



# OUR TOWN

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE TOWN OF LOS ALTOS HILLS

DECEMBER 2013



**4**  
Artemas  
Ginzton  
Path



**6**  
Explore  
the World  
through  
Books



**8**  
The  
Coyote



**11**  
Ladies  
Who  
Lunch



## MILESTONES

**1909**

Born in Lake Mills, Iowa

**1934**

Married Mary Stuart Page

**1937**

Won Little Brown Prize for  
*Remembering Laughter*

**1943**

Published *Big Rock  
Candy Mountain*

**1967**

Won the Commonwealth  
Club Gold Medal for  
*All the Little Live Things*

**1972**

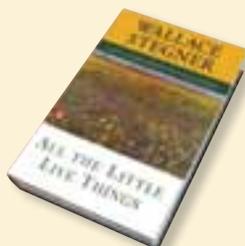
Won the Pulitzer Prize  
for *Angle of Repose*

**1977**

Won National Book Award  
for *The Spectator Bird*

**1993**

Died following an  
automobile accident in  
Santa Fe, New Mexico



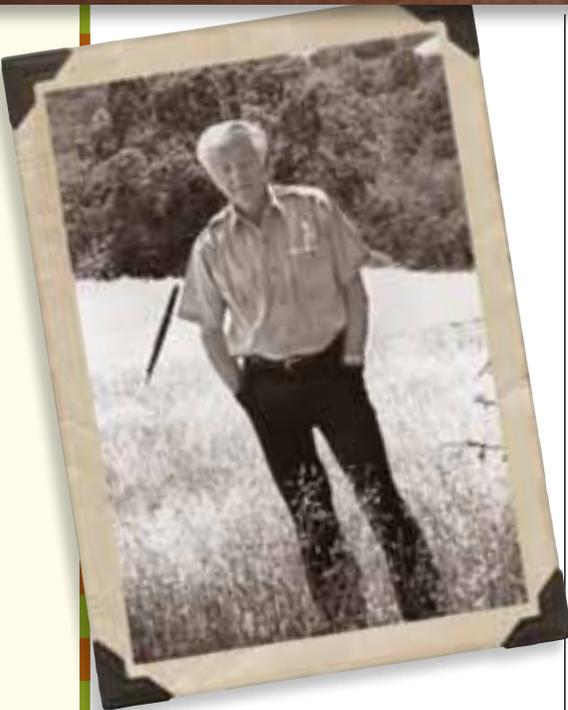
## The Legacy of Wallace Stegner

**W**allace Stegner is one of the most celebrated writers ever to have lived in Los Altos Hills, where he and his wife Mary built a hilltop home on South Fork Lane just after the end of World War II. His novels won him a Pulitzer Prize, a National Book Award, and many other honors. At Stanford University, he founded the creative writing program and taught such students as Larry McMurtry, Ken Kesey, Edward Abbey, and Thomas McGuane. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor was also one of his students. [CONTINUED ON PAGE 2]



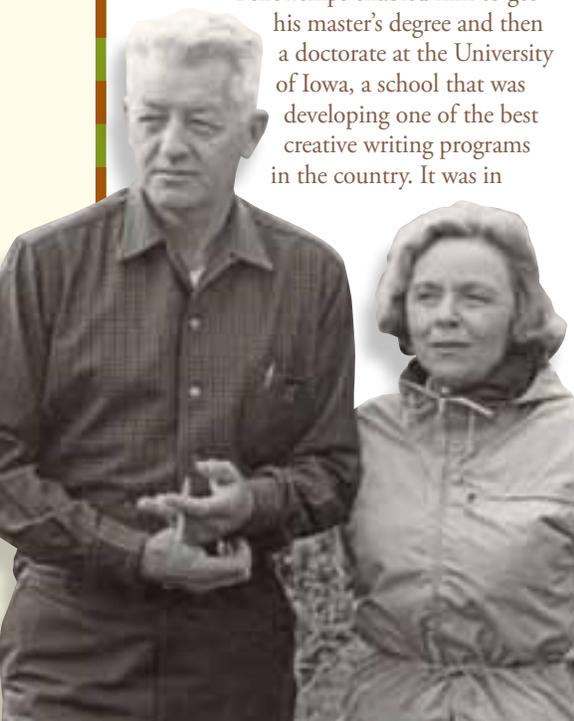
**“[Stegner] left a legacy as writer, professor, and environmentalist that once moved Edward Abbey to pronounce him ‘the only living American writer worthy of the Nobel.’ Indeed, Stegner was one of the American West’s preeminent historians and arguably the most important of its novelists.”**

James Hepworth, Professor Emeritus of Humanities, Lewis Clark State College and author of *Stealing Glances: Three Interviews with Wallace Stegner*



Though he came to California from a teaching job at Harvard, Stegner was not an Easterner. Born in Iowa in 1909, he spent most of his childhood moving through “twenty places in eight states and Canada,” as he later wrote. Stegner’s father repeatedly uprooted his family as he tried one get-rich-quick scheme after another, all over the West. The son found success in school, no matter where the classroom. Wallace Stegner spent his high school years in Salt Lake City, where a scholarship later helped him earn his undergraduate degree at the University of Utah.

Fellowships enabled him to get his master’s degree and then a doctorate at the University of Iowa, a school that was developing one of the best creative writing programs in the country. It was in



returning to his home state of Iowa—“which I then thought of as the East,” he wrote—that Stegner discovered he had been changed by the vistas of the West.

“I was used to a dry clarity, a sharpness in the air,” he wrote in an unpublished autobiography. “I was used to horizons that either lifted into jagged ranges or rimmed the geometrical circle of the flat world. I was used to seeing a long way. I was used to earth colors—tan, rusty red, toned white—and the endless green of Iowa offended me. I was used to a sun that came up over the mountains and went down behind the mountains. I missed the color and smell of sagebrush, and the sight of bare ground.”

Beginning in 1938, Stegner became a fixture at the annual Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference in Vermont and through his contacts there began teaching at Harvard University where he and his wife Mary and their son Page spent most of the years of World War II. But, when he got the chance to teach at Stanford University, he and his family loaded up their car and headed to the West.

It was not an easy move. No civilian housing of any kind had been built in the San Francisco Bay Area during World War II, so, when they arrived at Stanford in 1945, the Stegners spent two years moving between rented rooms, rooming houses, and dormitories. Mary Stegner, a committed socialist, urged her husband to join the Peninsula Housing Association, which was hoping to build a planned cooperative community called Ladera adjacent to Portola Valley. But, says Stegner biographer Jackson Benson, “delays and disagreements gradually discouraged” the Stegners and they took leave of the association. That’s when they found 2.4 acres on a hilltop off Page Mill Road, and decided to build their home.

Even that was complicated. The property was on county land in what eventually became Los Altos Hills; but Los Altos Hills did not incorporate until 1956 so there were no city services to the property. Before construction began, there was no road to the lot, no water supply, no electricity, and no sewer hookup. Stegner figured he could only afford the

home if he did much of the finishing work and landscaping himself.

The result was markedly different from the homes being built in Los Altos Hills today. The Stegner house was just 1,800 square feet, with two bedrooms and two baths. Later the Stegners added a one-bedroom cottage on the property for guests and a study (pictured on page 1) across the deck from the main house. Designed in the low-flung style popularized in California by developer Joseph Eichler, the simple home suited the Stegners, who lived there for almost half a century.

During those years, Stegner became a keen observer of the constant struggle in the West between development of the land and conservation. As a Westerner, he knew it was never a simple thing, this tug-of-war. The subject was at the core of his novel, *All the Little Live Things*, published in 1967 and set in Los Altos Hills. As his

*“We simply need that wild country available to us, even if we never do more than drive to its edge and look in. For it can be a means of reassuring ourselves of our sanity as creatures, a part of the geography of hope.”*

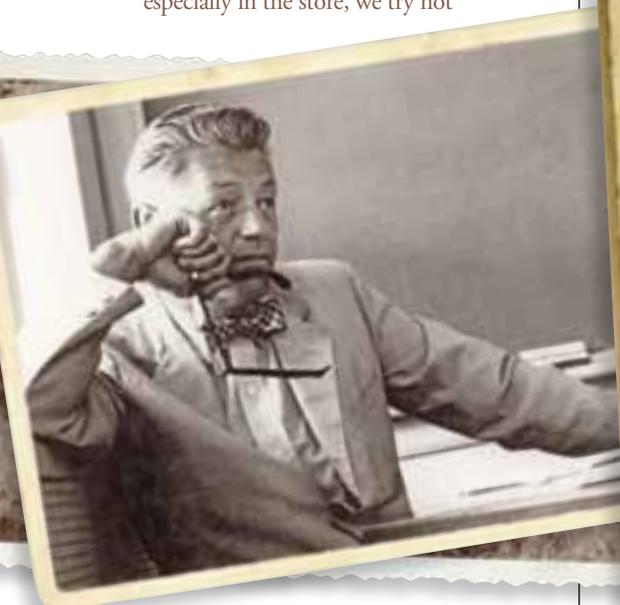
WALLACE STEGNER

character Joe Allston says: “I admire the natural, and I hate the miscalled improvements that spread like impetigo into the hills. But who can pretend that the natural and the idyllic are the same? The natural is often imperfect... So I clean it up and grub out its poison oak and spray for its insect pests and plant things that bear blossoms instead of burrs, and make it all Arcadian and delightful, and all I do is help jar loose a tax increase, bring on

# THE WILDERNESS LETTER

roads and power lines, [and] stir up the real estate sharpies.”

Stegner wrote every morning in his study, which may explain an output that has to be described as prolific, for a man who produced his own writing while he continued to teach at Stanford for a quarter of a century. During his years in Los Altos Hills, Stegner published eight novels, fourteen books of non-fiction, and six collections of articles and stories. He was a fixture in the area. Faith Bell, whose family lives in the Hills and owns Bell's Books in Palo Alto, saw him often both in her store and on the trails she walked. “We would nod to each other,” she says. “But, especially in the store, we try not



to disturb people if they want anonymity.” Another local, Tom Sherlock, whose father served on many of the founding committees of Los Altos Hills, remembers encountering Stegner at a party later in his life. When Sherlock's wife told Stegner she was a libertarian, the writer spent the rest of the party questioning her to learn more about her beliefs.

Wallace Stegner retired from Stanford in 1971 but continued to write on into his 80s. His last collection of work, *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs*, was published in 1992. Stegner died in 1993.

He was an early environmentalist who served in the Department of the Interior during the Kennedy administration; was a board member of the Sierra Club; and authored the Wilderness Letter (see highlight box), which became part of the

In 1960, David Brower, founder of the Sierra Club Foundation, persuaded his friend, Wallace Stegner, to write a letter to the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC). By the 1960s the development of the highway system resulted in a dramatic increase in automobile travel making parks more accessible to the public. This prompted Congress to look at the long-term impact of public use of the nation's parks; therefore, the ORRRC was established to identify recreational areas in the United States and develop recommendations for their management and preservation.

Stegner's letter — a passionate, poetic, eloquent manifesto on the importance of wilderness as a spiritual resource and part of what defines us as a nation and as a people — has withstood the test of time. It is as true and compelling today as it was over 50 years ago — particularly in a world that has replaced real-world experience with digitally created environments and entertainment.

*I want to speak for the wilderness idea as something that has helped form our character and that has certainly shaped our history as a people... Something will have gone out of us as a people if we ever let the remaining wilderness be destroyed; if we permit the last virgin forests to be turned into comic books and plastic cigarette cases; if we drive the few remaining members of the wild species into zoos or to extinction; if we pollute the last clear air and dirty the last clean streams and push our paved roads through the last of the silence, so that never again will Americans be free in their own country from the noise, the exhausts, the stinks of human and automotive waste. And so that never again can we have the chance to see ourselves single, separate, vertical and individual in the world, part of the environment of trees and rocks and soil, brother to the other animals, part of the natural world and competent to belong in it. Without any remaining wilderness we are committed wholly, without chance for even momentary reflection and rest, to a headlong drive into our technological termite-life, the Brave New World of a completely man-controlled environment. We need wilderness preserved — as much of it as is still left, and as many kinds — because it was the challenge against which our character as a people was formed. The reminder and the reassurance that it is still there is good for our spiritual health even if we never once in ten years set foot in it. It is good for us when we are young, because of the incomparable sanity it can bring briefly, as vacation and rest, into our insane lives. It is important to us when we are old simply because it is there — important, that is, simply as an idea...*

As a novelist, I may perhaps be forgiven for taking literature as a reflection, indirect but profoundly true, of our national consciousness. And our literature, as perhaps you are aware, is sick, embittered, losing its mind, losing its faith. Our novelists are the declared enemies of their society. There has hardly been a serious or important novel in this century that did not repudiate in part or in whole American technological culture for its commercialism, its vulgarity, and the way in which it has dirtied a clean continent and a clean dream. I do not expect that the preservation of our remaining wilderness is going to cure this condition. But the mere example that we can as a nation apply some other criteria than commercial and exploitative considerations would be heartening to many Americans, novelists or otherwise. We need to demonstrate our acceptance of the natural world, including ourselves; we need the spiritual refreshment that being natural can produce. And one of the best places for us to get that is in the wilderness where the fun houses, the bulldozers, and the pavement of our civilization are shut out...

These are some of the things wilderness can do for us. That is the reason we need to put into effect, for its preservation, some other principle than the principles of exploitation or “usefulness” or even recreation. We simply need that wild country available to us, even if we never do more than drive to its edge and look in. For it can be a means of reassuring ourselves of our sanity as creatures, a part of the geography of hope.

*Very sincerely yours,  
Wallace Stegner*

National Wilderness Preservation System, known as the Wilderness Act, in 1964. The Peninsula Open Space Trust today has a series of Wallace Stegner Lectures in his honor. If you hike the trails of the open space in Los Altos Hills, you might see a sign, which his wife Mary helped dedicate after his death. It carries Stegner's words—his own conservation creed for the beautiful region he called home: “To try to save for everyone, for the hostile and indifferent as well as the committed,

some of the health that flows down across the green ridges from the Skyline, and some of the beauty and refreshment of spirit that are still available to any resident of the valley who has a moment, and the wit, to lift up his eyes unto the hills.”



**GUEST WRITER:** Robin Chapman is a writer and former television journalist and news anchor. She is the author of four books on regional history, including *California Apricots: The Lost Orchards of Silicon Valley*. To learn more, visit [www.historypress.net](http://www.historypress.net).

Los Altos Hills residents are fortunate to have miles of paths on which to soak in the health benefits of “green exercise.” Green exercise — exercise in the presence of nature — results in a bounty of mental and physical benefits that an individual cannot get in a gym. Research compares green exercise favorably with meditation, showing decreased heart rate variability, reduction of anxiety, increased immune response, and increased mental focus.

One of the town’s prettiest and most popular paths is the Artemas Ginzton Path, which connects Moody Road with Byrne Park Lane. On Moody Road, a wooden sign beckons drivers, cyclists, and walkers to a serene, shady trail. From there, the path meanders along Moody Creek, then heads up toward Byrne Park Lane.

This beautiful path was named after long-time Los Altos Hills resident and trails advocate Artemas Ginzton. Ginzton was an educator who was ahead of her time in understanding the value of open space. She taught both elementary and adult school and after raising her children focused on activism on behalf of trails and hostels.

Best access to the path is by foot, but if you don’t live within walking distance, park at Westwind Barn and head either to the top of the trail at Byrne Park Lane through Byrne Park, or hike down toward Central Drive to connect to the lower portion. The Artemas Ginzton Path is all natural dirt trails and completely shaded. A comprehensive map of the Pathway System is available at Town Hall.

Starting from Moody Road, the first half mile is moderate. Continue straight through the four-way path intersection. The stream bed will be on your left. A few minutes later you will see a bridge on your left; keep going straight to where the path forks and go to the right to stay on the Artemas Ginzton Path. Soon you start a steep climb up to Byrne Park Lane. In winter it can be slippery. If you continue on to Byrne Preserve, go through the green gate. You have another steep but fairly short uphill, which is more than rewarded by glorious views to the Bay. This is open area and the only shade is under the majestic oaks in Byrne Park. Please note that horses pasture here. If you prefer not to hike through the pasture, go straight over the hill to Altamont Road and walk back to the Barn on the roadside path.

We can appreciate the efforts of Artemas Ginzton while traversing between century-old oaks, bays, and buckeyes. Stop and listen for wildlife. You may hear a juncos, Nuttall’s woodpecker, or red-tailed hawk. Quail scamper in the bushes.

California native plants abound. The pungent, herbal bay laurels announce themselves with their scent. Creeping along the ground, yerba buena (*Satureja douglasii*), with its delicate white tubular blossom was used in teas by native people. Good for colds and insomnia, yerba buena is also an aphrodisiac. Monkeyflower (*mimulus* species), gooseberry (*ribes* species), ferns, and blue elderberry are a few of the native species along this watershed.

In the evening, great horned owls and western screech owls are frequent hunters. Bobcats, fox, and the elusive mountain lion may travel through here. Evening is the best time to hear the yips of coyote pups and howls of the coyote adults. Together and interdependent these species, from the banana slug to the bobcat, maintain and balance this swath of colorful and vibrant nature.

*Kit Gordon is a retired engineer working on water conservation and creek restoration.*

## ON THE FOOTSTEPS OF Artemas Ginzton



# Holiday Events Around Town

## Make Your Own Gingerbread House

There's magic awaiting boys, girls, and adults in this workshop. Create your very own gingerbread house and take home some sweet magic. Students will design, bake, assemble, and decorate their very own unique creations. This will not be "gingerbread from a box." Processed ingredients, food colorings, preservatives will not be used. Students will learn how to make healthy foods with easy recipes from scratch.

*Date: 12/7, Noon – 2:00 pm*

*Location: Parks and Rec. Center at Town Hall*

*Fees: \$38 + \$8 Materials*

## Holiday Barn Lighting at Westwind Community Barn

Join the Los Altos Hills community for a special holiday celebration. The event is free for all residents. Spend the afternoon in the fresh air at Westwind Community Barn, sampling cookies and

hot cider and/or wine tasting while kids participate in seasonal games, craft tables, face painting, pony rides, and a petting zoo. Local student groups will perform traditional carols and holiday music. Bring your camera as Santa will be available for last-minute holiday wish lists and a tasty candy cane treat. Local Pony Club and 4-H students will demonstrate horse grooming and horse management skills and answer questions on how you can participate in their programs. The Barn will light up at 4:00 pm and Santa will ride off into the sunset in true Hills style! Make this holiday season memorable and bring the whole family for a day in the Hills that they will not forget!

*Date: 12/8, 1:00 – 4:00 pm*

*Location: Westwind Community Barn*

## Caroling in the Hills

Bring fun holiday cheer to Los Altos Hills neighborhoods. Drinks and treats will warm up your voice before heading out on pathways to warm the hearts of town residents. Adults, kids, families, seniors, and members from surrounding communities are all welcome to attend this free event. Feel free to invite your high school singing group, or scouting groups, clubs, etc. Carolers should wear warm clothes and bring a flashlight. In case of inclement weather, caroling will be held at Town Hall only. For more information, please contact Scott Vanderlip at 650-948-6455 or email at [scott@inet-sciences.com](mailto:scott@inet-sciences.com).

*Date: 12/19, 7:30 – 9:00 pm*

*Location: Parks and Rec. Center at Town Hall*

For more information on any of these events, please contact Sarah Gualtieri at 650-947-2518 or [Sarah.Gualtieri@losaltoshills.ca.gov](mailto:Sarah.Gualtieri@losaltoshills.ca.gov).

## HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS



Each year in America, fire loss from the period from December 24 to 26 is estimated at over \$80 million. During the holiday season, the risk of death, injury, and property loss from a fire increases an average of 50%, 61%, and 43% respectively. These facts reflect that most people celebrate the season by decorating their homes with Christmas trees, electric lights, candles, banners, and wreaths. Another leading cause of fires during the winter months is heating equipment. Each year, half of all home heating fires occur in December, January, and February.

### Parking During Holiday Events

During this upcoming holiday season please remember to advise your guests that parking on the streets — particularly narrow streets — in Los Altos Hills can become very congested, making it difficult or impossible for emergency equipment to reach homes in the event of a fire or medical emergency. Battalion Chief Tony Bowden states, "There have been several incidents over the past few years where emergency vehicles had to park over 100 yards away from an emergency, thus delaying a patient emergency treatment. Please remember to leave plenty of room for your first responders, so that they can help you if and when an emergency arises." Two common options are to have guests park on only one side of the street or set up a remote parking site and shuttle guests or use a valet service.

### Christmas Trees

- Keep your tree away from fireplaces, wood burning stoves, portable heaters, or other sources of heat.
- Place the tree in an area where it will not block your escape path in the event of an emergency.
- Choose a fresh tree. Do not buy a tree that is shedding needles.
- Before mounting your tree in a sturdy stand, cut 1" from the trunk and immediately submerge in water. This keeps sap from clogging water flow.
- Fill tree stand with water daily (or more often as needed) so the tree does not dry out. The average 6-foot tree has a 4-inch diameter trunk and can consume as much as 1 gallon of water per day.

### Artificial Trees

- Be sure plastic trees have the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) label, and that they are labeled as flame retardant.
- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree.

### Holiday Lights

- Use only lights that have the (UL) label.
- Carefully inspect each set of lights for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, and loose connections. Discard any damaged light sets.
- Check packaging to determine the maximum number of strings that may be connected together.
- Use only extension cords that have a built-in circuit breaker.
- Do not run cords under throw rugs or carpets.
- Check labels on lights before using them outdoors. Never use indoor lights outside.
- Always unplug lights before you go to bed or leave the house.

### Candles, Matches, and Lighters

- Never use burning candles on your tree or as part of wreaths.
- Keep candles away from decorations, drapes, furniture, and other combustibles.
- Use sturdy, non-combustible candleholders that can collect dripping wax and won't tip over.
- Purchase only child-resistant lighters.
- Always keep matches, lighters, and candles out of the reach of children, and don't leave children unattended in a room with lit candles. Teach young children to bring matches and lighters to an adult.
- Always extinguish candles when leaving the room or going to sleep.

For more information on how to keep your family safe during the holidays, contact Mike Sanders at 650-922-1055 or [mike.sanders@cnt.sscgov.org](mailto:mike.sanders@cnt.sscgov.org). For more information on programs and services provided by the Los Altos Hills County Fire District, go to [www.lahcfd.org](http://www.lahcfd.org)

# EXPLORE THE World *through* Books

In August 2013, a special ballot was put forth to residents who live within the Santa Clara County Library District (SCCLD). The all-mail ballot asked residents to renew an existing tax which directly benefited libraries within District boundaries. Woodland Branch, located on Grant Road in Los Altos, is one of the eight libraries affected. Not surprisingly, residents throughout the District showed their support for library resources, programs, and events by voting to extend the Library Measure A Special Tax for another twenty years. The measure (which asked for the continuation of the existing special tax of \$33.66 per single-family home) passed by an overwhelming 81%.

Accounting for 18% of SCCLD's annual budget, revenue from the tax will help retain current programs and purchase new research materials and books, keep qualified librarians on staff, and maintain the ongoing Bookmobile program to far-reaching areas of the county.

## Woodland Branch Offers More Than Your Childhood Library

In years past, local libraries were often quiet places to visit for reflection and research. Woodland Branch patrons enjoy these qualities; however, today's libraries also serve as gathering spots for children, teens, and families and serve as essential community assets for local residents.

SCCLD libraries, including the Woodland Branch, offer a wide variety of classes, seminars, and hands-on resources. Weekly toddler and baby lap-sit story times are offered at the Woodland Branch. On school days, the tables are filled with families, students, and tutoring pairs.

District libraries provide patrons with Internet and computer access, free wi-fi, and offer online resources that can be downloaded 24/7 from home or work. Students have access to numerous study aids, including online homework help and drop in support from professional librarians. They can download free songs through SCCLD's Freegal application. Soon patrons will be able to access the new Treehouse program, featuring interactive coursework which will provide free technology education courses for library cardholders.



## WOODLAND BRANCH LIBRARY BY THE NUMBERS

**44,494**

Items in library collection

**228,402**

Items checked out annually from the Woodland Branch

**35**

Average number of items checked out per year by Los Altos and Los Altos Hills residents from the Woodland or Los Altos libraries

**108**

Programs offered by the Woodland Branch

**1,889**

Attendees to these programs

**319**

Volunteer hours logged during fiscal year of 2012-13

***“We may be a small library, but we are very loved by our community.”***

## Book Value

A recent independent study revealed just how valuable the SCCLD is to the cities it serves. Commissioned by the District, the study revealed a return on investment for local residents as high as 400 percent. Researchers calculated that for every dollar spent by the Library District, the community received between \$2.50 and \$5.17 in direct benefits. The study only looked at quantifiable items,



## THE THINKER

Ever wonder how a famous sculpture (or at least a replica of a famous sculpture) ended up in the parking lot of the Woodland Branch Library? Donated by long-time Los Altos residents, Sue and Don Watters, the replica of Auguste Rodin's "Thinker" was originally found in an antiques store in Naples, Fl. From there, the statue made its way to New Hampshire, where it was on display on the campus of "Soul Search," a multi-faith retreat center built by the late Kevin Watters, son of Sue and Don. After many months of securing safe passage, the large sculpture was brought from New Hampshire to Los Altos Hills. The Los Altos City Council along with the Public Arts Commission determined that the perfect spot for "The Thinker" to be on permanent display would be the Woodland Branch Library.

which included the number of print and non-print materials borrowed; the number of children, teen, and adult programs offered; and patron access to technology and reference services. If the study had included intangible benefits such as those derived from early literacy and youth education; public access to information and technology; personal recreation and quality of life; lifelong learning and personal growth; and building and bridging diverse communities, the return would have been even higher.

"Woodland Branch has an extremely dedicated patronage," stated Jane Cronkhite, community librarian for the Woodland Branch

and the Los Altos Libraries. "When the library was closed last winter due to flooding, library patrons stopped by each day to check on us and ask when the library would re-open. In addition, we receive some of the best book donations to our library. Another popular program is the children's story time. Probably our best-attended program, participants include a large group of parents and nannies who are regular attendees. We have seen many friendships formed among this group between the adults and children. Many home-schooling families also rely on our library for resources. I can't imagine where everyone would go if we weren't here. We may be a small library, but we are very loved by our community."

### Bookmobiles – Venturing off the Beaten Path

Where does a person go for reading material if they live off the beaten path away from public transportation, or are unable to drive? Santa Clara County is lucky enough to have two Bookmobiles. Making their way to distant communities and driving along meandering roads such as Mt. Hamilton or the Santa Cruz Mountains, the Bookmobile serves a unique clientele. Twice a month, the Bookmobiles serve senior living facilities, Moffett Field, Stanford, schools, and neighborhood stops with a variety of library materials – including books, movies, talking books, DVDs, and music CDs for adults, teens, and children. The new Bookmobile is equipped with three solar panels on the roof which generate enough solar power to run the lights and computers, eliminating the need to use the generator at each stop. It also has a fan on the roof

and skylights to help with lighting and cooling. The vehicles are ADA compatible with two entrances: one with a set of stairs and another entrance with a wheelchair/walker lift.

"We have a very loyal group of people who regularly wait in line for the Bookmobile to arrive. Often times, when we know we'll be making a stop where a patron might have a certain preference for things such as historical fiction or language books, we try to add a few more items to our inventory which we think they would like. This way, they'll have a larger selection from which to choose," stated Karen Apland, SCCLD Bookmobile Librarian. "Being out on the road can have its excitement as well. I remember one time, while driving on Mt. Hamilton road, a herd of cows suddenly appeared and surrounded the Bookmobile. We couldn't move at all," laughed Apland. "We had to wait until the rancher rode by on his horse to get them to move along! That isn't something you see every day," she said smiling.

To learn when the Bookmobile will be in Los Altos Hills, please visit: [www.sclcl.org/bookmobile](http://www.sclcl.org/bookmobile). To learn more about the Woodland Library, visit: [www.sclcl.org/locations/hours-and-locations/woodland-branch/news](http://www.sclcl.org/locations/hours-and-locations/woodland-branch/news).

*Charlette (Lili) Smith is Public Communications Specialist for the Santa Clara County Library District.*



The coyote, or song dog, is the only dog species native to North America. It was present in the Pleistocene and today its range extends from Costa Rica to northern Canada. Its name, pronounced “Ki-oh-tey” or “ki-ote,” is Aztec in origin, from an area that is now in central Mexico. It was known as *cuictal/cayotal/coyotl*, which translated to coyote in English. Scientists gave it the scientific name *Canis latrans* (“barking dog”) in 1832. Coyotes can occupy nearly all habitats in California. Humans and coyotes have been living around each other for a long time.

# COYOTE



Coyotes invoke every human emotion, from admiration to fear and disgust. Although hunted heavily, along with wolves, the coyote is highly adaptable and a large population in North America persists. There is some indication that active hunting causes the population to increase because the females have bigger litters in response to the reduction in competition and the resulting increase in available food. Even so, human intervention has reduced the coyote population in North America to a fraction of what it was in the mid-1800s.

The coyote looks like a tawny, mid-sized dog. It has rusty ears, legs and feet, a pale belly and throat, and a dark-tipped, bushy tail. Its snout is more pointed than a dog's, and it tends to trot. It keeps its tail low, even tucking it between its legs when running. Similar to the larger domestic dog, an individual coyote may live up to 10 years.

### The Call of the Coyote

The coyote calls heard in winter probably relate to finding mates. Territories are established by the pair, not by the male prior to finding a mate. Dens are spread out, depending on terrain. Related

females may share a den, so there may be many pups per den. Coyotes mate in February in California, and the pups are born two months later. There is only one litter per year. Not all five to 10 pups survive, for various reasons, including predation. May through July is the basic training period for the pups, but both adults parent the pups actively until the late fall, when the family group disperses, and calls may again become more frequent. There is not a strong social structure, or pack, other than the annual family unit or temporary packs for hunting.

### The Coyote Diet

Coyotes often hunt at night. They eat rodents, frogs (but not toads), lizards, rabbits and similar-sized animals (including pets), birds, snakes, fish, crustaceans, insects, and carrion. They also eat fruit. They are adept at selecting and feasting on ripe watermelon. They eat green wheat grass, which is rich in nutrients. Like most dogs, they have also been known to swallow inedible but undoubtedly tasty things such as leather or rubber. Most of the conflicts between coyote and humans come about because of food.

In addition to being great at keeping rodent populations in check, the adaptable coyote is tolerant of humans and will forage on pet food left outdoors, as well as fallen fruit and seed dropped from bird feeders. It also finds pets and livestock easy prey, so these should be kept indoors or

be well-secured. Visits in summer and fall when pups are being raised are more likely. Los Altos Hills is coyote territory, and it is best not to entice them. They are frightened away by loud noises (yell, bang a pot), acting big, standing ground, and making eye contact. It is important for

### FAST FACTS

The parent coyotes teach the pups with vocalizations that signal “food, come and get it,” “lie low and keep quiet,” and “follow me.”

Dens are only used when raising young.

Coyotes can run up to 40 mph, and are capable of maintaining lower speeds for several miles.

Coyote tracks have four toes, show the claw (dogs cannot retract their claws), and are about three inches long.

both of the species' well being to “haze” coyotes and to discourage close encounters. However, if it is denning season, be aware that the coyote may be defending its young and it should not be hazed. Den activities will be finished within two months and the den can be disassembled if necessary so that it is not re-used.

More information about dealing with coyotes is available at [ProjectCoyote.org](http://ProjectCoyote.org), or by contacting the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

*Taylor Vanderlip is an environmental consultant specializing in biological issues.*



# INNOVATIVE EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PROJECTS FOR SENIORS

On November 16 and 17, Los Altos Hills seniors had the opportunity to test a pilot best-practices project bringing high technology to emergency preparedness. The project invited seniors to input basic contact information onto a simple Red Cross form and then have that form scanned (by Eagle Scouts) into a computer and then dragged onto a special USB drive. The USB drive is then presented to the senior for safekeeping.

This USB project is one of two emergency preparedness projects for seniors being implemented in Los Altos Hills. These projects are a direct outcome of the Senior Survey conducted by the Senior Commission as part of the charter of the Senior Commission and the application to be an Age-Friendly City.

## Survey Says

In January 2011, 4,530 residents aged 55 and over received a questionnaire. The intention of the survey was twofold: gather comprehensive data on the needs of seniors, and utilize the data in the application for designation as an Age-Friendly City. The first two directives of the Senior Committee's Charter: advise both city councils on senior needs and issues; and make recommendations about programs and resources that pertain to seniors, including gathering information from the senior community.

The survey, with a response rate of 23%, revealed that there were five unmet needs of seniors in the Los Altos and Los Altos Hills areas. One of those unmet needs was emergency preparedness. In the survey, many seniors felt unprepared in case of emergency, and while the Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) program is a significant support, individualized preparation is always a good plan. Therefore, the Rotary and the Center for Age-Friendly Excellence (CAFÉ), a new project of the Los Altos Community Foundation, and others have partnered in attempt to meet those emergency preparedness needs. The other unmet needs were: transportation; aging in place/community; an improved senior center; and keeping active — physically, mentally and socially.

## The USB Project

The USB project is an attempt to address the senior community's desire for emergency preparedness. The project was undertaken by Renny Glasner, as an Eagle Scout final assignment. He met with seniors to collect their medical information (medical condition, name of emergency contacts, and primary-care physician) to place on a USB stick for use by medical emergency responders. In essence, the USB stick functions as a digital medical ID bracelet.

He worked with patience and diligence to navigate the project through several local organizations, multiple levels of approval and legal consultation. While the

USB project is new to Los Altos Hills, it has been utilized by a variety of regional and national community-based agencies and senior housing communities.

Renny and his team



of Eagle Scouts met with seniors at the Los Altos Hills Civic Center in November and carried out the project. If the USB project is well-received by seniors in the community, the Eagle Scouts plan to repeat it in the new year.

The project was made possible by a grant from the Los Altos Rotary awarded to CAFÉ. The mission of CAFÉ is to advance the understanding of and promotion of age-friendly cities and communities. CAFÉ intends to drive transformational change in creating healthy, active, sustainable, and engaged intergenerational communities.

## The Backpack Project

The second step in the emergency preparedness project will consist of a carefully organized day next spring when seniors will be aided by Eagle Scouts to create individualized backpacks filled with basic supplies in case of emergency. This means each senior will be assisted by an Eagle Scout to create the best backpack for him or her while following the recommended Red Cross list. For example, some seniors may need a special medications container or a magnifying glass in case eyeglasses are missing or broken. Vital elements of the emergency preparedness day will be to advertise the event to seniors, organize expert speakers, and gather supplies from various local vendors for the backpacks. The CAFÉ grant will support coordination by a short-term, part-time staff person and the purchase of needed supplies not otherwise donated. A Rotary grant will also support the purchase of basic backpack supplies recommended by the Red Cross (for example a first aid kit, flash light and batteries, toilet tissue, medications etc.). The date of the spring event has not been set yet.

Both the USB and backpack projects are designed to help seniors learn about what to do in an emergency, offer simple technology, and some basic supplies. Research has clearly indicated that individuals most likely to suffer morbidity and mortality in an emergency are older persons. These two projects are designed to address the needs of seniors.

*Anabel Pelham is a professor of Gerontology and Founder of the Center for Age Friendly Excellence.*



For the second time in three years, a Bullis Charter School teacher has been named as the Santa Clara County Charter School Teacher of the Year. Jessica Lura, 8th grade English Language Arts and History teacher at BCS, was honored for her tremendous contributions in the classroom at the county's Teacher Recognition celebration this fall, one of the oldest and largest recognitions of public school educators in the state.

Jessica Lura brings the innovative Silicon Valley spirit to her students through real-world learning experiences. She recently led all students through an entire app design process that allowed each student to ideate, prototype, test, and in several cases, publish an educational app.

"One of Jessica's many strengths is her ability to create truly unique and meaningful learning opportunities for our students," said Superintendent/Principal Wanny Hersey. "The app design process maximized student engagement and creativity, which is when the real learning occurs. The perennially strong test scores in the

middle school program are evidence that this model of learning works, and Jessica is at the forefront of designing the curriculum and making it accessible for every student she teaches."

In her nine years at BCS, Ms. Lura has been responsible for writing and implementing several key curriculums,

## CHARTER SCHOOL TEACHER OF THE YEAR

including the Environmental Science program that begins with students in kindergarten researching sea turtles and culminates with 8th graders collaborating with panda researchers in China.

Sharing the idea of global citizenship is particularly important to Ms. Lura, and she has spent time studying abroad in Denmark, Kenya, Costa Rica, Trinidad, Ecuador, and India.

"I believe it's crucially important for students to look outside of themselves, their homes, and their communities, to see what's going on in the world, and to understand how it impacts them," Lura explains. "We're all connected, and students need to grasp that what happens to the giant pandas in China matters to us, and where and how our food is grown matters to us, and that solutions to global issues can come from anywhere — even from them. This is why getting students to work directly with panda researchers is so important — they get to experience being part of the solution."

Ms. Lura has a bachelor's degree in anthropology and classical studies with a minor in human development. She also has a Masters in Education and is a Nationally Board Certified Teacher, a designation that less than 3% of teachers in the country have achieved. Outside of the classroom, Ms. Lura has used her leadership to help create a performance-based compensation structure that she and her fellow teachers have implemented at BCS.

# Ladies I *who* Lunch

**I**n 1958, a small group of women from the Newcomer's Club came together to form the Los Altos Hills Club. One of the limitations of the Newcomer's Club was that membership was limited to three years. The Los Altos Hills Club was founded to provide a way to meet neighbors, promote social contacts, and develop friendships in a relatively small town. Another goal of the club was to organize culturally enriching activities for its members who were accustomed to the vibrant culture of large city life. In those early years, many of those families were transplants from the East Coast — men and women sought new opportu-

nities with the leading innovative companies of the time — Philco/Ford, Fairchild, or Hewlett Packard. These young mothers looked forward to meeting one another and spending time together. One of

the early members of the club, Nina Steiner, reflects on her memories of those years: "My back door neighbor invited me to a meeting. I was 38 years old and very involved with my kids in their activities. I was thrilled to be with women who talked of things other than little kids. Many programs were flower arranging, crafts, mystery trips, and delightful lunches in different restaurants. It was always an interesting and friendly group of ladies."

Flash forward to 2013 — the club is still thriving after 55 years. Although much has changed in that time, one thing has not changed: because the town is a rural community (houses are separated by large lots and there are no community centers

or shopping areas) it is still difficult for new residents to meet their neighbors. The Los Altos Hills Club's mission is as vital today as it was back in the 1950s.

The women in today's club are a diverse group that includes young mothers, professional women, retired seniors; they range in age from 30 to 80 years old. Members of the club meet on the second Tuesday of each month for lunch. During the lunches, members visit with one another, learn about town and community events and issues, and enjoy learning from guest speakers. Presentations cover a wide range of topics (examples include an annual report about the town, current global concerns, elder fraud and abuse, and antique jewelry). Club members have also enjoyed performances by local entertainers, the Main Street Singers and the Boomerang Barbershop Quartet. In addition to the monthly meeting, the club organizes holiday parties, book clubs, bridge groups, and a traveler's group. There is an occasional field trip and a party is held twice a year to include the members' husbands as well as other guests.

Current club member, Nancy Voorhees Traficanti, a resident of the town since 1949 talks about the benefits of membership in the club: "The ladies in the club are people you can always turn to for help when you need it, or simply sharing stories of growing older."

Membership is open to women with a Los Altos Hills mailing address and limited to 150 members. Prospective members must attend two luncheons before joining. For more information please contact membership chair, Kay Barchas at [barchas@sbcglobal.net](mailto:barchas@sbcglobal.net)

*Left: Armen Ann Sabakian and Dot Schreiner. Above: Vicki Oldberg and Duffy Price*





**TOWN OF LOS ALTOS HILLS**  
26379 Fremont Road  
Los Altos Hills, CA 94022

Presorted Standard  
U.S. Postage  
Paid  
Los Altos, CA  
Permit No. 306

**Town Newsletter Statement of Purpose**

This is the official town newsletter to communicate current issues, services, and activities in Los Altos Hills to the residents of the town — to facilitate, encourage, and improve interaction between the residents and the town government. The newsletter is published quarterly. **Deadline for the next issue is January 3, 2013.**

Printed with soy-based inks. International Paper, the manufacturer of the paper, has earned Sustainable Forestry Initiative and Forestry Stewardship Council dual certification.

[www.losaltoshills.ca.gov](http://www.losaltoshills.ca.gov)

**Our Town**

Our Town is published with assistance from the City Clerk, Deborah Padovan, and Town Volunteer Committees.

Editor: Alexander Atkins

Associate Editor: Glen Reed

Contributors: Sarah Gualtieri, Emily Nelson, Duffy Price, Mike Sanders, Barbara Waldeck; Proofreading: Ronda Breier

Photography: Alexander Atkins, Jitze Couperus, Kathy Evans, Stephen Fitzgerald, Sarah Gualtieri, Emily Nelson, Marita Seulamo-Vargas, Santa Clara County Library District

**Los Altos Hills City Council**

Gary Waldeck, Mayor  
John Radford, Vice Mayor  
Courtenay Corrigan  
John Harpootlian  
Rich Larsen

**City Manager**

Carl Cahill

**CALENDAR**

**Dec**

**7**

**Sat., Noon-2:00 pm  
Make Your Own Gingerbread House**

Parks and Recreation Center. Students will design, bake, assemble, and decorate their very own gingerbread houses. For more information visit [www.rainbowchefs.com](http://www.rainbowchefs.com) and to sign waiver and allergy forms before starting the class. [www.losaltoshills.ca.gov/parks-and-recreation/activity-guide](http://www.losaltoshills.ca.gov/parks-and-recreation/activity-guide).



**8**

**Sunday, 1:00-4:00 pm  
Holiday Barn Lighting at Westwind Community Barn**

Arts & crafts, petting zoo, community and school groups perform, visit Santa in antique horse carriage, demonstration by YRRP, 4-H, and Pony



Club. To learn more, contact Sarah Gualtieri at 650-947-2518.

**19**

**Thurs., 7:30-9:00 pm  
Caroling in the Hills**

Parks and Recreation Committee member Scott Vanderlip leads this annual caroling event.

Kids, adults, and families meet at the Parks and Recreation Center for a brief rehearsal and then tour nearby neighborhoods. Dress warmly and bring a flashlight. Cookies and cider will be provided. For more information, contact Scott at 650-948-6455 or [scott@inet-sciences.com](mailto:scott@inet-sciences.com).



**Feb**

**7**

**7:00-9:00 pm  
Teen Movie Night**

Town Hall Council Chambers. Hosted by the Los Altos Hills Youth Commission. All middle and high school students are invited for a night of entertainment, popcorn, and candy! Bring your own chairs, sleeping bags, blankets or beanbag. For more information send an email to [lahyouthcommission@gmail.com](mailto:lahyouthcommission@gmail.com).

Calendar events are also posted on Town's website: [www.losaltoshills.ca.gov](http://www.losaltoshills.ca.gov)

**Jan**

**11**

**Technology for Seniors**

Need a tutorial on social media, email, or cell phones? Community volunteers are joining forces to answer your questions. Registration is required; please provide your name, contact information, device(s), and/or service to 650-947-2518 or [sgualtieri@losaltoshills.ca.gov](mailto:sgualtieri@losaltoshills.ca.gov).