

Wandering & Wondering

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VIOLENT VIDEOS

Citing potential harmful effects on minors, child psychologist and Senator Leland Yee (D-San Francisco/San Mateo) urges all gift buyers to avoid purchasing violent video games for children this holiday season: "There is mounting evidence that ultraviolet video games have negative effects on children, and can cause real behavioral changes." Several studies by the Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Psychiatric Association, and the American Psychological Association conclude that adolescents who play violent video games may become increasingly aggressive over time. Yee's 2005 law to prohibit the sale of extremely violent video games to minors in California is currently being litigated and under consideration by the Supreme Court of the United States. Another law, also authored by Yee in 2004, requires video game retailers to post signs to inform consumers about the video game rating system that indicates the age-appropriateness of video games. Parental guidelines: Be aware of advertising and marketing to children. Advertising pressure contributes to impulse buying. Check the age ratings video game descriptors found on the box. Read other reviews, such as parentstv.org, commonsensemedia.org, and whattheyplay.com. Become familiar with the game. If there are violence and sexual themes in the title and cover picture, you can assume these themes are also in the game. Avoid the "first person shooter" and "third person shooter" killing games. Discourage games that reward the player with more points or new scenes for antisocial and violent behavior. Several media sources urge parents to avoid these best-selling violent video games: Dragon Age: Origins, Assassin's Creed 2, Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2, Left 4 Dead 2, Resident Evil: Darkside, and Call of Duty 4. Common Sense Media, an organization dedicated to improving the media and entertainment lives of kids and families, recently released the following list of violent video games to avoid: Manhunt, Resident

Evil, Dead Rising, Grand Theft Auto, God of War, Mortal Kombat, Mad World, Gears of War, Saints Row. For info on toy and product recalls, visit the United States Product Safety Commission website at cpsc.gov.

RECYCLE DISCS

More and more recycling programs grind up unwanted discs, including audio CDs, CD-ROMs, CD-Rs, and DVDs, and sell the byproducts for manufacturing into other plastics. You can mail your discs, but you pay the postage. Here are two places:

- M-Cubed, 270 E. Caribbean Drive, Sunnyvale, CA 94089. Call 408-752-1560 or 800-377-9933. Open weekdays 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

- Plastic Recycling, 2015 S. Pennsylvania, Indianapolis, IN 46625. Call 317-780-6100.

Contribute your unwanted discs to a solar-power experiment. Ray Calkins of Veguita, New Mexico, is building a CD-based solar concentrator that increases the output of a conventional solar panel by focusing more energy on it. Send discs to Ray at 201 Dolores, Veguita, NM 87026. (Nature News: free subscription from jakesigg@earthlink.net)

CENSUS CAUTION

With the 2010 U.S. Census beginning, the Better Business Bureau (BBB) advises people to be cooperative but cautious, so as not to become a victim of fraud or identity theft. The first phase of the census is under way as workers have begun verifying addresses of households across the country. Eventually, more than 140,000 census workers will count every person in the United States and will gather information about every person living at each address, including name, age, gender, race, and other relevant data. The big question is: How do you tell a census worker from a con artist? BBB offers the following advice: If a census worker knocks on your door, he/she will have a badge, a handheld device, a U.S. Census Bureau canvas bag, and a confidentiality notice. Ask to see identification and a badge before answering questions. But

never invite anyone you don't know into your home. Census workers currently knock on doors only to verify address information. Do not give Social Security, credit card, or banking numbers to anyone, even if they claim they need it for the census. Remember, no matter what they ask, all you need to tell them is how many live at your address. You don't have to answer anything about your financial situation. The census will not ask for Social Security, bank account, or credit card numbers, nor will it solicit donations. Anyone asking for financial information or money is NOT with the census. Eventually, the census may contact you by telephone, mail, or in person at home. But the census will not email you, so be on the lookout for email scams impersonating the census. Never click a link or open any attachment in an email supposedly from the census.

MILLWOOD BUST

Back on November 12, Pacifica Riptide received and posted this email from a Park Pacifica resident: "[I am] very concerned with the amount of work going on back at Millwood Ranch (formerly Picardo Ranch). It used to be a beautiful canyon with some rustic homes scattered about. It has now been cut and filled without permits. A large steel structure has been erected on fill, without engineering or permits! The city has issued five stop-work orders. Millwood has been cited by Fish & Game and the Army Corps of Engineers. Our city enforcement officer Jason Lo has been ignored for months, and he says he is handcuffed. I lived back here in 1982 when the hills came down. I live very near the location where the children were killed by a mudslide, all due to faulty hillside engineering. When I see Millwood Ranch, it gives me nightmares. They have people living and working below un-engineered cuts. They have filled creeks. When this floods, which it will, it will inflict major damage on Terra Nova's new football field, a disaster waiting to happen. City Council member Mary Ann Nihart has been up there and observed for herself the major changes to that valley. Before-and-after satellite pictures would be revealing. Old topographic maps are useless. The environmental damage may be irreversible." San Mateo County Times reporter Julia Scott has done her homework, as usual. See her story and related comments at PacificaRiptide.com and in this edition of the Pacifica Tribune.



SNOWY PLOVER - PHOTO BY BILL COLLINS

SAVE PLOVERS

Tiny snowy plovers have lost most of their natural habitat along the coast, but a few of these endangered shorebirds still call Pacifica State Beach at Linda Mar home. On the fourth Sunday of each month, volunteers spend an hour or two to restore native plants so that plovers can raise their chicks. Plovers eat worms and small crustaceans in the wet sand, but have little protection from people and dogs other than camouflage. When they have to fly away to protect themselves, they can't eat and care for their vulnerable chicks. Last year, volunteers saw about 20 endangered plovers in the dunes. If you see the birds, watch them from a safe distance and keep your dogs on leash. The snowy plover has been listed as an endangered species for a dozen years. To help snowy plovers, meet at the Portola Statue in the Community Center parking lot, Highway 1 & Crespi Drive, Sunday, December 27 at 10 a.m. If you come late, look for us on the beach between the dunes and the highway, a little to the north. If you are bringing a group, please email Bill Collins at 94116bc@gmail.com.

SEARS G.I. BILL

Thanks to Betty Schultz for sending Snopes.com's story on Sears department stores' excellent treatment of Sears employees in military service or reservist duty. Betty suggests shopping at Sears (Tanforan, Stonestown, and elsewhere) to show support of its worker-friendly policies. She also says to patronize OSH, Lands End, and Kmart. (Big thanks to Victoria Monroe, our sterling designer, for fact-checking this item. Turns out that in 2004, Kmart bought Sears, OSH, and Lands End, making it second only to Walmart in the megabucks department.)

BIG BUS CHANGES

SamTrans Route CX, which connects Pacifica with Colma BART Station, will be retained and re-

named Route 118, but express bus Route DX between Pacifica and San Francisco will be eliminated. The service changes are effective Sunday, December 20. Another local change is on Route 14 (Linda Mar, Oddstad Park, Casa Pacific): clockwise direction only before 7 a.m. and after 4 p.m.

WEED WARRIORS

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has announced job openings for nine "weed warriors," seasonal employees who will work next spring and summer to combat the spread of invasive and noxious weeds on public land in north-east California and far northwest Nevada. "This is a good opportunity for people who want to work outdoors and make a difference in the health of our public lands," said Nancy Haug, BLM's Northern California district manager. "These jobs are also a good first step toward a career in natural resource management." Applications must be filed online by February 28, 2010. Job descriptions and application instructions are available at usajobs.gov. Jobs are listed under the title Range Aid/Technician (Weeds), under the announcement number NHRMC-2010-0045. Weed warriors work four 10-hour days per week in rugged back-country locations to locate, map, and apply treatments to weeds that threaten wildlife habitat and productivity of the land. They must be able to operate manual-transmission four-wheel-drive pickup trucks. They should have strong communication and map reading skills. Experience with global positioning systems (GPS) equipment is helpful. Because work is performed in hot weather and rugged terrain, crew members must be in good physical condition. For more information, contact Alan Uchida in the BLM Alturas Field Office, 530-233-4666; Josh Huffman in the Eagle Lake Field Office, 530-257-0456; or Lynette Sullivan in the Surprise Field Office, 530-279-6101.

SWAMI SEZ

"It is possible to disagree without being disagreeable." (U.S. Senator Jon Kyl, Republican-Arizona; thanks to Ted Kaden for this gem)

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- Web Sites: Pacifica Tribune, Wandering & Wondering, Goofbuster
- Blogs: Pacifica Riptide, In Peninsula Coastside (SF Gate)
- Email: mayburrito@goofbuster.com