

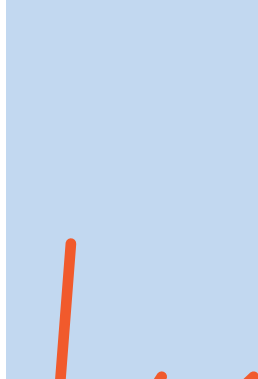
The Almanac

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

NOVEMBER 15, 2024 | VOL. 60 NO. 11



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SPECIAL FEATURE

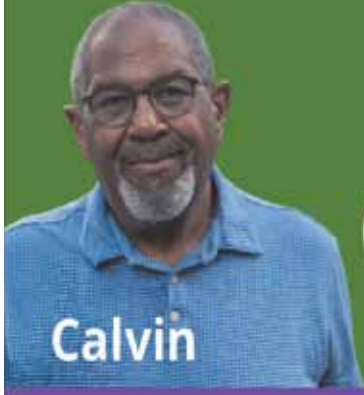


HOLIDAY ARTS & EVENTS 15



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Calvin

Your Generosity Can Change a Senior's Story.

A Hidden Crisis: Our senior community faces rising costs, hunger, and isolation.

We wish you a joyous holiday season with family and friends. While we celebrate the season with loved ones, many local seniors face challenges that threaten their well-being.

Behind the region's prosperity, **seniors on fixed incomes** are silently struggling with **soaring costs of food** and other essential daily support needs, leading to increased **hunger and health risks**. San Mateo County and the Surgeon General recognize the **epidemic of loneliness** as a public health crisis. Many older adults live alone, craving connection. **Alzheimer's and dementia** rates are surging, placing overwhelming caregiving burdens on families, yet less than 2% of institutional funding supports aging-related causes. These urgent challenges ripple through our community, **affecting the families of all backgrounds**-- neighbors and friends, parents and grandparents and raising serious concerns for the fastest growing senior demographic over the next decade and beyond.

The holiday season intensifies the challenges for Ruth and others!

Over the holidays, these burdens grow heavier for countless seniors like **Ruth**, who is homebound with a broken hip and cannot shop or cook for herself, or **Calvin**, a widower who lives alone and struggles to afford food. **Joyce** is overwhelmed by her husband's Alzheimer's, while others face loneliness and technology barriers to stay connected with loved ones.

Peninsula Volunteers, Inc. provides crucial support to local families.

PVI understands the urgency of the senior crisis and provides life-changing support services for each of these families, bringing hope beyond the season. Your support is essential. Together, we make this possible.

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* Examples: \$500 provides PVI Meals on Wheels for two at-risk seniors for a month; \$700 supports a week of Adult Day Services; \$1,200 funds an annual premium membership at PVI's Adult Activity Center at Little House; \$2,000 funds 100 round-trip rides for seniors; \$2,500 funds an iPad and training for a year.

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"I wouldn't be able to afford healthy meals without them." - Ruth



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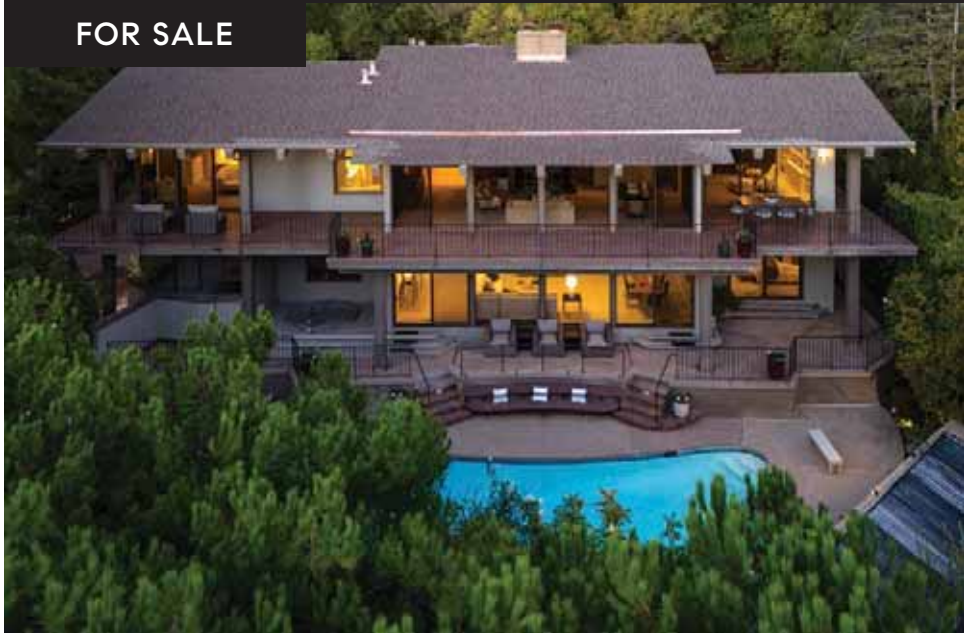


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Contributions to the Holiday Fund go directly to programs that benefit Peninsula residents. Last year, Almanac readers and foundations contributed a record \$350,000 from more than 150 donors for the 10 agencies that feed the hungry, house the homeless and provide numerous other services to those in need.

Contributions to the Holiday Fund will be matched, to the extent possible, by generous community organizations, foundations and individuals, including the Rotary Club of Menlo Park Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. No administrative costs will be deducted from the gifts, which are tax-deductible as permitted by law. All donations to the Holiday Fund will be shared equally among the 10 recipient agencies listed on this page.

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Boys & Girls Club of the Peninsula

Provides after-school academic support, enrichment, college and career access, and mental health programs to more than 5,000 low-income youth at 29 locations from East Palo Alto to Daly City.

Ecumenical Hunger Program

Provides emergency food, clothing, household essentials, and sometimes financial assistance to families in need, regardless of religious preference, including Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets for more than 2,000 households.

Health Connected

Serves over 5,000 students and their families each year through comprehensive sexual health education programs. Students learn to have ongoing communication with parents and to make informed decisions that will apply to their lives, now and in the future.

LifeMoves

Provides shelter/housing and supportive services across 18 sites in Silicon Valley and the Peninsula. Serves thousands of homeless families and individuals annually on their path back to permanent housing and self-sufficiency.

Literacy Partners

Supports literacy programs and projects through fundraising and community awareness. Helps community members enhance their reading, writing and related skills and education to improve their economic, professional and personal wellbeing.

Ravenswood Family Health Center

Provides primary medical and preventive health care for all ages at its clinic in East Palo Alto. Of the more than 17,000 registered patients, most are low-income and uninsured and live in the ethnically diverse East Palo Alto, Belle Haven, and North Fair Oaks areas.

St. Anthony's Padua Dining Room

Serves hundreds of hot meals six days a week to people in need who walk through the doors. Funded by voluntary contributions and community grants, St. Anthony's is the largest dining room for the needy between San Francisco and San Jose. It also offers take-home bags of food, as well as emergency food and clothing assistance.

St. Francis Center

Helps low-income, working families become self-supporting members of the community by providing long-term solutions through educational programs for children and parents, as well as after-school programming at Siena Youth Centers. St. Francis Center also provides housing, food and clothing services to address short-term needs.

StarVista

Serves more than 32,000 people throughout San Mateo County, including children, young people and families, with counseling, prevention, early intervention, education, and residential programs. StarVista also provides crisis intervention and suicide prevention services including a 24-hour suicide crisis hotline, an alcohol and drug helpline, and a parent support hotline.

Upward Scholars

Upward Scholars empowers low-income adults by providing them with financial support, tutoring, and other assistance so they can continue their education, get higher-paying jobs, and serve as role models and advocates for their children.

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Local News

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Anna Hoch-Kenney

San Mateo County District 2 Supervisor Noelia Corzo, left, and San Mateo County District 3 Supervisor Ray Mueller, right, respond to questions during a press conference at the San Mateo County Center in Redwood City announcing the release of an independent report into allegations against the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office on Nov. 12.

San Mateo County supervisors reveal damning report on Sheriff's Office amid arrest of union president

By Eleanor Raab and Jennifer Yoshikoshi

In an explosive press conference on the evening of Nov. 12, San Mateo County Sheriff Christina Corpus announced that she had arrested Carlos Tapia, union president of the San Mateo County

Deputy Sheriff's Association.

The arrest was announced just 15 minutes before a planned press conference by San Mateo County supervisors Noelia Corzo and Ray Mueller, where they shared damning findings from an independent investigation that the county commissioned following "an

unprecedented" number of complaints against the sheriff. The supervisors will convene a special meeting on Wednesday, Nov. 13, to decide on what action to take, including calling on the sheriff to resign due to the investigation's findings

See **SHERIFF'S OFFICE**, page 11

Records show Las Lomitas district administrators spent taxpayer money on stays at luxury hotels, Michelin-starred restaurants

Administrators dropped \$39K on food in less than a year, but some costs are unknown

By Arden Margulis

Dining at Michelin-starred restaurants. Stays at swanky hotels. Three-thousand dollar trips to eat out in downtown Menlo Park. Such spending has been highlighted in a community petition, which made multiple allegations of fiscal mismanagement by the Las Lomitas Elementary School District during recent labor negotiations with the teachers union. The school board is now considering a third-party audit of district spending.

This news organization reviewed over 600 transactions made by top administrators on district credit cards. The cards were meant for "emergency purchases or transactions which are not typically accepted by purchase orders, such as travel/conference related costs," according to Lead Deputy County Attorney Gina Beltramo, who has responded to records requests on behalf of the district.

On Sunday, Nov. 10, the teachers union, Las Lomitas Education Association, took to its Facebook to post that district educators and community members "are feeling an urgent need for the board to take action in response

to serious concerns regarding financial and ethical matters that have recently come to light regarding our superintendent."

"We are calling for an immediate investigation into any potential misuse of public funds particularly in relation to the superintendent Beth Polito and our chief business officer," the post states. "Given the apparent complicity in these issues, it is critical that we act swiftly to uphold transparency and accountability. Beth Polito must be removed from her position now."

Polito did not respond to a request for comment on the call for her to resign by The Almanac's Wednesday afternoon press deadline.

This news organization also reviewed some travel expenses and discovered administrators ate and stayed at luxury restaurants and hotels.

In a review of credit card statements from this calendar year, which includes transactions from Dec. 10, 2023 to Oct. 9, 2024, it appeared that district administrators spent taxpayer money routinely on catering and delivery from local restaurants.

In less than a year, district

See **LAS LOMITAS**, page 10

SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory celebrates 50 years since discovery of groundbreaking particle

Discovery of J/Psi particle set the stage for the modern era of particle physics

By Eleanor Raab

Fifty years ago, a team at SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory in Menlo Park made a discovery that turned the world of particle physics upside down; they discovered a particle, called J/Psi, that set the stage for the modern era of particle physics. On Nov. 8, SLAC hosted a symposium celebrating the monumental discovery, and the 50 years of

particle physics achievements that have followed in its wake.

The 50th anniversary symposium was a testament, not only to the importance of the discovery itself, but also to the remarkable progress made in particle physics over the last five decades, said Michael Peskin, a professor of particle physics and astrophysics at Stanford, and the organizer of the symposium. Today, scientists at SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory

are using the J/Psi particle to help answer even bigger questions in particle physics.

"Much of the work done (to discover J/Psi) is the foundation of what we are now doing for the Large Hadron Collider," said Zhi Zheng, a research assistant at SLAC who is working with the ATLAS collaboration at the Large Hadron Collider at CERN in Switzerland.

In November 1974, Burton Richter, a physics professor at

Stanford University, and his team had made their revolutionary discovery of what they called the "Psi" particle by smashing electrons and positrons (anti-electrons) together in SLAC's particle collider. They double checked what they thought was a minor statistical inconsistency in the data that they were collecting, but found that it wasn't a flaw in the data, it was a new particle.

Another group, led by Samuel

Ting at the Brookhaven National Laboratory, had incidentally made the same discovery at the same time. However, they called this particle "J."

On Nov. 11, 1974, the two teams working at the two separate particle colliders on opposite sides of the country simultaneously announced their groundbreaking discoveries, launching rapid progress

See **SLAC**, page 9

Remembering Joyce Rosenstiel, Sequoia district's first female principal

By Tom Rosenstiel

My sisters and I were surprised how much we didn't know. Not until near the end. And when we began to empty the house.

Our mother, Joyce Rosenstiel, who rose from a classroom volunteer when she was nearly 40 to become the first woman principal in the history of the Sequoia Union High School District, and later the oldest resident of the Skylonda Junction neighborhood of Woodside, had died, one month short of her 98th birthday.

But I never knew that she decided to become a teacher — after 19 years as a homemaker — when I came home from school one day with an incorrectly graded spelling test. I learned that from a newspaper clipping in a scrapbook hidden among photo albums on a bookshelf.

"It infuriated me," she had told the Palo Alto Weekly. "Then I decided that if I was going to get mad, I should do something about it."

That was her. Don't get mad. Do something.

She volunteered as a classroom aide at Ravenswood High School in East Palo Alto and enrolled in a

program for a teaching credential at College of Notre Dame. Her first day as an aide in a remedial reading class, the teacher walked out. "Rosenstiel, the volunteer, was suddenly the teacher," the newspaper recounted.

I heard 50 years later about the Black student at Ravenswood who asked Mom if it were true there was no such thing as Black Literature. It was 1967, her first year teaching. Shocked, she answered it was absolutely untrue and decided to create a course. When she looked for books by Black authors at Keplers, however, there was only one. She discovered more at an East Palo Alto barber shop, and the rest at a Black-owned bookstore in Oakland. Then she created the course, her first lesson in the challenges of curriculum creation.

She transferred to Woodside High School in 1969, became vice principal of instruction nine years later and moved to Menlo-Atherton High School in 1982. Less than two years after that, amid a controversy involving the principal, she was named "acting" principal.

I only learned what happened next from a research paper we found cleaning out the house,

written by a graduate student who shadowed my mother for a profile of the life of a public school administrator. In its then-89-year history, the Sequoia District had never hired a woman principal. Now it advertised the position nationally. My mother had no intention of applying, thinking she had little chance. She changed her mind at the last minute.

"When I looked at the job description," she told the graduate student, "I had already done most of it. But I had to be accountable to someone else, and I wasn't always able to do it exactly the way I thought it ought to be done because I was not the head banana."

She decided, "If I was going to do all the work anyway ... at least I would be accountable to myself."

That was her, too. The head banana. Accountable to herself.

Her management style was simple: Hire motivated people. Get them all the resources you could. And support them.

Three years later she would go to the White House to receive an award at a Rose Garden ceremony honoring Menlo-Atherton as one of the outstanding public and private high schools in the nation.

Blunt, practical, and inclined to



Courtesy Tom Rosenstiel

Joyce Rosenstiel at Alice's Restaurant in Woodside.

solutions rather than worry, she was intensely proud of but not especially emotional with me or my two sisters. We were fine, living safe and secure lives. But she had an extraordinarily soft heart for people in trouble. She worried about one Ravenswood student from Fiji, living with relatives far from home. She invited him to spend the weekend. He stayed two years.

Cleaning out the redwood log cabin in Skylonda she and my father, Eddie, bought in 1975, we discovered a cache of letters from parents, colleagues and former

See **ROSENSTIEL**, page 8

For the first time in its history, Woodside will pay council members

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Since Woodside's incorporation in 1956, the Town Council has been volunteer run. But in December, that will change.

All council members except for Council member Paul Goeld voted to adopt an ordinance to pay council members \$950 per month for their work starting in December when the new council is seated. It will cost the town \$57,000 annually to pay five council members, according to the ordinance. This amount could be absorbed by the town's budget, the ordinance states.

The council had previously

introduced the idea of council compensation in May. Council members discussed how paying members might open up the pool of council candidates. For example, someone could run who might not otherwise have because of financial barriers such as paying for child care or other services while fulfilling their duties on the council.

"If we are only attracting a certain profile of council members, we're doing Woodside a disservice," said Mayor Jenn Wall. "I think we should be attracting council members that are young, old, working, retired, parents and all different types of talent."

On Oct. 8, the council deliberated on introducing an ordinance on compensation. All council members except Goeld voted in favor.

Woodside is one of 21 cities in the Bay Area with a population under 35,000 that do not pay a monthly salary to the council. Within San Mateo County, Atherton, Portola Valley and Hillsborough do not pay their council members.

During the Oct. 8 council meeting, Council member Dick Brown acknowledged that the workload

of being a council member has increased over the last three to four years, requiring more meetings with outside agencies and town committees. Increasing housing quotas in the state-mandated housing element is one area that is requiring more of council members' time, for example.

"The workload has gone significantly up. We've had to hire more staff to handle the increased workload," said Brown. "I estimated that between my Town Council meetings, my committee meetings, my outside committees that I serve on for the town and meetings with constituents, I'm spending about 50 hours a month doing town-related work."

Council member Brian Dombkowski added that pay might add to accountability for the council but if the total pay is for \$950 a month, council members will be getting paid less than minimum wage for the hours they work.

Goeld said he remembers being on the council in the early 2000's when council members didn't have to attend extra meetings and do homework in preparation for council meetings. Nowadays,

he spends hours doing research to review meeting agendas throughout the week.

"I can remember when we would be handed out binders and you could hear the splines opening for the first time as we're looking at our binders and to review the agenda for that night," said Goeld.

Although he could see a compelling argument in favor of pay and how much the council member role has evolved, he said he "takes it as a point of pride" that he is a volunteer council member. He explained that he embraces the town's tradition of a volunteer-run council.

Town residents, including architect Thalia Lubin, commented that council compensation should be voted by citizens, not the council itself.

"I think it's an important enough issue that it should be put to a vote of the citizens," said Lubin. "You might get some blowback on this and I think it would be more honest to put it to a vote."

She recommended the council post a survey on the town website to gauge how the community feels about the council voting on their own compensation. ■

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Officials offer tips to Portola Valley residents struggling to maintain home insurance

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Portola Valley hosted an event to inform local residents about home insurance options and policies, an important topic for a community at risk for wildfires. On Nov. 11, over 60 residents joined a presentation and Q&A with the California Department of Insurance and United Policyholders, a nonprofit dedicated to providing impartial information about insurance options.

In the last few years, Portola Valley residents have struggled with their home insurance policies being canceled and home insurance premiums going up, according to Vice Mayor Judith Hasko, who put the event together with San Mateo County District 5 Supervisor Ray Mueller.

Frequent wildfires and natural disasters have led insurance companies to be wary of offering coverage to homes in high-risk areas. "In our [wildland-urban

interface] community, the availability of insurance is a constant concern. It impacts every household," Hasko said. "Some state initiatives are being implemented and further developed that will impact home insurance so we need to keep informed on these matters."

Since 2022, seven of the top 12 insurance companies including State Farm, Farmers Insurance, CSAA, Liberty Mutual and Allstate have been pausing or restricting new business and implementing new policies, according to Mary Beth Bykowsky, outreach specialist at the state department of insurance.

Common reasons for nonrenewal are wildfire risk, age of home, age of roof, galvanized pipes, pools, certain electrical systems and the value of homes. United Policyholder Program Specialist Joel Laucher explained that fire loss and water damage are the most common and

expensive claims.

As residents face nonrenewal and increases in premiums, many have resorted to the California FAIR Plan. In August 2023, it began offering insurance discounts for protecting building structures and the immediate surroundings of homes for residents that take actions toward mitigating fires under the CDI's Safer from Wildfires programs.

Mitigation measures include clearing vegetation and debris, removing combustibles within five feet of the home, using non-combustible materials for fences and gates, and clearing any combustible structures such as sheds and outhouses within 30 feet of the home.

Additionally, homeowners can receive an existing 10% discount on policies if they live in a recognized Firewise community. Firewise, led by the National Fire Protection Association, promotes collaborative efforts among residents, local fire departments and

others to bolster the fire resistance in their neighborhoods, according to Cal Fire.

The FAIR plan also expanded to offer \$20 million coverage per structure for commercial policies, such as HOAs and affordable housing. Homeowners can also receive a wildfire risk score from insurers when mitigation efforts are taken.

In September, Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara introduced the California Sustainable Insurance Strategy to increase availability in high-risk areas. It ensures that insurance companies will accept no less than 85% of homes and businesses in wildfire distressed areas, according to Bykowsky.

CDI is also exploring California-only reinsurance costs to ensure state residents do not bear the costs of hurricanes and floods across the nation and only the costs incurred within the state.

The FAIR plan however only offers basic coverage and is often the last resort for those who can't obtain a plan from a traditional insurer, said Laucher. "If you end up in the FAIR plan, you want to try and get out of there," he added.

Tips for finding the best home insurance

Laucher advises homeowners to seek out proactive insurance agents, do as much mitigation as possible and to ask agents about all available discounts. He emphasizes that raising

deductibles will also help reduce premium costs.

When shopping for an insurance carrier, look for policies that provide adequate "Coverage A" dwelling limits to prevent being underinsured. Also known as dwelling coverage, "Coverage A" offers homeowners with a coverage limit that often amounts to less than \$300 per square foot to rebuild — nowhere enough to cover a typical Bay Area home.

"There's a reason you buy insurance. It's to avoid being in a situation where you cannot rebuild your home or even come close to it because you are significantly underinsured," said Laucher, who advises homeowners to get a realistic understanding of the cost per square foot to rebuild a home.

Insurers are obligated by state regulators to send homeowners an estimated cost to rebuild their homes every other year, even with detailed costs of demolition, labor and architecture plans.

While receiving an insurance checkup, homeowners can also take the time to inventory their personal items as well. Laucher recommends taking photos or a video of belongings by doing a walkthrough of the home. The photos and videos can be uploaded to the cloud for safekeeping in the event of a catastrophe.

The United Policyholders offers tools to guide community members in choosing the best home insurance plan. Visit uphelp.org/cainsurancehelp for more information. For tips from the CDI, visit insurance.ca.gov. ■

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Redwood City YouTuber interviews AI chatbots

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Using artificial intelligence, Redwood City resident Tia Creighton has started a YouTube channel interviewing AI chatbots, an entertaining and informative way to learn from chatbots who take on the role of people like plumbers, witches, a North Korean working as a tailor and seamstress and a "skinfluencer."

Creighton started her channel, Turing with Tia, in July, naming it in reference to British computer scientist Alan Turing. In 1950, Turing created the Turing Test, a method to determine whether a machine can think and function with human-level intelligence. A machine has to be able to fool someone into believing that it's a human in order to pass the test.

"We should remain curious about AI and see where it is and learn. We're trying to remain abreast of AI's ever changing and advancing nature and set accurate expectations," said Creighton. "I do want to somewhat take the fear out of it, but I don't want to completely say 'hey, it's safe, don't worry.'"

Creighton recently graduated with a master's degree in liberal arts studying the intersection between communications, technology and culture from Arizona State University. During this time, she began studying AI, humanities and created a podcast where she interviewed teachers. Outside of YouTube, Creighton is a writer and educator.

When interviewing the chatbots, she aims for their conversations to be spontaneous.

"This isn't machines talking to each other but rather a point-counterpoint, interactive dialogue between human and machine," said Creighton. "As the creator and host, I have to pivot in every episode because I never know what the machine's going to say."

So far, Creighton has interviewed six different chatbots. Her main goal is to inform and entertain her audience by interviewing chatbots of people who wouldn't regularly be interviewed.

"I'm presenting [AI] in a way that is keeping people informed, but not scared about AI," she said. "It's growing power and its exponential influence in our lives for sure."

When talking to the chatbots, Creighton was surprised to hear it was able to crack jokes, insult her and even make fun of her.

AI chatbots only use publicly accessible databases, explained Creighton. When she asks questions, she makes sure to only ask about information that would already be available online.

On her video interviewing an AI North Korean, she said, "I knew that it wouldn't have any access to any sort of behind the wall information in North Korea. It would only be giving me information given by somebody who escaped from North Korea or some really deep reporting on it."

Future of Turing with Tia

Since creating the channel, Creighton has been running the channel on her own. As the current host, editor, marketer and graphic designer of "Turing with Tia," she's hoping to bring in more people to help bring up the production value of her show.

Creighton plans to produce about 10 to 12 episodes a year. "I'm trying to make each episode more of an event," she said. Right now she has six chatbot interviews on her channel and 110 subscribers.

Her videos are available online at youtube.com/@TuringwithTia. ■

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

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



The Pause Until January

Dear Monica: It's the end-of-the-year question. Should I wait until January to list my house or try to sell it now?

Michael T.

Dear Michael: The answer to your question is also nearly the same every year. True you can sell a property any day of the year. However, the days are getting shorter and buyers can't see properties for as many hours each day. The holidays are a distraction for many and we are already in mid-November.

You will reach the largest audience for your property if you wait. Unless you need to sell now, you should wait until after the first of the year.

Contact me at monica@monicacorman.com: Office: 650-465-5971, COMPASS. WSJ Nationally Ranked. Real Trends Bay Area Top 100 Agents

Invasive beetle found in San Mateo County

Beetles were also found in Santa Clara County in August

By Bay City News Service

A beetle the size of a sesame seed, responsible for killing thousands of trees in Southern California, has been confirmed for the first time in San Mateo County.

Invasive shothole borers, which attack a wide variety of tree species, were found in the Redwood Shores community, the San Mateo County Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures said

Friday on its website.

First discovered in Los Angeles County in 2003, the beetles were found in Santa Clara County in August and in Santa Cruz County in October. They have no natural enemies. The beetles don't eat wood, but they carry a fungus that disrupts water movement in the tree, according to the Santa Clara County Division of Agriculture. The fungus is the beetles' food source.

The borers have been known

to attack 66 different tree species in California, including avocado, cottonwood, sycamore and oak.

The beetles leave perfectly round holes, about the size of the tip of a ballpoint pen. Other signs of infestation include stains that are wet and dark or dry and light-colored; and resin or a white powder, resembling a volcano, pushed out by the beetle, according to the county agriculture department. ■



Courtesy Akif Eskalen, UC Davis via Bay City News Service

A female invasive shothole borer, shown next to the smaller male on a penny for scale.

ROSENSTIEL

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students from when she retired in 1990, after our father suffered a heart attack.

"You have been a role model ... for me and many female educators," and "demonstrated quite well the fact that 'women of today' can have it all," wrote a counselor.

A Los Angeles attorney — who hadn't seen her in a decade — wrote: "I look back to Woodside and think of you ... as a major influence on my life. ... Thank you for all you did for me."

When she was 91, another former student emailed me looking for recollections of her. He was writing a book. "As a senior at Woodside High School in 1969, I took an English class from your mother ... The emphasis was African-American literature. ... Her class had a huge impact.

[She was] a much-needed and welcome voice of kindness, sensitivity, empathy and compassion, something I have never forgotten." She's still alive and very much kicking, I answered. He got an afternoon of recollections firsthand.

Born in Chicago in 1926 and the first in her family to attend college, she called her educational background "speckled" — two years at Carleton in Minnesota, then the University of Chicago to study international relations. I didn't know until going through her papers that she was one credit shy of a degree in 1947 when she married our dad, the California cousin of her college roommate. When they moved west, she finished her degree at UCLA.

Like many young women, she took up the task of writing letters to soldiers in World War II. "Please don't hold hands with

anyone else," wrote Bill. She didn't marry Bill, or any other pen pals. She married our dad, Eddie, the cousin of her college roommate. But she kept the sweet, innocent letters in a box for 79 years, along with a trove of our father's love letters.

When Dad had his first heart attack, Mom coped during the surgery by drafting her school's master schedule, a task that normally took weeks, in a few hours of perfect concentration.

The longest chapter of her life, retirement, lasted 34 years. She and Dad fitted out a Volkswagen camper van, criss-crossing the American West to see kids and grandkids. I knew they traveled internationally. I learned after only after she died that, in the 16 years my dad had left, they visited over 60 countries.

For most of the next 18 years following his death, she would drive down the mountain in the morning, not returning till dark, just as when she worked. She had taken up birding, quilting, and painting, supporting local theater, the public library system and land preservation. She worked for more than a decade to convert the private lands of Rancho Del Oso into a state park.

We found in the house an autobiographical sketch she wrote for an exhibition of local artists: "Retirement is a time of self discovery," it read. "There isn't enough time in any day to follow all the paths now open to you. Whatever path you choose to explore, happy journeying." Still the teacher.

Into her 90s, her friend Hilary Hart told me, she was part of a group called The Wednesday Walkers. When the full hikes became too much, she would stop along the way and sit and sketch until the others returned.

Her good friend and neighbor, Sandy Turner, remembered her 50 years in Skylonda this way: "Joyce knit sweaters for every new

baby on the block and tutored neighbor kids in math and science." During her teaching years, she frequently gave rides to kids who overslept. "Her home was always available to locals in need of a place to stay, whether it was someone with more guests than bedrooms or staff from Alice's restaurant stranded by a storm or road closure who needed a bed for the night."

In 2020, when she was 94, my sister and I flew to the Bay Area to persuade her she could no longer live in the rustic cabin behind Alice's Restaurant. It was too remote, and she could no longer drive. She told us that if we would not support her living as she wanted, she would find people who would. Two weeks later, amid COVID, we relented. She passed away gently, in her sleep Oct. 5 in the redwood cabin she loved. The head banana. Accountable to herself.

Rosenstiel is survived by her three children, Karina Buck of Los Angeles, California, Beth Rosenstiel of Big Lake, Washington, and Tom Rosenstiel of Washington, D.C., five grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

A memorial will be planned. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests a donation in Joyce Rosenstiel's memory to either Friends of the Woodside Library woodsidefriends.org/donate or Rancho Del Oso Nature and History Center ranchodeloso.org/donate. ■

Tom Rosenstiel's first newspaper job was a summer internship at the *The Almanac*. He later worked as a national correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times* and *Newsweek* and directed the media research at the Pew Research Center. He is a Professor of the Practice at the University of Maryland Philip Merrill College of Journalism.



Courtesy Tom Rosenstiel

Joyce Rosenstiel hiking at Rancho Del Oso in Santa Cruz County.

CRIME BRIEFS

Two Atherton residences burglarized over the weekend

The Atherton Police Department reported that two residential burglaries occurred in the town over the weekend at houses on Catalpa Drive and Fairfax Avenue.

According to a news bulletin from the town of Atherton, police responded to a house on Catalpa Drive on Friday, Nov. 8, after a resident contacted them to report a burglary. The resident reported that a person or group of people entered the house between 7:30-10:30 p.m., ransacked several rooms and took miscellaneous items.

On Saturday, Nov. 9, officers responded to a house on Fairfax Avenue after a resident reported that someone had broken in through a sliding door window sometime between Thursday, Nov. 7, and Nov. 9. The master bedroom had been rummaged through and various items were taken.

According to Atherton Police Cmdr. Dan Larsen, items taken from the two homes include a crystal vase, designer purses, various jewelry items, a safe and a U.S. passport.

So far, there have been 26 residential burglaries in Atherton this year, along with two commercial burglaries and three auto burglaries, said Larsen.

Police do not yet know if it was one or multiple people that broke into the houses. The Atherton Police Department is asking anyone who lives around Catalpa Drive or Fairfax Avenue to check their surveillance video systems, and report any suspicious activity to the police department by calling 650-688-6500.

— Eleanor Raab

SLAC

continued from page 5

in humanity's understanding of the basic building blocks of atoms and matter. The J/Psi particle that the two teams had jointly discovered was unlike anything that scientists had previously encountered.

"The suddenness of the discovery coupled with the totally unexpected properties of the particle are what make it so exciting," wrote Richter in a press release at the time of the discovery.

The discovery was so disruptive, that the event is now known as the "November Revolution" in particle physics.

The discovery of the J/Psi particle by Richter and Ting's teams verified the existence of an atomic building block called the charm quark, and led to the widespread acceptance of what is now known as the "Standard Model" of particle physics. This earned the two men the 1976 Nobel Prize in physics.

"The discovery of this particle, the J/Psi, was absolutely crucial, because it turned out, first of all, that no one's theory had predicted it," said Peskin. "So all of a sudden we go from many models, uncertainty and arguments ... to now you have to say



Eleanor Raab

SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory is celebrating 50 years since the discovery of the J/Psi particle, which completely changed theories of particle physics.

quarks are real, and we have to build our theory around that."

The discovery of the J/Psi particle paved the way for many other breakthroughs in particle physics, including the detection of the famed Higgs boson by the ATLAS experiment at CERN, the particle that is thought to be responsible for creating mass.

The ATLAS collaboration is an international group of physicists conducting a large particle detection experiment at the Large Hadron Collider at CERN in Switzerland with ATLAS, one of the largest particle detectors at the collider.

This is the group that achieved the first experimental observation of the Higgs boson. SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory has many physicists, computer scientists and other technicians involved in the ATLAS experiment.

Prajita Bhattarai, another research assistant with the ATLAS collaboration, said that since the J/Psi particle has now been measured extensively, it can be used to calibrate machines at the Large Hadron Collider that measure other particles that we know less about.

"It has been 50 years since the



Courtesy SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory, Archive and History Office

Burton Richter (left) and Samuel Ting (right) at SLAC for the 10th Anniversary symposium of the November Revolution, Nov. 14, 1984.

discovery (of the J/Psi particle), so it has been measured really, really well," she said. "So we can use this resonance to calibrate for the objects where we don't know precisely how well our detector will be able to measure them."

Peskin said that SLAC's physicists, as well as other scientists around the world, will continue to build upon the large leap in understanding that was gained through the discovery of the J/Psi particle in 1974.

"Now we can begin to get at the questions that the Standard Model (of particle physics) doesn't answer," said Peskin. "Things like, why are some particles heavier than others? ... Why does the Higgs boson do what it does? These are the frontier questions in particle physics today, and ... (the J/Psi) discovery gave us the tools to explore these questions." ■

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



Parents:

is it that time of the school year?

- Declining grades
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- Frequent refusals to attend school
- Arguments about homework
- Struggles with organization
- Falling behind in classes
- Signs of depression or anxiety

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San Mateo County approves state's first county-level plan for autonomous vehicles

The plan identifies the current local, statewide, and federal policies and regulatory frameworks for autonomous vehicles

By Simmerdeep Kaur

The San Mateo County Transportation Authority Board of Directors accepted California's first county-level automated vehicle strategic plan at its November meeting.

The plan identifies the current local, statewide, and federal policies and regulatory frameworks for autonomous vehicles. It seeks to establish a shared vision for AV deployment that aligns with both county and state objectives.

The project also aims to identify opportunities and challenges related to AV deployment and pilot projects and prioritize the next steps for implementing initiatives in the AV Strategic Plan.

"This plan includes recommendations on how the transportation authority will prioritize funding to advance AV pilots, projects and activities in the county," said TA Board of Directors Chair Carlos Romero in a press release.

The plan has five pillars: agency readiness, infrastructure,

outreach and partnerships, policy and AV pilots. According to the authority board, each pillar provides a structured approach for agencies to prepare for the presence of AVs on roadways.

This is a \$220,000 project funded by a TA grant with support from the City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County. The project was planned in response to rapid advancements in transportation technology.

The C/CAG Board of Directors also planned to accept the AV Strategic Plan on Thursday,



Adam Pardee

A self-driving Waymo vehicle sits parked in front of Civic Center Plaza during a tech showcase in downtown Mountain View.

Nov. 14, after The Almanac's Wednesday afternoon press deadline. ■

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LAS LOMITAS

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administrators ordered at least \$38,879 in food and groceries, most from local restaurants or through DoorDash and ezCater.

District parent Susanna Chennete originally requested credit card statements and shared it with this news organization. This news organization verified the authenticity of the documents. She said she was prompted to request the credit card statements because the district claimed it could not afford to pay teachers more.

This news organization divided charges into categories — including food, groceries and Amazon purchases — based on the descriptions listed on the statements. Due to the limited information available on the statements, each category may not include a complete list of relevant charges.

The Almanac requested over 100 receipts, as well as the most recent credit card statement from Oct. 10 to Nov. 10, but did not receive a response in time for publication.

\$2K on a lunch at Cafe Wisteria, frequent DoorDash orders

District administrators dined at local restaurants, spending \$3,004.22 at Left Bank in Menlo Park on March 29, \$2,094.27 at Cafe Wisteria on April 19, and \$1,034.53 at Left Bank again on Feb. 23.

However, the bulk of spending consisted of smaller catering orders. Administrators ordered catering through ezCater at least 31 times and DoorDash at least 28 times.

This news organization asked Superintendent Beth Polito and board President Heather Hopkins

if they thought this spending was appropriate and if there was a policy governing when administrators should order food on the taxpayer dime. Neither answered those questions. Polito said in a statement, "Outside auditors review our books three times a year to provide an annual report to the board of any mismanagement of resources. We have received no findings of any kind for many years."

"The context behind each of these credit card charges is really important. For example, when staff travel together, they will often put multiple staff hotel stays and group meals on the corporate card. We also typically use cards to pay for local retirement parties and the like," she added.

Every administrator that had food expenses in the past year, including Polito, was given a list of their credit card charges and an opportunity to provide context on their spending. Few did.

Las Lomitas Elementary School Administrative Assistance Deanna Celis said that the \$213.18 trip to Dutch Goose was a holiday event for classified staff. The \$258.51 Avanti's Pizza order and \$243.16 DoorDash order for LuLu's Mexican restaurant were meeting lunches for teachers. She added that all three were approved by Las Lomitas Elementary School Principal Alain Camou.

"I can honestly state that all charges made to DoorDash, Starbucks and Woodside Bakery were for school-related events such as staff appreciation, lunch meetings with staff, and Principals' Coffee. The latter is a parent facing event that happens every couple of months. Staff appreciation and lunch meetings happen throughout

the course of the year," Camou said separately via email.

The records obtained only include spending on district credit cards. District staff also purchased food using their personal accounts and submitted them for reimbursement from the district.

Travel expenses

In September, five district administrators and one teacher flew to New York to attend the Mossflower Think Tank. The administrators were Superintendent Polito, Principal Camou, La Entrada Middle School Principal Bjorn Wickstrom, Assistant Superintendent Valerie Park and Director of Student Services Marta Batlle.

While in New York, district administrators dined at two restaurants by Michelin-starred chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten: ABC Kitchen and ABC Cocina. Administrators also stayed in The Wallace, a four-star hotel on the Upper West Side.

This news organization requested all expenses related to the trip but has yet to receive them.

A credit card charge from Aug. 22 indicates that Polito upgraded to first or business class on a United Airlines flight.

This news organization also requested reimbursement requests relating to every taxpayer-funded trip in the past year. According to Beltramo, "The district does not maintain a running log of who submitted reimbursement requests, nor of the people who have engaged in an activity that may result in a travel reimbursement request."

The district told The Almanac that it would allocate 30 minutes per week to search for reimbursement requests.

A review of older credit card statements showed that this behavior is nothing new.

Polito stayed at the San Francisco Four Seasons Hotel in 2023 at least twice, costing the district \$861.09. In a phone interview, she said she was there to interview Loyola Marymount graduate students as part of their credentialing process. She defended the choice to stay at one of the most famous luxury hotels saying that she got a good deal through Hotels.com.

On an October 2022 trip to New York, Polito ate at the two-Michelin-starred restaurant Jean-Georges which cost the district \$218.91.

Board looking into third-party audit

During its Nov. 6 board meeting, the board discussed hiring an auditor to review spending on district credit cards and travel reimbursements.

Multiple trustees advocated against paying for a third-party audit due because they believed it would not provide new information.

"I don't have a problem with a third-party audit except I don't think we should be spending money on it. We aren't going to get any real insight except for 'yes these expenses occurred,'" said Trustee Paige Winikoff. "The broader issue is how we are spending money and any transparency we can provide would be helpful."

Trustee Gautam Nadella said he would like to know a couple of facts first before making a decision like costs and what the firm would be doing.

"I think we need to dig into this sooner rather than later but right now I can't ask we approve an audit without more details," he said during the meeting.

The board discussed having the San Mateo County Office of Education audit district credit card spending at no cost to the district. During the meeting, members of the board stated they were unsure of what the process was and what the result would be. The board eventually directed the finance committee, consisting of Trustee Jason Morimoto and Nadella, to contact the Office of Education and start that process.

"The board has committed to a third-party audit of past credit-card charges to ensure alignment with district policy, and identify corrections, if needed. We will also reevaluate current district policies and practices related to credit-card expenditures and reimbursements to make sure they reflect best practices and the district's current needs," board President Heather Hopkins said in a statement to this news organization.

Hopkins said that Morimoto has reached out to the San Mateo County Office of Education to request a third-party audit but did not answer questions about how the audit would work or if the office has agreed to conduct it.

The Almanac asked Morimoto and County Superintendent of Schools Nancy Magee if either are considering an AB 139 Extraordinary Audit, which occurs when the county superintendent suspects "fraud, misappropriation of funds, or other illegal fiscal practices have occurred that merit examination."

"The County Office is working with the district to understand their needs and how we can best support them," Magee responded. ■

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SHERIFF'S OFFICE

continued from page 5

that she is having an affair with her chief of staff, used racist and homophobic slurs, and retaliated against her employees.

In an emailed joint statement released just before Corpus's press conference, the DSA and the Organization of Sheriff's Sergeants alleged that the timing of Tapia's arrest, just before the county's independent report was released, suggests "whistle-blower retaliation." Tapia spearheaded the unions' vote of no confidence against Corpus and her chief of staff, Victor Aenlle.

"This is not a coincidence," the unions wrote. "Existing policy mandates that any allegation of criminal misconduct against sheriff's office employees must be referred to the District Attorney's office."

Corpus said that she made the decision to arrest Tapia on Tuesday because of "substantial evidence that there was a crime that's been committed." She said she "will not turn a blind eye" when there is evidence of a crime. She also claimed that her investigators "shared and conferred evidence with the District Attorney's office" before arresting Tapia.

"It's never easy when one of your own is involved in alleged criminal activity," said Corpus during her press conference. "I must share with you the difficult but necessary decision to arrest a deputy within our office."

"No one is above the law, and we are committed to accountability at every level," she added.

District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe confirmed in an email to this news organization that the Sheriff's Office let his office know that they had investigated Tapia for fraud and planned to arrest him, but that "they did not ask for (the District Attorney's office's) opinion."

"We will review the Sheriff's Office police reports and determine whether Mr. Tapia committed a crime, and whether it can be proven beyond a reasonable doubt," said Wagstaffe.

Following Corpus' press conference, Tapia said in a statement to the press that he "will not be intimidated by our sheriff" and that he will continue to "faithfully represent" the interests of DSA union members.

"I look forward to the District Attorney's review of this investigation, and I'm confident that I will be vindicated," he said.

According to a copy of Tapia's bail receipt, which the DSA and OSS released with their joint statement, Tapia was charged with grand theft and fraud, also known as "theft

by false pretenses." Wagstaffe confirmed that more specifically, he was arrested for felony time card fraud. The California penal code definitions of these crimes can include theft of labor of \$950, such as by clocking in and out early or late.

Wagstaffe said that Tapia has not yet been charged with anything by the District Attorney's office, as the reports for the arrest have not yet been submitted by the Sheriff's Office as of Wednesday morning, Nov. 13.

Corpus also alleged that Mueller and County Executive Mike Callagy are friends with Tapia and accused both men of "meeting behind closed doors." She said these allegations raise questions about attempts to undermine her office and urged Mueller and Callagy to "remain on the right side of the law."

Mueller said in an email to this news organization that these allegations are "simply a fabrication."

"I haven't spoken to Mr. Tapia in months," he said. "I can't help but wonder if this perception played a role in the Sheriff's decision to arrest him."

At the county's press conference, Corzo shared that Tapia was arrested without the involvement of the San Mateo County District Attorney's office.

"We know that Mr. Tapia was arrested today without a warrant issued by the district attorney," said Corzo. "We find the timing and circumstances surrounding this arrest to be highly troubling especially given the other findings of Judge Cordell's investigation."

400+-page report findings

The investigation by Judge LaDoris H. Cordell, which was commissioned by the county following "an unprecedented volume of complaints brought forward ... against members of (Corpus') executive leadership team," reported that 12 out of 15 allegations against the Sheriff's Office were sustained. The findings revealed issues of intimidation, retaliation and abuse of power within Corpus's executive team, according to the 408-page independent investigation report released following the county press conference Tuesday.

In the report, Cordell recommended that Corpus step down and Aenlle be terminated immediately. The Board of Supervisors has released Judge Cordell's full 408-page report with evidence on their website.

Sustained allegations include a personal relationship between Corpus and Aenlle, Corpus' use of homophobic and racial slurs, Aenlle's abuse of authority with Corpus' approval, Aenlle's lack of duty requirements met for

a level one deputy, retaliation and intimidation by Corpus and her team and Anelle's improper possession of suppressed rifles.

The investigator also found sufficient evidence that Aenlle had a conflict of interest when negotiating the lease for the Broadway property to use for a proposed child care center, Aenlle did not follow protocol for the selection of the Broadway property's contractor and that Aenlle did not follow county procurement policies, according to Cordell's report.

Allegations that Corpus and Aenlle improperly issued concealed carry weapon permits were found to be unfounded. Exonerated allegations include Aenlle improperly removing social media posts criticizing him and Corpus and claims that Corpus, Undersheriff Dan Perea and Assistant Sheriff Matthew Fox improperly possess suppressed rifles.

The Board of Supervisors planned to hold a special meeting at 4 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 13, after The Almanac's Wednesday afternoon press deadline, to discuss the report's findings and vote on the county's course of action in response to them.

"Judge Cordell's independent investigation contains findings that are unprecedented in the history of San Mateo County government. The sheriff and her chief of staff's reprehensible conduct demands full transparency and immediate action," said Mueller at the press conference. "The Board of Supervisors is committed to addressing these issues to the fullest extent permitted by California law."

Mueller said that the county could take any or multiple of the following actions:

- Censuring Corpus
- Calling for Corpus' resignation
- Removing Aenlle from his role
- Referring the report to the District Attorney's office and civil grand jury

"While the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors does not currently have independent authority to remove the sheriff, the board may consider bringing a (county) charter amendment in an election to ask the voters for the authority to do so," said Mueller.

"It is my belief that the report lays out the case clearly: Sheriff Corpus' tenure as sheriff must come to an end, whether by resignation or removal," he said.

A call for resignation from the Board of Supervisors would be essentially symbolic, as they do not currently have the legal authority to remove her outright without action from a grand jury.

After the press conference,

state Sen. Josh Becker, D-Menlo Park, took to X, formerly known as Twitter, to voice his support for the Board of Supervisors.

"I was disturbed to read the report by Judge LaDoris Cordell. I have considerable concerns about the Sheriff's ability to fulfill her obligations to the residents of San Mateo County," said Becker on X. "I stand with the Board of Supervisors as they work through these issues with the Sheriff."

Jim Lawrence, chair of Fixin' San Mateo County, a local grassroots organization, also shared a statement on Nov. 13 in support of the Board of Supervisors and their call for Corpus to resign. The organization urges the board to appoint an inspector general and to task the Independent Citizen Advisory Committee to review Cordell's findings and advise in next steps.

"This report underscores the urgent need for independent oversight to safeguard public trust and ensure accountability within our law enforcement," said Lawrence. "Judge Cordell's findings highlight the critical role an Inspector General would play in San Mateo County. If we are to regain confidence in the Sheriff's Office, we must establish robust oversight mechanisms now."

Corpus responds

In response to Mueller's call for her resignation and the possibility that the board may formally call for her resignation at the special meeting that has been called, Corpus said that the board has no legal authority over her office, that they cannot force her to resign and that she will not resign, even if the board calls for her to do so.

"I respect the people of this county too much to walk away when there is a righteous fight underway," she said at her second press conference of the night. "(It is) a fight against the good ol' boy system in this

county that is corrupt."

Corpus held two press conferences — one just before the county's and another a few hours afterward — in response to the investigation's findings released to the public.

At the second press conference, Corpus denied all allegations made in the county's report and said that the report was "outright slander" and that she was "disgusted at how low these people will go," referring to the county officials who commissioned the report. She claimed that she is being targeted by those in power because she "represents change" and is trying to take down what she calls the "good ol' boys" system in the Sheriff's Office.

"Anyone who knows me knows that I would not use racist words. I am not capable of that," she said. "These allegations are absolutely not true. These are lies. ... What I can tell you is that it is a biased report."

Corpus alleged that screenshots that showed her using homophobic language in text messages, which were included as exhibits in the report, were fabricated.

"I do not recognize those text messages, it looks very fabricated to me," she said at the second press conference. "I don't speak like that."

She also explicitly denied having an inappropriate personal relationship with Aenlle when asked and said that accusations of an affair are sexist.

"I have a personal relationship with Mr. Aenlle, and with all my employees," she said in response to the report. "I've been dealing with this rhetoric my entire career. ... I have addressed this, I have talked about it; Victor Aenlle and I are friends." ■

Email Staff Writers Eleanor Raab and Jennifer Yoshikoshi at eraab@almanacnews.com and jyoshikoshi@almanacnews.com.

OBITUARIES

Local residents who died recently include:

Diana Plummer, 86, who emigrated from England to Palo Alto in 1961 to work at the Department of Computer Science at Stanford, who was a keen gardener and is remembered for her charm and her beautiful smile.

Basant Khaitan, 77, who was born in Calcutta but ventured to California in 1971 for his degree in electrical engineering and computer sciences, who went on to design the Register and Arithmetic Logic chip that was the heart of the industry's first 16-bit microprocessor and earn two patents, who co-founded vEngines and is remembered for his commitment to his family, travel and other pursuits.

Dan Stober, 75, who was a journalist, backpacker, cyclist, family man, and adored father and husband, who was born and began his career in Florida before moving to the Bay Area to work for The Mercury News, after which he joined the Stanford News Service in 2007 as a science writer, then served as the director of news and media relations.

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



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What Journalism means to me ...and why it should matter to you



“Journalism.” Such a simple word, but with complex interpretations. To me, journalism is about storytelling. So let me tell you a story.”

Kort Van Bronkhorst

Rusty Van Bronkhorst, Kort's mother, was an original investor and board member of Embarcadero Media Corp. upon its founding in 1979. Kort was honored to take her seat on the board upon her passing in 2012.

My mother was born in Palo Alto in 1932 and lived on Fulton Street. As a child she helped out in the family business at the Golden Crescent Bakery on University Avenue. She went on to attend Palo Alto High School, and then worked on Page Mill Road at H-P, where she met and married my father. In 1958, I was born in Palo Alto, soon followed by two brothers, at which time we moved from Menlo Park to Portola Valley.

As a student at Woodside High School, I was recruited by the school paper to be its business manager, but I quickly found my writing voice and did double duty. The power and importance of the written word made an impression on me, so much that I pursued this path in college. At the University of Oregon, I obtained my B.S. in Journalism, albeit with an emphasis on advertising – a different kind of storytelling. Yet the J-School curriculum instilled in me all the principles and best practices of good journalism, no matter the implementation.

Upon graduation in 1980 I returned home and took up residence in Palo Alto, directly across the street from the flailing Peninsula Times Tribune. I worked for an ad agency downtown, just as my mother was investing in a new newspaper called The Palo Alto Weekly. She believed fervently that Palo Alto, and indeed the entire southern peninsula area, needed a stronger and more focused voice to inform its citizens.

As the Weekly grew, so did its staff. My wife (also a journalism major) even joined the ad sales team for several years, before creating and penning her own column, “Shoptalk.” The company became the Embarcadero Media Corporation, and it garnered numerous prizes from the CNPA for editorial excellence, which it has continued to do.

Cut to today: my two children, born in Palo Alto and schooled in Mountain View, both went to college at Oregon, where one was a Journalism major and the other minored in it. My mother served on the board of Embarcadero until her passing in 2012, at which time I took her seat. As everyone knows, the media landscape and the revenue models have all changed dramatically, imperiling news organizations of all types and sizes. The fact that Embarcadero Media is still going is a testament to the dedication of our staff and our management, who have found creative ways to continue producing compelling journalism with integrity, even in the face of this change.

My story above is littered with mentions of Palo Alto, Menlo Park, Portola Valley, Woodside, Mountain View. This is where my family is from, where we have roots. This is one of the most remarkable places in America in terms of opportunity and prosperity. Even though I now live in the Napa Valley, I remain dedicated to doing all that I can to help keep this enterprise flourishing. Too many things happen in your local communities that you need to know about. You need to hear these stories. And without local media you can trust, how will you hear about them?

My mother had the foresight to invest in the vision that the Palo Alto Weekly represented. I have recently donated to the (now) Embarcadero Media Foundation because I want to see it continue to serve my hometowns. I'm not usually one to quote song lyrics, but Joni Mitchell comes to mind today:

“Don't it always seem to go, that you don't know what you got 'til it's gone?”

If you share my vision and my fear, then I hope you will join me in contributing. There are so many stories yet to tell.

Bio: Kort was born in Palo Alto and lived 52 years on the peninsula before eventually moving to the Napa Valley. A graduate of the University of Oregon Journalism School, Kort built a 35-year career in advertising and marketing for several Silicon Valley companies. He also managed his own agency for 14 years. He is now president of the Napa Chapter of the California Civil Grand Jury Association.



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Public Notices

PACIFIC SHORES LANDSCAPING
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-298679

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) PACIFIC SHORES LANDSCAPING, located at 303 Twin Dolphin Drive Suite 600, Redwood City, California 94065.
Mailing Address: PO BOX 1029 Redwood City, CA 94064.

Registered owner(s):
PACIFIC VISTAS GROUP, INC.
303 Twin Dolphin Drive Suite 600 Redwood City, CA 94065
State of Incorporation/Organization: CALIFORNIA
This business is conducted by: a Corporation.
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 02, 2024.
(ALM Nov 15, 22, 29 and Dec 6, 2024)

FIFTH SUN VETERINARY IMAGING PC
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-299005

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) FIFTH SUN VETERINARY IMAGING PC, located at 1265 Eaton Ave, San Carlos, CA, 94070. Mailing Address: 1401 21st St STE R Sacramento, CA 95811
Registered owner(s):
FIFTH SUN VETERINARY IMAGING PC
1401 21st St STE R
Sacramento, CA 95811
State of Incorporation/Organization: CA
This business is conducted by: a Corporation.
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 November 07, 2024.
(ALM Nov 15, 22, 29 and Dec 6, 2024)

GOLDEN STATE VALLEY CONSTRUCTION
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-298748

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) GOLDEN STATE VALLEY CONSTRUCTION, located at 1775 Tulane Ave, East Palo Alto, CA 94303.
Registered owner(s):
V J PALO ALTO CONSTRUCTION
1775 Tulane Ave
East Palo Alto, CA 94303
State of Incorporation/Organization: CA
This business is conducted by: a Corporation.
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 09, 2024.
(ALM Oct 25, Nov 1, 8 and 15, 2024)

CULTIVATE GROWTH MARKETING
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-298845

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) CULTIVATE GROWTH MARKETING, located at 1065 Lupin Way, San Carlos, CA 94070.
Registered owner(s):
PROPERTIES ON THE PENINSULA LLC
1065 Lupin Way
San Carlos, CA 94070
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 10/8/2024.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on October 21, 2024.
(ALM Nov 1, 8, 15 and 22, 2024)

WELCH ROAD APARTMENTS
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-298925

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) WELCH ROAD APARTMENTS, located at 3603 Alameda de las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025.
Registered owner(s):
ROBINSON FINANCIAL CORPORATION
3603 Alameda de las Pulgas
Menlo Park, CA 94025
State of Incorporation/Organization: CA
This business is conducted by: a Corporation.
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 28, 2024.
(ALM Nov 8, 15, 22 and 29, 2024)

EXPRESS CARWASH
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-298740

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) EXPRESS CARWASH, located at 339 Dumbarton Ave, Redwood City CA 94063.
Registered owner(s):
ISELA GARCIA
339 Dumbarton Ave
Redwood City CA 94063
NOE GARCIA
339 Dumbarton Ave
Redwood City CA 94063
This business is conducted by: a Married Couple.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 09/02/2019.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on October 09, 2024.
(ALM Nov 15, 22, 29 and Dec 6, 2024)

EVERGREEN WEAR
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-298836

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) EVERGREEN WEAR, located at 731 Claridge Dr., Pacifica, CA 94044.
Registered owner(s):
MAE AAITKO
731 Claridge Dr.
Pacifica, CA 94044
State of Incorporation/Organization: CA
This business is conducted by: a Corporation.
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 21, 2024.
(ALM Nov 1, 8, 15 and 22, 2024)

LAVINIA RECORDS
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-299008

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) LAVINIA RECORDS, located at 520 Midway Ave, Colma, CA 94015.
Registered owner(s):
TATIANA BOOKBINDER

520 Midway Avenue
Colma CA 94015
This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 5/4/2019.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on November 07, 2024.
(ALM Nov 15, 22, 29 and Dec 6, 2024)

NOTICE OF PETITION TO ADMINISTER ESTATE OF:
DARRELL BROOKS
Case No.: 24-PRO-01336

To all heirs, beneficiaries, creditors, contingent creditors, and persons who may otherwise be interested in the will or estate, or both, of DARRELL BROOKS. A Petition for Probate has been filed by: Suzanne Nourmand in the Superior Court of California, County of SAN MATEO. The Petition for Probate requests that: Suzanne Nourmand be appointed as personal representative to administer the estate of the decedent. THE PETITION requests authority to administer the estate under the Independent Administration of Estates Act. (This authority will allow the personal representative to take many actions without obtaining court approval. Before taking certain very important actions, however, the personal representative will be required to give notice to interested persons unless they have waived notice or consented to the proposed action.) The independent administration authority will be granted unless an interested person files an objection to the petition and shows good cause why the court should not grant the authority.

A HEARING on the petition will be held on December 04 2024 at 9:00 AM in Dept. 1 of the Superior Court of California, County of San Mateo, located at Southern Branch 400 County Center Redwood City, CA 94063. If you object to the granting of the petition, you should appear at the hearing and state your objections or file written objections with the court before the hearing. Your appearance may be in person or by your attorney.

If you are a creditor or a contingent creditor of the decedent, you must file your claim with the court and mail a copy to the personal representative appointed by the court within the later of either (1) four months from the date of first issuance of letters to a general personal representative, as defined in section 58 (b) of the California Probate Code, or (2) 60 days from the date of mailing or personal delivery to you of a notice under section 9052 of the California Probate Code. Other California statutes and legal authority may affect your rights as a creditor. You may want to consult with an attorney knowledgeable in California law. You may examine the file kept by the court. If you are a person interested in the estate, you may file with the court a Request for Special Notice (form DE-154) of the filing of an inventory and appraisal of estate assets or of any petition or account as provided in Probate Code section 1250. A Request for Special Notice form is available from the court clerk.
Attorney for Petitioner:
Marty J. Nicholson, Esquire
P. O. Box 891593
Temecula, CA 92589
951-219-5230
(ALM Nov 8, 15 and 22, 2024)

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

'Portola Valley at 60' film screening, Nov. 19

What makes Portola Valley special? A diverse group of residents was asked this question. The answers highlighted the sense of community, natural beauty, and positivity that are central to life in the town. A short documentary, "Portola Valley at 60," seeks to answer that question.

Join a screening of Portola Valley volunteers Charlie Krenz and Ateret Haselkorn's film on Nov. 19 from noon to 1 p.m. at the Portola Valley Library, 765 Portola Road. The pair will answer any questions people have about the film. Donuts and tea will be served.

You can hang around after for a chance to show your affection for Portola Valley through a postcard, personalized by you.

The film is also posted on the town's YouTube channel.

— Angela Swartz

Menlo Park school projects awarded Jeanie Ritchie Grants

The Menlo Park-Atherton Education Foundation announced that it has awarded \$51,250 in Jeanie Ritchie Innovation Grants to 31 projects led by Menlo Park City School District teachers and staff.

The Jeanie Ritchie Grant program began in 1984 to honor Jeanie Ritchie, a founder of the Menlo Park-Atherton Education Foundation. The grants are annually provided by the foundation to the school district in part of the foundation's motto, "Investing in Education. Together."

Grants ranged from \$222 to \$3,190 to provide financial support for teachers to integrate "innovative curriculum, projects and experiences in the classroom." The mission of the grant is to allow teachers to pursue innovative programs in their classrooms and schools.

"We are thrilled to support many of our dedicated teachers who have received the Jeanie Ritchie Grant, which will empower our students to think, explore, and dream like scientists!" said MPCSD Associate Superintendent Jammie Behrendt in a prepared statement. "This year's grants focus on teachers' commitments to hands-on, inquiry-based learning, where every student can dive into the wonders of science and become a curious investigator of the world around them."

MPAEF also continued its partnership with the California Water Service for a second year to provide \$6,250 to fund grant projects focused on water conservation. MPCSD has also provided an additional \$20,000 from last school year's MPAEF Auction Fund-a-Need to support projects focused on the theme of "Students as Scientists."

Find the list of awardees on mpaef.org/innovation-grants.

Phillips Brooks School's new head of school

The Phillips Brooks School Board of Trustees in Menlo Park announced Jennifer Bohnen as the new head of school on Nov. 11. Bohnen was unanimously selected by the board and will start on July 1, 2025, according to a press release.

"We are thrilled to welcome Jennifer Bohnen to Phillips Brooks School," said Puja Batra, chair of the PBS Board of Trustees. "Jennifer's extensive experience in building collaborative school communities, combined with her warm and approachable leadership style, makes her the ideal leader to guide PBS into the future."

Bohnen brings more than 25 years of experience as an educator, administrator and leader. She is currently the head of school at Green Hedges School in Washington, D.C.

"I am deeply honored and thrilled to become part of Phillips Brooks School, a community I have long admired. The school's mission — 'to inspire students to love learning, to develop a spiritual nature, to communicate effectively, to be kind to others, and to respect the uniqueness of each person' — is closely aligned with my own values. I am excited to support and champion these principles in the years to come," said Bohnen in a prepared statement.

— Jennifer Yoshikoshi

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Artscene

PEOPLE AND PERFORMANCES IN ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

The more the merrier

Our guide to a flurry of Peninsula holiday events — no dashing through the snow required

By Heather Zimmerman and Julia Brown

While Thanksgiving is still a couple of weeks away, holiday preparations are in full swing around the Peninsula.

For those who love the musical and performing arts traditions that accompany the holidays, there are multiple productions of “The Nutcracker” plus Smuin Contemporary Ballet’s Christmas Ballet and concerts from Latin music legend Jose Feliciano (the “Feliz Navidad” hitmaker), Hanukkah-themed shows by a cappella vocal band Six13 and more.

Shopping opportunities abound at markets and holiday shows featuring locally made wares and gifts, including food, decor and artwork. Tree-lighting ceremonies will light up the night, making spirits (and dark skies) bright. And find Santa Claus popping up for photo opps with families and pets. All that and more are in store for the 2024 holiday season — here’s how and where to celebrate.

DANCE

Pacific Ballet Academy Nutcracker

Students of Pacific Ballet Academy perform in the company’s 33rd annual production of the ballet. The company’s dancers will greet audiences as they enter the theater. On Nov. 29, the company presents a sensory- and autism-friendly performance of just Act II of the ballet.

Full performances take place Nov. 29, 6 p.m., Nov. 30, 1 and 6 p.m.; and Dec. 1, 1 p.m.; sensory- and autism-friendly performance at 2 p.m. All shows take place at the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, 500 Castro St., Mountain View. Tickets are \$28-\$34 for full performances; \$18 for sensory-friendly performance. tickets.mvcpa.com.

Smuin’s Christmas Ballet

Smuin Contemporary Ballet presents its 29th annual holiday touring production bringing together classical ballet and con-

temporary pieces, set to a variety of holiday-themed music. The 2024 edition includes the premiere of a classical piece by Smuin Artistic Director Amy Seiwert, plus the debuts of two contemporary pieces: company member Brennan Wall’s “Last Christmas” and Smuin alum Rex Wheeler’s “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas.”

Dec. 5-6, 7:30 p.m.; Dec. 7, 2 and 7:30 p.m.; Dec. 8, 2 p.m., at Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, 500 Castro St., Mountain View. \$31-\$104. smuinballet.org.

Dance Connection Nutcracker

The studio presents its 25th annual production, featuring young dancers ages 5 to adults. The company will also stage “Hip-Hop Nutcracker,” offering a modern twist on the holiday ballet.

Nutcracker Dec. 6, 7 p.m., and Dec. 8, 4 p.m.; Hip-Hop Nutcracker Dec. 7, 7 p.m., at Spangenberg

Theatre, 780 Arastradero Road, Palo Alto. \$28-\$45. danceconnectionpaloalto.com.

Ballet America Nutcracker

Academy of American Ballet presents its annual production featuring students performing the family-friendly ballet.

Dec. 7, 2 and 6:30 p.m., and Dec. 8, 1:30 and 4 p.m., at Cañada College Theater, 4200 Farm Hill Blvd., Redwood City. Tickets start at \$20. americanballet.com/nutcracker.

Dance Magic Nutcracker

Dance Magic, a Palo Alto-based school for dancers ages 2 and up, presents its annual production.

Dec. 7, 11:30 a.m. and 2 p.m., at Cubberley Community Center Theatre, 4000 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto. dancemagic.org.

Peninsula Lively Arts Nutcracker and Hip-Hop Nutcracker

The company presents three different “Nutcracker” produc-



Courtesy Chris Hardy

Smuin artists, front to back, Cassidy Isaacson, Tessa Barbour and Terez Dean Orr perform in “The Christmas Ballet,” coming Dec. 5-8 to the Mountain View Center for Performing Arts.



Courtesy Molly Tuttle

Peninsula-raised Grammy-winning bluegrass artist Molly Tuttle returns for “Home for the Holidays,” a concert at The Guild Theatre on Dec. 21. She will also be a special guest with the Terrapin Family Band for a Dec. 20 show at the venue.

tions: “Nutcracker Sweet,” an abridged production of the traditional ballet tailored for young audiences ages 3-6; a full-length traditional production of “The Nutcracker” featuring Peninsula Ballet Theatre’s professional company with students from Peninsula School of the Arts; and “Hip-Hop Nutcracker,” mixing the iconic story and Tchaikovsky’s score with hip-hop dance and featuring a cast of 35 hip-hop dance artists.

“Nutcracker Sweet” Dec. 7-8, 12:30, 2:30 and 4:30 p.m., at Peninsula Lively Arts, 1880 S. Grant St., San Mateo. \$30 ages 9 and under/\$40 regular admission; classic Nutcracker Dec. 21-22, 2 p.m., at the San Mateo Performing Arts Center, 600 N. Delaware St., San Mateo; \$35-\$70; Hip-Hop Nutcracker Dec. 21-22, 2 p.m., at the Fox Theatre, 2215 Broadway, Redwood City; \$35-\$70. peninsulalivelyarts.org.

Western Ballet Nutcracker

Western Ballet presents the traditional holiday ballet in a production that lasts 1 1/2 hours.

Dec. 13, 7 p.m.; Dec. 14, 1 and 7 p.m.; and Dec. 15, 1 p.m., at the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, 500 Castro St., Mountain View. \$42-\$47. tickets.mvcpa.com.

Ramon Moreno School of Ballet Nutcracker

Students of the Ramon Moreno School of Ballet perform a traditional production.

Dec. 14, 1:30 and 7 p.m.; Dec. 15, 1:30 p.m., at Menlo-Atherton Performing Arts Center, 555 Middlefield Road, Atherton. \$49.87. ramonmorenoballet.com/nutcracker.

Bayer Ballet’s Snow Queen

Bayer Ballet Company presents its annual production of a two-act ballet inspired by a Hans Christian Andersen fairytale about a girl who travels through magical lands to rescue her brother after he’s kidnapped by the Snow Queen.

Dec. 20-21, 7 p.m., and Dec. 22, 1 and 7 p.m., Visual and Performing Arts Center, 21250 Stevens Creek Blvd., Cupertino. Tickets on sale soon. bayerballet.com/onstage.

CONCERTS

3rdThursday

Palo Alto’s free monthly outdoor live music event celebrates the holidays. Its November edition, “ThanksCaring,” takes place on Nov. 21 with three bands performing along California Avenue and themed

See **HOLIDAY ARTS**, page 16

HOLIDAY ARTS

continued from page 15

activities. The event marks the season in December with the theme “Winter Holidays,” taking place Dec. 19 and featuring live music by local artists. Some area merchants and restaurants offer specials or extended hours.

Nov. 21 and Dec. 19, 6-9 p.m., along California Avenue, Palo Alto. Free admission. 3rdthursday.fun

Stanford Friends of Music Holiday Musicale

The Friends of Music at Stanford present their annual holiday showcase with festive performances by Department of Music ensembles and guests.

Dec. 7, 2:30 p.m., at Memorial Church, Stanford. \$22-\$27. live.stanford.edu.

Rocky Mountain High Experience: A John Denver Christmas

John Denver tribute artist Rick Schuler plays many highlights from the singer-songwriter's career, including “Sunshine On My Shoulders” and “Take Me Home Country Roads,” along with carols and songs from Denver's holiday specials, such as “Aspenglow.”

Dec. 8, 1 p.m., at The Fox Theatre, 2221 Broadway St., Redwood City. \$76. foxrwc.com.

Kitka's Wintersongs

Women's vocal ensemble Kitka performs their annual concert celebrating the holidays and winter solstice. This year's performance is inspired by a traditional Georgian ritual feast in which all present are encouraged to contemplate what uplifts and connects us.

Dec. 8, 4 p.m., at St. Bede's Church, 2650 Sand Hill Road, Menlo Park. Tickets start at \$31.19. kitka.org.

Woodside Village Band Winter Concert

The band performs a light-hearted program that includes “Sleigh Ride” and “Bugler's Holiday,” selections from “Moana,” “Little Drummer Boys Bolero,” “A Mariachi Christmas” and more.

Dec. 8, 3 p.m. at Woodside High Performing Arts Center, 199 Churchill Ave., Woodside. Admission is free; donations welcome. windband.org/woodside.

Feliz Navidad with Jose Feliciano

Latin music legend Jose Feliciano plays many of his hits, including “Feliz Navidad” and shares memorable stories from his long career.



Courtesy Vita and Bryan Hewitt

Women's vocal ensemble Kitka performs its annual Wintersongs concert Dec. 8 in Menlo Park.

Dec. 11, 7:30 p.m., at The Fox Theatre, 2221 Broadway St., Redwood City. \$77-\$93. foxrwc.com.

Holiday Heist with Jazz Mafia

San Francisco-based musical collective Jazz Mafia brings soul- and jazz-inflected reworkings of holiday tunes including James Brown's “Soulful Christmas,” Tchaikovsky's “Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy” and Vince Guaraldi's “Linus and Lucy.”

Dec. 11, 7 and 9 p.m., at Bing Studio, Stanford. \$15-\$50. live.stanford.edu.

A Chanticleer Christmas

The San Francisco men's chorus performs their annual holiday show at Stanford Live, featuring a new program every year.

Dec. 12, 7:30 p.m. at Memorial Church, Stanford. \$15-\$95. live.stanford.edu.

Meow Meow's Feline Festive Holiday

“Post-post-modern diva” and vocalist Meow Meow rings in the holidays with a concert of jazzy vintage showbiz tunes to original and contemporary classics.



Michelle Le

Ernie's Trains, John Bianco continues his father's tradition of running an electric train display in the front yard of his Mountain View home. Visitors can view the trains nightly except Mondays, Nov. 28 through Dec. 25.

Dec. 13, 7:30 p.m., at Bing Concert Hall, Stanford. \$15-\$50. live.stanford.edu.

Music of a Charlie Brown Christmas

Stanford Jazz Workshop's annual holiday tradition features the Glen Pearson Trio with jazz pianist Glen Pearson, bassist Ruth Davies and drummer Lorca Hart playing Vince Guaraldi's contemporary jazz score for the 1965 TV special “A Charlie Brown Christmas.”

Dec. 13, 7:30 p.m., Dec. 14, 2 and 7:30 p.m., Dec. 15, 2 p.m. at Campbell Recital Hall, Stanford. \$22-\$49. stanfordjazz.org.

Boleros de Navidad with Tres Souls

Los Angeles-based trio Tres Souls specialize in adding a modern spin to the music of the 1940s-'60s, songs from the golden era of Mexican cinema, and boleros. The ensemble presents a bilingual Latin holiday performance.

Dec. 14, 7 p.m., at Bing Studio, Stanford. \$15-\$45. live.stanford.edu.

Carols for a Cause

A bi-coastal, teen-led holiday performance group featuring

members ages 11-19. Their concert this year, titled “Last 5 Years,” aims to raise funds for Facing History and Peninsula College Fund.

Dec. 15, 2 p.m., Palo Alto Art Center Auditorium, 1313 Newell Road Palo Alto. carolsforacause.com.

Oakland Interfaith Choir

Director Terrance Kelly leads the multicultural, interfaith choir in their annual South Bay concert featuring Kelly's gospel arrangements of traditional holiday favorites in a performance that also includes the group's Southbay Workshop Choir.

Dec. 20, 7:30 p.m., at Mountain View Center for Performing Arts, 500 Castro St., Mountain View. \$39-\$55. tickets.mvcpa.com.

Grateful Holiday

The Terrapin Family Band presents its second annual holiday concert, with special guest Molly Tuttle.

Dec. 20, 8 p.m., at The Guild Theatre, 949 El Camino Real, Menlo Park. \$62.57-\$144.85. guildtheatre.com.

Molly Tuttle: Home for the Holidays

Peninsula-born, Grammy-winning bluegrass artist Molly Tuttle returns to town for a holiday show.

Dec. 21, 8 p.m., at The Guild Theatre, 949 El Camino Real, Menlo Park. \$69.53-\$144.85 (show is waitlisted). guildtheatre.com.

Pops Family Christmas Special

The California Pops Orchestra stages its annual concert of holiday favorites, this year featuring music from “Frozen,” “The Grinch,” “White Christmas” plus carols and Christmas standards like “Sleigh Ride.” Kids are invited to join the orchestra on stage for “’Twas the Night Before Christmas.”

Dec. 22, 3 p.m., at Capuchino Performing Arts Center, 1501 Magnolia Ave., San Bruno. \$21-\$61. californiapopsorchestra.com.

You Should Be Dancing

Bee Gees tribute band You Should Be Dancing presents a special holiday show.

Dec. 28, 8 p.m., at The Guild Theatre, 949 El Camino Real, Menlo Park. \$48.09-\$77.64. guildtheatre.com.

CLASSICAL

Bel Canto Flutes

The Mountain View Library hosts the Bel Canto Flutes performing a holiday concert with music from across the ages, including many favorites. The group is an all-flute ensemble with flutes of all sizes and shapes.

Dec. 3, 7 p.m. at the Mountain View Public Library, 585 Franklin St., Mountain View. Free; registration is required. mountainview.libcal.com.

Stanford School of Medicine Holiday Concert

The Stanford Medicine Chorus and Stanford Medicine Orchestra perform a program of classical and contemporary holiday songs, including selections from Tchaikovsky's “Nutcracker” and “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas.” The groups are made up of faculty, staff and students from Stanford Medicine, Stanford Hospital and Lucille Packard Children's Hospital.

Dec. 4, 6:30 p.m. at Bing Concert Hall, Stanford. \$20. live.stanford.edu.

Ragazzi Boys Chorus

With the concert “Sing, Choirs of Angels,” the boys chorus' Concert Group, Choral Scholars and Young Men's Ensemble perform a program of works by Bach, Mendelssohn, Forrest, Rutter and more.

Dec. 7, 7 p.m., at First United Methodist Church of Palo Alto, 625 Hamilton Ave., Palo Alto. ragazzi.org/performances.

Soli Deo Gloria

With “A Vivaldi Christmas: Gloria and Carols,” the choir and instrumental ensemble performs Vivaldi's “Gloria” plus a selection of hymns to Mary by Rachmaninoff, Choate and Bruckner and carols by McDowall and Gardner. The program includes choral and instrumental arrangements by Eric Choate and songs that encourage audience participation.



Courtesy S.M.Lieu

Singers from South Bay choir Schola Cantorum will perform at the Los Altos History Museum's "Catch the Spirit" event on Nov. 20.

Dec. 7, 3:30 p.m., at Grace Lutheran Church, 3149 Waverley St., Palo Alto; additional performance Dec. 8 in Alameda. \$30. sdgloria.org/performances.

Palo Alto Chamber Orchestra

The Palo Alto Chamber Orchestra presents a holiday fundraising concert featuring all five of its youth orchestras with special guest artist Ariana Kim playing Astor Piazzolla's "Four Seasons of Buenos Aires."

Dec. 8, 3 p.m., at Carrington Hall, Sequoia High School, 1201 Brewster Ave., Redwood City. \$25-\$50. pacomusic.org.

Phiharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Chorale

The group presents "A Bach Christmas," featuring selections by J.S. Bach and Christoph Graupner, with soprano Sherzade Panthaki

Dec. 11, 7:30 p.m., at Bing Concert Hall, Stanford. \$15-\$130. philharmonia.org.

Sing-and Play-Along Messiah

Stanford University's Department of Music hosts an annual "sing and play it yourself" celebration of Handel's masterpiece, conducted by Stephen M. Sano, with the University Singers. Orchestral parts will be provided and singers can purchase scores at the door if they don't already own one.

Dec. 13, 7:30 p.m., at Memorial Church, Stanford. \$22-\$27. live.stanford.edu.

Bay Choral Guild

The choir's "Christmas Spectacular" concert features holiday favorites, including selections from "Messiah."

Dec. 14, 7:30 p.m., at First United Methodist Church of Palo Alto, 625 Hamilton Ave., Palo Alto; additional performance Dec. 15 in Campbell. \$10-\$30 in advance/\$10-\$35 at the door. baychoralguild.org.

San Francisco Choral Artists

The choir performs "Christmas on the Edge: Voices from the Pacific Rim," a program that offers an international journey exploring languages from the numerous countries that border the Pacific Ocean, from Chile to Korea, Mexico to Russia.

Dec. 21, 7:30 p.m. at All Saints Episcopal Church, 555 Waverley St., Palo Alto. Tickets are \$15-\$35. sfca.org.

Palo Alto Philharmonic

The orchestra performs the program "Transcending Fate" featuring works by Uebayashi and Beethoven, with guest artist Ráyo Furuta, flute.

Dec. 14, 7:30 p.m., at the Cubberley Theatre, 4000 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto. \$10-\$25. paphil.org.

Peninsula Women's Chorus

"Cultivating Hope" highlights a selection of international holiday songs celebrating Kwanzaa, Christmas and Noche Buena, along with songs of light, faith, and survival. The program includes such works as J.S. Bach's "Suscepit Israel," and "Before I Forget" by the chorus' composer-in-residence, Amy X Neuburg.

Dec. 13, 7 p.m., at First United Methodist Church, 625 Hamilton Ave., Palo Alto, and Dec. 14, 2 p.m., in Santa Clara. \$10-\$50. pwchorus.org.

San Francisco Girls Chorus

Music at Kohl Mansion hosts a holiday concert with Grammy Award-winning youth choir San Francisco Girls Chorus.

Dec. 15, 7 p.m., at Kohl Mansion, 2750 Adeline Drive, Burlingame \$20-\$40. musicatkohl.org.

Schola Cantorum

The choir presents "The Heart of the Season," a concert featuring music and sing-alongs from many faiths and traditions.

Dec. 15, 4 p.m., at Los Altos United Methodist Church, 655 Magdalena Ave., Los Altos. \$30. scholacantorum.org.

Schola Cantorum Messiah Sing

The choir hosts its 58th annual Messiah Sing. The performance features the Christmas section of Handel's composition, along with other favorite movements from the work, and audiences are encouraged to sing along. Scores will be available or you can bring your own.

Dec. 16, 7:30 p.m., at First Congregational Church of Palo Alto, 1985 Louis Road, Palo Alto. \$30/free admission for students under 25, with student ID. scholacantorum.org.

STAGE

Fiddler on the Roof

Palo Alto Players stages the classic musical about Tevye, a poor milkman and his family who live in a tight-knit, traditional Jewish community in imperial Russia.

Through Nov. 24, times vary, at Lucie Stern Theater, 1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto; \$35-\$60; paplayers.org.

Mary Poppins

Peninsula Youth Theatre presents a stage musical inspired by the favorite Disney film and the stories of author P.L. Travers.

Nov. 16-24, times vary, at the Mountain View Center for Performing Arts, 500 Castro St., Mountain View. \$32. <https://pytinet.org/>

The Agitators

The Pear Theatre presents a play that tells of the 45-year

tumultuous friendship of Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass.

Preview on Nov. 21; show runs Nov. 22-Dec. 15, times vary, at The Pear Theatre, 1110 La Avenida, Suite A, Mountain View. Tickets start at \$42 (Nov. 21 preview is \$20). thepear.org/season23.

A Christmas Story: The Musical

Los Altos Stage Company presents a musical adaptation of the favorite holiday movie set in 1940s Indiana, where young Ralphie Parker attempts to convince his parents — and Santa Claus — to bring him a Red Ryder BB gun for Christmas.

Nov. 29-Dec. 22, times vary, at 97 Hillview Ave., Los Altos. Tickets start at \$28. losaltosstage.org/a-christmas-story.

Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley

TheatreWorks Silicon Valley presents a romantic sequel to Jane Austen's classic "Pride & Prejudice" by Lauren Gunderson and Margot Melcon.

Previews Dec. 4-6; show runs Dec. 7-29, times vary, at the Lucie Stern Theatre, 1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto. \$34-\$115 (\$29-\$49 previews). theatreworks.org.

Anastasia

Hillbarn Theatre stages a musical inspired by the animated film that journeys from the waning Russian Empire to the streets of 1920s Paris in telling the story of a brave young woman named Anya on a quest to uncover the mystery of her past.

Dec. 5-29, times vary, at Hillbarn Theatre, 1285 E. Hillsdale Blvd., Foster City. hillbarntheatre.org.

See **HOLIDAY ARTS**, page 18



Courtesy Peninsula Lively Arts

The "Hip-Hip Nutcracker," which takes place Dec. 21-22 at Redwood City's Fox Theatre, is one of three holiday productions staged by Peninsula Lively Arts.

HOLIDAY ARTS

continued from page 17

The Nutcracker

Palo Alto Children's Theatre presents a children's play with dialogue, dance and Tchaikovsky's classic music, based on E.T.A. Hoffmann's story of Clara and the enchanted nutcracker doll that takes her to a magical land. Suggested for ages 3-10.

Dec. 5-22, times vary, at Palo Alto Children's Theatre, 1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto. \$18. bit.ly/PACTNutcracker.

The Secret Garden

Peninsula Youth Theatre presents an original adaptation based on the classic children's book. The performance features a live talkback with the cast and production staff after the show.

Dec. 7, 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m., at SecondStage, Mountain View Center for Performing Arts, 500 Castro St., Mountain View. Call 650-903-6000 for ticket information. pytnet.org.

24-Hour Alumni Musical

Portola Valley Theatre Conservatory invites adult alumni to gather on the afternoon of Dec. 20 and spend the next 24 hours rehearsing a 90-minute musical that will then be performed for the public.

Production takes place Dec. 21, 4 p.m., at Portola Valley Theatre Conservatory, 945 Portola Road, Portola Valley. pvtc-ca.org.

The Gingerbread Man

Palo Alto Children's Theatre presents a 55-minute holiday performance suited for ages 2 to 6.

Dec. 21-23, 10 a.m. and noon, at Palo Alto Children's Theatre, 1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto. \$17. bit.ly/3MfZIm1.

MARKETS AND GALLERIES

Pacific Art League

The Palo Alto-based art institution marks its 103rd anniversary with an exhibition and fundraising sale.

An opening reception takes place Nov. 15, 5:30-8 p.m. The show runs through Jan. 14 at Pacific Art League, 668 Ramona St., Palo Alto. pacificartleague.org.

Gallery House

"In the Moment," a group show in a variety of media by the cooperative gallery's member artists.

Through Jan. 5 at Gallery House, 826 Santa Cruz Ave., Menlo Park. galleryhouse.art.



Devin Roberts

Dailey Combs, the daughter of City Council member Drew Combs, lights the tree at Menlo Park's annual tree lighting event in Fremont Park in 2023.

The Main Gallery

The co-op gallery presents "Celebrations," a group show highlighting works by its member artists in a variety of media.

Through Dec. 24. A reception takes place Dec. 14, 5-7 p.m., at 883 Santa Cruz Ave., Suite 1, Menlo Park. themaingallery.org.

Art on the Square Holiday Show

Visitors can shop for gifts and stocking stuffers made by nearly 30 local artists working in a variety of media, including jewelry, handmade clothing, accessories, ceramics and prints.

Nov. 23, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., at San Mateo County History Museum, 2200 Broadway, Redwood City. Admission is free (museum admission is free on the day of the show). artonthesquarerwc.com.

Christmas at Our House

St. Francis High School hosts a gift boutique with artisans selling gourmet foods, vintage and specialty gift items and holiday decor. The event also offers a student art showcase, live entertainment, a holiday tea and an interactive advent experience. The event benefits the Saint Francis Fund. New for this year is Christmas in the Quad on Dec. 6, with student-led activity stations, entertainment and decor throughout the school's quad.

Dec. 6, 1:30-9 p.m., (boutique) and 5-9 p.m. (Christmas in the Quad), and Dec. 7, 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m. at Burns Pavilion, St. Francis High School, 1885 Miramonte Ave., Mountain View. sfhs.com.

Allied Arts Guild Christmas Market

Shops and vendors at the guild offer gifts and holiday decor.

Dec. 7, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., at Allied Arts Guild, 75 Arbor Road, Menlo Park. Admission is free. For more info, call

Artisan Shop at 650.325.2450 or visit alliedartsguild.org.

Art Center Studio Holiday Sale

The Palo Alto Art Center holds its annual sale featuring jewelry, functional and fine art ceramics, paintings, prints and other artwork created by artists working in the Art Center's studios. The sale raises funds to benefit the artists, studios, and the Palo Alto Art Center Foundation.

Dec. 7, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at the Palo Alto Art Center, 1313 Newell Road, Palo Alto. (Foundation members-only presale held Dec. 7, 9-11 a.m.). cityofpaloalto.org.

Artifactory Holiday Fair

Shop for unique hand-crafted gifts at this fair featuring jewelry, textiles, ceramics, glass, photography, paintings and more by local artists.

Dec. 6-8, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., at Hoover House, 1120 Hopkins Ave., Palo Alto. artifactoryholidayfair.com.

German Holiday Market

The German International School of Silicon Valley hosts its annual holiday marketplace, with traditional seasonal Ger-

man treats, mulled wine, and chocolate, wooden ornaments, nutcrackers and other holiday items, plus food and music. Proceeds benefit the school.

Dec. 14, 11 a.m.-9 p.m., at Mountain View Civic Center Plaza, 500 Castro St., Mountain View. Free admission. germanholidaymarket.org.

HANUKKAH

Six13 Hanukkah Special

Oshman Family JCC presents two Hanukkah-themed shows by Six13, a six-man a cappella vocal band performing a mix of traditional and contemporary Jewish music.

Dec. 15, 4:30 and 6:30 p.m., at Oshman Family JCC, 3921 Fabian Way, Palo Alto. \$30-\$50. paloaltojcc.org.

Hanukkah Craft Party

Families can make their own menorahs, design a personalized dreidel and make unique decorations for the home to enjoy during the eight nights of Hanukkah.

Dec. 15, 3:30 p.m., at Oshman Family JCC, 3921 Fabian Way, Palo Alto. \$18. paloaltojcc.org.

FESTIVALS, TREE LIGHTINGS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Holidays at Filoli

The Filoli estate's gardens and historic mansion are decorated for the holidays. Activities include Bottomless bubbles and live piano music in the Ballroom Signature Lounge; visits with Santa; private fire pit rentals with warm drinks and wine on the terrace; holiday tea in the Garden House, behind-the-scenes house tours, wreath-making workshops and a New Year's Day "hair of the dog" hike. The event kicks off with a holiday preview night on Nov. 15.

Open daily, Nov. 16-Jan. 12, 10 a.m.-9 p.m., (closed Nov.

28 and Dec. 24-25) at Filoli, 86 Cañada Road, Woodside. Reservations are required; ticket prices vary. Fire pit rentals are \$750 for up to eight guests. filoli.org.

IlluminOdyssey

CuriOdyssey hosts a winter light display inspired by the science of light. The four-level Redwood Hall at the science museum and zoo will transform into a glowing forest of interactive exhibits and kid-friendly glowing art.

Open Tuesday-Sunday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. (closed Nov. 28, Dec. 24-25 and Jan. 1) Nov. 16-Jan. 26 at CuriOdyssey, 1651 Coyote Point Drive, San Mateo. Free with museum admission of \$17.95-\$21.95 (plus \$6 park entrance fee). curiodyssey.org.

Winter Lodge

Palo Alto's outdoor ice skating rink is open for public skating.

Open daily, times vary (closed Nov. 28, Dec. 24-25 and Jan. 1; through April 13 at Winter Lodge, 3009 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto. Admission is \$19 per person and skate rental is \$6 per person. Public skating tickets must be purchased online in advance. winterlodge.com/public-skating.

Ernie's Trains

John Bianco, Ernie's son, will continue the tradition of running his model trains from Thanksgiving through Christmas Day. The engines and cars change daily.

Weather permitting, five tracks will run trains every evening except Mondays, Nov. 28 through Dec. 25. at 2387 Adele Ave., Mountain View, from 6:30 to about 9 p.m.

Peace & Social Justice Harvest Fair

Peninsula Peace & Justice Center and First Presbyterian Church host an event featuring local activist groups offering unique gifts and providing information on their work. Free food and beverages.

Nov. 17, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church, 1140 Cowper St., Palo Alto. peaceandjustice.org/harvest-fair-2024.

Los Altos History Museum Catch the Spirit

The museum hosts a celebration with live choral music from choral group Schola Cantorum and the Volare Choir from Los Altos High School, and a sing-along around the piano with Carole Cameron, home-baked treats and unique boutique shopping. All proceeds support the Museum's exhibitions and programs.



Courtesy Jerry Pierce

The Hometown Holidays parade in downtown Redwood City features performances by many local arts and cultural groups. The event takes place Dec. 7 this year.



Courtesy Mike James

The Filoi estate decorates its historic home and lights the extensive gardens, in addition to hosting a variety of activities and events during Holidays at Filoi, through Jan. 12.

Nov. 20, noon-4 p.m., at Los Altos History Museum, 51 S. San Antonio Road, Los Altos. losaltoshistory.org/events.

Après Village and Skate Rink

Skate on an alpine-themed synthetic skate rink at the Four Seasons Hotel Silicon Valley at East Palo Alto, complete with chalets for groups. This year's menu of snacks and treats features an Italian mountain lodge theme.

Open daily, Nov. 22-Jan. 7, 4-9:30 p.m., at Four Seasons Hotel Silicon Valley at East Palo Alto, 2050 University Ave., East Palo Alto. Skate sessions are \$20-\$30 for 45 minutes. fourseasons.com/siliconvalley/apres-village.

Stanford Theatre

The movie theater's holiday schedule kicks off with "The Wizard of Oz" Nov. 22-24 and Nov. 29-Dec. 1. The program also offers double features: the 1964 version of "Mary Poppins" and "Sitting Pretty" Dec. 6-8 and Dec. 13-15 and "The Shop Around the Corner" and "Miracle on 34th Street" Dec. 20-22. The schedule wraps up with two Dec. 24 screenings of "It's a Wonderful Life."

Thursdays-Sundays, screening times vary, Nov. 22-Dec. 22; two screenings of "It's a Wonderful Life" take place on Dec. 24, 4 and 9 p.m., at the Stanford Theatre, 221 University Ave., Palo Alto. \$5-\$7. Advance ticket sales for "It's a Wonderful Life" start on Dec. 7. stanfordtheatre.org.

Friendsgiving

The city of Palo Alto and Magical Bridge host a celebration of kindness and culture that aims to make connections across generations. The event features activities curated by Kafenia Peace Collective and food from favorite Palo Alto restaurants including Evvia, Redwood Grill, Ada's Cafe, iTalico and others.

Plaza, Main and State streets, Los Altos. Santa photos Dec. 7, 2-4 p.m., at Enchante Boutique Hotel, 1 Main St., Los Altos. downtownlosaltos.org/events.

BayLUC Holiday Show

The Bay Area LEGO User Group and BayLTC, the Bay Area L-Gauge Train Club, feature their annual holiday display of miniature scenes and electric trains built from Lego bricks. This year's theme is "Once Upon a Time."

Open Saturdays-Sundays, 11 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Dec. 7-Jan. 11 at the Museum of American Heritage, 351 Homer Ave., Palo Alto. \$4 per person. baylug.org.

Gamble Garden

The historic estate and garden hosts a three-day Winter Festival that includes a grand opening party Dec. 5, a tree-lighting ceremony, a special holiday night with Santa (Dec. 6); a holiday ballet performance; crafts for kids; stilt walkers; holiday teas, music and a festive marketplace featuring vendors and local artisans.

During December, Gamble Garden will also host holiday luncheons, a wreath-making workshop and a tour of the home and its gardens.

Winter Festival takes place Dec. 5-7, times vary; luncheons are held Dec. 10-14, noon-2 p.m.; wreath workshops Dec. 12, 6-8 p.m. and Dec. 14, 2-4 p.m.; house and garden tour Dec. 17, 1:30 p.m. All events take place at Gamble Garden, 1431 Waverley St., Palo Alto. Ticket prices vary by event. gamblegarden.org.

Santa at Stanford Shopping Center

Take a photo with Santa and enjoy a variety of holiday festivities at Stanford Shopping Center. The center also hosts a



Magali Gauthier

Skaters take a break and help each other stay up on the ice rink at the Winter Lodge in Palo Alto in 2021.



Marianna Jamadi

Après Village at Four Seasons Hotel Silicon Valley is an alpine-themed experience with skating, Italian-themed snacks and chalets for groups.

breakfast with Santa Dec. 7, with tasty treats and special guests.

Breakfast with Santa Dec. 7, 9-11 a.m. RSVP requested to breakfastwithsantastanfordsho.splashthat.com. Photos available through Dec. 24, times vary. Photo packages are \$19.99-\$39.99. For Santa photos, visit whereissanta.com. Both events take place at 660 Stanford Shopping Center, Palo Alto.

City of Menlo Park Light Up the Season

Menlo Park holds its annual tree lighting event, with a winter wonderland theme, featuring family-friendly entertainment, photo opportunities, performances by Menlo Park youth and free hot cocoa. Rain or shine.

Dec. 6, 5:30-7 p.m., at Fremont Park, University Drive at Santa Cruz Avenue, Menlo Park. Free admission. menlopark.gov.

City of Palo Alto Tree Lighting

This holiday season kickoff features live music and carols, plus winter treats. Hosted by Mayor Greer Stone.

Dec. 6, 5:30-7 p.m., at Lytton Plaza, University Avenue and Emerson Street, Palo Alto. Also offered virtually. cityofpaloalto.org.

Hometown Holidays

Redwood City Downtown Business Group's 18th annual event includes photos with Santa, carnival rides, food and drink, entertainment, local vendors and community groups, concluding with a parade. Rain or shine.

Dec. 7, 10 a.m.-6 p.m., at Courthouse Square, Redwood City. redwoodcitydowntown.com.

Teddy Bear Tea

Portola Valley Theatre Conservatory hosts a family-friendly event with cookie decorating,

crafts, performances, a photo booth and a special surprise.

Dec. 7, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., at Portola Valley Theatre Conservatory, 945 Portola Road, Portola Valley. Tickets are \$65 for two people/\$85 for three/\$100 for four/\$120 for five/\$150 for six/\$30 each additional ticket. pvtc-ca.org.

Redwood City Tamalada

Chef Steve Cortez of S&C Culinary leads a tamalada, a social gathering to make tamales ahead of the holidays. The event includes a sit-down tamale lunch. Guests will also make tamales to steam at home. Vegan option upon request.

Dec. 7, 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., at Highlands Community Club at 1665 Fernside St., Redwood City. \$86.14 per person. eventbrite.com.

Springline Holiday Extravaganza

An event with live music, food, festive cocktails and hot chocolate, a snow playground with real snow, complimentary photos with Santa, screenings of "The Grinch" and "The Santa Clause" and ornament-making.

Dec. 7, 4-9 p.m., at Springline Menlo Park, 1300 El Camino Real, Menlo Park. Free; registration requested. springline.com.

Atherton Hometown Holiday and Tree Lighting

The town of Atherton hosts a celebration and tree lighting.

Dec. 13, 4-8:30 p.m., at Atherton Town Center, 80 Fair Oaks Lane, 80 Fair Oaks Lane, Atherton, ci.atherton.ca.us.

Find a longer version of this story with more holiday events at almanacnews.com//arts-culture. ■

Email Arts & Entertainment Editor Heather Zimmerman at hzimmerman@almanacnews.com. Email SixFifty Editor Julia Brown at jbrown@almanacnews.com.

Food & Drink

'A sports bar for nerds'

At 7 Stars Bar and Grill, drinks and decor pay homage to 'Star Wars' and other movie franchises

By Adrienne Mitchel

A sci-fi-themed bar and grill wasn't exactly what Jenny Voccola was expecting to find in San Jose while perusing Yelp for places to eat — but it definitely intrigued her. It was the fall of 2019, and she had just moved to the Bay Area from Southern California.

"On Yelp I saw this place that had a big statue of Jabba the Hutt, and I was like, 'Well, that looks fun,'" she said.

So after work, she went to 7 Stars Bar and Grill for dinner. She decided to go back after a day at the Northern California Renaissance Fair, sitting at the bar dressed in Renaissance clothing.

That's when Crystal Isola walked in. A schoolteacher, Isola had been frequenting 7 Stars to watch shows like "The Mandalorian."

"I felt very comfortable there," she said. "It was a fun atmosphere and very welcoming and safe, even for a single woman."

She had just come from the opera and was dressed elegantly, Isola recalled. She sat next to Voccola at the bar and complimented her Renaissance outfit.

"We just hit it off really, really well, so we exchanged phone numbers," Voccola said. "To this day...under the (new contact) company description, it said 'Kindred spirit I met at 7 Stars.'"

Now they regularly hang out at 7 Stars, which relocated to Campbell in the former LvL Up space on Sept. 20. Established by husband and wife Paul and Marya Cunha in 2011 in San Jose, 7 Stars wasn't initially sci-fi themed — its goal was mainly to foster a safe and comfortable neighborhood bar without an emphasis on sports. The name isn't a sci-fi reference either — it symbolizes Paul and Marya Cunha and their five children.

"We opened the bar we wanted to be at...somewhere for me, where I could meet my



girlfriends for a ladies' night and not wait in my car until someone else arrived," Marya Cunha said.

Over time, the Cunhas — who had a "Star Wars"-themed wedding in 2004 — slowly began decorating the space with "Star Wars" memorabilia and action figures. Instead of streaming sports at the bar, the Cunhas played movies that they enjoyed, like "Indiana Jones," "The Goonies" and, of course, "Star Wars." In 2012, 7 Stars hosted its first May the Fourth "Star Wars" celebration. The community's reaction was extremely positive, so the Cunhas decided to lean into the theme.

"If you picture a sports bar with signage, 1989 Giants, champions, whatever it is, you don't see that here," Paul Cunha said. "Instead of seeing those

49ers posters and jerseys, no, we've got limited-edition artwork or convention-exclusive poster work that was done. So we're essentially a sports bar for nerds."

In June 2020, 7 Stars shut its doors due to COVID, opening back up in July 2021 for five weeks to say goodbye. In March 2024, they found 7 Stars' new home: the historic Growers National Bank in Campbell, only a seven-minute drive from the Cunhas' home.

Walk inside the former bank to find a pair of child-sized stormtroopers guarding the door. Funko Pop figurines are lined up in display cases, starfighters hang from the ceiling, "Star Wars"-themed art fills the exposed brick wall and a Landspeeder, Jabba the Hutt and BB-8 keep the DJ in the



Anna Hoch-Kenney

Above: "Star Wars"-themed decorations at the recently re-opened 7 Stars Bar and Grill in Campbell. Top: Owners Marya Cunha, left, and Paul Cunha stand in front of their sci-fi themed bar.

back company. In addition to "Star Wars" decor, find art and figurines related to "Indiana Jones," Marvel and DC franchises, "Harry Potter," "Lord of the Rings" and more.

Open for lunch and dinner daily, 7 Stars is all ages (and offers a kids' menu) until 7 p.m., at which point guests must be 21

See **BAR FOR NERDS**, page 21

Portola Valley native opens store specializing in live-fire cooking and dry-aging equipment

Cárnico Tools & Provisions sells Mibrasa grills, Dry Agers, 100% Iberico ham and dry-aged tomahawks

By Adrienne Mitchel

Luxury meat is the focal point of a new Los Gatos business — from \$40,000 hand-welded Mibrasa grills to \$10,000 German-made Dry Agers, it's a high budget, carnivorous foodie's dream.

Los Gatos residents Jorge Bianchi and Sarah Shires Bianchi soft opened Cárnico Tools & Provisions on Oct. 18 and hosted its grand opening on Thursday, Nov. 14, after The Almanac's Wednesday afternoon press deadline. The husband and wife duo are bringing specialty live-fire cooking and dry aging equipment found in Michelin-starred restaurants to homeowners, architects and designers. Cárnico Tools & Provisions also has a small deli section featuring dry-aged American Angus beef, 100% Iberico ham and foie gras. Additionally, find grilling cookbooks, charcoal-grilled tinned fish, cookware, knives and more.

"This is a nice, fun excuse to have people come in and learn about and find hard-to-find items," Jorge Bianchi said. "We do it to give visibility to the brand, and to also give visibility to the equipment brands that we have, because the main purpose for this business is to really market these extremely premium brands."

Cárnico Tools & Provisions has four brand partners that it aims to highlight through its new showroom and deli: Mibrasa, a Spanish manufacturer of charcoal ovens and Korean grills; Dry Ager, a German manufacturer of dry

aging equipment; Pat LaFrieda, a New York butcher specializing in dry-aged beef; and BEHER, an Iberico ham producer. All four companies are multi-generational family-owned.

"We've got very strong relationships with these families," Bianchi said. "We go see them in Spain, we go see them in Germany and we go to see Pat LaFrieda in New York."

Jorge Bianchi's relationship with Mibrasa began in 2018, when he became a consultant for their line in the United States. He and his wife use a Mibrasa charcoal oven at home, which they say elevates the flavor of whatever is being cooked and has very low risk of a fire hazard due to the Mibrasa's dissipating smoke filter.

"You get the direct heat from the grill that seals the product very, very quickly, and gives the Maillard reaction extremely quickly," Bianchi said. "So that allows the steak, or whatever you cook in there, to retain the juices. And then you get the indirect heat from the oven, and then you get the super nice, smoky flavors from the charcoal."

Mibrasa products are commonly found in Michelin star kitchens, Bianchi said, including San Ho Won, a Michelin star restaurant and Atelier Crenn, a three Michelin star restaurant (both in San Francisco). Atelier Crenn also uses Dry Ager, which is sold in multiple sizes at Cárnico Tools & Provisions.

"Dry aging is a technique that you employ to refine meat, to make it more tender, making it more flavorful, increase the

flavor intensity and complexity," Bianchi said.

To demonstrate what dry aging does to meat, Cárnico Tools & Provisions partnered with Pat LaFrieda, who supplies top steakhouses in New York City and uses Dry Agers for personal use. Find dry-aged beef, like New York strips and tomahawks, ranging from \$39-\$115.

"(Pat LaFrieda has) the best dry aged program in the country," Bianchi said. "The cattle are treated extremely well. They just are roaming free, eating grass most of their lives. At the very end, they are fed corn to give the meat that really nice marbling and taste."

Continuing with dry-aged products, Cárnico Tools & Provisions also partnered with BEHER, which cures its Iberico ham for four years before it's ready to serve.

"Iberico pigs are a breed of small hogs, black. They're very dark," Bianchi said. "They're free roaming in the fields that this company owns in Salamanca, Spain, and they eat acorns from the fields, so they live a wonderful life."

Many of the cookbooks offered at Cárnico Tools & Provisions are written by brand ambassadors, meaning the authors use Mibrasa and/or Dry Ager in their kitchens or for personal use. Brand ambassadors include celebrity chef Tyler Florence of Miller & Lux in San Francisco; Josiah Citrin of Méliisse, a two Michelin star restaurant in Los Angeles; Joshua Weissman, a YouTuber with 9.75 million subscribers; and Chris Cosentino, who won "Top Chef Masters" and was a competitor on



Adrienne Mitchel

The deli section at Cárnico Tools & Provisions in Los Gatos includes dry-aged American Angus beef from Pat LaFrieda and Iberico ham from BEHER.

"The Next Iron Chef" and "Iron Chef America."

"We love doing what we do," Bianchi said. "We love spreading the word about these techniques and these really nice ingredients, and we obviously hope to help get these brands in very nice homes enjoyed by people that appreciate food and they like cooking."

The Bianchis have long been interested in all things culinary. Sarah Shires Bianchi grew up in Portola Valley, meeting Jorge Bianchi, who was born and raised in Spain, during her study abroad in San Sebastián, Spain, which is considered by many to be Europe's food capital.

The couple moved to Los Gatos in 2006 and shortly after launched a company focused on premium import goods from Spain. The business didn't work out, so Jorge Bianchi worked for European manufacturers of high quality food service equipment until 2018, at which point he began consulting for Mibrasa. Now, the couple owns three small businesses: one which markets and sells equipment to professionals, one that distributes equipment for residential and their new retail store that buys from their distribution business.

"Los Gatos is a very nice area where there's a lot of people that

have the resources and the interest in cooking and grilling and dry aging," Jorge said. "But we also think there's many other regions in the U.S. where people have second homes or first homes and they like to invest. They like to have the very best looking backyards with the very best looking and performing outdoor kitchens, and serving the very best foods, sharing the very best foods with their loved ones. And that's what we're trying to achieve." ■

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Cárnico Tools & Provisions, 501 N Santa Cruz Ave., #1, Los Gatos, 669-877-4887, Instagram: @carnicotoolsandprovisions. Open Monday to Friday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturday from noon to 6 p.m.

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BAR FOR NERDS

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or over. The menu (\$5-\$16) offers bar food classics like nachos and hot dogs, as well as more unique items like plant-based banh mi sandwiches and 7 Stars eggs with housemade aioli, pickled onions and trout roe. The Grown Up PB&J features salted caramel almond butter and jelly, both sourced from the farmers market, spread onto Texas toast and put into a special panini press that seals the sandwich.

"It's like a grown-up size Uncrustables," Marya Cunha said.

But despite its name, the new 7 Stars doesn't actually have a grill.

"It's a historic building, so installing a hood is just not happening," Marya Cunha said. "But we had our name established. We had 10 years at the old location. We had a loyal following. We didn't want to change the name."

The food menu is pared down from the former San Jose location — you'll no longer find linguica corn dogs, burgers, chicken strips or fries. But 7 Stars is still making its hummus, aioli, roasted nuts, pickled jalapenos and pickled onions from scratch.

The cocktail list (\$8-\$18) includes themed drinks like the Chewie, made with vanilla vodka and coffee liquor; the Rey, made with coconut fat-washed vodka,

lime juice and soda water; and Blue Milk, made with chocolate whisky, blue curacao and your choice of dairy, almond or oat milk. New to the Campbell location is 7 Stars' gin egg sour, called the Mace Windu (\$18).

"A lot of our staff came back from our previous location," Marya Cunha said. "They were waiting for us to open, and as soon as we were able to announce an opening day, we got several back, and some of them had worked at other places with more elevated cocktails."

7 Stars is working to expand its nonalcoholic offerings and focuses on sourcing its brews and



Anna Hoch-Kenny

Trivia teams filled the recently re-opened "Star Wars" and sci-fi themed 7 Stars Bar and Grill in Campbell on Oct. 14.

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kombucha locally. Karaoke is held Fridays and Saturdays beginning at 8 p.m., trivia is Mondays at 7 p.m. and special events are announced on 7 Stars' Instagram.

Marya Cunha said one facet of 7 Stars that's particularly meaningful to her is its ability to help uplift community voices. In the former location, she held a women's forum where local leaders explained propositions to help educate women voters, as well as a LGBTQ business showcase where local LGBTQ-owned businesses came to 7 Stars to showcase their products.

To continue the bar's inclusive nature, she hopes to reinstate rotating ads on the TVs with messages encouraging bargoers to talk to bartenders if they feel uncomfortable and emphasizing that "everyone is welcome."

The community at 7 Stars has not only fostered friendships, but several marriages from couples who first met at the bar.

"We've been invited to four different weddings (where) we've been announced...as where the couple met," Paul Cunha said. "We've met children that were born to couples that met at the bar, and I played with and hung out with kids and helped



Anna Hoch-Kenney

Trivia host Matt Piasecki banter with the crowd during Monday night trivia at the recently re-opened "Star Wars" and sci-fi themed 7 Stars Bar and Grill in Campbell on Oct. 14.

kids that they were around because their parents met at our business."

One couple is Matt and Serena Holt, who met in 2014 at 7 Stars during its Rock Band-themed night.

"I just went there with my best friends, and she was there with some other friends," Matt Holt said. "We ended up singing a Green Day song together, 'Jesus of Suburbia.'"

They began dating, and in 2016, they became fast friends with another couple who was also

sporting 7 Stars merch, moving in together as roommates in San Diego in 2018. Last year, Matt and Serena Holt got married, inviting Paul and Marya.

Bars played a role in Paul and Marya's own love story — it's where they dated and became inspired to open a bar of their own. Paul and Marya attended the same junior high and high school together — even working at the same food court during high school — but they each had separate families and didn't connect until their divorces.



Anna Hoch-Kenney

Bartender Missa Masouris delivers "blue milk" samples in test tubes to trivia players at 7 Stars Bar and Grill in Campbell on Oct. 14.

"We saw in other businesses things we'd like to do differently," Marya Cunha said. "We were just building the bar we'd like to be in, without the sports, without the misogyny that's in a lot of bars."

With the bar now built back up in Campbell, the couple is eager to continue building community in its new neighborhood.

"We're here to support the community," Marya Cunha said. "When we look at this street full of restaurants and bars and whatnot, we don't think of all the

competition. We think of all the community, all the neighbors, all the support." ■

Email Food Editor Adrienne Mitchel at amitchel@almanacnews.com.

7 Stars Bar and Grill,
400 E. Campbell Ave.,
Campbell; Instagram:
[@7_stars_bar_and_grill](https://www.instagram.com/7_stars_bar_and_grill).
Open Tuesday to Thursday
4 p.m. to midnight and Friday
to Monday 11 a.m. to midnight.

Efforts to build wildfire resilience are heating up

Stanford's campus has become a living lab for testing innovative fire management techniques, using tools like AI-powered environmental sensors, the BurnBot firebreak machine, and goats to reduce wildfire risks. Collaborating with local agencies and drawing on expertise across disciplines, Stanford's Wildfire Resilience Program focuses on land stewardship, fire risk reduction, and conservation. Techniques include controlled burns, fuel removal, and AI-based early detection. Researchers are also exploring fire-resistant materials and studying the environmental impacts of wildfires, aiming to develop comprehensive fire resilience strategies. **SCAN TO READ THE SPOTLIGHT**



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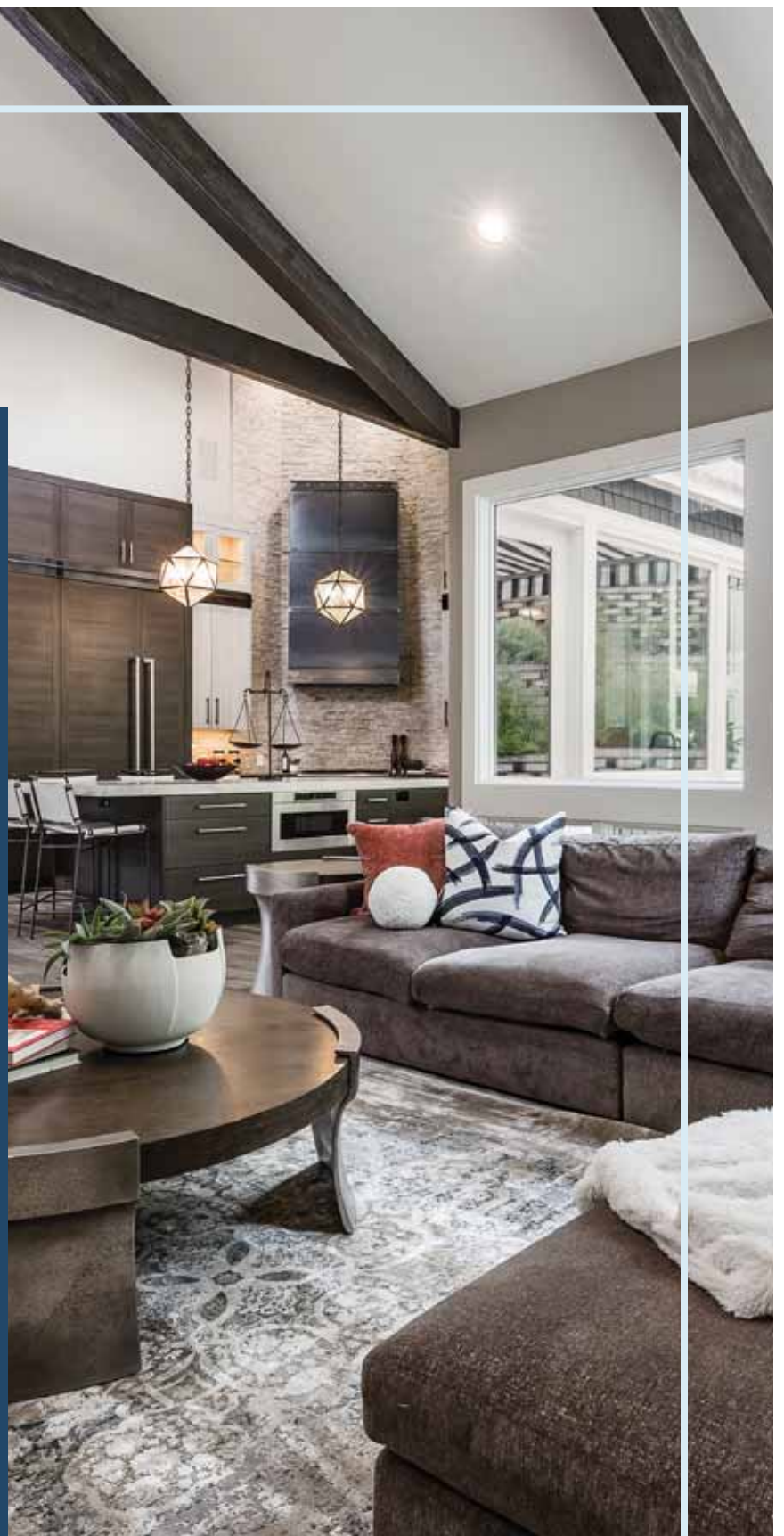


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