

INSIDE ALL HOME-DELIVERED ISSUES:

THE 2009 WELCOME! DIRECTORY

COMMUNITY INFORMATION GUIDE

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EVERY THURSDAY				...THE PAPER WITH THE PICTURES			
POST							
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PAW PRINTS

Photo by Kym Fortino

Rod Burns, official artist in residence for the Humane Society of the United States, begins a mural at the soon-to-open Humane Society Silicon Valley Animal Community Center in Milpitas. Burns and local artist Sonya Paz began an "Art for the Animals" painting marathon at the Humane Society's new facility on Ames Avenue on Tuesday.

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School board approves \$2.1 million in cuts

Class-size reduction eliminated in third and ninth grades; elementary music dropped; Milpitas High pool closes; busing limited

BY WES BOWERS

The Milpitas Unified School District Board of Education on Tuesday approved \$2.18 million in budget reductions at a time when the State of California is facing a \$46-billion budget shortfall.

These cuts are only the beginning, board President Mike Mendizabal warned, as the district could face a total of \$9 million in reductions over the next 18 months.

No level of the district was

excluded from reductions as the proposal included 22 reduction items including counselors at the high school and middle school level, employees at the district office, assistant principals at the elementary school level, the community day school principal, technology services reductions and classified staffing.

"All of the programs on this list are very vital and important to our district," Superintendent Karl Black said. "For every cut on

here I could offer 10 reasons why

we shouldn't cut it. But we're facing a \$9-million problem, and we're going to have to make cuts and find ways to save money."

Black said while the recently approved federal stimulus package will be allocated in the near future, it was unclear how much would actually filter to Milpitas Unified.

He said some of the money — however much that might be — will most likely go to the district's Title I program, and some to special education.

He added the district is working to put a revenue-generating measure such as a parcel tax on the November ballot.

At the district office,

\$515,033 in cuts was approved, including eliminating kindergarten through third-grade busing and a supervisor, both for \$100,000 savings.



Karl Black

Teachers on special assignment will all receive layoff notices, but only one will be lost for a \$91,457 savings.

At Milpitas High School, the elimination of class size reduction in ninth grade will save \$320,000, while eliminating a counselor will save \$80,165 and closing the swimming pool will

save \$60,000.

High school athletics will also be reduced by \$10,000, but Black added the district will continue to contribute \$33,000 to the program as it has done in the past. He said the same would apply to middle school athletics, which will be reduced by \$6,000.

A middle school counselor and librarian will be eliminated at \$80,165 each. There are currently two counselors and librarians at the middle school level and the reduction would leave one of each to cover both.

At the elementary school level, class size reduction in third grade will be eliminated for a

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Pop artist Sonya Paz begins a mural during the three-day "Art for the Animals" painting marathon at the Humane Society Silicon Valley's new digs at 901 Ames Ave.

Photo by Kym Fortino

Artists paint murals in marathon at soon-to-open Humane Society

BY WES BOWERS

With a new Humane Society Silicon Valley Animal Community Center opening next month, two nationally recognized artists have been painting as fast and as beautifully as they can over the course of three days.

Ron Burns and Sonya Paz began an "Art for the Animals" painting marathon at the Humane Society's new digs at 901 Ames Ave. Tuesday. Their goal is to end today.

Humane Society Silicon Valley is expected to open its new 48,000-square-foot facility in March and close its current location in Santa Clara at Lafayette and Martin streets.

Burns and Paz are each painting eight works of art related to animals in the center's new pet adoption rooms.

The idea is to make the rooms more pet-friendly, as if the animals have their own pad while awaiting adoption.

Burns is the official artist in residence for the Humane Society of the United States and is known for his Andy Warhol-like style.

His paintings are usually bright and saturated, and he begins every piece of work at the eyes.

"As soon as the eyes are done, I can see into their soul and I see they have a personality,"

Burns said Tuesday. "All the life and personality of that animal just radiates outward and I just go along with it."

Burns takes a lot of his inspiration from animals he sees at Humane Society shelters.

Because each painting will have a different subject matter, he said the time to complete his work varies.

On Tuesday he was working on a painting on the wall of a central community room. When finished, it will look like a dog looking up at the viewer from a couch, as if it is in its own living area.

In the smaller pet adoption rooms, Burns said he will most likely paint portraits.

Paz is a local artist who also manages her own gallery and has worked with the Humane Society in the past.

Her artwork leans more toward cubism and stylized pop art and has appeared on several different forms of media, including watches, ceramics, pillows and jewelry.

On Tuesday she was working in one of the pet adoption rooms on what at first glance appeared to be a trio of flowers. A closer inspection revealed the flowers' bulbs as paw prints. She had already completed a cubist piece of

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Murals adorn animal center walls

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work of a dog.

"I have some conceptual designs before I begin," she said of undertaking this marathon. "Then I just take these ideas and run with them."

She and Burns will both have a painting in the community room, and Paz said she already has a possible idea to paint.

"I have a dog I love very much, and I might immortalize her," she said.

Both Paz and Burns are animal lovers, and they also do commission paintings for anyone who adopts pets from the Humane Society. When their independent work is sold at galleries and shows, a percentage of the sales are donated.

The Humane Society's new center will open March 28 with an open house to showcase its programs and services, including:

- A spay/neuter medical center
- Community dog park and training center
- Doggie daycare, boarding and grooming
- Veterinary hospital with a public viewing room
- Education center with programs for children, teens and families
- Community event center
- A pet store and pet-friendly cafe

In addition, the center will be the first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Gold Certified animal community

center in the nation.

Laura Fulda, Humane Society Silicon Valley's vice president of marketing and communication, said the organization chose its new Milpitas home because it offered so many benefits both to the society and its customers.

"It was one of the few sites we looked at that had five acres with a perfect area for animals," she said. "And it wasn't in a dilapidated area like other centers generally are."

"It's also got a great location near every major freeway — 680, 880, 237, 101 — and that's easy access for our customers," she added.

More information on the new Milpitas center can be found online at www.giving.hssv.org/campaign.

Restrictions loosened to sell condos

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ed in market prices being similar to minimum sales prices for affordable units. This situation provided little or no incentive for buyers to purchase the off-price units, which come with 45-year resale restrictions that limit equity growth.

"People ask themselves 'Why get tied up for 45 years when you can get a market rate (unit) with no restrictions?'" Reliford said.

He added that over the last two and half years city staffers and KB Home have advertised on five different occasions (June 2006 to November 2008) to attract homebuyers for the purchase of the affordable units.

He said approximately 580 applications were reviewed after the first four rounds of advertising. He claimed the scope of advertising these units was increased last November to include the entire Bay Area in regional newspapers.

"For the entire Bay Area, we got only nine applications," Reliford said.

KB Home has reduced the sales price of the affordable units to the minimum price floors

established in agreement with the city and also provided incentives up to an additional \$20,000 toward closing costs, if financed through their preferred lender.

In order to offload the units, the city, county, and KB Home have been working together to draft the amendments to formal agreements.

Those amendments would only affect unsold condominiums and would include:

- Establishing an in-lieu housing payment of \$1.7 million to remove the affordable restrictions on 46 of the 67 remaining unsold affordable units (\$37,000 for each unit). This would be paid in equal parts to the redevelopment agency and to the county. Also, \$3.15 million (\$2.3 million from the unused down payment loans and \$851,000 from the in-lieu fee) would be uncommitted, returned to redevelopment agency's low- and moderate-income housing fund to be used for other projects. The total number of affordable units within the Terra Serena project would be reduced from 110 to 64.
- Reduce the minimum sale price of the remaining 21 units

from \$290,000 to \$226,500 for a one-bedroom unit and from \$330,000 to \$246,500 for a two-bedroom unit. The agency would still provide the \$50,000 down payment assistance loans for these units. The combination of the reduced unit price and the down payment assistance would allow these units to be affordable to low-income instead of moderate-income households.

■ Remove prior obligations related to a Abbott/Thompson street connection, and un-encumber \$1.32-million of a \$1.37-million set-aside amount to the redevelopment agency. The remaining \$50,000 would be used to cover the final invoice for the approved infrastructure work and extended project management costs.

The proposed amendments require the approval of both the city's redevelopment agency and Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors since the county was a party to the agreement.

County supervisors were set to review Milpitas' amendment for approval on Tuesday.





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