

## YOUR VOICE

## Going somewhere for the holidays?

EDITOR,

For years, I have made people aware in newspapers and speeches how my life changed 25 years ago after a drunken driver hit me. I was 16 then. I urge all to have a sober driver if drinking, and some are listening. Thank you.

I intend to bring more responsible, safe and sober drivers on the roads.

A new threat is quickly taking its place: cellphones. I see people on them everywhere, like in stores, restaurants and even vehicles. Drivers of all ages are distracted in numerous ways, but cellphone usage takes the cake.

Driving with a cellphone is like driving drunk, if not worse. Who wants to drive a vehicle and not pay attention to the road just to text a petty message? Is this distraction worth the risk of injuring or killing others?

People travel on roads and highways in beautiful California for the upcoming holidays. Drivers need to place undivided attention on the road for safety. Navigating or texting on the phone prevents them from that.

Using the phone for just five seconds is similar to driving the length of a football field at 55 mph, blindfolded. Clearly, that is irresponsible and unsafe.

Please, stop your vehicle when using the phone and do not drive drunk. This brings more safety to the roads every day.

Lori Martin, Tracy

## Thanks for sidewalks

EDITOR,

About four years ago, Lisa Di Pasquale and I started a project with the city to get sidewalks on Mount Oso, C Street and Mount Diablo. We were told to talk to the property owners in that area. Which we did and they wanted this done as long as they didn't have to put any money out.

Throughout this period, we had meetings with the city and property owners.

The city finally got the money from Sacramento and bids were put out.

The work finally got started a few months ago, and I am very happy to say we now have sidewalks.

Lisa and I would like to thank the city for finally getting this done.

Josie Lopez, Tracy

## Legacy of breaking the bank

EDITOR,

For many years, the city of Tracy enjoyed a reputation of sound fiscal management. That changed a few years ago when Robert Rickman and Veronica Vargas successfully pushed to add a "minimum of \$5 million" to the \$11.6 million the city had spent on Legacy Fields under agreements with local youth sports leagues. That financial commitment of taxpayer funds grew incrementally, again driven by Rickman and Vargas, to the current amount of around \$19 million, with another \$11 or so million needed to complete just Phase I.

At the Oct. 30 Measure V workshop, city staff identified the cost of finishing Legacy Fields Phase I, Phase II and other potential features at over \$74 million. Staff predicts \$40 million in "grants" will cover most of the Phase II costs. Those grants are actually predicted revenue from a private sector "partner," a regional youth soccer group. To expect such an organization to live up to that large of a financial commitment is unrealistic.

The reason the city was drawn deeper into the Legacy Fields money-pit was because two of the local sports leagues could not meet their financial commitments and Rickman and Vargas determined that taxpayers would make up the difference. Over a few short years, this facility, that everyone agrees is a badly needed amenity for Tracy, has spiraled out of financial control.

With the availability of Measure V funds, the council needs to take a hard look at how to most effectively use this money the voters of Tracy (in spite of Rickman's desire to deny them the opportunity) have generously made available. It is encouraging that funding bonds to facilitate building sooner rather than later seems to be a favored option.

The "we can build it all" attitude expressed by some council members is cause for concern. Tracy will be living with the Measure V decisions this council makes for decades to come. There needs to be better fiscal prudence when dealing with

Measure V funds going forward than we have witnessed for the past three years with the Legacy Fields experience.

Michael Maciel, Tracy

## Site 300 community meeting

EDITOR,

Did you know the city of Tracy borders an 11-square-mile experimental test site used for nuclear weapons development? This place is known as Site 300, and it is operated by Livermore Lab.

Site 300 conducts high-explosive tests out in the open air that threaten human health and the environment because of the toxic materials involved. For instance, the explosions cause microparticles of chemicals used in nuclear weapons to get carried away with the wind. Some of these airborne particles then get deposited within the community.

Now the Lab is proposing to increase the limit for high-explosive compounds in open-air tests from 100 pounds per day to 1,000 pounds; that's a tenfold increase daily!

It doesn't stop there. The Lab also wants to increase the annual limit from 1,000 pounds of high explosives detonated in the open air to 7,500 pounds, a more than sevenfold increase yearly!

I urge you to attend an informational community meeting on this alarming proposal. It will be held Monday at 6:30 p.m. at 902 N. Central Ave., Ste. 201.

I will be there. I hope you will join me. If you have any questions, please contact me at 601-8489.

Valeria Salamanca, Tracy

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## Write In:

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Letters of fewer than 200 words that deal with public issues will be given preference. Letters from people living in Tracy or Mountain House, or who have a strong local connection, will also be given preference. Letters will be edited for length, clarity and civility. Routine thank-you letters will not be published.

All letters must include the name, address and daytime phone number of the writer. Only the name will be published.

## Comics creator talks turtles and a 33-year legacy

Last week, I sat down with Kevin Eastman, co-creator of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, who was in town for the Tracy Comic Show. From humble beginnings to enormous fame, my column this week takes a look behind the scenes at how the most famous comic turtles team came to be.



TRACY TALKS  
ANNE MARIE FULLER

arts, slow-moving turtle. So I did this little sketch of Michelangelo and said, "This is a ninja turtle." Peter and I both laughed and thought it was the silliest thing we had ever seen. We really loved this idea and thought we should come up with a story on how these characters got to be these teenage mutant ninja turtles. That was back in 1983 that we did the first drawing. In 1984, we self-published the very first comic book.

Q Did you originally plan to have four different ninja turtles?

A The original drawing was just one, but both Peter and I liked superhero groups. Growing up, we would read about the Fantastic Four or the Avengers. They would bicker like brothers and sisters would, but whenever they needed to all join together, they were strongest together because they had individual strengths. One might be the leader type, one might be the comedian or one the technical guy. We liked the idea that even though they might have spats, they would still join together and as a team where they were strongest and could defeat anything. That was really the foundation of having four individual turtles. It was the dynamic of having a group.

Q How did the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles change your life?

A The biggest and most significant thing is the fact that I get to draw comic books for a living. That was always the dream from the very beginning. Growing up, as a child, I had a dream to write and draw comic stories. Through the success of the turtles, I was able to do that. ... Here we are years later and the turtles are still popular. Young children are discovering the turtles for the first time. A new generation enjoying them.

■ Anne Marie Fuller is the president of the James McDermott Unit 172 American Legion Auxiliary and the chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary Post 1537. She is also the vice chair of the Tracy Arts Commission and a member of the Tracy Crime Stoppers board of directors. Contact her at [annemarie@columnist.com](mailto:annemarie@columnist.com).

## More online

■ Anne Marie Fuller was the only reporter to sit down with Kevin Eastman during his recent visit and has a lot more from the famous comic creator. Visit [www.tracypress.com](http://www.tracypress.com) to read the full interview, including how Eastman and Peter Laird created the personalities for each of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.