

Danville Weekly

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Honoring memories: Garden tour tomorrow to benefit Valley Oak Respite Center PAGE 18

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Cashing in on crime



Alamo man finds his niche in cleaning up crime scenes PAGE 12

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Streetwise

ASKED ON HARTZ AVENUE

What does downtown Danville need?



They need a central location for people to meet where they can get information about the town, restaurants, places to visit, things that are coming up, etc. It would be like a community information center. I've been living in Danville for 40 years, and all of my kids grew up here. I love it here.

Chris Christman
retired USMC and insurance broker

We have an office in downtown Danville and would like to see an office supply store here. It would be a lot easier than driving to San Ramon for all of our supplies. We can do it online, but it would be nice to go into a store and support the local businesses.

Claire Dowds
human resources director



I play music as a hobby (guitar) and would like to go hear music at a nice upscale bar/restaurant. Some of the old joints here just have their regulars hanging around outside smoking. It seems out of character for a nice town like Danville with so many upscale restaurants and shops.

Harris Kravatz
Oracle Corp. manager

They need a plaza like a "zocolo" in any town in Mexico where we can all come down and walk around.

Ford Andrews
restaurant manager



My husband and I grew up in the Danville/Alamo area and he likes what they've done in Lafayette, but I prefer Danville. It's hard to say if Danville needs anything because I love it here so much. A specialty bakery, like a cupcake store, would be nice. Or better yet, having all the ruts fixed on the Iron Horse Trail would be good.

Danni Sherman
bookkeeper/accountant

— Compiled by Stan Wharton

Have a Streetwise question? E-mail editor@DanvilleWeekly.com

About the Cover

Crime Scene Cleaners Inc. owner Neal Smither mops up a pool of pigs blood as part of a demonstration of what his company does. The Alamo resident started a business of cleaning up in the aftermath of violent events 13 years ago. Today, he has branches in several states and has become one of the foremost companies in this highly specialized field. Photo by Geoff Gillette.

Vol. V, Number 6

A woman hijacked a California Highway Patrol car in Sunol at 3:40 this afternoon, leading sheriff's deputies on a high speed chase on northbound Interstate 680...

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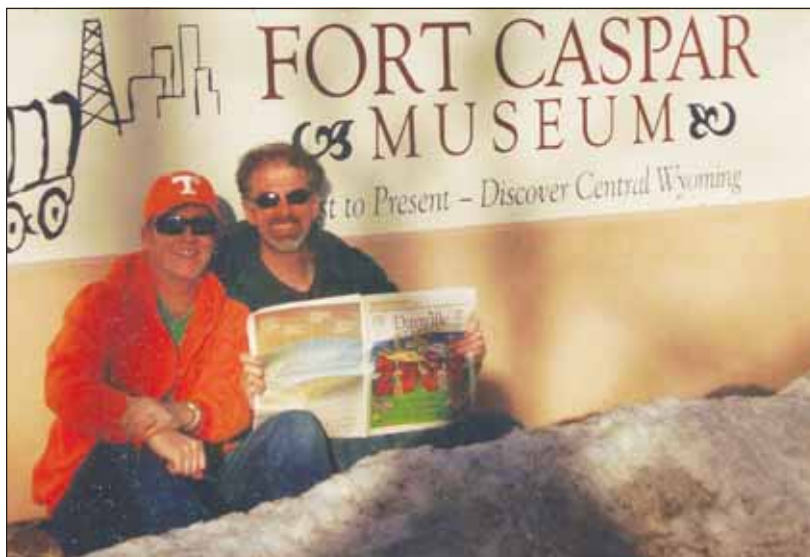
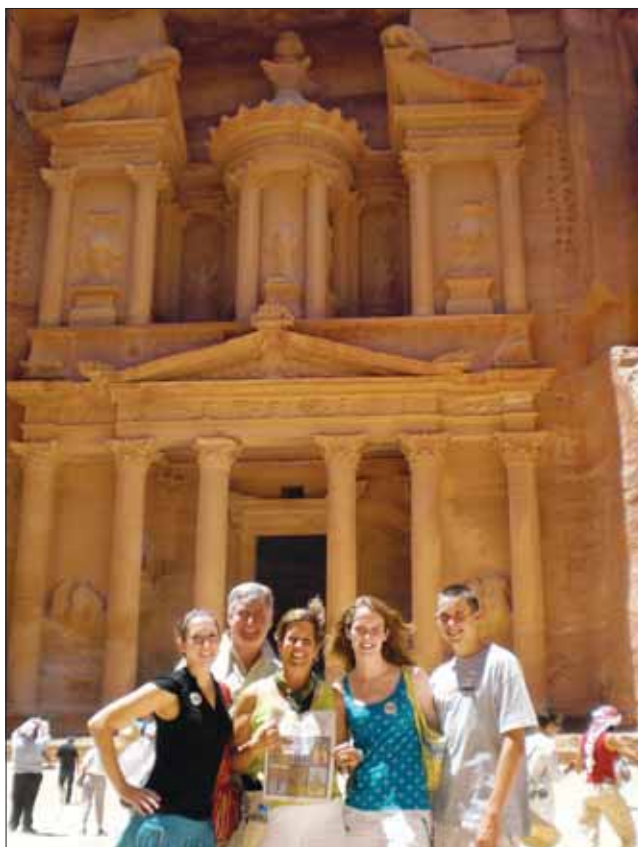
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Aloha: Evan (left) and Roger Dorris read the Danville Weekly while in Kukuilono Park (say it three times fast) overlooking Poipu, Kauai, Hawaii in August.

Reading in the ruins: The O'Neill Family—Mike, Stasi, Bridget, Betsy and James—enjoy their Weekly while visiting the ruins at Petra in Jordan on their two-week trip to Egypt, Israel and Jordan.



Cowboy country: Jeff Olsen and Kevin Evert enjoy their Danville Weekly in front of the Fort Caspar Museum in central Wyoming.

More Take Us Along on PAGE 22

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“I have a brand new fleet with the cleanest burning diesel engines on the market.”

Aram Boyd,
new manager of Traffix bus program for the schools. See story, page 8.

NEWS DIGEST

BART fare hikes are less than original proposal

BART directors voted last Thursday to increase fares less than the 10-percent level originally recommended. At the end of a lengthy discussion, directors voted to raise basic train fares by 6.1 percent and to increase the minimum fare for short trips by 25 cents, from \$1.50 to \$1.75.

“The idea of a 10-percent across-the-board fare increase didn’t sit well with most board members,” said BART Board President Thomas Blalock, “because it put too much of a financial strain on our regular commuters.”

Directors also voted to increase the surcharge for trips to and from San Francisco International Airport by \$2.50, going from \$1.50 to \$4. BART directors also voted to begin charging a \$1 parking fee at additional stations. Parking fees already are in place at some stations.

BART normally increases fares every two years based on cost-of-living formulas and its next fare hike wasn’t scheduled to occur until Jan. 1. But the board voted to move up the fare increase by six months because the transit agency faces a \$54 million budget deficit for the fiscal year starting July 1 and a \$249 million budget shortfall over the next four years.

Danville spelling champ to take the stage for a musical comedy

Evan O’Dorney, the Danville resident who won the 2007 Scripps National Spelling Bee at the age of 13, will be the guest of honor at a production Sunday of the Broadway award-winning musical comedy, “The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee.”

The comedy shows six young people learn that winning isn’t everything and that losing doesn’t necessarily make one a loser. The show is described as “tuneful, offbeat and at times heartwarming” and offers audience members the opportunity to become part of the action as onstage spellers.

This weekend’s four productions at the Bankhead Theater, 2400 First St. in Livermore will have celebrity spellers, including disk jockeys, a winemaker and Evan O’Dorney, who will appear at the 2 p.m. Sunday performance.

To purchase tickets call 373-6800 or visit www.bankheadtheater.org.

Bowlers to raise money for slain officers’ families

San Ramon Valley firefighters invite everyone to bring their families and head down to Danville Bowl, 200 Boone Court, Danville, on Saturday, June 13. The San Ramon Valley Firefighters Association is hosting a charity bowling event to raise money to help the families of fallen Oakland Police Officers.

“We are hoping the community will come out, support the families and have a great afternoon of bowling, entertainment and fun,” said Firefighter Jonas Aguiar.

Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$5 for kids, which includes open bowling from 2-6 p.m., food provided by Kinder’s Barbeque, and entertainment by the San Ramon Valley Fire Pipes and Drums band.

Organizers will hold drawings and auction off prizes donated by the community, including tickets to local professional sporting events, golf packages, a four night get-a-way to Lake Tahoe, private wine tasting events and more.

At 7 p.m. the event will switch to a traditional bowling tournament made up of 20 teams of five players competing for a \$500 cash prize. The fee is \$250 per five players.

Tickets can be purchased at www.srvff.org or at the door.

Ready, set, start reading on Monday

Contra Costa County Library’s Summer Reading Program, which takes place June 8-Aug. 17, is offering great prizes for adults. Readers ages 18 and up are invited to be “free2create” by submitting a book review online at ccclib.org or at their local library for a chance to win a booklover’s bag full of goodies, one night stay at the Renaissance ClubSport Hotel or dinner for two at Stanford’s Restaurant in Walnut Creek.

Children ages 2 through fifth-graders can tap into their artistic side and “Be Creative” for fun treats, and students in grades 6 to 12 are encouraged to “Express Yourself” with a chance for prizes including a Nintendo Wii.

The program includes a Baby Reading Program, too, for babies birth to 2 years of age. Learn more at the Danville Library, 400 Front St.

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Mount Diablo on list of endangered state parks

Letters to governor protest drastic measure

BY DOLORES FOX CIARDELLI

Park lovers sprang into action May 28 when Gov. Schwarzenegger released a list of 220 state parks he was proposing to close out of 279 total. The list has 43 parks in the Bay Area, including Mount Diablo.

The next day, Save Mount Diablo and other environmentalist groups sent out alerts to their members.

"As of Sunday, the governor and the legislators had received over 25,000 letters and I'm sure it's probably doubled since then," said Seth Adams, director of Land Programs for Save Mount Diablo, on Tuesday. "I know at least 2,000 letters came from around Mount Diablo."

A public hearing was held Tuesday, and more will continue throughout the month.

The California State Parks Foundation has a complete list of threatened parks, a map showing their locations, and a link to write to the governor and legislators at ga3.org/campaign/budget_may09.

"I think that we're in the worst situation we've ever been in and that flooding them with mail will make a difference," said Adams. "The real threat isn't just closing the parks, it's losing 2,000 staff members and rangers. They were cut to the bone already."

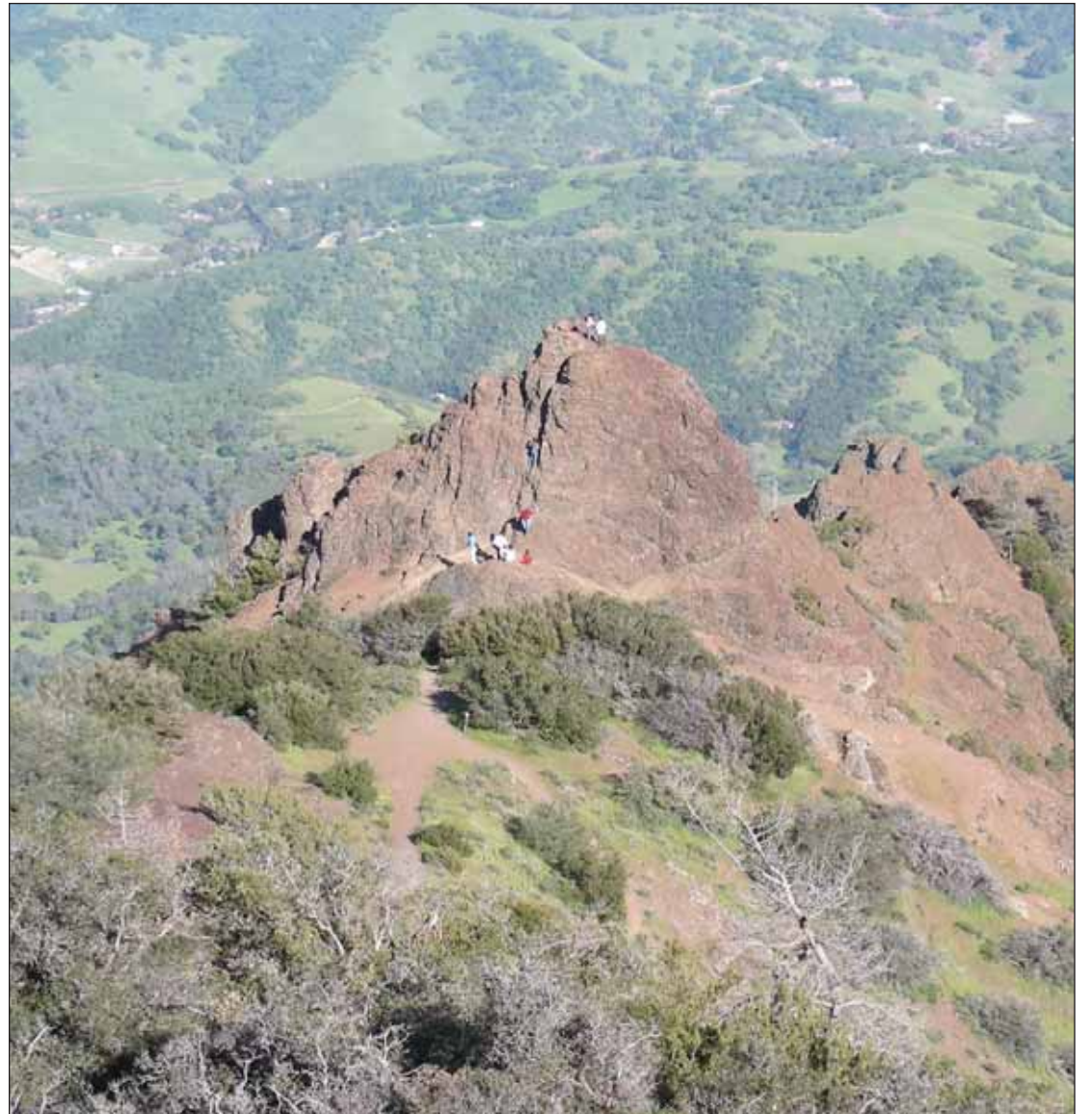
The proposal, part of Schwarzenegger's May revision for the 2009-10 budget announced last week, would eliminate all \$143.4 million of the state's general fund contributions to the state park system. The parks would lose \$70 million in the 2009-10 budget, and the remaining \$73.4 million in the 2010-11 budget.

"Basically that eliminates salaries for people, and if you eliminate people and jobs, you eliminate the people that run the parks, so you must then close them because there's nobody there to operate them," said California State Parks spokesman Roy Stearns.

The elimination of the money for state parks is only .62 percent of California's budget shortfall of \$24.3 billion, according to Jerry Emory, spokesman of the California State Parks Foundation. He said the cuts could even end up adding to the deficit. According to a study by California State Parks and UC Berkeley, every dollar that funds state parks returns \$2.35 to the general fund through economic activities in the communities around the parks, as well as purchases made inside the parks.

Lisa Page, a spokeswoman for the governor, said that the size of the deficit this year, as well as the rejection of the May 19 propositions in the state's special election, leaves no good options.

—*Bay City News*
contributed to this story



DOLORES FOX CIARDELLI

Looking southeast from the summit on Mount Diablo on Easter Sunday, hikers can be seen climbing over the Devil's Pulpit, a rock outcropping that looks out over Morgan Territory. Mt. Diablo State Park is one of 220 that may lose their funding.

Rose Garden wants more 'personal services'

Planning Commission ruling opens door to other businesses

BY GEOFF GILLETTE

Members of the Danville Planning Commission approved a parking variance request last week that will mean a wider variety of businesses will be able to take up residence at the Rose Garden Shopping Center.

At their May 26 meeting, commissioners heard a request from Blake Hunt Ventures, the leasing and property manager for the Rose Garden, asking that the current variance of 12 percent be increased to 27.2 percent. Blake Hunt CEO Brad Blake explained that having the variance would allow them to lease out space to more "personal service" businesses such as nail salons, fitness studios and tutoring services.

Since its opening in 2008, the Rose Garden has been primarily a retail/restaurant area. The initial variance to parking was granted in order to allow the Burke Williams

Day Spa to set up shop there.

Town staff explained that each business is allotted a certain number of parking spaces. High turnover uses, such as retail, require fewer spaces because customers park, shop, then leave.

Personal service uses like the day spa require a greater number of parking spaces because customers will generally be there for a longer period of time. Since the parking for the Rose Garden was designed to provide 368 spaces divided up between the various tenants, variances must be approved to allow those uses to occupy more than their share of parking.

Blake explained that having more of the personal service uses in there serves the dual purposes of providing additional businesses in the Rose Garden, but also brings in more customers who are likely

See **ROSE GARDEN** on Page 8

Donations down, say Blue Star Moms

Danville drop zone will be accepting donations tomorrow

BY DOLORES FOX CIARDELLI

The Blue Star Moms, who have offspring in the U.S. military, are known for the care packages they send to our troops in war zones.

"We have three mailings a year—Valentine's Day, Fourth of July and Christmas," said Janet Burchard of East Bay Chapter 101.

The Fourth of July is fast approaching but donations are down, she lamented.

"I think it's because of the economy and maybe we just haven't gotten as much publicity," she said.

Tomorrow will be the last collection—called a drop zone—before the goodies are bundled up and mailed June 19-20. A list of suggested items to donate is available at www.bluestarmoms.org but Burchard said the No. 1 thing they need is snack foods such as trail mix, candy, gum and nuts packaged in individual sizes.

"No chocolate," she warns. "At this time of year temperatures can be 120 degrees. Although we do send chocolate at Christmastime."

She also suggested fun items

like Frisbees or Hacky-sacks.

Burchard joined the Blue Star Moms when her son Scott Crosley, a 1991 graduate of Monte Vista High School, was deployed to Iraq in 2005. He is with the Texas National Guard and spent a year in Iraq where, although a chaplain, he went out on patrol.

"It sounded scary and I needed support," said Burchard. "We sent Scott a care package every other week and he had a lot of guys he'd share with, soldiers that maybe didn't get anything from home."

She doesn't know if or when he may be sent overseas again but she stays active in the Blue Star Moms.

"A lot of moms have sons and daughters who are veterans," she said.

If people can't buy items, money is also welcome, Burchard noted. Postal rates have increased and each package costs \$12 to mail.

"The cost of our postage runs in the tens of thousands of dollars a year," she said, adding that donations are tax-deductible.

Tomorrow's drop zone also will

have a table for people to write notes to the troops.

"We include a little note in each of our boxes," said Burchard. Sometimes children in classrooms will write notes to be included.

The troops often write back. "We get quite a few thank you notes from soldiers and Marines," said Burchard. "They like the idea that someone remembers them and is supporting them. It kind of makes their day." ■

Help the troops

■ **What:** Drop Zone to collect items and postcards for Summer Fun Care Packages for U.S. troops overseas. Money also gratefully accepted.

■ **Who:** Blue Star Moms, whose sons and daughters are in the military, are serving overseas, or are veterans

■ **When:** 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Saturday, June 6

■ **Where:** Veterans Memorial Building, 400 Hartz Ave., Danville

■ **Contact:** Janet Burchard, 838-4228



JOHN G. REESE

Remembering the fallen

The crowd lines the All Wars Memorial for the ceremony on Memorial Day at Oak Hill Park in Danville, which was attended by about 1,200 people. At right, Danville Mayor Arnerich tells the reasons why we celebrate Memorial Day.



Teen job program moving ahead

Danville business takes part in county employment initiative

BY GEOFF GILLETTE

A Danville company is joining several other Contra Costa County businesses in helping to employ 1,000 teens this summer as part of a job program funded with federal stimulus dollars.

At a May 14 press conference, Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors Chairwoman Susan Bonilla and Workforce Development Board Executive Director Bob Lanter announced that \$2.5 million of \$6.9 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds will go toward the Contra Costa Youth@Work program.

Lanter said under the program up to 1,000 teenagers will have the opportunity to learn needed job skills and will then be placed in a business to work for 120 hours during the summer.

"It is imperative to give our youth the opportunity to learn the skills and practices crucial to long-term success in the professional world," said Lanter. "By creating new opportunities for the youth, we are building the skills of our county's future workforce and helping support local business."

Lanter said that in the program, residents ages 14-24 will have the opportunity to learn skills and practices usable in the business world. The participants will be given aptitude tests to determine their skills and interests, and then be placed with a business.

The teens taking part in the program will work a total of 120 hours over the summer and will be paid \$8.25 an hour.

In Danville, Spectrum on Science Foundation will be taking part in the program. Lanter said other Danville businesses may be in the program as well, but Spectrum is already on board.

Bonilla said she is pleased with the program and is happy to see the stimulus dollars providing needed job skills.

"It is a vital contribution to the future development of an educated and skillful workforce," she said.

The teen job program is only one area where the stimulus funds are being used. Lanter said that \$1.1 million will be used to provide adult employment and training services to help low income residents compete in the job market. Also \$2.7 million is targeted at county residents who have lost their jobs. The Workforce Development Board will help in retraining employees to seek other jobs in the market, as well as helping them to refine their skills during the job search. ■

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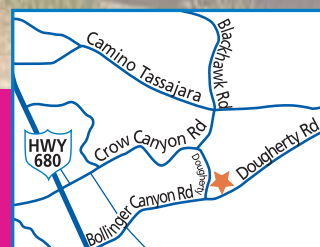
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DIABLO VIEWS

By DOLORES FOX CIARDELLI

'You have the right to do nothing'

A little white card arrived in my mail last week. At first glance, it seemed to be from Costco and I thought it must be time to renew my membership. Then I looked more closely. Right above my address, it read: "Important information about a class action settlement."

On the back of the card it said the notice was addressing anyone who had purchased and paid for a new 12-month term of Costco membership between March 1, 2001, and March 31, 2009.

The lawsuit regards people who pay for their next year's membership a few months after the expiration date from the previous year. I almost always do this. Although my membership expires in June, I may not make it to Costco until August or even September. Then I pay the renewal fee when I pay for my purchases.

The suit states that people like me are paying for 12 months of Costco privileges but only receiving 10 months from the time we pay. Yes, that's true although I always regarded it more like a club and I was actually late paying the dues so of course it would be retroactive to June.

But! If, as the card says, my rights have been violated, it sounded interesting. So I downloaded a 40-page document from the Web to get the details.

The complaint alleges that Costco did not disclose this policy to its members and therefore they did not agree to it. I would like to state here that I went to the "Costco" folder in my file cabinet to look over my original membership agreement. Alas, I am not that organized. I can only assume that I first joined in June 1993 because that's what it says on my card, and I can only hope that this date is more precise than the photo of me. But even if I had been aware of this renewal policy, I would not have been deterred by it—I just wanted cheap toilet paper.

According to the summary of the proposed settlement, if I have renewed my membership two months or more (but less than

three months) after it expired, I will receive two months of free membership. If I renewed my membership more than 21 days (but less than two months) after my expiration date, I'll receive one month of free membership. In response to the lawsuit, Costco changed the rules. Before, Costco members could only "start fresh" if they waited five months to renew. Now their membership dates will begin when they renew more than two months after they expire. And Costco will be sure to make these policies clear. All of this was settled out of court and doesn't mean any law was broken.

All of that was spelled out in the first few pages. Then I looked over the summary to decide what else I needed to read. There was "basic information," "excluding yourself from the settlement," and "objecting to the settlement" plus a section called "What happens if I do nothing at all?" That sounded relevant to me. Here is what it said:

"You have the right to do nothing. If you do nothing, you will receive the benefits of the settlement to the extent that you are eligible for such benefits." It went on to say that unless I exclude myself, I cannot sue Costco on the issues in this case.

Well, that sounds safe enough. If I want to exclude myself from the suit I need to state my intention to do so in writing and send it to the defendant's counsel. I wasn't ready to join the class action suit because I didn't especially agree with it. If people can let their memberships expire, then start them up again a few months later, they might opt to go without their Costco membership for a month or two and Costco will lose that money and raise its prices. And if it's a private membership club, why can't it make the rules?

But it sounds like I don't need to do anything except wait around and get extra months added to my membership after the final hearing Oct. 16. The settlement has all the information it needs to do this so obviously someone's bookkeeping is better than mine. I'm not sure I agree with the action so to be fair, I'll spend more money at Costco.

E-mail Dolores Fox Ciardelli at editor@DanvilleWeekly.com.

Danville man to manage Traffix

Aram Boyd helping launch new student transportation program

By GEOFF GILLETTE

The Traffix board, which has been working on developing a student transportation plan for the past two years, has hired Danville resident Aram Boyd as manager to make sure the program gets off to a solid start this fall.

"We are really excited to bring Aram on board," said Danville Transportation Director Tai Williams. Williams said the Traffix board sent out the proposal late last year to individuals they knew as well as advertising the position in transit periodicals.

They received three applications for the job. Williams said that Boyd offered a mix of talents and interests that made him a perfect fit for the position.

"He has a genuine enthusiasm for the program, and he was brimming with ideas on how to use school buses to address traffic congestion," explained Williams. "He also lives in Danville, has a child in the school district, and his wife works for the district. All of those components blended together to make the perfect candidate."

As program manager, Boyd will serve as the liaison between the parent community and the Traffix board.

"He'll field all the calls from parents, he'll review the routes, and see if there needs to be any amendments to them," Williams said.

Boyd has a long history in public transportation, having spent the last 10 years working for AC Transit, the Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District, which is responsible for nearly a quarter million riders per day.



NAT ROJANASATHIRA

Traffix Manager Aram Boyd is proud that the program will use Thomas HDX Saf-T-Liner Buses.

Boyd said he knew from reading the proposal that this new position with Traffix was a matter of finding the right job at the right time.

"I looked at it and really liked what they were doing. And it let me stay here in Danville and put my expertise to good use," Boyd said. "When I was working for AC Transit every day I was leaving my community to help provide transportation in someone else's community."

Since joining the program in February, Boyd has been working with the parent groups at the seven schools that will be served in the first phase of the transportation program.

"We had the funding for 19 buses, so we have to be really smart with our money," he stated.

The main question Boyd said he keeps hearing is when will the passes be available and how can parents get them. He said at this point everything is dependent on the school district. In order to provide the services at both the middle and elementary schools, the buses will have to use a tiered system, delivering the middle schoolers, then going back out and getting the elementary kids. In order to do so, the district needs to amend bell schedules to accommodate the roughly 45-minute gap needed in order to get

back out, run the routes and pick up the second wave of students.

Boyd said once the schedules are amended, Traffix will be implementing a marketing campaign to let people know they can get the passes, and also the Web site will go live. The site will provide route maps and will enable parents to buy the passes.

He added that what he thinks is really selling the program is the buses themselves.

"I have a brand new fleet with the cleanest burning diesel engines on the market," he said. "Full lap and shoulder seatbelts for all the kids, a GPS system, video cameras on board and air conditioning. We've tried to put together a top shelf program for parents in this area."

Traffix is sponsored through Measure J tax funds and is designed to help alleviate congestion on the streets in the Danville/San Ramon area. The student transportation program is one of the first major initiatives for the agency.

The seven schools participating initially are Los Cerros Middle, Green Valley Elementary, Pine Valley Middle, Country Club Elementary, Walt Disney Elementary, with limited service to Vista Grande and Neil Armstrong elementary schools. ■

ROSE GARDEN

Continued from Page 7

to stay and patronize the other merchants.

"We'd really like it if this were all retail with a massive parking problem," he stated. "The parking problem right now is no one is parking there."

"Retailers are having a difficult time getting the people out of the restaurants and into the stores," he added. "Of all the uses we've listed here we've had opportunities to sign leases with them and had to turn them away. They've gone to San Ramon or Blackhawk."

In the variance request, any business vacated would revert to the previous parking variance after 90 days. Blake said that having such a short turnaround time would make it difficult to get another occupant in before the variance ran out. He requested

that the commission amend the request to read 180 days.

Commissioners had several questions over the issue, not the least of which was whether it made sense to approve such a large increase in the parking variance. In leading off the public hearing, Chairman Bob Nichols asked Blake how such a change would help him.

Blake responded that having the ability to solicit the wider range of clientele for the shopping center would allow them to fill the space at the Rose Garden and increase traffic.

"If those tenants are out there, conceivably we could put them all in there," he explained.

Commissioner Lynn Overcashier expressed concern that allowing tenants in there for five years would basically guarantee that it would never change, that the variance would be there in perpetuity.

"I want a line drawn in the sand," she stated, "that after five years they look at the tenant mix."

Fellow Commissioner Renee Morgan disagreed.

"Our intent is to keep businesses in Danville," she said. "I think we should do what we can to keep the businesses here rather than see them go to San Ramon or Blackhawk."

Another concern expressed was how the parking can be mitigated if a number of new businesses come in and parking becomes an issue.

Danville Principal Planner David Crompton said that a condition of approval is that the parking management plan has to be approved. He said the town could monitor it and if a problem comes up, it can be dealt with.

After some further discussion, the members of the Planning Commission gave their unanimous approval to the 27.2 percent variance. ■



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Community Pulse

POLICE BULLETIN

Firefighters tackle grass fire, garage blaze and spilled fuel

High temperatures and steady winds kept fire crews busy alongside I-680 south Thursday, May 28, as a grass fire ruined the afternoon for hundreds of commuters passing through Alamo.

San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District spokeswoman Kim French said crews were dispatched shortly after 2:30 p.m. to an area between Livorna Road and Rudgear Road on a report of an outside fire.

SRVFPD and firefighters from Contra Costa Fire Protection District worked together to contain the fire, fed by the constant winds sweeping through the area. French said engine companies were dispatched to the nearest structures in order to protect them from the encroaching fire, but it did not prove to be necessary as no buildings were threatened.

French said the fire was contained by 3:30 p.m., although crews remained at the scene late into the afternoon on cleanup duty.

One injury was reported as a reserve firefighter was overcome by heat exhaustion and was transported to Kaiser Medical Center in Walnut Creek. The firefighter was expected to make a full recovery.

The fire burned about five acres of land, said

Emily Hopkins of the Contra Costa Fire Protection District. She said the cause for the fire is still under investigation.

The next morning, May 29, San Ramon Valley firefighting crews from Stations 30, 31 and 36 responded to a garage fire in the 4000 block of Conejo Drive in Danville at 4:31 a.m. Damages were estimated at \$100,000 for the structure and \$50,000 for the contents.

The flames were mostly contained to the garage area, the dispatcher said, and firefighters declared the blaze under control just after 5 a.m. No injuries were reported.

The cause of the fire was found to be electrical in nature, said French.

On Friday afternoon, May 29, a passenger vehicle collided with a fuel delivery tanker at the corner of Alcosta Boulevard and San Ramon Valley Boulevard in south San Ramon at 10:43 a.m., resulting in 2,581 gallons of unleaded fuel spilled into a nearby storm drain, with San Ramon Valley firefighters responding as well as others. The spill traveled approximately 1.2 miles through the storm drain system to the San Ramon Creek in Dublin and several businesses and home were evacuated.

The spill was contained primarily to the storm drain, although some fuel did reach the creek, according to the San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District. National Response Corporation (NRC) Environmental coordinated cleanup efforts throughout Friday night and into Saturday morning, May 30.

—Staff reports

POLICE REPORT

The following information is provided by the Danville Police Department.

Sunday, May 24

- Residential burglary on Mission Dr. at 12:18 a.m.
- Battery on Blackhawk Rd. and Camino Tassajara at 12:35 a.m.
- Auto burglary on Messiah Pl. at 8:40 a.m.
- Auto burglary on Cedar Lane Ct. at 8:45 a.m.
- Auto burglary on Sycamore Cir. at 1:57 p.m.
- Accident, property damage, on Greenbrook Dr. and San Ramon Valley Blvd. at 8:39 p.m.

Monday, May 25

- Accident, property damage, on Fostoria Way at 4:13 p.m.
- Drunk in public on San Ramon Valley Blvd. and Sycamore Valley Rd. at 6:43 p.m.
- Vandalism on Valley Creek Lane at 8:11 p.m.

Tuesday, May 26

- Vehicle traffic stop, arrest, on Laurel Dr. and Laurel Ct. at 12:46 a.m.
- Grand theft on Remington Loop at 9:26 a.m.
- Auto burglary on Sycamore Cir. at 10:16 a.m.
- Misdemeanor driving under the influence (DUI), arrest, on Camino Tassajara and Sycamore Valley Rd. at 1:14 p.m.
- Weapon on school grounds on Blemer Rd. at 1:57 p.m.
- Service to citizen, arrest, on La Gonda Way at 5:58 p.m.
- Vehicle traffic stop, arrest, on Greenbrook Dr. and Sycamore Valley Rd. at 9:56 p.m.

Wednesday, May 27

- Auto burglary on Joaquin Dr. at 6:17 a.m.

- Accident, property damage, on Camino Ramon and Fostoria Way at 8:12 a.m.
- Petty theft on Turrini Dr. at 10:08 a.m.
- Accident, property damage, on Diablo Rd. and Green Valley Rd. at 3:22 a.m.

- Petty theft, shoplift, on 3400 block of Camino Tassajara at 9:07 p.m.
- Vehicle traffic stop, arrest, on northbound I-680 on ramp and Sycamore Valley Rd. at 10:17 p.m.

Thursday, May 28

- Felony embezzlement on Entrada Mesa at 12:19 p.m.
- Vandalism on San Ramon Valley Blvd. at 1:15 p.m.
- Petty theft on Lasata Ct. at 1:37 p.m.
- Misdemeanor hit-and-run on Sycamore Valley Rd. at 6:57 p.m.

Friday, May 29

- Vehicle traffic stop, arrest, on Diablo Rd. and El Pintado Rd. at 1:32 a.m.

- DUI, arrest, on Camino Tassajara and Shady Creek Dr. at 3:13 p.m.
- DUI, arrest, on Railroad Ave. at 5:31 p.m.
- DUI, arrest, on Gwen Ct. and Richard Lane at 9:01 p.m.

Saturday, May 30

- Drunk in public on San Ramon Valley Blvd. at 1:21 a.m.
- Vandalism on Timberline Ct. at 11:30 a.m.
- Unwanted guest disturbance, arrest, on Winfield Lane at 3:10 p.m.
- Residential burglary on Tweed Dr. at 4:26 p.m.
- Accident, property damage, on Fostoria Way at 5:29 p.m.
- Accident, major injuries, on Fountain Springs Dr. at 9:19 p.m.
- Drunk in public on 300 block of Hartz Ave. at 10 p.m.
- Accident, major injuries, arrest, on Magee Ranch Rd. and Sunhaven Rd. at 10:45 p.m.

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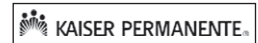
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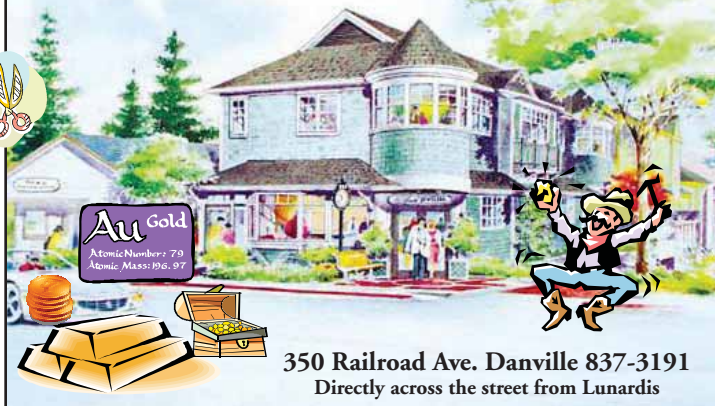
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Perspective

EDITORIAL

THE OPINION OF THE WEEKLY

A Blue Star chance to give

The Blue Star Moms have a slogan: "Our hearts are on the line." That touching phrase makes us want to ask what we can do to help. Their answer probably would be to make donations so they can keep their care package campaign going strong.

Chapter 101 was formed in November 2001 and has more than 150 members from Contra Costa and Alameda counties. The original group formed during World War II but it was after the attacks on Sept. 11 that the local Moms mobilized when they realized the job that was now facing their sons and daughters serving in the Armed Forces.

The group has monthly meetings at the Danville Veterans Hall; members offer support to each other and are there to welcome home returning soldiers. Chapter 101 also helped present a two-day event for the state's Gold Star families, which was held at the Marines' Memorial Club in San Francisco to comfort the 100 families who have lost their children in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

But perhaps the Blue Star Moms are best known for their drop zones, where they collect donations of goodies to put into care packages to send to the troops overseas for the Fourth of July, the Christmas holidays and Valentine's Day. They call it mailing "a little bit of home" to their sons and daughters who are serving around the world. Often they will hear from commanding officers in the field who contact them to say there is a young man or woman who is not receiving any boxes or letters from home. The Blue Star Moms immediately mail off a care package to them with a big blue star on the box to let them know that people from Alameda and Contra Costa counties in California think about and support them.

The Moms also send notes to the troops and include one with each package. Each drop zone has a table set up for folks to send a message of encouragement, and sometimes classes of children will write these notes. Other groups are also welcome to ask their members to write positive messages, chatting a bit about themselves. No stamps are required—the Moms take care of it all.

The Moms report that they know their packages have come to mean a lot to the troops overseas because they get letters from them. One young man named Stephen wrote, "Please know that the packages you have sent me have brought lots of smiles to the faces of my fellow soldiers. I want to extend my sincere thanks to all who volunteer and who work to make our lives brighter."

The Blue Star Moms will have a drop zone tomorrow at the Vets Hall in Danville. Stop by to donate snack items, cotton socks or toys like Frisbees or Hacky-Sacks. Money is always needed for mailing costs. Stop by to show you care.

Danville Weekly

Serving the communities of Alamo, Blackhawk, Diablo and Danville

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Crime Scene Cleaners Inc. owner Neal Smither speaks to a group of students from St. Joseph Notre Dame High School in Alameda. Smither tells the students that if they want a career in forensic science they need to stay in school and stay out of trouble.



A mural depicting the logo of Crime Scene Cleaners blares out from one of the walls of the company's Oakland headquarters. The bold design is in keeping with Smither's philosophy of using shock value to market his service. "When you see one of my trucks, you're going to say 'Whoa!'" he explains to the students.



Alacritas employees make pickup trucks. Smither said they have a philosophy of using shock value to market his service.

TV vs. real crime scenes

BY GEOFF GILLETTE

With more than a half dozen mainstream television shows dealing with crime scene investigation you'd think at least some of them would get it right. Not so, said David Freidel, director of operations for Alacritas Inc., an affiliate of Crime Scene Cleaners Inc.

Alacritas provides transportation and storage services for mortal remains. Freidel said he has seen plenty of crime scenes in his years in the business and has yet to see one that looks at all like what one would see on CSI.

"For one thing," he said, "CSI's don't work in pairs. Most of them are deputies who've been trained in crime scene investigation."

Other ways that reality differs from TV:

- It's never as neat and sterile as it looks on TV.
- Bodies aren't neatly in one place.
- CSI's don't go into houses alone with guns drawn.
- Most of the scientific investigation happens in the lab.
- Coroners and pathologists don't go to the crime scene.

Freidel said he understands the need for things to be orderly on a TV set, but in real life things just aren't that tidy. He added that police officers are trained to examine the scene, bag up the evidence and move on.

"You don't hear a lot of chatter at a crime scene. And investigators don't argue about their interpretation of a scene," he said.

What show comes closest to matching real life? According to Freidel it would be "First 48." ■

Cashing in on

Alamo man finds his niche in cleaning

GEOFF GILLETTE

"Hi, my name is Neal. I'm into death."

This is the greeting offered by Neal Smither, the mastermind behind Crime Scene Cleaners Inc., one of the largest such cleaning operations in Northern California. Smither is talking to a group of students from St. Joseph Notre Dame High School. An after-school program called CSI-Alameda has requested a tour of the company's Oakland headquarters.

That cavalier, tongue-in-cheek greeting is line with the way Smither approaches the grim business of mopping up in the aftermath of violent events, be they crime or calamity.

"It's the best way to get the word out there," he tells the students. "We play on the shock value. When you see my truck you're going to go, 'Whoa!' And you're going to tell people you saw me."

The business of death and the cleanup of mortal remains isn't exactly where the lean, 42-year-old Alamo man expected himself to be.

"I was in mortgage banking for Countrywide," he said. "They closed down my division so I was like, 'Now what?'"

The plan was heading toward the mortuary business, but Hollywood altered Smither's plans.

"I was sitting watching 'Pulp Fiction' and they shot the guy in the car and they brought the Wolf character in to clean it up and for me it was kind of an epiphany. I was like, 'Wow that's genius.' I can do that," he said.

In June 1996, Smither started Crime Scene Cleaners. At the time, he said, there were very few other people working at the job. "There were a few guys out there, but it wasn't their main job. It was more like a weird sideline job where they could make a little extra money," he explained.

Smither said he started off by going to the mortuaries and trying to get some business that way, but he had very little luck there. "Most of the mortuary guys just thought I was a nut, so I went to the cops and started trying to develop them," he said.

Working with the police was the spark that started the business moving, but even so Smither said he needed to work slowly and grow his client base.

"I undersold everyone else. No matter what they needed, the price was always \$50. If it was a car, no matter what the condition, it was \$50."

Offering to do the work was only half the battle, the other half being knowing how to do the work.

"I didn't know a darned thing about this. I was just going in and using household cleaners, store-bought stuff. It wasn't until my third job that I really decided I needed to get serious with this," he said.

The job involved cleaning up after a suicide in an apartment complex in the Grand Lake area. The man had killed himself on the hide-a-bed in his living room.

"It was middle summer and it was hotter than hell," he recalled. "When I tipped the couch up on end to get it out of there it just released a torrent of body fluids that I was not prepared for at all. I wasn't wearing protective gear, I was barely wearing gloves. It freaked me out. It was noxious, I've never smelled anything like that before."

After that he started wearing more protective clothing, as well as a respirator. He studied the products available for cleaning up blood and other fluids, making sure he had the items that would work best.

"I researched, I made sure I knew what I needed to know so I could be ready," he said.

Smither grew the business through a combination of smart, savvy networking and a blatant hucksterism not seen since the days of Barnum and Bailey.

"It's a fine line," he laughs, "but you gotta have an edge to you to get it done. The more they knew of me, the more business I would get."

Smither's in-your-face style and willingness to throw himself into any situation led to more and more jobs from the police, as well as developing relationships within the press. This led over time to two big breaks that put the fledgling company over the top. The first was a national contract with an undisclosed hotel chain to provide cleanup services. The second was the media blitz surrounding the 1997 suicides of the Heaven's Gate Cult in San Diego County.

"I was extremely new when that hit. I went down there on a chance and was able to talk my way in and get mattresses out," he said. "I did it for free. I didn't make a dime on that job, but it really gave me something to talk about. I could say, 'Hey, we did Heaven's Gate.' That's the biggest thing anyone had seen. That allowed me to get a lot of press."

The exposure resulted in articles

"I didn't know a darned thing about this. I was just going in and using household

Neal Smither, owner of Crime Scene Cleaners Inc.



Employees Terrance Stokes (left) and Jeremy Isakson demonstrate how they would pick up a body. The work of a mortuary driver is very stressful and demanding. Smither has a high turnover rate, going through as many as 70 drivers in a year.

Crime

up crime scenes

about the business in national magazines like Spin, as well as offers from Hollywood.

"I did some consulting for Michael Bay on a project called 'Gory Details.' I was optioned to do some consulting for another movie, 'Sunshine Cleaners,' but I broke that option to do some other stuff," he said.

The growth of the company forced some tough decisions from Smither. Initially, he said, he wanted to create franchises all over the country. And in the early days, he worked on that, traveling most of the year and setting up operations in several major cities around the U.S.

"I wanted to be everywhere. I wanted to be the McDonald's of blood," he joked. "But I just realized that I couldn't travel 320 days a year."

That hasn't stopped him from continuing to build contacts and grow both the cleanup business and a second death-related business transporting bodies.

"I started up a business called First Call. Now it's called Alacritas. We have contracts with coroner's offices all over the state, sheriff's offices, mortuaries. We've built our own freezer storage unit. That's if there's a body

that they don't know where it's supposed to go, like for an indigent. We can store them here until they let us know where it needs to go," he said.

But Smither didn't limit himself to blood, gore and death. Realizing that there was a wide array of services he could provide, he allowed his company to expand so that now it also provides assistance for meth lab decontamination, squad car cleanup, hantavirus prevention, mold spore remediation and property cleanup.

After 13 years of cleaning up scenes of violence, Smither remains excited by the business but knows that eventually he's going to move on. So what comes next?

"I want to run a mom-and-pop doughnut shop," he said. "I want a business that I can build up, work it, run it."

He added, "I would like something that doesn't have employees, that would allow me to work with my kids and teach them to work."

Regardless of what the next step is, Smither said he is confident he will succeed. "Look, I may not be as educated as other people but, plain and simple, I'll do it because I'll outwork everyone else." ■



GEOFF GILLETTE

Smither, partially dressed in the protective Tyvek suit, puts an enzyme down on a pool of pig's blood he has spread out for the demonstration. Environmental law states that any spilled blood must be neutralized before it can be removed. Smither said the enzyme renders the blood safe and makes it easier to clean up.

old cleaners, store-bought stuff."

Calendar

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

Art

ART GALLERY RECEPTION Kevin Milligan Gallery will host a reception from 5-8 p.m., Saturday, June 13, at the gallery, 408 Hartz Ave., Danville. The show will feature American landscape photography, porcelain pieces and oil paintings. This event is free and wine will be served. Call 309-4648.

Auditions

DANVILLE GIRLS CHORUS This group will be holding auditions for the upcoming 2009-2010 season for

girls in grades 3-8 from 4-6 p.m., Tuesday, June 9, at San Ramon Valley High School's chorus room. No musical experience is required. The season begins Sept. 2. There is a \$25 audition fee. For an appointment, call 837-2624 or e-mail danville_girls_chorus@hotmail.com.

Author Visit

HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY IRAN Mahbod Seraji, author of "Rooftops of Tehran," will discuss his native land at 7 p.m., Tuesday, June 9, at Bay Books, 2415 San Ramon Valley Blvd., San Ramon.

This event is free. Visit www.bay-books.us.

SCOTT GUMMER Rakestraw Books will host Scott Gummer, author of "Homer Kelly's Golfing Machine," at 5:30 p.m., Tuesday, June 9, at Diablo Country Club, 1700 Clubhouse Rd. A golf clinic will be given by Tony Gill. Tickets are \$28.50 (including one copy of the book). Reservations are required; call 837-7337.

Civic Meetings

ALAMO COMMUNITY COUNCIL Alamo Community Council meets

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

ALAMO IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION Regular monthly meetings of the Board of Directors of the Alamo Improvement Association are held from 7-9 p.m., on the second Thursday of every month, at Creekside Community Church, 1350 Danville Blvd., Alamo. The 54-year-old membership organization of Alamo households supports preserving Alamo as a semi-rural community. Call 314-0521 or visit www.alamoca.org.

DANVILLE PARKS AND LEISURE SERVICES COMMISSION The Commission meets regularly on the second Wednesday of every month at 7 p.m. in the Town Meeting Hall, 201 Front St.

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

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

Camps

CAMP EDGE VACATION BIBLE CAMP Children ages 3 through 6th grade are invited to participate in Danville Congregational Church's Camp Edge from 9 a.m.-noon, Monday-Friday, June 15-19, at the church, 989 San Ramon Valley Blvd., Danville. Cost is \$50; fee assistance is available. Children will have fun learning Bible stories, crafts, games, songs and snacks. Call 837-6944 or visit www.danvillechurch.com.

SAN RAMON VALLEY VOLLEYBALL CAMP Learn to play volleyball and have fun. The youth camp will be

held July 20-23, skills camp from Aug. 3-6 and tune-up camp from Aug. 10-13. The camps will be held at San Ramon Valley High School. Cost is \$130. For information, e-mail srvball@sbcglobal.net or call 838-7595.

SAN RAMON VALLEY YMCA SUMMER CAMPS The YMCA is gearing up for a busy summer with a full slate of half-day specialty camps. Camps include sports, legos, robots, theater, wrestling, fashion, art, chess, music, Shakespeare and more. For information, call 831-1100.

SHAKESPEARE FOR KIDS Role Players and the YMCA will host a new camp where students will use their individual creativity as writers, artists and actors to learn about Shakespeare from 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Monday-Friday, July 13-24, at Alamo Elementary School, 100 Wilson Rd. Cost is \$295. Call 831-1100

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL San Ramon Valley United Methodist Church will host Camp Edge for children including two sessions: 6:15-8:15 p.m., Sunday-Thursday, June 21-June 25 (optional family-friendly dinner will begin at 5:45 p.m.), and 9:15 a.m.-noon, Monday-Friday, June 22-26, at San Ramon Valley United Methodist Church, 902 Danville Blvd., Alamo. Cost is \$50 for the morning session and \$45 for the evening session. Call 837-5243 or visit www.srvumc.org.

Classes

DROUGHT TOLERANT PLANTS FOR YARDS Come and learn about drought tolerant plants for yards from 10:30-11 a.m., every Saturday, at Sunset Color, 1435 San Ramon Valley Blvd., Danville. These classes are free. Call 914-0035 or visit www.sunsetcolor.com.

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Clubs

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.

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

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

DANVILLE 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 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 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 \$45 annually for active members and \$50 for associate members. Call 837-1165.

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

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

EXCHANGE CLUB OF SAN RAMON VALLEY This club will host guest speakers Tom Guarino and Richard Pon of PG&E who will discuss "Smart Metering—Ready or Not" at noon, Wednesday, June 10, at Faz Restaurant, 600 Hartz Ave., Danville. Cost is \$16 for members; \$20 for returning guests. 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 Janice Ridge at 837-8007.

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

SAN RAMON VALLEY NEWCOMERS CLUB This club will host a luncheon

at 11:30 a.m., Thursday, June 18, at Crow Canyon Country Club, Danville. Spencer Christian of "View from the Bay" will be the guest speaker. For information, call Paula at 735-6483.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS, POST 75 The organization meets at 7:30 p.m., every second Thursday of the month (except December), at Danville Veteran's Hall, 400 Hartz Ave., Danville. For information, call Post Commander Tony Carnemolla at 932-4042 or visit www.vfw.org.

Concerts

'RUSSIAN CONNECTION' Contra Costa Wind Symphony will feature a trombonist and an opera singer in "Russian Connection" at 2 p.m., Sunday, June 7, at the Leshher Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Dr., Walnut Creek. Tickets are \$18, \$15 and \$12. Call 943-7469 or visit www.lesherartscenter.org.

'SCENE-IT' Danville Girls Chorus will perform "Scene-It," at 11 a.m., Saturday, June 6, at Canyon Creek Presbyterian Church, 9015 S. Gale Ridge Rd., San Ramon. The concert will feature music from Hollywood and television shows. Tickets are \$10 for adults; \$5 for children under 14 years. Call 837-2624.

SUMMER CONCERT SERIES IN LIVORNA PARK Alamo Parks and Recreation presents the 2009 Summer Concert Series in Livorna Park with four concerts from 6:30-8:30 p.m., Fridays. Future concerts will take place June 26; July 17, July 31 and Aug. 14. These concerts are free. Visit www.alamore.org

Events

10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION Museum of the San Ramon Valley will celebrate its 10 year anniversary from noon-5 p.m., Sunday, June 7, at the museum, 205 Railroad Ave., Danville. There will be train and hay rides, ice cream, live music, a reenactment of the original ribbon cutting ceremony and artists will

demonstrate their work. Call 837-3750 or visit www.museumsvr.org.

AVIATORS IN EARLY HOLLYWOOD Experience rare images and footage of classic motion picture aviators from 7-8:30 p.m., Saturday, June 6, at Forest Home Farms, 19953 San Ramon Valley Blvd., San Ramon. Cost is \$10. Call 973-3200 or visit www.sanramonrecguide.com.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY MEETING Learn how to earn an immediate and residual income by starting your own business from 7-8 p.m., every Thursday, at Hotel Sierra, 2323 San Ramon Valley Blvd., San Ramon. These meetings are free. Call Roy at 548-3511.

DANVILLE FINE ARTS FAIRE Come out and stroll beautiful tree-lined Hartz Avenue while enjoying one-of-a-kind fine art pieces from 200 talented artisans from 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Saturday-Sunday, June 20-21, in downtown Danville. Admission is free. Call 837-4400.

DOGGIE NIGHT Discover Danville presents Doggie Night from 5-8 p.m., Thursday, June 11, in downtown Danville beginning at Molly's Pup-purr-ee, 411 Hartz Ave. Walk to stores for free dog treats, music, booths and drawings. Visit www.discoverdanvilleca.com.

DUBLIN/SAN RAMON WOMENS' CLUB GIANT GARAGE SALE Looking for a great deal? Come to the GFWC Dublin/San Ramon Womens Club's Giant Garage Sale from 8 a.m.-4 p.m., Saturday, June 6, at 3391 Estero Dr., San Ramon. Proceeds will benefit Tri-Valley charities. Visit www.dsrwomensclub.org.

FAMILY FUN DAY The Plaza at Gale Ranch will host Family Fun Day from noon-3 p.m., Saturday, June 6, at the plaza located at Dougherty Road and Bollinger Canyon Road in San Ramon. Enjoy live music, face painting, kids crafts and more.

FERRARI CAR SHOW Motor down to the Danville Livery where 30 Ferraris will be on display from 11

a.m.-4 p.m., Sunday, June 7, at the Paddock. There will be a fashion show, detail demonstration, music, and a wine and food sampling tour (for \$10). Call 838-2488 or visit www.danvillelivery.com.

FIVE GREAT DATES Friday nights with your spouse has never been so much fun! Community Presbyterian Church will host 5 Great Dates from 7-9:15 p.m., every Friday, July 10-Aug. 7, meeting at the church, 222 West El Pintado Rd., Danville. Enjoy a night on the town with some fun and simple exercises to enrich your marriage. Childcare will be available. Call 855-1367 or visit www.cpcdanville.org.

Exhibits

TRAILBLAZERS AND TRENDSETTERS Blackhawk Museum will host the "Trailblazers and Trendsetters: Art of the Stamp" exhibit until June 21, at the museum, 3700 Blackhawk Plaza Circle, Danville. The museum is open from 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Wednesday-Sunday. Admission is \$10 for adults; \$7 for seniors and children 6 and under are free. Call 736-2277.

Film

MOONLIGHT MOVIES ON TOWN GREEN Town of Danville hosts Moonlight Movies on the Town Green from 8:15-10:30 p.m., Fridays, June-August, on Town Green in front of the Danville Library, 400 Front St. "Stardust" will be shown June 5; "The Spiderwick Chronicles" on June 19; "Neverending Story" on July 17; "Zathura" on July 31; and "Coraline" on Aug. 14. Call 314-3400.

Fundraisers

BLUE STAR MOMS DROP ZONE Blue Star Moms will be collecting items for their 4th of July Care Packages to the Troops from 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Saturday, June 6, at the Danville Veterans Memorial Building, 400 Hartz Ave. For a list of what will be accepted, visit www.bluestarmoms.org.

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CHARITY BOWL San Ramon Valley Firefighters will host a fundraising charity bowl from 2-6 p.m., Saturday, June 13, at Danville Bowl, 200 Boone Court. Families will be able to bowl and a team tournament will follow afterward. Proceeds will benefit the families of Oakland PD fallen officers. Cost is \$20 for adults; \$5 for kids; \$250 for a team with five players. For information, call Jonas at 989-6348 or visit www.srvff.org.

HATS OFF AMERICA RUN AND WALK The 15th annual Hats Off America Red T-Shirt Run and Walk will be held from 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Saturday, June 6, at Sycamore Valley Park, 2101 Holbrook Dr., Danville. Cost is \$35; no entry fee for volunteers. All runners and volunteers receive T-shirts and lunch. Proceeds benefit families of soldiers. Call 855-1950 or visit www.hatsoffamerica.us.

JOIE DE VIVRE 2009 Join STAND! Against Domestic Violence as we venture to 1960s Las Vegas including dinner, casino games and a live and silent auction Saturday, June 6, at Roundhill Country Club, Alamo. Tickets are \$100. Call 603-0110.

PROUD FATHERS BOWL-A-RAMA Family Stress Center will host a bowling extravaganza from 1:30-3:30 p.m., Sunday, June 14, at Danville Bowl, 200 Boone Court. Cost is \$25. Proceeds benefit the Proud Fathers Program. Call 827-0212, ext. 107 or visit www.familystresscenter.org.

SECOND ANNUAL ALEX'S LEMONADE STAND As a part of the National Lemonade Days, the second annual Alex's Lemonade Stand will be held from 11 a.m.-4 p.m., Saturday, June 13, at Safeway, 2505 San Ramon Valley Blvd., San Ramon. Proceeds benefit cancer research for children.

Garden/ Home Tours

MEMORIES IN THE GARDEN The sixth annual garden tour will be held from 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Saturday, June 6, in unique and luxurious gardens in Diablo, Danville and San Ramon. Tickets are \$30. Proceeds benefit Valley Oak Respite Center. Tickets are available at East Bay Flower Company in the Livery. Call 956-9269.

Health

CANCER CELEBRATION OF LIFE Cancer survivors and those who support them are invited to an inspirational evening and dessert reception called "Seeds of Opportunity" from 7-9 p.m., Wednesday, June 10, at Faz Restaurant, 5121 Hopyard Rd., 2nd Floor Ballroom, Pleasanton. Four cancer survivors will share their uplifting and inspirational stories. This event is free. Call 734-3319.

Holiday

FOURTH OF JULY PARADE Celebrate the Fourth of July with the Town of Danville and the Kiwanis Club of San Ramon Valley from 9 a.m.-noon, Saturday, July 4, in downtown Danville. The theme of this year's parade is "Celebrating Our

IN THE SPOTLIGHT



COURTESY DANVILLE GIRLS CHORUS

'Scene- It' for season finale: Danville Girls Chorus will perform its final concert of the 2009-10 season with "Scene-It" at 11 a.m., Saturday, June 6, at Canyon Creek Presbyterian Church, 9015 S. Gale Ridge Rd., San Ramon. The concert will feature music from Hollywood and television shows. Tickets are \$10 for adults; \$5 for children under 14 years. Call 837-2624.

Youth." Spectator chairs may not be put next to the parade route until 6 p.m., July 3. Visit www.kiwanis-srv.org.

Kids and Teens

EVENTS AT THE LIBRARY Danville Library will host numerous children's programs including "The River Otter Circus" with Swazzle Puppets at 4 p.m., Tuesday, June 16; "Hard Day's Knight" at 1:30 p.m., Saturday, July 18; cowboy storyteller Lariat Larry at 4 p.m., Tuesday, Aug. 18; and Timothy James, a comedy magician, at 4 p.m., Tuesday, Sept. 15; all at the Danville Library, 400 Front St. Call 837-4889.

FATHER'S DAY CRAFTS Dougherty Station Library will host Father's Day Crafts at 3:30 p.m., Thursday, June 18, at the library, 17017 Bollinger Canyon Rd., San Ramon. Crafts are appropriate for kids ages 6 and up. This event is free. Visit www.ccclib.org.

STORYTIME WITH THE FARMER Preschoolers are invited to spend an hour of storytime, songs, crafts, games and a snack from 10-11 a.m., Wednesday, June 17, at Forest Home Farms, 19953 San Ramon Valley Blvd., San Ramon. Cost is \$5 for residents; \$6 for non-residents. Children must be accompanied by an adult, but only children need to register. Pre-registration is required; call 973-3284.

WHEN MOM OR DAD HAS CANCER School-age children participate in fun, creative activities to help them express themselves while teens have a group where they can discuss concerns and will meet on Saturday, June 13, at the Wellness Community, 3276 McNutt Ave., Walnut Creek. Parents meet concurrently. This event is free. Call 933-0107.

Lectures/ Workshops

CULTIVATING FORGIVENESS Explore the various aspects of forgiveness, its meaning, the myths surrounding it, the research regarding its health benefits and how to practice and cultivate it from 10 a.m.-noon, Saturday, June 20, at the Wellness Community, 3276 McNutt Ave., Walnut Creek. This event is free. Call 933-0107.

LOOK GOOD, FEEL BETTER American Cancer Society and San Ramon Regional Medical Center are sponsoring the Look Good... Feel Better program from 6-8 p.m., Mondays, June 8, Sept. 14 and Dec. 14, at San Ramon Regional Medical Center, West Day Room, South Building, 7777 Norris Canyon Rd. A staff of cosmetologists will work with patients to address the personal changes they are experiencing. These workshops are free, but reservations are required; call (800) 227-2345.

Literary Events

SUMMER READING 2009 Contra Costa County Library's Summer Reading Program will be from June 8-Aug. 17. Children in grades 2-5 will "Be Creative" for fun treats and children in grades 6-12 will express themselves for exciting prizes. Readers 18 and up are invited to "Master the Art of Reading" too. For information, call 837-4889 or visit www.ccclib.org.

Miscellaneous

AMERICAN RED CROSS PUBLIC BLOOD DRIVE American Red Cross is holding a public blood drive from 11 a.m.-5 p.m., Friday, June 12, at the Grange Hall in Danville. For an appointment, visit www.helpsavealife.org; use the sponsor code: DANVILLE.

HOST FAMILIES NEEDED Edu-Culture International is bringing French and Spanish students to Danville from July 7-19 and host families are needed. The students attend daily planned activities, speak English, are fully insured and bring their own spending money. Call 552-8017.

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

On Stage

'HELLO, DOLLY!' Diablo Theatre Company (formerly Diablo Light Opera Company) presents "Hello, Dolly!" at 8 p.m., June 5-6, 12-13, 18-20 and 25-27 and at 2 p.m., June 14, 21 and 27-28, at the Leshner Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Dr., Walnut Creek. Tickets are \$29-\$41. Call 943-7469.

NIGHT AT THE IMPROV San Ramon has its own Improv U Troupe and will host an interactive evening of improvisational comedy at 8 p.m. Saturday, June 6 and July 18, at Front Row Theater, 17011 Bollinger Canyon Rd., San Ramon. Tickets are \$8. Visit www.sanramonperformingarts.com.

Political Notes

BLACKHAWK REPUBLICAN WOMEN COCKTAIL MEETING "Security of Global Trade on the High Seas" will be addressed by Earl Agron, V.P. of Security, at its monthly meeting at 5:30 p.m., Wednesday, June 10, at Blackhawk Country Club, 599 Blackhawk Club Dr., Danville. Cost is \$25, including hors d'oeuvres. Reservations are due by noon, June 8. Call 820-6452.

DESAYLNIER STAFF AT FARMERS MARKET Sen. Mark DeSaulnier's staff will be at the Danville Farmers Market

from 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Saturday, June 20, at the Railroad Avenue Municipal Parking Lot, at the corner of Railroad and Prospect avenues. They will answer questions about state services and provide informational materials. For information, call 942-6082.

Recreation

TRAIL MIXERS Town of Danville will host a Trail Mixer from 9 a.m.-noon, Saturday, June 13, at Eagle Peak Loop Trail at the Bollinger Staging Area. For information, call 314-3400.

Seniors

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

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

PRIME TIME Prime Time for seasoned citizens meets from 9 a.m.-1 p.m., every Tuesday, at Community Presbyterian Church, 222 W. El Pintado, Danville. Activities include line dancing, English handbells, ceramics, wood carving and more. A home-cooked meal is served at noon for \$4. Rides are provided by County Connection Link for \$4 round trip; call Gloria at 837-5229. For information, call Ruth Ann at 820-6387.

SENIORS PROGRAM Danville Veterans' Memorial Hall Lounge hosts a senior drop-in program from 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Monday-Friday, at Veterans' Memorial Hall, 400 Front St., Danville. Activities include playing cards and board games, visiting with friends and meeting new people. Call 314-3400.

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

Spiritual

SRI AUROBINDO'S LIFE DIVINE Join an ongoing reading, meditation and yoga group every Wednesday from 7:30-8:30 p.m. The group is dedicated to the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and meets at a private residence in Danville. The event is free. E-mail Samesh at shinasa@hotmail.com or call (650) 218-4223.

Sports

ADULT OPEN GYM BASKETBALL Town of Danville holds drop-in basketball year-round at the Los Cerros Middle School, 968 Blemer Road, for ages 18 and over. Drop-in times are 7:30-9 a.m., Saturdays. Bring your own ball. Cost is \$3 for residents, \$5 for non-residents. Call 314-3400.

Sports



Blues ain't singing the blues

The 10U Alamo Blues went undefeated in the Santa Barbara Memorial Day Tournament. Team members are (back, l-r) Manager Jon Schletz, Drexel Catalli, Chris Schwarcz, Coach Mike Vigil, Ryan Marsh, Dylan Cole, Coach Scot Marsh, (front) Kevin Vigil, Clark Baker, Michael Quinn, Eric Wilkman, Colin Schletz, Jacob Cosca and Brad Mori.



Big guns

The Danville-based Colt .45s 14U baseball team won the NorCal Travel Ball Elite Cinco De Mayo Festival Championship at Mistlin Field in Ripon on May 3. The Colt .45s beat teams from Turlock, San Francisco, Loomis and Martinez to take the title. Matt Fowler was selected as tournament MVP. Austin Lonestar, Sam Sarver and Jason Gregory were among the hitting and fielding stars. Tim Bhatt pitched the championship game, and other winning pitchers were Blake Dicus, Zack Argiros and Mark Hirsch, while Nick Garlieb closed out two games in relief.



Slamming into second

The San Ramon Slammers 12U Pony baseball team, a combination of San Ramon and Danville residents, traveled to Sacramento on Memorial Day Weekend to play in the 2009 USSSA Super NIT qualifier tournament. The Slammers ended up with a 4-1-1 record in route to a second-place finish in an 11-team bracket. Their opponents came from Novato, Lincoln, Brentwood, Martinez and Redding. Slammers team members are (front, l-r) Jacob Steiger, RJ Motter, Rob Rowenhorst, Brandon Visperas, Jimmy McCarthy, (back) Michael Ricupito, Steven Good, Joey Jennison, Michael Asbell, Garret Lee, Michael Olivieri, Jacob Wooldridge and Keyshawn Norfleet. Coaches are Mike Ricupito, Eric Asbell, Jim Motter and Victor Visperas.

PREP ROUNDUP

MONTE VISTA HIGH SCHOOL

Track and Field

Monte Vista's track and field team recently competed in both NCS and then the following week in the Meet of Champions. After all was said and done, only one Mustang made it to state but that doesn't paint an accurate picture of how successful they truly were.

Mikaela Hammitt came in 4th in the 800 in order to qualify and keep competing. Mel Rosenburg, Sean Nguyen, and Stephen Burke all came in 5th narrowly moving on to state.

At the MOC the lineup of Kyla Aiuto, Christina Chin, Lauren Gratsch and Jill Anderson took first place in the 4x800. Many other athletes did great simply by getting to NCS or the MOC. Both 4x4 relays for men (Connor Donley, Gordie Nash, Elliot Killick and Chris Prudhomme) and women (Jill Anderson, Megan Penland, Rachel Call, Mikaela Hammit) missed qualifying by less than a second at these events.

Donley also missed qualifying by one spot in the 800. Dane Turner competed in the high jump to cap, and Mike Roderick competed in the mile to cap off his successful season as well as the girls 4x100 relay. All in all it was a great couple of weeks for the Mustangs.

Women's Lacrosse

Senior captain Jillian Bush put in five goals against league rival Cal High to take home Monte Vista's first ever North Coast Section girls lacrosse championship. The game took place at Dublin High School but the Mustangs made themselves feel right at home.

Everyone seemed to chip in, but Bush, Aimee Dewan and Lauren Goerz all played outstandingly. They continued their domination of the NCS by beating Cal by a final score of 17-8. It was their third time beating Cal this year. Junior goalie Sarah Tucker came back from injury to provide them with an extra boost of emotion, making 12 critical saves. After losing in last year's NCS championship the girls wanted to make sure they didn't leave this time empty handed. They went undefeated in league play, as well as against NCS competition.

Men's Lacrosse

After battling and defeating two tough opponents in Foothill and Amador Valley to get to the championship game, the Mustangs boys lacrosse team finally ran out of gas against the Spartans. De La Salle came out and took a 6-2 lead all the way to the third quarter when Monte Vista began what appeared to be another one of their spirited comebacks.

Daniel Blakey and Mitchell Stein both put in a pair of goals during that stretch in order to cut the game to 6-5 while the defense led by goalie Trevor Moriarty kept De La Salle at bay. After that though, the Mustangs seemed to run out of magic and the Spartans pushed the game out of reach, winning 12-7. This was Monte Vista's fifth trip to the NCS championship. Next year they look forward to trying to get back to the championship, this time with a different result.

—Troy Dillingham

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COURTESY VALLEY OAK RESPITE CENTER

Gorgeous gardens in the San Ramon Valley will be open to the public Saturday to raise money for the Valley Oak Respite Center, which serves seniors with memory loss or physical disabilities.

So many memories

Garden tour will benefit respite center's adult day program

'Memories in the Garden'

What: Sixth annual self-guided tour of private gardens in the San Ramon Valley

Benefits: Valley Oak Respite Center, a social day program for frail seniors and those with dementia

When: 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Saturday, June 6

Price: \$30

Tickets: Available at East Bay Flower Co. in the Livery. Or call 945-8040.



DOLORES FOX CIARDELLI

Program director Carmen McCarthy quizzes the seniors on famous people with Augusta Ferris paying close attention. "Who went by the name 'Ol' Blues Eyes?'" she asks.

BY DOLORES FOX CIARDELLI

The frail seniors sat quietly at tables in a circle, drinking apple juice and eating donuts, a special Friday treat. They were dressed nicely and most were well-coifed, two men surrounded by more than a dozen women. Some had personal caregivers by their sides, and the program has two regular volunteers.

It was the Friday session of Valley Oak Respite Center, held at Danville Congregational Church to serve seniors who have memory loss or physical disabilities.

Program director Carmen McCarthy announced that this was a special day because Irene was turning 99. She comes from Alamo for the program.

"Let's introduce ourselves by using the first letter of our names to describe ourselves," McCarthy went on. "I'm Carmen. I'm charming."

Volunteer Margaret described herself as "marvelous."

The assembled group caught on to the idea at differing levels and helped each other find the right descriptions.

Ora said she was old, but others preferred original. Jackie described herself as jolly Jackie. Augusta chose awesome but McCarthy later said it should be adorable. And around the room it went.

Next McCarthy led memory games. She'd give a hint and they would fill in the blanks. Lucky Lindy was Charles Lindbergh; Ol' Blue Eyes was Frank Sinatra; and First Lady of the Theater was Helen Hayes. The game was era-appropriate to the folks assembled.

The Valley Oak Respite Center program takes place 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. The participants seem to enjoy the activities but, McCarthy pointed out, it also helps the caregivers.

"They can get their hair done—or pay their bills," she explained. "And I think programs like ours are the last thing the families have before placing them in a home. It helps keep them at home longer."

"I try to do fun things with them and engage them," she said. Some may be quiet when she plays the word games but then come to life when they sing, she explained.

McCarthy began to work as a volunteer in 1994 when the program was only one day a week. She heard they needed help and she was new in the San Ramon Valley after years on the peninsula working in the corporate world. A couple of years later she joined the staff and then became program director in 1998.

"There are 13 of these programs in the county but this is the only one this far south," said McCarthy, except for those in retirement homes. Valley Oak is run by the Diablo Valley Foundation for the Aging, which helps seniors and their families with health issues, medical care, finances and legal concerns.

Twenty-two seniors are signed up for the respite program although anywhere from nine to 16 might show up on any given day, McCarthy noted. Each session costs \$30. Most of the clients arrive by Link, the paratransit service of County Connection, although some are brought by family members or caregivers.

McCarthy said she was surprised at first when families began to ask if there were scholarships to help defray the expense.

"Then I realized these people were putting their kids through school and have Mom and Dad to take care of," she recalled.

McCarthy belonged to the Danville Alamo Garden Club and hit on the idea of holding a garden tour to benefit the program. Audrey Van Poppel, who lives in Diablo, offered her gardens and the tour has begun on her estate since 2003. The silent auction takes place there, too. The tour has raised as much as \$8,000 some years.

McCarthy also applied for state licensing so long-term care insurance would cover the expense for some.

She said one sad part of the job is going to the memorial services for clients.

"I don't have to, it's not part of the job," she said, "but I learn so much about them."

She said she never forgets that these frail elderly were once young and robust, doing great things and living full lives. Now she wants to help them maintain their dignity as long as possible.

The sessions include eating lunches, which they bring, light exercise and bingo.

On this Friday, the songbooks were distributed. Some opened them avidly, others thumbed absent-mindedly through the pages. Soon the hall was filled with elderly voices singing:

"Every morning

"Every evening

"Ain't we got fun...." ■

EPICURE



By JACQUI LOVE MARSHALL

My berry berry favorites

One of the benefits of California springs and summers is the extraordinary bounty of fruits and vegetables grown close to home. Among my favorites is the wide array of berries available to us—oooh, blueberries, strawberries, blackberries—rinsed and eaten right out of the container, served as fresh toppings on yogurt or ice cream or baked into luscious desserts.

The fruits we generally call berries may include some true and not true berries. According to wikipedia.com: "In botanical language, a berry or true berry is a simple fruit having seeds and pulp produced from a single ovary." True berries are grapes, tomatoes (yes, it's a fruit), currants, goji berries and elderberries. However, similar-looking fruits, e.g., strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, are popularly included in the berry group. Any fruit—including grapes—that is singular and portable enough to grab a handful (or baggie) of while on-the-go is a berry in my book.

Besides the fantastic flavors of berries, they are some of the healthiest foods available to hu-

mans. If fruits are the most natural foods around—containing disease-fighting antioxidants but no bad cholesterol—then think of berries as a "super sized" healthy category of fruits. Five berries—blackberries, cranberries, raspberries, strawberries, blueberries—are counted among the top 50 foods with the highest levels of antioxidants.

Blackberries also contain high levels of fiber and vitamin C plus ellagic acid, a compound known to help fight cancer, viruses and bacteria. Raspberries are known to have anti-inflammatory benefits, helpful in reducing pain associated with arthritis, gout and other inflammatory conditions. Research indicates that blueberries may improve eye fatigue and night vision as well as protect against heart disease and damage from stroke. Good things all but it's the sumptuously unique and juicy flavors of berries that get my taste buds revved up.

When buying fresh berries, there are a couple important things to remember:

- Select unblemished berries in dry, unstained containers. The color of raspberries should be medium to bright red, depending on the variety. Blackberries should be shiny and black—avoid those that are dull or reddish. The berries themselves

Prime time for berries

Strawberry: June 1 - June 30

Red Raspberry: June 14 - July 20

Loganberry: June 20 - July 10

Black Raspberry: July 1 - July 31

Marionberry: July 10 - Aug. 10

Boysenberry: July 10 - Aug. 10

Blackberry: Aug. 10 - Sept. 15

should be free of surface moisture, as moisture accelerates decay.

- Store fresh berries uncovered in the refrigerator as soon as possible after purchase. Wash just prior to use; if desired, dry on a paper towel. Serve/eat them at room temperature for the best flavors.

- The only shortcoming of berries is their short shelf life—they should be consumed within two to three days of purchase. If you're not eating them immediately, berries may be frozen up to six months with or without sugar added.

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

Recipe

Blackberry-Yogurt Smoothies

(makes 4 cups)

- 12 oz. blackberries (3 cups)
- 1 cup plain low-fat yogurt
- 1 cup low-fat buttermilk
- 3 Tbsp honey
- 1 pinch ground cardamom

Blend ingredients in a blender on high speed. Serve or store in refrigerator.

Fresh Spinach & Strawberry Salad

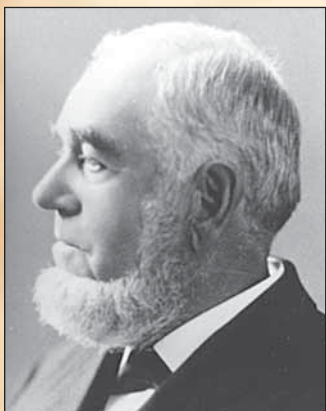
(serves 8-10)

- 12 oz. torn fresh spinach
- 3 cups halved or sliced fresh strawberries
- 1/3 cup sliced green onions
- 1/3 cup salad oil
- 3 Tbsp lemon juice
- 1 cup broken walnuts
- 2 Tbsp sesame seeds
- Salt and pepper to taste

1. Combine spinach, strawberries and green onions in a large bowl. Cover for up to 2 hours.
2. Blend oil and lemon juice; chill. Shake before pouring over salad. Top salad with nuts and sesame seeds. Season as desired.

PRESENTING THE PAST

By BEVERLY LANE



Valley Leader August Hemme:

August Hemme was a German immigrant who came to New York in 1846 and to California in 1849. Three years later he purchased 3,000 acres of fertile land in south Alamo, and in 1856 married neighbor Minerva Ish. An ambitious, energetic and public-spirited man, he left his mark on the Valley. In 1890 his leadership was pivotal in persuading Southern Pacific to open the San Ramon Branch Line.

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

OF NOTE

Education Foundation announces grants

The San Ramon Valley Education Foundation handed out almost \$40,000 in educator grants at its annual award ceremony at Pine Valley Middle School in San Ramon. A total of 50 grant requests were funded by the Foundation.

"I am extremely grateful for the work of the San Ramon Valley

Education Foundation," said Superintendent Steven Enoch. "These grants provide our teachers with an even stronger ability to engage students in their own learning."

In addition to the educator grants that were distributed, the Foundation also supports district-wide programs and initiatives with multi-year funding, such as the Science Initiative, robotics, and art curriculum development. In the 2009-10 school year, the Foundation has given more than \$150,000 to support teachers and district projects. For more information about SRVEF, visit www.srvef.org.

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Amici's East Coast Pizzeria

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

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6/06 - Keep Rich from Opening All the Wines in the Store Flight (4 - 9 p.m.)
6/07 - Closing early - 5:30 p.m. for private event
6/11 - Another Pinot Noir Flight
6/12 - Live Music with Sue Lukito - NEW MUSIC (7:30 - 9:30 p.m.)
6/19 - Live Music - Chris Ahlman (7:30-10:30 p.m.)
Check us out online on our events page for current upcoming events at www.bvino.com

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6/06 - Bordeaux Educational Tasting 1-4:30 p.m.
6/11 - JAQK Cellars
6/13 - Pinot Noir Educational Tasting 1-4:30 p.m.
6/18 - Townley Cellars
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THE Y FILES



By MARIA SHEN

How to deal—and how not to deal—with stress

When—thank goodness AP tests are now over. But before high school students can collapse onto their couches and vegetate in front of their laptops, there's one more hurdle coming: finals. It feels like this will never end. Whether you're a freshman still recovering from the disconcerting concept of finals, a junior trying to make that last push for grades before college apps, or a senior trying to keep your C in calculus, there's no question that this is a high stress period.

After scouring the Internet and books for de-stressing techniques, I've come up with some that'll relax even the most high-strung overachiever.

Things to do

1. For seniors only: Just think about how close you are to graduating. Close your eyes, imagine that diploma in your hand, flinging your mortar board into the air, screaming your lungs out. Don't you feel better already?
2. Go for a walk outside, but leave the iPod at home. Completely disconnect for 10 minutes. I find that listening to music only makes me zone out of the present and fuels my obsessive list-making and schedule-making tendencies.
3. Brew some tea. Chamomile is a

great de-stressor. Something about the smell is just so calming. Mint tea works as well. Or, even better, make some chamomile and mint tea. Once you feel collected, tackle those European monarchs or geometry proofs again.

4. Sniff some lavender. The smell of lavender is proven to decrease stress levels. Here in Danville, there is lavender aplenty growing about. When you're going on that walk of yours, bend to smell the flowers.
5. Prioritize your tasks. When you have both your chemistry and algebra final in one day, things may seem overwhelming. Instead of thinking of the sheer quantity of work you have, write it down and list them in order of importance. Then, go down the list and do them. The act of writing down your tasks will put things in perspective and help you feel more organized.
6. Drink some water, eat some nuts. Walnuts are great for the brain and will give your energy a boost. Constantly downing energy drinks will eventually lead to that total crash. Water will make you feel more refreshed.
7. Stretch. Really, stretching actually helps. As you stretch, your body will take in more oxygen and you'll feel instantly rejuvenated. If stretching isn't your cup of tea, try putting on some loud music and dancing around. Just getting up and moving will help you shake out that panic-y feeling.

Things NOT to do

1. Call your friends to complain. The more you whine, the more you'll feel overwhelmed. You and

your friend are also likely to get off track and end up having hour-long phone conversations.

2. Chat on AIM. No, it's actually not necessary to have your buddy list open. I know you're trying to tell yourself that if you need help with a certain math problem, you can IM someone over AIM and ask them. But, come on, who are you kidding? Keeping those chat boxes open will distract you more than help you.

3. Start making playlists and mixes for the end-of-the-year party. I know this is one thing I'm guilty of. For anyone out there who loves music, there's nothing more fun than spending a couple of hours putting together the perfect playlist.

4. Go on Facebook. No. No no no no. Just ... no. Don't do it!

5. Go on Fmylife.com. Yes, reading about the mishaps of others makes you feel better about the possibility of failing that history final. But those FML posts last for pages and pages. It's the perfect procrastination tool. Resist the urge to read these funny little tidbits!

Armed with the above suggestions, you are ready to tackle the rest of the school year. Hang in there—it's almost over. Now, sharpen your pencils, don your glasses, and get studying.

Maria Shen, reporting on Generation Y, is a senior at Monte Vista High School. She founded Contra Costa County's Young Bohemians creative writing club and is editor of Voicebox, a literary magazine. E-mail her at youngbohemians@gmail.com.

ART SCENE



By JOHN A. BARRY

Details, details

The first thing you notice about Chris Ellingson's portrait of Danville's hometown hero Chelsey "Sully" Sullenberger is what you don't notice. A closer look reveals elements related to Capt. Sullenberger's life and profession. Ellingson refers to such elements as "associative images." He says they sometimes emerge from his subconscious.

The artist's intent is not of paramount importance for Ellingson (www.christopherellingson.com). "No one cares what you (the artist) think," he says. "I try not to infuse my work with too much intent." He prefers to "set the stage for people to enter a painting and figure out their own meaning."

Ellingson says he begins with a subject and then introduces imagery that will complement that subject. "I start with one thing and then build upon it." His approach is to present abstract ideas in a relatively realistic fashion.

Although this approach as described is accretive and focused on problem-solving, Ellingson says he does not get "hung up on every detail being perfect." He says that he needs to paint quickly or the work's flow will be impeded. The temptation is strong to go over and over a line in the pursuit of some perceived perfection, but too often, Ellingson believes, such pursuit can ruin the work in question.

If that work is a portrait, Ellingson avoids a formal sitting. He meets with the subject and gets the subject talking about him- or herself, taking lots of pictures in the process. That way, he says, he gets a relaxed, "real" view into the person, as opposed to a postured pose. He retains the energy the subject manifests during the session and then puts it onto canvas "however it turns out," which generally begins with a quick sketch. "The process is intuitive," he explains.

A friend of Ellingson's suggested that he do the portrait of Sullenberger, a project he took on when he had no commissions, using a public-domain image of the pilot. The artist said he thought this work "would put him on the map," but so far he has been unable to bring it to the captain's attention. He says he may take it to the Town of Danville in hopes of having it displayed somewhere.

Raising the bar

Ellingson started to develop his esthetic attitudes as a high school student. His interest in the arts eventually took him to the San Francisco Art Institute, where he studied for three years, leaving to work for a time as a clinical program specialist, forming programs for developmentally disabled people.

He then found a more appropriate avenue for his talents: faux painting and other decorative



MICHAEL THORNTON

Chris Ellingson's portrait of Capt. Chelsey Sullenberger incorporates "associative images" from his life and profession.

arts for homeowners, working for high-end design firms such as Danville's J. Hettinger Interiors. He still takes commissions for this type of work as well as for portraiture. Portraits, he notes, do not necessarily allow him to do his own thing, but they are currently his "bread and butter" when it comes to commissions.

Last year he served briefly as director of Danville's defunct Pioneer Art Gallery. At the time of my interview with him for this column, he was balancing art—his passion—with duty as a barista at Starbucks in Blackhawk Plaza, a job he was about to leave, he said, because it was detrimental to artistic development.

"Things run their course," he says. "Working at Starbucks has been good for me. I've gotten a lot of commissions while working the bar there, talking to customers about art and the meaning of life, but I want to dedicate all my time to my art."

After some lobbying by his Starbucks co-workers and with customer support, he will be displaying his portrait of Sullenberger at the Blackhawk Plaza Starbucks. "The Blackhawk Plaza store previously had no space allocated for community art. Starbucks customers voiced interest in an art space and made it happen. It's really nice to see that support for my art, and for the local art community, is there."

In 2007 Ellingson was mainly responsible for the installation of a community art wall at another Starbucks location, next to San Ramon Valley High School. "There are people in this community who care about art. That's something we can all be proud of."

Reception and Exhibit: Kevin Milligan Gallery, 408 Hartz Ave, Danville; 5-8 p.m., Saturday, June 13; telephone 309-4648

John A. Barry is a writer and aspiring artist. To share anything art-related, call him at 314-9528 or e-mail jobarry@pacbell.net.

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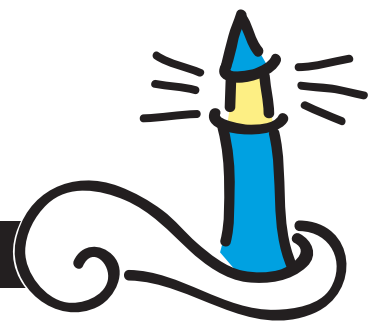
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Mazda 2003 Miata MX5 Shinsen - \$11,500
Pace Arrow 1989 MotorHome - \$11,000.00
PORSCHE 1987 911 TARGA - \$24,999
RoadTrek 2006 Adventurous - \$64,900

210 Garage/Estate Sales

PA: Citywide Yard Sale 6/6, 8-1
Join the Palo Alto Citywide Yard Sale! Addresses and maps will be listed in the June 5 Palo Alto Weekly. Brought to you by Palo Alto Zero Waste Program, 650/496-5910. www.zerowastepaloalto.org/yardsale

Pleasanton, 2757 Lylewood Dr, June 6&7, 9-3

Estate Sale- everything must go. furniture, Piano, glassware, kitchen ware, electronics; Flat T.V. all high end must see.

Pleasanton, 3457 Touriga Drive, June 10-11-12, Wed. Thur. Fri. 9-3

Pleasanton, 3911 West Las Positas Blvd., Sat, June 6, 8am-12noon
Pleasanton, 4532 Harper Ct, CA

215 Collectibles & Antiques

Royal Doulton figurine - \$45

220 Computers/ Electronics

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240 Furnishings/ Household items

3 piece kitchen carving set - \$10
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MEDIA CABINET - \$375.00

245 Miscellaneous

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2 Outdoor Patio Heaters, 48,000btu, propane, ht. 89", verdigris finish; Costco priced \$249-299 each (on-line); Used twice: one lights, one doesn't: \$185 for both: (925) 837-5416.

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Care Needed
I need a babysitter who can watch over my kids when am off to my job, tell me where you are located let me see how close that is to my new job and see how i can fix you in to babysit for my kids while am there for this new inspection job at hand. Feel free to contact me at quartzcharles@yahoo.com for any question.

Regards
Charles

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560 Employment Information

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Pleasanton, 1 BR/1 BA - \$894
Pleasanton, 2 BR/2 BA - \$1187

805 Homes for Rent

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Desireable Townhome near Foothill High for rent, 925-997-2084 for details



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Pleasanton, 1 BR/1 BA - \$650.00

825 Homes/Condos for Sale

Danville, 4 BR/3 BA - \$979,000
Danville, 4 BR/3 BA - \$1,249,000

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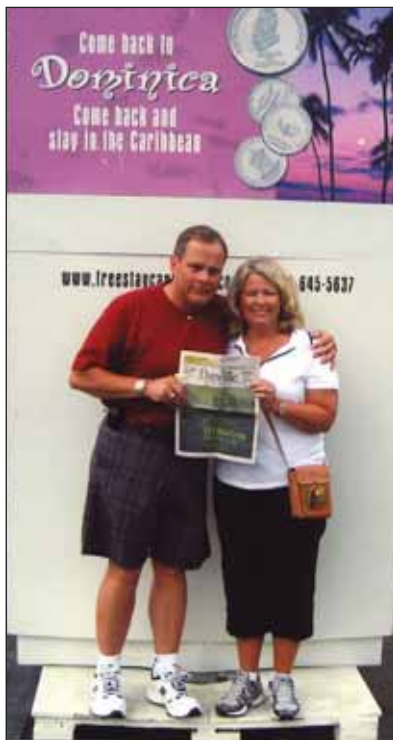
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TAKE US ALONG



Caribbean reading: Tom and Jeannie Meyer remembered to bring their hometown reading on their 10-day cruise to the southern Caribbean last January. The ports of call were Aruba, Bonaire, Grenada, St. Thomas, Princess Cay and Dominica, where the picture was taken.



Waltzing down the river: Bud and Linda Bales share the Weekly with their friends Dick and Linda Bastin while visiting Budapest on a Danube River Cruise.

PET OF THE WEEK



CATHERINE HANSEN RUSH

Lady Arthur

"Arthur," I said, "How do you feel about the food at the animal shelter?" Enough said! Arthur prefers tuna but she'll have to settle for dry food for awhile. Arthur is a 9-year-old, spayed female seal-point Himalayan whose owner recently passed away. Yes, Arthur is a girl. Arthur is declawed and she has always been an indoor-only pet. She may be shy at first but Arthur loves to be brushed and she'll warm up to you quickly with a little special attention. Because Arthur is missing her little incisor teeth, her tongue peeks out in the cutest fashion. Sometimes you can see just the tip of it. And sometimes, like now, she wants to get her point across. Arthur has pretty cream colored fur with dark markings and big beautiful light blue eyes. Visit Arthur (pet #85320) at the East County Animal Shelter, 4595 Gleason Drive in Dublin, open daily from 11:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Call 803-7040.

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Danville Weekly

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SALES AT A GLANCE

Alamo

Total sales reported: 2
Lowest sale reported: \$660,000
Highest sale reported: \$1,657,000
Average sales reported: \$1,158,500

Danville

Total sales reported: 11
Lowest sale reported: \$300,000
Highest sale reported: \$1,200,000
Average sales reported: \$767,636

Walnut Creek

Total sales reported: 10
Lowest sale reported: \$150,000
Highest sale reported: \$755,000
Average sales reported: \$394,500

Source: California REsource

OPEN HOMES THIS WEEKEND

Danville

4 BEDROOMS
1675 St. David Drive **\$799,000**
 Sun 1-4 Keller Williams Realty 925-855-6410
241 Aptos Place **\$979,000**
 Sun 1-4 Keller Williams Realty 925-855-6410

5 BEDROOMS

16 Hermosa Court **\$1,950,000**
 Sun 1-4 Prudential CA Realty 925-218-1224
246 Greenbrook Drive **\$999,000**
 Sun 1-4 Keller Williams Realty 925-855-6410

Livermore

5 BEDROOMS
777 E Vineyard Avenue **\$3,999,000**
 Sun 1-4 Prudential Ruby Hill 925-417-2250

Pleasanton

4 BEDROOMS
1122 Baur Court **\$1,149,000**
 Sun 1-4 Prudential Ruby Hill 925-417-2250
968 Summit Creek Court **\$1,450,000**
 Sun 1-4 Remax Accord 925-719-0972
823 Country Club Circle **\$850,000**
 Sun 1-4 Keller Williams Tri-Valley Realty 925-858-1984

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

HOME SALES

This week's data represents homes sold during April 2009

Alamo

315 Golden Grass Drive Davidon Homes to K. Epley for \$1,657,000
2109 Granite Drive Herr Trust to A. Ghabi for \$660,000

Danville

1021 Barrenger Drive Blackwell Trust to Rubendall Trust for \$811,000
370 Cameo Drive C. & M. Palmer to J. & D. Clancy for \$590,000
1974 East Rancho Verde Circle Fitzpatrick Trust to A. & M. Pecota for \$350,000
235 El Pinto Chevy Chase Bank to S. & S. Carter for \$1,200,000

412 Jonathan Ridge Drive Lee Trust to R. Hagerty for \$720,000

585 La Gonda Way M. Sansberry to V. Coker for \$300,000

301 La Spezia Court Lennar Homes to A. & R. Arsanjani for \$1,104,500

55 Normandy Court US Bank to B. & K. Crosthwait for \$740,000

43 Pulido Court Camarda Trust to M. & L. Katzman for \$970,000

51 Tennis Club Drive Fahrenkrog Trust to Woulfe Trust for \$910,000

3968 Welshland Street Shapell Industries to K. Landers for \$748,500

Walnut Creek

2070 Gill Port Lane H. Jaoudi to D. & M. Levie for \$625,000

560 Monarch Ridge Drive S. & I. Schwab to E. Parsons for \$605,000

2730 Oak Road #1 W. Lippman to J. Mina for \$239,000

185 Sierra Drive #206 US Bank to Moore Trust for \$150,000

175 Sierra Drive #207 Bank of New York to Huie Trust for \$235,000

2031 Strand Road Schiff Trust to S. Kerr for \$755,000

1562 Sunnyvale Avenue CCRD Limited to G. Lam for \$480,000

127 Vista Hermosa T. & D. Giebler to S. Jung for \$392,000

1246 Walker Avenue #303 K. Coronado to P. Bray for \$186,000

2564 Walnut Boulevard #109 S. Chang to Minn Trust for \$278,000

Source: California REsource

Your Shadow Hills/Greenbrook Specialists Present...Four Fabulous Properties

OPEN SUN 1-4



1675 St. David Drive, Danville Offered at \$799,000

Gorgeous updated "Pottery Barn" style 4BR/2BA family home across from greenbelt. Walk to Greenbrook Elementary and Iron Horse Trail. 1,786 sq. ft. on a 9,975 sq. ft. corner lot. Updated kitchen with Brazilian Cherry. Plantation shutters and new lighting fixtures. Master bedroom has cedar organizers in walk-in closet. New furnace, air conditioner, and garage door. Flat screen in family room stays. Dual-pane windows and much more make this a wonderful "move in ready" home for entire the family.

OPEN SUN 1-4



241 Aptos Place, Danville Offered at \$979,000

Welcome to your Private Sanctuary! This 4BR/3BA 2,422 sq. ft. updated home with 3 car garage on a 9,976 sq. ft. lot is located on a popular Shadow Hills double court! This sunny & bright home includes dual panes, retextured ceilings, hardwood floors, new interior and exterior doors, new garage doors, updated baths & kitchen with white cabinets, granite slab, recessed lighting, professionally landscaped and hardscaped front & back and so much more! Don't miss this great family home!

OPEN SUN 1-4



246 Greenbrook Drive, Danville Offered at \$999,000

Fabulous remodel with 5BR/BA 3,100 sq. ft. on a private 9,130 sq. ft. lot has been beautifully remodeled to include a bonus game room, media room complete with projection screen and equipment, walk to Greenbrook Pool, K-8 schools and Iron Horse Trail. Updated gourmet kitchen with custom cabinets, granite, stainless appliances, and updated baths. Huge master suite with to-die-for walk in closet with custom built-ins. Outdoor pavilion offers peace and tranquility for entertaining: ceiling fan, tons of storage, a hobby room and Sundance jacuzzi.

PENDING IN 1 WEEK



431 Corte Dorado, Danville Offered at \$1,249,000

4BR/3BA 2,608 sq. ft. total remodel with 3 car garage on a huge 13,800 sq. ft. tropical paradise backing to open space. This "Top of Court Shadow Hills views all around" location comes up once in a blue moon! Don't miss this showcase home with over \$400K in upgrades including covered outdoor living, dining & kitchen with built-in BBQ, fridge & TV. Pebbletech pool & spa with flagstone waterfalls, views of the hills and cows to the back, and Las Trampas out the front. Updates abound with custom built-ins and hardwood floors. Gourmet kitchen with 8 ft island, granite slab, and butlers' buffet!



925.855.6410
 www.HarperMees.com • www.GreenbrookNeighbors.com
 760 Camino Ramon, Suite 200, Danville (in The Rose Garden)



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Summer Safety FOR YOUR KIDS.

WATER SAFETY

- Never leave children unattended around a pool or water – not even for one minute. Accidents occur fast.
- Flotation devices are not drown-proof.
- Children should always wear a life vest while boating and near open water.
- Always close your pool gate. Double-check the gate after people have been in the pool area.
- Review your pool rules and safety with family, friends and babysitters.
- Learn CPR. You could save a life.

SUN SAFETY

- Always use sunscreen and wear protective clothing.
- Make sure youngsters drink enough water.
- Watch for signs of heat exhaustion and heat stroke: dizziness, nausea, rapid heart beat.

PREVENT BURNS

- Watch toddlers closely near barbecues, campfires or outdoor fireplaces. Burns are common injuries.
- Install screens or some type of barrier where appropriate.
- Metal playground equipment can get hot enough to cause burns on hot days.

PREVENT FALLS

- Move beds and chairs away from windows. Children may jump and play, and could fall through open windows.
- Make sure low windows are closed to prevent young children from falling out.
- Install gates at the top of stairs or decks to prevent falls.

ROAD SAFETY

- Always wear helmets and protective gear while biking, skating or skateboarding.
- Discuss bicycle and road safety with your children.
- Review pedestrian safety with children as well as adolescents.
- Never leave a child alone in a car. Temperatures quickly reach over 100 degrees.
- Drive cautiously. Children move quickly and may be difficult to see, especially when backing up. You may not see toddlers and older children playing behind a car.
- Always put your children in car seats or seat belts.

Safety tips are brought to you by the Pediatrics Department at San Ramon Regional Medical Center:

Tracy Trujillo, M.D. *Pediatric Department Chair*

Nick Giardini, M.D. *Director, Inpatient Pediatric Services*

Vicki Starr, R.N., CPNP

Pediatric Clinical Nurse Specialist & Nurse Manager

The Pediatric Program at San Ramon Regional Medical Center has a pediatrician in the hospital 24 hours of every day from Children's Hospital & Research Center Oakland.



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