



Obama: 'National power' will be used to keep Americans safe after failed terror attack **NATION, A6**

◀ Abdulmutallab has been charged for trying to detonate an explosive device on Dec. 25 flight

# GERHART ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

SPORTS

Stanford running back earns The Daily News' biggest honor



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Full weather report, B10

# THE Daily News

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150

ATHERTON EAST PALO ALTO LOS ALTOS LOS ALTOS HILLS MENLO PARK MOUNTAIN VIEW PALO ALTO PORTOLA VALLEY REDWOOD CITY SAN CARLOS STANFORD WOODSIDE

## Canine comfort

TERAPY ANIMALS BRING JOY TO STANFORD HOSPITAL PATIENTS



Kat Wade / Daily News

Jorge Rodriguez, 18, who recently broke his clavicle and femur in a car accident, lies in his hospital bed with Chloe, an 11-year-old Scottish terrier, at Stanford Hospital on Monday. Chloe is part of the Pet Assisted Wellness at Stanford (PAWS) program.

BY JESSICA BERNSTEIN-WAX  
Daily News Staff Writer

This holiday season hasn't been Teri Corpus' happiest. The 51-year-old Lindsay, Calif., resident has spent the past month in a Stanford Hospital bed far away from friends and family undergoing numerous procedures for her kidney cancer.

"I spent my birthday and Christmas here, and I'm probably having my happy New Year here too," Corpus said Monday afternoon as she lay in bed hooked up to an intravenous therapy tube and with a catheter in place.

But a 10-minute visit from Chloe, a black Scottish terrier sporting a bright red bandana, seemed to lift Corpus' mood.

"Isn't she sweet?" Corpus said, as Chloe's handler, Ruth Hodos, lowered the small dog onto the hospital bed.

Chloe nestled in and was soon lying peacefully with her head on Corpus' lap.

The 11-year-old pooch is part of a group of about 25 specially trained dogs, cats and bunnies who visit patients twice a week through the Pet Assisted Wellness at Stanford, or PAWS, program.

All participating animals undergo careful screening and receive certification through the nonprofit Delta Society before ever setting paw, tail or snout in the hospital, said Barbara Ralston, vice president for guest services. Their handlers also clean and sterilize them before each visit.

In addition to visiting individual patients at the main

CANINE THERAPISTS, page A5

“I've always believed that these animals have incredible potential for human interaction.”

RUTH HODOS, DOG HANDLER FOR PET ASSISTED WELLNESS AT STANFORD

## SamTrans rolls out new buses

■ Fleet of buses cost \$61.6M; money was earmarked for project despite budget problems that raised fares, eliminated routes, official says

BY MIKE ROSENBERG  
Bay Area News Group

There is a strikingly new, modern look to buses in San Mateo County.

SamTrans has begun rolling out 135 new buses that feature a sleeker design, automatic rear doors and cleaner engines. The first ones hit the road two weeks ago.

The \$61.6 million project the agency launched nearly three years ago will result in the replacement of one-third of the SamTrans fleet. The 137 old vehicles that will be retired from service first rolled onto the streets in 1993.

The agency used \$9.7 million from its half-cent sales tax and \$1.5 million from local bridge toll revenues and received \$50.2 million in federal grants for the buses.

SamTrans has faced budget problems that have led to higher fares and fewer routes, but spokeswoman Christine Dunn said the money used was earmarked for capital improvements and could not be used to stave off operational cuts.



Courtesy photo

San Mateo County Transit District rolls out its new fleet.

It will be hard for motorists and pedestrians to miss the new buses. The signature red, white and blue color scheme remains, but the new vehicles are more colorful than the old, mostly white buses, and the colors swirl in a thick, curving motion, instead in straight, skinny lines. Also, the front of the new buses is curved instead of having a boxlike design.

The interior looks and feels different. The stanchions are

SAMTRANS, page A5

SAN MATEO COUNTY

## County hospital sued for negligence

■ Mental health patient died after arriving at San Mateo Medical Center, lawsuit states

BY SHAUN BISHOP  
Daily News Staff Writer

The daughter of a woman who died last year has filed a medical malpractice lawsuit against San Mateo County, claiming that negligence on the part of staff at the county-run hospital caused the woman's death.

Penny Louise Prevezich died in November 2008 after she was transported from a Menlo Park mental health facility to the San Mateo Medical Center, according to the lawsuit.

The suit, filed by Prevezich's daughter Nicole Blincoe, claims staff at the medical center left Prevezich in a waiting area unattended for about 90 minutes; at some point she stopped breathing and no longer had a pulse.

The county "carelessly and negligently managed the care of" Prevezich and "failed to monitor and supervise her resulting in her death," according to the lawsuit, filed Nov. 17, which seeks unspecified damages from the county.

Deputy County Counsel Glenn Levy declined to comment, saying the county has not yet been served with the suit. Lawsuits generally must be served within 60 days.

Prevezich, 57, was a resident of Menlo Park, according to the county coroner's office. Senior Deputy Coroner Michelle Rippe said Prevezich's cause of death is listed as "multiple drug intoxication," though no further details were available.

Blincoe's attorney, Frank Liuzzi, could not be reached for comment.

Prevezich was a patient at Transitions, a mental health program on the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs campus in Menlo Park, on Nov. 28, 2008, when she requested to be transferred to another facility, the lawsuit states.

At about 9 p.m., the county's Mental Health Assessment and Referral Team took her to the medical center to

COUNTY HOSPITAL, page A5

### INSIDE TODAY

#### LOOKIN' GOOFY!

▶ Get your 2010 glasses in time for New Year's Eve  
**FUSION, PAGE B6**



#### VTA revs up for new bicycle sharing program

**LOCAL, PAGE A3**

#### NUMMI closure hits suppliers, factory workers

**BUSINESS, A9**

#### Two charged in felony robbery in Redwood City

**LOCAL, PAGE A4**

#### Index

Abby.....B5 Business.....A9 Comics.....B4 Letters.....A11 Lottery.....A2 Fusion.....B6

### Broken and chipped teeth. What can be done?

Broken or chipped teeth can be unsightly, unhealthy and damaging to the soft tissue in the mouth.

There are a number of ways to fix broken teeth:

**Composite resin fillings** which are bonded to the tooth and performed in one visit. The advantage is they are completed in one visit and the disadvantages are they have a shorter lifetime and are not suitable for larger breakages.

**Porcelain veneers** for front teeth which are performed in two visits. The advantages are porcelain veneers have a longer lifetime and tend to look better but the disadvantages are that two appointments are required and a small layer of tooth needs to be removed.

**Crowns** may be another option for front and back teeth which have been heavily filled or decayed. The advantages are that they tend to be stronger than fillings and veneers and have a longer lifetime, but the

disadvantages are that they require two appointments and also require more tooth structure removal.

If you or anyone you know could benefit from any of these services, please contact Dr Ravi Sahdev at 650. 566. 0999. Please mention this ad to take advantage of any special offers.



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BAY AREA: SPARE THE AIR

# Air district records dozens of no-burn violations on Christmas

BY LAURA DUDNICK  
Bay City News

Nowhere in the Bay Area should chestnuts have been roasting on an open fire on Christmas due to a Spare the Air alert issued for that day, but some residents still lit logs in their fireplaces, an air district spokesman said Monday.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District recorded 47 potential violations of the regional no-burn restriction, air district spokesman Ralph Borrmann said.

The district had declared a Spare the Air Day for the holiday, meaning residents were not allowed to burn wood, manufactured fire logs or any other solid fuel. A Spare the Air is is-

sued when there is an unhealthy amount of particulate matter forecast for the region.

For the Christmas Spare the Air Day, the air district received 216 calls ranging from complaints to compliments, Borrmann said. Twelve air district inspectors worked on Christmas, patrolling the region and watching for smoke.

A violation does not automatically mean a resident will get a citation, Borrmann said. He said violations are entered into the air district's database, and that a citation is issued only if a resident has racked up more than one.

A citation carries a \$400 fine paid to the air district.

Despite the 47 potential violations, the air quality didn't

exceed the federal health standard, Borrmann said.

"It seems like people heard the message," he said.

Homes without permanent heating, where wood stoves or fireplaces are the only source of heat, are exempt from the ban, and fires used for cooking are also allowed.

The winter Spare the Air season runs from Nov. 1 through Feb. 28. The first Spare the Air alert this season was issued on Thanksgiving, and the second was declared Dec. 9. Christmas was the third.

The daily air quality forecast is available at www.baaqmd.gov or www.sparetheair.org. To sign up for alerts, visit www.sparetheair.org or sign up for phone alerts at 800-430-1515.

## COUNTY HOSPITAL

From page A1

await transfer to another facility, according to the lawsuit.

On the way to the medical center, a paramedic noted that Prevezich denied being suicidal and did not exhibit suicidal behavior, the lawsuit states. Though the suit does not specify what Prevezich was being treated for, it says her "psychiatric history was well-known to the staff" at the county's medical center.

Prevezich arrived at the medical center's Psychiatric Emergency Services department at about 10 p.m. and a nurse seated her in the wait-

ing area, according to the lawsuit.

"She was not checked again until approximately 90 minutes later when she was found slouched over without a pulse and not breathing as she was in cardiac arrest," the lawsuit states. She was pronounced dead at 12:02 a.m. on Nov. 29, 2008, according to the suit.

The county's negligence left Blincoe "deprived of a kind and loving mother," according to the lawsuit.

A case management conference has been scheduled for March 30, 2010.

E-mail Shaun Bishop at sbishop@dailynews.com.



Handler Ruth Hodos, right, introduces Pet Assisted Wellness at Stanford therapy dog Chloe, an 11-year-old Scottish terrier, to patient Teri Corpus of Lindsay, Calif., at Stanford Hospital on Monday. Corpus is recovering from spinal surgery and some other procedures related to treatment she is receiving for cancer.

Kat Wade / Daily News

## CANINE THERAPISTS

From page A1

hospital and Lucile Packard Children's Hospital, the animals participate in group therapy programs in the psychiatric unit, Ralston said.

Spending time with the furry creatures benefits patients and brings them joy, she said.

"They're the best listeners and therapists," Ralston said. "For patients who become very depressed and uncommunicative, it will trigger memories for them and really cheer them up. A dog is completely non-judgmental and non-threatening. It doesn't come in with a syringe or anything like that."

Program facilitator Nan Wetmore recalled one woman who refused to speak during her hospital stay until a program dog came and sat beside her.

Suddenly, the woman began talking freely and told hospital staff about her farm in Ohio, Wetmore said.

Studies have suggested that animal-assisted therapy can help a patient's emotional state and even provide physiological benefits.

"Many people are able to relax when animals are present," the Delta Society's Web site says. "Tests have shown that the decrease in heart rate and blood pressure can be dramatic. Even watching fish swim in an aquarium can be very calming."

Hodos, of Palo Alto, said she has seen that firsthand.

One cardiac patient Chloe visited was breathing very hard and appeared distressed, Hodos said. But after just a few minutes with the dog, "his breathing started evening out," she said, adding, "The residual of the calmness and the visit actually is sustained over a period of time."

And those benefits extend beyond the pa-

tients. While the hospital can be a stressful and chaotic environment for dogs, Hodos said both Chloe and her corgi, Willow, appear excited and happy when she takes out the red PAWS bandana and leash for their visits.

On the days Willow visits patients without her, Chloe hangs her head and waits mournfully by the door, Hodos said.

"She's still at the door when we come home and then she gives me the cold shoulder," Hodos added with a laugh.

Down the hall from Corpus' hospital room, Jorge Rodriguez happily greeted Chloe from his bed.

Rodriguez, of East Palo Alto, said he lost control of his car early Christmas Eve morning and crashed on Highway 101. Now the 18-year-old soccer player must postpone entering San Jose State University until he recovers from a broken femur and fractured clavicle — a process that will probably take six months, he said.

"I have two dogs, and it's nice to have a little bit of company other than family and friends," Rodriguez said while he patted Chloe's head.

As for Chloe, she may go into semi-retirement in the next year or so, but Hodos is already prepping her 2-year-old Scottish terrier, Rosie, for certification.

"I've always believed that these animals have incredible potential for human interaction," she said. "I've always wanted to work with my dogs in a meaningful way."

Because of high patient demand, Stanford Hospital is looking for more volunteers for the program. For more information, see the PAWS Web site at <http://stanfordhospital.org/forPatients/patientServices/pawsGuestServices.html>.

E-mail Jessica Bernstein-Wax at jbernstein@dailynews.com.



Kat Wade / Daily News

Pet Assisted Wellness at Stanford (PAWS) therapy dog Chloe has a guest services PAWS volunteer badge with her photograph attached to her leash as she waits to visit the next patient on her rounds at Stanford Hospital on Monday.

## SAMTRANS

From page A1

yellow, the seats are upholstered with cloth, digital video recorders are installed for safety purposes and the lights are LED. There also are overhead sensors that automatically open the rear door at stops, and the wheelchair ramp incline is less steep.

The new buses also meet 2009 California Air Resources Board standards. They use ultralow sulfur diesel fuel and emit less nitrogen oxide and particulate matter. Dunn said the vehicles should save the agency money on operating costs, but it is not known by how much.

Most of the buses will be either 40 or 35 feet long, but four 29-foot buses will be used along Route 17. The shorter buses will allow drivers to navigate more easily on narrow coastal roads, Dunn said.

Dunn said each bus was custom-made by Hayward-based manufacturer Gillig. Public transit buses typically are replaced every 12 years, although Dunn said the agency made some improvements to the old fleet to extend buses' lives a few years. She said the fleet's other buses do not need replacing.

## SAN MATEO UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

# Contractor sues over stadium upgrades

BY NEIL GONZALES  
Bay Area News Group

A company that builds stadium bleachers has sued a South San Francisco contractor and the San Mateo Union High School District for more than \$1 million, alleging breach of contract with respect to improvement projects at four campuses.

Texas-based Steel Stadiums filed suit Dec. 18 in San Mateo County Superior Court against the district and Interstate Grading and Paving Inc. Steel Stadiums is seeking \$1.1 million in damages plus interest, attorney fees and other costs, according to Ernest Brown, a San Francisco-based lawyer representing the company.

Although the district is named in the suit, Brown said, the real disagreement is with Interstate Grading.

"It's a payment dispute with Interstate Grading," he said Monday. "To protect our rights, we needed to file the case in a timely manner, but we are making progress in resolving (it) as soon as possible."

Interstate Grading contracted Steel Stadiums to put in seating, press boxes and other upgrades for the football fields at Aragon, Capuchino, Hillsdale and Mills high schools, Brown said. Steel Stadiums finished the work in September.

Steel Stadiums and its

Interstate Grading has paid Steel Stadiums about \$230,000 but still owes more than \$1 million, according to the suit.

subcontractors have "performed all things necessary and required" in the agreement with Interstate Grading — including additional work resulting from "site conditions not previously anticipated," the suit claims.

Interstate Grading has paid Steel Stadiums about \$230,000 but still owes more than \$1 million, according to the suit.

San Mateo Union is a defendant in the suit largely because the case involves its campuses and Steel Stadiums is asking the district to withhold payment of about \$816,000 to Interstate Grading until the issues are resolved, Brown said.

District Superintendent Scott Laurence said Monday that he hasn't seen the complaint, and he declined to comment. An official for Interstate Grading could not immediately be reached for comment.

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