

# LOCAL NEWS

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## School district considering tax plan

Consulting firm hired to help tailor measure for Newark voters

By Chris De Benedetti

[cdebenedetti@bayareanewsgroup.com](mailto:cdebenedetti@bayareanewsgroup.com)

NEWARK — Weeks after school board members approved nearly \$5 million in budget cuts, school officials are considering placing a ballot measure to aid the cash-strapped district.

To that end, Newark school board members last month hired

TBWB Strategies, agreeing to pay the San Francisco consultant firm \$58,000 for a six-month contract.

TBWB, which specializes in public financial ballot measures, is being asked to find a source of revenue — perhaps a parcel tax or a bond measure — to help fund the district's various needs, said Charles Heath, a TBWB employee.

"But first, we need to do research to see what's feasible," Heath said. "Then, we'll make our recommendations."

The feasibility study will include a citizen survey to determine the

priorities of Newark residents and what type of funding mechanisms they might support, Heath said.

Last autumn, school district officials chose TBWB and its associates, Godbe Research and Wise Campaigns, after interviewing three finalists, said Steven Shields, chief business official for Newark schools.

The district is considering a ballot measure later this year to address the fiscal woes that spurred school board members to cut nearly \$4.7 million from its 2010-11 budget. The total district budget for the fis-

cal year is \$61.4 million.

However, district officials say it's far too soon in the process to decide what combination of factors might be most successful.

"We're looking for (the consultants) to guide us as to what and when we should put something on the ballot," Shields said.

If recent history is any indicator, local voters might be in the mood to approve a parcel tax or bond measure. The last parcel tax that Newark school officials put to a citywide vote was successful, passing in June 2003, Shields said. Also, Newark

voters last November approved Measure U, a tax on utilities to shore up the city's general fund.

Last year, Fremont voters resoundingly approved Measure K, a parcel tax that will replenish funds for Fremont schools.

The consultant that assisted Fremont school officials on Measure K was TBWB Strategies, a fact that did not go unnoticed by Newark officials when they recently hired the firm.

"It's good to see an election right

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## Website offers help to South Asians

Fremont woman starts nonprofit to reach culture traditionally averse to therapy

By Matthew Artz

[martz@bayareanewsgroup.com](mailto:martz@bayareanewsgroup.com)

FREMONT — If Parijat Deshpande needed further evidence that clinical psychology is poorly regarded among South Asians, she got it as a college freshman when she told her Indian-born parents that she planned to become a psychologist and not a doctor.

"When I said I didn't want to go to medical school, it was like 'What about engineering? What about being a lawyer?'" she said.

About 10 years and two psychology degrees later, Deshpande has sold her parents on the importance of psychotherapy.

Now the 28-year-old Fremont native and UC Berkeley lecturer is trying to spread that message to South Asians throughout the Bay Area.

Last year, Deshpande started the nonprofit MySahana, whose website ([www.MySahana.org](http://www.MySahana.org)) seeks to destigmatize and spread awareness of the mental health field among South Asians while providing resources to those considering counseling.

"There is really a big stigma when it comes to mental health in general, let alone trying to get services," she said. "If someone has a mental health issue, it generally isn't talked about outside the family."

With MySahana.org (sahana means patience or fortitude in Sanskrit), Deshpande presents psychological studies in a culturally relevant style for South Asians and writes stories illustrating mental health issues that readers might be facing.

The website, which has been averaging about 60,000 page views a month, also includes healthy lifestyle tips and referrals to doctors and therapists accustomed to working with South Asian patients.

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"There is really a big stigma when it comes to mental health in general (among South Asians), let alone trying to get services. If someone has a mental health issue, it generally isn't talked about outside the family."

— Parijat Deshpande, Psychologist, UC Berkeley lecturer



ARIC CRABB/STAFF

## Fremont school group to host gala

Mardi Gras is theme of annual event, which includes food, games

By Rob Dennis

[rdennis@bayareanewsgroup.com](mailto:rdennis@bayareanewsgroup.com)

FREMONT — Online ticket sales begin Tuesday for the Fremont Education Foundation's annual "Excellence in Education" Gala, benefiting grants for public school classrooms.

This year's gala will be from 5:30 to 10 p.m. Friday, Feb. 25, at the Fremont Marriott, 46100 Landing Parkway.

Each year, the foundation celebrates two honorees — one from the school district and one from the community — for their contributions to education.

Being honored this year is Parvin Ahmadi, who worked in the district for more than 13 years as teacher, principal, director of elementary education and assistant superintendent of instruction before leaving to become superintendent of the Pleasanton school district last year.

The community honoree is Dale Hardware, which has provided ongoing support to numerous nonprofits in Fremont, particularly those serving students and schools.

This year's gala will have a Mardi Gras theme, with music, dance and food of a New Orleans flavor. It will include games provided by five Fremont district business associations, singing and dancing by StarStruck Show Stoppers, and a silent auction and raffle.

The master of ceremonies will be David Louie from ABC7 News.

Tickets are \$75 per person, and sponsorship opportunities are available.

To register, go to [www.fremont-education.org](http://www.fremont-education.org) or call Desrie Campbell at 510-456-8783.

All proceeds benefit the foundation's Innovative Education Grant fund.

Contact Rob Dennis at 510-353-7010.

## Thanks for the kind warning, Officer

**Q**: I want to say thank you to the San Jose police officer who let me off with a warning recently. I did a really jerk move and when he pulled me over I admitted that I was being impatient and really had no reason for what I did. Not only am I thankful for the warning instead of the numerous citations he could have given me, but I also appreciate the warning figuratively.

He told me he didn't want to see me dead on the streets this Christmas. It made me realize I need to be more patient and thoughtful when behind the wheel. Thanks again for caring not only for the safety of others, but for mine as well.

Merridith Manning  
San Jose

**A**: I have an idea. What would others like to say to a cop who has given them a ticket or a warning? Has it changed your driving habits? Are you thankful for a lesson learned? Or, as I suspect, are



GARY RICHARDS  
MR. ROADSHOW

you angry over getting cited?

**Q**: The other day you wrote "Stoneridge Drive to Highway 237, where backups have been horrific since the opening of the toll lane last fall."

Since last fall?! Where have you been? Interstate 680 from Stoneridge to 237 has been plagued with backups since at least 1987.

Bill Van Gorp  
Former 680 commuter

**A**: A Roadshow favorite returns! Bill first wrote me in 1996 with a long essay to complain about the 680 commute, which ranked that year as the worst in the Bay Area — the only time in three decades the Bay Bridge has not held that distinction. He lived in Pleasanton at the time.

**Q**: Now I live in San Jose and do not commute on 680 anymore,

after 14 fun-filled years. Cannot say I miss it. The more things change, the more they remain the same.

Bill Van Gorp

**A**: Yes, they do. Traffic studies show that backups are easing on I-680, but judging by my e-mail most commuters aren't buying it.

**Q**: Hacienda Avenue between Winchester Boulevard and Burrows Road in Campbell is an absolute mess, and has been since I earned my license more than eight years ago. There is more than one point where each of the four tires on my car can be touching a different vintage of pavement, from all the times the road has been torn up and patched again. Considering it's the main path from Highway 17 to many neighborhoods, why has it not been repaired?

Justin Zazzi  
Campbell

**A**: The city has held off repaving Hacienda as it searches for \$4.5 million in grants to convert

Hacienda into a "green street" — one that manages storm water runoff to minimize storm sewer flows, improve water quality and provide more urban greenery. This would be accomplished by removing some pavement and installing more trees and plants to allow storm water to percolate and filter through the ground rather than run off the surface and flow into nearby creeks and then into the bay.

If funds are not secured, the city will then focus only on repaving Hacienda. Stay tuned.

**Q**: In a recent column, you recommended steering in the opposite direction of a skid on black ice. Everything I've read has said to steer into the direction of a skid to regain control. Perhaps you made a mistake?

Tov Fisher-Kirshner  
and many more

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## Hayward sewage plant earns honor

From staff reports

HAYWARD — The city's sewage treatment plant — which completed a \$58 million renovation project in 2008 — is in the running to be the state's top plant of the year.

It's quite an honor, said facility manager Greg Shreeve.

Earlier this month, it earned the regional plant of the year award, given by the California Water Environment Association.

"The award recognizes high achievement for sewage treatment plant operation," Shreeve said. "I am very proud of (plant) staff who have worked hard to showcase the (improvements)."

The improvements include methane generators that supply about 30 percent of the plant's power, two clarifying tanks and a

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