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This week's news, features and community events.

FIRST SHOT



Colorful parasols

This photograph of colorful parasols for sale in a handicraft market in Laos is among the works of Menlo Park photographer Frances Freyberg that are on exhibit in Palo Alto. A selection of photos from her travels to some 40 countries are in the exhibit. A reception for Ms. Freyberg will be held Sunday, March 22. See story on **Page 7**.

Menlo Park

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Schools

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Artscene

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Family Almanac

- It's up, up and away for Menlo School benefit, "Menlo 9 Takes Flight." **Cover, Section 2**

On the cover

When the topic of Menlo Park businesses comes up, most people think of downtown restaurants and merchants. But the city is increasingly focusing its attention on the area east of U.S. 101. Photo by Michelle Le. See **Page 10**.

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Coming Events

- **Texas Hold'Em Poker Tournament** — Saturday, March 21, 12:30 – 5:00 PM
- **Pearl Sofaer Lecture, Book Signing & Lunch** — Saturday, March 28, 11:00 AM
- **Fashion Show & Luncheon, Art to Wear** — Friday, April 17

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M-A senior gets a look from science's big leagues, meets with President Obama

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

It was a (science) fair to remember for Julia Ransohoff, a Menlo-Atherton High School senior and one of 40 teens attending one of the nation's premier competitive scholastic science events, the annual Intel Science Talent Search held last week in Washington, D.C.

Among the top honors this year were for research that could lead to temperature-sensitive clothing and molecule-sized insulin pumps for diabetic patients; a chemotherapy delivery system to treat drug-resistant cancer without significant side effects; and math equations essential to developing a quantum theory of gravity.

Not your ordinary high school science fair, but Ms. Ransohoff was a contender. She investigated gender as a factor in donated stem cells used to repair cardiac tissue damaged by a heart attack, concluding that stem cells from adult female donors alerted a recipient's immune system to a significantly greater degree than previously thought.

Ms. Ransohoff came home after the March 10 black-tie awards dinner with a \$5,000 scholarship,

a new laptop computer, and memories of some rare experiences.

She talked about her work at some length with Dudley Herschbach, a 1986 Nobel Laureate in chemistry, Harvard University professor and board chairman of the contest.

"He seemed very interested in my project," Ms. Ransohoff said in a phone interview, adding that she felt treated "not like a celebrity but like an important member of the scientific community."

Mr. Herschbach talks with every finalist individually, Intel spokesman Rick Bates said.

The actual judging, done by 13 working scientists, takes place over two days. Each student meets with three or four of the judges at a time in 15-minute sessions when the student fields questions, Mr. Bates said.

"It was pretty nerve-wracking and pretty intimidating, but I had fun with that even if you couldn't answer the question right away," Ms. Ransohoff said. "There were no obvious answers to the questions. They wanted to hear you



Julia Ransohoff

think."

Meeting the president

The finalists gathered on March 9 on the White House steps, Ms. Ransohoff said, to shake hands with President Barack Obama and pose with him for a group photo.

Mr. Obama told them how important they were to the future of the country and how proud he was of them and what they'd accomplished, she said.

They spent about 10 minutes with the president, and it happened to be about an hour after he'd signed an executive order ending federal restrictions on embryonic stem cell research. "It was a very exciting time to meet him," she said. "I'm thrilled for him to do that, to separate science from politics."

At the other end of the fame spectrum, Ms. Ransohoff, who was staying at the St. Regis hotel, saw actor Brad Pitt and former anchorman Dan Rather on separate occasions at the hotel, and actor Angelina Jolie working outdoors on the set of a film.

As for her experience with the other 39 science contest finalists: "We've really bonded and had a wonderful time," she said.

Dance team show

The Menlo-Atherton Dance Team will hold a fundraising performance at 6 p.m. Friday, March 20, in the new gym on the M-A campus, 555 Middlefield Road. The team, coached by Nona Ybarra, is made up of M-A students who perform at football and basketball games. Tickets are \$8 for adults, \$5 for students, and \$10 at the door. To purchase tickets in advance, call Kristin Gananian at 854-9332. Raffle prizes will be offered.



World travels featured in Frances Freyberg photos

In 2008, Frances Freyberg of Menlo Park left her job in high-tech communications at Sun Microsystems to travel the world for a year, taking photographs and writing about her experiences.

Ms. Freyberg is hosting a reception from 1 to 4 p.m. Sunday, March 22, at the Yoga Mind Warrior Body Studio in Palo Alto, where a selection of photos from her travels to more than 40 countries will be displayed.

In addition to the March recep-

See picture on Page 3.

tion, Ms. Freyberg has two upcoming Open Studio weekends in May: May 2-3, Silicon Valley Open Studio at Yoga Mind Warrior Body, 609 B Cowper St., Palo Alto; May 16-17, Silicon Valley Open Studio, 753 Partridge Ave., Menlo Park.

Ms. Freyberg grew up in Menlo Park, attending Oak Knoll and Hillview schools, and Menlo-Atherton High School. After grad-

uating from Brown University in 2000, she returned to Menlo Park to take a job at Sun Microsystems. "Menlo Park was a wonderful place to grow up, and it's a wonderful place to be a young professional," she says.

Ms. Freyberg specializes in portraits of people, wildlife, nature and architecture from her travels.

More information about the March 22 reception may be found at www.francesfreyberg.com/invasion.htm.

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



Back To Basics

The weather is warming and gardens are beginning to bloom. This is traditionally the beginning of the most active real estate buying season of the year. Buyers are out in substantial numbers looking at property and some are buying. Others are waiting for assurance that we are at or near the bottom of the price decline that began in 2008. Much of their confidence depends on what happens in the financial markets, since Wall Street news surrounds us daily.

This is a good time to remember that long term benefits are more important than short term fluctuations. Prices have come down 10 - 25% in some areas of the Mid-

Peninsula and interest rates are low. Before now low interest rates kept prices higher than they would have been if rates were higher. But now prices and rates are down. Prudent buyers who are looking for a good place to live for the long term should not be afraid to take advantage of this. Make the decision to buy based on where you want to live, and don't think of property only as an investment. If your plan is to be in a house for at least 7 - 10 years, then you go ahead and buy the home that suits your needs and be confident in your decision. This has always been the best way to buy real estate in any market.

For answers to any questions you may have on real estate, you may e-mail me at mcorman@apr.com or call 462-1111, Alain Pinel Realtors. I also offer a free market analysis of your property.

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