Local health providers reeling from huge spike in demand for COVID-19 vaccine

By Kevin Forestieri

Health care providers in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties are reeling from a massive spike in requests for COVID-19 vaccines last week, after state and county officials greatly expanded eligibility for the vaccine.

The crush of demand starting last week temporarily crashed the Sutter Health website, and residents reported sitting on hold with Kaiser Permanente for three to five hours in an attempt to schedule an appointment. Once someone does pick up, residents reported mixed success — some were able to schedule an appointment, which are now pushed back to February, while others are being turned away due to constraints in vaccine supply.

In a statement Jan. 15, Kaiser apologized for the sluggish and overloaded call system, noting that the state’s new eligibility guidelines pose a significant challenge. There are not nearly enough doses to vaccinate all interested residents age 65 and older, and it’s difficult to plan ahead when state allocations to health care providers are only revealed on a weekly basis.

As a result, most people who qualify to receive the vaccine will not be able to schedule an appointment at this time, Kaiser said in the statement.

“We sincerely apologize to our members who have encountered long wait times when calling for a vaccination appointment and understand the frustration this causes. We are grateful for everyone’s patience and are taking action to alleviate the situation as we work on more ways to increase access to vaccinations as supply allows,” according to the statement.

Up until last week, COVID-19 vaccine eligibility in California narrowly focused on health care providers and those living and working in long-term care facilities, including skilled nursing homes. The next “tier” of residents to qualify for the vaccine was supposed to be workers in education, child care, emergency services, food and agriculture.

But Gov. Gavin Newsom announced on Jan. 13 new guidelines in which all residents age 65 and older will now qualify for the vaccine, abruptly extending eligibility to more than 3 million additional Californians.

Santa Clara County officials were quick to announce more modest guidelines for local residents, extending its vaccine supply to people age 75 and older and noting that there won’t be enough doses available to accommodate the state’s ambitious guidelines.

San Mateo County remained focused on vaccinating health care workers in its first phase of vaccine rollout. On Jan. 17, county officials said that it is transitioning to the next vaccination phase, which now includes residents 65 and older “as the supply of vaccines allows” but as of Jan. 19, did not have enough vaccine to actually do so. Residents are

After a theft, Menlo Park family creates a food locker for the hungry

By Kate Bradshaw

Last week, Menlo Park resident Xan Craven said she received a text from her husband asking her where the food and drinks they had stored in the carport had gone.

“I hadn’t moved them,” she said.

So she checked their home’s security camera footage, and saw that while she was out picking up her daughter from preschool, a guy on a bike had ridden into the carport and stolen the food and drinks. They were valued food items that her family doesn’t usually buy, she said, ones that her husband, a neurocritical care fellow at Stanford, had treated himself to after working long hours in the ICU. Earlier this year, he’d also had a nice bike stolen from the carport, she said.

As a photographer staying home full-time with her children, she said, the theft made her feel anxious and unsafe. She posted about the experience online and received some support, but also some harsher remarks. People told her the person who stole the food may have needed it; that she shouldn’t have stored the food in so accessible a location; and that hopefully it went to someone in need, she said.

“The food wasn’t a really big deal, but again ... it was just discouraging,” Craven said. She said she felt frustrated on her husband’s behalf, knowing he’s been working extra hard comforting people on their deathbeds who aren’t allowed to have their families visit the hospital due to COVID-19 restrictions.

But, thinking about her spouse’s attitude of charity and compassion during this difficult time, Craven said she decided to react to the situation with kindness, too.

With her 2- and 4-year-old children, she picked out some snacks from the pantry and used them to fill a large storage bin, which they set on the street corner. They posted about it online via Nextdoor and some local Facebook groups telling people to take what they want or donate if they can.

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Local middle school parents upset over lack of face time with teachers

Concerns also raised about ‘questionable’ online learning platform Edgenuity

By Angela Swartz
Almanac Staff Writer

When classrooms closed last spring because of COVID-19, many parents hoped that their children would still connect with teachers and peers over video while remaining safe at home. Now, some local parents are complaining that administrators are sticking kids in front of computers without district instruction for certain classes.

At Hillview Middle School, parent Meredith Ozbil said her sixth grader has very little instructional time led by teachers, even after sixth grade students returned to classrooms at the end of October (seventh and eighth graders returned to campus in early November). Ozbil said she would like to see more classes offered to students and started an online petition in the fall — that got 30 signatures — asking the district to implement more live instruction.

“It’s really stressful because I have a full-time job and am working from home,” she said. “There’s constant interruptions and managing my child’s calendar is taxing on my employment. Come furlough time, I’d be the first one laid off.”

Ozbil said she thought there was a chance Hillview was violating Assembly Bill 77, legislation that outlines guidelines for how to operate public schools amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The law specifies that fourth graders to 12th graders receive 240 minutes of instruction daily during the 2020-21 school year. But the law doesn’t stipulate that all of these minutes need to be direct (also called synchronous) instruction from teachers — they could include writing up a response to a podcast that students listened to independently, then receiving feedback from teachers. Another assignment that counts toward instructional minutes might be an independent 30-minute at-home workout.

Hillview Principal Willy Haug said he empathizes with parents struggling to do their own jobs and monitor their students’ work. He noted that some students are ready and able to navigate distance learning materials independently. “This pandemic is a lot to manage and process, some (students) are demotivated or dejected,” he said. “I acknowledge it’s a challenge for some families. … I’m hoping people hang in there and keep engaging with us (administrators) to gain the respect and love of his teammates.”

Menlo School sophomore died Monday night, Jan. 18, from injuries he sustained in a car crash in Menlo Park over the holiday weekend, according to the Atherton school.

Michael Enright, 16, of Portola Valley was one of three teens in an SUV that rolled over in the Sharon Heights neighborhood Saturday afternoon, Jan. 16, near the intersection of Valparaiso and Albschul avenues. Police identified Enright as the driver of the SUV, which apparently hit a light pole, according to fire Chief Harold Schapelhouman of the Menlo Park Fire Protection District and Menlo Park Police Department spokesperson Nicole Acker.

He was surrounded by family when he died at 5:30 p.m. on Monday after being taken off of life support, according to the school and Acker.

“Michael was a witty, interesting, and insightful student who had a unique perspective and bravely spoke his mind,” Menlo School said in a Jan. 19 statement. “As a freshman, he was also a member of last year’s undefeated JV football team where he showed his resiliency and determination and worked hard to gain the respect and love of his teammates.”

Menlo Park firefighters said they found two people trapped inside the SUV and a third who had been ejected lying in the street near the sheared-off light pole. Crews stabilized the upside-down car and used the Jaws of Life to extricate the trapped occupants, the fire district said. The passengers were a 16-year-old male from Menlo Park and a 15-year-old female from Woodside.

See CRASH, page 18

Local News

Pregnant and homeless: Menlo Park resident’s documentary aims to raise awareness

By Kate Bradshaw
Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park resident Laura Ferro is raising funds for a project to complete a documentary she is directing about women who are homeless and pregnant in the region.

The project for the commercial filmmaker started five years ago when Ferro, herself was pregnant. She saw a news story about a homeless woman who gave birth at a bus stop, Ferro said in an interview. “This story made me realize how much more we need to do for our unhoused neighbors. Becoming a new mom is already challenging, but this story made me think about how hard it is for a woman to go through a pregnancy without a stable home,” she said.

Ferro primarily makes videos for businesses with her production company, Rebel Monk. This is her first documentary project, she said.

See DOCUMENTARY, page 12

Menlo School sophomore dies from injuries following Sharon Heights car crash

Portola Valley teen was one of three hurt in rollover crash on Jan. 16

By Angela Swartz
Almanac Staff Writer

A Menlo School sophomore died Monday night, Jan. 18, from injuries he sustained in a car crash in Menlo Park over the holiday weekend, according to the Atherton school.

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Jacky Schlegel teaches English to sixth graders at Hillview Middle School in Menlo Park on Jan. 11. Some middle school parents are complaining that students attending class from home aren’t getting enough direct instruction time.

See MIDDLE SCHOOLS, page 12

See CRASH, page 18

See MIDDLE SCHOOLS, page 12

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INVITES APPLICATIONS FOR COMMITTEES

ARTS AND CULTURE COMMITTEE - Meets monthly on the 2nd Thursday at 5:00 p.m.; 2-year term; strengthens community involvement by initiating, sponsoring, and celebrating local art and cultural activities including, art, photography, design, music, horticulture, culinary arts, literature, drama, and dance; organizes and supervises events showcasing local creative talent.

CIRCULATION COMMITTEE - Meets monthly on the 1st Thursday at 3:00 p.m.; 2-year term; supports the General Plan goal to foster a community of all users of the public roadway system; works with the Town Engineer, Sheriff’s Department, and local and regional organizations to encourage “share the road” programs; develops educational programs on traffic safety, promotes safe, convenient access to schools, businesses, public and private institutions, and neighborhoods.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE - Meets monthly on the 1st Wednesday at 5:30 p.m.; 2-year term; supports the General Plan Policies related to education on natural hazards and emergency preparedness; develops and maintains appropriate plans and procedures with staff to respond to disasters and emergencies; supports the Citizens’ Emergency Response and Preparedness Program.

ENVIRONMENT: OPEN SPACE, CONSERVATION & SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE - Meets monthly on the 4th Thursday at 5:30 p.m.; 2-year term; advisory and staff, and makes recommendations to the Planning Commission; staff with the Town Council, Planning Commission, and staff on implementing the goals and policies of the environmental elements of the General Plan: Open Space, Conservation, and Sustainability.

LIVESTOCK AND EQUESTRIAN HERITAGE COMMITTEE - Meets monthly on the 4th Wednesday at 5:30 p.m.; 2-year term; reviews applications for professional stable permits and forwards recommendations to the Planning Commission; reviews applications for exceptions to the private stable regulations, forwards recommendations to the Planning Director, and conducts stable inspections in accordance with the Municipal Code; develops and supports education and information programs which aid the community in sustaining, protecting, enhancing, and enjoying equestrian activities and facilities.

RECREATION COMMITTEE - Meets monthly on the 1st Thursday at 6:00 p.m.; 3-year term; guides the activities of the community recreation program. The Committee provides organized and supervised community recreation services in all areas of the Town and makes recreation budget recommendations to the Council.

TRAILS COMMITTEE - Meets monthly on the 2nd Thursday at 3:00 p.m.; 2-year term; reviews land divisions, subdivisions and conditional use permits for locations for equestrian, pedestrian, and bicycle trails and makes recommendations to the staff and to the Planning Commission; advises on trail maintenance projects and on rules, regulations and ordinances pertaining to the trails.

THE VOLUNTEERISM/VOLUNTEER LIAISON AND ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE - Meets as needed; 2-year term; encourages citizen volunteer participation, including by direct recruitment; assists with volunteer recognition; and researches, implements and administers recommendations; liaises with Town Staff, other volunteer committees, various local school groups and the general public to implement ideas and projects.

WOODSIDE HISTORY COMMITTEE - Meets monthly on the 2nd Thursday at 10:30 a.m.; 2-year term; advises the Town Council and staff regarding actions, policies and plans relating to historic preservation; plans and recommends means for ensuring the security and public accessibility of the Town’s historic archives; gathers and catalogues historic material.

These are volunteer positions and serve in an advisory capacity to the Town Council. Interested residents may request information and applications from the Town Clerk’s Office at Town Hall, 2955 Woodside Road, or email: jll@woodsidetown.org. The deadline for applications is Friday, January 29, 2021, by 5 p.m.
Coronavirus central: County health officer discusses vaccination rollout

Winter surge may be turning a corner based on state’s COVID-19 statistics

By Embarcadero Media staff

San Mateo County as of Tuesday had 32,887 cumulative cases of COVID-19, with 309 deaths. The rolling seven-day average of new cases ending Jan. 11 was 469. There were 189 people hospitalized. Santa Clara County as of Tuesday had 94,346 cumulative COVID-19 cases and 1,109 deaths. The rolling seven-day average of new cases ending Jan. 11 was 1,579. There were 614 hospitalized, 86 of which were new.

**County health officer statement on vaccination rollout**

Dr. Scott Morrow, San Mateo County’s health officer, released a new statement on Tuesday addressing the recent surge in COVID-19 cases and the county’s vaccine rollout process.

Morrow reaffirmed that the county remains focused on vaccinating all eligible Phase 1A health care workers and long-term care residents and that it will move into Phase 1B — which would include people 65 and up — “when the vaccine doses it receives for its Phase 1A populations are more complete.”

“We are in a textbook rationing situation,” Morrow wrote. “We have more demand than supply. Ignoring this fact, or pretending that this is somehow not the case, is not useful.”

“The Feds and the State have attempted to fairly deal with this rationing situation by creating the tiered prioritization scheme, although there is evidence these tiers are slowly being abandoned,” he added. “Everyone’s experience of having lived through the last 10 months of this pandemic and the current surge has caused the demand for the vaccine to be very high. This rationing situation, in and of itself, creates more demand.”

Morrow acknowledged the county has not vaccinated people as quickly as it had hoped, saying that to vaccinate most of the population adequately by July, all entities in the county need to vaccinate 60,000 people per week — but the current supply coming from the state is about one-tenth that rate.

He said the main constraint is that vaccine supply “is massively inadequate for the demand.”

“We all want to go faster, but until this supply issue is ameliorated, we won’t be able to,” he said.

“The solution is to ramp up production. I don’t know how feasible this is.”

Morrow also called on health care providers, such as Kaiser Permanente and Sutter Health, to “fully step up and play a major role in this effort,” and asked the public to practice gratitude and patience.

“You will be able to get your vaccine this year,” he said. “Hang in there.”

California sees drops in case rate, hospitalizations

California’s average daily coronavirus test positivity rate is down nearly 10% over the last two weeks, a sign that the state’s winter surge may be turning a corner, the state’s Health and Human Services secretary said Tuesday.

“We are in a textbook rationing situation,” Dr. Scott Morrow, San Mateo County’s health officer, wrote in a new statement on Tuesday. “We have more demand than supply. Ignoring this fact, or pretending that this is somehow not the case, is not useful.”

Morrow acknowledged the county has not vaccinated people as quickly as it had hoped, saying that to vaccinate most of the population adequately by July, all entities in the county need to vaccinate 60,000 people per week — but the current supply coming from the state is about one-tenth that rate. He said the main constraint is that vaccine supply “is massively inadequate for the demand.”

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“You will be able to get your vaccine this year,” he said. “Hang in there.”

**Woodside’s new mayor on housing, pedestrian safety and post-pandemic life**

By Angela Swartz

Almanac Staff Writer

After a tough year marked by a pandemic and nearby wildfires that brought ash and smoky skies, Woodside’s mayor for 2021 is looking ahead to what is set to be a “very busy year.”

Mayor Brian Dombkowski discussed his priorities, which include making outdoor dining a permanent fixture, improving the architecture and community space program. This month, the council will put into law new building codes in the Old Woodside area, Dombkowski said. The town will work on relaxing building codes in the Old Woodside area, Dombkowski said. The town will work on relaxing building codes in the Old Woodside area, Dombkowski said. The town will work on relaxing building codes in the Old Woodside area, Dombkowski said. The town will work on relaxing building codes in the Old Woodside area.

The CZU Lightning Complex fires brought fire risk to the town’s doorstep last year, Dombkowski said. The town is 10 years into its defensible space program (citizens can apply for 50% off their clearing costs, up to $3,000) and still building on its success, with the primary goal of reducing as much fuel as it can, he said. He also encouraged residents to sign up for SMC Alerts, the county’s emergency warning notification service that sends out text messages.

“If residents haven’t yet signed up for that texting service, please do take emergency preparedness seriously and sign up — it is the best way to get immediate information on any serious threat to your town or your safety,” he said.

“Please participate in our defensible space program. We are all in this together and those are the happiest checks we write every month at Town Hall.”

As in other communities, local merchants and restaurants were greatly affected by stay-at-home orders, and the town allocated $80,000 in grants from the general fund to support local businesses through the San Mateo County Strong program and streamlined permits for outdoor dining.

Outdoor dining — which is barred by the current stay-at-home order but was offered by restaurants much of last year — may help bring a sense of community and gathering to town, Dombkowski said. He wants to “optimize the Woodside experience in a post-pandemic environment” by making the town center more accessible. He called the town’s restaurants “really critical to the fabric of the town.”

“It’s a dark winter they have to go through,” he said. “We have continued to advocate for (restaurants) in any way we can on their behalf.”

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With Avenidas Village, you can have a lot more fun in 2021!
‘Let them play’ say youth sports advocates during rally

By Angela Swartz
Almanac Staff Writer

About 20 student athletes and their parents gathered with signs and masks along El Camino Real in front of Sequoia High School in Redwood City on Jan. 15 to plead with officials to allow them to compete again. The start date of high school sports has been pushed back repeatedly as officials respond to changing state and county rules during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This was one in a series of statewide protests under the name “Let Them Play” held last week to advocate for the return of youth sports.

Becky Cordero, one of the Sequoia event’s organizers and a parent of a senior who plays volleyball at Woodside High School, said she wants to see athletes safely restart play.

“I strongly believe we can do this safely while at the same time getting back into sports,” she said, noting not being able to play has been “really tough” on her daughter. “I’m a marriage and family therapist, so I’m seeing firsthand how it’s affecting (students’) mental and physical health.”

Organizers invited students from Menlo-Atherton, Menlo School, Woodside, Eastside Prep, Sacred Heart Preparatory and Woodside Priory schools to the Sequoia event.

Earlier this month, the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF), the state’s governing body for high school sports, said the soonest athletes could return to competition would be Jan. 25.

CIF said girls volleyball, cheerleading, cross country, football, water polo and other sports will start their seasons in January and run into April. Cross country is the only season that can begin while San Mateo County is in the purple COVID-19 tier, which signifies widespread transmission risk. The county has to improve to the orange tier (moderate risk) to start football and volleyball competition.

“We fully support the safe return to play for our athletes and we’ve been working hard to get this done since last March,” said M-A Athletic Director Paul Snow in a Jan. 14 email. “We are hopeful that we’ll have some sports starting to compete soon and other athletes will be able to practice with their teammates until restrictions ease up. We want to stress the importance of masking up and keeping socially distant, the better we are at this, the sooner we get back to the playing surface!”

In the fall, CIF said seasons would resume in December, but the starting date was pushed back. Some district teams have been holding physical conditioning, practice, skill-building and training outdoors at 6 feet apart.

People stood on the corner of El Camino Real and James Avenue on Jan. 15 advocating for youth sports competitions to begin again. Students held signs that read “Let us play” while parents held signs that said “Let them play.”

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Feeling a sense of urgency, Ravenswood moves to reopen schools

By Elena Kadvany

The Ravenswood City School District is looking to start reopening its campuses as soon as next week for small groups of high-need students, which school leaders hope will be an initial step toward safely resuming more in-person instruction.

Ravenswood submitted a waiver application to San Mateo County Health on Jan. 14 to bring back an estimated 42 students, including a transitional kindergarten class at Costanoa Elementary School and 31 students with moderate to severe special needs, from preschool to fifth grade. But the district doesn’t need a waiver to reopen for select groups of “urgent learners,” the county recently told Superintendent Gina Sudaria, and can proceed following existing state and local public health guidance pending direction from the

Costanoa Elementary School kindergarteners and first-graders work in a classroom at the Boys and Girls Club in East Palo Alto on Sept. 16.

school board, she said Tuesday.

“Trustees supported staff’s recommendation, presented at a study session last week, to start reopening schools for students ‘whose education has been massively disrupted’ by months of remote learning, Sudaria said. “We need to reimagine what is possible ... to make up for the disruptions of COVID,” she told the board on Jan. 12. “This is just not about a few weeks of summer school. This is a long-term plan, a multiyear process that we need to start acting upon now.”

The district is purposefully starting small with willing families and teachers to demonstrate that in-person learning can be done safely, which will hopefully encourage more teachers and families to come back, Sudaria said.

The district hopes to bring the first groups of students back as soon as Monday, Jan. 25. The 11 transitional kindergarten students (the parents nearly all want their children to return to classroom instruction, Sudaria said) would attend school every day in the mornings with one teacher. In the afternoon, the class would remain in a stable cohort and attend a district learning hub together, which opened in September to provide support — but not direct instruction — to students.

About 200 students are currently attending the learning hubs, which are held on Ravenswood campuses but managed by local nonprofits.

The special needs students, some of whom are nonverbal or have other severe disabilities, would return in a slower, phased approach: attending school 30 to 60 minutes per day as they adjust to being back in the classroom with health and safety precautions. The district is currently conducting one-on-one special education assessments in person in the same time frame, so it will be familiar to students, Sudaria said, but over time, the district would gradually increase the amount of time and number of students together based on student needs and ability. Students would be in classes of no more than nine students with a teacher and up to three paraprofessionals.

Only staff who volunteer to teach in person will do so. Ten teachers and eight paraeducators

See RAVENSWOOD, page 16

New parking fee, lower visitor cap on the horizon at Foothills Park

By Gennady Sheyner

A fter seeing a spike in visits to Foothills Park, the Palo Alto City Council moved on Tuesday to sharply curtail the number of people who can enter the scenic preserve.

Responding to reports of heavy traffic and environmental damage over the past month, the council agreed to lower the cap on visitors who can be at Foothills Park at one time from the current level of 750 to 400. The new cap is well below the park’s historic limit of 1,000 visitors, which the council reduced to 750 for 90 days as part of its November decision to remove a residents-only restriction at the park. It is also below staff’s recommended cap of 500 visitors, though the council gave city staff leeway to potentially raise the limit to 500 if conditions allow.

The move is one of several that the city is preparing to institute as it seeks to limit access to a park that has seen a surge of visitors since Dec. 17, when the council officially repealed the residents-only requirement and opened it to the public. Daren Anderson, assistant director at the Community Services Department, said the number of people who visited the 1,400-acre preserve between Dec. 17 — the day the park officially opened to everyone — and Jan. 2 was 33,647, a roughly six-fold increase from 2019, when the park saw 5,687 visitors, he said.

Council members Greg Tanaka and Lydia Kou, who had both voted against removing the ban on nonresidents, pushed for more stringent restrictions and higher parking fees. Kou said she had hoped to see a limit of 300 visitors and called the 400-person limit a “compromise.” Tanaka supported setting the parking fee at $10, making it one of the most expensive parks to visit in the region. While council member Eric Filseth initially supported the $10 fee, the council ultimately voted to 6-1, with council member Alison Cormack dissenting, to institute a $6 fee, the level recommended by city staff, and directed its Parks and Recreation Commission to further refine the city’s policy of park admittance and fees.

Cormack supported retaining the limit at 750 visitors, giving staff leeway to lower it as needed, and deferring the discussion on fees until the Parks and Recreation Commission vets the issue. She recalled volunteering at the park in recent weeks and called it a “wonderful, positive and welcoming environment.”

“Many people said they used to live in Palo Alto and they’re so glad to be able to come back here again,” Cormack said.

While she acknowledged the traffic problems at the park

See FOOTHILLS PARK, page 14

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Music@Menlo’s rhapsody in bleu

Online concert features works by George Gershwin and Maurice Ravel

By Heather Zimmerman

What happens when two renowned but very different musical masters cross paths? According to Music@Menlo, “mutual admiration” sparked when French composer Maurice Ravel and American composer George Gershwin met in 1928 at a birthday celebration for Ravel.

That the two composers held each other’s artistry in such esteem inspired the theme of Music@Menlo’s latest virtual concert, “Mutual Admiration: Gershwin and Ravel,” featuring violinist Kristin Lee and pianist Orion Weiss.

Lee and Weiss will play a selection of works by Gershwin and Ravel in a performance available online for on-demand viewing through Sunday, Jan. 23.

The concert is presented as part of Music@Menlo’s online Explorer Series, which pairs musical performances and discussion.

The program opens with Ravel’s Violin Sonata no. 2 in G major, op. 45 (1923-27), followed by Five Selections from Porgy and Bess for Violin and Piano by Gershwin (arranged by Jascha Heifetz) and concludes with Ravel’s Tzigane for Violin and Piano.

Music@Menlo’s co-directors, Wu Han and David Finckel, are also co-artistic directors of the Chamber Music Society at Lincoln Center in New York City, giving Music@Menlo a deep well of talented guest artists to draw from for its own season.

Lee and Weiss are both members of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and they each have many credits, among them: Lee is a principal artist with Camerata Pacifica in Santa Barbara while in recent years, Weiss has released recordings of the complete Gershwin works for piano and orchestra with longtime collaborators the Buffalo Philharmonic and conductor JoAnn Falletta.

Listeners can get Lee and Weiss’ insights into the works featured in the “Mutual Admiration” performance during a short discussion presented as part of the program.

Tickets are $25. For more information, visit musicatmenlo.org.
Private Retreat on Expansive Lot in North Palo Alto

Located in North Palo Alto’s highly desirable Duveneck/St. Francis neighborhood, this traditional four bedroom, three bath home has it all. Perfectly sited on a rarely available oversized lot (11,835 square feet), the home enjoys a park-like setting with great privacy.

The single level floor plan, having been expanded and remodeled over the years, offers generously proportioned rooms, well designed for the way we live today. The kitchen/family great room is a comfortable and casual gathering spot, while the living/dining main room with its central fireplace and view of the rear garden provides a slightly more formal alternative.

The ideal arrangement of the bedroom wing maximizes flexibility. The fourth bedroom may also serve as an office or guest suite and is situated off the foyer with its own separate patio. Across and down the hall is the primary suite with its spacious bath, then a multi-purpose bonus room leads to two additional bedrooms at the rear of the home. Work, study, play or just relax in this inviting space.

The rear yard has a lovely cultivated portion with patio, sparkling pool and jacuzzi, plus an additional 900 sf +/- undeveloped portion that may accommodate an organic garden, orchard, play area, or accessory dwelling unit. Explore the possibilities.

Stroll the tree lined streets, or bike to Rinconada Park, Lucie Stern Community Center, Edgewood Shopping Center and top Palo Alto schools. Enjoy close proximity to Stanford University and Shopping Center, downtown Palo Alto and Silicon Valley’s tech companies... all that Palo Alto has to offer!

Carolyn Aarts Keddington
650.946.8122
carolyn.keddington@compass.com
carolynkeddington.com
DRE 01490400
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Ozbil said she fears not all

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... I felt trapped with nowhere

Years ago in Seattle, Shearin

area," Ferro said.

“She knows everyone in this

... and that's OK.”

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“Having a conversation is a

she has been sober for nine

her son moved back to the Bay

her son, and later when she and

for alcohol and pill use. Now,

she has been sober for nine

they started to improve when

she and her son moved back to the

Bay Area and she sought treatment

for alcohol and pill use. Now,

she has been sober for nine

years, she said.

“I needed to be around a

healthy community,” she said.

she said. “I can do

and counselors.”

A Nov. 20 middle school sur-

vey showed 57% of parents with

students in Virtual Academy —

the district's current at-home

learning option — thought the

amount of synchronous instruction

was just right, while 74% of students

thought that the right amount. Some

84% of all parents surveyed said they

thought the distance learning program

was robust.

Haug said 20% of middle

schoolers are taking classes

online only, while the other

80% alternate between a week

of in-person classes and a week

of online classes.

In response to parents who

wish there were more for their

children to do, the school is

beginning to offer sixth graders

the option to take a twice

a week project-based learning

course on writing and recitation,

social justice poetry, Haug said.

Which said she fears not all

students are receiving equi-

table educations in the district

amid the pandemic. Parents

with the means are filling up

their students' time by sign-

ing them up for extra classes,

joining pods or hiring tutors.

Not all families have that

luxury, she said.

Fellow sixth grade par-

tent Barbara Vu said she has

become a “professional kid

scheduler” for her son. She’s

even signed him up for an

extra online class to keep him

busy.

“I’ve been a manager,” she

said. “The point is: I can do

that as a parent in the pandemic,

but not all families can. It

raises a big question: Is this the

best we can do in our district?”

Shani Podell, who also has a

sixth grader at Hillview, said

while many schools can’t even

figure out how to get stu-

dents back on campus, she feels

pretty lucky her son has been

able to do in-person learning.

“It’s not perfect, but I’ve

come to a point where I don’t

care,” she said. “My son is so

happy to be on campus, even

though the COVID precau-

tions make it very different

from before, but any normalcy

and some interaction is wel-

comed. They have ramped up

on homework/assignments so

my son is busier than he was

before, but I’m happy with

that. I still wish he was getting

language or some enrichment

but in the scheme of things,

it’s a trivial complaint. I have

come to terms that this year of

schooling will be whatever it

will be … and that’s OK.”

Things started to improve

when she got shelter at a house

for women and children with

her son, and later when she and

her son moved back to the Bay

Area and she sought treatment

for alcohol and pill use. Now,

she has been sober for nine

years, she said.

“I needed to be around a

healthy community,” she said.

she said. “I was vulner-

able, with an unhealthy person. ...

I felt trapped with nowhere to

go. It was a frustrating time in

my life.”

Portola Valley district

learning platform

questioned

In the neighboring Portola

Valley School District, sixth

graders returned to campus,

with several sixth and eighth grad-

ers joining them this week,

according to Superintendent

Robert Zarea. Some parents of

students who are remaining

at home also did not agree with

the online learning platform

Edgenuity for math and sev-

enth and eighth grade English

classes. They started a petition

on Change.org in November

asking the administration to

livestream classes rather than

have students taught by Edge-

nuity teachers not associated

with the district. The platform

has “alarming reviews,” petition

author Liz Poggi wrote.

“Whether our family chooses

for our children to attend school

in person or to attend the Por-

tola Valley Virtual Academy,

we do not find Edgenuity to be an

acceptable or equitable source

of instruction for two of the most

critical subjects for our middle

school children,” Poggi wrote.

“We ask the adminis-

trators and school board to

reevaluate the virtual program

available to the middle school

community.”

Poggi asked the district to

provide a more open process

and create a shorter period

for the binding commitment,

allowing a March pivot point for

students to return to campus or

switch to virtual learning.

Zarea said there have been

several parent meetings and

board presentations since the

petition started circulating

where the virtual program has

been discussed and revised.

In response to parent concerns,

the district is offering more classes

taught by its own staff in order

to have a robust alternative vir-

tual program with more options

for students unable to partici-

pate in in-person learning.

“While we believe we are

offering a robust, standards-

aligned program we are con-

tinuing to look at ways in which

to mitigate any concerns and

tweak the program further to

address our students’ needs and

include parent input,” Zarea

said in a Jan. 11 email. “I believe

we have a rigorous alternative

virtual program.”

During a Nov. 13 discus-

sion with Corte Madera School

parents about the return to

school and the Virtual Acad-

ey, Zarea explained that the

district would have to hire three

additional teachers, with appro-

priate credentials, in order for

all classes to be taught in-house

in the Academy, according to a

video of the meeting.

“There are nine levels of math

and English and language arts

for the seventh/eighth grades,”

she said. “Teachers don’t have

room in their schedules.”

It cost nearly $1 million to

reopen district classrooms this

fall, with over $580,000 going

toward increasing staffing.

Corte Madera Principal Kris-

ten Shima said it’s very dif-

ficult to bring students back at

the middle and high school

levels, because of the number

of courses being offered and

students moving from class

to class, according to a video

of the meeting viewed by The

Almanac.

“It’s a completely different set

up than (grades) K-5, frankly,”

she said.

Shima said that livestreaming

classes is not plausible at this

time. For example, fourth and

fifth grade teachers are still

moving around a lot and mov-

ing their classes outside a lot,

she said.

“Some teachers feel much

more comfortable being out-

side,” she said. “With livestream-

ing, teachers would essentially

be sitting in front of a cam-

era and that’s not how our

teachers are teaching right now.

They’re moving around the

room and bringing groups

inside/outside. Masks are on.”

Director Laura Ferro and cinematographer Robin Webster film under a highway overpass in Redwood City in 2017 while working on a documentary about women who are homeless and pregnant.

Email Angela Swartz at

aswartz@almanacnews.com

Email Kate Bradshaw at

kbradshaw@almanacnews.com

Director Laura Ferro

and cinematographer Robin Webster film under a highway overpass in Redwood City in 2017 while working on a documentary about women who are homeless and pregnant.
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- Marketing to international community
- Multiple, full-page newspaper ads
- Quarter-page ad in The DeLeon Insight newsletter

* Subject to governmental restrictions  
** Courtesy of The Law Offices of Michael J. Repka

Michael Repka  
Managing Broker, DRE #01854880 | 650.900.7000 | michael@deleonrealty.com  
www.deleonrealty.com | DRE #01903224
since the Dec. 17 policy change, she argued that much of the impact has been addressed by the city’s recent decision to bar entrance to the park on mornings and afternoons when the number of visitors hits the 750-person limit, which has only happened during weekends and holidays.

During Martin Luther King Jr. Day on Monday, the park reached its capacity at about 9:45 a.m., Anderson said, and the entrance gate remained closed until about 2 p.m. The park had about 1,600 visitors that day, he said.

Jeff Greenfield, chair of the Parks and Recreation Commission, told the council that the crowds and impact are "more significant than most people have anticipated."

"The visitor experience now is quite different — perhaps best epitomized by a mass of cars circulating in search of a parking space, kind of similar to Golden Gate Park on a busy weekend," Greenfield said. But while Cornmack favored a lighterc touch, others argued for more stringent measures. Kou supported starting with a small cap and then gradually widening it, as circumstances allow. Tanaka argued that the entrance fees for Foothills Park should help make the park "revenue neutral," a restriction that does not apply to any other parks or open spaces.

While the council majority stopped short of adopting the most extreme proposals on the table, members agreed that the city needs to take immediate action to address the impacts of crowds on the park’s delicate ecosystem. Filseth said he has recently visited the park and confronted an "amusement park" atmosphere with cars everywhere and people disregarding park rules.

"I saw people walking down hillsides," Filseth said. "I saw someone throw their trash on a hillside. I saw dogs off leash chasing squirrels through the underbrush. I saw kids throw rocks at water fowl."

While Filseth said he would support a $10 fee for entrance, Mayor Tom DuBois and Vice Mayor Pat Burt both pushed for $6, which would be better aligned with other parks in the region. A $10 fee is going to be viewed as onerous by residents and by nonresidents alike and it will, I fear, smack of a backdoor attempt at exclusivity, and leave us open to that accusation," Burt said.

The city hasn’t set a date when the new rules will go into effect. Palo Alto city staff will return to the council next week with an emergency ordinance listing the changes.

Barry A. Carr
August 10, 1958 – January 2, 2021

Barry A. Carr, age 62, attorney, patriarch and community fixture died unexpectedly in his sleep on January 2, 2021 at his home in Portola Valley, CA.

Born in New York City, raised in Marin, he is survived by his wife of thirty-five years, Kathleen, and their three sons: Ryan, Jordan (with Sylvie, parents of June), and Grant, his sister, Gwen, many beloved nieces, nephews, friends, and his dog Ruby. He was preceded in death by his father Philip Carr, and followed by his mother, Iris Carr, who passed on January 9, 2021.

Barry graduated from UC Berkeley in 1980 and Columbia School of Law in 1983. He worked as an attorney in Los Angeles and San Francisco before striking out on his own. Barry co-founded the fifty-person law firm of Carr & Ferrell in 1992, where he built a successful securities practice focusing on Silicon Valley startups and venture capital firms.

He and Kathleen were high school sweethearts, and in a life filled with blessings, he always liked to say he was the best thing that ever happened to them. They loved traveling, though he was as happy snuggling in their corner of the couch as he was exploring Sicily or New Zealand so long as they did it together.

With her, they built a life they wanted—a community they were central to, a family they loved dearly, an ongoing adoration for each other. He regularly described things in his life as " privilege" whenever he was moved, whether that be from the 16th tee box at CordeValle Golf Course, popping a bottle of wine, or after being tossed a popscicle from across the room by a son. He loved golfing with Ryan, chasing baby June with Jordan, and watching sports with Grant. A second father to many others, he had a special passion for helping young people find the confidence they needed to excel in their careers and lives.

He spent 26 years in Portola Valley, CA as a pillar of the community. Over the years he could be found at Ford Field for his sons’ Little League games, at the Corte Madera gym on Sundays, hooping with his buddies, working out like a maniac at Alpine, and putting on his (only) playlist ranging from Bill Withers to Tom Petty at a house party.

Barry did everything—even unwinding—at full speed. Standing 6’5” with an even bigger presence, the room always ended up revolving around him as he got the night going with his very particular kind of tall guy dancing, and held court over a night cap as things wound down. He loved people, and always wanted to be sure everyone was having as much fun as he was.

As a young man, Barry was a basketball star at Terra Linda High in Marin and played in college at Cal. An explosive leaper who never lost a jump ball in high school and an intimidating shot blocker, he could get a bucket against any defender with his signature baseline fadeaway. Still throwing up 360 dunks into his 40s, he was a baller in every sense. Later on in life, he golfed often with family and friends. He also liked to go alone, at the crack of dawn, bragging in the AM that he’d "played 18 today," and then taking a nap on his couch.

When it is safe to do so, we will gather to celebrate his remarkable life. He said his only regret was that he couldn’t go to his own funeral, which is to say he’d like to be a Barry Carr party, which is to say: open bar.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula, where he was a board member for over a decade. To honor his memory, please take a moment to acknowledge the blessings in your life, as he so often did.

https://www.bgcp.org/donate

Robert-Shenk
February 7, 1940 – January 10, 2021

Long-time Menlo Park resident Bob Shenk peacefully passed away at his home on Sunday, January 10, 2021. Bob had been suffering from symptoms related to lymphoma.

Bob was born on February 7, 1940, at Palo Alto Hospital to Samuel and Sally Shenk. The second of three children, Bob enjoyed growing up in the Ingleside Terrace area of San Francisco. He was a 1957 graduate of Lick-Wilmerding High School and later attended Purdue University, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in 1964.

Bob married Mary Catharine Dolan on September 12, 1964, in San Francisco. Bob first met Mary when he was 9 years old, and they celebrated 56 loving years of marriage before his passing. Bob and Mary soon settled in a home in Menlo Park, California – a house they lived in together for the next 52 years.

Bob first worked for Cincinnati Milacron, a leading CNC machine tool producer, where he was named Salesman of the Year in 1970, 1974, and 1976. He later showed his entrepreneurial talent in forming Shenk Tool Gauge, which produced a series of useful diagnostic tools. Later, Bob set out on his own and started Shenk Machinery. It was here that he grew to be a master tool salesmen shined most brightly. Bob loved supporting the manufacturing needs of leading companies in the Bay Area to include Apple, Tesla, FMC, and Intuitive Surgical.

Despite his many professional achievements, Bob never let work get in the way of family. He coached his children’s baseball and basketball teams, cheered his grandchildren from the stands, and was ever-present for performances and graduations. Bob was famous for leading backpack trips into the Sierras and enjoyed fly fishing with his brother John and his family.

Bob was a remarkable carpenter who created furniture, toys, boats, and wooden works of art that his family will treasure for generations.

Bob and Mary were longstanding members of Menlo Church (Menlo Park Presbyterian Church) and were active in the Menlo Park community. Always a gregarious man, Bob made friends easily and stayed close to many of his childhood buddies throughout his life. Bob is survived by his wife Mary and his three children and their spouses - Rob and Tracey Shenk, Carrington and Steve Kujawa, and Charles and Sarah Shenk. He will be deeply missed by his seven grandchildren, family, countless friends, and so many others. And if one’s wealth was measured in love created, love shared, and friends made, Bob would be the richest man ever. Now it is up to all of us to carry his love and memory forward.

Memorial donations may be made to Peninsula Open Spaces Trust (POST).Link: https://openspacetrust.org/donate
encouraged to check with their private health care providers to confirm if they are vaccinating people 65 and older, but should not expect to get access through county-run vaccination clinics yet.

Many private health care providers, including Sutter Health and Stanford Health Care, have followed in Santa Clara County’s footsteps and are providing appointments to people age 75 and older. Kaiser opted to follow the state guidelines and immediately reached out to patients who are 65 and older, leading to call volumes and wait times that “remain extremely high.”

Kaiser has since increased staffing in its call center and now operates it 24 hours a day, and is telling callers up front if there are no more available appointments for the day. The hope is that by this week, Kaiser patients will be able to schedule vaccine appointments solely through its website.

Another cause for concern is whether there will be enough COVID-19 vaccine supply to provide second doses. Residents receiving the vaccine developed by Pfizer must receive two doses of the vaccine 21 days apart, while those receiving the Moderna vaccine must receive two doses 28 days apart.

State and local officials were reassured that there was a federal stockpile of “second dose” vaccinations, and told not to sit on reserves that could be otherwise used to vaccinate more people.

Last Friday, it was revealed that the federal government may have secretly depleted that stockpile of vaccines. Santa Clara County officials blamed former President Donald Trump’s administration for the poor communication, and are unsure what it will mean for the expanded rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Anyone interested in getting the vaccine can go to the following:

Kaiser Permanente
Residents age 65 and older qualify for the vaccine. Information and scheduling for appointments can be found at mydoctor.kaiserpermanente.org or by calling 866-454-8855. Kaiser’s website is now advising people age 75 and older not to call or email, and to await a letter or email about available appointments.

Sutter Health/Palo Alto Medical Foundation
Residents age 75 and older qualify for the vaccine. Appointments can be scheduled at sutterhealth.org or by calling 844-987-6115. Patients are asked not to call their care site or provider’s office for vaccination scheduling, and to expect long wait times.

Santa Clara County
Residents age 75 and older qualify for the vaccine. Appointments can be scheduled at stanfordhealthcare.org or by calling 650-498-9000. Vaccinations for people age 65 and older were expected to start Jan. 20.

El Camino Health
Residents age 75 and older qualify for the vaccine. Eligibility is restricted to those who do not receive primary care from the Santa Clara County health system, Kaiser, Sutter or Stanford. Appointments can be made at elcaminohospital.org. A phone number is not available.

El Camino Health
Residents age 75 and older qualify for the vaccine. Appointments can be scheduled at

and vaccinations. Newsmen asked the state Legislature to preemptively allocate the $2 billion before the end of the month to ensure the reopening plan proceeds smoothly.

Many schools across the state have resumed in-person classes in recent months in some form or for certain groups like special-needs students.

As of November, schools in 41 counties were holding in-person classes to some extent. According to Newsmen, while schools in the remaining 17 were mostly holding classes online.

—Bay City News Service

Mary Ann Ferrando
July 25, 1952 – January 10, 2021

Mary Ann Ferrando, a Menlo Park resident who retired as a Meter Reader for the City of Santa Clara, has died.


Mary enjoyed walking and hiking, and successfully hiked Half Dome three times. Mary loved sewing costumes, making clothes, baking delicious cookies, pies and cakes, and cooking wonderful meals for her friends and family. Mary was also a very creative person who excelled at various different crafts.

Mary was a very caring person who helped in helping others. She was a 159-time donor at the Stanford Blood Center, and volunteered at the American Cancer Society Discovery Shop in Menlo Park.

Mary was preceded in her death by her sister, Lynda Parsons and brother-in-law, Ron Ferrando.

Mary is survived by her husband of 32 years Randy; son Andrew R. Canning (Siera); sisters Joan Stair, Helen Torres (Tony), Brenda Bateman (Richard); brother Norman Bateman (Peggie); brother-in-law, Bob Ferrando (Grace); and many nieces and nephews.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations be made to the American Cancer Society.
NOTICE INVITING BIDS
TOWN OF ATHERTON, CA
The Town of Atherton will accept bids for construction of the following public work:
2021 SPRING PATCHING PROJECT
Grind and replace approximately 25,000 square feet of asphalt to a 6-inch depth of pavement failures. Some hand work around utility access-hole covers will be necessary.
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 Avenue, Atherton, California 94027, until 1:30 p.m. Pacific Standard Time on Wednesday, February 10, 2021, 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 2021 SPRING PATCHING PROJECT”, along with date and time of bid opening.

RAVENSWOOD continued from page 9
have said they're willing to come back for this initial phase of reopening, according to the district.
Ravenswood has invested in safety precautions to prepare for reopening, including purchasing 100 portable HEPA air purifiers, hand-wash stations, high-quality masks that use commercial-grade germicide and enough masks for every student and staff member to have multiple masks.
Sudaria said the district is eager to reopen for more students at more schools if all goes well — and the district feels a sense of urgency to do so even in the face of concerning COVID-19 case counts in East Palo Alto. She said a few other East Palo Alto schools are offering in-person learning, including city’s charter schools.
“We are trying to strategically walk the line on how to pull the entire community forward and be in support of bringing students on campus,” she said.
Trustee Bronwyn Alexander supported the plan but expressed some reservations about reopening schools while San Mateo County remains in the purple tier.
“I just want to voice the concern: It’s still a very deadly, dangerous disease and it’s still very rampant in our community,” Alexander said.
Vice president Tamara Sobomehin urged the district to not lessen its focus on improving the distance learning experience when schools reopen.
Trustee Ana Maria Palidio, meanwhile, advocated for returning even more students to campuses, especially with the likelihood of teachers getting access to the vaccine on the horizon. She noted that other local elementary schools have remained open for in-person instruction despite the county moving into the purple tier.
“I’m devastated to think our students will potentially (go) an entire year without being back on our campuses, connecting with teachers and learning in the classroom,” she said. “I hear a lot of frustration and stress from families for whom this has become very burdensome.”
As Ravenswood moves closer to reopening schools, the district is ramping up COVID-19 testing availability for students and employees. Starting this month, the district is requiring all staff coming onto campuses to be tested weekly. By February, the district hopes to offer free testing to all Ravenswood students, whether they’re on campus for a learning hub or direct instruction.
The district is also participating in an eight-week rapid test pilot program through San Mateo County Health. The rapid antigen testing — with results that come back in 15 minutes — will be first made available to staff, then students, Sudaria said.
The school board was set to discuss the waiver and reopening plan again at its virtual meeting Thursday, Jan. 21, after the Almanac’s Wednesday press deadline. Visit almanacnews.com for updates.
In other business at the board’s Jan. 12 study session, trustees unanimously supported a $50 million renovation plan to build two new buildings at the Cesar Chavez Ravenswood Middle School, the single largest new capital project in Ravenswood’s history.
The district plans to build one larger two-story building with seven classrooms and a media center, while a second, one-story building will house four new classrooms and offices for students to meet in small groups with district support staff. All remaining classrooms at the middle school, which opened in 2017, will also be renovated.
The upgrades will be funded through Measure S, a school bond that voters approved in 2018. Construction is set to begin this summer and be completed by 2024.

FOOD LOCKER continued from page 1
The response, she said, blew her away. “I was flooded with kind comments and supportive people, not only cheering me on, but asking if they could contribute to the food bin as well,” she said.
So many neighbors donated food that the bin overflowed, she said. So when a neighbor noticed that someone was giving away an old locker and offered to donate it, she agreed to take on a new project. She took it home and painted the locker a cream color with trees on it and added a whiteboard inside to enable people to write down requests for any specific items they needed.
The family returned the locker to the corner, located at the intersection of Curtis Street and Live Oak Avenue, restocked with food donated by her daughter’s preschool teacher.
“Hopefully the locker will continue to hold many items for those in need during these difficult times,” Craven said.
Email Kate Bradshaw at kbradshaw@almanacnews.com

Xan Craven painted a locker to store food donations from her neighborhood near downtown Menlo Park. Her children helped pick out snacks to include.
In July, the council unanimously voted to make it easier to get permission to build ADUs. The change brought the town's ordinance into alignment with a state law that went into effect at the beginning of the year, streamlining ADU requirements to help alleviate the state-wide housing shortage. The changes include shorter timelines for approval and loosening of setback requirements, allowing for state law, for at least one 800-square-foot ADU to be built a minimum of 4 feet from the side and rear property lines. The updated ordinance is likely to get some fine-tuning, particularly as it relates to building height.

In updating the town's ADU ordinance, the council embraced the concept as a method of providing additional housing in town without adding density, in order to maintain the community's rural character.

Moving into the cloud

Woodside aims to reopen Town Hall to the public for council deliberations. For much of the past year, meetings have been held exclusively on Zoom. Prior to 2020, meetings were livestreamed only occasionally by local watchdog group Citizens of Woodside (COW). Dombkowski said he imagines the town will continue to livestream once council members meet in person.

"One of the unexpected positives that has come out of the pandemic environment is it has forced a significant tech evolution in local government," he said. "We've moved town halls across America into the cloud."

He said this has improved the accessibility of local government to its citizens, which "can only be a good thing." In-person meetings do provide a better dynamic and more debate, he noted.

Speaking of technology, Dombkowski said he would also like to help extend broadband internet connectivity to all corners of Woodside.

Other priorities

Dombkowski would like to recruit more people to serve on town committees, which can be a challenge in such a small town.

"Finding qualified candidates can be a challenge," he said. "We have a town of 5,500 and we're trying to staff a lot of critical positions."

The town will also need to renegotiate its policing contract with the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff's Office has two dedicated officers serving the town. The town receives at least $100,000 a year from the state Citizens for Public Safety (COPS) program to help pay for policing.

The town will work to address pedestrian safety in 2021. Traffic safety continued to be a major concern in 2020, as there were several fatal collisions on Woodside roads, including a two-car incident that killed both drivers in August and a fatal solo vehicle crash in July that resulted in the driver's arrest on felony DUI charges after his friend, a passenger, died in the incident.

The Council next meets on Tuesday, Jan. 26. Email Angela Swartz at aswartz@almanacnews.com

AN IMPORTANT NOTICE REQUIRED BY CALIFORNIA DIVISION OF DRINKING WATER

Este informe contiene información muy importante sobre su agua.

The O’Connor Tract Co-Operative Water Company has levels of manganese above the secondary drinking water standard. Although this is not an emergency, as our customers, you have a right to know what happened, what you should do, and what we are doing to correct this situation. Our water system is in violation of a secondary drinking water standard. Violation of a secondary standard does not pose an immediate threat to health. We routinely monitor for the presence of drinking water contaminants. Average results for water samples for the last four quarters have manganese levels of 62 ppb in well #1 and 145 ppb in well #2 (ppb-parts per billion). This is above the secondary drinking water standard, or secondary maximum contaminant level of 50 ppb. Manganese concentrations above the standard may have an effect on taste and tend to leave black deposits in some plumbing systems.

What should I do?

• You do not need to use an alternative water supply (e.g., bottled water). There is no health risk.
• If you have other health issues concerning the consumption of this water, you may wish to consult your doctor.

What happened? What is being done?

O’Connor Water has been above the secondary standard for manganese for many years, and this has been described to members in the annual Report on Water Quality Measurements. Recent state regulations have imposed stricter requirements for complying with the secondary standard for manganese. The state has issued the company a citation for noncompliance. The state ordered the company to start quarterly monitoring in February 2012, and this monitoring is still ongoing at both wells. The state also required that manganese monitoring be continued quarterly and that the results of these tests be reported to all water consumers.

The Company is working with State agencies and the City of Menlo Park to complete the planning of a manganese treatment facility that will then be installed and operational on the Company’s property.

Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this public notice. Please share this information with other people who drink this water, even those who may not have received this public notice.

For further information contact: Secretary-Treasurer Telephone 650-321-2723 Email: oconnorwater@gmail.com

The O’Connor Tract Co-Operative Water Co., System 4110019 P.O. Box 1375, Palo Alto, California 94302-1375

NOTICE TO PROSPECTIVE CONTRACTORS

Notice is hereby given for the purpose of pre-qualification; Responsibility Questionnaires will be received by the Board of Trustees of the Portola Valley School District up until the close of business on the date indicated below for:

Project Description:
Corte Madera & Ormondale – New Classrooms and Courtyard Renovations

Pre-Qualification Packages Due Date and Time: Friday, January 22, 2021 at 5:00pm at RMG Kramer, Inc., attention: Yasmin Rouholiman, 4020 Moorpark Avenue, #220, San Jose, CA 95117.

Pre-Qualification of Trade Contractors

To receive plans and bid, Trade Contractors must possess a current and active license to perform the work listed, submit and certify the required Responsibility Questionnaire information, and be pre-qualified by the District.

A. General Trades A or B License Required
B. Earthwork and Paving Trades A or C-12 License Required
C. Underground Utility Trades A or C-34 License Required
D. Electrical and Low Voltage Trades C-10 License Required
E. Plumbing Trades C-36 License Required
F. HVAC Trades C-20 License Required
G. Fire Protection Trades C-16 License Required
H. Flooring Trades C-15 License Required
I. Cabinet and Millwork Trades C-6 License Required
K. Painting Trades C-33 License Required
L. Landscaping Trades C-27 License Required

Only Pre-Qualified Contractors will be permitted to bid. Pre-Qualified Contractors will be required to attend a mandatory Pre-bid Conference scheduled for Thursday, January 28, 2021 at 9:00am, 10:00am, 11:00am, or 12:00pm at the Corte Madera School, 4575 Alpine Rd, Portola Valley, CA 94028. Groups of no greater than eight people will be led through the Pre-Bid Conference in each time slot. Confirm your attendance at the pre-bid conference including your desired time slot to yasminr@rgmkramer.com and djhalbert@rgmkramer.com as soon as possible. Time slots will be approved on a first-come, first-serve basis. Opening of the sealed bids submitted by pre-qualified bidders is scheduled for Thursday, February 25, 2021 at 1:00 PM at the Portola Valley School District Office, 4575 Alpine Rd, Portola Valley, CA 94028. Pre-qualified contractors are advised to verify dates and times of the mandatory pre-bid conference and bid opening prior to the above listed dates. Responsibility Questionnaires and instructions for submission can be obtained by emailing Yasmin Rouholiman at Yasminr@rgmkramer.com. Contracts will require a 100% Performance Bond, a 100% Labor and Materials Bond and a Bid Security in the amount of 10% of the submitted bid. The project is subject to the State Labor Code, Labor Code 1720-1861 regarding DIR registration, the payment of prevailing wages and submission of certified payroll statements will be enforced. No contractor or subcontractor may be listed on a bid proposal for a public works project (submitted on or after March 1, 2015) unless registered with the Department of Industrial Relations pursuant to Labor Code section 1725.5 This project is subject to compliance monitoring and enforcement by the Department of Industrial Relations. Contractors are allowed, according to PCC sec. 22300, to submit securities in lieu of retention. Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise, in accordance with Education Code Section 17076.11, the Portola Valley School District has “a participation goal of at least 3% per year of the overall dollar amount expended each year by the school district for Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise”. Thus, all contractors bidding on this project are required to make a good faith effort to achieve this 3% participation goal. Requirements for demonstrating that this good faith effort has been made are included in the Project Manual.
The state’s 14-day average test positivity rate sits at 11.6%, according to Dr. Mark Ghaly. That figure is down from the 12.7% positivity rate on Jan. 5.

It is also higher than the state’s average test positivity rate over the last seven days, 9.9%, which is also under 10% for the first time in several weeks.

“We are seeing some reductions in transmission,” Ghaly said Tuesday during a briefing on the pandemic.

That figure is down from the state’s wave of winter coronavirus cases and deaths may be beginning to crest, Ghaly said. State officials, including Gov. Gavin Newsom, have referred to the winter spike in cases as the “last wave” of the virus before vaccines become widely available to the public.

To date, roughly 3.2 million vaccine doses have been shipped to the state’s local health departments and health care systems, with roughly 1.5 million doses administered.

On Friday, counties across California administered the largest number of vaccine doses in one day to date — 110,505 — ultimately helping the state meet its goal of doubling out 1 million doses by Friday.

Delays in data reporting also mean the state’s total number of administered vaccine doses is likely even higher than 1.5 million, Ghaly said.

According to Ghaly, several local public health departments and private health care systems, including San Francisco, have also expressed concern that they will run out of vaccine doses soon as new shipments remain at a trickle.

State officials have remained optimistic that the incoming administration of President Joe Biden will dramatically increase vaccination shipments, subsequently allowing the state to increase the speed with which it vaccinates both vulnerable groups like people over age 65 and the public at large.

“The number one thing we want to make sure we do across the state is make sure we’re doing this safely, with speed and in an equitable way,” Ghaly said.

New school reopening guidance

Gov. Gavin Newsom released updated guidance on Jan. 14 for the safe reopening of schools across the state, including new restrictions and oversight for both public and private schools.

Notably, the new framework explicitly prohibits schools that have not yet been formally open — now defined by the state as a school that has been operational for at least one full grade level, including for hybrid learning — from reopening for in-person education.

Schools will now be required to report the status, scale and model of reopening every other week to the State Safe Schools Team, a group of health and educational experts tasked with overseeing implementation of in-person instruction. And “to ensure public transparency,” California plans to launch an interactive map detailing the reopening status and COVID-19 transmission rates reported by schools.

School staff and parents can also send in safety concerns about specific schools online at caschoolopening.powerappsofts.als.us/comments-and-concerns/ or via telephone to the State Safe Schools Team, which will monitor reports and “when appropriate” intervene with technical assistance or enforcement.

“The state is now requiring that all students on reopened campuses wear masks, regardless of age, and recommends disposable surgical masks for staff interacting frequently with others.

Newsom’s announcement cites the “best available science” that demonstrates “in-person instruction can be implemented safely, especially for elementary schools.” It also states that transmission rates are low at elementary schools, children with COVID-19 most often get the virus from an adult they live with rather than at school and that transmission among or from students is uncommon.

“Core mitigation strategies are necessary for safe and successful schooling. If those mitigation strategies are implemented as several layers of safety, elementary schools can be safe workplaces for teachers and other staff and safe learning environments for children,” the California Department of Public Health said.

More information is available on the state’s new online reopening hub at schools.covid19.ca.gov.

Curative tests may yield false negatives

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has issued an alert that Curative, a COVID-19 test provider operating widely in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, may return false negative results for asymptomatic individuals.

“The county is monitoring the situation and engaging with Curative as it works to resolve the FDA’s concerns,” according to a press statement from the San Mateo County’s emergency operations center. “Please take the FDA’s communication into consideration when choosing the appropriate testing vendor for you and your family.”

Access more information about testing in San Mateo County at smgov.org/testing. Details on COVID-19 testing in Santa Clara County is available at sccgov.org.

Comprehensive COVID-19 coverage


“Hearers and Bay City News Service contributed to this report.”

CRASH continued from page 5

Enright and another victim were taken to Stanford Hospital with injuries considered serious, but not life-threatening, he said.

Menlo School, a private school located in Atherton, noted that the Enright family has been a part of its school community for more than four decades.

“The entire Menlo community is deeply saddened by this tragic loss and our hearts go out to the entire Enright family,” according to the school.

Schapelhouman said the Sharon Hills Park area where the accident occurred is a “significantly steep section of road for this area that slightly winds about with some pedestrian traffic at times.”

The crash is still under investigation, but a witness alleges the vehicle was being driven at a high rate of speed, Acker said. It hasn’t been determined if drugs or alcohol were involved, she said.

Email Angela Swartz at aswartz@almanacnews.com.
242 Oak Grove Avenue, Atherton

Grand Atherton Estate on Over 1.3 Acres

Nestled in absolute privacy on over 1.3 sweeping acres, this grand, two-level estate of nearly 5,800 square feet offers ultimate luxury and a sought-after Atherton lifestyle. High-end appointments including detailed ceilings, intricate moldings, and oak floors wrap the home in elegance from the moment you step inside. A fireplace highlights the spectacular living room, the chef’s kitchen includes appliances from Wolf and Sub-Zero, and the family room features a fireplace all its own plus access to the grounds. Enjoy the convenience of 5 comfortable bedroom suites, including the master suite with a fireplace and private balcony, as well as a main-level bedroom suite ideal for office use or work from home in style. The grounds of the home offer incredible space for outdoor enjoyment, with a fireplace, kitchen, and pool, plus a lush, sizable lawn perfect for pick-up sports. Adding the finishing touch, this great location is just moments to downtown Menlo Park, and is close to top-ranked Menlo Park schools including Laurel Elementary and Menlo-Atherton High.

For virtual open houses & more photos, please visit:
www.242OakGrove.com
Offered at $9,988,000

Easy access for potential buyers and Realtors®

Listed by Michael Repka of the DeLeon Team, the #1 Team in Atherton

Data from BrokerMetrics® based on MLS sales from January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2020, in Atherton, residential properties, with no off-MLS sales included in the rankings.

Michael Repka, DRE #01854880 | 650.900.7000 | michael@deleonrealty.com
中文諮詢請聯繫Audrey Sun, DRE #01933274 電話: 650.785.5822 | www.deleonrealty.com | DeLeon Realty, Inc. | DRE #01903224
By Yvonne Boxerman

I’m interesting to drive along El Camino Real these days, say a stretch from Menlo Park to Sunnyvale. You’ll probably notice that traffic has picked up somewhat from those really quiet early days at the start of the pandemic. You’ll see a few pedestrians, some masked and others “bare” faced, walking along the sidewalk. You may observe a few trees, with the last of their beautiful red leaves just barely hanging on, as we head deeper into the winter months.

Your drive may be interrupted by those annoying construction trucks, causing lane closures and occasional bottlenecks, as they deliver their next round of concrete to another building site.

But what you may miss is this very odd incongruity: many large apartment, office and retail spaces in various stages of construction being built right next to shuttered businesses and emptying strip malls. On many blocks of this drive, one notices all sorts of stores, services and restaurants, now closed. Some are waiting for the go-ahead to reopen after months and months of little or no business. Others that somehow managed to stay open just couldn’t hang on for even one more month.

There are multiple signs advertising space available, for rent or lease along this route. You may even see these empty stores with the names removed, as you try to remember what was that business in that particular space.

So while city councils all up and down the Peninsula contemplate severe housing shortages in the decades ahead, we are also witnessing probably the largest exodus from the Bay Area in many years. I’m not suggesting we won’t need this housing eventually. I am merely pointing out the stark contrasts of today, as we find ourselves living during these very strange and difficult times.

As you continue your drive along El Camino, do you ever wonder what will become of these people who have lost their small business, or are just trying to stay afloat month to month, and the workers they employ? The restaurant that’s been there for several generations but that now can’t hang on anymore. The boutique owner, who finally has to let all of her staff go, as she can’t keep paying them from her ever-dwindling reserves.

And what happens to those former workers in that store, when their unemployment insurance runs out, if they could even get it in the first place given the dismal performance of the EDD? Maybe they have to drop out of college, if that retail or restaurant income was helping to keep them in school. For some, sadly, it may mean packing up and returning to Mom and Dad’s home in Kansas or Wisconsin where work, but in jobs requiring a great deal of human interaction, and those who live in crowded housing situations.

Unfortunately, we are still many months away from all of us getting protection with that life-saving vaccine.

But what, you might ask, can I do, as you look left and right at these sad and shuttered businesses?

“I donate money when I can to many worthwhile causes,” you rationalize.

We do know Americans are a generous people, and it is true that so many do continue to try to help alleviate the awful suffering of others.

But maybe there’s more each of us with the capability can do. In fact some of us might even find our financial reserves are in better shape than they were a year ago.

“Gone for now are the trips to Europe and Asia, the expensive dinners out with friends, the concert tickets, the trips to see family in other parts of the country. What if we took some of that saved money, along with the government stimulus check many of us could see soon, and donate it to worthwhile causes designed to help with rent, utilities and food relief?”

“Everyone who is in a position to give undoubtedly has a favorite charity or two. What if those of us with these extra resources made a concerted effort to give to those organizations that can make a difference in the lives of our neighbors who are so desperately in need?”

There are many nonprofits in our area doing truly excellent work in helping with relief. If you would like a suggestion, you might try going to umbrella organizations like the United Way (at uwba.org/covid19fund) that have a special COVID-19 relief fund.

While our journey today took us along El Camino, that thoroughfare does not have the monopoly on suffering by any means. In every town, the scene we see along this main road is repeated on small side streets, in downtown areas and in our own neighborhoods. With our collective will, coupled with the great deal of wealth that is found in this Peninsula region, there is no reason those of us with the resources can’t help alleviate the tremendous toll this pandemic has inflicted on so many.

Yvonne Boxerman is a longtime Palo Alto resident. She is retired from a career in HR and has recently had a collection of short stories published. She can be reached at yboxermanbook@gmail.com.

By Rusty Day

S

Tanford University is proposing to build 27 homes and three multi-family apartment buildings in Portola Valley at the mouth of a steep ravine along Alpine Road near Westridge Drive, both major evacuation routes.

As Woodside Fire Protection District Fire Marshal Don Bullard told The Almanac in February 2020: “The fire (district) doesn’t think that (Stanford’s proposed housing project) is the best use of that land.”

Incredibly, while Stanford promises to reduce vegetative fuels, it is simultaneously seeking to reduce the intensity and curtail the spread of fire.

The fire marshal has called for 100 feet of separation between Stanford’s proposed houses. Our ordinances impose minimum parcel sizes, setbacks and maximum square footage allowances that result in just such separation.

Stanford is asking the town to waive these important safety restrictions so it can reduce its costs by building much larger homes on much smaller parcels with far less separation between structures.

Stanford’s proposed parcels are 80% smaller than the minimum parcel size our ordinances require. Its 27 houses would each have 60% more square footage/parcel than our ordinances allow.

Combined, these homes not only destroy the defensible space around each structure, but also increase the amount of man-made fuels added to each parcel. Many fire experts consider building square footage a good proxy for estimating the amount of man-made fuels a building will add. By this measure, Stanford would add 270% more man-made fuels/acre of occupied land than our ordinances allow.

Further, Stanford proposes to ignore our municipal code’s minimum requirements for road easement, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and parking spaces. Worse still, the project straddles a geologic fault whose seismic activity has not been investigated and is situated on alluvial soils subject to liquefaction and ground shaking.

Town residents deserve answers.

In this “very dangerous place for fire,” will the reduction in parcel size and increase in man-made fuels and housing density increase fire hazards?

What lives, residences and essential infrastructure are in jeopardy if fire spreads from Stanford’s site?

The lives, safety and homes of hundreds of neighbors may depend on the answer.

(Editors’ note: The town’s Architectural & Site Control Commission is holding a virtual study session on the project Monday, Jan. 25, at 4 p.m. For more information, including how to participate, visit tinyurl.com/stanfordwedge.)

Rusty Day is a Portola Valley resident.
By John Orr

Close on the heels of the invasion of the U.S. Capitol by hundreds of racists and anti-Semites, what better time to stage a play about race relations?

A completely hilarious comedy about race relations, that is.

The Pear Theatre in Mountain View is offering a video-recorded version of Eric Coble’s satire/farce, “Fairfield,” which features desperately sincere people trying to cross the racial divide — and pratfalling in the process.

In the show, Miss Kaminsky, a brand-new and overeager young (white) teacher, has a very ambitious plan for teaching her first graders about Black History Month.

“Don’t you want to celebrate your own heritage?” she asks her principal, who is Black. “No,” says the principal.

“But, it’s such a gift! To all of us!” says the teacher.

“You know what part of the world my people came from, Miss Kaminsky?” the principal replies. “New Jersey. I feel no need to celebrate that.”

Her lesson plan somewhat pared down, Miss Kaminsky still gets her students to stop pouring milk on each other and putting crayons in their ears long enough for an ill-fated Black History Month role-playing game, during which a discouraged word is heard.

Tense parent meetings in the principal’s office ensue.

Coble’s plan is about “community and race and tolerance,” according to Jennifer Bradford, who plays one of the parents, said it’s also a look at how schools and parents can struggle with difficult conversations.

“But what their kids say, and how that reflects on them, and how they move through it.”

Campbell said he hasn’t previously “done subject matter so real, so heavy, so topical ... it’s difficult to get the importance of it while still making it hilarious.”

The Pear, like pretty much every other theater company, has been struggling with finding ways to reach audiences of devoted fans during the COVID-19 crises. A good cast was assembled for a recorded production of “Lysistrata” last autumn, but that video, in this critic’s experience, was a technical mess.

But Artistic Director Sinjin Jones said his plan is to try something different for every video production, and for “Fairfield,” the plan is certainly different, and certainly challenging.

The rehearsals, via Zoom, have been going well, according to Bradford, Campbell and Jones. The show is being directed by Jones and the esteemed Bay Area actor and educator Aldo Billingslea (longtime acquaintances Bradford and Campbell actually met years ago when in the theater program at Santa Clara University, where they were taught by Billingslea).

The performance itself will be where the true challenge happens: Each actor will go alone to a set in the theater, joined by other actors via Zoom. Ford acts in The Pear, accompanied by castmate Terrance Smith via Zoom; then Smith goes to the Pear to do the scene, with Bradford joining via Zoom.

It will be up to Jones, who has a background in filmmaking, to stitch together all the pieces into one coherent package.

“Maybe it be a logistical nightmare,” said Campbell. But, he added, “I am looking forward to seeing the end product, seeing how it works out.”

What’s tricky about it, of course, is that timing is one of the most important aspects of any comedy. But timing in a regular production is hard enough;

Jennifer Bradford performs in The Pear Theatre’s virtual production of “Fairfield.”

in this puzzle box of a play, it will be very difficult to achieve.

Jones said they’ve set the action “during COVID times, so most of the play works live to Zoom, gives it an interesting perspective.” Some scenes will be set as video calls, while the trickiest will involve two shots being put together with the actors pretending they’re next to each other.

This production process “still requires acting techniques,” Bradford said, but “it’s hard to build community in a virtual way.

“Normally, you can sit next to somebody (in a production) and get a feel for who they are. Bumping into the assistant stage manager to remind you of your entrance times. It’s important to bring that energy in rehearsal.”

“It’s like filmmaking, in a way.

“This technique is not completely foreign,” she said. “You can’t let it throw you. You don’t have the interruptions to the flow, the interactions with the audience. You have to imagine that you get interrupted but continue going (as in a live stage production).

But, “Sinjin and Aldo have done great work. It’s been great to rehearse with them,” said Campbell.

“Fairfield” is available Jan. 22 through Feb. 21. Tickets are $30-$34. More information is available at thepear.org/season-19.

Freelance writer John Orr can be emailed at johnorr@regardingarts.com
How a South Bay pizza shop successfully became a worker-owned cooperative

By Elena Kadvany

ast fall, when restaurants were working desperately to keep their doors open amid coronavirus restrictions, A Slice of New York pizza shops in Sunnyvale and San Jose voluntarily closed for an entire week to give employees a paid, mandatory break.

The decision came after one brutal Friday night shift — following six months of brutal shifts — during which co-owner Kirk Vartan watched employees physically and emotionally break down around him. The next day, he called a board meeting.

A Slice of New York is a worker cooperative, meaning the closure had to be approved by the employee-run board. Shutting down for a week would cost upwards of $25,000, not counting lost revenue, but would give the staff paid time off to rest and recharge. The board agreed.

“This is their profits, too. This is where people are taking time to think about the long term and that’s where I see people really understanding the weight of ownership,” Vartan said. “It’s not about today. It’s not about what you get. It’s how do you sustain and what does it take to sustain?”

A Slice of New York became a worker-owned cooperative in 2017, marking the birth of Silicon Valley’s first brick-and-mortar cooperative, Vartan said. There are several worker co-ops in the Bay Area — including the well-known Arizmendi bakeries, as well as landscaping and cleaning companies in the South Bay — but Vartan has become a co-op evangelist of sorts, sharing A Slice of New York’s story in Sunnyvale and San Jose.

They started meeting weekly on Sunday mornings, before their shifts at the pizza shop started. They talked to Arizmendi co-founder Tim Huet and attorneys from Democracy at Work Institute in Oakland, which supports worker cooperative development. They eventually joined Project Equity, an Oakland organization that supports companies that want to transition to employee ownership, and started the year-plus process of selling A Slice of New York to its employees.

Employees have a direct hand in evolving the business, from creating A Slice of New York’s first paid-time-off plan to a health care plan that allows money for doctor’s office checkups and massage therapy. In September, a Zoom meeting of the board’s culture and accountability committee included discussions about face shields, increased compensation for shift leads taking on added responsibility during the pandemic and legislative advocacy for workers cooperatives. After noticing weaknesses in the company’s training processes, that committee developed detailed onboarding quizzes for new employees.

“I think that’s where the power lies. You can challenge things,” said Rendell Boguiren, a founding member of the A Slice of New York cooperative who now serves on the board. “It allows for a democratic dialogue about processes, about where money should be going, how we should be functioning collectively.”

CONVENING THE COOPERATIVE

The pizza shop functions much like a self-contained city government. It has a board, like a city council, that’s elected annually by its members, has its own constitution (an operating agreement) and makes decisions on budget, governance and strategy.

The board meets monthly (now via Zoom) with subcommittees focused on topics like innovation, culture and accountability. Vartan, as the general manager, compares himself to a city manager. He makes the day-to-day decisions for the business but reports to and takes direction from the board, which has the power to fire him. If he needs to spend anything that costs more than 10% of the budget, he has to go to the board for approval.

A Slice of New York employees who opt into membership become part-owners with the right to the profits that they earned for the business, based on hours worked. To become a member, employees must have worked full time for at least 1,200 hours, commit to work there for two years and pay $3,000, like buying a share in the company.

Employees have a year to plan for an initial $750 deposit and can pay the rest of the money over two years. If they leave before their two-year commitment, their deposit stays with the company — an investment that’s meant to be affordable but would also sting to lose if they walk away, Vartan said.

A Slice of New York currently has 13 cooperative members, three of whom are board members, including Vartan. The final step to approval for new members is a 75% supermajority vote by all current members.

Starting employees make about $21 an hour ($16.50 plus profits from a surcharge added to each order) as well as tips, bonuses, holiday pay and paid time off. Many employees earn closer to $25 to $25 per hour. Vartan said, with salary, the surcharge and cash tips. (By comparison, Sunnyvale’s minimum wage is now $16.30 per hour and San Jose’s, $15.45.) Their hourly rate is also tied to the pizza shops’ success: As the shops make more revenue, the employees profit from the surcharge increases.

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Boiguiren started working at A Slice of New York in 2010, when he was a San Jose State University sophomore in need of a job. He had never worked in restaurants before; most of his work experience was in retail or unionized jobs at grocery stores.

Boiguiren, who later helped the pizza shop transition into a cooperative, said he’s never experienced a work culture like at A Slice of New York. He was given a business card and told to write his own title and any quote he wanted. He said he felt like the face of the company as much as Vartan and Lee, empowered to speak up about the business as both an employee and part-owner.

Decisions at A Slice of New York are made democratically. When the local shelter-in-place order took effect last spring, the company held an all-hands-on-deck meeting and asked its employees, both members and non-members: Should the 18% surcharge for both members and non-members: meeting and asked its employees, took effect last spring, the company that cares about you. It’s not about the bottom line. It’s about you and making sure you’re OK and that you can afford to live and make it a career.

IT’S ALL ABOUT YOUR PEOPLE
A Slice of New York’s response to the pandemic illustrates the radical benefits of a worker-owned cooperative. No employees have been laid off, though the pizza shops stopped hiring for six months, reduced operating hours and have had to close several times due to staffing shortages.

Employees who didn’t feel safe working received sick time, and those working were allowed to eat for free at the pizza shops. (And when one employee’s wife visited her family outside of the area, A Slice of New York split the cost of a hotel where she quarantined until she tested negative.)

Ownership took early, proactive steps to protect employees’ health. A Slice of New York shifted to takeout only on March 8, before the shelter-in-place order, and started limiting the number of people who could come inside the shops. Vartan also made a difficult — but in his eyes necessary — decision to stop selling pizza by the slice, which typically accounts for 40% of revenue.

When some new employees resigned in mid-March, unwilling to risk their health to serve pizza, Vartan talked to them about their concerns, which informed how to help the remaining employees feel more comfortable. He required everyone to wear masks before it was mandated by Santa Clara County and started checking employees’ temperatures. The pizza shop is also unusually transparent, posting detailed updates about COVID-19 precautions and internal business decisions on its website.

At A Slice of New York in Sunnyvale, only five customers are allowed inside at a time, and there are two doors designated for entry and exit to minimize contact. They’ve jury-rigged a contactless notification system for when orders are ready — a walkie-talkie fastened with Velcro to the front window — and added a touchless thermometer to check customers’ temperatures. They recently separated the Sunnyvale and San Jose employees into two pods to further prevent any potential exposure.

“The one thing I walked away from Cisco with ... is it’s all about your people. No matter how good your product is, if you don’t take care of your people it doesn’t matter,” Vartan said. “You take care of the people; the people take care of the business; the profits work themselves out.”

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Email Elena Kadvany at ekadvany@paweekly.com
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In addition to running the top listing team in Silicon Valley, Michael Repka is also the Chief Executive Officer and General Counsel of DeLeon Realty. Michael has two law degrees, including an advanced law degree in taxation (LL.M) from NYU School of Law, the #1 tax program in the nation. Prior to joining DeLeon Realty, Michael was a practicing real estate and estate-planning attorney. Michael also worked at PricewaterhouseCoopers, focusing on mergers and acquisitions, and later at Baker & McKenzie, specializing in tax law.

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