The Almanac

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

OCTOBER 20, 2023 | VOL. 59 NO. 7 WWW.ALMANACNEWS.COM

For Menlo Park's teen Fortnite pro, a lockdown pastime is turning into an e-sport career

Shane Kelsey, aka Source, competed for $1M prize at FNCS Global Championship in Denmark

By Neil Gonzales

Source planned to push the action, exacting as much damage and eliminations as he could.

So when a Storm Surge would activate, it could target and help remove as many opposing players as possible, like the ones just looking to survive. Source and his teammate, on the other hand, could slip away to fight in a less-crowded area of battle.

"So we're going to get Storm Surge early and then play the dead side of zone," Source said. "And then we're going to play our game out."

Source is 16-year-old professional Fortnite player Shane Kelsey of Menlo Park. He was dispensing some strategy that he believed would prove key in going far the past weekend in one of the biggest competitions in e-sport history.

Indeed, Source and his partner, 18-year-old Arthur Mijares of Mexico (aka Yumi), did reach the grand finals Sunday of the $4 million Fortnite Champion Series (FNCS) Global Championship 2023 tournament at the Royal Arena in Copenhagen, Denmark.

In the end, the pair placed 40th in a tough, top-flight field of 75 two-player teams from around the world, bringing home $14,000 in prize money.

Source was psyched to be competing in a packed indoor stadium. "I was really excited in that arena," he said after flying back home earlier this week. "It was super surreal. It was a dream for me to see all those people in the stands."

The entire experience in Denmark was invaluable. "It was super cool to meet a lot of new people," Source said. "I need to work a lot harder to become the best, but it was a really good event for me to learn and take in new information from."

It was the team of Cooper Smith and Matthew Faitel (Cooper and Mero) that emerged as champion in the competition Oct. 13-15 and was awarded $1

See **FORTNITE,** *page 14*

Courtesy David Kelsey

Shane Kelsey, 16, of Menlo Park stands outside the Royal Arena in Copenhagen, Denmark, where he is competing in the Fortnite Global Championship 2023 tournament Oct. 13-15.

Stymied by red tape, Caltrain must wait to repair San Francisquito Creek rail bridge after storm damage

Despite deal with Menlo Park and Palo Alto, work can't start until June

By Gennady Sheyner

Facing the prospect of another wet and wild winter, Palo Alto and Menlo Park are keeping a particularly watchful eye on the San Francisquito Creek rail bridge, an aged steel-truss span next to the iconic El Palo Alto tree at two cities' border.

So is Caltrain, which declared an emergency last spring after discovering eroded soil on the north creek bank that supports the foundation of the 1902 bridge. On Oct. 16, the Palo Alto City Council approved an agreement with Caltrain and Menlo Park that determines how much each of the three parties would pay to repair the bank that supports both the rail bridge and a bicycle bridge that runs parallel to it.

But much to the chagrin of all parties, these fixes won't come in time to protect the bridge during the next rainy season. After Caltrain's consultant recommended in April that the bank be shored up, the transit agency commissioned contractor Walsh Construction to perform the work.

Caltrain also submitted applications to the various state and federal agencies that govern the riparian corridor, including California Fish and Wildlife and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

"They got the materials ready with a short lead time ... and had crews ready to go to work," Robert Barnard, Caltrain's deputy chief for rail development, told the agency's board of directors earlier this month.

Then came the setback. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers determined that they want Caltrain to consult with and get concurrence from the state's preservation office. The determination, which Barnard called "disheartening," effectively made it impossible for Caltrain to begin work this year, in time for the rainy season.

And because work in the creek is not allowed during the winter months because of the presence of endangered species, work now won't kick off until next June, Barnard said at the Oct. 5 meeting.

In the meantime, Caltrain

See **RAIL BRIDGE,** *page 18*

INSIDE ARTSCENE **19** | FOOD & DRINK **21**

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Local News

Courtesy Ilja Bedner

Sangini Bedner performs at a Dollies' mini reunion at a past Stanford football game. Bedner helped organize a reunion of over 100 Dollies, who will perform at the Oct. 21 game when Stanford hosts UCLA.

Portola Valley's Sangini Bedner helps keep the Peninsula on its toes

Dance teacher is reuniting 100 former Stanford Dollies to perform at this weekend's game against UCLA

By Kate Daly

Over 100 past members of the Stanford Dollies are expected to perform at halftime during the home football game against UCLA on Saturday, Oct. 21. One of the main organizers behind their reunion is Sangini Majmudar Bedner, a creative dynamo from Portola Valley who instead of wearing her Dollie outfit from 30 years ago, will be sporting the "Once a Dollie, always a Dollie" black T-shirt she designed for a smaller gathering a decade ago.

But being a member of the Leland Stanford Junior University Marching Band's cheerleading troupe is only part of the professional dancer's story that started at age 4 when she studied ballet, jazz and tap in her hometown of Atlanta.

As a first-generation Indian American, Bedner represented Georgia and won the Miss India national title when she was a student at Stanford majoring in American Studies. She then headed to Los Angeles

See **SANGINI BEDNER,** *page 18*

Belle Haven residents mobilize to keep Onetta Harris name for new community center

By Cameron Rebosio

Judging by the more than 100 comments at a recent meeting, there appears to be overwhelming support for naming the new Menlo Park Community Campus after Belle Haven resident Onetta Harris.

A joint meeting of Menlo Park's Library Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission discussed keeping the Onetta Harris name on the new community campus, which is still under construction in the city's Belle Haven neighborhood, east of U.S. Highway 101.

Belle Haven's former community center, torn down to make way for the new community campus, was named for late resident Onetta Harris who was an activist and involved community member, according to the Menlo Park Historical Association. The Menlo Park City Council unanimously voted to rename the Belle Haven Community Center at 100 Terminal Ave. the 'Onetta Harris Community Center' in July 1983.

The new Menlo Park Community Campus (MPCC) is soon to be completed, according to the city's project website, and was funded largely by Meta, formerly known as Facebook.

The commissions are considering dedicating the building to Meta Founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg. At a Sept. 18 meeting, 71 residents spoke, and many sent written comments, largely to support keeping Onetta Harris' name on the building. Between public speakers and write-ins, it totaled over 100 comments.

The commissioners addressed what they said were some common misconceptions, saying that the city, not Meta, holds the naming rights; Meta has no hand in the naming process; and that city officials never promised not to change the name from Onetta Harris.

At the crux of the fight for Harris's name, however, is not just one woman's legacy. Belle Haven residents said that they are fighting for the community they know and a history that is often forgotten.

"No matter how many times you can tear that building down, build another one ... Onetta Harris' legacy should always be up, front and center on the building," resident Darrell Barbour said.

Several comments at the meeting mentioned a perceived gentrification of Belle Haven, as well as an erasure of Black history, not just in Menlo Park but throughout the United States. To the speakers,

See **COMMUNITY CENTER,** *page 15*

'Kidnapped' flyers of people held hostage by Hamas appear in Palo Alto, Los Altos

By Isha Trivedi

After conflict broke out between Israel and Hamas on Oct. 7, "kidnapped" flyers with pictures and names of people kidnapped by Hamas started appearing across the U.S. — and Palo Alto is no exception.

Located on a signboard on Cambridge Avenue are rows of such posters, with pictures of kidnapping victims ranging from a nine-month-old to an 80-year-old. One depicts a 4-year-old Israeli child identified as Raz, pictured standing next to a bench behind a bouquet of flowers. Another shows 80-year-old Gadi Moses and 69-year-old Efrat Katz, who appear to be a couple.

The flyers are part of a street art activism campaign by Israeli artists Nitzan Mintz and Dede Bandaid, who were in New York City when the war broke out and launched the campaign to raise awareness about the missing people.

"I am not happy about what is happening in Gaza; it is awful," Mintz told the New York Times. "I want the Palestinians to be free from Hamas; I want our children to learn together; I want Palestine to prosper and to be wealthy, but they need different leadership."

Mintz and Bandaid told the Times that they chose to focus on the hostages because they

See **FLYERS,** *page 8*

Isha Trivedi

Flyers showing Israelis who have kidnapped by Hamas were posted on a board, seen here on Oct. 16, by an unknown person on Cambridge Avenue in Palo Alto.

Public Notices

STATEMENT OF ABANDONMENT OF USE OF FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME
File No. M-294408
The following person(s)/registrant(s) has/have abandoned the use of the fictitious business name(s). The information given below is as it appeared on the fictitious business statement that was filed at the County Clerk-Recorder's Office. FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME(S):
GOLDEN EAGLE SPA & MASSAGE
148 W 25th Avenue
San Mateo, CA 94403, San Mateo County
FILED IN SAN MATEO COUNTY ON:
05/25/2023
REGISTRANT'S NAME(S):
BO ZHOU
6401 Vista Pacifica
Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275
THIS BUSINESS WAS CONDUCTED BY An Individual.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk Recorder of San Mateo County on October 10 2023.
(ALM Oct 20, 27, Nov 3 and 10, 2023)

WELCOME MOVERS
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: M-295368
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) WELCOME MOVERS, located at 445 Madison Ave. Redwood City, CA 94061, San Mateo County.
Registered owner(s):
SANTOS MARTINEZ
445 Madison Ave.
Redwood City, CA 94061
JESUS GONZALEZ
445 Madison Ave.
Redwood City, CA 94061
This business is conducted by: a General Partnership.
Registrant began transacting business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 09/15/2023.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on September 15 2023.
(ALM Oct 6, 13, 20 and 27, 2023)

CAFE ZOE
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: M-295445
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) Cafe Zoe, located at 1929 Menalto Ave., Menlo Park, CA 94025.
Registered owner(s):
NEIGHBORHOOD PIZZA LLC
1929 Menalto Ave.
Menlo Park, CA 94025
California
This business is conducted by: a Limited Liability Company.
Registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 09/01/2023
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on September 26 2023.
(ALM Oct 20, 27, Nov 3 and 10, 2023)

THE TESS FOUNDATION
TESS RESEARCH FOUNDATION
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: M-295438
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) The TESS Foundation, 2.) TESS Research Foundation, located at 430 Claremont Way, Menlo Park, CA 94025, San Mateo County. Mailing Address: 655 Oak Grove Ave #53, Menlo Park, CA 94026.
Registered owner(s):
TREATMENTS FOR EPILEPSY AND SYMPTOMS OF SLC13A5 FOUNDATION
430 Claremont Way,
Menlo Park, CA 94025
CA
This business is conducted by: a Corporation.
Registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 02/03/2015
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on September 25 2023.
(ALM Oct 6, 13, 20 and 27, 2023)

BORACAY GARDEN AND GRILL
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: M-295453
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) Boracay Garden And Grill, located at 269 El Camino Real, South San Francisco, CA 94080.
Registered owner(s):
JOEL A. DOCTOR
109 Seahorse Drive
Vallejo, CA 94591
This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has not yet commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on September 27 2023.
(ALM Oct 20, 27, Nov 3 and 10, 2023)

PARIS BAGUETTE
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: M-295546
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) Paris Baguette, located at 2278 Westborough Blvd. #202, South San Francisco, CA 94080.
Registered owner(s):
HI FRESH LLC
2212 W. Middlefield rd.
Mountain View, CA 94043
CA
This business is conducted by: a Limited Liability Company.
Registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 03/24/2021
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on October 06 2023.
(ALM Oct 20, 27, Nov 3 and 10, 2023)

BAG TO BASICS
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: M-295413
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) Bag to Basics, located at 46 Greenoaks Drive, Atherton, CA 94027.
Registered owner(s):
SAMIRA NAWAS
46 Greenoaks Drive, Atherton, CA 94027
This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 10/27/2006
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on September 22 2023.
(ALM Oct 6, 13, 20 and 27, 2023)

PREI CAPITAL GROUP
DIVORCE MORTGAGE ADVISORS
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: M-295265
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) PREI Capital Group, 2.) Divorce Mortgage Advisors, located at 840 Hinckley Road #150, Burlingame, CA 94010.
Registered owner(s):
ROSS GARCIA
825 Alameda De Las Pulgas
Belmont, CA 94002
This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 03/02/2017.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on September 07 2023.
(ALM Oct 13, 20, 27 and Nov 3, 2023)

THE CHRISTMAS STUDIO
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: M-295538
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) The Christmas Studio, located at 100 Baltic Circle Unit 130, Redwood City, CA 94065.
Registered owner(s):
DEBORAH ANNE HOOVER
100 Baltic Circle Unit 130
Redwood City, CA 94065
This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has not yet commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on October 05 2023.
(ALM Oct 20, 27, Nov 3 and 10, 2023)

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NEWSROOM

Senior Editor Andrea Gemmet, 223-6537, agemmet@almanacnews.com

Staff Writers
Cameron Rebosio, 223-6536
Angela Swartz, 223-6529

Audience Engagement Editor
Jamey Padojino, 223-6524, jpadojino@almanacnews.com

Home/Real Estate Editor Linda Taaffe, 223-6511, ltaaffe@almanacnews.com

Arts & Entertainment Editor
Heather Zimmerman, 223-6515, hzimmerman@almanacnews.com

Features Editor Julia Brown, 223-6531, jbrown@almanacnews.com

Audience Engagement Assistant Editor/Visual Journalist Magali Gauthier 223-6530, mgauthier@almanacnews.com

Audience Engagement Assistant Editor Zoe Morgan, 223-6519, zmorgan@almanacnews.com

Lifestyle Assistant Editor Karla Kane, 223-6521, kkane@almanacnews.com

Embarcadero Media Staff Writers
Sue Dremann, 223-6518
Emily Margaretten, 223-6517
Zoe Morgan, 223-6519
Gennady Sheyner, 223-6513

Contributors Kate Daly, Neil Gonzales, Maggie Mah

DESIGN & PRODUCTION

Design and Production Manager
Kristin Brown, 223-6562

Designers Linda Atilano, Paul Llewellyn, Mary Watanabe, Doug Young

ADVERTISING

Vice President of Sales
Gina Channell Wilcox, 925-621-1171

Major Accounts Sales Manager
Connie Cotton, 223-6571

Multimedia Advertising Sales
Elaine Ogden, 223-6572

Real Estate Manager Neal Fine, 223-6583

Digital Advertising Sales Lori Mikuls, 223-6585

ADVERTISING SERVICES

Advertising Services Manager
Kevin Legarda, 223-6597

Sales & Production Coordinator
Diane Martin, 223-6584

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  Newsroom Fax: (650) 223-7525
- **Email news** and photos with captions to: Editor@AlmanacNews.com
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CRIME BRIEFS

Arrest in string of home burglaries along I-280

A man suspected of a months-long series of residential burglaries in San Mateo County was arrested in San Jose on Oct. 12.

With assistance from San Jose police, San Mateo County Sheriff's Office said officers arrested a 29-year-old San Jose man.

He is suspected of committing a string of burglaries along the Interstate 280 corridor that investigators have been trying to solve since March.

The San Jose man was identified as the suspect through witness statements and with the help of automatic license plate readers, the San Mateo Sheriff's Office said in a statement Sunday, Oct. 15.

He was arrested and booked into Maguire Correctional Facility on suspicion of residential burglary, grand theft, loitering on private property and tampering with a motor vehicle.

Investigators believe the 29-year-old may be associated with other unreported burglaries and ask anyone with information about this case to contact Detective. A. Baggetta at abaggetta@smcgov.org or Detective E. Storch at estorch@smcgov.org.

Tipsters can also remain anonymous by calling the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office Anonymous Tip Line at (800) 547-2700.

Escaped burglary suspect found in Menlo Park

A suspect in a series of San Mateo County burglaries was arrested Thursday, Oct. 12, but managed to briefly escape from custody while being questioned at the Hall of Justice, according to the county Sheriff's Office.

Detectives arrested a 29-year-old San Jose man at about 5:30 p.m. and took him in for questioning.

While he was in custody, the suspect was able to free himself from a metal leg restraint and flee the area, sheriff's officials said.

He was found in Menlo Park at about 7:30 p.m. and was booked into the Maguire Correctional Facility, where he is being held without bail on suspicion of burglary, attempted burglary, peeking, grand theft and damaging or tampering with a vehicle, according to court records.

Roofing scam targets elderly

Authorities are warning homeowners of a roof inspection scam that has recently victimized elderly residents around the Bay Area.

The scammers are driving around in vehicles with fake roofing service decals, according to San Mateo County District Attorney Stephen Wagstaffe.

The suspects offer free roof inspections or inexpensive repairs, but then intentionally damage homes and demand payment for repairs, Wagstaffe said.

The scam has been reported in San Mateo, Belmont, Palo Alto, Albany and San Francisco.

Before agreeing to or paying for repairs, consumers can check to see if the contractor has a valid license at cslb.ca.gov.

Any suspicious activity should be reported to police.

—Bay City News Service

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Mayor of Galway comes to Menlo Park

As a part of Menlo Park's sister cities program, Eddie Hoare, the mayor of Galway, Ireland, visited Menlo Park last Friday, Oct 13.

"I feel uplifted after having spent a few hours around a table, sharing how much two communities across the globe can have in common," Menlo Park Mayor Jen Wolosin wrote in an email.

Belle Haven Action celebrates new location with open house

Belle Haven Action, a community advocacy group, announced it's opening its new office at 907 Newbridge Ave. in Menlo Park. The group plans to celebrate with an open house on Saturday, Oct. 21, from 2-4 p.m.

The open house will include discussions about Belle Haven Action's history and plans for supporting community leaders in the future. More information is at bellehavenaction.org.

—Cameron Rebosio

Mayors of Menlo Park, Atherton say their thoughts are with civilians in Israel-Hamas war

By Cameron Rebosio

After conflict broke out between Israel and Hamas on Oct. 7, two local mayors offered their empathy to those caught up in the clash.

Menlo Park Mayor Jen Wolosin at the Oct. 10 City Council meeting read a statement that condemned the actions of Hamas, a militant group, and asked residents to stand with their Jewish neighbors in support of Israel.

"Your Jewish neighbors are not okay," Wolosin said, speaking for the Menlo Park Jewish community. "We are worried about our cousins and sisters and brothers, both figurative and literal ... We all know someone who has a loved one who has been personally traumatized."

She called the attacks launched from the Gaza Strip as "unprovoked" and said that "Hamas terrorists savagely brutalized" civilians, and asked people to voice their support for Israel and condemnation of Hamas publicly so that their Jewish neighbors don't feel alone with antisemitism on the rise in the United States.

"I also want to ask those who are currently lending their support to continue to do so, even when, and especially when, Israel takes necessary actions to continue to defend herself," Wolosin said.

Atherton Mayor Bill Widmer also condemned the actions of Hamas, and said that humanitarian aid needs to be allowed into Gaza, referring to Israel's subsequent siege that cut off water and power to the Palestinian territory.

"The Israelis have had a number of attacks on their citizenry over the years, and this is just the absolute worst of that," Widmer said. "I think that they have a right to respond ... I do believe that some of the Palestinian citizenry are taking the brunt of it."

Wolosin added an addendum on Oct. 13 to her Oct. 10 comments, which she also had sent out in an email.

"My thoughts are with all members of our community who have family and friends in the region," Wolosin said. "It is possible to simultaneously support Israel, condemn Hamas, and have compassion for the loss of civilian life in Gaza and Israel." ■

Email Staff Writer Cameron Rebosio at crebosio@almanacnews.com.

Courtesy Lulu Jane Photography

Attack on Israel draws nearly 100 people to unity gathering in Portola Valley

The Unity Gathering for Israel brought together about 90 people in Portola Valley Town Center on Oct. 12.

Organized by Rabbi Mayer and his wife Dassi Brook of The Village Chabad, residents from the Portola Valley and Woodside community were joined by state Sen. Josh Becker, who lead the group in the Shema, the most important Jewish prayer, Rabbi Brook said in an email.

U.S. Rep. Anna Eshoo sent a message, and the evening's other speakers included author and CEO David Porush, locals who had served in the Israel Defense Forces and a high school senior, according to Rabbi Brook.

"There was a sense of unity as together as a community we pledged to be a resounding beacon of light, illuminating the world with boundless goodness and kindness!" he wrote.

—Almanac staff

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Menlo Park to focus funds on Belle Haven for home electrification retrofits

City officials, looking to reduce carbon emissions, aim to use $2.25 million grant to replace gas appliances

By Cameron Rebosio

The Menlo Park City Council has two years to spend $2.25 million on home electrification in the city, and members have their sights set on Belle Haven.

The funds come from a state grant to replace gas appliances with electric ones in order to reduce the city's carbon footprint. Menlo Park has set a goal to convert 95% of existing buildings to all-electric by 2030.

City staff recommended putting $2.15 million of the funds into a partnership with Peninsula Clean Energy (PCE) and its Home Electrification Program to retrofit homes in the Belle Haven neighborhood, an area that has historically struggled with pollution and air quality. PCE's clean energy program provides homeowners with qualifying incomes no-cost home repairs, electric appliances and energy efficiency upgrades. Menlo Park staff recommended the remaining $100,000 in funding go toward training local residents in electrification for workforce development.

The Menlo Park City Council discussed how best to use the funds at an Oct. 10 meeting, and decide where to focus its efforts. The $2.25 million is the first of two installments awarded by the California Energy Commission, totaling $4.5 million. The city will receive the second half after submitting a progress report to the state.

The Menlo Park City Council decided to start by focusing on lower-income homeowners first and expanding to higher-income households if necessary, in order to spend down the grant by the deadline. If the $4.5 million is not used up by June 30, 2026, Menlo Park has to return any remaining money to the state. According to city staff, it costs approximately $30,000 for a whole home electrification retrofit.

"I think the worst thing that could happen is two and a half years go by, and we're giving back money," Mayor Jen Wolosin said. "...If the choice is between giving the money back or giving it to someone that's low-income elsewhere, I think we'd be better served giving it elsewhere."

The council also suggested expanding the retrofitting program to the rest of Menlo Park if the pool of interested homeowners in Belle Haven was too small to exhaust the funds. To spread the word to residents, the city is looking to Climate Resilient Communities, a nonprofit focused on the effects of climate change in underserved communities, or even paying neighbors to circulate information.

Council members also concluded that city staff should adopt language from a Habitat for Humanities contract, so that if the retrofitted property is sold within a certain timeframe, the seller would have to reimburse PCE. It's intended to prevent homeowners from using the program intended to boost the value of a house they were planning to sell. The council also decided that people 65 years old or over don't have to be income-qualified in order to receive funding to retrofit their homes. ■

Email Staff Writer Cameron Rebosio at crebosio@almanacnews.com.

FLYERS

continued from page 5

felt their release back to their families would help de-escalate the war. The two artists identified the subjects of their posters based on their own outreach to their friends and relatives and created digital copies in 12 languages, such as Portuguese and Serbian, for the public to download and print themselves.

It's unknown who posted the flyers in Palo Alto.

Kim Naru, a Mountain View resident, saw many of the same posters plastered on light poles in Los Altos.

"I'm not Jewish but I want the Jewish community to know there are many of us who share their outrage and heartbreak over the bloody massacre and kidnapping of innocent by Hamas and support the Jewish community unequivocally," Naru said.

The flyers have gained popularity on social media since Mintz and Bandaid began working on the project, with celebrities and public figures such as Gal Gadot sharing them on Instagram.

"Take a photo of this poster and share it," the posters read. "Please help bring them home alive." ■

Email Contributing Writer Isha Trivedi at itrivedi@paweekly.com.

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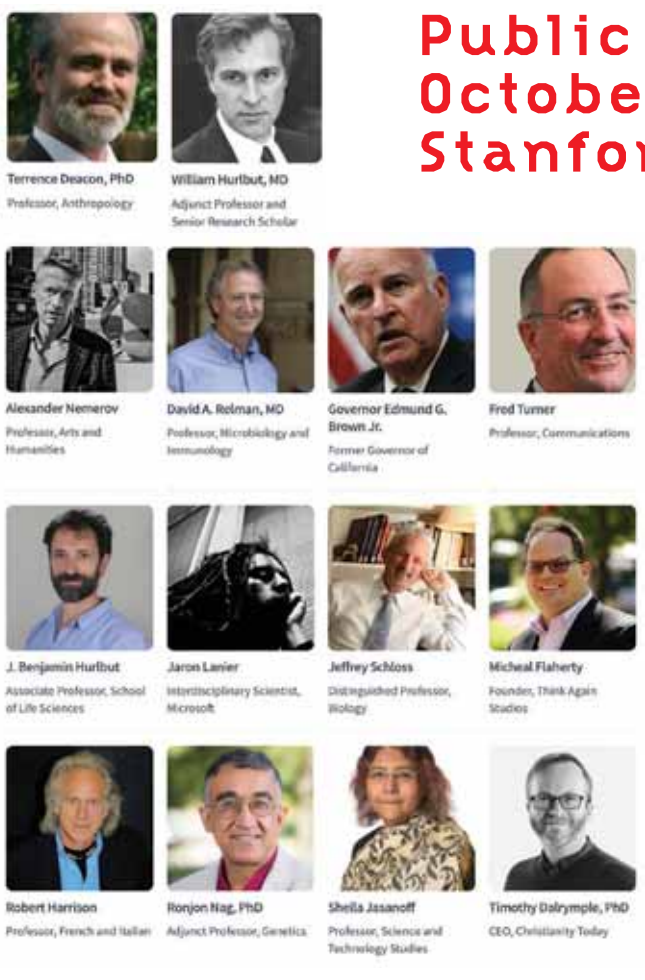

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An open letter to our readers: The changing, challenging state of local news

The seasons are changing. The leaves are changing. The local media landscape has been changing for a long time.

Advertising no longer supports the reporting resources necessary to do even basic meeting coverage, let alone investigative journalism and analysis. We have been seeing declines in our advertising since even before the pandemic and this year our advertising revenue has declined by 24%. With such significant declines, we need to make up for the shortfall in other ways which is why we need your help.

Adam Dawes

Without more support from the community, we may face the same challenges that other publishers have experienced across the nation. News organizations across the US have closed at an increasing pace, leaving "news deserts" — communities with little or no access to professional journalism and fact-based news coverage. According to a University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Hussman School of Journalism and Media study in 2020, at least 1,800 communities with a local news outlet in 2004 were without one at the beginning of 2020.

The organizations still standing are mere shadows of their former selves with thousands of journalists being laid off or furloughed. The consequences of losing news organizations and journalists are devastating and should alarm people who believe in democratic values.

Embracing the opportunity that comes with the challenge, our staff is looking to the future by making our own changes. We have made significant reductions in our organization's management and infrastructure while not touching our journalistic operations. We are modernizing our online reader experience and will soon introduce you to updated websites and ask for your input on ways to improve and increase our reporting.

Right now, though, our reporters and editors are working hard to keep our coverage consistent and quality high and paying these journalists continues to become more difficult.

News organizations across the US have closed at an increasing pace, leaving "news deserts" — communities with little or no access to professional journalism and fact-based news coverage.

But we need to rebuild our business, by generating more money from our readers, to keep our mission of informing the public on civic affairs and community news alive. If you feel a strong local press is imperative to an informed citizenry and healthy community, please consider becoming a member or making a one-time donation, which a generous donor has agreed to match up to $40,000!

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Adam

Adam Dawes
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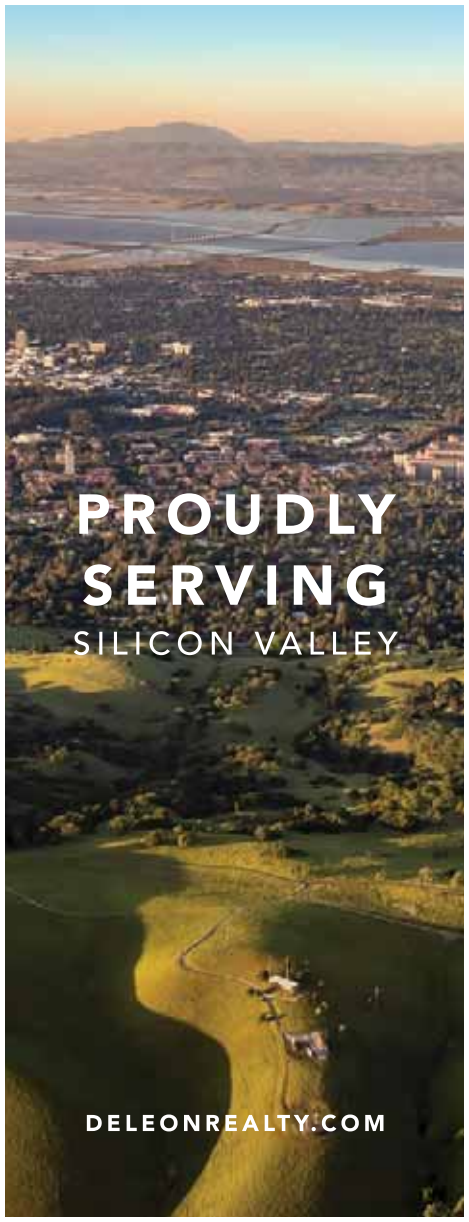

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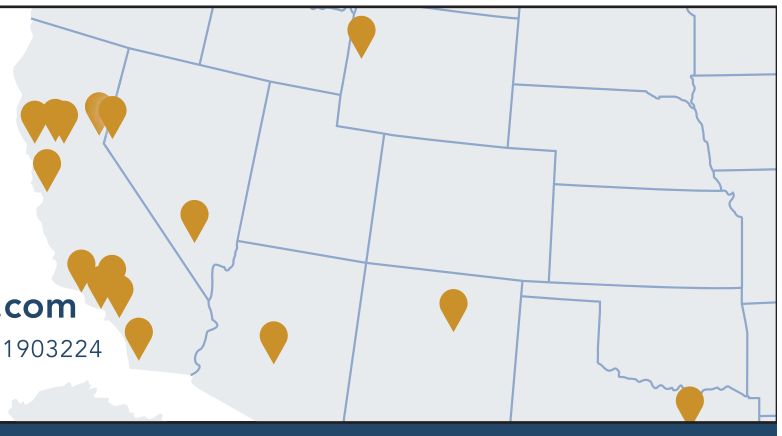

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East Palo Alto Vice Mayor Antonio López will run for San Mateo County Supervisor

Three others have declared candidacy for Supervisor Warren Slocum's seat

By Michelle Iracheta

Antonio López, the vice mayor of East Palo Alto, declared his intention to run for the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors District 4 seat in the 2024 election.

In an online video released on Monday, Oct. 16, López touted his leadership skills in steering the city through recent crises and advocating for systemic improvements.

He said his campaign will focus on public safety, infrastructure development addressing climate change, economic opportunities, and housing affordability.

"I'm running to build a San Mateo County that works for everyone," López said in a statement.

López is a first-generation American who grew up in East Palo Alto. He attended Duke University, becoming the first in his family to go to college. He later received an MFA in creative writing from Rutgers University and a master's degree from from Oxford University known an MPhil as a Marshall Scholar. In 2020, López returned to East Palo Alto to continue his education with a Ph.D. program at Stanford University and to run for city council.

Magali Gauthier

East Palo Alto Vice Mayor Antonio López will run for San Mateo County Supervisor.

According to a press release, López's campaign has raised over $50,000 and reports over $45,000 cash on hand since filing for candidacy.

The vice mayor joins East Palo Alto Mayor Lisa Gauthier, Paul Bocanegra, a victim, homeless and juvenile justice advocate, and Maggie Cornejo, a former county legislative aide, who are all vying for the District 4 seat currently occupied by Warren Slocum. Slocum is not running for reelection.

District 4 encompasses Redwood City, East Palo Alto, unincorporated North Fair Oaks and a portion of Menlo Park east of El Camino Real. ■

Email Editor Michelle Iracheta at miracheta@rwcpulse.com.

FORTNITE

continued from page 1

million and a jewelry-like, gold-plated trophy.

Going into the tournament, Source said last week that he and Yumi could do well and make it through to the last day. "I'm pretty confident," Source said.

His Japan-based coach, Carter Kawai, noted that Source handles pressure well. "For being as young as he is, it's pretty impressive," said Kawai, a former competitive Fortnite player himself known as Kahtaz who also coaches other high-level pros. "He's able to play pretty normally under ... the weight of the event."

But while anything was possible, Kawai said, winning it all was "going to be very, very tough."

North Carolina-based FNCS analyst and podcaster Matt K., better known as Panda in the gaming space, described Source as a fast-rising star in competitive Fortnite since he burst onto the scene last year at North America regional tournaments.

Then for this year, Panda pointed out, Source made the two major Local Area Network (LAN) contests — Gamers8 in Saudi Arabia and now the Global Championship. A LAN event is where players compete on the same network in front of thousands of fans at a large venue such as the 16,000-seat Royal Arena.

"He's been a player that I've been watching," Panda said. "His play is very, very methodical, aggressive. He's a phenomenal fighter, has a great mindset. There's something about him that long term will stand out amongst the pack, and he's just getting started."

But Source wasn't thinking to go pro initially. As it typically goes with many youngsters these days, Fortnite was just a fun online video game he picked up when he was in fifth grade.

"All my friends played, and we all played on mobile," said the lanky teen with bushy blond hair. "It's not like I wanted to be a competitive player back then, but I sort of really liked the game."

The game helped Source get through the height of the pandemic when lockdowns persisted. "He was actually spending a lot more time with his local friends playing the game," said his father, area Little League coach David Kelsey. "You could hear them laughing and carrying on. And frankly, I think that was very healthy for them all."

Courtesy photo by Rich Bernero

Shane Kelsey sharpens his gaming skills for the Fortnite Global Championship 2023 tournament in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Over time, Source sought to get really good at Fortnite. "I like to think when I play, I play with a purpose," he said. "So I'm not just playing to have fun. I'm playing to improve on something."

That kind of mentality drove him "to want to become a pro gamer," he said.

He turned pro last year and had earned about $20,000 in contest earnings before adding to that following the Global Championship.

He still attends high school — Design Tech in Redwood City, but Source and his family are all in on him to continue his pro gaming career.

"His mother and I kind of talked about it, and we said, look, he's having a good time with it," David Kelsey said. "His grades aren't suffering, and he's happy. I think it's important to support your kids in what they love and what they want to do."

Plus, Source has shown his commitment to his craft, practicing for hours, working on strategies and building big-match experience.

"I think that to be able to compete on a level where you're one of the best in the world, you don't get there by luck," his father said. "It's a lot of hard work."

That hard work has paid off with some quality tournament performances, all-expense-paid trips to big contests around the world and other opportunities.

"I want to make this my full-time career," Source said. "I really enjoy doing it. I think to have a good career you got to enjoy doing it. I'm tunneled in on this." ■

Email Contributing Writer Neil Gonzales at ngonzales92@yahoo.com.

LEHUA GREENMAN

"When witches go riding, and black cats are seen, the moon laughs and whispers, 'tis near Halloween!"

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Horsing around in Woodside

By Almanac staff | Photos by Lizzy Myers

For horse-crazy kids — and adults - the family-friendly Horse Fair on Sunday, Oct. 15, was the place to be.

The annual event included a youth art show Oct. 13 and a progressive trail ride Oct. 14, and is put on by the Woodside Area Horse Owners group (better known as WHOA!). This year's theme was "Let It Be in 2023 - the '60s & '70s," with a horse costumed as a "Yellow Submarine" and many on Saturday's progressive trail ride decked out in tie-dye and bell-bottoms, said volunteer Nan Meek.

The final event in the weekend-long Day of the Horse festivities in Woodside featured free activities ranging from pony rides and painting to live music, crafts and demonstrations celebrating all things equine. Attendees could get their faces painted, help paint a group mural or even dab washable paint on a live horse.

Those who braved the heat got to watch a horseshoeing demonstration, witness young athletes from Woodside Vaulters demonstrate some of the stunts they perform on horseback and hear about how volunteers with horses can join Mounted Search and Rescue in San Mateo County. ■

Top right: Steve Wiberg gives a horseshoe demonstration. Middle row, from left: Maya, of Oakland, gets her face painted; an event goer pets Bling, the horse. Bottom row, from left: Christopher Gregory, of San Mateo's Mounted Search and Rescue, shares information at their booth; Rebecca Witter and her horse Gypsy, of On a Lark Farm; a young attendee participates in a pony ride.

COMMUNITY CENTER

continued from page 5

the name of the MPCC is a way to preserve the community's history, despite demographic changes, for future generations.

Belle Haven resident Rose Bickerstaff, who opposes naming the building after Harris, said it would not be erasure to name the building after Zuckerberg.

"Maybe we can find common ground," Bickerstaff said. "It isn't always getting your name on the building. There are other things that you can do to honor your loved ones."

Menlo Park Housing Commission Vice Chair Adriana Walker spoke on behalf of keeping Harris' name on the MPCC, saying that her husband's family has been in Belle Haven for generations and knew the Harris family. According to Walker, he says that it's hard to even look at the MPCC building without it bearing her name.

"What does it hurt to keep a name on a building, especially of one who holds great value, whose name still rings, and registers with, and resonates with residents?" Walker said.

According to the commissioners, they are considering suggesting both Mark Zuckerberg and Onetta Harris for the name of the building. The Library Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission is recommending up to three potential names and dedications for the MPCC, as well as three for each of the five programs within the facility: the library, the senior center, the youth center, the aquatics center and the recreation center.

The decision of the commissions will be sent as a recommendation to the City Council for a final decision at a meeting later this fall.

The Library Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission will discuss its recommendation at another joint meeting on Wednesday, Oct. 25. Written comments may be emailed to city.council@menlopark.gov. ■

Email Staff Writer Cameron Rebosio at crebosio@almanacnews.com.

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RAIL BRIDGE

continued from page 1

will monitor the bridge during periods of heavy rain and implement an emergency measure if the structure seems unstable: placing a series of "super sacks" — filled with rocks and weighing about a ton each — at the base of the bridge to stabilize it.

"If this winter's weather results in continued erosion, the team will be ready to act to implement a temporary bank stabilization solution, and we're working with the Army Corps of Engineers and regulators as to what that might be," Barnard said.

The permanent bank fixes, which will kick off next year, are expected to cost about $6.5 million, according to the newly approved agreement. Caltrain will pick up about two-thirds of the cost, or $4.3 million, while Palo Alto and Menlo Park will each pay 16.6%, or about $1.1 million.

In addition, Menlo Park will pay $100,000 to replace its storm drain outfall, which was undermined by the high creek flows, according to a report from Palo Alto Public Works Director Brad Eggleston.

The bridge project at Alma Street is distinct from the efforts that Menlo Park and Palo Alto are pursuing further downstream around the San Francisquito Creek, in the areas of Middlefield Road, Chaucer Street and Newell Road.

In those sections of the creek, the channel occasionally cannot contain the creek during major storms. During the Dec. 31, 2022, storm, which was among the strongest on record, water overflowed from the channel and onto the streets in various parts of Menlo Park, Palo Alto and East Palo Alto.

But on Alma Street, the main concern isn't rising water but bridge stability. And while the broader flood-control projects are spearheaded by the San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority, here it's Caltrain that's in charge.

Consternation over delay

Members of the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board, which operates Caltrain, expressed frustration and anger earlier this month when they learned about the permitting delay. Board member Jeff Gee, who serves on the City Council in Redwood City, called the U.S. Army Corps determination on the permit "unacceptable," particularly given Caltrain's early efforts to coordinate its work with its agency.

"You do everything and at the last minute, when the team is assembled, when the budget has been set, after other permits have been assembled from other agencies, this comes in. ... It puts our ridership, our organization, our staff and the operations of Caltrain at risk," Gee said at the Oct. 5 meeting.

He and other board members agreed that Caltrain needs to come up with an emergency plan that's implemented as soon as a weather emergency occurs — one that could be put in place without any additional meetings or approvals.

Palo Alto Council member Pat Burt, who currently serves on the Caltrain board of directors and who formerly served on the creek authority board, identified one key challenge in the event of an emergency: the difficulty of predicting a flood before it occurs.

The San Francisquito Creek is a "flash flood" creek, he said. As such, it was impossible to anticipate flooding prior to the Dec. 31 storm.

"I don't get how we're going to necessarily have a trigger in advance that would allow us to act on the emergency basis," Burt said. "We might if we have a two-stage occurrence where a first major storm event puts us in even greater jeopardy. But we can have a first major storm event that is even more severe than that."

The Dec. 31 storm both underscored the urgency of the planned flood-control measures and created fresh complications for the various agencies trying to implement these plans.

The San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority is now revising its hydrological assumptions about the creek — an exercise that could significantly delay its pending and long-delayed plans to replace the Pope-Chaucer Bridge between Palo Alto and Menlo Park. Meanwhile, Palo Alto is spearheading the replacement of the Newell Road bridge, which connects it to East Palo Alto.

In updating the Palo Alto City Council this week, Burt suggested that he doesn't expect the conditions around the rail bridge to present a flood risk or contribute to flood risks.

"Its carrying capacity of water far exceeds what we have down in Chaucer and other locations along the creek," Burt said. ■

SANGINI BEDNER

continued from page 5

to pursue work in theatrical, TV, film and musical video projects. After gaining experience in teaching and choreography, she returned to the Bay Area in 2006 and is now known as an active Portola Valley School District mother of two who choreographs student musicals and runs the annual bingo fundraiser. She continues to draw upon her Hollywood expertise when she produces promotional videos for the school district's bingo event, which in the past has sold out in 24 hours.

Bedner's website, sanginimb.com, illustrates her wide range of other activities. In the last month alone, she has taught dozens of people Bollywood-style dances online and in person so they could participate in a traditional event held as part of a local wedding celebration.

Every week she teaches two hip-hop classes, one for kids in Woodside, the other for moms in Portola Valley. And Bedner produced instructional videos and distributed them to hundreds of former Dollies to refresh them on the routines they will be doing with the five current Dollies.

Before Saturday's 7:30 p.m. kickoff they plan to march into the stadium waving their pompoms when the Stanford Band plays the fight song. Later on, they expect to entertain the crowd with five songs during halftime.

Bedner is also actively involved with the Portola Valley Theatre Conservatory

"Theater, I love more than anything else; I love how you have to be in the moment, how you have to think very quickly, and read your audience," she said.

A career highlight for her was acting in an original play that was so successful in Los Angeles that it took her to New York when she was in her early 30s. She admits however, what she didn't enjoy back then is how her professional life felt like such "a roller coaster full of highs and lows."

For a while she helped support herself by tutoring kids for celebrity clients such as Melanie Griffith and Don Johnson. Observing their crazy schedules confirmed for Bedner that she "wanted to be a hands-on parent," and contributed to her decision to make some changes and move.

She signed with an agent in San Francisco, did some commercials, and married Ilja Bedner. She also got hired to do choreography for corporate customers, for example, teaching Bollywood dancing at offsites as a team-building exercise.

On what she calls her "favorite" gig, she was eight-months pregnant and "popping out" while leading a flash mob dance for a group of Stanford Business School students. She fondly recalls Condoleezza Rice grinning on the sidelines.

When COVID-19 hit, Bedner turned to making videos and strung together shots of Portola Valley kids dancing in their Halloween costumes. They couldn't trick-or-treat in 2020, but she figures they still got to participate in their community in a fun way.

This fall Bedner is teaching hip-hop to a group of young kids at the Village Hub in Woodside on Monday afternoons. The following mornings she instructs 10 women at Portola Valley Town Center.

At a recent session, rhythmic music blared as the moms bounced, shook and stretched for an hour, sweating smiling, and stopping long enough to mop a brow with a towel or take a swig from a water bottle. Bedner energetically modeled the hip-hop moves in the front of the room, only taking a brief break to switch the tunes.

After class she explained, "I am a professional dancer, I was trained that you must excel ... now I just teach from the fun place and I say, 'Just connect with your spirit and use the music as a way to express whatever is going on.'"

"Dancing is my therapy," she said. "This is a chance to have an hour where you do something for yourself."

Bedner confesses she sometimes feels guilty for being paid to do what she loves so much — combining her passion for teaching and creating with being and connecting with people.

She describes herself with one word: extra.

"I just want to be extra and give extra," she said.

So, at the Saturday night Stanford game, look for the performer making an extra effort, and chances are you will see Bedner, always a Dollie, and a lot more. ■

Get info about Sangini Bedner's classes and more at sanginimb.com.

The Stanford Dollies perform at the Stanford vs. UCLA game Oct. 21, 7:30 p.m. at Stanford Stadium, 625 Nelson Road, Stanford. For more information, visit gostanford.com.

OBITUARIES

Local residents who died recently include:

Kathryn H. Armstrong, 93, a Palo Alto resident who as a U.S. Army daughter was the first American high school graduate in Japan following World War II, who was cultured and dignified and embraced her roles as a homemaker, wife and mother and who lived a generous life as a woman of deep faith, on Sept. 20.

Vicki Brooks, 79, a longtime resident of Palo Alto whose lifelong interest in contributing to the greater good included teaching through the Peace Corps, many volunteer activities at Stanford University, a therapeutic acupressure massage practice and work at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project, on Sept. 23.

Patricia Flynn, 87, a Palo Alto resident who made selfless dedication to her family and friends seem effortless, gave her time to many local charitable organizations, was a member of the Hibernian Society of San Francisco and proudly graduated college at the age of 45, on Oct. 8.

Peter James Giamalis, 91, a resident of Palo Alto who practiced law at the Law Offices of Rost, Sleizer and Giamalis, was very involved in politics and avidly supported the ACLU, and took his greatest joy in his family, who knew him as wise, just, empathetic, funny, thrifty, tenacious and truly authentic, on Oct. 5.

Patrick Stewart McVeigh, 71, a Menlo Park resident whose career included key roles at Apple Computer, Palm Computing and OmniSky Corporation, which he founded, who had a giant personality that included a vast knowledge of many things, and who found endless joy in his family, on Oct. 1.

Mary J. Peterson, 107, on Sept. 1, a Mountain View resident who worked for J.W. McClenahan as an executive secretary and whose lifelong dedication to others was characterized by her prolific volunteerism, energetic spirit, zest for life, "can do" attitude and many type-written letters to friends and family, on Sept. 1.

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

Grassroots for good

United Nations Association Film Festival highlights humanitarian efforts with local ties

By Heather Zimmerman

How do you move millions of pounds of food to people who are hungry? Quicker than many thought possible when student-led project Farmlink is at the wheel. How do you tackle poverty both abroad and in our own backyard? For Peninsula resident Evelyne Keomian, it's done fearlessly — and on two continents.

Groups led by individuals with local ties are addressing some of the world's toughest questions. Their stories are among those captured in the 26th annual United Nations Association Film Festival.

This year, UNAFF screens a total of 60 short and feature films that delve into a variety of topics, from war to equity in the workplace, but the films, as always, have a common focus: human rights issues. UNAFF takes place Oct. 19-29 at venues in Palo Alto, Stanford University and East Palo Alto, as well as San Francisco.

The festival highlights films from around the nation and the world and includes a number of films about locals matter-of-factly taking on issues that seem insurmountable.

"Abundance: The Farmlink Story"

Just weeks after the start of the pandemic shutdown in spring 2020, Stanford undergrads James Kanoff and Stella Delp were among the students who launched a grassroots effort to serve as a missing link in the food supply chain, according to Stanford News. The students made a connection with farmers so that, in the absence of restaurants and other businesses that typically bought their crops, they could donate their surplus to food banks instead of being forced to let it go to waste. The effort quickly came to encompass students from universities around the country and became the Farmlink Project.

Owen Dubeck, director of the short documentary "Abundance: The Farmlink Story" was in a unique position to document the project's earliest days.

"It's been a bit of an interesting project in that I'm both a founder who was there on day one helping drive the U-hauls in the beginning and then also I am a film director so I was able to document the whole journey," he said.

Dubeck volunteered with Farmlink and captured members of the group as they secured crops from farmers and transported them to food banks. The initial aim in documenting the work was to promote Farmlink and help spread the word just on a local level. But their efforts quickly grabbed national attention. The tons of food that the grassroots group was able to rescue and the sheer number of volunteers — about 600 college students and eventually 4,000 other volunteers, Dubeck estimated — was eye-opening.

"The amount of food that goes to waste every year shocks me. I didn't know much about the terrible food system before taking on this documentary. ... Seeing those visuals of 3 million bananas in a ditch or 5 million onions in a hangar, I thought it was really striking and surprising," Dubeck said.

Jane Tovar, now a senior at University of California, Berkeley, was among the project's early volunteers and she's featured in "Abundance." An environmental sciences major, Tovar was drawn to the organization's missions of sustainability and addressing hunger. She grew up in Gilroy, where she and her family experienced food insecurity. Her mother, a farmworker, did not earn enough picking crops to feed their family, she said.

Tovar was a freshman when she first volunteered, cold-calling farmers before the project's mission was widely known.

"It was difficult and there were a lot of noes and a lot of like 'is this spam?' — a lot of instant hangups when you start to explain. But then there were some promising things (people agreeing to call back)," she recalled.

After an initial stint with Farmlink in the U.S. Tovar also volunteered for a time with the program's international arm. As a Spanish speaker, she was able to call farmers in Mexico.

Although the project's founders have graduated, Farmlink continues on as a nonprofit.

"Our long-term goal is to set up infrastructure which will render our work obsolete," the organization's website says.

Fear Not

The short documentary "Fear Not" captures the work of Peninsula resident Evelyne Keomian, who's working to address poverty and improve educational prospects for children in her home country of Côte d'Ivoire as well as in Silicon Valley. In Côte d'Ivoire, she founded the Karat School Project, to provide education to impoverished children, particularly girls, who may be left out of schooling in order to work for the family, according to the film.

In 2021, Keomian published a children's book based on her own story of selling water to pay for school supplies — the aim was to inspire children to be resilient and to raise funds for her school.

"She's been working on building schools and expanding the program to offer education to girls and the community where she grew up, and only boys were allowed to attend school. So she was really defying the odds," said Annette King, who co-directed the film with Ivanovitch Ingabire.

The directors shared photography duties, with Ingabire filming in Côte d'Ivoire and King behind the camera in Silicon Valley during 2021 and 2022.

"Fear Not" finds Keomian reading to the young students, playing with them and even making food for them at the school she founded. Ingabire recalled the relaxed, friendly atmosphere among the students at the school, how hands-on with the students Keomian was and how welcoming the children were as he worked on the film.

Keeping up with Keomian's schedule was not easy, the filmmakers said: in addition to her time at the school, we see her visiting families of Karat School students and opening a library for the patients at a pediatric hospital.

In 2022, the school building was destroyed by a storm, and undaunted, Keomian embarked on a fundraising campaign to rebuild and secured a new site for the school.

From top to bottom: A Karat School Project student looks up from her lesson; philanthropist Evelyne Keomian cooks food for students in "Fear Not." Courtesy Splicer Films. Students organized a project early in the pandemic to help distribute surplus food to hungry people; previously, farmers had to destroy surplus crops in "Abundance: The Farmlink Story." Courtesy Abundance: The Farmlink Story.

In addition to leading the Karat School Project, Keomian has also organized projects in the Bay Area to help families dealing with poverty.

Beginning in early 2020, she gathered donations and distributed care packages of school supplies and books to children of low-income families on the Peninsula and also organized a holiday drive for families living in RVs.

When "Fear Not" screened recently at the North Hollywood CineFest, Keomian was recognized with a humanitarian award for her work.

"She said that's the first time she's won an award, and I was shocked," King recalled. "But I think that she wins an award every day with these kids, just really admiring her and wanting to follow in her footsteps." ■

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

"Abundance: The Farmlink Story" screens Oct. 21 at 2:30 p.m. and "Fear Not" screens Oct. 28 at 1:30 p.m. For more information and a full schedule, visit unaff.org.

Review: A classic for a reason

West Bay Opera's straightforward 'Madama Butterfly' reveals its enduring power

By Michael J. Vaughn

It's a sign of great works that they reveal new ideas on repeated viewings — often, a new insight with each new performance. At a time of unsettling conflicts in Israel and Ukraine, West Bay Opera's straightforward production of "Madama Butterfly" reveals Puccini's opera as a profound indictment of colonization and imperialism

This idea comes out largely through the character of Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton, the U.S. naval officer who marries a teenage geisha and sets up house outside Nagasaki. Pinkerton just might be the most toxic villain in Puccini's canon, in that he pretends to be anything but: charming, sincere, romantic. And then proceeds, regardless, to wreck all the lives around him.

Tenor Tom Mulder brings to Pinkerton a certain underground awkwardness, as if he's trying hard to be cool and have swagger, but really he's just faking it. Mulder's singing fits this bill also. He doesn't have the most powerful voice, but he sings with great care and craft, and matches well with his new bride in the first act's prolonged love duet.

The production design by Peter Crompton is subdued and lovely, a pair of screened-off rooms before a projection of the harbor, regularly augmented with fog banks, fireflies and cherry blossoms.

To a straightforward production, add a straightforward

Courtesy West Bay Opera

Suzuki (Mariya Kaganskaya, seated) does not share the faith that Cio-Cio-San (Toni Marie Palmertree) has in her long-lost husband.

Butterfly. Toni Marie Palmertree is a classic Cio-Cio-San, even down to the ritual gestures associated with the role. She employs her soprano in a dazzling manner, regularly producing voluptuous swells of tone that send chills down the spine. The regular place of the aria "Un bel di" in the recital repertoire can obscure the fact that, in the context of the opera, it springs from a simple conversation with Butterfly's maid, Suzuki. This little telling of a dream — her vision of her long-lost husband returning to her — grows to dramatic proportions in a remarkable way, and serves as a fine demonstration of Palmertree's dynamic range.

Mezzo Mariya Kaganskaya plays a strong Suzuki — wise, mysterious, and always knowing more than she lets on. During the flower-strewing scene (in anticipation of Pinkerton's return), the unison passages between her and Palmertree are gorgeous.

Baritone Daniel Cilli performs the American consul Sharpless with calm and grace, while still managing to convey the disgust he feels at Pinkerton's abandonment of his Japanese wife. Bass Alexander Hahn gives a fearsome account of The Bonze, scaring everyone in the theater as he condemns Butterfly's conversion to Christianity. Playing the suitor Yamadori, baritone-tenor Michael Orlinski remains impressively stoic as Butterfly skewers him with insults. Yamadori's dazzling outfits are always an expected treat of this scene, and Callie Floor's scarlet robe does not let us down. Kudos to stage director Richard Harrell for getting the most from his players in these side stories.

The women's chorus does not quite capture the magic of Butterfly's entrance music, but does a beautiful job offstage with the humming chorus, as Butterfly and Suzuki await Pinkerton's return. The orchestra's delicate playing in this piece, under director Jose Luis Moscovich, is superb, along with elegant string passages in the love duet.

Oct. 21-22, 2 p.m. Sunday, Lucie Stern Theatre, 1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto. Tickets are $40-$112. wbopera.org. ■

Read a longer version of this story at almanacnews.com/arts

Email Contributing Writer Michael J. Vaughn at michaeljvaughn@hotmail.com

APPLY FOR COMMUNITY FUNDING BY NOV. 3

The City of Menlo Park invites local nonprofit agencies to submit proposals for the Community Funding Grant Program. This program awards monetary support to local nonprofit agencies whose programs respond to the human service needs of Menlo Park residents.

GRANT DETAILS:

- Funding will help subsidize any recipient agency but cannot be the sole support of any organization.
- All grant recipients will enter into a contractual agreement with the City with specific objectives.
- Grant recipients must fully use all funds by June 30, 2024.

APPLICATION PROCESS

- Apply by 5 p.m., Friday, Nov. 3
- Application form: menlopark.gov/CFGapplication

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- menlopark.gov/community fundinggrant
- nscasados@menlopark.gov
- 650-330-6611

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Worth a Look

Courtesy Jay Grabiec

Author Roxane Gay comes to Kepler's Books on Oct. 23.

Roxane Gay

Bestselling author ("Bad Feminist," "Hunger," and "Difficult Women," among other books), cultural critic and New York Times columnist Roxane Gay is returning to Kepler's for the first time since a sold-out appearance in 2015, in support of her new anthology, "Opinions: A Decade of Arguments, Criticism, and Minding Other People's Business." Known for her insight and humor, according to Kepler's, this new collection contains a selection of Gay's essays on feminism, civil rights, politics and more. Masks are required for attendees age 2 and up.

Oct. 23, 7 p.m., Kepler's Books, 1010 El Camino Real, Menlo Park. Admission is $10-25, or $45 including a copy of "Opinions." keplers.org.

Juanito Pascual Trio

When acclaimed guitarist Juanito Pascual is joined by bassist Brad Barrett and percussionist/vocalist Jose Moreno at their free concert in Mountain View, audiences can expect an intriguing blend of traditional flamenco rhythms with contemporary flair, and even some jazz and rock influences. The trio plans to play new compositions from their forthcoming album (due in 2024) as well as new arrangements of old favorites from Pascual's first record, "Cosas en Común," which is celebrating its 20th anniversary. According to the Community School of Music and Arts' blog, Minnesota native Pascual says no two shows are the same, thanks to the group's penchant for improvising.

Oct. 21, 7:30 p.m., Community School of Music and Arts, Tateuchi Hall, 230 San Antonio Circle, Mountain View. Free. Best suited for ages 7 and up. arts4all.org.

The Wallflowers

Long-running alt-rock project The Wallflowers, led by Jakob Dylan (son of Bob), is probably best known for the 1996 hit "One Headlight" from the "Bringing Down the Horse" album ("Me and Cinderella ..." — admit it, it's in your head now). The group, which has undergone lineup changes and a hiatus over the years, released its most recent album, "Exit Wounds," in 2021 on New West Records. The band is coming to the Peninsula for a multi-date engagement at the Guild, with a third night recently added. Ragged Glory will be the opening act.

Oct. 19, 20, and 21, 8 p.m. (doors at 7 p.m.), The Guild Theatre, 949 El Camino Real, Menlo Park. Tickets are $68. guildtheatre.com.

Todd Sickafoose's 'Bear Proof'

Genre-defying double bassist/composer Todd Sickafoose won both Grammy and Tony Awards (as orchestrator and music producer of the 2019 Broadway hit "Hadestown" and its original cast recording), is a longtime collaborator of Ani DiFranco, and has led his band Tiny Resistors on all sorts of musical adventures. "Bear Proof," his roughly hour-long "chamber jazz hybrid piece" written for eight musicians, was recorded live in the studio in one continuous take (with a few slight edits). The piece was released in September and is being celebrated with a series of West Coast concerts this month, including in Palo Alto, hosted by Earthwise Productions.

Oct. 21, 8 p.m., Palo Alto Art Center, 1313 Newell Road, Palo Alto. Tickets are $16.75. eventbrite.com.

Robin alights at Springline

You won't need a menu at this high-end spot serving up a modern take on omakase sushi

By Julia Brown

The lineup of restaurants at Menlo Park's Springline development includes several buzzy and familiar names like Canteen, the sister restaurant of Camper's Greg Kuzia-Carmel, and San Francisco's Barebottle Brewing Company and Burma Love. But one element sets the newest addition, Robin Menlo Park, apart: It doesn't have a menu.

The sister location of one of San Francisco's most renowned sushi restaurants, Robin Menlo Park opened Sept. 21 in the midst of Springline's grand opening festivities. Other restaurants that have opened at Springline include Andytown Coffee Roasters, tapas bar Canteen, grab-and-go cafe Proper Food, Burmese restaurant Burma Love and Barebottle Brewing Company. Remaining eateries coming to Springline include Italian restaurant Che Fico, which plans to open this fall along with Italian market Il Mercato di Che Fico, and contemporary Mexican restaurant Mírame, opening in 2024.

The Robin Menlo Park team includes chef Adam Tortosa, operations and managing partner Michael Huffman and strategic partner Lloyd Sacks. Tortosa previously worked for sushi chef Katsuya Uechi, who owns a series of sushi restaurants in the Los Angeles area, and "Top Chef" champion Michael Voltaggio's acclaimed Los Angeles restaurant Ink. He left to open 1760 in San Francisco, working as executive chef and later joining Akiko's Sushi before opening the original Robin location in 2017.

"Robin's kind of a combination of that traditional sushi and the way we like to take care of the fish and prep the fish and the base of it, but with more new American flavor combinations," Tortosa said. "Before we opened Robin, you can go to a high-end sushi restaurant and not always have the best time. It's kind of sterile or intimidating ... we were looking to serve elevated food, but still in a fun, relaxed environment."

A year after opening in San Francisco, the Robin team began talking about expanding. They knew they didn't want to open another omakase restaurant in the city and potentially take away from the original location, so they started to look elsewhere. Menlo Park "felt like a really good fit," Huffman said.

"A lot of our guests and regulars in San Francisco live or work in this community... we knew there would be a lot of overlap, but it's far enough away to establish its own identity and serve different guests," he added.

Like the San Francisco location, Robin Menlo Park is menuless, with the offerings left up to the chef each night as is the custom with omakase dining. But don't expect traditional Japanese sushi at Robin.

Courtesy Robin Sushi

Chef Adam Tortosa described Robin's offerings as combining traditional sushi techniques in how the fish is prepared "with more new American flavor combinations."

Courtesy Annamae Bafia

Robin's new Menlo Park location is slightly bigger than the original restaurant in San Francisco.

"We're definitely not trying to transport you to Japan," Tortosa said. "It's certainly an inspiration, an ode to Japanese precision and execution and quality, but in a more approachable, fun and super contemporary environment."

"Every bite is a composed dish as far as the different flavors, different textures," he continued. "Typically in high-end sushi, the flavor with the fish is usually soy sauce or maybe lemon and salt. We're not trying to mask the fish, but we're trying to use these other flavors to heighten the fish."

Dinner ranges from $109 to $189 for 12 to 18 dishes. Patrons will see items like a nori chip with wagyu beef tartare, Asian pear, pickled shallots and a piece of uni on top; toro with pistachio crumble, soy sauce and wasabi from Half Moon Bay; and A5 Japanese beef with frozen foie gras, Meyer lemon and Maldon salt.

Local fishermen bring in California halibut and black cod, but a lot of the fish comes from Tokyo. The seafood is complemented by California farmers market produce, Huffman said.

"If you come to Robin three times in the next six months you'll have three different experiences," he said.

Unlike the original location, Robin Menlo Park has a shared liquor license at Springline that enables the restaurant to serve spirits without having to commit to a craft cocktail bar, which they didn't have room for. That means additions like a Suntory whisky highball machine and a highball-inspired cocktail program along with Japanese whisky, wine and sake.

The new restaurant is also a slightly bigger space, with a private dining room that seats eight people, a sushi bar with 14 seats and a 34-seat dining room. Robin Menlo Park worked with Lundberg Design as the architect, and the result is a space that's "dark and moody but it's slightly more elevated (than Robin in San Francisco)," Tortosa said. The private dining room is lined with portrait illustrations of people and pets affiliated with the Robin team, including Tortosa's mother, the inspiration behind the Robin moniker (it's her middle name).

When Robin opened in San Francisco, people were "panicking" about the lack of a menu, Huffman said. For those who may feel similarly about Robin Menlo Park, Huffman says the omakase experience is about putting trust in the chefs.

"It's very much about trusting the kitchen to create a great menu for you," he said. "We're trying to create a dining experience that's fun and different and hopefully an adventure for our guests." ■

Email the Peninsula Foodist at peninsulafoodist@almanacnews.com

Robin Menlo Park,
1300 El Camino Real Suite C,
Menlo Park; 650-204-1437,
Instagram: @robinmenlopark.
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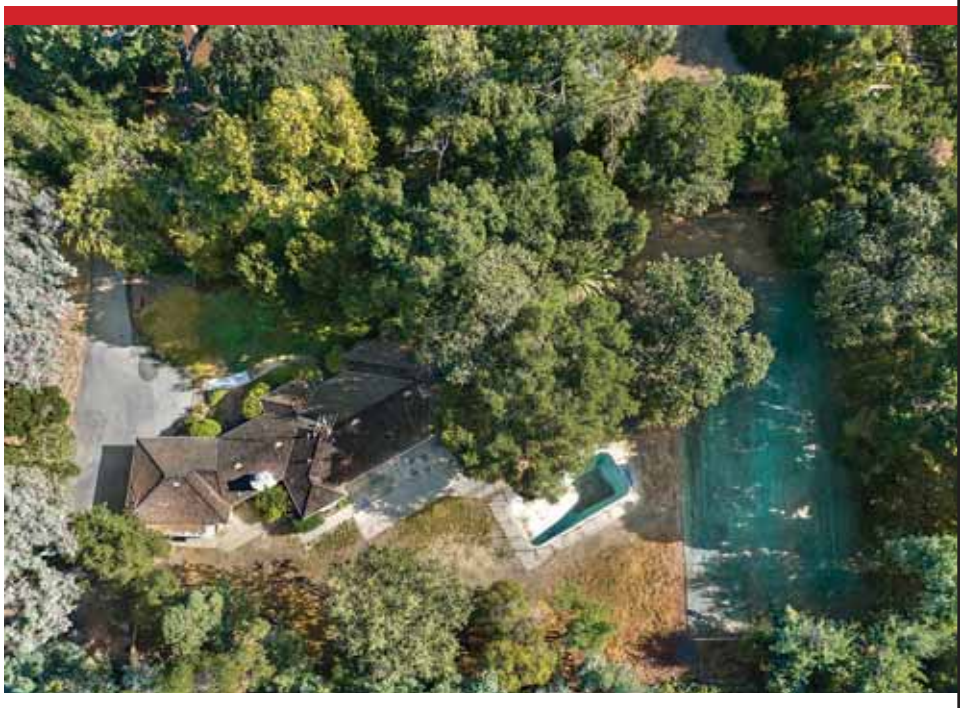

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BRENT 650 888 4898
DRE 01329216
BRENT@GULLIXSON.COM

MARY 650 888 0860
DRE 00373961
MARY@GULLIXSON.COM