

Local

Saturday, May 16, 2015

WINE WEEKEND

If you enjoy wine, there are two tasting festivals to choose from Sunday, one in Moorpark and one in Thousand Oaks. **10B**



Pleasant Valley teachers make case

District chief expects deal on pay issues

By Tamara Koehler
Special to The Star

About 100 Pleasant Valley School District teachers took to the streets in a rally for support of pay raises they say are long overdue. Waving signs and handing out leaflets, the educators lined the sidewalks Wednesday outside

Rancho Rosal Elementary School, where an open house was underway. Parents heading onto the elementary school campus were encouraged to join teachers at the May 21 district board meeting, when salary negotiations again will be discussed.

"We want what is fair and what is right, and that's making teachers a priority when it comes to education spending," said Scott Wright, a physical education teacher who helped organize the demonstration.

"We have teachers who are planning to leave the district because they are struggling to pay their bills. We are only asking to be in the average range of comparable districts."

The rally was the latest demonstration by the Pleasant Valley Education Association, which represents 350 teachers in the K-8 district. The union and district are at an impasse in salary negotiations for this school year.

Teachers are asking for a 5 percent salary increase

and a 1 percent raise in health care benefits.

"It's the health insurance cost that is killing families," said Thad Robbins, a middle school math teacher. "We have teachers paying \$1,200 a month out of pocket because the district's share is so low."

The board in December approved a 2 percent salary increase, a 1.5 percent one-time bonus and a health benefit boost for nearly 400 classified and management employees. A similar offer was made to teachers

but was rejected.

The union also has turned down the district's current offer of a 3 percent raise in salary with a one-time bonus of 2.5 percent and additional health benefits.

The next step is a fact-finding session between a mediator and attorneys for the union and district, Robbins said. Teachers could go on strike after that, but Superintendent RaeAnne Michael said she believes a compromise will be found.

"I was a teacher for 16 years. I am a teacher at heart, so I know how many hours of their own time they put in with no pay, and it's because of the care they have for the students," Michael said. "But I'm also concerned about not cutting student programs, money for facilities and all the other pieces of the picture."

Robbins and Wright said the sticking point for teachers is the district's policy of

See PROTEST, 10B

Cleanup of spill restarts in Simi

Families may be able to return soon

By Cindy Von Quednow
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The cleanup resumed Friday at the site of a Simi Valley mercury spill, with officials hoping affected families can return home this weekend.

The cleanup was delayed by rain Thursday. Officials now hope residents of four homes in the affected area in the 4100 block of Cochran Street will be able to return safely on Sunday.

"We can't bring them back until the driveway is cleaned and safe," said James Purtee, assistant city manager.

Six homes share a driveway where the mercury spill was reported Monday. Residents of four homes were allowed inside to get necessities and their vehicles, and were being assisted by the American Red Cross with lodging. Residents of two other homes did not leave when the spill was detected.

A contaminated portion of the street was cleaned and repaved Wednesday, but crews retested it and found traces of mercury.

Authorities on Thursday blocked storm drains with sandbags and held off on doing any more work outside because of concerns about rain runoff becoming contaminated.

Crews from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency were back at the scene Friday to work on additional cleanup and repaving, Purtee said. Crews planned to put sulfur on the street and driveway to bond with the mercury, then remove it with special vacuum cleaners.

Cochran Street remains closed in the area, but neighbors can get in and out freely. City officials went from door to door updating residents on the situation, Purtee said.

Ten people were exposed to the toxic element Monday, but no illnesses had been confirmed, officials said.

EPA officials found significant levels of mercury in one home, but Purtee said most of it was in an isolated area.

Officials still did not know how the substance got on the driveway or when. One neighbor said it had been there for months.



Nathan Jimenez (from left), Diego Rivera, Drago Romero and Andrew Santos use a new crosswalk at Collins Street to cross Rose Avenue on their way home from Rio del Valle Middle School on Monday.

Students' safer route

New signal, sidewalk debut near Rio del Valle

By Claudia Boyd-Barrett
Special to The Star

From the first day she became principal of Rio del Valle Middle School four years ago, Joanne Davidson felt concerned about the safety of some students walking to the Oxnard-area campus, she said.

Many children and parents from the El Rio neighborhood had to cross Rose Avenue, a busy four-lane arterial road, to get to school. But there was no traffic signal within easy reach and no sidewalk once they made it to the other side of the road.

Some of the students

would jaywalk to cross the street rather than walk the almost quarter-mile to the nearest signal at Rose Avenue and Walnut Drive, Davidson said. That put them at risk of being hit by cars.

Thankfully, Davidson's fears subsided last month when the Ventura County Public Works Agency completed installation of a new traffic signal at Rose Avenue and Collins Street, close to the El Rio neighborhood, and 500 feet of sidewalk on what had been a narrow, unpaved shoulder. The agency also created a bicycle lane.

"This road here is symbolic of the smooth road

that we are working together to provide our deserving students," Davidson said last week as she gathered with county and Rio School District officials for a ribbon-cutting celebrating completion of the improvements. "In 40 years, when the kids tell their grandchildren that they had to walk to Rio del Valle on a muddy, dirty street ... their grandchildren will laugh and think: What are they talking about? There's a paved road in front of Rio del Valle. So on behalf of the students, thank you."

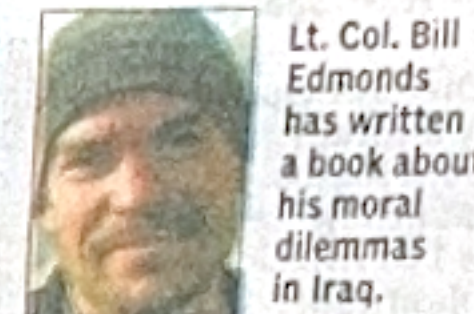
The county funded the improvements with a \$418,000 grant from the federal Safe Routes to School program. The grant included \$10,000 for a sheriff's deputy to teach the students about safe walking and cycling habits

once a week for a year. The district has since agreed to continue funding the position, the principal said.

David Fleisch, director of the county's transportation department, said the education component is an important part of the improvements.

"We tend to focus on the engineering piece, but the education is huge," he said. "If we teach the kids today how to be careful and understand what safety is, then that's going to help them much in the future."

Mike Barber, a member of the Rio/Del Norte Municipal Advisory Council, said the area has changed since his daughters attended Rio del Valle in the 1980s. Oxnard has expanded and is now closer



Lt. Col. Bill Edmonds has written a book about his moral dilemmas in Iraq.

Soldier shares scars of war

Army officer to discuss book, his time in Iraq

By Claudia Boyd Barrett
Special to The Star

It's a long way from Fillmore to the battlefields of Iraq.

But one former resident and Fillmore High School graduate is bringing the travails of that protracted Middle East conflict back to his hometown this weekend.

Bill Edmonds, 44, a lieutenant colonel in the Army Special Forces, spent a year in Mosul in 2005 working inside an Iraqi prison as adviser to an Iraqi intelligence officer, trying to improve interrogation techniques and at the same time deter the use of torture on insurgents. The deployment threw Edmonds into a dark, violent world that left him profoundly conflicted and disillusioned. He said he left Mosul free of physical injuries but bearing deep psychological scars.

Edmonds recently completed a memoir about his experiences, subsequent breakdown and journey toward self-recovery.

Thousand Oaks kids open hearts to Nepal

Family raises money to send quake victims

By Kelsey Stuart
Special to The Star

"I have heard about the grown-ups doing stuff to help, but what about all the kids — can't we can do something?"

Akash Pandey, 8, asked his father this on April 26, the day the Thousand Oaks family was able to contact Akash's grandmother in Kathmandu, Nepal. Akash and his dad, Deven, had seen video images of the

devastating magnitude-7.8 earthquake that had struck Nepal the day before.

"When I told Akash the temple was destroyed, he got tears in his eyes," the father recalled.

Akash had visited Nepal a few years before and remembered the cable cars that took him to the temple. Among his toys, he still has a small replica of the now-demolished building.

Pandey was raised in Kathmandu and came to America in his early 20s for college. The death toll from the quake and succeeding tremors — now at 8,000 — hit him hard, with the losses including many

close friends and extended-family members.

"My kids immediately jumped into action," Pandey said. "They wanted to help."

On May 2, Pandey's 6-year-old daughter, Harmony, asked the guests coming to her birthday party not to bring gifts but instead to bring donations that could be sent to Nepal.

The party raised \$410, which was sent to Bishwo Subedi, a Nepalese friend of Pandey.

Subedi, who lives in Los Angeles, was traveling to visit family members when the first earthquake hit. He



The Pandeyes, of Thousand Oaks, are raising money for Nepalese earthquake victims. Akash and his father, Deven, view a few pictures of children who received school supplies with money sent by the family.

See NEPAL, 2B

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- MOTHER'S DAY BRUNCH - May 10, 2015 • 10:00 am - 1:30 pm
- A FIRST LADY'S TEA AND TOUR - June 4, 2015 • 12:30 pm - 4:30 pm
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40 Presidential Dr., Simi Valley • For more information, to view a complete menu and to make reservations, please visit www.reaganfoundation.org/events or call 805.577.4057



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VENTURA COUNTY STAR



PUPILS GET SAFER PATH

A new traffic signal, 500 feet of new sidewalk and crosswalks debut near Rio del Valle Middle School.
LOCAL, 1B

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIANS WELCOME WETNESS FROM SPRING STORM: STATE, 4A

\$1.00

COAST
62°/54°
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Quick Read



QUAKE SPURS COMPASSION

The son and daughter of a Thousand Oaks man who grew up in Kathmandu raise money to send to earthquake victims.
LOCAL, 1B

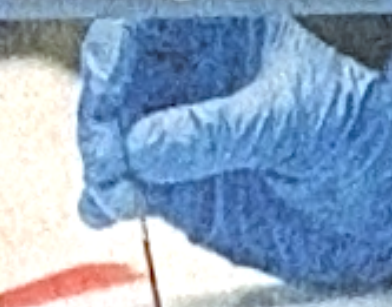
SLOVAK TAKES SIXTH STAGE

Slovakia's Peter Sagan takes the Tour of California lead in the sixth stage, racing to a dominating victory in the individual time trial.
SPORTS, 1C

IS SOFTWARE SETTING RENTS?

Demand-based pricing software used by large apartment complexes nationwide could be behind rent swings in Ventura County.
BUSINESS, 13A

Coming Sunday



Lab tests influence about 70 percent of medical decisions. But a Journal Media Group investigation by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel has found that labs make serious errors and patients have no way of finding out. Coming Sunday and Monday in The Star.

Opinion

"When the NFL stands up for integrity, it is like Madam Flossie's Palace of Fun coming out for chastity."

REG HENRY, 9B

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Bomber 'will pay ... with his life'

Defendant's lack of remorse affects decision

By Denise Lavole
Associated Press

BOSTON — A jury sentenced Dzhokhar Tsarnaev to death Friday for the Boston Marathon bombing, sweeping aside pleas that he was just a "kid" who fell under the influence of his fanatical older brother.

Tsarnaev, 21, stood with his hands folded, his head

slightly bowed, upon learning his fate, sealed after 14 hours of deliberations over three days. It was the most closely watched terrorism trial in the U.S. since the Oklahoma City bombing case two decades ago.

The decision sets the stage for what could be the nation's first execution of a terrorist in the post-9/11 era, although the case is likely to go through years of appeals. The execution would be carried out by lethal injection.

"Now he will go away, and we will be able to

move on. Justice. In his own words, 'An eye for an eye,'" said bombing victim Sydney Corcoran, who nearly bled to death and whose mother lost both legs.

Karen Brassard, who suffered shrapnel wounds on her legs, said: "We can breathe again."

Three people were killed and more than 260 were wounded after Tsarnaev and his brother set off two shrapnel-packed pressure-cooker bombs near the finish line of the race April 15, 2013. The

See MARATHON, 2A



Boston Marathon bombing victim Karen Brassard, surrounded by fellow victims, speaks to members of the media after the death penalty verdict for Dzhokhar Tsarnaev.



Nadia and Anatoly Kostichenko (from left), Maura Kelley and Senior Deputy Patrick Hawthorne attend the National Peace Officers Memorial Service in Washington, D.C., on Friday. Deputy Yehven "Eugene" Kostichenko, Kelley's husband, was killed by an alleged drunken driver in October.

Salute pays respect to guardians of law

Obama, kin mourn deputy from county

By Bartholomew Sullivan
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WASHINGTON — Ventura County Sheriff's Deputy Yehven "Eugene" Kostichenko and 130 other law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty last year were honored Friday on the west lawn of the U.S. Capitol.

With Kostichenko's

family looking on, President Barack Obama, on behalf of the American people, expressed his condolences to "men and women who put themselves in the way of danger so that the rest of us could live in safety."

"Scripture tells us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves, but only a special few take that commandment so deeply to heart that they are willing to risk their lives so that others — often total strangers — can know

See OFFICERS, 2A



Kelley, with Hawthorne, receives a Medal of Valor during the Peace Officers Memorial Service in honor of her late husband, Deputy Yehven "Eugene" Kostichenko.

Democrats focus on laying groundwork

Local chief making rounds at convention

By Timm Herdt
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ANAHEIM — Thom Tibor, the first-year chairman of the Ventura County Democratic Central Committee, arrived at his party's annual state convention

this weekend with a singular goal in mind: to persuade candidates who will be running for statewide office to put a Ventura County stop on their campaign itineraries.

He met Friday with campaign staff for Rep. Loretta Sanchez, who this week announced she will run for the U.S. Senate seat being vacated by the retiring Barbara Boxer. He hopes to meet Saturday with someone from the political team

of another Senate candidate, Attorney General Kamala Harris.

Tibor knows it's a tough sell in a state as big as California, but he's reminding the campaigns that Democrats hold a growing plurality of Ventura County voters and that it was the site of two of the party's big wins last fall — those of Rep. Julia Brownley and Assemblywoman Jacqui Irwin.

He also knows it's tough to compete against

Southern California's political fundraising capital, Los Angeles.

"My problem in Ventura County," he said, "is that I live next to a gold mine."

Tibor's quest is not unlike those of most who are attending the party's annual convention at Disneyland's doorstep in this nonelection year. This is a weekend to lay the groundwork for a hectic year ahead.

See CONVENTION, 2A

CRIME

Patient death details emerge

Attorney of accused pair denies charges

By Tom Kisklen
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Investigators alleged a doctor's husband who was arrested in connection with an 88-year-old patient's death treated other people and administered other injections although he has no medical training.

Paul McQuillan, chief operations officer at House Call Doctor Thousand Oaks, is accused of practicing medicine without a license for allegedly administering morphine to

Polly Duntley at her home July 31.

The Camarillo senior, who allegedly needed care for leg pain, died Aug. 2.

McQuillan's wife, house-call physician Dr. Ellen Crowe, is accused of helping her spouse practice medicine and conspiring to

provide the morphine.

The Thousand Oaks husband and wife were arrested Wednesday. They have been released on bail and are scheduled to appear in court for arraignment on May 27. They denied the allegations through an attorney.

"He never administered care to a patient. He is not a physician," said Los Angeles lawyer James W. Spertus, adding that McQuillan's wife was in Africa when the death occurred. "Dr. Crowe had nothing to do with the care of the patient."

The Camarillo incident wasn't the first time McQuillan allegedly provided

See DOCTOR, 2A



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NEPAL from 1B

mediately offered to help distribute supplies.

"He is using the money to buy food, clothes, pens, paper, markers and toys," Pandey said. "The first two villages he went to were in Gorkha and Dhading. He is traveling in a huge van with a banner that says, 'From Akash and Harmony Pandey and friends in L.A.'"

The situation worsened Tuesday when a second quake, registering magnitude 7.3 with an epicenter just northeast of Kathmandu, destroyed the home of Pandey's grandmother in Solokhumbu, a village near Mount Everest.

"They had just moved back into my mom's house in Kathmandu when the second quake hit on May 12," Pandey said.

His mother and 87-year-old grandmother

were physically unhurt.

His mother is now terrified to sleep inside and has opened the fields near her house to the rest of the neighbors and families, creating a tent area for sleeping.

"She said she was getting motion sickness because, besides the earthquakes, there have been over 100 tremors that each last over a minute," Pandey said.

After the second large tremor, Akash, who is in third grade at Aspen School, feverishly began raising more funds. As the money comes in, his parents send it to Subedi.

"I have told my teachers and my friends about what we are doing," Akash said, sporting a new T-shirt that reads "Kids4Kids Nepal Relief." He is selling the T-shirts for \$10.

"With just \$1, we can feed four kids in Nepal for a day," Pandey said.

His wife, JoAnn, is concerned because

Kathmandu's economy thrives on tourism, but now most of the places people go there to go see have been destroyed.

"Temples that have stood for hundreds of years are gone, and one of our biggest concerns are the orphanages that have crumpled," she said. "The orphanage in Kathmandu was a part of the palace, and it has just completely collapsed."

She said that with so many children lacking a home — and many now without parents — the risk of human trafficking heightens. It was already a concern

before the earthquakes, she said.

Pandey said he uses Western Union to get money to Subedi.

"Everything that we raise we send through Western Union, who has been helping to send the funds without a fee, straight to Bishwo," Pandey said.

On the Net:

Visit <http://www.gofundme.com/kids4kids-Nepal> to donate to the cause. Visit Pandey's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/deven.pandey.3> to see the work Subedi is doing in Nepal.

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MAD MAX: FURY ROAD IN 3D (R)	(11:30) 2:15 5:00 7:45 10:25
IN IMAX/MAXIMAX MX4D MOTION EFX THEATRE	
MAD MAX: FURY ROAD IN 3D (R)	8:30
MAD MAX: FURY ROAD (R)	(10:50 12:15 1:35)
	3:00 4:15 5:45 7:00 9:40
PITCH PERFECT 2 (PG13)	(10:55 1:30)
	4:20 7:30 10:25
HOT PURSUIT (PG13)	(10:55 1:10) 3:25
	5:40 7:55 10:20
LITTLE BOY (PG13)	(11:10 1:50)

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THE AGE OF ADALINE (PG-13)	10:35 1:25 4:20 7:05 9:50
AVENGERS: AGE OF ULTRON (3D) (PG-13)	11:25 1:05 2:45 4:25
MAD MAX: FURY ROAD (3D) (R)	11:30 2:30 3:30 5:30 8:30
MAD MAX: FURY ROAD (R)	12:30 6:30 9:30 11:00

