

WINDSOR • Town has nearly met and expects to exceed state and regional targets for housing construction. **A3**

CLOVERDALE • Head chef at Trading Post turns up the flavor by embracing techniques of pickling, marinating. **D1**



KEEP ON CHUGGING • Golden Gate Railroad Museum draws hundreds to 1st public event in Sonoma. **A3**

The Press Democrat

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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2022 • SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA • PRESSDEMOCRAT.COM

116
CLOVERDALE

115
SANTA ROSA

115
HEALINGSBURG

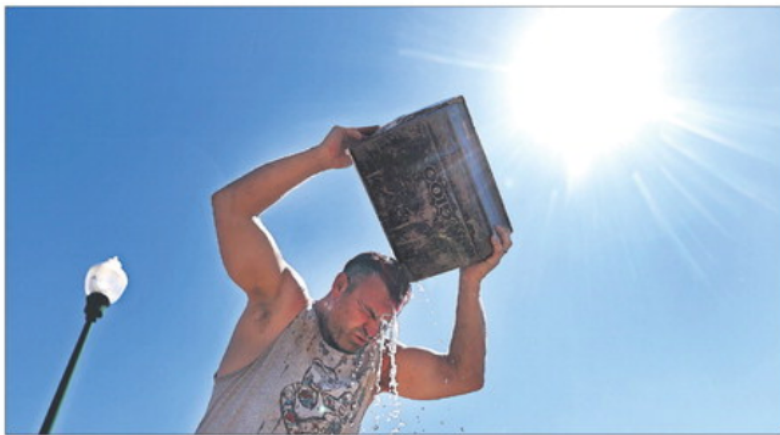
114
WINDSOR

112
ROHNERT PARK

108
PETALUMA

75
BODEGA BAY

A record buster



Mikey Mosierchak dumps ice and water on his head Tuesday after his supervisor called the work day off because of the heat. He and fellow workers were removing wood debris from a new home going up in the Crown Hill neighborhood of Santa Rosa. The city set a new temperature record Tuesday of 115 degrees.

SANTA ROSA • City sets new record of 115 degrees as county sizzles amid extreme heat wave
By **MARTIN ESPINOZA**
THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

Santa Rosa hit its hottest-ever recorded temperature on Tuesday as a blistering, weeklong heat wave sent people scrambling for indoor cover and overtaxed the state's power grid, again raising the specter of a more dangerous climate era

WHERE TO COOL OFF
There are cooling centers available across the county for residents who need relief from the heat. **A5**

day's record also set a new threshold for the hottest September day, re-topping more than a century of local heat marks.

In some parts of the county and surrounding, temperatures were even higher.



Janet Marroquin puts a tamale lunch together Tuesday in Rosebud, pulling the food from an oven, which adds an extra blast of heat to an already sizzling day in Santa Rosa.

"They stay away. It's very hot. I've sold a couple of tamales, that's it."

JANET MARROQUIN, of Max's Tamales stand on Sebastopol Road

Residents find ways to cope with 'wall of heat'

By **KERRY BENEFIELD**
THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

It started out tame enough. Temperatures at 6 a.m. Tuesday in Santa Rosa hovered in the low 90s, just about normal for this time of year.

But normal was just an illusion. At that time of the morning, cross country runners were just starting their workout at the Santa Rosa High School track.

With meteorologists warning of record-setting heat Tuesday afternoon, Panthers coach Curtis Joseph called an audible. No afternoon practice.

"I announced we are going at 6 a.m. and that locker rooms were

TURN TO HEAT • PAGE A7

TURN TO COPE • PAGE A2

INSIDE

SANTA ROSA
High **95**, Low **58**
THE WEATHER, CA

- Advice **B7** | **Message** **B5**
- Business **B7** | **Legal** **B7**
- Comics **B7** | **Letters** **B7**
- Community **B7** | **North Coast** **A3**
- Editorial **B7** | **Obituaries** **B7**
- Food **B7** | **Sports** **B7**



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Local developers saving Athena House

SANTA ROSA • Center that helps women fight substance use to reopen

By **PAULINA PINEDA**
THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

A 33-year-old Santa Rosa residential treatment program for women has found a new home after being forced to close in July.

Athena House, for women struggling with substance use, will reopen with new management at the site of its sister sober-living facility Hope Village, which was also slated to close.

Well-known developers Bill and Cindy Gallaher purchased the Hope Village property in Rincon Valley at the end of August for just over \$2.1 million and have agreed to lease it to Bucklewo Program for \$1 a

year to keep the two programs operating.

Plans call for more than \$8 million in construction and renovations at the site.

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Former operator California Human Development, a lo-

cal nonprofit, said the closure stemmed from declining patient enrollment and loss of revenue. They put the Stone House and the Hope Village properties up for sale.

The Stone House is still on the market for \$3.05 million, while Hope Village was listed for \$2.33 million, according to online listings for the properties.

TURN TO ATHENA • PAGE A6

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Plans call for more than \$3 million in construction and renovations at the site.

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Former operator California Human Development, a local nonprofit, said the closure stemmed from declining patient enrollment and loss of revenue. They put the Stone House and the Hope Village properties up for sale.

The Stone House is still on the market for \$3.075 million, while Hope Village was listed for \$2.23 million, according to online listings for the properties.

“To see that program taken away from our community, a community that’s at the top of the list in terms of need, was kind of devastating and appalling,” said Brooke Ross, a graduate of the program and director of sales at Hotel Trio.

Saving the programs was a labor of love for Athena House’s longtime director Sylvie De La Cruz, former clients and social service advocates who say there’s already limited options for women in need of substance use treatment in Sonoma County.

A chance phone call hours before bids were due on the property sealed the deal.

On Tuesday, several of the women living at Hope Village, including some of the last Athena patients to graduate from the Stone House, circled around the kitchen table as building plans for the site were unveiled.

“Oh my heart,” house manager Danielle Jones said as she glossed over a large white sheet depicting a house with 10 bedrooms, a study and kitchen. “This is our house.”

Jones and the other women, who credited the programs for helping save their lives, wiped away tears as they thanked the Gallahers, who live outside Rincon Valley, and Buckelew Programs, based in Marin County.

Now, they said, they and others going through recovery will have a permanent and safe place to continue their work. “These ladies need to be here and having a safe place where they can learn to live again is so important,” Jones said. “We are eternally grateful.”

The last offer

By all accounts, efforts to keep Athena House open seemed fruitless.

“We kept hitting roadblocks,” Ross said.

After trying to raise money to buy the building, former Sonoma County Supervisor Shirlee Zane suggested the group partner with a bank. She had a contact, she said.

On the morning offers were due, Zane put Ross in contact with Komron Shahhosseini, a board member at Poppy Bank, founded by Bill Gallaher, who serves as the bank’s chairman. Gallaher, a Sonoma County native, has developed retirement and assisted living facilities across California and Nevada through his company Oakmont Senior Living.

Ross told Shahhosseini they sought to purchase Hope Village and reopen the residential treatment program there, as well as keep the sober-living program running. The property was the cheapest of the two and had enough space to operate both, she said, while the Stone House on Highway 12 needed significant work. Shahhosseini notified the Gallahers, who were on vacation, of Ross’ proposal and the tight deadline.

He called Ross back a few minutes later: The Gallahers had accepted and would bankroll the purchase.

“I was in shock,” Ross said. “The Gallahers heard about this need in their community and they had the ability to do something about it, and they didn’t just write a check, they got invested.”

The Gallahers’ offer was the last and lowest to come in for Hope Village but was accepted.

Ross, a licensed real estate agent, served as the broker on the sale, which was finalized Aug. 31. She described it as one of the most memorable moments of her life.

The Gallahers have sparked controversy with high-profile spending on political campaigns, while their charitable giving has supported a number of philanthropic causes in the community.

They saw the opportunity with Athena House as a call to action, Cindy Gallaher said in an interview.

Many of the roughly 20 women at Hope Village, some with children, were at risk of homelessness unless they found another treatment program. The family couldn't stand by without trying to help, she said.

"We just felt it was worse than just a shame to have all those women displaced," she said.

Thomas Stuebner, CEO of California Human Development, said they received multiple offers, mostly from private buyers and at least one social service group, but agreed to sell to the Gallahers with the condition they keep the programs going.

He didn't disclose how long the Gallahers must keep the facility running as part of the contract but said "it's a reasonable amount of time."

The organization is happy the programs will continue under new management, he said. The Gallahers signed a two-year lease with Buckelew Programs, which has provided mental health and addiction services in the North Bay since 1970, to absorb the programs into its services, helping expand the organization's footprint in Sonoma County. The nonprofit had already in mid-August become a fiscal sponsor of the programs, which allowed it to accept donations on behalf of Athena House and Hope Village.

The intention is to have the programs operate indefinitely, Cindy Gallaher said.

Pat Gallagher, chief philanthropy officer at Buckelew, described the Gallahers as "angels to this program."

Buckelew is looking forward to continuing the two programs and helping women in recovery, Gallagher said.

The Gallahers' recent political spending includes the failed effort, bankrolled by Bill Gallaher, to recall Sonoma County District Attorney Jill Ravitch last year, and the 2020 opposition effort, financed by Molly Gallaher, that helped defeat an early sales tax renewal sought by Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit.

Next steps

The 2.2-acre property is comprised of several aging buildings on three parcels that span a block between Middle Rincon Road and Speers Road in east Santa Rosa.

Once the Gallahers toured the property, they found it was in need of significant repairs.

There had been little maintenance over the years and inside they found dirty carpet, mold in the bathrooms and buildings that weren't up to code, Cindy Gallaher said. Broken appliances were strewn about outside and old mattresses were stacked against one of the buildings.

Cindy Gallaher said it was shocking and saddening to see the conditions the women and children were living in.

Stuebner acknowledged the property needed work but said the organization didn't have the funds to make improvements as they were operating at a loss.

The Gallahers plan to knock down most of the Speers Road buildings, which were built in the mid-1950s, and build two large structures: a 10-bedroom home with space for 20 women and a five-bedroom house for women with children.

Plans call for a community garden, outdoor children's play area and a community center for the women.

The homes off Middle Rincon Road, which are newer, will be remodeled. The Gallahers hope the new Athena House program can reopen in one of those spaces.

Women staying on the property will be moved into a temporary space in another building on site during construction.

Cindy Gallaher estimated construction and renovations will cost upward of \$3 million.

Crews will begin cleaning the property in the coming days and the Gallahers will soon start the city permit process.

Buckelew Programs must go through a county procurement process to operate the residential treatment facility. Operating Hope Village doesn't require a county contract.

Buckelew hopes if they're awarded the contract they can reopen Athena House within a year, Gallagher said.

Athena House served between 120 to 180 women a year, said De La Cruz, the director.

Closing Athena House and Hope Village permanently would've hurt women in need of these services, she said. De La Cruz, like many behind the effort to save the program, knows this firsthand. She graduated from Athena House more than 22 years ago.

"I'm living proof of what it can do and how it can change a life," she said. "It's such an honor to be able to reopen again and continue to help women."

Kelsey Wambold, 32, one of the last clients to leave Athena House, said many of the women worried they'd be left behind when they found out it was closing. It has been inspiring to see everyone come together to support them.

She looks forward to welcoming the new Athena House residents when the program restarts, she said.

As the Gallahers have met with the women in the program, it has become clear the impact of their move to keep it operating, Cindy Gallaher said.

"This is not something we were familiar with at all so it has been eye opening for us," she said. "The program saves peoples lives. Hundreds of women will end up going through this program." *You can reach Staff Writer Paulina Pineda at 707-521-5268 or paulina.pineda@pressdemocrat.com. On Twitter @paulinapineda22.*



Above: Molly Gallaher Flater, second from left, unveils plans for the new Hope Village, on Tuesday. Joining Flater, from left, resident Rachelle Chatham, Erika Klohe, the Buckelew Program's regional director, embracing a tearful resident Danielle Jones, in plaid, and Kelsey Wambold. Below: Gallaher Flater tours the grounds of Hope Village in Santa Rosa. PHOTOS BY KENT PORTER / THE PRESS DEMOCRAT



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