

The Almanac

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Students walk out to protest deportations

Students from multiple high schools demand protections for immigrant families

By Simmerdeep Kaur

Hundreds of students across the Sequoia Union High School District walked out of their classrooms Thursday in protest of the President Donald Trump administration's immigration policies, calling attention to the impact of mass deportations on families and communities across the country.

Students from Sequoia High School, Menlo-Atherton High School, Woodside High School, Redwood High School, Sacred Heart Preparatory and Tide Academy marched through the streets carrying Mexican and El Salvadoran flags. Many held signs reading, "You can't love our culture but hate our people" and "My parents fought for my future, now I will fight for theirs."

Despite the rain, the Sequoia High students left campus at 10:55 a.m., making their

way through James Street, El Camino Real, Jefferson Avenue and Broadway before heading downtown to join other protesters. As they walked the streets, a few passersby honked their horns and gave a thumbs-up in support.

"We want to let the country know that, as students, we are not gonna back down," said Jocelyn, a Sequoia High School student who did not reveal her last name due to safety concerns. "We're gonna fight for those who have been silenced for so long."

She added that the school, including principal Sean Priest, was supportive of the protest.

M-A administrators shared guidelines with all students in preparation for the protest, letting them know of their rights to protest and freedom of speech.

The protest remained peaceful, and no police presence was reported.

Heidi Benitez Nolasco, a senior



Anna Hoch-Kenney

Menlo-Atherton High School and Sacred Heart Preparatory students marched down Middlefield Road in Redwood City after a student organized walkout on Feb. 6, 2025. The students marched over three miles in the rain to downtown Redwood City, where they gathered with other students from SUHSD schools.

at Sacred Heart Prep in Atherton, helped organize a walkout at her school before linking up with students from Menlo-Atherton. She said she felt it was important for students from all backgrounds to show solidarity.

"Now, we're walking towards downtown in protest of the massive deportations that there's been throughout the new administration, throughout the time with this new administration," Benitez Nolasco said.

She said Thursday's demonstration was about unity, stressing that students must unite to support immigrant communities regardless of

See **WALKOUT**, page 18

Black Liberation Month honored at Belle Haven Community Campus

Locals celebrate and honor the Black labor movement with music and performances

By Eleanor Raab

Community members gathered at the Belle Haven Community Campus in Menlo Park on Saturday afternoon, Feb. 8, to celebrate local business owners and community members, and to listen to music and spoken word poetry performances as part of the city's annual Black Liberation Month

celebrations. Dozens of people attended the celebration.

This year's theme for the event was African Americans and Labor. The event focused on the various ways that work and working intersects with the collective experiences of the Black community.

Speakers included local residents

See **BLACK LIBERATION**, page 16



Amaya Edwards

Etienne, 4, and Artemis, 5, paint during the City of Menlo Park's annual Black Liberation month celebration at Belle Haven Community Campus on Saturday, Feb. 8, in Menlo Park, Calif. More photos online at AlmanacNews.com.

INSIDE

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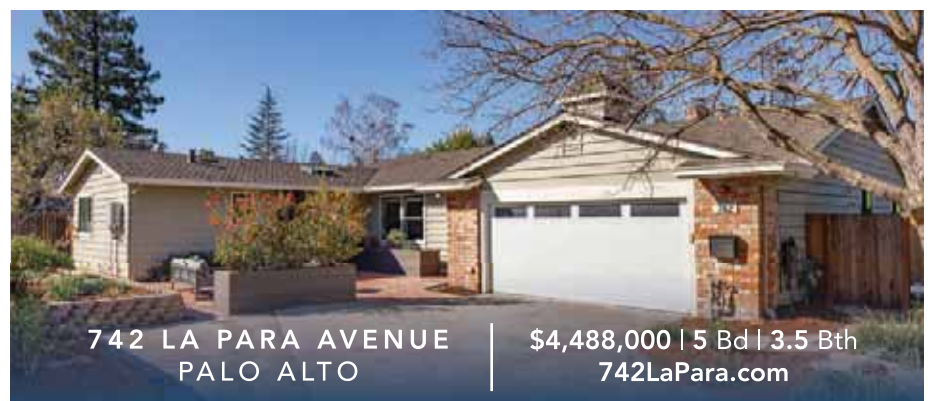
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中文諮詢請聯繫 Audrey Sun, DRE #01933274 電話: 650.785.5822

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Local News

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Magali Gauthier

Year of the snake slithers in

Leung's White Crane Dragon and Lion Dance Association brought good luck and prosperity to the Woodside Library during a Lunar New Year lion dance performance on Feb. 11. Leung's White Crane is one of the oldest martial arts schools in California. The traditional Chinese lion dance is performed by two dancers who serve as the legs and head of the lion's body, incorporating movements of kung fu.



Courtesy Getty Images

A test tube with a blood test for H5N1 avian influenza.

Bird flu confirmed in backyard flock in San Mateo County

San Mateo County officials warn of risks to poultry keepers as bird flu continues to spread

By Hannah Bensen

H5N1, known as bird flu, has been detected in a backyard poultry flock in the city of San Mateo, a representative from the San Mateo County Health department said Thursday following a notice of the case from the California Department of Food and Agriculture published on Monday, Feb. 3.

An outbreak of H5N1 has infected poultry and, recently, some cattle farms across the nation, leading to soaring egg prices. Though no human cases of the virus have been linked to the San Mateo County outbreak, the incident highlights the risk of H5N1 for anyone who works with or lives near poultry.

"It's important for residents who keep chickens and other birds in their yards to protect their flock and themselves from H5N1," San Mateo County's Agricultural Commissioner Koren Widdel said in a prepared statement. "There are simple actions every flock owner can take to prevent the disease from spreading."

H5N1 has been found in several counties across California. The seasonal migration of wild birds increases the risk for poultry owners, including those with backyard flocks. The virus is

primarily spread by wild birds, particularly waterfowl like ducks and geese, and through contact with contaminated surfaces such as hands, shoes, clothing, or the fur of rodents and other animals.

Bird flu spreads rapidly among birds and is often deadly. Symptoms of H5N1 in poultry can include sudden death, difficulty breathing, clear discharge from the nose, mouth, or eyes, fatigue, reduced appetite and water intake, and swelling.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the risk to the public from bird flu outbreaks remains low but officials caution that human infections are possible, as some bird flu strains have previously spread to people.

To prevent the spread of bird flu, San Mateo County advised in a press release that any unusual illnesses or deaths should be reported to a veterinarian or the California Department of Food & Agriculture's Sick Bird Hotline at 866-922-2473. Pet owners who suspect bird flu cases in cats or dogs should consult a veterinarian. Anyone who experiences symptoms of bird flu should consult a doctor. ■

Email Editorial Intern
Hannah Bensen at hbensen@almanacnews.com.

Local police distance themselves from ICE

Law enforcement emphasizes they do not enforce immigration laws and will not question immigration status

By Hannah Bensen

Local police authorities said they had little or no interaction with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and police would not inquire about the immigration status of a victim, witness or perpetrator.

In a letter posted to the Atherton Police Department's website, Police Chief Steven McCulley wrote that the "top priority is ensuring the safety and well-being of all members of this community, regardless of their background or immigration status."

Menlo Park Police Chief David Norris said in an email that Menlo Park Police Department staff are aligned with a Jan. 21 statement on immigration enforcement from the California Police Chiefs Association, which affirms law enforcement's commitment to protecting all Californians. The statement also notes that it has never been the

role of local police to enforce federal immigration law.

"Our mission [is] to serve our community — everyone, regardless of status," Norris said in an email. He added that police staff, in internal messaging, had "reinforced our relentless pursuit of justice against those who commit crimes that harm the safety, peace and order of our entire community."

The San Mateo County Sheriff's Office had a similar message for the community. In an email, SMCSO Communications Director Gretchen Spiker wrote that the Sheriff's Office "believes in serving all members of our community with dignity, compassion, and respect." Spiker added that the Sheriff's Office does not turn anyone over to ICE, a policy Corpus' predecessor Carlos Bolanos implemented in 2021 after receiving negative feedback from the community after his department accounted

for 62% of all Bay Area transfers and more than any other county in 2020.

"Sheriff's deputies do not enforce immigration laws, and the Sheriff's Office does not collect immigration status information," Spiker said in the email. "The Sheriff's Office wants to provide reassurance to our community that this commitment will continue."

A November 2024 statement from Redwood City Mayor Jeff Gee about immigration policies specified that Redwood City PD "does not actively participate in the enforcement of federal immigration laws" and its police officers "do not conduct sweeps looking for suspected undocumented aliens."

McCulley and Norris said that Atherton PD and Menlo Park PD, respectively, had not received any reports of residents being afraid to interact with law enforcement due to immigration concerns. Still, McCulley noted that law enforcement across the country is concerned that residents will not report crimes because of a lack of transparency or trust about the role of local authorities in immigration enforcement. He wrote the letter to try to reduce

See ICE, page 17

Rescued Portola Valley mountain lion cub recovering from giardia

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Fern, one of three mountain lion cubs rescued from Portola Valley in late January, has tested positive for giardia, an intestinal infection that is spread through contaminated water, food, feces and other surfaces. She is currently being treated, according to the Oakland Zoo.

The three cubs were found and rescued from a Portola Valley cul-de-sac after residents reported a dead female mountain lion on the side of Portola Road weeks before. On Jan. 26,

local wildlife officials were able to capture the cubs and take them to the Oakland Zoo for rehabilitation.

On Feb. 7, the Oakland Zoo posted an update about Fern on Instagram, stating she was lethargic and not eating “with the same gusto” as her brothers Thistle and Spruce. She received a full physical exam, CT scan and bloodwork, according to the post.

As of Saturday, Fern has been eating much better, said Oakland Zoo spokesperson Isabella Linares. Thistle and Spruce are doing well and all three are



Courtesy Oakland Zoo

Three Portola Valley mountain lion cubs were rescued and transported to the Oakland Zoo for rehabilitation on Jan. 26.

gaining weight, she added.

The zoo clarified that the cubs will not be staying at its facilities long term. Officials there are unsure where the cubs will be moving. An announcement

will be made once the California Department of Fish and Wildlife chooses their forever home. ■

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

COMMUNITY BRIEFS



Courtesy Getty Images

Annual ‘broom pull’ in Portola Valley, March 2

The Portola Valley Conservation Committee, community volunteers and Scout troops invite the public to spend a couple of hours pulling French Broom. As they have since 2004, participants will pull the invasive weed from public lands and rights-of-way.

Conditions are best during the rainy season for pulling the weed out. Once the ground becomes dry, it’s nearly impossible to yank it out of the ground, according to the town. It’s crucial to pull out the roots of the plants, because cutting it off just makes it much harder to remove and it re-sprouts with an even stronger root, the town’s announcement noted.

Community service hours are provided for this activity.

Bring water and gloves and wear long sleeves and close-toed shoes. Tools will be provided.

Meet at 9 a.m. at the Historic Schoolhouse, 775 Portola Road. The clean up will conclude by noon.

— Angela Swartz

Learn about California’s Mexican period at the Belle Haven Library

The Belle Haven Library, located at 100 Terminal Ave., is hosting a special exhibition on California’s Mexican period, which lasted from 1822-1846. The exhibition, titled “Telling Stories of Mexican California: Real Life & Myth Making,” will

be on display until March 30.

The exhibition outlines California’s history leading up to statehood as a backdrop to the factual and fictional stories that emerged after the United States takeover of the land. The exhibition was developed by the California Historical Society, drawing extensively from their collections and consisting of 11 freestanding pop-up banners.

The library is also hosting several live events in conjunction with the exhibition. On Tuesday, Feb. 25, Carlos Manuel Salomon Ph.D. author of “Pio Pico: The Last Governor of Mexican California,” will talk about California as a land in transition, and the powerful families of the time.

On Wednesday, March 12, Amy Cohen, executive director of the nonprofit Exhibit Envoy, will give a talk on how traveling exhibitions are conceived and created, and the logistics of bringing shows to audiences across the United States.

Application period open for 2025-26 San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury

The application period to serve on the 2025-26 San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury began on Feb. 3, 2025 and will close on March 31, 2025. The Civil Grand Jury is an independent investigative and judicial body composed of 19 citizens, and is meant to act as a “watchdog for citizens of the county.”

A seat on the Civil Grant Jury is open to “any U.S. citizen and San Mateo County resident, 18 years of age or older, of ordinary intelligence, sound judgment and good character, with sufficient knowledge of the English language.” Applicants must have resided in San Mateo County for at least one year. Elected public officials are not eligible to serve.

The Civil Grand Jury application form can be obtained by emailing grandjury@sanmateocourt.org, or on the Court’s website: sanmateo.courts.ca.gov/divisions/civil-grand-jury.

— Eleanor Raab

Free tax assistance in Menlo Park

Community members can get free tax assistance from AARP Tax-Aide

volunteers every Tuesday at Little House located at 800 Middle Ave. in Menlo Park. Volunteers are certified to prepare tax returns of simple to moderate complexity but more intricate tax situations may be ineligible.

To schedule an appointment online, visit aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp_taxaide/locations or call Little House at 650-326-2025. Tax preparation hours are 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. on Tuesdays, through April 8.

For a list of documents and tax forms to bring to your appointment, see tinyurl.com/tax-aide-SMC.

Menlo Park school district seeks members for citizens bond oversight committee

The Menlo Park City School District is looking for community members to serve on the citizens bond oversight committee to oversee the spending of funds from Measure U, a \$123 million bond measure approved in November 2024.

The committee will be tasked with reviewing expenditures of Measure U funds, ensuring they are used in line with the ballot measure and that progress is being made on its capital improvement projects. The committee is also responsible for making regular reports on the status of the Measure U projects.

“We are committed to transparency and accountability in the expenditure of Measure U funds,” said Superintendent Kristen Gracia in a district press release on Feb. 6. “The citizens bond oversight committee will play a vital role in ensuring that our community’s investment in our schools’ safety and security is used wisely and effectively.”

The district is looking for members with diverse backgrounds and experiences including parents, senior citizens, community leaders and business owners. There is no prior experience necessary.

Applications for the committee are open until Feb. 21 and can be found on tinyurl.com/MPCSDCBOC.

— Jennifer Yoshikoshi

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The Almanac

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NEWSROOM

Staff Writers

Eleanor Raab, 223-6537
Jennifer Yoshikoshi, 223-6536

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

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

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

Food Editor Adrienne Mitchel, 223-6539, amitchel@almanacnews.com

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

Audience Engagement Assistant Editor/Visual Journalist Anna Hoch-Kenney, 223-6530, ahochkenney@almanacnews.com

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

Embarcadero Media Foundation Staff Writers

Simmerdeep Kaur, 223-6533
Emily Margaretten, 223-6517

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Gennady Sheyner, 223-6513

Editorial Intern Hannah Bensen

Contributors Kate Daly, Ashwini Gangal, Neil Gonzales, Maggie Mah, Arden Margulies

DESIGN & PRODUCTION

Design and Production Manager Kristin Brown, 223-6562

ADVERTISING

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The Almanac is published every Friday at 3525 Alameda De Las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025

■ **Newsroom:** (650) 223-6525
Newsroom Fax: (650) 223-7525

■ **Email news** and photos with captions to: Editor@AlmanacNews.com

■ **Email letters** to: Letters@AlmanacNews.com

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Menlo Park could revisit reopening parts of Santa Cruz Ave

By Neil Gonzales

Should the stretch of Santa Cruz Avenue that has been closed to vehicle traffic since the COVID-19 pandemic reopen? Or should it stay closed — permanently?

Mayor Drew Combs would like to know if his fellow City Council members are interested in tackling such questions.

Per his request, the council Tuesday, Feb. 11, is scheduled to decide whether it wants to explore possibly reopening eastbound Santa Cruz between Curtis and Doyle streets.

“It has been clear for a long time now that most of the members of the business community downtown prefer the street to fully open,” Combs said Thursday, Feb. 6, in an interview with *The Almanac*. “They believe (the continued closure) has negatively impacted their business.”

Merchants contend that the closure has curtailed downtown traffic circulation, access to shops along Santa Cruz and the willingness of people to visit the area, he added.

At the Jan. 28 council meeting, downtown shop owner

Keith Quiggins told city leaders that he doesn’t understand why Santa Cruz remains closed.

“I talked to several people recently that said, ‘Oh, I don’t even bother coming through downtown because I can’t get to El Camino (Real) going that way,’” Quiggins said.

Aaron Andrikopoulos, another downtown merchant, also urged the city to reopen the avenue.

“I strongly support reopening Santa Cruz Avenue to improve accessibility for businesses and residents,” Andrikopoulos said in an email the week of Feb. 3 to the council. “Restoring traffic flow would make it easier for people to get around, encourage more visitors to downtown and provide much-needed support for local businesses. Many of us rely on convenient access for our customers, and reopening this key street would help sustain the economic health of our community.”

But other community members are in favor of keeping Santa Cruz closed.

“I am very opposed to the removal of the outdoor dining and seating in that block of

Santa Cruz,” Elaine Cummings previously said in an email to the council. “The tiny inconvenience of taking an alternate route to El Camino is well worth it to have more outdoor gathering spaces. With so many empty storefronts on Santa Cruz Ave., this is a welcome glimmer of vibrancy in our downtown. Please don’t eliminate something that has been so positive for our community.”

Menlo Park actually launched its outdoor dining program in 2015 with a pilot on Santa Cruz Avenue, the city said. That effort expanded during the pandemic to help local businesses remain viable through the severe economic challenges at the time.

In 2020, the city closed the one segment of Santa Cruz as well as part of Ryans Lane to allow outdoor space where patrons could dine and gather in a safe manner under pandemic-related health protocols.

In 2023, the council voted 4-1 with Combs dissenting to continue the Santa Cruz closure while reopening Ryans.

Combs believes it’s time for another reevaluation of the closure. Besides the concerns



Magali Gauthier

Bistro Vida customers eat on tables along block-offed parts of Santa Cruz Avenue in downtown Menlo Park on July 29, 2020.

raised by merchants, he said, the closure doesn’t tie into any current larger city project and is “kind of a holdover from the pandemic.”

But Combs acknowledged that the closure has created a key communal gathering spot, which he suggested could still be preserved while allowing vehicles through by adjusting the barricades.

Then again, he said, maybe Menlo Park overall is OK seeing a permanent closure.

If that’s the consensus, he said, then perhaps that section could be enhanced “to look and

feel more permanent.”

He wants to hear the latest conversation on the avenue’s future if the council moves forward on the topic and is keeping an open mind, Combs said.

“More than anything, I’m interested in the discussion,” he said. “I do think it’s worth a discussion.”

If the council agrees to take up the matter, it has options to choose from, including having city staff prepare a report for later this month or the next. ■

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

Atherton reinstates chicken regulations

By Eleanor Raab

The Atherton City Council unanimously passed an urgency ordinance to once more regulate backyard chickens after a section of the town’s municipal code relating to chicken husbandry was inadvertently deleted in 2023.

According to City Attorney Mona Ebrahimi, Atherton had amended its municipal code regarding animal control and husbandry in 2023 to better coordinate with San Mateo County, which handles animal control for the town. However, in altering those codes the town inadvertently left chickens unregulated. Consequently, code enforcement was unable to address any chicken issues that arose.

Atherton first put chicken regulations on the books in 2016. At that time, the council voted to allow residents with a permit to keep three chickens on lots between a half-acre and one acre, 10 chickens on lots between one and two acres, and 20 chickens on lots more than two acres. Schools with more than two acres were allowed to keep up to 40 chickens for educational purposes.

The urgency ordinance reinstated all of the same rules from 2016. In addition to the lot size requirements, the ordinance outlines requirements for chicken enclosures. Chicken enclosures must be within the buildable area of the lots and must not be over six feet tall or over 120 square feet. The enclosures are required to be set back at least eight feet from the main residence on the property, and at least 20 feet from the rear and side property lines.

The ordinance also requires that chicken enclosures be kept tidy and sanitary, and that any water runoff from the enclosures should not run onto the neighboring properties. The ordinance also prohibits roosters from being kept in Atherton.

The council also discussed how to encourage residents to obtain permits for their chickens, as many currently have unpermitted chickens. City Manager George Rodericks said that only two Atherton residents have ever pulled a chicken permit.

The council talked about additional ways that the town can educate chicken owners about proper chicken husbandry and the need for a permit, such

as writing an article in the town newsletter, continuing to educate chicken owners at the town’s annual Earth Day event, and educating the public when code enforcement officers respond to chicken complaints.

Council member Rick DeGolia said that the town should make it convenient for residents to own chickens so that they are encouraged to obtain a permit. He suggested that the council consider increasing the minimum number of chickens allowed on half-acre and one acre properties as well.

“I think, as a council, there’s no reason not to encourage people to have chickens,” he said.

Other council members said that it is important for the town to encourage residents to get chicken permits so that its code enforcement officers can ensure that chicken owners are keeping their chickens healthy and safe, and are receiving any necessary updates about diseases that might affect backyard chicken flocks.

“I think the most important thing is the health and safety component of owning chickens,” said Vice Mayor Stacy Miles Holland. “We should know who has chickens so we



Barbara Wood

Chickens in a backyard in Atherton.

can tell them about stuff like the bird flu.”

The council ultimately voted to adopt the ordinance as-is, and to revisit the issue of chickens if any residents feel strongly about changing the chicken regulations.

“I think if chicken owners want to increase the number of chickens, they should let us know going forward,” said Council member Bill Widmer. ■

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

LEHUA GREENMAN



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Former Sheriff's captain sues for retaliation, discrimination, wrongful termination

Brian Philip files suit as Christina Corpus faces possible removal from office

By Eleanor Raab

Former Sheriff's Office Capt. Brian Philip has filed a suit against San Mateo County, alleging that Sheriff Christina Corpus and her former chief of staff ordered him to serve an "illegal internal affairs notice." Philip also alleges that the pair retaliated against him because of his refusal to serve the notice.

Philip claims that he has suffered "immense personal and professional damage" for refusing to arrest Deputy Sheriff's Association President Carlos Tapia — choosing instead to resign from his position as captain.

Corpus is facing possible removal from office in an upcoming election that will take place on March 4. Mail-in ballots have already been sent out to San Mateo County residents.

The complaint against the county, which was filed in the San Mateo County Superior Court on Wednesday, Feb. 5, includes two charges of whistleblower retaliation, one charge of employment retaliation, one charge of discrimination based on sex, one charge of wrongful termination and one charge of failure to pay final wages in a timely manner.

Philip is represented by Zak Franklin of Santa Monica-based employment law firm Franklin Law P.C. The law firm

previously represented another former Sheriff's Office employee, Carryn Barker, who was paid \$8 million by the county following a lawsuit alleging sexual harassment and discrimination.

Philip had previously filed a claim against the county on Nov. 19 asking for lost wages and compensation for emotional distress due to retaliation and discrimination based on his refusal to serve the "illegal" internal affairs notice and refusal to arrest Tapia. That is a required legal step before a claimant can sue the county in court.

In the suit, Philip and his attorneys allege that he was illegally ordered to arrest Tapia on the morning of Nov. 12.

"Capt. Philip refused to make the arrest because he reasonably believed that the arrest would violate Tapia's civil rights, including Tapia's rights under the Peace Officer's Bill of Rights," the suit reads. Philip resigned from his position as captain rather than make the arrest. The suit also states that Philip immediately reported the arrest order to County Executive Officer Mike Callagy.

Tapia, who is the president of the Deputy Sheriff's Association, was arrested just hours before the county released a 408-page independent investigative report by Judge LaDoris Cordell, which detailed allegations of retaliation, abuse of power, an affair

between Corpus and her chief of Staff Victor Aenlle, illegal possession of silenced rifles and more by Corpus and her executive team. He was arrested for alleged "felony time card fraud," and at the time, the DSA said that his arrest suggested whistleblower retaliation.

An investigation by District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe's office found that "there was no basis to believe any violation of law had occurred, and ... that deputy Tapia should not have been arrested."

Philip also claims that he was retaliated against by Corpus for cooperating with the county-commissioned independent investigation into her office. The allegations included Corpus and her executive team expecting Philip to respond to work emails at times when he was not scheduled to work, altering meeting times to conflict with his childcare schedule, removing Philip from his "high-level spacious office" and assigning him to a "lower-level cramped office," removing Philip from a security detail for President-elect Donald Trump and replacing him with a less-experienced officer and other similar duty downgrades.

Additionally, the suit details an instance when Philip refused to serve an internal affairs notice that he understood to be illegal due to "the notice lacking the date and time for the



Anna Hoch-Kenney

San Mateo County Sheriff Christina Corpus speaks at a last-minute conference at the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office in Redwood City on Nov. 12, 2024.

subject officer's interview and (the notice) not providing the identities of the complainant or witnesses." The suit states that Corpus and her executive team began retaliating against him immediately after he refused to serve the notice by stripping him of his prestigious duties and giving him the silent treatment.

Screenshots of texts included in the complaint allegedly show Aenlle asking a human resources manager if Philip had been employed at San Mateo County beyond the one-year probationary period. Aenlle also allegedly told the human resources manager that he intended to remove Philip, who at the time served as the internal affairs captain, "with another captain who would be willing to do Aenlle and Corpus's bidding."

The suit states that "the illegal actions of Sheriff Corpus and her regime have caused Capt. Philip to suffer millions of dollars in damages, including:

lost wages, lost earnings and emotional distress." The suit does not name a specific dollar amount that Philip is seeking in restitution from the county, but Franklin told this news organization that the exact damages will be determined during the course of the lawsuit.

"The key decisions and actions leading to this lawsuit came from Sheriff Corpus and Victor Aenlle," Franklin told this news organization in an email. "That means they will be deposed in this lawsuit and they will be forced answer my questions under oath of penalty of perjury. Sheriff Corpus managed to avoid accountability for the way she manipulated and mistreated Detective Barker. She won't be so lucky here."

Corpus did not respond to this news organization's request for comment. ■

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

Portola Valley Women's Book Club brings local readers together

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

The Portola Valley Women's Book Club is keeping local residents' minds sharp through intellectual conversations about literature. Since 2017, the club has read over 90 books and has amassed about 60 members.

What do residents love about this club? They actually talk about the book, said club members. Sometimes other book clubs often turn into gossip sessions and in some cases the organizers don't even read the book.

Town residents Rita Comes, Wen Gong and Ginger Creevy, who is no longer with the book club, formed the group when they met at the Portola Valley's Women's Club in 2016. Comes and Gong are both book lovers and wanted to create a space where other readers could come together to have meaningful

discussions about literature.

The book club meets in the Portola Valley Library one afternoon a month.

"We wanted to be in this environment so that it's surrounded by books, and we are constantly reminded that this is our focus," said Gong.

Every six months, members vote on what six books they will be reading for the months to come. Book club members said joining the club has exposed them to books they typically wouldn't pick on their own.

The book club's discussion format is modeled after St. John's College's "Great Books" curriculum, which Comes took as a summer course about 17 years ago. The school's teaching style is conversational and encourages students to learn by participating in respectful discussions. Comes was inspired.

Comes describes Portola



Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Portola Valley Women's Book Club meeting at the Portola Valley Library on Jan. 30.

Valley's book club philosophy as "an opportunity for all voices to be heard and all opinions to be respected."

The formation of the club has allowed all of its members to find a community and build

connections through books, said Comes and Gong. Although the club is focused on keeping conversations within the bounds of the story, members slowly get to know each other as they share personal experiences in relation

to the themes of the book.

After each book club meeting, a summary of the discussion is posted on the Portola Valley Women's Book Club website

See **BOOK CLUB**, page 18

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COMPASS

Menlo Park hosts first College and Career Day

By Contributing writer
Jenna Lee / M-A Chronicle

The city of Menlo Park hosted its first College and Career Day at the Belle Haven Community Campus on Jan. 25. Over 75 families attended the event to explore the variety of possibilities for their path after high school. The event was supported and funded by the Menlo Park Library Foundation, Tarlton Properties, Inc., Meta Platforms, Peninsula Clean Energy, East Palo Alto Academy and Live in Peace.

"It's the first time that we're doing this event. There is not a lot being done in our specific community for teens looking into options after high school. We thought it would be a great opportunity to allow them to explore that," Natalya Jones, Library and Community Service Manager and organizer of the event, said. "I want our students, particularly those in the Menlo Park and East Palo Alto community, to know what their opportunities are."

Spirited with decorated booths and informative flyers, the Belle Haven Community Campus was lively and loud. Colleges, vocational schools, the military, and other prospective organizations came from all over the Bay Area to inform students about their programs and the different resources available.

Jules Thomas, a student ambassador at Cañada College,

shared how community college can help bridge students' educational journey. "At Cañada, classes are completely free if they live in San Mateo County. We want to show the importance of education because community colleges don't have enough representation. We want to showcase to the community that we are here," he said.

"I feel like we're a forgotten CSU campus, so I love being able to remind students that we exist," Gabriella Lomeli, Early Assessment Program director at CSU East Bay, said. "I want students to know about the diversity of our campus and our variety of 50 different majors."

Lomeli advised high school students to visit and research different colleges and career opportunities. "Visit campuses as much as possible. It's really important to enjoy the vibe of the school and see if it's fit for you. Reach out to representatives and ask questions," she said.

Representatives of the U.S. Army also came to recruit prospective members. Staff Sergeant Tanielu, an Army Recruiter and Career Counselor for the Mountain View Recruiting Station, highlighted a different pathway for students. "A lot of people have misconceptions of the army. There are a lot of benefits that come with being a soldier. Service to the country is number one, but we also have a lot of educational benefits such as paying for college."



Courtesy M-A Chronicle

A Menlo College ambassador speaks to a student attendee at the Jan. 25 city of Menlo Park College and Career Day.

Tanielu recommended that students "make sure to get as much research as possible." "Make sure you educate yourself so you can make the best decision," she said.

April Jackson, a first-year apprentice in the IBEW Local Union 617, illuminated vocational school options. "A lot of people think of trade as something that you're not going to make a lot of money from, not going to have a lasting career, or that you won't have a job. All of those are not true. You're always going to have a job, especially as an electrician because people need electricity. That's one of the reasons I decided to go into this type of trade," she said. Jackson advised students who don't love school or want to start making money once they graduate to go into trade school.

The Peninsula College Fund spread awareness about the services they provide to high school seniors attending school in San Mateo County and Santa

Clara County. "We support first-generation low-income students through their four years of college. We pair them with a mentor, a college, and a career services program coordinator to make sure students are supported academically throughout college. We help build their network, internships, and jobs by the time they graduate," Nohely Peraza, a college services program coordinator, said.

"I strongly believe in higher education and that it should be accessible to everybody. Financially, there should be no barriers," fellow college services program coordinator Lupe Vasquez added.

Christopher Wardell, the Program Services Coordinator at Cañada College, held a financial aid workshop informing students of different resources available and a guide to FAFSA. "I believe that the more you know, the better you are to be empowered to make decisions that benefit you and your future," he said. "I hope that

students understand that there are options out there that will reduce their educational costs and make their educational goals more realizable."

At the end of the event, staff announced winners for the raffle where students won bikes, gift cards, a tablet, or application scholarships. One of the big prizes included two tuition support scholarships funded by Live in Peace.

"I'm not super sure on what I want to do in the future. Right now, I have a vague idea of college and what I might want to study, so I think it's good to see what else is out there," Melanie DeSantis Carillo, a senior at East Palo Alto Academy, said. "I really like looking at the different courses and just any aid that different colleges have. I didn't know community college was free for students so that was great to learn."

All the organizations and colleges shared a common message for high school students confused on their journey after high school: Ask questions, know you're not alone, use your resources, and take a breath. It is alright to not know what you want to do, no matter the age.

College and Career Day ended with success, with families gaining insight on the diverse opportunities and resources available for students. "This is a kickstart for college and career related events. Based on student feedback, we plan on establishing other training, workshops, and opportunities for teens to be able to come to our libraries and our community centers to get more information," Jones said. ■

This story originally appeared in the M-A Chronicle.

Lorraine Paolucci Macchello

Lorraine Paolucci Macchello, beloved family matriarch and Menlo Park community member, died peacefully at home on February 1, 2025, under hospice care. She was 99 years old, just shy of her 100th birthday.

She is survived by her daughters: Ronda (David Taylor), Carla (Scott Wigginton), and Paula (Mary Kay Henry); grandsons Nicholas Taylor (Danielle), Daniel Taylor (Courtney), and Adam Wigginton (Jacquelyn); and great-granddaughters Eva, Pia, and Murphy Taylor.

Funeral Mass will be celebrated at 11:00 on Saturday, February 15, at St. Raymond Catholic Church, 1100 Santa Cruz Ave., Menlo Park. Reception to follow at the church hall. In lieu of flowers, it was Lorraine's preference that memorials be in the form of donations to St. Raymond Church Homeless Family Fund, St. Raymond Church, the St. Francis Center (stfrancisrwc.org) or to Pathways Hospice 585 N. Mary Avenue, Sunnyvale, Ca 94085. Please see her obituary and sign the guestbook available at altamesafuneralhome.com.



PAID OBITUARY

Patricia Gail Owen

September 29, 1945 – December 5, 2024

Patricia Gail Owen, daughter to Stevan Robertson and Florence Englebert passed peacefully after a long battle with alzheimer's. Patricia loved to travel and spend time with her family and will be greatly missed. She is survived by her sisters Kathy Butler, Jan Ruby and her brother Stevan Robertson, her son and daughter Shawn and Jennifer Owen as well as her grandchildren Cody and Kayla Harmon, Jackie Owen and her great grandchildren, Easton Zielke and Eleanor Harmon. Private family ceremony.



PAID OBITUARY

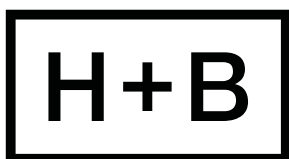
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New Stanford database tracks learning loss, gain in California and districts nationwide

By John Fensterwald / EdSource

A unique database that enables people to compare standardized test scores among nearly all districts and states found that California experienced slightly less learning loss than the national average in the four years following the 2020 pandemic.

The Education Recovery

Scorecard, which researchers from Stanford University, Harvard University and Dartmouth College developed, also identified those districts that have escalated learning recovery and those that had fallen farthest behind.

Those whose test scores improved in either math, reading or both, include Compton Unified and Monterey

Peninsula, both with high proportions of low-income students, as well as Chino Valley Unified and Bonita Unified, whose students gained nearly a half-grade level of learning compared with pre-pandemic 2019.

The Associated Press, in conjunction with the researchers, published Tuesday a wealth of information from 43 states

with 8,718 districts for which data was available, including the nearly 1,000 districts in California. They affirm what other analyses of states and the nation have found: The decline in scores in both reading and math, as a result of the pandemic, was severe.

Although no state reached their pre-pandemic scores in both math and reading, many individual districts did. The scorecard found that 31% of California students attended districts scoring above 2019 levels in math, with 12% of students in districts scoring above 2019 levels in reading, and 10% in districts that have recovered in both.

That's significantly higher than the national average: Only 17% of students nationally in grades three to eight are in districts whose average math score on the scorecard was above that of 2019.

However, keep in mind that California had much more ground to make up. In 2019, California's average score in math was already half a grade behind the national average. While in 2024, the gap between California and the nation had narrowed to 36% in math, scores nationally and in California both had lost ground. As a result, California's 2019 score in math was 82% of a year of learning below the 2019 national average.

Some of the biggest districts, including San Bernardino County, Long Beach and San Juan remain more than half a grade equivalent behind in math from five years before.

Reading scores followed a similar trend. In 2019, the gap between the nation and California was 29%; in 2024, it had narrowed to 22%, yet had dropped to 69% of a grade below the 2019 national average.

As the state's two largest districts with nearly 10% of California's enrollment, Los Angeles and San Diego may have lifted the state's overall average. Los Angeles in 2024 was within a few percentage points of its 2019 scores in reading and math; San Diego's pandemic decline was significantly less than the state's.

The scorecard makes comparisons possible on a single scale based on percentages of an expected year of growth. It equalizes states' scores by aligning them to their results on the National Assessment of Academic Progress (NAEP), the common test that a

representative sample of students in all states take every two years.

Going Deeper

The Associated Press analyzed data from the Education Recovery Scorecard, produced by Harvard's Tom Kane and Stanford's Sean Reardon, which uses state test score data to compare districts across states and regions on post-pandemic learning recovery. The AP provided data analysis and reporting for this story.

Researchers from Stanford, Harvard and Dartmouth created the Education Recovery Scorecard using a longitudinal database developed by the Stanford Graduate School of Education. Because states use different tests with different measures for determining what constitutes proficiency, apples-to-apples comparisons of learning losses and gains across the nation normally can't be made. Some states' scores for proficiency are "easier" to achieve than in other states.

The scorecard affirmed trends that others have found by analyzing NAEP and California's Smarter Balanced scores and results nationally.

Achievement gaps by income and race and ethnicity widened during the pandemic. The highest-income districts were nearly four times more likely to recover in both reading and math than the lowest-income districts. The disparity in math scores between students in affluent and low-income districts grew by 11% since the start of the pandemic; the disparity in scores between students in predominantly non-minority and predominantly minority districts grew by 15%.

High rates of absenteeism, especially in high poverty districts, have slowed recovery. One of the report's recommendations is to recruit mayors, employers and other community leaders; total responsibility shouldn't rest with schools, the report said. Help could include launching public information campaigns, funding extracurricular activities to draw students to school; and assisting with transportation, the report said.

Federal Covid relief for schools, especially \$122 billion from the American Rescue Plan passed in 2021, appeared to stem even bigger learning losses in the higher poverty districts — by about 10% of a grade equivalent. But how districts spent the money mattered. In examining federal spending in California, which required more extensive reporting on expenditures, researchers found that spending on intensive tutoring

Imsong Lee

September 9, 1931 – December 31, 2024

Imsong Lee, age 93, passed away peacefully on Tuesday December 31, 2024 in Redwood City, California surrounded by family.

He was born in a small town called Hunchun near the border of China, Russia and Korea, in August of 1931. Growing up, he lived a relatively normal life until his early teens which was significantly disrupted by the Japanese Colonial Occupation, Chinese Civil War, WWII and the Korean War. In 1945 shortly after Japan had surrendered, his father was killed which changed the outlook for the entire family. He was 14 years old. Soon he traveled south down to Seoul, Korea with his maternal uncle, where some relatives settled. His journey to Seoul was illegal at the time and had to be done in the cover of night. After studying for school exams,

he attended Joong Ang High School and graduated in Spring of 1949, and then he attended Seoul National University (SNU) majoring in physics.

When he was a sophomore in June 1950, the Korean War broke out that changed his student life. He joined the Korean Army in October 1950 and served as a liaison officer between the U.S. and Korean Army while acting as an Interpreter, learning to speak English on the job. He was awarded a Bronze Star Medal from the US Army for this work.

After the war, Imsong came to the United States on scholarship to attend Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) in Troy, New York. An American army officer sent a radio message to RPI by MAR Network (Military Affiliated Radio Network) to help secure the tuition scholarship awarded the previous year.

Imsong married Hyun Choong Kim in April, 1958 in New York City, and later had four children: Donna, Betty (Elizabeth), Peggy and David. In New York he attended Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn and earned a Masters degree in Electrical Engineering.

Imsong Lee proceeded to obtain his Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering from Stanford University. His doctoral thesis was on the Study of Linear Feedback Systems with Periodic Parameters through an Extension of the Floquet Theory. He was the first Korean employee at HP, where he worked as a doctorate student under HP's Honors Corporation Program from 1959 to 1962. After he finished his Ph.D. program, he worked in the electronics, computer and semiconductor fields.

Imsong Lee worked at GE Research Lab

(1962-1964) then taught at his alma mater RPI (1964 - 1969). A one-year sabbatical was spent at IBM research in Yorktown Heights New York. Imsong taught as a professor at UMass Amherst (1969-1972). In 1972 he packed up his family and

drove across country in a Ford Country Squire station wagon and pop-up tent trailer for a teaching engagement at UC Berkeley from 1970 to 1978.

Imsong also created a startup, Digital Electronics, in 1974. The company was to commercialize his invention named "DE69", a kind of a primitive personal computer based on Motorola's early microprocessor "6900".

Imsong Lee led Tristar Semiconductor (later Samsung Semiconductor) as its first president, then-R&D company of Samsung Electronics, located

in Silicon Valley in 1983. During the formation process he met Samsung developed and successfully manufactured the first 64K DRAM in 1985 in Korea

He consulted for many years for with Sharp Corporation in Japan, and spoke fluent Japanese. While Imsong had a great belief and career in technology, he repeatedly said the most delicate and intricate reasoning machine is the human brain.

After retirement from industry, Imsong became involved in the Korean American Community Center, a small local church, local Zen Buddhist community and wrote poetry. He published a book of his poetry, with each poem being written in both English and Korean. He and Hyun Choong enjoyed travels to Europe, Japan, Korea and Australia among other countries during this time. He also enjoyed traveling to the Big Island of Hawaii and would meet his brother from Korea there annually.

Imsong was fortunate to have several friend groups including a book club and a luncheon group, and even a tea tasting group. His luncheon group met at Chef Chu's in Los Altos for many years.

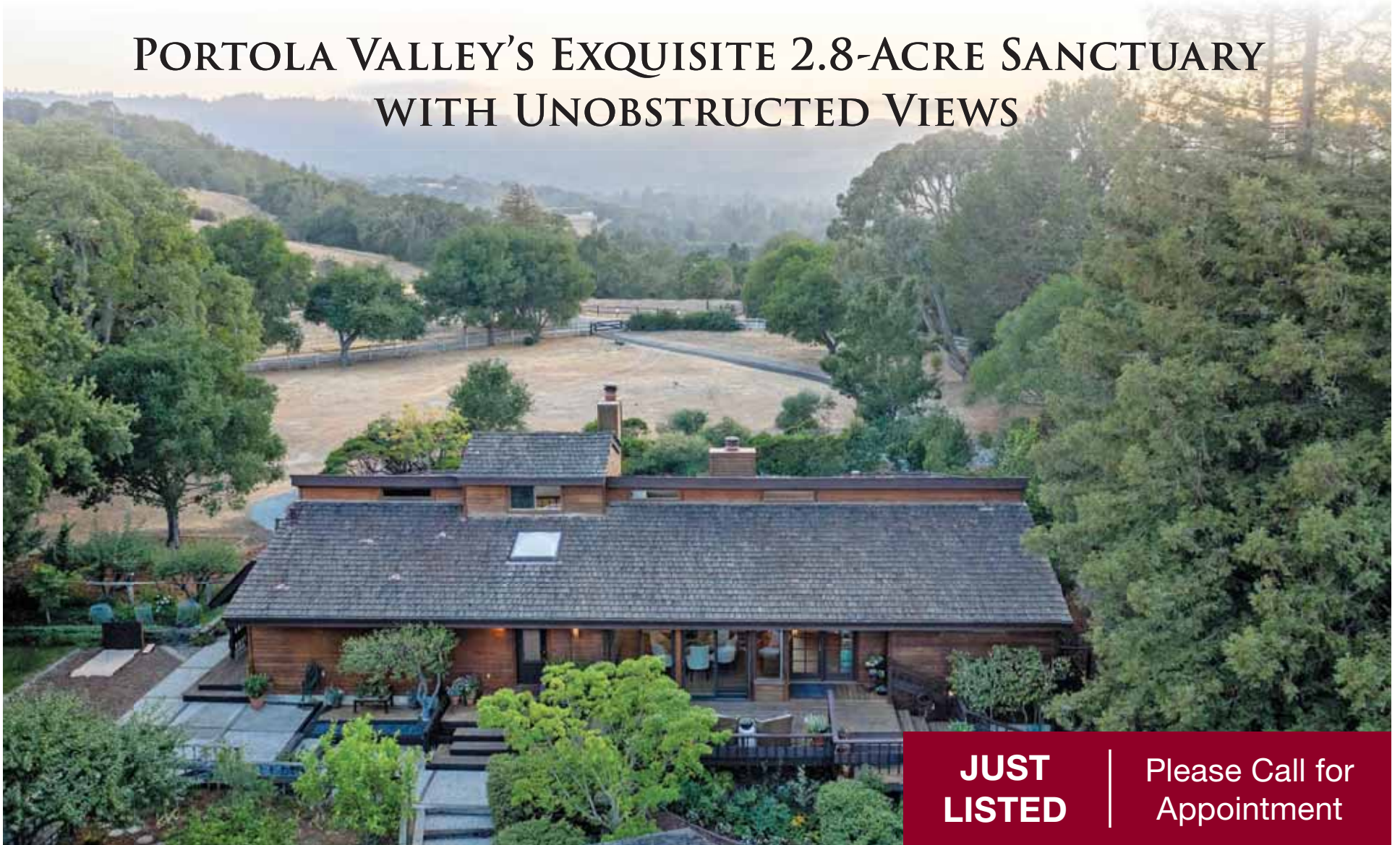
He resided in Atherton, CA from 1978-2017, and in Los Altos, CA from 2017 to 2024.

He was preceded in death by his wife Hyun Choong in 2016, and his daughter Margaret Weimar in 2020. Imsong is survived by his daughters Donna Lee (Mark), Elizabeth Kim (Robert), son David, and six grandchildren, who miss him dearly and take inspiration from him.

Imsong's life was celebrated in a private service and he is interred at Gate of Heaven, Los Altos, CA.



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Master gardeners give winter veggie tips

This season, try cutting back grasses and trees and growing Asian vegetables

By UC Master Gardeners of Santa Clara County

Do you have a gardening question? The UC Master Gardeners of Santa Clara County can help. Our volunteers are part of the University of California's Cooperative Extension program and we are trained to use research-based information to educate our fellow residents on sustainable gardening and landscaping practices specific to our area.

Our monthly "Ask a Master Gardener" column will answer your questions and offer tips. Have a question? Email lifestyle@embarcaderopublishing.com.

Tree pruning — DIY or hire an arborist?

Answer: Whether you prune your own trees or hire someone, it's important that whoever does the job knows about tree anatomy, plant health and the purpose of the plant (shade? privacy? fruit?). Knowing the difference between heading cuts and thinning cuts, how to locate a node to direct growth and how to open up a tree for air circulation are all part of good tree pruning. An improper pruning job can stress the tree, spread disease, invite pests and promote weak branching. These can lead to breakage, damage, and injury. The cheapest bid may end up costing more in the long run due to damage repair, lawsuits and additional fix-it pruning.

Take a class or read tree pruning guides if you want to do a good job yourself. If you hire someone, it is strongly recommended that you choose a certified arborist who has been specially trained and is insured. The International Society of Arboriculture can help you find a certified arborist in your area.

February garden tips

Plant sweet peas for a fragrant spring garden

Sweet peas are incredibly fragrant vining flowers that come in a variety of colors, mostly pastels. They are an annual flower so they must be planted again every year.

You can sow seeds anytime during the winter for spring bloom.

The seeds are hard and it can be helpful to nick them slightly before putting them in the

ground. Sweet peas do best in full sun or light shade.

The plants will decline when it gets hot outside and they will need to be removed. Learn more about growing sweet peas here.

Dispose of unused pesticides and fertilizer

Winter is generally the off-season for gardening, making it a great time to get rid of unused pesticides and fertilizer — but **disposing of them must be done carefully**. Pouring garden chemicals down the drain is not only against the law, but water treatment plants aren't designed to remove all toxic chemicals from wastewater, and street drains carry chemicals directly into rivers and the ocean.

Get rid of your unused pesticides and fertilizer by taking them to the free hazardous waste disposal sites offered by Santa Clara County.

To reduce your use of toxic chemicals, try using **integrated pest management methods** to solve garden problems. Identify the target pest, use non-chemical practices first, and if you need a chemical treatment, only purchase and use what you need.

Cut back ornamental grasses

Now is a good time to cut back perennials and bunch grasses. You can cut back some perennials all the way to the ground. These include yarrow, hummingbird sage, goldenrod, California aster and most kinds of California fuchsia. You can divide other perennials at this time, such as Douglas iris, alum root, seaside daisy, woodland and beach strawberry, yarrow, yerba buena, daylilies and chrysanthemums.

February gardening events UC Master Gardener gardening events are happening all over the county this month. Here are some of them; more are listed on our events page.

- **Growing Fabulous Citrus** - Mountain View, Feb. 11
- **Growing Vegetables from Seed: A Winter Start for your Summer Garden** - San Jose, Feb. 15
- **"The Color Purple: the Veggies not the Movie"** - Los Altos, Feb. 15
- **Spotted, Dotted, and Spongy: Have You Seen These Invasive Pests?** - Online, Feb. 20
- **Love Your Santa Clara County Clay!** - Palo Alto, Feb. 23



Courtesy Getty Images

Fresh long brinjal.

You can propagate bunch grasses, sedges and rushes by division this time of year. Examples of bunch grasses are purple needle grass (state grass of California), fescues, blue grama, leafy reed, oat and deer grass. Some sedges are the meadow, clustered field and San Diego sedge. Rushes include the

common rush and the California gray rush.

Try Growing Asian Vegetables

You can easily grow some vegetables used in different types of Asian cuisine and found in Asian markets. They are not necessarily native to Asia but

have found their way into various cuisines. One way to decide which food to grow yourself is to choose varieties that aren't readily available or are more expensive in your local markets. It's also fun to impress your family, friends and neighbors with something they may not have seen growing before.

With our mild climate, many Asian greens can be planted year-round, including in late winter. Possibilities include bok choy, napa cabbage, daikon radishes, gai choy in spring or winter, and sesame seeds, bitter melon, opo, sigua (loofah) in summer. For fun, you could grow a garden full of purple vegetables, both Asian and Indian.

For more information about purple vegetables, join us for "The Color Purple — the Veggies, Not the Movie." The presentation is on Feb. 15 at the Los Altos Library and you'll learn about the purple vegetables that grow in our Zones 9B and 10A.

Would you like to ask a UC Master Gardener about a plant problem? Submit questions to our Help Desk online.

You can also subscribe to our monthly Tips and Events newsletter. San Mateo residents can also find gardening advice on the UC Master Gardeners of San Mateo and San Francisco website. ■

Menlo Park Monthly Market Report

January 1, 2025 - January 31, 2025

TOP 7 SALES

- \$4,800,000
1160 Trinity Drive
- \$3,600,000
1065 Lassitt Drive
- \$2,900,000
2140 Santa Cruz Avenue
- \$2,110,000
544 Encina Avenue
- \$2,095,998
450 Sand Hill Circle
- \$1,500,000
1730 Sharon Park Drive, #54
- \$1,475,000
600 Willow Road, #3

ACTIVE LISTING

Jan: 29 ↑123%

Dec: 13

AVERAGE SALES PRICE

Jan: \$2,640,143 ↓12%

Dec: \$2,984,477

AVERAGE SALES PRICE/SQ FT

Jan: \$1,101 ↓31%

Dec: \$1,589

PENDING LISTING

Jan: 11 ↑22%

Dec: 9

AVERAGE SOLD DAYS ON MARKET

Jan: 34 ↑42%

Dec: 24

MONTHS OF INVENTORY

Jan: 4.10 ↑583%

Dec: 0.60

If no further properties were to come to market, the cost would be SOLD OUT of residential real estate in the number of MONTHS shown

SOLD LISTING

Jan: 7 ↓68%

Dec: 22

SALE/LIST PRICE

Jan: 99.30% ↓4%

Dec: 103.70%

30 YEAR MORTGAGE RATE

Jan: 7.03% ↑0%

Dec: 7.04%

7/31/2024 7.04% 1/29/2025 7.03%

Source: Bankrate

★ January 2025 compared to December 2024

Making A Move?

Sellers Start Here: RossettiHomeValue.com

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15-year-old tied to fatal shooting in Redwood City, arrested

By Simmerdeep Kaur

Redwood City police officers have arrested a 15-year-old in connection to a fatal shooting on Adams Street on Thursday after they found a body lying in the road.

At 1:40 a.m., on Feb. 6, officers

with the Redwood City Police Department responded to the 500 block of Adams Street and found a man suffering from a single gunshot wound to the torso, police said. Paramedics responded, but the man was pronounced dead at the scene. The victim was identified as

an 18-year-old Redwood City resident. His name was not immediately available, according to police.

The alleged shooter, whose identity is not being disclosed due to his age, has been booked into the juvenile detention hall in San Mateo for murder, police said.

Later on Thursday, the police received a call regarding a family disturbance that alleged that a 15-year-old male had assaulted a family member, according to police. The teen was believed to be a person of interest in the shooting. Investigators found probable cause to arrest him for murder,

the police said in a press release.

According to police, the shooting appears to be an isolated incident, and there is no indication of any ongoing threat to the community. ■

Email Staff Writer Simmerdeep Kaur at skaur@almanacnews.com.

Silicon Valley riders all in on Caltrain electrification

By B. Sakura Cannestra / San Jose Spotlight

Caltrain's electrification has lured people back to riding the rails.

Transit advocates and officials said Caltrain's electric fleet, which launched last September, helped drive an increase in year-over-year ridership to 39% as of December 2024 — with electric trains delivering on promises of more service and smoother rides.

The agency has been touting the benefits of electric service for years and promising faster, quieter trips, increased service and less greenhouse gas emissions. But even transit officials are surprised by the bump in ridership.

Palo Alto Councilmember Pat Burt said he's heard more good feedback from riders than he expected. Burt, who sits on the Caltrain board of directors and chairs the agency's Local Policy Maker Group, said the rider base has changed to more weekend leisure travelers than weekday riders, with commuter

traffic decreasing post-COVID.

"What we've heard from the public anecdotally is just a lot of enthusiasm over the electrification, people virtually giddy over it," Burt told San José Spotlight. "We'll see how that translates into ridership recovery."

Last December, Caltrain ridership jumped to 588,328 riders, compared to 416,190 in the previous year. Still, there's a long way to go before Caltrain returns to pre-COVID levels. In December 2019, Caltrain had 1.4 million riders.

Monica Mallon, a public transit advocate and San José Spotlight columnist, said the electric trains are noticeably faster and have so far provided better service. She said better service means more riders, especially as word spreads.

"It's a bit of a gamble if you say all that," Mallon told San José Spotlight. "I think they've been able to accomplish a lot of what they promised and that's really important. If you want people to invest in transit in the future, you have to deliver on what you're promising."



Magali Gauthier

A train pulls up to the Redwood City Station during an event celebrating the electrification of Caltrain on Sept. 21, 2024.

Burt said Caltrain and other local transit agencies are pushing to improve other parts of the rider experience, especially at stations. For example, he said the board has looked into opening more retail spaces in stations so riders can grab drinks and snacks. Some stations serve multiple transit networks, and Burt said transit agencies across the region have been working to improve connection points.

In Sunnyvale, electric trains have meant more stops. Councilmember Richard Mehlinger, whose district touches Lawrence Station, said the station is busier because of that.

Lawrence Station, located near the borders of Santa Clara and Sunnyvale, saw ridership increase by nearly 55% from December 2023 to last December. The Sunnyvale Station, located near the city's downtown, saw a

ridership increase from 21,679 in December 2023 to 31,554 as of last December, a roughly 46% increase.

"It's proof that if you build it, they will come," Mehlinger told San José Spotlight. ■

This article originally appeared in San Jose Spotlight. Contact B. Sakura Cannestra at sakura@sanjosespotlight.com or @SakuCannestra on X.

BLACK LIBERATION

continued from page 1

and activists Juanita Croft and Pam Jones, who gave a presentation on local businesses. Jaliyah Minor, 16, a local high school student, gave a presentation on the leaders of the labor movement. Konstance Kirkendoll, a local resident and educator at Beechwood School, gave a presentation on recent achievements in the Black community.

Jamey Williams, a local rapper and spoken word poet, performed at the celebration.

Activities also included the painting of a community mural that reads "Intentions & Unity." The mural was completed by youth and adults alike. ■

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



Amaya Edwards

Konstance Kirkendoll gives a presentation on recent achievement within the Black community at the Black Liberation Month celebration at Belle Haven Community Campus on Saturday, Feb. 8, in Menlo Park, Calif.



Amaya Edwards

The City of Menlo Park hosts its annual Black Liberation month celebration at Belle Haven Community Campus on Saturday, Feb. 8, in Menlo Park, Calif.

Public Notices

SWEET ADVENTURES CLUB
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: CP-575G
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) SWEET ADVENTURES CLUB, located at PO box 22, Loma Mar CA, 94021.
Registered owner(s):
LEANNE KEENAN
PO box 22
Loma Mar, CA, 94021
This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has not yet begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on February 27, 2025.
(ALM Feb 14, 21, 28 and Mar 7, 2025)

BLUE SEAL POTTERY
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-299564
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) BLUE SEAL POTTERY, located at 1220 Peralta Road, Pacifica, CA 94044.
Registered owner(s):
ROBERT CHARLES MELHORN
1220 Peralta Road
Pacifica, CA 94044
This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 12/18/2018.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on January 17, 2025.
(ALM Jan 31, Feb 7, 14 and 21, 2025)

MEDICAL AESTHETICS
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-299462
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) MEDICAL AESTHETICS, located at 885 Oak Grove Ave, Suite 101, Menlo Park, CA, 94025.
Registered owner(s):
GMRS MD INC
1838 Valparaiso Avenue
Menlo Park, CA, 94025
State of Incorporation/Organization:
California
This business is conducted by: a Corporation.
Registrant has not yet begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on January 07, 2025.
(ALM Feb 14, 21, 28 and Mar 7, 2025)

C & E COMPUTERS
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-299692
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) C & E COMPUTERS, located at 165 Ramona Ave, South San Francisco, CA 94080.
Registered owner(s):
CHRISTOPHER ROBERTS
165 Ramona Ave
South San Francisco, CA 94080
This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 12/28/1992.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on January 31, 2025.
(ALM Feb 7, 14, 21 and 28, 2025)

STUDIO BELMONT
BELMONT HARDWARE
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-299423
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) STUDIO BELMONT, 2.) BELMONT HARDWARE, located at 940 El Camino Real, Belmont, CA 94002.
Registered owner(s):
COMPLEAT BALDWIN BRASS CENTER OF CALIFORNIA
940 El Camino Real
Belmont, CA 94002
State of Incorporation/Organization: CA
This business is conducted by: a Corporation.
Registrant has not yet begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on January 02, 2025.
(ALM Jan 24, 31, Feb 7 and 14, 2025)

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Case No.: 25CIV00686
TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:
Petitioner: Yousef Moslam Salamah Aldalaeen filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows:
YUSEF MOSLAM SALAMAH ALDALAEEN to YUSEF DALAEEN
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: 4/8/2025, 9:00am, San Mateo 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:

BONOMI CABINETS
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-299322
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) MARK BONOMI, located at 2913 SHERWOOD DRIVE, SAN CARLOS, CA 94070.
Registered owner(s):
MARK EUGENE BONOMI
2913 SHERWOOD DRIVE
SAN CARLOS, CA 94070
This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 09/01/2011.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on December 19, 2024.
(ALM Jan 31, Feb 7, 14 and 21, 2025)

ALMANAC
Date: 2/5/2025
Stephanie G. Garratt
JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
(ALM Feb 14, 21, 28 and Mar 7, 2025)

THE ARMSTRONG ENTERPRISE
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-299684
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) THE ARMSTRONG ENTERPRISE, located at 441 Avenue Del Oro, El Granada, CA 94018.
Mailing Address: PO Box 1707 El Granada, CA 94018.
Registered owner(s):
PHILLIP CONNOR ARMSTRONG
PO Box 1707
El Granada, CA 94018
This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 10/23/2015.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on January 31, 2025.
(ALM Feb 7, 14, 21 and 28, 2025)

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Case No.: 25CIV00685
TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:
Petitioner: Erika Seiberler Sivarajan Froelicher filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows:
ERIKA SEIBERLER SIVARAJAN FROELICHER to ERIKA FROELICHER
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: 4/3/2025, 9:00am, San Mateo 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: 2/4/2025
Stephanie G. Garratt
JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
(ALM Feb 14, 21, 28 and Mar 7, 2025)

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Case No.: 25-CIV-00188
TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:
Petitioner: Lauren Elizabeth Peterson filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows:
LAUREN ELIZABETH PETERSON to LAUREN PADILLA STEVENS
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: March 17, 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: January 14, 2025
Hon. Stephanie G. Garratt
JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
(ALM Jan 24, 31, Feb 7 and 14, 2025)

NOTICE OF PETITION TO ADMINISTER ESTATE OF: FREDERICK BRUCE THIEMANN
Case No.: PRO00084
To all heirs, beneficiaries, creditors, contingent creditors, and persons who may otherwise be interested in the will or estate, or both, of FREDERICK BRUCE THIEMANN.
A Petition for Probate has been filed by: FREDERICK DONALD THIEMANN in the Superior Court of California, County of SAN MATEO.
The Petition for Probate requests that: FREDERICK DONALD THIEMANN be appointed as personal representative to administer the estate of the decedent. THE PETITION requests the decedent's will and codicils, if any, be admitted to probate. The will and any codicils are available for examination in the file kept by the court. A HEARING on the petition will be held on March 10 2025 at 9:00 am in Dept. 3 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.
Petitioner in Pro Per:
Frederick Donald Thiemann
850 Piedmont Way
Redwood City, CA 94062
650-814-6114
(ALM Jan 31, Feb 7 and 14, 2025)

To place a legal notice visit
[AlmanacNews.com/legal_notices/](https://www.almanacnews.com/legal_notices/)

OBITUARIES

By Embarcadero Media staff

Lily Wong Brelsford, 76, a Menlo Park resident who worked at Stanford Hospital and Genentech, was an avid traveler and family matriarch, who died on Jan. 24, 2025.

Elizabeth Savage Duncan, 90, a Palo Alto resident who immigrated from London and was an accomplished artist, community volunteer and mother and grandmother, who died on Jan. 20, 2025.

Imsong Lee, 93, a Los Altos resident who was the first Korean employee at HP, invented a primitive personal computer and served as the first president of Samsung Semiconductor, who died on Dec. 31, 2024.

Patricia Owen, 79, a Menlo Park resident who loved to travel and spend time with her family, who died on Dec. 5, 2024.

To read full obituaries, leave remembrances and post photos, go to Lasting Memories at <https://obituaries.almanacnews.com/obituaries/>.

ICE

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these concerns, McCulley said. To mitigate fear of law enforcement, Spiker said that the Sheriff's Office has sponsored initiatives such as the Community Alliance to Revitalize our Neighborhoods to share information about immigration rights and foster trust between the community and law enforcement.

Gee's statement noted that Redwood City has for years worked with community

organizations to share information about legal rights and dispel rumors about federal immigration enforcement. Redwood City Police Capt. Ashley Osborne also said that the department is actively sharing resources such as "Know Your Rights" information from the San Mateo County Office of Immigration Services to support our immigrant communities. ■

Email Editorial Intern
Hannah Bensen at hbensen@almanacnews.com.

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STANFORD

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and after-school and summer school programs tended to yield the most effective results.

“The slide in average NAEP scores masks a pernicious inequality: Scores have declined far more in America’s middle- and low-income communities than in its wealthy ones. The good news is that it could have been worse: The federal investment in public schools during the pandemic paid off, limiting academic losses in high-poverty districts,” professor Sean

Reardon, faculty director of the Educational Opportunity Project at Stanford and a lead researcher on the scorecard, told the AP.

Along with Compton Unified, whose impressive improvement started before Covid and was undeterred by it, Bonita Unified, a 10,000-student district where 36% of students are eligible for free or reduced meals, raised both reading and math scores to a third of a grade level above 2019 results. In a letter to parents, Bonita Superintendent Matt Wien praised “the sense of purpose that is felt throughout

the district and drives our students and employees alike.” He also pointed to hiring elementary school intervention teachers and comprehensive instruction during summer programs.

Chino Valley Unified scores rose in 2024 to 43% of a grade above 2019 in math and 34% in reading. Deputy Superintendent Grace Park cited the collaboration of teacher teams that developed an essential set of learning standards in every grade, followed by designing lessons and assessments, then monitoring their effectiveness. She also noted that the district was the

first in San Bernardino County to return to the classroom when the pandemic eased.

Economist Tom Kane, faculty director of the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard and a collaborator on the scorecard, said it is essential for districts to apply lessons of the recovery. He and Reardon stressed focusing on which of the “science of reading” reforms that districts have tried most improved early literacy.

“The rescue phase is over. The federal relief dollars are gone. It is time to pivot from short-term recovery to longer-term

challenges such as reducing absenteeism and addressing the slide in literacy,” Kane said.

One advantage California has is a \$6.8 billion pot of state money that is replacing the expired federal Covid funds. Distributed based on districts’ low-income enrollment, districts can use the Learning Recovery Emergency Block Grant through 2027-28 on tutoring and other research-proven strategies, along with mental health and student well-being. The funding is a second chance. ■

This article was written by John Fensterwald for EdSource.

WALKOUT

continued from page 1

their school or background.

“I’m hoping that they see that, you know, regardless of like how the media may portray young people, that we’re here to stand up for our elders and for the people that protect us and for the people that have provided us with so much, and that despite, the kind of stereotype that there is about this new generation that we’re not going to bow down, and that we’re going to stand up for what we believe in, and we’re going to stand up for those that have stood up before us,” she said.

Two to three weeks ago, seven students at Woodside High School came together to form the activist group Banderas Unidas to fight injustices against immigrant families. According to Kathy Morales, a junior and member of the group, they organized the walkout at Woodside and connected with students from other schools through social media and word of mouth.

“I’m a first generation American and my parents are immigrants. This affects me on a personal level and it affects others in my community too,” said Maria, a junior at Woodside High School who used a pseudonym due to safety concerns. “I wasn’t going to just stand by and let all of this stuff happen. We’re fighting for immigrants.”

As students made their way downtown, they continued chanting and holding up signs, determined to keep pressure

on policymakers and show that they won’t stay silent on immigration issues.

“Our generation has so much power to do so many things that most of our parents couldn’t do,” said Nora Acosta, a student organizer at M-A. “(My parents) who came to this country at a young age have struggled to obtain their citizenship and it is sad to see how several families are being torn apart due to ICE.”

A few protestors addressed the crowd, speaking passionately about the discrimination immigrants are facing and urging the crowd to stand strong for their community.

“Today is not a regular school day for us to wake up in the morning and go to school,” said Andy Villeda, a senior at Redwood High School, while addressing the crowd. “Today is a day of change. Today is the start of a movement going forward. Today is the sound of our shouting voices finally not being silent.”

Many of the protestors decided to stay in downtown Redwood City until the end of their school day. Some danced to Latin music, others whistled, but enthusiasm never wavered.

Former East Palo Alto Mayor Antonio Lopez called the student walkout “admirable and important,” emphasizing the role of young people in raising awareness.

“I’m grateful to the young people whose bravery and courage show that in this hour when many people are feeling hurt,

scared and fearful for their safety and their families, they’re standing up and putting their lives on the line to speak out against what’s going on, not just locally, but nationally, Lopez said.

Decrease in attendance across schools

Since Trump took office, students at M-A have been noticing lower attendance rates, especially in Spanish-speaking classes, according to Nora Garcia, a junior at M-A.

Teachers in M-A classrooms have been supporting immigrant students by handing out “red cards,” which outline their rights and protections under the U.S. Constitution, she added. The cards can be used to help immigrants when confronted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents.

Morales also shared seeing a decline in student attendance at Woodside High since the “Day Without Immigrants” on Feb. 3.

Sara Chacon, a junior at Sequoia High, shared similar concerns. She told this publication that not only are fewer students attending school, but fewer people are going to work, and some stores are closing due to fears of deportation.

“I’m speaking for our people who are scared to speak up for themselves,” Chacon added. ■

Redwood City Pulse Editor Michelle Iracheta contributed to this story.

Email Staff Writer Simmerdeep Kaur at skaur@almanacnews.com.



Anna Hoch-Kenney

Menlo-Atherton High School students walked out of school at 10:20 A.M. in protest against the Trump administration’s immigration policies on Feb. 6, 2025. Despite the rain, the students marched over three miles to downtown Redwood City, where they gathered with students from other SUHSD



Anna Hoch-Kenney

Woodside High School students, left, help keep other SUHSD student protesters from walking out into an intersection in downtown Redwood City on Feb. 6, as the protest relocated to Courthouse Square.

BOOK CLUB

continued from page 8

for members that are unable to attend the afternoon meetings. Recently, the club has started organizing group activities and field trips in addition to its monthly gathering.

In January, the club read “Remarkably Bright Creatures” by Shelby Van Pelt, a novel about a friendship between a widowed aquarium janitor and a giant

Pacific octopus. Prior to the book club meeting, members met at Comes’s home to watch “My Octopus Teacher,” a documentary about an interspecies bond between a filmmaker and an octopus. During the monthly meeting on Jan. 30, organizers also talked about planning a road trip to the Monterey Bay Aquarium to see an octopus up close.

“We have decided that we want to make it as intellectual

as possible, but also have fun,” said Gong. To mix up the meeting location, the club will sometimes meet at Hidden Villa, a local restaurant or at someone’s home, she added.

Despite the name, the club is inclusive to all readers, regardless of gender. It currently has one male member and welcomes more to join.

Portola Valley is home to a community of diverse backgrounds, including CEOs,

researchers, company founders and tech executives. Comes said that when people begin to know you for your money or title, it can be difficult to have a regular conversation, but at book club everyone is merely known for their love of literature.

“[People] want to figure out how you can donate or what you can do for them,” said Comes. “Here in this room, everybody was just talking about the book and sharing parts of their lives,

and that, at times, is a mini vacation from the other stuff and allows you to just be yourself.”

Gong added that it’s refreshing to hear the opinions of people from different backgrounds because “people can read into stories differently.” Discussing the book is what adds richness to the reading experience, she said. ■

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

Fireside Books and More opens in downtown Redwood City

New indie bookshop welcomes readers (and, eventually, maybe cats)

By Karla Kane

Local bookworms have a new place to browse, thanks to the Feb. 1 opening of Fireside Books and More, an independent, general-interest bookshop in downtown Redwood City.

Owners and Redwood City residents Andrew Johnson and Taylor Kubota said they hope Fireside will become a part of their hometown's fabric. The name of the store is an homage to one in Chagrin Falls, Ohio, where Johnson grew up.

"It was my favorite place in the world," he said, recalling his childhood "perfect day" consisting of lunch, a sweet treat and a visit to the bookshop.

"That's what I want to be for Redwood City. I want people to come down here, I want them to eat at one of our great restaurants, I want them to get a scoop of ice cream, and I want them to come to the bookstore. I want to feel part of the community in that way."

Fireside is housed in a 2,104-square-foot space on Broadway near the Caltrain station, formerly home to an electronics repair shop and a marketing agency. In addition to books, the new shop also features cards, stickers, gifts and goods by local makers, such as birdhouses by LeighLee's Garden, which are made in Half Moon Bay, and prints and jewelry by Redwood City's own Wandergrove.

Although they're lifelong bookstore fans, neither Johnson nor

Kubota have worked in the book business before, and they appreciate the help they've gotten along the way.

"We have a lot to learn," Johnson said. "One of the really really cool things about this industry that I didn't know before we got started is just how gracious and welcoming it is. We've had so much support from people," including getting invaluable advice and tips from folks at Kepler's in Menlo Park and the Peninsula Book Collaborative in Daly City, as well as from fellow downtown Redwood City retailers such as Little Green - A Plant Bar.

Fireside has been soliciting book recommendations from fellow downtown businesses, as well as from family and friends, some of whom came to help with preparations for the shop. In fact, Johnson and Kubota, who've been a couple for a decade and who live nearby, decided to get married right in the bookstore while their out-of-town loved ones were there.

"We're making it official. We own a bookstore together so we may as well," Johnson joked.

The very first book placed on Fireside's shelves was a novel by fantasy author Brian McClellan, Johnson's friend since seventh grade and the best man at his bookshop wedding. McClellan likely won't be the only writer to visit — in addition to selling books and gifts, Fireside plans to start holding in-store author events, storytimes for kids, book clubs and more.



Anna Hoch-Kenney

Store owners Andrew Johnson, left, and Taylor Kubota, right, at Fireside Books in Redwood City on its opening day on Feb. 1.

"Assuming we get our heads above water here in the next couple weeks, we hope to have story time on the weekends and then we'd love to have authors come through and give talks," Johnson said. "We really hope that would be one more way to bring the community together. Hopefully people get excited about that stuff."

Fireside's logo, designed by Oakland's Molly McCoy, depicts a pair of stripey cats with a row of books between them. Those two felines represent Johnson and Kubota's own cats, Merry and Pippin (who have appropriate literary names for being part of a bookstore family). There may be a bookstore cat or two in Fireside's future — provided the right cat is interested in the job. Merry and Pippin may be too shy (although Merry has potential), but Kubota and Johnson have a neighborhood cat called Bonnie that they think would enjoy the experience.

"We hope Bonnie can make it in here with us. She's quite a little personality. I think she'd be a little more suited for the space," Johnson said.

"We don't know until we try so ... it might take a lot of cats," Kubota laughed.

For now, Johnson is pretty much the sole staff member and the main force behind Fireside, having left his previous career in the medical technology industry.

"That was a nice job, it filled a lot of needs for us, but I kinda wanted to change gears and maybe do something a little more rooted in the area," he said. He's mindful of the risk involved in starting up a retail business, noting that "the economics of that are pretty challenging," but feels inspired by the downtown Redwood City scene.

Kubota works at Stanford University but will likely be spending plenty of her free time helping at the store as well. She grew up in the North Bay and counts iconic indie chain Copperfield's Books, which has locations in Marin, Sonoma and Napa counties and has had bookstore cats of its own, as among her inspirations.

Fireside stocks exclusively new books, as Johnson and Kubota are mindful that downtown Redwood City already offers second-hand books for sale at several places, including Encore Books on the Square and at the library.

"We don't want to step on any toes there," Johnson said.

"One of the things that's really important to us is, sort of, fitting into the community here. People ask us all the time, 'Are you going to sell coffee?' We're on the same block as Baires and Mademoiselle Collette. We don't think that we need to sell coffee."

However, "People will be allowed to bring their coffee! That is welcome. If they want to bring me a coffee, also great," Kubota joked.

Their goal is to create an atmosphere in which people feel at home, including by offering plenty of comfy nooks and seating options and, as the name suggests, a cozy fireplace feature.

"Come in, hang out with us for a little while," Johnson said. "Sit down and read a book and put it back on the shelf; that's OK." ■

Email Assistant Lifestyle Editor Karla Kane at kkane@almanacnews.com.



Anna Hoch-Kenney

Panagiotis Makrygiannis, left, and Lucy Okumu, right, play a quick game of chess at Fireside Books.

Fireside Books and More, 2421 Broadway St., Redwood City; Tuesday-Saturday from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Instagram: @fireside.rwc.

Orchestra to present Mahler symphony on a grand scale

Over 170 guest voices will join Redwood Symphony for performance

By Heather Zimmerman

The Redwood Symphony is going big for its next performance, bringing Gustav Mahler's "Resurrection" symphony to the stage.

Everything about the work is on a grand scale, from its themes of death, redemption and resurrection to Mahler's highly dramatic music itself.

It takes a lot of musicians to bring such a piece to life, and so in addition to the 110 members of the Redwood Symphony, this concert will feature over 170 singers.

Dr. Eric Kujawsky, Redwood Symphony founder and music director, will conduct the orchestra in its Feb. 16 performance of the "Resurrection" symphony, which will also bring together a host of guest artists, with soloists Kindra Scharich, mezzo-soprano, and Raeeka Shehabi-Yaghmai, soprano, and the singers of Schola Cantorum Silicon Valley, Cal State East Bay Singers and San Francisco Bay Area Chamber Choir.

Also on the program is Aaron Copland's "In the Beginning," a choral work that will be conducted by Buddy James, artistic director for Schola Cantorum.

Redwood Symphony is a volunteer community orchestra based on the Peninsula that will be marking its 40th anniversary in 2025.

The Feb. 16 concert is part of the orchestra's performance of a Mahler symphony cycle, playing all of the composer's symphonies over the course of multiple seasons.

We spoke with Kujawsky ahead of the symphony's concert. This conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

Embarcadero Media: What inspired the choice of Mahler's "Resurrection" symphony?

Eric Kujawsky: We have made it a practice to do all the Mahler symphonies. This is actually our third complete Mahler cycle that we're in the middle of. So this is our third time doing the Mahler "Resurrection," and our second time with Schola Cantorum.

Embarcadero Media: What does performing a symphony cycle bring to the audience's understanding of the composer's works?

Eric Kujawsky: It's a way of seeing the growth of the composer, his idiom from the early works to the later works. Mahler is such a popular composer, and because his works are so ambitious, they



Courtesy Redwood Symphony

The Redwood Symphony is an all-volunteer orchestra that will be celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2025.

don't get performed that often, other than by big symphonies like San Francisco Symphony. So I think this is a rare opportunity for audiences on the Peninsula to hear the Mahler symphonies played by us and at a less expensive price.

Embarcadero Media: What's unique about the "Resurrection" symphony?

Eric Kujawsky: In some ways, it's modeled after Beethoven's Ninth because it brings a chorus in for the last movement. But this is a 90-minute work, and the chorus only comes in for about the last between five and 10 minutes. But like Beethoven's Ninth, every other movement seems to foreshadow, and have premonitions of that of the final movement, where the chorus sings about the resurrection of souls. But I think that also like Beethoven's Ninth, it's not necessary to know the message of the work, to just enjoy it as pure music. It's an incredibly dramatic and exciting piece on its own terms.

Embarcadero Media: How did the collaboration with these vocal groups come about?

Eric Kujawsky: As I said, we have performed with Schola Cantorum before and many other local choral groups. They have a new music director now, Buddy James, and he is bringing along some groups that he also works with from the East Bay.

We will barely fit on the stage. The logistics have been difficult to work out, and they have to bring in extra risers from other locations to fit all the singers and musicians we have.

It's not (Mahler's) biggest symphony. He wrote the Symphony No. 8, which is called the "Symphony of a Thousand," which is even bigger. We've done that twice before as well. I'm looking forward to that at some point again.

Embarcadero Media: Given the scope of this piece, what are the challenges of conducting it?

Eric Kujawsky: One is keeping the concentration of the orchestra focused. And there's an awful lot of cueing, just bringing people in, because sometimes you have to count hundreds of rests before you come in to play a cymbal.

There are many, many transitions. Mahler loves to build up to something and then suddenly pull back to nothing. And so all these sudden changes need to be drilled until the musicians can do it naturally, and there are no mistakes. As with any piece, 90% of the work is in the rehearsal preparation, but then I'm out there on stage with them just to reinforce and remind them of what they've already been practicing.

Embarcadero Media: What have you enjoyed most about conducting this piece?

Eric Kujawsky: I enjoy the experience of doing any piece of music with the orchestra. These are people that I love working with, in many cases, people that I've been working with for 40 years, since I founded the orchestra. So any experience, any chance to get in front of them and do a piece like this is just amazing. And I always look forward to it. I hope I can do another 20 or 30 years at it. ■

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

Redwood Symphony performs Mahler's Resurrection Symphony Feb. 16, 2 p.m., San Mateo Performing Arts Center, 600 N. Delaware St., San Mateo. Tickets are \$40 adults/\$35 seniors/\$15 students with ID and free to kids under 18 with an adult or senior. redwoodsymphony.org.

Worth a Look

Andrea Claburn

San Francisco vocalist, composer and arranger Andrea Claburn, who blends classical training with a passion for jazz, celebrates Valentine's

weekend with two performances of love songs. Claburn is on the faculty of California Jazz Conservatory,

from which she also earned a degree in jazz studies, and released her debut album in 2017. She's joined by the Michael O'Neill trio (Michael O'Neill on saxophone, Matt Clark on piano, Ron Belcher on bass) for her two sets at Meyhouse Palo Alto.

Feb. 15, 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m., Meyhouse Palo Alto, 640 Emerson St., Palo Alto; \$50; meyhousejazz.com.



Courtesy a-retrospective

Vocalist and composer Andrea Claburn performs Feb. 15 at Meyhouse Palo Alto.

Fresh Friday: 'A Valentine's Day Serenade with Lyshia Megan + Friends'

For the Valentine's Day edition of Fresh Friday, Roger Bar and Restaurant at Ameswell Hotel's live local music series organized by Rafael Unplugged, check out music from Lyshia Megan, chris, Shanel + Josille / browntown and No Clue, according to the event listing. Roger is also offering a four-course meal and stargazing experiences as part of its special Valentine's weekend events.

Feb. 14, 6:30-9:30 p.m., Roger Bar and Restaurant at Ameswell Hotel, 800 Moffett Blvd., Mountain View; free (restaurant reservations must be made separately); tinyurl.com/SerenadeAtRoger.

Bay Area Special

Red Rock Coffee's 2nd Story live music series continues its focus on bluegrass with a performance by Bay Area Special, a South Bay band influenced by classic bluegrass artists. The lineup includes Ruby Davis on lead vocals and rhythm guitar, Elijah Chen on lead guitar, Phil Cornish on mandolin and harmony vocals, Ryan Triolo on upright bass and Danny Clark on fiddle.

Feb. 15, 7-9 p.m., Red Rock Coffee, 201 Castro St., Mountain View; redrockcoffee.com/2nd-story.

The Dip

Seattle R&B band The Dip takes influences from soul, funk and jazz and is known for its vintage vibe and detailed arrangements, including a three-piece horn section. The group features singer and guitarist Tom Eddy, bassist Mark Hunter, drummer Jarred Katz, trumpet player Brennan Carter and saxophonists Evan Smith and Levi Gillis. The band has played at festivals including Bonnaroo and Outside Lands, released its fourth full-length album, "Love Direction," in July of 2024 and comes to the Guild on tour in support of that record.

Feb. 20, 8 p.m., The Guild Theatre, 949 El Camino Real, Menlo Park; \$44-\$99; guildtheatre.com.



CACAO CHRONICLES

How 'Italian Indiana Jones' inspired this chocolate shop in downtown Palo Alto

By Ashwini Gangal | Photos by Anna Hoch-Kenney



Above: Alegio Chocolaté carries Claudio Corallo chocolate bars.
Top: Owners Panos Panagos, left, and Robbin Everson, right, in front of Alegio Chocolaté in downtown Palo Alto.

If you walk into Alegio Chocolaté on Bryant Street and meet co-owner Panos Panagos, you are sure to leave the store with the flavors of the African rainforest on your palate, visions of cacao being cultivated in the equatorial island nation of São Tomé and Príncipe and fables of Claudio Corallo, an Italian agronomist who has made the tropical plantations of Terreiro Velho his home. And you'll probably have at least one of his fawn-colored chocolate boxes in your hand.

Call him a good salesman at your own risk, though. "That's the worst insult for me; this is more than selling one box of chocolate!" said 70-year-old Panagos. He and his business partner Robbin Everson have been distributing Corallo's chocolates since 2006, first through their store in Berkeley, which they ran for around 13 years, and now through their Palo Alto store, which has been in business since 2012.

Panagos fumed as he spoke of what he believes is overprocessed, industrialized cacao, routinely doused in vanilla and soy lecithin — what he calls "mass-produced rubbish" — that masquerades as chocolate today.

"People, generally speaking, don't understand chocolate, they don't know chocolate, they don't know what chocolate is and they don't know what it could be," he said.

Alegio chocolates, available in varying percentages of pure cacao, are minimally flavored with either crystallized sugar, ginger, orange peels, raisins, coffee, sea salt,

'People, generally speaking, don't understand chocolate, they don't know chocolate, they don't know what chocolate is and they don't know what it could be.'

PANOS PANAGOS,
CO-OWNER OF ALEGIO CHOCOLATÉ

pepper or little bits of raw cacao nibs. A 160-gram box of chocolates costs \$38.50.

The story of how he came across this product is multihued. Before he became a chocolate distributor, Panagos — originally from Trikala in Greece — worked in the film and television industry.

He studied and later worked under the tutelage of underground and avant-garde filmmaker George Kuchar at the San Francisco Art Institute. "He taught me so much, I would need three lives to be able to appreciate and show gratefulness to that man," he said. "George Kuchar initiated me into filmmaking. ... My philosophy was shaped there."

Over the years, Panagos worked both in San Francisco — he was one of the directors of the 1980s hit TV show "Evening Magazine," hosted by Richard Hart and Jan Yanehiro — and later across Europe, where he worked for the European Broadcasting Commission as a representative of Greek

See **CHOCOLATE**, page 22



Panos Panagos, co-owner of Alegio Chocolaté, selects chocolate for customers to sample at the downtown Palo Alto chocolate shop.

CHOCOLATE

continued from page 21

television. He has several documentaries and TV shows to his credit, including “Jammin,” a popular Greek show he created in the 1990s.

Panagos first heard about Corallo’s African escapade when a project for the Associated Press took him to Ethiopia in the mid-’80s to cover one of the worst famines of the 20th century. “People were dying on the streets,” said Panagos, his young, photojournalist alter ego resurfacing momentarily as the present-day Silicon Valley entrepreneur excavated memories.

It was while driving the roads of Ethiopia in a United Nations Jeep at the crack of dawn, photographing food packages dropped by American and Russian airplanes, that a Zimbabwean journalist told him about Corallo. “It was there when she started talking to me about ‘that man’ — at the time I had no idea about this character named Claudio Corallo — who reminded me of ‘Apocalypse Now.’”

The 1979 Francis Coppola movie he referenced is based on author Joseph Conrad’s novel “The Heart of Darkness,” whose plot

unfolds along the Congo River in Africa. Corallo, dubbed the “Italian Indiana Jones,” is originally from Florence, Italy. In the 1970s, he left Europe to live in Congo, known as Zaire back then. He started growing his own coffee — which he sells across countries like France, Italy, Portugal and the Czech Republic today — and subsequently fell in love with cacao. Corallo has lived in Africa for around 50 years now.

It wasn’t until many years later — around the early 2000s, when Panagos was looking to pivot away from his travel-heavy media career and try something new — that he rediscovered Corallo. “I was looking for something unique and different,” he said.

He asked an economist friend to help him understand what the “next big thing” was. It turned out that olive oil, balsamic vinegar, wine and coffee had all had their moment of becoming gourmet. The answer, quite simply, was chocolate.

Panagos then remembered the mysterious “guy from Congo” that the Zimbabwean journalist had told him about all those years ago. By then, Corallo had become a name to reckon with in the world of coffee and chocolate.

“The next thing? I took a trip to Africa.



Customers eagerly take samples of chocolate during a tasting session at Alegio Chocolaté.

The next thing? We became too close,” Panagos said. “I believe I was the only one who deeply understood not the chocolate maker, but the man — who he was as a man, his philosophy about life... and dare I say, I met my match. Most of the collaboration was not about the product per se; it was about the philosophy around that product.”

Alegio is named after Panagos’ sons Alexander and Giorgio. For Panagos and his business partner and “second brain” Everton — who was a high-tech sales executive before Alegio — expansion is not a priority.

“I don’t want to open more shops,” he said. “We have very limited production; Claudio will never compromise on quality.” That said, he does

dream of opening a store in a chic neighborhood like Century City, Los Angeles, someday.

For now, they are focused on bringing small batch, high quality chocolate to Silicon Valley. “People who have refined taste and less tired minds start looking for things that make life beautiful,” Panagos said. ■

Email Contributing Writer Ashwini Gangal at ashwinigangal@gmail.com.

Alegio Chocolaté, 522 Bryant St., Palo Alto; 650-325-4500, Instagram: @alegio_chocolate. Open Tuesday to Thursday from noon to 6 p.m., Friday and Saturday from noon to 7 p.m.



Boxes of chocolate bars at Alegio Chocolaté in downtown Palo Alto.



From left to right, Ashley Yeung, Tara Jog and Patty Salazar cheers before trying hot chocolate during a tasting at Alegio Chocolaté.

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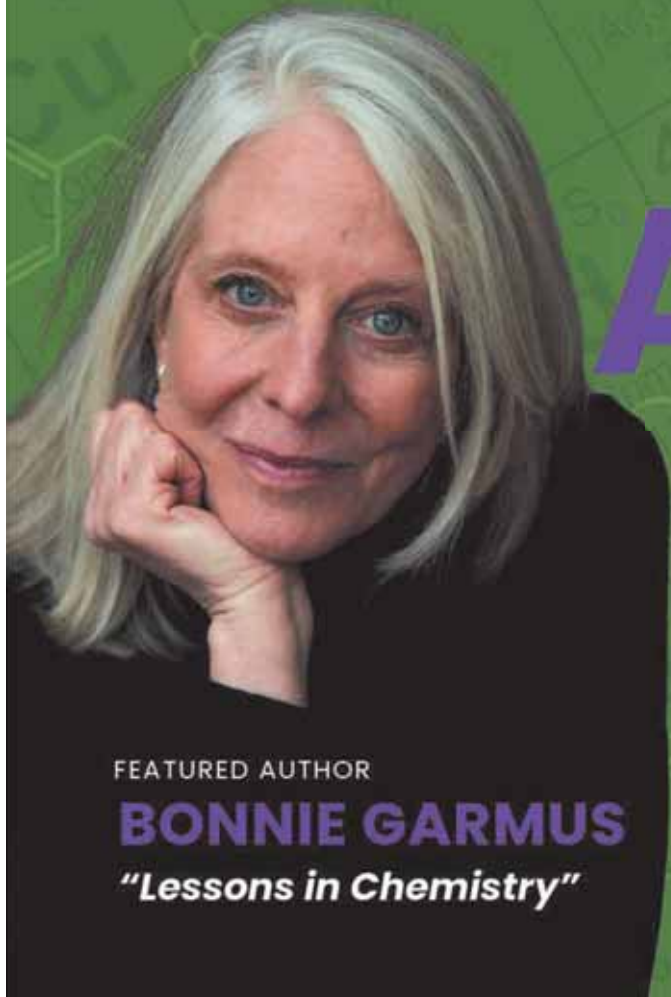
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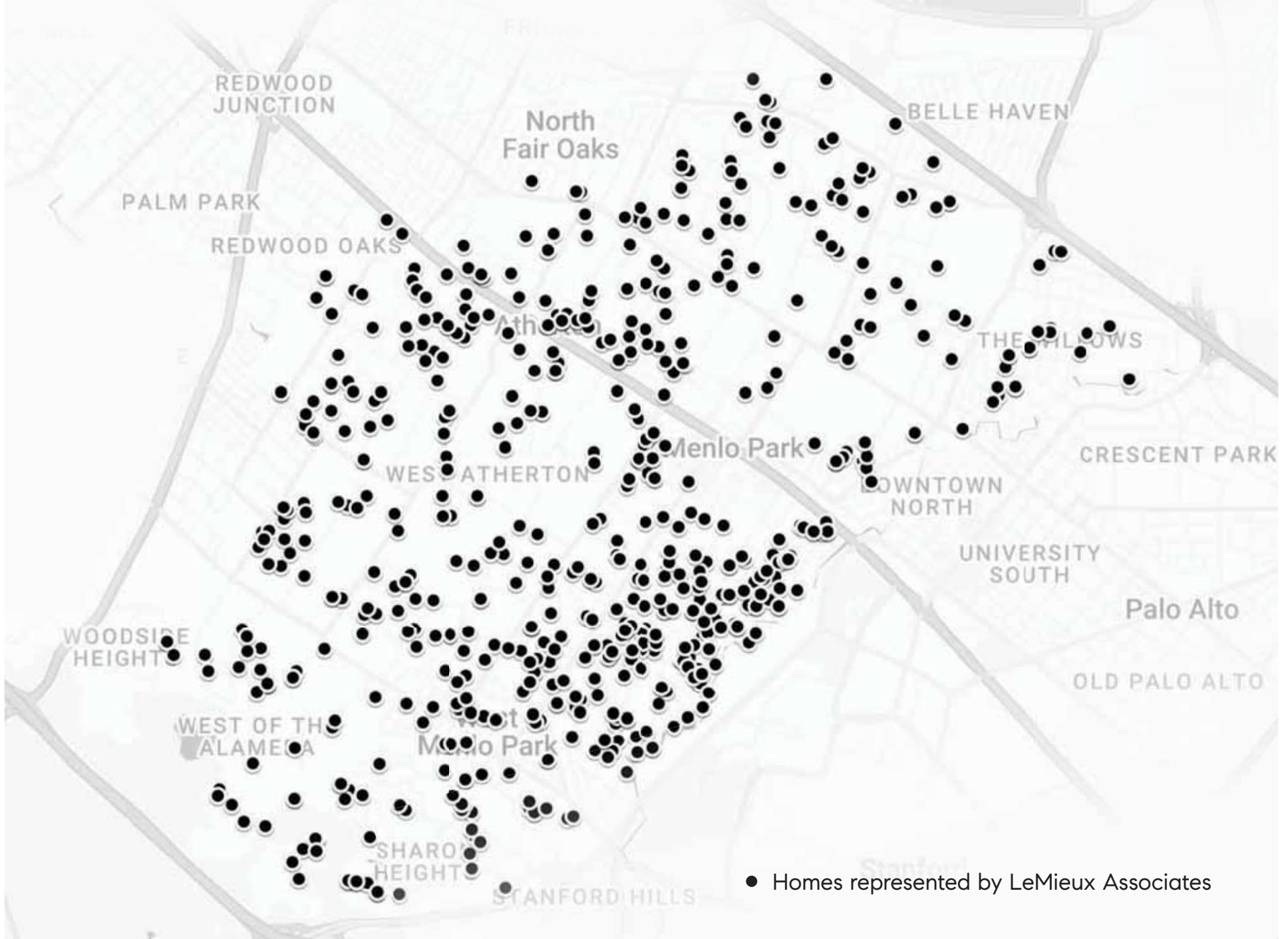
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