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THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 2009
Volume 7 Issue 365

Santa Monica Daily Press

Since 2001: A news odyssey

SAFER SURGERY
SEE PAGE 13

THE SHAKE IT UP ISSUE



NICE TOUCH

Byron Kennerly *news@smdp.com*

A construction crew working on Santa Monica Place installs the last piece of structural steel in the traditional 'topping out' ceremony. 'Topping out' is the term used by ironworkers to indicate that the final piece of steel is being hoisted into place on a large structure.

Council releases money to district

BY MELODY HANATANI
Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL It took more than 18 months, a time marked by the release of a critical report on special education and the surprising resignation of a controversial figure, but school officials finally got what they wanted.

Convinced the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District has met all the demands placed upon them to begin changing the culture of special education, the City Council on Tuesday voted to release approximately $804,000 that it had been withholding because of parent concerns over the troubled program.

"I'm very appreciative of the council taking the position and releasing the money," Interim Superintendent Tim Cuneo said on Wednesday. "We have met the conditions that were established by the council and there is a great deal of work to be accomplished by the district and as the superintendent, I am committed to making that happen."

The release of the money came at a critical time for the district where officials learned before the meeting that they could see a loss of 16 percent in revenues — a little less than $10 million — over the next 18 months. The figure is based on discussions going on in Sacramento over the state budget and appropriations to local school districts.

The money that was released is part of approximately $7 million in city funding that the district receives annually through its joint-use agreement in which the district permits public use of school facilities in exchange for added revenue.

After hearing complaints from parents, the council in the summer of 2007 decided to hold onto half a million dollars that represented the increase the district was set to receive when City Hall and the SMMUSD

SEE FUNDS PAGE 12

Schwarzenegger to deliver address during tough times

BY JULIET WILLIAMS
Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO Five years ago, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger told Californians in his first address to the Legislature that the state couldn't afford to tax its way out of a fiscal mess or borrow against the future.

As the governor prepares to deliver his annual State of the State address Thursday, California is again on the brink of financial calamity and Schwarzenegger's solution relies heavily on new taxes, fee increases and borrowing.

The grim news is not what the perennially optimistic governor envisioned when he swept

SEE ADDRESS PAGE 12

SMFD brings dispatch back home

BY MELODY HANATANI
Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL When it comes to fire dispatching, it's in with the old and out with the new.

The Santa Monica Fire Department will reactivate its Communications Center in the Public Safety Facility after concluding that a more than year-long relationship with the Los Angeles Fire Department Regional Dispatch Center just isn't working.

"While the Santa Monica Fire Department has experienced improvement in communication systems technology … certain aspects of the Los Angeles Fire Department Dispatch System is providing less than optimal service delivery," SMFD Chief Jim Hone said on Tuesday during a City Council meeting.

The council authorized City Manager Lamont Ewell to terminate the agreement with the LAFD and reactivate the Communications Center, which has been sitting dormant since the department switched over in January 2007.

The move back to the Communications Center, which is estimated to take about nine months, comes after the completion of a study that examined the efficiency of the Regional Dispatch Center and explored alternatives, including forming a similar partnership with the cities of Beverly Hills and Culver City and merging operations with the Santa Monica Police Department.

Conducted by GeoComm, the study ultimately recommended that reverting back to the Communications Center would best serve the needs of residents at

SEE DISPATCH PAGE 12

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WHAT'S UP WESTSIDE

OUT AND ABOUT IN SANTA MONICA AND SURROUNDS



2009 Homeless Count Volunteer Training

Virginia Avenue Park
2200 Virginia Ave., 7 p.m. — 8 p.m.
The Santa Monica Human Services Department is seeking volunteers to assist in the 2009 biennial census of homeless people in Santa Monica. The census will occur on Tuesday, Jan. 27 from 8 p.m. — 2 a.m. but volunteers are encouraged to first attend a training session. For information, call (310) 458-8701.

The Danish are coming

John Adams Middle School
2425 16th St., 9 a.m. — 3 p.m.
JAMS hosts a visit of the National Danish Performance Team. This is the first U.S. stop on a 10-month, 18-country world tour for the Danish Team and JAMS is the only Santa Monica area school recipient of a day of healthy fitness workshops, culminating in an all-school assembly performance by the National Danish Performance Team. High-energy gymnastics & dance, breath-taking acrobatics, and unique Danish artistry make for a dynamic and motivating performance.

Time for stories

Montana Avenue Branch Library
1704 Montana Ave., 11:15 a.m. — 11:45 p.m.
Calling all preschoolers for story time.

In the news ...

Fairview Branch Library
2101 Ocean Park Blvd., 1 p.m. — 2:30 p.m.
Join this weekly discussion of the week's key news stories. The discussion covers everything from politics to culture. Jack Nordhaus, a former college history professor, moderates. For more information, call (310) 450-0443.

Friday, Jan. 15, 2009

Pillow talk

Santa Monica Playhouse
1211 Fourth St., 6:30 p.m. — 9:30 p.m.
The Santa Monica Playhouse showcases a comedy about first date nightmares. "If Pillows Could Talk" is written by Santa Monica Playhouse Alumni Billie Dawn Greenblatt and Grahm Silbert. Friday is the only performance. For more information, call (310) 394-9779.

Nuclear cancer

Santa Monica Playhouse
1211 Fourth St., 8:00 p.m. — 9:15 p.m.
"Made Me Nuclear" is Charlie Lustman's humorous one man pop music operetta about surviving cancer. Written and performed by Charlie Lustman. Directed by Chris DeCarlo. Every Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. until Jan. 31. For more information, call (310) 394-9779

For more information on any of the events listed, log on to smdp.com and click the "Events" tab for the given day's calendar.

What the X$ %%? No cussing founder under major siege

BY JOHN ROGERS
Associated Press Writer

SOUTH PASADENA Pizzas and pornographic magazines being delivered to your home by the dozens. Your phone rings all night, and your e-mail inbox overflows with thousands of profane hate messages.

It would be enough to have most people saying, "What the $%X& is going on here?"

But most people aren't McKay Hatch, the 15-year-old founder of the No Cussing Club whose stand against public profanity has suddenly subjected him to a torrent of four-letter-word abuse and other harassment.

Pizzas began proliferating shortly after New Year's Day. Pornographic magazines began filling up his mailbox last week. He and his family drew the line when the death threats started coming in over the Internet.

They contacted police, who confirmed Wednesday that an investigation was under way.

Did the teenager ever cut loose with anything stronger than an "Ah heck" when his critics publicly questioned his manhood and threatened to crash his No Cussing Club Web site? Nah, he wouldn't even think of it.

"I haven't slipped in a while," Hatch chuckles as he prepares to head off to tennis practice at South Pasadena High School, where he is a sophomore and heads the local

SEE **CUSSING** PAGE 10

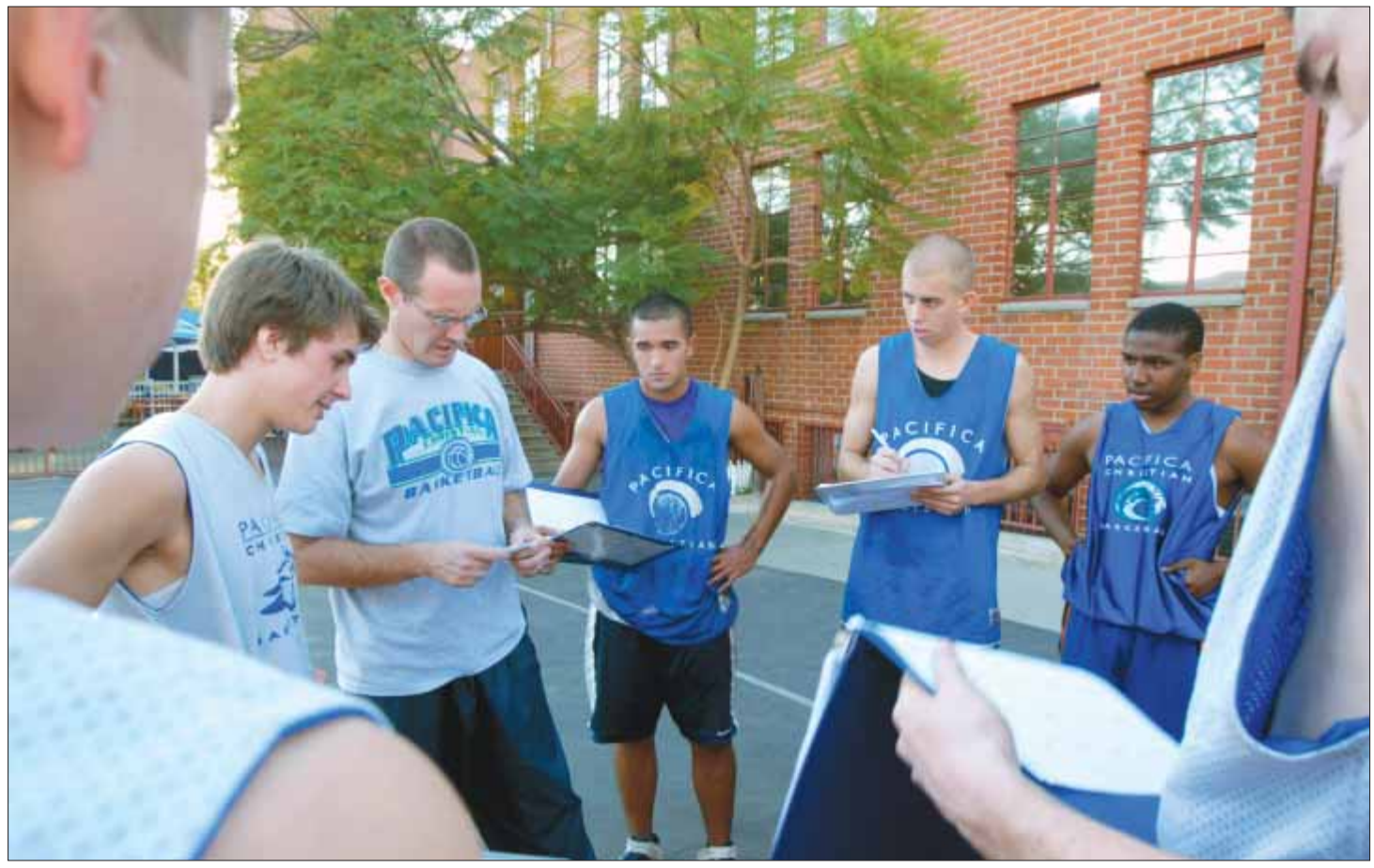
Fire officials mull over stay-defend policy

BY GREG RISLING
Associated Press Writer

BURBANK When a raging wildfire is racing toward your home, is it best to flee or stay and try to protect your house?

For most people, the answer is obvious, but in Southern California where there are many stubborn homeowners unwilling to leave or who have grown indifferent to the year-round threat of flames, fire officials are considering a policy that would allow some people to stay and defend their homes rather than simply ordering neighborhoods evacuated.

SEE **FIRE** PAGE 10



Byron Kennerly *news@smdp.com*

TEAM TIME: **Pacifica Christian High School's head basketball coach Kevin Kelsey (left center) goes over plays with his team on Wednesday.**

The little program that could

Pacifica Christian's sports teams are on the rise

BY DANIEL ARCHULETA
Managing Editor

PACIFICA CHRISTIAN Some high schools have the benefit of making cuts.

With prospective student athletes often times coming out in droves, most athletic programs can pick and choose when it comes to players to fill the many teams available. For Pacifica Christian High School, which opened its doors just four years ago, that isn't the case.

In fact, despite having a student population of just 150, this small private school not only manages to field a number of teams, but has added sports as fast as possible to build credibility and name recognition.

"It is encouraging to know that you can play a sport even if you aren't that good at it," basketball and volleyball player Katrina Heger said. "Sometimes at big schools, students work so hard, but they don't make the team.

"Here, you will make the team no matter what."

The results may be mixed at times, but so far, it seems to be working. The Seawolves even boast a California Interscholastic Federation Southern Section title in girls volleyball.

"We really wanted to broaden the student population," Athletic Director Kevin Kelsey said. "We had a window when we first opened [the school] that once that window was open you have a shot at building a name.

"We try to field as many sports as possible because we'd like to be linked with the heavy hitters in the area. We also don't want to miss out on a student because we don't offer their sport of choice."

While Kelsey knows his school has a long way to catch up with the Santa Monica High School and Crossroads of the world, he believes that being aggressive is the only way for his program to perhaps one day challenge for local supremacy.

But, for now, he just wants to keep things in perspective.

"We want [our students] to be a part of our community," said Kelsey, who also serves as the head coach of the boys basketball team. "We have good coaches and we want our kids to be around them."

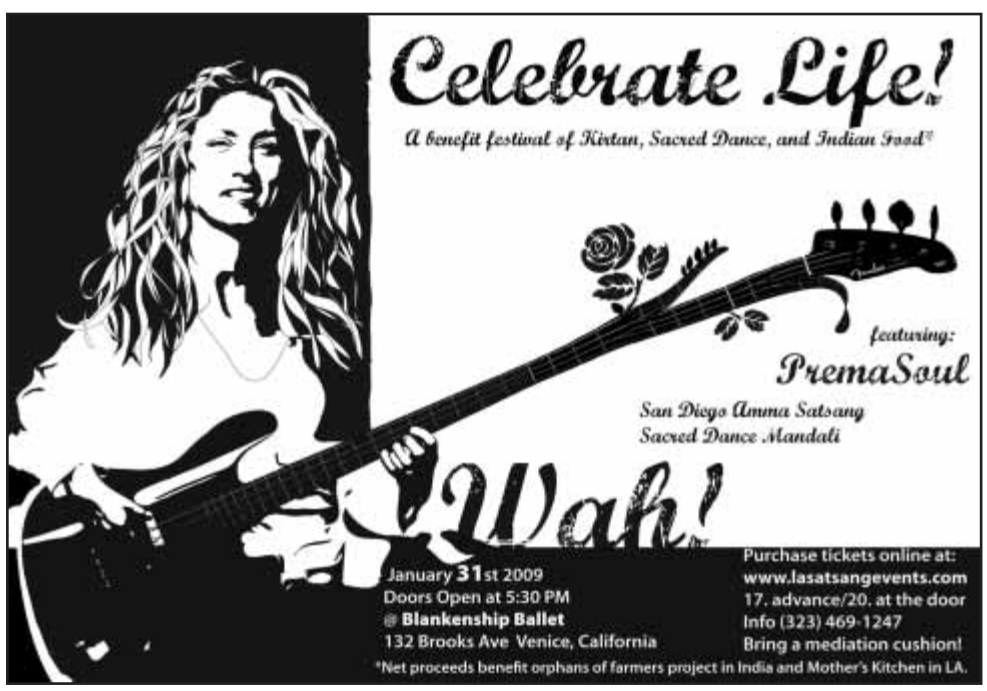
For many of Pacifica's student athletes, that often means lettering in multiple sports.

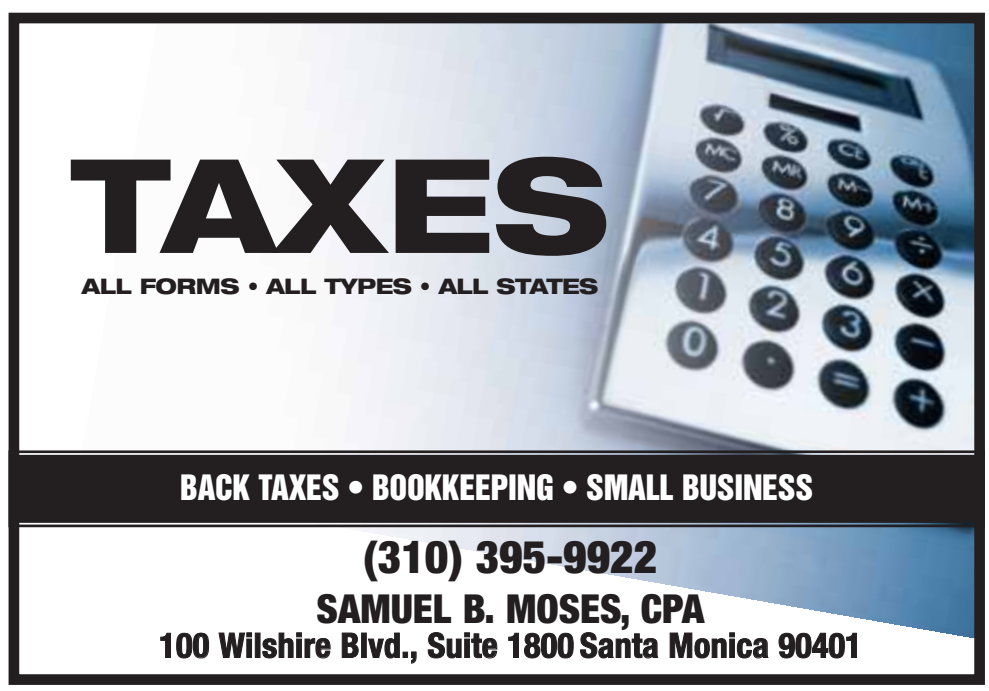
With the athletic program featuring 14 different teams in seven sports, the struggle has been finding athletes who are flexible enough to play on two — and often three — teams during the course of the school year.

Kelsey sees that level of commitment as a key to the success of the program.

"It completely depends on that," he said. "We have some single sport athletes, but a majority of our athletes are lettering in more than one sport."

SEE **PACIFICA** PAGE 11





EDITORIAL

Fare game

ANYONE WHO HAS SPENT TIME IN DOWNTOWN HAS seen cab drivers roaming the blocks, desperately seeking their next fare. The alley just east of the Third Street Promenade, between Santa Monica Boulevard and Arizona Avenue, is a favorite passageway for taxis as drivers roll slowly through, most parking illegally at either end, waiting as long as they can before someone pulls up behind them and honks angrily, wanting to pass.

This waiting game is a symptom of having an estimated 412 cabs in a city of just 8.3 square miles, where the majority of residents drive, ride bikes, walk or take the bus.

Taxi companies are necessary, especially in a city by the sea that attracts millions of visitors a year. That said, too many cabs contribute to traffic congestion, air pollution and conflicting fares that can ruin a pleasant excursion.

Something needs to be done to better regulate taxi companies and City Hall has a game plan in hand thanks to a report from Nelson/Nygaard Consulting Associates. The report, requested by the City Council, suggests City Hall regulate the number of taxicabs in town and the number of companies who operate in it, setting minimum standards for operations to improve service, and requiring low-emission vehicles.

The Daily Press supports these recommendations. City officials need to end open-entry regulation, which has failed, and move forward with a plan to allow only a handful of companies with low-emission vehicles to operate within the city limits.

The Daily Press believes Santa Monica can be served well by three local companies that transport people around town only, and two county-wide companies that will take passengers to Downtown L.A., Beverly Hills or the Valley, as well as LAX and Long Beach. That way the elderly running errands during the day and the drunks at night will have a ride home, as will tourists and business executives who need to see the sights or catch a lunch meeting.

Because Santa Monica has 18 one-cab companies, and 65 companies with two to five cabs, competition is fierce, forcing some drivers to charge more than those in neighboring cities, with the average fare being 34 percent higher than other areas for a five-mile trip. It is estimated that Santa Monica cabbies make only about $24,000 a year working six days a week. This is not fair to the drivers and the customers who pay more. By allowing established companies with centralized dispatching, driver training/discipline, marketing budgets and insurance, we can ensure safety, equitable rates and decent pay so that everyone wins.

The total number of cabs in town would drop from over 400 to around 200, which seems adequate. City Hall could issue temporary permits for specific holidays when people tend to need cabs, such as New Year's Eve and the Fourth of July.

To pay for regulation, cab companies awarded a permit would pay a franchise fee to cover city staff costs. City staff would monitor customer complaints and force companies to fire drivers who repeatedly violate traffic laws. Those companies that prove they can follow the rules and provide excellent customer service could expand their fleets as a way of rewarding them for a job well done.

Franchises could be awarded for five years with two, one-year extensions. At the end of each five-year term, a comprehensive review would be completed to determine if the company is following the guidelines and if more cabs should be allowed.

For a city that prides itself on sustainability, we need to have a cab system that protects the environment, the drivers and passengers for many years to come.



Your column here

Nancy Geshke and Claudia Vizcarra Send comments to editor@smdp.com

Hopefully no hard feelings

THE FOLLOWING IS IN RESPONSE TO THE cancellation of a comedy show last Sunday to benefit Edison Language Academy ("District cancels benefit amid controversy," page 3, Jan. 13). At a time when California schools are suffering deep budget cuts, Edison Language Academy, like many schools in the state, is struggling to raise funds to meets its basic needs. Edison, the only dual-language immersion program in the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District and one of the top immersion programs in the country, has just received its fourth Title 1 Academic Achievement Award from the state of California for exceeding improvement goals for all students and for every significant subgroup of students on our campus.

Edison owes its success to a wonderful partnership between our principal, teachers, staff and parents who have instilled in this very diverse school made up of families from a multitude of nationalities and ethnicities, the belief that effort equals success, a commitment to high academic standards in two languages and respect for yourself and others. It is in fact the mission of Edison to prepare its students for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century that already reach far beyond the borders of any nation. Its students will be global citizens

As a result, Edison parents are involved and passionate about their school, spending thousands of hours every year lending their talent and expertise to help in classrooms, beautifying and improving one of the oldest campuses in the district and raising funds to pay for classroom aides, office equipment and summer reading assistance for needy students.

Yet, like thousands of schools in California, and countless more across the nation, education at Edison is in jeopardy.

In this next year, schools are facing what could be the most severe budget cuts in a century.

Raising money in a community where more than 50 percent of the population is low-income presents special challenges. The Edison PTA is perpetually looking for inclusive ways to raise funds in a community where many parents work more than two jobs and many struggle to keep a roof over their heads. So when an Edison parent approached the PTA about the opportunity to have a big-name performer do a show to benefit Edison that could potentially raise between $25,000 and $50,000 from outside sources, the PTA saw this as an opportunity to relieve parents from once again pulling out their already tight pocketbooks for the sake of their children's education.

The Edison PTA deeply regrets any hurt feelings or divisions that differences of opinion about this event have created and respects the concerns raised. We also continue to believe that sincere people committed to the education of all children can and do sometimes disagree. We remain committed to dialogue and respectful problem solving. Since the sudden cancellation of a key fundraiser has left a $25,000-plus hole in our budget, we must turn our attention immediately to efforts to raise from other sources the resources for the programs that our students need.

As we renew our efforts to raise funds, we cannot help but wonder how is it that we live in the world's most affluent nation, and yet education funds are wanting? How is it that California — the ninth largest economy in the world — is nearly rock bottom in per pupil funding? How is it that our elected officials in Sacramento can engage in endless bickering and finger-pointing while letting education slide into an abyss?

THE EDISON PTA DEEPLY REGRETS ANY HURT FEELINGS OR DIVISIONS THAT DIFFERENCES OF OPINION ABOUT THIS EVENT HAVE CREATED AND RESPECTS THE CONCERNS RAISED. WE ALSO CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT SINCERE PEOPLE COMMITTED TO THE EDUCATION OF ALL CHILDREN CAN AND DO SOMETIMES DISAGREE.

The outrage in this is the utter failure of our leaders to see the value of investing in our children. Dollar-for-dollar, there is no better outlay of a nation's resources than education. Any land in which education goes begging will surely become a second class nation.

The Edison PTA will continue to seek ways to support our children and their school. We invite any and every member of the community to join us. We are dedicated to preserving the extraordinary learning environment we call Edison. It was a large task before this economic crisis; it is enormous now. But we know it will be well worth every bit of effort.

NANCY GESHKE and CLAUDIA VIZCARRA are co-presidents of the Edison Language Academy PTA.

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CIRCULATION VERIFICATION COUNCIL

The Santa Monica Daily Press is published six days a week, Monday through Saturday.

19,000 daily circulation, 46,450 daily readership. Circulation is audited and verified by Circulation Verification Council, 2006. Serving the City of Santa Monica, and the communities of Venice Beach, Brentwood, West LA. Members of CNPA, AFCP, CVC, Associated Press, IFPA, Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce.

Published by Newlon Rouge, LLC

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Meredith Pro Tem

Meredith C. Carroll
Send comments to editor@smdp.com

Copy cat tales

THE BEST-SELLING AUTHOR OF "Conversations with God" admitted last week that he passed off another writer's work as his own. Neale Donald Walsch fraudulently recalled on a recent post on the spirituality Web site Beliefnet.com one of his son's holiday concerts in which the children were supposed to hold up letters spelling "Christmas Love," except one of the kids accidentally held the "m" upside down, thereby spelling "Christwas Love" instead.

However, it was actually author Candy Chand who first published the story of her son's kindergarten pageant in 1999. When confronted by Chand, Walsch claimed to be "truly mystified" by his "unwitting" plagiarism, saying he must have "internalized" the story as his "own experience" at some point after recounting it for years.

Despite having committed a cardinal writer's sin, though, you have to feel for Walsch. After all, a guy whose head is chock full of enough monumental details about his tête-à-têtes with the Lord that he filled an entire book (plus more than a dozen subsequent volumes) could easily be forgiven for misremembering whether it was his child or someone else's who participated in a holiday performance featuring a prominently misspelled word.

Of course I can't really relate to that kind of memory loss. I, after all, have a mind like a steel trap. Which is why I'll never forget a single detail of the time when God asked me to sacrifice my son Isaac on Mount Moriah. As I dragged him to the top, Isaac kept begging me to explain what we were doing. I lied and said we were going to McDonald's for some Apple Dippers so he wouldn't run away before I had the opportunity to offer him up to the Almighty.

But just as I was about to take his life in God's name, an angel appeared out of nowhere and stopped me. Luckily I noticed a ram caught in a nearby bush and slaughtered it in God's name so at least I had some sort of consolation prize to propose in Isaac's place. (I figured our Creator probably doesn't appreciate being left empty-handed.)

Which reminds me of the totally unforgettable time that I boarded a steamship on its maiden voyage from Southampton, England, to New York City. I was 17 and betrothed to a fellow named Cal Hockley who, despite lavishing me with high-priced gifts, was always bossing me around. So I found comfort instead in the arms of a young drifter name Jack who had snuck onboard.

When the captain failed to avoid an encounter with a considerable iceberg, I let Cal believe that I went down with the ship even though I managed to stay afloat on a piece of carved oak — all the while holding onto an absurdly valuable blue diamond heart-shaped necklace that Cal had given me as an engagement gift. Years later a team of treasure hunters determined to uncover the necklace believed to have sunk with the ship asked me to accompany them on their journey. Once at sea I threw the necklace overboard, leaving not just them empty-handed, but me with an empty bank account and no serious prospects.

But that wasn't nearly as bad, or as memorable, as the time that I was left exposed — literally — in front of tens of millions of people around the world when I performed during the halftime show at the Super Bowl. I had just finished a medley of my greatest hits when former boy-bander Justin Timberlake ripped off a section of my costume, revealing part of my right breast for 9/16ths of a second. The FCC received over half a million complaints about my wardrobe malfunction and my album promptly tanked upon its release a few weeks later.

Fortunately it hasn't been all doom and gloom. I'll always cherish the memory of the time when I thought I wanted to be a nun but was ordered by the Mother Abbess to first work as a governess for the seven children of a widower to ensure that my commitment to the monastic life was firm.

As it turns out, it wasn't. I sang, made the children (and myself. Sue me.) clothing out of curtains and fell in love with their father, whom I married. But when the Nazis tried to force him into the German navy, we took the kids, performed at a festival concert, hid in the abbey and then climbed (what felt like) every mountain until we reached Switzerland, where we were able to begin our happily every after.

So while I pity Walsch for his "unwitting" plagiarism, he simply should have drawn from his own experiences instead of stealing from others. Too bad he and God never discussed not coveting another's story as thine own. It's just so wrong.

E-mail questions or comments to meredithccarroll@hotmail.com.

The Q Line

Fond memories

The passing of Councilman Herb Katz last week got us thinking of the many things he accomplished as a civil servant.

So this week's Q-Line question asks:

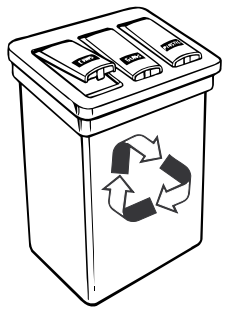
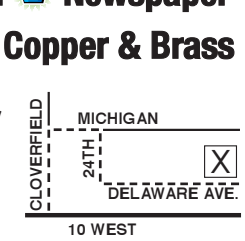
What are some of your fond memories of the longtime lawmaker?

Call (310) 285-8106 before Friday at 5 p.m. and we'll print your answers in the weekend edition of the Daily Press. Please limit responses to a minute or less.



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Simple Real Food

Amanda Cushman
Send comments to editor@smdp.com

Eat lean without getting too mean

IT IS THAT TIME OF YEAR WHERE MANY of us are eating leaner and perhaps looking at getting healthy or losing weight. I know in my house we are doing a cleanse, which basically means cutting out all the good stuff — no alcohol, sugar, dairy, meat, coffee or fatty foods. What is left to eat, you might ask? Well let me tell you there's more than you think. For instance, we had a terrific meal last night — a buffalo burger (buffalo is not part of the taboo red meat category) with caramelized onions and avocado served over some really delicious wasabi mashed potatoes (sans cream, milk or butter!) with roasted curried cauliflower.

I tell you, after a meal like that, who feels deprived? Yes, it would have been nice to have a glass of wine or a beer with the meal instead of water, but hey, it's not so bad.

So this is my fourth day on this diet and it actually feels pretty great to have a lot of energy and not be craving sugar. To feel satisfied after eating but not that stuffed, full feeling is quite a pleasure. I find that it is important to eat fruit, nuts and have the occasional handful of raisins to stave off any niggling urges that creep in especially at the end of the day or around 4 p.m.

I thought I would stick to this for two months to see if I feel so fabulous that I become someone who is permanently transformed. Wish me luck!

Here are a few recipes that might help motivate you to improve your diet. Enjoy!

AMANDA CUSHMAN is a culinary educator who has cooked professionally for 25 years. She teaches privately for groups of two to 20 students. She has developed hundreds of recipes for cookbooks as well as food magazines and Web sites. She can be reached amandascooking@gmail.com.

Turkey and Bean Chili
Serves 8
Ingredients
1 tbs. canola oil
2 onions, chopped
1 1/2 tsp. oregano
1 1/2 tsp. ground cumin
1 1/2 pounds ground turkey
1/4 cup chili powder
2 bay leaves
1 tbs. cocoa powder
1 1/2 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. cinnamon
1 28 oz. can plum tomatoes
3 cups chicken broth
1 tbs. tomato paste
3 15 oz. cans small white beans, rinsed and drained
Chopped cilantro

Procedure
Heat the oil in a large saucepan over med-hi heat. Add the onions and sauté 2 minutes. Add turkey and sauté until cooked through about 5 minutes. Add spices, tomatoes with their juices, broth and tomato paste. Bring to a simmer and cook for 25 minutes, stirring occasionally. Taste and adjust seasoning.
Add beans and simmer another 10 minutes. Discard bay leaves. Serve with cilantro as garnish.

Grilled Turkey Burgers with Caramelized Onion Relish
Serves 4
Ingredients
2 large onions, sliced thinly
1 tbs. olive oil
1 tbs. Dijon mustard
2 tbs. balsamic vinegar
Salt and pepper, to taste
1 1/4 pounds lean ground turkey or buffalo
1 egg
1/3 cup bread crumbs
2 small shallots, minced
2 tbs. chopped parsley

Procedure
1. Heat a large skillet for a few minutes over medium heat. Add onions and oil and sauté until translucent. Lower heat and cook, stirring occasionally until caramelized, about 30 minutes. Add mustard, vinegar and 1/3 cup water, season to taste with salt and pepper. Cover and cook another 4 minutes. Uncover and simmer until liquid is evaporated, about 3 minutes. Set aside.
2. Combine the turkey, egg, breadcrumbs, shallots, parsley, salt and pepper in a large bowl and mix well. Shape into four patties.
3. Heat the grill for 5 minutes over high heat. Grill the burgers until firm to the touch, about 5 minutes on each side. Serve with the onion relish.



Growing up Gourmet

Samantha Barnes
Send comments to editor@smdp.com

The kitchen in the classroom

FORGET LABORATORIES AND LIBRARIES. The best place to teach kids is in the heart of every family's home — the kitchen.

As a middle school teacher, I grew tired of watching the unhealthy food choices my students were making — hot Cheetos for breakfast and caffeinated diet soda for a 9 a.m. snack.

When the lunch truck pulled up after fourth period, some kids ordered corn dogs, others a Snickers, and some just a plain bagel.

Few kids realized the impact their nutritional decisions were having on their academic and athletic performance. Yet despite what they were chowing down on, they all told me the same thing: they were hungry to learn their way around the kitchen.

So I left my job as a school teacher and founded Kitchen Kid, a Santa Monica-based culinary school for kids and families.

Two years and countless cooking classes later, I am more convinced than ever that parents should stop cooking for their kids, and start cooking with them. With this column I hope to share some tips for families, along with recipes that kids can create.

Here's why parents should start cooking with thier kids:

• The kitchen is a classroom, and school becomes delicious! There are bazillions of lessons to learn, and ample ways to reinforce academic and social skills. Take geography: Kids can find the Mediterranean Sea when they make hummus or map the Silk Road when they stir fry. Or language and culture: Steak frites anyone? Farfalle with prosciutto? Dance the flamenco while prepping Spanish tapas?

There's always math: Cups are divided into thirds and tablespoons halved into quarters way before fractions are introduced at school. And don't forget science: Consider the chemistry of egg whites after they've met an electric mixer. There are even lots of chances to practice reading comprehension, sequencing skills, cooperation, and one of my personal favorites, following directions.

• Kids love the prep work parents hate. Washing potatoes? (Fun with water!) Trimming asparagus? (Snap off that third grade aggression!) Chopping herbs? (Meticulous results with craft scissors!) Mundane kitchen tasks become creative opportunities for moms and dads to spend quality time with their kids.

• They call it culinary arts for a reason. Cooking is a tasty and tangible way for kids to express their creativity. Whether it's decorating a cookie, garnishing a plate, or topping a pizza, there are abundant opportunities for kids to explore their artistic ambitions in the kitchen.

• Healthy snacks and yummy meals will thankfully begin to replace vending machines and drive-thrus. With the help of a tiny chef, roasting chicken won't seem like such a formidable task. Moms and dads will be grateful for a few extra hands in the kitchen.

• Kids are empowered to make their own wholesome choices when engaged in honest dialogue about nutrition. In the kitchen, children discover new flavors and textures. They learn to eat a rainbow a day, and are amazed to realize sweet potatoes fuel their brains, bananas boost their energy, milk makes them grow strong, and strawberries fight a cold.

AS A MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER, I GREW TIRED OF WATCHING THE UNHEALTHY FOOD CHOICES MY STUDENTS WERE MAKING – HOT CHEETOS FOR BREAKFAST AND CAFFEINATED DIET SODA FOR A 9 A.M. SNACK.

• Cooking is an essential lifelong skill. Many of my friends rely on frozen pizzas and canned soups for dinner. They didn't learn to cook when they were kids, they missed out on home-ec in school, and they took full advantage of the dining hall for four years of college. But suddenly, as they start families of their own, my friends have realized they simply don't know how to cook. Like any skill, the younger you learn and the more you practice, the better off you'll be. Kids who learn to cook will be gourmands by the time they have kids of their own. And in the meantime, children experience success, independence, and increased self esteem when they put dinner on the table, all by themselves!

• An appreciation of where food comes from fosters an interest in local, sustainable, and organic ingredients. Long after kids forget the nursery rhymes of barnyard animals, kids clamor to track the journey from farm to fork. Kids who peel a fresh peach or shuck an ear of corn understand what ingredients look like and taste like before they go into a can or onto their plate.

• Kids who cook will expand their palate well beyond the limited fare of nuggets and buttered pasta. Children are much more likely to eat — and enjoy — foods which they had a hand in creating. In countless Kitchen Kid cooking classes, I've seen picky eaters chow down happily on foods they previously feared. Vegetables included.

• Dinnertime becomes family time once again. They say that families who eat dinner together raise smarter, safer, and more secure kids. We can only imagine what happens when families actually cook together, too! Norman Rockwell rests in peace.

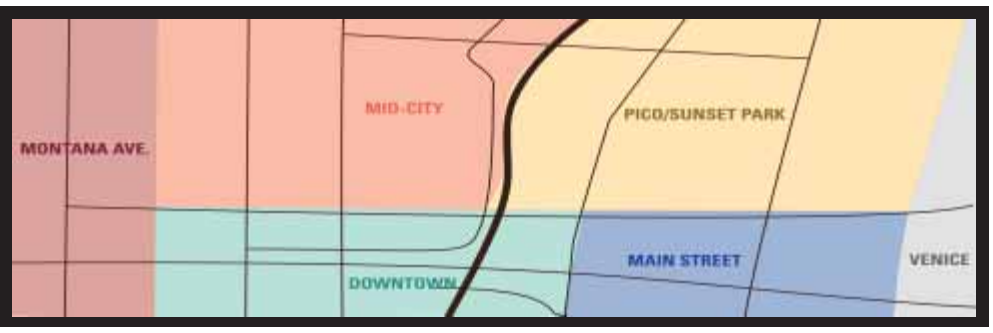
• Watching five year olds mix, mash, and measure is pretty entertaining! As one toque-touting tot-chef explained to me during cooking class, "I love to be shoe-chef!"

SAMANTHA BARNES is the founder of Kitchen Kid, a kids' cooking school. She can be reached at samantha@kitchenkid.com or at www.KitchenKid.com.



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Fire chiefs believe plan will take some time to develop

FROM **FIRE** PAGE 3

On Wednesday, fire chiefs from throughout California attended a meeting of Firescope, a panel representing fire services statewide where the tactic was briefly discussed. While no action was taken, board members stressed the plan will take some time to develop.

"This is not a program we say, 'Here,' and just put it on a piece of paper," said Ventura County Fire Chief Bob Roper. "This will take a long-term dedication."

Modeled after a concept in Australia, where homeowners in rural areas fight fires on their own, the program would teach people how to make their homes more fire-safe and how to save their property if firefighters are unable to respond. It also would be up to individual fire agencies to adopt the policy.

Fire officials who support the program said it's not meant to train people to replace firefighters, but rather to have them snuff out embers and other burning material that may land on a house before the flames arrive.

"We are not telling you to stay," Roper said. "We are giving you the tools and you take personal responsibility if you want to stay and defend (your home)."

The ideal candidate for the program would be someone who is physically fit; has cleared brush from around their home; has a stucco-walled home with fire-resistant roof tiles; and who has decided prior to the fire whether to leave or stay.

Not everyone is convinced such a program would work in their communities. The challenge for fire agencies will be providing a clear and pointed educational campaign so people aren't confused.

"My concern is expecting residents to react correctly in the extreme conditions of a wildfire, particularly a wind-driven firestorm, is asking too much, perhaps, and could lead to injury or worse," Los Angeles County Fire Chief P. Michael Freeman said.

Freeman recalled a fire in 1996 in Malibu where several firefighters were burned by flames because a jittery resident who evacuated at the last-minute accidentally blocked a road that fire trucks were trying to access.

"If people stay, then lose confidence and they decide to evacuate when it's too late, then they are very vulnerable," Freeman said.

Club's creator facing public scrutiny

FROM **CUSSING** PAGE 3

No Cussing Club chapter.

"A couple people in my club do need to work on it a little bit," he says of their language. "But nobody is perfect."

He's surprised by the sudden ire he seems to have drawn from the pro-cussing crowd.

"They say I'm trying to take away their freedom of speech, but I'm not," he says. "I'm just trying to improve people's speech."

Hatch says he is surprised at the growth of the club after he founded it two years ago when he and a few friends got fed up with the blue language they seemed to hear everywhere.

But then the City Council in South Pasadena, a bucolic suburb of tree-shaded cottages and 24,000 people just north of downtown Los Angeles, got on the bandwagon last year and declared the first week of March as No Cussing Week.

Since then, Hatch's club has been profiled in national news stories, and he was interviewed by Dr. Phil and most all of the morning talk show hosts.

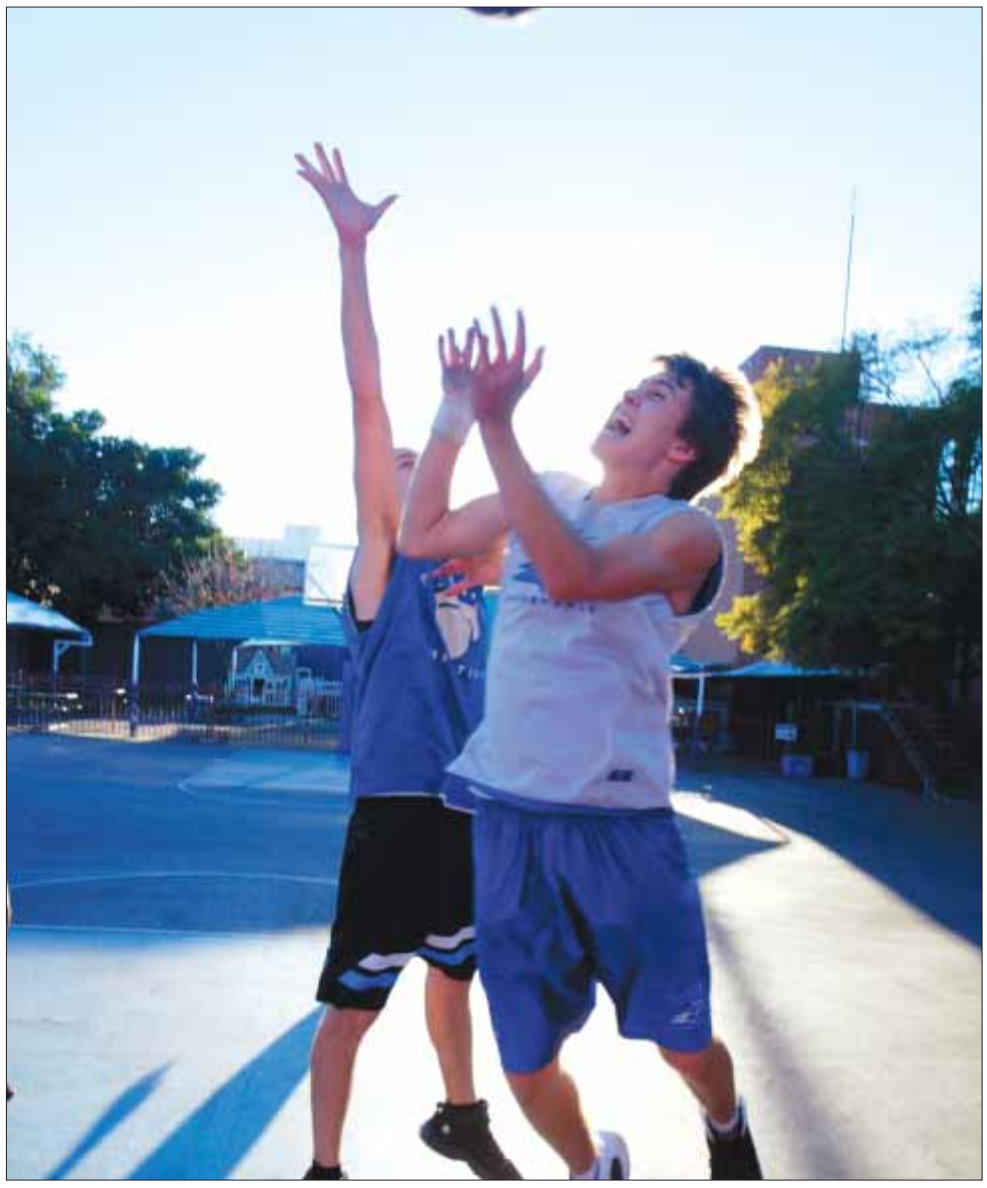
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Byron Kennerly *news@smdp.com*

JUMP BALL: **Pacifica Christian High School's boys basketball team practices on Wednesday.**

Pacifica Seawolves a work in progress

FROM **PACIFICA** PAGE 3

But, ever the salesman, Kelsey said that there is room at Pacifica for one sport athletes, too.

"There is a place for everybody, here," he added.

With so many chances to be a part of school athletics, it has made for a tight-knit campus where everybody knows each other and comes out in numbers to support every team.

For one athlete, the options afforded him have helped build the school from the ground up.

"I'd say that it is fairly important that we have the chance to play other sports," senior David Hammer said. "I just like playing a lot and it's nice to have options."

Hammer, who starts on both the varsity basketball and volleyball teams, said that the opportunity to letter in both sports helps him on both ends.

"I've not seen it work as a disadvantage," he said. "It is a positive for the school. It gets more kids involved, gets them out of their niche.

"They have a little more invested in the school as a result."

That investment really shines during home games. Home may be Culver City High School's gym, but the environment is Pacifica all the way.

"Our kids have really bought in to supporting each other at all of the different events," Kelsey said. "We try to make that experience as fun as possible."

Pacifica students even wear the same T-shirts to games as a show of support for their fellow Seawolves.

"Coaches have done a great job of selling that," he added.

Pacifica may continue to rely on those ever important multiple sport athletes, yet has grown enough to give some respite to those coaches who have been on campus the longest.

Jason Lee, who coaches both boys and girls volleyball, at one point also coached basketball and golf. While he didn't mind the extra work, he admits that things have changed for the better.

"It's nice to have the winter season off and just coach two teams," said Lee, who also plays on the Association of Volleyball Professionals' beach circuit.

That benefit has come to pass due to the struggles he and other coaches endured during the early days of the program.

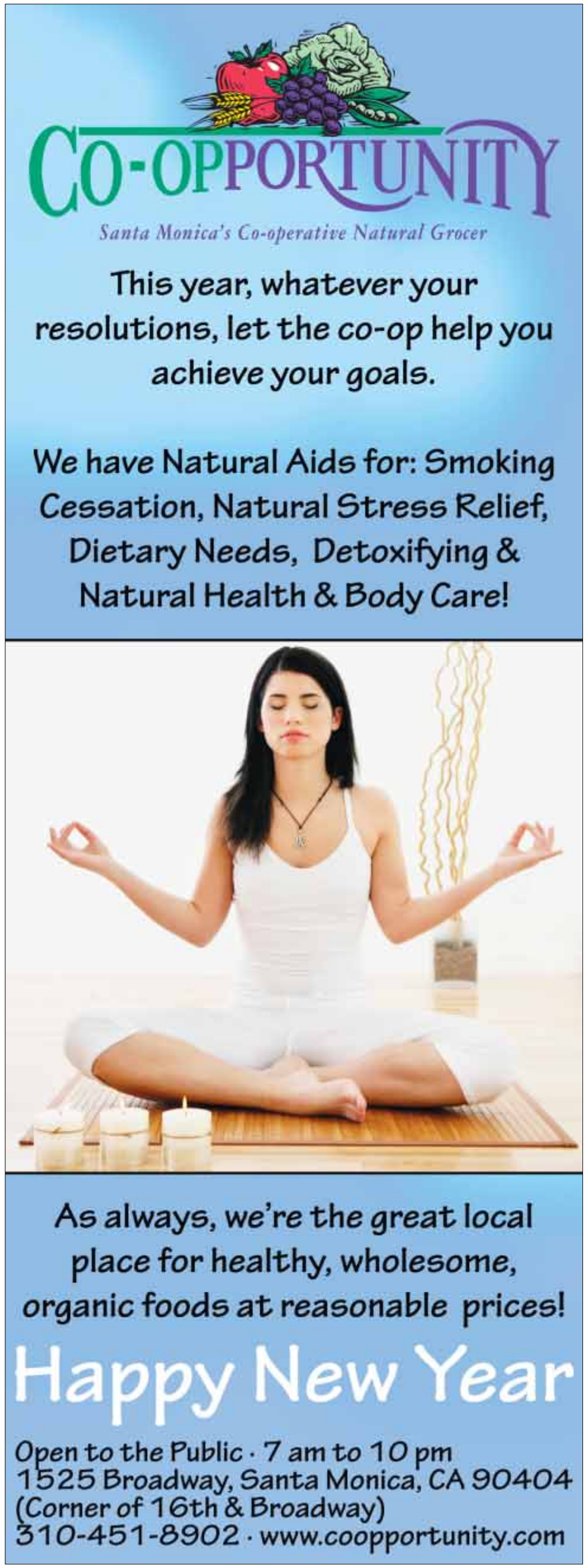
"We don't have the luxury of making cuts," Lee said. "We get a broad range of athletes and you have to be flexible."

He remembers the days when his teams had no more than seven players on each squad. With reserves few and far between he said he didn't have the luxury of sitting people. Everybody had to play if that team was going to be successful.

Those days may be fading into the past, but Lee keeps in mind that it's that environment that has led to Pacifica's success.

"Our goal is to be a powerhouse at any sport we undertake," he said.

daniela@smdp.com



Joint-use agreement could include oversight

FROM **FUNDS** PAGE 1

renegotiated the terms of the contract earlier that year. The amount that was ultimately released to the district includes about half of the funds due this year.

Parents have for years alleged a hostile environment during negotiation sessions for their children's education plans, slamming the practice of including confidentiality clauses in settlement agreements between the district and families.

City officials placed several conditions on the release of the money, ordering the district to conduct an audit on special education and stop the practice of confidentiality clauses, both of which have been completed. The report, which included critical statements by parents, was released last spring and Deputy Superintendent Tim Walker, a key figure in the controversy, later resigned.

The district has also formed several working groups to study and synthesize various reports conducted on special education over the past few years and hosted a fall forum with the Santa Monica-Malibu Council of PTAs in November.

Several long-time educational advocates joined school officials in asking the council to release the money, arguing that all of the conditions have been met and the district is in need of money.

"The state is in a very difficult financial condition right now," Gleam Davis, who serves on various District Advisory Committees, said. "The district has made strides and has set in place committees and other institutions that will continue to make those strides."

While some changes have been made in the program, a group of parents argued on Tuesday that it was premature for the district to approach the council, pointing out that much of the efforts outlined in a recent letter from Cuneo to Mayor Ken Genser have just started to get underway.

Some expressed fear that there would be a lack of oversight from the council if the money was released and that the district would abandon its plans of pushing for change.

Richard Milanesi, the father of a child in special education, likened the situation to fixing a plumbing problem in his house, wondering whether he should pay the plumber before or after a city inspector comes to check out the work.

"My heart tells me to give the money to the school district, but my brain tells me if you release the funds, everything stops right now," he said. "I implore you to hold the money back until the work is done."

While Milanesi's comparison drew laughter from residents who attended the meeting, his wife had a different tone to her speech, prefacing her comments to the council by saying that she hoped she wouldn't cry.

She had just spent eight hours in a negotiation session.

"There is still very much a hostile environment and fear among parents," she said.

Debra Shepherd, a parent of a child in special education, said that she has not observed any changes and her personal situation has gotten worse, claiming the district has been adversarial toward her family since November.

"The district threatened to take services away for my child," she said.

Some parents suggested that the council consider including conditions when they begin renegotiating the joint-use agreement this year, allowing for an opportunity to continue oversight over the school district. There were also questions raised about how much control city officials should have over the district, which falls under the purview of the Board of Education.

Genser said residents should not view the release of the money as the end of the line.

"When we renew the contract, if we (hear) that residents of this city are not getting good service, I have a feeling there would be conditions put on," Genser said.

District officials agreed that there is still work to be done and assured progress will continue.

Cuneo said he was open to discussing the possibility of placing conditions on the joint-use agreement.

"I know there are parents who feel like nothing has been accomplished," Cuneo said. "There is a real committed professional staff that has done a tremendous amount of work to make sure of the success done so far.

"It really does take the community and our staff to work on this together and we're committed to doing that."

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Communications Center to be up and running in nine months

FROM **DISPATCH** PAGE 1

this time.

The study was headed by two retired fire chiefs — Ken Hobbs from Lenexa Fire Department in Kansas and Barry Luke of Orange County Fire Rescue in Florida — and included interviews with local firefighters, most of whom concurred that the current partnership with the LAFD has too many issues.

"The urgency still exists at this point," Brad Lomas, the president of Santa Monica Firefighters Local 1109, said. "This is something that needs to be addressed."

Among the issues experienced at the Regional Dispatch Center was confusion caused by emergency calls that came from addresses in both Santa Monica and Los Angeles.

"There were occasions where the emergency call with the city of Santa Monica would result in Los Angeles Fire Department units being sent to the same address in the city of Los Angeles," Luke said.

The center was also plagued by the problem of experiencing overwhelming call volumes, which would lead to periods of time every day when the system would be saturated, leaving 911 lines to ring longer than the department would prefer.

About 95 percent of the calls that the LAFD handles fall within their own jurisdiction, Luke said.

"Santa Monica is really more of a customer to the Los Angeles Fire Department and not really a full participant in the Los Angeles Fire Department dispatch system," he said.

The shift back to the Communications Center is estimated to cost about $3.1 million in one-time start-up charges, with the bulk of the money going toward an upgraded radio system. The annual cost to operate the center is expected to be about $1.14 million, which covers equipment and personnel.

The current budget for dispatch services is about $630,000 and was estimated to be $650,000 in the 2009-10 budget if the department continued with the Regional Dispatch Center.

Ewell said the costs could have an impact on next year's overall city budget.

Geocomm recommends that the center be staffed with at least two dispatchers and one supervisor. Staffing and the outdated equipment were two of the reasons why local fire officials pursued the partnership with the LAFD.

The one-time cost is helped by the current state of the communications center, which has been maintained by staff since it was shut down.

"It looks like a dispatcher went on break and never came back," Luke said. "The console is there, the chair is there, the radio equipment is there, the 911 system is there."

Councilmember Kevin McKeown praised fire officials for admitting that a system wasn't working out and be willing to think about solutions.

"We're … very lucky we have firefighters who care so much that they came to us and said, 'you know what, it just ain't working,'" McKeown said. "Your dedication to your job and safety of residents is very much appreciated."

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Gov. Schwarzenegger has hard time living up to pronouncements regarding debt

FROM **ADDRESS** PAGE 1

into office with reform on his mind and a pledge to restore the California dream.

"I did not seek this job to preside over the decline of a dream, but to renew it," he proclaimed in January 2004.

But the dream has become more like a nightmare for the Republican governor these days, as his powers of persuasion have failed to yield a deal to solve California's budget deficit, projected to be $42 billion over the next year-and-a-half. When he replaced former Gov. Gray Davis, state finances were buckling under the collapse of the dot-com bubble.

By the time he gave his annual address the following January, Schwarzenegger faced a $14 billion budget deficit for the upcoming fiscal year and an unemployment rate of 6.6 percent, compared to 8.4 percent today.

"We cannot tax our way out of this problem ... a tax increase would be the final nail in California's financial coffin," he said then.

Schwarzenegger also pledged to tear up the government's credit card to avoid borrowing to pay annual expenses: "Never again will government be allowed to spend money it doesn't have," he said in 2004.

Living up to those pronouncements has proved difficult, especially with the nation's economy mired in the worst recession in at least a generation. In his latest budget plan, the governor has proposed $17.4 billion in spending cuts and $14.3 billion in tax increases and other new revenue, as well as $10 billion in borrowing to close the deficit through June 2010.

On policy, the state's schools have made only marginal gains during Schwarzenegger's tenure, despite his pledge to streamline education funding and give local districts more control to boost achievement. A national report by Education Week gave California a D grade for student achievement and an F for funding.

Finding ways to solve California's structural budget deficit has been a recurring theme for the governor, but he's been unable to reach meaningful compromise with Democrats and Republicans in the Legislature.

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Cheney: Audiotape shows Osama bin Laden is isolated

BY DEB RIECHMANN
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON The White House said Wednesday that the recent audiotape believed to carry a message from Osama bin Laden reflects the "isolation" of the al-Qaida leader whose influence over the terrorist network has waned.

"Wherever he is, he's in a deep hole," Vice President Dick Cheney said in an interview Wednesday with PBS' "The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer." "He does not have much impact on the organization as best we can tell."

In a new message aimed at harnessing anger in the Mideast over the Gaza offensive, bin Laden urges Muslims to launch a jihad, or holy war, against Israel and condemned Arab governments as allies of the Jewish state.

The audiotape, posted on Islamic militant Web sites, was bin Laden's first since May and came nearly three weeks after Israel started its campaign against Gaza's militant Hamas rulers.

"It appears this tape demonstrates his isolation and continued attempts to remain relevant at a time when al-Qaida's ideology, mission and agenda are being questioned and challenged throughout the world," said Gordon Johndroe, a spokesman for the National Security Council at the White House.

The al-Qaida leader also vowed that the terror network would open "new fronts" against the United States and its allies beyond Iraq and Afghanistan.

Study: Basic checklist cut surgical deaths in half

BY MIKE STOBBE
AP Medical Writer

ATLANTA Scrawl on the patient with a permanent marker to show where the surgeon should cut. Ask the person's name to make sure you have the right patient. Count sponges to make sure you didn't leave any inside the body.

Doctors worldwide who followed a checklist of steps like these cut the death rate from surgery almost in half and complications by more than a third in a large international study of how to avoid blatant operating room mistakes.

The results — most dramatic in developing countries — startled the researchers.

"I was blown away," said Dr. Atul Gawande, a Harvard surgeon and medical journalist who led the study, published in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine.

U.S. hospitals have been required since 2004 to take some of these precautions. But the 19-item checklist used in the study was far more detailed than what is required or what many institutions do.

The researchers estimated that implementing the longer checklist in all U.S. operating rooms would save at least $15 billion a year.

"Most of these things happen most of the time for most patients, but we need to make it so that all these things happen all the time for all patients, because each slip represents an opportunity for harm," said Dr. Alex Haynes of the Harvard School of Public Health, one of the study's authors.

The checklist was developed by the World Health Organization and includes measures such as these:

— Before the patient is given anesthesia, make sure the part of the body to be operated on is marked, and make sure everyone on the surgical team knows if the patient has an allergy.

— Before the surgeons cut, make sure everyone in the operating room knows one another and what their roles will be during the operation, and confirm that all the needed X-rays and scan images are in the room.

— After surgery, check that all the needles, sponges and instruments are accounted for.

That checklist was tested in 2007-08 in eight cities around the world: Seattle; Toronto; London; New Delhi; Auckland, New Zealand; Amman, Jordan; Manila, Philippines; and Ifakara, Tanzania. (Heart and pediatric cases were excluded.)

Before the checklist was introduced, 1.5 percent of patients in a comparison group died within 30 days of surgery at the eight hospitals. Afterward, the rate dropped to 0.8 percent — a 47 percent decrease.

The biggest decreases were in developing countries, with the combined death rate for Jordan, India, Tanzania and the Philippines falling 52 percent. There was no significant difference in deaths in the wealthiest countries.

Overall, major complications dropped from 11 percent to 7 percent. Again, the biggest decreases were in the lower-income countries.

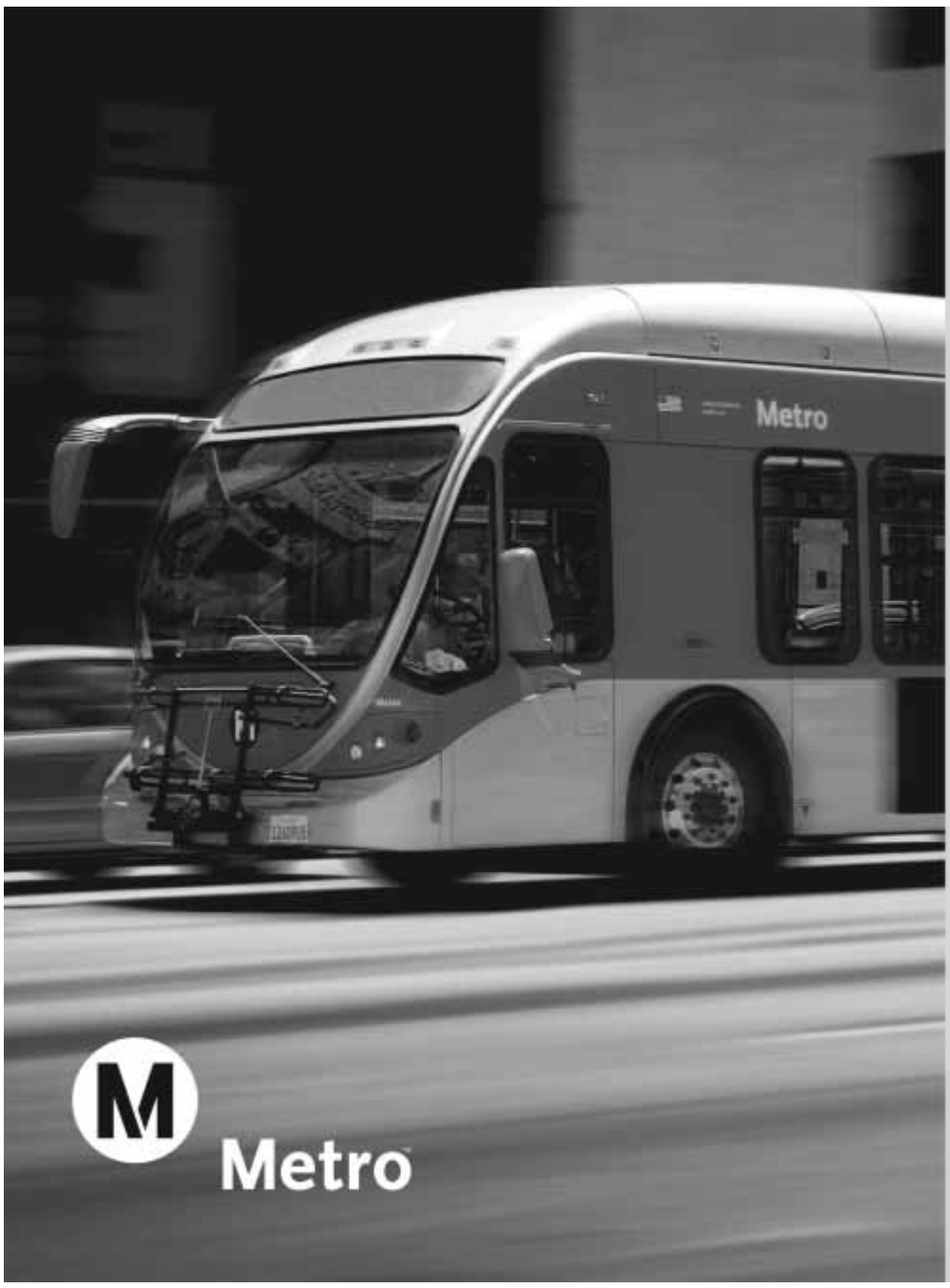
"What we're seeing is the benefits of good team work and coordinated care," Haynes said.

The results were so dramatic that Dr. Peter Pronovost, a Johns Hopkins University doctor who proved in a highly influential study a few years ago that checklists could cut infection rates from intravenous tubes, said he was skeptical of the findings.

One possible flaw, he said, is that "you had people who bought into the system collecting their own data."

The researchers acknowledged it is possible that the results were partly because people perform better when they know they're being watched.

However, the 19-point checklist is already being adopted. Ireland, Jordan, the Philippines and Britain have recently established nationwide programs to have the checklist used in all operating rooms.



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SURF REPORT

Surf Conditions **Water Temp:** 57°

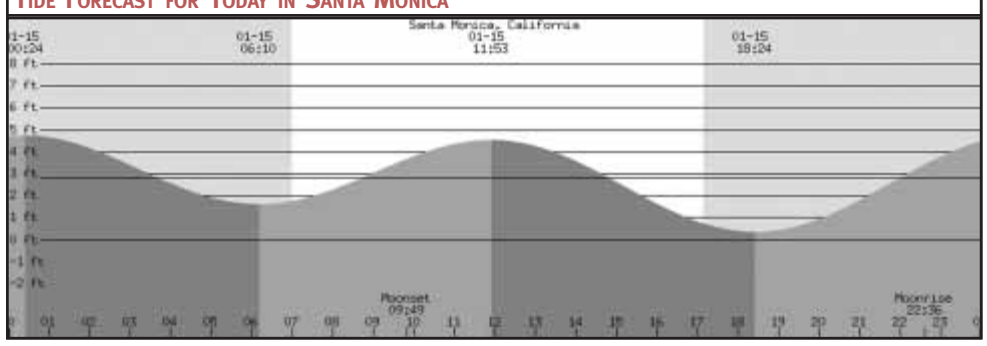
Swell Forecast (2-4 FT)

Thursday the 15th sees a small burst of NW swell come in, but this should only help west facing breaks get into waist high waves.

Long Range Synopsis

Friday the 16th is looking smaller, but it's not out of the question that some forerunners from Saturday's WNW swell come ashore.

Tide Forecast for Today in Santa Monica



BEACH REPORT CARD

NORTH LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Grades for this report are based on monitoring data from the previous four weeks up to the ending date of **January 6, 2009**

HEAL THE BAY - 1444 9th Street, Santa Monica, CA 90401 - www.healthebay.org - brc@healthebay.org - 800 HEAL BAY

QUICK STATS (for the last 28 days)

- Number of sewage spills -- 0
- Number of beach closures due to a sewage spill -- 0
- Number of wet days -- 13
- Number of A grades for dry/wet weather -- 39 / 17
- Number of (C,D,F) grades for dry/wet weather -- 9 / 38

The Beach Report Card is made possible by simplehuman, The Goldhirsh Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, Ford

Heal the Bay reminds you not to swim or surf within 100 yards of any flowing storm drain or for 3 days after a rainstorm. After a rain, indicator bacteria counts at beaches throughout California usually far exceed health criteria in the state's Beach Closure and Health Warning Protocol.

LOCATION	DRY	WET
Leo Carrillo Beach, at Arroyo Sequit Creek mouth	A+	A+
Nicholas Beach at San Nicholas Canyon Creek mouth	A+	A+
El Pescador State Beach, between Lechusa and Las Alisos creeks	A+	A+
Encinal Canyon at El Matador State Beach	A+	A+
Broad Beach at Trancas Creek mouth	A+	A+
Zuma Beach at Zuma Creek mouth	A+	A+
Walnut Creek, projection of Wildlife Rd. (private)	A+	F
Paradise Cove Pier at Ramirez Canyon Creek mouth	A+	F
Escondido Creek, just east of Escondido State Beach	A+	A+
Latigo Canyon Creek mouth	A	F
Solstice Canyon at Don Blocker County Beach	D	A
Pearco State Beach at creek mouth	A+	D
Marie Canyon storm drain at Pearco Beach, at 24572 Malibu Rd.	A	F
Surfrider Beach at Malibu Colony fence	A	F
Surfrider Beach (breach location)- daily	F	F
Malibu Pier - 50 yards east	A	D
Carbon Beach at Sweetwater Canyon	A+	A
Las Flores State Beach at Las Flores Creek (point zero)	A+	F
Big Rock Beach at 19948 PCH stairs	F	A+
Pena Creek at Las Tunas County Beach	A+	A
Tuna Canyon	A+	A+
Topanga State Beach at creek mouth	F	F
Castlerock Storm Drain at Castle Rock Beach	A+	F
Santa Ynez Storm Drain at Castle Rock Beach	F	F
Will Rogers State Beach at 17200 PCH (1/4 mile east of Sunset drain)	A+	C

LOCATION	DRY	WET
Will Rogers State Beach at Bel Air Bay Club drain near fence	A+	A+
Will Rogers State Beach at Pulga Canyon storm drain	A+	C
Will Rogers State Beach at Temescal Canyon drain	A+	F
Will Rogers State Beach at Santa Monica Canyon drain (Chautauqua)	F	F
Santa Monica Beach at Montana Ave. drain	A+	F
Santa Monica Beach at Wilshire Blvd. drain	A+	F
Santa Monica Municipal Pier	F	F
Santa Monica Beach at Pico/Kenter storm drain	F	F
Santa Monica Beach at Strand St. (in front of the restrooms)	A	B
Ocean Park Beach at Ashland Ave. drain	A+	F
Venice City Beach, at the Rose Ave. storm drain	A+	F
Venice Beach at Brooks Ave. drain	A+	D
Venice Beach at Windward Ave. drain	A+	F
Venice Fishing Pier - 50 yards south	A+	D
Venice Beach- projection of Topsail St.	A	F
Marina del Rey, Mothers' Beach- lifeguard tower	A	F
Dockweiler State Beach at Ballona Creek mouth	F	F
Dockweiler State Beach at Culver Blvd. drain	A+	C
North Westchester Storm Drain at Dockweiler State Beach	A+	A
Dockweiler State Beach at World Way (south of D&W jetty)	A	A+
Dockweiler State Beach at Imperial Hwy drain	A+	A+
Dockweiler Beach- opposite Hyperion Treatment Plant	A+	A+
Dockweiler State Beach at Grand Ave. drain	A+	C

LEGEND

DRY -- each location is graded on an A – F scale based on bacterial pollution levels present in the surf zone
WET -- grades for days of recorded rainfall and the following 3 days
ns -- no sample taken

Heal the Bay is a non-profit environmental organization dedicated to making Santa Monica Bay and Southern California coastal waters safe and healthy for people and marine life.

Heal the Bay

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Heal the Bay's Beach Report Card® is based on weekly water quality monitoring data provided by the City of Los Angeles' Environmental Monitoring Division and the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services. Data is analyzed as soon as it is made available to us by the public agencies. Beaches are graded on an A–F scale based on the risk of ocean users becoming ill. Samples are analyzed for bacteria—enterococcus, total and fecal coliforms—that indicate biological pollution. A fact sheet detailing the exact methodology used in determining grades for each location is available from the office or on our web site. The report is not designed to measure the amount of trash or toxins found at local beaches.

The Beach Report Card is an indication of past water quality and is not a warranty of the current safety of those areas surveyed. Our lawyers are happy.

Tough times can turn homeowners into landlords

BY MELISSA KOSSLER DUTTON
For The Associated Press

When Dave and Gina Schudi of Phoenix went house hunting last year, they knew the time was right to buy — not sell — a home.

So when they did purchase a new one, they rented out their old home.

"It all depends on the market," said Dave Schudi, who plans to sell the old house eventually. "We've got good renters in there."

Falling house prices and a slow market are forcing more homeowners to consider renting their properties.

It's something Tampa, Fla., Realtor Julia Vakulenko suggests to potential clients.

"Basically, we ask all the people who contact us, 'Must you sell it right now?'" she said. "Most likely, it will just sit there or maybe sell below the market value."

For many, the role of landlord is something they'd never considered. If done right, however, renting out a home can help the owner ride out the housing slump, said Vakulenko, of Tampa4U.com. But the process does require doing some research, said Vakulenko, who owns five rental properties.

She often refers clients to property management companies who can determine what their home would rent for and whether there's a market for it. Homeowners are often disappointed to learn that their home would rent for less than their mortgage payment, added John Nuzzolese, president of the Landlord Protection Agency in East Meadow, N.Y.

"Whether it's for sale or for rent, it's only worth what people are willing to pay for it," he said. "People have to be realistic and put themselves in the tenants' shoes."

Real estate analyst Danielle Babb often sends people to www.rentometer.com to see what the going rent is in their area. The Web site allows users to see what comparable properties in the area charge.

Once you've set a rent range, determine your demographic — students, families, young professionals — and market the house to them, said Babb, author of "The Accidental Landlord" (Penguin Group, 2008).

Babb, who has owns 27 rental properties, wrote the book after watching friends and colleagues trying to rent out houses they couldn't sell.

"You've got to think like a renter. There's lots of availability," she said. "They're going to choose the most exciting option."

Babb, Nuzzolese and Vakulenko offered the following suggestions for homeowners who are considering renting their home:

• Familiarize yourself with local laws dealing with rental properties. It's important to understand the eviction process, how to handle security deposits and what type of access you have to the property once it's rented.

• Determine whether you want to select the tenant and handle property issues or hire a company to do it. If you take on the responsibility, you are obliged to fix any problems (leaky faucets, broken furnace, etc.) or find professionals to do it.

• Develop a rental application. Ask questions on the application that will help you quickly determine whether you want this person for a tenant. Consider asking about pets, smoking and employment, for example.

• Ask for references. Call former landlords and ask about the person's rental history. Verify that the references listed are really landlords and not the applicant's friends posing as landlords.

• Screen potential tenants. Once you've narrowed your field of potential tenants, hire a service to run a criminal and financial background check on the applicants. Be wary of tenants with previous evictions or bankruptcies.

• Consult with an attorney or the Landlord Protection Agency, www.thelpa.com, before writing a lease. A well-written lease is crucial to protect your property. It will help you evict a tenant or hold them accountable for damage if necessary.

• Collect a security deposit equal to one month's rent. This will help cover any damage to the property and protect you if a tenant moves without paying rent.

• Perform a walk-through of the property with the tenant before he or she moves in. During the walk-through, make notes and take photos of any property damage such as chips in the tile, spots on carpeting, etc. You and the tenant should sign the paper as an acknowledgement of what condition the property was in at the start of the lease.

• Check on the property. Drive by at least once a month and look for signs of trouble such as garbage in the yard, extra cars in the driveway, or excessive wear and tear. Make arrangements to walk through the property three months into the lease to see how well the tenant is caring for it. (Make sure you give the proper notice required for entering the property.)

• Do not accept partial rent payments. Accepting money from tenants who are not paying the full rent can make it more difficult to evict them.

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1441 Third Street Promenade
(310) 458-1506

The Spirit (PG-13) 1hr 43min
2:00, 4:30, 7:00, 9:30

Tale of Despereaux, The (G) 1hr 27min
2:45, 5:05, 7:20, 9:40

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (PG-13) 2hrs 48min
1:45, 5:15, 8:45

Milk (R) 2hrs 08min
1:15, 4:05, 6:55, 9:45

AMC 7 Santa Monica
1310 Third St.
(310) 289-4262

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (PG-13) 2hrs 48min
1:00, 4:30, 8:00

Not Easily Broken (PG-13) 1hr 39min
2:30, 5:00, 7:35, 10:00

Bride Wars (PG) 1hr 30min
2:15, 4:45, 7:15, 9:40

Yes Man (PG-13) 1hr 44min
2:10, 4:50, 7:30, 10:05

Bedtime Stories (PG) 1hr 35min
2:00, 4:30, 7:20, 9:50

Frost/Nixon (R) 2hrs 02min
1:20, 4:10, 7:00, 9:45

The Unborn (PG-13)
1:10, 3:25, 5:35, 7:50, 10:15

Laemmle's Monica Fourplex
1332 Second St.
(310) 394-9741

Revolutionary Road (R) 1hr 59min
1:00, 4:00, 7:00, 9:50

Last Chance Harvey (PG-13) 1hr 39min
1:40, 4:30, 7:20, 9:45

Slumdog Millionaire (R) 2hr 1min
1:10, 4:10, 7:10, 10:00

Doubt (PG-13) 1hr 44min
1:30, 4:20, 7:00, 9:35

Mann's Criterion Theatre
1313 Third St.
(310) 395-1599

Seven Pounds (PG-13) 1hr 58min
12:50, 3:50, 7:00, 9:50

Gran Torino (R)
11:40am, 2:20, 5:00, 6:00, 7:40, 9:00, 10:30

Valkyrie (PG-13) 2hrs
11:10am, 1:50, 4:40, 7:30, 10:20

Marley & Me (PG) 2hrs Digital Projection
1:30, 4:20, 7:10, 10:00

Marley & Me (PG) 2hrs
12:00, 3:00

The Reader (R) 2hrs 02min
1:10, 4:10, 7:20, 10:10

For more information, e-mail news@smdp.com

Do your thing, Scorpio

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
★★★★ Though you feel a need to handle matters in a certain way, someone could be quite pushy. The issue will be how to handle the situation best. How do you win a power play? By not playing. Tonight: Hang with one or more of the many good people in your life.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★★ Tap into your creativity in the morning, whether scheduling your day or handling an inevitable hassle. You know your limits. Reach out for someone at a distance who can be, and frequently is, contrary. Tonight: Squeeze in some exercise.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★★ Stay on top of your game, though initially you might want to retreat this morning. Your creativity surges in the afternoon, especially as a key partner could be stubborn and difficult. You'll find a way around this hassle. Tonight: Pretend it is Friday night.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★★★ Clear out a conversation early on. You'll breathe much more clearly as a result. A personal matter overtakes your mind and attention in the afternoon. If you can, call it an early day. Tonight: Enjoy every minute at home.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★★★ Deal with finances. You also might feel out of sync with an associate or when dealing with a work problem. You can get past this issue by discussing it. Others will bend given ease and the right path. Tonight: Catch up on another's news.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★★★ Your ease helps others relax. Still, someone will buck your ideas. Instead of feeling challenged, know that you can strengthen a relationship and a project by working through the problem. Tonight: Pay bills first.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★★★ As you wake up this a.m., you prefer to choose a more reclusive phase. By midday, you are with it, upbeat and tossing yourself into events, communication and the people who might be involved. Tonight: Smile and know that you need to choose.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★ Use the morning well. Emphasize goals, people and meetings. In the afternoon, pull back and do some thinking. A conversation could be a big eye-opener. Think past the obvious here. Was there another message? Tonight: Do your thing.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★★★ Handle an important matter quickly. Success garnishes your path this afternoon. Interactions with others and meetings make you even more of a star. Communication flourishes beyond precedent. Tonight: Where the action is.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★★★ News filters through. Be a smart Goat: Question information and confirm that you have been given the facts and only the facts. Yes, facts are often embellished. Don't make it a big deal. Tonight: Out and about.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★★★★ A partner steps forward and shares more than he or she has in a long time. Don't get into the details, especially if you have a knee-jerk reaction. By taking in the big picture and detaching, you'll find answers. Tonight: Let your imagination rock and roll.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★★ Defer to others and take in new information. Your ability to deal with others needs to come out, as there are so many opinions and requests. Of course everyone wants to be treated as if he or she is kingpin (or queenpin). Tonight: Schedule a quiet dinner.

Happy birthday

Get past immediate situations. That attitude will be one of your ways of handling issues this year. By detaching, you will gain additional insight into the people and problems involved. Trust your skills to come up with a middle ground that is workable and/or a novel solution. If you are single, you meet people with ease. Your popularity soars to a new level this year. Know that you might want to get to know someone better before deciding this is "it." Time is your ally. If you are attached, the two of you can get along better together, especially if you are willing to listen more to your sweetie and understand where he or she is coming from. LIBRA knows how to a difference.

JACQUELINE BIGAR'S STARS
The stars show the kind of day you'll have:
★★★★★ Dynamic ★★ So-So
★★★★ Positive ★ Difficult
★★★ Average

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HC09 2009 Greater Los Angeles HOMELESS COUNT

Tuesday, January 27, 2009
8 p.m. – 2 a.m.

Volunteers needed for a biennial census of homeless people in Santa Monica.

Volunteers are encouraged to attend one of the following trainings:

Thursday, January 15, 7- 8:30 p.m.
Virginia Avenue Park, Thelma Terry Center
2200 Virginia Ave.
or
Saturday, January 24, 10 – 11:30 a.m.
Santa Monica Main Library, Martin Luther King, Jr. Auditorium
601 Santa Monica Blvd.

Join the Santa Monica Police and Fire Departments and the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce – VOLUNTEER!

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RSVP to City of Santa Monica, Human Services Division
dina.aubrey@smgov.net
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Sudoku

Fill in the blank cells using numbers 1 to 9. Each number can appear only once in each row, column, and 3x3 block. Use logic and process of elimination to solve the puzzle. The difficulty level ranges from ★ (easiest) to ★★★★★ (hardest).

Difficulty Level ★★★

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

King Features Syndicate

GETTING STARTED

There are many strategies to solving Sudoku. One way to begin is to examine each 3x3 grid and figure out which numbers are missing. Then, based on the other numbers in the row and column of each blank cell, find which of the missing numbers will work. Eliminating numbers will eventually lead you to the answer.

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S PUZZLE

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

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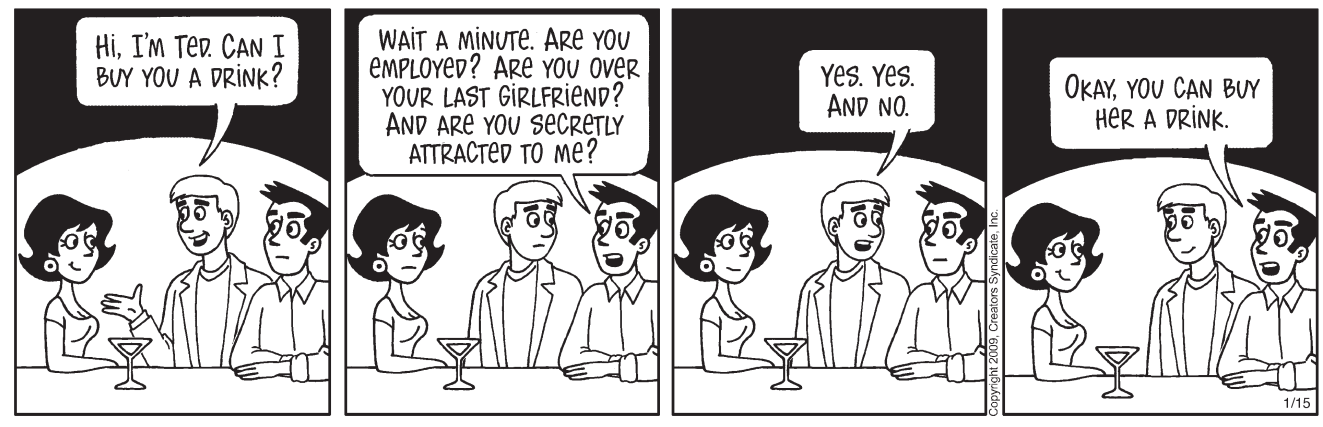
Girls and Sports

By Justin Borus and Andrew Feinstein



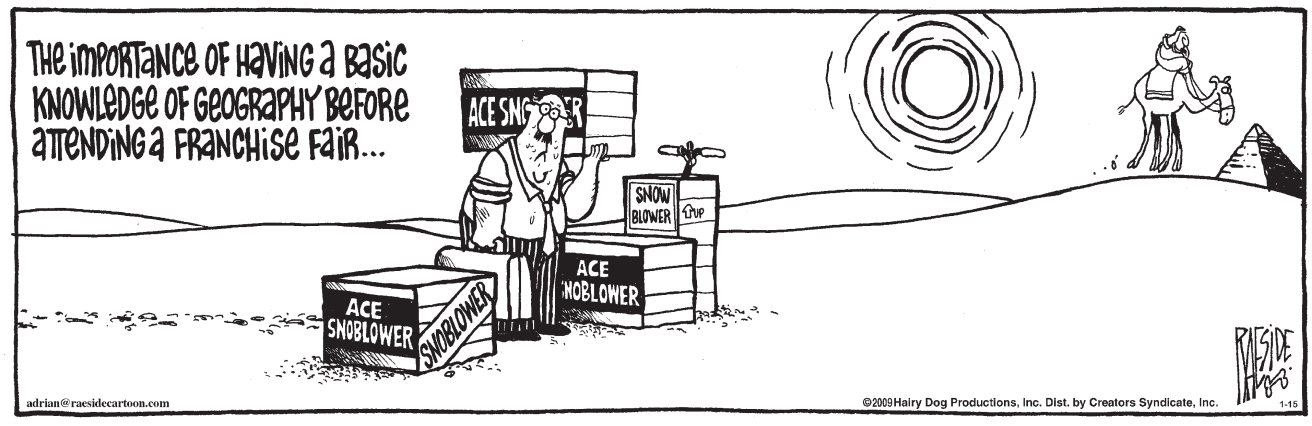
The Meaning of Lila

By John Forgetta & L.A. Rose



The Other Coast

By Adrian Raeside



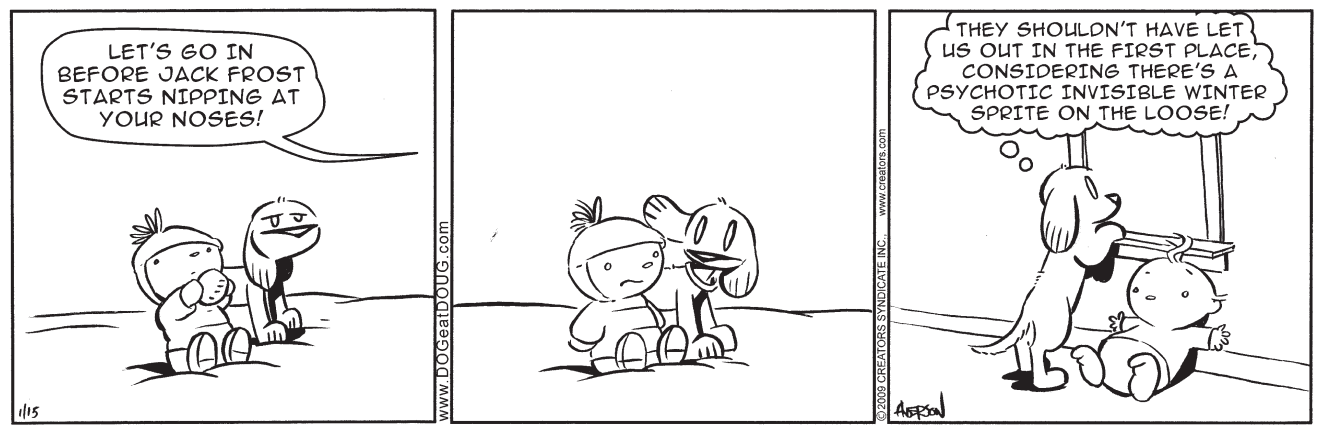
Garfield

By Jim Davis

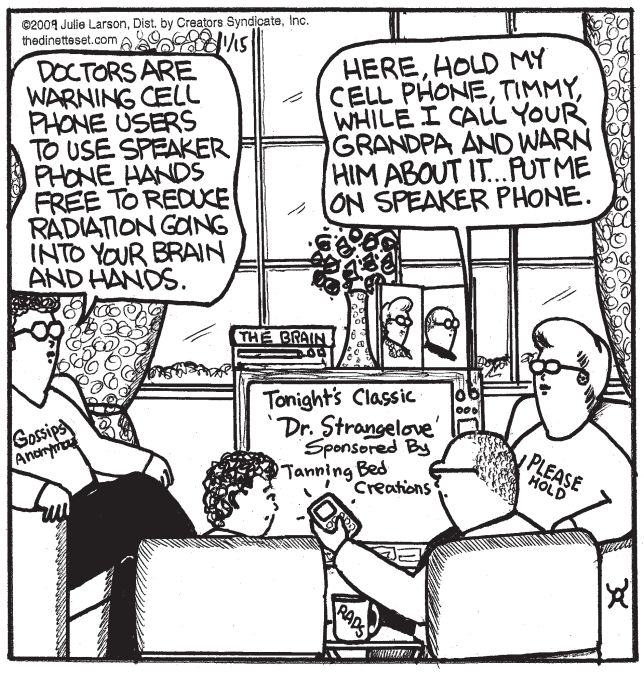


Dog eat Doug

By Brian Anderson

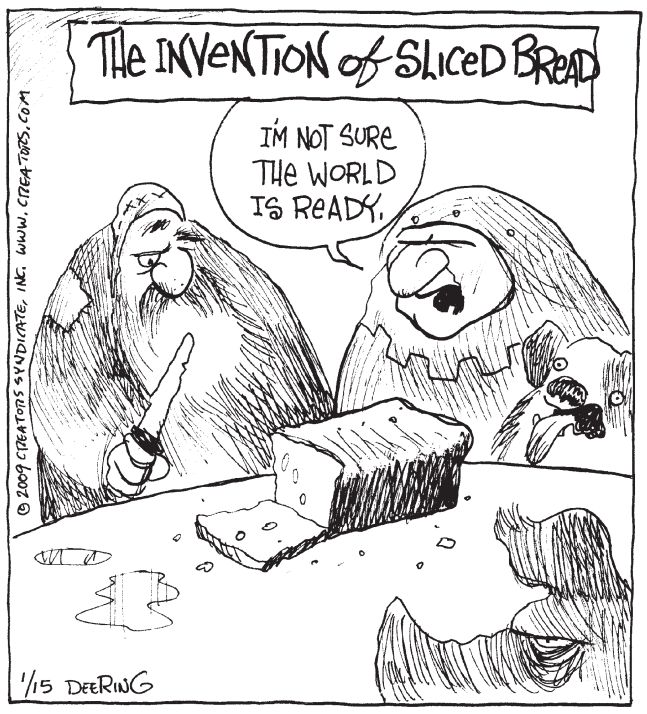


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Speed Bump

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MYSTERY PHOTO

Rachel Dardashti *news@smdp.com*

The first person who can correctly identify where this image was captured gets a pat on the back from the Santa Monica Daily Press. Send answers to *editor@smdp.com*.

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Copy for pasteup
6 Prepare for surgery
11 Museum piece
12 Lead to
13 Roofing material
14 Heart, for one
15 Like some breads
17 Checkers side
19 Undoing word
20 Field judge
23 Egypt neighbor
25 Niger neighbor
26 Receipt line, often
28 Cruising
29 Evening repast
30 Legal matter
31 Blockhead
32 Parched
33 Singer Estefan
35 Story with a lesson
38 Big singing group
41 Love affair
42 Designer Geoffrey
43 Asian land
44 English county

DOWN

1 Reading and others: Abbr.
2 Long swimmer
3 Kids' visits with friends
4 Solemn act
5 Tasmania setting
6 "Ivanhoe" author
7 Grant of films
8 Floor cover
9 D.C. setting
10 Golfer

F	A	C	T	S			B	R	E	D
O	T	H	E	R		F	I	E	R	Y
N	E	E	D	S		R	A	M	O	N
D	I	E	S		B	E	S	I	D	E
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	O	H	N	O		E	N	D	S	
			S	T	A	R	G	A	T	E
B	O	B		R	D	S		V	A	N
U	S	E	R	I	D		L	I	N	T
R	A	N	U	P		S	I	N	C	E
S	K	I	N	S		P	A	C	E	R
T	A	N	S			A	M	I	S	S

Yesterday's answer

Crenshaw **25** High pt.
16 Scoundrel **27** Strip
17 Speed checker **31** Watchful
18 Make blank **33** Sticky stuff
20 Rescheduling concerns **34** Secures
21 Playwright Rice **35** Diet no-no
22 Blazing **36** Paris pal
24 "Don't — stranger!" **37** Short cut
39 Compass pt.
40 Singer Ritter

NEW CROSSWORD BOOK! Send $4.75 (check/m.o.) to Thomas Joseph Book 2, P.O. Box 536475, Orlando, FL 32853-6475

1	2	3	4	5	■	6	7	8	9	10
11					■	12				
13					■	14				
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30			■	31			■	32		
■	■	■	33				34		■	■
35	36	37			■	38			39	40
41					■	42				
43					■	44				

1-15

DAILY LOTTERY

MEGA MILLIONS: 22 25 33 36 48
Meganumber: 40
Jackpot: $12M

SUPER LOTTO PLUS: 25 29 30 31 38
Meganumber: 25
Jackpot: $47M

FANTASY 5: 2 11 30 37 38

DAILY 3: MIDDAY: 8 8 1
EVENING: 5 3 1

DAILY DERBY:
1st: 07 Eureka
2nd: 01 Gold Rush
3rd: 04 Big Ben
RACE TIME: 1.47.19

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 at http://www.calottery.com

NEWS OF THE WEIRD

BY CHUCK SHEPARD

■ Karma: A few animals were rescued from an early morning fire at a Humane Society shelter in Oshawa, Ontario, in December, but cats suffered heavy casualties, with nearly 100 perishing. The Fire Marshal's office said the blaze was probably started by mice chewing through electrical wires.

■ Drunk-Driving News: (1) Kathleen Cherry, 53, was arrested for DUI in Carson City, Nev., in December. She is a phlebotomist working on contract with the sheriff's office and was driving to the jailhouse to administer a blood test to a DUI suspect. (2) Stephen Foster, 28, was jailed briefly in June in Edmonton, Alberta, when he showed up in court drunk for his DUI trial. The driving charge was postponed until December, and at that time a court found him not guilty.

■ In December, Lorraine Henderson, the port director for the federal Customs and Border Protection agency's southern New England area, was charged with hiring illegal immigrants to clean her home and instructing them how to avoid detection by her agency. According to court documents, she told one worker, "You have to be careful, 'cause they (meaning, her agency) will deport you."

TODAY IN HISTORY

1929 civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. was born in Atlanta.

1943 work was completed on the Pentagon, headquarters of the U.S. Department of Defense.

1947 the mutilated remains of Elizabeth Short, the 22-year-old aspiring actress nicknamed the "Black Dahlia," were found in a vacant Los Angeles lot; her slaying remains unsolved.

1967 the Green Bay Packers of the National Football League defeated the Kansas City Chiefs of the American Football League 35-10 in the first AFL-NFL World Championship Game, retroactively known as Super Bowl I.

WORD UP!

Poesy \poh-uh-see, -zee\, *noun*:
1. Poetical works; poetry.
2. The art or practice of composing poems.
3. The inspiration involved in composing poetry.

Santa Monica Daily Press

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GIVE OF YOURSELF American Cancer Society Discovery Shop needs volunteer sales help. You can contribute by spending 4 hours per week Thurs., Fri., or Sat.assisting in our up-scale resale shop in Santa Monica. Conact Terry or Shaunnah at (310) 458-4490.

Employment

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SINGLE 12746 Pacific Ave. unit 2 Lower stove, fridge, dishwasher, wall ac, carpet, blinds, laundry,intercom entry, restricted parking, no pets. $995.move-in special $200 off (310)578-7512 www.jkwproperties.com

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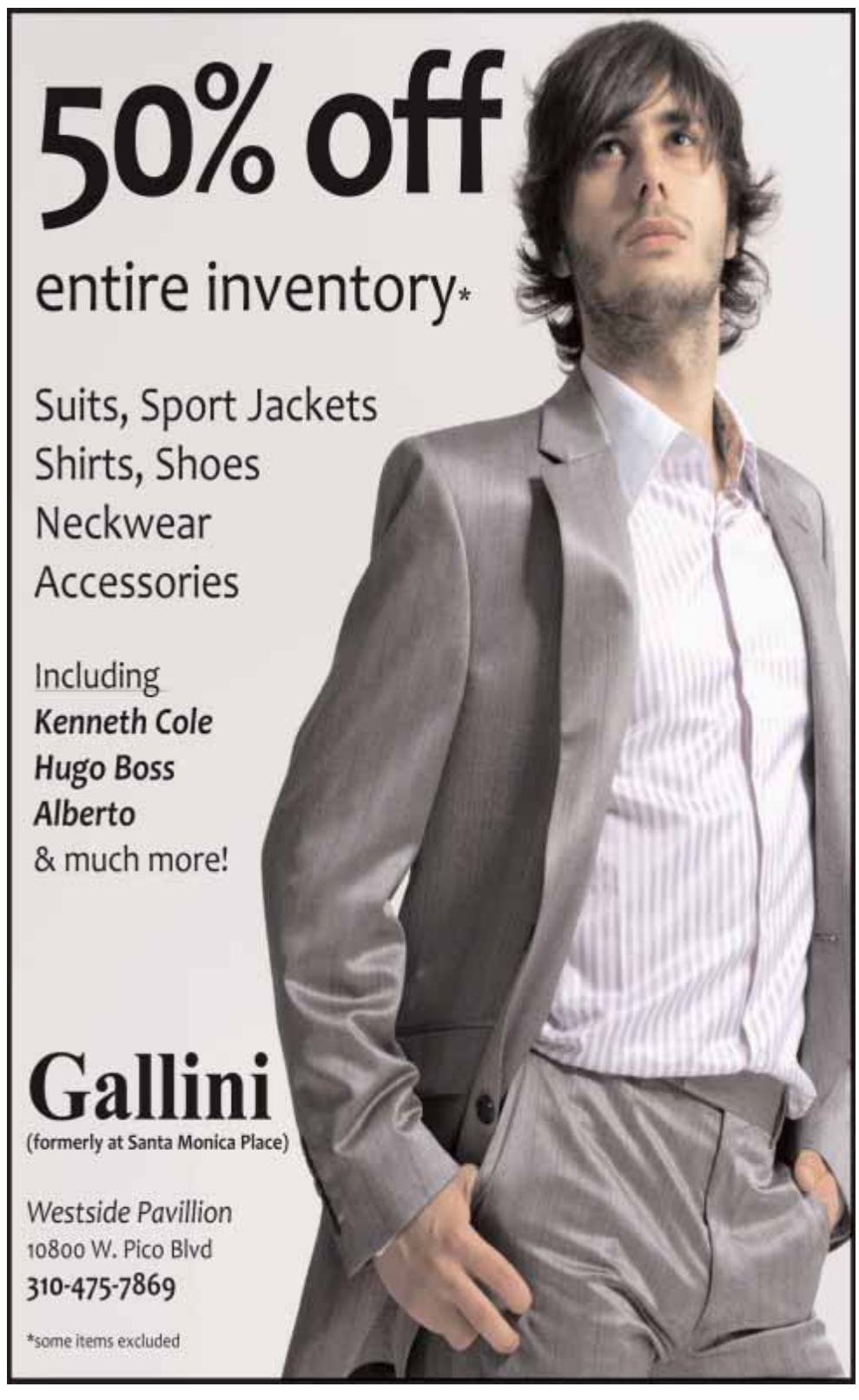
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		Single Family Homes	Condos & Townhomes
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North of Montana	=	$3,287,040	$1,647,047
Between Wilshire & Montana	=	$1,985,914	$903,637
South of Wilshire	=	$942,625	$670,060
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