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SQUASH SPLASH

Program gives pumpkins to local schools

B.J. Burns, owner of Bianchi Flowers, hands down pumpkins to Salvador Mejia, assistant director of the CARON program run by the San Mateo County Sheriff's Department, who then passes them to Luis Olivares and Santiago Morales, both 10. Burns donated the pumpkins to Fair Oaks Elementary School in Redwood City on Monday afternoon. San Mateo County Supervisor Rose Jacobs Gibson also distributed goody bags to the children. Local farmers also gave pumpkins to schools in Menlo Park and East Palo Alto on Monday.

Victor Maccharoli / Daily News



AMGEN TOUR OF CALIFORNIA

City divulges big plans for cycling race

Palo Alto, Stanford to host gala, festival in weeklong celebration

BY KRISTINA PETERSON
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

While the actual cyclists may speed by in this winter's Amgen Tour of California race, organizers in Palo Alto and Stanford University are planning a full week of community events leading up to the kickoff time trial, planners said Monday night.

Roughly 50,000 people are expected to descend upon Palo Alto to watch the official "prologue" — or 2.5-mile time trial — that kicks off the eight-day stage race hosted by Amgen and AEG, said Chris Ewert, a member of the local organizing committee. During the time trial, cyclists spaced one minute apart will bike from Palo Alto City Hall down University Avenue and Palm Drive to the finish on the Stanford University campus.

Many of the international cyclists could arrive with their entourages as early as a week before the Feb. 17 race, fellow committee member Glenn Rawlinson said at a Monday night meeting for Palo Alto business owners.

So local organizers plan to draw on the top-name cycling talent in the Palo Alto area to create a week of events built around the idea of a healthy lifestyle.

"We want to use the bike race as a catalyst for something much bigger," Rawlinson said.

Local race organizers have already connected with the "Palo Alto Walks and Rolls" program spearheaded by Mayor Yoriko Kishimoto and Santa Clara County Supervisor Liz Kniss, and plans are in the works to host bicycle-themed events at local schools, Rawlinson said.

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Sudoku sensation

Local named national champ; can solve puzzle in less than minute

BY KRISTINA PETERSON
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

On Monday the winner of the first Sudoku championship contest held in the United States pulled out a pencil to demonstrate his technique — but not just any pencil.

It was a mechanical pencil, made with special, thicker lead "so in the heat of competition it won't break," Palo Alto resident Thomas Snyder, 27, explained as he sat on a bench near the Stanford University bioengineering lab where he works.

"It's good for 50 or so puzzles before you have to click," Snyder said, laughing at the lengths he goes to save "a few

SUDOKU, page 6



Palo Alto resident Thomas Snyder, 27, won the first national Sudoku competition on Saturday. A postdoctoral student in bioengineering at Stanford, Snyder can solve a Sudoku in as little as 52 seconds.

Victor Maccharoli / Daily News

Navy combat medic receives rare honor

BY JOSHUA MOLINA
MEDIANEWS

The mortar fire was flying all around him, and several U.S. Marines were down. As adrenaline coursed through his bloodstream, Shawn Nirdlinger threw his body on top of a wounded fallen soldier to shield him from the barrage of mortar.

Six rounds later, the Iraq battle was over. One Marine was dead

and 21 others were badly injured. But Nirdlinger, a U.S. Navy hospital corpsman third class, was well enough to treat 13 of them and save the lives of many. The medic reached into one Marine's pocket, pulled out his identification card and pushed it into a sunken hole in the man's chest — to keep the air inside him. The Marine survived.

In a rare reward reserved for the

MEDIC, page 6



FOR CITY COUNCIL
Bridging Communities

"By leading as President of the district-wide PTA Council, advising on facility issues on the district-wide Program Review Committee, and contributing to the Board of the Palo Alto Recreation Foundation, as well as supporting activities in community events and projects, Dan has developed deep knowledge of community issues. His good judgment and experience enable him to be an immediately effective representative on the City Council."

— MANDY LOWELL, Palo Alto School Board Trustee and Immediate Past President

www.DanforCityCouncil.com

Campaign ID #1299027

"I have known Dan for several years. His behind-the-scenes work on community projects and events and thoughtful engagement on civic issues reflect his passion for Palo Alto. He is a recognized business and civic leader."

— GEORGIE GLEIM,
Athena and Tall Tree Awards Recipient

