

# The Almanac

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

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## A grassroots movement to preserve nature turns 50

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District now manages 65,000 acres across 26 preserves

By Kate Bradshaw

When you see the foothills, mountains and Baylands of the Peninsula, you may think about the hiking, biking or riding trails that wait to be explored. But behind much of the Peninsula's nature access is one predominant organization shaping that landscape: Midpen.

That's the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, the publicly funded open space district tasked with protecting and managing public access to more than 65,000 acres of undeveloped land spread out across 26 preserves — all but two of which are publicly accessible — from Half Moon Bay and Redwood City in the north to Los Gatos and San Jose in the south.

Midpen turns 50 this year, and its leaders are using the milestone to celebrate the district's achievements since it was officially created through a voter initiative on the November 1972 ballot.

Measure R, an initiative called "Room To Breathe," passed "overwhelmingly" by 67.7%.

"I think that it can be easy to perhaps take these public open spaces for granted, but they are here because of a lot of foresight and hard work," said Leigh Ann Gessner, a district spokesperson.

### A half-century of preservation

What would grow into Midpen first began in the late 1960s, when Nonette Hanco became involved with local government to raise concerns about how rapidly local open spaces were being developed. After an editorial in the Palo Alto Times by Jay Thorwaldson suggested adopting an approach the East Bay used to create a regional park district, Hanco began a grassroots campaign to pass the "Room to Breathe" initiative.

In 1973, the Midpen board of

See **OPEN SPACE**, page 16



Veronica Weber

Deer graze as the sun sets on the Bay Area Ridge Trail at the Russian Ridge Preserve.

## After a riding coach abused her daughter, Woodsider creates nonprofit for young athletes

By Sue Dremann

When Portola Valley resident and equestrian coach Michael Traurig was recently arrested for allegedly sexually abusing a minor, the story was only too familiar to Woodside resident Carrie Kehring. Her own daughter had come forward saying she had been groomed and abused by a different instructor, an Olympic athlete of high standing, she said.

A survey by the nonprofit U.S. Center for SafeSport found that 9% of respondents said they experienced inappropriate sexual conduct during their

sport involvement. Half of the respondents who experienced sexual abuse said it occurred while they were under the age of 18. Yet, 93% of those who experienced abuse didn't make a formal complaint. Of those who did, more than 18% said they experienced retaliation.

In July 2021, in response to her own growing awareness and family experiences, Kehring formed We Ride Together, an educational, support and advocacy organization, to help the riding community understand and fight against sexual abuse.

Seven months since its inception, Kehring's effort to support her daughter and other

equestrian survivors of sexual abuse and harassment has gone from homegrown and self-funded to a budding nonprofit organization seeking funding to expand its outreach and resources to all sports.

"It hits a variety of sports, a variety of people and a variety of neighborhoods and communities every day," she said. "People just don't talk about the subject. It's taboo. We want people to talk about it and not feel bullied."

Court records show that equestrian trainer Richard Fellers, 62, who competed in

See **ATHLETES**, page 14



Magali Gauthier

Carrie Kehring, a Woodside resident and founder of WeRideTogether, pets her horse Agano at Portola Farms in Woodside on Feb. 8.

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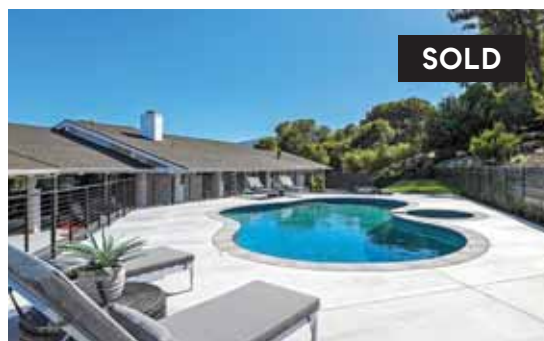
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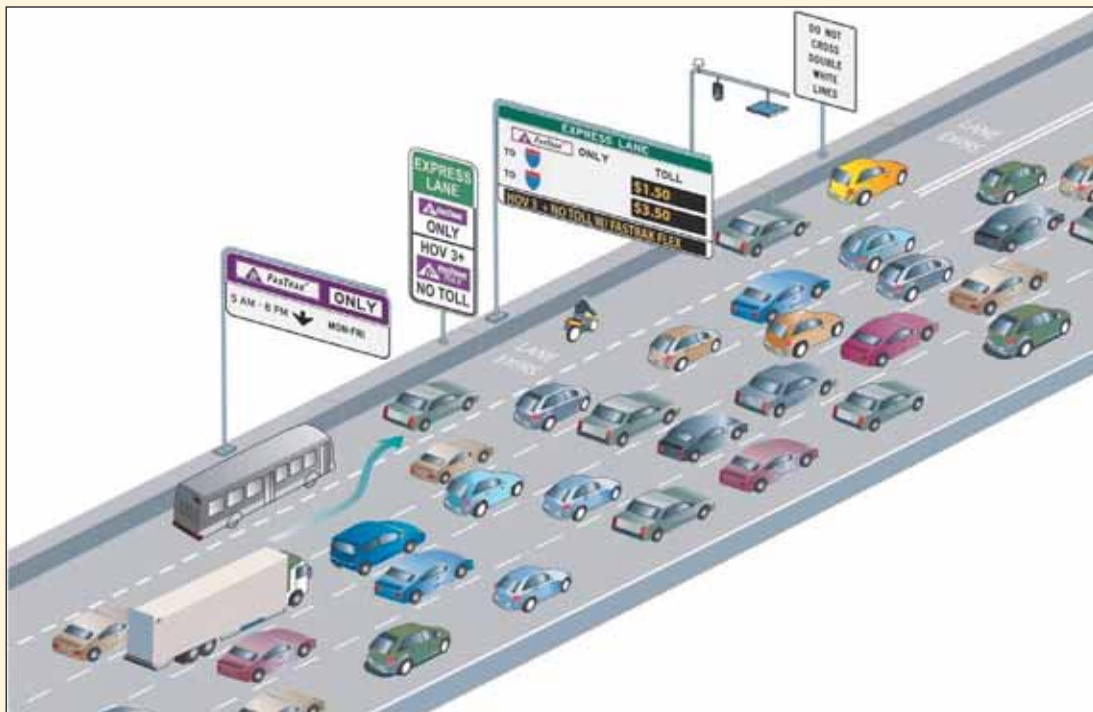
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# Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY



Courtesy Caltrans

New highway express lanes from Mountain View to Redwood City have replaced carpool lanes on U.S. Highway 101 and opened Feb. 11.

## What you need to know about the new toll lanes on Highway 101

Express lanes aim to manage traffic congestion, but the rules are complicated

By Jocelyn Dong

The highway toll lanes that have been popping up in other parts of the Bay Area, notably Interstate Highway 880, debuted on the Peninsula on Feb. 11 after years of construction.

Now, drivers are faced with a dizzying array of signs and lane markings on U.S. Highway 101 between state Route 237 in Mountain View and Whipple Avenue in Redwood City.

Part of the Bay Area Express Lanes program, the newly

designated toll lanes are the latest way that transportation agencies are trying to manage traffic congestion.

From 5 a.m. to 8 p.m. on weekdays, these lanes can be used for free by carpools of three people or more, vanpools, motorcyclists and buses. Vehicles with two passengers, who used to take advantage of carpool lanes, won't get a free ride anymore — and neither will clean-air vehicle drivers. Those two groups will have to pay half of the toll price to use an express lane.

Anyone using an express lane,

even those who don't need to pay a toll, will have to have a FasTrak toll tag with them.

By charging tolls on segments of the local highways, transportation leaders expect to be able to manage the volume of vehicles in express lanes, keeping it low enough for drivers to achieve a minimum speed of 45 mph, according to the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA).

Those toll prices will change as traffic congestion changes,

See **TOLL LANES**, page 10

## As COVID cases fall, school districts are dropping outdoor mask mandates

By Angela Swartz

For the first time in two years, Menlo Park students are seeing each others' faces on playgrounds around campus.

The Menlo Park City School District governing board voted to lift its outdoor mask mandate last week, effective Monday, Feb. 14, as the omicron surge levels off at local schools. It reported just nine cases last week, on par with its case counts from the fall semester, down from a peak of 88 in one week earlier this year.

The school board also dropped the district's requirement for students to wear medical-grade masks.

Superintendent Erik Burmeister implored the school community to "remain respectful and tolerant regardless of choices made for your family and the assumptions made about others," during the meeting. No one will be made to feel judged for their outdoor masking decisions, he said.

Cases began to spike when students returned from the winter holiday break in January.

Although California lifted its mask mandate in indoor public settings on Feb. 15 as cases continue to fall, it's unclear if this change will apply to schools. Updates on the school masking policy are expected in the coming weeks, according to a Feb. 7 press release from the California Department of Public Health.

The Woodside Elementary School District, which had seven cases last week, will drop the outdoor mask mandate on March 7, the week after students

return from the February break, said Superintendent Steve Frank. Administrators plan to hand out COVID-19 rapid tests to students and staff before the break so they can test before returning to campus on Feb. 28. The district's student vaccination rate stands at 68%, a few percentage points higher than the rest of the county.

"As we approach that date, we must realize that everyone, students and staff, are transitioning away from their 'new norm' of wearing masks while outside the entire school year," Frank said in a message to families on Feb. 11. "Each individual will move at a different pace regarding the comfort of wearing or not wearing a mask outdoors, and we must try our best to be respectful to everyone."

The Portola Valley School District, which reported five cases last week, will drop its outdoor mask mandate Wednesday, Feb. 23, when students return from the Presidents Day weekend. The decision is based in part on omicron being a "substantially weaker variant" and the lower COVID-19 case counts.

It is also attributed to "very high vaccination rates" among staff and older students. As of Feb. 1, nearly 80% of staff are fully vaccinated (including booster shots) and as of Feb. 9, 57.1% of students between the age of 5 and 11 were vaccinated, and 94.8% of those over age 12 were vaccinated. The district is using layered strategies including self-screening before coming to

See **SCHOOLS**, page 14

## Rare sighting of an Oriental turtle-dove has birders flocking to a Palo Alto neighborhood

Common in Asia, the bird has previously been seen in California only twice

By Sue Dremann

A bird sighted only for the third time in California has hundreds of birders flocking to Palo Alto's Midtown neighborhood.

The Oriental turtle-dove, also known as the rufous turtle-dove, has been hanging out near Greer Road and Maddux

Avenue since Feb. 2. The bird was first spotted by wildlife biologist Andrew Bradshaw, who saw it feeding with local mourning doves under his bird feeder, he said by phone on Wednesday, Feb. 9. Since then, the dove has attracted avian aficionados from all over the country.

Armed with birding scopes, binoculars and cameras, gaggles

of birders were seen training their equipment toward the trees. Sometimes, the bird appears in a tall, thin redwood visible from the Matadero Creek overpass on Greer Road; other times, it perches in a high tree on Colorado Avenue at Higgins Place.

The lone Oriental turtle-dove presides far above its human

admirers. A sheen of rusty-golden-edged wing and back feathers and black-and-white feathers on the sides of its neck tipped in silver distinguish it from other local doves.

"It's a little like a Tiffany lamp," said neighborhood resident and birder Ed Hillard, gazing upward last Monday morning.

Matthew Dodder, executive director of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, said he arrived one day and got to see it for 18 seconds before it flew off its perch.

"The Oriental turtle-dove is exceedingly rare. This is only the third time it has been seen

See **BIRDERS**, page 17



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### CRIME BRIEFS

#### Man arrested for allegedly stealing \$500 in bras

A sharp-eyed Victoria's Secret worker at Stanford Shopping Center on Feb. 10 helped to nab two people from Southern California who police say stole \$18,000 worth of merchandise from various stores in an organized retail theft operation.

Shoplifting is considered "organized retail theft" under the California Penal Code when merchandise is stolen from one or more retailers with the intent to sell, exchange or return the merchandise for value.

Palo Alto police at 6:43 p.m. received a call reporting in-progress shoplifting at the Victoria's Secret store at the shopping center at 180 El Camino Real, according to a department press release.

A store employee told police a man was stuffing merchandise down his pants to conceal it as he appeared to shop with a female accomplice.

Police said the pair then left the store without paying for the items and went to their vehicle. A store employee followed them.

Police officers were able to detain the pair, a 59-year-old man from Van Nuys and 62-year-old woman from North Hollywood, in their vehicle without incident.

Investigators determined the man shoplifted more than \$500 worth of bras from Victoria's Secret.

Following a search of the vehicle, police located several trash bags filled with suspected stolen property. Police said there were almost 400 separate pieces of name-brand clothing from Express, Hollister and J. Crew valued at more than \$18,000 recovered.

Investigators are still working to determine where and when most of the clothing was stolen but have confirmed some was taken from a Victoria's Secret in Fresno on Feb. 8.

The pair were arrested on suspicion of organized retail theft, felony possession of stolen property and possession of burglary tools, according to police. The penalty for one count of organized retail theft is one year in county jail, according to California penal code.

See **CRIME BRIEFS**, page 7

### COMMUNITY BRIEFS

#### Atherton recycling event

The town of Atherton will host its annual recycling event on Saturday, April 16, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Holbrook-Palmer Park, 150 Watkins Ave. in Atherton.

Residents can drop off e-waste and paper for shredding. The town will also be giving away one cubic yard of compost for free. Bring shovels, gloves and containers for the compost. Proof of residency is required.

The town will be following all COVID-19 rules set by the county health officer at the time of the event.

Anyone with questions about allowable items can email City Clerk Anthony Suber at [asuber@ci.atherton.ca.us](mailto:asuber@ci.atherton.ca.us).

#### Portola Valley Town Hall reopens to visitors

Portola Valley's Town Hall reopened to visitors on Monday, Feb. 14.

The town hall has been closed since December when the omicron surge hit.

#### Local students are Presidential Scholars candidates

Students from local schools are candidates for the Presidential Scholars program this year.

The candidates include Menlo-Atherton High School students Maia L. Goel, Audrey Ha and Katherine Spivakovsky; Menlo School students Grace J. Tang, Emily K. Han and Eric V. Young; and Woodside Priory School student Abigail E. Milne.

Students are recognized for either their academic achievement or for their accomplishment in either the field of Visual and Performing Arts or Career Technical Education.

Each year over 5,000 students nationally are identified as candidates for the component of the program that focuses on academic achievement.

The full list of candidates can be viewed online at [www2.ed.gov/programs/psp/2022/candidates.pdf](http://www2.ed.gov/programs/psp/2022/candidates.pdf).

See **COMMUNITY BRIEFS**, page 8

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# Menlo Park disbands housing plan's community outreach committee

Member resignations and frustration over committee's scope fueled the decision

By Lloyd Lee

**M**enlo Park City Council unanimously voted on Feb. 8 to disband the housing plan's Community Engagement and Outreach Committee (CEOC) and enlist a community-based organization to take over the group's work, after several members resigned in frustration due to the committee's limited scope and other complaints.

Since May 2021, CEOC — a 14-member group made up of residents from the city's five districts — was tasked to do outreach to local residents, raise awareness about community meetings and encourage people to participate in the city's process for updating the 2023-2031 Housing Element, a state-mandated blueprint of the city's future housing goals. Part of the update also includes a safety and environmental justice component.

The CEOC would not provide input on policy, City Council member Drew Combs previously told *The Almanac*. This limitation proved to be one of the many grievances committee members soon raised about their mission.

Nehezi Ollarvia, former vice chair of the committee who resigned, told *The Almanac* at the time that she felt the group's sole purpose was to "be a hype man" for the city.

Current and former members said that other issues stemmed from unequal representation across the city's five districts and feelings of being disrespected by City Council and city staff members.

CEOC members soon jumped ship. Six out of 14 members left the committee, which meant forming a quorum required everyone still on the CEOC to be present at meetings.

The council recently mulled over the idea of dissolving CEOC or shrinking its size and supported the idea of hiring a community-based organization to take over the group's outreach work.



Embarcadero Media file photo

**The Community Engagement and Outreach Committee**, which is responsible for publicizing the city's future housing plans, was dissolved by the City Council on Feb. 8.

But even as that was anticipated, last week's vote didn't come until after council members Ray Mueller and Combs delivered exasperated remarks about the direction of public outreach.

In particular, Mueller and Combs said they were concerned that Mayor Betsy Nash and council member Cecilia Taylor planned to use the community-based organization to conduct significant outreach efforts for District 1 — an area that includes the Belle Haven neighborhood and has the highest population of low-income and Latino residents — while neglecting other districts. The council members pointed out that District 1 won't see any new homes as part of the Housing Element.

"I'm not objecting to what my colleagues are proposing," Mueller said. "The thing that just confuses me is: What was the logic around no outreach for the rest of the city?"

Combs added that he couldn't back such an effort while a developer wants to fast-track a 80-unit project in the Suburban Park neighborhood as soon as the zoning is updated through the Housing Element and yet the city hasn't conducted outreach to the impacted residents.

"I'm supposed to sit here and rationalize to my constituents that we're going to do this extensive,

sort of bespoke outreach to residents into a part of the city that see no impact, while they're being completely ignored?" Combs asked.

Taylor clarified that outreach efforts will be citywide, and that an emphasis was placed on District 1 after two resident-members left the outreach committee. In addition, Nash and Taylor stated that outreach to District 1 was crucial as the city approaches the environmental justice and safety component of the Housing Plan.

"It's not that any one area of the city is getting more attention than the other," Taylor said. "The fact is, the environmental justice piece was a priority in this area. And so without anybody participating in it, it makes it difficult to actually get the input that's needed."

To address Mueller and Combs' concerns, the city directed staff to bring back proposals for outreach to engage communities with fast-tracked residential projects.

Staff will also amend a contract with M-Group, a third-party city planning agency, to include a community-based organization that will work with previous members of the disbanded outreach committee as well as any community members interested in participating in the Housing Element update process, "particularly from District 1." ■

evening.

Deputies responded around 5:50 p.m. to Plaza Jewelers located at 3303 Middlefield Road and learned that three male suspects entered the store, showed firearms and demanded money and jewelry, according to the Sheriff's Office.

The suspects, described as wearing dark clothing with

black ski masks covering their faces, then fled south on Middlefield Road and remain at large.

Anyone with information about the attempted robbery is asked to call the Sheriff's Office at 650-363-4911 or an anonymous tip line at 800-547-2700.

—*Bay City News Service*

## REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



### Masks Off?

Dear Monica:

My property is coming on the market this week in San Mateo County after the time at which masks may be eliminated indoors. May I still require them in my house? Louis M.

Dear Louis:

As of this week, many counties in California are dropping their mask requirements. San Mateo County has done so for vaccinated people but unvaccinated people are still required to wear masks indoors. Santa Clara County has not dropped mask requirements and so nothing has changed in this county.

In your own home, and you are in a county that has dropped mask requirements, you can ask visitors to show proof of vaccination. If proof is given, they don't need to be masked but they need to stay masked if rules have not changed.

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### CRIME BRIEFS

continued from page 6

#### Attempted armed robbery in North Fair Oaks

San Mateo County sheriff's deputies are investigating an attempted armed robbery at a jewelry store in unincorporated Redwood City on Monday

# Residents question Woodside staff's judgment on mountain lion exemption

By Angela Swartz

After making national news for shutting down all projects under a new state housing law by citing an exemption for mountain lion habitats, some Woodside residents told the Town Council to do better.

The town froze applications for California's new split-lot law, Senate Bill 9, but reversed the decision on Feb. 6 facing a lawsuit and a warning from California Attorney General Rob Bonta.

Resident Bob Wilson called on the Town Council to freeze pay increases for Town Manager Kevin Bryant and Planning Director Jackie Young and conduct a full investigation into their "mishandling" of SB 9 projects in town.

"If there is wrongdoing, immediate consequences must follow," he said in a letter to the town. "No more handling with kid gloves for these two. Please, do not subject the citizens of this town to more embarrassment and humiliation."

Bryant clarified that the council was not voting on raises during the meeting. The council

approved Bryant's raise in September 2021, effective Jan. 1, according to the staff report.

Bryant said the council "didn't give any indication" that it would take action based on Wilson's comment.

**'Please, do not subject the citizens of this town to more embarrassment and humiliation.'**

BOB WILSON, WOODSIDE RESIDENT

Virginia Dare, the planning commissioner who suggested the mountain lion loophole to the Town Council, said that while the memo freezing SB 9 projects went out under Young's name, "it was likely prepared in collaboration with others at the town," such as the town attorney and town manager.

Dare said she recognized that the statement that went out under Young's signature could have been more nuanced and

could have reflected better the Town Council's decision to pause accepting SB 9 applications, adding that she's worked closely with Young since she joined the town staff. "And now as a planning commissioner, I continue to have the utmost confidence in Jackie, she is unequivocally one of the most professional and ethical people I have worked with. She also cares deeply about our town, and the welfare of the people who live in it," Dare said.

Dare said that many newspapers are trying to generate clicks on their stories and it isn't the first time "lightning rod issues" have ended up in the press. She suggested the town find a public relations expert in case an issue like this comes up in the future.

Daniel Yost, a former council member and 19-year resident of Woodside, urged the town not to support a proposed constitutional amendment that calls for more control over local land use, which came up at the same meeting as the mountain lion exemption.

"Tonight's agenda does not include how the town can turn itself into a national punch line



Courtesy photo

After Woodside walked back claims that the entire town was a mountain lion habitat, exempting it from a new state housing law, residents questioned how town staff came to that conclusion.

about wealthy communities going to extremes to avoid letting their residents add housing. What's not on tonight's agenda is the use taxpayer money to ask staff to come up with novel arguments to shirk our housing commitments, potentially opening up the town to lawsuits. And not on the agenda tonight is using the office of mayor and town council time on the dais to push a constitutional amendment designed to preempt many state

laws, including civil rights laws, fair housing laws and environmental laws ..." Yost said. "Mr. Mayor, these items are not on tonight's agenda because that was the agenda for your last public meeting."

The constitutional amendment was put forth by a group called Our Neighborhood Voices, which argues that the majority of the state's land planning efforts

See **MOUNTAIN LION**, page 11

## Trouble Sleeping and Feeling Anxious, Depressed, or Irritable?



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or fill out the interest form at [redcap.link/sleepstudies](https://redcap.link/sleepstudies)



In order to participate, you must have someone who can act a Study Partner to describe your daily habits to the research team.



For participants' rights questions, contact 1-866-680-2906

### Are You:

- 50 to 90 years old?
- Experiencing memory problems?
- Experiencing emotional distress such as anxiety, depression, or irritability?
- Experiencing sleep difficulty?

### Eligible Participants Will Receive:

- Sleep evaluation
- MRI brain scan
- Individual treatment for insomnia
- Reimbursement for participation

Sleep loss can negatively impact the brain networks that regulate emotion. Research suggests that insomnia contributes to depressive mood symptoms. The CoPsyN Sleep lab at Stanford University (lab website: <http://med.stanford.edu/copsynsleep.html>) is conducting a study to investigate the degree to which the emotional regulation brain network is modified by improving sleep in individuals with or at risk for developing Alzheimer's Disease (AD).

Individuals who are between 50 and 90 years old, experiencing depressive symptoms, memory impairments and trouble sleeping may be eligible for this study. Eligible participants will receive a sleep evaluation, individual treatment for insomnia, and reimbursement for participation. This study will require visits to Stanford University. To learn more please call (650) 849-0584, email [lunas-tudy@stanford.edu](mailto:lunas-tudy@stanford.edu), or fill out the interest form (<https://redcap.link/sleepstudies>).

### COMMUNITY BRIEFS

continued from page 6

#### Woodside spring musical Freaky Friday running March 11-20

Woodside High School will present "Freaky Friday" as its spring musical from March 11 to 20.

There will be reserved seats with social distancing.

The show runs Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m., and 2 p.m. on Sundays at Woodside High School Performing Arts Center, 199 Churchill Ave. in Woodside.

Tickets are \$20 for adults, \$15 for seniors and \$10 for Woodside High students and staff.

Tickets are for sale online only at [whsdramaboosters.org](http://whsdramaboosters.org).

— Angela Swartz

#### Community Emergency Response Team offers free training

The Menlo Park Fire Protection District's Community Emergency Response Team is offering free training sessions on disaster preparedness.

The classes will go over response skills, including fire safety, first aid training, and

light search and rescue, as well as tips on team organization.

Training sessions will be held in East Palo Alto on Feb. 26, March 12 and March 26, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. To register, go to [menlofirecert.com](http://menlofirecert.com)

#### Presidents Day closures

The city of Menlo Park's administrative offices and libraries will be closed for the federal holiday on Feb. 21.

#### Menlo Park commission and committee vacancies

The city is looking to fill several vacancies on its advisory commissions and one committee.

These groups are powered by community members and offer residents a way to shape plans and policies brought forward to the City Council. There are openings on the complete streets, environmental quality, housing, library, parks and recreation, and the planning commissions. The finance and audit committee also has two openings.

Residents can apply at [bit.ly/3sMiAis](http://bit.ly/3sMiAis). Candidates must be over 18 years old to apply. The deadline is 5 p.m. on April 13.

— Lloyd Lee

# Sequoia District Teachers Association reaches tentative contract agreement with district

By Leah Worthington

After months of negotiations, the Sequoia District Teachers Association and Sequoia Union High School District have reached a tentative agreement for a new contract for teachers, counselors and other school specialists.

The decision was reached during the final bargaining session on Friday, Jan. 28, according to Sequoia District Teachers Association (SDTA) President and Sequoia High School math teacher, Edith Salvatore.

The contract approved unanimously by the SDTA's Legislative Council on Tuesday will be voted on by union members this week. If ratified, it will be brought to the SUHSD Board of Trustees for final approval at their next meeting on Feb. 16, after the Almanac's deadline.

The two-year contract includes a salary increase of 2.5% for both the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years, with an additional 2% increase from benefits-related savings, effective Jan. 1, 2023.

The SDTA originally proposed a 4% raise for this year, with a

subsequent round of discussions in the coming year.

Based on up-to-date salary schedules, certificated, non-management staff, which includes many teachers, have a starting salary of \$70,979, which will increase to \$72,753 for the current year. An additional 2.5% raise on July 1, 2022, and a final raise of 2% in January 2023 would bring SDTA members salaries to roughly those of the San Mateo Union High School District, according to Salvatore. The starting salary for certificated employees at San Mateo district is \$75,883, including a 2.5% increase for this year.

Some teachers have expressed frustration that the salary increases among non-management have not equaled the salaries of management, Salvatore said. According to Salvatore, while compensation for the SDTA members has increased by about 26% in the last five years, the amount spent on certificated management staff, such as site principals and other administrators, has risen by roughly 49% over the same period.

Salaries for all certificated staff,

which includes union members as well as management, represented 40.4% of the district's total expenditures for this year, according to budget data.

The district did not respond to requests for comment by time of publication of this article.

The tentative agreement outlines changes to "healthcare providers, professional development language, adjustments to evaluations, catastrophic leave, compensation for head counselors and case management time for teachers in the specialized Satellite and Satellite Plus programs," Salvatore wrote in an email. It also creates and maintains committees to continue discussing health benefits, professional development and job descriptions and workloads for counselors and other non-classroom staff.

With the spring term already underway, the contract comes much later than usual, Salvatore said. While the union's original proposal was presented during a public school board meeting in February 2021, active bargaining didn't begin until October.

"Because we were in distance

learning, and we were in negotiations over the terms of all the health and safety precautions for returning in person last spring, the contract negotiations got put off until the fall," she said. "And then we didn't actually start until October because the district was without an assistant superintendent of human resources."

She added that it was "very frustrating to be this far into the year without a contract."

Having served on the bargaining team for over a decade, Salvatore said she understands negotiating is a long, complicated process for the district. Still, she said she's sympathetic to a feeling of exhaustion among many union members.

"They've worked harder, and done more, in the last two years than has ever been asked of

them," she said, adding that many feel underappreciated for their work. "There's a lot of, 'We couldn't do it without you guys. Thanks so much.' And at some point, you wonder, what's the priority of the district?" ■

Email Leah Worthington at [lworthington@rwcpulse.com](mailto:lworthington@rwcpulse.com).

## OBITUARIES

**Bliss Carnochan**, 91, professor emeritus of English at Stanford University and Portola Valley resident, died on Jan. 24.

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



Sign up today for the only food newsletter on the Peninsula at [AlmanacNews.com/express](http://AlmanacNews.com/express)

**CLOSE THE DOOR.**

A door is one of the best pieces of firefighting equipment.

It can:

- Reduce fire growth and spread.
- Limit damage to your home/building
- Save lives.

Remember:

- Close the bedroom door when sleeping.
- Close doors behind you when escaping a room or building that is on fire.
- Keep fire doors closed. Never wedge, disable, or prop open a fire door.

# Shooting injures man at Stanford Shopping Center parking lot

By Sue Dremann

A shooting at a Stanford Shopping Center parking lot left a man with hand and foot injuries on Feb. 10, Palo Alto police said.

The shooting happened around 9:40 p.m. in a parking lot at the mall, police initially said. The man's injuries were not life threatening, and the shooter fled in a car.

The man's girlfriend drove him to a hospital and called the Police Department's emergency dispatch center, police said in a statement

released on Friday morning. She told a dispatcher that the man had recently been shot in the parking lot of the Stanford Shopping Center at 180 El Camino Real.

Police hadn't received any other calls from the community about shots being fired or any sort of suspicious circumstance in the parking lot, the department said. Officers responded to the scene and met with the man and the woman. Police found an expended casing from a .40-caliber handgun at the scene and will be processing it for evidence, they said.

The man, who is in his 20s, and

his girlfriend had just returned to their parked vehicle on the east side of the shopping center. As he was getting into the car, a person approached him and fired two shots. One struck him in his hand, and the other struck him in his foot. The suspect then fled the scene, they told police.

As of Friday, Feb. 11, the man was not cooperating with the police investigation and had not provided law enforcement with additional information.

Police found a witness at the scene. The individual hadn't called the police to report what they had

seen. The person said they saw the shooter run up to the man after getting out of the back seat of a white BMW. The shooter ran back to the BMW and got into the back seat after firing the gun. The vehicle fled east through the parking lot.

The witness described the shooter as a male wearing a black hooded sweatshirt, about 5 feet, 6 inches tall, with a slim build. There is no description of the BMW driver.

Police said they have reviewed preliminary surveillance video from the scene but have not

located footage of the incident. If additional footage is found and the images would help identify the shooter or the suspect car, police will release it to the community, they said.

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

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

## TOLL LANES

continued from page 5

rising with increased traffic to discourage some budget-conscious drivers from using the lanes, and then decreasing with less traffic to incentivize more drivers to jump in.

The express lanes in north Santa Clara County were created by restriping existing single carpool lanes on Highway 101 between routes 237 and 85 and on Route 85 from Grant Road to the Highway 101 and Route 85 interchange. New signage, monitoring technology and barriers were also added.

The existing double carpool lanes on Highway 101 from the Route 85 interchange to the San Mateo County line in Palo Alto were both converted to express lanes.

The local express-lanes project broke ground in March 2019, two years after Senate Bill 1 was signed into law. SB1 is investing \$54 billion over a decade to fix roads, freeways and bridges across California. Of that state funding, \$220 million is going to San Mateo County's current express lanes segment, and \$33 million is helping to fund VTA's latest segments.

"The integration of managed express lanes will reduce congestion all along the U.S. 101 corridor. It will encourage carpooling and transit ridership as well as the use of technology to help manage traffic," Toks Omishakin, Caltrans director, said in a video about the project.

Construction of additional express lanes is continuing, with lanes being extended north, up from Whipple Avenue to Interstate 380, and south on Highway 101 to Interstate 880.

The following information comes from Caltrans, VTA, 511.org and the San Mateo 101 Express Lanes Project.

**Tell me again what hours the express lanes are in effect?**

The express lanes will operate from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m. on weekdays. Unlike the former HOV lanes, express-lane rules cover most of

the day, not just commute hours.

**So can electric vehicles still use the express lanes for free?**

Nope. Customers driving clean-air vehicles, such as cars that run on fuel cells, battery or plug-in hybrids that have a valid clean-air vehicle decal from the Department of Motor Vehicles, will qualify for a 50% discount on tolls. But you'll need to have a FasTrak CAV toll tag in your car to get that discount or you'll be penalized.

**How many people have to be in my car for me to use the express lanes for free?**

Three or more, unless you ride a motorcycle, in which case you can use the lanes without paying a toll. But again, you've got to have a FasTrak Flex tag on you, otherwise the overhead cameras will photograph your license plate and send you a bill, which will be the toll plus a penalty fee. Before you start your car, make sure your FasTrak Flex tag button is set to position "3+."

**And what about a two-person carpool? Can I use an express lane?**

Yes, you will qualify for a 50% discount on tolls. But you'll need to have a FasTrak Flex toll tag in your car to get that discount or you'll be penalized. Before you start driving, make sure your FasTrak Flex tag is set to position "2."

**OK, so anyone can use the express lane, but they may have to pay. How much does it cost to take an express lane?**

That depends on how far you're going. The toll could be 30 cents or several dollars. You'll see the toll for traveling through a zone listed on the overhead electronic sign when you hop into an express lane. For example, if you get into the express lane at Oregon Expressway in Palo Alto going south to Route 85, you will pay one price, and if you continue on Highway 101 to Route 237, you'll pay more. Both toll prices will be listed on the electronic sign at Oregon Expressway.

In addition, toll prices change based on how much traffic is on the road, so you might be charged

more to take the express lane from Oregon Expressway to Route 85 on Monday at 8:30 a.m. than you are on Monday at 2 p.m.

**What if I'm driving in an express lane, and because of traffic congestion, the toll changes?**

If the toll amount changes while you are in the lane, you pay the toll posted when you first entered.

**How are the tolls charged?**

An overhead antenna will read FasTrak transponders in vehicles and the correct toll will be automatically deducted from prepaid FasTrak accounts.

**What happens if too many cars get into the express lanes and the traffic slows way down?**

When a lane gets too crowded and cars are traveling slower than 45 mph, the electronic signs will replace the toll price with the words "HOV ONLY." This indicates the lane cannot take any more toll-paying vehicles. Only carpools and other toll-free eligible vehicles are allowed to enter the lane when the signs say "HOV ONLY." If you're already in the lane when this happens, you can

stay in the lane.

**How are penalties assessed if I'm in an express lane without a FasTrak tag?**

A violation-enforcement system camera will capture a license plate image if a vehicle is in an express lane without a FasTrak tag. FasTrak will send the registered vehicle owner a violation notice for the toll amount and a \$25 penalty. If you fail to pay that promptly, then the penalty goes up to \$70.

**What about the \$491 penalty for driving solo in a carpool lane — is that still being enforced?**

Yes. If a California Highway Patrol officer sees you driving solo in an express lane but your FasTrak tag is set for two or more people, you will be pulled over and cited for the carpool violation, which is \$491. Your FasTrak setting will be shown on electronic panels on the highway.

**I don't get this whole FasTrak tag thing. Which FasTrak tag do I need? How do I get one?**

Go to the FasTrak web site at 511.org for information, including how to order a tag.

**Which segments on Highway 101 still have non-toll carpool (HOV) lanes?**

South of Route 237 in Mountain View and north of Whipple Avenue in Redwood City.

**I'm still confused. Who can answer my questions?**

For more information about how express lanes work, go to the 511.org website.

For more information about the VTA Express Lanes Project, you can go to the Silicon Valley Express Lanes website at [vta.org/programs/silicon-valley-express-lanes](http://vta.org/programs/silicon-valley-express-lanes), or contact VTA's Community Outreach Department at 408-321-7575 or (TTY) for the hearing-impaired at 408-321-2330 or at [community.outreach@vta.org](mailto:community.outreach@vta.org).

For more information about San Mateo County's express lanes, visit the San Mateo County Express Lanes web page at [smcxpresslanes.org/about/](http://smcxpresslanes.org/about/). ■

Email Editor Jocelyn Dong at [jdong@paweekly.com](mailto:jdong@paweekly.com).



Courtesy Caltrans

**MOUNTAIN LION**

*continued from page 8*

“take away the authority of local jurisdictions to determine for themselves the land use policies and practices that best suit each city and instead imposes ‘one-size fits-all’ mandates that do not take into account the unique needs and challenges faced by local jurisdictions.”

Mayor Dick Brown supports the amendment, and said he has been gathering signatures for the initiative. The item was tabled for a future meeting, however, following concerns raised by

Councilman Ned Fluet.

“You might feel I’m being unfair to bring this up now since you’ve backed off some of (the SB 9 freeze),” Yost said. “There are areas where we would want to reasonably approach the state such as limiting new housing and high fire zones which makes sense to me. And I fear our recent actions have caused us to lose credibility as the town that cried wolf or mountain lion.”

**More on the mountain lion exemption**

On Jan. 25, as first reported

by The Almanac, the town put an indefinite hold on all housing projects allowed under SB 9 because of a clause in the law that prohibits development in areas identified as habitats for protected species. The move came after a council study session on the same day, when the council discussed the mountain lion clause but did not formally vote on it, according to Cardinale.

Town staff consulted with the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife about how to identify a habitat, according to Bryant. So far, the town has received no applications for development

projects that would utilize SB 9, he said.

The department has since advised that the entire town cannot be considered habitat, said Deputy Town Attorney Kai Ruess on Feb. 6.

Yost brought up his concerns last week that the “excellent” Woodside Elementary School’s enrollment figures are declining because families can’t afford to move to town. The TK-8 grade public school has 365 students. Enrollment which is down almost 11% from the 2018-19 school year.

Matt Gar, who was appointed to the town’s Planning Commission

during the Feb. 6 meeting, said he thought it was important to have representation from younger people in the town on the commission.

“We’ve seen declining enrollment; there’s empty classrooms at this point,” he said. “So how do we also make sure that the town is upholding some of these institutions like the elementary school, while also, you know, meeting the needs and continuing to uphold the character of the town?”

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

# Public Notices

**995 Fictitious Name Statement**

YADIRA'S HOUSEKEEPING  
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT  
File No.: 289947  
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:  
Yadira's Housekeeping, located at 1431 Hill Ave., Menlo Park, CA 94025, San Mateo County.  
Registered owner(s):  
YADIRA MAGAÑA GALVAN  
1431 Hill Ave.  
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 1-13-2022.  
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on January 13, 2022.  
(ALM Feb. 4, 11, 18, 25, 2022)

SELECT PHYSICAL THERAPY  
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT  
File No.: 289976  
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as: Select Physical Therapy, located at 268 Redwood Shores Parkway, Redwood City, CA 94065, San Mateo County; Mailing address: 4714 Gettysburg Rd., Mechanicsburg, PA 17055.  
Registered owner(s):  
SELECT CAL PHYSICAL THERAPY, P.C.  
4714 Gettysburg Rd.  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055  
California  
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 January 19, 2022.  
(ALM Feb. 4, 11, 18, 25, 2022)

SELECT PHYSICAL THERAPY  
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT  
File No.: 289977  
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:  
Select Physical Therapy, located at 900 Veterans Blvd, Suite 230, San Mateo County; Mailing address: 4714 Gettysburg Rd., Mechanicsburg, PA 17055.  
California  
Registered owner(s):  
SELECT CAL PHYSICAL THERAPY, P.C.  
4714 Gettysburg Rd.  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055  
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 January 19, 2022.  
(ALM Feb. 4, 11, 18, 25, 2022)

SELECT PHYSICAL THERAPY  
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT  
File No.: 289979  
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as: Select Physical Therapy, located at 3532 Alameda de las Pulgas,

Menlo Park, CA 94025, San Mateo County; Mailing address: 4714 Gettysburg Rd., Mechanicsburg, PA 17055.  
Registered owner(s):  
SELECT CAL PHYSICAL THERAPY, P.C.  
4714 Gettysburg Rd.  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055  
California  
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 January 19, 2022.  
(ALM Feb. 4, 11, 18, 25, 2022)

SELECT PHYSICAL THERAPY  
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT  
File No.: 289978  
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as: Select Physical Therapy, located at 1860 El Camino Real, Suite 201, Burlingame, CA 94010, San Mateo County; Mailing address: 4714 Gettysburg Rd., Mechanicsburg, PA 17055.  
Registered owner(s):  
SELECT CAL PHYSICAL THERAPY, P.C.  
4714 Gettysburg Rd.  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055  
California  
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 January 19, 2022.  
(ALM Feb. 4, 11, 18, 25, 2022)

SELECT PHYSICAL THERAPY  
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT  
File No.: 289980  
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:  
Select Physical Therapy, located at 540 Ralston Ave., Suite B, Belmont, CA 94002, San Mateo County; Mailing address: 4714 Gettysburg Rd., Mechanicsburg, PA 17055.  
Registered owner(s):  
SELECT CAL PHYSICAL THERAPY, P.C.  
4714 Gettysburg Rd.  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055  
California  
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 January 19, 2022.  
(ALM Feb. 4, 11, 18, 25, 2022)

AKTive hoMes  
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT  
File No.: 290155  
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:  
AKTive hoMes, located at 533 Airport Blvd, Suite 400, Burlingame, CA 94010, San Mateo County.  
Registered owner(s):  
ANNE KAREN MANNING  
555 Bryant St. #451  
Palo Alto, CA 94301

This business is conducted by: An Individual.  
The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 02/10/2022.  
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on February 4, 2022.  
(ALM Feb. 18, 25; Mar. 4, 11, 2022)

MENLO ROTARY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION  
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT  
File No.: 290190  
The following person(s) is (are) doing business as:  
Menlo Rotary Community Foundation, located at 75 Arbor Road, Menlo Park, CA 94025, San Mateo County; Mailing address: P.O. Box 876, Menlo Park, California 94026.  
Registered owner(s):  
ROTARY CLUB OF MENLO PARK FOUNDATION  
75 Arbor Road  
Menlo Park, California 94025  
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 February 9, 2022.  
(ALM Feb. 18, 25; Mar. 4, 11, 2022)

MENLO PARK DESIGN DISTRICT  
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT  
File No.: 290149  
The following person(s) is (are) doing business as:  
Menlo Park Design District, located at 800 Santa Cruz Ave., Menlo Park, CA 94025, San Mateo County.  
Registered owner(s):  
MENLO DESIGN DISTRICT, INC.  
800 Santa Cruz Ave.  
Menlo Park, CA 94025  
California  
This business is conducted by: A Corporation.  
The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on February 1, 2022.  
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on February 4, 2022.  
(ALM Feb. 18, 25; Mar. 4, 11, 2022)

**997 All Other Legals**

T.S. No.: 201-019263 Title Order No. 91221683 APN: 069-041-030 Property Address: 235 HARCROSS ROAD, WOODSIDE, CA 94602 NOTICE OF TRUSTEE'S SALE NOTE: THERE IS A SUMMARY OF THE INFORMATION IN THIS DOCUMENT ATTACHED 注: 本文件包含一个信息摘要 참고사항: 본 첨부 문서에 정보 요약서가 있습니다  
NOTA: SE ADJUNTA UN RESUMEN DE LA INFORMACIÓN DE ESTE DOCUMENTO TALA: MAYROONG BUOD NG IMPORMASYON SA DOKUMENTONG ITO NA NAKALAKIP LUU Y: KÈM THEO ĐÂY LÀ BẢN TRÌNH BÀY TÓM LƯỢC VỀ THÔNG TIN TRONG TÀI LIỆU NÀY [PURSUANT TO CIVIL CODE § 2923.3(a), THE SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REFERRED TO ABOVE IS NOT ATTACHED TO THE RECORDED OR PUBLISHED COPY OF THIS DOCUMENT BUT ONLY TO THE COPIES PROVIDED TO THE TRUSTOR.] YOU ARE IN DEFAULT UNDER A

DEED OF TRUST DATED 12/23/2019. UNLESS YOU TAKE ACTION TO PROTECT YOUR PROPERTY, IT MAY BE SOLD AT A PUBLIC SALE. IF YOU NEED AN EXPLANATION OF THE NATURE OF THE PROCEEDING AGAINST YOU, YOU SHOULD CONTACT A LAWYER. A public auction sale of the Trustor's interest will be made to the highest bidder for lawful money of the United States, payable at the time of sale in cash, cashier's check drawn on a state or national bank, cashier's check drawn by a state or federal credit union, or a cashier's check drawn by a state or federal savings and loan association, or savings association, or savings bank specified in Section 5102 of the Financial Code and authorized to do business in this state will be held by the duly appointed trustee as shown below, of all right, title, and interest conveyed to and now held by the trustee in the hereinafter described property under and pursuant to a Deed of Trust described below. The sale will be made, but without covenant or warranty, expressed or implied, regarding title, possession, or encumbrances, to pay the remaining principal sum of the note(s) secured by the Deed of Trust, with interest and late charges thereon, as provided in the note(s), advances, under the terms of the Deed of Trust, interest thereon, fees, charges and expenses of the Trustee for the total amount (at the time of the initial publication of the Notice of Sale) reasonably estimated to be set forth below. The amount may be greater on the day of sale. Trustor: NIRVANA INVESTMENT GROUP, LLC, A CALIFORNIA LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY Duly Appointed Trustee: PLM LOAN MANAGEMENT SERVICES, INC. Recorded 12/31/2019, as Instrument No. 2019-111954, of Official Records in the office of the Recorder of San Mateo County, California, Date of Sale: 3/11/2022 at 1:00 PM Place of Sale: At the Marshall Street entrance to the Hall of Justice at 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063 Amount of unpaid balance and other charges: \$2,794,297.97 (estimated as of the first publication date) Street Address or other common designation of real property: 235 HARCROSS ROAD WOODSIDE, CA 94602 A.P.N.: 069-041-030 The undersigned Trustee disclaims any liability for any incorrectness of the street address or other common designation, if any, shown above. The property heretofore described is being sold "as is". If the Trustee is unable to convey title for any reason, the successful bidder's sole and exclusive remedy shall be the return of monies paid to the Trustee, and the successful bidder shall have no further recourse. If no street address or other common designation is shown, directions to the location of the property may be obtained by sending a written request to the beneficiary within 10 days of the date of first publication of this Notice of Sale. The following statements; NOTICE TO POTENTIAL BIDDERS and NOTICE TO PROPERTY OWNER are statutory notices for all one to four single family residences and a courtesy notice for all other types of properties. NOTICE TO POTENTIAL BIDDERS: If you are considering bidding on this property lien, you should understand that there are risks involved in bidding at a trustee auction. You will be bidding on a lien, not on the property itself. Placing the highest bid at a trustee auction does not automatically entitle you to free and

clear ownership of the property. You should also be aware that the lien being auctioned off may be a junior lien. If you are the highest bidder at the auction, you are or may be responsible for paying off all liens senior to the lien being auctioned off, before you can receive clear title to the property. You are encouraged to investigate the existence, priority, and size of outstanding liens that may exist on this property by contacting the county recorder's office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge you a fee for this information. If you consult either of these resources, you should be aware that the same lender may hold more than one mortgage or deed of trust on the property. NOTICE TO PROPERTY OWNER: The sale date shown on this notice of sale may be postponed one or more times by the mortgagee, beneficiary, trustee, or a court, pursuant to Section 2924g of the California Civil Code. The law requires that information about trustee sale postponements be made available to you and to the public, as a courtesy to those not present at the sale. If you wish to learn whether your sale date has been postponed, and, if applicable, the rescheduled time and date for the sale of this property, you may call (916) 939-0772 or visit this Internet Website <http://www.nationwideposting.com/>, using the file number assigned to this case 201-019263. Information about postponements that are very short in duration or that occur close in time to the scheduled sale may not immediately be reflected in the telephone information or on the Internet Website. The best way to verify postponement information is to attend the scheduled sale. NOTICE TO TENANT: You may have a right to purchase this property after the trustee auction pursuant to Section 2924m of the California Civil Code. If you are an "eligible tenant buyer" you can purchase the property if you match the last and highest bid placed at the trustee auction. If you are an "eligible bidder" you may be able to purchase the property if you exceed the last and highest bid placed at the trustee auction. There are three steps to exercising this right of purchase. First, 48 hours after the date of the trustee sale, you can call (916) 939-0772, or visit this internet website <http://www.nationwideposting.com/>, using the file number assigned to this case 201-019263 to find the date on which the trustee's sale was held, the amount of the last and highest bid, and the address of the trustee. Second, you must send a written notice of intent to place a bid so that the trustee receives it no more than 15 days after the trustee's sale. Third, you must submit a bid so that the trustee receives it no more than 45 days after the trustee's sale. If you think you may qualify as an "eligible tenant buyer" or "eligible bidder" you should consider contacting an attorney or appropriate real estate professional immediately for advice regarding this potential right to purchase. Date: 2/7/2022 PLM LOAN MANAGEMENT SERVICES, INC., as Trustee Phone: 408-370-4030 5446 Thornwood Drive, Second Floor San Jose, California 95123 Elizabeth Godbey, Vice President NPP0399040 To: COUNTRY ALMANAC 02/18/2022, 02/25/2022, 03/04/2022

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# Bus drivers stage a sick-out in East Palo Alto in the midst of labor negotiations

By Angela Swartz

All four of the Ravenswood City School District's bus drivers called in sick on the morning of Friday, Feb. 11, as their representative, the California School Employees Association (CSEA), negotiates with the district over pay. Some students who didn't get the message were left waiting at bus stops, according to an East Palo Alto City Council member.

The district, which made an offer to CSEA during negotiations on Tuesday, Feb. 15, notified families early Friday morning that it wouldn't provide bus services to its Menlo Park and

East Palo Alto schools for the day, said Will Eger, the district's chief business officer. Bus service was back to usual on Monday, Feb. 14, said Superintendent Gina Sudaria in an email.

It's the district's understanding that the drivers' action was related to labor negotiations, Eger said. The sick-out was not sanctioned by CSEA, which represents about 125 employees: bus drivers, food service workers, maintenance staff and other non-teaching positions, administrators noted.

The CSEA chapter's president couldn't be reached for comment.

The district granted teachers a "historic" 10% raise in November

2021, retroactive to July 1. The district aimed to bring educators' salaries on par with other nearby school districts.

The starting salary for bus drivers in the district is \$25.99 per hour and they can make up to \$31.38 an hour, according to the CSEA salary schedule.

District bus drivers made between \$51,230 and \$59,343 in 2019, with some pulling in about half their pay with overtime work, according to Transparent California, which provides compensation information for public employees in the state.

The CSEA signaled earlier in the week to the district's director of operations, Delma Camacho,

that the drivers might stage a sick-out. It was confirmed on Friday morning, according to Eger.

"The district asked the police department to watch students who may have been waiting at the bus stops if some families did not get the message," Sudaria said. Attendance was slightly lower on Friday districtwide, at 82% compared to the average daily attendance of 90%, Eger noted.

Councilman Antonio López expressed displeasure that the students were "used as collateral" in labor negotiations. Some students didn't get the message in time and were stuck at bus stops,

he said.

"They've been through enough," he said of students, adding that he understands there's a high cost of living in Silicon Valley and said there's "no question everybody should be paid a decent wage."

"There's been so much of a disruption of learning (because of the pandemic) and they do their best to learn given the circumstances. There are wiser ways of going about it," he said. "I urge that it be nipped in the bud for the sake of the kids." ■

Email Staff Writer

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aswartz@almanacnews.com.

## ATHLETES

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the 2012 Summer Olympics, was indicted in Oregon City, Oregon in 2021 on four second-degree sexual abuse felony charges related to Kehring's daughter, and is under a lifetime coaching ban by the U.S. Center for SafeSport. He denied the charges, which stemmed from a months-long investigation, according to a story in the Daily Mail last August.

"We wanted to make sure that others don't suffer the way my family had," she said.

We Ride Together offers online educational tools and resources so people can get help, report abuse or learn how to communicate with someone about being abused. There are tips for federations, training schools and coaches on keeping the barn or clubhouse safe and what to say to a survivor. It offers resources to

understand the different forms abuse takes. Most of all, it provides help for survivors. It posts the anonymous stories of those who have been abused and public service announcement (PSA) videos by those who have come forward. People just like Kehring's daughter.

In fact, when her daughter went public with her story in a PSA, We Ride Together received hundreds of phone calls, Kehring said.

One of the hardest things for adults to grasp is the relationship between the coach and the victim, leading to a misunderstanding and lack of support for the young survivors, she said.

It's common for the victim to accept physical contact or other kinds of abuse as a tradeoff or as part of the price paid to get benefits from the aggressor, she said.

"The major cases of sexual abuse involve seduction and deception, not force. It's through grooming and coercion,"

Kehring said.

The tactics can start off slowly and grow over time. The abuser might give the intended victim preferential treatment such as a favorite position on a team or individualized, quality instructional time.

The man who abused Kehring's daughter was an icon of his sport and groomed her daughter for two years, she alleged. When the teenager stepped forward, some in the community reacted in "utterly horrifying" ways with Facebook posts, she said.

At one point, Kehring nearly lost her daughter to suicide.

"He had a lot of people defending him. We also found that a significant portion of the equestrian community viewed it as an extramarital affair," she said.

Her daughter was 16 years old. "People were arguing, 'Should his life really be ruined?' That's what started the campaign. We have to unpack this. These

attitudes are so off from normal," she said.

The attitudes in the equestrian community that her family experienced aren't any different than in other sports, Kehring stressed. Across the board, many sports federations are recognizing that sexual abuse is a huge problem they don't know how to address.

But "the campaign set a lot of people straight," she said.

After she formed We Ride Together, Kehring saw the tone shift away from hatred of her daughter to people understanding they shouldn't be criticizing the victim.

The response went worldwide after her daughter released the video. A woman in Sweden sent her daughter a gift and note thanking her for her courage, Kehring said.

The turnaround and embracing of We Ride Together's message gives her hope.

"If you can't talk about it, you

can't fix it," she said.

Awareness is growing. Congress passed the Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017 in the aftermath of the widely publicized abuses of Olympic athletes by their former physician, Larry Nassar. The bill was sponsored by Sen. Dianne Feinstein and established the U.S. Center for SafeSport, which develops and enforces policies, procedures, and training to prevent abuse and misconduct.

The center also has the power to revoke the permission to coach of those who are accused of, or who engaged in, misconduct. It maintains a centralized disciplinary database of revoked and suspended individuals.

More information about We Ride Together can be found at [weridetgether.today](http://weridetgether.today). Information about the U.S. Center for SafeSport can be found at [uscenterforsafesport.org](http://uscenterforsafesport.org). ■

## SCHOOLS

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school, spacing in classrooms, high quality air filtration, sanitizing and handwashing.

There were six cases in the Las Lomas Elementary School District last week. There were seven the week before.

The Ravenswood City School District reported 10 cases last week, down from 31 the week prior.

### High school district cases are down

There were 35 cases in Sequoia Union High School District as of Thursday last week, compared to 121 the previous week.

Masks have been optional when outdoors in the district. However, particularly in areas of

substantial to high transmission levels, people who are not fully vaccinated are encouraged to wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve contact with other people who are not fully vaccinated, according to a district FAQ.

### Next steps: Field trips, visitors, congregating on campus

This week, Portola Valley district administrators plan to work with the parent-teacher organization at each site to determine ways to invite families onto campus for outdoor events, according to a staff report.

Teachers and staff will work with site administration to consider field trips and classroom visitors. ■



### Principal Kristen Garcia

hands out jump ropes to first graders during recess at Oak Knoll Elementary School in Menlo Park on Sept. 29, 2020. Students are now allowed to go maskless while outdoors.

Magali Gauthier

# INTERO

Menlo Park • A Berkshire Hathaway Affiliate • Residential/Commercial

## WELCOMES

### Jan Strohecker

*Jan brings a wealth of real estate knowledge* with her 35 years selling Silicon Valley properties. She has sold the same properties multiple times. She has a pulse on the current market conditions. She sells residential and commercial real estate, multi-units, land and is well versed in IRC 1031 Exchanges.

The Strohecker Palo Alto family ties date back to the 1930's as well as their Stanford University affiliation. She is indeed a welcomed addition to the prestigious Silicon Valley founded Intero real estate corporation.

"Quiet sales", where privacy is needed is her forte as she has built an extensive network of local colleagues over the 35 years of doing local business.



#### Hobbies & Interests

Giving back to her community is one of her passions. She is an active member & supporter of the following organizations:

- First Congregational Church of Palo Alto
- Woman's Club of Palo Alto
- Elizabeth Gamble Gardens
- Garden Club of Palo Alto
- Cantor/Anderson Art Museum
- Silicon Valley YMCA
- Stanford Sports including the Buck Cardinal Club
- PAHA (Palo Alto Historical Association)
- SHS (Stanford Historical Society)
- West Bay Opera
- Palo Alto Players

Her love of music appreciation is extensive ranging from Classical to the Blues. Other leisure activities include attending Stanford sporting events, playing tennis, reading, family, friends and travel.

*If you are considering selling or buying in the near future, hire Jan. You will be her #1 priority.*

### Jan Strohecker

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# INTERO

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## OPEN SPACE

continued from page 1

directors hired its first general manager, Herb Grench. The following year, the agency bought its first piece of land, 90 acres that became the Foothills Open Space Preserve. It later purchased 760 acres that would become the Monte Bello Open Space Preserve, and received its first land gift, 136 acres that would become part of the Saratoga Gap Open Space Preserve.

Then, in November 1976, voters agreed to annex the southern portion of San Mateo County — Atherton, Redwood City, Portola Valley, Menlo Park, Woodside, San Carlos and East Palo Alto — into the district. Around that time Grench proposed the creation of a separate nonprofit land trust to raise money and work with land owners to secure land purchases. That organization became the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), formed in 1977.

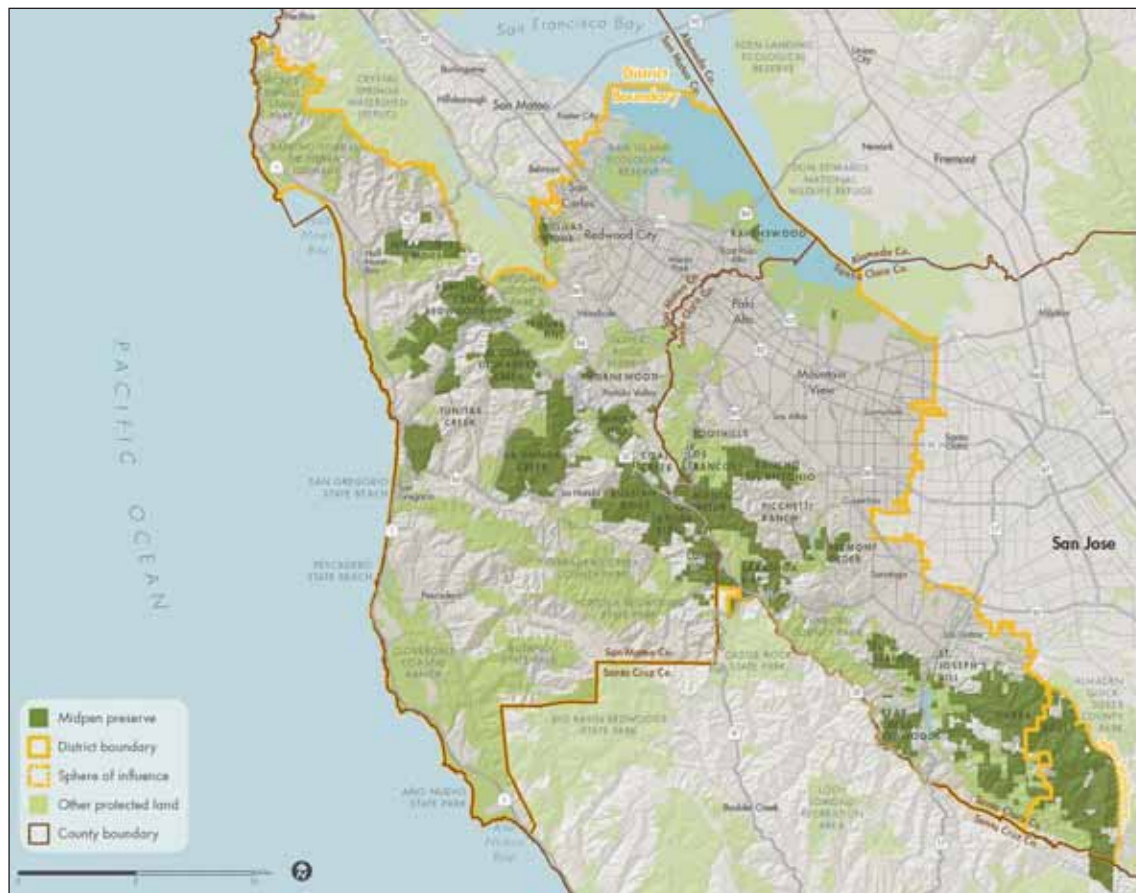
Over the years, the district continued to both purchase land and receive land as gifts. In 1980, Midpen bought the 537-acre Windy Hill property from POST, representing the first of many public-private partnerships developed between Midpen and POST.

By 1992, the agency had protected roughly 35,000 acres. It had added another 12,000 acres by 2002. It continued to expand its land holdings, creating the Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve in 1999.

In 2004, Midpen expanded its boundaries to the San Mateo County coast, and has since protected more than additional 11,000 acres of natural and agricultural lands.

Then, in 2014, voters approved Measure AA, providing a \$300 million general obligation bond to the district to buy open space, expand access and improve existing preserves. Hanko retired in 2019 after serving on the district's board for 46 years.

Over the past several years, Midpen has also opened up the summit of Mount Umunhum and La Honda Creek Open Space



Courtesy Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

**Open spaces** that the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District has preserved over the past 50 years are shown in dark green.

Preserve, adopted a climate action plan and wildland fire resiliency program, and developed a program to protect watersheds and provide grants to support conservation, education and access.

#### Adapting to changing times

Over the past five decades, the district has not only acquired more lands, but invested more resources toward restoring the lands in its care, according to Gessner.

The district has three primary goals as part of its mission: to preserve land, restore it to its original function and promote its accessibility.

"It's a big part of the work we do that isn't as visible to the public as preserving the land and opening it up for public enjoyment," Gessner said.

Nearly all of the land that Midpen has acquired over the years is not what's considered

"pristine wilderness," she said. The lands have been used by different groups in different ways over the centuries — they have been logged, made into motorcycle parks or been subjected to unnatural fire suppression tactics.

"We have challenges that are different today than 50 years ago," she said. "For example, climate change and wildfire were probably not as top of mind as they are for us today."

This year, the district has a number of projects it's working on.

Midpen is in the middle of a redistricting process to draw new election boundaries for its seven seats, each of which represents a geographic area called a "ward." The district's board has already selected a preferred map for the new boundaries and is expected to consider approving it at its March 23 meeting. The proposed shifts push the boundary of Ward

6 northward, consolidates Wards 2 and 5 into shapes that are less intertwined and pushes the proposed Ward 3 boundaries farther south.

Go to [is.gd/redistrictmidpen](https://is.gd/redistrictmidpen) to see an interactive map showing the current boundaries compared to the proposed ones for more details, or to do an address-based search.

Midpen is also stepping up its approach to wildland fire management, and is working to manage vegetation at several preserves, developing fuel breaks — gaps in vegetation designed to slow the spread of a fire — at the Skyline and Monte Bello preserve parking areas. The agency is also working to reduce fuels in Thornewood Preserve in Woodside.

In addition, staff are working to remove dead, broken and diseased tree limbs and a few bay laurel trees around the area of the Deer Hollow Farmhouse at

Rancho San Antonio in Cupertino. Midpen recently created a fuel break at Pulgas Ridge and Coal Creek preserves.

Midpen field staff are provided annual training as fire first responders, according to the district website.

The open space district is also in the middle of a pilot program to evaluate whether e-bikes should be allowed on trails where other bicycles are permitted at Rancho San Antonio Preserve and County Park and Ravenswood Preserve, and the results are expected to be reviewed by the district's Planning and Natural Resources Committee on March 8.

#### Celebrating Midpen

To celebrate the district's 50th year, district staff are planning a number of community programs, according to Gessner.

"We invite the public to join us in 2022 to celebrate how far we have

come together as a community in realizing our vision, sharing stories from the last half-century of perseverance, and recognizing the contributions of people past, present and future," Ana Marla Ruiz, general manager at Midpen, said in a press statement.

Among the planned activities include a family-friendly festival set for April 30 at the Ravenswood Open Space Preserve along the Bay in East Palo Alto and a Coastside community celebration at Johnston Ranch near Half Moon Bay in the fall. Throughout the year, Midpen will also offer hikes and other activities led by docent naturalists, including a hike series aimed at visiting all 26 preserves.

People can also participate in the celebration through online and social media programs. Midpen is offering participants in a program called "Open Hearts" a commemorative gift if they share their stories and talk about what they like most about their favorite open space preserves. People are also invited to post photos at Midpen preserves and tag their post with the tag @MidpenOpenSpace and hashtag #SpottedAtMidpen. Each month, a winner will be chosen to receive a prize. The district also plans to host pop-up events at open spaces throughout the year, visiting a different preserve each month.

"The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District has long been an important part of the fabric of San Mateo and Santa Clara counties' regional open space identities," said San Mateo County Supervisor Don Horsley. "Congratulations on a half-century of success and I am sure Midpen will continue for centuries to come." ▀

Email Staff Writer

Kate Bradshaw at [kbradshaw@miv-voice.com](mailto:kbradshaw@miv-voice.com).



Veronica Weber

**Nonette Hanko**, founder of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, sits at the Monte Bello Preserve on Feb. 6, 2019.



Courtesy Carolyn Caddes

**Ed Shelley**, Herb Grench, Dick Bishop, Craig and Margo Britton, Nonette Hanko and Jim Bollend celebrate Midpen reaching 10,000 acres preserved in 1981 at Monte Bello Open Space Preserve.



Magali Gauthier



Courtesy Yash Shetty/ Verde Magazine

**Above:** Birdwatchers gather at a cul-de-sac near Greer Park in as they attempt to glimpse a rarely spotted Oriental turtle-dove nested nearby in a tree. **Left:** An Oriental turtle-dove perched in a tree at the corner of Colorado Avenue and Higgins Place around 11 a.m. on Feb. 7.

**BIRDERS**

*continued from page 5*

in California. It is considered a ‘mega-rarity’ with only a handful of reports from anywhere in North America,” he said on Wednesday.

“The discovery of this bird was extremely exciting to birders. For most people, it was what we refer to as a ‘lifer,’ meaning we have never seen it before, anywhere. For others who had seen the bird in its normal range, it was an ‘ABA Area life bird’ — American Birding Association refers to North America including Canada, Alaska and Hawaii.”

The Oriental turtle-dove is similar in shape to the Eurasian collared-dove but with a rusty scalloped pattern on its back and wings. It is immediately distinguishable from any other doves in the area, he said. The bird is closer in size to a pigeon than to the local mourning doves.

The bird’s native distribution ranges mainly across Asia to Japan, where it isn’t rare. A migratory species, it has six subspecies ranging from eastern and central Asia to the Himalayas and from central Siberia to Japan. It winters in India and as far south as Sri Lanka.

It also occupies an incredibly diverse habitat. According to the Cornell Laboratory’s Birds of the World website, the Oriental turtle-dove occupies habitats ranging from northern coniferous to tropical forests, to forest edges and mountainous regions of Japan, where it can thrive in subalpine habitats. It can occur in sparse woodland, scrub and wooded farmland bordering

cultivated fields and it appears to be increasingly breeding in Japan in areas with tree-lined streets.

In Kashmir, it breeds in pine forests mixed with birch, aspen, poplar and willow groves, but it is also found in foothill oak, mixed deciduous and bamboo forests. It has been found as high as nearly 8,000 feet on Mt. Fuji and more than 13,000 feet in Nepal.

So how did it get here?

Dodder said that it might have traveled north from its breeding range instead of south as expected.

“It would have had to come across the Bering Strait to reach North America and may have then ‘mirrored’ its movement south. This is a common phenomenon with Asian vagrant species. It is often called ‘mirror misorientation,’” he said, noting that its internal navigation system might not have been functioning properly. “There are no records of this bird being kept in collections or sold by breeders, so it seems to have gotten here naturally. There is a possibility it was ‘ship assisted,’ meaning it was a stowaway on a freighter — quite common, actually. But we will likely never know,” he said.

Palo Alto’s dove has likely found a cozy place to hang out, with plenty of nearby seeds and grains in bird feeders or on the ground. Bradshaw, who is also a birder and does bird conservation work in the South Bay, said he noticed the dove when it was feeding with mourning doves on the ground under his bird feeder. He wasn’t sure what he was seeing at first, but after looking the bird up

in his Sibley’s Bird Guide, he thought it could be the Oriental turtle-dove.

He posted a request on a local birding Listserv for assistance identifying it. At first, he thought it might be a lost pet or escaped captive bird, such as some parrots, doves and pigeons. But Alvaro Jaramillo, a global bird expert, responded that based on its plumage, it looked like a subspecies of the Oriental turtle-dove that can migrate and cross over to Alaska.

“He said that it is a super rare bird and I could expect large crowds,” Bradshaw recalled.

“On the first weekend, more than 200 people showed up. On Wednesday, there were 20. I talked to a guy from St. Louis this morning. He had friends from New Jersey who are coming tomorrow,” he said last week.

Bradshaw said he isn’t a

“chaser” — one who follows the birds wherever they go — but he has seen a number of rare birds, particularly in Palo Alto.

More recently, he viewed the rare curlew sandpiper, a small wader that breeds on the tundra of Arctic Siberia and winters in Africa, Asia and Australia and New Zealand, which had attracted crowds in the Palo Alto Baylands Nature Preserve.

But the Oriental turtle-dove has beaten them all so far. As one birding expert told him, “This kind of blows that sandpiper out of the water.”

There’s no danger of the many people scaring the bird, since it’s high enough away from people. The only threats could be from a Cooper’s hawk that might swoop down to take it as a meal, or outdoor cats, Dodder said.

Salying Wong and Andrew Yeh, avid birders for the past two years, said they arrived from Sunnyvale to view the Oriental turtle-dove. After a few days of trying, they were finally rewarded with a view of the bird last Monday.

What’s most striking about this bird, or any rare sighting, is the incredible distance it has traveled to reach here, Yeh said.

“That it could find its way

all the way over here is pretty amazing. That it can migrate long distances is pretty incredible,” he said.

Wong said they aren’t skilled enough to spot these rare birds on their own.

“We always spot the birders and ask, ‘What do you see?’” she said.

They got interested in birding through technology they found online: the mapping apps and photographs, birding data and many ways to learn about avian diversity. Birding also became a great outlet during the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing them to enjoy the outdoors and to meet many kind and generous people, she said.

But what about the social life of the Oriental turtle-dove, the only one of its kind? Just because it’s the lone example doesn’t mean it has to be lonely. The bird has been roosting with the mourning doves, Bradshaw said.

It’s also quite possible it could also interbreed with local doves, Dodder said.

“Hybridization happens all of the time, often with ducks and gulls,” he added. ■

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

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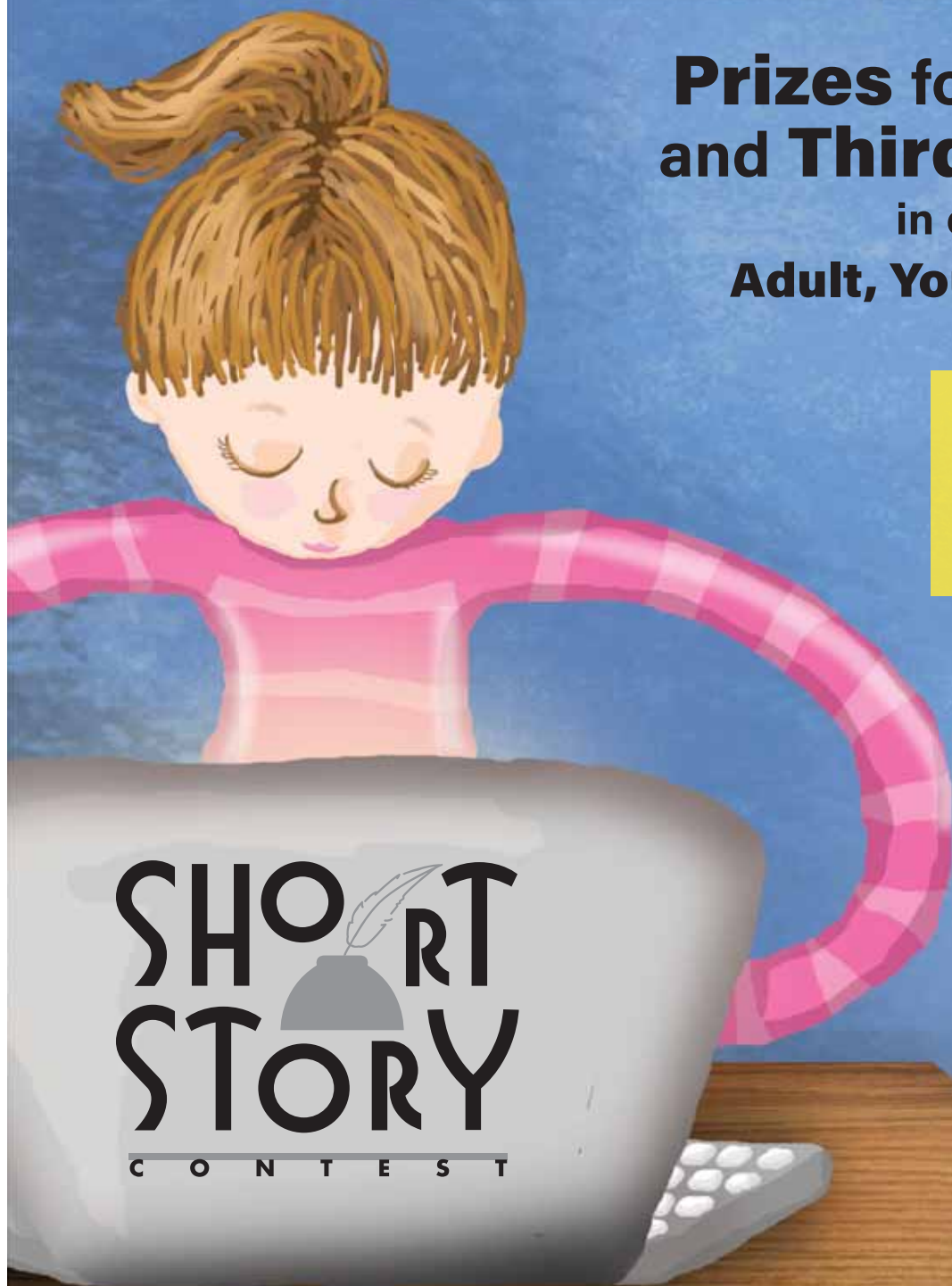
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## A song in her heart

Smuin Ballet revisits two works by choreographer with unique musical inspirations

By Heather Zimmerman

Every work that choreographer Amy Seiwert creates starts with a love match — at least musically speaking.

“I fall in love with music first, and my musical choices are very wide,” she said in an interview.

Two of her pieces returning to the stage this month offer pretty solid proof of her expansive musical taste: “Dear Miss Cline,” a honky-tonk romp set to the songs of country crooner Patsy Cline, and “Been Through Diamonds,” a tale of unrequited love inspired by a lyric from an ‘80s rock song but danced to the music of Mozart.

The pieces will be featured in Smuin Contemporary Ballet’s February program, “Dance Series 1: Love, Smuin” Feb. 24-27 at the Mountain View Center for Performing Arts. The program also features the company premiere of Gina Patterson’s “You Are Here,” which explores themes of loss and perseverance. The piece is set to the music of pianist Ludovico Einaudi.

Seiwert, a former Smuin dancer who also served for about a decade as the company’s first choreographer-in-residence, said she has found musical inspiration for her pieces in everything from the works of 20th-century American classical composer Morton Feldman to 12th-century religious music by Hildegard von Bingen.

“To me, any musical choice, as long as it speaks to me and says, ‘hey, I want to be ballet,’ it’s valid. And ‘Dear Miss Cline’ was one of the first times I was starting to explore using more pop music,” she said.

Seiwert created “Dear Miss Cline” in 2011. She said that she knew at the time that audiences would be receptive to the unusual piece, as the company had already become known for founder Michael Smuin’s inventive ballets incorporating pop music — among them, “To the Beatles Revisited 2001” set to songs by the Beatles and “Come Dance Me a Song,” danced to the music of Sir Elton John.

“Dear Miss Cline” features 10 of Cline’s country songs, many so lovelorn

that Seiwert recalled during a rehearsal, lighting designer Brian Jones asked her, “How many people left this woman?” Jones might have been joking, but the question actually gets to the heart of how Seiwert said she approaches choreography and why music is such a big part of her process.

“When you’re making a ballet, for me that starts with stories: ‘Who is this character? What happened in this song? Why is this heartbreak there? What is her relationship to the people around her?’ So you’re following the stories of the songs and storytelling is just such a huge

‘When you’re making a ballet, for me that starts with stories: ‘Who is this character? What happened in this song?’

AMY SEIWERT, CHOREOGRAPHER

part of the game with dance,” she said. “Dear Miss Cline” brings Cline’s songs to life on the stage with athletic leaps, playful pirouettes and acrobatics as dancers embrace, and in the next moment, push each other away. There are elements that recall classical ballet, but the choreography looks more down-to-earth, a visual interpretation of both the longing in the lyrics and the twang of the music.

“The movements are still based in the classical language, but they’re interpreted differently, like where the center of weight is. It’s much more grounded — a little bit lower through the dancers’ bodies. You’re not hiding the physicality, which you do often in classical ballet (where) you’re doing something excruciatingly hard, and you’re trying to make it look as easy as possible,” she said, pointing out that an emphasis on the athleticism and physical labor of dancing is more common in contemporary ballet.

Seiwert employs that physicality to tell a story with many romantic complications in “Been Through Diamonds” — a piece that came from a surprising source.

The 1980 song “Love Stinks” by the J. Geils Band may not sound like an obvious fit for ballet, but Seiwert used its opening lyrics, “You love her/But she loves him/And he loves somebody else/You just can’t win” as a jumping off point for the piece, which begins with a group of characters who are all in love with people who love someone else in their group.



Smuin dancers Terez Dean Orr (top) lifted by Ian Buchanan (left) and Max van der Sterre (center), with Yuri Rogers (right) in Amy Seiwert’s “Been Through Diamonds.” Courtesy Chris Hardy/Smuin Contemporary Ballet

“For some reason that struck me as the perfect mix for Mozart,” Seiwert said, noting that the playfulness of Mozart’s String Quintet in C Minor suited the dynamic she had in mind. The overlapping, unrequited affections among characters give way to character studies in the piece’s second and third movements: a man who is never satisfied with the relationship he has and a vivacious woman who’s in love with love.

Another lyric from “Love Stinks” gave the piece its title, but “Been Through Diamonds” isn’t all dashed hopes and dreams, with the characters happily pairing up in the fourth movement. The piece was the first that Seiwert choreographed for Smuin Contemporary Ballet after retiring as a dancer in 2008.

“It was one of the first times I really tried to play with story. I was working on that as a different approach for me. And it’s super technical, and then super fast,” Seiwert said, laughing at the realization she had when revisiting the piece for “Love, Smuin.”

“I was younger when I made it and it seems crazy how fast it is. But the dancers are doing it and they look great,” she said.

Seiwert noted that dancer Terez Dean Orr, who joined the company in 2008, danced in the original casts of both “Dear Miss Cline” and “Been Through Diamonds” and she reprises her role in

the latter work, but is dancing a new role in “Dear Miss Cline.” Seiwert said she has enjoyed watching her explore a different aspect of the piece.

In fact, revisiting her works roughly a decade later has given Seiwert the chance to see her work interpreted by new artists.

“It’s been really great to see how it changes with new generations of dancers. I see the memory of the original artists that it was (created for), then you see this new group and they bring completely different things. And it’s a wonderful journey to watch that happen.”

“Dance Series 1: Love, Smuin” will be followed this spring by a second series revisiting other Smuin company works, including Seiwert’s piece “Renaissance,” set to music by the Oakland-based Kitka Women’s Vocal Ensemble.

Smuin Contemporary Ballet performs “Dance Series 1: Love, Smuin” Feb. 24-25, 7:30 p.m.; Feb. 26, 2 and 7:30 p.m. and Feb. 27, 2 p.m. at the Mountain View Center for Performing Arts, 500 Castro St., Mountain View. Tickets are \$25-\$99. The company will also offer the program virtually, March 10-31. Tickets for virtual performances are \$20. For more information, visit [smuinballet.org](http://smuinballet.org). ■

Email Arts & Entertainment Editor Heather Zimmerman at [hzimmerman@almanacnews.com](mailto:hzimmerman@almanacnews.com).



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# Food & Drink

## 'Nom Nom Paleo' authors want to be known for more than health and wellness

Palo Alto couple's latest cookbook showcases the Asian American cuisine they love

By Anthony Shu

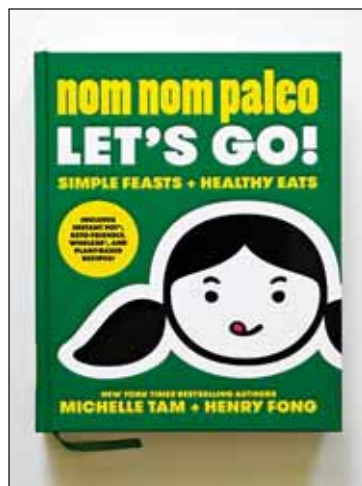
Authors of three New York Times bestselling cookbooks, Palo Alto husband-and-wife team Michelle Tam and Henry Fong have championed simple and comforting paleo recipes on the award-winning blog Nom Nom Paleo since 2010. Despite plenty of press showcasing Tam's expertise on the paleo diet, which she defines as "an ancestral approach that prioritizes eating real, whole, nutrient-dense foods," few outlets have covered a different driving force behind their work: growing up as omnivorous Asian Americans in the Bay Area.

With an approachable visual style that harnesses step-by-step photographs and graphic novel-inspired illustrations by Fong, the "Nom Nom Paleo" cookbooks stand out. However, some bookstores still relegate them to a diet cooking genre dominated by mainly white doctors who focus on health over creativity and taste.

"For the longest time our books were always upstairs in the back in the wellness food, the diet food section. We were like, 'That's not where it belongs,'" Fong says about a prominent bookstore. Tam and Fong want to be recognized for spreading accessible, nutritious food that celebrates a variety of cultures, not for dispensing health advice.

Tam, who is the face of Nom Nom Paleo's blog and writes all of their recipes, used to start her cookbook writing process by wondering what dishes her audience might want to cook. With millions of readers to appeal to, Tam feared certain recipes might be too unfamiliar for some of her followers.

However, in the couple's latest cookbook, "Nom Nom Paleo: Let's Go!," Tam shares the foods she loves most. This focus might seem like a cliché of cookbook writing, but it took the stress induced by the pandemic and recent attention around anti-Asian hate crimes for Tam and Fong to unapologetically present their comfort foods. These dishes originate from "polyglot



Courtesy Henry Fong

Cover art for "Nom Nom Paleo: Let's Go!" by Michelle Tam and Henry Fong.

diets" built on burritos, kebabs and dim sum. Their version of Bay Area cuisine incorporates ginger scallion sauce on one page and Oaxacan pipián verde that mixes ground pumpkin seeds with pureed tomatillos and herbs on the next one.

We sat down with Tam and Fong to learn more about how dining out in the Bay Area and their Asian American heritage informed their latest cookbook. This conversation has been edited for clarity and brevity.

**Peninsula Foodist:** Tell me a little bit about eating together throughout the Bay Area; it seems like it is a big part of your relationship.

**Michelle Tam:** I think everything important in our lives has revolved around food. I grew up in Menlo Park, and then I did a little circle around the Bay Area.



Courtesy Henry Fong

**Scallion pancake tacos** from "Nom Nom Paleo: Let's Go!" showcase how authors Michelle Tam and Henry Fong incorporate influences from the Bay Area's diverse food scene.

I met Henry in college. Our freshman year, we were in the same freshman dorm at Berkeley. We spent our student loan money all over the Bay Area, eating all sorts of stuff.

**Foodist:** I really liked how you talk about this "polyglot diet" in the cookbook. It's definitely reflected in the recipes. People ask me, "What do you cook?" And I don't know. I can't just cook Chinese food for a week. I'll need to go eat something Mexican because that's the way I grew up here. Could you tell me a little bit more about how your diet in the Bay Area influenced your cookbook writing?

**Michelle Tam:** In the Bay Area, you're just spoiled because you have access to amazing produce. It's easy for me to source and try things, and at a lot of these specialized grocery stores, everything's so cheap and so fresh.

**Henry Fong:** We were originally going to follow a similar template to what we had done previously, which is: Try to figure out what Michelle's audience wants to eat, and then kind of meet them there. When the pandemic happened, it really forced us to reevaluate our priorities.

Michelle was like, "You know what, I am just going to cook the foods that I want to eat. And I'm going to put them in this book. And I don't care if it only appeals to a niche audience of folks who miss 'sort of Asian' and Bay Area immigrant comfort foods." We are focused on the foods that both of us grew up on, not just a standard middle of



Magali Gauthier

**Nom Nom Paleo founder Michelle Tam** and husband Henry Fong, the authors of three best selling cookbooks, in the kitchen of their Palo Alto home.

the road, quote unquote, American food.

**Michelle Tam:** A perfect example of a recipe like this is our dan tat (Hong Kong egg tarts). I was like, "I don't know that I want to attempt this." A lot of people have never had one because they've never had Cantonese dim sum. But I was like, "This is something I missed, and I want to recreate it. There will be some people seeing it for the first time. But that's okay."

**Foodist:** It really seems like the pandemic has changed your work. And with the pandemic, there's this topic of hate crimes against Asian Americans. Have you had any reflections on this idea of Asian American identity and how it affected your work over the last couple of years?

**Michelle Tam:** The last couple of years, I have really leaned into being proud of being Asian American. One thing I've noticed talking to Henry about this — we may be one of the few Asian American authors of three New York Times bestselling cookbooks but nobody ever —

**Henry Fong:** Nobody ever identifies them as Asian first. They identify them as paleo first. And it is remarkable, because we do consider ourselves to have a lot of Asian influence in what we put out there.

The anti-Asian hate, it's something we've thought about a lot. I remember being up in Portland with my younger son and us saying, "Hmm, do we really want to go downtown? We are Asian." I'm thinking, that is not the way I want my kids to feel living in the United States, living in progressive areas on the West Coast. How awful is it that you grow up thinking, "I can't walk down the street?"

**Michelle Tam:** When our parents came in the late '60s and early '70s, it was all about assimilating, being a model minority and not making any waves —

**Henry Fong:** Trying to blend

in with the dominant culture as quickly as you possibly could.

**Michelle Tam:** Yeah. And so what I love now is that everybody is super proud of being Asian American, and that we are Americans. We aren't others, which I think we've been categorized as forever.

**Henry Fong:** In the past, I don't know that we would have been as mindful about explaining, "Where does this particular dish come from?" This is an Indian dish. It's an egg masala that we got from a friend who's Parsi. This is the heritage that it comes from, here's the story behind it.

Our editor asked us about dan tat, Cantonese, or Hong Kong egg tarts. And they were like, "Can we just call them Chinese egg tarts?" And we're like, "No, because actually, they originated in Hong Kong. They're the product of a fusion between the Portuguese in Macau, English and Chinese influences. It's a very specific thing."

Being able to say that out loud, put it in a book and try to educate folks about the provenance of foods from a very diverse Asian community is actually something that I'm very proud of. ■

Visit the Peninsula Foodist Instagram @peninsulafoodist this week to hear about Tam and Fong's favorite local restaurants.

Email Associate Digital Editor Anthony Shu at [peninsulafoodist@embarcaderopublishing.com](mailto:peninsulafoodist@embarcaderopublishing.com).

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