

## NewsStand

### City hall, libraries closed over holidays

San Jose City Hall will be closed for the holidays until Jan. 5 and the city's libraries and community centers will be closed on Dec. 25 and 31 and Jan. 1.

The city's police, fire, environmental and other critical services will be unaffected by the closure, and Mineta San Jose International Airport will remain open.

City neighborhoods with Thursday garbage and street-sweeping services will see the services delayed to Friday during Christmas and New Year's weeks.

Residents can recycle their Christmas trees between Dec. 26 and Jan. 30 by removing tinsel, decorations and any stand, cutting the tree into 5-foot lengths and placing the tree pieces with the curbside yard waste.

More information about city services during the holidays can be obtained by calling 408.277.4000.

### County clean-air rebates available

Santa Clara County residents can get cash back for switching their wood stoves to natural-gas stoves this winter. The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is offering rebates of \$300 to \$500 for residents who choose to switch to the cleaner natural-gas form of home heating.

The district will give \$300 to people who retrofit an existing fireplace box with a new gas line and gas log set. The district will give \$500 to residents who replace a wood stove that is 12 years or older with a gas stove.

### County courts' civil cases now online

Santa Clara County Superior Court officials have announced that information about pending civil and family court cases, including court calendars, is now available on the Internet.

The information can be accessed at [www.sccaseinfo.org](http://www.sccaseinfo.org). Case information can be located using a date range, case number, case title, party's name, attorney's name or court department number. The website is updated daily at 7 a.m., according to the court clerk's office.

Certain types of cases protected by confidentiality laws, including adoptions, juvenile dependency and delinquency, confidential paternity and recent unlawful detainees, do not appear on the website. In addition, information about cases that have been sealed by a judge is not available.

Officials hope to expand the website to include information about traffic cases in September 2004 and criminal cases in June 2005.

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# ALMADEN NEWS



Photograph by Erin Day

**Miles of Smiles:** Steven Cohen, who has a practice in Almaden, is one of two known dentists in Santa Clara County who makes house calls for hospice patients, nursing-home residents and the infirm.

## One dentist gives patients more than brighter and whiter smiles

### Cohen is one of few to make house calls

By GLORIA I. WANG

If families could give each other "Most Likely/Least Likely" titles, Steven Cohen would have the distinction of "Least Likely to Be a Dentist" and his two younger brothers, "Most Likely to Be a Dentist."

Cohen's father and grandfather were both dentists, so another one in the family was inevitable.

But Steven was the musician. He started drumming as a small child, then learned guitar and flute and picked up four more instruments. He went to music school and "just had a ball," Cohen says, later touring and recording albums.

Richard and Alan, on the other hand, "They worked in my dad's office while we were growing up. They were supposed to be dentists," Cohen says.

Ironically, Steven Cohen is now a decade into his career in dentistry, and Richard is mayor of Agawam, Mass., while Alan is a school guidance counselor in Agawam. (Oldest brother David is the publisher of Silicon Valley Community Newspapers.)

And Steven doesn't just make people's smiles brighter in his office, he also is one of only two dentists in the county who does house calls for patients.

Although Cohen spends most of his time in his Almaden Valley office, he often visits hospice patients, nursing homes and the infirm. Organizations such as the Santa Clara County Dental Society regularly refer inquiries for house calls to Cohen.

"It's an amazing thing, when you're called for an emergency and you can get someone out of pain," Cohen, 47, says of being a dentist. And house calls are something that his father and grandfather had always done. "It was the thing to do back then. You took care of the community," he says. "It's wonderfully rewarding because these are the people who need us the most."

With assistant Vita Gredinberg, Cohen

grabs his travel kit and takes off for patients' homes. Often, especially for those in hospice, the need is merely to keep the patient comfortable by adjusting a denture or minor work. House calls have certain practical as well as medical limitations and require a deep level of medical experience.

"Most dentists won't do that on a regular basis. For those people, their care is sort of left to the wayside," says Paul Carroll, an Almaden oral surgeon who went to dental school with Cohen. "I don't know many other dentists who routinely go out of their way."

Carroll also says that Cohen "cares very much for the care of his patients... He sees being a dentist not as a business but as a caregiver." A good dentist is one who "does what's right for the patient, not what the insurance tells you needs to get done," Carroll says.

Former Almaden resident Danny Yeung has been going to Cohen since 1992, when he started his practice. "When I go to see



Photograph by Erin Day

**Time to Listen:** Longtime patient Charlotte Petulla chats with Steven Cohen before having her teeth cleaned.

## Dentist

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him, it's like going to see a friend," Yeung says. Instead of merely playing the role of dentist and asking "What's wrong?" and "How are you feeling?," Yeung says, Cohen talks about his own hobbies and wants to know about the lives of his patients.

But to Cohen a career in dentistry was not on his radar screen until a specific incident had him rethinking his life path.

Cohen was living the life of a musician in Los Angeles in the 1980s when he realized he wanted to be a doctor. One summer, he was taking classes while working at his father's clinic when one patient walked in who would change his life.

"My dad had this man open his mouth and he said, 'Your grandfather did that bridge work,'" Cohen says. "On my drive back to school, something hit me and I said, 'This is what I want to do.'" His father, at age 81, is still practicing today.

Faced with an immediate deadline for dental school candidates, Cohen sent in his application by Federal Express the next day. He was accepted into Georgetown University, but after the school shut down its dental program without warning, he transferred to the University of Southern California and graduated in 1990.

Cohen chose to move to Willow Glen after graduation and has been in the area since. "I like the downtown aspect. I like the neighborly feel. And I like the trees," he says. "And I like the fact that my brother and friends are within a half-mile radius."

Cohen adds, however, that he loves the cultural diversity of Almaden. "It's such a melting pot," he says. "I could just as easily live in Almaden. I would love to walk to work."

Along with practicing dentistry, Cohen is involved with several work-related extracurricular activities, such as advising trauma patients at CareMeridian, a health-care facility in Gilroy; serving as chairman of the membership committee of the Santa Clara County Dental Society; and acting as a board member of Young Audiences of San Jose and Silicon Valley, which focuses on arts education for students.

For several years, Cohen joined a team of volunteer doctors and dentists that trav-

eled to Baja California as part of the Flying Samaritans. The Samaritans brought their own pharmaceutical supplies and held free clinics for locals.

"Before we came down, they'd drive the old Volkswagen buses with bullhorns and say that we were coming," Cohen says. "There were days when we were treating 80 people a day, with just two of us there."

Cohen is a firm believer in doing what he loves, which includes tennis and golf.

And then, there is the music. Cohen still writes and records music, and has a studio in his house. He does gigs on occasion, and what he plays ranges from Afro/Cuban/Latin funk to classical.

"To me, theoretically you should be able to play in any style," he says. "Whatever instrument I'm playing at the time is the one I like the most."

"He's a fantastic musician," says Almaden resident Ben Stein, a dentist who attended USC with Cohen. "Most people when they have really broad interests, they're pretty good here and there. But he's fantastic at a lot of things."

Carroll says, "Pretty amazing how he can balance his time between music and dentistry. He really loves both."

"Most of the time, he talks to me about golf and music. He also talks about research papers," Yeung says about his visits to Cohen's office. "To me, he's like a Renaissance man."

According to Cohen, he is continually aiming to improve both as a dentist and as a musician. "I'm always striving to develop new ideas and techniques in my profession. And hopefully, I'll never feel that I've written the best song," he says.

*Steven L. Cohen, D.D.S. can be reached at 408.268.8585. His office is in the Almaden Medical-Dental Center, 6541 Crown Blvd., Suite H.*

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