Infamous ‘Valpo Hill’ could face traffic restrictions
to improve safety following fatal crash

Menlo Park’s Valparaiso Hill is notoriously treacherous. Nicknamed Valpo Hill, the 0.2-mile stretch of curved road between Hallmark Circle at the top and Altshul Avenue at the bottom in the city’s Sharon Heights neighborhood is steep.

One very rough calculation put the hill at about a 14% grade — one reason it draws walkers seeking a cardio workout going up and skateboarders seeking a stomach-dropping thrill coming down.

The hill for years has been host to Menlo Park’s Skate Jam, where longboarders competed for, among other feats, “gnarliest spill.”

Most recently, however, the hill has became the site of a community tragedy. Portola Valley teen Michael Enright was driving an SUV that apparently hit a light pole on the street and rolled over near the bottom of the hill at Valparaiso and Altshul avenues on Saturday, Jan. 16. He died of his injuries the following Monday, and two other teens in the car were also injured.

The hill has a history of traffic accidents. According to traffic data history obtained from the Menlo Park Police Department, there have been a total of six vehicle collisions on the hill since 1999, including the tragedy in January. In four of the other reported incidents, no injuries were reported, and in one, no details were provided.

In the aftermath of the accident, some people have urged the City Council to do something to make the street safer, and the Menlo Park City Council has begun to discuss what actions during his previous tenure as chancellor.

Ron Galatolo, the San Mateo County Community College District’s contentious chancellor emeritus, has been fired from his post amid an investigation into his actions during his previous tenure as chancellor.

The district’s governing board voted to end Galatolo’s $467,700 annual contract during a closed session at its Feb. 6 retreat, said trustee John Pimentel in an email on Feb. 8. Not only did the board fire Galatolo, but Pimentel said it also voted to try to claw back what it paid the chancellor emeritus under his 2019 contract. As chancellor emeritus, Galatolo was the district’s highest paid employee.

Galatolo failed to complete any work over the 18 months he was under contract, trustees said in a Feb. 6 letter. He also “refused” to answer any of the board’s questions about his work for the district, they said.

Galatolo did not respond to The Almanac’s emailed requests for comment.

The board outlines some of the allegations against Galatolo while he served as chancellor in a Feb. 6 board packet:

■ The alleged use of public funds for retirement incentives, undisclosed personal relationships with vendors for the district, and undisclosed receipt of gifts from contractors who work for the district. These gifts appear to have included high-end travel, concert tickets and meals, and do not appear to have been reported on a Form 700 as required by law.

■ The nature and/or extent of Galatolo’s activities with vendors doing business with the district were not disclosed to the board.

■ The board asked Galatolo to provide it with any exculpatory information, according to its letter. Galatolo said that he should not be required to “incur the burden and expense of answering such allegations,” even though he was being fully compensated as an employee of the district at the time, trustees wrote.

“Please know that we are disappointed and saddened by this turn of events and your blatant refusal to even respond to the substance of our concerns,” board president Thomas Nuris wrote in the letter. “Our decision has not been lightly made. We are proceeding in what we believe is in the best interests of the college district and of the public that we serve.”

“Working in collaboration with my board colleagues, and the district’s administration, we initiated an investigation of the hundreds of thousands of documents and dozens of witness interviews that district staff have diligently and thoroughly produced for the San Mateo County District Attorney’s 18-month long criminal investigation into the former chancellor emeritus, which remains ongoing,” Pimentel said in a prepared statement.

The review turned up numerous material facts that were not provided to the board of trustees by Galatolo when he entered into the contract to be chancellor emeritus. “In light of these facts, and at a time when our hard-working students are struggling to pay SMCCCD tuition and fees to invest in their futures, the board found continued payments to the former chancellor emeritus to be unacceptable,” Pimentel said.

On Aug. 12, 2019, the district...
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Approximately 11,595 total square feet
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– Barn upstairs recreation areas: 1,830 sf
– Storage: 80 sf

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Disability rights groups decry California’s age-based vaccination plans

State eligibility requirements put younger residents with disabilities in the back of the line

By Kevin Forestieri

California’s announce-
ment last month that everyone age 65 and older could receive a vaccine came as a happy surprise to many, offering long-awaited safety for the elderly during a deadly pandemic. But the decision left other at-risk residents behind, leaving them feeling frustrated and invisible.

Mountain View resident Jenny Panighetti said her first response to the news was anger. Gov. Gavin Newsom’s change of plans essentially canned the previous vaccine phases, meaning younger residents with disabilities and underlying health conditions will likely be skipped over for months.

Jenny Panighetti of Mountain View is advocating for priority vaccine access for young people with health conditions or disabilities that put them at higher risk of dying from COVID-19.

Radio silence is coming

As police encryption of dispatch transmissions grow, questions remain about the public right to information — and alternatives that would not exclude news organizations

By Sue Dremann

Police departments throughout the Midpeninsula are following in the footsteps of the Palo Alto Police Department, which on Jan. 5 abruptly announced it would immediately encrypt its dispatch radio communications — a longtime source of information for residents and the news media — to protect certain private information from being transmitted publicly.

The Menlo Park, Atherton and Mountain View police departments all state that they plan to completely encrypt their communications, choosing the more stringent of two options for complying with a California Department of Justice policy that aims to protect information such as license plate numbers, names, street address es, phone numbers and other private information. The less stringent option is to encrypt only the private data, which is accessed through the California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS) and could be used for identity theft. Encrypting the information also gives privacy to victims of crime.

The Department of Justice requires encryption of “specific information” disseminated by the news media — to protect certain private information from being transmitted publicly.

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NOTICE INVITING BIDS

TOWN OF ATHERTON, CA

The Town of Atherton will accept bids for construction of the following public work:

2021 OVERLAY PROJECT

Removal and replacement of 2 inches of asphalt concrete pavement on Various Streets. Crack sealing and grind and replace approximately 10,000 square feet of asphalt to a 4-inch depth of pavement failures and placement of thermoplastic/paint striping. 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, March 3, 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 Bids must be for the entire work, and shall be submitted in sealed envelopes clearly marked: “Bid of (Contractor) for

Time on Avenue, Atherton, California 94027, until

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Vice President Sales and Marketing

Tom Zahrls (223-6570)

Display Advertising Sales

(223-6570)

Real Estate Manager

Neal Fine (223-4583)

Legal Advertising

Alicia Santillan (223-6578)

ADVERTISING SERVICES

Advertising Services Manager

Kevin Legarda (223-6597)

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Diane Martin (223-6584)

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OBTUARIES

Local residents who died recently include Joan Cherie Bohannon, 87, a Menlo Park resident and former real estate broker, on Jan. 13; Joan Talbot Moore, 91, a Woodside resident and co-owner of Talbot’s Toyland in San Mateo, which closed last year, on Jan. 25; Charlene Dowley, 87, a Menlo Park resident and medical assistant at the Palo Alto Medical Foundation, on Jan. 30; and Darla Marlene Tupper, 85, a longtime Menlo Park resident and former educator for the Menlo Park and Los Altos School districts, on Feb. 2.

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

CRIME BRIEF

Burglaries, break-in reported in Atherton

Burglars struck again in Atherton last week, including an attempted burglary that was thwarted by the home’s resident. On Feb. 4 at around 11:25 p.m., someone entered a house on the first block of Snowden Avenue through an unlocked front door, according to a Feb. 5 Atherton police bulletin. Once inside, the suspect removed his shoes, presumably to avoid making noise. The resident confronted the suspect, who immediately fled. Nothing was taken and no one was harmed, police said.

Police describe the suspect as a Hispanic male adult, about 30 years old with a mustache and wearing a light-colored hooded windbreaker jacket, black pants and black shoes.

In two separate incidents, thieves took bicycles from homes, according to Atherton police. Overnight on Feb. 1, someone entered an unsecured indoor pool structure on the unit block of Tuscaloosa Avenue and took four bicycles.

Sometime between 5 p.m. on Feb. 6 and 8:45 a.m. on Feb. 8, someone stole a bicycle from a shed in the 100 block of Selby Lane. The shed appeared to be unlocked when the bicycle was taken, police said. The bicycle was described as a green men’s anodized Santa Cruz Nomad mountain bicycle with grey lettering.

There have been 14 burglaries in town since Oct. 1. The Feb. 4 incident is one of two attempted burglaries during that time period.

Residents are encouraged to lock and secure all doors and windows when leaving their home for any length of time and to always set the security alarm.

Anyone with information is asked to call the Atherton Police Department at 650-688-6500.

—Angela Swartz

COMMUNITY BRIEF

Black History Month speakers series

Curieus, a nonprofit aimed at fostering interest in STEM among underserved elementary school kids in the Bay Area, is hosting a Black History Month speakers series on two Saturdays: Feb. 13 at 10 a.m. and Feb. 20 at 11 a.m. The series will include virtual webinars and Q&As featuring inspiring Black scientists and industry pioneers.

The first event will be a conversation with Dr. Odette Harris of Stanford University, America’s first Black female tenured professor of neurosurgery. The second event will be a conversation with Stanford University’s Kunle Olukotun, professor of electrical engineering and computer science and the “father of the multi-core processor.”

To learn more or RSVP go to curieus.org/events.

—Angela Swartz

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EPA councilman forms committee to push diversity in Sequoia high school district leadership

By Angela Swartz
Almanac Staff Writer

Easte Palo Alto Councilman Antonio Lopez has created an ad hoc committee to expose the history of racial inequality within Sequoia Union High School District leadership ranks, a direct result of the district’s unwillingness to recognize these issues or a committee on the topic, he said. The committee will be composed of local leaders, most of whom are people of color.

The committee will listen to community testimony regarding experiences at the school district, which includes teenagers from East Palo Alto, Woodside, Menlo Park and Atherton, along with other cities on the Midpeninsula, and make recommendations, according to a Feb. 4 press release from Lopez.

“The district has made it very clear that they do not see a problem with the current makeup of their leadership teams,” he said. “This is because it sends a clear message to the rest of the community that they are not welcomed. The district’s decision to not diversify their leadership teams is both legally and morally wrong, as qualified candidates of color are being clearly excluded.”

Besides Lopez, who was elected to the East Palo Alto council in late fall, the committee includes:

■ San Mateo County Supervisor David Canepa
■ NAACP Education Chair Maurice Goodman (also a trustee with the San Mateo County Community College District)
■ Ravenswood City School District board president Mele Latu
■ San Mateo County Board of Education member Hector Camacho
■ Menlo Park Mayor Cecilia Taylor

Early 30 district alumni, community members and parents signed a Jan. 14 letter to the Sequoia district governing board imploring it to listen to the needs of students and families by diversifying its leadership.

“For years, we have dealt with a whole host of issues that boil down to not having representation at the top,” the letter states. “We have seen assistance for students with special needs go unnoticed. We have experienced and/or witnessed (cyber) bullying that wasn’t effectively addressed. We had teachers who made microaggressions or explicitly racist remarks against us and were not held accountable for their actions. We have seen an alarming amount of police presence in our hallways and are worried about our safety.”

As the COVID-19 pandemic has only widened the gap between those with ready access to educational resources and students who may feel pressured to take an extra job to help their unemployed parents, the letter said.

Canepa recently wrote to Sequoia school board president Alan Sarver about diversity in leadership, urging the district to form an ad hoc subcommittee on the topic. He said in a Feb. 2 letter that there is “no justifiable reason why every single member of the district’s appointed leadership team is of one race.”

Although true that you cannot hire based on race, it is impossible to believe that you have not been able to find administrators of color to work within your leadership ranks,” he said. “The fact that you haven’t is representative of bigger issues within your district’s culture and hiring policies.”

Latu and Goodman also wrote letters in support of Lopez’s efforts to Sarver.

Lopez first called on the district to diversify its leadership — from administrators to principals and vice principals — last month in an email to Sarver, saying he has “grave concerns regarding the current relationship between the district and East Palo Alto.”

Sarver responded by saying

See DIVERSITY, page 16

Local clean power agencies join new group to invest in greener energy infrastructure

By Kate Bradshaw
Almanac Staff Writer

Clean energy agencies Peninsula Clean Energy and Silicon Valley Clean Energy announced Monday that they will join six other nonprofit agencies that buy clean energy on behalf of residents and form a new entity called California Community Power.

The nonprofits are community choice aggregators (CCA), which pool the entire purchasing demand of a county or area so that they can secure contracts for cleaner energy than is provided by the dominant utility, which in much of California is PG&E.

The aggregators give customers a choice to buy cleaner power since PG&E can have older contracts and electricity that comes from sources that are not as renewable or lower in carbon emissions than what CCAs often provide. Often, electricity purchased by CCAs is still distributed through the existing power grid belonging to PG&E or another dominant utility provider.

In San Mateo County, Peninsula Clean Energy is the CCA that by default offers customers cleaner energy than PG&E at a slight discount. Customers can either opt to purchase 100% renewable energy for slightly more than PG&E rates or opt out of the program and stick with PG&E.

“CCAs have helped local communities meet their climate goals by building new renewable resources and implementing programs that reduce emissions from transportation and buildings,” said state Sen. Josh Becker in a press statement. “It is encouraging to see CCAs come together to develop long duration storage, a crucial resource for achieving our 100% clean energy target.”

The new entity, California Community Power, will be a joint powers authority (JPA), which will allow the member agencies to buy new, cost-effective clean energy and resources to help make that energy more reliable, according to the statement.

By joining, these agencies expect to be able to better negotiate for larger contracts for renewable energy and storage and mitigate risks.

To start, the JPA is looking for applicants for an at least 10-year contract for long-duration energy storage.

“We are eager to expand and formalize our partnerships among CCAs to help our communities affordably meet their climate goals while maintaining reliability, as the state transitions to a decarbonized grid,” said Girish Balachandran, CEO of Silicon Valley Clean Energy, which serves much of Santa Clara County, including Moun-

tain View. The eight community choice aggregators that have joined the joint powers authority are Central Coast Community Energy, East Bay Community Energy, MCE, Peninsula Clean Energy, Redwood Coast Energy Authority, San Jose Clean Energy, Silicon Valley and Sonoma Clean Power. CleanPowerSF is also expected to join, according to a press statement.

“(These eight CCAs) are among the most ambitious in pursuing clean power, including our own drive toward 24/7 renewable power in the coming years,” said Peninsula Clean Energy CEO Ian Pepper. “That won’t be possible without reliable long-term energy storage, so it’s important we are concentrating our early effort toward making that a reality.”

Email Kate Bradshaw at kbradshaw@almanacnews.com

Menlo Park City Council: News racks, library tech, pensions and more

By Kate Bradshaw
Almanac Staff Writer

The Menlo Park City Council had a busy meeting Tuesday, ironing out details about news racks, which library information system to use, what to do about unfunded pension liabilities and a possible way to support grocery store workers facing health risks, low pay and no vaccine relief yet from the pandemic.

Permits for news racks

In a yearslong City Council debate over how to clean up the shabby appearance of some abandoned news racks in downtown Menlo Park, the Menlo Park City Council took action Tuesday, voting unanimously to start a permitting system that requires news publishers to register their news racks with the city, and to waive the initial permitting fees for at least the first two years of the program.

In a public comment, Bill Johnson, publisher of The Almanac and the Palo Alto Weekly, said while he agreed with the goals of the ordinance, the proposed permit system created burdens for both news publishers and city staff.

At the proposed permitting fee of $79 per news rack, it would cost the publisher more than $5,000 to secure permits for the 68 Almanac and Palo Alto Weekly newspaper boxes located throughout Menlo Park. He argued that, at an estimated processing time of two hours per permit, it would take about 136 staff hours to line up permits for just his company’s news racks.

“I really don’t like imposing fees on entities that are involved in something as constitutionally protected as free speech,” he told the council. “These entities are doing for our public,” said Councilman Ray Mueller.

He argued that implementing costly fees for struggling news organizations during a pandemic that prevent them from distributing their speech could possibly be litigated as prior restraint.

The council ultimately agreed to keep fees in place for noncompliance with the ordinance, setting fees to appeal a permit denial or protest the removal or impoundment of a news rack at $465 and the fee to impound for 90 days and dispose of the news rack of the full cost plus 25%.

See MENLO COUNCIL, page 10
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http://earlensevents.com/2M21IDj
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PRESENTED BY
Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital Stanford physician has been arrested for allegedly attempting to lure a girl to a location for sexual activity, according to the Redwood City Police Department.

Dr. Dylan O’Connor, 33, was arrested at 7 p.m. on Feb. 5 in the 1800 block of El Camino Real in Redwood City for allegedly sending harmful material to a juvenile and traveling to meet a minor for lewd purposes. Both are felonies.

Redwood City police received a tip from the San Jose Police Department’s Internet Crimes Against Children unit, which monitors the illegal exchange of electronic images and activity involving children. The tip involved a possible sex crime against a girl in Redwood City, police said.

Redwood City police’s Street Crimes Suppression Team conducted a lengthy investigation, which included monitoring electronic media communications and personal photographs of a pornographic nature allegedly sent by O’Connor. The investigation revealed that a man attempted to lure a girl to a specific location with the intent to engage in sexual activity. When he arrived at the arranged location, police arrested him without incident, according to a press release.

A search warrant was served at O’Connor’s residence after his arrest. Police seized electronic devices as part of the investigation and are seeking to identify additional victims, with assistance from the San Jose police Internet Crimes Against Children unit, Hillsborough Police Department Investigations Bureau and the San Mateo County District Attorney’s Office.

O’Connor is listed as a pediatri-c critical care physician and instructor, according to his Stanford profile, which has since been taken offline.

In an email statement, Stanford Health Care said: “Upon learning of Dr. O’Connor’s arrest, Stanford immediately placed him on unpaid administrative leave and relieved him of all duties. These are serious criminal charges, which we understand are still under investigation by law enforcement, so we are unable to comment further at this time.”

Redwood City police are asking for anyone with additional information that could aid the investigation or other victims who may have had a similar contact with O’Connor to contact Sgt. Nick Perna at 650-780-7672. Those who want to remain anonymous can provide information through Bay Area Crime Stoppers at 800-222-8477.

Email Sue Dremann at sdremann@paweekly.com

By Sue Dremann

Stanford pediatrician arrested for allegedly meeting a minor for sex

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In an email statement, Stanford Health Care said: “Upon learning of Dr. O’Connor’s arrest, Stanford immediately placed him on unpaid administrative leave and relieved him of all duties. These are serious criminal charges, which we understand are still under investigation by law enforcement, so we are unable to comment further at this time.”

Redwood City police are asking for anyone with additional information that could aid the investigation or other victims who may have had a similar contact with O’Connor to contact Sgt. Nick Perna at 650-780-7672. Those who want to remain anonymous can provide information through Bay Area Crime Stoppers at 800-222-8477.

Email Sue Dremann at sdremann@paweekly.com
New CEO of LifeMoves poised to take on leadership at organization’s ‘inflection point’

By Kate Bradshaw
Almanac Staff Writer

The Menlo Park-based nonprofit LifeMoves, which is the largest network providing services, shelter and resources to unhoused people on the Peninsula, announced local nonprofit leader Aubrey Merriman as its new CEO on Feb. 9.

Merriman, who lives in San Jose with his wife and three children, most recently worked as CEO of the Boys & Girls Clubs of North San Mateo County. Previously, he also worked as executive director for Camp Fire USA in Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties and Summer Search Silicon Valley, and spent 12 years with Special Olympics Northern California and Nevada where he became chief development officer.

After 25 years working in the nonprofit world, he said, he is excited to lead an organization that “comes to the real questions of our time” and "has an ethical clarity and a balance between being ambitious and humble.”

Merriman graduated from the Stanford Graduate School of Business’ Executive Program for Nonprofit Leaders and holds an undergraduate degree in psychology from Hawaii Pacific University and a master’s degree in social work from the University of Hawaii.

LifeMoves, formerly known as InnVision Shelter Network, has 24 shelter and service sites between Daly City and San Jose and provides shelter, food, services and clothing to up to 1,200 people each night.

The nonprofit’s former CEO, Bruce Ives, announced plans to retire last year, and since then, the organization has undergone an extensive search process to find its new leader, said LifeMoves board chair Joe Stockwell in an interview. The process involved forming a search committee led by community leaders and working with the search firm Oppenheim, according to a statement.

“As I step down, LifeMoves is in a very strong position for Aubrey to take it to new heights,” Ives said in a press statement. “From the moment I met Aubrey, I was impressed by his deep experience, significant accomplishments, and can-do attitude. His leadership style and warm personality are a great fit for LifeMoves culture.”

One major initiative for the nonprofit over the next year is to launch a new shelter in the works in Mountain View. Through a $12.4 million grant through the state’s Project Homekey program and a partnership with the city of Mountain View, LifeMoves plans to provide transitional housing for 12 families and 88 individuals, or a total of 124 people, by transforming a 1-acre property at 2566 Leghorn St. into a 100-unit modular housing complex.

The units, set to be roughly 80 to 100 square feet in size, will be prefabricated, and tenants will be provided with case management services focused on helping them find permanent housing. Construction is currently underway, and the project is expected to be completed in the spring.

While in the long run, Stillman said, “it’s housing that we need,” the transitional housing is a key to help people safely get back on their feet.

Merriman, who said he’s toured the construction site and was impressed, noted that LifeMoves’ model, pairing shelter with support services, has potential to be replicated in other communities.

In addition to the interim housing site in Mountain View, LifeMoves is also working on a number of initiatives aimed at tackling homelessness, including offering safe parking for households living in recreational vehicles in Redwood City and San Jose, Stillman said.

LifeMoves, Merriman said, is at an inflection point as an organization. Over the past five years, it has undergone a significant amount of growth as the need for homeless services continues. Merriman said he was eager to “grow, learn and lead in this organization and build people and systems to turn this inflection point into a launch pad.”

“Aubrey’s experience, his passion and his voice are in the right place at the right time for this agency,” Stillman added.

“The opportunity to lead this organization that’s been doing some incredible work, to amplify its community impact — that offer was deeply profound to me,” Merriman said. “That’s what brings me to LifeMoves.”

Kevin Forestieri contributed to this report. Email Kate Bradshaw at kbradshaw@almanacnews.com

Kensington Senior Living and HFC present

CareCon

A FREE, virtual event designed specifically for Alzheimer’s and dementia family caregivers to empower them with support, knowledge and community

Connecting Hearts through Caregiving
National Caregiver’s Day: Fri, Feb 19, 2021 • 6:00pm PST
Hosted by Lauren Miller Rogen of HFC

Join Kensington Place and HFC to celebrate YOU as a caregiver. Connect with others around the globe who are caring for loved ones with memory loss. Learn tools for resilience and best practices to help ease the stressors and guilt that often come with the caregiving experience. And, ask questions of experts to expand your caregiving knowledge about:

• Building Community & Taking Action • Finding Support • Employing Levity • Keeping Your Brain in Shape

Our promise at Kensington Place Redwood City is to love and care for your family as we do our own. And we do. We are skilled and prepared to address not only the predictable changes that come with each phase of memory loss, but also the emotional challenges that unfold for you and your family. Please let us share in your caregiving experience. We will make every effort to improve your loved one’s quality of life to the greatest extent possible. And, we will give you time to recharge without guilt so that you can freely enjoy the pleasure of togetherness with your loved one.

To register, go to the events tab at www.KensingtonPlaceRedwoodCity.com

HFC is a nonprofit, led by Seth Rogen and Lauren Miller Rogen, whose mission is to care for families impacted by Alzheimer’s disease, activate the next generation of Alzheimer’s advocates, and be a leader in brain health research and education.
Bicycle, Pedestrian & Traffic Safety Committee
Meetst first Wednesday of each month, 8:15 a.m.; appointed for a one-year term. The objectives of this committee are to foster a community for all users of the public roads. To advise the Town in ways and means for safer conditions regarding motor vehicles, bicyclists, pedestrians and road conditions. To encourage proper traffic enforcement. To encourage safe and enjoyable bicycling in Portola Valley as a means of transportation and recreation.

Cultural Arts Committee
Meets second Thursday of each month; appointed for a one-year term. Increase cultural awareness among residents of Portola Valley by sponsoring and supporting local cultural activities in the areas of art, music, science and nature, history, horticulture, drama, literature, photography and dance.

Emergency Preparedness Committee
Meets first Thursday of each month, 8:00 a.m.; appointed for a one-year term. This Committee works with Town Staff to ensure that neighborhoods and Town government are ready to respond to possible emergencies such as earthquakes, wildfires and flooding. Other duties include maintaining emergency supplies and equipment, planning response to emergencies and educating Town residents.

Finance Committee
Meets as announced; appointed for a one-year term. The committee objective is to develop, recommend and oversee the overall; financial policies of the Town. To review and comment and/or recommend approval of annual and five year budget plan as prepared by the Town Manger. To make recommendations to the Council regarding investments and other financial matters.

Historical Resources Committee
Meets as announced; appointed for a one-year term. To procure, organize, preserve, and make available for review and/or display archival materials likely to be of significant, general interest over a prolong period of time to residents of the Portola Valley region.

Nature and Science Committee
Meets 2nd Thursday of alternate even-numbered months, 5:00 p.m.; appointed for a one-year term. The objectives of this Committee are to increase appreciation for Portola Valley's natural environment by providing opportunities for residents and visitors to observe and study local natural history, encourage scientific dialog and promoting scientific literacy in the community and provide information to the community about science, technology and natural history.

Open Space Acquisition Advisory Committee
Meets as announced; appointed for a one-year term. This Committee supports preservation of the Town's rural environment by advising the Town Council on open space acquisitions and uses.

Parks and Recreation Committee
Meets first Monday of each month, 7:30 p.m.; appointed for a one-year term. This Committee meets to develop, promote and maintain quality recreational and community enrichment programs, recreational facilities and park areas in the Town of Portola Valley.

Public Works Committee
Meets as announced; appointed for a one-year term. The Portola Valley Public Works Committee acts as the liaison between the citizens of Portola Valley, Public Works Staff and members of the Town Council on the Towns need of public works nature.

Sustainability Committee
Meets third Monday of alternate months, 10:30 a.m.; appointed for a one-year term. The Sustainability Committee mission is to assist the Town of Portola Valley in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, developing comprehensive water conservation, energy efficiency, and waste reduction programs, and engaging and educating the residents of Portola Valley to meet the goals outlined in the Sustainability Element of the General Plan.

Trails and Paths Committee
Meets third Tuesday of each month, 8:15 a.m.; appointed for a one-year term. This Committee meets to provide a system of trails and paths that provide passageways for people, whether on foot, horseback or bicycle. It is their objective that these trails be safe, pleasant and provide access to all parts of town.

Ad-Hoc Wildfire Preparedness Committee
Meets as announced; appointed for a one-year term. Given the inherent risk of wildfire in Portola Valley and the changing character of wildfires due to climate change, the Ad Hoc Committee on Wildfire Preparedness shall advise the Town Council, on a limited duration basis, on ways to reduce wildfire danger, and increase resident resiliency in a wildfire emergency.

Please complete an online application for the Committee you wish to join. Additional Committee information and a link to the online application is available on the Town's website (www.portolavalley.net) under the Town Committees tab of the Homepage.

Sharon Hanlon, Town Clerk
Town of Portola Valley
765 Portola Road, Portola Valley, CA 94028
E-mail: shanlon@portolavalley.net
Phone: (650) 851-1700 ext. 210

DISABILITIES
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“...to matter. “Even though I’ve lived with this (disability) my whole life, I’ve never really felt like I was part of a disenfranchised group,” she said. “But lately I have absolutely felt it.”

The previous version of California’s vaccine plan had numerous phases, set to prioritize health care workers and residents of nursing homes. Soon to follow was Phase 1C, which included people age 16 to 49 who have an underlying health condition or disability that increases their risk of severe COVID-19. That phase has since been erased from the state’s vaccine plan webpage.

The state has collected and reported sparse data on how dangerous the virus can be for people with disabilities. One report suggests that, nationwide, people with developmental disorders under the age of 70 have a 5.3% mortality rate and are three times more likely to die from COVID-19. Intellectual disabilities and mobility impairments also put people at much higher risk.

A previous study out of England suggested that people with disabilities that significantly limited day-to-day activities were 2.6 times more likely to die from COVID-19. Leaders of the group Disability Rights California have blasted the state’s decision to deprioritize those with disabilities. At a Jan. 29 press conference, Executive Director Andrew Imparato said many disabled people are sheltering in place as best they can, but are often still at risk of getting the virus from a cast of people who provide their in-home care and support. Yet at the current rate, state health officials say it will be June before people under 65 will have access to the vaccine.

“That’s just unacceptable,” Imparato said. “Lots of people are going to die if that happens.”

Engracia Figueroa, an East Bay native and member of the group Disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (DAAA), said she’s been stuck in her home since March and feels like the pandemic has only further disabled her life. She had a scare around Christmas time when one of her caregivers tested positive for COVID-19, and is currently down to one caregiver.

Figueroa said she’s been stuck in her home since March and feels like the pandemic has only further disabled her life.

“When the governor’s administration changed it to get people over 65, there went the glimmer of hope of survival,” she said.

Advocacy groups see the decision by the Newsom administration as part of a larger pattern of bias and discrimination against people with disabilities, even in the field of health care. Dr. Alyssa Burgart, a member of the Stanford Center for Biomedical Ethics, said people with disabilities are “largely invisible” and confined to their homes, limiting their ability to be fully engaged in their lives as Californians.

The state should do everything it can to ensure each and every person with disabilities is quickly vaccinated, Burgart said, and eligibility guidelines shouldn’t be pitting high-risk groups against one another.

While California has robust data showing the correlation between age and COVID-19 mortality, the same is not true for those with disabilities, Burgart said. She believes the state has failed to collect that kind of data in a strategic way, which is used in turn as a reason not to include them in early phases of the vaccine rollout.

“If you don’t have the data that you need and then you punish that population because that data does not exist to the degree that you expected, that is just one more form of erasure of our disability community,” she said. Panighetti, who penned an open letter to the governor last week in The Almanac’s Viewpoint section, said she has taken on an advocacy role for the disability community since last year and worries about who will be skipped under age-based eligibility. Young adults in their 20s are stuck at home and rely on caregivers, and could very well wait until the fall to get their vaccine.

“If you go down the list, they’re going to be the last to get vaccinated,” she said. “Just as other people are so excited to get their vaccine, we’re getting delayed more and more even though we’re at higher risk.’

JENNY PANIGHETTI

Email Kevin Forestieri at kforestieri@mv-voice.com

NEWS

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Email Kevin Forestieri at kforestieri@mv-voice.com
Teacher vaccines in California determined by location, luck

State Sen. Josh Becker urges immediate inoculations for educators in San Mateo, Santa Clara counties

By Ricardo Cano/ CalMatters

How soon teachers can expect to get vaccinated depends largely on where they live and could determine whether the bulk of California’s students return to campuses this spring — or next fall.

Teacher vaccinations have emerged as a central point of contention in California’s charged debate over reopening schools as unions representing teachers and school employees have listed vaccine access as one of their demands before returning to campuses.

But, faced with a limited supply and dueling priority groups, many of California’s largest counties have not yet begun offering vaccines to teachers. And though some counties expect to begin vaccinating teachers within the next week or so, leaders in several others told CalMatters that limited supply makes it difficult to project when their educators could expect a dose.

Some counties don’t expect to offer vaccinations to teachers until mid to late March.


He said that the number of available doses and public school finances mean that both counties can manage to efficiently distribute vaccines.

San Mateo County, where there are about 5,000 teachers, is administering an average of 9,000 doses per week, and Santa Clara County has about 13,000 teachers and is administering an average of around 45,000 (first and second) doses a week, according to Becker’s office.

“This is doable,” he said in a press release. “Vaccinating teachers and beginning to safely reopen schools will be the most meaningful move yet to return to normalcy for everyone.”

Local educators have been waiting for news from the counties on when they’ll have access to vaccines. While many schools are already open and others continue to plan to partially resume in-person instruction or interaction. Teachers unions in the area have asked that all teachers be vaccinated before returning to their classrooms in person.

Becker suggested both counties designate an upcoming week to inoculate teachers.

“If we do that we still have the chance to save spring classes,” Mixed messaging and a decentralized approach have resulted in a chaotic vaccine rollout roughly two months after the first doses prioritized for frontline health workers arrived in California in mid-December.

At his Feb. 8 press conference, Gov. Gavin Newsom said during a press conference Feb. 9 that schools are unlikely to physically reopen this school year if vaccinations for every teacher are a prerequisite.

“When you’re receiving less than 600,000 first doses a week, and you start to do the math ... then we need to be honest with people, and let them know ... that it’s very unlikely that we’ll be able to accomplish that very realistic goal before the end of the school year because of the scarcity of supply in vaccinations,” he said.

Currently, many of the state’s largest counties are approaching or have begun distributing doses to those in the first tier of Phase 1B of the state’s vaccination priority list. That broad group encompasses 8.5 million Californians and includes teachers, farm workers and first responders as well as residents 65 and older.

Newsom acknowledged Feb. 8 that vaccine scarcity has hampered the ability of local public health departments to vaccinate teachers in large numbers. A recent plan by the governor to incentivize school districts to reopen campuses with extra per-pupil funding stalled after many school officials, unions and legislators said it was unworkable.

At the Feb. 8 press conference, Newsom said he hoped to announce a new school reopen deal with the Legislature “this week” that would include “a prioritization framework to get our teachers vaccinated.”

“The challenge is self-evident,” Newsom said. “In each and every county, they have different capacity issues, different demographics, different issues in terms of availability of the vaccine and the number of people that they have to prioritize within those tiers.”

Several public-health experts as well as the governor, who’s under intense public pressure to reopen K-12 public schools this spring, have said in-person learning can be done safely without vaccinating educators if paired with strict preventative measures such as masking, ventilation and cohorting students.

Newsom, who recently told school superintendents that requiring teacher vaccinations for reopening schools would effectively keep them closed this spring, has cited “low” numbers of transmission within reopened schools as evidence that in-person instruction has not resulted in higher community spread. In January, 87 cases were linked to schools, a figure Newsom said was lower compared to November and December despite the state’s surge in cases and deaths.

The state, however, has yet to publish any data on cases in schools to affirm figures cited by Newsom. It remains one of the few states that is not publicly tracking which schools are open and whether they’ve experienced outbreaks. Under new state guidance, the California Department of Public Health began collecting this information from schools Jan. 25; the agency said in a statement Feb. 5 that it will provide the information on its new school website “in the near future.”

In many of California’s largest counties, the approach of the end of the school year has heightened the stakes in the complicated race to vaccinate educators. Most of the state’s public schools end the academic term in late May and early June, and full inoculation requires the administration of two vaccine doses spaced a month apart.

As of Feb. 5, Santa Clara County was not vaccinating educators, and health and education leaders could not offer a timeline for when it would, primarily because of limited vaccine supply, they said. San Mateo County remains in Phase 1A and is prioritizing “those eligible at greatest risk of death.” Other large counties such as San Diego, San Joaquin and Kern are not yet vaccinating educators, citing vaccine scarcity.

CalMatters is a Sacramento-based nonprofit, nonprofit journalism venture that works with more than 130 media partners throughout the state, including The Almanac.
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February 12, 2021  The Almanac  15
Joan Talbot Moore
October 30, 1929 – January 25, 2021

Joan Talbot Moore of Woodside, CA passed away on January 25, 2021 after a long illness.

Joan and her husband Gordon were long-time owners of Talbot’s Toyland in San Mateo. Talbot’s Toyland, which closed in 2020, was known and loved throughout the Peninsula by generations of families.

She was born in Sacramento, CA on October 30, 1929. She attended C. K. McClatchy Senior High School in Sacramento and graduated in 1946. Joan attended UC Berkeley where she was a member of Chi Omega Sorority. She met her future husband Gordon at Cal and they were married on May 22, 1948 in Carmel, CA.

In 1953 Talbot’s Toyland opened in San Mateo. Joan’s parents, Wilburn “Lank” and Betty Talbot, founded the store, later assisted by Joan and Gordon. Over the years Talbot’s grew from a small corner shop to a premier destination toy, hobby and bicycle shop for the San Francisco Bay Area.

Enjoying the outdoors, fishing and travel were important to Joan and Gordon and were later reflected in their home in the woods where they enjoyed forests, wildlife and views of the Bay as well as “forest gardening” which required use of their tractor, wood chippers and multiple chainsaws.

As avid skiers, golfers and fishers Joan and Gordon traveled the West, Canada and Alaska. They also toured much of Europe by foot with their European Walking Tours group, a collection of friends from UC Berkeley who spent many summers together.

Joan was an active member of the Peninsula Quilters Guild of San Mateo County for many years. She won many awards for her quilts at the annual Guild shows and the San Mateo County Fair.

Joan was preceded in death by her husband in 2015. She is survived by her sons Stephen T. (Shirley) Moore and Gary E. (Terri) Moore, four grandchildren and nine great grandchildren.

Joan was known for her quick wit and wonderful sense of humor. She loved time with family – her door was always open, welcoming her announced visits from her children and grandchildren.

To place an ad or get a quote, contact Kevin Legarda at 650.223.6597 or email digitalads@paweekly.com.

Joan Cherie Bohannon
November 17, 1933 – January 15, 2021

Joan Cherie McFarland Bohannon, 87, of Menlo Park, California passed away January 15, 2021, at Stanford Hospital. Joan was born November 17, 1933, in Santa Clara County, CA, to Hiram and Rosalie McFarland. Joan grew up in Redwood City, California and was a lifelong resident of San Mateo County. She graduated from Sequoia High School and attended San Jose State University. In 1959, Joan moved to Menlo Park with her husband, David E. Bohannon.

Joan raised three children (David, Lisa and Scott) and later, as the children entered their teens, began a long and successful career as a real estate broker. Joan retired from real estate in the early 90’s not long after becoming a grandparent. Her true passion in life was being a devoted mother to her three children, six grandchildren, and in 2020, the arrival of two great grandchildren.

Joan survived by her sister Barbara McFarland, brother Steve McFarland, children David (YuiQin Wen), Lisa, and Scott (Mary) Bohannon, grandchildren Abigail (Ian Dunckel) Dunckel, Macallan (Ryan Johnson) Johnson, Sarah Bohannon (Jason Lowenthal), Christine Bohannon, Kevin Bohannon, Ryan Bohannon, great grandchildren Carson Dunckel and Rosalie Johnson.

Joan was known for her quick wit and wonderful sense of humor. She loved time with family – her door was always open, welcoming her announced visits from her children and grandchildren.

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Alternatives for access

For news organizations, the loss of access to police radio transmissions is thorny. The FBI and the California Department of Justice (DOJ) maintain that media members are not authorized to receive information that is obtained from the California criminal telecommunications system. Atherton’s Chief McCulley said a person receiving CLETS information must have “a right to know” the information and “a need to know” of the information under DOJ and FBI mandates.

“I understand from the media standpoint it’s kind of like radio silence,” Sunnyvale Capt. Hank Syu said.

Some police departments throughout the country offer a way for credentialed media to listen in on radio transmissions: decryption licenses. A license with the Denver Police Department in Colorado allows the media to utilize a decryption “key,” which gains limited access to specific police channels and transmissions. While the decryption is offered at no cost, the media organizations must purchase specific radio traffic have liability, worker’s compensation, commercial general liability, media professional liability and cyber liability insurance policies, according to a copy of the licensing agreement.

They can be prohibitively expensive, and the terms of use can be burdensome, said Mailyn Fidler, a legal fellow for the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press.

Public Notices

995 Fictitious Name Statement

Registered owner(s): VAHAM ANTONYAN
1250 Arguello Apt 7
San Mateo City, CA 94406

This business is conducted by: An Individual

The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on N/A.

This statement was filed with the County Clerk Recorder of San Mateo County on January 12, 2021.
ALM Jan 26, 2021

965 Fictitious Name Statement

Registered owner(s): JOE YOUNG
1885 East Bayshore Rd. #42
East Palo Alto, CA 94303

This business is conducted by: An Individual

The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on N/A.

This statement was filed with the County Clerk Recorder of San Mateo County on January 12, 2021.
ALM Jan 26, 2021

COIN BROKER

958 Fictitious Name Statement File No. 286344

This business is conducted by: An Individual

The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on N/A.

This statement was filed with the County Clerk Recorder of San Mateo County on January 12, 2021.
ALM Jan 26, 2021

HUMBLE HELP STUDIO

965 Fictitious Name Statement File No. 286326

This business is conducted by: An Individual

The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on May 1980.

This statement was filed with the County Clerk Recorder of San Mateo County on January 13, 2021.
ALM Jan 26, 2021

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Is police information ripe for abuse?

While the FBI and California Department of Justice (DOJ) say private information might fall into the wrong hands when the public and the press listen to radio transmissions on scanners, there have been hundreds of instances of police abuses of the system by law enforcement staff themselves, according to the San Francisco-based Electronic Frontier Foundation, an international nonprofit organization advocating for privacy and accountability regarding technology and the law. The foundation has researched abuses of the system by law enforcement employees for the past five years.

The foundation has pressed for transparency over police abuses of the California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS) system. In 2017 alone, they found 143 cases of privacy abuses, according to the foundation’s reports. The abuses included using the CLETS information to stalk ex-partners, gain advantage in custody proceedings and to screen potential online dates. In one of the worst incidents, a Los Angeles police officer allegedly attempted to leak records on witnesses to the family of a convicted murderer, the foundation noted.

Electronic Frontier Foundation pushed the state DOJ to better track the abuses. In 2018, it asked the DOJ to require law enforcement agencies to report 100% of abuses. Failure to comply could result in sanctions and removal from using the CLETS service, according to a foundation report.

Interest in protecting private information grew beyond identity theft concerns and police use for private matters, however. In 2019, the Trump administration was pushing for law enforcement agencies to divulge information about detained individuals and their immigration status to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). There were concerns that ICE was or would be violating SB 54, the 2017 California Values Act, which prevents state and local law enforcement organizations from using their resources to aid federal immigration enforcement agencies.

Aaron Mackey, staff attorney for the Electronic Frontier Foundation, said the pendulum has now swung the other way, with regulation meant to protect access by officers as a pretext to cut off public access to police communications.

One of the fundamental purposes of access to the dispatch transmissions is so the public has knowledge of information about their communities. It’s why the press access is so important, he said.

"I'm not aware of any case where (the press) was listening with the purpose of obtaining personal information and misusing it," he said.

— Sue Dremann

Encryption continued from page 17


Feldman said those fees and the cost of specified equipment can amount to thousands of dollars, effectively cutting out small news organizations.

But abuses of radio transmissions in 2018 in Riverside County, California, led to a legislative attempt to continue access by the news media.

The state Assemblyman Todd Gloria introduced a 2019 bill, AB 1555, that would have required any law enforcement agency to provide access to the encrypted communications to “a duly authorized representative of any news service, newspaper, or radio or television network, upon request.” AB 1555 went through revisions in the assembly before it advanced before Gloria withdrew it due to its failure to make it to a vote under legislative deadlines.

Nick Serrano, Gloria’s communications director, told the Desert Sun newspaper of Palm Springs the department described how his department provides media access to its computer aided dispatch (CAD) system, which offers call information in real time. The press page is different from the one the police see in that Hutchinson can control what information goes out. He regulates traffic stop information, for example, because he doesn’t want to release information about the location of unmarked patrol vehicles. But violent crimes, thefts and other incidents that affect the community are listed.

A map with icons and a log show the time, location, type of crime, incident number and if the call is active. The public has access to a separate police log later, after the incidents have closed.

The system cost less than $2,000 to create and about $1,000 to add on to the current CAD program, he said.

Julie Makinen, executive editor at The Desert Sun, said she applauds the Palm Springs Police Department for trying to come up with a solution. But “the fact is, it’s not the same as listening to the scanner,” she said.

One can always listen to the scanner in the background while working or listen on a portable scanner while driving, she said. The CAD-access website needs to be continually refreshed and it only offers one line of information out of a long stream of scanner traffic. The information doesn’t tell news staff whether an incident that starts off as innocuous has escalated into something worse, she added.

“A domestic violence incident that turns into a police-involved shooting doesn’t show up on a page with only one line,” she said.

Local news media are conduits on behalf of a community, especially if there’s a school shooting or other emergency incident.

“I think it’s critical for public safety,” she said of media access to the transmissions. “The media is a partner, informing the public and directing people away from the site,” she said.

The encryption “is a solution to a problem that doesn’t exist,” Makinen said.

Email Sue Dremann at sdremann@payweekly.com.

Almanac Staff Writers Kate Bradshaw and Angela Swartz and Mountain View Voice Staff Writer Kevin Foresters contributed to this story.

Investigation continued from page 1

announced that Galatolo would leave his chancellor post to become chancellor emeritus and work on a feasibility study to bring a California State University campus to the Peninsula. The total compensation over the full term of the contract was $1,247,200, according to district spokesman Richard Riera.

Last summer, the DA’s office issued search warrants in connection with Galatolo’s tenure as the district’s chancellor, but there is no set time to conclude the investigation of the case yet, said District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe. Galatolo has been on paid administrative leave since the DA announced the investigation.

There were allegations against Galatolo of improprieties with construction and purchasing contracts and of harassment of an employee, Wagstaffe said. The warrants and affidavits have been sealed by court order, he said.

“We continue to conduct dozens of interviews and review records obtained by way of search warrant,” Wagstaffe said in an email. “We are as well working constantly with the law firm representing all the district employees and board members to be able to set up interviews.”

The contract for Galatolo’s new position was set to expire on March 31, 2022, and was now in effect. A 2019 separation agreement between Galatolo and the district, obtained by the Palo Alto Daily Post through the California Public Records Act, said the two parties would craft a “mutually acceptable joint press release.” It also states that district officials would stick to “talking points” when discussing Galatolo’s departure.

The agreement prevents the district from suing Galatolo for anything he might have done as chancellor.

District officials said in a statement that it is important to avoid speculation or jumping to conclusions, and to allow the DA’s office to conclude the investigation.

Mike Claire, College of San Mateo’s president, is serving as acting chancellor.

Galatolo first joined the district as executive vice chancellor in 1999, serving 11 years as controller for the Foothill-De Anza Community College District, according to his Redwood City Chamber of Commerce profile.

Email Angela Swartz at aswartz@almanacnews.com

The San Mateo County Community College District’s highest paid employee, Ron Galatolo, was fired by the board from his two-year contract as chancellor emeritus. The district operates community colleges including Cañada College in Redwood City.
Everyone plays a role in protecting school communities during pandemic

Midpeninsula superintendents urge caution during upcoming breaks

We believe a commitment to systemic racism, these people are more likely to be Black, Indigenous, Pacific Islander and Latinx. The impacts of distance learning affect families differently, largely correlated to income levels. When making decisions for our school districts, we have all had to consider the health and well-being of all our families and staff and the influences of the larger community spread. Our teachers are doing their best to engage with students and make progress toward learning goals. Delivering a high-quality education over Zoom, whether all or part of the time, is hard and we commend our teachers for rising to the challenge. We also acknowledge the burden placed on families and are grateful for the adaptations they make to support their students.

What is also clear as we navigate this pandemic within our school districts is that it takes the whole community doing its part to protect our students, families and staff and allow any amount of in-person instruction to happen on our campuses. There are many guidelines that schools must follow including wearing face masks, physical distancing, staff and student testing, contact tracing, hygiene, and limiting gatherings. Implementing this at school is expensive and time consuming. It takes diligence, cooperation, and a complete reimagining of the education experience; our administrations, school boards, and labor unions have been dependable partners in getting us to where we are.

Regardless of your connection to public schools, you can help us do it much more fully and keep schools open by following these five important health guidelines, especially in light of possibly more transmissible strains:

1. Don’t travel beyond the Bay Area and if you do, please quarantine 10 days when you return.
2. Don’t gather inside with anyone not in your household.
3. Limit outdoor gatherings to three households.
4. Wear a well-fitting mask whenever outside the home.
5. Get your vaccine when it is available.

Predictably, following school breaks in November and December we saw more COVID cases within our school communities. February mid-winter breaks are next week and we fear a similar surge, followed quickly by spring breaks. Teachers and staff working in person take risks for themselves and their own families, especially since educators in San Mateo County still do not have access to the vaccine. Families sending their students to school in person and diligently adhering to no-travel and limited-gathering guidelines prioritize their students’ education over the temptation of things like TikTok and indoor celebrations.

What is most frustrating to a superintendent right now are the folks that flaunt guidelines and then potentially expose our staff and other students to COVID. If we could ask one thing of all families, it is that if you have the privilege of sending your students to school in person, please please please do not travel or gather indoors on your own time.

Over the past year perhaps no segment of society has struggled, adapted and succeeded more than our public education. Expectations of our schools are huge while funding and clear direction remain elusive. Even as we lead our districts to meet our individual community’s needs, we see collective challenges that those within and without education should address. That communities of color have borne the heaviest burden during COVID — in terms of morbidity and mortality, economic loss, access to testing and health care, availability of in-person schooling, and infrastructure to support remote learning — is also a reality we cannot ignore. And our country’s attitude toward public education must evolve. Other countries have prioritized their schools by doing — and funding — whatever is necessary so that schools could stay safely open. When this pandemic ends (and at some point it will) if we learn anything, your superintendents fervently hope it is that a robust, equitable, and well-funded public school system is a foundational asset in which we should all invest.

Written by superintendents Erik Burmeister, Menlo Park City School District; Steven Frank, Woodside School District; Beth Polito, Las Lomitas Elementary School District; Gina Sudaria, Ravenswood City School District; and Roberta Zarea, Portola Valley School District.

Viewpoint
IDEAS, THOUGHTS AND OPINIONS ABOUT LOCAL ISSUES

Prioritizing the safe reopening of schools

By Sequoia district parents

Dear Sequoia Union High School District Board of Trustees, Interim Superintendent Crystal Leach, and Sequoia District Teachers Association president Edith Salvatore:

As parent leaders, we ask the district to prioritize the safe reopening of campuses during the remainder of the 2020-21 school year, for purposes of in-person pupil reengagement and instruction.

We are deeply concerned about the negative impact of distance learning on children. We would like to offer our help — in any way we can — to enable the safe and swift return of students and teachers to campus for in-person instruction.

We believe a commitment to returning to in-person, on-campus learning with direct instruction begins with a detailed, submitted and widely communicated plan. We understand reopening can’t happen until local and state health orders allow. While high-level proposals have been circulated, they lack specificity, which raises questions about their suitability and true readiness. We understand there are concerns and constraints such as the current capacity of available properly ventilated rooms; however, rather than posing these constraints as obstacles, a thorough examination of how to operationalize reopening, given the known constraints, should be part of the plan.

In addition, we understand all stakeholders will need, in the short term, to be creative and flexible about solutions.

We know not every family or teacher can return in person and a distance learning option must remain for those who are medically fragile or quarantining from COVID-19.

Per the district’s own Dec. 9, 2020, survey results, 43% of 3,770 SUHSD respondents would like their children to attend as much in-person school as possible when the county moves into the red tier — which is expected to happen very soon. Fifty-seven percent would like their children on campus should the county hit the orange tier. And more than three-quarters — 76% — want them back if we move into yellow.

It is clear the majority of families in SUHSD will want in-person instruction soon. As some proposed legislation and discussions state, schools need to be ready to offer on-campus learning within two weeks of local or state public health orders allowing school campuses to be open. We are at — or close to — that trigger.

Convincing data shows that in-person instruction is safe with universal masking, social distancing, screening measures and regular testing. We can look to Menlo Park City School District for an example of how labor representatives have worked cooperatively and collaboratively with the district to allow for in-person instruction. We are grateful for how hard teachers and staff have worked to deliver distance learning; their efforts are appreciated and recognized. But now it is time to get back to in-person instruction — the way we know students are best able to succeed, as every child deserves a chance to reach his or her own potential.

While we applaud efforts to bring extracurricular cohorts and activities back to campus, such efforts are not enough — and they do not replace nor preclude the importance of getting children back at school for in-person, on-campus direct instruction.

We have studied California’s Safe Schools for All Plan and we expect a detailed SUHSD plan for a return to in-person instruction; we stand ready to help and support with its implementation and dissemination, or any other way you see fit.

Parent leaders from across Sequoia Union High School District: Tricia Barr, Jacqui Cebrian, Sarah Eisner, Becky and Aaron Cordero, Tish and Ivan Costantini, Julia and Christian Fox, Cortney and Tommy Hyland, Tina Liu, Andrea Luskin, Linda McGeever, Jeff and Jennifer Moon, Taylor Perkins, Matt and Sonia Presotto, Sarah Ravella, Danielle and John Ryan, and Julie and Rick Thall. Learn more about the group at reopensuhsd.com.

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Artscene

Bonsai bonanza

Filoli’s biggest-ever show of its smallest-ever trees

By Sonia Myers

Filoli is going small this month.

The grand estate known for its huge gardens, immense house and large holiday festivities is taking a scaled-down approach for its latest exhibit — a collection of bonsai trees. These diminutive plants span a variety of different species, including juniper, camellia.

Filoli has opened up its entire collection of bonsai trees for the first time, including a 400-year-old black pine.

Bonsai is the Japanese art form of cultivating trees to a micro scale. When properly cared for in specific containers, a bonsai tree is essentially a miniature replica of a species that would grow much larger when rooted in the ground. Filoli’s collection, on display until Feb. 28, serves as a vivid case study in the many forms of bonsai trees for the first time, including juniper and camellia.

These diminutive plants span a variety of bonsai trees for the first time, including juniper and camellia.

The exhibit — a collection of bonsai trees. A selection of trees featured in Filoli’s current bonsai exhibit are on display with abundant fruit is part of Filoli’s bonsai collection. A yuzu tree with abundant fruit is part of Filoli’s bonsai collection.

FIloli has remained open during the pandemic, though in a more limited capacity.

“We have been fortunate to be able to remain open and available to our Bay Area community,” said Susan O’Sullivan, Filoli’s chief external relations officer, “as a place for outdoor recreation and to have a much-needed respite in nature.”

The current regulations, O’Sullivan said, “have brought us back to the core of our mission, to connect our rich history with a vibrant future through beauty, nature and shared stories. We’ve been reminded that we have a unique role to be a place of escape and solace.”

When planning a trip to Filoli, it is strongly recommended to purchase tickets online in advance, as daily admittance is limited during the pandemic. More information is available at filoli.org.

There are many bonsai clubs throughout California. A list of clubs, and information on the care and cultivation of bonsai trees, can be found at gsfbonsai.org.

A version of this article was originally published Feb. 4 on TheSixFifty.com, a sister publication of The Almanac, covering what to eat, see and do in Silicon Valley.
By Elena Kadvany

During shelter-in-place last April, Shane Cheng casually created a Facebook group for friends and family to share updates on local restaurants’ offerings and hours. It was partly out of self-interest — in the early throes of the pandemic, it was hard to figure out which of his favorite spots were still open and when, particularly mom-and-pop eateries with little to no online presence — but it quickly became something much more. One member created a Google map of Bay Area restaurants open for takeout. More people started joining, including restaurant owners, completely through word of mouth, and sharing what they were eating. A grassroots, altruistic food community was born.

Bay Area Eats now has 17,500 members who respond within minutes to posts asking for dining recommendations, from their favorite “last-meal-on-earth bowl of noodle soup” in the Bay Area to the best pizza to restaurants serving Lunar New Year and Valentine’s Day specials. Whether you’re on the hunt for a crepe cake, stinky tofu or fried chicken, the avid food lovers of Bay Area Eats have the answer.

The overarching rule is “give more than you take.” Influencers that might be trying to promote themselves more than the restaurant they’re posting about or startups looking for clients must themselves more than the restaurant they’re posting about. Members by and large follow the group rules (don’t do “anything that would get you put in timeout if you were in kindergarten,” and no spam, unless it’s served with rice) and quickly flag any problematic posts, which the moderators discuss and then vote on whether to delete.

“People know when they log onto this group ... that what they’re going to see is actual people actually eating,” Peter Huang, a Mountain View resident and one of the page’s moderators, said during a live Q&A the group hosted last Friday. “It’s not paid placements. We just try to keep it as organic and natural as possible.”

“Every order matters.”

Cheng, a food lover and Millbrae real estate agent, never thought Bay Area Eats would get this big. He eventually asked a friend, Huang and another super-active member to become moderators, but the respectful and positive group mostly makes their job easy. Members by large follow the group rules (don’t do “anything that would get you put in timeout if you were in kindergarten,” and no spam, unless it’s served with rice) and quickly flag any problematic posts, which the moderators discuss and then vote on whether to delete.

The page reads like a love letter to local restaurants, illustrated with photos of members’ recent meals — an enormous calzone oozing cheese, a gorgeous box of masu ikura don, saucy Singaporean chili lobster, boba and popcorn chicken purchased inside a gas station — and short blurbs about the eateries to help give them exposure. Members live all over the Bay Area, so the group’s geographic coverage is unusually comprehensive.

“People know when they log onto this group ... that what they’re going to see is actual people actually eating,” Peter Huang, a Mountain View resident and one of the page’s moderators, said during a live Q&A the group hosted last Friday. “It’s not paid placements. We just try to keep it as organic and natural as possible.”

Ken Ko is one of Bay Area Eats’ most frequent posters. For him, local restaurants are the “bread and butter of any community,” places to learn about other cultures and meet people. “Some businesses are truly under-represented, undervalued, and under-appreciated, so this forum and those who are like-minded help showcase the need to keep our local restaurants going,” Ko said. “We all end up learning from each other in one form or another, as well as immediately get a pulse on what’s going on out there in the restaurant world.”

Standout meals he discovered through Bay Area Eats include Taqueria San Bruno and ube desserts from Hula Hoops, a tiki bar in South San Francisco. Cheng, for his part, still thinks about the fresh sashimi he picked up from Suruki Supermarket in San Mateo after seeing another member post about it. “It’s a great community,” Cheng said. “We have a lot of local restaurants. I just don’t know them in person.”

Local restaurant owners say the group has brought them increased business during a time when every order matters. “You’re really giving exposure to these places,” Yuka Irori, who owns Cassava in San Francisco, said during the Q&A. “Some of these are older Asian restaurants that might not have any digital presence. ... the next thing they know, all of a sudden they might have a line outside. You can’t put any words to a feeling like that.”

Last fall, Huang found Dim Sum King in Sunnyvale, which was donating meals to people who had been displaced by the wildfires burning in the Santa Cruz Mountains. He’s since become a regular. “I will always go back to them now whenever I want dim sum,” he said. “It’s these cool little threads that bind us all together. It’s the best power that food brings for all of us.”

Find Bay Area Eats on facebook.com by searching its name. 

Email Elena Kadvany at ekadvany@paweekly.com

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Otsumami from Ranzan in Redwood City, including wagyu steak, free-range chicken karaage with amazu, sweet egg omelet, ikura, blue shrimp and an assortment of vegetables.

Curry udon soup from Kemuri Japanese Baru in Redwood City.

The steak burrito from Taqueria San Bruno, shared on Bay Area Eats.

Photo courtesy Bay Area Eats.
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NEW CONSTRUCTION
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