

The Almanac

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Figuring out how to feed kids when they're not in school

The pandemic challenged child nutrition leaders to rethink strategies for getting school meals to those in need

By Kate Bradshaw

Every Wednesday in East Palo Alto, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 2 p.m., adults pull over on Pulgas Avenue between the Los Robles-Ronald McNair school campus and the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Peninsula clubhouse and pick up a week's worth of food for their families.

On a recent Wednesday, Consuela Meza and Maria Gonzalez, two student nutrition staffers from the Ravenswood City School District, cheerfully offered food to everyone who showed up, loading bags of milk, juice, meatballs, mini pancakes, raisins, apples, macaroni noodles, cheese sticks and carrots, handing them off into vehicles or leaving visitors to tie the bags onto their bicycle handlebars before riding off.

Each week, their team distributes between 140 and 150 bags of food at that location, Meza said. Conversations with those picking up food indicated that the program was helping them. Marta Andulo of East Palo Alto said in Spanish that she's experienced stress after losing work at a restaurant when it closed, and was picking up the food to help

out a grandchild.

Kenneth Pope of Menlo Park said that the pandemic has been hard, but that "it brought the family closer together." The meal program has helped feed his four grandchildren, he added.

Through major efforts to feed children during the pandemic, school districts across San Mateo and Santa Clara counties have offered an important resource to families struggling with unprecedented changes and challenges.

Interviews with school district leaders involved in providing school meals tell a story about widespread and herculean efforts to help families impacted by the pandemic's seismic economic shifts.

An analysis of school meals data by The Almanac shows that while the number of school meals provided to children varied widely between districts, there was an overall 36% decline in the number of school meals distributed in October and November of 2019, before the pandemic, and during the same months a year later, in the heart of the COVID-19 pandemic in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.



Magali Gauthier

Norma Lazcano places potatoes in a bag at a food pickup site at the Los Robles Ronald McNair Academy in East Palo Alto on May 19. When the pandemic forced school campuses to close, child nutrition staff had to adapt quickly to make sure families didn't lose access to the school meals that they rely on.

Across the two counties, that meant a total decrease in school meals to about 4.1 million meals compared with 6.5 million in those two months a year earlier.

Without children in classrooms for more than a year, the

pandemic forced most school districts to rethink how they feed children and what role schools should play in combating child hunger during the school day, even while kids weren't physically in their care.

During the pandemic, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service has permitted schools to offer up to two free meals per day to anyone

See **SCHOOL MEALS**, page 18

Are local cops getting vaccinated? It depends on the police department

By Kevin Forestieri

If an officer pulls you over during a routine traffic stop, there's plenty to worry about. Will you get an expensive citation or a fix-it ticket? Did the officer approaching your window decline to get the COVID-19 vaccine and is putting you at risk?

Police departments throughout San Mateo and Santa Clara counties are encouraging officers to get vaccinated, but the results vary widely from one department to the next. Some

agencies are publicly touting high rates, while others are struggling to get their cops to get the shot. And for some departments, like Menlo Park, there hasn't been any effort to track vaccination rates, making it a mystery just how many officers are immunized.

Law enforcement employees in the Bay Area have had access to the COVID-19 vaccine since January, placing high on the priority list as first responders who interact with the public on a daily basis. But the early access hasn't necessarily led to higher

vaccination rates among sworn officers, particularly among those working in county jails.

On the high end is the Mountain View Police Department, which reports that 83% of its sworn officers had received the COVID-19 vaccine as of May 10. By comparison, about 73% of residents above age 12 in Santa Clara County have received the vaccine. For non-sworn personnel in the department, the vaccination rate is over 90%.

For the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office, it's been more of a challenge. Among

those working in the jails, only 476 sworn officers (59%) had received the vaccine as of May 11, up from 53% in early March but still well below the county average. The rate improves to 67% among enforcement officers outside of the custody setting.

The low vaccination rates among jail staff have raised alarm bells for county supervisors, who worry that widespread immunization is critical to protect those who are incarcerated. A total of 427 inmates have contracted COVID-19 while

in custody since the pandemic began, averaging one to two active cases at a time in recent months, while 243 employees of the Sheriff's Office have contracted the virus. The Sheriff's Office does not disclose who has been vaccinated, and does not give different roles to correctional officers based on their vaccination status.

At a May 4 meeting, county Supervisor Joe Simitian questioned whether more could be done to improve the persistently

See **POLICE VACCINATION**, page 17

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Local News

MENLO PARK | A THERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY



Courtesy Chris Barresi/Midpen

A view of the Hawthorns area of Windy Hill, looking toward Windy Hill. A process has just begun to figure out how to open the area to the public.

Open space district launches yearslong process to make Portola Valley 'Hawthorns area' public

By Kate Bradshaw

Many locals are familiar with Windy Hill, an open space preserve in Portola Valley operated by the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD) that features vigorous trails leading up to the namesake hill's summit and a range of terrains to explore, from dry California grasslands

to redwoods and creeks.

But MROSD owns a separate property in Portola Valley that's also considered part of the Windy Hill Open Space Preserve, and it's easy to miss — mostly because it's not open to the public.

It's a fenced-off 79-acre property known as the Hawthorns area of the preserve, and it is roughly bordered by Alpine Road, Los Trancos Road and

Saddleback Drive, near Corte Madera School and the Portola Valley Ranch neighborhood. Its midpoint is across the street from the Portola Valley Roberts Market location.

After taking on responsibility for the property in 2011, MROSD is just beginning to discuss how to open it to the public.

See **HAWTHORNS**, page 14

Hey Midpeninsula, how vaccinated is your ZIP code?

By Jocelyn Dong

If there were a prize given to the first Midpeninsula ZIP code to reach 100% vaccination for COVID-19, it may soon go to 94304, the Palo Alto Hills and Stanford West areas where it appears that everyone 12 years old or older has been either fully or partially vaccinated, according to California Public Department of Health data. The 12-and-over population, estimated at 3,264 by the state Department of Finance, is 86%

fully vaccinated, with everyone else having already received one dose.

As Santa Clara County moved into the least-restrictive phase last week, following San Mateo County's move to the same yellow tier the previous week, county Health Officer Dr. Sara Cody said she is encouraged about the massive effort to protect the local population from COVID-19 through vaccinations.

"For the first time, I feel optimistic. For a while, it seemed uncertain to me whether the

vaccines or the variants would win. And now it looks like 'Team Vaccine' will come out on top," she said during a press conference May 18.

In all but two ZIP codes of the Midpeninsula area stretching from north Sunnyvale to south Redwood City, two-thirds of residents ages 12 and over are partially or completely inoculated. In concrete numbers, that's 219,000 out of 361,000 people who've received a shot.

See **ZIP CODES**, page 15

Menlo Park won't rule out changes to single-family zoning

The hot-button issue is on the table for upcoming review of housing policies

By Kate Bradshaw

The Menlo Park City Council took a nearly unprecedented step Tuesday by narrowly deciding to not rule out possible changes to the city's single-family zoning codes as part of upcoming revisions to the city's housing element.

California cities' housing elements are treated as guides that each city must adopt every eight years laying out where new homes can be developed within city limits. Through a state-mandated process called the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA), each city is allocated a certain number of housing units it is expected to plan and zone for, and this time, cities are seeing substantially higher allocations than in previous cycles. Menlo Park is no exception, with its allocation bumped up to 2,946 units in the upcoming cycle from 655 in the current one, according to Geoff Bradley, principal and president at M-Group, the consultant firm leading the update project.

Menlo Park council members voted 3-2, with Mayor Drew Combs and Councilman Ray Mueller opposed, to not rule out the possibility of rezoning land in city limits that is zoned for single-family use. Councilwoman Jen Wolosin proposed the approach because she favored keeping "all options on the table."

"I see the housing element process as a moment in time when our community is engaged ... this is when people are talking about housing. It seems like a natural place to have these conversations," she said.

"I don't consider it abolishing R1 (the zoning code for single-family homes); I'm considering it enabling more than single-family homes," she added later.

Combs and Mueller said they were opposed to inviting

any discussions of single-family zoning changes.

"I don't want, as part of this process, any time to be wasted on looking at single-family zoning," Combs said.

Mueller said he'd favor focusing on the city's downtown housing stock and considering upzoning areas near downtown to permit mixed-use development, including housing and entertainment uses like a movie theater. He said he had concerns that the community discussion over R1 zoning would "consume" the process and would not generate much housing growth. "I don't think it's an appropriate time," he said.

One of the requirements of the state's housing element process this time around is to "affirmatively further fair housing" by proactively combating housing discrimination, undoing historic patterns of segregation and stopping racial bias in the realm of housing statewide.

Some researchers critique single-family zoning as exclusive and inequitable, particularly to racial minorities. For instance, a report from the Othering and Belonging Institute at University of California at Berkeley argues, "Although no longer racially explicit, exclusionary zoning such as single-family zoning is explicitly classist, designed to exclude lower-income residents and more affordable housing options, and can be implicitly racist, designed to keep out certain groups of people based upon racist stereotypes."

However, the "predominance of single family uses and larger lot sizes in racially concentrated areas of affluence" is only one of a number of examples of zoning and land use barriers that cities mandated to "affirmatively furthering fair housing" consider in their analyses, according to an

'I don't want ... any time to be wasted on looking at single-family zoning.'

COUNCILMAN DREW COMBS

See **HOUSING**, page 16

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NOTICE OF INTENT TO ADOPT AN URBAN WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN AND WATER SHORTAGE CONTINGENCY PLAN AND HOLD A PUBLIC MEETING TO RECEIVE COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSED PLANS

CALIFORNIA WATER SERVICE – BEAR GULCH DISTRICT

California Water Code (CWC) sections 10610 through 10656, known as the “Urban Water Management Planning Act” (Act), require all urban water suppliers that provide water for municipal purposes either directly or indirectly to more than 3,000 customers or supply more than 3,000 acre-feet of water annually to prepare an Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP) at least once every five years.

UWMPs support a water supplier’s long-term resource planning to ensure that adequate water supplies are available to meet existing and future water demands under defined conditions. The UWMP must describe and evaluate sources of supply, reasonable and practical efficient uses, reclamation, and demand management activities. The components of the plan may vary according to an individual community or area’s characteristics and its capabilities to efficiently use and conserve water. The UWMP must also address measures for residential, commercial, governmental, and industrial water demand management.

Further, Section 10632 of the CWC requires that every urban water supplier shall prepare and adopt a

Water Shortage Contingency Plan (WSCP) as part of its plan (UWMP). Section 10632.2 provides that,

“An urban water supplier shall follow, where feasible and appropriate, the prescribed procedures and implement determined shortage response actions in its water shortage contingency plan...or reasonable alternative actions, provided that descriptions of the alternative actions are submitted with the annual water shortage assessment report pursuant to Section 10632.1.” The WSCP will be incorporated as an appendix of the UWMP.

One of Cal Water’s service areas is the Bear Gulch District, which serves Portola Valley, Woodside, Atherton, and portions of Menlo Park and Redwood City, in San Mateo County. As a defined urban water supplier, Cal Water is preparing an update to its UWMP that will address the water service conditions in the Bear Gulch District. It is Cal Water’s intent to adopt that UWMP, and the incorporated WSCP, and file that plan as required with the Department of Water Resources, the California State Library, and any city or county within which Cal Water provides service no later than 30 days after adoption.

Schedule of upcoming actions:

On or about May 10, 2021, an electronic copy of the Draft 2020 UWMP and WSCP will be available for review. After a public review period, a public meeting to receive comments on the Draft UWMP and WSCP Plan for the Bear Gulch District will be held online on June 9, 2021, at 5:00 p.m. The electronic copy of the UWMP, WSCP, and additional information on the public meeting, including a link to participate, is available at the following internet address:

<https://www.calwater.com/conservation/uwmp-review/>

If you are unable to attend the scheduled public meeting but want to provide comments regarding the proposed UWMP or WSCP, you may send your comments via email to PlanningInfo@calwater.com. Cal Water will receive comments on the Draft 2021 UWMP and WSCP from May 10 through June 9, 2021.

Please share this notice with others that may have interest in this matter.

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CRIME BRIEFS

Shooting kills one in East Palo Alto

Police are investigating the death of a man who was shot in East Palo Alto on Sunday night, nearly three weeks after another man was killed a block away. The San Mateo County Coroner’s Office identified the victim on Wednesday as 19-year-old Sebastian Anguiano of Redwood City.

Officers dispatched to the 1800 block of Woodland Avenue at about 10:20 p.m. found a Hispanic male suffering from gunshot wounds. They attempted life-saving measures before fire personnel and paramedics arrived. He was taken by ambulance to a hospital where he died a short time later, police said.

Relatives have set up a GoFundMe page for Anguiano to help with his funeral expenses at tinyurl.com/s-anguiano.

See **CRIME BRIEFS**, page 17

COMMUNITY BRIEFS



Tate Cohen

From left to right: Sophomore Lucas Vogel, sixth grader Sajni Gaitonde, eighth grader Rishan Patel and ninth grader Sohan Gaitonde are raising funds for COVID-19 relief in India through their nonprofit Alley-Oop Kids.

Menlo School students’ fundraiser to help India

Four Menlo School students surpassed their goal of raising \$5,000 for COVID-19 relief in India through a virtual three-point and free throw contest.

Tenth grader Lucas Vogel, sixth grader Sajni Gaitonde, eighth grader Rishan Patel and ninth grader Sohan Gaitonde raised \$7,500, as of Wednesday, May 26, via the nonprofit Alley-Oop Kids. Rishan started the nonprofit in 2014 alongside his brother.

To participate in the fundraiser, visit alleyoopkids.org/fundraiser by Sunday, May 30. Once registered, you can either donate or submit a video of yourself shooting baskets at the free throw line for a total of 30 seconds for the first round of the contest. To participate in the three-point contest, send a video of yourself shooting baskets at the three-point line in the center of the court for a total of 30 seconds. Participants will be eligible for cash prizes, and all proceeds will go toward emergency COVID-19 relief in India.

—Angela Swartz

Fundraiser to upgrade Woodside Village Church hall

Like many 80-year-olds, Guild Hall at Woodside Village Church in Woodside is starting to show its age.

On the church’s 128th birthday, May 23, co-chairs Cathy Quist Brisbin and Sarah Quist kicked off a capital campaign to raise \$500,000 to upgrade the event space at Guild Hall and its neighboring facilities.

Renovation plans for the approximately 1,440-square-foot wooden structure built in 1941 include redoing the French doors, adding windows to one wall, removing the fireplace, raising the ceiling, repairing the roof and installing HVAC and a new commercial kitchen.

The work also involves making the nearby bathrooms larger and ADA accessible. Woodside architect Steve Patrick is overseeing the project.

Organizers said they hope community members will lend their support to turning Guild Hall into a beautiful gathering place that will last for many more years to come.

More information is at wvchurch.org/donate.

—Kate Daly

Mickie Winkler, former Menlo Park mayor, joins race for governor

Winkler says she wants to curb union powers, slash red tape

By Gennady Sheyner

It's been 15 years since Mickie Winkler concluded her term on the Menlo Park City Council but she hasn't stopped thinking about the issues that had preoccupied her as mayor and council member: aged infrastructure, excessive red tape and the influence of employee unions on public affairs.

Winkler, who now lives in Palo Alto, also hasn't been shy about expressing her opinions. Over the past year, she has penned numerous opinion pieces devoted to local affairs and most recently published a satirical book that includes her thoughts on municipal topics such as the city's heritage tree ordinance, resistance to new developments and labor negotiations.

On a more serious note, Winkler wants to be the next California governor. As such, she has joined a list of contenders that includes businessman John Cox, decathlete-turned-socialite Caitlyn Jenner and dozens of lesser known personalities in a race



Mickie Winkler

to replace Gov. Gavin Newsom, should California voters choose to recall him in November.

Just like her writings, which tend to call out City Hall over excessive staffing and high employee costs, Winkler's gubernatorial campaign is taking aim at public sector units.

"We all know — and despair about — the power of the police unions," Winkler wrote in her campaign statement. "Teachers, city, county and state workers cannot be fired, no matter how badly they perform. They are the only part of the state that is fire proof."

As governor, Winkler said, she will "call out every bill that is union-inspired and I will call out every legislator who introduces such a bill."

"I just think we have to be aware of their huge power. I don't think the public employee unions are viable. I don't think they should exist," Winkler said in an interview.

She also believes public sector unions and excessive red tape hinder Sacramento's ability to respond to the most critical issues of the day: the statewide drought, the rising threats of wildfires and unreliable electric infrastructure. These issues, she said, "threaten the health and

well-being of all Californians and we must face them much more seriously than we're facing them now." She wants to see more state investment in water storage (to account for floods) and recycled-water systems (to protect from droughts).

"There are many places in the world that reuse their water and even drink it," Winkler said. "I think we have a huge budget surplus now and we need to start dedicating money."

She also wants to see more housing get built — a goal that she believes is hindered by the California Environmental Quality Act. She can rattle off anecdotes about developments that were stuck in limbo for years because of legal challenges and permitting snags.

"We need a major rethink," Winkler said. "CEQA was not designed to address the building projects that we have now. It's irrelevant to the building projects we have now but it delays anything you want to do by two years and increases the building costs enormously."

Another problem, she said, is "NIMBYism." Residents need to become more community minded, less litigious and less

See **WINKLER**, page 16

Deputy fire chief named interim replacement for Chief Schapelhouman

Menlo Park Fire Protection District board voted unanimously for Mike Shaffer

By Sue Dremann

Mike Shaffer, Menlo Park Fire Protection District's deputy fire chief, has been chosen as the interim replacement for outgoing Chief Harold Schapelhouman, the district board of directors decided in a unanimous May 20 vote. The board announced the decision during a public session after holding a closed hearing.

Shaffer has a long history and understanding of the district's operations, having served in numerous positions since 1991. He was a firefighter, engine driver, rescue driver, truck driver, paramedic, airboard operator, station captain, truck captain and acting battalion chief prior to being promoted to battalion chief in



Mike Shaffer

April 2006 and division chief in 2017, according to his district biography.

He has been a longtime member of the state and federal Urban Search and Rescue Program and the fire district's local and state water rescue programs. He is a veteran of national disaster incidents, including the Oklahoma City bombing, the World Trade Center collapse and Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.

"Mike has pretty much held every position in the fire district," board member Virginia Chang Kiraly said on Tuesday. "He's the logical choice for continuity. We're really lucky to bring him in that role. He has operations, management and labor experience. He really is a very well-rounded person for this job on an interim basis."

The board must still discuss his salary, she said.

Schapelhouman leaves his position after 41 years with the district. His contract expires on

June 30. He served as chief starting in March 2006 and has been with the fire district since 1981. He also held multiple positions during his career, from firefighter and dispatcher to battalion chief, division chief, deputy chief and fire chief. He also took part in responding to national incidents that included the Oklahoma City bombing, the World Trade Center collapse, the recovery of the Columbia Space Shuttle astronauts and the PG&E pipeline explosion in San Bruno, according to his district bio.

A dynamic and outspoken leader, Schapelhouman made his mark by modernizing the district's operations and equipment, expanding communications with the public and the media and bringing technology to the fore. ■

Email Staff Writer Sue Dremann at sdremann@paweekly.com.

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



Advice to First Time Buyers

Dear Monica: I am trying to buy my first house now that I have a good, stable income but I keep getting outbid by stronger buyers, many paying cash. How can I succeed in this market?

Eric B.

Dear Eric: It's not easy for buyers like you now but do not be dismayed. If you have an experienced agent to direct you, he or she will guide you through this. Stay focused and involved, expand your criteria, and watch the market

carefully. You may start out as a somewhat timid buyer but you will learn to be more forceful as your experiences increase. Make a list with your agent of the things you will compromise on and those you won't, and stick to this. While you probably can assume more risk, you should know what to give on and what not to. Have a good lender behind you, be patient, and keep at it. If you do these things, I am confident you will succeed.

Contact me at monica@monicacorman.com; Office: 650-465-5971, COMPASS. WSJ Nationally Ranked. Real Trends Bay Area Top 100 Agents

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Private school to open in Redwood City on site of former school that merged with Selby Lane Elementary

By Angela Swartz

This coming school year, a new private preschool and K-8 elementary school is opening in Redwood City, at the former home of Adelante School. Adelante merged with Selby Lane School in Atherton in 2019 because of declining enrollment in the Redwood City School District.

The Harper School, located at 3150 Granger Way on the edge of Woodside Hills, is accepting applications for enrollment for full day and half-day programs for preschoolers, pre-kindergartners and kindergartners, according to a May 20 press release. In subsequent years, the school will add first through eighth grades.

Harper School founder Joe



Courtesy Joe Wagner

Harper School at 3150 Granger Way in Redwood City will open this fall with about 110 students. The campus was formerly home to Adelante School, which merged with Selby Lane School in Atherton in 2019.

Wagner, who co-founded the private Stratford School in Palo Alto, said there is a use permit that limits enrollment to 110 students

the first year, with the number growing to a cap of 546 students on the campus. The school has a 10-year lease with the Redwood

City School District.

“A hallmark of our school is going to be high expectations for students, academic excellence and character development,” he said. “It’s just a fantastic site. It’s a really nice building and it has lots of green space.”

For the 2021-22 school year, Harper is also offering morning and afternoon extended care.

The school is named after Harper Lee, author of “To Kill a Mockingbird.” It has a sister campus in St. Louis, Missouri, which Wagner also founded.

“The novel is one of the all-time greats for fostering a love of reading in children and provides young and old readers alike an enduring lesson about living without prejudice and standing up for what is right,” said Wagner

in a statement. “You couldn’t ask for a better message. After all, our goal at Harper is to help our young learners not only be good students, but good kids, and only by doing both will we succeed as a school.”

With the current pace of COVID-19 vaccinations, Wagner hopes this coming school year students will be back on campus regularly.

Annual tuition for the 2021-22 school year will be between \$20,000 to \$25,000, with need-based financial aid available, Wagner said.

To learn more, email rw@harperschool.org or visit harperschool.org.

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

Preliminary Sequoia district climate, wellness survey results released

District extended the deadline because of lack of participation

By Angela Swartz

Sequoia Union High School District administrators extended the deadline for students to fill out the Healthy Kids and Panorama surveys because the district didn’t hit the target number of students it wanted to participate, officials said during a May 12 governing board meeting.

The last publicly available Healthy Kids survey data from the district, which has an enrollment of roughly 9,300 students,

is from the 2014-15 school year (during this cycle, the district had even lower participation). The survey, used by public school districts throughout the state, includes questions for students on their mental health, along with their alcohol, drug and tobacco consumption. The survey takes about 15 to 30 minutes for students, parents and staff members to complete, according to the survey’s website.

“The Panorama survey deadline has been extended for another week to increase participation,”

said district spokesperson Ana Maria Pulido in an email last week. “The survey’s preliminary results will be shared at the next board meeting (Wednesday, May 26, past The Almanac’s press deadline) along with our Healthy Kids Survey.”

For the Healthy Kids survey, the district’s target sample size for ninth graders was 2,222 students and some 1,877 filled out the survey, an 84% response rate. The district aimed to have 2,256 11th graders fill out the survey; 73%, or 1,654 students, filled it out. The

overwhelming majority of students who took the survey were remote learners. The response rate was 82% and 66% for ninth and 11th graders, respectively, for the 2014-15 survey.

Preliminary results for the Healthy Kids survey shared in the May 26 board packet show that 68% of ninth graders felt very lonely at least sometimes over the past month. Some 74% of 11th graders felt very lonely at least sometimes, according to the packet. Over the past year, 34% of ninth graders have had chronic sad or hopeless feelings, while 43% of 11th graders felt chronically sad or hopeless.

Some 12% of ninth and 11th graders have seriously considered suicide over the last 12 months. This is actually lower than the 2014-15 statistics, which show 16% of ninth graders and 17% of 11th graders at the time had contemplated suicide.

Some 2,743 students filled out the Panorama study. Some 78% of students surveyed said people at their school understand them well as a person. About 86% said they feel like they at least somewhat belong at their school. The survey also touched on racism, with at least 85% stating that their school helps students, at least somewhat, speak out against racism.

Background on districtwide wellness surveys

The Sequoia district missed the 2017-18 Healthy Kids survey cycle because it no longer had a grant, which also helps fund tobacco-specific student instruction, reinforcement activities, events

and intervention programs for students.

In 2018, the district began to administer the Panorama survey, which focuses more on school climate and culture, engagement and communication. Panorama doesn’t include questions about students’ alcohol, drug and tobacco consumption.

At the recommendation of the Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Task Force and the Mental Health Action Team, the district seeks to add Panorama climate surveys to assess student and staff social-emotional learning during the spring of 2021 and three times a year for each subsequent year of the contract. Survey administration, analysis, and reporting, at an incremental cost of \$3,375, would bring the new contract to \$90,375.

From January to May, 43 teachers, classified staff, school board members, counselors and others participated in the district’s Emotional Learning Committee. The Mental Health Action Team, a subcommittee of the committee, is having conversations about what kind of support students need as they return to campuses, said Interim Superintendent Crystal Leach during the May 12 meeting.

Read the full results from the preliminary Healthy Kids survey online at tinyurl.com/sequoia-healthykids. Preliminary Panorama survey results can be found online at tinyurl.com/SequoiaPanorama2021.

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

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High school sports roundup

Tennis

Menlo School and Bellarmine will compete for the Central Coast Section boys team tennis championship for the third straight season.

The top-seeded Knights advanced with a 7-0 semifinal victory over Saratoga, highlighted by a terrific match at No. 1 singles between Menlo's Alex Volgin and Saratoga's Anthony Zheng, with Volgin recording a 6-7 (5), 6-4, (7) victory.

No. 2 Bellarmine, which advanced with a 4-3 victory over Cupertino, travels to play at Menlo Thursday, May 27.

Menlo (12-0) and Bellarmine (13-1) have faced each other for the CCS championship in six of the past 11 seasons. Menlo handed Bellarmine its only loss of the season.

The Knights will be making their 19th championship appearance in program history, 18 with coach Bill Shine.

"They really came to play today," Shine said. "We knew it was going to be tough, but the boys made it look easier than it was. Hopefully, we can carry it into the finals against a great Bellarmine team. We'll need all the boys to be on."

In other singles matches, junior Mick Tamas, freshman Evan Burnett and junior Rishi Jain all won in straight sets.

In doubles, Nik Khuntia teamed

with fellow junior Soren Sutaria to win at No. 1. Senior Justin Tian and Nishan Rajavasireddy also won in straight sets at No. 2. At No. 3, senior Justin Creamer and junior Rohan Shah prevailed in a marathon first set to win 7-6 (3), 6-0.

Menlo will be playing for its 16th CCS title.

Menlo's girls tennis team brushed the rust off a two-month layoff to beat visiting Notre Dame Belmont 7-0 in the quarterfinal of the Central Coast Section team tournament Monday.

Menlo (9-1) beat NDB by the same score on March 29 in a West Bay Athletic League match.

The top-seeded Knights were scheduled to host No. 4 Evergreen Valley in Wednesday's semifinal, after The Almanac's press deadline. The Cougars (12-1) advanced with a 4-3 victory over Mitty.

No. 6 Harker (8-0) and No. 2 St. Francis (7-2) meet in the other semifinal. Harker beat Menlo 4-3 on March 11.

St. Francis beat Castilleja 7-0 to reach the semifinal.

Against Notre Dame Belmont, senior Addie Ahlström, juniors Tricia Zhang and Brynn Brady, and sophomore Charlotte Yao each earned straight-set wins in singles.

In doubles, senior Lindsey Ball teamed with junior C.C. Golub at No. 1, sisters senior Elisabeth Westermann and sophomore Natalie Westermann at two and senior

Penelope Anderson and junior Alex Viret at No. 3 all won.

Soccer

In Division I, Lucas Guida scored in the final minute of the second overtime to lift host **Menlo-Atherton** past St. Francis in the first round Saturday.

The third-seeded Bears (7-3-2) were slated to play again Wednesday against Leigh.

M-A scored in the 25th minute to open a 1-0 lead, but St. Francis came back to tie it just before half-time. After another 59 minutes of scoreless soccer, Guida scored in a scramble in front of the net.

Woodside fell to No. 8 seed Watsonville 2-1 in another first round game at Sequoia on Saturday.

The top-seeded Wildcats (12-1-1) suffered their first loss of the season.

In Division II, No. 7 **Sacred Heart Prep** (8-3) beat No. 2 San Benito 8-1 on the road and was scheduled to meet Monta Vista on Wednesday.

In Division III, **Priory** (6-4-1) dropped a 4-1 decision to host San Mateo.

In the Open Division, **Menlo** engaged in a serious struggle with host Leland in the quarterfinals Saturday and neither team seemed willing to give an inch.

It took overtime before fourth-seeded Leland finally got the tiebreaker, beating the Knights



Courtesy Pam Tso McKenney/Menlo Athletics

Brynn Brady won her singles match in Menlo's win over Notre Dame Belmont.

4-3 and ending one of the finest seasons in Menlo history.

No. 5 seed Menlo (10-1) won its first league championship in four years in a season no one was sure would happen. The Knights outscored their opponents 63-14 on the way to their first Open Division bid.

"We didn't even know if we were going to have a season, now the boys have memories that will last them a lifetime," Menlo coach Marc Kerrest said. "My only disappointment is that I won't have another chance to coach this group again; they were a lot of fun."

Occidental-bound senior Christian Corcoran gave Menlo the early lead, scoring from the 6-yard box on a feed from senior Luke Appel.

The Chargers tied it but senior

Tor Micaelian converted a free kick for a 2-1 halftime lead.

Leland (7-3-4) tied it again early in the second half and Menlo had an answer. Micaelian redirected a cross from senior Ilan Listgarten and the Knights took a 3-2 edge. Leland then scored on a break to tie the score and send it to overtime.

The Knights created chances, but Leland scored in the second overtime.

"Our team showed today what made us successful all season. We came up against a really strong Leland team who won their A league in impressive fashion," Kerrest said. "We showed no fear, played our hearts out and gave it everything we had until the final whistle. In the end, the ball didn't

See **SPORTS**, page 17

Coronavirus central: State confirms June 15 reopening with no capacity, physical distancing requirements

Santa Clara County employers face June deadline to record worker vaccination status

By Embarcadero Media staff

San Mateo County as of Tuesday had 42,043 cumulative cases of COVID-19, with 573 deaths. A total of 64% of the eligible county population is fully vaccinated; 15.9% is partially vaccinated. Santa Clara County as of Tuesday had 118,963 cumulative COVID-19 cases and 2,117 deaths. A total of 61.7% of the eligible county population is fully vaccinated; 13% is partially vaccinated.

No social distancing, capacity limits with June 15 reopening

California will reopen on June 15 without any capacity limits or physical distancing requirements for businesses or events, the state's Health and Human Services secretary said May 21.

Gov. Gavin Newsom last month announced the expected

June 15 reopening date, which state officials confirmed last week as COVID-19 case numbers and hospitalizations continue to drop and the number of people vaccinated continues to increase.

Health and Human Services Secretary Dr. Mark Ghaly on a call with reporters May 21 said COVID-19-related hospitalizations are down to levels not seen since the start of the pandemic, while vaccines are available with no wait throughout the state for everyone ages 12 and up.

As a result, California will end its tiered system of restrictions for counties as it lifts the capacity and distancing limits on June 15.

"Those requirements of the past are no longer needed for the foreseeable future," Ghaly said.

He said the state will be laying out recommendations and guidelines for vaccine verifications for businesses, but will not

be creating any sort of vaccine passport system.

Dee Dee Myers, a senior adviser to Newsom, said confirming the June 15 reopening date is "a really important milestone as we move forward" and "will allow people to really plan in detail" for their businesses or events in the coming weeks and months.

"We're still in the middle of that transition, and not sure what the next normal is going to look like," Myers said.

Ghaly said a priority will be working with local school districts to make sure K-12 schools are fully reopening for the new school year, and said while vaccines were recently made available for people as young as 12 years old, vaccine eligibility for children ages 2-11 might not happen until the late summer or early fall.

As California reopens fully, public health officials anticipate that COVID-19 cases will rise,

but Ghaly said he doesn't think it will have a significant impact on the state's hospital systems given current levels of vaccination, and there won't be any new metrics counties will need to reach to stay out of further capacity or social distancing restrictions.

Employers must record worker vaccination status in Santa Clara County

With Santa Clara County loosening COVID-19 health restrictions on May 18 under the yellow tier, businesses may be welcoming what seems to be another push toward normalcy as they no longer need to post social distancing protocols on storefronts and can expand indoor capacity.

But one requirement has left many business owners concerned about privacy, enforcement and compliance: By June

1, employers in the county will have to obtain a record of their workforce's COVID-19 vaccination status or face a \$5,000 fine per day.

On Monday, The Silicon Valley Organization (formerly The San Jose Silicon Valley Chamber of Commerce) hosted a 30-minute Q&A session on Zoom with county Counsel James Williams to field questions about the new mandate. Nearly 300 participants, including college deans, members of various chambers of commerce, city officials and businesses small and large — from day care facilities to tech giants like Amazon — were among the digital audience, seeking clarification.

One point was emphasized early on by Williams: The mandate is not a requirement for anyone to go and get vaccinated.

"There's nothing in the order

See **CORONAVIRUS**, page 11

Nearly 400 people, mostly children, vaccinated at Hillview clinic

By Angela Swartz

Nearly 400 people, most of them under 18 years old, received their first doses of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine at Hillview Middle School this past week.

The Menlo Park City School District partnered with Safeway to host drive-thru vaccine clinics on the Menlo Park school's campus on Friday, May 21, and Monday, May 24. About 250 people were inoculated on Friday, while 130 received their jabs on Monday, according to Vice Principal Danny Chui.

"The community is really grateful," Chui said on Monday as he directed drivers into the

drop-off and pickup circle where they lined up for shots.

Chui said about 95% of the participants were under 18 years old.

The majority of the middle school's seventh and eighth graders will be vaccinated by the start of the 2021-22 school year, but those under 12 likely won't, so students will continue to wear masks, Chui said. There will be no virtual learning option in the fall, and all students will return to campus full time, he said.

There have been few cases of COVID-19 reported on the school district's data dashboard, with six documented since the beginning of May.

People who participated in the clinics will return on June 10 and

14 for their second doses of the vaccine. The district would like to host more clinics, but Safeway hasn't committed to another, Chui said.

"It's been pretty exhausting," he said. "The clinic itself is not difficult. The difficult part is running a school and after school sports (at the same time)."

The FDA has granted emergency approval for the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for people ages 12 and up. Sign up for an appointment on the state department of health's website at myturn.ca.gov.

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



Magali Gauthier

Brady Watten, 13, receives the first dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine from Joanna Morales at a drive-thru clinic held at Hillview Middle School in Menlo Park on May 21.

Eight killed in shooting at San Jose VTA yard

By Bay City News Service

A Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority employee shot and killed eight people at a VTA maintenance yard in San Jose on Wednesday morning authorities said. The suspect died at the scene.

Local, state and federal authorities continue to investigate

suspected explosive materials in the wake of the shooting. Investigators, law enforcement officials and political leaders held a briefing Wednesday afternoon, May 26. The suspect was identified by various media outlets as Samuel Cassidy, 57.

A spokesman for the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office said that explosive-detecting dogs and robots and members of the

sheriff's bomb squad were expected to remain at the VTA's Guadalupe rail yard on West Younger Avenue into Thursday to ensure it is safe. As a result, the VTA's light rail service was suspended until further notice, with bus service put into place.

"We're going to be there throughout the night to clear every room and every crevice of that building," Deputy Russell

Davis said.

Investigators with the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives were supporting the Sheriff's Office in the investigation and supplying investigators with assets like ballistics and forensic equipment from the FBI's offices in Quantico, Virginia.

The Sheriff's Office first received reports of the shooting at 6:34 a.m. and dispatched deputies to the rail yard, which is adjacent to the Sheriff's Office's headquarters.

The gunman opened fire during a shift change at the rail yard, with graveyard shift employees leaving the facility and day shift employees arriving, according to Davis.

More than 40 employees were at the facility at the time, said San Jose Police Chief Anthony Mata. One shooting victim was in critical condition at a local hospital in addition to the eight victims confirmed dead as of Wednesday afternoon.

In addition to the FBI and ATF, local law enforcement in Santa Clara County, the California Highway Patrol, the state's Office of Emergency Services and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security assisted during the initial active shooter response.

Davis and Santa Clara County Sheriff Laurie Smith argued that the death toll could have been even higher if law enforcement officers hadn't responded as quickly as they did.

"The deputy sheriffs from the Sheriff's Office, the officers from San Jose Police Department ran into the building while shots were being fired and I know that it saved many lives," Smith said at the briefing.

Davis noted that sheriff's deputies did not exchange gunfire with Cassidy and investigators are working under the assumption

that he died by suicide.

Davis did not confirm whether a house fire at what is believed to have been Cassidy's home was connected to the shooting.

San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo said it is "a horrific day for our city, and it's a tragic day for the VTA family ... our hearts pain for the families and the co-workers because we know that so many are feeling deeply this loss."

VTA board of directors chair and Sunnyvale Vice Mayor Glenn Hendricks described the Guadalupe facility as a maintenance yard where light-rail vehicles are dispatched.

"VTA is a family, people in the organization know everyone," Hendricks said. "This is a terrible tragedy."

The VTA was getting grief counselors in place for its employees, Hendricks said.

"My prayers are with the families and my gratitude goes to all the first responders," Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Palo Alto, said in a tweet.

Some elected officials called for more effective gun control measures.

Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Santa Clara, said he will continue to push for "common sense gun control measures."

"While much still remains to be confirmed at this time, one thing is abundantly clear: the gun violence epidemic will continue to rage unless we take concrete action to protect our country. It was our community today, but it will be someone else's tomorrow," Khanna said in an emailed statement.

Khanna said more than 80% of Americans favor measures like waiting periods, "red flag" laws and background checks.

"When I head back to Washington, I will continue to push for

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CORONAVIRUS*continued from page 9*

that says all personnel must get vaccinated," Williams said.

The order also is not a requirement that businesses need to disclose the information to the broader workforce within the company, the public or the public health department, he added. It only requires employers to keep track of the vaccination status of personnel. Complying with the order would include asking employees for their vaccination status. An employee who is fully vaccinated in this case means that they have reached the two-week mark since they received the second shot of the Moderna or Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine or the single shot of the Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Employers need to record the responses, whether that may be "I'm fully vaccinated" or "I decline to answer." The county has offered a sample vaccination status form for businesses or they can use their own system.

It is not enough to send a mass email to all workers, Williams emphasized. Employers must get a response.

In addition, "personnel" covers all workers who regularly

come to a work site in the county. This can include volunteers or unpaid interns. For contract workers, Williams said that the responsibility falls upon the vendor of the contractor to record the employee's vaccination status. However, employers will still have to check that the vendor has done so.

The order does not apply to tenants, visitors of a work site or customers.

If an employee declines to answer, then employers should assume that he or she did not get vaccinated, according to Williams. Employers have to follow up with those workers 14 days later, including those who were only partially vaccinated.

If businesses are not required to report the data to the county or to their own larger workforce, some participants at the Zoom session questioned the point of the order.

Williams said one of the main reasons is because the rules are different for those who are fully vaccinated and for those who are not. Knowing who is vaccinated will help employers to be able to apply those rules accordingly.

"For example, right now, if you're fully vaccinated, and you're in contact with a COVID-19 case, you do not need to quarantine.

You can continue to come to work, you can continue to work, but that doesn't apply if you're not fully vaccinated," he said.

Mask requirements, which were recently updated following new guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, will also be based on vaccination status.

In the draft of new regulations put in place by the state's workplace safety agency Cal/OSHA, if everybody in a room is vaccinated, then no one will have to wear a mask indoors and physical distancing rules and other requirements can be more relaxed, Williams said.

More broadly, Williams suggested that the new order is an effort to encourage more workers to get vaccinated.

"It's because vaccination is the name of the game right now," he said. "It is the best tool that we have available to us to prevent us (from) having a resurgence of cases like we've seen in other countries. It's the best tool for us being able to keep businesses open and avoiding another surge that's going to lead to shutdowns, which I know nobody on this call ... wants to have happen again."

Still, concern lingered among participants of Monday's Q&A session.

Some business owners were troubled that asking about one's vaccination status is a violation of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). In this case, Williams said HIPAA is not applicable since the law only concerns "health plans or health care providers with respect to their patients or clients."

Others were worried that asking the question every two weeks may make some employees feel they're being harassed and that having certain rules in place based on one's vaccination status is a form of discrimination.

"It's a very, very simple question that should take folks no more than 15, 20 seconds to be able to answer," Williams said in response. "Provided that you're just asking folks to answer that question and move on, that should be a complete non-issue."

Williams said the 14-day follow-up requirement is aimed at people who change their minds or have gone from partially to fully vaccinated.

Robert Lindo, the vice president of Casino M8trix in San Jose and board member of The Silicon Valley Organization, which moderated Monday's session, raised a concern that many business owners have

maintained since a mountain of regulations was placed on them throughout the pandemic: How can employers make sure they're complying and not get fined?

While violating a health order is a misdemeanor, Williams also added that no one's been prosecuted for violating a COVID-19 health order.

"We're just looking for people to be acting in good faith," he said. "If we receive a complaint, you have to be able to, if asked, show that you demonstrated good faith in implementing things. ... Most of the provisions of the health orders have always been reliant on that."

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. 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. ■

CalMatters and Bay City News Service contributed to this report.

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Mildred "Millie" Bader Urbain

August 15, 1927 – April 15, 2021

Mildred "Millie" Bader Urbain of Palo Alto, passed away peacefully at the age of 93 on April 15, 2021.

A longtime resident of Menlo Park, Millie was born on August 15, 1927, in Little Rock Arkansas to a single mother, Katherine Koch. She married her husband, John H. Bader, Sr., a Naval Officer, in 1945, eventually settling in Palo Alto in 1953 to raise their two boys.

She was a tireless volunteer in the schools and was a devoted fund raiser and organizer for both the Betty Wright Center and C.A.R. After being encouraged by her friend Ray Spinelli to explore real estate because she was "a natural," Millie found time in the evenings to enroll in real estate law courses. In 1968 after getting her license, she started her career in real estate with Spinelli & Company. She found immediate success and love for the profession. Later, after obtaining her Brokers License, she managed the Menlo Park branch of Pantano Realty. In 1981, she started her own firm, Millie Bader Realtors, in Menlo Park. She retired in 2011 after 43 successful years in real estate.

Millie was a major contributor to Bay Area real estate, serving as President of the Menlo Atherton Board of Realtors, VP of Education, and the Regional VP for California Association of Realtors. She also served as a director of the National Association of Realtors for many years. She was very proud of her work on real estate ethics committees as well as her accomplishments as a real estate instructor and speaker.

Millie's family circle was wide and always growing as she made room for so many — especially young Realtors seeking to be mentored and young families looking for help buying their first home. Millie was compassionate and generous — always willing to help others. She often said that she was so lucky to have discovered her penchant for real estate. Her work brought her so much joy.

She married John T. Urbain in 1985, welcoming his son, Kevin Urbain into the family. She and John spent a wonderful life together, full of family celebrations, travel and special times with friends.

Millie was a devoted wife, mother and grandmother who prioritized family above all. She always brought boundless energy to her career, but her greatest focus and joy in her life were her two boys, John and Jeff. The grandchildren and her three daughters-in-law were the cherries on top. Her grandchildren meant the world to her, and she set a wonderful example for them. She showed that one could be successful with drive, hard work, high moral standards and good character.

She is survived by her children, John H. Bader and his wife Linda Bader, Jeff L. Bader and his wife Jennie Bader, her stepson Kevin Urbain and his wife Charlene Morrow and her 4 grandchildren, Scott, Brett, Leland and Deanna. Millie was preceded in death by her mother Katherine Koch, her first husband John H. Bader, Sr., and her second husband John T. Urbain.

Millie cherished her many friends from all phases of life who provided laughter, strength and so many wonderful memories. She was forever grateful for the outpouring of love from her family and her life-long friends.

She will be interred in a private-family graveside service. A Celebration of Life will be held at a later date, to be determined.

In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation in Millie Bader Urbain's name to Mission Hospice in San Mateo or AbilityPath in Redwood City or St. Denis Church in Menlo Park.



HAWTHORNS

continued from page 5

The Hawthorns area was developed in the late 1880s as a summer estate and was granted to the Peninsula Open Space Trust by the Woods Family Trust before becoming MROSD property.

The district has done some work on the property to restore native grasslands, improve fire safety and protect the historic buildings on the property, but now officials are working to figure out how to best offer the public access to

the low-intensity recreational uses and improvements that are allowed by the conservation easement that governs the property, according to MROSD staff.

The long process to open Hawthorns to visitors began May 18, when the district's Planning and Natural Resources Committee heard an early presentation by district staff about procedures and a timeline to create a plan and implement it.

It's a process that's expected to take a number of years and will be developed in response to

feedback from the community, said Meredith Manning, senior planner with the district. A preliminary timeline MROSD staff presented indicated the agency planned to work through the vision and goals through mid-2022, identify a working group in 2022, spend 2023 developing a plan, spend 2024 working on the environmental review, and work on permitting and approval processes in 2025 and beyond.

Between now and early 2022, the district's Planning and Natural Resources Committee will meet to draft the vision and goals for the project, plus the plan to create the working group. From there, the full MROSD board will finalize those details in early to mid-2022 before the plan is drafted.

Among the topics to be included in the use and management plan are wildland fire protection, structure management and the types of public access that could be offered, she added.

It's one of the last large remaining areas of undeveloped open space in Portola Valley, and "it really is a gorgeous landscape," Manning said.

Allowing the public on the property will require working with the town of Portola Valley to arrange a conditional use permit, she said.

"We stand by to assist in any way, shape or form," Town Manager Jeremy Dennis said.

"Obviously, the town has been, for a very long time, a host of Midpen's (MROSD's) other properties at Windy Hill. We look forward to hosting this property as well," he added.

One matter that staff also plan to iron out through the process of developing the use and management plan is just where the boundary is between Portola Valley and Palo Alto along Los Trancos Road. The border between the communities appears to be right at the Hawthorns area, Manning said.

Commissioner Zoe Kersteen-Tucker suggested that the initiative also provided an opportunity for the town of Portola Valley to work with MROSD on ways to improve safety on its narrow trail along Alpine Road that's shared by bicyclists, pedestrians and equestrians.

"It feels like a real safety issue, if nothing else," she said. "I look forward to learning more about that."

The project is funded by Measure AA, a 30-year, \$300 million bond passed by local voters in 2014. ■

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

Karl J Poppenberg

September 19, 1943 – May 17, 2021

Karl J Poppenberg passed away on May 17, 2021 at his home in Woodside, CA. He had been diagnosed only weeks before with a brain tumor. Karl was born in Oelde Germany and also met his wife Heide in Germany before emigrating to the United States in 1969.

Karl was an engineer in the food processing industry first working for Westfalia Separator, a world wide company, in his hometown of Oelde, Germany, and later accepting the opportunity to work for GEA Westfalia Separator, a US subsidiary in New Jersey and California. He was an expert in his field of liquid food processing and remained in the industry until retirement in 2016. He especially enjoyed the craft beer brewing industry when it became popular in the United States and also was a home brewer.

Karl and his wife and three daughters moved to Woodside in 1983 because of their love for horses. He was an active member of the equestrian community including The Mounted Patrol of San Mateo County, The Shack Riders, The San Mateo Horsemen's Association, and San Mateo County Parks Volunteers. Years ago he could be seen driving through Woodside with his horse and carriage, and he also competed in 3 day eventing carriage driving shows. He was a proud Dad and Grandpa at Woodside Vaulters, Woodside Junior Riders, and Woodside Pony Club.

Karl and Heide raised their three daughters in Woodside and enjoyed hosting many holidays, parties and bar-b-ques at their home. Karl was an excellent cook and made any visitors feel like family. He was the Mess Sergeant for many years at the Mounted Patrol, happily running the kitchen for large groups and at major events with a smile on his face.

At home he was Mr. Fix-it-all and taught his daughters and grandchildren how to use all of his tools in the garage. Other hobbies included flying glider airplanes in his youth in Germany, private pilot license in CA, waterskiing, snow skiing, camping and biking with the family.

He will be greatly missed by his wife of 53 years, Heide, and daughters, son-in-laws and grandchildren including Kathrin and Scott Dancer with Nicole and Patrick, Kerstin and Marc Spangner with Eric and Filip, and Krista and Erik Mack with Tilly and Cassidy, and also many close relatives in Germany. He was lovingly known as Opa by all of his grandchildren.

A celebration of Karl's life will be held this summer.

The family would rather have donations made to the Woodside Trail Fund, <https://woodsidegiving.org/choose-fund/woodside-trail-fund.html>



The Almanac honored in California journalism competition

By Almanac staff

The Almanac was honored with nine awards for its newspaper and website, including fifth place for general excellence among weekly newspapers, in the annual California Journalism Awards competition.

Reporter Kate Bradshaw won first place for local coverage of election 2020 for her reporting on the candidates in the state Senate race and their positions on key issues. “Conversational and easy to read. I feel like I know a lot about each candidate after reading it,” wrote one of the judges.

Chief Visual Journalist Magali Gauthier won first place in the feature photo competition with an artfully framed shot from the story “Marco makes his mark,” about a 4-year-old Tibetan spaniel from Menlo

Park that hit the big time with a showing at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show. “Nice composition and framing with the door. Interesting subject matter with great moment of interaction,” commented a judge.

The story “Delivering a fond farewell: Portola Valley residents celebrate ‘beloved’ UPS driver on his last day,” by Assistant Editor Julia Brown took second place for feature stories. “Can’t recall seeing another story recently about a UPS delivery guy who seems to have endeared himself to his community after making deliveries in the area ever since 1984. Gets an extra point for finding the unusual and special in what would seem to be the ordinary,” a judge wrote.

Gauthier’s photography took third place for a “subtle yet telling moment of the isolation

wrought by the coronavirus pandemic” for one of her images accompanying the story “Mixed feelings as students return to campus,” which chronicled Oak Knoll Elementary’s first day back in school amid unfamiliar protocols to prevent COVID-19’s spread.

She also took third place among all weekly newspapers (“stiff competition,” noted a judge) in the protests and racial justice category for a photo that ran with the story “Black Lives Matter rally targets Amazon, Facebook in calls for racial justice” and fourth place in the digital division category for photo coverage of protests.

Gauthier and Bradshaw shared credit for their story “Behind the lines of the CZU August Lightning fires,” riding along with a local restaurateur to deliver meals to firefighters and holdout residents. They

were awarded third place in a category open to all weekly publications in the state, regardless of size. “Covering wildfires, access is key. Many residents rely on local papers to find out how their area is faring, and this story delivers, showing and telling readers what it’s like behind the fire lines,” a judge wrote.

Former Almanac Editor Renee Batti was awarded fifth place for editorial writing with her take on the Atherton City Council’s complaints that the town wasn’t getting its money’s worth from the local fire protection district. “The notion that Atherton taxpayers, who own some of the highest-valued property in the entire country, are somehow being abused by having to bear a higher proportion of the cost for emergency services in the wider community is absurd,” she wrote.

The Almanac’s sister

publications also earned significant recognition, including second place in general excellence for the Palo Alto Weekly, third place general excellence for the Mountain View Voice and fourth place general excellence for the Pleasanton Weekly, among numerous other categories. The Six Fifty, a lifestyle website geared for millennial readers, garnered three awards.

Overall, this year’s journalism contest, put on by the California Newspaper Publishers Association, received more than 3,000 entries from print, digital and campus publications, an increase over the prior year’s total.

The Almanac competed with other weekly newspapers in the 11,001-25,000 circulation category and in the digital division among news websites drawing between 100,001-400,000 monthly unique visitors. ■

ZIP CODES

continued from page 5

The Palo Alto Hills/Stanford West ZIP’s through-the-roof vaccination rate may be helped by its small population, but size isn’t necessarily an indicator: A dozen miles to the west, the ZIP code of 94020 in the Santa Cruz Mountains has among the lowest vaccination rates: 61.2%. Identified as the La Honda ZIP code, slightly fewer than half of its 1,580 residents aged 12 and older are fully vaccinated. (Only the Stanford ZIP code, 94305, has a lower rate, but the university has been mostly shut down for the past year and its population has a higher percentage of transient residents.)

Some of the Midpeninsula’s most populated areas are also trailing somewhat in vaccinations. Among the ZIP codes with the lowest rates:

■94303, with more than 40,000 residents in East Palo Alto and a portion of Palo Alto, has a rate of 69.1% of fully and partially inoculated residents.

■94061, with more than 33,000 in the Redwood City and Woodside ZIP code that crosses State Route 84, has a rate of 67.1%.

■94063, where more than 29,000 people live in the Redwood City and North Fair Oaks area, east of Middlefield Road, has a rate of 68.4%.

The North Fair Oaks ZIP code, however, is also among several where residents have been jumping on the vaccination bandwagon in greater numbers recently.

The percentage of North Fair Oaks residents who are in the

midst of the immunization process is 18.1%; compare that to the majority of Midpeninsula ZIP codes, whose partial vaccination rates are between 13% and 16%.

This could be due to the fact that North Fair Oaks has a younger demographic, and thus more residents had to wait until they were eligible for a shot. The median age of 94063 is 33.1 years, according to the 2020 American Community Survey.

It could also be attributed to recent pushes by the county to get more people vaccinated in lower income areas through pop-up clinics.

Other ZIP codes with vaccination momentum are the 94085 area of north Sunnyvale, where the median age is just 32.6 years. It has the highest percentage of residents midway through the vaccinations: 18.7%.

And 94040, central Mountain View’s ZIP code, has a partial immunization rate of 18% and a median resident age of 34.6 years.

The Palo Alto Hills neighborhood is not the only ZIP code to be sailing toward full immunization. In Los Altos’ 94022, which straddles Interstate Highway 280 and stretches east to El Camino Real, 91.7% of its 16,763 residents are either fully or partially vaccinated.

Also doing well: 94024, the Los Altos ZIP code that stretches from west of 280 to east of Foothill Expressway, where 86.8% have received at least one shot; and 94301, the Palo Alto area that includes the neighborhoods of Crescent Park, the downtown area and Old Palo Alto. There, 86.6% are either completely or

halfway through the process.

Mark Nadim, a longtime resident of Palo Alto Hills, said that he is proud to live in a neighborhood that’s achieved full vaccination.

“As to why we have such a high vaccination rate, it might be that with a small neighborhood with mostly high-tech residents as well as many seniors, we tend

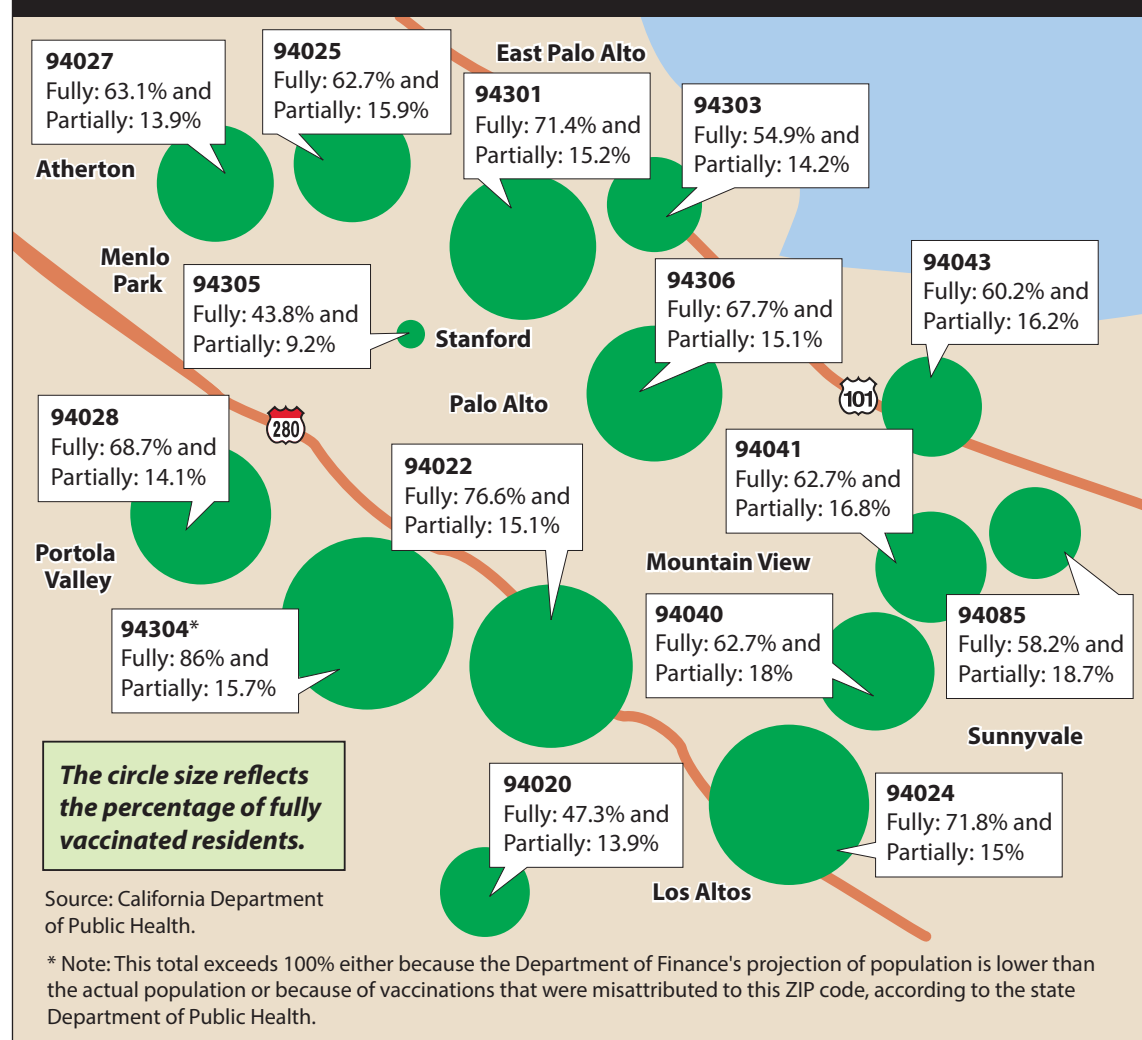
to be less suspicious of new technologies, whether they are pharmaceutical or otherwise,” Nadim wrote in an email.

The state’s data does not include persons immunized through the Veterans Health Administration, which received its doses directly from the federal government. In addition, the population numbers from

the Department of Finance are projections and may not be completely accurate, according to the Department of Public Health’s vaccination rate website.

Email Palo Alto Weekly Editor Jocelyn Dong at jdong@pawebly.com.

Midpeninsula COVID-19 vaccination rates by ZIP code (as of May 19, 2021)



Jamey Padojino and Kristin Brown

For eighth graders, the operetta must go on

After a one-year gap, Woodside Elementary School's annual show will be streamed instead of live

By Kate Daly

After a one-year hiatus due to the pandemic, the 63rd eighth-grade operetta at Woodside School is back, but breaking with tradition and being streamed online.

A recorded version of "Schoolhouse Rock Live Jr." will be shown twice, on Saturday, June 5, at 6 p.m., and on Sunday, June 6, at 5 p.m. Tickets are on sale until June 5 to watch the performances on electronic devices.

For safety reasons, all 46 students in this year's graduating class were prerecorded in small groups in early May. A production company taped vocals when they spread out and sang

in the school's outdoor amphitheater, and then students wore identical face masks when cameras rolled in Sellman Pavilion to capture their acting, dancing and lip syncing.

Robyn Freedman Cornyn, one of three parents co-producing the show, said that the upside to not going live in front of a large audience is the students felt a lot more relaxed performing because videotaping and then editing can correct any mess ups.

Students returned to campus last fall, and have been keeping in the same socially distanced cohorts ever since. The same three groups rehearsed and taped together, which led to divvying up the main role. Following the 1970s cartoons

the musical is based on, new teacher Tom Mizer is anxious about his first day of school. Various characters advise him on what to do in 12 songs such as "Just a Bill" and "Conjunction Junction." In this class's version of "Schoolhouse Rock Live Jr.," 11 students all play the role of Tom.

COVID challenges like that became all part of the job for Gary Stanford, Jr. of Woodside when he signed on as director, musical director and choreographer.

Tickets range from \$25 for an individual to \$60 for a family of four. There's also an option to buy a concession box of baked goods and a program. They're available online at tinyurl.com/wes-operetta. ▀



Courtesy Robyn Freedman Cornyn

The annual operetta at Woodside School is back this year, but in different form, due to the pandemic. Pods of students prerecorded performances that will be streamed online June 5 and 6.

WINKLER

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self-protective, she said.

"When you buy a house, you do not buy the airspace next to your house," she said. "I think we really need to make that clear in our zoning."

While Winkler favors constructing more housing, she does not support state bills like Senate Bill 9 and Senate Bill 10, which aim to promote more housing density. That's because these

bills, by focusing exclusively on housing, fail to consider related issues like transportation and infrastructure when considering residential development.

"We look at housing as separate from transportation, as separate from water supply and power grids, but we need to incorporate them — take them out of their pockets and put them all in one place," she said.

In her columns Winkler has criticized Menlo Park for employing too many city workers and

Palo Alto for failing to hold its police officers to account. Her skeptical stance toward unions extends to California's education system, an area that she sees as ripe for major changes. The system, she wrote in her campaign statement, "exists to benefit the Teachers Union, not the students."

"I think many teachers will agree. Money is not the main problem. The system is — and begs for reform," she wrote.

Her boldest proposal on

education is abolishing tenure rules for teachers, possibly by bringing a ballot measure to the voters. Teachers who get secure jobs for life are "gumming up the system," she said. Doing so, she noted, may require bringing a ballot to the voters. Guaranteed tenure for teachers, she said, "is one huge impediment to change."

"We need meritocracy — bright new thinkers," Winkler said.

In a crowd of mostly Republican challengers, Winkler is running as an Independent, she said.

And while she says she's not a big fan of Newsom, whose regular term expires in 2022, she isn't particularly enthusiastic about the recall effort.

"When they're one year away from the end of term, I think we really need solid reasons to recall someone — not because they attended a party and were a hypocrite," she said. ▀

Email Staff Writer

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VTA SHOOTING

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this urgently needed legislation," Khanna said.

Caltrain and SamTrans officials shared their condolences in a joint statement.

"This is a dark day for the VTA and the City of San Jose," Caltrain board chair Dev Davis said. "We don't yet have all the details regarding this horrible act, but we stand with our member agency as they continue to serve the public amidst this tragedy."

"We are deeply saddened by the terrible shooting this morning," said SamTrans board chair Charles Stone. "Our hearts go out to everyone at VTA; especially the women and men who work to keep it running."

The city of San Jose was scheduled to hold a vigil for the victims of the shooting Thursday at 6 p.m. at San Jose City Hall, located at 200 E. Santa Clara St.

The San Jose-based community organization Working Partnerships USA and the South Bay Labor Council set up a fund to support families of the shooting victims. Donations can be made at bit.ly/vtasolidarity. ▀

HOUSING

continued from page 5

April 2021 report from the California Department of Housing and Community Development.

Several California cities have taken steps to end single-family zoning earlier this year, when the Sacramento City Council signaled support for zoning plans to permit up to four units on properties zoned for single-family use and the Berkeley City Council passed a resolution to end single-family zoning by the end of 2022. In San Mateo County, South San Francisco City Council members in late February agreed to explore the possibility of ending single-family zoning in its upcoming general plan update.

In his experience, Bradley explained, there's been an "unspoken assumption" not to touch R1 zoning in the community engagement process. Opening up the conversation with the community about the possibility of permitting more than single-family homes in single-family zoned areas, even if that feedback is there's not much support for doing so, would be "moving the needle significantly," he said.

In addition to crafting an updated housing element, Menlo Park is required to create a citywide environmental justice element and update its safety element. Those city efforts involve work by consultants from the M-Group, ChangeLab Solutions, ESA, Hexagon and BAE.

One topic the council appeared open to was in response to a question from Councilwoman Cecilia Taylor. She wondered if, since there are already thousands of new housing units proposed in her district, whether District 1, or the area of the city on the Bay side of U.S. 101, would get a pass from having to zone for more homes in the upcoming zoning cycle.

"I think that's totally fair," Combs said, adding that he felt it was a policy discussion the council should work through, rather than getting feedback on it from staff and consultants.

Bradley added that if all of those proposed housing units in District 1 are approved and built, they will count toward the city's overall RHNA requirements, and could actually exceed that total requirement. However, because most of those units are market rate, and the

state mandates a certain proportion of those new units to be designated for lower-income households, Menlo Park will still have to make plans throughout the city for how to accommodate more affordable housing units, he said.

In addition, cities are typically expected to zone for around 15% to 30% more units above the mandated number of housing units, putting the expected number of units to plan for at closer to 3,400 or 3,800 housing units, he said.

The timeline for the project is to begin community outreach efforts during the summer, do a community survey later on in the summer and then start talking about land use strategies and alternatives in the late summer and fall. The effort is expected to be complete by the end of 2022, Bradley said.

The City Council also created a subcommittee with members Combs and Wolosin, as well as a Community Engagement and Outreach Committee that will help with public outreach for the housing element update. Its members are: Victoria Robledo, Yadira DiSiena, Dan McMahon, Lesley Feldman, Nehezi

Ollarvia, Aaron Spaulding, Max Fennell, Carol Marshall Mayer, Michal Bortnik, Rich Cline, Soody Tronson and Tiffany Dao. Because none of the candidates was from Menlo Park's District 5 area, two spots will be held for District 5 residents. City Council district representative Ray Mueller planned to recruit two district residents for the positions.

That group was set to hold its first meeting Thursday, May 27. ▀

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

OBITUARIES

Local residents who died recently include **Mildred "Millie" Bader Urbain**, 93, a longtime Menlo Park resident and president of the Menlo Atherton Board of Realtors, on April 15; and **Karl J Poppenberg**, 77, a Woodside resident, on May 17.

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

POLICE VACCINATION

continued from page 1

low vaccination rate among jail guards, or if the leadership at the Sheriff's Office was content to "live with" the low number of deputies opting to get the shot.

"I just think both in terms of the health of our jail population, the health of our employees and the potential liability, this is an issue that we can't just keep kicking the can down the road on," Simitian said.

Assistant Sheriff Timothy Davis said the department is making a concerted effort to improve the vaccination numbers. He said they are in constant communication with staff, providing informational emails, weekly meetings, town halls and even a video that sought to dispel some of the concerns about the vaccine.

"The Sheriff's Office is very pro-vaccine, and we will continue to work on efforts to increase those numbers," he said.

There has been more success



Magali Gauthier

The Menlo Park Police Department hasn't gathered any data about how many of its officers have been vaccinated against COVID-19.

next door, where the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office reports that 133 of the 188 sworn staff working in jails have been vaccinated, or just over 70%. That number could be even higher, as the data only tracks those who received the vaccine through the county health system, said Rosemerry Blankswade, spokeswoman for the agency. The vaccination rate among all 502 officers at the Sheriff's Office was not immediately available.

Menlo Park and Palo Alto

The Palo Alto and Menlo Park police departments could not provide vaccination data for their officers. James Reifschneider, acting captain for the Palo Alto Police Department, said officers are being encouraged to get the vaccine but the department has no records of how many employees have actually been immunized. Nicole Acker, a spokeswoman for the Menlo Park

Police Department, said the city isn't tracking vaccination rates among officers so long as it remains voluntary.

"The Menlo Park Police Department has encouraged all our employees to get vaccinated, and were active participants in the vaccination program facilitated by the county in February for law enforcement personnel," Acker said. "We continue to encourage vaccinations and employ all appropriate safety protocols to avoid infection and prevent spread of COVID-19."

The supportive messaging stands in stark contrast to the California Peace Officers Association (CPOA), a statewide professional association for law enforcement personnel, which has declined to encourage its membership to get the vaccine. Shaun Rundle, deputy director of the CPOA, said the organization is "not approaching" the issue of vaccines at all, and does not have data on vaccination rates

among officers statewide.

State officials are working with California's prison guard union, the California Correctional Peace Officers Association, to boost vaccination rates among those working in prisons and jails. So far, Gov. Gavin Newsom has said there are no plans to make vaccines a requirement.

Police departments in Santa Clara County will soon be required to track vaccination rates among employees, broadening public knowledge of which law enforcement agencies are successfully immunizing their officers. Under a May 18 county health order, businesses and government entities must determine which employees are vaccinated by June 1, and staffers who are not fully vaccinated must wear face masks and follow COVID-19 public health protocols. ■

Email Staff Writer Kevin Forestieri at kforestieri@mv-voice.com.

CRIME BRIEFS

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The fatal shooting is the second in the Woodland area on the city's west side in almost three weeks. On May 4, Christian Garcia-Torres, 25, also of Redwood City, was found shot in a parking structure at an apartment complex a block away in the 1700 block of Woodland Avenue. He later succumbed to his wounds at a hospital, police reported at the time.

Anyone who witnessed Sunday's shooting or has information is asked 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 or by text or voicemail to 650-409-6792.

—Sue Dremann

More than \$150K worth of handbags stolen

More than \$150,000 worth of handbags were stolen from the Neiman Marcus department store at Stanford Shopping Center by a "coordinated group" of at least 10 people on May 19, according to Palo Alto police.

Officers responded to the mall

at 180 El Camino Real after an emergency dispatcher received a call around 12:20 p.m. from someone who heard second hand that a man was inside the department store with a gun, according to a press release.

Soon after police reached the scene, they found out the information of an armed man was a false report. They learned the store was hit by a group of at least 10 people who took 43 handbags, including some that were forced from security cables, breaking some glass display cabinets in the process, police said.

The group, made up of five

males and five females, fled the store in three vehicles before officers arrived. Officers suspect two more people worked with the thieves by serving as their getaway drivers, but didn't go inside the store, according to police.

Investigators found no evidence that the group was armed, the release states. They believe the sound of glass breaking was mistaken for a gunshot, which may have led to the false report of an armed person.

Based on witness accounts, the thieves were described as Black males and females who wore face coverings and clothes with hoods.

The three getaway vehicles were a white Ford Mustang and two Infiniti four-door sedans, one that was white and another that was dark blue, police said.

Officers plan to connect with other agencies in the area to see if the group is linked to other similar thefts in nearby cities.

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

—Palo Alto Weekly staff

SPORTS

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bounce our way; that's soccer. I am so proud of our team and all they accomplished this season."

In girls soccer, top-seeded **Menlo** and seventh-seeded **Sacred Heart Prep** both



Bob Dahlberg @bobd_photo

M-A celebrates Lucas Guida's goal in second overtime at Menlo-Atherton on May 22. M-A defeated St. Francis 2-1 in CCS quarterfinals play.

advanced in the CCS Division I playoffs with wins in the first round.

Menlo (11-0-1) downed visiting Santa Cruz 5-1 as Stella El-Fishaway scored twice and recorded an assist.

Gabby Kogler scored a goal and had an assist for the Knights,

who play Branham in the semifinals. Branham advanced with a 1-0 win over Aptos.

Francesca Prescott and Dorothy Zhang also scored for Menlo.

Hannah Gorospe, Claire Pickering, and Ashley Grady each recorded an assist.

Senior defender Julia Deffner was an anchor on defense with sophomore goalie Sam Sellers.

Sacred Heart Prep (8-3) edged No. 2 Aragon 4-3 at San Mateo. Lilly Lynch scored the go-ahead goal off a corner kick in the 75th minute.

Megan Tinsley scored on a penalty kick and Sydney Adas scored on an assist from Molly Tinsley.

The Gators were slated to play Soquel in Wednesday's semifinal.

Menlo-Atherton downed host Saratoga 3-0 in Division II and will play Sequoia in the semifinals.

Girls lacrosse

Kat Showalter scored four goals in helping the **Sacred Heart Prep** girls lacrosse team to a 12-7 victory over host Mitty in its regular season finale on Tuesday.

Kalista Hurel added three goals for the Gators (9-3, 8-0), who clinched the West Bay Athletic League Foothill Division's best record with the victory.

SHP, the defending WBAL champion, advances into the first-ever Central Coast Section girls lacrosse tournament, which is scheduled to begin Wednesday, June 9. The seeding meeting is Monday, June 7.

The Gators are likely to receive one of the top four seeds, which would mean a bye into the quarterfinals. All three of SH Prep's losses were to St. Ignatius by a total of 11 goals.

Sacred Heart Prep dominated WBAL play, outscoring its opponents 117-35. St. Francis, which has a game remaining with Mitty,

is second with 73 goals.

Gators coach Wendy Kridel, a member of the U.S. Lacrosse Greater Baltimore Chapter Hall of Fame, also coached the U.S. U19 national team between 1999 and 2007 and owns a 20-0 record with Team USA.

SHP assistant coach Liz Hogan was an All-American goalkeeper at Syracuse and holds the school record with 654 career saves and 170 ground balls.

Alex Precourt and Genna Gibbons each added a pair of goals against Mitty, with Lauren Hagerty also scoring. Gabby Galletti and Lauren Hall combined for five saves.

—Rick Eymer

Read more online

Get the latest on local prep sports delivered to your inbox Monday through Friday by signing up for The Almanac's Express newsletter at almanacnews.com/express.

SCHOOL MEALS

continued from page 1

under 18 and issued a series of waivers offering additional flexibility to schools. Most recently, it extended a waiver program to allow its “Seamless Summer Option,” which usually runs during summer vacations, to operate during the regular school year through June 30, 2022. With it, schools can continue to provide up to two free meals per day to anyone under 18.

Here’s a look at the lessons learned by those on the front lines of child hunger during the pandemic.

What worked

Among those leading the charge to track school meal distributions during the pandemic is not a celebrated think tank but a rising, youth-led coalition of students and graduates called UnBox, which has built what it believes is the Bay Area’s most comprehensive school meals database. Co-founded by 2018 Stanford University graduate Isabelle Foster and current undergraduate Charlie Hoffs, the organization has assiduously tracked and reported where and how to access school meals throughout the region, mapping them on an interactive website, bayareacommunity.org.

Being responsive

In a number of school districts in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, child nutrition staffers said that they were most successful in listening to the families they work with and responding to their needs. In comparing meals distributed in October and November of 2020 to student enrollment, among the leaders were Luther Burbank School District, a one-school district in San Jose, and the Ravenswood City School District in East Palo Alto and Menlo Park. Generally, school districts with higher numbers of students who experience poverty reported more school meals distributed, though there were some exceptions.

Superintendent Edith Mourtos of the Luther Burbank School District said in an interview that after distributing meals to families every day, the district switched to a weekly “market basket” approach, providing families with healthy ingredients to cook their own meals. As students have come back to school, the district has continued to send them home with breakfasts and suppers, as all of the families in the district are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, she said. They’ve also surveyed families to find out what foods they like and have worked with their



Magali Gauthier

An assortment of food, including milk, pancakes, apples, carrots, pasta, raisins and cheese are ready for distribution at Los Robles Ronald McNair Academy in East Palo Alto on April 28.

vendor to order meals that kids enjoy and that stay within the health guidelines for school meals, she said.

“I would say kudos to the kitchen staff for being really responsive to what the kids liked and didn’t like,” she said.

The Ravenswood district took a similar approach in responding to feedback from families to switch to a weekly meal program, said June Richardson, child nutrition consultant for the district. The most popular meal kit? Pizza, by far, she said.

When the pandemic hit, the district’s nutrition program had just finished undergoing a vigorous review process when staffers learned that the district might be locked down. Over a single weekend last March, Ravenswood set up its school meals program. The district experimented with different distribution approaches, offering multiple meals daily, then twice a week. After surveying families, the district now provides seven-day meal kits on Wednesdays, with curbside pickups available between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Staff received some surprising feedback, like from one respondent who didn’t want to leave home during that window because it would mean losing a parking spot at a crowded apartment complex. Another said they didn’t like receiving so much meat because they didn’t have enough room to store it.

In contrast, the Mountain View Whisman School District took a different approach after getting different feedback from its families, serving grab-and-go breakfasts at each school site daily. The district served record numbers of students during the pandemic and was on track to keep setting records in May, according to Debbie Austin, Mountain View Whisman’s director of food and nutrition services. Staff has

also been providing meals to about 50 families at Moffett Field military base.

The district’s daily meal program reflects that many of its families don’t have a lot of refrigerator space, and some don’t have access to kitchens or may be doubled up with other families. People were most interested in picking up food around lunchtime, between 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Austin said.

“We’ve had parents that have literally been in tears saying if it wasn’t for us, they wouldn’t have food in their families,” Austin said. “That’s what kept our crew going.”

Her crew hasn’t skipped a day, providing food to families over the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays as well as spring break, she said.

“People have to eat every day and food insecurity is only growing. It’s not lessening,” she said.

People have been laid off longer than they thought, run through their minimal savings, and have been unable to pay rent for eight, nine or 10 months, and are concerned they’ll be evicted soon, she said.

Since families don’t have to apply to participate, they don’t experience any stigma that might otherwise come from accessing free school meals, Austin added. “I think parents are thankful they don’t have to put breakfast and lunch together,” she said.

Networking

Another key approach that aided Richardson of the Ravenswood district was to broaden her network through the Midpeninsula Pediatric Advisory Coalition, a multidisciplinary team led by Stanford Children’s Health that formed during the pandemic to help mitigate the pandemic’s indirect impacts on local children.

During the group’s twice-monthly meetings, members including Richardson learned about the needs facing the community and took action, said Dr. Lisa Chamberlain, who co-founded the group with Dr. Janine Bruce.

“The implications of food insecurity are so far-reaching,” Bruce said. “I think that when everybody was so uncertain during the pandemic, schools became one of the primary anchor points for meals for kids.”

They worked with food organizations like East Palo Alto’s Ecumenical Hunger Program to supplement the meals that organization was providing by purchasing more protein-rich foods.

“We bought them so much peanut butter and tuna,” Chamberlain recalled.

The coalition also crafted bilingual flyers with information about pandemic resources for families that were sent out with school meals. San Mateo County librarians, part of the coalition, pitched in by using their empty library facilities to make thousands of copies.

‘We had to step outside our traditional roles and do things we would never be expected to do.’

STEPHANIE MARTINEZ, JEFFERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

“It was just this really wonderful partnership where everybody comes together to make things happen,” Chamberlain said.

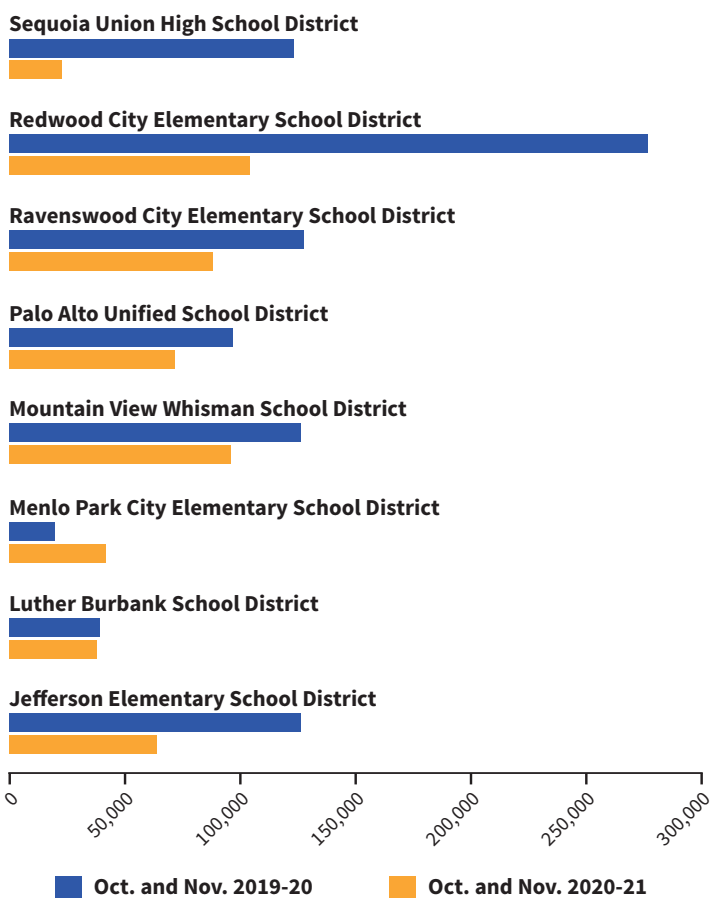
Richardson also created public-private partnerships to bolster her efforts. Through a partnership with Palo Alto-based VMware, the district received fruit donations through most of the year. Her team partnered with Facebook and other organizations that bought food from local restaurant vendors to provide special meals and meal kits, she said. And she was able to get gift cards and meal donations for her staff. Those, along with certificates signed by the district superintendent that she created to thank her staffers, boosted morale, she said.

“You would think they all got a piece of gold,” she said, describing staff members’ response to the certificates.

Another tool was using social media, specifically the EPA Neighbors page on Facebook, to spread the word about the meal offerings, she said.

Continued on next page

School meals served in 2019 and 2020



Kate Bradshaw

School meals provided in the months of October and November between the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years varied widely between districts. Data courtesy California Department of Education, Nutrition Services Division. The 2019-20 data was retrieved for Second Harvest Food Bank March 25, 2021, and the 2020-21 data was retrieved for UnBox Feb. 10, 2021.

Continued from previous page

Make it convenient

The Ravenswood district also coordinated food pickup days when schools were distributing educational materials to families, or at sites that had mobile COVID-19 testing stations, which helped the numbers skyrocket, she said. Throughout the pandemic, the district also offered home food deliveries to families, which in turn helped keep its bus drivers employed.

“At one point our home delivery was 60% to 70% compared to curbside,” Richardson said. Families would call by 9 a.m. and leave a message saying how many children they had and where they lived. In the beginning, this option was more popular because “nobody wanted to come out,” she said. As time went on, people began to pick up items in person more.

Through the “Seamless Summer” policy offered through the USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service, the district has also been providing meals for neighboring charter schools, Montessori schools and local day cares.

“It’s not restrictive to just students enrolled in your school,” she said. “It opens up to anybody in the community.”

She and her team just have to count the number of meals they distribute with a simple clicker.

Still, with all the food they’re distributing, the participation rate is about 50% less than it would be if students were in school, she said. Richardson said she suspects it’s because families are getting food from other places — and given the dramatic uptick in demand that other food organizations are reporting, this may very well be the case.

Second Harvest Food Bank continues to serve twice as much food to twice as many people as it did before the pandemic hit, said Tracy Weatherby, a vice president at Second Harvest, the primary food bank for San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.

And they don’t see demand falling any time soon, she said. “Over 50% of our clients we surveyed have less than \$100 in savings,” she said. “That’s not savings. That’s not enough cash to pay most people’s grocery bills. We’re pretty certain this need will continue.”

But some families are relying solely on the student meals for their extra food support. Two families picking up meals at a recent distribution in East Palo Alto said in Spanish that they weren’t getting nutritional aid from anywhere else.



Magali Gauthier

Ravenswood City School District staff prepare bags of food on May 19. After surveying families, the district now provides seven-day meal kits on Wednesdays.

Use existing staff in new ways

Other school districts, like the Jefferson Elementary School District in Daly City, met the new needs of their students by shifting the roles of existing staff members to help battle child hunger. Stephanie Martinez, program director of student services with the district, who also leads the district’s counseling program, said that many of her 15 counseling staffers switched to helping families get access to food — though counseling services continued during the pandemic as well.

They served food to between 100 to 250 families each month, said Arthur Melendez, a counselor with the district. They also retooled their menu, from hot meals to a grab-and-go style, after learning that the meals would sometimes be soggy or cold by the time they were picked up, and supplemented them with fresh produce through Second Harvest.

For families that couldn’t come pick up meals, counselors and district staff members delivered the meals to families themselves. Among the reasons that families didn’t pick up meals were that they were sick with COVID-19, didn’t have a car, lost their insurance, couldn’t pay for gas or had too many kids to fit into the car, Martinez said.

She and her team also brought in additional resources through grants and were able to provide some bus passes and direct financial support to families.

Counselors, Martinez said, are “like super power people. They do take on a lot. We had to step outside our traditional roles and do things we would never be expected to do.”

What didn’t work

The global pandemic triggered plenty of challenges: Children were away from school, some families moved

without reporting their new addresses and some were fearful of leaving home. Even so, it was a requirement in some districts for parents to bring the child with them when picking up food.

According to Weatherby, the free and reduced price meal program poses some obstacles to getting meals to children who could benefit. One is that some families are afraid to apply, perhaps concerned that it will negatively affect their immigration status. Another is that the income eligibility requirements are so low that they don’t include people who still struggle to pay for food. “There are plenty of people struggling making over 185% of the federal poverty limit,” she said.

Yet another challenge associated with school meals outside of the “Seamless Summer Option” is that to be eligible for free and reduced-price meals, federal guidelines don’t take into account the significantly higher cost of living associated with the Bay Area, Martinez said. She noted that a lot of families and community members work in labor fields that may not provide full benefits, more than part-time pay or minimum wages to their workers.

To be eligible for free meals at school, a family of four can earn no more than \$34,450 and no more than \$49,025 to receive reduced-cost meals. The fair market rent of \$2,923 for a one-bedroom apartment in San Mateo County (according to rentdata.org) is more than the monthly income threshold for free lunches of \$2,871.

On one hand, there may be less stigma to getting school breakfasts and lunches than in going to a food bank, suggested Mary McGrath, executive director of Safe and Supportive Schools, a San Mateo County initiative focused on school-based behavioral and mental

health services. On the other hand, she said, funds can be limited because some districts tend to undercount the number of children who are eligible for McKinney-Vento funds, a program aimed at making school services more accessible for students who experience homelessness or significant housing insecurity. One district, McGrath said, reports only having four students eligible for such funds, but contains a whole street full of RVs where children are living.

Yet another obstacle is that gaining access to free and reduced-price meals requires a certain amount of digital literacy from the families, but with little training and support available, Martinez said.

Many applications for housing, finances or food support are now online, and those take certain resources and skills to navigate. Families don’t always have the documents or the tools to scan and upload the requested information, Martinez said.

‘We’ve had parents that have literally been in tears saying if it wasn’t for us, they wouldn’t have food in their families.’

DEBBIE AUSTIN, MOUNTAIN VIEW WHISMAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

“All of these things we learned as college students and educators — our families have never had to do this,” she said.

Pandemic EBT cards

One pandemic program aimed at helping keep families fed is the Pandemic EBT program. Families that were eligible for free and reduced-price school meals were sent EBT cards, similar to SNAP/Cal-Fresh cards, loaded with \$5.70 per student per day, roughly covering the number of days that school was not in session. The \$5.70 aimed to cover the cost of breakfast and lunch. However, families that were not already qualified for the program had to fill out applications. Martinez said it was hard for her counseling staff to navigate the applications, and they had to spend time going through rather personal questions with applicants.

In the first round of the Pandemic EBT program, in which cards were mailed to eligible households, San Mateo County reported one of the largest gaps between estimated eligible participants and actual participants among

California counties — the EBT cards reached only 85.9% of the estimated children who were eligible. The proportion in Santa Clara County was 90.4%, according to a California Department of Social Services report.

One reason for the gap in San Mateo County was that a number of families moved out during the pandemic, and the cards missed them in the mail, McGrath said.

“The address change issue is difficult ... even for well-intentioned organizations trying to implement that,” Weatherby said.

The next round of pandemic EBT is set to be disbursed shortly, with cards expected to be mailed to eligible families between June 21 and July 31, according to a state memo.

What’s next

Given all of the new ways of combating child hunger that were initiated during the pandemic, it’s perhaps unsurprising that there are efforts in the works to codify some of those changes. Assemblyman Marc Berman (D-Menlo Park), whose District 24 represents parts of San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, last year proposed a bill to reform the community eligibility provision, and this year is a principal co-author of state Sen. Nancy Skinner’s “Free School Meals for All Act,” Senate Bill 364. The legislation would promise free breakfast and lunch for all California students and end the application process to receive free meals.

If the proposed legislation passes, it will increase the workload for school meal providers, requiring more staffing and equipment.

At the same time, “It’s going to help farmers. It’s going to help everybody that produces food. It’s going to spread the wealth,” said Austin of the Mountain View Whisman School District.

“If you think about every other industrialized country in the world, they do not charge children in school for food,” she said. “We’re just now getting on the bandwagon.”

This article was produced as a project for the USC Annenberg Center for Health Journalism’s 2020 Data Fellowship. It is the first in a series exploring the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on local food systems and policies. Second Harvest of Silicon Valley and UnBox provided data.

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

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Public Notices

995 Fictitious Name Statement

STATEMENT OF ABANDONMENT OF USE OF FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME

File No. M-270737

The information given below is as it appeared on the fictitious business statement that was filed at the County Clerk-Recorder's Office.

The following registered owner(s) abandoning the use of the fictitious business name(s):

VIVIANNE KELVIN
REGISTRANT'S NAME(S):
VIVIANNE KELVIN

251 Winding Way
San Carlos, CA 94070
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME(S):
VIVIANNE KELVIN DESIGNS

251 Winding Way
San Carlos, CA 94070
FILED IN SAN MATEO COUNTY ON: 09/14/16
THIS BUSINESS WAS CONDUCTED BY:
Individual.

This statement was filed with the County Clerk Recorder of San Mateo County on April 27, 2021.

(ALM May 14, 21, 28; Jun. 4, 2021)

INNOVATIVE PIPING SYSTEMS
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: 287206

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

Innovative Piping Systems, located at 608 Douglas Drive, Mill Valley, CA 94941, Marin County.

Registered owner(s):
VINCENT EDWARD PUCETTI
608 Douglas Drive
Mill Valley, CA 94941

This business is conducted by: An Individual. The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 1996.

This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on April 1, 2021.

(ALM May 14, 21, 28; June 4, 2021)

THE MANDARIN
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: 287619

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

The Mandarin, located at 1029 El Camino Real, Menlo Park, CA 94025, San Mateo County.

Registered owner(s):
CHINA WOK CHINESE CUISINE LLC
1500 W. El Camino Ave., Suite 8
Sacramento, CA 95833
CA

This business is conducted by: A Limited Liability Company.

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

This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on May 10, 2021.

(ALM May 21, 28; June 4, 11, 2021)

BRITISH BANKERS CLUB
THE BRITISH BANKERS CLUB
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: 287593

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

1.) British Bankers Club, 2.) The British Bankers Club, located at 555 Santa Cruz Ave., Menlo Park, CA 94025, San Mateo County.

Registered owner(s):
ROBERT S. FISCHER
566 Emerson St.

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Viewpoint

IDEAS, THOUGHTS AND OPINIONS ABOUT LOCAL ISSUES

Here's the key to ending the pandemic

By Dr. Nadine Burke Harris/
CalMatters

GUEST OPINION

California is entering a critical phase in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. After a yearlong struggle that has claimed more than 62,000 lives, we are beginning to see signs of a return to normal.

Last month I was finally able to hug my mom for the first time in over a year! Earlier this month, I went for a walk with a friend and was able to hug her goodbye without the nagging fear of passing on a potentially deadly virus. But you don't have to be a hugger like me to benefit from social connection.

Research shows that people who feel more connected to others have lower levels of anxiety and depression, higher self-esteem and greater empathy for others. It is literally good for our mental and physical well-being, and it's something that's been absent from us all for so long.

That fulfilling feeling of connecting with others — in person and safely — is something I want every Californian to be able to have.

But the only way it's possible, the only reason we can reopen our businesses and restaurants and make post-pandemic memories with friends and family in person again, is by reaching community immunity with the help of the three highly effective vaccines we have available to protect us.

Getting vaccinated is not just about protecting ourselves. It's

about protecting our family, our loved ones, our friends, our neighbors. That's why we call it public health.

The only way we can get through this pandemic is togeth-

'They are safe. They are effective. It's clear that the benefits of getting vaccinated far outweigh the risk of side effects.'

er. That's why we need the participation of every Californian, along with continued coordination and cooperation on a statewide scale.

In the last few months, the state has made great strides. California now has one of the lowest infection rates in the U.S. Just a few months ago, our state had close to 60,000 new COVID-19 cases daily and well above 500 deaths per day. Those numbers have plummeted to fewer than 1,400 new cases and fewer than 100 deaths daily. We've administered more than 33 million vaccines across the state — and more than 6 million of those doses have been administered in our most vulnerable communities.

One of the most important responsibilities of government is to make sure that our most vulnerable residents receive equal protection, especially during a crisis. So, as we charge ahead with delivering vaccinations as safely and quickly as possible, equity continues to be a central focus of our strategy.

Today, everyone age 12 and

over is eligible for vaccination — an estimated 2.1 million newly eligible individuals. Clearly, as millions more become eligible, there are steps we must take to ensure we continue to reach the hardest-hit communities as effectively and efficiently as possible.

First, we must provide access and support to make it easy to reach Californians who are disproportionately affected by this disease. That could include transportation assistance, extended hours, language support and resources to reach homebound and unhoused Californians. Second, we must come together as a community to build trust in these life-saving vaccines so that as many Californians as possible will choose to become vaccinated.

Across California, those in positions of trust — clergy and teachers, neighbors and friends, business leaders and co-workers — should urge all those around them to learn the facts about the coronavirus vaccines. They have been proven, first in large clinical trials, and now in the broader population. They are safe. They are effective. It's clear that the benefits of getting vaccinated far outweigh the risk of side effects.

Most importantly, they are our path out of this darkness. They are the means through which we can fully reopen our state, reconnect with friends and loved ones and put an end to this pandemic. *Dr. Nadine Burke Harris is the surgeon general of California. This piece was first published by CalMatters, a nonpartisan, nonprofit journalism venture that works with media partners throughout the state, including The Almanac.*

Stop bringing people in from other parts of the state and world. This only contributes to more sardines packed into one can, traffic congestion, accidents, road rage, a higher cost of living and more mental and physical stress for everyone. Our governor and many of our cities talk about the need to conquer global warming and rising tides, but these actions only add to the intensity of global warming. How about providing jobs and housing for our local community first and foremost?

*Jackie Leonard-Dimmick
Walnut Avenue, Atherton*

What's on your mind?

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

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

Letters should be no longer than 300 words.

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

LETTER

Our readers write

Jobs and housing

The Almanac stated in "Local towns face increased state housing requirements" in its May 14 issue (that "San Mateo County is confronting a housing shortage. Since 2010, just 10,000 homes have been built, while 100,000 jobs have been created.")

Why not fill the 100,000 jobs with the occupants of the 10,000 new homes — with the people that are already here? Support our local communities!

‘The story of an artist’

Palo Alto gallery showcases the vivid work of Menlo Park painter Mitchell Johnson

By Sheryl Nonnenberg

The current exhibition at the Pamela Walsh Gallery, “Mitchell Johnson, Color Continuum,” may be perfectly timed to usher in a hopeful, post-pandemic era. The survey show, which features selected paintings by the Menlo Park artist dating from 1988 to 2021, is a bright, colorful and uplifting experience with the added benefit of taking the viewer, vicariously, to scenic spots around the world.

The idea for the show came after Johnson visited Walsh’s Ramona Street gallery to see her Nathan Oliveira collection. A subsequent visit to Johnson’s light-filled studio inspired her to suggest an exhibition that would showcase his latest, large-scale works but also include paintings from earlier in his career.

“The dialogue between these pieces showed a remarkable progression in Mitchell’s evolution as a painter,” Walsh said. “A large survey exhibition tells the story of an artist in a way that words cannot, and Mitchell has arrived at a very important moment in his career.”

The show is a combination of new work and early paintings from Johnson’s private collection, as well as works borrowed from museums and private collectors.

“Mitchell and I spent quite a bit of time in his studio going through paintings and thinking about the narrative. We are showing the arc of 30 years and how his work has evolved, so we were careful to include paintings that illustrate different time periods,” Walsh said.

Born in 1964, Johnson’s childhood involved frequent relocations due to his father’s military career. In a recent email interview he explained, “I am sure I started painting and making things as a way to be grounded amidst the constant change. The interest in color was always there.”

After graduating from Randolph-Macon College in Virginia, he found employment in the computer industry and took art classes in the evening.

He saved enough money to attend Parsons School of Design in New York City, earning a master of fine arts degree in 1990. Although stimulating, New York was prohibitively expensive for a young artist. A call one day from his brother Ed in California would set him on a new life path.

Abstract expressionist painter Sam Francis, who lived in Palo Alto, needed a part-time assistant. Johnson moved west and continued to paint while working for Francis. It proved to be a transformative experience.

“Working for Sam made me realize that every artist decides what their work will look like and be about but also how they will build a career. Careers in the art world are cobbled together in unique ways; galleries don’t run people’s lives or careers and they certainly don’t provide consistency or stability.”

Johnson’s early work, expressionistic landscapes of California, soon found an audience. But, perhaps because of the transient quality of his upbringing, Johnson sought out other venues in order to explore his passion for color and shapes. Soon he was traveling to Cape Cod, Italy, France and Asia (often with wife Donia and son Luca) in order to find new inspiration. His works, sometimes done en plein air (outdoors), more often from memory in the studio, are not the stereotypical renditions of scenic locations. Two lawn chairs on a beach, the rooftops of Cape Cod cottages and a lone picnic table are more likely to draw his attention because they are opportunities to pursue his quest for “colors and shapes that feel complex and challenging.”

In the rear of the Walsh Gallery, a narrow corridor provides an intimate space in which to view very early examples of Johnson’s work. One can see that, as a student, he was working in a soft, impressionistic manner of representation, as in “Green Car, Palo Alto” from 1992. Moving around the gallery, the canvases become larger, brighter, with more attention to

the geometry of shapes. Johnson said that he views the canvas as “a stage where shapes and colors perform together.”

These stages include places where we all have been, perhaps, or have wanted to go.

“I think the subjects of Mitchell’s paintings allow people to access the work and are universally pleasing, but that is why they are great,” Walsh said.

“North Truro” (2015) is an Edward Hopper-esque scene, a white clapboard cottage on the ocean’s edge. Strong lines define the architectural features of the corner of the house, its roofline, open screen door and paned window. But it is the color that draws our attention. Is the roof really green? Is the doorstep really purple and is the ocean ever that deep, deep blue? It doesn’t matter because it all works and the overall feeling is one of warmth and nostalgia. Walsh said, “His true genius is his understanding of color; people are magnetically drawn to color.”

Johnson’s paintings also capture a moment in time, and they are usually not defined by having people as main characters. In “Yellow Table” from 2021, for example, the composition could not be simpler. A bright yellow picnic table sits solidly in the center canvas, resting on a ground of green grass. Horizontals of light and dark blue delineate the beach and sea behind it. It’s a compact composition but holds potential for so much meaning: We have been there, it was fun, and we want to go there again.

Johnson has also tackled the more complex subject matter of cityscapes. In “Pine and Grant” (2019-21), the artist has started out depicting, in a realistic manner, a very specific location in San Francisco. But this realism is obscured by large square, rectangle and oblong shapes of secondary colors superimposed upon the city backdrop. It is a conscious effort on the artist’s part to merge aspects of representation and abstraction in one canvas. This may not be everyone’s notion of a San Francisco city scene.



Magali Gauthier

Mitchell Johnson, a Menlo Park artist, stands among his paintings currently exhibited at Pamela Walsh Gallery in Palo Alto on May 19.

The show also includes examples of Johnson’s purely abstract paintings, such as “Biarritz (Secret)” 2018-2020. Rectangles of flat, matte colors, applied with a hint of pentimento (traces of paint from previous layers), overlap and encourage the eye to travel in and around the canvas.

Johnson, who has long been his own publicity and business manager, has found a loyal following for his work here in California and, thanks to ads in the Wall Street Journal Magazine, around the world. One local collector is tech entrepreneur Donna Dubinsky, who commissioned him to paint the view from her home on Taylor Street in San Francisco. “For me, Mitchell’s work toggles between realism and abstraction in a very appealing way,” she said. “Yes, there are buildings and recognizable objects, but when you look carefully, you realize they are really shapes and colors. He assembles shapes and colors to create a mood and a vivid sense of place.”

As one collector said as she viewed the show, “I have such

joy having his work in my house.”

The artist shared his feelings about seeing 30 years of his work on display locally.

“After all the years here, I have rarely exhibited in Palo Alto, but each time I do I think about how Ed found me the job with Sam Francis and how fun it was to live with him on Channing Avenue for about eight months. Ed passed away from multiple myeloma on Valentine’s Day 2020. I owe so much to him and think of his suffering every time I paint,” he said. “All of my paintings have been about color, but they are also about the bittersweetness of life.”

“Color Continuum” is on view at Pamela Walsh Gallery, 540 Ramona St., Palo Alto, through June 26. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. (Sunday and Monday by appointment). More information is available at pamelawalshgallery.com. ■

Email Contributing Writer
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Food & Drink

By Zack Fernandes

Months after delays brought about by construction permit challenges and the COVID-19 pandemic, Bar Zola, the companion of French restaurant Zola, is now open on Bryant Street in Palo Alto. The bar features a beverage program which aims to fill a void of craft cocktail bars in the city.

"We're gonna be the best cocktail bar on the Peninsula," owner Guillaume Bienaime said.

Opening a bar connected to a well-established restaurant like Zola can be a complex affair, requiring chefs and bar managers to collaborate and decide on the role cocktails will play as part of the dining experience and how their flavors might support the food menu. Bienaime threw this complexity out the window when he decided that the mission of Bar Zola would be simple: "I've always thought there's nowhere for you to drink a cocktail in Palo Alto. And so that's our first goal, to just create a place to drink cocktails."

Though both Zola and Bar Zola share a food menu, a kitchen and an owner, the bar feels like a distinct entity. When Duncan Harrison, Bar Zola's bar manager, first began working with Bienaime in the early days of the bar's construction, he proposed a concept cocktail list to complement the restaurant's classically French bistro dishes. Harrison imagined serving cocktails that felt as French as Zola's beef bourguignon, featuring mostly French spirits, aperitifs and herbs like tarragon. When Bienaime (who was born in France) first considered the proposal, he thought about his own dual French and Californian identities and suggested that Harrison not limit himself only to French flavors and ingredients.

Returning to the drawing board, Harrison took inspiration from "Meehan's Bartender Manual," a comprehensive treatise on how to conceptualize, build and run a bar penned by craft cocktail pioneer Jim Meehan. Adopting

Craft cocktails without pretension?



Bar Zola's Speak Low, Rude Boy and Weekend in Tulum cocktails.

Magali Gauthier

Bar Zola says it has the recipe.

The long-awaited Palo Alto project offers French food and drinks that are fun, complex and sometimes alcohol-free.

Meehan's strategy of making the bar's concept fit the neighborhood rather than the other way around, Harrison decided on an intentionally curated menu for the bar's opening to gauge the response of his customers.

"Bars are supposed to be something that come in to make the neighborhood better, not change it," Harrison said, adding that his plan was to remain flexible to the tastes of the local community. "If we need more vodka drinks on the menu, we're going to do it," he said.

Though Harrison estimates that the opening cocktail menu will be about half of its eventual length, Bar Zola has still tried to offer something for everybody, or as he puts it — a cocktail menu that is "unpretentious, fun to drink and complex enough to satisfy just about anybody." The resulting menu showcases an assortment of cocktails across five categories: sparkling, citrusy and refreshing, stirred and boozy, low-proof and no-proof (mixed drinks containing no alcohol).

"It's kind of like a neo-tiki cocktail list," Harrison said, referring to the flavors that are used in many of the bar's cocktails, which feature plenty of citrus and spice — hallmarks

of classic tiki cocktails.

Though tiki flavors are certainly abundant in the "citrusy and refreshing" category of the menu, Harrison's love of tiki has also influenced his "stirred and boozy" drinks like the Rude Boy, which he describes as an "old fashioned in a Hawaiian shirt." The drink is made with a base of both Barbancourt and Plantation Caribbean rums for sweetness and complexity (in place of whiskey), and gets its tiki twist from Bittermens Elemakule Tiki Bitters, which lend cinnamon and allspice flavor, as well as orange bitters and gomme syrup (a sugar syrup thickened with gum arabic) for body and texture.

Where Bar Zola may stand out amongst many other craft cocktail bars on the Peninsula is in Harrison's approach to thoughtfully crafted cocktails made with low or no alcohol. "If you come in and spend the money on something that doesn't have liquor in it, it should be interesting," Harrison said, noting that most non-alcoholic cocktails he samples at bars are merely reproductions of classic cocktails made with non-alcoholic distillates.

Harrison has also considered the modified drinking habits of customers during the pandemic.

"Going out to a bar and having like five or six drinks is kind of becoming less and less logistically possible," Harrison said, noting that many customers are reluctant to use ride-sharing services that would have otherwise assured safe passage home after a long night. Seeking to provide low-alcohol offerings that are delicious enough for customers to order a second round while still drinking responsibly, Bar Zola uses smaller quantities of flavorful liqueurs and cordials like Haus Alpenz Byrrh Grand Quinquina (an aromatic wine-based aperitif) and Grand Marnier for complex flavor with less alcohol.

For customers who prefer not to drink alcohol at all, Harrison noted that one of the most popular drinks served during the bar's soft opening has been a non-alcoholic one. The Speak Low is made with muddled grapefruit and celery, lime juice and a hibiscus-cashew orgeat that Bar Zola staffers makes themselves. "Spirits provide body just as much as they provide boozy-ness," Harrison said, noting that the cashews in the drink provide the mouthfeel and richness that are usually imparted by spirits.

Though other housemade syrups like the hibiscus-cashew

orgeat and unique liquors like Pineau des Charentes abound in Bar Zola's drink wells, Harrison says he wants to keep the menu as "unpretentious" as possible.

"We're never going to tell you that there's Ticaloid (a culinary stabilizer) and xanthan gum in our hibiscus-cashew orgeat," Harrison said, noting that he wants to remove the "guesswork and Googling" that can come from trying to read an overly complicated cocktail menu.

Instead, Bar Zola relies on flavor-driven descriptors on their menu to help customers find cocktails that best match their tastes. In the case of the low-alcohol Coupe de Ville, for example, the base of Martini & Rossi Fiero (a bittersweet vermouth imbued with flavor from Spanish oranges) is simply described as "Italian, red, bitter."

Another area where Bar Zola hopes to be unpretentious is in its ability to provide access to cocktails that don't break the bank. Though Bar Zola's house cocktails are priced at \$15 each (not uncommon for craft cocktails in the area), Harrison says that the team at Bar Zola will always be able to recommend a well-made classic cocktail like a daiquiri for between \$10 and \$12.

Though that price point will be a welcome one to budget-conscious drinkers, Harrison says offering drinks in that range is also about giving more options to the bar's regulars.

"Our staff is going to be intimately trained on our spirits list and what would work best in the classics," he said, adding that a Bar Zola regular who always drinks from the menu should be offered the chance to branch out and try something else for the same price, or less than that of the house cocktails, depending on the customer's choice of spirit.

While Zola remains closed for dine-in service, Bar Zola will serve an abbreviated version of the restaurant's pre-pandemic menu, which diners can enjoy inside, or in a newly constructed parklet. Bienaime has combined a number of small bites like olives, salmon tartine and tuna tartare with larger entrees of Hokkaido scallops cooked in a carrot-truffle nage with shiitake mushrooms, or steak au poivre served with pommes frites.

Bar Zola is open from Thursday to Saturday, 5 p.m. until late. 585 Bryant St., Palo Alto; 650-521-0651. ■

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