

# The Almanac

THE HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER FOR MENLO PARK, ATHERTON, PORTOLA VALLEY AND WOODSIDE

DECEMBER 25, 2020 | VOL. 56 NO. 16



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## Belle Haven creates its own COVID-19 testing sites

Community group trained, recruited local residents to operate sites

By **Kate Bradshaw**  
Almanac Staff Writer

**B**raving the downpour on Sunday morning, Dec. 11, a line of at least 50 people stretched from the Belle Haven Library down the block of Ivy Drive, standing under rain-weighted canopies to take a COVID-19 test.

On one of her last days as Menlo Park's mayor, Cecilia Taylor stood under an umbrella and directed people where to go. (Drew Combs was selected as mayor several days later at the City Council's annual reorganization meeting.)

At the front of the line, entire families followed the protocols to take the self-administered oral swab tests offered by the testing company Curative through a partnership with San Mateo County.

Young and old, with instructions given in Spanish and English, those being tested coughed three times, swirled a swab

around their mouths for 20 seconds, deposited the swab in a tube, and handed over the sample for analysis.

The testing site might not have existed without the efforts of Belle Haven Action, a community-based organization that works to support the Menlo Park neighborhood east of Highway 101.

The initiative came about after the county put out a request for proposals and Belle Haven Action offered to oversee the neighborhood testing process, according to Taylor, who is a founder of Belle Haven Action.

Belle Haven Action recruited, organized and trained paid volunteers from around the neighborhood — some of whom are under- or unemployed due to the pandemic, and some of whom have medical backgrounds — to operate the testing sites.

Before this initiative, there

See **BELLE HAVEN**, page 20



Magali Gauthier

**Estelle Dufour**, 12, uses a swab alongside her family at a self-administered COVID-19 test site in Belle Haven on Dec. 13.

## Newsom: Stay-at-home orders likely to be extended in much of state

By **Eli Walsh**  
Bay City News Service

**S**tay-at-home orders in multiple regions across the state are likely to remain in effect past the minimum of three weeks as COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations continue to skyrocket, Gov. Gavin Newsom said Monday.

The state's stay-at-home order — triggered when a region's average intensive care unit capacity falls below 15% — now affects 98% of the state's population in the greater Sacramento, Bay Area, San Joaquin Valley and Southern California regions.

While the Bay Area's order went into effect last Thursday, lasting at least through Jan. 7, the stay-at-home order could expire on Dec. 28 in the San Joaquin Valley and

Dec. 30 in Southern California.

Newsom said current trends in coronavirus hospitalizations and ICU admissions will require the state to extend those expiration dates later into January.

"We continue to see record-breaking ICU capacity, hospitals that are getting filled up," Newsom said during a briefing on the state of the pandemic. "A surge that we are experiencing, not dissimilar to other parts of the country, but putting real challenges on our staffing here in the state."

ICU capacities in both the Southern California and San Joaquin Valley regions have fallen to 0%, according to Newsom, triggering the opening of surge facilities in the state's lower half to accommodate more patients. The greater Sacramento area is at 16.2% and Northern California

has 28.7% ICU capacity.

ICU bed occupancy has increased by 51% and hospitalizations have increased by 63% over the last 14 days ending Dec. 20, Newsom said. The state had 2,741 deaths over the 14-day period — 233 people on average each day, he said.

Statewide, just 2.5% of ICU beds are still available, Newsom said.

The numbers are "a sober, sober reminder of how deadly this disease is," he said.

The Bay Area's ICU capacity sat at 13.7% as of Monday. Health officers in the region have predicted that the Bay Area's stay-at-home order could last well into January if the current wave of new cases and hospitalizations is not abated soon.

San Francisco's Director of Public Health Dr. Grant Colfax said

earlier this month that the city could run out of ICU beds entirely by Dec. 27 if the current surge is not contained by methods other than vaccination.

"The vaccine will not save us from this current national, state or local surge," Colfax said during a Dec. 9 briefing. "There is simply not enough time."

The state's current modeling of hospitalizations statewide forecasts nearly 100,000 hospitalizations by mid-January, according to Newsom and state Health and Human Services Secretary Dr. Mark Ghaly. As of Sunday, 17,190 people were hospitalized due to COVID-19 across the state.

Ghaly said an average of 12% of the coronavirus cases confirmed each day will result in hospitalization and 12% of those hospitalizations then become ICU patients.

"It is true that some regions may begin to exceed their existing stated hospital capacity, not just ICU capacity, by the end of the month and early in January," Ghaly said.

"We don't see that across the entire state quite at that time, but we're watching it very closely," he said.

A decision regarding an extension of stay-at-home orders will be based on multiple factors, including ICU capacity, the number of new cases over a seven-day period and how quickly the transmission rate is accelerating or decelerating, he said.

With the immediate focus on Southern California and San Joaquin Valley, Ghaly said state leaders are preparing to issue a

See **HEALTH ORDER**, page 13

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FOOD AND DRINK 22

Help local families in need 12, 13





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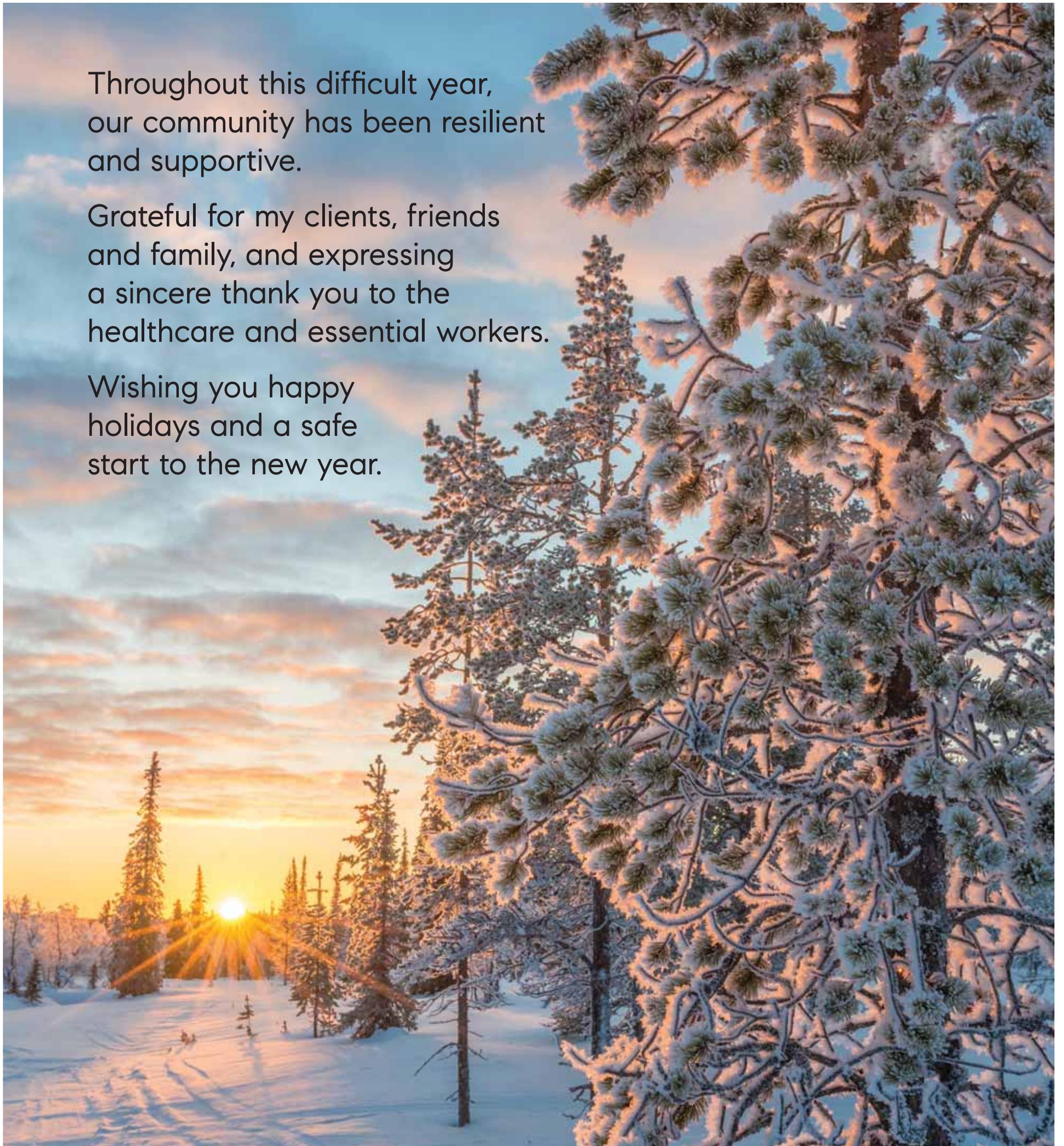
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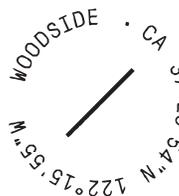
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our community has been resilient  
and supportive.

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and family, and expressing  
a sincere thank you to the  
healthcare and essential workers.

Wishing you happy  
holidays and a safe  
start to the new year.



**Sean Foley**  
650.207.6005  
sean.foley@compass.com  
DRE 00870112



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# Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY



Kate Bradshaw

**Cousins from the Alcalá family** gather in a socially distanced group to enjoy a picnic at Foothills Park on Dec. 17.

## No longer exclusive, Foothills Park welcomes residents from outside Palo Alto

By **Kate Bradshaw**  
Almanac Staff Writer

A park that for decades has had what might be the highest “entry fee” in the country — that is, the price of a Palo Alto home address — opened its doors to residents outside of the city on Thursday, Dec. 17, for the first time since 1965.

Previously, the park was off-limits to people who live outside of Palo Alto unless visitors were accompanied by

a city resident — although it was an open secret that the entrance was not guarded on most weekdays. On Dec. 17, the sign at the entrance listing the prohibition was gone as residents from other cities were finally invited to explore the park’s many offerings.

The gates opened in accordance with the Palo Alto City Council’s action to open the 1,400-acre park on Nov. 2 — and after a referendum petition launched to halt the opening failed to collect about 2,600

signatures needed by the Dec. 16 deadline.

Near the Foothills Park Nature Interpretive Center, a trio of cousins from Redwood City gathered on the enormous grassy field at the bottom of the hill in the early afternoon to enjoy a picnic lunch. Alejandra Alcalá said it was their first time visiting the park.

“It’s really nice and open,” she said. “There are not that many people here.”

See **FOOTHILLS PARK**, page 18

## How San Mateo County is tackling inequality in its COVID-19 response

By **Kate Bradshaw**  
Almanac Staff Writer

The coronavirus pandemic is still taking a disproportionate toll on people of color and low-income people, according to San Mateo County’s new public health equity officer, Shireen Malekafzali.

Malekafzali was previously senior manager for health policy, planning and equity in the county and began the new role Nov. 15.

One of the most glaring

inequities is the prevalence of the disease among Hispanic and Latino residents in the county. Based on the most recent figures available, Latino and Hispanic residents make up 47% of the confirmed COVID-19 cases even though they make up only 24% of the county population.

The new position is focused on bringing a number of the county’s existing equity efforts together, focusing on listening to the most impacted communities — such as communities of color and low-income

communities, among others, Malekafzali said in an email.

It involves focusing on testing, contact tracing, and making resources available to people who test positive for COVID-19, she said.

“We see our impacted communities as our teachers and even if our intentions are good, if the impact or experience isn’t effective, we need to learn and adjust,” she said.

There are many efforts

See **HEALTH EQUITY**, page 15

## Eagle-eyed bird-watchers keep 121-year-old tradition despite pandemic

A Christmas Bird Count with COVID precautions

By **Kate Bradshaw**  
Almanac Staff Writer

Every year since 1900, birders have braved the winter weather to engage in what’s considered to be the longest-running citizen science survey in the world: the Audubon Society’s Christmas Bird Count.

Held annually between the days of Dec. 14 and Jan. 5, the Christmas Bird Count is a census of winter birds that has, over time, expanded to involve tens of thousands of annual participants who count bird populations all across the Western hemisphere.

The tradition began as an alternative to a very different popular Christmas Day pastime: shooting as many birds as possible. Frank Chapman, an ornithologist at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, suggested counting birds instead, according to National Geographic.

And while the annual bird count looked a bit different this year, the COVID-19 pandemic didn’t stop the bird-watchers of San Mateo and Santa Clara counties from engaging their binoculars and field guides for science.

Birders across the two counties, organized by the Sequoia chapter of the Audubon Society in San Mateo County and the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society in Santa Clara County, were set to observe a total of six circles — each with a 15-mile diameter — in one-day counts held this year and in the first days of 2021. The

two areas planned in San Mateo County were set for Dec. 19 at Crystal Springs and Jan. 2 at Año Nuevo near Pescadero, and the four areas in Santa Clara County set to be surveyed were scheduled for Dec. 20 in San Jose, Dec. 21 in Palo Alto, Dec. 26 in the Calero-Morgan Hill area and Jan. 3 at Mount Hamilton.

Strict precautions to avoid mixing households are being observed, said Matthew Dodder, executive director of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society. Participants are expected to follow COVID-19 guidelines, such as wearing face masks, staying at least 6 feet apart, and not carpooling. The event’s traditional dinner where counts are compiled is taking place over Zoom rather than in person. In fact, this news organization was not permitted to photograph or interview participants in person during the Palo Alto count held Dec. 21.

At least in Santa Clara County, Dodder said, generally well over 100 people work in teams to complete the count, and it’s traditionally been a great opportunity for new birders to get involved. However, because of the pandemic precautions preventing households from interacting with each other during this year’s count, it can’t be as open to newcomers as in past years, Dodder said.

“One thing that has always been good for the event is that it attracted a lot of beginners,” he

See **BIRD COUNT**, page 15



Courtesy Alex Tey

**A bushtit** was spotted by local birders with the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society during the 121st annual Christmas Bird Count.




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Kate Daly, Maggie Mah

##### Special Sections Editor

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##### Chief Visual Journalist

Magali Gauthier (223-6530)

##### Visual Journalism Intern

Olivia Treynor

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Newsroom Fax: (650) 223-7525

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#### CRIME BRIEFS

### Another burglary reported in Atherton

Burglars struck again late last week in Atherton, marking the 10th such crime in town since Oct. 1.

Between 6 a.m. and 8 p.m. on Dec. 17, burglars forced their way into a home on Rosewood Drive near Wisteria Way in the Lindenwood neighborhood by smashing a kitchen window, according to a Dec. 18 police news bulletin. Nothing was taken, but it appears that they attempted to drag a safe out of the home, police said.

The burglars may have intentionally shut off the power to disable the alarm system, the bulletin states. The house had an alarm system that was not armed during the time of the break-in.

Councilman Rick DeGolia told The Almanac last week that police may have a lead on the Dec. 8 burglary in which thieves took nearly \$800,000 worth of jewelry from a home, he said. License plate readers captured an image of the vehicle involved in the incident, he said. The town installed 21 cameras to help

See **CRIME BRIEFS**, page 20

#### COMMUNITY BRIEFS

### MPCSD to host speaker series on race

Following a June school board resolution to create anti-racist classrooms, schools and communities, the Menlo Park City School District will present a three-part online speaker series “Race, Prejudice & Policy: A Conversation on Segregation and its Legacy on Education around Menlo Park” in January.

There will be a Jan. 6 presentation by Menlo Together and the Community Equity Collaborative based on Richard Rothstie’s book “The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America.” During the event, speakers will examine how real estate redlining policies led to the demographic segregation in the city and in schools that is visible today.

During a Jan. 13 webinar, local equity leader Mary Montle Bacon of Images of Culture will guide participants through what the school district experience may look like from the perspective of different families, and how the community can work to ensure that all talents, cultures, languages and achievements are valued and elevated.

The series culminates with a Jan. 19 panel discussion presented in partnership with Ravenswood City School District and Menlo-Atherton High School. The panel includes Ravenswood Superintendent Gina Sudaria, Menlo Park City Superintendent Erik Burmeister, M-A Principal Simone Rick-Kennel, Menlo Park City Council member Cecilia Taylor, East Palo Alto City Council member Regina Wallace-Jones and Ravenswood School District board member Ana Maria Pulido. They will discuss the historical influences that continue to impact local school districts and how the community might organize to address the challenges.

For more information on the upcoming series, go to [mpcsd-speakerseries.com/events](http://mpcsd-speakerseries.com/events).

The district is also offering the community the opportunity to read a book and engage in conversation with fellow community members about issues of race and racism.

The district’s Antiracism Advisory Team has chosen: “Caste” by Isabel Wilkerson, “The Color of Law” by Richard Rothstein, “So You Want to Talk About Race” by Ijeoma Oluo, “Between the World and Me” by Ta-Nehisi Coates, “Nice White Parents” podcast by the New York Times, “Real American” by Julie Lythcott-Haims, “Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You” by Ibram X. Kendi and Jason Reynolds, and “How to Be an Antiracist” by Kendi. All are welcome to choose a book and join in the facilitated conversations, which will be held virtually between January and March. To sign up for a book club, go to [tinyurl.com/MPCSDbookclub](http://tinyurl.com/MPCSDbookclub).

—Angela Swartz

### Text to 911 option now in effect

San Mateo County residents can now text 911 to receive emergency aid rather than having to call the emergency number, according to a press statement from Cal Fire CZU, Cal Fire’s

See **COMMUNITY BRIEFS**, page 19

## Public Notices

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Happy Home, located at 258 Lowell St., Redwood City, CA 94062, San Mateo County.

Registered owner(s):  
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258 Lowell St.  
Redwood City, CA 94062

This business is conducted by: An Individual.

The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 6/17/20. This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on November 12, 2020.  
(ALM Dec. 4, 11, 18, 25, 2020)

THE STROLLER STORE  
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File No.: 285969

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:

The Stroller Store, located at 180 South Spruce Ave., Unit L, South San Francisco, CA 94080, San Mateo County; Mailing address: 561 Hilbar Ln., Palo Alto, CA 94303.

Registered owner(s):

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561 Hilbar Ln.  
Palo Alto, CA 94303  
Delaware

This business is conducted by: A Corporation.

The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 12/03/20.

This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on December 3, 2020.  
(ALM Dec. 11, 18, 25, 2020; Jan. 1, 2021)

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FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT  
File No.: 285894

The following person(s) is (are) doing business as:

Tacos y Mariscos El Gordo, located at 2315 El Camino Real, Redwood City, CA 94063, San Mateo County; Mailing address: 1525 Regent St. #6, Redwood City, CA 94061.

Registered owner(s):  
JOSE LUIS PEREZ ESQUIVEL  
1525 Regent St. #6  
Redwood City, CA 94061

This business is conducted by: An Individual.

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# Coronavirus central: First vaccines administered at San Mateo Medical Center

Second vaccine gains FDA's emergency-use authorization

By Embarcadero Media staff

Santa Clara County as of Monday had 57,452 COVID-19 cases. The seven-day rolling average of new cases per day ending Dec. 13 is 1,183. Twenty-four people have died, raising the death toll to 607. In addition, 621 people were hospitalized with the virus, 99 of which were new. San Mateo County reported 20,479 cumulative cases as of Monday. The death toll stands at 198. There were 133 people hospitalized.

## First COVID-19 vaccines given at San Mateo Medical Center

San Mateo County's public hospital, the San Mateo Medical Center, received its first allotment of 957 doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine last week, according to county spokesperson Michelle Durand. The first person from

the county medical system to be vaccinated was Dr. Suja Georgie, an internal medicine specialist at the hospital, she said. She received her first dose of the vaccine on Friday, Dec. 18.

The county expected to receive 7,300 doses of the Moderna and 2,925 doses of the Pfizer vaccines this week, with additional vaccines coming by the end of the month, she said.

Doses are being used to vaccinate clinical and nonclinical health care workers involved in caring for COVID-19 patients, as well as medical first responders, she added.

## Second COVID-19 vaccine gains FDA's authorization

Moderna gained emergency authorization Dec. 18 from the Food and Drug Administration to distribute its COVID-19 vaccine. A total of 39,300 doses for Santa Clara County and 7,300 doses for San Mateo County

were expected to arrive this week.

Under the authorization, doses of the vaccine can be given to people ages 18 and older.

"With the availability of two vaccines now for the prevention of COVID-19, the FDA has taken another crucial step in the fight against this global pandemic that is causing vast numbers of hospitalizations and deaths in the United States each day," FDA Commissioner Dr. Stephen Hahn said in a statement.

## Cases found in Peninsula schools

The Woodside Elementary, Las Lomas Elementary Portola Valley school districts have reported COVID-19 cases in recent weeks since reopening classrooms.

There have been 27 cases of COVID-19 reported in the Menlo Park City School District since it reopened to



Courtesy San Mateo County

**Dr. Suja Georgie** is the first to receive the COVID-19 vaccine at San Mateo County's public hospital, the San Mateo Medical Center, on Friday, Dec. 18.

students in September.

The Las Lomas district's newly created COVID-19 case dashboard shows a total of 10 cases since its two schools resumed widespread classroom instruction in October. There have been cases at both La Entrada Middle School in Menlo Park and Las Lomas Elementary School in Atherton. There was one case reported in September when only high-risk cohorts of students were on campus.

Woodside Elementary reported one case the week of

Dec. 7 and two the week of Dec. 14. Neither of the cases resulted in students needing to move to distance learning, according to the district.

Corte Madera School in Portola Valley reported one case the week of Nov. 30, forcing one student cohort to move to distance learning until Dec. 7. In the same district, there was a positive case at Ormondale School, the week of Dec. 7, which led one student cohort to switch to distance learning until Jan. 4.

See **CORONAVIRUS**, page 13

# County invests \$4.5 million to staff extra ICU beds at Sequoia Hospital

Astrid Casimire  
Bay City News Service

San Mateo County announced on Monday a \$4.5 million investment to provide up to 10 extra intensive care unit beds at Dignity Health's Sequoia Hospital in Redwood City.

The extra beds will be provided through a partnership between the county, Dignity Health and AMI Expeditionary Healthcare, a company that provides clinical resources, including personnel, to hospital settings worldwide.

The agreement will cover medical personnel for 30 days through AMI, which will provide licensed medical professionals to staff the ICU beds at Sequoia Hospital. The first five-bed unit will be staffed within a week with the second five-bed unit available the following week.

County Manager Mike Callagy said the extra "around the clock" staffing would be a regional asset as COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations rise.

"We've already received some patients from outside the county and we want to make sure that we're able to respond to all the needs that we have," Callagy said.

Callagy said the \$4.5 million investment will come from

federal funding through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

Kevin Kimbrough, Dignity Health's manager of external communications, said that the extra beds would add to Sequoia's existing ICU beds.

"Sequoia Hospital has 16 licensed ICU beds. There is capacity within our hospital to surge beyond that. In order to do that we would convert existing beds into beds that are ICU capable," Kimbrough said.

The partnership comes amidst record-high COVID-19 cases in San Mateo County, with over 7,000 cases reported over the last 30 days, representing about one-third of the county's total cases. There are 133 COVID-19 patients hospitalized as of Sunday, Dec. 20, leaving seven regular ICU beds and an additional 88 surge beds available in the county.

The Bay Area's ICU availability was at 13.7%, according to state data, which triggered a regional stay-at-home order last week.

"When ICU capacity drops below 15%, every staffed ICU bed counts, especially for each individual who needs care," Travis Kusman, Emergency Medical Services director for San Mateo County, said in a statement. Kusman also serves

as the Regional Disaster Medical Health Coordinator.

The county's Medical Health Operational Area Coordinator program will coordinate placing patients into the supplemental ICU beds.

Both Sequoia Hospital and AMI Expeditionary Healthcare have helped pandemic efforts in the county in the past. Sequoia's critical care and ICU teams have been treating ICU patients while medical personnel from AMI Expeditionary Healthcare have supported COVID-19 testing and clinical services at congregate care facilities in the county.

While the additional beds serve an important need, Chief of San Mateo County Health Louise Rogers asked

that people continue to follow safety guidelines.

"In addition to reinforcing what we all need to do as residents — to always wear a mask in public, insulate our households from exposure, and taking the earliest possible actions to mask, isolate, self-quarantine even within our

households — we determined there is an additional role we could play by investing in greater ICU staffing capacity," Rogers said. "This partnership between San Mateo County, AMI, and Dignity Health is a timely backstop to preserve the availability of medical care for Bay Area residents." ■

## REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



### Prop 19 – Part 2

**Dear Monica: Should I transfer properties to my children before Prop 19 is effective to preserve the property tax rules under the old law?**

Gerry M.

your children now you also need to know if this will trigger taxes that would not otherwise be owed right now such as estate taxes.

Dear Gerry: This is a most important question many parents are asking right now. If you transfer your property(ies) to your children now, you should get advice on whether you should do this in the form of a trust, a limited liability corporation, or some other legal form. And you should understand if changing the ownership will restrict you from selling the asset in the future should you need the money. If you do transfer assets to

There are many more questions too such as can you keep the tax base on your main residence if you have moved to an assisted living facility but have kept the house? If you have more than one child do they all have to move into the main residence to continue with the same tax basis? Even some county tax assessors don't know how to administrate under these new rules. You should seek legal advice now to understand the options available to you.

Contact me at [monica@monicacorman.com](mailto:monica@monicacorman.com); Office: 650-465-5971, COMPASS. Ranked in the Wall St Journal's 2016, 2017, and 2018 Nationwide list of top 250 Realtors.

## OBITUARIES

Local residents who died recently include: **Don Kepler**, 87, longtime Menlo Park resident, on Nov. 9; and **Susan Southworth**, 73, an editor at Stanford University's Hoover Institution and Menlo Park resident, on Dec. 11.

To read full obituaries, leave remembrances and post photos, go to Lasting Memories at [almanacnews.com/obituaries](http://almanacnews.com/obituaries).

# Las Lomas school board appoints two trustees

Former candidate Molly Finn and Cynthia Solis Yi are newest members

By Angela Swartz  
Almanac Staff Writer

The Las Lomas Elementary School District has two new trustees after sudden departures left the K-8 district scrambling to fill board seats. Trustee-elect Jody Leng decided not assume her seat and Jon Venverloh resigned his seat on Nov. 8 over his wife Mehr-edith's racist tweets about Vice President-elect Kamala Harris. The board selected Molly Finn, who came in third for two open seats on the November ballot, and Cynthia Solis Yi, during a Friday, Dec. 18, meeting over Zoom. There were only three members on the five-member board: president Dana Nunn, Jason Morimoto — who was elected last month — and John Earnhardt. Trustees Diana

Honda and Bill Steinmetz did not seek reelection and their terms ended this month.

Finn, a legal executive, is a 14-year resident and parent of two La Entrada Middle School students. She said that her priorities are teachers, preparing students for the future and meeting the needs of all students. In her application for the seat, she said the board could improve its communications.

"We can open additional channels for communication and increase engagement from the community," she wrote in her application. She also said that the school board needs to do more and/or different work around diversity, equity and inclusion.

Solis Yi, also a parent of two children who attend La Entrada, said in her application that she



Molly Finn



Cynthia Solis Yi

wanted to bring a diverse perspective to the board. Inclusivity, equity and diversity should be considered in decisions as a trustee, particularly now in this polarized political landscape, she said.

"I was born and raised by a single Filipina mother on the Lower East Side of Manhattan," she wrote. "I represent a minority here in this district that have managed through education to become members of a much different socio-economic class than which we were raised. We

all have the duty of making sure our children become pillars of strength in this community and the others they become a part of. My personal intersectionality will be one that has likely not been represented in a meaningful way in this district. Because of this, I feel a duty to serve."

She also noted that her experience working with equity and diversity issues will likely be an asset to the board. A Menlo Park resident, she is the director of earned income at La Cocina, a nonprofit incubator in San Francisco focused on formalizing the businesses of female minority entrepreneurs.

She said she also has experience with residential and commercial construction projects, as well as many years of experience in a corporate financial setting.

The board interviewed three

candidates: Finn, Solis Yi and Evan Reis, during a Dec. 15 Zoom call. Candidates returned for a meeting three days later, when the board announced its two picks. During the Dec. 18 meeting, Nunn said she had "serious concerns" about the conflict of interest presented by Reis being married to a district teacher. He would have to recuse himself from voting on teachers' contracts, Dunn noted.

In November, trustees voted to pursue an appointment process for the two seats. They had to either order a special election or make provisional appointments within 60 days of the vacancies (on or before Jan. 7, 2021, for Venverloh's former seat, and Feb. 9, 2021, for the seat to which Leng was elected),

See LAS LOMITAS, page 11

# Elizabeth Lewis chosen as Atherton's 2021 mayor

Mike Lempres to serve as vice mayor

By Angela Swartz  
Almanac Staff Writer

The Atherton City Council selected Elizabeth Lewis to serve as mayor and Mike Lempres to serve as vice mayor for 2021 during a Dec. 16 meeting held on Zoom. The council also said farewell to outgoing council member Cary Wiest.

Lewis said the COVID-19 pandemic has required people to rethink their priorities and



Elizabeth Lewis



Mike Lempres

how they lived in 2020. During the meeting, she also shared some personal news — her husband Joe died of cancer on Dec. 5. She said her husband

insisted she run for reelection.

"He loved how much I loved the work (on council) and he knew that he was not going to recover," Lewis said. "I'm glad I did and I'm grateful for all the many Atherton residents who reelected me for my fourth term on the council. ... As I look to 2021, I know that it has to be better than 2020 for all of us. We have learned how to live with adversity and how to be creative with how we conduct business. There's hope

the vaccines will beat back the virus and restore normalcy to our lives."

In the year ahead, Lewis said she looks forward to the completion "at long last" of the town's new civic center. She also looks forward to traffic calming measures, a potential ban on gas-powered leaf blowers and projects addressing regional flooding issues, she said.

Lewis, who has lived in Atherton for 23 years, was first elected to the council in 2008 and was reelected by a substantial margin in 2012. She previously served as mayor, a position which rotates among council members, in 2013.

Lempres, a lawyer, joined the council in 2014. He currently serves as executive in residence at Andreessen Horowitz and serves on various corporate boards.

Lewis and Lempres also served as mayor and vice mayor, respectively, in 2016.

Newly elected Councilwoman Diana Hawkins-Manuelian and Lewis were sworn into office during the meeting.

The council also recognized Wiest, who was first elected to the council in 2012 and lost his reelection bid in November. Wiest was up against Hawkins-Manuelian, Lewis and longtime resident Christine David.

Wiest has been called a "hawk" for his ability to monitor activities of special districts and manage the town's

finances responsibly, Councilman Rick DeGolia said, reading a proclamation recognizing Wiest for his service to the town.

DeGolia described how Lempres' 6-year-old daughter once offered Wiest a smoothie concoction that had "flavors appealing to a 6-year-old" and a color "somewhere between brown and purple" and Wiest said it was "delicious." This exemplified the kindness Wiest demonstrated in and outside of the council chambers, he said.

In departing, Wiest advised the council to care about, and be kind to, each other, noting the "past election (Nov. 3) cycle was challenging and wrought with misinformation." Wiest was likely referencing the claim by DeGolia that Wiest supported a controversial proposal for the town to detach from the Menlo Park Fire Protection District. DeGolia endorsed Hawkins-Manuelian since she didn't support detachment. Wiest maintained that he had not supported the proposal but wanted to explore it.

DeGolia, the outgoing mayor, said it was a great honor to serve as Atherton's mayor this past year.

"There've been several significant losses this year," he said. "Hopefully the pandemic is a once in a hundred years experience." ▀

Email Angela Swartz at [aswartz@almanacnews.com](mailto:aswartz@almanacnews.com)

## Don't Go It Alone for The Holidays

You are not alone. This time of year can normally be very stressful, let alone during a pandemic when we are asked to shelter in place and minimize contact with family and friends.

**If you are struggling, you can turn to Avenidas Care Partners (ACP) for help.**

Call (650) 289-5438 to request a crisis intervention, an elder care consult, family mediation and emotional support during these challenging times.



**Avenidas**  
Care Partners

[www.avenidas.org](http://www.avenidas.org)



**We are here for you.**

## Filoli estate's holiday decor lands a top spot in national poll

When it comes to decking the halls, Gilded Age mansion lives up to its opulent era

By Heather Zimmerman

At first glance, it's easy to assume that Elvis Presley's mansion and Woodside's Filoli estate wouldn't have much in common, but according to a USA Today readers' poll, both historic dwellings are among the best in the nation at decking the halls to welcome holiday visitors.

Filoli Historic House & Garden and Presley's former home, Graceland, in Memphis were both recently announced as winners on the publication's list of top 10 historic holiday home tours in its "10Best Readers' Choice Awards" for 2020.

At No. 9 on the list, Filoli is the only winner west of the Mississippi River — and at just over a century old, one of the "newer" homes featured, relatively speaking. Graceland topped the list, which also included George Washington's home, Mount Vernon, in Virginia.

Every year, Filoli staff lavishly decorate the sprawling formal gardens and 1917 Georgian revival mansion with a profusion of lights and ornaments,



Courtesy Jeff Bartee

**Filoli House and Garden** has expanded its holiday lights program this year with dazzling garden displays and theme nights.

as well as holiday decor drawn from nature, from traditional evergreens to dried flowers preserved from the estate's gardens.

With public health restrictions in place due to COVID-19, guests cannot go inside the 54,000-square-foot mansion this year, but the estate's gardens still offer plenty of holiday cheer for both daytime and nighttime visitors. And though the mansion can't be visited in person at the moment, Filoli staff recently unveiled a virtual tour of the historic home that can be seen

on Filoli's YouTube channel.

In addition to festive decorations, the estate's holiday programming has included socially distanced visits with Santa, musical performances and shopping.

To ensure adequate social distancing, visits to Filoli are currently by reservation only. For more information, visit [filoli.org](http://filoli.org). ■

Email Heather Zimmerman at [hzimmerman@paweekly.com](mailto:hzimmerman@paweekly.com)

## Several development proposals in North Menlo Park now open for public input

By Kate Bradshaw  
Almanac Staff Writer

When it comes to getting developments approved in Menlo Park, one of the largest obstacles many development proposals face is what's called an environmental impact report.

Applicants have to analyze and report on various ways their project and its construction will impact the surrounding environment, quantifying the impacts of everything from air pollution to traffic.

Community members are able to participate in this process by raising topics they'd like to be analyzed when a "notice of preparation" is released at the start of the process. They may also comment on the analysis that has been done when the draft environmental impact report is released.

The draft environmental impact reports for two projects in northern Menlo Park have been released. Go to [is.gd/mpEIRs](http://is.gd/mpEIRs) to view them.

### 111 Independence Drive

This is a proposal to construct an eight-story building with 105 apartments, a cafe and above-ground parking at 111 Independence Drive. The deadline to submit comments is 5 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 2. People should email comments to Payal Bhagat, contract principal planner at [pbhagat@menlopark.org](mailto:pbhagat@menlopark.org) or address them by mail to Bhagat at Community Development, 701 Laurel St., Menlo Park, CA 94025.

### Menlo Uptown

Menlo Uptown would involve redeveloping the office and industrial buildings at 141 Jefferson Drive and 180-106 Constitution Drive to build 441 apartments and 42 for-sale townhomes, plus about 3,000 square feet of office space.

The deadline to submit comments is also 5 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 2. People should contact Senior Planner Tom Smith by email at [tasmith@menlopark.org](mailto:tasmith@menlopark.org) or by mail at Tom Smith,

Community Development, 701 Laurel St., Menlo Park, CA 94025.

People may also submit comments when the Menlo Park Planning Commission reviews the environmental impact report at its remote meeting, currently scheduled for 7 p.m. on Jan. 11.

### Menlo Flats

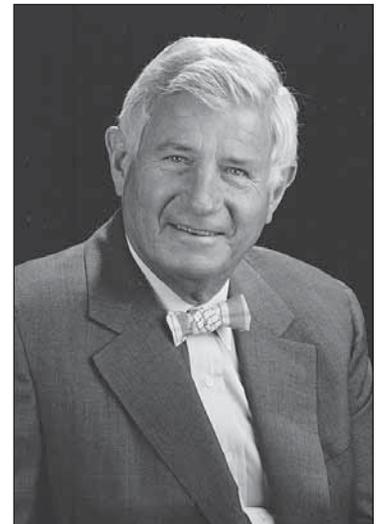
The Menlo Flats development proposal at 165 Jefferson Drive is adjacent to the proposed Menlo Uptown development. This proposal by developer Greystar is to build an eight-story building with 158 new apartments and about 15,000 square feet of commercial space. There would be an estimated 113 studio-size apartments and 45 four-bedroom apartments.

The Planning Commission weighed in Dec. 7 on what topics should be analyzed before the environmental analysis begins; the deadline for others to comment was 5 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 21. ■

Email Kate Bradshaw at [kbradshaw@almanacnews.com](mailto:kbradshaw@almanacnews.com)

## Paul M. Cook

Paul M. Cook, age 96, passed away peacefully on December 14, 2020, with his wife, Marcia, by his side. Paul is survived by his son, Gavin (Cecilia), his step-children Richard Souter (Mary) and Susan Lengyel, and his grandchildren, Maxwell and Liliha Cook, Elizabeth, Nick and Luke Souter, Andrew Souter, Allison Groton, Steven Groton, and Chance Lengyel.



Paul was born in Ridgewood, NJ, April 25, 1924. He developed an interest in chemistry at a young age, advancing from a basement laboratory in his parents' home, to studying chemical engineering at MIT. In 1943, he put his education on hold to enlist in the Army. In the Army Specialized Training Program he studied mechanical engineering for two terms at Stanford University. As a lieutenant he joined the famed 10th Mountain Division serving in combat in Italy toward the end of WW2. Upon completion of his military service, he returned to MIT, completing his degree in 1947.

Paul loved the Bay Area for its beauty and pioneering spirit and was determined to call it home. In 1948, he returned to the Bay Area as the 48th employee at SRI International. He returned to SRI years later as a Director and served as Chairman from 1993 to 1998.

In 1957, starting from a tiny building in Redwood City, he founded Raychem Corporation to develop commercial applications for an entirely new field — radiation chemistry. With offices in more than 40 countries and thousands of employees, Paul served as CEO of this Fortune 500 company until 1990, inspiring a new generation of innovators through his leadership.

Paul received many awards in his lifetime. In 1988, President Ronald Reagan presented Paul with the National Medal of Technology for creating a worldwide chemically based industry. He also received the Winthrop Sears Medal from the Chemical Industry Association, and he was named to the San Francisco Bay Area Business Hall of Fame in 1999.

Paul, in his spirit of giving back, was very active in his alma mater, MIT, serving as Chair of the Chemical Department and becoming a Member of the MIT Corporation.

Paul loved new technology, innovators and doers. After retiring from Raychem, he was involved in many startups and new ventures. At his death, he remained as Chairman of his latest venture, Vox Frontera, Inc., a voice recognition company.

As involved as he was in technology and business, Paul was generous with his time and the sharing of his deep knowledge and experiences. He was passionate about helping those early in their careers, offering mentoring, insights, and advice. He always had time for his family and friends and was creative and fun in how he expressed his love and support for them, especially in his later years.

Paul was an active contributor to many charitable causes. The family asks that in lieu of flowers, contributions be made to JobTrain in Menlo Park, [www.jobtrainworks.org](http://www.jobtrainworks.org), the Raychem Entrepreneurs Gallery at the San Mateo County Historical Association [www.historysmc.org](http://www.historysmc.org), or to the Paul and Marcia Cook Fund for Innovation in Chemistry at MIT <https://giving.mit.edu/paul-cook>.

A celebration of Paul's extraordinary life is planned and will be announced after COVID restrictions have been lifted, and we can celebrate together safely.

PAID OBITUARY

# Nine days in the wilderness

In February, a Palo Alto couple went missing in Marin.  
Now they're telling their story.

By Sue Dremann

The late afternoon hike from their vacation cottage wasn't supposed to take more than 15 minutes. For Palo Altans Carol Kiparsky and Ian Irwin, the idyllic sunset walk along a narrow Marin County trail instead became a nine-day walkabout and a fight for their very survival.

Their disappearance on Feb. 14 set off a massive search-and-rescue mission, which took helicopters and ground teams over and through the rough terrain near Seahaven/Inverness. Given their ages — Kiparsky is 77 and Irwin is 72 — the length of time their absence and weather conditions, authorities at one point declared that the rescue had turned into a recovery mission and started searching Tomales Bay for their remains.

But Kiparsky and Irwin did survive, living off fiddlehead tops of ferns and a few seeps, or puddles with muddy water. They were found safe by a search-and-rescue team on Feb. 22. Now recovered but still processing their journey, they agreed to talk to reporter Sue Dremann, their first interview since their rescue.

Theirs is a story of survival, but don't call what they went through an "ordeal," they said. Their experiences amounted to much more than that, with deeper insights into the importance of love and companionship, universal human experience and of never giving up.

Irwin and Kiparsky weren't novice hikers the day they disappeared. The couple has trekked many places over the years, and they were acquainted with the area around their vacation retreat in Seahaven/Inverness, they said. Irwin was an experienced backpacker, spending weeks at a time in the Sierra Mountains.

Having arrived earlier in the week, they set out on a narrow trail near their cottage to find a commanding view of their surroundings, including Tomales Bay.

"We thought it would be lovely to see the sunset and come back and have dinner," Irwin recalled.

As the sun descended in the sky, they worked their way back toward the cottage. Seemingly in an instant, the beauty and grace of the setting sun fell away into a black, moonless void. Coastal mist enveloped them.

They became disoriented. They were walking the trail "by Braille," Irwin recalled, tapping their feet on the ground to figure out what was the trail and what was off-trail. "I tripped and fell

and I banged my head and broke my glasses," he said.

Irwin balanced the cockeyed pieces on the bridge of his nose. He had blood dripping from a gash on his forehead, and later he found blood had dripped down his glasses that had obscured his vision, he said.

The trail was covered in thick vegetation along many stretches. With Irwin injured and the dark upon them, they realized they could not travel farther. They decided to spend the night where they were.

Normally on hikes, they carry a small pack with essential supplies, but they were only on a brief stroll.

"We had nothing with us. No phone, no light, no water, nothing," Irwin said.

"Not even a candy bar," Kiparsky added.

They were also dressed for a short evening outing. She wore corduroy pants, a favorite sweatshirt with a jacket on top, a hat and comfortable shoes; Irwin had a light down sweater jacket, flannel shirt, corduroy pants with a small tear in one leg and hiking boots.

Alone in the cold and darkness, they piled up ferns on which to rest their heads. That night would be the first of many without much sleep. With temperatures in the low- to mid-30s, the nights were "bone-chilling," Irwin said. They huddled as best as they could to keep each other warm.

"We would take turns to warm each other up," Irwin added. As they tossed and turned through the night, they alternated holding the other's back for warmth.

By 10 a.m., the sun was high enough and the shadows had receded so they could warm up and catch a little sleep. The first day, they were high on the hillside and could hear cars and voices. If they followed the sounds, they would find their way out, they thought.

"I could see Tomales Bay in

the distance. The trails are narrow here and tend to come and go, so we wandered most of that morning. We thought if you can navigate downhill we would get to Tomales Bay and to civilization. It was really hard going. We were beating through dense, dense underbrush," Irwin said.

He threw himself backward over the dense vegetation to flatten it with his back so they could walk on top.

"It was very slow progress. Imagine it was really big and dense like a Brillo pad and you are in the middle of it," Kiparsky said. "It's kind of hard to find your way through. And in any direction you go, there's more Brillo."

In many places, they would fall through the vegetation, which had grown over a creek about five or six feet below, soaking their feet and legs. But they could not drink the water; it smelled of sewage. They decided they wouldn't take a chance. Getting sick on top of being lost was unthinkable, Irwin said.

Hope came in the form of a few distant summer homes, but these were closed up, uninhabited for the winter, they soon realized, with no one inside to see or hear them.

"By day two we did a lot of screaming," Irwin said, trying to attract attention.

At first, they weren't frightened. The couple has done a lot of backpacking. They felt comfortable in the woods, Kiparsky said. Kiparsky remembered hunting for fiddleheads, the spiral, young fronds of Ostrich ferns not yet unfurled that people would pick and eat on the East Coast where she grew up. The tops would usually be sauteed in olive oil and garlic. The couple sustained themselves on uncooked fiddleheads and a few other recognizable edible plants, she said. The fiddleheads are low in calories — only 34 calories per about 100 grams — but they are high in antioxidants, vitamins A



Magali Gauthier

**Ian Irwin and Carol Kiparsky** in their backyard in Palo Alto on Dec. 2.

and C and essential fatty acids. But they had nothing to drink.

By day four, they became delusional from the lack of water.

"We saw imaginary people. At one point Carol thought we were in the bedroom. All we had to do was go to the closet and get a blanket to keep warm," Irwin said.

Her delusions became treacherous at times. She didn't recognize her own jacket and took it off, thinking it belonged to someone else; she left a shoe behind that came off in the mud, then saw no need to keep the other.

One saving grace: As the couple drifted in and out of confused states of mind, at least they did it at separate times, they said.

"There was always someone with an ounce of sanity," Kiparsky said.

Irwin said that, just like the spots one sees floating in one's field of vision, thoughts of people he knew passed by, and being alone for so long gave him the chance to remember them more deeply.

"It was an opportunity to think of everyone I've ever known," he said. "I wondered if something did happen to us if they would find out about it and how that would affect them."

"There were all kinds of moments in the day," Kiparsky said. "Definitely, we thought we might die. We thought about grandchildren and children and other people and my cat and I thought, 'There's no way I'm ready to leave these beings. So I'm sorry, I'm not dying.'"

Thoughts of death didn't consume them, though, Irwin said. Their goal was to keep moving and not to give up. And they knew the key was having each other.

"Being close was indispensable," Kiparsky said. "I think I would've not gotten out of there if I had been there by myself."

Because Irwin was injured, at one point she tore pieces of a silk scarf and tied them onto trees so that Irwin could follow her to the next clearing, but even at 20 feet away they couldn't see each other. Although she lost her shoes,

Kiparsky's feet were in better shape than Irwin's. Irwin, with boots and wet socks, developed foot problems from the lack of circulation — sort of like trench foot that soldiers developed during World War I, he said. He was afraid to take his shoes off to look at blisters.

When end-of-life thoughts did creep in, they managed them with humor at times.

"At one point we had been talking about planning our estate and the possibility of doing — instead of ... being incinerated or buried — that we would want to be compost. And we were sitting there amid piles of vegetation and everything, and he says, 'You know about that compost burial? We might be accomplishing it right now,'" Kiparsky said.

After the fourth day without water, they resolved they had to drink whatever they could. If not, they knew they would die. They found small seeps — puddles created by water oozing up through the ground — and places where a deer might have put its hoof print. The water there didn't smell like a septic system. They tried to absorb the water with a sock, squeezing handfuls into their mouths. Sometimes, they laid down and sipped from the small puddles, they said. The water seeps contained bioluminescent fungi. At night, sticks around the water margins would glow in the dark, Irwin said.

They always expected they would be rescued. At nights, a helicopter flew overhead. Irwin could see its green and red lights. He took off his shirt, hoping his skin would give off a heat signature detectable by infrared sensors.

"It flew right over us. We waved and screamed constantly," he said.

Sometimes they sang songs to lift their spirits. Old favorites turned into ballads about their circumstances, such as songs about drinking muddy water, they said.

By day 9, however, they were



Magali Gauthier

**The Marin County Sheriff's Department Dive Team** heads out to search the waters of Tomales Bay in Inverness on Feb. 19.

See **MISSING COUPLE**, page 11

# Local nutrition programs find creative ways to provide meals and cheer as demand for food hits new record

By Chris Kenrick  
Special to The Almanac

As they face rising demand for food, organizers of local senior nutrition programs say they're committed to meeting the need and making the holidays special — even if socially distanced — for those who depend on them.

Instead of its traditional music-filled Hanukkah, Christmas and New Year's gatherings inside a festive dining hall, Palo Alto's La Comida is distributing freshly prepared, boxed meals from an outdoor table.

Recipients have to stand in line for the daily takeout distribution, but special menus — including brisket, latkes and turkey — are being offered for the holidays. Volunteer masked musicians Jena Rauti and Gary Breitbard often stop by to liven up the scene with background music.

"Demand (for the hot meals) has gone up significantly" since the COVID-19 pandemic

began, Bill Blodgett, La Comida board co-president and long-time volunteer, said. The agency currently is serving as many as 250 meals per day at two locations, up from about 160 per day a year ago. The 390 meals served last month for Thanksgiving were a single-day record in the agency's 48-year history, Blodgett said.

More than 1,200 homebound seniors get meals delivered to their doorsteps several days per week by Menlo Park-based Peninsula Volunteers, Inc., which operates Meals on Wheels for much of San Mateo County, including East Palo Alto and Menlo Park.

The average number of meals delivered per month jumped from 13,837 to 15,450 from last year's third quarter to this year's, the agency said.

Turkey with all the trimmings is on the Christmas menu. Peninsula Volunteers also sought donations of small gifts to place inside the packages with the meals.

"We've had to get creative on our programming," Peninsula Volunteers CEO Peter Olson said.

To reduce client exposure, Meals on Wheels comes only three days per week — with multiple meals — instead of the usual five days a week. Staff and volunteers must disinfect hands before and after each home delivery.

"We make wellness calls on days clients do not receive a meal delivery to assess each client's well-being on a regular basis while also helping to reduce their feelings of isolation and to provide additional resources where needed," Rebecca Matteson Nelson, Peninsula Volunteers development director, said.

Peninsula Volunteers, which also operates the Little House senior center, the adult-day program Rosener House and senior transportation services, has substantially altered its other programs in response to the pandemic.

Rosener House, which serves adults with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia, and Little House have closed their doors to the public and are offering classes by Zoom. The agency continues to offer transportation services for medical, dental and grocery visits.

Olson said data from the 2010 Census indicates "there are an estimated 16,000 seniors in San Mateo County suffering from food insecurity.

"We're serving 1,200 individuals (with a waiting list of 266) and we'd like to serve more, but fundraising is critical for any type of expansion," he said. "It takes support from the community."

While some of the volunteer drivers for Meals on Wheels had to withdraw because of the pandemic, the agency has "received an outpouring of community support and interest from new volunteers," Nelson said.

It's a different story at La Comida in Palo Alto. A shortage of volunteers "has been

one of our greatest challenges during the pandemic," Blodgett said. "Most of our volunteers are seniors, so understandably many are sheltering at home and not volunteering."

"We definitely need more volunteers Monday through Friday from 10:30 a.m. 'til 12:30. We need volunteers year-round, not just at the holidays."

Extra funding from Santa Clara County covered additional La Comida meals from July through October, Blodgett said. "We are hopeful that there will be additional county funding to cover the higher meal volume through the rest of the year but we will have to wait and see on that. In any case La Comida is committed to fully meeting the demand for senior meals throughout the pandemic period," he said.

For more information on La Comida, go to [lacomida.org](http://lacomida.org) or email [manager@lacomida.org](mailto:manager@lacomida.org).

For more information about Peninsula Volunteers, go to [penvol.org](http://penvol.org). ▀

## MISSING COUPLE

continued from page 10

beginning to feel they might truly die. The couple was hesitant to leave the water holes.

"We were pretty spent" by then, Irwin said.

But on the morning of Feb. 22, their ninth day in the wilderness, they heard faint voices. The couple called out.

"It seemed to be a call and response," Irwin said.

On the other end were Marin Search and Rescue volunteer Quincy Webster, California Rescue Dog Association volunteer Rich Cassens and Groot, a golden retriever.

Kiparsky and Irwin had been found, about 4 miles from the cottage where they'd started their sunset hike.

Cassens said they would send the dog down to the couple. The brush was too dense to get through.

"I asked, 'Is that a cadaver dog or a person dog?'" Irwin recalled. "He said, 'He does both.'"

The friendly, 3-year-old Groot made his way to them, but it took another 40 minutes for Quincy and Cassens to reach them after cutting through the thick vegetation. They had fresh water, Gatorade and warm clothing.

A helicopter arrived with a litter on which to carry Kiparsky and Irwin out. Irwin broke into song as he was hoisted into the sky, singing "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," he recalled. As he

swung out over the forest, he felt a kinship with all of history: with all of the people who had been lost or traveled through forests before them; of the Coast Miwok who inhabited these lands and all of the slaves who had escaped through forests in the South and into an uncertain and often hostile environment.

"Think about all of the people who endured that for one reason or another," he said.

**'I asked, "Is that a cadaver dog or a person dog?" He said, "He does both."'**

IAN IRWIN

Kiparsky, who is terrified of heights, said she shivered as the litter carried her into the sky. But her fear was eased. They had made it out alive.

"I looked around and saw the world," she said.

Just as they had been inseparable for nine days, they remained together as they healed. Placed in the ambulance together, they stayed in the same intensive-care unit in Marin General Hospital.

Both were hypothermic, with body temperatures of about 94 degrees Fahrenheit. Of the two, Irwin was injured the worst due to hitting his head and with his feet nerve-damaged from being cold and wet in his boots and with poor circulation. Kiparsky mainly had scratched feet, she said.

The couple is immensely

grateful for the outpouring of support they have received from all over the world and for their neighbors, who brought them food once they returned home. But don't ask them to talk about their "ordeal," they said.

"It was a much more mixed experience than that," Irwin said. There was "good conversation, good company and some beauties of nature."

The experience was also transformative: "The commonality of all humanity, even across time and even across individual experiences. We share an awful lot across time, history and as a nation," Irwin said.

Kiparsky said she was most struck by "truly being present. Really present and immersed, even for a moment, was something I learned out there."

Kiparsky and Irwin now savor each taste of food, each encounter with a person, the sound of music — and nature. Looking out at the finches at their backyard bird feeder, Kiparsky said, "Before, it was a fleeting, 'Oh, we've got birds. Isn't that nice?'"

But now, "There's so much more capacity to know who's who and how many different kinds they are and their behaviors and seeing them from different angles," she said.

There are flashbacks. During a visit to a garden store in Redwood City, Irwin came across benches made out of twisted willow branches. It brought back unpleasant memories of the

thicket of brambles, he said.

The couple has been doing much writing about their experiences since returning home.

"We're definitely processing," Kiparsky said of their time in the wilderness, which is still vivid to her. "I feel there's a lot to be learned from it. ... When I stop and think about it, things come up."

They also haven't shied from revisiting the place where they became lost. In August, they went back to those woods to find where they had started. They were accompanied by two of their rescuers, and they shared all of the events, including what was involved in their rescue.

About 1,400 or 1,500 people get lost in national parks each year, Irwin said he has heard.

Looking back on their experience, Irwin said when taking even a short walk in the wilderness now, he will take a cell phone, as much as he dislikes mobile devices.

Kiparsky said that what stands out to her most is a new perspective: "You are just more aware of being alive. Alive." ▀

Email Sue Dremann at [sdremann@paweb.com](mailto:sdremann@paweb.com).

## WATCH MORE ONLINE

Excerpts from Sue Dremann's video interview with Carol Kiparsky and Ian Irwin can be viewed at [facebook.com/paloaltoonline](https://www.facebook.com/paloaltoonline).

## LAS LOMITAS

continued from page 10

according to the county.

A video of the interviews can be viewed at [tinyurl.com/LasLomitasInterviews](http://tinyurl.com/LasLomitasInterviews).

## Recall effort

A change.org petition began circulating in November to recall Las Lomitas trustee Earnhardt. Parents supporting the recall effort say his comments in a local newspaper reacting to Mehr-edith Venverloh's insulting tweets about Vice President-elect Harris lacked sensitivity and warrant his removal.

District parents started the online petition, which has 135 signatures, after Earnhardt declined a request that he step down from the board. The parents took issue with statements he made to the Palo Alto Daily Post, calling Venverloh a "very diligent as a board member and impactful for the district" and noting the "controversy moved quickly because it spread through electronic media and parents are more engaged in the district than in the past" because board meetings are happening over Zoom.

An official recall petition would require signatures from a quarter of the district's registered voters in order to move forward. ▀

Email Angela Swartz at [aswartz@almanacnews.com](mailto:aswartz@almanacnews.com)

# Give to The Almanac Holiday Fund

Your gift helps local children  
and families in need



Contributions to the Holiday Fund go directly to programs that benefit Peninsula residents. Last year, Almanac readers and foundations contributed \$150,000 from more than 150 donors for the 10 agencies that feed the hungry, house the homeless and provide numerous other services to those in need.

Contributions to the Holiday Fund will be matched, to the extent possible, by generous community organizations, foundations and individuals, including the Rotary Club of Menlo Park Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. No administrative costs will be deducted from the gifts, which are tax-deductible as permitted by law.

All donations to the Holiday Fund will be shared equally among the 10 recipient agencies listed on this page.

## Boys & Girls Clubs

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.

## Health Connected

Serves over 5,000 students and their families each year through comprehensive sexual health education programs. Students learn to have ongoing communication with parents and to make informed decisions that will apply to their lives, now and in the future.

## 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.

## 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.

## St. Francis Center

Helps low-income, working families become self-supporting members of the community by providing long-term solutions through educational programs for children and parents, as well as after-school programming at Siena Youth Centers. St. Francis Center also provides housing, food and clothing services to address short-term needs.

## 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.

The organizations below provide  
major matching grants to the Holiday Fund.



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Changes or corrections to listings may be made by contacting Kali Shiloh at kshiloh@almanacnews.com.

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# Holiday Fund: Upward Scholars pivots to ensure adult immigrants stay in college

By Linda Prieto  
Special to The Almanac



Since 2010, local nonprofit Upward Scholars has empowered more than 900 students through education, career development support, and a community that believes adult immigrant students from low-income households have the determination to achieve a better life for themselves and their families.

This year, due to COVID-19, more than 80% of Upward Scholars students are reporting a loss of employment, housing insecurity, and not enough money to pay for food. As a result, their education is no longer their top priority.

In a normal year, Upward Scholars provides students with laptops and textbooks and covers their community college transportation, parking, and an on-campus meal voucher. But 2020 is not a normal year, and the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on the lives of Upward Scholars students prompted Upward Scholars to increase and diversify its support services so adult immigrant students from a low-income bracket can continue studying at local community colleges.

To help ensure that students can continue their community college classes, Upward Scholars has pivoted all of its in-person services to online programs. For example, prior to COVID, Upward Scholars tutors, all community volunteers, met with their students in person. Now, tutors meet with

their students over web video. Upward Scholars has also created several new virtual programs during the pandemic, such as online learning workshops, one-on-one English conversation partners, virtual career development workshops, and virtual student-staff support groups in Spanish.

Providing selected students with laptops has been a long-time focus of Upward Scholars. Now, all students who need laptops receive one, along with hot spots to ensure internet connectivity.

"Technology and connectivity for all remain the number one priority in the area of the digital divide as we work to bridge educational welfare for families and individuals most impacted by economic constraints," said Prieto.

Donations to The Almanac's Holiday Fund benefit Upward Scholars and nine other nonprofits serving the local community. To donate, go to [siliconvalleycf.org/almanac-holiday-fund](http://siliconvalleycf.org/almanac-holiday-fund).

Since the onset of COVID-19 in mid-March, Upward Scholars has provided needy students with over 350 grocery gift cards, nearly 150 biweekly grocery gift boxes (provided by Vegan Outreach), and four drive-thru

meal programs serving 750 student meals (provided by AnewVista). But as the pandemic has dragged on, student surveys revealed that they were still struggling. Thus, Upward Scholars recently launched its first-ever Safety Net Fund for students needing emergency aid.

Upward Scholars student and single mom Cristina wrote on her application, "I don't have medical insurance, and I'm very concerned and overwhelmed by the whole situation. Since my kids are home, I've been spending more on food because they are eating three times more. I live on a budget, and this month, it seems like I already exceeded the limit of my budget. Thanks for taking the time of providing care for us."

Another Upward Scholars student, Moises, said, "My family and I are so concerned because at work they cut hours. The rents are too expensive, and with the current situation at work, it is more difficult to survive in this emergency. I don't like to do this, but due to the situation and the concern I have for the well-being of my family, I am forced to ask for help. With all my heart, thank you very much!"

"The stories our students share are heartbreaking," said Prieto. "Our hope is that emergency funds will give students like Cristina and Moises the impetus to stay in school. In short, we're doing all that we can do to ensure that we don't let the pandemic stand in the way of our students' future success." ■  
*Linda Prieto, Ph.D., is the executive director of Upward Scholars.*

## CORONAVIRUS

continued from page 7

### Eshoo tests negative for COVID-19

Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Palo Alto, has tested negative for COVID-19, the congresswoman announced Tuesday. She had been under self-quarantine after a potential exposure last week, when she learned on Wednesday evening, Dec. 16, that a member of her staff was confirmed with the virus. Eshoo received her negative test result on Monday, Dec. 21, she said in a statement.

"Per CDC guidelines and in consultation with the Office of the Attending Physician, I'm eligible to end my period of quarantine tomorrow," she said. "My thanks to the many constituents for their kind messages of support in recent days."

## Comprehensive COVID-19 coverage

View interactive charts tracking the spread of the coronavirus in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties online at [paloaltoonline.atavist.com/tracking-the-coronavirus](http://paloaltoonline.atavist.com/tracking-the-coronavirus). Find a comprehensive collection of coverage on the Midpeninsula's response to the new coronavirus by The Almanac and its sister publications, Palo Alto Online, and the Mountain View Voice, at [tinyurl.com/c19-Almanac](http://tinyurl.com/c19-Almanac). *CalMatters and Bay City News Service contributed to this report.*

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## HEALTH ORDER

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decision for those areas at the end of this week or next week.

Newsom said the state continues to reassess its surge capacity resources — medical stations set up in addition to hospitals — and has asked the federal government for another field medical station to expand hospital capacity.

He said there was better news regarding vaccines. The state has received 110,000 doses of the newly authorized Moderna vaccine out of an anticipated 672,600 doses; California also received 327,600 doses of the first authorized vaccine, from Pfizer, last week and anticipates another 233,025 doses from Pfizer this week, he said. ■  
*Palo Alto Weekly staff writer Sue Dremann contributed to this report.*

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# High school district paid superintendent over \$250K to leave post

Mary Streshly left in September following complaints from teachers, principals

By Angela Swartz

Almanac Staff Writer

The Sequoia Union High School District paid former Superintendent Mary Streshly \$256,276 to leave her position, according to a resignation and separation agreement obtained by The Almanac.

Streshly, whose contract was set to expire on June 30, 2022, stepped down from her role in September following calls for her firing by teachers, top district officials and administrators. The agreement states that Streshly voluntarily resigned from her post.

"The parties desire to avoid the time and expense attendant upon potential administrative

and civil litigation and to settle, once and forever, all disputes arising out of ... the superintendent's employment with the district and her resignation," the Sept. 18 agreement states.

It also stipulates that the board will only provide basic employment information (date of hire, salary, job duties, resignation date and positions held within the district) and information in a letter of recommendation written by former board president Allen Weiner outlining her accomplishments as superintendent.



Mary Streshly

Streshly will also receive health benefits through the district through August 2021.

The agreement includes the press release announcing Streshly's resignation.

The Sequoia District Teachers Association (SDTA) announced a vote against Streshly on Aug. 3 and asked for board members to replace her.

A group of district administrators that included high school principals sent a letter to the board calling for her ouster on July 31. Both teachers and administrators accused Streshly of mishandling the district's COVID-19 response and complained about a history of ineffectual leadership. The letter included signatures from 22

principals and top administrators such as Bonnie Hansen, the assistant superintendent of instructional services.

In a statement, the Sequoia board of trustees said that Streshly left her job "in order to fulfill critical care responsibilities with her family."

Streshly became superintendent in July 2017, signing on with a salary of \$240,500 per year.

Former Assistant Superintendent Crystal Leach has served as the district's interim superintendent since Streshly departed.

The school board voted to hire search firm Leadership Associates during a Dec. 16 school board meeting to help find a new superintendent, said Laura Lauese, executive assistant to

the superintendent and board of trustees, in a Dec. 18 email. Trustees have said they'd like to hire Streshly's replacement to start at the beginning of the 2021-22 school year.

The school board interviewed three consulting firms on Nov. 10 that could conduct the hiring process for a new superintendent to replace Streshly, including Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA), which helped the board hire Streshly three years ago. Trustees questioned if HYA would be good for the job given that Streshly's tenure was a shorter time than the board "would have liked." ■

Email Angela Swartz at [aswartz@almanacnews.com](mailto:aswartz@almanacnews.com)

## BIRD COUNT

continued from page 5

said. "That simply can't happen this year. ...That'll change once everybody is clear of the virus, but we can't have that kind of hand-holding that usually takes place."

Still, he said he expected to see many regular participants return this year. "I think we're still going to have a pretty good turnout," he said.

The Palo Alto count, which has been held every year since 1959, had fewer participants and didn't involve newcomers this year. But it was still a lot of fun, according to Ann Hepenstal, a Los Altos resident, who helped organize the count and participated with her son, Alex Tey.

Tey, now 21, got the family involved in bird-watching as a 5-year-old who was permitted

to study his mom's birding field guide instead of napping, Hepenstal said. They joined their first Christmas Bird Count that year and were quickly welcomed into the birding community at the annual dinner held after the count, which usually involves pizza and eager stories shared about the rare birds that were observed, Hepenstal said. That first year, Tey impressed the older birders — many of whom were his senior by at least 50 years — with his precocious knowledge of kingbirds, and the two have been regulars ever since, she said.

The birds reported in the Palo Alto area during the Dec. 21 count included a merlin flyover, parakeets in Palo Alto, a Mandarin duck and snow geese at a pond near some apartments in Sunnyvale, a Western screech owl and barn owl at Stanford,

woodpeckers at the Alta Mesa Cemetery, a Western tanager at the Stevens Creek Trail and more, Hepenstal said.

Because the data is collected year over year, the count shows trends in bird populations over time, she said.

It's unlikely that some abnormalities in this year's annual count, due to the pandemic restrictions, will have a major impact, Leslie Flint, the Christmas Bird Count coordinator for San Mateo County, said in an email.

"National Audubon indicated early that canceling the count would not be a problem in the greater scheme of things," she said.

Particularly in San Mateo County, in areas that have been damaged by CZU Complex fires this year in the Año Nuevo region, it's likely that the counts

will naturally be lower due to park closures, Flint said.

Over the past century and more, Dodder said, the Christmas Bird Count has offered scientists a good sense of the fluctuations in bird populations, which then shapes which types of conservation efforts are enacted.

"It serves a real purpose for the protection of birds," he said.

The annual bird count, when compiled at the national level, has shown some concerning trends in recent years. At the most recent count, the 120th in 2020, there were 81,600 participants, more than ever, and a total 2,646 species counted. However, the number of birds counted had fallen by around 6 million from the previous count, according to the National Audubon Society.

While the counts from the Palo Alto area were being collected

Dec. 21, Hepenstal said, previous years' data was brought up to show how some species were being observed in larger numbers, while others hadn't been counted in several years.

## Learn more

Even though local Audubon Society chapters aren't accepting new volunteers for the Christmas Bird Count right now, December is still a good time for birding, according to the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society. The organization has put together several self-guided field trip recommendations for nearby destinations to explore in December. Go to [scvas.org/self-guided-field-trips](http://scvas.org/self-guided-field-trips) for more information. ■

Email Kate Bradshaw at [kbradshaw@almanacnews.com](mailto:kbradshaw@almanacnews.com)

## HEALTH EQUITY

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underway focused on helping people safely quarantine and isolate, to increase access to testing and improving health education, but one challenge will be to increase the focus on equity and accountability within those efforts, she said. The county has many staff in lots of divisions, and creating a health equity lens for every effort "will be an undertaking," she said. "But we are all committed and up for the task."

Working with community leaders to be thoughtful and authentic takes time, even while the needs in the community are very urgent, she said.

"Managing the urgency with a thoughtful approach will be important," she added.

## How is San Mateo County performing on equity goals?

The county's two main priorities for reducing the spread and the unequal distribution of the virus are to first bolster communication, build trust, and increase engagement and participation in efforts to protect people from getting the virus; and second, to focus interventions in at-risk communities.

The county reports specific metrics for how it's doing on these goals, which can be accessed at [is.gd/covidequityplan](http://is.gd/covidequityplan).

For the first priority, the county reported that it exceeded its goals for the number of canvassing events hosted and the number of visitors to online COVID-19 resources, but fell short of the monthly 4.5 million

media impressions it sought to achieve (reaching 3 million in November).

It also aimed to distribute 2,400 masks per month, but distributed 2,328 in November. It also was falling short of its efforts to contact 500 businesses by the end of the year, with specific quotas for those operated by English, Spanish and Chinese-language owners. It had so far contacted 244 businesses, about 40% of which had Spanish-speaking owners.

The county exceeded its goal of hosting at least six interactive panels, discussions or forums by the end of the year with a count of nine.

For the second priority, hosting targeted interventions in at-risk neighborhoods, the results were more successful. The county was well in excess of its goal to provide a little over 300

tests per 100,000 people at 843 tests per 100,000 people the last week of November.

The county also sought to perform at least 16 neighborhood testing events per month and hosted 81 in November. The most recent reports show that people who tested positive for COVID-19 were contacted by contact tracers within one day 82% of the time, and a third of contact tracers were bilingual, slightly under the 40% goal.

County health workers also exceeded the goals set for helping people who test positive for COVID-19 but may have a hard time isolating safely. They have a team of case managers, all of whom are bilingual, working to connect people with housing, food, health coverage or other county support programs, like rent assistance, landlord

assistance or immigrant relief funds. In November, the case managers made 622 referrals to service agencies helping meet these needs, well in excess of the stated goal of more than 250. The two cities with the largest number of referrals were Redwood City and East Palo Alto, according to the report.

Another important strategy, the county reports, is tracking hospital capacity and keeping it available to those who need it, which has become a significant challenge amidst the current surge of COVID-19 cases. As of Monday, Dec. 21, there were 70 staffed and available beds for acute care and only four ICU beds available, with 133 COVID-19 patients hospitalized, according to county data. ■

Email Kate Bradshaw at [kbradshaw@almanacnews.com](mailto:kbradshaw@almanacnews.com)

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## FOOTHILLS PARK

continued from page 5

Near the Wild Horse Valley trails, a couple from Mountain View who had previously lived in Palo Alto were back for the first time in about eight years, visiting familiar trails with their dog Caspian.

Out on the Sunrise Trail, San Francisco couple Amy and David Leblanc were excited to explore the beautiful views of the park after learning about it in the news. Amy Leblanc marveled at the sights and her husband was struck by the backstory behind the open space.

The park's opening came after much discussion and a lawsuit this year. In August, the Palo Alto City Council agreed to a pilot program to open Foothills Park to residents outside of Palo Alto that would allow up to 50 nonresident permits per day, and indicated that it planned to send the issue to the voters in 2022.

Then came a lawsuit in September from a coalition including the American Civil Liberties Union, the NAACP and residents from Palo Alto and neighboring cities.

The lawsuit alleged that Palo Alto's 1965 law banning non-residents, "traces its roots to an era when racial discrimination in and around the City was open and notorious," and violated



Kate Bradshaw

**Boronda Lake** at Palo Alto's Foothills Park drew new visitors eager to fish and sit on the docks when it opened to the public on Dec. 17.

nonresidents' right to free speech by preventing them from expressing their opposition to the ordinance in the park. It also violated their constitutionally protected right of freedom to assemble, the suit alleged.

The city settled the lawsuit by repealing the residents-only requirement, and on Nov. 16 it officially approved the settlement.

Despite fears voiced by some Palo Alto residents who were afraid of what might happen if the park were opened to people from other cities, it was not overrun with visitors, at least on the afternoon of opening day.

Christopher Sundita of Sunnyvale said he's been exploring local parks during the pandemic

and had been following the news stories about the park's reopening before deciding to explore it on Thursday. "It's beautiful and peaceful," he said, noting the great views from Vista Hill. At Boronda Lake, Jen Edson, who lives outside of Palo Alto, said she'd seen on the fishing app Fishbrain that Boronda Lake was a good place to fish, and just happened to visit on the first day the park was open to people who live outside of Palo Alto. Meanwhile, Menlo-Atherton High School seniors Dylan Wang and Violet Taylor sat on the dock at the lake celebrating the completion of their last finals for the semester just earlier that morning.

However, not everyone was excited to see the park open to the

public. Hiker Steve Rutledge, who said he first visited the park in the 1970s, said he opposed opening it to everyone because he wanted to ensure the natural environment is protected. He said he worried about the impacts to wildlife if the park were to be overrun with human visitors.

"I've had a lot of beautiful nature experiences here almost by myself. I don't want to see it change," he said.

Toward the trails near Wild Horse Valley, two Palo Alto residents, who declined to provide their names, said they opposed opening the park to nonresidents on the grounds that the city's residents are the ones who pay the taxes for the park's maintenance and that it isn't fair for everyone else to use the space without paying.

Several other park visitors from Palo Alto didn't express opposition to the park going public as much as apprehension about sharing a beloved place with newcomers.

As they hiked toward the Los Trancos Trail loop, Lynette Philippe and Sue Nicholls of Palo Alto said they had come to the park to see how busy it would be on opening day. They were supportive of opening the park to the public, but added that they'd be willing to pay a \$5 to \$10 entry fee to ensure the park's maintenance.

Another hiker said she'd been coming to the park since she was a child and just wants to see the park preserved and taken care of. If that means having to pay an entry fee, such as those charged at the nearby trails at Hidden Villa, she would be OK with it.

And some Palo Alto residents were eager to see newcomers from outside city limits visit the park.

Drew Harwell, a longtime Palo Alto resident who offers after school and preschool programs for children about the outdoors, said he felt opening the park was "long overdue" and that he'd always been "a bit embarrassed" about the policy banning non-residents. The outdoor education program he teaches travels to a number of local parks, and he had always been able to provide lessons at Foothills Park. But when his students who live outside of Palo Alto wanted to visit the same park on their own on weekends, they weren't able to — until now.

Hiker Cheyenne Pico of Palo Alto also saw the benefits of expanding access to the preserve.

"This is a great opportunity for the greater community to take advantage of nearby parks, especially with all of the lockdowns," she said. ■

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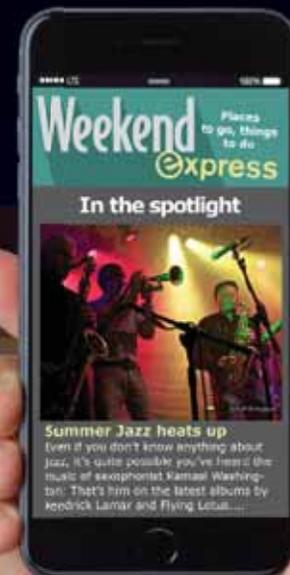
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# Menlo Park briefs: No parking enforcement over holiday

By Kate Bradshaw  
Almanac Staff Writer

## Parking enforcement suspended over holidays

In keeping with tradition, the Menlo Park Police Department will not be enforcing the city's overnight parking ban over the holidays, with will run through the morning of Saturday, Jan. 2. Enforcement will begin again at 2 a.m. on Sunday, Jan. 3.

Vehicles parked on the street without a permit receive a courtesy warning. People can purchase overnight permits online at [menlopark.org/parkingpermits](http://menlopark.org/parkingpermits) or in person at the Menlo Park Police Department at 701 Laurel St.

## Menlo Church removes medical debt

Menlo Church, a six-campus megachurch headquartered in Menlo Park, is raising funds to erase medical debt for households in need in California and Texas.

So far, the organization has spent at least \$60,000 to purchase \$7 million in medical debt to help 3,764 households and plans to spend a total of \$120,000 to purchase an additional \$5 million to provide \$12 million in debt relief, according to church spokesperson Heather Holliday.

Donations have helped households in Santa Clara County as well as Marin, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties in



Sammy Dallal

**Menlo Church** officials announced a \$120,000 campaign to pay off people's medical debts.

California and Fort Bend and Harris counties in Texas, according to a press release.

"The chance to bless

someone by alleviating their medical debt is a tangible act of compassion and kindness," said Executive Pastor Eugene

Lee in a press statement. "We believe that helping to pay off the debts of others is a tangible way to serve our neighbors and show God's love."

The church has had a tumultuous year after former Senior Pastor John Ortberg resigned at the end of July when it was revealed he had permitted his grown son to continue to work as a volunteer with church youth even after the man privately disclosed that he was sexually attracted to minors.

People interested in participating in the medical debt-relief fundraiser can learn more at [give.menlo.church](http://give.menlo.church). ■

Email Kate Bradshaw at [kbradshaw@almanacnews.com](mailto:kbradshaw@almanacnews.com)

## COMMUNITY BRIEFS

continued from page 6

unit covering San Mateo and Santa Cruz counties.

The service is intended to be used in emergencies when people cannot call 911 by voice. Such situations might be if it's dangerous for a person to make a voice call to 911; if an individual is deaf; hard of hearing or has a speech impairment; if a person is incapable of speaking due to a medical emergency; or if there is poor cellular service that permits text messages but not a voice call.

The service only accepts SMS text messages and won't support videos, photos or MMS messages.

Initial funding for the project comes from the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Branch.

—Kate Bradshaw

## Atherton police donate toys to kids in need

The Atherton Police Activities League and Police Officers' Association donated gifts for Adelante Selby Lane Spanish Immersion School in Atherton for the holidays.



Courtesy Steve McCulley

**Atherton police** deliver toys to Adelante Selby Lane Spanish Immersion School in Atherton on Dec. 14.

Over 100 families signed up to receive gifts for their children, Principal Warren Sedar told Atherton Police Chief Steve McCulley.

One resident donated \$5,000 to the program, allowing the groups to provide 50 \$100 Target gift cards to families, said McCulley.

"There are going to be a lot of happy kids and families at Christmas again this year," McCulley said in an email to police officers.

Police also gave Encinal and Laurel School students in need a Christmas hat, light-up necklace and a \$100 Target gift card in lieu of the annual "Shop with a Cop" event.

"This is the third year we have put together this great program and we are very much looking forward to shopping in person at Target with the kids next year," McCulley said in an email to Menlo Park City School District Superintendent Erik Burmeister.

## M-A hires new volleyball and wrestling coaches

Menlo-Atherton High School Athletics has hired Gino Gamboa as the school's head varsity boys volleyball coach, according to a Dec. 11 press release.

Gamboa, a Los Angeles native,

graduated from University of California at Santa Cruz with a degree in human biology, and learned how to play volleyball during his freshman year of high school. During his sophomore year at Bishop Alemany High School, he joined the varsity volleyball team. He also competed at the club level for Santa Monica Beach Club for four years.

While at Santa Cruz, Gamboa was a member of the team's Division III NCAA men's volleyball team from 2013-18.

He holds a master's degree in exercise biology from Northumbria University, where he also played volleyball. He then signed a contract to play the sport professionally in Denmark.

Gamboa works as a volleyball and sports performance coach in the Bay Area and has coached several teams at the club and high school level.

"I want each one of my players to learn and grow as not just volleyball players but as people," he said in a statement. "Everyone has something they can improve upon. It's my duty as a coach to properly challenge my players with the intention of having them realize how capable they are in achieving their respective goals."

M-A Athletics announced it hired Gregory Prior, an aspiring Olympic competitor, as the head coach of the varsity boys wrestling team.

A Bay Area native, Prior has coached judo as well as strength and conditioning for the last two years. Prior is an internationally ranked judo player on Team USA, and an active competitor.

Prior spent over 20 weeks training in Japan and Europe in 2019. He hopes to medal at the 2024 Olympics.

"Greg is one of the most talented athletes I've ever coached," said Willy Cahill, a two-time

Olympic, Paralympic coach and ninth-degree judo black belt from San Bruno.

Prior won medals at two international tournaments, a Veterans World Championships bronze and four national tournament medals.

He has spent a majority of the pandemic developing conditioning and strength techniques.

"My influences come from the wrestling coaches in my formative years at camps and my family of wrestlers," he said in a statement. "I have hopes to bring a scientific and safety approach to developing a full team of successful athletes that supports champions. I want a full team understanding what hard work really is and what it can do for them as a life skill."

For more information on M-A's new coaches, go to [bearsathletics.com](http://bearsathletics.com).

—Angela Swartz

## Padilla to replace Harris in Senate

Gov. Gavin Newsom on Tuesday announced that he has selected California Secretary

of State Alex Padilla to fill the U.S. Senate term being vacated by Vice President-elect Kamala Harris.

Padilla, a former Los Angeles city councilman and state senator, has been elected twice as the secretary of state and will be the first Latino to serve as a U.S. senator for California.

"The son of Mexican immigrants — a cook and house cleaner — Alex Padilla worked his way from humble beginnings to the halls of MIT, the Los Angeles City Council and the State Senate, and has become a national defender of voting rights as California's Secretary of State," Newsom said in the announcement.

Padilla will be the first Southern Californian in nearly three decades to serve as one of the state's two representatives in the Senate. He will fill the rest of Harris' term, which ends in 2023, after she and President-elect Joe Biden were elected to the White House in November.

—Bay City News Service

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**BELLE HAVEN***continued from page 1*

hadn't been testing offered in Belle Haven, only in nearby neighborhoods in East Palo Alto and North Fair Oaks, Taylor said.

Now, testing sites also move around the neighborhood, rotating between the Belle Haven Library on Sundays, the Onetta Harris Community Center and Cummings Park Church at 531 Pierce Road. They also provide private testing at Sequoia Belle Haven, which offers affordable housing to low-income seniors.

Testing times often align with other community events to promote walk-up testing, such as on Second Harvest food distribution days at Onetta Harris and the drive-thru farmers market, which is held Sunday mornings in the driveway of the Belle Haven Library.

The paid volunteers now number around a dozen and



Magali Gauthier

**People line up** in the rain to check in at the COVID-19 test site outside the Onetta Harris Community Center.

provide oversight of the self-administered oral swab tests by Curative.

The tests are funded through San Mateo County and insurance — people's insurance companies are billed for the tests, but if they do not have insurance, the costs are covered with federal funds, so they are free for everyone.

"We encourage people to

bring the whole family out to get tested," Taylor said.

While some people have come from as far away as Richmond or San Francisco to access testing, many are neighborhood residents, she said.

It helps people feel more comfortable to have familiar faces staffing the testing sites, Taylor said. "If your neighbor

is helping to do neighborhood testing, (you know that) this is a safe place to come."

Site coordinator German Pech, who is a Belle Haven resident, said Dec. 11 that he lives around the block from the testing site and is a youth church leader at Cummings Park Church. His niece, Sara Bautista, was also volunteering, and helped to provide bilingual instructions on how to administer the tests.

Another volunteer from the neighborhood, Brigith Babb, operated stations guiding people through the testing process. "It's a good experience for me ... helping in the community," she said.

The Almanac spoke with members of several households seeking testing, who provided various explanations for why they were there. Helen Piekos of Palo Alto and children Estelle and Charles Dufour were there because one of their teachers had tested positive for COVID-19 but was asymptomatic.

Belle Haven resident Daniel Guzman brought student Lilley Nava because they had tried unsuccessfully to get testing through their doctors and heard that the neighborhood testing was free. Guzman said they "just wanted to be on the safe side" before Nava played with other kids.

Merna Reyes of Redwood City said she saw the event on Facebook and wanted to be tested after being exposed to someone who had tested positive.

Alongside the neighborhood testing, which runs through the end of the year, Taylor said that she's hoping to also provide families who receive testing with additional support, such as gift cards and food, to enable them to stay home while they await results.

Go to [bellehavenaction.org/testing.html](http://bellehavenaction.org/testing.html) to access the testing schedule. ■

*Email Kate Bradshaw at [kbradshaw@almanacnews.com](mailto:kbradshaw@almanacnews.com)*

**CRIME BRIEFS***continued from page 6*

deter crime and possibly capture criminals going to or leaving the scenes of burglaries.

Police have linked the same car to two other thefts in the Bay Area.

Police said earlier this month that they believe the latest residential burglaries are tied to a spree during the winter of 2018-19, when thieves gained access to residences mainly by climbing up to the second story of homes and breaking windows and doors.

The victim of the Dec. 8 burglary is offering a \$50,000 reward in collaboration with police for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person or people responsible for the burglary.

—Angela Swartz

**Man found dead in East Palo Alto homicide**

A 58-year-old man was found dead in East Palo Alto on Monday in what police are investigating as a homicide, police said Tuesday.

East Palo Alto police were called to an address in the 1800 block of East Bayshore Road near Pulgas Avenue regarding a body found in the backyard of a residence in a mobile home park, according to police dispatch reports. Arriving officers found a deceased man, identified as East Palo Alto resident Christopher Hamilton, according to a press release issued Tuesday.

"Based on the circumstances, we are treating this investigation as a homicide," police said in the release. Details are not being released at this time.

Police had received calls about gunfire in the vicinity the previous night, according to dispatch reports.

The death marks the city's seventh homicide of the year.

Anyone who witnessed this incident or has information is urged to contact the East Palo Alto Police Department by calling Detective Andrea Dion at 650-853-7247. Anonymous tips can be sent by email to [epa@tipnow.org](mailto:epa@tipnow.org) or text or voicemail to 650-409-6792.

**Shooting leaves man with stomach, shoulder wounds**

East Palo Alto police are investigating a shooting that left a 40-year-old man with stomach and shoulder wounds on Sunday afternoon near U.S. Highway 101.

The incident occurred at about 5:30 p.m. in the 1400 block of East Bayshore Road near Euclid Avenue, police Cmdr. David Carson confirmed on Tuesday. Police found a man semiconscious and breathing inside his car, which had four gunshots on the driver's side.

The man was shot after gunfire erupted between his vehicle and another car near the on-ramp that connects U.S. Highway 101 and East Bayshore. Police believe there were four suspects in a black Honda Civic.

East Palo Alto police temporarily closed off the intersection

of Euclid and East Bayshore as part of the investigation.

Carson said they found bullet casings indicating that the shooters used 9mm and .45-caliber handguns. The man was taken to a hospital where he was initially assessed with life-threatening injuries and later stabilized.

Police are investigating the case. They have yet to talk to the man and don't yet know the motive, Carson said Tuesday.

The shooting preceded a spate of gunfire reports that night around the city, according to dispatch reports, including in the 1800 block of East Bayshore Road. It is not known if they were related.

Anyone who has information related to the Sunday injury shooting is asked to contact Detective Robert Weigand at 650-521-7280. Anonymous tips can be sent by email to [epa@tipnow.org](mailto:epa@tipnow.org) or text or voicemail to 650-409-6792.

**Three boys allegedly beat, robbed woman**

Three boys were arrested in connection with the strong-arm robbery of a woman at Stanford Shopping Center on Monday night, resulting in injuries that left her hospitalized, Palo Alto police said.

Officers responding to a call on Dec. 21 at about 8:20 p.m. found an injured woman in her 60s in a parking garage at 180 El Camino Real with moderate injuries to her head and knee, according to a press release. The woman told police she exited her

vehicle to shop at the mall when three boys emerged from two cars and approached her.

The boys allegedly attempted to yank the woman's purse off her shoulder. When she attempted to hold onto her purse, one of the boys allegedly punched her repeatedly in the back of the head. She fell to the ground, and the same boy stomped on one of her knees. The woman let go of her purse and the boys fled, police said.

The woman gave police descriptions of the robbers and of one of the cars, a white 2016 Mazda6 four-door sedan. Palo Alto Fire Department paramedics took her to a hospital.

An officer spotted the Mazda6 with three people inside heading east on Hamilton Avenue in downtown Palo Alto. The officer attempted to stop the car, but the driver accelerated at high speeds. The officer lost sight of the sedan, but another officer spotted it again a short time later driving east on Oregon Expressway near U.S. Highway 101.

The second officer also attempted to stop the car, but the driver accelerated and drove onto northbound Highway 101. Police pursued the car until it eventually stopped on O'Brien Drive near Kavanaugh Drive in Menlo Park. Officers took all three boys into custody without further incident at about 8:35 p.m., police said.

Police found evidence from the robbery in Palo Alto at about 9:44 p.m. A resident in the 800 block of Lincoln Avenue found items dumped in front of their house, which included credit

cards in the woman's name, which had been inside the stolen purse.

Police said that the car the boys occupied was reported stolen in Oakland on Saturday, Dec. 19. The car was eventually returned to the owner, police said.

The boys were taken to Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall. The driver of the stolen car and one of the passengers are both 12-year-old Oakland residents who initially lied to officers about their identities, police said. The other passenger was a 14-year-old Oakland resident.

The three boys were arrested on suspicion of robbery, battery and conspiracy to commit a crime. Two 12-year-olds were also arrested for allegedly providing false information to police; one of them faces an additional charge for allegedly evading police and vehicle theft.

Investigators are looking into whether the boys are linked to crimes in other cities. No other recent robberies in Palo Alto were committed by juveniles, police said. Officers are also investigating the presence of the second vehicle, mentioned by the woman and a witness. The second car is described as a dark-colored four-door sedan.

Anyone with information about this incident is asked to call the department's 24-hour dispatch center at 650-329-2413. Anonymous tips can be emailed to [paloalto@tipnow.org](mailto:paloalto@tipnow.org) or sent by text message or voicemail to 650-383-8984.

—Sue Dremann

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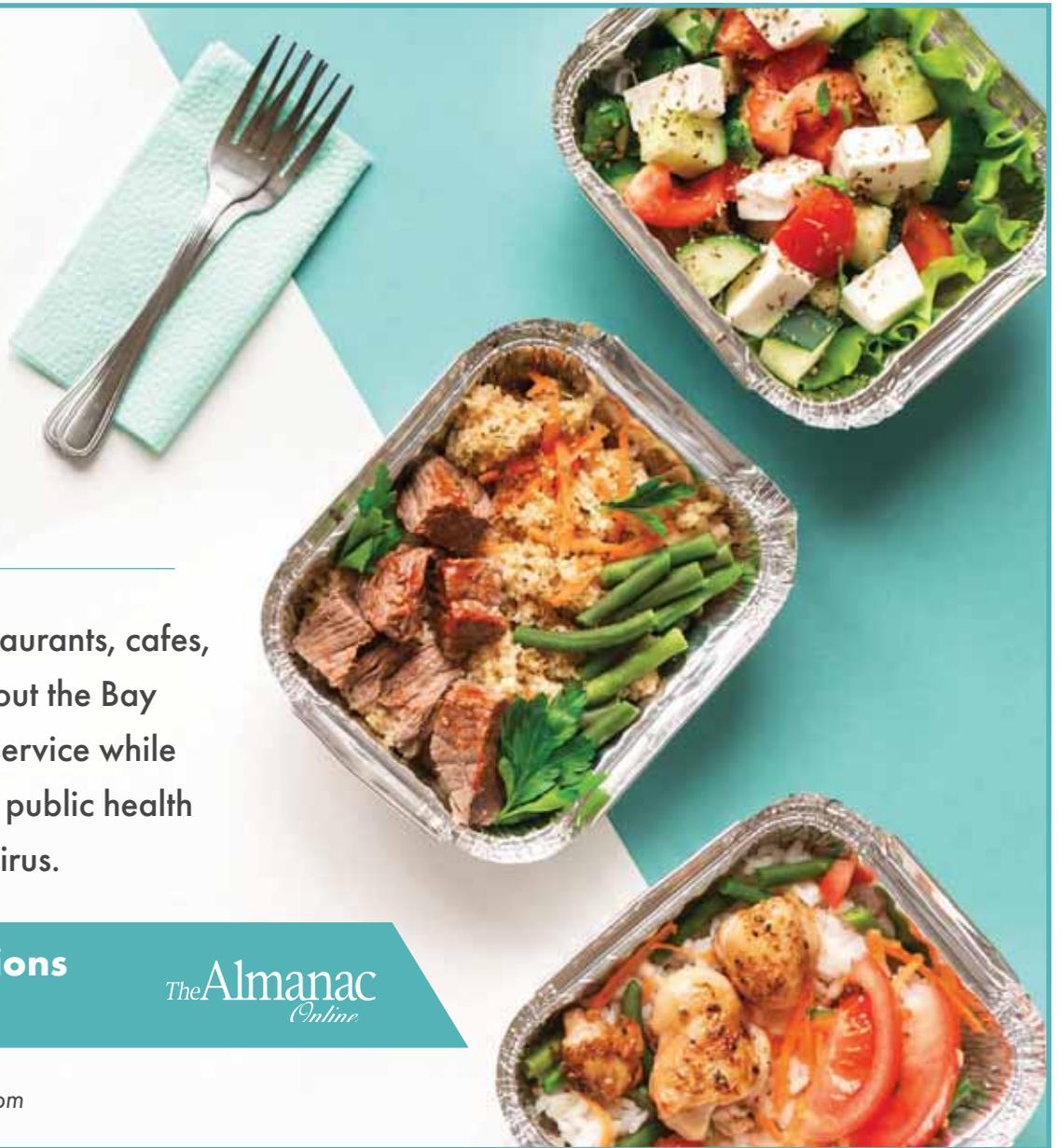
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# Food & Drink

## Ada's Cafe, which hires people with disabilities, has temporarily closed

*The business and mission face mounting COVID-19 hurdles*

By Elena Kadvany

Ada's Cafe in Palo Alto, like many local food businesses, is barely treading water amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Sales are down 80% at the Mitchell Park Community Center cafe. The staff of 50 has been cut to just six people.

But Ada's is not a typical cafe. It's a nonprofit that trains and employs people with developmental disabilities, giving them space to both work and belong. The pandemic has turned that mission and the business itself upside down: Owner Kathleen Foley-Hughes announced last Friday that the cafe will close temporarily until the new stay-at-home order is lifted. The order currently runs through Jan. 7, but Gov. Gavin Newsom has indicated it will likely be extended.

"The goal of Ada's is to create meaningful connections between the community and our employees. Right now that is a real struggle with sales down as much as they have

been and real concerns about COVID-19 and the impact that would have on any of our employees, especially our mission-based employees," she wrote in an email. "We can't afford to keep losing significant money, wasting resources and potentially getting someone sick."

Firoozeh Dumas, a Palo Alto resident, has launched an online auction to support Ada's with a fundraising goal of \$250,000. Dumas, whose children went to elementary school with Foley-Hughes', said she was motivated in part as a native of Iran who always admired the U.S. for being more accepting of people with disabilities.

"I'm really saddened a place like Silicon Valley cannot sustain a business like Ada's. What does that say about us if we let a business like this not survive?" Dumas said. "I know every business is suffering but if you look at the employees at this place, they are the most marginalized."

Foley-Hughes, whose son Charlie has a developmental



Veronica Weber

**Kathleen Hughes**, founder of Ada's Cafe, left center, and Charlie Hughes, center, and Todd Cerf, right, serve a customer at the cafe in November, 2017. The cafe is temporarily closed in hopes of reopening next year.

disability, opened Ada's in 2014. The majority of Ada's 50 employees have diagnoses including Down syndrome, traumatic brain injuries, autism spectrum disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder from war and incarceration and mental illness. The unemployment rate for people with disabilities is 10 times the average of a local area. Hughes has also hired refugees from Syria and El Salvador.

The nonprofit also conducts research on how to improve workplaces for people with disabilities and on hiring, training and empowering people with disabilities in the commercial food service industry.

During the lockdown, Ada's pivoted to offering to-go meals out of a Mountain View commercial kitchen. Employees who felt comfortable coming into work made jam to sell, plus cookies and corporate baskets. Foley-Hughes organized Zoom meetups and virtual cooking classes to keep her staff as connected as possible under the circumstances. "They really benefit from being at work for the social aspects of it (and) the constant repetition and teaching that goes on all day long when they're at work. Many of them are just really lonely" during the lockdown, she said.

"The employees that have

been working are absolutely extraordinary," she added. "If you can imagine what it might be like to have a processing disability and add to that the need for a plexiglass wall, a screen, masks on the customer and then masks on the employee — it makes communication and engagement really tough."

The Palo Alto cafe reopened in October for takeout and outdoor dining, but foot traffic has been slow. On a normal weekday pre-pandemic, the cafe would see about \$1,200 in sales, Foley-Hughes said, and even then the business wasn't breaking even due to high labor costs and training. That's plummeted



Veronica Weber

**Todd Cerf**, left, and Jeremy Teter, count the number of pastries left in the display case as they prepare for the next day's service at Ada's Cafe in November, 2017.



Veronica Weber

**John Collins** prepares the "Wonderful Wendy" sandwich at Ada's Cafe in November, 2017.



Veronica Weber

**Despite temporarily closing** the Palo Alto cafe, Ada's is offering takeout meals and holiday gifts from its commercial kitchen in Mountain View.

to about \$200 in daily sales.

"We are losing less money by being closed given the food cost, daily food waste and, again, labor costs," Foley-Hughes said.

Rent at the commercial kitchen is also costly. Once that lease is up at the end of May, Ada's will start using the kitchen at the Mitchell Park Community Center in the mornings through an agreement with the city of Palo Alto. This means Ada's will no longer offer catering and the cafe menu will be smaller, but downsizing will help the business survive, Foley-Hughes said.

Ada's is still offering takeout meals out of the Mountain View kitchen and holiday gifts, revenue from which is helping to keep the six remaining staff members employed.

"We're in it to maintain it and to get to the other side of this," Foley-Hughes said. "We plan to be here in 2021 and beyond."

The online auction includes items such as lunch prepared and hosted by Ada's employees, antique art, signed books, a weekend at the Squaw Valley Lodge and opportunities to meet (in person or virtually) movie director Jessica Yu and well-known authors. People can also donate directly to Ada's via [adascfe.org/donate.html](https://adascfe.org/donate.html) or purchase gift cards.

Dumas is auctioning her grandmother's antique Persian silver set "in honor of all the people who are forced to live in the shadows." In the item description, she recounts a childhood memory: She was with her family at the home of a fortune teller in Iran when a young boy burst into the room. The fortune teller, "apologetic and ashamed," quickly took him out of the room.

"I hope that someday, there will be Ada's Cafes all over the world, where everyone has a chance to a part of something, to give back to their community, and to feel like they belong in the living room with the rest of us," she wrote. **A**

Email Elena Kadvany at [ekadvany@paweekly.com](mailto:ekadvany@paweekly.com)

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# Wishing You the Happiest of Holidays & a Wonderful New Year!



We so appreciate how our community has come together to help each other through this very trying year. Let's put 2020 behind us and look forward to a happy and healthy 2021!

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