

# Napa Valley Register

## Look back at 2016

Golf, baseball rule valley **SPORTS, PAGE B1**



## Land Trust in 2016

The best stories of the year **HOME & GARDEN, PAGE C1**

## Details of Russian hacking

U.S. closes compounds **NEWS, PAGE A5**



**MOSTLY SUNNY 57 • 36** FORECAST, D4 | **SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2016** | [napavalleyregister.com](http://napavalleyregister.com) | 50 cents

TOP 10 STORIES OF 2016: NO. 1

# Wine industry under fire

Critics question spread of grape-related business

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Napa County in 2016 saw heated growth wars involving not ever-expanding subdivisions threatening to pave over the landscape, but multiplying wineries and vineyards.

These are growth wars, Napa-style. They focus on the world-famous wine industry that is the county's economic life blood and source of immense local pride, even among many who

fear Napa is getting too much of a good thing.

With vacant space on the Napa Valley floor hard to come by, vineyard projects are increasingly targeted for the adjacent mountains. Some citizens see this as an attack on the region's oak forests and the watersheds that drain into reservoirs for local cities.

The result was two land-use battles royal – Walt Ranch and the proposed watershed protection ballot initiative.

Craig and Kathryn Hall of HALL Wine in St. Helena are the driving force behind the Walt Ranch project. They have tried since 2008 to win county approval to create a few hundred acres of vineyards

on the 2,300-acre property in the mountains between Napa and Lake Berryessa.

But a power couple who have entertained Bill and Hillary Clinton struggled to sell the project to opponents. The Napa Sierra Club said creating the vineyards means cutting down thousands of trees and hurting wildlife habitat. The neighboring, rural Circle Oaks community said irrigating vineyards could sap the community's wells.

A massive environmental impact report done for the county concluding that Walt Ranch, with mitigation steps, would have no



J.L. SOUSA, REGISTER FILE PHOTO

Please see **WINE**, Page A3 About 100 people on Nov. 18 protested the Walt Ranch development.

## SHARING THE SPIRIT



J.L. SOUSA, REGISTER

Glenda Fankhauser has become the "Cake Fairy" for Napa Emergency Women's Services. She has baked close to 100 cakes for the shelter over the last eight years.

# Bringing love to those in need

Baking cakes for women's shelter

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This story is part of the Register's annual holiday series about people making a difference in their

communities.

The shelter operated by Napa Emergency Women's Services is a refuge for women escaping abusive spouses or partners. But on the first week of each month, a local grandmother – and avid cook – does her part to add a touch of home to the families

torn away from theirs.

For eight years, a series of whimsically decorated cakes, nearly 100 of them by her count, has emerged from the kitchen of Glenda Fankhauser, to be taken to a four-bedroom house at an undisclosed address where NEWS shelters at-risk women

and their children.

Fankhauser turns sketches into edible sculptures in flour and cream and frosting; as the seasons pass, one month's heart-shaped Valentine's Day "candy box" gives way to a summertime

Please see **LOVE**, Page A3

## TRANSPORTATION

# Highway faces watery future

Planning for sea level rise on Hwy 37

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Napa County supervisors are keeping an eye on efforts to save Highway 37 along San Pablo Bay from perhaps one day disappearing beneath rising bay waters.

Highway 37 passes over wetlands skirting the bay to link Solano, Sonoma and Marin counties. Although it barely grazes Napa County, the road is a major, regional corridor that the state Department of Transportation says is traveled by an average of about 40,000 vehicles daily in the local sections.

What would happen if 21-mile-long Highway 37 someday went underwater because of predicted sea level rise and was abandoned by the state?

"I don't think anyone on this Board would want to see the alternative, which is to change Highway 121 to a four-lane road all the way through, which would require the taking out of very premium vineyard land in both Napa and Sonoma counties," Supervisor Keith Caldwell said.

Please see **HIGHWAY**, Page A2

## RESERVOIRS

# Leaving the drought behind: December storms bring relief

Napa County water systems in good shape

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A driving rain can be the prettiest sight of all – at least to those closely watching local wa-

ter stocks after half a decade of drought across California.

As 2016 draws to a close, Napa Valley cities are reporting full or nearly full reservoirs following a spate of December storms in the Bay Area. Lake Hennessey, the main feeder to the city of Napa, was essentially full, while reser-

voirs serving Yountville, St. Helena and Calistoga saw their first spill-over earlier in the month.

"The waters are healthier than they were a year ago; they are significantly improved," said Patrick Costello, a Napa city water analyst, about the state of Lake Hennessey, where the arrival of

more than 2 inches of rain Dec. 15 brought it to 96 percent of capacity.

A less intense rain the next week pushed Hennessey to the brim.

"Supplies are looking good, some of the best in years in the northern part of state – and yet we're using less," Costello said.

Upvalley water already had reached their spill stages earlier. Outside of Yountville, state-owned Rector Reservoir, which supplies the town as well as the Veterans Home of California, became full at the height of the Dec.

Please see **DROUGHT**, Page A2

## OBITUARIES | PAGE D2

James Garry Fitch, Donald Vern Hansen, Barbara Anne (Lesko) Kistner, Jonatha Ann Maystead, Nita Marie Meyer

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