

The Almanac

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

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Looking back on another pandemic year

COVID-19 colored the images that defined life in 2021 on the Midpeninsula

By Magali Gauthier

As chief visual journalist at The Almanac, my coverage of the pandemic reached a turning point in January 2021. With vaccinations against COVID-19 starting to be administered, knowing that the vulnerable people I was photographing were now protected from the deadly virus felt like a weight had been lifted off my shoulders.

I had spent most of the previous year worrying that I could catch, carry and spread the virus without knowing it.

While I no longer methodically sanitized my camera equipment and showered and changed my clothes at the end of each work day, I continued double masking wherever I went, and the majority of my shoots stayed outdoors.

By the spring, I had gotten my two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, which gave me access to spaces and situations I hadn't been in for over a year. In May, I photographed hundreds of Menlo-Atherton High School seniors dancing at their outdoor prom. The next week, I was capturing images of modified graduation ceremonies.

In the second half of the year, after California reopened, my coverage started reflecting a community that was joyously yet cautiously adapting. I captured a group of vaccinated friends hanging out at the Pioneer Saloon in Woodside. In the fall, I photographed students and staff returning to campuses full time for in-person classes. Some of my coverage even diverged from the pandemic-related news cycle. In August, I covered Gov. Gavin Newsom's visit to Big Basin Redwoods State Park to survey the damage



Magali Gauthier

Above: Kindergarten teacher Ruth Cuellar gives Regina some hand sanitizer before entering the classroom on the first day of school at Los Robles-Ronald McNair Academy in East Palo Alto on Aug. 25. **Right:** David Steenson, Brynda Olson and Kelley Wathen have a drink with friends at the Pioneer Saloon in Woodside on July 22.

caused by the 2020 CZU Lightning Complex fires.

Things aren't back to the way they were, obviously, and it feels like the "new normal" (excuse the overused phrase) may actually be upon us. We're living in a world where there is a constant threat of new COVID-19 variants, such as omicron, but we're adapting to it and are able to do many of the things we did pre-pandemic.

These images illustrate how our community has come back together over the last 12 months to celebrate, learn, protest, support and create. Take a look. 

Email Chief Visual Journalist Magali Gauthier at mgauthier@almanacnews.com.

See **LOOKING BACK**, page 12



Magali Gauthier

INSIDE

OUR NEIGHBORHOODS

HELP FAMILIES IN NEED **8** | FOOD **23**



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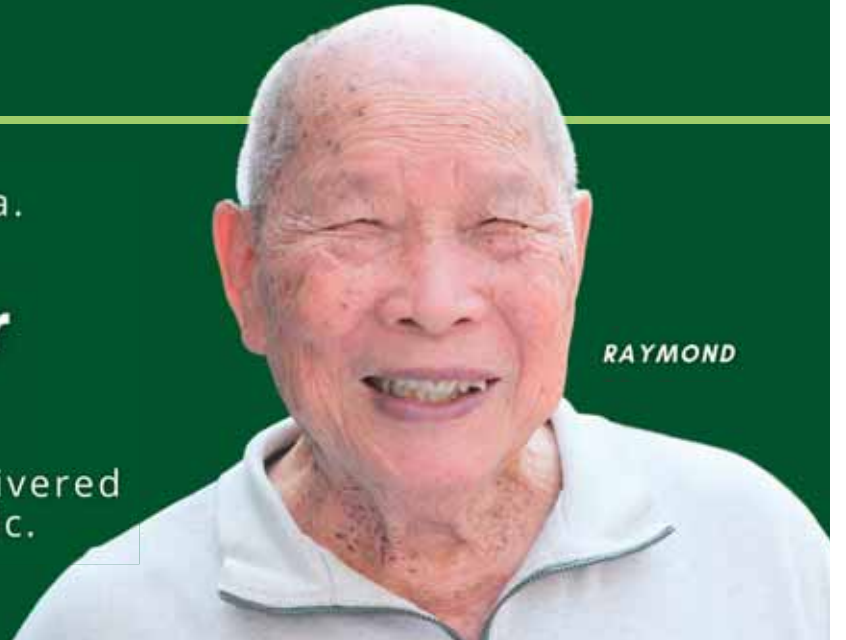
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Aging seniors still most affected

We've shared an historic journey together since March 2020. As we all learn to live with COVID -19, aging seniors are still most affected, and the challenges are now much larger in scope for our diverse senior community.

Peninsula Volunteers, Inc.'s vital services for seniors are more critical now than ever. The pandemic's disproportionate impact on older adults has led to more widespread loneliness, isolation and health vulnerabilities. **Hunger has more than tripled in Bay Area counties**, jeopardizing the health and well-being of older adults. **Now nearly 1 in six seniors is facing hunger risk and cannot cover the cost of basic needs.**

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You have been with us every step of the way. Because of you, we extended our reach during the pandemic, preparing and home delivering almost **288,000 nutritious Meals on Wheels** from our Menlo Park kitchen; placing over **47,500 wellness care calls and visits**; holding **12,462 combined virtual and in person sessions** with active seniors and with Alzheimer's clients to engage in exercise and stimulating learning activities; providing **4,093 transportation rides** for medical and grocery needs and **23,750 volunteer hours**. We continue to partner with local companies and restaurants to secure additional meals for those in need and continue to envision new and better ways to expand our support for our senior community in the new environment.

You may ask “how can I help local seniors like Raymond right now”?

Join us as we continue strengthening the senior community by helping us provide high -quality programs that keep your loved ones and neighbors fed, engaged, and living independently. Your gift of any size* made securely online at penvol.org/donate will change the lives of seniors now.

* A \$500 donation will support: one month of daily Meals on Wheels for two seniors; or full services for a week at Rosener House for an adult with Alzheimer's; or sixteen 30-minute personal training sessions at Little House; or 100 transportation rides at the subsidized rate.



For nearly 75 years, Peninsula Volunteers, Inc., a duly recognized 501 © (3) non-profit organization, has enabled seniors to age in place, driven by a profound legacy of caring and our core values of respect, commitment, trust, dedication, and compassion. Our essential programs serve over 6,000 Peninsula households and address the most pressing issues of aging adults by offering critical services to sustain their daily physical, nutritional, emotional, and mental health while achieving dignity and independence in their lives. PVI's innovative programs: Nutrition Services/Meals on Wheels; Adult Day Services at Rosener House; Health, Wellness and Lifetime Enrichments offerings at Little House; and on-demand Transportation Services at Little House., the Roslyn G. Morris Activity Center.



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Local News

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Magali Gauthier

Jane Mackey, creator of Jane Lane dessert mix boxes, in her home in Woodside on Dec. 14.

Woodsider hopes to mix up the baking aisle with her new line of tortes

Jane Mackey's Jane Lane brand offers a twist on the typical cake mix

By Angela Swartz

With a swirl of fresh fruit and layers of raspberry and citrus, Jane Lane tortes are not the typical boxed cake mix. Woodside's Jane Mackey, the woman behind the torte mix, is setting out to shake up the baking aisle.

Launched in early November,

Mackey said she has always been passionate about flavorful desserts. Cranberry coconut, chocolate orange and raspberry lemon are her three boxed offerings currently found at local grocers and on her website.

"I wanted to inspire people to bake again," said Mackey, who moved to the Midpeninsula in 2006 before settling in

Woodside this spring. "They don't feel like they can do it because the mixes out there are pretty homogeneous. I wanted to create a bakery-quality dessert that anyone could make, that's beautiful in a simple way."

The recipes, which she crafted with pastry chefs while

See **BAKING**, page 17

Daily COVID cases surpass summer surge in San Mateo County, health officials say

By Leah Worthington

COVID-19 cases in San Mateo County are on the rise and have now surpassed the summer surge, with an average of about 190 cases reported per day over the last two weeks, according to county officials and the county dashboard.

"We've seen an increase in case reports that are substantially higher than we saw at the height of the delta (variant) summer surge," said Preston Merchant, communications officer for the San Mateo County Department of Health.

According to Merchant, current data trends show roughly twice as many cases as experienced during the latest delta surge. He added that case numbers are continually revised with new data and are subject to change.

Daily cases peaked at roughly 180 in early August. By contrast, 374 cases were reported on Thursday, Dec. 23.

In the past month, the county reported 308 new COVID-19 cases in Redwood City and 38 in North Fair Oaks. According to data from the California Department of Public Health published by the Los Angeles Times, 80% of the cases in Redwood City, and 84% in North Fair Oaks, occurred in the last two weeks.

The California Department of Public Health has also confirmed the presence of the

new omicron variant in the county using genetic sequencing, according to Merchant. However, it's unclear whether the rise in COVID-19 cases in the county is due to omicron or how many cases have been caused by the new strain.

"Through wastewater testing and data from our neighboring counties, we have known for several weeks that omicron is prevalent in the region, including in San Mateo County," he said, noting that wastewater testing was conducted by the Stanford-based Sewer Coronavirus Alert Network. "We continue to send samples to the state lab for genetic sequencing as part of regional disease surveillance."

Though San Mateo County doesn't report the specific number of cases of each variant, test samples are sent to the state Department of Health, which sequences 10% to 20% of cases statewide. These data "contribute to a much larger picture" of California's COVID status and variant breakdown, Merchant said.

As of Dec. 21, omicron represents 6.5% of cases in California, with delta still leading at 93.5%.

Since its first detection in South Africa in late November, the new COVID-19 variant has spread to at least 77 countries worldwide, causing record outbreaks and reimposed restrictions. The United States' first case

See **COVID CASES**, page 19

Belle Haven, East Palo Alto have far fewer trees than neighboring communities. Groups like Canopy hope to change that.

By Jennah Haque/
Peninsula Press

Community members are up bright and early on Nov. 20 at All Five, a preschool in Menlo Park's Belle Haven neighborhood.

And they're hard at work. Students are digging holes with shovels taller than they are. Parents are wicking away dirt from tree roots. Marty Degge, who's been planting for 25 years in the area, stabilizes the young tree with a metal pipe so it will

grow straight. By the end of the event, they'll have planted 17 trees on the school grounds with Canopy, a tree planting nonprofit.

Belle Haven residents Maria Cruz and her son Jeff Caceres dig holes together by the playhouse. For Cruz, the event is a special moment for her family and the community at large.

"I want my son to come back in 10, 15 years and see how it's doing," Cruz says. "Trees are very important for us. Everyone should have them."

But in reality, not all communities do. There's a severe shortage of tree canopy coverage in low-income neighborhoods. As average temperatures rise in the Bay Area, this means more extreme heat days for vulnerable communities.

Palo Alto, a city with a median annual income of \$158,000, has tree canopy coverage as high as 25% in some neighborhoods, according to the Healthy Places Index. Trees occupy a fourth of the land within the city.

Adjacent East Palo Alto,

where 3 in 4 residents are either Black or Latino, has a median income of \$67,000. HPI shows one neighborhood with canopy coverage of 12%. The rest have 6%.

Technically, the two regions are separate cities that fall under different counties. However, tree coverage disparities fester within city boundaries too. Most of Menlo Park has between 15% to 31% tree canopy coverage, according to the Healthy Places Index. The predominantly lower income

Belle Haven neighborhood has 7% coverage.

"You walk around a poor neighborhood and it's just concrete. There's no shade structure. No respite from the sun," says Emi Wang, associate director of Capacity Building at the Greenlining Institute, an Oakland-based organization that advocates for racial and environmental justice.

And this has been an issue spanning decades. Uriel

See **TREES**, page 21

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NEWS

CRIME BRIEFS

Shooting kills man in East Palo Alto

East Palo Alto police are investigating the death of a man found with gunshot wounds late Tuesday, according to a news release issued by the department early Wednesday morning.

Shortly before 8 p.m., officers responded to a report of shots fired in the 1600 block of Bay Road, just east of University Avenue, and found a 33-year-old man with gunshot wounds lying on the ground of an apartment complex parking lot.

Paramedics from Menlo Park Fire Protection District provided medical care to the man, but he died of his injuries at the scene.

Police are withholding the name of the victim pending notification of his next of kin.

The homicide is the city's second shooting in less than a week. On Dec. 24, a 22-year-old man was found suffering from gunshot wounds in a crashed car in the 900 block of Beech Street. Police initially said he died of his injuries at a hospital, but clarified Wednesday morning that he is on life support.

Police urge anyone with information about Tuesday's shooting to contact the East Palo Alto Police Department by any of

See **CRIME BRIEFS**, page 11

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Curbside tree pickup starts Jan. 2

Now that Christmas is over, people are encouraged to dispose of their Christmas trees by placing them next to their green compost carts on their regular waste collection day during the month of January, starting Jan. 2.

To be composted, trees should have no decorations remaining on them such as lights, tinsel, tree stands or nails.

Trees may be up to 8 feet in length; any larger trees should be cut into pieces and placed next to or inside the green compost cart. Trees with flocking will be accepted.

At apartments, owners or apartment managers should call 650-595-3900 to arrange for tree collections.

No fireworks, please

The Menlo Park Police Department has put out a reminder urging people to remember that it is illegal to discharge firearms and use or possess fireworks within the city, even while celebrating the start of a new year. It is a felony to discharge a firearm and a misdemeanor to use and/or possess fireworks.

To report the illegal use of fireworks or discharge of a firearm, call the Menlo Park Police Department at 650-330-6300.

DUI enforcement boosted over New Year's weekend

The Menlo Park Police Department is planning to have officers looking for drivers suspected of driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs through New Year's weekend, according to a citywide announcement.

"This year has been challenging and difficult on all of us," Menlo Park Sgt. Chris Adair said. "The last thing we need is more heartbreak and tragedy. Make the right choice by not driving impaired so everyone can have a safe holiday season and new year."

In addition to the risk of impairment to one's driving by alcohol, people should be aware that prescription medications, over-the-counter drugs and marijuana can also impair one's driving ability, especially when combined with alcohol and other drugs. People are urged to stay at home or use a designated sober driver if they plan to drink, according to the announcement.

Enforcement funding comes from a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety.

Free overnight parking ends Jan. 3

Menlo Park's annual pause on enforcing the citywide overnight parking ban over the holidays will end Jan. 3, according to a city announcement. Enforcement will restart at 2 a.m. on Monday, Jan. 3, at which point people will need an overnight parking pass. Parked vehicles found in violation of the ordinance receive a courtesy notice upon the first violation, according to the police department.

Go to is.gd/mpparkpermit to learn more or purchase a permit.

—Kate Bradshaw

Manager's Corner



by Sergio Ramirez
District Manager

As we wrap up year two of the COVID-19 pandemic, I'd like to give thanks to all of the West Bay staff for their work and dedication throughout the pandemic, and for serving our community as intended. I'm proud to say that for approximately two years now our staff has never stopped working and continues to provide excellent service to our residents and other customers. As we enter our 120 year anniversary, I realize this has been the second pandemic the District has experienced, the first being in 1918. Through these challenging times, West Bay Sanitary District was recognized by the California Water Environment Association as the "2020 Collection System of the Year" for the entire State of California. The award is in recognition of having an outstanding maintenance and rehabilitation program among other things. With this huge accomplishment one can only hope that 2022 brings a sense of normality.

We have several exciting projects developing in 2022. One of our projects is to raise the levee at the District's flow equalization and resource recovery facility (FERRF) behind Bedwell Bayfront Park in Menlo Park (the site of the District's retired wastewater treatment plant.) The levee around the facility needs to be raised in order to protect the site from a 100 year storm event. Similar projects around the entire Bay

Area are also underway. Fortunately, West Bay Sanitary District recently received a \$3.9 million grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The grant will help build an ecotone levee that will create additional marsh habitat by using a horizontal living shoreline while protecting the site from sea level rise.

We are proud to report that the Board of Directors after several years of positive pension reform efforts, made the decision to pay down its Unfunded Accrued Liability (UAL) to the California Public Employees Retirement System (CalPERS), saving over \$4.2 million in interest to CalPERS. As of June 30, 2021 the District was officially debt-free as it pertains to CalPERS unfunded accrued liability. The District will pay any future liability as accrued, saving additional interest expense. [Visit FY 2020-21 Financial Audit for more information.](#)

After being established on December 10, 1902 as one of the first Sanitary Districts in the Bay Area and constructing a sanitary sewer system to promote public health during the Estate Era of Menlo Park and Atherton, West Bay is now entering into its next phase using water reclamation to help in the sustainability of our environment yet again. For more information on these and other exciting projects, please visit our website at www.westbaysanitary.org.



WEST BAY SANITARY DISTRICT AND SHARON HEIGHTS GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP – RECYCLED WATER TREATMENT PLANT

As the first year of operation for the West Bay – [Sharon Heights Recycled Water Treatment Plant](#) winds down, the District is proud to report delivery of over 50 million gallons of recycled water since January 27th, 2021. This reuse project has been a tremendous asset to both the partnership and local community by relieving the municipal water system of over 50 million gallons of potable drinking water that can be used elsewhere. The partnership has provided a reliable local water supply that reduces vulnerability to droughts and other water supply constraints. The use of recycled water is critical for sustainable management of our long term water supplies. Using treated recycled water instead of potable water for irrigation, street sweeping, and construction dust control will have a significantly positive impact on our regions ability to prosper well into the future. Be on the lookout for future Recycled Water projects to further implement this fantastic resource for irrigation, toilet flushing, and other commercial water needs!



Recycled Water Storage Pond
at Sharon Heights

Funding for this \$22.6 million recycled water project has been provided in full or in part by Proposition 1. The Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014. Funding has also been provided through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, which is capitalized through a variety of funding sources including grants from the United States Environmental Protection Agency and state bond proceeds.

SALT POND RESTORATION PROJECT

West Bay Sanitary District and Save the Bay have teamed up with the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project.

The District has designated part of our Flow Equalization and Resource Recovery Facility (FERRF) located behind the Bedwell Bayfront Park as a temporary nursery facility for the Save the Bay organization. Save the Bay is using the site to propagate Salt Marsh type plants for Horizontal Levee Projects. The District's grounds at FERRF are in close proximity to the Salt Pond Restoration Project and serves as a convenient location for a raised bed nursery to propagate these types of plants. The District will be raising its own levee using a horizontal ecotone levee system.

"We are proud to partner with our friends at Save the Bay to promote a natural and sustainable means to protect the Bay from sea level rise," says Sergio Ramirez, District Manager.

The District envisions the ecotone levee as a community asset and a potential opportunity to expand partnerships with the facility.



Salt Pond Restoration Project

WEST BAY SANITARY DISTRICT LEVEE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The West Bay Sanitary District (WBSD) owns and operates a Flow Equalization and Resource Recovery Facility (FERRF) on the retired wastewater treatment plant site in Menlo Park. The FERRF site is located at the northern end of Marsh Road in Menlo Park, shown as "Project Site" in the figure to the right. [For more information visit EIR.](#)



Levee Improvement Project

Bedwell Bayfront Park borders the site to the south and east. Flood Slough borders the site to the west. Levees protect the site from normal tides on the north and west sides.

During normal sewer flows, WBSD pumps wastewater via the Menlo Park Pump Station to the Silicon Valley Clean Water (SVCW) treatment plant. On occasion, during high rainfall events, the FERRF is used for flow equalization (temporary storage of wastewater) when the volume of wastewater collected exceeds conveyance capacity to the plant. The FERRF has two ponds that can be used to equalize sanitary sewer flows during high rainfall events. The FERRF has many uses besides flow equalization. A portion of the FERRF is used by Save the Bay for a nursery that grows vegetation that will be planted throughout the San Francisco Baylands. Furthermore, a portion of the FERRF acts as material storage for WBSD operations.

The earthen levees on the north and west sides of the FERRF were originally constructed in the late 1950's and do not protect the FERRF from 100-year tides. Therefore, the facility is located within the FEMA 100-year flood zone and may also flood if a 50-year storm surge coincides with mean high-high water.

The District's [Levee Improvement Project](#) proposes to protect the site from flooding and sea level rise by installing sheet pile walls along the western perimeter of the facility and construction of a structurally supported ecotone levee along the north perimeter to promote shoreline resiliency and marsh habitat after sea level rise. The levees will be raised to Elevation 15 (NAVD88). The ecotone levee will create a wider upland transition zone with approximately 3.5 acres of high-quality native upland refugia habitat for both rare and common wildlife species. A site plan of the improvements can be seen above.



Levee Improvement Site Plan

A portion of the Levee Project will be funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) grant of \$3.9M. [Visit NFWF for more information.](#)

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The District has completed the North Bay Road and Ringwood Avenue Capital Improvement Project. This project includes the replacement & rehabilitation of over 11,000 feet of sanitary sewer mains in Menlo Park, Atherton, and Unincorporated San Mateo County. Precision Engineering, Inc. of San Francisco was awarded the project, and most recently replaced approximately 2,800 feet of public sewer pipelines on Ringwood Avenue originally installed using terracotta pipe in 1903. This project required considerable coordination with San Mateo County, so that the underground pipe work be constructed before the County's pavement project. The work included the installation of recycled water pipe for future use. Many residents of the area appreciated the coordination and work being performed. The District will wrap up the project in Menlo Park's Flood Triangle neighborhood. The District has been enforcing the strictest construction protocols in order to safely deal with the current pandemic.

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with a gift to the Holiday Fund



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.

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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.

Almanac Holiday Fund Donor List

As of Dec. 21st, 131 donors have contributed \$126,948 to the Almanac Holiday Fund.

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

Berman, Low seek fresh Assembly terms in different districts

Prospect of heated race between two Democrats fades with Monday announcements

By Gennady Sheyner

Assembly member Marc Berman announced Monday, Dec. 27, that he will seek a new term in Sacramento, where he hopes to represent a newly reconfigured Midpeninsula district.

Berman, D-Menlo Park, is a former Palo Alto City Council member who was first elected to the Assembly in 2016. He is running to represent the new District 23, which includes much of his current domain in the Midpeninsula, including Mountain View, Palo Alto, most of Menlo Park and western San Mateo County. Unlike Berman's current district, the new one will also include communities along the coast and south of Daly City, including Pacifica and Half Moon Bay, as well as the Santa Clara County cities of Saratoga and Campbell.

Berman will no longer, however, represent East Palo Alto, Belle Haven, North Fair Oaks or Sunnyvale, with the former three communities included in the newly formed Assembly District



Marc Berman



Evan Low

21, which includes the eastern portion of San Mateo County, and the lattermost joining Cupertino, Sunnyvale and Santa Clara in the new Assembly District 26.

The inclusion of Campbell on the eastern tip of District 23 raised the prospect of a fiercely competitive Peninsula race between Berman and Assembly member Evan Low, a Campbell resident. That prospect fizzled on Monday, with Low announcing his intention to run in Assembly District 26 rather than in Assembly District 23.

The two Democratic lawmakers discussed their election plans last Thursday and commemorated the summit with a pillow fight in a parking lot, footage of which was posted on TikTok.

Berman alluded to the changing boundaries of the district in his Monday announcement, noting that he will "sadly no longer represent the communities of Belle Haven (in Menlo Park), East Palo Alto, North Fair Oaks, and Sunnyvale.

"It has been a tremendous honor to represent the constituents of these communities over the last five years, and I look forward to my final year as their Assembly member," Berman said. "I look forward to representing new communities on the Coastside and in the South Bay in the new 23rd AD."

Berman's announcement follows a year in which he had authored high-profile legislation to make California a vote-by-mail state in all elections and to phase out sales of gas-powered leaf blowers. He also currently chairs the Assembly Elections Committee and is leading an effort to revise the state's rules for recall elections. ■

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

New Atherton mayor takes the helm

Rick DeGolia lays out his vision for 2022

By Angela Swartz

Atherton Mayor Rick DeGolia is back in the mayor's seat for his second time amid the pandemic.

DeGolia, who was last mayor in 2020, has a list of priorities for the City Council in 2022. So far, these include: examining options for improving pedestrian and bike safety; reviewing the water drainage plans; extending a quiet zone along Watkins Avenue; and addressing the town's long-term financial liabilities.

DeGolia is up for reelection next fall and said he plans to run when his term is up.

"Continuity (on the council) is extremely important," he said. "It takes a long time to learn the ins and outs of how a municipality works."

He plans to host weekly office hours with residents, which he has done during his past terms as mayor. They will take place in person at the new Town Hall from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. on Tuesdays, beginning Jan. 4.

Atherton's newest Councilman Bob Polito's eight years of experience on the town Audit and

Finance Committee will provide an "enormous benefit" to the council. The town faces pension liabilities and has to pay off \$7 million it borrowed to fund the new civic center. The pensions come at a 7% interest rate, while the civic center loan is for 3%, so DeGolia said he would like to prioritize paying off the pensions first.

In terms of pedestrian and bike safety, DeGolia would like the council to review its master plan and identify one or two projects to target. The town hasn't examined the plan in several years, and reviewing it will help the three of the five council members new to the council get up to speed on the plan.

"Atherton has no sidewalks, so it's an issue of people being safe on the streets that are shared with cars, traffic and congestion," he said.

DeGolia said he would like to reexamine the town's storm

drainage master plan, which it hasn't reviewed in about five years. He'd then like to identify one or two priority projects.

Caltrain is in the design phase of extending the existing "quiet zone" at the Fair Oaks Lane railroad crossing to include the crossing at Watkins Avenue. DeGolia expects designs for the estimated \$5 million project, funded by the rail service, to be completed by the end of the first quarter, and he's hopeful they can move to construction in 2022. Caltrain's target completion date is December 2023, said Town Manager George Rodericks in an email.

"It's very hard to really be able to do things on a City Council that materially benefits the quality of people's lives," DeGolia said. "There's nothing I've received more positive comments for than setting it up so we could declare a quiet zone at Fair Oaks. The lack of the horn significantly improved the quality of their lives."

The parking area at the Caltrain station that the town leases



Rick DeGolia

See **ATHERTON MAYOR**, page 17

Coronavirus central: Lawmakers call for vaccine, testing for domestic air travel

Also, Santa Clara County issues new mandates for workers in high-risk settings

By Embarcadero Media staff

A group of Democratic lawmakers, including Sen. Dianne Feinstein and Rep. Eric Swalwell, last week wrote a letter calling for a requirement that domestic air passengers show proof of their full COVID-19 vaccination status or a recent negative test.

Feinstein, D-California, and Swalwell, D-Castro Valley, joined Reps. Ritchie Torres, D-New York, and Don Beyer, D-Virginia, in sending the letter to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky and Federal Aviation Administration Administrator Steve Dickson.

The four lawmakers noted that both proof of COVID-19 vaccination and a negative test is already required for people coming to the U.S. from a foreign country, but domestic travelers are not even required to show that they have recently tested negative for the virus.

Proof of vaccination or a negative test are also required for domestic travelers flying to Hawaii, otherwise they are required to quarantine after arriving.

“Ensuring the health and safety of air travelers and their destination communities is critical to mitigating the ongoing COVID-19 surge, especially as the virus continues to evolve,” they said in the letter.

Last month, the four lawmakers and 32 other members of Congress wrote a letter to President Joe Biden also calling for a vaccination and negative test requirement.

Feinstein has also introduced a bill that would require airlines to confirm that their passengers are fully vaccinated, have tested negative or are fully recovered from the virus.

On Monday, Dec. 20, Swalwell said in a Twitter post that it is



Magali Gauthier

Syringes filled with the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine are at the ready at Ravenswood Family Health Center in East Palo Alto on Jan. 30.

“one-hundred percent batty” that unvaccinated people have carte blanche to fly domestic.

“It’s unsafe in the cabin and we are transporting the virus,” Swalwell said. “Requiring the vaccine to fly is the LEAST we can do to stop the spread.”

A mid-November Harris Poll survey of roughly 2,000 U.S. adults found that 66% were in favor of airlines requiring proof of vaccination to board a domestic flight.

Last month, U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg suggested in an interview with NBC’s Meet the Press that such a mandate was not imminent and that current measures like mask requirements when flying and in airports and vaccine requirements for those in the travel industry were enough to keep passengers safe.

“What we’re doing right now is working to make air travel safe,” he said. “It’s a little bit of a different picture, of course, when you have international travel because different countries have different standards ... but between the masking and the other mitigations, we’re very confident in the safety of air travel.”

Santa Clara County rolls out new vaccination requirements

With the lightning-speed spread of the COVID-19 omicron variant, Santa Clara County health officials on Tuesday issued a new order that expands on the state’s vaccination requirements for workers in high-risk settings, including health care facilities, jails, shelters and long-term care facilities.

The Dec. 28 county health order mandates up-to-date vaccination for workers in certain health care and long-term care settings by Jan. 24. The workers would be required to be fully vaccinated and have received a booster shot if they work in these high-risk settings:

- Skilled nursing facilities, long-term care facilities, adult day care facilities and memory care facilities.

- Health care delivery facilities (such as hospitals, clinics, medical offices, dialysis centers) where patient care is provided, and those who are medical first responders.

- Jails and other correctional facilities.

- Congregate shelters.

It requires unvaccinated or unboosted staff who work in health care, jail, long-term care or shelter settings to be reassigned to lower-risk settings or otherwise be prohibited from working in higher-risk settings. This includes workers with religious or other exemptions, who would be reassigned to jobs that are outside of the higher-risk settings, county Counsel James Williams said.

The order also speeds up mandated up-to-date vaccinations for these workers by Jan. 24 instead of the state’s Feb. 1 deadline. County officials said they made that decision based on how quickly the omicron variant is spreading and the widespread availability of vaccination appointments in the county.

“Less than two weeks ago, we noted that the omicron variant was about to bring a deluge of new COVID-19 cases to Santa Clara County. Unfortunately, that deluge is now here,” Dr. Sara Cody, the county’s health officer and director of public health, said in a statement. “We urge everyone in our community to get boosted as soon as they are eligible and be highly cautious because the omicron variant is so transmissible. It is especially essential that workers who are delivering healthcare and interacting with vulnerable populations are vaccinated and boosted in order to best protect themselves and the people in their care.”

Businesses aren’t mandated to require up-to-date vaccination, but the health order recommends that they require their workers to be vaccinated and boosted against COVID-19 now if they have not done so already. In addition, businesses were advised to move operations and activities outdoors where possible, where there is

significantly less risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Businesses that serve the public, especially those with activities that require patrons to remove their face masks (such as restaurants and bars), should require their patrons to show proof of up-to-date vaccination prior to entry.

The county also offered additional recommendations, such as not gathering indoors in groups of more than 10 people from outside their household, unless everyone is wearing face masks at all times.

Cody said while people should continue to support restaurants through takeout orders, delivery and generous tipping, health officials advise against indoor dining. For New Year’s Eve celebrations, she doesn’t recommend gathering, but if people choose to do so, they should limit their contacts to 10 people or fewer and everyone should wear masks while indoors.

She urged people to take the omicron variant seriously and to do everything they can to protect themselves and others.

“The case rates are going up incredibly fast. They will exceed last winter’s,” she said. “(Omicron) grows with breathtaking speed.”

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.

East Palo Alto City Clerk Walfred Solorzano resigns

By Sue Dremann

Walfred Solorzano has departed from his job as East Palo Alto’s city clerk after signing a “separation agreement,” according to a settlement document. The reasons for his departure have not been disclosed.

Solorzano, 42, was on leave of absence earlier this year and signed the separation

agreement on Nov. 23. Three members of the City Council, Antonio Lopez, Lisa Gauthier and Regina Wallace-Jones, approved the agreement on Dec. 7; council members Ruben Abrica and Carlos Romero voted against it.

The separation agreement pays Solorzano for an undisclosed sum of back wages, vacation and leave time, \$30,248 in “severance” pay and \$7,820 to

cover three months of health insurance premium payments. The severance pay is a lump sum in accordance with an agreement signed at the time he began his employment.

The intent of the agreement is to resolve any legal claims surrounding his employment and termination, according to the settlement. Both sides agreed not to disparage each other.

Earlier this year, Solorzano

was recognized by the City Clerks Association of California with the 2021 Special Award of Distinction for Communications, Organization and Administration for his work on a new city website; partnering with organizations that helped create record voter turnout; overhauling the city’s communications and outreach efforts; and helping San Mateo County in bringing free Wi-Fi to two

parks and other areas of the city. He also pushed a new agenda system for the council and city commissions.

Earlier this month, Solorzano began a new position as clerk for Patterson, a city in Stanislaus County, according to his LinkedIn profile. ■

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

Counties to distribute free at-home COVID-19 test kits

By Sue Dremann

In an attempt to track and identify rapidly spreading cases of COVID-19, Santa Clara and San Mateo counties plan to distribute tens of thousands of free COVID-19 home test kits as soon as this week, according to county departments of public health.

The announcements come as the more contagious omicron variant has become dominant throughout the United States and the numbers of sick people are growing, forcing some states to issue new mask mandates and emergency orders.

Santa Clara County anticipates receiving 90,000 at-home COVID-19 test kits from the state this week, and more have been

ordered. The free tests will be distributed through partner agencies serving the most impacted communities and by county outreach teams that will go door-to-door in areas with the highest case rates, such as in East San Jose and Gilroy.

"The county is prepared to begin distribution as soon as the tests are received, which is expected to be this week," Santa Clara County officials stated in an email.

In addition to home testing, Santa Clara County increased testing for the holiday season and is providing more appointments in response to increased demand. The largest county location, the Santa Clara County Fairgrounds parking lot, increased testing from 1,500 to 1,800 tests per day

to a capacity of 3,500 per day starting Dec. 20. The location will soon have a capacity of 5,000 tests per day, according to the county.

"Testing is an important part in defending our community against COVID-19, and everyone is encouraged to be tested if they are exposed to an individual or they have symptoms," county staff stated.

Testing site and appointment information can be found at is.gd/scc19test.

San Mateo County Health is working with the state of California and the county Office of Education to provide rapid antigen test kits to families before school will reopen after the holiday break or soon after children return to school, department staff stated in an email.

So far, the county has received 48,000 test kits. Plans are being made for their free distribution to families through the districts and schools.

San Mateo County also sponsors testing at 13 locations, in addition to the many other options for testing by health care providers, pharmacies and other operators. County-sponsored testing sites are open to the public and don't have a role in processing the test kits distributed to schools, according to the department.

"Current demand is at approximately 45% of capacity of county-operated sites, and we are working to ensure that we have sufficient capacity to meet demand at individual locations, not just county-wide," department staff said.

Last week, the county averaged

690 tests per day and is seeing an approximately 30% increase in average weekly usage compared to the month of November.

Gov. Gavin Newsom announced Dec. 22 that the California Department of Public Health "will expand those efforts by providing one to two rapid tests for every student. CDPH will work with local education and health partners to distribute those test kits as quickly and efficiently as possible."

The federal government plans to issue 500 million at-home test kits, President Joe Biden announced on Dec. 21, but it could take weeks before they become available. The public will order the test kits through a new, planned website. ■

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

CRIME BRIEFS

continued from page 6

the following means:

- Send an anonymous email to epa@tipnow.org.
- Send an anonymous text from your cell phone to 650-409-6792.
- Leave an anonymous voicemail by calling 650-409-6792.
- Call Detective Andrea Dion at 650-853-7247.

—Bay City News Service

Motorcyclist dies in crash

A motorcyclist died after striking a disabled vehicle on U.S. Highway 101 near Willow Road in Menlo Park early Tuesday morning, Dec. 28, the California Highway Patrol reported.

The motorcyclist was Adam Christopher Wolf, a 36-year-old from San Jose, according to the Coroner's Office.

The fatal crash closed the southbound lanes of 101 between approximately 4 and 6:30 a.m., and southbound traffic was diverted off the highway off-ramp north at Marsh Road.

Officers responded to a 3:50 a.m. report of the crash between a disabled Honda Accord and a 2018 Kawasaki Ninja sport motorcycle, and at 4:04 a.m. issued a SigAlert closing the southbound lanes and then contacted the Coroner's Office.

A 31-year-old Sunnyvale man lost control of the 1999 Accord and the car was stopped in the fast lane of southbound 101, north of Willow Road, with no lights on, the CHP reported. According to witnesses, the motorcyclist drove into the disabled car's rear passenger door and was pronounced dead at the scene, the CHP report said.

Drugs or alcohol do not appear to be a factor in the collision, the CHP said. Any witnesses are

asked to contact Officer D. Myers at 650-369-6261.

—Bay City News Service and Almanac staff

Police investigate Christmas Eve shooting

An East Palo Alto man was apparently shot on Christmas Eve and reportedly later died of his wounds, prompting police in East Palo Alto to investigate the incident as a homicide, according to a news release from the department. Police later said the victim was not dead but on life support at the hospital.

At 11:33 p.m., officers responded to a Shotspotter activation in the 900 block of Beech Street, which is between Clarke Avenue and Brentwood Court.

Officers found a vehicle that had crashed through a fence and into the front porch of a home. Inside the vehicle was a 22-year-old man, who did not respond to officers and looked like he might be injured.

Police got the man out of the vehicle to give him first aid and noticed he appeared to be suffering from gunshot wounds.

The man was transported to the hospital, where he was on life support, police said.

Anyone who has information related to the incident is asked to contact East Palo Alto police by calling Detective Aleyda Romero at 650-853-7249. Anonymous tips can also be made by text or voicemail at 650-409-6792 or email to epa@tipnow.org.

Man sentenced for indecent exposure at Encinal School

A 36-year-old man who pleaded no contest to a felony for exposing himself at an elementary school in Atherton last month has been sentenced to

16 months in state prison, San Mateo County prosecutors said Dec. 28.

Brandon Yamagata, who had seven prior felony convictions including one earlier this year for grabbing a teenage girl at a coffee shop in Redwood City, was arrested on the night of Nov. 1 after a janitor at Encinal School reported that someone

was masturbating at the campus, according to the San Mateo County District Attorney's Office. No students or teachers were at the school at the time.

He had entered a no contest plea last month to felony indecent exposure and was sentenced by Judge Barbara Mallach to the 16-month term with 113 days credit for time served,

prosecutors said.

Yamagata in June was arrested for grabbing the teen outside of the Teaspoon coffee, tea and desert bar on Broadway in Redwood City and pleaded no contest to a misdemeanor child molestation charge. He was on probation for that case at the time of the November arrest, prosecutors said.

—Bay City News Service

TOWN OF WOODSIDE 2955 WOODSIDE ROAD, WOODSIDE, CA 94062 PLANNING COMMISSION JANUARY 12, 2022 6:00 PM

PURSUANT TO THE GOVERNOR'S EXECUTIVE ORDER N-29-20, AS AMENDED THROUGH ORDER N-08-21, PLANNING COMMISSION MEETINGS WILL BE HELD AS HYBRID MEETINGS WITH THE OPTION TO ATTEND BY TELECONFERENCE/VIDEO CONFERENCE OR IN PERSON. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC THAT WISH TO ATTEND AND/OR PARTICIPATE IN A MEETING MAY DO SO IN PERSON OR BY JOINING THE ZOOM MEETING [HTTPS://US02WEB.ZOOM.US/J/86068472736](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86068472736) - PUBLIC COMMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED BOTH IN PERSON AND VIA ZOOM MEETING. ANY EMAILS SENT TO SHARPER@WOODSIDETOWN.ORG WILL BE PROVIDED TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION PRIOR TO THE MEETING. IN THE EVENT THAT ANY MEMBER OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION PARTICIPATES IN A MEETING BY TELECONFERENCE OR VIDEO CONFERENCE, PURSUANT TO THE RALPH M. BROWN ACT, GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 54953, ALL VOTES OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION SHALL BE BY ROLL CALL.

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Remote Public Comments:

Meeting participants are encouraged to submit public comments in writing in advance of the meeting. The following email will be monitored during the meeting and public comments received will be read into the record.

Email: sharper@woodsidetown.org

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Town-wide

Town of Woodside

Planner: Jackie Young, Planning Director

Review and discussion of the Housing Element Update, Cycle Six; and Current State Housing Laws.

THE APPLICATION MATERIALS ARE AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC REVIEW BY CONTACTING JACKIE YOUNG AT JYOUNG@WOODSIDETOWN.ORG

Looking back on another pandemic year

continued from page 1



Magali Gauthier



Magali Gauthier



Clockwise from above: Nicki Poulos, co-owner of Ann's Coffee Shop, speaks with customer Steve Mercer on April 7, the last day the 75-year-old downtown Menlo Park institution was open before closing permanently; a protester holds a sign outside the Sequoia Union High School District office to demand schools reopen for in-person learning once San Mateo County enters the state's "red tier" in Redwood City on Feb. 23; varsity tennis player junior Callista Mille plays doubles with junior Lila Motamedi against Carlmont High School at Menlo-Atherton High School on Feb. 25; Elizabeth McCarthy glues "protein spikes" made out of paper straws and pompoms onto her coronavirus piñatas in her Menlo Park home on April 26.



Magali Gauthier



Magali Gauthier



Magali Gauthier



Magali Gauthier

Above: Jena Hollister uses bobby pins to fasten Katie Kwan's cap to her hair before the Woodside High School graduation on June 4. **Top:** Seniors Emery Goldberg, Alexandra Gonzalez, Sophie Glinder and Kayli Smith pose together at the Menlo-Atherton High School outdoor prom on the campus' soccer field on May 7.

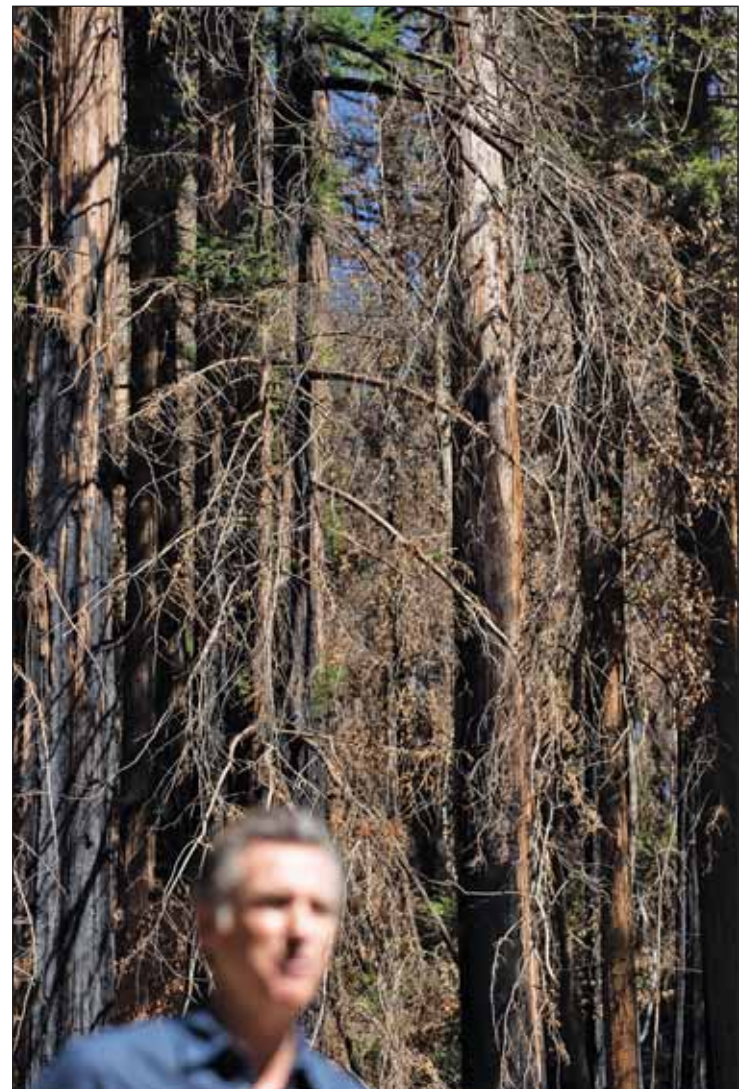


Magali Gauthier



Magali Gauthier

Above: Ken Clark reads a book in the fiction section of the main library in Menlo Park on July 22. Both city library locations opened for indoor access on July 6. **Right:** Burned trees with new growth stand behind Gov. Gavin Newsom during a press conference at Big Basin Redwoods State Park in Boulder Creek on Aug. 17. **Top:** Ornella Tchoumie passes a box to Lauren Shaub at the Community Mobile Market warehouse Facebook is leasing in Redwood City on June 22. The boxes are filled with fresh produce and other goods.



Magali Gauthier



Magali Gauthier



Magali Gauthier



Magali Gauthier



Magali Gauthier

Clockwise from top: Sharona Wolff uses a torch to fuse 22-karat gold balls onto a larger gold piece in the studio she works out of at the Allied Arts Guild in Menlo Park on Nov. 29; Michael Thompson looks through “The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins” by Dr. Seuss, his godfather, in his Redwood City home on March 8; parents watch their kindergartners from a distance on the first day of the new school year at Laurel School in Atherton on Aug. 19; Theodore “Teddy” Jester, 6, looks at his mother while receiving his first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine from Erica Smith at a clinic at Las Lomitas Elementary School in Atherton on Nov. 10.

Supervisors consider waiving parking fees for all San Mateo County park visitors

By Kate Bradshaw

A proposal to consider waiving parking fees at San Mateo County parks for low-income households has spurred the county to consider getting rid of the fees for everyone, regardless of income.

The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors on Dec. 14 discussed a proposal by the Parks and Recreation Department to let anyone who receives Medi-Cal, CalFresh and/or San Mateo County Access and Care for Everyone (ACE) benefits to enter any of the county's parks for free.

Called the "Mariposa Program," people who show their cards for any of those benefits — which serve low-income households — would be exempted from entrance fees, without having to fill out any forms or provide additional financial documentation.

Currently, there are seven parks throughout San Mateo County that charge a \$6 vehicle entrance fee: Huddart Park in Woodside, Sam McDonald Park, Memorial Park, Coyote Point Recreation Area, San Pedro Valley Park, Junipero Serra Park and San Bruno Mountain State and County Park. The county has a total of 24 parks, according to Nicholas Calderon, director of the county Parks and Recreation Department.

Throughout San Mateo County, there are 88,611 households and 157,553 individuals enrolled in Medi-Cal; 16,129 households and 26,872 individuals enrolled in CalFresh; and 25,500 members of ACE, a locally funded



Kate Bradshaw

A trail marker at Sam McDonald Park in Loma Mar, one of seven parks in San Mateo County that charges \$6 for parking. The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors is considering waiving that fee.

health care program for low-income adults who don't qualify for other state and federal insurance programs. Calderon said he expected that there would be roughly 185,000 county residents who would be eligible for the Mariposa Program.

Previous research by the county Parks and Recreation Department found that for many visitors, the current fees are affordable and don't impact their ability to access county parks — in fact, one of the biggest barriers cited in a recent survey was that people reported feeling like they didn't have time to visit the parks, according to Calderon.

The top three barriers to park access identified in a 2015-16 study were limited awareness of the parks and where to find information about them; transportation and parking; and language barriers related to signs

and printed materials. Parking and transportation appeared to be the most significant barrier, according to Calderon.

"With regards to vehicle entry fees specifically, we've proposed the Mariposa Program because we truly believe that this allows us to meet the needs of the most vulnerable residents in San Mateo County," he said.

Eliminating all parking fees?

After Calderon made the case for waiving fees for the specific low-income individuals and families, supervisors seemed interested in exploring going further.

"I would like to see us not have fees to enter the park," Supervisor Carole Groom said.

The county usually generates between \$1.1 million to

\$1.2 million in vehicle entrance fees each fiscal year, which are used to maintain facilities like restrooms, playgrounds, picnic areas and reservation sites, according to a county board memo. The county would have to figure out how to make up that funding to operate parks, and savings wouldn't necessarily come from no longer having park staffers collecting money at the entrance kiosks, Calderon said. Maintaining staff at park entrances to interact with visitors is an important role, whether or not they're collecting fees, he said.

The supervisors agreed to look into the matter further, acting unanimously to create a subcommittee of Groom and Supervisor Don Horsley to work with parks staff to examine the fee schedule and the possibility of eliminating vehicle entry fees for all.

Supervisor Warren Slocum added that he'd like to see the subcommittee and staff also discuss how to attract a more demographically diverse set of visitors and draw in patrons who say they feel they don't have time to visit county parks. Tentatively, he suggested that the research come back to supervisors in about six months.

San Mateo County's Parks and Recreation Department has already waived the \$6 entry fee for Flood Park in Menlo Park, one of the county's more urban park locations. Slocum also suggested that the county study the impacts of waiving parking fees at Flood Park as part of a pilot initiative.

In addition, he said that

he wanted further evaluation before considering ending parking fees at county parks.

"I am concerned about what happens if we move into a serious recession ... coupled with this \$1 million, \$2 million revenue loss," he said.

While a former county manager may have called figures like \$1 million to \$2 million "budget dust," Slocum noted, "It is significant for the parks department that has to withstand the vicissitudes of funding and downturns of the economy."

The parks department has taken a series of steps in recent years to expand access for communities that have been under-represented when it comes to outdoor recreation, including the county's "Parks Rx" program, which "prescribes" park visits to county health system users and encourages people to go outdoors. Whereas people who were prescribed park visits through this program had previously been given a day pass, the county health program now also plans to give out annual passes, according to Calderon.

Board President David Canepa also noted that park visitors tend to find ways to access the parks for free where they can, such as at the San Bruno Mountain State and County Park, where many people park on the street outside the park rather than pay to park in the official lot.

"We want people to use our parks," he said. ■

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

Community college district vice chancellor pleads not guilty to misusing public funds

By Kevin Forestieri

Jose Nuñez, the latest district official ensnared in a criminal investigation into the San Mateo Community College District, pleaded not guilty last week to more than a dozen felony charges alleging that he misused public funds and illegally spent district money to support a political candidate.

Nuñez, a 21-year veteran in the district, currently serves as vice chancellor of facilities planning, maintenance and operations. He has since been put on administrative leave

during the pending legal matter.

The San Mateo County District Attorney's Office filed 15 felony charges against Nuñez, including embezzlement and perjury charges, accusing him of illegally awarding a contract for a solar project at Cañada College in 2014. He also allegedly failed to report "numerous" gifts he received from vendors



Jose Nuñez

spanning more than a decade.

Nuñez also faces felony charges that he had used district resources to support a candidate for the district's Board of Directors and to support a \$2 billion bond measure for capital improvements, both a violation of state education code.

Nuñez appeared in court on Dec. 22 for an arraignment, and pleaded not guilty to all charges, according to the District Attorney's Office. He remains free on his own recognizance, and will return for another court hearing next

week on Jan. 5.

The District Attorney's Office has spent more than two years investigating the corruption scandal at the community college district, looking into possible illegal activity by former Chancellor Ron Galatolo, who was fired earlier this year. The district's Board of Directors has accused Galatolo of misusing public funds for retirement incentives; failing to disclose personal relationships with district vendors; and failing to disclose gifts from contractors ranging from high-end travel to concert tickets.

Prior to Galatolo's dismissal, the district had spent in excess of \$200,000 in legal fees directly related to Galatolo's employment. Formal charges have not been filed against Galatolo, making Nuñez the first of the district's top officials to face criminal proceedings in the investigation.

Charges against other staff could come as soon as next month, according to the District Attorney's Office. ■

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

Feds add wire fraud to list of charges against former Uber security chief

A federal grand jury in San Francisco added wire fraud to the list of charges pending against Joseph Sullivan, former chief security officer at Uber, for his role in the alleged coverup of the 2016 hack of user and driver records.

The 52-year-old Sullivan, of Palo Alto, was previously charged with obstruction of justice and misprision of a felony in connection with the alleged attempted coverup of the incident, according to a news release issued Dec. 22 by acting U.S. Attorney Stephanie M. Hinds and FBI Special Agent in Charge Craig D. Fair.

Prosecutors said Sullivan was serving as Uber's chief security officer when hackers revealed to him that they had

accessed and downloaded an Uber database containing personally identifying information, or PII, including approximately 600,000 driver's license numbers associated with certain Uber drivers.

The previous charges filed against Sullivan alleged that he orchestrated the disbursement of a six-figure payment to two hackers in exchange for their silence about the hack; took deliberate steps to prevent drivers from discovering that the hack had occurred; and took steps to conceal, deflect and mislead the Federal Trade Commission about the data breach.

Prosecutors said the new charges of three counts of wire fraud center around Sullivan's attempt to defraud Uber's



Veronica Weber

Uber's former security chief Joseph Sullivan is facing charges for allegedly participating in the coverup of a data hack in 2016.

drivers by failing to disclose the 2016 breach and that rather than notify the drivers of the breach, he took deliberate steps to ensure Uber's drivers and others did not learn the true nature of the incident.

If convicted, Sullivan faces a maximum

statutory penalty of 20 years in prison for each count of wire fraud, five years in prison for the obstruction charge and a maximum three years in prison for the misprision charge.

—Bay City News Service

BAKING

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developing the company, take only 15 minutes of preparation time before they can be popped in the oven. She wanted "fail proof," bakery-quality desserts. For example, her raspberry torte mix uses freeze-dried berries in the raspberry cake layer.

Mackey, who has a background in finance, got her start baking with her grandmothers, Mary and Linnis, who she says were amazing bakers.

"I always baked my whole life; it's the thing I always bring (to parties)," she said. "The rest of the food feels a little irrelevant."

She sold her accounting business a couple of years ago and dove into the food industry to take a "whole new direction" in her working life.

Mackey used to make chocolates and said she enjoys creating flavor combinations.

"It was challenging to have tasters

because of COVID," she said, noting that she started the company in 2020 and had some setbacks because of supply chain issues associated with the pandemic. "I knew a couple of people who still had to go into the office, so they brought them to their office."

Friends and family also acted as guinea pigs.

She mixes and packages the boxes at KitchenTown in San Mateo, the Peninsula's food industry incubator.

She understands that at \$15 a box, the mixes seem expensive, but said they are still more affordable than picking up a high-quality dessert at a bakery. Plus there's the added benefit of having a kitchen that smells great after baking it.

Buyers at specialty grocers, like Draeger's and Bianchini's, were receptive to the idea of a higher end cake mix, Mackey said.

"Honestly, almost everyone without even trying the sample said: 'Yes, let's try it,'" she said. "It's something new and different on the market and they want to

shake it up because it's kind of (a) boring (space)."

Down the line, Mackey said she'd like to expand into other areas — like chocolates, baking equipment and carrying boxes for tortes. She also plans to produce new torte flavors in the new year and said she'd like to see her line nationwide at specialty stores.

The torte mixes are on shelves at 10 Bay Area stores, including Draeger's Menlo

Park and Los Altos locations; Bianchini's in Portola Valley; Delucchi's Market in Redwood City; The Market at Edgewood in Palo Alto; and The Willows Market in Menlo Park. It'll be in more stores in January, Mackey said.

They're also for sale online at janelane.co. ■

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

ATHERTON MAYOR

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from the rail service will be turned into parking, DeGolia noted.

"It's greatly needed by the new town center," he said.

In October, the town began to seek bids to refurbish the train station building and turn it into a museum, he noted. The museum will likely feature the history of the train in Atherton, he said. The proposed budget for the interior displays and video is approximately \$50,000 to \$150,000.

An initial concept of the museum involves three areas. The first is a free-standing display that tells the story of pre-train Atherton, including Native Americans, settlers and the stagecoach days. The second is a center display that

features a train track with model trains that show the history and evolution of the trains, the station and the riders over time, and the third is a video screen with seating that will show a short video, according to a town staff report. There are also two wall spaces that can be used for mounted displays or memorabilia cases.

DeGolia said he looks forward to hosting hybrid meetings as a council (it is still meeting on Zoom) once council chambers are complete and ready to use around February.

Rodericks said the town doesn't plan to use the chambers until staff has tested all of the new IT systems and know that they will function for hybrid meetings. ■

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



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In North Fair Oaks, a battle is brewing over redevelopment

For nearly a year, residents have been posting signs, collecting signatures and petitioning the county to intervene

By Leah Worthington

Like many other neighborhoods along the Peninsula, North Fair Oaks has recently become a hotbed for new developments. Texts and phone calls from developers wanting to buy residents' homes, often in cash, are the norm. But many feel that the past year has ushered in a new era, due in large part to Thomas James Homes, a Los Angeles-native real estate agency that has become a ubiquitous (and, by many, hated) name in parts of the Peninsula and South Bay.

Founded in 2006, the company has since expanded into Northern and Southern California, Seattle, Denver and Phoenix, building more than 800 "luxury residences" in what its website calls "the nation's most in-demand zip codes." Since establishing a Bay Area office in 2018, it's built somewhere around 70 homes, and another 110 are in various stages of construction.

Since coming last December into North Fair Oaks — San Mateo County's largest



Leah Worthington

Residents of North Fair Oaks have put up signs protesting the rapid transformation of their neighborhood by developer TJ Homes.

unincorporated area, located between Redwood City and Menlo Park — TJ Homes has purchased a half-dozen properties, tearing down the existing houses and building larger, more expensive ones in their place.

In many ways, TJ Homes is like any other developer looking to turn a profit in an up-and-coming market. The eastern

side of North Fair Oaks makes an obvious target, with its dense tree canopy, access to good public schools and proximity to downtown shopping centers.

But, according to the neighbors, when the first TJ Homes sign went up in December 2020, something felt different.

"It's actually pretty alarming," said Virginia Miller-Bowen, who's lived in the neighborhood

for 12 years. "The amount of development that's happening so quickly in a concentrated area."

It wasn't just the suddenness with which TJ Homes began buying up properties that put the residents on high alert, but the fact that \$1.5 million ranch-style houses were becoming two-story mansions that tower over the adjacent homes and sell for double the cost.

"My patio, my bedroom, my living room, my other bedroom, my bathroom, they all look out west," said 36-year resident Susanne Beattie, who lives adjacent to one of TJ Homes' new developments. "And now here they are, 5 feet away, putting up a just-a-couple-inches-under-27-foot house. And the second story has nine windows looking onto me."

"Then we started seeing more and more homes getting bought by TJ Homes," said resident Niket Sirsi.

Alarmed both about the new housing and about trees being felled as part of the redevelopment, residents built a website, collected signatures for a petition to protect the canopy

and planted accusatory signs on their lawns. "Say No to TJ Homes" became their rallying cry. They created spreadsheets to track the new developments and tree removal permits. They began to scrutinize TJ Homes' every move, documenting alleged violations like instances of construction happening outside of working hours and damage caused to heritage trees.

According to TJ Homes, the firm hopes to mitigate local housing needs by replacing deteriorating homes and diversifying the options for potential homeowners.

"When you look at what the community needs, it needs all housing types," said Jon Tattersall, president of TJ Homes' Northern California office. "We're typically improving the existing condition. We're adding square footage for multigenerational homes. We have people that are raising their families that need more space."

"Not everybody is looking for a two-bedroom, two-bath house that was built in 1945," he

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COVID CASES

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of omicron was reported in San Francisco on Dec. 1 and, according to the Centers for Disease Control, it has since been detected in almost all states and territories, causing an estimated 58.6% of COVID-19 cases in the U.S.

Transmission in San Mateo County is currently “substantial,” according to the CDC, which calculates seven-day case rates. With 94.71 new cases per 100,000 people, San Mateo County is in the second-highest tier. The CDC recommends wearing a mask in public, indoor spaces and as of Dec. 15, the state of California requires it.

“With omicron spreading throughout the Bay Area, we can’t stress enough the need for vaccinations and boosters, wearing masks indoors, staying home if you feel sick, and getting tested if you have symptoms or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19,” said Merchant.

Throughout Northern California, Kaiser Permanente said it is increasing appointment availability in response to an increase in testing demand over the last week, according to a statement.

The hospital system said it expects appointment requests to continue to rise during the



Magali Gauthier

Adelia Hodges, 11, holds her mother’s hand while receiving her first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine from Erica Smith at a clinic at Las Lomitas Elementary School in Atherton on Nov. 10.

omicron surge, adding that hospitalizations have mildly increased over the last week. Kaiser has not seen a rise in pediatric hospitalizations.

According to data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services published by the LA Times, Kaiser Redwood City has seen an average of seven new COVID-19 patients a day over the last week.

Kaiser said it’s seeing higher numbers of confirmed cases across all age groups, which is “likely associated with the omicron variant, holiday gatherings and travel.” Kaiser added that the biggest spike has been among

adults between the ages of 18 and 50.

“We are closely monitoring the situation in our hospitals in Northern California and throughout the state, as the effects of this omicron surge in the community are likely to be evident over the next two weeks,” said Kaiser in its statement.

Along with the sudden rise in new cases, demand for COVID-19 tests has skyrocketed across the county.

In the week before Christmas, the county was averaging 690 tests per day and saw a roughly 30% increase in average weekly usage compared to

the month of November.

With current demand at approximately 45% of capacity of county-operated sites, the county health department joined Santa Clara County in distributing tens of thousands of free COVID-19 tests to residents.

“There aren’t many pharmacies now that you can go and get self-tested,” San Mateo County Supervisor David Canepa told NBC Bay Area. “That’s problematic, that’s extremely problematic and so as a county, we’re going to have to lean in and we may have to do much, much more than we’re doing now.”

While much remains unknown about the new variant, the CDC says that omicron is believed to spread faster than previous strains and likely can be transmitted by anyone, even if they are vaccinated and asymptomatic. Additional research is needed to determine whether it causes more severe illness, though the New York Times reported that several researchers observed generally milder symptoms with omicron than previous strains.

The CDC also shortened the recommended isolation and quarantine period for those who test positive for COVID.

Recent data published by the UK Health Security Agency

suggests that the booster shot likely helps protect against omicron, with its effectiveness waning after roughly 10 weeks. Though data is still limited, the CDC website says that “the recent emergence of omicron further emphasizes the importance of vaccination and boosters.”

In San Mateo County, about 78% of all residents are fully vaccinated with two doses of Pfizer or Moderna or one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, according to Merchant. However, only 45% of eligible residents have received their booster shot, and nearly half of 5- to 11-year-olds are still unvaccinated.

“It’s still too early to determine the effect omicron will have on our community,” said Merchant. “There are still over 100,000 unvaccinated residents.”

In addition to getting vaccinated, he added that, as the new surge continues, “sticking to the proven strategies — wearing a mask indoors, avoiding crowded spaces, remembering that outdoor activities are safer than indoor activities, and getting tested after an exposure or developing symptoms — are more important than ever.” ■

Email Staff Writer Leah Worthington at lworthington@rwcpulse.com.

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NORTH FAIR OAKS

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added. “If there was no demand for the housing that we were providing, what you would see is a lot of vacant houses, right? But what you do see is that there are no vacant houses and that we are severely undersupplied.”

But Laura Caplan, resident and current president of Fair Oaks Beautification Association, a volunteer urban forestry group, said that these new developments represent a threat to potential homeowners in North Fair Oaks, which she called “the last ‘affordable’ (area) in the Peninsula.”

According to the county’s 2014-2022 housing element, North Fair Oaks, which has 4,228 housing units according to the 2020 census, has a relatively high concentration of low and moderate-income households. Though 30% of housing in the area was built 60 or more years ago, the price of homes has recently skyrocketed.

In the last five years alone, the median housing price in San Mateo County has nearly doubled, from \$1.35 million in October 2016 to \$2.1 million in October 2021, according to historical housing data from the California Association of Realtors. Redfin reported a 100.2% increase in home prices in November compared to last year, with houses



Susanne Beattie, a North Fair Oaks resident, points at one of the new TJ Homes developments going up on her block.

selling for a median of \$2 million.

At the same time, a recent community needs survey conducted in collaboration with the Stanford Graduate School of Education found that housing is one of the main issues for residents of Redwood City and North Fair Oaks. The survey also reported that housing insecurity,

which affects a third of renters, has increased dramatically since pre-pandemic.

“TJ Homes is probably going to be part of that rapid gentrification effect,” said North Fair Oaks council member Ever Rodriguez. “Because it’s in their mind to purchase very affordable properties and then turn around those to make a profit.”

Rodriguez, who said he “wholeheartedly support(s) the residents of North Fair Oaks in trying to voice their concerns,” is concerned that TJ Homes will expand west into the Redwood City side, which is majority Latino. “This is a problem for the whole community,” he added.

District 4 Supervisor Warren Slocum, who’s been in talks with

the neighbors, said he empathized with their concerns.

“What it represents is large-scale change for a community being transformed from what it was in a bygone era to more of an Atherton-like feel,” he said.

For Tattersall’s part, he understands that the residents are protective of their neighborhood and said that “development is a responsibility” TJ Homes takes seriously, including having entire departments dedicated to neighborhood relations and community development. He thinks the problem isn’t so much the new houses themselves.

“The mistake that we made, candidly, is having two to three active projects going on all at once,” he said. “And not really understanding what the impacts would be to the overall neighborhood.”

In recent months, TJ Homes — which this past September filed paperwork for its IPO and is currently valued on the NASDAQ at over \$588 million — has made an effort to repair trust with the North Fair Oaks neighbors. It slowed down development, increased communication and showed up for community events, such as a recent North Fair Oaks Community Council meeting last month.

On Nov. 18, the company’s director of community development, Deanne Green, and executive vice president of asset management, Adam Kates, addressed the community with a half-hour presentation on their goals as a housing developer and how they hope to improve neighborhood relations.

Kates explained that, from their perspective, the houses they’re removing “have reached the end of their useful lives” and are being replaced with “well-designed, energy-efficient, sustainable houses that meet the needs and wants of today’s families and households.”

Tattersall said he’s been doing everything he can to facilitate communication with the community, including sharing his personal contact information and sending out a weekly email bulletin informing the neighbors of their progress. But he said the neighbors seem unwilling to acknowledge TJ Homes’ efforts to improve relations and felt that they were being “overly scrutinized.”

“I think we’re being made out to be something worse than we really are,” he said. “There’s a little bit of NIMBYism when it comes to new development. And I think people are trying to frame us as being bad people.” ■

Email Staff Writer Leah Worthington at lworthington@rwcpulse.com.

Public Notices

995 Fictitious Name Statement

NEW LEAF COUNSELLING
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: 2897731
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
New Leaf Counselling, located at 307 2nd Ave., San Mateo, CA 94401, San Mateo County.
Registered owner(s):
LITTLE MUNCHKINS PROFESSIONAL CLINICAL COUNSELOR INC.
1905 Palm Ave.
San Mateo, CA 94403
CA
This business is conducted by: A Corporation.
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 December 15, 2021.
(ALM Dec. 24, 31, 2021; Jan. 7, 14, 2022)

J & SON'S GENERAL MAINTENANCE
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: 2897770
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
J & Son's General Maintenance, located 919 Runnymede St., E. Palo Alto, CA 94303, San Mateo County.
Registered owner(s):
JESUS O. CRUZ RUIZ
919 Runnymede St.
E. Palo Alto, CA 94303
This business is conducted by: An Individual.
The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 12/13/21.
This statement was filed with the County

The Almanac is adjudicated to publish in San Mateo County.
Public Hearing Notices • Resolutions • Bid Notices • Lien Sale
Notices of Petition to Administer Estate • Trustee's Sale

Deadline is Monday at noon.

Call Alicia Santillan at 650-223-6578 or email asantillan@pawekly.com for assistance with your legal advertising needs.

Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on December 20, 2021.
(ALM Dec. 31, 2021; Jan. 7, 14, 21, 2022)

HAMILTON INTERIOR DESIGNS
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: 289683
The following person(s) is (are) doing business as:
Hamilton Interior Designs, located at 332 Arbor Road, Menlo Park, CA 94025, San Mateo County.
Registered owner(s):
JOHN F. HAMILTON JR.
332 Arbor Road
Menlo Park, CA 94025
This business is conducted by: An Individual.
The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 02/13/14.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on December 9, 2021.
(ALM Dec. 31, 2021; Jan. 7, 14, 21, 2022)

THIS AND THAT HANDYMAN
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: 289689
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
This and That Handyman, located at 2801 Marlborough Av., Redwood City CA 94063, San Mateo County.
Registered owner(s):
JOSE ANGEL ABARCA PEREZ
2801 Marlborough Ave.
Redwood City, CA 94063
This business is conducted by: An Individual.
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 December 9, 2021.
(ALM Dec. 31, 2021; Jan. 7, 14, 21, 2022)



At 828 14th St., the neighborhood’s first TJ Homes development went up and a protected Modesto ash tree was removed. Residents have begun scrutinizing the developer’s tree removal permits for suspected violations.

Employment

Engineer II, Optical (R&D)

Engineer II, Optical Pacific Biosciences of California, Inc. has an opening in Menlo Park, CA. Engineer II, Optical (R&D): design, tests & protocols. Submit resume (principals only) through the Pacific Biosciences of California, Inc. Website at <http://www.pacb.com/company/careers/> EOE

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TREES

continued from page 5

Hernandez, a board member with Canopy, has lived in East Palo Alto his whole life. He noticed the disparity as a child, he says.

“I grew up a block from the freeway, so as a kid I had asthma,” Hernandez says. “I was never around trees or nature.”

Why is this a problem?

Tree canopy coverage provides more than just aesthetics. Scientists have shown that as there’s more shade from trees, temperatures cool below the canopy line.

More canopy could be a savior during scorching summers. Average Bay Area temperatures rose nearly two degrees from 1950 to 2005, according to

research from the state Energy Commission. By 2050, average temperature is projected to jump an additional degree.

Shade from trees slashes temperatures inside parked cars by 45 degrees, a study from the Journal of Arboriculture found.

Less shade over buildings means higher energy bills, a cost that disproportionately affects low-income families, Wang says.

There are secondary benefits too: More trees can help reduce crime, air pollution, and asthma rates within a community, Santa Clara County Senior Management Analyst Chris Curry says.

From an accessibility perspective, trees promote outdoor

activity, says Maya Briones, an advocacy associate of Canopy. Cars drive slower in tree-lined areas too, making communities more walkable.

Perhaps the most critical benefit to trees for California, currently in a state of emergency for the severe drought, are the water benefits. Trees slow down rainwater as the roots help soak up runoff, Curry says. This can then go into groundwater supply and cut the burden for stormwater management systems.

How did we get here?

Nearly 80% of trees are on private property, says Nareesh Duggal, program manager of Santa Clara County. That means it’s up to residents to plant and maintain trees on their own.

For the well-resourced Palo Alto, that’s easy. Most folks in East Palo Alto, however, are renters. They have to rely on landlords to plant enough trees to build up the canopy, and renters themselves may not have enough disposable income to maintain the tree on their own. Water bills alone can be a huge burden.

Local municipalities could opt to plant trees on city property, like street medians. However, governments, particularly those serving low-income communities, rarely have sufficient funding for green spaces. It’s often the first program to get cut in the face of budget shortages, Duggal says.

“When the economy is down, the funding for these



Courtesy Canopy

Canopy volunteers load mulch into a wheelbarrow during a tree planting event at Willow Oaks elementary school in Menlo Park on June 20, 2015.

nature-based solutions, especially for urban forestry, is scaled back,” Duggal says. “There are other priorities at that time for these public agencies.”

Funding is also often allocated to tree planting; in reality, maintenance, albeit less exciting, is more important to tree health and longevity. Managing existing tree canopy garners less attention and funding, Duggal says.

“These trees may live to 300 years,” Duggal says. “Saving an asset of that kind is more important than just planting.”

Trees in East Palo Alto have historically not been well-maintained, Briones says.

“There’s a distrust between the community and the government. These big trees that are here haven’t been taken care of and they fall,” Briones says. “They break up concrete. Why would they want more?”

communities: Palo Alto, East Palo Alto, Belle Haven, North Fair Oaks, and Mountain View. In 2020, Canopy planted and tended to nearly 3,000 trees on the Peninsula.

Canopy’s Nov. 20 event was meant to educate community members on the benefits of trees and involve local youth. Teen Urban Foresters, paid high school interns, help lead tree planting.

Briones led Canopy’s Branching Out program for nearly two years. Within East Palo Alto, Briones and Canopy would find the optimal location for the tree in dwellers’ lots, plant it themselves, and offer three years of maintenance at no cost.

In the past, Canopy even wrote checks out to East Palo Alto residents to pay a share of their water bills, Briones says. However, the funding eventually ran out.

Duggal calls for a partnership across city and county governments to provide a more resilient funding mechanism. Duggal proposes a parcel tax to fund this collaborative body: properties would be taxed based on characteristics like tree planting viability.

Project Manager Romain Taniere looks to outreach and community engagement to build up canopy. A resident of East Palo Alto for 20 years, he hosts block parties and brings in eco-friendly companies to open the eyes of neighbors, he says.

Regardless of the solution mechanism, Duggal and Briones agree: These policies need to be written with race and income in the purview.

“Everyone deserves trees,” Briones says. “It shouldn’t matter their socioeconomic status. That’s what equity is.” ▴

Who are the problem-solvers?

Groups like Canopy are hoping to tackle the issue head-on. Canopy now serves five

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Magali Gauthier

Traffic moves along University Avenue in East Palo Alto in October 2020. East Palo Alto and the adjacent Belle Haven neighborhood of Menlo Park have less of a tree canopy than surrounding communities like Palo Alto.



Veronica Weber

Rinconada Park in Palo Alto is full of oak trees, including this one which grows next to Rinconada Pool.

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Food & Drink

Vintage cookbook features a dish from Mountain View's Gemello Winery

By Max Hauser

Great cooking specialties often are named for places of origin. How many of these do you recognize? Salade nicoise, risotto alla Milanese, chicken Kiev, Tunisian tajine, eggs Florentine, Peking duck, potatoes Lyonnaise, pad Thai, eggs à la Riga, ragù Bolognese, Turkish delight, Mountain View veal with eggplant. (Note: Not all are equally famous.)

The story of how that last dish came to be publicized entails national and state history, and Mountain View's own pioneering 20th-century winery. Gemello Winery operated on El Camino Real from the 1930s to 1980s; a neighborhood is now named for it.

First, some historical context.

A United States wine industry flourished in the 19th and early 20th centuries, but withered after 1919's 18th Constitutional Amendment empowered federal "prohibition" of alcoholic beverages. Prohibition was an international trend; other nations tried it, including Russia, Finland, Norway and Canada. All later repealed it, as the U.S. did in late 1933. California's wine industry then began a slow rebirth, and not until 1990 did the U.S. surpass its peak pre-Prohibition winery count.

In 1938, recognizing wine's agricultural importance, California launched a Wine Advisory Board, which worked with an industry group, the Wine Institute, to promote California's products. The board created educational materials, initially to counter Prohibitionist rhetoric that wine was just a source of alcohol for getting drunk. Long experience in places like Mediterranean Europe showed that wine could be a healthy part of daily life, complementing and enhancing food. Not just by chance did so many influential California winemakers have names like Bargetto, Franzia, Gallo, Latour, Martini, Masson, Mirassou, Mondavi, Nichelini, Pardiucci, Pedroncelli and Sebastiani.

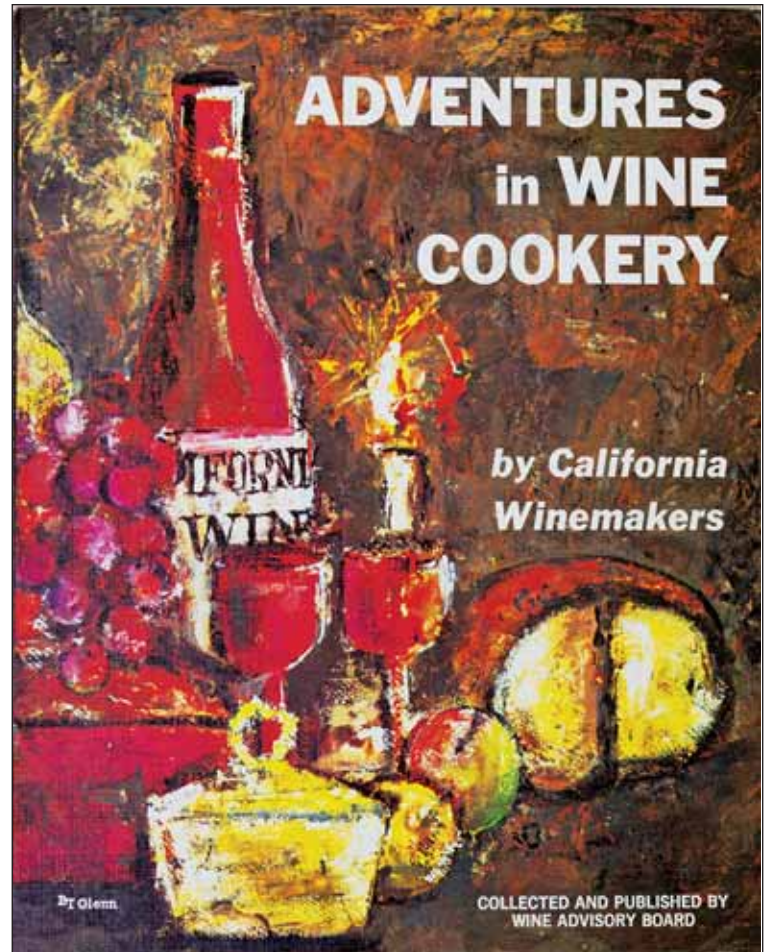
In that tradition and foreseeing Prohibition's end, in 1933 Italian immigrant John Gemello



(1882-1981) started a winery on 31 acres off El Camino Real, where his family grew fruits and vegetables. By the late 1950s, Gemello focused on premium cork-closed wines; thereafter, major books on California wine regularly mentioned the winery. In 1983, John's granddaughter Sandy Gemello Obester took over; she and husband Paul soon consolidated Gemello with their own Obester winery in Half Moon Bay. In 2002 Obester was sold, evolving to La Nebbia.

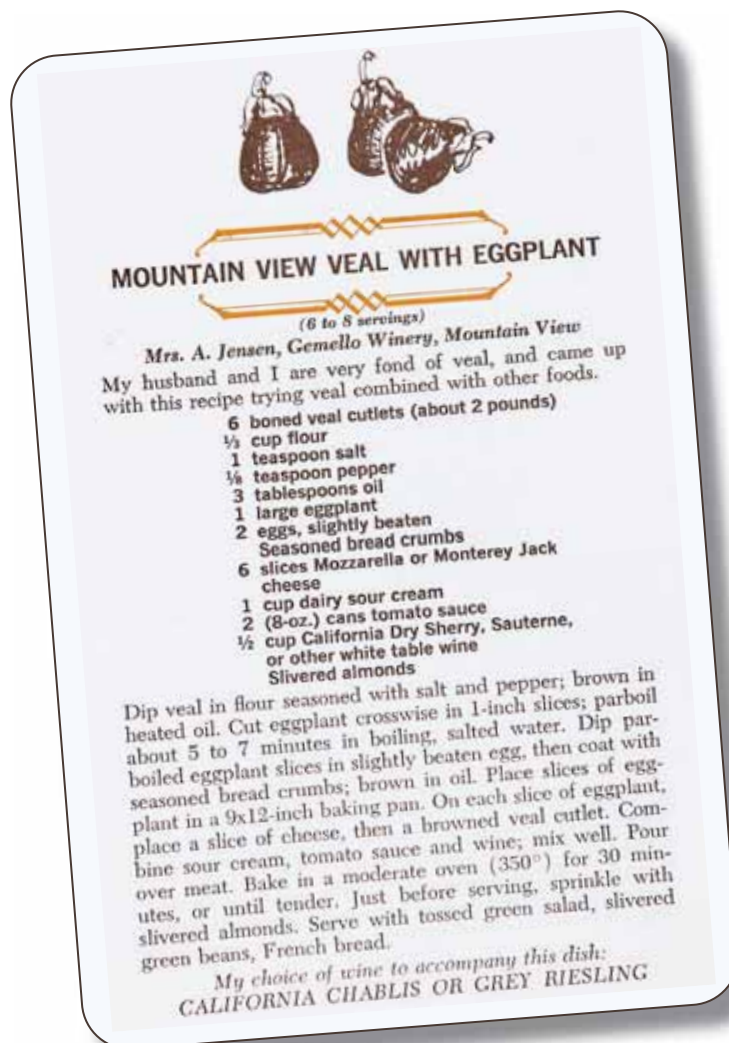
Gemello Winery contributed recipes to a winemaker cookbook series published by the Wine Advisory Board. Mountain View veal with eggplant appeared in 1965's "Adventures in Wine Cookery by California Winemakers."

The dish fries veal cutlets and breaded eggplant slices separately. These are then assembled in a baking pan, one cutlet on each eggplant piece and a slice of cheese between; surrounded by a mixture of sour cream,



Magali Gauthier

Above: The cover of 1965's "Adventures in Wine Cookery by California Winemakers." **Top left:** A bottle of Gemello Winery's 1968 Cabernet Sauvignon. The winery contributed a recipe to a vintage cookbook that highlights dishes using California wines. **Bottom left:** The recipe for Mountain View veal with eggplant by a friend of the Gemello family, from the cookbook "Adventures in Wine Cookery by California Winemakers."



tomato sauce and white wine; baked until tender; and sprinkled with slivered almonds.

Many early post-Prohibition California wines were dessert and fortified types à la sherries. So-called table or dinner wines, which are typical today, didn't dominate by-volume sales until the late 1960s. That history influenced the 1965 cookbook, whose recipes (Gemello's included) often specify dessert wines or commercial genres like California Sauterne. The cookbook also reflects the era's greater use of certain ingredients: veal, lamb, organ meats, lots of sour cream. But the recipes are diverse; I've found good and timeless cooking ideas in it. As it is with many older cookbooks.

For full recipes of the Mountain View dish and others, used book sellers (including Amazon) offer inexpensive spiral-bound

and paperback copies of 1965's "Adventures in Wine Cookery by California Winemakers." My details on the Gemello family and its winery are from Mario Gemello's memoir on the Benning Trust website at tinyurl.com/mv-gemello. ■

Max Hauser is a Mountain View resident.

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