



CHALK IT UP TO INSPIRATION

96 HOURS: Artist says Martinez Italian Street Painting Festival changed her life

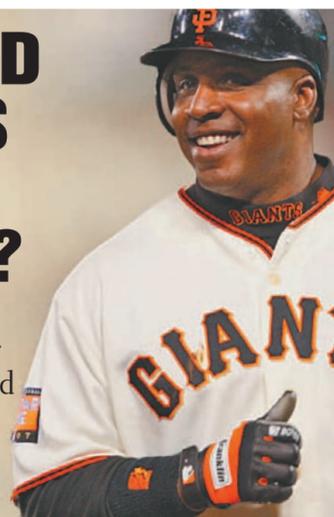
AUDITIONS NO DAY AT THE 'BEACH'

DATEBOOK: 59 hopefuls try out for 'Beach Blanket Babylon' cast — and just 9 of them remain



SHOULD BONDS STAY OR GO?

SFGATE.COM: Vote on whether the Giants should bring the aging slugger back for another season



San Francisco Chronicle

★★★★★ Printed on recycled paper | THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2007 | sfgate.com 415-777-1111 46¢ plus tax

Hsu accused of scam to get campaign contributions

N.Y. investment group sues, saying he took \$40 million

By John Coté
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

A New York investment group run by one of the promoters of the 1969 Woodstock festival has sued disgraced Democratic fundraiser Norman Hsu for allegedly funneling \$40 million in financing for a non-existent clothing company into political campaign contributions and an "extravagant international lifestyle."

The lawsuit brought by Source Financing Investors LLC says Hsu fooled investors into believing they were financing an operation to supply Chinese-made clothes to U.S. retailers when in fact he was running a Ponzi scheme, in which initial investments are repaid with money from subsequent investments until the operation collapses.

Hsu, 56, was convicted in San Mateo County of running a similar scam in the early 1990s but fled before he could be sentenced to prison. He resurfaced years later as a Democratic moneyman, turned himself in last month after his past caught up with him, and now he is about to be extradited to Redwood City from Colorado after he skipped out on \$2 million bail.

Democratic politicians to whom Hsu arranged a total of about \$2 million in contributions in recent years, including presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, have rushed to announce in recent days that they will return the money. The New York lawsuit, however, could complicate those plans as attorneys for the

► **HSU:** Page A18

Aging's no fun, and it's harder for immigrants

Fremont volunteers showing them how to access the system

By Heidi Benson
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

It was a joyful day when Kashmir Shahi's parents came to live with him in Fremont 10 years ago. The long-married couple had left Hoshiarpur, in northern India, to spend their golden years with their only son, his wife and their two grandchildren.

"We were a happy family," said Shahi, 41, a Sikh engineer who came to the United States in 1992 when he married a U.S. citizen.

Yet all too soon, his parents, both 70, suffered serious health problems. His father became bedridden with a blood disorder, and his mother suffered mental illness — forcing Shahi to navigate the labyrinthine American health care system and seek local community organizations to help ease his domestic load.

Last week, Shahi was one of 30 volunteers at the Fremont Family Resource Center training to become a "community ambassador" for the city's large immigrant senior population. Volunteers will go into their own ethnic or faith-based communities to teach elders to access transportation, social activities and health care, and to gain a measure of independence in their new homeland.

Today, California is growing not only more populous and congested, it is growing more gray. The state has more residents 65 and older than any other —

► **ELDERS:** Page A19

Warning of health risks, environmental groups demand strong federal rules on scented fresheners

CLEARING THE AIR



Photo illustration by LANCE IVERSEN / The Chronicle

By Jane Kay
CHRONICLE ENVIRONMENT WRITER

A group of heavyweight environmental organizations is asking the federal government to crack down on air fresheners, products that scientific studies show can aggravate asthma and pose other health risks.

In response to the groups' petition filed Wednesday with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Consumer Product Safety Commission, Walgreen Co. quickly pulled three of its air fresheners off the shelves of its 5,850 stores nationwide.

The Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club, Alliance for Healthy Homes and the National Center for Healthy Housing filed the petition asking the agencies to more strictly regulate the industry, which is expected to have \$1.72 billion in sales this year.

Scented sprays, gels and plug-in fresheners offer no public health benefits yet contain harmful chemicals linked to breathing difficulties, developmental problems in babies and cancer in

► **AIR FRESHENER:** Page A18

Fresh alternatives

- Clean with vinegar and water solution.
- Keep draperies and carpets clean.
- Mist a solution made from water and items like lavender or lemons.
- Use a cup of baking soda in problem areas such as the fridge or the trash cabinet.
- Make your own potpourri with dried flowers and fruits.
- Grind up half a lemon in the garbage disposal.
- Open a window to air out a room.
- Bake something. Nothing makes a home smell nicer than fresh cookies or bread.

S.F. vote count will take weeks

State-imposed restrictions on machines will delay results

By John Wildermuth
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

San Francisco's election night will end early on Nov. 6, but thanks to a new ruling by Secretary of State Debra Bowen, it could be weeks before voters know who won.

"We'll probably be able to release the absentee ballot results at 8:30 p.m., and then election night will be over in San Francisco," said John Arntz, the city's election chief. "Those will be the only ballots counted on election night."

Because of a dispute between Bowen and Election Systems and Software, the Omaha, Neb., company that makes San Francisco's voting machines, Bowen has severely restricted the use of the company's system.

Concerns that ballots marked with anything other than a No. 2 pencil or the special dark pens supplied in the voting booths might not be recorded means that ballots can be counted only on the machines at election headquarters rather than on the less sensitive machines that previously were used at each polling place.

"We have to visually inspect each ballot to be sure the right implement was used before we can have it counted," Arntz said. "We won't be able to count more than 10,000 votes a day."

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NATION/WORLD INSIDE

Iraq area once safe, now a 'hell'

Residents in the Baghdad neighborhood of Karrada — a thriving and diverse haven in Iraq's war-torn capital — say the area is in decline and increasingly isolated as violence continues to plague their nation.

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EX-ANCHOR RATHER SUES CBS IN DISPUTE OVER CONTRACT

Former anchor Dan Rather files a \$70 million lawsuit against CBS, alleging that network executives marginalized him and forced him to out as anchor-man. A7



PODCAST: Greta Van Susteren on O.J. sfgate.com/podcasts



MYSTICAL PHOTOGRAPHY: Relaxing Jacuzzi statues. sfgate.com/blogs/larson

BARGAIN BITES: Eat out on 12 bucks or less. sfgate.com/food/bargains



WEATHER Partly cloudy; slight chance of showers. Highs: 62 to 70. B8
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