Local school districts report record numbers of COVID-19 cases

In a week, Sequoia district had four times as many cases as in all of fall semester

By Angela Swartz

Over 700 COVID-19 cases over just five days in one high school district. Staffing shortages. During the first week back from winter break, local schools began to report record numbers of COVID-19 cases among students and staff amid the emergence of the highly contagious omicron variant.

Late last week, San Mateo County amended quarantine and isolation guidelines to align with the new, more lax, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines, which will result in shorter absences from school if someone tests positive or is exposed to the virus, which could help alleviate staffing challenges schools are facing.

The Sequoia Union High School District, which has roughly 11,000 students and staff members, reported a startling 710 cases its first week back, Jan. 3 to 7. That’s more than four times higher than the case count prior to winter break: the district reported there were about 175 cases in total during the entire fall semester.

The district updates its COVID-19 data dashboard every weekend.

Of the cases last week, 76 were among staff members, while 634 were among students. At 2,226-student Menlo-Atherton High School there were 191 cases (12 were staff). At the 1,752-student Woodside High School, there were 163 cases (9 were staff). At TIDE Academy in Menlo Park, there were 19 cases (three were staff).

“Once again, our country has been shaken by COVID-19 and its impact. While the country is paying close attention to omicron’s next move, educational leaders are staying abreast of health updates and putting systems in place to support the safety of students and staff,”

See SCHOOLS, page 19

Menlo Park’s city manager resigns just months before her planned retirement

The assistant city manager left for a Sunnyvale job on Dec. 31

By Kate Bradshaw

Menlo Park’s city manager Starla Jerome-Robinson has resigned and will work no later than Jan. 28. The City Council appointed Deputy City Manager Justin Murphy as the city’s new interim city manager on Jan. 11.

The news was announced by Genevieve Ng, legal counsel for the city, following a closed — not public — City Council session held Jan. 7.

Her resignation comes just months before her planned retirement. The move isn’t expected to materially alter her retirement benefits, she said. “From my perspective, this is a strategic decision that helps provide continuity between the end date of my contract and the start date of the new city manager,” she said in an email to The Almanac. “I care deeply about the community and the organization, and it was a difficult to make the decision to leave. I believe leaving early takes the time pressure off the City Council to make the new appointment and provides consistency for the organization. I highly regard Justin and know he will do an outstanding job.”

Jerome-Robinson leaves during a time of transition within the city’s executive leadership. Among the 10 positions that are considered to be part of that executive team, there are four vacancies, not including the city manager role, she said. Of those, two are filled with interim or acting appointees.

Menlo Park’s former Assistant City Manager, Nick Pegues, no longer works for the city, and ended his tenure there on Dec. 31. He began work on Jan. 12 with the city of Saratoga as administrative services director. In an email, he said that he has continued to “transition institutional knowledge” to Menlo Park’s administrative services department since his separation from his previous role.

“It’s a loss for the city that the city manager has decided to step down before her retirement, but I totally respect and understand the decision,” Councilman Drew Combs told The Almanac. “As I reflect on the city manager’s tenure I have to admit a degree of disappointment that some recent actions by my City Council colleagues made a challenging job even more challenging. As Mr. Murphy assumes this role in an interim capacity, my hope is that he’s afforded a bit more grace.”

Among those actions was the decision by three council members, Mayor Betsy Nash, Vice Mayor Jen Wolosin and Councilwoman Cecilia Taylor, to hold a closed session meeting last October without the knowledge of then-Mayor Drew Combs’ or Jerome-Robinson, to discuss a matter
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Local News

Betsy Nash, Menlo Park’s new mayor, lays out her priorities

By Kate Bradshaw

Betsy Nash, Menlo Park’s mayor for 2022, identified three key areas where she’s hoping to use her role to make an impact: climate action, downtown revitalization and community outreach, she said in a recent interview.

Nash represents Menlo Park’s District 4, which includes downtown, Allied Arts and a southern segment of El Camino Real.

“We’ve got so much on our plate now, and so many different transitions and opportunities. I really want to focus on what is already in front of us,” she said.

A significant goal named in the city’s 2030 climate action plan is to phase out gas power in buildings citywide, but how to do it is still being debated. “We need to find a way to electrify our buildings in Menlo Park,” Nash said. The city is also in the running to receive a $50 million grant to help build levees along the city’s Bayfront area to protect it from sea level rise.

In the area of downtown revitalization, community members can expect a number of changes in the coming year some of the projects that have been under construction near the city’s downtown area will be finished, according to Nash. Those include the Springline.

Residents who didn’t receive their boosters had twice the case rate of breakthrough infections when they failed to easily find test appointments elsewhere. Health care officials have been trying to redirect the test-seekers away from the ERs.

Cody and Rogers also said that vaccinations are significantly reducing hospitalizations. In a dramatic graph of hospitalizations by vaccination status of people ages 18 and older, Cody noted that the seven-day rolling average showed that hospitalizations among unvaccinated residents are 20 times higher compared with those who had been fully vaccinated in Santa Clara County.

Residents who didn’t receive their boosters had twice the case rate of breakthrough infections when they failed to easily find test appointments elsewhere. Health care officials have been trying to redirect the test-seekers away from the ERs.

San Mateo County Health Chief Louise Rogers said the load from the ERs. She said: “We are working through a difficult period in every sector, resulting in strains on the systems we all rely on. This is the highest number of cases we have ever experienced,” she said.

San Mateo County’s rate soared from an average of 79 new cases per day last week to 905 this week. On some days, the county had between 1,000 and more than 1,500 positive cases, she said.

In both counties, people have been flocking to hospital emergency rooms for COVID-19 tests, when they failed to easily find test appointments elsewhere. Health care officials have been trying to redirect the test-seekers away from the ERs.

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Atherton resident scares off attempted burglar

An Atherton resident scared off a person attempting to break into their home on Friday night, according to a town news bulletin.

Around 9:30 p.m. on Jan. 7, a would-be burglar climbed up the rain gutters at the back of a home on the 400 block of Walsh Road to try to break in, Sgt. Anthony Kockler said in an email. Police believe the intruder was scared off when the homeowner turned on backyard lights.

The suspect did not enter the house, but caused about $500 worth of damage. There is no suspect description or security footage available, Kockler said.

Police believe the attempted burglary got onto the property through the Sharon Heights Golf Club.

In November, someone broke into a home on the same block in Atherton. The burglar broke a fence in the process, causing “extensive water damage.” There were 45 residential burglaries in 2021, and there has been one attempted residential burglary in 2022, Kockler said.

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

—Angela Swartz

Portola Valley Town Hall closed to visitors until Jan. 18

Portola Valley’s Town Hall will remain closed until Tuesday, Jan. 18, while staff works remotely.

The town hopes the closure will help curb the rapid spread of the omicron variant.

Online resident services are available at portolavalleynet.net.

Las Lomitas district bond oversight committee recruiting

The Las Lomitas Elementary School District is searching for a community member to serve on the Citizens’ Oversight Committee for Bond Measures.

Find the application on llesd.org and email the completed application to mchan@llesd.org.

Part-time roles in the Las Lomitas district

The Las Lomitas Elementary School District is hiring for various part-time positions, including substitute teachers, bus drivers, paraeducators and playground monitors.

Apply at edjoin.org.

Vaping talk on Jan. 19

Erin Vogel, a senior research associate, at University of Southern California’s Keck School of Medicine will speak on how teenage use of tobacco, e-cigarettes, and vapes has changed during the pandemic on Wednesday, Jan. 19, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

The online talk will also touch on how social media influences the pandemic on Wednesday, Jan. 19, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. The online talk will also touch on how social media influences the pandemic on Wednesday, Jan. 19, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

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As COVID-19 cases spike, demand on county hospitals is ‘challenging but manageable’

By Astrid Casimire/Bay City News

Despite a surge of COVID-19 cases related to the new omicron variant, San Mateo County health officials say the hospital situation in the county is "challenging but manageable." During a meeting of the county’s Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, Jan. 11, San Mateo County Health chief Louise Rogers said that while health care workers are being affected by the virus, hospitals are not being impacted as badly as last winter.

"We’re still not at the level of last winter when we were actually over 200 in the hospital," Rogers said. Even then, hospitals were able to meet the high demand.

Now, as of Monday, there are 116 confirmed and suspected COVID-19 patients at county hospitals.

"We’re seeing that most of the demand is ... not for (intensive care unit) beds, and that we’ve been able collectively to maintain capacity," Rogers said.

Rogers said that hospitals can still increase capacity if needed as they have not taken steps such as canceling elective procedures.

However, amid the biggest surge in cases since the pandemic began, health care providers, pharmacies and county facilities are struggling to meet the high demand for testing.

According to Rogers, the county has a 16% test positivity rate. And in the past week, some days reported more than 1,000 positive cases. This may not even reflect the true number of positive cases.

"Many more residents than that are learning of a positive result through a positive rapid antigen test, which as you all know is not reflected in the data," Rogers said.

Some people have even been going to hospital emergency rooms with mild symptoms or to get tested, a practice that Rogers discouraged.

In response, the county has added more testing sites and ordered more test kits, such as 50,000 at-home antigen test kits which will be distributed to low-income families with young children, medically vulnerable residents and workers in care settings.

Schools have also upped their testing numbers, according to County Superintendent of Schools Nancy Magee.

Rogers said that residents are being affected by workers being affected by the virus as well.

"We’re still not at the level of last winter when we were actually over 200 in the hospital," Rogers said. Even then, hospitals were able to meet the high demand.

As the situation continues to evolve, Rogers said that hospitals can still increase capacity if needed as they have not taken steps such as canceling elective procedures.

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Community college district vice chancellor strikes a deal, pleads no contest to two felonies

Jose Nuñez faced 15 felonies, including embezzlement and perjury; investigation into college district is ongoing

By Bay City News Service

A San Mateo County Community College District vice chancellor has pleaded no contest to two felonies for using district resources for political purposes, San Mateo County prosecutors said Jan. 6.

Jose Nuñez, 69, entered the plea Jan. 5 as part of an agreement to cooperate with the county District Attorney’s Office in its investigation into the college district and to testify as a witness in any court proceedings.

Nuñez, who has served as the vice chancellor of facilities for 21 years at the district that oversees Skyline College, Cañada College in Woodside and the College of San Mateo, was charged last month with 15 felonies, including embezzlement and perjury.

The embezzlement charges were related to the awarding of a contract for a solar photovoltaic project at Cañada College while the perjury charges were for his alleged failure to report various gifts from district vendors over more than a decade, according to the District Attorney’s Office.

Prosecutors dropped those charges as part of the plea agreement, in which Nuñez admitted to using district resources for political purposes for the election of a district board member and for a bond measure for district projects.

He remains out of custody but faces a maximum sentence of three years and eight months in prison for the two felonies pending his cooperation in any future court proceedings in the District Attorney’s Office investigation into the district.

Nuñez’s defense attorney declined to comment on the plea agreement.

Following the announcement of charges filed against Nuñez in December, Ana Maria Pulido, director of public affairs for the community college district, said Nuñez is on administrative leave pending the legal process.

"The College District has an unwavering commitment to integrity, transparency, and accountability and supports the District Attorney’s goal of ensuring that these standards are met by all public officials," Pulido said. "The College District has cooperated with the investigation, and will continue to be available to the District Attorney’s Office."

The case was continued to July 15 to set a date for sentencing.
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Provides after-school academic support, enrichment, and mentoring for 1,800 low-income K-12 youth at nine locations across Menlo Park, East Palo Alto, and the North Fair Oaks neighborhood of Redwood City.

Ecumenical Hunger Program

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

Fair Oaks Community Center

This multi-service facility, serving the broader Redwood City community, provides assistance with child care, senior programs, citizenship and immigration, housing and employment, and crisis intervention. Programs are available in Spanish and English.

LifeMoves

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

Literacy Partners — Menlo Park

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

Ravenswood Family Health Center

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

Second Harvest Food Bank

The largest collector and distributor of food on the Peninsula, Second Harvest Food Bank distributed 52 million pounds of food last year. It gathers donations from individuals and businesses and distributes food to more than 250,000 people each month through more than 770 agencies and distribution sites in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.

St. Anthony’s Padua Dining Room

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

StarVista

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

Upward Scholars

Empowers low-income adults by providing them with financial support, tutoring, and other assistance so they can continue their education, get higher-paying jobs, and serve as role models and advocates for their children.
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**In Memory Of**

Donna Whitson                | $500     |
Doris & Jerry Carlson        |          |
Robby Babcock                | $100     |
Jean Zonner                  | $1,000   |
Bill Land                     |          |
Duncan Matteison             | $500     |
Paul Bosman                  |          |
Frank & Celine Halet         | $500     |
Bill Hewlett & Dave Packard  | $100     |
Bill Berka                   | $125     |

**In Honor Of**

Nancy Stevens                | $500     |
The David Uggert Family      |          |
Dennis McBride               | $1,000   |

**Businesses & Organizations**

Packard Foundation           | $15,000  |
Hewlett Foundation           | $8,750   |
Griffin & Sons Construction  | $100     |
Rotary Club of Menlo Park    | $10,000  |
Menlo Park Firefighters'     | $500     |
Association                  |          |

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

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

Volunteer Amy Galindo places dry goods into food packages that will be handed out to clients at Ecumenical Hunger Program in East Palo Alto on Nov. 22. EHP is one of 10 local nonprofits that benefit from contributions to The Almanac Holiday Fund.

‘Stunned by this generosity’: Anonymous donor gives $350,000 to Holiday Fund

Almanac and Palo Alto Weekly charitable giving campaigns benefit from the largest-ever donation in their history

A Silicon Valley philanthropist has made the largest-ever donation to the Almanac Holiday Fund and the Palo Alto Weekly Holiday Fund: $350,000, shared by the two charitable programs.

Working through the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, the philanthropist asked to remain anonymous while giving $250,000 to the Weekly’s and $100,000 to the Almanac’s funds.

Both annual campaigns raise money to support the vital work of local nonprofit organizations that serve kids, families and individuals in need.

“We’re stunned by this generosity,” said Bill Johnson, president and CEO of the Almanac’s parent company, Embarcadero Media. “We would like to thank this individual or family for showing such care and compassion during these very difficult pandemic times. The enormity of these gifts will enable the Holiday Fund to provide tangible help to many more nonprofits and significantly improve the lives of even more of our neighbors.”

This year, the Almanac Holiday Fund sought to raise $200,000. “It’s safe to say that, with this donation, that goal has been blown out of the water,” Johnson said. “We couldn’t be more appreciative.”

Every year, hundreds of local residents contribute to the Holiday Fund. Since the Almanac and Silicon Valley Community Foundation absorb all of the costs of the program, every dollar that is donated is distributed without any overhead or expenses deducted.

Last year, Almanac readers and foundations contributed $260,000, which was distributed equally among 10 nonprofit agencies.

In addition to individual gifts, the Holiday Fund program has enjoyed ongoing support from the Rotary Club of Menlo Park Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

To make a contribution or see a list of the nonprofits supported by the Holiday Fund, go online to almanacnews.com/holiday_fund.

—Almanac staff
Menlo Park residents David Fogel, Kirill Pertsev and Kaitlin Darke have filed a class action lawsuit looking for a refund of utility users taxes from the city of Menlo Park, alleging that the City Council has failed to properly reauthorize the tax collection since 2014.

Menlo Park’s Utility Users Tax (UUT) was approved by voters in 2006 and imposes a maximum 3.5% tax on gas, electrical and water usage and a maximum 2.5% tax on cable, telephone and wireless services, according to the city website. The taxes are collected by the utility service providers and sent monthly to the city’s finance division.

The taxes, which have been set at 1% since 2007, also set a cap of $12,000 for the total amount a user can pay for electric, gas and water utilities. In the 20-21 fiscal year, the city collected about $1.4 million in utility users taxes, and the amount collected annually since the 2012-13 fiscal year has generally fluctuated between roughly $1.1 million and $1.7 million.

An Oct. 28 demand letter by attorney James Pistorino on behalf of Fogel, Pertsev and Darke states that these residents are demanding that the city stop collecting utility users tax and provide a refund.

According to the lawsuit, filed Dec. 28, each person who paid Menlo Park’s utility users tax past Dec. 31, 2016, “is entitled to a refund (with interest) of all such monies paid.”

When asked whether Menlo Park residents might see a tax refund in their future, City Attorney Nira Doherty said in an email to The Almanac, “The City now has the opportunity to file a responsive pleading to the class action lawsuit. The lawsuit is in the very early stages, and any determinations on the allegations, including those related to a tax refund, would be premature.”

At the time the tax was approved in 2006, Pistorino writes in the initial demand letter, those pushing to have the measure passed argued that the city faced a recurring budget deficit of $2.2 million and needed the utility users taxes to avoid “drastic cuts” and help pay for police, emergency preparedness, libraries, street repairs, park maintenance and senior and youth programs.

The law passed by a narrow 67-vote majority.

In the municipal code, it says that the tax would need to be reauthorized every two years, and to be reauthorized, the City Council would have to, by a two-thirds majority, make findings that the tax is “necessary for the financial health of the city.” If it didn’t, the tax would be terminated at the end of the calendar year. That’s what happened when the council allegedly neglected to reauthorize the tax any time after 2016, Pistorino argues.

Furthermore, under the California Constitution, it says that governments are not permitted to “impose, extend, or increase any general tax unless and until that tax is submitted to the electorate and approved by a majority vote.” Since Menlo Park voters haven’t voted on it since the tax allegedly lapsed, the city is allegedly in violation of the state constitution, the lawsuit claims.

According to Pistorino, citing city documents he obtained, the City Council made the needed findings in 2008, 2010, 2012 and 2014, but hadn’t been made in 2016 or any year beyond that, and as a result, the UUT would have expired at the end of 2016 — which, by extension, means that any taxes collected after then were illegally collected.

The group bring forward the lawsuit is making it a class action lawsuit on behalf of all of the households who paid the utility users tax after its authorization lapsed; estimated to be more than 12,000 households or entities, according to the legal complaint.

The lawsuit requests that the judge determine that the UUT is no longer in effect, bar the city from collecting any more UUT, order the city to refund those taxes, including interest, and award the plaintiffs and class members litigation expenses and legal relief.

The claimants’ research into the UUT began after Aug. 31, 2021, when now Mayor Betsy Nash, Vice Mayor Jen Wolosin and Councilwoman Cecilia Taylor expressed favor toward increasing the utility users tax to the maximum 3.5% up from the current 1% rate to generate funds to help low-income households replace gas power with electric power. The votes “prompted increased scrutiny of the UUT itself and, as a result, this demand letter,” Pistorino wrote.

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

Council pays $3.9 million for parking lot to build new Caltrain crossing

As part of a long-term plan to help make Menlo Park more navigable for people traveling on bike or foot, the city has for years been working on a plan to build a Caltrain undercrossing at Middle Avenue.

That project took a step forward Jan. 11 when the City Council voted unanimously to spend roughly $3.9 million to purchase a parking lot along the Caltrain tracks near the current Big 5 location at 700 El Camino Real, a site that’s considered critical for planning the installed undercrossing ramp to descend beneath the train tracks.

The city has to pay the fair market value for the lot, which was estimated to be $210 per square foot, plus more for whatever assets exist there, and agreed to pay additional fees for construction easements to access the property while the undercrossing is being built.

Current estimates for the project now place it at $20 million; up from the $10 million estimated when Stanford agreed to pay 50% of the cost “up to $5 million.” According to the staff report, as part of its proposal to provide community benefits in exchange for development rights at its new Middle Plaza development project under way at 500 El Camino Real.

Beyond funding already set aside for the project, there is currently about a $7.5 million funding shortfall, according to staffers. They are continuing “to explore sources of revenue” to build the project, including from the federal level, regional and state grant programs or local funding sources like transportation impact fees, Measure A or Measure W funds.

The council also took action Jan. 11 to join forces with a county on a project to study how to improve bike and pedestrian safety for kids and other street users along Coleman and Ravenswood avenues and to join Commute.org, a countywide joint powers effort aimed at encouraging alternatives to solo driving commutes.

Council OKs joint safe routes study with county

A project to study how to improve bike and pedestrian safety at Coleman and Ringwood Avenues in Menlo Park passed a milestone when the City Council voted Jan. 11 to dedicate $225,000 and agree to split costs with the county of San Mateo, paying one-third of costs while the county pays the other two-thirds. The vote was 4-0 in favor, with Councilman Ray Mueller absent.

There are a number of schools near those streets, yet in the unincorporated area of Coleman avenue, there are no sidewalks, and on both sides of the street there are no bike facilities. The county and city aim to work together with a consultant to develop preferred concept designs for Ringwood Avenue between Middlefield Road and Bay Road and Coleman Avenue between Ringwood Avenue and Willow Road, with public engagement and outreach along the way, including the development of a technical advisory committee and a community advisory committee, according to a staff report.

The consultant firm, W-Trans, proposes to start the project in February and come up with a final study for approval by the county Board of Supervisors and City Council by summer 2023. Funding comes from the countywide 2018 eighth-cent sales tax measure, Measure W, aimed at boosting safety, fixing potholes and congestion relief.

Menlo Park to join Commute.org

The council also voted 4-0 Jan. 11, with Mueller absent, to join Commute.org, also known as the “Peninsula Traffic Congestion Relief Alliance,” which helps local employers to increase employee biking, walking, carpooling, and taking transit or sharing vans or shuttles to get to work. The group was organized in 2000 and over the years 17
WOODSIDE MAYOR
continued from page 5

Atherton for 35 years before moving to Woodside. He suggested the town host focus groups on what they’d like to see done with the town-owned property.

“We need to make sure the parking stays as rural as we can. ... We don’t have a mandate,” he said, adding that he is confident they can find a way to make it happen that is not going to “antagonize the 49.9% who said no.”

“I never dreamed the vote would be that close,” Brown said.

With the increased amount of outdoor dining in town during the pandemic, there is a lot more traffic in the Town Center are he noted. Measure A should help with building additional parking capacity.

Fire safety is also on Brown’s mind this year. Although no one in Portola Valley or Woodside was forced to evacuate because of the nearby CZU August Lightning Complex fires that burned over 86,000 acres, it was a wake-up call to the two small wooded towns that fire danger needs to remain top of mind. And fires are at the forefront of the minds of local officials and residents as temperatures rise.

Brown said that there is extreme fire danger on the hillsides and if the wind hadn’t changed direction, Woodside could have been consumed.

“We want to try to work more with the county, state and federal government to get more funding and programs in place to make a significant barrier,” he said.

In 2021, Woodside increased its police budget — by a little under $63,000 — to help address the volume of traffic in a town that’s en route to the beach and popular destination for cyclists in the summer months, he said.

Neighboring Atherton has installed nearly 50 automated license plate readers to combat a recent string of residential burglaries. Although Woodside hasn’t seen a similar spike in crime, the Town Council will consider installing its own. Since the town is surrounded by others with license plate readers (including Portola Valley and Palo Alto), Woodside could become a target for such crime since they don’t have any, Brown said.

Finally, he said he hopes to bring back annual events like Woodside’s May Day Parade and the Fourth of July rodeo that have been canceled since the pandemic began.

“We can all get out and celebrate what’s special about Woodside,” he said. □

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

COMMUNITY BRIEFS
continued from page 6

have credentials. The order also extends the length of time substitute teachers can be assigned to a class to 120 days and allows more flexibility for retired teachers to work as substitutes.

Districts must submit a “written finding” that the more flexible rules will allow them to maintain in-person instruction despite staffing shortages.

Anti-price gouging order for home COVID tests
Gov. Gavin Newsom signed an executive order this weekend aimed at preventing price gouging on COVID-19 at-home test kits, which are in high demand due to the omicron variant surge.

The order generally prohibits sellers from increasing prices on the test kits by more than 10%. State Attorney General Rob Bonta issued a consumer alert following the governor’s signing of the order and encouraged anyone who has been a victim of price-gouging on at-home COVID-19 test kits to file a complaint with his office or contact local law enforcement.

Sellers who haven’t previously sold-at-home COVID-19 test kits may not sell them for 50% more than what the seller paid for them. Violation of the order is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to $1,000 or imprisonment for up to six months, or both. Violations would also constitute a violation of the Unfair Competition Law, which is subject to a $2,500 per violation civil penalty.

Price-gouging complaints can be filed at oag.ca.gov/report.

Stanford Blood Center seeks donors amid a shortage
Stanford Blood Center is seeking new blood donors in light of a significant increase in cancellations from the current COVID-19 surge, wrote Harpreet Sandhu, executive director of the center, in a letter on Tuesday.

Sandhu said the center only has a few days of blood on hand as regular donors are falling ill and companies initiate stricter visitor onsite policies.

Sagone said the demand at the hospitals has increased, and shows no signs of slowing down in the coming weeks,” Sandhu said in a statement.

New donors can check their eligibility at 888-723-7831 or stanfordbloodcenter.org/eligibility. Appointments can be made online at sbcdonor.org.

—Buy City News Service

OBITUARIES
Local residents who died recently include Alfred Neiman, 90, a longtime Menlo Park resident and board member of the Ladera Community Association, on Dec. 22; Katherine Sonett Kahrs, 95, a former Menlo Park resident; and John MacDonald Oda Burns, 90, former rector of Christ Church Portola Valley Woodside, on Jan. 1.

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

Birt Harvey
November 24, 1928 – December 20, 2021

Birt Harvey died in his home on December 20, 2021. He was 93. He had a remarkable life, touching the lives of countless children and families along the way.

Birt was born in Teheran to Ethel LaVal and Malcolm Mognihan when he was 6 months old, the family returned to New York. He grew up a solid Giants fan, walking to games at the Polo Grounds as a young child.

He attended Manhasset High School where he played lacrosse and ran track. He got his undergraduate degree from Columbia University and then attended NYU medical school, where he met and married his wife of 60 wonderful years, Doris Roberts. After an internship in Denver, two years in the Air Force in Ohio, and the birth of their first son, they moved to San Francisco where he completed his pediatric residency at Stanford and added two more children to the family.

The family moved back to NYC where he completed a chief residency at Babies Hospital at Columbia. They had planned to remain in New York, but their enjoyment of their time in Palo Alto, the challenges of bundling multiple babies into snowsuits every morning plus the relocation of the Giants from New York to San Francisco were enough to woo the family back to a pediatric practice on Welch Road. Shortly after the move to Palo Alto, their fourth and fifth child were added to the family.

Dr. Harvey took care of children in a private practice in Palo Alto for 30 years. During much of that time, he ran the pediatric pulmonary clinic at Stanford and took on roles that enabled him to advocate for children’s health needs. He was instrumental in setting up the Child Health and Disability Prevention program which funds well child visits for millions of low income children in California.

Dr. Harvey served on the American Board of Pediatrics, was elected President of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and was a member of the National Academy of Medicine and of the American Pediatric Society. He chaired the Board of Trustees of the Johnson and Johnson Pediatric Institute and was on the boards of the Children’s Environmental Health Network and the Children’s Advocacy Institute, as well as on advisory committees to the CDC and the EPA.

Over the years, Dr. Harvey served on the Voluntary Clinical Faculty at Stanford and at UCSF before eventually joining the full time faculty at Stanford as Professor and Associate Chair in the Department of Pediatrics. He published many articles and book chapters, as well as serving on several editorial boards and as Associate Editor of the journal, Pediatrics. He received numerous awards for his outstanding service. He also provided exceptional pediatric care to many local kids, specializing in treating children with cystic fibrosis.

Beyond his career accomplishments, Birt knew how to have a good time. He and Doris had a supportive, caring, complimentary relationship. Together, they enjoyed TheatreWorks, the San Francisco Opera, the Symphony, and traveling, managing to see over 50 countries. After Doris’s death in 2011, he continued to travel until COVID restrictions made it impossible. Birt additionally enjoyed Giants games and loved his weekly poker nights. He read voraciously and enjoyed his book group. More recently, he enjoyed playing bridge. He moved to the Vi, a senior living facility, in 2013 and was fortunate to find love again, enjoying the company of Gayle Riggs for the remainder of his life. While he lived at the Vi, his social life flourished – so much so that his family always had to plan far ahead to reserve a spot in his busy social calendar.

He is survived by his five children: Brit (Jamie Chau), Kim (Kevin Coleman), Ann (Francesca Cunningham), Paul and Tom, and his grandchildren, Allison (Kartik Darapuneni) and Megan Coleman and Colina Harvey, his brother John (Madeline) and his sister Nancy (Neuman).

We all love and miss him dearly, but take comfort in knowing that his was definitely a life well lived and full of love.

We will likely have a gathering to celebrate what’s special about Birt’s life sometime in the spring, COVID allowing.

In lieu of flowers please donate to a charity of your choice, preferably one that supports children.
Sequoia district officials to make plea for ‘immediate’ government aid amid COVID surge

District also bumps pay for teachers covering for absent colleagues

By Angela Swartz

With a surge of COVID-19 cases, the Sequoia Union High School District governing board planned to meet Jan. 13 to urge government officials to “immediately” dedicate emergency public health workers and funding to the district amid staffing shortages, a need for help administering COVID-19 tests and more. The teachers union head is also reiterating that the district is increasing pay for teachers who cover absent teachers’ classes.

The district reported a startling 710 cases just last week upon students’ return from winter break. A resolution, which the board was set to vote on Thursday afternoon after The Almanac’s press deadline, asks the state and federal government to deploy emergency public health care workers and staff to the district so it can have adequate COVID-19 tests, testing services, vaccination clinics and medical services.

The resolution notes that California’s public schools are not staffed, funded and “adequately trained” to provide public health department services. The district also needs the state to offer additional COVID-19-related leave to employees who have to quarantine if they test positive, the district said.

According to the resolution: “Contact tracing, COVID-19 testing, administration, and staffs’ symptoms of potential illness, safety mitigation resources, and safety protocol mandates have burdened public school staff with additional responsibilities well beyond their staffing, funding, resources, and training, and have thereby shifted the focus of public schools, teachers, and staff from educating students to instead prioritizing the performance of public health department duties and functions.”

As a result, school districts are struggling to meet the staffing shortages and demands caused by the pandemic. “Immediate and significant staff and support from state and federal agencies and officials is an emergency need for our public schools,” the resolution said.

On Jan. 12, Superintendent Darnise Williams said in a statement that “given the ever-evolving reality created by COVID, it is critical that the community view the steps the district is taking to keep our schools safe.”

Teacher pay

The Sequoia District Teachers Association (SDTA) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on Wednesday morning, Jan. 12, to raise the pay rate for teachers who cover another teacher’s class, according to

teachers union president Edith Salvatore, in an email.

With this MOU, the district is recognizing the much “higher rate of in-house coverage” that members are providing and they have set the compensation at $75 per 50-minute period and $150 for an 85-minute “block” period, retroactive to the beginning of the school year and lasting through the end of the year, she said.

By contract, the rate for an SDTA bargaining unit member to cover the vacant class for a colleague is set at 25% of the daily sub rate (50% for a block class). At the beginning of this school year, that meant that teachers were earning $41.25 daily/$82.50 for a block class. In November, the district raised the sub rate to $240/day, meaning coverage rates went up to $460/$920 by contract.

“We have only just communicated this to our members, but I believe it will help morale,” Salvatore said. “And while we agree that the state or federal government should definitely be providing COVID sick leave (since it is, at this point, the price of doing business if the state wishes to keep schools open for in-person learning), we don’t think the district should wait for that to be resolved before committing to cover COVID absences for our members who have been forced to quarantine already this year.”

If the state agrees to provide leave, the budgets can be adjusted, but it’s important that members know now that their accumulated leave will be kept intact or, if they’ve already exhausted that leave, that they won’t have their daily pay deducted should they be
Coronavirus central: Santa Clara County officials agree to keep schools open

By Embarcadero Media staff

The Santa Clara County Office of Education and Public Health Department agree that keeping schools open and in class full-time is important during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Officials said that school districts in the county may no longer offer remote or virtual learning in lieu of in-person instruction, stating that students learn best when they are amongst their peers and have access to school resources.

"Keeping our students, staff, and families safe remains our top priority," Dr. Mary Ann Dewan, county schools superintendant, said. "We are working alongside our school districts to protect in-person learning and practice the appropriate safety protocols."

"The good news is that the cases we are seeing from omicron are milder than previous COVID cases," said Dr. Sara Cody, the county’s public health director. "We have also learned that we need to find ways to coexist and live with COVID. We have learned a lot from the previous two years."

Cody and Dewan said it is Santa Clara County’s goal to ensure that students receive a solid, in-person education.

San Mateo County Sheriff’s Office updates procedures at correctional facilities due to COVID

The San Mateo County Sheriff’s Office and San Mateo County Correctional Health Services on Thursday implemented updated procedures at correctional facilities to protect employees and incarcerated people from COVID-19, including the highly contagious omicron variant.

The updated procedures include:

- All in-person visits have been canceled until further notice with the exception of attorney visits and court-ordered visits.
- In-person programs have been canceled until further notice, and there will be no in-person meetings or large gatherings except for emergencies.
- Newly arrived incarcerated people will be quarantined per CDC guidelines, and all correctional staff will be required to take COVID-19 tests once per week. All arrestees will be screened outside the facility and will be isolated if they display symptoms of COVID-19.

Comprehensive COVID-19 coverage


—Bay City News Service contributed to this report.

Craving a new voice in Peninsula dining?

Every other week, top local food reporter Sara Hayden provides insight into the latest openings and closings, what she’s eating that she’s excited about, interviews with chefs and the trends affecting local restaurants.

SEQUOIA continued from page 12

forced to quarantine in order to safeguard student and community health, she said.

Recent district actions during the pandemic

The district also outlined the measures it’s taken to keep schools open, including:

- Maintain partnership with Worksite Labs for testing and contact tracing.
- Offer mass testing for students and employees on Monday, Jan. 17, through Sunday, Jan. 24, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- Deploy district office staff to schools to assist with classroom coverage.
- If state or federal law does not provide additional COVID-19 related leave this school year, the district will negotiate with its labor partners regarding COVID-19 leave for purposes of quarantining employees that test positive for COVID-19. The district will rely on emergency response package funding, if available, for such leave.
- Encourage community members and parents to apply for employment with the district to temporarily fill COVID-19-related vacancies (such as substitute teachers or custodians). The district temporarily suspended contact tracing because it doesn’t have enough staffing to cover the surge in cases, according to the resolution.
- Prior to winter break, the district will also temporarily suspend contact tracing because it doesn’t have enough staff to cover the surge in cases, according to the resolution.
- During the entire fall semester.
- It doesn’t have enough staffing to cover the surge in cases, according to the resolution.


—Bay City News Service contributed to this report.

Email Staff Writer Angela Swartz at aswartz@almanacnews.com.
dr. Anthony Fauci: ‘Many more children will be infected’

Omicron will cause hospitalizations to spike, the nation’s top doctors say

By Sue Dremann

Children are likely to be among the most frequently infected by the COVID-19 omicron variant, which is sweeping the nation and the Bay Area, health leaders said during a White House press conference on Jan. 5.

With 96% of schools open for in-person learning and children younger than 5 not yet approved for a vaccination, the numbers of cases are bound to increase.

Sick patients could again fill up hospital beds despite the lesser severity of omicron symptoms, said Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. “Many more children will be infected,” Fauci said.

The omicron variant comprises an estimated 95% of cases in the U.S., with the previously ubiquitous delta variant now accounting for 5%, according to Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The infections are also spreading rapidly, with waves of cases breaking records on a daily basis.

Nationally, there are currently 491,700 new cases per day, an increase of 98% over the prior week, Walensky noted.

The seven-day average of hospital admissions nationwide is about 14,800 per day, an increase of about 63% above the previous week. The seven-day average of daily deaths is about 1,200 per day, an increase of about 3% over the prior week, Walensky said.

Omicron symptoms are thought to be less severe than the delta and other prior variants, according to international studies and preliminary data from Texas. Omicron also differs from previous variants by getting into upper-bronchial and airway secretions, but not the lungs, Fauci said.

While there are indications the omicron causes fewer hospitalizations and less need to put patients on oxygen, there’s a caveat, he said. Increased transmission rates will result in an increase in hospitalizations.

With more cases, Fauci said, “A certain proportion are going to be severe.”

The number of hospitalizations appears to be growing in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties. Santa Clara County saw a 17% increase in hospitalizations from COVID-19 in one day, from Jan. 3 to Jan. 4 and San Mateo County had a nearly 9% increase during the same days, according to the California Department of Public Health COVID-19 Hospital Dashboard.

In the course of a week through Jan. 4, Santa Clara County had a 76.5% increase in hospitalizations from San Mateo County’s hospital rate increased 67.8% in the same week, according to the state data.

Vaccination and its protective benefits

Federal officials are changing their strategies to stem deluges of cases almost as quickly as the virus is mutating into variants. On Monday, Jan. 3, the Food and Drug Administration shortened the recommended span of time between the second Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccination and a booster shot to five months instead of six for anyone older than 12.

The FDA on Monday also approved the emergency use authorization for the Pfizer booster dose for children ages 12 to 15. On Wednesday, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention followed the recommendation of its Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices to allow boosters for that age group.

The CDC has recommended that 5- to 11-year-old children with compromised immune systems should receive a booster shot 28 days after their second shot of the Pfizer vaccine, said Jeff Zients, White House COVID-19 response coordinator.

COVID-19 vaccines haven’t yet been approved for children younger than 5 years old, but clinical studies of children ages six months to 5 years are underway. Results could be in by the earlier part of the year, Fauci said.

Given the high degree of omicron’s transmissibility, Fauci said the best way to protect young children who cannot receive a vaccine is to have them wear a mask if they are able to tolerate one in congregate settings or to surround them with people who are vaccinated.

Anyone who can be vaccinated and receive boosters should do so to reduce the most severe effects. Large studies in Israel comparing people who received boosters with those who were fully vaccinated found a booster dose reduced infection by a factor of 10 in all age groups.

Individuals older than 60 who were boosted showed an 18-times increase in severe disease compared to those who had only received the two-shot regimen. Severe disease in people ages 40 to 59 years old decreased by 85%, while people who received a booster shot had a 90% lower death rate due to COVID-19 than those who did not receive a booster shot, she noted.

Although the Israeli research was done with the delta variant, health leaders think the same will hold true for the omicron variant, Walensky said.

How the federal government is responding

The Biden administration has been ramping up measures to prevent infections. It provided $130 billion in American Rescue Plan funding to schools to implement prevention measures, including ventilation and social distancing, and an additional $10 billion to support testing in schools, Zients said.

The administration has also added military doctors, nurses, and emergency medical technicians to assist local hospital staff throughout the country and additional teams are ready to be sent as needed, he said.

On Jan. 4, President Joe Biden announced he has instructed the COVID-19 response team to double the government’s purchase of the Pfizer antiviral pill from 10 million treatment courses to 20 million. The administration expects it will have the first 10 million treatment courses by the end of June instead of the end of September, Zients said.

“These pills can dramatically decrease hospitalizations and deaths and are a game-changer, with the potential to alter the impact of COVID on people and on our nation,” he said.

Meanwhile, many pharmacies are running out of at-home, rapid COVID-19 test kits and there are often long appointment wait times at public facilities. Zients said turn-around times are also deteriorating for lab-test results due to staffing issues. The Biden administration’s promised 500 million free at-home, rapid COVID-19 tests won’t be available until some time later in January. But the government won’t cannibalize the stock going to pharmacies to fill its own test-kit quota, he said.

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TOWN OF ATHERTON
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given that the Atherton Planning Commission will hold a public hearing to consider a recommendation to the City Council on adoption of an Ordinance governing the development of qualified Senate Bill 9 subdivisions and development projects on single-family properties within the Town of Atherton.

This meeting will be held via teleconference only pursuant to Government Code section 54953(e) to provide the safest environment for staff and the public while allowing for public participation. The public may participate in the Planning Commission Meeting via Zoom Meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting:
https://zoom.us/j/147031861
Meeting ID: 147-031-861
Dia Ln: +1 669 900 6833, 147031861

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

Description: The Planning Commission is considering a recommendation to the City Council for adoption of an Ordinance governing the development of qualified Senate Bill 9 subdivisions and development projects on single-family properties within the Town of Atherton. The establishment of these regulations will result in the orderly subdivision and development of qualified Senate Bill No. 9 (2021) (“SB 9”) projects while ensuring that the new units are consistent with the existing development patterns of the Town and do not create any significant impacts with regards to public infrastructure or public safety. A copy of the meeting agenda, staff report and draft Ordinance can be found online by Thursday, January 20, 2022 here: https://www.ci.atherton.ca.us/Archive.aspx?AMID=44&Type=Recent

The proposal has been determined to be exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to CEQA Section 15378(a), which defines projects subject to these provisions. The proposal does not meet the definition of a project.

Notice is further given that said Ordinance is set for hearing by the Planning Commission at its meeting on January 26, 2022 at 6:00 PM via teleconference accessible through the above described information, at which time and place all persons interested may participate and show cause, if they have any, why the Ordinance should or should not be recommended for approval.

If you challenge any actions taken to prepare a recommendation to the City Council on adoption of a decision ordinance in court, you should be prepared to raise only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing described in this notice, or in written correspondence delivered to the Planning Commission at, or prior to, the public hearing.

Planning Commission decisions are appealable by any aggrieved person to the City Council within 10 days of the date of the decision.

If you have any questions on the item, please contact Ralph Robinson, Assistant Planner, at ralph@ci.atherton.ca.us or 650-732-0544. Any attendee who wishes accommodation for a disability should contact the Building Division at (650) 732-0542 at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.

Date Published: January 14, 2022
Date Posted: January 13, 2022

ATHERTON PLANNING COMMISSION
/ts/ Lisa Costa Sanders
Lisa Costa Sanders, Town Planner

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The Almanac ■ AlmanacNews.com ■ January 14, 2022
Unboosted: California COVID-19 booster rate falls below 40% in most counties

By Kristen Hwang and Ana B. Ibarra/CalMatters

Hospitals are at capacity. COVID-19 infections are at record highs. Testing lines stretch for hours. Yet even as the omicron variant batters the state, only 38% of vaccinated Californians have gotten a booster shot.

As with initial vaccinations, acceptance of the booster shot has varied throughout California: Counties in the far north and rural areas continue to see lower numbers, with as few as 23% of vaccinated people getting a booster in Mariposa, Colusa and Merced counties, according to a CalMatters analysis of state data.

The Bay Area boasts the highest rate, at 55%, and only three counties have more than half of their vaccinated population currently boosted: San Francisco, Marin and San Mateo. In 19 California counties, less than a third of eligible residents are boosted.

In Imperial County — the border community that led the state in vaccination rates last spring after it was hit hard by the virus — only a quarter of eligible residents have gotten a booster shot. The health officer there blames “pandemic fatigue.”

“I do think there’s been some fatigue after nearly two years of this pandemic, not just in Imperial County, but everywhere,” said Helen Hwang, Imperial County’s health officer on Jan. 7.

People want to get back to their normal lives. They want to go to work, they want to take care of their families. It’s kind of like, well, gosh, I got my two doses, why do I have to get another one?

It’s not just people in rural counties where a majority of people have refused so far to get the extra shot. Even in permanent developments such as San Diego, San Bernardino and Riverside are lagging behind.

State and federal recommendations for booster shots have changed several times, making them difficult for the public to follow. Current guidance advises a booster for all adults, while children as young as 12 can only get an additional Pfizer shot. Immuno-compromised children as young as 5 are also eligible for another Pfizer dose.

Studies show an additional dose can double protection against infection and is highly effective against severe disease and hospitalization even against the omicron variant, said UC San Francisco epidemiologist George Rutherford.

“Run, don’t walk, to go get your boosters,” Fresno County Health Officer Dr. Rais Vohra said.

Most older adults throughout the state have listened to the advice: Nearly 64% have been boosted. In Marin County, as many as 80% of those 65 and older have been boosted, and only four counties have boosted fewer than half of their older population.

But for younger Californians, getting an additional dose is far less common. Only 47% of those aged 50-64 have been boosted. Forty-four counties have boosted less than half their population in this age group.

“The case spikes are being driven by the unvaccinated, which are 25 to 45 years old, “ said Imperial County Health Officer Munday. According to the state health department, the state stockpile currently has doses — a 39-day supply. MyTurn, the state’s vaccination portal, recently added booster shots for children ages 12-15.

“Omicron is here. We can’t abandon the tools that have allowed California to be one of the safest states throughout the pandemic. Those are vaccines and boosters,” Health and Human Services Secretary Dr. Mark Ghaly said during an update Wednesday.

All-patient hospitalizations are approaching 51,000 people, a number just shy of the peak capacity reached during last winter’s surge. Approximately 8,000 of those patients are COVID-19 cases.

“To those who haven’t been vaccinated at all: Get your vaccine as quickly as you can. And then go get your booster. If you have been vaccinated but haven’t been boosted, please consider getting boosted,” Ghaly said.

In Fresno, where COVID-19 hospitalizations and hospitalizations are rising, according to state data, North of Fresno, officials in Mariposa County are relying heavily on the state’s MyTurn portal to distribute booster shots. Less than a quarter of eligible residents have been boosted.

Fresno County Health Officer Dr. Eric Sergienko said massive vaccine clinics have subsided due to decreased demand, fewer resources and privacy concerns in their small community.

“Rather than doing clinics with hundreds, we have clinics through MyTurn that are booked out with 30 to 100 people at our scheduled clinics on Tuesdays and Thursdays,” Sergienko said.

Cases and hospitalizations in Mariposa County have trended younger with a majority of cases occurring among those ages 20-29. A majority of hospitalizations among unvaccinated people ages 40 to 55, department spokeswoman Lizz Darcy said.

The statewide surge in infections and hospitalizations is expected to peak during the third week of January, experts say. Hospitalizations remain substantially below pre-vaccine levels.

Community organizations and health centers, which have been at the forefront of vaccine education and distribution, say interest in the booster has increased during this current surge.

“It seems our community is much more receptive to receiving the booster than they were originally to get the first dose,” said Bryant Macias, emergency relief supervisor at the United Farmworkers Foundation, which has advocated for priority doses for farmworkers and organize clinics.

“The main challenges we have identified are individuals not knowing how long they need to wait before getting the booster shot, whether or not they can get a booster that is different from their initial vaccine, and some folks only wanting the booster if it’s the same kind as their initial dose.

In agricultural counties, like those in the Central Valley, workplace vaccine clinics played an important role in increasing access last spring. Those events for boosters may not be as visible yet because it’s the off season for many crops. But they’re in the plans, said Irene de Barracuda, director of operations with Líderes Campesinas, a network of farm workers based in Nordan.

“We’ve heard from counties and work groups that are enthusiastic about continuing these efforts,” she said.

development at 1300 El Camino Real, which has residential units expected to open in the spring, with offices and retail set to open shortly thereafter, according to Nash, and the Guild Theatre, which is expected to open in February.

After the new city manager is selected, he or she will also be able to work toward hiring a new economic development manager — work that is currently being done by a consultant. Nash and community development director, according to Nash. She also favors exploring the idea of adding more housing units downtown, such as above retail on Santa Cruz Avenue or using parking lots, possibly for affordable housing, and finding other ways to accommodate parking demand.

When it comes to community outreach, it’s a thing all cities struggle with, she said.

“We need to do a better job reaching residents in Menlo Park who aren’t typically plugged into city activities,” she said. “Communication is one of the most important things local government can do.”

Steps to improve communication might include providing citizens more ways to make efforts to “make everyone feel welcome,” she added.

Among the projects ahead of the City Council this year include hiring an independent city manager — the Council intends to name Deputy City Manager Justin Murphy as interim city manager at its Jan. 11 meeting. It is beginning the environmental review process for the city’s new housing plan and developing a plan to improve the city’s safety and environmental justice practices, among many other to-do items, Nash said.

With some of the downtown street closures, there have been more people walking and cycling around, which has put pressure on the city’s bike and pedestrian infrastructure, she said. Figuring out how to keep streets safe and comfortable for people is the next step.

Other projects expected to move forward in the coming months include:

• Quiet zones. A request for proposals for consultants to conduct a feasibility study is expected to be released shortly, according to Nash. The request is expected to ask contractors to figure out what it would take, how much it would cost, and what could be accomplished by making the rail crossings in Menlo Park “quiet zones” where Caltrain doesn’t blare its horn whenever it passes through.

• Middle Plaza bike crossing. Sometime in January, the city is expected to receive an update. There have been some challenges working with Caltrain and its electrification plans, said Nash. “We’ve been able to move that ahead as quickly as we would have liked.”

• Redistricting. The City Council redistricting process has happened simultaneously to that of the City Council. Menlo Park’s Independent Redistricting Commission has a number of upcoming meetings to draw district boundaries citywide based on the 2020 U.S. Census data and is expected to select a final map by the April 17 deadline.

• New city manager. The application period for Menlo Park’s next city manager is expected to close as soon as the end of the week, after which the council plans to review applicants and conduct interviews, according to Nash. The city announced Friday, Jan. 7, that City Manager Starla Jerome- Robinson tendered her resignation effective immediately for medical reasons.

“We’ve got so many opportunities in front of us. We’ve got a chance to have a really great year,” Nash said. “I think Menlo Park is such a special place. We have to keep building on that.”

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

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have been vaccinated.

Vaccines and boosters are “a very, very, very, very important part” of staving off infections and reducing the severity of illness in breakthrough cases. The data “shows how well vaccines reduce your chance of becoming a case,” she said.

But Cody added the reputed “mildness” of the omicron variant can be deceiving. The word “mild” has a different meaning to doctors than to patients. When doctors talk of a mild infection, they are speaking about not ending up in the hospital or on oxygen, Cody noted.

“That’s different than a layperson thinking they get to watch TV in bed and drink a hot beverage,” she said.

So far, the death rate has been relatively flat, another possible benefit of vaccinations. Currently, Santa Clara County has five to 10 deaths per week. In early January 2021, when vaccines were not widely available, 160 residents died, Cody noted.

Cody and Rogers are cautiously optimistic the death rate in the current surge — the fifth since the pandemic began — will be significantly lower due to the high numbers of vaccinated residents in both counties and the omicron variant’s possibly less severe infection. The next few weeks will show where the numbers are headed.

Rogers noted the hospital system could still be overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of people who become infected by the more transmissible omicron strain. A certain percentage of those people will have severe illness, she noted.

If there’s good news, it’s that transmission rates of COVID-19 are relatively low in schools. Most children are becoming infected at family gatherings, Nancy Magee, San Mateo County’s superintendent of schools, told the supervisors.
allegedly related to Jerome-Robinson’s performance.

Other council members highlighted Jerome-Robinson’s longtime service to the city.

“I can’t express enough thanks to Starla Jerome-Robinson,” Councilman Ray Mueller said. “She came out of retirement and led the city for over three and a half years, and led us through the pandemic ... I’m incredibly thankful for her service with the city.”

“We are going to miss Starla. She has been an important part of our city government for many years. She has helped us work through the difficulties of the COVID pandemic,” Mayor Nash said in a statement provided to The Almanac. “Starla is a long-time resident of Menlo Park and I look forward to seeing her around town.”

Vice Mayor Wolosin said she appreciated her years of service and wished her well in retirement.

“I appreciate Starla for coming out of retirement to serve Menlo Park. And I thank her for dealing with the unprecedented challenges over the past two years,” Councilwoman Taylor said.

Murphy, a longtime city employee, is now the new interim city manager. He began working for Menlo Park as an associate planner in 1996 before rising through the ranks as a development services manager, assistant community development director, public works director, and most recently, deputy city manager, a role he has been serving in for nearly three years, according to LinkedIn. He holds a bachelor’s degree from Stanford University in urban studies and a Master of Public Administration degree from the Harvard Kennedy School.

The City Council has selected The Hawkins Group to conduct a nationwide search for a new city manager and the application period recently closed. Over the next few months, the council plans to consider applications for the permanent city manager position, according to a press statement.

When a new permanent city manager hire would begin work is still unclear. Often, Jerome-Robinson said, there is a lag time of roughly six to eight weeks before they begin, as they need time to wind up their old jobs and take a break before starting the new position.

“While it’s possible the new (city manager) could start by April 1, it seems unlikely,” she said.

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

Starla Jerome-Robinson, works at her desk at Menlo Park City Hall on April 10, 2019. She tendered her resignation as city manager on Dec. 27.

Justin Murphy, deputy city manager, was appointed as interim city manager in Menlo Park on Jan. 11.

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New law adds mental health to school curriculum

By Carolyn Jones/Bay City News

Health classes in California high schools will soon cover more than nutrition and exercise. Thanks to a new law that went into effect Jan. 1, students will learn about depression, schizophrenia, mood disorders and other serious mental health conditions.

Senate Bill 224 requires all school districts that offer health classes to include mental health as part of the curriculum. The California Department of Education has until Jan. 1, 2023 to incorporate mental health into the state standards, and districts have until Jan. 1, 2024 to begin teaching the new material.

"Hopefully this will change lives," said State Sen. Anthony Portantino, D-La Canada Flintridge, sponsor of the bill. "That ninth-grader who's inspired by a health class may go on to save a peer's life. Everyone one of us touches so many people in our lives, we see this as having an exponential benefit."

Health classes are not mandatory in California high schools, but about 60% of districts offer a health course that includes lessons on nutrition, exercise, substance abuse, sexual health, injury prevention, healthy relationships and other health-related topics.

The standards also include mental health, but the new legislation takes the subject a step further, to cover more serious conditions such as schizophrenia, eating disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder and bipolar disorder. The curriculum will explore causes and symptoms of mental illness, as well as treatment and how to advocate for friends or family members who need help. Substance abuse and its relationship to mental health will also be part of the curriculum.

No additional funding is available through the bill, but the financial impact is expected to be minimal. The California Department of Education will create the new curriculum, and schools that don't already offer health classes will not be required to add them.

Portantino, whose brother died of suicide a decade ago, has long advocated for mental health education. The new law, he said, will empower young people to talk about mental illness, recognize the signs and provide help for those who need it.

"Teenagers are much more likely to listen to someone at school than a lecture from mom or dad," he said. "Our hope is that this encourages that peer-to-peer advocacy and support, and it will have wide-reaching effects."

Even before the pandemic, young people were facing myriad mental health challenges due to social media, school shootings, social injustice, racial inequity and increasing uncertainty about the future. In 2019, a third of high school students reported persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness, according to the Centers for Disease Control. After nearly two years of Covid, those feelings have intensified for many students, especially those who've felt isolated or struggled with distance learning and economic hardship.

A California youth advocacy group called Generation Up and the National Alliance on Mental Illness, said SB 224 is a good start in warning about the mental health of young people, urging schools, health care companies and other institutions to do a better job supporting young people's emotional health and self-esteem.

"Access to high-quality counseling, instruction on stress management and emotional regulation, limits on social media and video games, and access to physical health care are among the surgeon general's recommendations. Supporting families who are struggling with poverty and inequities is also key," he said.

"Mental health challenges in children, adolescents, and young adults are real, and they are widespread," Murthy said. "But most importantly, they are treatable, and often preventable. ... Our obligation to act is not just medical — it's moral."

The California Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance instructors strongly supported the bill, saying that even though mental health is part of existing curriculum, it's not consistent across school districts and sometimes teachers aren't adequately prepared to teach it.

Hopefully, this bill will help fix that," said William Potter, the group's president. "Many (of our) members instruct mental health topics in schools, and we know how important this education is for young people. It can literally save lives," he said. "However ... many school districts do not have qualified health teachers who are trained to teach this content and it would be great to see that change."

Jessica Cruz, executive director of the California chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, said SB 224 is a good step toward making mental health education more widely available to students.

See MENTAL HEALTH, page 19
Superintendent Darnise Williams said in an email to families on Jan. 7, “Our team has been working to address many concerns related to safety, testing, school closures, and staffing. I have responded to many emails and made phone calls in an attempt to allay fears around possible school closures and to reiterate the district’s commitment to maintain safe spaces for staff and students. Our goal is to keep schools open for in-person instruction.”

M-A Principal Karl Losekoot told families in a Sunday email that “there is no doubt that this has been a strange week as we are existing amidst the omicron surge.”

The school is restricting fans of indoor sports to “just immediate family members” for the time being, he said. The school will reevaluate weekly, looking at new cases of infection in the school and broader community, he said.

On Jan. 6, KN95 masks were passed out to staff members and students, Losekoot said and the district will be ordering more. Health officials have advised people to upgrade from cloth face masks to N95 respirators since omicron appears to be more contagious than previous variants.

The Woodside High community has had to remain flexible. In an update to families on Sunday, Principal Karen Van Putten said that last week she began typing updates at least three times, but guidelines kept changing as she wrote them. “Our Woodside staff, students and parents deserve praise for their flexibility, patience and cautionary perseverance as we navigate the third year of COVID-19 health and safety protocols and the new omicron variant,” she said.

There were 85 cases reported in the K-8 Ravenswood City School District from Jan. 3 to 7, which has about 1,501 students enrolled in its non-charter schools in Menlo Park and East Palo Alto. The district does not report cases in its charter schools, which it doesn’t operate and enroll about 1,250 students. Costano Elementary School reported the most cases (27), while Los Robles-Ronald McNair Academy reported the fewest (eight). Seventy of the cases were among students, while 15 were among staff.

In previous weeks, the district reported case numbers in the single digits.

From Jan. 3 to 10, there have been cases reported in the Menlo Park City School District, which has about 2,716 students at its Atherton and Menlo Park campuses. The district does not break down how many of the cases were among staff and how many were among students.

The two-school, 1,099-student Las Lomitas Elementary School District has reported 57 cases since the semester began last week.

The Portola Valley School District reported 26 cases between its two schools during the week of Jan. 3. They were fairly evenly split, with 12 of those cases at Ormondale Elementary School and 14 at Corte Madera Middle School.

There were 22 cases reported in the 365-student Woodside Elementary School District last week. Superintendent Steve Frank credited the district’s distribution of rapid tests to families before returning to campus from winter break with catching 17 cases.

New quarantine guidance

Staffing has proved a challenge, some districts moved to shorten the quarantine guidance for teachers and other staff who test positive, allowing them to return to the classroom more quickly.

On Jan. 6, the county adopted the state’s new quarantine guidelines, which state that if fully vaccinated — meaning it’s been at least two weeks after having received two doses and a booster (if booster-eligible) — students or staff members who are exposed to someone who tests positive for the virus can attend school as long as they are asymptomatic, get tested five to seven days after the exposure, and continue to monitor for symptoms.

Staff members who aren’t fully vaccinated and test positive can return to campus after five days, if they don’t have symptoms and test negative on the fifth day. Previously, people who tested positive needed to quarantine for 10 days.

Students who aren’t vaccinated are required to quarantine for at least five days following the date they were last exposed to COVID-19. If they test negative on or after day five, or have no symptoms, they can return to school.

Decisions about school closures will be made by the schools and districts, in consultation with the county health department, but the state has made clear that there are no thresholds. “The process should be guided by local epidemiology, with particular attention paid to concern for in-school transmission. Operational factors may also be considered, including the ability to maintain sufficient teaching staff to provide in-person instruction,” according to state guidance.

“Temporary school closure due to COVID-19 should be a last resort and considered only after all available resources have been exhausted in an attempt to preserve in-person education,” according to the guidance.

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

MENTAL HEALTH

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“My hope is that eventually, this curriculum will get into every school in California and the nation,” she said. “It’s not just for the benefit of students, but their families and teachers, too. It’s for the entire community.”

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Artscene

PEOPLE AND PERFORMANCES IN ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Artist Danielle Eubank captures the world’s oceans on canvas. Pamela Walsh Gallery highlights her most recent journey

By Heather Zimmerman

Talk about getting one’s sea legs. Over the past 20 years, artist Danielle Eubank has sailed all the world’s oceans and captured the experiences in abstract paintings that delve into the beauty, unpredictability and drama of the open water.

“Boundless,” a show made up largely of Eubank’s recent ocean paintings, is on view at Pamela Walsh Gallery in Palo Alto through Jan. 22.

In an interview, Eubank said she was always drawn to water but that there are several reasons why it has become such an important theme in her work. For one thing, she likes a challenge — and always has.

In her childhood, Eubank was already frequently drawing and creating art. Time spent at the beach inspired her from an early age, as she was growing up in Sonoma County near Bodega Bay.

One day, around the age of 12 she recalled, “just looking at the waves, sitting there for a second, not really doing anything, watching the water and thinking. I’ll never be able to draw that. It’s beautiful and it’s intense and it’s amazing, but I can’t think of anything harder to draw, is what went through my mind at that point,” she said.

In addition to the challenge, both the emotional pull of people’s experiences with water and the element’s ever-shifting nature help open it up, as a subject, to broad interpretation.

“The great thing about water is that it’s organic. And what we see in it is highly abstract. I can create all kinds of shapes that please me and abstract ideas and emotions. And yet I can still mold it to make it look like water, which appeals to everyone.

“We all have an experience with water. Whether it’s swimming or boating, or fishing or sailing or, when we’re on vacation, we all have some kind of memory having to do with water, so it’s highly evocative,” she said.

Eubank has now spent two decades meeting her own challenge of portraying water in her art, with voyages to the world’s five oceans: Arctic, Atlantic, Indian, Pacific and Southern. A 2019 trip to the Southern Ocean near Antarctica completed her quest to document all the world’s oceans. The bulk of the works featured in “Boundless” were inspired by this most recent trip.

Eubank draws on both colors and textures that viewers might find surprising for ocean-themed paintings, a departure from the expected seaside palette of blues and greens and from the smooth, glassy surfaces that often evoke water in art.

Shades of blue and green do appear in her pieces, but in works such as Southern Ocean IX and Southern Ocean VI, pools and splashes of cool reds and pinks — even a fiery orange in Southern Ocean X — ripple across the canvas. While makes frequent appearances, adding highlights and a sense of depth and luminescence in pieces such as Southern Ocean XIV.

Southern Ocean XI and Southern Ocean VII, one can see the brush strokes and occasional peaks of the canvas beneath, while the surface of Southern Ocean XIII appears almost velvety. The show also includes Waterlow L, a highly textured work from earlier in Eubank’s career, around 2003.

The broad palette and range of textures reflects the unpredictability of the subject, but also something more: an emotional interpretation of the emotional. Eubank certainly has unique experiences to share. Not only has she journeyed to the world’s five oceans; she has also worked as an expedition painter on a number of these voyages, documenting the crew members and the people on land, the boats and other surroundings encountered on the trip. She has made four international sailing expeditions and two of these trips were made in ships that replicated historical vessels.

Her first such trip was in a replica Borobudur ship, an ancient Indonesian vessel, on a voyage that rounded the Cape of Good Hope sailing from Indonesia to Ghana. The next trip she made was aboard a replica of a 2,500-year-old Phoenician ship that circumnavigated Africa. She also made an expedition to the Arctic on a barquentine (three-masted) tall ship.

Experiencing life aboard these unusual vessels not only offered an up-close perspective on the oceans, but also on how humanity interacts with its natural world.

Southern Ocean X, above, is among the works featured in “Boundless,” an exhibition of paintings by artist Danielle Eubank capturing her 2019 trip to document the Southern Ocean near Antarctica. Paintings such as Southern Ocean IX, right, and Southern Ocean XIV, far right, reflect Eubank’s use of unexpected colors.

Photos courtesy of Danielle Eubank.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on December 23, 2021.


997 All Other Legal

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Palo Alto. For more information, visit pamelawalla.com.

Email Arts & Entertainment Editor Heather Zimmerman at hzimmerman@alamancnews.com

J & S Scott General Maintenance FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME Statement File No. 289770

This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on December 15, 2021. (Alam. Dec. 24, 31, 2021; Jan. 7, 14, 22)

985 Fictitious Business Name Statement

This paper is the property of Almanac News.

Rocks Unlimited

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business at: Rocks Unlimited, located at 441 Alameda Ave., Half Moon Bay, CA 94019, San Mateo County. Registered owner(s): DAVID FRYER 441 Alameda Ave. Half Moon Bay, CA 94019 ROBERT T. TUCKER 441 Alameda Ave. Half Moon Bay, CA 94019 This business is conducted by: A General Partnership. The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 1/7/2013. This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on December 23, 2021. (Alam. Jan. 14, 14, 28, 2022)

The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 1/7/2013. This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on December 23, 2021. (Alam. Jan. 14, 14, 28, 2022)

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Email Arts & Entertainment Editor Heather Zimmerman at hzimmerman@alamancnews.com

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This paper is the property of Almanac News.
Food & Drink

15 Peninsula sandwiches we’re craving now

Check out crispy duck in South San Francisco, tortas in Redwood City, veggie sandwiches in Half Moon Bay and more

By Sara Hayden

We enjoy a good sandwich as a perfectly self-contained, hand-held meal or a decadent indulgence accompanied by a stack of napkins. These Peninsula sandwiches satisfy from bread to filling, layer by layer. Have you ever tried... Email us at peninsulafoodlist@embarcaderopublishing.com — we’d love to try!

Apple Fritter: Pigs Gone Wild Brekky

This San Mateo eatery offers breakfast and brunch with donuts, burgers, sandwiches and more. On the menu is a “brekky sandwich” spread that includes the Yoga Mom Brekky (grilled spinach, mushroom, egg, cheddar cheese, pesto) and the Pigs Gone Wild Brekky (grilled mushrooms, bacon, cheddar cheese, scrambled eggs, arugula, chipotle mayo). The brekky sandwiches come with your choice of bread (sourdough, egg, brioche, gluten-free, wheat, rye, or English muffin). But if your choice of bread happens to be a glazed donut, get a donut burger. Yup, there’s a special section on the menu dedicated to donut burgers! Try the Donut Luther with a beef patty, bacon, American cheese and a fried egg. applefrittereatery.com; 1901 South Norfolk St., San Mateo; 650-525-9125.

B Deux Go: Croque Poivrons

B Deux Go’s croque-style sandwiches with ham or peppers, Gruyere cheese and bechamel sauce are perfectly packaged to eat on the run. To make it easier to eat while out and about, the sandwiches’ buttermilk bread is baked with no oil on the outside, and served in a paper envelope with a napkin neatly tucked within.

Pick up your sandwich to go in Palo Alto from the restaurateurs behind the fine-dining restaurant Baumé — in fact, the team serves orders from Baumé’s kitchen door. The Chemel family launched their to-go sandwich concept in the fall of 2021.

bdexugo.com; 201 California Ave., Palo Alto (pick up from kitchen door on Park Boulevard); 408-900-8000.

Cafe Bunn Mi: Crispy Duck

This South San Francisco café offers baguettes served with crisp pickled carrots, onions and daikon, and a choice of combination pork, five-spice chicken, grilled pork, lemongrass steak, crispy duck, vegetables, tofu and more. Also very satisfying to go with this crispy duck sandwich! A side of garlic fries.
yelp.com/biz/cafe-bunn-mi-south-san-francisco; 226 Grand Ave., South San Francisco; 650-745-8883.

Greedy Ant: Artichoke Art

This Belmont eatery has a tightly curated sandwich selection with a focus on fresh ingredients. Among the menu’s seven sandwiches are the Artichoke Art (artichoke hearts with fennel pollen, melted brie, roasted red peppers, greens, tomato and garlic pesto). Ham 1 Am (with choice of shaved truffle ham or rosemary ham, plus havarti, marinated onion, greens, tomato and their magic mayo) and Disco Chicken (roasted chicken breast with herbs, sautéed red onion, jack cheese, tomato, greens and lime-basil mayo). Each sandwich comes with a choice of side. Choose between marinated chickpeas in dill or pickled beets.
thegreedyantgourmet.com; 932 Ralston Ave., Belmont; 650-832-1136.

La Casita Chilanga: La Super Aguila

La Casita Chilanga has been in the community for more than 20 years. At an eye-catching location painted half green and half white on Middlefield Road in Redwood City, you’ll find tortas with fresh-baked talera, housemade aioli, xipocoti salsa, avocado, cheese and caramelized onion along with your choice of other topings.

Circumstances were difficult when Juan Zamora and his partner first decided to open their own restaurant. They set out to achieve their goal shortly after 9/11. “In that time, it was a hard time — like right now (during the pandemic),” Zamora says. But they weren’t deterred. “We say, ‘You know what? We should put tortas here, like Mexico City-style.’” He and his partner found a small place that could fit three tables, developed their own recipes and set up shop with tortas to go. The menu was inspired by their Mexico City hometown, different from the menus at the Asian and Italian restaurants that Zamora had previously worked at. “There’s little jokes in the menu,” Zamora says. Some tortas are inspired by football clubs, like La Super Aguila (breaded chicken breast, smoked turkey leg sausage, chorizo, ham, yellow and Monterey cheese) and La Mega Chiva (pastor, caramelized pineapple, chorizo, turkey sausage, Monterey cheese), and celebrities like Sofia Vergara (breaded chicken breast) and Raul de Molina (pork head cheese). La Cubana is the most popular, with thin-cut breaded beef, ham, chorizo and smoked turkey leg sausage.

The team is a mainstay in the Peninsula sandwich scene. In addition to Middlefield Road, La Casita Chilanga has locations on El Camino Real as well as in San Mateo and San Jose (watch for different items on these menus). Other credits include the Sandwich Bug in Palo Alto, offering deli sandwiches with house-baked bread and special mayo “buggy” sauce, Snacks in San Mateo serving tortas and street foods, and The Patty Shack, offering burgers in Redwood City.
lacasitachilanga.com; 2928 Ralston Ave., Belmont; 650-560-9832.

Jood: Taook Sandweesh

The Harballi family has a decadeslong history of building food businesses with prized beef, sheep, poultry, and lamb. Their most recent addition to their restaurant repertoire is Jood in San Carlos, showcasing barbecue.

Try a sandwich made with slow and pickles on lavash, with fries on the side. The Minced and Kneaded Sandweesh is made with meat or vegan kafhta, hummus and tahini, and the best-selling Taook Sandweesh is made with marinated grilled chicken breast, creamy garlic sauce and ketchup. Heaven’s Sandweesh offers a vegan option with eggplant, cauliflower, pesto and tangy housemade sun sauce.

The online menu has a handy chart with allergen information. eatjood.com; 635 Laurel St., San Carlos.

Respectable Bird: co-owner Christian Perez adds sauce to a spicy chicken sandwich in the South San Francisco kitchen.

Dad’s Luncheonette: Mushroom sandwich

Served out of a bright red caboose off Highway 1 in Half Moon Bay, the hamburger sandwich previously made the Peninsula Foodlist’s chef’s bucket list. Served on grilled bread from Rosalind Bakery, the sandwich is made with beef, soft egg, cheese, red onion pickles, “Dad’s Sauce” and red oak lettuce.

Also not to be missed is the mushroom sandwich, made with the same ingredients as the burger except for the beef. In place of the patty are maitake mushrooms.

The eatery was opened by co-owners Alexi Liu and Scott Clarke in 2017. After the birth of their daughter, Clarke left his role as a chef de cuisine at the three Michelin-starred Saison as the family sought balance.
dadaluncheonette.com; 225 Highway 1, Half Moon Bay; 650-560-9832.

Little Lucca: Egg salad on Dutch crunch, with everything

Little Lucca has been on the Peninsula since 1980, expanding from South San Francisco to Burlingame. Choose between a roll (sour, sweet, wheat, Dutch crunch or ciabatta) or sliced bread (rye or white). If you get a roll, the Little Lucca team scrapes out the middle, creating a pocket of crust for maximum filling.

You choose — there are crab and shrimp sandwiches, meatballs, liverwurst, cured meats (including salami, soppressata, coppa and prosciutto), combos like the Chicken Cordon Bleu (breaded chicken, ham, Swiss cheese) and Veggie Delight (cream cheese, tomato, cucumber, avocado and creamy Caesar dressing), and more.

Order your sandwich with “everything” (mayonnaise, mustard, pickles, tomato, peppers...). littlelucca.com; 1459 Tulip Ave., South San Francisco; 650-993-5175.

Pepil Gauthier

La Casita Chilanga sells tortas with names inspired by football clubs like La Super Aguila and celebrities like Sofia Vergara.
mustard, pickles, red onion, lettuce, tomato), and especially one (or both!) of the housemade hot pepper and original garlic sauces for extra spice and savoriness.

Breakwater Barbecue: Brisket sandwich
On the menu at Coastside destination Breakwater Barbecue is the Gold Rush Pulled Pork Sandwich (topped with apple cilantro slaw and Gold Rush sauce), a Reuben (house-smoked pastrami, Swiss cheese, sauerkraut, pickles) and a banh mi that features a daily smoked meat selection. Founder Wyatt Fields has a particular passion for brisket. The brisket sandwich features slices of smoked and seared Black Angus brisket, caramelized onions, pickles, ancho coffee barbecue sauce and mayo, all on thick cut country sourdough from Rosalind Bakery in Pacifica. Breakwaterbbq.com; 30 Avenue Portola, El Granada; 650-713-5303.

Mendocino Farms: Mrs. Goldfarb’s Unreal Reuben
Founded in Los Angeles, Mendocino Farms has locations in Palo Alto, San Mateo and Mountain View. The menu clearly marks vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free items, as well as which items contain nuts.
For those who crave a meaty sandwich without the actual meat, try a Reuben on rye made with plant-based corn beef, apple and celery root slaw, bread and butter pickles and Thousand Island dressing. Get it with havarti cheese for a vegetarian option, or plant-based smoked provolone cheese for a vegan option. The menu also has options for gluten-free sandwiches, including chimichurri steak and bacon or chicken pesto caprese (these both have meat), a plant-based burger and more. mendocinofabs.com; 401 San Antonio Road, Suite 64, Mountain View; 650-209-3987; 167 Hamilton Ave., Palo Alto; 650-543-8135; 1060 Park Place, San Mateo; 650-332-8300.

New England Lobster Company: Lobster Roll (Dressed)
Head to Burlingame for a luscious lobster roll with a side of creamy chips and coleslaw. If you want pure meat, order the Naked option, served with a side of butter, or get mayo, salt and pepper with the Dressed option. The menu also offers a seasonal choice.
The company started out as a wholesale distributor in Maine in 1987 before opening up a market for the public in South San Francisco and in 2002. Its brick and mortar eatery has been in Burlingame for about a decade. newenglandlobster.net; 824 Cowan Road, Burlingame; 650-443-1599.

Respectable Bird: The Sandwich (Spicy)
At a South San Francisco ghost kitchen or food truck, the Respectable Bird team makes their regular or spicy fried chicken sandwiches available via pick-up or delivery. Each is served on a Martin’s potato roll. Also used by Shake Shack, the bread holds up to a hefty half-pound of thigh meat, as well as sauce and juicy pickles. If you’re feeling especially bold when it comes to spice, try a level 4 hot chicken sandwich from the group’s Love Burn brand. If you do, you’ll be required to sign a waiver, served with a complimentary side of milk. respectablebird.com; 312 Swift Ave., South San Francisco; 650-754-6258.

San Benito House Garden Deli: Cheese and avocado on olive-walnut bread
This 116-year-old Half Moon Bay outpost moved out of a temporary location at Pizza Pie and reopened in the fall, following a devastating fire in April 2021. The San Benito House Garden Deli’s homemade breads are velvety smooth, complimenting hearty slices of turkey, ham, hot pastrami, cheese or avocado, topped with extra fresh and crisp tomato, onions, lettuce and pickles, and just the right amount of mayo and mustard.
Try olive-walnut bread for a briny crunch (especially tasty with a scoop of egg salad), or whole wheat for subtle sweetness. If it’s really bread you crave and not all the sandwich fixings, take home French bread or a Portuguese loaf.

TOWN OF ATHERTON
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Atherton Planning Commission will hold a public hearing to consider a recommendation to the City Council of an Ordinance to repeal and replace Chapter 8.14 “Historical Artifacts” of the Atherton Municipal Code (AMC) with Chapter 8.14 “Historical Preservation”. This meeting will be held via teleconference only pursuant to Government Code section 54953(e) to provide the safest environment for staff and the public while allowing for public participation. The public may participate in the Planning Commission Meeting via Zoom Meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting:
https://zoom.us/j/147031861
Meeting ID: 147-031-861
Dial In: +1 669 900 6833, 147031861#

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

TOWN OF ATHERTON

NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that said application is set for hearing by the Planning Commission at its meeting on January 26, 2022 at 6:00 PM via teleconference accessible through the above-described information, at which time and place all persons interested may participate and show cause, if they have any, why the Ordinance should or should not be recommended for approval.

IF YOU CHALLENGE any actions taken to prepare a recommendation to the City Council on adoption of the Ordinance in Court, you may be entitled to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing described in this notice, or in written correspondence delivered to the Planning Commission at or prior to, the public hearing.

Planning Commission decisions are appealable by any aggrieved person to the City Council within 10 days of the date of the decision.

Date Published: January 14, 2022
Date Posted: January 13, 2022

ATHERTON PLANNING COMMISSION
/s/ Lisa Costa Sanders
Lisa Costa Sanders, Town Planner

For more information, visit almanacnews.com.
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