



OUR TOWN

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE TOWN OF LOS ALTOS HILLS

SEPTEMBER 2015



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BICYCLING BY THE NUMBERS

9

Millions of bike trips each day in the U.S.

238

Number of gallons (in millions) of gas saved by commuting to work on a bike each year in U.S.

1

Billion of bicycles in the world, about twice the number of cars

60

Percentage of all bike trips are one mile or less



Bicycling to School

Learning to ride a bicycle is a memorable rite of passage for many children. It will be many years before they learn how to drive, but riding a bike offers kids a sense of freedom and a simple, efficient way to get around — especially getting to and from school. With Gardner Bullis Elementary School located in the heart of town, cyclists — young and old — are a daily sight along Fremont Road. [CONTINUED ON PAGE 2]



Biking as a Lifestyle Choice

You don't have to be a dedicated bicycle enthusiast, spending thousands of dollars on equipment and gear, to really enjoy biking. Once you own a bike and realize how easy it is to get around, you let it become part of your lifestyle. One resident explained, "Getting around by bike is a big part of our family's daily routine. We all choose to bike over taking a car for most short trips. We bike to school, meetings, errands, and just for fun."

Biking to School

Kids love the flexibility of riding a bike to school. Jan Ahrens said, "My two sons really like the flexibility and control of their schedule. They bike to school at different times, and return home when they've finished their after-school sports, hanging out with friends, or studying. Best of all, they don't need to coordinate with me."

Bike-to-School Day

Each spring, Gardner Bullis Elementary School's annual Bike-to-School Day promotes biking to school by providing group rendezvous points, treats at school,



A Gardner Bullis student participates in the ABC Quick Check performed by Margaret Suozzo on Bike to School Day.

and equipment safety checks. This school-wide event encourages students who do not already bike to school to try it out for a day. Safety in numbers is encouraged through bike trains — self-organized groups that bike together to school. Once the students reach school, volunteer parents offer ABC Quick Checks for bicycles and helmet fittings, which help kids learn how to check the air, brakes, crank, and chain on their bikes, as well as understand how to properly fit a helmet. Volunteer students hand out treats for those who biked, walked, or carpoled. Note that the Fremont Road pathway from West Edith to Town Hall is a

designated Safe Route to School. The next Bike-to-School Day is May 4, 2016.

WoW! Program

GreenTown Los Altos, which strives to educate and inspire residents of Los Altos Hills and Los Altos to make environmentally-friendly choices and become more sustainable, introduced the Walk or Wheel (WoW!) program to encourage walking or biking to school. After several years, GreenTown reports that more than 43% of elementary school students and 67% of middle school students who attend Los Altos School District schools walk or ride a bike to school. Students who participate learn that riding a bike is not only good for the environment, but is also a great exercise, and they learn safety skills.

SCHOOL TRAFFIC

As school begins in late summer, so do local traffic delays. Be aware that traffic on Fremont Road will generally back up between 8:15 to 8:30 am and 2:15 to 3:00 pm as parents drop off and pickup students at Gardner Bullis Elementary School Monday through Friday. Local drivers might want to look for alternate routes during these times. Please watch for students crossing by foot and on bikes on Fremont Road at crosswalks at West Edith, at Miranda, at Fremont Pines Lane, and at Manuella.

SHERIFF'S BICYCLE SAFETY NOTES

One of our most important responsibilities at the Sheriff's Office is to keep residents of Los Altos Hills safe whether they are skating, riding a bicycle, motorcycle, or car. Therefore, we enforce all bicycle and motor vehicle laws to ensure public safety. Whether you are a beginner or veteran cyclist, please be informed about these California bicycle laws and relevant motor vehicle laws.

Let's start off with the bicycle helmet law. California Vehicle Code (CVC) 21212(a) is the law that requires all juveniles under 18 years of age to wear a helmet. This applies to all juveniles who ride on a bicycle, scooter, inline skates, motorized scooter, and skateboard. After the age of 18, the decision to wear a helmet is up to the individual; however, consider that there is a correlation between brain injuries and cyclists not wearing helmets. Helmets are designed to absorb the type of impact that is harmful (and sometimes lethal) to the brain.

Let's turn our attention to CVC 21200(a), the law that requires cyclists to obey all the same rules of the road as vehicles. In particular, CVC 27400(a) prohibits both cyclists and drivers wearing ear buds/headphones in both ears while operating a vehicle. This is because, when listening to music, a cyclist or driver cannot hear critical sounds in front and behind them — like a siren of an emergency vehicle, an approaching or trailing vehicle, or the sound of horse hooves.

Next, let's discuss CVC 22450(a) that requires all motor vehicles and cyclists to come to a full and complete stop at all posted stop signs. This bears repeating: *all motor vehicles and cyclists must come to a full and complete stop at all posted signs*. It is our experience that many cyclists feel they do not have to obey stop signs because they claim that they can see that an intersection is clear, or they say that it is inconvenient to unclip their shoes. The law, however, does not allow for any exceptions. Deputies who witness stop sign violations will issue a ticket.

Finally, let's cover the recently-passed bicycle law, CVC 21760(a), commonly known as the three-foot safety act. This law requires that motorists must pass a bicycle with at least three feet between the motor vehicle and the cyclist. However, there are some exceptions to this law; for example, if the lanes of traffic cannot allow for a three-foot distance between the motor vehicle and bicycle, or if passing would not endanger the cyclist's safety. In addition, the law requires that the motorist must slow to a prudent speed to pass the cyclist safely. This is especially important in Los Altos Hills, where many roadways have steep drop-offs.

Captain Rick Sung, Division Commander, West Valley Patrol, Office of the Sheriff, County of Santa Clara

The WoW! program at Gardner Bullis reinforces bicycling, walking, and carpooling to school all year long through recognition at school assemblies for trips completed and milestone awards. The school holds a bike safety assembly once per year to instruct students on safe riding rules and techniques. "Perhaps the best part is the sense of community that comes from walking and biking to school with your friends and family members," said Margaret Suozzo the school's WoW! organizer.

Sharing the Road

By and large, the roads of Los Altos Hills are wonderfully scenic, winding and narrow. Here are a few basic safety tips for cyclists when sharing the road with motor vehicles:

- Cyclists must obey all traffic signals and stop signs.
- Be visible, alert, and communicate your intentions.
- Stay as far right on the road as you safely can.
- Cyclists should ride single file on a busy or narrow road.
- Be considerate to motorists, pedestrians and equestrians.
- Cyclists and pedestrians should carry identification.



TO LEARN MORE:

To learn more about bicycle safety, visit: <http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/bike/kidsandbikesafetyweb/>

FROM THE CITY MANAGER

Fiscal Year 2015-16 Budget Details

On June 18, 2015, the City Council adopted the 2015-16 Operating and Capital Budget with General Fund Budget of \$9.8 million in general fund revenues and \$9.7 million in general fund expenditure and transfers. Total general fund revenue is projected to increase by 4% and

general fund expenditures and transfers are projected to be reduced by 2% from the 2014-15 revised budget.

As shown below, the property tax, other taxes, and license, permits, and charges for services categories represent 74% of total budgeted general fund revenues. These revenue sources are sensitive to changes in the housing market. With the strengthening of the housing market, property tax revenue experienced an average 7% growth in the last few years, with a further 6% projected increase for 2015-16. This growth was driven by the restoration of property values to pre-recession levels. Property values were temporarily reduced by the County Assessor's Office during the "Great Recession" as required by Prop 8 Decline in Property Value. The "other taxes" category accounts for property transfers and is projected



Carl Cabill

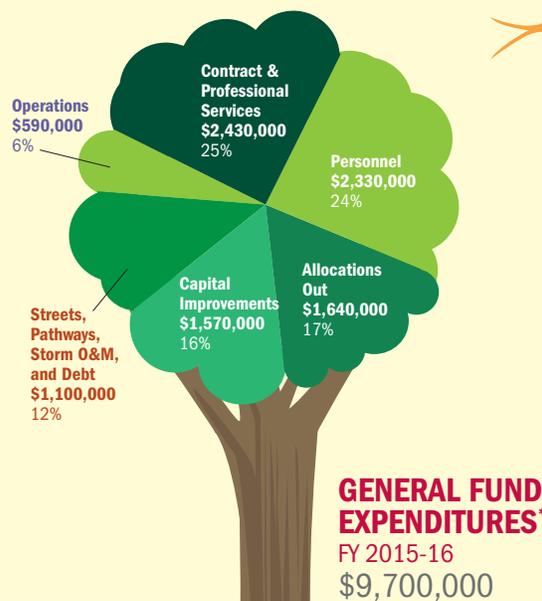
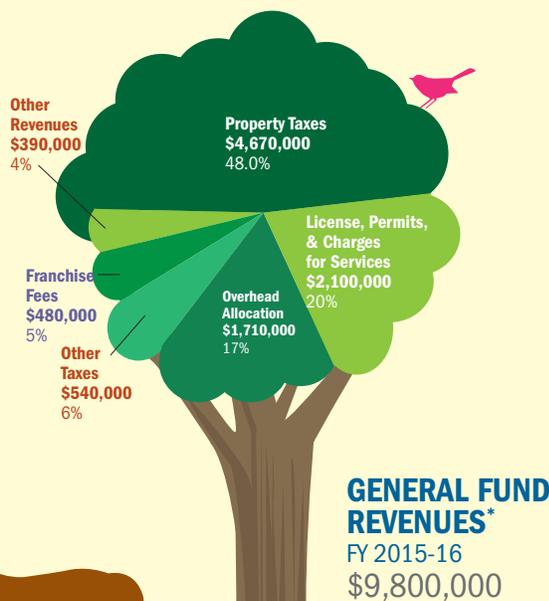
to increase 3%. License, permits, and charges for services are related to private developments. In the last three years, the town has seen a rise in these revenues because of increased numbers of development permits issued, as well as increases in the cost-recovery ratio.

The total \$9.8 million of budgeted general fund revenues supports the City Council-approved general fund appropriations and transfers of \$9.7 million. As shown in the expenditure chart, a substantial portion of the town's expenditures are related to personnel and contracts and professional services, which include a \$1.1 million contract with the County Sheriff for law enforcement services. Comparing to the 2014-15 revised budget, overall budgeted expenditures remain flat. To contain payroll costs, the town continues its policy of benefit cost-sharing with employees. Increases in contracts and professional services and operations are offset by the removal of one-time project appropriations, such as the general plan update, and biennial expenditures, like the election cost, in the prior year.

With continued commitment to maintaining the integrity of the town's infrastructure, the 2015-16

budget includes the transfer of \$614,000 for the Matadero Creek storm drain erosion repair and Barron Creek channel restoration projects and \$1.1 million for routine maintenance of the town's streets, pathways, and storm drains. Additionally, the budget includes a continued investment of \$1.1 million in the town's annual street rehabilitation program to maintain the overall public road pavement in good condition, with \$811,000 transferred from the general fund.

The general fund surplus of \$127,000 brings total projected 2015-16 general fund reserves to \$6.4 million. The council designated \$2.1 million of those reserves for operating contingencies, disaster contingencies, pension liability, and equipment replacement. The remaining \$4.3 million in undesignated reserves can support general fund operations for seven months without using general fund revenues budgeted in the new fiscal year. With \$2.1 million in designated and \$4.3 million in undesignated reserves, the town is in a financially healthy position for the coming year. A copy of the town's budget is available at www.losaltoshills.ca.gov or at Town Hall Administrative Services Department.



*Excludes internal allocations.

The Planning Department reviews proposed development for compliance with the town's General Plan and Zoning Ordinance and prepares long-range planning and policy documents. The department also provides support to the Planning Commission and City Council on development and land-use matters, and coordinates with the Pathways, Environmental Design and Protection, and Open Space Committees in the review of development permit applications.

The building division reviews architectural and structural plans for compliance with applicable building, plumbing, electrical, mechanical, and energy codes, and conducts site inspec-

tions of buildings under construction to ensure compliance with these codes.

Planning and Building Activity

Planning and building activity is at an all-time high. The town saw an increase in the number of planning approvals and building permits issued in the last fiscal year (July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015). There were a total of 193 planning approvals, inclusive of the following:

- 32 new residences
- 31 additions and remodels
- 25 landscape plans
- 12 pools
- 40 fence/gates

In contrast, there were 142 planning approvals in FY 2013-14 and 119 planning approvals in FY 2012-13.

A total of 653 building permits were issued in fiscal year 2014-15 inclusive of the following:

- 28 new residences
- 10 second units
- 41 additions
- 91 interior remodels
- 34 pools
- 81 solar panels
- 25 EV chargers
- 54 re-roofs

By comparison, 568 permits were issued in FY 2013-14, and 474 permits were issued in FY 2012-13.

Suzanne Avila, AICP, Planning Director

Recently, residents received a notice from Purissima Hills Water District and Cal Water limiting outdoor watering to only two days per week. Below are some common questions that residents have about the new regulation.

Q. Are drip irrigation, and hand watering exempt from the two day-a-week limitation?

A. Yes. Drip irrigation, hand watering, and vegetable garden watering are exempt from the two-day-a-week limitation, but you must continue to show reductions or consistent low water use. An exemption from the two-day-a-week rule doesn't exempt a resident from conservation in total use.

CONSERVING WATER

Q. Will my entire landscape die by watering on only two days a week?

A. No. Most shrubs and lawns will survive with a cycle-and-soak schedule two days a week. Lawns should no longer be brilliant green, but a dull olive color with a lot of brown; the lawn is still alive. And some shrubs that poorly fit a California climate will die, but this is a good time to replace with drought-tolerant natives. Make trees a top priority — give them water.

A common mistake made by professional gardeners is to overwater landscapes, which promote rapid growth and screening. During a severe drought, there should be no overwatering. Watering only two days should suffice.

Q. If my weather-based controller saves more water than a two-day-a-week schedule, do we have to conform to the regulation?

A. Yes. Though this is partly correct, you must conform to the two-day-a-week schedule which enables the districts to monitor everyone's schedule for compliance, and enables neighborhood-based compliance. In addition, weather-based controllers don't automatically account for mandatory cutbacks during a drought; in fact, this system may water more than previous years. Some systems, nevertheless, may be set for reduction, such as 25% less than the system's recommended amount. It still doesn't exempt you from the two-day-a-week rule.

Q. Some people will simply water more on two days, and not reduce. Does the two-day-a-week rule help conserve water?

A. Yes. It's expected that residents in town are responsible and want to contribute to the solution and not the problem. Using an equal amount or more water on two days than a prior watering schedule is gaming the system, which is irresponsible given the severe drought in the state.

Q. Can the water districts monitor my use and will I be fined for watering more than two days?

A. Yes. Noncompliance with the regulation will result in notices from the water districts, and continued failure to comply will result in a fine or termination of water service.

TAKING CARE OF THE TOWN

Each day, while residents go about their business, there is a hard-working crew of three that works behind the scenes, sometimes around the clock, to keep the town well-maintained and safe. That team is the town's Public Works Department, led by Superintendent Jacob Asfour, and his crew members, Oswaldo Arellano and Hector Huerta — all of whom take great pride in their work. The public works teams are on call 24/7, 365 days a year. They are responsible for the maintenance of 65 miles of paved roadways and 96 miles of pathways. When trees fall and block roadways or storm drains back up, Asfour and his team are the first responders. All of the town's maintenance crewmembers have commercial class A driver's licenses and are certified in heavy equipment operation, traffic control, handling hazardous materials, trenching, and excavation. Additionally, crew members are CERT-certified and receive regular training in first aid and all aspects of workplace safety.

In addition to maintaining roads and pathways, the Public Works Department provides many other critical services such as trimming trees and shrubs along public roads and pathways; creating and maintaining street signs; cleaning storm drains and natural ditches; maintaining town facilities and parks; maintaining all of the town's vehicles; making minor street repairs and applying asphalt crack sealing; building small shelters; removing graffiti; and helping with the maintenance of Westwind Community Barn. In addition to all these ongoing responsibilities, the team also helps out with official town events, like the Pathways Run/Walk and the Town Picnic.

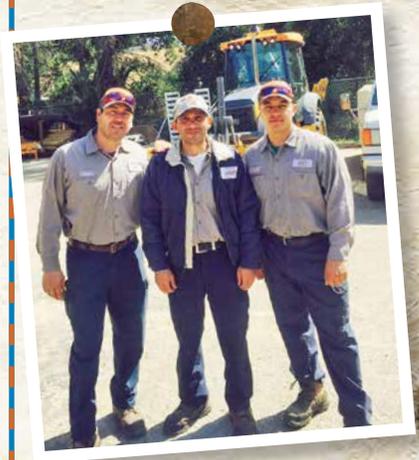
Unfortunately, there are some individuals who use the town's beautiful streets as their own dumping ground—an activity that is strictly forbidden by town ordinance. Asfour and his team regularly go around and pick up illegally dumped garbage, and sometime hazardous materials, soon after it is reported—at a cost to all residents. (Residents are encouraged to call 911 to report any illegal dumping in progress.)

Throughout the year, Asfour focuses on specific projects, depending on the season. Prior to the rainy season, Asfour and his crew focus on cleaning trenches and storm drains from accumulated fall leaves and debris. When winter arrives, the crew keep storm drains clean and repair any damage to roadways and pathways.

After spring arrives and before the summer fire season begins, the crew works assiduously to clear dry weeds and dead or overgrown trees from the sides of roads and pathways. This is the most challenging period for the crew because not only do weeds grow quickly, they are also growing all over town, an area that covers approximately nine square miles. For a crew of three, there is a lot to take care of in a short period of time. Residents, who are concerned about the fire danger that tall weeds pose call in to make maintenance requests. However, these calls frequently come in all at once. For some residents, tall weeds can also aggravate allergy conditions as well as harbor disease-carrying insects like ticks. Some plants like poison oak and stinging nettle are noxious and must be cleared from the edges of pathways. Aware of all these issues, the crew of three does its best to schedule all the weed-clearing as soon as possible.

In the summer, the crew also repairs the roadway by replacing small sections or filling cracks with hot tar. At Westwind Community Barn, the crew assists with maintenance project like replacing storm drains or minor construction or repair projects.

To contact the Public Works Department, to report a maintenance request, contact Town Hall at 650-941-7222 or rchiu@losaltoshills.ca.gov.



MEET THE TEAM

Jacob Asfour (center), Superintendent, reports to the Public Works director. He keeps track of all projects, and supervises his crew members — Oswaldo Arellano and Hector Huerta. Asfour has been working as Superintendent since September 2008. Prior to that, he was the lead maintenance worker for the Town of Woodside for eleven years. Asfour is certified in advanced welding, carpentry, and operating heavy equipment. He lives in Union City with his wife and two children.

Oswaldo Arellano (left), Maintenance Worker II, started working in the Public Works Department in December 2008. Prior to that, he worked at Westwind Barn for five years and was responsible for taking care of the horses, making repairs to the Barn and surrounding fenced pasture. Oswaldo lives in Mountain View with his wife and two children.

Hector Huerta (right), Maintenance Worker II, has been employed by the town since June 2009. Huerta has his technical certification in commercial and residential heating, venting, and air conditioning. He lives in Half Moon Bay with his wife and two children.

Butterflies



Butterflies show up in the fossil record dating back 60 million years. One of the butterflies we see in Los Altos Hills is the painted lady butterfly (*Vanessa cardui*), which is recorded from 35 million years ago. That is roughly 30 million years older than the oldest known human-related fossil. Butterflies are not as delicate as they seem; some are brilliant at migration, and fly hundreds of miles in a relatively short period of time.

Life Stages

All butterflies have a life cycle encompassing four distinct stages. The stages are: egg, larva (caterpillar), pupa (chrysalis), and adult. Each butterfly undergoes a complete metamorphosis, changing from one body form to another. We typically recognize the adult, winged form, and may not be aware of the other forms of the butterfly that occupy our gardens and open space.

Survival Strategies

Butterflies depend on plants. The caterpillars eat one type of plant (the host plant), and the adults eat the nectar of other plants. The timing of the butterfly life cycle is in tune with when the particular plant has foliage to eat or flowers to nectar on. If the plants are not available, the butterfly will struggle to survive. One of the concerns about climate change is that the availability of host and nectar plants will fall out of sync with the

life cycle of several butterfly species, which will affect a food source for birds, and so on.

Each butterfly species has a different reproductive strategy to assure survival, but in general the life cycle goes like this: the adult flies for a few weeks (usually in spring), and lays eggs on or near the host plant. The eggs hatch and each caterpillar feeds on the host plant until they grow big enough to transform to the next stage (called instar). When dry



weather comes and the host plant is gone, the larvae go dormant. This is usually in the leaf litter or duff near where the host plant was. When it rains again and the plants start to grow, the larva wakes up, eats until it is big enough to pupate, then metamorphoses into a butterfly, and the cycle starts again. Several butterfly species are in our environment year round in less recognizable forms. If you want to encourage butterflies in the garden, it is important to understand the life cycle. For example, clearing out leaf litter may clear out the butterfly larvae as well.

Some butterflies migrate long distances, which affects their reproductive strategy. The painted lady (*Vanessa cardui*), shown on left, overwinters on the US/Mexico border and migrates northward in late winter. Although we often see painted lady butterflies, they

LIST OF BUTTERFLY-FRIENDLY PLANT SPECIES

Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)
 Hollyhock (*Alcea rosea*)
 Aster (*Aster chilensis*)
 Foxglove (*Digitalis sp.*)
 Buckwheat (*Eriogonum spp.*)
 Sunflower (*Helianthus spp.*)
 Lupine (*Lupinus spp.*)
 Sticky monkey flower (*Mimulus aurantiacus*)
 Beard tongue (*Penstemon spp.*)
 Milkweed (*Asclepias spp.*)
 Borage
 Hound's tongue (*Cynoglossum spp.*)

are not actually regular residents of the town – they are just passing through. In some years they migrate through in the millions and are quite noticeable. When they emerge as adults, they have a large store of yellow fat that allows them to fly long distances non-stop. If you have ever noticed a big yellow splotch on your windshield, it may have been from a painted lady from the border. Eventually, these long-distance travelers use up this store of fat and stop to nectar and mate. They lay their eggs, the larvae hatch, and within about four weeks another set



of adults continues the migration route. So, when you hear about butterflies migrating from Canada to Mexico (and vice versa), it is not a single butterfly that makes the trek; it takes a few generations to accomplish the task. They migrate north in late winter, and migrate south in August-November. Exactly why this happens remains a mystery.

Contrast this with the West Coast lady (*Vanessa annabella*), pictured above, which moves up and down slope, rather than up and down latitudes. This butterfly is territorial. It is common in urban environments, and occurs in all habitats except the deep woods. Because it has a localized migration pattern, it does not need to produce several generations each year. Interestingly, both species rely on the same host and nectar plants, which are mainly our weeds, including thistles and mallow.

FUN FACTS

- Our understanding of the relationship between butterflies and plants contributed to our understanding of co-evolution, where two completely different species evolve reciprocally (a change in one elicits a change in the other).
- Butterflies are not significant pollinators, but they do provide food for birds. Monarch butterflies taste bad, so several other species that look like monarchs are less likely to be eaten by birds.
- The painted lady migration pattern is also observed from North Africa and the Middle East into Europe.

Butterfly-friendly gardening practices

Plant several different host and nectar plants to attract butterflies. The larvae depend on native plants (oaks, coyote brush, buckeye, lupine, hound's tongue, plantago are just a few). The adults will nectar on native or non-native plants, so sweet pea, sunflower, borage, milkweed, daisies, yarrow, and just about any flowering plant will provide a nectar source for butterflies. When providing a nectar source, consider planting a palette that includes plants that bloom at different times of the year so that there is always a source of food for butterflies (and other nectaring insects, like bees).

Provide a wet or muddy spot on the ground for water and social connections (called puddling). Butterflies are social because they only have a few weeks to complete the cycle and create more butterflies. They meet at the watering hole, which is often a muddy rut in a dirt road, the edge of a cattle pond, or a puddle. Bird baths are too deep. Butterflies may drink water when puddling, but the main purpose is thought to be social.

Leave leaf litter in the area around the butterfly host plants. If you include host plants in your garden where butterflies lay their eggs and larvae hatch out and feed, it may be important to leave some of the leaf litter and duff around the plants. It depends on the particular host plants and butterfly species, but some overwinter in the leaves and duff that accumulates under the plants.

Taylor Vanderlip is an environmental consultant specializing in biological issues.



The Value of Common Core

The memories of summer fade away slowly as a new school year begins.

The biggest change in the world of education is the implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for K-12 programs intended to validate learning strategies in our public schools.

The CCSS are a set of K-12 educational standards in mathematics and language arts and literacy that have been adopted across 45 states; thus, as families move all across the country, our students will find a common set of learning goals within public schools using the CCSS. These new standards are designed to build students' knowledge and skills as they progress through school, so they are prepared for college entry and career life. Designed to have fewer, simplified standards, the CCSS adds rigor, so students delve deeper into fewer required topics. California's old state standards were overly prescriptive. Our local schools have embraced the CCSS, because they more clearly separate "the what" from "the how." This allows our teachers more freedom to innovate and tailor lesson plans to their specific needs.

The new standards have an integrated model of literacy that blends reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language skills applicable to a range of subjects. "The Common Core now gives us permission to go in depth," said Marie Pinder, teacher at Gardner Bullis Elementary. Her third-

Above: Gunn High School pre-calculus students take it outside, where a bouncing ball demonstrates an infinite geometric series. Right: Bullis Charter School middle school students work in small groups to investigate the fall of the Roman Empire.

grade students explored their passions with "Expert Projects," which they researched through books, online sources, created slides on computers, and then presented to an audience. One challenge was the varied levels of reading comprehension among students, so Pinder worked with the school librarian to provide books at just the right level via library carts in the classroom.

The Common Core State Standards are designed to build students' knowledge and skills as they progress through school, so they are prepared for college entry and career life. Designed to have fewer, simplified standards, the CCSS adds rigor, so students delve deeper into fewer required topics.

The new standards increase frequency of non-fiction reading and require cross-disciplinary projects. "The Common Core makes the benefits of a more unified curriculum more obvious," explained Lisa Stone, teacher of History and English Language Arts at Bullis Charter's middle school. Her students studied the fall of the Roman Empire, then broke into small groups to answer, "Is the USA next?" The students researched reliable sources, resolved conflicting information, summarized findings, and took notes. With all students speaking, the groups presented their findings to an audience accompanied by multimedia slides. The associated writing assignment was, "What was the main cause for the fall of the Roman Empire?," based on the evidence they had gathered through historical research.

In science and social studies, teachers lead students cooperatively in "close reading" of complex texts like the Magna Carta in its original English, science articles, and scientific data. These passages are challenging for all students. Teachers structure questions to break it down for analysis to improve comprehension.

The goal for mathematics is to teach learning strategies to solve problems that will last a lifetime, rather than memorizing facts that can be soon forgotten. Mistakes are an opportunity for deeper learning. In algebra classes, teacher Noirin Foy at Blach

STATE INTRODUCES THE SBAC TEST

Junior High posted the new learning goals on the wall and removed the desks. She has kidney-shaped tables topped with white boards. "These tables made the biggest change for me to implement the Common Core," she said. Daily, she created small groups based upon student need and gave mini lectures on the tables. She encouraged her students to take pictures with phones and computers for their notes. "Hearing each other's reasoning is really powerful. They need to socialize. They are off topic much less often in this class environment," observed Foy.

With high school students fluent in technology, the standards do not drive instruction, but reflect what teachers can



now do to facilitate learning strategies. "Students cannot cram for a month, take a test, and move on," reflected Robert Barker, world literature teacher at Los Altos High School. "Through online discussion groups we are now hearing from everyone. Students are crowd-sourcing ideas in class where all benefit — from struggling to advanced students." Barker continued, "The students are not just staring at screens. Their online participation fosters increased face-to-face interactions. We can now logistically manage transformational instruction that is

In September, parents will receive the first results for the new SBAC (SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium) Testing for those who took the test in the previous school year. There will be a numerical score for mathematics and for language, but the overall value reported will be one of four values: Exceeds Standard, Met Standard, Nearly Met Standard, or Standard Not Met. An important point to remember is that these results cannot be compared with previous results from the former STAR tests.

Local schools administered the tests by computer. During SBAC testing, students were given a varying number of questions that might range in difficulty. The computer-based tests adjusted the questions asked based on how a student answered previously. If they answered correctly, the next question might be harder. If they answered incorrectly, the next question might be easier.

"Formative assessment is currently moving toward center stage on the national scene. Not surprisingly, it appears that most formative assessment efforts lack attention to the rigorous elements that are critical to potential effectiveness," wrote David Foster of the Silicon Valley Mathematics Initiative in 2009. Fast-forward to the spring of 2015, when the state provided assessments developed by Foster to public schools to use for mathematics. These arrived too late in the school year to impact SBAC results as testing was already underway. However, Sandra McGonagle, Assistant Superintendent for the Los Altos school district, reported that these assessments are very high quality, include full rubrics for teachers, and will be useful as formative assessments in this and future school years.

Very few students in third through eighth grade opted out of the state testing according to school district officials. At the high school level, a greater but not significant number of students opted out. SBAC testing occurred in the same timeframe as Advanced Placement (AP) testing. Overall in California, there was little opposition to the new tests as the state does not tie the student test results to teacher compensation.

differentiated, democratic, practiced, and immediate."

Gunn High School is moving to "block scheduling" with class lengths of 70, 75, or 80 minutes. Gunn math teacher Toni Smith commented, "Common Core is a new way of applying concepts to real-life problems. With the new schedule, we have more time for group work and for projects where kids can be creative and apply their learning." For example, her math students designed amusement park rides with computer-based modeling and made math rap videos to remember the quadratic formula.

The remaining challenge is that textbooks have not yet responded to Common Core, but teachers are pulling inspiration from many sources and meet

in teams and across specialties to share what works. "As teachers, we know that there isn't one mathematics or language arts program out there that works for all students. We pick and choose the best parts of the programs we have used over the years and we use the knowledge and skills we learned about teaching those subject areas to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students. The Common Core State Standards are bringing us back to a place where teachers have more control to do this," said Teri Baldwin, Palo Alto Educators Association President.

Heather Rose is a member of the Los Altos Hills Education Committee. More details can be found at <http://losaltoshillseducation.org>.

OPENINGS ON YOUTH COMMISSION

The Los Altos Hills Youth Commission (LAHYC), established in 2010, represents tweens and teens (grades 6 - 12) in local government and engages them through activities and volunteer events. Each year the LAHYC holds three signature events: Movie Night, the Halloween Monster Bash, and the Leadership Conference. The popular Leadership Conference is designed to promote leadership, and foster participation in certain fields that have thrived in Silicon Valley. The other popular event for local youth is Movie Night, usually held at Town Hall, aimed towards



bonding and developing a sense of community for young people who live in Los Altos Hills. The commission is dedicated to making a difference in the community, participating in the town's annual Town Picnic, Earth Day Festival, Hoedown, Barn Lighting, and

Easter Egg Hunt. Members of the youth commission also volunteer by feeding the homeless on Thanksgiving Day.

The LAHYC meets the first and third Tuesdays of every month from 7:00 to 8:00 pm in the Parks and Recreation Building at Town Hall. Currently there are three openings on the LAHYC; to apply and for more information contact sgualtieri@losaltoshills.ca.gov.

With summer coming to a close, students are gearing up for a new fall schedule. Back-to-school letters from local principals include a myriad of information and reminders for the new school year. As parents envision the year ahead and the things they hope to support their children in accomplishing, El Camino Hospital provides considerations to reinforce the mental well-being of teen students. In addition, there are many ways to enhance communication with your child and to connect with your local school to understand the mental health resources specific to your community in order to meet the unique needs of your family.



Fostering MENTAL Well-Being

The beginning of the school year holds so much promise, and expectations can often be stretched. When the importance of mental well-being is discussed regularly, parents and children can align goals. Surveys reveal differing responses when you ask adolescents what they are most worried about compared to what they think their parents are most worried about for them—these conversations can help close that gap and build understanding.

Parents can be unsure on how to start these conversations. Something as simple as a car ride is a chance to start a dialogue with your teenager and ask your teen to give you details about what their ideal school year would look like. Open-ended discussions can enable your teen to feel listened to in a supportive way and provide opportunities to talk about how stress can occur and how it can be managed. Throughout the school year, regular check-ins with your child to see how things are going in terms of stress can be helpful in being able to identify potential problems early.

Topics of discussion could also include the importance of sleep and how many hours per night are ideal for physical and emotional well-being. Does the

8-10 hours of sleep recommended each night by health professionals match what you and your teen think is adequate? According to the National Sleep Foundation, most teens are not getting a sufficient number of hours of sleep each night and this can impact mood, memory, and ability to succeed in school. Healthy limits on electronic use, how to manage stress, and your personal definitions of “success” are all important topics that can be open-ended discussions with your child.

Fortunately, there is a wealth of services in the community to support these conversations and define new goals with your child, including services provided by your school. Your primary care doctor, school nurse, community mental health centers, local hospitals, and health professionals are all resources that can provide you with information and tools along the way.

Asking the questions below, at the start of the school year, can help you identify mental health resources available to you and your child:

- **How can my child access counseling services through the school?** Local high schools are equipped with therapists, counselors, nurses, and other health professionals. These individuals are

eager to answer questions and provide information.

- **Are there mental health services available outside of school?** You and your family can also connect with your primary care physician, local community mental health organizations, mental health professionals such as therapists and psychiatrists, and your local hospitals. You can ask these professionals how you can be supported at school and at home with whatever needs are specific to your child.
- **Are there peer mental health support groups my child can participate in?** Various community organizations such as Adolescent Counseling Services (ACS) and Community Health Awareness Council (CHAC) facilitate teen programs and groups such as OUTLET and Teen Talk. These groups allow teens to be supported by peers and offer education for families. Health professionals can also help you find groups near your home or school.
- **Who should we contact if my child experiences a mental health crisis?** Before a crisis, find out the hours your school counselor and resource officer are available and an explanation of what that position entails. If it is a critical situation, go to the nearest emergency room or call 9-1-1. You can also contact the National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 800-273-TALK (273-8255).

Schools are often notified of local community health education opportunities that aim to reduce the stigma associated with mental health conditions, improve the education and understanding of these illnesses, and enhance access to care for those in need. Parent education events are often posted on school calendars. Examples of organizations that host mental health education events throughout the year include: El Camino Hospital, Palo Alto Medical Foundation (PAMF), Santa Clara County Suicide Prevention, Stanford Hospital, and others. The Health Care Alliance for Response to Adolescent Depression (HEARD) organization website at www.heardalliance.org offers an extensive list of local mental health resources.

*Lauren Olaz, MPH, Mental Health Services
Community Liaison Specialist, El Camino Hospital*



LOS ALTOS HILLS HOEDOWN

The annual Los Altos Hills Hoedown will be held on Saturday, September 12, from 3:00 to 8:00 pm at Westwind Community Barn. A new feature at this year's hoedown is the Boneyard Food Truck, an exciting and memorable dining experience — so don't forget to bring money for food and beverages. Along with the tasty food, attendees will enjoy live bluegrass music, a farmers' market, and entertainment for the entire family. The community farmers' market gives residents the opportunity to set up a table to sell their own garden-grown fruits and vegetables. Quench your thirst with hand-pressed apple cider, made using DeMartini Orchard's apples and Hidden Villa's press.

Custom handweavers will be providing textile demonstrations including quilting, knitting, crocheting, spinning, and weaving. The event will also feature leather tooling by Silicon Valley Leathercraft Guild as well as the popular soap-making, puppet-making, and family-oriented games and prizes. For further enjoyment, there will be equestrian exhibitions in the upper arena, featuring 4-H mini horses and riding demonstrations from the Pacific Ridge Pony Club. A bake sale will be hosted by 4-H, Youth Commission, and Pony Club. Several local wines will be poured. For more information, or if you would like to participate (e.g., sell at the farmers market, host a craft table, game, help teach knitting, crocheting or embroidery, pour wine), or donate to the event, please contact Sarah Gualtieri 650-947-2518 or sgualtieri@losaltoshills.ca.gov.

SAVE THE DATE



FOR THE DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE TOWN OF LOS ALTOS HILLS

The occasion of the Los Altos Hills' 60-year anniversary is an appropriate time for our community to draw inspiration from our past as we look forward and plan for the future. Celebrate our ever-changing community with dinner, dancing, and live music at Los Altos Golf and Country Club.

Sat., January 30, 2016
6:00 pm Reception
7:00 pm Dinner

Invitations to be mailed
in early January 2016

OBJECTS IN A NEW LIGHT

The community is invited to attend a reception at Town Hall, on September 27 from 2:00 to 5:00 pm, for a new exhibit featuring the paintings and photography of Immaculada Del Castillo Ditzel. Ditzel was born in Madrid, Spain, and enjoyed a career as an economist before she switched to fine art, initially out of curiosity and as a challenge, and now as a way of life. Her still-life photographs are very sophisticated — she carefully juxtaposes everyday objects in a unique way to make viewers see them in a new light. Backgrounds are often black. The photography uses unconventional cameras, materials, and printing methods featuring creative digital photography. Her art mirrors her philosophy of life — love of simplicity and beauty and a marriage of art and technology.

The exhibit will include some extra-large painted canvasses in the council chamber and a room full of humorous paintings of deer, engaged in activities of daily living, like talking on smart phones.





TOWN OF LOS ALTOS HILLS
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Los Altos Hills, CA 94022

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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 Oct 1, 2015.**

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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

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Photography: Alexander Atkins, Jitze Couperus, Sarah Gualtieri, Heather Rose

Los Altos Hills City Council

Courtenay Corrigan, Mayor
John Harpootlian, Mayor Pro Tem
Rich Larsen
John Radford
Gary Waldeck

City Manager

Carl Cahill

CALENDAR



Sept 12

Sat., 3:00 – 8:00 pm
Hoedown at Westwind Community Barn
Live bluegrass music, BBQ food truck, crafts, and dancing. For more information see page 11. Free entrance, with food and drink available for purchase.

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Sunday, 2:00 – 5:00 pm
Art Reception for Immaculada Del Castillo Ditzel
Photography and paintings by Ditzel. The free event, held at Town Hall, will feature live

music, gourmet food and wine. For more information, call 650-941-7222.

Oct 11

Sunday, 2:00 – 4:00 pm
The History of the Taaffe Family
The Los Altos Hills History Committee presents a history of the Taaffe family at Town Hall. The Taaffe family was one of the first families of Los Altos Hills, and whose descendants are still residents of the town.

25

Sunday, 2:00 – 5:00 pm
Los Altos Hills Vines and Wine
Join Los Altos Hills vintners at Town Hall



for tastings of locally-produced wines. This event is open to the public with a \$20 entrance fee. Registration provides you with a souvenir glass and the tastings. To register visit: losaltoshills.ca.gov or call 650-947-2518 for more information.



Nov 29

Sunday, 6:00 pm
Los Altos Festival of Lights Parade
Get into the holiday spirit with a treasured holiday tradition: a parade featuring festive floats and holiday music. Look for the Los Altos Hills Parks and Recreation float. For more information visit: losaltosparade.com.



Dec 6

Sunday, 2:00 – 5:00 pm
Barn Lighting at Westwind Community Barn
Join your neighbors in singing holiday carols, visits with Santa, crafts, and refreshments. The barn lighting will take place at 5:00 pm.

Jan 30

Sat., 6:00 pm
Town's 60th Anniversary Celebration
Reception and dinner at the Los Altos Golf and Country Club.

Calendar events are also posted on town's website: www.losaltoshills.ca.gov