

The elusive mountain lions

Napa Valley's Living Landscape HOME & GARDEN, PAGE C1



Koepka can't wait

Golfer to chase history in S.F. SPORTS, PAGE B1

Plastics lawsuit

Companies accused of pollution NEWS, PAGE A3



VARIABLE CLOUDS, NOT AS WARM 66 • 37

FORECAST, B4

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 2020

napavalleyregister.com

\$1

EDUCATION

145 Napa teachers face layoff

District coping with drop in attendance, reduced state funding

HOWARD YUNE

hyune@napanews.com

Battered by falling enrollment and the resulting reductions in state funding, the Napa Valley Unified School District has approved staff cutbacks that could

see as many as 145 teachers lose their jobs.

A staff reduction plan gained the unanimous if somber approval of the NVUSD board Thursday night, setting the stage for pink slips for up to 101 full-time and 44 part-time teachers – about 16 percent of the district's teachers with state certificates. The teacher layoffs will follow a round of staff cutbacks in 2019 that eliminated jobs or reduced hours for instruc-

tional assistants and food service workers.

The layoff plan follows the January release of an enrollment report forecasting Napa and American Canyon student counts to continue sinking well into the decade, with sharper declines from kindergarten to second grade possibly foretelling a continuing decline as today's young children become tomorrow's high schoolers.

NVUSD, like most public school networks in California, receives state educational funding on a formula based on the number of full-time students, turning drop-offs in enrollment into drop-offs in revenue.

District-wide enrollment, which exceeded 17,000 in 2015, is projected to drop to 15,000 or less by 2026, according to data from King Consulting.

Among the possible layoffs are

12 full-time teaching positions at elementary schools and eight at middle schools, as well as 56 slots across a slew of subjects from math, sciences and social studies to physical education, music and art.

Trustees called the looming teacher layoffs – the final number of which will be set before the new academic year begins in

Please see **TEACHERS**, Page A4

CELEBRATION



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Emily O'Rourke-Wall first celebrated her Feb. 29 birthday in 2008, four years after her birth, with a trip to Disney on Ice with her parents Jason and Kelli.

Leap year babies ready to party

A birthday every four years keeps leapers young at heart

HOWARD YUNE

hyune@napanews.com

A birthday is a time to be coddled, treated and celebrated – and for a handful of people in the Napa Valley, an occasion made all

the more precious for not coming around every year.

An estimated 187,000 Americans have a birthday on Feb. 29, the date added every four years to keep the Western calendar synchronized to the solar year. For the people sometimes known as “leapers” or “leaplings,” their unique birthday can become the source of constant jibes and jokes – and occasional snafus of

paperwork or record-keeping – but also a reason for their loved ones to treasure the day more.

“She was born at 11:51 p.m. – she was nine minutes shy of being a March 1 baby,” Kelli Wall of Napa said of her daughter Emily O'Rourke-Wall, a Napa High School sophomore for whom Saturday can be considered her 16th birthday or her fourth.

“We would have really missed

this unique part of her life, so it's really been a fun family experience we all look forward to.”

The origin of the birthday conundrum is a timekeeping device that for more than 2,000 years has kept the calendar closer to the actual timing of the earth's trajectory around the sun – the extension of the 365-day cycle to

Please see **LEAP**, Page A5

CONSTRUCTION

Housing slows in AmCan, will pick up

First units at Watson Ranch will boost activity

BARRY EBERLING

beberling@napanews.com

American Canyon has the reputation of being a Napa County housing growth hot spot, but in 2019 issued only one housing building permit and that for an accessory dwelling unit.

But, as a housing report to the Planning Commission on Thursday made clear, that slow year should be only a lull.

“Some years we'll get a lot,” city Associate Planner William He said. “Some years we just get one.”

For example, American Canyon in 2014 and 2016 issued no housing building permits, but in 2018 issued 162.

Housing hasn't ground to a halt in American Canyon because of building permits issued in previous years. The city had 72 homes completed in 2019, among them 70 units of the Valley View senior homes.

In addition, 21 units for the Village at Vintage Ranch apartments were for all practical purposes finished last year, He said.

As for the near future, He said the city anticipates issuing building permits for the four-home Rio Del Mar subdivision near West Carolyn Drive and Rio Del Mar. Also, staff anticipates grading and construction

Please see **HOUSING**, Page A4

TOURISM

Napa County looks at 2 hotels

Oak Knoll is far along, Abbey just beginning

BARRY EBERLING

beberling@napanews.com

Napa County seems to be wrapping up the Oak Knoll hotel project, but another rare hotel proposal for unincorporated Napa Valley is on the horizon – The Inn at the Abbey near St. Helena.

New, local hotels usually are

built in the cities, given Napa County's laws to preserve Napa Valley vineyards. But there are a few commercial pockets outside of cities where hotels can be built with county approval.

The county Planning Commission will once again discuss the Oak Knoll hotel proposed along Solano Avenue between the city of Napa and Yountville. It endorsed the project on Jan. 22 and is to hear more public testimony before taking the

final votes.

Commissioners will meet at 9 a.m. Wednesday in the county administration building, 1195 Third St. for what could be the last Oak Knoll hotel hearing.

Oak Knoll hotel is to be located on 3.5 acres at 5091 Solano Ave. It is to have 50 rooms and a 100-seat restaurant. It would replace the vacant,

Please see **HOTEL**, Page A5



COURTESY OF THE INN AT THE ABBEY

This aerial view depiction by SB Architects shows how the proposed The Inn at the Abbey northeast of St. Helena would look. In the foreground an existing Freemark winery stone building. An application for the project is on file with Napa County.

OBITUARIES | PAGE C7

William (Bill) Bresciani, Norbert 'Bert' Joseph Doll, Silverio Gonzalez, Edmund Greendale, Nicholas David Vassos

BUSINESS A6
CROSSWORD C5
CLASSIFIEDS D1

HOME & GARDEN C1
NATION & WORLD A3
OPINION A7

SCOREBOARD B3
SPORTS B1
WEATHER B4

