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TRUSTED BY LOCALS AND LOVED BY VISITORS SINCE 1915

Former Travel Bag owner's suicide started Tassajara Fire

By MARY SCHLEY

AN HOUR before the Monterey County Coroner's Office on Friday revealed the identity of the man who committed suicide in Cachagua Sept. 19 by setting himself on fire — and sparking the blaze that destroyed 20 buildings, charred nearly 1,100 acres and took more than a week to be contained — Steve McAlpine's family, which includes wife Jill and daughters Stacey and Jennifer, released a statement about his death via a local public relations firm.

"We are grateful and endlessly thankful to the community, volunteers, firefighters, utility and safety officials who have faced the Tassajara Fire that has threatened and devastated our community, our neighbors," McAlpine's surviving family members, who were not named, were quoted in the statement distributed by Kristina Wyatt of Farmhouse Communications. "You are in our constant thoughts and prayers."

The statement went on to say the family, which until late last year owned a home on Carpenter Street in Carmel, "suffered an unthinkable, unexpected and tragic loss of our father, Steve McAlpine, due to suicide resulting from his long and painful struggle with mental illness. It was a horrific series of events that has left our family in shock and utter disbelief at what we are still trying to process."

"During this time of utmost grief, there are simply no

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Dametra owners adding two Ocean Avenue restaurants

By MARY SCHLEY

LONGTIME RESTAURATEURS Tony Salameh and Csaba Ajan are handing the keys of their PortaBella and Merlot Bistro restaurants to their successful neighbors in a sale that's set to close next week. Citing a demand that exceeds supply at the always busy Dametra Café he operates with friend and business partner Faisal Nimri, Bashar Sneeh said the two new restaurants will offer quality and value to the many locals who often complain they can't get tables at their café.

"Most of the flow to Dametra Café, we've been turning away, so now this is going to be a good addition," Sneeh told The Pine Cone Thursday. "All the people who try to come

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Dancers' flash mob performance turned out to be quite an engagement

By LISA CRAWFORD WATSON

PICTURE IT: A young couple walks out of the InterContinental Hotel to enjoy the balmy coastal air and culture of Cannery Row during a getaway weekend to Monterey. They take a table that gives them vantage on the sea and

Police ask for help finding Mission vandals

By MARY SCHLEY

THE SECURITY cameras weren't recording, and a private security guard hired to patrol the Carmel Mission failed to notice the vandals that struck the historic church sometime late Saturday or early Sunday, throwing paint on several doors, defacing signs and graves, and toppling a statue of

Junipero Serra.

Last week, Pope Francis made Serra a saint during a ceremony in Washington, D.C., reigniting the centuries-old conflict between the church and the various American Indian tribes that blame Serra and the missionaries for spreading disease and building their Missions on the backs of the indigenous people, costing many of them their lives. After

Serra's impending canonization was announced, tribes staged peaceful protests and ceremonies at the Mission during Easter Masses and again last week on the day the Mission founder was made a saint. Serra is buried there.

The vandalism was reported by a volunteer who showed up at around 6:30 a.m. Sept. 27 for morning Mass, according to Carmel Police Sgt. Luke Powell.

"Gallons of paint were strewn about the entryways to the Basilica and the mausoleum. One statue of Junipero Serra was toppled over, and more gallons of paint poured on it. Two gravesites had paint poured on them," he said. The statue is actually on loan to the Mission from the City of Carmel.

Other than the white marble headstone of Old Gabriel, an American Indian who was baptized into the Catholic Church by Serra,

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Vandals pushed over a statue of Carmel Mission founder Junipero Serra and poured green paint all over it during an attack over the weekend. It took four people to right it.

MARY ADAMS MAKES BID TO UNSEAT DAVE POTTER

By KELLY NIX

THE FORMER CEO of United Way Monterey County, Mary Adams, ended months of speculation that she would challenge longtime 5th District Monterey County Supervisor Dave Potter when she announced her candidacy this week.

With more than two dozen supporters by her side, Adams kicked off her campaign in Salinas Wednesday. Before the media event, she spoke to The Pine Cone about her bid for the job, which Potter has held for 19 years. The primary election is June 7, 2016.

"I feel like the county is ready for change," said Adams, who retired from United Way at the end of June after 14 years. "And I feel that I have the experience, the energy and the vision that are needed to help effect the change that we need to see."

Potter's last political challenge was in 2012 by attorney Marc Del Piero, but Potter defeated him by more than 3,900 votes.

Adams, who lives in Pebble Beach, said her decision to square off against Potter wasn't abrupt, but something she

weighed for 18 months. During that time, Adams said she listened to concerns from Peninsula and county residents.

"And what I'm hearing from people is they are very frustrated," she explained. "There are closed-door sorts of hearings, and things are sprung on people without having input into the process. My whole approach to transparency is what is needed at the county right now."

When asked to provide an example of such closed-door meetings, Adams said, an "example that comes to mind most immediately is the activity surrounding SCRAMP and the management of Laguna Seca."

The topics people are most concerned with, Adams said, are water, traffic, short-term rentals, public safety, the proposed Carmel Canine Sports Center and Monterey Downs developments, and even the possibility of zip lines at Point Lobos.

To water — the most important issue facing the 5th District — Adams couldn't say whether she supported California American Water's proposed desal plant in Marina,

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the sidewalk, and order some wine.

Suddenly, a song begins, and some 30 lithe girls break into a choreographed dance routine. As the songs shift and the dancing continues, the guy ushers his gal a little closer for a better view of what appears to be a "flash mob" — a spontaneous public uprising of seemingly random people who

launch into an unexpected performance and then disperse as if nothing happened. Only this time, something would happen. This time, if all went according to plan, it would end in a successful marriage proposal.

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PHOTOS/PHILIP M. GEIGER



What seemed to be an exuberant flash mob of dancers from the Carmel Academy of Performing Arts performed on Cannery Row last weekend (left), riveting the attention of everyone who happened to be on hand. Among them was Cindi Kumpf, who was stunned to learn at the end of the performance that its actual purpose was to provide a backdrop for a hopeful Luke Anderson (center). When he was finished making a proposal and presenting a ring, Kaufman's answer was ... isn't it obvious?

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