

# The Carmel Pine Cone

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## Thrill-seeking fireman swims with hammerheads

By CHRIS COUNTS

WHEN HE'S not putting out fires, Chris Hartzell pursues another adrenaline-pumping activity — swimming with sharks.

A captain for Cal Fire who works at the Carmel Hill Fire Station, Hartzell is a shark enthusiast who's traveled to seven countries to study the fearsome creatures, and he's swum with 17 different species. But nothing he's seen compares to what he encountered last month when he and his wife, nurse Ame Wells, visited the Bahamas.

Hartzell's friend, underwater filmmaker Joe Romeiro, invited the couple to join him for a diving trip off the coast of Bimini Island in the Bahamas, where they swam with great hammerhead sharks.

The largest species of hammerhead, the sharks can reach 20 feet in length and are dangerous to humans, though such attacks are rare. Instead, the massive sharks eat a varied diet of sea life — and have a particular fondness for sting rays.

Knowing what they like to eat, Hartzell wasn't too worried about becoming a meal for a hammerhead. But he was concerned about getting hit by its unusually hard and wide head.

"Hammerheads can turn on a dime," explained Hartzell, who lives in Monterey. "With tiger sharks, once they go past



Filmmaker Joe Romeiro really gets up close and personal with a great hammerhead shark in the Bahamas. Joining him on the February dive were Carmel fireman Chris Hartzell (who took the picture) and his wife, CHOMP nurse Ame Wells.

you, you can stop watching them. But with hammerheads, if you take your eyes off them, they can turn 180 degrees in a split second."

To reach the hammerheads, Hartzell and his wife dived

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## Candidates count down days until city election

By MARY SCHLEY

THE CONTENTERS in the election for mayor and two city council seats are just a little more than a week away from their moment of truth April 8, as they make their last few appearances outside the Fifth Avenue post office and send out their final mailings, seeking to draw support from their constituents.

"It's sort of like marking the days until Christmas off on the calendar," commented council incumbent Carrie Theis.

### ■ Mayor's race

Jason Burnett, who took office as mayor two years ago after serving two years on the council and is seeking a second term, said he hopes voters will choose him because he's shown himself "as someone who's willing to take on the tough challenges," including finances, water and parking.

"I take on the tough issues and I follow through, and I make good on the commitments I've made," he said. "I think people know what they're getting if they choose me to be their mayor in the next two years, and I'll work to make good on my previous commitments and will continue to work on the roadmap that we've worked out."

He'd like to serve another term because he wants to continue building on the progress made over the past two years. "We now have the resources to deliver the quality projects and quality services to the community," he said. "We've made progress on issues that people thought were intractable. I want to continue that work."

And while the past couple of years have been focused on reorganizing inside city hall by establishing new management positions and "bringing in a whole senior leadership team," Burnett said, "during the next two years, you're going to see a lot of improvement out in the community," including street and sidewalk repairs and other capital projects.

"It will be a shift from getting our internal house in order, to putting resources to good use for the community," he said.

For his top five priorities, Burnett selected from the 10 key initiatives he and the council adopted for the year, focusing on parking, water (including the allocation from Clint Eastwood), the IT plan, the facility use plan and necessary improvements (particularly to the public works building and the police station), and Sunset Center. "I'm really excited about the strategic plan that the Sunset Center board has embarked upon," he said.

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## Commission: Moratorium on tasting rooms needed

By MARY SCHLEY

THE CITY should stop approving new wine-tasting rooms in downtown Carmel until the planning commission can develop a reliable and logical set of guidelines for evaluating proposals, the planning commission decided at a special meeting Tuesday. Commissioners voted to recommend the city council adopt an emergency ordinance that would suspend hearings on tasting rooms, a growing business in town, and residents and business people alike supported the break.

"I don't hear anybody saying, 'Let's not take a time out,'" commissioner Steve Dallas said. "It's nice to see the businesses and the residents working together, and we need to see more of that in this town."

Since the commission adopted its policy on wine-tasting rooms in 2011, 18 applications have been submitted, and 11 approved. Five of those applications have come in this year, "and over the last few months, the city has received an uptick in inquiries regarding potential new establishments," senior planner Marc Wiener said in his report. A total of 18 tasting

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## Dangerous but unarmed fugitive shot in Big Sur

By CHRIS COUNTS

A MAN who was sought by police was shot and killed by sheriff's deputies March 20 in Palo Colorado Canyon after the U-Haul truck he was driving collided with a patrol car.

The suspect was identified as 40-year-old Hector Chairez of Selma. Chairez was traveling with a 29-year-old woman, Amber Dawn Barnett, who fled and hid from police but was later located by a K-9 unit and arrested on suspicion of burglary. According to court records, Chairez was convicted in 1992 for intimidating a witness, in 1999 for robbery, and had been charged with other felonies.

Law enforcement officials provided few details about the

shooting last Thursday, because it's under investigation by the Monterey County District Attorney's Office. While local TV stations reported that two deputies involved in the shooting were placed on leave while the investigation continues, the sheriff's office did not confirm it.

Assistant district attorney Berkley Brannon said Chairez was not carrying a gun when he died.

But according to Sgt. Brandon Hayward of the Union City Police Department, the suspect was a parolee and considered dangerous.

According to [www.fugitive.com](http://www.fugitive.com), in February Chairez "kidnapped and physically assaulted his girlfriend." After escaping from him, she said he was armed with a shotgun during the kidnapping, and "made threats to shoot it out with the police if contacted." He was sought by police for possible charges of making criminal threats, spousal battery, kidnapping and being a felon in possession of a firearm.

Hayward confirmed the charges. "We knew there was a very good potential for a violent encounter if we located him," he said.

The shooting happened just east of Highway 1 along Palo Colorado Road in the late afternoon March 20.

Because police aren't commenting, it's unclear what triggered it. Media reports offer conflicting explanations. One report said Chairez was identified by deputies while driving along Highway 1 and led them on a high-speed chase, while another said police were responding to a call about an attempted burglary in the canyon.

Shortly before the shooting, canyon residents said the truck Chairez was driving was sighted along Garrapatos Road near the Glen Deven Ranch, about two miles from Highway 1.

Two canyon residents had conversations with Chairez



Hector Chairez

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## Pro-takeover ballot arguments mislead public, lawsuit says

### ■ Judge may order changes to ballot

By KELLY NIX

THE ACTIVIST group, Public Water Now, used "false and misleading" statements — including a promise that publicly owned water would be cheaper — in support of its June 3 ballot measure aimed at taking over California American Water, according to a lawsuit filed Monday by a local anti-tax advocate who is opposing the measure.

In the suit filed in Monterey County Superior Court, Rick Heuer contends Public Water Now is trying to mislead the public in the ballot arguments it submitted to the Monterey County Elections Office in favor of Measure O, and he wants a judge to stop county registrar Claudio Valenzuela from placing the information on the June ballot.

Heuer is a member of the "A Risk We Cannot Afford, Vote No on O" campaign.

Public Water Now's "ballot argument is replete with false

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