



## City To Audit Cerrito Theater

PROMPTED by the fact that operators of the Cerrito Theater are nine months behind in \$10,000 a month lease payments, the El Cerrito Redevelopment Agency Board moved decisively to determine what it can do to insure the movie house's future success.

"There is no possibility at this time that the Cerrito Theater will be closed down," Assistant City Manager Karen Pinkos told the Chamber of Commerce. "The city owns the building, and the movie house is an unquestioned community asset. We want to insure its long-term success."

After initially meeting all its obligations for its first 12 months of operation, the Cerrito Theater fell behind in its lease payments, and the city staff spent the next several months working with the operators of the movie house regarding the Cerrito's financial picture.

In April of this year Downey Street Productions failed to provide the Redevelopment Agency with financial reports which were required under its lease with the city. On the last day of June the city staff outlined the Cerrito Theater's financial troubles at a closed session of the El Cerrito Redevelopment Agency. Following that meeting the City Council, sitting as the Redevelopment Board, went public with the movie house's troubled financial situation.

The Agency Board announced it had unanimously ordered its staff to contract with an independent audit firm specializing in theater and/or food and beverage to study the situation and recommend possible action.

## City's Violin Maker Known Worldwide



The foyer of the new Ifshin Violins store on Fairmount Avenue. Story on page 3.

## 2008 Taste of El Cerrito Off to Fast Start

WITH PREPARATIONS for the fourth annual Taste of El Cerrito less than a month old, initial exhibitor and sponsor sign-ups indicate this year's event will be the biggest ever. Judy Pope, chairperson of the 2008 Taste, reports this year's co-sponsors, the Chamber of Commerce and the city of El Cerrito, have been joined by the West County Times/Bay Area News Group East Bay as print sponsor.

Other firms that have already signed on as sponsors include Sunset View Cemetery, Olivero Plumbing, Marvin Gardens Real Estate, Plaza Auto Service, PetVet/Petfood, East Bay Municipal

## Plaza Street Closures

ON JULY 7TH the Albany City Council approved a resolution authorizing the City Administrator to proceed with an environmental review on closing all the Albany streets leading to El Cerrito Plaza.

At the same time, however, various members of the Council made it plain they wanted the environmental document to be a focus EIR which also covered alternative proposed street closure proposals.

Findings contained in the focused EIR will also have to deal with whether or not to amend the circulation element of Albany's General Plan to allow for the street closures.

This latest move on the part of the Albany Council clears the way for that

► See Street Closures, page 3



Judy Pope

Utility District, Seidell Enterprises, El Cerrito Royale, B&T Bookkeeping and El Cerrito Natural Grocery.

The 2008 Taste is scheduled for 5 to 9 p.m. on Sunday, September 28, at the El Cerrito Community Center. It will offer the general public the opportunity to sample food specialties prepared by leading local restaurants, to collect samples from food markets, bid on outstanding silent auction bargains, and participate in drawings for a number of valuable prizes.

Among the first to sign up as exhibitors for the upcoming event were

► See Taste of El Cerrito, page 2

Welcome

NEW MEMBER

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## Royale Cool-off

HELP IS ON the way for seniors who find hot weather too oppressive to bear, thanks to the kindness and concern of one member of the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce.

El Cerrito Royale, at 6510 Gladys Avenue, has established a "Cooling Center" for overheated El Cerritans 60-years of age and older. During the coming hot summer months the facility will be open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily.

For more information telephone (510) 235-5200. The Royale's e-mail address is: elcerritoroyale@sbcglobal.net.

## Lending a Hand

THE MECHANICS BANK Financial Services Manager Francie Esparza, a member of the El Cerrito Chamber's Board of Directors, is living proof that one person can make her community a better place in which to live.

### Mechanics Bank

Spurred by a newspaper article that pointed out that Contra Costa County's Food Bank badly needed donations, Esparza went to work and organized a program at her branch to relieve this situation. In short order food barrels were installed at The Mechanics Bank offices throughout the county.

With her food drive well underway, Esparza sent out an e-mail to her fellow Chamber members seeking their support. Declaring the food bank's shelves were empty and there was "a desperate need for canned goods," she wrote that the following items were needed: iron rich cereal, 100% fruit juice, canned fruit, dry beans, canned vegetables, enriched rice, powdered milk, canned meat and fish, enriched pasta, and peanut butter in plastic containers.

Esparza is to be congratulated for her efforts. Now it's up to her fellow Chamber members to help keep the Food Bank's shelves filled.

The next  
**Stockton Ave. Art Stroll**  
will be on Friday, September 12  
7-9 p.m.



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**Yammy Sushi, Romano's Macaroni Grill, Strings Italian Café, Well Grounded Tea & Coffee Bar, Pasta Pomodoro, Katana-Ya Ramen, the Red Onion, Carrows, Taqueria Del Palmar, Yokohama, Panda Express and El Cerrito Natural Grocery.**

Additional exhibitors and sponsors are needed, according to Pope. Anyone interested is signing up or in donating a prize to the silent auction or raffle is urged to contact Chamber Manager Sewall Glinternick at (510) 233-7040.

Those sponsors donating \$2,500 will become members of the President's Circle, \$1,000 contributors will be Platinum Sponsors, \$500 donors will be Gold Sponsors, and \$250 donors will be Silver Sponsors. Those who donate a substantial amount of goods and services instead of cash will be designated as In-Kind Sponsors. All sponsors, exhibitors and prize donors will be given extensive recognition.

As in the past, a part of the proceeds from the Taste will be used to finance scholarships for El Cerrito High School seniors who plan to attend college to prepare for a business career.

## Free CFL Recycling

ALL HOME DEPOT stores, including the one in El Cerrito, have launched a free consumer compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulb recycling program. El Cerrito business people and residents may now bring any expired, unbroken CFL bulbs to the local Home Depot and give them to the store associate behind the return desk for recycling.

The El Cerrito Environmental Services Division applauds the new Home Depot program as "an example of extended producer responsibility that protects local government and ratepayers from escalating disposal costs."

## Cain Leaves Board

LISA CAIN, past president of the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce, has resigned her post as a long-time member of the organization's Board of Directors due to the press of business.

Her resignation was accepted, with regret, last month by the Board after its members had acknowledged her outstanding contributions to the Chamber. During her year as president in 2005, Cain helped found the Taste of El Cerrito annual event, and later coordinated the refurbishing of the Chamber office. She also helped install the Chamber's first computer, established the organization's Internet access, and designed, maintained, and hosted the Chamber Web site for several years.

Lisa and her husband, Aaron Gobler, started PagePoint Web Solutions in the garage of their home, and in just a few short years the company grew from its modest beginning into the fully staffed office it now occupies in El Cerrito Plaza. In 2006 Lisa Cain was named the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce's "Small Business Owner of the Year."

In accepting her resignation this year's President, John Stashik, acknowledged her service to the Chamber by saying: "We're sorry to see her leave the board, but one cannot be everywhere at once, and run a business at the same time."

## E-waste Collection

CHAMBER MEMBERS are advised that they can dispose of unwanted electronic equipment at an e-waste collection event here in September. The next electronic waste event is scheduled for 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, September 6 and 7, in the parking lot of the El Cerrito Department of Motor Vehicles at 6400 Manila Avenue.

The event will be free and open to all businesses and residents. No appointment will be needed.

Among the e-waste that will be accepted are computer monitors, computers and computer components, televisions, VCR and DVD players, toner cartridges, printers, fax machines, copiers, telephone equipment, cell phones, and MP3 players. No appliances, batteries, microwaves, paints, or pesticides will be accepted.

# Impressive Fairmount Avenue Quarters for Ifshin Violins

**A**FTER THREE YEARS of planning and building, Ifshin Violins, one of the Chamber's new members, is busy making, restoring, selling and renting violins, violas, cellos, and basses at their new home. Located at 6420 Fairmount Avenue, it is unquestionably one of the best business buildings in El Cerrito.



Jay Ifshin

The saga of the company's eventual opening here began well over a quarter century ago when owner Jay Ifshin quit his job as a mechanical engineer because, as he puts it, he was "tired of always having dirty hands."

After closing out his engineering career, he attended one of this country's rare violin making schools in Salt Lake City and then purchased a small violin shop in Berkeley, where he spent the next 26 years building the business to national and international prominence.

The need for much more space brought him to El Cerrito where he bought an old office building and set about completely remodeling it to meet his company's special needs.

Today the two-story Ifshin Violin building boasts over 13,500 square feet of space, all of which is well lit with power supplied by solar panels on the roof.

In addition to an impressive reception area, the building contains an expanded instrument rental section, a comfortable sales and display area and a recital hall. There are specially constructed trial rooms where clients can play their instruments in an environment that brings out its best tonal quality. There is also a high security walk-in safe that is used to house the firm's collection of fine instruments and bows.

The first floor of the building has the tone of an art gallery thanks to a pair of life-sized heavy wire sculptures of violin players at the entrance and in the reception area, plus large, colorful vintage violin posters on every wall.

Much of the firm's high standing in the international music world is due to the top quality work produced by the craftspeople and violin makers who have an average of 26 year's experience in the field. A series of picture windows that line one side of the workshop makes it easy for pedestrians to see these experts at work.

With the long wait to open the new location complete, Ifshin is quick to praise the El Cerrito city staff for their cooperation and assistance in his rebuilding project. "It was," he emphasizes, "a lot more help than I ever got from Berkeley officials."

Visit [www.ifshinviolins.com](http://www.ifshinviolins.com) for more information about the firm including many construction photos.

## EBMUD Rates Up

**B**USINESSES in El Cerrito have been notified regarding their assigned individual water use allocation by the East Bay Municipal Utility District.

EBMUD's business clients are being asked to reduce their water use 12% from their baseline figure in every billing period. Beginning with the billing period which opens on August 1 businesses will be charged a \$2 drought surcharge for each 748-gallon unit that exceeds their allocation. The surcharge will be in addition to a 10% increase in water flow charges during the drought.

## Idaho to Get Loan

**T**HE CITY OF EL CERRITO will loan Idaho Apartment Associates up to \$350,000 from its Low-Moderate Income Housing Fund for an existing housing development located at the former Idaho Motel site at 10203 San Pablo Avenue.

All City Council and Redevelopment Agency Board approvals for the loan were obtained when the Owner Participation Agreement was approved in February of 1997, clearing the way for Apartment Associates to rehabilitate a deteriorated motel in the project area to create 28 units of affordable housing.

## Business Help

**M**ANAGEMENT consulting and training are being offered business owners here by the Contra Costa Small Business Development Center.

The SBDC has a staff of professional consultants to assist small business owners on a variety of management issues such as planning, marketing, finance, human resources and technology. This service is free.

The Center also offers training sessions on a variety of business management topics. These sessions are both fee-based and free. For further information telephone (925) 646-5377.

## STREET CLOSURES

Continued from page 1

city's staff to proceed with an environmental review which focuses on traffic, air quality and noise on Kains, Cornell, Talbot and Evelyn Streets.

After the review has been completed staff is expected to return to the Council with a Scope of Work report and a draft contract agreement.

## 'The Avenue' Report

**S**AN PABLO AVENUE'S median work is complete except for installation of a central controller, which has been delayed due to a technical issue. The central controller, which will be located at the city's Corporation Yard, relies on the establishment of a radio relay station at the new City Hall. It should be up and running within the next month.

Meanwhile, in response to several complaints concerning over-spray from the median's new irrigation system, the city has ordered the contractor of adjust the system to make sure the young plants are receiving the water they need.

Staff is currently aiming to present 100% plans and cost estimates for bulb-outs to Caltrans for approval in September.

## Council Backs Tax

**T**he City Council voted unanimously to support the West Contra Costa Unified School District parcel tax measure on the November 4 ballot.

In a resolution encouraging local voters to review the arguments concerning the tax measure, the Council's resolution said the tax renewal measure was "not only beneficial, but is essential to the quality of life of El Cerrito residents."



**Chamber Officers**

President John C. Stashik, Premier Graphics  
First Vice President Baylan Megino, Pre-Paid Legal Services, Inc.  
Second Vice President Kent Langston, Orchard Supply Hardware  
Secretary-Treasurer Charlie Weaver, Certified Public Accountant  
Past President Blaine Davis, Edward Jones

**Staff**

Manager Sewall Glinternick  
Secretary Pat Berndt

**Calendar of Events**

- Aug. 5** National Night Out (25th anniversary). 6-9 p.m. Meet in individual homes. Details from EC Crime Prevention Committee; (510) 215-4414 ext. 30.
- Aug. 6** Board of Directors meets, 8:30 a.m., at Coldwell Banker Bartels.
- Aug. 16** "Daffy Dave" with slapstick comedy and magic at EC Library, 11-11:45 a.m.
- Aug. 18** City Council meets, 7:30 p.m., at Community Center.
- Aug. 23** CPR-First Aid class; 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Call the Fire Dept. for reservations: (510) 215-4450.
- Aug. 30** Cinema in Cerrito Vista Park. Bring a picnic dinner and watch "E.T." under the stars.

**Serious Crime Reduced Here**

**T**HE NUMBER of Part 1 crimes in El Cerrito during the first five months of 2008 was lower than the number reported during the same period last year, according to the most recent figures sent the Mayor and City Council.

The number of Part 1 crimes reported to the State of California for January through May of this year was 122, as compared with 136 for the same five months last year.

"The effort the city and the police department are putting forth is making a difference," Police Chief Scott Kirkland told the Council. "The department will always try to reduce incidents of crime. That is always our goal."

*Thank you!*

Our deep appreciation is extended to Charlie Weaver, CPA, for his support in co-sponsoring the expense of printing and mailing this *Byline*.

**Charles E. Weaver, CPA**  
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**Businesses Help Out**

**S**EVEN LOCAL businesses, three of which belong to our Chamber, provided raffle prizes for the annual Public Works open house in May.

Among the firms that provided prizes such as star lighting fixtures, CFL light bulbs and children's toys were Pastime Ace Hardware, Olivero Plumbing and Orchard Supply Hardware.