

The Almanac

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San Mateo County Sheriff's Office updates crime data portal

Up-to-date crime, other factors available

By Eleanor Raab

The San Mateo County Sheriff's Office announced the launch of its new crime and arrest data portal, an updated version of the agency's previous crime data portal.

The portal, accessible through the Sheriff's Office website, provides community members with up-to-date crime, traffic collision, public disturbance and arrest data. Users can search for crime data by date, location and type of crime, and arrest data by name, description, criminal charges and the place of arrest.

According to Sheriff's Office spokesperson Gretchen Spiker, the agency's crime data and records management vendor, Sun Ridge Systems, is phasing out the old system used to track public crime data, and replacing it with a new system with an updated interface.

Spiker said that the new portal

has some additional features that were not available with the agency's previous crime data portal. She added that the Sheriff's Office hopes to continue introducing additional features over the coming months.

The portal has included crime and arrest data for the past three months, but Spiker said the Sheriff's Office plans to add older data to the tool in the coming months.

"It's important for our community members to be able to access the portal to see the type of crimes that are affecting their neighborhoods," said Sheriff Christina Corpus in a press release. "This lends to transparency and increasing awareness within the community, leading to a safer San Mateo County."

But, the updated portal interface does not include all arrests in San Mateo County. It only covers arrests made by the Sheriff's Office, and omits



Magali Gauthier

The new portal for crime information can be found at smcsheriff.citizenrims.com/map.

information regarding juvenile offenders or crimes that are "sensitive in nature" to protect privacy, according to Spiker.

"The Sheriff's Office aims to post real-time data, while

balancing accuracy, privacy concerns and investigative steps," said Spiker. "To ensure we're providing the most accurate data to the community, information does not get published

to the portal until the case goes through an internal review process."

"Typically, in-custody arrests

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Report: Silicon Valley in 'flux and uncertainty' as inequality rises

New report details trouble in tech sector

By Gennady Sheyner

The party is over in Silicon Valley. After 12 years of growth, the tech sector has slowed, ushering in a period of "flux and uncertainty" in a region with deepening social divides, a growing cost of living and a shrinking labor force.

Those are the sobering conclusions of the newly released Silicon Valley Index, an annual report released by Joint Venture Silicon Valley that tracks economic, population and employment trends in the region. While the report concludes that venture capital continues to fuel the regional economy, it also highlights the growing chasm between the haves and the have-nots in the region, which encompasses San Mateo and

Santa Clara counties as well as small portions of Alameda and Santa Cruz counties.

The report paints a picture of growing inequality. Housing costs in Silicon Valley remain the highest in the nation, with the median home price hitting \$1.92 million last year, making the dream of home ownership out of reach for the vast majority of residents, according to the report. Fewer than 26% of first-time home buyers can afford a median-priced home.

Meanwhile, housing production remains lethargic, with just 4,900 housing units permitted in 2024, the lowest number in 12 years. Nearly half of the region's residents spend more than 30% of their income on rent and the number of homeless people has shot up by 17% in a year. More



Anna Hoch-Kenney

A Tesla drives past a crowd protesting Elon Musk's involvement in the federal government on Page Mill Road in Palo Alto on Feb. 28.

than 12,520 individuals are homeless, which includes 700 unaccompanied minors living without a shelter, the report found.

Incomes in the area remain

relatively high, but unevenly distributed. The report notes that per capita income reached \$157,000 last year, an all-time high, and the region boasts 89 billionaires and 145,000

millionaires. At the same time, about 30% of Silicon Valley households are not self-sufficient and 37% of children live in households at risk for food insecurity, according to the report. The top 1% of households now hold about 15% of the region's collective assets, while the bottom 50% "struggle to claim even a fraction of that pie," the report states.

"In fact, a mere nine households control more wealth than the entire bottom half," the Index states.

Strikingly, billionaires saw their investable assets grow by 30% in the past year, the report found, while those with less than \$25,000 had an average gain of \$41. And nearly a third of Silicon Valley's residents do not earn enough to meet their

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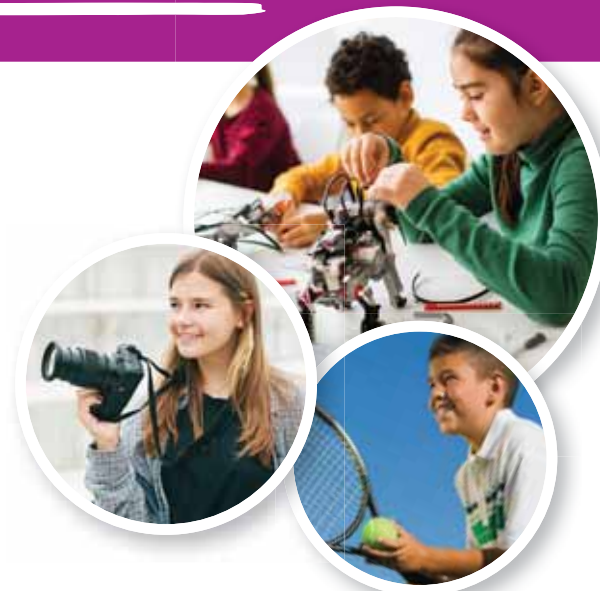
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Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY



Courtesy Signature Development

A rendering of the sprawling Willow Village plans include housing. The Meta development factors into the city's success in meeting housing targets.

Menlo Park on track with housing construction

Report reveals city on target with goals

By Eleanor Raab

A report detailing Menlo Park's housing construction progress in 2024 reveals that the city is mostly meeting the production targets outlined in its state-certified housing element for the 2023-2031 housing cycle.

Under California law, every jurisdiction is required to submit an annual report to the California Department

of Housing and Community Development to update the agency on the progress of its housing plans. This year's report, presented to the Menlo Park Housing Commission at its March 5 meeting, delivered positive news for housing advocates.

As of the end of 2024, Menlo Park had already permitted 35.7% of the 2,946 units the state mandates the city build by the end of 2031.

"At the two-year mark of an eight-year cycle you'd want to see about 25% completion for (housing production) to be relatively on pace," said Menlo Park Principal Planner Tom Smith in a presentation to the Housing Commission. "So, you can see that we are meeting or exceeding that target."

Each city's regional housing needs allocation is divided into

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Founder of Woodside Vineyards turns 99

Mullen recommends celebrating the day with wine

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Bob Mullen, founder of Woodside Vineyards, celebrated his 99th birthday on Feb. 12, 2025, surrounded by friends and family from across the country. The secret to living a long healthy life? "A bottle of chardonnay a day," he said.

Born in 1926, Mullen grew up in the Midwest, moving frequently across states including Illinois, Ohio, West Virginia and Pennsylvania while his father relocated for work. In his 20s, Mullen was transferred from Chicago to San Francisco to work as a regional manager for Armstrong World Industries, a ceiling manufacturing business.

Despite his current status as a wine connoisseur, Mullen said he hadn't had a proper glass of wine until he moved to California in the 1950s. That first sip came at the age of 28 during a work dinner at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco.

A bottle of Charles Krug Grey Riesling sparked his love for wine. It was the first time he drank the right wine paired with the right food and upon his first sip, he thought "Damn, this is good."

On the way home, he went to the liquor store and bought a bottle of the same wine.

Beginning a life on the vineyards

Mullen moved to Woodside in 1954 and lived in town for



Courtesy Thalia Lubin

Bob Mullen and his wife Marsha Campbell at their home in Menlo Park on Feb. 24.

50 years. His first home was on Martin Lane, where he made his first batch of wine in his garage. The grapes were picked off of a vineyard on Kings Mountain Road that was up for sale. The owners of the property weren't interested in picking grapes that year and gave him permission to take what he wanted.

"I got my wife and two other ladies and we picked all the grapes that we could pick in three or four hours, crushed the grapes in a garage down on Martin Lane and made eight five gallon carboys of wine," Mullen said. "We still have a couple of bottles of it left."

A couple years later, Mullen purchased the three-acre vineyard on Kings Mountain Road for \$28,000.

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Town Hall on 'federal overreach' surfaces concerns

Becker joins county officials for event

By Gennady Sheyner

Budget shortages. Hits to health care system. Increased immigration enforcement and a diminished ability to fight climate change.

These are some of the challenges that state and county representatives are dealing with as they grapple with recent and expected actions by the Trump administration, which has spent the past six weeks freezing grants, suspending programs and firing federal workers. State Sen. Josh Becker, D-Menlo Park, expects

these moves to hit California particularly hard, given the state's historic role in pushing progressive policies and challenging Donald Trump on funding freezes and immigration policies.

"California is a target. We're absolutely a target. But we're also going to be the bulwark for this country," Becker said at a town hall on March 7, which brought about 200 residents from across the Peninsula to the Palo Alto Art Center.

While the full impact of federal policies on Silicon Valley remains to be seen and felt,

he and county supervisors are bracing for turbulence. San Mateo County Supervisor Ray Mueller, who presented at the event, estimated that recent federal policies could cost the county about \$600 million. He added that may require officials to shift and withhold funds from valuable programs.

One big concern: the potential of the administration to change the reimbursement formula for Medicaid, thus requiring state and local jurisdictions to absorb more of the cost, he said. Currently, the federal government provides 30% of the cost. Mueller said he was concerned that this will be

reduced and that the state will be required to contribute more.

"We're not sure where that money will come from," Mueller said.

The county is already planning for leaner times ahead. Mueller cited the grants that San Mateo County awards to nonprofits through Measure K, a sales tax measure. Normally, the county awards grants for three-year periods. Now, however, county officials are informing all grantees that they can only guarantee it for one year — and in some cases six months

See **BECKER**, page 17



Gennady Sheyner

State Sen. Josh Becker talks about impacts from the Trump administration during a March 7 town hall in Palo Alto.

Local school closure leaves teachers in limbo

Charter school says students have placements

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Adozen teachers stood in front of Summit Everest, a Redwood City charter school, on Friday, March 7, to protest the Summit Public Schools Board's lack of support toward the staff's transition and future employment after it introduced a recommendation to close at the end of the school year due to insufficient funds and low enrollment.

On March 6, the board voted unanimously on the official closure, according to local teachers.

During the protest, school faculty held signs that read "Justice for Teachers," and "United for Our Students."

While all students at Summit

Everest are guaranteed enrollment at the school's sister campus, Summit Prep, teachers are in the dark as to what the next school year will look like for them.

"It's been a great experience here and it's sad that the school is closing, it's hard for this community," said Spencer King, AP U.S. History teacher at Summit Everest. "It's important that teachers and students feel supported through this process and we feel that hasn't been the case."

Summit Everest opened in 2009 with 100 students and had welcomed as many as 400 students over the years. Since 2019, the school has struggled with a declining enrollment rate and for the 2023-24 school year, 293 students were enrolled. It now



Jennifer Yoshikoshi

On March 7, Summit Everest teachers stand in front of the school in protest of the school board's lack of support for faculty after it announces the closure of its campus.

joins a list of other California Summit Public School closures including Summit Rainier in San Jose which closed in 2020 and Summit Denali in Sunnyvale which closed in 2023.

The Summit school model encourages relationship building between students and teachers through a mentorship program. Every student has a mentor who guides and supports them throughout all four years of high school, according to the school's website.

"We want the chance to continue being with our kids, which I think is a rare thing for a lot of teachers to say," said Dawn Towers, visual and performing arts teacher. "One of the tenets of Summit is mentoring and building relationships and we want to keep those relationships going."

English teacher Matthew Sigler said since the board's vote, teachers have been in a "weird limbo" feeling unsure whether they should start applying for other jobs or wait to hear about opportunities to transfer to Summit Prep, located a mile and a half down the road.

Despite feelings of disappointment around the school's closure, teachers say they were not surprised. Sigler said that the process leading up to the board's vote was similar to that of Summit Denali. He said there was instability and inner turmoil within the school as enrollment continued to plummet.

Students were devastated to hear about the closure, and some stood by their teachers on Friday morning supporting

them through the difficult transition. Sophomore student David Luna said Summit Everest is like a home for him.

"These teachers have helped us in every way that they can and they work hard for us to get a good education," Luna added.

Before enrolling in Summit Everest, Luna didn't have the motivation to work hard and pursue a successful future, but through the mentorship and support from his teachers, he said his mindset changed.

"I'm learning now that these people are here to help and I should take more advantage of that," he added.

Cristel De La Cruz Bonilla, a senior at Summit Everest, attributes her strong public speaking skills and personal growth to the teachers and environment of the school. Through the school's Expeditions Experiences program, De La Cruz Bonilla said she was able to join debate and other activities which helped her come out of her shell and encouraged her to be more social at school.

Others are worried for their teachers' futures as they hear about the lack of transparency from the school board and the uncertainty of teachers being able to transfer to Summit Prep.

"The teachers here genuinely care about the students and it sucks how some of them will not be able to transfer to a school where we have already built a community and have to uproot," said Gie Ruiz, a junior.

Summit Everest teachers were given the opportunity to apply for a position at Summit Prep, but there have been no further details on what positions are available.

"At the end of the day, we came into this career to help the next generation and we're keeping this up every step of the way. (We're keeping) the students center, just making sure that we're supporting them with this uncertain time," said AP Government teacher Chris Beggs. ■

Email Staff Writer

Jennifer Yoshikoshi at jyoshikoshi@almanacnews.com.

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Declining enrollment may affect Spanish immersion program

Menlo Park district says it has been 'prioritizing' classes

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

As student enrollment declines at Menlo Park City School District, administrators are pushing to maintain programs such as Spanish immersion in its classrooms. During a school board meeting on March 6, Superintendent Kristen Gracia and Tami Girsky, coordinator of world language and Spanish immersion, presented board members with the current state of language programs at its schools.

Spanish immersion was introduced to the district in 2008 in two kindergarten classrooms and 48 students at Encinal Elementary School. In the 2024-25 school year, the program has grown to incorporate kindergarten through fifth grade classrooms at Encinal and Laurel School's Lower Campus with over 500 immersion students.

The goal of the program is to encourage bilingualism, biliteracy and multicultural competence.

Menlo Park City School District's immersion model provides 90% of learning in Spanish and 10% in English starting in kindergarten. As students progress through grades, the percentage shifts to balance Spanish and English learning, to eventually reach a 50/50 model by fifth grade, said Girsky,

Data from the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress test from the 2023-24 school year shows the majority of students in the immersion program either met or exceeded state standards in English and math.

The Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages test that is taken in the sixth grade measured that students who were in the immersion program were mostly at an intermediate level in speaking, writing, listening and reading in Spanish.

As of the 2024-25 school year, 40% of Encinal and Laurel classrooms are Spanish immersion, according to Gracia.

"As our enrollment declines, we adjust the number of strands and classes we run in both English and Spanish accordingly," Gracia said. "Up until now, we have prioritized efforts to meet the demand for Spanish immersion."

Declining enrollment numbers are becoming a concern for school administrators as it would affect the ratio of Spanish immersion and English classrooms available for students, leading to more rigid circumstances for student placements, according to Gracia.

"With a smaller number (of

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Kid-sized care for kid-sized people.



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February 1, 2025 - February 28, 2025

Rossetti Realty Inc.

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5. \$3,750,000 3119 Alameda De Las Pulgas	6. \$3,680,000 521 Windsor Drive	7. \$3,175,000 21 Bishop Lane	8. \$3,000,000 565 9th Avenue
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ACTIVE LISTING

Feb 32 ↑ 19%

Jan 27

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Feb 20 ↑ 67%

Jan 12

SOLD LISTING

Feb 13 ↑ 86%

Jan 7

AVERAGE SALES PRICE

Feb \$3,297,145 ↑ 25%

Jan \$2,640,143

AVERAGE SOLD DAYS ON MARKET

Feb 13 ↓ -62%

Jan 34

SALE/LIST PRICE

Feb 105.50% ↑ 6%

Jan 99.30%

AVERAGE SALES PRICE/SQ Ft

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Feb 6.84% ↓ -3%

Jan 7.03%

5/28/2025 7.03% 3/25/2025 6.84% Source: Bankrate

★ February 2025 compared to January 2025

*Source: MLS Listings for Single Family Properties | Townhomes | Condos

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OBITUARIES

Here are the local residents who died recently:

Roger Fleischmann, 90, of Portola Valley, who earned his law degree from Harvard Law School in 1959. And while he considered himself an old-school generalist, he took particular delight in his successful pro bono representation of a group of Mill Valley residents seeking the right to public nudity in that city's parks. He died on March 5, 2025.

Oscar Firschein, 97, of Palo Alto, was a computer scientist, engineer, Renaissance man, husband, father, and grandfather who, in Brooklyn, New York, pioneered research in the early field of artificial intelligence, which influenced autonomous land vehicles, remote piloted aircraft, and NASA space station automation. He died on March 5, 2025.

Dr. Jean "Jeannie" Lythcott, 86, of Palo Alto, was a pioneering science educator who taught across continents, a civic leader who inspired young voters, and a resilient trailblazer who shaped education and democracy. After battling cancer and cognitive decline, she died on March 1, 2025.

Lynette Ann Belingheri, 79, of Redwood City, was a devoted wife, mother, and counselor who guided students at Cañada College, a passionate dog lover involved in service animal programs, and a warm-hearted presence whose kindness touched many. She died on Feb. 17, 2025.

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

M-A teacher remembered for passion, dedication to his students

Harris remembered for love of career, music, golf

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Sam Harris, a beloved history teacher at Menlo-Atherton High School, died at the age of 40 on Jan. 28. Family, friends and colleagues say he had a special way of connecting with his students.

Born in Fresno on June 30, 1984, Harris grew up in a picturesque suburban neighborhood in the Central Valley with a house full of dogs and cats on an acre of land. The backdoor to the Harris home was always open to all neighborhood kids, said Renee Chambers, Harris's childhood best friend. She lived two doors down from his parent's home.

Harris graduated with a bachelor's degree in history from the University of California, Los Angeles, and obtained his teaching credentials from San Francisco State University.

An unexpected love for teaching

Upon graduating from college, Harris was unsure what

career path to follow, said Hal Harris, Sam's father. His uncle, who was a retired vice principal at Sunnyside High School, persistently offered a substitute teacher job to Harris and he continuously declined to take it. It wasn't until he learned that the position earned \$120 a day that he finally agreed, his father said.

Surprisingly, he loved it. It came as a surprise to many that his first day as a substitute would lead to over a decade-long career as a teacher.

"It was as simple as not knowing he wanted to be a teacher to that's all he ever wanted to be," said Hal Harris.

Months later, the young man moved to the Bay Area to pursue his teaching career in South San Francisco where he started substituting and was eventually hired as a social studies teacher at Westborough Middle School. Over the past nine years, Sam taught AP United States History and government at Menlo-Atherton High School.

Sam's mother, Sara Hedgpeth-Harris, described her son as

unique, fearless, engaging and intelligent.

"Learning was a sacred thing for him. He was a voracious reader and learner," Sara Harris said. "He wanted to show his students how fun it can be to learn things."

Harris had an affinity for books. As a child, teachers would complain about him reading during class rather than paying attention to the lesson, his mother said. As an adult, he had developed a diverse library of books about world cultures, religion, democracy and even collected historical memorabilia.

His classroom was covered in posters promoting women's rights, the Black Lives Matter movement, Eleanor Roosevelt, Martin Luther King Jr. and more. He made learning fun by incorporating funny stories, jokes and music.

His co-teacher at Menlo-Atherton High School, Andy Stuart, said in the classroom, Harris was "energetic, electric and kind." He particularly cared for democracy and felt



Hal Harris

Sam Harris with his dog, Oliver.

a deep responsibility to teach students about the government, their rights, complex legal cases, the Constitution and more, Stuart added.

Harris's dedication to his students extended past his responsibilities of teaching history and government. Stuart said he had a personal connection with his students and would take the time to talk to them individually about their futures. He would also take notice of kids who were struggling and offer them guidance.

"He gushed over all of his students," said Chambers, who remained friends with Harris for over 30 years. "I mean, he

really bragged about them. Even when we were at the bars, he would talk about his students."

Chambers said when Harris was teaching, he was probably thinking of himself at that same age. "That makes me happy to know that he was living his childhood again through teaching," she added.

Golf, music and furry friends

Outside of the classroom, Harris was an avid golfer, animal lover and melomaniac.

At the age of 7, he was introduced to both golf and baseball by his father, who was a former college baseball player. Hal said he thought his kids would also become baseball players, but both Sam Harris and his brother took an affinity to golf. As an adult, he became a highly competitive amateur player and was part of a recreational league.

On the golf course, he would befriend wild foxes and squirrels that would follow him, said his mother. Growing up with a house of pets, Harris learned to become a very patient man, a trait that served him well as an educator, his father, Hal Harris added. Sam Harris also had a dog named Oliver, which his students grew familiar with.

See **SAM HARRIS**, page 15



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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Menlo Park seeking applicants for commissions

The city of Menlo Park is seeking interested residents to apply for vacancies on a number of commissions. Applicants must live in Menlo Park, be 18 years or older and be committed to attend monthly evening meetings.

Requirements and length of term vary by commission. Interested applicant should submit an application by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, April 9.

There are currently five vacancies on the Finance and Audit Commission, four vacancies on the Housing Commission, two vacancies on the Complete Streets Commission, two vacancies on the Parks and Recreation Commission, one vacancy on the Planning Commission, one vacancy on the Environmental Quality Commission and one vacancy on the Library Commission.

Learn more and apply at menlopark.gov/Government/Commissions-and-committees.

RethinkWaste hosting 'Trash to Art' contest

To celebrate Earth Month, RethinkWaste is hosting its annual "Trash to Art" contest, which is open to students in grades three to five who live within its service area.

This year's contest is open to both individual students and classes. A field trip to a local museum or art studio will be awarded to the class category winner and a class pizza party to the second class category winner. Individual winners will choose from a selection of fun local activities or sustainable arts and crafts kits. Winning art pieces will be announced the week of April 7, and all winners will be recognized publicly at the RethinkWaste office on Thursday, April 24.

Submissions are due by Friday, March 28, at 4 p.m. to the RethinkWaste Office located at 1245 San Carlos Ave., Suite E, San Carlos, CA 94070.

Learn more at rethinkwaste.org/schools/school-contests/#trashtoart.

— Eleanor Raab

Menlo Park brothers win first place at German music competition

Music is a family tradition for Encinal Elementary students

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Menlo Park students Daniel and David Herbrich won top honors at the "Youth Makes Music" competition in Germany, according to a press release. The two young violinists, who attend Encinal Elementary in Atherton, each scored first place in the prestigious event.

Eleven-year-old Daniel and 8-year-old David are following in the footsteps of their mother, Melina Gehring. From the ages of 11 to 19, Gehring herself competed in the same music competition. Twenty-five years later, she returned to the stage as her sons' piano accompanist.

Competing against thousands of young musicians, Daniel scored 23 out of 25 points, allowing him to advance to the state round. David earned a perfect score of 25 out of 25 points but was too young to be eligible for the next round.

"Sometimes I can express myself better with music than with words. I love how the sound



Courtesy Horst and Associates

Eight-year-old David Herbrich performs a violin piece with his mother Melina Gehring who accompanies him on the piano for the "Youth Makes Music" competition in Germany.

resonates through my body," said Daniel, who has been playing the violin for five years.

The two brothers faced a panel of three judges while performing a 10-minute piece they prepared

for the competition with the help of Katie House, a teacher based in Sunnyvale who is trained in the Suzuki method.

See **MUSIC**, page 14

Call for Entries

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HOUSING

continued from page 5

income categories. According to Smith, the city is on track with most of the categories including the above moderate-, moderate- and low-income categories, though it has only permitted about 16% of the very low-income units required for this housing cycle.

"There's still plenty of time to make up for that," Smith noted.

In 2024, Menlo Park issued building permits for 176 new dwelling units, an increase over the 65 units that were permitted the previous year. City staff

attributes the progress to several factors: 62 units permitted for MidPen Housing's affordable veteran housing project, growing awareness of and interest in residential lot splits allowed under Senate Bill 9, and a record growth in accessory dwelling unit building permits.

A total of 68 permits for ADUs were issued by the city in 2024. With 131 ADUs permitted over the past two years, the city has surpassed its projected total of 85 ADUs for the 2023-2031 period. Recently, the city implemented a pre-approved ADU program where homeowners can choose from several ADU plans

that have been pre-approved by city officials for compliance with building codes to streamline approval of the backyard units.

Because Menlo Park has made sufficient progress toward its regional housing needs allocation goals, it is one of only 47 municipalities in the state that are not subject to streamlined ministerial approval for development projects with at least 10% affordability. This means that the city retains more local control over development projects than the jurisdictions that have not made sufficient progress.

The Planning Commission

and City Council will review the annual progress report on March 24 and 25 respectively. The city will submit the progress report to HCD before the state's April 1 deadline.

Future housing production

Looking forward, the staff report highlighted the projects that have received entitlements from the city but have not yet received building permits — Meta's Willow Village project (1,730 units), Capital Management's 3705 Haven Ave. project (112 units), Sobrato's 123 Independence Drive project (432 units) and Greystar's Menlo

Flats project (158 units). Eighty-eight units were also approved by the Planning Commission for the Ravenswood City's School District's affordable housing development at 320 Sheridan Drive but the project is now facing an appeal.

Units are only counted toward a city's housing progress once they have received building permits. If all currently entitled projects are built as proposed, the city would exceed its housing allocation requirements for the current cycle. ■

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

MUSIC

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Suzuki teachers utilize a teaching style created by Japanese violinist Shinichi Suzuki, which embraces the idea that anyone can learn an instrument through an immersive environment and parental involvement.

Gehring has been learning to

play the violin with her children, which makes their practice sessions more engaging and enjoyable. "We work on the same repertoire and tackle the same technical challenges," she said in a prepared statement. "It helps me be a better coach for them — or, in Suzuki terms, a better 'practice parent.'"

Now that the Herbrich brothers have put their first competition behind them, they are now focusing on performing on other stages. Daniel is preparing to play Prince Hans in Encinal Elementary's production of "Frozen" while

also playing for the Palo Alto Chamber Orchestra. David had played the role of Scar in the school's production of "The Lion King" the weekend before leaving for Germany. He continues to hum the tunes from the musical.

Despite David's success in advancing to the state round, he and his mother will not be returning to Germany in April due to school, work and other commitments, according to the family. ■

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

SPANISH

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students), we have less flexibility," she added.

Gracia explained to the board that adjustments made in response to enrollment shifts will also inadvertently impact student experiences and create an imbalance of demographic, needs and resources between programs.

As of fall 2024, the school district has nearly 2,700 students enrolled. The numbers have fallen since 2016, when there were about 3,000 students in the district.

With low enrollment in consideration, Gracia told the board that there may have to be fewer Spanish immersion classrooms and a reconsideration of the number of students placed into language programs. Her recommendation to the board is to no longer only prioritize the demand on Spanish immersion to decide on how many classrooms are in the program but rather consider the various factors of enrollment rate, staffing and resources. ■

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



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BOB MULLEN

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During his years on Martin Lane, Mullen became partners with Bob and Beverly Groetzinger, a local family who made wine at the century-old La Questa Vineyards. In 1970, the Groetzingers moved to Europe and Mullen bought their share of the business, starting what is now Woodside Vineyards.

“We call it Woodside Vineyards, plural, because we have 20 different vineyards around Woodside and Portola Valley,” said Mullen. “We grow grapes in backyards or side yards. The biggest vineyard we have is one acre and the smallest has 101 vines.”

Most of the grapes that are used to make Woodside Vineyard’s La Questa wines are from the original vines that were planted in 1884, he added.

Making wine started as a hobby for Mullen but over decades of success, the winery has grown to become the oldest continuously operated winery in San Mateo County. It produces chardonnay, pinot noir, cabernet sauvignon and zinfandel.

At 99 years old, Mullen still dedicates his time to the winery, working three to four hours a day.

Woodside Village Church and History Committee

Mullen was also a pioneering member of the Woodside Village Church committee that pushed to build a new sanctuary when it was in desperate need of an expansion.

Decades ago, the old historic chapel held about 80 people, Mullen said.

“By the time I joined (the church), we were having two services to accommodate all the people,” he added. “Then a couple years later, it took three services at 8 o’clock, 9:30 and 11

o’clock and we really needed to have more space.”

Although church membership was booming 30 years ago, Mullen said the congregation has changed drastically with the town.

“We used to have as many as 200 people in a new sanctuary. Now they have about 35,” he said.

He still contributes to the church through donations and watches Sunday service on Zoom when he can.

Mullen was also one of the founding members of the Woodside History Committee and was asked to join by some local ladies who were looking to add a man to the group. He was there to witness the official adoption of the committee into the town in the 1990s.

When asked what he did for the history committee, Mullen’s response was “I grew old.”

Mullen is featured in a photo in the book, “Woodside,” which is part of Arcadia Publishing’s Images of America series. The book was written by history committee members Thalia Lubin and Bob Dougherty and published in 2011.

“You know you’re getting old when you get your picture in a history book,” he joked.

Mullen currently resides in Menlo Park, but his love for Woodside shines through the dedication he has shown to local wine making, faith and preservation of town history.

Currently, the Woodside Community Museum has an exhibit about the history of wine in Woodside, which Mullen helped curate. It features bottles of Woodside and La Questa Vineyard wine as well as a wine press. ■

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

SAM HARRIS

continued from page 8

Chambers said her strongest memories about her childhood with Harris involve their shared love for music that developed in their early 20s.

“There were a lot of nights he and I would spend in his red Jaguar and we would listen to whole albums from start to finish. There was a time we would do it almost every night,” Chambers said.

The two would listen to rock albums by Velvet Underground, Can and Joy Division and even experimental music. Even though they mainly listened to rock together, Chambers knew that Harris’s real taste in music extended to rap.

“He really loved Earl Sweatshirt and MF DOOM. He really liked

the beats,” she said. “He had a good ear for music.”

Celebrating Sam Harris

In the days after Harris’s death, students and teachers at Menlo-Atherton placed flowers and letters outside of his classroom. The student newspaper, M-A Chronicle, wrote an obituary in remembrance.

Harris is survived by his parents, Hal and Sara, his brother Charlie and many family members.

A celebration of Sam Harris’s life will be held at noon on March 22 at Laurie Meadows Park in San Mateo. The Harris family welcomes the community to donate to the Peninsula Humane Society and SPCA in his name. ■

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



Town of Atherton

Planning Commission, March 26, 2025

REGULAR MEETING, 6:00 P.M.

This meeting is held virtually and in-person at the Council Chambers 80 Fair Oaks Lane

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the **Atherton Planning Commission** will hold a public hearing to consider the items listed below during their regular meeting.

NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that said application is set for hearing by the Planning Commission at its meeting on **March 26, 2025, at 6:00 PM** in-person and via teleconference accessible through the information provided below, at which time and place all persons interested may participate and show cause, if they have any, why the projects listed in the public hearing section should or should not be approved. This meeting will be held via teleconference pursuant to Government Code section 54953(e) to provide the safest environment for staff and the public while allowing for public participation. The public may participate in the Planning Commission Meeting via Zoom Meeting or by attending in-person in the Council Chambers at 80 Fair Oaks Lane, Atherton, CA 94027.

Topic: Atherton Planning Commission Regular Meeting
Time: March 26, 2025 at 06:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)
In person Option: 80 Fair Oaks Lane, Atherton, CA 94027
Zoom Meeting Option and Details:
<https://ci-atherton-ca.zoom.us/j/84150249099>
Meeting ID: 841 5024 9099
One tap mobile:
+13017158592 (Washington DC)
+13052241968 (US)
Find your local number:
<https://ciathertoncazoom.us/u/kglcVN4cq>

Remote Public Comments:
Meeting participants are encouraged to submit public comments in writing in advance of the meeting. The following email will be monitored during the meeting and public comments received will be read into the record.
Email: planningcommission@ci.atherton.ca.us

Projects under Public Hearing:

- A. Consideration of a **Tree Protection Zone Exception (PTPZ25-00001)** to accommodate an addition to an existing single-family residence at **5 Callado Way (APN 073-230-170)**, an approximately 46,311 square foot site within the R-1A zoning district. Atherton Municipal Code (AMC) Sections 8.10.050 (Request for exceptions to the Tree Protection Zone (TPZ)) and 8.10.020 (Definitions) outline the requirements for construction activities within the TPZ. The Town of Atherton’s *Heritage Tree Preservation Standards and Specifications* further describes that the Planning Commission may grant a Tree Protection Zone Exception (PTPZ) in the R-1A Zoning District for projects that are within a distance of a heritage tree less than 8 times the diameter of the trunk at breast height, noted as “8x.” The PTPZ application requests that the Planning Commission consider approval of an addition to the existing main residence that is 5.5x from one (1) Coast Redwood. CEQA: This proposal has been determined to be categorically exempt from further environmental review pursuant to AMC Section 15.32.100 and CEQA Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land). If you have any questions on the item, please contact Gerry Martin, Assistant Planner, at gmartin@ci.atherton.ca.us or (408) 809-9513.
- B. Consideration of requests for a **Heritage Tree Removal (HTR24-00005)** and **Tree Protection Zone Exceptions (PTPZ24-00003)** to construct a parking pad that results in the removal of one Coast Redwood and is within the tree protection zone of three Coast Redwoods, at **37 and 53 Euclid Avenue (APNs 070-022-570 and 070-022-810)**. The property consists of two one-acre sites within the R1-A Zone, under common ownership and developed as a single-family dwelling.

The request facilitates the construction of a concrete parking pad (approx. 2,300 square feet) at the front of the 53 Euclid Avenue property. Previous iterations of this proposal included up to three heritage tree removals; the applicant has since redesigned the proposed parking pad to reduce the removal to one tree. Atherton Municipal Code (AMC) Sections 8.10.040 (Removal of and Damage to Heritage Trees, Permit Process) and 8.10.040 (Definitions) outline the requirements for heritage tree removal. Staff has determined the subject tree is not dead or dangerous; therefore, removal requires consideration and approval by the Planning Commission.

The Town of Atherton’s *Heritage Tree Preservation Standards and Specifications* describe that the Planning Commission may grant a Tree Protection Zone Exception (PTPZ) in the R-1A Zoning District for projects that are within a distance of a heritage tree less than 8 times the diameter of the trunk at breast height, noted as “8x.” The PTPZ application requests that the Planning Commission consider approval of the parking pad that is 5.5x from one (1) Coast Redwood and 3x from two (2) Coast Redwoods.

CEQA: This proposal has been determined to be categorically exempt from further environmental review pursuant to AMC Section 15.32.100 and CEQA Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) and 15311 (Accessory Structures). If you have any questions on the item, please contact Brittany Bendix, Consulting Town Planner, at bbendix@ci.atherton.ca.us.

The agenda for this meeting with links to related staff reports can be found online by **Friday, March 21, 2025**, here: <https://www.ci.atherton.ca.us/641/Agendas-Minutes>

IF YOU CHALLENGE the listed projects in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing described in this notice, or in written correspondence delivered to the Planning Commission at, or prior to, the public hearing. Planning Commission decisions are appealable by any aggrieved person to the City Council within 10 days of the date of the decision. If you have any questions on an item, please contact the Planning Commission Contact: planningcommission@ci.atherton.ca.us

Any attendee who wishes accommodation for a disability should contact the Building Division at (650) 752-0542 at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.

ATHERTON PLANNING COMMISSION

/s/ Brittany Bendix
Brittany Bendix, Consulting Town Planner

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basic needs without assistance. “All but the highfliers are slammed by soaring costs and stagnant wages, and there is scant progress on our most pressing issue, housing,” Russell Hancock, CEO of Joint Venture Silicon Valley wrote in a letter summarizing the report’s findings. “The market remains out of reach for all but a few, creating deep social divides, ballooning our wealth gaps, and factoring heavily into the continuing growth of homelessness.

We’ve long lamented this but in truth we’ve also shrugged it off, observing that somehow the region defies gravity and remains an economic superpower.” While inequality is hardly unique to Silicon Valley, the report notes that the region’s income divide has grown twice as quickly as that of the state and the nation since the 2012. Billionaires who live in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties have an estimated \$195 billion in liquid wealth, which the report notes is four orders of magnitude higher than that of

the 447,000 in the bottom 50%. Meanwhile, about 201,000 households in the region have less than \$5,000 in total investable assets. More than half of these have zero — or near zero — net assets, according to the report. The report notes that a Silicon Valley family of four — with two adult income earners and two school-aged children — could have earned five times the federal poverty level in 2024 and would still “struggle to afford anything other than the most basic necessities (e.g., eating at restaurants, going to the movie theater, taking a family vacation,

or saving for retirement) without seeking outside support or incurring debt.”

The Index underscores the continued dominance of the tech sector in the Silicon Valley economy and its job market. Software developers representing the region’s largest labor group, with more than 147,000 employees, were followed by engineers, with 116,000. One in five tech workers are employed in the region’s largest tech companies: Google, Apple, Meta, Amazon, Cisco and Tesla, according to the report.

Across the region, job growth had stagnated, with a decline of about 1,200 positions between mid-2022 and mid-2024, according to the report. One sector that has seen growth was health care and social services, which added 28,000 jobs between mid-2023 and mid-2024. Meanwhile, the retail sector lost 16,500 jobs during the same period.

The region’s unemployment rate at the end of 2024 remained relatively low at 3.7%, particularly when compared to the pandemic peak of 12.2% in April 2020. Yet it has also risen from 2.2% in May 2022, according to the report.

The tech sector has borne the brunt of this downturn. In 2023 and 2024, more than 87% of the staffing reductions that were reported under the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act came from tech companies, which collectively laid off at least 33,000 workers over those two years. Companies with the most layoffs were Meta, Cisco, Intel, Google, Broadcom and Cepheid. Each has eliminated at least 1,000 jobs, according to the report.

“Since 2020, the composition of WARN-reported layoffs has shifted dramatically from sectors such as hospitality, entertainment, and recreation — all greatly affected by pandemic-era disruptions — to tech,” the report states. “In 2020, only 16% of layoffs were in the tech industry; this share rose to 88% in 2024.”

On the brighter side, the region’s culture of innovation remains strong. Even though San Diego led the state with 5,494 patents in 2024, the next seven cities on the list are San Jose, San Francisco, Mountain View, Cupertino, Santa Clara, Palo Alto and Sunnyvale. The report notes that 2024 marked the first time in at least the past two decades that San Jose was not at the top of the list.

The new report also highlights the changes in Silicon Valley’s population, which is stable but aging and, increasingly, foreign-born. Since 2013, the number of residents 65 or older has grown by 28% while the number of

children under 18 dropped by 14%, driving a 9% decline in public school enrollment since 2020, according to the Index.

Immigration remains one of the region’s defining features, with 41% of the population foreign born, a historic high, according to the Index. In the tech sector, 66% of the employees were born outside the United States, with 70% coming from India or China. The influx of immigrants has helped hold the population level steady at a time when residents are leaving the region. Since 1993, Silicon Valley has added 472,000 people from abroad while losing 641,000 residents to other parts of the state and nation, according to the Index.

While immigration remains a divisive topic around the nation, with the Trump administration pledging to increase immigration enforcement and shutting down avenues for foreign-born individuals seeking asylum or legal assistance, the new report argues that increasing the region’s diversity “enriches the fabric of the community.” Diversity — the coming together of people with different backgrounds, cultures, genders, races, and ethnicities — is critical to the success of businesses and the region as a whole,” the report states. “These backgrounds shape the perspectives from which tasks are undertaken. Inclusive communities and workplaces enable people of all backgrounds to build, succeed, and grow together.”

The Silicon Valley divide is playing out on the national stage, with some of the nation’s most prominent tech titans donating money to Trump for his January inauguration and then changing their policies to align with the new administration’s agenda. Meta and Alphabet both reportedly responded to Trump’s election by ending their respective diversity programs. Tesla CEO Elon Musk, who in 2023 opened the company’s engineering headquarters in Palo Alto, is leading Trump’s effort to cut costs and reduce the federal workforce as part of a newly created taskforce known as the Department of Government Efficiency.

Meanwhile, city and county officials in the region are bracing for budget challenges and a fraying safety net as a result of threats and actions by the new administration. Santa Clara County and San Francisco last month sued the federal administration over an executive order that sought to freeze funding in “sanctuary” jurisdictions, which don’t cooperate with

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CITY ADVISORY BODY CURRENT VACANCIES

The City has openings on several commissions and committees! Help examine issues of community concern and provide guidance to the City Council.

CURRENT ADVISORY BODY VACANCIES

- Complete Streets – 2
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Developing **leaders** within the community

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- Apply by 5 p.m., Wed., April 9
- Menlo Park resident
- Over 18 years of age
- Committed to attending scheduled meetings

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Visit menlopark.gov/commissions
- Email city.clerk@menlopark.gov
- Call 650-330-6620



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¡La Ciudad tiene vacantes en varias comisiones y comités! Ayude a examinar los problemas de interés de la comunidad y proporcionar orientación al Concejo Municipal.

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Desarrollando **líderes** dentro de la comunidad

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- Aplicar antes de las 5 p. m., miércoles 9 de abril
- Debe ser residente en Menlo Park
- Mayor de 18 años
- Comprometido a asistir a las reuniones programadas

PARA MÁS INFORMACIÓN

- Visite menlopark.gov/commissions
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BECKER

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— with the expectation that it may have to claw it back to support the hospital system and other social safety net services.

“That’s just one of the impacts that we’re seeing right now,” Mueller said. “It’s very real, it’s on our mind every day and we’re waiting for what’s going to be taken away next.”

Santa Clara County Supervisor Margaret Abe-Koga noted that her county also relies heavily on federal funding to support its \$12-billion budget, about half of which is devoted to its health care system. The county could stand to lose about \$1.9 billion just for health care and another \$400 million in other social services.

“This could really be quite devastating and we’re really bracing ourselves, to be honest,” Abe-Koga said.

Both the state and the counties have already taken some actions to prepare for increasing uncertainty and hostility from Washington, D.C. Both Silicon Valley counties have established Rapid Response hotlines for residents to call to obtain legal aid during immigration enforcement. Santa Clara County has also joined San Francisco in suing the Trump administration over its executive order that instructs the Department of Justice to freeze funding for “sanctuary cities,” which don’t cooperate with the federal government on immigration.

“We are prepared to take legal action as more of these actions are taken by the federal government,” Abe-Koga said.

Impacts on the state are expected to be severe. The Trump administration is withholding \$25 billion that had previously been approved in a bipartisan fashion for climate change programs, Becker said. It has also fired 3,400 people from the U.S. Forest Service at a time when wildfire risk remains acute. Becker noted that 57% of the state’s forest land is under

federal jurisdiction.

“That’s going to increase the wildfire risk here in California,” Becker said.

Becker acknowledged at the beginning of the event that many people are feeling dispirited by what they’re seeing in the new administration and its approach to civil rights, reproductive rights and — more broadly — democracy. By talking about ignoring court rulings, the administration is breaking the “fundamental checks and balances that have characterized our democracy for almost the last 250 years,” Becker said. Becker urged the audience to follow the dictum of historian Timothy Snyder, who urged people who want to resist tyranny to “not obey in advance.” As a counterexample, he pointed to Meta, which announced in early January that it will be moving its content safety teams from California to Texas, a state that Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg claims without evidence has less “bias.”

“I went into Meta and met with senior leadership to express my severe displeasure about the announcement, timed right after the election, on eliminating fact-checkers and moving the security and content teams to Texas to be freed of bias. ... It’s most pernicious because a lot of the entrepreneurs look up to Mark Zuckerberg, so when he says something like this, what does that mean? How will they treat their companies?” Becker said.

Unlike other town halls across the nation, which have often devolved into jeering and interruptions, the crowded event in Palo Alto was cordial and free of disturbance. Partly, that’s because all the speakers at the event were Democrats at the state and county levels, with little sway over the executive branch. While attendees broadly shared the goals of their elected leaders in protecting vulnerable populations from budget cuts and deportations, some told this publication that they wanted to see more fight from their elected representatives.

Dima Ryazanov, who lives in

Redwood City, suggested that Republicans and Democrats appear to be playing by different sets of rules, with the latter slowly crafting legislation while the former are quickly taking actions that are taking the country downhill.

Others said they appreciate the effort by elected representatives to bring people together during a difficult time.

“It feels really satisfying to do something after reading all the news and being depressed by the news,” said Cindi Reed, a resident of Redwood City.

Videhi Mallela, a resident of

Palo Alto, said it was valuable for her to hear directly from her elected representatives about the impacts of federal actions on her area.

“There is a lot happening and we always know where to get real information,” Mallela said.

Both Becker and Mueller urged the audience to be empathetic toward those who are bearing the brunt of the impacts from the federal actions and to tell their stories. Mueller recalled the June 2023 mass shooting in Half Moon Bay, which claimed the lives of seven farmworkers. After the shooting, Mueller said he went

to Half Moon Bay to take photos of the houses that farmworkers live in and to post them on social media. When asked why he is doing that, he responded, “Because you can’t look away.”

“While we at the county and the state are trying to pick up these things, what really moves people to action at times like this is their neighbors telling them stories about what’s happening and the community coming together to care about each other,” Mueller said. ■

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Gennady Sheyner at
gsheyner@almanacnews.com.

Frustrated with technology?

Classes at PVI

Peninsula Volunteers Inc in partnership with Technology Credit Union present our:

Tech Connect Program



iPad class

Want to learn how to use an iPad? Join our Tech Connect Program at PVI, Inc. If you do not have an iPad, a complimentary one will be lent to you for the duration of the class. During the 8-week session, you will learn the basics, Zoom, email, taking pictures, being safe on the Internet, and much more! Training materials are provided.

\$60 for Little House members • \$80 for non-members

April 22, 2025 to June 10, 2025

Tuesdays : 10:00am - 12:00pm

Advanced registration is required



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The program meets once a week every Tuesday afternoon or Thursday either in the morning or afternoon.

\$80 for Little House members • \$100 for non-members

April 29, 2025 to August 12, 2025

Tuesdays : 1:00pm - 3:00pm

May 1, 2025 to August 14, 2025

Thursdays (Option 1 morning class): 10:00am - 12:00pm

May 1, 2025 to August 14, 2025

Thursdays (Option 2 afternoon class) : 1:00pm - 3:00pm

Advanced registration is required

Please contact **dsuslow@1pvi.org** or call
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Artscene

PEOPLE AND PERFORMANCES IN ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Sticks and stones and penguin bones

Composer and performer Cheryl E. Leonard harnesses the sounds of natural objects to make music

By Heather Zimmerman

If you know where to look and listen, objects like rocks, ice, shells, bones and even seaweed have their own music within them. San Francisco-based composer and performer Cheryl E. Leonard discovers and shares these sonic secrets of nature, constructing musical instruments from some objects, and composing works that draw on their hidden sounds.

Leonard will perform this unique music on March 20 at the latest Forms & Frequencies event at the Cantor Arts Center.

The Forms & Frequencies series brings musicians and sound artists to perform at the Cantor in free events that draw on themes featured in one of the museum's current exhibitions. The series launched in September. Leonard's performance and other Forms & Frequencies events this spring will be offered in conjunction with the recently opened "Second Nature: Photography in the Age of the Anthropocene."

"The Bay Area has such a rich experimental sound and music scene that we really saw this as an opportunity to be able to support and also introduce the Peninsula and the Bay Area to those wonderful artists," said Vivian Sming, associate director of Academic and Public Programs at the Cantor Arts Center, who organized the series together with Public Programs Associate Kwang-Mi Ro.

With the museum now open Thursdays until 8 p.m.,

the Forms & Frequencies series aims to make the most of those later hours and show visitors a different side to the institution and its offerings. Events are held around once a month.

"We are actually pairing with the exhibitions. The performances and music can echo these exhibition themes through the sound. So this is going to be a really good multisensory experience for audiences. I think it's going to be a good reflection and conversation about the things that we are creating through the museum," Ro said.

Leonard's background is as a traditional composer and she holds a master's degree in composition from Mills College. Her interest in using unconventional objects began with coaxing unusual sounds out of traditional instruments like violins or pianos, which then evolved to playing found objects from the street as percussion instruments or using a violin bow on them. She began playing natural objects as she was spending more and more time outdoors, hiking, rock-climbing and mountaineering.

"Things happen, like you're hiking on the trail and you kick a rock, and it makes a beautiful musical sound, and so I started to think, 'Well, I should be working with found objects from nature, rather than just, you know, old bed springs.' It was kind of a way to bring together the things that I loved in my life," she said.

Working with her instruments isn't as straightforward



Courtesy Cheryl E. Leonard

Some of Leonard's constructed and found natural-object musical instruments are created from materials such as driftwood, shells, bones, dried kelp, stones and crab claws.

for Leonard as it is for conventional musicians, who know what range of sounds to expect when they play their chosen instruments. She starts with a process of discovery and experimentation to learn what techniques best suit a material.

"Objects from nature are not as refined as, say, a finely crafted violin. So there is always some level of uncertainty as to what they will actually do when you play them. They have their own voices, and the smart thing to do as a composer is to work with what the objects want to do, versus trying to make them do something they don't want to do — you know, not

inflict your opinion on them too much, but listen to what they would like to say. It's fun for me, because life is a lot of uncertainty, and you have to learn to roll with the punches and learn from the material," she said.

Leonard draws from an array of techniques to make music from natural objects, some of which borrow from music and others from basic technology like amplification and recording.

"Mostly I'm using amplification because the objects are not very loud on their own. So I get to pretend like I'm a mad scientist. I put a microphone on the thing, be it a shell or some driftwood

or bones or feathers, and then I just try different ways of playing it. So I would maybe try tapping or brushing or rubbing or taking a violin bow and bowing it," she said.

"I used to play the viola, so in my heart, I'm still a string player. I do like to bow everything, if possible, and then from whatever interesting voices I find, then I will use those in a composition, and often together with field recordings from the area where the object came from."

Field recordings capture the sounds of the environment where Leonard is working

See **STICKS AND STONES**, page 20

Where to spend St. Patrick's Day on the Peninsula

By Julia Brown

Monday is rarely a day people want to celebrate for any reason, but with St. Patrick's Day falling on that dreaded weekday this year, there are still plenty of spots on the Peninsula offering ways to mark the holiday.

Alhambra Irish House:

The Redwood City Irish pub hosts events all weekend, including On the Rocks band on March 14, 8 p.m.. On March 15, a Celtic harp player will perform during brunch starting at noon, followed by live music from Magic Nostalgia at 8 p.m. and a DJ party at 10 p.m. Irish dancers will perform at noon on March 16, and Paddy O'Furniture will play jigs, reels and Irish jams from 5-9 p.m. On March 17 there will be Irish dancers, live music, Irish food and drink specials from 11:30 a.m. until close. Through March 17 at Alhambra Irish House, 831 Main St., Redwood City; Instagram: @alhambra_irish_house. Free admission; food and drink prices and event times vary.

St. Paddy's Beer Stroll:

A ticket to this annual event in downtown Los Altos includes a wristband and map for access to over 20 tasting sites (all indoors), and a collectable glass. Hear live music from TC Jazz, Gaby Castro, Norm Kahan and more. Participating breweries include Gordon Biersch Brewing Co., Lagunitas Brewing Company, Russian River Brewing. March 14, 6-9 p.m. in downtown Los Altos. Tickets are \$64.70 each. tinyurl.com/LosAltosStPats.

Town & Country Village:

Visit stores participating in the Discover Gold event and collect gold coins while trying complimentary small bites and drinks. Trade coins in for raffle tickets and a chance to win gift cards, tote bags and more. March 15, 4-7 p.m. at Town & Country Village, 855 El Camino Real, Palo Alto; RSVP required at tinyurl.com/TownCountryGold.

Hiller Aviation Museum:

The planned leprechaun parachute jump was canceled due to weather, but kids can still enjoy

face painting, the paint-a-plane activity and search the museum's gallery for hidden leprechauns to earn a treat. Children wearing green will also receive a special toy.

March 16, 10 a.m. to noon at Hiller Aviation Museum, 601 Skyway Road, San Carlos; Admission is \$22 for adults, \$14 for seniors 65 and up and youth 4-17, free for children 3 and under. hiller.org.

Alice's Restaurant:

Corned beef and cabbage is on the menu from noon to 8 p.m., plus specialty drinks including Discretion Brewing's Dublin Irish Red Ale. Live music from Lucky Charms starts at 5 p.m. March 17 starting at noon, Alice's Restaurant, 17288 Skyline Blvd, Woodside; Free admission. ■

Email SixFifty Editor Julia Brown at jbrown@almanacnews.com

Find more St. Patrick's Day events at almanacnews.com/the-650-explore-the-peninsula.

Worth a Look

Lavinia Meijer

Dutch and South Korean harpist Lavinia Meijer is the only classical artist to have hit the top 10 in the Dutch rock charts with three consecutive albums, according to Stanford Live. At her solo performance at Stanford, Meijer will perform original compositions, works by Arnalds, Frahm, Cuomo, plus pieces written for her by Philip Glass.



Courtesy Corbino

Harpist Lavinia Meijer will perform at Stanford Live.

March 15, 7 p.m., The Studio at Bing Concert Hall, 327 Lasuen St., Stanford; \$40-\$45; live.stanford.edu.

Samuray Akarvardar

The newest exhibition at The Main Gallery is "Homecoming," featuring the work of artist Samuray Akarvardar. According to the gallery's website, Akarvardar makes art based on the human form. "In Akarvardar's works, the concepts of drawing and painting are inextricably intertwined and the conflict between spontaneity and design is resolved by dialog," the website states. Akarvardar will give an artist talk on her work at a reception on March 15. The exhibition runs through April 13.

March 15, 5:30 p.m. (reception 5-7 p.m.), The Main Gallery, 883 Santa Cruz Ave., Menlo Park; free; themaingallery.org/.

'Beethoven, Brahms and Beauty'

Bay Choral Guild celebrates its 25th year with Sanford Dole as artistic director with the world premiere of "All is Beauty," composed for the occasion by Dole and based on texts by John Muir. The program also features Beethoven's Mass in C, and Brahms's "Schicksalslied." Joining the choral guild for the performance are Jubilate Baroque Orchestra (a program of the San Francisco Early Music Society) and, as vocal soloists, soprano Ann Moss, alto Heidi Waterman, tenor Benjamin Liupaogo and bass Chung-Wai Soong.

March 15 at 7:30 p.m., First United Methodist Church, 635 Hamilton Ave., Palo Alto; The choir also performs March 16 in Campbell. \$10-\$35; baychoralguild.org/tickets.html.

Underground Rush Hour

Underground Rush Hour is a pop-up music event celebrating house, rap and reggaeton sounds, featuring performances, DJ sets, and a cross between the two. Participating acts include Swami Sound, gum.mp3, galen tipton, MJ Nebreda and Polo Perks.

March 14, 8 p.m., The Guild Theatre, 949 El Camino Real, Menlo Park; \$40.56; guildtheatre.com.

STICKS AND STONES

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and might feature everything from the sound of wind in the trees to penguin vocalizations.

While researching artists for Forms & Frequencies, Ro discovered a video of Leonard performing at San Francisco science museum The Exploratorium.

"She used those natural materials to make very immersive soundscapes. So I think she was really a perfect fit for this 'Second Nature' theme," she said.

The "Second Nature" exhibition features the work of 44 photo-based artists exploring the "anthropocene" era, a term coined by scientists in the last 20 years, according to the exhibit website, to mark a "new geological epoch marked by human activity."

"I'm going to play a set of pieces about climate change to connect with the photography exhibition," Leonard said. "I'm going to start out in the polar regions. I have been to both polar regions. I went to the Antarctic Peninsula, and I've also been to Svalbard, which is an archipelago north of mainland Norway. I'll be doing pieces about changes to environments in both places. And then we're going to end with a piece about a local place, inspired by a landslide area in the Marin Headlands."

Among the instruments Leonard will be playing at the Cantor is one constructed of Antarctic limpet shells. A driftwood log, which serves as the base, bristles with nearly a dozen upright brackets made of smaller pieces of wood that are holding oval-shaped shells of various sizes. The piece has a graceful, sculptural quality to it.

"I wanted to bow the shells, and I was literally just holding it in my hand and bowing it with the other hand, which is pretty awkward. So I tried to figure out a way to mount them so I could play a set, and then I didn't want it to look ugly," she said.

Her 2009 trip to Antarctica added other unusual objects to her collection of instruments, including found penguin bones.

"When I'm playing them on stage, people can come up and see the penguin bones. It's another way to connect the audience with a place that's far away and yet affects our lives in many ways," she said.

An instrument with a more local origin that will be featured in Leonard's Forms & Frequencies performance is a kelp flute, made from a piece of bullwhip kelp that dried in a loose spiral shape. Bay Area beachcombers will recognize this smooth brown kelp, which washes up on beaches as

long hollow stalks that are slightly tapered at one end, with a prominent bulb shape on the other end.

Leonard used a Swiss Army knife to punch a hole in the bulb end; blowing across the hole produces notes much like a wind instrument. The uneven edges of the hole contribute to the unique sound.

The Forms & Frequencies series seeks to introduce audiences new sounds, but also offer a different experience at the Cantor, Sming said, noting that she hopes the performances bring listeners "an awareness of the Bay Area sound and music community — that there are artists working in this way — and also that the museum can be a space for different kinds of experiences. The museum offers a variety of programming, as well as art, and it might be different from what they're expecting." ■

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

Cheryl E. Leonard performs at Forms & Frequencies, which takes place March 20, 6:30-8 p.m. at the Cantor Arts Center, 328 Lomita Drive, Stanford. Admission is free. events.stanford.edu.

Food & Drink

HALAL HOT SPOT



Halal Street Xinjiang Cuisine & BBQ in downtown Mountain View offers halal Chinese and Uyghur dishes

Story and Photos by Adrienne Mitchel

Walking inside Halal Street Xinjiang Cuisine & BBQ feels like being welcomed into owners Sudai Ma's and Isaming Deng's home.

While the downtown Mountain View restaurant is large and can seat 180 people, it still has a cozy, warm and inviting ambiance. A row of traditional home-style tatamis decorated with plush, vibrant pillows sit to the left, a private dining space with karaoke is straight ahead and a bustling dining room can be found at the right. In the back, the owners have plans to transform the outdoor patio into a backyard barbecue area, with additional seating and grills coming soon.

The menu, crafted by Ma herself, highlights comfort foods eaten in her and her husband's hometown of Xinjiang. This autonomous territory in northwest China has a cuisine featuring a blend of cultural influences — including Persian, Turkish, Mongolian and Chinese — which is not easily found along the Peninsula. Prior to Halal Street's opening, Mrs. Khan in Menlo Park was the only local restaurant specializing in Uyghur cuisine.

A home cook taught by her grandmother, Ma's dishes do not have MSG, and everything is halal — you won't find pork or alcohol, and all meat and poultry is treated humanely and slaughtered

according to specific guidelines.

Eating halal is very important to Ma, who practices Islam, and she said she hopes her restaurant is a place of inclusivity — where people from all backgrounds, religions and dietary practices can come together over a meal.

"My goal is to let all of the community sit on the same table and eat together," general manager Ali Omer translated for Ma, who spoke in Mandarin.

Ma and her husband immigrated from Xinjiang to the East Bay six years ago, but the idea to open a restaurant didn't come about until the pandemic, when the couple and their young son took a road trip to Orlando. They quickly realized how difficult it was to find restaurants serving halal offerings during their trip.

"I think maybe a lot of people

See **HALAL**, page 23

'My goal is to let all of the community sit on the same table and eat together'

SUDAI MA, CO-OWNER
OF HALAL STREET XINJIANG
CUISINE & BBQ



Yogurt zongzi with blackberry sauce (\$8.98) at Halal Street Xinjiang Cuisine & BBQ in downtown Mountain View.



Top: Grilled fish (\$59.98) in Sichuan peppercorn beef broth with pickled cabbage, tofu and nan.

Above: Dapanji, or big plate chicken, is a Chinese Uyghur fusion dish consisting of spicy, hot chicken stew over hand-pulled noodles and potatoes (\$28.98).



Courtesy TAVERNA

From left: Greek village salad with local tomatoes, cucumbers, Epiros feta and olives (\$19.95) at TAVERNA. Superior Farms lamb rib chops at TAVERNA (\$66.75).

A Peninsula fine-dining restaurant is bringing its elevated Greek classics to Portola Valley with its second location

Palo Alto's TAVERNA offers weekend brunch, Greek-inspired cocktails and an extensive wine program



Courtesy TAVERNA

Hakan Bala, left, and Thanasis Pashalidis are co-founders of TAVERNA, a Greek restaurant in Palo Alto and Portola Valley.

By Adrienne Mitchel

Whether you're looking for a \$5 beer with crispy chicken wings or an \$8,500 bottle of merlot with locally sourced lamb chops, Greek restaurant TAVERNA offers both.

TAVERNA has been serving farm-to-table, upscale Greek cuisine in Palo Alto since 2018 and was gearing up to open its second location in Portola Valley Friday, March 14. Created by Thanasis Pashalidis and longtime friend Hakan Bala, TAVERNA's newest location, in the former Old Port Lobster Shack within Ladera Country Shopper, will feature the same all-day menu, weekend brunches, cocktails and extensive wine options as its Palo Alto restaurant.

"(We serve) handcrafted food that's made with passion and locally sourced ingredients and, first and foremost, an experience that transports you to Greece," Pashalidis said.

The decision to expand to Portola Valley was influenced by the owners' love of the town (they love to hike and bike in the area), as well as demand from residents to open a TAVERNA closer to them.

"I'm in love with Portola Valley," Pashalidis said. "It reminds me a

lot of a Greek village."

Born in Queens, N.Y., Pashalidis learned to cook from his parents, who had immigrated from northern Greece.

"Both my father and my mother were in the kitchen all the time at home," he said.

He grew up in diners, starting as a busser and working up to server. Pashalidis moved to California and worked at Kokkari in San Francisco before working at Palo Alto's Evvia and later Michelin-starred The Village Pub in Woodside. It was 2008 when Pashalidis met Bala — both were servers at Evvia.

"It's serendipitous and actually very interesting that he's Turkish and I'm Greek. As countries, we're displayed as enemies throughout antiquity," Pashalidis said. "Our love for food, wine and hospitality brought us together outside of work."

Both Pashalidis and Bala have an affinity for cooking and would often barbecue and cook at friends' gatherings. From there, their network grew and friends of friends would invite them to cook for other events. They created a catering company, expanding to a 40-seat brick and mortar in Palo Alto, then growing the restaurant to 200 seats.

It may be a farm-to-table fine-dining restaurant, but TAVERNA

aims to be far from pretentious. It even has a kids' menu (\$4.25-\$12.95) with Greek fries, spanakopita, chicken souvlaki and a grilled cheese sandwich made with kasseri cheese and brioche.

"The parents get it for their kids, but then they actually want it for themselves," said Pashalidis, a father of five. "I don't use the term kid-friendly or not kid-friendly. We're human-friendly."

The all-day menu, created by Pashalidis and Bala, features bites (\$5.95-\$99), small plates (\$12.75-\$24.95) and entrees (\$24.50-\$66.75). Standout bites include TAVERNA's tzatziki, crispy zucchini cakes (kolokithokeftedes) and cast-iron seared Greek meatballs (keftedakia), which is Pashalidis's favorite dish on the menu.

"It's a northern Greek specialty," Pashalidis said. "(In Greece,) you just go to a small little taverna and you meet a friend. You drink a glass of wine and you have a couple little bites, tapas-style. And you spend a couple hours just hanging out and catching up."

While crispy chicken wings (fterouges) may not be the most authentic Greek dish, it was added to the menu because of his son's end-of-the-school-year party.

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Above: The exterior of the restaurant. Pictured from left to right: co-owner Isaming Deng, co-owner Sudai Ma (wearing a traditional doppa), general manager Ali Omer and general manager of Halal Street Xinjiang Cuisine & Hot Pot Leo Yu at Halal Street Xinjiang Cuisine & BBQ in downtown Mountain View.

HALAL

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like me have the same situation when they drive out of town,” Deng said.

Even in the Bay Area, which Ma and Deng chose to live in due to the larger Muslim community, halal Chinese food is extremely hard to come by. So Ma started a catering business marketed to a group chat of about 500 people looking for halal Chinese food. One of those group chat members, Omer, is now the general manager of Halal Street Xinjiang Cuisine & BBQ, and his friend Zufar Osman is the head chef. Both Omer and Osman also grew up in Xinjiang.

In June 2023, Ma and Deng opened their first brick-and-mortar restaurant, Halal Street Hot Pot & Cuisine in Newark, offering all-you-can-eat halal hot pot, sushi, boba tea, Xinjiang Uygur kabobs, Xinjiang handmade noodles and more.

And at the end of January, they opened their second restaurant,

Halal Street Xinjiang Cuisine & BBQ in the former Amarin space in Mountain View. (Amarin fans need not worry, as its second location remains open across the street.)

While Halal Street’s newest location doesn’t offer hot pot, it does offer dishes not found at the original location, including its elaborate whole grilled fish dishes (\$59.98). With four flavors — cumin spicy, tomato, peppercorn and pickled — a whole fish is marinated for eight to 10 hours before roasting. The fish is served in a flavor bomb of boiling beef bone broth as well as pickled cabbage and tofu. Additional sides like nan (bread) can be added to bulk up the extravagant dish.

Besides the grilled fish, Omer recommends trying dishes like dapanji and laghman (\$19.99-\$28.98). Dapanji, also known as big plate chicken, is a Chinese-Uyghur fusion dish that gained popularity in the mid to late 1990s consisting of spicy, hot chicken stew over hand-pulled

‘We want to let the American community know about Chinese halal food’

ISAMING DENG, CO-OWNER
HALAL STREET XINJIANG CUISINE

noodles and potatoes. Laghman is a traditional Uyghur hand-pulled noodle dish with vegetables, beef and gravy.

“Most of the Xinjiang people will eat (this) during their whole life,” Omer said. “And (it’s) everybody’s favorite food, not only Xinjiang, in the Middle Asia, also Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, all the -stans, all the people know about the laghman.”

Other notable dishes include samsa (small lamb pies), lamb polo (a type of lamb pilaf) and roasted lamb rack. Appetizers go for \$6.98-\$12.99, chef’s specialties are \$9.98-\$88, vegetable dishes \$12.98-\$14.98 and kebabs

are \$38-\$88.

For drinks (\$5.98-\$12.98), Halal Street offers homemade yogurt, hot mint tea and what they lovingly refer to as “kawasaki,” a made-up term combining the words kvass and sake. Kvass is a cold and refreshing nonalcoholic fermented drink made from rye bread. The beverage is very popular in Xinjiang and often consumed with barbecue. It comes in flavors like honey, pomegranate, honeydew and more.

The dessert menu features three dishes: cheese-baked sweet potato, glutinous rice cake and yogurt zongzi (\$8.98-\$9.98). The yogurt zongzi is unique to the Mountain View location, featuring sticky rice, tangy housemade yogurt and sweet blackberry sauce.

In addition to spreading her culture’s cuisine to the Bay Area, Ma is excited to show other aspects of Uyghur culture. Guests may choose to sit at one of the four tatamis in the restaurant, a low table where people sit cross-legged or on their knees. Tatamis are the norm

for dining in Xinjiang, and Ma is happy to provide that at-home feel. She is also considering having the servers wear doppas, a traditional Uyghur square hat featuring colorful and embroidered fabric.

“We want to let the American community know about Chinese halal food,” Deng said. “At the same time, we want to allow the Muslim community to eat out when they leave their home.”

Ma and Deng plan to continue expanding Halal Street, and hope to eventually have restaurants nationwide. ■

Email Food Editor Adrienne Mitchel at amitchel@embarcaderomedia.org.

Halal Street Xinjiang Cuisine & BBQ, 174 Castro St., Mountain View; 650-386-5103, Instagram: @halalstreet2023. Open Monday to Thursday from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and 5-9 p.m., Friday to Sunday from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and 4:30-9:30 p.m.

TAVERNA

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“I love spicy wings, and I can’t find them anywhere,” Pashalidis said. “If I do, they’re usually subpar.”

So he called his butcher for 20 pounds of wings and asked his chef if he could make wings.

“And he made me some gangster buffalo wings,” Pashalidis said.

He decided to “Hellenize” or “Greekify” the buffalo wing recipe with the inclusion of a creamy feta dip. The wings were so popular, he added them to TAVERNA’s menu.

“Six pieces for \$12.95, have that with a cold Greek beer or a glass of wine. Call it a day,” Pashalidis said.

For small plates, he recommends the Greek village

salad (Horiatiiki salata), made with Epiros feta and local Kumato tomatoes in the winter or local heirlooms in the summer.

For an entree, Pashalidis said you can’t go wrong with the grilled Spanish octopus salad (oktapodi salata) or lamb rib chops (arnaki) sourced from Superior Farms in Sacramento.

“In a blind tasting side-by-side, Australian, New Zealand, Colorado and California, even though the California (lamb) was exponentially more expensive in terms of pricing for the meat, the quality blows it away, and so we use California lamb,” he said.

DoorDash is a huge part of TAVERNA’s business, Pashalidis said, and the chicken souvlaki family combo meal (\$59.95) is one of its most popular delivery orders. Featuring six chicken

souvlaki sticks, tzatziki, three housemade pitas, potato wedges, steamed greens, Greek salad and a dessert of yogurt, honey and walnuts, Pashalidis said it’s “a feast for two or meal for up to four.”

The drinks menu features Greek takes on classic cocktails, as well as an extensive wine program with California wines, biodynamic Greek wines and the best wines from France and Italy, according to Pashalidis.

Pashalidis personally enjoys Negronis and Manhattans, so he created the Hellenegroni by replacing the gin with Tsipouro Idoniko, a Greek grappa, and the NYC, adding Greek brandy Metaxa 7 to a Manhattan.

But TAVERNA’s two most popular drinks might come as a surprise: the CDMX, a mezc-cal margarita, and Anatolitiko,

an Eastside cocktail made with Greek spirit mastika. Mastika is a liqueur from the island of Chios that’s derived from mastic trees, which ancient Greeks made chewing gum out of.

“It’s aromatic, but it’s not overwhelming,” Pashalidis said. “It also has nutritional benefits as a vitamin source. It settles your stomach, just like the Italians have digestifs.”

And for a restaurant offering bottles of wine costing upwards of \$8,500, it’s almost unbelievable it offers beer for just \$5.

“People are like, ‘Why don’t you raise the price of beer?’” Pashalidis said. “I’m like, ‘Because I don’t want to. I don’t want to have a \$9 beer. I want an imported Greek beer, my favorite beer.’”

Despite TAVERNA coming with the label of fine dining,

Pashalidis emphasized his restaurant is for everyone.

“Whether you’re in a business suit or if you just got off your bicycle, you’re going to be treated exactly the same,” he said.

And Pashalidis isn’t planning on stopping at Portola Valley — he hopes to continue to expand TAVERNA, aiming next for San Francisco.

“My goal is to make people happy and to continue making people happy,” he said. ■

TAVERNA, 3130 Alpine Road, #300, Portola Valley; Instagram: @tavernarestaurant. Beginning March 14, open Monday to Friday from 11:30 a.m. to 9 p.m., Saturday and Sunday from 10:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.

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