Palo Corona park getting lots of new trails

By CHRIS COUNTS

NOW that a six-month trail renovation project has been completed, the hike to what is perhaps the Monterey Peninsula’s most dramatic scenic vista, Inspiration Point, is again open to the public.

And soon, other scenic vistas among the vast collection of hills and meadows that make up Carmel’s southern horizon will be accessible as well.

Reached through a rustic gate just south of the former Odello artichoke fields, Palo Corona Regional Park was part of the Palo Corona Ranch, which was privately owned until a consortium of agencies acquired it in 2002 for $37,000,000.

One of the chief aims of the project was to improve the Palo Corona Trail, which travels from Highway 1 to Inspiration Point. A decomposed granite surface was added to the trail, and extensive work was done to reduce the impact of erosion. The route was also realigned, making the grade easier for hikers.

The Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District last week also unveiled a new loop through the park’s East Field. Three new trails form the loop, which meanders for a little less than a mile through stately oaks and gently sloping meadows. The loop provides a far less strenuous alternative than the hike up to Inspiration Point and features a variety of enticing picnic spots.

“This is going to be a very popular loop,” predicted Al Miyamoto, the park district’s operations manager.

As part of the project, two obsolete sections of road in the park were realigned. And three more trails, each leading to dramatic vistas, are planned to do. But due to budgetary constraints, the work was never done.

The recent completion of the Carmel Hill & River Bicycle Trail makes access to the canyon far more inviting for the hikers. The Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District also unveiled a new loop through the park’s East Field. Three new trails form the loop, which meanders for a little less than a mile through stately oaks and gently sloping meadows. The loop provides a far less strenuous alternative than the hike up to Inspiration Point and features a variety of enticing picnic spots.

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Dog ban lifted on Hatton Canyon path

By CHRIS COUNTS

IN A move that will no doubt be hailed by Carmel’s canine-loving population, California Department of Parks and Recreation superintendent Dana Jones confirmed this week that dogs are now welcome along the entire length of the Hatton Canyon recreation trail — as long as they are on leashes.

A ban on dogs along the trail went into effect in March 2009. The move upset several residents who were long accustomed to walking their dogs along the scenic route.

Two years ago, Jones said dogs would be able to return to the canyon once the trail was paved, which state parks planned to do. But due to budgetary constraints, the work was never done.

The recent completion of the Carmel Hill & River Bicycle Trail makes access to the canyon far more inviting for the hikers.

Beloved Pine Cone writer dies at 79

By MARY BROWNFIELD

MARGOT PETIT Nichols, creator of The Pine Cone’s Sandy Claws column and one of the paper’s most distinctive voices, died Friday afternoon from heart failure one day short of her 80th birthday.

A talented journalist who made words her career and lived in numerous countries, Nichols was perhaps best known locally for her column profiling dogs she encountered on the Scenic Road footpath above Carmel Beach, but she also specialized in thoughtful profiles of local chefs, defining reviews of books by local authors and was the paper’s assistant arts editor for almost 10 years. Her colleagues at the newspaper loved her for her charm and grace, her knowledge and wisdom, her quiet poise and her dry sense of humor.

“She was an intellectual, but she wasn’t the least bit pretentious. And she had an amazing gift for injecting charming wordplay into her stories.”

By the time Nichols moved to Carmel-by-the-Sea as a widow and started freelancing for The Pine Cone in the late 1980s, she was a seasoned journalist and wordsmith. She had spent several years living in the Napa Valley, where she founded the Images Unlimited Advertising Agency that put her in contact with many of the area’s winemakers and chefs — many of whom became lifelong friends.

Nichols occasionally recounted stories about her days there, including picknickning with chefs Jacques Pepin, who brought ham sandwiches.

Chef, restaurateur and KCBS radio personality Narayi David, recalled Nichols “marvelous commitment to the art of eating” and her “recognizing the human effort of restaurateurs.”

“She is our most devoted reader,” he said. “We are deeply saddened by her passing. We will miss her greatly.”

Some of her stories included interviews with local chefs, including Jacques Pepin, who brought ham sandwiches.

Nichols had a remarkable gift for injecting charming wordplay into her stories.

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MARGOT
From page 1A

restaurant reviews with kid gloves, not want- ing to harm businesses in such a difficult
industry with harsh words. Instead, if a res- taurant performed poorly during a visit from “Morgan” (her undercover alias), she would return, again undetected, for another try. If failure struck twice, she wouldn’t write a word about the place, up or down.

She was perhaps most proud of her Sandy Claws column, which she created to show- case the dogs and people who visited Carmel Beach, and hundreds of photos of her canine subjects covered the walls of her office at work. An animal lover whose allergies pre- vented her from having pets of her own, Nichols particularly savored meeting and “interviewing” the dogs for her column, which always included charming tidbits “interviewing” the dogs for her column, which always included charming tidbits about the dogs’ favorite toys, preferred meals, sleeping places, friends and even their opinions about cats and humans. Quite a few of her subjects even fussed up about mischief they got into.

Sandy Claws first appeared July 11, 1997, and quickly became a favorite feature of The Pine Cone readers. In, and in a town that was becoming increasingly dog crazy, they soon started cajoling, pleading and angling to have their dogs immortalized by becoming a “Sandy.”

“She was probably the most lobbied per- son in town,” Miller said.

“People would always call to ask me how they could get their dog in Sandy Claws,” said Vanessa Jimenez, who answered the phones for several years at The Pine Cone’s office on San Carlos Street. “Everybody read it, and they all thought their dog would be perfect.”

But Nichols insisted on choosing her sub- jects randomly among dogs she met while on walks on Carmel Beach or, later, when age took away her ability to climb a lot of stairs, during strolls, notebook and camera in hand, along the Scenic Road footpath.

While many journalists only hear from people upset by their stories, Nichols received fan letters not just from humans, but dogs, as well, and she particularly thought it funny when people tried to get her to write about their cats. Nichols’ words graced The Pine Cone up until her death.

Global adventures
Born on Jan. 8, 1931, in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, Nichols moved with her family to Los Angeles a year later, and her father went to work for Safeway. In 1937, they relocated to a small ranch in Pomona, where she and her brother, Ken, had their first dog, Spooky. Soon after, they moved again to the 640-acre Triangle Ranch in Modesto, helping to harvest apricots, peaches and almonds for a few years.

Another move, this time to Oakland, led to Nichols’ enrollment at Oakland Technical High School — where former Carmel Mayor Clint Eastwood was a student at the same time — and she graduated in 1948, immedi- ately going to work for the Oakland Tribune’s editorial department and then the Claremont Press. She earned a degree in English on a full scholarship from the University of San Francisco, graduating in 1959.

Nichols then made her way east, stopping in New York for a short while to work as copy chief for Roberts & Roberts advertis- ing, and then moving to London, where she worked as copywriter for Fleetway Publishing Co., Ltd.

A year later, she went to Germany, where she worked for the Overseas Service Corporation lecturing on lifestyle topics all over Europe, Greece and Turkey. In 1964, she moved to Venice and mar- ried, and the following year, her daughter, Francesca, was born.

Following a divorce several years later, Nichols moved away from Venice and returned to the United States. When dis- cussing that part of her life, she often said she left everything behind but her daughter and her typewriter. In 1972, she and a young Francesca settled in St. Helena, where she worked for Oakville Vineyards before launching Images Unlimited Advertising Agency.

While living in wine country, she married architect John Nichols, and it was after her death that she moved to Carmel-by-the-Sea — a place they had frequently visited while vacationing together and often dreamed of making their full-time home one day. Nichols spent her final decades living in Carmel and writing for The Pine Cone, and also opened an antiques and collectibles store, Lily’s Chance Discoveries, with her daughter. Together, they also created a map of the town’s courtyards and passageways that became the template for the city tourist map used today.

At The Pine Cone, Nichols often repeated one of her mottos, “Smile anyway,” and fre- quently shared her wit and wisdom.

“Thousands of folks took pleasure in Margot’s writings, but how lucky I was to get to know the beautiful soul who crafted them every week. It truly was an honor,” com- mented her friend and former editor, Anne Papineau. “Margot was not merely ageless; she was downright youthful, if youth is mea- sured by enthusiasm, laughter and agility of mind.”

Papineau recalled walks around town dur- ing which strangers would attach themselves to Nichols and share their stories.

“They opened up to her, shared intimacies, kept touching her elbow,” she said. “It was amazing. Usually she shrugged it off and smiled wryly.”

She praised Nichols’ ability to work “unceasingly hard on her writing and friend- ships,” without making it appear laborious.

“She launched Sandy Claws all on her own, and what light and magical sallies they were, delivered in the hundreds,” she concluded.

“People say every child should have a dog, but every dog should have a Margot,” observed Pine Cone advertising rep JoAnn Kiehn. “She had the biggest heart.”

“Margot was unique and therefore irre- placeable,” Miller said. “I feel very fortunate to have been publisher during the Sandy Claws era.”

Nichols is survived by her daughter and son-in-law, Francesca and Walter Hawthorne, who live in Pacific Grove. A ser- vice for Nichols will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 22, at All Saints Church at Dolores and Ninth in Carmel-by-the-Sea.
RECENTLY FEATURED in a Wall Street Journal article about America’s most overpriced properties, a 6,400-acre ranch comprising 20 separate parcels in upper Carmel Valley sold last week for $14.8 million. The buyer of the ranch is Sue Ann Hamm. According to Internet searches, a woman with that name is married to Harold Hamm of Enid, Okla., who is listed at No. 136 on Forbes’ list of the world’s richest individuals with a net worth of $5.5 billion. He is chairman and CEO of the oil exploration company Continental Resources, Inc.

Forbes’ list of the world’s richest individuals with a net worth of $129,000

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Margot was born in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. A year later her family moved to Los Angeles where her father worked for Safeway.

In 1937, Margot’s family moved to Pomona, where she and her family lived on a small ranch and she had her first dog, Spooky.

While on the ranch, she and her brother Ken had many adventures digging forts and defending them against all enemies.

After a brief stay in Tulare, the family moved to Modesto and into a big house on the Triangle Ranch. The 640-acre ranch was active and beautiful, with the Tuolumne River running through, and the family thought they were in heaven.

Margot and her family worked on the ranch and neighboring ranches in the summer months cutting apricots and peaches and, later in the year, helping with the almond harvest. They only stayed there three years, but they were the happiest days of young Margot’s and her brother, Ken’s, lives.

The family then moved to Oakland, where her father was employed by Westinghouse Electric. Margot graduated from Oakland Technical High School in 1948 and went on to get a degree in English from San Francisco State University. She lived in the Bay Area and was a part of the Beatnik poetry scene in San Francisco. While in the Bay Area she also worked for the Oakland Tribune.

After a brief stay in New York City, she then moved to Europe and lived and worked in Germany for the Overseas Service Corporation.

In 1964 her travels took her to Venice, Italy, where she married, and her daughter Francesca was born a year later.

After Margot and her husband were divorced, Francesca and Margot moved to St. Helena in 1972 where she worked for Oakville Vineyards and then started Images Unlimited Advertising Agency.

She met her second husband, architect John E. Nichols, and they enjoyed many years in the Napa Valley together.

Margot and John often vacationed in Carmel during their marriage and hoped to one day move there together. After John died, Margot moved to Carmel-by-the-Sea and started working for the Carmel Pine Cone where she had a wonderful writing career up until her illness.

Margot was also blessed to live out another dream of owning a little shop in the village with her daughter Francesca. Lily’s Chance Discoveries was a little gem they were both very proud of.

Margot was blessed to have a loving family and many wonderful friends. She lived a full life and always felt blessed to live in Carmel.

Margot is survived by her daughter, Francesca Hawthorne, and son-in-law, Walter Hawthorne, of Pacific Grove; brother Geoffrey Ruff and his wife, Doris, of Abingdon, Ill.; brother Ken Petit and his wife, Ruth, of Alpine; niece Patti Murray and her husband, Ronald, of Macomb, Ill.; niece Diana Goff and her husband, Ray, of Macomb, Ill.; stepson John Nichols and his wife, Julie, of Beaverton, Ore.; stepdaughter Cindy Howa and her husband, Allan, of Twin Falls, Id.; stepdaughter Betsy Salmans and her husband, Mike, of Hidden Valley Lake; daughter-in-law Lucille Nichols of Healdsburg, and many grandchildren, grandchildren, great-nieces and nephews.

Memorial Services will be held at All Saints Episcopal Church in Carmel-by-the-Sea on Saturday, January 22, at 11 a.m. with a reception to follow. In lieu of flowers the family asks that you make a donation in Margaret’s name to her favorite charity, www.peaceofmindedogrescue.org
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The county needs its own high-level hospital to handle serious traumatic injuries, according to the Monterey County Civil Grand Jury report released Monday, to reduce the number of patients flown by helicopter to trauma centers in other counties. But officials should also do a better job of collecting data on such patients and figure out a way to help cover the expenses of flying people who can’t pay.

The civil grand jury decided to examine the trauma care system plan and the use of helicopter transport based on concerns about the frequency of unnecessary flights and their high costs. Helicopter services such as the nonprofit California Shock Trauma Air Rescue charge tens of thousands of dollars to carry seriously injured victims of car wrecks, shootings, stabbings, industrial accidents and other incidents to trauma centers in San Jose, Santa Clara and Stanford.

According to their research, jurors found patients are in fact not flown to trauma centers excessively. They cited statistics from Santa Clara County that 18 percent of the people taken there from Monterey County had not required serious treatment, while the nationally accepted rate of “over-trauma” is 25 percent to 50 percent.

A relatively high over-trauma rate is widely accepted in most communities and is a trade-off in providing the best care possible when trying to save a patient’s life. Under-trauma could have dire consequences for patients by failing to provide medical care possible when trying to save a patient’s life. Under-treatment could have dire consequences for patients by failing to provide medical care possible when trying to save a patient’s life.

The civil grand jury reported. “The perception that patients are being transferred to out-of-county trauma centers needlessly is not valid.”

But they acknowledged people with private insurance are saddled with an unfair burden of paying for the service to offset the patients who are covered by Medicare or have no insurance.

“In all aspects of health care today, some of the unpaid costs are shifted to those who can pay. Monterey County does not subsidize or reimburse any funds to [helicopter transport] providers in the county,” they wrote. “Therefore, by default, those patients with insurance or financial resources to pay carry the brunt of the costs.”

The grand jury recommended Monterey County officials develop a means of helping to fund trauma air transport.

“A local trauma center is long overdue,” according to the report, so the county should also begin working on establishing a trauma center at one of its existing hospitals. The U.S. Census Bureau found that in 2009, Monterey County’s population was 410,370, and the state recommends one trauma center per 350,000 people.

“At an analysis of selected local hospitals revealed that relatively few upgrades would be needed to meet the requirements for a local trauma center designation,” according to jurors, including some specialized equipment and 24/7 availability of teams of surgeons with special training in concurrently treating complex, multiple, critical injuries resulting from car crashes, gang violence and industrial accidents.

“The challenges may be in obtaining a full complement of required surgeons to staff the trauma center on a continuous basis,” the grand jury report said.

To progress toward an in-county facility, jurors recommended the board of supervisors appoint a county trauma director to oversee the effort and revise the trauma care system plan.

But even after a trauma center is established, CALSTAR and other life-flight services will still be needed to carry seriously injured patients to care, since the county is so large and has several different urban centers. The grand jury touted CALSTAR’s superlative record and assistance with outside matters like search and rescue and police activity, and suggested county officials update their old and outdated agreement with CALSTAR to ensure it remains the primary provider.

CALSTAR would continue to provide outstanding [service] to the county while meeting Monterey County’s standards and requirements for safety and a high level of patient care,” the jurors wrote.

But an impediment to progress is the lack of data the EMS Agency collects, mostly due to lack of staff. In order to assess how effective the county’s trauma care system is, jurors recommended the EMS Agency hire more people to collect and analyze information about trauma patients and their care.

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THE MAN suspected of shooting three people outside the Mucky Duck bar on New Year’s turned himself in to San Jose police and was booked into Monterey County Jail Monday afternoon on felony charges of attempted murder, gang affiliation and being a felon in possession of a firearm.

According to Monterey Deputy Chief Phil Penko, 23-year-old Alejandro Gonzalez was accompanied by family members and an attorney when he showed up at SJPD. Monterey PD detectives drove north to retrieve him and take him to Salinas. At the jail, his bail was set at $3 million, and he was set to appear in court this week.

Gonzalez’ arrest followed unsuccessful raids at two Greenfield residences Jan. 5 in which one person died after a flash-bang devise was fired into a San Antonio Drive house, which then caught fire. Rogelio Serrato, 31 — whom Monterey police had suspected of being at the Mucky Duck with a woman who also lived in the home — was wanted for other crimes, and officers planned to arrest him on those outstanding warrants if they found him at the house, according to Penko. They later learned Serrato, who died of smoke inhalation and had suffocated fire. Greenfield Fire Department put out the flames, after which Serrato was found in a rear bedroom.

“Shortly thereafter, a female subject who stated she had not seen Serrato since December stated he had been hiding in the attic,” Richards said. “Where Serrato was found, the ceiling overhead was broken downward into the room, and it appears he fell from the attic.”

At 11:19 a.m., he was taken out of the house, and AMR paramedics pronounced him dead at 11:31 a.m. This week, the coroner’s office reported he had died of smoke inhalation and had suffered no other trauma. Toxicology results are still outstanding.

Serrato was found in a rear bedroom.

“The Monterey County Sheriff’s Office SWAT Team employed all safe means to extricate Serrato from the residence,” Richards stated. “It is unknown why he chose not to exit the residence.”

The sheriff’s office also reported the “characteristics of the fire are not consistent with an accelerant, and the investigation into the case is ongoing.” At Greenfield’s city council meeting this week, a large crowd gathered to express concern and anger over Serrato’s death, according to the Monterey County Herald. His mother, Rita, “wept as she expressed the frustration felt by many who are getting few answers from officials who say they can’t comment because of ongoing investigations,” the paper said.

Through an interpreter, Serrato’s mother told the council, “All I ask for is justice — justice for my son,” the Herald reported.
A BIG Sur whale watching “tour” aims to offer a bird’s-eye view of some of the world’s largest creatures — while never leaving the shore.

In anticipation of this year’s northerly migration of gray whales from Mexico to Alaska, Pt. Sur Lightstation will host its annual fundraising whale watching event Sunday, Jan. 16.

“Pt. Sur is the finest place on the Central Coast for watching whales,” explained Mary Jane Hammerland, who works as a volunteer for the nonprofit Central Coast Lighthouse Keepers. “The 360-foot rock is just perfect for observing a wide area of ocean.”

Interestingly, it turns out that the northerly migration is better for viewing than the southerly migration, which occurs in the fall.

“When the whales are traveling north, they stay closer to the coast because they’re bringing along their babies and they’re trying to protect them from the orcas,” Hammerland said.

Undoubtedly, there is no guarantee that whales will be seen during the event. But recent reports are encouraging — on a recent afternoon at Soberanes Point, countless spouts could be seen offshore.

“Everyone always enjoys the day, whales or not,” Hammerland added.

In addition to a lengthy visit to one of the Pacific Coast’s great vantage points, the tour will also feature an abbreviated tour of the lighthouse, which was opened in 1889 to provide boats with an aid to navigation, particu-

The SPCA is located at 1002 Highway 68 across from Pt. Sur Lighthouse tour offers sweeping views of whale migration

By CHRIS COUNTS

larly on foggy days and nights.

All proceeds from the event will benefit the CCLK’s continuing effort to maintain and restore the historic facility.

The tour starts at 11 a.m. The cost is $20 person. Space is offered on a first come, first served basis. Guests are asked to meet along Highway 1 just outside the gate to the lighthouse.

Hot drinks and binoculars will be provided. Also, docents will be available for questions. Guests will need to bring their own lunches and are asked to dress warmly, since Pt. Sur is a particularly windy place.

The lightstation is located on Highway 1 about 19 miles south of Carmel. To make reservations or get more information, call (831) 624-7570 or visit www.pointsur.org.

Culinary Round Up

Jan. 23 to benefit Rancho Cielo

THE COUNTY’S most successful program for troubled youth, Rancho Cielo, will stage its biggest fundraiser of the year Jan. 23 at the Monterey Plaza Hotel.

The Culinary Round Up, which has a western theme, features some of Monterey County’s finest wineries and chefs.

The event, which offers a strolling dinner, creative raffle items and live auction, is $150 per person. But the Culinary Round Up, is anything but stuffy, according to its organizers.

“You don’t have to wear black tie — oh, no, it’s Western attire — even jeans are OK,” according to the press release about the event.

The event’s guest speaker will be Master Chef Ferdinand Metz. And guests will be able to meet the inaugural class from Rancho Cielo’s Drummond Culinary Academy: The culinary program at Best Cuts.

The Culinary Round Up is Sunday, Jan. 23, at 5 p.m. at the Monterey Plaza Hotel and Spa. For information and reservations, call (831) 444-3504 or visit www.ranchoelcoy.org.

SPCA offers special: Set your own adoption fee

THE SPCA for Monterey County is having an adoption special this weekend that lets adopters name the price to take home certain animals.

From Jan. 15 to 17, the SPCA will reduce the adoption fee on all dogs, cats and rabbits six months and older.

The special rate for dogs will be $50. For cats and small critters, the SPCA is offering a chance to pick your price.

In an effort to find all its adult cats loving homes, the SPCA is letting adopters choose their own adoption fee during the event. All cats will be spayed or neutered, vaccinated, microchipped and given a health evaluation.

Cats will also come with a pet carrier, a four-pound bag of cat food, one month of prepaid pet health insurance and lots more, a retail value of more than $500.

The SPCA is located at 1002 Highway 68 across from Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca. Adoption hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekends.

Regular adoption fees range from $35 to $290. For more information, call the SPCA at (831) 373-2631 or visit www.spcamc.org/special.html.

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Carmel High Sports

Hoosters win 9th straight, wrestlers tune up for league opener

By CHRIS COUNTS

THE Carmel High School girls basketball team extended its win streak to nine games Wednesday by downing Soledad High 68-44 at home. The Padres took control of the game by outscoring Soledad 26-6 in the third quarter. “The game was close in the first half, but we opened it up in the third quarter,” coach Jeff Nakamura said.

Sarah Anderson paced the Carmel High with 21 points, making seven of 10 three-point shots. Jule Muegge added 19 points, while Mackenzie Dooner hauled down 11 rebounds and blocked four shots.

Last Thursday at home, the Padres cruised to an easy 50-12 win against an overmatched Stevenson School team. Muegge paced the Padres with 22 points, while Anderson added 15 points, making three of five shots from beyond the arc. Anderson’s all-around game was on display against Stevenson as she grabbed five rebounds, five assists and dished off five steals. Kaylee Vandenberg, meanwhile, paced the Carmel High defensive effort with eight steals.

The Padres are now 3-0 in Mission Trail Athletic League play and 10-2 overall. Muegge now leads all Monterey Bay players in scoring with 19.7 points a game, and she ranks fifth in the Central Coast Section. Anderson ranks first in the MTAL with 3.3 3-pointers a game and third in the league in scoring with a 14.8 mark. Emma Fuzie leads the league with 1.6 blocks a game.

Team Carmel High hosts Pacific Grove High (3-7) Friday, Jan. 14, at 6 p.m. The team continues its homestand Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. against Gonzales High (7-5).

■ Wrestlers set for league debut

In the team’s final tune-up before its first league competition of the season, the Carmel High School wrestlers finished a solid 17th place out of 37 teams in last weekend’s Apple Cider Invitational tournament at Watsonville High School.

“We’re coming around,” said Russell Shugars, the CHS wrestling coach. “We’re looking good.”

Three Padre wrestlers placed in the two-day tournament, which started Friday. Trent Jones took second place in his weight category, while his brother, Todd, finished eighth in his class. Joe Kochever, meanwhile, finished fifth in his class.

Jack Carmentina and Connor Monneyham also performed well in the tournament, recording pins in their matches. Todd Jones leads Carmel High in pins with seven, while Richie Rodriguez is close on his heels with six. Shugars keeps a tally of every pin recorded — the wrestler with the most pins at the season’s end will take home what the coach called the “hotly contested” Padre Pin Champion trophy.

As The Pine Cone went to press this Thursday, the wrestling team was preparing to host its league opener at home against King City High School, the defending champions of the Mission Trail Athletic League. “It’s tough first test for us, but it will be a good test to see if we’ve got what it takes to win the league championship,” Shugars added.

On Saturday, the Padres travel to Prospect High in San Jose, where they will compete in the Jim Root Classic. About 35 schools are participating in the all-day tournament.

And next Thursday, Jan. 20, the wrestling team faces off against Gonzales High at home. The action starts at 6:30 p.m.
C.V. trio pays tribute to the Fab Four — with a jazz twist

By CHRISS COUNTS

COUNTLESS words have been used to describe the sound of the Beatles, although “jazz” isn’t one of them. But that isn’t stopping a Carmel Valley trio from putting its own jazz-inspired stamp on the Fab Four’s music.

Infinity and the Jazz Cats performed Friday, Jan. 14 at the Plaza Linda restaurant in Carmel Valley Village.

“It’s something different,” said lead singer Susana McGuire of the trio’s affection for playing Beatles’ songs with jazz arrangements.

The group got together about a year ago when McGuire hooked up with guitarist Patrick Ryan and bassist Ed Kreps.

“They’re super guys,” McGuire explained. “I’m really happy to be playing with them. We’re pretty new on the scene, but we’re having lots of fun.”

Since all three musicians like jazz — and love the Beatles as well — it seemed only natural for the trio to cover the group’s music. “We mixed it all together, and it sounded great,” she observed.

In addition to performing covers of Beatles songs, the trio draws heavily from the Great American Songbook, which features, in the words of McGuire, “the greatest music in the world.” McGuire, Ryan and Kreps are also big fans of the Bossa Nova, a hybrid of traditional Brazilian music and jazz.

The music starts at 7 p.m., and there’s a suggested donation of $10. Plaza Linda is located at 9 Del Fino Place. For more information, call (831) 659-4229.

Cave Country returns to Big Sur

Like two of Southern California’s greatest bands — the Byrds and Buffalo Springfield — Cave Country explores the rich and fertile territory that lies between psychedelic rock, country and folk.

“We try to incorporate the vocal harmonies of bands like the Byrds and Buffalo Springfield,” said bass player and singer Jim Reynolds. “Those bands have been an inspiration for us.”

Cave Country performs Saturday, Jan. 15, at Fernwood Resort in Big Sur, where they’ll be joined by Big Sur singer-songwriter Levi Strom.

Like their musical heroes, the members of Cave Country like to showcase a diverse range of musical influences.

“We incorporate a wide range of styles,” Reynolds explained. “It’s important for us to test our limits.”

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This village had never had Peace Corps volunteers before, even though there were quite a few in Tanzania,” she said. “We were also the first white people who had ever lived in the village before, so that was all very new.”

Banks said she was impressed with the villagers’ generosity, despite their living on $1 per day or less. “It was very common to have someone walk up to your door and give you four carrots, or potatoes,” she said. “They were so appreciative of our help.”

One of the first tasks they undertook was teaching in the secondary school, which often had dozens of students in classrooms without any teachers. In Africa, the government pays for primary school through seventh grade, but secondary school costs money, and parents can’t necessarily send their kids to school right away, so the age range varies widely, according to Banks.

After the principal managed to get more help, they moved on to teaching life skills classes designed to help stop the spread of HIV by empowering girls and women to learn they could say “No!” to sex or at least demand the man use a condom.

“It’s got to start when they’re young,” Banks said. “It was successful — sometimes 100 people would show up for one class, and the age group could be anywhere from 12 to 21.”

She said the classes surprisingly drew as many boys as they did girls, and they became even more effective when some of the students learned enough to teach other classes.

“These are peers who may be just a couple of years older than the kids, and they did a bang-up job,” Banks said. “It was so much more effective. When we did a presentation to

a primary school, we would get no questions, but they were so good and they would get all these questions. It was really gratifying to see how much more information they were absorbing.”

Grow your own chickens

They also worked with villagers who already had HIV to help them make money so they could get to the hospital for appointments and treatment. The bus ride to Lushoto is costly, and often they couldn’t get their medication, according to Banks, so she and her husband each had a group of patients and would hold meetings at their home to discuss solutions.

The villagers decided to raise chickens and sell the eggs. “It would be pretty easy and they would do it at their home, so if they weren’t feeling well, throwing out a little chicken feed wasn’t too difficult, or they could get one of their children to help,” she explained. They requested grant funds from the Peace Corps to teach the residents how to build coops and keep their flocks.

The couple also worked to get electricity to the small medical dispensary in the village, which would allow physicians to better stabilize their tools (without electricity, they were using rubbing alcohol), keep perishable medicines and perform medical procedures.

“If a mother comes in for delivery at night, we won’t have to send her to the hospital,” she said. “We saw a couple of women die because they didn’t have the proper facility.”

They wrote a grant application and sent letters successfully seeking contributions for the effort, and construction for electrical lines was under way as the Bankses prepared to leave the village in late August.

But the largess of Monterey Peninsula residents that really impressed Malindi residents involved books. When the Bankses arrived in the village, the school there did not contain a single book, so they decided to ask people back home to send some.

Boxes upon boxes of books arrived at the post office to be schlepped back to the village by the Bankses and a few helpers, including four sets of encyclopedias, donations from school book drives and gifts from a librarian in Kansas City whose husband had read about their effort in The Pine Cone. All told, they received 2,200 books, at a shipping cost of $55 per 20 pounds, “and it doesn’t take much to make 20 pounds of books,” Banks pointed out.

“Of course, the headmaster was overwhelmed,” she said. “He thought he was maybe going to get a few, having not ever had any experience with Americans and their generosity!”

When the area’s district chairman — similar to the financial head of an American county — saw how many books had arrived, he authorized construction of a library in the village, in addition to the bookshelves the Bankses had arranged to build in the classrooms.

“Our two-year contracts with Anthem Blue Cross — effective Jan. 1, 2011 — gives Community Hospital tier-one, preferred status with employers that offer a tiered system of health insurance — Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield of California.

This means our teachers, our government workers, our checkers at the grocery store, and the rest of the many members of our community who are covered by these plans will be able to continue to receive their care — at the lowest possible cost — right here at home.

Our two-year contracts with Anthem Blue Cross — effective Jan. 1, 2011 — gives Community Hospital tier-one, preferred status with employers that offer a tiered system of health insurance coverage, and continues our longstanding, in-network status for all of our health insurance plans, including our preferred plans offered locally. This agreement includes members of MSCIG (Monterey County Schools Insurance Group), CallPERS (California Public Employees Retirement System), MPC (Monterey Peninsula College), and PEBL (Pebble Beach Company).

We have also signed a two-year agreement with Blue Shield, effective Jan. 1, 2011. That contract now includes the hospital-based doctors for whom Community Hospital bills — for example, the specialties of radiology, radiation oncology, pathology, psychiatry, and emergency medicine, among others. All are now considered in-network providers on all of our Blue Shield plans. That means lower out-of-pocket costs for our patients for these doctors’ services.

In addition, we now are an in-network provider of the Blue Shield Life and Health insurance plans.

We also continue to enjoy strong and lasting relationships with many other insurance plans.

PHOTO/COURTESY/DAVE BANKS

Dave Banks said he had to convince the kids in their rural village to smile into the camera.
Move over Buddy Holly, here comes ‘The King’

By CHRIS COUNTS

The Tribute to rock ‘n’ roll’s first golden era continues this week in Carmel. Just two weeks after staging the latest incarnation of its popular ‘Buddy Holly Tribute Show,’ PacRep Theater is bringing back its take on the Broadway hit, “All Shook Up.” The musical will open Friday, Jan. 14, at the Golden Goblet Theater.

“All Shook Up” will showcase PacRep’s School of Dramatic Arts program. The cast will include more than 30 local high school and college actors and actresses. As its name implies, the show pays tribute to the music of Elvis Presley. Twenty-five songs by The King are featured in the musical, including “Heartbreak Hotel,” “Love Me Tender,” “Don’t Be Cruel,” “Hound Dog” and his first hit, “That’s All Right.”

Set in a small town in 1955, “All Shook Up” tells the story of a motorcycle-riding, guitar-playing rebel named Chad who just happens to bear a striking resemblance to Elvis. The handsome bad boy is pursued by a sweet local girl who dreams of a more exciting life.

“We did ‘All Shook Up’ last January and it’s a wonderful show. The cast has grown and the audience comes from miles around.”

See KING page 15A

In addition to illustrating two books of Neruda’s poetry, Heebner recently compiled a book, “Uneraired,” about her horseback riding adventures through Patagonia. The book, which comes out next month, features Heebner’s writings as well as her paintings.

The Cherry Center will host a reception Friday from 5 to 7 p.m. The gallery is located at Fourth and Guadalupe. The exhibit will be on display until Feb. 19.

See ART page 15A

Fundraising dinner and play to benefit symphony

By CHRIS COUNTS

To HELP raise money for the Monterey Symphony, a group of supporters will stage a Mystery Party and Dinner Redux Saturday, Jan. 15, at La Playa Hotel.

The fundraising event offers guests not only an evening of fine dining, but a chance to solve “The Case of the Missing Marquis of Monterey.”

The mystery play, which was written by Elaine Martinez, seeks to discover the whereabouts of a 15-carat diamond that went down in a 17th century shipwreck. In the 1940s, the diamond surfaced in Monterey when a fisherman found it in his dinner. But the diamond disappeared again at the dinner party, and it’s up to the audience to figure out what became of it.

A colorful cast of local personalities will perform at the dinner. Former Carmel Mayor Ken White, appropriately, plays the mayor of Monterey. Other members of the cast include Leslie Epps, Sharon Pezzola, Amy Treadwell, Michael Walas, Michelle Lange, Stancil Johnson, Bruce Wagner, Betty Carpenter, Dr. Ingrid Wekerle, Jean Hurd and Steve Bradford. Peter Tuff will serve as narrator.

Last year, La Playa hosted a similar event, “Who in the World Murdered Lady Jane,” which also benefited the symphony.

“The people loved it,” said Marti Mysza, who is directing the play. “We turned people away.”

In addition to offering a fun-filled evening of dinner theater, the event also benefits a good cause. “All the money we raise supports the symphony, its salty-kelp scent, abundant life, restlessness, infuse my work.”

In addition to illustrating two books of Neruda’s poetry, Heebner recently compiled a book, “Uneraired,” about her horseback riding adventures through Patagonia. The book, which comes out next month, features Heebner’s paintings.

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See ART page 15A

A detail of one of the brooding works by Mary Heebner who will be part of a new exhibit, “Black Island,” at the Carl Cherry Center.
Chanterelles for Rachael, half-priced wines and special M&M’s

By MARY BROWNFIELD

The BIG Sur Chanterelle Festival will be held Feb. 26 and will benefit photographer Rachael Short, who was seriously injured in a car crash on Highway 1 Halloween night, organizer Toby Rowland-Jones announced.

“This is the only festival in the known universe dedicated to specifically the chanterelle, and it’s well known that the California chanterelle is the largest of all,” he said. “People are really excited, as we are having a great chanterelle season so far!”

Scaled down to one day this year, the event will include its signature FUNgus Hunt (“More fun than anything else,” Rowland-Jones said.) in Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park guided by rangers and mycologists from 9 to 11:30 a.m., followed by examination and discussion of the specimens in the Santa Lucia Conference Room.

The Chanterelle Festival and cook-off starring chefs from Dettjen’s, Treebones, the Rio Grill, Redwood Grill, Ventana, Big Sur Bakery, Mundaka and others — will run from noon to 3:30 p.m., with People’s Choice awards given for Most Creative, Best Taste and Overall Favorite at its conclusion. Galante, Morgan, Hahn, Tudor, Heller, Talbott and a few additional wineries, plus Firestone Brewery, will provide libation.

Tickets are $30 for the mushroom hunt, $50 for the festival and $65 for both. Big Sur residents living in the 93920 can attend the festival for $40. Rowland-Jones said tickets for the hike are selling quickly.

To learn more, go to www.chanterelle.tastebigsur.com or call (831) 667-0241.

Farmers markets open

The Pacific Grove and Marina farmers markets organized by Everyone’s Harvest are open again after the New Year’s holiday. The Marina market is held on Reservation Road on Sunday mornings, and the Pacific Grove market takes place on Central Avenue on Monday afternoons.

The nonprofit reported receiving $1,267 in donations plus matching funds to help fund cooking demonstrations it has planned for the spring, when it will also be launching Edible Education for Healthy Youth. In that program, the markets will serve as a “living laboratory to teach local youth about small-scale family farmers, healthy eating and active living,” according to organizers. The Nancy Buck Ransom Foundation is funding that effort.

Montrio deals

Sunday night at Montrio Bistro means drinking good wine, since the restaurant owned by Tony Tollner and chef Tony Baker offers almost every wine on its list for half price that night each week. (Rare bottles are the exception to the price break.)

The restaurant also continues to feature Dinner and Movie, a promotion that includes an appetizer, entre and an Osso Cinemas movie ticket for $21.95.

Montrio Bistro is located at 414 Calle Principal in Monterey and is open for dinner at 5 nightly. Call (831) 648-8880 for more information or reservations. www.montrio.com

Zeph’s focuses on value

In light of holiday debt and the ongoing recession, Bill and Vince at Zeph’s One Stop on Highway 68 in Salinas are presenting their favorite value wines for tasting Thursday, Jan. 20, at 5:30 p.m. Wines slated for tasting include Talbott Kali Hart, Estancia, Pine Ridge, Crossings, Louis Latour, Fat Monk, J. Lohr, Chateau Ste. Michelle, Ancient Peaks and Landers Jenkins. To sample “quality wines you can drink every day without breaking your budget,” reserve a space at the tasting, which costs $20 in advance or $25 at the door. They also decided to share their recipe for a Hot Toddy made with green tea, black tea or water:

1 oz. brandy, whiskey or rum
1 T. honey
1/4 lemon
1 cup hot water
1 tea bag

Coat the bottom of a mug or an Irish coffee glass with honey. Add the liquor and the juice of the lemon quarter. On the side, heat water in a tea kettle and add the tea bag to make hot tea. Pour the steaming tea into the glass and stir.

Zeph’s is located at 1366 South Main St. Call (831) 757-3947.

Fandango turns 24 in January 2011!

From January 1st - January 31st, 2011, if you dine at Fandango for lunch, dinner or Sunday brunch and fill out a customer comment card during the month of January, you could win a little taste of Europe for you and 24 of your closest friends!

All you have to do is fill out a comment card! Win a reception with heavy appetizers and wine personally selected by Marietta and Pierre for the winner and 24 of their friends in Fandango’s Upstairs Room.

Fandango is located in the heart of Pacific Grove at 223 17th Street. Call today for reservations at (831) 372-3456, or visit our website, www.fandangorestaurant.com, for room photos, menus and wine list. Come celebrate with us!

The drawing will take place on February 1st, 2011. Entrants do not need to be present to win. Winners will be notified personally by Pierre and Marietta Bain no later than February 14th, 2011. The date of the party is subject to availability and not valid for redemption on holidays.
The Terrace Grill in La Playa Hotel at Eighth and Camino Real in Carmel is drawing diners this month by presenting Dine ’til Nine. From 5:30 to 9 p.m. through the end of January, the restaurant is offering an entreé and soup or salad for $15.95. The idea is to encourage clients to try chef Bunyan Fortune’s new menu, which showcases local and organic fruits and vegetables, humanely raised meats and poultry, sustainable seafood and other sensible choices.

To learn more, call (831) 624-4010 or go to www.laplaya-hotel.com.

Special M&M’s

The only way to get M&M’s emblazoned with the map of Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca is to take part in its Valentine’s Day ticket promotion. This year’s sweet offer, which runs through Feb. 4, will ensure fans purchasing a multi-day ticket or two main event/race-day tickets to the Red Bull U.S. Gate BBQ, 19 HD monitors and a possible special appearance by cheerleaders.

Sunday, Feb. 6. Kickoff isn’t until the afternoon, but cele-
tating itself as the place to watch Super Bowl XL V on

See FOOD next page

Another Super Bowl option

Knuckles Sports Bar in the Hyatt Regency Monterey at 1 Old Golf Course Road underwent a major remodel and is touring itself as the place to watch Super Bowl XLV on Sunday, Feb. 6. Kickoff isn’t until the afternoon, but cele-

brating at Knuckles will begin at 11 a.m. with Kenny Allen from Hippo Radio serving as MC, Coors Light Girls handing out freebies, drink specials, multiple huge TV screens, a tail-

gate BBQ, 19 HD monitors and a possible special appearance by cheerleaders.

The bar also features the Table Tender — a tableside beer tap available to up to a dozen guests — more Sierra Nevada beers on tap than anywhere outside of the brewery itself, and a revamped menu with items like fish tacos with local cod, clam steamer, artichoke dip and the new signature sandwich (The Knuckle) of shaved beef rib eye, slow roasted pork, fried egg, avocado, fried onions, portobello mushroom, shredded lettuce and three-cheese sauce on a sourdough bun with Gilroy garlic fries.

To make reservations, call (831) 657-6625.

Web resources

Chefs and home cooks realize the Internet is a great tool for recipes and ideas, with sites like www.epicurious.com at their fingertips, but the web is also a bottomless pit of sites and blogs hosted by people with too much time on their hands. Considering everyone needs a break now and then, however, some of them offer an entertaining distraction.

Consider www.fancyfastfood.com, where creator Erik Trinidad and his cohorts turn items purchased from major fast-food chains into “gourmet” dishes, like Chicken Pizza Masala (Fancy Pizza Hut), without using any additional ingredients. Or, to keep your diet in check, see www.thi-

sthyoucaneat.com, “where dreams become heart attacks,” with creations like the Grilled Cheese Birthday Cake and the pulled pork sandwich with glazed doughnuts instead of buns.

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it was a big hit,” explained Stephen Moorer, PacRep’s executive director. “We had no idea how funny it was going to be. People were laughing until they teared up. They were falling off their seats.”

After seeing the musical performed on Broadway, Moorer resolved to find actual young people to play the teenagers in the story.

“Everybody’s playing age-appropriate roles,” he observed. “When I saw it on Broadway, they had 40-somethings pretending to be teenagers.”

Christopher Maros plays the role of Chad.

“Christopher played Chad last year, and he was great,” Moorer added. “He’s done of couple other shows for us, including ‘Spelling Bee,’ and he played the lead in ‘Footloose.’ He’s an incredible dancer, and he’s taking on the choreography role as well.”

Friday’s performance starts at 7:30 p.m. The musical will continue through Feb. 13, with performances on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. Friday and Saturday shows start at 7:30 p.m., while Sunday matinees begin at 2 p.m. “All Shook Up” will close Sunday, Feb. 13, with 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. performances.

Ticket prices range from $7 to $20 and discounts are available for seniors over 65, students, children, teachers and active military.

The Golden Bough is located on Monte Verde between Eighth and Ninth. For more information, call (831) 622-0100 or visit www.pacrep.org.

“People I’ve Seen”

The Marjorie Evans Gallery will host a reception Friday, Jan. 14, for an exhibit of photographs, “People I’ve Seen,” by Dale Garell of Carmel Valley.

The show is distinguished by Garell’s preference for hiding or obscuring the faces of those he photographs.

“You can’t tell if the subjects in his photographs are happy or sad,” explained gallery curator Barbara Davison. “The photographer gives the viewer a chance to use his or her imagination to decide where a subject is coming from or going to. The viewer has an opportunity to create a story.”

The reception starts at 5 p.m. The gallery is located inside Sunset Center at San Carlos and Ninth.

For more information, call (831) 624-7491 or visit www.carlcherrycenter.org.

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The undersigned caused a Notice of Default and Election to Proceed with Foreclosure, and Notice of Sale to be recorded in the Office of the Recorder of Monterey County, County of Monterey, State of California on December 17, 2010, as Document No. 2082282.

The Notice of Default and Election to Proceed with Foreclosure and Notice of Sale are recorded in the Office of the Recorder of Monterey County, County of Monterey, State of California on December 17, 2010.

The Notice of Sale is hereby given that Recon-

Trustee for the total amount (at the time of the initial publication of the Notice of Sale) reasonably estimated to be set forth below. The amount set forth below is the amount estimated to be realized from the sale at the commencement of the sale and shall be increased by all costs, charges and expenses of the trustee in the sale.

In accordance with the provisions of Section 5102 of the Code of Civil Procedure, the Notice of Sale is hereby given that Recon-

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The Notice of Sale is hereby given that Recon-
City gives American Legion $1,000

TO HELP defray the costs of organizing Memorial Day and Veterans Day ceremonies and support local veterans, the Carmel City Council decided last week to give $1,000 to the American Legion Post 512, located at Dolores and Eighth near the Red Cross change box. According to the report by city administrator Rich Guillen presented to the council at its Jan. 4 meeting, the local post was Erasing the past, energizing the future. This organization may also provide the color guard at city-sponsored events. It also recently purchased a new California state flag to replace the faded one at Devendorf Park.

“We are now in need of community support to assist us through this difficult financial time and ensure we will be able to continue our traditional Memorial Day festivities,” Guillen said in a letter sent to the city that was signed by “the men and women of the American Legion Post 512 Carmel.”

Acknowledging the services the American Legion provides, the council voted in favor of the $1,000 contribution.

Pebble Beach reads The Pine Cone

RANCH

Hills ranging in elevation from 1,200 to 3,700 feet. According to a real estate brochure published by Clark Company of Paso Robles, improvements to the property include a 5,700-square-foot main residence, a 3,400-square-foot guest house, an 1,800-square-foot caretaker’s house, a 2,800-square-foot maintenance shop and 21 miles of private roads. The ranch also features 21 stocked ponds and is home to a wide variety of wildlife, including deer, turkeys, quail, bobcats, mountain lions and wild boar. To be true to its name, the ranch is blessed with at least four running streams, four lakes and an oak grove. A particular tree is considered to be one of the largest live oaks in Monterey County. Numerous sycamores and willows add beauty to the area.

The 640-acre Blouquet Open Space Preserve is accessed through the ranch. The Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District manages the reserve.

About 1,500 acres a mother grazes the ranch. According to the brochure, the ranch’s owner pays only about $23,000 in property taxes each year because the land qualifies for cattle grazing tax breaks under the Williamson Act.

NOTICE OF TRUSTEE’S SALE

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NOTICE OF TRUSTEE’S SALE
Correlation is not causation, and sometimes it’s not even correlation

HUMANS TODAY may be significantly more enlightened than their ancestors, but they are still exceedingly superstitious and willing to believe, or even preach, things which are completely unsupported by facts or even blatantly illogical and untrue.

For example, if two fatal car accidents happen along a stretch of highway in a short period of time, concerned citizens can be counted on to demand an investigation of what makes that road especially dangerous. More often than not, the coincidence of two accidents at the same spot is just that—a coincidence. But many people refuse to recognize even the possibility of random chance in determining where fatal accidents occur.

In college psychology classes, students are repeatedly taught that correlation is not causation. But the lesson never seems to make it into the broader society. And lately, we have seen two very disturbing examples of how people see dangerous causes behind events where there is not only no cause-effect relationship, there isn’t even a relationship.

The first one is the shooting last week of Rep. Gabrielle Giffords and more than a dozen other people at a shopping center in Tucson, Ariz. Within hours, left-wing political commentators were opining that the shooting was caused by right-wing “hate speech.”

As the days went by, however, it became evident that the accused shooter, Jared Loughner, was not a right-wing fanatic or even a sympathizer, paid no attention to politics and had probably never seen Sarah Palin’s famous “gun-sight” political map or listened to Glenn Beck or Rush Limbaugh.

So not only didn’t right-wing “hate speech” cause him to open fire on a crowd of innocent people, it wasn’t even part of the world where he lived. No causation, and no correlation.

The same thing is happening with the bizarre controversy over smart meters. These meters, which will soon be common not only on your electric service but gas and water as well, will track your usage continuously and report it periodically to the utility companies, which has resulted in an outcry among a few vocal activists who claim that the electromagnetic radiation generated by the devices is dangerous.

The problem with their argument is that it isn’t based on anything. Electromagnetic radiation is everywhere and is constantly bombarding every living thing on earth. It comes from radio and TV broadcasting towers, cell phones, appliances, computers, televisions, the lamp on your bedside table and every single thing that has electricity in it. Also from the earth’s magnetic field, storm clouds, lightning, the sun and even our own bodies. The amount that will be added to this universal EMF environment by smart meters is truly insignificantly small.

Furthermore, while the amount of EMF in the world has certainly grown by leaps and bounds since the advent of civilization, there is absolutely no evidence that it is causing adverse health affects among humans. Even the World Health Organization says so. Meanwhile, electric devices have brought untold benefits to mankind.

So while the smart-meter naticuses can’t show that smart meters will cause harm, they can’t even show that harm is being done by electric devices at all. Again, no causation, and no correlation.

And while many news outlets seem eager to add to public anxiety about tragedies such as the shootings in Arizona, and to create fear about nonexistent problems such as the supposed danger from smart meters, we like to think our readers would rather not be fooled.

Letters to the Editor

The Pine Cone encourages submission of letters which address issues of public importance. Letters cannot exceed 350 words, and must include the author’s name, telephone number and street address. Please do not send us letters which have been submitted to other newspapers. We reserve the right to determine which letters are suitable for publication and to edit for length and clarity.

The Pine Cone only accepts letters to the editor by email. Please submit your letters to mail@carmelpinecone.com

Far-left-wing?

Dear Editor,

Now that Jerry Brown has released his budget recommendations, don’t you think you should reconsider your irresponsible characterization of him as a “far-left-wing governor”? If his proposals are too far to the left, what would you expect to see from a conservative governor, from your political perspective?

Mark O’Shea, Carmel Highlands

What about the wars?

Dear Editor

A recent Pine Cone editorial pointed out the expense of the government stimulus. What escaped your notice, however, was the billions of dollars that are being wasted in the continuing warfare started by G. W. Bush.

Judy Tschirgi, Carmel Valley

Fire policy no good

Dear Editor

I continue to be dismayed at the Carmel Valley Fire District’s policy allowing backyard open-air burns. On Jan. 7, a single legal controlled fire which began in the morning filled the entire west end of the valley with smoke the likes of which I have not seen since the smog-filled skies of the San Fernando Valley in the 80s. The negative externalities (as economists like to say about costs born by others than those that create the direct effect) imposed on both humans and the environment by this archaic policy are unacceptable in this day of “reuse, recycle, reduce.” Across the nation, communities have realized that we can no longer afford to burn leaves in the fall, have backyard incinerators or burn trash. Yard waste can be mulched or composted if removal is too costly, and almost anyone can transport their own trash to the dump if they do not want to or cannot be served by a provider. Carmel Valley needs to change its fire policy to protect both the health of its citizens and this beautiful natural asset that on most days demonstrates viewable vistas hidden by clouds of smoke.

Judith E. Tschirgi, Carmel Valley

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TRAILS

From page 1A

Currently under construction and will likely be open by May, if not sooner, Miyamoto continued.

When completed, the projects will cost nearly $1,000,000, reported Big Sur Land Trust spokeswoman Rachael Saunders. The work is being paid for with Proposition 50 funds, which were secured by the Big Sur Land Trust. According to Saunders, the project is relying on local contractors and is utilizing local materials.

The projects are part of the BSLT’s Carmel River Parkway Vision Plan, which aims to create an extensive network of trails in Carmel and Carmel Valley. The staff at the Carmel-based land trust has surveyed the work and they like what they see.

“We are thrilled with the work that’s been done,” Saunders said. “The trails are really gorgeous.”

The park access is by reservation only due to limited parking along Highway 1. For now, it is open only on weekends due to construction. When the project is completed, it is expected that the park will be open every day. A limited number of permits are available each day. For more information, call (831) 372-3186 or visit www.mprpd.org.

State parks to spend $200,000 on Lovers Point upgrades

By KELLY NIX

LOVERS POINT Park in Pacific Grove is a beautiful spot for picnics, weddings and just to watch and listen to the ocean, however, the state says it needs to be improved.

Despite California’s $25 billion-plus deficit, the California Department of Parks and Recreation has granted PG $220,000 to upgrade Lover Point. On Wednesday, the PG City Council authorized the city to spend the taxpayer money for the upgrades.

While many of the improvements will go toward making the park accessible for people in wheelchairs — such as grading and paving segments of existing pedestrian pathways — and to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the grant also allows the money to be spent to make the park prettier.

“The primary intent of the design is to improve accessibility within the park,” architect Elke Ikeda with the firm Bellinger Foster Steinmetz told council members.

“The secondary intent is to improve the aesthetics.”

In fact, the chain-link fence that surrounds the volleyball court will be replaced with a new 42-inch-high weather-resistant aluminum fence with a wrought-iron appearance.

The new fence “will allow users to look over the railing and have a much better vista over the bay,” Ikeda said.

The plan also calls for new planting areas with shrubs, grasses and vines, new square picnic tables, new trash cans that are a custom guardrail mounted on an existing sea-wall, drainage improvements and a picnic space with “new enhanced concrete paving.”

The Lovers Point project also includes installing ADA-required handrails and a new accessible ramp that leads to the volleyball court.

“If you are handicapped or in a wheelchair,” Ikeda said, “you will be able to maneuver yourself in these areas without added difficulties.”

City budget director Jim Becklenberg said the improvements are the first phase of a multiphase project. Other upgrades will also be made to Lovers Point Park when the Old Bath House restaurant is eventually renovated.

Though Pacific Grove won’t be out of pocket for the project, the city wants to begin construction soon, apparently because of uncertainty with the grant money due to the state’s fragile budget.

“The state has informed us that, due to their own issues, even though the funds are programmed through June 30,” according to the city staff report, “they want all project work completed by March 31, and invoices submitted as shortly thereafter as possible.

California Gov. Jerry Brown on Monday unveiled a plan that would slash $12 billion. The cuts include shutting down state parks with the lowest attendance and reducing hours at other parks. State parks officials in Sacramento did not return calls Thursday.

15-20% of all learners struggle with reading.

The Carmel Pine Cone

Buy your Pro-Am tix by Saturday

ADMISSION PRICES for the Feb. 7-13 AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am will increase after Saturday, Jan. 15.

Come Sunday, the special advance rate of $50 per day goes up to $60. Practice round tickets, which are good for all three days Monday through Wednesday, are also $50 in advance and $60 after Jan. 15. Season badges, valid all week, are $125 in advance and $150 after.

Tickets to the Fairway Club overlooking the 3rd Fairway of Pebble Beach, with food and beverages available for purchase Thursday through Sunday, must be purchased for $100 per day or $275 for the week by Jan. 15. All tickets are available online at www.atpgolf.com or by calling (800) 541-9091 or (831) 644-0333. Net proceeds go to support charities throughout Northern California.
Grand jury report: Reduce police, fire retirement benefits

By KELLY NIX

If YOU'RE considering being a police officer, firefighter or other public employee, you'll want to read a report released Monday by the Monterey County Civil Grand Jury.

The grand jury — following its investigation into the contentious issue of pension benefits for government employees — recommended upping the retirement age for police and fire from age 50 to 55 and from 55 to 60 for other government workers.

Though, not surprisingly, the grand jury found that the California Public Employees Retirement System is “broken” and “unsustainable,” it recommended Monterey County and the 12 cities that take part in CalPERS not pull out of the system.

“The public retirement system is broken and needs fixing rather than replacing,” according to the grand jury’s 10-page report on the CalPERS issue.

To reduce costs to agencies which take part in CalPERS, the grand jury recommends limiting the amount of retirement benefits public safety workers are entitled to.

Most Monterey County cities allow public safety employees to retire with “3 percent at 50,” meaning those workers can retire at 50 years old with retirement pay at 3 percent of their highest year’s salary multiplied by the number of years they worked. All other city employees make 2 percent of their salary at 55.

However, the grand jury report — intended to help cities contend with the costly pensions they pay their retirees — said cities should limit new public safety workers’ CalPERS benefits to 2 percent at 55 and all other public employees to 2 percent at 60.

Also, employees should pay their “fair share of CalPERS basic benefits and pay the entire costs of any optional CalPERS benefits,” it determined.

And any increase in CalPERS retirement benefits should require a public vote by the electorate, the grand jury decided.

In addition, the grand jury said binding arbitration in labor matters should be abolished — or else expose local cities to a fate similar to the City of Vallejo.

“It was an adverse decision in binding arbitration on a wage issue concerning safety employees that prompted the City of Vallejo to file for Chapter 9 bankruptcy protection,” according to the report.

Vallejo voters later did away with binding arbitration in labor disputes and gave elected officials the power to negotiate without it.

The grand jury also said agreements with unions should include the right of cities to reopen negotiations during the “term of the agreement if it determines that dire economic circumstances warrant it.”

LETTERS

Drop it, please

Dear Editor,

I would urge you to drop your recently established “celebrity sightings” column in the Pine Cone. Carmel has always been a place where people, both famous and not-so-famous, could get away, relax and not worry about the culture of celebrity. If you want to feature people, feature the many people of accomplishment and achievement who live, work or visit Carmel. Celebrities? Surely Carmel is above it.

R. Scott Colglazier, Carmel

Maps could be next

Dear Editor,

It was sad to see that the Pine Cone is in such dire straits that they have to resort to turning the general populace into paparazzi. I thought that the charm of Carmel was the anonymity offered to everyone. Maybe another way to augment your income would be to sell maps to celebrities’ homes. I’m disgusted.

Belle, Monterey

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CLOTHING • SHOES • JEWELRY • ACCESSORIES • GIFTS
Red Cross: Local Haiti donations totaled $475,000

By MARY BROWNFIELD

THE AMERICAN Red Cross last week released its one-year report on recovery efforts in Haiti following the January 2010 earthquake, including its response to complications like cholera and its plans for the country’s ongoing recovery.

Since the earthquake struck on Jan. 12, 2010, the American Red Cross has raised $479 million for relief and recovery work there, including more than $32 million generated by text messages. Locally, donations ranged from 25 cents to $50,000, totaling more than $475,000, according to Sharon Crino, CEO of the Monterey Bay chapter.

With their help, the American and global Red Cross network provided medical care for some 217,000 patients, cash grants and loans to 220,000 survivors, latrines for 265,000 people, daily drinking water for more than 317,000 people, emergency shelter materials for more than 800,000, vaccinations for almost 1 million and food for 1.3 million people for one month.

In addition, it spent more than $4.5 million to stem a cholera outbreak in the quake’s aftermath and plans to spend at least another $10 million to fight the spread of the disease. So far, the Red Cross has spent a little more than half the amount raised in donations to Haiti, and the remainder is being used for long-term recovery over the next several years. Part of that work involves getting victims into permanent homes — an effort the Red Cross expects to fund to the tune of $100 million — but officials reported “it has been difficult for the Haitian government to determine exactly who owns the land where these homes would be built.”

Complicating matters further, much of the terrain is covered with rubble, and heavy equipment to remove it is in short supply, while leadership from the earthquake-crippled government is lacking, according to the Red Cross.

MHAA fundraiser is Jan. 22

THE MHAA fundraiser in the G.T. Marsh building in Monterey will be held from 5 to 8 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 22. Last week’s Pine Cone included the incorrect date.

The Carmel Pine Cone

Our readers love it, because it’s...

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The New Year is Here! It’s the traditional time to make plans for the future. You’re invited to Lunch and Learn at Forest Hill Manor and ask Residents why they always say, “This is the Best Place to Live. Don’t Wait!”

Choice of Dates: Thursday, January 20 or Wednesday, January 26 at 12 Noon

You’re invited to enjoy a delicious luncheon in the welcoming company of residents who will answer your questions about retirement living at Forest Hill Manor. Ask the questions that matter to you!

- Learn about the many advantages of living at Forest Hill Manor.
  Free to travel, volunteer, play golf and tennis, indulge in new hobbies, new pastimes.

- Learn about the great relief of no property taxes and an affordable monthly fee.
  Learn about the choice of entrance fees designed with your estate plans in mind.

- Learn about the experiences of residents living a maintenance-free life!
  Find out more about the benefits of Continuing Care.

- Learn why residents value the availability of the new Medicare Certified Health Center.
  Ask questions about why assisted living services are important to them.

Find out why your hosts chose Forest Hill Manor. See how you, too, can simplify your life and enhance your lifestyle in one move.

Follow lunch with a Tour of Forest Hill Manor and visit apartments in a Cottage, the South Wing and the Main Manor.

RSVP: (831) 657-5200 or toll free (866) 657-4900 before January 14.