

POINT REYES LIGHT

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TOMALES > Strawberry documented from dark soil to a hungry mouth. /14



CIVIL RIGHTS > Judge decrees sidewalk must be desloped. /18



BUSINESS > Danish godiva serves carpaccio; Celine shapes loaves. /10



CALENDAR > Dance cumbia to celebrate Mexican independence. /24



Laborers on Sartori Farm in Tomales start work in the early morning fog. Alex Sartori trucks the flats 17 miles to Point Reyes for the Farmers Market on Saturdays. Photo by Taylor Templeton.

Mooringless future for Bay boaters

by **Jacoba Charles**

The mooring buoys that bob quietly on Tomales Bay's surface are newly contentious. Though the boat tie-ups have been illegal since 1981, the regulations have never been enforced, according to the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary (GFNMS) which manages the bay. But that is about to change: the GFNMS released a document last Friday that is the first step in increasing oversight of the area.

The agency says that it is not taking any regulatory action yet, and is simply calling for public input as they de-

Please turn to **page 6**

Golem rises from Drakes Beach

by **Samantha Gilweit**

Sand is billions of tiny granules created by millions of years of erosion, but sand to the Liles family who attended the 26th Annual Sand Sculpture Contest at Drakes Beach is a pizza.

"Our pizza is a knight that will rise out of the sand and crush you," Bob Liles said as he taunted his daughter who split away from the family's sand sculpture to work on a sea turtle.

"A pizza doesn't have arms or legs!" Lisa Liles shouted back over a pile of

Please turn to **page 9**

OPINION / 4

It's a cramped world and we are hitched

FARMING / 5

Wild spaces on both sides of a deer fence

FAIRFAX / 17

Labor Day was cool at the Scoop

Reconnect with kin after a bomb

by **Jacoba Charles**

On May 29 in Coimbatore, India, the music from a nearby temple woke Chris Hulls at 5 a.m. The 24-year-old from Point Reyes had traveled in a hot and crowded train from Delhi to spend two weeks living in a small room in a half-finished building with soft, humid air and no hot water.

Several hours later Hulls was picked up by Valaji, his new employee, and driven to his office. The car ambled slowly among three-wheeled autorickshaws and carts pulled by oxen, whose painted horns indicate caste and political bent much like bumper stickers.

Hulls was in India for work. As the

founder of a disaster preparedness company and education program called L-Ready, Hulls joined forces with a Corte Madera based outsourcing company that operates in Coimbatore.

Coimbatore is better known for its textiles than for its software, which makes it one of the most affordable places for projects like Hulls'. Outsourcing to India began in the early 1990s, and accelerated in 1999 when the nation loosened regulations on international partnering. The incentive for businesses is high: the 2004 salary for an American programmer is \$70,000 per year as opposed to \$8,000

Please turn to **page 8**

Extended Sheriff's call / 3

>> Calls about deer hit by cars and trucks are more common in late summer and fall when deer start to rut.



Chris Hulls, who describes himself as a natural worrier, began developing the idea of a disaster preparedness program in the wake of hurricane Katrina. He works out an office in San Anselmo and often visits employees in India. Photo by Jacoba Charles.

>> Hulls

Continued from page 1

per year in India, according to Wired magazine.

The person

Hulls is the son of John and Rose Hulls, of Point Reyes Station. He showed his entrepreneurial streak at an early age when he sold the Point Reyes Light at Western Weekend. Later, in junior high, he became involved in Internet sales when he brought back trinkets from a summer he spent in Kenya and sold them online. The following year he sold 3,000 beanie babies online for several thousand dollars.

Hulls graduated from Tomales high in 2000, one year early. In high school he sold laser pointers to classmates and, in his final year, sold satellite dishes to ranches where farm workers had no access to Spanish channels.

After graduating he joined the air force and became a "Load Master," responsible for balancing cargo in aircraft and dropping food, supplies, and even tanks and trucks to ground troops below. He spent several months in Qatar during the Afghanistan war, but the bulk of his time was spent at the Little Rock Air Force Base in Arkansas.

Hulls was honorably discharged from the air force in 2003, and returned home to attend College of Marin for a year before transferring to the Haas Business School at Berkeley. He graduated with honors and planned to take a position washing dishes in Antarctica. In a mandatory physical, the Hulls' family doctor, Margaret Bourne, discovered a tumor the size of a golf ball

in his throat.

"That kind of opened my schedule up and made me re-evaluate," he said. After two tense months, the tumor turned out to be benign. Hulls decided to found L-Ready along with his friend and mentor, Robert Kennedy, who owns Drakes Bay Café and taught Hulls at College of Marin.

The company

Hulls, who describes himself as a natural worrier, began developing the idea of a disaster preparedness program in the wake of hurricane Katrina.

"The whole response to Katrina was such a big failure. I felt that they were going about it all the wrong way – you can't scare people into getting prepared."

Hulls kept thinking about how he had encouraged his dad to stop smoking when he was in grade school. "If we can get the kids excited about something, they will take it home and encourage their parents to actually make a change," Hulls said. He calls it a "bottoms up" method instead of the traditional top-down approach.

"Everybody knows they should do this stuff," he added. "We're just trying to find a way to make that as easy as possible."

The solution that he and Kennedy came up with was to provide free services to preschools. They are developing a curriculum that includes sing-alongs and hand puppets. The "Ready Rex" dinosaur hand puppet comes with Velcro eyes, spots and teeth. For each part of the disaster preparedness curriculum the kids complete, they earn another dinosaur accessory: a cloud belt, fire goggles, and a water tail.

L-Ready also will provide the schools with a free messaging and communications system that will contact parents if there is an emergency. "Right now, the schools have to call each parent individually if something happens," Hulls said. "This lets them make one call, to us, and our system will keep trying each parent until it gets through." The program can be accessed by landline, cell phone, email, and even text message.

"If it looks like we wouldn't be able to have childcare available for some reason, we don't really have a quick way to reach parents," said Linda Nackerud, the director of the Fairfax San Anselmo Children's School in Deer Park. "That immediately appealed to me about that company." She wants to be prepared for wildfires, earthquakes and flooding – any of which could cut out phone systems, and make communication difficult.

L-Ready has also designed a slick yet simple disaster planning website that is free and easily customized to each user. Categorized according to type of situation – family emergency, natural disaster, or manmade emergency – the site keeps track of medications, meeting points, and emergency supplies as well as requiring simple but often neglected steps like locating and photographing gas and water shut-off points. "The real and practical benefit is spending the ten minutes it takes to build a plan," Hulls said.

Who pays for this program? Parents who wish to join the messaging system will pay less than \$8 per month. L-Ready also gets income from an online store, where people can purchase emergency supplies such as 72-hour survival kits, pry bars, duct tape, fire

extinguishers, and shut-off wrenches. If the online shopper has an L-Ready disaster plan, their purchases will automatically be added to their plan. Even if the parents don't join, the schools still can use the educational curriculum and accessories for free.

The future

L-Ready is still in the pilot stage. Hulls and his associates, Kennedy, Prakash, and Adrian Cheong are raising money to produce CDs, siren soundmakers, and other curriculum items; refining software, children's songs, and puppets; and signing up local schools to join the pilot launch of the program. They have seven preschools on board, including the Fairfax San Anselmo Children's Center, and the University of Play in Marinwood.

They are also talking with local health clinics, fire departments and law enforcement officials to explore the possibility of integrating the communications system with their services. For parents who are interested, their child's allergies and medical needs could be available as part of a database.

Hulls is looking for potential investors who want to get involved with the company at an early stage. Once the business is off the ground, he plans to attend Harvard School of Business, where he has already been accepted. Meanwhile he is excited to be putting his ideas into action. "I figured I might as well go for broke," Hulls said. "It didn't have much downside, and it was something that I felt good about."

If you want to contact Chris Hulls, he can be reached at (415) 462-0002 x 706, or at Chris@Lready.com