

CITY OF BELMONT (GENERAL)  
DAILY NEWS  
JULY 8, 2007

# Artist's ordeal spurs debate

## Belmont's response to fee complaint renewed his faith in government

BY WILL OREMUS  
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Keith Glowka's first visit to Belmont left a bad taste in his mouth.

After developing an interest in the art of Native American-style flute-making, the Austin, Texas native had spent 13 years honing his craft before he felt comfortable enough to sell his wares. So before he made a trip to Belmont last August for his first big show, he wanted to be completely prepared.

He contacted the city to see whether he needed a permit to set up his booth at the International Native American Flute Association's annual convention, held at Notre Dame de Namur University.

Yes, he was told: It would be \$230 for a standard business license.

That reply and Glowka's angry response to City Hall's seeming intransigence a year later set into motion a series of events that could result in a restructuring of Belmont's license fees.

Reeling from sticker shock, Glowka pressed city officials on whether they could make any exceptions for a small-time hobbyist who would only be in town a few days. He was informed that the price was the same for everyone who does business within city limits.

"They tried to put a sunny side on it," Glowka recalled. "They said, 'Look at it this way, you can do business here for a whole year.' But it was only a four-day festival."

Grumbling, Glowka paid the fee.

At the convention, his distinctive brand of flutes — made from buffalo horn — found a modest audience, and he sold eight or 10. But tacking the city's \$230 business license fee onto the convention's \$150 booth fee ate up the lion's share of his profits.

He returned to Texas feeling cheated, instead

of elated, about his first show.

At subsequent conventions in other towns, he says, he has not once been charged for a business license.

Last Monday, Glowka received a letter from Belmont asking him to renew the business license. In a burst of indignation, he sent an e-mail to Finance Director Thomas Fil and every member of the city council, telling them his story.

"As you can guess, I will not be renewing my business license," Glowka wrote. "Unless things change in this regard, I will also not do future business in Belmont. ... Pity: It's a beautiful place."

By the end of the day, Glowka had a response in his inbox from Fil, apologizing on behalf of the city and pledging to look into the matter. "That is not our style and we can certainly do better," Fil wrote.

Glowka also heard back from individual council members, each of whom promised to get to the bottom of the issue. Council Member Dave Warden promptly added an item to the council's Tuesday agenda suggesting a restructuring of the city's license fees.

And by Thursday, Glowka had another e-mail from Fil. It said he qualified for an art exhibit exemption and would be receiving a full refund of his license fee within 120 business days.

The city's prompt response now has Glowka playing a different tune.

"Dear Mr. Fil," he wrote on Thursday. "You have renewed my faith in government. Thank you."

Glowka continued, "Your city sits at the heart of our country's most active group of Native American flute enthusiasts. It wouldn't surprise me if the next convention will again be held in Belmont. If it is, I will certainly look forward to being there again."

Fil says he doesn't know what accounted for the city's originally intractable stance, but he's glad Glowka got back in touch.

"Our objective is, anytime somebody contacts the city, we try to get back to them. Sometimes we're able to solve their problems and sometimes not, but we should always reply quickly and see what we can do."

Warden said he sees the episode as an opportunity to take a broader look at the city's business license fees. "I think there really needs to be a distinction between sole proprietors working out of their house and the real commercial enterprises."

BELMONT NEWS (GENERAL)  
SAN MATEO TIMES  
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## Reggae musicians to perform for Morquio Syndrome cure

By Bernadette Harris

MEDIA NEWS STAFF

BELMONT — Local reggae artists will participate Saturday in "Reggae for a Cure," the first annual benefit to support Morquio Syndrome research.

Presented by Chris' New Harbor and Ariana's Cure, the event features talent like Native Elements and Dub FX, as well as a Caribbean barbecue. Kicking off at 3 p.m., the event will wrap up at midnight. All proceeds will go to a foundation

started by a South San Francisco family.

Ariana's Cure, which was founded earlier this year, is named after Ariana Kallas, a 2-year-old diagnosed with the debilitating disease. People afflicted with Morquio Syndrome will stop growing at 8 years of age due to a missing enzyme that causes gradual damage in the body and brain; many with the disease do not live past their 30s.

The foundation has hosted a series of events in the Bay Area

to raise awareness of Morquio Syndrome, as well as to raise money for research. One hundred percent of the \$20 donation will go toward research.

"Reggae for a Cure" takes place at Chris' New Harbor, 150 Harbor Blvd. in Belmont. Attendees must be 21 years of age or older.

For more information about Ariana's Cure, visit [www.arianascure.com](http://www.arianascure.com).

# DROPPED *from the* NETWORK

## State steps in to defuse PacifiCare controversy

By Suzanne Bohan  
STAFF WRITER

The California Department of Managed Health Care has reached a settlement with PacifiCare that ends, for now, a months-long quest for hundreds of Peninsula residents to find medical care after the insurer dropped physicians from its network.

"It was almost like I didn't have any insurance," said Irene Meyer, a receptionist in a Belmont physician's practice who had to visit the emergency department for crippling pain after her family's doctor of 17 years was cut from the network.

Last week's settlement follows the first cease-and-desist order the managed health care department has issued for deceptive marketing practices, said Lynne Randolph, spokeswoman for the state agency. The Department of Managed Health Care, which formed in 2000, serves as a watchdog for patients enrolled in HMO plans.

The May 17 cease-and-desist order found that more than 500 people enrolled with a small physicians' group associated



JOHN GREEN — Staff

**DR. SIDNEY MARCHASIN** speaks with patient Irene Meyer in his Belmont office Friday. Meyer was told that she can no longer see Dr. Marchasin after her insurer, PacifiCare, reportedly dropped numerous physicians from its network without notice.

(OVER)

with Sequoia Hospital in Redwood City were "deceived, or otherwise misled" into believing their primary care doctor was still part of PacifiCare's network when they enrolled or re-enrolled with the insurer last fall.

In fact, the order states, the insurer knew more than a year before the patients signed up that it planned to terminate its contract with the small physicians' group.

"It's not a huge pool of people here, but anyone who is not getting a fair shake, we're going to try to help them out," said Randolph. "People were misled here."

The order requires that PacifiCare allow the patients to immediately return to their original physician until the next open enrollment period in the fall. At that point, they'll still need to find either a new health plan or a new primary care physician.

A PacifiCare representative, Cheryl Randolph (no relation to the state spokeswoman), said the insurer adamantly disagrees with the state agency's finding of fraudulent marketing actions.

"We believe we provided appropriate notification to our members," she said, noting that the insurer complied with a 60-day notification requirement to patients. Some members, however, dispute they received such notification.

But an enforcement official with the managed care department said notification wasn't the issue; the enforcement order was solely focused on the insurer's failure to notify patients that their physicians were already dropped from the network when they signed up with PacifiCare.

PacifiCare's Randolph also said the doctors were offered an option to switch to other PacifiCare plans, enabling them to keep working with their patients. Only two doctors, she said, elected not to move to other groups.

Nonsense, responded Dr. Sidney Marchasin, a primary care physician in Belmont who was dropped by PacifiCare.

"That's a bunch of B.S.," Marchasin said. "I personally have five friends I practice with who were dropped and didn't have any availability to switch to another plan." He had no opportunity himself, he said. About 180 of his patients could no longer see him, Marchasin added.

Cheryl Randolph didn't respond by Friday evening to a request to provide documentation showing how many physicians with the Sequoia Hospital-affiliated group, called the Sequoia Directly Contracted Network, switched to another PacifiCare health plan and how many remained.

While the managed care department's order resolves the issue for the rest of the year — although patients say they're still getting conflicting information about re-signing with their physician — it's emblematic of the challenges facing small group practices, said Herbert Marks, a health care advocate whose son, Allan Marks, is a Redwood City pediatrician who also was dropped from PacifiCare's network.

"You now have survival of the fittest," Marks said of small physician practices. And the larger the group, the greater the odds of survival, he said. It was Marks' complaint to the managed care department that initiated its investigation into PacifiCare's termination of its relationship with the physicians' group.

"The small primary care practice is under siege," agreed Grant Cattaneo, a partner in Cattaneo & Stroud, a Burlingame health care consulting firm. "They're badly needed. But they don't have much bargaining power."

And it's patients who get caught in the middle when the relationship ends between insurers and providers.

For Meyer, the situation swiftly became dire when she learned she could no longer see Marchasin, her physician for 17 years. She also works in his group practice as a receptionist.

Meyer was suffering from intense pain from an ovarian problem in late April, the time when she learned PacifiCare had dropped Marchasin from its rolls.

"It got to the point where I couldn't even walk anymore," she said.

Marchasin had ordered tests to help diagnose Meyer's condition, but PacifiCare rejected those tests since Marchasin was no longer her physician, he said. PacifiCare also told her, Meyer said, that it would be several days before they could sign her up with another primary care physician.

Over the weekend, the situation became acute, and she visited the emergency room, where she racked up a \$10,000 bill. She said PacifiCare has paid \$4,000 and she's waiting to learn how much of the remainder she must pay.

"I was afraid because I didn't exactly know what the problem was," Meyer said. "And the fact that it didn't seem like I had any medical coverage between the time I had to change doctors."

Marchasin said had Meyer still been under his care, he would have ordered tests to pinpoint the cause of her condition and would have referred her if needed to a specialist.

"I would have taken care of her," he said. There would have been no need for emergency medical care, he emphasized.

Marchasin described the small group practice as "in real danger" if insurers only contract with larger groups. Cattaneo pointed out that 85 percent of Californians are enrolled in one of five large plans, leaving the smaller groups with decreasing clout.

And for Meyer, physicians in small practices provide something increasingly uncommon.

"He's like an old-time, caring doctor," she said. "He doesn't just rush you out."

These kinds of disruptions among patients visiting doctors in small practices can pass by unnoticed, emphasized Cattaneo, the health care consultant. He credited Marks' activism in bringing the issue to the attention of the managed care department.

"Herb stirred up a hornet's nest," Cattaneo said.

(OVER)

City of Belmont  
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Caltrain stops in Belmont have decreased since 2000, creating transit problems for companies such as Oracle, below. — Examiner file photos



## Belmont vies for Caltrain's time

City officials say fewer stops mean headaches for traffic and nearby businesses

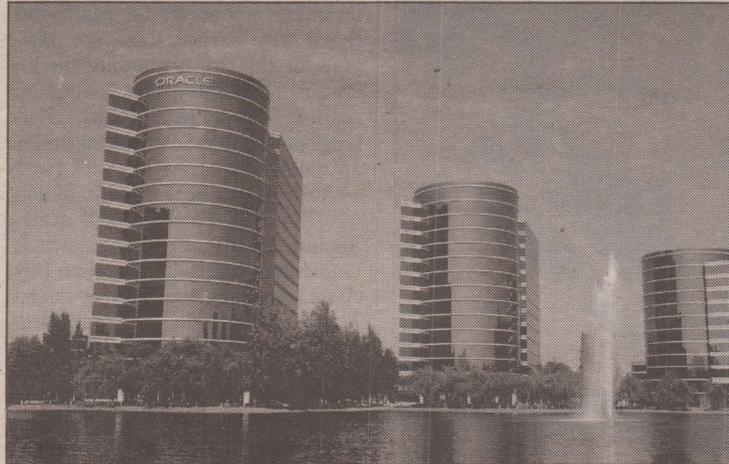
By Jason Goldman-Hall  
Staff Writer

**BELMONT** — Bypassed by new Baby Bullet trains, Belmont has seen daily Caltrain stops drop from 68 to 52 since 2000, frustrating many city leaders and creating transit headaches for neighboring businesses such as tech giant Oracle.

"In the morning and in the evening, our local roads are a gridlock, and with that, why does Oracle have two shuttles, one to San Carlos, one to the Baby Bullet station in Hillsdale, when the Belmont station is only one mile away?" Belmont Councilman Bill Dickenson said.

The company buses that once shuttled employees between Oracle — in nearby Redwood Shores — and the Belmont train station now drive up to 10 miles farther to bring riders to the San Carlos, Hillsdale or Millbrae stations.

"The majority of our employee commuters benefit from Caltrain's Baby Bullet and limited-stop rail service," Oracle spokeswoman Kim-



berly Pineda said, adding that there are approximately 110 employees who use the train daily. "The Baby Bullet's only scheduled stop near Oracle is at Hillsdale."

Dickenson was one of the Peninsula leaders hoping to work with Caltrain to hire an outside consultant to look at track schedules and infrastructure. Caltrain board members rejected that idea Thursday. According to the board, a consultant would be too much for the already funding-strapped organization to bear.

Despite the setback, Belmont City Council members want to work with Caltrain to support the expansion

of service and safety enhancements along the Caltrain lines.

"Wouldn't it be nice if we could show up at the train station and not have to worry about the schedule, if we had trains every 10 to 15 minutes?" he said.

Caltrain spokeswoman Janet McGovern said the organization was interested in meeting with the assembled leaders to find common ground.

"It is not an 'us versus them' situation, we're all trying to find the funding, trying to find solutions for us to have a bigger, better train system," Dickenson said.

[jgoldman@examiner.com](mailto:jgoldman@examiner.com)

## ■ Downtown rebirth occurred on his watch

By Neil Gonzales

STAFF WRITER

REDWOOD CITY — City Manager Ed Everett has done a lot of building around town for a long time and now wants to build the next phase of his life.

He is proud of “helping to build a great city organization, helping build community and (being part of) a lot of actual building, especially downtown,” Everett said Monday. “It’s something hopefully that will help people.”

Now, after more than three decades in public service, including some 15 years as Redwood City’s top administrator, Everett has announced his retirement. He plans to step down in September.

His tenure has seen the recent downtown renaissance that includes the new cinema-retail complex with a 20-screen movie theater and the completion of other projects.

But he also has become known for advocating the concept of community building as a critical part of a city’s growth. It’s an area he could explore further as his next career, although Everett says he’s keeping his options open.

“I might well do something around community building,” Everett said.

Under his leadership, the city has launched programs that encourage residents to learn how local government operates, to form partnerships such as neighborhood associations and to tackle issues together.

One program called Partnership Academy for Community Teamwork is a nine-week spring course offering participants a hands-on overview of city government from the Council and Finance Department to police and public works.

The city also holds occasional community dinners inviting residents to listen to authors, speakers and experts on civic engagement.

“It has fascinated me that cities get locked into building cities physically, but forget to build communities as well,” Everett said.

Everett “certainly has a passion for community building,” Councilwoman Diane Howard said. “He’s been giving talks to other cities on community building and how it’s done.”

Just last month, Everett spoke at an event hosted by the nonprofit group Palo Altans for Government Effectiveness.

“What he says a lot is that community is really about relationships,” said Barbara Spreng, board chairwoman for the Palo Alto nonprofit. “To really have a strong community, you have to know one another.”

For now, Everett, 63, will finish off his last few months with Redwood City and then travel to the Southwest for plenty of sightseeing and hiking, he said.

“I think it’s important to reflect,” he said. “I’m still having fun and still feel challenged. But now there’s a new phase. It feels like it’s a good transition time.”

In a letter Friday, Everett told city workers and the council, “I am excited and anxious about what fun and challenging things lie ahead for me, and at the same time, sad about leaving an organization made up of such great people and friends.”

Everett’s watch has also brought a new Fair Oaks branch library, two fire stations, affordable housing on Rollins Road, at the Civic Center Plaza and on El Camino Real, and other developments.

He previously served as Belmont’s city manager, an assistant county manager in Nevada and fire chief for Palo Alto.

Everett said Redwood City has begun the process of searching for his successor and could have that person named before he departs.

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EVERETT

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# Redwood City manager Everett resigns post