Hits and misses

Gift a godsend for Cabrillo’s dental program

**HIT** Merry Christmas from the Crockers, indeed! It’s appropriate the $100,000 donation to Cabrillo College’s dental hygiene program comes during the holiday season, because it is one huge gift to program students and faculty. Richard and Theresa Crocker, longtime Cabrillo supporters after whom the college’s Crocker Theater is named, made the donation, which will allow the program to admit 22 students this fall and retain its 14 part-time faculty. Because of reduced campus enrollment, Cabrillo officials announced in September that funding cuts would force them to admit students every two years, instead of annually. Funds also were cut for 12 of its 14 part-time adjunct faculty, saving the college $200,000. The two-year program is the college’s most expensive, due to a 5-to-1 student-to-faculty ratio mandated by its accrediting board. The Crockers’ gift buys the college time to put a permanent funding solution in place. Theresa Crocker, who worked as a dental hygienist for seven years, is a 1986 graduate of the program.

**HIT** Congratulations to Aptos High, whose football team came up big this weekend, repeating as Central Coast Section Division III champion with an 11-8 win over St. Ignatius of the West Catholic Athletic League on Saturday. Ap- tos posted four shutouts in the regular-season — one short of the school record — but headed to the playoffs having just allowed 80 points, a school-best for 10 games. Against better competition in the postseason, the defense stepped up to another level. And now another CCS title. Monte Vista Christian in Watsonville, meanwhile, reached the Central Coast Section football championship game for the first time in school history, also Saturday. The Mustangs will have to wait another year to take home some hardware, however. Monte Vista fell to Terra Nova, 43-23. Congrats to both teams.

**MISS** This one speaks for itself. The 52 percent turnout among registered voters in the Nov. 4 election was the lowest in Santa Cruz County history for a general election. Of the 342,405 registered voters from the Santa Cruz Mountains to the coast, only 74,040 cast ballots. Nonpresidential election years often draw a lower turnout, but the Nov. 4 turnout was 14 percentage points below the 69 percent seen during the last mid-term election in November 2010. County elections chief Gail Pellerin, who last week certified results from the Nov. 4 election, is dead-right when expressing her frustration, noting her department has worked hard in recent years to make voting more convenient, including mailing or emailing sample ballots and voter information pamphlets, offering early voting a month before the election, and issuing vote-by-mail ballots. Think your vote doesn’t make a difference? Santa Cruz City Schools board challenger Alison Thompson ousted incumbent Cynthia Hawthorne by 82 votes. In Capitola, former treasurer Jacques Bertrand won a seat by 62 votes over sheriff’s Sgt. Joe Clarke. Fifty-two percent is an embarrassment.

**MISS** Everyone knows this drought is a bad one, but apparently it’s even worse than most would guess. The last three years were the most severe drought period California has experienced in at least 1,200 years, according to a scientific study published last week. Analyzing tree rings that date to 800 A.D. there is no three-year period when California’s rainfall has been as low and its temperatures as hot as they have been from 2012 to 2014, the researchers found. Now couple that with this news: There are growing gaps between water conservation in the north and south parts of the state. While the San Francisco Bay Area cut its water use 15.5 percent in October compared with October 2013, according to new numbers released last week, Los Angeles basin residents cut their use by only 1.4 percent over the same period. Meanwhile, San Diego actually increased its use of water by 2.6 percent. Drought? What drought? Thanks, SoCal. Doing your part, we see.