

Pleasanton Weekly

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Pension passion: City gets earful at workshop to discuss pending employee union contract **PAGE 5**

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HOME *sweet* HOME

Local group provides and maintains homes for Pleasanton's special population **PAGE 12**

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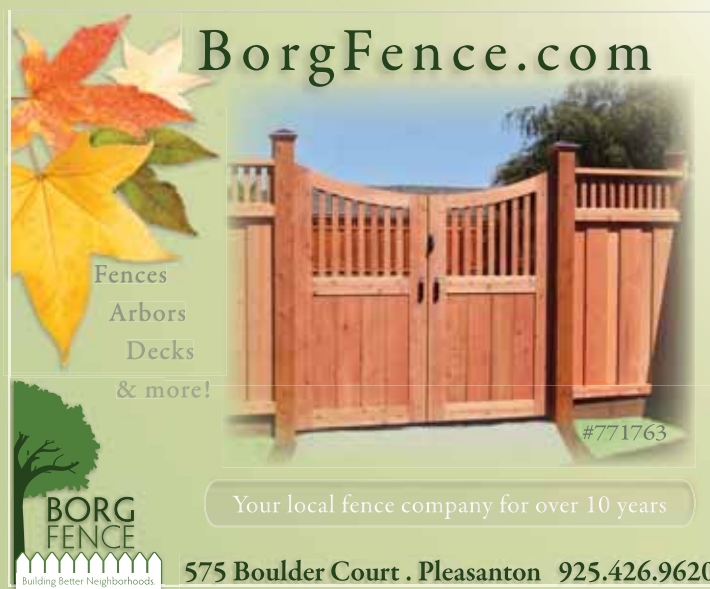
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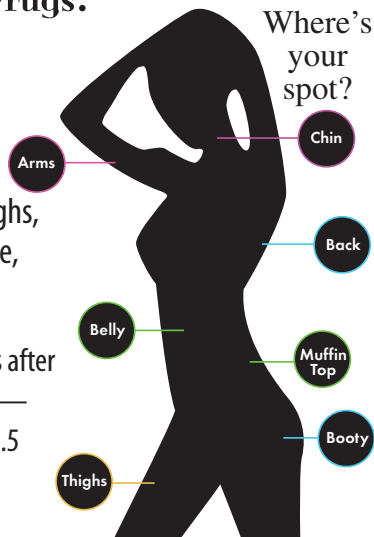
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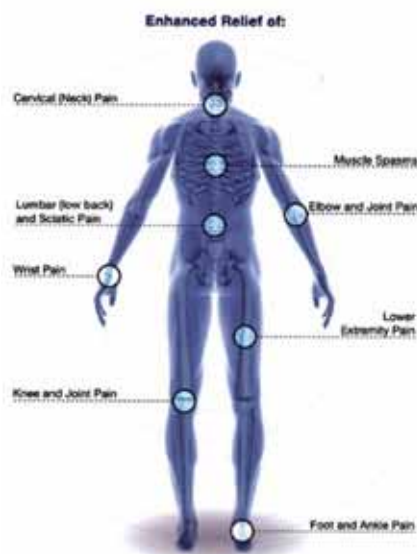


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AROUND PLEASANTON



By JEB BING

Acronyms, Alameda County may be synonymous

If you like acronyms, you must love Alameda County. Representatives of CEQA, BCDC, CARE, MTC, ABAG, BAAQMD and others met last Saturday to plan a future that will affect each of us, our lives and our lifestyles. And these representatives/regulators mean business.

Alameda County Supervisor Scott Haggerty hosted the workshop for mayors, city council members and senior staff from Pleasanton, Dublin, Livermore and Fremont at the Pleasanton Hilton. The workshop's focus was to educate and inform these city leaders about the implementation of SCS, yes, another acronym that stands for the regional Sustainable Communities Strategy. SCS also deals with the implementation of the newly revised California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) guidelines adopted by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD). These are the folks who tell us when we can't burn wood in our home fireplaces.

It would seem that elected officials and city staff in the Tri-Valley would be able to rattle off these acronyms in simple conversations at meetings like these, but few knew more about what many of these initialisms and abbreviations meant than I did, which was little. But after four hours of presentations, we had a better understanding of what these agencies do and how intrusive they are becoming as California focuses on creating more livable, sustainable communities. It all sounds good. The purpose of SCS (Sustainable Communities Strategy, remember?) is to build a Bay Area that "thrives and prospers." The strategy stems from State Senate Bill 375 passed in 2008, which is now considered "landmark" legislation that will regulate our neighborhoods, tell us how to conserve resources, and mandate that we create a sustainable region where we live. As attorney general, Jerry Brown showed a passion for reducing greenhouse gases as part of this sustainability. His office even sued Pleasanton over its housing cap, which he claimed restricted housing growth for lower-income workers in our business parks.

Not only couldn't they afford to live here, but by commuting from San Joaquin County and other areas, they contributed to the greenhouse gas emissions problem. The result was no housing cap and more affordable housing in Pleasanton.

At the meeting, Mayor Mark Green of Union City, president of the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), said the regulations controlling land use and greenhouse gas emissions are part of an evolutionary process for Californians. That "evolution" is under way with new environmental requirements to be in effect by 2013. For one, we'll have to reduce greenhouse gas emissions just from driving our personal cars by 15%. New housing, mass transit and land use plans to make us more "environmentally friendly" are all in the requirement hopper for 2035. With ABAG projecting 8,900 new jobs heading to Dublin, 2,800 more housing units will have to be built there. Livermore will see 1,300 new jobs for a need of 2,800 housing units. Pleasanton, with its 50,000-person workforce, will need more than the 800 workforce housing units now planned for Hacienda Business Park.

Besides housing, though, all these agencies cite another dilemma. If trucks and cars on freeways emit toxic, cancer-causing gases, we shouldn't live or play near them. Henry Hilken, director of planning and research for BAAQMD said his agency regulates all emissions in the Bay Area, including those from refineries and from our fireplaces. With the Livermore Valley designated as having the highest level of emissions, and with the greatest toxic risks from diesel trucks and trains passing through our valley, we're in trouble. Kids playing soccer and other stressful sports on fields near freeways shouldn't be there. Senior housing anywhere near a freeway, busy street or airport should be somewhere else. Showing fuzzy colored maps that modeled air toxic risks, the bright red—and highest cancer-risk areas—seemed perilously close to sports fields in Dublin and Staples Ranch in Pleasanton. "Health studies consistently show that living near highways has serious health consequences," Hilken said. Not to worry, though. MTC, ABAG, JPC, BAPDA, BAAQMD are working to address these GHG thresholds to make our area risk-free. ■

About the Cover

Pleasanton residents Cindy, Darla and Julie prepare their evening meal in the home they share provided by Reach (Resources Education Activities Community and Housing For Special Adults of the Tri-Valley). The organization was founded so developmentally disabled adults could continue living in Pleasanton when it was time for them to move away from their families. Photo by Dolores Fox Ciardelli. Cover design by Lili Cao.

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Streetwise

ASKED AROUND TOWN

Do you favor the Pittsburgh Steelers or the Green Bay Packers to win the Super Bowl on Sunday and why?

Thia Brown
Salon owner

I'm not planning to watch the Super Bowl. My husband, John, and I would rather watch Antiques Roadshow.



Ariel Darling
Baker and stylist

I'm actually cheering on whoever is making the snacks, because that is the main reason that I'm going to watch the game. If I had to choose a team, I'd pick the Packers. I do love cheese.



Todd Swalla
Musician with a day job

I'll be going for the Pittsburgh Steelers this year because they're not the Green Bay Packers. I was a Lions fan growing up.



Jackson Hilton
Student

I am hoping that the Packers win, because it's my brother's favorite team. It's always been one of my favorite teams also.



Rick Williams
Technical support

I'm going for the Pittsburgh Steelers. My favorite team is the 49ers, but I've always liked the Steelers' style of play.



—Compiled by Kerry Nally

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

The Pleasanton Weekly is published every Friday by Embarcadero Media, 5506 Sunol Blvd., Suite 100, Pleasanton, CA 94566; (925) 600-0840. Mailed at Periodicals Postage Rate, USPS 020407. The Weekly is mailed upon request to homes and apartments in Pleasanton. Print subscriptions for businesses or residents of other communities are \$60 per year or \$100 for two years. Go to www.PleasantonWeekly.com to sign up and for more information. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Pleasanton Weekly, 5506 Sunol Blvd., Suite 100, Pleasanton, CA 94566. © 2011 by Embarcadero Media. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is strictly prohibited.

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DIGEST

Cell phone tower denied

The 65-foot cell phone tower disguised as a pine tree that Verizon hoped to erect at Koll Center Parkway is no longer on the horizon. Last week the Planning Commission voted unanimously to deny the appeal to override city staff's decision not to allow the tower, based on the city's wireless ordinance.

The ordinance states that towers cannot be located within 300 feet of schools or parks, and the Arroyo del Valle trail, which is zoned Public Health and Safety, falls inside that area.

"This was a fairly straightforward decision," said Planning Commission Chairwoman Kathy Narum.

Verizon can appeal the decision to the City Council but had not done so by press time.

Saturday Science lectures

Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory's popular lecture series, "Science on Saturday," returns tomorrow and runs through March 5. This year's topics include using proton therapy for cancer; harnessing the wind for energy needs; withstanding climate change; and the search for the end of the periodic table.

The free lectures will be held at 9:30 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. in the Bankhead Theater, 2400 First St. in Livermore. Lectures highlight cutting-edge LLNL science presented by leading Lab researchers joined by master high school science teachers. Seating is on a first-come basis.

Tomorrow's lecture will discuss the role radiation plays in the treatment of cancer.

Sister City teen exchange

The Pleasanton/Tulancingo Sister City group is starting the 2011 selection process for its 27th Student Exchange Program. Interested teens can meet for more information at lunchtime at their school's Spanish Club location. Amador Valley High will meet Feb. 9; Foothill, Feb. 14. In addition, there will be informational meetings for students and parents at 7 p.m. Feb. 16 at the School District Office, and at 7 p.m. Feb. 17 at Amador.

To be eligible, students must be at least 15, a sophomore or junior in high school, and have a minimum of two years of Spanish. Candidates go through an extensive interview process that is judged on a point-scale.

Pleasanton council gets an earful at its pension reform workshop

Pending union contract with 227 city employees generates support, opposition

By JEB BING

Emotions ran high Tuesday night at a four-hour-long public workshop on city pension reforms hosted by the Pleasanton City Council.

In their packed council chamber in the Civic Center, council members weighed comments from 26 speakers who spoke following a one-hour presentation on city finances by Emily Wagner, the city's Finance Director.

The public forum was triggered after Pleasanton businessman Bart Hughes, former City Councilwoman Kay Ayala and David Smith objected to a two-year contract that had been negotiated between the city and the Pleasanton City Employees Association (PCEA), a union that represents 227 members.

Some speakers, with tears in their eyes, talked about their years of dedicated service as city employees working at the library, City Hall and other non-management jobs.

Represented by Brenda Wood, the business agent for the union, they said they had agreed to pay freeze over the past year, a freeze that would be continued in the new contract with 2% of their pay to now be taken out to pay their costs

of health and pension benefits. Since 2002, those benefits have been paid entirely by the city.

Other speakers talked about their frustrations and even anger over contracts negotiated with both the employees union and unions representing firefighters and police that failed to address unfunded pension liabilities for those employees, which they said now total \$290 million and are growing.

"Everyone agrees that Pleasanton is in financial difficulty," Hughes said. "This is not about the employees. This is a wonderful city. But these days, private citizens are finding that their incomes are not going up. Expenses are going up and inflation is going to take off again. We need to fix this (pension) liability."

Hughes and his coalition urged the council to scuttle the employee union contract that was negotiated last November with a 2% contribution toward pensions and negotiate a new one that would at least provide a 4% contribution, or even more.

Last month, City Manager Nelson Fialho voluntarily agreed in a new contract to contribute 8% toward his pension. He also won

an agreement from department managers to start contributing 4%. A new contract recently signed with the firefighters' union also has them contributing 2% toward pension benefits. A new contract with the police union is scheduled to be negotiated in a few months.

In her presentation, Wagner said the \$290 million unfunded pension liability actually has been reduced by cost-cutting measures and other adjustments with the liability closer to \$121 million. She agreed that's still a big number but with unrestricted net assets of \$171 million, the pension fund liability is manageable as the city continues working with employees groups to pick up more of the costs.

She pointed to a slight rise in sales tax revenue in 2010 and more growth expected this year, with Mayor Jennifer Hosterman pointing out that Pleasanton residents have the highest income level for any city its size in the country.

"Our current bond rating is AA+, the highest rating for cities in California," Wagner said.

The City Council will review last night's comments and plans to vote on the proposed city employee contract at its meeting Feb. 15. ■



GLENN WOHLTMANN

Nevada Merriman, a MidPen Housing project manager who led the tour of low-income housing, points out a mural at a San Mateo complex that shows the Bay Area, including Mount Diablo in the distance and the project in the foreground.

Tour shows affordable housing potential for Pleasanton

Low-income complexes range in size and construction costs

By GLENN WOHLTMANN

When it comes to providing affordable housing, Pleasanton has a lot more to think about, following a tour of low-income housing around the Bay Area on Saturday.

The projects varied in size and scope, ranging from a 68-unit complex in San Mateo built on less than an acre at a cost of about \$480,000 per unit to a larger but less expensive project in Union City, with 120 units built on just over four acres at a cost of about \$124,000 a unit. The San Mateo rents range from \$677 to \$1,186 — depending on income — for a two-bedroom apartment, while the Union City rents for a similar two-bedroom apartment range from \$486 to \$1,092, again, depending on income.

Other complexes fell between the two, such as two adjacent developments in Santa Clara, offering studios that go for \$543 to \$850 and

two-bedroom units for \$421 to \$1,376, similar to those in San Mateo and Union City.

With the exception of the studios in Santa Clara, all the complexes offer single to three-bedroom apartments, and most offer four-bedroom units as well.

At Riverwood Grove in Santa Clara, Dolores Martinez offered the group a tour of the home she shares with her daughter. While it looks no different from a typical apartment, her two-bedroom home costs her \$250 a month, because she's disabled and her rent can be no more than a third of her income.

All the complexes are near either train or bus service, as would be the case in Pleasanton, and most of the complexes are tied to commercial space, which is considered key to transit-oriented housing, since many residents either

See **TOUR** on Page 9

PUSD board backs parcel tax

Could bring in \$2.1 million annually for schools

By GLENN WOHLTMANN

After months, two surveys and hours of discussion, the Pleasanton school board voted unanimously at its Tuesday meeting to approve a resolution to put a parcel tax up for a May vote.

There were, however, a couple of last-minute alterations to the measure. Board Chairwoman Valerie Arkin asked that a yearly expenditure plan be included to track what the money is targeted toward and where it actually goes.

That fits with what Superintendent Parvin Ahmadi had planned already, to address concerns she'd been hearing from the community.

"We would come to the board with a spending plan. We would come back with very specific plans for what we would spend the money on," Ahmadi said. "Hopefully that would satisfy the requests I've had to be more specific."

Arkin also asked that an oversight committee already included as part of the resolution be made up of a minimum of seven people, all payers of the tax, and with no board members or school employees on it. The parcel tax revenues and spending would be reviewed by the oversight committee four times a year.

She also suggested that the board include a commitment to put the spending plan on the district's website, but that idea was shot down by Charles Heath of TBWB Strategies, the company hired to help with the parcel tax campaign.

"You might want to give yourself some flexibility," he said. "Everything you write into this you are legally bound to do."

Heath suggested that opting to put the spending plan on the district's website could be done by a board vote rather than including it on the ballot.

No one spoke at the public hearing on the parcel tax, although several supporters commented later. To date, no opposition to the tax has been raised at board meetings.

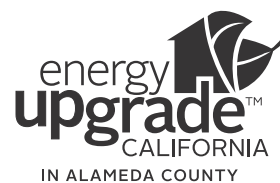
See **PARCEL TAX** on Page 8



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Aunt of accused Castlewood killer testifies

Tells jury of his erratic behavior after slayings

By Glenn Wohltmann

The actions of Ernest Scherer III following the murder of his parents led family members to suspect that he was responsible for the deaths, according to testimony in court this week.

Scherer is charged in the March 2008 deaths of his parents, Ernest Scherer Jr. and Charlene Abendroth, who were bludgeoned and stabbed at their home on Castlewood Drive.

In court Tuesday, Scherer's aunt, Carolyn Oesterle, testified she had volunteered to pay for his defense but then his behavior — suggesting he hide out and providing her with a secret email account — led her to reconsider.

"I said, 'If you run, I will not pay for an attorney,'" Oesterle told the jury.

Despite their relationship, neither made eye contact with the other during Oesterle's testimony, and she referred to Scherer not by his name but as "the defendant."

She described Scherer's unusual behavior following the killings; in one case, she glimpsed him fist-pumping behind her back when she said she didn't think he was involved in the deaths. Oesterle also told the jury that her nephew worried from the beginning that police would suspect him.

"Why would they come after you?" Oesterle said she asked Scherer during a walk following the funeral. "Because I'm an heir," she said he replied.

"But you couldn't have done anything like that," Oesterle responded.

She said Scherer was walking slightly behind her when she glanced back toward him and saw the gesture.

"I saw him do, 'Yes! I knew it!'" she recalled. "As soon as I turned, he went into a totally placid face."

Oesterle also testified that her brother's estate was valued at more than \$1.1 million and that Abendroth's estate came to nearly \$1.6 million, and that Scherer immediately began to try to get his hands on the inheritance.

She said Scherer hired two attorneys — one as early as April 2008, just a month after the slayings — in an effort to gain access to his parents' wills and assets.

Oesterle also recounted a telephone conversation with a police investigator, in which she was

told her brother and sister-in-law suffered before they died. Scherer, who was there during the call, got on the line.

"He asked her when he could get into the house," Oesterle testified, adding he didn't like the answer.

After the funeral, she said she went with Scherer and his wife Robyn to the Castlewood home "to see where the bodies were."

"There were marks on the wall and he said, 'Somebody was swinging something,'" Oesterle testified.

It was only later that Scherer became hard to find, according to Oesterle, who said he had no permanent address and that he was staying in motels or with friends. At one point, she testified, he told her he was considering camping in Connecticut.

"He said maybe the best thing to do was to go somewhere where nobody knew where he was but he could keep in touch by email," Oesterle told the jury, referring to the secret email address he'd given her.

Scherer's attorney, public defender Richard Foxall, has consistently maintained that police singled his client out from the start and never considered other potential suspects. ■



Ernest Scherer III

BART choosing seats for new fleet of cars

Public welcome to check out options, give feedback

By Dolores Fox Ciardelli

How wide does a commuter's seat need to be? BART has gathered sample seats from transit agencies around the nation to put together a "seating lab" as it prepares to replace its fleet of train cars, which have been in service since BART began in 1972.

"Seats, of course, are only one of the many considerations in the project to replace the fleet, but they are important to customers — where the rear end meets the road, so to speak," said Melissa Jordan, BART Senior Web Producer.

The seating lab was open to employees this month, showing that BART's 22-inch-wide seats are among the widest in the world. Paris Metro seats are 19 inches wide; Washington Metro and Boston MBTA, 18 inches; with Los Angeles offering riders only 17 inches.

"In the lab you could plop into a possible future BART seat that was 20 inches wide. Sitting alone, it was hard to notice a difference. When another person sat down beside you, however, it was definitely more cozy," Jordan said.

Of course narrower seats would allow more people to ride on each train, and BART ridership is expected to grow to more than 500,000 riders a day by 2035.

Sample seats also varied in height, with those on BART 16.5 inches off the floor. In Vancouver, the height

is 19 inches, which could leave shorter people's feet dangling but would be more comfortable for taller folks.

The seats from Boston are not only narrow, they are hard plastic, which is cold and hard and possibly slippery on a moving train, noted Jordan. BART is also considering whether to use padded vinyl rather than fabric on the new seats for easier cleaning. Another consideration is that the thicker the seat padding, the less legroom for passengers.

The seating lab presents variations to determine what is comfort-

able. BART employees who went through the lab filled out questionnaires as to what height, width and hip-to-knee space would be acceptable and what feels best.

"Whatever is ultimately chosen won't please everyone, but BART will take lots of effort to hear what the public thinks," Jordan said.

BART also asked for public input before the system opened, with the first public viewing of the BART train cars on May 7, 1972, at the El Cerrito station. Learn more about the new train car project at www.bart.gov/cars. ■



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Downtown

"It's a partnership"

"**Downtown Needs Our Help**", writes the editor of the Weekly. And I agree. I've lived, worked, and owned properties downtown for decades and I look at it this way. The 2002 Downtown Specific Plan, the Downtown Parking Ordinance, the In-lieu Parking Fee Program and twenty other downtown plans and programs were all created under the principal that downtown is special — that downtown does not belong to any one person, or business, or group — that downtown belongs to everyone and that along with property and business ownership and leadership comes responsibility and accountability . . . it's a partnership.

And as a partner, I've always argued that much like parking lots and vacant sites, street level 5-day 9-to-5 automobile-oriented businesses create gaps in Main Street's (or any street) pedestrian environment. The pedestrian continuum is fragmented. Pedestrian-oriented businesses become isolated. Pedestrian shoppers and strollers lose interest and turn back. Retail struggles to survive. Rents remain below replacement costs, or below where they could be, or should be, discouraging new construction and restoration of existing buildings. *"A downtown is only the synergy of its parts. The pieces cannot be isolated. The whole is enhanced by each of its parts, but those parts must relate and connect to make a complex whole"*, wrote New York planner Norman Mintz.

On the other hand, Pleasanton Downtown Association (PDA) policy has consistently been that individual property rights and a free market was the path to the Promised Land. Fair enough, now let's walk down Main Street and see what the Promised Land looks like. There's still parking lots and open sites and many of the buildings that once housed businesses like grocery stores, the hardware store, the creamery and the movie theaters are now occupied by banks, offices, salons and spas, or vacant. And I'll bet PDA even money I could still shoot a cannon ball down Main Street most nights after 10 and not hit anyone.

"Downtown should be run like a business", says one official. Maybe, but what's the plan, the goal, the vision? Is it pedestrian-based or automobile-based, and what's the difference . . . and who decides? I keep hearing things like "downtown needs more evening entertainment" — "mini-plazas attractively designed for small public gatherings" — "places to grab a sandwich after Firehouse Theater events." As a matter of record, I offered the possibility of these exact same things recently at two separate downtown locations and both ideas were quickly made economically and conceptually unfeasible by operating conditions and fees not required of all business selling the same services downtown. So if downtown should be run like a business, then shouldn't it be run like one business, like a partnership, and not like a collection of any businesses all-competing with each other for advantages and success.

Then the question becomes success for whom, downtown and the community as a whole, or the individual or special group. In a 2002 newspaper article, titled "Downtown, reborn or rebuilt", written in opposition to PDA recommendations to realign the entire south end of Main Street and place low vitality, land consuming, 5-day, 9-to-5 automobile-oriented City Hall at the end looking down Main Street like Big Brother in the futuristic movie "1984", I wrote, "With downtown's meager development limitations clearly understood, why consume prime pedestrian street frontage with automobile-oriented institutions or businesses that would attract equal patronage if located at less desirable locations." I believe the Firehouse Theater reveals the logic in this thinking. And if more walking is indeed the goal, then *"Density is the key"*, wrote Jane Jacobs, author and critic of urban planning, *"The more density, the more walking, it's as simple as that. Without density there will be no downtown revitalization — certainly not one with diversity — life attracts life."*

A couple of years ago the City Council instructed PDA and the City's Economic Vitality Department (i.e. the partnership's publicly funded management team) to study the pros and cons of some sort of street level retail-only rule along Main Street and report back. Where is that process today? The last I remember both were trying to figure out what pedestrian-oriented and pedestrian-retail meant. In the meantime, last week's Letter to the Editor had it just right. *"The downtown will continue to lose potential shoppers and revenue unless there's a reason to go there."* I'm with you partner, so now I'm thinking maybe downtown needs both new rules and a new vision. Better still, what does downtown's management team think?

—Robert W. Byrd

TAKE US ALONG



Aloha birthday: Greg, Julie, David and Nikki White stand on the lanai of their Kaanapali Shores resort suite with beautiful breezy views while in Maui to kick off 2010 with Julie's father, Richard Davis, who turned 71 while they were there Jan. 9.

Pleasanton parents attend forum on elementary school homework

Most folks want less homework overall, none on weekends

By GLENN WOHLTMANN

Parents of elementary school children in Pleasanton had their say at last week's homework forum, the first this year for the School District.

One thing was clear — most parents don't want any assignments on weekends or during vacation. When that option was presented, one woman answered by writing "NO" in foot-high letters. Although comments did show that some parents favored the idea of doing makeup work or assignments to stay current.

Other questions had a mixed bag of answers. A query about the value of homework, for example, led to comments ranging from home assignments "giving kids a sense of accomplishment" to homework "reinforcing classroom lessons."

Parents said — and Jane Golden, the district's director of curriculum and special projects, agreed — that homework for children in grades 1 to 5 has little effect on academic achievement.

At the forum, held at Hearst Elementary on Jan. 27, parents moved in groups to write comments about particular questions, and they generally approved of the process.



GLENN WOHLTMANN

Mother Dawn Olstad writes down her ideas of how much time children should spend on homework.

"It's beneficial to have a consensus," said Kelly French, the parent of a kindergartner and a third-grader. "In our house, it's sometimes been difficult to manage the workload."

Suzy Maska, the mother of a second-grader, may have summed up what most parents want.

"They should have less homework that's higher quality," Maska said.

The next forum, for parents of

middle school children, is set for 7 p.m. Feb. 2 at the Pleasanton Middle School multipurpose room. A third forum, for parents of high schoolers, will take place at 7 p.m. Feb. 9 at Amador Valley High School's multipurpose room.

The results will help form a new homework policy that will go before the school board for a vote in May. ■

PARCEL TAX

Continued from Page 5

Luz Cézares, assistant superintendent of business services, estimates the parcel tax could bring in about \$2.1 million a year, even if 50% of seniors opt out of paying, as they are eligible to do.

Board Member Chris Grant said the tax could reassure teachers, some

of whom have been laid off then re-hired just before school begins.

"The more that we can create a stable base of funds, the fewer pink slips we'll have to issue," he said.

Bill Faraghan, assistant superintendent of Human Resources, said the district has been losing teachers because of just that.

"A number of teachers laid off were hired by other districts,"

Faraghan said, adding he's heard that districts look to Pleasanton for highly qualified teachers.

The board allocated \$250,000 for the mail-in election, something none of the members took lightly.

"It really is a lot of money," said Board Member Jamie Hintzke. "To me, it's not just spending \$250,000 for \$2 million, it's spending \$500,000 because we lost last time."

New board members Jeff Bowser and Joan Laursen both campaigned for Measure G, the board's last attempt to pass a parcel tax, which received 62% approval, less than the two-thirds approval needed to pass. "Nobody likes taxes. I certainly don't," Bowser said. "This is the only way we have to protect schools. This is the only way we have to raise funds."

Bowser pointed out that the parcel tax could not be used to increase salaries. That does not include step-and-column raises that are included in current contracts, although Faraghan noted the district is in negotiations with its two unions.

Laursen said she hesitated making a commitment to support a parcel tax when she was campaigning.

"At that time, we didn't have a survey," she said. With the new data, Laursen said public leaders have been approaching her asking, "How can I help?"

The most recent survey showed 72% approval for a \$98 parcel tax, but board members know they still have work to do if they want the measure to pass.

In stumping to get the measure passed, Arkin said, "We need people behind us.... We need everyone to step up." ■

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CHRIS AYERS PHOTO

Safeway gives \$13,000 to Amador Valley High

'10% Goes Back to Schools' program provides \$3.8 million nationwide

By JEB BING

Amador Valley High School on Tuesday received nearly \$13,000 from Pleasanton-based Safeway Inc. through that company's annual "10% Goes Back to Schools" program.

Safeway made the donation, part of \$3.8 million Safeway is giving to schools nationwide through the program. The company has just completed a successful winter version of the popular funding vehicle.

Donations from the program, an in-store initiative that unites more than 100 food manufacturers in support of America's students, go to schools and education projects to sustain important programs, purchase equipment and recognize excellence in the classroom. The manufacturing partners donate 10 percent of the sale price of selected items to local schools.

Since its launch in 2005, the

Back to Schools program has raised more than \$20.8 million for schools throughout the U.S. and the number of manufacturers has more than doubled.

In January, as schools began receiving checks for the \$3.8 million in donations earned during the Fall 2010 Back to Schools campaign, Safeway held a special mid-year Back to Schools campaign in response to the unprecedented education budget cuts, such as physical education, music and art where class sizes are increasing.

"We are partnering with our consumer package goods partners to help schools in our operating area provide the best possible curriculum and activities for their students," said Karl Schroeder, president, Northern California Division of Safeway.

Through the winter Back to Schools program, 10% of the sale price of more than 3,000 selected

products went to support education. When customers purchased these products using their Safeway Club Card, they automatically accumulated donations that they can assign to a school of their choice. Schools and customers already participating in Safeway's eScrip rebate program also benefit from Back to Schools. Their final accumulated total will automatically be donated to their registered eScrip school or organization.

Safeway is one of the country's largest corporate supporters of education, giving more than \$20 million to schools each year. The company also contributes to a broad range of charitable and community programs and in 2010 raised and donated more than \$250 million to cancer research, hunger relief, health and human services and programs focused on assisting people with disabilities. ■

Planners weigh in on Hacienda plans

Commissioners want to change requirements for retail, live-work units

By DOLORES FOX CIARDELLI

After reviewing the proposals of the Hacienda Task Force for development, the Pleasanton Planning Commission is recommending to the City Council that it remove the requirement for retail and live-work units on Gibraltar Drive at Hacienda.

The task force recommended retail and live-work unit requirements at two parcels near that intersection and one parcel on Owens Drive across the street from the Dublin/Pleasanton BART station. The Planning Commissioners agreed that the Owens Drive requirement made sense, at their meeting Jan. 26, but didn't want to limit development at

the other parcels.

"At Gibraltar and Hacienda it was recommended to have at least 5,000 square feet of retail and then live-work units along the streets," Planning Commission Chairwoman Kathy Narum said after the meeting. "We recommended removing the retail and the live-work. That doesn't mean a developer couldn't do it but we recommended not requiring it."

The commissioners recognize that the Hacienda plan is meant to advance transit-oriented development so people living there would not be dependent on cars, Narum noted, but said there is a lot of retail space just across the freeway in

Dublin that is not doing well.

"I think we had a good discussion. We had a lot of comments from people in the audience," Narum said.

Becky Dennis, founder of Citizens for a Caring Community, a local fair housing group, and task force member Valerie Arkin both spoke against the commission's recommendation.

The 21-member Hacienda Task Force worked for almost one year to draft guidelines for lively, pedestrian-oriented, mixed use development on sites near the BART station. The development plan goes to the City Council at a workshop Feb. 8, then before the council at its Feb. 15 meeting. ■

TOUR

Continued from Page 5

don't own a car or share one with other family members.

A Starbucks is at one corner of the property in Union City, a property once occupied by run-down apartments and a used furniture store. In San Mateo, small commercial units line the front of the building along South El Camino Real, a site that was once home to a tire center. A complex in Redwood City is adjacent to city hall, and restaurants and small shops run along the street in front. Generally, the commercial spaces are sold off as condos, according to Nevada Merriman, a MidPen Housing project manager who led the tour.

A diverse group of about 40 toured five properties built and managed by MidPen, a nonprofit developer that builds apartments for low-income families. The group on the tour was a mix, largely of fair-housing advocates but also including housing professionals and some from the Hacienda Task Force. The task force was created to work out guidelines for an 850-unit, transit-



GLENN WOHLTMANN

Becky Dennis, founder of Citizens for a Caring Community and one of the tour organizers, takes notes.

oriented housing project in the Hacienda Business Park, and recently finished its job, adopting a vision statement that gives direction for property owners and developers.

John Carroll, a member of the now-disbanded task force, said his impressions changed after seeing some new possibilities. Carroll said the task force had only been to see affordable housing in Dublin,

where affordable housing means five-story buildings.

"It (the tour) gave me the impression that to have that density, you don't have to have these tall structures," he said.

Mike Serpa, a construction consultant who works with developers to get project approvals, brought a business perspective to the tour.

"It was really the capital management I was concerned about," Serpa said.

Serpa said any development at Hacienda similar to those on the tour would probably be a joint effort involving the developers and the nonprofit.

"It's going to have to be a partnership between the two, and I think both sides are open to it," he said.

The tour was organized by the Greenbelt Alliance and sponsored by it, the Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California, MidPen and EBHO, East Bay Housing Organizations, with help from former Pleasanton City Councilwoman Becky Dennis, founder of Citizens for a Caring Community, a local fair housing group. ■



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EDITORIAL

THE OPINION OF THE WEEKLY

Pleasanton's economy gaining in 2011

We're not saying the recession is over, but from Pleasanton's perspective, 2011 is shaping up to be a better year than we've seen in quite a while. Last month, the county's Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo), where Mayor Jennifer Hosterman is a board member, voted to annex the undeveloped 124-acre parcel southwest of I-580 and El Charro Road into Pleasanton, paving the way for millions of dollars in new business and residential development. Next Thursday, Safeway will break ground on a new "Lifestyle" supermarket at Bernal and Valley avenues next to I-680, another multi-million-dollar project. On Feb. 18, BART will open its new Pleasanton/Dublin West station near Foothill Road. This spring, Clorox will start moving 1,100 managers, researchers and other employees into the office complex it has acquired at Hopyard Road and Johnson Drive. Add to all this a report by the city Finance Director Emily Wagner on Tuesday night that sales tax revenue is inching up this fiscal year from last year's 10-year low of \$15 million. 2011 does look promising for Pleasanton.

Staples Ranch: Now part of Pleasanton, this 124-acre site will soon see:

- Stoneridge Creek Pleasanton, a 45-acre senior continuing care community to be developed by Continuing Life Communities (CLC), with up to 800 units for assisted living, skilled nursing and independent living homes and apartments. Construction could begin later this year with the first home buyers moving in 2012.

- Hendrick Automotive Group will build a new auto mall on its 37-acre portion of Staples, next to the junction of I-580 and El Charro Road.

- A 5-acre park that will include tennis courts and a landscaped area.

- Stoneridge Drive extended to El Charro Road and connected to Jack London Road on the Livermore side as soon as a development agreement for a nearby outlet mall is completed.

Safeway: A groundbreaking ceremony for a new super-large 58,000-square-foot Lifestyle supermarket is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. next Thursday at the store site, 6750 Bernal Ave., across from the Koll Center retail stores. This new store, here in Pleasanton where Safeway has its corporate headquarters, will offer the latest in marketing innovations and products, often before they are rolled out across the company's national market. Because of its larger size and product offerings, including large organic foods and fresh vegetables sections, the Lifestyle store also is expected to attract shoppers from other cities who now go to Whole Foods in San Ramon. A Whole Foods store once planned for Dublin is now on hold, perhaps for good. Finance Director Wagner said the fiscal impact to Pleasanton will add \$123,000 to the city's general fund in the store's first year of operation and \$285,000 a year after that. Safeway plans to have the store open by Thanksgiving, along with an array of restaurants, small retail shops and other services in its 12-1/2 acre complex.

BART West: The West Pleasanton/Dublin BART station grand opening and ribbon cutting is set for 10 a.m., Friday, Feb. 18. The station, the second in Pleasanton, will include 1,200 parking spaces and eventually 210 housing units, office space and a hotel. BART is selling a limited number of the \$63 monthly permits for use in reserved parking areas in two new garages, a 722-space structure on the Dublin side of I-580 and a 468-space garage on the Pleasanton side off Stoneridge Mall Road. Besides the new developments planned in conjunction with the station, it is expected to attract more commuters from cities on I-680 who will have easier access to BART, and then may spend more time (and money) at Pleasanton restaurants and stores.

Clorox: Although not a new business in Pleasanton, this Oakland-based, internationally known company is moving 700 more employees from Oakland and the 400 from its older Johnson Drive research center to a corporate campus at 4900-5040 Johnson Drive and adjacent to Thoratec, Hitachi, other research and development companies. At one time, more than 3,000 employees worked on the site when it was used by former owner Providian as a credit card call center. In addition to its five-building campus, Clorox is now adding a sixth building on the site, a 65,000-square-foot, two-story research and laboratory center, another major business development that will add to Pleasanton's economic growth this year. ■



Visit Town Square at PleasantonWeekly.com to comment on the editorial.

GUEST OPINION

BY BART HUGHES

Contract should be renegotiated

The current Pleasanton PCEA employee contract should be renegotiated for several reasons. First, the contract would mean that Pleasanton retirement costs continue to rise faster than the overall budget thereby crowding out other line items. Inevitably this means a reduction in services for residents. Staff acknowledged this cost point during the public workshop on Tuesday evening.

Second, the contract would ensure that Pleasanton's retirement unfunded liability, already an unsustainable \$185 million (market value adjustment), will continue to grow. Simply put, it is irresponsible to continue to let this happen. Once again, staff acknowledged this liability growth point Tuesday evening.

Third, the city did not put forward a credible plan to address our unfunded liability. The suggestion to use current city reserves to pay off the debt is not feasible and would put the city in a precarious financial position. It is an unsustainable approach to approve employee contracts without a concrete framework to address the liability. Essentially, this contract would be "kicking the can down the road."

Fourth, it is the fiduciary responsibility of our elected officials to consider new material information. Since the Nov. 6 closed-door agreement, CalPERS communicated that Pleasanton's contribution costs will grow substantially over the next few years. On top of this, CalPERS communicated further rate increases due

to its planned reduction of investment returns assumption. This has not been accommodated for with the current tentative agreement.

Lastly, this contract was discussed and agreed upon behind closed doors and well before the public had the opportunity to provide input. This action is quite dissimilar to how many cities operate. Cities like Santa Cruz first gather input from citizens and then enter into labor negotiations. The mayor and several City Council members stated the need to negotiate in good faith with the union and therefore are bound by this tentative agreement. Where is the good faith with regards to citizens? How can the City Council bind the city to a decision outcome that admittedly excluded public input early in the process?

The following omission is quite telling: The current proposal does not contain a two-tier pension element that so many other cities have already implemented. A two-tier pension would not cost current employees anything but would allow Pleasanton to begin to control long-term pension costs. And yet the City Council doesn't feel it is right to send the contract back for re-negotiation. To date, absolutely no contract changes have been made due to public input.

Unfortunately, it appears that this contract will be approved as is. Pleasanton residents deserve and should have had a better outcome that balances the needs and sacrifices of both employees and citizens. Most everyone, including the mayor and City Council, acknowledge that we have a serious issue that needs to be addressed. It should start now in a meaningful way with this current contract.

Bart Hughes, a 12-year Pleasanton resident, has held senior management positions with leading technology companies, as well as board positions with local nonprofit organizations.



Bart Hughes

LETTERS

Concern about civility

Dear Editor,

I attended and spoke at the city of Pleasanton's Unfunded Pension Liability workshop on Tuesday. It was a great exchange of information and I feel the citizens, workers and City Council are now fully aware of the serious situation our city is facing regarding pensions. Thank you to the council and staff for this meeting.

The meeting, however, did raise a new concern around this issue: civility. Mayor Jennifer Hosterman emphasized the need for civility at the beginning of the meeting. My observation during the meeting was that both sides of the issue were extremely civil. Of course, there was passion from both sides, but conviction and passion does not mean uncivil.

In my opinion, the only example of uncivil behavior came at the end. Bart Hughes returned to the podium to ask additional questions per his (and my) understanding of the process. I was taken aback by Mayor Hosterman's repeated attempts to prevent Mr. Hughes from asking his questions. I consider Mayor Hosterman's behavior in this regard toward a citizen and constituent extremely uncivil. Being the speaker following Mr. Hughes, this outburst from the mayor intimidated and flustered me. Rather than ask my legitimate questions on the issues, I gave a brief statement and retreated, a bit rattled.

I advise all those who are chanting the "civility" mantra to understand that having a discussion where parties may not agree is not uncivil, but adopting actions or techniques intended to silence the discourse is most uncivil.

David Miller

Pleasanton Weekly

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The Pleasanton Weekly is published every Friday by Embarcadero Media, 5506 Sunol Blvd., Suite 100, Pleasanton, CA 94566; (925) 600-0840.

Mailed at Periodicals Postage Rate, USPS 020407.

The Pleasanton Weekly is mailed upon request to homes and apartments in Pleasanton. Community support of the Pleasanton Weekly is welcomed and encouraged through memberships at levels of \$5, \$8 or \$10 per month through automatic credit card charges. Print subscriptions for businesses or residents of other communities are \$60 per year or \$100 for two years. Go to www.PleasantonWeekly.com to sign up and for more information.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Pleasanton Weekly, 5506 Sunol Blvd., Suite 100, Pleasanton, CA 94566.

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POLICE BULLETIN

Local shop hit for high-end bikes

Tandem bicycles worth more than \$18,000 were stolen from a shop in the 5400 block of Sunol Boulevard on Jan. 22, according to a police report.

Three tandem bicycles were stolen between 2 a.m. and 5:18 a.m., the report said; a pry bar was used to open the rear door of the store.

Police reports also stated that household goods worth an estimated \$1,600 were stolen in a burglary in the 5500 block of Springhouse Drive in late January. Art, mirrors, a

bar stool and a plant were stolen, according to the report, which said the theft occurred between noon Jan. 15 and noon Jan. 26, and the front door was open.

Another residential burglary netted jewelry worth an estimated \$1,225 at a home in the 6500 block of Calle Altamira, according to a police report. The theft took place between 7:50 a.m. Jan. 24 and 7:20 a.m. Jan. 25. In this case, too, a door had been left open, according to the report.

A front door also provided access to a home in the 5400 block of Dudley Court, in which sunglasses, a wallet, a purse and cash were taken, a police report said. The total netted in the theft was an estimated \$600, according to the report, which said the burglary occurred between 8:30 and 10 p.m.

POLICE REPORT

The Pleasanton Police Department made the following information available. Under the law, those charged with offenses are considered innocent until convicted.

Jan. 24

Burglary

- 8:25 a.m. in the 6900 block of Koll Center Parkway
- 11:32 a.m. in the 2100 block of Camino Bazos
- 2:29 p.m. in the 440 block of Valley Avenue
- 10:19 p.m. in the 6900 block of Koll Center Parkway

Alcohol violations

- 7:54 p.m. in the 5800 block of Owens Drive; public drunkenness, battery
- 9:58 p.m. in the 3400 block of Andrews Drive; public drunkenness

Jan. 25

Theft

- 12:24 p.m. in the 1400 block of Trimmingham Drive; possession of stolen property
- 1:34 p.m. in the first block of W. Angela Street; identity theft
- 3:47 p.m. in the 4200 block of Diavila Avenue; identity theft
- 4:15 p.m. in the 4300 block of Foothill Road; petty theft

Burglary

- 7:27 a.m. in the 6500 block of Calle Altamira

DUI

- 11:13 p.m. at the intersection of Hopyard Road and Owens Drive

Jan. 26

Theft

- 8:15 a.m. in the 1800 block of Santa Rita Road; theft
- 10:05 a.m. in the 3600 block of Kamp Drive; identity theft
- 11:56 a.m. in the 4200 block of Hopyard Road; identity theft
- 1:20 p.m. in the 1100 block of Mataro Court; theft
- 2:59 p.m. in the 4700 block of Willow Road; petty theft

Prank Calls

- 9:52 a.m. in the 3200 block of Chablis Court

Drug/alcohol violations

- 7:08 p.m. at the intersection of Santa Rita Road and Morganfield Road; possession of fake ID; possession of marijuana

Jan. 27

Theft

- 8:40 a.m. in the 4300 block of Foothill Road; petty theft
- 11 a.m. in the 7900 block of Winged Foot Court; identity theft
- 1:04 p.m. in the 7100 block of Valley Trails Drive; identity theft
- 1:09 p.m. in the 800 block of Sylvaner Drive; petty theft
- 3:59 p.m. in the 6200 block of Detjen Court; mail theft
- 4:19 p.m. in the 1300 block of Stoneridge Mall Road; petty theft
- 6:57 p.m. in the 5600 block of W. Las Positas Boulevard; identity theft

Battery

- 8:55 p.m. in the 5600 block of Belleza Drive

Vandalism

- 8:28 a.m. in the 1400 block of Calle Santa Anna

Jan. 28

Theft

- 11:51 a.m. in the 5100 block of Golden Road; petty theft, vandalism
- 9:13 p.m. in the 1300 block of Stoneridge Mall Road; petty theft

Vandalism

- 12:02 p.m. in the 5100 block of Golden Road

Auto burglary

- 7:21 a.m. in the 7300 block of Hillsdale Drive

Drug/alcohol violations

- 1:41 p.m. in the 1800 block of Harms Road; possession of marijuana
- 3:02 p.m. in the 1800 block of Santa Rita Road; public drunkenness
- 7:12 p.m. in the 3700 block of Hopyard Road; possession of another's prescription, paraphernalia possession

Jan. 29

Theft

- 10:08 a.m. in the 5100 block of Case Avenue; petty theft
- 1:29 p.m. in the 1300 block of Stoneridge Mall Road; petty theft
- 1:34 p.m. in the 1000 block of Stoneridge Mall Road; petty theft
- 4:33 p.m. in the 130 block of Stoneridge Mall Road; petty theft, lock picking
- 8:21 p.m. in the 800 block of Main Street; auto theft

Vandalism

- 11:54 a.m. in the 5400 block of Dudley Court

Drug/alcohol violations

- 12:57 a.m. at the intersection of Ray and Main streets; possession of marijuana for sale
- 2:05 a.m. at the intersection of Stoneridge Drive and Denker Drive; DUI
- 5:45 p.m. at the intersection of Second Street and E. Angela Street; DUI
- 7:57 p.m. in the 4300 block of Valley Avenue; public drunkenness
- 11:34 p.m. in the 4800 block of Hacienda Drive; possession of a controlled substance, DUI

Jan. 30

Theft

- 6:35 p.m. in the 1300 block of Stoneridge Mall Road; grand theft
- 8:06 p.m. in the 1300 block of Stoneridge Mall Road; identity theft
- 10:57 p.m. in the 4200 block of First Street; petty theft

Burglary

- 1:02 a.m. in the 2900 block of Moreno Avenue

Auto burglary

- 8:13 p.m. in the 5100 block of Case Avenue

Drug/alcohol violations

- 1:30 a.m. in the 6000 block of Johnson Drive; public drunkenness, vandalism
- 1:38 a.m. in the 600 block of Main Street; public drunkenness

OBITUARIES

Don W. Brown

Pleasanton resident Don W. Brown died Jan. 29, succumbing to a sudden stroke, at the age of 84.

He was born July 24, 1926, in San Jose, graduated from the Ojai Valley School



in Ojai, and attended the University of Washington at Seattle. After serving in the Army he worked for Boeing Aircraft in Seattle then returned to California and worked for Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory for more than 25 years. He married Phyllis Lorraine in 1957 and adopted his son Don in 1963. He lived in Livermore until Lorraine died in 1985. He joined the Williams family in 1985 and later married Edith Charline. They spent 25 happy years together until she died just seven months ago. They were members of the Tri-Valley Unity church for more than 17 years. Many knew Mr. Brown

for his outgoing personality and quick wit, and all who knew him will miss him.

Mr. Brown is survived by his son Don and wife Veronica of Los Gatos; three granddaughters; five stepchildren, 12 step-grandchildren, and two step-great-grandchildren (with one more on the way) from the Williams family.

Friends and family are invited to a memorial service at noon Sunday at the Tri Valley Unity Church, 2260 Camino Ramon in San Ramon. Burial is to follow at 2 p.m. at Roselawn Cemetery, 1240 N. Livermore Ave., Livermore, with a reception to follow.

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WEEKLY MEETING NOTICES

City Council Workshops

Tuesday, February 8, 2011 @ 6:30 p.m.
Council Chamber, 200 Old Bernal Avenue

- Review and discussion of Hacienda TOD Standards and Design Guidelines for a Major Modification to the PUD for Hacienda Business Park for three parcels near the Dublin/Pleasanton BART station, and design concepts for the associated improvements including streets, landscaping, bike and pedestrian connections and open space

Thursday, February 10, 2011 @ 6:30 p.m.
Council Chamber, 200 Old Bernal Avenue

- The Pleasanton City Council, Parks and Recreation Commission and the Bicycle, Pedestrian and Trails Committee will hold a joint workshop to review and discuss the Iron Horse Trail Feasibility Study and Master Plan for Santa Rita Road to the Dublin/Pleasanton BART Station

Planning Commission

Wednesday, February 9, 2011 @ 7:00 p.m.
Council Chamber, 200 Old Bernal Avenue

- **PV 203, Rahul and Himani Limaye**
Application for a Variance from the Pleasanton Municipal Code to allow a garage to be set back 11 feet, 6 inches from the street-side sideyard property line where a 20 foot setback is required. The property is located at 4267 Churchhill Drive
- **PV 204, Sia Hashimi**
Application for a Variance from the Pleasanton Municipal Code to allow the width of a corner lot located at 364 Linden Way in unincorporated Alameda County to be reduced from the required 85 feet to 80 feet for a proposed three lot subdivision, to be processed separately by Alameda County
- **PAP 151, Kong Susanto and Catherine Pranoto (PADR 2138, Frederic and Yiping Lerouquier, Applicants)**
Appeal of the Zoning Administrator's approval of an Administrative Design Review to install a second-story window on the right (south side) elevation of the existing residence located at 5252 Meadowwood Court
- **PUD 82, David DiDonato, Donato Builders, Inc.**
Work Session to review and receive comments on a proposal to construct 13 detached single family homes on an approximately 1.17 acre site located at 4171 and 4189 Stanley Boulevard

Civic Arts Commission

Monday, February 7, 2011 @ 7:00 p.m.
Council Chamber, 200 Old Bernal Avenue

- Discussion of Commission Priorities for fiscal year(s) 2011/12 and 2012/13.

Library Commission

Thursday, February 10, 2011 @ 7:00 p.m.
Library Community Room, 400 Old Bernal Avenue

- Library Commission Goals – Outreach
- Public Survey
- Commission Retreat Planning
- Election of 2011 Officers

Youth Commission

Wednesday, February 9, 2011 @ 5:30 p.m.
Gingerbread Preschool, 4333 Black Avenue

- Informational Review of Community Grant Process

ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND PUBLIC COMMENT IS WELCOME

The above represents a sampling of upcoming meeting items. For complete information, please visit www.ci.pleasanton.ca.us/community/calendar



HOME *sweet* HOME

Local group provides housing for Pleasanton

By DOLORES FOX CIARDELLI

*Y*ou've probably seen them around town, people who are developmentally disabled, enjoying parks and street fairs, doing their shopping, or even working at stores. It's Pleasanton's special population and, thanks to an organization called Reach, formerly House Inc., they can live near their childhood homes after they are adults.

"Darla loves to get out," says her caregiver. The two of them will attend any public event or take the bus downtown and walk up and down Main Street, just to enjoy seeing new things and being outdoors, the caregiver explained.

Darla lives with her roommates Julie and Cindy in a warm, inviting home in Pleasanton that is conveniently located near a bus line. They all have the help of caregivers, who take turns staying overnight.

There was a time when such disabled adults had to move to other communities to find homes. Then, two decades ago, parents banded together to form a nonprofit organization to purchase properties in the Tri-Valley that could be homes for their disabled children when they reached adulthood.

"There was no housing available in the Bay Area," recalled Norm Guest, a founding member of the organization whose grown daughter Darlene has cerebral palsy. "We found a group home in Sonoma."

That home closed after Darlene finished high school at age 22, and she moved to a place in Stockton. When that didn't work out she moved back in with her folks in Pleasanton.

"Then I got into this group of parents," Guest remembered. "They said, 'We're going to start an organization that's going to

provide housing,' and I said, 'That's for me.'"

The parents selected the name Housing Options Utilizing Supportive Environments (HOUSE), and the nonprofit House Inc. was incorporated in May 1991 to provide homes, with support services supplied by other agencies.

"We wanted homes in the same community where our children were born and raised," Guest said.

The founders raised the \$150 for the business license by selling hotdogs at a cat show. Then the Garnet Austin Chapter of ARC (Association for Retarded Citizens) in Livermore donated \$170,000 to House Inc. to purchase property. The new group also received \$75,000 from the city of Pleasanton and \$20,000 from Livermore and bought duplexes in each of those cities.

"Most of the homes started out with children of people on the board," Guest said. "Darlene went into the Livermore unit."

But first the houses were renovated, using funds from the county and state.

"We had to bust out walls and make it more handicapped accessible," Guest said.

Now, 20 years later, Reach owns nine homes — six in Pleasanton and three in Livermore — and founders Guest, Sue Johnson and Lloyd Hanson are still on the board.

The residents all receive federally funded Supplemental Security Income and are registered clients of the Regional Center of the East Bay. Their rent ranges from \$375-\$525 per month for a private bedroom and shared living space, which includes garbage, water and yard maintenance. Since Reach tenants can't drive, it is important that their homes are near bus lines.

The organization's name was changed to Reach (Resources

Education Activities Community and Housing For Special Adults of the Tri-Valley) because it now does more than provide housing. It's allied with others for Special Olympics Northern California and partners with Recreational Activities for the Developmentally Disabled (RADD) for an annual golf tournament. Reach also hosts a prom in the spring at the Pleasanton Hilton with help from Pleasanton Rotary North and Keystone Adult Learning Center.

"The event allows these folks to participate in a spring event complete with a photo opportunity, food and dancing. Some rent a limo to have the full prom experience," said board member Julie Testa.

She became aware of the group while serving 11 years on the Pleasanton Human Services Commission.

"All of my years on the commission, this organization was my favorite because it is so connected to the community," Testa said. "There is no paid staff. I've always been in awe of this organization. They created something out of nothing."

She calls Reach the best-kept secret in town as Community Development Block Grants and Home Funds from Pleasanton and Livermore are used to buy properties, renovate them, and maintain them. Fremont Bank has been instrumental with the property acquisition.

"Every dollar granted or donated stays in our community and directly serves our special needs population and their families," Testa explained. "You won't find a more grassroots organization."

"In providing housing for special needs tenants we provide families with freedom to allow their young adults with disabilities to live away from family in a safe environment," she added. "This provides peace of mind not only for the parents but for



provides and maintains homes
n's special population



Reach Out

Visit www.trivalleyreach.com to sign up to donate goods you no longer need or to offer services as needed.

Goods:

- Beds, mattresses
- Dressers
- Recliners
- Microwave
- Toaster
- Coffeemaker
- Towels
- Blankets

Services:

- On call handyman
- Appliance trouble shooting/repair
- Plumbing
- Painting
- Window cleaning
- Seasonal yard work
- Gardening
- Transporting furniture

Clockwise from far left: Julie, Cindy and Darla, who share a home in Pleasanton, relax in the late afternoon on their couch in the living room; Julie shows her cookbook signed by celebrity chef Rachel Ray, whom she met on a recent outing, in her colorful bedroom that reflects all her interests; Cindy, an animal lover, enjoys having stuffed animals in her bedroom; Darla places her dinner into a bowl after microwaving the meal, which she'd made earlier in the week.

DOLORES FOX CIARDELLI

the entire extended family.”

Reach board members manage two properties each so they are on call to handle problems such as broken appliances.

“It puts us very hands-on with our population,” Testa said. “They call me when the dishwasher doesn’t work, or the bathtub has standing water.” She assesses the situation to see if she can solve the problem or whether a plumber must be called.

A couple of times a year, Pleasanton Rotary North sends teams out to do upkeep on the properties.

“We want to make sure the houses look nice. We want the neighbors to like their appearance,” said Guest.

“After we acquire a property we invite the neighbors to an open house,” Testa said. “Our tenants are really good neighbors. We have a good neighbor policy. We want homes to fit into the neighborhood.”

Reach is starting a new component called Reach Out, hoping community members will add their names to a list to share their skills as plumbers, electricians and more.

On a recent visit to the Reach home of two young men, Anthony and Ferris, Testa noted that their washer and dryer were her old ones. But she and other board members are running out of furniture and appliances to give to the homes, she said with a laugh.

“They often come with very few belongings,” Testa said. “Most have bedroom sets, and we can scrounge up glasses and silverware.”

“I realized we were missing a great opportunity — clearly this community would be thrilled to give a chair and have an excuse to go out and get a new one,” she said, which led to the start of Reach Out. “We do not need a lot of money because we operate

so very efficiently but we could not do so without the support of our community and we want to build on that.”

The website, www.trivalleyreach.com, will soon have categories of goods and services that people can contribute.

“The most difficult part is to create a household,” Testa noted, finding the right mixture of tenants and caregivers for a home. “We have very high functioning and very low functioning.”

“Some have ‘supported living,’ with someone there all the time,” explained Guest. “Others have ‘independent living.’” These residents have part-time support for chores such as paying bills and grocery shopping.

Board member Gina Gourley, who is the WorkAbility Coordinator for the Pleasanton Unified School District, heads up the committee for placing tenants in homes.

“When we have vacancies, I have a waiting list and I contact agencies and they contact me with potential tenants,” she said.

She arranges a meeting with prospective tenants, caregivers and families to explain how things are shared, what support they receive, and basic house rules. They encourage residents to be in a day program, work or volunteer. Tenants are chosen for compatibility.

“I love the organization,” said Gourley. “It’s an opportunity for young adults to be able to step out of the family home. They develop self-esteem to live as independently as possible. There’s a feeling of ‘Wow! I can do this.’”

“It’s a great opportunity for parents to have a more normal life as they grow older. There are days you want to throw in the towel,” added Gourley, who adopted a son Kevin with cerebral palsy when he was 18 months old. Kevin died three years ago at the age of 29.

“He was a joyful young man — even at his funeral there were

700 people,” she said. “We’d put him on the waiting list for Reach when he was 18-20 years old but because he was in a wheelchair there was no place for him. But my husband and I stayed connected with Reach and stayed involved.”

Placing an adult child into their own home allows parents to have an adult relationship with the child, she noted, plus gives the child independence for when the parents die.

“This housing also removes siblings from feeling required to care for their special-needs sibling,” Testa pointed out. “It allows them to have a more typical adult relationship with their sibling with disabilities. They can be a friend rather than a caregiver.”

The Reach Networking Group, a small group of Tri-Valley agencies invested in adults with special needs, held a Tri-Valley Transition Fair at the Pleasanton Senior Center in October. More than 50 families attended, said Testa.

“Also, out of a need that was voiced by this group, next week the Pleasanton Chamber of Commerce will be sponsoring an event to inform local employers about the benefits of hiring folks with disabilities,” she said.

“We want the community to know how grateful we are for the support of the cities of Pleasanton and Livermore,” she added.

To receive an invitation to a spring Open House, register on the Reach website or email info@trivalleyreach.org.

In the late afternoon, Darla, Julie and Cindy amble into the kitchen to prepare their meals, along with their caregivers. Everything runs smoothly with smiles and laughter as they focus on chores such as cutting beans and microwaving premade meals. When you see special Pleasanton residents out enjoying themselves around town, know that at the end of their adventures they return to welcoming homes. ■

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BARBECUE

Red Smoke Grill

4501 Hopyard Road, Pleasanton, 734-0307. Home of the Tri Tip and Blue, Red Smoke Grill was Voted Reader's Choice Best 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2010. Dine in or take out rotisserie chicken, ribs,

prawns, salads and tri tip, or pulled pork sandwiches. Relax with a beer or a bottle of wine. Visit www.redsmokegrill.com.

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Auditions

'REBECCA OF SUNNYBROOK FARM' City of Pleasanton Civic Arts Stage Company will hold auditions for Kate Wiggins' "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm" from noon-5 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 26, and Sunday, Feb. 27, at the Firehouse Arts Center, 4444 Railroad Ave. Auditions are open to ages 7 years to adult. Audition packets are available at www.firehousearts.org/programs. Rehearsals will begin March 13, and performances take place May 6-15. Call 865-4425.

'THE SOUND OF MUSIC' Auditions for Tri-Valley Repertory Theatre's "The Sound of Music" will be held at 11 a.m., Saturday, Feb. 19, and 7:30 p.m., Monday, Feb. 21, at the Studio Theatre, 1048 Serpentine Lane #303. Callbacks, by invitation only, are at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 22 and Feb. 24. Prepare a brief song (16-32 bars); bring sheet music (accompanist provided); and a picture and resume, stapled together. No Tapes, no a capella. Be prepared to dance. Call 462-2121 or visit www.trivalleyrep.com.

Author Visits

COOKBOOK AUTHOR Stephanie O'Dea, author of "Make It Fast Cook It Slow" and "More Make It Fast Cook It Slow," will be at lunch Tuesday, Feb. 8, at Towne Center Books, 555 Main St. Cost \$10 for lunch only or \$25 for one of her books and lunch. Reservations required. Call 846-8826 or visit www.townecenterbooks.com.

Clubs

THE LIVERMORE AMADOR VALLEY GARDEN CLUB LAVGC will meet at 7 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 10, at Alisal Elementary School's multipurpose room, 1454 Santa Rita Rd. Jolene Adams, a Master Rosarian and VP of the American Rose Society, will speak about the history of roses in Livermore. For more information, visit www.lavgc.org.

WRITERS CLUB LUNCHEON The California Writers Club Tri-Valley Branch invites writers of all levels to a lunch program from 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 19, at Oasis Grille, 780 Main St. Pleasanton Poet Laureate Deborah Grossman will present "Why We

IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Write: Is Writing a Social or Solitary Experience?" In addition, the club will hold its annual Book Exchange, exchanging one gently read book for another. Cost \$21 for members and \$27 for non-members. Call 484-5924 or visit www.trivalleywriters.org.

Concerts

PIANO RECITAL Valley Concert Chorale's internationally known concert pianist Daniel Glover is holding a piano recital to benefit the Chorale, from 7:30-10 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 5, at Livermore Presbyterian Church, Fourth and L streets, Livermore. The program will feature works by Franz Liszt to commemorate the 200th anniversary of his birth, as well as works by Schumann, Bartok and Liapunov. Cost is \$25. Call 866-4003 or visit www.valleyconcertchorale.org.

Events

23RD ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION A Touch of Health Day Spa celebrates 23 years of business and will be having an Open House from 5-9 p.m., Tuesday, Feb. 8, at 377 St. Mary St. Live music, appetizers and specials. Call 484-1726 or visit www.atouchofhealthdayspa.com.

NARFE LUNCHEON Potential and active members of the National Active and Retired Federal

Employees Association are invited to attend the monthly luncheon and meeting of the Livermore Chapter 397. The no-host luncheon is at 11:30 a.m., Thursday, Feb. 10, at Emil Villa's Restaurant, 3064 Pacific Ave., Livermore. For more information, contact Elaine at 426-7800.

PLEASANTONIANS 4 PEACE A candlelight Vigil will take place at 7 p.m., Wednesday, Feb. 9, at Museum On Main, 603 Main St. Pleasantonians 4 Peace will reflect on the human and monetary costs of the war, honor veterans who have sacrificed, and visualize ways of moving beyond this conflict to a more peaceful world. Contact Cathie Norman at 462-7495.

RAGIN' CAJUN Mardi Gras fundraiser event from 6:30-11 p.m., Friday, Feb. 11, at Palm Event Center, 1184 Vineyard Ave. Music, dancing, buffet dinner, silent auction and more to benefit people with cancer through the Sandra J Wing Healing Therapies Foundation. Tickets \$75.

Last weekend to enjoy 'Scoundrels'

Dirty rotten scoundrels Dan Kapler as Lawrence (left) and Robert Lopez as Freddy fight over the rights to fleece American soap heiress Christine Colgate (Anne Milbourne) in the Tri-Valley Repertory Theatre production of "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels." Tickets are still available for the final performances this weekend, at 8 p.m. tonight and tomorrow, and at 2 p.m. Sunday, at the Bankhead Theater, 2400 First St., Livermore. Telephone 373-6800 or purchase tickets at www.livermoreperformingarts.org, for \$27.50-\$37.50. The play contains adult language and adult situations.

PAUL MARTINEZ

Call (866) 862-7270 or visit www.healingtherapiesfoundation.org.

THE LINKED VISUAL ARTS & POETRY CONTEST Poets and Junior Poets will have the opportunity to view visual art created by members of the Pleasanton Art League and write a poem in response to it. The artwork will be on display at various merchants around downtown Pleasanton. Winning poems will be displayed, with a \$50 prize for the best overall junior poem. Visit www.pleasantonarts.org or email Dave Wright at Dawright@sbc-global.net.

TREASURE HUNTERS ROADSHOW Treasures will be on display from 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Tuesday-Friday and 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 8-12, at Holiday Inn Express Hotel & Suites, 3000 Constitution Dr., Livermore. This is a chance to talk to world-renowned antique and collectible experts. Call (217) 241-3170.

YAN CAN COOK AT THE LIBRARY Martin Yan, Master Chef, noted author of more than 30 books and

television personality, will discuss his latest book and demonstrate his cooking skills, at 2 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 5, at the Dublin Library, 200 Civic Plaza. This event is free and registration is not required. A selection of Chef Yan's cookbooks will be for sale. Call 828-1315.

Exhibits

THE LOOK OF JAZZ Talented Bay Area artists are featured in an exhibit that celebrates the jazz music genre and how it inspires visual artists. The exhibit is from noon-5 p.m. Wednesdays-Fridays and 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturdays, Jan. 29 through Feb. 22, at the Firehouse Arts Center, 4444 Railroad Ave. Suggested donation is \$2; free to theater ticket holders. Call 931-4848 or visit www.firehousearts.org.

Film

'KINGS OF PASTRY' Pleasanton Library is hosting a free documentary film viewing of "Kings of Pastry" at 7 p.m. (doors open at 6:15 p.m.), Thursday, Feb. 17, at the Firehouse Arts Center, 4444 Railroad Ave. Seating is on a first-come, first-served basis and no reservations are required. Call Penny Johnson at 931-3405.

GERMAN FILM 'EIN FLIEHENDES PFERD' The San Ramon Valley German School presents "Ein Fliehendes Pferd" from 7-8:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 11, at Thomas Hart

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Middle School, 4433 Willow Rd. This German language film is about Helmut Halm vacationing with his beautiful wife Sabine, adapted from the novel by Martin Walsers of the same title. Appropriate for children 12 years and older. Sandwiches and drinks will be available for purchase. Cost is \$7. Call 273-4100.

Fundraisers

COACHES VS. CANCER BASKETBALL GAMES The women and men's basketball team are playing fundraising games and events at 5 p.m. and 7 p.m., respectively, Wednesday, Feb. 16, at Las Positas College, 3000 Campus Hill Dr., Livermore. Both games will be played against teams from City College of San Francisco. Tickets are \$5 for general admission; students (with ID), seniors and staff \$3; and children under 10, free.

TRI-VALLEY ANIMAL RESCUE'S CLAWS FOR PAWS The sixth annual TVAR crab feed is from 6-10 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 5, at Shannon Center, 11600 Shannon Ave., Dublin, with all the crab you can eat plus Caesar salad, pasta, french bread, dessert and coffee or tea. No-host bar available. Also drawings for baskets, silent auction, along with a kindle drawing. Tickets are \$45. Call 803-7043 or visit www.tvlar.org.

Health

GLUTEN AND CASEIN-FREE DIET: WHAT EVERY PARENT SHOULD KNOW Dr Thana Abrin will teach parents how to implement GFCF diet for autism, from 6:30-8:39 p.m., Wednesday, Feb. 9, at ChildCare Links, 6601 Owens Dr., Ste 100. Call 249-3908 or visit www.childcarelinks.org/office/ContactUs.htm.

HEALING TOUCH ValleyCare Health System is hosting a free learn at lunch seminar on "Healing Touch." This treatment was developed by nurses to help cancer patients restore balance in their life. The lecture is from 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Tuesday, Feb. 8, at ValleyCare Health System Women's Center, 5725 W. Las Positas Blvd., Conference Room 240. All registered participants will receive a free lunch. Call to register, 734-3319.

Lectures/ Workshops

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS SEMINAR Come hear about the latest in college admissions and how colleges evaluate applicants, how to find colleges that fit, and more, from 7-8:30 p.m., Monday, Feb. 7, at the Pleasanton Public Library, 400 Old Bernal Ave. This event is free. Call 963-2932 or visit www.dianescollegeconnection.com.

Live Music

'THE BENNY TORRES JAZZ QUARTET Tenor saxophonist Benny Torres and his hot San Jose based jazz quartet will be performing at 2 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 6, at the Pleasanton Public Library, 400 Old Bernal Ave. The quartet features Benn on tenor sax, Ben Anjo on piano, Danny Ernst on bass, and Zak Morton on drums. Free parking, free admission and free Jazz! Call 931-3405.

9TH ANNUAL YOUTH MUSIC FESTIVAL Youths between the ages of 6 and 18 will showcase their musical talents, including vocal and instrumental soloists and ensembles, at 2 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 19, at the Firehouse Arts Center, 4444 Railroad Ave. Tickets are \$8. Call 931-4848 or visit www.firehousearts.org.

On Stage

'ISN'T IT ROMANTIC?' Firehouse Arts Center Cabaret Series will host recording artist, Wesla Whitfield, in a Valentine eve show, "Isn't It Romantic?" at 2 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 13, at the Firehouse Arts Center, 4444 Railroad Ave. Tickets are \$15, \$20 and \$25 for adults; \$15 for children and \$22 for seniors. Call 931-4848 or visit www.firehousearts.org.

Seniors

BRAIN MATTERS Enjoy a morning of fun while learning how to keep your brain active and your memory sharp. The class is held from 10-11:30 a.m. the first and third Fridays of every month at the Pleasanton Senior Center, 5353 Sunol Blvd. Word games, puzzles,

challenging activities, reminiscing and more, geared to help you age-proof your mind. Cost \$1.75 for resident and \$2.25 for non-resident. Call 931-5365 or visit www.pleasantonseniorcenter.org.

LUNCH PROGRAM The lunch program sponsored by Spectrum Community Services is from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Monday-Friday at the Senior Center, 5353 Sunol Blvd. Lunch is served at noon. Suggested donation: \$3.25. Reservations required a day in advance by 1 p.m. Call 931-5385.

Wii BOWLING Play Wii Bowling on the big screen from 3:30-4:30 p.m. every Wednesday afternoon at the Pleasanton Senior Center, 5353 Sunol Blvd. Cost \$1.75 resident and \$2.25 nonresident. Call 931-5365 or visit www.pleasantonseniorcenter.org.

Spiritual

SUNDAY SCHOOL Faith Chapel Assembly of God, 6656 Alisal St., offers Sunday School for all ages at 9:15 a.m.; Worship at 10:30 a.m.; and Children's Church at 11:15 a.m. Women's Bible study takes place 10-11:30 a.m. Wednesdays. Call 846-8650 for weekly programs.

Sports

MORNING GROUP RIDE - CYCLING The group ride starts at 8:30 a.m. every Saturday and Sunday from Cycle Pros Bike Shop, 728 Main St., meeting in the parking lot. The ride breaks into groups based on skill and distance. The regular ride usually covers 25-40 miles at speeds of 14-18 mph. The long ride covers 35-60 miles at a brisker pace. Routes vary each week. Call 400-4336 or visit www.thecyclepros.com.

Support Groups

PLEASANTON MILITARY FAMILIES SUPPORT GROUP Formed in 2003 this support group's mission is to provide support and comfort to the families of Pleasanton residents whose loved ones are deployed in the combat zones of Afghanistan and Iraq. This group has monthly meetings and other events such as "pack outs" of comfort and care items for deployed members of the armed forces; the next pack out is for Easter and takes place March 26. The group also sponsors the Yellow Streamer program on Main Street where these personnel have streamers displayed with their name, rank and branch of service. Contact Chairwoman Pat Frizzell at PleasantonMilitaryFamilies@gmail.com or Chris Miller at millercj3@gmail.com.

TRI VALLEY SUPPORT GROUP FOR FIBROMYALGIA, LUPUS & ALL FORMS OF ARTHRITIS Tri Valley Support Group for Fibromyalgia, Lupus and all forms of Arthritis meets from 6:30-8 p.m. the fourth Monday of the month at Tri Valley Support, 3115 Finian Way, Dublin. They are in need of volunteers to help. Call 875-0960.

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DISCIPLINE IS KEY, SAYS ANTHONY MORALES

FROM MORTGAGES TO MARTIAL ARTS

By DOLORES FOX CIARDELLI

When Anthony Morales was 6 years old and growing up in Union City, he often accompanied his father to the racetrack. He would hang out with the other youngsters, but it wasn't always a happy experience.

"My dad saw me getting picked on — so he put me into martial arts," recalled Morales, 39.

Anthony first studied Tae Kwon Do, which not only taught him to protect himself but also demanded discipline. He competed in local and state tournaments and dominated the junior boys division, earning top honors in the Junior Nationals in 1983.

He branched out to learn other martial arts, including Brazilian Jui Jitsu and Thai kickboxing. But for many years, mixed martial arts were an avocation for Morales while he built up a mortgage business in Pleasanton.

"I was in the mortgage business for 21 years," he said, "as a loan processor, than an underwriter manager." He went into mortgage sales and started California Capital Mortgage, which employed 15-20 loan agents, and he credits the discipline learned in martial arts with this success.

But eventually the mortgage service business began to collapse.

"I decided to go into a different service," Morales said, "the protection service and self-protection. I got into the business of martial arts."

He established Victory In Performance Mixed Martial Arts Academy in Pleasanton where his team teaches the skills and discipline of mixed martial arts to others. In 2009, VIP MMA moved to Stoneridge Drive to combine offices with Guerrilla Jiu-Jitsu master Dave Camarillo.

The front office/store offers a clothing line, VIP Gear, designed by Morales' younger brother, Michael. Anthony also partners with his older brother, Mario, onsite in Mana Storm Entertainment, which makes commercials, movie trailers and mixed martial arts training videos.

"Your family is your backbone and support," Morales noted. He lives in Brentwood with his wife Tamara and sons Brandon, 8, and Christian, 3.

"Brandon does martial arts," Morales noted.

Mana Storm produced a four-set DVDs for light heavyweight champion Lyoto Machida. Another project was "Shield of Honor: The Joe Bannon Story," a documentary about a San Francisco policeman, who is also a former Department of Justice Anti-Terrorist Special Agent.

"Joe Bannon comes here to do week-long street survival seminars," Morales said. "He was a bodyguard for both Bushes, Gorbachev, the Pope."

VIP MMA offers classes for all ages in-house, blending traditional methods with modern combat training. The instructors will work with individuals to define their

goals, whether they be to increase fitness or learn self-defense tactics. They also teach children discipline and physical control along with the martial arts.

"We're very busy in the evenings," said Morales, "and the summertime is popular when kids are off school."

Morales is the inventor of the VIP Coach Monitor, a punching bag with sensors that is contained on a platform along with a computer screen where the coach will appear.

"It's designed for soccer moms who don't know anything about martial arts," Morales said.

The idea came when he noticed that people in large classes would slack off when he wasn't directly working with them.

"When I went to the other side of the room I saw them slacking in the mirror," he recalled.



One-on-one coaching is best but can be impractical, he realized, and he began to develop his coaching machine. It allows users to choose their coach, who then talks them through a workout, offering encouragement.

"I've created a machine that engages the mind," Morales explained. "I've studied people, and my 'secret sauce' is the actual coach inspiration. The reactive coaching technology gives motivational commands to keep you moving. The whole thing is rewarding the user."

The machine also can record how the person is exercising, tallying jumps and punches.

"Can you imagine being able to capture Bruce Lee's data and use it as we work out?" Morales said with excitement. "We can take data from athletes and immortalize the athletes."

The Virtual Coaching Machine currently is being tested at a Fortune 500 company on the peninsula in its employee gym.

Morales hopes the new machine will allow him to reach even more students to teach them about the importance of working out the mind, body and spirit.

"This is my brain child — I want to give back to people," he said.

And it all comes back to learning discipline, which has helped his life's journey.

"We have to tap into discipline," said Morales. "That's why I chose this new path in my life." ■

DOLORES FOX CIARDELLI
Anthony Morales shows his VIP Coaching Monitor, which is equipped with sensors connected to a touch screen monitor. A "coach" on screen helps users choose a workout, then guides and encourages them every step of the way.

OF NOTE



Eagle Scout Greg Soyka designed, managed and participated in the construction of two 8-foot-long bleachers for inside Alviso Adobe Park.

Greg Soyka earns Eagle rank

Greg Soyka of Troop 948 recently earned the rank of Eagle Scout from the Boy Scouts of America and his Court of Honor will be held this summer. For his project, he designed, managed and participated in the construction of two 8-foot-long wooden bleachers for inside the structure at the Alviso Adobe Park on Foothill Road in Pleasanton. The bleachers will be

used by school children and others attending field trips and nature seminars.

Soyka began Scouting as a Cub in the second grade. As a Webelos Scout he earned the Arrow of Light, the highest rank a Cub Scout can earn. During his time in Troop 948, sponsored by the Centerpointe Presbyterian Church, he served as Senior Patrol Leader, Patrol Leader, Den Chief, Instructor and Assistant Senior Patrol Leader. He completed Brownsea National Youth Leadership Training, was on Brownsea staff and is a member of the Order of the Arrow.

He has logged more than 75 nights camping and more than 300 miles hiking while in Scouting, including two trips to Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico. He is a graduate of Foothill High School and is currently a student at the University of Nevada, where he is studying civil engineering.



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JEFRA STARR LINN

Award winning fashion designer and star of MTV's House of Jazmin, Jazmin Whitley, speaks at the Defining Girl Academy at Ruby Hill Golf Club about becoming empowered to find their passions in life.

Celebrity designer motivates girls to define themselves

BY DOLORES FOX CIARDELLI

Award winning fashion designer and star of MTV's House of Jazmin made her debut in the world of motivational speaking Jan. 22 at Ruby Hill Golf Club at the Defining Girl Academy, a workshop aimed at empowering teen girls to find their passions in life.

Jazmin Whitley, 22, spoke to about 50 teens on how obtainable individual dreams really are. At 17, Whitley was the youngest designer ever to show her line of clothing, Li Cari, at New York Fashion Week. Now she dresses Hollywood's hottest celebs, including Paris Hilton.

Defining Girl was the idea of Twisted Silver Jewelry designer Deb Mitchell.

"The world has such a loud voice — TV, movies, music, magazines, what 'the crowd' is doing — that it can be hard for girls to hear that quiet voice inside that can lead them to success," Mitchell said. "I want to show girls that it can be done. My message is, 'You define you, or others will do it for you.'"



Jazmin Whitley and Twisted Silver Jewelry designer Deb Mitchell with their Sprinkles cupcakes.

Jazmin Whitley spoke to the girls about her passion for designing and her drive from early on, saying that her faith is her guidepost in a loud world. Then, shaking off the seriousness, she got down to fashion, demonstrating how to change a look in a flash by shrugging off her jacket and switching around her Twisted Silver Jewelry.

Whitley told the girls to stick

with their goals, never following the crowd, and she attributed her success to her family, including her business manager mom.

"When the going gets tough, I have had someone to fall back on, someone to lift and encourage me, and someone to always point me in the right direction," Jazmin said.

"Jazmin's message was so real, in fact the importance she puts on family and family support struck a cord with me. I called my mom right after the event and told her how important it has been having my family always there for me, and how I never want that to change," said Twisted Silver intern Candice Newell.

In classic Hollywood style, each Defining Girl in attendance was able to meet, greet and have a photo op with designers Whitley and Mitchell, leaving the event with a swag bag of goodies.

Girls from everywhere are invited to join the Defining Girl page on Facebook, noted organizer Donna Garrison. ■

OF NOTE

Young musicians performing with symphony

Pleasanton violinist Da Eun Kim, one of the winners of the Livermore-Amador Symphony's annual Competition for Young Musicians, will be a featured soloist on its program Feb. 12 along with harpist Anna Lorenz of Livermore. The program, "Youth Soloists Musical Panorama," will begin at 8 p.m. at the Bankhead Theater in Livermore with Kim performing the Violin Concerto No. 2 of Henryk Wieniawski, and Lorenz, the Danse Sacree et Profane for harp by Claude Debussy.

Kim, who began studying the violin at the age of 5, is



Harpist Anna Lorenz

a sophomore at Amador Valley High School, where she is concertmistress of the school's orchestra. Lorenz, a home-schooled high school junior, began studying the harp when she was 8 and has appeared with several Bay Area orchestras including the Castro Valley Chamber Orchestra.

The program for the evening will also feature Gioachino Rossini's William Tell Overture, Jean



Violinist Da Eun Kim

Sibelius' Karelia Suite, Chabrier's Espana Rhapsody, and Khachaturian's Masquerade Suite, which ends in an exhilarating "gallop." Bob Williams, LAS Assistant Conductor and Peter Curzon, LAS orchestra member, will give pre-concert talks beginning at 7 p.m. For tickets, call 373-6800.

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Ellie is about 1 year old, and possibly a Pekingese/Tibetan Spaniel mix. Although she is still a bit shy, she warms up quickly to people she knows. Kids are also a great match for her! Ellie is easygoing and enjoys going out on walks. She will be available along with other puppies and dogs from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. tomorrow. To learn more about adoptable animals, call 426-8656 or visit www.valleyhumane.org. Valley Humane Society is open 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday at 3670 Nevada St. in Pleasanton.



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Real Estate

OPEN HOME GUIDE AND REAL ESTATE LISTINGS

California home sales rose in December

Buyers take advantage of rock bottom interest rates

By JEB BING

California home sales rose in December, posting their highest level since May, according to data from the California Association of Realtors.

The statewide median price increased from November, but was down from a year ago.

"December's sales increase reflects buyers taking advantage of rock bottom interest rates and improved affordability since the first half of the year, when prices were higher," said CAR President Beth L. Peerce. "Most of December's sales opened escrow in October and November. Rates hit their absolute lowest in October but began edging higher in November, prompting buyers to get off the fence."

Closed escrow sales of existing, single-family detached homes in California totaled a seasonally adjusted annualized rate of 520,680 in December, according to information collected by CAR from more than 90 local Realtor associations statewide.

December's sales were up 5.9% from November's revised pace of 491,590 but were down 6.8% from the revised 558,840 sales

pace recorded in December 2009. The statewide sales figure represents what would be the total number of homes sold during 2010 if sales maintained the November pace throughout the year. It is adjusted to account for seasonal factors that typically influence home sales.

Following three consecutive monthly declines, the median price of an existing, single-family detached home sold in California increased 1.7% from a revised \$296,690 in November but was down 1.6% from the revised \$306,860 median price recorded for the same period a year ago.

"While sales rose in December, the sales pace in the second half of the year was lower than the first half as the housing market weaned itself off home buyer tax credits," said CAR Vice President and Chief Economist Leslie Appleton-Young. "For 2010 as a whole, sales reached 494,900 homes sold, down 9.5% from the 546,860 homes sold in 2009. However, the statewide median price increased 10.2% to reach \$302,900 for the year, up from the \$275,000 recorded in 2009," she said. ■

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4 BEDROOMS

1711 Cottswald Street \$899,000
Sat 12-3/Sun 1-4 J. Rockcliff Realtors 251-2553

Dublin

4 BEDROOMS

4195 Preciado Drive \$649,000
Sat 1:30-4 J. Rockcliff Realtors 251-2547

Livermore

4 BEDROOMS

523 Joyce Street \$439,000
Sat 1-4 J. Rockcliff Realtors 583-2186

5 BEDROOMS

5601 Dressler Circle \$775,000
Sun 1-3 Keller Williams Tri Valley 980-0273

Pleasanton

2 BEDROOMS

175 Junipero Street \$499,000
Sat 1-4 Bob Huckler 400-8146

3 BEDROOMS

4386 Krause Street \$565,000
Sun 1-4 Coldwell Banker 847-2200

7717 Cottonwood Lane \$615,000
Sat/Sun 1-4 Dennis Gerlt 426-5010

2853 Iberis Court \$620,000
Sun 12-2 Keller Williams 577-5787

3008 Calle De La Mesa \$649,000
Sun 1-4 J. Rockcliff Realtors 251-2516

4 BEDROOMS

11 Lower Golf Road \$1,250,000
Sat/Sun 12-3 J. Rockcliff Realtors 251-2544

3650 Platt Court \$619,000
Sat 1-4 Keller Williams 766-3198

4734 McHenry Gate Way \$765,000
Sat 1-4 Better Homes & Gardens Tri-Valley 463-9500

852 Madeira Drive \$774,950
Sat 1-4 Jim Lavey - Allied Brokers 846-3755

6366 Paseo Santa Maria \$885,000
Sun 1-4 Jo and Carla Hunter 413-4278

5 BEDROOMS

3104 Devereux Court \$1,349,000
Sat 1-4 Cindy Gee 963-1984

3116 Devereux Court \$1,349,000
Sat 1-4 Coldwell Banker 847-2200

6 BEDROOMS

35 Golf Road \$1,749,000
Sat/Sun 1-4 Keller Williams 260-2220



SOLD IN LAGUNA OAKS
8274 Regency Drive,
Pleasanton
Offered at \$1,399,000



SOLD
3051 Ridgefield Court,
Dublin
Offered at \$889,000

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3104 Devereux Ct. Pleasanton

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5 bedrooms, office, extra flex room. Close to
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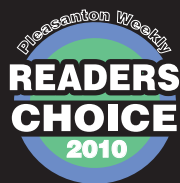
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Open Sun 12-2

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2853 Iberis Court, Pleasanton

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PRICE REDUCTION! 3803 Newton Place, Pleasanton
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Open Sat & Sun 1-4

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Broker Associate
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www.dennisgerlt.net
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7717 Cottonwood Lane, Pleasanton

This is a beautiful move-in condition, single level home in Highland Oaks! With tons of curb appeal on a large lot, it has 3 bedrooms and 2 baths, and is close to shopping and freeways. A must see! **Offered at \$615,000**



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Cindy and Gene Williams

REALTOR®
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www.williamsteam.net
 DRE # 01370076 and 00607511

1677 Cascina Court, Livermore

4 BR plus library and loft (loft is 5th bedroom option), 3 BA, 3,328 approx. sq. ft., 10,217 approx. sq. ft. lot, gourmet kitchen w/all st. steel appliances, plantation shutters & Corian solid surface counters. Close to wineries & shops w/easy access to highways 84 & 580! **Offered at \$865,000**



Open Sun 1-4

Jo and Carla Hunter

REALTOR®
 Jo: 413.4278; Carla: 200.2142
jo@johunter.com
carla@carlahunter.com
 DRE # 00692588 and 01463436

6366 Paseo Santa Maria, Pleasanton

4 BR, 2.5 BA, 3038 sq. ft. 3 car garage. Lovely Ponderosa home with in-ground pool/spa in great neighborhood. Large kitchen, breakfast room and family room combo. 3 fireplaces. Master BR features a walk-in closet and see-thru fireplace. Formal LR and DR. **Offered at \$885,000**



Open Sat & Sun 1-4

DeAnna Armario

REALTOR®
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www.armariohomes.com
 DRE # 01363180

35 Golf Road, Pleasanton

Stunning 6 BR & 4.5 BA Craftsman style home built in 2010. Hillside home boasts quality construction, luxurious detailing, and a secluded location at the end of one of the most desirable streets in Castlewood Country Club. Features expansive valley views. **Offered at \$1,749,000**



Pat Burns

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 DRE #00396535

1012 Bartlett Place, Pleasanton

Beautiful Shea built home in desirable Ventana Hills. Lovely landscaping surrounds this home situated on a corner lot, close to Mission Hills Park. 4 BR + Bonus Room & 3 BA, 3,179 sq. ft. of living space on a 9,500 sq. ft. lot. Call for private showing. **Offered at \$1,025,000**



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(209) 825-9548

VILLAGIO
\$249,000

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4 Bedrooms, 3 Bathrooms

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MLS# 10083848

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ONE OF A KIND PROPERTY \$899,000
WELL IS IN.Rock walls to property.Perked for septic.Paved drwy to parcel,many imprvemnts 925-580-9050

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#10 STORYBOOK LANE
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well is in,perked for septic,paved driveway to parcel,NOT raw land,many imprvemnts are in! 925-580-9050

736 SUNSET DR
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1866 CORTE CAVA
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1226 SHADY POND LN. PLEASANTON
LOCATED IN PHEASANT RIDGE



6 BD 6 BA 5,096sf. on a 15,712sf. lot. Amazing private backyard! Huge gourmet kitchen, hardwood throughout. Guest suite w/ full bath on main level.
\$1,649,000

5190 GENOVESIO DR. PLEASANTON
LOCATED IN VALENCIA



4 BD 2.5 BA 1,770sf. on a 5,796sf. lot. Largest yard in neighborhood! Close to community pool. Tile flooring downstairs, granite counters, HUGE backyard.
\$663,000



383 CHRISTINA CT. PLEASANTON
LOCATED IN DOWNTOWN

3 BD 2 BA 1,204sf. on a 1/2 acre lot. Single level, AC, court location. Walk to downtown.
\$699,000

3265 NORTHAMPTON CT. PLEASANTON
LOCATED IN PLEASANTON MEADOWS



5 BD 3 BA 2,441sf. on a 6,937sf. lot. Great location with side yard access. Bedroom and full bath on main level. Open floor plan.
\$690,000

PLEASANTON
LOCATED IN JENSEN/AMADOR NEIGHBORHOOD



3 BR 2 BA 1460sf. on a HUGE 10,537sf. lot. Largest lot in the neighborhood! Refinished hardwood flooring throughout, dual pane windows. Living room, family room and dining room. Call for private showing. **\$565,000**

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PLEASANTON SEMI-CUSTOM

SOLD



4150 CREEKWOOD COURT, PLEASANTON
Don't miss this private, Pleasanton home on premium 1/2 acre lot. Large multimedia/game room, upgraded kitchen and bathrooms with granite. Five bedrooms, three full bathrooms, hardwood floors, two fireplaces, three car garage, 4,002 square feet. Large secluded park-like rear yard includes expansive Trex deck, in-ground pool, Hot Springs grande covered spa, waterfall/pond, playhouse, zip line, large lawn area, mature redwood trees and large cemented side yard area. Walk to great schools & neighborhood parks. **SOLD FOR \$1,120,000**

GOLDEN EAGLE ESTATES LOT



8019 GOLDEN EAGLE WAY, PLEASANTON
Beautiful large premium 1.08 acre lot in desirable Golden Eagle Estates gated community. Panoramic views! One of a couple of remaining lots. Build your own dream home or plans are approved and ready to start for a 6300 sq ft. 5 bedroom, 6 bathroom home with 4 car garage, plans available for custom rock sculpted pool with waterslide and waterfall, pool cabana and custom outdoor kitchen with pizza oven, outdoor shower. Community amenities include: pool, tennis courts and access to Augustin Bernal Park. Located adjacent to Castledwood Country Club. Five minutes from charming downtown Pleasanton. **OFFERED AT \$1,000,000**

NEW CUSTOM SINGLE LEVEL

SOLD



1588 FOOTHILL ROAD, PLEASANTON
New custom single level home on private country lane off of Foothill Road. This private half acre lot is located adjacent to Golden Eagle with ridge views. Four bedrooms, bonus room/guest quarters, home theater room, private office, lockable 400 bottle wine cellar, 4.5 bathrooms, 4762 sq. ft. Gourmet kitchen with granite slab countertops, top of the line appliances. Oversized three car garage (4th car option). In-ground pool, detached permitted room (office/workout room) seller to credit buyer for brand new landscaping. Near Castledwood Country Club. **SOLD FOR \$1,625,000**

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1327 HEARST DRIVE, PLEASANTON
Great location! Beautiful semi-custom home on .40 acre lot. Expansive deck with panoramic views! Private rear grounds. Five bedrooms, 4.5 bathrooms, 4,026 square feet. Upgraded gourmet kitchen with granite countertops, newer paint & carpeting, extensive hardwood floors. Expansive master suite. Community pool, park, tennis courts and open space. Walk to Main Street and award winning schools! **OFFERED AT \$1,195,000**

LOS OLIVOS

SOLD



2951 PICHOLINE COURT, LIVERMORE
Beautiful, highly upgraded Los Olivos home on professionally landscaped private .25 acre lot. Don't miss it! Five bedrooms (bonus room 5th), 3.5 bathrooms, plus detached studio/guest quarters (1 bed/1 bath). Approximately 3889 sq. ft. Gourmet kitchen with custom cabinets, granite slab countertops and stainless steel appliances. Highly upgraded spacious master suite with granite. Beautiful grounds include large private patio, spacious lawn area, garden/play set area, and atrium/side patio. Views of surrounding hills. Minutes to quality golf courses and Livermore Valley wineries. **SOLD FOR \$950,000**

GREY EAGLE ESTATES

SOLD
REPRESENTED BUYER



27 GREY EAGLE ESTATE, PLEASANTON
Secluded 5904 sq ft. custom home on premium 5.3 acre estate in desirable, gated Grey Eagle Estates. Panoramic Views of the valley and Mt. Diablo. Five bedrooms, plus bonus room, office, 2nd office/hobby room, 3.5 bathrooms. Four car garage. Beautiful grounds include private vineyard, In-ground pool and spa. **SOLD FOR \$1,900,000**

VINSANTO

SOLD



2845 VINE COURT, LIVERMORE
Beautiful highly upgraded home in excellent condition. Panoramic views of vineyards and surrounding hills. Five bedrooms (4th is private office, 5th in guest house/casita), four bathrooms (4th in casita). Approximate total square footage 3,553. Upgraded kitchen with granite countertop & backsplash, two fireplaces, plantation shutters throughout, three car garage. Private gate & rear grounds include separate guest house/casita, expansive exposed aggregate patio, lawn area, fruit trees and vineyards. No backyard neighbors. Close to wineries & golf courses. **SOLD FOR \$809,000**

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