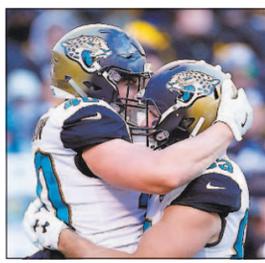


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MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY

Achievement, focus despite discrimination

Growing segment: Black female doctors – 2 percent of US physicians – reflect on support that helped them surpass barriers



LAURA A. ODA — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

"I always say, 'It's easier to dream it if you can see it.'"

Pediatrician Dr. Pamela Simms-Mackey, examining 2-year-old Olivia Magana-Yem



NHAT V. MEYER — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

"In most of our cases, you are very likely to be one of — if not the only — female of color working in your department, and sometimes in your hospital."

— Dr. Shani Muhammad, Valley Health Center Downtown

By Tracy Seipel

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Stanford surgeon Dr. Leah Backhus is an esteemed member of a relatively tiny club in U.S. medicine she sometimes refers to as "two-fers:" female African-American doctors.

They represent about 2 percent of the nation's 877,616 active physicians but are among a growing trend in the country: A report last year from the Association of American Medical Colleges indicated that by 2013, black women 49 and younger made up a greater percentage of the U.S. physician workforce than black men in the same age group.

The reasons behind that are not entirely clear, said the association's Laura Castillo-Page, though data shows women have been outpacing men in college enrollment for decades, especially among blacks and Hispanic

DOCTORS » PAGE 8



PATRICK TEHAN — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

"I have also seen a flood of relief when I have reached out to young surgeons in training who are infinitely grateful to have someone who does look like them."

— Dr. Leah Backhus, Stanford surgeon

PUBLIC HEALTH

Huge flu season slams hospitals

Emergency rooms are packed as administrators ask: Has the influenza outbreak peaked yet?

By Julia Prodis Sulek

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The emergency room at Good Samaritan Hospital has been so packed with patients suffering from miserable flu symptoms the past few weeks, with incoming ambulances lined up outside and hospital rooms jammed, the staff has gone to its "Code Green" nearly every day.

"It's all hands on deck," said Dr. David Feldman, chairman of Good Samaritan's Emergency Department.

Hospital CEO Joe DeSchryver has picked up a broom to sweep out emergency rooms for the stream of patients. Grace Ibe, a vice president, has wheeled patients in gurneys upstairs. And CFO Jody Dial has come in at midnight to troubleshoot and bring pizza.

"There have been times we've had two or three times the number of patients we have space for," Feldman said. "For a 10-day period around Christmas, we were setting a new record every day."

MORE INSIDE

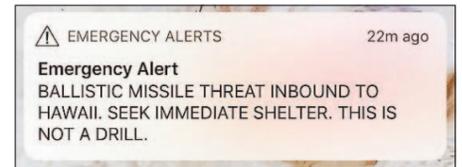
Tips to help you avoid the flu. **PAGE A8**

Online extra:

More health news at www.mercurynews.com/tag/health

FLU » PAGE 8

911 AUDIO RECORDINGS



ASSOCIATED PRESS

This smartphone screen capture shows a false incoming missile emergency alert in Hawaii.

Hawaii police were told quickly about false alarm

Dispatchers knew in 5 minutes it was just a drill, but public wasn't informed

By Matthias Gafni and Rick Hurd

Staff writers

Police dispatchers in Hawaii were told within five minutes that an incoming ballistic missile alert Saturday was a false alarm, but 911 audio recordings obtained by this news organization show authorities continued to struggle with how to calm panicked residents seeking safe cover.

It took 33 more minutes for the public to hear an alert confirming what police had already been told — that there was no imminent attack. Recordings show the confusion officers on the street and dispatchers confronted in the meantime.

"Somebody," one officer said amid the haunting episode, "should get fired."

According to the police audio, officers seemed to immediately question the legitimacy of an alert sent about 8:07 a.m. warning that a missile was headed to the island chain and that "THIS IS NOT A DRILL." The public, however, did not.

HAWAII » PAGE 8

RAPTORS INCLUDED IN LESSON PLANS

Bald eagles back to rebuild nest

Curtner Elementary cheers return for symbols of freedom

By Jennifer Leman

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MILPITAS » Tucked high above the cacophony of a bustling schoolyard, Curtner Elementary School's two resident bald eagles are back to rebuild their nest — and their family.

The pair moved to the neighborhood last spring and riveted the attention of bird experts and enthusiasts across the Bay Area. As bird-watchers flocked to spot the revered raptors, teachers at Curtner supplemented their lesson plans with tales about their feathered neighbors.

Now, despite the hustle and bustle below, both the male and female eagles can be

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JIM GENSHEIMER — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A pair of bald eagles roost in a redwood at Curtner Elementary School in Milpitas, returning to the site where they raised a baby last year.

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Eagles

FROM PAGE 1

seen carrying branches to their nest — gearing up to rear another chick. Visible to students and passers-by, witnesses have caught sight of the birds bringing food back to their nest.

“They had a baby, they left, and then they came back,” said a school crossing guard, Surrender Chadha, delighted to see the birds return.

Chong B. Frazier of Milpitas lives in the neighborhood and sent both her children to Curtner. She said she often sees the eagles on her morning walk.

Near the school, Wayne Ngo, a sixth-grader at Curtner, eagerly peered out the window of his father’s van, hoping to see the eagles.

First-grader Parker Moon put it simply: “They pretty much just sit there.” After a bit of prodding from his father, however, he remem-

bered a livelier encounter with the national bird.

“I did see the eagle bend a smaller tree once,” he said, adding that the heavy bird caused the flimsy branch to sway.

Curtner Elementary School seems like an unlikely habitat for a bald eagle home, a tuft of branches roughly three-fourths of the way up the tree. The birds typically prefer quieter — and more remote — places. Curtner Elementary is neither of those things.

But it’s near a rich food source, said Jim Ervin, a compliance manager at the San Jose-Santa Clara Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility close to the elementary school.

The wastewater treatment facility is home to hundreds of species of native and migrating birds, making it the perfect feeding ground for the eagles. Mallard ducks and coots splashing around the facility’s lagoons make for easy pickings. The coots espe-

cially, Ervin said, are slow and easy to catch.

“The bedroom’s near the kitchen,” said Glenn Stewart, director of the UC Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group.

Originally, the pair tried to set up a nest in one of the pine trees on the wastewater treatment facility’s grounds, Ervin observed. He believes strong winds drove them farther away from the facility.

“With the constant wind blowing over, I suspect the mama eagle said ‘no way,’” Ervin said.

The baby bird that was last year’s center of attention has long flown the coop.

But where is it now? Stewart has a hunch. Many young eagles soar up to the southern reaches of Canada and Alaska, scavenging the remains of fish from salmon-rich streams. “They go there all by themselves,” Stewart said. It’s as if they know exactly where to go.

“They’ll eat salmon until everything freezes, and then they turn around and come back down,” he said.

Once chillier temps set in, the juvenile eagles, which can fly up to 300 miles a day, head south back to their birthplace.

Without a tracking device, it’s impossible to know exactly where the juvenile eagle is now. But it may be close. “The place they fledged from is usually near the place they’ll want to nest,” Stewart said.

The bald eagles’ resilience is due in part to the support they’ve received as they’ve moved back into the Bay Area. Banning the

pesticide DDT played a key role in bringing populations back from the brink of extinction. As of June, 30 pairs of breeding eagles had been spotted throughout the Central Coast, according to the Ventana Wildlife Society.

Stewart was part of a critical project that seeded this current batch of breeding pairs, and he’s excited to see the progress the birds have made in repopulating a once sparse habitat.

To protect the birds, Curtner Elementary has taken measures to help the eagles stay safe.

A sign has been posted on the lawn directly below

the nest, reminding curious students and bird-lovers alike to keep a distance of at least 330 feet. Last year, a drone was spotted hovering near the nest, a disturbance that could have cost the pilot nearly \$20,000 in fines.

Most passers-by are respectful of the birds — especially the school’s students. They’re simply excited to watch the circle of life unfold.

“When I go to recess, I like to see them flying over us,” said first-grader Henry Tabladillo, who’s seen them carry branches to their nest — a sign that these eagles are likely here to stay.



JIM GENSHEIMER — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Bald eagles have returned to Curtner Elementary School and rebuilt their nest.

STANFORD HEALTHY HEART STUDY

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