

# MOUNTAIN VIEW VOICE Local News

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## Alive and kicking

By Don Frances

**“K**ICK, LEAD and Dream” is what the people at Mesa de la Comunidad called this year’s soccer camp, which will be wrapping up a successful first run this Friday at Bubba Field.

The program, co-sponsored by the Police Action League and the Mountain View Los Altos Soccer Club, brought less fortunate kids (or “at-risk youth,” as they’re often called) together with cops, volunteers and Mountain View High School soccer players for some scrimmaging, some drills — just some decent exercise and good times.

The two-week camp is for fifth- to eighth-grade kids from Castro, Crittenden and Graham schools, and is coached largely by the high schoolers. According to a press release by Mesa, “The main focus of the camp is on soccer training, and each day the campers participate in a wide variety of drills and games. Some of the more popular variants are the Italian PK Shootout and the World Cup corner shots.”

The term “at-risk” often alludes to gangs, and it’s implicit in programs like this that they’re meant to be an antidote to the “gang problem.” I believe they are, because what we call “gangs” are not usually organized crime syndicates, just groups of pent-up kids with too much energy



John and September Higham stand with their two children, Katrina and Jordan, in Kyoto, Japan.

## Those globetrotting Highams

MOUNTAIN VIEW FAMILY MEMBERS SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES, ADVICE ON TRAVELING THE WORLD

By Alexa Tondreau

**F**or anyone who’s ever dreamed of traveling around the world, but can’t fathom how to put together such a trip, the Highams of Mountain View are happy to help.

They ought to know, since they’ve done it themselves. And they have a Web site which lays out the particulars — just click on “How to plan a round-the-world trip.”

The Highams can tell you

how much you’ll probably spend — well over \$100,000, in their case — and how to live on about \$6,000 a month. Anything cheaper is almost impossible for a family of four, they say.

The Highams also advise how to travel so that you never hit winter in any country you visit, and how to pack (lightly) for a trip of this magnitude.

Recently, the family has been telling audiences about their year-long journey, which spanned 28 countries and five continents, at

community organizations and Bay Area REI outlets, with a presentation tentatively planned at the Mountain View REI location for October.

Also in the works is a book called “Armageddon Pills — Don’t Leave Home without Them (and Other Lessons from a Family’s Journey Around the World),” which the Highams hope to have published sometime next year. The book will have a Google

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## Health services in limbo

PROFESSOR: COUNTY BUDGET CUTS LEAVE PUBLIC VULNERABLE TO HEALTH DISASTER

By Melody Dye

**R**ecent cuts in funding to public health services by the Board of Supervisors have some health advocates alarmed, with one saying the cuts have left the county “completely unprepared for any kind of health disaster.”

Last month’s cuts to health care, which slashed \$16.1 million in funding, will affect nearly every facet of health services at the county level. Several regional health offices and community clinics are now slated to close, and funding has been reduced or, in some cases, completely cut for sexually transmitted disease services, violence prevention, disease control and other programs.

Some public health advocates argue that the recent cuts, coming on top of reductions in years past, amount to a gradual dismantling of the county health department’s infrastructure, with negative long-term consequences for all 15 cities in the county, including Mountain View.

“Given the role of the public health department in protecting and promoting the health of the 1.6 million [residents], it does raise issues about where the county’s priorities



COURTESY PHOTO

The family got stranded on the salt flats of Bolivia after their truck broke down.

## HIGHAMS

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Earth companion guide, so readers can download photos of the Higham family's travel path.

Unique to their story is not just the amazing feat of a family of four traveling to five different continents (and never staying in one location for more than two days), but also that they divulge the detailed planning, scrimping and saving that goes into making such a trip possible.

The Highams began to save for their trip soon after the birth of their oldest daughter, Katrina, now 12.

"We wanted to give the experience of seeing the world to our children. They heard us talk about it for as long as they can remember," John Higham said.

Saving for the trip required certain lifestyle choices, like buying less expensive cars and a smaller house, and putting money most people would "squirrel away for college funds" into their trip fund, he said.

Even the children, Katrina and her brother Jordan, now 9, got into the act.

"They became zealots for saving for this. For the last two years before we went, every single day they would ask me if we would be able to go. It really built up their imagination," John said.

Finally, the family was able to embark on their trip in June 2005, with camping gear, tandem bicycles and school books in tow.

The Highams are often asked whether they planned their every move from the beginning. September Higham says they booked

most of their plane flights in advance, but didn't schedule their time once they were in a particular location. For instance, when they arrived in Europe that June, they had already scheduled a plane flight out of Istanbul for 18 weeks later, but didn't have a set plan for the interim.

Katrina and Jordan were homeschooled throughout the trip, and each day began with a math lesson. September had books shipped to

John said.

For instance, Katrina broke her leg in central Europe, and the family's cycling trip abruptly came to an end. Another time, the family became stranded on the salt flats of Bolivia with nothing to eat but a bag of peanut M&Ms — leading September to coin the term "Armageddon pills" as a description of their only nourishment.

Of the 150 places they visited, the family may have liked Switzerland best, September said.

"It was really fun there. There are a lot of outdoor things to do. We really like hiking and biking," she said.

Katrina was particularly fond of the African nation of Tanzania, September said, because of the safari animals she got to see. Jordan liked Costa Rica for its volcanoes.

Having just completed their first year back in school, the children don't outwardly appear to be any different from their peers, though the Highams say they notice internal changes.

"They have a global perspective most kids don't. When they hear about things on the news, they tend to ask about the people instead of the politics in those events," John said.

"I think they act like kids who live in this world, not just Mountain View, California," September said. ■

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### ■ INFORMATION

For more on the Highams' trip, including presentations and book news, visit [www.armageddonpills.com](http://www.armageddonpills.com).



COURTESY PHOTO

In Machu Picchu, Peru.

the family at various outposts along the way, specifically historical fiction that would coincide with their travels.

John and September made sure to utilize the locations they were visiting to enhance their children's lessons, including studying D-Day in Normandy and the Cultural Revolution while in China.

Both children were required to keep daily journals documenting their account of the trip. Each family member had good and bad days,