Can fitness clubs lure people away from their pandemic home gyms?

By Lloyd Lee

For the past few years, Meghan Van Metre searched for the right place to open her franchise of Barre3, a fitness studio chain that mixes elements of Pilates, yoga and ballet.

She fell in love with the community it fostered ever since she took her first Barre3 class about four years ago. So when Van Metre recently took over the lease of the Menlo Park location on El Camino Real, which closed in July 2020, it felt like her dream was coming to fruition. Plus, Van Metre was born in Menlo Park, so opening a business in the city was like a homecoming.

"The stars really aligned with the Menlo Park studio," she said.

But as Van Metre opens her remodeled Barre3 studio, she is also aware that the landscape of the fitness industry and the demands of the consumers have drastically changed over the past 19 months due to the pandemic.

As gyms shut down for much longer than other retail businesses, the exercise industry pivoted to offer greater personalization, convenience and safety from airborne viruses like COVID-19.

As a result, some fitness buffs and casual gymgoers continued their membership at a brick-and-mortar club but worked out from home. Chains like CorePower Yoga and Barre3 built a robust online presence by hosting live classes and uploading a digital library of recordings while physical locations were closed.

But on the Midpeninsula, many locals who have the resources took lockdown life as an opportunity to create their own personal fitness bubbles and routines.

Janet Dafoe, 72, used a personal trainer for several months after Functional Lifestyles in Palo Alto temporarily closed.

For $75 per session, a personal trainer came to the home twice a week to help Dafoe and her husband exercise on their front porch.

"I have various free weights, bands and a good front porch with lots of railings and other things to hook things on," she said.

Toni King and Audrey Ryder have surfed that wave of new demand for one-on-one courses. The couple owns a high-end personal training service called Tonik Fitness, which has trainers go to people’s homes or conduct virtual classes. At $150 for a one-hour session, Tonik’s prices are steeper than other similar services. But still, business boomed.

“Our revenues probably doubled,” King said.

In contrast, the two also opened a new Yoga Six franchise in Mountain View last September — at $158 per month for unlimited classes — but have yet to turn a profit. The rise in delta variant cases is slowing the progress to profitability, King said. Meanwhile, there are still prospective clients for Tonik Fitness on a waitlist.

Meghan Van Metre, the owner of Barre3 in Menlo Park, mops the floor of the newly remodeled studio on Aug. 30.

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Can fitness clubs lure people away from their pandemic home gyms?

Meghan Van Metre, the owner of Barre3 in Menlo Park, mops the floor of the newly remodeled studio on Aug. 30.
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State legislation expands independent study option for students, but few are enrolled locally

By Angela Swartz

A select few students are taking advantage of new legislation that lets them learn from home this fall, even though schools have reopened from their pandemic closures. After getting a taste of at-home learning since March 2020, one independent study teacher in the Sequoia Union High School District — where just 34 of its roughly 9,000 students are signed up for the program — says he sees increased interest in alternative educational models like his.

While a lot of students were anxious to return to the classroom, independent study appeals to those whose families’ health may be put at risk by COVID-19 exposure or who just aren’t ready to return to campus. In July, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed Assembly Bill 130 into law, which requires public school districts to offer an independent study option to all students.

Teacher Evan O’Reilly said he believes the demand for an independent study option in California has been increasing for years, and after experiencing a full school year of distance learning, “the demand is through the roof” to continue offering virtual or hybrid schooling options for many years to come. This fall, the program “filled up quicker than it’s ever filled up,” O’Reilly said.

Bonnie Hansen, the Sequoia district’s assistant superintendent of educational services, said the district isn’t allowed to provide a distance learning option — with its own instructors teaching on Zoom.

“As we know, learning online is inferior to learning in person,” she said during an online Sept. 3 back to school night.

The Sequoia district’s independent study program was conducted through Edgenuity this school year. The district noted Edgenuity course content meets the same graduation requirements as in-person instruction. With the district’s current staffing of the program, it can accommodate up to 70 students, Hansen said. The district is in the process of hiring another independent study teacher and it will continue to hire more if needed, she said.

The legislation also requires that high school students enrolled in independent study receive live, two-way instruction in a small group or one on one once a week in person, online or by phone. The legislation does not specify a minimum amount though.

“While independent study may be a viable option for some of our students, it does not replace the outstanding

Lawmakers target reforms to California’s recall process

By Gennady Sheyner

A fter beating back an effort to oust Gov. Gavin Newsom, Democratic lawmakers began to set the stage Wednesday for reforming what they see as a deeply flawed recall process, with the goal of bringing a measure to the voters in 2022.

Assembly member Marc Berman, D-Menlo Park, will be one of the leaders of the reform effort. As chair of the Assembly Committee on Elections, he and state Sen. Steve Glazer, D-Orinda, plan to hold bipartisan joint hearings with their colleagues in the Legislature in the coming months to explore ways to change the recall process, the two lawmakers said Wednesday morning at a press conference over Zoom.

While the details of the reform package have not been hashed out, Berman said his biggest issue with the current system is the relatively low threshold for ousting and replacing an incumbent governor. Under the two-question format that was used in the recall election, Newsom needed at least half of the state’s voters to reject the recall for him to stay in office. By contrast, if a simple majority had voted to support the recall, any candidate who was vying to replace Newsom would only need to have won a plurality of votes.

“For me, the biggest issue is that we currently have a process whereby the governor can be recalled and replaced by someone who has less votes,” Berman said Wednesday morning. “For
CRIME BRIEFS

Police arrest woman wearing Atherton resident's necklace

Atherton police arrested a woman on Saturday, Sept. 11, who they say broke into a home by breaking a screen door.

At around 9 a.m. in the 400 block of Middlefield Road, a resident reported hearing someone inside the home, according to a Sept. 14, police news bulletin. The resident called out to the person, but did not get a response. The resident then left the house and called police.

Police arrived and arrested a woman found in a bedroom of the home wearing a necklace belonging to the resident. The woman had gathered other items prior to police arriving, they said.

Police arrested the woman on suspicion of burglary, possession of stolen property and vandalism and booked her into the San Mateo County Jail in Redwood City.

Jewelry likely taken in Portola Valley burglary

Someone broke into a home in the 100 block of Thistle Street in Portola Valley while a resident was on vacation, according to a Tuesday, Sept. 14, San Mateo County Sheriff’s Office press release.

Police were dispatched on Sept. 4 when the resident returned home and discovered someone had rummaged through the bedrooms. The resident believes jewelry was taken.

Residents can always ask for passing checks when they are out of town for an extended period of time.

Anyone who has information regarding this incident may call the Sheriff’s Office anonymous tipline at 800-547-2700.

— Angela Swartz

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Flu shot clinic at Hillview Middle School

Hillview Middle School, at 1100 Elder Ave. in Menlo Park, is hosting a flu vaccine clinic on Saturday, Sept. 18, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. with Safeway Pharmacy. Most insurance is accepted, except for Kaiser.

Shots are $40 and $65 (for seniors) without insurance.

Walk-ins are welcome, but to help with social distancing, those interested are encouraged to schedule an appointment online at mhealthsystem.com/MPCSDFLU2021.

— Angela Swartz

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To reduce fire risk in a part of Wunderlich Park where high voltage lines power the nearby SLAC linear accelerator, the Woodside Fire Protection District, Stanford, Woodside and San Mateo County are funding a project to remove tree debris.

County supervisors OK fire safety funds for Wunderlich Park

The Woodside Fire Protection District and a number of other local agencies including Stanford University and the town of Woodside, have teamed up on a project to remove dangerous debris from areas of Wunderlich Park near power lines for the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center (SLAC).

On Tuesday, Sept. 14, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to approve a $20,000 grant to support the fire safety project using funds from Measure K, a county-wide half-cent sales tax.

The power lines are considered high voltage, according to
Newsom overwhelmingly defeats California recall attempt

By Laurel Rosenhall and Sameea Kamal/CalMatters

The attempt to throw Gov. Gavin Newsom out of office failed by a wide margin, according to vote counts released Tuesday night in California’s historic recall election.

With some 9.1 million ballots counted — out of 22.3 million ballots mailed to registered voters — the “no” vote was ahead of the “yes” vote by 64% to 36%, according to the California secretary of state.

Newsom pulled to such a big early lead that the Associated Press, CNN, NBC and other networks declared within an hour of the polls closing Tuesday night that the recall had failed and Newsom had survived.

“We are enjoying an overwhelming ‘no’ vote tonight here in the state of California,” Newsom said in a brief appearance in the courtyard of the state Democratic Party headquarters in Sacramento on Tuesday. “But ‘no’ was not the only thing that was expressed tonight. I want to focus on what we said ‘yes’ to as a state. We said ‘yes’ to science, ‘yes’ to vaccines, we said ‘yes’ to ending this pandemic.”

“We said yes to diversity, we said yes to inclusion, we said yes to pluralism. We said yes to all those things that we hold dear as Californians, and I would argue, as Americans,” the governor added.

But there are likely many more votes to count. Here’s why: The votes reported Sept. 14 only those ballots cast before Tuesday, from voters who sent them in by mail, left them in election drop boxes or voted early in person. After 8 p.m., election officials began counting ballots that were cast on Election Day. And ballots postmarked by Tuesday will be counted as long as they arrive within a week.

Republicans are expected to make up a larger share of those voting Tuesday at polling places, so the results may shift toward the “yes” side as those ballots are counted.

Among the candidates seeking to replace Newsom, GOP talk radio host Larry Elder was leading the pack with 47% of the vote. Democratic Kevin Faulconer, a Republican, was in third place at not quite 9%.

In his election night speech, Faulconer told supporters that while he initially set out to campaign for 2022, it turned into a recall campaign. He said he’d take time to figure out “the best steps here in the coming weeks to continue to be a fighter, to continue to serve our great state.”

Elder indicated that he will likely run for governor next year.

“We may have lost the battle, but we are going to win the war,” he told supporters on election night.

Elder also declared a victory, of a sort: “They are now listening. They are now going to listen to the people. They are now going to listen to the people of California.”

Newson’s team used the same offense and define your opponent strategy, but with the opposite politics. In a state where Democrats outnumber Republicans 2 to 1, they cast Republicans as the boogeyman, and repeatedly tried to tie the recall to former President Donald Trump, who is deeply unpopular in California. And when Elder emerged as the front-runner, Newsom focused on bashing his conservative stances on race, immigration, and climate change.

Gov. Gavin Newsom successfully fought off a recall attempt, with an insurmountable lead in early returns announced on election night.

High school officials urge state to require student COVID vaccinations

By Angela Swartz

Officials in the Sequoia Union High School District are asking the state to require that students be vaccinated against COVID-19 to attend in-person classes.

In a Wednesday letter to Gov. Gavin Newsom, Sequoia governing board trustees, Superintendent Darnise Williams and San Mateo County Office of Education Superintendent Nancy Magee said that they’d like COVID-19 vaccinations to be added to the list of legally required immunizations for students.

“For generations, immunization against certain diseases has been a legal requirement for public school attendance,” they wrote. “Currently, eligible students must be excluded from school attendance unless they present documentation of immunization against measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, poliomyelitis, hepatitis B, varicella (chickenpox) and Hib meningitis. Under the current conditions, we find it extremely troublesome that each and every school district in California must act as medical experts and determine whether or not to require students to be vaccinated against COVID-19 in California’s schools.”

Instead, they said that these decisions should be driven by the state of California through legislation or action by the California Department of Health.

Under the current system, school district officials are forced to make what amounts to medical decisions while being “squarely in the middle of political divides,” the letter states.

Email Staff Writer Angela Swartz at aswartz@almanacnews.com.

Real Estate O&A

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Rita C.

Dear Monica:

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Rita C.

Lender demands that arise during a transaction can be a problem and may even derail it. Often the lender wants more time to do these appraisals, and the buyer has to ask for extensions. This can be a problem if a seller refuses, and the deal can fall apart, which we have seen happen. I hope you will be able to work with these demands.

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More than 800 new housing units approved in Menlo Park

By Kate Bradshaw

Facing little alternative due to new state housing laws, the Menlo Park City Council voted Tuesday, Sept. 14, to approve more than 800 new housing units on the Bay side of Menlo Park proposed by the developer Greystar.

The City Council held two public hearings Tuesday to consider appeals of Planning Commission approvals of two Greystar development proposals. Those appeals were led by the Sequoia Union High School District and City Councilwoman Cecilia Taylor, who represents the voting district where the developments are proposed.

The first proposal, Menlo Uptown, plans to build 441 new apartments and 42 new condominiums, as well as an on-site urgent care clinic at 141 Jefferson Drive and 180-106 Constitution Drive. The second proposal, called Menlo Portal, calls for 335 new apartments, about 34,500 square feet of office space and a 1,600-square-foot child care center at 115 Independence Drive and 104 and 110 Constitution Drive. Combined, the two developments would add 818 new homes to the city.

Council members, as well as City Attorney Nira Doherty, noted that the Menlo Park City Council now has less discretion approving housing projects due in part to the Housing Crisis Act of 2019, also known as SB 330, which limits the number of public meetings on a housing project proposal to no more than five hearings. Tuesday’s meeting was the fifth, which triggered in the council a sense of urgency to make a decision. SB 330 also prevents cities from imposing additional fees or policies on developers that weren’t in effect when the developer filed the initial application with the city.

The City Council ultimately voted 4-1 to approve both developments, with Taylor opposed each time. In both instances, the council opted to impose certain conditions on the proposals, including what’s called a “PILOT” agreement — an acronym for an agreement for “payment in lieu of taxes.” The agreement protects the city from a circumstance that occurred

District Attorney’s two-year investigation of alleged financial misdeeds by former community college chancellor about to conclude

By Angela Swartz

San Mateo County District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe has completed a two-year investigation into Ron Galatolo, the county community college district’s contentious chancellor emeritus who was fired from his post amid claims of financial impropriety. A meeting this month with Galatolo’s attorney should help the DA “finally decide how the case will proceed,” Wagstaffe said.

Wagstaffe had “several productive meetings” with Galatolo’s attorneys after the DA’s office finished its criminal investigation in June, Wagstaffe said in a Sept. 8 email. Investigators began looking into Galatolo back in the summer of 2019. “In late August we were advised that Mr. Galatolo had fired his attorneys and hired a new attorney, Redwood City attorney Charles J. Smith. Mr. Smith asked for time to be able to get up to speed and similarly make a presentation to us.”

This presentation is scheduled for this month, after which the DA’s office will make the case decision.

Among the allegations leveled against Galatolo are the use of public funds for retirement incentives, undisclosed personal relationships with the district’s vendors and undisclosed gifts from contractors who work for the district, according to 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 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 get back what it paid the chancellor emeritus under his 2019 contract.

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

District officials did not have a comment on whether the attempt to recoup some of Galatolo’s salary was successful.

Email Staff Writer Angela Swartz at aswartz@almanacnews.com.

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Coronavirus central: Large businesses must prove employee vaccination status or test weekly

By Angela Swartz

Feds to issue vaccination and testing mandate for businesses

President Joe Biden directed federal labor officials last week to draft a mandate that businesses with 100 or more employees must require them to prove their COVID-19 vaccination status or undergo regular testing for the virus at least once a week.

The mandate will apply to roughly 100 million workers, including those in the public sector as well as health care workers and workers under contract with the federal government.

Biden argued Thursday that just as presidential “to protect all Americans” and that compelling eligible people to get vaccinated is “not about freedom or personal choice, it’s about protecting yourself and those around you.”

The requirement is one of the largest steps the federal government has taken to address the sector of Americans who remain resolutely unvaccinated.

On Sept. 9, Biden pointed out that major businesses like United Airlines and Tyson Foods have already mandated vaccination or frequent testing for their employees across the country and that many vaccine holdouts cited a lack of full approval from the Food and Drug Administration as a reason for their hesitance.

With the two-dose Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine now fully approved by the FDA and the Moderna and Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccines likely to receive similar approval in the coming months, Biden argued that the time for waiting to get vaccinated is over.

“We’ve made vaccinations free, safe and convenient,” he said. “The vaccine is FDA-approved. Over 200 million Americans have gotten at least one shot. We’ve been patient, but our patience is wearing thin, and the refusal has cost all of us.”

Nearly 82% of California residents age 12 and up have received at least one vaccine dose as of Friday, according to data from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Within the state, many of the greater Bay Area’s counties have some of the highest vaccination rates in California. Both San Mateo and Marin counties have eclipsed 90% of their eligible populations receiving at least one vaccine dose. Both counties are also on the cusp of reaching 90% of their respective eligible populations being fully vaccinated.

Comprehensive COVID-19 coverage


CallMatters and Bay City News Service contributed to this report.

How Menlo College hit a nearly 100% COVID-19 vaccination rate

By Angela Swartz

The 1,000 students, faculty and staff milling about Menlo College in Atherton have one thing in common: Nearly all are fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

Officials from the private four-year Atherton college reported this week that, aside from four medical and religious exemptions, 100% of their community was inoculated when they stepped on campus four weeks ago, according to a Monday, Sept. 13, press release.

Community members needed to demonstrate “sincere and deeply held religious beliefs” and cite sacred texts and religious authorities that prohibit vaccination to receive a religious exemption. Only one member of the community was granted a religious exemption, noted Vice President Angela Schmiede, who has served as chair of the school’s pandemic planning team, in an email.

“Few other communities, if any, can boast a 100% vaccination rate. That we reached our goal shows that Menlo students and employees all understand the importance of keeping our campus, and our larger community, as safe as possible,” said Menlo College President Steven Weiner in a statement. The school shut down in March 2020 due to the pandemic and began a phased reopening over the succeeding months.

The school set out on a vaccination campaign in April, when it announced that it would require proof of vaccination for all community members by the start of the fall semester — ahead of Stanford University and the University of California system. Once the FDA gave Pfizer’s COVID-19 vaccine full approval, the school made vaccination mandatory for faculty, staff, students and contractors — including security staff, dining hall staff and ASL interpreters, Schmiede said.

Student Body President Mia Shuman said the college promoted vaccinations by asking students to post on social media when they got their shots. The school also called students who didn’t submit their proof of vaccination to check in. Shuman recorded a video, which was posted on the school’s Instagram page, explaining why she decided to receive the vaccine.

Shuman, a senior, said she was not surprised Menlo College was able to achieve this milestone, as the community is “tight knit” and everyone wants to “take care of each other.”

Still, in the larger context of the U.S., where only a little over half of Americans overall are vaccinated, it is impressive, she said.

“The majority of our community wanted nothing more than to reclaim the familiar, in-person experience that is the hallmark of our college, which had been missing for the last 18 months,” Weiner said in his statement. “It has been a joy to see students and faculty back in the classroom, our student-athletes back in competition, and more broadly, the Menlo College family safely back together on our beautiful campus.”

Colleges have the legal authority to require proof of vaccination for students — they already mandate that students be vaccinated against measles, mumps and rubella, meningitis, and other vaccine-preventable communicable diseases.

On-campus testing

Last spring, about 250 students were living in dorms on campus in residence hall pods and 100 would come onto campus for athletic training, Schmiede said. Some students living on campus needed emergency housing, such as those who didn’t have a safe or productive place to engage in online learning, and international students who would face difficult time differences if they did distance learning in their home countries, she said.

School officials said there was only a 0.1% positivity rate among the nearly 9,000 COVID-19 tests taken during that semester. There are two active COVID-19 cases; both are commuter students isolating off campus, Schmiede said. Over the past month, the school has had nine positive cases, five of which were asymptomatic cases that were detected through testing on campus.

“Providing testing is helping us maintain very low transmission on campus,” Schmiede said.

The few who are unvaccinated are required to test twice weekly, and all student athletes must also undergo regular testing for the virus. Fully vaccinated visitors are also invited to attend Menlo athletics competitions, provided they demonstrate proof of vaccination.

Antigen self-tests are offered weekly to vaccinated staff and students for free.

Vaccination rates at other universities

Stanford is requiring students

See MENLO, page 12

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By Angela Swartz

E lizabeth Miller was just 6 years old when her father, firefighter Douglas C. Miller, was killed during the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center. Years later, in her grief, she began to learn more about the United States’ response to 9/11. She met a Middle Eastern man held at Guantánamo Bay purely for “seeming suspicious.” What she learned made her feel obligated to “speak out about the injustices that stemmed from (her) loss,” she wrote in an opinion piece published in Time magazine Sept. 10.

Hers was just one of the stories shared by some of the more than 200 people who gathered in Palo Alto’s King Plaza on Saturday evening for the Multifaith Peace Picnic & Prayer Service. For the 20th year in a row, organizers put together the event to not only memorialize 9/11 victims and remember the families, but also to share stories of peace and unity despite the backlash against the Muslim community. This year’s program began with boxed dinners and speeches and musical performances by local faith groups. Chairs were spread out throughout the plaza as a precaution against the spread of the coronavirus. The event, which was held annually last year, was also streamed live on Zoom for those who couldn’t attend in person.

The evening ended with a candlelight vigil at Guantánamo Bay. The 20th years of holding candles in a prayer vigil to honor the victims.

Organizer and Palo Alto resident Samina Sundas, founder of American Muslim Voice, has held the vigil annually since the first anniversary of Sept. 11. She said that the return to power by the Taliban in Afghanistan and the current of hatred among some groups through-out the country sometimes make her feel that nothing has changed over two decades. “I don’t know why you need a boogeyman,” she said of the history of xenophobia and tendency of some to choose a group toward which to direct their fears and anxieties. “I try to bring the community together and try to heal and build peace.

‘Sadly, we are still divided,’ organizer says at 9/11 multifaith vigil

About 200 gather at King Plaza to honor victims and discuss ways to build peace

MENLO

Swartz at aswartz@almanacnews.com.

REFORM

continued from page 5

me, that’s the big foundational piece that I want to change,” Glazer, who chairs the Senate Committee on Elections and Constitutional Amendments, also said he has significant concerns about the two-question format on the recall ballot. Most of the other 19 states that have a recall process have provisions for appointing someone to fill the vacant seat if a governor is recalled and then following an election process. Some lawmakers, he said, believe a recall should trigger a runoff. Others believe a lieutenant governor should step forward if a recall is successful and fill the spot until an election is completed at a future date.

These alternatives will be explored in the coming months, he said, as the two legislative bodies proceed with gathering ideas from lawmakers, academics and legal and political experts. Lawmakers will look at issues such as grounds for removal, California’s signature gathering requirements and the process of succession, should the recall effort be successful.

“We currently have a process whereby the governor can be recalled and replaced by someone who has less votes.”

ASSISTANT MAN Marc Berman

Both lawmakers expressed concern Wednesday about the way that the recall process, which has been around for over a century, has been used in recent years. More than 70% of attempts to recall elected state officials that have qualified for the ballot occurred in the last 27 years. Berman and Glazer noted in a statement that each of the last nine governors in California has faced multiple recall attempts, though only two had qualified for the ballot. The only successful ouster of a governor through the recall process occurred in 2003, when voters removed Gray Davis from office and replaced him with Arnold Schwarzenegger.

The two lawmakers noted that the reform process will be open to the public to maintain transparency.

“Neither of us is suggesting that the recall process be elimi-nated,” Glazer said Wednesday’s press conference. “We’re simply saying that accountability is good and it needs to be maintained, but we need to look for ways to modernize it and understand how it’s been manipulated in the last couple of decades in ways that we think are counterproductive and that voters of California, at the end of the day, may view as counterproductive.”

Berman said in a statement that the Tuesday vote, in which more than two-thirds of the voters rejected the recall, “highlig-hited the fundamentally undemocratic nature of California’s existing recall process.” The leaders of the state’s two legisla-tive chambers — Senate Presi-dent pro Tempore Toni Atkins and Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon — also issued statements expressing support for explor-ing recall reforms. Atkins called such a review “timely and worth-while” while Rendon called it “totally appropriate.”

“We came far too close to hav-ing a governor elected by a tiny fraction of eligible voters,” Rend-on said in a statement. “While that is no way to pick the leader of the most populous state in the nation, it would be equally wrong to make any changes without a thorough study of alternatives. I look forward to hearing the discussion.”

Berman and Glazer said Wednesday that the earliest time frame for enacting reform to the recall process would be 2022. That is also when Newsom is up for reelection. Berman said the given the recent effort to recall the governor, reforms to the process are an issue that is “in front of the mind for a lot of voters right now.”

In hindsight, Chair Glazer and I probably wish this was addressed before either of us has been elected to the Legislature,” Berman said. “It hasn’t been. We want to make sure we make some improvements to the pro cess now and not kick it off to future elected officials.”

Email Staff Writer Gennyday Sheyner at gsheyner@paweekly.com.
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the largest overall increase in its Asian population, which rose by 708 people or 42.4% between 2010 and 2020.

The two neighborhoods that saw the largest overall population increase within the same census tract in Menlo Park were the Linfield Oaks and Allied Arts neighborhoods. Linfield Oaks saw its population increase by about 575 people or 13.8%, while Allied Arts saw a population increase of about 500 people or 12%. Both neighborhoods saw a roughly 8% decline in the proportion of white people at the same time they experienced 86% and 70% increases in the number of Asian residents in Linfield Oaks and Allied Arts, respectively.

West Menlo Park saw a higher than average increase in its overall population at 8.5%, seeing a roughly equal drop in white residents (351) and increase in Asian residents (344).

The neighborhood that saw the greatest increase in American Indian and Alaska Native people — a 725% bump — was in Census Tract 6118, which includes part of Menlo Park and East Palo Alto toward the Dumbarton Bridge, with 116 more residents.

The tract reporting the largest increase in Hispanic residents was Menlo Park’s Linfield Oaks neighborhood, which saw an overall increase of 194 Hispanic residents.

Neighborhoods that saw their overall populations decline included Sharon Heights (down 3.2%) and Menlo Park’s Menlo Vin-
cuss tract 6139, which includes the south of Seminary/Vintage Oaks neighborhood and part of the Willows (down 1.7%).

East Palo Alto
East Palo Alto experienced a 6.7% increase in its overall population to 30,034 people, up from 28,185 in 2010. The city saw a nearly 56% drop in its white population and a 30% drop in its Black population. It also saw an increase of more than 500 people each who identify as Asian or American Indian/Alaska Native. The number of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders fell by slightly, by 34, with 2,084 people overall. The Hispanic population in East Palo Alto increased by about 10% to almost 20,000 people overall.

North Fair Oaks
North Fair Oaks was the only jurisdiction in which a population decline was reported. Between 2010 and 2020, the population fell by a total of about 660 people in North Fair Oaks, to 14,027 from 14,687. The unincorporated jurisdiction saw a 51% decrease in its overall population, a decline of more than 3,500 people, and a 26% drop in its Black population, while seeing a 56% rise in its Asian population. The Hispanic population in North Fair Oaks fell by about 932 people or 9%. The number of people who identified as two or more races rose by nearly 2,500 people.

Atherton
Atherton experienced a 4% population increase overall to a population of 7,188 residents, up from 6,971 residents in 2010. There was a 13% decline in its white population, a 33% increase in its Black population (to 100 residents in 2020 from 75 in 2010), a 55% increase in its Asian population (an increase of about 300 residents) and a roughly 190% increase in people identifying as being of two or more races, to 624.

Woodside
Woodside experienced the smallest population increase at 0.4% overall. It saw a 12% decline in its white population, a 47% increase in its Black population (to 34 residents from 23), and a 34% increase in its Asian population, to 446 from 332 residents in 2010. The town’s Hispanic population increased in line with its overall population increase by 0.4% or about 22 people.

Portola Valley
Portola Valley experienced a 2.4% increase to a population of 4,456 residents, up about 103 people from a decade before. During that time, it lost 375 white residents and one Black resident, bringing the number of Black residents down to 11. There were 105 additional Asian residents and 55 additional Hispanic residents, and an overall increase of 348 people claiming two or more races.

Ladera
Ladera’s population increased 9.2%, to 1,557 from 1,426. Its white population declined by 103 people, it gained a single additional Black person, for a total of four in 2020, and saw nearly identical increases in Hispanic residents (72) and Asian residents (71).

Email Staff Writer Kate Bradshaw at kbradshaw@almanacnews.com.

Menlo Park district kicks off parent education series

The Menlo Park City School District began its 2021-22 school year parent education speaker series this week with a talk about giving up screens one day a week to allow for more time, creativity and connection.

Terry E. Givens will be the next speaker in the series on Tuesday, Oct. 12, at Hillview Middle School. She will talk about her new book “Radical Empathy: Finding a Path to Bridging Racial Divides.”

Other upcoming topics include: teaching children self-regulation; how to elevate historically diminished voices; and how food giants exploit addictions. — Angela Swartz
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Nestled on a corner lot of more than one-quarter acre in the sought-after Ladera neighborhood of Portola Valley rests this stunning 4-bedroom, 3-bathroom California ranch home of more than 2,800 square feet. Brilliantly remodeled by renowned local architect Libby Raab, this home presents a warm, welcoming ambiance from the moment you step inside, with light-filled interiors and an open floorplan that connects seamlessly to the grounds for true indoor/outdoor living. A fireplace centers the living room, the kitchen offers striking black soapstone countertops along with a spectacular French Lacanche range, and the expansive family room with a wall of glass provides excellent space to entertain or unwind. The grounds of the home present an outdoor oasis with Montecito-inspired hardscaping and vibrant plantings, highlighted by the entertainers’ paradise in the backyard that offers a peaceful terrace, built-in grilling station, and Jacuzzi hot tub. This home takes full advantage of its incredible setting in this close-knit community, and is just moments from the Ladera Recreation District where kids and adults can enjoy activities including swimming, tennis, yoga, and more. Plus, you will be just a short drive from downtown Palo Alto and Stanford University, and have access to the acclaimed Las Lomitas school district (buyer to verify eligibility).

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Exemplary grounds of over an acre provide an intimate setting for this spectacular Atherton estate, custom-built in 2017 by renowned builder Lencioni Construction. Natural tones create a warm, welcoming ambiance that puts you at ease from the moment you step inside, with a quiet elegance that emanates throughout over 9,300 total square feet of interior space filled with high-end appointments and finishes. The modern floorplan offers grand-scale formal rooms made for entertaining, as well as a gourmet kitchen with top-of-the-line appliances, a convenient office, family room with wet bar, theater, wine cellar, and much more. An impressive 5 bedrooms and 7 bathrooms include the detached pool house, as well as 4 en suite bedrooms in the main home highlighted by the primary suite with a spa-like bathroom and stunning walk-in closet. Enjoy true indoor/outdoor living as numerous glass doors open to impressive grounds filled with vast heated terraces, a fireplace, grilling station, and a lap pool. Plus, ample parking for family and guests is always available thanks to a gated motor court and oversized 4-car garage. Just moments to downtown Menlo Park, this estate is also within easy reach of downtown Palo Alto and Stanford University, with the venture capital firms of Sand Hill Road close at hand.

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Quintessential Atherton luxury takes center stage in this beautiful home that masterfully blends timeless design elements with modern style and sophistication. A sprawling front lawn bordered by tall trees and vibrant plantings welcomes you, and inside, nearly 3,400 square feet of living space enjoys high-end appointments including hardwood floors, marble finishes, and fine millwork. A fireplace and built-in entertainment center anchor the expansive family room, the dining room adjoins the chef’s kitchen for easy entertaining, and the entire home enjoys a bright, light ambiance thanks to lofty ceilings and abundant natural light. The home’s 4 en suite bedrooms provide comfortable accommodations for friends and family alike, highlighted by the primary suite with a spa-like bathroom. Outside, the backyard offers private space for outdoor enjoyment with a pergola-covered terrace and lush lawn, while the detached 2-car garage and extended paver driveway ensure ample parking is always available. Just blocks to Holbrook-Palmer Park, this home is also convenient to both downtown Menlo Park and Palo Alto, and the soon-to-be-completed Atherton Town Center will be just moments away. Plus, children may attend acclaimed schools including Encinal Elementary and Hillview Middle (buyer to verify eligibility).

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**OBITUARIES**

Local residents who died recently include Tina Enomoto, 71, a former Portola Valley resident, on Aug. 7; Emmanuel Barbariol, 96, a longtime Menlo Park resident, on Aug. 20; Noble Hancock, 99, a Portola Valley resident of 61 years, on Aug. 21; George White Jr., 86, a former Portola Valley resident, on Aug. 25; and Kathleen Gaffney Braunstein, 77, a Woodside resident and docent at the Filoli Historic House & Garden for 25 years. To read full obituaries, leave remembrances and post photos, go to Lasting Memories at almanacnews.com/obituaries.

From the San Mateo County Sheriff’s Office

Janet Ann Taylor, a La Honda resident, planned to hitchhike home in March 1974 but never returned. Her body was found in a ditch the next day and her murder went unsolved for 47 years.

Taylor’s killing, Diane Perlov, Leslie Perlov’s younger sister, watched from the courtroom as Getreu’s verdict in the Taylor case was read. It could be more than a year until he comes to trial in Santa Clara County for her sister’s death due to a backlog of cases, she said.

But Perlov is proud of her sister’s contribution to convicting Getreu. “She fought for her life. The evidence under her fingernails is what led us here. ... I remember a detective said, ‘She made this happen,’” she said.

One moment stood out to Diane Perlov after the verdict. “When the jury was gone and it was just the lawyers and Getreu in the court, Josh (Stauffer) gave me a little nod,” she said.

Leaving the courtroom after the verdict, Stauffer said only: “Today justice was done.” Taylor’s family has preferred to remain private.

“Justice is always good. It’s very gratifying to see justice served,” Perlov observed. “You never know until the verdict comes in. The prosecutors did a great job — a thorough job. There’s no healing because of course she’s gone, but there is a sense of satisfaction that he’s put away. He will be condemned after he dies, but I want him to be condemned in this life for what he did.”

James Schroeder, a close friend of Janet Taylor, traveled across the country with his wife, Mary Ellen, to testify at the trial. After the verdict, Schroeder said he was happy Getreu was finally convicted. He’s been waiting for this moment for 47 years.

Mary Ellen Schroeder didn’t know Taylor, but her tragic story has been a part of her life for the 31 years she and Schroeder have been married.

The Schroeders will celebrate the verdict in a deeply personal way. On their way to visit Russell Bissonnette, Taylor’s companion at the time of her death, Schroeder said he planned to bring a gift. ‘I’m bringing a bottle of champagne to celebrate Janet’s life,” he said.

Getreu will return to court for sentencing on Nov. 5.

**Noble Hancock**

Noble Hancock was born Oct. 1, 1921 in Aurora, Illinois and died at The Sequoias in Portola Valley on Aug. 21, 2021 just six weeks short of his 100th birthday. He and his wife Lorraine had lived in the Westridge area of Portola Valley for 61 years where they raised their five children. They moved to The Sequoias three years ago.

Mr. Hancock grew up in San Jose, attended Willow Glen Elementary School, Los Gatos High School and UC Berkeley before WWII and later earned a Bachelor of Electrical Engineering from the University of Santa Clara and a Masters from Stanford. He also took business classes at Stanford.

During the War he served as information liaison in the US Army IV Corps Headquarters in the invasion of Luzon, Philippines.

As an avid amateur radio enthusiast he served as treasurer of the Santa Clara County Amateur Radio Assn. and was proud of the 1,000 watt transmitter that he constructed, which he used to make contacts throughout the U.S. and Pacific.

Mr. Hancock was an assistant professor of Electrical Engineering at SJU from 1951-1961, served as Program Officer of the Luke B. Hancock Foundation in Palo Alto from 1961-1978, and spent his retirement years gardening, tending to his personal finances and writing his memoirs.

He was a generous supporter of the environment, homeless, and his church. His children remember him fondly for the stories he would read them after dinner, his buying a boat so they could water ski at Lake Tahoe, and his introducing them to the concepts of philanthropy.

Those celebrating his life are his wife Lorraine and their children: Joyce Gavin of San Jose; Bruce (Carolyn) Hancock of Altadena, CA; Janice (Jeff) Pettit of Auburn, CA; James Hancock of Alameda, CA; Allen Hancock of Eugene, OR and a daughter from a previous marriage Diane (Dan) Sheehy of Rolling Hills Estates, CA. They are joined by eight grandchildren, eight great grandchildren and one great great granddaughter. The family will gather privately on Noble’s birthday, Oct. 1st.

Friends and neighbors are invited to gather at The Sequoias on Saturday Oct. 2nd at 6:00pm to remember the gentle man with the camping stool. In lieu of flowers contributions may be sent to Second Harvest or The International Rescue Committee.

For questions or for the Zoom link contact lorrhan@aol.com

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“Our clients were referring their cousins, uncles, brothers, sisters, neighbors — we have clients literally from all over the world now,” King said.

Fitness on demand

People also turned to the latest trends in expensive fitness equipment such as Peloton, Lululemon’s Mirror or Tonal, which have customers spending anywhere from $1,000 to $5,000 in upfront costs. Access to online classes offered by the same brands come with an additional monthly fee that can cost as much as a gym membership.

But while prices may be high, people in the Midpeninsula who were already paying $20 and up for an individual class at a boutique studio said they are finding that the returns, financially and physically, are worth it.

Andrew Navarro of Palo Alto purchased a Tread, Peloton’s premium treadmill, in January for around $5,000 and a monthly subscription for $39.

It’s not a cheap investment, Navarro, 46, said. But he finds that he’s actually saving money by dropping his membership to 24 Hour Fitness and the regular visits to Barry’s Bootcamp, a high intensity interval training workout, which costs around $35 per class. He and his partner could spend around $4,000 to $6,000 a year on a membership and classes, Navarro said. With Peloton, they can buy one treadmill and both take advantage of the classes through a single subscription.

“There were some months where I would go to Barry’s almost everyday and that racks up 500 bucks right there,” Navarro said. “It gets expensive.”

Ellen Kiss, 44, a designer and Samyama Yoga Center said they are finding that the returns, financially and physically, are worth it.

Before the pandemic, Kiss visited a boutique studio said they are finding that the returns, financially and physically, are worth it.

“During the day, I can’t go to the gym or do something.”

American overall have increased spending on the latest fitness technology. According to a McKinsey & Company article published June, monthly consumer spending on internet-connected fitness equipment, which includes Peloton, increased 5% and spending increased from $100 million in 2019 to $210 million in 2020.
for paid apps rose about 10%. "A little more than 10% of the American general population have also set up home gyms or have accessed fitness resources online during the pandemic," one study by McKinsey said.

By 2028, the home fitness equipment-outdoor market is expected to grow from $10.73 billion in 2021 to $14.74 billion in 2028, according to a report by Fortune Business Insights.

In the realm of cycling alone, Peloton bikes became so popular the company experienced supply constraints and delivery delays, pushing Peloton to invest more than $100 million just to expedite shipping.

For Tom Craig, 62, part of the allure of his NordicTrack bike — a counterpart to the more trendy Peloton bike in price and features — is the experience of the online classes. Riders don’t merely sit alongside a virtual instructor belting commands and encouragements. Instead, NordicTrack’s classes offer a lesser form of virtual reality to make the workout more engaging. The screen can simulate the experience of moving through a different continent or country or even one’s own city using Google Maps’ “street view” function.

"I did one in the North Pole at Christmas time,” said the Palo Alto resident, who described himself as an "elliptical junkie.” Peloton’s subscription includes themed workout sessions that reflect the current cultural zeitgeist, with classes that emphasize mental health, Black History Month or Beyonce, for example. (One New York Times culture critic called it, “A total curation of the mind.”)

Greater personalization is one of the greatest draws of the smart fitness equipment industry. But beyond all the bells and whistles, there’s a critical feature of at-home equipment that keeps people like Craig, Kiss and Navarro at home rather than in the gym: It works.

"I got the bike last August,” Craig said. “By the end of the year, I dropped 20 pounds.”

Kiss and Navarro both said they were unused if they would return to their gyms, given the effectiveness of at-home workouts. Kiss said she might consider a class for a social occasion. Clark is a die-hard for her regular routine? Even if the situation with the pandemic improves, she doesn’t anticipate returning to the gym.

"I think it’s less about COVID and more about convenience,” she said.

Creating a more varied fitness normal
Not everyone is turning their backs on in-person exercise, however — even for those who might have hopped on the latest fitness equipment trends.

When looking specifically at studio classes as opposed to a gym, where people often exercise independently, Van Metre finds that at-home equipment doesn’t really compete with studies like Barre3, where different clients: those who prefer a do-it-yourself model and those who prefer to be a part of a community. If anything, she said, "I think only complement each other.

"People like variety anyway,” she said.

Corey Mailloux, founder of Functional Lifestyles in Palo Alto, which offers classes capped at 10 clients for a more personal experience, said that he always saw the fitness industry as a spectrum of clients with different preferences: There are clients who prefer to work out by themselves at the gym or at home, clients who prefer a large group when training, and then those who prefer more intimate classes, Mailloux said.

"Yes, the at-home gym is partly competition, but it’s also a separate thing inside of that continuum,” he said.

And when it comes to serving individuals with low to middle incomes, gyms, which typically require a one-time initiation fee and a monthly fee, still have the upperhand. Multiple studies of the fitness equipment industry found that one of its main barriers to market growth is its high cost and the requirement of space at home.

This rings especially true for studios that offer highly specialized forms of exercise using particularly expensive equipment. At Reach Pilates, which has served Palo Alto for nearly three decades, offers workouts that require machines or “apparatus classes.” The studio focuses on exercises on the mat and the machines.

To replicate what’s offered at Reach, studio manager Kathleen Paice said that a client may be looking at purchasing up to $15,000 for five pieces of equipment.

"We did have a couple clients who bought one piece of equipment and did classes virtually because they had the means to do that,” Paice said. “But even those clients have come back because it’s part of their routine.”

Despite the at-home trend, there will always be people who gladly consider themselves gym rats.

As someone who thrives under a competitive environment, Reema Dhillon, 38, said she happily pays nearly $1,000 a month for classes at Barry’s, CorePower Yoga and Rumble Boxing. Any at-home or virtual options, Dhillon found, just didn’t push her enough as much as in-person classes.

"I couldn’t even muster up enough motivation to do the workouts at home,” the Palo Alto resident said. "It just really hindered all my progress. It was kind of depressing.”

In a survey of 1,171 Americans published by the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association, 48% of participants said they had a harder time finding the motivation to exercise without their fitness club. The same survey found that 54% said they found their new workout routine less challenging, while 53% said it was less consistent.

Dhillon, who works at a law firm in Palo Alto and used to compete in softball and track and field, tried some of the workout videos on YouTube and even her boyfriend’s Peloton but found nothing challenged her as much as her classes. Her only outlet while fitness studios were closed was walking 10 miles a day.

"Being around other students creates that competitive environment,” she said. "And that’s what I thrive under — being faster or pushing myself because the person next to be is doing it. I feed off of that.

In the weeks leading up to the debut of Van Metre’s studio, the Menlo Park native hosted several outdoor Barre3 classes thanks to getting a permit from the city.

"People are saying, Oh my gosh we’re so glad you’re back,” she said.

Van Metre acknowledged that the pandemic and now, in California, the threat of poor air quality due to the wildfires are formidable risks for an already vulnerable industry. But with pent up demand to exercise and recovery, she remains optimistic.

"Really, the goal is to bring our community together again,” she said.

Email Editorial Assistant Lloyd Lee at llee@paweekly.com.

### Marketplace

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The coveted neighborhood of Sharon Heights sets the stage for this remarkably stylish 3-bedroom, 2.5-bathroom townhome of nearly 2,000 square feet. Bright, fresh interiors enjoy appointments including crown molding, high ceilings, and beautiful vinyl wood floors, while numerous glass doors fill the home with natural light and open to private patio space for indoor/outdoor living. A fireplace centers the living room, while the sleek kitchen embraces modern design and features a suite of Samsung appliances. Two upstairs bedroom suites, including the spacious primary suite, both enjoy access to a private balcony perfect for enjoying a morning coffee, while an additional bedroom can also be used as an office. Plus, this home offers a Nest thermostat, laundry, and a 2-car garage with EV charging, while this incredible enclave of homes also includes a community pool and clubhouse. Just moments to the amenities of the Sharon Heights Shopping Center, this home is also convenient to both downtown Menlo Park and Palo Alto, Stanford University, and Interstate 280, and it is served by the acclaimed Las Lomitas school district (buyer to verify eligibility).

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units, four two-bedroom residences, one three-bedroom unit and six for-sale townhomes for moderate-income households, of which five will have three bed-
rooms and one will have four bedrooms. The Menlo Uptown development will also include a 2,940-square-foot space dedicated as an urgent care center to be operated by the Ravenswood Family Health Network, which is considered to be a community amenity valued at $8.9 million.

Menlo Portal

The Menlo Portal development would add 335 apartments to the city, 48 of which would be set aside for lower-income households. As a community amenity, the developer would contract with All Five, an early childhood education provider in Belle Haven, to operate a child care facility at the new development. The commitment adds up to about an $8.9 million contribution, including building space, a student tuition, and an in-lieu payment to the city of $3.8 million.

Email Staff Writer Kate Bradshaw at kbradshaw@almanacnews.com.

INDEPENDENT STUDY

continued from page 5

instruction provided by our teachers in-person,” said Superintendent Darnise Williams in an email. “We have clearly heard from our families all of last year of their interest and urgency to return to our campuses, be in the classrooms, receive live instruction, and engage with their peers.”

District officials said they notified parents of the option via email and at a school board meeting and back to school informational night. It was also posted on the district website.

Interest in the program

Students in the program can take one class at their home high school or at a community college. O’Reilly, who has taught in the district’s independent study program for about five years and has worked for the district for eight, said he offers an English course to students one on one. He is assigned to about 26 students in the program.

“My many of my students’ parents do work from home,” he said. “I don’t think the work-from-home movement is going away; children emulate their parents.”

O’Reilly said he’s taught in traditional classrooms and continuation schools, but enjoys working in the independent study department because it’s more representative of the college and life experience, with a few hours of class per day and the rest of students’ time self-directed.

“Students have to be independent and structure their own time; they can push pause if they struggle with something,” he said. Some students who wanted to join independent study this school year thought it would resemble remote learning during the pandemic and decided to enroll in the program when they learned more.

For many years, there has been a huge waiting list for the independent study program, but the demand decreased because students weren’t getting off the wait list, he said.

“Some parents feel that students are opting out of traditional high school include social anxiety, depression or needing to work, while others are academically proficient and don’t want to sit in class. The district’s middle college option at Cañada College requires students to complete an associate’s degree at the same time as their high school diploma, which is an ‘incredibly intense’ pathway for students, he said.

Maggie Kravtchenko, 17, a senior who attended Carlmont High School until this past winter, decided to enroll in the independent study program because she needed to work to support herself.

“This year has gone really well for me,” she said in an email, adding that she is on track to graduate a semester early with the full A-G credits needed to apply to college. “I don’t think there are any downs for me; I think for some there can be a motivational challenge but I am motivated to finish, so that is not a problem,” she said. “The upside is that I can go at my own pace as well as choose the time of the day I do it, i.e. after work.”

She has applied to San Francisco State University and Cal State East Bay for the spring semester of 2022.

Elementary districts pool resources for independent studies program

Local elementary school districts took a different approach to their independent studies programs. Rather than running its own program, the Menlo Park City School District (MPCSD) partnered with neighboring Las Lomitas, Portola Valley and Hillsborough districts to develop a remote independent study collaborative.

School districts may choose to contract with a county Office of Education or establish an interdistrict transfer agreement with another school district to meet the independent study requirement for the 2021-22 school year. If the district demonstrates that it creates an “unreasonable fiscal burden,” and entering into an inter-
district transfer agreement or contract is not a viable option, the requirement to offer independent study can be waived by the county offices of education or the state Department of Education.

The total enrollment across the four districts is 35 students, said Public Information Office Parkes Treaty of the Menlo Park district.

It will cost $333,585 to pay teachers and administrative overhead, according to the district. MPCSD is the sponsoring district for the limited remote independent study program, and students will be required to be enrolled in the district to participate. MPCSD students account for about half of those enrolled in the program and will pay about 50% of the cost, with Las Lomitas paying about 20% and Portola Valley about 6%.

With few available options, five community-funded districts met to discuss their plans, according to an MPCSD report on the collaborative. With so few students, it didn’t make fiscal sense to run its own program, and there’s no financial incentive for community-funded districts to accept transfer stu-
dents. “Parents are also reluctant to leave the district to which they have invested so many resources by being a resident,” it said. Partnering with other smaller districts could change the cost-benefit ratio to a win-win, according to the report.

For K-8 students, asynchronous instruction will include assignments, tasks, and projects aligned with grade level standards that are assigned by a classroom teacher to be done independ-
ently at home, according to the district’s plan. They will also receive daily instruc-
tion that involves classroom-style, small group or individual instruction involving live, two-way check-ins between the teachers and students.

Students in the independent studies program will use the Altitude Learning LMS platform to track and turn in assign-
ments and for communicating with the teacher. MPCSD will use its adopted cur-
rriculum and learning maps to design the assignments for each grade level.

Email Staff Writer Angela Swartz at aswarts@almanacnews.com.

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A rendering of the Menlo Uptown development, which received approval Sept. 14 and is set to add 483 new housing units and an urgent care clinic on Menlo Park’s Bay side.

Email Staff Writer Kate Bradshaw at kbradshaw@almanacnews.com.
I love green spaces. I began advocating for more affordable homes in Menlo Park in part because I know that affordable homes near schools and jobs are vital to a healthy planet. While I love all green spaces, Sharon Park is my neighborhood park, and I walk my dog there almost every day. It is my love for green spaces, healthy communities, and a healthy planet that motivated me to propose that we consider Sharon Park and other land owned by the city of Menlo Park as sites for affordable housing.

We have a legal, moral and existential mandate to plan for more housing throughout our city, and especially near transit corridors. As part of our housing element update, the state requires us to plan for over 3,000 new homes, of which about 890 must be affordable to Menlo Park families and residents of all abilities who have very low or extremely low incomes.

A key strategy for producing supportive and extremely low/very low-income affordable housing is to plan for it on land we own and control. We can do this by considering land we already own and control — Sharon Park, the Civic Center, the downtown parking lots and — and we can consider buying land at $7 million or more per acre (based on the starting price for the USGS site), assuming we find land that is for sale and are able to compete with fast-moving private buyers.

Even assuming an ambitious 100 homes per acre, to meet our mandate, we need to identify 9 acres where we can plan for housing that is affordable to very low- and extremely low-income households (over and above what we must plan for low- and moderate-income households).

We cannot afford to take options off the table. Instead, we must examine every possibility, starting with land the city already owns.

The city-owned surface parking lots downtown are ideal sites for deeply affordable housing. We must make them a priority for that purpose. Our neighbors in Burlingame and Mountain View have dedicated public parking lots to affordable housing, and the plans and results are inspiring.

In addition to Sharon Park and downtown parking plazas, where else does the city own land?

The Civic Center is arguably the highest opportunity site for deeply affordable housing. It’s walking distance from shops and services, in the award-winning Menlo Park City School District, and sits on the transit corridor. A study by Housing Leadership Council and Transform California found that the more deeply affordable the housing, the more likely residents are to not own a car and to take public transportation instead of driving, thus reducing the traffic impact of adding new homes. It’s an ideal location for deeply affordable housing, and we need not lose any of our green spaces. The Civic Center hosts several buildings that are aging and dated, and could be redeveloped in partnership with an affordable housing developer to include extremely low and very low-income affordable housing for large families and people with disabilities.

We can and must create a zoning and policy environment that encourages private developers, whether that be the owners of the SRI campus, Sharon Heights or El Camino shopping centers, or other private parcel owners, to include deeply affordable housing and new parks as part of their projects. But ultimately, we only control the land we own.

In addition to the climate challenge, it’s a matter of public health. If the public health consequences of housing insecurity and homelessness were not apparent before the pandemic, they are glaringly clear now.

This feels like a crisis, but it’s also an opportunity. We can produce extremely low-income and supportive housing above a state-of-the-art new library and beautiful civic buildings. New privately developed housing developments can include new parks. The possibilities exist. Let’s channel the creativity, innovation and abundance that are our hallmark and use it to make Menlo Park a city that is integrated and diverse, multigenerational, and environmentally sustainable, with walkable, bikeable, vibrant places, and much less climate-change-inducing solo driving.

Karen Grove is a resident of the Sharon Heights neighborhood in Menlo Park. She is also a founding member of Menlo Together and sits on the city’s Housing Commission but is writing on her own behalf.

By Karen Grove
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Havana at the Hub

Argelia Fragoso, known as “The Golden Voice of Cuba,” performs at a concert and dinner celebrating Cuban music, culture and friendship

By Karla Kane

Most locals probably haven’t had the opportunity to visit Cuba, thanks to years of restrictions on American travel to the Caribbean island nation. But on the evening of Sept. 25, attendees can experience a bit of Cuban culture at Woodside’s Village Hub, in the form of a “Havana Night” dinner concert by renowned vocalist Argelia Fragoso. The event is a celebration of friendship — between longtime friends, as well as between two cultures.

“I love the idea of having the Woodside community experiencing a ‘real taste of Cuba’ in their own backyard. If Americans can’t go to Cuba, we will bring Cuba to the Americans. Why not?” Fragoso told this news organization in an email interview, translated by Ana Alvarez.

Alvarez, a Woodside resident and lifelong friend of Fragoso, is the concert’s organizer. It was Alvarez’s love for both her communities — Cuba, where she grew up, and the Midpeninsula, where she’s lived for more than two decades — and the desire to bring them together that provided inspiration for the special event.

“Cuba is a mystery for most Americans,” Alvarez said, adding that there is not a very large Cuban American presence locally. “It’s a beautiful country; I know many Americans who would love to go,” she said.

People the world over, though, do know and adore Cuba’s music.

“I am so grateful for the response,” Alvarez said of interest in the event so far. “I didn’t know how much people love Cuban music.”

Cuba’s distinctive musical styles and sounds, Fragoso said, “are the result of the mixing of the two grand cultures: Africa’s and Spain’s. Both of them contribute equally to the rhythm and melody of every musical note.”

Fragoso — known as “The Golden Voice of Cuba” — is a contralto singer with a deep background in music of various genres. She trained at the Franz Liszt Conservatory in Weimar, Germany, performs internationally, and has won numerous awards. She’s released 21 albums so far, and at the Woodside concert will be backed by a full band, the Afro-Cuban Jazz Cartel. She said her set for the evening will feature traditional songs and well-known Cuban favorites.

“Music like the Cuban traditional trova ... as well as other genres from Hispanic America. There’s also a few songs that people will recognize immediately, because they were very famous in this country, too,” she noted.

Fragoso has been based in Mexico for the past several years, her normally busy international performance schedule hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“In my case, like every musician, during the last year, the possibilities of doing live concerts have been reduced almost to zero, so I have dedicated myself to write more music and to continue my work as a professor through my online academy, where I have been able to help so many students for so many years,” she said.

She happily agreed to perform in Woodside at the request of Alvarez. The two grew up together in Cuba and have stayed in touch over the decades.

“Our families are very good friends from long ago. Her parents to my parents, her grandparents to my grandparents. She became very famous, and we kept the friendship,” Alvarez said.

She said some have been surprised to learn that a big name like Fragoso is performing at an intimate gig in Woodside.

“Putting this event together, when I went to see and talk to some musicians, many musicians in this area said, ‘I can’t believe that Argelia is coming here,’” she noted. “That is the value of friendship; she’s coming.”

The Sept. 25 event not only offers a musical “taste” of Cuba but a literal one as well. Before the concert, attendees will dine on authentic Cuban cuisine, courtesy of San Mateo restaurant Cuban Kitchen, and sip on beverages such as mojitos and coffee. To honor the multicultural friendship theme of the event, Woodside Bakery will provide dessert, including a cake boasting a special design featuring the American and Cuban flags in a heart shape.

Tickets are $99, and include both the 6 p.m. dinner and 7 p.m. concert. The event will be held outdoors, with social distancing in place.

Alvarez noted that a portion of the night’s proceeds will go to The Village Hub, to help fund a new full-time program and events coordinator position. The Village Hub is located at 3154 Woodside Road, on the campus of Woodside Village Church. It serves as a community gathering place, hosting classes, workshops, arts events and a coffee shop.

“I feel honored to bring my music to Woodside,” Fragoso said. “Particularly to this very special event and to support the reason behind it: friendship and gratitude.”

More information is available at thevillagehub.org/events-new.

Email Contributing Writer Karla Kane at karlajkane@gmail.com.
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After 20 years in Menlo Park, Koma Sushi now has a new home a few minutes away in Palo Alto, at sister restaurant Kanpai Sushi.

The building that housed Koma Sushi in Menlo Park is being demolished to make way for a mixed-use Allied Arts development.

“It’s sad that we have to move out of a place we’ve been at for a very long time. But it’s also exciting that we’re starting a new chapter,” owner Koichi Baba said.

In downtown Palo Alto, Koma Sushi customers can expect to still find their favorites at the 330 Lytton Ave. location. Everything will be under the Kanpai Sushi name, but both Koma and Kanpai will keep their respective teams and menus, featuring sushi, sashimi, udon, teriyaki, tempura, sake and more.

“The name is going to be different, but ... I want to make sure (customers) can see the same people working here, including myself,” Baba said. “All the employees are friends with regular customers.”

This isn’t Koma Sushi’s first move. The restaurant was originally located across the Dumbarton Bridge at the Fremont Hub shopping center, where Koma Sushi opened in March 1977.

“That was one of the oldest Japanese restaurants around Newark, Hayward and Fremont in the tri-city area,” Baba said. Baba recalls first hearing about the Bay Area restaurant when he was living in Tokyo, going to school at night to learn how to make sushi. Someone he met had a connection to Koma Sushi’s original owner in the United States. By that time, Baba had already been an exchange student to the U.S. twice, with stints studying at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and San Jose State University. He was eager to return.

“It’s been a dream for me, since my high school years. I always wanted to come to the United States and open a Japanese sushi restaurant,” Baba said.

Koma Sushi’s original proprietor, Riyoko Lingerfelt, told Baba there wasn’t even a BART line because the restaurant’s location was so far afield at that time. Nevertheless, Baba came to work for “Riyoko-san.”

“She’s a legend actually. She’s a very tough, strong woman. Back then, running and owning a restaurant as a woman was a tough thing, I think. Even now, and especially back then. Many women weren’t doing that,” Baba said.

In 1977, The Argus newspaper reported that Lingerfelt worked in restaurants her whole life, starting in Japan at her parents’ restaurant, and then continuing in the Bay Area where she ran Koma Sushi with her sister Sumako Kinoshita. They didn’t have a microwave oven, but they had a cook, and a friend who helped them make custom “koma” game pieces to decorate the restaurant.

Lingerfelt told the paper, “I thought I knew everything about the restaurant business when I decided to start my own.” She laughed, and continued, “But I was wrong. I’ve learned a lot since then, and I still have a lot to learn. It isn’t easy.”

The reporter asked Lingerfelt why she chose Fremont, to which she responded there were no other Japanese restaurants there.

“Of course, lack of competition is no guarantee of success, but with her charm and culinary ability, Riyoko just might make it!” the article concluded.

And she did. When Riyoko-san was ready to retire from the restaurant, Baba took over, and operated in the Fremont location for more than a decade.

“We had a very traditional, old-fashioned Japanese food menu, like sukiyaki that you almost never see right now,” Baba said.

When their Fremont building was demolished, Baba relocated Koma Sushi to Menlo Park and the menu evolved, specializing in sushi and more varieties of fish.

Since then, Baba and his wife, Noriko, have opened another restaurant in Portola Valley, and introduced a fusion menu at Kanpai Sushi in Palo Alto. Koma Sushi became a favorite of Flea Street owner Jesse Cool, and a long-standing family favorite. The Babas have seen some customers grow up there.

“They used to come here with small kids. Now they’re all adults, some have kids. Looking at the family history of the regular customers, I’m so proud,” Baba said.

Baba said he initially planned to retire after running the business for more than 30 years, but he plans to keep with it now, carrying on the spirit of a restaurant that’s now into its 44th year of continuous operation.

“It’s like we are beginning a new chapter in our history,” he said.

Koma Sushi is now a part of Kanpai Sushi at 330 Lytton Ave. in Palo Alto. Guests can dine at the restaurant indoors or out. Delivery and takeout are also available.

A platter of Amaebi, tuna, albacore, yellowtail tuna, salmon, surf clam, scallop and squid sashimi, served with fried Amaebi heads on a bed of shredded daikon radish, at Kanpai Sushi.

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Kanpai Sushi’s dragon roll has shrimp tempura and avocado inside and is topped with eel.

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Kanpai Sushi in Palo Alto has absorbed the staff and menu of Koma Sushi, which left Menlo Park because its building is being demolished for a development project.
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