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Jon Wake, 11, waits 'not so patiently' for his grandmother in Lafayette while brother, Jeff, and father, Dan, check their iPhones.

Photo Jennifer Wake

Has Intimacy Suffered in the Information Age?

By Amanda Kuehn

The first iPhone made its debut Jan. 9, 2007. Seven years later, over nine million iPhones were sold in the first weekend alone after the release of the iPhone 5S, according to businessweek.com. Smartphones and their apps follow us everywhere – to grocery stores, soccer games, school, the movie theater.

We use them in our cars and at restaurants, for work and on vacation. With the ability to find friends online and take the Internet just about anywhere, is it possible that we are missing out on real connection with each other? Maybe even with ourselves?

Ellen Rigsby, associate professor of communications

at Saint Mary's College, shared some interesting insights on the issue. When asked how she saw recent technology effecting today's culture, Rigsby commented that "social relationships develop around technology." Change happens fast because technology itself advances so quickly.

... continued on page A12

Quote of the Week:

"I heard someone once say that in your first 30 years, you learn what you need to know; during the next 30 years you do what you're good at and the rest of your life you do what you love. I'm still loving it all." Read Moraga's Own Hot Dog King - page B2

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Two Parcel Taxes Likely on May Ballot

Local schools looking for an extension of existing measures

By Cathy Tyson

The Acalanes Union High School District and the Lafayette School District are making plans to put measures on the May, 2014 ballot to extend exiting parcel taxes that will sunset next year. Voters in Moraga, Orinda, Lafayette and parts of Walnut Creek will vote on the high school district measure, while only Lafayette voters will make a decision for the Lafayette School District.

Back in 2010 voters in the AUHSD, which includes Campolindo, Miramonte, Acalanes, Las Lomas and the Acalanes Center for Independent Study, approved Measure A for \$112 per parcel to raise money to avoid the loss of science, foreign language, English, social studies, arts, and mathematics classes due to cuts in the state budget. Measure A, also known as the "Emergency Education Act" collected this fee per parcel for five years starting in 2010, resulting in approximately \$3.9 million in annual funding since the 2010-2011 school year, according to the district.

The initial results are in from a feasibility study completed by True North Research on behalf of the high school district; officials say the results look promising. More complete results are expected in the near future.

If the measure isn't approved, the district will have to lay off teachers and classified staff according to Tom Mulvaney, AUHSD board member. "It's key that we keep our teachers," he explained, adding, "We have a very serious responsibility; we're going to have to do something."

Board members called for an additional special meeting to review the measure and finalize ballot language before the Feb. 5 deadline.

Only Lafayette voters will likely have a second parcel tax measure, if approved, on the May ballot – this one for the Lafayette School District comprised of four elementary schools and Stanley Middle School. Not one, but two existing parcel taxes are expiring; the district would combine both to

form one measure.

Voters approved the Measure J parcel tax in 2007 for \$313 per parcel that includes a 3 percent annual adjustment for inflation – this measure sunsets in 2015. In addition, voters approved Measure B in 2011 for \$176 per parcel that also expires in 2015. Currently these two taxes contribute roughly 15 percent of the annual budget, almost \$5 million dollars.

Decisions about whether to place a measure on the ballot, along with the timing and structure, will be finalized at a special meeting of the Lafayette School District on Jan. 30, according to Teresa Gerlinger, president of the school board.

Rachel Zinn, superintendent of the Lafayette School District, called passage of the parcel tax "critical."

Both the Acalanes Union High School District and Lafayette School District measures would need to garner at least two-thirds of the vote to pass.

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Art in the Garden

Sculptures grow like flowers in this Orinda garden - page D1.

