

SARATOGA NEWS

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Three Falcons play for winning North team in Wedemeyer all-star game  page 23

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FIVE CANDIDATES IN THE RUNNING FOR COUNCIL, AND STILL COULD BE MORE

Three seats up for grabs, and filing deadline is not until Aug. 8

BY KHALIDA SARWARI

Engineers and planning commissioners are among the field of candidates vying for a seat on the Saratoga City Council this fall.

Three seats are up for grabs in the Nov. 4 election, those of Mayor Emily Lo and council members Chuck Page and Jill Hunter. All three are four-year terms; Lo is seeking re-election.

Several residents announced their intention to run as early as February. Since then, a few have chosen to drop out and one resident recently decided to join a pool of candidates that is mostly made up of planning commissioners and community leaders.

- John Chen, a 12-year Saratoga resident and data center engineer for Raptr, a Mountain View-based social network for video gamers, is the latest candidate to throw his hat into the ring. This is Chen's first time running for any political office, and he said he was inspired to do so after regularly attending and speaking out at workshops and meetings on the Highway 85 issue.

"I felt since I was doing all this advocacy it might be worthwhile for me to run for city council, because as a city council member I'd have a little more influence with the VTA board than I would as a citizen," he said.

Chen said, if elected he'd prioritize environmental issues and controlling the development of high-density housing. As part of that, he said he would look for ways to improve Saratoga's air quality and offer more bike-friendly paths.

Chen plays the ukelele during Christmas events at the VA Palo Alto Health Care System and for the Peninsulaires, a barbershop choir. He graduated from UC-Berkeley with a bachelor's degree in computer science.

- Lo, the second Asian woman ever to be appointed mayor in the city's history, will be running for re-election. She ran for city council for the first time in 2008

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Going Green

Brown lawns all the rage this summer, but a little paint can keep them green

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Shawn Sahbari, president of Green Canary, sprays an advanced aqueous polymer 'paint' onto the brown front lawn of the Almaden Valley Athletic Club on July 20.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JACQUELINE RAMSEYER

A MediNews Group NEWSPAPER

Lawns turning brown, but they could be green—with just a little paint

Green Canary flies to the rescue

BY JUDY PETERSON

Brown may be the new green, but it doesn't have to be that way. A Los Gatos company, Green Canary, is in the business of painting grass green. It's not a permanent fix for drought-ravaged lawns, but if a special event is coming up—say an outdoor wedding or a fancy party—a painted lawn will keep the drought police off your back.

Green Canary was founded in 2008 in response to the home foreclosure crisis. President Shawn Sahbari, who lives in Saratoga, was often hired by banks, homeowners' associations and real estate agents. "Usually the water department had cut off the home's water, and neighbors were upset about the way the yard looked," he said.

Now the drought is keeping Sahbari and his crew busy crisscrossing the Bay Area, painting grass at homes and businesses. He also recently painted a golf course in Southern California.

Last week found the Green Canary crew at Almaden Valley Athletic Club, where man-

ager Jeff Griffith-Jones hopes to cut back on outdoor watering by as much as 90 percent.

"If it looks good and everybody's happy, we'll do other areas around the club," Griffith-Jones said.

Painting grass is like any other paint job in that there's a fair amount of prep work involved. Sahbari and his crew start by masking tree trunks, sidewalks and anything else that's in the way. Leaves and debris also need to be cleaned up. Then it's just a matter of using a spray wand to disperse what Sahbari describes as "a highly concentrated water-based pigment."

"We tested dozens of formulas, taking into account health and safety, aesthetics and economics. If it costs a million dollars, people wouldn't be interested in it," Sahbari said.

Painting prices vary and depend more on how much prep work is involved than the size of the area being painted. "How much stuff do I have to watch out for?" Sahbari asked. "If you do the masking yourself it's going to cost around 10 to 15 cents a square foot. If we do the masking it can cost between 35 and 55 cents a square foot. Sometimes raking and cleaning up dog poop can take several hours."

He said that on average "for



PHOTOGRAPH BY JACQUELINE RAMSEYER

Employees of Green Canary of Los Gatos spray 'paint' onto the brown front lawn of the Almaden Valley Athletic Club. It's just one way to keep lawns green during the drought.

a few hundred dollars, you can have green grass during the peak season."

The formula Green Canary uses is safe for children, pets and the environment, and it dries within an hour. "It won't fade or wash off or rub off," Sahbari said.

According to Sahbari, the

application lasts longer if the grass being painted is already dead. "If the grass is dead and there aren't any people or dogs traipsing over it, the paint will last a long time," he said. "If the grass is living and being cut every four to six weeks, it could last anywhere from 60 to 90 days."

Back at the athletic club, Griffith-Jones said, "We love the painted grass. We've received many compliments on it already." He said the club now plans to paint all of its grass.

Visit green-canary.com or call 408.614.4959 for more information.

Green

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County is for landscape irrigation, according to the water district, so limiting watering to two days per week will have a big impact, Grimes said.

The district offers other tips to help a lawn survive the drought, such as keeping grass longer to shade the ground and lessen evaporation, watering in the early morning and aerating the soil to provide nutrients to the root system.

The state Water Resources Control Board approved regulations July 15 that allow state and local agencies to fine those who are misusing water resources

\$500 per day, beginning Aug. 1. The state may also impose larger fines on municipalities that do not take action at the local level to reduce water usage.

Grimes said that the fines are not for well-meaning folks with a sprinkler head askew and that it would be preferable to have residents heed the agency's warnings about overwatering.

The regulations "don't prohibit watering; they prohibit runoff," he said. The state regulations specifically bar residents and commercial water users from washing cars without a shutoff nozzle on the hose, watering landscape to the point of runoff, hosing down cement areas and using potable water in non-recirculating fountains.

San Jose resident Jan Soule

said she opposes "excessive fines" for using water.

"The issue is that our legislators are more concerned with catering to the wishes of environmental groups that are contributing to their campaigns than serving the needs of taxpayers," she stated in an e-mail, adding that resources would be better spent on "proper state-wide water management."

Seth Masters, a Monte Sereno resident, said he has already been taking water-saving measures since the water district declared the drought in January. He said that while he welcomes the \$500 state fines and would "turn in" water wasters, he won't be letting his lawn

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Water collection buckets are part of the water conservation campaign; residents are being asked to capture cold water from their showers while it's warming up for use in the yard or to flush a toilet.