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TUESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2008

Volume 7 Issue 67



SHOW GOES ON
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Santa Monica Daily Press

Since 2001: A news odyssey

THE FOND MEMORIES OF SANTA MONICA PLACE ISSUE

Closing time for SM Place

Merchants, shoppers say good-bye after 28 years of service

BY MELODY HANATANI
Daily Press Staff Writer

DOWNTOWN Good-byes are never easy. The window decorations and business signs are coming down inside Santa Monica Place as the remaining few retailers begin boxing up unsold inventory and packing it away in trucks, preparing to bid adieu to the aging mall that will soon undergo a multi-million dollar makeover that will literally raise the roof.

On Thursday evening, the 28-year-old shopping center that was designed by Frank Gehry will close for more than a year for a renovation that will transform the mall into an open-aired, three-level destination, taking advantage of the ocean breezes and better connecting the complex with the area's other main attractions — the Santa Monica Pier and Third Street Promenade.



Alexis Hawkins news@smdp.com

SEE GOOD-BYE PAGE 8 **BIG DEALS:** Signs like these could be found at nearly ever store at Santa Monica Place on Monday as merchants prepared for the mall's last day, Jan. 31.



ALL ABOARD

Photo Courtesy/MTA

City Councilwoman Pam O'Connor, MTA board chair, takes a tour last week of Metro's 2,500th compressed natural gas bus, which will help reduce emissions in the county.

Samohi exhibit talks about choices 'Freshman Seminar' uses the Holocaust to teach life lessons

BY MELODY HANATANI | Daily Press Staff Writer

SAMOH The choices made today can shape tomorrow.

It's a lesson that students in a freshman seminar at Santa Monica High School have learned over the past four months and one that will be relayed to the public tonight through an exhibit that features a series of poems, essays and art work that ties in the Holocaust with the power of choice.

Titled "Saving Memories: History as a Witness to the Future," the exhibit showcases the work of more than 100 freshmen that spent several months studying a survivor from the 1939 Club, one of the largest organizations of Holocaust survivors that is based in Los Angeles. Each student in the mandatory freshman seminar was charged with the task of examining a survivor's testimony and transcribing the power of that experience into the form of a written or art piece. Part of the assignment included connecting the survivor's experience to themselves, said Tisha Reichle, who teaches one of the sections.

"The class is about choices and the factors that influ-

ence the choices we make," the Samohi teacher said on Monday. "It looks at what influences the choices we make and looks at how we can make a more positive contribution to our community, whether it's our geographical neighborhood, school community, racial community or religious community."

The seminar is sponsored in conjunction with Facing History and Ourselves, an international organization that aims to educate students about issues of racism and prejudice in society. The non-profit organization provides the framework and resources for the freshman seminar, a program they run in various high schools and grade levels across the country.

The exhibit, which is an aspect of the year-long course, is part of the Ninth Annual Holocaust Art and Writing Contest, which is sponsored by Chapman University. The students responsible for the top three pieces, which will be announced at the high school tonight, will be sent to Chapman University next week

SEE EXHIBIT PAGE 9

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Students study Holocaust

FROM EXHIBIT PAGE 1

where they will compete with hundreds of students from Southern California. The student that earns the top prize will win \$500.

"The students were asked to reflect on the memories that spoke to them and what the importance is of having memories," said Mary Hendra, the program associate with Facing History and Ourselves.

The exhibit tomorrow night will feature Alfred Benjamin, a Santa Monica resident and Holocaust survivor.

Benjamin, who has lived in Santa Monica for 36 years,

was born in Hamburg, Germany in 1936 and was the only member of his family to survive the Holocaust. The career photographer and artist has traveled the country on speaking engagements, teaching the history of the Holocaust through his own personal experience.

"I want to give (my memories) to the next generation so that the memory will be kept alive," Benjamin said on Monday.

Facing History and Ourselves' involvement with Samohi's freshman seminar began about three years ago to provide a place where students could explore the issue of identity, said Hendra, who taught the course in 2005.

Aside from the Holocaust, the students have studied

other genocides that have taken place throughout history, including the Armenian and Rwandan genocides.

"We look at the Holocaust and the (factors) that influence the choices people make — the choice to be a bystander and do nothing, to be upstanders and to rescue people," Reichle said. "To in some way do something or to be a witness."

The exhibit and reception will be held at the Mortensen Library on the Santa Monica High School Campus, 601 Pico Blvd., from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

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Water quality is poor after weekend rain

FROM NO FLOOD PAGE 3

"It can take quite a bit of time for all of the water to reach the ocean so for 72 hours, you still have water coming in that is contaminated with bacteria and other contaminants like metals and trash," said Polly Barrowman, a staff scientist with Heal the Bay.

But the water quality is typically cleaner following a long continuous rain storm, similar to what Santa Monicans saw last week, as opposed to a short intermittent rain storms where there are gaps of several days between rainfall, said James Alamillo, the urban programs manager for Heal the Bay.

"The first few days of the rainfall will have flushed everything out," said Alamillo, who once compiled the Heal the Bay Beach Report Card. "There is no time for dirt and trash and other uses to build up again."

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✉ WHAT DO YOU THINK?

■ Send letters to editor@smdp.com

Power lost during rain storm

By Associated Press

LOS ANGELES Skies were clearing Monday over water-logged California after a week of downpours and heavy snowfall that led to avalanche and traffic deaths but only minor flooding and slides.

State workers clean up mud on Pacific Coast Highway in Malibu, California, on Sunday.

Highways closed because of heavy snow in the Sierra Nevada were reopened Monday, including a nearly 130-mile stretch of U.S. 395 just north of Bishop to the Nevada state line, state officials said.

Interstate 80 through the Sierra between Sacramento and Reno, Nevada, also was reopened Monday but chains were required, according to a Department of Transportation Web site.

The storm produced wind approaching 40 mph during the night in the mountains east of Los Angeles, said Penny Dodge, a desk clerk at the mountain resort community Big Bear Lake. It was the worst she has seen in her seven years in the area.

"We had it all last night — the wind and the blowing," she said Monday.

The storm system was headed east Monday and could bring winds and heavy moisture to the Great Plains, National Weather Service forecaster Stan Wachowski said.

But California was due for a reprieve that would last at

until at least Wednesday, when there was a 20 percent chance of rain.

"We're definitely past the worst of it," Wachowski said. "Now it's just a matter of things winding down."

Up to 3 inches of rain had fallen since Saturday along the Southern California coast, with nearly 8 inches in some remote mountain areas, the weather service said. The storms had pushed the seasonal total for Los Angeles to more than 11 inches, well past the norm of 6.5 inches at this time of year.

Experts said hillsides in Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego counties charred by last year's wildfires remained at risk for landslides.

Sue Cannon of the U.S. Geological Survey's landslide hazards program said the ground has not been able to dry out because of the back-to-back storms. "It still is a very hazardous situation," she said.

Thousands of power outages were reported throughout Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area.

Three skiers were killed Friday by a trio of avalanches that swept through canyons outside the trails of Mountain High ski resort at Wrightwood, northeast of Los Angeles in the San Gabriel Mountains.

At least two California traffic deaths were believed linked to the storm, and a man walking along a road in Washington state died after being struck by a state snowplow, authorities said.

ODDS OF A CHILD BEING IN A FATAL AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT: 1 in 23,000

ODDS OF A CHILD BEING DIAGNOSED WITH AUTISM: 1 in 166

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