

The Almanac

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

OCTOBER 18, 2024 | VOL. 60 NO. 7



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Organization works to remedy environmental inequities in Belle Haven by planting trees

Nonprofit Canopy plants 15 trees in neighborhood to help increase urban canopy

By Eleanor Raab

On Oct. 5, nearly 40 community members from Menlo Park and surrounding communities came together to plant 15 trees in the Belle Haven neighborhood of Menlo Park. Canopy, a local nonprofit focused on growing the urban tree canopy in Midpeninsula cities, sponsored the tree planting in partnership with All Five, a Belle Haven preschool.

Five trees were planted on All Five's campus at 1391 Chilco St., and another 10 were planted in the surrounding neighborhood.

These 15 trees are just the beginning of a tree boom that Canopy has planned for Belle Haven. Over the next two years, Canopy aims to partner with the Ravenswood City School

District, All Five and the surrounding community to plant an additional 90 trees in and around the All Five and Belle Haven Elementary School campuses.

Canopy partnered with All Five preschool to ensure that the youngest residents of Belle Haven are experiencing the benefits of tree canopy coverage. Additionally, Canopy and All Five received a \$612,000 grant through Cal Fire's Green Schoolyards grant to plant trees on the school grounds.

The Green Schoolyards grant is aimed at "(creating) green schoolyards to protect the health, well-being and educational opportunity of children most vulnerable to increasing temperatures and extreme heat across California," according to Cal Fire's Green Schoolyards webpage.

The Cal Fire grant will cover the planting of the trees at All Five, as well as ongoing tree care and outdoor tree education for the students over the next two years.

The trees in the surrounding neighborhood are being planted with a grant from Lockheed Martin, according to Canopy.

Marla Romero-Sosa, All Five's family director, said that she was excited that the students will be able to learn more about the environment from the new trees.

"It's never too early to inspire our students to love our environment and build a shared vision of what it means to show up for community, for our schools, for our partners and for each other," she said. "A special

See **CANOPY**, page 12



Courtesy Jean-Paul Renaud

Volunteers from tree-focused nonprofit Canopy and preschoolers from All Five work together to plant trees on the Belle Haven school's campus on Oct. 5.

Candidates debate detracking, mental health solutions at Sequoia board forum

By Arden Margulis

Candidates for the Sequoia Union High School District Board of Trustees outlined their visions for the future of the district during The Almanac and Redwood City Pulse's candidate forum on Thursday, Oct. 10. The forum, held at the Menlo Park City Council Chambers, was attended by all six candidates running for the Area B and Area E seats.

The event drew an in-person audience of 40 people, while the YouTube livestream, hosted by MidPen Media Center, garnered

over 200 views within 24 hours. In attendance were three current board members: outgoing Area B trustee Carrie Du Bois, Area C Trustee Rich Ginn, and Area D Trustee Sathvik Nori.

Watch a recording of the forum on YouTube with subtitles in different languages.

The forum was moderated by Almanac Editor Angela Swartz and Staff Writer Jennifer Yoshikoshi. In total, candidates were asked seven pre-determined questions as well as six audience-submitted questions.

Learn more about the candidates on this news organization's

election guide at [AlmanacNews.com/election](https://www.almanacnews.com/election).

Priorities

The first question focused on what issues the candidates would want to first bring to the board if elected.

Area B candidates Daniel Torunian and Jacob Yuryev both emphasized the importance of revisiting the district's detracking policy, a heated topic. Detracking is the removal of honors courses to place students of mixed academic abilities in the same courses to level the playing field.

Area B candidate Mary Beth Thompson argued that the district should prioritize new topics. "The data already exists out there for policies from four years ago (like detracking), what does not exist right now is looking at how our students are affected by extremely high pressure societal norms," she said.

Area E candidates Maria Cruz and Tonga Victoria said they would want to first address detracking. Cruz also wants the district to look at student mental health and Victoria wants a focus on building community. However, Area E Candidate Jon

Bryant said he wants to first address teacher burnout in the district.

Detracking

Detracking was one of the main focuses of the candidates.

Torunian voiced his concerns about the lack of data supporting the benefits of current

See **SEQUOIA FORUM**, page 9

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Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY



Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Trump supporters rally at Woodside's Pioneer Saloon ahead of Sen. JD Vance's arrival at a local fundraiser on Oct. 9.

Trump supporters rally for hours welcoming JD Vance to Woodside

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Bay Area Trump supporters gathered in front of Woodside's Pioneer Saloon to welcome Republican vice presidential candidate Ohio Sen. JD Vance to his private fundraiser in town on Oct. 9. The San Mateo County Sheriff's Office had traffic blocked off on Lindenbrook Road as fundraiser guests were checked in at the barricade.

Vance's motorcade arrived at

approximately 7:10 p.m.

Waiting in anticipation for Vance's arrival, supporters began the rally in front of Pioneer Saloon at 3:30 p.m. waving Trump flags and singing along to patriotic music.

"JD seems to be a breath of fresh air. I'm really looking forward to voting for him in four years," said Redwood City resident Mark Norman, who showed up to support the Republican party.

Others attended the rally to voice their support freely alongside fellow supporters. Redwood City resident John Charlesbois said, "If you support the other side, you're like their enemy and it shouldn't be that way. It should be that you believe in whatever you want to believe but let's not fight over it."

The rally was also attended by two protesters from Palo Alto,

See **VANCE**, page 13

'My people' — South Pacific Food Fest takes East Palo Alto

The second annual event showcased Pacific Island talent

By Lisa Moreno

Seia's spot, keeping 25+ years of tradition alive, one recipe at a time," read a banner at Oct. 12's South Pacific Food Fest in East Palo Alto.

The banner — draped over a booth of laughing family members and longtime chefs — listed Tongan dishes like lu kapa pulu, steamed corned beef with tomatoes and onions wrapped in layers of taro leaves.

From 1999 to 2008, their family ran Islands Delite on E. Bayshore Road in East Palo Alto — the only establishment dishing up traditional Tongan food in the area and considered a staple in the community.

"I was 8 years old when it opened and grew up in there," Fonua said. "But you don't know what you have until you lose it."

Ever since its closure, his dad has been "itching to get back in the game," and for the first time in over 15 years, he got his chance.

"The business is named after my dad," said Uilifeleti Fonua, his son.

Hundreds of people from all over the Bay Area flocked to East Palo Alto on Oct. 12 to attend the second annual South Pacific Food Fest, which showcased 16 Pacific Islander-owned businesses in University Circle.

Angelina Hurrell, owner of Tokemoana Foods and Fusi Taaga, started the event last year with the aim of creating a space for Pacific Islander talent. Before the event, they held workshops for the vendors, discussing marketing and helping them fill out business-related paperwork.

"We wanted to showcase our people's talent," Hurrell said.

Many of the businesses — run out of homes — haven't had experience selling at markets,

but Hurrell and Taaga wanted to change that.

The opportunity was game-changing for Fonua's family, who started serving Tongan food again during the COVID-19 lockdown.

"My dad taught me the recipes for all his dishes," he said.

Depending on their success at the market, Fonua said, would determine how the business would proceed, whether in their home kitchen, a food truck or at a brick and mortar.

'I love being here, these are my people. It's inspiring to be around so many creators and I believe everyone is one at heart.'

RAIJIELI RANADINIVULA,
OWNER OF DAULOMANI CREATIONS

Jocelyn Vaitai, niece of Tuk Eats business owner Tricia Kaho, ran her aunt's booth at the market, selling her signature cookies.

"It takes a lot for us to come out to events," she said. "My aunt is really picky about where we attend, but this is our community."

Like Vaitai, many of the business owners seldom get the chance to be in a space specifically for Pacific Island culture.

Raijeli Ranadinivula, owner of Daulomani Creations, which sells traditional Fijian wood carvings and "tapas," relished the opportunity.

"I love being here, these are my people," she said, smiling.

See **FOOD FEST**, page 14

Judge denies majority of Sequoia district's motions to dismiss lawsuit brought by former M-A student

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

United States District Judge Rita Lin issued a ruling in the lawsuit against the Sequoia Union High School District involving the arrest of a then Menlo-Atherton High School student in April 2023. Lin ruled majority in favor of the plaintiff, known in the suit as K.C., denying most of the district's motions to dismiss claims against former M-A Vice

Principals Stephen Emmi and Nick Muys on Oct. 15.

The reported incident occurred on campus shortly before police arrested K.C. near the Atherton campus.

"I'm very positive about the ruling," said John Burris, the plaintiff's attorney. "The cause of actions that we made were based upon the conduct of the school district, the people there and the impact so I fully expected the court would recognize

those issues."

The court ruled that accusations are legitimate against Emmi, SUHSD's current wellness programs coordinator, for assault and battery, intentional infliction of emotional distress and the Bane Act, which protects individuals from threats, intimidation or coercion that interfere with federal or state rights. The district's motion to dismiss the negligence

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FALL HOME + GARDEN DESIGN



Portola Valley candidates discuss housing, finances and more at forum

Some daylight between candidates over evacuation plans, annexation

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Nearly 100 local residents gathered in Portola Valley's Community Hall on Oct. 8 to hear from the town's four Town Council candidates Rebecca Flynn, Ellen Vernazza, Helen Wolter and Carter Warr.

Candidates addressed questions related to the state-mandated housing element, balancing the town budget, evacuation plans, fire safety and changes to government structure.

The League of Women Voters of South San Mateo County hosted the forum and its vice president, Lisa Conrad, moderated.

Housing element and developments

After the decertification of Portola Valley's 2023-31 housing element, many residents are concerned about the following steps. Every jurisdiction in the state updates a housing element plan under the state's Regional Housing Needs Allocation program every eight years.

Vernazza said the first step is to get the housing element recertified, otherwise not much can be done. Flynn suggested that the town move forward with programs within the housing element, certify and pre-approve additional dwelling unit plans, and identify areas where housing can be developed.

On the topic of the proposed housing developments at the Stanford Wedge site, Dorothy Ford Park and others, Warr and Wolter both expressed their support for the Portola Terrace project at the Stanford Wedge but did not support housing at Dorothy Ford Park.

"I think [Dorothy Ford Park] was purchased with open space in mind and needs to continue to be open space," Warr said. "I think there are opportunities all over town for density increases that weren't considered in the housing element at this time."

Vernazza said she is against all high-density housing because of its potential impacts on traffic during evacuations in a fire.

When asked about their opinions on the housing element's Opt-In Diversification Program all candidates expressed their support for the goal of the program. The program was created to increase multigenerational housing and diversify housing opportunities for different demographics.

"I absolutely support the Opt-In program. It is one of the innovative ways to spread our density throughout the town," said Wolter.

Warr and Vernazza support the program's intentions but disagree with the current language allowing unlimited lots to build dispersed housing units.

Town finances and budget

The town is facing a deficit and expects deficits to increase in the coming years. All candidates stated that securing financial stability was one of their top priorities as a candidate.

Vernazza proposed the town look into becoming a charter town, which would create

another flow of revenue through property transfer taxes. Other candidates, including Warr and Wolter, discussed cutting costs, especially with consultants and focusing on the recruitment and retention of staff. Flynn called for a deep evaluation of the town's finances.

Changes to government structure and Ladera annexation

The fact that Portola Valley is presently without a town manager led to the question of whether the town should move away from the town manager model.

Warr said he "would support improving the relationship between town staff and the council, principally by having the department directors report to the town manager and Town Council at the same time."

He points out that when information is relayed from department heads to town managers who report back to the council, important information and details are lost. He believes it would be more efficient for department heads to report directly to the council.

Flynn shared similar thoughts on creating a model in which avenues of communication between department heads and the council are not "blocked by a town manager."

Candidates also discussed their ideas on annexing the Ladera neighborhood and mixed opinions were expressed. Wolter and Vernazza disagreed with annexation while Flynn and Warr were open to exploring the idea.

"I don't agree with annexing Ladera. I think we're two different lifestyles," said Vernazza.

See **PORTOLA COUNCIL**, page 7



Left to right, Portola Valley Town Council candidates Carter Warr, Rebecca Flynn, Helen Wolter and Ellen Vernazza during a forum on Oct. 8. in Community Hall.

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Newsroom: (650) 223-6525
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The Almanac (ISSN 1097-3095 and USPS 459370) is published every Friday by Embarcadero Media Foundation, 3525 Alameda de las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025-6558. Periodicals Postage Paid at Menlo Park, CA and at additional mailing offices. Adjudicated a newspaper of general circulation for San Mateo County. The Almanac is delivered to homes in Menlo Park, Atherton, Portola Valley and Woodside. However, in order to continue delivering you the news you depend on, we encourage you to become a paid subscribing member. Go to AlmanacNews.com/join to start supporting The Almanac today.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Almanac, 3525 Alameda de las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025-6558.

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2024
ELECTION ★ ★ ★
GUIDE

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SEQUOIA FORUM

continued from page 1

course offerings, stressing the need for a “substantive, data-driven discussion” on whether detracking serves students well. Yuryev added that recent changes to advanced classes were not yielding the intended outcomes, particularly for underrepresented students.

“We really need to help the students who are underrepresented. The data doesn’t show that we are effectively doing that,” Yuryev said, calling for a focus on improving the transition from middle school to high school and improving academic support.

Thompson is the only Area B candidate who supports the district’s detracking initiative, however, she clarified that neither she nor the district want additional classes to be removed. “The classes that were removed were one or two from the ninth or tenth grade curriculum for very specific reasons to increase the sense of belonging and in the words of [Sequoia High School Principal] Sean Priest ‘let people find their people.’”

“We put a lot of pressure on our students and it’s not just burnout on our teachers, it’s burnout on our students,” she added.

Victoria said she wants to work to improve the pipeline from the Ravenswood City School District to the Sequoia district and on her candidate questionnaire said she would support restoring removed honors classes.

Bryant discussed training teachers to handle students at different levels and adding more AP classes.

Cruz said that the district’s detracking policy has been good and encouraged open discussions. She also supported the board’s directive last year to add additional electives for freshmen. “Freshmen, like my son, are able to take electives to find somewhere where they really belong. When you find a place you belong, you will have higher retention rates,” she said.

Uniformity in course offerings

Candidates were also asked a question from the audience about whether course offerings should be similar across different schools in the district, especially relating to courses that have been detracked at some schools but not all.

Thompson does not see an issue with course offerings being different across schools.

“The district already doesn’t have uniformity across sites,” she said. “I think the school sites should have a lot of autonomy on how best to serve their community.”

Torunian said students should



Arden Margulis

Left to right: Sequoia Union High School District board candidates Daniel Torunian, Jon Bryant, Jacob Yuryev, Maria Cruz, Mary Beth Thompson and Victoria Tonga.

have similar opportunities but tailored to their communities. Yuryev argued that there should be at least some level of uniformity across schools.

Bryant said that each school should offer the same amount of services.

Cruz said: “Every school should have its own autonomy on what

they choose and how they choose to do it.”

Victoria said there should be limited oversight of sensitive courses like Ethnic Studies.

Student well-being and mental health

Candidates also addressed questions related to mental health

issues amongst students. In a district survey conducted last school year, 42% of students said workload stress “almost always” or “frequently” impacted their abilities to complete assignments.

Thompson said, “What good is a 4.0 GPA if you’re burnt out by the time you get to college?” She said that the district needs to take a well rounded approach to mental health.

“We need to look at the whole child. Mental health is not just a counselor, it’s not just a wellness space, those are extremely important but we need to look at everything that is affecting our young people,” she added.

Torunian agreed with Thompson on the importance of a well rounded approach to student support. Yuryev emphasized the need to fund student activities and extracurriculars to foster a sense of belonging among students.

Cruz, a professor at San Jose State University, said, “I have seen students in college coming

in burnt out already because they were stressed out in regards to the AP courses they had taken in high school.” She also wants to ensure every site has the resources to support student mental health.

Bryant said, “I feel like as a community, we really need to put mental health on the forefront.”

Technology and transparency

All candidates supported strategies to reduce cell phone usage in classrooms and integrate technology and AI in the classroom. Additionally, they unanimously agreed that transparency and communication should be key areas of focus for the district moving forward.

Watch a recording of the forum on youtube.com/@TheMidpenMediaCenter. ■

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Portola Valley considers options as finances appear worse than expected

Town evaluates methods to increase revenue

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Finances in Portola Valley have been a concern for town staff and residents for many years, but after an Oct. 1 Finance Committee meeting it was revealed that finances are far worse than expected. The town may have to declare a fiscal emergency to save its financial crisis, according to the Finance Committee.

The Finance Committee has evaluated the town budget and identified areas where costs can be cut as well as three revenue options which were presented to the council on Oct. 9.

Largest expenses

The town is currently catching up on years of financial audits. With the help of Finance Director Tony McFarlane, Portola Valley is starting to see that they will be entering a deficit sooner than expected if expenses are not cut and reevaluated.

“We’ve known about the structural deficit, the results of the expenses associated with the housing element and increases to the sheriff’s contract



Angela Swartz

The entrance to Portola Valley Town Center on Jan. 21.

exacerbated by staff turnover and increases in legal and consulting fees,” said Mayor Sarah Wernikoff during the Oct. 9 Town Council meeting.

During the Finance Committee meeting, McFarlane pointed out that the town’s biggest expense is the sheriff’s contract, which has cost the town over \$6 million over the past four years.

“Without significant cuts to the proposed 2024-25 budget, general fund reserves will end in

a deficit,” said Tony McFarlane.

The committee has been able to revise the 2024-25 budget to cut expenses by \$1.9 million to ensure a reserve of approximately \$695,000. Expenses were largely reduced from salaries, benefits, the sheriff’s contract and transfer of assets. The town will be taking advantage of the staff vacancies for the next fiscal year, said McFarlane during the meeting.

The committee identified that \$95,000 of general funds toward

the sheriff’s contract will be paid for by the Citizen’s Option for Public Safety, COPS, grant, which allows for funds to be allocated to other needs. The town has been using Public Safety Augmentation Funds, PSAF, and American Rescue Plan Act, ARPA, funds to pay for the sheriff’s contract and other recurring expenses.

In the fiscal year 2023-24, the town received about \$17,000 in PSAF funding and \$195,000 in COPS funding. The town uses approximately \$160,000 of COPS funding every year to offset general funds, according to McFarlane.

Consulting costs have also impacted the town with a total of over \$2 million spent from 2021-2024. The planning division has spent a total of \$1.5 million excluding recurring annual costs of \$80,000 to \$100,000. Consulting for the housing element also cost the town about \$1.2 million over three years.

“Additional revenue will need to be considered or the town is on the road to becoming unincorporated,” McFarlane added.

If the town were to unincorporate, Portola Valley would lose

local control and everything would “revert to the county level,” said town resident Dave Cardinal. Although sheriff costs would be covered by the county, other services provided by the town would be nonexistent.

The town has been incorporated since 1964. Reverting back would take away all town services and legislative bodies that have been built over the last 60 years, according to Cardinal.

Town resident Rita Comes, who runs the organization Portola Valley Neighbors United, is feeling discouraged by the promises that have been made over the last few years on finances and the completion of audits.

“In the end of the day, we’re paying the cost of not reviewing the documents and receiving emails with lots of promises,” said Comes during the Town Council meeting.

Town resident Karen Vahtra has been following the town’s finances and analyzing the numbers. After the Finance Committee meeting, she was shocked to find out that the town only had \$1.6 million in general funds after

See FINANCES, page 14

What is it like to win a Nobel Prize?

In anticipation of the 2023 Nobel Prizes, Stanford Report interviewed three of Stanford’s Nobel laureates: Carolyn Bertozzi (chemistry, 2022), William F. Sharpe (economics, 1990), and Carl Wieman (physics, 2001). Each shared reflections on winning the prestigious award, from the emotional impact on their families to the whirlwind celebrations in Stockholm.



They described life-changing moments, including champagne toasts, media attention, and meeting royalty. Winning also brought career opportunities and increased recognition, though it demanded discipline in managing new responsibilities. Their advice includes staying humble and carefully choosing which invitations to accept post-award. **SCAN TO READ THE SPOTLIGHT**



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CANOPY

continued from page 1

thanks to our trees, who are helping us build the foundation for our community.”

The trees planted included some fruit trees, such as a persimmon tree, a lemon tree and an avocado tree. Canopy also opted to plant several african fern pines, an island oak, an Engelmann oak, a western redbud and a strawberry tree.

Trees as a public health intervention

Jean-Paul Renaud, Canopy's executive director, says Canopy hopes that the 100 trees that will be planted over the next two years will begin to help remedy some of the environmental inequities in Belle Haven that have been caused, in part, by disinvestment in the neighborhood's urban canopy.

Belle Haven is the neighborhood in Menlo Park with the least tree coverage. While the city of Menlo Park has an average tree canopy coverage of 28%, Belle Haven's trees only shade about 10% of the neighborhood, according to Canopy. Nearby, Atherton's tree canopy coverage sits at just under 50%, according to an urban canopy mapping tool created by the USDA and Cal Fire.

Canopy sees trees as not just an aesthetic boon to neighborhoods, but as a public health investment. This is especially true in historically under-resourced communities throughout the Peninsula, where trees are often scarce.

Renaud said that trees provide numerous health benefits. Tree coverage provides shade to communities, which can lessen instances of heat-related illness like heat stroke during hot summer days. Trees can also help to improve the air quality near where they are planted.

According to a survey conducted by Menlo Park for the development of its Environmental Justice element, residents of Belle Haven were much more likely to report adverse environmental effects than residents of other neighborhoods in the city.

Fifty-one percent of Belle Haven residents reported experiencing extreme heat indoors compared to 34% of residents in other neighborhoods. Some 34% of Belle Haven residents reported experiencing extreme heat outdoors compared to 20% of residents in other neighborhoods.

The direct health disparities are outsized in Belle Haven as well. Asthma is a huge issue, with 50% of residents claiming that they or their family

members suffer from the condition compared to just 17% of residents in other areas of Menlo Park. Heat stroke is more common in Belle Haven too, with 17% of residents saying that they have experienced the heat-related illness compared to 10% of residents of other areas in the city.

“We have to be like, ‘trees are a big deal,’” said Renaud. “They can't just be taken as a piece of furniture in the background. They're an important part of the solution and an important part of our communities.”

Renaud said that in addition to technological solutions to the climate crisis, like electrified appliances and solar panels, cities need to invest in nature-based solutions like trees to help address climate change.

“Nature has solutions to address climate change on its own,” he said. “Trees can hold water for stormwater capture, they can filter water. ... They can provide shade and cool the air around you. Technology can do all those things, but nature has a role to play as well.”

A community-based approach

On the day of the planting, it wasn't just Canopy's staff members doing the work. Nearly 40 community members, including

some of the preschoolers attending All Five, got their hands dirty as they helped plant the trees.

Renaud said that Canopy likes to have at least four people help plant each tree, so that the community becomes personally invested in its urban canopy.

“We believe that a tree will survive longer, and the community will thrive longer when they have a relationship with one another,” he said. “We believe that coming together and working toward a common cause is another really important benefit that trees give us.”

Canopy wants every Belle Haven resident who wants a tree in their yard to get a tree in their yard from Canopy.

“We will plant it and then care for it for three years,” said Renaud. “If tomorrow 10 more people signed up in Belle Haven and said I want 10 trees, we would be there.”

Renaud said that one of the biggest challenges to growing Belle Haven's urban forest is that there is very little public plantable space left, so Canopy relies on interested residents who want to offer up their yards as homes for new trees.

However, Canopy is also working with the city of Menlo Park to identify areas where new trees can be planted, and to develop an urban forestry master plan.

Menlo Park recently adopted its environmental justice element, a section of the city's

general plan which seeks to address and remedy environmental health disparities within the city. As part of the environmental justice element, the city has committed to developing an urban forestry master plan by March 2028. This master plan will include identifying additional grant opportunities for urban forestry projects within the city, identifying the areas of the city that most need new trees and developing equitable canopy expansion procedures.

“Having an urban forestry master plan for a city like Menlo Park would be a huge policy win,” said Renaud. “It would really be a rallying document for policy makers, for funders, for community leaders and for us to focus on and keep as our North Star.”

Menlo Park aims to create at least 40% canopy coverage for Belle Haven and other areas of the city lacking in tree coverage by 2045. Studies referenced by the city suggest that this is the level of urban canopy that is required to alleviate the urban heat island effect, where areas with heavy development trap heat as pavement and buildings absorb warmth during the day.

“It's hard work, but we have to do it,” said Renaud. “Canopy is committed to working in these communities and continuing to identify funding and provide support.” ■

Email Staff Writer Eleanor Raab at eraab@almanacnews.com.

SamTrans reaches contract agreements with several teamsters bargaining units

By Bay City News Service

The San Mateo County Transit District has reached new contract agreements with several bargaining units that include wage increases and “equity adjustments” over three years for some workers in the SamTrans bus system.

The agreements feature increases of between 18.3% and 21.9% for nearly 60 Teamsters Local 856 employees in six bargaining units representing inspectors, supervisors, facility technicians, maintenance instructors, transit instructors and utility/maintenance supervisors, according to the district, which also provides administrative support for Caltrain and the San Mateo County Transportation Authority.

“Our employees are the backbone of this agency, and their hard work and commitment

to serving the community is what makes SamTrans such an outstanding transit system,” SamTrans CEO April Chan said in a news release Monday, Oct. 14. “This agreement reflects our deep respect and appreciation for their contributions, and we look forward to continuing to work together to deliver safe, reliable, and exceptional service to our riders throughout San Mateo County.”

The transit agency is still in negotiations with Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1574, which represents nearly 400 bus drivers, utility workers, storekeepers, customer service representatives and receptionists.

SamTrans runs 74 bus routes in San Mateo County and parts of San Francisco and Palo Alto.

Teamsters Local 856 representatives didn't immediately respond to requests for comment. ■



VANCE

continued from page 5

Nate Shrager and Ryan K. They held signs that read “Catbois 4 Trump. Immigrants are eating me out” and “F— Trump.”

“I am dismayed at the fact that we’re not able to have a healthy discussion in this area about not just the parties themselves, but about policies that are ongoing,” said Ryan K., who asked to be identified by his last initial.

Norman noted that he is “the only person I found in Redwood City that has a Trump sign in

front of his house and I routinely walk out with all my Trump garb on.”

“What we all need to learn is that we all have freedom of speech and to let one another have their time,” Norman said.

Around 5:30 p.m. supporters began to leave the Pioneer Saloon and moved their rally to the park and ride lot along Woodside Road and Highway 280. They rallied across from the Sheriff’s Office barricade on Lindenbrook Road.

Supporters stood along the busy road cheering and waving flags at bikers and cars.

The rally caused a distraction for one driver who rear ended another car at the nearby traffic light. Luckily, the Sheriff’s Office witnessed the crash and responded to it within seconds, followed by first responders.

Supporters maintained their spirit late into the evening as they waited for Vance’s arrival. After nearly four hours in anticipation, Vance’s motorcade was met by loud cheers from supporters. ■

Email Staff Writer Jennifer Yoshikoshi at jyoshikoshi@almanacnews.com.



Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Trump supporters rally at Woodside’s Pioneer Saloon ahead of Sen. JD Vance’s arrival at a local fundraiser on Oct. 9.

CRIME

continued from page 7

the use of ALPRs could lead to a violation of the Fourth Amendment, which guards against unreasonable searches and seizures and sets warrant requirements.

“Because Flock data records place and time, movement may be deduced, which constitutes a search, which then requires a warrant,” Avalos told the council. “So we should require a warrant for using the system. If that’s not tenable, then the system should not be used. A warrant requirement provides a reasoned check-and-balance that is fundamental to law and governance.”

In voting against the ALPR

expansion, Nash cited privacy and other concerns.

“We still have not seen data that ALPRs reduce residential burglaries or crime in general,” Nash said. “They are an investigative tool. Meanwhile, we have seen the bad guys finding easy ways around these cameras. Second, I continue to worry about residents’ privacy rights and the security of data captured and shared with this technology.”

Police Chief David Norris told this publication in an email that he is committed to a continuous review of the ALPR program “to ensure its usefulness is in line with the city’s investment.”

The city seeks to ensure that the program remains “an objective, useful and fairly applied tool that

balances privacy needs with the safety of our residents and daily visiting population,” Norris also said.

The signing of the agreement with Flock and a meeting to launch the program are expected in the coming weeks, the chief said. “Our goal is to be up and running as soon as practical.”

As for where the ALPRs would be placed, he said, “we will be doing our very best to cover as many ingress and egress points as possible and coordinating with camera locations in our neighboring jurisdictions to eliminate duplication. Exact locations will not be publicly provided though when they are installed they will be plainly visible to the public.”

In other business Tuesday, the

council approved authorizing the city to apply for continued grant funding from the state Department of Education for the Belle Haven Child Development Center.

Menlo Park would become eligible to receive up to \$2.3 million in direct reimbursements

from the state to offset the costs of the center’s operations based on a maximum enrollment of 96 children in fiscal year 2025-26, according to a city staff report. ■

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

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority seeks survey responses for flood risk reduction project

Residents of the San Francisquito Creek Watershed, which includes Atherton, Menlo Park, Portola Valley, Woodside Palo Alto, East Palo Alto and parts of Stanford’s campus are invited to fill out a survey to help guide the San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority as they embark on flood risk reduction projects throughout the watershed.

Learn more about the agency’s Reach 2 flood risk reduction project at sfcjpa.org/reach-2-upstream-project.

The survey will close on Oct. 24.

The SFCJPA board will discuss the results of the survey at its board meeting on Oct. 24. The results of the survey will be shared in both English and Spanish on the SFCJPA website.

Take the survey at tinyurl.com/SFCJPAsurvey.

Menlo Park hosts 9th annual storytelling festival

Throughout late October and early November, Menlo Park will be hosting its 9th annual storytelling festival, featuring diverse storytellers, who weave stories without the help of a book, from all over the Bay Area and beyond.

The city will host five free, family-friendly storytelling events throughout the month-long festival. No registration is required for the in-person events.

The festival kicked off with a performance from Olga Loya, a Latina storyteller, performance artist and teacher, who uses a mix of

Spanish and English to share traditional tales from Latin America, as well as stories from her own life.

The festival will continue with folktales from around the world as told by Eleanor Clement Glass, a volunteer storyteller with the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, on Wednesday, Oct. 23, from 6-7 p.m. at the Menlo Park Library, 800 Alma St. Glass will focus on telling stories from her own Filipino heritage.

On Nov. 8 from 4-5 p.m., The Ohlone Sisters, Carla Marie and Desiree Muñoz, will share storytelling, songs, regalia, language and special relationships from their Ohlone culture. The event will take place at the Belle Haven Library at 100 Terminal Ave.

On Nov. 13 from 6-7 p.m., award-winning storyteller Diane Ferlette, accompanied by Erik Pearson on banjo and guitar, will perform “Wickety Whack, Brer Rabbit is Back,” at the Belle Haven Library. Ferlette’s programs emphasize the history, struggles and triumphs of the African American experience. Wickety Whack, Brer Rabbit is Back has received a Grammy nomination, and one the Children’s Music Web Award and the Storytelling World Winner Award.

The festival will close with a Zoom event featuring storytellers from around the world on Nov. 22 from 5-7 p.m. Over the two-hour online event, attendees will hear stories from storytellers all around the United States, Singapore, South Korea and Australia. Register for the Zoom event at tinyurl.com/menloparkstoryfest.

—Eleanor Raab

PALO ALTANS FOR SENSIBLE ZONING (PASZ) PROUDLY ENDORSES

LYDIA KOU

FOR STATE ASSEMBLY DISTRICT 23

PASZ believes that the Assembly District’s constituents deserve a representative who will speak for the issues they are concerned about. Incumbents do not always do that.

Assembly Member Marc Berman voted for AB 1893, which “improved the efficacy of the so-called ‘builder’s remedy’”, which remedy “limits the ability of local governments to restrict the development of new affordable and mixed income housing development projects”. Sounds good? Not really, as this is what Mr. Berman’s vote may soon bring to Menlo Park: this “builder’s remedy” project, with others being proposed elsewhere.



Lydia Kou will continue to speak out against “builder’s remedy” projects that are out-of-scale with adjacent residential neighborhoods, while backing the creation of affordable housing that meets the needs of teachers, nurses, police, and other service workers.

That is why PASZ recommends that you vote for Lydia Kou for State Assembly District 23.

“It is time to shake up Sacramento.”

Vote for THE candidate who will do that.

VOTE FOR STATE ASSEMBLY DISTRICT 23 CANDIDATE

LYDIA KOU

Lydia has also been endorsed by the Daily Post and the Sierra Club.



Political Advertisement paid for by Palo Altans for Sensible Zoning

FPPC #1359196 <https://sensiblezoning.org>

This advertisement was not authorized by a candidate or a committee controlled by a candidate.



Photos by Lisa Moreno

Clockwise from top left: Jacinta Seiuli serves poke nachos at the South Pacific Food Fest on Oct. 12; Customers line up at Saia's spot; Tuk Eats employees prepare an order for customers.

FOOD FEST

continued from page 5

"It's inspiring to be around so many creators and I believe everyone is one at heart."

She aims to support Fijian talent through her business, scouting out artisans in Fiji and helping them sell their creations in California.

Ranadinivula started the company only a year ago but has balanced it with attending college and working full time. It's her dream to focus specifically on running the business, and markets like this one are integral to sales and marketing.

Jacinta Seiuli and her husband, who everyone calls "Chef T," she said, operated Sacramento-based Fresh off Da Boat, a Pacific Islander-fusion restaurant with dishes like Poke nachos and Taro fries.

It's not easy to attend events, pack up their business and cook dishes on the fly, but the market was important to them.

"It's beautiful seeing Pacific Island people come together and show what we can bring to the table," Seiuli said.

While the event only started last year, organizers Hurrell and Taaga hope to continue, expand and find sponsors.

"It still hasn't set in," Hurrell said on Oct. 13. "There's nothing else like this." ■

Email Staff Writer Lisa Moreno at lmoreno@almanacnews.com.



FINANCES

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former Town Manager Sharif Etman presented in April that the projected balance would be at over \$5 million.

"We need a detailed spreadsheet based analysis of our

financials both for the past years and for budgeting purposes, and enforceable policies and procedures that ensure this never happens again," Vahtra said.

Three forms of revenue

The Finance Committee has come forward with three ways the town can increase revenue: a 2% user utility tax, a parcel tax or to become a charter city. All options require the council to place a ballot measure during an election and require voter approval to take effect.

The UUT is the only avenue that would require the town to declare a fiscal emergency and will not increase taxes but temporarily redirect 2% of open space funds to the general fund. This tax measure can be placed on a ballot as soon as March 4,

2025 and will bring in revenue as soon as it is certified after the election. The town will need to file with the county by Dec. 6 if it wants to pursue the UUT and it would need a majority of voter approval to pass.

The parcel tax will "impose a parcel tax at a fixed rate per parcel for a fixed duration," and can also be placed on the ballot for March 4, 2025. This tax will require a two-thirds majority to pass and increased revenue will come in around December 2025. This will not require a declaration of a fiscal emergency.

For the town to become a charter city, the measure must be included in a statewide general election. The next is in November 2026. Becoming a charter city would allow the town to gain revenue through a real estate

transfer tax. If a measure were to pass in the 2026 election with a majority vote, revenue would be seen in January 2027.

Council member Mary Hufty has been a supporter of exploring becoming a charter city since her first campaign in 2020. In her weekly newsletter she states that she will continue to research charter cities and the benefits and risks of becoming one.

How residents are affected

The financial crisis has the potential to impact local residents in facilities management, approval of building permits and lack of town services.

"If revenue doesn't keep pace with recurring costs, we will have to cut services," said McFarlane, who adds that approvals on building permits might take

longer due to the lack of staff.

Cardinal expects that the financial crisis will also affect the maintenance of public works facilities and projects.

"There's a bunch of culverts in town that are troublesome that the town needs to step up to and we're not gonna have the money to fix some of those," said Cardinal.

Upcoming meeting

The Finance Committee is still evaluating the town's finances and held a meeting on Oct. 15 to discuss further details.

If the Town Council were to declare a fiscal emergency, Mayor Wernikoff estimates that it would occur during the regular meeting on Nov. 13. ■

Email Staff Writer Jennifer Yoshikoshi at jyoshikoshi@almanacnews.com.

LEHUA GREENMAN



"A hero is someone who is willing to help others in his or her best capacity."

650.245.1845 COMPASS

Sparks fly when Silicon Valley congressional candidates face off

By Brandon Pho /
San Jose Spotlight

Former San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo and California Assemblymember Evan Low traded razor-sharp rebukes of each others' records on climate, public safety and housing in a tense one-hour debate for Silicon Valley's hottest congressional race.

The candidates for Congressional District 16 were initially all smiles at NBC Bay Area's San Jose studio on Friday. But the gloves came off when moderators asked Liccardo and Low if they were running ethical campaigns amid a highly contentious recount, endorsement jockeying and dueling election transparency complaints.

Both maintained their congressional bids have been ethical. Liccardo — who is accused of and has denied secretly coordinating the recount following the March primary — said the lack of an automatic recount provision in state election law opened the door for political theater.

"We had Evan Low and his attorneys attempting to stop a recount twice," Liccardo said. "(Low) admitted in a public forum on June 14 in Los Altos that he did it because he thought he might lose if he had a full recount. Let's make sure we count every vote. It should be funded by the Registrar (of Voters), and in this



Camille Cohen (pool photo)

Former San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo and Assemblymember Evan Low debate at the NBC offices in San Jose, California on Oct. 11.

case, it couldn't because of legal issues."

Low said his campaign abides "by the most ethical standards" and turned his response into an attack on Liccardo's public safety record.

"When he was mayor of San Jose on the City Council, he implemented a plan that dismantled public employees and public safety," Low said. "In fact, 500 police officers left because he instituted his public safety plan. As a result, he had to declare a state of emergency because of rising crime rates."

The state of emergency was about a police staffing shortage. As a councilmember, Liccardo in 2012 pushed for voter-approved Measure B, which aimed to reduce the city's growing pension

debt. But it drastically cut benefits and pensions for the city's police and firefighters.

Liccardo responded that he was being "smart on crime" and insisted the San Jose Police Department added 200 officers during his time leading the city. He criticized Low for being too close with police unions and opposing laws such as Senate Bill 1421, which in 2018 allowed more disclosure of police misconduct, sexual assault and excessive use of force records.

Moderators asked both candidates for their stances on Proposition 36, a statewide ballot measure that if approved by voters would ramp up criminal punishment for retail theft and drug crimes. Liccardo said he supports it. Low said he did not.

water toy from K.C. and that he physically pushed the student. The court found that the allegations are enough to "infer that Emmi touched K.C. in a harmful or offensive manner with the intent to do so" charging him with assault and battery.

Emmi continues to face additional charges for intentional infliction of emotional distress after continuing to escalate the situation with K.C. while aware of his intellectual disability. The ruling states that Emmi's conduct was outrageous and that "the allegations plausibly suggest that Emmi at least recklessly disregarded a probability of causing emotional distress."

The court also found that he violated K.C.'s rights to be protected from harm under the Bane Act when he physically blocked and pushed into him.

Negligence claims against Muys were granted by the court stating his inability to uphold his duty and responsibility to care for the school's students on campus as an administrator.

"On a motion to dismiss, these allegations plausibly support that Muys failed to exercise reasonable care under the circumstances and

that this failure caused harm to K.C.," writes the court order.

Burris hopes that the school district will "get a profound lesson from [the lawsuit]" and hopes that the district will learn to treat special needs children in accordance with what they need.

"I think kids of color who have special needs problems should be treated like all kids with special needs," he added.

The court is allowing K.C. 21 days to file an amended complaint correcting any deficiencies in the claims. According to lead investigator Dan Molieri, K.C.'s attorneys are in the process of amending the Ralph Act claim, the only item dismissed by the judge.

The district has not responded to this news organization on the judge's ruling.

A case management conference is scheduled for Nov. 13 at 10 a.m. via videoconference. ■

"I refuse to go back to the era of mass incarceration," Low said.

Liccardo said arrest does not mean incarceration.

"It's interesting that Evan Low made mention of incarceration, because his support for private prisons has been remarkable," Liccardo said.

The candidates faced questions on their plans to build affordable housing. Liccardo said he supported an expanded tax credit program to transform vacant office buildings and retail into housing. He also called for exempting older homes from capital gains taxes to incentivize homeowners to sell.

"We have a fundamental supply problem and we need to reduce the cost and price by producing more housing," Liccardo said.

Low again turned his response to the question into an attack on Liccardo's record — holding the former mayor responsible for increased homelessness and no measurable results on housing. Liccardo countered that a state audit this year found California lawmakers failed to account for billions in homelessness program spending.

Low promised to partner on housing with presidential candidate Kamala Harris if she's elected.

"In Congress, I will partner on the Democratic Party ticket along with Kamala Harris in implementing 3 million new homes to

be built, including \$25,000 tax credits for first-time homebuyers," Low said. Moderators also asked the candidates about the climate crisis. Liccardo took aim at Low's hefty support from oil and gas companies, as well as PG&E. Low hit back, calling out Liccardo's support from Texas philanthropists who worked in the oil business.

Liccardo called for federally-backed financing to help homeowners weather proof their homes. One example he drew was helping people in wildfire-prone areas to replace wood shingle roofs and install ceiling sprinklers.

His efforts to explore community choice energy utilities and combat PG&E have earned him broad support among climate activists.

"The Sierra Club has endorsed me. The League of Conservation Voters has endorsed me," Liccardo said. "Every single environmental organization has in this race endorsed me."

Low drew on his record.

"In the Legislature I've led efforts making sure that in California we have zero emission vehicles by 2035, a clean electric grid by 2045," Low said. "In fact I just left the special session in the California state Legislature holding oil companies accountable for price gouging, so I'm deeply committed."

The election is Nov. 5. ■

LAWSUIT

continued from page 5

claim against Muys were denied.

The district's motion to dismiss K.C.'s request for punitive damages from Emmi and Muys was denied. Punitive damages would award K.C. further payment from the defendants in addition to compensation. The court ruling states that "it is premature to conclude that K.C. is not entitled to such a reward."

The only motion of dismissal that was granted to the district was the Ralph Act claims against Emmi. The Ralph Act is a law that prohibits hate crimes motivated by bias. The ruling found that there is not enough evidence suggesting Emmi's alleged actions were driven by his bias against disabled children.

"At the heart of it all was this young man who had disability problems that the school district was aware of and they treated him in a harsh, disrespectful manner that was unbecoming," said Burris. "That's the part that's most disturbing to me is that they didn't respect him as a human being."

The lawsuit alleges that Emmi forcefully grabbed a confiscated

VOTING INFORMATION

Voting is now open for the 2024 election. Early in-person voting is now open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays at the San Mateo Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder office at 555 County Center in Redwood City and the Registration & Elections Division office at 40 Tower Road in San Mateo. Voting will be open to voters on the following weekend days: Oct. 26 to 27, and Nov. 2 to 3. Ballots returned by mail must be postmarked on or before Election Day and must be received no later than seven days after Election Day. No postage is required. Ballots that are returned in-person must be received by 8 p.m. on Election Day to any authorized drop off location in San Mateo County.

Official ballot drop box sites on the Midpeninsula:

Menlo College
1000 El Camino Real (Atherton)

Woodside Town Hall
2955 Woodside Road
(Woodside)

Town Center
765 Portola Road (Portola Valley)

Boys & Girls Club
401 Pierce Road (Menlo Park)

City of Menlo Park
701 Laurel Street (Menlo Park)

Don't forget to sign your ballot envelope. All voting information is available at tinyurl.com/votecentersmc.

★ ★ ★
2024
ELECTION
GUIDE

Get informed with our **2024 Election Guide** — your one-stop shop for all things election. Learn more about the candidates and ballot propositions, watch our candidate forums, and on race night see up-to-the-minute race night results.



EXPLORE THE ELECTION GUIDE AT
AlmanacNews.com/election/

Portola Valley author shares story about guinea pigs and the power of love

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Portola Valley resident Rochelle Perucca celebrated her children's book "Feather Finds Love" at a launch party at The Sequoias Portola Valley on Oct. 6. Perucca and her guinea pig Silly were joined by children, friends and Sequoias residents in her launch of the book.

"Feather Finds Love" is a tale of a blind baby guinea pig named Feather who gets adopted by a blind girl named Abby as the two find each other through their senses. Perucca's book highlights the power of love between guinea pigs and humans.

"It's about sharing love," said Perucca. "Guinea pigs are easily frightened. They require a lot of love to overcome the fear response."

At 81 years old, Perucca has experienced life as a park ranger at Rocky Mountain National Park, a college professor at the College of San Mateo and Columbia College in Sonora, a therapist, a sign language instructor and now a children's book author.

Perucca has been a guinea pig owner for 40 years and is known as "guinea pigs grandma."



Left: Rochelle Perucca with her book "Feather Finds Love" and her guinea pig Silly at her book launch party on Oct. 6. Right: Silly, Rochelle Perucca's guinea pig.



Photos by Jennifer Yoshikoshi.

As a small pet, guinea pigs were a perfect companion for Perucca who was wheelchair bound for seven years while recovering from a rock climbing accident. Over years of caring for guinea pigs, she began to understand "their nervous system and how they work on a very intimate level," Perucca said during her launch party.

Looking to start a different career, she looked at her guinea pig Feather and was inspired to write a book about something

she loved. Feather died prior to the publication of her book. For the story, Perucca brought in her experience volunteering in Berkeley with the deaf and blind community when she was in her early 20s.

"The book was a real labor of love," said Perucca.

"Feather Finds Love" took seven years to complete. She worked with Indonesian illustrator Koen Setyawan for three years during the COVID-19 pandemic to finish the project. Perucca

said she also got a lot of help from The Sequoias community.

The book was published in December 2023 and during this time Perucca was diagnosed with a 4-inch mass in her pancreas and became ill. Now she's feeling better and is able to celebrate the launch of her book.

During the launch party, she said her book was endorsed by Alice Turner, Director of Community and Corporate Relations of the Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Perucca announced she will be donating 20% of proceeds from book sales to the organization.

"If we spend time and give love, the reward is amazing," Perucca said. She hopes to do presentations at bookstores to continue to share the message about love.

Learn more about Perucca and her book at rochelleperucca.com. ■

Email Staff Writer Jennifer Yoshikoshi at [jyoshikoshi@almanacnews.com](mailto: jyoshikoshi@almanacnews.com).

Summer institute brings nanoscience to teachers

The Nanoscience Summer Institute for Middle School Teachers (NanoSIMST), hosted by nano@stanford, provides hands-on professional development to middle school educators, equipping them to teach nanoscience in the classroom. Teachers participate in experiments, facility tours, and talks with scientists to learn about science at the molecular level.



The program also emphasizes outreach to Title I schools, aiming to inspire students from low-income backgrounds to see themselves as future scientists. The institute connects teachers with cutting-edge research to help foster interest in STEM careers, and highlights the importance of diverse perspectives in science education. **SCAN TO READ THE SPOTLIGHT**



PRESENTED BY  **Stanford University**

Teachers are still leaving, but these aspiring educators are excited to join the profession

By Clara Brownstein / EdSource

Amid a statewide teacher shortage, talk of teachers leaving the profession or simply not going into it in the first place is widespread. In a 2022 UCLA study, 1 in 5 California teachers said they would probably or definitely leave the profession in the next three years because of burnout, low pay and student apathy and misbehavior.

But what about the teachers who are joining the profession? What motivates Gen Z students to go into teaching today, when it's seemingly less lucrative and less attractive than ever?

One reason students like Katherine Osajima Pope — a recent University of California, Santa Cruz graduate who is earning her master's degree and teaching credential at Stanford University — decide to become teachers is to effect change. Osajima Pope wants to have a positive impact on her students, and, by extension, her community, “even if that's one person at a time, or one classroom at a time.”

Chloe Decker, a rising senior at UC Berkeley, has noticed an increase in students who approach teaching from an advocacy perspective. As a peer adviser in UC Berkeley's CalTeach program, through which undergraduates can gain teaching experience and even get their credentials, Decker regularly meets with students considering the teaching profession.

“I have seen so many inspired students excited for student advocacy. They want to change people's lives, they want to be there for the kids, they want to be one person of influence that can change minds as to how they view education,” Decker said.

CalTeach and other undergraduate and graduate credential programs place a heavy emphasis on the role of teaching in equity and social justice. One of the required courses for CalTeach's program focuses on equity in urban schools, and the program lists increasing “access, equity, and inclusion for STEM learning” as one of its core principles. Osajima Pope said she was “pleasantly surprised” by Stanford's commitment to educating its students on anti-racism and equity.

Decker, who aims to become

a teacher and then a school social worker, said she has seen a change in “what school actually means.” Beyond “just emphasizing academic requirements,” schools now see themselves as a support and social system for kids — and Decker and many of her peers are excited to engage in this aspect of the job.

“It's just deeper than having them learn what one plus one is,” she said.

Excited by the idea that educators can do more than teach facts and figures, many future teachers plan to bring their own educational experiences into the classroom, while parting ways with some aspects of traditional pedagogy.

Osajima Pope has been working with children for years, volunteering at schools and libraries since she was a child. She called her educational experience growing up in Oakland “transformative,” and said she wants to go back as an ethnic studies teacher to “teach to the same person that (she) was.”

Susana Espinoza said her high school Spanish teacher exposed her to the world of Chicano/Latino studies, and she wants to similarly broaden students' horizons. Espinoza, who is currently studying at UC Berkeley, remembers that Spanish class as the first time she saw herself reflected in the classroom, or in “any type of story that was told.”

Espinoza hopes to be “that one stepping stone” that allows students to achieve

their dreams, as her teacher did for her.

While equity and access to education are powerful motivators, some future teachers are just as excited by the potential of a job that allows for creative expression and deep interpersonal connections. For Lindsay Gonor, a recent Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo graduate who is now earning a teaching credential there, it was working at a theater camp through her teen years that led her to education. Gonor said the experience contrasted with what she heard from her parents about their jobs, and specifically her father, who was a lawyer.

“I would ask (my dad) how work was, and he'd be like, ‘They don't call it going to fun.’ And I was like, well, that's not what I want to do. I work at the theater camp, and work is fun,” Gonor said.

These Gen Z-ers are not ignorant of the challenges that come with teaching. Decker said that each time CalTeach hosts a teacher panel, at least one speaker discourages the students from joining the profession — citing the common problems of low pay and long hours.

Gonor even acknowledged that her credential program is not a good “bang for your buck.” However, Gonor said, “The people that want to be teachers want to be teachers.”

Osajima Pope said she's confronted with the realities of the job practically every time she tells someone her intended field, and she's met with

resistance. But for her, a part of the desire to teach is intrinsic, and possibly inexplicable.

“For me, my job isn't about the money I make, it's about what I feel passionate about,” Osajima Pope said. “It's definitely hard to explain choosing happiness over money just because those two are equated so frequently, but I guess it

was just (that) there's literally nothing else I could see myself doing. Like, absolutely nothing else.” ■

Clara Brownstein is a third-year student studying English, Spanish and journalism at UC Berkeley, and a member of EdSource's California Student Journalism Corps.

Public Notices

BRAUSA CLEANING SERVICE
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-298576

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:

1.) BRAUSA CLEANING SERVICE, located at 820 Antoinette Lane Apt D, South San Francisco, CA 94080.

Registered owner(s):
DIOGO MIRANDA PEREIRA

820 Antoinette Lane Apt D
South San Francisco, CA 94080

This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has not yet begun 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 20, 2024.

(ALM Sep 27, Oct 4, 11 and 18, 2024)

OCEAN ELEMENT REAL ESTATE
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-298484

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:

1.) OCEAN ELEMENT REAL ESTATE, located at 40 Stone Pine Rd, Ste H, Half Moon Bay, CA 94019.

Registered owner(s):
OCEAN BLUE ELEMENT GROUP, LLC
40 Stone Pine Rd, Ste H
Half Moon Bay, CA 94019

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 09/06/2024.

This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on September 10, 2024.

(ALM Sep 27, Oct 4, 11 and 18, 2024)

CLEAN EXPERT SERVICES
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M298525

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:

1.) CLEAN EXPERT SERVICES, located at 7800 El Camino Real, APT 3132, Colma, CA 94014.

Registered owner(s):

MIGUEL RUIZ
7800 El Camino Real, APT 3132
Colma, CA 94014

This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has not yet begun 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 16, 2024.

(ALM Sep 27, Oct 4, 11 and 18, 2024)

AUTO MATCH FRIEND
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-298656

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:

1.) AUTO MATCH FRIEND, located at 1036 Walnut Street, San Carlos, CA 94070.

Registered owner(s):

MARK STEPHEN LUBECK
1036 Walnut Street
San Carlos, CA 94070

This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has not yet begun 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 01, 2024.

(ALM Oct 11, 18, 25 and Nov 1, 2024)

The Almanac is adjudicated to publish in San Mateo County.

- Fictitious Business Name
- Abandonment of Fictitious Business Name
- Name Change
- Partnership Withdrawal or Dissolution
- Petition to Administer Estate - Probate Hearing
- Notice of Bulk Sale
- Legal Summons
- Trustee Sale

The deadline is Sunday at 11:59 pm.
Visit [AlmanacNews.com/legal_notices/](https://almanacnews.com/legal_notices/)
For assistance email LegalNotices@AlmanacNews.com.

OBITUARIES

Local residents who died recently include:

John Peter Schaefer, 91, who graduated from Stanford University in 1954 and served in the Army as a pharmacist's assistant in occupied Germany and was a devoted husband, avid backpacker, fly fisherman, reader, gardener, and traveler,

Michael A. McCabe, 83, Palo Alto, who became a reporter and worked for newspapers, such as the Minneapolis Star and the Chicago Tribune, and who covered stories about drug trafficking, major earthquakes and conflicts between developers and environmentalists.

Claude Jean Caubert, 88, Woodside, who was an avid snow skier, water skier, tennis player, golfer, fisherman, and duck hunter. He attended Oakland High School and Menlo College, where he received a degree in business.

Giselle Anschuetz McKellar, 87, Atherton, who loved to travel and whose favorite place in her life was her beloved Villa d'Este on Lago di Como in the Italian lakes north of Milan and a lively spirit and love for life that mirrored her vibrant red hair and her impressive collection of wide-brimmed hats for any occasion.

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

Employment

The Almanac offers
employment advertising.

The deadline is Sunday at 11:59 pm.

Visit [AlmanacNews.com/employment_ads/](https://almanacnews.com/employment_ads/).

For assistance email LegalNotices@AlmanacNews.com.

The case for properly rehabilitating site toxic waste site in EPA

By Youth United for
Community Action

GUEST OPINION

It has been 17 years since Romac Environmental Technologies closed its doors for business in East Palo Alto, only after Youth United for Community Action, YUCA, mounted a 10+ year long campaign to *Shut Romac Down!* Today, the former Romac site sits mostly empty and, unfortunately, still contaminated by the chemical toxins that were once pumped into our water, soil and air without any accountability or regard for life in East Palo Alto.

East Palo Alto is a low-income community that once had green infrastructure, urban agriculture, diversity, and also it has a history of continuous displacement and gentrification.

Along Bay Road, within the area currently outlined as our Ravenswood Business District, RBD, that was adopted in 2013, you can see that improvements have been made to the road and sidewalk but community members who we've spoken to have many unanswered questions and concerns about what

is supposed to happen with this last open stretch of land in East Palo Alto.

After YUCA had the landmark victory of shutting down this toxic waste facility in 2007, our work transformed into helping inform the city planning process to decide what would be built in this area in the future. Our priority was to ensure that there would never be another facility perpetuating environmental racism in our town and that what is built there in the future truly serves the people of East Palo Alto. Working closely with the community coalition Envision-Transform-Build East Palo Alto, ETB-EPA, a diversity of ordinary residents, renters, youth, elders, faith-based groups, and more, pushed the city of EPA to produce. Out of that process, the Ravenswood Business District Specific Plan was born. Our community continues to struggle with severe gentrification, the plan was reopened by the City Council for revision in 2018 due to pressure from developers who want to build office space in this

area. In our opinion, it is critical that ordinary residents, especially those of us who are not usually at the decision-making table, understand what is happening in the RBD area, ask hard questions about impacts to our community, and make our voice heard for what kind of things we want to see happen there.

Between the months of March and June of 2022, YUCA took it upon themselves to go out into the community and gather data around the RBD.

EPA has often struggled in the past with developers trying to build too much office space which has been proven that does not always benefit the community. For example, there have been instances in the past when developers want to bring in jobs that require degrees which the majority of EPA residents don't have. The majority of jobs the RBD is offering right now are for office space YUCA wants to ensure that the jobs being offered are targeted for the community. This is why youth are so empowered to make sure what is being proposed is beneficial. After collecting and sorting the data from

the surveys taken, the top three most wanted community benefits were affordable housing, jobs and neighborhood retail.

Even though the Specific Plan can bring prosperity, it started to generate some major concerns.

In January 2024 YUCA youth interviewed community members via email and asked them what their concerns were and Edwin Magaña said, "Ultimately my biggest fear is that the profits that these companies stand to earn from this project will not be seen by this community but the one they put on top of us. Right now it just looks like an attempt to put a Band Aid on a severe wound that they are planning to cause." This shows that community members are aware of the damage this plan may cause.

Another concern that was brought up was by Laura Rubio and she said, "My concern is that these developments will displace existing families in EPA." Displacement has been a huge issue that's been happening in EPA for years, so residents want to make sure that won't be the case for the RBD Specific Plan.

With groundwater on the rise,

flooding is starting to become more of a risk to residents. ROMIC was a toxic waste facility that was successfully shut down but the toxic chemicals are still left under the ground. YUCA continues to push ROMIC and make sure that the remediation process is still going smoothly. Although, it still isn't known how long it may take for the soil to become nontoxic. The RBD plan can seem very complicated but at the end of the day all we want to see is an equitable and safe development that will benefit our community.

EPA has changed slowly but surely every year, there are a lot of outside proposals for the RBD Specific Plan that does not benefit the community at all. ■

YUCA is a grassroots community organization created, led, and run by young people of color, majority from low-income communities, provides a safe space for young people to empower ourselves and work on environmental and social justice issues to establish positive systemic change through grassroots community organizing.

LETTERS

Our readers write

No on Measure U

Government debt is crushing our economy. The federal government alone now exceeds 100% of GDP. There is no way this will ever be paid back without levels of inflation that none of us have experienced in our lifetimes.

Then on top of that the state, cities, and school districts are piling on bonds that will have to be paid back by the same taxpayers! 22 tax increases in San Mateo on Nov. 5!

The District wants to purchase "Modern Technology" with a 30-year loan. But most "technology" is obsolete in 5-6 years, while enrollment is DECLINING significantly: down to 2,584 students.

Would you buy a computer via a 30-year loan? Nuts, right?

But that's exactly what the District is doing (to you).

Stop bad fiscal policy, vote NO.

This bond equals \$47,832 per student and 30+ years of interest expenses at rates up to 12%

Yikes!!!

Will this \$123.6 million bond debt be spent to hire or train great teachers to improve student academics?

Answer: NO, that's not legally permitted.

Look at the latest academic performance:

2022-23 school year results: 20.47% below grade level for English.

2022-23 school year results: 22.11% below grade level for math.

The district rewarded students, parents, and taxpayers for the passage of the 2017 parcel tax (\$360) with the above failures in English and math!!!

The district rewarded teachers for this poor performance by increasing the average salary of \$119,736 in 2020-21 to \$132,501 (2022-23) plus benefits.

Source: California Department of Education Data Partnership — ed-data.org

Should you, the voters, reward the district for below grade level scores in English and math and poor fiscal policies?

If not, we encourage you to vote NO on Measure U.

If you reward failure, you will get more failure!

Reject failure — Vote No on U.

Mark Hinkle,

Silicon Valley Taxpayers Association

YES on U - Menlo Park Schools Need to Modernize Now

The Menlo Park City School District is an exceptional community asset, but the campuses need updating. Our schools consistently deliver high-quality public education, yet the structures do not meet the demands of today's environmental and social realities. We're talking earthquake safety, climate change, and gun violence.

Earthquake Safety: Earthquakes are nothing new, but engineering standards and building materials have advanced since Lower Laurel Elementary was constructed 65 years ago. In the intervening years, we've used stopgap measures to keep them up to code. Measure U will rebuild the older classrooms making them stronger and less expensive to maintain in the future.

Climate Change: 94% of Encinal, Laurel, Oak Knoll and

Hillview's classrooms don't have air conditioning. Classrooms, especially those on second floors, are even hotter and stuffier than the temperature outside. On hot and smoky days — which are more frequent than ever before — students struggle to concentrate. We wouldn't ask adults to work in offices without A/C — but that's exactly what our teachers do. Measure U will add new electric heating and air conditioning to all classrooms.

Gun Violence: After every tragic school shooting in this country, our board and administration receive letters and calls urging us to improve campus security, and we must. It is our responsibility to keep our kids safe. Measure U will install central locking systems and improve emergency communications.

None of this work is frivolous. None of this is icing on the cake. They're critical investments so our students and teachers can focus on learning.

The world has changed and we need to change with it. General obligation bonds are the only way that public schools can fund large-scale facilities projects.

On behalf of the students,

teachers, and the community, please vote Yes on Measure U for safe schools for our children.

Francesca Segrè, Menlo Park City School District board president and Katherine Bicer, Chair, Committee for MPCSD Student Safety, Yes on U

What's on your mind?

From City Hall politics and the schools to transportation and other pressing issues, The Almanac aims to keep readers informed about their community. But we also want to hear from you.

Tell us what's on your mind by sending your letters to letters@AlmanacNews.com. Or snail-mail them to: The Almanac, 2345 Yale Street, Palo Alto, CA 94306.

Letters should be no longer than 300 words.

Questions? Email editor@AlmanacNews.com, or call 650-223-6529.

Artscene

PEOPLE AND PERFORMANCES IN ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

HAUNTED HAPPENINGS

Get ready for a spirited Halloween with our guide to Peninsula festivities

By Julia Brown, Karla Kane and Heather Zimmerman

There are two types of people when it comes to Halloween: those who lean into the spooky and scary side of the holiday, and those who favor the fun frivolity over frightening festivities.

Whichever side you find yourself on, there's no shortage of ways to mark Halloween on the Peninsula, including lots of events in the leadup to Oct. 31. From "Nightfall at Filoli" and "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" to live music, parties and a trove of trick-of-treating opportunities for kids, here's how to celebrate Halloween with traditions new and old.

PARTIES AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Nightfall at Filoli

The Filoli estate's atmospheric after-dark Halloween experience includes a candlelit walk through the historic house, a meadow adorned with flickering jack-o-lanterns, games, photo opps, and seasonal food and drink. *Wednesdays-Sundays through Nov. 3, 5:30-9 p.m. at Filoli, 86 Cañada Road, Woodside, \$28-\$41; filoli.org/halloween.*

Stanford Theatre

The theater's fall movie schedule includes classic horror films and thrillers: "Isle of the Dead" and "The Spiral Staircase" (Oct. 17-18); "The Curse of the Cat People" and "The Night of the Hunter" (Oct. 24-25); "I Walked With a Zombie" and "Ministry of Fear" (Oct. 31-Nov. 1). *Showtimes vary. Stanford Theatre, 221 University Ave., Palo Alto. Tickets are \$5-\$7. stanfordtheatre.org.*

Barks and Boos!

Springline, in collaboration with Pets in Need, hosts this event with spooky tunes spun by a DJ, a runway show costume contest, plus food from Chef Gilly's and brews and wine from Barebottle Brewery. *Oct. 18, 5-8 p.m., at Springline, 1300 El Camino Real, Menlo Park, free. tinyurl.com/SpringlineBarksBoos.*



Courtesy Igor Porton

The Half Moon Bay Pumpkin Festival celebrates all things autumn with displays of intricately carved gourds, a giant pumpkin weigh off, a Great Pumpkin Parade and more.

Redwood City's Halloween events

Redwood City is offering a number of Halloween events, including the annual Halloween Spooktacular party, featuring carnival games, photo opps, crafts and prizes (for kids up to age 10); the Thrill-O-Ween Kids Night Out, which includes a pizza dinner and a special dessert (for ages 5-10); a tour of the (possibly haunted?) historic Union Cemetery, where visitors can learn about some "unusual" deaths; and a haunted house Lego workshop (for ages 5-10).

Halloween Spooktacular takes place Oct. 19, noon-3 p.m. at Red Morton Community Center, 1120 Roosevelt Ave., Redwood City; \$10.

Thrill-O-Ween Kids Night Out takes place Oct. 25, 6-9 p.m., at Red Morton Community Center, 1120 Roosevelt Ave., Redwood City; \$33.

Halloween tour of Union Cemetery takes place Oct. 26, 10-11:30 a.m. and 1-2:30 p.m., 316 Woodside Road, Redwood City; free.

Lego workshop takes place Nov. 1, 9 a.m. to noon, at Red Morton Community Center, 1120 Roosevelt Ave., Redwood City; \$65.

Information on all events can be found at redwoodcity.org/residents/redwood-city-events/halloween-hub.

Scare Faire and Costume Swap

Bring old Halloween costumes for children or adults in good condition to trade with others at this event hosted by Transition Palo Alto. Stick around for the Scare Faire, a Halloween twist on the group's Share Faire, held in partnership with Gunn High School students, in which participants can learn a new skill, find something in need of a home and meet neighbors.

Oct. 19, 1-3 p.m., at Museum of American Heritage, 351 Homer Ave., Palo Alto. transitionpaloalto.org.

BraveMaker Halloween Party

Peninsula arts nonprofit BraveMaker hosts its annual costume party and fundraiser, with a costume contest, film screenings and a DJ.

Oct. 26, 7-11 p.m., in Redwood City; \$28.52-\$33.85 in advance/\$44.52 at the door. tinyurl.com/BraveMakerHalloween.

Club Fox Halloween Bash and Halloween Blues Jam

The club's Halloween Bash on Oct. 26 features a costume party with band Pop Fiction playing favorites from the '70s through the 2000s. On Oct. 30, the club hosts a Halloween-themed blues jam with the Daniel Castro Band. **Halloween Bash Oct. 26, 9-11 p.m., \$18.78 in advance/\$24.13 at the door; Halloween blues jam Oct. 30, 6 p.m., \$13.38, both at Club Fox, 2209 Broadway, Redwood City. clubfoxrwc.com.**

Dance Through the Decades

Sound Union hosts a Halloween party (21+) with live music, featuring The Heady Vedders, playing '90s rock, and Smokin' Slice of Mojo, playing dance music of the 1960s and 70s. Guests are encouraged to dress up as their favorite musical act from the 1960s-90s. **Oct. 26, 7-10 p.m., Sound Union, 2625 Broadway St., Redwood City; \$17.37; tinyurl.com/DecadesRWC.**

Trick or Trot

This annual run on the San Francisco Bay Trail offers 5K, 10K and half-marathon options, and runners can enjoy some

Halloween candy at the finish line.

Oct. 26, 7:30 a.m., at San Francisco Bay Trail, San Mateo. Tickets start at \$41.32. bit.ly/TrickOrTrotSF

Zohar Dance Company Open Mic and Party

The party kicks off with dancer Kayvon Kordestani teaching guests a ghoulish dance number. The festivities include open mic performances, a costume contest and beverages and snacks. Open mic limited to first 12 participants to sign up; accompanist provided. **Oct. 26, 7 p.m., at Zohar Dance Company, 4000 Middlefield Road Building L, Room 4, Palo Alto; \$29.58. tinyurl.com/ZoharOpenMic.**

Halloween Walk at Hawthorns

Volunteers from Grassroots Ecology lead a casual walk around the Hawthorns Area of the Windy Hill preserve that highlights the various Halloween-themed creatures that live in the area. **Nov. 3, 1:30-4 p.m., at the Hawthorns Area at Windy Hill Open Space Preserve, 4420 Alpine Road, Portola Valley. Free admission. tinyurl.com/HawthornsHalloween.**

FAMILY-FRIENDLY EVENTS

Haunted Hangar at Hiller Aviation

Hiller Aviation Museum's general admission includes access to its decorated haunted hangar display. Other special activities include a carnival with the chance to paint a plane and helicopter pumpkin drops. **Daily Oct. 19-31, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. (carnival Oct. 19-20, 10 a.m.-noon and helicopter pumpkin drop Oct. 26 and 27, noon), Hiller Aviation Museum, 601 Skyway Road, San Carlos. hiller.org.**

Gamble Garden

Families are invited to come search for Pikachu and other Pokemon friends in a scavenger

See **HAUNTED**, page 20



Marvin Fong

Inflatable spooky cat seen at the Menlo Park Halloween Hoopla in Menlo Park on Oct. 28, 2023.

HAUNTED

continued from page 19

hunt. The event also offers tattoos, face-painting, crafts, prizes and trading cards. Also, the Palo Alto Junior Museum & Zoo will bring the great bald eagle Sequoia for a special visit.

Oct. 19, 10-11 a.m., at Gamble Garden, 1431 Waverley St., Palo Alto. \$45-\$55 nonmembers/\$36-\$44 members. gamblegarden.org/event/halloween-2024.

Half Moon Bay Pumpkin Festival

The 52nd annual festival kicks off with a pancake breakfast each day (starting at 7 a.m.). Festival-goers can enjoy live music, food and drink, juried art by 275 artists, plus works by local artists (Sunday only); a collaborative paint temple, DJ dancing from Dancepark DJ Collective, pie-eating contests and photo opportunities with the giant gourd that won a weigh-off held earlier in the week. Additional activities on Saturday, Oct. 19, include a costume contest and the Great Pumpkin Parade, and on Sunday, Oct. 20, there's pumpkin carving and the Pumpkin Run, which offers a kids' fun run, 5K, 10K and half marathon events.

Oct. 19-20, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Main Street, Half Moon Bay. Admission is free. hmbpumpkinfest.com.

Jack-O-Jaunt

The city of Palo Alto hosts a pumpkin carving competition and display in which members of the community can vote for the scariest, cutest and most creative jack o'lanterns.

Oct. 25, 6:30-8:30 p.m., at Lytton Plaza, University Avenue and Emerson Street, Palo Alto. cityofpaloalto.org.

Foster City Halloween Spooktacular

Foster City's Halloween festival includes a character meet and greet, a costume contest, a magic show, games, trick-or-treat

stations, and the "Spooky Boo Trail."

Oct. 26, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Leo J. Ryan Park, 650 Shell Blvd., Foster City; \$5 entry only, \$10 for entry and trick-or-treating. fostercity.org/parksrec/page/halloween-schedule-events.

Menlo Park Halloweek

The city of Menlo Park hosts a series of Halloween-themed events for families. With Halloween Hoopla, visitors can come in costume to parade through downtown Menlo Park, trick-or-treat from local merchants, then take part in crafts, games and entertainment at Fremont Park. The following day, the Pumpkin Splash event brings "floating pumpkin patches" to city pools, where guests can enjoy swim time, a pumpkin decoration and treat bag. Closing out "Halloweek," the city hosts its first Trunk-or-Treat. Children can go trick-or-treating from car-to-car, with each vehicle's trunk decorated in a Halloween theme.

Halloween Hoopla takes place Oct. 26, 11 a.m.-2 p.m., at Fremont Park, Santa Cruz Avenue at University Drive, Menlo Park; free.

Pumpkin Splash will be held Oct. 27, 11 a.m.-noon, at Belle Haven Pool, 100 Terminal Ave., Menlo Park, and 1-3 p.m., at Burgess Pool, 501 Laurel St., Menlo Park; registration required for Pumpkin Splash and admission is \$12 per person.

Trunk-or-Treat takes place Oct. 29, 4:30-6:30 p.m., at Belle Haven Community Campus, 100 Terminal Ave., Menlo Park. For more Halloweek info, visit menlopark.gov.

Mountain View's Monster Bash

Mountain View's annual Monster Bash returns, boasting a treat trail, spooky games, performances, an inflatable zone, a "Lil Ghouls Corral" for the youngest attendees, a bike circus (bike safety training and bike course for kids), and a "Creepy Crawly Ooey Goey Zone," highlighting the

sometimes-spooky elements of nature and featuring live animal guests.

Oct. 26, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Rengstorff Park, 201 S. Rengstorff Ave., Mountain View; free. <https://www.mountainview.gov/our-city/departments/community-services/special-events/monster-bash?locale=en>.

Peninsula Bible Church Trunk or Treat

Visitors can stroll through the church parking lot and visit vehicles decorated with fun themes and gather treats from each vehicle. The event also offers a scavenger hunt and photo booth. Family-friendly costumes are welcome.

Oct. 26, 10 a.m.-noon, at Peninsula Bible Church, 3505 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto. Free admission. pbc.org/trunkortreat.

Trunk-n-Treat and Twilight Organ Concert

First United Methodist Church of Palo Alto hosts a decorated trunk-n-treat event for kids in the parking lot, followed by "Twilight: A Haunted Concert and Spooky Tales" in the sanctuary. Oct. 27, trunk-n-treat at 3:30 p.m., concert at 5:15 p.m., First United Methodist Church of Palo Alto, 625 Hamilton Ave., Palo Alto. facebook.com/events/512988714838931/.

Halloween and Dia de Los Muertos Storytime at Linden Tree Books

Laura Zarrin (illustrator of the "Wallace and Grace" series) and Stephanie Wildman (author of "Ghost Writer") come to Linden Tree for a Halloween and Dia de Los Muertos storytime. Oct. 27, 10:30 a.m., Linden Tree Books, 265 State St., Los Altos; free. lindentreebooks.com/events-calendar/.

A BOO-tiful Downtown Halloween

The merchants in downtown Los Altos host a trick-or-treating event for children, sending them on a quest to find stores displaying an orange pumpkin sign in the front window. Visitors can also enjoy games, creepy crafts and a balloon artist in Veterans Plaza between 2 and 4 p.m. Oct. 31, noon-4 p.m., in downtown Los Altos, free. downtownlosaltos.org/event/bootiful-downtown-halloween.

RESTAURANT AND BAR EVENTS

Halloween Drag Brunch at Roger Bar

A spooky brunch with hosts Chai Auntea, Kalypso and DJ Lady Jesus and performances by King SlayHer, ReddRum FaFiltH and Kizzy Dolce.

Oct. 26, 11 a.m.-1 p.m., at Roger Bar, The Ameswell Hotel, 800 Moffett Blvd., Mountain View. rogerbarandrestaurant.com/happenings.

Alhambra Irish House Halloween events

Enjoy a Dragoween brunch on Oct. 26 with performances by Vicodonia Knightingale, Diamond Dior, Charity Kase and Niya La Rey, plus food, endless mimosas and a Halloween costume contest. Come back on the evening of Oct. 26 for a Prohibition-era party with live music by Scott Bell and the Cool Ranchers, plus food and drink. 1920s-style costumes are encouraged, but all costumes are welcome. Then, on Nov. 1, grab your best '80s outfit for a Halloween '80s dance party with the band On the Rocks.

All events take place at Alhambra Irish House, 831 Main St., Redwood City.

Drag brunch Oct. 26, noon-2 p.m., \$12.51. tinyurl.com/AlhambraDragoween.

Halloween Prohibition Party Oct. 26, 7-11 p.m. \$7.18. tinyurl.com/AlhambraProhibition.

'80s Halloween Dance Party Nov. 1, 7-11 p.m., \$7.18. tinyurl.com/Alhambra80sDance.

Mountain House Halloween Extravaganza

Mountain House's Halloween celebration includes live music, spiked "zombie blood," hearty snacks and a costume contest with a \$100 gift-card prize.

Oct. 28, 6-11:30 p.m., Mountain House, 13808 Skyline Blvd., Woodside; \$30. tinyurl.com/MtnHouseHalloween.

CONCERTS AND PERFORMANCES

Hip-Hop Halloween

Peninsula Lively Arts (formerly Peninsula Ballet Theatre) presents "Hip-Hop Halloween," a family-friendly dance performance featuring ghouls and favorite Halloween monsters showing off their moves. Audiences are invited to wear costumes to the performance.

Oct. 25, 7 p.m., Oct. 26, 4 and 7 p.m., Oct. 27, 1 and 4 p.m. at Peninsula Lively Arts' Studio One Theatre, 1880 S. Grant St., San Mateo. \$30-\$40. peninsulalivelyarts.org.

The Rocky Horror Picture Show

The Bawdy Caste comes to the Guild to perform alongside two screenings of the cult classic musical film "The Rocky Horror Picture Show," featuring plenty of audience participation. Oct. 25, 7 and 10 p.m., at The Guild Theatre,

949 El Camino Real, Menlo Park; \$24.92. guildtheatre.com.

Redwood Symphony Halloween Concert

Redwood Symphony's annual Halloween concert invites attendees to come in costume, with 10 kids selected from the audience to try their hands at conducting. The performance includes John Williams' "Hedwig's Theme" from "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" and the premiere of "A Country Fair" by Kirke Mechem.

Oct. 27, 2 p.m., Cañada College Main Theater, 4200 Farm Hill Blvd., Redwood City; \$15-\$35. redwoodsymphony.org/concert/musical-pictures/.

Peaches Christ UnHoly Sunday

Legendary San Francisco-based drag performer Peaches Christ hosts an evening of music, horror, humor and more with special guest performers and an audience costume competition.

Oct. 27, 5 p.m., at Bing Studio, 327 Lasuen Street, Stanford. \$15-\$45. events.stanford.edu.

Guild-o-Ween

Comedy magician Robert Strong emcees an evening of magic, comedy and circus-inspired acts. All ages welcome.

Oct. 31, 6 p.m., at The Guild Theatre, 949 El Camino Real, Menlo Park. \$49.83 general admission/\$84.59 reserved/\$191.20 VIP reserved tables. guildtheatre.com.

Stanford 2024 Halloween Concert

The Stanford Symphony Orchestra and Stanford Wind Symphony present an annual concert of spooky-season music. Audience members are invited to come in costume — one lucky winner will be chosen to conduct the last selection of the night.

Oct. 31 at 7:30 p.m., Dinkelspiel Auditorium, 471 Lagunita Drive, Stanford; \$22-\$27 (free to Stanford students). events.stanford.edu/event/halloween-concert-2024.

Danny Elfman

The composer and singer-songwriter with a penchant for the spooky is featured in "From Boingo to Batman to Big Mess and Beyond," a Halloween-inspired show capturing his music from his film scores to his time as frontman with the band Oingo Boingo, as well as his solo work. With special guests Johnny Jewel x DESIRE. Nov. 3, 7:30 p.m., at Shoreline Amphitheatre, 1 Amphitheatre Parkway, Mountain View. \$62.70-\$335. livenation.com. ■

Visit almanacnews.com for more Halloween events.

Documentary 'American Delivery' examines nation's maternal health crisis

The film, along with 59 others, is on UNAFF's program this month, themed around 'Shared Humanity'

By Ashwini Gangal

When we talk about the grave issue of maternal mortality, it's rarely in the context of a wealthy nation with ample technological wherewithal like ours. Truth is, this is as much a problem of the so-called first world as it is of other less developed nations.

Filmmaker Carolyn Jones has brought the spotlight to this subject in her documentary film "American Delivery," which will be showcased at the United Nations Association Film Festival this month, where 60 films will run over 11 days, between Oct. 17-27 across Stanford University, Palo Alto, San Francisco and East Palo Alto.

"Losing women during childbirth — it just makes no sense," said Jones in an interview with this publication. The film is also about other related topics, like the social determinants of health, gender, race and governance.

"I think we're living in a very complicated time for women. Watching us lose the power to choose, to have agency over our own bodies, I really wanted to dig in and see how all of this was inter-related, how much of it is due to racism, how much of it is due to our failing healthcare system..." she said. "Birth has been medicalized in our country and as women we've gotten farther and farther away from making our own decisions about our bodies. I started to think that I need to make a film that reminds everybody what we're fighting for."

Jones' interest in healthcare is personal. It was her own battle with breast cancer several years ago that sparked an interest in this area in general and in the nursing profession in particular. During that painful time, a nurse who cared for her really stood out for her ability to understand what she was going through. "She had the emotional intelligence of a genius," Jones said. "She had an uncanny way of knowing how to look at me holistically..."

In the film five women are shown giving birth. They belong to different social strata and races. "Black women are dying at least two times as much as white women," she said, in the context of maternal mortality. These women belong to different places, including California, Kentucky, Ohio, Brooklyn — and Tanzania. At least 10 other women, including some in Texas and Mississippi, were interviewed



Courtesy UNAFF

A still from "American Delivery," which explores the United States' maternal healthcare crisis. The film shows as part of the United Nations Association Film Festival.

for the project but not all stories made it to the final film. Jones was also particular about including healthcare providers from diverse backgrounds. "We tried very hard to get a snapshot of the country."

The whole project took two years to complete. Finding women who agreed to let a film crew record while they gave birth was easier than Jones had anticipated. What then was the biggest challenge? "Timing," she said. "Waiting for women to give birth," she said.

A variety of issues relating to maternal health, such as postpartum depression, working with a midwife and going through with a C-section, are covered in the film. Jones aims for the film to spur change at both the personal and systemic level. Among changes she'd like to see are paid family leave, the option to lean on a midwife in a hospital setting, and easier access to conditional services like the Nurse-Family Partnership Program that enables women on federal aid to have a nurse visit them at home every two weeks from the moment they get pregnant till the child is 2 years old.

"I hope the film is a tool for healthcare workers to extract what they need and use some of these stories to drive their points home," said Jones, who, though always a feminist, finds herself "much more militant" about the subject of maternal health, coming out of the process of making this film than she was going in. "I'd like for women to feel like they have a voice."

This year, the theme of the festival is "Shared Humanity."

"We want to see the dots that connect us — and also see the obstacles," said Jasmina Bojic, founder and executive director of the UNAFF, who launched this festival 27 years ago in Palo Alto, as a way to celebrate the then-50th anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, something she believes is

even more important than civil rights. "Everything we will see and discuss goes through the prism of human rights."

The last 10 years, in her opinion, have been the "golden age" of documentary filmmaking. She attributes this to what she believes is the steady decline of in-depth analysis and elaborate storytelling in mainstream American journalism — the kind Walter Cronkite and Barbara Walters were known for back in the day — thus creating an opportunity for documentaries to fill the gap.

Besides screenings, the program also includes panel discussions and awards. Some of the themes that will be covered are women's issues, criminal justice, healthcare and the environment, among others.

The team received around 600 films from across the world and used the "old fashioned" jury process to curate the final list. The jury comprised 24 members including journalists, filmmakers, professors and community leaders.

After the festival, the films will be showcased through special screenings at libraries, senior centers and veterans homes in the city over the coming year.

"The value of having this film festival in Palo Alto is huge," said Bojic, who is also a film critic and Stanford educator, appreciating the support of the city and several diverse communities therein. "But we really need our citizens of Palo Alto to be financially involved." ■

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UNAFF 2024 will be held at multiple locations across Stanford University, Palo Alto, San Francisco and East Palo Alto, through Oct. 27. "American Delivery" will run at Stanford Medical School on Tuesday, Oct. 22 at 7:30 p.m. unaff.org.

Worth a Look



Courtesy Alma Rosaz

Remi Wolf plays Frost Amphitheater on Oct. 18.

Remi Wolf

Funky pop singer-songwriter Remi Wolf grew up in Palo Alto and was making a name for herself on the local music scene even back when she was a Paly student. Since then, she's hit the big time, performing at festivals including Coachella, Lollapalooza and Outside Lands. Her sophomore album, "Big Ideas" (following 2021's LP "Juno"), came out in July, featuring the exuberant single "Cinderella." Wolf comes back to the Peninsula to play at Stanford's Frost Amphitheater as part of her "Big Ideas" tour, along with slimdan.

Oct. 18, 7 p.m., Frost Amphitheater, 351 Lasuen St., Stanford; \$68.91; stanford.edu/events/2024-frost/remi-wolf/.

The Dynamic Miss Faye Carol featuring Talib Kweli

Longtime Bay Area vocalist and educator The Dynamic Miss Faye Carol uses music to trace the four centuries-long story of Black people in America in "Blues, Baroque & Bars," which weaves blues, jazz, classical, hip-hop, funk, R&B, and gospel "to tell stories of triumph, sadness, romance, injustice, protest, humor and resilience," according to Stanford Live. In addition to Carol's vocals, the performance includes rapper Talib Kweli, drummer Dennis Chambers and a baroque string quartet, with music by Nina Simone, John Coltrane, Marvin Gaye and more.

Oct. 20, 2:30 p.m., Bing Concert Hall, 327 Lasuen St., Stanford; \$15-\$84; live.stanford.edu.

Jondo Flamenco

Club Fox hosts an evening of flamenco, presented by Jondo Flamenco Productions, bringing together top artists from Spain, the Bay Area and San Diego to deliver the intricate rhythms and passionate expression flamenco music and dance is known for. The lineup includes Pirouz de Caspio (vocals), Juan Murube (vocals), Kambiz Pakan (guitar), Reyes Barrio (dance), Melissa Cruz (dance), Jesse Torre (guitar) and Marlon Aldana (percussion).

Oct. 20, Club Fox, 2209 Broadway St., Redwood City; \$49.87; eventbrite.com.

Book Arts Bazaar

Bay Area Book Artists (BABA) are local artists with a passion for book arts, which includes a variety of art forms relating to creating or altering books. At BABA's volunteer-run Book Arts Bazaar, attendees can view and buy work made by book artists and book-related vendors (find unique items like artist books, handmade paper and cards), stitch their own homemade book, browse used art supplies and more at discount prices, and try their hands at a printing press, with the help of San Jose Printers Guild.

Oct. 19, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Veterans Memorial Senior Center, 1455 Madison Ave., Redwood City; free; bayareabookartists.org/book-arts-bazaar-2024.

Food & Drink

Taking meal prep off parents' plates

San Mateo-based Bebe Bitez produces ready-made, organic meals for babies and kids

Story by Karla Kane | Photos by Anna Hoch-Kenney

Many parents would likely agree that having a child is a life-altering experience. In Peninsula resident Nichola Buckley's case, motherhood inspired her to shift her priorities, start a business and become an advocate for access to high-quality food.

"Having Lilly basically changed my whole world," Buckley said of the arrival of her first child. "I went from this super career-driven person to really starting to want to know more about the world around us, and in particular, food."

Buckley's company Bebe Bitez delivers organic, farm-to-table, ready-made meals for babies and young children and is headquartered in San Mateo. She launched it in part to help families mitigate some of the stress that can arise around feeding kids.

As Lilly (who's now a preschooler and older sister to brother Jack) grew, so did Buckley's curiosity about food and childhood nutrition. She became concerned about

diet-related diseases and allergies, and about ingredients in many foods marketed to children. She also noticed how many of her fellow parents felt overwhelmed when trying to make the best choices for their families, particularly when it came to introducing their babies to solid foods.

"I was like, 'This shouldn't be this way; this should be an enjoyable moment where we feed our children, it should be exciting to see their faces,'" she said, "but people were stressed."

Introducing allergens early, safely and tastily

Buckley and her husband Adam White, Bebe Bitez's co-founder, love cooking at home but, as busy working parents, sometimes want the convenience of ready-made meals. When they looked at the baby food commercially available, they found some brands' offerings had additives and sweeteners they weren't comfortable with, while many options were sound nutritionally but

excluded common allergens.

While conventional wisdom used to be that allergens should be avoided for the first year of life, "all the research now shows that we need to introduce allergens early and often, and preferably the 'big 9' (peanuts, tree nuts, eggs, dairy, soy, shellfish, wheat, sesame and fish) before kids are 1 year old in order for them to not develop an allergy later in life," she said, citing findings including the LEAP (Learning Early About Peanut Allergy) and EAT (Enquiring About Tolerance) studies.

"The research is undeniable in this space, especially when it comes to peanuts and eggs," she said.

Buckley decided to take matters into her own hands.

"I was like, 'You know what? I'm just going to make my own baby food and give it out to my friends and see what they think. And then I'll start my own business. How hard could it be?' Turns out, very hard," she said with a laugh. "But that's how we got started."

Over the next few years,



Bebe Bitez founder Nichola Buckley prepares food at her home in Woodside.

she went through the rigorous process of getting approvals from the FDA and USDA and coming up with meal plans. She brought on pediatric dietician Jenny Janov to be chief nutrition officer.

"She's strongly passionate about the same things I am," Buckley said of Janov. "She's a big part of the team and makes all our recipes happen. I have the recipe ideas and she makes them healthy, nutritious, etc."

Bebe Bitez offers staged meals for children from about 6 months old (or when they're developmentally ready to start eating solid foods) to 6 years.

"It helps the parent safely introduce (allergens). We do it through real foods, we don't have the powdered version; it's all the food that you would find at home but hopefully it just gives parents that ease and peace of mind," she said.

Bebe Bitez's "Marvelous Mac and Cheese" Stage 1 meal (for 6 months and up) consists of just a few ingredients: broccoli and cheddar cheese (which introduces dairy) in a smooth puree with low-sodium vegetable broth. Stage 2 (for ages 8 months and up) adds wheat, plus additional nutrients like cauliflower, baby spinach and hemp seeds, and is a chunkier blend. The final stage, for ages 10 months and up, is a "real meal," featuring pasta and whole veggies, plus tofu mixed into the cheese sauce (adding

creaminess as well as introducing soy).

Other products in the direct-to-consumer line include "Remarkable Risotto," "Cheery Chow Mein," "Scrummy Salmon Pasta," "Lovely Lasagna" and "Fabulous Fish Pie." The goal is not only to introduce allergens safely, but also expose babies to new textures and savory-first flavors.

Occasionally, "we've actually had some parents say that they steal them for their own lunches," she said.

The ingredients are sourced from farms in the Bay Area and Central California and prepared at Bebe Bitez's San Mateo facility. The meals are frozen immediately after preparation and delivered to customers in packaging that keeps the food frozen for up to eight hours.

Bebe Bitez began selling its direct-to-consumer products in January and now also partners with day-care centers and preschools.

"We were hearing from our parents, 'We basically heat up your meals and send them to day care. Could you not just cut out the middleman and go to day cares and preschools?'" Buckley said.

The company is currently serving several child care providers, from small in-home ones to centers with over 100 children.

"At the end of the day, I'm a mum myself, and I know how



Bebe Bitez founder Nichola Buckley feeds her son, 9-month-old Jack White, at their home on Oct. 4.

great it is to not have to think about lunches,” she said. “(It) takes one thing off the parent’s plate but also the child care provider’s plate.”

Expanding the mission

“The mission grew even further, from introducing allergens to food as medicine as a whole to really making access to the best-quality ingredients as possible for all children regardless of their demographic, because food really can nourish the whole child and their development,” she said.

With the day care and preschool menus, the company can be more flexible, with customized orders and more incorporation of seasonal produce, she said. Bebe Bitez’s meals meet the guidelines for federal and state regulations and programs, including for the National School Lunch Program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, the School Breakfast Program, and California Department of Education Nutrition Services Division.

“Schools can actually get subsidies from the USDA for foods meeting a certain criteria, and what we found is we were exceeding that criteria,” she said. “So we’ve started to service more lower-economic schools so we can really support all children and reach more people that might not be able to necessarily afford our foods otherwise.”

On the direct-to-consumer side, a batch of a dozen Stage 1 meals costs \$72, while a dozen Stage 3 meals is \$120. (Customers who want to order fewer than 12 at a time can do so via meal delivery services such as DoorDash.) Subscriptions can be delivered on a weekly,



4-year-old Lilly White eagerly watches her mom, Bebe Bitez founder Nichola Buckley, dish out heated Bebe Bitez food at their home in Woodside on Oct. 4.

biweekly or monthly basis.

“It’s really important that we are supporting farms, but I also have the mission of making sure this is accessible to everybody. What I’d eventually like to get to is to offer a 1:1 program: You buy one and we donate one, and things like that. Or that we get it covered on HSA (health savings account), FSA (flexible spending account), so people can actually use those dollars to pay for this food,” she said.

Buckley is originally from England, where she grew up on a beef cattle farm. Part of her own aims as a parent is making sure her children understand where their food comes from.

“We’re so lucky where we live with so many great farms along the Coastside and around the Peninsula,” she said, recalling a

recent trip to a Pescadero farm, where Lilly was thrilled to pick tomatoes right off the vine.

This passion extends to her work with Bebe Bitez.

“We actually take our farms to the schools — and eventually we’d like to take the schools to the farms — but we take the raw ingredients, and we show the schools what’s included in the meals. We really educate the kids from an early age on, like, ‘Try a raw carrot’ or ‘There’s a tomato’ to really show them the importance of the ingredients,” she said. “And then we tell them how those ingredients have an effect on their bodies. ‘They’ll make you jump higher or run faster,’ things they understand.”

Bebe Bitez has enlisted local “tiny taste testers” to sample the foods, and Buckley said they’re

a customer feedback-driven company.

“Even when my kids are grown up I never want to lose sight of what’s helpful to parents because that’s why I started this,” she said.

Advocating for better ingredients

She’s also passionate about public policy in regards to child nutrition.

“The other thing we’re getting more involved in is the lobbying side, so really trying to advocate for the eradication of harmful ingredients in foods targeted at children — the dyes, the pesticides, all the things that are hot topics at the moment,” she said. Recently, California Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a law banning certain synthetic dyes from foods sold at schools, following a law passed last year to ban several food additives from products sold in California.

“There are products like Doritos made in Europe without any of the harmful ingredients, so why can’t we also have that?” Buckley said. “That really frustrates me because I know that those products exist, and so one of my main issues is to make sure that we bring those here, too.”

Supporting families

Since becoming a mother she’s also realized how much of a struggle it is for many to balance careers and parenthood.

“The reason for starting the business was the food aspect, but since I’ve done this more and more and realized how flexible I can really be, and be there for my kids, I realize that the system is really broken and this needs to

change. It’s just not sustainable for parents,” she said.

She supports her team putting their families first, whether that’s staying home with a sick child or prioritizing attending their soccer games.

“Because I’m like that with mine,” she said. “The most important thing is that we’re there for our children.”

To that end, she’s also started a “Chief Mommy Officer” program.

“We take on stay-at-home mums or mums that want a side hustle on a commission basis so they can work around looking after their children at home,” she said. “They can call preschools and day cares and get them signed up, and we give them a 5%-10% commission based on that.”

Building healthy relationships to food

While Bebe Bitez is committed to providing healthy food options, its mission also includes helping families build healthy relationships to food and eating. She recommends that children get involved with family food preparation as much as possible. And as her own parenting adventure unfolds, Buckley said she’s learned that caregivers can — and should — only control so much.

“The biggest surprise to me is how quickly a child can go from loving something to hating something; it can be in the space of the same meal!” she laughed, reflecting on her experiences feeding her son and daughter. “That’s the biggest piece of advice I pass on to parents. We put so much pressure on ourselves as parents, especially when it comes to food and nutrition, because it’s so important for our kids, but I think kids know their bodies better than we think that they do, and they know to listen to themselves when they’re full. We don’t know that as parents because we’ve been told, ‘Clean your plate and you’ll get something sweet.’”

Some days, “I don’t feel like eating cheese or broccoli so I don’t eat it, but we expect them to sit down and eat it, and we’re so stressed if they don’t,” she said. “All we can do is serve them the plate; they should have the choice of what they eat off it. And if some days that’s the pasta and nothing else, at least they ate.” ■

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More information is available at bebebitez.com; Instagram: [@bebebitez](https://www.instagram.com/bebebitez).



Bebe Bitez founder Nichola Buckley plays with her kids, 4-year-old Lilly White, right, and 9-month-old Jack White, center, during lunch.

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