

Students plan E. Palo Alto voter drive

By Amy Rosenfeld

Hoping to help secure passage of a tenants' rights measure in next month's East Palo Alto city election, a group of Stanford law students will conduct a voter registration there beginning next week.

On March 5 and again on March 12, law students Charic Daniels, Julie Gutman, Larry Ottinger and Gary Peck — along with East Palo Alto Councilman Ruben Abrica, the East Palo Alto Council of Tenants and hundreds of volunteers — will be going door-to-door in East Palo Alto in an effort to register voters before the April 14 election.

If passed, the measure — known as Measure C — could increase tenant rights by restricting the right of landlords to raise rents.

Abrica, a 1978 Stanford graduate, proposed Measure C, which states that "any law adopted by the voters can only be amended or repealed by the voters." According to Gutman, passage of Measure C would help tenants in their fight to retain the city's 1986 Rent Control Ordinance.

The Rent Control Ordinance prevents landlords from increasing rents beyond the level of the Consumer Price Index inflation rate, allows the continuation of low income housing, includes

standards for upkeep of housing and demands good cause for eviction.

Over the past year, however, many landlords have pressured the city council to repeal the ordinance. The council is currently split 3-2 in favor of keeping it. If elected next month, "new members could overturn that decision," Gutman warned.

In addition to seeking passage of Measure C, the group of law students has set goals of increasing "community empowerment, educating people in East Palo Alto and encouraging people to be more active," Gutman said.

A secondary goal of the law students is to establish stronger links

between Stanford and the East Palo Alto community. If "students and residents go into apartment buildings and see what life is like, [they will] get a better feel for the whole situation," Gutman said.

The group will focus on registering tenants and "low income people [who] tend to be less represented," Gutman said.

In the past, "tenants have been very important to elections (in East Palo)," Daniels said. Although the city used to have one of the highest voter registration rates in the Bay Area, in recent years over 4000 names have

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dropped from the rolls.

Daniels explained that a name may be purged from the list for a number of reasons and "not just because [a person] didn't vote." She said the volunteers will try to re-register these past voters, in addition to registering 18-year-olds and people who have just moved into the area.

Although will concentrate on registering tenants, Abrica stressed that it is "just a big push to register new people," not just tenants. "Though you target areas ... basically you register anybody who wants to register," he said.

Gutman estimated that the



Julie Gutman

drive's volunteers would register at least 400 or 500 tenants. "We just hope we can help as much as we can," Daniels said.