

The Ranchos Independent



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Flatlander's Issue 2008

The Official Publication of Southeastern Madera County

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FLATLANDER'S DAY 2008

The 17th Annual Parade and Craft Show
Shines on the Madera Ranchos
Again ...



File Photos by Bill Whyman

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To Bypass or *Not* to Bypass: Future of Ave. 12 Uncertain

County Still Giving Say To Ranchos Community

By Ranchos Independent Staff

Several weeks ago, representatives of Madera County visited the offices of the Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce, and they came bearing gifts. One of these gifts came in the form of a conceptual plan that detailed a "bypass" of major cross-county traffic around the "downtown" Ranchos area on Ave. 12 between Roads 38 and 36. This visit from the county triggered some real interest among many community members, and this interest led to several meetings to discuss the alternatives for the future of Ave. 12 in the vicinity of the Madera Ranchos.

To the county's credit, they let it be known that they have no definitive plans for what Ave. 12 will look like in the future. They have made it known that the county wants to have significant input from the Ranchos community before final plans are decided.

In anticipation of county wide growth and the need to upgrade road capacity on several county-wide roads, Madera County has begun a process that will lead to these future road improvements. At recent Madera County Planning Commission meetings, certain county roadways, including Ave. 12, have received new "expressway" designations that will ultimately lead to the need for additional lanes to handle the anticipated growth in traffic. At a minimum, there is a future need for four travel lanes along Ave. 12. The Planning Commission has already adopted the four-lane configuration from Hwy. 41 west to Road 38, and from Hwy. 99 east to Road 36. The Planning Commission specifically left out the two mile stretch of Ave. 12 between Road 36 and Road 38, pending feedback from the Ranchos community.

What Madera County specifically wants to

know from the Ranchos community is this: 1) Does the community want to add two more travel lanes on Ave. 12 on the existing alignment between Road 36 and Road 38, or 2) Does the community want the county to construct a bypass around the Ranchos for major through traffic, and create a two-lane "main street" in the center of the Ranchos? These are the two alternatives. The Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce has attempted to act as a liaison between the county and the community in an effort to educate the community on the alternatives and to develop the consensus that the county desires before moving forward.

As part of this education process, Charley Clouse of TPG Consulting has donated time and

Madera County traffic model suggests that a majority of traffic currently using Ave. 12 would opt for the bypass rather than traveling through the "center of town." However, the bypass is designed in a way that would allow for traffic to easily transition back onto Ave. 12, if that route was desired. A bypass would allow through-traffic to travel at relatively high speed across Ave. 12, thereby providing an opportunity to slow-down traffic on the remaining two lanes through town. Construction of a bypass could also provide opportunities for additional curbside parking and pedestrian crossings in the "downtown" area.

TPG Consulting has agreed to continue to assist the Chamber of Commerce in making this information

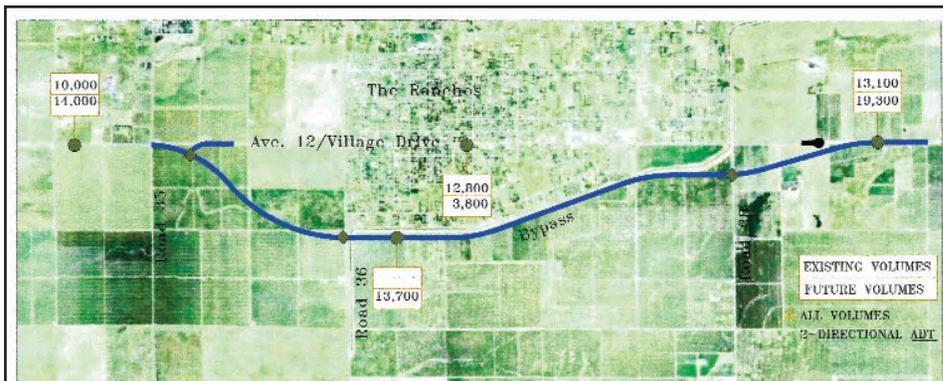
available to the public, and to attend upcoming meetings to help explain the future results that can be expected from each alternative.

Madera County staff has stated that there are currently funds available for these contemplated improvements to Ave. 12. For this reason, the county is anxious to hear from the Ranchos community as to the community's consensus. County staff

has further suggested that there will be funding available to improve Ave. 12, even if a bypass is constructed.

At present, there are no new community meetings scheduled to discuss Ave. 12. However, there will be additional meetings scheduled on this topic prior to the time that the county undertakes final planning. Both representatives of the county and TPG consulting have agreed to continue to assist the community in this decision making process. We encourage you to attend these upcoming meetings, to learn about the proposed alternatives and to voice your opinion. Please watch for future announcements.

If you have any questions regarding the planned improvements to Ave. 12, or would like to voice your opinion on the alternatives, please contact the Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce at 645-4001 or the Ranchos Independent at 645-0634.



The only option for Ave. 12 other than expanding it to four lanes is a bypass similar to the one depicted here. Traffic counts show that of nearly 13,000 vehicles that pass through the Ranchos daily, fewer than 4,000 actually stop. Nearly 10,000 drivers daily are using Ave. 12 as nothing more than an expressway to get from Hwy. 41 to Hwy. 99 and back again.

Map Courtesy of TPG Consulting

design work to help the community better understand the impact of the two alternatives. TPG Consulting is currently under contract with the Madera County Transportation Commission (MCTC) to conduct trip count analyses on various county roads. While performing this work for the MCTC, TPG has also recently collected trip count data along Ave. 12.

Recent data shows that there currently are 10,000 average daily trips (ADT) per day on Ave. 12 west of Road 36, 12,800 ADT on Ave. 12 at Road 37, and 13,100 ADT on Ave. 12 east of Road 38. This data suggests that the majority of daily traffic on Ave. 12 is passing through the Ranchos without stopping.

In addition, TPG has designed a conceptual routing of a potential bypass to the south of the Ranchos between Road 38 and Road 36. The

Berms Say "Bye Bye," Hello Lights!

By Pete Petersen

Installation of football field lighting at Liberty High School began on March 10. The first thing done was to lower the berm where the new lights will be on the home side of the football field. There will

be four new 90-foot tall stadium light poles with 15 lights on each pole and there will be two light poles on each side of the football field. Future emergency lighting will also be installed at this time

Please see **LIGHTS** on P. 16



Looking southeast, the berm is gone to make way for new lights for next year's football season.

Future Looks Murky For Ranchos Water

By Christi McKinney

Residents and businesses in the heart of the Madera Ranchos were surprised to find they had very low water pressure over the very warm weekend of April 12. The Pizza Factory, located in the heart of the Ranchos, was unable to operate and had to close their doors on Sunday, April 13.

"The problem was a result of routine maintenance which happened to occur on the first warm day of the season when usage had spiked," said Brett Richards, manager of the Special Water District. "Normally if there is a problem we receive a lot of calls, however only one report was received over the weekend. We hadn't heard of other incidents until the following week."

However, Hal Parks, owner of the Pizza Factory, is very concerned with ongoing water system issues. "The pressure is so low every morning when people are getting ready for work that we can't even use the dishwasher."

This particular water system, Maintenance District 10A, Madera Ranchos, was taken over by Madera County in 1996. There are a total of five wells in the district, specifically Sparta, which is permanently shut down because it tested high in Nitrates and "Gross Alphas" which are radioactive particles that occur in nature but can be cancerous in high concentrations; Fernwood, which tested positive for bacteriological contaminants, meaning chlorination of the system is required only if the Fernwood well is pressed into use during peak summer use periods. It also has problems with sand making it difficult to get clean water; Fender; New Fender; and Charlton. Construction is expected to begin on a new Kennsington well in the coming months.

Madera County Engineering Department routinely monitors for contaminants in the drinking water as required by both State and Federal laws. Consumer Confidence Reports are prepared annually and delivered to all residents on the various systems and these reports are available at www.madera-county.com/engineering/districts/index.html. Reports for 2007 will be posted in July.

Ranchos resident Lewis Forbes experienced problems with his water over the same weekend but was pleased to find

Please see **WATER** on P. 16

Madera Ranchos Volunteer Firefighters Stretched to the Breaking Point

By Christi McKinney

Despite tremendous growth in the Madera Ranchos, the Madera County Fire Department remains shockingly understaffed. While new homes have sprouted up everywhere, staffing levels for Station 19 in the Bonadelle Ranchos have not increased in over 20 years. The station is staffed with only one paid firefighter position and supplemented by trained volunteers. Under these conditions, there are serious concerns it may be unable to adequately respond to a large accident or fire or several incidents that might happen at

the same time.

Statistics provided by Station 19 Fire Captain Tom Shevenell indicate Station 19 responds to over 600 incidents per year. Fifty percent of these incidents are for medical assistance and 33 percent are for assisting other stations. On average, two volunteers respond to an incident, however Shevenell said, "The fact of the matter is that 33 percent of all incidents have no response from volunteers, leaving one paid firefighter to respond. All that is guaranteed is one firefighter and one engine, within 15 minutes."

Volunteers are essential to the opera-

tion of the station, however most work full time jobs, commute to those jobs and aren't always available. Volunteers respond to medical aid calls, accidents and fires within the area of Highway 145 to Road 39 1/2 to the San Joaquin River and to the railroad tracks. When needed, additional firefighters are dispatched from Station 9 in the Rolling Hills/Valley Children's area or from Station 1 at the Madera County Center.

Many volunteers have passed through Station 19 since it was established in 1974, however most leave to seek work in a paid capacity at other fire departments through-

out the Valley once they've obtained the required training. Volunteers are actually paid a flat rate of approximately \$10 per hour for fire calls and vehicle accidents only with no benefits. For all other calls, training and meetings, the Volunteers receive no compensation. It all amounts to just enough to cover gas and mileage if they're lucky.

In 1999 OSHA Staffing Policies required that firefighters enter serious building fires in teams of two while two more firefighters are outside and in constant

Please see **FIRE** on P. 11



The North Fork Rancheria Project An Economic Stimulus Package that Works for Madera and the San Joaquin Valley

Jobs and Career Opportunity

- 4,250 permanent, temporary construction, and spin-off jobs
- Great salaries and benefits - *nearly three times the current local average*
- A career opportunity ladder offering diverse, permanent, well-paying positions

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- \$45-50 million annual goods and services purchased - *much of it locally*
- Increased local tourism, hospitality, and entertainment through the creation of a regional destination marketplace at the gateway to the Sierras and Yosemite and Kings Canyon/Sequoia National Parks

Community Investment

- \$5 million annually to the County of Madera, City of Madera, City of Chowchilla, and local communities to fund public safety, infrastructure, schools, parks, housing, economic development and local charities

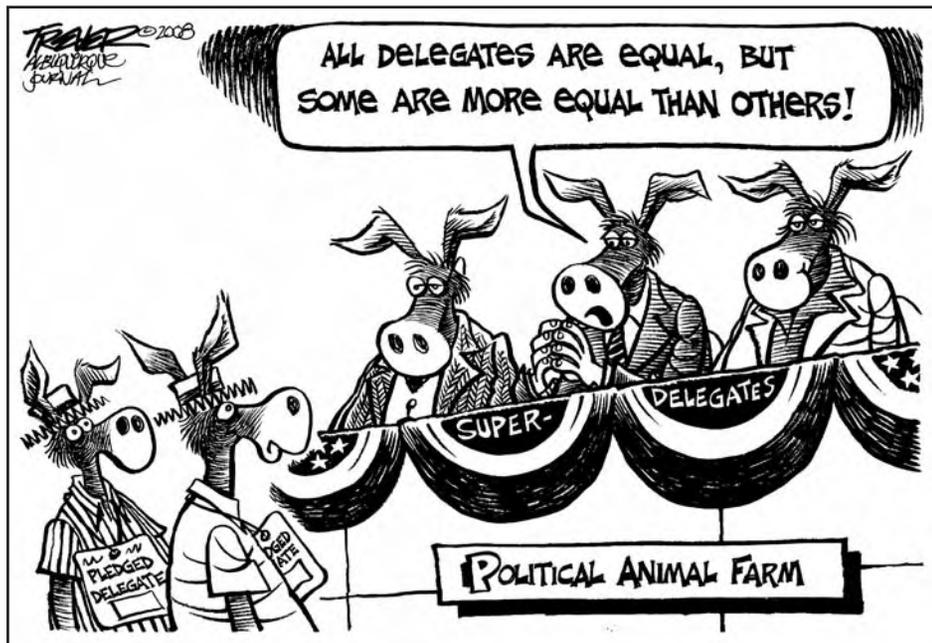
Overall Benefits

- \$100 million per year in local economic benefits (\$277,000 per day!)
- Annual payroll and benefits of \$50-60 million a year
- Privately funded, environmentally clean, non-seasonal jobs
- A commitment to the community to mitigate significant project impacts and build a better quality of life and stronger social fabric for all citizens of Madera



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The Ranchos Independent

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Editorial

Bypass Me!

By Randy Bailey

I think it's time to make a decision. To pick a side. To finally stand up and say I'm going *this* way and not *that* way.

I want an Avenue 12 bypass.

When I saw the map produced by TPG Consulting that showed actual traffic counts for our little main street here in the Ranchos, I knew it was time.

According to the traffic analysis done by Charley Clouse of the aforementioned TPG Consulting, the people stopping on Avenue 12 on an average given day comprise about one third of the population of the Ranchos.

That's it.

There aren't thousands of eager shoppers anxiously waiting to park their cars and shop for groceries or eat a great breakfast. Seventy-five percent of them just shoot right on by. And they'd shoot right on by at 70 miles per hour if all of those stupid Ranchos people would just get out of their way!

The research shows that on an average day we have approximately 13,000 drivers coming into one side of the Ranchos and about 10,000 drivers exiting the other side. I'm no math whiz, but this one seems pretty easy to me. About 3,000 travellers each day (OK - it's US ... and a few stragglers mixed in every so often) are using all of the wonderful things that the Ranchos have to offer.

Too bad. Their loss.

But now knowing that, I'm ready to do something about it.

Call me crazy (as if several of you don't al-

ready), but I can envision an Avenue 12 running through the Madera Ranchos that looks like ... dare I say it ... Carmel? Yeah, I know we're kind of missing that whole "ocean" thing, but what I'm talking about is the *feel* of Carmel. The feel of Davis by the University. San Luis Obispo. Old Town Sacramento.

What I'm talking about is if we get rid of the people who view the Ranchos as a hindrance in their quest to either get to Highway 41 or Highway 99, then we can make the Ranchos what we've always wanted it to be - a nice, peaceful little community where you'd be happy to raise your kids.

Move the Speed Racers over to a bypass and let us transform Avenue 12 into a meandering thoroughfare with sidewalk cafes and shops. Slow the traffic down to a crawl so you could actually get across the street if you wanted a pizza or a sandwich. Make the Ranchos a "destination" for people looking to get away from Fresno or Clovis or Madera for a little while. It's completely do-able.

The best part of this is if you're one of those people who wants to speed out of the Ranchos, no problem! Drive a few blocks over to the south and have at it. Go east, go west ... heck, go 70 miles an hour! You will not have lost a thing, but what everyone else will gain will be awesome.

There is no reason why there couldn't be outdoor concerts in such an area or art shows or collectors events or flea markets or car shows ... the list goes on and on. But none of those things really make a whole lot of sense with cars whizzing by - illegally passing on the right because they might be slowed down by 30 seconds - prohibiting people from turning into any of those venues or from walking across the street for some coffee and a cigar in the open night air.

Well there it is. I've made my stand.

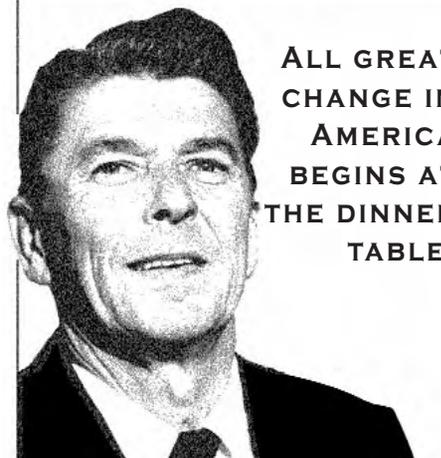
Yes to the bypass.

No to building four lanes down the middle of Avenue 12. And then six. And then ...

The County of Madera is being very reasonable about the future of our community. I sincerely believe they want our input and want to work with us on this one. BUT they need to hear from us. From ALL of us. Not only those of us who live and work on Avenue 12, but everyone in the Ranchos. Think of how your community can look. Think about what it can become. Contact the Chamber of Commerce and let them know what you think and it will all get passed on to the County.

Make no mistake about it - Avenue 12 is going to change in the future. The only question is will we be responsible for that change or will someone else force their change upon us?

THE RAY GUN SHOOTING STRAIGHT TO THE HEART



ALL GREAT CHANGE IN AMERICA BEGINS AT THE DINNER TABLE.

RONALD REAGAN
 SAYING MORE IN ONE QUOTE THAN OTHERS SAY IN A LIFETIME

THE D.O.G. HOUSE

DEMAND OPEN GOVERNMENT BY DALE DROZEN



Road Impact Fee - I am having a real hard time understanding the logic in the distribution of the road impact fees collections (you need to either laugh or sit down and cry). I would imagine the county response will be "you just don't understand our record keeping system." That has been the standard response every time the Grand Jury uncovered waste and total incompetence. I shudder to think about how much was spent on this "STUDY" with the forgone conclusion that the elevator belongs in the Valley and the shaft is properly located in the foothills. I stand here waiting for the elevator with my pockets turned inside out.

The "STUDY" seems to have reached the required conclusion that there are no existing problems or shortfalls in our road system. Everything is as it should be for the population and use that we have. (Tell that to the families of those killed or injured on our perfect roads)

Any problem discovered in the future will have been caused by the addition of the homes that are being required to pay the new fees. (Wink-wink)

The "STUDY" concluded that it costs more to build roads in the mountains so residents of Oakhurst building a single house are being asked to pay \$10,480 in road fees while the same house being built in the "rural 99" area are asked to pay \$255. That is over 40 times as much. (Big Grin)

Madera City and Chowchilla City both declined to participate in the program, instead just focusing on their own area. A house built in either city will pay nothing toward their impact on the county road system. (LOL)

The justification for the cost difference is that it costs more to build roads in the mountains. (How many overpasses are planed for Oakhurst?)

The justification for the cities paying nothing is because they have that option. (More uproarious laughter from the city dweller)

Here is where I am losing my way in the argument - For many years the lion's share of the road money has gone to the Valley. We have dumped the vast majority of general fund, Measure "A," Measure "T" and "Prop 1B" into the Valley and the area in and around the City because that is the greatest need. The 2007-2008 "Prop 1B" plan puts \$3,436,000 in the Valley and only \$335,000 (less than 10 percent) into the mountain district. The 2007-2008 Madera Transportation Authority Allocation (Measure T) puts 29 percent to the county, 24 percent to the cities and 47 percent to the MCTC impound fund (which is code for projects in and around the cities - mostly Highway 99 overpasses).

If roads in the mountains cost so much more, why have we gotten so little in the past?

I keep hearing that the majority of the growth has taken place in or around the cities so that is where the money is needed. Why is it when it is time to spend the money, the cities are in front of the line but when it is time to pay we in the foothills are standing there all alone? My concern now is that all of this money will be collected from the foothills and a greater need will be discovered in the Valley, such as a new Highway 65 to serve Fresno, Clovis or a new four lane expressway through the Ranchos on Ave. 12.

I have been going through the Fire Mitigation Fund where millions were collected. The law requires it to be spent only on new infrastructure expansion directly related to and caused by the development that was required to pay the fees, but that simply did not happen! It became a slush fund used when and where our Board wanted to use it. My biggest surprise was that nobody with the power to hold them accountable cares how it was spent.

I can only assume that the same will be true of the new mitigation fees.

I hear that there is this thing called a "ballot initiative." It sounds like we could vote a new law in that requires any county wide fee to be collected on an equal basis, whether it's for roads, fire, flood, parks, general government, public protection or solid waste. I guess that we could also require that it be distributed to the areas that were assessed the fee in the first place.

Your money well spent - I am afraid the Grand Jury missed the pea in this shell game. It is called misdirection. MD-95 isn't the problem. While all of the interest is on MD-95, all of the other areas are sitting there fat, dumb and happy with no idea that a lot of the money they have been paying has been wasted through in-

Please see **D.O.G.** on P. 6

Random Notes

Who knows what time it is? Did you say FLATLANDER'S time? For the 17th year, the Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Ranchos Library are bringing us the Flatlander's Day Parade and Craft Fair. Saturday morning, May 10, the parade will start at 10 a.m. on Avenue 12 at Topper and run all the way to Kensington. Two hours earlier at 8 a.m., the craft fair at Maywood Center will begin. What a great time to get out of the house, watch a genuine, old fashioned, Main Street U.S.A. parade and then do a little Mother's Day shopping while pigging out on all the food being offered from all of the different groups. How does it get any better? Add to this KMJ 580 will have its Traveling Road Show motorhome in attendance with Radio Trade-i-o host Craig Hansen broadcasting live from the event and it's a scene, baby! I hope to see all of you there. I'll be the guy directing traffic in the empty lot at the end of parade (most likely with a cigar in my mouth).



Next week on May 14, there's going to be a very special visit paid the Ranchos courtesy of the Chamber of Commerce. The Partnership for Prescription Assistance is bringing its "Help is Here Express" to the Chamber office at 37167 Ave. 12 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. If you're struggling to pay for the medications your doctor is prescribing, the PPA has a program that provides FREE (or nearly free) prescription medicines just for you. The Express has computer terminals and mobile phones to help you see if you're eligible and specialists onboard to help with application process. It's great to know that in a time when everything else seems to be costing more, here's a program that can make your medicine cost NOTHING! Call the Chamber at 645-4001 for more info.

If you're a motorcycle rider and you've got a genuine good streak running through you, you can join the One Nation Under God motorcycle

group for their annual "Ride for the Cure" event on Saturday, June 7. This group of heavenly bikers raise money to fight cancer in kids and would love to have you join them. There's a small entrance fee but you get breakfast, a T-shirt and a three-hour ride that ends up at Valley Children's where a check from ALL of the proceeds will be delivered. For more info call Sue Shaw at 645-0199 or 232-3464.



You probably already know that the Annual Station 19 FIRE-B-Q is coming up Aug. 16 at Cobb's Ranch and that it's their biggest fundraiser of the year, but did you know that they don't CALL YOU about to

solicit money? It appears that a couple of people in the Ranchos have received calls from someone claiming to represent the firefighters seeking a donation but Station 19 wants you to know - IT'S NOT THEM! Volunteer Captain Chuck Hoover said he doesn't know if this is an isolated incident or two, or the start of some scam, but just know that Station 19 does NOT make phone calls seeking donations. Hoover said a call to the Sheriff is in order if you get such a call.

Have you got some little ones who want to be the next Joe Montana? Ranchos Youth Hawks Football is going to be at the Flatlander's Day Parade and have a booth at Maywood Center where your budding Peyton Manning can sign up at a GREATLY REDUCED PRICE! You'll save \$25 per child by signing up early at their booth. It's for ages 8 through 14 so get 'em signed up. Hut hut!

I mentioned in last month's paper about Michael Delfin, the teenager from the Ranchos who plays the piano like a maestro. He was recently on KVPR, the Valley's public radio station, playing LIVE in the studio and he was amazing. I got an email from his family saying that he's now won the 2008 Music Teacher's Association of California Composition Contest and was just named a Young Artist's Guild member. If you appreciate classical music, Michael is going places. Remember his name and where he comes from. Beautiful music!



competence and mismanagement over the years. Not to mention the millions from the general fund they have used to cover up the mess by subsidization the districts. I challenge the Grand Jury to look into any two other maintenance Districts. You pick them and see what you discover. The cost of Special Districts has doubled in recent years. It might be interesting to see how all of that money was used and how much better each of the districts are doing now that we have thrown the extra money at them.

Not to worry – we have a \$40 million “Granite Palace” government center that impresses all that visit it.

The new fire station/sheriff substation may top \$10 million. Last year when I saw the landscape plan and the budget for Indian Lakes Station 8, I lost it. I went to the Board and protested. The Board put a hold on the money and ordered that I meet with two of the supervisors and representatives from RMA and Fire to work out the issues. We met and not one of the representatives was willing to defend the landscape plan. As a compromise for spending thousands on the plan, it was decided among other things that the landscaping would become a “demonstration garden” for how someone could landscape to be fire safe and conserve water in our area. What happened was very little was changed and now the station has more lawn than homes in the area – many on water rationing much of the year – and the money to complete the project was spent without the funds being released by the Board.

Look at any project our county has undertaken, whether it's the new animal shelter, Station 8, Oakhurst fire/Sheriff substation or Ahwahanee Hills Park, for example. You pick 'em. They are over budget and a mess from beginning to end.

The Board gave direction to have a project manager: one person where the buck stops. That system does not help if you call someone a project manager and then put them in charge of all projects. We are back to one dropped ball after another.

I made one of my impassioned speeches about how the Board needed to fight to have the Essential Services Act repealed or at least cut back to what the original intention was. I was quickly jumped on by one of the supervisors telling me they were already doing all that was possible. I made a public records request for all board letters or resolutions in opposition to or advocating changes in the law. What I got was

NOTHING! NOT ONE SINGLE official act was taken in the cause ... EVER.

My point is – The problem is not with our government workers, it is with our Board that leads them. The Board gives direction that is not followed up and seldom carried out as intended. They ignore state and federal laws when it is expedient to do so. Our own laws and ordinances are enforced only when convenient. Things get direction by what I call “management by procrastination” – when the Board gives direction, if it is something staff wants to happen it happens; if it isn't, all that is needed is to drag your feet awhile and the Board will forget all about it.

Month after month new ordinances are written and passed by the Board that they know will not be enforced; unless it is created for a specific case to give someone needed ammunition. I sit there week after week watch the hand wringing and listen to the eloquent speeches and I have been admonished by my fellow – more experienced – observers with, “This Board does a pretty good job ... compared to a lot of others I have had to deal with.”

If that is to be the measure of success I guess we have been successful. It seems this measure of success is all you can expect when you pay Board members only \$70,000 a year and make the outrageous demand that they work four days a month with only a 90-minute lunch break.

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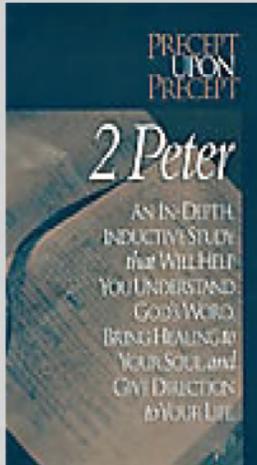
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Precept Upon Precept



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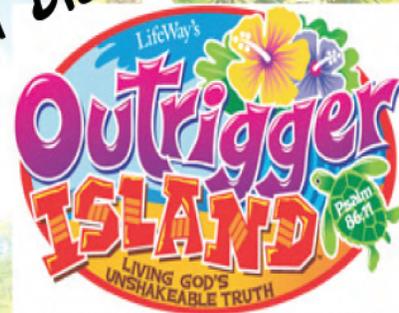
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- Know the truth
- Learn to live effectively
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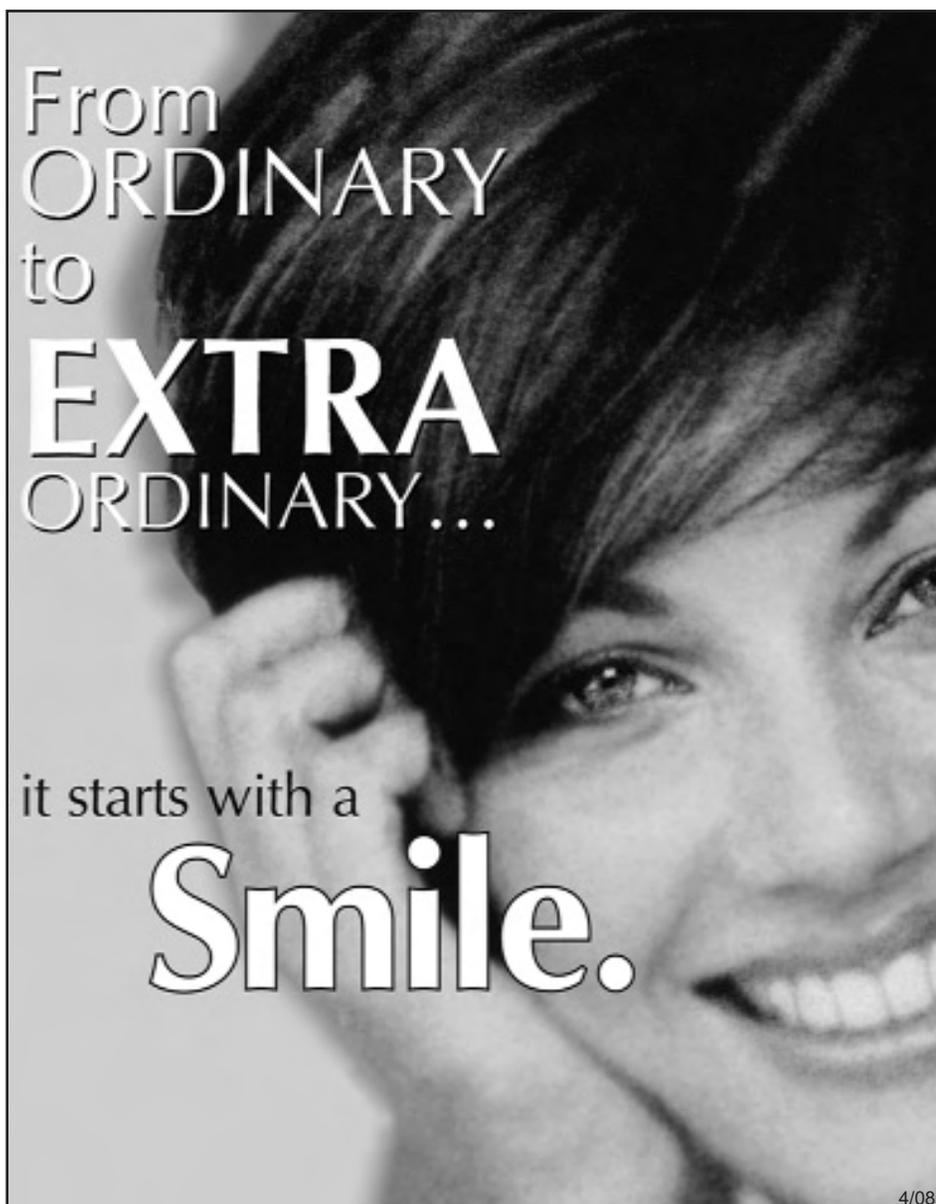
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KIWANIS KORNER



Kiwanis Club of the Ranchos would like to remind everyone Earth Day was April 22. It is a time for all of us to think about issues that affect our planet, our community and our neighborhood. Let's all take some time and plant some wildflowers or a tree or any type of plant or bush. Start helping out the world one house at a time, begin by improving your landscape.

The Kiwanis Club of the Ranchos would like to thank everyone who supported our E-Waste event. This was another huge success, even better than the one we held six months ago. Many noticed a 44-foot, all green trailer parked out in front of the Ranchos Market in March. Our community filled three 44-foot trailers with E-Waste, one whole trailer greater than last time. We had E-Waste from all over Madera and Fresno counties delivered to our collection site right here in the Ranchos.



Kayla Hodges (left) and Ethan Blair help collect E-Trash from folks throughout the Valley at the Ranchos Kiwanis E-Trash days at Ranchos Market March 29-30. The event was wildly successful, requiring three 44-foot trailers to haul all of the waste away, one more than the previous event.

What is on track for the club in the next few months? The Liberty Under the Stars scholarships will be distributed at the Scholarship Banquet held at Liberty High School on May 12. Also on the 12th is The Torch of Excellence, which benefits Fresno City College and Reedley Community College scholar athletes.

Last but not least is our booth at the Flatlanders Parade. This year at the Flatlanders Parade we are going to have a hot dog bar and strawberry shortcake booth. Please come by and help support the Kiwanis Club of the Ranchos and have a hot dog and a little dessert with us.

One more announcement to make for our club is our meeting place changed a few months ago. The club is now meeting at the Pizza Factory. The Pizza Factory has graciously donated their meeting room for our use. We now have delicious breakfast pizzas along with all the other morning goodies. Our meetings are every Thursday morning at 6:30 a.m. at the Pizza Factory, except the last Thursday of the month when it is held at 6:30 p.m. to help accommodate our members who have difficulty attending the morning meetings. Thanks again to Hal and Mary Ann Parks for donating the meeting room at the Pizza factory.

Oh yes, it's that time of the year, tax time. Hopefully everyone got their taxes off on time. Uncle Sam needs our support! Now let's talk about what the Kiwanis is all about. The Kiwanis Club of the Ranchos, is a service club collectively united by local community members, looking to volunteer their time and resources to enhance the lives of children in their local community and worldwide. We help sponsor many service projects throughout the world but we pay special attention to our local community schools and children by holding fundraisers and sponsoring, or co-sponsoring, events that help children here in the Madera Ranchos. To get a hold of us, you can write to us at:

Kiwanis Club of the Ranchos, 37221 Avenue 12 1-C #29, Madera CA 93636, or email us at info@ranchoskiwanis.com

If you are interested in volunteering some time and giving back to your community, please feel free to contact any of our officers for 2007-2008. They would be happy to answer your questions.

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- President Elect - Steven Monk
- Vice President - John Herrera
- Secretary - Sandy Monk
- Treasurer - Charisse Stindt
- Past President - Chris Parks
- Board Member - Marie Cameron
- Board Member - Ollie Ridge
- Board Member - Virginia Vick
- Board Member - Bruce Blair
- Board Member - John Glueck

The Bookshelf

Madera County Library Consultant Looks at Needs of Ranchos Library

By Ellen Mester

Exciting news! Madera County has hired a library consultant, Kathryn Page, to meet with the community, to evaluate our current services and to make recommendations on our future needs for a new library. She and County Librarian Linda Sitterding met with the community at a Town Hall Meeting at the Ranchos Library on Tuesday, April 29 at 7 p.m. They wanted to hear how our community values the library and what we envision for the future library. Ms. Page especially wanted to hear from the community educators, leaders, organizations, families and patrons. In addition, children were in attendance and shared their feelings about the library. The library was standing room only at this important opportunity to let the county know how much we care about our library. We look forward to the results of Kathryn Page's research.

Flatlanders Update

As of press time, almost all of the booths for the 2008 Flatlander's Parade and Craft Show had been sold. We have many new crafters joining us this year, while many of your favorites will return too. The date is Saturday, May 10. Don't forget! Parade applications can be picked up at the Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce office and Craft Show applications can be picked up at the Ranchos Library. This event has been going on for over 17 years and it is a great way to support the Ranchos Library and have lots of fun and good food, plus you can see all your local organizations and clubs march in the Parade down Avenue 12. The Parade begins at 10 a.m. but the Craft Show begins at 8 a.m. See you there!

New Library Planning Committee Update

The NLPC met with Kathy Page, the library consultant, and Linda Sitterding, the Madera County Librarian, to discuss the new library, the present needs of the community and how to plan for future growth on April 30. I will post a summary of that meeting in the next Ranchos Independent. This was a follow-up to the Town Hall Meeting on the previous night.

Coming Soon: The Ranchos Library Summer Reading Program. Before you know it summer will be here and this year we hope you will "Catch the Reading Bug @ Your Library," or for the teens we hope you will experience "Metamorphosis @ Your Library." Keep reading the Ranchos Independent for further updates. We have an exciting line-up this year of performers and activities starting with our big Kick-off on June 19.

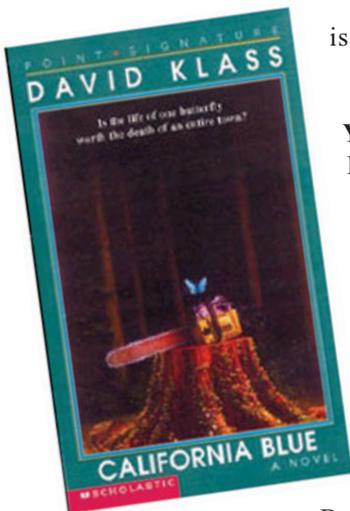
Special Programs: Bilingual story time with Ana Anaya is on the second and fourth Wednesdays at 2 p.m. and the "Read-to-Katie the Dog" program is on the first and third Wednesdays at 2 p.m. Both new programs have been very successful, so there is always something fun to do on those early release Wednesdays at the Ranchos Library.

Regular Story Time for pre-school age children is every Monday at 11 a.m. with Mrs. Anderson.

Book Recommendations

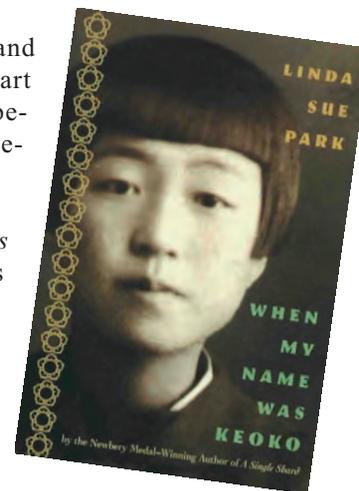
Young Adult Fiction: *California Blue: a novel* by David Klass. John Rodgers, a high school junior on the track team, was out for his usual run through the old growth redwoods in the lumber mill town of Kiowa. Unlike his older all-star brothers, John was just average and didn't communicate well with his dad — especially since he had been diagnosed with leukemia and had retired from the mill. On this day, John discovers a rare blue butterfly right in the middle of the forest. He doesn't know it's rare until he takes it to his biology teacher and finally to an entomologist at U.C.

Berkeley. Very quickly lines are drawn between those who want to preserve the butterfly and the old growth trees and those who make a living cutting them down. John is caught in the middle of this quag-



mire, torn between his family, friends and community and what he believes in his heart is the right thing to do. This story offers a believable plot that does a reasonable job representing both sides of a thorny issue.

Juvenile Fiction: *When My Name Was Keoko* by Linda Sue Park. Kim Sun-hee was given the name of Keoko by the Japanese who occupied Korea before and during World War II (1935-1945). Her whole family lived under the cultural rules of the



Please see BOOKSHELF on P. 15

Luke 24:6-7

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Say you saw it in the *Ranchos Independent*

The Stock Report

GV Students Make Ranchos Proud

By Audrey Stock

Hi Neighbors,

I went to the 8th grade Civil War Ball that was put on by the Ranchos Middle School last month. The Civil War period in the history of the United States is the time frame that the middle school students have been studying. Teachers across their subject areas have projects for the students to work on pertaining to the Civil War time. The students research and display their projects the night of the Ball. The students are in costume, the boys in blue uniforms for the North and gray uniforms for the South. The girls in hoop-skirted ball gowns. The uniforms and most of the ball gowns are owned by the Ranchos Middle School and are stored from year to year. The P.E. class teaches the students to waltz and the kids did a great job. The student's presentations of poems and songs were wonderful. The teachers really deserve a lot of credit for putting all of the pieces together to showcase all of the students' projects on the night of the Ball.

I am proud of all of the students and schools in the Golden Valley Unified School District. Last month California Superintendent of Schools, Jack O'Connell, called Scott Tefft, Principal of Sierra View Elementary, to congratulate Sierra View as a California Distinguished School for 2008. The upcoming Recognition Ceremony will be held in Anaheim, California on May 16. In the short time that Golden Valley Unified has been a school district, both Webster Elementary and now Sierra View Elementary have been recognized by the state of California as Distinguished Schools. The community should be very proud of this fact.

At Liberty High School we have student Kayla Hodges who holds the position of State Commander of the California Cadet Corps. Kayla will leave for West Point Military Academy this summer. Kayla also received the CIF Spirit of Sport Award in Oakland, California on May 2.

That award recognizes student-athletes who have demonstrated the 16 principles of Pursuing Victory with Honor, are active in school and community service and exhibit leadership qualities. Congratulations Kayla, I am so proud of you.

Another outstanding Liberty student by the name of Shannon Willhoite was named a 2008 Dell scholar recipient. Dell will provide the education tools for a college education. Dell will provide a notebook PC, a printer, textbook credits and \$20,000 per year for six years. I am proud of Shannon for earning this prestigious scholarship.

Bradley Abell is another Liberty High student who will be honored with an award and a scholarship from the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA). Well-done Bradley! These students show the type of students that we have at Liberty High.

Golden Valley Unified has nominated Hal, Maryanne and Chris Parks for the prestigious award of the Golden Apple given to community members who have helped schools in their area by the ACSA. The Pizza Factory owned by the Parks' will be honored on May 12, 2008 at the Madera Municipal Golf Course as a community business that supports Golden Valley schools.

Were you present at the Foundation for Golden Valley Schools' dinner on March 29? This was truly "The Night the Stars Come Out." If you didn't attend this year you really should put this dinner on the list of "must do" for next year. This is the time that Golden Valley employees are given awards in five different categories. This year award winners were Mary Helen Garcia from Webster Elementary, Diana Forshiee from the district office, Jeremy Norris from Ranchos Middle school, Kandace Osborn from Sierra View and Principal Kevin Hatch from Webster Elementary. These are great employees of Golden Valley and I am

Please see **STOCK** on P. 11

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Spring H&G Festival Major Success

By Eleanore Burchell

Our 16th Annual Spring Home and Garden Festival was held on April 5 and it was a GREAT success, even though the wind was cold in the morning. However, by noon it warmed up for the rest of the afternoon. The biscuits and gravy breakfast started at 6:30 a.m. and fed approximately 110 hungry early morning risers. Olen Williams and his garden crew started with over 100 fruit trees and had very few left by closing time. Shade trees and many, many flowering flats also streamed out. We want to thank the Master Gardeners for their participation in our sale. The bake sale did extremely well selling cookies, breads and other goodies. The Treasure House as always did very well and is now waiting to show you their new items. The produce section did not have much variety at this time of year except for oranges, oranges and more oranges, of which we sold many. The boutique, cookbooks and some vendors were in the main building with displays of necklaces, earrings, painting, antiques, etc. April 5 was a spectacular occasion for all of us and we would like to thank you for coming and sharing it with us.

Remember the garden area still has other nice trees, shrubs, tomato and flowering plants for you to plant in your yard as this is the season to get these plants well settled into your soil before the summer and hot weather comes. These, as well as the produce and boutique sections, are available Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Thursday evenings between 6 and 9 p.m.

The Ranchos/Hills couple of the month is Esther and Merle Anderson who have been members since approximately 1988. They were not actual Ranchos/Hills Senior charter members but joined soon after they moved here from the bay area and built a new home in the Ranchos. Esther was extremely active in the search for a site for the seniors to meet and hold their activities. She helped organize bake and craft sales to raise money to create a senior center. After attending a class to develop the skills, Esther established the Ranchos/Hills Newsletter. She has been our one-and-only editor for all these years.

Esther saw the need for the nutrition program and was diligent until it was approved. We now have a lunch program at the senior center as well as meals for the homebound. As a retired teacher, she definitely wants children to be encouraged to read so has been the Story Lady each Mon-

day at the local library for 15 years. Esther also wears the hat of a salesperson at the Library's bi-annual book sale. Merle has also contributed to the senior center by working Tuesday nights at Bingo. He makes all of our flyers and bulletins and is in charge of the raffles. He also has logged many volunteer hours working at the Library's bi-annual book sale. Merle is an active member of several local committees such as the Library and Chamber of Commerce. He is a past recipient of the Fresno-Madera Area Agency on Aging's Annual Volunteer Award.

Did you know we have been remodeling and this has brought a new face to our center? Do come in, visit us and see our upgraded kitchen, tile floor, fresh new paint inside and out, etc.

Please remember that two nurses from the Madera County Health Department periodically come to the center to give FREE check ups. The screenings include personal health history review, blood pressure check, blood sugar check, low cost blood test available, nutrition and health education, referrals to medical providers and community services, if needed. Health screenings of adults, age 50 and OVER, at our center are provided ONLY when they receive your calls. If you are interested in taking advantage of their services, call Carla or Melody at 675-7893 to make an appointment. They come to help you and other seniors so please call for your appointment.

If you are new to the area, lonely or just lost a spouse, we welcome you to come to see us. We are here for you. Many of our members have surely experienced your same situation.

THE UP SIDE

Words and eggs must be handled with care. Once broken, they are impossible to repair.

Our seniors have returned from the Northern Pacific cruise which left from San Francisco and docked in Astoria, Ore., Seattle, Wash., Vancouver and Victoria, Canada. The Panama Canal cruise left on April 14 and returned on April 28. They flew to Fort Lauderdale, Fla. to board the ship with scheduled stops in Jamaica, Cartagena, Columbia and then sailed through the locks of the canal and exited into the Pacific Ocean with dockings in Costa Rica and then in Huatulco, Acapulco and Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. They fin-

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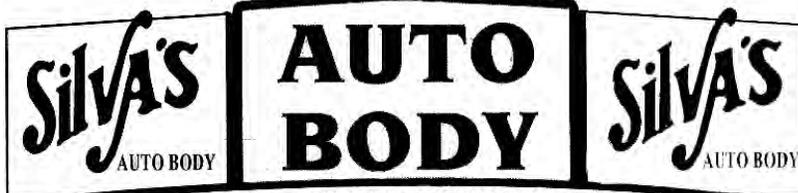
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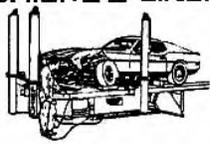
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FIRE cont. from P. 3

communication ready to rescue them should trouble arise. This is commonly referred to as the "Two in/Two out" policy. These policies were reaffirmed in May 2001 when the National Fire Protection Association Standards on Career Fire Service Deployment was passed. This legislation made all OSHA regulations applicable to local government including fines and a huge increase in criminal penalties under Cal/OSHA.

Madera County Fire Engineer Danny Cesena explains that if a home is on fire and only one or two firefighters respond, they are not legally allowed to enter a home to suppress the fire. If they do so they could face fines of up to \$250,000 and be imprisoned for up to four years for failure to take appropriate safety precautions. The only exception is to make a rescue of someone trapped inside a building on fire. Since the Ranchos runs at the bare minimum with one paid firefighter, the results could be catastrophic. "We'd like to see the county run at the city standards of three paid firefighters per engine," Cesena said.

"Long time Ranchos residents and newly transplanted residents assume they'll have help when they need it and they don't really think about it until they have a need to dial 911."

Madera County Supervisor Frank Bigelow, who has been a volunteer firefighter for many years, has commissioned a company called Citygate to do a preliminary study of the needs for additional resources Countywide. He expects the study to be complete within the next few months. Citygate will review all resources including staffing and equipment, both for the present situation and for future needs and will make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.

Bigelow is familiar with the "Two in/Two out" legislation but points out that most counties in California don't meet this standard. "Communities like Yosemite Lakes Park rely entirely on volunteer firefighters and have no paid firefighting positions," he said.

This potentially dangerous situation is affecting all homeowners in the Ranchos

Please see **FIRE** on P. 16

STOCK cont. from P. 9

proud of each one.

The next event at the Foundation Dinner was the awarding of grants to teachers who need money for special projects in their classrooms. Six grants totaling \$6,000 were given to Kathy Gorman, Emily Mucianti, Christine Panian, Kandace Osborn and Shellie Roth. Grants were also awarded to teachers Lisa Cartwright, Scott Rigby and Wes Beal. Again, congratulations on receiving your grants. Let us know next year how it helped your students. This was the 4th Annual "The Night the Stars Come Out" Foundation dinner. For the last two years it has been held at the Birdstone Winery. After the costs of the event are paid the rest of the money goes into the Foundation to help Golden Valley Schools. As a charter member of this wonderful Foundation I urge all community members to become a part of this foundation. Our meetings are held on the first Wednesday

of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the district office. Supporting our Golden Valley schools is the best thing that we can do for our community.

The big event that we have all been waiting for is the Ranchos Middle School ground breaking. At press time the date had been confirmed for Thursday, May 8 from 2:15 - 3 p.m. on the building site on avenue 12 1/2. Truly evidence of your bond money put to work. I am so pleased that this is really happening for our middle school students and teachers. It has been a dream of mine to complete the Liberty High Campus with a comprehensive middle school. When the County of Madera, the state of California offices in Sacramento and the Madera Fire Dept. - just to mention a few - get finished with their work and finally say, "Now you can start building," I will have a great sigh of relief.

Next school board meetings in May are May 13 and 27 at Liberty library at 6 p.m. Hope to see you there.

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The Good, The Bad and the Bullied

By Dave Johnson

Recently there has been a lot of press regarding "bullies" and the problems they create. TV talk shows, YouTube videos of girls ganging up on one girl, school campus violence right in our own backyard. The profiles of school shooters Seung-Hui Cho at Virginia Tech and Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold at Columbine High School show a disturbing commonality: They were bullied by their classmates, sometimes for years.

Virginia Tech gunman Cho was bullied in high school, former classmates say, because of his race and accent. Cho's family immigrated to the United States from South Korea. In class, other students laughed and said "Go back to China" when he spoke.

"The best study ever completed on school shooters was done by the Secret Service," said Dr. Michele Borba, an educational psychologist and author who regularly appears as a parenting expert on "The Today Show."

"They looked at every school shooter to see if they could profile who the next shooter would be," she said. "Almost always they were boys. Almost always they were middle class. They had an easy accessibility to guns. The ONLY commonality for every kid was that he'd been unmercifully bullied from a very early age."

Although many children who are

bullied don't act out against others, they are at higher risk for depression and suicidal thoughts than other children.

If your own child has been victimized by a bully, know that you and your family are not alone. One in seven children gets bullied, Borba said. "We need to learn a lesson from this. All I hear is, 'How are we going to stop it at the college level?' but we need to rewind it and put our priorities in the mental health of children and teach them to stop the cruelty before it escalates."

Steps in Dealing with Bullying

1. The key to helping your child cope with a school bully is to believe him or her when they tell you about the bully.
2. Take it seriously, and don't ignore your child; listen to the whole story.
3. After that: Don't blame him/her. Explain that they are not alone — lots of kids get bullied for different reasons.
4. Don't assume he did something to provoke the bully. Don't say, "What did you do to aggravate the other child?"
5. Never tell your child to ignore the bullying; it's a serious problem and needs to be confronted. Often, ignoring the bullying can make it worse.
6. Find out when and where the incidents took place, how often they occurred and how your child reacted.

Please see SAFE on P. 13

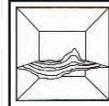
"All I hear is, 'How are we going to stop it at the college level?' but we need to rewind it and put our priorities in the mental health of children and teach them to stop the cruelty before it escalates."

Dr. Michele Borba



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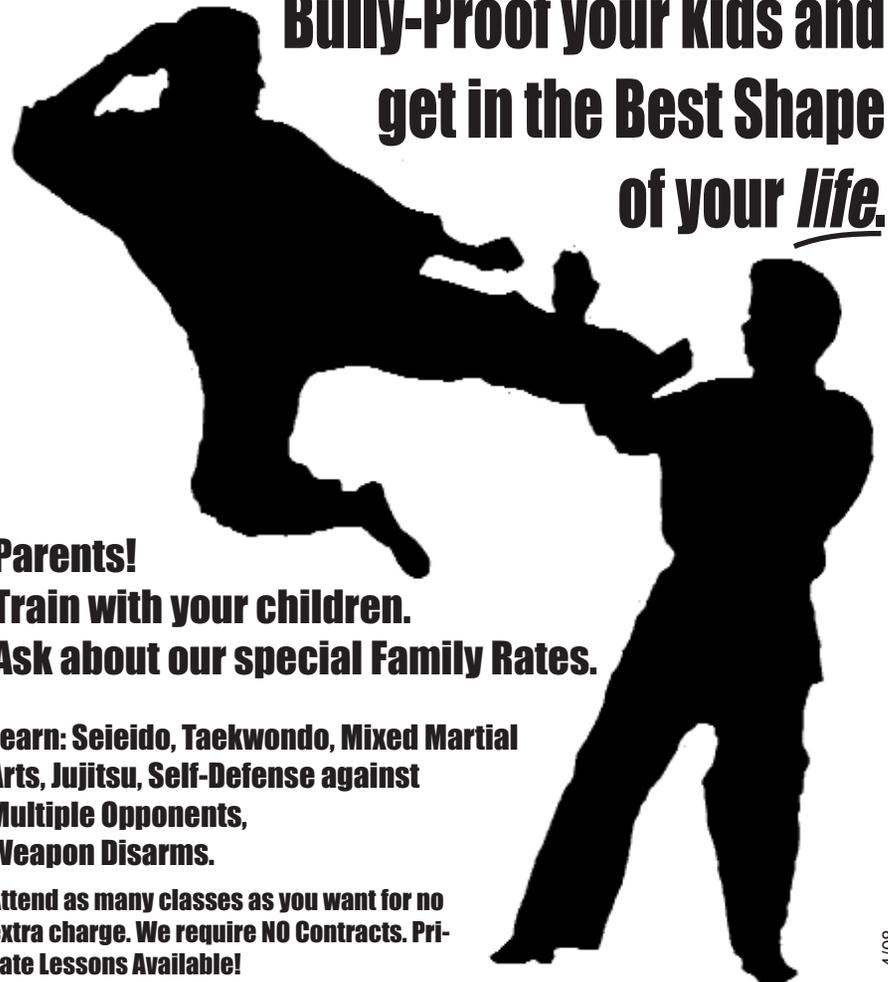
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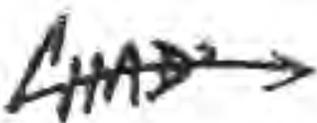
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Youth.....6 p.m.	Rainbows (Boys & Girls 3-4)

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The Gold Comes Home ... Again For Golden Valley Martial Arts



Students from our local Golden Valley Martial Arts school brought home 24 medals and a school trophy after competing in the 2nd Annual City of Fresno Mayor's Taekwondo Championships. Parents, Instructors and students celebrated by taking in a Fresno Falcons hockey game afterward.

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SAFE cont. from P. 12

7. Show empathy. Tell your child you're glad he/she was brave enough to tell you about it.

8. Teach "bully-proofing" skills. Coach your child on assertive strategies. That he/she can stand tall and, with a strong voice and say, "Stop making fun of me" or "I want you to leave me alone."

9. Teach your child Borba's CALM approach: Cool down; Assert yourself; Look your bully in the eye; and Mean it.

10. Urge your child to stay with others. It's safer to be in a group, with the support of friends.

11. Tell your child to, if possible, avoid locations where the bully may be.

12. Don't promise to keep it a se-

cret. You may need to report the bully.

13. Don't give your child the total responsibility for stopping the bully. You may need to take action by talking with a teacher or principal at your child's school.

14. When you meet with school authorities, give plenty of facts about your child's experiences.

15. Talk regularly with your child and the school staff to see if the bullying has stopped. If it persists, contact school authorities again.

16. Help your child meet new friends outside of school (like at your local Martial Arts School).

Research has shown (and I have witnessed time and time again over the past 23 years) that Martial Arts in-

Please see SAFE on P. 17

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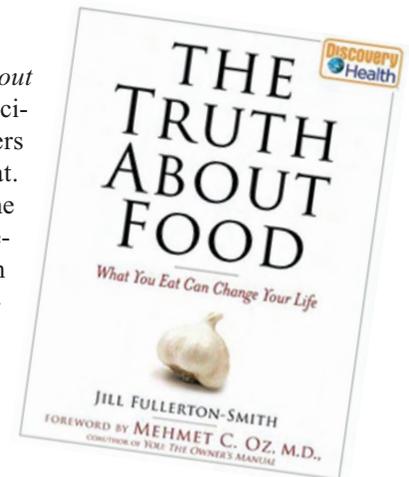
We are a proud supporter of the Flatlander's Day Parade

4/08

BOOKSHELF cont. from P. 8

Japanese, forbidden to write or speak their native language. If anything Korean was found, even the national tree, it was destroyed and those responsible were punished severely. Sun-hee's uncle operated the local newspaper, writing an underground version late at night causing great peril for the family. Sun-hee's brother eventually enlisted in the Japanese army and was immediately put into the kamikaze corps. Even there, the Koreans were treated like second-class citizens. Stories about the Japanese occupation of Korea during WWII are rare and Park expertly tells the tale through little Kim Sun-hee and her family. It is a compelling and interesting read.

Adult Non-fiction: *The Truth About Food* by Jill Fullerton-Smith. Combining science with common sense, this book offers sound advice in a straightforward format. There is a section that helps you determine if you are overweight, which foods are really good for you, what's not good, all in an easy to read style that uses clinical studies to clear up common misconceptions about food. There is an introduction by Dr. Oz from the *You: The Owner's Manual* fame that adds credence. While this topic has certainly been written about A LOT, you may find some new information.



Check out these books and more at the library and remember your library card ... don't leave home without it!

HAPPY FLATLANDER'S DAY FROM THE RANCHOS INDEPENDENT

Bring Mom to Flipside on Her Day!

Sunday, May 11, 2008
Services at 9:30 & 11:00 am
Liberty High School

If you are a mom or know a mom, please join us at Flipside Christian Church. We will welcome you and renew your spirit by demonstrating how difficulties in life can be used for God's good.

Flipside CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Office located in the Maywood Center inside of the "Flipside Activity Center"
Check out the events page at www.acts178.com for info on upcoming events or to contact any of the Flipside staff.



4/08

The Old Cowboy by Woody Laughnan

Mercifully in most cases, the aging process is both gentle and gradual. And because the day-to-day and month-to-month physical change is so imperceptible, we accept the transformation through subconscious assimilation. Indeed, the changes reflected in the mirror seem so insignificant that each of us in private moments dote on how much younger we look than friends we so frequently see.

But the ravages of time, working upon those we have not seen for a long period of time, can be most unsettling, even shocking. And so it was when I visited my mother. Time had dealt her a mighty blow, wrote my brother, preparing me in advance of my visit, saying that her hair had

tuned white, lines were deep-set in her face and she was ever-so feeble.

"Her body is gaunt and bent and she has trouble breathing," he said, "and I do not think she will be with us very long."

Nevertheless I do not believe one can be fully conditioned to absorb the impact of being reunited with someone dear who has fallen victim to old age: so frail, so weak, and suffering the cruelest blow of all, Alzheimer disease.

She did not remember me, although she said I looked familiar. And reaching to the dresser top stared for sometime at the family picture taken many years ago.

"I don't know for sure," she said in trembling voice and pointing to my father, "I think this must

have been your father, but he never comes to see me."

"Dad died almost 15 years ago," I said softly.

"No, I saw him from the side yard window last month, but he walked by without coming to visit," she said, dabbing at tear-filled eyes. "I'd know him anywhere in his overalls. He was on his way to the barn with a milk pail."

She looked at the picture again and then at me.

"This does look like you," she decided, pointing to me in the picture. "Is it really you come all the way from California to see me?" And shuffling down a hallway in a walker introduced me to a nurse and some of the other old people in the rest home.

"It's my boy come all the way from California to see me," she said, but could not remember my name. "He was always such a good boy. All my boys were good. I wonder where they are now."

I visited her again the next day and once more she reached for the family picture.

"That's poor dad," she said, "and there are you and your two brothers, but I don't know who the girl is."

"It's our sister, mom," I told her.

"Well, I do I believe you are right," she said. "But I wonder why she never comes to see me?" On my last morning in the old hometown, I returned again to the rest home but did not tell her I was leaving that afternoon.

"You never kissed me goodbye," she said as I turned to leave, dabbing at tear-filled eyes. "Come and give me a kiss because you will never be back again."

The train was miles down the track on my return trip before I could hold back my own tears. And she was right. I never went back. She died before I reached California.

FIRE cont. from P. 11

area in the form of increased Homeowners Insurance premiums. The Insurance Services Office, Inc. (ISO) evaluates and rates the fire protection provided in communities. The ISO grades a community's fire protection on a scale of 1-10, based on ISA's Fire Suppression Rating Schedule. Many insurance companies use ISO's evaluations as a factor in setting premiums charged for property insurance; the better the community's grade, the lower the premiums in that community. ISO's data on fire losses indicates communities with better fire protection tend to have lower losses in relation to other communities.

Madera County residents would greatly benefit from increased staffing in several ways with better response times and increased fire protection as the most obvious. However the addition of just one more paid firefighter position could improve our ISO insurance ratings and homeowners could see their insurance rates go down as the Countywide fire insurance ratings improved.

Firefighters and their supporters are a

resourceful bunch. Over the years they've had fund raisers that have enabled them to purchase needed equipment for the stations. Items such as thermal imaging cameras to quickly locate people inside smoke filled buildings; a rescue squad with a high intensity emergency light system and other equipment necessary to do their job efficiently and safely.

The Citygate study is a start that can help answer the question of what can we as a community do to help our firefighters. Once the recommendations are in, Rancho residents need to make their voice heard. Growth in the Ranchos has been tremendous and we need to make sure our firefighters have the resources they need to do their job safely and efficiently to keep us safe. Currently the communities of Raymond, Bass Lake, North Fork and Awahnee are staffed with one driver and one firefighter due to contractual requirements with Cal Fire, referred to as the "Amador Plan," affording all of these communities a better fire protection plan than here in the Ranchos.

Let's not wait until we have to call 911 to discover how important this issue is.

would not be enough room between the track and the new lights for a berm on the visitor's side. The remaining berm will be approximately 9 feet away from the light poles on the home side of the field per the requirements of the light pole manufacturer.

Football field trenching and conduit installation was completed April 25 allowing District staff to be able to begin reactivation of the irrigation system and field turf restoration after that. Completion of the field is expected to be August 1, 2008.

LIGHTS cont. from P. 2

in order to do as much underground electrical work as possible and a portable public address system including speakers and equipment is included in the project.

The dirt needed to be taken from the berm on the home side of the field was spread around the east side of the football field fence in order to create a "bowl" effect. There were early discussions of creating a visitor side berm, but upon survey of light location it was determined that there

WATER cont. from P. 2

out about the testing. "At least we know what's in our drinking water. Residents with private wells have no idea what might be in their water unless they take it upon themselves to have their water tested," Forbes said.

Water issues have been a hot topic at recent Board of Supervisors' meetings. Unfortunately most property owners don't take interest in the matter until the water doesn't come on. Many of the special water districts that dot the Ranchos are operating in the red and are in disrepair. A case in point is MD 95.

Property owners in the Continental Estates at Road 35 and Ave. 12 1/2 recently received news that Maintenance District 95 (MD-95), which was created to provide water to their subdivision, had been dissolved in a 4 to 1 vote by the Madera County Board of Supervisors. District 1 Supervisor Frank Bigelow was the only dissenting vote. This makes way for the county to sell its infrastructure to a Public Utilities Commission-regulated water company. The County will be responsible for providing service until the transition is final.

This dissolution occurred after the majority of property owners rejected a rate increase which would have raised fees to \$310 per quarter, a \$60 per quarter increase to cover costs, and an additional \$22 per quarter for 10 years to cover \$17,000 in rearranges.

Residents contend they are willing to pay for justified costs however they feel they are being overcharged and the County had been either unable or unwilling to provide itemized billing. Undefined labor charges and engineering charges with an administrative cost of 45 percent were cited as examples. Property owners had also re-

quested that plans be made for repairing their failing water delivery system.

"Residents don't believe they were given the full breadth of information," Bigelow said. "Staff provided blanket numbers and didn't see the need for itemizations. I just don't believe this is the way you treat customers."

Depending on which Madera County source you investigate, there are between 45 and 100 Maintenance Districts located throughout the County. They were formed to provide residents with essential services including: water, sewer, road maintenance, lighting and drainage. Supervisors have relied upon the Madera County General Fund to subsidizing these Districts. Countywide these Districts cost the General Fund \$649,648 for 2005-2006 and estimates expect those numbers to rise to \$771,079 for 2006/2007.

"For many years the Board has been long on discussions and a bit short on actions needed to stop the downward spiral of these districts," said Political Activist and columnist Dale Drozen. "Inflation and the inevitable breakdown of the mechanical aspects of the systems made operations much more expensive, but the rates stayed the same. To compensate, Special Districts Department used up the reserves, deferred needed maintenance and replacements in an effort to make do with what they had."

Perhaps the future will be better, according to Drozen. "Madera County is about to write case law and establish the policy of how we will deal with special districts in crises in the future," he said. He also said that it's time for all property owners to take this issue seriously, become educated about the matter and become involved in the processor or it just may be a very long, hot and dry summer here in the Ranchos.

LEGAL NOTICE

"MADERA COUNTY HAS DECLARED THAT THE GROWTH AND ACCUMULATION OF WEEDS IN THE UNINCORPORATED AREA OF THE COUNTY POSES A FIRE SAFETY AND PUBLIC HEALTH RISK AND THEREFORE HAS DECLARED WEEDS A SEASONAL AND RECURRING NUISANCE. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO ABATE SUCH NUISANCE LIES WITH THE INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY OWNER. THIS YEAR THIS NUISANCE MUST BE ABATED ON OR BEFORE MAY 1, 2008."

Due to the weed regrowth and the continual hazard throughout the summer HAZARD ABATEMENT MUST BE MAINTAINED THROUGHOUT THE FIRE SEASON. This may require REDISCING/HAZARD ABATEMENT MORE THAN ONCE AS WEEDS AND HAZARD grow back.

4/08

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4/08



call Suzie Dunn
at
559-645-3500

SAFE cont. from P. 13

struction helps THE BULLY eliminate the need to pick on others by teaching respect for themselves and others, self-discipline of their actions and by filling that void for needed acceptance and the feeling of importance. Research also shows that Martial Arts instruction strengthens and raises the level of self-esteem for THE BULLIED. They learn that they are of great value. They learn to carry themselves with confidence yet remain respectful to others. They learn to believe in their capabilities and realize that they can accomplish ANYTHING.

It helps to Bullyproof kids. Bullies often torment kids who unknowingly send messages that make them become targets. It is as simple as how they stand, their posture or their lack of eye contact. In martial art classes, participants are constantly challenged and then praised for doing their best, building confidence. Kids learn that their bodies and minds are strong, powerful and worthy of respect. Once a child this, his or her whole attitude changes. Children begin to carry themselves with an ease and assurance that tells bullies to move on. Because martial arts are generally non-competitive, kids can set their own pace for earning the next belt or being promoted to the next level. Classes provide a safe environment for kids with fragile egos to heal and become stronger, mentally and physically. They learn to look an aggressor in the eyes, to think through hostile situations calmly and to take a positive, no-nonsense stance when threatened.

Bullies benefit too, and not because they learn to kick harder. A 2001 study in Adolescence found that violent behavior decreased among middle-schoolers when they were participating in martial arts training. At the same time their confidence lev-

Flatlander's Issue 2008 Page 17

els rose. Bullies act the way they do because they have low self-esteem, poor social skills, or little respect for themselves or others. The focus on respect and courtesy within the martial arts sends the message that you don't have to be mean to earn a person's respect.

Enroll your child in your local self-defense school, Golden Valley Martial Arts. Beginner classes are starting in May and will be limited in size. SPACE IS LIMITED! Call Master Johnson at 917-5262. Your feedback is vital and appreciated. Remember, since we are all in this together, let's make it a community project, have some fun and increase our level of safety.

For other tips on stopping bullies, go to www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov.

Parental Guidance: Spend some time with your children reviewing the following sites: www.amw.com/kids, tcs.cybertipline.com and finally, www.missingkids.com/adCouncil.

Self-Defense Tips: If someone makes you feel uncomfortable, turn and look him or her in the eyes with confidence and say so. Protect your space. Always stand at a slanted angle with one foot back spaced at about shoulder width. Hands should be relaxed and held between waist and chest level. **KNOW YOUR ENVIRONMENT.**

Master Johnson is a world recognized security and self-defense expert specializing in executive protection, hand-to-hand, multiple opponents and weapon disarms. He is listed in the "Who is Who" in Martial Arts and was named "Master Instructor of the Year" 1996 by the World Martial Arts Hall of Fame. He is the owner of Golden Valley Martial Arts, Tactical Training International, Dave Johnson Real Estate, and operates the World's only online self-defense and Black Belt training course at www.masterjohnson.com. He can be contacted at info@masterjohnson.com.



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4/08

Warm, Sunny Spring Weather Can Mean Only One Thing: Yard Sales!

Tag sale, yard sale, garage sale – whatever you call it, the yard sale is part and parcel of the American way of life.

On sunny weekend mornings, slow-moving cars ("I brake for yard sales!") circle suburban neighborhoods as their occupants hunt baby toys and French-fry makers, auto parts and cocktail shakers.

If you're in active de-clutter mode, the next stop is your house. A yard sale can clear clutter and score some cash, but it helps to have a road map. Try these tips for a successful yard sale:

Gather Your Inventory

Your yard sale inventory is living right under your nose. The first step is to find it. In the weeks before your sale, scour closets and cupboards, bookcases and basement for yard sale finds.

How to decide? Some home managers ask these questions: "Have I cooked with it, worn it, displayed it, used it or read it within the last year?" Others apply a percentage rule: a firm 10 to 20 percent of all books, videos, clothing, or bric-a-brac must go.

Set The Date

Choose your day, and plan a one-day sale, maximum. In yard sales, as in life, there is a point of diminishing returns. Have a strategy for sale's end. Many charities will pick up all unsold items. Call and schedule a 3 p.m. pickup for sale day.

Make Like Madison Avenue: Advertise!

You've sorted your stuff and scoped out the field. Now it's time to play retailer. First rule: advertise, advertise, advertise.

Do spring a few dollars for a newspaper ad. Many local papers offer special garage sale rates, or free signs to yard sale advertisers. Watch your wording! Mention furniture, baby items, garden tools or other desirable items you have to offer, but don't waste ad dollars on "miscellaneous."

Use your computer to make signs, lots of signs. Use neon poster board and deep-black

markers. Make the directions BIG. If you can't see your signs from a block away, neither can your customers. Make it easy for buyers to find you.

Prep and Price

Assess your inventory. Does it look garage-sale drab? A little elbow grease can yield big bucks. Run dusty dishes and filmy glassware through the dishwasher. A quick spritz of automotive vinyl protectant makes small appliances and plastic items shine like new. Clean, fresh-smelling clothing hung on hangers commands a higher price than stained and rumpled items tossed into boxes.

To price, or not to price? Experience comes down in favor of pricing every item. Yes, haggling is part of the yard sale scene, but for those with shyer natures, a price sticker saves a lot of energy. Buyers are more apt to buy when they know the price is in their ballpark. Use masking tape or small adhesive stickers to label your wares.

Set Up Shop

Where will you hold your sale? Yard, garage or driveway, make sure your site can be seen from the road, and plan to haul a few big items out front, for good measure. It's best to work from a stripped site, so remove everything that's not for sale from the driveway, garage or carport. If you can't, drape the not-for-sale items with sheets or tarps. That way, you won't have to explain that the garden tools are not for sale for a full seven hundred and thirty-two times.

Set out your wares. Tables, even a slab of plywood board resting on sawhorse, make it easy to browse. Hang clothing from ropes or chains attached to the ceiling. Display books, spines up, in shallow boxes for easy shopping. Lay a heavy-duty extension cord to operate radios and television, and test electrical appliances.

Prepare your yard as if it were Halloween night. Remove anything that can be tripped over, including the dog, which should live elsewhere for the duration of the sale. Check the garage floor and driveway for slippery spots or hidden hazards. Tape down extension cords or

cables.

Are you ready to make change? A muffin tin makes a good change holder. Be prepared with at least \$20 in small bills and change.

Ready, Set, Sell!

Plan for at least two staffers for every yard sale, and more is better. One person acts as "background", shuffling cash, bringing coffee, keeping an active eye on everything. A cashier sits at the front with muffin tin or cash box. Leave the selling to the most enthusiastic salesperson.

Offer free coffee, and give your children a taste of private enterprise, entrusting them with

a donut concession. If people are eating, they're staying – and if they're staying, they're buying. That's the point!

When The Sale Is Over

Wrap up your sale when you said you would. A yard sale is a lot of work, and you're still not finished. Dispose of the leftovers, either to the charity pick-up or by boxing and delivering the items yourself.

Be considerate of your neighbors and next week's yard sale enthusiasts. Remove all signs, and return your sale site to normal.

Then go count your proceeds – and take the family out to dinner. You've earned it!

Ride for the Cure!

The Motorcycle Ministry of

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Ride will begin at 1st Southern Baptist Church Madera at 711 Nebraska and will end at Children's Hospital Central Valley.

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4/08

SENIORS cont. from P. 10

ished up and disembarked in San Francisco. The next travel adventure will be a 7-Night Eastern Caribbean cruise from Nov. 1-8, 2008. This cruise will leave Miami on Carnival's new "LIBERTY" ship with dockings at San Juan, St. Thomas and St. Maarten. These flyers may be picked up in our office or for more information call Joann at 645-4864. Just remember, you need NOT be a member to participate in these cruises.

Our March Birthday and Anniversary celebration luncheon was held at Shanghai Chinese Cuisine. There were 25 members and guests in attendance. April's celebration was held on April 19 at Madera's IHOP on Cleveland Avenue. May's luncheon will be held on Saturday, May 17 at 11 a.m. at Luna Pizzeria & Italian Restaurant at 349 Pollasky in Clovis.

On May 6 we opened the doors to BINGO again! BINGO will be held the FIRST and THIRD Tuesdays from 5:30 to 9 p.m. each month. Please come and join us.

In the senior years, many need someone to laugh with, so come join our Thursday evening potlucks with games played afterward. There is a lot of fun here and remember that laughter is good for your body and soul and being happy does not mean everything is perfect; it means you have decided to see beyond the imperfections!

More Facts and Fun

A nutritionally balanced lunch program Monday through Friday at 11:30 a.m. Suggested price for 60 years and older is \$1.75. Reservations are needed a day in advance so remember to call Joann at 645-4864. We have a growing exercise program being held on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 10:15 to 11:30 a.m. The participants are getting more than just exercise by attending - they have found new friends, neighbors and a reason to laugh. There is

still room for you and you can attend all three days or just one or two of them. The Line Dancing class meets on Wednesdays at 1 p.m. This is also fun and full of laughs and also a great way to exercise. The Watercolor Painting class meets on Thursdays from 3 to 5 p.m. No prior watercolor experience is needed. The instructor can be reached by calling 645-1137. You do not need to be a member to attend these classes. We have a large group but there is always room for one more - you! Fill your car with your friends or neighbors. They will enjoy finding new friends here, too. Come in and check these classes out.

Up and Coming Events

June 7, Monthly Sale, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.
November 1-8, Eastern Caribbean Cruise

Weekly Events

Monday through Friday Lunch Program, 11:30 a.m. (Reservations needed, call Joann at 645-4864)

Monday, Exercise Class, 10:15 - 11:30 a.m.
Tuesday, Pinochle, noon until?

BINGO, 1st & 3rd Tuesdays from 5:30 - 9 p.m.

Wednesday, Exercise Class, 10:15 - 11:30 a.m.

Wednesday, noon to 1 p.m. Card BINGO

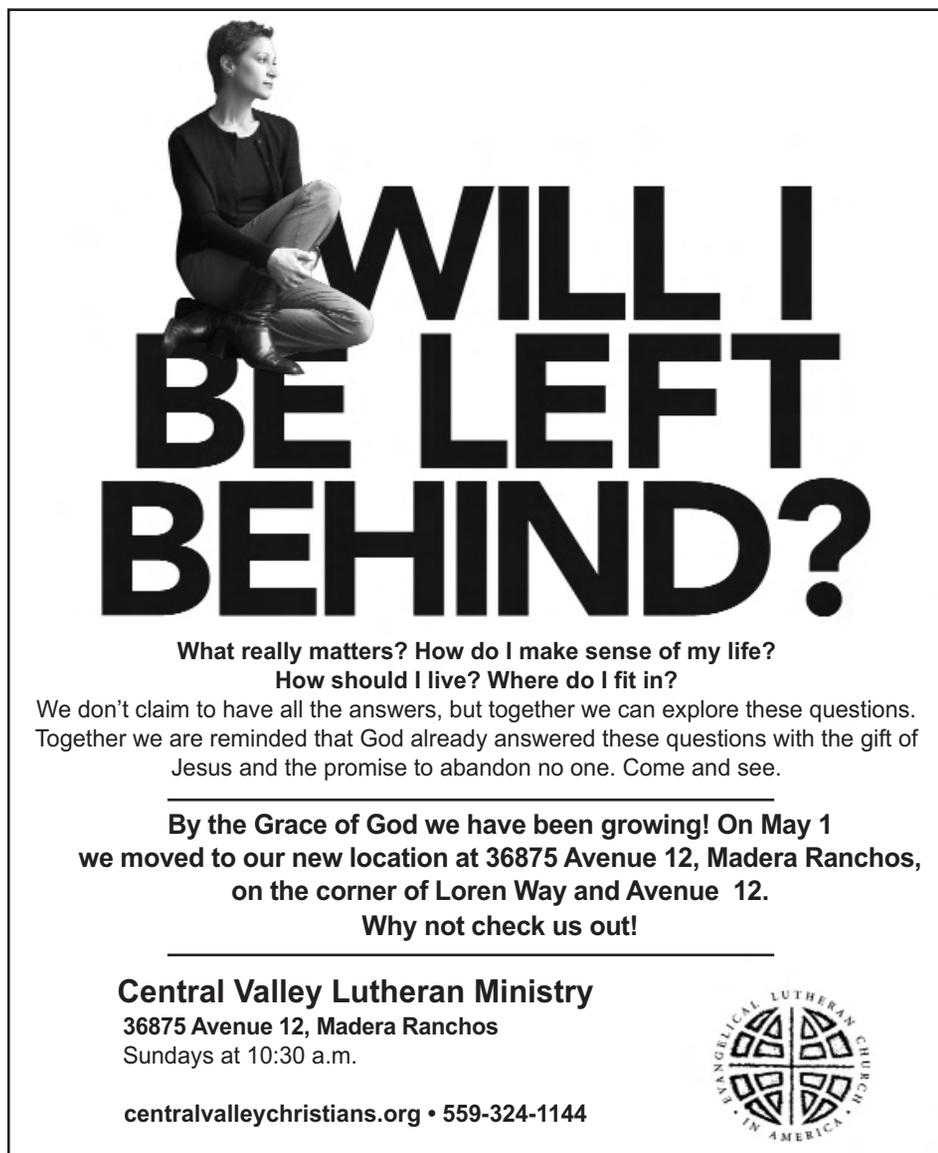
Wednesday, Line Dancing, 1 p.m.

Thursday, 3:00 - 5:00 p.m. Watercolor Painting Class

Thursday, 6 to 9 p.m. Potluck then Hand & Foot, Pinochle or other games (Please bring your own plate and silverware)

Friday, Exercise Class, 10:15 - 11:30 a.m.

Please feel free to come in and visit our Senior Center and get acquainted with our members. We welcome you to come and be one of us as our organization offers and promotes social, educational and civic activities in order to provide a better quality of life for all senior citizens. You have received an invitation. Hope to see you soon!



WILL I BE LEFT BEHIND?

What really matters? How do I make sense of my life?
How should I live? Where do I fit in?

We don't claim to have all the answers, but together we can explore these questions. Together we are reminded that God already answered these questions with the gift of Jesus and the promise to abandon no one. Come and see.

By the Grace of God we have been growing! On May 1 we moved to our new location at 36875 Avenue 12, Madera Ranchos, on the corner of Loren Way and Avenue 12. Why not check us out!

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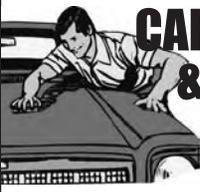
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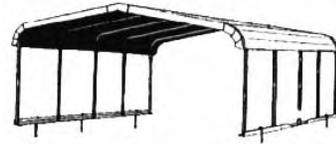
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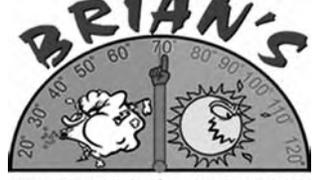


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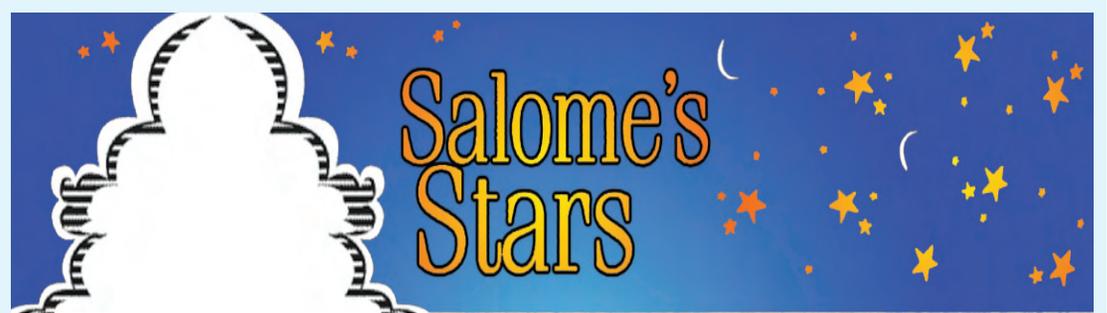
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ARIES (March 21 to April 19) You easily handle your tasks this week, thanks to those high energy levels that never seem to run down. But pace yourself, Lamb, for the demanding week ahead.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) With the arts dominant this week, you might want to pick up any of those creative projects you've neglected. A workplace situation benefits from some fresh insight.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) Music helps replenish your energy levels. Play your CDs if you must. But a live concert could prove more rewarding, especially if you go with that very special someone.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) Close friends reach out to help perk up your lagging social life. That workplace situation also eases, leaving you time to do more fun things by week's end.

LEO (July 23 to August 22) A revelation clears up that perplexing job-related problem. Some changes will have to be made, which, no doubt, will meet with the Big Cat's roaring approval. Good luck.

VIRGO (August 23 to September 22) Reaching out to someone in need is the noble thing to do. But try to restrain the temptation to add a lecture -- no matter how well-intended -- to your good deed.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) There could be another tough challenge to face before the month is over. But all that hard work is winning you lots of important recognition from your peers.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) Keeping to your work schedule could prove difficult with all those personal distractions. Best advice: Stay with it. There'll be time later for socializing.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) Jumping hurdles this week might be vexing for most, but not for the sage Sagittarian, who recognizes that meeting a challenge can open up opportunities.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19) More obstacles might be thrown in your path as you try to finalize a new agreement. But the sure-footed Goat ignores the stumbling blocks and stays the course.

AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 18) We know the Water Bearer takes pleasure in giving to others. But why not let someone else enjoy the experience too by accepting that offer of help?

PISCES (February 19 to March 20) You might find you need to ease up on your hectic schedule this week. Don't fret about it. It could be helpful to take a break and replenish your energy supply.

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Born this Week

You have a way of finding practical solutions to complex problems, and you do it with grace.

Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



R.F.D.

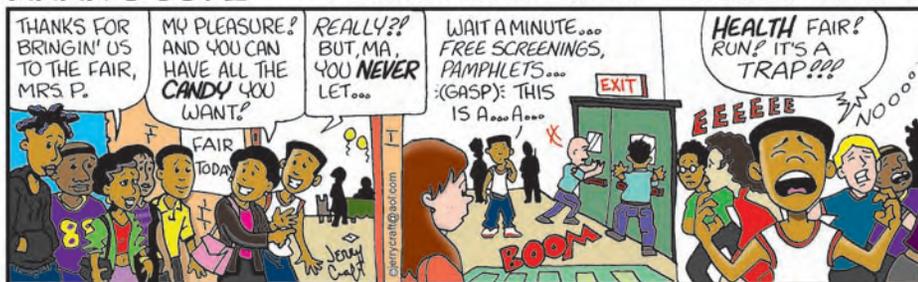
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The Spats

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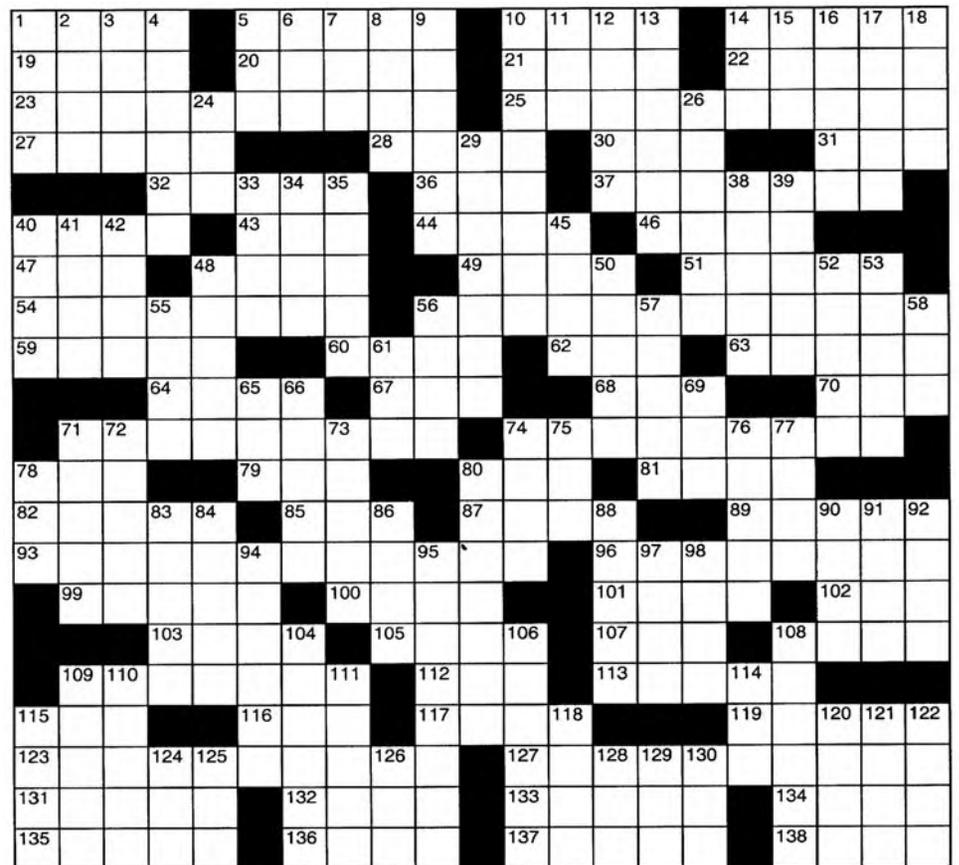
HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels. Differences: 1. Man's collar is different. 2. Window is larger. 3. One boy is larger. 4. Leg on the left is missing. 5. Boy on the bottom has a hat. 6. Part of fence is missing.

Super Crossword



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- | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ACROSS | 54 Comic born 10/5/1924 | 102 Maugham's "Cakes and —" | 3 London area | 42 Room divider | 92 Cut the payroll |
| 1 Engage, as gears | 56 Veterinarian born 10/3/1916 | 103 Kind of oven | 4 Kermit's creator | 45 Footfall | 94 Guru's grounds |
| 5 Spanish city | 59 Rabbit food | 105 Valuable | 5 Master | 48 Confuse | 95 Practical people |
| 10 Writer Silverstein | 60 Tiger food | 107 Part pugilists | 6 Delivery truck | 50 Laotian native | 97 At any time |
| 14 Correctional | 62 Actress Zadora | 108 Walked | 7 Lodging | 52 "Now We Are Six" author | 98 Soybean product |
| 19 — vera | 63 Take inventory | 109 Venus — | 8 Hang over | 53 Greek lawmaker | 104 Tire type |
| 20 Church law | 64 Clay clump | 112 Showed the way | 9 Use a | 103 Across | 106 Fit to feast on |
| 21 Hawaiian harbor | 67 Leading lady? | 113 Consequences alternative | 10 Where to see models | 11 Terry-cloth inscription | 56 Hirt hit |
| 22 Isolated | 68 Landon or Kjellin | 115 Paid player | 11 Where to see models | 12 Spanish hero | 57 Turkish treat |
| 23 Singer born 10/9/1940 | 70 Figs. | 116 Drillers' org. | 11 Terry-cloth inscription | 13 Rich | 58 Cobb and Hardin |
| 25 Writer born 10/16/1856 | 71 Coach born 10/18/1939 | 117 Horus' mom | 12 Spanish hero | 14 Dachs-hund's dog | 61 "A mouse!" |
| 27 Win by — | 74 Entertainer born 10/10/1946 | 119 Intended | 13 Rich | 15 Yalie | 65 Eccentric |
| 28 Catty remark? | 78 Pine product | 123 Poet born 10/14/1894 | 14 Dachs-hund's dog | 16 Nick of "Cape Fear" | 66 Frank book |
| 30 Wells or Tarbell | 79 Patriotic org. | 127 Actor born 10/20/1882 | 15 Yalie | 17 Actress MacDowell | 69 Nourished |
| 31 — the season . . . | 80 Merry month | 133 Permission | 16 Nick of "Cape Fear" | 18 Dregs | 71 Roger of baseball |
| 32 Hall's partner | 81 Leading man? | 134 Abhor | 17 Actress MacDowell | 19 Where | 72 Boiling |
| 36 Spring mo. | 82 College exams | 135 Crow toe | 18 Dregs | 24 Where flocks frolic | 73 Go fishing |
| 37 Fan | 85 Hurried | 136 Glasgow girl | 24 Where flocks frolic | 26 Act like Attila | 74 Big party |
| 40 Time to crow? | 87 On the briny | 137 Adds lace | 26 Act like Attila | 29 Function | 75 Check out |
| 43 Cunning | 89 Stringed instrument | 138 Manuscript imperative | 29 Function | 33 Skater Lipinski | 76 Poe crow |
| 44 Sayer and Delibes | 93 Actress born 10/17/1918 | DOWN | 33 Skater Lipinski | 34 "— go brag!" | 77 Kuwaiti ruler |
| 46 Ballplayer Winfield | 96 Artist born 10/19/1937 | 1 Goya's "The Naked —" | 34 "— go brag!" | 35 Cook clams | 78 Rocky hill |
| 47 Significant years | 99 Genders | 2 North Carolina campus | 35 Cook clams | 38 Manifest | 79 Grows up |
| 48 Racer Luyendyk | 100 Stead | | 38 Manifest | 39 — incognita | 80 Without care |
| 49 Composer Nino | 101 Bard's river | | 39 — incognita | 40 Labor leader Eugene | 81 Without care |
| 51 Bacteria | | | 40 Labor leader Eugene | 41 Notes from Verdi? | 82 Without care |
| | | | 41 Notes from Verdi? | 91 Composer Schifrin | 83 Without care |
| | | | | | 84 Word with metal or music |
| | | | | | 86 Film — |
| | | | | | 88 In pieces |
| | | | | | 90 Julie's "Doctor Zhivago" co-star |
| | | | | | 91 Composer Schifrin |
| | | | | | 92 Cut the payroll |
| | | | | | 94 Guru's grounds |
| | | | | | 95 Practical people |
| | | | | | 97 At any time |
| | | | | | 98 Soybean product |
| | | | | | 104 Tire type |
| | | | | | 106 Fit to feast on |
| | | | | | 108 Chicken servings |
| | | | | | 109 Singer Payne |
| | | | | | 110 Regional |
| | | | | | 111 Bamboo muncher |
| | | | | | 114 Kind of cross |
| | | | | | 115 Swamp stuff |
| | | | | | 118 Bird food |
| | | | | | 120 Castle ditch |
| | | | | | 121 Tivoli's Villa d'— |
| | | | | | 122 Spare fare |
| | | | | | 124 Actor Tognazzi |
| | | | | | 125 Half of us |
| | | | | | 126 "M*A*S*H" extras |
| | | | | | 128 Trail |
| | | | | | 129 "Hi, Horace!" |
| | | | | | 130 Berlioz's "— Troyens" |

FUN PAGES

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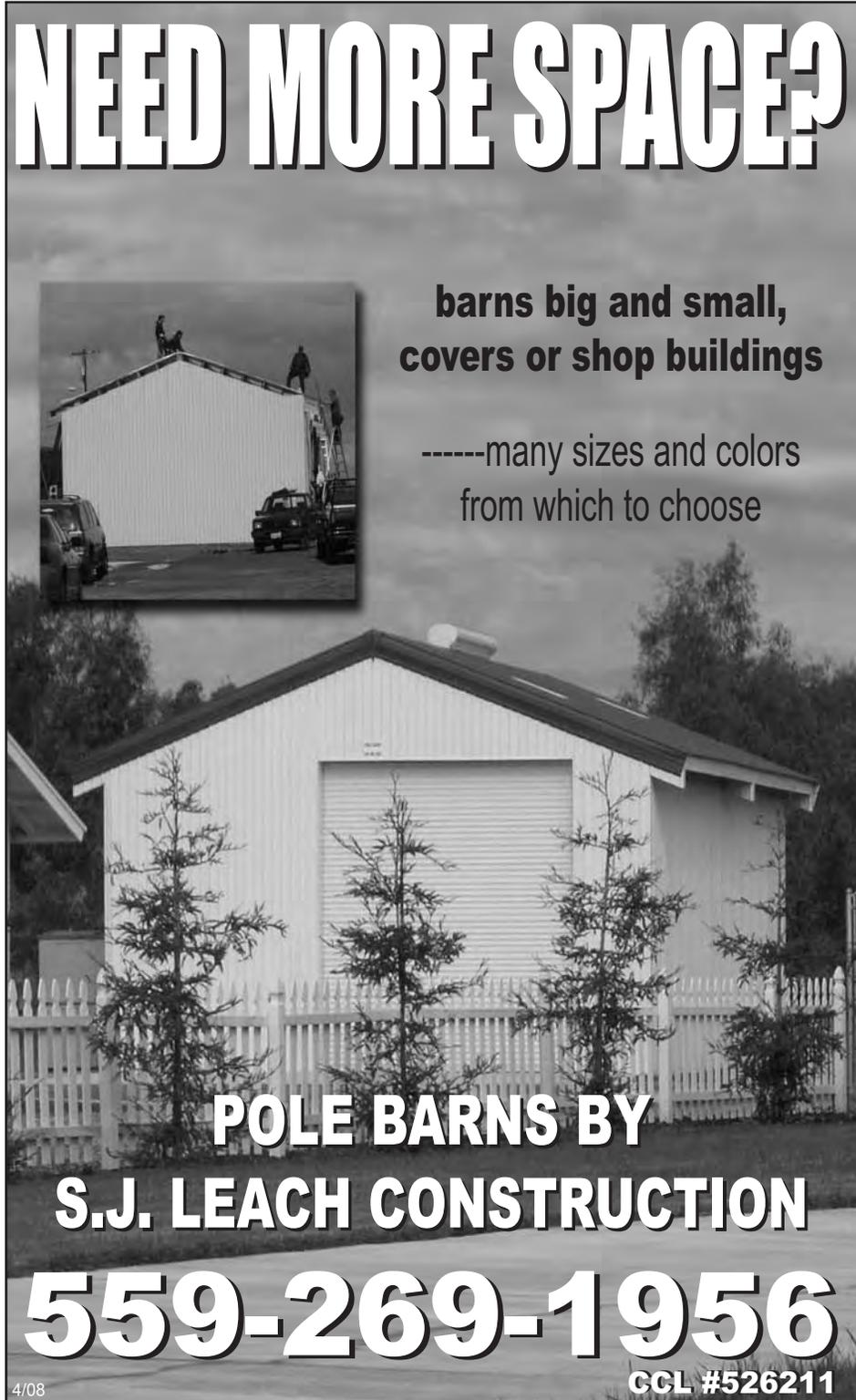
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COMMERCIAL - WAREHOUSE FOR LEASE @ HWY 99 and Golden State Bl. 24,000 sq. ft. Call for details.

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	-		x		28
x		x		÷	
	+		x		35
+		+		+	
	+		+		15
24		23		2	

1 2 3 5 6 7 7 8 9

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SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

5			4					7
		1	8		7	6		
	6			9				5
	1				2	4	3	
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	8	9		4				3
1			7			2		
		7			3		8	

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 3-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

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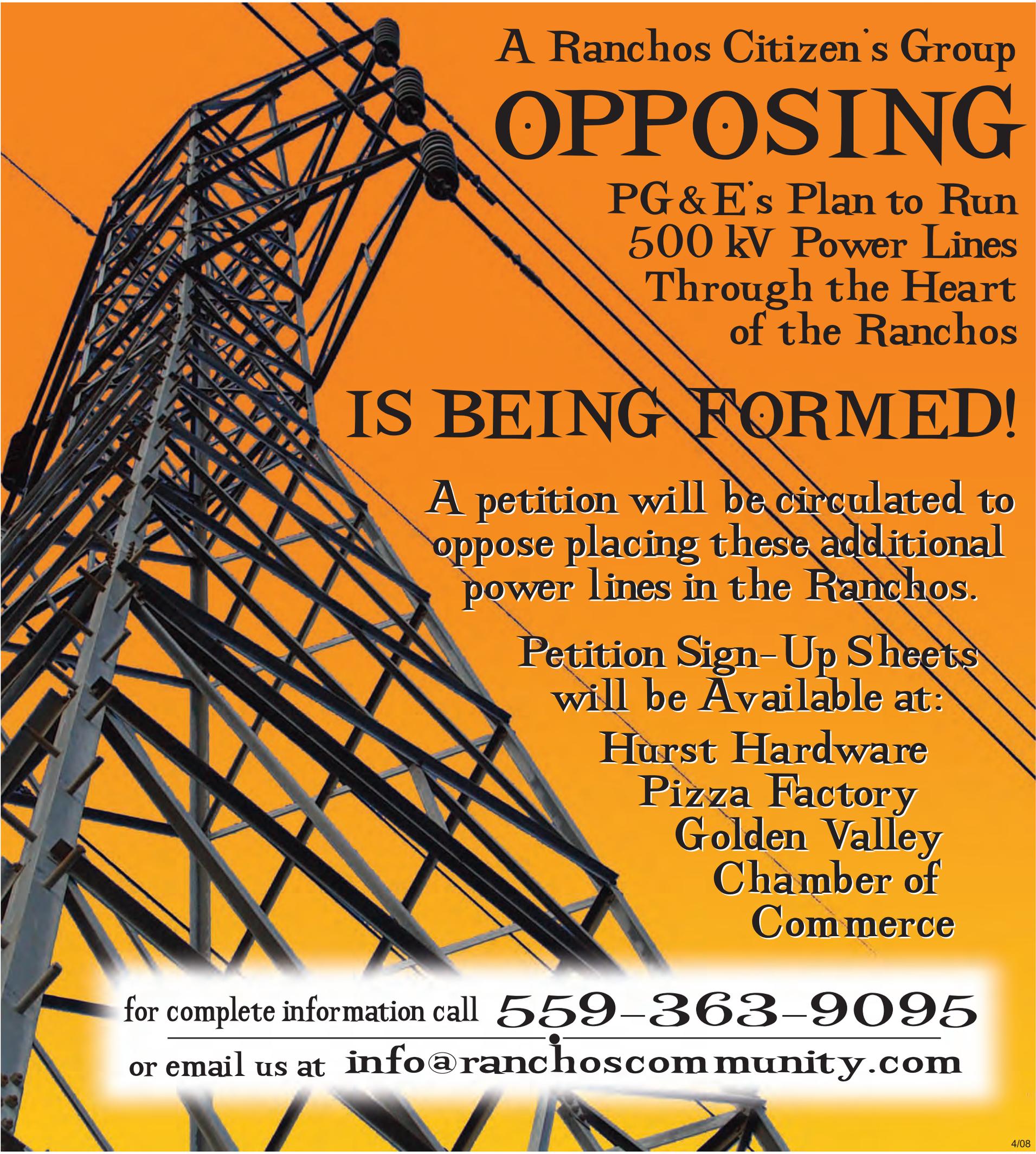
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ANSWERS

24		23		2
6	+	8	+	15
+		+		
2	+	3	X	35
X		X		÷
9	-	5	X	7
28				

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2	7	4	9	3	8	5	6	1
8	1	5	6	7	2	4	3	9
7	6	2	3	9	1	8	5	4
3	4	1	8	5	7	6	9	2
5	9	8	4	2	6	3	1	7



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