

COAST NEWS

YOUR COMMUNITY IN YOUR HANDS

AVILA BEACH • SHELL BEACH • PISMO BEACH • GROVER BEACH • ARROYO GRANDE • HALCYON • OCEANO



The 19th Annual Central Coast Orchid Show bloomed in Arroyo Grande over the weekend. See more photos on page 12.

Photo by www.PhotoByVivian.com

All Children Welcome

By Theresa-Marie Wilson

What is today an empty 33-acre parcel of property in Nipomo will soon be filled with the sounds of children laughing and playing outside with family and friends—for some, this kind of participation has been a lifelong challenge.

With long-awaited permits in hand, groundbreaking ceremonies were held for Jack Ready Imagination Park—the county’s first universally-accessible park designed so that all children, regardless of physical limitation, will be able to play side by side.

In 2004, San Luis Obispo residents Paul and Bridget Ready lost their 3-year-old son, Jack, to a rare form of brain cancer. Not long after, the couple and their good friend, Mary Illingworth, founded Jack’s Helping Hand to help families of children with cancer or special needs who need assistance that is not provided by other sources.

“We noticed that there were holes in services,” Bridget Ready told a crowd of supporters, volunteers, sponsors and elected officials

See *Children*, page 4

Interchange Project Nearing Approval

By Theresa-Marie Wilson

A financial boost with time constraints might be the catalyst for a decision on a long-awaited fix to traffic flow nightmares at what amounts to a road hub in South County.

The Arroyo Grande City Council recently approved additional funding for design work for a project to improve the often entangled Brisco Road- Halcyon Road/U.S. 101 interchange.

“We are on the brink of moving this thing forward,” Mayor Tony Ferrara said.

The interchange has frustrated

drivers and City leaders alike for decades. Mayor Tony Ferrara said that as an elected official he has been dealing with these road woes since taking office in 1996.

“This has been ongoing ever since the council at the time determined that the shopping center (Walmart Center) up on West Branch would be a regional shopping center and not what it was zoned for originally, which was a community shopping center,” Ferrara said. “I’m not saying that it was a bad idea, but what we

See *Interchange*, page 5



Citrus Pest Arrives

page 8



Little Environmentalists

page 10



Flying High

page 11



Elk Tracks

page 17



An Apple (Farm) A Day

page 27

Children, from page 1

during the ceremony. “We noticed that things could be better. It was a beautiful place to live, but it was very difficult, we felt, having a special-needs child. We wanted families to have fun. We wanted families to celebrate.”

In 2005, Jack’s aunt and uncle, Nick and Kathleen Tompkins, donated the 33-acre property to the county for a park site in memory of their nephew.

Continuing efforts to assist children with unmet physical, mental and medical needs, Jack’s Helping Hand then spearheaded efforts to build Jack Ready Imagination Park on the site that sits atop the southern end of Illinois Way in Nipomo with a stunning view overlooking miles of agricultural fields.

As designed, the park will include



Above: An artist rendering of the upcoming park. Below: Groundbreaking ceremonies were held for Jack Ready Imagination Park in Nipomo. Photo by Christopher Gardner.



themed play structures, a memory grove, sand play area, water play area, soccer and baseball fields, basketball courts and a therapeutic horseback-riding center. There will also be a sensory garden, gazebo, picnic and parking areas as well as bathrooms. The entire park will be accessible by foot, bike, stroller, wheelchair and walker.

The park will be the first outdoor park of its kind in the 400 miles of coastal California between San Francisco and Los Angeles.

“We are so thrilled that we are one step closer to a park that will serve our community and especially the thousands of medically-fragile and special-needs children here in our area on the Central Coast,” Ready said. “Jack’s Helping Hand

has stepped forward and really tried to fill a void that we found was so needed when we had a child with special needs.”

One in every 10 children in San Luis Obispo County has special needs—they are either physically disabled or medically fragile due to illness, injury or a birth defect.

“We really wanted to make sure that these children knew that they were loved and supported, that they had dignity and pride throughout their journey,” Ready said. “That is one of our greatest efforts. Really, this park is the next step in that, where these children will be able to come play alongside their siblings... We are fulfilling another part of our dream and a need for a universally-accessible park for the enjoyment

of every member of our community regardless of their special needs.”

Jack’s Helping Hand offers multiple programs to assist local children with illnesses and disabilities, providing special treatments, services, equipment and transportation. Currently, the Jack’s Helping Hand Assistance Program helps a new child every day. In 2013, the nonprofit helped 368 children.

The organization provides three adaptive toy lending libraries allowing children to learn through fun and creative play, the Little Swimmers Program, a warm water therapy pool for children with disabilities and the Little Riders Program, offering special horseback riding experiences, in addition to support groups and special classes for disabled children. They also help provide financially for treatments, prosthetics, hearing aids, specialized equipment and medical co-pays as well as transportation, food and lodging for families needing to travel for medical reasons.

The park itself comes with a \$5 million price tag. Jack’s Helping Hand is hoping to raise \$2 million through business sponsorships and individual donations.

For more information or to make a donation to Jack Ready Imagination Park, call 547-1914 or visit www.JacksImaginationPark.org or www.JacksHelpingHand.org.

Bret Colhouer
publisher
bret@tolosapress.com

Neil Farrell
managing editor
The Bay News
neil@tolosapress.com

Theresa-Marie Wilson
managing editor
The Coast News
t@tolosapress.com

Camas Frank
section editor
SLO City News
frank@tolosapress.com

Paul Winninghoff
sports reporter
sports@tolosapress.com

Gareth Kelly
business / lifestyle reporter
gareth@tolosapress.com

Christy Serpa
art director

Jim Bennett
graphic designer

Julia Lombard
graphic designer

Kathrene Tiffin
copy editor

Charles Gerencser
publishing consultant

Hayley Block
office manager

ADVERTISING

Dana McGraw
sales manager
dana@tolosapress.com

Zorina Ricci
senior advertising executive
SEO specialist
z@tolosapress.com

Carrie Vickerman
carrie@tolosapress.com

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS & PHOTOGRAPHERS

- Teri Bayus
- Michael Gunther
- King Harris
- Vivian Krug
- Evanne Mingori
- Betsey Nash
- SLO Nightwriters
- Ray Ambler
- Ruth Anne Angus

This is a publication of Tolosa Press, Inc., Copyright 2007–2013 all rights reserved. One free copy per person. Additional copies can be obtained at our offices 615 Clarion Court, #2, San Luis Obispo, CA, 93401. Tolosa Press makes every reasonable effort to ensure the accuracy of its contents. Please notify us if information is incorrect.

phone (805) 543-6397
fax (805) 543-3698
615 Clarion Ct., #2, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
www.tolosapress.com

Call 543-NEWS