

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

DAILY LOTTERY

SUPER LOTTO

20 28 38 42 43
Meganumber: 27
Jackpot: \$56 Million

FANTASY 5

11 12 13 18 29

DAILY 3

Daytime: 2 1 8
Evening: 5 2 6

DAILY DERBY

1st: 10 Solid Gold
2nd: 11 Money Bags
3rd: 05 California Classic

RACE TIME: 1:47.54

Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the winning number information, mistakes can occur. In the event of any discrepancies, California State laws and California Lottery regulations will prevail. Complete game information and prize claiming instructions are available at California Lottery retailers. Visit the California State Lottery web site: <http://www.calottery.com>

NEWS OF THE WEIRD BY CHUCK SHEPARD

David Smith Sr., who holds the world record for the longest flight of being shot from a cannon, was blasted about 150 feet in August from Tijuana, Mexico, into California, uninjured, as part of an art project about "dissolving borders." (He showed his passport before blast-off.) However, a November 2002 catapult shot of a 19-year-old Oxford University (England) biochemistry student (who was a member of Oxford's extreme sports club) ended badly, as an inquest in October 2005 heard; he was propelled almost 100 yards, which was just short of his landing net.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is the third day of 2006.
There are 362 days left in the year.

On Jan. 3, 1777, Gen. George Washington's army routed the British in the Battle of Princeton, N.J.

In 1938, the March of Dimes campaign to fight polio was organized.

In 1521, Martin Luther was excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church.

In 2000, the last new daily "Peanuts" strip by Charles Schulz ran in 2,600 newspapers.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"To have reason to get up in the morning, it is necessary to possess a guiding principle. A belief of some kind. A bumper sticker, if you will."

JUDITH GUEST
AMERICAN AUTHOR

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Cemetery director fights for reputation

BY RYAN HYATT

Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — A personnel hearing to determine if the director of the city's cemetery was incompetent or just had his own management style which led to financial troubles at the graveyard will resume next week.

Michael Steen was fired this past fall after three audits revealed the management of Woodlawn Cemetery's finances was not in line with general accounting practices. Steen, who is appealing his dismissal, said he has his own management style and had a lack of appropriate resources from City Hall.

That's according to testimony from both sides at a personnel board hearing held last month. The hearing will continue Jan. 9.

Steen appealed City Hall's decision to terminate him in September after a nine-month investigation concluded there was no criminal wrongdoing on his part regarding financial discrepancies discovered at Woodlawn, a municipal cemetery located between Pico Boulevard and Michigan Avenue, from 14th to 17th streets.

Officials at City Hall haven't said specifically how much money might not be accounted for at Woodlawn or what revenue might remain so. They have, however, paid outside firms for two audits, as well as conducted their own audit, all of which have shown discrepancies in Woodlawn's financial books.

The cemetery brings in about \$450,000 a year in revenue. Because Steen's firing is a personnel matter, city officials won't elaborate on circumstances surrounding the criminal investigation, or his termination — beyond what is said in the appeal hearing.

See WOODLAWN, page 5

Running from the past



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

Alex Tiseo leads the pack during the inaugural 5K Resolution Festival Soft Sand Run on New Year's Day. Tiseo, a 19-year-old football kicker from Michigan Tech, crossed the finish line first in 23 minutes and 52 seconds.

Rose parade: Youngsters pave the way

BY RYAN HYATT

Daily Press Staff Writer

ROSE AVENUE — Young students wearing florescent green vests and hard hats are cleaning up this neighborhood street some say has been neglected — until now.

The effort will better maintain a

LOCAL

Homeless man's body found on New Year's

By Daily Press staff

DOWNTOWN — A homeless man's dead body was found on a bench by passersby on New Year's Day.

At about 6:50 p.m., Santa Monica Police were called to the 200 block of Wilshire Boulevard, in front of the Banana Republic. Upon investigation, officers confirmed that a homeless man in his 50s had died.

Preliminary investigation indicates that the cause of death is natural.

gateway to Venice Beach where trash from motor and pedestrian traffic often collects on the sidewalks and is slow to disappear.

The dozen or so Los Angeles middle school students — who can be seen shoveling, raking and sweeping sections of Rose Avenue twice a month — are involved in a program called "Clean and Green," organized by the Los Angeles Conservation Corps.

The LACC is a nonprofit group which provides struggling youth with employment opportunities to develop their job skills and character while working on community-oriented projects.

Participating students are paid minimum wage. In addition, they gain a better sense of pride, responsibility and community involvement, said Mark Antonio Grant, a field deputy for Los Angeles City Councilman Bill Rosendahl, whose jurisdiction includes Venice and helped organize the sweeps.

"This is a great program that gets the kids out there making a difference and being recognized for it," Grant said.

Youngsters who complete the

"This is a great program that gets the kids out there making a difference and being recognized for it."

MARK ANTONIO GRANT

Field deputy

eight-week program are honored with an award ceremony hosted by Rosendahl. The program runs year round, and the sweeps are expected to continue indefinitely, Grant said.

The effort was initiated by a local resident, Jamie Cantor Ginsburg, who owns Plantine Cookies, which are made to order from a commercial kitchen in Venice.

"I moved to the area six months ago and my husband and I were walking down Rose Avenue and noticed it could use a little love," Ginsburg said. "The kids have

See ROSE PARADE, page 5

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HOUSE CALLS AND SAME DAY APPOINTMENTS

Find your friends, Taurus

♈ ARIES (March 21-April 19)
 ★★☆☆ What someone in the know shares with you needs to be kept to yourself. Others could be reactive. You might need to respond to a request. Insight and spontaneity merge. Know when to say enough — for your sake. Tonight: Yawn — get extra sleep.

♉ TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
 ★★★★★ Your opinions are highly sought after, yet at the same time you are looking for answers. Do not hesitate to be spontaneous with a partner. Emphasize your goals. Concentrate, and don't let others distract you. Tonight: Find your friends.

♊ GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
 ★★☆☆ Be willing to absorb others' opinions, though you might have to take unanticipated action. Deal with responsibilities and finances. You'll succeed as a result. Flow with the unpredictable. Excitement greets you. Tonight: Don't be surprised if you are up late.

♋ CANCER (June 21-July 22)
 ★★★★★ You are finally able to break out of the box, at least in your thought patterns. Some Moon Children might need to revise their plans because of information received. Don't get upset; take the high road. Tonight: What would be mentally relaxing?

♌ LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
 ★★★★★ Work with others knowing that you have a good idea. You seem to be the circuit through which information and ideas pass. A partner or associate certainly surprises you. Don't get fixed in rigid patterns — certainly not now. Tonight: Follow another's lead.

♍ VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
 ★★★★★ Review a situation that is close to your heart. Swapping ideas with others can and will make a difference, if you allow it. Sometimes you wonder what needs to happen in order for you to see eye to eye with a key person. Tonight: Try it someone else's way.

♎ LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
 ★★★★★ You might opt for a low profile even though you are bubbling with information. How you view a situation could be very different from how your cohorts do. You might need to act on your own or be extremely innovative when dealing with others. Tonight: Find an outlet for your high energy.

♏ SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
 ★★★★★ You have a way of invigorating others through coming up with new ideas. Start up talks, and you'll come up with very interesting ideas. Ingenuity flourishes through brainstorming and tossing out rigid guidelines. Tonight: Spontaneity rules.

♐ SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
 ★★☆☆ Know when to check all facts and figures. Taking this precaution could save you a lot of aggravation in the future. You might need to let go of some preconceived ideas. Check out someone's great moneymaking scheme with care. Tonight: Happy at home.

♑ CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
 ★★★★★ You naturally find the right words to address an issue. You find that others respond to you with speed and/or the unexpected. Your ideas stimulate more ideas. Expect to brainstorm for much of the day. Tonight: Try a new neighborhood spot for dinner.

♒ AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
 ★★☆☆ You might be weighing the pros and cons of a personal matter or expense. You might opt to do something or make a purchase from out of nowhere. Your mind works overtime. Don't make mountains out of molehills. Tonight: Gather your bills.

♓ PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
 ★★★★★ Changes you make and your unexpected behavior could be quite startling to others. In fact, you might get a reaction that could set you back. Do a better job of listening, and you'll find that others will be more responsive. Tonight: As you like.

			Santa Monica Daily Press		
Published Monday through Saturday Phone: (310) 458-PRESS (7737) • Fax: (310) 576-9913 1427 Third Street Promenade, Ste. #202 • Santa Monica, CA 90401 • www.smdp.com					
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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Nonprofits smiled on in 2005

By Daily Press staff

The California Community Foundation has announced that it awarded more than \$33 million to nonprofits serving Los Angeles County during 2005. The top three areas of grantmaking by percentage are: health care (29.3 percent); education (25.9 percent); and arts and culture (25.8 percent).

The community foundations makes grants to organizations throughout the county, including nonprofit agencies in Santa Monica.

“The staff and board of the community foundation are committed to making positive changes in Los Angeles County,” said Antonia Hernandez, president and CEO of the California Community Foundation. “We are both excited and proud that the \$33 million we and our donors invested in the Los Angeles community is being used to build affordable housing, teach kids to read, treat chronic asthma and address many other critical social issues.”

Grants were made through the community foundation’s discretionary grantmaking program, special initiatives and many of the more than 500 active donor advised funds managed by the foundation.

Donor advised funds are established by individuals, families and corporations, and donors can make grants to any qualified nonprofit agency through that type of fund. They are considered to be an alternative to a private foundation, since there are no start-up fees, administrative hassles or minimum payout requirements.

Field of interest and unrestricted funds are used by the foundation’s discretionary grantmaking program. Field of interest funds are created by donors who wish to support a particular issue area — children’s services or animal welfare, for example — but want the foundation to take care of deciding which specific organizations to support.

Since October, the foundation has awarded more that \$2.4 million through its discretionary grantmaking program in the areas of neighborhood revitalization, health care, early education, economic development and more. The grants range from \$26,000 to \$357,000.

A \$106,000 health care grant was awarded to Helen Keller International Childsight program, which provides screenings to 15,000 low-income children throughout Los Angeles. Additionally, the grant will fund up to 1,200 pairs of prescription glasses for those children who need them.

Established in 1915, the foundation is one of the largest philanthropic organizations in Southern California, with assets of more that \$760 million.

To see a full list of recently awarded grants or to learn more about the CCF, visit www.calfund.org.

SNOW AND SURF REPORTS

CONDITIONS

DATA PROVIDED BY ONTHESNOW.COM

BEAR MOUNTAIN

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 12"-8"	LIFT HOURS 8:00am - 4:00pm	RUNS OPEN 8	LIFTS OPEN 9/12
CONDITIONS: Machine Made, Machine Groomed, Hard Packed, Loose Granular, Thin Cover				

JUNE MOUNTAIN

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 40"	BASE DEPTH 40"-72"	LIFT HOURS 8:30am - 4:00pm	RUNS OPEN 35	LIFTS OPEN 2/16
CONDITIONS: Powder, Packed Powder, Machine Groomed				

MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 120"-144"	LIFT HOURS 8:30 am - 4 pm	RUNS OPEN 50	LIFTS OPEN 11/28
CONDITIONS: Powder, Packed Powder, Machine Groomed				

MOUNTAIN HIGH

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 8"-10"	LIFT HOURS 8:00 am - 10:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 3	LIFTS OPEN 3/16
CONDITIONS: Machine Made, Wet, Thin Cover				

MT. BALDY

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 0"-1"	LIFT HOURS 8:00 am - 4:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 0	LIFTS OPEN 0
CONDITIONS: N/A				

SNOW SUMMIT

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 12"-12"	LIFT HOURS 8:00 am - 6:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 8	LIFTS OPEN 8/13
CONDITIONS: Machine Made, Machine Groomed, Hard Packed, Loose Granular, Thin Cover				

SNOW VALLEY

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 12"-12"	LIFT HOURS 8:00 am - 9:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 2	LIFTS OPEN 4/11
CONDITIONS: Machine Made, Machine Groomed				

CONDITIONS

WATER TEMP: 59°

DATA PROVIDED BY WETSAND.COM

SWELL FORECAST (12-24 FT)

Tuesday the 3rd looks like a big day as this swell comes to its peak. Calculations today call for face heights running 10-14 feet at most west facing breaks, with standout spots possibly seeing some set waves reach face heights of 16 feet or better. Caution is strongly advised.

LONG RANGE SYNOPSIS

Large, storm-driven surf hits coast over the next 24-48 hours...

More NW for 4th and again by 7th..

TIDE FORECAST FOR SANTA MONICA

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SURF AND SNOW QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS? EMAIL ALEX@SMOP.COM



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The Q Line

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Now that a new year is upon us, 2006 will prove to be 365 days of opportunities and challenges. The city of Santa Monica has many of both — a new city manager will start his job this month, as will a “homeless czar” who is charged with effectively dealing with our growing residentially-challenged citizens.

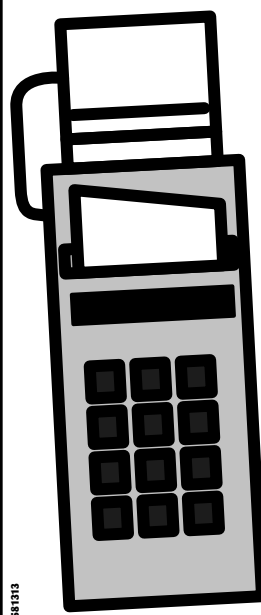
So this week, Q-Line wants to know, “What is the biggest issue facing Santa Monica and how should we as a community deal with it?”

Call (310) 285-8106 before Friday at 5 p.m. and we'll print your responses in the weekend edition. Please try to limit your comments to a minute or less. It might help to think first about the wording of your response.

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OPINION



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

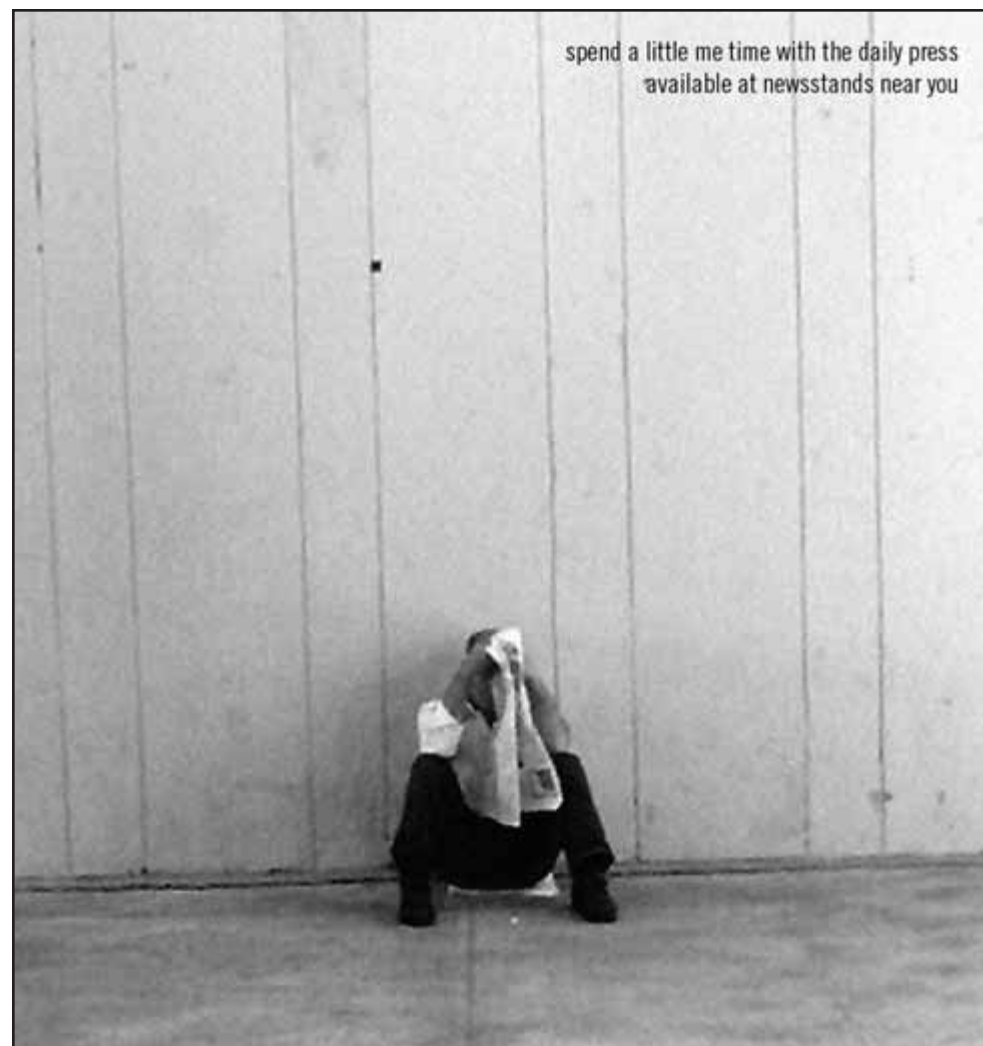
The intelligence behind the Big Bang

Editor:

I read with interest the article on intelligent design (SMDP, Dec. 29, page 4). The concept is nothing new. If I remember correctly, my freshman philosophy class at UCSB had a unit about the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, who wanted to prove that God existed. Aquinas assumed everything had a cause. He carried this reasoning back to what he called "the first cause." Since the first cause was unknowable, Aquinas called it God. I think we were required to put a hole in this logic, as well as that of Descartes, Socrates, Plato and others. I remember the professor saying something like, "How do we know that nothing caused the first cause?" All this hoopla is just recycled medieval thinking, as far as I'm concerned, but it is fun to speculate. And if anyone can tell me what caused the Big Bang, I'd be glad to listen.

Harriet Beck
Santa Monica

OPINIONS EXPRESSED are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect those of the Santa Monica Daily Press staff. Guest editorials from residents are encouraged, as are letters to the editor. Letters will be published on a space-available basis. It is our intention to publish all letters we receive, except those that are libelous or are unsigned. Preference will be given to those that are e-mailed to editor@smdp.com. All letters must include the author's name and telephone number for purposes of verification. Letters also may be mailed to our offices located at 1427 Third Street Promenade, Suite 202, Santa Monica, 90401, or faxed to (310) 576-9913. All letters and guest editorials are subject to editing for space and content.



Bag grocery store plastic



WHAT'S THE POINT?

BY DAVID PISSARRA

By now, the holiday madness has hopefully left our lives and we can return to thinking about things beyond which "must have" toy to buy, how many pounds of cheese to put out for our friends and families and that jerk in the parking structure who decided to take up two stalls and half of the lane with an SUV. It is that time of year when we are supposed to have our resolutions made and firmly in place.

Most of us will resolve to spend the first two weeks of this year eating better, working out, and realizing that we spent too much on people we don't need to spend on, and not enough on those we do. I'd like to propose that as a society we resolve to make this world a better place to be.

This is not one of those, "Help the homeless, feed the poor, cloth the naked," types of columns. No, what I'd like to see is very simple.

I'd like to see this city, and perhaps this state, if we can get someone in the State Capitol to pay attention, to tax the use of those horrible plastic bags at the grocery store.

Those super thin, non-recyclable, plastic bags are a wonder. They can hold 30 pounds of potatoes, but if I have a carton of milk and a dozen eggs, the handles break.

On a recent road trip to Utah, we must have passed thousands of those bags on the roadside, in the divider, and trapped in chain link fences like fish in gill netting.

Now I must admit, as a dog owner, I really like the convenience factor of having a ready supply of poo-bags. And judging from the army of dog owners that I observe who do actually pick up after their pooch, the grocery bag is the preferred choice among poo-pickers.

But I can't help but think that there is a better way for us as a society to get our groceries home from the store and pick up our dog's poop.

Whole Foods Market makes a good attempt at social responsibility in this area. They use sturdy bags which are printed with an announcement, that if you re-use them, or any other bag, they will give you a nickel. Now a nickel is certainly not much money, but at least they are trying to motivate their customers to be more socially responsible — which is more than I can say for the other stores, who all seem to have removed their grocery bag recycle bins.

In the interest of fairness, I have to say that I have been told by the manager at the Palisades Ralphs when I brought my bags in for recycling that they have the bin in the back, and she took the bags from me and tossed them in the manager's bay between the checkout lines. But honestly, there's a little voice in the back of my head that says, "she just says that, takes the bags, and they end in the general trash anyway."

I'd like to see the city of Santa Monica create a tax that I could stand behind with full support. This is one topic that I think our City Council could and should stand tall on, and for once not appear like quixotic fools. The Irish experience with these bags shows that a good tax, properly applied, can have the intended effect, and the state can benefit in two ways.

"According to the Irish Department of

the Environment, shoppers used around 1.2 billion plastic bags per year before the tax was imposed in March 2002. Since then, the use has dropped by around 95 percent," according to MSNBC.COM.

Ireland has a population of approximately 4 million people, and their usage was about 300 bags per person per year, totaling 1.2 billion bags. Three hundred bags a year sounds like a lot, until you look at what you use. I go shopping for major groceries about once a week and get four bags on average, 52 weeks a year make that 208 bags. When you add in the "just stopping in for a quick ..." plus the occasional office supply purchase, church social purchase, it is easy to get to 300 bags a year per person.

The Irish tax amount was equivalent to approximately 17 cents. This resulted in a dramatic 95 percent drop in the usage of the bags, and provided cash to the state to fund a recycling program. By my estimates the Irish tax raised \$10 million in revenue, give or take.

In Santa Monica there are about 86,000 residents, not including the daytime inflow of office workers and tourists. At an average of 300 bags a year, that means about 26 million bags a year are used. We could definitely cut down on the use of those things.

I'd like to see the tax be \$1 per bag and the funds earmarked for purchasing green space in the city.

I'm reasonably certain that a tax of \$1 per bag would decrease the amount of the bags in significant ways almost immediately. I think a tax on them is the most logical because if we ban them outright, the lobbyists and the grocery stores will all start screaming. The media will have a field day again with our little socialist community, and again we'll look stupid on the news. The lobbyists will be all over our City Council trying to influence the legislation, and historically, when lobbyists and politicians get together, the public loses, so we want to avoid that. But if we just get a tax passed, the lobbyists won't argue that much, and we can get rid of this product that is a scourge on the land.

If we taxed them at \$1 per bag, and that caused usage to drop by 95 percent, we would reduce our annual use by 24.5 million bags. The remaining usage would generate about \$1.3 million — just enough to buy a corner lot somewhere in the city.

I know taxes are not popular. But if we did this on a statewide level, here's what the numbers would look like: With a population of almost 36 million people, we use almost 11 billion of those bags a year, probably more. If use dropped by 95 percent and we had \$1 tax per bag, we could raise \$540 million.

I think it would make great legislation. It would accomplish two goals that are hard to argue with, in a non-confrontational manner. The argument against it, is that it would fall unduly on the lower income people. I disagree.

There are enough bags in circulation that if you can't afford \$1, you can bring your own from home.

And if you don't have any at home, just stop along the way at any chain link fence and pick one up.

(David Pissarra is a business development lawyer in the Santa Monica firm of Pissarra & Grist. He can be reached at dpissarra@pissarra.com or (310) 664-9969.)

LOCAL



Director put on leave

WOODLAWN, from page 1

which is public record.

Steen — described as well-liked and well-respected during his 15-year tenure as Woodlawn's director — was placed on paid administrative leave in December of 2004 while City Hall investigated his financial management of the cemetery.

As a result of his termination, Steen has taken private funeral jobs which pay between \$200 and \$300 a week, according to his domestic partner, who asked to remain anonymous in fear of reprisals related to his full-time job.

That's a fraction of the \$100,000-plus annual salary Steen is believed to have earned as Woodlawn's top administrator. Considering the fact no criminal charges have been filed, Steen hopes to clear his

name and be compensated by City Hall through the course of the appeal, his domestic partner said.

"There are two points trying to be achieved with this appeal," Steen's domestic partner said. "One is trying to clear Michael's name. The other is to see to it that Michael is compensated for the loss of his job, since it's unlikely at this point that the city would be willing to give it back to him, or that he would even take it, if they offered."

After Steen appealed his termination, the matter was set to go before a five-person personnel board, whose members are appointed and neither hold public office nor are city employees. The board serves as an advisory to the City Council and

See WOODLAWN, page 11

Clean sweeps: Rose Avenue gets a new outlook for 2006

ROSE PARADE, from page 1

really helped."

Ginsburg said she felt Rose was in such need of "love" that she decided to run for an elected position on the Grass Roots Venice Neighborhood Council last fall with the hope of finding a solution to the street's woes.

Ginsburg failed to win the election. However, she wanted her campaign promise to be fulfilled.

She contacted Grant, who made some inquiries and learned that the LACC offered to head up localized cleaning projects.

Having spoken with LACC representatives and local business groups, Grant was able to arrange for Rose Avenue and areas in Westchester to be cleaned on a bi-monthly basis. Support for the LACC's programs come from a variety of public and private donors, according to the group's Web site.

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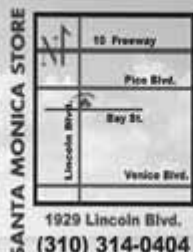
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COMMENTARY

Rain on my parade: Heavens doused an unexpected holiday



ANY DAY IN LA

BY HEIDI MANTEUFFEL

Los Angeles really is a beautiful place with beautiful people, and I specifically like it when they aren't here.

What good are the sandy beaches, the Hollywood boulevards and trendy restaurants if you have to deal with the entire population of LA just to get to them?

On my arrival from Chicago back to LA at the close of my vacation, the bare streets indicated to me everyone else was still on one. So while last week was considered my Christmas break, this week feels more like a real vacation.

Christmas week was spent eating, sleeping and getting presents, all of which can be very stressful. No, I deserve better than lazing around. I deserve a break.

So what am I going to do on my real vacation, you may ask — or that I'm forcing you to ask since rhetorical questions can't be answered in print?

I'm gonna be a rebel, a rabble rouser. I'm gonna park anywhere I want on my own block after 6 p.m.

I will actually run errands around Santa Monica, instead of purchasing items on Amazon to evade noxious traffic.

Parking spaces open in a Santa Monica parking structure — who knew?

Did you know you can get from Santa Monica to Pasadena in under 25 minutes? All this time I wondered what a moving freeway looked like.

Even the Sunday service of sun and bikinis was out because the beaches were as good as empty. I rollerbladed up and down the sidewalk without too many people staring at my less-than-designer exercise fare.

Yes, I have something to admit to everyone. Hi, my name is Heidi, and I refuse to spend over \$100 on clothes I plan to sweat the socks off of.

But alas, the city of Santa Monica treasury department never takes a vacation. No, they continue to work hard through the hustle and bustle of Christmas-kwanzakka.

I went down to pay for beach parking in the two-hour max spots. Sure, I discovered the machine will accept a \$5 bill, but it doesn't always feel like giving them back.

I think it's fantastic that not only will the city take your money, but you get a neatly printed receipt of exactly how they plan to take from you: "shorted \$3."

Yes, for once, the Santa Monica/Venice bike path wasn't brimming to full capacity. I rollerbladed without having to hurdle little munchkins like soccer practice cones, and then dodge their irate mothers with swinging Fendi purses. Without mass quantities of over buff LA-ians, including the old ladies that continually speed past me in better shape than I am, I felt like I could finally let go.

Other exercise enthusiasts seemed to feel that way too. I passed a large 6 foot 2 inch man on rollerblades executing interpretive dance movements to the beat of his Walkman, which I assume was actually turned on.

I was so excited. A four-day weekend was mine for the taking. Nothing could stop me from going to Culver City and back. I dared the usual crew as they normally do to stop traffic at every single off and onramp to the 405.

Until, the thing that never happens, did. Rain. It started raining in LA, part of Saturday, most of Sunday and Monday.

Well now my vacation is ruined. I'm not from Iowa, I live in LA, and we don't deal with having to wipe our windshields and break down the meaning of ABS.

I once treaded through snow with miles of gray sludge and icy patches just to get to Wendy's. Now I don't even like driving cross-town to Miyagi's. Have you ever seen a Californian drive in rain?

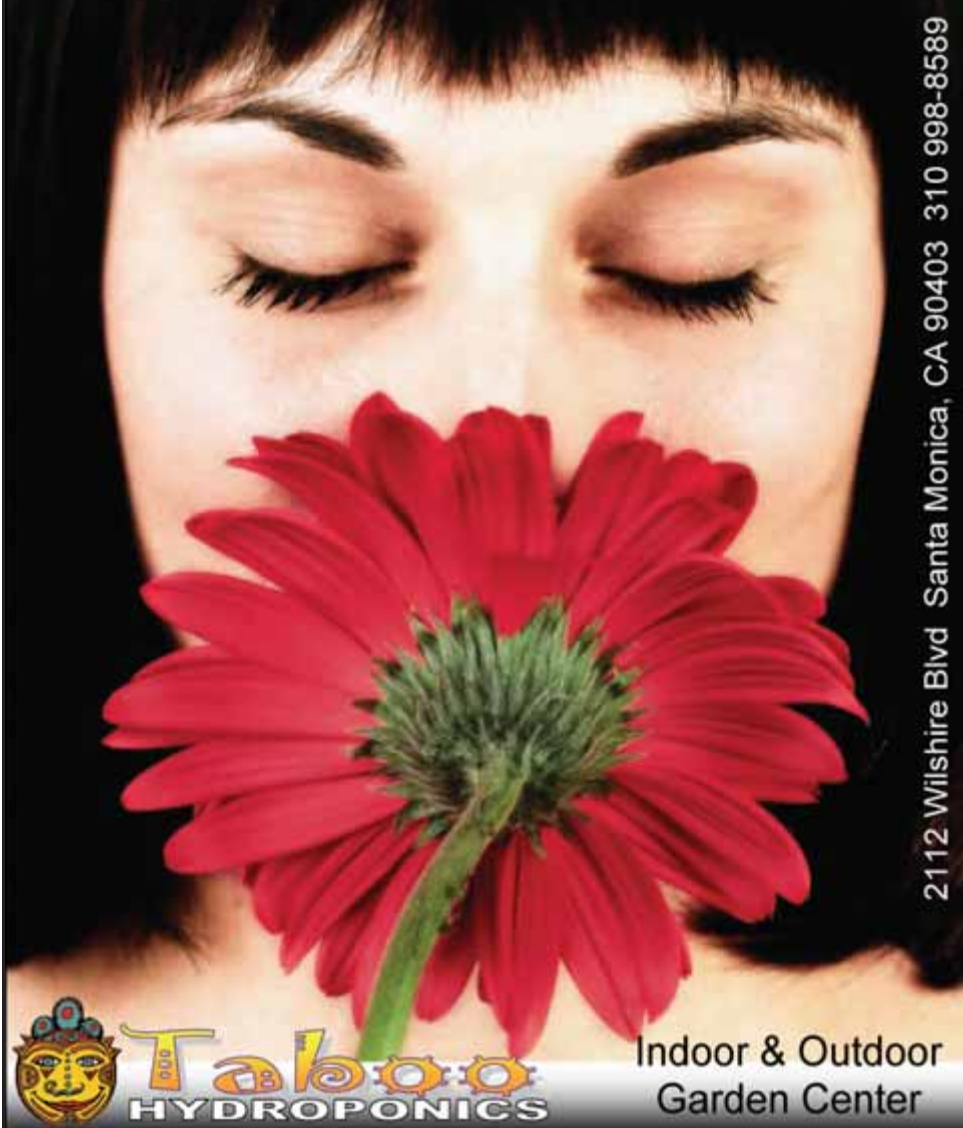
Besides, who should have to deal with rain in the first place? Oh wait, the rest of the entire country the majority of the year where weather includes three other dimensions of seasons beside warm, warmer and ultimate valley hot.

Well, I live in LA, and I won't stand for it. Rain is not natural, and so must be stricken from a city that otherwise is.

Hopefully, though, people in LA do understand the definition of sarcasm.

(Heidi can be reached at anydayin-la@gmail.com.)

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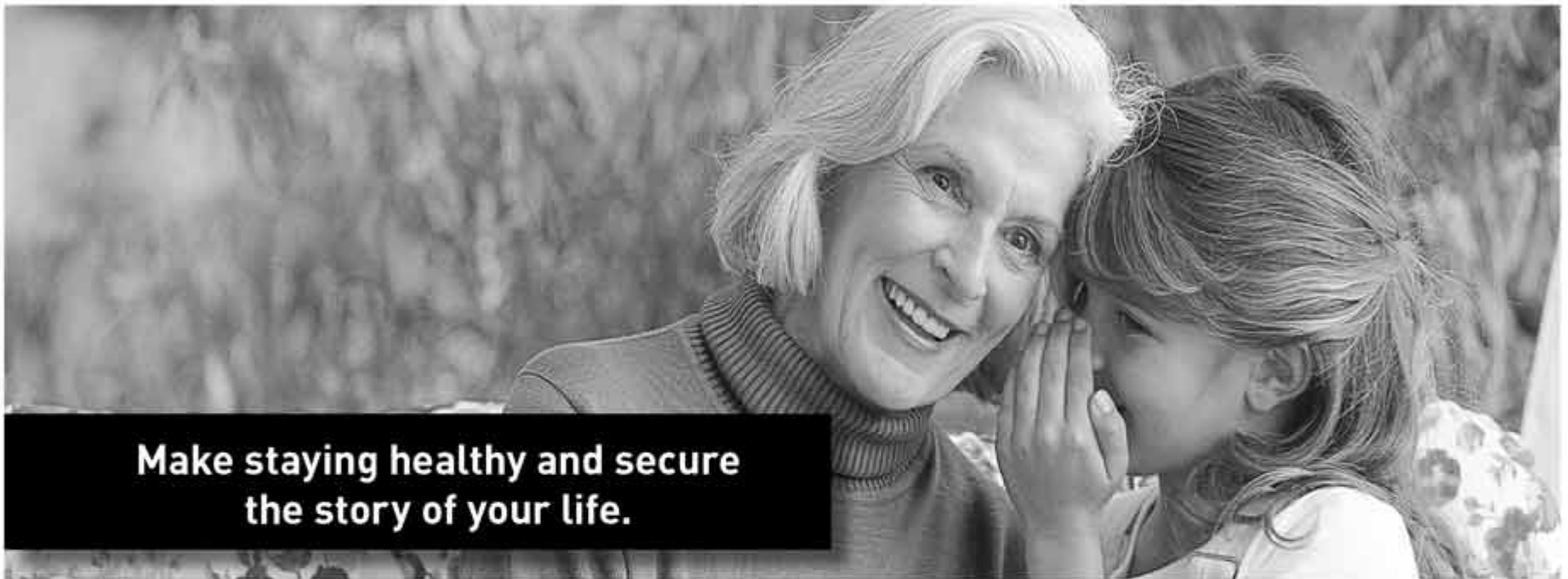
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**Tuesday, January 17
10 a.m.**
Marie Callender's
4356 Lincoln Blvd.
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DEAR DORIE

Weening wee little ones from the rush

Dear Dorie,

For the past few weeks, I've been really flexible with our nighttime routine. Now that the holidays are over, do you have any tips for getting the kids back in the swing of things?

— Ready for Reality

Dear Ready,

Yes! Pat yourself on the back for having the flexibility to enjoy the season and slowly, really slowly, limit the stimulation and sugar of the holiday routine.

Start simple, with a "no plans" evening and a long, drawn out bedtime ritual. Even if you spend an hour and a half getting your children to bed a little bit closer to their normal bedtime, consider it a success. Continue this for a few days.

Next, if they've been sleeping late, try waking up the house earlier. We're not talking alarm clocks here, just open shades and some music to help them shake off the snoozes.

Finally, serve their favorite healthy meals over and over again as they detox the sweets. This will help them sleep better and, as with most everything, sleep is the answer. Children are remarkably adaptable, and they usually prefer a calm routine. They should respond positively. Good luck.

— Dorie

(Dorie Meek is director of the Infant & Family Support Program, provided by Saint John's Health Center in partnership with the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District. Meek answers questions concerning children ages birth to 5 years old. Submit your questions to "Dear Dorie" at meek@smmusd.org, or call (310) 452-6132; fax (310) 452-6392).

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Now what? Getting kids back into swing of things



How Much Is Enough?

By Jean Illsley Clarke Ph.D.

The big days are over. The Nutcracker has come and gone; the holiday decorations have vanished from stores and streets. The presents have all been opened. Maybe not every thank-you has been sent, but the holiday bustle is past and the doldrums of January are here.

So what do the children do then, the poor things? No more presents and parties to look forward to. No more parts to memorize for the holiday programs. No more wondering what to give your best friends. No more wishing you get everything on your list.

Some children settle in to long-term enjoyment of the dolls, the trucks, the CDs and the computer games. Some parents wish the children would come, unbidden, to say, "Thank you for the wonderful experience, the arrangements you made, the decorations, the food, the gifts. Thank you." But that's not how it is in most families. If your kids did that, I congratulate you, and I have a two-hour interview I want to do with you to find out how you made that happen.

Some of our children, accustomed to getting everything they want, feel cheated if a certain gift wasn't on the pile. In many families the children feel let down. Little ones may be listless or unusually aggressive. Older children may be moody and hard to please. Teens may withdraw or look for other ways to continue the high level of excitement.

Does that mean we should skip the holiday activities? Not at all. Big celebrations of family, religion, and cultural-custom are part of the glue that holds communities together and helps children know who they are. Celebrations at the turn of the season, the coming of light, are cross-cultural and as old as history. It is a time of renewal, of looking forward, of hope. A time to come together and celebrate.

But, maybe we overdid it a little, and so what should we do now?

■ Accept that children may have the post-holiday blahs.

■ If there are too many toys, put some away for February or March.

■ Encourage children to relate the gift they are wearing or playing with to the person who sent it. Tell stories about the giver. This is one way to strengthen relationships.

■ Encourage physical exercise, outdoors if possible.

■ Monitor the amount of time spent in front of the screen. All ages, all types.

■ Monitor the content of the screen experiences. Play every video or electronic game your children play. Know the content and remove items that don't agree with your family values.

■ Start a winter family activity that is about benefiting others or the environment.

■ Monitor sleep. Especially for teenagers, do what you can to help them get eight to 10 hours of sleep a night. Their brains are growing fast, and, to paraphrase Hercule Perrot, you have to give the little gray cells time to generate.

■ Take good care of yourself so you have the energy to observe and the patience to interact with children as they transition from the holidays to "January normal."

■ Insist that each child has some unstructured time. Some times to hang out, do nothing and just be. Those are important times for children's growth.

"They over-scheduled my time. I didn't have time to be me, time to hang out." This was a common complaint reported in the Overindulgence studies by adults who were overindulged as children.

So help your children find healthy things to do. But don't yield to their temptation to become over-scheduled with activities. And don't become their social secretary. That's their job.

To participate in a new study on overindulgence and relationships log onto www.overindulgence.info.

(Jean Illsley Clarke Ph.D., Connie Dawson Ph.D., and David J. Bredehoft Ph.D. are co-authors of "How Much is Enough? Everything You Need to Know to Steer Clear of Overindulgence and Raise Likeable, Responsible, and Respectful Children." Illsley Clarke can be reached at jiconsults@aol.com. To read more about overindulgence go to www.overindulgence.info.)



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SPECIAL EVENTS

NEW MAIN LIBRARY GRAND OPENING!

SAT., JAN 7 – CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS (Activity Room)

11:00 a.m. – Swizzle Puppet Show featuring friendly dinosaurs. Ages 4 and up.
1:00 p.m. – Fiesta! A program that focuses on the culture of Mexico through stories, artifacts and dance. Children will learn an authentic folk dance. Ages 4 and up.
2:45 p.m. – From Mother Goose to Dr. Seuss. "Edu-tainer" Janeece Flint presents a theatrical program bringing books to life. Ages 3 and up.

DOWNTOWN ON ICE – THRU JAN. 16

Don't miss your chance to glide at this outdoor skating rink located at Pershing Square. Live music and special skating presentations throughout the week. \$6 per session, \$2 skate rental, 532 Olive St., 213-847-4970, www.laparks.org.
Mon. – Thurs., noon to 9:00 p.m.; Fri. – Sun., 10:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m.

REGISTER NOW!

SANTA MONICA YMCA PARENT/ ME GYM & SWIM PROGRAMS

Program begins Jan. 9. Contact Shelana Philip-Guide for more info at 393-2721, ext. 107 for more info. 1332 6th St., www.ymcasm.org.

KID'S YOGA CIRCLE WINTER/SPRING SESSION

Session dates are Wednesdays, Jan. 4 – March 22 (no classes Jan. 18 & 25)
Ages 4 – 7, 3:30 – 4:25; ages 8 – 11, 4:30 – 5:30. Classes are taught by Darlene D'Arezzo, named Best Kids Yoga Teacher by the LA Weekly. At the Center for Living Meditation, 220 Pier Ave. Call 587-3235 or visit www.kidsyogacircle.com for more info.

CREATIVE DANCE WORKSHOP – Wed., Jan. 11, 3:30 – 4:15 p.m.

Ages 4 – 6, FREE! Fairview Branch Library, 2101 Ocean Park Blvd., 450-0443.

CITY OF SANTA MONICA YOUTH and KID'S CLASSES

A variety of sports, dance and art classes are offered beginning this month. See the latest issue of SeaScape for details or call 458-2239 for more info.

TUESDAY

Movies for Moms! 11:00 a.m., Loews Cineplex Broadway Theatre, 1441 3rd St. Promenade – for Moms and babies newborn – 1 year old. Doors open early for socializing and getting comfortable. Visit www.enjoytheshow.com/reelmoms for details.

Storytelling

Main Library – 601 Santa Monica Blvd. – 458-8621

Baby Time – 10:15 & 10:45 a.m., babies up to 2 years. Session dates Jan. 10 – Feb. 14.
Spanish and Bilingual Stories – 11:20 a.m. Ages 2 – 5.

Fairview Branch Library – 2101 Ocean Park Blvd – 450-0443.

Toddler Story Time in Spanish – 10:00 a.m., ages 2-3.

Baby Time – 11:00 a.m., babies to age 2. Session dates Jan. 3 – Feb. 7.

Twilight Story Time -7pm – an ongoing program for 3-5 year olds.

Montana Avenue Branch Library – 1704 Montana Ave – 829-7081.

Terrific Tuesdays – 3:30 p.m. Jan. 17 & Feb. 14. Stories and crafts for K to 2nd graders.

Family Story Time – 7:00 p.m., all ages.

Ocean Park Branch Library – 2601 Main St. – 392-3804.

Story Time for Twos - 10:00 and 10:30. Session dates Jan. 3 – Feb. 7 (registration required).

Tiny Tuesday Storytime at Storyopolis

For ages infant to 3. 11:00 a.m. 116 North



Robertson, Plaza A, LA. 310-358-2500, www.storyopolis.com
Barnes and Noble at the Grove
Storytime for ages 2 – 6. 10:00 a.m. 189 Grove Drive, LA, 323-525-0270

Classes

YWCA – A Place for Parents –Toddler & Me Class - 9:15 - 10:15 a.m. – 12 to 36 months; Infant & Me Class – 10:45 – 11:45 a.m. and 1:30 – 2:30 p.m., 0 – 12 months; 2019 14th St. Call 452-3881for details and prices.
BREAKTHROUGH PARENTING CLASSES – 7:00 – 9:30 p.m.

An advanced 10-week parent education course. Continuous enrollment. For info call Jayne A. Major, Ph.D., Breakthrough Parenting Services, Inc., 310-823-7846, jm@BPinAction.org.

Yoga & Exercise

Prenatal Aqua Aerobics at the Santa Monica YMCA

10:00 – 11:00 a.m and 7:30 – 8:30 p.m; Free for members, non-members \$90 for 10 classes. (also Thursday nights 7:30 – 8:30 p.m.) 393-2721. ext. 117 for more info.

Yoga Works – 2215 Montana Ave, 310-393-5150; Pre/postnatal – 12:15 – 1:40 p.m., \$15. Mommy and Me – 1:45 – 3:00 p.m.

Mommy Care – at the Dance Factory, 11606 San Vicente Blvd., Brentwood, 310-394-6711. Combined Pregnancy/Recovery Exercise Group – 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.. (babies welcome, includes baby massage and workout at the end)
Itsy Bitsy Yoga – Baby IBY (6 weeks to pre-crawling) – 9:30 – 10:30 a.m. With Khefri Riley at Ocean Oasis, 1333 Ocean Ave. Register at www.khefri.net or call 323-549-5383.
Stroller Strides Fitness Class – 9:30 a.m. Mon. – Fri., Palisades Park, call 800-795-6708 or visit www.strollerstrides.com for more info.

Breastfeeding Group

The Pump Station, 2415 Wilshire Blvd., 310-998-1981 - drop-in, first class free, \$10 fee thereafter. Moms/babies 0-4 months, 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

MOMS Club of SM South Playgroups – 4:30 p.m., separate groups for children born in 2000 and 2001. Call or email Alison at 393-4481/riversalison@hotmail.com for more info. All moms welcome!

Storytelling

The Talking Stick Coffee Lounge – 1630 Ocean Park Blvd., 450-6052

10:30 a.m. Free story time for moms and kids ages 0-4 at this neighborhood coffee shop.

Fairview Branch Library – 2101 Ocean Park Blvd – 310-450-0443.

Story Time for Twos – 9:30 a.m.

Preschool Story Time – 10:30 a.m.; ages 3-5. Session dates Jan. 4 – Feb. 8.

Montana Avenue Branch Library – 1704 Montana Ave – 310-829-7081.

Baby Time - 10:15 & 11:15 a.m., ages 0-2. Session dates Jan. 4 – Feb. 8.

Wacky Wednesdays – 3:30 p.m., Jan. 4 & Feb. 15. Crafts and activities for 3rd – 5th graders.

Ocean Park Branch Library – 2601 Main St. –392-3804.

Preschool Twilight Story Time – 7:00 p.m. Parents/children ages 3-5.

Barnes and Noble, Westside Pavilion – 2 pm – ages 2-5 – 310-475-4144

Border's, Westwood – 11a.m. – 310-475-3444.

Classes

YWCA – A Place for Parents –Toddler & Me Class - 10:45 – 11:45 a.m., 7 to 36 months; 2019 14th St. Call 452-3881for details and prices.

Rhythm Child Parent & Me Rhythms, Santa Monica Studios, 3025 Olympic Blvd., 9:30 – 10:15 a.m. Children explore rhythms through

drum play. For toddlers. \$100 for 8 weeks. Call 204-5466 or visit www.rhythmchild.net for more info and session dates.

YWCA – A Place for Parents –Toddler & Me Class - 9:15 - 10:15 a.m. – walkers to 3 years; (Mon – Fri); 2019 14th St. Call 452-3881for details and prices.

Enchanted Lunchtime Theatre at Santa Monica Playhouse, 1211 4th St., 394-9779
11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. For ages 3 – 5 with parents. This theatrical adventure includes story time, theatre games, crafts, play building and lunch. Reservations required 24 hours in advance, \$19.50 includes lunch for child and lunch.

Yoga & Exercise

Yoga Works, 2215 Montana Ave, 310-393-5150 Pre/Postnatal – 12:15 – 1:45pm, \$15
Fitness for Moms – Babies Welcome! Step Aerobics, 10:30 a.m. at the YMCA, 393-2721, ext. 117 for more info. Free for members, non-members pay \$90 for 10 classes.

Stroller Strides Fitness Class – 9:30 a.m. Mon. – Fri., Palisades Park, call 800-795-6708 or visit www.strollerstrides.com for more info.

Breastfeeding Group

The Pump Station, 2415 Wilshire Blvd., 310-998-1981, drop-in, first class free, \$10 fee thereafter. Moms/babies 0-4 months, 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.

Other

Puppetolio – 1:00 p.m., 310-656-0483, 1255 2nd St., ages 3 & up, reservations suggested

THURSDAY

MOMS Club of SM South Playgroup – 3:30 p.m., for children born 3/03 – 12/03, Call or email Alison at 393-4481/riversalison@hotmail.com for more info. All moms welcome!

Storytelling

Main Library – 601 Santa Monica Blvd. – 458-8621

Story Time for Twos – 10:15 & 10:45 a.m. Preschool Story Time – 11:20 a.m. Ages 3 – 5. Session dates Jan. 12 – Feb. 16.

Fairview Branch Library – 2101 Ocean Park Blvd – 310-450-0443.

La Hora Del Cuento – 7:00 p.m. Spanish stories, songs and rhymes for all ages.

Montana Avenue Branch Library – 1704 Montana Ave – 310-829-7081.

Story Time for Twos – 10:15 a.m Session dates Jan. 5 – Feb. 9.

Preschool Story Time – 11:15 a.m.; ages 3-5. Ongoing.

Ocean Park Branch Library – 2601 Main St. – 310-392-3804.

Baby Time – 9:20 & 10:20 a.m. Babies to 2 years. Next session Jan. 26 – Mar. 2.

Babystyle, 1324 Montana Avenue, 434-9590 10:30 a.m. Free story time for moms and kids ages 0-4.

Classes

YWCA – A Place for Parents –Toddler & Me Class - 9:15 - 10:15 a.m and 10:45 – 11:45 a.m., 12 to 36 months; Parent Support Group – 3:30 – 4:30 p.m., age 3 – 5 years; 2019 14th St. Call 452-3881for details and prices.
BREAKTHROUGH PARENTING CLASSES – 6:30 – 9:30 p.m.

An advanced 10-week parent education course. Continuous enrollment. For info call Jayne A. Major, Ph.D., Breakthrough Parenting Services, Inc., 310-823-7846, jm@BPinAction.org.

Yoga & Exercise

Prenatal Aqua Aerobics at the Santa Monica YMCA

7:30 – 8:30 p.m; Free for members, non-members \$90 for 10 classes. (also Tuesdays at 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. and 7:30 – 8:30 p.m.) 393-2721. ext. 117 for more info.

Yoga Works – 2215 Montana Ave, 310-393-5150; Pre/postnatal – 12:15 – 1:40 p.m., \$15. Mommy and Me – 1:45 – 3:00 p.m.

Stroller Strides Fitness Class – 9:30 a.m. Mon. – Fri., Palisades Park, call 800-795-6708 or visit www.strollerstrides.com for more info.

Breastfeeding Groups

La Leche League of LA/Mar Vista – meets the 1st Thursday of each month at 10:00 a.m. in the Community Room of the Westchester Municipal Bldg., 7166 W. Manchester Ave., corner of Lincoln and Manchester. Call 310-390-2529 for info.

The Pump Station, 2415 Wilshire Blvd., 310-998-1981 - drop-in, first class free, \$10 fee thereafter. Moms/babies 4-8 months, 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.

FRIDAY

MOMS Club of SM South Playgroups

11:00 a.m. - playgroup for children born 10/04 – 5/05. Call or e-mail Alison at 393-4481, riversalison@hotmail.com for more info.

Parent's Night Out at Child's Play, 2299 Westwood Blvd., 6:00 – 11:00 p.m.

Kids get a night of supervised fun with pizza, games and more while parents go out. Ages 3-10, \$9 per hour, \$7 siblings, 3 hour minimum. Reservations required, 470-4997. www.child-splayonline.net

Planetarium Show at SMC's John Drescher Planetarium, 7:00 p.m. - Night Sky Show, 8:00 p.m. – featured program. \$5 adults, \$4 children. Pico and 17th St., 434-3000.

Classes

YWCA – A Place for Parents –Toddler & Me Class - 9:15 - 10:15 a.m. – 12 – 36 mos.; 2019 14th St. Call 452-3881for details and prices.

Yoga & Exercise

Fitness for Moms – Babies Welcome! Indoor Cycling, 10:30 a.m. at the YMCA, 393-2721, ext. 117 for more info. Free for members, non-members pay \$90 for 10 classes.

Yoga Works – 2215 Montana Ave, 310-393-5150; Pre/postnatal – 12:15 – 1:45 p.m., \$15.

Stroller Strides Fitness Class – 9:30 a.m.

Mon. – Fri., Palisades Park, call 800-795-6708 or visit www.strollerstrides.com for more info.

Other

Baby Attuned - Fridays, 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., A new program promoting sensitive parenting and developmental awareness. Eileen Escarce, PhD, MSN. (PSY 18819). Introductory fee: \$15 per screening with feedback. 1137 2nd Ave, Suite 213. By appointment only 310-367-1155.

SATURDAY

Storytelling

Barnes and Noble, 3rd St. Promenade – Kid's Story Time – 10am, 310-260-9110

Barnes and Noble, Westside Pavilion – 10:30am – ages 2-5, 310-475-4144.

Children's Book World, 10580 1/2 Pico Blvd, LA - 10:30 a.m., 310-559-800K.

Village Books, 1049 SwarthmoreAve, Pacific Palisades – 10:30 a.m., 454-4063.

826LA, 685 Venice Blvd, 2nd Floor, Venice – 10:30 – 11:30 a.m., ages 3-6, RSVP to info

@825LA.com or 310-314-8418. (826LA is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting students with their creative and expository writing skills, and to helping teachers inspire their students to write).

Classes

YWCA – Toddler & Me every other Sat., 9:45 – 10:45 a.m., \$15 per class; Parent Enrichment once per month , 11:00 a.m. – noon, \$15 per class, \$25 per couple.

Yoga & Exercise

Santa Monica Yoga – Pre- & Post-Natal Yoga, Saturdays – 12:30 – 2:00 p.m.

1640 Ocean Park Blvd, 396-4040, www.santa-monicayoga.com

Mommy Care – at the Dance Factory, 11606 San Vicente Blvd., Brentwood, 310-394-6711. Combined Pregnancy/Recovery Exercise Group – 8:30 – 9:30 a.m.(babies welcome, includes baby massage and workout at the end)

Stroller Strides Fitness Class – 9:00 a.m., Palisades Park, call 800-795-6708 or visit www.strollerstrides.com for more info.

Other

Cinderella at The Santa Monica Playhouse

Saturdays & Sundays at 12:30 & 3:00 p.m. thru Jan. 14 - 29 , \$12.50 adults, \$10.50 kids ages 12 & under. 394-9779 ext. 2 for reservations, www.santamonicaplayhouse.com

Puppetolio – 1:00 and 3:00pm, 310-656-0483, 1255 2nd St., ages 3 & up, reservations suggested

Magicopolis – 2 and 8 p.m., 1418 4th St., Admission is \$20 for evening, \$15 for matinee. Call 310-451-2241 for info.

Precious Prints – Ceramic Heirlooms for a Lifetime

Second Saturday every month at The Pump Station, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. Contact Kristan Ritchie at 310-802-8013 or visit www.preciousprintsstudios.com for more info.

Lakeshore Learning Stores "Free Crafts for Kids" – Saturdays, 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., 8888 Venice Blvd., 559-9630.

"A Faery Hunt" – 10:30 a.m., every Saturday at Franklin Canyon Park. An interactive children's show, searching for fairies and other enchanted creatures in the magical canyon and finding them! \$10, call for reservations – 818-324-6802. www.faeryhunt.com. Meet in the parking lot of the Sooky Goldman Nature Center, 2600 Franklin Canyon Dr., Beverly Hills.

SUNDAY

Cinderella at The Santa Monica Playhouse

Saturdays & Sundays at 12:30 & 3:00 p.m. thru Jan. 14 - 29 , \$12.50 adults, \$10.50 kids ages 12 & under. 394-9779 ext. 2 for reservations, www.santamonicaplayhouse.com

Main Street Farmer's Market – 9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., corner of Main St. and Ocean Park Blvd. Pony rides, live music, lots of vendors and great family socializing.

Puppetolio – 1:00 and 3:00pm, 310-656-0483, 1255 2nd St., ages 3 & up, reservations suggested

Magicopolis – 2 p.m., 1418 4th St., Admission is \$15. Call 310-451-2241 for info.

MONDAY

MOMS Club of SM South Playgroups

Noon – 2:00 p.m., for children born 1/02 – 2/03; 9:30 a.m. – for children born 1/04 – 9/04; call or email Alison at 393-4481/riversalison@hotmail.com for more info. All moms welcome!

Storytelling

Barnes and Noble, 3rd St. Promenade – Toddler Story Time – 10am – 310-260-9110

Classes

YWCA – A Place for Parents –Toddler & Me Class - 9:15 - 10:15 a.m. – 12 – 36 mos.; "Playtime – A combination play time and parent support time", 10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., 2019 14th St. Call 452-3881for details and prices.

Breastfeeding Group

The Pump Station, 2415 Wilshire Blvd., 310-998-1981 - drop-in, first class free, \$10 fee thereafter. Moms/babies 0-4 months, 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.

Yoga & Exercise

Yoga Works, 2215 Montana Ave, 310-393-5150 Pre/Postnatal – 12:15 – 1:45pm, \$15

Itsy Bitsy Yoga – TOT IBY (crawling) – 2/3 years) – 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. With Khefri Riley at TURNOUT Performing Arts Center, 12113 Santa Monica Bl., St. 201. Register at www.khefri.net or call 323-549-5383.

Yoga Garden, - Restorative yoga for pre/postnatal – 6:30 p.m., 310-450-0133. www.yoga-gardenstudios.com

Stroller Strides Fitness Class – 9:30 a.m.

Mon. – Fri., Palisades Park, call 800-795-6708 or visit www.strollerstrides.com for more info.

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STATE

Chevron fights charges of human rights abuses

BY TERENCE CHEA

Associated Press Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — A young boy holds out a deformed hand. A woman is missing a lower leg that was amputated to remove a tumor. A gaunt middle-aged man lays in a hammock dying of stomach cancer.

The haunting images displayed in a photo exhibit at San Francisco City Hall claim to document the devastating effects of more than three decades of oil extraction in Ecuador's Amazon rainforest.

Humberto Piaguaje came to help launch the exhibit and seek justice from the powerful petroleum company he blames for sickening his people and poisoning his homeland. He's one of 30,000 plaintiffs in a class-action lawsuit that alleges San Ramon-based Chevron Corp. failed to clean up billions of gallons of toxic waste dumped in pristine rainforest in Ecuador, where a lengthy trial is under way.

"We've lived there for thousands of years, and we've never had diseases like this before," Piaguaje, a leader of Ecuador's Secoya tribe, said in Spanish. "We want Chevron to do a true cleanup of the areas they contaminated."

Chevron, one of the world's largest oil companies, has denied human rights and environmental violations in the 180 countries where it operates, but allegations of abuse threaten its public image around the world. Critics claim such abuses are increasing as the global scarcity of petroleum drives oil companies into countries with rich reserves but poor protections for human rights and the environment.

"It's the resource curse," said Steve Kretzmann, executive director of Oil Change International. "Unfortunately, the rule around the world is that where you have oil extraction, you see increasing rates of poverty, human rights abuses and environmental destruction."

In Ecuador, the plaintiffs estimate it will cost \$6 billion to clean up 18.5 billion gallons of oily wastewater that Texaco, which merged with Chevron in 2001, dumped into more than 600 unlined pits and streams between 1972 and 1990.

Chevron is also fighting lawsuits filed in San Francisco by Nigerian villagers who claim the company's subsidiary supported military attacks on protesters in the oil-rich Niger Delta. A federal lawsuit is scheduled to go to trial next fall, and a trial for a state class-action lawsuit is set to start in 2007.

Chevron lawyers deny the plaintiffs' claims in both Chevron and Ecuador and believe they will prevail in court.

Company officials say Chevron has a long record of

protecting human rights and the environment, pointing to its annual reports that detail goals and accomplishments in areas such as environmental management, human rights, AIDS, climate change, energy efficiency, health and safety.

"Wherever we operate, we strive to be a good example through our employment policies, our support for universal human rights as well as obeying domestic and host country laws," said Maria Pica, Chevron's corporate responsibility manager.

Investors don't appear to be worried. Like the rest of the oil industry, Chevron has reported robust profits from soaring worldwide demand.

Fadel Gheit, a senior energy analyst at Oppenheimer & Co., believes the company will likely win both cases, and if they are forced to compensate victims, the payments won't be big enough to affect the bottom line.

"It's nothing but background noise," Gheit said.

But critics say the company's troubles in Nigeria and Ecuador are part of a deeper problem.

"Both ultimately arise out of the corporation's disregard for basic human rights and environmental protection," said Marco Simons, legal director of EarthRights International. "It is part of a pattern that's pervasive in the oil industry."

Simons and other industry critics say the extraction of oil doesn't create many jobs or distribute wealth but props up repressive regimes, leading to widespread social unrest and ecological damage in oil-rich regions.

Chevron is hardly the only petroleum company fighting lawsuits alleging abuse. Talisman Energy Inc., for example, is being sued in U.S. courts by Sudanese villagers who allege the Canadian oil company provided money, vehicles and logistics to Sudanese soldiers who sought to depopulate 142 villages near oil fields from 1999 to 2002. Company lawyers have denied the allegations.

As abuse reports have risen, so has the ability of victims to hold corporations accountable. Thanks to the Internet and an increasingly global network of activists, victims are drawing more attention to their plight, and more lawyers are taking on cases.

In an undisclosed settlement in 2005, El Segundo-based Unocal agreed to compensate 15 Myanmar villagers who held the company liable for forced labor, murder and rape allegedly carried out by government soldiers during construction of the \$1.2 billion Yadana pipeline.

Chevron, which acquired Unocal in August, now faces criticism for doing business in the Southeast Asian nation formerly known as Burma, where the U.S. government has banned new investment due to human rights concerns.

"Chevron used the Nigerian military as their security force and that resulted in gross human rights violations."

CINDY COHN

An attorney for the plaintiffs.

"Our position is that no one should be investing in Burma right now," said EarthRights' Simons. "It's impossible to do business in Burma without being complicit in serious human rights abuses."

Chevron officials would not comment on the Myanmar operations because the company is still evaluating its new assets, according to spokesman Jeff Moore.

The Nigerian plaintiffs accuse Chevron's subsidiary of supporting attacks by Nigerian soldiers that destroyed homes and killed or injured dozens of people. A federal judge ruled in 2004 that Chevron could be held responsible if Chevron Nigeria was involved.

The lawsuits, which seek unspecified damages, claim the subsidiary provided helicopters, boats and planes to Nigerian soldiers who fired at demonstrators in 1998 on an offshore oil platform and in 1999 at two villages where protesters lived.

"Chevron used the Nigerian military as their security force and that resulted in gross human rights violations," said Cindy Cohn, an attorney for the plaintiffs.

Chevron attorneys say the platform protesters were armed youths who demanded money, took more than 200 workers hostage and were shot during a rescue attempt. The company also argues the case belongs in African courts.

"We don't think it's fair or appropriate for Nigerians to bring lawsuits in the United States where they're challenging what the Nigerian government did to them in Nigeria," said Chevron attorney Bob Mittelstadt.

The rainforest case spent a decade in U.S. courts before being transferred to Ecuador. The trial, which began two years ago, has proceeded slowly as the judge takes testimony and inspects more than 120 alleged dump sites.

Plaintiffs claim toxic chemicals contaminated rivers, streams and soil in a region the size of Rhode Island, leading to unusually high rates of cancer, birth defects, skin diseases and other health problems. They want the company to pay for their medical care and a thorough cleanup.

"This is rainforest Chernobyl," said Leila Salazar-Lopez of San Francisco-based Amazon Watch. "Before Texaco arrived, this was pristine Amazon rainforest where five indigenous tribes depended on a clean, healthy environment to survive. Now they're basically living in a giant Superfund site."

Chevron has resisted calls for further remediation, saying Texaco already complied with a \$40 million government-ordered cleanup from 1995 to 1998 and auditors found no lasting environmental impact.

"So far in the inspections the evidence clearly indicates the remediation was done properly and any residual there doesn't pose a risk to human health," said Chevron environmental scientist Sara McMillen. Samples met drinking water standards of Ecuador, the U.S. and the World Health Organization, she said.

Texaco was only a minority partner in a joint venture with state-owned PetroEcuador, and was released from responsibility for any further remediation when the joint venture ended in 1992, said Ricardo Veiga, the Chevron attorney working on the Ecuador case. He blamed the environmental damage on PetroEcuador and on government policies that encouraged haphazard migration to the area.

"We cannot be blamed for the lack of infrastructure, education and sanitation," Veiga said. "We are sympathetic to the people that live in the area, but we don't think it's accurate or fair to accuse us of creating this situation."

But Amazon natives like Piaguaje don't buy Chevron's arguments.

"We're bringing this case because we do not want to continue living in the disaster left by Chevron," Piaguaje said. "We want this case to be a lesson to the world that companies can act better."

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Cold case: Cemetery finances at issue

WOODLAWN, from page 5

City Hall's human resources director. It is a quasi-judicial review body for employee appeals of disciplinary actions. The Dec. 8 hearing had four board members present.

The testimony presented at the December personnel board hearing centered around the last of three major audits specifically aimed at ascertaining the financial state of affairs at Woodlawn.

MINDING THE DOLLARS AND CENTS

Irma Rodriguez-Moisa, an attorney with Liebert, Cassidy and Whitmore, has been representing City Hall in the case. Her role is to advocate City Hall's position to the personnel board.

Rodriguez-Moisa said Steen began his tenure at Woodlawn in 1989. During the 1990s, occasional audits first showed signs of financial discrepancies at the cemetery. However, it wasn't until an audit of the 2001-02 fiscal year conducted by an outside accounting firm — Moss, Levy & Hartzheim — in which a "significant number of issues came up," Rodriguez-Moisa said.

A letter from ML&H to City Hall regarding its audit and findings states, "The cemetery did not have adequate audit trails or records available to determine if internal controls existed. The internal controls appear to have been inadequate or non-existent ..."

ML&H didn't draw definitive conclusions about what questionable financial role Steen may or may not have played in the cemetery's operations. Instead, its 13 findings, mirrored in two subsequent audits, examined the discrepancies and what opportunities they might have presented for misappropriation of funds. Some of the major findings included: An inadequate segregation of staff duties; delays in processing purchases; a lack of checks and balances in money handling; no official inventory of sold and unsold burial plots; no manual for office procedures; the use of two different invoice books; and the lack of a method "to be able to reconcile sales of inventory plots with revenue received."

As a possible ethical discrepancy, ML&H's audit pointed out that the spouse of a Steen assistant received a contract for ground maintenance at the cemetery, indicating a potential compromise in the bidding process.

Counsel for Steen argued the maintenance contract, which has since expired, was arranged through City Hall's purchasing department, not through Steen.

Steen's manager, Gil Borboa, issued a corrective action plan to address the lack of internal controls that the ML&H audit pointed out, but Steen didn't accept it, according to records. He also didn't accept the evaluation of his performance in 2001, which signaled that as a manager, Steen was to implement internal controls in the cemetery's operation that better accounted for the incom-

ing revenue. Instead, he appealed the evaluation. The appeal required City Hall to make some changes in its corrective action plan. Otherwise, City Hall's position was upheld, Rodriguez-Moisa said.

Meanwhile, City Hall responded to the audit by indicating it would make several improvements at the cemetery, including an updating of office technology and bookkeeping capabilities, as well as the construction of a newer, larger office.

In 2002, then-City Manager Susan McCarthy asked another outside auditing firm, KPMG, to follow up on the 2001 audit. The new audit, however, wasn't available until 2004, according to testimony. KPMG was only able to provide an unsigned draft of its audit, which it presented to City Hall in July of 2004. It's unknown why there was a two-year delay in presenting the audit or why it was an unsigned draft.

After reviewing the KPMG audit, which testimony said mirrored many of the key findings of the ML&H audit, City Hall conducted its own audit.

That audit was overseen by Steve Stark, City Hall's finance director. Stark asked Mabel Borja, a senior finance manager with the city's Big Blue Bus to lead the audit.

Borja — whose accounting career spans more than 20 years — developed a plan to test the findings in the previous audits. The goal was to sample 3 to 10 percent of the 820 financial transactions for fiscal year 2003-04 at Woodlawn Cemetery.

Borja said she and at least one assistant set up a table outside the cemetery's office after interviewing staff and debriefing them on the nature of the financial review. The auditors began to request documents — which Steen, and his assistant, Phyllis Romleski, as well as a temporary employee — helped Borja obtain, according to testimony.

Cemetery staff is said to have cooperated fully with Borja's audit.

By December of 2004, Borja had prepared a draft report regarding her audit, the findings of which she said took 400 to 500 total staff hours to investigate and prepare. Of the 42 completed transactions surveyed, 19 — or 45 percent — had what were considered to be "exceptions" contrary to general accounting guidelines, according to testimony.

While those exceptions may have provided an opportunity for criminal behavior, they also did not show any occurred, Borja said.

Borja's audit seemed to show not much had changed in the financial management at Woodlawn since the previous audits — some of the findings of which Steen had disputed. Discrepancies pointed to a lack of precise recorded knowledge of which burial plots had been purchased and which were still up for sale.

Many customers were paying for their plots in installments, and some had failed to pay over the course of

years more than \$200 on a total bill ranging in the thousands, according to testimony.

Bill Becker, Steen's attorney, pointed out during the hearing that his client's strengths rest on his customer service and people skills, and that finance was not his strongest suit.

Becker also indicated steps City Hall had previously promised to put into place to improve Woodlawn operations had been slow to materialize. He noted that it had taken years to fully investigate the alleged financial misconduct at cemetery. An electronic geographic map system — to pinpoint the status of burial plots at any time — has yet to be installed. A new office expected to replace the current one, which is described as "cramped," may not have even begun construction, he said.

"I'm just trying to show the city hasn't treated (Woodlawn operations) like an emergency situation," Becker said.

Becker's comments were dismissed by the personnel board, which agreed with City Hall's counsel that Becker's remarks were out of the purview of Steen's appeal.

Borja said city staff recovered \$17,000 of \$21,105 worth of credit card transactions for fiscal year 2003-04 during the course of staff's audit. The credit card transactions had never been posted but should have been, according to invoice statements, she said.

At the same time, representatives from City Hall conceded that the lost credit card transactions may have been augmented by the cemetery's billing arrangement with the water department.

Invoices requesting credit card purchases for items such as coffins and crypts were faxed to City Hall's water department, which handles billing for the city's utilities division.

Those invoices were then ran through a credit card machine, a copy of which was supposed to be faxed back to the cemetery for record keeping.

In the cases where transactions didn't go through, City Hall was unable to ascertain if the cemetery or the water department was to blame.

"(Some of the transactions) seemed to have fallen through the cracks," Stark said.

Fax machine errors might have explained why the water department might not have received requests for credit card purchases, and therefore why some may had not gone through. However, City Hall, while admitting its own system wasn't perfect, suggested Steen or other cemetery staff may have been partially to blame for such mishaps.

"Would someone with an accounting or finance background be needed to make sure credit card purchases went through?" Rodriguez-Moisa asked Borja.

"No," Borja said. "It's routine to follow up with such things in an office, especially when it involves money."



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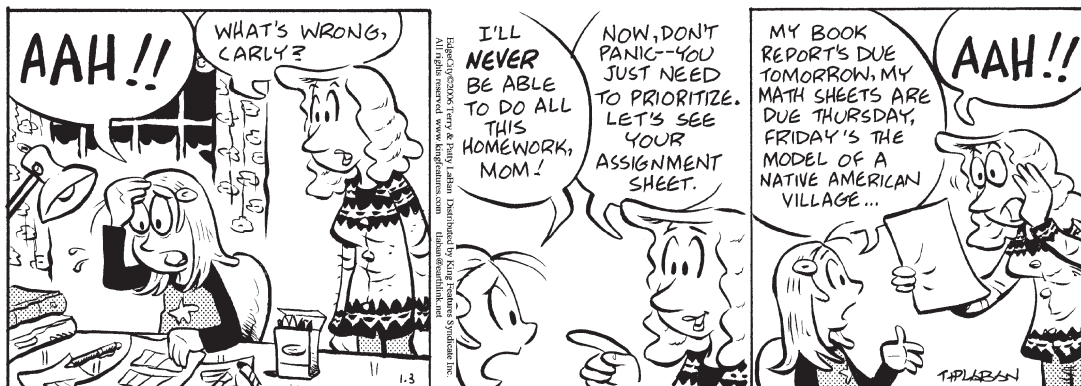
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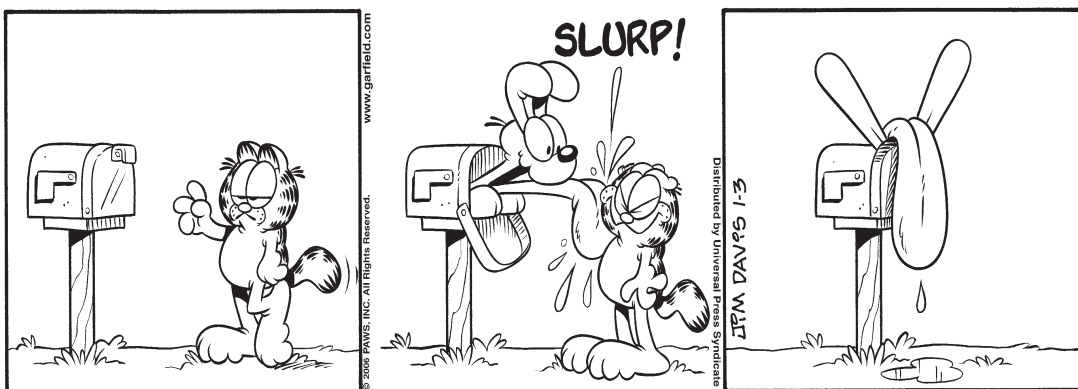


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By Russ Wallace

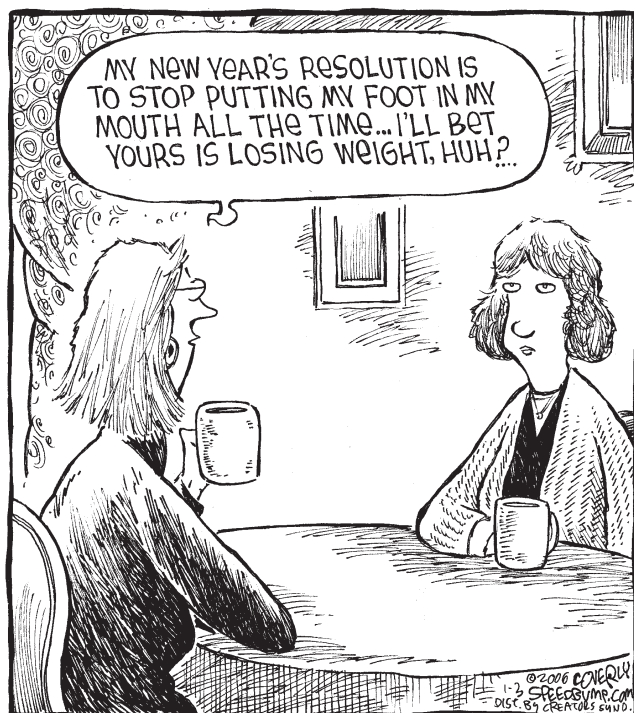


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32 Man of
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DOWN

1 Garden visitor
2 Sleeve fill

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- 4** Tilted type
- 5** Metric units
- 6** Do a checkout chore
- 7** Rival of Athens
- 8** Half a Heston title
- 9** Ostrich's cousin
- 10** "—Kapital"
- 14** Full of flavor
- 16** Letter before iota
- 17** Approach for a loan

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Yesterday's answer

19 Soap Box Derby setting	31 Egg buy
20 Picture puzzle	33 Mystery writer
21 "Survivor" network	Woods
22 Blue	34 Small rug
23 Plop down	35 Yale student
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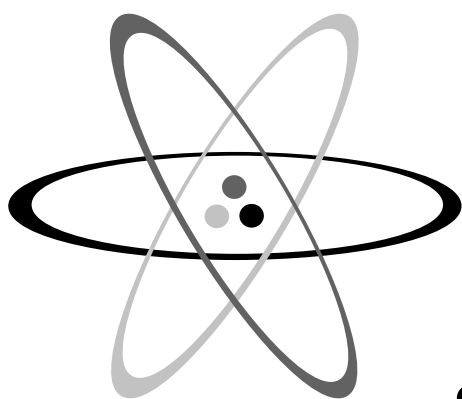
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It's a New Year's b-b-baby for 'Stuttering John'

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — "Tonight Show" announcer John Melendez is a father for a third time.

Oscar David Melendez weighed 8 pounds, 2 ounces when he was born Sunday just after midnight. He was believed to be the first baby born in the San Fernando Valley in 2006.

"It's just funny that my husband's the one who usually is in the spotlight," mother Suzanna Melendez, 39, said. "To pick how you come into this world and have it be New Year's Day is pretty funny to me."

Oscar has two sisters, ages 9 and 5.

"Three kids already, I might have to ask Jay Leno for a raise. That's a lot of mouths to feed," said Melendez, 40.

Melendez is known to Howard Stern fans as "Stuttering John," who carried out cringe-inducing red-carpet interviews for Stern's radio show before moving to the "Tonight Show."

NEW YORK — Judi Dench says she is no intellectual and never reads plays, just doing them "because someone asked me to."

"I've gotten myself into real trouble by saying yes to a play, then going to the first reading and realizing, 'This is a bummer!'" the actress said in the latest issue of Newsweek.

Dench, who plays a 1930s British dame who opens a nude theatrical review in "Mrs. Henderson Presents," also admits to sneaking a peek at Bob Hoskins, who appears briefly in the nude.

"Of course! Don't think I'm going to let Bob Hoskins take all his clothes off and me not take a look? I just had a quick look up and down, like you would," she said.

NEW YORK — Lorraine Bracco keeps a simple strategy when it comes to investing: She sticks to real estate. Bracco said she has never bought a stock in her life

and doesn't understand it. But real estate "is like porn for me."

"Listen, if I am going to get in a cab to go home, and I see a sign for an open house, I will go in. I like real estate because I am the boss," she said in Sunday's New York Times.

Bracco filed for bankruptcy in 1999, the same year of the debut of "The Sopranos."

"It was horrifying and embarrassing: getting foreclosure notices; lawyers knocking on your door wanting their money and no work to be found," she recalled.

Since then, Bracco said, she has paid off much of her \$2 million in debt as well as nearly \$500,000 in back taxes.

"I owe my last \$50,000 to the bankruptcy lawyers," she said, adding that the show has given her financial security.

NEW YORK — Liza Minnelli helped heat things up at Mayor Michael Bloomberg's inauguration with a lurching rendition of "New York, New York."

At times pumping her fist in the air, Minnelli, wearing a billowy red coat and black pants, received a standing ovation from the crowd, which joined in a sing-along at the outdoor City Hall ceremony on Sunday.

Bloomberg, who was sworn in for a second term, helped the 5,000 guests in attendance keep the chill off by providing hot cider and wool blankets.

NEWARK, N.J. — When it comes to the brew of choice for Samuel A. Alito Jr., the jury is in. And it likes caffeine.

When Alito was nominated to the Supreme Court in November, reporters and customers flocked to a Broad Street coffee store that sells a potent blend named after the judge. The federal appeals court judge and former federal prosecutor has an office in Newark.

Two months later, sales of "Judge Alito's Bold Justice" are still going strong.

"We've been selling a lot more ever since he got nominated," Vera Barbosa, a clerk at T.M. Ward Coffee Co., told The Star-Ledger of Newark.

The store blended the brew as a birthday gift for Alito about five years ago. It is a mix of Papua New Guinea, Celebs Kalossi, Java, Italian Roast and espresso.

"It's a pretty strong roast, but he's a pretty strong guy," said Lawrence M. Herrmann, a former U.S. attorney in Connecticut who visited the store for a cup of Alito blend last week. "I think having a strong blend of coffee named for him is better than an herbal tea with hibiscus."

Alito likes it as well. He bought 44 pounds of the \$7.95-a-pound blend just before Christmas, Barbosa said.

LONDON — Bono said he feared his commitment to campaigning against poverty would force him out of his band, U2.

"They (the band) are hugely supportive spiritually and financially of the work I do, but they are in a rock 'n' roll band, and the first job of a rock 'n' roll band is not to be dull," Bono told British Broadcasting Corp. radio on Saturday.

"So we have to be very careful about just letting me go too far."

With fellow musician Bob Geldof, Bono was one of the leaders of this year's international Make Poverty History campaign and Live 8 concert, and he frequently makes on-stage statements about global poverty during U2 concerts.

"When I do my rant on making poverty history, I have got Larry Mullen, our drummer, behind me looking at his watch, timing me."

"I thought we would wear our audience out, but it hasn't happened," he said. "People are smart out there. They know what you are doing, they know the compromises you are making, they get it."

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