

The Almanac

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

DECEMBER 10, 2021 | VOL. 57 NO. 13



WWW.ALMANACNEWS.COM

Demand is soaring for COVID-19 booster shots, pediatric vaccinations are on the rise

San Mateo County officials urge 'resilience' and 'stamina' to get through the current omicron strain

By Sue Dremann

San Mateo County health officials have a message for the public when it comes to COVID-19 vaccination: Keep up the momentum.

The health officials are pleased with the strong demand for COVID-19 vaccinations for children, and a rise in booster vaccination rates, they said during a San Mateo County Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday, Dec. 7.

Since the Food and Drug Administration's approval of the vaccine for 5- to 11-year-olds, 38% of eligible children in that age group have received their first shots, said Louise Rogers, chief of the San Mateo County Health System. It's an auspicious start, considering a recent Kaiser Foundation study found nationally only one-third of parents planned to seek vaccination for their children in the eligible age group, she noted.

Rogers acknowledged the challenges ahead due to the emergence of the omicron variant.

"This is a time when we find ourselves needing resilience

and stamina," she said. Rogers emphasized that it's important for everyone who is eligible to be fully vaccinated and to get their boosters.

Rogers said her department is heartened by the initial turnout, and hope it will continue to ramp up as more clinics become available. The health department is working in partnership with the San Mateo County Office of Education to establish vaccine sites in 13 school locations, she said.

Dr. Anand Chabra, the county's COVID-19 mass vaccination section chief, said the county would have a fuller picture of vaccination rates for children ages 5 to 11 next week.

The county health department will continue to push for greater public education to help parents understand that the vaccines are safe and necessary, particularly in light of the recent appearance of the omicron variant. Omicron is thought to be more transmissible than previous variants, including the ubiquitous delta strain, but it isn't yet known if it causes more severe infection, Rogers said.

One good bit of news: The



Magali Gauthier

Teddy Jester, 6, looks at his mom while getting his first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine from Erica Smith, LVN, at Las Lomas Elementary School in Atherton on Nov. 10.

level of COVID-19-related hospitalizations in the county has not greatly risen and remains at 10 to 15 patients over the past seven days, she said.

The county is also seeing a high demand for booster shots

among people who are already fully vaccinated, she said.

On Dec. 6, the county experienced understaffing for clinics due to the high number of people coming to walk-in clinics, she said. The county

is encouraging people to make appointments so that adequate staffing can be lined up. Rogers said the county needs more help from contracting agencies

See **BOOSTERS**, page 16

Menlo Park commits more than \$5M for solar and electric tech for new community center

By Kate Bradshaw

The Menlo Park City Council voted unanimously Tuesday to spend an estimated \$5.2 million to add a solar battery storage microgrid, solar thermal pool heating system and 27 electric vehicle (EV) charging spaces to the new community center under construction in the city's Belle Haven neighborhood.

The microgrid would generate

solar electricity at the new community center and store extra solar energy in a battery for energy needs at night, and could provide clean backup power instead of a diesel-powered generator in the event of an emergency.

Those facilities are expected to be designed, built, operated and maintained by contractor ENGIE Services Us. Inc. following a request for proposals issued in the

spring, though the city manager is still negotiating some final details. The council also authorized an additional 10% of the project costs, about \$500,000, to be set aside as a contingency. The resolution to approve the contractor is expected to be officially approved at the council's Dec. 14 meeting.

It's expected that the construction costs of the microgrid will be recovered by energy cost savings

between the 16th and 18th years of the community center's operation, according to Sustainability Manager Rebecca Lucky.

In public comments, residents Lynne Bramlett and Pam Jones raised concerns that the public hadn't been notified or its input solicited sufficiently before the City Council discussed it. Bramlett asked how many residents in Belle Haven had electric cars

to make use of 27 EV charging spaces.

According to a staff report, less than 3% of multifamily properties have access to charging at or near their homes.

Councilwoman Cecilia Taylor, who represents Belle Haven, said she had hoped there would be better notifications about the

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INSIDE

Help local families in need 10

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Nearly 75 years of vital services, enabling seniors to age in place.



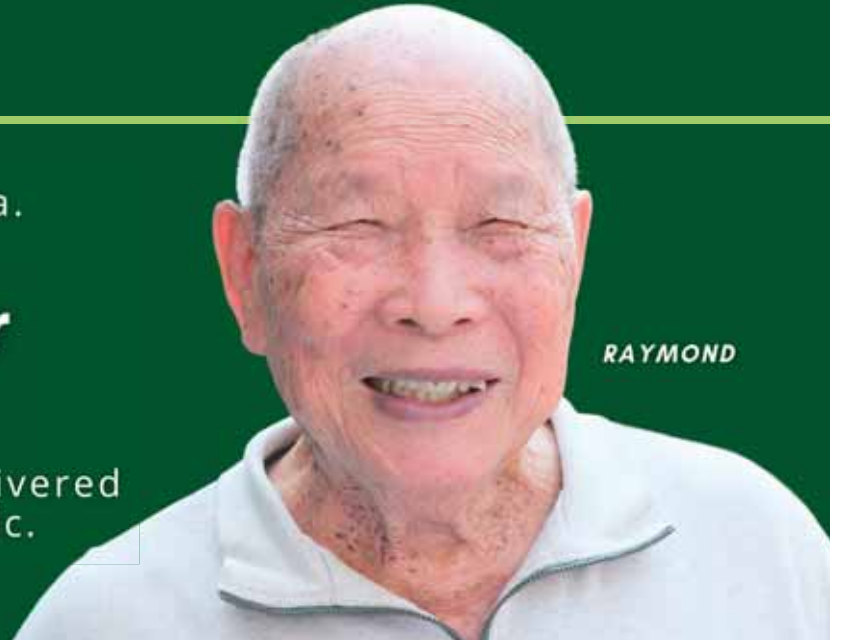
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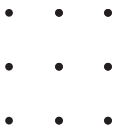
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Local News

MENLO PARK | AThERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY



Magali Gauthier

The Toy Project founder Sarah Weintraut, a sophomore at Menlo-Atherton High School, sorts through thousands of used donated toys in Portola Valley on Dec. 2.

Toy trucks, blocks and stuffies, oh my!

M-A teen finds new homes for discarded toys to help kids in need

By Angela Swartz

Boxes filled with thousands of used board games, books, dolls, Matchbox cars and more lined a driveway in Portola Valley last week. It was distribution day for The Toy Project, a nonprofit started by a local teen to help solve two problems: providing toys to kids in need during the holidays and stopping loads of playthings from ending up in landfills.

Learning from home during the first couple of months

of the COVID-19 pandemic, Sarah Weintraut, 16, the group's founder, had free time on her hands and looked for a project to tackle.

"My mom told me that parents need a resource to donate toys their kids discard," said Weintraut, now a sophomore at Menlo-Atherton High School. "(Some) toys are left untouched; kids swear on their life they love it at the store, then never touch it."

Unlike most other toy drives, Weintraut's group, which

is co-founded by fellow La Entrada Middle School graduates, accepts used items. Most toy drive organizers ask for unopened, new toys, she noted.

Weintraut said response from local residents has been "astounding." Last year, its first in existence, the nonprofit served over 400 children. In total, it collected between 3,000 and 4,000 toys, she noted. The teens work with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul to

See **TOYS**, page 11

Recount complete, Woodside land use measure still passes

Measure A was approved by four votes, county election officials report

By Angela Swartz

After two days of manually recounting ballots, elections officials said on Dec. 2 that Measure A has still passed, but the margin of victory narrowed for the Woodside initiative to allow two sites in the Town Center area to be considered for outdoor community gathering spaces.

Although the outcome remained the same, the final vote count tightened to a four-vote difference, with one additional no vote, according to the San Mateo County Elections Office. The final vote count for Measure A remained at 1,160 yes votes, while the count for no votes is now 1,156.

The ballot in question was previously considered an "undervote," according to the county. An undervote occurs when a ballot is left blank or the voter's intent cannot be determined.

During the recount process, county officials determined that the voter did not properly mark the ballot, resulting in it being considered a blank ballot. The county's recount board reviewed the ballot and determined the voter intended to vote no on Measure A.

Measure A opponent Alan Watkins requested the recount after the election results showed the measure passed by just five

votes. Measure A required a simple majority to pass.

Eight staff members conducted the recount over about two days, Jim Irizarry, assistant chief elections officer for the county, said in an email.

The race grew closer as votes were tallied, after starting with a 20-vote lead on election night. The results were certified on Nov. 19.

Voter turnout was about 54%, according to a county press release, with 2,316 of the 4,270 registered voters in Woodside casting ballots on the measure.

Watkins could not be reached for comment by The Almanac's press deadline.

The county estimated it would cost about \$6,000 to conduct the recount. Watkins, as the requester, must foot the bill for the recount since the results did not change. There is no provision in California law for an automatic recount in any election.

"A tremendous debt of gratitude to Vicki Coe, Matt Garr, Stacia Garr, David Madrid, Matt Richter, Tim Stannard, Jamie and Andy Kerr, Christine Roberts, Tyler MacNiven, Dror Berman and the countless volunteers that reached out to us asking for signs or to give us words of encouragement

See **RECOUNT**, page 7

Holiday Fund: Literacy Partners supports reading and online skills in the community

By Angela Swartz

With a new name and expanded clientele, Menlo Park-based Literacy Partners' vision is now helping children and adults in the broader community enhance their reading, writing and related skills and education.

The nonprofit, which up until July 2020 was called Project Read, previously solely supported the Menlo Park Library's tutoring program. It now offers



grants to other organizations that promote literacy.

In 2018, the city of Menlo Park doubled its annual support to the Project Read program from \$55,000 to \$110,000, according

to a September 2020 letter from Literacy Partners. With the increased funding, the nonprofit no longer needed to focus its sole attention on Project Read. The city funds finance the Project Read adult literacy program, but a need still existed for broader resources to support community literacy, according to the nonprofit. These include services for youth and enrichment programs for families that fall outside Project Read's focus.

Students are in great need of

academic support after more than a school year of distance learning during the pandemic, said John Schniedwind, Literacy Partners board member and treasurer. These programs are also helping students sharpen skills that might have gotten rusty while learning from home.

"I think like many or even most of us, our recipients have talked about the pandemic as a moving target that complicates, and through isolation can impede, progress toward

the educational goals they are continuing to try to meet," said Literacy Partners President Mike Goodkind. "When we review funding requests we try to evaluate what may be needed immediately to get folks through the pandemic, to keep education moving. But we never lose sight of the need to support programs in their efforts to look ahead to be successful beyond the pandemic."

See **LITERACY**, page 15

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every Friday at

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The Almanac (ISSN 1097-3095 and USPS 459370) is published every Friday by Embarcadero Media, 3525 Alameda de las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025-6558. Periodicals Postage Paid at Menlo Park, CA and at additional mailing offices. Adjudicated a newspaper of general circulation for San Mateo County. The Almanac is delivered to homes in Menlo Park, Atherton, Portola Valley and Woodside. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Almanac, 3525 Alameda de las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025-6558. Copyright ©2021 by Embarcadero Media. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is strictly prohibited.

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NEWS

CRIME BRIEF

Five convicted in major retail theft ring

California Attorney General Rob Bonta on Dec. 3 announced five people have been convicted of crimes linked to a retail theft ring that involved \$8 million in merchandise stolen from stores throughout the Bay Area.

Speaking in Burlingame, Bonta made the announcement alongside law enforcement officials from San Mateo County, where a majority of the thefts occurred, Bonta said.

The announcement came on the heels of a multi-city wave of smash-and-grab robberies and burglaries.

“The organized retail theft we’re seeing throughout California, it’s unacceptable. Let’s be clear,” Bonta said.

The investigation, which began in April 2020, revealed a theft ring in which five suspects transported, stored and sold merchandise stolen from retail stores in the Bay Area. The stolen goods, which also included over-the-counter medication, were then resold places such as eBay, according to prosecutors.

“Organized criminals resell their stolen goods, and in many cases, use the money to fund additional illicit activity like organized crime and human trafficking, for example. Those who break the law and peddle stolen goods, they will be held accountable,” Bonta said. “The lead defendant organized what

See **CRIME BRIEF**, page 14

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Sequoia substitutes get a raise

Substitute teachers in the Sequoia Union High School District are getting a pay bump, as the pandemic has made it more difficult to find subs than in past years, according to a Nov. 17 governing board staff report.

Substitutes will make \$240 for a full day of work, an increase of \$45 per day from the 2020-21 school year.

Subs on long-term assignments (more than 15 days for the same teacher) will make \$260 for a full day of work versus \$225 a day during the last school year.

Rates will be evaluated again next year, according to the report.

New assistant town manager in PV

The town of Portola Valley has hired Melvin Gaines as its new assistant town manager, according to a Dec. 2 town newsletter. He replaces Brandi de Garreaux, who will transition to a new role with the town as a consultant on sustainability, emergency preparedness and software implementation.

Gaines most recently served as the lead analyst for the city of Mountain View for five years, according to his LinkedIn profile. In Mountain View, he managed the council’s goal-setting and strategic planning, developed the budget for the City Manager’s Office, served as staff liaison to the race, equity and inclusion council subcommittee and the public safety advisory board, among other responsibilities. Prior to that, he worked for the city of East Palo Alto in a variety of roles, including acting assistant city manager, management analyst working on economic development issues, and special projects manager with the East Palo Alto Police Department.

He holds master’s degrees in public policy and urban planning from the University of Michigan, and a bachelor’s degree in political science and environmental studies from Santa Clara University.

He lives in East Palo Alto with his wife and two young sons.



Melvin Gaines

Woodside High junior’s video featured on KQED

KQED chose Woodside High School junior Clara Chiu’s video “Asian American Hate” as one of eight videos featured during the Nov. 10 event “I Made This: A Youth Media Celebration.”

Chiu’s video was chosen because of the “creativity and power of her video,” according to Principal Karen van Putten.

Watch “Asian American Hate” at tinyurl.com/Asian-American-Hate.

See **COMMUNITY BRIEFS**, page 14

Menlo Park briefs

Downtown block to reopen to cars

The 800 block of Santa Cruz Avenue in downtown Menlo Park, which includes Fleet Feet and Galata Bistro, will reopen to vehicle traffic as soon as this week, according to Menlo Park City Manager Starla Jerome-Robinson. The parklets on that block, however, will remain in place. The move is supported by the Menlo Park Chamber of Commerce, Jerome-Robinson said.

Springline development inching toward opening

The developers of the Springline mixed-use development at 1300 El Camino Real in downtown Menlo Park, formerly called "Station 1300," are working to open the project. They cleared a hurdle Dec. 7 when the City Council approved some minor changes that will permit about 9,000 additional square feet to be added at the project, including

repurposing existing basement space for mail and storage. In exchange, Springline agreed to give \$300,000 to help fund a quiet zone feasibility study — a step that has already received \$75,000 in city funding — and add to the city's downtown public amenity fund. The city is doing a study to evaluate if it is feasible to enable Caltrain to safely avoid sounding its horns at Menlo Park's rail crossings.

Other changes the council signed off include approving alcohol sales at the new development, expanding outdoor seating, modifying the residential building entry and adding a ramp to improve accessibility. The residential portion of the development could be complete by May, according to Cyrus Sanandaji of Presidio Bay Ventures.

Sister Cities program becomes new nonprofit

Menlo Park's former Sister Cities Committee has recently become a separate nonprofit

entity called the Menlo Park Sister Cities Association. Five of the outgoing members of the committee incorporated the organization and plan to add two more to create a seven-member board, according to a city staff report.

The Menlo Park City Council also agreed Tuesday to give \$10,000 to the group to support it through its first year. The Sister Cities International organization aims to promote citizen diplomacy by encouraging people from different communities to foster bonds around the world. The network has about 500 cities in the U.S. that participate and nearly 1,800 partnerships in 138 participating countries. Currently, two of Menlo Park's four sister city relationships are active: Galway, Ireland, and Bizen, Japan. Other friendship city affiliations with Changzhou, China, and Kochi, India, are relatively inactive, according to the staff report.

—Kate Bradshaw

RECOUNT

continued from page 5

or to offer support (mental or otherwise) along the way," said Measure A co-author Alex Tauber in an email. "The folks above waged a campaign characterized by facts and a strong ethical compass, despite weathering the constant attacks."

He thanked the broader community of Woodside for allowing a discussion to formally occur. "We have tremendous confidence that our town staff and elected officials will make us proud in how they manage this discussion and process moving forward," he said.

Measure details

Measure A amends current land use regulations that limit two residentially zoned pieces of land adjacent to the Town Center, a town-owned complex along Woodside Road from Whiskey Hill Road to Roberts Market that includes government buildings and parking lots, and Cañada Corners at the Cañada Road intersection (owned by Roberts Market). Because the rules were established by ballot measures J and 1 in 1988 and 1989 respectively, only voters could overturn the restrictions.

The measure allows the property behind Cañada Corners to be outfitted with surface parking to accommodate permanent outdoor dining, trails and play

structures, all of which were previously prohibited. It would also allow for the possible construction of a public building — an amphitheater or gazebo — for community events in the residentially zoned Town Center area. Measure J prohibited development of commercial or office space on a then-vacant, town-owned parcel near where Town Hall is located. It also required residential properties within and adjoining Town Center to remain in residential use unless commercial parking on those properties had been permitted before June 1988.

Measure 1 created an exception to Measure J, allowing residentially zoned parcels in the Woodside Road Whiskey Hill Road Parking Assessment District to be improved to provide access, parking and open space, so long as at least 50% of the residential parcels were maintained in open space. It allowed the town to construct parking and access improvements for Town Hall, commercial businesses and the public.

The Woodside Town Council's emergency ordinance allows the town to waive the restaurants' parking requirements that are part of a conditional use permit, something allowed thanks to Gov. Gavin Newsom's executive order that extends parts of his March 4, 2020, COVID-19 emergency proclamation through March 31.

Mayor Brian Dombkowski said outdoor dining is likely to

be extended through March, which was set to occur regardless of the outcome of Measure A.

When the emergency declaration ends, the town must once again enforce the parking requirements, he said. ■

Email Staff Writer Angela Martz at asmartz@almanacnews.com.

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REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



Waiving the Home Inspection

Dear Monica: I would like to make an offer on a property that will likely receive multiple offers. The sellers have not provided a home inspection as part of the disclosures and I'm hesitant to make an offer without an inspection contingency. What would you advise?

Mary D.

Dear Mary: It is unwise to make an offer on a property that has not been inspected by a reputable inspector. It's best to have an inspection contingency and if you get into contract you will have time to confirm the property condition. But the seller may choose another offer that has no contingency.

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Avenidas Village

County supervisors approve new maps with majority minority districts

By Bay City News Service

The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday approved new supervisorial district boundaries that will stay in effect for a decade and used the most recent numbers from the 2020 U.S. census.

The board on Dec. 7 unanimously approved what was called the “Communities Together” proposal for the county’s five districts. Two of

the new ones, District 1 and District 5, will have a majority of eligible voters who are racial or ethnic minorities, while the new districts 2 and 4 have about even numbers of white and minority voting-age residents.

“Four of the five districts provide significant opportunities for traditionally under-represented groups to elect candidates that reflect the values of their communities,” Board of Supervisors president David

Canepa said. “This is a significant achievement in drawing lines that respect the makeup of our communities today.”

A 15-member Supervisorial District Lines Advisory Commission with the county had voted in October to recommend two maps to the Board of Supervisors following a series of public meetings.

Federal and state law requires the districts to be updated every 10 years following the release of the new census data. They must

be balanced in population, with communities of interest and cities staying intact as much as possible, among other criteria.

The board gave its initial approval Tuesday for the “Communities Together” proposal, with a final vote tabbed for Dec. 14. When approved, the boundaries will first be used in the June 2022 primary election.

“Ensuring we have districts that minimize divisions and empower local communities is

the very essence of representative democracy,” Supervisor Don Horsley said.

In a press release, Horsley said the new districts also respect the geographical integrity of local communities and neighborhoods with shared interests. The new map, for instance, minimizes the division of coastal communities and those living in East Palo Alto, Menlo Park’s Belle Haven neighborhood, North Fair Oaks and Redwood City. ■

Mullin nets Speier’s endorsement in race for her Congress seat

By Gennady Sheyner

State Assembly member Kevin Mullin, D-South San Francisco, received a big boost in his bid for a seat in the U.S. Congress on Monday, when he received an endorsement from Rep. Jackie Speier, whom he is seeking to succeed in 2022.

Mullin, who served as an aide to Speier during her tenures in the state Assembly and the state Senate, is running in a field that includes San Mateo County Supervisor David Canepa and

Burlingame City Council member Emily Beach. The three are hoping to represent Congressional District 14, which includes a large portion of San Mateo

County and the western part of San Francisco (the district map is now being redrawn and the new map shows the San Francisco portion of the district shifting east). Speier announced



Assembly member
Kevin Mullin

last month that she will not be seeking another term.

In endorsing Mullin, Speier called him the “the only candidate with legislative experience and a proven track record of bringing the bacon home to the district.” In a statement, she called him “the number one most progressive member in the state Assembly” and credited him for securing \$8.5 million to repair the seawall in Pacifica and for setting aside \$3 billion for universal pre-K for California children.

“Kevin Mullin is a great listener, he is compassionate, he

is intellectually honest, he is genuine, he has a great work ethic, and he is humble,” said Speier, who has represented the 14th District since 2013.

Speier made the announcement Monday at a campaign event in Mullin’s hometown of South San Francisco. Mullin, who was elected to the state Assembly in 2012, currently serves as the Assembly Speaker pro Tempore. Other San Mateo County politicians who have endorsed his bid include former state Sen. Jerry Hill, former state Assembly member Rich Gordon

and current San Mateo County supervisors Carole Groom, Warren Slocum and Dave Pine.

Mullin said in a statement that he is “deeply honored” to net Speier’s endorsement.

“I plan to carry on Jackie’s tradition of being a district-based Legislator — naturally being effective in the halls of the Capitol, but always grounded in the crucial constituent work of a legislative office,” Mullin said. ■

Email Staff Writer
Gennady Sheyner at
gsheyner@pawebly.com.

Menlo Park Firefighters Toy & Food Drive

We Need Your Help To Make Wishes Come True This Year.

Deadline: December 18th

This year, Menlo Park Firefighters are looking for assistance in getting toys to 704 children in need.

Due to the Pandemic, we’ve needed to make significant changes to our normal operations.

For Food Donations: Please go to this website to donate: <https://impact.shfb.org/team/390460>

For Toy Donations:

IF YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE, Please Follow These 5 Rules:

1. Contact John Wurdinger @ johnw@iaff2400.org with how many children you wish to sponsor. You will be assigned a child on our website: www.iaff2400.org/menloparkfirefighterstoyandfooddrive

2. Purchase 3 toys from the child’s list www.iaff2400.org/menloparkfirefighterstoyandfooddrive expect to spend \$60 to \$80.

3. Package the gifts in a clear 55 gallon bag with the: Childs Name and Assigned Number clearly legible on a piece of paper inside the bag (we need to be able to see both the toys and child ID)

4. Deliver the bag to one of Menlo Park Fire Districts 7 Firehouses by the 18th of December

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Station 2 – 2290 University Avenue, East Palo Alto

Station 3 – 32 Almendral Ave, Atherton

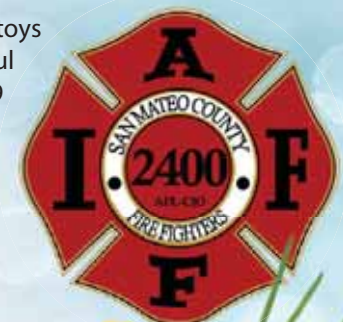
Station 4 – 3322 Alameda de Las Pulgas, Menlo Park

Station 5 – 4101 Fair Oaks Ave, Menlo Park

Station 6 – 700 Oak Grove Ave, Menlo Park

Station 77 – 1467 Chilco St, Menlo Park

5. When you drop the toys off, please be mindful that due to COVID19 the Firefighters are not allowed to have visitors in the firehouse.



www.iaff2400.org/menloparkfirefighterstoyandfooddrive

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Contributions to the Holiday Fund go directly to programs that benefit Peninsula residents. Last year, Almanac readers and foundations contributed \$260,000 from more than 170 donors for the 10 agencies that feed the hungry, house the homeless and provide numerous other services to those in need.

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

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

Boys & Girls Clubs

Provides after-school academic support, enrichment, and mentoring for 1,800 low-income K-12 youth at nine locations across Menlo Park, East Palo Alto, and the North Fair Oaks neighborhood of Redwood City.

Ecumenical Hunger Program

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

Fair Oaks Community Center

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

LifeMoves

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

Literacy Partners — Menlo Park

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

Ravenswood Family Health Center

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

Second Harvest Food Bank

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

St. Anthony's Padua Dining Room

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

StarVista

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

Upward Scholars

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

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

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

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As of Dec. 64 donors have contributed \$80,840 to the Almanac Holiday Fund.

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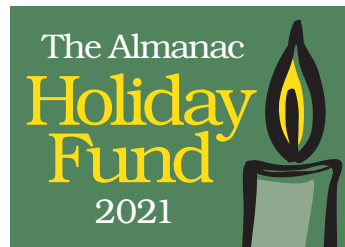
Holiday Fund: In times of crisis, StarVista's hotline offers support 24/7

By Zena Andreani

Alana* received a flyer with StarVista's 24/7 crisis hotline number on it after she attended a school presentation on suicide prevention and intervention by StarVista's Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Center. At first, Alana wasn't sure if she would need the flyer, but she decided to take it anyway. Little did Alana know that the flyer she almost left behind would play a vital role during a challenging moment in her life.

A few months later, Alana found out that her aunt had recently been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and was struggling to accept the diagnosis. In a phone call, Alana's aunt shared openly about her struggles to understand life after the diagnosis and expressed that she was feeling hopeless and without motivation to keep living. Alana was in shock.

As she was trying to process her aunt's situation, Alana



recalled the Crisis Center presentation and reflected upon the early signs and symptoms of suicide that she had learned about. In addition to hearing her aunt talk about feeling hopeless, she also noted that her aunt discussed feeling her diagnosis would be a burden to the rest of the family and was overwhelmed by having to ask others for support. Alana remembered being told by a StarVista presenter about the importance of asking directly about suicide. After Alana asked, her aunt began to cry as she replied "yes" and asked her niece for help.

Grabbing the Crisis Center flyer she kept in her bag, Alana immediately called StarVista's

crisis hotline at 650-579-0350 for support. A crisis line counselor provided emotional support to her by listening without judgment and exploring coping strategies. The crisis line counselor also encouraged Alana to share the crisis line number directly with her aunt, so that she may call when feeling overwhelmed by her feelings of hopelessness. Alana and the crisis counselor also spoke about her desire to help her aunt practice resilience and work through her diagnosis.

Later in the conversation, a crisis counselor provided resources and referrals to Alana. She received information on caretaker support groups and chronic illness support groups hosted by one of StarVista's community partners. Additionally, the crisis line counselor discussed referrals for individual counseling and Alana requested a referral to another StarVista program, the StarVista Counseling Center, which could provide individual therapy to help her cope with her fears and worries associated

with this family change. At the end of the call, Alana said she was very grateful for the support she received from the crisis line, and she felt comforted knowing she could call back anytime for additional support.

StarVista is a nonprofit agency that delivers high-impact services through counseling, skill development and crisis prevention to children, youth, adults and families in San Mateo County. From struggles with substance abuse and thoughts of suicide to family violence and homelessness, StarVista helps approximately 40,000 people every year. It's also one of 10 local nonprofits that benefit from donations to The Almanac's Holiday Fund.

StarVista's crisis hotline is 650-579-0350. More information is at star-vista.org. ■

**Name changed to protect client confidentiality.*

Zena Andreani, AMFT, is the assistant director of the StarVista Crisis Center.

TOYS

continued from page 5

help distribute the donations to socioeconomically disadvantaged kids in East Palo Alto.

"Parents know the toys they bought are going to a better place," she said.

Weintraut collected items at several donation bins at locations such as M-A, La Entrada Middle School, Burgess Pool in Menlo Park, Alpine Hills Tennis and Swimming Club and Bianchini's Market. She doesn't have her driver's license, so her dad acted as chauffeur and she stashed the toys at his home.

Weintraut said she first became environmentally aware as a seventh grader and student in science teacher Whitney Thwaite's class at La Entrada Middle School. She watched the documentary "50 Minutes to Save the World" and learned that

most plastic can't be recycled.

At least 14 million tons of plastic end up in the ocean every year, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature's website, and marine wildlife eat or are entangled in plastic debris. Plastic pollution also threatens food safety and contributes to climate change, it said. Weintraut said plastic toys play a part in that pollution since kids grow out of toys quickly.

Weintraut and her co-founders plan to keep the collection and distribution annual since they don't have the time to manage the nonprofit year-round now that in-person learning and sports have resumed.

"We're teenagers too," she said. Logistically, she said, storing toys at parents' homes isn't "going to fly" all year long. They've also discussed creating an app to post about used toys.

The group is recruiting



Magali Gauthier

Used donated toys gathered by The Toy Project volunteers are sorted on Dec. 2.

volunteers to lighten the workload for the current members. The Toy Project has surplus toys it needs to distribute. To help it find groups that can dole out the items, email thetoyproject.team@gmail.com.

Go to thetoyproject.org for more information. ■

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

SOLAR

continued from page 1

plans to the community, including in Spanish.

Vice Mayor Betsy Nash said that there had been input from the community and desire expressed for the building to be environmentally sustainable, adding that avoiding using a diesel generator could have health benefits by improving the air quality around the community

center. "The city is doing everything possible to make it as clean as possible and not contribute to the air quality issues that are there," she said.

Councilman Ray Mueller added that given the expected lifespan of the solar technology is 30 years, and that by 2035 all new cars will have to be electric, "I don't think there will be many cars on the road that won't be electric." He added that if the community doesn't want it, the

city doesn't have to spend the money on the proposal.

"This is one of the most advanced clean energy projects on the Peninsula for a community center," he said.

Mayor Drew Combs said he was shocked by the cost of the project, but said he was willing to go along with it. "This is a community that has not been given historically as much resources," he said. Given the circumstances, "we should in this instance do all we could to

make sure we got not only a top-quality project but a project that leaned into the future."

Councilwoman Jen Wolosin said that the project, while it poses significant upfront costs, is expected to ultimately save the city money in the long run. It seems, she said, "fiscally responsible to do this project." ■

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

Animal welfare expert named interim head of troubled Pets in Need

By Sue Dremann

Pets in Need, the troubled nonprofit animal shelter weathering upheaval after the deaths of seven puppies in its care, has a new interim executive director, the organization has announced in a statement on its website.

Board member and animal welfare expert Valerie McCarthy will immediately replace outgoing Executive Director Al Mollica, who resigned from

his position in November after the puppies' deaths and the overheating of 21 other dogs in a hot transport van in August.

McCarthy has served on the nonprofit's board of directors for the past year and a half. She is the research editor for the Animal Law and Public Policy Program at Harvard Law School and did graduate work at New York University in animal welfare, according to the statement. She worked on animal welfare issues that

included pit bull rescues in some of New York's poorest neighborhoods and finding homes for cats in Stockholm, Sweden. She has also earned the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals' highest volunteer certification in behavioral training. She cares for two male rescue cats at her home.

Pets in Need is the animal shelter contractor for the city of Palo Alto and runs a no-kill shelter in Redwood City. The 55-year-old organization came under a firestorm of criticism after three staff managers were charged with animal cruelty in late October by the Santa Clara County District

Attorney's Office. A police report noted that the seven puppies likely died from heat stroke after being transported for hours in a van that lacked efficient cooling. The compartment where the puppies and 21 other dogs had been confined in cages lacked adequate ventilation in the nearly 100-degree heat. All of the dogs exhibited symptoms of heat distress, a police investigation found.

Staff members wrote a highly critical letter to the nonprofit's board about management's handling of the animals and the aftermath.

Mollica abruptly announced on Nov. 15 that Pets in Need would terminate its contract with the city and would only run the shelter through the end of 2022. He blamed the city of Palo Alto, which he claimed had not provided funding and

repairs to the aging facilities in a timely manner. The city refuted that characterization, and some critics considered Pets in Need's assertion a red herring to deflect from the crisis.

Three days later on Nov. 18, the Pets in Need board confirmed that Mollica had given notice he would resign. A date for his departure was not given at that time.

Mollica's replacement would, hopefully, help the organization regain the public's and donors' confidence in the nonprofit's services, the board said.

"Valerie will provide much-needed stability at this time and ensure PIN continues to provide the very best, most compassionate care for the animals in our charge. She has agreed to serve in this interim capacity for up to six months," the organization said in the statement. McCarthy and the board plan to soon begin a nationwide search for a permanent executive director, the announcement said. ■

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

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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

continued from page 6

New Sacred Heart assistant principal of athletics named

Sacred Heart Schools, Atherton, announced Jason Armstrong is Sacred Heart Preparatory's (SHP) assistant principal of athletics, effective July 1, according to a Nov. 16 press release.

Armstrong, who has been the school's assistant athletics director for three years, will succeed Frank Rodriguez.

"I'm thrilled that Jason

Armstrong will be overseeing the athletic programs at SHP," said Rodriguez in a statement.

Under Rodriguez's guidance, 70% of the student body participates in at least one sport, and SHP athletes have earned over 50 Central Coast Section (CCS) team championships during his tenure, according to the press release.

"He's well-versed in the mission of the school, and regarded



Jason Armstrong

across campus as smart, responsive, hardworking, and student-focused. Student-athletes not only like him a great deal but have the utmost respect for him as well. He's the perfect athletic administrator to lead our Gator Nation."

Armstrong attended St. Joseph's School (the former name of SHS' elementary school). Since SHS did not have a football program at the time, Armstrong attended Menlo School, where he played football and baseball.

Armstrong holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from Trinity University

in San Antonio, Texas. He also has a master's degree in sports science and coaching education from Ohio University.

After playing baseball in college, Armstrong was drafted by the Toronto Blue Jays. He advanced through the club's minor league system. After the 2008 season, he became associate head baseball coach at Trinity and coached in the Cape Cod Summer Baseball League. From 2009 to 2016, Armstrong coached baseball at the University of California at Davis and San Jose State University.

He began his tenure at SHS as a sports information director, increasing the social media presence of the school's sports programs. He also served as athletics performance coach for SHP's football team.

Rotary Club's turkey drive

The Rotary Club of Menlo Park revived a charitable tradition of holding a turkey drive in local schools for Thanksgiving.

The Rotary Club, Sacred Heart Preparatory and Woodside Priory collected over 500 turkeys to donate to St. Anthony's Padua Dining Room, the St. Francis Center and Catholic Charities.

In addition, students developed a lesson plan on "Dining with Dignity" for fellow students about food insecurity and income disparity.

The school collecting the most turkeys per capita was dubbed the winner of the drive. The second place school must present a \$1,000 check to St. Anthony's, and Menlo Park Rotary will match the \$1,000 donation.

—Angela Swartz

Dr. Arthur A. Biedermann

October 21, 1935 – December 4, 2021

Dr. Arthur A. Biedermann passed away on December 4, 2021.

A humble, kind, and selfless Renaissance man died December 4th, 2021 thinking of others and his precious family. He died at home among the sights, sounds and memories of his life and others with his devoted wife by his side.

Arthur Biedermann was born October 21, 1935 in Richmond, California to immigrant parents. He returned to Germany to be Christened and Baptized in the family's Lutheran church. They returned home due to an undercurrent of unrest in Germany but continued to write and maintain family ties.

Arthur grew up during turbulent times. As an only child his best friend became the public Library and, while his parents worked, he enlarged his academic world and became a voracious reader. Everyone in the family played a musical instrument and soon Arthur was at the piano and being taught by his mother and aunt.

His quest for knowledge led him to develop a stock collective in sixth grade. Having ten members each putting in \$1.80 into what was then called penny stocks they invested in Mindanao Mining Company. Their literal investment of \$18 grew to thirty within 5 months. But concerned parents approached Arthur's father and told him that Arthur was teaching their sons how to gamble and this collective had to be disbanded.

Arthur's childhood Victory Garden in Healdsburg won awards during the war. Not being citizens, Arthur's parents had to relinquish their property until after the war and move 100 miles away from any area engaged in the war effort. After the war and gaining citizenship, Arthur's parents once again returned the family to Richmond and Arthur attended high school at Richmond High. He became fluent in four languages (German, English, French and Latin). He lettered in tennis and earned many awards in academia, spelling and languages.

He worked at his father's bowling alley, (Downtown Bowl), Motel and Corner Store. In his teenage years, he contracted pneumonia and was hospitalized for two weeks. This made an impression on him and he was to devote the rest of his life to a Medical Degree.

Dr. Arthur A. Biedermann graduated Phi

Beta Kappa from UC Berkeley and attended UCSF School of Medicine. He completed his pediatric training at the University of California Medical Center, San Francisco, and Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York. He received an Allergy Fellowship at Children's Hospital in Boston and at Stanford University Medical Center where he was appointed Assistant Clinical Professor of Pediatrics. He has been selected to Best Doctors in America and is Certified by the American Board of Pediatrics and the American Board of Allergy and Immunology (Both Adult and Pediatric). Read Dr. Biedermann's article on "How to Enjoy Your Garden Without Allergies."



Bright, creative, hard working and ethical, he was a master negotiator and held people accountable for wrong behavior but with the benefit of doubt and kindness in regard for their dignity and self respect. He will be missed by all who knew him. There wasn't anything that he couldn't do.

When Minou Yamate met him at Stanford, he convinced Arthur to give up his private practice in Santa Rosa and join him in San Jose to form a partnership. They became Allergy and Asthma Associates in February 1970. For the next fifty years, Arthur lived and loved his practice of medicine. He withheld nothing of his love, expertise and sleuthing to help his patients and partners.

But his greatest accomplishments were his friends and family. Bone cancer may have taken his life and severed his spine but it didn't take away his sense of fair play, love, and teaching and promoting independence, honor and the ability to make wise and thoughtful decisions that put neighbor above self. He will be dearly missed by his most significant family.

His devoted wife and best friend, Susan Biedermann and his beloved daughters: Stephanie Biedermann and Karen Biedermann. Arthur was an only child but spent his lifetime accumulating brothers. He leaves behind his two brothers, Mario Di Cicco and David Bevin. Also his sister-in-laws; Toni Di Cicco and Kathleen Bevin. Ellen Moffatt and Pamela Anderson as cherished friends along with son-in-laws; Jon Jensen and Diego Salas.

We will all patiently wait for the Resurrection to see him once again.

CRIME BRIEF

continued from page 6

we believe is one of the largest retail theft rings to have ever been busted in state history."

San Mateo County Sheriff Carlos Bolanos described the ring as "a hierarchy of criminals who were purchasing and distributing stolen property consisting mostly of retail merchandise and electronics."

He added, "It was a network of criminals responsible for an international distribution center, moving millions of dollars in stolen merchandise."

"This case is a great example of how organized retail theft rings are wreaking havoc across county lines and how through collaboration we can really do something to combat these crimes that are plaguing our community," said San Mateo County Assistant District Attorney Shin-Mee Chang.

The five defendants — Danny Louis Drago, Michelle Renee Fowler, Jose Villatoro, Isis Vasquez Villanueva, and Edgar Geovany Robles Morales

— were arrested in September 2020. At the time, more than \$1.8 million was seized from multiple bank accounts, prosecutors said.

The lead defendant, Drago, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit organized retail theft, receiving stolen property, and money laundering, and an aggravated white collar crime enhancement. He's set to be sentenced in February and could receive up to six years in prison, prosecutors said.

Fowler pleaded guilty to organized retail theft, receiving stolen property, and an aggravated white collar enhancement. She was sentenced to three years in prison, with two years of supervised probation.

Robles Morales and Villanueva have pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit organized retail theft. They've both been sentenced to probation.

Villatoro pleaded guilty to receiving stolen property and was sentenced to probation, according to prosecutors.

—Bay City News Service

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PAID OBITUARY

Judge rules sexually violent convict can be housed in East Palo Alto

By Sue Dremann

A man with a history as a “sexually violent predator” will be released from prison to a residence in East Palo Alto over the objections from the San Mateo County District Attorney’s Office.

On Dec. 2, Superior Court Judge Jeffrey Finigan approved the release of Lamar Johnson, 60, who was arrested in 1984 and again in 1992 for multiple sexual assaults both within and outside of San Mateo County. A jury unanimously determined him to be

a sexually violent predator.

Johnson has served 27 years of a 36-year sentence. The California Department of State Hospitals has deemed him no longer a threat to the public and recommended that he live in East Palo Alto, said Deputy District Attorney Alpana Samant, who presented the DA’s office’s opposition to Finigan during a hearing on Dec. 1.

Assistant District Attorney Shin-Mee Chang said she doesn’t know the reasoning behind placing Johnson in San Mateo County. He isn’t from the East Palo Alto community and his association with the

county is due to being the location of his last conviction.

“This is a target-rich environment for this particular offender,” Chang said, noting that East Palo Alto is densely populated, and perhaps even more so than many of its neighboring cities. Typically, sexually violent predators would be placed in more rural communities where they are less likely to encounter potential victims.

At least six schools and children’s/teen support programs are approximately within a 2,000-foot radius of the home on Beech Street where Johnson

is set to be placed. They include East Palo Alto Academy, The Primary School, Oxford Day Academy, Family Connections and the Girls to Women program and Laevngamali Christian Academy. Five additional locations serving students are located approximately 100 feet beyond the 2,000-foot circumference.

Acting Police Chief Jeff Liu also expressed his opposition in a letter to the community in late October.

“We are deeply concerned that our community could potentially have their safety at risk should this individual

live near schools or rental properties,” Liu wrote. “We believe the decision to allow this individual to live in such close proximity to schools and rental properties could create potentially dangerous situations for those who deserve to feel safe where they live, visit and work.”

As part of his release, Johnson will be wearing a GPS tracker so authorities will know if he violates his release by entering 200 feet into a forbidden area. ▀

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

Palo Alto couple to plead guilty in college admissions scandal

By Sue Dremann

A Palo Alto couple charged with paying to cheat on their son’s college entrance exam have agreed to plead guilty after a long-running saga that saw them facing a trial on Jan. 13, according to the U.S. Attorney’s Office.

Dr. Gregory Colburn, 63, and Amy Colburn, 61, agreed to plead guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud and honest services mail and wire fraud. Plea hearings have not yet been scheduled by the court.

Under a plea deal, the Colburns will plead guilty to their roles in a pay-to-play scheme where college admissions consultant William “Rick” Singer received \$25,000 to bribe test administrator Igor Dvorskiy and test proctor Mark Riddell to secretly correct the Colburns’ son’s SAT exam answers. The goal was to obtain a fraudulently inflated score to increase his chances of admission to a top-level college or university, according to federal prosecutors.

Singer, Dvorskiy and Riddell have pleaded guilty for their

respective roles in the nationwide scheme that implicated more than 50 people.

The Colburns each accepted plea agreements that include two-month prison sentences, one year of supervised release, 100 hours of community service and a fine of \$12,500, subject to a federal judge’s approval.

The Colburns will be the 36th and 37th parents in the college admissions case to either plead guilty or be convicted by a jury following trial, the U.S. Attorney’s Office said in a statement.

The Colburns had steadfastly

pleaded not guilty until right before trial was set to begin. They faced a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, three years of supervised release and a fine of \$250,000 or twice the gross gain or loss, whichever is greater, if convicted.

The Colburns join a group of Bay Area residents who have or will be sentenced in the nationwide scam. Other residents, who have taken plea deals and were sentenced to punishments ranging from fines with no jail time to a few months in prison with hefty fines, include former Stanford University

sailing coach John Vandemoer; Menlo Park residents Marjorie Klapper and Peter Jan Sartorio; Atherton residents Manuel Henriquez and Elizabeth Henriquez; Hillsborough resident Marci Palatella; former TPG Capital senior executive William McGlashan Jr., previously of Palo Alto; and Napa vintner Agustin Huneus Jr.

Bruce and Davina Isackson have pleaded guilty but have not yet been sentenced. ▀

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

LITERACY

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Literacy Partners is also one of the beneficiaries of The Almanac’s Holiday Fund. Because The Almanac and its partner the Silicon Valley Community Foundation cover all the administrative costs, every dollar raised goes directly to this year’s 10 nonprofit organizations. Donations to

the Holiday Fund can be made at almanacnews.com/holiday_fund.

Literacy Partners will give about \$140,000 worth of committed grants to groups like Ravenswood Classroom Partners (\$5,000), East Palo Alto Kids Foundation (\$15,000 to support 20 teachers and over 500 students) and StreetCode Academy (\$50,000) during the 2021 fiscal year. About \$40,000

of its funds are set aside to revamp the library tutoring program’s space.

“We want to make sure kids have excellent opportunities within the community of Silicon Valley,” Goodkind said.

JobTrain, which received a \$30,000 grant from Literacy Partners, helps contractors — such as housekeepers or landscapers — learn technology skills like digitally sending

a cost quote for a project or a receipt to a client, Goodkind said. They also help businesses market themselves on social media.

By working with Literacy Partners, the recipients are also introduced to similar programs, helping them learn from each other.

In the next year, the nonprofit plans to begin offering individual scholarships and

offer more grants, Goodkind said.

It’s also recruiting board members and volunteers it can send to the organizations it supports.

Find more information about Literacy Partners at literacypartnersmenlopark.org. ▀

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



Courtesy Angie Holman



Courtesy Irene Searles

Left: Ravenswood Classroom Partners tutor Karl Clausing works with two students at Costaño Elementary School in East Palo Alto before the pandemic. **Right:** Atherton resident Jeanette Kennedy tutors Gricelda at Costaño Elementary School as part of the Ravenswood Classroom Partners (formerly All Students Matter) program before the pandemic.

State championship football game coming to Sacred Heart Prep this weekend

By Glenn Reeves

The Sacred Heart Prep football team improved to 7-7 on the season Dec. 4 and won a NorCal championship.

This weekend the Gators will attempt to move above .500 for the first time since the first game of the season, and win a state championship.

An unlikely scenario, but true. The Gators beat University Prep of Redding 20-0 Dec. 4 to capture the CIF NorCal Division 5-A regional bowl game. This Saturday at 1 p.m. they will host a state championship game against Righetti of Santa Maria, a 14-7 winner over Northwood of Irvine in the Southern California 5-A bowl game.

And this team has a chance to go where no Sacred Heart Prep team has gone before.

Saturday's win was the third time the Gators won a NorCal title. But on the two previous occasions, in 2013 and 2015, they lost in the state final in games played in Southern California.

This time, they get to play at home.

"This is the only school I've ever gone to," said quarterback Jack Herrell, who has attended Sacred Heart Schools from elementary school on up and passed for 199 yards Saturday. "When you look at the history of this program, at players like Ben Burr-Kirven, who is in the NFL now, at Mason Randall, Andrew Daschbach and John Oppenheimer, who was a mentor to me. We're such a group of motivated guys. We've been through so much adversity, we're so ready to finish the job. We want to make it 8-7."



Bob Dahlberg/@bobd_photo

Anthony Noto scored the final touchdown on a short run.

SHP went 3-7 in the regular season, with six of its seven losses by eight points or less. But the team qualified for the Central Coast Section playoffs with a fourth-place finish in the Peninsula Athletic League Bay Division.

After receiving a No. 3 seed in Division IV the Gators came alive offensively, beating Alisal 42-0, Hillsdale 42-14 and No. 1 seed Homestead 51-28 to advance to the Dec. 4 game against a UPrep team that went 13-0 and averaged nearly 40 points per game.

So the SHP defense pitched a shutout.

"Our defense really bonded well," said linebacker Mat Bucher, one of several defensive standouts on Saturday. "Everyone on defense knows every guy was going to do their job."

Defensive coordinator Ed Larios has been around high school

football for some six decades and previously coached at Jefferson, Burlingame and Aragon.

"These guys give every ounce they can, every day," Larios said. "They respect their opponent and execute the game plan."

SHP took the opening kickoff and drove 86 yards for a touchdown, a 2-yard run by fullback Andrew Latu. Pass completions by Herrell of 34 yards to Jake York and 20 yards to Bucher were the big gainers on the drive.

University responded by driving from its own 28 to the SHP 1, all on the ground, before Anthony Noto threw the quarterback for a 4-yard loss on fourth-and-goal.

SHP was forced to punt out of its end zone and University drove to the SHP 9. But a fumble was picked up by a UPrep offensive lineman who took off running in the wrong direction. The



Bob Dahlberg/@bobd_photo

SHP Coach Mark Grieb shares the championship plaque with Mat Bucher and Jack Herrell.

result of the play was a 14-yard loss and the drive ended when a 45-yard field goal try missed.

Then on the first play after taking over at the 20, Herrell connected with Latu for an 80-yard touchdown pass.

"We knew they wouldn't be able to cover a back out of the backfield playing man with no safety help," SHP coach Mark Grieb said.

"I was so pumped. It came at the right moment and was executed perfectly. Jack played so well. He made the right decisions, put the ball on the money with no negative plays. I'm excited for the whole team, but especially for Jack and what he went through on the games on the sideline."

Herrell started the first five games of the season, mostly watched for several weeks as Mitchell Taylor took a turn running the team, but came back at

his best in the playoffs.

The score remained 14-0 until the fourth quarter, University made one more drive inside the SHP 10, but turned it over on downs after a 1-yard run on fourth and 3. The Gators proceeded to drive 92 yards with Noto scoring on a 9-yard run.

"Our defensive coaches did a great job of preparation," Grieb said. "We bent, but we didn't break. The kids played their hearts out."

And now, after a season of improbabilities, the Gators will attempt the ultimate reversal of fortune and win a state championship.

"You wouldn't believe it if somebody wrote it," Grieb said. "People would laugh at you. It's too far-fetched." ■

Email Associate Sports Editor
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Magali Gauthier

Luke Garlinghouse, 9, takes a photo with Roary, the Las Lomitas Elementary School mascot, after receiving his first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine at a clinic at the Atherton school on Nov. 10.

BOOSTERS

continued from page 1

to meet the rising demand.

Overall, 80.4% of all eligible county residents have had at least one dose of the vaccine and 74.6% are fully vaccinated, Chabra said. In comparison, 64% of all Californians are fully vaccinated and 59.9% of all residents nationwide have received full shots, he said.

The county is currently in the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's "moderate" tier for infections. It has a test-positivity rate of 1.5% overall and a 2% rate for residents in the state's lowest quarter of the Healthy Places Index. The index examines the most vulnerable populations based on economics and access to health care and other disparities.

Rogers said the county doesn't

yet have data to show if infection rates are rising due to exposure during the Thanksgiving holiday. She said she does expect that higher numbers will be reflected in the next set of data provided by the state health department. ■

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

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We have enough clean power for aggressive, affordable building electrification in Menlo Park

By Jan Pepper

GUEST OPINION

The proposed ordinance from Menlo Park's Environmental Quality Commission discontinuing the installation of new methane gas appliances in favor of far cleaner electric models is one of the strongest measures our community can take to address the climate crisis.

These proposed changes to the building codes have sparked a healthy debate over whether we have sufficient and affordable clean power to successfully meet such a requirement. I can emphatically answer: Yes!

But to help underscore that, some key questions should be addressed:

Can the electric grid handle the increased power needed if we go to all-electric buildings AND adopt lots more electric vehicles (EVs)?

Yes, because the increased demand for electricity by both all-electric buildings and EVs will happen over time, allowing for the grid to adapt.

Nevertheless, investment in

upgrades to the electric distribution and transmission system will be required over time. This is similar to the modernization of the electric grid when air conditioning became widely used in the 1970s. The successful strategy at the time included increasing generation, modernizing the grid and improving the efficiency of systems. And that same time-honored strategy will be deployed now, alongside the current growth in renewable generation, modernization of the distribution and transmission system and installation of more efficient appliances.

Is there enough clean electricity to meet this increased demand?

Renewable energy is the least expensive and fastest growing source of energy in California. One thing that will be essential to long-term reliability of renewable power will be expansion of long-duration battery and other storage that allows renewable power to be used at all times regardless of whether the sun is shining or

wind is blowing. According to the California Independent System Operator (CAISO), 3,500 megawatts of utility-scale storage came online this year at a pace that is already almost 50% greater than the annual rate needed for the state to reach full decarbonization of our power sector by 2045.

Peninsula Clean Energy and several other northern and Central Coast Community Choice Aggregation agencies have banded together to pursue joint renewable power and long-duration storage opportunities, including providing 500 megawatts of long-duration energy storage over the coming decade. We are also pursuing our own independent opportunities as an agency, including recent 15-year agreements to receive both solar and battery storage from two projects in Kern and Riverside counties. There will be much more of that to come.

Can we rely on electricity as the sole power source for our homes and businesses?

Almost none of the outages Californians have experienced

has been caused by insufficient energy supply. Current grid challenges, such as public safety power shut-offs, are driven by growing extreme weather events and the effect on the transmission grid. These events are, in part, a consequence of accelerating climate change further exacerbated by use of methane gas and other fossil fuels. Investing in this clean energy transition will reduce these impacts.

A recent study by the California Energy Commission found that building renewables and storage over the next five years, which Peninsula Clean Energy is aggressively pursuing, would result in a *more* reliable grid than if we built an equivalent amount of methane gas plants.

This is because while solar and wind can vary with weather, we can use storage to even out this variation. In fact, the outages of summer 2020 were caused in significant part from the unexpected loss of a 494-megawatt methane gas

plant at the same time gas resources were unable to produce at full capacity because of the extreme heat wave.

As your locally controlled and not-for-profit official power provider, we are partnering with the city of Menlo Park and others in San Mateo County to make critical facilities and community centers more energy resilient. We are also helping homeowners become energy self-sufficient, including partnering with solar installers to provide incentives for residential battery storage. And we are working on exciting and innovative options to use electric cars as a backup power generator at home.

There are very strong feelings on both sides of the building electrification debate. But we do have enough clean and affordable power to make it work. And the benefits of this clean electrification transition for Menlo Park are too good to pass up.

Jan Pepper is CEO of Peninsula Clean Energy.

Why electrification, now, is counterproductive

By Alexander Cannara

GUEST OPINION

The growing belief that we must electrify everything, including home and building heating, may sound environmentally "green," but it's fraught with environmental danger. Electricity produced by environment-threatening means must be avoided.

Electricity is indeed the "cleanest" flexible energy conveyance from here to there, but its generating sources actually define the cleanliness of its use. If the source is coal, or wood, or gas or oil from leaking wells, or most any other combustion source, the electricity is tainted by sources that we know threaten the environment. These sources should be avoided.

In California, most of our electricity is produced by gas combustion, in about 50% efficient combined-cycle plants or about 30% efficient turbines in "peaker" plants. Past regulators (such as the CPUC and CEC) and governors have added new gas plants, as Gov. Gavin Newsom recently has, rather than add reliable clean power sources, as the California Commission on Science and Technology

advised in 2011.

Newsom and our regulators have even asked the federal government to allow us to violate emissions laws because of our increased dependence on fracked gas-powered (and unreliable wind and solar) electric generation. Why?

Our only clean electricity now comes from The Geysers (a geothermal plant in Northern California), some state and imported hydro, some imported nuclear from Palo Verde in Arizona, intermittent wind and solar installations, and from our Diablo Canyon nuclear plant, located in San Luis Obispo. Diablo is the largest source of reliable, clean electricity we have in all California. It's unaffected by weather, drought, earthquakes or darkness. And it is scheduled to be shut down. Why?

Why are we so short on clean power in the most populous state? Ask our politicians. We created a commission in 2011 to help us "follow the science" but ignored it. We allowed our San Onofre nuclear plant in San Clemente to be shut for no valid

reason in 2013. It was replaced by new natural gas fired-power. Why? The attorney general's investigation of Sempra Energy and Edison International was never completed.

In any case, any sensible California plan to "electrify everything" had best first de-gas our electric generation, or enter the annals of California goofs, like building Oroville Dam poorly, or regulating PG&E poorly, even killing people with gas and burning forests via poor power line and forest maintenance. Ours is the most populous state. We boast the largest economy. Shouldn't our officials deliver competence?

As for Menlo Park, we're fortunate in having some of the cleanest electricity because we're in Diablo Canyon's distribution realm and "gas/unspecified" is less than half of PG&E's power pie. Fifty-nine percent of our energy is clean. And of course Diablo, which now supplies 23% of our power, but may be foolishly shut down in a couple of years. Why?

Of course, PG&E's "unspecified" pie slice offers lots of opportunity for sneaking in some combustion sources, like Warren Buffet's PacifiCorp

coal.

Back to electrifying Menlo: Our electricity (unless Diablo shuts down) appears to be less than half bad. However, another reality is common everywhere the word "renewables" appears. Wind and solar power have low reliabilities — wind may deliver 40% of what its equipment is designed for each year, but solar is even worse, at 25% or less. Business folks don't like such "nonperforming" assets.

Their unpredictability means we must design a power system that can quickly call up other, reliable, power sources. And what do our regulators and politicians do for that? Burn gas.

Even when the wind is blowing and/or the sun is up, we burn our favorite — gas. It's called "backdown mode" for gas turbines that we wish not to damage via quick starts and stops. These are our "peaker" plants.

About 25% of full-power gas is burned in peakers' "backdown" mode. Their emissions are part of the wind and solar backup burden.

So if Menlo Park wants to move to all-electric building

codes, perhaps it should first help educate our Legislature, governor, and regulators and move them onto the right track. Sources of electricity matter and they are not under local control, but their effects are felt worldwide, and by our descendants. What will they think of us?

Alexander Cannara is a Menlo Park resident.

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ICEBREAKERS

THE SILICON VALLEY BOYCHOIR RETURNS TO LIVE PERFORMANCE WITH THE HOLIDAY CONCERT 'FIRE & ICE'

By Heather Zimmerman | Photos courtesy Silicon Valley Boychoir

The Silicon Valley Boychoir celebrates both the chilly winter weather and the warmth of the season with the holiday concert "Fire & Ice," Dec. 12 at Grace Lutheran Church in Palo Alto.

The concert will be the first in-person performance in nearly two years for the choir, which teaches boys ages 7 to 18 to sing choral music.

The choir has been back to singing together in person since August after many months of rehearsing and performing online, said Kaia Richards, artistic director for the group.

The Silicon Valley Boychoir's membership, which totals almost 40 singers at the moment, is made up primarily of boys from the Midpeninsula area, but a few members come from as far north as Belmont and as far south as San Jose.

The group was founded in 2010 by Julia Simon, who serves as the choir's program director. The Boychoir features four levels for singers of different ages and skills: the beginning-level Overture Choir, for ages 7 and up; the intermediate- and advanced-level Concert Choir for ages 8 to 14; the advanced-level Ovation Choir for ages 9 to 14; and the advanced-level Encore Choir for ages 14 to 18.

Richards, who is in her first year as artistic director, has been with the Boychoir for five years and directs the Ovation and Concert choirs. Composer and arranger Allen H. Simon, who is also the artistic director of Soli Deo Gloria, the Bay Area choir for adult singers, directs the Encore Choir and musician Chloe Billings is the new director of the Overture Choir.

All four choir levels, led by their respective directors, will perform in the Dec. 12 concert, the theme for which was inspired by the nature of winter and the festive season.

"Although we don't live in a place where it snows, it's the concept that winter has the coldness and the darkness, yet also has the

warmth and the light that people bring in to combat the darkness of the season. A lot of repertoire — choral music — plays on those themes," Richards said.

The program includes seasonal favorites and other holiday-themed works.

Among the highlights: The Encore Choir will perform "You're A Mean One, Mr. Grinch" from "How the Grinch Stole Christmas," the Overture Choir will sing the classic "Christmas Time is Here," from the 1965 TV special "A Charlie Brown Christmas," and the Ovation Choir will perform "Unending Flame," a song for Hanukkah by composer Paul Carey. The piece, which includes clapping and some tempo shifts, also features accompaniment from Joel Jaffe on clarinet.

"There will be some traditional gems like 'The Christmas Song (Chestnuts roasting on an open fire),' and then some more classically inspired," Richards said.

She also noted that in a first for the Boychoir, the Concert and Ovation choirs will team up to perform "Fire" by composer Mary Goetze, which is inspired by a 13-year-old's poem exploring the nature of fire. The piece

uses the poem as its text.

All four choirs will come together at the end of the program to sing "We Need a Little Christmas."

"We always do two pieces at the very end of the concert where everyone is singing. So it's a

fun opportunity for the very young boys to have the experience of singing SATB — soprano, alto, tenor, bass — a full group sound as opposed to just the music that

they do in their individual groups. So 'We Need a Little Christmas' will be fun," Richards said.

In choosing music for the holiday program, Richards said that she was mindful of finding pieces that are fun and educational for the young choristers.

"I like to choose music that I think is beautiful, things that I think they will enjoy singing and things that also teach them classical repertoire, and expose them to really good composers," she said.

Richards also sought pieces that would work for a smaller sized group of singers than the Silicon Valley Boychoir is accustomed to, as its membership has decreased due to the pandemic, down from 64 singers pre-pandemic to just under 40.

'I like to choose music that I think is beautiful, things that I think they will enjoy singing'

KAIA RICHARDS, SILICON VALLEY BOYCHOIR ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



The Silicon Valley Boychoir, which offers musical education for boys ages 7 to 18, returned to in-person rehearsals in August.



Above: Kaia Richards, artistic director of Silicon Valley Boychoir, leads the singers in a rehearsal.

Left: The Silicon Valley Boychoir will perform "Fire & Ice" on Dec. 12 at Grace Lutheran Church in Palo Alto.

"Our numbers dropped drastically because of it. So we're in a very strong push to build our numbers back," Richards said, noting that the limitations of virtual performance had a major impact on choirs in general.

Before the Boychoir's singers were able to reunite in person a few months ago, rehearsals took place virtually, a method that has brought challenges for anyone

trying to make music together, due to inherent delays in video-conferencing, known as latency. During that time, the organization also temporarily adapted its teaching model to what worked best online. Since the choristers couldn't sing together, instruction was more individualized.

"We actually used the year to focus more on the individual singer and we gave each boy a private

voice lesson with his director once a week for a shorter amount of time. It was more about personal growth," Richards said.

Now the Silicon Valley Boychoir is back to performing in person, Richards noted, it's all the more special for the members to perform a live concert — and for their families to witness it, but also to keep in mind that personal growth is always a key

part of the singers' experience.

"What we do here is teach the boys musicianship, how to become the tenors and basses of the future for high school choirs and beyond, in college. Even if they don't go to college to become a music major, they'll hopefully still retain the love of singing and find a community choir — (and they will) be able to read music and find the flexibility and improvisational

skills to be fluid with what music has to offer."

"Fire & Ice" takes place Dec. 12, 3:30 p.m. at Grace Lutheran Church, 3149 Waverley St., Palo Alto. Tickets are \$10-\$35. For more information, visit svboychoir.org. ■

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

HERE COME THE HOLIDAYS

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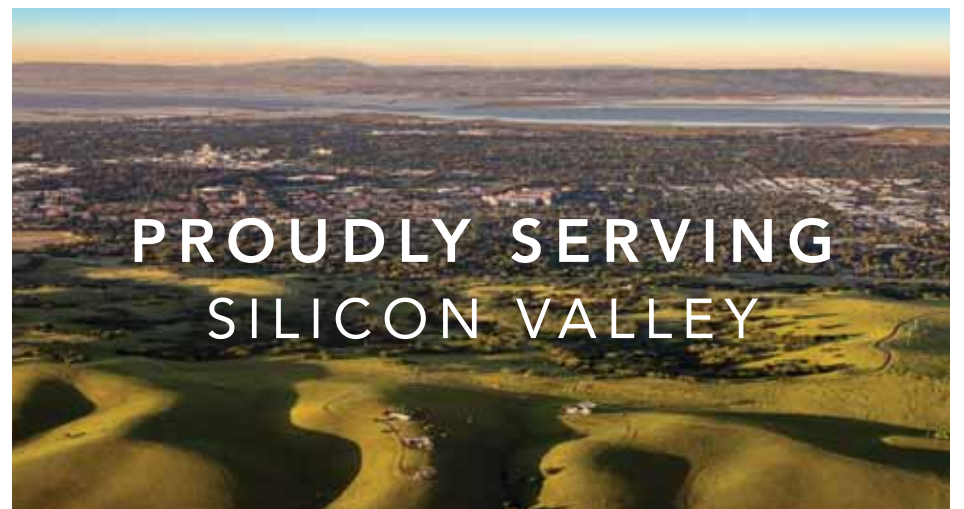
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Food & Drink

The latest openings and closings in Midpeninsula dining

Local Kitchens brings several eateries under one roof, while Anatolian Kitchen makes way for Naschmarkt

By Sara Hayden

While 2021 is winding down, the local restaurant scene continues to see change as eateries open and close.

In Palo Alto's California Avenue neighborhood, Anatolian Kitchen has closed, to be replaced by a cozy Austrian-themed restaurant slated to open by February. And around the corner, Local Kitchens has opened up shop, offering food from several different restaurants and cuisines. Another outpost is set to open in Mountain View this month.

Naschmarkt to replace Anatolian Kitchen in Palo Alto

Anatolian Kitchen is closed, making way for a new concept: By no later than February, restaurateur Dino Tekdemir and team are aiming to reopen as Naschmarkt Palo Alto, a sister restaurant to a successful location in Campbell. The Naschmarkt restaurants are inspired by a popular food market in Vienna.

"Once we open, we want everyone back here," said Tekdemir, who also co-owned Anatolian Kitchen. "I'm doing everything for them to make them happy."

Anatolian Kitchen opened more than a decade ago. The restaurant was led by a family, owned by Tekdemir and his brother, both from Diyarbakir, a Kurdish area in southeastern Turkey. At the Palo Alto restaurant, Tekdemir met the person he would marry, who worked there too. Together, they created a homey atmosphere and Kurdish and Turkish specialties, as recounted in an episode of the restaurant review show "Check, Please! Bay Area."

The show's guests noted dishes like manti (juicy spiced beef dumplings with herbed yogurt sauce), Alexander's Favorite (cubes of bread soaked in butter, served with rotisserie meat, tangy orange tomato sauce and yogurt) and lamb shanks over orzo pasta. They also lauded the team's hospitality, attention and care.

"We're grateful for that time," Tekdemir said of their years dedicated to Anatolian Kitchen.

Now, the team is shifting its focus. Since closing the restaurant at 2323 Birch St., remodeling has been underway to capture the atmosphere of Naschmarkt Restaurant in Campbell, which serves Austrian fare.

"We're going to open a sister restaurant, same cuisine, right here in this location," Tekdemir said.

From the Campbell location, general manager Yalcin Odabasi, chef Carlos Morales and bar manager Salvatore Marotto will be working with the team in Palo Alto.

The menu will include dishes like red cabbage soup, pretzels, sauerkraut, duck pot pie, wiener schnitzel and beef goulash, as well as more than 30 beers from all over Europe, and wines from Germany and Austria.

The ambiance will be warm — "squishy," even, and incorporate red brick walls, Tekdemir said.

"(Naschmarkt) has been very successful. We want to create a brand," Tekdemir said. "Our chef is amazing, our staff is good. It's a beautiful restaurant."

One reason for the change is to manage the labor shortage at a time when 3 out of 4 restaurant operators say recruitment and retention is their toughest challenge.



Veronica Weber

Restaurateur Dino Tekdemir and his team are remodeling Anatolian Kitchen, with plans to reopen the restaurant as Naschmarkt Palo Alto in early 2022.

Tekdemir said it's difficult to find and train new staff, so replicating the existing restaurant's concept will allow the current team to use its skills and work in both locations.

The other reason is to satisfy customers' tastes. "We have the larger community. They are from different areas," Tekdemir said. "I really know what their expectations are, what they're looking for and what is missing in this area. I try to fill up that gap."

Like the Viennese market that is the restaurant's namesake, the menu will reflect regional variety and influences from the broader area.

"If you look at the map, (Austria's) located in the center of Europe," Tekdemir said. "All that region is going to be included."

Tekdemir has been working in

the Peninsula restaurant industry for more than a decade. After arriving in the U.S., Tekdemir worked as a janitor, busser, server and manager. After nine years, he pursued opening his own restaurant. In addition to Anatolian Kitchen and Naschmarkt, he owns Nemea Greek Taverna in San Jose.

"Most customers know me, because I've been here a long time," Tekdemir said.

With a laugh, Tekdemir continued, "I want to let them know that — don't worry, something very good is coming. You won't be missing Anatolian Kitchen, because you'll be thankful for me opening Naschmarkt."

Naschmarkt (coming soon), 2323 Birch St., Palo Alto; naschmarkt-restaurant.com.

Local Kitchens opens 'digital food halls'

If you've ever craved curry, Reubens and ice cream all at once, you're in luck: Local Kitchens makes it possible to buy all the above and then some from different restaurants in a single order. On Nov. 30, the team opened a new Peninsula location in Palo Alto at the former site of The Counter. A Mountain View location will follow in mid-December.

Led by DoorDash alumni, Local Kitchens bills itself as a "micro food hall" with a focus on local food purveyors. At a Local Kitchens location or on its website, customers can order dishes from a variety of Bay Area restaurants for pickup or delivery, or to eat on-site.

"It's a little bit of a different mix," co-founder and CEO Jon Goldsmith said. "Our goal is to capture the diversity of the Bay Area food scene."

Participating restaurants vary by location. For example, Oren's Hummus is available in Lafayette, but not on the Peninsula (you'll have to go directly to Oren's for their legendary hummus instead). From the Palo Alto Local Kitchens location, the biggest to date, customers can order:

- Curry Up Now: Indian street food
- MIXT: gourmet salads
- Proposition Chicken:



Courtesy Local Kitchens

Local Kitchens recently opened on California Avenue in Palo Alto.

See **DINING**, page 22

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PUBLIC HEARING

1. Jon Jang

3110 Woodside Road

ASRB2021-0028; CUSE2021-0005

Planner: Sarah Filipe, Associate Planner

Presentation and consideration of a proposal, requiring Formal Design Review (ASRB2021-0028), to demolish an existing barn and shed; and construct a new barn, greenhouse, and ADU and other site improvements.

The new greenhouse is greater than 250 square feet, which requires a Conditional Use Permit (CUSE2021-0005). The Planning Commission will consider the ASRB's recommendation on the project design and take action on all requested entitlements.

THE APPLICATION MATERIALS ARE AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC REVIEW BY CONTACTING SARAH FILIPE AT SFILIPE@WOODSIDETOWN.ORG



Veronica Weber

Falafels from SAJJ, one of several restaurants serving food out of Local Kitchens' new Palo Alto food hall.

DINING

continued from page 21

sandwiches, salads and entrees

■ SAJJ: Mediterranean dishes

■ Señor Sisig: Filipino street food

■ The Melt: burgers and comfort food

■ Humphry Slocombe: ice cream

■ Rooster & Rice: Thai chicken and rice

■ Wise Sons: Jewish deli classics

From the Mountain View location, in addition to MIXT, Proposition Chicken, Señor Sisig, The Melt, Wise Sons and Humphry Slocombe, customers will also be able to order Israeli street food from Sababa.

Investors are banking on Local Kitchens, which currently has locations in Lafayette, Cupertino and San Jose, and has plans to expand to Sacramento, Los Angeles and beyond. The startup raised \$25 million in series A funding in June with the support of venture capital firm General Catalyst, which includes the likes of Airbnb, Instacart, Warby Parker and Deliveroo in its portfolio.

Local Kitchens' Peninsula presence isn't entirely new: Proposition Chicken, which was founded in San Francisco, partnered with the team at Local Kitchens — then called Local Food Group — to reach Peninsula customers a year ago as the startup kicked off.

In the Local Food Group arrangement, Proposition Chicken dishes were prepped by the staff at Shioh Singapore Kitchen in Menlo Park, and distributed via third-party delivery

services like DoorDash and Uber Eats. At the time, Ari Feingold and Dennis Lim, the restaurants' respective leaders, were interested in a new model that could support their businesses.

Since then, the Local Food Group has turned into Local Kitchens, with a slightly different model: In its current iteration, dedicated Local Kitchens staff prepares different restaurants' dishes on-site at the Local Kitchens locations.

To fulfill delivery orders, Local Kitchens contracts with DoorDash, a company that's recently faced heat from "Dashers," the city of Chicago and others. Last month, DoorDash agreed to pay \$5.3 million to settle allegations of violations of past benefits for San Francisco delivery workers. Last year in Santa Clara County, business leaders pushed for a cap on delivery fees.

The Local Kitchens team believes that convenience and choice will ultimately benefit customers, and they'll also be able to help their restaurant partners with a revenue share agreement.

"We came up with a model we hope is sustainable for them," Goldsmith said. "We were so excited to have an opportunity to help restaurants."

Local Kitchens, 369 California Ave., Palo Alto; (coming soon) 1711 W El Camino Real Suite B, Mountain View; localkitchens.com. ■

Email Associate Digital Editor Sara Hayden at peninsulafoodist@almanacnews.com.

Dig into food news.

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