

The Almanac

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Menlo Park is struggling to fill city hall vacancies

About 27 staff positions are currently unfilled

By Lloyd Lee

In March, when Menlo Park City Council members discussed a study of the city's downtown economy, they were reminded of how staff vacancies are putting a strain on the city's resources and its ability to pursue both urgent and less time-sensitive projects like downtown improvements.

When council member Drew Combs asked about the status of hiring an economic development planner, Interim City Manager Justin Murphy said that it was one of about 40 open jobs at the city out of a total 271.75 full-time equivalent positions in the budget, citing a Jan. 25 personnel report. The total number includes City Council members, according to Murphy. Part of the problem? The team that recruits job candidates was itself suffering from "staffing challenges," Murphy said at the time.

A new report from the city shows that the vacancy numbers don't run as deep as they did a few months ago, but the city's staffing woes remain: About 27 city positions are unfilled, representing a 10% vacancy rate, and 10 of them are for executive and management positions.

Vacancies are felt across almost every department — from administrative services to public works, to library and

community services to the city manager's office. This includes a community development director, senior civil engineer, city planners and a building inspector, Murphy said.

The 10 executive and management positions are for administrative services, community development, library and community services, the public works department and the city manager's office.

Five of those roles are filled with an interim or acting employee, the report stated. This includes Murphy, the interim city manager, who essentially functions as the city's CEO, and is responsible for executing the budget and enforcing policies adopted by City Council.

According to an April 12 staff report, the city has been working with a management consulting firm, Hawkins Group, to find a permanent city manager since September.

Longtime city staffer Murphy stepped into the interim role in January, after then-City Manager Starla Jerome-Robinson abruptly resigned months before she was set to retire.

Since then, the City Council had at least seven meetings behind closed doors regarding the city manager position.

"It is fair to say that Menlo Park, like other Bay Area cities and private employers, is



Magali Gauthier

The vacancies in Menlo Park City Hall go all the way to the top, with longtime city staffer Justin Murphy serving as the interim city manager since January while a permanent hire is sought.

experiencing real challenges in filling its open positions," Mayor Betsy Nash said. Nash declined to comment on the current hiring progress for the city manager position.

On April 12, the City Council approved a \$10,000 increase to Murphy's salary, following the recommendation of a staff

report which stated that he has "ably served the organization and community" and that he has taken on the interim role longer than anticipated.

"We try to do the best we can to deliver services to the community," Murphy said.

These empty seats don't just present an issue for the city's

immediate priorities but also for those that Menlo Park may want to pursue in the near future.

The personnel report was also attached to a draft budget report for the city's next fiscal year that outlines some of the expected costs for new employees in this

See **VACANCIES**, page 7

Stanford to cut striking nurses' pay, health care benefits

Union: Decision during COVID-19 pandemic is 'beyond cruel'

By Sue Dremann

Stanford Health Care and Lucile Packard Children's Hospital administrators have announced they will cut off health insurance benefits to striking nurses and their families as well as pay.

The hospitals announced the

cuts on April 15 to the Committee for Recognition of Nursing Achievement (CRONA), a union of more than 5,000 nurses representing the two hospitals, which plans to begin striking on April 25 after both sides failed to reach contract agreements.

The union has posted a petition on its website that has

thus far garnered nearly 23,000 signatures. The petition will be presented to hospital officials prior to the strike, CRONA said in a statement.

"It is beyond cruel and insulting for the hospitals to cut off health care for the nurses who have given everything to the hospitals in these last two years

and are simply asking to negotiate common-sense solutions for their patients and their profession — especially when the hospitals reported that their joint operating surplus increased by \$676 million in 2021, in addition to a combined revenue of approximately \$8.3 billion," the union said.

"Instead of trying to address why 93% of eligible nurses voted to go on strike, the hospitals responded with this cruel move that's clearly designed to punish nurses and break their resolve."

In a statement, Dale E. Beatty, chief nurse executive and vice

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Courtesy Ravenswood City School District

A transitional kindergarten student at Costaño School in East Palo Alto during the summer of 2021.

Ravenswood school district drops outdoor mask mandate, keeps indoor rules

By Angela Swartz

After a lively debate, with one board member arguing that students need to be able to return to normalcy, the Ravenswood City School District Board of Trustees opted on April 14, to continue to require face masks indoors, but moved to make

masks optional outdoors starting this week.

Ravenswood remains the only school district in the area with an indoor mask mandate still in place. The district's outdoor mandate ended on Monday, April 18.

After hearing that classified staff members and teachers would prefer to keep indoor

masking, Trustee Ana Maria Pulido said she was fine with preserving the mandate until the end of the semester.

"Our endpoint should be very, very near," she said. "I think we're a little bit delayed on this one," she said, asking what it means for COVID-19

See **SCHOOL MASKS**, page 18

Mullin takes fundraising lead in race to succeed Rep. Jackie Speier

By Gennady Sheyner

Boosted by a strong quarter and a personal loan to his own campaign, Assembly member Kevin Mullin has taken a fundraising lead in the closely watched race to replace U.S. Rep. Jackie Speier in District 15, according to reports that were filed with the Federal Election Commission Friday, April 15.

Mullin reported \$374,888 in total contributions over the last reporting period, which stretched from Jan. 1 to March

31. This includes \$328,660 in contributions from individuals and \$46,228 from political committees.

The strong fundraising numbers have propelled him past his two closest competitors, San Mateo County Supervisor David Canepa and Burlingame City Council member Emily Beach. Both had been ahead of Mullin in fundraising just before the latest reporting period.

The strong quarter brought his overall campaign chest to \$620,000 in total receipts,

according to the FEC report. This includes \$496,864 in contributions from individuals and \$58,228 from political action committees. The total also includes the \$40,000 that Mullin contributed to his own campaign. Mullin had also loaned \$25,000 to the campaign.

Canepa, who had a commanding fundraising lead at the end of 2021, reported \$128,474 in contributions over the past quarter, bringing his overall

See **FUNDRAISING**, page 18

Menlo Park budget aims for return to pre-pandemic normalcy

City staffing challenges may hinder that progress

By Lloyd Lee

Menlo Park, like many other cities, faced many unknowns when the pandemic hit, so much so that city staff prepared a budget for the 2020-21 fiscal year with a 15% staff reduction across all departments and a freeze on various citywide programs including the popular gymnastics program. Staff anticipated spending nearly every penny that came in, and budgeted for a surplus of just \$1.

"We've really cut to the bone on this budget," council member Ray Mueller said at the time.

Two years later, the City Council on Tuesday, April 19, weighed a draft budget that anticipates life in Menlo Park to return to full swing.

On top of funding for 62 new and ongoing public works projects, the city drafted a long list of requests to beef up staffing throughout all departments, from public works to police to library and community services. Together, they amount to requests for about 20 additional employees at a cost to the general fund of about \$3.2 million.

Chief among these requests is \$1.6 million for the police department for more community service officers, an emergency preparedness coordinator, restoring the traffic unit and staffing support as well as parking enforcement officers — a

total of eight more employees.

In 2020, the city slashed the department's budget by \$2.46 million and removed 15 full-time employee positions.

One item on the list of requests that received a lot of community attention is the restoration of the city's gymnastics program. The program was shut down due to the coronavirus pandemic and has faced delays in reopening due to staffing challenges, the spread of the delta variant and the lack of vaccines for young children.

More recently, a staff report revealed that the employee who was supposed to lead the reactivation of the gymnastics program retired, which will extend the time it would take to reopen to five months after the council decides to restart it.

Sean Reinhart, director of library and community service, anticipates his department will need \$694,540 to fund 5.75 full-time employees to reopen the program. A majority of council members signaled support for bringing back the gymnastics program as soon as possible.

"We need to start living life normally again and bringing back enrichment programs for our city, so I support it," Mueller said.

Mayor Betsy Nash and council member Cecilia Taylor both said that while they support the gymnastics program, they did

See **BUDGET**, page 7



Magali Gauthier

Staffing shortages at Menlo Park City Hall are likely to delay the restoration of services like the popular gymnastics program.

Notice of Public Hearings

The Woodside School District will hold two separate public hearings on the proposed Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), with the Budget Overview for Parents cover page, and the proposed Budget for fiscal year 2022-23 on May 10, 2022, at 6:00 pm, 3195 Woodside Road, Woodside, CA 94062. The meeting agenda will be posted on the District website, <https://www.woodsideschool.us> on May 5, 2022. A copy of the LCAP, with the Budget Overview for Parents cover page, and the proposed budget will be available for public examination at the Woodside School District, 3195 Woodside Road, Woodside, CA 94062 on May 5 between the hours of 8:00 am to 3:00 pm and posted on the District website, <https://www.woodsideschool.us>. Please contact Waly Ndiaye at (650) 851-1571 ext. 4015, wndiaye@woodsideschool.us to request a printed or electronic copy. Public members or stakeholders may request to comment at the public hearing on the LCAP and proposed budget or any item therein, by following the Instructions for Public Comment at Board Meetings found on the District website.

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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Candidate forums for June primary election

With the June primary election just around the corner, local organizations and community groups are helping to educate voters about San Mateo County's candidates and their platforms through a series of forums.

The Redwood City Woman's Club together with the League of Women Voters of South San Mateo County is hosting a San Mateo County Sheriff candidate forum on April 27 from 6:30-7:30 p.m. The event will take place in the Woman's Club at 149 Clinton St. in Redwood City and can also be viewed online at youtu.be/TqFsVaZyuXI. Christina Corpus, captain and chief of police services for the City of Millbrae, is running against incumbent Sheriff Carlos Bolanos.

Thrive will co-host a forum for State Assembly District 21 candidates on Thursday, May 4, from 2-3:30 p.m. Redwood City Mayor Giselle Hale joins James Coleman, Mark Gilham, Maurice Goodman, Alison Madden, Diane Papan and Tania Solé in campaigning for California's 21st district, whose cities are currently represented by Assembly members Kevin Mullin and Marc Berman.

Thrive Alliance and Choose Children 2022, a project of Silicon Valley Community Foundation, will host a forum for candidates for Board of Supervisors Districts 2 and 3 to discuss critical children's issues on Thursday, May 5, from 6-7:30 p.m. The candidates — Virginia Chang Kiraly, Noelia Corzo, Ray Mueller, Laura Parmer-Lohan and Charles Stone — are running to replace outgoing supervisors Don Horsley, D-3, and Carole Groom, D-2.

Thrive will co-host the San Mateo County Sheriff candidates, Sheriff Carlos Bolanos and Sheriff's Captain Christina Corpus, in a forum on Thursday, May 12, from 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Most Thrive-hosted forums will take place virtually via Zoom and those with an in-person option will also have a virtual viewing option. Information on Thrive-sponsored forums are at thrivealliance.org.

The Statewide Direct Primary Election will take place on Tuesday, June 7. Vote by mail ballots for the election will be mailed out starting the week of May 9, according to the San Mateo County elections office. Residents have until May 31 to submit their application for a Vote by Mail ballot. For more information on registering to vote and different methods of submitting your ballot, visit smcvote.org.

—Leah Worthington

Menlo Park hosts park cleanup for Earth Day

Menlo Park's Youth Advisory Committee is inviting community members for a cleanup day at Bedwell Bayfront Park on Saturday, April 23, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in recognition of Earth Day.

Volunteers under 12 years old must be accompanied by an adult.

Interested participants can sign up online at bit.ly/3K3qYAO.

Cañada College appoints new president

Kim Lopez, a former assistant dean of students at University of California, San Diego, and former interim president of College of San Mateo, will head Cañada College as its new president.

San Mateo County Community College District Chancellor Michael Claire announced the news on Tuesday, April 19.

"I have had the pleasure of working with Kim Lopez for several years and in several capacities," Claire said in a press release. "I know her to be a leader of integrity and compassion with values that align to put students first and create a college environment that is equitable, diverse, inclusive and anti-racist. I am confident that she will lead Cañada College into a new era of success and commitment to the community."

Lopez has been the interim president of Cañada College since Aug. 1, 2021, the news release stated. Before that, she held several roles at the college and the district, including as dean of enrollment services and counseling at Cañada and as vice president of student services at College of San Mateo.

Lopez will start her new role on July 1. The college district's



Kim Lopez

Menlo Park district to look internally for new superintendent

More leadership changes coming in the district

By Angela Swartz

With its superintendent leaving by year's end, the Menlo Park City School District (MPCSD) board opted on April 15 to start its search for his replacement with internal candidates. Superintendent Erik Burmeister also announced some leadership shakeups as he restructures the district before stepping away.

District administrators already have an idea of who they'd like to see take the helm. Over the last few days, four district principals, two other district leaders — Assistant Superintendent Jammie Behrendt and Executive Director of Student Services Stephanie Sheridan — and a parent recommended Kristen Gracia, the district's assistant superintendent of talent and technology, according to a meeting summary from Trustee Francesca Segrè. Gracia previously served as Oak Knoll School's principal.

The district plans to commence interviews next week, Segrè wrote.

Board members noted that the pool of qualified superintendents outside of the district has dwindled during the pandemic, as many have left the field, she wrote. And since the 2,700-student district is relatively small, past nationwide searches have

attracted candidates with less experience.

The administration has sent out surveys that are due Friday, April 22, and is holding a Zoom town hall on the superintendent role at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 30 (Meeting ID: 988 9220 9189). Trustees Segrè and David Ackerman will serve on the search subcommittee. Community members may also email comments to board@mpcsd.org.

Other leadership changes

In a recent letter to the community, Burmeister shared planned leadership changes throughout the district. The district is seeking a new principal and vice principal at Hillview Middle School, a principal at Laurel Upper Campus and an assistant principal at Oak Knoll School. There will also be internal shuffling of administrative roles.

"This sounds like a lot of change, and it is," Burmeister said. "I recognize that not everyone is comfortable with change; transitions involving critical leadership roles, especially all at once, can feel unsettling. However, I invite everyone to embrace the inspiration of the moment. The perspectives and gifts generated from these leadership changes will only strengthen our team and build MPCSD's capacity to

serve our community."

Before the pandemic, the school board and Burmeister discussed a potential adjustment to the administrative structure at the two-campus Laurel School. Principal Linda Creighton has managed both campuses, but district officials now want to employ a different principal at each site. Linda Creighton will remain the principal of Laurel Lower Campus in Atherton.

Burmeister is recommending Hillview Middle School Principal Willy Haug for the position of director of technology and innovation. The district has gone two years without a director of technology or coordinator of technology, he said.

"Willy has served for over 20 years as a teacher, activities director, assistant principal, and principal all at Hillview," Burmeister said. "It's a terrific opportunity for him to offer his incredible coaching, leadership, and instructional technology expertise to our dynamic team of technologists and educators."

There are other upcoming changes at the Menlo Park middle school. Assistant Principal Danny Chui will leave this next school year to become principal of Mill Valley Middle School in Marin County.

"We will miss Danny's warm

See **SUPERINTENDENT**, page 16

VACANCIES

continued from page 1

week's council agenda for a reason, Murphy said. If Menlo Park wants to, say, restart its popular gymnastics program, which has been shut down since the beginning of the pandemic, the city will have to add an additional 5.75 full-time employees, potentially placing more burden on the city's human resources personnel.

"There's a limited capacity of staff who actually are experts in running recruitment," Murphy

said. "That is probably our pinch point as well."

On Tuesday, when council members reviewed a draft budget for Menlo Park and some of the potential budgeting priorities requested from various city departments, Nash and council member Cecilia Taylor both said that they didn't want to add an additional burden on city resources to find gymnastics employees at a time when the city is still facing vacancies.

"Given that we have a 24% vacancy rate in our community development department

... I believe we need to focus all possible resources on those vacancies," Nash said.

Another indication of the city's current staffing troubles? The report itself was prepared by Mary Morris-Mayorga, who is listed as an administrative services director and an "extra help retired annuitant," referring to a statewide program that allows qualified retirees to take on a temporary position with little to no training. ■

Email Lloyd Lee at llee@almanacnews.com

BUDGET

continued from page 5

not want to tap resources for recruiting gymnastics employees at a time when the city is still marred by staff vacancies.

"Given that we have a 24% vacancy rate in our community development department ... I believe we need to focus all possible resources on those vacancies," Nash said.

Taylor added that she wants to prioritize other areas first, such as adding more housing support staff to the Community Development Department.

"I'm interested in restoring the gymnastics program (but) I'm concerned about our headcount increasing in departments when we have such a large number of vacancies in other departments that I believe need to be resourced as well."

The city anticipates revenue of \$62.5 million for the 2022-23 fiscal year and \$64.5 million in budgeted expenses, amounting to a \$1.9 million deficit.

The City Council will hold a public hearing on the budget on June 14 and is set to adopt a budget on June 28.

To view the draft budget, go to bit.ly/3vR4rlV. ■

Email Staff Writer Lloyd Lee at llee@almanacnews.com



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Palo Alto parents are sentenced for bribing son's SAT proctor in 'Varsity Blues' scandal

Gregory and Amy Colburn will spend 2 months in prison and pay \$25,000 in fines

By Sue Dremann

A Palo Alto mother and father who paid \$25,000 to facilitate cheating on their son's SAT exams were each sentenced to prison on Thursday, April 14, the U.S. Attorney for the District of Massachusetts said in a press release.

U.S. District Court Judge Nathaniel M. Gorton sentenced Dr. Gregory Colburn, 65, and Amy Colburn, 53, each to eight weeks in prison, one year of supervised release, 100 hours of community service and ordered them each to pay a \$12,500 fine. The Colburns pleaded guilty on Dec. 7, 2021, to one count each of conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud and honest services mail and wire fraud.

The couple, who initially pleaded not guilty to multiple charges, conspired with college admissions consultant William "Rick" Singer and others to cheat on their son's SAT exam. As part of the scheme, the Colburns paid Singer \$25,000 in the form of purported donations to Singer's sham charity, the Key Worldwide Foundation. Singer bribed Igor Dvorskiy, a test

administrator, to allow Mark Riddell, a test "proctor," to secretly correct the Colburns' son's SAT exam answers and obtain a fraudulently inflated score.

The Colburns switched their pleas to guilty in December just weeks before they were to stand trial. They previously steadfastly denied the charges. They faced a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, three years of supervised release and a fine of \$250,000 or twice the gross gain or loss, whichever is greater, if convicted.

In a joint sentencing memorandum filed in federal court, lawyers for the Colburns said their clients are "deeply remorseful. The Colburns have accepted responsibility for their conduct and are prepared to accept their punishment and move on with their lives."

And "while they had a comfortable life prior to this case, the Colburns do not remotely resemble the caricature of the typical 'Varsity Blues' defendant in the public view. Neither Greg nor Amy grew up with the trappings of wealth and privilege," the sentencing memorandum said.

While they may have received just eight weeks in prison, their lives have been shattered ways that are much more permanent, according to those who know the couple.

In 27 letters of support submitted to the court on their behalf, family and colleagues described the couple as giving and loving people who were not likely to offend again and who have faced immense consequences as a result of their actions and the public notoriety. They have lost their jobs and been shunned by their friends and community, the letters said.

The couple's eldest son said the charges call into question their parenting in the eyes of some, but they are "incredibly caring and supportive parents" and "continue to be people I look to for moral support."

He described how his mother didn't push him when he was disappointed and depressed by his math grades and that she tried to help him feel that such difficulties are just part of life.

Others described how Gregory Colburn, a radiation oncologist, left a more lucrative job in Seattle, Washington to serve

at a nonprofit hospital, where he often cared for indigent patients.

Federal prosecutors, meanwhile, asked the court for a "meaningful" prison term for the Colburns in their sentencing memorandum. They quoted from a Jan. 26, 2015, email Amy Colburn wrote to the Palo Alto Unified School District regarding a purported cheating scandal by 10 students in an AP Calculus class at Palo Alto High School. Colburn wanted stiff academic consequences, including having all of the test scores of the 10 cheating students thrown out and for them to be given zeros.

"Since the tests are graded on a curve, this cheating scandal not only affects the cheating students, but everyone else's grades in the class. ... As a parent of a student taking this course, and for all (high-school) students and parents, it is important that the school be seen not only handing out appropriate consequences to those students who cheated but to be seen making grade reparations to all the honest students who have been adversely affected by this scandal."

Just a few years later, the Colburns paid Singer a \$25,000 fake donation to bribe two individuals to cheat on their younger son's SAT exam, lied about the payment on their taxes and then agreed to lie to cover-up their crimes, prosecutors said.

"The audacity it took for the defendants to publicly accuse *children* of cheating when it disadvantaged their own son, and then privately engage in cheating, fraud and bribery to benefit their other son, encapsulates the causes of the college admissions scandal and Varsity Blues cases. For an array of reasons — self-aggrandizement, arrogance and a belief that the rules do not apply to those with wealth and privilege — the defendants knowingly chose to break the law and engage in conduct that they obviously knew was wrong," the prosecutors wrote.

At the sentencing, Gorton addressed the Colburns: "You and many of your codefendants have already been punished for your selfish, brazen and frankly stupid conduct," Gorton said, according to an Associated Press article. "You both have time to make it up to the ones you love, and to society in general."

The Colburns are among a group of Bay Area residents who

See **SCANDAL**, page 19

Former Stanford pediatrician sentenced for felony distribution of pornography to a minor

By Sue Dremann

A former Lucile Packard Children's Hospital Stanford pediatrician who was arrested after trying to meet up with a 16-year-old girl, allegedly for sex, received a three-year suspended prison sentence and will serve one year in county jail, the San

Mateo County District Attorney's Office said on Thursday.

Dylan Edward O'Connor, 35, of Redwood City, was arrested on Feb. 5, 2021, after the girl called San Jose police to report that O'Connor kept sexting her and sending pornographic photos of himself starting in Nov. 18, 2020.

He had contacted her on

social media, and San Jose police traced the internet address back to O'Connor. Redwood City police continued the undercover investigation, with an officer, posing as the 16-year-old girl, communicating with O'Connor, who continued sexting and asked to meet her in person, the DA's office said.

The undercover investigator arranged to meet O'Connor. Officers said he brought a blanket and condoms to the meeting when they arrested him. O'Connor admitted to having a sex addiction, according to the

DA's office.

O'Connor pleaded no contest to felony distribution of pornography in San Mateo County Superior Court on Nov. 23.

On Wednesday, April 13, during the sentencing hearing, O'Connor's wife addressed the court and asked for leniency in his case. Prosecutors argued "strenuously" for prison time, the DA's office said. Judge Susan L. Greenberg said it was a close call but she decided to follow a probation recommendation, according to the DA's office.

Greenberg sentenced O'Connor to three years in state prison but suspended the sentence and placed him on two years of supervised probation and one year in county jail. He received one day credit for time served. He must register as a sex offender and complete a sex-offender treatment program for



Dylan O'Connor

at least one year. He is also subject to search and seizure, must pay a \$400 fine and restitution to the victim in an amount not yet determined.

He cannot associate with minors, must stay away from areas where minors congregate and can't have a relationship with any person who has a child. He is also subject to genetic marker testing. ■

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

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OBITUARIES

Talmadge De Witt "Ted" Cooper, 79, a former clinical associate professor at Stanford's Byers Eye Institute and an Atherton resident, died on Feb. 17.

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



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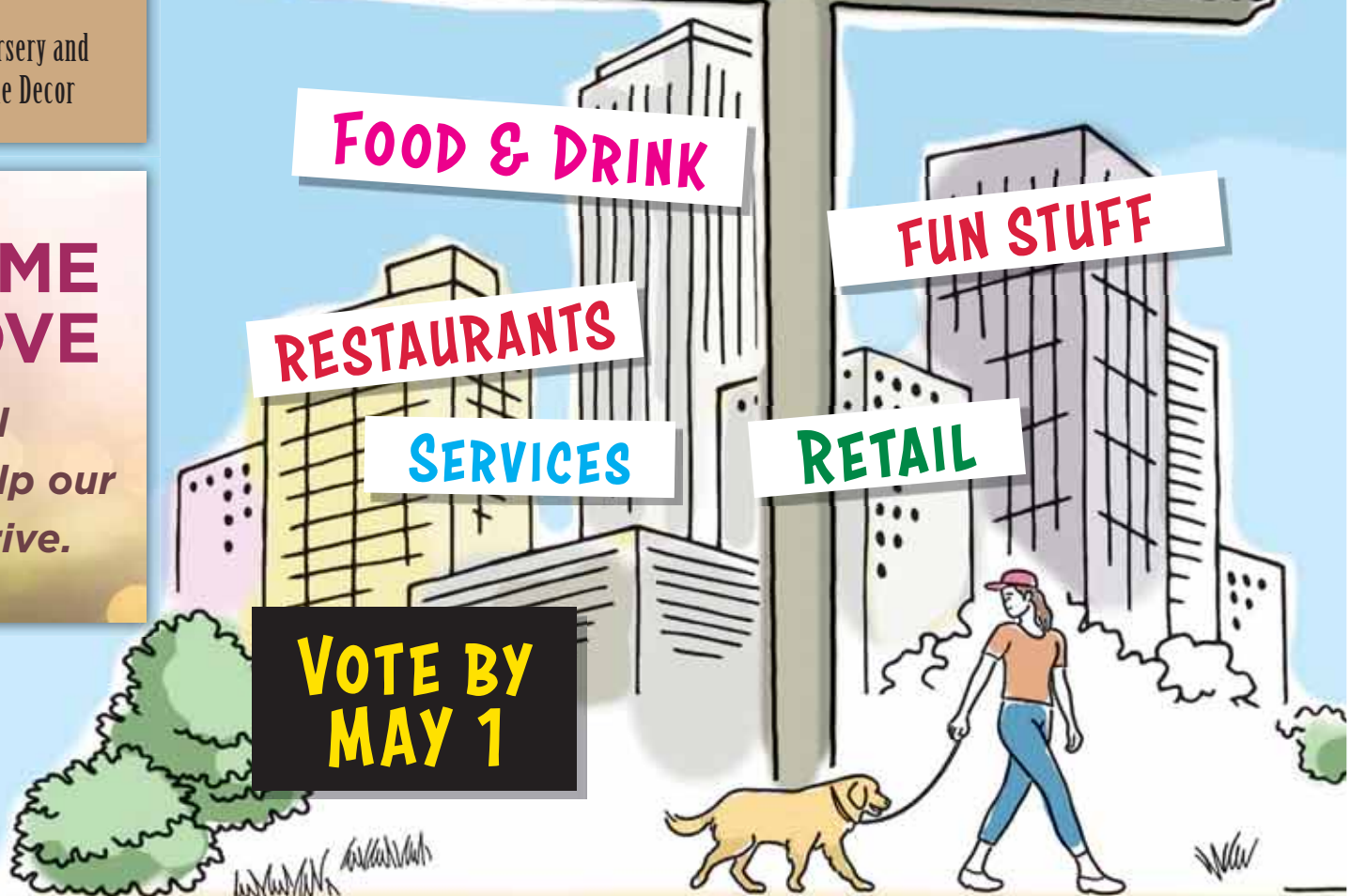
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'Introvert' Dr. Sara Cody reflects on her front-and-center role during the pandemic

By Sue Dremann

Dr. Sara Cody faced the biggest challenge of her public health career in January 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic began to unfold. Emerging from her mostly behind-the-scenes roles as Santa Clara County health officer and director of public health, Cody — a self-described introvert — was suddenly thrust into an unwelcome spotlight that made her a recognized national leader for making bold and sometimes controversial decisions.

Cody, who ordered the first stay-at-home directive in the nation, was on the forefront of addressing the pandemic from its start. She created an incident command center as early as Jan. 23, 2020, just days after learning of the first COVID-19 case in the nation. She developed a contact-tracing program to try to contain the outbreak. She went on to galvanize other health officers in the nine Bay Area counties to work together and with a common voice. With her team and multiple community partners, she has focused on health equity in underserved communities by making vaccines readily accessible.

As of April 11, 90.7% of all eligible Santa Clara County residents ages 5 and older have completed their initial series of

vaccinations compared to 74% of residents statewide and 65.8% nationally, according to county and CDC data.

As an epidemiologist by training, Cody said she knew the risks that could come from a viral or bacterial outbreak. Working as a federal Epidemic Intelligence Service officer for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, she investigated the global 1996 E. coli bacteria outbreak linked to unpasteurized Odwalla apple juice and led an investigation into a salmonella outbreak of raw milk cheese in Santa Clara County. She has overseen many investigations of diseases, including SARS and H1N1.

'Being in chronic crisis means that there's always another decision that's right in front of you that needs to be made.'

DR. SARA CODY,
TALL TREES AWARD RECIPIENT

SARS-CoV-2 was different: She was facing a global pandemic on a magnitude that hadn't been seen in more than 100 years.

"I've never experienced a chronic crisis pandemic, which is what everyone has

experienced — 'chronic crisis,'" Cody said.

In recognition of her work during the pandemic, the Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce and the Palo Alto Weekly are honoring Cody with the Tall Tree Global Impact Award. It's only the third year the award has been given in 42 years.

Cody spoke about what it's been like to be the person charged with making health decisions during the pandemic.

Calling herself "just another kid," Cody was born and raised in Palo Alto. She attended Walter Hays Elementary School, Jordan Middle School, Palo Alto High School and Stanford University. After receiving her medical degree from Yale School of Medicine, she became a resident in internal medicine at Stanford Hospital. She's been at the county health department for more than 23 years, first as deputy public health officer before taking the reins as public health officer in 2013.

Cody said the closest she had come to anything like COVID-19 was when the H1N1 influenza virus emerged in 2009.

"I remember the feeling of 'Oh my gosh, it's actually happening. We're in the middle of this pandemic' and that we've thought about it, trying to prepare for so long," she said. "I do remember that feeling and kind of getting



Adam Pardee

Health Officer and Public Health Director Dr. Sara Cody stands outside the Santa Clara County Health Department in San Jose on April 12. She's been honored with the Tall Trees Global Impact Award for her work during the coronavirus pandemic.

an adrenaline rush just thinking about it."

H1N1 fizzled, but she encountered that same concern in December 2019 and January 2020 when the SARS-CoV-2 virus began to emerge.

On the morning of Jan. 31, 2020, she received a call that the first case of COVID-19 had been identified in Santa Clara County. Two days later, there was another case. Both patients had traveled from China. Nearly four weeks later, on Feb. 28, the first case of transmissible COVID-19 was identified in the county. The patient, a woman in her 60s, died nine days later.

"Things were happening very, very quickly at the beginning, and what I experienced was that

time kind of changed. ... We got very focused on what was right in front of us. Time sort of telescoped down," she said.

Ordering the initial lockdown was the hardest decision she had to make, Cody said. She knew the decision would especially affect the most vulnerable, who couldn't go to work or would lose their jobs, she said. She became tearful during a March 2020 press conference when she announced limiting the number of people who could gather to 100. This also meant closing school campuses.

The last thing she wanted was to close schools, but it became clear that most educational

See **DR. SARA CODY**, page 19

New \$50M Sheriff HQ to replace 60-year-old facility

The county broke ground on a 14-month project to upgrade and consolidate the department

By Leah Worthington

Gold shovels in hand, officials broke ground last week on what they called a modernized, state-of-the-art headquarters for the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office.

Occupying the old site of the

Maguire Correctional Facility at 330 Bradford St. in downtown Redwood City, the project is a major upgrade for the sheriff's office, which has been in its current location — across the street in the Hall of Justice — for more than 60 years. In addition to providing more modern facilities,

Sheriff Carlos Bolanos said the renovations will make the office "more convenient and accessible" to the public.

"This is an exciting and historic day for everyone here at the Sheriff's Office," Bolanos said at the April 13 event. "This new building will allow the Sheriff's Office to house our major units and bureaus under one roof and will allow us to accommodate future growth to better serve the public as we move forward."

Though the footprint and general structure of the building will remain intact, a fifth story will be added for a total of 50,000-square feet of floor space. Renovations, which include new locker rooms and up-to-date shower facilities, are expected to be completed by early summer of 2023. The new John Arrillaga Sr. Headquarters Center will house the Sheriff's records, civil enforcement, investigations bureau and the Sheriff's executive staff, among other departments.

"This is really a transformative period for the county in terms of renovation and building of facilities. And the Sheriff's Office is really long past due to have a modern environment," said Board of Supervisors Vice President Dave Pine. "We take law enforcement and public safety very seriously as a Board of Supervisors and we want to make sure that they have the tools and environment that they need to be a great success."

The development of the project was estimated to cost \$50 million, according to the Sheriff's Office. However, San Mateo County is responsible for only about half of the cost of the project — \$25 million, with \$15 million coming from non-departmental reserves and \$10 million from sheriff's office reserves, according to a board memo.

The rest of funding would come from billionaire philanthropist John Arrillaga Sr., who died earlier this year at the age of 84.

But Arrillaga's donation comes with a catch.

The county had to tap developer Vance Brown Inc. to lead the construction of the project, meaning the project was exempt from the request for proposals and the bidding process. In a board memo, the county stated, "requests for competitive proposals would be futile, unavailing and produce no public advantage, as the project could not be completed for a lower price to the County."

More than 75 people were in attendance at the event, including four of the five supervisors, District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe, Redwood City Police Chief Dan Mulholland, County Counsel John Nibbelin and Sheriff's Operations Captain Christina Corpus who is running for county sheriff against Bolanos in this year's election. ■

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



Leah Worthington

San Mateo County Sheriff Carlos Bolanos spoke at a groundbreaking ceremony for a new headquarters building in Redwood City on April 13.

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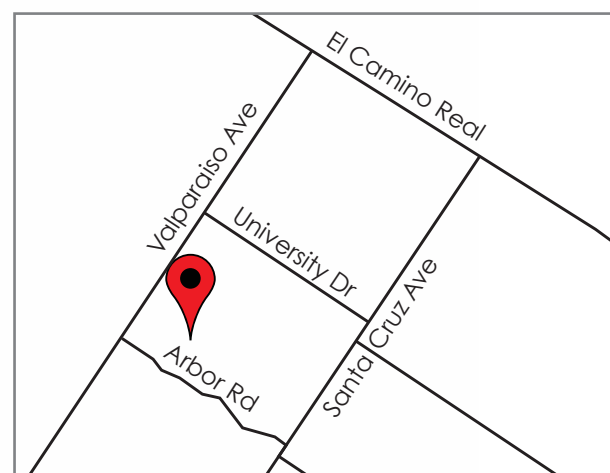


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Talmadge De Witt Cooper

February 8, 1943 – February 17, 2022

Talmadge “Ted” Cooper, M.D., passed away on February 17th, 2022, from melanoma. With Ted Cooper, the universe really broke the mold. He just did things differently. Before “growth mindset” was a thing, Ted had it in spades. He was a self-taught neuro-ophthalmologist and a self-taught medical informatics expert. He pursued knowledge voraciously and knew a ton about a wide array of subjects. While many in his generation shied away from technology, in 1978 he bought an Apple 2 and was a lifelong early adopter. He could fix anything, was stellar at Trivial Pursuit, loved dogs, and gave the best hugs. To his colleagues, he was a brilliant doctor and a warm mentor. To his friends, he was a trusted confidant. To his family, he was everything.

Ted Cooper was born in Bakersfield, California to Talmage De Witt Cooper Jr. and Mary Cooper (née Lenkersdorfer) on Feb. 8, 1943. The son of an Air Force pilot, Ted was a military brat. He moved many times growing up, living in New Mexico, Virginia, Greece, and France and had fond memories of fishing and hunting trips he took with his family all over the world. He attended the American University in Beirut, Lebanon for a year before transferring to George Washington University, where he majored in Latin American Civilizations. He went on to also complete his M.D. (1967) and ophthalmology residency training there (1973). In 1966, he married the love of his life, Sheila Cooper, who he met while doing research at an Eye Bank in Washington, D.C., where Sheila worked at the time.

After his residency, Ted served in the US Public Health Service before joining Kaiser Permanente Medical Center in Redwood City in 1973 as the first full-time ophthalmologist. At that time, Kaiser Redwood City was becoming a regional center for neurosurgery and needed a neuro-ophthalmologist. Ted had not done a formal fellowship in neuro-ophthalmology, but he seized the opportunity to become one. For several years he attended weekly neurosurgical and neuroradiology meetings and went on rounds with patients. He immersed himself in neuro-ophthalmology research and literature and saw patients with related conditions. Ted’s DIY approach worked, and he became a neuro-ophthalmology expert. From 1973 to 2003, he was an attending physician at Kaiser Redwood City and served in leadership roles such as Chief of Ophthalmology (1975-1980) and Assistant Physician-in-Chief (1980-1984).

The tech revolution ushered in another opportunity for Ted as computers became a lifelong passion. He started a computer club with friends and wrote programs that he shared with colleagues at Kaiser. Despite having no formal training in computers, by the late 1980s Kaiser was computerizing their systems and Ted played a lead role in that effort. Over the next 20 years, along with many colleagues, they became pioneers in the emerging field of healthcare IT. Ted was the Associate Director for Medical Information Systems for Kaiser Permanente Northern California and was the National Director of Confidentiality and Security for Kaiser Permanente, where he helped guide Kaiser’s response to HIPAA. He also served as director and chairperson of the Computer-based Patient Record Institute, was an American Medical Informatics Association Fellow, and held leadership positions as part of the Health Information and Management Systems Society. His key accomplishments include bringing the first electronic medical records system and electronic scheduling to Kaiser Permanente and publishing a series of important scientific papers on electronic health technology, privacy, and data security.

After retiring from Kaiser in 2003, Ted formally joined the Stanford Byers Eye Institute. He served as a Stanford clinical

faculty member for almost five decades, initially as a volunteer starting in 1973 and then as Clinical Associate Professor since 2010, helping to build the internationally known neuro-ophthalmology team there today. Ted was a dedicated and master educator, spending decades teaching residents, fellows, and faculty and being a constant presence at Grand Rounds. At Stanford, Ted combined his passions for technology and teaching and created a neuro-ophthalmology blog in 2016. For the blog, he reviewed the medical literature and generated educational questions, regularly posting a “neuro-ophthalmology question of the week.” To Ted’s great surprise, the website has become one of the top neuro-ophthalmology learning resources across the world and continues to receive over 10,000 visits a month.



Ted was also an amazing husband, father, and grandfather. He loved his family fully and unconditionally and always believed in and supported them. And because he was so knowledgeable, because he could fix anything, because he had such a steady hand, and because of his unlimited capacity to care about the issues in his family’s life, he was like the ultimate backstop. As his wife Sheila put it, “He has just al-

ways been my rock.” He was also the most hands on, involved grandfather there ever was who truly delighted in caring for and being with his grandchildren.

If there is one through line to Ted’s life, it’s that people turned to him to solve problems — often complex and messy ones, involving tricky technical issues and even trickier people issues. And that’s because, as people have commented, he always had a “pragmatic approach to finding solutions” and had a “calm demeanor” and “positive attitude” even in stressful situations; because he was “a hard worker who never complained,” who was “incredibly knowledgeable and incredibly dedicated,” because he was “the best listener in the room and the best prepared,” who was “very thoughtful” and “very sympathetic,” because he was a “calm father-figure you could turn to for anything,” a “total gentleman” who “never had a bad word to say about anyone.”

Despite his accomplishments, Ted was an extremely modest and self-effacing person. In recordings of him talking about his life and career he regularly used words like “luck” and “fluke.” He often said that he had “lived a charmed life,” as if all of this happened by chance. But really so much of what he achieved was a result of him — his strong work ethic and perseverance, his openness to trying new things, his desire to improve healthcare, his fundamental decency, and his steadfast commitment to his family.

He is survived by his wife of 55 years, Sheila Cooper; his son and daughter, Brian Cooper and Marianne Cooper; his son-in-law Scott Saywell; his grandchildren Eóin Cooper, Emmet Cooper, Kate Saywell, and Wesley Saywell; his younger sisters, Mary Ann Jordan and Jo Reser, and his many nieces and nephews. He is predeceased by his parents Talmage and Mary Cooper, as well as by many beloved dogs, including Happy Dog, Cheerio, Tandy, and Boundji.

Ted Cooper was one of a kind and ahead of his time. A remarkable man who was unaware of his own remarkableness. In Ted’s mind what he did with his life and the way he lived it was no biggie. He was just trying to make things work better, get stuff done, and take care of his family. We hope he knows he succeeded spectacularly. He will be dearly missed.

A memorial service has been held. Donations in his honor can be made to the American Indian College Fund. <https://collegefund.org/>.

PAID OBITUARY

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

continued from page 6

board of trustees is expected to formally approve Lopez’s appointment during its public May 11 meeting.

Menlo Park Rotary Club donates \$41,000 in grants

The Rotary Club of Menlo Park donated a total of \$41,000 in grants to local nonprofit organizations this year, according to an April 14 press release from the organization.

The club focused on supporting nonprofits that provide food, shelter or educational support to youth and families impacted by COVID-19, the release stated. Eleven nonprofits received grants ranging from \$2,000 to \$5,000. Organizations included Ecumenical Hunger Program, Ravenswood Education Foundation, Menlo College Student Pantry, Nuestra Casa de East Palo Alto, Menlo-Atherton High School Learning Center and Live in Peace, among others. Half of the nonprofits were new recipients. They were honored on April 13 at the Allied Arts Guild.

In addition, the club donated \$10,000 to the Almanac’s Holiday Fund, an annual donation drive that supports local nonprofits. ■

—Lloyd Lee

SUPERINTENDENT

continued from page 7

mentorship of our students and dedicated support of staff, but are thrilled for him that his dream of being a middle school principal is coming true this fall,” Burmeister said.

Early Learning Center Director Jessica Mihaly, who helped found the preschool, will leave at the end of the school year. He is recommending Oak Knoll School’s assistant principal, Chana Stewart, to be the school’s new leader.

“While relatively new to MPCSD, Chana joined our team with a wealth of experience in leading early learning initiatives in East Palo Alto,” he said. “She’ll be able to pick up where Jessica left off and assist MPCSD in creating and integrating the new transitional kindergarten program to our community.”

Burmeister appointed Ellen Kraska as the permanent associate principal at Encinal School. She has served in an interim capacity this year during the extended medical leave of Jennifer Kollmann. The district plans to welcome back Kollmann in “a new capacity” upon her complete recovery. ■

Email Angela Swartz at aswartz@almanacnews.com

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NURSES

continued from page 1

president of patient care services for Stanford Health Care, and Jesus Cepero, senior vice president of patient care and chief nursing officer for Stanford Children's Health, confirmed the hospitals will cut the nurses' health care benefits and pay if they strike.

The hospitals are "well prepared to continue to provide safe, quality health care to the communities that rely on us," they said.

Nurses who strike will not be paid for any shifts they miss.

"In addition, employer-paid health benefits will cease on May 1 for nurses who go out on strike and remain out through the end of the month in which the strike begins," they said.

Stanford quoted from a "contingency manual" the union provided to nurses:

"If a strike lasts beyond the end of the month in which it begins and the hospitals discontinue medical coverage, you will have the option to pay for continued coverage."

The hospitals said that nurses who choose to strike may pay out of pocket to continue their health coverage through the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA), a federal program that allows employees to temporarily extend their group health benefits.

Stanford said the move is a standard practice that "is not unique to our hospitals and applies to any of our employees on unpaid status, including those who leave the hospital to transition to another job.

"We remain hopeful that CRONA will return to the bargaining table to work with us to reach a new contract agreement and avert a strike. We support and value the extraordinary nurses of Stanford Health Care and Lucile Packard Children's Hospital and have put a strong economic proposal on the table that, when a contract is ratified, ensures they will remain the highest paid nurses in the nation," the hospitals said.

CRONA's demands include providing mental health services, retaining existing medical benefits, increasing pay and implementing measures to address nurse burnout, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. ■

Email Sue Dremann at sdremann@paweekly.com.



Courtesy CRONA

Stanford nurses represented by the Committee for Recognition of Nursing Achievement hold a rally outside of Stanford Hospital on April 4. The group is seeking additional pay and medical benefits, among other demands, in a new contract.

FUNDRAISING

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total to \$556,873. The total includes \$11,600 from political committees, of which \$6,600 came in over the last reporting period, according to FEC filings.

Beach raised \$168,842 in the first quarter of the year, bringing her campaign total to \$445,729. The vast majority of her contributions came from individuals. Her only contribution from a political action committee was a \$5,000 contribution from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Political Action Committee.

Gus Mattammal, the lone Republican in the race, found himself in distant fourth with \$12,956 in contributions over the last reporting period, bringing his total to \$29,372. All of these contributions came from individuals.

While most of Mullin's contributions came from individuals, he also received sizeable checks from numerous political and labor groups. GenenPAC, the political action committee associated with the biotech giant Genentech, contributed \$5,000 to his campaign. So have the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, Plumbers & Steamfitters Local #467, and Vision For America, a political action committee run by Speier.

Canepa's campaign received \$5,000 from the National Union of Healthcare Workers Federal Committee on Political Education. Canepa also received support from businesses and elected officials from across the county, with Millbrae council member Anne Oliva donating the maximum amount of \$2,900 to his campaign. Others who contributed the maximum

amount to Canepa's campaign include restaurateurs John and Elena Duggan; Daisy Li, CEO of Moonstar; Mark Calvano, principal at Calvano Development; and Richard Peterson, consultant with Lighthouse Public Affairs.

Beach, who has been on the Burlingame council since 2015, was boosted by many donations from her hometown, including \$2,900 contributions from software developer Jeremy Gordon, preschool teacher Jill Fair and physician Andrea Meskus. She also received the maximum amount from Kevin Taweel, chairman of Asurion, and attorney Todd Brody, among others.

Mattammal's top contributors include Lilian and Thomas Olivieri, Los Altos residents who contributed \$2,900 each to his campaign, and Laura Jones Joukavski, CEO of Global Fashion Brands at TechStyle Fashion

Group, who also contributed \$2,900.

The Mullin campaign celebrated the latest reports, which campaign manager Brian Rogers called "undeniable proof" that Mullin is in the strongest position to prevail in the race for Speier's seat. Mullin, who kicked off his canvassing operation on Saturday morning in downtown San Mateo, told an assembled group of volunteers and campaign supporters that the campaign believes he is now considered the frontrunner in the race.

"The polls say that, the campaign donations say that. That's all good, but we still need to go out there and win it on the ground," Mullin said.

Canepa said in an interview Friday that he believes his campaign is outworking Mullin's and that his opponent's numbers are inflated by his own

contributions.

"I just feel that we're in a much, much better place than he is," Canepa said.

Canepa also touted the fact that his campaign raised a total of \$558,000 while remaining "corporate-PAC-free." In a tweet, he noted that his grand total remains "the highest out of all the candidates (not counting \$65,000 that an opponent gave to his own campaign)."

The four candidates are vying to represent an open seat in a recently redrawn district that stretches from a southern portion of San Francisco in the north to Redwood City and a section of Menlo Park in the south and that encompasses cities east of the U.S. Highway 280. ■

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SCHOOL MASKS

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to be part of everyday life for district students. "Are they expected to wear masks for the rest of their educational experience at Ravenswood City School District? ... At what point do we stop forcing students to wear masks? So they can have that social emotional experience they so desperately need?"

About 43% of Ravenswood students are fully vaccinated against COVID-19, according to a board presentation from the Thursday meeting. Only 27.7% of eligible district students are fully vaccinated and boosted, according to the presentation. The city of East Palo Alto's vaccination rate has grown steadily, but it is still among the lowest in San Mateo County.

Trustee Jenny Varghese

Bloom said, who supported keeping masks on indoors and outdoors at schools, that she would like to see 75% of district students vaccinated (considered the threshold needed to reach herd immunity) before lifting mask mandates.

"By no means are we done with the pandemic," she said. "We are a low-income community. We are a minority community. I do not think we're threatening parents or coercing parents."

Pulido shot back that "75% is not a requirement, it's a recommendation; what happens when we don't reach that?"

Board President Mele K. Latu said that because the district doesn't have a vaccine mandate, it's hard for her to want to push to reach the 75% threshold.

"Overall, I would be OK with the strong recommendation (to

mask), but if teachers/CSEA (classified staff) are saying that that's their position, I'm OK with keeping the indoor mask mandate but lifting the outdoor mask mandate."

Board Vice President Tamara Sobomehin called it a "complicated decision," but said that right now, it feels safest to keep the indoor mandate.

"I'm trying to think about this with my heart as well as my head," she explained. "I'm trying to make a good decision. I know this is emotional and I know this is heavy."

COVID cases locally

The 1,500-student Ravenswood district reported just one COVID-19 case since students returned from spring break on April 4.

Ravenswood neighborhood

COVID-19 case rates are now at or below the county average, with an average of 25 cases per 10,000 in the last 30 days, according to the board presentation.

This case rate has declined steadily, according to district staff. There were 35 per 10,000 on March 17, and 98 per 10,000 on March 4. This is in the low to middle range of case rates within the county, staff reported.

Nearby districts' masking rules, vaccination rates and case counts

Despite fears that case counts might increase after students returned from traveling and socializing during spring break, it appears that coronavirus transmission remains relatively low on school campuses that dropped their indoor mask

mandates last month, when the state changed its guidance to schools.

As of early March, 86% of Portola Valley School District students in grades K-8 were fully vaccinated against the virus and had submitted proof of vaccination, according to the district.

At least 74% of Menlo Park City School District students were fully vaccinated as of early March, according to the district.

Some 85.8% of all students in the Sequoia Union High School District had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine as of March 2, according to a March 9 board meeting staff report. ■

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

After escaping war, Ukrainian chess grandmaster now plays to support his homeland

By Anthony Shu

Three years ago, Ukrainian chess player Evgeny Shtembuliak was enjoying the most successful year of his career — he had won the World Junior Chess Championship, achieving the title of grandmaster. Now, Shtembuliak has an entirely different focus: reuniting with his family, supporting his war-torn home country and imparting life lessons on young chess players of all levels.

Since escaping from the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February, the 23-year-old has been holding in-person and online chess camp fundraisers in communities across the world to help support his country.

He stopped in Palo Alto last month to lead camps at Foothills Tennis & Swimming Club and Eichler Swim and Tennis Club after Palo Alto High School student Kyle Cromwell invited the chess champ to share his expertise with local players. Cromwell, who has been taking lessons from Shtembuliak online since last December, invited his teacher to Palo Alto prior to the Russian invasion. Shtembuliak decided to turn the camps into fundraisers. He donated half of the registration proceeds to World Central Kitchen, which has been distributing food in Ukraine and its neighboring countries that have taken in refugees.

Shtembuliak, who had been living in the United States and



Evgeny Shtembuliak, a chess grandmaster, plays with Nicky Leighton, 8, at a chess camp at Eichler Swim and Tennis Club in Palo Alto on March 26.

studying at Texas Tech University, had returned to Kyiv for an extended visit when Russian forces invaded the city on Feb. 24.

"It was very scary because everything (was) very chaotic. You don't really know what's going on," he said about that night, when he sheltered in his bathroom with his girlfriend and best friend.

Making a plan to get to Ukraine's western border, Shtembuliak and his friends relied on hearsay and rumblings for intel. Some stories suggested Russian soldiers were firing at civilian cars, and it was unclear what roads were open. To leave the country, Shtembuliak needed documentation of his exemption from military service, which was with his parents in Odessa on the other side of the country. After

hearing from a single friend who successfully made it to the border, Shtembuliak piled into a car with his girlfriend and other family members for a 12-hour drive west.

Although Shtembuliak describes the border as an unpleasant scene, he felt inspired by the volunteers helping families once they crossed out of Ukraine and was grateful that his family managed to escape (though his family and girlfriend are still spread out across Europe). He considers himself lucky that his business operates online.

"For most people, their lives are fully based in Ukraine, so when they're fleeing, they have no way to get their income. ... They left their cars, their apartments and their jobs," he said.

With his green card,

Shtembuliak was able to return to the United States and launched his fundraising chess camps.

Shtembuliak said he started teaching chess when the pandemic disrupted his tournament schedule. He decided to try instruction and recruited a couple of students. When Netflix's "The Queen's Gambit" and pandemic-related restrictions inspired a rise in chess's popularity, Shtembuliak started building a more formal business with other coaches and his own signature method of teaching.

Shtembuliak said he enjoys teaching chess more than playing. When competing, Shtembuliak would have to spend most of his time studying openings and strategy in front of the computer to break into the top 50 players. His life was entirely consumed by the game, he said.

Now, Shtembuliak said the joy he feels when winning a game against a strong player pales in comparison to seeing a child grasp a new concept, improve their rating or checkmate an opponent.

"You can even see it in peoples' eyes when they learn something new. ... It just feels exciting to them, and it also feels exciting to me," he said.

Most of Shtembuliak's students are casual players, and he sees great value in how chess might impact their lives. He constantly sees parallels between the game and his surroundings.

Referencing how analysts incorrectly expected the Russian

invasion of Ukraine to end within a few days, Shtembuliak compares the Russian military to a player making random, incoherent moves when developing their pieces on the board. Regarding his students, Shtembuliak said that chess gives them foresight and the ability to plot out paths toward their life goals.

When asked if he ever considered canceling the camps, Shtembuliak said that after a couple of difficult weeks, he recognized that he had to contribute to the war effort in his own way.

"You got to do something for the cause," he said. "If I'm just gonna be depressed and do nothing, that's not gonna help. And if I do things, if I raise awareness, if I collect money, that (will) help a lot."

Shtembuliak's first priority is reuniting with his family, and then he will keep raising awareness about events in Ukraine through partnerships with YouTubers and chess livestreamers. He especially hopes to support smaller charity organizations like Cash for Refugees, which is giving financial aid directly to Ukrainians crossing the border. He is inspired by even the smallest actions in support of his home country, including social media posts.

"It just feels like one person can't change anything, but that's not really true," he said. ■

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DR. SARA CODY

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institutions couldn't keep up with the cleaning and sanitizing protocols that authorities thought were necessary to keep the virus from spreading to children and their families, she said.

Cody struggled with what that decision would mean, she said.

"During the press conference, for whatever reason, I started thinking even more about all of the life events that wouldn't be able to happen if more than 100 people couldn't gather. And that sort of flashed across my mind, literally in the middle of the press conference, and I got a little choked up. Not the first and not the last time," she said.

Cody said decisions had to be made, and she had an obligation in her capacity as health officer to make them.

"The law gives you the authority in this position and to each

county, and if you're sitting in that position, you're the one with that authority, like it or not. ... So it felt more that if I was in that position, if I had that duty, and if I had the ability to take an action that was going to be very protective, and nobody else could take it, then much of the time I sort of felt like I didn't have a choice, even if it was going to be extremely difficult," she said.

Many health officers resigned around the country after facing enormous pressure from politicians, businesses, and an angry and fearful public. Cody hung on.

Her husband, a professor of medicine and health policy at Stanford University, was an "extraordinarily important and helpful thought partner early on. I had a lot of pandemic-related conversations with him," she said.

On a personal level, it's life lessons that have kept her going.

"Rowing in college, I was not a very talented rower, but I really wanted to do it. It was really hard and extremely painful. ... The rowing and the mindset for the rowing experience turned out to be quite helpful to me during the pandemic, and things that I could draw on like, 'I felt like this before, and I made it through,'" she said.

Cody said she also has had "phenomenal support" from the public health teams, the County Counsel, county executives and other departments, which have worked in solidarity.

"I've never felt like I've been alone at all. I think that more than anything, it is what has sustained me," she said.

Still, she has experienced the mental stress of living through a pandemic, she said.

"I don't really know anyone who hasn't had their moments, and I certainly had my moments," she said.

Hiking helps most to regain

her equilibrium, to "just go be in the hills or go to the beach, or being outside. Being outside helps me more than anything else. It was a little bit tricky during the first year and a half of the pandemic because I always had the company of the Sheriff (for protection), so I never kind of had that feeling of, 'I'm free. I'm alone.'"

Looking to the future, Cody said she doesn't think the pandemic will be over anytime soon.

"I think the pandemic is going to have a very, very long tail," she said. "So I think it's going to go on for a while."

"For me, what I miss is time for reflection because being in chronic crisis means that there's always another decision that's right in front of you that needs to be made," she said. ■

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SCANDAL

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have or will be sentenced in the nationwide scam. Other residents who have taken plea deals and were sentenced to punishments ranging from fines with no jail time to a few months in prison with hefty fines include former Stanford University sailing coach John Vandemoer; Menlo Park residents Marjorie Klapper and Peter Jan Sartorio; Atherton residents Manuel Henriquez and Elizabeth Henriquez; Hillsborough resident Marci Palatella; former TPG Capital senior executive William McGlashan Jr., previously of Palo Alto; and Napa vintner Agustin Huneus Jr.

Hillsborough residents Bruce and Davina Isackson have pleaded guilty but have not yet been sentenced. ■

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ACADEMICS

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Artscene

PEOPLE AND **PERFORMANCES** IN **ARTS** AND **ENTERTAINMENT**

A colorful tribute



Artist Amber Jean Young celebrates mother Pegi Young's life with a new series of paintings

By Sheryl Nonnenberg

Creative people may have an advantage when it comes to processing grief. Writers can craft a poem or story, musicians can compose a song and multimedia artists like Amber Jean Young can tap into a wellspring of resources to deal with loss. When her mother, writer and musician Pegi Young, died of ovarian cancer in 2019, it seemed only natural that Young would turn to her first love, painting, in order to create a tribute. The resulting art works became an exhibition entitled Pegi's Garden, on view through April 30 at Bryant Street Gallery.

Young speaks with fondness about her childhood growing up in Broken Arrow Ranch, near Kings Mountain. Being surrounded by nature, with lots of trees and open sky, was definitely an inspiration for her as a child. But she was also impacted by the many patterns that existed within the home. "My mother was an avid collector of textiles, including Navajo weaving, baskets, Persian rugs and lace," said Young. She laughed as she recounted numerous times when walking down a street in Europe often included "a sharp right into a lace shop."

Young said that her destiny to be an artist was locked in pretty early. "I took art classes in preschool and that started me on a path that I never diverged from." She attended elementary and middle school in Portola Valley and went on to high school in San Francisco. Following high school, she applied to a number of small, liberal arts colleges in the Midwest and chose to attend Kenyon College in Ohio. When asked why, as a California native who had enjoyed an idyllic childhood on an expansive ranch, she picked Ohio, she admitted, "Every February I asked myself the same question!"

She returned to the Bay Area and earned a graduate degree at



Photos by Adam Pardee

Artist Amber Jean Young created a series of colorful paintings in memory of her mother, writer and musician Pegi Young. A show of the paintings, called "Pegi's Garden," is on view at Bryant Street Gallery through the end of the month. Young is shown at the gallery in downtown Palo Alto on April 13.

the San Francisco Art Institute, where she focused mainly on painting. Young is quick to credit her parents, Pegi and renowned musician Neil Young, for recognizing and supporting her predilection for the arts. "Not a lot of people get the level of encouragement I received — and the early identity as an artist. This is who I am, this is what I do," she said.

A residency at the Djerassi Resident Artist Program in Woodside ("just the other side of the mountain from home") was a turning point in her development. "That time was really important for me because I went on to create a series of quilts there that were all about place."

For a number of years, Young worked in mixed media, fiber art and quilts. In fact, Bryant Street Gallery owner Karen Imperial visited Young's Berkeley studio with the intention of seeing her

textile work. She recalled, "I walked into the studio and there were very few textiles but there were these paintings. She told me who her mother was and that she had died of ovarian cancer and this was the way she processed her grief. I loved the idea of showing these works and decided we were going to give a substantial amount of the proceeds to ovarian cancer research."

Young said that after her mother's death, she needed to "reframe." "I could not do the same work as before. It was not the same world," she said.

The paintings do, however, reflect the influence of all the years of working in textiles. They begin with the idea of a pattern, said the artist, and then are worked upon in layers. The exuberant, boldly colorful still lifes are executed in acrylic and are inspired not by an outdoor

garden but by the many houseplants her mother tended. In fact, one of the smaller paintings is titled "She must have had 40 houseplants." She recalled a plethora of vines and rhododendrons in the house and a deck filled with flowering plants and succulents. "It really was a beautiful place," she said.

Young talked about how, early on, her work was influenced by the pattern and decoration movement of the 1970s. "I don't have any one artist who drew me in, it is more about the whole philosophy of the movement — the visuals of it and the reaction to the very masculine art of the time."

"My art has a very feminine undertone, especially this body of work," she said.

The bright, almost day-glo colors in these floral paintings were specifically inspired by her

mother's last years. "She lived a lot of her life wearing black because it was dramatic. But then she switched gears and started wearing big patterns and bright colors. That shift in the last part of her life made her feel really good."

Creating these paintings obviously had the same effect on Young. "These colors helped me move through the grief of her passing. It shored me up and tricked my brain into feeling good."

Imperial said that visitors to the show have had a similar reaction. "Responses to the work have been amazing. We have sold many and people are just delighted to see them. Pegi Young was extremely loved by the community and known for her work for disabled children."

Pegi was a co-founder of The Bridge School in Hillsborough to serve children with severe physical disabilities and communication needs. The Youngs' son, Ben, and Zeke, Neil's son from a previous marriage to actress Carrie Snodgrass, both have cerebral palsy. Pegi and Neil, who divorced in 2014, also co-founded the Bridge School Benefit Concerts, which helped raise funds for the school from 1986 to 2016.

Young said her next body of work will again reflect her love of textiles. "I am going to continue to build compositions around patterns, with the theme of the mother/child relationship."

And what would her mother say about this exhibition? "I hope she would be very pleased with the show — I know she would be," Young said with a smile. "She loved bright colors."

"Pegi's Garden" is on view through April 30. Bryant Street Gallery is located at 532 Bryant St., Palo Alto. For more information, visit bryantstreet.com. ■

Email Contributing Writer
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Food & Drink

A fighting spirit

Launched out of a Menlo Park garage, Rocket Vodka is now supporting relief efforts in Ukraine

By Zack Fernandes

Like so many tales of Silicon Valley entrepreneurship, Rocket Vodka's origin story takes place in a garage. But it wasn't a technological revolution that founder and Menlo Park resident Dariusz Paczuski was chasing — it was the memory of apples from his childhood, and a desire to make a premium vodka.

Though Paczuski's first distillation was in a Menlo Park garage, he says his connection to the spirit runs deep, and far back in time. "The first time I drank, it was vodka," he says, adding that "vodka was always my go-to spirit." Born in Poland but raised in the United Kingdom and Norway, Paczuski's early memories of vodka at the dining table are a throughline to his Polish heritage, with shots of vodka serving as the de facto beverage pairing and perfect foil for the salty, rich and meat-laden cuisine he grew up around.

When Paczuski's parents had saved up enough money to buy the family's first house in the Norwegian town of Drammen, they found themselves on a property that was also home to apple trees in its backyard. As a child, Paczuski was often dispatched to harvest fallen fruit from the ground. "They were the sweetest and the ripest," he recalls, describing the apples his mother would juice for his father to ferment into alcohol.

The son of a glassblower and a hobbyist distiller himself, Paczuski's father had used some old tools to piece together a makeshift still out of copper pipes in the family's root cellar. There, he would distill the fermented apple cider into a spirit before aging it in casks to make an apple brandy. "During the distillation phase, when it (the spirit) was starting to drip out, he'd let me put my pinky into it and taste it," Paczuski says. It's the memory of that apple brandy that later inspired Paczuski to produce his vodka from a base of apples.

The Nordic backdrop of Paczuski's childhood did more than

just set the stage for a future in craft spirits: It also inspired in him a love of skiing. Many years later, after moving to the United States, Paczuski would earn the nickname "The Polish Rocket" from a buddy, a reference to his penchant for speed on the slopes. Paczuski filed it away in his mind as the perfect name for a vodka brand — an idea that he had already started toying with.

In 2015, Paczuski was introduced to a local home distiller via a mutual friend. The distiller, who worked at Google by day, had made batches of his own vodka and was happy to be a resource. With some guidance, Paczuski decided to give it a shot.

"I went to the Menlo Park farmers market. I bought some Granny Smith, Red Delicious, and Fuji apples," Paczuski says, intending to find the perfect varietal for vodka production. After coring and mashing the apples, he mixed them with warm water and yeast and left them to ferment for three weeks.

That first batch was mostly unsuccessful. As Paczuski was learning, not all ferments are created equal, and making



Magali Gauthier

Rocket Vodka founder Dariusz Paczuski in his garage in Menlo Park on April 19. He and Ukrainian-born business partner Dmitry Lipkin are donating profits to World Central Kitchen.

vodka from apples would prove to be a bit more challenging than making it from grain, potatoes, or corn (some of the typical base ingredients for vodka).

The Granny Smith juice had grown mold, giving Paczuski a rash after he tasted the ferment. The Red Delicious juice didn't appear to be dangerous, but hadn't fared much better, with the apple's flesh being too fibrous and absent of fermentable sugars to produce enough alcohol. But with the juice of the Fuji apples, Paczuski had found success. He'd eventually settle on a blend of Fuji and Golden

Delicious apples, with apple juice and concentrate added to boost the natural sugar levels and aid in fermentation.

Today, Rocket Vodka has scaled its operations out of a garage to Dry Diggings Distillery in El Dorado Hills, northeast of Sacramento. There, apples harvested from nearby Apple Hill, are fermented and distilled in small batches to a boozy 190 proof spirit (that's 95% ABV) before being cut to a more palatable 80 proof vodka (40% ABV), with mountain water sourced from the Sierra Nevada foothills.

The brand has grown steadily, and Midpeninsula retailers like The Willows Market (Rocket Vodka's first retail distribution account), Draeger's Market and K&L Wine Merchants, along with bars and restaurants like Ettan, Terún, and Flea Street Cafe, all stock Rocket vodka on shelves or behind the bar.

Though Paczuski, who also has a job in marketing, runs Rocket Vodka with the care and attention of a full-time business, it ultimately sits somewhere between a passion project and side hustle for him. "I'm not in a rush to turn this into a multi-billion-dollar brand," Paczuski says, noting that this approach affords the business some flexibility to do good.

At the end of February, as images from the Russian invasion of Ukraine dominated the news cycle and refugees began arriving in Paczuski's native Poland, he thought of his own parents, who fled the country

to escape Soviet oppression. Paczuski wasn't alone — his business partner, Dmitry Lipkin, was born in Ukraine, in the now besieged city of Kharkiv. "The hospital I was born in, the school I went to, the building I grew up in ... everything's been demolished," Lipkin says.

Given vodka's popularity in Eastern Europe, Paczuski's two worlds began to collide. Stories began appearing of bars and liquor stores removing Russian vodka from their shelves. "A bunch of people were suggesting to me like, 'Oh, you should take advantage of this,'" Paczuski says. "That just didn't feel right to me ... I don't want to be a war profiteer."

Less than a week after the invasion, Paczuski, his wife and Lipkin put their heads together to figure out how Rocket Vodka could help. Lipkin went as far as considering flying to Ukraine to try to help in some way, an idea his wife would later talk him out of. But after seeing that World Central Kitchen — the aid organization founded by celebrity chef José Andrés — had taken up the cause of feeding those displaced by the war on the Polish border, Paczuski and Lipkin's minds were made up.

"It was the most obvious choice for us," Paczuski says when describing their decision to support World Central Kitchen. In a video statement posted to Rocket Vodka's social media accounts, Paczuski and Lipkin announced that they would be donating



Courtesy Dariusz Paczuski

Dariusz Paczuski's father picks apples in the family's backyard in Norway, where Paczuski grew up, in this photograph taken in the late 1970s.

See **ROCKET VODKA**, page 26

ROCKET VODKA*continued from page 25*

100% of Rocket Vodka's profits for the month of March to World Central Kitchen, an effort that would raise close to \$4,000 for the organization. Rocket Vodka also partnered up with Flea Street Cafe in Menlo Park to place a special cocktail on the menu: The Peace Rocket, made with Rocket vodka, Cointreau orange liqueur, cranberry, and lime juice. Flea Street donated profits from sales of the cocktail and a Ukrainian borscht to World Central Kitchen and

Nova Ukraine, a Ukrainian aid organization.

In the weeks since those fundraising efforts began, the war in Ukraine has continued to escalate. Lipkin's home city of Kharkiv has come under sustained attack, with one Russian missile strike reportedly destroying a local restaurant that World Central Kitchen was using to prepare food. The evolving situation has led Rocket Vodka to extend its fundraising efforts into the month of April, for as long as the business can sustain it.

As Paczuski looks toward

Rocket Vodka's future, he says he wants it to be recognized widely as "a great vodka brand." He may well get his wish — Rocket Vodka has racked up numerous awards at spirits competitions, including being named best vodka at the 2017 SIP Awards International Spirits Competition.

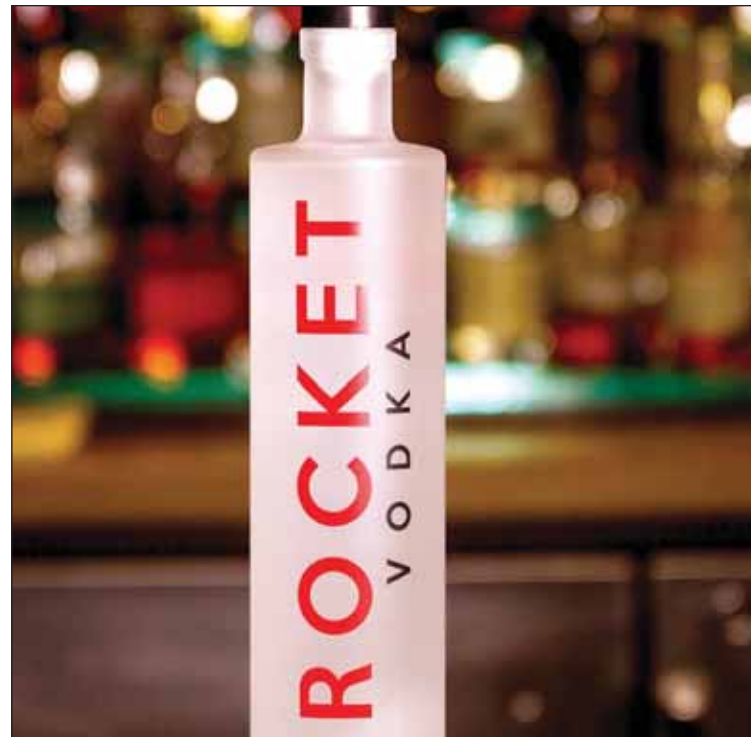
Paczuski is keen to credit the universe for playing a part in Rocket's success, noting the random presence of chance that led him from tasting his father's apple brandy to finding a home distillation expert, and ultimately, to being able to

aid humanitarian efforts on the ground in his homeland. "In life, but especially with Rocket, serendipity is key." ■

*Email Contributing Writer
Zack Fernandes at hello@zackfernandes.com.*

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Veronica Weber

Rocket Vodka is being featured in The Peace Rocket cocktail at Flea Street Cafe in Menlo Park, with profits donated to Ukrainian relief efforts.



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TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY NOTICE OF PLANNING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Planning Commission of the Town of Portola Valley will hold a public hearing, via teleconference, on **Wednesday, May 4, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.** on the following:

The Town of Portola Valley, as the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), has completed a Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR) for the Stanford Wedge Housing Project located at 3530 Alpine Road, APN 077-281-020. The Draft EIR is available for public review and comment through May 13, 2022. Verbal comments may be presented at the public hearing.

The Draft EIR has identified potentially significant impacts in the following topic areas: Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, Hydrology and Water Quality, Transportation, and Wildfire. After mitigation, the project would not have any significant unavoidable impacts.

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Public Hearings provide the general public and interested parties an opportunity to provide testimony on these items. If you challenge a proposed action(s) in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at a Public Hearing(s) described above, or in written correspondence delivered to the Town of Portola Valley at, or prior to, the Public Hearing(s).

The Draft EIR and all documents incorporated by reference in the Draft EIR are available for public review at Portola Valley Town Hall (765 Portola Road, Portola Valley, CA 04028) and may be viewed on the Town's website at www.portolavalley.net/projects. Interested persons are invited to appear before the Planning Commission to be heard at the time and place mentioned above. Written comments on the Draft EIR may be sent by email to stanfordeir@portolavalley.net.

Dated: April 22, 2022

Laura Russell, Planning Director

Public Notices

995 Fictitious Name Statement

GRACE DENTAL
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File No.: 290592
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California
This business is conducted by: A Corporation.
The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 3/23/22.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on March 23, 2022.
(ALM Apr. 1, 8, 15, 22, 2022)

PLATA'S GARDEN MAINTENANCE
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: 290587
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
Plata's Garden Maintenance, located at 24 Clinton St. #1, Redwood City, CA 94062, San Mateo County.
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ELIZABETH BUENDIA MENDEZ
24 Clinton St. Apt. #1
Redwood City, CA 94062
This business is conducted by: An Individual.
The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on March 22-2022.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on March 22, 2022.
(ALM Apr. 1, 8, 15, 22, 2022)

BUBBLES HOUSE CLEANING
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: 290669
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Registered owner(s):
ALMA DELIA MARTINEZ MORALES
6500 Pescadero Creek Rd.
Pescadero, CA 94060
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An Individual.
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This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on April 4, 2022.
(ALM Apr. 8, 15, 22, 29, 2022)

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FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: 290602
The following person(s) is (are) doing business as:
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Registered owner(s):
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217 Camino Al Lago
Atherton, CA 94027
CA
This business is conducted by: A Corporation.
The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on N/A.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on March 23, 2022.
(ALM Apr. 15, 22, 29; May 6, 2022)

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