Pat-down case goes to Supreme Court

Suit filed on behalf of disgruntled Danville 49er fans

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Happy New Year?

Police report no DUI arrests in Danville

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Danville WEEKLY

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

County keeps foster care

Contra Costa will continue services for thousands of children

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Diane Barley

Bob Connelly

Dennis Johnson

Vicki Koc

Karen McPherson

Meet the candidates

16 people are running to be on the first Town Council in Alamo **PAGE 12**

Steve Mick

Vishwas More

John Morrow

Kevin Morrow

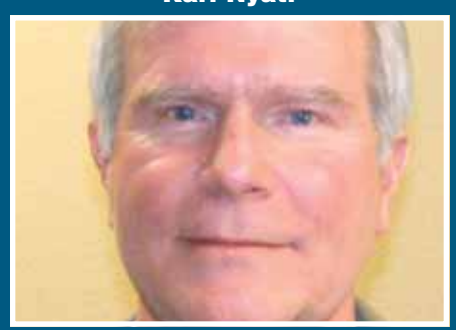
Randy Nahas

Karl Nyati

Joe Rubay

Grace Schmidt

Roger Smith



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Blackhawk Store:
Thursday, 1/15 Red & White Burgundy
Friday, 1/16 Italian Favorites
Saturday, 1/17 Bordeaux Blow-Out
Thursday, 1/22 Wines of Spain
Friday, 1/23 Germany and Alsace
Saturday, 1/24 Southern Hemisphere

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Streetwise

ASKED IN ALAMO

Q: When was the last time you danced?

This morning in the car. A phone ring tone got my hips moving. I also just danced at Costco. There was a great song on the big screen TV there and I just could not help it.

Todd Baron

bartender

Yesterday. I danced to a Justin Timberlake song on my MP3 player. I dance a lot. I go to dance clubs in the city and I take dance classes at Funkmode in Pleasant Hill.

Regina Roman

accountant

I danced to the radio at home yesterday. I am a jazz/hip hop dancer. I also took modern dance class. I have danced since I was a young girl.

Christallyn Tan

dentist

I danced last Saturday at home to Duffy. I dance a lot around the house. Last November, my husband and I went dancing at the Top of the Mark to celebrate our anniversary.

Sharon Kelly

esthetician

I danced with my friends at a Christmas party recently. We danced to Beyonce's "Single Ladies" song. All the single gals got up and danced.

Lana Cross

college student at San Francisco State

COMPILED BY PATTY BRIGGS

ABOUT THE COVER

Sixteen Alamo residents have stepped forward to run for five seats on the first Town Council, in case voters choose to incorporate in the March 3 election. Here we present short profiles on each of the candidates.

Vol. IV, Number 36

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NEWS DIGEST

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"I'm not sure I can fill her shoes or fill the seats the way she would have."

—Charleen Earley, comedienne who worked with Stacey Hartmann on the annual Comedy Night to benefit the National Ovarian Cancer Coalition. See story, page 5.

15 apply for school board position

The San Ramon Valley Unified School District School Board will be going over applications to fill the vacancy left by former Trustree Joan Buchanan, at 2 p.m., Friday, Jan. 9. The meeting is being held at the district offices and is open to the public. Those with questions can contact the district at 552-2933.

Fifteen candidates have filed applications for the position. Danville residents vying for the seat are Lisa Blackwell, Mari Cyphers, Denise Jennison, Judy Lloyd, Geraldine McCloskey Subia, Janet Orgill, James Pandell and Mark Thornton. San Ramon applicants are Chih-chi Chu, Adam Cipriano, Patty Hoyt, Ken Mintz, Lawrence Piatti, Mark Said and Will Sanford.

Dine in, dine out restaurant opens

A new restaurant, ATOL Gourmet Paninis, has opened at 121 Hartz Ave. in Danville in the former Garlex Pizza location.

"We have turned it into a warm, family friendly European-inspired gourmet panini restaurant," said Laurie Lenhart, who owns the restaurant with Menchu Andres, the chef who created the menu. "Everything is made fresh daily at the restaurant." The new restaurant offers lunch specials for the high students during the week. It also delivers lunch to local businesses.

Students to attend inauguration

Twenty students from Athenian high school are flying to Washington, D.C., to attend Barack Obama's Presidential Inauguration. They are being led by teacher April Smock, chairwoman of Athenian's Humanities Department. The group will leave Jan. 17 and return the evening of Jan. 21.

"They are all history students who have written essays about their desire to experience this historic event and their passion for the political process," said Smock in an e-mail. "We are all very excited for this trip."

The students are Regina Chang, Molly Fagan, Payton Gordon, Sarah Ingram, Connor O'Neill, Tina Solvik, Theo Vorster, Jackie Culkin, Kathrina Mathews, Julia Eiden, Sandra Loyola, Jared Madden, Dylan Smock, Kaitlin Plunkett Franklin, Cailie Reesor, Daniella Smith, Kristiana Meyer, Margaret Rowland, Meg McClure and Sarah Weinberg.

Tour raises $15,000 to help scholars

The Danville-Alamo AAUW reports that its Holiday Home Tour on Dec. 12-13 raised more than $15,000 for college scholarships and Tech Trek, a summer math-science camp for seventh-grade girls. All proceeds benefit women in the San Ramon Valley. This year 560 people participated in the two-day event, which featured five fabulous homes decorated for the holidays. The Danville-Alamo AAUW also holds a fund-raising Home and Garden Tour in the spring.

The American Association of University Women scholarships go to women who have lived within the San Ramon Valley Unified School District boundaries during their high school years and are currently a junior in college or above, including graduate school. For scholarship information, go to www.aauw-da.org. This year's application deadline is April 6.

Corrections The Weekly desires to correct all significant errors. To request a correction, call the editor at (925) 837-8300 or e-mail: editor@DanvilleWeekly.com

Newsfront

SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF DANVILLE • BLACKHAWK • DIABLO • ALAMO

Foster care services remain in county hands

Contra Costa cuts staff but keeps well regarded program

by Geoff Gillette

Recent budget cuts in Contra Costa County have resulted in more than 200 positions being eliminated. In many cases, the loss was felt most strongly in the areas of Adult Protective Services and Child Protective Services.

But while many of the county's programs face drastic reductions, there was some small good news amid the bad. Instead of relinquishing control of the county's adoptions and foster home licensing programs back to the state, officials opted to keep the program, which provides services to several thousand children in Contra Costa County.

Joe Valentine, director of County Employment and Human Services, said keeping those programs in-county is a big accomplishment, as they are not state mandated.

"We could have let those go back to the state. But after hearing testimony and not wanting to send the program back to the state's control we came up with an alternate proposal that left us at about 50 percent," Valentine said.

In order to maintain those programs, other areas had to be trimmed down. With the most recent round of cuts, foster home licensing will have three staff members and adoptions will have seven.

"It's not ideal," Valentine said, "but we think we can still provide good services. It will be quite a stretch. Am I worried? Yes, but our staff works hard and we will have to focus on the basics."

Valentine said this means the extra services they had been providing will have to go by the wayside.

"We'll have to cut back on some of the tutoring services we provide for children in foster care to help them in school," he said. "Our workers will just have less time to spend with a foster child or parent than they did before."

Currently, there are 1,700 children in the county's foster care system. There are more than 400 homes that the county licenses, in addition to other programs and group homes that provide services.

For Valentine, the frightening thing is that the cuts they have just endured will not be the last.

"The county administrator has already advised the Board of Supervisors that the continued decline in property values is leading to a further decline in tax revenues and each department is going to have to include some cuts," he explained.

In addition, as the state struggles with its own budget woes, mandated programs in the county will see their funding from the state continue to dwindle. Valentine said he understands how these decisions can be made at the state level but feels legislators may be out of touch with just what it is they are cutting.

"I wish the people in Sacramento could come and spend a day in our offices. These are people who have been working and paying mortgages and now they're lined up outside our offices. We're not just giving away money." He added, "Food stamps go right back into the local economy. I hope they'd understand that not only do we need to support those families in need of help, but that it helps the community as well." ■

Strong voice for cancer awareness stilled

Stacey Hartmann remembered for courage and selflessness

by Geoff Gillette

It's funny how one word can capture the essence of a human being so fully that it stays with you always. In Stacey Hartmann's case that word would be "vibrant." Hartmann, 47, one of the Bay Area's strongest advocates for cancer awareness and treatment, died Jan. 3 after her own eight-year struggle with ovarian cancer.

Stacey Hartmann

Hartmann, a Danville journalist and media specialist for the Town of Danville, was diagnosed with cancer in 2000. Since that time she had waged her own campaign to see to it that other women knew to look for the signs of cancer, to seek out treatment, and to know that they were not alone in the fight against the disease.

"All I know is that she was a remarkable mom and wife," said John Hartmann. "I know it sounds cliched but she was selfless. No matter what problems she had she didn't dwell on it."

John Hartmann said that through the years, the chemo-therapy, recurrences of cancer and a secondary battle with breast cancer, his wife demonstrated unwavering strength and courage.

"People would remark they never thought she was sick," he said.

➤ Continued on page 6

PHOTOS BY GEOFF GILLETTE

An early morning fire raged through the Danville home of John Gallups, gutting the home in less than an hour. Damage has been estimated at $1 million to the home and its contents.

Christmas tree fire destroys Danville home

Resident injured as fire guts house in middle of night

by Geoff Gillette

A crispy Christmas tree has been tagged as the starting point of an early morning fire Sunday on Danville's northwest side that left one man injured and his home destroyed. The fire occurred around 1:20 a.m. at the residence at 8 Diamond Court, said Kim French, spokeswoman for the San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District.

"There were two occupants at the home. One called to report the fire. Engine 31 was the first on the scene and found the home fully involved. We did a defensive attack on the fire," French stated.

French explained that a defensive attack is undertaken when a fire has already reached a certain size. "If it was a smaller fire, we'd gain entry and attack it from inside as well, but because it was fully involved we had to attack it from the outside in."

One of the occupants, identified as John Gallups, 38, suffered burns to his hands and face in the fire and had to be transported to San Ramon Valley Regional Hospital by paramedics. He has since been transferred to San Francisco General Hospital, where he was listed as stable and recovering.

Gallups and his wife were the only two people at the home when the fire broke out. After calling in the alarm they fled to the street outside.

Three engines, two trucks and two paramedics responded to the scene of the two-alarm fire. French said firefighters were able to get the blaze under control within 45 minutes.

The fire, which began in a Christmas tree in the home, quickly spread to the exterior, roof and garage. The family's vehicle and a nearby fence suffered extensive damage as well.

> "Engine 31 was the first on the scene and found the home fully involved."
>
> *—Kim French, San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District*

The 2,200-square-foot home was nearly a total loss, with only parts of the structure still standing. In addition, a fence near the home, the garage and a vehicle were extensively damaged. Damage to the structure was estimated at $750,000, while damage to the contents of the home was estimated at $250,000.

French said they were not certain how the tree caught fire, and investigators are continuing to look for a cause. She added that residents are strongly recommended to safely dispose of their trees after the holiday.

"When the tree becomes dry and brittle to the touch, it's best to get it out of the house," she said. "Store it safely away from your home until it can be disposed of."

Each year firefighters across the United States respond to about 240 Christmas tree-related house fires, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

Between 2003 and 2006, Christmas tree fires caused an average of 16 deaths, 25 injuries and more than $13 million damage each year, the association reported. ■

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Hartmann

➤ Continued from page 5

"When people met her they would just think that she was a strong, healthy, vibrant woman. Her legacy is going to be in her daughters. She taught them, through osmosis or just watching her, to be strong independent women able to handle anything life throws at them."

In public life, Hartmann became an advocate. She was a leader and spokeswoman with the National Ovarian Cancer Coalition. She also, along with good friend Charleen Earley, co-founded Comedy Night, an annual show benefiting cancer research.

"She called me to say she'd been diagnosed with ovarian cancer," Earley recalled. "She said she wanted to be able to rely on my humor during all this."

Earley, working her way into the East Bay's standup comedy scene, took her at her word and began organizing benefit performances dedicated to Hartmann. Earley would work the talent end of the show and Hartmann handle the marketing. "It took off from there," Earley recalled. "We just had our eighth annual show at the Lesher (Lesher Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek)."

With the loss of Hartmann, the question now is whether the show will go on. "All the signs are pointing that way, but I just don't know," Earley stated. "I don't know if I could fill her shoes or fill those seats like she did."

GEOFF GILLETTE

Stacey Hartmann is honored at the Danville Community Service awards in December for her efforts on behalf of cancer awareness.

Hartmann was also well known at the Wellness Community, a Walnut Creek facility that provides support and education for those with cancer as well as loved ones. At the organization's annual gala fundraiser, Hartmann delivered the keynote address.

Executive Director Jim Bouquin lauded Hartmann's courage and the grace with which she approached her disease. "Even when she was in the end stage she showed us how to approach that with dignity and love and was very expressive about her experience. She touched us all again at that stage in her path."

In December, Hartmann was honored at the annual Danville Community Service awards for her efforts on behalf of cancer awareness. After receiving the award Hartmann, trademark smile shining brightly, said simply, "I've lived this journey the only way I know how, and if that's helped other women that warms my heart. That makes me glad."

On her passing, Mayor Newell Arnerich said, "Through her efforts with the National Ovarian Cancer Coalition, she has helped save the lives of other women she will never meet. Stacey's pay-it-forward attitude was her offering to help others. Our community is deeply saddened by the loss of someone so giving to others." ■

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GEOFF GILLETTE

Nancy Watkins works on an oil painting at a seniors art class at the Veterans Hall in Danville, while, in the background, instructor Mark Jezierny works with Sandy Kubal on a pencil sketch.

Registration program puts Danville seniors first

One-day difference gives residents a jump on sign-ups

by Geoff Gillette

The problem with having a successful program is that soon everyone wants to be in it. Which then leads to the issue of how to make the program accessible.

This is the knotty problem that the Danville Senior Issues Subcommittee had to deal with in regards to its Senior Sneakers trips.

Recreation Services Supervisor Jane Laris said the program, which takes seniors on day trips throughout the area, was popular enough that they were turning away a lot of participants. This ruffled some feathers when Danville residents learned that non-residents were getting in on the trips but they weren't.

"We had some Danville residents who were on waitlists for trips and some of our more popular programs," Laris explained.

She said that nearly all of the Senior Sneakers trips fill up fast, as do many of the other programs. So, at their Oct. 22 meeting, the members of the subcommittee examined how to give Danville seniors an edge in signing up for the programs.

The subcommittee was given four options and chose to create a staggered registration start time, with residents getting a one-day jump on non-residents. According to the town, "residents" refers to those within the incorporated boundaries of Danville. Thus, residents of Blackhawk, Alamo, Diablo, Bettencourt Ranch, Bryan Ranch and other developments would sign up one day later.

Laris said the first run at the new registration method occurred Dec. 16 and seemed to go well. "We've gotten only positive response so far," she stated. "We are doing the best we can to get as many people as we can on these trips. We get up to 40-50 on each trip, as many as we can fit on the bus. And if we have a large waiting list and we can get more tickets then we do offer a second trip."

> "We had some Danville residents who were on waitlists for trips and some of our more popular programs."
>
> *— Jane Laris, recreation services supervisor*

The second part of the new program would limit the number of trips seniors can take during each registration session. The updated registration form asks the resident to prioritize which trips they wish to go on and officials will try to get them in their top two. Any person looking to register with a friend or spouse can note it on the registration and if there are not enough spots they could be moved down to the next higher priority trip.

Laris said they are continuing to work on making the trips enjoyable and accessible to all seniors in the area.

The Senior Issues Subcommittee meets on a quarterly basis at the Veterans Hall in Danville. Its next scheduled meeting is at 3:30 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 28. ■

Honor your favorite nonprofit

Danville Weekly sponsoring new community award

The Danville Weekly is sponsoring a new award to be presented at the Awards and Installation Dinner being hosted by the Danville Area Chamber of Commerce next month.

The Weekly is introducing an award for Charitable Organization of the Year to honor a nonprofit group that has made significant, consistent contributions to the San Ramon Valley with a notable contribution in 2008.

"We want to acknowledge the contributions that charitable organizations have made to our community," said publisher Gina Channell-Allen.

Other criteria are that the group has held 501c3 status for at least give years, and that it demonstrates leadership, thoroughness and integrity.

Mail candidate nominations to the Chamber offices, 117-E Town and Country Drive, Danville 94526 Attn: Melony Newman, CEO, or fax to 837-5709. A form is available on the Chamber's Web site, danvilleareachamber.com.

Nominations are due Jan. 15 for this and the three awards that are being presented by other news agencies: Citizen of the Year; Business Person of the Year; and Educator of the Year.

Last year the awards were given to the following:

- Citizen of the Year—Beverly Lane, former Danville mayor and currently director of the East Bay Regional Park District and curator of the Museum of the San Ramon Valley.
- Business Person of the Year—Lori Sato, vice president and branch manager of Union Bank of California in Danville.
- Educator of the Year—Barbara Williams, a well-loved and highly respected teacher at Charlotte Wood Middle Middle School.

"We are pleased to add a new category to the mix," said Channell-Allen, "and to take part in this exciting evening sponsored by the Chamber."

The 2009 Installation Dinner and 2008 Awards will take place at the Blackhawk Museum at 6:30 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 7. Cost is $90. For reservations call 837-4400, ext. 11.

The Chamber will be honoring the top three nominees in each category at the dinner, and the winners will be announced that evening. The Installation Dinner will also recognize the installation of the 2009 Danville Area Chamber of Commerce Chairman of the Board Chris Edlund, the Executive Board, the Board of Directors and outgoing Chairwoman Elaine Cortez Schroth of Bay Building Maintenance Inc. ■

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Danville couple's legal battle to continue

Suit against 49ers goes to California Supreme Court

by Geoff Gillette

Lawyers for the American Civil Liberties Union went before the California State Supreme Court on Tuesday in an effort to halt the practice of pat-down searches of fans attending 49ers games at Candlestick Park.

The suit was filed on behalf of Daniel and Kathy Sheehan of Danville. The Sheehans, long time season ticket holders, were upset by the decision in 2005 to conduct the searches of fans coming into the games. The search consists of security operatives patting down the legs and sides of fans in search of weapons or other contraband.

The Sheehans contend the searches are a violation of privacy.

ACLU attorney Ann Brick said residents are constitutionally protected from unwarranted intrusion. "The California Constitution says that we don't have to pay for access to goods and services with our privacy," she stated.

The change in security measures was instituted on direction of the NFL, as an additional safeguard against terrorist attacks. Attorneys for the 49ers contend that fans have the option of not attending the games if they do not wish to be subject to the pat-down searches.

49ers attorneys also claim that purchasing the tickets provides tacit consent to the searches. This argument held enough merit that the trial court and the Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the sports team.

"I think the most important thing to keep in mind about this case is that the 49ers' theory that they can present privacy invasions on a take-it-or-leave-it basis and Californians' only option is to not go to the games means that the privacy provisions of our State Constitution don't affect our state's private businesses," Brick said Wednesday morning.

The Supreme Court took the case under review after a short hearing Tuesday. A written ruling will be handed down in the next three months. ■

All quiet on the Danville front

Police issue no DUIs on New Year's Eve, but thefts up during long weekend

by Geoff Gillette

Of all the holidays throughout the year, one most closely associated with the imbibing of spirits is New Year's Eve. Parties are held, alcohol consumed, and people drive impaired.

Each year, police officials step up their enforcement efforts over the holiday and many drivers find themselves pulling over with flashing blue and red lights accompanying them to the curb. Not so this year.

The year 2009 entered with barely a hiccup to accompany it as police throughout the Danville area kept the peace. Police Chief Chris Wenzel reported that it was a quiet end of the year.

"We really didn't see much," he said. "Our guys were out there, they were watchful."

Police logs from the department show that no DUI arrests were made between 5 p.m. Dec. 31 and 5 p.m. Jan. 1. The California Highway Patrol offices in Dublin and Martinez reported a total of 14 local arrests during that period with two of those stemming from minor injury accidents that were found to be alcohol related.

As is customary, extra Danville patrol officers were out on the road for the evening, keeping an eye out for impaired motorists. During the afternoon, one pedestrian was arrested for public drunkenness but no drivers were found to be under the influence.

"We were out in force and I thought it went well," Wenzel said of the evening. "It looks like we were doing things right."

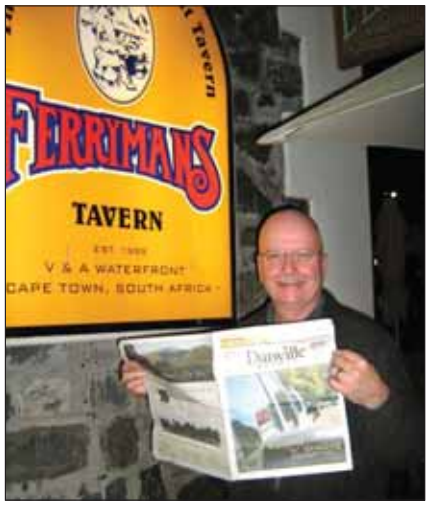
At the same time, logs show that a number of vehicles were burglarized over the long holiday weekend, a fact Wenzel said is something they are going to continue looking at as the new year unfolds.

"The biggest issue we continue to have are the property crimes. I've been here almost six years and we're still trying to get it out to the public," said Wenzel.

In many cases, vehicles are left unlocked or valuables are left out and visible.

"The hot ticket right now are GPS's. They're mounted on the dashboard, you can take them without damaging them," Wenzel explained. "I know it's kind of a hassle taking it out of the car but it's the safest thing to do. At least get them out of open sight."

Wenzel said the department is compiling end of year crime statistics with an eye toward mobilizing resources to problem areas. He said they are looking at trends in property crime to determine how best to respond, whether it be additional officers on the streets, or a suppression unit of undercover officers. ■



Burstedts always take the Weekly

Danville resident Jim Burstedt took along the Weekly last November when traveling to Cape Town, South Africa, the farthest he has ever gone for business. Meanwhile, (see photo at right) his wife April Burstedt and her four girlfriends Renaye Johnson, Pam Kelly, Judy Moniz and Judy Dahlquist took the Weekly on their cruise to Cabo San Lucas.

Diablo Views

BY DOLORES FOX CIARDELLI

New shift for nurses at San Ramon Regional

Aubrey Barker wanted to be an actress when she grew up and hoped to play a nurse. Then she worked in a hospital as a medical secretary when she was 18 and it suddenly occurred to her: "Why don't I just go into nursing?" She'd also come to the realization that she was better in the sciences than the arts.

Barker is one of 10 registered nurses graduating Jan. 8 from the new Versant RN Residency at San Ramon Regional Medical Center. The 18-week program is for recently graduated nurses, to help them transition from their education into real-world clinical settings.

"It's like a medical residency; they do shift work and have classroom experience," said Margie Bickar, program manager, who is also an intensive care nurse.

"Our goal is to retain them at our hospital," Margie continued. "They have been hired full time and are actually working. The last day of the program was Dec. 21 ... they already started working—Dec. 21."

Eight women and two men were in the class, and admittance was competitive.

"We held a recruitment lunch," explained Tina Nowak, director of education. Fifty-five candidates showed up. "It was kind of like speed dating. Ten of us did interviews that were 15 minutes long."

By 2020 the Bay Area is expected to need nearly 14,000 extra RNs to handle the workload that will be brought on by aging baby boomers. Plus 30-40 percent of nurses themselves are baby boomers and will be retiring in the next five years.

As a baby boomer, I was interested to learn more and it is indeed cause for concern. American hospitals are losing from 35 to 60 percent of their new nurse workforce within 12 months of employment and 57 percent at two years of hire. Something ain't right here—and the Versant program, which was begun at Children's Hospital of Los Angeles about four years ago, was designed to fix it.

"Each resident is matched with a mentor in addition to a preceptor, who gives them clinical guidance," said Margie. San Ramon Regional spokeswoman Sandra Ryan said the program has involved the entire hospital staff—more than 345 nurses—which made those in the program feel like they are part of the community.

"When you are a new nurse coming out of school you have a lot of information," said Tina. "When you come to the hospital it's applying that knowledge you have—the critical thinking. You need to be able to reason: 'What's going on with the patient?' It's very difficult for someone who is new."

"We want to see nurses being confident," said Margie. "When they are first out of school, they are novices."

Margie and Tina, who have been nurses for 27 and 15 years, respectively, told me nursing has changed over the years, in technology with the equipment and machinery they use, and also with the increase in medicines.

"When I first became a nurse there were one or two medications for different illnesses," said Margie. "Now, for blood pressure there are probably 40. And the nurses administering the medication to patients need to know the side effects."

Another change Tina noted is government involvement, with guidelines.

"They are based upon research," she explained. "Before, physicians would have their own way of practicing. Now we have government agencies saying, 'This is the best way to do it.'"

Also different is the amount of information that patients and their families get from the Internet.

"Their expectations of what is going to occur have changed," Margie said. "That's a dilemma in nursing. It's great when people do research on their own, but sometimes it's not complete."

For instance, people may get their information from blogs. Tina advises people that the most accurate information is on government sites.

Also patients in hospitals are sicker than they used to be: They are no longer admitted the night before surgery, and they are released earlier.

"The bedside nurse is responsible for discharge instruction, teaching them about medications and their follow-up care," said Margie. "A lot of patients go home with drains in place."

Aubrey Barker, former aspiring actress, is currently working the evening shift in the medical surgery unit. "I thought I was going to go in and save the world, but the reality is you don't have that much power to save the world—but you do it one patient at a time," she told me.

She said time management has been her biggest challenge. "You have five patients and each patient thinks they're the only one—and you have to act like they are. It's really a tactful art."

She called the Versant program fantastic. "There was always someone to turn to and say, 'This happened. What do I do next?' They don't judge you," she said. "Margie was fantastic. Such a compassionate nurse and role model to follow. It was good having her there to say, 'Let it go,' or 'Why don't you try this approach?' She always had an answer and always had a smile on her face."

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

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Perspective

EDITORIALS • LETTERS • OPINIONS ABOUT LOCAL ISSUES IN OUR COMMUNITY

EDITORIAL • THE OPINION OF THE WEEKLY

Water still precious

Rain, rain everywhere but water rationing is still in effect.

Although we have experienced storms this season, the rainfall has not been enough to recover from the last two dry winters, reports the East Bay Municipal Utility District. Officials remind everyone that mandatory rationing is still in effect.

EBMUD declared the drought emergency and imposed mandatory rationing May 13, seeking a 15 percent reduction in water consumption over the next year. It intensified its efforts to fix leaky pipes quickly, provide recycled water to stretch the drinking water supply, and cut back on water use at its facilities and in its operations.

The district forecast that reservoirs would drop to 415,000 acre-feet, which is far from the 600,000 acre-feet desired or the 500,000 acre-feet necessary to avoid triggering conservation measures. EBMUD explained that even heavy rains do not assure that reservoirs will be refilled because not all rain actually makes it into the reservoir system.

EBMUD reported in October that although the measures were having an effect, the forecast of lowered water in the reservoirs proved to be accurate. The district is urging residents who had not taken the measures seriously to please comply. It reminds us all that leaky toilets are notorious water wasters; water is also wasted if it runs while we rinse dishes or brush our teeth; and showers should be limited to five minutes.

The district set goals for residents to cut their water usage by 19 percent over the last three years. Customers who felt they could not meet their allocation—perhaps because they were already conserving—were able to request changes, and 90 percent of the 7,300 who applied had received adjustments by the end of September.

On a hot summer day, water rationing comes naturally. When water is streaming down our windows it's more counter-intuitive but just as important.

YOUR TURN

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

Submit Letters to the Editor of up to 250 words to editor@DanvilleWeekly.com or mail to 117 Town and Country Drive, Suite D, Danville, CA 94526. Include your name, address and daytime phone number so we can reach you. We reserve the right to edit contributions for length, objectionable content, libel and factual errors known to us. Anonymous letters will generally not be accepted.

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

For more information, contact Dolores Fox Ciardelli, editor, at 837-8300, ext. 229.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Cheers for MVHS women's water polo

Dear Editor:

I'm disappointed to see that the cross town football rivalry between Monte Vista and San Ramon Valley is listed in your year-end wrap-up (Dec. 26) but not the Monte Vista Women's Varsity Waterpolo team, which not only went undefeated this year with a 28-0 record but also became the first team to have an undefeated EBAL season ever. The Danville Weekly needs to remember that Monte Vista has some spectacular things happening with their students too!

Shelly Blackford, Danville

Risky for Alamo to continue under county

Dear Editor:

I graduated from Monte Vista High School in 1971 and always remembered the rural atmosphere of Alamo. When my family returned in 1994, I was struck by Alamo's still rural feeling, which vastly influenced our decision to locate and raise our family here.

But changes are jeopardizing Alamo's rural nature, and I believe that incorporation is needed to protect it. The studies conducted for incorporation have convinced me that revenue flow will be adequate to support the Town of Alamo.

I believe the county will view Alamo's high property tax base as their "cash cow" to compensate for loss of property taxes in other parts of the county. I prefer our property taxes be spent on Alamo's needs. The Sheriff's department is already stretched over a large area, and with crime increasing, police coverage will be spread thinner in the unincorporated areas. I believe incorporation will give Alamo better, more consistent police protection. The county is trying to pay down a $1.7 billion liability for employee benefits that it has not saved money to pay. Incorporation would end our liability for these benefits.

Alamo needs to incorporate to maintain its rural atmosphere and allay risk in this economy.

Kathy Tate, Alamo

Council seems arrogant

Dear Editor:

In the Jan. 2 issue (Happy New Year!) of the Danville Weekly the article "Town wants abatement on Diablo Road" caught my attention. Why is the Town Council bullying Jean Taylor? Her suggestions seem reasonable (i.e., place benches in the offending area rather than tearing up the asphalt, replacing with landscaping and placing a maintenance responsibility on her) and yet the response from Councilman Mike Doyle was "they're 'toying' with us." This seems to be unduly harsh and frankly, arrogant.

The article didn't mention how Taylor received the town approvals to asphalt and lane mark the area to begin with, but the Town Council suggested alternatives appear arbitrary and without full consideration of all alternatives. I do hope the Town Council works toward a more conciliatory approach to resolve the problem.

Lastly, it's also perplexing why, with real town issues like the shambles called the Danville Hotel and the Lucky/Albertsons/Lucky store replacement in the Green Valley Center (lacking any real progress toward replacement until recently), the Town Council and attorney want to focus their attention on Taylor.

Town Council, give Ms. Taylor a break and start to deal with the real issues in Danville. Or perhaps the stagnant thinking at town hall needs some replacements that are less mired in their own authority and power.

James Larente, Danville

Does Alamo want housing mandate?

Dear Editor:

So supporters believe that incorporation will allow Alamo to "stay the same"? Not likely. If you want the truth about the state's impact on incorporated cities, Google "California State Dept Housing-Community Development"; go to Housing Policy Development, and read the state mandate known as Housing Element and come to the realization that the "local control" you will have is to assist the state in its housing goals and to comply with its demands for "affordable housing."

Incorporated cities must, by law, adopt a state-mandated General Plan, which must include seven elements, of which housing is one. This element is designed to remove overall constraints on housing development, by mandatory rezoning, second dwelling ordinances, infill housing and increased density and then to offer, by mandate, lots and acreage to builders and then to work with them to develop housing. Disbelief? Google "Town of Danville-Documents"; go to Housing Elements-VI Housing Plans, to Housing Goals and then read and weep.

Your dream of a small, rural Alamo is just that—a dream—unless you remain unincorporated. Want more informative reading? Google "SB2-Cedillo," read the law and find out what's in store for incorporated cities.

Alameda County's Measure F was voted on by the entire county because the California Constitution and state law require a county-wide vote, not because they wanted to pick on unincorporated areas. The proceeds are used for unincorporated area services, such as police, fire and library. Can't the proponents argue facts instead of inflammatory falsehoods?

Stephen Heafey, Alamo

Danville WEEKLY

Serving the communities of Danville, Blackhawk, Diablo and Alamo

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Community Pulse

POLICE BULLETIN & LOG • OBITUARIES • BIRTHS & WEDDINGS

POLICE BULLETIN

Cracked windshield leads to felony arrest

The smallest thing can lead to the biggest problems. That's the lesson learned by a 47-year-old Castro Valley man arrested Saturday for violating his parole for felony domestic violence.

Danville Police Lt. Mark Williams said the incident occurred at 11:30 p.m. Jan. 3 on San Ramon Valley Boulevard near Podva Road.

Williams said Officer Dan Sosa was driving south on San Ramon Valley Boulevard when he noticed the Dodge SUV in front of him had a sizable crack in the windshield, a violation of city vehicle code. Sosa pulled over the vehicle and spoke to the driver, who identified himself as Kenneth Biscotti. When Biscotti explained that he did not have a license, Sosa asked him to exit the vehicle and ran a check on both vehicle and driver.

Sosa was informed that Biscotti was on parole, and he was also informed that the SUV had been spotted in the vicinity of another vehicle earlier in the evening involved in a drug arrest. With Biscotti's consent, Sosa searched the truck and discovered three unspent 9 mm Luger rounds in the glove compartment as well as a small amount of marijuana.

Biscotti was taken into custody and charged with felony possession of ammunition, violation of parole and a misdemeanor drug charge. He was transported to the Martinez Detention Center.

—Geoff Gillette

POLICE LOG

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

Tuesday, Dec. 30

- Grand theft on Ackerman Dr. at 8:30 a.m.
- Vandalism on Adobe Dr. at 10:02 a.m.
- Petty theft on Willow Dr. at 10:04 a.m.
- Battery on Diablo Rd. at 10:42 a.m.
- Forgery of fraudulent documents on Fountain Springs Cir. at 2:48 p.m.
- Forgery of fraudulent documents on Dustin Lane at 4:28 p.m.
- DUI, arrest, on 200 block of Hartz Ave. at 5:51 p.m.
- Unwanted guest disturbance, arrest, on 100 block of Hartz Ave. at 11:12 p.m.

Wednesday, Dec. 31

- Auto burglary on Castleford Cir. at 8:17 a.m. and 8:26 a.m.
- Vandalism on Old Orchard Ct. at 8:45 a.m.
- Auto burglary on Old Orchard Dr. at 8:57 a.m. and 9:20 a.m.
- Vandalism on Park Hill Rd. at 9:41 a.m.
- Auto burglary on Morninghome Rd. at 12:36 p.m.
- Accident, property damage, on San Ramon Valley Blvd. at 1:52 p.m.
- Drugs violation on Lehigh Valley Cir. at 2:47 p.m.
- Drunk in public, arrest, on La Gonda Way at 3:14 p.m.
- Misdemeanor hit-and-run on Diablo Rd. at 3:48 p.m.
- Accident, major injuries, on Diablo Rd. at 5:44 p.m.
- Littering on Plaza Cir. and Valle Vista Dr. at 5:49 p.m.
- DUI, arrest, on Camino Tassajara and Woodranch Dr. at 5:56 p.m.
- Minor in possession of alcohol on 100 block of Hartz Ave. at 6:49 p.m.
- Fireworks disturbance on Fostoria Cir. at 9:26 p.m.
- Fireworks disturbance on Camino Ramon and Franciscan Dr. at 9:39 p.m.
- Promiscuous shooting on Estates Dr. and W. Prospect Ave. at 10:04 p.m.
- Vehicle traffic stop, arrest, on 100 block of Hartz Ave. at 10:32 p.m.

Thursday, Jan. 1

- Fireworks disturbance on Willow Dr. at 12:01 a.m.
- Fireworks disturbance on Mariposa Ct. at 12:03 a.m.
- Misdemeanor hit-and-run on Railroad Ave. at 12:30 p.m.
- Accident, property damage, on Diablo Rd. and Willowmere Rd. at 12:37 p.m.
- Investigation, arrest, on Valley Creek Lane at 3:52 p.m.
- Petty theft on 3400 block of Camino Tassajara at 4:37 p.m.
- Promiscuous shooting on El Cerro Ct. at 7:31 p.m.
- Suspicious subject stop, arrest, on Ilo Lane at 10:35 p.m.
- Warrant, arrest, on Ilo Lane at 11:07 p.m.

Friday, Jan. 2

- Auto burglary on San Ramon Valley Blvd. at 9:11 a.m.
- Vandalism on Fostoria Way at 11:30 a.m.
- Vandalism on La Gonda Way at 5:17 p.m.
- DUI, arrest, on W. El Pintado Rd. and southbound I-680 on ramp at 9:52 p.m.
- Vandalism on Sycamore Valley Rd. at 11:13 p.m.

Saturday, Jan. 3

- DUI, arrest, on 300 block of Hartz Ave. at 1:03 a.m.
- Auto burglary on Old Farm Rd. at 7:42 a.m.
- Petty theft on Waingarth Way at 11:37 a.m.
- Drunk in public, arrest, on Danville Blvd. and Hartz Ave. at 12:21 p.m.
- Vandalism on Garden Creek Pl. at 3:09 p.m.
- Vandalism on Estates Dr. at 3:41 p.m.
- Accident, property damage, on northbound I-680 and Sycamore Valley Rd. at 7:47 p.m.
- Vehicle traffic stop, arrest, on Podva Rd. and San Ramon Valley Blvd. at 11:25 p.m.
- Petty theft, shoplift, on 3400 block of Camino Tassajara at 11:46 p.m.

OBITUARIES

Joseph Albert Van der Haeghen

Joseph Albert Van der Haeghen, a resident of Alamo, died Jan. 1 at the age of 91.

He was born July 2, 1917, in South Bend, Ind. His family moved to Oakland in 1919 where he grew up and graduated from Roosevelt High School in 1934. Soon after Pearl Harbor he enlisted in the Army Air Corps, where he flew 25 missions over Germany by December 1943. Back home he was stationed in Long Beach in the Air Transport Command. There he met his wife, Maxine, and they were married June 22, 1945, in Riverside. He became a partner in his father's cabinet shop in Oakland after leaving the Air Corps. Following his father's death in 1955, he ran Van Der Haeghen Cabinet Works until he retired in 1982.

His family lived in Orinda before moving to Alamo in 1955. For many years he coached Little League and other youth baseball teams and was president of Pop Warner Football in 1964. He loved camping, fishing, hunting, skiing, golf and traveling the world. He was an avid fan of Notre Dame, the 49ers and the A's. He was a member of St. Isidore Church, Knights of Columbus, American Legion, VFW, Gen. James E. Doolittle Chapter of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society, 384th Bomb Group, and former member of SIRS and Old Crows of the Crow Canyon Country Club.

He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Maxine; son Mark and his wife Nancy; three granddaughters; his sister Dorothy Herman; many nieces and nephews and his beloved dog, Ginny Mae.

Friends and family are invited to a funeral mass at 10 a.m., Saturday, Jan. 10, at St. Isidore Church in Danville. In lieu of flowers, the family welcomes memorial donations to the American Brittany Rescue or Hospice of the East Bay.

Louise H. Robinson

Louise H. Robinson, a resident of Alamo, died Dec. 18 at the age of 73.

She was born Aug. 13, 1935, in Delano. She earned her teaching credential from Oregon State University, Corvallis, in 1957 and touched the lives of countless students during her long teaching career. She retired from the Mt. Diablo School District in 1995, after 25 years with the district. An active member of the Retired Teachers Association, she loved keeping in touch with her retired teacher friends and was active in the group's frequent luncheons, outings and travels. She also enjoyed years as a member of the American Volksport Association, completing dozens of walks in many beautiful places. She was a life-long avid reader who also loved cooking, dining out, travel, nature and all kinds of animals, especially her pets and most especially her dog Buddy.

She is survived by son, Michael Robinson of Lafayette; daughters Cindy Robinson of Quincy, and Laura Henry of Danville; four grandchildren; a great-grandson; sisters Mary Ann, Cathy and Lucretia; brother Richard and many nieces and nephews.

A Celebration of Life will be held at 2 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 17, at the Danville Town Meeting Hall, 201 Front St.

Harold Pensky

Harold Pensky, a resident of Danville, died Nov. 29.

He had a distinguished career as an aerospace engineer who worked on the Space Shuttle program at Vandenberg Air Force Base. He moved from Santa Barbara to Danville in 1996 to be near his children and grandchildren. Always the engineer, he found the ideal new home at the Crow Canyon Country Club Golf Course where he spent much of his retirement years trying to perfect his game. When he wasn't playing golf, he honed his bridge playing skills, achieving the rank of Bronze Life Master.

He is survived by his loving wife of 60 years, Eileen Pensky; his sister Marion Diamond of Chicago, Ill.; sons Norman (Barbara) Pensky of Orinda and Wayne (Kim) Pensky of Stamford, Conn., daughters Ellen (James) McGraw of Pleasanton and Rhonda (Brad) Holsworth of San Ramon; 11 grandchildren; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Services were held Dec. 3 at the Redwood Chapel in Oakmont Memorial Park in Lafayette.

Patrick 'Pat' Rhoads Murphy

Patrick "Pat" Rhoads Murphy, a resident of Danville, died surrounded by his loving family Dec. 3 at the age of 80.

He was born Aug. 4, 1928, in Sacramento and was a lifelong resident of California. He studied at the Franciscan Seminary in Santa Barbara from 1941-48. He later returned to Sacramento and attended Sacramento State College and graduated from McGeorge School of Law with a Juries Doctorate Degree. He spent a portion of his career working as an assistant to the chief clerk of the assembly for the state of California. He also spent time as an attorney in private practice. He later worked as a deputy in the Sacramento Public Defenders Office and as a deputy Public Defender for Contra Costa County in 1967. Eventually, he held the position of the Public Defender of Contra Costa County until his retirement in 1988.

He was a lifelong San Francisco 49er faithful fan and spent many years attending games. He spent his retirement years with his wife and best friend Frances, traveling to Ireland and other destinations throughout the United States.

He is survived by his wife of 52 years, Frances Murphy; three children, Patrick Murphy of Danville, Sally Rodgers (Bradley) of Dallas, Texas, and Mary Norling-Christenesen (Steve) of Thousand Oaks; and five grandchildren.

A private funeral mass was celebrated, per the families' request. Memorial donations can be made in his name to San Damiano Retreat House in Danville.

Russell 'Rusty' Lee Stewart

Alamo resident Russell "Rusty" Lee Stewart died Dec. 5 at the age of 49.

He was born Oct. 3, 1959, in San Jose and was raised in Hayward, Dublin, San Ramon and Danville. He graduated from Cal High in 1977. He worked with his father in the concrete business and as a manager with Conco Companies for more than 30 years. He also served nearly 26 years as an officer with the Walnut Creek Police Department as a reserve, attaining the rank of lieutenant. He was involved in the Las Lomas community, especially the water polo and swim teams. He enjoyed swimming and traveling, especially with his family to Hawaii.

He is survived by his wife of 16 years, Andrea; son Rory, 15; stepdaughter Elissa 26; and step-son Robert 21. He was a loving son to Ed and Jean Stewart of Discovery Bay, and loving brother to Renee' (Mark) Cooper of El Dorado Hills, and sister-in-law Randi Carmen, numerous cousins, aunts, uncles and 23 nieces and nephews.

A celebration of his life was celebrated Dec. 11 at Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church. Donations may be made in his name to Food Bank of Contra Costa County or Walnut Creek Police Officers Association Widows and Orphans Fund.

Steve Van Sickle

Steve Van Sickle, a resident of Danville, died Dec. 8 at the age of 58 after a two-year battle with colon cancer.

He was born April 9, 1950, in San Jose. He graduated from Chico State with a bachelor of science degree. He met his future wife Barbara while at Chico, and in 1983 their family moved to Danville, where he pursued passions from playing golf to starting his own company. He enjoyed time with his family, from skiing at Lake Tahoe to enjoying sun and fun in Cabo, and bike riding through the French country side.

He was predeceased by his father George Van Sickle. He is survived by his wife Barbara Van Sickle; daughters Lauren Hlebakos and Julie Van Sickle; son-in-law Daniel Hlebakos; mother Lorene; in-laws Bill and Jeanne Holst; sister Nancy Chapel; brothers and sister-in-laws Nancy and Dick Leasia, and Bill and Suzette Holst; and many nieces and nephews.

A celebration of his life will take place Jan. 10 at the Blackhawk Country Club. In lieu of flowers, the family requests contributions to a charity of choice.

Diane Barley

A former president of the Alamo Improvement Association, Diane Barley has spent a number of years working with Alamo residents in various capacities, which makes her accessible, a quality she feels is important in a council member.

Barley said she believes a Town Council of Alamo residents would be preferable to management by the county. Although she does not feel the county has done a bad job, a council would have more input from residents and move more quickly. "One of the things I hear about now is the no turn on red (Danville Boulevard/Stone Valley Road). I'm sure some traffic engineer in Martinez made that decision. He doesn't live in Alamo."

Barley and her husband have lived in seven different houses in Alamo during the last 30 years, so she's familiar with many neighborhoods. She thinks the town's density rules could be mitigated slightly in places to allow for smaller homes and more manageable lots for residents who want to downsize.

Barley, who works afternoons as a personal banker at Bank of America in Alamo, said she was asked to run for Town Council because of her work in the community. "I've been involved for a long time and want to be there for the long haul," she said. Although people complain about the traffic, she says, "I think Alamo is a pretty nice place. I call it Camelot myself."

More about the candidate

Married, two grown sons; BA and graduate work; banker at Alamo B of A; president of Alamo Rotary, Alamo Improvement Association (AIA), Monte Vista PTA; Friends of Discovery; Zone 36 Alamo Landscape and Lighting District; Alamo Merchant and Professional Association (AMPA); Citizen of the Year; Business Person of the Month
Web site: DianeBarley.com

Bob Connelly

Bob Connelly is a retired commercial banker and currently president of the Alamo Oaks Homeowners Association. For most of his 19 years in Alamo he was content to allow the county to provide services and saw no need for incorporation. However in the past few years that position has changed.

"I began to be concerned with what was happening two or three years ago," he said. He pointed to two large housing developments on Stone Valley Road that went against current zoning, with residents getting little say in the process.

He also concluded that Alamo could stand alone financially and that it is an insignificant part of the responsibility of the five County Supervisors. "I strongly believe that the best form of government is that closest to the people," he said. He joined the Alamo Incorporation Movement and this involvement led him to believe that he could serve a role on the new Town Council.

"I believe I have a lot of experience to help get this town off on the right foot," he said, adding that he is interested in serving only one term.

Connelly, 70, has 34 years of banking experience, has served on a volunteer fire department in Southern California and was a founding director of the Bell Canyon Special Services District in Southern California.

His priorities would be to maintain the integrity of Alamo and to establish sound fiscal policies.

More about the candidate

Married, three children; Alamo Community Foundation; signature committee for Alamo Incorporation Movement (AIM); chief, Redhill Volunteer Fire Department (Orange County); chairman, Banking Administration Institute, Banking School at University of Wisconsin; Kiwanian of the Year in Orange County club as well as Kiwanis Outstanding Service Award.
Web site: www.BobConnelly.org

Dennis Johnson

Maintaining the rural quality of Alamo is important to Dennis Johnson. A commercial developer, Johnson said he has had a great deal of experience with governments and land use issues and he wants to use that experience to help preserve the town.

Although he and his family are relative newcomers to Alamo, he said they chose the community with great care after deciding to move to the Bay Area. "We could have lived anywhere in the world and we chose to come to Alamo and we wanted to keep it just like it is," he said.

A cautious supporter of incorporation, Johnson said he's talked to many residents with strong doubts. "Their concern is that over half of the ballot positions are filled with either officers or associates of the incorporation movement who they think may want to advance a single agenda. So I would be concerned about incorporating for the wrong reasons."

No stranger to small town government, Johnson served on both the city Planning Commission and Budget Advisory Commission for Clyde Hill, Wash., before moving to Alamo. Johnson said during his tenure they were able to lower taxes three times. Now he wants to bring that experience to Alamo. "I would like to use my considerable municipal budget experience to see the city establish a conservative fiscal policy," he said. "Including a policy that reserve funds are set aside for the purpose of lowering taxes."

More about the candidate

Married, with 8-year-old twins; University of Washington college of Architecture and Urban Planning; Planning Commission, Budget Advisory Committee in Clyde Hill, Wash.; Bellevue Boys and Girls Club board of directors; Little League coach
Web site: www.johnson4council.blogspot.com/

Vicki Koc

During her 28 years in Alamo, Vicki Koc has become well known among residents for her involvement in the community. Currently president of the Alamo Incorporation Movement, Koc has served in several capacities in civic groups that include the Alamo Road Improvement Committee and San Ramon Valley Education Foundation.

While her primary goal is to see Alamo become a town, Koc said she is running for Town Council because she feels the experience of shepherding the incorporation process has given her unique insights into what comes next. "I want to make sure the new town starts out on a strong footing. And having that knowledge of all the different things that go into it that we've looked at and researched, it makes sense," she said. "I'm very goal-oriented, and I can usually bring people together to work together."

She lists another asset as being forward thinking, looking two to six months down the road.

Koc said that her time spent on incorporation petition drives and public hearings makes her uniquely qualified and has given her a strong understanding of what residents want to see happen there.

"Because I've done all these things I've met a lot of people within the Alamo community and I think I've got a pretty good ear for what they want," she said.

This includes keeping intact the scenic beauty of Alamo, giving the town a voice on regional boards, and letting Alamo make its own decisions.

More about the candidate

BA Cal State University East Bay; founder of AIM; member of R7A Alamo Parks and Recreation Committee, Zone 36, Road Improvement Committee; president, Diablo Valley National Charity League; president, Alamo School PTA, on boards at Stone Valley Middle School, Monte Vista High
Web site: www.vickikoc.com

Meet candi

16 people are on the first Town

On March 3, Alamo residents will make t become a town? And, who should serve

Here we present brief profiles on the 1 names are well known to people in Alamo. Others munity contemplates this important step in determ

A Council Candidates Faire is being held from 7-9 meet the 16 people who are running for council and other issues. The event is being held at the Alamo W League of Women Voters, the Alamo Chamber of Co

Karen McPherson

Candidate Karen McPherson feels that her knowledge of Alamo's recent history gives her a solid footing on where the town should go in the future. "I think that it is time for Alamo to incorporate," she said. "The county does a nice job for us. But in the county we have one supervisor who cares about us and four who don't even know us."

"I just want to make sure the community has a voice in everything that happens in their town," she said. "It's time." She said some changes—such as the parking lot at Monte Vista High—would probably have been done better under local governance, and permission would not have been given to cut down the trees in front of Yardbirds because local leaders would have known they were part of the Boulevard of Trees project.

McPherson, who has been on a number of committees in the last 19 years, says she understands concerns with incorporation "I think the main concern is the financial aspect of it. Nobody wants more taxes so we need to do everything lowkey and conservatively."

She says she would work on the council to create compromise. "I'm effective at getting all groups to work together," she said. "On the Regional Planning Commission sometimes we have real strong voices either way and I think I can come up with workable compromises that are agreeable for everyone and don't polarize either side."

More about the candidate

Married; BA San Jose State; National Zoning Manager in Telecommunications; R7A, San Ramon Valley Regional Planning Commission, AMPA, Alamo Rotary; worked in Supervisor Donna Gerber's office as community liaison for Alamo.

t the dates

running to be Council in Alamo

wo major decisions: Should Alamo incorporate to on the first Town Council?

6 candidates for the five council seats. Some of the have decided to become involved now as their com- ining its future.

9 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 22, a chance for residents to learn more about their positions on incorporation and Women's Club, 1401 Danville Blvd., sponsored by the ommerce and the Alamo Community Foundation.

Steve Mick

Steve Mick has spent the last years working on a number of organizations in Alamo and is a strong advocate of incorporation. While he wants to see Alamo become a town, he is not in favor of sweeping changes. "My core philosophy is that I am an Agent of Minimal Change," he said. "I'm not against change. I just want it to be measured and reasonable."

A retired computer specialist from Livermore Lab, Mick said he feels that most residents want the town to remain basically what it is now, a semi-rural community. "Take a look at the way Alamo looks now and what we want it to look like in the future and those should look the same."

He feels that incorporation would give Alamo a better sense of community. For instance, Scout troops could open meetings of the Town Council. As a council member, Mick said he would advocate keeping the various committees already in existence, and he would like to see a lot of residents involved in new fun events.

Mick said his time working on community projects has given him the tools to be a strong member of the first council and the job would be a natural extension of what he has been doing. "As far as I know, I'm seen as a consensus builder. I have knowledge and experience in the way government works, and I can run a heck of a meeting."

More about the candidate

U.S. Navy, 1965-69; Alamo resident with wife since 1989; Alamo Parks Committee, Alamo Beautification Advisory Committee; Hap Magee Ranch Park Joint Planning and Operations Committee; Veterans Memorial Building Development Committee of San Ramon Valley; AIA; Alamo Community Council (ACC); Viet Nam Veterans of Diablo Valley; Exchange Club of San Ramon Valley; Blackhawk Museum Docent & Guild Member; Wheelchair Foundation; Leadership Diablo graduate; Diablo A's Model A Ford Club.

Web site: www.stevemick.org

Vishwas More

Vishwas More has been involved in Alamo Rotary and local activities since he and his wife moved to Alamo from Orinda 10 years ago, after their four children were grown.

"I want to keep the town as it is—a town for families and grandchildren," he said. He says the most important issues are public safety, roads and parks, pedestrian walkways, and maintaining public areas. He wants a solution for the traffic problems on Danville Boulevard rather than continuing with trial and error.

More is a retired engineer/manager at Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory and at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center, and was president and financial budget chairman of the Board of Governors of California Community Colleges. He said these roles have given him the expertise to analyze and solve the complex issues Alamo will face after it incorporates.

"With the amount of taxes we collect, we should be able to handle ourselves," said More. "We have to make sure we stay within our budget."

More, who describes himself as "a people person," feels it is important to listen to what other people have to say. "The elected people are responsible to the people of Alamo," he said. "The key thing is find out the facts first. Do the work and fact-find. And listen to both sides."

"I want to give thanks to the U.S.A.," he added, "to put something back into the community."

More about the candidate

BS, MS mechanical engineering, University of Michigan; project engineer at Argonne National Laboratory, University of Chicago; appointed by California governor as Student Aid Commissioner, President; board of International Education Corp.; trustee, Cal State East Bay for Education Foundation; AIM; treasurer, Alamo Rotary; volunteer Kaiser Permanente in Walnut Creek

Web site: www.votevishmore.com

John Morrow

John Morrow, who worked for U.S. Steel, Standard Oil of Ohio and British Petroleum, and owned two small businesses, wants to bring his knowledge to the table to help run the new town of Alamo. He believes no one should make a dishonest gain in government, and he would like to help prevent this. He says he could hold the line on spending in Alamo with the expertise he gained from the years he spent doing competitive bidding.

Now a widower, Morrow and his wife moved to Alamo 30 years ago and raised three sons here. He says he "is not in great favor of incorporation" but he respects those who are. "A lot of problems are in the eyes of the beholder," he said. "A lot of people would like to have more control." He likes having no sidewalks and no streetlights in Alamo, the better to enjoy the stars.

"I can't believe all these rosy scenarios in Alamo," he noted, referring to predictions of financial security in the new town while the county, state and federal government are all in dire straits. Nonetheless, he stated, "Anything is viable if it is done right. We can do anything we set our hearts and minds to."

"I've been about teamwork my whole career," said Morrow, 74, and he foresees the new Town Council coming together for the good of the community.

More about the candidate

Raised in Kittaning, Penn. Graduated from U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, then transferred to U.S. Air Force; served in Korean and Vietnam wars. Also attended Penn State. Engineering manager on larger construction projects. Has volunteered in churches, Scouts, Indian Guides, YMCA and at the schools.

Kevin Morrow

Kevin Morrow, 37, an insurance agent, knew he wanted to run for Town Council the minute he heard incorporation was on the ballot. "I want to help ensure that we will have a responsible government in place," he said.

He has lived in Alamo the last 30 years. "I was a Boy Scout, graduated from high school here, and know the town intimately," he said. "I have a vested interest in the future of Alamo."

Morrow said he knows about getting things done on a limited budget, both in his job and in his personal life, and that his character is one of the best things he would bring to the council. "Responsibility is the key for me," he said.

He was against incorporation in the beginning but the more he learns, the more it looks feasible. "I believe we are going to incorporate and I want to make sure we're responsible," he said. "Alamo is limited in size and I want to make sure we don't bite off more than we can chew." He has found residents concerned about raising taxes and wants to make sure this isn't necessary.

He started a hauling business with his brothers when he was 13 and said, "I know how businesses succeed." He said the priority for the council will be the General Plan to be used for a solid plan of action.

More about the candidate

Attended Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and the California Maritime Academy in Vallejo. Works as an insurance agent with licenses in fire/casualty with State of California. Has received public speaking awards; named Student of the Month by Alamo Rotary.

Randy Nahas

Randy Nahas recalls meeting a few years ago with folks who'd been involved with Clayton's vote to incorporate in 1964.

"They said the best way to get it to pass is to run," remembered Nahas, 59. And so he is.

Nahas, who grew up in Piedmont, has lived in Alamo for 28 years with his wife Jan, and they raised their four sons here. "People want a back-to-basics lifestyle," he said. He works in property management, is a general contractor, real estate broker and Realtor.

"Basically Alamo is a bedroom community with two poorly maintained off-ramps between Walnut Creek and Danville," he said, and he thinks it needs its own government. "You don't have 'county fathers,' you have 'city fathers.'"

Nahas said the Comprehensive Fiscal Analysis proves that Alamo has the assets to be incorporated and he would like to help build Alamo into a financially stable contract town.

"Let's keep the money at home and see what we can do with it," he said. He believes that if Alamo were a town, its residents would gain more of a pride of community, which is especially important for healthy children.

The incorporation of Alamo is more important than his race for council, says Nahas, but if elected he sees himself as a consensus builder.

"I have a vision I would share with the others," he said.

More about the candidate

BS mechanical engineering, UC Davis; former board member International House at Berkeley, San Ramon Valley YMCA, Mt. Diablo Region YMCA, SRV Little League, SRV YMCA Facilities Committee Chairman, YMCA Theater Committee Chair; R7A; Alamo Roads Committee; Hap Magee Park JPO; Facilities Committees SRVUSD; project leader Tassajara 4-H; 4-H All Star Advisor.

➤ **More candidates on page 14**

Karl Nyati

Karl Nyati is known in Alamo as a soccer coach, both for Al Caffodio and Monte Vista High, and for the Alamo Creek restaurant he opened on his downtown property after he retired from hospital administration.

"I opened the restaurant to give back," he said. And with incorporation a possibility, he wants to give back by serving on Alamo's first Town Council. He favors incorporation but says with the economic downturn it is important to validate the financial figures.

He noted that Alamo money is currently going to the county and, if incorporated, Alamo could do a better job with it. "Alamo people want to make decisions for themselves," he said.

"Council members have to run the city as a successful business," he said. "The mayor is the CEO; the residents are stockholders." He looks forward to recruiting creative individuals to serve as city manager, attorney and in finance, and to negotiating the best services.

He would like to see townhouses available for older folks who want to stay in town but downsize after their families are raised. He also wants to see activities for young people at the parks and schools. "We have to coordinate our services," he added.

One priority if elected would be to work with the other council members and with residents to identify the services required and establish a budget accordingly.

More about the candidate

MBA Economics, MPH Health Care Administration, USC; Lifetime Teaching Credential; Retired management consultant for own firm; retired Kaiser Hospital financial and administration 25 years; former UC instructor; soccer coach; restaurant owner
Web site: niyatialamocouncil.com/

Joe Rubay

Joe Rubay is a real estate appraiser and former CPA who is looking to run for Alamo Town Council to help keep an eye on the bottom line and because he feels a passion for politics. "My hobby is politics," he said. "I think it's my hobby because I love people, I like to be involved with the news, I like to effect change." He also ran in the Republican primaries to represent Assembly District 15.

The 49-year-old resident has lived most of the last 35 years in Alamo, and bought his family home to stay in town. He is a CSU East Bay graduate in business administration and has a keen interest in the financial end of getting the town of Alamo off the ground. "I have a lot of analytical skills. And I'm fiscally conservative." Rubay said his role on a new Town Council would be as "a watchdog."

"Alamo is growing, but we need to be smart government," he said. He sees public safety as the No. 1 concern and thinks police services could probably be improved.

On the issue of the incorporation itself, Rubay said he is cautiously in favor. "I have some reservations. Things are working great the way they are. We have a great supervisor." However he said he also sees the need for a local government to give residents their own voice in the decisions that will affect Alamo in the future.

More about the candidate

Treasurer, Alamo Improvement Association; Contra Costa Fair Board Director; National Director of Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance; member of Sheriff's Posse

Grace Schmidt

Grace Schmidt, 68, has worked as staff for many years for public officials, including as field representative in the 10th Congressional District and for supervisors in Marin and Santa Clara counties.

"I have a knowledge of government," she said. "My career has been working in government."

Schmidt, a fifth-generation Californian who grew up in El Cerrito, has lived in Alamo with her husband Smitty for 23 years except for a three-year sojourn in Europe. In her retirement, she became active in Alamo, through joining the Alamo Improvement Association three years ago and the Alamo Community Foundation. After studying the issues and writing about them for Alamo Today and writing press releases and Web site information for ACF, she feels ready to work on the new Town Council.

Schmidt wants Alamo to incorporate so its residents can make their own decisions. "Alamo needs a seat at the table of jurisdictional bodies," she said, "and I know a lot about it." She believes in doing outreach and getting everybody to the table. "I like to hear different opinions."

She is optimistic about Alamo's financial situation, noting that it would benefit from increased property taxes as homes are sold to new owners. Of the last 50 homes sold in Alamo, she said, 34 increased in valuation by half a million dollars. "I believe there are enough resources," she said.

More about the candidate

BA in biological science, UC Berkeley; master's in community organization and social planning, UC Berkeley; staff to local and national public officials; board member, AIA; writer and researcher, AIA monthly page in Alamo Today and for Alamo Community Foundation; member AIM Election Committee; researched and got word out on county's proposed "Ultimate Configuration" for the Stone Valley Road/ Danville Boulevard intersection.
Web site: graceforalamo.org

Roger Smith

Roger Smith has spent the last 12 years on the Alamo Improvement Association's Planning Committee, eight of those as chairman, and has been on its board for 15 years. Now, the Alamo business owner is setting his sights on Town Council. "I feel I have a body of knowledge and a body of work that makes me a strong candidate."

Smith has said he is not opposed to incorporation, but he isn't certain it is the correct path for Alamo at this time. "A number of Alamo residents believe in less government, not more government. I know I am carefully reviewing all of the information available before I make a final decision," he stated.

If Alamo becomes a town March 3, Smith said he feels the new Town Council must reach out to residents. "It will need to be inclusive and work to resolve any remaining divisiveness." He sees himself as a calming influence on the council who could keep people focused on the issues. He wants to keep existing organizations intact because their members have gained a lot of experience serving Alamo.

Smith said the council will also have to soon address how the new town will repay the $3 million owed to the county in the revenue neutrality agreement. "We will need to take steps to determine how best to make that payment. I would prefer to pay it off in steps."

More about the candidate

BA in business administration, finance and management; business owner; 15-year resident of Alamo; two grown children were raised in Alamo; coached numerous youth teams; served on Round Hill Country Club Swim Team Board
Web site: SmithAlamo.org

Brad Stribling

Brad Stribling, a retired electronics executive, said he wants to use his leadership skills and financial experience to establish the new town of Alamo.

"If incorporation succeeds, I would like ... to have a voice," said Stribling, 63. He wants to help the new Town Council work together to put the appropriate services in place.

"Alamo will need to define itself," he said. "What is its view of itself? It has to get clarification."

Stribling sees Alamo's natural beauty as its core, along with non-crowded residences and businesses.

"I'm an outdoorsman," he said. "I would like to see extended parks. I would like to see Alamo be the garden spot of Contra Costa County."

He said the new Town Council members will need to immediately begin to get to know one another and form a cohesive team, which will define action items and parcel them out. He says he has the skill set to help the council members bond, explaining, "Sometimes that doesn't just happen."

Stribling and his wife Winnie built their home in Alamo 24 years ago and raised their son and daughter here. He said that in his retirement he has given back to his community, particularly through his Alamo church. Now he wants to serve the town of Alamo in its formative years, working to maintain the quality of life "while maintaining taxes at responsibly low levels."

More about the candidate

BSEE, MSEE UC Berkeley, MBA Stanford Business School; enjoys backpacking, performing arts, family, people; recently retired electronics executive; has led several companies and technology groups; helped rebuild homes of Katrina victims; holds several patents in areas of technology

Brad Waite

Brad Waite, who has lived in Alamo for 17 years, has been a quiet force in the Alamo Improvement Association. Over the past 10 years, the 48-year-old resident has worked in a number of positions within the AIA and is currently serving as its president. "The pulse of the community is AIA," he said.

Waite said he knew early in the incorporation effort that the town was fiscally viable and that creating a government to use those local dollars was a solid plan. "It is time for Alamo to take control of those decisions and make them for ourselves," he said.

He noted that as a town, Alamo would have a seat on regional committees. "We can make noise but we need a seat at the table," he said.

Waite said that one of the big issues that will face the new Alamo council is the town's budget. "With a $3 million debt I think setting a very tight budget is the top priority," he said. "Go into savings mode until we get our feet on the ground."

Another concern would be downtown traffic. He advocates keeping Danville Boulevard as it is and not widening the lanes.

Waite said besides his financial background he brings good negotiating skills to the council. "I think I'm good at compromising. I never go into a decision without looking at all sides," he said.

More about the candidate

Married with three children; active with children's sports; BA's in business economics and psychology UC Santa Barbara; president, Mortgage Banking; Zone 36; AIA

Qigong: The ancient way

Learn to de-stress, mentally and physically, at one-day workshop

by Dolores Fox Ciardelli

DOLORES FOX CIARDELLI

Bob Kipper leads a dedicated group of Tíai Chi Chuan students through a sequence of motions at the Danville Community Center. His new session begins Jan. 13, sponsored by the Town of Danville.

Breathing. Walking. They seem so basic but most of us don't do them properly, and our lives will be greatly improved if we learn the right way. So says Emilio Gonzalez, who will be teaching a Qigong for Health Workshop for the Town of Danville next month. Qigong is pronounced chee-gong.

"Most people breathe shallow, in the chest. I show abdominal breathing," Gonzalez explained. "For many people it is difficult the first time around. If they catch on, they will be supplying their body with three times as much oxygen."

"Those trained, like singers and swimmers and athletes, breathe correctly," he added. "An infant in a crib breathes correctly."

The workshop also will teach the correct way to walk. Older women, especially, have walked too many years in high heels and tend to walk on the balls of their feet, he said.

"Feet are our connection to the earth," Gonzalez noted. "We actually walk in a circle in class, to show how to place the foot. I've seen a dramatic difference."

He will be leading the workshop with Alamo resident Bob Kipper, who has built up a following for his T'ai Chi Ch'uan classes at the Danville Community Center. Gonzalez and Kipper are both senior students under Grand Master Tung Kai Ying, and have taught this workshop in Danville before.

In Kipper's T'ai Chi class, the students goes through an entire slow sequence of movements together, which uses every muscle group in the body. It is rooted in traditional Chinese medicine and improves circulation and balance, plus helps relax and strengthen the nervous system.

"T'ai Chi is the martial arts part of Qigong," explained Gonzalez. "'Qi' is energy; 'gong' is work or effort."

"What I like about Qigong as opposed to T'ai Chi is that it is accessible on the very first class," he continued. "You don't have to come to class for six to eight months to learn the sequence. From the first class, you learn the benefits of Qigong."

The Qigong for Health Workshop is being held Feb. 7, and it will teach the nine postures of Tiger Mountain Tai Chi/Qigong. It also will feature the Six Healing Sounds, which Gonzalez said are probably the oldest form of Qigong known; descriptions of them were found on scrolls that were 5,000 years old.

"Somehow the Chinese discovered that by making certain sounds that resonate with your internal organs, each one targets a different organ," he said. "Chinese medicine is all centered around the internal organs, working with where the basic stuff is stored." Chinese traditional medicine includes Qigong, acupuncture, herbs and massage, he explained.

FILE PHOTO

Emilio Gonzalez will teach a Qigong for Health Workshop with Bob Kipper on Feb. 7. He said most people benefit from Qigong because it helps with stress.

He enthusiastically remembered the harmony of 20-30 people making the Six Healing Sounds in the last workshop in the Danville Community Center. "It harmonizes the room," he said. "I encourage all students to try it alone at home. Some get really hooked on it."

"The Six Healing Sounds give you a lot of energy," he added. "Don't do it late at night because it would be hard to sleep. It's great to do in the afternoon."

Gonzalez discovered Qigong by accident. He lived down the street from a T'ai Chi/Qigong studio in Southern California when he attended UCLA in the early '70s. He embraced the practice although, knowing he had to earn a living, he also continued on to USC for an MBA.

He credits Qigong with keeping him healthy after being diagnosed HIV-positive in 1985. At that time he was living in San Francisco and began teaching Qigong at the International Center.

"It was before there was hope for HIV," he recalled. "We had very large classes, men and women with HIV." He credits his longevity to Qigong, T'ai Chi, traditional Chinese medicine as well as getting plenty of rest and eating good food.

He now teaches one or two classes per week in Occidental, where he lives, and many of his students are recovering from or coping with illnesses.

"I have a lot of cancer survivors," he said. "They network with each other, go hiking or go for coffee. My personal opinion is that this is almost as important as the exercise—making a connection with other people with similar problems."

"Qigong is designed to be done sitting down for people in wheelchairs, even lying done," he said. He charges $5 per class, or $1 for people with a chronic illness.

"I started doing this to give back to the community," he said.

He said most people benefit from Qigong because it helps with stress.

"We live pretty highly stressed lives," he said. "Come to class for one hour and we're pretty quiet, we concentrate on breathing, we do simple movements."

Next month's workshop will be from 10:15 a.m. to 4 p.m. with a break for lunch. The instructors will give handouts to help students practice what they have learned—fuller breathing, more grounded walking and so much more. ■

Traditional Chinese Medicine

What: Qigong for Health Workshop
Who: Emilio Gonzales and Bob Kipper
When: 10:15 a.m.-12:45 p.m., 2-4 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 7
Cost: $50 for Danville residents; $60 for non-residents
To sign up: Call 314-3400 or visit www.ci.danville.ca.us
Other: Bob Kipper's T'ai Chi Ch'uan class begins a new session Jan. 13. For details, see the town's Winter 2009 Activity Guide.

The Y Files

BY MARIA SHEN

Getting high on nutmeg

I never thought I'd one day Google-search "unusual ways to get high." And, having searched, I find myself reading a forum on DigitalGangster.com (I wish I were kidding, but this is an actual Web site). Recently, I've been doing a little bit of research on the most unusual and, admittedly, creative ways teenagers have been using accessible legal substances.

Don't worry—I'm not planning on snorting Vodka or sniffing a sock sprayed with Lysol (though, apparently, some people do). Two events in the past week have led me to this research.

A few days ago, I was hanging out with a friend of mine at Peet's Coffee when her cell phone rang (you can understand why I refrain from using names in this article, can't you?). She glanced at her caller ID.

"Oh." Her eyebrows scrunched quizzically. "It's ____. I haven't talked to him for weeks." She answered and, after a short, stumbling conversation, hung up.

"What did he want?" I asked.

She had an ambivalent expression on her face, as if she were stuck between wanting to laugh and wanting to figure out what the hell just happened. "Well," she finally began. "He's calling me because he's high."

"Oh."

"High off nutmeg."

Nutmeg. Nutmeg? My eyebrows introduced themselves to my hairline.

The very next day, I went shopping at Target with another friend. I needed to get toothpaste. As we passed the aisle, he groaned and turned away.

"What? Does toothpaste scare you?" I asked jokingly.

He pointed to the mouthwash. "I got ridiculously drunk off Scope once. Now, I can't be near that stuff."

Nutmeg and mouthwash. I used to think they were innocent items. I guess the mouthwash, since it contains alcohol, doesn't surprise me as much as nutmeg does. So I went online and did some research. Admittedly, the Internet isn't the most rock-solid, reliable source for information, but it does definitely have a wealth of strange news. When people find new ways to get high, guess how they communicate it to each other?

Anyway, an Internet search yielded the following information: Nutmeg contains myristicin, an organic compound with hallucinogenic effects if taken in large doses. According to an article titled "Nutmeg High: The Psychoactive Properties of a Common Household Spice" published by the Associated Content, the nasty side-effects of a "nutmeg high" is what deter most people from using it a second time. The bitterness of the spice causes gagging and nausea. Users experience dry mouth, panic attacks and an inability to focus. (Of course, since my research is somewhat limited, especially when it comes to the technical reasons why nutmeg has hallucinogenic effects, I suggest you do some research of your own and perhaps ask your friendly neighborhood chemist.)

Because I found nutmeg and mouthwash such strange ways to get high, I knew there must be more. I primarily looked for Internet forums, where teenagers usually congregate and share information on a topic.

Here are the more common ways to get high with legal drugs, which parents should take note of: using large doses of cough syrup that contains dextromethorophan, called "robotripping"; using salvia divinorum; a variety of over-the-counter drugs; "huffing" or inhaling substances via a plastic bag over the head; and, uh, drinking mouthwash.

Here are some of the more surprising ways people have tried to achieve a high: drinking vanilla extract; smoking toads (which The Simpsons parodied); snorting vodka (this sounds so, so painful); inhaling Lysol; and, yes, ingesting nutmeg.

Parents who are reading this don't need to regard their child with suspicion if he or she is caught holding a Lysol bottle or rummaging through the herb rack. However, it's always wise to be aware of what's out there. In order to get high, teenagers have done some very stupid things in the past. I remember watching an Oprah episode about how people my age accidentally kill themselves by seeking a high through strangulation. But even for the dumb but seemingly harmless ways to get high (i.e., nutmeg), it's good to remember that, used at high doses, almost anything is dangerous.

And for the teens who are reading this: Please use some common sense. If you want to get drunk, don't grab that bottle of Listerine. Wait until you're 21.

Add your 2 cents to
Town Square
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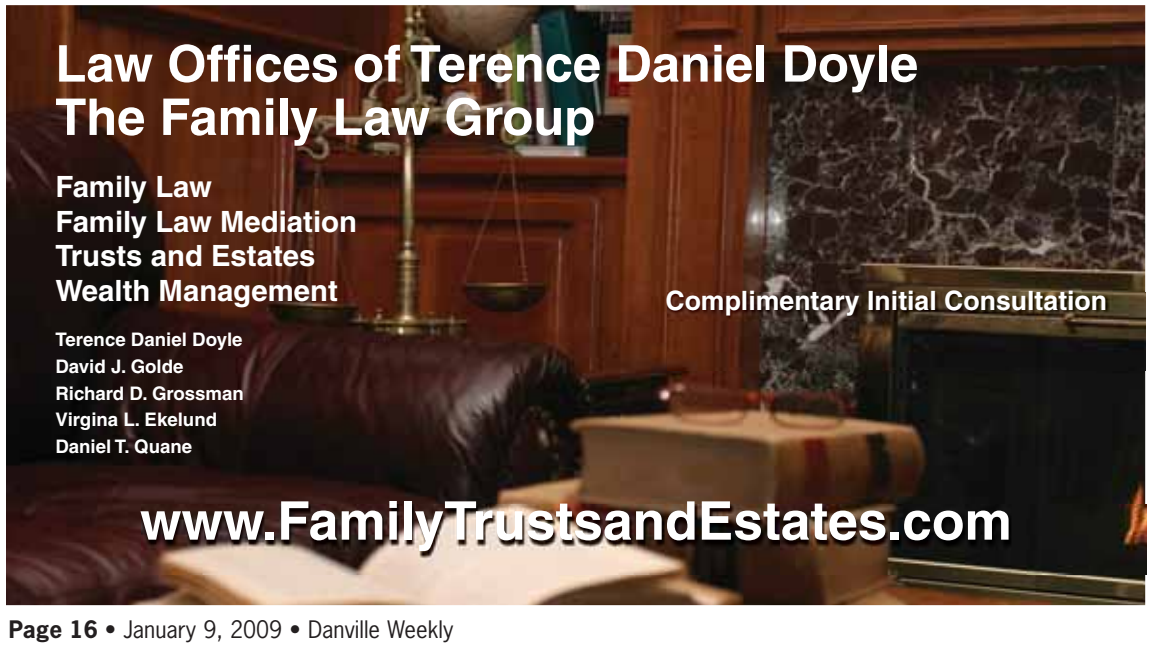


OF NOTE

Raising holiday spirits

Girls from Alamo Elementary School first-grade Brownie Troop 30345 visit the Willow Commons Senior Living Residence on Hartz Way in Danville to sing Christmas carols on Dec. 19. Everyone had a great time as the young carolers lifted the spirits at Willow Commons. Pictured are (seated in front) Katie Hawk and Isabel Jone, and (standing, l-r) Lindsay Baptiste, Janelynne Galera, Sydney Liao, Ashley Liao, Maddie Andrews, Mimi Janze, Gabrielle Piacente, Alyson Bianchi, Emma Bone and Mia Ciapponi with Willow Commons resident Patricia Myers. Their teachers (not shown) are Cathy Garrett and Nicki Scott.

Presenting the Past

BY BEVERLY LANE

Union Academy was first Valley high school

Determined pioneers organized the county's first high school in the San Ramon Valley in 1859. Named the Union Academy, it was a private high school located midway between Alamo and Danville and served both day and boarding students. A Historical Society sign on Danville Boulevard across from El Portal recalls the school's location.

This school was initiated by the Cumberland Presbyterian Church Synod in 1857 when it appointed three county residents to select a county high school location. Protestant churches were in the forefront of school-founding movements in the West. Ministers often were commissioned by East Coast missionary societies to establish new high schools.

In Contra Costa, the school search committee members were from Martinez, Lafayette and the San Ramon Valley. They looked for a site but, in the end, each wanted the high school in his own community. Responding to this impasse, the Synod appointed a committee of five non-residents to select the location, which chose the centrally situated community of Pacheco.

According to the Contra Costa Gazette of July 11, 1868, "this selection did not suit the parties in the San Ramon neighborhood (and) they took up the matter on their own account, erected the building and placed the school in charge of Rev. David McClure."

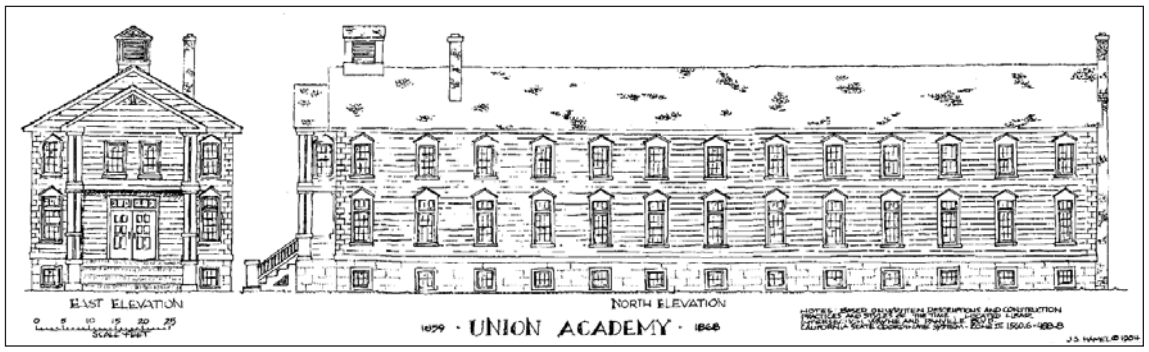
Alamo's Mary Jones recalled that "leading residents organized the Contra Costa Educational Association," with Silas Stone, John M. Jones and Robert Love on the first Board of Trustees.

Stock was sold by the association to support the new school, and August Hemme sold 2-1/2 acres of his large ranch to the Trustees. The land was listed as worth $200 in the 1860 Deed Book, but the philanthropic Hemme may have sold it for less.

The cornerstone was laid on Oct. 19, 1859. It was a two-story building with windows and a basement. The largest building in the San Ramon Valley, it also hosted meetings, graduations and church services. It cost $32 a month for a high school student to board.

The school opened in the spring of 1860 and its courses, trustees, purposes and fees were featured prominently on the front page of the Contra Costa Gazette. Primary and intermediate departments were also available. The academic curriculum was based on that of the San Francisco School Department and included Greek and Latin. For an extra charge, there was instruction in music (with use of instrument), drawing and painting. Vocal music and calisthenics formed a part of the daily exercises for which there was no extra fee.

The director, Presbyterian minister David McClure, was very modern in his approach. The May 5 Gazette stated that McClure was aiming for the "symmetrical development and discipline of the various powers of the mind, the formation of good physical constitution, ease and grace of manners, kindness and courtesy in social intercourse—having special reference to the best practical preparation for the duties of this life, and also to that moral and religious culture which shall fit them for the life to come."



DRAWING BY JOHN S. HAMEL, BASED ON DESCRIPTIONS OF THE UNION ACADEMY.

San Ramon Valley residents organized a large private high school in 1859, the Union Academy, located midway between Alamo and Danville. It served students who lived at home and boarders.

John Swett, California's superintendent of public instruction in 1862, had nothing but praise for the school: It is "pleasantly situated, with a succession of rolling hills in the background, the fertile valley around, and Mount Diablo, with its tawny hills in the distance ... Success to all such civilizing influences as Mr. McClure's Seminary."

Each June, the school had graduation exercises, which included examinations of the scholars. The Gazette on June 23, 1860, said the "young masters acquitted themselves in a highly creditable and satisfactory manner" before an audience of 400 people. The program included: "Music and Declamation, Delivery of Pieces, Tableaux, Calisthenics and a Party Song." Later a monthly newspaper called "The Waifs" was published.

The academy was a prime example of the importance of education to families in rural California and in the San Ramon Valley. Most in the community supported it through thick and thin, although some local farmers ranchers objected to music as part of the instruction.

Student James D. Smith wrote about the monthly academy parties. "They played games, danced the Virginia Reel, Money Musk and Cotillions with McClure playing the violin and instructing us in the intricacies of the different steps. At the conclusion of the dance we were furnished a light repast. We were then asked to kneel and our teacher would offer a prayer, after which we were dismissed."

"Did we love our teacher? I'll testify we did."

On July 6, 1868, after the school had closed for the summer, the Academy burned to the ground. No one was hurt, but the satisfaction and convenience of having their own high school came to an end for Valley settlers. It took 42 years before the next high school was founded, the San Ramon Valley Union High School.

Sources: Contra Costa Gazette, Virgie V. Jones' Remembering Alamo, J. D. Smith, "Coming of Gringo to Contra Costa," Contra Costa Gazette, Oct. 23, 1925

Beverly Lane is curator of the Museum of the San Ramon Valley and co-author of "San Ramon Valley: Alamo, Danville, and San Ramon" and "Vintage Danville: 150 Years of Memories."

The Wine Guy

BY DON COLMAN, THE EVERYDAY WINE GUY

Cab or Merlot—Which will it be?

St. Clement Vineyards: 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon ($36) vs. 2005 Merlot ($28)

I took on a big project this time, comparing two very nice gift wines from the same vineyard—the only difference being the grape. The wines were from St. Clement Vineyards: 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon ($36) vs. 2005 Merlot ($28). I thought I might need some help for this one so I invited over another couple who know a lot about wine. If I am Don, The Everyday Wine Guy, then one of them would be known around Danville as Mike, The Everyday Wine Snob. We had four people deciding which wine we liked better.

We went through the official taste test. We checked the age, color, legs, nose and then finally the taste. Both wines are still relatively young and should age well. There are a number of similarities in the wines—particularly in the scent. We picked out a fair amount of oak, pepper and berries in both wines. The taste is where we noticed the big difference—the Cabernet was full of body and a medium dry wine, while the Merlot came across as being a little sweet and a bit thin. When we finished the official review, we all looked at each other and agreed that the Cabernet Sauvignon was a better buy even though it cost a bit more.

Being an "everyday wine guy," I could not have an official recommendation based solely on the small tasting samples. Here is really how I pick my favorite wines: When given a choice, which wine would I want to drink first? In this case, we continued with our night and I left both bottles on the counter and let everyone pour their own drinks. Here is the interesting part—of the four of us, three immediately polished off the Merlot bottle leaving Mike, The Everyday Wine Snob, as the only one drinking the Cabernet Sauvignon. I asked the wives why they started with the Merlot and both responded that they found it to be a smooth and more balanced wine. This is exactly what I look for in a wine.

Ultimately, which of the two wines would I suggest bringing as a gift? If you are going to give it to someone who is a wine connoisseur, then splurge for the Cabernet Sauvignon. However, if you are going to a friend's house and want to have an easy to drink wine that will lead to good times—then reach for the Merlot. That's the wine that I liked best and I hope you do too.

Incidentally, one of the reasons I like St. Clement winery is that it reminds me of old times. Much like people in Danville who read local newspapers and support small businesses, St. Clement is more of a boutique winery with a local following. In fact, the 2005 St. Clement Merlot comes from a production of under 4,000 cases. There is nothing better than bringing a nice wine as a gift that has a unique feel to it.

After all of my red wine reviews it is time for a white wine. Next time we will look at the 2007 Chateau St. Jean Chardonnay ($14). Until then, cheers!

Don Colman, the Everyday Wine Guy, lives in Danville and can be reached at everydaywineguy@hotmail.com.

Sports

A LOOK AT THE LOCAL SPORTS SCENE

Parent photographers

Send a jpeg to Editor@DanvilleWeekly.com of the best action shot from your child's game for consideration for our Sports page. Remember to include caption information: who, what, when, where—and the score.

Freezing weather winners

John Doyle Soccer Academy Dynamo, playing out of the Mustang Soccer Club, won its first ever championship in its first tourney Dec. 13 at the Mustang Soccer complex. The team members, who had never played before as a team, braved sub freezing weather to bounce back from a first game loss 7-6 to the Earthquakes to rally with three straight exciting 3-2 results to win the Mustang 6v6 Soccer Shootout.

Needing a win in the final pool game to advance to the semifinals, the Dynamo scored with less than one minute left off a breakaway by Noah Jaye to send the team into the semifinals vs. the No. 1 seed from Watsonville. The Dynamo played tough defense and with less than three minutes left got the game winner from Christian Corral, which propelled Dynamo to the finals vs. the Livermore Quakes.

In the final the Dynamo jumped out to a 3-0 lead and held on with awesome shot saves from GK Sean Berry and outstanding defense all day by Griffin Turner and Brett Hoofnagle, turning away several opportunities to preserve each victory. The offense was led by Ryan Collonna and Quincy Poynter, who with midfielders Owen Crenshaw and Dylan Miller helped control the semis and finals for the Champion—JDS DYNAMO.

Team members are (l-r) Coach Pedro Naranjo, Griffin Turner, Christian Corral, Noah Jaye, Sean Berry, Brett Hoofnagle, Ryan Colonna, Dylan Miller, Quincy Poynter and Coach Johnny Kinnear (not pictured, Owen Crenshaw).

Red Bulls take league title

The U9 boys Red Bulls team finished its first year of division 1 travel soccer with great success. Coached by Tom Hennigan, Kevin Colaco and Edmund Eusebio, the boys played great soccer during the seven months of the season, culminating in winning the championship of the competitive Norcal Region 3.

Team members are Caden Bruce, Sam Morgan, Wyatt Clancy, Will Riherd, Matt Gillespie, Drew McComas, Bryan Spears, Michael Winaker, Carson O'Reilly, Griffin Egan, Luke Giusto, Nick Eusebio and Dominic Armanino.

During the season, the Red Bulls played in numerous tournaments, winning in Santa Rosa and finishing no worse than the semifinals in all the rest ... Huntington Beach, Sacramento, Santa Clara and Elk Grove.

Bulldogs are champion Die Hards

The Tassajara Valley Bulldogs 10U AAA baseball team competed in the Die Hards Only tournament in Fremont on Dec. 13-14 and won all four of their games, including the championship against the Bay Valley Bombers by a score of 10-4.

Team members are (back row, l-r) Austin McFarlane, Luke Garratt, Jack Maloon, Nate White, Brendan Cindric, Turner Olson, Christian Diebenow, (front) Nathan Landman, Jack Fryer, Boston Hubbard, Will Blackburn, CJ Worley and Mike Dejesus. The team is managed by Jorge Garratt, assisted by Rick Fryer and Brian Cindric.

Hoops victory

The CCOP seventh-grade girls continue to roll with consecutive wins on the basketball court after beating St. Joan of Ark, 20-5, on Sunday, Jan. 5. Jessie Medina was the high scorer in the game with four baskets as well as four steals. Jacquie Price, Uma Paranjpe, Roxy Moran and Jaime Rinetti also contributed points to the board.

Team members celebrating are (back, l-r) Jacquie Price, Juliet Logan, Uma Paranjpe, Roxy Moran, Jessie Medina, (front) Jaime Rinetti, Haley Brodnick, Rachael Miller, Moira Andrews. The head coach is John Elhert, assisted by Dave Miller and Dean.

PREP SCHEDULE

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

Saturday, Jan. 10

Men's Basketball
San Ramon Valley vs. Livermore at Cal High, 4 p.m.

Women's Soccer
San Ramon Valley vs. Irvington, 2 p.m.

Wrestling
San Ramon Valley Invitational at Monte Vista, 9 a.m.

Men's Soccer
Monte Vista at Pinole Valley, 10 a.m.

San Ramon Valley at Acalanes, 5 p.m.

Tuesday, Jan. 13

Men's Basketball
San Ramon Valley at Granada, 7 p.m.

Calendar

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN OUR COMMUNITY

Auditions

Auditions for WomenSing As part of its Celestial Season, WomenSing embarks on another journey of outstanding treble music and is holding auditions for experienced singers. Altos are particularly encouraged to audition, but all voice parts are welcome. For an apppointment, call 974-9169.

Valley Concert Chorale The Chorale is seeking experienced singers with sight-reading skills. Auditions are by appointment from 6-7 p.m., Monday, Jan. 12, at First Presbyterian Church, 4th and L streets, Livermore. Call 462-4205.

Classes

Fruit Tree Pruning Seminar Learn how to encourage fruit production from your fruit trees with Elizabeth Ruiz at 10 a.m., Saturday, Jan. 10, at Sloat Garden Center, 828 Diablo Rd., Danville. This event is free. Call 743-0288.

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 Luncheon This club will start its 2009 program with guest speaker Rev. Doug Heisal and his wife, Crystal at noon, Tuesday, Jan. 27, at the Clubhouse, 1401 Danville Blvd., Alamo. He will talk about "Uplifting All Women." Cost is $20, including lunch. Reservations are required by Jan. 23; call Pat at 837-8530.

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.

California Writers Club Joint Meeting Mt. Diablo and Tri-Valley Branches of the California Writers Club will meet at noon, Saturday, Jan. 10, at the Brass Door Restaurant, 2154 San Ramon Valley Blvd., San Ramon. Register at 11:30. Authors Alice Wilson-Fried and Laurel Anne Hill will speak on "Writing an Award-Winning Novel." Cost is $20 for members; $25 for non-members. Call 376-3631.

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

Danville 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.

Exchange Club Luncheon Speaker The Exchange Club of San Ramon Valley will host guest speaker Mike Consol, Publisher of the San Francisco Business Times, at its January monthly meeting at noon, Wednesday, Jan. 14, at Faz Restaurant, 600 Hartz Ave., Danville. Mr. Consol will speak about "Economic Outlook, East Bay." Cost is $16 for members; $20 for non-members. Call 275-2412.

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.

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.

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.

Concerts

'Grateful Dead' Tribute California Symphony presents "Dead Symphony: An Orchestral Tribute to the Music of the Grateful Dead" and Igor Stravinsky's "Firebird Suite" at 4 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 25 and at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 27, at the Lesher Regional Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Dr., Walnut Creek. Tickets are $39-$59. Visit www.lesherartscenter.org or www.californiasymphony.org.

Carlos Reyes' Latin Jazz See brilliant Latin Jazz and traditional folkloric music by Carlos Reyes, instrumentalist of the highest caliber, 7 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 31, San Ramon Valley High School Performing Arts Center, 501 Danville

WEEKEND PREVIEW

Thomas the Tank Engine and Friends

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. Children will get to lay down train track and drive trains. This event is free with museum admission. Call 736-2277.

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WEEK OF JANUARY 12

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Choice of:
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Choice of: Tiramisu OR Gelato

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Blvd., Danville. Tickets are $40 for Gold Circle; $25 adult; $10 SRVHS staff and students with ID. Call 229-2710.

Jazz at Peace Jazz at Peace welcomes dynamic duo jazz stars Anton Schwartz, sax and Gerry Grosz at 5 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 11, at Peace Lutheran Church, 3201 Camino Tassajara, Danville. This concert is free. Call 648-7000.

Steve Turre Quartet The Committee for Lectures, Art and Music at Saint Mary's College welcomes preeminent jazz innovator, trombonist Steve Turre, at 8 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 14, at Saint Mary's College of California, 1928 Saint Mary's Rd., Moraga. Tickets for general seating is $25; $20 for seniors; and $12 non-SMC students. Call 631-4381 or visit www.stmarys-ca.edu.

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.

Flea Market at SRVHS San Ramon Valley High School Instrumental Music Programs will host its annual Flea Market from 8 a.m.-2 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 10, at San Ramon Valley High School's cafeteria, 501 Danville Blvd., Danville.

Hacienda School Open House Hacienda School is having an Open House from 4:30-5:30 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 14, at Hacienda School, 3800 Stoneridge Dr., Pleasanton. The school has individualized curriculum and superior academics. This event is free, but reservations are required; call Jo Anne at 485-5750.

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

Alamo Elementary Auction Gala Event Log-on for your chance to bid on over 60 local restaurants, a dozen golf courses, shops, get-a-ways and the chance to skate with Kristi Yamaguchi and Bret Hedican at Alamo Elementary's Auction Gala event from Jan. 12-21, at www.alamoelementary.cmarket.com. Proceeds benefit the school.

Danville Rotary Crab Feed Join friends and neighors for a fun night of crab, pasta, salad and dessert from 6:30-10 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 31, at St. Isidore's Small Gym, 440 La Gonda Way, Danville. The evening will include door prizes and a silent and live auction. Tickets are $45. Proceeds benefit the community good works of Danville Rotary. Call 831-1100.

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.

TVAR's Claws for Paws Crab Feast Join Tri-Valley Animal Rescue, 6-10 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 7, at the Shrine Event Center, 170 Lindbergh Ave., Livermore, for its fourth annual crab feast with all the crab you can eat plus Caesar salad, pasta, French bread, dessert, coffee and tea and a no host bar. Games and drawings for baskets and cash will be held. The cost is $45 before Jan. 17 or $50 after. Visit www.tvar.org or call 323-8517.

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Health

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

Kids and Teens

'She's All That!' Conference A special conference will be held for middle school girls and their parents from 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 7, at Gale Ranch Middle School, 6400 Main Branch Rd., San Ramon. There will be a keynote address by Sejal Hathi, 17 workshops for girls, 4 for parents, and "Live Your Dream" info tables. Cost is $25 until Jan. 15; $30 thereafter, including lunch for the girls. Register by calling 355-2442 or visiting www.soroptimist-sr.org.

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

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.

Masked Marvels and Wondertales Michael Cooper's one-man extravaganza features his original stories of courage and wonder, breathtaking handcrafted masks, outlandish stilt dancing, and a physical repertoire that ranges from the madcap to the sublime. Starts at 2 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 11, at Bankhead Theater, 2400 First St., Livermore. Cost varies from $12-30.

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.

Lectures/ Workshops

'Dialogues' Lecture Series Contra Costa Jewish Community Center will host a lecture series, "Dialogues," featuring guest speakers at 7:30 p.m., at Contra Costa JCC, 2071 Tice Valley Blvd., Walnut Creek. Jesse Choper will speak on Wednesday, Jan. 21; Michael S. Baker on Wednesday, Feb. 4; Richard Gonzales on Wednesday, March 18; Mark Yudof on Thursday, April 2; and Noah Alper on Thursday, May 21. Call 938-7800, ext. 0 or visit www.ccjcc.org/dialogues.

Ask the Pharmacist Join Zan Sorooshian, Kaiser Oncology Pharmacist, as he answers questions about medications and how they may interact with chemotherapy drugs, and how medication side effects can be managed from 4-6 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 20, at the Wellness Community, 3276 McNutt Ave., Walnut Creek. This event is free for cancer patients, their families and friends. 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.

Miscellaneous

American Red Cross Public Blood Drive The American Red Cross is holding a public blood drive from 11 a.m.-5 p.m., at Friday, Feb. 6, at Grange Hall, 743 Diablo Rd., Danville. Appointments are required, visit www.beadonor.com.

On Stage

Free Preview of 'The Underpants' Role Players Ensemble Theater will host a free preview of Steve Martin's "The Underpants" at 8 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 15, at Village Theatre, 233 Front St., Danville. Donations are accepted. Call 820-1278 or visit www.danville-theatre.com.

Political Notes

'Death by a Thousand Cuts' Tri Valley Democratic Club will host a meeting for the election of its 2009 officers with guest speaker, Craig Cheslog, who will speak about "Death by a Thousand Cuts" at 7 p.m., Monday, Jan. 19, at IBEW Hall, 6250 Village Pkwy., Dublin. Q&A and discussion will follow. Free refreshments and wheelchair accessible. Call 451-4303.

Historical Perspective on the Presidency Common Wealth Club will host different speakers will who talk about "Problems with Progress" from 6:30-7:30 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 15, at the Veterans Memorial Hall, 3780 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette. Cost is $12 for members; $18 for non-members. Visit www.commonwealthclub.org.

Recreation

Team In Training Information Meeting Take on the physical challenge of a full or half marathon, triathlon, cycle century ride (100 miles) or distance hike event with The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's Team In Training. A meeting is planned at 6:30 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 20, at San Ramon Valley High School, 501 Danville Blvd., Danville. Call (800) 78-TRAIN or visit www.teamintraining.org/sf.

Sports

Danville Little League Player Tryouts Danville Little League Player Tryouts are from 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 10 for ages 10-12; and from 9 a.m.-2 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 31 for 9 year olds; both at the Charlotte Wood Blacktop. Arrive 30 minutes before call time to check in and receive tryout number. Visit www.danvillelittleleague.net.

Late Fees Waived for Danville Little League In recognition of tough economic times, Danville Little League will postpone late registration fees. The new late fee schedule is Jan. 15 for League ages 5-8. Visit http://danvillelittleleague.net.

San Ramon Valley Tennis Club This women's league is year round for both A and B players meeting for practice weekday mornings. Membership is $30 annually. For information, call Patty at 820-8131 or Laurie at 820-0695.

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.

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.

American Red Cross Volunteer Orientation American Red Cross Blood Services will host a volunteer orientation at 10 a.m., Tuesday, Jan. 13, at 140 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill. Tour the center and learn about the different ways to help. For information, contact Mandy at (510) 594-5211 or lewism@usa.redcross.org.

Help Your Senior Neighbors A lot of Danville seniors need rides to their appointments, stores or to special events. The Seniors' Club at Veterans Memorial Hall is looking for volunteers to provide rides on an "as-needed basis" on one or more Mondays a month. Call Jenn Overmoe at 314-3476 for more information.

Hospice of the East Bay Hospice of the East Bay is seeking volunteers to assist hospice patients and their caregivers. Opportunities include: volunteers who are fluent in Spanish; Patient Support Volunteers; Licensed Hair Stylists to offer hair cuts and styling; Certified Massage Therapists; Handymen to help with minor repairs and maintenance; Mobile notaries; and Bereavement Support Volunteers to provide support to family members after their loved one has died. To apply for free training, call 887-5678 and ask for the volunteer department, or e-mail peggyh@hospiceeastbay.org.

Lindsay Wildlife Museum Docents are needed to lead class tours, teaching children and others about our important connection with wildlife and the world we share. No experience needed. Call 627-2444 or visit www.wildlife-museum.org.

Make a Difference Reutlinger Community for Jewish Living (RCJL) in Danville provides assisted living, Alzheimer's and skilled nursing care in a community our residents call home. Volunteers play a key role at RCJL and opportunities are availabe for students and adults. For information, call Volunteer Coordinator Irma at 964-2098.

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.

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.

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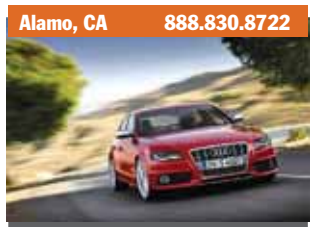
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Five home-buying myths

As first-time homebuyers grow curious about the home-buying process, they often turn to friends and family for advice about purchasing a home. While these sources can provide useful tips and information, they also may perpetuate some common home-buying myths.

"While family and friends may have the best intentions when sharing their purchase experiences, it is important to make sure that first-time homebuyers have accurate information," says Brian Lee, vice president and national sales manager for ditech, a wholly-owned subsidiary of GMAC Financial Services.

There are many resources first-time buyers can use for learning about the home-financing process, including attending local mortgage seminars or researching online. Well-known mortgage lenders often have educational resources and mortgage tools on their Web sites.

So what are some common home-buying myths? Lee, who has 10 years of experience in the mortgage industry, addresses the myths and sets the facts straight.

• **Myth 1: You need perfect credit.** An individual's credit score will significantly affect his or her mortgage loan approval and interest rate. Credit scores may range from 500 to 850, but the majority of scores are between 600 and 700. The higher the score, the more options you will have when looking for a mortgage. Along with your credit score, lenders will need to consider other factors before they approve a loan. Carefully review your credit report and immediately contact the credit reporting bureaus to correct any errors. You will want your credit report to be accurate by the time you apply for a mortgage.

• **Myth 2: Owning a home is more expensive than renting.** In many markets, owning can be as affordable as renting, especially when you consider the tax advantages of owning a home. Unlike rental costs, which increase over time, fixed-rate mortgages provide consistent monthly principal and interest payments for the life of the loan. As you make payments, the money will be applied toward the principal, increasing the equity in your home over time. Historically, owning a home has been one of the easiest ways of building wealth in America as home prices generally increase over time.

• **Myth 3: Lenders share your personal information.** Your personal information is protected by federal and state privacy laws. Generally, lenders must get your permission to share personal financial information with non-affiliates.

• **Myth 4: The mortgage process is too long and complicated.** With the right resources, the process of buying a home and obtaining a mortgage can be simplified. Expect an experienced loan officer to review the home financing process with you, define terms, and address concerns to find the financing option that's right for you. In addition, home lenders offer a number of online resources such as payment calculators, appraisal tools and a glossary of commonly used mortgage terms to simplify the home-buying process.

• **Myth 5: Lenders love to make you wait.** Mortgage lenders don't enjoy making you wait, but it does take time to review your application. Although some lenders may give you a preliminary and conditional pre-approval based on the information provided in an application, they will need to verify this information. This typically involves confirming employment and income, financial assets, and assessing the value of the home you're purchasing. Other documents, such as a payoff statement, may have to be ordered as well. Because lenders must rely on the response time of third parties, the process may take longer than anticipated. Ask your lender about what to expect when you submit an application and to keep you informed of unexpected delays.

—Courtesy of ARAcontent

SALES AT A GLANCE

This week's data represents homes sold during December 2008

Danville

Total sales reported: 3
Lowest sale reported: $550,000
Highest sale reported: $1,545,000
Average sales reported: $1,122,333

Walnut Creek

Total sales reported: 14
Lowest sale reported: $270,000
Highest sale reported: $1,700,000
Average sales reported: $583,571

HOME SALES

Source: California REsource

This week's data represents homes sold during December 2008

Danville

722 Pagosa Court Hager Trust to G. & M. Estrella for $550,000

526 Preakness Court Ponderosa Homes to L. & A. Robinson for $1,272,000

140 Tamarind Lane Braddock & Logan to J. & J. Campana for $1,545,000

Walnut Creek

80 Adak Court Fisher Trust to T. & S. Devoto for $435,000

5954 Autumnwood Drive #4A Mauro Trust to Firpo Trust for $380,000

714 Buena Vista Place Kern Trust to L. Sarver for $495,000

1965 Cactus Court #3 Hart Trust to D. Christopher for $360,000

78 Cuesta Way J. & V. Groman to Frye Trust for $949,000

5 Kayser Court R. & A. Hansen to L. Spencer for $939,000

1631 Montin Court GMAC Mortgage to J. & M. Jenny for $440,000

2715 Oak Road #B F. Laredo to C. Kohlhoff for $270,000

2 Oak Treat Court J. Quinlan to F. Lui for $480,000

623 Persimmon Road Bank of New York to S. Arrol for $610,000

3258 Rossmoor Parkway #2 S. Lardiere to Fraser Trust for $400,000

349 Shady Glen Road J. & S. Randolph to Blackwell Trust for $1,700,000

432 Tampico Stewart Trust to L. Young for $425,000

2564 Walnut Boulevard #107 M. Guerguy to B. Mirkovich for $287,000

OPEN HOMES THIS WEEKEND

DUBLIN

2 Bedrooms

7340 Cronin Circle $359,500
Sat 1-4 Alain Pinel Realtors 918-2425

LIVERMORE

4 Bedrooms

1823 Vancouver Way $599,000
Sun 1-4 Alain Pinel Realtors 339-3077

PLEASANTON

1 Bedroom

7880 Canyon Meadows Circle #E $264,950
Sun 1-4 Hometown GMAC 200-2457

3 Bedrooms

1485 Trimingham $516,000
Sun 1-4 Investment Real Estate Co. 963-0569

7748 Creekside Drive $599,950
Sun 1-4 Hometown GMAC 510-612-0719

1812 Paseo Del Cajon $739,000
Sun 1-4 REMAX Accord 699-3122

455 Linden Way $950,000
Sun 1-4 Prudential California Realty 463-6113

4 Bedrooms

1332 Bordeaux Street $1,199,000
Sun 1-4 Alain PInel Realtors 918-2425

3907 Arrowwood Court $1,399,999
Sun 1-4 Hometown GMAC 510-612-0719

4263 Croce Court $775,000
Sat 1-4 Investment Real Estate Co. 963-0569

5 Bedrooms

1368 Royal Creek Court $1,238,888
Sun 1-4 Keller Williams Realty 260-2508

1342 West Lagoon $1,274,950
Sun 1-4 Alain PInel Realtors 963-8871

2784 Calle de La Loma $999,900
Sun 1-4 Alain Pinel Realtors 998-4311

SAN RAMON

2 Bedrooms

3799 Crow Canyon Road $349,000
Sat 1-4 Alain Pinel Realtors 339-3077

Danville.com WEEKLY

To list your open home please contact Tracey Fordahl at (925) 837-8300, ext. 130 or e-mail: OpenHomes@DanvilleWeekly.com

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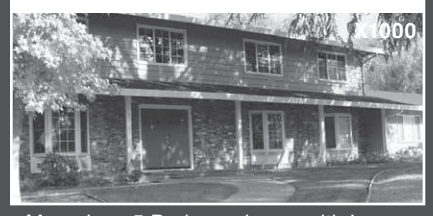

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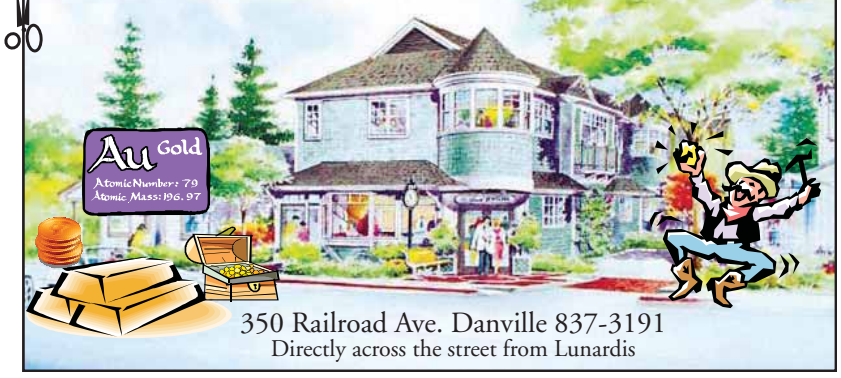

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