In Atherton, a house becomes a fire department training ground

By Abigail Van Neely

As their truck pulled around the corner to 2 Lowery Drive, firefighters listened to their acting captain describe the Atherton property: Single story home. Five bedrooms. Confirmed fire. Occupants still possibly in the house.

The firefighters were told to pretend it was the middle of the night, even though it was a drizzly Friday morning. Other than that, they weren’t supposed to do much planning ahead of time. Opportunities to train in actual houses are rare, and the simulation was supposed to be as realistic as possible.

This training was made possible when the owners of 2 Lowery Drive donated their property to the Menlo Park Fire Protection District and Atherton Police Department at the beginning of the year. It will be available until the end of February, when the owners plan to demolish the house, split the lot, and rebuild multiple homes.

Thanks to a 2022 state housing law, Senate Bill 9, this is now an option in a neighborhood with high property values and a growing housing shortage. 2 Lowery Drive was the first property approved by Atherton to be split.

“Our decision to offer the property for the first responders was deeply meaningful to me. It represents our commitment to the community, and it’s also the first step in a larger plan where we will split the lot to address the housing shortage,” property owner Mircea Voskerician said on behalf of himself and his partner Stephanie Ye in a written statement. According to a February staff presentation, SB 9 could result in about five new housing units per year in town.

The donation of the

Menlo Park neighborhood implores action against spate of burglaries

By Neil Gonzales

A recent rash of burglaries has unsettled, upset and frustrated residents of the Sharon Heights neighborhood in Menlo Park, and they have implored the city for help.

“We are in the middle of a wave of home burglaries in Sharon Heights,” resident Jacqueline Wender said in an email to The Almanac. “Home burglaries are a problem throughout the city and the entire region, but right now, Sharon Heights is getting hit really hard.”

The level of worry in the neighborhood has reached a point where more than 100 residents recently gathered at a community meeting to lay their concerns in front of police and city leaders and ask for what can be done, including the possibility of employing automatic license plate recognition (ALPR) technology despite the issue of privacy.

The affluent, lush-landscaped neighborhood with a golf and country club has experienced more than a dozen burglaries in a little over a month.

According to police, 14 break-ins occurred from Jan. 4 to Feb. 12. No arrests had been made.

One of those break-ins happened Feb. 10, the day of the community meeting attended by about 125 residents and police and city representatives, such as Cmdr. William Dixon, Mayor Cecilia Taylor and Council members Maria Doerr, in the auditorium of St. Bede’s Episcopal Church on Sand Hill Road.

The Sharon Heights Community Association arranged the meeting in partnership with Doerr, who represents the neighborhood in western Menlo Park along Interstate 280 and Sand Hill Road.

The association also wrote a letter to the council, summing up the meeting.

“None of us wants to live in an atmosphere of fear as many of us are now experiencing as to the safety of our families and homes because of the surge in break-ins,” the association said in the Feb. 13 letter. “In view of the rising number of break-ins, how does our council propose to protect and serve our residents?”

The letter signed by association members Maya Sewald, Brian Kissel, Cat Carlton and Derek Marsano raised the idea for the council to pursue ALPR as a tool to help combat crime.

Other nearby jurisdictions such as Atherton and Woodside have already installed the camera system that identifies vehicles of possible suspects in crimes.

In September, the Menlo Park council studied tech company Flock Safety’s ALPR system with gunshot-detection capability but held off moving in that direction, citing privacy, cost and other issues.

However, the association said in the letter, “prioritizing safety and security over privacy seems to be an obvious choice” given the recent burglaries and other crimes.

The association urged the council to ensure the neighborhood’s safety by keeping police fully funded, which it said could lead to deploying crime-fighting tech such as ALPR, hiring additional officers for patrols, establishing community-watch programs or exploring other initiatives.

The association acknowledged that Menlo Park needs to balance resources across numerous objectives but argued that residents’ safety and protection of their property should be near if not the top of the city’s priorities.

“We encourage the council to move quickly to determine and implement the most cost-effective solutions to address the increased crime in our community,” the association said. “We don’t want Menlo Park to become an easy target for home break-ins and other crime among cities on the Peninsula.”

Doerr told this publication that the city is responding to the residents’ concerns.

“I’m very concerned about the break-ins in our community,” she said. “The police are doing their best to investigate these occurrences and doing extra patrols.”

ALPR remains on the table, she added.

See BURGLARIES, page 16
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Menlo Park proposes revised aquatics fees, giving big discount to Belle Haven

By Neil Gonzales

Menlo Park has proposed revising aquatics fees that would give Belle Haven residents a deep discount to use the pool in the new neighborhood center underway there.

During its regular meeting Feb. 13, the City Council, in a 3-2 vote, moved to proceed with the proposal to revamp fees for various activities and services at the pool complex at Burgess Park and the one being built as part of the Belle Haven Community Campus (BHCC) under construction at 190 Terminal Ave. Vice Mayor Drew Combs and Councilmember Jen Wolosin dissented.

The council is expected Feb. 27 to consider final approval of the new fees, which would then become effective on April 1.

“The vast majority of resident fees do not increase with the new proposed fees,” Sean Reinhart, the city’s library and community services director, said during the meeting. “In fact, there is a very substantial reduction proposed in resident fees, specifically for residents who qualify for the hyperlocal rate.”

The hyperlocal rate would be a reduced charge applying to those residing or going to school within the BHCC service area, which would extend from Bay Road to San Francisco Bay and encompass all of council District 1 and portions of District 2 near the pedestrian and bicycle overcrossing of Highway 101 at Ringwood Avenue.

For the most part, according to a city staff report, those within this area would see fees lowered by up to 35%.

They would be charged, for instance, $42 for monthly lap and open swim compared to the current $65, according to the report. Other residents and non-residents would pay the same as they do now for that activity — $65 and $72, respectively.

The discount for those in the BHCC area “would result in overall lower revenues at Belle Haven Pool,” Reinhart said, “but it’s hoped that the increased usage of the facility will offset the revenue lost to some degree.”

The idea behind the hyperlocal rate is to prioritize access and use of the new community center by those in that service area “in recognition of historic inequity and generational harm caused by redlining, freeway construction and property loss, and other discriminatory practices of the past that uniquely affected the neighborhoods in the vicinity of BHCC,” the staff report said.

BHCC is targeted for a summer opening with the Belle Haven Pool expected to be ready later in the year.

Peninsula Clean Energy’s new CEO is committed to reducing carbon emissions and energy prices

By Abigail Van Neely

Peninsula Clean Energy CEO Shawn Marshall outside of her office in January.

As a nonprofit community choice aggregation agency, CAA, PCE procures electricity on behalf of its customers. It aims to put energy on the grid that is cleaner, greener, and more affordable. PCE is the official electricity provider for San Mateo County and the city of Los Banos.

Moving into her new role felt like a full circle moment for Marshall. “I understand this agency from the kernel of the idea all the way through: to its name, to its legal founding, to its core mission and strategic plan,” she said.

As a ‘70s kid, Marshall’s childhood dream was to become a singer, or maybe an actress. But, over time, she became more aware of the growing climate crisis. After college, Marshall got involved with local climate action organizations advocating for land conservation, open space, and clean air. In the late ‘90s, she spent six months traveling through Asia, Africa and the Middle East, an experience she said showed her firsthand the impact of climate change.

Peninsula Clean Energy’s new CEO Shawn Marshall outside of her office in January.

Menlo Park business updates: Le Boulanger closed, Ace Hardware expanding, new wine bar coming

By Fan Chen and Angela Swartz

Downtown Menlo Park continues to see businesses come and go.

Le Boulanger vacated its storefront at 720 Santa Cruz Ave. on Nov. 23, according to a sign posted on the business’ front door. The space is being gutted to make way for a wine bar, Somm Cellars, according to the alcohol license posted on the storefront’s window.

“Thank you for your support and business over the years and we will miss all of our loyal customers,” the note reads. “This is not a decision that we made lightly and we are sorry that we couldn’t stick around longer. We hope to see you at one of our other locations and that this is not a goodbye!”

In 2020, the main offices of this family-owned chain moved to Fresno, after its headquarters property, brand and business were purchased.

Its locations in Los Altos, San Jose and Mountain View are still open, according to the business’ website. Its San Mateo location closed in 2019 after 25 years in business, according to a note from the owners at the time.

Menlo Clock Works, the watch and clock repair shop permanently closed on Nov. 25, after four decades in operation.

“As after 42 years of serving our wonderful community, we are sad to say goodbye,” the website announcement reads.

According to this news organization’s reporting, the owners plan to keep the shop at 961 El Camino Real and lease it to a restaurant.

Both owners did not respond to this news organization’s requests for comments.

Openings, expansions

The Flegel’s Design at 1010 El Camino Real, Suite 90, expected to close at the end of 2023 but did not shutter after all.
Affordable housing complex coming to East Palo Alto

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

On Feb. 2, San Mateo County Board of Supervisors President Warren Slocum, past and present local dignitaries, and East Palo Alto community members celebrated the groundbreaking of Colibri Commons at 965 Weeks St. in East Palo Alto. The affordable housing complex will have 136 new apartments and is expected to be completed in summer 2025, according to a press release from the county’s Executive Office.

As a response to the need for affordable housing in San Mateo County, this apartment complex will offer housing to people earning between 30% to 60% of the area’s median income, which is about $39,000 for a one-person household and about $47,184 depending on family size.

The development is led by local nonprofit housing developers, EPACANDO and MidPen Housing and funded by private, local, state and federal sources.

The budget includes a $13 million loan from the county’s Measure K sales tax and $10 million secured by the county’s Department of Housing.

“Colibri Commons represents our best work — but our work is far from done,” said Slocum in a statement. “Let’s build on these strong partnerships and creative financing strategies to create many more affordable housing opportunities for people in communities across San Mateo County.”

With 136 units in total, the variety in floor plans will include units ranging from studios up to four-bedroom apartments. The site is estimated to be 2.6 acres, the size of two football fields and will provide tenants with 222 parking spaces.

Colibri Commons will also be a hub for resources, offering tenancy after school and summer programs for youth, exercise and nutrition classes, along with case management and employ-ment services.

This project is the success because of a decade-long plan of financing by dozens of people, according to officials. Tenant applications are not being accepted yet, but those who are interested in learning when applications open can fill out an online form at midpen-housing.org.

— Email Staff Writer Jennifer Yoshikoshi at tyoshikoshi@almanacnews.com.

Fan accused of breaking into Steph Curry’s house fails to appear in court, warrant issued

By Nicholas Mazzoni

The man accused of breaking into the Atherton home of the Golden State Warriors star Steph Curry in October for an autograph failed to appear in court on Tuesday, Feb. 21, prompting prosecutors to issue a bench warrant for his arrest, according to San Mateo County District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe.

Sheng Gao, 19, a Cupertino resident and international exchange student, walked up to Curry’s security gate at 5:50 p.m. on Oct. 15, according to officials.

Gao was arrested the afternoon before and was tried for a misdemeanor charge of trying to willfully cause damage to property by entering Curry’s home.

Gao took a bus to Atherton to look for Curry’s house, according to the DA’s Office. A neighbor pointed out to him which house belonged to Curry.

Nothing was taken from the home, Wagstaffe said.

Gao signed a trespassing citation promising to appear in court for a misdemeanor arraignment in December failing to appear in court.

Wagstaffe said that he turned himself into Atherton Police station, the police gave Gao a chance to attend his court hearing on his own recognizance.

During Tuesday’s hearing, Gao again failed to appear. The court revoked his release on the citation to appear in court and a bench warrant was issued for $2,500.

Wagstaffe said a further hearing will be scheduled once Gao is located. He faces six months in jail for trespassing.

— Email Staff Writer Nicholas Mazzoni at nmazzoni@rcwpulse.com.
Crisis response clinicians to assist Menlo Park police on crisis calls

By Joshua Picazo

A resolution to introduce the StarVista nonprofit organization to three cities’ police departments, including Menlo Park, was unanimously approved during the consent agenda portion of the Feb. 13 San Mateo County Board of Supervisors meeting.

StarVista offers mental health counseling and the organization has already worked with several other police departments in the county to collaborate with officers in working with those in need of counseling.

The board approved a pilot program in 2020 when the Community Wellness and Crisis Response Team (CWCRT) partnered with four police departments (Daly City, South San Francisco, San Mateo and Redwood City). During the pilot, mental health clinicians served within the police departments to help provide a co-response to crisis calls that involve issues of mental health.

In the pilot program, StarVista clinicians joined in assisting officers with crisis de-escalation, early intervention, 5,150 evaluations and involuntary holds. Moreover, guidance to receiving support services was also something the clinicians provided.

Briana Fair, a crisis response clinician with the San Mateo Police Department, said she waits for a code on her radio to see when her assistance is needed. Dispatch will call her in while she does background checks to see if any history is relevant to the call.

Clinicians will only arrive on the scene once it is deemed safe and they will typically work to de-escalate situations with clients and assess the situation for what is needed, Fair said.

“We’re able to go when there is a call where a weapon is involved ... to be able to help that individual and de-escalate that situation for the best possible care of our client and our communities,” said Cathy Maguire, the CWCRT program manager.

The funding will last until June 2026 and totals a little over $2 million for three different police departments: Menlo Park, San Bruno and East Palo Alto. The entirety of the funding will come from the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant.

Departments have long been urged by activists to combine other tools in collaboration with policing to ensure those who come in contact with officers are treated by social workers or therapists when needed and StarVista has so far received good feedback by departments currently using their services.

“The Menlo Park Police Department feels this collaborative effort with clinicians will ensure better service within the community,” said Menlo Park Police Department Chief David Norris.

Norris said that MPPD watched how the program was applied in other San Mateo County cities in recent years and how they benefited from the co-response model.

Norris highlighted that StarVista’s co-response model integrates the expertise of mental health clinicians into police responses without compromising safety. He also emphasized that the partnership with Stanford University’s Gardner Center, which will collect and analyze program data, will facilitate necessary adjustments and that access to follow up with clinicians will reduce repeated crisis responses.

“We wear many hats in police response, but even with our officers’ having extensive crisis intervention training, we are not experts,” Norris said. “All of our officers aim to do the very best for our community, and this addition will provide that edge.”

Email Contributing Writer Joshua Picazo at joshuadpicazo@gmail.com.

Early February storm caused most PG&E outages in nearly 30 years

By Bay City News Service

A PG&E spokesperson said on Feb. 7, that this week’s storm has caused the most outages for the utility in nearly 30 years, affecting more than 1.4 million customers since Sunday, Feb. 4, throughout its service area.

Nearly 38,000 customers in the Bay Area remained without power as of 2 p.m. Wednesday, a total that rose from about 35,000 earlier in the day. The majority of the affected customers are in the South Bay, which has more than 19,000 without power, and in the North Bay, where nearly 14,000 are without power, PG&E spokesperson Fiona Chan said.

The rise in outages coincided with another round of rain and wind that came through the region, dropping more than a half-inch of rain in parts of the Bay Area since Wednesday morning, according to the National Weather Service.

When the atmospheric river starting blowing through the region, Sunday saw the highest number of outages in a single day since the beginning of PG&E’s modern period of recording outages in 1995.

Over the past handful of days, the storm has broken or topped more than 700 PG&E power poles and damaged hundreds of transformers, according to the utility, which has about 5,000 employees and contractors working to restore power.

The PG&E crews will have better conditions to deal with after this week. Although some showers are still possible around the Bay Area later Wednesday, dry weather is in store Thursday morning and into the weekend, according to the weather service.

A list of community resource centers set up to help affected residents and more information about PG&E’s response to the storm’s impacts can be found on PG&E’s website.
Bill would make computer science a high school graduation requirement

Assembly Bill 2097 would force every high school to offer computer science courses by the 2026-27 school year

By Gennady Sheyner

Every public high school in California would have to offer computer science classes as a graduation requirement under a proposed bill from Assembly member Marc Berman, D-Menlo Park.

The legislation, known as Assembly Bill 2097, will require all school districts and charter schools to offer a computer science class by the 2026-27 school year. Schools would also be required to make computer science a requirement by the 2030-31 school year.

The legislation, which Berman announced at a Feb. 6 press conference, is his second attempt in two years to create a computer science requirement. His last bill, AB 1054, fizzled in committee last fall. Unlike the current legislation, it did not include a graduation requirement.

In introducing the new bill, Berman noted that 27 other states already require every high school to offer computer science. Five states — Arkansas, Nebraska, Nevada, South Carolina and Tennessee — require a computer science course for high school graduation, he said.

California, meanwhile, is behind 40 other states when it comes to the percentage of high schools that offer at least one computer science course, Berman said. About 45% of the state’s high schools offer computer science, he said.

“This is as unacceptable as it is indefensible,” Berman said. “And frankly, it’s embarrassing.”

The bill, he said, is critical for equipping students with the skills they need in the modern workforce and the “digitally driven world.” Too many California students, he said, are growing up in the shadows of tech companies that are creating world-changing technologies but are not given the skills they need to one day work there.

Even outside Silicon Valley, computers are an “integral part of our everyday life and are relied upon in every industry, in every corner of California,” Berman said.

Sen. Josh Becker, who joined Berman at the press conference, is the principal co-author of the bill, which is also being supported by Tony Thurmond, California’s state superintendent of public instruction.

Thurmond spoke in favor of ensuring that computer science is a requirement rather than an elective. This, he said, will help advance equity. Currently about 34% of schools serving high proportions of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Pacific Islander students offer computer science courses, compared to 52% of schools serving a greater proportion of white and Asian students, according to Berman.

“This computer science bill is intended to create a requirement because without a requirement what we see all the time is that schools that have access to resources and means will provide access to students,” Thurmond said. “It shouldn’t be that the access you live in dictates if you have access to this training.”

Berman acknowledged that it might be challenging for some high schools to start offering computer science but noted that there are many “role models” that these schools can follow, both in California and across the nation.

“No one is going into this blindly, thinking we can just flip a switch and immediately every high school in California can offer computer science,” Berman said. “But ... we can’t afford not to. It’s not fair to our students, it’s not fair to their future.”

Email Staff Writer Gennady Sheyner at gsheyner@paweekly.com.
**COMMUNITY BRIEFS**

**The presentation will be available on YouTube after the event and natural disasters as well as the stories of volunteers who**

resident, will be presenting stories and photos that she's gathered tics, and providing exceptional customer service."

**It was both a tremendously difficult and also exciting time," Marshall remembered.**

**To help other institutions throughout California form their own CAA,” Marshall then formed the Local Energy Aggregation Network, LEAN. The organization has helped start up 10 of the largest CAAs in the state, including PCE.**

**At PCE, Marshall said she wants to help people see that renewable energy can be a good choice for both the community and the planet. By 2025, the agency hopes to provide 100% renewable energy at no extra cost.**

**Last July, during the hottest summer on record, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned that the era of global boiling has arrived.**

**With reports like this, it’s easy to feel powerless about the current climate crisis. But Marshall says she tries to focus on helping consumers do their part.**

**“I try to stay away from being totally worried all the time because we’re all in a position to do what we can to make a difference,” the CEO said. “One of the hallmarks of community choice is all about engaging the community and engaging the customer.”**

**PCE organizes workshops to educate the public about what renewable energy programs are available, like an electric vehicle rebate or 0% loan to electrify one’s home. Marshall praised PCE’s community advisory committee for its efforts to seek feedback on these initiatives.**

**One of the biggest questions she receives is how clean energy can be affordable.**

**“The affordability issue is front and center for us right now,” Marshall said. “We all experience rising energy costs, and just (the) general cost of living in this area is getting harder and harder all the time.”**

**In response, PCE announced in January that it would freeze its rates at 2023 levels. The decision, Marshall says, will result in a 10-15% discount on electric generation charges compared to PG&E.**

**Still, the cost of power can be twice as much as anticipated, Marshall added. She explained that PCE is able to keep its rates low in part because, as a nonprofit CAA, it is able to access the wholesale market power. According to Marshall, the agency devotes 90% of its budget to procuring energy that is then delivered to consumers by PG&E. Because the agency does not have to pay shareholder dividends, it can spend more on community reinvestment.**

**Marshall said she is aware that the consumer response to PG&E has largely been negative.**

**“There is just been a general sense of (upward) spiraling costs that are very frustrating to our shared customers,” the CEO added. She hopes that PCE will give these customers another option.**

**In the coming year, PCE plans to continue expanding its community outreach efforts and increasing access to local renewable power sources like batteries and solar power.**

**Ultimately, Marshall says it feels great to be in her new position with an “amazing” team behind her. She is proud to have a career where she works toward environmental justice while being a supportive mother to her two boys. ■**

**Email Editorial Intern Abigail Neely at almanacnews.com.**

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**ATHERTON resident Jeanette Kennedy tutors Gricelda at Costatio Elementary School in East Palo Alto through the Ravenswood Classroom Partners program.**

**Volunteer as a tutor with Ravenswood Classroom Partners**

Ravenswood Classroom Partners is seeking volunteers to tutor elementary school students in the Ravenswood City School District in literacy, math and mentorship. Volunteers will dedicate an hour each week, working with East Palo Alto and eastern Menlo Park students. No prior tutoring experience is required and all training, guidance and resources will be provided.

For more information or to sign up, email Program Director Cristiana Freed at cristina@ravenswoodclassroompartners.org.

**Woodside offers new online tool: Citizen Request Tracker**

The town of Woodside’s new .gov website provides residents with a new tool that will allow them to report their concerns as well as track existing requests. Within these tools, community members can upload photos and detailed information for town staff to have all information needed to respond to the request. Access this tool through the town website’s homepage by clicking the “Submit a Request” button or visit woodsideca.gov/request.

**Short documentary films by Emmy award-winning filmmaker**

The Parent Venture is hosting, “MY BODY TO LOVE: Katie’s Story” on Feb. 29 from 5:30-6:30 p.m. in an online event that will discuss the importance of healthy relationships. This short film was created by Emmy award-winning filmmaker, Preeti Mankar to explore topics around young Californians coming into their sexuality. Mankar Deb will be joined by Ivy Chen, sexual health educator and lecturer at San Francisco State, and Katie Marshall remembered.

**Meet Red Cross responders in Woodside**

Barbara Wood, retired Almanac reporter and Woodside resident, will be presenting stories and photos that she’s gathered from participating in more than 35 disaster responses. As a Red Cross volunteer, she will share the personal stories of victims of natural disasters as well as the stories of volunteers who have responded to fires, hurricanes and more.

This free event will be held on March 1 at Woodside Town Hall, 2955 Woodside Road, from 7-8 p.m. Light refreshments will be served and early arrival is recommended to secure a seat. Reserve a spot on Woodside Arts & Culture Committee’s Eventbrite page. The presentation will be available on YouTube after the event and can be viewed at tinyurl.com/WoodsideCA.

— Jennifer Yoshikoshi

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**TOWN OF WOODSIDE**

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PLANING COMMISSION

MARCH 6, 2024, 6:00 PM

Members of the public that wish to attend and/or participate in a meeting may do so in person or by joining the zoom meeting https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86068472736 public comments will be accepted both in person and via zoom meeting. Any emails sent to sharper@woodsideca.gov prior to 5:00 p.m. On the date of the hearing will be provided to the planning commission prior to the meeting.

In the event that any member of the commission participates in a meeting by teleconference or video conference, pursuant to the ralph m. Brown act, government code section 54953, all votes of the commission shall be by roll call.

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**PUBLIC HEARING**

1. 127HillsideDrive VAR12023-0005

Daniel Vargas, AKD Homes Project Planner: Sarah Filipe, Associate Planner

Presentation and approval, conditional approval, or denial of a proposal to construct a new Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) that is less than 800 square feet. The proposed ADU requires Planning Commission approval of a Variance for plate heights exceeding the 11-foot plate height maximum and 17-foot overall height maximum requirements for accessory structures (VAR12023-0005).

The project is Categorically Exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to §15303(a), which includes a second dwelling unit in a residential zone.

**THE APPLICATION MATERIALS ARE AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC REVIEW BY CONTACTING SARAH FILIPE AT SFILIFE@WOODSIDECA.GOV**
Police identify victims of San Mateo homicide

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

San Mateo Police officers identified the victims of a homicide that occurred in a San Mateo home on the 4100 block of Alameda de las Pulgas on Feb. 12 at 9:13 a.m.

Through fingerprints, the adults were identified as Anand Henry and Alice Benziger, along with their twin boy children, who were identified through familial identification, according to a Feb. 15 press release from the San Mateo Police Department.

The investigation has found that both Henry and Benziger were wounded by gunshot.

The Almanac

February 23, 2024

Local residents who died recently include:

Mary Finlayson, 90, a Woodside resident who raised seven children and had a passion for music, learning how to play the piano, flute and harp and singing in the Chorus Pro Musica with the Boston Symphony and with the Oakland Symphony Chorus, and who in 1963 co-founded the Berkeley Montessori School (later called The Berkeley School), on Feb. 12, 2024.

Yolanda “Lolly” Font, 93, who earned a PhD from the California Institute of Transpersonal Psychology and was heavily involved in education, serving in her children’s PTA and working as a preschool director for her husband’s school in San Jose, Beacon School, and who also worked as a yoga teacher at the California Yoga Center, on Feb. 3, 2024.

Samuel Anderson, 83, a longtime Palo Alto resident who attended Cubberley High School and later taught English at Mills High School in Millbrae, and who was a founding member of the Beyond War Foundation as part of his commitment to world peace, taking groups of U.S. high school students to the former Soviet Union during the historic time of glasnost and perestroika as part of the People to People Student Ambassador Program, on Dec. 24, 2023.

To read full obituaries, leave remembrances and post photos, go to Lasting Memories at star-vista.org/programs/ambassador-program, on Dec. 24, 2023.

Employment

Staff Engineer (Menlo Park, CA) – Bedrock Labs Inc: Design & implement agnists, distributed cloud Irvine tht provides customers w/ insights into how their clients’ systems ar being used & mngd. REQS: Master’s (or forg equiv) in Comp Sci, Info Tech, or 4 yrs exp. Alt, Bedrock will accept Bch (or forg equiv) in Comp Sci, Info Tech, or 6 yrs exp. Exp can b gained pr- or post- Master’s; using distributed systs exp in key-valu stor to build resilient sfwre svcs; using operating systs knowledge w/ exp in Unix to optimize MapReduce firmwr fr big data anal & dist sys; using MapReduce extrnts to bld infrstct fr strm data & processing; building efficient data processing pipelines fr processing large amts of data; & setting tech direct & effectively leading team of engs & intms. Salary $215k-$230k/yr. Email resume to pranava@bedrock.security & use ref code 431 183.

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AQUATICS FEES

During the meeting, the council directed that the fee for subcontractor lane rental be reduced to $15 from the staff-recommended $18.

The direction came amid concerns that nonprofit groups subcontracting space in the city’s aquatics program — long managed by private operator Team Sheeper — are being charged too much.

Currently, the fee for subcontractor rental per hour a lane ranges from $14 to $18, according to the staff report.

But other pools elsewhere charge $6 to $8, public commenter John Martin told the council.

He complained that in Menlo Park community programs are paying the same level as commercial outfits.

“We just don’t think that’s fair or reasonable and respectful,” he said. “So we don’t think the operator should be increasing fees for any of the community programs. In fact, we think the operator should be bringing the fees back in line with what other local pools are charging.”

Combs acknowledged that sentiment during council deliberations. “I do think that there’s legitimate concerns from established community nonprofits about these increases and the impacts and the disparate nature that is appearing there,” Combs said. “I think that that’s valid.”

Tim Sheeper, CEO of Team Sheeper, told the council that the subcontractor fee has held steady at $14. While other fees and operating costs have gone up, Sheeper said, the lane charge for subcontractors has “remained the same for the past five to six years.”

The city’s aquatics fees are currently set at the discretion of Team Sheeper, Reinhart said.

If ultimately adopted by the council, the revised fees would be incorporated into the city’s master fee schedule.

That move would be consistent with the requirements in the new five-year contract that the council approved in September for Team Sheeper to continue running the city’s aquatics program, the staff report said.

That contract stipulates that aquatics fees would be subject to council approval in the master schedule, the report said.

Email Contributing Writer Neil Gonzales at ngonzales92@yahoo.com.
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B COMMA
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-296641
The following person (person(s) is (are) doing business as):
1.) B COMMA , located at 580 Remillard dr., Hillsborough, CA 94010.
Registered owner(s): SAEBRA HUBER
580 Remillard dr.
Hillsborough CA 94010
State of Incorporation/Organization: CA
This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 02/05/2024.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on February 07, 2024.
(ALFM Feb 16, 23, 1 and 8, 2024)

WALNUT DESIGN
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-296365
The following person (person(s) is (are) doing business as):
1.) WALNUT DESIGN , located at 79 Santa Maria Ave, Portola Valley CA 94028.
Registered owner(s): LISA ANDERSON HILL
79 Santa Maria Ave
Portola Valley CA 94028
State of Incorporation/Organization: CA
This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 12/01/2023.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on January 19, 2024.
(ALFM Feb 16, 23, 1 and 8, 2024)

RL LOGISTIX
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-296389
The following person (person(s) is (are) doing business as)
1.) RL LOGISTIX , located at 90 South Spruce Ave., Suite B, South San Francisco, CA94080.
Registered owner(s): AGUILAR, LLC
90 South Spruce Ave., Suite B
South San Francisco,CA 94080
State of Incorporation/Organization: CA
This business is conducted by: a Limited Liability Company.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 12/23/2024.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on January 13, 2024.
(ALFM Feb 16, 23, 1 and 8, 2024)

LEENZART
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-296493
The following person (person(s) is (are) doing business as):
1.) LEENZART , located at 245 7th Ave #6, San Mateo, CA 94401.
Registered owner(s): KATHLEEN LAURIE BRIEN
245 7th Ave
San Mateo, CA 94401
This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has not yet begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above above on 12/01/2023.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on January 13, 2024.
(ALFM Feb 16, 23, 1 and 8, 2024)

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Case No.: 24-CIV-00001
TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:
Petitioner: Brooke Dorothy Weissenfeld filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows:
BROOKE DOROTHY WIESENDENL to BROOKE WIESENDEL BORE
THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause why the petition should not be granted.
Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file a written objection that includes the reasons for the objection at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing to show cause why the petition should not be granted.
If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing.
NOTICE OF HEARING: 03/21/2024, 9:00 am, Southern Branch of the Superior Court of the State of California for the County of San Mateo, located at 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063.
A copy of this ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE shall be published at least once each week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county:
THE ALMANAC
Date: 01/17/2024
Hon. Elizabeth K. Lee
JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
(ALFM Feb 9, 2, 16 and 23, 2024)

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Case No.: 24-CIV-00015
TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:
Petitioner: Anne DeBuylte Bipes filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows:
ANNE DERUYTRE BIPES to ANNE MARIA TERAESA DERUYTRE
THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause why the petition for change of name should not be granted.
Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file a written objection that includes the reasons for the objection at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing to show cause why the petition should not be granted.
If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing.
NOTICE OF HEARING: 03/21/2024, 9:00 am, Southern Branch of the Superior Court of the State of California for the County of San Mateo, located at 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063.
A copy of this ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE shall be published at least once each week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county:
THE ALMANAC
Date: 01/15/2024
Hon. Elizabeth K. Lee
JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
(ALFM Feb 9, 2, 16 and 23, 2024)
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Los Altos

Ventana School offers girls entering grades 2-6 a range of age-appropriate activities including athletics, art, science, writing, crafts, cooking, drama and music. Leadership program available for girls entering grades 7-9.

Castilleja.org/SummerCamp (650) 470-7833

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HiddenVilla.org/SummerCamp (650) 949-8650

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**ATHLETICS**

**Spartans Sports Camp Mountain View**

Spartans Sports Camp offers a wide variety of sports and academic enrichment camps for kids entering grades 1-9. Experienced staff ensures everyone has fun. Daily on-site swimming is offered for all camps. Camps run weekly from June 10 - August 2 at Mountain View High School. The camp is run by MVHS coaches and student-athletes and all proceeds benefit the MVHS Athletic Department. Lunch and extended care are available.

SpartansSportsCamp.com (650) 479-5906

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HiddenVilla.org/SummerCamp (650) 949-8650
Mary Finlayson
December 5, 1933 - February 12, 2024

Mary Finlayson passed away of a subdural hemorrhage in the early morning of February 12, 2024 at her home in Woodside, surrounded by her family. She had recently celebrated her 90th birthday, as well as the 70th anniversary of meeting her beloved husband Norris for the first time in January 1954.

Mary Ann Ellis was born in Berkeley, California on December 5, 1933, the first daughter of Dr. Grant Ellis and Mary Laurine Holmes Ellis. A few years later, the family welcomed her younger sister Laurine ("Renie"), who became a lifelong best friend. Mary revered her father, a soft-spoken, highly intelligent, and hardworking man who was a beloved and respected family doctor in the community. Dr. Ellis deeply loved their mother, who was a force of nature: tall, beautiful, outspoken, opinionated, and fascinated by art, music, and literature. The house was full of love, culture, and lively debate. Mary’s life was also enriched by the presence of an extended family of Ellis and Holmes uncles, aunts and cousins whom she loved and was so proud of, and with whom she shared countless adventures and celebrations.

From childhood, Mary embraced life with curiosity and a gift for bringing others along on her adventures. As a young girl she organized the neighborhood “Daring Club”, a group of friends who engaged in vaulting fences and jumping off of the roofs of houses. The Daring Club members remained lifelong friends (although the vaulting and jumping was eventually retired after a few broken bones). Mary also had an irresistible love and gift for music. From a young age, she heard harmonies in her head, which she sang and arranged for her classmates to perform — in one case while at Berkeley High School, in a quartet on national TV. As a senior, Mary served as President of the Girls’ Association, choosing the theme of “Friendship and Service.”

Mary attended college at U.C. Berkeley, where she performed in a popular jazz singing quartet before transferring to Barnard College in New York to study art history. At church her first Sunday, she experienced an unexpected thrill when she met a young man who was visiting for the weekend from Harvard Medical School. For Norris and Mary it was love at first sight. On their second date, Norris proposed and Mary accepted. They married in August of that year, in the Salt Lake City Temple, and have remained passionately and tenderly in love ever since.

The young couple lived first in Boston, Massachusetts where Norris continued his medical studies and Mary completed her college degree at Boston University. Soon after, they welcomed their first daughter. Two sons followed during medical residencies in San Francisco and Boston, and then their daughter. After many adventures they welcomed their second daughter, another son, and two more daughters. Family life was full of activity: learning, music, sports, service in church and community, and unforgettable rich friendships with people from all walks of life visiting from near and far. The kids never knew who would be joining the family for Sunday dinner — it seemed there was always someone, new or familiar, who received a warm welcome, a delicious meal, and lively discussion accompanied by warmth and laughter. No one knows exactly how many people have stayed with Mary & Norris in their home and cottage: individuals and families, sometimes because some life crisis created an urgent need, and at others simply because Mary and Norris loved them and were delighted to have them stay while in town. (And the former invariably morphed into the latter.) Some stayed for a few days, some for weeks, and some for months and even years.

Mary threw herself into the enrichment of her seven children’s minds and hearts. Their home overflowed with books, art, music and educational materials of all kinds. School absences (mostly properly excused) were common for special outings to museums, plays, concerts and educational travel. Several of the kids had “home school” years with curriculum tailored to their interests and gifts. And undergirding all family discussion was a deep core of Mary’s moral strength, highlighting the importance of kindness, loving service, faithfulness, and generosity. She pointed out and celebrated the many role models, “heroes and altruists”, who inspired her, and she assured us we could surely find more all around us if we looked with curiosity and a gift for bringing others along.

Mary expected her children to enjoy mental achievements and the joy of learning for its own sake. This joy proved infectious, as all of their children went off to challenging universities to study art, history, classics, literature, political science, biology, law, medicine and other fields. Throughout Mary’s life, her love of music brought her great joy and meaning. As a young woman she learned to read music, and to play the piano, flute and harp. Although she considered herself never to have been formally “trained”, she had an excellent ear, a lovely voice with near perfect pitch, and loved to sing with talented friends. As a young woman she was thrilled to sing in the Chorus Pro Musica with the Boston Symphony, and later with the Oakland Symphony Chorus. She sang in countless church choirs, including the celebrated “Valparaiso Singers”, a Menlo Park-based traveling choir group that performed a variety of choral music with great enthusiasm and gifted leadership. Later in life, Mary spent more time on musical composition, producing a wide range of choral, oratorial, celebratory (for baptisms, for the birth of a friend’s child, or a colleague’s son’s Bar Mitzvah), children’s (including the Portola Valley Elementary school song) and instrumental music. She was surprised and delighted when her work was well-received by musicians of talent and advanced training whom she greatly respected.

Mary was a creative and inspiring leader, and supportive follower, in both church and community life. After returning to Berkeley (the place where she had co-founded the notorious “Daring Club” many years before), as a young mother she co-founded the Berkeley Montessori School in 1963 (now “The Berkeley School”). Over the years she served as President of local church organizations for women (Relief Society), young women, and children (Primary). She taught adult Sunday School class (Gospel Doctrine), and for many years co-taught with Norris an inspirational and much appreciated marionette show.

Mary was a woman of great faith, a lifelong practicing Christian in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She drew strength and insight from the teachings of both ancient and modern prophets, and cherished a deeply felt personal relationship with a God who she knew in her bones loved her more than she could even comprehend, and equally loves all of His precious children. Mary also profoundly appreciated the commonality as well as distinctiveness that she found in the faiths of her many friends whose traditions she deeply admired and respected, including the ancient faith of Judaism, the deep traditions and philosophy of the Catholic faith, whose scholarship she read for inspiration with great appreciation, and the warm and open community of the Woodside Village Church. Her faith inspired her to embrace everyone she met as a fellow child of God. She left this world fully expecting to meet every one of us again.

Mary is survived by her husband Norris, their children Mary Bliss (Lewis Hassell), Grant (Pam Hutchcraft), John (Jennifer Fife), Elizabeth (Jim Nadel), Samuel (Erika Lambert), Emily (Riccardo Stoobs) and Susan (Elliott Ferris), 15 grandchildren, one granddaughter who predeceased her, 18 great grandchildren, her sister Laurine, and many nieces, nephews and cousins.

Mary’s life will be celebrated at a funeral of February 12, 2024 at her home in Atherton, Woodside and Portola Valley.

‘None of us wants to live in an atmosphere of fear as many of us are now experiencing as to the safety of our families and homes because of the surge in break-ins.’

FEB. 13 SHARON HEIGHTS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION LETTER

With or without ALPR, he said, police are taking the burglaries in Sharon Heights seriously and investigating them accordingly.

“Any crime that occurs anywhere in the city is of concern to us,” Norris said. “When someone has their home broken into, that can be a particularly difficult and nerve-wracking experience for the people involved in that residence.”

He added: “We are very interested in bringing the people who are responsible to justice, and we are using all of our available tools as well as working in a team environment with other agencies that are experiencing similar problems to try and identify the people responsible and to get them held to account.”

Just late last week, several residential burglaries (a third was reported on Lupin Lane on Friday evening, Feb. 16) in Atherton were reported in a matter back to the council at a meeting.

Menlo Park police are also spreading crime-prevention tips to residents, department spokesman Nicole Acker said. Those including ensuring their doors are locked, installing a home-alarm system and improving lighting around their property.

Email Contributing Writer Neil Gonzales at ngonzales92@yahoo.com.
How California lawmakers want to target retail theft

By Lynn La / CalMatters

Early four months after forming a bipartisan select committee and two hearings later, Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas announced legislation Thursday, Feb. 15, to combat shoplifting and organized retail theft — just beating today’s deadline to introduce new bills.

Rivas, a Democrat from Salinas, “Organized retail theft is having a chilling effect on our communities. Crime, like everything, evolves. And criminal enterprises are using new and different ways to get around current prohibitions ... It is our responsibility to ensure that our laws are addressing the situation at hand.”

Focusing on “professional retail thieves,” Zbur said the measure would create a new crime with a penalty as long as three years behind bars for the possession of stolen property with the intent to sell. Because “intent to sell” can be difficult to prove in court, evidence can include repeated offenses or possessing an amount of goods that is “inconsistent with personal use.”

Other key provisions of the bill, according to Zbur:

- Aggregation: The value of thefts from different retailers can be added up so they can be prosecuted as grand theft.
- Retailers: Online sellers would be required to maintain records to show that goods were obtained legally and large retailers would be required to report “theft data” (though details remain unclear).
- Enforcement: Police could arrest shoplifters based on a witness’ sworn statement or video footage of a crime.
- Intervention: Courts could refer some shoplifters to alternative programs instead of jail or prison.

Thursday’s measure is in response to a 29% jump in 2022 in shoplifting (though the rate was still 8% below pre-pandemic levels), including some high-profile smash and grabs. Also, there was a 16% rise in commercial burglaries of items totaling more than $950 between 2019 and 2022, according to the Public Policy Institute of California.

The $950 is the threshold set by Proposition 47, which voters approved in 2014, to prosecute shoplifting as a felony. Zbur noted that the new bill can be enacted and signed into law without a ballot measure to overrule Prop. 47, which Republicans and some Democrats propose.

Prop. 47 is viewed by some legislators and local officials as part of the reason why “ram-pant acts of theft” are happening across the state. While Rivas did not directly rule out reforming Prop. 47, he said it “has been law for a decade,” and that the legislative process is better for “developing well-constructive policy.”

Rivas: “We need to get it right. We can’t make a mistake here.”

The select committee on retail theft is expected to hold one more hearing, though when and where that will be “are still under discussion,” according to Zbur’s spokesperson.

This story, from Bay City News Service, was originally published by CalMatters.

Janet Lee Jurian
December 10, 1950 – January 21, 2024

Surrounded by love and family, Janet Lee Jurian of Woodside, CA, passed away peacefully at home on January 21, 2024, after a fifteen-month battle with brain cancer.

Janet was born on September 10, 1950, the daughter of the late John N. Duzanica and Lillian Garibaldi Duzanica. Raised in Menlo Park, Janet attended St. Raymond’s parish school, Holy Cross High School (Class of 1969), and College of San Mateo. She remained a resident of the peninsula her entire life. Janet attended nursing school, worked in school nutrition (Stanford University and Monte Vista High School), and later transitioned to dental office administration. However, she was most well known for her lifelong secondary occupation of crafting beautiful wedding and special occasion cakes. Outside of work, Janet could most often be found on horseback; she was an avid western trail rider who revered her horse community. Janet was a woman in perpetual motion — from boxing to pickleball, reading, cooking, line dancing, photography, travel — the list went on. Even after “retiring”, she continued to be active, working for her son’s business and riding her horse until October 2022 when cancer rendered her unable.

Janet was warm and welcoming, always finding time and compassion for others. She was a caring friend, a loving mother, and a devoted wife; her generous spirit knew no bounds. She drove carpools, coordinated birthday parties, helped with school projects, cooked meals, planned vacations and more. Somehow, Janet did it all, with a smile on her face and her signature flowers in her hair. As much as she thrived in her many roles, nothing gave Janet more joy than being ‘Nonie’ to her two granddaughters, Sophia and Avery. To them, she embodied unconditional love and support, and her memory will be a guiding light.

Janet’s family is survived by her husband of 48 years Andrew Jurian; her two children, son Ryan Jurian and his wife Jennie; daughter Jannessa Wisney and her husband Ben; her two brothers, Tim Duzanica and his wife Pa; Jim Duzanica and his wife Cher; and her two granddaughters, Sophia and Avery Jurian.

“Love doesn’t die, people do. So when all that’s left of me is love, give me away.” — M. Malloy

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to: National Center for Equine Facilitated Therapy (nceft.org), Friends of Huddart and Wunderlich Parks (huddartwunderlichfriends.org), or the American Cancer Society (cancer.org).
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West Bay Opera stages contemporary piece that captures dark era in a country’s politics

By Michael J. Vaughn

It’s fitting that “Corpus Evita” begins with that legendary image of Evita, the president’s dying wife in the balcony, raising her arms in that idiosyncratic way while saying farewell to her people. Created by composer Carlos Franzetti, with a libretto by West Bay Opera general director Jose Luis Moscovich, the opera is largely concerned with image, and if you whispered the name “Evita” to the average American, this is exactly the image that would come to mind.

The bulk of the opera’s action begins much later, in 1973, as Juan Peron returns from a 17-year exile in Spain to run for re-election. The real meat of the conflict arises then, with Ministro, both of whom seem to be much more interested in consolidating and expanding his power. He coerces Isabel into unleashing the military on a growing uprising of communists, which results in 30,000 deaths. The military also engages in a ruthless program of slaughtering young couples and giving their babies to couples with more Peronist views.

The opera is a wild trip filled with magical realist devices. Isabel, who in reality is 93 and still exiled in Spain, is brought home to Argentina to answer for her sins. Ministro then uses his occult powers to bring in the younger Juan and Evita for a conference, or perhaps it’s more of a trial.

Composer Franzetti, who is well-versed in jazz and tango idioms, created a rhythmically propulsive score, at times moody and haunting, but always prepared to go off in bursts of musical gunfire. Moscovich and his orchestra handle the resultant challenges beautifully, notably percussionist Sohrab Bazargan and timpanist Neal Goggans.

The vocal style is straightforward and declamatory, making use of modern intervals but always in service to the discourse. Soprano Jessica Sandidge handles the role of Evita with grace and an even, clear tone, even though playing a goddess can be an unrewarding job. Casey Germain’s bass tone is gorgeous, lending a calm presence to Juan that is quite a contrast to his impassioned cohorts.

Tenor Patrick Bessenbacher is an edgy treat as the Rasputinesque Ministro. His spinto tone provides just the right measure of danger, and no one’s really surprised when he resorts to the dark arts.

The bulk of the conflict settles on the shoulders of soprano Sara LeMesh, whose performance of Isabel is a superb example of vocal acting. A particularly powerful scene comes in a trio with Juan and Ministro, both of whom seem relatively untroubled by 30,000 dead people, while Isabel is ripping out her hair at the hell she has unwittingly unleashed.

The stage direction designed by Jose Maria Condemi is balanced and effective, many times resembling the creation of living portraits upon the stage. The torture scene, in which a young couple is killed, their baby wrestled away for “reassignment,” is particularly savage and chilling. Done with their jobs, the soldiers file off-stage, receiving bank notes from Ministro as they leave. Another tableau brings veiled desaparecidos (the disappeared), holding candles and framed pictures of their missing children; they later transform into happy citizens, basking in the glow of Evita’s image.

Franzetti’s chorus parts are beautifully simple, a great contrast to the rolling dramatic scenes, and well handled by chorus master Bruce Olstad’s charges. Peter Crompton’s set design is flexible enough to handle the ever-shifting realities, while his projections are helpful in offering enlightening bits of propaganda and newspaper clippings. A striking departure is the projection used to portray the interior of Isabel’s apartment, which is magically realistic.

In my desire to see things in a fresh way, I make a habit of never reading the program before a performance. In the case of “Corpus Evita,” I would recommend that you read Moscovich’s notes beforehand. It’s best to get a quick refresher on your Argentine politics, and it also gives a striking account of Mosocovich’s childhood in Argentina.

Email Contributing Writer Michael J. Vaughn at michaelvaughn@hotmail.com.
A local landmark and temple to Hollywood's Golden Age

The Stanford Theatre kicks off a new program highlighting the films of Fred Astaire on Feb. 23

By Allegra Hoddie/M-A Chronicle

With red velvet curtains, patterned carpet, and popcorn kernels, and a dazzling marquee, University Avenue’s Stanford Theatre is a timeless relic of culture and history. The theater opened in 1925, enthusiastically titled the ‘New Stanford Theatre.’ Construction had begun a year earlier in the style of a neoclassical movie palace, an architectural trend that sought to engage audiences in not only the films themselves but in a complete moviewing experience.

On top of live performances, the theater played films as they were released in the early 20th century and to this day exclusively shows classic movies paired against roughly 1920 and 1960. Black-and-white or even silent films are typical for its selections. However, in the 1960s, the building fell into disrepair as it was overshadowed by modern movie theaters. In 1987, David Woodley Packard rented the theater out for a Fred Astaire film festival. Packard, the son of Hewlett-Packard Company founder David Packard, decided to purchase the 1,175-seat auditorium through his Packard Foundation. The nonprofit Stanford Theatre Company was established to manage it.

In total, Packard spent over $6 million renovating the theater, much more than its original cost in 1925. It was opened in 1989 with a grand reopening in 1989.

A grand reopening in 1989 was paired with a showing of the classic “The Wizard of Oz.” Packard transformed (the theater) into a singular cinematic vision of bringing people back into feeling the golden age of Hollywood, said Charlie Dickey, an assistant manager who has worked at the theater for nine years. “Now (the theater) is kind of a temple to that idea,” Dickey said. Employees wear collared shirts and welcoming smiles, contributing to the theater’s warm atmosphere even outside of the auditorium itself.

Authentic movie posters chosen from both current programming and past favorites are arranged throughout the theater’s halls. However, most memorabilia is concentrated inside an adjacent gallery room. Some of the material is purchased at auctions from estates or collectors. Glass cases enclose curated newspaper clippings from the theater’s history, including original 1925 articles from the “Palo Alto Daily,” along with preserved advertisements and movie decor.

The cost of day-to-day operations are covered by ticket and concession sales, which have ranged from $10 for a drink or bucket of popcorn and $3 for a large; wildly atypical from modern cinema prices. “When the theater needs upgrades, the Stanford Theatre Foundation receives assistance through grants from the Packard Humanities Institute,” explained manager Cyndi Mortensen.

The theater does it all, the hall is a landmark the “Mighty Wurlitzer” organ performances that take place before and after the 7:30 p.m. show. An organist ascends on a rising platform immediately following the end of a film and descends in dramatic fashion just as the next begins. David Hegarty, one of the theater’s two organists, has been playing around the Bay Area for nearly 50 years, most notably at San Francisco’s Castro Theatre. ‘I’m kind of a movie buff, particularly with classic movies, and that ties in with my main interest as a concert organist and arranger,” said Hegarty, who has a master’s degree in organ performance.

“...if a movie has very specific music, I try to play some of it. If the movie doesn’t have songs, I often can play the main title track. I try to pick something from the era of the movie.”

He continued, “Mr. Packard prefers the last piece we play when we bring the organ down to be ‘Isn’t It Romantic.’ I remember him saying that it’s his wife’s favorite song, so it’s kind of the theater’s theme song.”

All the movies shown on the single large screen are hand-picked by Packard and organized in a “festival” format that runs films featuring certain actors, directors, or seasonal themes for a few weekends at a time. These festivals can include homages to Alfred Hitchcock, Audrey Hepburn, Shirley Temple, or occasions like Halloween. “We don’t give eight months without starting ‘Roman Holiday’ because people will see it every time we play it,” Dickey said. Fan-favorite films make frequent appearances on the programs, most notably the popular Christmas Eve showing of “It’s A Wonderful Life.” “The place gets absolutely bouncing in here on Christmas Eve,” Dickey added.

Though the theater has been renovated to adapt to the modern day, films are still played in their original formats. Dickey said, “It all has to do with where we can source archival 35-millimeter prints, meaning that our selection of titles is not as broad as other cinemas.”

Hegarty explained, “(Packard) doesn’t want anything that drives people into the present. Everywhere else, I use an iPad to read music off of, but I have to go old school here. If I’m going to read music, I have to use paper because the theater’s integrity dictates that we keep everything within its era.”

The theater was one of the first businesses in Palo Alto to close at the dawn of the COVID-19 pandemic, and waited until the summer of 2022 for a limited reopening.

Despite the prolonged closure, employees came in during the pandemic to maintain the theater and assist with renovations. The reopening came with a new heating, ventilation and air conditioning system, as well as credit card readers, drawing in new audience members.

The theater has prevailed through nearly a century of his party. “My favorite thing about the theater is its low barrier to access, a maximum of seven bucks for two movies,” said Dickey. Even decades after Hollywood’s arguable peak, the Stanford Theatre continues to welcome audiences to the simple and accessible charm of a movie-going experience.

“I like that people will very frequently enter this place skeptical and come out astonished in ways that they hadn’t anticipated,” Dickey concluded.

Read a longer version of this story at stanfordnews.org/arts-culture.
Redwood City resident Andy Coyle is a busy 13-year-old juggling school and extracurriculars. But unlike most kids his age, he has to find time to shop for specialty baking ingredients, prepare and decorate layered cakes and budget extra time for laminated pastries.

The budding baker and owner of Andy’s Big Head Bakery recently appeared on Season 12 of Food Network’s popular show, “Kids Baking Championship.” In 2022, the network’s casting contacted him through his business’ Instagram account and asked if he’d like to audition. After several callbacks, all requiring that he show up with a baked item, he was selected to compete against 11 other contestants for a $25,000 grand prize.

Andy was eliminated during the second episode but was philosophical about his departure. “Baking on the show was stressful, and even though I would have liked to stay on the show longer, I wouldn’t have changed anything,” he said. “Overall, it was a great experience. I made new friends and memories I’ll take with me for my entire life.”

Andy’s journey in baking started when he was very young. “I would hear my mom and grandmother pulling supplies out, and I would come running. My curiosity about baking probably started when I was still in diapers,” he said.

The first cake he made that he was really proud of was in second grade. His mother, Mary Coyle, said, “It was a beautiful two-tiered cake that looked like a wedding cake.”

That same year, when Andy was 7, he began fulfilling dessert orders for his friends, family and classmates at St. Raymond Catholic School in Menlo Park. Soon after, he opened his business, and today, Andy continues to masterfully whip up desserts of all types for customers who contact him through Instagram. He averages three to five orders a week, and as he’s gotten older, he’s graduated from cookies and cupcakes to yeast doughs, celebration cakes, cinnamon rolls and cheese Danishes.

“I’m more focused on detailed items like croissants and cakes with intricate piping. I make a really great chocolate coffee cake with a mocha icing,” he said.
Andy Coyle

Andy’s two sisters are gluten-intolerant, so his repertoire includes many gluten-free options. "I usually use King Arthur Baking gluten-free all-purpose flour for most things unless I’m making something that requires almond flour like macarons," explained Andy. His favorite Peninsula spot for sweets is Los Altos’ gluten-free bakery, Sweet Diplomacy, a place where the whole family can enjoy.

When not baking for customers or going to school and studying, Andy enjoys volleyball and cross-country. A trip to watch the world’s best track and field athletes at the 2022 Track and Field World Championships in Oregon right after he was eliminated took the sting out of his short stint on the show. That episode’s challenge was to create blondies that honor the classic game of hopscotch in a playground schematic. Mary said that it was disappointing that he didn’t get more of a chance to show off his skill and technique with more advanced challenges.

Andy hopes to continue baking through high school and college, but when asked about a career in the field, he wasn’t sure. He’s particularly interested in weather, so maybe those math skills that help with the exactness of baking will one day be applied to the climate and forecasting. Asked what he does with the earnings from his business, Mary mentioned purchasing more baking equipment and investing in the stock market.

Contact Andy via @andysbigheadbakery on Instagram to place an order.

Email Contributing Writer Sophia Markoulakis at sophiamarkoulakis@gmail.com

Below: A lemon cake with Swiss buttercream frosting garnished with candied lemon peel and a fondant lemon topper made by Andy Coyle. Courtesy Mary Coyle.

Right: Andy Coyle poses for a photo for Food Network. Courtesy Food Network.
STUNNING LOS ALTOS RETREAT

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