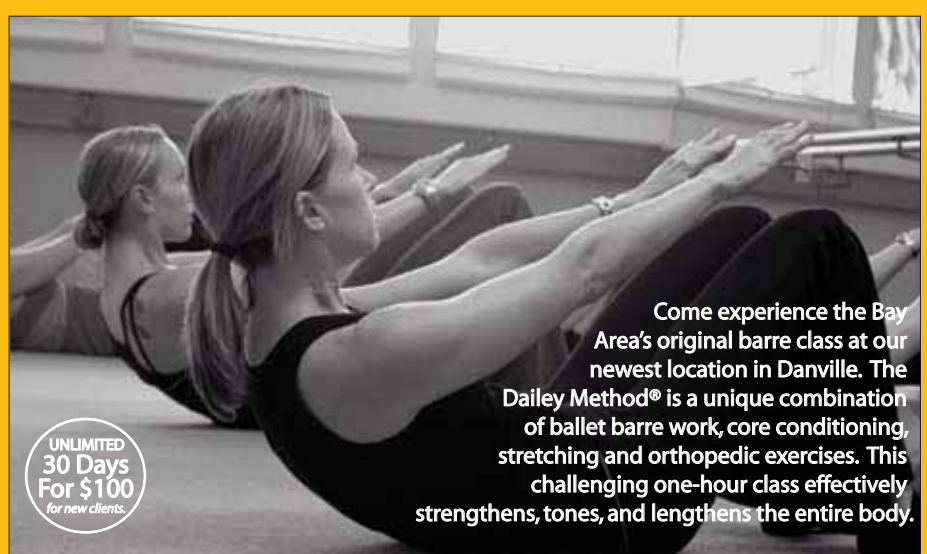

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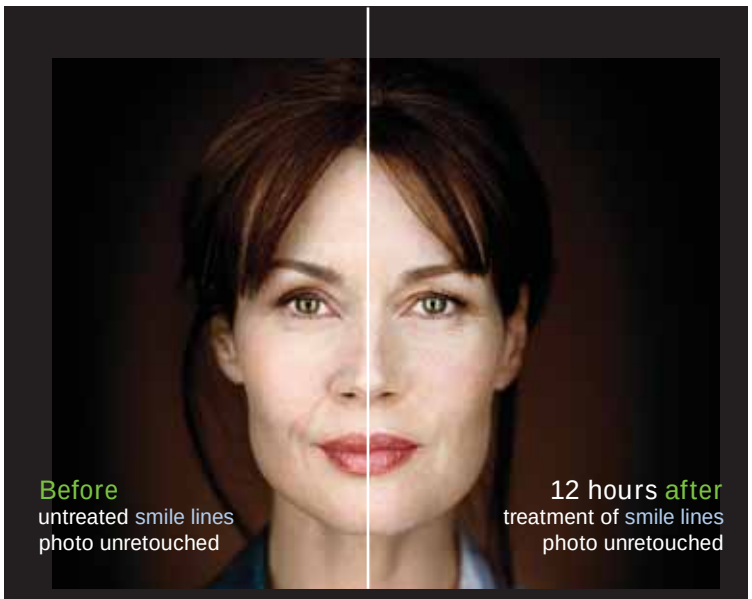

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NEWS DIGEST

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

> "Although our house is filled with many gold medals, the most important thing we have taught MJ is to focus on his abilities and not his disability."

—Linda Mc Colgan about her son, who was nominated for the 2009 California Hall Of Fame. See story, page 6.

Mayor's Morning next week

Danville Mayor Newell Arnerich will hold his second Mayor's Morning at 7:30 a.m., Friday, Jan. 9. This is a chance to share a light repast with the mayor and town officials, learn what is new in town, and to voice concerns. The free event is usually held the first Friday morning of each month but was postponed a week due to the holidays.

The meeting will be held at Father Nature's restaurant on East Prospect on Friday and also in February and March. Arnerich will host the gathering during the second quarter of 2009 at Chow's. The third quarter will be held in a location further south in Danville and then in the east part of the town. Arnerich said he hopes these changes in venue will make the event more convenient for residents in different parts of Danville to attend. No reservations are necessary.

Orators to study Constitution

The American Legion Post 246 of Danville will hold its annual High School Oratorical Competition at 6 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 13, at the Veterans Memorial Building, 400 Hartz Ave. The purpose of the contest is to help students develop an appreciation of the U.S. Constitution, leadership qualities and the ability to think and speak clearly. Each contestant must deliver a prepared eight- to 10-minute oration on some phase of the Constitution, plus a three- to five-minute speech on an assigned topic.

The winner will advance to the District 9 finals Feb. 8, followed by Area 2 finals, state finals and nationals in Indianapolis. Scholarship awards are presented to the three finalists in the final round of the national contest as follows:

- First place—$18,000
- Second place—$16,000
- Third place—$14,000

Smaller awards are given during the contests leading to the finals.

Participants must be enrolled in high school during the time of the competition. Interested students should contact their school's speech department.

Red Cross needs blood, volunteers

The American Red Cross, Northern California Region, is having a volunteer orientation at 3 p.m., Friday, Jan. 9, and at 10 a.m., Tuesday, Jan. 13, at the Contra Costa Donor Center at 140 Gregory Lane in Pleasant Hill. This is a chance to learn about the different ways to help, by greeting and giving information to donors, by thanking the community's blood donors, or by posting fliers at key locations. Dates and times are subject to change according to interest. Call (510) 594-5211 to learn more.

To encourage blood donations, the Red Cross has launched Project: Plasma. From Jan. 1-23, donors at the five East Bay locations can be entered into a drawing for a new 42-inch plasma HDTV. The drawing will take place Jan. 27, giving the winner plenty of time to set up that new TV before the Super Bowl gets under way Feb. 1.

To schedule an appointment, call 800-give-life (800-448-3543) or go online at beadonor.com.

Library hosting book sale

Friends of the Danville Library is holding its huge quarterly sale Jan. 16-18. Thousands of hard-covered books, paperbacks and children's books will be for sale at rock bottom prices, in the Mt. Diablo Room of the library, 400 Front St.

The sale begins from 9-10 a.m., Friday, Jan. 16, for members only, then continues that day until 5 p.m. for members of the public. The next day, it is open to the public from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. The last day, Sunday, Jan. 18, is "bag sale" day, open to the public from noon-4 p.m., and a bag of books costs $5. Proceeds from the sale benefit the Danville library.

Friends of the Danville Library sponsors the First Wednesday program and runs the used book store at the library. Membership application forms are available at the library.

Role Players Ensemble to show off 'Underpants'

In keeping with their season so far, the Role Players Ensemble Theatre company continues to showcase plays that feature incisive wit coupled with social commentary. Following up on the fall dramatic production of "The Best Man," Role Players is turning to the comedic vein. Starting Jan. 16, the theater company will be putting on "The Underpants," comedian Steve Martin's adaptation of Carl Sternheim's 1910 comedy.

"The Underpants" is a satire on bourgeois manners and customs, bringing into sharp focus the hypocrisy that often accompanies them. The comedy begins with an unfortunate "wardrobe malfunction" befalling a young housewife, her husband's shocked reaction and the hilarity that ensues.

Artistic Director Sue Trigg directs the new show and has assembled a cast of faces familiar to fans of Role Players, including Bonnie DeChant, John Blytt and Craig Eychner.

Shows will run at the Village Theatre, 233 Front St., at 8 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sunday through Feb. 7.

Corrections In the Dec. 26 issue the story on Danville's sweeping contract should have said the Town Council voted 3-2 in favor of accepting the new sweeping contract. Councilwomen Karen Stepper and Candace Andersen voted against. There were also questions raised by Stepper regarding the service previously provided by Contract Sweeping.

Newsfront

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Trustees OK new homework guidelines for high schools

Teachers asked to be aware of total work load

by Harry Stoll

The school board approved new homework guidelines for high school students in the San Ramon Valley Unified School District, at its Dec. 9 meeting, in an attempt to balance testing schedules and night-to-night assignments. The new guidelines were recommended by a committee of district administrators and parents.

"Kids should learn what they need to learn and still have a life," said Trustee Paul Gardner. He said his children often had at least three hours of homework but some of it was busy work.

Students and parents also had complained that students were being tested the same day on different subjects. To address these problems, the language of the new guidelines includes the wording: "the staff should make efforts whenever possible to be aware of homework projects, and testing schedules across the curriculum."

How to create this awareness and use it to even out homework and testing, given the varied schedules of high school students, is to be worked out by the start of the next academic year. Both existing and new guidelines require the principal and staff at each school to develop and regularly review a homework plan.

The new guidelines continue the policy requiring each school to devise a method whereby "students do not receive an overload of homework one day and very little the next."

They also change the maximum estimated time for nightly homework from 30 minutes per hour of instruction to a total of three hours. This might appear to be the same thing, but it's a significant change and would allow teachers to load up one subject area on different nights.

Homework is defined by the guidelines as any work assigned to be completed outside of class. Elective classes—such as drama, speech and debate, and athletics—will require more homework time as will honors and advanced courses, the new guidelines state.

Weekend homework assignments are allowed for high school students if deemed necessary, according to the guidelines, which limit estimated homework to three hours for the weekend.

But present and continuing guidelines state, "Assigning homework over holidays is highly discouraged."

"Overachievers make family holidays a living hell," said Board President Bill Clarkson.

The committee did its homework, according to district spokesman Terry Koehne.

"The task force, comprised of various stakeholders in the district, considered the latest research on the topic as well as several student surveys conducted from grades kindergarten through 12," said Koehne in an e-mail after the meeting. There were no students on the committee, and no student addressed the board on the new guidelines.

The board approved the guidelines by a 4-0 vote and delayed their start to the new academic year rather than from the recommended start at midterm 2008-09. Trustees emphasized that each school site should be working to develop a homework plan. ■

Town wants abatement on Diablo Road

Property owner given until mid-February to make changes

by Geoff Gillette

Improvement work done at a property along Diablo Road has placed the owner into conflict with the Town of Danville over whether or not the improvements constitute a nuisance.

At their Dec. 16 meeting, members of the Danville Town Council discussed the asphalt work done at 484 Diablo Road, which is across the street from the northbound I-680 off-ramp.

Property owner R. Jean Taylor put down asphalt in an area that had been gravel and dirt, plus paid to have bike lanes painted on to the path along Diablo Road. In addition, to avoid problems with vehicles parking illegally along the roadway, she had "No Parking" painted in several areas of the newly minted asphalt.

Town officials commended the effort to improve the area but said that the asphalt has actually caused new problems as motorists con-

➤ Continued on page 6

GEOFF GILLETTE

Members of Carpenters Union Local 405 stage an informational picket outside the former Albertsons location on Diablo Road near I-680. Union officials contend that the contractors doing the work for the new Fresh & Easy store are undercutting union labor by paying non-union workers below scale pay.

Union members picket Fresh & Easy worksite

Picketers say carpenter wages are too low

by Geoff Gillette

Early Monday morning, members of Carpenters Union Local 405 marched outside the chain link fence set up around the former Albertsons grocery store on Diablo Road, in an informational picket protesting the use of non-union contractors paying less than union scale.

Equipped with bullhorns and giant inflatable rats, 16 members of the union walked along the perimeter of the fence, chanting slogans and calling for equitable wages.

"Without the employees, the employers can't make the money they are taking home," called out Union Representative Walter Murcia. "Come on, Ciarra, do the right thing. No peace for Ciarra Construction until they do the right thing."

Union Spokesman Paul Cohen said the issue is not that Ciarra and the primary contractor are non-union shops but that they pay lower wages, undercutting union carpenters. "We have an issue with them paying below established wages for carpenters in the area," he said.

Local 405 represents around 3,500 workers, primarily in the South Bay. Cohen said undercutting wages creates difficulties for those union carpenters who live and work locally.

"When someone comes in and tries to profit at the expense of the workers it makes it that much tougher," he stated.

Ciarra Construction President Walt Oxley said the picket is something he sees periodically at his job sites.

"They'll picket us at random sites," said Oxley. "Usually in times like this where the economy gets a little slow they start picketing us more."

Oxley did not give specifics on the pay he offers his employees but he did say he feels they are not underpaying.

"We offer very competitive wages, health benefits and a 401k. We're very good to our employees." He added, "The union's been trying to organize for 23 years and not been successful. I think that says something about how we treat our employees."

Cohen said this is not about the union attempting to organize the employees of Ciarra Construction, which is located in San Jose. "It's that they're paying what we feel is a ridiculously low wage," he said.

Ciarra Construction has been working on improvements for the new Fresh & Easy store for the past three weeks. Oxley said he expects the work to last another three to four weeks. The informational picket at the site is not uncommon, he said, and he has seen others at job sites all throughout the area. ■

Despite economic slump, town finances stand strong

Conservative investments have proven steady

by Geoff Gillette

With the recent fluctuations in the market and their effect on both national and international economic structures, many towns and cities are nervously eyeing their budgets and accounts. Danville Town officials say that here, at least, the situation is stable.

Members of the town council were presented with the draft comprehensive annual financial report for the fiscal year ending June 30, at their Nov. 18 meeting.

Town Finance Director Elizabeth Hudson presented the report to the council and said the news was good. "The Town of Danville's financial condition remains sound," Hudson stated. According to the report, one indicator of a town's financial condition is the balances in a town's various funds.

In the case of Danville, the general fund is seeing a balance of $13.6 million. Additionally, $25.7 million has been reserved in Special Revenue Funds; $4.1 million in Debt Service Funds; and $39.6 million in Capital Projects Funds.

Town Manager Joe Calabrigo said the reason they are holding steady currently is that they have been very conservative in what they do with their investments. "We focus on safety first, yield second and liquidity third. The full amount we've invested is still there and we enjoyed an increase in the value of the fund," he said.

The report showed that property taxes remain the town's chief revenue source. In 2007-08, property taxes increased by 1.1 percent, which reflects an increase of 5.4 percent in the assessed value of property in the town. Property taxes account for around 37.2 percent of revenues for Danville.

A number of construction projects came to fruition in 2007-08, including the Oak Hill Park Community Center, completion of the La Questa Storm Drain project, renovations of the children's play areas at Sycamore Valley and Diablo Vista Parks, and nearly $2 million in pavement maintenance repairs, overlays and slurry seal projects throughout the town.

The outlook for the future shows a continued steadiness in the town, but there will be some areas that will need to be addressed in the coming years. The report said areas that will need additional assistance include the Lighting and Landscape Assessment District, various street projects and the Town's Capital Improvement Program. All are expected to need additional infusions of capital from the Town in the coming years.

Overall, officials said they felt it was a solid report and an indicator of how well the town's financial advisors are steering their investments. Councilman Newell Arnerich congratulated Hudson and her team on a solid report and said now is the time to begin strategizing for how best to maintain funding levels in the face of a down economy and a financially starved state. "We're moving into a new era and we're going to have to tighten our belts," he noted. "I think it's wise that we are cautiously putting money into our reserve fund. The state of California is going to figure out ways to steal money from the towns." ■

Abatement

➤ Continued from page **6**

tinue to park there illegally. Town Attorney Rob Ewing said cars parked in that spot create a hazard.

"The primary concern the engineers have is that vehicles can and do park there and block the pedestrian path. This can affect children going to school or neighbors coming downtown," he explained.

The town gave notice to Taylor to abate the problem and when she had not done so, Ewing brought the issue to the council.

Councilwoman Karen Stepper asked what work needed to be done, saying, "It's hugely improved over what it used to look like. What are they supposed to do?"

Ewing said staff had outlined three options:

* Remove the asphalt in the town's right of way near the street and replace it with landscaping;
* Cut out tree wells and plant trees to keep vehicles from parking; or
* Place planters along the right of way to discourage parking.

Due to some confusion concerning a permit sought by Taylor and the nuisance ordinance, council members were told that they could approve the initial resolution, which would require the abatements to be completed by Jan. 18, or they could honor the permit Taylor sought with Feb. 15 as the completion date.

Stepper said she supported the Feb. 15 date. "There's no reason that they haven't made the change but with the holidays and the rainy season I can see giving them until Feb. 15," she stated.

Councilman Mike Doyle disagreed. "They're toying with us and I don't believe in that," he said. "We've given them 14 months. I don't think we need to give them another five minutes."

Mayor Newell Arnerich said he tended to agree with Doyle but was willing to give Taylor the grace period she requested. He added, "We gave them a year and two months; they're not listening. On Feb. 15 I expect to see us out there taking action."

Councilwoman Candace Andersen moved for the resolution with the Feb. 15 date, which Stepper seconded. Council members gave it their unanimous approval.

Above: The property at 484 Diablo Road before improvements were carried out by owner R. Jean Taylor.
Below: After the improvements were done, the area was covered in asphalt and Taylor paid to have striping done to show where the bike path continued and had "no parking" stenciled in several areas.

After learning of the Town Council's decision, Taylor expressed her disappointment in how the issue was handled. "This was just a simple encroachment issue which they have made into a nuisance. I don't think that's any way to treat people." She added, "They said I haven't done anything for 13 months, but my attorney Dave Bowie has been talking to Rob Ewing."

Taylor said she applied for a permit to remove four feet of the asphalt along the right of way as a means of answering the town's concerns but she does not feel that is the right thing to do. "I think it's a terrible, terrible mistake. It's the wrong thing to do there."

She said that she has considered the alternatives suggested by the town but feels they would create a maintenance hardship, as planting landscaping or trees would also require getting water out to that area.

Rather than cut holes in the asphalt or remove it, Taylor suggested that the town put up a "No Parking on pavement" sign, which would allow police to ticket cars who park there illegally. Another option would be to install benches for residents using the path. "It would block off cars from parking there, and it wouldn't tear up the asphalt and leave a gaping hole. I could do it, or I could donate $10,000 to the town and let them put in what they want."

Taylor said despite her feelings in regards to how the issue was handled, she does want to work with the town to resolve it. "I just don't know who I can talk to about this," she stated. ■

Danville resident nominated for 2009 California Hall of Fame

Young golfer adds honor to his long list of triumphs

MJ Mc Colgan, who has won gold medals in golf at regional, state and national Special Olympics, has been nominated for the 2009 California Hall Of Fame.

Conceived by First Lady Maria Shriver, the California Hall of Fame was established along with the California Museum for History, Women and the Arts to honor individuals and families who embody California's innovative spirit and have made their mark on history.

Mc Colgan, a 2002 graduate of San Ramon Valley High School, was born with a walking disability and competes with his dad Mike Mc Colgan in the Ryder Cup Alternate Shot format for Special Olympics Northern California with the use of a golf cart. The father and son team also has co-authored five golf books.

He is also a Global Ambassador and helped Special Olympics Northern California raise $1 million last year by giving speeches to businesses and organizations about winning and overcoming adversity.

"The golf keeps my legs moving," said MJ Mc Colgan. "I love the competition and winning never gets old."

Mc Colgan will go for his ninth straight Northern California State Championship this year and has won three National Championships. He also participated in the 2003 World Games in Ireland and 2007 World Games in China. He was inducted into the 2004 San Francisco Hall Of Fame and the 2006 Hall of Fame in Michigan, where he was born.

"Although our house is filled with many gold medals, the most important thing we have taught MJ is to focus on his abilities and not his disability," said mother Linda Mc Colgan.

COURTESY OF MCCOLGAN FAMILY

MJ Mc Colgan and professional golfer Casey Martin.

The 2008 inductees into the California Museum's California Hall of Fame were recently announced by Dina Eastwood, who is chairwoman of the California Museum board and wife of 2006 inductee Clint Eastwood.

In its third year, the California Hall of Fame is sponsored by Chevron and Accenture. This year's inductees are Dave Brubeck, Jane Fonda, Theodor Geisel (Dr. Suess), Robert Graham, Quincy Jones, Jack LaLanne, Dorothea Lange, Julia Morgan, Jack Nicholson, Linus Pauling, Leland Stanford and Alice Waters. Past inductees include Tiger Woods, Steve Jobs, Ronald Reagan, and Elizabeth Taylor. ■

District appoints fire marshal

Christina Jamison will lead Fire Prevention Division

Fire Chief Richard Price announced recently the appointment of Christina Jamison to the position of fire marshal for the San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District. Jamison was previously the fire marshal/assistant chief for the Ventura County Fire Protection District in Southern California.

"Chief Jamison is well versed with California Building and Fire Codes and has developed an excellent reputation and working relationship within the building industry," said Price. "Her operational experience as a planning section chief on wildland incidents and her accomplishments as fire marshal in developing and managing vegetation hazard abatement programs are highly valued by San Ramon Valley Fire."

Jamison holds a bachelor of science degree in Occupational Studies from California State University at Long Beach. She has also completed her associate degree in Fire Technology and will begin the four-year Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy in 2009.

"I am both honored and excited to serve as Fire Marshal for the San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District," said Jamison. "I look forward to my involvement with the District's established fire and life safety programs and to being a member of this great community."

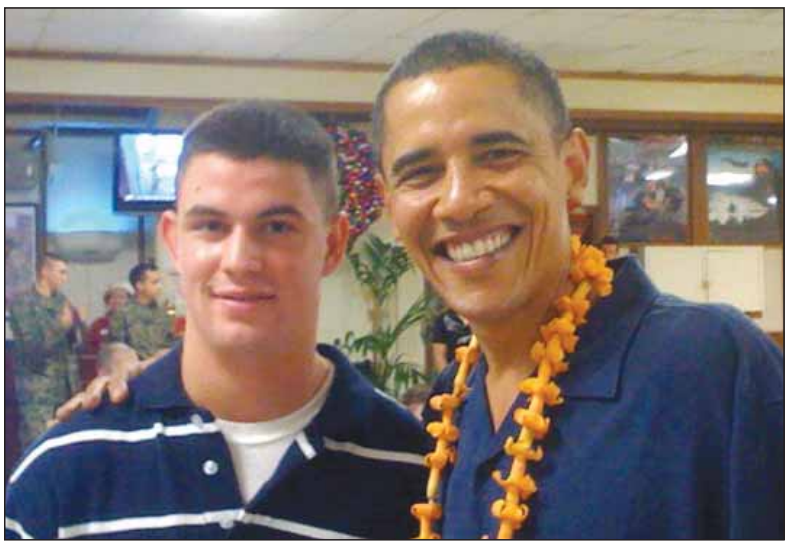
Christina Jamison had been appointed to the position of fire marshal for the San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District.

As fire marshal for the San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District, Jamison will lead the Fire Prevention Division, which oversees fire investigations, plan checking, code compliance, public education, the Community Emergency Response Team program and the exterior hazard abatement program.

"Our representatives were very impressed with Chief Jamison throughout the recruitment and evaluation process," said John Keel, president of the San Ramon Valley Firefighters Association. "We are confident that she will do an outstanding job for the district. We look forward to working closely with Chief Jamison and her staff to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards in our community."

Jamison's career with the Ventura County Fire Protection District spanned 13 years, first as a fire specialist and then as a fire inspector. In 2007, Jamison was appointed to the position of fire marshal/assistant chief, where she oversaw a staff of 37 and was responsible for countless programs. She has a 21-year old son and two daughters, ages 18 and 15, and will reside with her family in Danville.

In 2006 Jamison was appointed by Gov. Schwarzenegger to the California Building Standards Commission and was presented with the "Fire Official of the Year" award by the California Building Official's Association in recognition of her significant achievements in protecting, promoting and ensuring public safety. ■



Christmas treat

U.S. Marine PFC John "Mitch" Lappin, a 2007 graduate of San Ramon Valley High School, meets President Elect Barrack Obama, who showed up to greet the military at Kaneohe Bay while vacationing in Hawaii. Mitch is the son of Marilyn and John Lappin.

"(Obama) just came into the base and said hello to everyone in there and thanked them for their sacrifice, being away from home," reported Marilyn Lappin.

JCC announces line-up for 2009 lecture series

Guest speaker Jesse H. Choper, the Earl Warren Professor of Public Law at UC Berkeley Boalt School of Law, launches the 2009 lecture series, Dialogues, at the Contra Costa Jewish Community Center in Walnut Creek. The stimulating evening series commences Wednesday, Jan. 21, with Choper, who will address the timely and challenging topic of religious freedom and the constitutional separation of church and state.

The 2009 line-up for Dialogues includes renowned guest speakers who will examine informative, enlightening and entertaining subjects ranging from U.S. security and radio journalism to the UC school system and business ethics.

Speakers include:

• Wednesday, Feb. 4: Michael S. Baker, M.D., F.A.C.S.—The retired rear admiral and current chairman of the Department of Surgery at John Muir Medical Center will discuss Strategic Biologic and Medical Threats to the Security and Safety of the USA.

• Wednesday, March 18: Richard Gonzales—The award-winning correspondent of National Public Radio's popular newsmagazines—All Things Considered, Morning Edition and Weekend Edition—will discuss "A Career Behind the Microphone: Vignettes Along the Way."

• Thursday, April 2: Mark Yudof—The 19th president of the University of California will address a topic of special interest to parents: "The State of the UC System."

• Thursday, May 21: Noah Alper—The founder of Noah's Bagels and Noah Alper Consulting will share "The Noah's Bagels Story: Running an Ethnic Business in a Multicultural World."

The public is invited to enjoy this thought-provoking series, which takes place at the Contra Costa JCC in Walnut Creek. All lectures begin at 7:30 p.m. Individual lecture tickets go on sale Jan. 2. Space is limited. For tickets, which can include receptions and conversations with the guest speakers, call 938-7800, ext. 0, or visit www.ccjcc.org/dialogues. The Contra Costa JCC is located at 2071 Tice Blvd. in Walnut Creek. ■

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Perspective

EDITORIALS • LETTERS • OPINIONS ABOUT LOCAL ISSUES IN OUR COMMUNITY

EDITORIAL • THE OPINION OF THE WEEKLY

Alamo will decide in 2009

At this time next year, what will be the state of Alamo? The voters will decide March 3.

On that Election Day, Alamo residents not only will choose whether or not to incorporate their census-designated area of 16,000 people, they will also pick five of the 16 candidates to become the first town council—if the town is voted into existence.

It speaks well for Alamo that more than a dozen people have stepped forward hoping to serve on a new town council. A lot of decisions will be made by this first council, including hiring for key positions. Commissions will be formed and members appointed. A General Plan will be written. This first council will spend many hours studying the issues and working together at public meetings; candidacy is a huge commitment to a demanding, albeit rewarding, job.

Alamo is known for its educated populace and the number of CEOs tucked away on its country lanes. The makeup of the community is one reason pro-incorporation forces feel that Alamo would be better off running itself than Contra Costa County, as is now the case. Even those who praise the actions of the Board of Supervisors note that Alamo is but a small entity in the county's large District 3. Supporters of incorporation want to put local talent to work to make decisions for Alamo.

Applications for vote-by-mail are available starting Feb. 2, and requests must be received by the Registrar of Voters by Feb. 24. The last day to register to vote in this election is Feb. 17, which is also the deadline for write-in candidates to file.

This is an exciting time for Alamo residents to vote for or against incorporation as well as to get to know their neighbors who were passionate enough about their community to offer their services at this historic time. Whether incorporation passes or not, it is good news that so many well qualified people are willing to serve on the first council.

ONLINE READER POLL

Give your opinion at
www.DanvilleWeekly.com

Should the State Legislature stay in session until it passes a budget?

Results from last poll:

When do you put up your Christmas lights?

- **A day after Thanksgiving:** 15.56%
- ✔ **First weekend in December:** 57.78%
- **On Christmas Eve:** 4.44%
- **Week before Christmas:** 8.89%
- **What Christmas lights?:** 8.89%
- **They are up all year:** 4.44%
- **Total votes:** 45

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

County cuts just starting

Dear Editor:

Alamo citizens haven't seen anything yet.

In 18 months—the lag time for Contra Costa County to adjust the county employees' pension plan—the county must start making up an estimated $1.3 billion loss in pension investments this year.

According to county officials, the county must cover the loss when there is a shortfall in the market. Money to make up the loss will come from money that would have paid for county services in unincorporated areas like Alamo.

Already trying to pay down a $1.7 billion unfunded liability for employee benefits, the county has cut Sheriff's services in unincorporated areas each of the past three years. The $1.3 billion pension loss will trigger significant further cuts in county services as well as significant county efforts to develop new revenue sources in unincorporated areas like Alamo.

Alamo can remain unincorporated county, or Alamo can incorporate as a town. The town would contract for most services, avoiding crippling effects of employee pension plans, and it would receive the benefits of its own healthy property tax revenues from its older homes, compared to those of newer county housing stock, now re-assessed below original market value.

Alamo citizens: Vote to incorporate Alamo.

Teresa Schutzman, Alamo

Incorporate Alamo to save Alamo

Dear Editor:

In uncertain economic times, we look for certainty in local government. It's comforting for Alamo citizens to see Contra Costa County, Alamo's local government, as our safe governance in the economic storm. The county is big—one of the region's largest employers—with a $1.2 billion annual budget. It has maintained our public roads well. If physical disaster struck our community, we want to believe the county would take responsibility for clean-up and restoration.

But facts belie what we want to believe. Contra Costa County has a $1.7 billion unfunded liability for benefits for its large employee force. It must pay down that liability by severely cutting services and increasing residential and commercial development in all unincorporated areas. Overhead costs of its public works department are so great it often contracts for road work with private firms—and it has repeatedly tried to expand Alamo roads to accommodate overflow freeway traffic. Moreover, the county, like any other local government, has no disaster mitigation funds, which come from state and federal governments.

Finally, the county could legally tax only unincorporated areas by vote of unincorporated areas and cities—google Alameda County Measure F.

We must incorporate Alamo to save Alamo!

Jan Bergamini, Alamo

County governance presents dangers

Dear Editor:

Would any intelligent, successful property owner choose to be governed by a local government with a $1.7 billion unfunded liability for employee benefits? A local government with the power to levy a Utility Users Tax Extension, as Alameda County has done, paid only by property owners in unincorporated areas of the county—specifically Ashland, Castro Valley, Cherryland, Fairview, San Lorenzo and Sunol?

Alamo voters can Google "Alameda County Measure F" (2008) to read about the Utility Users Tax perpetrated by county-wide vote—including votes of citizens of incorporated jurisdictions—solely on property owners of unincorporated Alameda County and not on those of incorporated jurisdictions in the county.

These are some of the dangers of staying unincorporated in this precipitous economic downturn, especially if the governing county—Contra Costa County, in the case of Alamo voters—is in debt by an amount even greater than its annual $1.2 billion budget. In this economy, other Bay Area cities with Alamo's potential property assessed valuations restrained by Proposition 13 aren't clamoring to return to county government. Los Altos, Woodland, Atherton, Hillsborough, Piedmont, Tiburon and Ross—all with small commercial areas—continue to thrive with their healthy property tax revenues. Let Alamo join them!

Jeremy Hallisey, Alamo

What's your opinion?

Write a Letter to the editor

at Editor@DanvilleWeekly.com or put your opinion

on Town Square at www.DanvilleWeekly.com

Danville WEEKLY

Serving the communities of Danville, Blackhawk, Diablo and Alamo

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Diablo Views

BY DOLORES FOX CIARDELLI

Life at the Laundromat

ALAMO LAUNDROMAT, DEC. 27—The day after the day after Christmas found me at the Laundromat in Alamo, the one near Rotten Robbie's, the 7-Eleven and Alamo Bicycles. I had to use the giant washing machine—the one that takes comforters.

Why the sudden need to wash a comforter? Ask Misty. My daughter Zoe brought her cat Misty to stay with us for a few days before Christmas and apparently she didn't like being left in the guest room for too long—or perhaps she didn't like sharing the house with our cat Bob—or maybe she was just feeling ornery. For whatever reason, she decided to pee on the bed.

Luckily Zoe discovered the accident (the intentional?) soon afterward and the damage was limited to the comforter and a pillow. The pillow I put into my own washing machine and, despite the horrendous thumping noises and problems keeping it evenly distributed with the towels, it came out pretty well. But I didn't want to further challenge my washing machine with the comforter.

It was interesting to be in a Laundromat again. My first experience was in high school when the family washing machine broke, and my mother asked me to take a big load of towels to a neighborhood Laundromat. Of course, I first drove to the other side of town to pick up a girlfriend to keep me company. We figured out how to wash the towels and put them into a dryer. Then we took a walk around the strip mall, visiting different shops. I didn't notice that I removed fewer towels from the dryer than I had put in. But my mother sure did.

Later there was a time when I was a frequent visitor to Laundromats. Like during the first few years we were married, still in college. After that, when Jim was in the Air Force during the Vietnam War and stationed outside Marysville, we lived in one of several small houses that an enterprising rancher had moved onto a few acres of land. Each house had a screened-in back porch, and the landlord was proud to provide each of us tenants with a washing machine. Unfortunately they were vintage 1940 (1930?) and the washing machine was only partly automatic. Buttons had to be pushed for each cycle, plus the clothes had to be physically put through a ringer after the wash cycle and after the rinse cycle. Perhaps this was standard procedure for my grandmother but after one try, I opted for the local Laundromat, where I could wash, dry and fold our clothes in one hour.

Fast forward to the birth of our son, when disposable diapers were also in their infancy. We decided the time had come to join the ranks of grownups and buy our own washing machine. I didn't see any need for a dryer for a few years but now I can't remember why. Yes, it's pleasant to hang out clothes on a beautiful sunny day but there's nothing like a dryer for convenience.

Anyway when I arrived at the Alamo Laundromat last week the big washer was free, luckily, so I crammed in the comforter and inserted 25 quarters or $6.25. I noticed that the smaller washers cost $2. A middle-aged man was reading all the directions carefully before placing in his eight quarters. He volunteered that his washer was broken and that he hadn't been to a Laundromat in 30 years, and that even then someone else had actually done the wash.

I am happy to report that the Alamo Laundromat is a good place to use a laptop. There is even a convenient plug in case your battery runs low, although I didn't test it. When I logged on, I received a message that one or more wireless connections were available but I didn't try that out either.

Drying costs 25 cents for four minutes; I don't know how the manufacturers arrived at that length of time. I sat down in a spot where I could keep an eye on my dryer. Even though the other people looked honest I wasn't about to tempt anyone to take my comforter—not while it's so cold at night. My mother would be proud to know that I learned my lesson.

—Dolores Fox Ciardelli can be e-mailed at editor@DanvilleWeekly.com.

New laws in effect

With a new year on the horizon, the California Highway Patrol wants to remind motorists of a handful of new laws, passed by the Legislature and signed by Gov. Schwarzenegger, that go into effect in 2009.

"The overall safety of the motoring public is our primary concern," said CHP Commissioner Joe Farrow.

High tech devices will be more closely supervised as laws now in effect make it illegal to be engaging in texting, e-mail or similar activities while driving. Also GPS devices must now be mounted on car dashes only in specific locations, in order to minimize their effect on the deployment of airbags.

A number of new laws designed to stiffen the state's DUI laws are now on the books: Drivers on probation for a DUI conviction are no longer allowed to operate a motor vehicle with a blood alcohol level of .01 or above. In addition, drivers with a blood alcohol level of .15 or higher will be issued ignition interlock devices to keep them from driving under the influence; the device installed in a vehicle requires the driver to perform a breath test before the vehicle will start.

A more complete list of the new laws is at www.danvilleweekly.com.

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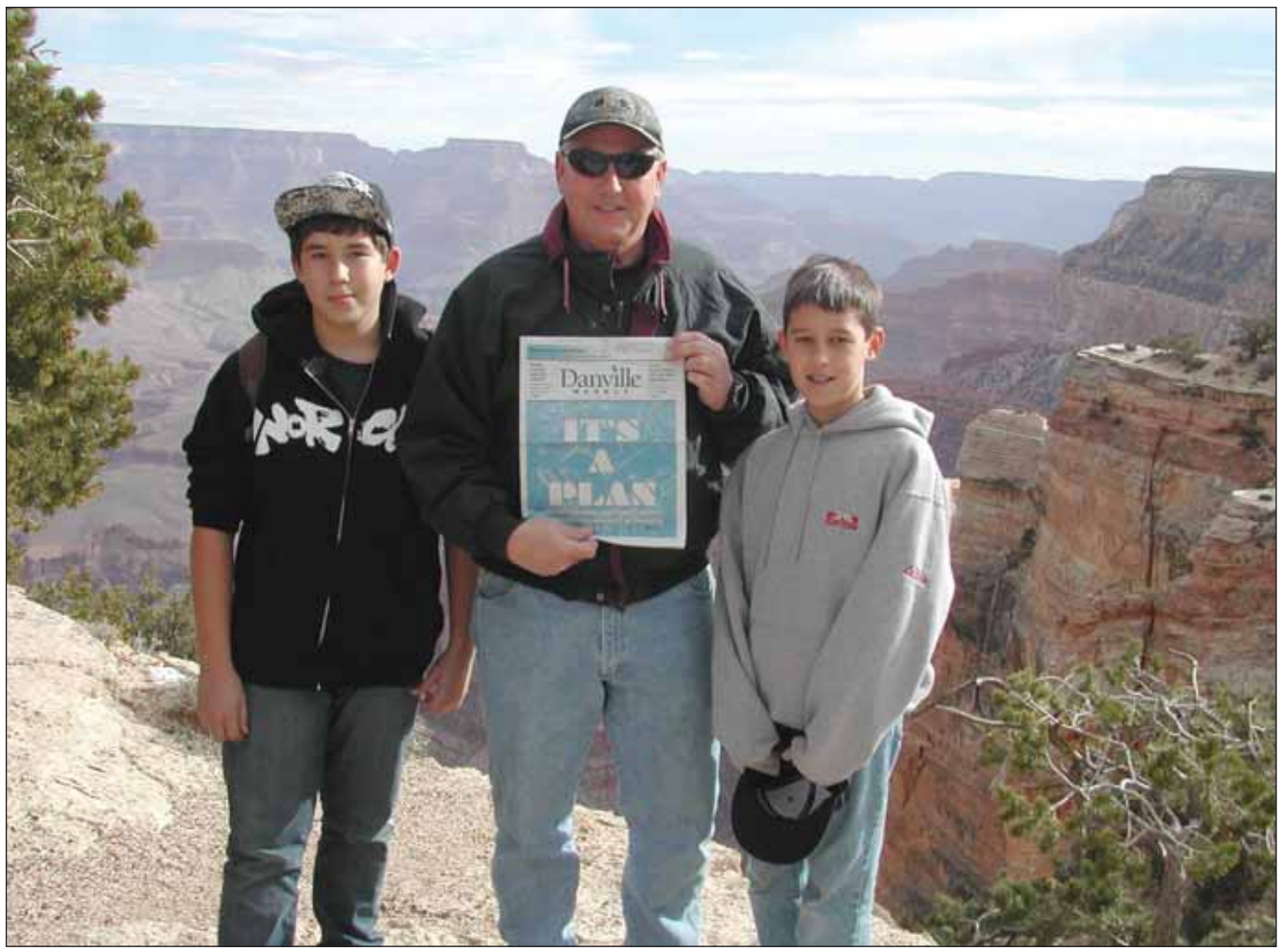
What a view: Dennis LaBrie and his two sons Brian and Matt vacation in the Grand Canyon in November 2007—with their Weekly.

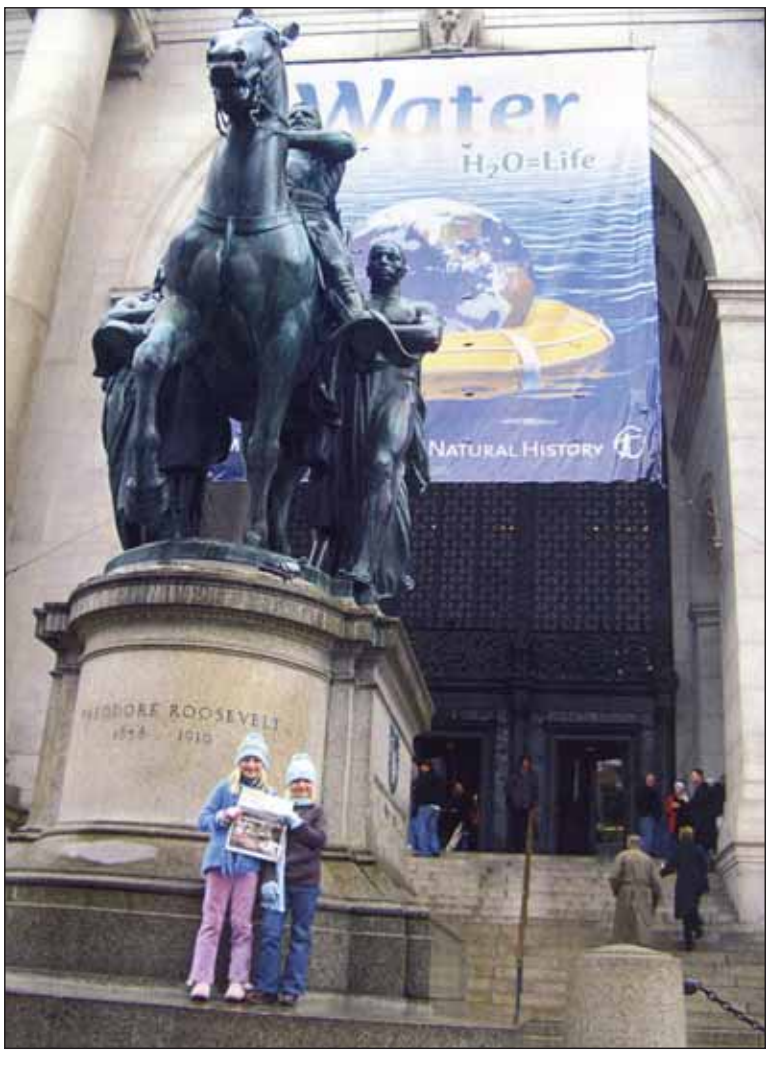
New York by night: Ray and Michael Salo and Michelle McBee grabbed the Danville Weekly on their way out of town on a business trip to Rockefeller Center in NYC last December.



TAKE US ALONG

The Caribbean scene: Danville residents Michelle and Paul Indelicato enjoy the gorgeous view from their beach house in Eleuthra, Bahamas, where they vacationed with their Danville Weekly in May 2007.

Bloody Mary anyone? Catherine Kuss and Danilo Purlia took the Danville Weekly on their Tahitan cruise, and visited Bloody Mary's restaurant on the island of Bora Bora.



On parade with the Weekly: Amy and Gracie Rooney brave the cold with their Danville Weekly in front of the American Museum of Natural History in New York before watching the Thanksgiving Day parade.

Remembering the gladiators: Karen and Larry Horwitz of Danville and Nancy and Jerry Kaplan of Alamo visit the Roman Coliseum with their Weekly while on a Mediterranean cruise on the Crystal Serenity during October and November 2007.

Being brave with the Weekly: Joyce and Jock MacKaig bravely enter the dungeon at Fort San Lorenzo, Panama (below), with their Danville Weekly while in Panama celebrating a high school reunion. Fort San Lorenzo is one of the oldest Spanish Forts in the Western Hemisphere, located at the mouth of the Chagres River, built in the 1570s to protect the trade routes.

In merry old England: Six-year Danville residents Rob, Jayne, Julie, Laura and Claire Managan think about home while on a trip to Madrid, Barcelona, Paris, London and Manchester in July 2007. Their trip was a continuation after choir leader Ken Abram's SRVHS tour to Spain with his Concert Choir. This was at their bed 'n' breakfast near Knutsford, Cheshire.

Remember the other Alamo: John and Nadene Bruhl vacation with John's brother, Jeff and his wife Teresa at the Alamo in Texas in the summer of 2007.

Bright colors of friendship: Larry and Marilyn Carstensen, along with their daughter and granddaughter Jennifer and Summer Hunt, took along the Danville Weekly on a missionary trip to Kampala, Uganda, where they talked quilting to a group of teenagers at the Zana Community Presbyterian Church in August 2007.

VOYAGE OF

Danville woman among
treatment in China for a cu

by Geoff Gillette

Oct. 28: Priscilla and I are all moved into our room on the 20th floor of the hospital in Hangzhou. I have had tests, been interviewed by several doctors. They will tell me after some evaluations if I am healthy enough for the bone marrow transfusion. We have met many of the families. All are hopeful for the best.

Those were the first words Joanne Loveland posted on her blog when she and her good friend Priscilla checked into the Xiaoshan Hospital in Hangzhou, China, on a journey to find a cure to a hereditary disease that has affected many members of her family.

"We have a genetic condition in our family called ataxia. It is not well known, but it is similar to MS and Parkinson's disease," she said.

Ataxia affects the central nervous system, causing its victims to experience atrophy in their cerebellum. It affects balance, speech, coordination and is progressive and incurable. As it works its way through the victim's systems, they also begin to experience weakness and loss of energy.

Loveland said the family first became aware of the illness when her grandmother began to experience symptoms. "She was diagnosed with late onset MS." It wasn't until later that doctors realized the misdiagnosis and pegged ataxia as the culprit.

"We didn't know as she was dealing with it that it was an inherited thing," said Loveland. "She started seeing symptoms in her 60s, my father started to see it in his late 50s."

Ataxia has affected Loveland's grandmother, father, aunt, brother and herself. The 59-year-old Danville woman said it has come upon her gradually, but she is seeing the effects of the disease now as well.

"I do notice when I'm walking I have balance issues. I am wobbly. Balance is the major thing, along with some speech and minor coordination," she explained.

The erosion of her skills affected many aspects of her life. The mother of two grown children, Loveland had been working at the Diablo Lodge until July when the situation became untenable. She has been unemployed since then.

Because the disease is said to be incurable, Loveland and her family did what they could to hold off the symptoms through physical therapy and exercise. Still their hopes rose when a cousin informed her that he'd seen an ABC Nightline program about a hospital in China working on a host of illnesses using stem cells.

The program dealt with a company called Beike Biotech. Beike has rented hospital facilities all across China and set up care facilities where patients suffering from a variety of illnesses can come for stem cell treatments.

Stem cells are cells that have not been assigned to a specific task in the body. They are found in most if not all multi-cellular organisms.

Humans have two types of stem cells:

- embryonic, which come from either the umbilical cords of newborn babies or from amniotic fluid; and
- adult stem cells, which work with another type of cell called a progenitor cell to act as a repair system in a grown human.

When injected into the body, the cells have been seen to act as a repair and strengthening agent. They go to an area of weakness in the body and differentiate to become the type of cell necessary to assist the weakened area. They can become almost any type of specialized cell.

In the United States, stem cell research is currently against federal regulations, so in order to get treatments involving stem cells, it is necessary to go out of the country.

Loveland said when they heard about the work being done by Beike Biotech they began researching what they could about stem cells and ataxia. They found that Beike was working with ataxia patients, as well as many other diseases.

"People from all over the world are going there for these treatments. People with MS, Parkinson's, they are trying out these stem cell treatments, and a lot of them are seeing results," she said.

After more research, Loveland's brother went to China for the treatment. "You go over three-and-a-half weeks, and you get five transfusions, one as an IV and the other four are given in the spinal cord."

Loveland said she was heartened by the reports she was getting back from her brother regarding his condition. "He couldn't believe how much better he felt after each treatment. He had no complications, his body didn't react negatively to the stem cells."

With that positive response, Loveland made the decision that she, too, would make the journey to Hangzhou and undergo the procedure.

"It's definitely a leap of faith, an adventure," she said. With a cost of over $24,000 for the entire procedure, it's also a major financial commitment, something Loveland said she thought hard about but ultimately did not let stand in her way. "This is a treatment that helped my brother to get back a lot of function. He still has good days and bad days, but he can see the difference. I think it's worth it to try."

One of the reasons that stem cell research is currently not allowed in the U.S. is the implications of using cells from newborns or amniotic fluid. It has become a focus of much debate. When asked if she was worried about people's reactions to her seeking such a treatment abroad she said she's not encountered any negative reaction. "A lot of people know I'm going and most are like, 'Wow, that's great.' Most want to follow what's going on while I'm there. You feel more like you're being sort of a pioneer."

She added that Beike's treatments don't utilize the amniotic

In between treatments, Joanne Loveland would have free days in which to explore the Chinese countryside near Hangzhou. Loveland s

E RECOVERY

g those pioneering new
ure to her inherited disease

spent almost four weeks at the Xiaoshan Hospital undergoing stem cell treatments.

COURTESY JOANNE LOVELAND

stem cells, which although more potent do present some risks in obtaining them. "They use the umbilical cells. The umbilical cord is really just a piece of tissue that is being thrown away when the baby is born. They're taking umbilical cords, harvesting the stem cells and putting them in a medium where they can be transfused into patients."

In late October, Loveland and her best friend Priscilla boarded a jet and embarked on the trip to Hangzhou. There were no problems getting to the hospital and getting checked in. She said she was both nervous and excited to get the procedure under way. "They warn you that after the lumbar (spinal) punctures you could have really bad headaches. I just wasn't sure what was going to happen."

Oct. 31: Wednesday I had my first stem cell treatment which was a piece of cake because it was by IV. They do an IV treatment first to make sure you do not have an allergic reaction to the stem cells. In 30 minutes I am going to have my first lumbar stem cell treatment. Wish me a great spinal experience with no headache after.

Over the course of the nearly four weeks she was there, Loveland underwent the stem cell transfusions, but also had a daily physical regimen she was required to follow. The course of treatment prescribed by Beike followed both scientific and wholistic approaches. Bone marrow was transfused to harvest Loveland's own adult stem cells, which were then injected into the spinal column to shore up damaged nerve tissues.

Physical therapy was held each day as well as acupuncture. All working toward the single goal of strengthening Loveland's damaged central nervous system and giving back some of the function she had lost.

Nov. 2: My first lumbar stem cell transfusion on Friday afternoon went well with no bad headache. Tomorrow I am going to have my bone marrow transfusion. They will extract some of my bone marrow from my hip. They harvest the marrow for five days and then they give me another stem cell treatment with my own stem cells. Many of the patients here have received this treatment. It is very new, but everyone is hopeful it will increase the success of the treatments.

Everyone here is positive and grateful to be here. Patients have MS, ALS, spinal injuries and brain injuries as well as Ataxia. There are 13 rooms for patients on this floor and every room is occupied.

In her blog Loveland talked about the gradual realization that she was seeing improvement. "I noticed at dinner that I was not stiff when I got up to leave. My balance when walking felt very good walking back to the hospital. I believe all these treatments together are helping."

Nov. 8: Today I had my regularly scheduled acupuncture and physical therapy. I wasn't as good with my balance today. I know there will be good days and average days. I will receive my own stem cells from my bone marrow Wednesday this week.

We are realizing how lucky I am compared to many of the patients here.

Loveland's final blog entry before returning home showed a renewed feeling of accomplishment and hope for a future with greater mobility, speech and coordination.

Nov. 12: Wednesday I had my bone marrow stem cells returned to me in my spinal column. It went very smoothly and today I am feeling stronger than ever and I feel my speech is better as well. I can't say enough about how wonderful the nurses and doctors have been on the 20th floor. The staff are all young, but very professional and helpful.

Now back in the U.S., Loveland has begun resuming her life in the wake of her journey. Already she has noticed a definite improvement. "My energy level is higher. My balance is better. Before, if I carried a glass of water across a room it would splash out because my gait was more jerky. Now I can carry a glass of ice tea to a table and not splash it. My walking is more normal."

Loveland said her doctors told her to expect to see continued improvement over the next few months as the stem cells continue to regenerate.

Even with her successes she remains cautious in her optimism. "This whole stem cell thing is not a cure but it does improve the things you are dealing with. For me, it's speech and coordination."

The big question, though, is does she feel it was worth it? The expense, the time, the procedures? Loveland says absolutely yes. "I feel like I had to do this because it helped with the research. I am a pioneer in this. People are coming from all over to do this to see even a slight gain because it improves quality of life. I am very grateful."

Successes using stem cell technology are beginning to appear all over the world. Four European doctors recently replaced a woman's windpipe with a donor organ, using stem cells from the woman's own body to line her throat to lessen the chances of rejection. Successes in spinal surgery have also been reported, using stem cells to help damaged tissue and nerves to heal.

Research in the U.S. could begin again in early 2009, as President-Elect Barack Obama has said one of the first things his administration would do in office is lift the presidential ban on embryonic stem cell research. Loveland said she is excited by the president's statements and feels it will spur some great advances in the research. "I know there are biotech companies in California and the U.S. that are just waiting for these restrictions to be lifted so they can get right into this."

Meanwhile Loveland's pioneering journey shows that there is a chance for those throughout the world suffering from degenerative nerve disorders to return a sense of normalcy to their lives. "It's given me a lot of hope for the future for eliminating the symptoms of ataxia and other illnesses. Hope is here." ■

Community Pulse

POLICE BULLETIN & LOG • OBITUARIES • BIRTHS & WEDDINGS

POLICE BULLETIN

Police seek gas station robbery suspects

Danville police are investigating a weekend armed robbery at the Danville Olde Town Arco service station on San Ramon Valley Boulevard at Boone Court across from the Livery.

Sgt. Dan Hoffman said around 9:28 p.m. Saturday night two males entered the gas station. One of the men displayed a compact chrome semiautomatic handgun and demanded money. They took an undisclosed amount of cash from the cash register and then left the business. The pair fled east behind the gas station.

Police officials set up a perimeter and used a canine to track the fleeing men, but they eluded capture. The suspects are described as black men, one medium height and heavy build, between 20-30 years old, and the other tall and slender in his late teens or early 20s.

The investigation is continuing. Police are asking anyone with information to contact the Danville Police Department at 314-3700.

Daylight car theft lands man in jail

A 39-year-old Hayward man is being held at the Martinez Detention Center after he brazenly made off with a Danville man's auto Sunday afternoon.

Sgt. Dan Hoffman said police received a call from a resident in the 2000 block of Fostoria Circle around 1:30 p.m. Sunday reporting his car as stolen. The victim told police he heard his car starting up and when he looked out the window he saw a white male driving off with his Ford f550 pickup truck.

Police began searching for the stolen pickup and a Contra Costa Sheriff's deputy spotted the vehicle driving northbound on I-680. The deputy performed a high risk traffic stop, pulling the pickup over. Weapon out, the deputy ordered the driver, identified as Kenneth Hafner, out of the vehicle. He was handcuffed at the scene and taken into custody. There were no other occupants of the pickup.

Hafner is charged with possession of stolen property, driving a stolen vehicle and violation of parole. Hafner also had several outstanding warrants for his arrest on various charges. He remains in custody at the Martinez facility.

—Geoff Gillette

POLICE LOG

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

Sunday, Dec. 21

- Vehicle traffic stop, arrest, on El Cerro Blvd. and El Quanito Dr. at 1:46 a.m.
- Vandalism on Abigail Cir. at 2:34 a.m.
- Petty theft on San Ramon Valley Blvd. at 10 a.m.
- Petty theft from vehicle on El Cajon Dr. at 6:06 p.m.

Monday, Dec. 22

- Suspicious subject, arrest, on Briar Pl. at 2:31 a.m.
- Auto burglary on Fostoria Way at 6:47 a.m.
- Auto burglary on St. Norbert Dr. at 6:50 a.m.
- Auto burglary on Fostoria Way at 7:13 a.m.
- Vandalism on El Dorado Ave. at 8:52 a.m.
- Petty theft from vehicle on Messian Pl. at 8:54 a.m.
- Auto burglary on Heritage Park Dr. at 9:31 a.m.
- Auto burglary on St. Norbert Dr. at 9:45 a.m.
- Auto burglary on Heritage Park Dr. at 10:07 a.m.
- Misdemeanor hit-and-run on Camino Tassajara and Crow Canyon Rd. at 10:24 a.m.
- Petty theft, all other, on 100 block of Hartz Ave. at 10:26 a.m.
- Auto burglary on Heritage Park Dr. at 11:26 a.m.
- Petty theft on Montego Pl. at 1:08 p.m.
- Vandalism on Silver Lake Dr. at 1:49 p.m. and 2:16 p.m.
- Misdemeanor hit-and-run on San Ramon Valley Blvd. and Sycamore Valley Rd. at 2:17 p.m.
- Auto burglary on Heritage Park Dr. at 2:24 p.m.
- Accident, major injuries, on Greenbrook Dr. and San Ramon Valley Blvd. at 5:22 p.m.
- Petty theft, shoplift, arrest, on San Ramon Valley Blvd. at 6:08 p.m.

Tuesday, Dec. 23

- Petty theft on Parkhaven Dr. at 12:09 a.m.
- Suspicious vehicle stop, arrest, on Camino Ramon at 3:07 a.m.
- Petty theft from vehicle on Contada Cir. at 8:34 a.m.
- Vandalism on Fostoria Way at 8:44 a.m.
- Auto burglary on Contada Cir. at 9:16 a.m.
- Warrant, arrest, on San Ramon Valley Blvd. at 2:22 p.m.
- Vandalism on El Dorado Ave. at 3:52 p.m.
- Accident, property damage, on Camino Tassajara and Sycamore Valley Rd. at 3:57 p.m.
- Accident, property damage, on Fostoria Way at 4:59 p.m.
- Suspicious subject, arrest, on Everett Dr. and Paraiso Dr. at 8:45 p.m.
- Accident, property damage, on Camino Tassajara and Tassajara Ranch Dr. at 10:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Dec. 24

- Fight disturbance, arrest, on Diablo Rd. and Hartz Ave. at 1:18 a.m.
- Misdemeanor battery on Diablo Rd. and Hartz Ave. at 1:32 a.m.
- Vandalism on Esther Lane at 7:31 a.m.
- Vandalism on Camino Ramon Pl. at 11:25 a.m.
- Misdemeanor hit-and-run on 3400 block of Camino Tassajara at 3:04 a.m.

Thursday, Dec. 25

- Unwanted guest disturbance, arrest, on Plaza Cir. at 1:24 a.m.
- Grand theft on Shadewell Dr. at 6:03 p.m.
- Misdemeanor driving under the influence (DUI), arrest, on 100 block of Hartz Ave. at 11:35 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 26

- Vehicle traffic stop, arrest, on northbound I-680 on ramp and Stone Valley Rd. at 2:08 a.m.
- Grand theft on St. George Rd. at 10:39 a.m.
- Accident, property damage, on Camino Tassajara and Sycamore Valley Rd. at 12:28 p.m.
- Felony embezzlement on Sycamore Valley Rd. at 2:48 p.m.
- Drunk in public on Hartz Ave. and San Ramon Valley Blvd. at 2:53 p.m.
- Drunk in public on San Ramon Valley Blvd. at 3:20 p.m.
- Petty theft on Linda Mesa Ave. at 4:06 p.m.
- Suspicious subject stop, arrest, on Iron Horse Trail and W. Prospect Ave. at 10:15 p.m.

OBITUARIES

Zelma Phyllis Gammer Roter

Zelma Phyllis Gammer Roter, a resident of Danville, died Nov. 18, in Henderson, Nev.

She was born Sept. 1, 1921. She was a teacher's aide for the handicapped with the Contra Costa School District and also a secretary for Temple Isaiah in Lafayette. She volunteered for a number of years at the Alzheimer's Respite Center at the Jewish Community Center. She also was a long time member of Temple Isaiah and sang in the choir. She loved music, theater and the arts, and loved to share a good joke to any new audience that came along.

She is survived by her two children, Mark G. Roter of Danville and Andrea Roter of Henderson, Nev.; brothers Ernie and Marty Gammer (Francis), and sisters Doris Damon and Marilyn Ross (Jerry).

Funeral services were held Nov. 25 at Oakmont Memorial Park in Lafayette.

Helen Marie La Croix

Helen Marie La Croix, a 56-year resident of Danville, died Nov. 20 at the age of 92. She was born Feb. 28, 1916, in Falston, Md.

She is survived by her children, Helen Oliva, Carolyn Sydlik and Tim La Croix; five grandchildren; 11 great grandchildren; a sister, Katherine Jennings of Falston; and niece Karen Lloyd of Falston.

Visitation was held Nov. 25 at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Danville.

William Mansel Dawkin

William Mansel Dawkin, a resident of Danville, died Nov. 21 at the age of 89.

He was born Nov. 6, 1919 in Staten Island, N.Y., and was raised in the United States; Lima, Peru; and England. In WWII he served with the British 21st Independent Paratroop Regiment in Europe and the Welsh Regiment in Sumatra. He returned to the United States in 1957 with his wife Jane and two small children. He worked for Joseph Magnin and Mervyn's stores in corporate finance until he retired in 1986. Besides being an avid golfer and gardener, he volunteered as a respite worker for Hospice of Contra Costa for 15 years.

He is survived by his wife of 54 years Jane; son Steven and his wife Atsuko; daughter Amanda Booth; son Neil Nylander and his wife Tara; three grandchildren; one great-granddaughter; and foster son. Donations may be made to any Hospice branch or the Contra Costa Humane Society.

Mary Rose Barry

Mary Rose Barry, a resident of Alamo, died Nov. 24 surrounded by family at the age of 64.

She was born July 13, 1944, and raised in San Francisco where she graduated from Star of the Sea Academy in 1962. She moved to Alamo with her husband to raise her two young children and lived there for the last 31 years. She retired from Pacific Bell after 34 years and from Verizon Wireless after 10 years. She filled the moments of her life traveling the world, gardening, cooking and rooting for the SF Giants. She loved her family, playing with her grandchildren, caring for her husband and gathering her large Italian and Irish families for legendary feasts.

Mary Rose Barry

She is survived by her loving husband of 41 years and best friend John; her son Tony, daughter-in-law Sarah; her daughter Tina; four grandchildren; her brothers Dick and Gino Eandi and their wives Barbara and Sandy.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated Dec. 4 at St. Isidore Church in Danville. Memorial contributions can be made to the Caring for Carcinoid Foundation.

Mary Jane de Girolamo

Mary Jane de Girolamo, a resident of Danville, died Nov. 25 at the age of 51 with her family by her side, after an eight-year battle with cancer.

She was born Dec. 10, 1956. She was a dental hygienist and practiced in her husband Harry's Fremont office for 25 years until she became ill. She loved her pets and especially liked equestrian activities with her horse Ty. She also liked golf, hiking and fishing. She maintained her incredible positive attitude, exuberant energy and physical strength to the very end of her life.

She is survived by her loving husband of nearly 30 years, Dr. Harry de Girolamo; her mother Joanne Collier; brother Charles Collier; and sisters Cathy and Grace Collier. She is also survived by her nephews Ben and Brian Collier and niece Kaci Poor. She was preceded in death by her father Rob Collier who died in 1997.

Services were held Dec. 5 at Crosswinds Church in Dublin. Donations can be made in her name to Hope Hospice, 6500 Dublin Blvd., Suite 100, Dublin 94568.

Juanita Claire Lewis

Juanita Claire Lewis, a resident of Danville, died Nov. 29 in Alamo at the age of 91.

She was born Dec. 5, 1916. She was married to the late Anthony "Tootie" Lewis for 62 years. Survivors include her daughters Barbara Grant and Toni Baker; 14 grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren; and 22 great-great-grandchildren. She was preceded by her husband; daughter Shirley Cadloni; brother Charles A. Smith (Buddy); grandchild Shelly Van Pelt; and longtime friend Dorothy Fernandez.

A Memorial Mass was celebrated Dec. 5 at St. Vincent of Ferrer Catholic Church in Vallejo.

Lella (Cindy) P. Johnson

Lella (Cindy) P. Johnson, a resident of Danville, died peacefully Nov. 28 at the age of 85.

She was a native of Oklahoma and was raised in Colorado and lived in Danville for more than 50 years. She enjoyed many life skills such as medical stenography and clerical work, and her passion was being a school bus driver for 20 years. She enjoyed being active in the Grandmother's Club and Danville Senior Citizens. A great love in her life was her precious cat, Tuxedo.

She is survived by her children Ray Johnson and Linda Lord-Johnson of Danville, Signe and Jim McIntire of Tracy, Alan and Sue DeTar, Curt and Sandy DeTar of Sparks, Nev., Grant and Coyo Johnson of Oroville, and four grandchildren.

Donations may be made in her memory to Animal Rescue Foundation, P.O. Box 30215, Walnut Creek 94598 or you may honor her spirit by giving a heartfelt hug to those you love.

TREATING DENTAL PAIN IN THE WAR ZONE

Americans, coalition forces end up in the Danville native's orthodontist chair

by Staff Sgt. Vincent Borden

Lt. Col. John Walton, the lone orthodontist for the dental care of the 386th Air Expeditionary Wing, works in an office at an undisclosed location in Southwest Asia that could serve as the classic example of irony.

The clinic, which is the size of a small bedroom, serves as the sole point of dental care available to airmen and coalition forces in the wing—some 3,000 personnel with more than 100,000 teeth of varying condition. Walton has but one dental assistant, one reclining dental chair and one policy: that anyone suffering dental pain can walk in and be treated immediately.

Despite a range of dental problems, no one has gone untreated.

"We treat a lot of different things here, but what we see often falls into three main categories: broken bones and broken teeth, pulp problems and temporomandibular joint conditions," said Walton, 386th Medical Group orthodontist.

The procedures that must be performed in response to these problems—such as root canals and filling replacements—range depending on the severity of the infection or injury to the mouth. Walton may have to replace a filling and pin a tooth together one day and suture someone's lip together the next.

"We stay busy here," said Walton. "I've always heard historically that the dentists stay pretty busy on deployments. There's always a steady stream of dental problems that happens here."

Things are both busy and different for Tech. Sgt. Jason Staggers, a 386th MDG dental technician who calls Berkeley home. He was mostly used to cleaning teeth at his clinic at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

He said the range of procedures he sees in his new assignment keeps things interesting, and it gives his work a different feeling than working back in the U.S.

"Back home you get into a routine, a sort of 9-to-5 type of thing," said Staggers. "I didn't realize how important dental was until I came out here. Getting people out of tooth pain and getting them back to their jobs is very important."

Walton and Staggers understand that importance, and have adjusted their range of care accordingly. They exclude routine dental work, such as teeth cleaning, from the services they offer. The clinic also refrains from performing major oral surgery operations, such as wisdom tooth removal and other tooth extraction procedures. In cases where that level of care is needed, Walton will refer the patient to a nearby dental facility at Camp Arifjan in Kuwait, which has the tools and personnel to handle the work.

Walton said he was impressed by the capabilities of Camp Arifjan. He's had to refer a few patients there for surgery and advanced infections, and said he was able to do so in confidence and has not been disappointed.

The dental clinics at Camp Arifjan allow Walton to concentrate on getting people the help they need quickly, instead of him having to devote hours to one patient for oral surgery.

Because of this, Staggers said the clinic is able to treat a lot of non-traditional patients as well.

"With it being a walk-in clinic, we see a lot of transients flying on their way back to Landstuhl (Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, operated by the U.S. Army) or to other locations," Staggers said. "We also see a few Army and Navy, as well as Koreans and Australian military."

The ability to extend his services internationally and non-traditionally to other services and coalition forces that need the care is especially satisfying to Walton, who considers himself a nontraditional orthodontist.

After graduating from dental school, Walton participated in a few different specialized Air Force training programs, including maxillofacial prosthetics and prosthodontics. His path through the dental profession drew him away from general dentistry, which he hadn't performed in 10 years.

After being notified of his deployment, Walton said he relied on the Air Force Dental Corp in his attempt to familiarize himself with general dentistry procedures.

"It all came back to me," said Walton, a father of three who takes his children's dental care as seriously as his profession. "That was nice to see, that I could bring those skills back to the forefront that I hadn't practiced in a while. It's made me feel really good to be here, because I know the work we're doing is important and it shows every day.

"I know that if we weren't here, there would definitely be something of a vacuum or a hole that's not being filled," he continued. "To know that you can come over here and step into a job like this and make your own little impact for your country just feels good. And I know (Sergeant Staggers) and I will go back home proud of the work we were able to accomplish." ■

Staff Sgt. Vincent Borden is with the 386th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs office.

RAHEEM MOORE

Lt. Col John Walton, a Danville native, and Tech. Sgt. Jason Staggers work together to repair Australian Air Force Sgt. Courtenay Brockman's broken tooth during an emergency visit Nov. 4 to the 386th Expeditionary Medical Group dental clinic on an air base in Iraq.

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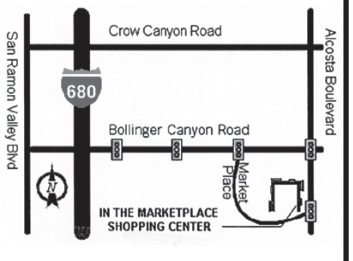

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OF NOTE

Mustang Soccer greats

Mustang Soccer committee chairman Matt Zahner presents the eighth annual Mustang Soccer Student Athlete Awards for 2008 to Chris Walden (San Ramon Valley High School), Ben Wang (Athenian), Mitch Stein and Garrett Weiss (Monte Vista High School). Each year the organization recognizes seniors for their altruistic and valuable contributions to Mustang Soccer, outstanding performance as soccer athletes and exemplary academic achievements.

Gala for a good cause

Scott Zenaro, a patient, from Boston who is living in L.A. while receiving treatments, and Susan Sappington, Chairman of the Board for Lazarex, attend the Lazarex Cancer Foundation Gala in October. The Lazarex Cancer Foundation, which is located on Front Street in Danville, supports cancer patients who have been failed by conventional medicine by providing financial assistance and access to other methods.

Search a complete Restaurant Listing on **DanvilleWeekly.com**

Forks Corks & More

AMERICAN

Bridges Restaurant & Bar
44 Church Street, Danville, (925) 820-7200. Bridges in downtown Danville is the ideal venue for lunch or dinner. Enjoy cozy, alfresco dining on our vine-covered patio, or experience the warm ambience of our main dining room. The sleek, contemporary bar/lounge area is ideal for meeting friends after work, offering a delicious "small bites" menu and specialty cocktails. Executive chef Kevin Gin creates an inspired seasonal menu featuring California cuisine with European and Asian influences. Lunch Monday-Friday, 11:30 a.m.-2:30p.m. Dinner nightly. Complimentary valet parking.

PIZZA

Amici's East Coast Pizzeria
720 Camino Ramon, (in the Rose Garden), Danville, 925-837-9800. Amici's offers authentic, thin, crisp-crust Pizza and a casual Italian menu of freshly made Pastas and Salads, all available for takeout and delivery as well as dine-in at this new Danville location. Check out the menu or order online at **www.amicis.com**

WINE - RETAIL/TASTING

Bella Vino
3450 Camino Tassajara, Danville, 94506, 925-648-1300. Taste a variety of wines at leisure or grab a bottle to go!

WINE - RETAIL/TASTING

Tasting Tuesday - Sunday. Special tasting events every Thursday and Live Jazz on Fridays.

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1.15 MEET THE WINEMAKER
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1.16 Come Jazz Our Sue Lukito & Guest Musician 7:30pm to 9:30pm

Check us out online on our events page for current upcoming events at **www.bvino.com**

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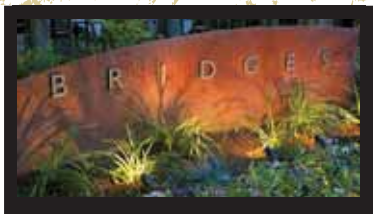
The Vine at Bridges, 480 Hartz Avenue, Downtown Danville. 820-7210. Wine shop open from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Closed Mondays. Wine Bar open Tuesday through Saturday evenings and Sunday afternoon. 30 wines are available to taste at the wine bar and 260 different wines are available for purchase in the wine shop.

1/3 & 1/10 - In Store Educational Tastings 1-4pm (Regular tastings 1-4pm on Saturdays). Hosted by Curtis Mann. No reservations required. Tasting fee depends on the wines being poured and will be refunded with a two bottle purchase.

1/6 - Wine Club Pick Up Party 5-6pm. Join one off our two great wine clubs and come in and taste the wines that are part of the club.

Gift certificates available–makes a great stocking stuffer!

For more information about events please visit **www.thevineatbridges.com**



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Epicure

BY JACQUI LOVE MARSHALL

A year of recession cooking

A new year offers new commitments, new hopes, new opportunities; 2009 also promises to have its share of financial, employment, real estate and other challenges.

Even those of us in comfortable, upscale communities will not be immune to these challenges, and the smartest of us will use this year of transition to tighten our belts a bit and re-institute a few cost-conscious shopping and cooking habits within our households. But don't sacrifice healthy eating for the sake of saving a little. That would be, as my wise grandfather used to say, "penny wise and pound foolish." With some creative shopping and cooking strategies, however, it's possible for your family to eat healthier while also spending less.

- **Shopping:**
  - Consider generic brands (e.g., Whole Foods' 365 brand; Safeway's O brand); identify your favorites and stick with them
  - Buy long-shelf items in bulk and freeze/store
    — Dry: beans, rice, pasta, oats, sugar, flour, spices
    — Liquid: oil, syrup, soy sauce, honey, peanut butter
  - Purchase spices, nuts, grains, etc., in small quantities only as you need them
  - Reduce waste; buy fresh items only as you will consume them weekly
  - Take note of sale products and specials; build menus around them
  - Collect and use coupons to offset costlier items
  - Buy and marinate cheaper cuts of meat
  - Give up dairy products, packaged snacks or sugared beverages one week a month
- **Cooking:**
  - Cook more chicken; cook vegetarian one to two times a month
  - Make more whole-meal soups and casseroles
  - Recycle leftovers for take-to-work lunches, omelets, salads, sandwiches, etc.
  - Use fruits and vegetables seasonally
  - Make your own bread, yogurt, granola, etc.
  - Develop healthy, home-made alternatives to your family's favorite fast-food meals
- **Other:**
  - Set limits for take-out or dining; set monthly cost boundaries
  - Plant a small vegetable garden for your family

Below are recipes for home-made chicken nuggets and shoestring potatoes; serve with your family's favorite nugget sauces and a side salad for a delicious, low-cost, homemade meal.

No matter what you do to save a dollar or two in the checkout lanes throughout 2009, I wish you a year of eating well. Bon appetit! Guten appetit! Buon appetito! Itadakimasu! Aacha Khaleyah! Est gezunterhayt! An ngon nhé! Buen provecho!

Jacqui Love Marshall lives in San Ramon with her pug, Nina Simone, and volumes of cookbooks and recipes. Her column runs every other week. E-mail her at jlovemarshall@yahoo.com.

RECIPES

Mickey D's á la Home Baked Chicken Nuggets
(four 3-oz. servings)

1-1/2 pounds chicken thighs, boneless, skinless
1 cup ready-to-eat cereal, cornflakes, crumbs
1 tsp paprika
1/2 tsp Italian herb seasoning
1/4 tsp garlic powder
1/4 tsp onion powder

1. Remove skin and bone; cut thighs into bite-sized pieces.

2. Place cornflakes in plastic bag and crush with a rolling pin; add remaining ingredients to bag. Close bag tightly and shake until blended.

3. Add a few chicken pieces at a time to crumb mixture; shake to coat evenly.

4. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Lightly grease a cooking sheet.

5. Place chicken pieces on cooking sheet so they don't touch; bake until golden brown, 12-14 minutes.

Shoestring Potatoes
(four 6-oz. servings)

1-1/2 pounds potatoes
3 Tbsp vegetable oil
1/4 tsp salt
1/4 tsp pepper

1. Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Wash potatoes; cut lengthwise into thin strips.

2. Combine remaining ingredients in plastic zip-lock bag. Put potatoes in bag; seal; and shake to coat potatoes.

3. Arrange potatoes in single layer on baking sheet; bake until crisp and golden, about 30 minutes.

Recession Cooking Resources:

www.slashfood.com/2008/08/13/tip-of-the-day-what-to-do-with-leftover-veggies/
www.theculinaryreview.com/
www.frugalrecipes.com/
www.rebeccablood.net/thriftyo/
www.wholeandnatural.com/servlet/StoreFront
http://sistersvegan.blogspot.com/2008/04/eating-vegan-on-cheap.html

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Danville WEEKLY.com

Presenting the Past

BY BEVERLY LANE

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

Service with a smile

Meat was delivered throughout the Valley in this Danville Market wagon, pulled by a gentle horse and driven by the jaunty Joseph E. Lawrence. His father, Joseph C. Lawrence, opened a butcher shop on Prospect Avenue in Danville in 1897 where he sold meat, poultry, milk, cream and eggs from local ranches. Fresh fish was also delivered in a horse and cart by Louis Pelligrini, whose friendliness and fondness for singing opera were recalled by many. His nickname was "Louie the Fish Man."

OF NOTE

Teen is first runner-up in national pageant

Alexandra Curtis

Monte Vista junior and Miss Danville 2007, Alexandra Curtis, competed in the National All-American Miss Teen Pageant during Thanksgiving break and was selected First Runner-Up in the national competition.

Curtis won numerous awards at her state pageant in August to qualify her to compete nationally. She won the Actress and Photogenic Awards and first runner-up to Spokesmodel and Casual Wear model awards. She was also crowned "Cover Girl" for her outstanding program participation and ad sales.

Though Curtis narrowly missed winning the National All-American Queen's title, she is excited to once again represent the Danville community at the 30th annual Miss Teenage California Scholarship Pageant in Los Angeles in April. Pageant officials have appointed her "Miss Teen Contra Costa County."

Chimneys loaded with toys

Three SUVs full of toys were delivered to Foster-A-Dream on Dec. 13 after the Green Valley Elementary PTA sponsored a toy drive during the month of December to support the organization's Winter Wonderland. Green Valley children brought in hundreds of toys and gift cards to treat foster children a magical holiday experience.

Green Valley PTA is proud that during these difficult economic times, their families gave what they could to make a difference.

Sports

A LOOK AT THE LOCAL SPORTS SCENE

Angels win Turkey Shoot-Out

The Blue Angels CYO basketball team of sixth-grade girls at St. Joan of Arc won the Turkey Shoot-Out held after Thanksgiving for MVP Flight and Flight Elite Basketball. These girls fought hard for three straight victories and are undefeated in CYO league play.

Team members are (top, l-r) Coach Jeff Tallerico, Jessica Tallerico, Vidhi Sachdeva, Taylor Nixon, Kaidyn McClure, Isabella Denton, Sally Kim, Assistant Coach Dean Mills, (bottom) Katie Letts, Madison Mills, Maria Nazarova, Kaila Young and Mackenzie Mills.

Avalanche win sends it to Sunset Cup

The Avalanche Under 14 white-plus girls team won the Mustang playoffs in a close game, 1-0, against the Lightning. The Avalanche went on to represent Mustang in the Sunset Cup played Dec. 6-7.

Team members are (back row, l-r) Coach Jose Velo, Coach Bob Belson, Coach Bill Warnken, (middle) Jennifer Quillin, Karen Kennedy, Katelyn Belson, Noelle Ruese, Marina Velo, Emily Burchfield, Madison Chambers, (front) Heather Rigby, Haley Anderson, Alyssa Gerontides, Amanda O'Brien, Cami Warnken, Alaynna Rudd and Annie Taylor.

Vipers win Dick King Tournament

The Vipers are U12 Mustang Dick King Tournament champions after beating the Venom, 3-0, in the championship game in November. Team members are (first row, l-r) Brian Cheng, Zach Morris, Daniel Golub, Jack Carbonell, Trent Fornasier, Austin Damero, (second row) Chris Cheng, Alex Raymond, Baxter Cantrell, Jack Maloon, Jiwan Karunatilake, Conor Mullins, Ryan Mullins, Mason Schinnerer, Taylor Roper, Brendan Suh, (third row) assistant coach Peters Suh, head coach Tim Morris and assistant coach John Schinnerer.

Fury girls are champs

The Division III Girls Mustang Fury U-9 were victorious in their quest to become District Cup Champions over the weekend of Dec. 6-7. They went undefeated the entire weekend with every team member contributing to their success. The "Fury Girls" team pictured with their coaches are (back row, l-r) Assistant Coach Jamie Nelson, Head Coach Michael Schmahl, (middle) Julia Racioppo, Lizzy Vojvoda, Genevieve DeWalt, Caitlin Putvin, Blaire Southmayd, Molly Kolander, (front) Natalie Schmahl, Katie Kim, Maddie Nelson, Thea Pelz, Rory Biles and Megan Rose.

Division victory for Mad Dogs

Mad Dogs U-10 Mustang soccer team finished at the top of their division this year under the guidance of coaches David Sanghera and Vic Lorenc. Team members are (top row, l-r) Eshan Bhargava, Gustavo Madsen, Jared Buxton, Aaron Sanghera, Kieran Gallagher, Shashwat Bhargava, Shervin Soroosian, (bottom) Shrish Ganjoo, Wyatt Dennis, James Morizono, Jake Obujen and Alexander Lorenc.

PREP SCHEDULE

Saturday, Jan. 3

Men's Basketball
San Ramon Valley at College Park, 5:30 p.m.
Wrestling
Mat Classic at Granada, 9 a.m.
Monte Vista at Granada
Women's Basketball
Women's Basketball
Monte Vista vs. Castlemont, 3 p.m.

Tuesday, Jan. 6

Men's Basketball
San Ramon Valley at Amador, 7 p.m.
Monte Vista at Granada, 7 p.m.
Men's Soccer
San Ramon Valley vs. Granada, 6 p.m.
Monte Vista vs. Cal High, 6 p.m.

Wednesday, Jan. 7

Women's Soccer
San Ramon Valley at Granada, 6 p.m.
Monte Vista at Cal High, 6 p.m.
Women's Basketball
San Ramon Valley vs. Amador, 7 p.m.
Monte Vista vs. Granada, 7 p.m.

Thursday, Jan. 8

Wrestling
San Ramon Valley vs. Livermore, 7 p.m.
Monte Vista at Foothill
Men's Soccer
San Ramon Valley at Cal High, 6 p.m.
Monte Vista vs. Livermore, 6 p.m.

Friday, Jan. 9

Women's Soccer
San Ramon Valley vs. Cal High, 6 p.m.
Monte Vista at Livermore, 6 p.m.
Women's Basketball
San Ramon Valley at Livermore, 7 p.m.
Monte Vista vs. Foothill, 7 p.m.
Men's Basketball
Monte Vista at Foothill, 7 p.m.

Friday-Saturday, Jan. 9-10

Wrestling
Valley of the Moon Tournament in Sonoma

Calendar

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN OUR COMMUNITY • POST CALENDAR ITEMS AT WWW.DANVILLEWEEKLY.COM

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.

Youth Music Festival Auditions Auditions will be held for solo vocalists, instrumentalists, and vocal and instrumental ensembles, ages 18 and under, from 6-9 p.m., Wednesday-Thursday, Jan. 14-15, at Amador Theater, 1155 Santa Rita Rd., Pleasanton. Appointments are required; call 931-3481.

Civic Meetings

Alamo Community Council Alamo Community Council meets at 5 p.m., the second Thursday of each month, at Hap Magee Ranch Park, Swain House, 1025 La Gonda Way, Danville. The public is welcome to attend.

Danville Parks and Leisure Services Commission The Commission meets regularly on the second Wednesday of every month at 7 p.m. in the Town Meeting Hall, 201 Front St.

Danville Planning Commission The Commission meets regularly on the second and fourth Tuesday of every month at 7:30 p.m. in the Town Meeting Hall, 201 Front St.

Town Council Meeting The Danville Town Council normally meets on the first and third Tuesdays of each month at 7:30 p.m. at the Town Meeting Hall, 201 Front St.

Clubs

Alamo Cribbage Club The club plays cribbage for fun. It meets at 6:30 p.m. every Wednesday at the Safeway conference room, 200 Alamo Plaza, Alamo. Call 284-7044 or e-mail almoy1@prodigy.net.

Alamo Rotary The Alamo Rotary meets at noon every Wednesday at Roundhill Country Club, 3169 Roundhill Road. Call Mark Kahn at 837-3262.

Alamo Women's Club Federated The club meets on most Wednesdays at its clubhouse, 1401 Danville Blvd. It holds a business meeting and tea the second Wednesday at noon; meets for Mah Jong at 10:30 a.m. the third Wednesday; and holds a luncheon with program at noon the fourth Wednesday. For information, call 552-9733.

Alamo-Danville Artists' Society Alamo-Danville Artists' Society (ADAS) hosts monthly meetings featuring well-known guest artist demonstrations on the second Tuesday of every month. These meetings are free and open to the public. This society also hosts Art in the Park and Open Studios to raise funds for art programs in the San Ramon Valley area schools. Visit www.adas4art.org.

Alamo-Danville Newcomers Club This club is open to new and long-time residents of the surrounding areas. If you are interested in making new friends, learning more about the area or getting involved in various activities, call 775-3233 or visit www.alamodanvillenewcomers.com.

Amador Valley Quilters Meeting This club will meet for its January meeting featuring Karen Boutte with a lecture about African American Quilters and their Quilts from 1:30-4:30 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 10, at Pleasanton Middle School, 5001 Case Ave.

Communication Arts Network This organization meets at 11:45 a.m., the second Tuesday of every month, at Forli Ristorante, 3160 Danville Blvd., Alamo. The organization is for professionals interested in networking with others in the communications industry. Cost is $20, including lunch. Visit www.commartnet.org.

Danville AM Toastmasters Club The club meets from 7-8:30 a.m., every Tuesday, at Father Nature's, 178 E. Prospect Ave. Guests are welcome. For more information, contact Dave Miklasevich at 899-1543 or dmik210@yahoo.com or www.danvilleamtoastmasters.org.

Danville Lions Club This club meets at 7 p.m., on the first and third Wednesday of every month, at the Brass Door, San Ramon. For information, call Tom Jackson at 984-1541.

Danville PM Toastmaster Club #1785 The club meets from 7:30-9 p.m., every Wednesday, at DVC, San Ramon Campus, 1690 Watermill Rd., San Ramon. Guests are welcome. For information, call Debra Elmore at 934-3113 or visit www.danvilletoastmasters1785.com.

Danville Rotary The Danville Rotary meets at noon, every Monday at the Brass Door, 2154 San Ramon Valley Blvd., San Ramon. For information, visit www.danvillerotary.org.

Danville Women's Club This club meets for lunch, a program and a business meeting on the third Thursday of every month, September-May and on the first Thursday of June, at the clubhouse, 242 Linda Mesa Ave., Danville. Dues are $30 annually with a $5 initiation fee for new members. Call 837-1165.

Danville-Sycamore Valley Rotary The Danville-Sycamore Valley Rotary Club meets for breakfast at 7 a.m. every Tuesday at Crow Canyon Country Club, 711 Silver Lake Drive, Danville. Join them for great fellowship and make a difference in your community and the world. Call Scott at 743-8449.

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 Chapter, Order of Eastern Star Eastern Star is a social order with a concentration on philanthropy. Currently, the Diablo Chapter is collecting and making baby quilts, hats, booties, clothing, etc. for the babies at the Contra Costa Regional Medical Center. Additionally, care packages are sent to the troops in Iraq. The club meets at 7:30 p.m., on the second Monday of every month, at the Orinda Masonic Center, 9 Altarinda. Call 283-7176.

Diablo Valley Fly Fisherman This club meets at 7 p.m. on the second Tuesday of every month at Heather Farm Lakeside Room, 301 N. San Carlos, Walnut Creek. Guests are welcome. For information, visit www.diablovalleyflyfish.org.

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.

Diablo View Toastmasters AM Afraid of public speaking? Lose your fears and develop communication and leadership skills by meeting with the Diablo View Toastmasters from 7:55-9 a.m., every Tuesday, at 111 2333 San Ramon Valley Blvd., San Ramon. Call Sahar Kordahi at 315-8730.

Diablo View Toastmasters Club Novice and veteran speakers meet to support and encourage development of professional and personal speaking skills from 7:55-9 a.m., every Tuesday, at 111 Deerwood Rd., San Ramon. Guests are welcome. Call 736-8808.

Ellen's Guild Ellen's Guild is a non-profit group dedicated to supporting programs of Family Stress Center of Contra Costa County to help make a difference in lives of underprivileged children. It meets from 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., second Tuesday of every month. New members welcome. Membership fee $40 a year. Visit www.familystresscenter.org or call 820-2371.

Exchange Club of San Ramon Valley The Exchange Club of San Ramon Valley meets from noon-1 p.m., on the second Wednesday of every month, at Faz, 600 Hartz Ave., Danville. Meetings include lunch, a guest speaker and business networking. Guests are invited with reservations; call 275-2412.

Friends of the Danville Library Friends of the Danville Library are renewing annual memberships and recruiting new members to help support, raise funds and sponsor programs for the Danville library. There are many benefits of being a Friend including merchant discounts, volunteer opportunities and preview of book sales. Dues and donations are tax deductible. Application forms are at the library, 400 Front St. Call 837-4455.

Grandmothers Club Grandmothers of all ages meet for lunch at 11 a.m., on the second Friday of every month, at the Brass Door, 2154 San Ramon Valley Blvd., San Ramon. If interested, contact Fran Britt at 743-4026.

Homeowner/Homebuyer Book Club The Homeowner/Homebuyer Book Club is a place to learn, share and discuss. It meets at 6 p.m. the first Monday of each month, at 3223 Crow Canyon Road, second floor conference room, San Ramon. Call 397-2093.

Job's Daughters Installation The members of Bethel No. 247 Danville of Job's Daughters International will host an installation ceremony from 7-11 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 3, at the Danville Grange, 743 Diablo Rd. A reception and dance will follow the ceremony; semi-formal attire. This event is free. Call 829-8505.

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.

Porsche Club of America, Diablo Region This club is for owners and enthusiasts of all Porsches. It meets at 8 a.m. every Saturday for breakfast at Marie Callendar's, 1101 S. California Blvd., Walnut Creek. Visit www.pca.org/dia.

San Ramon Valley Genealogical Society This group meets at 10 a.m., on the third Tuesday of every month (except August and December), at the Danville Family History Center, 2949 Stone Valley Rd., Alamo. The public is welcome. Call Ed at 299-0881 or visit http://srvgensoc.org.

San Ramon Valley Newcomers Luncheon This club will host a luncheon at 11:30 a.m., Thursday, Jan. 15, at the Brass Door, San Ramon. Guest speaker will be Franklin Dill, physical therapist and director of Sport Fit. Call Paula at 735-6483 or visit www.srvnc.com.

San Ramon Valley Rotary Club This club meets for dinner at 7 p.m., every Wednesday, at the Crow Canyon Country Club, 711 Silver Lake Dr., Danville. Guests are welcome. The club offers a great way to make new friends while making a difference in your community. Call Dany at 838-9110.

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.

Events

Contemporary Ballet's Program A Company C Contemporary Ballet presents Program A, which includes the world premiere of Charles Anderson's "The Song Remains the Same", a new ballet set to six Led Zeppelin songs at 8 p.m., Friday-Saturday, Jan. 23-24, at the Lesher Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Dr., Walnut Creek. Tickets are $40 for general seating, $25 for students and seniors. Call 943-SHOW (943-7469) or visit www.companycballet.org.

Farmers Market The Danville Farmers Market is open from 9 a.m.-1 p.m., every Saturday at the Railroad Avenue Municipal Parking Lot, at the corner of Railroad and Prospect avenues. Call 825-9090 or visit www.pcfma.com.

Single Cougars Party Single adults of all ages are invited to break the age barrier at the first-ever Single Cougars Party from 7-9 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 8, at Faz Restaurant, 600 Hartz Ave., Danville. The party is based on Valerie Gibson's book "Cougar: A Guide for Older Women Dating Younger Men." Cost is $10. Call (415) 507-9962 or visit www.thepartyhotline.com.

Tour of the Blackhawk Museum Blackhawk Museum sponsors a docent-led tour of the museum's Renowned Exhibitions at 2 p.m. every Saturday and Sunday. The tour is free with admission. For information, call 736-2280.

Exhibits

Illuminated Sculpture Bedford Gallery will host an exhibit titled "Illuminated Sculpture" from Jan. 11-Feb. 22, at the Bedford Gallery, Lesher Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Dr., Walnut Creek. An opening reception will be from 3-5 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 11; admission is $5. Call 295-1417.

Fundraisers

Friends of the Library Book Sale Friends of the Danville Library will host a book sale from 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Friday, Jan. 16 (members only from 9-10 a.m.); 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 17; and from noon-4 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 18, at the Danville Library, 400 Front St. Call 837-4889.

Kids and Teens

Children's Film Festival Review Inspire young cinematographers to follow their dreams to see the best

WEEKEND PREVIEW

'Art and Artists'

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, located at the corner of Railroad and Prospect avenues, Danville. The museum is open 1-4 p.m., Tuesday-Friday and from 10 a.m.-1 p.m., Saturday. Call 837-4889.

award-winning short films for children from the California Independent Film Festival on Saturday, Jan. 17, at Front Row Theater at Dougherty Station Community Center, 17011 Bollinger Canyon Rd., San Ramon. Tickets are $8. Call 973-ARTS or visit www.sanramonperformingarts.com.

Free Online Tutoring Available Contra Costa County Library is offering free homework help from expert online tutors to students grade 4-12 and beginning college from 1-10 p.m., Monday-Friday, at http://ccclib.org

Kids Circle and Teen Talk The Wellness Community will host this workshop for school-age children and teens to participate in activities that will help them express themselves when a parent has cancer from 10 a.m.-1 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 10, at the Wellness Community, 3276 McNutt Ave., Walnut Creek. Parents meet concurrently. Call 933-0107.

Thomas the Tank Engine Funshop Blackhawk Museum will host a drop-in funshop about Thomas the Tank Engine and Friends from 1-4 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 11, at the Blackhawk Museum, 3700 Blackhawk Plaza Circle, Danville. This event is free with museum admission. Call 736-2277.

Willy Claflin to Entertain at Next SaturYAY! Parents' Choice Gold Award winner Willy Claflin and his sidekick, Maynard the Moose, will entertain with stories and musical surprises at 11 a.m., Saturday, Jan. 10, at Amador Theater, 1155 Santa Rita Rd., Pleasanton. Tickets are $10, $14 and $18 for adults; $6, $10 and $14 for children. Call 931-3444 or visit www.civicartstickets.org.

YMCA Adventure Guides The San Ramon Valley YMCA is still accepting registrations for its 2008-2009 Adventure Guides and Trailblazers program, which includes fun and life-enriching activities for fathers and their children. Call 831-1100 or visit www.mdrymca.org.

Lectures/ Workshops

Cancer 101 The Wellness Community will host a workshop on cancer which will cover subjects like understanding your diagnosis, what cancer is, navigating the health care system, using the internet as a research tool and more from 4-6 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 27, at the Wellness Community, 3276 McNutt Ave., Walnut Creek. Call 933-0107.

Newly Diagnosed Breast Cancer Workshop This 16-week series is for women who have just been diagnosed and are either in treatment or starting treatment for breast cancer and meets from 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Jan. 14-April 29, at the Wellness Community, 3276 McNutt Ave., Walnut Creek. Guest medical experts will present information. This group is free. Call 933-0107.

Stress Reduction and Guided Imagery This workshop will help those with cancer and their loved ones focus and relax the mind and body to experience relief from negative emotional states. The group will meet from 6-8 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 22, at ValleyCare Medical Plaza, 5725 West Las Positas, Pleasanton. The techniques have been shown to stimulate the immune system and help you use the power of your mind and imagination. Call 933-0107.

Seniors

Bridge Seniors meet to play bridge from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. every Friday at the Danville Veteran's Memorial Hall, 400 Hartz Ave. Experienced players only. Cost is $1. Reservations are required. Call Jerri Kaldem at 837-6283.

Buzz Sessions Town of Danville presents Buzz Sessions for seniors from 1-2:30 p.m., each fourth Tuesday of the month, at Danville Library, Mt. Diablo Room, 400 Front St. These events are free, but register to reserve your place by calling 314-3400.

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.

Free Tax Help For seniors 60 years and older, free tax help for middle or low incomes is available Tuesdays, Feb. 7-April 11. For an appointment, call Gloria at 837-7628.

Prime Time Special Presentations Prime Time holds non-denominational gatherings for "seasoned citizens" from 9 a.m.-1 p.m., every Tuesday, at Community Presbyterian Church, 222 W. El Pintado, Danville. The group also hosts special presentations at 11 a.m., Saturdays, including The Good Time Performers on Jan. 31; Don Phelps, a leading authority of Native American artifacts on Feb. 14; and The Singing Realtors on Feb. 28. 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.

Sports

Adult Open Gym Basketball Danville Parks and Recreation Department holds drop-in basketball year-round at the Los Cerros Middle School, 968 Blemer Road, for ages 18 and over. Drop-in times are 7:30-9 a.m., Saturdays. Bring your own ball. Cost is $3 for residents, $5 for non-residents. Call 314-3400.

Adult Softball Adult Softball plays pickup softball at 9:30 a.m., Tuesdays and Thursdays year-round. New members welcome. Call Bob Randall at 855-4646 for more information

Baseball Beyond 12 Years Old Danville Little League has expanded to include Junior and Senior Programs. Team formation will be dependent upon player registration and parent manager/coach volunteer support. Tryouts for the 2009 season will be from 5-9 p.m., Friday, Jan. 9, at Sycamore #4. Call 989-1404 or visit www.danvillelittleleague.net .

Danville Little League Player Tryouts Tryouts for Danville Little League for 9-year-olds will take place Saturday, Jan. 31; Saturday, Jan. 17 for ages 10-12. Times and location to be announced.

Danville Tennis Club The Danville Tennis Club meets 6:30-9 p.m., Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays; and 9-11 a.m., Saturdays for drop-in tennis at San Ramon Valley High School. This free co-ed club provides play for 4.0 to 5.0 and very strong 3.5 level players. See information at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/danvilletennisclub.

Walnut Creek Tennis Club WCTC is a free, co-ed tennis group for single adults of all ages and levels (primarily 2.5-3.5). It plays drop-in tennis from 9 a.m.-noon, Saturdays and Sundays at Las Lomas High School in Walnut Creek (S. Main). See information at http://sports.groups.yahoo.com/group/wctc/.

YMCA Youth Basketball League Registration is open for the San Ramon Valley YMCA winter basketball league beginning Jan. 17. Spaces are filling up fast. Sign up online at mdrymca.org, at the YMCA offices in Hap Magee Park or call 831-1100.

Support Groups

Addiction Counseling Narconon offers free counseling, assessments and referrals to centers nationwide to families in need of drug or alcohol addiction help. Call (800) 468-6933 or visit www.stopaddiction.com.

American Chronic Pain Association The ACPA group meets from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. every second and fourth Monday at the Community Presbyterian Church Library at 222 W. El Pintado Rd., Danville.

Bipolar Support Group The Tri-Valley Support Group provides free peer support for people with mood disorders. It meets from 7:15-8:45 p.m., every Wednesday, at St. Clare's Episcopal Church, 3350 Hopyard Road, Pleasanton. Call 560-0842

Blue Star Moms California Blue Star Moms is a support group for families of members of the U.S. Armed Forces. It meets at 7 p.m., the second Wednesday of the month, at the Danville Veterans Hall, 400 Hartz Ave. Call Peggy at 866-7035 or Patty at 838-9096 or visit www.bluestarmoms.org.

Cancer Support Groups Free support, education and stress management for cancer patients and their loved ones, including general support groups for all types of cancer patients as well as cancer specific groups for breast cancer, colorectal cancer, ovarian cancer, lung cancer, prostate cancer, brain tumor, support groups for caregivers and life after cancer. Groups meet at the Wellness Community, 3276 McNutt Ave., Walnut Creek. For times and days, call 933-0107.

Celebrate Recovery Celebrate Recovery is a forward-looking and balanced Christ-centered recovery program for people with hurts, habits and hang-ups. The group meets at 6:30 p.m. for dinner and the program starts at 7 p.m., every Friday, at East Bay Fellowship, 2615 Camino Tassajara, Danville. Childcare available for ages 5-11. Call 736-5100, e-mail celebraterecovery@eastbayfellowship.org or visit www.eastbayfellowship.org.

ClutterLess Self Help Group Is clutter stressing you out? Cluttering is a psychological issue, not just an organizing issue. Join the group at their meeting from 7-8:30 p.m., Mondays, at Pleasanton Presbyterian Church, 4300 Mirador Dr. Optional $2-5 donation. Call 297-9246 or visit www.clutterless.org.

Danville TOPS The Danville chapter of Take Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS) meets at 9 a.m., every Tuesday at St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, 1550 Diablo Road. Call Bob Blendow at 935-9344 or Rosemarie at 838-7870.

Find Help For Addiction Problems with drug or alcohol addiction in a loved one? Don't know whom to turn to for help? Contact Drug Rehab Resource for a free confidential consultation to find the help you need. Call (866) 649-1594 or visit www.drugrehabresource.net.

Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous Are you having trouble controlling the way you eat? There is a solution to weight and diet obsession. This effective 12-step program has proven results. There are no dues, fees or weigh-ins. This group meets from 7-8:30 p.m., every Wednesday, at Grace Presbyterian Church, 2100 Tice Valley Blvd., Walnut Creek. For a complete listing of East Bay meetings, call 838-1837 or visit www.foodaddicts.org.

Heart Support Group This group provides support for people with heart disease, undergone a heart procedure and their families and caregivers and meets from 1:30-3 p.m., on the fourth Saturday of every month, at Kaiser Hospital Medical Office Building, 3rd Floor, Walnut Creek. Hear and learn from healthcare professionals speak on a variety of heart-related topics. Call 708-4151 or visit www.mendedhearts254.org.

Hospice Offers Support Hospice of the East Bay (formerly Hospice and Palliative Care of Contra Costa) offers a variety of support groups and workshops for people experiencing grief and loss after the death of a loved one. All groups and classes are offered for a fee and require pre-registration. Fees are waived for those who cannot afford them. Call 887-5678, ext. 1068.

Man to Man Prostate Cancer San Ramon Regional Medical Center offers "Man to Man Prostate Cancer Support Group" from 7:30-9 p.m., the second Tuesday of every month, at San Ramon Regional Medical Center, South Building, West Day Room, 7777 Norris Canyon Road. Call 933-0107.

Newly Formed Proactive Group for Women Support Group for FIBRO, CFF and Chronic Pain meets from 12:30-2:30 p.m., every other Wednesday. Call 234-5621 or e-mail dsashby@msn.com.

Overeaters Anonymous The group offers a 12-step approach to issues around food, overeating, anorexia and bulimia. There are many different groups that meet at different times and places, visit www.dvig.org.

PFLAG The Danville/San Ramon Valley Chapter of Parents Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) is a support group that meets at 7 p.m., every third Monday at the Danville Congregational Church, 989 San Ramon Valley Blvd. Call 838-8632.

SRV Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous (FA) is a free 12-step recovery program for anyone suffering from food obsession, overeating, undereating and bulimia. This group meets from 7-8:30 p.m. every Tuesday at the San Ramon Library, 100 Montgomery St. Call Gordon at 899-3117 or visit www.foodaddicts.org.

Stroke Support Group of Contra Costa County This group meets at 7 p.m., the second Monday of every month (except August), at John Muir Medical Center, at either the Walnut Creek Campus, Ball Auditorium or the Concord Campus, Concord Room (locations alternate every other month). The group hosts guest speakers and provides coping groups for stroke survivors with and without aphasia or caregivers of stroke survivors. Call 376-6218.

Tri-Valley Parkinson's Support Group The group meets from 10 a.m.-noon, on the second Saturday of every month, at the Pleasanton Senior Center, 5353 Sunol Blvd. The group provides peer support for Parkinson's patients and for their caregivers, families and friends. Call Norman or Jackie Bardsley at 831-9940.

Twin Valley Mothers of Twins Club This club provides support, information and friendship for mothers of any number of multiples meeting every second Tuesday of every month, at John Knox Presbyterian Church, 7421 Amarillo Rd., Dublin. R/T discussion begins at 6:30 p.m.; roundtable discussion is open to all current and prospective members from 7:30-9 p.m., hosted by a twin mom member. Dads and babies welcome! Call 484-5886 or visit www.tvmotc.com.

Volunteering

Adult Literacy Tutor Training Project Second Chance (PSC), the Contra Costa County Library adult literacy program, announces tutor training for volunteer literacy tutors from 6:30-8:30 p.m., Jan. 21 and 24 and from 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Jan. 31, at 75 Santa Barbara Rd., Pleasant Hill. To register, call 927-3250 or e-mail psc@ccclib.org. Cost is a $15 donation. Call 927-3250.

Mt. Diablo State Park Mt. Diablo State Park offers many interesting ways to volunteer by helping with trail maintenance, serving as a docent at one of the Visitors Centers, helping with the new native plants garden or working on the trash removal program. Training provided for all areas. Call 837-6129 or visit www.parks.ca.gov.

Museum of the San Ramon Valley The Museum of the San Ramon Valley welcomes volunteers and has a current need for greeters who give three hours one day a month to welcome visitors to the museum, register their attendance, and give them an introductory tour of the Waiting Room and the Museum Store. Call Carmen Curtis at 837-9781 or the museum at 837-3750.

New Docent Training at Forest Home Farms Forest Home Farms is looking for volunteers to help with the third-grade fieldtrip program and will schedule docent training on Thursday, Jan. 15, at Forest Home Farms, 19953 San Ramon Valley Blvd., San Ramon. Call 973-3282 or visit www.srhf.org.

Role Players Ensemble Theatre Volunteer to greet, seat and serve refreshments to Role Players Ensemble Theatre patrons at Village Theatre, 233 Front St., Danville. Work once per production with a team of 3-4 friendly volunteers. Performances are at 8 p.m., Thursday-Saturday and at 2 p.m., Sunday. Call 820-1278.

San Damiano Retreat Opportunities abound for people of all ages and abilities at San Damiano. Sit and socialize while helping with mailings, enjoy solitude and meditation while cultivating the flower, vegetable and fruit gardens or lend your support to the front desk and gift shop. Call 837-9141, ext. 307 or visit www.sandamiano.org.

San Ramon Valley Education Foundation The San Ramon Valley Eduction Foundation meets the first Friday of every month, 7:45-8:45 a.m., at 699 Old Orchard Dr., Danville. This is a great way to get involved in the education of our local communities. Call 998-5270.

Search and Rescue The Contra Costa County Sheriff's Search and Rescue Team needs volunteer members to respond to missing person incidents, disasters and other critical incidents. Team members are on call 24/7 year round. The program provides required training including wilderness traveling, first aid, map and compass, tracking disaster response and search skills, and may additionally include special training for canine, equestrian, technical, mountain bike or other rescue skills. For information and applications, visit www.contracostasar.org or call 646-4461.

Second Annual Mitzvah Day Join us for a day of community service with rewarding projects for every age and interest, 7 a.m.-7 p.m., Monday, Jan. 19. Location varies by project throughout the Bay Area. Please register at www.paloaltojcc.org/mitzvah or call (650) 852-3502.

Sheriff Seeks Senior Volunteers The Sheriff's Valley Station Office in Alamo is seeking people interested in assisting law enforcement in the community. Citizens should have a clean criminal history and would be responsible for one shift a week for four-and-a-half hours. Interested applicants should call James Hogan or Elmer Glasser at 837-2902.

Trails Maintenance East Bay Trail Dogs is an all-volunteer group that has built, repaired and helped maintain single-track trails in the East Bay Regional Park District, the Mt. Diablo State Park, and Walnut Creek open space. Volunteers meet the fourth Saturday and one weekday each month. To participate, call Harry at 443-3925.

Valley Children's Museum Needs Volunteers If you are interested in working with kids, Valley Children's Museum is looking for you! For information about volunteer opportunities, call 461-6574, 3 # or e-mail Linda@valleychildrensmuseum.org.

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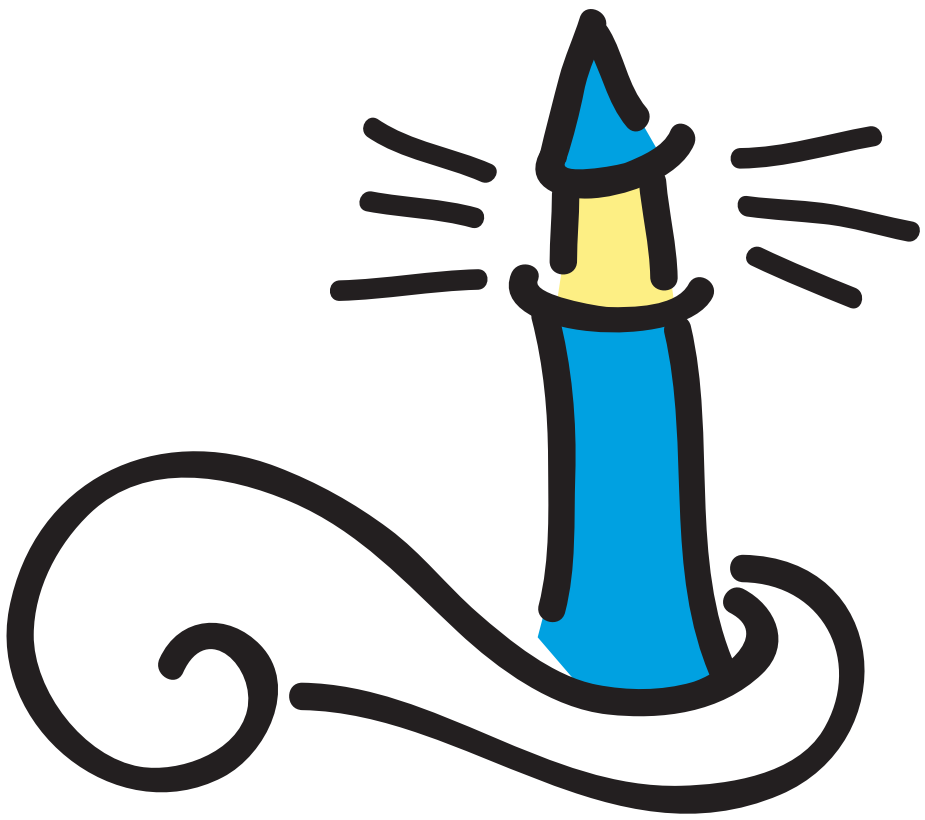
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Real Estate

OPEN HOME GUIDE AND REAL ESTATE LISTINGS

Happy New Year?

Maybe it won't be so bad after all

by Dave Walden

For those worried about the economy and their investments, it may not seem like a very happy New Year. However, it is times like these that we should stop and reflect upon our long-term blessings.

Worried about home prices going down? Yes, median prices were down to around $180,000 last month. This drop was more than 13 percent in one year and represented the largest one-year plunge since the Depression.

Would you like some perspective? Median home prices were approximately $80,000 in 1990. In other words, prices are up 125 percent over the past 20 years even factoring in the recent decline. And with lower home prices and record low rates, homes are now as affordable as they have been for the past decade.

The stock market? Down 40 percent in a year. Obviously stocks are much more volatile than real estate. A drop in a portfolio of 40 percent in one year has to be unnerving. Here we have another historical perspective. In 1990, the Dow Jones average hovered around 3,000 as opposed to the 8,500 during the final month of this year. This also represents an increase of over 100 percent.

There are many who see tremendous buying opportunities in stocks right now, just as many are crowding auction houses to get a chance to bid on real estate bargains.

The message? In every down market opportunities are created. Those who benefit are the ones who step in and take the opportunity of today. The markets will turn around. Those who wait to act are more likely to miss the opportunity. And that is the reason it is a happy New Year. Because we live in a country that gives us the ability to take advantage of opportunities and take the risks that go with these opportunities.

The Markets

Mortgages continued their assault on record lows as they dropped for the eighth week in a row. Freddie Mac announced that for the week ending Dec. 24, 30-year fixed rates averaged 5.14 percent, down from 5.19 percent the week before. The average for 15-year fixed fell slightly to 4.91 percent. Adjustables were mixed with the average for one-year adjustables increasing slightly to 4.95 percent and five-year adjustables falling to 5.49 percent. A year ago 30-year fixed rates were at 6.17 percent.

"Rates on 30-year fixed-rate mortgages eased for the eighth straight week and set another record low since Freddie Mac's survey began in 1971," said Frank Nothaft, Freddie Mac vice president and chief economist.

"Real GDP growth fell 0.5 percent in the third quarter of the year, pulled down by the largest drop in consumer spending since the second quarter of 1980," he added. "The market consensus calls for an even larger decline in the last three months of the year."

"The housing market, meanwhile, continues to contract," Nothaft continued. "Existing home sales (excluding condominiums and co-ops) fell 8.6 percent in November to 4.0 million houses (annualized) in November, representing the slowest pace since July 1997."

Financial mogul Sam Zell, owner of the Tribune Co. which recently declared Chapter 11 bankruptcy, told an Israeli business conference a few weeks ago that the U.S. real estate market will be in recovery by spring 2009.

Zell pointed out that the U.S. population is growing and with fewer than 600,000 building starts in 2008, a million fewer than any of the last 10 years, demand for housing will rise. Zell blamed the current crisis—at least in part—on ill-considered decisions.

"We are living through our first Blackberry recession where, literally, information is instantly disseminated around the world and people, in effect, respond to it, perhaps, often without any particular caution or attention," he said.

Sales are picking up in markets where prices are deflated, but the business is different than it was before the bubble burst, observers say. The housing market in deflated markets, including California, Arizona, Florida, and Nebraska, are beginning to show signs of a rebound.

Analysts say that prices have fallen to the point that those with average salaries can afford to buy once again.

"The buyers are returning," said Lawrence Yun, National Association of Realtors chief economist. "And in such a strong way that now we are hearing in some cases there is multiple bidding, which hints that maybe pricing is reaching a bottom point. But inventory remains high."

In California's San Joaquin County, sales in September and October reached sales levels about equal to business at the height of the boom in 2005, says DataQuick, which provides property data.

But new buyers are primarily first-timers and investors looking to cash in. Local practitioners say the buyers are primarily local residents who have cash to spend.

"It's the couple down the street that has a nice nest egg and who wants to put it into something that will give them a good return," said Bev Marlow, head of the Central Valley Association of Realtors.

With the exception of cash transactions, investment activity in commercial real estate sectors is nearly at a standstill because commercial lending has essentially halted, while job losses are curtailing the demand for space, according to the latest Commercial Real Estate Outlook of the National Association of Realtors.

David Walden is a Certified Mortgage Planning Specialist and Certified Divorce Planning Professional associated with Diversified Capital Funding of Pleasanton.

SALES AT A GLANCE

This week's data represents homes sold during December 2008

Danville

Total sales reported: 8
Lowest sale reported: $534,500
Highest sale reported: $1,950,000
Average sales reported: $952,063

Walnut Creek

Total sales reported: 18
Lowest sale reported: $172,500
Highest sale reported: $1,100,000
Average sales reported: $664,806

HOME SALES

Source: California REsource

This week's data represents homes sold during December 2008

Danville

1236 Ariel Drive Shapell Industries to L. Chow for $1,120,000

736 Blue Spruce Drive A. & M. Kadir to K. Pedersen for $1,950,000

4150 Fox Creek Court D. Krause to J. & T. Lauer for $1,051,000

185 Gil Blas Road Gaponoff Trust to R. & J. Fernandez for $658,000

1025 Hill Meadow Place S. & T. Kay to T. Wilkes for $875,000

3690 Silver Oak Place F. Hamilton to C. & L. Gonzalez for $543,000

61 St. Ann Court T. Hill to M. & T. Silveira for $885,000

419 Sutton Circle D. & C. Porter to S. Lyn for $534,500

Walnut Creek

615 Banbury Court Hughes Trust to D. & R. Wakayama for $955,000

2257 Bromfield Court P. & V. Marana to S. & A. Austin for $1,050,000

2105 Cactus Court #1 F. & R. Marvan to Blankfeld Trust for $865,000

1695 Candelero Court Salvemini Trust to C. Eaton for $420,000

1749 Countrywood Court Richardson Trust to P. & C. Hollenbeck for $330,000

1310 Creekside Drive #201 Iron Horse Place Limited to K. Connolly for $459,000

2102 Dunblane Court Charno Trust to G. Young for $655,000

568 Europa Court Diablo Valley Foundation to G. Siddiqui for $410,000

391 Pimlico Drive M. Cinovic to K. Dyer for $582,500

761 Rosewood Drive Bush Trust to J. & K. Levadou for $640,000

3162 Rossmoor Parkway #2 Rutledge Trust to Gosling Trust for $512,500

172 Rudgear Drive S. & C. Joskowitz to C. Skjorshammer for $1,000,000

150 Sharene Lane #108 Rolfs Trust to C. Cadag for $307,000

2372 St. Ashley Place Normandy Group to B. & N. Berry for $1,078,000

1536 Sunnyvale Avenue CCRD Limited to B. Loh for $505,000

1840 Tice Creek Drive #2213 Brennan Trust to R. Leksan for $172,500

50 Willowbrook Lane H. & A. Ellicock to Chetcuti & Associates for $925,000

703 Woodren Court Regan Trust to Armsby Trust for $1,100,000

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