

Dublin center opening: Shannon Community Center is back in business **PAGE 9**

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INSIDE

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“This is the greatest surprise I could imagine.”

Sgt. Mariela Meylan on celebration as she returned to her Livermore home, still recovering from injuries in Iraq war zone



JEB BING

Army Sgt. Mariela Meylan shouts in excitement to a crowd of more than 100 celebrants who surprised her when she arrived home in Livermore for her 29th birthday. Joining the wounded Iraqi war veteran are a neighbor's son Eric Heinke and Retired Army Major Doug Miller, head of the Army's Wounded Warrior Program.

‘GREAT TO BE BACK’

By **JEB BING**

Army Sgt. Mariela Meylan had a roaring welcome as she was driven up to the Morgan Territory Road hilltop home of her parents Lisette and Emile in far north Livermore in a special celebration of her service in the Persian Gulf.

And we do mean “roaring.”

For her 29th birthday party, more than 30 motorcyclists from the Patriot Guard Riders escorted her from a downtown Livermore meeting place, traveling north on Livermore Avenue in the peak of rush hour, then on to Manning Road and to the waiting celebrants.

Livermore soldier's 29th birthday is one to remember

More than 100 waved flags and banners as her car came up the steep hill. They weren't there just to sing “Happy Birthday,” which they also did, but the surprise gathering of well-wishers was to officially welcome Meylan home in the tradition Pleasanton and Livermore veterans' groups always do for those returning from military duty in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This homecoming was special because Meylan has been recuperating in veterans' hospitals and clinics for nearly three years, slowly learning to walk, talk and write again after suffering massive injuries Dec. 18, 2005 in Kuwait. It was there that an unidentified civilian vehicle ran her down as she changed a tire on her military vehicle.

In a coma for seven months, she was told when she awakened that she would never walk again. But through determination to prove the doctors wrong, she has spent most of the time since then in special therapy and recovery programs in Washington, D.C., at

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Where there's a need, there's a Y

Tri-Valley YMCA welcomes new programs, leadership

By **EMILY WEST**

The goal of the YMCA since beginning in 1844 is to meet the needs of the community. Despite its affluent reputation, many people of the Tri-Valley are struggling. With new leadership, the local program branch of the YMCA is revved up and ready to make a difference.

Kelly Dulka, executive director of the Tri-Valley YMCA, which serves Pleasanton, Dublin, Livermore and Sunol, was hired in August 2006 to help revamp the organization. With an all-new staff, they have been working hard to continue the current programming as well as develop new ones.

“My main goal is to build partnerships and relationships, as well as build strong kids, families and communities,” she said. “We are looking where there may be gaps in services. In the last six months, we've seen a tremendous increase for services and financial assistance.”

While most programs have fees attached, scholarships and financial assistance are available. Tim Stier, associate program director at the YMCA, said that no kids are turned away.

Not only has Dulka built relationships with city leaders, she has also made partnerships with local businesses to build a new mentoring program, which will begin this year. Five corporate sponsors—Valley-Care Medical Center, Sybase, BBNT/Tanner Insurance, Colliers International and Fun-Mobility—will provide funding and mentor volunteers to link adults with junior high school-aged kids. Axis Community Health and Be a Mentor of Hayward are also teaming up to help.

“We make an effort to get out into the community,” Stier said. “We get to know people, gain trust and build relationships and

See **YMCA** on page 7



Courtesy of the YMCA

Children watch cars race in the pinewood derby, sponsored by the Tri-Valley YMCA.



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Imagination has new home

Dublin school helping children in need to move to Schaefer Ranch

By Emily West

Ground on Dublin's new housing development Schaefer Ranch was broken by golden shovels, followed by dozens of miniature plastic shovels, marking a new beginning for the School of Imagination last month.

The one-of-a-kind school started in the rented Pleasanton home of Charlene and Mitch Sigman in 2001. Then called Happy Talkers and focusing on therapy programs for children with autism and special needs, it quickly grew from four children to 120, forcing the couple to move to a larger home.

In the past five years, the school has moved seven times. Most recently the school has been housed at CrossWinds church in Dublin, but the program continued to grow and the church moved properties.

"The last moving truck I ever want to see is one with the word 'permanent' on the side," Charlene Sigman said. "All I and our parents ever wanted was to have a stable environment, where kids with everything from autism to speech and developmental delays could have a familiar home that wasn't going to be taken away at a moment's notice."

The school was Dublin's Organization of the Year for 2007 and was also featured on CBS's "Eye on the Bay." James Reid, executive producer of the show, has since shown his support for the program by lending his talents to coordinate the groundbreaking event.

The Dec. 2 groundbreaking marked the beginning of what will be their last move. The 13,000-square-foot facility will include eight classrooms for the kindergarten, preschool and preschool readiness programs, and 10 individual therapy rooms. The school's programs also include speech therapy, occupational therapy, community outreach, parent support, social skills and academic tutoring.

"Our whole mission started when we saw the incredible need," Mitch Sigman said. "People

drove, and still do, over 200 miles, several days a week to get their kids to our inclusion program. We have placed children into typical classrooms, once diagnosed as too disabled."

Outgoing Dublin Mayor Janet Lockhart and former City Manager Richard Ambrose helped broker a deal with Discovery Builders to grant them the space in the west Dublin hills development, which is accessible by the extended Dublin Boulevard.

In her last day as mayor, Lockhart was one of several involved community leaders and members to welcome School of Imagination to their new home. Mitch Sigman said it was Lockhart who played "matchmaker" and the developers "fell in love with our children."

The Seeno family and Discovery Homes is funding 100 percent of the construction costs. "Talk about a miracle," Mitch Sigman said.

As far as filling the building goes, the school continues to have support from Pleasanton North Rotary. They have given \$35,000 to the school in November and have pledged more. Bill Wheeler, Frank Hanna, Dominic Pipitone, Judge Ron Hyde and Jim Ott were also there to celebrate at the groundbreaking ceremonies.

"PNR has made us their ongoing major beneficiary as well as providing the sweat-equity to complete the school," Mitch Sigman said.

Another school supporter is Congressman Jerry McNerney (D-Pleasanton), who has helped the school secure additional federal funding and helping the program reach more children.

"He is the voice of our annual Autism Outreach and leads his staff to help us," Mitch Sigman said. "Together with County Supervisor Scott Haggerty, they connected us to become the 211 resource in Alameda County, for families needing assistance with their child's development."

To learn more about the School of Imagination, call 829-9552 or visit www.schoolofimagination.org.

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By Bob Fagan

I'm not much different from many Tri-Valley dads or businessmen. I am a 50-year-old divorcee, the proud father of two wonderful teenagers, and call Pleasanton home. I have owned some modestly successful businesses and headed up and turned around some organizations in a continuing career. There is nothing too remarkable or unusual about me except that no one would ever picture me as a shabbily dressed homeless person.

A while back I stepped out of my safe, secure suburban existence and spent five days and nights living on the streets and sidewalks of San Francisco. Hardly street savvy, many of my life lessons were gained on the farm fields of southeastern Pennsylvania, the playing fields or in the boardrooms.

I chose the week before Thanksgiving to become "homeless" in San Francisco. My life had typically been so busy with the children and work, and trying to start a dating life. With my children and lady friend out of town, and just having finished a work assignment, there was a perfect window of opportunity for time off. No one knew of my whereabouts except for leaving an answering machine message that I was away and out of communication.

Preparation begins

Working in cities from time to time, I have long observed those weary tattered folks, pushing a shopping cart or curled up over a heat vent or asking for a handout. You may notice them, too. Perhaps you have avoided them, were afraid to make eye contact or maybe you have shown them compassion. More than likely you have not been too comfortable in their presence.

Yet, what if you or I were on the streets?

My preparation for this special sabbatical was minimal. I stopped shaving a few days ahead of time, delayed a haircut, and for about 24 hours ahead of time, I only drank water. As far as personal items, I took a

STREET SMARTS

Tri-Valley executive Bob Fagan shares lessons learned living as a homeless person on streets of San Francisco



pocketknife, a magic trick, \$25 in quarters to give away, and \$20 stuffed into my socks for emergencies. I wore five thin layers of clothes up top and long underwear and old blue jeans below. Some old shoes that were ready for the Dumpster and a faded red hooded sweat jacket with an old knitted green and white stocking cap completed my attire. My coke-bottle thick glasses would be a fitting complement to the look.

My ace in the hole was that I did possess a return ticket to the Dublin/Pleasanton BART station with a comfortable car parked there waiting for me.

Out of my comfort zone

Missing the normal daily hygiene needs and the comfort of a dry, comfortable house and bed was to be expected. My first shock was witnessing nearly two dozen men and a woman choosing to relieve themselves during a two-hour period on the Market Street

sidewalks that first night. Next it was really problematic to find a place on the concrete to lie down that did not have the stench of urine. I finally salvaged a small piece of cardboard to rest my shoulders and head on. It was surprising how noisy the city was late at night with construction work all around. About 2 a.m. the first evening I fell into a deep sleep only to experience two sharp pokes in the ribs. Looking down at me was a fellow looking far older than his years hunched over asking me if I had any "smokes or coin." Though the man was harmless enough, I then realized that when I was asleep I was physically vulnerable. I never did sleep quite so well from that time on.

The first two nights were quite cold and damp. In fact, the temperature dipped below freezing, the coldest nights that year. I found myself crawling into commercial buildings on my hands and knees to avoid security every so often so I could get warm for a few

minutes. The evenings, however, were therapeutic, a great time to meditate, reflect and walk about the city in quiet solitude.

The days were quite another thing. Nothing could have prepared me for the emotions and loneliness I encountered during the day. Sitting on the sidewalk or standing aside a building for minutes seemed like hours. Here I was in the midst of hundreds of people and never have I felt so alone. Whether I was situated on busy Market Street or in the Tenderloin district, everyone I saw had a purpose: to do an errand, get back and forth from work, go shopping, meet someone for a meal, or enjoy entertainment with a friend. What's more, I assumed they would all enjoy a soft, warm bed and a hot meal that night.

I had no purpose, no responsibilities, no acquaintances, nowhere to go, and no one in the world knew I was here. I never did expect a "normal person" to engage me, let alone make eye contact, but I never anticipated the loneliness that would accompany having no purpose. If someone is a sane, sober person, I can now appreciate how and why they could lose either trait.

A lonely path

I was completely stripped of all relationships. Typically the homeless have very few if any relationships, which is the saddest twist. Though I am not particularly extroverted, it drove home how much I need people in my life. Besides, isn't it wonderful to share memories with someone?

Properly hungry, I frequented the back door and Dumpster areas of restaurants, hardly the tablecloth and wine decor that I usually associate with my city dining experiences. Standing outside some of the Union Square establishments, I was usually ushered on as opposed to being welcomed in. Fast food establishments were my restrooms of choice, a place to take a paper towel bath.

Originally I wondered if I would engage any of the other homeless in conversation. Would



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I encounter down-on-their-luck professionals? Soon I deemed it better to keep to my own business. I must have encountered maybe 200 fellow drifters and less than a dozen I could identify as women. Most of those people are sadly mentally or emotionally ill or the casualty of drugs or all of the above. The vast majority appeared fiercely independent, though most would be quick to accept any charity cash, a drink, a drug fix, or food; and cash is king. Other than a few other homeless talking at me, none really talked to me.

One of the liberating aspects of being homeless was the complete sense of freedom, but at the high cost of loneliness. They live a very independent life of freedom: no mail, no bills, no bosses and no responsibilities. Survival appeared to be their primary and possibly only purpose.

Paying it forward

Inspired by the movie, "Pay It Forward," I chose to beg for money on my fifth and final night. Armed with an outstretched arm, a cup and a hopeful smile, I had 14 people drop coins into my cup during a two-hour period on Market Street. For each who did, I gave them a dollar bill from my emergency stash in return. Eleven of the 14 were dumfounded by my gesture. I simply told them to "pass it forward" and "thanks for showing heart". It made me feel human again; I had been starting to wonder.

It was my final morning, the day before Thanksgiving, and 4 a.m. I was ready to go home. Another day was not going to prove more. By 7 a.m. I was home in my familiar warm, safe surroundings. Before entering my house I stripped down in the garage and tossed my clothes in the washing machine. I then took a long, welcomed hot shower, followed by a late morning nap in my cozy, warm bed.

The life lesson that immediately hit me was that I, as well as most of us in America, live a life of abundance. You could take everything away from me except my health, my time and

my relationships, and I would still be a very wealthy man. That realization has since led me to a greater contentment with life in general.

In the meantime, the company I had been helping to start lost its funding and closed. Like many, my investment and retirement portfolio suffered losses. Now I was better prepared than ever to cope.

The more important lesson was one just as powerful as that newfound appreciation for relationships, health and time. Simply stated, each of us is presented every day with a life-altering choice. That choice is whether or not we choose to be content with what we already have. The challenge for me has been an acquired taste and an appreciation for the better, finer, faster, smaller, more powerful and more prestigious "stuff." When that appreciation becomes an appetite, it creates stress and puts things out of balance. It dawned on me that I was setting myself up for recurring dissatisfaction.

Many of us are constantly racing through life, failing to stop and appreciate the many blessings we have all around us. We are racing toward the future, be it an appointment, a vacation, a retirement, or even a relationship. What if we were to simply step back and observe, and appreciate?

Two days later on the Friday after Thanksgiving, clean-shaven and well clad, I revisited San Francisco for a day of shopping with my lady friend. There were some familiar faces that didn't recognize me, and I observed some very familiar patches of pavement as I recounted to her what I had just experienced. San Francisco will never be the same for me; I am different now, grown a little. And now every day is Thanksgiving.

Bob Fagan, a Pleasanton resident, is the western vice president for The Callahan Group, Inc. and specializes in mentoring and personal coaching. He plans to publish a DVD and audio CD on applying The Law of Attraction. Fagan can be reached at rsf4653@aol.com.

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PHOTOS BY JEB BING

Military veterans and motorcyclists from the Patriot Guard Riders, many in full regalia, surround Army Sgt. Mariela Meylan (center, with decorative ribbon around her neck) at welcome home celebration on her return to her Livermore home. Meylan is still recovering from severe injuries suffered when attacked in Kuwait on her way to Iraq.

HOMECOMING

Continued from PAGE 1

the Veterans Clinic in Palo Alto and in Livermore rehabilitation centers. Although the therapy is continuing, she's now able to take some steps with the help of a walker. Last November, she joined fellow veterans for the annual Veterans Day Parade in Pleasanton, gaining special recognition from Congressman Jerry McNerney (D-Pleasanton) in a ceremony that followed.

At her "official" homecoming, she was all smiles as she cut her birthday cake and talked briefly as representatives from scores of local veterans' organizations saluted her during an hour-long celebration. They included Retired Army Major Doug Miller of Pleasanton, who heads the Army's Wounded Warrior Program and helped organize the event; Cathy Cordova of the Pleasanton Police Department and a representative of the Women Overseas Service League; Pleasanton Councilman Jerry Thorne; and representatives of the VFW, American Legion, Blue Star Moms, Pleasanton Military Families, and the Sentinels of Freedom, which

has helped in Meylan's rehabilitation.

Meylan said she was on her second tour of duty in Iraq and heading back there when the accident happened. She was in a convoy when her Army truck had a flat tire and she climbed out to change it. Three others were hit by the speeding car, which crushed almost every bone in Meylan's body. She was rushed to a nearby military hospital and then transferred back to a special facility in Washington where doctors pretty much gave up on her, according to her father Emile. But her parents didn't and with the help of Sentinels of Freedom and Livermore and regional veterans and military family groups, they found physical therapists and even a spiritual healer who had the right procedures to give her a new start on life.

As she sat in her special walker-chair and then stood for a few minutes to thank everyone for her party, she hugged her parents, telling everyone they are the ones who gave her the hope that has made her 29th birthday—and many more—possible.



Emile and Lisette Meylan join their daughter Mariela, an Army sergeant who was badly wounded in the Iraqi war, at her homecoming celebration in Livermore by local veterans, friends and military family support groups.

Livin' is good in Livermore

87% of residents in survey rate quality of life as good or excellent

By JANET PELLETIER

A record 87 percent of residents questioned in an annual survey on city government rated Livermore as having an excellent or good quality of life. That figure was a 5 percent increase over the previous one.

The survey is conducted every two years by the National Research Center, coinciding with the city budget evaluation. The 2008 survey was mailed to a random sampling of 3,000 residents and generated 788 responses, according to results released in a city of Livermore newsletter. According to the NRC, an increase or decrease of more than 3 percent from the 2006 survey is considered to be a "significant" change.

Some of the biggest increases from the 2006 survey were in the categories of overall appearance—76 percent of residents rated it excellent or good (14 percent increase) and cultural activity opportunities—60 percent rated them excellent or good (21 percent increase). Ninety-two percent rated Livermore as an excellent or good place to live, while 96 percent said they felt very or somewhat safe in neighborhoods and downtown during the day (79 percent after dark). Fire services were rated among the highest of city services at 94 percent; police services garnered 80 percent; library services 92 percent, street maintenance 49 percent; land use, planning and zoning 49 percent; code enforcement 52 percent; and city employees' knowledge 78 percent, responsiveness 70 percent, courtesy 79 percent.

Livermore has seen a revival of sorts over the past decade with the once small, country town undergoing a major downtown renovation and the growth of residential communities and wineries. A movie theater, new landscaping and hardscaping, restaurants and other beautification improvements downtown appear to have pleased residents.

But with change also came some complaints. While much of the news was positive, residents did find faults in some categories. Residents rated major problem areas the city needs to address as being: traffic congestion (33 percent); too much growth (18 percent); taxes (17 percent); weeded lots, junk vehicles and rundown buildings (7 percent); unsupervised youth (12 percent); drugs (19 percent); crime (5 percent) and graffiti (5 percent).

A significant portion of residents who responded in the survey said they were bothered by Livermore Airport noise (57 percent), but numbers were smaller for motor vehicle traffic (38 percent) and trains (22 percent).

Livermore park ranger gets fellowship

Lewis Reed, one of 40 chosen, will focus on reducing invasive plants in the Valley

Livermore resident Lewis Reed has received a new national fellowship designed to advance the work of individuals with potential to help shape a brighter environmental future.

Reed was one of only 40 people selected from competitors nationwide for the TogetherGreen Conservation Leadership Program, part of a new conservation initiative of the National Audubon Society with support from Toyota. Fellows receive specialized training in conservation planning and execution, the chance to work and share best practices with gifted conservation professionals, and assistance with project outreach and evaluation. Each Fellow will also receive \$10,000 towards a community-focused project to engage local residents in conserving land, water and energy, and contributing to greater environmental health.

For his fellowship, Reed will focus his efforts on leading a cooperative effort between the Livermore park district and community volunteers to reduce invasive exotic weeds and establish native vegetation in the grasslands of the Livermore Valley. The all-volunteer group will have the opportunity for additional mentoring and training through interpretive seminars and educational field trips led by Reed, empowering them to have a direct impact in improving environmental health.

Involved in conservation efforts for a decade, Reed is currently a park ranger for the Livermore Area Recreation and Park District. As a student mentor, he helps high school and undergraduate students from underrepresented communities identify their own career goals and learn how to get involved in careers in ecology and environmental science—encouraging

others to pursue education as a means of self-empowerment.

"I hope that this project will help raise awareness and build appreciation for this increasingly rare piece of our natural heritage," Reed said. "Most of the undeveloped land around Livermore is grassland and in large part people don't realize that even if we never set foot on that land, we interact with it. These grassy hills provide forage for livestock, sequester carbon and nitrogen emissions from our automobiles, cleanse water that fills our reservoirs, and host about 90 percent of California's rare and endangered species."

A dedicated researcher, Reed has been awarded numerous scientific grants from organizations including the British Ecological Society and the Illinois State Academy of Science.

—Janet Pelletier



COURTESY OF THE YMCA

The Tri-Valley YMCA sponsors events such as the pinewood derby designed to bond fathers with their sons and daughters.

YMCA

Continued from PAGE 1

find out more and more what the needs are."

The YMCA is not without needs itself, as it operates as a "program branch" because it doesn't have its own facility. By its 50th anniversary in 2015, they hope to have a formal home to call their own. For now, they must rent out other facilities, which is costly and venues are not always ideal or even available for the programming.

Another future program is a model United Nations program for junior high-aged kids, which is part of the national YMCA program.

Children are a primary focus of the YMCA and one of the priorities is addressing health and wellness. Last year the organization received a \$10,000 grant from the Kellogg's Foundation and another grant from the Bay Area Sports Hall of Fame to buy sports equipment for use in their non-competitive sports programs.

They also have a fun and fitness camp coming up this summer and Healthy Kids Day April 18.

Martin Luther King Jr. Fellowship Breakfast

Tri-Valley YMCA will host a celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. at a Fellowship Breakfast on Jan. 26, at the Radisson Hotel, 6680 Regional St., Dublin. The winners of the essay and art contests will be announced. Call 475-6107 or e-mail tstier@ymcaeastbay.org.

"Kids can find out how fun it is to exercise and learn about nutrition," Dulka said. "We want to get kids up and moving."

Through building relationships in the community, they have discovered a need for helping teens dealing with stress and risky behaviors dealing with issues such as alcohol and sexuality.

Perhaps the most popular program put on by the Tri-Valley Y is its child care program, followed closely by its summer day camp.

"We try to address the holistic needs of the child," Dulka said. "It's not just a child care setting, it's a chance for kids to grow and thrive."

"We have a very successful Y-Guides and Y-Princesses program," Stier said. "It bonds fathers to daughters and fathers to sons with monthly and bi-monthly events. It includes a pinewood derby, a father-daughter dance and camp outs."

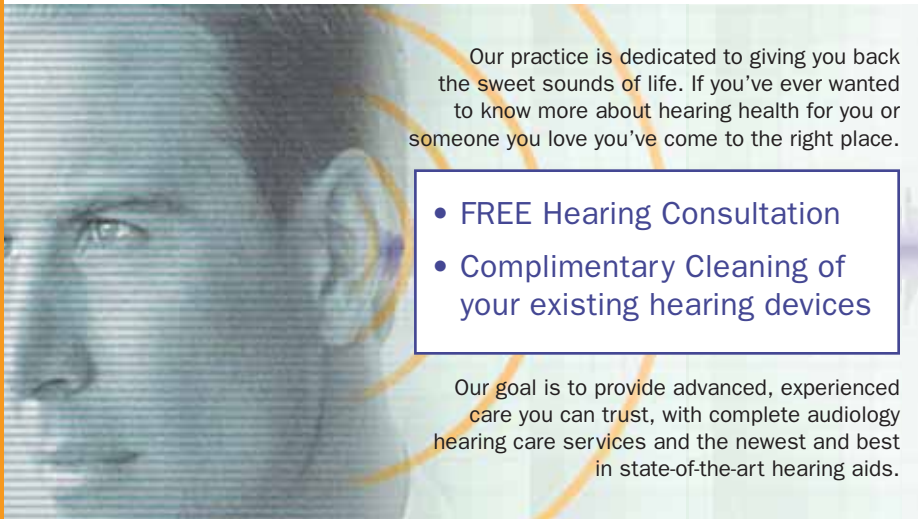
One of their biggest events of the year, which also is their main fundraiser, is Jan. 26 with the ninth annual Martin Luther King Jr. Fellowship Breakfast.

"It's an opportunity to bring together leaders from different communities in the Tri-Valley and to be inspired by the life and legacy of Dr. King," Dulka said, adding that Dr. King participated in local Y events as a child. "With the essay and art contests [by students] we will be looking at it multi-generationally and embrace the message of a world and a community that is inclusive of all."

The winners of the contests will be announced at the breakfast. Bernard Tyson of the Kaiser Foundation will serve as the keynote speaker.

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AROUND THE TRI-VALLEY



By JEB BING

No news is good news for TV30

No news is good news for TV30. By stripping the Tri-Valley's community broadcast station of its costly four-day-a-week live news show last June, the four mayors who now control TV30 trimmed \$250,000 from a runaway budget that had forced city councils (a.k.a. taxpayers) to contribute about \$70,000 from each of the cities for two years in a row just to keep the station on the air. The action came after surveys showed that about 70 percent of the 200,000 people who live in the TV30 coverage area never watch TV30 or its sister channels 28 (education) and 29 (city government), or had only watched it once. The mayors—Jennifer Hosterman of Pleasanton, Dublin's Janet Lockhart (now Tim Sbranti), Livermore's Marshall Kamena and San Ramon's Abram Wilson—replaced the once-appointed and independent board of directors and executive directors after two consecutive years of runaway budgets. Besides the community survey, they also brought in outside auditors who spent three months sifting through scraps of old budgets and financial materials. Last June, after cutting payroll and programs, the mayors approved a budget for fiscal 2008-09 of \$587,000, down from the \$880,193 spent the year before and reasonably balanced with revenue that includes \$430,000 a year from Comcast and the rest from sponsors/advertisers who support the non-profit system.

They also hired last fall a new executive director, Melissa Tench-Stevens, who has extensive experience in financial management as well as 20 years as director of programming and station operations for independent station KICU, Channel 36 in San Jose. Tench-Stevens also was president and CEO of the Evers Group in San Jose, which produced television programs. Already, with just a few months on the job, she has successfully produced a series of candidate forums covering local city council and school board races in the Nov. 4 election, and has produced and started broadcasting "A Slice of Life" programs that feature each of the four cities. These hour-long specials are built with four 15-minute stand-alone shorts, with Tench-Stevens coordinating the topics with the mayors and their city managers. Other programs, including the "Mayor's Report," and council and school board meetings from the four cities are continuing to be broadcast on one of TV30's three channels. Still, with the mayors and city councils obsessed with restraining the cost of operating a nonprofit television broadcast system, station equipment and rapidly-changing technology in the industry is costing more than Comcast's contribution and sponsorships can cover. Simple repairs, such as grid breakers that were broken and burned out studio lights to more expensive new monitors and software are potential budget-breakers that Tench-Stevens has to deal with. When she started the job, it

was not uncommon for TV30 to go "dark" during part of the day as it trimmed-down workforce tried to fix the problem. Costs for high-tech HDTV digital equipment are in the tens of thousands of dollars, money that TV30 doesn't have and the city councils don't want to spend.

There's also little back-up programming to fill time slots when there's nothing new to air. Some programs, including the few features that TV30 has produced, run multiple times, often months at a time. A "Ghost" program, taped at a Museum On Main lecture more than two years ago, was running regularly until Tench-Stevens tossed it out. Even with the budget in sync with incoming revenue, Tench-Stevens and the mayors face new concerns. The surveys of Tri-Valley residents showed that an increasing number of households, particularly in Pleasanton and the Dougherty Valley, rely on dishtop receivers for satellite TV, bypassing Comcast. These providers don't offer TV30 to their subscribers and also don't contribute to the community television system. In 2011, just two years from now, Comcast's agreement with the cities to provide free channel space and to collect 50 cents from each subscriber to support TV30, expires. New federal regulations give cable television providers such as Comcast and AT&T the right to serve their communities without local regulations. AT&T, when it installed its system in San Ramon, agreed

to a stipulation by the city of San Ramon to offer TV30. But to access the station, viewers must punch several codes into their remotes, a process that most are finding too complicated and time consuming. In 2011, even the AT&T agreement expires for that limited audience in San Ramon.

For now, through the creative talents and experience that Tench-Stevens brings to TV30, and the mayors' monthly board meetings to review the station's needs and costs, TV30 will continue with improved local programming but probably with steadily decreasing revenue. The number of Comcast cable subscribers may have peaked with AT&T planning to compete in Dublin, Pleasanton and Livermore shortly. The economic downturn has also affected the number of sponsorships, with some of the largest accounts opting out, at least until they see their own profits back on track. The mayors, in their survey, found that other cities, such as Palo Alto and even Contra Costa County (Channel 27 in Pleasanton), own and operate their own community television stations. Of course, with these local governments as owners, their stations are hardly independent in terms of programming. But with the mayors of Pleasanton, Dublin, Livermore and San Ramon now in charge of TV30, there may be little difference. The question is will the four city councils agree to foot the bill which only last year they grumbled about?



Melissa Tench-Stevens
executive director, TV30.

Shannon Community Center opens Feb. 28

The Shannon Community Center in west Dublin will celebrate its grand opening on Feb. 28.

The original Shannon Community Center closed in 2004 due to extensive water and mold damage and was demolished in 2007.

Located at 11600 Shannon Ave., the new building includes 19,000 square feet of space and provides a banquet hall for 300 people; a catering kitchen; two preschool classrooms; flexible meeting rooms; a staff area and support spaces. The mission-style building incorporates a terra cotta colored tile roof, cream-colored walls, and green stone accent tiles. The interior has similar finishes and colors that mimic the terra cotta and creams.

There is a demonstration garden on the

lower terrace which can be used as a teaching tool for nature camps. A plaza located off of the social hall has a "faerie ring," which, according to Irish folklore, is where fairies rejoice and dance in circles when no one else is around. This element will also function as an opportunity for donor names for the Dublin Pride Steering Committee.

The city is accepting facility rental applications for events after June 1 of this year. To download an application, visit www.ci.dublin.ca.us/pdf/rec/ShannonCommunityCenterRentalApplication.pdf. They can be dropped off at the Parks and Community Services office at the library, 200 Civic Plaza. For information, call 556-4500.

The grand opening will be held from noon to 4 p.m. Feb. 28.

—Janet Pelletier



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This week's top stories & hot picks for Livermore and Dublin

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Goings On

a calendar of TriValley events worth a look

Jan. 1-Feb. 13

WRITE A LUCKY LIMERICK

As part of the city of Dublin's Lucky Limerick competition, original, five-line limericks are being accepted now through Feb. 13 for judging, awards and publication. Winners will receive cash prizes, trophies, free membership in the Dublin Sister City Association, a place of honor in the St. Patrick's Day parade and invited to read their work at the sister city association's "Green and White Gala." Forms can be picked up at the library, parks and community services window in city hall or on the web at www.ci.dublin.ca.us. All ages.

Jan. 26-Feb. 1

SPAY OR NEUTER YOUR PIT FOR FREE

The East Bay SPCA will join other Bay Area animal shelters in an effort to spay and neuter pit bull mixes for free during the week of Jan. 26. With the goal of curbing the problem of pit bull overpopulation, the East Bay SPCA is one of the participating agencies that will offer free surgeries. Days of surgery and appointment availability varies by organization. Call the Tri-Valley Spay/Neuter Center in Dublin at 479.9674 or 1-877-4-PIT-FIX.

Jan. 29

DEADLINE APPROACHING FOR CITY NOMINATIONS

The deadline to nominate for Dublin Citizen/Young Citizen of the Year and Organization of the Year is 3 p.m. Jan. 29. A gala dinner event and celebration will be held Feb. 20 announcing and honoring the winners. Organization of the Year wins \$500, and a \$300 donation will be given to each the Citizen and Young Citizen of the Year's favorite nonprofit organization. Forms are available at the civic center, senior center, heritage center, library and chamber of commerce. They're also available online at www.ci.dublin.ca.us. Call 833-6650.



Lady K and the Kings of Swing

Jan. 31

LADY K AND THE KINGS OF SWING

Lady K and the Kings of Swing will create the sounds of Duke Ellington, Cole Porter,

Count Basie, Sinatra, Miles, Gershwin, Kenton and more from 7-10 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 31, at the Dublin Senior Center, 7600 Amador Valley Blvd. It will be an evening of toe-tapping fun! Cost is \$8 for residents; \$9 for non-residents; \$10 at the door. Call 556-4511 or visit www.ci.dublin.ca.us.

Feb. 2

CHINESE NEW YEAR DRAGON CRAFT

Come and decorate your own dragon with Christie by celebrating the Chinese New Year Holiday from 4-5 p.m., Monday, Feb. 2, at the Dublin Library, 200 Civic Plaza. To reserve your spot, contact Monica Ten Eyck at 828-1315 or mteneyc@aclibrary.org.

Feb. 7

CLAWS FOR PAWS CRAB FEAST

Join Tri-Valley Animal Rescue from 6-10 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 7, at the Shrine Event Center, 170 Lindbergh Ave., Livermore, for its fourth annual crab feast with all all-you-can-eat crab, plus caesar salad, pasta, French bread, dessert, coffee and tea and a no host bar. Games and drawings for baskets and cash will be held. Cost is \$50. Visit www.tvr.org or call 323-8517.

Feb. 14-15

ROMANTIC HORSE-DRAWN CARRIAGE RIDES

Take your Valentine on a romantic horse-drawn carriage ride throughout downtown Livermore. Rides take place every half hour from 5-9 p.m., Saturday-Sunday, Feb. 14-15. Carriage rides include a private 20-minute ride, a box of See's chocolates, a red rose and a split of sparkling wine (or sparkling juice) as the perfect compliment to a romantic evening. Cost is \$60 for sparkling wine option; \$55 for sparkling juice option; per couple. To reserve your spot, call 373-1795.

Feb. 28

LIVERMORE'S GOT TALENT

Livermore Rotary Clubs presents the next best thing to NBC's "America's Got Talent" with "Livermore's Got Talent" competition at 7 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 28, at Bankhead Theater, 2400 1st St., Livermore. There will be

top winners in each age category: youth (17 and under) and adults (18 and over); and the winner in each category will take home \$2,500. The competition will feature singers, dancers, bands, pianists, magicians, comedians and other performers. Visit www.livermoresgotalent.com.

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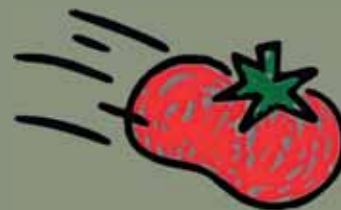
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