

Hitching a ride via the Web

Craigslist a portal for those avoiding long bus rides, expensive plane tickets

By Tamara Barak Aparton
Examiner Staff Writer

In San Francisco, a young woman trying to make it to her mom's house for Thanksgiving promises to strap on her accordion and serenade any driver who can deliver her home to Oregon.

In Daly City, a man who is driving to Los Angeles offers his passenger seat to anyone who isn't crazy and isn't broke.

Across the Bay Area, dozens of holiday travelers who eschew Greyhound and won't spring for a plane ticket are making their Thanksgiving trips with strangers who advertise on Craigslist, the online bulletin board at craigslist.org.

Jeremy Chew, a 25-year-old consultant from Sunnyvale, offered up the extra seats in his Buick Regal for anyone going to Las Vegas over Thanksgiving. Chew placed the ad after putting his economics education to work by doing a cost analysis of the trip. Sharing gas turned out to be cheaper than flying, he said.

Chew acknowledged the risk in



Jeremy Chew, a 25-year-old consultant from Sunnyvale, determined that splitting the cost of gasoline would be cheaper than flying. - Courtesy photo

traveling with strangers, noting that a highly publicized Minnesota killing remains in the back of his mind. In that case, 24-year-old Katherine Olson was found dead after answering an ad for a nanny on Craigslist. A 19-year-old man has been charged in the crime.

Still, Chew is reassured by his previous ride-sharing experiences. Once, as a UC Berkeley student, he made friends with some UCLA students who took him up on a ride. His only unpleasant experience, he says, involved a fellow traveler dropping pastry crumbs into the crevices of his leather seats.

"I enjoy having conversations," he said. "I know how boring road trips can be without company."

To be safe, Chew won't offer a ride to someone unless they can provide him with an e-mail address tied to their employment. Anyone can create an anonymous identity with a Yahoo or Gmail account, he pointed out.

For Berkeley resident Gordon Campbell, who posted on Craigslist looking for a ride to Portland, Ore., ride-sharing was practical.

"On Greyhound, you get a small, very hard seat," he said. "You're not able to lay back and it's \$80 for a ticket."

Sharing a ride with a motorist going his way, Campbell plans to offer \$35 to \$50 in gas money.

"It's more relaxed and you meet new people, but the biggest thing is price," said Campbell, a student.

Lt. Marc Alcantara of the San Mateo County Sheriff's Department is not a fan of the practice.

"I have a college-aged daughter and I would strongly discourage her from doing that," he said. "As a father, I'd have a long sit-down with her."

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Eco-groups team up to save threatened species

By Joshua Sabatini
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An new program intended to educate people about endangered and threatened species in park land and inspire efforts to help them recover is about to begin in the Golden Gate National Recreational Area, thanks to the efforts of a number of non-profit environmental groups.

Called the 2008 Golden Gate National Recreation Area Endangered Species Big Year, people will be competing to observe 33 endangered and threatened species within the park land, and to take 33 conservation actions to help those species recover.

The program officially launches with a kickoff party at the San Francisco Zoo on Jan. 6, followed by a trek to Ocean Beach to observe the Western snowy plover, one of the 33 endangered species.

Program director Brent Plater — a staff attorney with the Environmental Law and Justice Clinic at Golden Gate University law school — said it will encourage people to "reflect on their relationship to this landscape" and foster the attitude that "we can all play a role" in helping species recover.

Plater said the fact that the

Golden Gate National Recreation Area has one of the highest number of threatened and endangered species compared to other national parks is an "astounding" fact, and one that inspired the creation of the program.

Environmental groups behind the effort include Nature in The City, the Sierra Club, and the Golden Gate Audubon Association, according to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, which is also lending a helping hand.

"The parks service supports the effort to educate the public on threatened and endangered species," said Chris Powell, a spokeswoman for the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. "We are working with the environmentalists to support them in their tours of the parks and ensuring correct information goes out."

Powell said the Big Year 2008 "is one of the largest efforts by non-profit organizations to educate the public."

Participants are to enter their sightings of rare species, such as the California clapper rail bird or the Presidio clarkia flower, via the Internet at a Web site dedicated to the Big Year 2008.

For more info, visit www.ggnrbigyear.org.

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Advertisement

Free Workshop Reveals 7 Ways To Slash College Costs

Millbrae — An extremely popular free workshop is being held for the parents of college bound high school students during the month of November. The workshop will focus on little-known ways of getting money for college, no matter how much income you make, or how good of a student you have. The class will include such topics as how to double or triple your eligibility for free grant money, the secret to sending your child to a private or UC school

for less than the cost of a junior college, and the single biggest mistake that 9 out of 10 parents make when planning for college. The workshop date is Tuesday, November 27th in the Chetcuti Room located at 450 Poplar Ave, Millbrae. The class is from 6:45pm to 8:00pm. The workshop is hosted by College Planning Specialists, the nation's leading experts on paying for college. Seating is free, few seats are still available. To reserve your seat, call 650-591-0299.

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Woman stalked, survives stabbing

By Brent Begin
Examiner Staff Writer

Police arrested a 23-year-old man early Wednesday morning on suspicion of following a woman to the door of her Ocean Beach home and stabbing her several times.

Robert Hancock, who is on probation for a narcotics offense, according to court records, was arrested just before 2 a.m. Wednesday. The victim, an unidentified 27-year-old who sustained non-life-threatening wounds, told police she didn't know why the man stabbed her.

According to police Sgt. Steve Mannina, Hancock stalked her from a 7-Eleven store at 46th Avenue and Judah Street to her home near Moraga Street and Great Highway. At about 1:30 a.m., a verbal exchange broke out between the two and Hancock pulled out a knife and stabbed her numerous times.

Mannina said that although the

wounds were not life-threatening, they were serious enough to have killed the victim if they were placed differently.

A nearby witness called 911 as the attacker left the area and Taraval Station officers spotted him 20 minutes later a block away from the same 7-Eleven.

Hancock allegedly ran once he was spotted by one officer but was taken into custody by another officer shortly afterward. A knife was also recovered.

According to court records, Hancock had been arrested and prosecuted at least twice for dealing or possessing crack cocaine. In 2002, when he was 18, he was sent to drug diversion, and in 2006 he pled guilty to a lesser offense and received three years of unsupervised probation.

Police are holding Hancock on charges of attempted murder, aggravated assault, stalking, possession of drug paraphernalia, resisting arrests and probation violation.

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