

Ready, Set, Decorate! See Details For **Holiday Window Contest, Pg. 5**

# BEVERLY HILLS COURIER

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Five tips to stave off post-Thanksgiving weight gain. 8

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- and More



George Christy, Page 6  
High Camp With Cher And Christina; The Valley Welcomes Sweet Butter.

Editorial from Rabbi Pressman

AND MORE



**EARLY THANKSGIVING**—On Monday, seniors enjoyed free Thanksgiving-themed fare from Koo Koo Roo on behalf of the Beverly Hills Fireman's Association. Firefighters served seniors from the Active Seniors Club at the Roxbury Park Community Center, and enjoyed the hot meal on a cold day. Pictured: BHFD's Kevin Reed.

Photo by Adam Popescu

## Lurie Tackles Test Release, Teachers Push Back

By Amanda Peabody

Does your child get to bring home his or her tests? If they are a BHUSD student, most likely that answer is "no."

According to a flexible district policy, Beverly Hills Unified School District teachers are able to decide whether or not students can take home tests, called "test release." The fluid policy, however, has some parents and Board of Education members questioning the value lost by withholding tests.

"Students' math tests are

very important to analyze the learning and assess what was done, both right and wrong," said BHUSD Board of Education member Myra Lurie, an advocate for a blanket test return policy, at least within the math and science disciplines. "We know math is an area that students in our district are struggling with, especially geometry."

Recent API testing scores, which are the general benchmark for the educational quality

(see 'TESTS,' page 17)

## Divine Design Back In BH

By Amanda Peabody

In support of Project Angel Food, the shopping mega-event Divine Design will return to Beverly Hills, Dec. 3-6.

The "must-attend" annual shopping extravaganza is ramp-

ing up for another successful run as fashion, beauty, gift and home designers from all over the country are donating products enabling shoppers to enjoy

(see 'DIVINE DESIGN,' page 24)

## Five Murders In Five Years

By Brenton Garen

As Beverly Hills detectives remain tight-lipped about their investigation into last week's murder of Ronni Chasen, *The Courier* takes a look into the City's five homicides over the past five years.

Beverly Hills recorded clean sheets for 2006, 2007 and 2009 with no reported homicides; but the City has not been so fortunate with two in 2008 and three in 2010.

(see 'MURDERS,' page 24)

## Two-Hour Parking Measure Prompts City To Sue Clerk

By Adam Popescu

The City of Beverly Hills is suing City Clerk Byron Pope.

Pope didn't do anything wrong—he was just doing his job as clerk. On Sept. 15, he accepted and filed a petition from G & L Properties, the initiative to bring two-hour free parking to City lots. An initiative the City now claims is illegal.

"The City is in fact challenging the legality of this initiative,"

Deputy City Manager Cheryl Friedling confirmed Tuesday.

After the recent mid-term elections, staff began exploring whether or not newly passed propositions made the proposal illegal.

"The City believes that the initiative is invalid on several grounds," City Attorney Larry Wiener told *The Courier* in an e-

(see 'POPE,' page 24)

## New Pacific Realty Buys 9200 Wilshire For \$16.8 Mil.

By Adam Popescu

The *Courier* has learned that Beverly Hills-based New Pacific Realty Corporation has paid approximately \$16.8 million in cash for the vacant property at 9200 Wilshire Boulevard.

On Nov. 4 New Pacific, the

original developer of 9900 Wilshire, signed a grant deed, closing the all-cash purchase on Nov. 12. The seller, 9200 Wilshire Blvd, LLC, is comprised solely of MB Financial Bank,

(see '9200,' page 17)

## Heavy Snow Set For Rodeo

By Brenton Garen

For the first time ever in the history of Beverly Hills, a blizzard is forecast to hit the City on

with more than 50 shops that will host in-store events on the night being dubbed "SNOW 90210."



From 6-9 p.m., residents are urged to brave the chilly conditions and celebrate the holiday season

Tom Blumenthal, owner of Gearys of Beverly Hills and president of the Rodeo Drive

Committee, said the snow-cov-

(see 'SNOW,' page 15)



**A SHINING STAR**—Christina Aguilera received her star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame the week her film *Burlesque* opened. More about Christina in *Burlesque* in George Christy's column on Page 6.

Photo by Celebrity Photo/Scott Downie



**TESTS**

(Continued from page 1)

ty of a K-12 institution, have dipped at two of the five sites, with minimal improvement at those that did see rises. BHUSD's average API score dipped 1-point in 2010 as well, to 871.

According to Beverly Hills Education Association (also known as the "teacher's union") President and Beverly Vista Math Teacher Mark Frenn, teachers are wary of releasing tests beyond the classroom to reduce instances of cheating, both in the immediate future and years ahead, and also find test regeneration an ineffective use of teacher's time.

"Every minute a teacher has to spend regenerating a test is a minute the teacher doesn't have to work on lesson plans, grade papers and lessens the amount of time they have to enhance their program," said Frenn.

Although teachers are contractually allotted "prep" time, or time to answer emails, grade assignments, design lesson plans, etc. as per contract, Frenn estimates it is not enough time and that most teachers ultimately take additional work home.

"So when you talk about regenerating more tests—when you have a teacher spending four hours a night of their own time grading papers or whatever—some-

thing will give," he said.

But how much effort do teachers need to exert to recreate tests? Educational publishers, utilized by the district, regularly provide complete packages for textbook adoptions, which include test banks with multiple versions and generations of assessments, as well as companion materials such as lesson plans, study guides, workbooks, visual materials and more.

"What I have noticed is that test bank questions aim for the average student," said Frenn. "They don't have real meaty, critical thinking questions to give the students."

Currently teachers vary on test release. Each are required to return tests at the request of a parent or guardian, but many are wary to do so for fear of student repercussions. In fact, no parent would go on record with *The Courier*.

"I think what teachers are not in favor of is a unilateral (Board of Education) directive to release the tests because it does not include the teachers and it's a top-down directive," said Frenn. "Not every teacher releases the tests, some do. Each teacher knows what is best for their program."

"(Test release) is something that doesn't have a price tag," said Lurie. "It is something we can do that will not require any extra effort or time on the teacher."

**9200**

(Continued from page 1)

N.A.

The property has been through many owners over the past 10 years as one after another sought permits to build from the City.

The most recent developer owner, Legacy Partners, obtained approval to construct a mixed-use project containing residential condominiums and street-level retail. Legacy, headed by Broadway Bank, lost the property to its lenders in February for a bid price of \$15 million when \$31 million was owed.

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**A FREE INFORMATIVE PRESENTATION**

Tuesday, November 30, 2010  
6:30 p.m.



**BridgePoint at Beverly Hills  
Salute to Veterans**

Please join us at BridgePoint at Beverly Hills as Deron Stokes, *National Sales Manager* from American Veterans Aid, shares important information about VA benefits. If you or a loved one are currently (or may be) paying for home health, assisted living or nursing home care and were a wartime vet or spouse, you will not want to miss this free informative event.

Learn more about the aid and the attendance pension benefit and how to obtain care outside of the traditional VA residential system. A question and answer session will follow. Handouts and refreshments will be provided. We look forward to seeing you.

RSVP by November 25th to the concierge at 310-860-9234



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