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Apartment rents stabilizing

By Dana Yates
DAILY JOURNAL STAFF

The price of an apartment in San Mateo County is stabilizing after months of turmoil that spiked rents as people left their homes for more affordable options.

The first look at the 2008 rental market is mostly optimistic with

rents growing at a rate of .4 percent per quarter, according to the RealFacts quarterly report. The RealFacts database includes more than 3.1 million rental units in 15 states and the survey conducted in March indicates that the average rent for all locations was \$993. The fourth highest quarterly rent increase occurred in the San

Francisco-Oakland-Fremont metropolitan area, according to RealFacts.

Both Daly City and Belmont have two of the county's highest apartment occupancy rates with some of the highest rents. Daly City has a 98.8 percent occupancy rate with an average rent of \$1,591. Belmont has a 97.4 occupancy rate with an average rent of

\$1,474, according to RealFacts.

The average apartment in San Mateo County now goes for \$1,774, the second highest in the Bay Area. The rent is more than Marin, Alameda and Contra Costa counties but less than San Francisco, which had an average rent growth of 14.4 percent in the last year, according to the report.

Rising rent is not uncommon. When the housing market slumps, rents begin to rise because people are more likely to rent instead of entering into a bad loan or over extend themselves through pricey mortgages. However, the troubled housing market showed more homes on the market, but no change

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Habits evolving with fewer nuns

By Dana Yates
DAILY JOURNAL STAFF

There was a time when nuns taught generations of catholic schoolgirls on the Peninsula, but a dwindling community is changing the way sisters are fulfilling their missions.

"I think it's bringing us together. When your ranks are thin you tend to pull together," said Sister Rosanne Murphy of the Sisters of Notre Dame in Belmont.

The two major communities of nuns in San Mateo County, at Notre Dame in Belmont and at the Mercy Center in Burlingame, are changing their mission from education and health care to broader callings. They are also relying on the support of lay people to carry on the spirit of their causes.

There were just 16 women nationwide "in formation" — or in the process of becoming a nun — for the Sisters of Notre Dame last year. There are approximately 1,000 Sisters of Notre Dame nationwide, but the aging group of women is not



SEAN DONNELLY/DAILY JOURNAL

Sisters Charlene Dazols, left, and Sherry Dolan read from the Bible in the chapel at Mercy High School in Burlingame.

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Gang member takes plea deal for teen rape

By Michelle Durand
DAILY JOURNAL STAFF

A 26-year-old gang member accused of inebriating and raping a 13-year-old girl at a Menlo Park party last summer pleaded no contest to forcible sexual penetration in return for no more than six years in prison.

Jose Martin Lopez will likely be required to register as a sex offender after being sentenced June 24. Lopez took the prosecution offer on the last day it was good after the court trimmed the eight-year maximum sought by the District Attorney's Office down to a six-year cap.

In return for the no contest plea, prosecutors also dropped other sexual assault charges.

According to the District Attorney's Office, on June 29, 2007, the victim and a friend went to the party in Menlo Park at the urging of a third friend. At the party, the girl reportedly began drinking and Lopez continued pouring her drinks until she was woozy.

Lopez was reportedly told the girl was 13 but continued hitting on her. Prosecutors say Lopez took the girl into a bedroom, locked the door and sexually assaulted her as other partygoers listened to her screaming for him to stop.

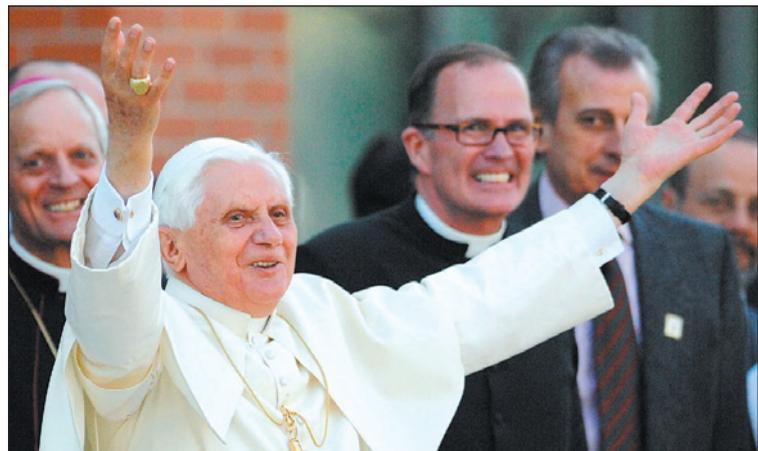
The girl was found bleeding and unconscious inside the room and later driven home while Lopez made a "flip remark" and left, according to Chief Deputy District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe.

The girl's mother reportedly found her still bleeding 10 hours later and the assault was reported.

Lopez remains in custody in lieu of \$300,000 bail pending sentencing.

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Pope: America needs to be a land of hope



JONATHAN ERNST/REUTERS

Pope Benedict XVI reacts to cheering students in Washington.

By Victor L. Simpson
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Pope Benedict XVI presided over a Mass celebrated in 10 languages Thursday, calling the United States a land of opportunity and hope but decrying that the nation's promise has been left unfulfilled for some.

At the first public Mass of his U.S. pilgrimage, Benedict mixed praise for the American experience with an effort to touch consciences, something he has been doing since the start of his trip on Tuesday.

More than 45,000 people filled Nationals Park on a clear spring day, as the pope, wearing scarlet vest-

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Pope prays with victims of clergy sex abuse scandal

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ments, led the service from an altar erected in center-field of the recently inaugurated baseball stadium. Rows of red-robed church leaders joined him.

The enthusiastic crowd burst into cheers when Benedict entered the stadium in his popemobile.

His homily was more somber. Benedict examined American society, saying he detected anger and alienation, increasing violence and a "growing forgetfulness of God."

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