

**HISTORIC DAY: Four local teams win Central Coast
Section water polo championships Saturday. Page 8**

The Almanac

THE HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER FOR MENLO PARK, ATHERTON, PORTOLA VALLEY

AND WOODSIDE

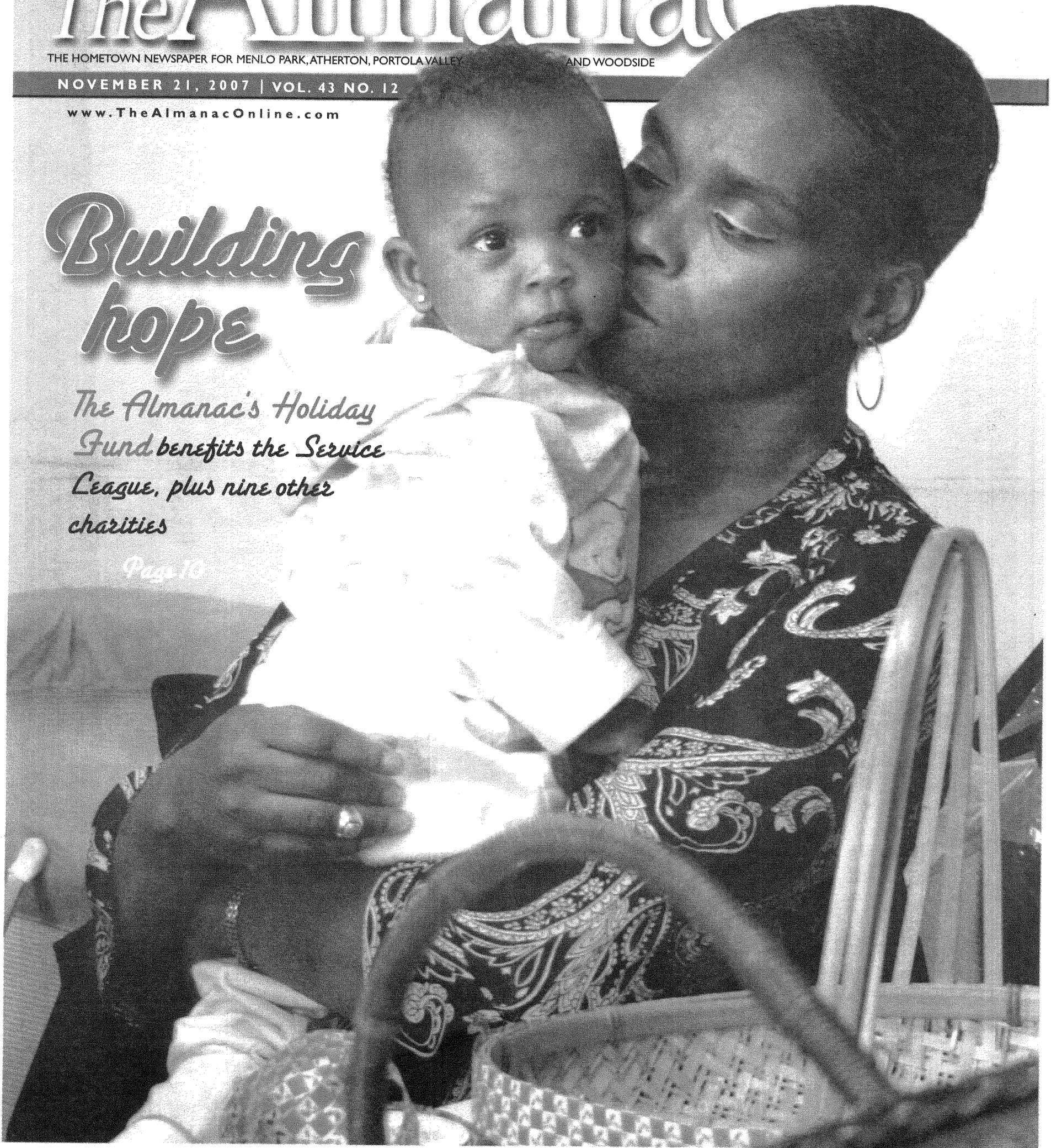
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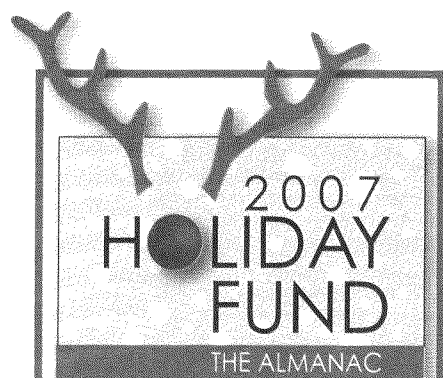
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Building hope

*The Almanac's Holiday
Fund benefits the Service
League, plus nine other
charities*

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Giving through the Holiday Fund 2007

For the 15th year, the Almanac offers readers the opportunity to multiply their charity dollars by giving through its annual Holiday Fund.

The Almanac has selected 10 local charities to benefit from donations to this year's Holiday Fund. These charities help the most vulnerable of our neighbors, be they homeless, hungry, sick or abused, young or old, native or immigrant.

In a series of articles over the next month, the Almanac will profile the organizations that benefit from the Holiday Fund.

For every dollar given to the Holiday Fund, the Almanac seeks matching funds from foundations and private donors. The total amount donated is then divided equally among the 10 charities.

The fund drive could not happen without the help of the Silicon Valley Community Foundation and the donors who provide the matching grants for most contributions.

Since the Holiday Fund started in 1993, it has contributed \$2.5 million to a wide range of local nonprofit agencies. More than half — \$1.4 million — came from readers, who have donated an average of \$111,000 a year over 15 years.

Cover Story By Marion Softky • Photos by Veronica Weber

Building hope



Women at Hope House enjoy the dinner they just cooked. They are living at Hope House, run by the Service League, for six months, while they take a 12-step recovery program and study in classes, ranging from cooking to computers.

"I'm ready to get my life back. I like being clean." It's hard to realize that, less than a year ago, the poised young woman who said that was a drug addict, pregnant, and in San Mateo County jail for petty theft.

Now Trina is clean and sober, and bonding with her baby daughter, Cy. They are living at Hope House, in a small tract home in Redwood City that she shares with nine other women and staff.

Hope House is a residential drug and alcohol recovery program run by the Service League of San Mateo County. Women who are addicted can spend six months taking a 12-step course and intensive classes in living skills, ranging from anger management and job skills to cooking and parenting.

Trina tells her story matter-of-factly, seated at the spotless din-

ing room table in the neat living room of Hope House, while Cy enjoys the attentions of Mike Nevin, executive director of the Service League, and some other residents.

Trina's story may be all too typical. She grew up in Oakland, took up drugs when she was 17, and became addicted to heroin and coke. She has two sons, 15 and 19, who live with their father.

In 2000, she moved to San Francisco, where she kept going by fraud, petty theft, selling drugs, and prostitution. She was arrested several times, and was assigned to an earlier drug treatment program. "I didn't complete the first one," she says.

Trina's most recent arrest landed her in county jail in January. Cy was born two weeks later on Jan. 31.

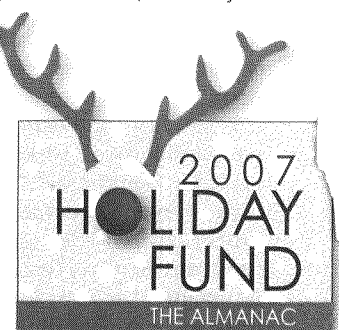
Cy was born two months premature, underweight, and addicted to methadone and crack. "She

was so small," Trina says. Cy was taken from her mother for medical treatment, and raised for her first eight months in a foster home for the medically fragile. A "kind lady" at Stanford Hospital connected Trina with Hope House, where she moved after a couple of more weeks in jail.

Hope House is a really hard program, Trina says, but she stuck with it, and the staff helped her get her baby back Oct. 30. "It was good for me," she says. "I never thought I would complete something like this and be interested in myself."

Gifts to the Almanac's Holiday Fund benefit the Service League, which provides services to jail inmates and their families. The organization is located in a historic brick laundry building at 727 Middlefield Road in Redwood City. For information, call Mike Nevin at 363-4664; e-mail mnevin@serviceleague.org; or go to www.serviceleague.org.

"The staff here is beautiful. Karen (Francone, the director) is like the mother I never had." Now Trina is working toward her GED at JobTrain, formerly OICW, the Menlo Park job-training center. She hopes to go into transitional housing at First Step for Families, run by Shelter Network, while she works on the next stage of her life. "I hope to get housing, go back to school, and take nursing," she says.



Service League

The Service League, founded in 1960, has this mission: "Helping rebuild the lives of inmates,

Hope House, a program of the Service League of San Mateo County, is helping 20 women and nine men, mostly former jail inmates, move into productive lives



Top: Sundae, left, and Vivian play with 9-month-old Cy at Hope House. A total of 130 healthy babies have been born at Hope House since it was founded in 1990. **Below:** Making cookies during a cooking class at Hope House are, from left, Maria, Christine and Rosa.

former inmates, their children and families.”

This mission translates into programs that help current inmates and their families, programs that help inmates when they leave jail, and programs such as Hope House, which helps former inmates and others who are homeless and in trouble, move toward productive lives. All taking the Hope House recovery program are addicted; most have been in jail.

“We’re trying to expand opportunities for people leaving jail,” says Mike Nevin, the new executive director for the Service League. “We want to build a seamless connection between the inmates and the outside world.”

Mr. Nevin, a former San Francisco police inspector, mayor of Daly City, and county supervisor, is leading the Service League through a major transition, following the retirement last year of Elizabeth Gheleta of Menlo Oaks, who led the

organization for 27 years.

Challenges for the Service League at all three levels are huge. Both men’s and women’s jails are severely overcrowded, with more than 1,200 prisoners crammed into facilities rated for 800, notes Sheriff Greg Munks. “The Service League is a very important partner in operating our jails,” he says. “It relieves our staff, and helps the safe operation of the jail.”

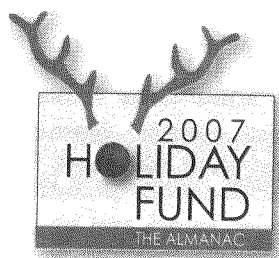
About 70 percent of the jail inmates are there temporarily, awaiting trial; the other 30 percent are non-violent offenders serving terms of less than one year, Sheriff Munks explains. Prisoners sentenced to longer terms are sent to state prisons.

Increasing numbers of gang members and people with mental illness are making the jails harder to manage; almost all the inmates have substance abuse problems,

See **SERVICE LEAGUE**, next page

Giving to the Holiday Fund

Your gift helps children and others in need



Contributions to the Holiday Fund will go directly to the programs that benefit Peninsula residents. Last year, Almanac readers contributed more than \$110,000, and with available matching grants, over \$150,000 was raised for 10 agencies that feed the hungry, house the homeless and provide numerous other services to those in need.

Contributions to the Holiday Fund will be matched

to the extent possible by generous community corporations, foundations and individuals, including the Rotary Club of Menlo Park, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. No administrative costs will be deducted from the gifts, which are tax-deductible as permitted by law.

All donations to the Holiday Fund will be shared equally among the 10 recipient agencies.

This year, the Almanac's Holiday Fund will support the following nonprofit organizations in the community:

- **Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula**
Provides after-school and academic support and activities for 3,200 young people, 6 to 18, at clubhouses in Menlo Park's Belle Haven neighborhood, East Palo Alto, and Redwood City and offers programs at Flood and Belle Haven schools in Menlo Park, Hoover Community School in Redwood City, and McNair School in East Palo Alto
- **Ecumenical Hunger Program**
Provides emergency food, clothing, household essentials, and sometimes financial assistance to families in need, regardless of religious preference, including Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets for more than 2,000 households.
- **Free at Last**
Provides recovery and rehabilitation programs for addicts in East Palo Alto, Belle Haven, North Fair Oaks and southern Redwood City. Founded in 1993, it serves about 4,200 people each year, predominantly African Americans, Latinos, and Pacific Islanders. Services include: street outreach; a drop-in center for youth and adults; intensive outpatient treatment programs; prevention and intervention for youth; a DUI first offender program; residential treatment programs for men and women; and transitional housing for men, women, and women with children.
- **Ravenswood Family Health Center**
Provides primary medical and preventive health care for all ages at its clinics in Belle Haven and East Palo Alto. It also operates a mobile clinic at school sites. Of the 16,500 registered patients, most are low income and uninsured from the ethnically diverse East Palo Alto, Belle Haven, and North Fair Oaks area.
- **St. Anthony's Padua Dining Room**
Serves hundreds of hot meals six days a week to people in need who walk through the doors. Funded entirely by voluntary contributions, St. Anthony's is the largest dining room for the needy between San Francisco and San Jose. It also offers emergency food and clothing assistance.
- **Second Harvest Food Bank**
The largest collector and distributor of food on the Peninsula, Second Harvest Food Bank distributed 30 million pounds of food last year. It gathers donations from individuals and businesses and distributes food to some 162,000 people each month through more than 700 agencies and distribution sites in San Mateo and Santa Clara County.
- **Service League of San Mateo County**
Provides services to inmates in county jails and programs to help them re-enter the community successfully after release. The league aids inmates in communication with families and provides a children's waiting room at the jails, a library, religious services, counseling, and Christmas gifts. In five residential Hope Houses some 30 men and women released from jail receive six months of drug and alcohol treatment, and training in life skills.
- **Shelter Network**
Provides short-term shelter and transitional housing services to more than 3,500 homeless people and children each year. Offers programs for families and individuals to become self-sufficient and return to permanent housing.
- **Teen Pregnancy Prevention Coalition**
Provides educational programs for youth and adults to help teens make healthy choices that will result in lower rates of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Its Teen Talk program last year served 3,650 youth at 23 public school sites in San Mateo County.
- **Youth and Family Enrichment Services**
Provides 22 programs to help people who struggle with substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health, relationship and communications issues. Helps strengthen youth, families, and individuals to overcome challenges through counseling, education, and residential services.

Name of donor _____ Amount \$ _____

Street address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

☐ I wish to contribute anonymously. ☐ Don't publish the amount of my contribution.

I wish to designate my contribution as follows:

☐ In honor of: ☐ In memory of: _____

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: THE HOLIDAY FUND

Enclose this coupon and send to: **The Almanac Holiday Fund**
The Almanac, 3525 Alameda de las Pulgas,
Menlo Park, CA 94025

By Credit Card: ☐ Visa or ☐ MasterCard No. _____

Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

The foundations named below provide major matching grants to the Holiday Fund.



Community Foundation Silicon Valley

The William and Flora
Hewlett Foundation

The David and Lucile
Packard Foundation



Rotary Club
of Menlo Park

For more information go to www.CommunityFoundationSiliconValley.org. The Almanac will make every effort to publish donor names for donations received before Dec. 31, 2007, unless the donor checks the anonymous box. All donations will be acknowledged by mail.

You are invited to attend our Admission Open House

Saturday, November 10
1 - 4 p.m.

OR
Thursday, December 13
7 - 9 p.m.



The Girls' Middle School

180 North Rengstorff Avenue, Mountain View, CA 94043
(650) 968-8338 x 115 or admissions@girlsms.org

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NOTICE OF A PUBLIC HEARING ON AMENDMENTS TO THE ZONING ORDINANCE AND NOTICE OF PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD OF PROPOSED NEGATIVE DECLARATION FOR ADOPTION OF THESE MATTERS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Town Council of the Town of Portola Valley will hold a public hearing on proposed amendments to the Town's Zoning Ordinance on Wednesday, December 12, 2007 at 8:00 p.m., in the Town Council Chambers (Historic Schoolhouse), 765 Portola Road, Portola Valley, California. The zoning ordinance amendment is intended to clarify the definition of basements. The Town Council will consider all evidence, written and oral communications pertaining to the proposed amendment. All interested persons are invited to appear before the Town Council to be heard at the time and place herein above mentioned,

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a proposed Negative Declaration regarding the above mentioned ordinance amendments has been prepared and is available for review. The Town Council will consider the proposed Negative Declaration at its meeting of December 12, 2007 at 8:00 p.m., in the Town Council Chambers (Historic Schoolhouse), 765 Portola Road, Portola Valley, California. Comments may be submitted in writing prior to the Town Council meeting or presented at the meeting. All interested persons are invited to appear before the Town Council at the time and place herein above-mentioned. Copies of the proposed Negative Declaration are available at Portola Valley Town Hall, 765 Portola Road, Portola Valley, California.

Dated; November 12, 2007

Signed: Leslie Lambert, Planning Manager

Published in THE COUNTRY ALMANAC on November 21, 2007.

Building hope

SERVICE LEAGUE

Continued from previous page

Mr. Munks says. "The Service League makes a difference in recidivism."

Jail programs

In 2005 and 2006, a total of 556 Service League volunteers visited the jail regularly to ease the lives of prisoners, according to the organization's annual report; they spent more than 31,000 hours helping inmates and their families.

Next month, former director Elizabeth Gheleta will return to run the Christmas party for inmates' children, who will receive presents. Members of Menlo Park Presbyterian Church will bake thousands of cookies so that each of the 1,200 inmates can have a bag of goodies for Christmas. And the Service League will provide a Christmas tree for every pod in the jail.

Service League volunteers operate a message center at the jail that allows inmates to communicate with their families, lawyers and others on the outside. Volunteers provide clothing for prisoners going to trial, plus counseling and classes.

The Service League operates library services, and a room at the jail where children can stay when waiting to visit their parents in jail.

Inmates also have access to religious services and support through the Service League and some 250 religious volunteers of all faiths.

"We're bringing hope to clients, both inside and out," says Mr. Nevin.

Re-entry: Hope Houses

It's a Wednesday morning, and parenting instructor Marsha Howard of Redwood City leads eight residents of Hope House in a lively discussion of how to raise kids. She keeps everyone laughing and joining in, as she plays a bossy — do as I say — parent, or a permissive — every home should have a big bowl of candy — mom. And finally a moderate — listen to children and respect them — mother.

Later they'll practice cooking in the kitchen that serves two adjacent Hope Houses with a joint back yard and garden — which the residents tend.

Residents of Hope House work hard as they try to re-mold themselves in six months to re-enter

society as contributing members. They're up at 6 a.m. for chores, exercise and grooming, before fixing breakfast at 8, says Director Karen Francone, who has been with the program since the first Hope House opened in 1990. Ed Brandle of Menlo Presbyterian Church was one of the original founders, and a committed volunteer.

The highly structured program sounds a bit like a boarding school, with not much freedom. The women attend classes eight hours a day — exercise, health, every aspect of life including the 12-step recovery programs, with lights out at 10 p.m.

It's not easy for the women to get over addiction; they often cry, Ms. Francone notes. "When you get clean and sober, everything you have stuffed down, does come up," she says. "I think of tears as ointment that flows over the body. Crying is healing."

Residents also find time to do community service, Ms. Francone says. They participate in cleanups of Redwood City or San Francisquito Creek. Sometimes they go to Glide Memorial Church in San Francisco to feed the homeless. "They see people there they know. It's very powerful," she says.

The Service League now operates five Hope Houses, three for women and two for men, with 30 beds. Mr. Nevin would like to open more Hope Houses, for perinatal women or for women with older children.

Ms. Francone is proud that residents of Hope House have delivered 130 non-addicted babies. Three current residents are pregnant, she says.

Mr. Nevin sees Hope House as a model to break the revolving door that leads most inmates to return to the set-

ting that got them in trouble, and then back into jail.

The people sentenced to county jail are mostly petty offenders involved with drugs and alcohol; they are not hardened or violent criminals, Mr. Nevin says. "These are people we're catching early in the game. We really have a chance to help them."

"We're talking about people who are victims themselves. They lack the things we take for granted — eating, dressing, talking," Mr. Nevin continues. "We're teaching them how to live."

And Hope House has been successful, Mr. Nevin says. The California recidivism rate is 75 to 80 percent, the highest in the country. But for Hope House it is almost the reverse. According to the last annual report, 72 percent of Hope House graduates remained clean and sober.

What next?

As Mr. Nevin reshapes the Service League, he is focusing on re-entry, and helping inmates and their families make the transition back to being solid members of their community — rather than recycling back into jail.

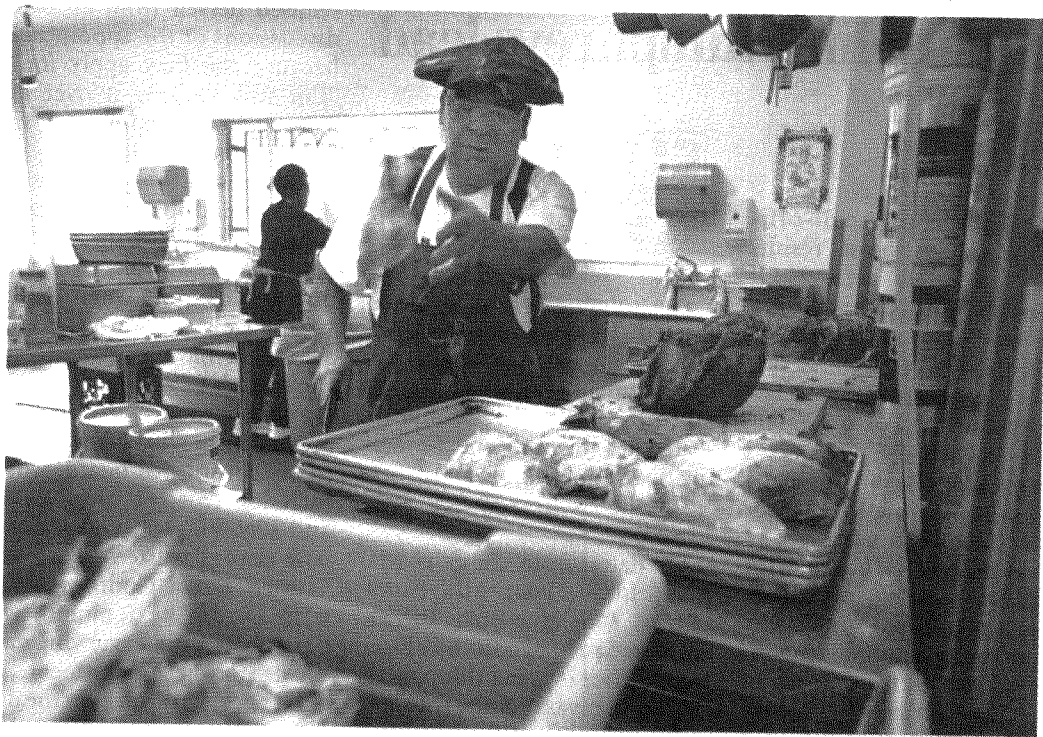
Besides expanding the Hope House programs, Mr. Nevin would like to see re-entry programs start sooner. "Our biggest mistake is that we don't begin programs while inmates are still in custody," he says. "I'd like to start turning lives around while people are still in jail."

Sheriff Munks sees opportunities to strengthen drug, alcohol, and other inmate programs as the county plans for a new jail. "We need to do a better job of preparing our inmates for readjusting to the social and economic fabric of the community," he says. ■



Maria, center, speaks with her parenting teacher, Marsha Howard, following a class at Hope House.

Dishing out hot meals to the hungry



Juventino Vargas tosses a debreasted turkey into a container from which volunteers will carve off the rest of the meat in preparation for Thanksgiving dinner at St. Anthony's Padua Dining Room. Almanac file photo

By Rory Brown

Almanac Staff Writer

This Thanksgiving, staff and volunteers at the Padua Dining Room at St. Anthony's Church plan to cook lunch for 1,500 people who otherwise couldn't afford a full-blown holiday meal.

How do the staff and volunteers plan to celebrate that feat?

By cleaning the stoves, mopping the floors, and getting ready to cook lunch the next day.

The dining room, located at 3500 Middlefield Road in the North Fair Oaks neighborhood, serves lunch for about 550 people a day, six days a week, said operations manager Max Torres, who has worked at St. Anthony's for 26 years.

"When I started here in 1982, if we got 180 or 190 people; that would be a lot," Mr. Torres said. "Since then we've expanded the dining room, and we're getting many, many more people who need a hot meal."

St. Anthony's is the largest dining room on the Peninsula, he said. It also prepares food for the Sequoia Children's Center, Maple Street Shelter, Clare-Mateo Alliance and the St. Vincent de Paul of St. Francis Church in East Palo Alto.

"There's no better reward than the feeling of doing something good for others," Mr. Torres said, noting volunteers play a huge part of the dining room's ability to provide food to so many. "People have dedicated their lives to St. Anthony's,



Juventino Vargas stirring a kettle of chilibeans in preparation for Thanksgiving dinner at St. Anthony's Padua Dining Room. Almanac file photo

and these are people who don't get a salary."

The dining room depends entirely on donations including contributions from the Second Harvest Food Bank and bread and pastries from local stores, such as Safeway and Le Boulanger.

Volunteers and chef Juventino Diaz have been chopping a lot of

that bread up in order to make stuffing for the Thanksgiving lunch.

The dining room can always use more help, whether it's volunteers, monetary donations or food. St. Anthony's is particularly short on fresh yams and cranberries this year, and Mr. Torres hopes more donations will come in before the Thanksgiving and Christmas meals.

St. Anthony's also gives out clothing, provides limited health services year-round, and distributes toys to children during the holidays.

Donations may be delivered to the dining room, located at 3500 Middlefield Road, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Money donations gives St. Anthony's the flexibility to buy supplies and food needed most. Mail checks to: St. Anthony's Padua Dining Room, 3500 Middlefield Road, Menlo Park, CA 94025. ■

**2007
HOLIDAY
FUND**
THE ALMANAC

Contributions to the Almanac's Holiday Fund benefit St. Anthony's Padua Dining Room. For more information about the dining room, call Max Torres at 365-9664.