Local soccer club hangs on despite COVID-19 setbacks

Worries over paying coaches subside as competitions resume, PPP loan comes through

By Angela Swartz

With sports competitions on hold because of the pandemic, club teams like the local Alpine Strikers worried they might not be able to survive.

If matches were fully canceled for the season, the league wouldn't be able to compensate its coaches. The team, a competitive youth soccer club for ages 8 to 18 in Atherton, Menlo Park, Portola Valley and Woodside, needed competitions to resume so they could continue to pay coaches, said Lisa Dunlevie of Menlo Park, an Alpine Strikers board member.

Competitive play resumed last weekend (the teams are in the NorCal Premier and Central Coast leagues). The Alpine Strikers’ 17 coaches, seven staff members and 550 players among 38 teams began in-person practices in the fall. They held workouts over Zoom prior to that, said Dunlevie.

“We said, ‘What can we pay coaches to maintain salaries without putting an additional burden on the families?’” she said. “They’re obviously not getting the same product. … We’re in good shape for now.”

She said the group adhered to all the guidelines, with socially distanced practices, and players and coaches in masks.

“We followed every guideline, unlike some clubs we saw, which was a little disheartening,” she said. “We were afraid we would lose kids to those clubs because they were breaking the rules (and competing).”

Dunlevie said there is no organization she knows of for reporting soccer clubs that are flouting the state’s COVID-19 rules. She also declined to name local clubs that are not adhering to the guidelines.

“You just have to roll your eyes and hope for the best,” she said.

Dunlevie said the Alpine Strikers have been able to maintain the coaches’ base salaries because of a Paycheck Protection Program loan. During competition season, they sometimes receive overtime over the past year because of the lack of play, she said.

“These poor kids have essentially not played high-level soccer since November or December (2019),” she said, prior to the start of competitions last weekend.

She said that if competitions hadn’t resumed, or if counties shut the fields back down, members of her organization would be worried.

“We financially would be OK for now, but we can’t ask our parents to keep paying for limited practices, especially when other clubs don’t follow all the rules,” she said.

Coach Ben Simon watches Mathew Ruiz, a member of the Alpine Strikers 2006 red team, prepare to kick the ball during practice at Rossotti Field in Portola Valley on March 22.

Bay Area COVID-19 vaccine hunters are here to help

Grassroots effort offers aid in the frustrating search for vaccination appointments

By Kevin Forestieri

Faced with endless frustration and fruitless searches for COVID-19 vaccine appointments, Bay Area residents have launched a grassroots effort to help one another sign up for the vaccine and get immunized — all without having to camp out in front of a computer all day.

The Facebook group Bay Area Vaccine Hunters has been a hub for residents in search of the COVID-19 vaccine, who trade tips, workarounds and other tools to get an appointment when they become available. Leaders of the Facebook group say vaccine providers have made it difficult to get the shot, and that it falls to the community to help one another.

One member of the group is Mukesh Aggarwal, who said his story is all too common. His father is older and has conditions that put him at high risk of getting severely ill and dying from COVID-19, but getting him an appointment was an exhausting chore. Each provider has its own website that must be checked periodically throughout the day for available appointments, and some are designed to make people sign up only to later reveal no vaccines were available.

“Most of them are set up in a way where you have to enter all your personal information over two or three pages, and after that they tell you whether there is an appointment or not,” Aggarwal said. “All of that work is completely wasted if there isn’t.”

Aggarwal joined the Bay Area Vaccine Hunters, and has since developed his own workaround: a program that automatically checks more than 100 vaccine sites across the Bay Area, scraping data once per hour to ping people when appointments are available. It’s done through an app called Telegram, and searches everything from private pharmacies like Rite Aid and Walgreens to public vaccination sites like the Moscone Center in San Francisco.

As of Monday, there were 3,000 people using the program and 200 more joining each day.

It’s unreasonable to expect people to sit hunched in front

See VACCINE HUNTERS, page 11
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M-A principal leaving for new role at district office
Simone Rick-Kennel will head up small school innovation and alternative education programs

By Angela Swartz
Almanac Staff Writer

This school year will be Simone Rick-Kennel’s last as principal of Menlo-Atherton High School. Rick-Kennel will assume the role of executive director of small school innovation and alternative education for the Sequoia Union High School District starting July 1, officials said Monday, March 22.

Rick-Kennel joined M-A in 2002 as a special education teacher and became the Atherton school’s principal in 2015. Rick-Kennel said in a March 22 email to M-A families that it is “bittersweet” to leave, but the decision came after “much thought and consideration” during a time her family needs her.

"In many ways, transitions are a part of life and while this one will be a significant one for me and the school, I know M-A is a great school and in a great place to continue doing remarkable things for students with highly individualized needs and administrative staff that I could not be more proud of; and a parent community that is incredibly supportive," she told families. "M-A embodies our collective community and will continue to be amazing, focused on our vision and mission to celebrate and make strength in diversity a reality for every student."

The district said in a March 22 press release that Rick-Kennel "brings a wealth of leadership and academic experience that will allow the district the opportunity to utilize her knowledge to carry out the district’s goal of supporting and promoting successful student outcomes at the district’s small schools and alternative programs."

"I feel fortunate to have an executive of the caliber of Simone Rick-Kennel be willing to accept such a crucial position for the district," said Interim Superintendent Crystal Leach in a statement. "Although I know she will be missed at M-A, I am equally certain that she has laid a solid foundation that will allow for M-A to continue succeeding well into the future."

In her new role, Rick-Kennel will be responsible for overseeing the district’s three small schools (TIDE Academy, Redwood High School, and East Palo Alto Academy). One of the key areas she will be responsible for is serving as co-principal of TIDE Academy "to strengthen and further TIDE’s philosophical underpinnings of preparing students for college and career success, provide students with individualized attention in a small environment, and to ensure deep learning through a personal approach," according to the district.

The small schools innovation director role was last held by Shamar Edwards, who also served as TIDE Academy’s principal and resigned from the district in 2019.

Time as principal
She previously served as the school’s dean of students, followed by vice principal, then spent a semester as co-principal with Matthew Zito (the previous M-A principal) before becoming principal.

Rick-Kennel said in the email to families that during her six-year tenure as principal, the school has had its highest
Parents petition for high schools to reopen fully this fall

By Angela Swartz
Almanac Staff Writer

Advocates for reopening Sequoia Union High School District (SUHSD) classrooms are looking beyond this spring, when students will be on campuses part time, to the fall, when they want to see classrooms fully reopen.

The group Reopen SUHSD, a coalition of parents, students and teachers that held a rally in February asking district officials to resume in-person learning once San Mateo County entered the “red tier,” started a petition two weeks ago to give students the option to return to campus five full days a week for in-person, on-campus instruction beginning the first day of fall semester on Aug. 11. The petition had 759 signatures as of March 24.

“This April, our district is taking a first step, but it must be a step in a journey that leads us back to full reopening as soon as we can, not a new hybrid or asynchronous normal,” the petition states. “Given the significant learning loss from the past year, it is critical the instructional hours are returned, at a minimum, to the pre-COVID level of 360 synchronous instructional minutes per day. ... We cannot begin to imagine the ways another semester — or even a year — in distance or significantly reduced in-person learning would dig even deeper holes for our students.”

Students are set to return to classrooms on April 5 so long as the county stays out of the most restrictive purple tier (San Mateo County recently entered the orange tier). A third of the district’s more than 9,300 students opted to go back to campuses, according to the district.

Fall reopening

The petition writers are seeking to ensure that in the new school year, students will be guaranteed more instruction than the daily 240 instructional minutes that have been offered this school year. They reference that in spring 2020, the district didn’t promise any live in-person instruction.

Tricia Barr, a Menlo Park resident who has two children at Menlo-Atherton High School, helped start the petition because she believes it’s critical the district start planning now for a full fall reopening.

“This year of at-home learning with greatly reduced instructional minutes and asynchronous instruction needs to be an anomaly, not set a new baseline for how our district educates our high school population,” she said in an email.

Barr said she and other parents have heard from administrators that for the fall, they can’t plan for classrooms being filled beyond 50% capacity, and that they’re “strongly considering” asynchronous learning because it’s “been popular with students and teachers.”

“Neither of these concepts take science or the best interest of our students into consideration,” she said.

See PETITION, page 7

Woodside resident scares off mountain lion attacking her dog

By Angela Swartz
Almanac Staff Writer

A mountain lion reportedly attacked a dog in Woodside on March 17 around 9:45 p.m., according to the San Mateo County Sheriff’s Office. Contrary to initial information released by the county, the dog was expected to survive.

A resident who lives near Raymundo and Marva Oaks heard a commotion and drove onto her lawn, honking at the mountain lion to scare it off, said Rosemary Blankswade, the Sheriff’s Office public information officer, in a video.

“The dog was taken to a veterinarian and is expected to make a full recovery from the injuries, she said.

The mountain lion had to climb a 6-foot deer fence to get onto the property, the owner told the Sheriff’s Office. Deputies couldn’t find the mountain lion, according to a press release.

The Sheriff’s Office notified the California Department of Fish and Wildlife warden of the suspected attack. Deputies said they would conduct additional passing checks of the area.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife last estimated in 1996 that there were between 4,000 and 6,000 mountain lions in the state. In 2014, the department began to update that estimate and anticipates completing the effort within a few years.

Mountain lion attacks on people are rare. There have only been 18 verified incidents since 1986, according to the state.

“Statistically speaking, a person is 1,000 times more likely to be struck by lightning than attacked by a mountain lion,” according to the Fish and Wildlife Department.

The Sheriff’s Office said it believes this was an isolated incident.

A mountain lion attacking a dog in Woodside last week was scared off by the dog’s owner, according to the San Mateo County Sheriff’s Office.

If you see a mountain lion in or near your neighborhood, use caution and call the Sheriff’s Office to report the sighting at 650-363-4911. Tips for making your property safer and for what to do in an encounter with a mountain lion are available at wildlife.ca.gov.
Menlo Park City Council briefs

By Kate Bradshaw
Almanac Staff Writer

Council denounces anti-AAPI violence and stigmatization

In response to increased acts of violence, racism and stigmatization of Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, the Menlo Park City Council passed a resolution denouncing such acts at its March 23 meeting.

The resolution came just days after eight people were killed at three different spas in Georgia, six of whom were Asian American, in an act of racism and xenophobia on March 16, the resolution stated.

In Menlo Park, about 15% of the population identifies as Asian or Pacific Islander, and some community members have reported being victims of stigmatization or called racial slurs.

“The city of Menlo Park stands united against hate and supports its AAPI neighbors,” the resolution stated.

In a public comment, Wayne Lee, a Millbrae councilman and president of the San Mateo County Asian Pacific Islanders Caucus, shared his experience of being one of a few minority students at his middle school when he was beaten up by a white student, saying it was frustrating when nobody apologized, checked up on him, or offered help afterwards. “Silence is complicity,” he said.

People looking to take action can start by getting educated about other cultures in the U.S., and advocating in their communities, getting out of their comfort zones and getting comfortable with different and new perspectives, he said.

Some commissioners to face new disclosure rules

Following a discussion by the Menlo Park City Council March 23, commissioners with the city’s Housing and Complete Streets commissions will soon be asked to publicly disclose the property they own in the city as part of revisions to the city’s conflict of interest code.

Initially, it was proposed that commissioners for these advisory groups be mandated to fill out the same form 700 that elected officials complete, which asks detailed questions about a person’s personal and family finances, including income, stock holdings, gifts and properties. Planning commissioners are already required to complete these forms.

Complete Streets Commissioner Katie Behroozi said that she objected to being mandated to complete a form 700 because the transparency requirement didn’t seem to match her level of authority as a commissioner on an advisory body. All the commission really has the power to do is remove up to five parking spaces near an intersection, she said.

“I think it’s kind of mean to have this sneaky thing on a consent calendar,” she added. “It feels a little bit like harassment.”

In contrast, housing commissioner Karen Grove said she favored housing commissioners being required to report what property they own because, for instance, if a commissioner is a landlord, he or she might have a certain perspective when it comes to policies the commission considers related to tenant protections.

Some council members recalled their own discomfort with completing the forms, especially because they ask spouses to disclose their financial information as well, and wondered if it might deter some people from volunteering to serve on the affected commissions.

“I can appreciate that it could be a shock, especially when there’s no history of those commissions being required to disclose,” said Mayor Drew Combs, while adding that, “from a good governance point of view, I don’t have an objection.”

As a compromise, the council voted unanimously to require commissioners to disclose just the property within city limits they own, which is already a public record. Current commissioners will be given a couple of months to comply with the requirement, and applicants to open commission seats will also be alerted about it.

Councilman Ray Mueller added that the requirement was “not that big of an imposition” and would be done to “create public trust.”

City hires consultant firm for housing element

M-Group, a consulting firm, was selected to lead the process for updating several components of Menlo Park’s general plan. The general plan is like the city’s constitution, and certain pieces of it, such as its housing and safety elements, need to be updated regularly and a new environmental justice element created. The new housing element is due to the state’s Housing and Community Development Department by January 2023.

On March 23, the council voted unanimously to authorize City Manager Starla Jerome-Robinson to negotiate with M-Group on a contract not to exceed $982,000 for these services, including community outreach, an environmental impact report and a fiscal impact analysis.

The council is set to meet tentatively on April 27 to iron out the project’s framework and establish an advisory committee. There will also be a countywide meeting on housing set for April 8. People may register at letstalk-housing.org/events.

Email Kate Bradshaw at kbradshaw@almanacnews.com

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CORRECTIONS

The story “Seven months later, M-A freshmen meet on campus for first time,” published in the March 19 issue, incorrectly stated 9,300 students attend Menlo-Atherton High School. There are approximately 9,300 students in the Sequoia Union High School District, which includes M-A.

In the same issue, a photo caption for the story “Nova Jimenez, professional singer, delivers the healing gift of music through sidewalk serenades” incorrectly identified the location of her March 3 performance for health care workers. It was in Menlo Park, not Palo Alto.

PETITION continued from page 6

During a March 10 district governing board meeting, Interim Superintendent Crystal Leach said regulations and guidance on how to reopen in the fall are expected to be released in a week or two by the county Office of Education.

For a “100% return” in the fall — meaning all district students would be in classrooms at the same time, the social distancing requirement would have to be far less than 6 feet, dependent upon the size of some of the classrooms and the number of students in the district, she noted.

“This is not a district choice,” she said. “We are governed by the social distancing requirements that come from the county.” Mask wearing is expected to be mandatory in classrooms through December, she noted.

Leach has been hosting virtual office hours. Her next office hours are scheduled for April 7 in Spanish and April 8 in English.

If the district is not allowed to open at 100%, it will continue to evaluate the best learning model for its students, district

spokeswoman Ana Maria Pulido said in a March 18 email.

Although fall planning will be contingent on the county’s health and safety requirements, SUHSD is working to open in the fall as close to 100% in-person instruction as possible, Pulido said.

The CDC announced March 19 that it had reduced the distance needed between students in classrooms to 3 feet instead of 6 feet. The potential change comes after a study published in “Clinical Infectious Diseases” suggests that 3 feet may be as safe as 6 feet if everyone wears a mask.

Currently, 6 feet of distance is still required in county classrooms. As the state completes its distancing updates, the county health department is aiming to quickly align its local guidance with CDC and state guidance, according to a March 19 county Office of Education press release. The state adopted the 3 feet distance change last weekend.

Until a change is finalized, schools will continue to follow the 6 feet distance requirement. After the CDC’s announcement, state Sen. Josh Becker, D-Menlo Park, called on San Mateo and Santa Clara County officials to align with the new CDC guidelines, saying that he would like districts to have the flexibility needed to safely get students back in classrooms.

Email Angela Swartz at aswartz@almanacnews.com
Remodeling plan for Portola Valley fire station worries neighbors

By Angela Swartz
Almanac Staff Writer

A proposed remodel of Portola Valley’s fire station that includes a zoning code change for its site has some residents concerned that more public buildings could be added to the site in the future.

During a March 17 Planning Commission meeting, Woodside Fire Protection District Chief Rob Lindner said the fire department has outgrown its current facilities and is in “desperate need” of a remodel. But town planning staff say since the station, which is located on a 46,970-square-foot lot just slightly north of the intersection of Portola and Alpine roads, is zoned for residential use, the town code would need to be updated first.

Station 8, which is located at 135 Portola Road, is considered a legal nonconforming use, which limits updates or additions that otherwise would be considered typical, according to a report prepared by staff for the meeting.

Resident Rita Comes Whitney wrote to the commission in a March 17 email that she supports the changes to the fire station, but she said changing the zoning creates “a broad and non-specific array of indeterminate potential uses…”

“The clear and obvious need to permit a pre-existing fire station, staffed 24 hours/day, to qualify for a conditional use permit in a residential neighborhood does not demonstrate the need for or propriety of changing our zoning ordinance to allow any use that can be categorized as a ‘public building’ to be permitted in a residential neighborhood,” she said. “Do we really need or want to authorize a ‘public’ authority to purchase any residence in any residential neighborhood and then convert that residence to some future ‘public’ use? … What exactly is the reason to create an exemption that is much, much broader than the present application and the demonstrated need?”

Commissioner Jon Goulden said the fire station is intended to be in its present location for a long time and that there’s “clearly been a heightened sense of fire danger” in the last few years, so fulfilling the district’s needs is important.

“The town has grown over time and our infrastructure has grown with it,” he said. “It’s in line to say, ‘You know we’re building something for the future.’ We don’t want to try to limit it now. Let’s do the right thing so they’re not back here in five years asking for something more.”

Town staff will look into the option of modifying the code narrowly to allow for building related to a fire station, but not other uses (a public building is defined as a facility that provides a public service to residents, such as a fire or police station, library, health care center, community center or recreation facility.)

Fire station zoning history

The fire station property is zoned to “permit a pre-existing fire station, but not any other uses” (a public building is defined as a facility that provides a public service to residents, such as a fire or police station, library, health care center, community center or recreation facility.)

The rezoning of the property created a discrepancy with the existing use. Staff doesn’t know why the fire station would have been deliberately made nonconforming. It is possible that the current regulatory constraint is an unintended consequence of the past code amendments.

Lindner outlined the district’s need for additional sleeping quarters (some staff working 48-hour shifts are currently forced to sleep in makeshift beds in the exercise room), a reception area, and more parking spaces.

He acknowledged neighbors’ concerns about possible future expansion.

See FIRE STATION, page 14
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How the pandemic has fueled Silicon Valley’s economic divide

INFORMATION COMPILED BY LINDA TAAFFE
DESIGN BY KEVIN LEGNON

A year into the pandemic, Silicon Valley has experienced historic losses and unprecedented gains as the virus has disproportionately impacted the region’s lowest earners. Unemployment among the region’s lowest earners reached nearly double the rate of the highest earners. And while the in-person jobs sector shrank, the tech industry experienced a banner year. Families facing housing insecurity reached an all-time high, while a hot real estate market outpaced pre-pandemic numbers. To show how the pandemic has accelerated the region’s economic divide, The Almanac has woven together data based on Joint Venture Silicon Valley’s State of the Valley report into a by-the-numbers graphic.

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( Household Pulse & Community Resilience Estimates, 2021)

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(February – December 2020)

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—Russell Hancock, president & CEO, Joint Venture Silicon Valley

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Silicon Valley & San Francisco

See next page for data sources.
Coronavirus central: Santa Clara County moves to orange tier

By Embarcadero Media staff

San Mateo County as of Tuesday had 39,935 cumulative cases of COVID-19, with 544 deaths. There were 15 people hospitalized, Santa Clara County as of Tuesday had 113,700 cumulative COVID-19 cases and 1,912 deaths. There were 120 people hospitalized, 13 of which were new.

Santa Clara County moves into orange tier for reopening

Santa Clara County moved into the state’s orange tier of COVID-19 restrictions Tuesday, allowing the county to expand indoor capacities for some businesses and reopen bars outdoors.

In the Bay Area, San Francisco and Marin counties were also cleared to enter the orange tier on Tuesday. They join San Mateo County as the only counties in the region to proceed into the orange tier since the state’s stay-at-home order was lifted in January.

“Advancement to the Orange Tier reflects the patience and persistence of the whole community in Santa Clara County. To continue to prevent cases and resultant hospitalizations and deaths, we must continue to wear masks, social distance, stay outdoors as much as possible, and get vaccinated when it’s our turn,” Santa Clara County Health Officer Dr. Sara Cody said in a statement Tuesday. “We are close to a significant increase in vaccine supplies, but until those doses are in arms, we must protect each other against another surge.”

The tier change from red to orange allows each county to increase indoor capacity from 25% to 50% for sectors such as places of worship, movie theaters and restaurants. Gyms and fitness centers will be allowed to raise capacity from 10% to 25%.

Orange is the most restrictive tier, in which bars can operate under any circumstance. A move to the yellow tier allows a county to resume indoor operations at bars at 25% capacity or 100 people, whichever is fewer, according to the California Department of Public Health.

In addition, business sectors like family entertainment centers, card rooms, offices and wineries will be allowed to resume indoor operations after being limited to opening outdoors or being closed altogether in the red and purple tiers.

On April 1, counties in the orange tier can allow 33% capacity crowds at outdoor professional sporting events and 25% capacity or 500 people, whichever is fewer, at amusement parks.

Guests at outdoor arenas must be state residents while amusement park guests must live in the same county as the venue.

Details on which businesses can operate in the orange tier and at what capacity can be found at covid19.ca.gov/safer-economy.

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Listed by Audrey Sun of the DeLeon Team, the #1 Team in Menlo Park
Data from BrokerMetrics® based on MLS sales from January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2020, in Menlo Park, residential properties, with no off-MLS sales included in the rankings.

2.5% Commission Paid to Buyer’s Agent • Waived if DeLeon Buyer’s Agent
For more information contact: Audrey Sun, DRE #01933274 電話：650-785-3822 我們精通國語和粵語
Managing Broker: Michael Repka, DRE #01854880 | www.deleonrealty.com | DeLeon Realty, Inc. | DRE #01903224
extensive environmental impact analyses.

The draft analysis found that the proposal would not generate any environmental impacts that were considered to be “significant and unavoidable” beyond what the city already permitted in its 2016 effort, called “ConnectMenlo,” to rezone the area.

As part of that zoning policy, since the developer is planning to build a denser, bigger project than what would otherwise be allowed in the area, it has to provide a “community amenity,” or some kind of benefit to the community. Greystar is proposing to provide a contribution valued at between $5.3 million and $8.6 million for a child care center and financial support for subsidized enrollment for Belle Haven families.

The center would be run by All Five, a Belle Haven-based nonprofit early childhood education program, and would serve between 20 and 24 children ages 3 to 5. Up to 75% of the program would be subsidized for Belle Haven families on a sliding scale based on income, while 25% of the spots would be for children whose families would pay the full price of tuition. Priority for staffing positions would go to Belle Haven residents.

The facility would offer 1,600 square feet of indoor space and 2,190 square feet of outdoor space as a play area.

In reviewing the proposal Monday night, March 22, planning commissioners asked some questions about the child care offering. Commissioner Chris DeCary asked if the developer had considered other locations.

Yes, they had considered looking for other locations closer to Belle Haven for the facility, but didn’t find anything that would be more affordable, developer Andrew Morcos of Greystar said.

“Think we asked for a child care facility and they’re giving us one. They should be commended for that. It’s not easy,” said Commissioner Michael Doran.

The proposal still has to go before the Housing Commission, back to the Planning Commission, and then the City Council before it can be formally approved, according to Morcos.

Email Kate Bradshaw at kbradshaw@almanacnews.com

PROJECT TIMELINE

Project plans next go to the Architectural & Site Control Commission for a recommendation on the architectural and site development permits. The project will then return to the Planning Commission for a public hearing on the environmental review. The project appears to qualify for a categorical exemption under the California Environmental Quality Act, though staff is still evaluating that.

The Planning Commission will make a recommendation to the Town Council, which will have final say on the project.

The staff report from the March 17 meeting can be viewed at tinyurl.com/pr-firestation.

Email Angela Swartz at aswartz@alamanacnews.com

CRIME BRIEF

Atherton police warn of increase in catalytic converter thefts

There have been two recent thefts of catalytic converters from casual park at residences in Atherton, police reported Monday, March 22. Thefts of catalytic converters are on the rise in the area and across the country, police said in a news bulletin.

Someone reported one stolen from James Avenue last weekend, according to the town’s crime blotter.

Stricter car emissions rules worldwide have increased demand for the precious metals in catalytic converters, leading to an increase in black market sales of the parts, police said. Some of the precious metals used in the device, such as palladium and rhodium, are at record high prices. (Rhodium hit nearly $30,000 per ounce five years ago, according to Trading Economics, a website that collects official records of commodity prices.)

Catalytic converters can be sawed off from the belly of a car in minutes. They can be sold for several hundred dollars at a scrapyard, which then sells the converters to recyclers who extract the metals, police said.

Residents should keep their cars in a garage or behind a gate, if possible, or in a well-lit area, to help deter thieves, police said. Residents can also install catalytic converter metal anti-theft guards.

It can cost up to $2,000 to replace a catalytic converter, and it is illegal to drive a car without one, according to Allstate Insurance.

Some states now require scrapyards and other recyclers to check the photo IDs of those selling catalytic converters, police said. California requires businesses to take a photograph or video of the seller and retain that record for two years. But rules differ between states, which makes tracking and enforcement almost impossible, according to police.

—Angela Swartz

Elvis the pig up for adoption

An stray male pig found in Woodside is available for adoption at the Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA (PHS/SPCA).

A good Samaritan reported that the adult pig, dubbed Elvis, was wandering her property in Woodside and called PHS/SPCA. The shelter’s rescue staff captured him and brought him to its shelter on Feb. 25.

“As an open admission shelter, we accept all kinds of animals, including pigs,” said Buffy Martin Tarbox, the PHS/SPCA communications manager, in a press release. “This is the fourth pig in the last three years that we’ve had available for adoption at our shelter. We are committed to finding him a loving home where he will be kept as a pet, not a source of food.”

No one came forward to claim Elvis, so PHS/SPCA made him available for adoption on Feb. 28. Elvis is the fourth pig in the last three years that we’ve had available for adoption at our shelter. We are committed to finding him a loving home where he will be kept as a pet, not a source of food.”

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People interested in meeting Elvis can call PHS/SPCA at 650-340-7022. His adoption fee is $100.

WEBINAR ON ANIMAL WELFARE DURING DISASTERS

Learn from the experts about managing creatures both large and small in the event of a disaster during the webinar “Animal Welfare During Disasters” on Saturday, March 27, from 4 to 5:30 p.m.

Dr. Abigail Kaufman will host a talk on animal first aid; Dr. Jen Dalmont will discuss sheltering animals during wildfires; and Stacey Claitor and Fawni Hill of the San Mateo County Large Animal Evacuation Group will discuss evacuating and sheltering large animals during large-scale crises.

The Woodside-Portola Valley chapter of CERT (Community Emergency Response Team), Woodside Portola Valley Ready, the evacuation group and the Humane Society of Silicon Valley are presenting the free event.

Organizers stand to gain $20 per attendee through a grant presented by the Woodside-Portola Valley chapter of CERT (Community Emergency Response Team).

PUBLIC NOTICES

995 Fictitious Name Statement

EQUINE EVENTS

EQUINE EVENTS FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT

File No. 286878 The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as: Equestine Events, located at 1619 Carleton Ct., Redwood City, CA 94061. This business is conducted by: An Individual. The request commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on Feb. 24, 2021. This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on February 24, 2021. (AlM Mar. 5, 12, 19, 26, 2021)

The Almanac is adjudicated to publish in San Mateo County. Public Hearing Notices Resolutions • Bid Notices • Lien Sale Trustee’s Sale • Notices of Election to Administer Estate Deadline is Monday at noon. Call Alicia Santillan at 650-223-6578 or email asantillan@pawweekly.com for assistance with your legal advertising needs.

Email Angela Swartz at aswartz@alamanacnews.com

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Organizers stand to gain $20 per attendee through a grant presented by the Woodside-Portola Valley chapter of CERT (Community Emergency Response Team).
Picturesque Mediterranean-Style Home in Coveted Vintage Oaks

158 Seminary Drive, Menlo Park
Bedrooms: 5 | Bathrooms: 3.5
Living: 3,587 sq ft | Lot: .27 acre
List Price: $4,989,000

European Country Estate in Exclusive Allied Arts

240 Princeton Road, Menlo Park
Bedrooms: 5 | Bathrooms: 4.5
Living: 4,086 sq ft | Lot: 7,500 sq ft
List Price: $5,798,000

David Weil | 650-823-3855
David@GranoskiWeil.com
DRE 01400271

Nick Granoski | 650-269-8556
Nick@GranoskiWeil.com
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Long time resident of Menlo Park and Sun Valley, Fred Judd passed away peacefully in his sleep at his home in Boregros Springs, CA on March 1, 2021 at the age of 95.

A lifelong outdoorsman who was active and vigorous and always good humored, Fred was a residential and commercial builder just as the mid-Peninsula building boom took hold. As a professional hobbyist, he pursued his love of hunting, fly-fishing, horseback riding and boating, and giving back to the communities where he lived.

Fred was born in Portland, Oregon on October 17, 1925 to parents Henry Clay Judd and Vera Temple Judd both originally from Pendleton, Oregon. Fred’s father Henry served in WWI in the European Theater. The family moved to Atherton, CA when Henry went to work for Standard Oil Co. in San Francisco.

Fred graduated from Sequoia High School in Redwood City.

As a young boy, Fred spent summers working on the cattle and wheat ranches run by his uncle Roy Temple and aunt Thelma McClintock, near Pendleton, Oregon. He also worked in the salmon industry in Astoria, Oregon. While still a teenager, Fred and his friend Joe Whelan built a cabin out of rough hewn wood near Skylonda. He also volunteered on the Pescadero Fire Department, working up an appetite for abalone sandwiches and slices of ollallieberry pie at Duarte’s Tavern in Pescadero.

After the invasion of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 Fred joined the US Navy, at 17 and served on the aircraft carrier, USS Marcus Island. He saw action in six battles, including the Battle of Leyte Gulf, one of the largest naval battles of the war. As a gunner on a 20mm rapid fire anti-aircraft gun, he was credited with shooting down multiple Japanese Kamikaze jets attacking the aircraft carrier.

After the war, Fred attended San Jose State on the GI Bill, graduating in 1950. There he met Esther Cameron. They were married in August 1951 and welcomed their son, Clay in 1954.

Early on, Fred was a carpenter and home builder with three subdivisions in Atherton - Clay Drive, Vera View, and the Donahoe property near Menlo-Atherton High School he developed with his friend Whelan. In the late 1950s, Fred started a grading and paving and heavy equipment leasing business, building roads in Redwood City, Atherton, and Ladera.

Fred enjoyed helping the growing community he lived in. He donated his time to build the first little league field in Portola Valley operating his own grading equipment. He was an active parent with Boy Scouts Campouts. He also served as a past president of the Menlo Park Chamber of Commerce.

In the mid-60’s Fred went on to develop The Palo Alto Business Park, the first tilt-up commercial buildings constructed in Palo Alto east of Hwy 101 at San Antonio Road.

Fred had an infectious laugh and was an expert storyteller always looking for material in his adventures. Here are some favorites:

Fred and his good friend Ray Jacobsen were partners in the “Hummingbird” Bird Class sailing boat and spent many weekends sailing on San Francisco Bay with family and friends out of Sausalito Yacht Harbor as well as summer trips sailing up the San Joaquin Delta.

He also loved hunting and fishing in northern California with good friends Sam Whiting, Bob Lewis and George Long and their annual opening day pheasant hunt. He was a member of Gordon Knapp’s duck club known as the “Alviso Hilton” along with good friends Don Broesamle, Jim Nystrom and others. He and his family loved their annual ski trip to Sugar Bowl with Stan and Kiki Hiller and sons. He often spent summers living out of his camper while fly fishing rivers of Montana.

In the summer of 1971, Fred and his son each piloted two of Fred’s wooden Rogue River float boats down the Middle Fork of the Salmon River, class IV rapids, known as “the River of No Return” with his friend Don Wells and son Donnie. Fred and Clay also floated Hells Canyon of the Snake River, class IV rapids, fishing and hunting with good friends Charlie Shriver and Stoney Burke.

In 1972, Fred and Esther moved to Sun Valley, Idaho and built one of the first homes on the golf course. He became active in helping his rapidly growing community. He served on the Sun Valley City Council and was part of the volunteer Fire Department.

He loved steelhead fishing on the Salmon River and Dean River in BC. In 1975 Fred built a log cabin and barn on his beloved Grove Creek near Picabo, ID. He liked searching for indian arrowheads after big rains. Fred also collected old farm tools which he called his ‘whatsits’.

Fred married Katharine Long Bishop October 14, 1986 and they had many wonderful years of marriage. Fred took Katharine’s teenage sons Scott and Brett under his wing and shared with them his love of the outdoors.

Fred and Katharine lived many years in Sun Valley until later wintering in Boregros Springs, CA. They spent summers flying fishing and floating rivers in Idaho and Montana and other western states. In later years they skipped power boats in the San Juan Islands, WA. and the Gulf Islands, BC.

They cruised on their boat, the “Kathalina” with family and friends. They also spent many summers on Orcas Island where Fred liked to go crabbing in his jet boat. Later in life Fred explored the Anza Borrego Desert with his friends and family on his ATVs and his vintage bronco.

Fred aka “Fred The Bird” will always be remembered for his love of life, his gusto in pursuit of making dreams happen, his generosity, kindness, and his exceptional quality of making good friends wherever he went. He lived by what his mother always told him, “work hard, play fair, and make every man your friend”.

Fred is survived by his wife Katharine Long Judd, son F. Clay Judd (Nita), grandson Ryan Clay Judd (Crystal), great grandchildren Tinsley and Heath, stepsons Scott Bishop (Lysie), and Brett Bishop (Julia), step grandchildren, Kenzie, Colby, Claire, Martha, Hugh, and step greatgrandson, Hayes

Preceded in death were his parents Henry and Vera Judd, brother Henry Judd, and first wife Esther Cameron Judd.

The family will have a private memorial service. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the charity of your choice.

**OBITUARIES**

Local residents who died recently include Frederick Earl Judd, 95, a former Menlo Park resident, on March 1; Gayle Lensing Rimerman, 71, longtime Menlo Park resident and former Junior League of Palo Alto president, on March 12; William John Gardner, 87, Portola Valley resident and volunteer for the town’s Emergency Preparedness Committee as well as the Woodside Fire Protection District, on March 18; and Kathleen Marshall Dieckroeger, 59, a Woodside resident who held several positions in the Menlo School Parents Association, on March 19.

To read full obituaries, see remembrances and post photos, go to Lasting Memories at almanacnews.com/obituaries.
School District. “But we don’t think the hybrid model, where kids are only on campus half the time, is conducive for everyone. We want our kids in school full time, five days a week.”

California’s rules for reopening, updated in late January, allow schools to physically reopen if they follow strict safety measures, which includes spacing desks no less than 4 feet while making a “good-faith effort” to maintain a 6-foot barrier. Recent studies have suggested schools can safely operate with 3 feet of distancing versus 6 feet. The Centers for Disease Control recommended 6 feet of distance in its latest February guidance, but doesn’t set a minimum standard. The CDC said last Friday that elementary school students and some middle and high school students can be spaced 3 feet apart in classrooms, as long as everyone wears a mask.

Now, health experts, parents and administrators want California to clarify its distancing requirements for reopening campuses. The Sequoia Union High School District is planning to bring students back on campus starting April 5, with most classrooms limited to 10-12 students to accommodate social distancing.

Palo Alto Unified Superintendent Don Austin said the CDC’s new spacing guidance wouldn’t immediately change the district’s reopening plans because staff have been planning for a potential shift.

“The CDC shift is exactly what schools needed to reopen in the fall,” Austin wrote in a weekly update. “There are still realties and logistics that will need to be addressed to return more hybrid students to full in-person instruction.”

He was waiting for the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to revise its guidance, which was announced the next day. The state’s updated guidance now recommends distances of at least 3 feet between students.

The Contra Costa County school district brought middle and high school students back on campus Wednesday under a hybrid model — similar to how most other California schools have so far physically reopened. In a March 11 letter to the governor pleading for clarification on state guidance, the San Ramon Valley school board said it wants to be able to offer students and families full-time in-person instruction, according to the district’s school press release.

Students in grades six through eight from schools throughout the Archdiocese competed in the academic decathlon on March 6. The St. Raymond School team included eighth graders Bella Svanberg, Grace Urban, Hailey Wells and Patrick Kane and seventh graders Ryan Karr, Emma Kane, James Palazzolo, Sam Boyd, Sarah Thieman, Henry Dommer, Luca Pinheiro, Sam Malek and Robert Cevacso.

The competition took place on Zoom this year, making it more challenging than in past years, according to the school. The students could only practice together during the last two weeks leading up to the decathlon. In years past, students met many times before school and on weekends to study. Each team took the test at their own school.

Atherton recruiting for committees

The town of Atherton is recruiting people for several town committees.

Atherton’s Bicycle and Pedestrian, Environmental Programs and Triathletes committees each have a vacancy for a term that expires in June 2023, while the Parks and Recreation Committee has a vacancy for a term expiring this June. The Parks and Recreation Committee member must also be a member of the Holbrook-Palmer Park Foundation.

The town is not filling current vacancies on the Rail Committee because it may reduce the membership size in the near future, said Deputy City Manager/City Clerk Anthony Suber in an email Wednesday, March 24. The town has reduced the membership to “up to 9” and may reduce it even further, he said. Rail service to Atherton’s station ended late last year.

Learn more about the committees and apply at tinyurl.com/Athertoncommittees. Contact Suber by email at asuber@ci.atherton.ca.us, or by phone at 650-752-0629, with any questions. — Angela Swartz

Priory production offers 10 short comic plays

If laughter is the best medicine, then Woodside Priory School is offering up a hefty dose of it to combat these trying times. The school’s spring production, “Laugh Till Your Pants Catch Fire,” is a collection of 10 short comic plays written by professional playwrights. The virtual production, which is offered on demand through April 4, was filmed on the Priory’s stage using COVID-safe practices and features the work of student actors, a student film crew and student editors.

The family-friendly show explores different types of relationships, including a first date during a zombie apocalypse; a marriage proposal with surprising saltiness right beneath its pearly white surface; as well as the comically bizarre turns that marriage and parenting can occasionally take.

“Laugh Till Your Pants Catch Fire” is available on demand starting at 6 p.m. Friday, March 26, through midnight on Sunday, April 4. Tickets are a pay-what-you-can cost. More information is at tinyurl.com/Laugh-Pants-Catch-Fire. — Heather Zimmerman

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Corte Madera named distinguished school

Corte Madera School has been chosen as a 2021 California Distinguished School by the California Department of Education. The California Department of Education recognized only 100 middle and high schools for 2021, including three from San Mateo County, according to the county Office of Education.

The Department of Education identifies and awards eligible schools based on performance and progress on state indicators on the California School Dashboard. Dashboard indicators include test scores, suspension rates, and conditions and school climate.

“Many of our students have been through so much together since the start of the pandemic, and this award is a reminder of the strength and resilience of our school community — staff, faculty, students — who have come together to overcome numerous challenges and maintain the outstanding learning environment we enjoy at Corte Madera,” said Principal Kristen Shima in a press release.

The district’s other school, Ormondale, received the same designation in 2010 and 2014.

The district’s other school, Ormondale, received the same designation in 2010 and 2014.

Corte Madera School students place second in academic decathlon

Students from St. Raymond School in Menlo Park placed second overall in the Archdiocese of San Francisco California’s Catholic Schools Academic Junior High Decathlon competition, according to a school press release.

Students in grades six through eight from schools throughout the Archdiocese competed in the academic decathlon on March 6. The St. Raymond School team included eighth graders Bella Svanberg, Grace Urban, Hailey Wells and Patrick Kane and seventh graders Ryan Karr, Emma Kane, James Palazzolo, Sam Boyd, Sarah Thieman, Henry Dommer, Luca Pinheiro, Sam Malek and Robert Cevacso.

The competition took place on Zoom this year, making it more challenging than in past years, according to the school. The students could only practice together during the last two weeks leading up to the decathlon. In years past, students met many times before school and on weekends to study. Each team took the test at their own school.

Parents sue

Last month, parent advocates in San Diego County sued the state in an attempt to undo school reopening rules they argued have arbitrarily kept schools from offering full-time in-person instruction. A judge issued a temporary restraining order Monday, March 15.

“The (judge) essentially indicated the remote learning action is not a learning model and slammed the state for creating rules that arbitrarily forced some students into remote learning while allowing others to attend in-person,” said Scott Davison, co-director of the Parent Association of Carlsbad and a supporter of the suit.

Tustin Unified in Orange County began offering in-person instruction via hybrid scheduling for all grades starting last September and has not experienced any cases of in-school transmission, according to Gregory A. Franklin, Tustin’s superintendent.

Six in 10 students are attending school in person in Tustin, with much campuses operating at 30% capacity.

“Teachers are instructing students who opted to remain online while also directing the students in their physical classrooms. Engaging students under hybrid instruction remains a challenge, Franklin said, because “it’s much easier for a kid to struggle anonymously online,” without continuous interactions with educators.

When the 2021-22 school year begins, Franklin envisions schools will continue operating with many of the same measures — everyone wears masks, washes their hands, travels hallways in one direction. Unclear yet is whether the rules will allow for a full-time return.

“What’s a little frustrating when I talk to the health officials, they talk about doing distance as much as practicable but not less than 4 feet,” Franklin said. “We have yet to talk to a health official who’s able to explain why 4 feet is different from 3 feet. I’m not sure how much science is involved in those decisions about the distancing.”

What’s next

The Legislature will decide this spring what to do about the state’s current hybrid model. Several school districts operate under hybrid and distance learning next school year, but some school districts begin their terms in July.

“Physical distancing is a huge barrier to reopening schools for full five-day-a-week schedules,” said Dr. Jeanne Noble, director of COVID-19 response for University of California at San Francisco’s emergency department.

“So it’s really time to look closely at the data and say it’s necessary, because it’s going to keep millions of kids out of full-time school. The data tells us it’s not necessary, that masking is really the key to this.”

Email Ricardo Cano at ricardo@calmatters.org. Elena Kadvany contributed to this report.

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DESKS

continued from page 5

offered by the state to increase emergency preparedness. Money received from the grant will be used to fund emergency trailers and supplies.

Sign up at tinyurl.com/animalsemergencyresponse.
By Antonio López

On March 18, San Mateo County voices are out about expanding access to COVID-19 vaccinations geared toward communities highly impacted by the virus. As council member of one of those cities in question, I am grateful for their acute attention over the disproportionate impact of this pandemic. The words of Supervisor David Canepa are exemplary: "We are laser-focusing our vaccination efforts by providing clinics in highly impacted ZIP codes to get more doses in arms right in the neighborhood you live and the language you speak."

The city of East Palo Alto makes up 4% of San Mateo County. Nevertheless, we make up 10.9% of all positive cases. My call is simple: I urge the county to commit to an equitable distribution of no less than 10.9% of the vaccine distribution for my community.

The reasons are painfully known, but allow me to cite two: we serve, and proudly I add, as the essential workforce of the Silicon Valley. If tech companies like Facebook, Google and Sun Microsystems provide the Silicon, we provide the backbone, the sweat that never takes a day off, the salt of the earth that keeps the Valley rich — that caters its events, that risks its life, day in day out, without even so much of a demand.

Until now.

There is much fanfare around the county’s turn to the orange tier. In one respect I understand this excitement. We are all fatigued from this yearlong recession. These months of sheltering in place have damaged our mental health, our bodies, and so many of us are yearning to return to some sense normalcy. But as an elected official, I simply cannot do that at the expense of my community.

I remind the county not of my standards, but of their very own. In attachment A of the announcement’s fact sheet, they highlight a commitment to fighting for a historic and equitable allotment for hardest hit communities.” My parents come from a generation that has been reared to keep its head down, to not rock the boat out of fear. But that is not my generation.

And what is the point of being the first generation of citizens, to this county and country, if I do not speak on behalf of those too busy or afraid (or both) to do so.

It is in this spirit that I remind readers and elected officials alike that the people of East Palo Alto, Belle Haven and North Fair Oaks do not just deserve more vaccines, but are entitled to them.

To date, there have been no mass vaccination sites for the south of the county. And while we are grateful for the neighbor- hood vaccination clinics made possible by collaboration with the county and local clinics like the Ravenswood Health Center, as the aforementioned statistics show, it does not constitute a fair share. The moral, economic and equity-minded strength for this argument is well-established. What we need now is the political one.

And so, County Manager Mike Callagy, vaccine czar Justin Mates, Supervisor Warren Slocum, Assemblyman Mark Berman and State Sen. Josh Becker, it is in the spirit of Supervisor Canepa’s words that I implore you all to be “laser focused” on communities like mine, to commit to the hard number of no less than 10.9% of the vaccine supply for the city of East Palo Alto, ideally, to commit to establishing a mass vaccination site in our area so as to benefit not just us, but our sisters and brothers in Menlo Park’s Belle Haven, in unincorporated Redwood City and in the other ‘hardest hit communities.’ Affirm to my constituents that even as we march to orange, the Black and brown will not get left behind.

Antonio López is a member of the East Palo Alto City Council.

### LETTERS

#### Our readers write

### Condemning hate against Asians

In light of recent, and increasing, incidences of racism, vio- lence, and hate against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, the Menlo Park City School Dis- trict school board members and superintendent wish to firmly condemn these acts. We are alarmed at the rise of racist behaviors and attacks against members of these communities. Violent anti-Asian sentiment has been building for years, and surged over the past year amid racist scapegoating that has blamed Asians for the coronavi- rus pandemic.

The MPCSD school board and superintendent stand against all forms of hate. The resolu- tion “Commitment to Creating Anti-Racist Classrooms, Schools, and Communities,” passed by the board in June 2020, takes a clear position against racism and inequity, and commits our schools and district to take action to make a difference for our students and our community. Since March 2020, there have been over 700 cases of anti-Asian racism and discrimination in the Bay Area alone; the state of Cali- fornia is home to 44.56% of all reported anti-Asian racism and discrimination cases throughout the country, as reported by Stop AAPI Hate. As 13.8% of MPCSD’s student body identifies as Asian or Pacific Islander, we must stand with them against this rising tide of hate.

MPCSD is working hard to create an educational environ- ment in which our children may grow up to be adults who are anti-racist. Through the superintendent’s Anti-Racism Advisory Team, the district is improving its recruitment, hiring and retention policies to develop a more diverse staff; making curriculum deci- sions that bring a variety of voices and perspectives to our classroom content; investing in staff professional development that empowers MPCSD teachers and staff to understand diverse perspectives and incorporate these into the district’s work with students; and bringing speaker events that encourage anti-racist ideas to our entire community. Over 500 community members participated in the district’s first anti-racism speaker series in January.

Beyond the district’s own work, MPCSD’s school board and superintendent support all individuals and groups who seek understanding, equity and kindness, and condemn racially motivated hate, harassment and violence against persons of any race or ethnicity. We hope that the next generation will do better than ours, and that our children may grow up to lead a just and democratic society with equi- table treatment and opportunity for all.

Erik Burmeister, MPCSD super- intendent; Sherwin Chen, school board president; and school board trustees David Ackerman, Stacey Jones, Scott Saywell and Francesca Segre.

### Guest Opinion

#### The misfits and future promise of green power

The power outages in Texas and California have a common cause — premature investments in unreliable wind and solar before feasible power storage technology is developed (Guest opinion: The Texas power crisis. What happened, why it hap- pened, and what it means for the future of energy policy,” March 12). Had Texas built more reli- able power, it would have had electricity to heat natural gas wellheads to keep natural gas generation plants running. It would also have had the money to lock in guarantees on its power purchases.

In California’s case the money invested in unreliable power has resulted in some of the highest power cost in the country with blackouts and wildfires. Califor- nia is prematurely shutting down natural gas plants and shifting budgets for maintenance and clearance of power lines into solar subsidies.

Battery storage costs will have to drop by 50% to make it affordable. But there is promise that the solar-hydrogen energy generation cycle would solve the power storage issue, which would make solar reliable and cost com- petitive with fossil fuels.

Ed Kahl

Woodside Road, Woodside

### Investing in good jobs

Congress just passed a COVID relief bill, but short-term relief is not enough — we need longer-term investment in good jobs for all. There are millions of people looking for good work, and so much good work that needs to be done. It will take millions to build a new green energy grid, care for older folks, teach chil- dren, restore parks and build- ings, and build the kind of future we want our kids to see. This year, we can put millions of peo- ple back to work in good paying jobs building a sustainable, just, and people-centered economy.

Congress must deliver at the scale of the crises we face. Our communities, our climate, our democracy cannot afford delay or compromise. We need our elected representatives to commit to fighting for a historic economic recovery of at least $10 trillion to create millions of good jobs stopping the climate crisis and building a new, people-centered economy before the end of Biden’s first 100 days.

Gabriela Hakeman

Palo Alto

### What’s on your mind?

From City Hall politics and the schools to transportation and other pressing issues, the Almanac aims to keep readers informed about their community. But we also want to hear from you.

Tell us what’s on your mind by sending your letters to letters@AlmanacNews.com. Or snail-mail them to: The Almanac, 450 Cambridge Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94306.

Letters should be no longer than 300 words.

Questions? Email editor@AlmanacNews.com, or call 650-223-6537.

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The Pear Theatre offers a rich feast of words from Dylan Thomas

Video production of ‘Under Milk Wood’ is well worth watching — and reading

By John Orr

The Pear Theatre has outdone itself with a production of Dylan Thomas’s “Under Milk Wood,” a play that resounds with the beauty of well-chosen words and goes deep with meaning for humanity. And, praise be, the Pear’s artistic director and director of the production, Sinjin Jones, has achieved the mastery of filmmaking that we have desired to see from him over the course of the theater company’s pandemic releases. Everything works: good performances from the six-person cast (OluChi Nwokocha, Ali-Moosa Mirza, Asha Kelly, Thomas Farley, Kalan Birnie and Coco Jimenez), the lighting, the sound, and the very useful closed captioning. Thomas worked on “Under Milk Wood” — a “play for voices” — for more than 20 years, starting it when he was only 17 and developing and polishing it for the rest of his life, which ended at age 39.

The result is fascinating and beautiful poetry, rich with meaning and imagery, as he tells the story of a night, a day, and another night in the fictional Welsh seaside village of Llareggub (set, in the Pear’s version, among six clans that come together after the apocalypse).

“It is spring, moonless night in the small town, starless and bible-black.”

We the audience arrive in the night to peep in on the dreams of several citizens of Llareggub. Captain Cat, old and blind, is visited by the ghosts of drowned shipmates. Mrs. Ogmore-Pritchard dreams of dead husbands. Shopkeeper Mog Edwards and Myfanwy Price dream of each other. Most of the play’s 40 characters are represented. All the actors wear masks, which keeps everybody safer, but it is sometimes confusing to not know who is speaking from line to line. And, the masks sometimes muffle the microphones that I think they are wearing on their faces, making it slightly difficult to understand their words occasionally.

That’s part of why the closed captioning is welcome. And, truly, it is a treat to be able to follow Thomas’s lovely language. With the dawn, we get more understanding of the hopes and dreams of the waking town, and more excellent writing from Thomas.

The cast adds to Thomas’s imagery with body movements, dancing and stepping from place to place on a circular raised stage with arms that radiate from a raised plinth. One actor may speak the words, while another mimics them from across the stage. The show was filmed in the round in the Pear’s Mountain View theater space. There are multiple camera angles, including one from above, so we get to see everybody go through their choreography.

But, really, it all comes down to the beauty of Thomas’s words. Thankfully, this cast delivers them very nicely. “Under Milk Wood” is available via streaming access through April 11 at thepear.org. Access is $30-$34. A companion piece to this production, titled “The Signal Tower,” presented by Dragon Productions Theatre Company and other partners, is being planned for a May release.

Contributing writer John Orr can be emailed at johnorr@regardingarts.com

Asha Kelly performs in the Pear Theatre’s production of Dylan Thomas’s “Under Milk Wood,” available online through April 11.

‘Color therapy’: Pace Gallery presents Arlene Shechet’s pandemic-inspired sculptures

Ceramic works push technical boundaries and celebrate the rainbow

By Sheryl Nonnenberg

The one-year anniversary of the pandemic has been cause for a lot of collective looking back and assessing. How have we used the past 365 days? Some people took to cleaning closets, baking bread or learning a new language. For New York-based artist Arlene Shechet, it was a fruitful period when she retreated to her Woodstock studio and created a series of sculptures that reflect her passion for form, color and shape, executed in the medium of glazed ceramic. “Together: Pacific Time” is a debut show of glazed ceramic. “Together: Pacific Time” is a debut show of glazed ceramic. Together: Pacific Time: 5 a.m.”

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Asha Kelly performs in the Pear Theatre’s production of Dylan Thomas’s “Under Milk Wood,” available online through April 11.

Pace Gallery in Palo Alto is presenting a collection of ceramic sculptures by Arlene Shechet, created during the pandemic. Pictured is “Together: Pacific Time: 5 a.m.”

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glorious reds, purples, yellows and greens. The gallery staff explained that Shechet directed (via FaceTime) the installation of the 10 plinths in this space and had very definite ideas about how they were to be positioned. They are arranged, like a sculpture garden, in the center of the space so that the viewer can both take them all in at once and walk around each one. The pieces are affixed to either wood or metal stands that serve as extensions of the sculptures, rather than just supports. To that end, they are painted in contrasting colors. In some pieces, like Together: Pacific Time: 5 a.m., it appears that the sculpture is balanced quite precariously on the edge of the metal base. It’s a great bit of trompe l’oeil by the artist and will encourage you to look even closer. (Fear not, however — each piece is firmly affixed underneath.)

Describing the sculptures is a challenge. They are colorful, highly tactile, dense yet shaped very purposefully by the artist. You may find points of reference. Together: Pacific Time: 9 p.m. reminded this writer of giant red lips. Somehow the artist has taken this highly malleable material and folded it, looped it, prodded and formed it into these mysterious shapes. The hand of the artist is clearly visible, as in Pacific Time: 5 a.m., a neon-orange sculpture that bears the indentations of the artist's fingers. There is a hollow in the center of this piece where an orange-yellow ooze of glaze emerges and drips over, sort of like a lava flow. The artist has said that these jeweled pieces “reflected what I needed: color therapy.”

The focal point of the works in this space is color. Shechet, who has developed her own unique glazing methods, has said that she dealt with the isolation of the lockdown by “shifting her mood” via the use of color. “Everything is color. I think everything has color, and I think that’s another language that some people are more sensitive to than others.” In Together: Pacific Time: 1 a.m. (the titles make reference to the marking of time, as in a medieval “Book of Hours”), the deep, rich purple glaze conjures up such disparate associations as grape juice, royal vestments and jelly beans. The artist has said that these jewel-toned pieces “reflected what I needed: color therapy.”

The remaining two sculptures in the exhibition reflect Shechet’s ability to work in large scale. Under cherry trees/There are/no strangers is an amalgam of glazed ceramic and painted hardwood. This piece is typical of the artist’s “half-made, half-found” approach in which she combines tree sections with ceramic forms. It’s a strong, bold, Cubist assemblage that changes from every vantage point. In the last gallery, Iron Twins is a monumental piece made of cast iron that has a Stonehenge-like quality. Or, it could be perceived as two standing figures, confronting each other with just a whisper of distance between their bases. These works have a strong physicality to them. As Shechet explained, “It’s quite muscular what I do. I don’t mean that they don’t have a lightness or female presence, but making sculpture is a very muscular, tough activity.”

How fitting that, during Women’s History Month, Pace is featuring the work of a female artist who has challenged the macho, male-dominated world of sculpture, forging a long and successful career — and she did it her way.

Pace Gallery, located at 229 Hamilton Ave., is open by appointment only, with COVID-19 protocols in place. Information is available at pacegallery.com.

Contributing writer Sheryl Nonnenberg can be reached at nonnenberg@aol.com

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Food for Thought

Pastry pop-ups in Palo Alto and chefs José Andrés and Jesse Cool converse about sustainability

By Elena Kadvany

Whether you’ve got a taste for social justice or finely made pastries (or both), the Midpeninsula has something for you. A local lecture series brings together a couple of staunch advocates for sustainability in the restaurant industry — Flea St. Cafe’s Jesse Cool and chef-philanthropist José Andrés, founder of World Central Kitchen — on April 6.

In Palo Alto, there are new temptations on offer, as Patty Lu, a former Tartine baker, and Nariya Charoensupaya, Vina Enoteca’s former pastry chef, are making breads and pastries with flavors that highlight their Asian American culinary heritages.

New on the Palo Alto pastry scene

While John Shelsta’s Love for Butter pop-up is on a temporary hiatus, two bakers have stepped in to fill the voids: a former Tartine baker and Vina Enoteca’s former pastry chef.

Patty Lu, who started her baking career at Tartine Bakery in San Francisco, is temporarily overseeing the bread program at Vina Enoteca on Welch Road in Palo Alto (where Shelsta has been baking for the last few months) and making pastries for Tono Coffee Project on Lytton Avenue in Palo Alto, which usually serves Love for Butter baked goods.

Lu was a line cook in San Francisco before delving into baking. She later started the bread program at The Charter Oak Restaurant in St. Helena and worked at Tartine for several years. As head baker at Tartine Seoul, she helped to open the bakery’s first location in Korea. For the last few years, she’s baked Roy Shvartzapel’s famed panettone during the holidays for Panettone From Roy.

Last fall, Lu started her own endeavor: Year of the Snake Foods, a pop-up with items like sesame-scallion focaccia, kimchi and langue de chat, delicate cookies filled with tahini, black sesame or white chocolate. Her creations reflect her Chinese American upbringing in Cupertino, her years of baking naturally leavened bread in the Bay Area and her time in Seoul.

At Tono Coffee, you can find Lu’s black sesame bostock — soft, circular brioche topped with a velvety frangipane made from powdered black sesame, which is inspired by Chinese tang yuen (sweet rice flour dumplings filled with black sesame paste) and zhi ma hu, a black sesame soup. She also makes a flaky biscuit studded with lap cheong (Chinese sausage) and garlic chives, among other items.

“For me, incorporating Chinese flavors — I want it to be more mainstream,” she said.

She said when she would bring Tartine bread home to her Taiwanese parents, they eschewed the crusty sourdough bread for soft white breads from Chinese bakeries.

“My whole background has been making European pastries and breads,” she said. “I want to make stuff that they like to eat.”

Lu is also making classic focaccia, sour-dough baguettes and other breads for Vina Enoteca’s Mercato, which is open Tuesday-Friday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the restaurant. She hopes to host Year of the Snake Foods pop-ups there as well.

Also in the pastry case at Tono are new sweets made by Nariya Charoensupaya, who runs cottage bakery operation Pastry Cat in Sacramento. Charoensupaya, Vina Enoteca’s former pastry chef, previously managed the kitchen team at the Italian restaurant with her husband, who was then the chef de cuisine. She’s worked in the Bay Area restaurant and bakery scenes for about a decade, including at Mourad and Le Marais Bakery in San Francisco. Last summer, she decided to branch out on her own and started Pastry Cat.

“My products are a reflection of who I am and what I would like my customers to experience,” Charoensupaya said. “I was trained mostly in French pastry techniques, but I love to incorporate Asian influenced/inspired flavors to my products as that is what I love, and what I grew up with.”

Charoensupaya is Thai American. She was born in the United States and grew up in Bangkok. She makes sweets like matcha yuzu almond cookies, salted butter caramel infused with genmai (toasted rice) and milk tea tiramisu, plus buckwheat shoku-pan bread. She developed her own recipe for miso brown butter cookies (which you can find at Tono) and painstakingly adjusted the ratios over and over again to yield a super chewy texture and sweet-savory balance.

“I’m very big on balancing everything — flavor, texture, temperature (when possible), no matter how simple or complex the product may be,” Charoensupaya said.

Tono Coffee will be closed from March 24-31, so check out the pastries there in April.

José Andrés and Jesse Cool

Local restaurateur Jesse Ziff Cool will be moderating a virtual conversation with José Andrés, famed chef and founder of World Central Kitchen, on April 6.

The event is part of the Peninsula Open Space Trust’s Wallace Stegner Lecture series, which features “writers, thinkers and activists who explore important issues related to land, nature and conservation.”

Jesse Ziff Cool, chef-owner of Flea St. Cafe in Menlo Park, is moderating a conversation with chef-philanthropist José Andrés for POST’s Wallace Stegner Lecture series on April 6.

Andrés — as well as Cool, the owner of Flea St. Cafe in Menlo Park — is a staunch advocate for sustainability in the restaurant industry. His new book, “Vegetables Unleashed,” explores cooking with vegetables to reduce food waste and the world’s carbon footprint.

World Central Kitchen has for over a decade served meals to people in need and responded in the wake of natural and man-made disasters, including when Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico, the bushfires in Australia and in 2020, the pandemic. Since last March, World Central Kitchen partnered with restaurants to keep them and their employees afloat while serving 36 million meals in more than 400 cities across America.

Cool, who’s championed farm-to-table, organic cooking at Flea St. Cafe for four decades, is also a culinary lecturer at the Stanford University Department of Education and uses her home garden and kitchen as a model classroom. Cool spearheaded an effort to revamp the food Stanford Hospital serves employees and patients.

During the coronavirus shutdown, Flea St. Cafe launched “Meals of Gratitude,” a program to donate meals to front-line health care workers while keeping the restaurant staff employed. The restaurant has made more than 29,000 meals for front-line health care providers, evacuees from the California wildfires (Flea St. also sent meals to wildfire victims through World Central Kitchen) and vaccination site employees. A year after starting the program, Cool ended Meals of Gratitude last week as the restaurant works to slowly reopen.

Cool is a supporter of the Peninsula Open Space Trust’s work to protect local land and farms, and also volunteers with World Central Kitchen. Because of these connections, the Peninsula Open Space Trust asked her to host the conversation with Andrés, she said.

The April 6 talk begins at 7 p.m. For more information and to buy tickets, go to openspacetrust.org.

Email Elena Kadvany at ekadvany@paweekly.com

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