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THE DAILY JOURNAL

Leading local news coverage on the Peninsula

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Jury: Gypsy Hill killer guilty

42 years later, jury finds DNA establishes link between violent convict and teen murders

By Anna Schuessler
DAILY JOURNAL STAFF

Since 1976, the families of 18-year-old Veronica Anne Cascio and 17-year-old Paula Baxter have faced a cloud of mystery surrounding the violent murders of the two teenage girls in San Mateo County more than 42 years ago.

Thought to be two in a string of five killings of teens and young women on the



Rodney Halbower

Peninsula in a five-month period, Cascio and Baxter's murders sat unsolved for years until DNA connected violent convict 70-year-old Rodney Halbower to them in 2014.

Some four years after he was charged with the girls' gruesome murders

— which led to Cascio being found dead in the Sharp Park Golf Course in Pacifica in January of 1976 and the discovery of Baxter's body behind a church in Millbrae about a month later — a jury found Halbower guilty of first-degree murder in the teens' deaths Tuesday.

And in doing so, they have destined Halbower for a life prison sentence and a path prosecutors believe will help bring Cascio and Baxter's families

closer to a sense of justice.

Though District Attorney Steve Wagstaff was surprised the jury's verdict was returned a little more than an hour after they began deliberations Tuesday afternoon, he noted it couldn't come soon enough for those who have waited more than four decades for the girls' killer to be held accountable.

"I can't imagine what they feel after 42

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ZACHARY CLARK/DAILY JOURNAL

Supervisor Don Horsley has led the effort to create farmworker housing in San Mateo County with Measure K funds. Horsley celebrated the project during the ribbon-cutting ceremony and was joined at the podium by Blue House Farm owner Ryan Casey and Daniel Olstein, director, land programs and stewardship at POST. Below: The four three-bedroom units will be occupied in five to six weeks by farmworkers paying substantially below market-rate rents. The plan is to further improve the area with landscaping and plan a privacy hedge.

Farmworker housing unveiled

County, nonprofit creates four new units at Blue House Farm in San Gregorio



By Zachary Clark
DAILY JOURNAL STAFF

Four three-bedroom units have been installed on a coastside farm and will soon be rented by laborers at substantially below-market rates.

The Blue House Farm project in San Gregorio is the largest of several that the county and nonprofit Peninsula Open Space Trust have collaborated on this year to create much-needed affordable housing for farmworkers in San Mateo County.

Supervisor Don Horsley has led the effort and was joined by Blue House Farm owner Ryan Casey and POST rep-

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REUTERS FILE PHOTO

Containers are seen in Shanghai, China.

Trade war escalating with China

China's Finance Ministry announces retaliatory increases on U.S. imports

By Joe McDonald
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEIJING — The U.S.-China trade war escalated further Tuesday, with China announcing retaliatory tax increases on \$60 billion worth of U.S. imports, including coffee, honey and industrial chemicals.

The increases are in response to the U.S. announcing it will impose tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese-made

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Burlingame trims hotel parking requirements

Officials OK allowing hoteliers to seek higher and better use for parking lots

By Austin Walsh
DAILY JOURNAL STAFF

Burlingame hotels need less parking than ever before, and city officials are OK with that.

The Burlingame City Council unanimously approved

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HOUSING

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representatives for a ribbon-cutting ceremony Tuesday, Sept. 18.

"When I thought about farming here about five years ago, I saw a whole set of challenges ahead of me and one of those challenges was a labor shortage," Casey said, adding that he attributes the labor shortage to a lack of housing. "It became clear that for me to have a future farming here on the coastside I was going to have to proactively provide some housing for my employees."

Casey employs about 30 workers at Blue House Farm, where more than 50 organic fruit and vegetables are harvested and sold locally. Many of those workers are not currently living in the "greatest conditions," Casey said, and they have to commute from around the county and as far away as Santa Cruz.

"[The new housing] will have a dramatic effect on my crew and the stability of labor for me... so this is quite an upgrade in terms of the condition of living as well as the commute," Casey said. "Farming takes a lot of hands and without those hands in the field, it all falls apart. So this housing is really critical to my future, the future of my workers and the farm."

In 2017, the Board of Supervisors approved 30,000 in Measure K funds for two



The homes are fully equipped with kitchens and living areas.

ZACHARY CLARK/DAILY JOURNAL

of the four units at Blue House Farm. Measure K is a half-cent sales tax approved by voters in 2016.

"The other two units were a direct investment by me and Blue House Farm and it's an investment I wouldn't have been able to make without the funding for the original two," Casey said. "And a lot of the infrastructure, plumbing, septic, electric and utilities were paid for

through the Measure K money."

POST is also partnering with the San Mateo Resource Conservation District to build a reservoir on site that will strengthen water security for the farm and also enhance stream flows within San Gregorio Creek for threatened and endangered steelhead trout and coho salmon, according to a press release.

The four units with 12 total bedrooms will

be occupied by Blue House Farm workers in about four to six weeks, Casey said. He also plans to landscape around the homes and plant a row of hedges for privacy.

The new housing at Blue House Farm is one of seven farmworker housing projects funded by the county, and there are four additional ones in the pipeline, Horsley said.

Over the summer, the county and POST teamed up to rehabilitate the rundown Red House at Cloverdale Coastal Ranches. It's now home to an extended family of nine.

Blue House Farm encompasses 60 acres of permanently protected agriculture land that is owned by POST. The nonprofit has preserved more than 75,700 acres of land in the last 40 years and has increasingly focused on building and preserving housing for farmworkers on that land.

"In San Mateo County alone, we have lost 35 percent of our farmland over the last 30 years. Through our Farmland Futures Initiative, POST is reversing this trend for the benefit of all. It's a complex challenge that involves the land acquisition, and the protection and strategic investments like farmworker housing, to make a thriving local farm operation possible," POST President Walter T. Moore said in the release. "Local farms not only add to the beauty of our region, but well-managed farmland plays a vital role in the health of our environment, our economy and our people. We hope that these new housing units will go some way to making life more comfortable for workers in this industry."



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