San Mateo County now under regional stay-at-home order

By Sue Dremann

Calling the human toll of the COVID-19 pandemic “devastating,” San Mateo County announced it will enforce the state's regional stay-at-home order starting Thursday, Dec. 17, at 11:59 p.m., officials said on Wednesday. The announcement came after the Bay Area’s intensive care unit capacity plunged to 12.9%, which triggered the state’s mandated order.

The order will affect 10 counties. Regions around the state must employ the stay-at-home restriction on businesses and activities when ICU capacity drops below 15%. The order aims to reduce the number of hospitalizations and deaths from COVID-19 infection and to prevent overwhelming the health care system.

Most Bay Area counties fast-tracked the stay-at-home order on Dec. 4 after Santa Clara County’s ICU capacity dropped below 15%, as a precautionary measure. Health officials anticipated their counties would soon follow. San Mateo County did not join the early restrictions, but under the state guidelines, it must now comply.

The order prohibits private gatherings of any size, except for outdoor church services and political demonstrations. Restaurants must stop offering in-person dining, even outdoors, and can only offer takeout and delivery services. Salons and barbershops must close. Retail businesses can remain open with 20% capacity. All retail establishments must have entrance metering and can’t have eating or drinking within stores. Nonessential travel, hotels and short-term rentals for leisure are banned.

The order is less sweeping than previous lockdowns instituted last spring, the county noted. People can continue essential activities such as grocery shopping, visiting a doctor, and barbershops must close. Retail businesses can remain open with 20% capacity. All retail establishments must have entrance metering and can’t have eating or drinking within stores. Nonessential travel, hotels and short-term rentals for leisure are banned.

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Police: Latest Atherton burglaries may be tied to 2018-19 crimes

By Angela Swartz

Police have reason to believe recent home burglaries in Atherton — including the theft of $800,000 worth of jewelry taken from a home on Dec. 8 — are linked to a crime spree in town two years ago, they told residents during a meeting on Dec. 9 over Zoom, which 212 people attended. Police may also have a lead on the culprits, Atherton City Council member Rick DeGolia told The Almanac.

One of the town’s new license plate readers captured the vehicle associated with the Dec. 8 jewelry theft, DeGolia said in an email Tuesday. Police have linked the same car to two other thefts in the Bay Area, he said.

The most recent burglaries, which police described in a Dec. 15 press release, took place between Dec. 7 and Dec. 15. They are among the nine burglaries in town since Oct. 1. The most recent burglaries, which police described in a Dec. 15 press release, took place between Dec. 7 and Dec. 15. They are among the nine burglaries in town since Oct. 1.

During a November 2018 to February 2019 spree, millions of dollars’ worth of goods were stolen in 20 residential burglaries over a four-month period. Police said gang members in Southern California, who were arrested, jailed or deported, were the culprits then. They may still be communicating with others to commit crimes, possibly including the nine burglaries in town that have taken place since Oct. 1, said Atherton Police Chief Steve McCulley.

“It appears that they are back,” he said. The break-in method on Dec. 8 on Greenoaks Drive is notably consistent with the prior string of burglaries, in which thieves climbed up to the second story of homes to gain entry. Burglars struck again last week. Sometime between the early afternoon on Dec. 9 and 4 p.m. on Dec. 12, an unknown suspect smashed a second-story window at a home on Serrano Drive near Stockbridge Avenue, according to police. The burglar(s) appeared to have used a patio couch turned on its side to climb to the second story, police said.

There is security footage from the Dec. 8 burglary, and police are hopeful they will capture images of the suspects, McCulley said. Unfortunately, if it is the same crew from two years ago, they often make themselves unidentifiable on camera, wearing hoodies and face masks, he said.

The same group likely broke into homes up the Peninsula in Hillsborough, McCulley said. They tend to burglarize residents mid-week ormid-night and come when there is still daylight, and wait until it gets dark to see which homes do not have lights on and appear to be unoccupied.

“The burglary last night (Dec. 8) fit that MO (modus operandi) exactly,” he said, noting the burglary happened between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. and burglars entered through a
To Our Stanford Medicine Community

For months, we have faced the challenges of living through this pandemic together. And while we have more reasons to hope with each passing day that we will eventually defeat this virus, it is clear the crisis is far from over.

The number of COVID cases in the San Francisco Bay Area, as well as much of California, has soared over the past few weeks. Recently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention urged Americans to avoid large gatherings in an effort to stop the rapid spread of COVID-19. Hospitals across the nation are filling their beds more quickly, and our frontline healthcare workers are facing exhaustion.

This is a dangerous situation to be in, and we need everyone’s help to fix it.

Even with so much uncertainty, the science is clear. We know what works to stop the spread of COVID-19:

- **Wear a mask.** Masks can save lives, including your own.
- **Wash your hands.** Thorough handwashing stops the virus from spreading.
- **Keep your distance.** Avoid gatherings and stay 6 feet apart from those you don’t live with.

We know you have heard all of these recommendations before, but they are more important than ever.

Stanford Medicine is here for you, as always, and committed to being a part of the solution. We remain open even during shelter-in-place and continue to care for patients safely.

We know you are counting on us, and we have mobilized everyone—our care teams, researchers, students, and staff—to rise to this challenge. But we need you to know that we are counting on you, too.

It is your help that will make the difference and determine whether or not we can slow the spread of the virus in the weeks and months ahead. It is your care and thoughtfulness that will save lives and shape the future.

We are here for you and with your help, we will get through this together.

**Lloyd Minor, MD**  
Dean, Stanford School of Medicine

**David Entwistle**  
President and CEO  
Stanford Health Care

**Paul King**  
President and CEO  
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—Cece’s mom, Kristin

Families with critically ill children have been through a lot this year. Everyday, our community helps thousands of families cope with the financial and emotional burden of accessing critical medical care for their children.

Through it all—and only thanks to the support of people like you—Ronald McDonald House Charities Bay Area has provided stability, essential resources, and moments of calm to families like Cece’s. By making a holiday gift, you will provide family housing near the hospital, daily meals, and specialized support programs so families can access lifesaving pediatric care.

Join us in keeping families with sick children together and close to the care they need.

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A conductor boards a southbound Caltrain at the Atherton station on its last day of rail service on Dec. 13. Town officials and Caltrain inked an agreement to end use of the station after 158 years.

All aboard for the last stop at Atherton’s train station

By Angela Swartz
Almanac Staff Writer

I t was the end of the line for rail service in Atherton last weekend. The final train stopped in town on the evening of Sunday, Dec. 13. Caltrain opted earlier this month to discontinue service in town in favor of nearby Menlo Park and Redwood City stations, which have much higher ridership and where denser developments are projected to generate higher levels of future demand for rail service.

The Atherton City Council voted to shut down the historic station at the end of October because of low ridership over the years and a desire to safeguard the town from future legislation similar to the recent Senate Bill 50, which would have required cities to allow high-density housing development near public transit.

“I have very mixed reactions to the Caltrain decision to close the Atherton station and to stop scheduled stops in Atherton after 158 years,” said Council member Rick DeGolia in an email. “On the one hand, it is sad that Caltrain has chosen to close the station due to low ridership because the station is a real asset to Atherton, and Atherton has been involved with the train for more than 150 years. It is sad to see the elimination of a train stop that is so convenient. On the other hand, time creates change and with the center of business demand for rail service.

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High school students won’t go back to classrooms next semester

By Angela Swartz
Almanac Staff Writer

S equoia Union High School District students will not return to classrooms for learning when the spring semester rolls around on Jan. 4.

Given the COVID-19 pandemic’s current “fluidity,” district officials decided to start next semester under the current distance learning model, the district website states.

“I hope this is the last semester we ever do (distance learning),” said Georgia Jack during a Dec. 9 meeting, her last as a trustee before her term expired Dec. 16. “I wish we (the district) would have had more creative. I think we really allowed tradition to push us forward and we weren’t really taking the opportunities that were presented to us; I understand everyone is in a crisis.”

Jack and other school board members agreed that it would benefit students socially to come to campus for club meetings or athletic conditioning, even if there isn’t academic instruction in person. Some students are already training for sports in person in small cohorts.

The district submitted a plan to the San Mateo County Office of Education this month to prepare for an eventual reopening of schools for in-person instruction. The plan includes an option to have some students learn over Zoom in a room on campus while others would continue lessons through Zoom at home. Those students returning to campus would be selected based on their internet

First FDA-approved COVID-19 vaccine reaches Midpeninsula

Pfizer-BioNTech going out to health workers, seniors in care facilities

By Sue Dremann

A fter the Food and Drug Administration on Dec. 11 authorized the first COVID-19 vaccine by Pfizer-BioNTech, doses began to be distributed in the United States.

The FDA’s emergency authorization allows the vaccine to be given to anyone age 16 and older. The Bay Area started getting shipments of the vaccine this week, with Santa Clara County receiving 17,550 doses in the initial distribution, county health leaders said.

San Mateo County was initially allocated 5,850 doses of the Pfizer vaccine and county officials expect to receive five to six times that many Pfizer and Moderna vaccines by the end of the month, according to a statement. The county also received two sub-zero freezers to be used for storing vaccines on Wednesday, Dec. 16. The vaccines must be stored at ultra-cold temperatures to remain effective.

San Mateo County’s first vaccines arrived Tuesday, Dec. 15, and will be distributed to the six general acute hospitals in the county to be administered to staff, according to a county media advisory.

“The first 5,850 doses of the vaccine arrived in Santa Clara County at about 7:30 a.m. Tuesday, offering what battle-weary public health leaders called ‘a glimmer of hope in the long fight’ against COVID-19. The remaining doses are being shipped from the manufacturer directly to the hospitals this week, including the Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System, which began giving shots on Wednesday.

FDA Commissioner Dr. Stephen M. Hahn hailed the vaccine’s authorization as the beginning to control the deadly virus.

“The FDA’s authorization for emergency use of the first COVID-19 vaccine is a significant milestone in battling this devastating pandemic that has affected so many families in the United States and around the world. Today’s action follows an open and transparent review process that included input from independent scientific and public health experts and a thorough evaluation by the agency’s career scientists to ensure this vaccine met FDA’s rigorous, scientific standards for safety, effectiveness, and manufacturing quality needed to support emergency use authorization.

The tireless work to develop a new vaccine to prevent this novel, serious, and life-threatening disease in an expedited time frame after its emergence is a true testament to scientific innovation and public-private collaboration worldwide,” he said in the statement.

The totality of the available data provides clear evidence that the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine may be effective in preventing COVID-19, the agency said in its statement.

“The data also support that the known and potential benefits outweigh the known and potential risks, supporting the vaccine’s use in millions of people 16 years of age and older, including healthy individuals. In making this determination, the FDA can assure the public and medical community that it has conducted a thorough evaluation of the available safety, effectiveness and manufacturing quality information.”

How it works

The vaccine contains a small piece of the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) virus messenger RNA (mRNA), which is a piece of genetic material that instructs cells in the body to make the virus’ distinctive “spike” protein. The body of a person who receives the vaccine produces copies of the spike protein, which triggers the immune system to react defensively and produce an immune response against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 disease.

Pfizer’s vaccine showed a 95%
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING BEFORE THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE WEST BAY SANITARY DISTRICT

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a public hearing will be held before the Board of Directors of the West Bay Sanitary District at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 13, 2021, at the District Offices, located at 500 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, California to consider the adoption of an Ordinance amending Section 209 “Board Member Compensation” of the District’s Code of General Regulations to increase the amount Board Members shall be compensated for attendance at meetings of the Board or for each day’s service rendered as a Director by request of the Board from $230.00 per day up to $240.00 per day, not to exceed six days in any calendar month.

WEST BAY SANITARY DISTRICT
By: /s/ Sergio Ramirez
Sergio Ramirez
District Manager

TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY
765 Portola Road
Portola Valley, CA 94028

In recognition of the Holiday Season
Portola Valley Town Hall
will be closed from Thursday, December 24, 2020 through Friday, January 1, 2020

TOWN OF WOODSIDE
2955 WOODSIDE ROAD, WOODSIDE, CA 94062
INVITES APPLICATIONS FOR
ARCHITECTURAL AND SITE REVIEW BOARD
The Architectural and Site Review Board reviews and makes recommendations to the Planning Director regarding community character, site planning, building design and landscape elements on residential and commercial applications.
Meetings are held on the first and third Monday of each month at 4:30 p.m. Appointments are for a four-year term, expiring February 2024.
Interested residents may request information and applications from the Town Clerk, Jennifer Li, by e-mailing jli@woodsidetown.org.
APPLICATION DEADLINE: Friday, January 29, 2021, by 5 p.m.
INTERVIEW AND APPOINTMENT BY TOWN COUNCIL: Tuesday, February 9, 2021, 7:00 p.m.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
West Bay Sanitary District

The Almanac is published every Friday at 3525 Alameda De Las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025

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For more detailed visit sanmateocourt.org or contact the court at (650) 261-5016.

—Bay City News Service

Fire district hosts virtual visits with Santa
This year, it turns out even Santa Claus is doing some of his work over Zoom, but instead of taking calls from the North Pole, he has set up shop at a local firehouse. The Woodside Fire Protection District is arranging for video chats with Kris Kringle on Dec. 22 in a virtual substitute for the traditional visit to sit on Santa’s lap.

To participate, send a letter to Santa and include an email address and phone number. The letter can be dropped off in one of the special “Santa” mailboxes at Station 7, 3111 Woodside Road, Woodside; Station 8, 135 Portola Road, Portola Valley; or Station 19, 4091 Jefferson Ave., Woodside. Letters can also be emailed or sent by regular mail, but all letters must be received by Dec. 19. Then Santa’s helpers will get in touch to set up a chat.

To make sure everyone has a chance to video chat with Santa, calls will be limited to five minutes each.

For more information or to email a letter, contact Selena Brown at selenab@woodsidefire.org.

New Caltrain schedule
Caltrain’s new schedule aims to improve service for essential workers and others dependent on public transit who have continued riding the agency’s trains amid the COVID-19 pandemic that has reduced overall ridership by 95%.

The new schedule, which took effect Monday, Dec. 14, includes more frequent off-peak and weekend service. Nine months into the pandemic, riders tend to be essential workers who may travel during off-peak times.

There will be 68 trains on weekdays, with two trains per hour, per direction running throughout the day, allowing for 30-minute frequency at stations in higher demand, including the connection with BART at Millbrae.

On the weekends, Caltrain will run hourly local service, improving on the current 90-minute frequency, among other changes. The agency says weekend riders make up 17% of overall ridership, three times more than before the pandemic.

According to Caltrain, about 3,600 riders currently ride its trains on weekdays, and the agency does not expect ridership to fully recover in the new year.

The new schedule can be found at tinyurl.com/caltrain-new-schedule.

—Heather Zimmerman

County offers free mental health app
For individuals who are experiencing pandemic-related stress and anxiety right now—and frankly, who isn’t—San Mateo County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services has partnered with Headspace to provide the Headspace app free to anyone who lives, works or goes to school in San Mateo County through August 2021.

The app provides guided mindfulness exercises, meditations,

See COMMUNITY BRIEFS, page 20
It looked different this year, but the Menlo Park City Council still managed to cram in several of its year-end traditions at its last scheduled meeting of 2020, which took place over video.

These traditions included recognizing outgoing Mayor Cecilia Taylor and outgoing council member Catherine Carlton, selecting Drew Combs as the next mayor, and swearing in new council member Jen Wolosin and reelected council member Ray Mueller. Councilwoman Betsy Nash was named vice mayor.

Taylor gave a succinct State of the City speech, highlighting the accomplishments of the city as a whole and her accomplishments in a difficult year.

In grappling with the economic impacts of the pandemic throughout the community, the council worked together to make major budget cuts and craft emergency aid packages to fund programs to provide funding to those in need, such as renters facing evictions, struggling businesses and restaurants looking to provide outdoor dining.

The year also brought growing demands to enact police reforms in the aftermath of the police killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. The council dealt with the resignation of the city’s police chief and brought on interim Chief Dave Spiller, and is holding listening sessions with community members about policing in Menlo Park.

In addition, the council passed an updated climate action plan laying out environmental and energy policies to reduce fossil fuel emissions, as well as an ordinance to make it easier to build accessory or secondary dwelling units, Taylor said.

Among the accomplishments she highlighted were working to help the unhoused population in the marshlands near Bayfront Expressway, advocating for community needs by revising the list of amenities that developers should provide the community when they construct large buildings, highlighting the potential impacts of sea level rise for the Belle Haven neighborhood, working to get air quality monitors installed in Belle Haven, and representing the historically underrepresented neighborhood on the council.

OBITUARIES

Local residents who died recently include: Robert Earl Capps, 65, a real estate developer and former Woodside resident who died on Oct. 22; Pat P. DiSibio, 88, a longtime Menlo Park resident and building contractor who died on Oct. 22; Dorothy Gravelle, 95, an Atherton resident of more than 50 years who died on Nov. 4; Donald Orville Young, 88, a real estate broker and Menlo Park resident who died on Nov. 7; Dan Pomerosy, 77, a Menlo Park resident who died on Nov. 17; Lois Marilla John, 87, a former Woodside resident who died on Dec. 4; Nancy Lou Kieuling, 88, owner of the The Book Rack bookstore and a Menlo Park resident, who died on Dec. 9; Norah Margaret Bretall, 85, a former Menlo Park and Atherton resident who died on Dec. 10; and Elizabeth Campbell Kridl, 95, a longtime Atherton resident and active local volunteer, who died on Dec. 10.

To read full obituaries, leave remembrances and post photos, go to Lasting Memories at almanacnews.com/obituaries.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

PLANNING COMMISSION – CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT TO ALLOW TEMPORARY USE OF ATHLETIC FIELDS FOR OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES WITH TEMPORARY LIGHTING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Atherton Planning Commission will hold a public hearing to consider an application by Menlo School for a Conditional Use Permit to allow outdoor recreational activities at its athletic fields and associated temporary lighting at Menlo School, 50 Valparaiso Avenue, Atherton, CA, pursuant to Atherton Municipal Code Chapters 17.12, 17.36 and 17.56. Description: Request for a Conditional Use Permit to allow Menlo School to utilize temporary lighting from January 19, 2021 through March 12, 2021 from the hours of 3:45 pm until 6:15 pm Monday through Friday on Cartan Field and Wunderlich Field (only as needed based on field conditions).

The proposal has been determined to be exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Sections 15301, Class 1, relating to use of existing facilities and 15332, Class 23, for normal operations of facilities for gatherings.

NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that said application is set for hearing by the Planning Commission at its Special Meeting on December 28, 2020 at 6:00 PM via teleconference/Zoom accessible through the below-described information, at which time and place public comments will be heard and all persons interested may participate and show cause, if they have any, why the Conditional Use Permit should or should not be approved.

This meeting is being held in compliance with the Governors Executive Order N-25-20 issued on March 4, 2020, and Executive Order N-29-20 issued on March 17, 2020, allowing for deviation of teleconference rules required by the Brown Act. The purpose of this is to provide the safest environment for staff and the public while allowing for public participation. The meeting will be held by tele or video conferencing. The public may participate in the Planning Commission Meeting via: Zoom Meeting.

THE ALMANAC

Almanac News, 216 Middlefield Rd., Menlo Park, CA 94025

December 18, 2020 Phone: (650) 850-5945 Fax: (650) 850-5984

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San Mateo County reported 19,330 cumulative coronavirus cases as of Tuesday. The death toll stands at 183. There were 110 people hospitalized. Santa Clara County as of Tuesday had 50,315 COVID-19 cases. The seven-day rolling average of new cases per day ending Dec. 7 is 1,056. Twenty-four more people have died, raising the death toll to 553. In addition, 528 people were hospitalized with the virus, 89 of which were new.

California groups sports into four tiers

The California Department of Public Health revised its guidance for youth and recreational adult sports Monday, outlining which are allowed in each of the state’s four pandemic reopening tiers.

The new guidelines apply to all organized sports, including school and community-sponsored programs and privately organized leagues.

Sports are grouped in each of the four tiers by their potential for the virus to spread, with factors including how much contact players make with each other and whether a sport or activity is played indoors or outdoors.

“I know as a parent and athlete myself, how important exercise is to maintain physical and mental health, and we encourage members of the same household to do physical activities together and outdoors until the current and alarming surge passes,” said Dr. Erica Pan, the state’s acting public health officer.

Outdoor physical conditioning, practice and skill training are all allowed across the state, including in counties that have implemented a stay-at-home order or are under the state’s stay-at-home order.

Residents in a county with a stay-at-home order are strongly encouraged to avoid exercising with people from another household under any circumstance.

“Despite how hard it has been to do this for so many months, it’s imperative now more than ever that we all follow public health guidance by staying home and not mixing with other households,” Pan said.

The new guidelines apply to counties that are not under the state’s stay-at-home order, according to the CDPH, which developed the guidelines with stakeholders like the California Interscholastic Federation and the California Association of Recreation and Park Districts.

More than two dozen sports and exercise activities are allowed in the most restrictive “purple” tier, including biking, golf, ice and roller skating, programs like yoga and Zumba, running, swimming, skiing, snowboarding and hiking.

For sports in all four tiers, competition will not be allowed to resume statewide until Jan. 25 at the earliest.

State officials will reevaluate that date in early January depending on the state of the pandemic and California’s capacity of hospital and intensive care unit beds.

“We need everyone to take seriously their responsibility to protect their entire community, and in the meantime, we all can look forward to these activities we can resume in 2021,” Pan said.

The list of which sports and activities are allowed in each tier can be found at cdph.ca.gov.

Comprehensive COVID-19 coverage


CalMatters and Bay City News Service contributed to this report.
Your home as the bakery
Your home as the office
Your home as your favorite cafe
Your home as the gym
Your home is your every place.

Wishing you and yours a safe and healthy holiday season, and peaceful new year.

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Contributions to the Holiday Fund go directly to programs that benefit Peninsula residents. Last year, Almanac readers and foundations contributed $150,000 from more than 150 donors for the 10 agencies that feed the hungry, house the homeless and provide numerous other services to those in need.

Contributions to the Holiday Fund will be matched, to the extent possible, by generous community organizations, foundations and individuals, including the Rotary Club of Menlo Park Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. No administrative costs will be deducted from the gifts, which are tax-deductible as permitted by law.

All donations to the Holiday Fund will be shared equally among the 10 recipient agencies listed on this page.

Please consider donating online, which enables your gift to be processed immediately. The secure website is: siliconvalleycf.org/almanac-holiday-fund

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Boys & Girls Clubs
Provides after-school academic support, enrichment, and mentoring for 1,800 low-income K-12 youth at nine locations across Menlo Park, East Palo Alto, and the North Fair Oaks neighborhood of Redwood City.

Ecumenical Hunger Program
Provides emergency food, clothing, household essentials, and sometimes financial assistance to families in need, regardless of religious preference, including Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets for more than 2,000 households.

Health Connected
Serves over 5,000 students and their families each year through comprehensive sexual health education programs. Students learn to have ongoing communication with parents and to make informed decisions that will apply to their lives, now and in the future.

LifeMoves
Provides shelter/housing and supportive services across 18 sites in Silicon Valley and the Peninsula. Serves thousands of homeless families and individuals annually on their path back to permanent housing and self-sufficiency.

Literacy Partners — Menlo Park
Supports literacy programs and projects through fundraising and community awareness. Helps community members enhance their reading, writing and related skills and education to improve their economic, professional and personal wellbeing.

Ravenswood Family Health Center
Provides primary medical and preventive health care for all ages at its clinic in East Palo Alto. Of the more than 17,000 registered patients, most are low-income and uninsured and live in the ethnically diverse East Palo Alto, Belle Haven, and North Fair Oaks areas.

St. Anthony’s Padua Dining Room
Serves hundreds of hot meals six days a week to people in need who walk through the doors. Funded by voluntary contributions and community grants, St. Anthony’s is the largest dining room for the needy between San Francisco and San Jose. It also offers take-home bags of food, as well as emergency food and clothing assistance.

St. Francis Center
Serves over 32,000 people throughout San Mateo County, including children, young people and families, with counseling, prevention, early intervention, education, and residential programs. Helps low-income, working families become self-supporting members of the community by providing long-term solutions through educational programs for children and parents, as well as after-school programming at Siena Youth Centers. St. Francis Center also provides housing, food and clothing services to address short-term needs.

StarVista
Serves more than 32,000 people throughout San Mateo County, including children, young people and families, with counseling, prevention, early intervention, education, and residential programs. StarVista also provides crisis intervention and suicide prevention services including a 24-hour suicide crisis hotline, an alcohol and drug helpline, and a parent support hotline.

Upward Scholars
Empowers low-income adults by providing them with financial support, tutoring, and other assistance so they can continue their education, get higher-paying jobs, and serve as role models and advocates for their children.
Thank you for donating to the Holiday Fund

Almanac Holiday Fund Donor List

As of Dec. 15, 106 donors have contributed $60,089 to the Almanac Holiday Fund.

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Dorothy Fuller-Polash ............. 500

* Donor did not want to publish the amount of the gift.

Change or corrections to listings may be made by contacting Tallie Shiles at tallie@almanacnews.com.

DONATE ONLINE:
siliconvalleycf.org/almanac-holiday-fund

Holiday Fund: LiveMoves assists unhoused students and their families

By Nacole Barth-Ellis
Special to The Almanac

It’s easy to label 2020 a year to forget, with nothing but heartbreak and hardship. But things are growing more positive with each day for Heilala and her family. She and her six family members were living in one bedroom of a friend’s home. When the friend decided to sell the house, Heilala, a high school senior, and her family became homeless.

Heilala said having a roof over their heads, “a home” at Haven Family House in Menlo Park, was life-changing, especially when the family was forced to quarantine for 14 days due to COVID-19. But being homeless significantly impacted her school performance. Heilala said she didn’t confide with her classmates about her living situation, but did share with her teachers and school counselors about the challenges she and her family were facing. “I struggled a lot with balancing my own needs, my family, and school. My only focus was on the fact that we were homeless. I lacked the motivation to even try at school and so I fell behind.” Heilala admitted.

COVID-19 has increased anxiety among both our oldest and youngest LifeMoves clients. Moving to a remote learning format while adhering to social distance protocols has required creative solutions to ensure students are not left behind academically. Many parents are struggling with how to help their children who are learning remotely, and it’s especially challenging for students who have special needs or if there is a language barrier. All LifeMoves family shelters have Children’s Services Coordinators (CSCs), who are essentially case managers for the children in our shelters. Since the shelter-in-place order was mandated in March, our CSCs have been providing extra services to ensure all school-aged children in our shelters have everything they need for remote learning.

Students at all six LifeMoves family shelters have personal computers and improved internet access for remote learning. With many children from the same family often taking classes at the same time, head-phones are critically important to focus on individual lessons. Common spaces at LifeMoves shelters have been repurposed to accommodate student learners on-site.

LifeMoves is one of the beneficiaries of The Almanac’s Holiday Fund. Because The Almanac and its partner the Silicon Valley Community Foundation cover all the administrative costs, every dollar raised goes directly to this year’s 10 nonprofit organizations. Donations to the Holiday Fund can be made at almanacnews.com/holiday_fund.

Heilala attributes the unwavering support her family found at Haven Family House with helping her graduate from a local high school this spring, though she was sad not have been able to participate in a traditional graduation ceremony. On the advice of her CSC, Heilala is continuing her education at College of San Mateo. She credits the encouragement she received from the

Heilala and her family had to quarantine for 14 days due to COVID-19. CSCS and LifeMoves’ student therapist for helping her persevere. “Once confused, scared and alone, I now feel more comfortable, grateful, well-supported and willing to pay it all forward,” Heilala said.

LifeMoves plans to help even more families like Heilala’s in 2021. A new shelter in Mountain View is slated to open later this winter and will serve 12 families and 88 individuals. The first new shelter in Santa Clara County in many years, the space will provide 10 times the number of year-round shelter beds available in Mountain View. For more information on this project, visit lifemoves.org/homekey.

LifeMoves’ mission, since 1987, has been to provide interim housing and support services for homeless families and individuals to rapidly return to stable housing and self-sufficiency. Over the course of a year, we provide food, clothing, customized case management, and 240,000 nights of shelter — all provided at no charge to our clients. On any given night, we house more than 1,200 individuals, about one-third of whom are children.

LifeMoves operates 24 shelters and service sites within San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. To learn more about LifeMoves, visit lifemoves.org or call 650-685-5880.

Nacole Barth-Ellis is a gift officer for LifeMoves.
**Feds, 40-plus states sue Facebook over anticompetitive practices**

Social media giant could be forced to divest from Instagram, WhatsApp

By Bay City News Service

The Federal Trade Commission has filed an antitrust lawsuit against Facebook, alleging the social media giant has been engaging in anticompetitive practices.

The lawsuit, filed in federal court in Washington, D.C., accuses Facebook of violating federal antitrust laws by acquiring Instagram and WhatsApp and then using its market power to harm competition.

The FTC alleged that Facebook has been using its market power to suppress competition and harm consumers, including by limiting access to Instagram and WhatsApp.

The FTC said Facebook has used its market power to suppress competition and harm consumers, including by limiting access to Instagram and WhatsApp.

The FTC's action comes as the social media giant faces growing scrutiny from regulators and lawmakers over its role in the economy and society.

The FTC's lawsuit is the latest in a string of legal actions against Facebook, which has faced criticism from lawmakers and regulators over its practices.

Facebook has denied the allegations and said it will fight the lawsuit.
Menlo Park lights holiday trees after all

By Kate Bradshaw
Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park’s traditional holiday tree lights, notably absent in early December, have made a comeback for 2020 after all.

More than a week into December, the Menlo Park City Council decided 3-1, with council members Betsy Nash opposed and Cecilia Taylor absent, to approve spending $40,000 to add holiday tree lights at Fremont Park and the Onetta Harris Community Center.

Fremont Park is located at the intersection of Santa Cruz Avenue and University Drive in downtown Menlo Park, and the Onetta Harris Community Center is located at 100 Terminal Ave.

Council members held a special open meeting Dec. 9 after a closed session to discuss the matter further after it became clear there may not be a majority of support for holiday lights.

Council members Ray Mueller and Catherine Carlton most favored installing the holiday lights. Mueller said he’d heard objections opposing the lights because of the costs, and expressed reservations that the lights could encourage people to gather unsafely.

“Lighting the trees, he explained, may offer cheer to people needing a mental health boost.

“I think that this is one of those times where we make an investment in basically quality of life and sanity,” Carlton said. “I think it’s a wonderful thing to do and a great tradition to keep going.”

Nash opposed installing the lights because of the costs, and expressed reservations that the lights could encourage people to gather unsafely.

“This is a really difficult season, and we may need this money next year,” she said. “I see this is a prolonged economic downturn. We don’t know what is ahead.”

“My support is a bit strained,” Councilman Drew Combs said, before voting to approve spending for the lights. The previous night, he noted that he understood the concerns about the cost, but added that, as a parent of small kids, he noted the benefits of seeing a large holiday tree lit up.

The council also discussed another site where tree lights have traditionally been set up, at the corner of Ravenswood Avenue and El Camino Real, but that site was more expensive. Also, Mueller said, the Fremont Park location could help draw people to downtown businesses.

The lights went on Sunday, Dec. 13, and will remain up into the new year. People are advised to practice COVID-19 safety by wearing masks and maintaining distance from other households when they visit.

Email Kate Bradshaw at kbradshaw@almanacnews.com

CALTRAIN
continued from page 5

moving from San Francisco to Silicon Valley and especially with the growth of online commerce, the train has been less used by Atherton residents and it is time to move on.”

Crews will install fencing this week to prevent access to the tracks, said Dan Lieberman, Caltrain public affairs specialist, in an email. Caltrain employees will remove the concrete center platform soon after the closure, according to the train service’s website. Work is expected to be complete in the summer of 2021.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Caltrain only scheduled limited weekend-only service every 90 minutes at Atherton’s station, drawing an average of 114 passengers per weekend day, according to Caltrain. Weekday service to the station was cut in 2005 by Caltrain, citing low ridership.

Costs
The Caltrain Board of Directors voted to close the station on Nov. 5, while the same day county transit board officials approved allocating $4.13 million to help close the station.

It will cost $600,000 to close the station and install temporary fencing, according to Caltrain, and an estimated $5.8 million for Watkins Avenue crossing safety improvements. Other site improvements and an access study will cost around $400,000. The $4.13 million is coming from Measure A transit funds and will partially fund these projects.

The initial costs of demobilizing the station, which is anticipated to be completed in February, and installing temporary fencing will be paid out of the operating budget of the 2021 JPB, Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board, which owns and operates Caltrain and consists of representatives from San Francisco, San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, according to a Caltrain staff report. Other major costs of the proposed actions, which are expected to total $6.2 million, will be funded by a combination of Transportation Authority funds and grant sources.

Email Angela Swartz at aswartz@almanacnews.com

The holiday tree in Fremont Park in 2014.
35 Edge Road, Atherton

Renovated Home on Nearly 1.1-Acre Lot

Tucked away on a sprawling corner lot of nearly 1.1 acres, this updated home of over 3,700 square feet includes 6 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, ample privacy, and an ambiance that is undeniably Atherton. Enjoy a warm, welcoming feel in this home, as rich Mediterranean oak floors extend throughout, and natural light fills the space. Extensively renovated, this home offers a traditional floorplan that includes the dramatic living room with a spectacular wall of glass, a modern kitchen with a delightful breakfast nook, an elegant formal dining room, and the family room with a wet bar and fireplace. Numerous updates include solid core doors, Lutron-controlled lighting, high-speed coax and Cat6 data lines, and much more. Plus, you will find great space for outdoor enjoyment in the expansive backyard with a pool and hot tub. Close to numerous parks, as well as downtown Menlo Park, this home also enjoys access to top-ranked Menlo Park schools including Laurel Elementary, which is just steps away, and it is just moments to sought-after private schools (buyer to verify eligibility).

For virtual open houses & more photos, please visit:
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second-story master bedroom by climbing up a downspout. DeGolia noted the mode of entry and timing of the burglary Dec. 8 "absolutely" fit with the crimes that occurred in town two years ago.

Thefts are climbing up gutters or putting furniture under the upstairs level since "very few" people install alarms or motion sensors beyond the first floor of their homes.

McCulley reassured nervous residents who asked whether the burglars target residences when the upstairs level since "very few" people install alarms or motion sensors beyond the first floor of their homes.

He said they try to enter from the upstairs level since "very few" people install alarms or motion sensors beyond the first floor of their homes.

Residents have reported nine burglaries (and one attempted burglary) in Atherton since Oct. 1. Crime information via Atherton Police Department.

lost the $790,000 in jewelry in the burglary earlier this month is offering a $50,000 reward in collaboration with police for information leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible.

Automated license plate readers (ALPRs) are mounted on police cars or on fixtures such as road signs and bridges. There were already public safety cameras at Holbrook-Palmer Park, and new police cars are equipped with ALPR cameras as part of their existing dashboard cameras.

In May, the City Council approved buying Flock Safety automated license plate readers at a cost of $2,000 each starting in the 2020-21 fiscal year, which began July 1.

DeGolia noted that for a town like Atherton in which residents value their privacy, 21 cameras is a large number to have installed, but the hope is that the Flock cameras were able to capture any vehicles the burglars arrived in Tuesday night and in other instances.

Email Angela Swartz at aswartz@almanacnews.com

TOWN OF WOODSIDE

2955 WOODSIDE ROAD

WOODSIDE, CA 94062

INVITES APPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING COMMISSION

District 1
Term from February 2021 to February 2024

The Planning Commission participates in the administration of the planning laws and policies of the Town. It is responsible for recommending to the Town Council ordinances and resolutions necessary to implement the General Plan and adopted development policy. The Commission also conducts necessary public hearings to administer the planning laws and policies of the Town and acts upon applications for zoning amendments, use permits, variances, subdivisions, and other related functions as may be assigned by the Council.

The Planning Commission meets on the first and third Wednesday of the month at 6:00 p.m.

Interested residents may check residency requirements, request information, and submit applications to the Town Clerk by emailing Jennifer Li at jli@woodsidetown.org.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: Friday, January 29, 2021, by 5 p.m.

INTERVIEW AND APPOINTMENT BY TOWN COUNCIL:
Tuesday, February 9, 2021, 7:00 p.m.

and picking up medications. Outdoor activities that allow for social distancing, such as hiking, walking and bicycling, are allowed.

Schools that were already allowed to open for in-person classes under a county-approved review may stay open.

Menlo Park City School District Superintendent Erik Bameister confirmed in an email to families Wednesday that "schools will remain open with the necessary risk mitigation efforts that our staff and families have effectively followed since we began opening schools on September 8.

"The order will stay in effect for three weeks in Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Monterey, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano and Sonoma counties. After three weeks, it may be lifted if the region’s ICU capacity meets or exceeds 15%.

San Mateo County officials said they will comply with the state order. The county has recorded new single-day highs for cases during December. From Dec. 9 through Dec. 15, the county has recorded 2,602 new lab-confirmed cases of COVID-19, a daily average of 372 cases and the most in any seven-day period, officials said. The county’s test-positivity 14-day average has significantly risen from 2.1% in November to 8.0%.

Officials acknowledged the restrictions would add to stress many people feel.

"I’m sure a lot of you are tired: tired of shutdowns, tired of staying away from friends and family, tired of seeing perhaps your business and businesses you love struggle. But the only way we are going to get through these next few months is by relying on each other more than ever. Let’s all pledge to do whatever we can to stay safe, stay well and stay positive," County Manager Mike Callagy said in the statement.

Counties officials said the restrictions would impact local businesses significantly and they encouraged people to support small businesses. Firms with fewer than 100 employees account for 97.4% of employers in San Mateo County. Firms with fewer than five employees account for half of all county businesses, according to county officials.

"Now, more than ever our small businesses need us," said Roseanne Foust, president and CEO of the San Mateo County Economic Development Association. She encouraged people to order takeout from a local restaurant and make purchases from local retailers online.

The ongoing pandemic is "devastating and tragic," Warren Slocum, president of the county Board of Supervisors, said in the statement.

"So many lives have been affected by COVID-19 across the world and here at home. It's heartbreaking. The holidays are a time when we show our love for our friends and our families. I encourage everyone this holiday season to show your love by giving the gift of good health. Please stay home and stay safe," he said.

Under the order, the following sectors must be closed (except to the extent that operations fall within critical infrastructure):

• Places of worship and political expression (such as demonstrations or protests are allowed outdoors only)

• Retail

• Entertainment production such as industries, studios and other related establishments can operate without live audiences.

What must close?

Under the Regional Stay Home Order all operations in the following sectors must be closed (except to the extent that their operations fall within critical infrastructure): Hair salons and outdoors only; personal care services; museums, zoos, and aquariums; movie theaters (except drive-in); wineries, bars, breweries, and distilleries (with exception for production, non-alcoholic beverage manufacturing, distribution, and retail sale for off-site consumption); family entertainment centers; card rooms and satellite wagering; live audience sports and amusement parks.

The full order on closures can be found online at covid19.ca.gov by clicking on "regional stay at home order."

Email Sue Dremann at sdremann@paweekly.com
Brian Dombkowski is Woodside’s new mayor

Dick Brown appointed mayor pro tem

Former Woodside Mayor Ned Fluet donned an orange, voluntary mayoral sachet gifted to him by former Councilman Daniel Yost as he passed the metaphorical gavel to Brian Dombkowski during a Tuesday, Dec. 8, meeting over Zoom.

Woodside council members chose Dombkowski to serve as mayor pro tem in 2022, to be the town’s new mayor, and Dick Brown to serve as mayor pro tem, for 2021.

Fluet shared some parting words as outgoing mayor, saying it has been a remarkable, and at times, tragic year for the town amid a pandemic and wildfires that led some residents to evacuate their homes and led to days in which smoke “blocked out the sun.”

“Despite these challenges, I’m in awe of the way we handled it,” Fluet said, noting how proud he is of the strength and resilience residents and town officials have shown. “We’ve moved our regular lives aside (because of the pandemic).”

Fluet said 2020’s council was a cooperative one.

He nominated Dombkowski for the mayor’s post, while Dombkowski nominated Brown for his position.

Dombkowski, who joined the council in 2018, is CEO of Sand Hill Global Advisors, according to the town’s website. He is a former member of the Woodside School Foundation and has lived in Woodside since 2005. He is also a former co-chief investment officer at RCM Capital Management. “I’m humbled and honored (to serve as mayor),” Dombkowski said.

He noted that Fluet was the “perfect mayor for the perfect storm that was 2020.”

Brown moved to Woodside in 2011 and joined the council in 2018. He is a San Mateo County Library board member and is a serial small business entrepreneur, according to the town’s website. Brown’s term ends in 2022 as well.

The mayor and mayor pro tem serve one-year terms that are effective on the day and time the council reorganization takes place.

The council presented proclamations in honor of outgoing council members.

The town held an uncontested election on Nov. 3, with the candidates for the four seats up for election in districts 1, 3, 5 and 7 all unopposed.

New to the council are attorney Jenn Wall, elected to the District 1 seat, and management consultant John Carvell, elected to the District 5 seat. They are replacing Daniel Yost (District 1) and Tom Livermore (District 5), who both declined to run for reelection.

Yost and Livermore both offered to provide their insights to council members in the future.

Email Angela Swartz at aswartz@almanacnews.com

Nancy Lou ("Lalu") Kiesling
March 25, 1932 – December 9, 2020

Nancy Lou Hunt Kiesling, Menlo Park resident and retired bookstore owner, passed away peacefully at home on December 9, 2020 after a brief illness. Her great pleasure was in introducing children to nature, including as a teaching volunteer at the Palo Alto Junior Museum, Hidden Villa Ranch, and the Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve. The Book Rack, her used paperback shop on Santa Cruz Avenue, was for 22 years a haven for those who shared her joy in reading, as well as a place for family and friends to launch their books.

Faithful companions over the decades included Jane Austin and Patrick O’Brien’s Royal Navy.

“Lalu,” as she was lovingly known to her family, was born in Houston, Texas in March 1932, the first of four children to Wilmer Brady Hunt, a district court judge, and Eugenia Flewellyn Howard Hunt, the artistic daughter of a prominent Houston surgeon. Nancy graduated from Stanford University, earned a graduate degree and returned to Houston to teach junior high school science. In December 1955, she married fellow Houstonian Roy A. Kiesling, Jr. [1934-2012], newly graduated from Yale and about to enter the University of Texas in Austin. They had three children in rapid succession, and a fourth after relocating to the eastern fringe of Palo Alto in 1960. A Master’s degree from Stanford followed in 1964.

The 1960s and 70s included moving to a creaky older house in Los Altos, family camping/canoeing trips, the Junior League, but also hosting the Parapsychology Research Group, a gopher-permeated vegetable garden, and teaching Native Californian survival arts like obsidian-knapping and acorn preparation. Efforts with like-minded intellectuals to build an intentional community did not progress far, but there was service on the Coop supermarket board. Jungian analysis and similar travels, including with the Sierra Club to the Galapagos Islands and mythic tours led by Joseph Campbell. The dissolution of her marriage prompted new exploration; she spent several years in a tiny trailer, with an outhouse and majestic Bay views, atop the then undeveloped Hayfields parcel in Portola Valley.

Acquiring a row house in Menlo Park and the Book Rack (1988) meant a new structure to her life as well as a place to hang favorite paintings. Visiting far-flung offspring brought pleasure and adventure. Local theater and ballet companies, the League of Women Voters, the Academy of Sciences, and other memberships were outlets for her, non-judgmental curiosity. A fire in the restaurant next door put an end to the Book Rack in 2010, and heart troubles gradually made her excursions fewer and more cautious.

Nancy’s Catholic faith, esthetic rather than dogmatic, enriched her life. She loved sung Latin mass, a counterpart to her botanical Latin, and she baked uncounted hundredweights of brownies for the congregations of St. Anne’s and later St. Thomas’s Church. For many years, her driver to church and source of beautiful flowers was John Fruhman, a gentleman admirer who passed away early this year. Nancy and a few cherished friends attended the annual Bach Festival in Carmel for decades.

Nancy is survived by younger brothers Grainger Hunt, a zoologist, and Sperry Hunt, a writer-musician. A beloved sister, novelist Robin McCorquodale died in 2014. Nancy leaves four children. Daughter Eugenia (Jennie) Kiesling (spouse Peter Law) is a history professor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Son Brady (Regina Tassitano) is a former U.S. diplomat, archaeologist, and writer based in Athens, Greece. Stephen (Mary Bemis), an Olympic oarsman in 1980, is a writer and magazine editor in southern Oregon. Roy (Birgit Rehder) is an industrial design/production expert in Burlingame, CA. Eldest granddaughter Lydia Kiesling (Tim Quayle) is a novelist living in Portland with her family; two sons; youngest grandchildren Alexandra, Tim, Brady J., Casey, and Tommy, are in various stages of medical school, university, or high school.

Memorial donations may be made to St. Anthony Padua Dining Room http://paduadiningroom.com/
Donald Orville Young

August 15, 1932 – November 7, 2020

Don Young's final escrow closed November 7, 2020. He would like everyone to know the transaction was smooth and fast, and that this permanent relocation reunites him with loved ones he has missed dearly. He is particularly happy to see his mother and father, Ruth and Clarence, brother William, and many cherished friends.

While there were no streets, buildings, or monuments named in his honor, many real estate folks in Menlo Park consider him a man worth celebrating. To his only child, daughter Brandie, he was a hero. Her daddy hung the moon and the stars and set a high standard for integrity, character, and values.

Don was proud of his working-class upbringing in San Francisco, where his father owned a barbershop in the Mission and his mother worked as a hairdresser. He grew up with a horse named Jerry and spent many a day riding around not yet developed Diamond Heights. He also had a dog named Jerry, and never could explain how the two animals came to share the same name. He maintained a deep love for the City, referring to it as "my beautiful city of St. Francis."

At 18, Don enlisted in the Navy which began three lifelong passions: sailing, Hawaii, and travel. He was stationed on the USS Tobigbee, a gas turbine deployed to the MidPac operating area during the Korean War. (Trivia: "Tobigbee" comes from Choctaw and means "coffin maker.") The Tobigbee was part of the fuel supply network for aircraft and other support vehicles on Bikini, Eniwetok, & Kwajalein atoll during the AEC Nuclear weapons tests. Don was awarded a bravery medal for being on the fuel tanker while under enemy fire, but that was not a tale Don would retell. The Tobigbee and each port of call were off-limits and the setting for stories that would delight and entertain for the next 65+ years. (Did you hear the one about driving a forklift off a pier?)

After his stint in the Navy, Don returned home to San Francisco with five tattoos and a zest for life. He and two buddies moved into a West Portal bachelor pad and somehow managed to get a pet monkey, George, "to charm the ladies." One day George ran away, but no search was conducted. As it turned out, George's propensity to toss his poop around the house was counterintuitive to the lady-charming story script.

Fast forward to Don's start in Menlo Park real estate when Ray Spinelli offered to mentor him. For perspective on late 60's real estate, it took 12 months, as Don earned his Million Dollar Club briefcase, the coveted prize for $1,000,000 in transactions over twelve months. He carried that briefcase with pride. He went on to earn his Broker's license, which he maintained until October of this year. Don later joined forces with Bill Wesceloth to start their boutique brokerage, Wesceloth & Young. Don remained at the brokerage until he accepted an offer to manage the local Grub & Ellis office, which then went through several acquisitions during those early days of real estate brand consolidation. No matter the logo on the building, Don's True North was to maintain the integrity of the business, and the success of the agents. He would not waver on either.

Don loved the real estate "biz" and the difference it could make in a person's life. He was too humble to admit that he enhanced many lives throughout his career. This includes the clients who built wealth through property ownership and the agents he mentored and supported. He cherished the many dear friends and relationships cultivated throughout his career.

Don retired from real estate after nearly 40 years and promptly moved to Hawaii to live on a sailboat aptly named "The Six Percent." His first night on the boat he called Brandie to describe the gorgeous sunset he was watching. "This is what it's all about, Kid. This is what I've worked for all these years." He, and the boat, moved back to California after a few years. Admittedly, he missed everyone too much to live so far away.

Real estate gave Don the means to travel, and he relished his time away from the phone. He enjoyed Greece, Italy, Mexico, and of course Hawaii, but his love of sailing made the Caribbean a favorite. Don and friends enjoyed several excursions on Windjammer Barefoot Cruises, a fleet of tall ships that took small groups out to sail the Grenadines, British Virgin Islands, and the Bahamas. Don couldn't get enough of sailing.

Above all, Don was a fiercely devoted father, raising his daughter as a single parent - unheard of in that era. His first priority was to make certain Brandie had a happy, magical childhood, and that she did. Her heart is full of beautiful, bittersweet memories; watching her Dad climb up onto the roof to leave carrots and water for Santa's reindeer, watching the Easter Bunny's footprints next to the basket left on the front porch, and believing he arranged the July 4 fireworks for her birthday of the same day. To celebrate her birthday in later years, Don would phone Brandie first thing in the morning, sing to her his own zippy rendition of "Happy Birthday" and then wish her a Happy Anniversary for it was "the anniversary of the day we first met."

In a goodbye note left for Brandie: "You were the epicenter of my life, and I loved you a whole bunch, Kid … God how I loved to brag about you."

Don's beloved son-in-law Mike (or as Don called him, "Chefy") will help Brandie carry on his spirit, but alas Don took his wit and endless tales of shenanigans with him. He told stories that led one to believe he was telling only half the tale.

"I had a great life and not many things come to mind that I would change." While Don lived a longer than average life, his life could never be described as average. He lived by his own rules and on his terms, going as far as to leave an instruction manual for his death known as "the Death Manual."

The three-ring, section-tabbed binder contained the goodbye note referenced above, financial and account information, and detailed step by step instructions for Brandie to follow when the time came. For decades Brandie refused to acknowledge the binder's existence, appalled her beloved father could so easily publish post-demise activities. Now she sees it for what it is – a selfless gift from a selfless, generous man that always wanted to make everything easier for those he loved.

Don's ashes will be scattered in strict compliance with Death Manual instructions. Said instructions include brand of scented incense, moon cycle, tide, month to scatter, location of scattering, and "guest list."

However, Brandie & Mike will defy Death Manual protocol and throw a Don-worthy celebration of life that will (naturally!) feature bourbon and tall tales. The date of the celebration is TBD.

Rest in peace, you wonderful, delightful man. You were loved. They broke the mold when they made you. There will never be another man that will hold a candle to Donald Orville Young.

Instead of tears, please donate to The Humane Society. Simply do a nice thing for someone that needs some help.

"It is the secret of the world that all things subsist and do not die but only retire a little from sight and afterward return again. Nothing is dead, when we feign ourselves dead, endure mock funerals, and there, across the room, they stand looking out a window, sound and well, in some strange disguise." — Ralph Waldo Emerson

Paid Obituary

I cannot imagine any of these achievements without residents, council and staff," she added. "We are working tirelessly to keep you and your family safe and set ourselves up for a prosperous future."

She closed by sharing a quote from Henry Morgan, a 90-year-old Menlo Park resident who is active in the community. "Acts of kindness should not be random but deliberative and daily."

After recognizing Taylor’s contributions as mayor through an extra-challenging year, the council voted unanimously to select Combs as Menlo Park’s mayor for the next year.

Combs was elected in 2018 and is a former bike and planning commissioner who works for Facebook.

"What you can expect from me as mayor — minus kids screaming in the background ... is what you’ve gotten over the last two years," Combs told meeting listeners, saying he planned to approach the position’s responsibilities with integrity, thoroughness, fairness and sometimes doggedness. “It is me and that won’t change.”

“I hope that as mayor I get to see our community recover,” he added.

A farewell and a welcome

Outgoing council member Catherine Carlton received recognition from Congresswoman Jackie Speier’s office and from Assemblyman Mark Berman, plus council members in other communities such as Millbrae and East Palo Alto. A farewell and a welcome were extended to Combs and a farewell and a welcome to Combs.

"You are someone that does their homework with a thoroughness I’ve rarely seen over the course of my academic, professional and community service career," Combs told Carlton.

After Carlton was recognized with a proclamation and kind words from her colleagues, both recently elected council members were sworn in by District 3 representative Wolosin, who is starting a first term, and District 5 representative Mueller, who is returning for a third term.

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Email Kate Bradshaw at kBradshaw@almanacnews.com

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Email Kate Bradshaw at kBradshaw@almanacnews.com
‘We don’t want to send kids back to a bad version of school, but I still want kids to go back to something.’
CARRIE DU BOIS
SEQUOIA DISTRICT TRUSTEE

The county is currently in the most restrictive purple tier, indicating widespread virus transmission.
Karyn Bechtel, a district parent and outgoing Portola Valley School District governing board member, said parents are “very interested” in their children returning to campus. Still, she doesn’t see the value of students returning to the same classrooms just to sit on their computers.

Dr. Krauskopf, a parent who has been vocal at numerous school board meetings about wanting students to return to classrooms, said at-home learning is resulting in learning loss and negative health impacts for students. In-person learning has been working in other schools across the globe and country, with few schools becoming hot spots for COVID-19 transmission, she said.

Conversely, another parent, who identified herself only by the name Morgan, said she does not support a return to classrooms and noted many parents are not in the loop about the district’s reopening plans.

View video of the Dec. 9 meeting at tinyurl.com/Dec9Seqmeeting.

Email Angela Swartz at aswartz@almanacnews.com

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Dorothy Gravelle
April 29, 1925 – November 4, 2020

With her camel turtleneck tucked into pressed khaki trousers and meticulously coiffured brown hair, Dorothy Gallus Gravelle’s tenderness and quiet courage made her a bedrock of strength in the lives of her family and friends. It is with great sadness that her family announce Dorothy passed away November 4th, 2020 suddenly, but peacefully, of complications from a recent illness.

Dorothy graced the lives of family and friends with her rich and storied fifty-nine years. She was a treasured wife, mother, grandmother, sister, and aunt; a generous and warmhearted friend to a multitude; a truly kind and gentle soul. She embraced everyone who knew her firmly in her arms and in her love. Dorothy was remarkable for her unmatched listening abilities, undivided attention, and unwavering faith, which made those in her company feel heard and cherished.

Dorothy was born in Little Falls, Minnesota in 1925, to Mary and Daniel Gallus. She was the tenth of eleven siblings in a tight-knit, musical family. Dorothy excelled at mathematics, outsourcing everyone in her high school class. At the age of 19, she was recruited for this talent to work as an administrative accountant in a POW camp during WWII.

Following the war, she married her lifelong love, Charles “Chuck” Gravelle in 1949. They were married for fifty-seven years, when he preceded her in death in 2006. Dorothy and Chuck moved to Atherton, CA in 1962 where they lived for over fifty-years before they moved into the Vi in Palo Alto. They made a life for themselves, textured with hard-work, travel, sports, family fun, and tradition.

Above all, Dorothy was an extraordinary and hands-on mother and grandmother who offered indefatigable interest and support to her children Doug, Steve and Cindy, and grandchildren Kelly, Stephanie and Alex. “Nana” was their rock, the rose of their lives, and every birthday, holiday, and special occasion always included them gathered around the table.

Dorothy didn’t tell them how to live; she lived and let them learn by watching her do it. They learned the essentials of how to live a good life, from the practical lessons of sewing, ironing, cooking, good nutrition, and keeping a tidy home, to the larger, more essential lessons of self-esteem and self-confidence. She set the example for choosing the morally right path, being a friend to everyone, being fortunate, and being a giver not a taker. Above all she led with the power of faith as her cornerstone.

In addition to motherhood, Dorothy had many interests and hobbies. She traveled internationally alongside Chuck throughout his career. She explored foreign cities on her own and met up with Chuck in the evening to share her adventures over wine and cheese. She enjoyed golfing at Menlo Country Club and Hawaii, boating at Tahoe and the Delta, bridge and cards, French cooking, art and metalworking, reading, and gardening. Today, the rose garden she planted at her home on Park Lane continues to thrive under the care of its current owners.

Dorothy’s strength, elegance, and generosity live on through her daughter Cynthia Gravelle, grandchildren Kelly Nicholson, Stephanie and Alex Sliwinski, brother-in-law Richard and wife Rose Gravelle, nieces and nephews Kathy and Dan Furtado, Mary Liz Perez, Stephanie and Greg Siegel, Mike and Andrea Gravelle, Barbara and Greg Thomas, Pamela Fritz Lott, Mary and Mark Kedrowski, Tom and Patty Meagher, and Mary and Phil Prozinski, and 18 grand-nieces and nephews.

We look forward to sharing a celebration of her life when a gathering can be held in her honor.

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The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 11/23/2020.

This business is conducted by: An Individual

JOSE LUIS PEREZ ESQUIVEL
1525 Regent St. #6
Redwood City, CA 94061

Registered owner(s):

Statement

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Maryann Derwin becomes Portola Valley’s mayor

By Angela Swartz
Almanac Staff Writer

Council member John Richards nominated Derwin, whose term ends in 2022, while outgoing Mayor Jeff Aalfs nominated Hughes. Derwin was elected to the council in 2005. She grew up in Mendocino County and moved to Portola Valley in 1992 for the “good schools and the bucolic rural ambiance.” Hughes, whose term also ends in 2022, was elected to the council in 2013. Hughes is chief technical officer for Cognosia, a startup that uses machine learning and diagnostic data collected on more than 10,000 children to form the basis for an algorithm to analyze a child's behavior to determine how best to support the child's parents.

Council members and residents also bid Ann Wengert adieu after 13 years on the council. Derwin said she made sure to describe Wengert’s contributions to the town. As a woman, Wengert helped diversify the once all-male council, Derwin said.

Aalfs and challenger Sarah Wernikoff, a Portola Valley School District volunteer with a background in web-based product management, were elected to the council in November, beating current council member Angela Hey, who sits on the town’s Bicycle, Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Committee last year.

View a video of the meeting on the town’s website, portalavalley.net.

Email Angela Swartz at aswartz@almanacnews.com

Local food, clothing and toy drives

Throughout the community, the pandemic hasn’t stopped local traditions of collecting food, clothing and toys for those in need during the holiday season.

Cafe Zoe is hosting a holiday fundraising drive for veterans. Normally they provide a holiday meal, clothing and gifts to psychiatric patients at the Palo Alto VA, but this year they’re just planning to donate clothing to the veterans. They’re seeking funding donations to purchase sweatpants, socks, boxes/underwear and T-shirts. People can go to PayPal.me/gethuman or gethumaninc@gmail.com or go to cafezoehub.com/music-events for information.

Menlo Park firefighters are seeking to raise $5,000 in donations to Second Harvest Food Bank. They can go to impact.shfb.org/team/333439 to access the online fundraiser. They also received commitments from businesses, families and individuals to sponsor gifts for 419 children and expected to receive the donations by Dec. 18.

— Kate Bradshaw

Dungeness crab season opening

State fish and wildlife regulators have opened the commercial Dungeness crab fishing season statewide two days before Christmas, giving people a chance to have crab on tables before the holiday season ends.

Saturday’s announcement of the statewide opener delays that were put in place amid poor meat quality in northern areas and the potential for whale entanglement in coastal regions.

Officials say the Dec. 23 opener also gives anglers plenty of time for planning and to get their gear ready to have an orderly start to the fishery.

Regulators say data indicates most whales have started their annual migration out of the fishing grounds and the risk for entanglement is low.

Crabbers, however, are encouraged to avoid areas where whales are congregating, including around the canyon edges of Monterey, and between the Farallon Islands and Point Reyes.

— Bay City News Service
Viewpoint

IDEAS, THOUGHTS AND OPINIONS ABOUT LOCAL ISSUES

Despite the distancing, making a connection this holiday could save a life

By Ashley Mills/CalMatters

The holidays are here, and it’s time to put out an SOS. Much like the signal transmitted by a ship in distress, this SOS is a call to action, a request for help:
Start a conversation.
Offer a connection.
Save a life.

The 2020 holiday season is unlike any other. We won’t be spending much, if any, time with loved ones beyond our immediate household. We won’t enjoy the freedom to dine inside our favorite restaurants or crowd store aisles in search of deals. But the pandemic, as dreadful as it is, gives us opportunities to do things we might not otherwise consider. Without all the travel, and with less time spent visiting face to face, why not invest time in connecting with people through a phone call or FaceTime? Such connections are more important than ever this year. People are lonely. People are anxious. People are unemployeed, overloaded, weary of home schooling their kids, fearful of becoming ill and worried about what lies ahead. It’s been a stressful year for all of us, and for some it adds up to a recipe for despair — and potential suicide.

While the threat is real, you can make a difference. The holidays are the perfect time to reach out to family and friends, especially those who may be alone, hard hit by the pandemic, or vulnerable to anxiety and depression.

Start a conversation, and when you do, listen for warning signs of possible suicide risk. Is your loved one or relative communicating feelings of guilt or shame, of hopelessness, of being a burden to others, of not seeing a reason to live? Is he or she depressed, or unusually irritable, or feeling anxious and isolated? Is there talk of giving away possessions, or evidence of increased use of alcohol or drugs? Is there a mention of suicidal thoughts, or even an actual plan?

Offer a connection. Sometimes just the chance to express feelings, to say them out loud to someone else, can reduce a person’s risk of suicide. You can provide that outlet, and then help expand the conversation by asking a few key questions if you sense warning signs: “Do you feel like you don’t want to go on living?” “Are you thinking about killing yourself?” Depending on the answer, you can continue the dialogue by exploring whether there’s a plan for suicide, an intent to act on that plan, and any steps that may already be underway.

Save a life. Expressing compassion to those in distress is key to helping someone at risk of suicide, and help is available. Confidential support can be found at any time through the National Suicide Prevention hotline - 1-800-273-TALK (8255), or by texting TALK to 741741. (Editor’s note: In San Mateo County, contact the Behavioral Health Services & Resources call center 24/7 at 800-866-0010.) This resource is not just for those in crisis; it’s there to help people on the supportive end of the relationship as well. Once you’ve connected your loved one to a crisis line, be sure to follow up with calls or texts. They serve as a powerful reminder that you care.

As we experience the holidays in the time of COVID-19, have a happy holiday season and let’s keep the most vulnerable among us in our hearts. Let’s also remember that suicide is preventable. Listen for the signs of distress and respond with your own SOS. You can save a life.

Ashley Mills is a research supervisor for the state Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission and can be reached at ashley.mills@mhsoac.ca.gov. This piece first ran Nov. 25. CalMatters is a Sacramento-based nonpartisan, nonprofit journalism venture that works with more than 130 media partners throughout the state, including The Almanac.

Preventing the next epidemic

Global warming is making mosquitoes scarier, but we aren’t helpless

By Elizabeth Nefferdorf and Eleanor Raab

Zika, dengue fever and chikungunya: These are no longer just tropical diseases — in a few years, you may find them in your own backyard. Global warming is pushing such diseases, which were previously confined to the tropics, northward. Following these changing conditions are the couriers of disease: mosquitoes. These pests have a penchant for warm, wet conditions and are the couriers of disease. Following these changing conditions are the couriers of disease: mosquitoes. These pests have a penchant for warm, wet conditions. Despite the distance, making a connection this holiday could save a life.

A small act that keeps mosquitoes at bay is eliminating standing water. Some species of mosquitoes can breed in pools of water as small as a bottle cap. This means bird baths, buckets and Frisbees shouldn’t be left outdoors to collect rainwater, unless you want to invite mosquitoes to your home. Another simple way to repel these insects is to grow plants that naturally oppose them. Herbs such as basil, lavender, lemongrass, rosemary and lemon balm contain compounds that are highly toxic to several species of mosquito larvae. If you’re more into flowers, marigolds and common lantanas have similar components.

However, mosquito control cannot be solely left up to the individual; we need swift action from our state and local governments to mitigate the threat that mosquitoes and other pests bring. One of our newest mosquito-borne diseases imminently pose. There are several movements across the globe that are controversially experimenting with genetically modified mosquitoes. With the knowledge that only female mosquitoes bite, the male mosquitoes are modified to carry a protein that will kill off any female offspring before they reach maturity. This experiment has seen success in the Cayman Islands in 2009, and more recently Brazil, reducing mosquito populations by over 92%. Environmentalists have warned that such eradication techniques could have unintended, adverse effects on the environment, yet in the 10 years since the initial experiment, the Caymans have yet to see any such effects.

In 2021, Florida plans to release 750 million genetically modified mosquitoes over a two-year period. Though this may seem like a drastic course of action now, it may just be the thing that prevents a mosquito-borne epidemic from wreaking havoc on our country. More towns should consider genetically modified mosquitoes as a possibility. If you could have prevented COVID-19 at the source, wouldn’t you have acted?

Eleanor Raab is a Manlo Park resident, and Elizabeth Nefferdorf lives in Warrenton, Virginia.
Kids have rescued out on a lot this year: in-person school, birthday parties, play dates and sleepovers. And while friends and extended family have been kept at a distance, most immediate family members have been closer than ever (maybe closer than anyone ever wanted).

That’s why it seems fitting to focus on books about families as we share some of our favorite children’s books of 2020 for this year’s recommended holiday reading list.

“Lift” by Minh Li, illustrated by Dan Santat; Little, Brown Books for Young Readers; $17.99; ages 4-8.

You think you have it tough? Try living with a bear! This story’s young narrator can’t understand how his parents don’t see what he sees: The bear is loud, messy, and bossy, yet they still treat it like family. But when he encounters some bullies at the playground and the bear comes to his rescue, he realizes that maybe the bear isn’t so bad after all. A sweet, charming story about dealing with an overbearing older sibling.

“The Bear in My Family” by Maya Tatsuoka; Dial Books; $17.99; ages 4-8.

This raucous and hilarious bedtime book introduces us to a family that should be sleeping but, instead, is doing everything else.

“The dog’s into the eggnog; Mom’s tap dancing to Prince while Dad is on the laptop buying ten-yard bolts of chintz.”

Their activities get wilder and weirder as the night goes on, leading to waged battles and blimps made out of underpants. The vibrant illustrations are full of clever details (see if you can find the frogs on every page) and match perfectly with the clever, rhythmic text. This is a book that demands to be read aloud.

By Chris Saccheri

Eight heartfelt children’s books to spend time reading while traditional celebrations are on hold.
Here come the Holidays

LIBERTY BANK

CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS WITH US!

You may not be able to join us in person this year, but we can still attend to every detail as you enjoy a stress-free holiday dinner with friends and family at home! Open from 12-8 pm on Christmas Eve and 12-9 pm on New Year’s Eve for pickup and delivery of our four course prix fixe.
Visit us online for menus, more details, and to order today!
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leftbank.com | 650.473.6543

WOODSIDE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT PRESENTS
SANTA CLAUS AT THE FIREHOUSE!
DECEMBER 22ND

SANTA WILL BE MAKING ZOOM CALLS!
DROP OFF A LETTER TO SANTA AT ONE OF OUR FIRE STATIONS IN THE “SANTA” MAILBOX:
ST. 7 - 3111 WOODSIDE RD, WDS
ST. 8 - 135 PORTOLA RD, PV
ST. 19 - 4091 JEFFERSON AVE, WDS

LETTERS MUST INCLUDE AN EMAIL ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER. LETTERS MUST BE RECEIVED BY DECEMBER 19TH. YOU CAN ALSO EMAIL OR MAIL YOUR LETTER.
YOU WILL BE CONTACTED BY SANTA’S HELPERS TO SET UP YOUR VISIT VIA ZOOM!

To accommodate everyone, Zoom appointments will be no longer than 5 minutes.
To email your letter or for more info contact - Selena Brown - selenab@woodsidefire.org

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Here come the Holidays

Christmas At
Trinity Church
An Episcopal community in Menlo Park
Please join us online for our celebration of the birth of Christ.

A Celebration for the Longest Night and the Promise of Light
Sunday, December 20th at 5:00 p.m.

Christmas Eve
Our joyful pre-recorded Christmas Eve service will be available online all day on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Our Sunday Morning Services
Services are live streamed every Sunday morning at 10:00 and are available on You Tube.

For information on how to join these services, please visit our website: www.trinitymenlopark.org

We wish you Christmas joy!

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www.trinitymenlopark.org

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Contact your Almanac Sales Rep to learn how you can reach local markets with your holiday message.

The Almanac 650-326-8210

An Avenidas Village membership provides peace of mind for you and a community of support and resources for your loved ones to help them stay independent and secure. They will enjoy joining a network of active seniors sharing resources for handling life’s transitions.

Act now to support the independent path your parents have chosen with a personalized gift certificate. For more info or to purchase, visit www.AvenidasVillage.org/gift or call (650) 289-5405 today! Redeem by 12/31/20 to lock in lower 2020 rates.

www.avenidasvillage.org
“The Time of Green Magic”
by Hilary McKay; Margaret K. McElderry Books; $17.99; ages 8-12.
Abi’s life is turned upside down when her father remarries and she suddenly becomes the middle child in their new, blended family. Sandwiched between sticky-handed Louis and moody teenager Max, Abi retreats into her books and then with a mysterious creature that literally into her books and then them: first, with Abi falling middle child in their new, blend-home. Sandwiched between sticky-handed Louis and moody teenager Max, Abi retreats into her books and then with a mysterious creature that literally into her books and then them: first, with Abi falling into an old, ivy-covered house in North London. Before long, magic starts to creep up on them: first, with Abi falling literally into her books and then with a mysterious creature that comforts Louis when his mother is away. The book is an enchanting blend of realistic fiction and fantasy, but at its heart, this is a story about a family struggling to adapt to a new situation. The parents are stressed and overworked, but trying their best to hold it all together; the kids are fully realized and relatable, but working through their own unique challenges. Any modern family will relate to them.

“A Whale of the Wild”
by Rosanne Parry; Greenwillow Books; $17.99; ages 8-12.
Orcas live in a matriarchal society and young Vega is honing her skills so that one day she will be trusted as the family’s way-finder. But when a devastating earthquake separates her and her young brother from the rest of their family, she must rely upon her instincts to lead them back home in this dramatic and emotional story. Based on the author’s own research trips to the Salish Sea, this beautiful book explores family bonds, survival, global warming, and a changing seascape. Perfect for fans of animal stories like Sara Pennypacker’s “Pax” or Parry’s previous book, “A Wolf Called Wander.”

NOTICE INVITING BIDS
TOWN OF ATHERTON, CA
The Town of Atherton will accept bids for construction of the following public work:
JAMES AVENUE OVERLAY PROJECT

Removal and replacement of 2 inches of asphalt concrete pavement on James Avenue (between Middlefield Road and Magnolia Drive). Once roadway is grinded down, the contractor and the Town’s project engineer shall identify any pavement failures for repairs. Grind and replace approximately 10,000 square feet of asphalt to a 4-inch depth; then contractor shall perform crack sealing (per specification). Some hand work around utility access-hole covers will be necessary. Repave the entire street with a self-propelled paver & finish per Town Standard Specifications. Striping and pavement marking installation is also included in this project.

Plans & Specifications may be obtained at http://www.ci.atherton.ca.us/bids.aspx at no cost. The Contractor shall be responsible for any addendums that may be posted on the Town’s website.

SEALED BIDS will be received at the office of the City Clerk, 150 Watkins Ave. (Temporary Trailers), Atherton, California 94027, until 1:30 p.m. Pacific Standard Time on Thursday, January 21, 2020, at which time bids will be publicly opened and read aloud.

Bids must be for the entire work, and shall be submitted in sealed envelopes clearly marked: “Bid of (Contractor) for JAMES AVENUE OVERLAY PROJECT”, along with date and time of bid opening.

Don’t Go It Alone for The Holidays
You are not alone. This time of year can normally be very stressful, let alone during a pandemic when we are asked to shelter in place and minimize contact with family and friends.

If you are struggling, you can turn to Avenidas Care Partners (ACP) for help.
Call (650) 289-5438 to request a crisis intervention, an elder care consult, family mediation and emotional support during these challenging times.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
PLANNING COMMISSION – CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT TO ALLOW TEMPORARY USE OF ATHLETIC FIELDS FOR OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES WITH TEMPORARY LIGHTING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Atherton Planning Commission will hold a public hearing to consider an application by Sacred Heart Schools for a Conditional Use Permit to allow outdoor recreational activities at its athletic fields and associated temporary lighting at Sacred Heart Schools, 150 Valparaiso Avenue, Atherton, CA, pursuant to Atherton Municipal Code Chapters 17.12, 17.36 and 17.56.

Description: Request for a Conditional Use Permit to allow Sacred Heart Schools to utilize temporary lighting from January 19, 2021 through March 12, 2021 from the hours of 4:30 pm until 7:00 pm Monday through Friday on Palomita Football field (parallel to Valparaiso) and Dollinger Soccer Field (parallel to Park Lane).
The proposal has been determined to be exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Sections 15332, Class 1, relating to use of existing facilities and 15332, Class 23, for normal operations of facilities for gatherings.

NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that said application is set for hearing by the Planning Commission at its Special meeting on December 28, 2020 at 6:00 PM via teleconference/zoom accessible through the below-described information, at which time and place public comments will be heard and all persons interested may participate and show cause, if they have any, why the Conditional Use Permit should or should not be approved.

This meeting is being held in compliance with the Governors Executive Order N-25-20 issued on March 4, 2020, and Executive Order N-29-20 issued on March 17, 2020, allowing for deviation of teleconference rules required by the Brown Act. The purpose of this is to provide the safest environment for staff and the public while allowing for public participation. The meeting will be held by tele or video conferencing. The public may participate in the Planning Commission Meeting via: Zoom Meeting.

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Remote Public Comments:
Meeting participants are encouraged to submit public comments in writing in advance of the meeting. The following email will be monitored during the meeting and public comments received will be read into the record.
Email: igarcia@ci.atherton.ca.us

IF YOU CHALLENGE the Conditional Use Permit in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing described in this notice, or in written correspondence delivered to the Planning Commission at, or prior to, the public hearing.

An aggrieved party may appeal the decision of the Planning Commission to the City Council, in writing, within 10 days of the date of the decision.
If you have any questions on the item please contact Lisa Costa Sanders, Town Planner, at lcostasanders@ci.atherton.ca.us or 650-333-0248. Any attendee who wishes accommodation for a disability should contact the Lisa Costa Sanders at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.

Date Posted: December 18, 2020

ATHERTON PLANNING COMMISSION

L/ L. Costa Sanders
Lisa Costa Sanders, Town Planner
By Zack Fernandes

The aisles of Central de Abasto, Mexico City’s largest outdoor market, are lined with vendors selling vegetables, herbs, bread and elote — the iconic Mexican street corn snack. It’s this dish and a memory of the market that are embodied in the eponymous drink at San Agus Cocina Urbana & Cocktails in downtown Palo Alto.

San Agus’ cocktail menu is entirely composed of drinks designed to transport you to Mexico City: there’s the La Merced, named after another one of Mexico City’s markets and the Xochimilco, which is inspired by a city borough. Notably absent from the cocktail list, though, is Mexico’s most significant contribution to the canon of cocktails: the margarita.

“It’s really hard having craft cocktails at a Hispanic restaurant,” said beverage director Eusebio Pozos. “In most people’s heads, the only thing they picture are margaritas.”

Armed with a desire to nudge his customers off the beaten path, San Agus has deliberately omitted the classic cocktail from the menu to make room for the diversity of Mexico’s flavors. “If I put a margarita on the menu, 60% of the cocktails I’m gonna sell are gonna be margaritas,” Pozos tells me.

He wants his customers to explore a broad range of Mexican spirits other than tequila, and tries to introduce them to newer imports like destilado de agave drink pulque, this higher-proof version is difficult to find in the United States, and San Agus carries a version made by juerte, the first company to import it here. Pozos’ home state of Tlaxcala, a few hours outside of Mexico City, is especially renowned for its pulque, and Pozos remembers how it’s all his father would drink during his childhood. “That (pulque) was the replacement for water,” he told me with a chuckle as he described the drink’s ubiquity, saying, “they would drink it and keep working in the farm.”

While most of his customers are unfamiliar with pulque, Pozos says that many of them have been excited by some of the other spirits on offer. “I was surprised that Palo Alto was so into mezcal,” he said, while noting that even the most knowledgeable of his customers were likely to find something new to taste at San Agus. In an effort to support independent producers, Pozos sources from smaller mezcaleros that are not widely distributed, such as Tres Tiempos, which produces small batches of mezcal in the state of Oaxaca. San Agus also carries raicilla and bacanora; more specific versions of mezcal that have received official designations as appellations and are protected and regulated by the Mexican government in the same way that many European countries regulate wine. Pozos is fond of the comparison to wine, often telling new mezcal drinkers that the two are more alike than one would think.

“You have a diversity of agave just like you have a diversity of grapes,” Pozos said. He explained that, like wine, agave spirits can also express terroir, a sense of place which factors heavily into the spirits he chooses to carry. San Agus also serves a range of spirits not made from agave. Sotol, a distillate made from the desert spoon shrub, rum distilled from sugar cane grown in the hills of Michoacán, and whiskey made from heritage Oaxacan corn all feature on the San Agus spirits list.

In addition to base spirits, San Agus is also exploring Mexican liqueurs that add flavor, texture, and complexity to their cocktails. Ancho Reyes, made by infusing neutral cane spirit with ancho chiles from Puebla, adds smokiness and depth to the La Merced cocktail, while Ancho Reyes Verde, made with fresh poblano chiles, adds more of an herbal and spicy kick to the Teptito. Since Mexican twists on classic cocktails can often feature spiciness, Pozos is keen to expand that narrow view of the country’s influence on cocktails by incorporating liqueurs made with Mexico’s vast varieties of herbs and edible flowers, like D’Aristi Xtabentún liqueur. Produced from the fermented honey of bees that pollinate the xtabentún flower in Yucatán state, Pozos uses the liqueur’s honeyed notes of anise to round out the intense herbal notes of housemade epazote syrup in the Central de Abasto cocktail. To counter the sweetness of maple-tobacco syrup in the Bellas Artes, Pozos uses Granada-Vallet, a Mexican take on classic bitter Italian liqueurs, made with pomegranate and colored a bright red with natural cochineal dye from Oaxaca.

The least Mexican part of San Agus’ beverage menu is its wine selection, which features selections from Argentina, California, France, Italy and Spain, but not Mexico. “It’s getting bigger and bigger.” Pozos says of the wine-producing culture in Mexico. But after importation and distribution, these small batch wines can end up costing as much as $24 to sell by the glass, and Pozos has to balance his desire to highlight these Mexican wines against the biases of some customers who simply aren’t willing to pay that much for wine from a region they have never tried. Pozos remains hopeful that San Agus will carry Mexican wine one day based on the response wine enthusiasts have had to the appearance of Mexican producers on the menu at San Agus’ sister restaurant, La Viga, in Redwood City.

As winter approaches, Pozos is beginning recipe development for the next iteration of San Agus’ cocktail menu, which will be the restaurant’s third since it opened in May. Pozos takes a seasonal approach to San Agus’ cocktails, incorporating local produce that he feels might work well with Mexican flavors and accounting for the weather. As the mercury drops, he says he’ll trade the fall flavors of persimmon-infused gin for a warming mezcal-based ponche, a traditional Christmas Mexican punch sweetened with piloncillo, an unrefined Mexican cane sugar, and spiced with cinammon. For more adventurous drinkers, Pozos will include a mezcal cocktail infused with huitlacoche, an edible fungus that grows on corn, often harvested as a culinary delicacy. “The cocktail looks a little scary,” Pozos says with a chuckle, owing to its color and cloudiness, but he remains confident that San Agus patrons will enjoy it as much as he does.

Beverage director Eusebio Pozos uses epazote syrup and Niixta Licoir de Elote to recreate the smells of a Mexico City market in the Central de Abastos cocktail at San Agus Cocina Urbana & Cocktails in Palo Alto on Dec. 3.

Beyond margaritas: How San Agus in Palo Alto is crafting a new Mexican cocktail experience.

By Zack Fernandes

Special to The Almanac

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A selection of cocktails currently featured at San Agus Cocina Urbana & Cocktails in Palo Alto: Xochimilco, left, Central De Abastos, center, and La Merced, right.
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