



April 2015

Serving the Villages and Neighborhoods of Irvine

Volume 2, No. 4

# Publisher's Perspective

Part Two - Special Investigative Report



As the publisher of this newspaper, I take pride in the outstanding investigative journalism of Dr. Harvey H. Liss regarding the dangerous location of the proposed \$300 million Portola High School.

The fact that the School Board, the City Council (on a 3-2 vote), and the State Department of Toxic Substances Control approved and seemingly encouraged the placement of this school next to dangerous, hazardous chemicals is more than perplexing.

In the face of mounting evidence of risks to health and safety, the School Board has not only proceeded with construction (delayed for a period by the removal of 78 truckloads of previously unknown hazardous waste discovered in the initial construction), but has also tried to keep the findings secret from the public, as reported in Harvey Liss's article.

The School Board's attempt at secrecy just reflects its attitude toward the whole question of dangerous toxins at the proposed site. In a February 3, 2014 letter responding to questions concerning the toxic chemicals located in the nearby landfill, School Superintendent Terry Walker stated: "It should be noted that the landfills are not hazardous waste landfills as termed in your letter." What kind of nonsense is that?

Why are these public officials proceeding with this clearly questionable site when other better-suited sites are surely available in Irvine? Who, besides the developers, benefits? These are questions that we hope to answer in future issues of this newspaper. Congratulations to Harvey Liss for his persistence on behalf of the future students, teachers and employees at Portola High.

*Franklin J. Lunding*

Franklin J. Lunding • Publisher and Editor  
www.IrvineCommunityNews.org

A lawyer and businessman, Frank Lunding has served on the Irvine Planning Commission and, prior to that, as Chair of the Irvine Transportation Commission.

# TOXICS AT NEW HIGH SCHOOL SITE THREATEN \$300 MILLION PROJECT?

*Records Show Officials Concealed and Downplayed Toxic Contamination*

by Harvey H. Liss

A year ago, when a former senior Orange County school facilities official was asked his opinion about Site A — the designated location for Irvine's next high school — he looked at the map and said, "The Irvine School District has chosen the very worst place in Orange County to build a school." According to this long-time official, locating Irvine's next high school at the former El Toro Marine



(Above) Just 250 yards from the future Portola High School is a capped, toxic waste dump that will remain a restricted area. (Right) Portola High School (Site A) is precisely at the end of runways where "it's well known that the military dumped everything," according to a former Orange County school facilities official.



Nov. 2014 discovery of contaminated soil  
Capped landfill in IRP Site 3  
Site A

Source: Google Earth Pro 2011

Corps Air Station — just 750 feet from an old military toxic waste dump (IRP Site 3) and near the end of runways that were used for half a century — "would be a terrible mistake."

Why? "Because," he said, "It's well known that the military dumped everything at the end of the runways — it was a dangerous place for kids when the Airbase was operational." And it's a dangerous place to locate a school today. He wondered aloud "why anyone in their right mind" would put a school there, "when it's virtually guaranteed that there will be problems sometime in the future."

The future is now. Irvine Unified School District's (IUSD) Portola High School is in the preliminary stages of construction at Site A, along Irvine Boulevard just outside the northeastern edge of the Great Park. Now, new discoveries of toxic contamination raise many questions about the earlier IUSD and State certification of Site A as absolutely safe for a \$300 million high school.

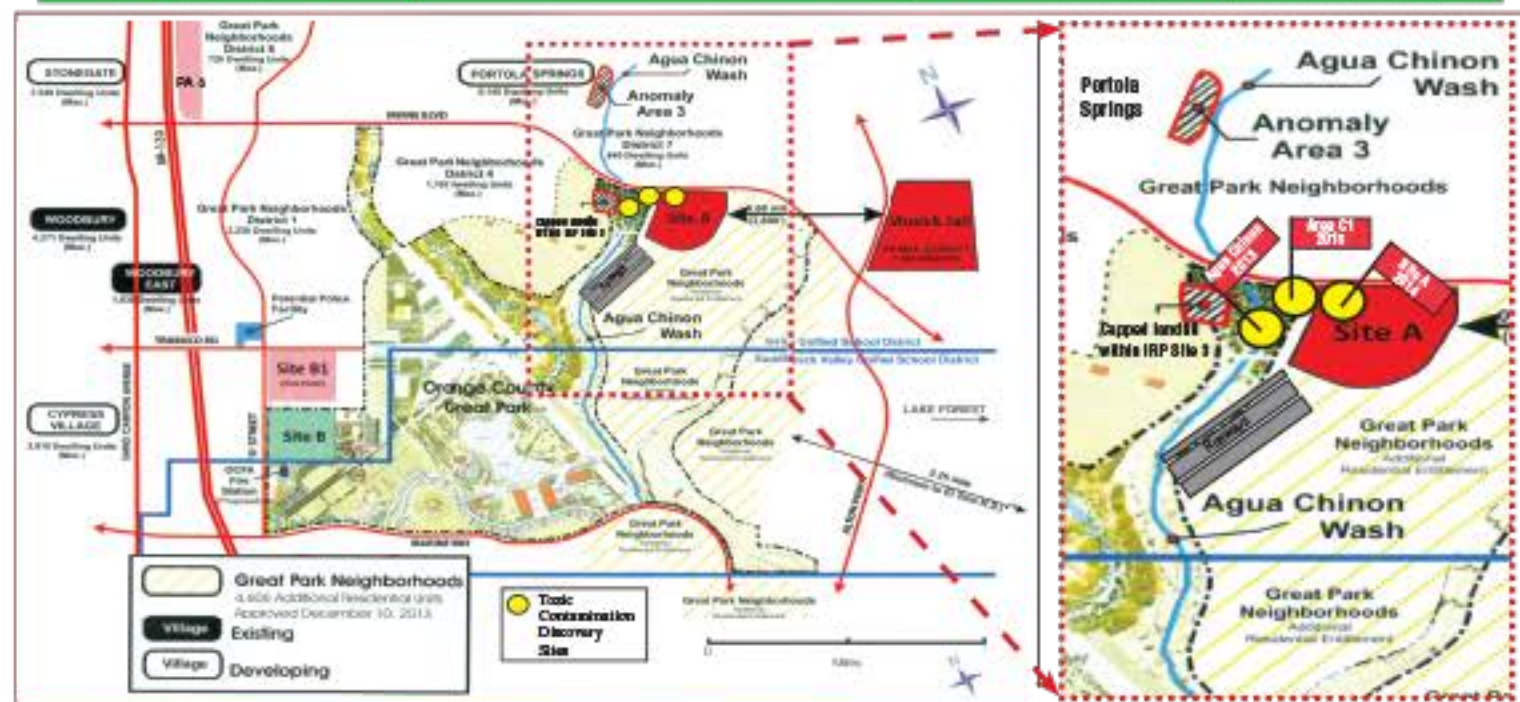
### A Toxics Email Trail

On Nov. 13, 2014, when construction workers were excavating soil to install a massive concrete storm drain, they encountered toxic contamination, later described as "stained soil," and stopped work. An email later revealed that the contaminated soil stretched 29 feet onto the Portola High School site; and the contamination permeated the soil between a depth of 15 and 28 feet. By the time the toxic discovery was removed for testing and disposal, a total of 78 truckloads of contaminated soil had been hauled away.

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This map (left) of the northeast area of Irvine includes residential villages surrounding the Great Park. Also shown are three previously considered High School sites — PA 6, Site B1, and Site B. All three were rejected by the School Board and developers FivePoint Communities and the Irvine Company in favor of Site A. The enlarged inset area (right) includes Portola High School Site A and the nearby, capped toxic waste dump within IRP Site 3. Also denoted — ● — are the locations where significant toxic contamination was found.



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On Nov. 20, Denise Clendening, the environmental consultant to IUSD, described the contaminated soil as “non-hazardous.” Two days earlier, David Richter, Principal Environmental Scientist at Niayo & Moore, the City’s own geotechnical and environmental consultant, wrote: “We have reviewed analytical results...These results indicate between 1,400 and 3,700 parts per million (ppm) of petroleum hydrocarbons generally in the diesel range, with some volatile constituents and naphthalenes possibly indicating jet fuels.” [Under California’s Proposition 65, naphthalene is listed as “known to the State to cause cancer.”]

So alarming was this discovery that in his Nov. 18 email Richter provided a strong directive to City staff: “Based on the discovery of site soil contamination that was not anticipated by the DTSC [State Department of Toxic Substances Control] school site review and approval process, we recommend that the City assure that both the DTSC and the Irvine Unified School District are informed of this changed condition.”

Worried about the “changed condition,” he added these critical words: “Based on our experience, it is our expectation that the DTSC will reconsider its prior approval of the PEA [Preliminary Environmental Assessment] and will...only re-certify the site for school construction after it is satisfied that there is no significant risk to students or school workers.” [Emphasis added.]

This call for decertification and more thorough testing of Site A and the State’s reconsideration of its prior approval of Site A went unheeded by the City, by the School District, and by the DTSC. For nearly four months — from November 2014 through February 2015 — the seriousness of the toxic contamination remained secret, until a Public Records Act request filed by this reporter brought the Richter memo out from the shadows.

**A Pattern of Secrecy**

When former Councilmember Larry Agran, a long-time outspoken opponent of Site A, was told of the Richter memo, he questioned why this was not immediately put in front of the City Council and School Board in public meetings this past November. “If it had been publicly disclosed last November, perhaps the headlong rush to build the new high school would have been halted so more comprehensive testing for toxic contamination could begin. Obviously, the previous testing program was inadequate.”

The Portola High School toxics controversy reflects what Agran calls “a pattern of secrecy that risks the health and safety of future teachers, staff and students.” He makes a “smoking gun” comparison of two Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs) that describe entirely differently the same toxic waste dump that is just 750 feet northwest of Site A, where Portola High is being built.

The 2003 EIR for the Great Park, prepared by the City, described IRP Site 3 as including,

→ continued on page 3 →

“municipal solid waste, scrap metal, incinerator ash, construction debris, paint residues, unspecified city wastes, industrial solvents, hydraulic fluid, and engine coolants.” Yet, the 2012 EIR prepared for Heritage Fields/FivePoint Communities to support its residential entitlement proposal for an additional 4,600 houses, deleted all reference to the contents of the landfill. It described IRP Site 3 as simply “the original former MCAS El Toro landfill, which was operated as a cut-and-fill disposal facility.”

When Agran and others tried to raise questions at City Council meetings, at School Board meetings, and in communication with IUSD officials, they were either ignored or scolded by Superintendent Terry Walker for getting in the way of building and opening Portola High School by September of 2016.

Agran says, “The low-point for me as a City Councilmember was November 26, 2013, when the City Council abandoned all pretense of good land-use planning. On a 3-to-2 vote — I was joined only by Councilmember Beth Krom in voting “No” — Mayor Steven Choi and Councilmembers Christina Shea and Jeff Lalloway rammed-through approval of the questionable EIR and a massive amendment of the City’s General Plan that allowed FivePoint Communities to build 10,000 homes — many thousands beyond what was originally planned — at the Great Park. Worse still, it also put the new high school at Site A.”

“Moreover,” said Agran, “I later learned there had been a major toxic contamination discovery in the Agua Chino Wash adjacent to Site A just a month before our November 26, 2013 City Council meeting. Agran concluded, “The nature and magnitude of that discovery — it included 1,2,4-Trimethylbenzene, a carcinogen, at nearly five times the unsafe level — was never brought to the Council’s attention.”

Agran added, “Approving that sanitized, falsified EIR may be catastrophic. It risks the health and welfare of tens of thousands of future students, faculty and staff at Portola High — and nearby homeowners, too — by risking exposure to toxic waste contaminants from IRP Site 3 or other nearby sources, either off or on Site A.”

**Legal Liability**

The “exposure” to toxic contamination isn’t only a physical matter. The City, as well as IUSD and others, risk tremendous legal liability for widespread disease, disability and deaths caused among faculty, staff and students from exposure to toxins emanating from City property.

Agran, a public interest and environmental lawyer, commented, “If, for example, a ‘cancer

cluster’ or other disease clusters begin to emerge at Portola High School — just like they have at Beverly Hills High School and Malibu High School — the City of Irvine could be looking at open-ended liability possibly reaching into the billions of dollars, certainly enough to bankrupt our entire City.”

Agran asked the City Manager and the City’s special legal counsel for environmental affairs to confirm this understanding of the law. When the City’s special counsel Robert Thornton did so, Agran asked that the Thornton memo be released to the public. The Mayor and City Council — again on a 3-to-2 vote — refused to do so. The special counsel’s memo and analysis — setting forth the laws and theories under which the City of Irvine could be held liable for any harm caused by toxic exposure — remains locked up at City Hall, unavailable to the taxpayers who paid for it.



Nov. 26, 2013 - Emile Haddad (l), CEO of FivePoint Communities, and Councilmember Jeff Lalloway (r) conferring prior to the sweeping environmental and entitlement approval that put the high school at Site A.

**More Possible Contamination Nearby, More Toxics Testing**

Perhaps jarred by the discovery of toxic contamination at the storm drain construction site and at the Portola High School site, or because of pressure from others, the Department of the Navy (DON) had commenced preparations for testing of a portion of IRP Site 3 — known as Area C1 — that extends completely under Irvine Blvd. onto property owned by FivePoint Communities, where many hundreds of houses are now slated to be built.

At its Feb. 25, 2015 meeting, a report of this work was presented to the Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) — a local technical committee organized by the DON (with participation of the federal EPA, the State of California, and local citizens) to oversee the cleanup of the El Toro Airbase, a designated federal Superfund clean-up site since 1990.

Waste disposal Area C1, within IRP Site 3, was

never excavated and consolidated onto the main (now capped) landfill. This is apparently because it lies under Irvine Blvd. and was inaccessible.

A preliminary work plan was presented to the RAB. The work plan involves subsurface probes to determine the nature and extent of the waste. After scheduled field testing in April and May, a report on findings and recommendations for proceeding is expected in June.

**What’s Next?**

When asked about this latest development, former City Councilmember Larry Agran said, “It’s good that the Department of the Navy is going to do some additional testing. But let’s face it, with each new discovery we’re learning that the toxic contamination and risks to future teachers, staff and students are even greater than we thought earlier.” “Meanwhile,” he lamented, “IUSD and the School Board are pushing ahead — spending nearly \$2 million per week building a school on a risky, contaminated site.”

When asked what’s next, Agran said, “I don’t know. Of course, I think construction should be halted right now — just as the City’s geotechnical and environmental consultant, David Richter, recommended. At this point, I think there should be a thorough investigation of this entire matter — by truly independent sources.”

Agran pulled out his notebook and pointed to a quote from the *Safe School Siting Toolkit*, published by the national Center for Health, Environment and Justice. He then read aloud its categorical admonition that citizens and governing bodies “should exclude from consideration sites which are on top of or within 1,000 feet of a state or federal Superfund or Brownfield site, or a site where hazardous or garbage waste was land filled.” Agran added, “It couldn’t be more plain, could it?”

When asked whether it’s just too late to change course, or even to stop construction and start doing more testing, Agran said, “It’s late all right, but it’s never too late to do the right thing.”

*Dr. Harvey H. Liss, a former Irvine Planning Commissioner, holds a Ph.D. in Applied Mechanics and is a California Licensed Civil Engineer. Dr. Liss is a longtime resident of Woodbridge, the iconic Irvine village he helped design in the 1970s.*

**For more, see Reporter’s Notebook by Harvey Liss on page 4**

**Next time - Part 3**



# REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK — NOTES TO SELF by Harvey H. Liss

These are just a few pieces of the puzzle I've been researching to explain why — against all reason and good sense — IUSD has insisted on Site A for its new high school, manufacturing all sorts of dubious rationales. Unfortunately, many pieces of the puzzle are still missing.

The remarkable emails, reproduced below, were obtained by a California Public Records Act request.

## CULTURE OF CONCEALMENT

On Jan. 5, 2015, at 5:22pm, Harvey Liss sent an email to Rana Georges, Project Manager at the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), asking for information regarding the contamination discovered on Nov. 13, 2014, during trenching for a storm drain next to the school site, Site A.

The next morning, on Jan. 6, at 8:40am, Denise Clendening, the environmental consultant to the IUSD, sent Rana Georges the lab report dated Nov. 17, 2014, that showed diesel at 385 times that of the EPA's Regional Screening Level (RSL), and naphthalene, a known carcinogen, at 92% of the RSL.

Twenty-two minutes later, at 9:02am, Clendening sent an email to Lloyd Linton, IUSD Executive Director for Facilities & Construction, and Lorrie Ruiz, IUSD Director of Facilities, that stated: "Rana from the DTSC called this morning asking for an update since she received an email from Harvey [Liss] that contaminated soil was found adjacent to the school site during trenching...I just sent to her the data from Jim [Werkmeister of FivePoint Communities] from the stockpile from an email he sent on Nov. 18th...Rana said she would keep us posted on further communication with Harvey."

Two days later, on Jan. 8th, Clendening then sent an email to Ruiz and Linton, stating: "Based on the email exchange between Harvey and Rana, I do not believe the district should send him the laboratory report. I spoke with Rana this morning and we agreed that Harvey will try to make a big deal out of this...If Harvey wants information on the impacted soil in the storm drain, how much was excavated, a map, etc. he should ask 5Pt [FivePoint Communities] and/or the city. If Harvey shows up at a school board meeting a prepared response might be good to have."

### FROM TOXIC TO "NONHAZARDOUS" IN TWO DAYS

On Nov. 13, 2014, David Richter, consulting scientist for the City of Irvine, sent an email to City staff, reporting on the initial test results from the storm drain excavation at Site A. He noted the dangerous concentrations of petroleum hydrocarbons (diesel) and naphthalenes. Naphthalenes are known carcinogens (cancer-causing agents).

Two days later, on Nov. 20, Denise Clendening, environmental consultant for the School District, emailed school facilities officer Lloyd Linton at IUSD and described the same test results in benign terms. Clendening invoked the term "nonhazardous" twice.

Email from David Richter to Gregg Gipe, City of Irvine, 18-Nov-2014

We have reviewed analytical results of samples reportedly collected by ENGEO yesterday from the excavation bottom and stockpile prior to the replacement of the stockpile into the excavation. These results indicate between 1,400 and 2,700 parts per million (ppm) of petroleum hydrocarbons generally in the diesel range, with some volatile constituents and naphthalenes, possibly indicating jet fuels.

Email from Denise Clendening to Lloyd Linton, IUSD, 20-Nov-2014

I think it might be prudent if I called Rana at the DTSC and indicate that nonhazardous petroleum impacted soil has been found adjoining the school site that is being removed... we will be taking samples to confirm that it is non hazardous after it is removed.

### Center for Health, Environment & Justice Safe School Siting Toolkit

2. Categorical Exclusions for Candidate Sites  
Candidate sites for new school facilities (whether by new construction or leasing) shall exclude from consideration sites which are on top of or within 1,000 feet of a state or federal Superfund or Brownfield site, or a site where hazardous or garbage waste was land filled, or where construction and demolition materials were disposed of.

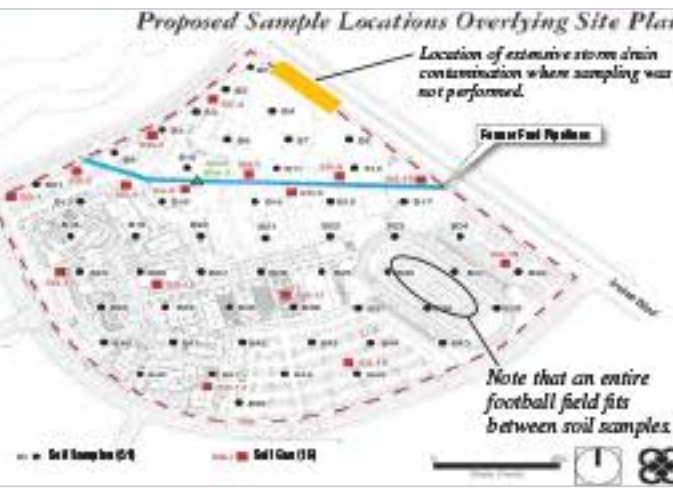
*The toxic dump at site 3 — is much cleaner than adjacent completely ignored.*

### WHO DELETED THE TOXICS FROM THE EIR?

In 2008, an EIR prepared by the City of Irvine for the GreatPark states: "...IRP Site 3 (Original Landfill) covers approximately 20 acres and operated between 1943 and 1955. It is believed to contain municipal solid waste, scrap metal, incinerator ash, construction debris, paint residues, unspecified oily wastes, industrial solvents, hydraulic fluid and engine solvents."

In 2012, an EIR prepared by the City of Irvine for Heritage Fields states: "...IRP Site 3 (Original Landfill) covers approximately 20 acres and operated between 1943 and 1955. It was the original former NICAS El Torro landfill, which was operated as a wet-vent-til disposal facility."

27 people were involved in writing the 2012 EIR, and 32 people were consulted, including 3 from Heritage Fields/FivePoint Communities. To this day, inquiries to the City — asking who replaced the critical sentence (in red) in the 2008 EIR that described the toxic contents with the benign sentence (in green) in the 2012 EIR — have gone unanswered.



This soil test sampling diagram from IUSD, submitted to and approved by the DTSC (CA Dept of Toxic Substances Control) for Site A shows sample spacing leaving untested 190 ft x 380 ft areas between samples. Worse, the testing depth was only 6 inches for 12 of 51 locations, and just 3 feet for another 3 locations. Remaining sample depths are unknown. 2in of 16 soil gas samplers were from a maximum depth of 15 feet and only 6 samplers from 40 feet.

### THE NOSE KNOWS

On the afternoon of Jan. 31, 2015, I visited the site of the storm drain excavation where all the contaminated material had been ostensibly removed. As the wind shifted back and forth, a moderate petrochemical odor was obvious at the fence. Testing should include air sampling.

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## DON'T JUST GET ANGRY ... GET GOING!

### SIGN THE ONLINE SAFE SCHOOLS PETITION

#### GO TO:

[www.IrvineCommunityNewsandViews.org/safe-schools/](http://www.IrvineCommunityNewsandViews.org/safe-schools/)

The Irvine Safe Schools Petition calls upon the Irvine School Board and the Irvine City Council to suspend construction of Portola High School (at Site A, along Irvine Boulevard) until independent, comprehensive testing for toxic contamination can be conducted at Site A, followed by remedial action to ensure that Site A is — and will always be — a safe site for Irvine's next High School.

*The Safe Schools Petition is a special project of Planning 2020, Inc., a California non-profit corporation dedicated to research, education and advocacy for planning excellence in Irvine. The Safe Schools Petition is a cooperative project with Irvine Community News & Views*

# CITYWATCH



## SCHOOL WATCH by Carolyn Inmon

### LEADERSHIP!

Where have all the leaders gone? Is leadership merely a title? Or is it the courage to do what is right, even when it means admitting you were wrong? As president of the teachers' union at Mount San Antonio Community College, and as statewide president of the 11,000-member Community College Association, I know that union representatives not only negotiate for salaries, they also negotiate for good working conditions.

The most important working condition is safety. Here in Irvine, we find that there is mounting evidence of serious and possibly widespread toxic contamination at the site of Portola High School, now in the preliminary stages of construction.

How could this happen? Where were the Irvine School District leaders when we needed them?

- Where were the IUSD administrators who were charged with identifying and recommending a clean, safe site?
- Where were the Board members who should have demanded a better 40-acre school site from developers, instead of "going along to get along."
- Where were the union officials — the Irvine Teachers Association and the School Employees Association — who should have been protecting their members, and everyone else, from health risks?
- And where were the PTA leaders who should have insisted that state PTA standards and guidelines for safe school sites be followed?

Where were they? It appears they were in denial. Despite growing evidence to the contrary, our "leaders" have continued to insist publicly that the Portola High School site is an excellent one and will not harm our children or anyone else at the site. This is not just disappointing, it's dangerous. Understandably, it makes me and many people angry.

From the perspective of a teacher, I am particularly worried about the safety of our teachers and staff. Of course, I'm concerned about the health and welfare of Irvine's children. But the teachers and staff at the High School will be there year in and year out — for 10, 20, or even 30 years. They will be sustaining long-term exposure to toxins and carcinogens (cancer-causing agents) during all that time.

I know that these dedicated teachers will deliver the superior education that Irvine families expect. But an outstanding education occurring at an unhealthy location is unacceptable.

For months — and even years — Irvine's school leaders and City leaders have been denying that a problem exists. Then, when denial was no longer possible, they minimized and rationalized findings of toxic contamination, even as they rushed approval of the Portola High School site.

We need bold leaders who are willing to confront their past mistakes and face up to the fact that we have a serious problem. It's time to stop construction of Portola High School — right now. It's time to conduct comprehensive soil testing and not resume construction of the High School unless and until the site is certified to be safe and clean, in keeping with Irvine's traditionally high standards.

Carolyn Inmon is a retired Irvine teacher. She has taught at virtually every grade level, from K - 12, as well as community college. She served as President of the Community College Association from 2005 - 2007. Carolyn welcomes your comments and ideas at:

[Carolyn@IrvineCommunityNews.org](mailto:Carolyn@IrvineCommunityNews.org)

## MOORLACH WINS IN ELECTION DAY UPSET

By Luis Alemán



Former Orange County Supervisor John Moorlach won the March 17th special election for the 37th State Senate District. Moorlach faced state Assemblyman Don Wagner (R-Irvine), Naz Namazi, and Democratic write-in candidate Louise Stewardson. Moorlach won with 50.3% of the vote, followed by Wagner's 44.0%, Namazi's 3.5%, and Stewardson's 2.2%. According to the Registrar of Voters, turnout for this election was just 14% of the nearly 492,000 voters registered in the 37th District. By getting more than 50%, Moorlach avoided a May 3rd runoff against Wagner.

Moorlach, speaking at an election night reception, said of the race, "We had a great grassroots effort. We had to deal with an opponent who just couldn't tell a straight story. It showed desperation." The race was marked by negative and harsh campaigning between Wagner and Moorlach. Wagner was the heavy financial favorite as he significantly outpaced the former Supervisor and benefited from heavy spending on his behalf by independent expenditure groups.

Wagner raised more than \$371,000 and blanketed the district with mailers and television ads touting his candidacy. The Assemblyman further benefited from establishment Republican endorsements, including recently elected Congresswoman Mimi Walters (R) who previously held the seat.

Moorlach ran as a political outsider who was not bound to the party establishment and would be an outspoken defender of conservative values in Sacramento.

Both men, despite their conservative voting records, sought to portray each other as liberals beholden to special interests. A point of contention in the race was the money that some unions poured into pro-Wagner independent expenditure groups. Going into the March 17th election, Wagner was seen as the favorite to win.

The unexpired State Senate term lasts through December 2016.

*Around the Town*  
The Exchange Club of Irvine and the Crossroads Exchange Club joined the OCF in honoring Orange County's "Best and Bravest" firefighters on January 29.



Back (left to right): Shaun Miller (Battalion 3), Josh Bender (Battalion 2), Dan Brown (Battalion 4), Chuck Hawkins (Staff), Greg Hoberg (Battalion 7), Jorge Robledo (Battalion 8). Front (left to right): Neal McCann (Battalion 9), Matthew Schuetz (Battalion 1), Ray McQueen (Battalion 5), Jason Jones (Battalion 6).

Thank you for your service!



# Community Calendar

# April 2015

**Save the date for:  
 IUSD Teacher of the Year  
 Banquet**



This annual event honors the outstanding teachers who make IUSD one of the finest school districts in the country. May 8, 2015 at the Irvine Marriott Hotel, 18000 Von Karman. 5:30pm. Tickets are \$55. The deadline for purchase is April 24. Presented by the Exchange Club of Irvine. Info: Vicki Harris 949-457-6363

**Irvine Fine Arts Center Exhibitions**  
 Hiromi Takizawa: Flora and Fauna Exhibition: Now-April 18

Glass artist Hiromi Takizawa creates quiet, meditative installations inspired by the environment of her native region in the mountainside of Nagano, Japan. Utilizing glass, light, water, sound and plants, Takizawa explores natural phenomena that surrounded her during her formative years. Takizawa's work captivates with its pensive nature and nostalgia for a place left behind.

**History Repaints Itself Exhibition: Now-April 18**

History Repaints Itself is a group exhibition that pays tribute to innovative masters of the past through re-imagined or referenced renditions of iconic and classical art. This educational project challenges viewers to contemplate art history and its contemporary influence.



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			<b>1</b> April Fools Day. 	<b>2</b> Planning Commission Meeting. Irvine City Hall. 5:30pm-8pm. 	<b>3</b> Full Moon Hike. Bommer Canyon. 6:30 - 9pm. Info: LetsGoOutside.org 	<b>4</b> Writer's Ink. Katie Wheeler Library. 2:30pm. This reading and writing workshop is for 1st - 3rd grades only. It is taught by Writer's Ink, a High School group of volunteers. Only the first 25 will be seated downstairs in the Community Room each Saturday at 2:30. Info: 714-669-8753
<b>5</b> Easter. Certified Farmers Market. OC Great Park. 10am-2pm. Rain or Shine. Story Time in the Garden. OC Great Park Farm + Food Lab. 10-11am. Info: OCGP.org	<b>6</b> Brainy Bookworms Reading Group. Katie Wheeler Library. The Brainy Bookworms Reading Group is hosted by High School volunteers for children in 2nd and 3rd grade. 4-5pm. Info: 714-669-8753	<b>7</b> University Park Library. Preschool Storytime. 11am. Great Books Book Club. 7pm. 4512 Sandburg Way. Info: 949-786-4001	<b>8</b> Harvest Wildflower Seed at the Native Seed Farm. Sign up to help behind the scenes at the Irvine Ranch Conservancy's one-of-a-kind Native Seed Farm in Irvine! Tools and training will be provided, and no experience is needed. Info: LetsGoOutside.org	<b>9</b> Volunteer Program Information Session. 6:30-7:30pm. Irvine Fine Arts Center. Free. 	<b>10</b> Down on the Farm - Preschool Program. OC Zoo at Irvine Regional Park. Learn about farm animals including chickens, pigs, goats, sheep, and more! Class includes hands-on learning, fun crafts, and meeting zoo animals up close! Ages 3-4 years old only. Parent must accompany child for duration of program. Fee: \$5 per child (includes one adult). Parking fee: \$3 Registration is required! Call 714-973-6846 to register.	<b>11</b> Spring Garden Workshop. Great Park Farm + Food Lab. 10-11am. 
<b>12</b> Certified Farmers Market. OC Great Park. 10am-2pm. Rain or Shine. Clinic in the Park. Farmers Market at the OC Great Park. 10am-2pm. Info: ClinicInThePark.org	<b>13</b> Teen Advisory Group. Katie Wheeler Library. 5-6pm. TAG - the Teen Advisory Group meets every 2nd Monday of the month to discuss teen library concerns, munch out, and plan future fun TAG events. Ages 13-18. Get an application for TAG! Drop-ins welcome. Info: 714-669-8753	<b>14</b> City Council Meeting. Irvine City Hall. 5pm. 	<b>15</b> Tax Day. 	<b>16</b> Agriculture, Wellness + Environment Lecture Series at the Great Park Gallery. 7-8:30pm. Info: OCGP.org 	<b>17</b> Fanatic / Zine Night OC Museum of Art. Short for magazine or fanzine, "zines" are self-publications, motivated by a desire for self-expression. FREE Admission (donations welcome). 850 San Clemente Dr. Newport Beach, CA 92660 949-759-1122. Email: info@OCMA.net	<b>18</b> Irvine Fine Arts Center. Hiromi Takizawa Exhibition History Repaints Itself Exhibition 9am-5pm. Info: 949-742-6880.
<b>19</b> Certified Farmers Market. OC Great Park. 10am-2pm. Rain or Shine. Children's Garden Workshop Great Park Farm + Food Lab. 11am-1pm. Earth Day at the Orange County Great Park. Fun for all ages. Info: OCGP.org	<b>20</b> After Work Fitness Hike on Paved Hicks Haul Road. 6-7:30pm. Info: LetsGoOutside.org	<b>21</b> What's Bugging Your Plants? Presented by: UC Cooperative Extension Masters Gardeners of Orange County. Katie Wheeler Library. 10:30am-12noon. Info: 714-669-8753	<b>22</b> Earth Day: Be gentle with our planet Earth! 	<b>23</b> Chess Club at University Park Library. 4pm. 4512 Sandburg Way. Info: 949-786-4001	<b>24</b> Newport Beach Film Festival. April 23-30. Info: NewportBeachFilmFest.com 	<b>25</b> Seasoned Chefs Culinary Workshop. Great Park Farm + Food Lab. 10-11am. Info: OCGP.org 
<b>26</b> Certified Farmers Market. OC Great Park. 10am-2pm. Rain or Shine. Info: OCGP.org	<b>27</b> University Park Library. Toddler Storytime. 11am. Homework Help. 3pm. 4512 Sandburg Way. Info: 949-786-4001	<b>28</b> City Council Meeting. Irvine City Hall. 5pm. 	<b>29</b> Sunset Yoga. Bommer Canyon. 6-7:30pm. Info: LetsGoOutside.org 	<b>30</b> Homework Help. Katie Wheeler Library. 3:30pm. Info: 714-669-8753 		

## Adoptable Pet of the Month

Each issue we feature one "adoptable" pet from the Irvine Animal Care Center. The Irvine Animal Care Center (IACC) is a progressive and innovative municipal animal shelter that continually strives to strengthen the human-animal bond and improve the welfare of animals by promoting their humane care and treatment. The Center's 3.73 acre, park-like facility cares for thousands of homeless, neglected and abused animals every year. All animals in their care receive veterinary care, high-quality food, soft bedding and daily socialization.

"Dexter" is a male, neutered, Miniature Pinscher, weighing 20 pounds. He is roughly 4 years old.

For more information about "Dexter" and other adoptable pets, or the IACC call 949-724-7740 or email info@irvineshelter.org



## Free Tax Prep Service

Tax season is here! The City of Irvine, in partnership with Orange County United Way, Irvine Valley College and the Orange County One-Stop Center, is offering free tax preparation services to taxpayers who earned less than \$60,000 in 2014. Qualifying taxpayers who live, work or attend school in Irvine can receive help filing their taxes from IRS-trained and certified volunteers, who will also assist eligible taxpayers in receiving the Earned Income Tax Credit when applicable.

For more information or to schedule a tax appointment, contact Orange County United Way at 1-888-434-8248.

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# SPOTLIGHT ON SMALL BUSINESS

## DENNY'S AT OLD TOWN IRVINE

By Mary Edmonds

Sia Adabkah, Owner - 14962 Sand Canyon Avenue / Irvine, CA 92618 - (949) 786-2600 - www.Dennys.com

When people think of a Denny's restaurant, they usually don't think "small business." But, in fact, that's exactly what Denny's in Old Town Irvine is — it's a small, independently-owned business with a wonderful personal story attached to it.

Fifty years ago, Sia Adabkah, then a young man, came to this country in search of his American Dream. Only 21, with a suitcase full of books and a few clothes, he left behind family and the only culture he had ever known.

Like many immigrants, Sia struggled. He got an early introduction to the "restaurant business" by working as a dishwasher while on his way to earning his MBA. In time, he became a husband and father, raising his young family. He gravitated toward a career in banking, ultimately becoming Vice President of a Wells Fargo Branch.

When a dear friend suggested to Sia that they open a business together, Sia's life changed. He established a relationship with the Denny's Corporation, opening a restaurant in 1999 in Dana Point; in 2000, Irvine; 2002, San Juan Capistrano; 2009, El Toro; and 2011, Mission Viejo. All together, he now employs more than 200 people.

In a City that craves independent businesses, the Denny's in Old Town Irvine (at Sand Canyon and Burt Road — at the 5 Freeway) has a real character of its own. Like most of Old Town Irvine, this Denny's has a bit of a "retro" feel — maybe not back to the early 1900s, but at least back to the 60s and 70s.

Long-time manager Javier Garcia and the entire Denny's Old Town Irvine staff reflect the old-fashioned values that Sia espouses and that have contributed to the business's success — integrity, hard work, courtesy and respect.

So come on in with your family, your friends, or your business colleagues. Enjoy a good meal or just a simple cup of coffee. Whatever your order, you'll be treated well, that's for sure.



## THANK YOU TO THESE IRVINE BUSINESSES...WHERE YOU CAN PICK UP IRVINE COMMUNITY NEWS & VIEWS

**Alton Square/Alton & Jeffrey**  
Donut Star  
Kriser's for Your Pets-All Natural Life  
Mooyah burgers-fries-shakes  
Ralphs

**Culver Plaza Shopping Center / Culver & Irvine Center Drive**  
All That Barbeque / Korean BBQ  
The Car Spa

**Cypress Village Shopping Center**  
Jeffrey & Trabuco  
Albertsons  
Cumin  
Da Luau Hawaiian Grill

**Farm Stands**  
Manassero Farms  
on Jeffrey between Irvine Valley College & Barranca Parkway  
Manassero Farms  
at the corner of Jeffrey & Walnut

**Harvard & Michelson**  
Irvine Lanes

**Harvard Place / Harvard & Main**  
Einstein Brothers Bagels  
Irvine Optometry - Dr. Ruth Tang, O.D.  
Nutrishop/Sports Nutrition  
Ralphs  
Rubio's  
Z-Pizza

**Heritage Plaza / Culver & Walnut**  
Caspian Restaurant  
Ralphs  
  
**Northpark Plaza Shopping Center**  
Albertsons  
Champagne French Bakery Cafe



**Oak Creek Shopping Center**  
Baja Fresh Mexican Grill  
Daphne's Greek Cafe  
Gelbon's  
Jack's Surfboards  
Mustard Cafe  
Orange Theory Fitness  
Upper Crust Pizza

**Old Town Irvine / Sand Canyon & 5 Fwy**  
Denny's Restaurant  
Knowlwood

**Osborn St. / East Yale Loop & Barranca**  
Dr. John Pasko, DDS  
Dr. Ghantnekar, DDS

**Parkview Center / University & Michelson**  
Farm Direct Market  
I-HOP  
Maxwell's Salon of London

**University Park Center**  
Culver & Michelson  
Barber Shop  
Hen House Grill  
Java Bakery Cafe  
Mag's Donuts & Bakery  
Tacos & Co.

**Walnut Village Center / Culver & Walnut**  
French's Bakery  
Starbucks Coffee  
Subway

**Westpark Plaza / Alton & Culver**  
Albertsons  
Sprouts Farmers Market  
Starbucks Coffee

**Woodbridge Village Center**  
Champagne French Bakery Cafe  
CorePower Yoga  
Irvine Car Wash  
Pedego Electric Bikes  
Ruby's Diner  
Treuhaff's Fine Jewelry



**JOIN US IN APRIL FOR OUR GRAND CELEBRATION**  
*(The Sand Canyon construction is nearly complete!)*

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(949) 786-2600 - www.Dennys.com



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## SENIORS AND FAMILIES WITH SENIORS

Making real estate decisions when you are a Senior is *different!*

Does this sound like it applies to you or your family? Have all options been explored?

- Is moving the best alternative? If so, where?
- What are the tax-related implications of the sale?
- Do you need a variety of services:

Handyman? Accountant, including tax advice? Senior moving specialist? Housekeeping?  
Elder law Attorney for wills/trusts? The counsel of a lender? Home health care?  
Estate sale specialists? Access to community resources? AND MUCH MORE!



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*Jane Olinger*



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**A NOTE TO OUR READERS...**

Our "Open Forum" and "Community Voices" — as well as our "Irvine Community Poll" — have proved to be the most popular interactive features of *Irvine Community News & Views*. Of course, we welcome all comments and opinions. While

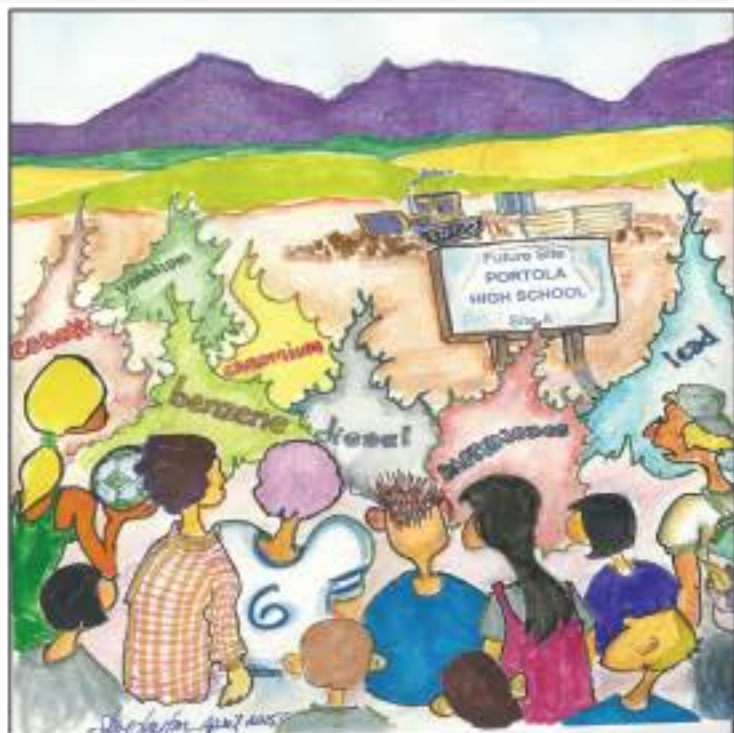
we can only publish a representative sample of the comments and opinions we receive, I want our readers to know that our staff reads and appreciates each and every e-mail or letter you send our way. Keep 'em coming!

- FJL

**Irvine Community Poll Results...**

**"Should IUSD halt construction and order more testing for toxic contamination at the new Portola High School site?"**

This online poll was taken in the first half of March, and attracted hundreds of participants. Here are the results:



*"Portola High — where every class will be a chemistry class!"*

**Poll Comments**

Stop the construction! I'm not sending my kids there unless this is taken care of!  
- Ruby Fan

Anyone who thinks it is okay to move forward without further testing and weighing the impacts to people should immediately move their entire family to the site and live there.  
- Melinda Nightengale

I can't believe they ever broke ground on this site, knowing what was known last year. Forget further testing. The evidence of probable danger is already in. IUSD should abandon the toxic site and build the new high school on Site B. And where is the ITA's (Irvine Teacher Association) voice in this? They should be speaking out loud and clear. Even considering the possibility of sending teachers and students to a toxic site is absolutely unacceptable.  
- Jean Anne Turner  
(Ms. Turner was Irvine's Teacher of the Year, 1988 and 2000.)

High schools are covered with cement and turf. It's a non-issue.  
- Kell Horton

The IUSD must ensure that the building site and surrounding area are free of toxic contamination. IUSD must not play with the health and welfare of future students, teachers, and school personnel.  
- Rogelio Camero

Are you kidding?  
- Patricia Fairbanks

IUSD should cancel all construction in this area.  
- Jerry James

Ignoring the safety and health of future students is inexcusable.  
- Jason Ng

What the hell are they thinking?  
- Nathan Oh

→ continued on page 11 →

**The Strange Great Park "Audit"**

by Franklin J. Lunding

In January 2013, the Irvine City Council, acting upon a motion by Councilwoman Christina Shea, voted to spend up to \$250,000 on a "compliance/forensic audit" of the Orange County Great Park for the years 2005-2012. Curiously, this so-called "independent" forensic audit was to be under the supervision and direction of a two-member Council "subcommittee" consisting of Councilmembers Christina Shea and Jeff Lalloway. None of the remaining Councilmembers were to receive information developed by the "audit" until the information was publicly disclosed. The cost of the audit was to be no more than \$250,000 — a pricey amount that dwarfed the cost of more than a half-dozen previous Great Park audits during the same 2005-2012 period.

One year later, in January 2014, the accounting firm selected to handle the audit, HSNO, presented a "preliminary report" of their findings. The report contained numerous errors — the most obvious of these errors was the claim by the accountants that \$38 million in Great Park funds was "missing." In fact, the \$38 million was safe and secure with the City of Irvine. As mandated by State law, these funds were transferred from the books of the Great Park to the City of Irvine to be held in a special housing set-aside fund. If the auditors had bothered to simply ask the City Manager, this legally required transfer would have been easily confirmed, sparing HSNO, the Shea-Lalloway subcommittee, and the City the embarrassment of such a gross error.

Yet, a majority of the City Council decided to proceed further with HSNO — these same incompetent accountants and auditors. Since January 2014, the cost of the "audit" has ballooned to over \$1.5 million, with more than 20 depositions taken.

Complaints against the audit and the auditors have been filed with the California Board of Accountancy and the California Attorney General. In addition, State legislative committees in Sacramento are considering a request by lawmakers to direct independent State auditors to "audit the Great Park audit" to identify audit improprieties and the possible misuse of public funds for political purposes.

*Irvine Community News and Views* has received numerous written and verbal criticisms of this so-called "audit." Most of these communications angrily question how this "forensic audit" has turned into an expensive, publicly-funded political witch hunt, generating outright falsehoods which were used in the last City election.

Since this entire "audit" process has been short on facts and long on politics, ICNV has refrained from reporting on the political machinations. This does not mean that we are not following the story. On the contrary, future ICNV articles will review the Great Park audit, its findings, and related materials for veracity. We will investigate any misuse of public funds for political purposes, which would be a violation of State law. We will also look into allegations that the accountants, auditors, lawyers and related others involved in this "audit" may have themselves been aiding the politicians who provided them \$1.5 million in taxpayer funds.

I am in total shock and disbelief that the IUSD is not only ignoring and dismissing the soil test results at the Portola High School site, but that they apparently are doing everything possible to prevent the results from being made public.

- Michael McNamara

We should not play games with the health of our children. It will be more cost effective to start testing now rather than waiting to see victims of exposure to toxic materials later, and then close the school.

- Ashraf Elmashat

Why do you want to poison these kids? Remember that high school in New York that was built on a toxic waste site and kids were developing tics? And neurological issues? This could be you. Be responsible.

- Betty Keen

It is arrogant to build a school on a toxic site. This shows how some private businesses will do whatever it takes to profit, no matter what the cost, and how some of our currently elected officials are not truly operating in the interests of the people. Elected officials need to step up and do what's right for the health and well-being of the community. This shouldn't have even gotten to this point of debate. Our elected officials need to quit operating in the interests of the highest bidder, and do what's right for our children.

- Calvin Tucker

It would be such a disappointment if more testing was not done for the safety of our children!

- Denise Aalameddine

It is inconceivable to me that all possible caution and care is not being taken to ensure that a public school is not to be built in a dangerous area. I don't have the knowledge to determine if Site A is safe or not, but surely it can be determined conclusively whether or not toxic chemicals could impact the health of students and adults who will be spending great periods of time there. Why is the School Board not demanding immediate, extensive tests?

- Marilyn Smith

I think Irvine should halt construction on everything. We've become so over-built and overgrown that now we're building on contaminated ground. It's sad.

- Kelli Peters

This is a no-brainer. They need to do extensive testing for any toxicity. This is for the health of our children, our future leaders.

- Thuy Nguyen

Letters to the editor are welcome. Please include your name and ZIP code. Letters for publication must be addressed to Editor, 4199 Campus Drive, Suite 550, Irvine, CA 92612 or email Editor@IrvineCommunityNews.org. Letters may be edited for publication. Unpublished letters will not be acknowledged or returned.



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