

# ManhattanBeachSun

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## Weekend Weather Forecast

**Friday**

Mostly Cloudy

59°



**Saturday**

Mostly Cloudy

61°



**Sunday**

Partly Cloudy

63°



## Good Year for Mustangs



Brent Weber had a great year for the Mustangs.

See Mustangs, page 7

## Program Helps Residents Become Leaders

By Evan Ortega

If you've ever wanted a chance to develop your leadership skills, give back to the community or meet new people, Leadership Manhattan Beach offers the opportunity to do all three. Every year, the non-profit organization offers a nine-month leadership program in which several dozen students work together on a class project to help better the city. "The program has been around for many years, but it has evolved into a very professional leadership course," Mayor Portia Cohen said.

Cohen was a member of Leadership's Class of 2003. "The premise behind it is to expose residents, students and business owners to the workings of municipal government, as well as other major philanthropic organizations within the city," she said.

The students meet twice a month, working together on the class project which they unveil at the end of the course. In the course of their project, the class breaks into different groups, including marketing, fundraising, product implementation and community relations. The class includes a retreat, seminars and field trips.

Class members also meet with officials within various parts of city government and non-profits, learning about leadership in both sectors. "It has taught class members year after year just what city government does for the residents and businesses," Cohen said. "So it educates citizens on the operations of city government as well as important social and community organizations."

Students have to raise money for the projects, which often cost thousands of dollars. Aside from fundraising, another important aspect of the class is garnering community support and City Council approval for the projects. "After graduation, a lot of Leadership Manhattan Beach classmen go on to be appointed to City committees and local organizations, so it serves as a stepping stone for some people," Cohen said.

Cohen said it's interesting to see 25 people

from different backgrounds come together to work on the community project. She noted that students include high school students and older adults. "It's a process that consists of bonding with your classmates and learning about municipal government and group leadership," Cohen said.

Leadership's class of 2009 recently unveiled its project at Pollywog Park: Two solar-powered trash compactors that would hold five times as much trash as a normal waste bin, with one for the baseball fields. A third "Big Belly Solar" unit will be installed at Meadows Elementary School this summer.

Class of 2009 project leader Shannon Wertz said the elementary school children learn about recycling and conservation, and that the compactor would help. "As they go into the new school year, they can put into action what they're learning every day," she

said. Wertz pointed out that one challenge of being project manager was to manage volunteers and motivate them to accomplish benchmarks. "Overall it was great," she said. "It strengthened my leadership skills and made me delegate in a way that I hadn't before."

The Shorewood realtor reported that classmates formed friendships that have carried on past the end of the course. "You have people from teenagers at the high school to retired senior citizens," Wertz said. "It's refreshing, because you get to spend time getting to know people you wouldn't normally."

Wertz said the program includes governmental and business field trips, which have included visits to Northrop Grumman, a 911 dispatch center, and area businesses. The only criteria for the project were that it had to benefit the city in some way and had to

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## Proposed Budget Spares Services, Cuts Programs

By Evan Ortega

After hours of budget study sessions and lengthy discussions with residents and staff, the Manhattan Beach City Council finalized its budget for 2009/2010, which includes cuts in programs and hiring freezes.

The budget keeps most city services intact, sparing budget cuts pertaining to public safety, seniors and the environment. Program eliminations will include Arts Manhattan, free downtown holiday parking, emergency call boxes, and a variety of parks and recreation programs. "We're proposing to suspend some programs," Councilmember Mitch Ward said. "That means when times do come back in the city of Manhattan Beach, some of the programs that we are suspending this evening, we will be bringing back."

Councilmember Wayne Powell said the elimination of programs in the budget shouldn't be considered cuts, because they may be reinstated once the city gets more cash. "We didn't technically cut anything out, they're just suspended for this year's budget," Powell said. "And hopefully the economy will turn around, and we'll be able to restore these programs."

The council went over the budget "line by line," spending 18 hours in special budget study sessions with staff over the last few weeks. "I've been on Council six years and we have never had the in-depth discussion of our budget as we had this year," Ward said. "We were asking staff to make very difficult choices and council had to make difficult choices."

Supporters of various programs facing  
See Budget, page 16