

# The Carmel Pine Cone

Volume 103 No. 36

On the Internet: [www.carmelpinecone.com](http://www.carmelpinecone.com)

September 8-14, 2017

TRUSTED BY LOCALS AND LOVED BY VISITORS SINCE 1915

## Come along with us to Rancho Sparkle Pony ...

By MICHAEL TROUTMAN

IN THE heat and dust of the Black Rock Desert in Nevada last week an ephemeral city arose, drawing participants from around the world — including the Monterey Bay area — for the annual celebration of life, love and art known as Burning Man.

Almost impossible to describe, Black Rock City is most easily understood as a temporary civilization with its own culture, ethos and way of life that draws upon the creativity of its citizens and is guided by 10 principles that inform and steer the society. Among the many 70,000 inspired citizens at the nine-day event was Celsius Maximus, a personal trainer from Pacific Grove.

A core member of camp Rancho Sparkle Pony (one of thousands of theme camps, small and large, in Black Rock City), Maximus not only directs and creates fire spinning performances, but also regularly brings his pet dinosaur/art car, “StegaTron,” to not only Burning Man but also the Feast of Lanterns and Holiday Parade of Lights in Pacific Grove.

“When I go to Black Rock each year, the spirit and creativity

of Burning Man becomes more permanent in my life in the ‘default’ world,” said Maximus. “Ultimately, I hope to inspire others to release the intense creativity in their everyday lives that may be lying dormant in their souls.”

Another regular participant here is Darlene von Maschmeier, a member of the fire spinning troupe

See **BURNING** page 14A



PHOTO/MICHAEL TROUTMAN, DMT IMAGING

P.G. resident Celsius Maximus (driving his StegaTron art car), Danny Finch of Marina (behind), Cyn Currie of Monterey (far right) and a pair of Canadians were part of a camp with many Peninsula locals who had the week of their lives at Burning Man.

## Panetta says he won't bargain DACA for wall

■ Press conference set for Hartnell College Saturday

By KELLY NIX

STRIKING A deal with House Republicans that would provide some funding for President Donald Trump's border wall in exchange for allowing “Dreamers” legal status is a nonstarter, said Congressman Jimmy Panetta, joining other Democrat leaders in rejecting the proposal.

Although the White House's announcement Tuesday to revoke President Barack Obama's 2013 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program was seen by GOP leaders as a catalyst for compromise on immigration reform, Panetta said any plan that would include helping pay for the roughly 2,000-mile wall is not an option he would entertain.

“I would not agree to bargaining the lives of these students who have come here, not on their own volition, and are contributing to our society,” Panetta told The Pine Cone Wednesday. DACA was “the right thing to do” he said, “so why do we need to leverage to do the right thing?”

Obama instituted the executive order, which gave protection from deportation and work permits to young people who were brought into the country illegally by their parents. Of the estimated 800,000 DACA recipients in the country, about 20,000 Dreamers reside in Monterey County, Panetta said.

In a statement Tuesday supporting his decision, which gives Congress until March to work out a replacement for

See **DACA** page 13A

## Teacher housing at tiny Big Sur school is in bad shape

By CHRIS COUNTS

ONE OF California's smallest school districts is facing a big challenge housing its teachers.

Stretching for 35 miles along Big Sur's South Coast, the Big Sur Unified School District may be large, geographically speaking. But it has just one school — the Pacific Valley School — and only 11 students, ranging from kindergarten to high school.

It also has six teachers, but since housing is virtually nonexistent on the south Monterey County coast, the school relies on three aging trailers to provide a place to live. One is a camping trailer with a hitch, while the other two are “very old and non-functional” RVs, superintendent and principal Gordon Piffero told The Pine Cone.

**A camper with a hitch and two ‘very old and non-functional RVs’**

When asked how bad a shape the trailers are in, Piffero didn't mince words. “I wouldn't live in them,” he said. He lives on the school site in what he described as a “mini home” built for him after a local fundraiser.

No similar campaign is yet under way to raise money to replace the trailers — in part because district officials are still trying to figure out how to do it. The district also needs to replace trailers that house its administration and pantry/shop, so five buildings are needed in all.

The options being considered include some combination of new trailers, used trailers and even tiny houses. The principal estimates that at least \$100,000 will be needed.

The school's district's fundraising options are limited. Piffero said passing a bond measure “would be virtually impossible” in a district where most of the land is owned by the government. Meanwhile, one of the school's biggest sources of financial support, the Big Sur Jade Festival, was canceled last year due to the Soberanes Fire and the storm damage to Highway 1 that followed. The school provides a site for the festival.

It's uncertain if this year's jade festival — set for Oct. 5-7 — will happen because the scenic route will need to be open from Carmel all the way to Pacific Valley. For now, the site can only be reached by taking a very arduous route along

Nacimiento-Fergusson Road.

Piffero said two others issues make it difficult to build anything at the school: The property is owned by the United States Forest Service and contains an archaeological site.

“If we do any digging here, somebody has to be here watching,” Piffero added.

It's difficult to imagine that there's a school district in California with just 11 students, but Big Sur Unified doesn't have the smallest student body in the state, which has seven school districts with fewer than 10 students — according to the California Department of Education.

At its peak enrollment, Pacific Valley School had 57 students, but that number has plummeted as skyrocketing housing costs and a limited job market have deterred young families from moving to the area. Last year's graduating class had just three students, including one, Fiona Harlan-Buzzard, who is now attending UCLA.

## Kayaker captures ‘whale party’ off Pt. Lobos

By CHRIS COUNTS

RIDING IN a kayak that he launched from Carmel River State Beach, Carmel resident Mark Campbell captured a very close encounter he had with humpback whales near Point Lobos State Reserve Sept. 2.

“It was like a party at sea,” Campbell told The Pine Cone as he described the scene. “The whales were feeding very actively. There were hundreds of sea lions shoulder to shoulder in the water, and birds flying above the whales. It was a magnificent experience — I had never seen anything like it before, and I get out into nature a lot.”

Three or four other kayakers were in the ocean at the time, but “I was the one with really good zoom lens,” noted Campbell, who was traveling with a friend at the time.

Because he was carrying a powerful camera, Campbell was able to get great images without getting too close to the massive mammals. The National Marine Fisheries Service urges people

See **WHALES** page 12A

## HOW HOT WAS IT? VERY!

By CHRIS COUNTS

WHILE THERMOMETERS up and down the coast told the story, last weekend's heat wave could also be measured by the number of people who put on their swim suits and sunscreen and headed for the ocean.

“I've never seen Carmel Beach so crowded,” Mayor Steve Dallas told The Pine Cone.

Often covered by a cool blanket of fog in late summer, the Monterey Peninsula sizzled last weekend as a record-breaking heat wave swept across the state.

See **HEAT** page 19A



PHOTO/MARK CAMPBELL

Accompanied by leaping sea lions, a pair of humpback whales feed near Point Lobos on Saturday. There are an unusual number of whales in local waters, experts say.