

Free
Thursday,
August 6, 2009
Featuring



Kickball:

Local teams give an adult spin to the grade school standby.

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Zucchini Fest:

New acts and recipes will add interest to this year's fundraiser.

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Rethinking Romeo:

Professor Melissa Hillman takes a new look at the Shakespearean standard.

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The PIONEER

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Car Fires Have SF Residents Fuming

BY LAUREN PINNELLA
Metro Editor

The recent string of car fires throughout San Francisco has created an uneasy feeling among residents.

SF State student and resident Alex Malmberg says she doesn't want to see her car torched. "It's weird because they're setting fires all around the city and you don't know where this will happen next."

Sarah Nielsen, also a SF State student and resident, is now concerned about where she'll park. "There's not even enough space to park in the city and now we have to worry about people setting our cars on fire?"

Thirteen car fires have been set at various locations throughout the city since July 23, said San Francisco Police Department Sergeant Wilfred Williams. "At this point, there have not been any arrests and it is still considered an ongoing investigation," added Williams.

The fires, which are still under investigation, have affected only a tiny number of the vehicles in San Francisco. According to the city transportation agency, there are 450,000 registered vehicles in the city and an additional 35,000



I'm on Fire:
This graphic shows where the 11 of the vehicle fires have been reported in San Francisco.

Photo/Pioneer Graphic

autos that enter San Francisco during each workday. The arsons have all occurred in the late night or early morning hours. The most recent fire occurred around 3 a.m. on July 29 at Balboa and La Playa streets.

Williams said "Some of the fires have been started the same way using newspaper and others have not been started that way. There is no known pattern of targeted vehicles or motives."

Although the investigation is continuing, many believe 62-year-old Fafa Chan, who was recently arrested in connection with two structural fires, may be

to blame.

"Chan was taken into custody on July 30 because of her connection with the structural fires that occurred on April 30 and July 24. There is no evidence linking her to the car fires and she [Chan] is not a suspect," said Williams.

However, it is interesting to note that there have been no car fires since Chan's arrest.

The fires may also be the work of multiple criminals.

"Copycatting is always a possibility. We're looking at all avenues in this investigation," said Williams.

"It is a difficult crime to com-

bat because of the lack of prime parking space in San Francisco," says Williams.

San Francisco Fire Department Public Information Officer Mindy Talmadge said the fires are of great concern. "Vehicles that are parked close to structures or trees and bushes present a potential exposure. It would not be uncommon for a car fire to expose to a building," says Talmadge.

"The fires have caused anywhere from minor charring of a vehicle to a fully engulfed vehicle that was exposing to a tree and another vehicle," said Talmadge.

The SFPD and SFFD arson investigators are working together and looking for any information about the thirteen crimes.

Anyone with information regarding the arsons is encouraged to contact a confidential tip line at (415) 575-4444.

"We are asking is for assistance and for citizens to be alert. Most of these crimes are happening late at night when people are asleep or inside. If you're coming home from work or a night out and you see something suspicious then call in and let's investigate," said Williams.

Change for the Meter

Those who park in
Oakland bemoan the
increase in meter fare.

BY NICOLE MESHACK
Staff Writer

A recent increase in metered parking in the city of Oakland has caused mixed reviews among city residents and local merchants who are directly affected by the change.

Due to the cities budget crisis, the city increased metered parking to \$2 on July 1 and extended metered parking times. This will add an estimated \$4.5 million to the city's budget.

"I haven't yet been horribly affected by the change," said Addison Michaels, a 30-year-old Bay Area resident. "I work in downtown Oakland so parking there was always an issue, so I try to take BART as much as possible."

Many Bay Area residents take public transportation with the hopes of saving money, but prefer to drive their own vehicles.

"As a current Oakland resident I think that the city is doing what needs to be done to get money," said 40-year-old Catherine Reese. "But as a citizen living in the middle of a widespread recession I think the increase is too much."

Along with the increase in

parking the city also extended the parking meter enforcement times an additional two hours with the hopes of accumulating \$1.3 million for the city's budget.

"The only positive outcome of this whole mess is that the meter maids with get more hours," said Derek Boyd a 25-year-old high school teacher. "But for those of us who would like to participate in the night happenings of Downtown, we are going to have to pay for both drinks and parking."

Due to this increase in metered parking and its extended hours, local businesses are protesting the change saying that the change is going to have a negative impact on their business.

In an interview Allen Michaan, the owner of the Grand Lake Theatre in Oakland, stated that local businesses wouldn't survive unless the original parking fee and hours are reinstated.

"Raising money this way is actually losing money," said Michaan.

"I can definitely see how this change will affect local merchants," said Dominique Smith a frequent Downtown Oakland shopper. "But in this economy the money has to come from somewhere, but I think people will still come."

See **Meters**, page 5

Cal Grants Increased

BY RACHEL SCHILLING
Staff Writer

The California State University fee increases passed by the CSU board of trustees last month may not be bad after all because of changes in the Cal Grants program announced in a recent CSU press release.

Student fees, which had already been increased by \$306 (10 percent) in May were increased an additional \$672 for undergraduate students, \$780 for teacher credential students and \$828 for graduate students at a board of trustees' meeting last month.

But according to the CSU press release, the total amount of \$978 will be completely offset by the Cal Grants "dollar-for-dollar" for the 62,000 students that depend on Cal Grant awards A and B.

"Many of California's neediest students depend on Cal Grants to make college a reality," said Allison G. Jones, CSU assistant vice chancellor for student support. "This increase means that CSU campuses can continue to provide low and middle-income students affordable access to higher education."

There are also other adjustments that have been made as well in addition to the Cal Grant will help students offset the increases in fees. Programs such as the university grants that over 108,900 students receive

each year will offset "dollar-for-dollar" the fee increases for students in the 2009-2010 year.

Other programs, such as the Federal Pell Grant, which has been increased by \$619, and ongoing higher education federal tax credits, will continue to help students address the fees.

According to CSU, student families that make less than \$75,000 will end up paying no fees. Other student families that make more than \$180,000 will qualify for financial aid and tax credits.

Diana Fuentes-Michel, executive director of the California Student Aid Commission, assured students that the program remains intact, despite previous concerns about whether the awards would be given.

"The Cal Grant and specialized programs remain intact and fully funded," said Fuentes-Michel. "As a result, all students who were notified that offers were 'tentative,' can now be assured that their grants will be awarded for the 2009-2010 academic year."

CSAC has currently renewed over 193,000 Cal Grant awards in higher education for the 2009-2010 academic year, and has been sending email to students informing them of their acceptance. This process will continue through December 2009.



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