

# East Palo Alto Today

Providing news that is relevant, informative and critical



East Palo Alto and Belle Haven

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## Responding to the Civil Grand Jury

The East Palo Alto City Council used the last hour of its four hour meeting on Tuesday, October 16 to discuss how it will respond to three San Mateo County

Civil Grand Jury Reports. The reports, which cover 2006-2007 looked into three separate areas: Electronic Communication among City Officials, Emergency

Planning for Dam or Levee Failures in San Mateo County and Building in East Palo Alto: Is the Building Permit Approval Process in East Palo Alto Equitable?

Each report was divided into three separate sections. The issue, the findings and the recommendations.

During their meeting, council members and city

staff discussed all three Grand Jury reports, with city manager, Alvin James primarily leading the discussion

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Photo courtesy of Dorothy Farrell  
East Palo Alto seniors pose in front of the bus they took for their trip to Allensworth State Historical Park in Allensworth, CA.

## Taking a trip in time

By Dorothy Farrell  
EPA Today Contributor

At 6:30am on Saturday October 13, 2007 a charter bus left bound for the Annual Rededication Program at Allensworth State Historical Park.

Aboard the bus were East Palo Alto residents and others interested in learning about and seeing a town founded, financed and governed solely by African Americans. The trip was

sponsored by the East Palo Alto PT Cruisers (a local car club) and several local individuals.

A former slave, Colonel Allen Allensworth, founded the town of Allensworth in 1908. The Colonel learned to read and write and in 1886 became the Chaplain to the 24th. Infantry. After his retirement he lectured throughout the east and mid-western states promoting Booker T Washington's phi-

losophy of African American self-reliance. The Colonel believed that through education and hard work, African Americans could rise above the effects of slavery, attain greater social stature and more fully realize their potential as a people. Along with another educator Colonel Allensworth purchased 800 acres of land south of Fresno, California, and the

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## Building big dreams

By Victor Lopez  
EPA Today Contributor

For many people, it is easy to remember a dream. Within this country, there are those who are supporting a bill, which they think would encourage young people to build big dreams while they are awake.

The bill is called the Dream Act (S. 1545), which is formally known as the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act. The bill addresses the sad case of young immigrants who grow up and are educated in the United States, but who face deportation because their parents are undocumented immigrants.

The bill's supporters think it will provide hope to immigrant students and lead many more of them to remain in school. The Dream Act would apply to individuals: who were brought to the United States. at least 5 years ago as children; those who have grown up in the United States, and those who have remained in school and

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## El Dream Act

Por Victor Lopez  
EPA Today Contributor

Para muchas personas, es fácil de recordar un sueño. Dentro de este país, hay los que sostienen una propuesta, que ellos piensan alentaría a jóvenes a basarse su vida en sueños verdaderos.

La propuesta es llamada DREAM ACT (S. 1545), que es llamado formalmente como la acta del Desarrollo, el Alivio y la Educación para Menores Extranjeros. La propuesta dirige casos triste de jóvenes inmigrantes que crecen y son educados en los Estados Unidos, pero que encara la deportación porque sus padres son inmigrantes sin documentos.

Los partidarios de la propuesta piensan que les proporcionará esperanza a estudiantes indocumentados y dirigirá muchos más de ellos quedarse en la escuela. El DREAM ACT aplicará a individuos: quién fueron

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## Students constantly late for school

By Henrietta J. Burroughs  
EPA Today

Patrick R. Gemma, the district superintendent for the Sequoia Union High School District, sent a letter to the parents of the East Palo Alto students attending high schools in his district. In his letter, he told the parents that

their children were arriving late to school because of tardy school buses and he apologized for any negative impact that the buses' late arrival was having on their children.

Gemma shared his letter with East Palo Alto community members and staff at a meeting held in the district's

headquarters on Tuesday, October 16.

This meeting was attended by Sharifa Wilson, Father Lawrence Goode, Pastor Paul Bains, Larry Moody, Kristina Thompson and others including Debra Moore Washington, the district's assistant superintendent and Dorothy Burnside, the parent



Supt. Patrick Gemma speaking at a community forum on October 8, 2007

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# EL DREAM ACT

traídos a los Estados Unidos. por lo menos hace 5 años como niños; los que han crecido en los Estados Unidos, y los que se han quedado en la escuela y fuera de problema.

Bajo las provisiones del DREAM ACT, jóvenes de inmigrante calificarían para "el residente permanente, lícito y condicional" la posición" y serían dado una tarjeta verde durante 6 años cuando ellos se gradúan del instituto, si durante ese tiempo, ellos se matriculan en el colegio, sirven en el ejército o realizan un número significativo de horas del trabajo comunitario.

A fines del seis año el período condicional, los que encuentran por lo menos uno de estos requisitos calificaría para la posición residente, permanente y lícita. Ha habido varias versiones

del DREAM ACT desde que fue introducido primero en el Senado de los Estados Unidos en el 31 de Julio de 2003.

A la desilusión de sus partidarios, el DREAM ACT falló de conseguir suficientes votos este Septiembre cuando sus adversarios republicanos encontraron las medidas que procesales bloquearlo. Pero Líder de Mayoría de Senado, Harry Reid (D-NV) prometió que será traído al piso del Senado para un voto alguna vez antes de 16 de Noviembre.

Es excepcional para la legislación específica como el DREAM ACT para conseguir una promesa tan pública, que requerirá el Liderazgo del Senado para apartar días de tiempo de piso poco antes de que el Congreso son planificados para salir para el año.



Esto significa que otros asuntos sostenidos por distritos electorales y ejércitos poderosos de cabilderos no quizás sean dirigidos, mientras que el DREAM ACT será dado una oportunidad de adelantarse.

Hay los que dicen que el consentimiento de Líder de Mayoría de Senado para hacer tal promesa hace honor a él, pero hay los otros que dice que su promesa muestra también cuánto progreso el DREAM ACT ha hecho en los últimos meses a con-

secuencia de la sangre, sudor y las lágrimas de estudiantes indocumentados y sus aliados.

Aparece que el DREAM ACT es ahora un asunto de primero-nivel que no se irá. Cuando el DREAM ACT venga al piso del Senado en Noviembre, necesitará 60 votos para pasar.

Los partidarios de la cuenta esperan que habrá un voto muy cercano. Ellos dicen que ellos preparan también para los abogados anti inmigrante, que será fuera vigente.

Mientras los adversarios del DREAM ACT utilizaron programas de entrevistas de radio, las entradas innumerables de blog y llamadas enojadas a oficinas de Senado para presionar contra la propuesta en el pasado, los partidarios del DREAM ACT dijeron que ellos están seguros que esta vez,

ellos están en el umbral de un voto histórico.

Los lectores interesados son instados a llamar o telecopiar a sus Senadores hoy y cada día para permitirles saber cómo ellos se sienten acerca de la propuesta y para tomar el tiempo de motivar a sus amigos para hacer lo mismo.

El teléfono individual de senadores y números de fax pueden ser encontrados en línea en <http://www.congress.org/congress/home/> además, correos electrónicos pueden ser mandados a un Senadores en línea yendo a [http://www.democracyinaction.org/dia/organizationsORG/NILC/campaign.jsp?campaign\\_KEY=12129](http://www.democracyinaction.org/dia/organizationsORG/NILC/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=12129).

**Victor Lopez** - el program coordinator for El Concilio of San Mateo County

# Neighbors rally to end the ICE raids

By Nicolas Camacho  
EPA Today Contributor

Over 600 parishioners gathered at St. Athanasius Catholic Church on Monday, October 15 to mourn the loss of Lucio Casiano, and pray for an end to the indiscriminate raids they feel are targeting area communities.

St. Athanasius is a member of Peninsula Interfaith Action (PIA) which represents 30 congregations on the San Francisco peninsula. The multi-racial group of PIA leaders, together with Youth for Christ and representatives of the Diocese of San Jose, testified to the horror and fear that ripped through the community when they learned that Lucio Casiano had been arrested. "Lucio has worked to help youth in our church stay away from gangs and drugs and be productive members of society. We can't stand by and allow him



Marchers at the rally for Lucio Casiano

to be stripped from our church family," explains Bertha Caneda, PIA leader and member of St. Athanasius Church.

"Today Lucio, Tomorrow All of Us," cheered the crowd, each with a Lucio written on their nametags. "When my father, born in the US, was 18 years old, federal agents came to the door and took him away to an internment camp where he lived for 4 years during WWII. His only crime was being Japanese-American," explained Irene Yoshida, PIA leader and

member of St. Athanasius parish "Today I am Lucio, because I know what it is like to trust a government who can do horrible things to its people." Lucio was a leader for 8 years with the group Youth for Christ and graduated from a 3 year ministry leadership institute with the dieses of San Jose. He dedicated himself to supporting youth in his community. Last Wednesday, at 7am Lucio answered a knock at his door, and was confronted with ICE agents. Instead of leaving after they realized they had the wrong address, the agents arrested Lucio who is currently in detention awaiting a bond hearing.

Lucio is not alone. In 2007, ICE incursions resulted in the deportation of over 200,000 people. Failure to pass a comprehensive immigration reform bill earlier this year, and increased efforts by ICE agents, leaves whole

communities terrified that someone they love may simply vanish one day "Lucio was in his own home. This could happen to any of us. Lucio is part of my church family, my faith calls me to stand up and demand these unjust raids stop and Lucio is released," said Phil Cosby PIA leader and member of St. Athanasius Parish.

At the end of the meeting, the group had raised over \$7,000 dollars in donations toward his bail. Clergy leaders blessed a group of 50 delegates who carried the crowd's prayers to 630 Sansome street, the immigration court, where Casiano's case was heard earlier today. At 8pm the same day, Casiano was released on bail and given a court date for next month, at which a final decision will be made. "We are glad to have Lucio with us, and we know that the fight is not over. We

will stand by Lucio and continue to urge our government stop destroying families and declare and end to these raids" says Nicolas Camacho, a leader of Youth for Christ at St. Athanasius parish.

The vigil and press conference was sponsored by Youth for Christ, Peninsula Interfaith Action and the Catholic Diocese of San Jose. Also in attendance were Mountain View Mayor Laura Macias and Councilwoman Ronit Bryant. Peninsula Interfaith Action is a federation of 30 diverse faith congregations from Daly City to Sunnyvale, collectively developing leaders to achieve extraordinary results in the areas of immigrant rights, improved schools, access to healthcare, and reducing youth violence.

**Nicolas Camacho** is a member of the Peninsula Interfaith Action (PIA).



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# News Briefs

## More Foreclosures

Over 25 ZIP codes in the Bay Area are experiencing a rise in foreclosure rates, including East Palo Alto, which has one of the highest foreclosure rates in the area.

Approximately 40 East Palo Alto foreclosures have occurred in the city, and historical data indicates that most of the houses belonged to minority homeowners.

Analysts attribute the higher percentage of foreclosures in the Bay Area to the affordability of housing and the recently large price drops, which analysts say may cause many workers, such as teachers, government workers and emergency responders, to move out of the Bay Area.

The Bay Area is working on establishing an emergency

loan program to help homeowners and prevent further foreclosures.

## Crime Crackdown

California Attorney General Edmund G. Brown Jr., and community and regional law enforcement representatives met on October 16 in the East Palo Alto City Council Chambers to announce Project Safe Neighborhood, a nine-month multi-agency crackdown on crime. The program, which has been ongoing in the East Palo Alto community, has reduced the amount of violence and number of homicides in the area. Brown credited the success to the close way law enforcement officials worked with East Palo Alto residents. However, he said that there is still much to accomplish.



Photo courtesy of Cynthia Keely  
Mayor David Woods with board members, staff and students at the ribbon cutting ceremony.

## Expanded new offices

College Track East Palo Alto celebrated the grand opening of its spacious new offices on October 5.

Visitors during the evening's festivities were given a tour of the new facility and were treated to a variety of presentations, including a ribbon

cutting ceremony performed by East Palo Alto Mayor David Woods.

Audrey Page, who is one of College Track's 2005 graduates, said that the new facility is great. "Now College Track can help a larger generation of students go on to college," she said.

## Monitoring San Francisquito Creek

With the flood season approaching, residents will be able to monitor the water level in the San Francisquito Creek with the online creek monitor. Community Advocate Dennis Parker, advises residents that they can both access the camera that monitors the creek, as it passes under the West Bayshore Bridge and get useful emergency preparedness information by using the following links:

[http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/info/fire\\_and\\_flood.asp](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/info/fire_and_flood.asp). To access the graphic that shows the creek levels, and rainfall and tide history over that last 12 hours, residents can click on the following link:

<http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/>  
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# New agency opens its doors for girls

By Patricia Foster  
EPA Today  
Contributor

Have you noticed the group of girls talking, laughing and sometimes skipping on Bay Road with their program leader Betty? If you haven't seen them yet, keep a look out for them.

They are the girls of Girls to Women, a non-profit community based after-school program that is dedicated to



Participants during a summer activity

supporting girls as they design their futures for successful womanhood.

Girls to Women opened its doors January 2007 under the leadership of founder

and executive director Patricia Foster. Currently with twenty-five participants ranging in age from six to twelve, Girls to Women represents a diverse group of girls coming from all over the East of Bayshore community.

The girls have just completed their very successful summer session of programming which included activities such as swimming, gar-



Young girls at their summer program.

dening, dancing, arts, and the never to be overshadowed academic enrichment. As the fall quarter starts, the girls look forward to more opportunities to grow and

learn.

If you are interested in learning more about Girls to Women or volunteering for Girls to Women, contact Program Director, Marquisa Hawkins, at Girls to Women, the St. Francis of Assisi Church, 1425 Bay Road during program hours: M,T,Th,F - 2:15 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., Wed. - 1 p.m to 5:30 pm.

**Patricia Foster** is the founder and executive director of Girls to Women. She currently serves as the Vice Mayor of the East Palo Alto City Council.

## City, County & State Government Meetings & Contacts

### East Palo Alto City Council

The City of Council meets the first and third Tuesday of each month at 7:30 pm in the Council Chambers, East Palo Alto City Hall, 2415 University Avenue; (650) 853-3100 or Fax: (650) 853-3115. Website: [www.ci.east-palo-alto.ca.us](http://www.ci.east-palo-alto.ca.us)

### East Palo Alto City Council Members

**David E. Woods- Mayor**  
(650) 853-1907

**Patricia Foster- Vice Mayor**  
(650) 328-3944

**Ruben Abrica**  
(650) 321-4001

**A. Peter Evans -**  
(650) 321-1009

**Donna Rutherford**  
(650) 327-7926

### East Palo Alto Boards, Commissions, Committees

Planning Commission  
Second and Fourth Monday

Rent Stabilization Board  
Second and Fourth Wednesday

Public Works & Transportation Commission  
First and Third Wednesday

Youth Advisory Committee  
First Thursday of each month

Senior Advisory Committee  
Meets the 1st Wednesday of each month - 6:30p.m. - City Hall.

**Menlo Park City Council**  
The Menlo Park City Council holds meetings every Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. at the City Council Chambers located at 801 Laurel Street. You can subscribe to

receive the agendas and minutes by e-mail when they are published. An agenda is posted in advance of the weekly meeting, and past agendas and minutes are filed by the date they were held. If you have questions about an agenda please call the City Clerk at 650.330.6620.

### Menlo Park City Council Members

**Kelly J. Fergusson -Mayor**  
(650) 327-4533

**Andrew M. Cohen - Mayor Pro Tem**  
(650)327-5332

**John C. Boyle**  
(650)323-5438

**Richard Kline**  
(650) 228-5166

**Heyward Robinson**  
(650) 330-6631

### Menlo Park Boards, Commissions, Committees

Arts Commission  
Bicycle Commission  
Environmental Quality Commission  
Housing Commission  
Las Pulgas Committee  
Library Commission  
Parks and Recreation Commission  
Planning Commission  
Transportation Commission

### San Mateo County Bd. of Supervisors

**Supervisor Rose Jacobs Gibson, Fourth District**

The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors meets on February 7, 28 March 7, 14, 28, 2006 in the County Government Center: Hall of Justice & Records 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063.

Roll call at: 8a.m. 9a.m.

Regular & Consent Agenda Items.

### State Officials

**Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger**  
State Capitol Building  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Phone: 916-445-2841  
Fax: 916-445-4633  
Email: [governor@governor.ca.gov](mailto:governor@governor.ca.gov)

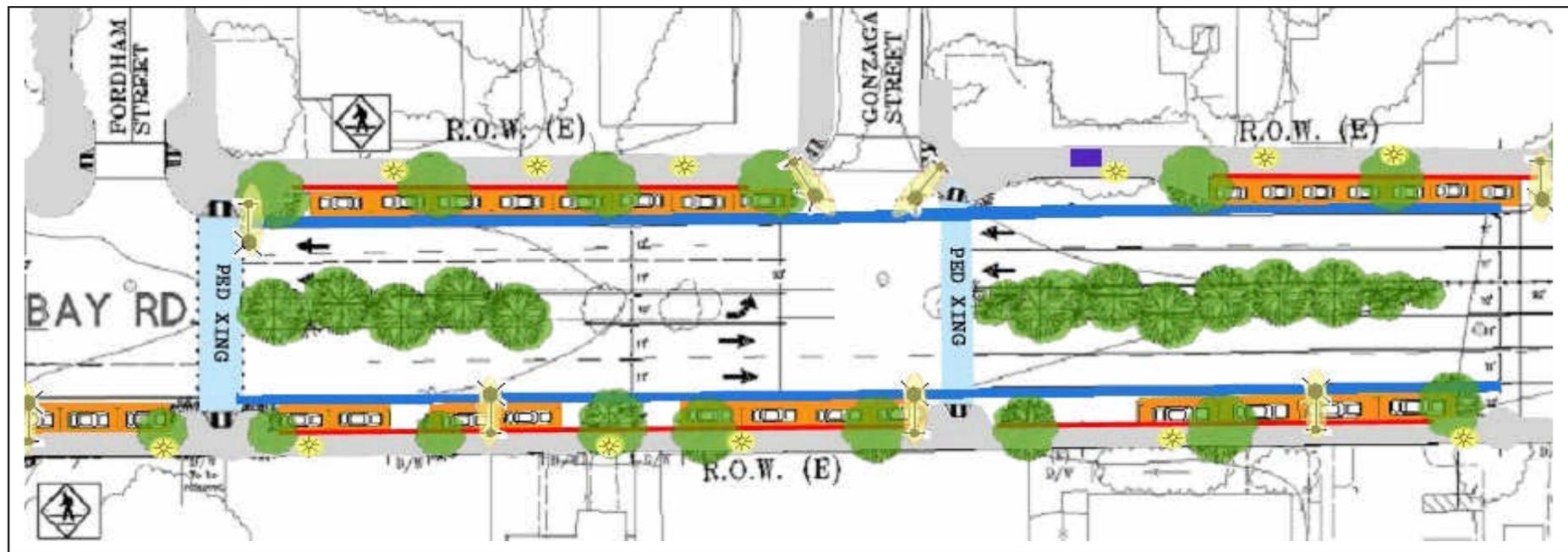
### Assembly Member Ira Ruskin

District Address  
5050 El Camino Real Ste.117  
Los Altos, CA 94022  
650 691-2121

### Senator Joseph S. Simitian

District Address  
160 Town & Country Village  
Palo Alto, CA 94301  
(650) 688-6384

# Traffic calming on Bay Road



Map 1: Bay Road Phase I, between Illinois and Fordham

**By Sean Charpentier**  
EPA Today Contributor

Illinois St. will become a safer and more attractive place to walk, ride a bicycle, take the bus, and drive. The Bay Road Phase I project (Project) will create a signature gateway for East Palo Alto by developing a tree lined boulevard that will improve the safety and experience of pedestrians, drivers, and bicyclists.

This Project supports the concepts of smart growth and livable communities by providing residents and visitors opportunities for walking, bicycling and using mass transit as viable transportation choices to basic retail and community services and amenities.

Traffic calming is important in East Palo Alto because almost 10% of East Palo Alto residents walk, ride a bike, or

take transit to work. Leaving the car at home and walking, bicycling, or taking transit to work will improve the environment by reducing smog and it will improve our physical health.

The scope of the Project consists of both sides of Bay Rd. between Illinois St. to Fordham St., and then the southern side of Bay Rd. from Fordham St. to University Ave. The northern side of Bay Rd. between Fordham Street and University Ave. will be developed when the northeastern corner of Bay Rd. and University Ave. is developed. The Project encourages non-vehicular travel by improving the walking experience and adding bus stops.

The Project will encourage walking, bicycling, and taking transit. The sidewalks will be widened to provide more room for pedestrians. Bicycle

lanes will be added on both sides of Bay Road to encourage people to ride their bicycles. It will be easier and more convenient to catch a bus at the 3 new bus shelters that will shield bus riders from the elements.

The Project increases the safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers. New traffic calming bulb outs will be added to create a sense of separation between the pedestrians and the cars, and new pavement and crosswalk striping will enhance pedestrian safety. The installation of 19 attractive new ornamental street lamps will make the street safer for walking at night. The new ADA ramps will greatly improve handicapped accessibility.

The walking, bicycling, and transit experience has to be enjoyable as well as convenient. The wider sidewalks and the new bike lanes will

encourage families to take an evening stroll or go for a bike ride. The significant new landscaping along the street, 48 new street trees, and 19 attractive new ornamental street lamps will create a boulevard that is perfect for evening strolls. Design elements such as textured asphalt and pavers will please the eye.

Drivers will also benefit from the new median landscaping, improved parking along Bay Rd., and the resealed and restriped pavement. The Project will maintain the existing lane configurations and provide better definition to the street parking spaces.

The Project is estimated to cost between \$1-\$2 million. The funding sources include the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Transportation for Livable Communities funds, Bay

Area Air Quality Management District funds, HUD funds, and local funds. The City expects to complete its bidding process this fall and begin construction by November. It is estimated that the Project will be completed by June 2008.

Everyone, from bicyclists to families out for an evening stroll, will appreciate the positive improvements of the Bay Road Phase I project. The long term goal is to have an attractive, safe, and tree-lined boulevard along Bay Rd. from University Ave. to Cooley Landing. If you have questions about this Project, please contact Kamal Fallaha at the East Palo Alto Public Works Department at (650) 853-3189.

**Sean Charpentier** serves as the Redevelopment Coordinator for the Redevelopment Agency in the City of East Palo Alto.

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# News about Menlo Park

## SPOTLIGHT ON BELLE HAVEN

This is the first in a series of articles featuring current events and other goings-on in the Belle Haven neighborhood by Menlo Park Mayor Kelly Fergusson.



Mayor Kelly Fergusson

**K**ids are back to school, and parents are breathing a sigh of relief to be back to a regular schedule. At the Belle Haven Elementary School, the "Community School" program is back too, starting its second year serving the students and parents of the Belle Haven neighborhood and beyond.

### What is a "Community School"?

A community school combines high-quality classroom teaching with a wide range of support services for students and their families. The

school site serves as the hub for these services and becomes the focus or heart of community activities, much in the way that a one-room schoolhouse or church functioned back in the days of the pioneers. Fundamentally, it is about neighbors helping neighbors, though today's services respond to the challenges faced by today's families. Services ranging from reading tutoring for English

learners, to a free "Clothes Closet" for family members, to mental health counseling, to after school enrichment activities are all part of the community school.

### How does it work?

The community school makes it easier for parents to get involved in their children's education. Parents can meet with counselors that help them overcome classroom difficulties their child might be facing. Parents receive reminder phone calls for parent-teacher conferences. Interpretation services are also available, to facilitate dialogue between parents and teachers.

Parents, and whole families, get involved in volunteering. One example is the "Clothes Closet" clothing exchange. Parents organize

the clothes and manage the center. Twice a month, parent leaders sign other parents in, share the rules of the clothing exchange with new parents, and fold and arrange the large number of clothes donated by community members.

Another example is the Second Harvest "Produce Mobile" which provides fresh produce and healthy dry grocery items to more than 150 local families to fill their unmet food needs. A hungry kid can't focus on his or her academics. Again, parent volunteers, as well as students and family center staff contribute many hours of time setting up, passing out grocery bags of food (fresh potatoes, tomatoes, spinach, oranges, pears, sweet potatoes, pasta, tortillas, beans,

and rice), and cleaning up. What a great way for some of Belle Haven's neediest families to give back to their community!

### Every kid deserves a bright future

Every kid deserves a great education and a prosperous future. At the Belle Haven Community School, that dream is closer than ever.

Together, the City of Menlo Park and the Ravenswood City School District have embarked on this exciting new endeavor. Funding is provided by the Bohannon and Stuart Foundations, and a wide range of service providers. It is managed by an arm of the Silicon Valley Community Foundation.

For more information, call (650) 330-2274 or email memintzer@menlopark.org.

# Teachers search for paychecks

By Dana Tom  
EPA Today Intern

Many eager audience members awaited their turn to express their personal concerns to the school board during the Ravenswood City School District Board meeting Thursday, October 11. The meeting started at 8 p.m. and continued for several hours.

Community members were given the open floor early in the meeting. Concerns ranged from teacher paychecks to student school transportation, but the meeting served as an open forum for many East Palo Alto and Menlo Park residents to voice

their grievances, support and suggestions, which the Board will further consider during subsequent meetings.

The community forum started when Loretta Shows a local East Palo Alto teacher, shared the personal difficulties she has had because she did not receive her salary paycheck after a summer training program in August.

Shows said that she was promised a late paycheck by the end of September, but since she never received it, and, she faced eviction from her apartment due to her lack of income.

Shows told the school board that there is a systematic problem with the teacher paychecks in the district, and

despite her ongoing efforts to get her check from the school district, she has yet to receive anything.

"I just want to know the issue, and what's being done about it," Shows said. "We teach our kids to be accountable and responsible, so what is our school district shadowing?"

Aaron Williamson, who is also a teacher in the district, spoke more generally about how many teachers are being forced to track down their paychecks and are often offered little to no assistance.

Williamson said the district has lacked compassion as teachers search for their paychecks through the district's system, even though the loss

of teacher paychecks is claimed to be accidental by the district.

"No one's helping, no one's apologizing," he said. School board members said they would take the issue under consideration.

Danny Thompson also spoke at the meeting and addressed the issue of the tardiness of the Sequoia Union School District buses, which are responsible for transporting East Palo Alto students to their respective schools in the Sequoia Union School District. Thompson said that the buses are arriving late to pick students up for school, so the students are arriving late to school. He said that this is creating a sit-

uation that is affecting their overall academic performance.

"We are still accountable, even though we are not responsible," he said. Thompson posed several questions for the board and the audience to consider, including potential solutions, such as not traveling during traffic hours, using video communication to keep students informed of what they miss in class, and discussing the issue with the students for student opinions and suggestions.

Lastly, several high school students from Willow Oaks School talked about a teacher at their school being

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# Changes at the Ravenswood City School District

By Kaara Baptiste  
EPA Today Contributor

Ravenswood began the 2007-2008 school year much like many a school year starts: with new faces, renewed energy and high expectations.

At three school sites, eager students were welcomed by their new principals:

Maria Ibarra, former Director of Human Resources at the District, at Belle Haven Community School;

Jonathon Stokes, a former principal in the West Contra Costa School District, who has taken the helm at Willow

Oaks Elementary; and Green Oaks Academy welcomed Elyse Belanger, a teacher with 15 years experience, to its campus.

Meanwhile, at the District office, new faces abound as well. In addition to new Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, Adam Escoto, there is a new Director of Human Resources, James Lovelace. Carla Torres is the English Language Development Coordinator and Ching-Pei Hu now serves as Literacy Coordinator. The District Nurse is now Catherine van Buren.

Ravenswood welcomes its

new staff members to the District and looks forward to their contributions to a team dedicated to providing a quality learning experience to the District's students.

Other new developments for the 2007-2008 school year:

**New website:** The District's website has a new look for the new school year! The new site is organized to better serve as a tool for improving communication between the district, parents, students, staff and other members of the Ravenswood community. "We are always looking for ways to establish more open communication with the com-

munity," said Superintendent Maria De La Vega. The site posts Board meeting agendas, the district calendar, newsletters and more. New features will be added over time, including Spanish, Samoan and Tongan translations. Take a look today at [www.ravenswood.k12.ca.us](http://www.ravenswood.k12.ca.us)

**Expanded Counseling Services:** Funding from Assembly Bill 1802-the Middle and High School Supplemental Counseling Program-will eventually allow Ravenswood's Counseling Program to review the academic and conduct files for every 7th and 8th grader in the District. For this first year,

counselors will focus on current 7th graders who scored "Far Below Basic" on the 2007 California Standardized Test (CST). Ravenswood hopes the counseling will better students' successful transition to high school and beyond. "Our goals for the program are to increase both academic achievement and college awareness, and to better prepare our students for high academic achievement in high school," says Sara Grace Johnson, Ravenswood's Counseling Services Coordinator.

### Class-size reduction:

continued on page 11

## From the Editor's Desk

### Critical Issues for East Palo Alto

In this issue of East Palo Alto Today, we have given considerable space to the 2006-2007 San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury Reports, and we strongly suggest that our readers get the reports and read them. Not only are they interesting reading, but they discuss issues that are critical to the future of East Palo Alto. The first report, dealing with Electronic Communication Among City Officials, focuses on the public's right to know about what is going on in city government.



behalf is not a difficult task. Council meeting can also be watched online at [www.communitymediacenter.net](http://www.communitymediacenter.net).

The Grand Jury reports can be viewed on the San Mateo County Governments web site at [www.co.sanmateo.ca.us](http://www.co.sanmateo.ca.us).

It is written on the county's web site that "The San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury is an independent investigative body created by the California State Constitution. Composed of nineteen citizens, the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury serves as a "watchdog for citizens of the county."

The second report, dealing with Emergency Planning for Dam or Levee Failures in San Mateo County, goes to the very heart of safety in the East Palo Alto community.

The third report, dealing with Building in East Palo Alto, concentrates on the very structure of the city and whether there are the proper checks and balances in place that would "equitably regulate the approval of building permits in the city."

Having the proper rules, regulations and structures in place would go along way toward protecting citizens' rights, their safety and their need to have their city government operate without questionable irregularities.

If you'd like to keep informed about what is being recommended for the city and the city council's response to the recommendations, then it is now easy to read the reports and follow the city council meetings.

Since the meetings are also televised and repeated, several times a week, it's hard now to say, "It's difficult to keep up, since I missed the last city council meeting." Keeping up with the decisions that council members are making on the public's

It's good that the county has citizens who are impaneled to monitor government, but residents might be wise to become individual monitors themselves.

The idea of individual monitors brings to mind the recommendation that was made in a previous East Palo Alto City Council meeting that the East Palo Alto Police Department would benefit by having a Civilian Review Board, which would monitor the activities of the police.

In that council meeting, it was said that the city had such a body years ago. Is it time to create a similar organization now?

You can see what some of your neighbors think about the idea in the Opinion section of the paper which is on the next page in this issue.

We'd also like to know what you think. You can share your views by going to EPA Today's web site [www.epatoday.org](http://www.epatoday.org) and clicking on the link that says EPA Today's Online Blogs. You will also see the question on our homepage as the Local Issue of Concern.

You'll also find other questions to which you can respond, sharing your views about what you think is good for the community.



Photo courtesy of Dorothy Farrell

This picture shows some of the East Palo Alto seniors who visited Allensworth State Historical Park in Allensworth, CA, a town that was founded in 1908 by a former slave. See story on page 1 in this issue of East Palo Alto Today.

## Letters in East Palo Alto Today

### Children's Health Bill

Dear Editor  
President Bush just rejected children's health care. If we can get 2/3 of Congress to stand up to President Bush, we can overturn his veto on the State Children's Health Insurance Program -- a program that provides health insurance for millions of kids.  
Join me and help to get those votes.  
You can use a simple tool that will allow you to write a letter and send it to your Representatives instantly. Send your Senators and Representative a message telling them to stand up to George Bush:

<http://www.democrats.org/FightForChildren>

Thanks,  
Eva Cuffy

[Editor's note: House Democrats were unable Thursday, Oct. 18, to override President Bush's veto of their effort to expand a popular government health insurance program to cover 10 million children.

The bill, which had bipartisan support, was 13 votes short (273-156), of the two-thirds that the bill's supporters needed to enact the bill into law over Bush's objections. The bill had passed the Senate.]

### Robbing Peter to Pay Paul

The following comment was taken from the EPA Today Online Blog.

In answer to the question: Should the East Palo Alto City Council take money that it had planned to give to other city funded programs and give to the boxing program, one resident who wished to be anonymous wrote:

"I do not feel the Council should take from these other programs. What avenues has Mr. Gray pursued? Perhaps focusing more on establishing a board of directors which could greatly assist with funding, and connecting with boxing programs in other cities to see how they have done it, might be something Mr. Gray should look into for funding of his program.

I understand he was a Golden Gloves champion, and I wonder if there is possible funding from that national organization or others like it. What about grants? I really do feel that people need to stop expecting the City to bail them out when they run into funding problems. Everybody wants to help the youth, but there's

only so much money to go around. Make it happen yourself, Mr. Gray."

Anonymous,  
October 11, 2007

### Paid sick days

Dear Editor:

Tell Congress that working women need paid sick days.

Currently, there are no state or federal laws that require workplaces to provide paid sick days. In fact, half of our nation's workers don't have a single paid sick day. But the Healthy Families Act would provide a guarantee of seven paid sick days a year to full-time employees -- to help them get well or to care for a sick loved one.

In a country that prides itself on family values, we need to do a better job of valuing our families. Join me in telling Congress to support the Healthy Families Act now.

<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/takeaction/115192162?z00m=10585789>

Sincerely,  
Natasha  
Care2 and the  
National Partnership for  
Women & Families

## East Palo Alto Today

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## EPA Today's Policies & Principles

In order to better serve the communities of East Palo Alto and Belle Haven, East Palo Alto Today has made the commitment to operate with high professional standards and to adhere to a strict code of ethical conduct. The principles and policies stated

herein serve as an agreement with our readers, advertisers and all others within our service area.

East Palo Alto Today is dedicated to conscientious journalism. We maintain this commitment by seeking and reporting the truth, acting with integrity, and serving the pub-

lic interest. We will report the news thoroughly and accurately and include multiple perspectives without favoring one over another.

We will hold ourselves accountable to common standards of decency, treating our colleagues, news sources, and the public with respect.

# Opinion

The ideas expressed on this page are solely the views of the individual authors who do not represent East Palo Alto Today's Board, management or staff.

San Mateo County Sheriff's Office  
400 County Center  
Redwood City, CA 94063  
Attention: Honorable Sheriff Greg Munks

Dear Mr. Munks

Sir, please allow me a few moments to introduce myself. I hope that I can be an encouragement to those that are looking for another way of life. My history goes back as far as Jan. 14, 1975 when I became Judge, and Jury. My thinking was to eliminate the witness, and the accused would go free. The accused was my brother, and I was the eliminator.

From that day forward I've either been on high risk parole or high risk probation with a history of violence, neglect for law enforcement,

assaults, robbery, drug usage, unhealthy friendships, and relationships. Please understand that I come from law abiding parents.

I chose to live the lifestyle that I was living because I thought my second choice wasn't as exciting. It wasn't until 1997 that the Parole Dept. decided to mandate me to a treatment program for drugs and alcohol. The beginning stages were my most difficult stages because it wasn't my choice to begin with.

To go from a traveling speed of 65mph to 25mph, it's only natural to hear the screaming sounds of my brakes. I resisted change, and the thought of giving up what I thought was my control.

Upon completion of the treatment program I dove into a relationship taking charge

of my life or so I thought. Shortly thereafter I was facing domestic violence charges, and the possibility of three strikes.

In the moments of my wandering the hallways of your facility I met Mrs. Shirley Lamar who asked if I was familiar and interested in the Choices Program. I politely declined her offer for the magnitude of my situation and behavior had not surfaced in the waters of my insanity. I was sentenced to one year in the county jail, and three years probation. Upon my release I went back to my marriage situation ignoring the advice of others even law officials.

Yes, within a few months, I'm arrested once again for domestic violence. Now I'm facing 40 years to life, without any bargaining options. Looking for Mrs. Shirley

Lamar is an understatement. The waters of insanity are quickly clearing to the tide of reality.

I could not understand why no one would listen to me, and I had not accepted my responsibility in this matter at this point. Fourteen months of Choices, and One Jury Trial has made the definition of the word miracle *miraculous*. I was found not guilty on all charges; needless to say probation wanted a seven month commitment to the Dept. of Corrections as a violation.

My devices are now weighing my options. Because the Choices Program is telling me I need a two year commitment to Delancey Street. Well, after completion from Delancey Street in 2003, I'm now a home owner, husband, father, actively connected to my church, actively connect-

ed to my community, actively connected to the Choices Alumni Group, actively connected to Prison Ministry, actively connected with the working classes, Trustee, Laymen President, and Promotional Director in my church.

My beginnings came when I allowed others to inform me of the things I couldn't and refused to see about myself. I was a walking Billboard for recidivism, now I'm a standing voice against the revolving door. I'm more than grateful and willing to give back all I can to Mrs. Shirley Lamar, and those that are willing to protect and serve. I hope that I can be an encouragement to those that are looking for another way of life.

Sincerely,  
Kenneth B. Williams

## Repairing the dams and the levees

By Dennis Parker  
EPA Today Contributor

The San Mateo County Grand Jury issued a summary of emergency planning (or lack thereof) for dam and levee failures in the county.

They set out to determine what improvements could be made to assure public safety in the event of a dam or levee failure. Most of the discussions were about the 12 high-risk dams in the county, because there is so little information available about levees.

But at least four levees



between Brisbane and East Palo Alto are shown on a recent FEMA map as uncertified to withstand a hundred-year flood event. "Failure of certain of these structures could threaten the lives of many thousands of county residents," the report says. The report is attached to this

message.

NOTE: The term "one hundred-year flood" conveys the impression that you won't be flooded for a hundred years, when the truth is that you are just as likely to be flooded tomorrow as you would 100 years from today.

The term is used to describe an event that has a 1-in-100 chance of happening in any given year. When you do the math, there is a 65% chance that there will be a "100-year flood" in 100 years.

You should not confuse this work with the emergency repairs

that were just completed on the San Francisquito Creek adjacent to East Palo Alto. The emergency repairs were to address an imminent threat caused by severe erosion and burrowing animals that could have caused the levee to fail by the next rainy season.

The Grand Jury study acknowledges that methods are in place to notify citizens of a levee failure emergency, but information about dams and levees is needed both for planning and to ensure timely warning in emergencies.

This information is not readily

available to the Office of Emergency Services/ Office of Homeland Security (OES/HS). This includes the lack of an Emergency Act-ions Plan (EAP) prepared by dam and levee operators, and inadequate information about the structural integrity of the county's dams and levees.

In addition to stressing the need for preparing emergency plans, the grand jury also recommended dam and levee owners to participate in county-wide mock disaster drills.

You can see the San Mateo

continued on page

## Community viewpoints heard on the streets

Does East Palo Alto need a civilian review board to monitor police activities?



Carolina McMorrow

"I actually do not think it's a good idea, especially in the city because there is a lot of racial discrimination.

Somebody could make a false complaint. But I guess if enough people complain about something, then it could be effective."

-Carolina McMorrow, EPA resident



-Roman Garcia

"I don't have a problem with the police, but I think it's a good idea and the board can only help the city."

-Roman Garcia, EPA resident



Alejandro Ramirez

"It's a good idea. The neighborhood in East Palo Alto is not all together.

Now we have more opportunities to report suspicious things."

-Alejandro Ramirez, EPA resident



Manghoba Shibambo

"The Board is definitely necessary because cops can violate people's rights because they are above the law. I think it will make a difference for the innocent people accused of crimes. Every city should have something like this because it's always good to have a checks and balance system with the Police Department. Although the cops have been really good to me, there still needs to be someone checking them out."

-Manghoba Shibambo, 17



Marilyn Scott,

"The more checks the better. That's what our government is made of, checks and balances. Now, it does depend what residents are on the Board. However, I've always had good relations with the police."

-Marilyn Scott, EPA resident of 30 years