

NEWSMAKERS OF THE YEAR

2002

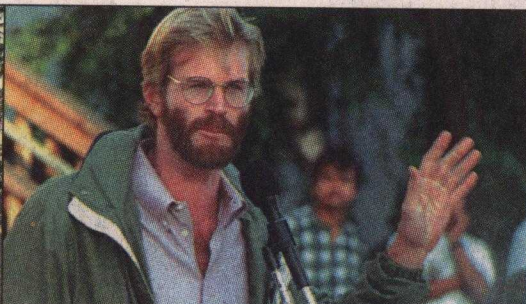
APTOS LITTLE LEAGUE ■ VALERIE AND MIKE CORRAL

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RISA BRAININ, PAGE A9



CHRISTOPHER KROHN, PAGE A8



GARY SMITH, PAGE A9

THE SENTINEL'S 2002 NEWSMAKERS

CO-NEWSMAKERS OF THE YEAR: This year marks the first time there are co-news-makers. They are the Aptos Little League team, for its improbable run to the Little League World Series, and Valerie and Mike Corral, for bringing the issue of medical marijuana back into the national debate.

SANTA CRUZ NEWSMAKER: Former mayor Christopher Krohn. . . . **A8**

SOUTH COUNTY NEWSMAKER: The board of the Pajaro Valley Unified School District. . . . **A9**

MID-COUNTY NEWSMAKER: Gary Smith, chief of the Aptos-La Selva Fire Protection District. . . . **A9**

SCOTTS VALLEY NEWSMAKER: Veteran antiques dealer and auctioneer Bob Slawinski. . . . **A8**

ARTS NEWSMAKER: Risa Brainin, intern artistic director of Shakespeare Santa Cruz. . . . **A9**

PAST NEWSMAKERS

2001: JAY MORIARITY. Well-known professional surfer dies in diving accident.

2000: Assemblyman FRED KEELEY. Local representative becomes big player in Sacramento.

1999: BORDERS BOOKSTORE controversy. Santa Cruz residents rally, unsuccessfully, to keep chain store out of town.

1998: EL NIÑO STORMS. Winter storms wreak havoc countywide.

1997: BOULDER CREEK ACCIDENT. Car wreck claims three young lives. Driver, who was drunk, convicted of involuntary manslaughter.

1996: E.COLI CONTAMINATION at Odwalla. Outbreak at former local company's plant kills child.

1995: MR. TWISTER. Santa Cruz's balloon-twisting clown garners national fame for feeding meters.

1994: U.S. REP. LEON PANETTA. Monterey representative named President Clinton's chief of staff.

1993: BRUCE McPHERSON. Former Sentinel editor, elected to Assembly in political upset.

1992: U.S. REP. LEON PANETTA. Monterey representative leads efforts to create Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

APTOS LITTLE LEAGUE: For a few weeks, the boys of summer captivated the county

By MARK CONLEY
SENTINEL SPORTS EDITOR

Who knew that people from West-side Santa Cruz gave a damn about the goings-on in Aptos?

Or that people in Felton cared. Or Bonny Doon. Or Watsonville. Or Capitola. For one rare stretch of a Santa Cruz County summer, all eyes turned toward Aptos.

What it took to achieve this shining moment in modern-day Western Civilization: 12-year-old people. In baseball cleats. With grass stains that no laundry detergent could touch.

Yes, it took a phenomenon like the Aptos Little Leaguers and their storybook run to youth baseball Mecca in Williamsport, Pa., to bring people together in this county. And for their consensus-building quality, this irresistible group of 12-year-olds has yet another distinction to place on its sagging mantle — the Sentinel's 2002 Sports Newsmaker.

"To see how this community came together to support these kids, and to see that everyone could put aside the petty little rivalries we have developed through our sports, was really rewarding," said Peter Connery, president of Aptos Little League. "The notion that any kid can do it, that the American dream for a 12-year-old is possible. I think it was really heartwarming for the entire community."



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Aptos Little Leaguers trail Tyler Raymond after his home run against Arizona put the locals in the Little League World Series.

ident of Aptos Little League. "The notion that any kid can do it, that the American dream for a 12-year-old is possible. I think it was really heartwarming for the entire community."

As the Aptos squad played in the Little League World Series on national television, a group of players from Watsonville who nearly made it to the

Please see **APTOS** on Page A8

VALERIE AND MIKE CORRAL: Raid reinvigorates WAMM, medical pot debate

By BRIAN SEALS
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

DANENPORT — Sept. 5 was a nightmare for Valerie and Mike Corral.

Just before dawn, federal agents stormed their Davenport-area home, ordering them and friend Suzanne Pfeil to the floor.

In the hours that followed, about 167 marijuana plants the Corrals say were destined for members of the Wo/men's Alliance for Medical Marijuana would be plucked from the

Valerie and Mike Corral on their raided marijuana farm.

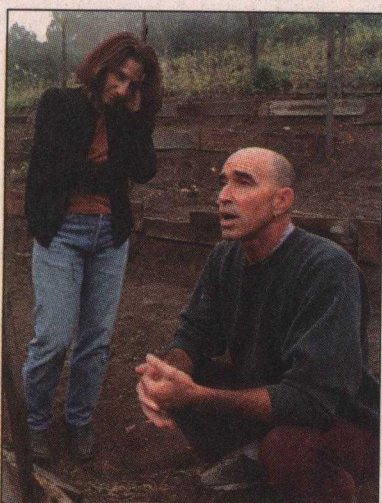
Dan Coyro/Sentinel

ground and the Corrals would find themselves in a federal jail.

The raid drew national publicity and put Santa Cruz front and center on the media map for two weeks, reigniting the national debate over medical marijuana and whether states have the power to enact laws the fly in the face of laws adopted by the federal government.

But the raid was hardly the death knell for the group. As 2003 begins, WAMM and its roughly 240 members continue their efforts, albeit with much less marijuana than before the raid, and now the Corrals are even deputized officers of the city of Santa Cruz.

Please see **CORRALS** on Page A9



NEWSMAKERS OF THE YEAR

CHRISTOPHER KROHN: S.C. mayor made national splash about Iraq and pot

By **DAN WHITE**
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

As mayor of Santa Cruz, Christopher Krohn faced the national media to speak out for medical marijuana and rally against a U.S. war on Iraq.

Every time he faced the TV cameras — and millions of viewers — his City Hall answering machine lit up. People cheered and sneered. One national pundit, replying to Krohn's comments, snapped back: "Don't smoke pot. Smoke Saddam."

It was a brief bit of national fame for Krohn, a soft-spoken mayor who seemed genuinely befuddled by all the fuss. But he also made a stir locally.

In his one-year term, Krohn, 45, went against most council members by opposing new downtown behavior rules drafted in response to hundreds of complaints about harassment and aggressive panhandling on Pacific Avenue.

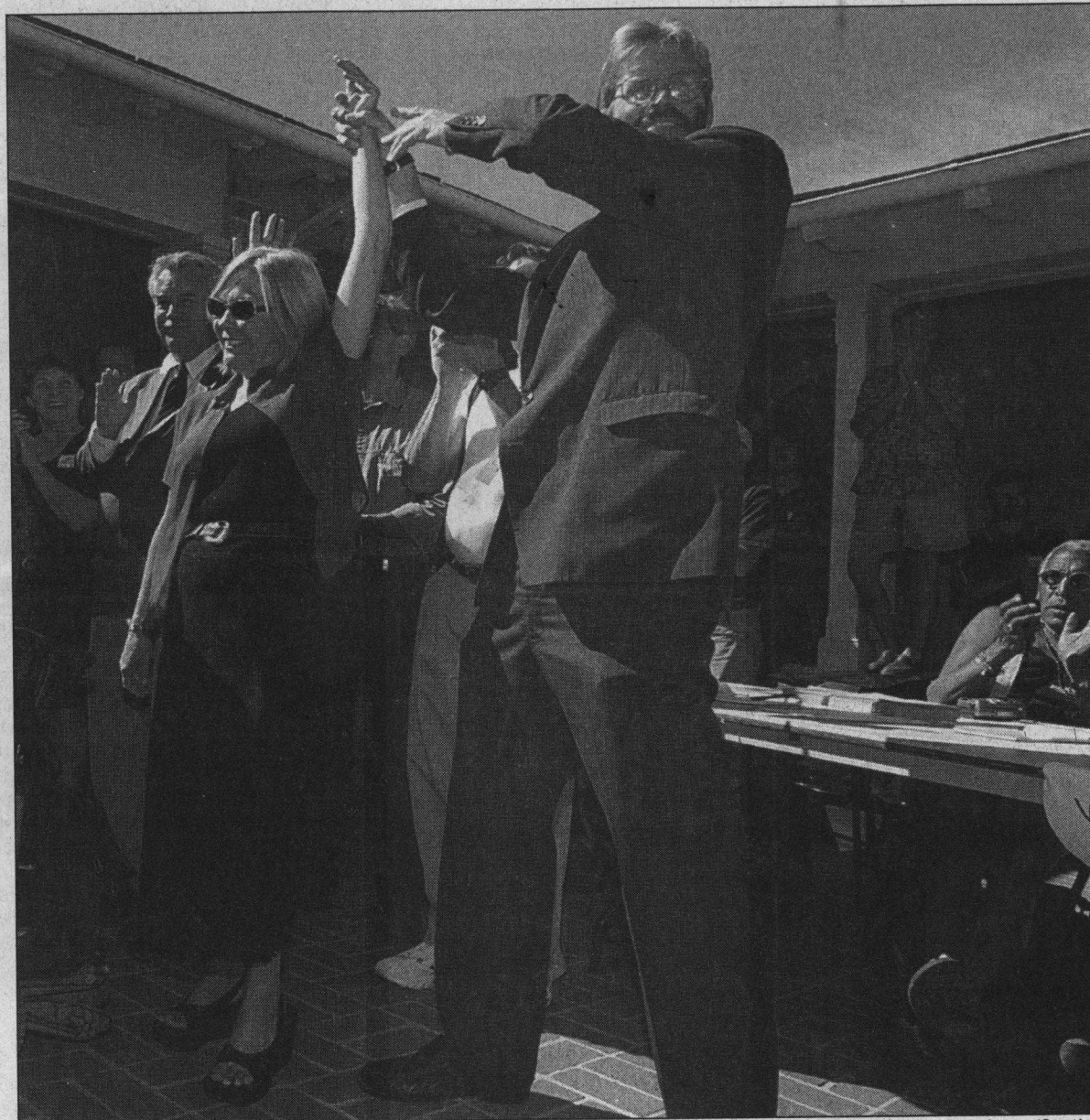
For his stands — and the resulting publicity — Krohn is the Sentinel's choice for 2002 Santa Cruz Newsmaker.

Krohn said the downtown rules were rushed and failed to target the worst problems, while potentially hurting people who were causing no harm. It was the kind of stance that won him praise from backers, and drew hoots from others who said he and then Councilman Keith Sugar were compromising the council's message of strength and unanimity.

He fought a losing battle to get a peace park built at the Town Clock traffic divider to memorialize victims of violence. Opponents called that project an example of "Krohnism" because it was to be named after a late activist who was Krohn's most influential political backer in the 1998 election.

In his year as mayor, Krohn learned that one man's hero is another man's buffoon.

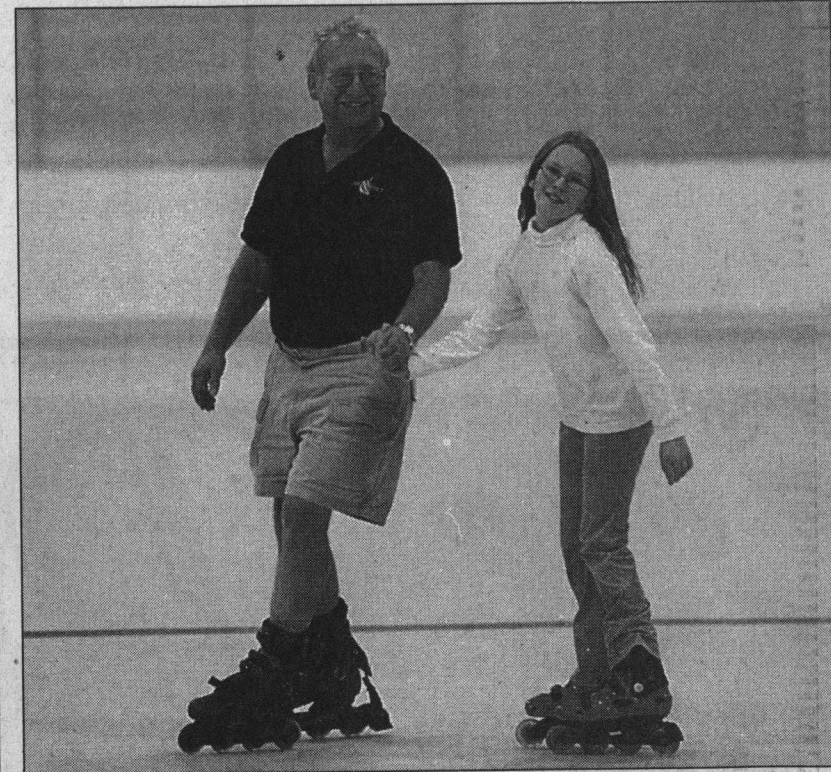
A frequent audience heckler labeled Krohn "The King of Pot" and the city was lampooned as pot-head central on the Jay Leno show.



Mayor Christopher Krohn at a Wo/men's Alliance for Medical Marijuana hand-out on the steps of City Hall.

that maybe I didn't expect to focus on," Krohn said. "I didn't expect necessarily to deal with those. But people wanted me and the council to speak out on those issues. And, at the same time, downtown issues were on the front burner."

He takes issue with the notion that his stands contributed to a flaky image of the city.



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Bob Slawinski takes a lap around the floor of the Scotts Valley Sports Center with his granddaughter Zoe Destores.

BOB SLAWINSKI: Antiques dealer developed new S.V. sports center

By **JONDI GUMZ**
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

After 20 years, Scotts Valley's roller rink was due for a facelift — and Bob Slawinski made it happen.

The veteran antiques dealer and auctioneer invested \$1 million to turn the aging facility into the Scotts Valley Sports Center, a multi-use arena for indoor soccer and lacrosse as well as roller hockey. Basketball hoops and volleyball nets are expected to be installed soon.

The project was a labor of love for Slawinski, who took up roller-blading to strengthen his back muscles. He enjoys skating with his grandchildren and encourages parents and grandparents to give in-line skates a try.

For his efforts — which go a long way toward creating the town center Scotts Valley has sought for years to create — Slawinski is the Sentinel's choice for 2002 Scotts Valley Newsmaker.

The sports center is closed this week but Slawinski is offering a free skate from 1-4 p.m. New Year's Day to encourage people who haven't seen the changes to take a look.

Everything is new, from the lighting

from the San Lorenzo Valley Chamber of Commerce. To showcase his auction wares, he built a redwood barn in Felton (sold a year ago to a growing Orthodox church). Now he uses the Web to promote his finds and advertise auctions, which take place four times a year.

He is known from California to Maine for his knowledge of Victorian antiques and what they are worth to collectors.

He's betting his investment in Scotts Valley will bring in trade shows, wedding receptions and corporate events. He charges \$500 for a two-hour event.

The place got glammed up in mid-November, with sparkling lights and holiday decorations, for a benefit that raised almost \$27,000 for a proposed municipal skatepark.

Other business owners say the improvements show Scotts Valley, which was mostly cow pastures and an airport 40 years ago, is ready to upscale.

Fitness instructor Chris Radich, who used to teach Jazzercise classes at the rink, moved to the Bethany College gym, saying she couldn't afford to rent the sports center for \$150 an hour.

But supporters hailed the council for standing up for Mike and Valerie Corral, co-founders of the Wo/Men's Alliance For Medical Marijuana, in the wake of a federal raid on their Davenport-area pot farm.

After Krohn left the board, the new council majority deputized the Corrals — an idea that Krohn had encouraged while he was still mayor.

"I think I was able, in this past year, to focus on some real issues

"Most people do have a good feeling of Santa Cruz," he said. "They don't roll their eyes about it."

Krohn gives no clues when asked about future employment or political aspirations.

"I've got a lot of irons in the fire, and I'm waiting for them to sort of gel," he said.

Contact Dan White at dwhite@santa-cruz.com.



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Krohn clowns around with Mr. Twister during a November visit to the downtown Santa Cruz Farmers Market with his daughters.

to the cafe to the bathrooms.

City officials are grateful Slawinski stepped up to meet a need for community sports facilities that the city couldn't afford to fill.

"It's like a gift to the community, a windfall for us and for the young people," Mayor Randy Johnson said. "I imagine he has other ways to spend a million dollars that might be more profitable."

Slawinski started out in Boulder Creek, where his accomplishments earned him Man of the Year honors

But the mayor doesn't have any complaints.

"That's the free-market system," Johnson said. "One way or the other, it'll find the right level."

Slawinski's next auction, featuring furniture, framed art and toys and trains, is scheduled for 10 a.m. on Presidents Day, Feb. 17. Consignments will be taken 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Jan. 8 and 23 at the sports center, 360 Kings Village Road.

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Little Leaguers already have major league scouts keeping an eye on them

By MARK CONLEY
SENTINEL SPORTS EDITOR

The registration table hasn't been open more than 20 minutes on a recent rain-soaked December Sunday, but business is already brisk.

"So far, we're cooking," says Kelly Christensen, a player agent for the Aptos Little League. "This is usually the day we get a lot of T-ballers, but we've had more older kids so far. There seems to be a renewed interest."

Six-year-old Danny Drysdale's interest doesn't need renewing. He caught the bug in T-ball last year, watched Aptos' big kids — its 11- and 12-year-olds — play on national television, and isn't about to forgo the next rung of the youth baseball ladder: Farm League.

"We watched those kids all summer long," says Danny's mom Julie. "We live in Seascap (where most of them live), so we see them quite a bit. It's funny, you say to yourself 'I saw that kid walking down the street just the other day and now he's a star.'"

And stardom would work just fine for a baseball-flinging tyke named Drysdale.

"He's got a pedigree," says Danny's mom. "Don Drysdale is his great uncle. He's my husband's father's cousin, if you can figure that out."

But even the late great Dodgers pitcher didn't get to play in Williamsport, Pa. And for all-comers to the registration table at Aptos Little League signups today, this is now the ultimate destination.

"Everyone's definitely a little more excited," says Mike Goldsmith, Danny's T-ball coach a year ago.

And why not? The kids who did what no kids from this area have done before are still the toast of the town — and beyond.

Four kids, in fact — Kevin Eichhorn, Kyle Anderson, Andrew Biancardi and Tyler Raymond — have their names implanted in the Boston Red Sox scout-

ing database.

The 12-year-olds were invited to take part in a scouting camp put on by the organization up in Oakland recently. After hemming and hawing about whether it was the right thing to do, the dads of Anderson, Eichhorn and Biancardi — the coaches of the World Series team — said what the heck.

Not only were most of the other kids 16, 17 and 18 years old, the pitchers — Eichhorn, Anderson and Raymond — threw off a mound 60 feet, 6 inches away.

"Here they are pitching from a Major League distance against these huge kids. Kyle pitched to this kid who was 21 years old and had an agent," says the elder Anderson. "He struck him out on a low, outside pitch."

Spoken like a true proud father and coach.

Those who put Aptos Little League on the map will be moving on to Mid-County Pony League in the spring. While it's still too early to tell whether Aptos Little League fever might create a surge in numbers next season, there's little question Little League will be missed by some who rode it all the way to the top.

"It's kinda frustrating leaving Little League because I've been playing it since I was like 5," said Drew McCauley, the catcher on the Williamsport team. "It's hard to leave a part of baseball you're so used to and move on so quickly."

Of course, McCauley, who along with most of the rest of that squad will move up to Pony League, has more practical reasons for shunning the change, too.

"I'm not excited about Pony because the basepaths are farther away," he admits. "You hit the ball to shortstop (and start running) and it's like 'when am I going to get there?'"

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Aptos

Continued from Page A1

LLWS themselves in 1986 gathered to watch from a restaurant in their hometown.

Earlier, as the Aptos squad played a crucial non-televized game in the Western Regionals in San Bernardino, phones in the Sentinel sports department rang off the hook. Voices from all the over the county couldn't wait to hear the news.

When the Sentinel announced it would run a special commemorative section on the Little Leaguers' run, local businesses from all over the county couldn't wait to advertise.

When the youngsters returned home from Williamsport — where they picked up a win over the team from Clemmons, N.C., before losing an emotional battle with Harlem — there was a parade in their honor, radio interviews to be done, chauffeured trips to Raiders' and Giants' games for pregame field appearances and even calls from major league scouts (Yes, scouts! See accompanying story).

Now, the majority of the team has settled back into its everyday Aptos life: playing flag football, shooting hoops, hitting the beach, easing into junior high life and still hanging out together often. For most, normalcy is good.

"At first when we came back it was crazy, for like the first month," said catcher Drew McCauley. "Now it's dying down. Now we're getting back to a normal life, being normal kids."

But what they accomplished was anything but normal, which is the only rational explanation for why 12-year-old kids are still getting hit up for autographs at the movie theater. Of the thousands of Little League programs in more than 100 countries around the world, only 16 make it to Williamsport each summer.

These fifth- and sixth-graders preparing for the rigors of acne and girl-liking were whisked away from the regional site on a chartered jet in the middle of the night without their parents. But only after spending a day yucking it up in front of the ESPN cameras and a PBS documentary crew that had followed them on a whim all the way from the district tournament



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Aptos fans who followed their team to Williamsport in August make a joyful noise to support their kids.

back in Santa Cruz — a place that seemed by then but a hazy memory for the families who had hopped on this Little League crazy train weeks before.

The beauty of it all is that the Aptos kids returned with perspective, not egos. Ask for a Williamsport highlight and it will come in the form of a well-executed cannon ball at the pool or a ping-pong match with opponents who laughed and joked just like they did — only in another language.

As McCauley put it, "The thing that made me most want to keep playing was going to different places, meeting other kids. It made me realize there are different people and different personalities. The way they act, the way they talk, the way they look."

For all but two from this group, the

Little League glory days are over. It's on to Pony League next season, where the competition will be bigger, as will the basepaths. Pitchers will have to sling the ball further to get it to home plate. The art of base stealing will be introduced. Metal spikes won't be off limits.

But not so fast. Before they flip to the next chapter of their not-quite-yet-Major-League-regulation field of dreams, the Aptos Little Leaguers will be soaking in the joys of simply being 11- and 12-year-old kids right here at home.

"They played flag football and had a blast. They're playing basketball now and having a blast," said Aptos manager Dave Anderson. "We're trying to say to them 'You've got your whole life

ahead of you to play baseball. Go have fun.'"

Anderson believes it's the parents who haven't quite yet returned to earth nearly four months later.

"We had a little Christmas party at one of the families' houses and every one brought photo journals they had put together," he said. "We were all going through them saying 'Wow, I never saw this picture before! I never saw this one ...'"

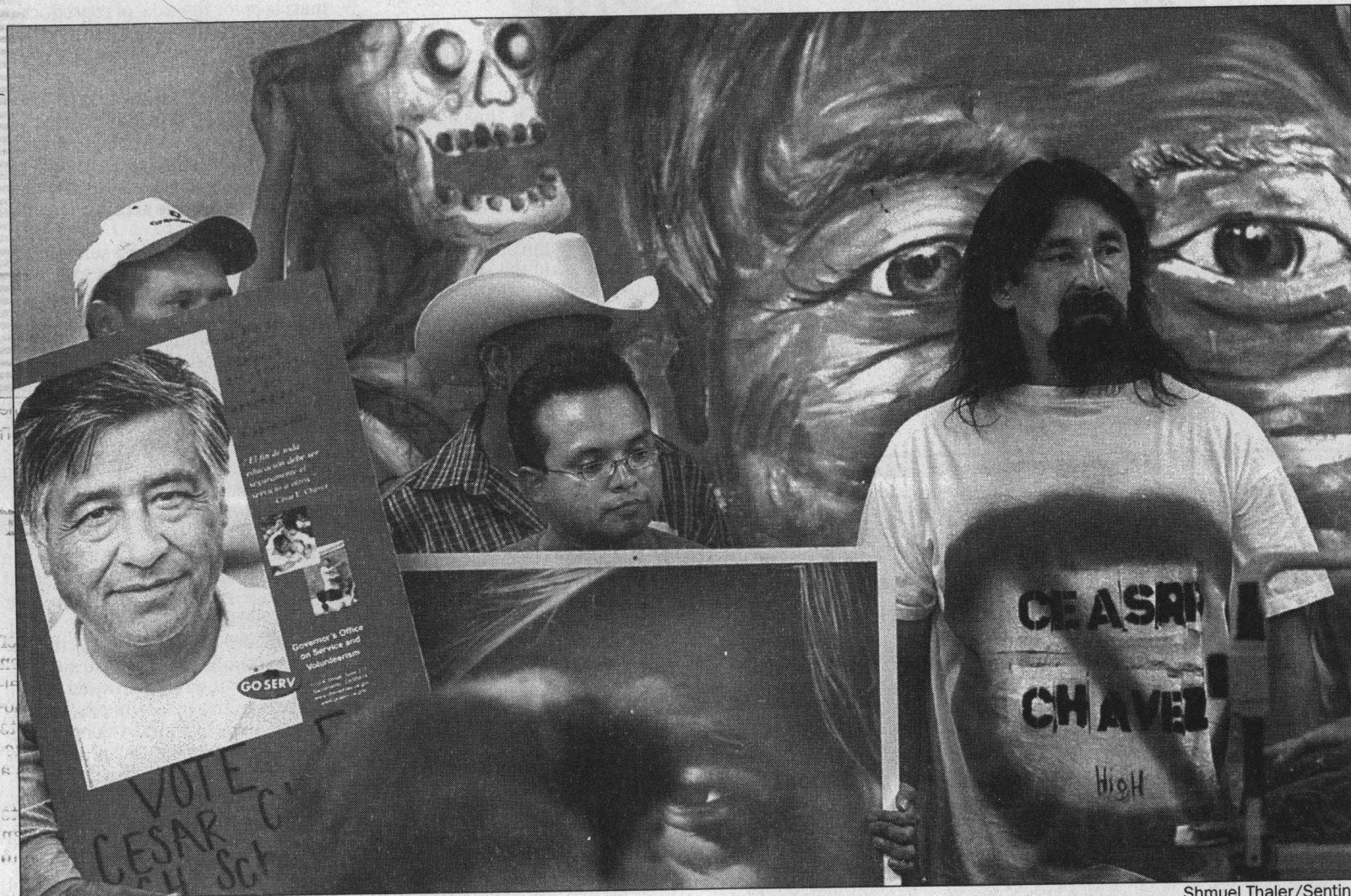
"For us, at least, it still gives us the chills."

But how to explain those tingly feelings being shared in other parts of the county? Grass-stained, cleated, 12-year-old people.

Contact Mark Conley at mconley@santa-cruz.com.

NEWSMAKERS OF THE YEAR

PVUSD TRUSTEES: Board names new high school, hires female superintendent



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

The Pajaro Valley Unified School District Board of Trustees meeting in August to decide the name of the new high school filled the district's headquarters with emotional proponents and opponents of naming the school in honor of Cesar Chavez.

By **DONNA JONES**
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

They celebrated breaking ground for a long-sought high school and the passage of an equally anticipated bond measure to improve campuses. They lost one school chief and hired another.

They squabbled among themselves, touched off an acrimonious community debate over naming the new high school

Roberts said. But when pressed to name one, she didn't pick the start of construction of a third high school near Harkins Slough Road — a project 10 years in the making — or passage of the 35-year-old-plus district's first school bond, a \$58 million success that came after two failures in the late 1990s.

"In a word, it's Dr. Mays," Roberts said.

Trustees made history in September when they hired the district's first

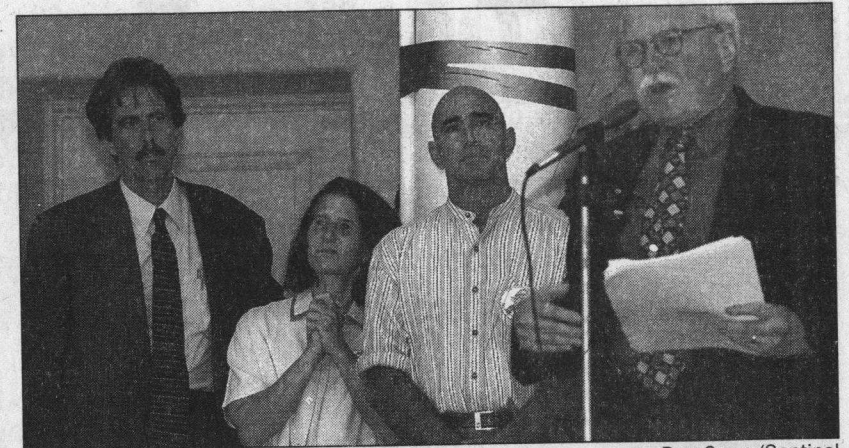
we can do right, and is very supportive of the board. ... She'll bring the board together."

Roberts said snagging Mays balanced the year against the things she called "devastating" — the naming of the high school, for example.

A proposal to honor legendary labor leader Cesar Chavez by putting his name on the high school reopened old wounds and gouged out some new ones between the Pajaro Valley's white and Latino communities

dissenting vote — in favor of Pajaro Valley High School.

Meanwhile, trustees Willie Yahiro of Watsonville and Evelyn Volpa of Aptos turned up the heat on the long-simmering issue of splitting the district. The idea of dividing the district had been on the backburner since Aptos parents lost a bid to secede when state officials denied their petition in 1998. But in June Yahiro and Volpa proposed taking another look at the idea to see if a different set-up



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

The Corrals are flanked by attorney Ben Rice and noted legal scholar Gerald Uelmens at WAMM's medical marijuana hand-out on the steps of City Hall.

Corrals

Continued from Page A1

Their roller-coaster ride of 2002 makes the Corrals — and the local medical marijuana movement — the Sentinel's 2002 County Newsmaker.

The couple shares the honor with the Aptos Little League team, which brought attention of a different kind to the county this year. The boys of summer made it to the Little League World Series, and played with an infectious enthusiasm and respect for the game that made county residents proud.

While the federal raid brought plenty of attention to WAMM, the Corrals say they would rather be quietly doing the work for which the cooperative was formed, caring for sick people, some of them terminally ill.

Twenty-five members have died during the past year, Valerie Corral said. "That's the big news," she said. "That should be the headlines."

In typical Santa Cruz style, the county Board of Supervisors and the Santa Cruz City Council passed resolutions condemning the bust. They were joined by elected leaders from U.S. Rep. Sam Farr to state Attorney General Bill Lockyer.

The City Council took its support a step further, allowing the group to dispense medical marijuana to about a dozen of its members on the steps of City Hall at an event that was part rally, part protest and part publicity stunt.

About 1,000 people crowded the City Hall courtyard, with a helicopter — rumored to be a federal Drug Enforcement Administration chopper — hovering high above, and a media horde clicking and recording every second.

To supporters, the couple and the

Though the Corrals were already well-known in the medical marijuana world, the raid pushed the couple into the national media spotlight and revived the medical-marijuana debate.

The New York Times, CNN, USA Today and a plethora of other national news outlets ate up the story.

The Corrals, who were released by the feds after a few hours in custody, still have not been charged. Moreover, rather than defending themselves in court, they have gone on the offensive by suing the federal government to get their pot plants back.

The first round of that effort failed earlier this month when U.S. District Judge Jeremy Fogel denied the request, but that was expected.

Getting the plants back is unrealistic and not even the point. The couple's goal, they say, is to push the medical marijuana issue all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The couple's odyssey with medical marijuana dates to 1973 when Valerie was involved in a car accident that left her with brain injuries that cause seizures. Years of traditional treatment only put her in a stupor. Then one day Mike read in a medical journal that marijuana could help relieve the seizures she was suffering.

She tried it, and within four years was off traditional medicines.

That set into motion the creation of WAMM. In the early '90s, the Corrals were busted by the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office and state agents. Charges against Valerie were dropped based on a medical-necessity defense. A 1993 raid resulted in no prosecution.

But as word spread, like-minded sick people came together to form the cooperative that now works cooperatively with county and city authorities.

The Corrals were at the forefront of

and resurrected the divisive issue of splitting the district.

Pajaro Valley Unified School District trustees grabbed headlines again and again this year, making the board the Sentinel's 2002 South County Newsmaker.

"So many trees fell on my watch," said trustee Carol Roberts, who presided over the board the past year. "There were some successes this year. It just seemed like a bumpy road to get there."

Those bumps made it difficult for her to recognize the high points,

female superintendent, Mary Anne Mays, to replace former superintendent John Casey. But it wasn't the gender precedent that convinced Roberts trustees chose well.

Mays, previously an administrator with a Washington, D.C.-based educational think tank, knows curriculum, understands budget issues and has the personal skills to navigate the sometimes tricky politics of the school district, she said.

"She's going to bring some stability to the district," Roberts said. "She's not a protagonist. She looks at what

Supporters — including many younger Latinos — equated Chavez's nonviolent struggle for farmworkers with the civil rights leadership of Martin Luther King Jr., and said his legacy would inspire students. But opponents, many long-time residents, remembered a different Chavez: a labor organizer who brought bitter strife to the previously peaceful Pajaro Valley fields in the 1970s. They called the proposal divisive.

In the end, trustees voted 6-1 — Latino Roberto Garcia casting the sole

vote against support lagging student achievement.

While igniting hopes in Aptos and grumbling in Watsonville, little was accomplished by the end of the year to pull the issue to the forefront. Other issues such as the superintendent search and the bond measure took precedence. But that will soon change. The board is expected to consider a study on separation in January.

Contact Donna Jones at djones@santa-cruz.com.

group were doing sanity work. To the DEA, though, it was just another pot bust, medicinal or not.

A DEA spokesman said the agency was simply enforcing federal drug laws in carrying out raids against WAMM and a string of other medical marijuana groups in California. While state law has made provisions for medical use, federal law hasn't.

"Anybody who is growing marijuana, distributing marijuana, shouldn't be surprised if we pay them a visit," DEA spokesman Richard Meyer told the Sentinel in early December, echoing a message repeated often since September.

the medical marijuana movement in the mid-1990s, helping to craft the state ballot measure approved by voters in 1996 that allows patients with a doctor's recommendation to use marijuana.

"We've worked diligently to change the law," Valerie Corral said. "To have the federal government uproot that is sorrowful."

"It's so hard to shake that old image," she said. "It's not people just laying around sitting on a couch. They actually use marijuana so they can just get off the couch."

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GARY SMITH: Fire chief fans flames of community activism

By RAMONA TURNER
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Aptos-La Selva Fire Chief Gary Smith is long-known for his devotion to community.

Smith arrived on the Central Coast in the mid-1980s to be Watsonville's fire chief. While there, he assisted the city manager, and got involved in numerous community organizations, such as the Spirit of Watsonville, which puts on the city's Fourth of July celebration, and Si Se Puede, a residential drug-treatment program.

Now, he's showing that same involvement in Aptos. That's why he's the Sentinel's 2002 Mid-County Newsmaker.

Smith, 51, started his firefighting career in Davis in 1971 and gained an international reputation for his work dealing with the safe handling of ammonia — a dangerous chemical

used in many cold storage and agriculture operations.

He and a retired assistant fire chief from Louisiana organized an annual ammonia safety summit in Watsonville dedicated to teaching those who use ammonia, as well as firefighters, how to handle it safely and deal with ammonia fires.

Now in Aptos, where he's been chief since 1999, Smith is known for his community outreach and getting the job done.

"He came and hit the ground running," said Karen Hibble of the Aptos Chamber of Commerce. "He came with great ideas and enthusiasm and the ability to see what the needs of the community are and how to take care of them."

For example, for years the community had been pushing for removal of the decrepit Terrible Herbst gas station in the heart of Aptos Village.

"It looked like we were in a war

zone," Hibble said.

But this year, Smith played a big roll in having the long-closed station removed.

"It's Gary's magic," Hibble said. "Gary takes his job to heart. He never says, 'No we can't do that.' He always tries to find a way to get it done."

Other projects Smith had a hand in include cleaning up the grounds around Aptos High School and starting community emergency-response teams, the idea of which is to have neighbors help neighbors during disasters.

Smith was one of the chamber's Men of the Year this year, for his accessibility to the public and his hands-on, problem-solving attitude. He shared the honor with sheriff's Sgt. Joe Hemmingway.

In 2003, Smith would like to expand the community emergency-response program Aptos-wide, continue to help the community solve problems, support efforts to consolidate the county's

many fire departments, and improve his department's ability to offer aid to other public safety agencies, such as the state lifeguards.

After retirement — he plans on calling it quits in a year or two — Smith plans to keep up his community involvement.

"I hope he does," Hibble said. "He's an inspiration."

The firefighters he leads feel the same way.

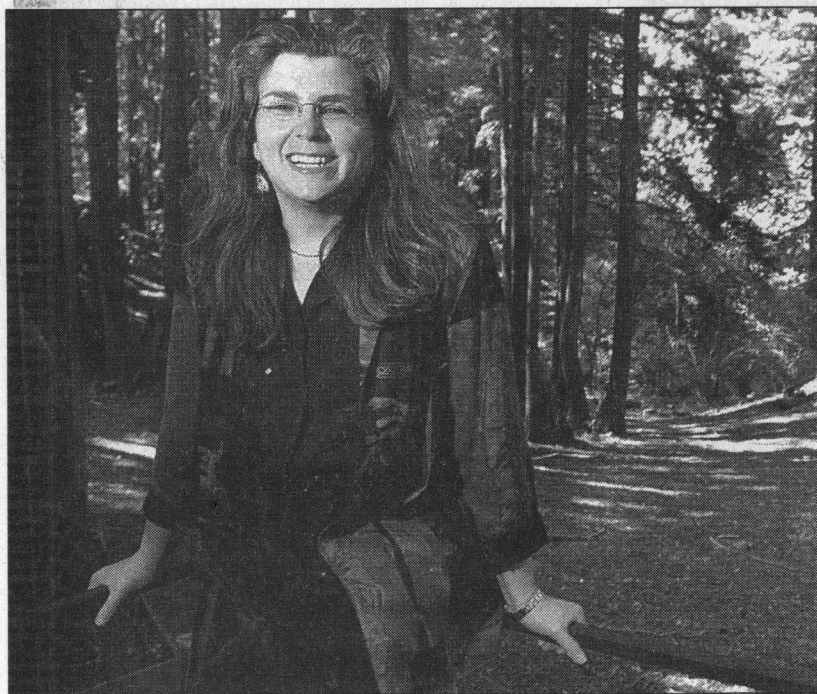
"What's funny about Gary is he comes in around 4:30 or 5 o'clock every morning," said Drew Johnston, president of the firefighters union. "And a lot of the time he'd be there at night when we go to bed. He puts in phenomenal hours. He's a good guy who cares about people and the community. I don't know how he finds the time to do all the stuff he does."

Contact Ramona Turner at rturner@santa-cruz.com.



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Aptos-La Selva Fire Chief Gary Smith is known for his service to his community.



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Risa Brainin came to the glen at UCSC to take the reins as artistic director for Shakespeare Santa Cruz.

RISA BRAININ: New blood brought to Shakespeare Santa Cruz

By WALLACE BAINE
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Paul Whitworth casts an enormous shadow from his perch in Santa Cruz. Luckily, it doesn't quite reach the Midwest.

Chicago-born Risa Brainin — whose theater career has landed her in Indiana, Missouri and Minnesota — was the choice in 2002 to succeed Whitworth, albeit temporarily, as artistic director of Shakespeare Santa Cruz.

Replacing a man of Whitworth's stature in a company that has become synonymous with his name is difficult enough. Knowing he'll be coming back — Whitworth is on a two-year sabbatical and is set to return to his job in 2004 — could intimidate the hardiest of souls.

But with her first year at the helm, Brainin proved that she was more than a mere caretaker with a brash and successful season that invigorated the company. For that, she is the Sentinel's choice for 2002 Arts Newsmaker.

Among Brainin's accomplishments was to bring Chekhov to SSC for the first time. How that happened is an illustration not only of her idea-driven enthusiasm for the magic of live theater but of her untroubled attitude in filling Whitworth's doublet.

Brainin first visited the spiritual home of Shakespeare Santa Cruz — the redwood-shrouded Festival Glen on the UC Santa Cruz campus — in the summer of 2001 where she saw a production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

Brainin had come to Santa Cruz with the ghost of Anton Chekhov hovering at her shoulder; she had embraced the great Russian writer and holds him in much the same regard that Whitworth has for Shakespeare.

The minute she saw the Glen, she immediately decided that it was the ideal setting for Chekhov's "The Sea Gull."

"It just hit me like a bolt of lightning," she said. "I have to do 'The Sea Gull' here."

Later, on a flight from Denver to San

Jose, she struck up a conversation with a stranger who turned out to be Josh Gitomer, leader of the Santa Cruz-based Mount Madonna Choir. From that chance meeting, Gitomer and his choir were brought in to provide incidental music for the SSC production of "The Sea Gull."

"Paul and I are so different," Brainin said. "Our approaches are different. Our backgrounds are different. So I didn't really feel like I was competing with him, which made it a lot easier. If I had been a British director with a background in the Royal Shakespeare Company or something, comparisons would have been made. But that really wasn't a problem for a nice Jewish girl from the Midwest like me."

Still, Brainin oversaw a season in keeping with SSC's established standards of excellence, from a snappy, retro and exquisitely funny "Merry Wives of Windsor" to a dashing version of Shakespeare's "Coriolanus."

She did so by bringing in a battalion

of new faces, choosing to use directors and actors that she had worked with in her career rather than those she might have inherited.

In 2003, Brainin's second and final season, Shakespeare Santa Cruz will stage "Hamlet," "The Comedy of Errors" and Noel Coward's "Private Lives," the first Coward production in SSC history.

Brainin learned early on in her tenure at SSC that artistic risk was not only tolerated but encouraged in Santa Cruz. She took that lesson to heart.

"The thing that I figured out about Santa Cruz audiences was that they accept you for who you are. Risk is the courage to be yourself, not to go way out on a limb or try to stage the wackiest, craziest play you can. I don't think anybody expected, or even wanted, me to be Paul Whitworth. The whole attitude was, 'Go out there and do what you believe in. Don't be shy.'"

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