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# SONOMA WEST TIMES & NEWS

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## Measure A flyer flub

By E.I. Hillin  
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Last week many west county residents found a political postcard in their mailbox from the "Committee for Measure A." One statement on the card reads, "The PDHC District Board voted 5-0 to sell the hospital to AAMG to keep acute care services available in west county."

The statement is inaccurate as the actual vote of the board was 4-1. Director Jim Horn voted against the lease/sale agreement between the district and American Advanced Management Group earlier this

month. In response, Horn sent a message to the email address listed on the postcard.

"As a member of the District Board, I can assure you that I voted No on the proposed lease/sale agreement with AAMG because it does not provide Fair Market Value for District assets," the email stated.

Horn also addressed other claims made by Committee for Measure A on the political advertisement.

"In addition, there's nothing in the agreement that requires AAMG to provide outpatient services or create new jobs in the community, as your flyer claims," he said.

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## Understanding the teenage brain



Photo Laura Hagar Rush

**BRAINIACS** — Twin Hills teachers Andrea Schmitz and Mary Fitch with props from their monthly class, "The Care and Feeding of the Adolescent Brain."

By Laura Hagar Rush  
Sonoma West Editor  
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Understanding what goes on inside the teenage brain has been a preoccupation of parents from time immemorial, but over the last 20 years, neuroscientists have made real progress in understanding how the adolescent brain differs from the brains of both younger children and adults.

Two local teachers, Andrea Schmitz and Mary Fitch, are on a mission to bring this knowledge to local parents and teens in hopes of increasing their understanding of the promise and vulnerability of the teenage brain.

They've been offering a class, "The Care and Feeding of the Adolescent Brain," at Twin Hills School once a month for almost a year. The class is open to all parents and teens, regardless of where the children go to school.

The class consists of two simultaneous one-hour classes — one for parents and one for middle-schoolers (fifth, sixth and seventh graders). Both groups learn about "the power, promise and pitfalls of the adolescent brain," as the flyer says, but the lessons are tailored to fit the different audiences.

Fitch, an eighth-grade science

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## High schools ax 7th period to save 500K

High school district cuts seventh period for 2020-21 school year and ponders new parcel tax

By Laura Hagar Rush  
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It was a full house once again at the February board meeting of the West Sonoma County Union High School District (WSCUHSD). Most of the audience, including dozens of students, had come to object to the main plank of the district's new fiscal recovery plan, which proposed cutting the high schools' seventh-

period as a way of saving \$500,000.

The district's budget, which has a structural deficit of \$400,000 to \$500,000, was approved by the Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE) last month, but given "qualified" status, which required the district to submit a fiscal recovery plan to SCOE, showing how it intended to address the deficit.

Closing the West County Charter Middle School, which the board voted to do in January, nudged the district \$352,000 closer to its goal, but the bulk of the savings was created by simply lopping an hour off the end of the school day, starting in September 2020, which

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Photo E.I. Hillin

**MEET THE DOCS** — From left, Dr. Pankaj Malhotra and Dr. Libby Flower stand ready to serve the community at Progressive Urgent Care, located at Sonoma Specialty Hospital.

## Urgent Care opens its doors

Hospital staff gives tours and chats with community about Measure A

By E.I. Hillin  
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Locals look to hospital staff to help clarify Measure A while getting a first glimpse of Progressive Urgent Care during the opening celebration on Wednesday, Feb. 13. The urgent care center at Sonoma Specialty Hospital, 501 Petaluma Ave., replaces the emergency room of the former Sonoma West Medical Center and is open 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. every day.

Staff was on hand to show off the new urgent care rooms and introduce the facility to the community. Matt Salas, SSH Chief Operating Officer, said the opening was a success.

"It was a terrific opportunity to take people into the hospital and urgent care, answer their questions about Measure A and show them what we're trying to create for west county," he said.

The closure of the ER was viewed

by many as a major loss to the community and a failure of the district. American Advanced Management Group, the company managing both the hospital and the urgent care, held a firm stance that the short-term acute care model, which included the ER, was not the way to go. Instead the group has dedicated its time and money to transition the hospital into a long-term acute care facility with an urgent care.

Salas said the role of the urgent care at the hospital is more important than ever.

"It fills a space vacated by both the closure of the emergency department as well as many of the local physician's offices," he said. "But more than that, it was important to open because it's what AAMG promised it would do when we made our initial proposal to the community."

Melissa Horve, SSH administrator, led groups down the hospital hallway while answering a steady stream of questions at the opening celebration. Horve said she had attended each of the town hall meetings on Measure A up to that

point and was moved by the frustration of district residents who have seen company after company attempt to make the hospital sustainable.

"These people have been dealing with this for 20 years," she said. After working at the hospital through the transition to SSH, Horve said she is dedicated to staying, believes in what AAMG is bringing to the community and is hopeful Measure A will pass.

Betty Stanfield, a 20-year Sebastopol resident, had a question for every staff member she encountered on the tour. She said she lives within walking distance of the hospital and considers it a "community treasure."

"People don't understand the importance of a community hospital," she said. "I am saddened to see the ER close, but happy to see a medical facility for people close by."

As for Measure A, Stanfield said she is voting Yes to approve the sale.

"We have such a huge debt and people complain about paying taxes," she said. "We need to start fresh with

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## Kozlowski winery gets go-ahead from zoning

By Frank Robertson  
Staff Writer

Plans for a winery and tasting room with promotional events at Kozlowski Farms in Forestville drew strong support last week at a public hearing to review the project's environmental impacts.

"The approval of the Kozlowski Farms proposal will positively impact all small business proprietors in Forestville," said Forestville Chamber of Commerce President Wendy Gianni Flowers in a letter supporting the Kozlowski project.

The Kozlowski family proposes up to 35,000 cases of annual wine production, a tasting room, wine-and-food pairings and approximately 30 promotional events with attendance limits ranging from 55 to 200 guests.

Shifting operations to wine production and sales at the Kozlowski Farms 21-acre facility "is simply a natural evolution" of agriculture in western Sonoma County "and is harmonious with operations currently in place at that location," said the chamber's letter.

Despite lingering questions about potential traffic congestion, the Sonoma County Board of Zoning Adjustments (BZA) approved the winery and tasting room at the Kozlowski's retail shop on Gravenstein Highway North. About

half the retail store space will be converted to wine tasting, sales and food and wine pairings.

The new wine business is not projected to generate a lot more customers or event traffic than already exists at the popular Kozlowski's retail store, known for its homemade preserves and fruit pies, according to a traffic study prepared by traffic consultant W-Trans.

Owing to parking considerations,

planners had recommended a 100-guest limit for special events, but the BZA nevertheless OK'd a maximum of 200 guests as requested in the permit application.

The new winery with a public tasting room and special events will help keep the family operation sustainable in Sonoma County's expanding wine and food market, said the Kozlowskis, who started

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Photo Frank Robertson

**WINE ON ITS WAY** — Sonoma County Planning Commissioners last week OK'd a future winery, tasting room and special events at the Kozlowski Farms agricultural processing and retail facility on Gravenstein Highway North near Forestville.