

The Almanac

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

DECEMBER 20, 2024 | VOL. 60 NO. 16



WWW.ALMANACNEWS.COM

Portola Valley's Frog Pond fills

By Embarcadero Media staff

Portola Valley resident Dan Quinn captured the sunrise, marked with streaks of pink and purple, behind a full Frog Pond in the town on Monday, Dec. 16, after rain returned to the area.

The Frog Pond, located next to Corte Madera School, is an environmentally sensitive vernal pool that many residents consider a local treasure.

Quinn is a photographer who captures the natural landscape, and the critters who inhabit it, around the Peninsula. ■



Dan Quinn

Top 10 stories of 2024

By Embarcadero Media staff

Although 2024 included visits to the Midpeninsula from presidential candidates going into a general election of major consequence, a mix of stories also drew readers — on local housing, education and business issues — to The Almanac.

Here's a look back at the most-viewed stories over the past 12 months.

10. National election-related stories: Trump supporters rally in Palo Alto, Woodside / President Biden is met with protesters in Portola Valley, Palo Alto

Presidential candidates made visits to the Bay Area for fundraising events during the year, including President Joe Biden, before he decided to drop out of the race.

YEAR IN REVIEW

Almanac reporters headed to protests and rallies around the events, documenting the frenzied affairs with photos and interviews of attendees.

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

When Las Lomitas Elementary School District teachers went on strike this fall they mentioned that they didn't understand how they couldn't get raises when the district was spending on luxury trips. This led to our freelance writer to review over 600 transactions made by top administrators on district credit cards. He also found that the district had spent

money on Michelin-star restaurants and 4-star hotels.

The investigation, in part, has led the school board to initiate an outside financial audit.

8. Opposition grows for massive 'builder's remedy' project at former Sunset Magazine site

Menlo Park residents continued to form opposition to the controversial proposal to construct towers on the former Sunset Magazine headquarters in Menlo Park.

More than 700 people have signed a change.org petition by Brielle Johnck of Menlo Park in protest against the ambitious mixed-use complex at 80 Willow Road proposed last year as a "builder's remedy" project by the development company N17.

7. Dutch Goose forced to close by health inspector, back open on Friday



Anna Hoch-Kenney

Pro-Palestinian protesters chant at the barricades at Addison and Middlefield Road in Palo Alto while President Biden attended a local fundraiser on May 10.

The Dutch Goose in Menlo Park was forced to close on July 17 by San Mateo County Environmental Health Services due to the presence of live cockroaches, according to the department's website.

An inspector with the department cleared the restaurant to open on the morning of July 19 and it was back open that day.

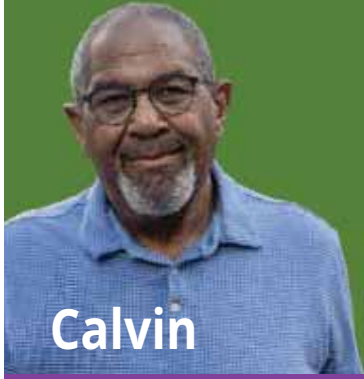
See **TOP 10**, page 17

INSIDE

Help local families in need **10**

VIEWPOINT **22** | ARTS **23** | FOOD **26**





Calvin

Seasons change. Hunger doesn't.

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.

Your local giving drives local impact!

Make your life-changing impact today: Your year-end gift of any amount that is right for you* directly supports vulnerable local seniors and means everything to the **thousands of local families relying on us**. Your gift puts food on plates, helps create new meal routes, eliminates meal waitlists and enables innovative programs to address isolation and dementia care needs. Give securely online at www.1pvi.org/donate or use the QR code. Your generosity makes a meaningful impact.

* 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.

Peter Olson
Chief Executive Officer

Georgie Gleim
Board Chair/President

Change a senior's story. Donate Today!

I love the fresh meals and the people who deliver them! - Ruth



SCAN TO DONATE



Peninsula Volunteers, Inc.
800 Middle Ave. Menlo Park, CA 94025
1PVI.ORG | Tax ID # 94-1294939



Ruth



450 Sand Hill Circle, Menlo Park
OFFERED AT \$1,950,000
LISA KEITH
650.703.8644 LICENSE# 00882247



92 Cebalo Lane, Atherton
OFFERED AT \$4,995,000
THE DREYFUS GROUP
650.485.3476 LICENSE# 01121795



220 Heacox Road, Woodside
OFFERED AT \$799,845
KIM HANSEN
415.806.8230 LICENSE# 01927728



961 High Road, Woodside
OFFERED AT \$19,900,000
THE DREYFUS GROUP
650.485.3476 LICENSE# 01121795



567 Cresta Vista Lane, Portola Valley
OFFERED AT \$12,500,000
PETER COWPERTHWAITTE
650.207.4101 LICENSE# 01012887



501 Wayside Road, Portola Valley
OFFERED AT \$1,500,000
DULCY FREEMAN
650.804.8884 LICENSE# 01342352



Villa del Prato, Portola Valley
OFFERED AT \$85,000,000
CHRIS IVERSON
650.450.0450 LICENSE# 01708130



66 Newell Road, #F, East Palo Alto
OFFERED AT \$845,000
BARBARA TELESCO CURLEY
650.861.2488 LICENSE# 01837664



262 Covington Road, Los Altos
OFFERED AT \$12,500,000
GARY CAMPI
650.799.1855 LICENSE# 00600311



477 Lassen Street #6, Los Altos
OFFERED AT \$1,295,000
GARY CAMPI
650.799.1855 LICENSE# 00600311



13206 Wright Way, Los Altos Hills
OFFERED AT \$5,995,000
GARY CAMPI
650.799.1855 LICENSE# 00600311



12445 Hilltop Drive, Los Altos Hills
OFFERED AT \$9,800,000
GARY CAMPI
650.799.1855 LICENSE# 00600311



605 Spar Drive, Redwood City
OFFERED AT \$1,988,888
JESSICA EVA
650.704.5483 LICENSE# 01210450



162 Madera Avenue, San Carlos
OFFERED AT \$3,498,000
JOHN SHROYER
650.787.2121 LICENSE# 00613370



26985 Hayward Boulevard, Hayward
OFFERED AT \$965,000
CHRISTY HERMAN
650.678.9579 LICENSE# 01170780



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Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY



Courtesy Robb Most

Atherton holiday tree aglow

Atherton Deputy City Manager/City Clerk Anthony Suber helped save the day on Friday, Dec. 13. He helped to light the town holiday tree outside of the Atherton Library after it failed to turn on. He stands with Santa Claus and outgoing Mayor Diana Hawkins-Manuelian, in red.

The town held its “Hometown Holiday & Tree Lighting” event from 3-7 p.m. with cookie decorating and gingerbread house-making; hot cocoa; and cookie decorating and gingerbread housing making. Officials turned on the holiday tree lights following sunset around 5 p.m.

DA says he won't prosecute union president arrested by sheriff

‘Tapia should not have been arrested,’ says DA Steve Wagstaffe

By Eleanor Raab

San Mateo County District Attorney Stephen Wagstaffe announced Monday, Dec. 16, that his office would not file charges against Carlos Tapia, president of the Deputy Sheriff’s Association who was arrested on felony charges in November by Sheriff Christina Corpus, stating that Tapia committed no crime.

Tapia was ordered to be arrested by Corpus on Nov. 12 on charges of felony timecard fraud that she said occurred between Jan. 1, 2024, and Oct. 18, 2024. In a press conference on Nov. 12, Corpus announced her arrest of Tapia just 15 minutes before a county press conference where San Mateo County Supervisors Ray Mueller and Noelia Corzo shared damning



Eleanor Raab

Carlos Tapia, left, and Supervisor Ray Mueller, right, speak at a press conference on Dec. 16 after District Attorney Stephen Wagstaffe announced that Tapia “should not have been arrested.”

findings from an independent investigation into Corpus and her Chief of Staff Victor Aenlle.

In a press conference following

Tapia’s arrest on Nov. 12, Corpus said that her office “did consult

See **TAPIA**, page 12

Community, elections, environment and development in Menlo Park

By Eleanor Raab

YEAR IN REVIEW

2024 was not a slow news year for Menlo Park. With an election, development throughout the city, police activity and numerous community events, there was much to cover in Menlo Park.

Development projects

As in many previous years, development dominated the headlines for Menlo Park this year.

After a multi-year housing element update process that involved dozens of community outreach events and city council meetings, the state certified Menlo Park’s housing element on March 21. The housing element lays out plans for nearly 3,000 new units of housing to be built throughout the city at different levels of affordability between now and 2031. The city has been working to implement the housing development programs laid out in the plans. Several large developments are working their way through the city’s approval process.

At the time that its housing plans were certified, Menlo Park was over a year past the deadline for housing element certification, which opened the city up to “builder’s remedy” applications for the time that it was out of compliance. The city received several builder’s remedy applications, but the project that has been causing a stir in 2024 is the proposed Willow Park project at the site of the former Sunset Magazine headquarters.

A new community group, Menlo Forward, formed in opposition to the Willow Park project. Leaders of the group say they have seen “widespread opposition” to the developer’s plans for three large towers in the heart of Menlo Park, the tallest of which would stand at approximately 430 feet, which would make it the tallest building in the Bay Area outside of San Francisco if constructed.

Menlo Park deemed the applications for the controversial development incomplete several times over the summer, but finally deemed the application complete on Nov. 14. The project

is now undergoing review for compliance with state environmental regulations and all other applicable state and local building regulations.

A housing element program to build affordable housing on city-owned parking lots downtown has also stirred up much controversy near the end of the year. At a November council meeting, many residents and business owners told the council that they had not been informed about the changes that could come to downtown, and the council elected to hold off on voting on the matter until Jan. 14, 2025 when more outreach could be done. A group called Save Downtown Menlo has formed in opposition to this program.

The teacher housing development at the site of the former Flood School at 320 Sheridan Drive has moved forward. The project, which was the catalyst for the controversial Measure V in 2022, also received \$1 million in city below-market-rate housing funds from the council in November in a split vote.

The council, commissions and residents explored plans for the Parkline development on the site of the SRI headquarters throughout the year. In May, the developers introduced a plan for the site that would add 250 more units of housing than they originally planned. Throughout the process of approving the Parkline development, residents have expressed concern over the traffic impacts and noise that the new office park and housing at the SRI site could bring to the city’s downtown.

The nearby site of the former USGS headquarters was vacated in April as the agency shifted its home base to Moffett Field in Mountain View. Questions remain over what will become of the site, but the city’s housing element specifies at least two acres of affordable housing at the 17-acre site.

The city also saw a lot of non-housing development this year,

See **MENLO PARK 2024**, page 16



WEST BAY SANITARY DISTRICT NOTICE OF ADOPTION

REGULATION NO. 2024-03 A REGULATION AMENDING GENERAL REGULATION NO. 58 "A GENERAL REGULATION ADOPTING CODE OF GENERAL REGULATIONS"

BE IT ORDAINED AND ENACTED BY THE District Board of West Bay Sanitary District that General Regulation No. 58, "A General Regulation Adopting Code of General regulations," passed and approved on November 22, 1982, as heretofore amended, is hereby further amended as follows:

Section 1. Former Sections 902 "Permit and Inspection Fees" through 906 "Environmental Impact Report and Negative Declaration – Preparation of Review Fee" are hereby re-numbered Sections 903 through 907, respectively, and a new Section 902 "Reclaimed Water Connection Charges" is hereby added to Article IX – FEES, RATES AND CHARGES to read as follows:

"SECTION 902. Reclaimed Water Connection Charges.
(01) Purpose of Reclaimed Water Connection Charge.

The purpose of the reclaimed water connection charge is to equalize the cost of acquisition, construction, and installation of the District's reclaimed water facilities by the District so that each property owner pays its proportionate share of such costs based on the allotted reclaimed water usage capacity assigned to such property. Charges and rates established by this Section and subsequent amendments, as required, shall be effective upon the date specified by the District Board and shall apply to all premises then connected.

(02) Upfront Contributions In Aid of Construction.

(A) The following charges have been adopted by the District Board for Customers who make upfront Contributions in Aid of Construction (CIAC)

- Pays a one-time upfront capital payment based on MGD of peak month capacity needed (currently estimated at \$127.67 per gallon of average day peak month demand needed).
- Pays on-going O&M charges based on actual use. The cost of on-going O&M will be shared among the customers of recycled water service.
- No debt-service payments or connection fees will be charged.
- Customers can connect at any time after construction is completed. Capacity will be reserved for such customers until connected.

Customers of reclaimed water projects will be charged for their proportionate use of the recycled water facilities based on the allocated reclaimed water usage capacity.

(032) Purchase of Capacity Post-Construction.

(A) Costs to connect to the District's reclaimed water system shall increase with each stage of the Bayfront Recycled Water Facility project. Subsequent customers who do not make CIAC will be charged, in lieu of a one-time upfront capital payment, in an amount to be established by the Board of Directors (including interest), an appropriate connection fee and will share in the on-going O&M costs. Appropriate O&M charges will be established after a rate study for such charges is performed."

Section 2. In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") (Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.) and the Guidelines for Implementing the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA Guidelines" (14 CCR 15000, et seq.)), the District Board hereby finds that this Regulation establishes rates, fees and charges for specific purposes, including but not limited to obtaining funds for capital facilities, and is therefore statutorily exempt from the requirements of CEQA pursuant to Cal. Public Resources Code Section 21080 and CEQA Guidelines Section 14273 – Rates, Tolls, Fares and Charges.

Section 3. This General Regulation shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage, approval, and publication as provided by law.

Passed and adopted by the Board of the West Bay Sanitary District at a regular meeting thereof held on the 11th day of December, 2024, by the following vote:

Ayes: DEHN, WALKER, THIELE-SARDINA,
MORITZ, OTTE

Noes: NONE

Abstain: NONE

Absent: NONE

/s/ Fran Dehn
President of the Board
West Bay Sanitary District

Attest:
/s/ David A. Walker
Secretary of the Board
West Bay Sanitary District

Established 1965

The Almanac

Serving Menlo Park,
Atherton, Portola Valley,
and Woodside for over 50 years

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To request delivery, or stop delivery, of The Almanac in zip code 94025, 94027, 94028 and the Woodside portion of 94062, call 854-2626.



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

See you on Jan. 3

Today's paper will be the final Almanac print edition of 2024, as we opted for a larger special issue with our Year in Review this week and to take a break from the newspaper production between Christmas and New Year's Day.

Our print paper will be back as usual on Jan. 3.

The news coverage won't stop in the interim, however. Our journalists will be hard at work reporting articles online over the next week. Visit AlmanacNews.com to see all of the big stories, and we will see you again in print in 2025. Happy holidays!

Menlo Athletics donates over 550 toys to Good Tidings Foundation

Continuing an annual tradition, Menlo College Athletics student-athletes, coaches, and staff partnered with the Good Tidings Foundation to support its Winter Wonderland program, an initiative focused on providing gifts to children in underserved communities across the Bay Area, according to a school press release.

Winter Wonderland program organizers collects toys through local drives to benefit non-profit partners, schools, and communities in need.

"Life in athletics is demanding," said Athletic Director Keith Spataro in a prepared statement. "Training, recruiting, traveling, academics, and competition require undivided attention. Yet, our athletes, coaches, and staff prioritize giving back to the community, especially during this season of giving. We are proud to bring smiles to local children and spread holiday cheer."

Last year, Menlo donated about 500 toys to the program. Last holiday season, the program served over 1,955 children and distributed 5,800 toys, bringing joy to countless families.

— Angela Swartz

San Mateo County court launches text reminders for misdemeanor cases

The San Mateo County Superior Court is now automatically enrolling cellphone numbers listed on criminal misdemeanor citations into its Court Date Text Reminder system.

The initiative aims to reduce failure-to-appear rates by sending text notifications about upcoming court dates.

The effort follows a revision to the Judicial Council of California's TR-130 Notice to Appear citation form, which now includes an optional field for cellphone numbers. Individuals who do not provide their numbers on citations or those facing felony charges can still opt-in by completing an online form here.

Currently, text reminders are available for criminal and traffic cases. The court is exploring expanding the service to other case types, including family law.

The court acknowledged the support of law enforcement agencies in encouraging individuals to provide cellphone numbers when signing citations.

This collaboration is expected to enhance the program's reach and effectiveness in improving court attendance rates.

— Michelle Iracheta

OBITUARIES

Local residents who died recently include:

Elizabeth Clinch, 88, a Portola Valley resident, author, musician and historical researcher who wrote for National Geographic and was a researcher for the Encyclopedia Britannica, on Dec. 8, 2024.

Francisco "Paco" Alexander Leon, 71, a Palo Alto resident who specialized in semiconductor device modeling at Intel and who was a passionate jazz musician, on Nov. 29, 2024.

Reginald W. Rice, 95, a Menlo Park resident who was a founding member of the Alpine Hills Tennis and Swimming Club in Portola Valley, a church deacon and financial advisor,

on Nov. 29, 2024.

Dr. Richard R. Dewey, 95, a Portola Valley resident and Clinical Professor of Medicine at Stanford School of Medicine Clinical Faculty who also served as physician to the nuns at Oakwood on the Sacred Heart campus in Atherton for 20 years, on Dec. 4, 2024.

Margaret Rush Hepper, 86, who raised four children in Palo Alto and ran an insurance company with her then-husband for 25 years, on Nov. 20, 2024.

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

Education in 2024: Preparing for changes and rising tensions

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

YEAR IN REVIEW

This year, schools across the Midpeninsula set a pace for new beginnings in the upcoming year. Transitional kindergarten is quickly expanding to include all 4-year-olds by the 2025-26 school year. As public schools are expanding, preschools are seeing a decline in enrollment.

As public school populations will continue to grow in the next year, school districts had to prepare funds for classroom expansions, facilities improvements and teacher retention by passing ballot measures during the November election. The Menlo Park City School District passed Measure U, a bond measure that would fund new buildings, facilities updates and security. The Woodside Elementary School District passed Measure Y and the Ravenswood City School District passed Measure S, both of which will increase parcel taxes to fund the districts' growing financial needs.

Local school districts celebrated their students settling into renovated campuses with updated classrooms and facilities. The Almanac toured renovated buildings at Ormondale and Corte Madera schools, which opened in October 2023.

In January, RCSD completed two years of renovations at Cesar Chavez Ravenswood Middle School, rolling out a red

carpet to welcome students onto a new and improved campus.

Tensions rose between staff, community members and school district administrators in Las Lomas Elementary and Sequoia Union High school districts.

In October, LLESB faced its first teacher strike after failing to settle on a contract agreement with higher pay and benefits for the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years. The strike ran for three days as staff, students and community members marched the picket line. After multiple bargaining meetings, an agreement was finally made, ending the strike on Oct. 26. LLESB Superintendent Beth Polito also announced her retirement at the end of this school year amidst a petition calling for her resignation.

The Almanac reported on LLESB's high spendings on luxury hotels, Michelin-starred restaurants and overnight work trips after teachers called out the district for misuse of funds. The district is pursuing a third-party audit of its spending, but the state has not yet initiated an external audit.

In January, a Menlo-Atherton High School ethnic studies teacher continued to face backlash for a controversial Israel-Hamas lesson. The Coalition



Devin Roberts

MPCSD Instrumental Music Teacher Andre Ehling leads class at Encinal Elementary School in Menlo Park on Jan. 22.

for Empowered Education started a petition accusing Chloe Gentile-Montgomery of teaching a biased lesson propagated by anti-Semitism. After facing harassment, Gentile-Montgomery took a leave of absence for her mental health in November 2023.

In August, Sequoia district board meetings started to gain the community's attention after students and parents asked

the board about why longtime Menlo-Atherton teacher and varsity basketball coach Mike Molieri was being placed on administrative leave. Former school district staff also came forward to share their traumatic stories of discrimination to the public. The Almanac investigated former district staff's claims about lack of mental health support and hostility in the workplace.

In November, Mary Beth Thompson and Maria Cruz won seats on the Sequoia district board after a competitive, and at times contentious, race. The Almanac hosted a candidate forum in which all six candidates debated over issues of interest to constituents. ■

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

Atherton submits new housing element draft, tackles property crime

By Eleanor Raab

YEAR IN REVIEW

Atherton spent much of 2024 trying to get its housing element plans across the finish line. Many of Atherton's 2024 headlines dealt with the achievements, bumps and discussion along the road to submitting a plan to the state. Crime, road improvements and the achievements of Atherton residents were other big themes this year.

Atherton did not have a City Council election in 2024 despite two seats being up for grabs, as only the two incumbents, Mayor Diana Hawkins-Manuelian and Vice Mayor Elizabeth Lewis, filed for the election. The council opted to cancel the election rather than spending money on it in hopes of a write-in candidate, and appointed Hawkins-Manuelian and Lewis to the empty council seats.

Housing element

The Atherton City Council adopted the third version of the town's housing element in

October, following a five-hour meeting where members of the public interrupted staff and talked over the council. The town's housing plans were sent to the California Department of Housing and Community Development, and town staff are now awaiting comments from the state.

HCD told Atherton in September that it had to finalize a revised housing element to submit to the state by the end of the council's Oct. 16 meeting or face consequences such as monthly fines ranging between \$10,000 and \$100,000, ineligibility to receive state funding and grants, and the loss of all local land use authority.

City Council members agonized over whether to include four properties along Bay Road and Ringwood Avenue in the housing plans after residents expressed concern over the traffic, noise and other impacts that could be caused

if multifamily housing were built there. Planning commissioners had recommended that the council remove those four properties. Ultimately, the council voted unanimously to include all proposed properties in the list that will be subject to a 10-unit per acre multifamily housing overlay.

Atherton also moved a new ADU ordinance forward that will allow property owners in town more leniency in the construction of ADUs on their properties, especially if the ADUs are deed-restricted for affordable housing.

Throughout the housing element discussion, the topic of converting Atherton to a charter city to preserve local independence came up time and time again. Prompted by a court ruling in southern California, where several charter cities were declared exempt from the state's controversial Senate Bill 9 housing law, the Atherton City Council began to look into what it would take to become a charter city. At its Nov. 20 meeting,

the council directed town staff to prepare a sample charter for the town; the council will look at the proposed charter in early 2025.

Police

In August, Atherton Police were called out to Middlefield Road after a pedestrian reported a device with a countdown timer that resembled a homemade bomb. The county bomb squad was called to the scene out of "an abundance of caution," but it soon became clear that the device that had caused so much concern was a mosquito monitoring device placed in the vicinity by the San Mateo County Mosquito and Vector Control District.

It is likely that the mosquito monitoring device was placed in the vicinity due to the detection of West Nile virus in a dead bird from Atherton.

Several burglaries took place in Atherton throughout the year, often clustered around holidays or times when people are out of the house. As of

December 2024, there have been 29 burglaries in town. In 2024, the Atherton Police Department deployed new tactics to help prevent property crime around town. In May, police deployed the town's bait house program, which involves placing GPS trackers in decoy items such as luxury purses. Atherton police Cmdr. Dan Larsen said that as of Dec. 18, no bait houses have yet been burglarized.

Police also used DNA evidence

See **ATHERTON 2024**, page 17

LEHUA GREENMAN

"Sending you Cheerful Wishes and Warmest Greetings for a joyous and festive Holiday Season!"

650.245.1845 COMPASS

Decertified housing element, financial crisis and new council in Portola Valley

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

YEAR IN REVIEW

Portola Valley saw many ups and downs this year as the town struggled with finances, a non-compliant housing element and high staff turnover.

In March, Portola Valley announced that its housing element was decertified by the state after it failed to submit zoning code amendments within two days after its certification. The town is still in the process of revising the zoning language to meet the state's requirements.

In April, former Town Manager Sharif Etman presented the Town Council with a plan to reorganize the town and its finances amidst staffing shortages and increasing costs for services from the Sheriff's Office. As financial audits from

past years were slowly being completed, it became clear that the town was facing a larger deficit than expected. With the help of the town's new Finance Director Tony McFarlane, the council approved a new budget in November that would help sustain the town's finances for a couple of years.

The town is actively looking into new ways to raise revenue, including a lease-leaseback and becoming a charter town. While the town is still lacking a permanent town manager, planning and building director, town clerk and town engineer, the town will be saving money on staffing as it focuses on investing in other town functions.

In June, the town bid farewell

to its former Public Works Director Howard Young, who worked in Portola Valley for 22 years. Town residents were devastated by the news as the reasons for his departure were unclear. Community members hosted a party celebrating Young and his accomplishments in his last weeks. Following Young, Etman unexpectedly resigned from his role in September after a tenure of just over a year.

During the election in November, four candidates ran for two open seats on the Town Council. Residents elected PV Forum founder Rebecca Flynn and town resident Helen Wolter. Local architect Carter Warr and town resident Ellen Vernazza fell short of votes needed to win. Flynn and Wolter were sworn into office on Dec. 11.

In November, Portola Valley



Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Portola Valley Council member Mary Hufty and former Public Works Director Howard Young pose for a photo taken by resident Rita Comes.

also approved Stanford's Portola Terrace project, a housing development for university staff and affordable housing that has been in the works for over two years. Throughout October and November, the project was reviewed by town committees, Planning Commission and

Town Council. Upon the project's approval, Stanford will now work with the town to obtain building permits to begin construction. ■

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Woodside council faces contentious issues, town sees road improvements

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

YEAR IN REVIEW

While the town of Woodside celebrated successes with improvements to roads, it also faced hardships with its yet-to-be approved housing element.

During the early months of 2024, local homes were victim to multiple residential burglaries. Although Woodside only had three reported burglaries, the newly installed automatic license plate readers were effective in helping local law enforcement identify one suspect. In April, the Town Council voted to add two more license plate readers to the town.

In May, the Town Council held a ribbon cutting for the completion of the Glens Path Project. The construction and planning of the project had been in the works since 2017 after community members called for the need of a safe walking route for children and residents. The new sidewalk connects to the crosswalk at the intersection of Glenwood Avenue and Cañada Road, providing a space for people to walk their dogs and children to walk to school.

At the end of May, Highway 84 reopened its two-way traffic after a landslide damaged the road in March 2023. For nearly a year, the section of the highway at Portola Road was only open to one-way traffic while Caltrans crews were repairing the road and reinforcing the slope.

In July, the town encountered pressure from the state to pass its housing element, which has been out of compliance since January 2023. The Town Council received backlash from the community in August as it approved resolutions on the housing element for four multi-family housing developments on High Road, Raymundo Drive, 773 Cañada Road and at Cañada College.

While residents asked the council to reconsider other housing locations in town with concerns about developing on environmentally sensitive land, wastewater and fire evacuation, the council were confident in their decision.

Ahead of the election, Woodside resident Hassan Aburish and incumbent council members Paul Goeld and Jenn Wall entered the race for three seats on the Town Council in August. Write-in-candidate Alayna Van Dervort Wagner, who joined the race later, lost the District 5 seat to Aburish. In December, Aburish, Goeld and Wall were sworn into office.

During the election season, Woodside residents hosted two fundraising events for President-elect Donald Trump and Vice President-elect J.D. Vance, which brought large rallies to the Pioneer Saloon. Hundreds of Trump supporters



Courtesy Darrell Batchelder

Woodside Town Council members at Glens Path ribbon cutting ceremony on May 24.

gathered along Woodside Road, waving flags and cheering while waiting for Trump and Vance's motorcade.

In October, Woodside's Town Manager Kevin Bryant announced that he will retire in May 2025 to move closer to family outside of the Bay Area. Bryant has worked for the town since 2008 alongside a dozen different mayors and 17 different council members. The town is currently recruiting for a new town manager before Bryant departs.

In October, the Town Council reviewed an application submitted by the Roberts family to construct permanent outdoor dining in front of Buck's Restaurant and The Village Bakery and to expand the parking lot at Cañada Corners. While the application was still being considered, the parklets were unexpectedly removed on Nov. 25 due to the restaurants being out of compliance with its seating capacity.

Community members voiced their support for

outdoor dining, calling for its return, during a Town Council meeting on Dec. 10. While there were divided sentiments on whether the parking lot should be expanded, the majority of the Town Council voted in favor of the application. Outdoor dining will be returning once the property owner acquires approved construction permits. ■

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Outdoor dining to return to Woodside businesses after brief hiatus

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

The Woodside Town Council voted 3-2 in favor of the Cañada Corners application to build permanent outdoor dining spaces and additional parking with amended conditions, on Dec. 10. Council members Paul Goeld and Hassan Aburish voted against the application.

The town plans to force the applicant, the Roberts family which owns the Cañada Corners commercial property at 3036-3062 Woodside Road, to abide by the seating capacities of 117 for the Village Bakery and 144 for Buck's Restaurant, which are set out in the conditional use permit.

Earlier this fall, the property owner asked businesses to remove the outdoor dining spaces, which were built during the COVID-19 pandemic. The parklets were in violation of the property's conditional use permit as businesses were seating more patrons than allowed, causing issues with parking.

Over 100 emails were received by the council pertaining to the project. The majority supported outdoor dining, but commenters

were divided on the need for more parking.

The council agreed on the application with amendments to the CUP, including restrictions on delivery hours between 6 a.m. and 8 p.m., security barriers to prevent after hours access, four-foot fencing to provide screening for neighbors, additional security cameras, and two new 10-foot light poles.

Contention on additional parking and saving open space

Despite almost all residents supporting outdoor dining, town residents disagreed on the necessity of expanding the parking lot into the open space adjacent to the property. Some acknowledged that parking at Cañada Corners has been a problem since the 1990s, prior to outdoor dining.

Community members were concerned that the parking lot expansion would ruin the town's rural image, invite more tourists and increase traffic on Woodside Road.

"Are we trying to keep a town or are we trying to keep a city?" said resident Bree-Anna Vail. "I



Anna Hoch-Kenney

A team removes a gazebo from the outdoor dining parklet at Buck's Restaurant in Woodside on the morning of Nov. 25.

don't think anybody here that has a warm feeling of the town of Woodside wants to see you tear up this beautiful little place that, if it is opened up to parking, it's just going to be another ugly parking lot."

Residents say parking has always been an issue at Cañada Corners. Vicki Coe recommended that the town address the traffic issues by restricting construction and reconsidering Woodside Elementary School release times;

the school is located just down the road from the business corridor.

Council member Dick Brown shared his support for additional parking, reminding the community that the town is in the process of building 394 new homes, which will bring more people into Woodside.

"The idea that we can stay as we are, no change, is a fantasy," Brown said. To those concerned about building on the land, he

noted that the project retains 71% of open space.

Council member Aburish supported building more parking, but wanted fewer new spaces. He encouraged further staff analysis and studies to be conducted.

The council has been pushed by community members to approve the application without delay, yet Goeld described conditions as having "a gun to our heads." In addition to parking, the council is facing concerns about traffic, open space, lighting, safety and landscaping.

Modifying delivery hours, fencing and security

Neighbors of Cañada Corners have complained that noises from delivery trucks at dawn can be loud and disruptive as well as headlights from the parking lot shining through their windows.

Council member Jenn Wall proposed that the CUP only allow deliveries between 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. The council agreed that signage will also be posted at the front of the property prohibiting non-employee parking outside of open hours from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m.

See **OUTDOOR DINING**, page 20

New Menlo Park Mayor Drew Combs to bring back 'state of the city,' encourage civil discourse

By Eleanor Raab

Menlo Park will have a lot of important decisions to make in 2025 as the city continues to implement its housing element plans and deal with other proposed developments. New mayor Drew Combs says that his goal for the upcoming year is to ensure that residents have a forum to discuss those issues collegially and respectfully. The council chose Combs to be mayor for 2025, with Betsy Nash as vice mayor, on Dec. 10.

In an interview with The Almanac, Combs, who lives in the Willows neighborhood with his wife and two school-aged kids, said that his other priorities for the upcoming year include supporting small businesses within the city, encouraging residents to get involved with the city's decision-making process and getting a revised use permit process for substandard lots in the city on the council's agenda.

"In these roles, you very quickly realize that you are sort of a caretaker or custodian," he said. "So my goal for my time as mayor is to hand things off a little further along toward our vision for Menlo Park than they were when



Drew Combs

I took things on."

Combs, who represents the city's District 2, was first elected in 2018 and again in 2022, after previously serving on the city's planning commission and bicycle commission. He previously served as mayor in 2021, and at the time, the city was still in the midst of recovering from the many disruptions that the COVID-19 pandemic brought. Combs says he is looking forward to serving his second term as mayor under more "normal" conditions.

"Last time I was mayor, so much was about the city contracting, and figuring out 'how

do we get back to normal?" he said. "Now it's going to be back to being about 'what's our future vision for the city, and how do we help that come to fruition?'"

In 2025, the Menlo Park City Council will make decisions on the direction to take on several large developments that have been proposed for the city. One of those, the decision of whether or not to proceed with seeking proposals for affordable housing on downtown parking lots, will take place on Jan. 14, 2025, right at the beginning of Combs' term as mayor.

The council also still needs to finalize a development agreement for the Parkline development at the site of the SRI headquarters. The so-called "builder's remedy" proposal for the former Sunset Magazine site, which has been deemed complete by city planners and is now in the early stages of the environmental review process, is another big question mark that hangs over the council members' heads.

Combs said that it will be important for the council to respond to those big projects and offer clarity to the public over the next year. He also said he knows the projects will generate "a lot of discussions and debates," but

that it's important for the council to prioritize hearing public comment and to encourage residents to engage in civil and respectful discussion with one another.

"I think as a council, it's important for us to ... encourage discussion and debate, but also to provide a forum for it, and also to remind people that we are all committed to making Menlo Park better, though we might have different visions for what better looks like," he said.

Combs said that staffing is another challenge that has been ongoing for the city. Though the hiring process is primarily driven by the city manager, he believes that the council can have a role in helping to fill key vacancies in City Hall.

In the 2024 general election, Menlo Park residents passed a transient occupancy tax (hotel tax) increase after the council put it on the ballot to add more money to the city's coffers. The city had been struggling to balance its budget due to uncertain state funding and after it lost the right to collect the utility user tax following a lawsuit. The city's final 2024-25 budget forecasts an \$820,000 deficit. Combs said he thinks that the increased TOT will help the city stabilize its

finances, but that the council still needs to carefully prioritize its limited budget.

He also hopes to return to the tradition of a "state of the city" address, which the city has not done for a couple of years. "Historically, those have been great community moments of both looking forward for the council ... and then also for staff and residents," he said.

Combs said that despite the complex issues the city is facing in the upcoming year, he looks forward to engaging with Menlo Park residents. Combs already holds weekly office hours from 9-10 a.m. at Cafe Zoe, at 1929 Menalto Ave., but says that he hopes residents know that he will have an "open door policy" as mayor. He also plans to expand his office hours to other locations in the city in 2025 to be more accessible to residents from other districts throughout his tenure as mayor.

"Those in-person, regular interactions with folks, and folks knowing that every Saturday at nine o'clock they know exactly where to find me ... is great," he said. ■

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

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LifeMoves

Provides shelter/housing and supportive services across 26 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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Holiday Fund: Helping neighbors thrive with literacy

By Margaret Simmons



Three current members of the Literacy Partners Menlo — Park Board didn't need to be told that too many people in their community — one of the world's most affluent — couldn't read, write or speak English well enough to get a viable job, progress in vocational training, or help their kids do their homework.

In the late 2010s, volunteers John Schniedwind and Mike Goodkind served a steady flow of adult literacy learners from the local community who spent evenings improving their English through the Menlo Park Public Library's Project Read program.

San Mateo County is a study in contrasts, based on the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 2018-2022. While 90.8 percent of persons over 25 in the county are high school graduates, overall 44.8 percent speak a language other than English at home and 16.3 percent of residents identify as Limited English Proficient.

"Statistics aside, it didn't take long for John [Schniedwind] and I to see just how much need there was locally for some pretty basic educational services when we saw people coming into the library for help. These were neighbors or near neighbors, they had kids who attended classes and played on the same sports teams as our kids. So many parents — I personally encountered hundreds — were anxious or even desperate to gain the tools to communicate — with their colleagues at work, supervisors, their kids' teachers and health caregivers, even their kids' team members, coaches and neighbors," Goodkind said.

Heriberto Madrigal didn't

need any prompting or education to see literacy services as a local issue. Madrigal already well understood the educational divide while growing up in Menlo Park's Belle Haven neighborhood with parents, he said, who were encouraging to him but spoke no English. Madrigal worked as a library page at 14. Now a professional librarian with an MLS degree, Madrigal joined the LPMP board in 2022.

Through 2024, the 501(c)(3) nonprofit has distributed more than \$250,000 to seven highly local organizations (including the Menlo Park Public Library) that serve clients from toddlers to seniors, Schniedwind, LPMP's current treasurer, noted. "The needs are ongoing as individuals improve their skills, new arrivals take their places," Goodkind said.

The latest three latest LPMP grants in 2024, highlight community need, from toddlers to seniors:

■ **All Five (allfive.org)** provides toddler and preschool education in Belle Haven, where scores on annual state proficiency exams are significantly below California norms. Early childhood education has been proven to give kids a jump start in brain development and learning. LPMP stepped up for a second year with a \$30,000 grant to support an onsite speech-language therapist, an urgent need not met by All Five's other funding. All Five uses a sliding scale tuition that is free for the lowest income families but

attracts tuition-paying students, thus representing a broad community resource and quality program that serves kids wherever they go on to elementary school.

■ **East Palo Alto Kids (epak.org)** provides hundreds of small — typically \$750 — micro-grants to primary and middle school teachers in eastern Menlo Park and East Palo Alto to provide to their own kids such enhancements as field trips, science equipment, musical instruments and basic classroom supplies often taken for granted from parent resources. LPMP granted \$15,000 to impact more teachers and kids in 2024.

■ **Rosalie Rendu Center (Rosalie-rendu-center.org)** offers English language and related education to community adults, including seniors. The Center came to LPMP with a request for \$22,017 to expand its English as a second language (ESL) classes to include a 34-week evening session held locally. As one student put it, "It's wonderful because I can work in the morning and the schedule is magnificent."

Since 2021, LPMP has also provided support for selected projects at **Job Train (jobtrainworks.org)**, **StreetCode (streetcode.org)**, **Ravenswood Classroom Partners (ravenswoodclassroom-partners.org)**, and the **Menlo Park Public Library (menlopark.gov/library)**.

Learn more from the LPMP website: literacypartnersmenlopark.org

Donate online: mightycause.com/organization/LiteracyPartnersMenloPark

By check: 1259 El Camino Real #176, Menlo Park, CA 94025 ■

Margaret Simmons is an LPMP board member.



Courtesy East Palo Alto Kids Foundation

Kids at the East Palo Alto Kids Foundation with books they were able to take home.

Holiday Fund: Bringing Families Home connects people with rapid rehousing program

By Valeria Rodriguez and Jackie Cisneros



Like many loving families, Mark's* own had some challenges. His wife, Joyce, struggled with substance use and the family did all that they could to help her. Because she needed care, Mark would stay home at times to look after her, which affected his ability to maintain a regular work schedule. This impacted the family's finances. Sadly, Joyce passed away and soon after her death, he and his daughters were evicted.

Mark struggled to keep up with the cost-of-living expenses and used up most of his savings to stay in hotels. He sold many of his belongings for extra cash, but it wasn't enough. Soon after, Mark and his three daughters began living in his van, four months after Joyce's passing.

He lost all hope but was finally connected to StarVista's Bringing Families Home Program. Here, he met a

housing specialist who helped him, and his family get connected to a rapid rehousing program aimed at providing rental subsidies and housing searches. While Mark and his family were searching for housing through the rapid rehousing program, the housing specialist got approval to fund three months of a hotel stay during their transition to permanent housing.

The hotel stays reduced further fear, anxiety, and harassment that Mark and his daughters faced while living in their vehicle. While living in the van, they did not get adequate sleep, as they frequently feared that the police would ask them to leave, or strangers would bother them, or try to harm them. It was quite frightening.

Living in their vehicle also prevented his daughters from attending school, as the only places they could stay were too far from their district. Mark had also started a new job, which was wonderful, but made it difficult for his daughters to get to school. This left his 17-year-old daughter to care for her younger sisters.

While Mark was working with the housing specialist, he was also working with a case manager from our Differential Response Program. He and his case manager worked on getting connected with counseling services, as neither he nor his kids had any real time to process Joyce's death, along with the traumas of being unhoused. His case manager and housing specialist worked closely together, collaborating in ways to improve their lives. After months of staying in hotels, dealing with behavioral issues with his daughters, and missing a significant amount of school, Mark was finally approved for an apartment.

The housing specialist advocated for furnishing his new apartment, and this request was approved. StarVista's Bringing Families Home Program successfully furnished his new apartment, providing beds for each family member, dressers, a table with chairs, a couch, pillows, and blankets. Mark also had some of his family's belongings in storage, and our staff secured funding to move their items from storage to his new home. The housing specialist was able to close the case with Mark as a successful completion of the program, meeting their needs and more.

Today, while his housing is secure, Mark continues to work with his case manager to address grief, stress, work-life balance, and the behavioral and the scholastic issues his daughters face. They are able to do this in the comfort and safety of their new home rather than the cold, dark, and unsafe vehicle in which they were previously living in.

Bringing Families Home is

a new state-funded program within StarVista's Differential Response Program aimed at helping families at risk of homelessness who are working with San Mateo County's Children and Family Services to maintain stable housing. StarVista helps children, youth, adults, and families navigate life's challenges by empowering individuals, inspiring hope, and strengthening communities. StarVista sees the potential in clients to overcome life's challenges.

StarVista is one of the beneficiaries of The Almanac's Holiday Fund. Donations are divided equally among this year's 10 nonprofit organizations and 100% of the funds raised go directly to the recipients. Donations to the Holiday Fund can be made at almanacnews.com/holiday_fund. ■

*Name and some details changed to protect confidentiality

Valeria Rodriguez and Jackie Cisneros are StarVista staff members.

TAPIA

continued from page 5

with the DA's office," when asked why she didn't involve the DA's office in the investigation.

However, Wagstaffe, in a press release on Dec. 16, cast doubt on Corpus' claim and said that Corpus' arrest of Tapia was conducted without a warrant and the involvement of the DA's office following an internal investigation by the Sheriff's Office. Wagstaffe said that the case was not referred to his office until the morning of Nov. 13.

The DA's office's follow-up investigation found that there were some "clerical errors" in the way that Tapia had coded some of his work hours but that there was no monetary loss to the Sheriff's Office due to the miscoding and that Tapia "did not commit grand theft, theft by false pretenses or any sort of timecard fraud." Wagstaffe said that since August 2024, the miscodings have been corrected and proper timecard entries have been made by Tapia.

"We have concluded based on the follow-up investigation that no crime was committed by Deputy Carlos Tapia," said Wagstaffe. "The complete investigation showed that there was no basis to believe any violation of law had occurred, and finally that deputy Tapia should not

have been arrested."

In a press conference held on Dec. 16 following Wagstaffe's announcement that he would not be pursuing charges against Tapia, Tapia said that the DSA is calling for a civil rights violation investigation into his arrest. Tapia also said that his arrest was another example of Corpus retaliating against her employees; he has been a vocal critic of Corpus' administration.

Corpus has come under fire for allegedly retaliating against Sheriff's Office employees — an allegation which was sustained by the county's independent investigation.

"The DSA remains extremely disturbed that Tapia was arrested to begin with. Arresting a union leader just before Judge Cordell's damning report was released was a clear attempt at silencing an opponent and stifling dissent," the DSA said in a statement on Dec. 16.

According to Wagstaffe's press release, the Sheriff's Office's internal investigation into Tapia was conducted "entirely by an acting assistant sheriff," who Wagstaffe said was "assigned" to the case. The acting assistant sheriff at the time was Matthew Fox, who resigned on Nov. 15, just two days after he submitted the case against Tapia to the DA's office for prosecution. Wagstaffe confirmed that Fox is the assistant sheriff that was

referenced in the Dec. 16 press release.

"The Acting Assistant Sheriff's investigation was extraordinarily limited and did not involve necessary follow-up investigation to examine the accuracy of the allegations," said Wagstaffe.

Fox apparently noted in the investigation report that he submitted to the DA's office that the investigation was "ongoing" and that "more needed to be done," but the Sheriff's Office executive leadership team directed that Tapia be arrested on Nov. 12 without any additional investigation being conducted.

'The DSA remains extremely disturbed that Tapia was arrested to begin with.'

DSA

Wagstaffe said that after the case was referred to the DA's office, they conducted a "complete investigation" into the claims against Tapia, which involved speaking to Tapia's supervisors to confirm his work schedule and assignments, to county human resources analysts who verified union

contract rules that allowed Tapia release time for his union work, to the assistant county controller regarding payroll rules and to county public works staff to track Tapia's building logins and logouts. The DA's office also conducted an interview with Tapia himself.

Corpus said in a statement on Dec. 16 that there will be a separate internal review that will take place regarding the arrest of Tapia as "standard protocol" dictates. Corpus said that the internal review would be conducted by an independent, third-party investigator to ensure fair review.

In an email to this news organization, Wagstaffe said that "it is very unusual" for a law enforcement agency to conduct a warrantless arrest of an employee, but that it is not illegal to do so. There is no basis for any criminal charges against Corpus in regards to her arrest of Tapia, according to Wagstaffe.

"We think that it is best for public confidence that a law enforcement agency contact us as soon as they believe criminal conduct and let us investigate it ... rather than the agency investigating it themselves," said Wagstaffe. "But this is a choice to be made by the police chief or sheriff. There is no rule or law requiring the referral to my office."

Eliot Storch, a spokesperson for and member of the DSA, said that it is a Sheriff's Office policy that investigation into any member of the Sheriff's Office should be referred to the DA's office.

"We generally will not do a criminal investigation into our own for fears of it being improper, for fear of any sort of bias," he said. "We let the District Attorney, and the District Attorney's investigators do that. Clearly, in this case, Sheriff Corpus did not."

The announcement by Wagstaffe led Corzo and Mueller, who have led the county's investigation into Corpus' office, to renew their calls for Corpus to resign.

"We want every person in this county to know of your (Tapia's) innocence," said Mueller. "I don't know if the sheriff or her executive leadership team will ever apologize to you, but on behalf of the county, I want to tell you how incredibly apologetic we are for what happened to you."

Tapia said that he and his fellow deputies "look forward to the day we can work with a new sheriff who will restore the trust and transparency the public deserves from its Sheriff's Office." ■

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

Portola Valley council selects Judith Hasko as new mayor

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

The Portola Valley Town Council voted Vice Mayor Judith Hasko as the new mayor and Council member Craig Taylor as vice mayor for 2025 on Dec. 11. The town recognized outgoing Mayor Sarah Wernikoff and Council member Jeff Aalfs as council members Rebecca Flynn and Helen Wolter joined the dais.

Wernikoff and Aalfs were presented with a resolution from State Sen. Josh Becker, D-Menlo Park, and Assemblymember Marc Berman, D-Palo Alto. They also received a resolution signed by the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors.

"I want to sincerely thank Jeff and Sarah for their years of dedication to helping Portola Valley in changing times," said Hasko. "Having served on the council for two years now, I can appreciate more fully how much work the departing council members have done for our community."

Hasko recalled Aalfs' hard work in supporting town residents and businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic and dedication to sustainability.



Judith Hasko

She also honored Wernikoff in her ability to navigate multiple challenges and leading efforts for town committees to have more independence.

Aalfs thanked past, present and future council members and staff that he has worked with over his 13 years of tenure. He shared his appreciation for former council members Maryann Derwinn, John Richards, Ted Driscoll and to all seven town managers that have served since 2011. In his speech, Aalfs also recognized significant members of the town staff by name, recalling the work they did together.

"The past year, we've made a lot of progress. Sometimes it unfortunately takes a crisis to make some of the hard changes that we've been making, but I think we've stepped up and there's more to do," said Aalf. "I am hopeful for the future of Portola Valley. I am grateful for all of the support I got from so many people in doing this job."

Wernikoff celebrated Aalfs' accomplishments and said: "Jeff has exemplified principled and steadfast leadership, always prioritizing what is best for our community above all else."

Wernikoff was honored for her four years of service to the town during the COVID-19 pandemic, various wildfires and for the hours she spent on the housing element.

Community member Alex Von Feldt expressed admiration for Wernikoff's practical and realistic views and her ability to find compromise in difficult situations.

In a speech, Wernikoff thanked the town staff for their support through challenges with the housing element, leadership transitions and financial struggles.

"I'd like to extend my congratulations to Rebecca Flynn and

Helen Wolter and express my gratitude for their willingness to serve our community," said Wernikoff. "We face significant challenges and I am confident they will help guide us through the work ahead."

As the new mayor of Portola Valley, Hasko spoke on the importance of improving town finances and creating a positive and productive environment for town staff. She asked the community to be patient and understanding as

the town navigates through its challenges.

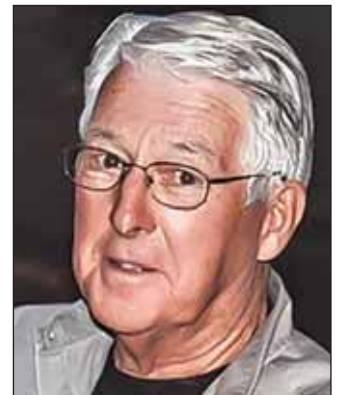
"We have done a lot in the past year but we have much more work to do going forward," said Hasko. "I ask for all of you to commit individually to share your comments, concerns and potential solutions so we can identify the best way we can set up our town for success." ■

Email Staff Writer
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Richard Ryder Dewey, MD

February 7, 1929 – December 4, 2024

Richard R. Dewey MD passed away peacefully on December 4, 2024, in Portola Valley, CA. Dick was born on February 7, 1929 to Benjamin and Julia Dewey in Westfield NJ. He was a graduate of Cardinal Farley's Military High School, and in 1946, enlisted in the US Army. Dick served with the 6th Infantry Division in Korea, and was honorable discharged in 1948, with the rank of Sergeant. Taking advantage of the GI Bill, Dick enrolled at



St. Vincent College in Latrobe PA, graduating in 1951 with dual degrees in Biology and Chemistry. He applied and was accepted at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis MO in 1951 and graduated with distinction in 1955. From 1955 to 1958, Dick completed his internship, residency and was a Fellow at Barnes Hospital St. Louis, MO. Thereafter, in 1959, he served as Senior Resident at Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, NY.

Dick met June Louise Schoknecht while at Washington University School of Medicine where she was a nurse at Barnes Hospital. They were married in 1956 and had two children, Richard Jr. and Valerie.

The family moved to California and Dick started his private practice of Internal Medicine in Palo Alto at the Stanford Hospital. Dick later joined the Stanford School of Medicine Clinical Faculty in 1984 and in 1994 attained the rank of Clinical Professor of Medicine.

Dr. Dewey was known for his dedication and kindness to his patients and their families, and continued to make house calls in his 80's. His passion for caring for others never ended. Dr. Dewey was the physician to the nuns at Oakwood on the Sacred Heart campus in Atherton for 20 years. He retired from his internal medicine practice at Stanford Medical Center in 1994 and relocated from Menlo Park to Graeagle CA and Borrego Springs CA, but Dr. Dewey being Dr. Dewey, engaged in part-time practice of internal medicine through 2012.

Dick was an avid golfer and played several times a week at Stanford Golf Course, where he served as men's club president in 1986. He annually planted impatiens on several holes at the golf course. Dick was a devoted husband and grandfather who loved wine, classical music, attended Stanford football and basketball games and was known for his dapper attire. He was upbeat until his passing and enjoyed socializing with a wide circle of friends. For many years, Dick and June worked with the NFL and helped organize the annual celebrity golf tournaments prior to the Super Bowl and Pro Bowl.

Dick is survived by his son, Rich (Lynn), daughter Valerie Soltau (Mark), three grandchildren: Richard Ryder III (Trey), Jenna Holden, and Shelby Soltau, and three great grandchildren: Ryder, Ellie and LJ. He is preceded in death by his wife, June.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations be made to Graeagle Medical Clinic (Eastern Plumas Health Care Foundation) or Oakwood RSCJ (Society of the Sacred Heart).

PAID OBITUARY

Firefighters extinguish house fire in Menlo Park

Blaze possibly started by barbecue on back deck

By Eleanor Raab

A house fire erupted at a single-family home on Morey Drive in Menlo Park on Thursday afternoon, Dec. 12. Crews responded to the fire around 1:30 p.m. after a neighbor reported a "fire on a deck that was threatening a structure," according to Menlo Park Fire Protection District Battalion Chief Matt Menard.

By the time fire crews arrived, the fire had spread to the back side of the house and into the house's attic. Menard said that the residents of the house were not at home when the fire broke out. No residents, pets or firefighters were injured in the blaze.

"It was a real quick knock-down of the fire," said Menard. "Early notification to 911 and the fire department by whoever called it in, ... a quick response from the company and a quick fire attack really saved a lot of the property."

Menard said that the back of the house, the attic and the back deck sustained "moderate



Eleanor Raab

Firefighters remove material from the roof of a house that went up in flames on Dec. 12.

to significant fire damage," but that fire crews were able to save several rooms in the front of the structure.

The fire was extinguished by 2:20 p.m., but fire crews remained on scene to ensure that there were no lingering hot spots or smoldering embers anywhere in the house.

The cause of the fire is still under investigation, but Menard said that fire crews have identified a barbecue and propane tank that was located on the back deck as a possible source of the blaze. ■

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

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From San Jose to D.C.: How Sam Liccardo is getting ready

By Brandon Pho /
San Jose Spotlight

Add one more person to the list of employers feeling the Bay Area's cost of living pains: An incoming Silicon Valley congressman looking for legislative staff and office space.

Former San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo will be the region's first new congressman in decades, and he's at the early stages of building his teams to serve in the Bay Area and Washington, D.C. His first session in the House of Representatives is Jan. 3, but he said his limited budget to get a team rolling doesn't match the extraordinary expense of paying employees in California. And while the lease is up for the Palo Alto congressional office of his retiring predecessor, Rep. Anna

Eshoo, the location won't work for Liccardo. The 54-year-old Capitol freshman said he's prioritizing people.

"Palo Alto office space is not cheap. We need to pay people more to live here and we also need to pay more for things like rent. We are still sorting out the numbers," Liccardo told San José Spotlight. "We're spending every possible dollar we have on people and having a really good team. That means we're looking for relatively cheap options for offices."

He's gotten help from a familiar name around town — Matt Hammer, the son of the late former San Jose Mayor Susan Hammer. The 56-year-old political strategist, previously a policy and climate advisor for Liccardo's congressional campaign, served as Liccardo's transition director

over the last month.

Hammer said Liccardo will have his pick of D.C. talent. President Joe Biden's administration is phasing out, and scores of Democratic bureaucrats are preparing to look for work when President-elect Donald Trump's Republican administration begins.

"There are a lot of incredibly experienced, talented people looking for work because of what happened in the election," Hammer told San José Spotlight. "We've had lots and lots of interested people applying — people in the Biden administration, people who have been working for Democrat legislators who are retiring or lost election. The situation is quite different on the other side of the aisle, who will be in greater competition for experienced people because

they'll hold majorities in both the House and Senate."

Liccardo said he's also selected his chief of staff in D.C., but he and Hammer declined to say who. Sources tell San José Spotlight Liccardo is close to picking Tim Delmonico, an administrator for the Environmental Protection Agency. Before that role, Delmonico was chief of staff for Congressman Raul Ruiz, a California Democrat representing Imperial County and parts of Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Delmonico declined to comment.

A geographic issue

Liccardo's office space decisions reflect the issues he'll be tackling on Capitol Hill. Rent and wages are one area. But a map of Liccardo's district, which

spans San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, shows why his constituents will need more than one local office.

The district extends to the Bay Area's coastline, where storm surges and coastal erosion have raised the need for unique federal attention to stave off long-term effects of climate change. For years, Eshoo has had another office in Half Moon Bay. That likely won't change under her successor.

"We're going to keep that location. It's important for us to have a presence on the coast side given the very unique challenges they have around infrastructure," Liccardo told San José Spotlight. "Then we will have an office somewhere in Santa Clara County that will hopefully be

See LICCARDIO, page 18

MENLO PARK 2024

continued from page 5

with many new restaurants opening throughout the city. Sandhill Sundeck opened in July. Cafe Vivant, a restaurant that will specialize in California heritage breed chicken and wine, is in the final stages of construction in the space that used to house Le Boulanger and will open in early 2025. Loretta, a new bar that is the brainchild of Bistro Vida owner Ali El Safy, will be opening soon in the spot formerly occupied by Magoo's Pizza, of Grateful Dead fame. Il Mercato di Che Fico, which sells handmade pasta, gelato, focaccia sandwiches, gourmet groceries and more, opened in the Springline development. Middle Eastern bakery LeVant Dessert, which sells the viral Dubai chocolate, opened on Santa Cruz Avenue.

Community

In January, several Menlo Park community members were honored by the Menlo Park Fire Protection District for saving a young girl's life in February.

Construction of the new Belle Haven Community Campus was completed in March. Hundreds of residents attended the grand opening in May and it's been used for community events throughout the year.

Menlo Park also provided help to other communities, as the Menlo Park Fire Protection District sent mutual aid to the Park Fire in northern California, and to Hurricane Milton in Florida and Georgia.

Election

After changing its City Council District boundaries in early 2024, Menlo Park's election season was pretty quiet. Council members Maria Doerr



Courtesy city of Menlo Park

One of Menlo Park's Tesla Model Y patrol vehicles.

(District 5) and Jen Wolosin (District 3) announced that they would not seek reelection. Jennifer Wise, a former library commissioner, was elected to the District 5 seat after winning over competitor Greg Conlon. Jeff Schmidt ran unopposed for the District 3 seat. Wise and Schmidt were sworn onto the council on Dec. 10.

Menlo Park voters also overwhelmingly opted to increase the city's Transient Occupancy Tax from 12% to 15.5%. This is a tax levied on out of town visitors making short-term stays within city limits. The City Council voted to place it on the ballot in order to plug an approximately \$800,000 deficit in the city's budget, and to give the city more locally controlled funds to work with. Some representatives of hotels in the city opposed the measure as they said it would negatively impact their businesses.

Environment

The city continued to pursue its environmental goals in 2024. The city created and approved

its very first environmental justice element, which focuses on protecting underserved communities from potential environmental health risks.

The city also partnered with Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge to open a new trail, the Flyway Trail, as part of an ongoing marsh restoration project in October.

Menlo Park moved forward with a state grant to launch a program to electrify homes in the Belle Haven neighborhood. The very first electric retrofits in the neighborhood were completed in November.

In October, community organization Canopy organized a mass tree-planting event near All Five preschool in Belle Haven.

Police

The year kicked off in Menlo Park with a spate of home burglaries in the Sharon Heights neighborhood. Fourteen burglaries took place between Jan. 4 and Feb. 12 in the neighborhood.

After a well-attended community meeting, the city opted to explore employing automatic license plate readers throughout the city, despite the council having rejected the technology in 2023. The council voted 3-2 in May to install 25-35 plate readers throughout the city, but with additional privacy guardrails. The council opted to further expand the agreement with ALPR provider Flock in October.

In February, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors voted to approve funding to have crisis response clinicians from StarVista join Menlo Park police officers on calls where they are needed.

In August, the police department opted not to continue with their Tesla patrol vehicle pilot, after encountering issues with the way that the Teslas operated in the line of duty. The police department will explore other possible zero-emissions patrol vehicles such as the Chevrolet Blazer electric vehicle. ■

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



Anna Hoch-Kenney

Nick Henriquez, 10, jumps into the Belle Haven Community Campus Pool on July 2.



Magali Gauthier

Jill Zanolli, left, and Cat Westover, right, play pickleball at Holbrook-Palmer Park in Atherton on April 25.

ATHERTON 2024

continued from page 7

to make an arrest following a string of burglaries early in the year, after detectives found traces of blood after a burglar cut themselves while ripping down shelves during a break in.

A federal lawsuit was filed against five Atherton police officers in January for the alleged use of excessive force against and the unreasonable arrest

of two Menlo-Atherton High School students in April 2023.

Road improvements

In addition to housing, the council focused heavily on road improvements in 2024. In October, the council opted to move forward with constructing a roundabout at one of the town's busiest intersections.

The council also considered adding sidewalks and bike lanes through the section of El Camino Real that runs through

the town. Right now, Atherton is in the initial planning stages of pursuing improvements along that section of El Camino Real in conjunction with other jurisdictions.

The beginning work has involved a \$755,000 study funded mostly by the San Mateo County Transportation Authority, according to Carolyn Mamaradlo, senior project manager at the agency. Atherton pitched in \$75,000 while Menlo Park chipped in \$30,000 and



Priscila Udell

Dylan Udell, center, on the ferry before her swim from Alcatraz to San Francisco, accompanied by her mom Priscila Udell, left, and her godmother Monika Bickert, right, who swam with her on Sept. 22.

SamTrans contributed \$100,000.

What Atherton residents did in 2024

Athertonians achieved many things in 2024. 9-year-old Atherton resident Dylan Udell became one of the youngest people to swim from Alcatraz to San Francisco. Atherton resident Sarah Eisner was featured in a documentary about dismantling the legacy of slavery on a personal level.

Atherton lost one of its most well-known residents after baseball great Willie Mays died at 93 in June. Mays was a genial presence around Atherton, and was known to give out baseballs to trick-or-treaters at his home on Mount Vernon Lane. Atherton

had previously named a conference room in the town's library after him, as well as the Homer Field at Willie Mays Ballpark at Holbrook-Palmer Park.

Atherton residents also gained new uses for the sport courts in Holbrook-Palmer Park, following a six-month pickleball trial. Following positive feedback from the community, the council opted to continue the pickleball program into 2025.

And though he is not an Atherton resident, Illinois-based singer/songwriter Rick Rockz was inspired to write a song this year by The Almanac's 2022 report about a buried Mercedes Benz that was unearthed from the backyard of an Atherton resident. ■



Courtesy Bon Appétit Management Company

Sand Hill Sundeck opened in Menlo Park in July.

TOP 10

continued from page 1

6. M-A boys varsity basketball coach placed on leave

Mike Molieri, a Menlo-Atherton High School special education teacher of 21 years and boys varsity basketball coach of 12 years, was placed on administrative leave by the Sequoia Union High School District for an undisclosed reason. Students say they're devastated to lose a teacher and coach who acted as a mentor and safe space for many on campus.

Molieri is still on leave.

5. New restaurant in Menlo Park pays homage to old

Silicon Valley

A new restaurant called Sand Hill Sundeck opened at 3000 Sand Hill Road in Menlo Park on July 7. The restaurant is located within the Sand Hill Collection, a 48-acre indoor-outdoor workspace poised at the top of Sand Hill Road.

4. 'Lies and abuse of power' plague San Mateo County Sheriff's Office, investigation finds

One of the biggest stories of the year was the turmoil in the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office.

A 408-page report released in November by county supervisors Noelia Corzo and Ray

Mueller called for the immediate resignation of Sheriff Christina Corpus and the immediate firing of her then-Chief of Staff Victor Aenlle due to what Judge LaDoris H. Cordell describes that "lies, secrecy, intimidation, retaliation and abuses of power," are "hallmarks" of the Corpus' administration.

The report detailed a multi-year affair between Corpus and Aenlle that allegedly involved Aenlle gifting Corpus thousands of dollars worth of jewelry and accompanying her on a trip to Hawaii, all while Corpus fast-tracked pay increases for Aenlle.

3. Former Sequoia staffers accuse district of discrimination

Almanac reporter Jennifer Yoshikoshi spent four months investigating working conditions in the Sequoia Union High School District, interviewing eight former and current staff members. Each referred her to another former staff member with similar experiences, indicating a potential pattern of discrimination.

2. San Mateo becomes only county in California where you need to earn over \$500K annually to afford a median-priced home

The high cost of housing remains a major challenge for San Mateo County residents.

A report from the California Association of Realtors found that you need to make \$518,400 annually to afford a median-priced home in the county.

San Mateo and Santa Clara counties require the highest minimum incomes in the state for a median-priced home.

1. Menlo Park police find that Teslas don't appear to be 'patrol cars of the future'

In August, the Menlo Park City Council received an update on the Menlo Park Police Department's Tesla pilot

program, which aims to see whether Teslas, or other electric vehicles, could be used as patrol vehicles.

Over the course of the program, police staff found that while "Teslas are useful within the department for patrol and non-patrol operations, (they) do not appear to be the 'patrol cars of the future,'" due to officer safety concerns, lack of off-road-riding ability and limited space for gear, personnel and detainees.

In 2021, the City Council implemented the Tesla patrol car pilot program as part of the city's effort to be carbon neutral by 2030. ■



Anna Hoch-Kenney

Former Sequoia Union High School District employees Kari Cheng, left, and Jeremy Arey, right, at Stafford Park in Redwood City on Oct. 1.

'It was a surprise completely:' a rare native plant pops up at Jasper Ridge

Western bewildering bushmallow is sprouting around some of the burn piles' fire rings

By Kate Daly

A rare native plant found only in the Bay Area has popped up in a surprising place on Stanford University land months after a controlled burn to cut down on fire risk.

Over the past few years, the university has focused on different ways to manage wild-fire fuel on its 8,100 acres. Generally speaking, decades of fire suppression practices have left a lot of brush accumulation in the West, which in turn has led to increasing intensity of wildfires. Stanford has tried various approaches to combat fuel build up such as goats, mowing, AI sensors, and a BurnBot, a vehicle that creates fire breaks by burning and then watering swaths.

In October 2023, an approximately 69-acre part of Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve near Sand Hill Road and the Westridge neighborhood boundary was targeted for clearing, including an area Executive Director Jorge Ramos describes as "a very thick chaparral stand probably eight feet tall; it was a wall."

In some places the topography made it too challenging to bring in chippers. In two three-acre sections workers heaped the cut vegetation into almost 200 piles measuring up to 6 feet tall, and then covered them to protect them from the rain.

Months later, after permits were secured with Cal Fire and the Woodside Fire Protection District, and neighbors were alerted, a prescribed burn got rid of the piles over several days in early March 2024.

The Stanford Report reported that many people gathered on the first day to witness members of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area burn sage in an abalone shell, and say blessings and prayers in the Chocheyno dialect to honor their ancestral home.

Charlene Nijmeh, the chairwoman of the tribe, told the Stanford Report, "We are connecting back to our land and learning the old ways and traditions of our ancestors. This fire is part of this process."

The preserve recently added the name 'Ootchamin 'Ooyakma to signage. In the

Chocheyna language that translates to red ridge or mountain, a reference to the red jasper stone found on the ridge.

The area burnt last spring hadn't been scorched in more than 50 years, and now this season a curious thing is happening. For the first time, Western bewildering bushmallow is sprouting around some of the burn piles' fire rings.

Specimens of the plant were first documented in the preserve in 1962, and around Searsville Lake, but nothing has been observed recently, and never in this area.

Preserve scientist Andriana Hernandez theorizes the plant's seeds must have long been dormant in the soil. And since they are fire followers, it took heat and smoke to prompt the seeds to germinate all these years later.

"It was a surprise completely," Ramos says.

The newly exposed soil in the burn area also regenerated some more common plants: yerba santa, pitcher sage and bluewitch nightshade.

He says, "We were expecting the native shrubs to come up, and they're about 2 to 3 feet



Courtesy Adriana Hernandez

Western bewildering bushmallow grows after a prescribed burn at Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve in Portola Valley.

tall now."

"When we found this plant [western bewildering bushmallow], this is part of that indigenous awakening," he says, an example of the collaborative

stewardship the preserve is striving for — to learn and implement sustainable land management practices by combining indigenous knowledge with Western science. ■

LICCARDO

continued from page 16

convenient to folks in San Jose."

His team is still looking at sites and talking to brokers. Liccardo said he's also talking to government organizations, as he may try to co-locate in a government office. At the same time, he said he's talking with some of Eshoo's staff about staying onboard for his term.

"We've expressed a willingness

to a couple members of Anna's team who also expressed their willingness to stay on," Liccardo said. "But that's in the district office. I don't want to get out there and say how many and exactly who. In some cases, folks are still mulling it over. It is the first and most important priority for me above committee assignments or other issues. Right now, the focus is on building the team."

A narrow majority

While Liccardo has attended several orientations on the East Coast for new congressional members, the transition in many ways is just starting. He's looking at apartments within walking distance of Capitol Hill, namely in the riverfront neighborhood of Navy Yard, where rents run an average of \$2,800 a month, according to RentCafe. He won't get the keys to his D.C. office until Jan. 3.

"I don't expect we'll have the full team in place by Jan. 3, but at the very least we'll have the senior team in both the district and D.C. offices," he said.

Then comes another consideration for his new life: the commute.

"You need to be out in D.C. for roughly four days from Monday through Thursday for the votes, and then you hop on a plane, usually Thursday night, and get back to the district for meetings and events and so forth. We will certainly be following that pattern," Liccardo said. The national political conditions may put pressure on that schedule.

Liccardo, a Democrat, will be



Courtesy Sam Liccardo

Former San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo will be the region's first new congressman in decades.

starting in a 119th Congress dominated by Republicans. House Democrats will have 215 members and Republicans are looking at a 220-member majority. But GOP leaders expect to lose three members early next year. Florida Rep. Matt Gaetz resigned to bid for an attorney general appointment. Then he dropped out. Two other GOP lawmakers are expected to resign as well to join Trump's cabinet, leaving a period where there will be 217 Republicans and 215 Democrats

until special elections can happen.

"(House) Democrats have 215 votes and Republicans, at least for several months, will have 217 depending on whether they're able to get those in sooner than later," Liccardo said. "This is a very, very narrow majority that Republicans have. There is going to be a premium on showing up. I don't want to miss a single vote. For any reason. I am not going to be the cause of any failure of my party to marshal the numbers we need on those crucial votes." ■

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Many of us in the Bay Area live in the suburbs because we prefer the small-town feel, the community culture, the intimate relationships with mom-and-pop shops, and restaurants where the servers are friendly, and know our name. We also appreciate small local schools, community events, and activities, including youth sports, art, music, and parades down Main Street.

Life is changing, and so much of what we hold dear is disappearing. Shops and restaurants are closed because we forgot to visit them and spend our money. After all, they need our support. They cannot compete with chains and box stores. So, if you love those unique places, support them by giving them your business.

Local journalism is the same. We all know that many local newspapers are dying because we have stopped supporting them. How many of us subscribe to a local paper, if we are lucky enough to still have one? Small local papers existed decades ago but disappeared when conglomerates took over, providing “regional news” instead. Coverage of our communities disappeared.

I could not have been happier when Embarcadero Publishing showed up in our small town to provide coverage of local issues. Reporting of government decisions, community interest stories, local high school sports, charitable event successes, local obituaries, and advertising for local small businesses had not existed for decades.

Any community with a local newspaper has been given the gift of connection among its citizens. Nothing else provides that same connection to the place you call home. It is time to celebrate and support this gift before it disappears. Sites like Nextdoor have their place, but nothing is more impactful than a local newspaper, be it in a printed version for those who still prefer that option or online.

As we all know, more money is needed for the things we want to be successful such as schools, arts, music, and charitable endeavors. Today, newspapers are no different. It should come as no surprise to anyone that if we want to have a local newspaper, we must provide the necessary funds through membership, donations, or a combination of both.

Decide today to support your local community by donating to your local non-profit newspaper. Keep independent, unbiased reporting coming, hold your elected officials accountable, and keep a local advertising option. Send in your donation before it's too late.

—Deborah Acosta McKeehan

Bio: Deborah was among the first female city managers in the United States, serving in California cities for over 25 years. After that career, she became vice president of Embarcadero Media's East Bay Region for three years, and currently serves on the Embarcadero Media Foundation board. She was chairwoman of the board of the Valley Care Hospital, which became Stanford Tri-Valley after a merger she helped to lead. She is on the board of Stanford Medicine Partners, which oversees the relationship between hundreds of doctors in the Bay Area with Stanford Hospital and Stanford School of Medicine. Deborah has also been deeply involved with numerous other nonprofits.



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The **Almanac**

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OUTDOOR DINING

continued from page 9

Wall and Aburish also supported adding a chain to prevent people from parking in the lot outside of open hours. The council voted to add necessary security cameras at each entrance and exit point to monitor drivers coming in and out of the shopping center.

A four-foot solid wall will also be constructed to separate the expanded parking lot area from the adjacent residential properties to prevent any disturbances from lights or traffic.

Enforcing CUP seating capacities

The Village Bakery and Buck's Restaurant have not been compliant with the property's CUP for three years, according to Goeld.

"If we were so far over capacity that we were seating double the number of people that should be allowed in the restaurants, what would it look like if that wasn't the case," said Aburish.

Goeld emphasized the importance of holding businesses accountable for exceeding seating capacity. The Village Bakery and Buck's are currently seating over

the permitted number of patrons, members of the council contend.

In the council's amendments to the CUP, members agreed to temporarily impose a fine of \$50 per extra patron seated over the capacity. The council asked the businesses to track the number of seated customers in a computer system which the town can check for violations.

Goeld believes that if businesses abide by the allowed number of patrons, the property will not have a parking problem.

"My question comes down to, do we even need (more) parking at all?" said Goeld. "We don't

know that because we're seating so many more people than the permit allows."

During the interim period after the application's approval, the applicant must complete all necessary steps to obtain approved construction permits to expand the parking lot and commence construction within a year.

The property owner is also required to provide valet parking for restaurants between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. "to provide a level of parking management" to accommodate additional vehicles, according to the staff report.

If these steps are not completed, the maximum seats allowed for each restaurant will revert to its previous capacity of 120 for Buck's and 70 for The Village Bakery.

The town will evaluate the applicant's CUP six months after the project is constructed.

Wall recommended that the town revisit the CUP every year or two to evaluate whether all conditions are being followed by the property owner. ■

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

Public Notices

PLACE4NAILS
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-299003
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) PLACE4NAILS, located at 218 PRIMROSE ROAD, STUDIO #18, BURLINGAME, CA 94010, San Mateo County. Mailing Address: 2848 Canyon Road, Burlingame, CA 94010.
Registered owner(s):
PLACE4NAILS LLC
2848 CANYON ROAD
BURLINGAME, CA 94010
State of Incorporation/Organization: CA
This business is conducted by: a Limited Liability Company.
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 29, Dec 6, 13 and 20, 2024)

GRANDVIEW/ESPINOSA ROAD FUND
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-299094
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) GRANDVIEW/ESPINOSA ROAD FUND, located at 166 Grandview Dr, Woodside, CA, 94062.
Registered owner(s):
JOE LANGE
166 Grandview Dr
Woodside, CA, 94062
PAMELA STRATTON
166 Grandview Dr
Woodside, CA, 94062
LAURA SCHAEFER
166 GRANDVIEW DR
Woodside, CA, 94062
CHRISTIN NEW
166 Grandview Dr
Woodside, CA, 94062
This business is conducted by: an Unincorporated Assoc. Other Than a Partnership.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on April 10, 2010.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on November 21, 2024.
(ALM Dec 6, 13, 20, 2024 and Jan 3, 2025)

SHE HIKES TOO
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-299135
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) SHE HIKES TOO, located at #1160 700 El Camino Real, Suite 120, Menlo Park, CA 94062.
Registered owner(s):
MNK CONSULTING LLC
#1160 700 El Camino Real, Suite 120
Menlo Park, CA 94062
State of Incorporation/Organization: CA
This business is conducted by: a Limited Liability Company.
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 27, 2024.
(ALM Dec 13, 20, 2024, Jan 3 and 10, 2025)

BEAUTY MASTERY
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-299109
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) BEAUTY MASTERY, located at 2135 Roosevelt Ave, Redwood City, CA 94061.
Registered owner(s):
DAISY PMU INC
2135 Roosevelt Ave
Redwood City, CA 94061
State of Incorporation/Organization: California
This business is conducted by: a Corporation.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 01/28/2021.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on November 22, 2024.
(ALM Dec 13, 20, 2024, Jan 3 and 10, 2025)

KB STAGING
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-299268
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) KB STAGING, located at 14 Vista Road, San Mateo, CA 94403. Mailing Address: 311 Avila Road, San Mateo, CA 94402.
Registered owner(s):
CER DESIGNS, LLC
311 Avila Road
San Mateo, CA 94402
State of Incorporation/Organization: CA
This business is conducted by: a Limited Liability Company.
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 December 12, 2024.
(ALM Dec 20, 2024, Jan 3, 10 and 17, 2025)

COCOLAB
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-298981
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) COCOLAB, located at 2335 Skyfarm Dr, Hillsborough, CA 94010. Mailing Address: 548 Market Street, PMB 77304, San Francisco, CA 94104.
Registered owner(s):
COCOFLOSS, INC.
548 Market Street, PMB 77304
San Francisco, CA 94104
State of Incorporation/Organization: Delaware
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 05, 2024.
(ALM Nov 29, Dec 6, 13 and 20, 2024)

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Case No.: 24CIV07026
TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:
Petitioner: Sally Louise Slate Lee filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows:
SALLY LOUISE SLATE LEE to SALLY LOUISE

SLATE
THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file a written objection that includes the reasons for the objection at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing to show cause why the petition should not be granted. If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing.
NOTICE OF HEARING: 01/21/2025, 9:00am, Southern Branch of the Superior Court of California, County of San Mateo located at 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063.
A copy of this ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE shall be published at least once each week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county:
ALMANAC
Date: 11/18/2024
Hon. Elizabeth K Lee
JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
(ALM Nov 29, Dec 6, 13 and 20, 2024)

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN MATEO COUNTY
Case No.: 24CIV07611
TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:
Petitioner: Nicholas Raymond Damer filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows:
NICHOLAS RAYMOND DAMER to NICHOLAS RAYMOND LIBERTY
THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file a written objection that includes the reasons for the objection at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing to show cause why the petition should not be granted. If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing.
NOTICE OF HEARING: 02/05/2025, 9:00am, Southern Branch of the Superior Court of California, County of San Mateo located at 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063.
A copy of this ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE shall be published at least once each week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county:
ALMANAC
Date: December 6, 2024
Stephanie G. Garratt
JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
(ALM Dec 20, 2024, Jan 3, 10 and 17, 2025)

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Case No.: 24-CIV-07254
TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:
Petitioner: Claire Elizabeth Kolling filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows:

CLAIRE ELIZABETH KOLLING to CLAIRE ELIZABETH KROFT
THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file a written objection that includes the reasons for the objection at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing to show cause why the petition should not be granted. If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing.
NOTICE OF HEARING: 1/27/2025, 9:00 AM, Civil Department of the Superior Court of California, County of San Mateo located at 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063.
A copy of this ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE shall be published at least once each week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county:
ALMANAC
Date: 11/25/2024
Jeffrey R. Finigan
JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
(ALM Dec 13, 20, 2024, Jan 3 and 10, 2025)

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN MATEO COUNTY
Case No.: 24C1V04198
TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:
Petitioner: Bertha Alicia Arreguin filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows:
BERTHA ALICIA ARREGUIN to BERTHA ARREGUIN CONTRERAS
THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file a written objection that includes the reasons for the objection at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing to show cause why the petition should not be granted. If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing.
NOTICE OF HEARING: 1-9-2025, 9:00AM, MC of the Superior Court of California, County of San Mateo County located at 400 County Center, Redwood City CA 94063.
A copy of this ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE shall be published at least once each week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county:
ALMANAC
Date: 11-15-2024
Elizabeth K. Lee
JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
(ALM Nov 29, Dec 6, 13 and 20, 2024)

NOTICE OF PETITION TO ADMINISTER ESTATE OF:
GRACIELA TERESA DE PIERRIS
Case No.: 24-PRO-01518
To all heirs, beneficiaries, creditors, contingent creditors, and persons who may otherwise be interested in the will or estate, or both, of GRACIELA TERESA DE PIERRIS.

A Petition for Probate has been filed by: Marta Susana De Pierris in the Superior Court of California, County of SAN MATEO.
The Petition for Probate requests that: Marta Susana De Pierris 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 January 23 2025 at 9:00 AM in Probate Division of the Superior Court of California, County of San Mateo, located at 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:
Raquel Lazar-Paley, Esquire
Paley & Prehn, PLC
819 Eddy Street
San Francisco, CA 94109
415-338-8226
(ALM Dec 20, 2024, Jan 3 and 10, 2025)

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- Fictitious Business Name
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- Notice of Bulk Sale
- Legal Summons
- Trustee Sale

The deadline is Sunday at 11:59 pm. Visit AlmanacNews.com/legal_notices/ For assistance email LegalNotices@AlmanacNews.com.

1 arrested at DUI checkpoint in Woodside over the weekend

By Embarcadero Media staff

The San Mateo County Sheriff's Office arrested one driver for driving under the influence of alcohol during a DUI checkpoint in Woodside last weekend.

More than 800 vehicles were

screened during the checkpoint, which took place between the hours of 6 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 13, and midnight on Saturday, Dec. 14, in the 2300 block of Woodside Road.

Drivers caught driving impaired and charged with a first-time DUI face an average of \$13,500 in

finest and penalties, as well as a suspended license, according to the CHP.

Overall results of the checkpoint:

- 822 vehicles screened
- 16 field sobriety tests conducted
- 25 total citations issued

- 20 drivers cited for driving without a license
 - One driver cited for driving on a suspended license
 - Four drivers cited for not having their driver's license in their possession
- The Sheriff's Office advises people who are thinking about

drinking alcohol to make a plan beforehand — use a ride-share service, a taxi, or designate a driver — to get some safely. The California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, provided grant funding for the checkpoint. ■

House Speaker Emerita Pelosi hospitalized during overseas trip in Luxembourg

By Bay City News Service

House Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi, D-San Francisco, has been hospitalized after being injured during an overseas trip in Luxembourg, her office confirmed Friday, Dec. 13.

Pelosi was traveling with a bipartisan Congressional delegation to mark the 80th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge from World War II. She "sustained an injury during an official engagement and was admitted to the hospital for evaluation," spokesperson Ian Krager said in a statement.

The statement said Pelosi, the first woman to serve as speaker

of the House of Representatives, "is currently receiving excellent treatment" and "continues to work and regrets that she is unable to attend the remainder of the CODEL engagements to honor the courage of our service members during one of the greatest acts of American heroism in our nation's history."

The statement concluded, "Speaker Emerita Pelosi was personally and officially honored to travel with the distinguished delegation, many of whom had family members who fought in World War II — including her uncle, Johnny. She looks forward to returning home to the U.S. soon."

Pelosi, 84, has represented San



Courtesy Olivia Wynkoop/Bay City News Service
Nancy Pelosi

Francisco in Congress for the past 37 years. ■

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Viewpoint

IDEAS, THOUGHTS AND OPINIONS ABOUT LOCAL ISSUES

Affordable Housing: Rebuilding Hope for the Bay Area

By James Wernikoff

GUEST OPINION

Volunteering at the LifeMoves homeless shelter opened my eyes to the harsh realities of affordable housing in the Bay Area. While working with LifeMoves, creating a sports camp for children, and speaking with residents, I learned that most were homeless because they could not afford to rent in one of the highest-priced markets in the nation. It was a startling realization: At that moment, I realized the housing crisis isn't just a policy debate. Thousands among thousands struggle because of the unsolved problem we tend to push aside.

The problem is deeply rooted in systemic challenges. High construction, land, and labor costs, restrictive zoning

laws, and the scarcity of land make it almost impossible to build enough affordable housing. California is just simply expensive. When housing does get built, it's often luxury condos that many low to medium-income Bay Area residents can't afford.

Through my research, I've explored innovative solutions. Converting empty office spaces into homes stands out to be the most effective one. Because of the high San Francisco office space vacancy rates of up to 40%, it's established that 14,000 new units will be built when converting them to office spaces, which will be 30% more cost-efficient. It will serve to repurpose the many idle office buildings left

unused due to remote work associated with COVID-19. However, solving the housing crisis will require more than out-of-the-box ideas for new construction. It will also need cross-county communication and cooperation. Today, when counties are given their goals of how much of each kind of housing they are supposed to build in a given time, towns often lack following through. What we really need is regional planning centered on equity among all communities. Each of the 11 Bay Area supervisors should interact and plan accordingly more often, and more efficiently for a fair, equitable, and efficient housing plan. ■

James Wernikoff is a Portola Valley resident and Menlo School student

Fungi: Key to helping ecosystems weather climate change?

Stanford biologist Kabir Peay investigates mycorrhizal fungi, which form symbiotic relationships with plant roots, enhancing nutrient and water absorption. His research focuses on how these underground networks support plant health and resilience, particularly in the face of climate change. Peay's team employs a multidisciplinary approach, combining field studies, lab experiments, and genetic analysis to understand fungal diversity and their role in ecosystems. By exploring how fungi adapt to environmental conditions, they aim to develop strategies for sustainable agriculture and ecosystem management. Peay's work underscores the importance of these fungal networks in maintaining forest health and their potential applications in combating climate change. **SCAN TO READ THE SPOTLIGHT**



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PIANIST CELEBRATES THE MUSIC OF HIS MENTOR, VINCE GUARALDI

LARRY VUCKOVICH, WHO WAS THE PIANO LEGEND'S SOLE STUDENT, PRESENTS AN EVENING OF MUSIC THAT GOES FAR BEYOND 'PEANUTS'

By Heather Zimmerman

What a lot of listeners know these days about Vince Guaraldi is “Peanuts” — in more ways than one.

The bright, bounding, jazzy tunes that provided the soundtrack for the 1965 animated TV special “A Charlie Brown Christmas,” and other “Peanuts” cartoons have earned a special place in the holiday music pantheon, and rightfully so. But the man behind them, pianist and composer Vince Guaraldi, had many deep facets to his music beyond these favorite tunes.

Longtime Bay Area pianist Larry Vuckovich, who was mentored by the jazz great and was his only student, aims to highlight Guaraldi's other work, in particular his love of Latin rhythms, in a concert paying tribute to Guaraldi and his music Dec. 21 at Meyhouse Palo Alto.

Vuckovich, a respected jazz master in his own right, performs regularly at Meyhouse.

He recently marked his 88th birthday with a show there highlighting some of his own unique contributions to jazz, playing music from his groundbreaking 1980 album “Blue Balkan” that pioneered a melding of Eastern European musical styles with jazz.

Born in the former Yugoslavia, Vuckovich came to the United States in his teens, post-World War II. His father had lived in the U.S. previously and had volunteered to fight in World War I, becoming an American citizen, which eased his family's move following the second World War.

Arriving in the Bay Area in 1951 at around 15 years old, Vuckovich quickly immersed himself in San Francisco's jazz scene, catching performances by an enviable list of top names in jazz, including Harry James, Woody Herman, Les Brown, Duke Ellington and Lionel Hampton.

“I met Vince Guaraldi at the end of high school, '56-'57,

at (Tenderloin nightclub) The Black Hawk. He was playing with Cal Tjader and he had a great backing band with Mongo Santamaria,” Vuckovich recalled. “He took me as his only student. He turned everybody else away. I don't know why he liked me. Then I would go to his house for lessons.”

Vuckovich studied with Guaraldi for three or four years after graduating from high school and then the pianist began inviting his student to sub for him.

“I would accompany some well-known singers when he had to go on the road. Then after that, he would recommend me and I would open shows for him,” he said.

Vuckovich said that it was in the early 1960s that Guaraldi made his first national splash with a song called “Cast Your Fate to the Wind,” a B-side from his album “Jazz Impressions of Black Orpheus.” The album took inspiration from the French-Brazilian film “Black Orpheus”



Photo by Anna Hoch-Kenney

Longtime bay area pianist Larry Vuckovich smiles at the audience during a performance at Palo Alto's Meyhouse on Dec. 6.

and included covers of songs from the film and originals, showcasing Guaraldi's love of Brazilian influences. “Cast Your Fate to the Wind” became a hit and earned him a Grammy Award for Best Original Jazz Composition.

“It had kind of a little funk, pop rhythm that took over the country,” Vuckovich said of the song, which also brought Guaraldi some financial recognition. It's clear, though, that he didn't let success go to his head.

“He had a good sense of humor when that took off. I studied with him in Daly City, one of those nice homes there. But when he got the money, he built a redwood and glass house, a phenomenal place, in Mill Valley. A drummer that I worked with was rehearsing with him. He said, ‘Hey, this is a beautiful home.’ (Guaraldi) said, ‘Yeah, I bought it for a song,’” Vuckovich said.

In 1973, Vuckovich would go on to perform as the second piano in Guaraldi's two-piano quintet, Powder Keg, which played regular gigs at the Great American Music Hall. “It featured all the well-known people and (Guaraldi) had Wednesday nights (at the venue) given to him for months. I was honored when he asked me to become his piano partner — the two pianos would do a dialogue,” he said.

Vuckovich said he learned many things from Guaraldi in their years studying and then performing together, including the art of how to accompany other musicians, “you know, not to get in the way, but to give them the chordal and rhythmic accompaniment to so they can play on top of it, so that was a big one. And I learned some Latin music from Vince. We used to listen to great records,” he said.

“Also Vince played with a lot of fire and drive. So I felt like that too. Some people in jazz play more retrospective, quieter — at times, that's important, but you gotta be able to drive and really accentuate your solo playing.”

The tribute concert to Guaraldi at Meyhouse will highlight his songs that feature Latin influences, particularly Brazilian and Afro-Cuban, as well as his song “Ginza Samba,” which uses a five-tone scale for the melody in a way that recalls Asian musical styles, Vuckovich said, noting that the song was named after a neighborhood in Tokyo. The song's rhythms, though, draw heavily on Brazilian sounds.

In addition, the program will feature some standards that Vuckovich learned from Guaraldi, including “The Lady is in Love With You.”

“Also, I wrote a tribute to Vince. I call it ‘Vince's Boogaloo Blues’ and it's kind of rock-funk,” he said.

Because the songs are so beloved, the concert will include a nod to the composer's famous “Peanuts” compositions, too, in particular the ballad “Christmastime is Here.”

For the performance, Vuckovich will be joined by guitarist Kai Lyons, bassist Doug Miller and drummer Akira Tana.

“I'm very excited to bring people from the Peninsula here and some of them might not know the history. They might know only ‘Peanuts,’ Charlie Brown, but I'm going to introduce them to the other material that he played, Vuckovich said. ■

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

Larry Vuckovich plays a tribute to Vince Guaraldi on Dec. 21, 5 and 8 p.m., at Meyhouse Palo Alto, 640 Emerson St., Palo Alto. You can also catch Vuckovich at Meyhouse on Dec. 20 for two performances, 5 and 8 p.m., in a program celebrating a legendary New York jazz club with New York saxophonist Craig Handy, drummer Silvia Cuenca and bassist Essiet Essiet, also at Meyhouse. Tickets for all shows are \$55. meyhouserestaurant.com.



Anna Hoch-Kenney

Longtime bay area pianist Larry Vuckovich, left, performs at Palo Alto's Meyhouse alongside Tommy Kesecker, center, and Akira Tana, right, on Dec. 6.

A bouquet of unique still lifes blooms in new group show

With 'The Art of Arrangement,'
Bryant Street Gallery celebrates floral creations

By Sheryl Nonnenberg

In the world of art history, there is a long-held hierarchy that ranks painting genres as follows: landscape, portraits and, in third place, still life. After all, even a toddler can draw a flower, right? Over the centuries, however, appreciation for the ability to capture nature in a faithful and aesthetically pleasing manner has increased. Esteemed artists like Van Gogh, Cezanne and Renoir found it a worthy subject and so have the four artists featured in "The Art of Arrangement," on view until Jan. 31 at the Bryant Street Gallery.

Gallery owner Karen Imperial said that, while she mainly displays artists working in an abstract style, she wanted to bring some variety into the schedule. She invited Marius Bosc, Miguel Rodriguez, Amber Jean Young and Elena Zolotnitsky to participate in a group show because, "I thought their renditions of flowers are very different and varied in style and medium, in addition to being well-executed." When asked why still life paintings are so enduring in their appeal, she acknowledged that it was a difficult question. "I just think they are classic. I love that they are able to be depicted in different

ways and sometimes things we see everyday become overlooked but a beautiful painting can bring them to our attention once again."

Bosc, at age 84, is the elder statesman of the group. Known for his landscape paintings, he cites Tiepolo, La Tour and Morandi as artists who have influenced his work. "In a still life the artist expresses his or her experience of beauty, color, space and energy and transmits that to the viewer."

In "Daisies in Jar," done in oil on canvas, Bosc reduces the subject to basics; a few stems of flowers in a simple glass jar. The flowers are recognizable but not elaborate and the jar is actually the dominant object in the composition. Vertical strokes of red, green, pink and brown on the vase reflect and refract the broad slashes of color in the background. The artist said that he begins by arranging the flowers but then light, color, space and reflections take over.

"These are optical paintings. The interaction of Bay Area color, light and space creates a dynamic energy and movement that I am always discovering and presenting in my paintings."

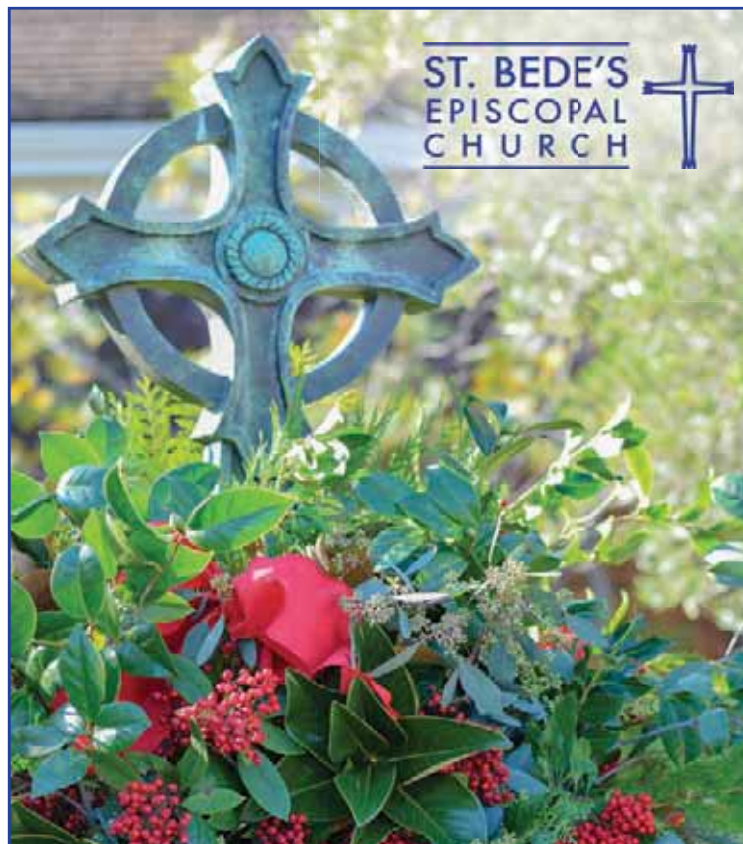
Zolotnitsky believes that, while still life is a centuries-old genre, it still has much to offer contemporary artists. "It provides a space for contemplation and reflection, but at the same time it offers immense creative freedom, enabling artists to convey deep meanings through seemingly simple arrangements."

Her work is the most impressionistic of the group with bright pastel colors painted in a soft, gauzy manner. "Summer Lovin" is an oil-on-paper depiction of flowers (they might be roses) in a translucent vase. There are no distinct lines here; the vase floats above a surface and emerges from a diaphanous blue background. Not concerned with realism, the artist explained that, "I am painting archetypes of floral still lifes, where my major concern is



Courtesy Bryant Street Gallery

"Daisies in Jar," oil on canvas, by Marius Bosc.



Christmas at St. Bede's Episcopal Church in Menlo Park

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December 24/25

10:15 a.m.
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Service

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Courtesy Russel Kiehn

“Summer Lovin’,” oil on paper mounted on panel, by Elena Zolotnitsky.

an emotion portrayed.” In this quiet, cheerful rendition she has achieved the goal of expressing “an abundance of summer love.”

“Still life painting is perennially interesting to me because of the way the composition can tell a story about a moment in time,” said artist Young. She is represented in the show with five paintings executed in acrylic on canvas and several ceramic vessels. Young shared that her work is “rooted using color, pattern and plants as tools for building resilience to the grief and challenges of life.” (Her most recent solo show at Bryant Street Gallery, in 2022, was a response to the 2019 death of her mother, singer/songwriter Pegi Young.)

All of those aspects are present in “Pansies and Flying Geese,” a charming arrangement of seemingly disparate objects that are very adroitly balanced. The deep purple, cone-shaped vessel is the anchor for the flowers, which are realistically rendered, and the swath of fabric that seems to float at its side. The ‘flying geese’ refers to this fabric, which consists of a traditional quilt pattern composed of half and quarter-square triangles. A contrasting piece of fabric in green and orange has been placed behind the quilted one and everything is held in place by bold strokes of purple, pink and red pigment in the background.

Young said, “I compose layers of vibrant patterns, colors, plant life and other items found in domestic spaces to encourage optimism in times that feel increasingly dystopian.”

Her glazed ceramic pieces in the show are bold, colorful, full of whimsy — and decidedly not utilitarian. In “Vessel #3,” a pitcher is decorated in a stark black and white geometric pattern that is offset by a mass of blood-red roses that circle the base. Young explained that she has been working in ceramic for several years and that her goal was to “make urns and vessels using a similar visual language as I use to paint.”

Working in the realm of abstraction, artist Rodriguez is represented with five works on paper. The aptly named “Constant Dance” series is a kaleidoscope of color and movement, executed in pastels. When viewed up close they appear to be a psychedelic array of intricate, flowing and intersecting designs. But step back and floral shapes do appear. Rodriguez said that each drawing was done in one sitting, usually taking three to five hours. “I like to try to capture a slice of time and how I was feeling at the moment,” he said.

Each of the artists in the exhibition had their own take on why the genre of still life has endured for so long but Bosc summed it up most succinctly: “In a still life the artist captures a moment in time. The moment is frozen in time and becomes eternal.” ■

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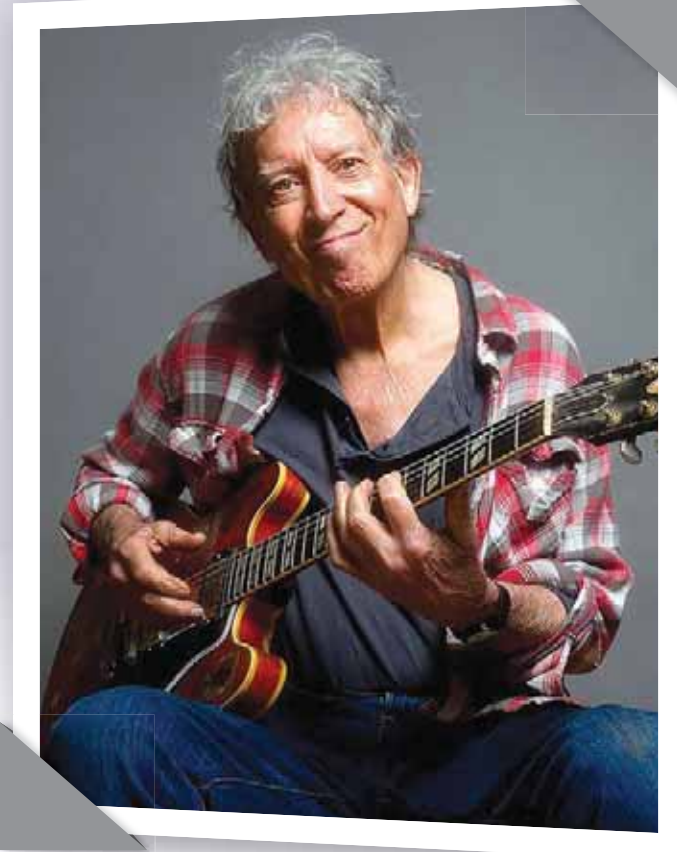
“The Art of Arrangement” is on view through Jan. 31 at Bryant Street Gallery, 532 Bryant St., Palo Alto. bryantstreet.com.

Worth a Look

Elvin Bishop's Big Fun Trio

Blues and rock icon Elvin Bishop brings his group Elvin Bishop's Big Fun Trio (including guitarist and pianist Bob Welsh and percussionist and vocalist Willy Jordan) to Redwood City for what's being billed as an intimate holiday show. Bishop, whose songs include “Fooled Around and Fell in Love” and “Travelin' Shoes,” has been performing for more than 50 years and has been inducted into both the rock and roll and blues halls of fame. Among his many recordings, he's released two with Big Fun Trio: “Something Smells Funky ‘Round Here” and the group's self-titled debut.

Dec. 20, 8 p.m., Club Fox, 2209 Broadway St., Redwood City; \$50.68; 21+; eventbrite.com.



Courtesy Pat Johnson

Legendary blues and rock guitarist Elvin Bishop plays an intimate holiday show at Club Fox on Dec. 20.

Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir

Director Terrance Kelly leads the Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir (OIGC) in its 16th annual South Bay holiday gospel concert. The award-winning, multicultural choir performs gospel arrangements of traditional holiday favorites and will be joined again onstage by The Southbay Workshop Choir. OIGC's mission is to inspire joy and unity among all people through Black gospel and spiritual music traditions, according to the group's website.

Dec. 20, 7:30 p.m., Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, 500 Castro St., Mountain View; \$39-\$55; tickets.mvcpa.com/eventperformances.asp?evt=655.

‘The Snow Queen’

Hans Christian Andersen's fairytale “The Snow Queen” (what Disney's “Frozen” was very loosely based on) is brought to life on stage by Mountain View's Bayer Ballet again this holiday season, in what has become an annual tradition since it premiered in 2014. Choreographed by Inna Bayer, the wintry ballet tells the story of a sister's quest to save her brother from the Snow Queen's spell and her icy castle. The cast is made up of Bayer Ballet's company dancers as well as guest artists.

Dec. 20 and 21 at 7 p.m. and Dec. 22 at 1 and 6 p.m., Visual and Performing Arts Center, De Anza College, 21250 Stevens Creek Blvd., Cupertino; \$58.07; bayerballet.com/onstage.

‘Winter's Gifts: Wish’

Just in time for the winter solstice, The Choral Project and the San José Chamber Orchestra celebrate their 20th annual winter concert collaboration with “Winter's Gifts: Wish.” The candlelit concert honors different faith traditions practiced in the diverse Bay Area community and the “deep, universal human

longing for peace and love,” according to the event's website. The Choral Project Artistic Director Daniel Hughes premieres two new pieces, plus selections by Gustav Holst, Z. Randall Stroope, Robert Seeley and Paul Halley.

Dec. 21 at 7:30 p.m., Valley Presbyterian Church, 945 Portola Road, Portola Valley (second performance Dec. 22 in Santa Clara); \$15-\$40; choralproject.org/wintersgifts.

‘Deck the Halls’

Palo Alto-based community chorus Peninsula Cantare, led by Jeffrey Benson, is joined by a professional brass octet for “Deck the Halls” — a holiday concert. The program features a performance of John Rutter's “Gloria,” plus favorite holiday tunes and contemporary arrangements for voice, brass and percussion. Expect a carol sing-along, and the chance for one lucky audience member to try their hand at conducting.

Dec. 21, 7:30 p.m., First United Methodist Church, 625 Hamilton Ave., Palo Alto; \$28.52; eventbrite.com.

The Pops Family Christmas Special

The California Pops Orchestra celebrates the season with a festive family concert highlighting wintry songs from films and TV shows including “Frozen,” “How the Grinch Stole Christmas,” “A Charlie Brown Christmas,” “White Christmas,” and “Holiday Inn,” plus a carol sing-along. And because the holidays wouldn't be complete without a special tradition or two, the Pops always invites the kids in the audience or two, on stage for the orchestra's performance of “‘Twas the Night Before Christmas.”

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

Food & Drink

Family-friendly Fine dining

LELÉ KITCHEN IN LOS GATOS REDEFINES FINE DINING FOR FAMILIES

By Adrienne Mitchel

Fine dining typically isn't a place for young children. But at lelé kitchen, you'll find high chairs for babies and toddlers, diapers and wet wipes in the bathroom and even an elevated kids' menu — amenities not often paired with Marin Miyagi oysters and Tsar Nicoulai caviar.

"It's a place where families can come together, with their kids, with their parents," said owner Lena Leskina, who has three children. "The main goal (is) to make this space where the people can come and be at home here."

Leskina opened lelé kitchen, a Californian farm-to-table meets Eastern European restaurant, on Oct. 24 in Los Gatos. A sister restaurant to its nextdoor cafe lelé cake, lelé kitchen is an upscale full-service restaurant featuring an extensive California wine list and a menu that changes daily.

Previous iterations of the menu have included appetizers like goat cheese and garlic macarons (\$15) and entrees like Binchotan-grilled Snake River Farms wagyu flat iron (\$62), as well as Eastern European dishes such as butterbrots, mini sandwiches, (\$10-\$16) and draniki, Belarusian potato pancakes that are widely eaten in Eastern Europe (\$22-\$24). The restaurant serves its draniki with smoked salmon or smoked trout, utilizing Californian ingredients like avocado and cilantro crema. Tsar Ncolai caviar can also be added for an extra charge.

The wine list features over 50 Californian wines from Napa, Sonoma, the Santa Cruz Mountains, Monterey and more. Bottles range from \$45-\$650 and glasses from \$12-\$25. A small selection of beer is available, as well as nonalcoholic options like Kally's "Golden Sparkler" and Olipop soda.

"Nothing from our drink menu (is) from other states or countries," Leskina said.

Desserts are made in lelé cake's kitchen, but there is no overlap with the cafe's menu. Find all new sweets like an apple cake with white chocolate, ginger and shortbread crumble that looks like a real apple (\$20). For the kids, there's organic chicken cutlet with mashed potatoes and honey glazed

carrots (\$18) or plain pasta for picky eaters.

"I'm a foodie, and I like to go to restaurants...and I'm almost always with my kids, and 90% of our visits are very challenging for me to find food for kids," Leskina said. "Usually it's something not too healthy, like nuggets or French fries, so I'd prefer to have something healthier with more vegetables."

The menu is developed by head chef Ulad Skoblia, and the wine list is curated by advanced sommelier Fedar Kamkou, both from Belarus. Leskina, who immigrated from Russia in 2018, connected with Skoblia and Kamkou over their similar cultural backgrounds and liked that much of Skoblia's previous experience was as a private chef cooking in homes.

Leskina launched the lelé brand back in 2015 after starting a custom cake business out of her home. She was living in Moscow and was on maternity leave from her full-time electrical engineering job following the birth of her first child. Inspired by the home bakers she saw on Instagram, she began teaching herself how to bake.

"I (felt) even more (of) a passion, like addiction, when I did it better and better," she said.

She began creating custom cake orders under the name lelé cake, a combination of the first two letters of her first and last name. What made her cakes stand out from the competition, she said, was likely her art education. In Russia, there are high-intensity after-school programs in which students receive diplomas after five or six years. The business became quite profitable and allowed her more time with her baby.

"I was surprised, actually, that I (could) have even more income than I had in office when (I worked) 40 hours (a) week," Leskina said.

Then in 2018, she won the green card lottery, moving to the Bay Area to live with her sister who had immigrated one year prior.

At the time, she was 35 weeks pregnant and had with her "(my) 3-year-old boy, two cats, two luggages and nothing more."

To continue her custom cake business, Leskina rented space in a commercial kitchen. A few months later, the pandemic

lelé kitchen, 14180 Blossom Hill Road, Los Gatos; 669-208-9621, Instagram: @lele.kitchen.ca. Open Thursday to Monday from 5-9 p.m.

began. Capitalizing on the lower cost of rent, she began looking for her own commercial kitchen space with a small storefront — but none were available in the area. So she began looking at larger storefronts, realizing the size would necessitate expanding her menu to include savory items. In 2022, she opened her first brick-and-mortar eatery, lelé cake, in a former Subway in Los Gatos.

With a menu developed by Katya Pervushina, now the head chef at upscale Eastern European restaurant Dacha in San Francisco, lelé cake began offering toasts, syrniki (cottage cheese pancakes) and gruyere waffles in addition to its signature cakes. Leskina created a kids' corner with a play kitchen set, children's books and more, so that kids could enjoy the cafe just as much as their parents. Business boomed, and just a month after opening lelé cake, Leskina was already considering expansion.

"Our landlords, they came a few times to our store, and they said, 'Oh my God, this plaza look very full of life,' because before it was empty plaza, silent plaza," Leskina said.

In 2023, Leskina welcomed her third child as well as a new business venture, acquiring the space next door to lelé cake, formerly a Starbucks.

"It looks like every era of my life comes with (a) new baby," Leskina said.

She initially planned to use the space to expand lelé cake, host workshops and serve beer and wine, but 15 months later, lelé kitchen was born. Still in its infancy, lelé kitchen will later offer weekend brunch with an entirely different menu and service style than lelé cake.

"This is a space for me and for families like my family to find anything for almost every family member," Leskina said. ■

Email Food Editor Adrienne Mitchel at amitchel@embarcaderomedia.org

Top right: Lelé kitchen head chef Ulad Skoblia is from Belarus. From top left down: Dranik with smoked salmon, garlic sour cream and crispy garlic (\$22). Wild mushrooms and English peas housemade fettuccine with dill rye bread crumble and chervil (\$33). Apple cake with white chocolate, ginger and shortbread crumble (\$20). Pommes dauphine with dill mayo (\$10). Mackerel crudo with cucumber, radish, citrus, horseradish, pistachio, yuzu and parsley oil (\$22). Basque dark chocolate cheesecake with grapefruit and persimmon black currant (\$16). Photos courtesy lelé kitchen.

The local's guide to the Bay Area food scene.

Peninsula Foodist

Read about hot spots, restaurant trends and the lifestyles of those who love everything about food.

Stay tasty,

Adrienne

Editor, Peninsula Foodist

Sign up to receive the Peninsula Foodist newsletter at PaloAltoOnline.com/peninsula-foodist



This is the **END OF YEAR** **DOUBLE EDITION!**

We're wrapping up the year with a special double edition combining the Dec. 20 and 27 issues.

The Dec. 20 edition of The Almanac will be the final newspaper delivered in 2024. We'll be back in print on Jan. 3.

Unlike Santa, though, our journalists will not rest for long after the big day. Just because there will be no paper delivered Dec. 27, our staff will still be working and you can **keep up with the local news on AlmanacNews.com.**



Happy Holidays!

The Almanac

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

WISHING YOU ALL THE BEST THIS SEASON & BEYOND.



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