

The Almanac

NONPROFIT LOCAL NEWS FOR THE MIDPENINSULA

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Woodside town manager behind jaw-dropping report asked town to buy out his contract

Town describes \$400K as demand to keep whistleblower allegations quiet

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Did Woodside's town manager demand a \$400,000 payout in exchange for quashing a scathing list of complaints against Town Council members? Or was Jason Ledbetter just asking for a partial buyout of his contract? These are among the claims roiling Woodside in the wake of a detailed whistleblower report from the town's top employee.

On Thursday, Feb. 19, the town announced that Ledbetter was placed on paid administrative leave, just hours after he sent a 14-page whistleblower report to the press. In it, Ledbetter alleged that Mayor Brian Dombkowski and Mayor Pro Tempore Paul Goeld pressured him to delay housing projects and that Council member Jenn Wall discriminated against him because he's male.

Shortly after Ledbetter released the report, Woodside's

town clerk emailed a statement claiming that Ledbetter had demanded the town pay him more than \$400,000 to keep it from going public.

Ledbetter characterized his request differently.

"I have 26 months left on my contract and felt that I could no longer work under the current circumstances," Ledbetter told this news organization.

Feeling that remaining quiet would leave a "stain" on his resume, he explained that he asked the town to provide a separation package with salary and benefits for a year or until he gets a new job. He also requested payment for his accrued vacation time. Adding that together appears to be how the town came up with the "over \$400,000" sum they claimed he demanded, Ledbetter said.

In the complaint, Ledbetter alleged that three members of



Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Woodside Town Manager Jason Ledbetter accused council members of trying to stall housing projects in their districts and of making bigoted remarks.

See **TOWN MANAGER**, page 16

Charged with child sex abuse, East Palo Alto employee gets character reference from council member

Redwood City man's attorney claims 13-year-old boy looked and acted like an adult

By Arden Margulis

A former East Palo Alto city employee allegedly molested and supplied drugs repeatedly to a 13-year-old he met while working for the city, according to San Mateo County prosecutors in newly obtained court documents that include a character reference by a city council member for the defendant.

Redwood City resident Rafael Prado, 28, was charged with five felony counts of lewd acts with

Editor's Note: This article may be disturbing to some readers; discretion is advised. If you know or suspect a child is being abused, please call the San Mateo County Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-632-4615.

a child and felony possession of child sex-abuse material on June 18. In an unsuccessful motion advocating for Prado's release from jail without a bond while he awaits trial, defense attorney Neil Hallinan stated Prado — who pleaded not guilty — had

good reason to believe the victim was over 18.

Several people submitted character references in support of Prado's release motion last summer, including East Palo Alto Council Member Carlos Romero. Romero said he was only attesting to Prado's character, irrespective of the allegations, and was not speaking on behalf of the city in his reference letter.

"In our judicial system the accused is presumed innocent until proven guilty," Romero

told this news organization. "My character reference for Mr. Prado was based on observed behavior during my interactions with him at numerous COVID vaccination outreach efforts in East Palo Alto from 2021 to 2022."

According to court records and sworn statements obtained by this news organization, the victim told authorities he was 13 years old when he first met Prado at the library sometime between late 2022 and 2023, and they later connected over

Instagram. Prado was working for the city of East Palo Alto at the time.

According to prosecutors, the victim said his first sexual encounter occurred at Prado's house in Redwood City. There, Prado allegedly supplied the teenager with marijuana, crystal meth and an unknown liquid. The victim, who was in eighth grade at the time, told authorities he went in and out of consciousness while Prado had

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Sunnyvale.ca.gov/Activities**(408) 730-7350**

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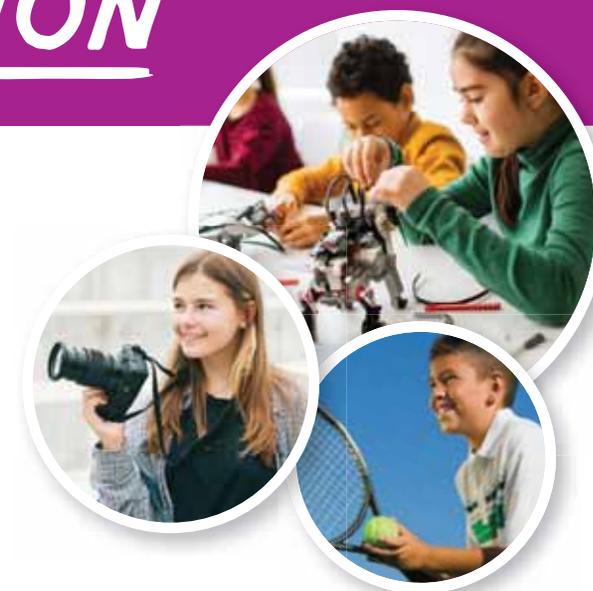
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Stanford

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MaccabiSportsCamp.org/wp**(415) 997-8844**

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StanfordWaterPoloCamps.com**(650) 725-9016***Please check directly with camps for updates and offerings.**To advertise in print and online, contact your sales representative or email Sales@EmbarcaderoMedia.org.*

Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY



Seeger Gray

The Dutch Goose owner Greg Stern stands for a portrait with a proclamation from San Mateo County recognizing the eatery's 60th anniversary in Menlo Park on Feb. 20.

Dutch Goose: 60 years of tradition

A West Menlo Park landmark survives challenges thanks to loyal patrons and timeless recipes

By Arden Margulis

For 60 years, the Dutch Goose has been more than a restaurant. Tucked in the small commercial strip of Alameda de las Pulgas not far from Sand Hill Road, the longtime West Menlo Park gathering spot has served deviled eggs and drinks to

generations of patrons, from Stanford students and venture capitalists to Little League teams and families.

The lore of this storied bar and restaurant is plentiful: from having the first-ever coin-operated video game to being a favorite hangout for Silicon Valley techies and local sports icons. In its 60 years,

the Goose has hosted business meetings, reunions and even weddings.

"At the Dutch Goose, there are no strangers, only friends you haven't met," said Greg Stern, who has owned the Goose since October 2005 and helped it weather a challenging

See **DUTCH GOOSE**, page 10

Former Menlo-Atherton teacher accused of attempting to meet minor for sex

Kevin Coulombe was a science teacher at M-A from 2011 to 2015

By Arden Margulis

A former Menlo-Atherton High School science teacher and current staff member at California Polytechnic State University was arrested for allegedly attempting to meet with a minor for sexual purposes, according to the San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Office.

San Luis Obispo resident Kevin Coulombe, 38, was charged on Feb. 23 with a felony count of contacting a minor for a sexual offense and a misdemeanor count of arranging to

meet a minor for lewd purposes. He is scheduled to be arraigned on March 4 in San Luis Obispo County Superior Court.

According to a press release from the SLO Sheriff's Office, investigators obtained a search warrant for Coulombe's residence, vehicle and workplace at Cal Poly as part of an ongoing investigation into the sexual exploitation of children.

Following the execution of the search warrant, the Sheriff's Office said they found evidence that Coulombe attempted to arrange a meeting with a minor

for sexual purposes. According to court records, the charges stem from an offense on Feb. 3.

The Sheriff's Office added that this investigation stemmed from their effort to "proactively target those who victimize the most vulnerable members of our community."

Coulombe worked as a science teacher at Menlo-Atherton High School from 2011 to 2015, according to Sequoia Union High School District spokesperson Naomi Hunter.

See **COULOMBE**, page 7

TIDE parents file lawsuit to block high school's closure

A federal court will decide whether to keep Menlo Park school open beyond this June

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

The Sequoia Union High School District's decision to close TIDE Academy, a small, STEM-based school in Menlo Park, in early February hasn't stopped parents from trying to save their children's school.

A group of parents who call themselves TIDE Rising filed a civil rights lawsuit against the Sequoia district, asking a federal judge for a temporary restraining order to stop the district from closing TIDE this summer. They are being represented by San Francisco-based firm Leigh Law Group.

The six-year-old high school, open to every student in the district, enrolls a disproportionately high share of socioeconomically disadvantaged students as well as those with learning disabilities, Sequoia district data shows. During late night meetings, demonstrations and in hundreds of emails, teachers and parents called on board members to save the school, saying TIDE has offered the educational support and strong community that allows its students to thrive.

The lawsuit, filed on Feb. 13 with the U.S. District Court in San Francisco, alleges that the school district discriminated against students with disabilities and violated the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Rehabilitation Act — laws that prohibit public agencies from discriminating against individuals with disabilities and offers equal opportunity to all of its programs and activities.

Parents also allege in court filings that the district's deliberations about the closure were a sham, and the decision was predetermined, citing documents obtained through a Public Records Act request.

"TIDE Academy is not merely a school preference; it is the functional equivalent of an accessibility ramp for students with autism, anxiety disorders, ADHD, and other disabilities that make large, comprehensive

high school campuses inaccessible," according to a memorandum filed in support of the temporary restraining order. "The District now proposes to demolish that ramp and scatter these vulnerable students across 2,000-plus student campuses where they cannot function — all under the pretext of financial necessity that the District's own data does not support."

The district filed an opposition to the parents' motion on Feb. 24, alleging that keeping TIDE open will disrupt district-wide scheduling and resource planning that will affect hundreds of students and families and require millions of dollars in staffing and operational costs.

Sequoia Union is facing a projected deficit of over \$6 million by the end of this school year, Assistant Superintendent of Administrative Services Janea Marking said in January. District staff said it spends thousands more per student at TIDE compared to its other campuses: an average of \$39,169 per student at TIDE compared to \$20,758 per Menlo-Atherton High School student, according to district data.

The Sequoia district board first floated the idea of closing TIDE in November. After months of community meetings and public outcry, the board unanimously voted on Feb. 4 to shut down TIDE at the end of this school year and move its programs to Woodside High School, displacing its roughly 200 students. No details have been shared about the future of TIDE's campus, which cost \$50 million and opened in 2019.

District officials explained that closing TIDE was necessary to prevent further budget deficits and potential teacher lay offs, considering the school's declining enrollment.

Supporters said that TIDE's small classrooms helped many students, especially those with disabilities, achieve academic success and social belonging,

See **TIDE**, page 9

Bernie Sanders warns about AI 'tsunami' at Stanford town hall

U.S. Rep. Ro Khanna joins Vermont legislator in discussion of emerging technologies

By Riley Cooke

Workers, students and researchers in Silicon Valley are no strangers to the idea that artificial intelligence may be coming for their jobs. Many are under the impression that it's not a matter of if, but when.

But for Sen. Bernie Sanders, an longtime critic of the billionaire class, the new technology has ramifications that go well beyond economics.

"If AI is going to replace a lot of the work that human beings do, what becomes of human beings?" the Vermont senator posited to a packed auditorium at Stanford University on Feb. 20. "Are we superfluous in the process? What happens to our ability to relate to each other?"

Sanders and U.S. Rep. Ro Khanna, whose district is nestled in the Silicon Valley, spoke to over a thousand people at Jane Stanford Memorial Auditorium about the intersection of AI technology and the labor movement, often to uproarious

See SANDERS, page 14



Seeger Gray

Sen. Bernie Sanders speaks with Rep. Ro Khanna at a student town hall titled "Who Controls the Future of AI: The Oligarchs or The People?" at Stanford University's Memorial Auditorium on Feb. 20.

Police probe string of residential burglaries across Menlo Park

Suspects targeted unoccupied homes, entering through rear doors or windows to take jewelry

By Arden Margulis

The Menlo Park Police Department is investigating a series of residential burglaries that detectives believe may be connected after a recent spate of similar break-ins across the city.

Police Department spokesperson Nicole Acker said detectives are working with neighboring law enforcement agencies to determine whether any of the incidents are linked to crimes reported elsewhere. Investigators are reviewing cases with similar patterns across the region to identify suspects and determine whether the burglaries are part of a larger trend.

According to police, there have been burglaries with similar methods and targets in recent weeks. In most cases, someone entered a home by breaking a back door or a window while residents were away. Jewelry was the primary item stolen, and in one incident, collectible coins were taken.

Acker said investigators are examining approximately 20



Magali Gauthier

Menlo Park detectives are investigating a string of approximately 20 burglaries throughout the city.

burglaries dating back to 2025. Not every break-in resulted in property being stolen, but police believe many of the incidents share similar circumstances and methods.

Detectives have increased their focus following additional burglaries reported last week that appeared to follow the same pattern.

"Our detectives are working with other agencies to see if there's

any similars, just trying to see if there's any that are connected," Acker said.

According to publicly available data, there have been 11 residential burglaries since Jan. 1.

Police have not announced any arrests, and the investigations remain ongoing.

If your home is broken into, the department says to call 911 and do

not enter or move anything until police arrive.

Police recommend residents take several steps to avoid becoming victims of residential theft or burglary:

- Keep windows and doors (including side gates) locked when away from home
- Install a monitored alarm system
- Keep valuables out of sight, including the packaging of valuables in trash bins
- Using timed or motion-activated lights at night
- Trim landscaping
- Plant thorny bushes under first floor windows

When on vacation, police recommend residents:

- Keep all windows and doors locked and closed
- Have a trusted friend keep an eye on the home
- Hold mail while away
- Have timed indoor lights or radios so that the house appears occupied. ■

Email Staff Writer Arden Margulis at amargulis@almanacnews.com.

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The Almanac

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and Woodside for over 60 years

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Becker bill aims to curb fraud involving AI deepfakes

Legislation would increase penalties for defamation, facilitate removal of images

By Hannah Bensen

Seeking to combat the increasing use of artificial intelligence for fraud and defamation, State Sen. Josh Becker introduced legislation on Feb. 19 that would raise penalties for scams involving deepfake technology and create new avenues for removing the offending images.

The impetus for Becker's bill is rooted in cases where bad actors have used the technology to commit fraud or harm people's reputations. In one case, a woman from Southern California lost her home and life savings when scammers used deepfake technology to impersonate the actor Steve Burton. The woman believed she was in a relationship with Burton, and transferred the money to the scammers.

In other cases, AI technologies, including xAI's Grok chatbot, have been used to generate sexually explicit content of women without their permission. The digital replicas are highly realistic, making it difficult to discern what is real and what is AI-generated.

"Artificial intelligence should empower people and not be

weaponized against them," Becker said in a press release. "An algorithm [should not be] used to defraud others, damage their reputation or violate their dignity. The Digital Dignity Act ensures Californians have real protections and real remedies in the age of AI."

According to Becker's office, the Digital Dignity Act clarifies that impersonation with a digital replica is now punishable under existing defamation law. It also increases the penalties for people found liable of defamation or impersonation when using AI-generated content.

Finally, the law would require platforms that host AI-generated content to provide pathways for victims to remove unauthorized AI-generated replicas. Becker's office explained that in cases where large online platforms also have generative AI tools, it is possible for that company to have a look-up tool for it to search who created digital content — and therefore, it's technically feasible for a company to remove images created without a person's permission.

The Senate Rules Committee



File photo by Magali Gauthier

State Sen. Josh Becker, D-Menlo Park, has introduced a bill in the California Senate designed to protect people from AI-related fraud and impersonation.

must now refer the bill to the appropriate policy committee based on its subject matter for review and discussion. This will occur in the coming weeks, a spokesperson for Becker's office said. If the bill passes the committee, it will move to the Senate

floor for debate.

Becker represents the 13th Senate District in California, which encompasses portions of Santa Clara and San Mateo counties including Palo Alto, Mountain View, Menlo Park and Redwood City. ■

Hannah Bensen is a recipient of the California Local News Fellowship who is a member of the Embarcadero Media Foundation Staff through 2027. She can be reached at hbensen@almanacnews.com.

Inmate died of fentanyl poisoning, coroner says

By Bay City News Service

A female inmate in a San Mateo County jail died of the toxic effects of fentanyl supplied by another prisoner, the county Coroner's Office said on Feb. 20.

The September death of Markeisha Monique Renee Blount, 31, was an accident, the Coroner's Office said.

The District Attorney's office has charged 34-year-old Ashley "Ashly" J. Gromnicki with homicide for bringing drugs containing fentanyl into

the Maple Street Correctional Facility and providing them to Blount.

Blount was found dead about 6 a.m. on Sept. 29 in a housing unit at the facility. Deterring and preventing contraband, particularly dangerous drugs, from the jails "is a top priority," the Sheriff's Office said in a statement.

"The Sheriff's Office utilizes state-of-the-art body scanning machines, narcotics detection K-9s and search procedures to deter, detect and intercept the smuggling of illegal drugs," the office said. ■

The Sheriff's Office posted Coulombe's mugshot on its social media.

"I called my mom like, 'Mom, this is like the first guy I met at Cal Poly. I've known him for three years,'" a student named Sophia told Mustang News, which withheld her last name. "He's literally one of the last people you'd think to be like that."

The San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Office asked anyone with additional information to contact the detective division at 805-781-4500. ■

COULOMBE

continued from page 5

According to Mustang News, the Cal Poly student newspaper, Coulombe had taught Introductory Physics and Introduction to the Physics Major. An article quoted physics students who said they were shocked at his arrest.

"It's a pretty disgusting thing to do, and especially the fact that he had a history as a high school professor is pretty scary," freshman Van Til said, according to the Mustang News story.

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Mountain View celebrates completion of major salt pond restoration

By Emma Montalbano

Conservation groups, community members, and officials from federal, state and local agencies gathered on the morning of Feb. 20 to celebrate the transformation of a 435-acre salt pond into a tidal marsh just north of Mountain View's Shoreline Park.

The local project is just one small part of the largest wetland restoration effort on the West Coast, which aims to return portions of California's bayshore back to its natural state. Mountain View City Council member Pat Showalter, a civil engineer who previously worked on the salt pond project management team at Valley Water, addressed the crowd at the Feb. 20 event, highlighting the years of complex work it took "to provide wonderful habitat for people and for wildlife."

"We should be very proud of this accomplishment, and also, we should take great pleasure as time goes on, watching it develop into a marsh," said Showalter, as the crowd looked out over the water. "It's going to be such a beautiful part of the city of Mountain View."

As part of the multi-year transformation of the pond formally known as A2W, crews repaired eroding levees, built five habitat islands for wildlife and added 1.2 miles of publicly accessible trails. Construction on the pond wrapped up at the end of January, and is estimated to have cost about \$20 million.

Restoring tidal marshes comes with many benefits, including aiding in the recovery of threatened species, removing carbon from the atmosphere and protecting nearby areas from storm surges, Dave Halsing, executive project manager of the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project, told *The Almanac*.

Now that construction on pond A2W is complete, it's nature's

turn to do some work. As the tide comes in each day, it will bring with it sediment and seeds that will settle at the bottom of the pond, develop and grow, eventually creating a marsh, Halsing said.

In less than a decade, the pond will be a "full, vibrant marsh on the edge of the Bay, providing wildlife and habitat benefits," said Chris Barr, the acting complex manager for the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

Restoring the Bay to its natural state

Though marshes were once a ubiquitous habitat in the San Francisco Bay Area, decades of urbanization and industrial salt harvesting led to the loss of about 85% of that land, according to the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project. This caused the rapid decline of marsh-dependent species and a decrease in local water quality.

In 2003, the federal government paid \$100 million to acquire 15,100 acres of land around the San Francisco Bay Area from Cargill Salt, the main commercial operator of local salt ponds. Since then, several agencies have collaborated with environmental groups to transform about one-third of those ponds, converting some into deep and shallow bodies of water for birds and restoring others into tidal marshes.

The success of the project in Mountain View will be measured over the next several years using metrics including sediment accretion rates, water quality and wildlife usage, Halsing said.

Plans to restore Mountain View's wetlands go beyond just the transformation of A2W. They also include a 275-acre pond to its west called A1. While rehabilitation work on A1 isn't expected to start for a few more years, the result of the project will be "one big marsh," with about 700 acres of connected wetland, Halsing previously told *The Almanac*.



Photos by Emma Montalbano

Above: The community gathers on Feb. 20 to celebrate the completion of a project in Mountain View that transformed a salt pond into a marshland habitat. Bottom left: The completed salt pond restoration project at pond A2W in Mountain View includes an additional 1.2 miles of trail for public use. Bottom right: Dave Halsing, executive project manager of the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project, addresses the crowd at Friday's event to highlight the significance of the restoration effort and thank those who helped make it happen.

Showalter noted that wetlands absorb a lot of wave activity and serve as "incredible physical barriers against sea level rise," which State Assemblymember Marc Berman, who also spoke at Friday's event, said is a major concern for both the coastal and bay-side communities he represents.

Berman, whose district includes Mountain View, Menlo Park and Palo Alto, noted that an undertaking like the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project takes perseverance and patience, adding that it's exciting to be "one pond closer to the completion of this long term effort." ■

Email Staff Writer Emma Montalbano at emontalbano@almanacnews.com.



Magali Gauthier

A completed island in pond A2W in Mountain View on Dec. 15, 2025.



TIDE

continued from page 5

something they had struggled with at larger schools such as Woodside and Menlo-Atherton High School.

The suit includes nine declarations from parents and TIDE staff in support of TIDE Rising's motion to prevent the district from closing the school. Multiple parents describe how their child's disabilities would make it difficult or "impossible" for them to attend a larger school, some citing their child's past experiences with bullying, academic struggles and lack of accommodations.

"The small teacher-to-student ratio has changed everything," said a TIDE parent identified as J.L. in the lawsuit. "While her IEP exists on paper, TIDE is the only place where it is implemented as intended."

A parent identified as D.W. wrote that her child was "overlooked, overwhelmed and shutting down emotionally," while managing anxiety and learning accommodations when at Sequoia High School, a campus with over 1,900 students.

The lawsuit adds that TIDE's lead counselor Lara Sandora confirmed that many students enrolled there after struggling in larger school environments. She added that TIDE's structural accommodations cannot be replicated at the district's other schools.

The parents allege that the district violated the students' disability rights by removing access to TIDE, which gives neurodivergent students fair opportunities to access federally funded programs, required under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

In the district's opposition, it argues that these laws only require "reasonable modifications when necessary," but do not give parents the right to freeze the school's closure or require the district to maintain a specific campus.

"Granting the requested (temporary restraining order) would force the district to undo months of planning, freeze staffing and budgeting decisions, and operate a school it has determined is fiscally unsustainable," it said.

Superintendent Crystal Leach's declaration asserts that TIDE was not designed or approved as a neurodivergent or disability-specific program and that all the services that students require can be provided on other district campuses.

When the school board member Mary Beth Thompson announced in November that the district would be exploring TIDE's closure, parents were quick to request documents from the district but a number of the requests were still pending



Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Local educator and TIDE Academy parent Toni Ouradnik speaks at a rally to save the Menlo Park high school from closure on Dec. 9.

when the board voted to close TIDE in early February. TIDE parent Jason Primuth said they sought records to get answers and look for "shady" behavior.

The lawsuit claims that the district engaged a third party communications consultant who drafted talking points and emails, and created a pre-set milestone timeline prior to the November announcement. It alleges that district documents show Thompson used the consultant to draft email responses to parents and was instructed by Leach to BCC her and other board members.

"Every step of the purported community engagement process ... was pre-calendared as a deliverable in a public relations work plan before a single parent had been heard," the lawsuit states.

"They literally paid for a communications consultant out of Sacramento to draft all their messaging, rather than hiring somebody to brainstorm, or just sit with parents and say, 'Hey, what would be a good solution here?'" Primuth told this news organization. "They've spent my money, as a taxpayer, on some company to make the communications look palatable."

TIDE Rising's lawsuit is being funded by parents and donors through the TIDE Education Foundation, he said.

'Botched' process after board's vote

Parents also complained about the district's follow-up after the decision to close TIDE. A week after the board's final vote in early February, parents only received communication from TIDE's principal, according to TIDE Education Foundation President Andromeda Garcelon. There was no email sent to families from the district, she said.

On Feb. 10, TIDE parents received their first communication since the vote — a "botched" email with an intra-district transfer request form that did not include the option

to enroll in TIDE's relocated programs at Woodside High, said Garcelon. The transfer form gives TIDE students and incoming eighth graders the opportunity to choose a campus to attend during Sequoia Union's open enrollment process.

Students have until March 9 to submit their forms.

At a board meeting on Feb. 12, parents complained that the district's email looked like spam and didn't mention the district in the subject line. Rather than being sent to a student's primary guardian, it went to the secondary contact.



File photo by Magali Gauthier

Seniors participate in a group activity during their English class at TIDE Academy in Menlo Park in 2022.

"If people ignore this email, their child defaults to their home school, effectively depressing the number of students who might actually want to go to TIDE at Woodside. This email assumes everyone is keeping up with every detail of (the recent) board decision," said parent Marijane Leonard.

Leach and the board were made aware of the mistake after parents made public comments and acknowledged that the email sent was missing information about the board's recent decision.

Primuth said the closure of

TIDE has dramatically impacted his child and their classmates. He said that neurodivergent students are worried about their chances of graduating from a larger high school — at TIDE, students with learning accommodations boast a 100% graduation rate while the district average is 80%.

A hearing has been scheduled for March 3 at 2 p.m. in Courtroom 9 at 450 Golden Gate Avenue in San Francisco. ■

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

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DUTCH GOOSE

continued from page 5

two decades. “It’s a melting pot.”

From an ADA lawsuit that forced the Goose to undergo \$2 million in renovations, to the COVID-19 pandemic that closed indoor dining and led to a revamp of its outdoor seating, the Goose has survived and thrived as the world around it changed. Stern credits its loyal customer base for its ongoing success.

“The community has just been phenomenal: Patronizing us when we were shut down, they were doing everything they could to, like, buy retail or place to-go orders, just because they didn’t want to see this place go away. Every day we’re humbled here with all the support,” Stern said.

A Menlo-Atherton High School graduate who grew up in the area, Stern has used the Goose for philanthropy, mainly to support education and youth sports.

Stern said the Goose has backed the Alpine Little League, Menlo-Atherton Vikings, Redwood City Pop Warner Football and Peninsula College Fund, which provides scholarships to first generation and low-income college students.

“Seeing that you made a difference in some kids’ lives, it’s better than any monetary compensation you can get,” Stern said.

San Mateo County Supervisor Ray Mueller presented Stern and the Goose with a proclamation from the county on Friday, Feb 20. The final proclamation is expected to be ratified by the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors in March.

“This board conveys its best wishes for continued success and many more years of ‘good times and great food’ at the Peninsula’s most beloved landmark,” the proclamation reads.

Stern said the community has



Photos by Seeger Gray

Clockwise from above: The Dutch Goose has been a cherished local hangout for six decades; Sports memorabilia decorates the walls inside The Dutch Goose; Over the years, the restaurant has expanded its outdoor seating areas at 3567 Alameda de las Pulgas in West Menlo Park.

been a very active partner in the restaurant’s management.

“We’re really lucky that the community is very vocal, and so if I was ever going off-track, they would speak up and get us in the right direction,” Stern said. “At this place, it seems like the less change, the better. That’s pretty unique — because usually when you take over a restaurant you make all these changes, and people just didn’t want us to change here.”

While Silicon Valley is known for constant innovations, some things stay the same. The Dutch Goose’s deviled eggs recipe hasn’t changed since the original owner Pete Eccle named the restaurant.

Stern bought the restaurant

in 2005 after the dot-com crash.

“In 2005 I was a stockbroker on Sand Hill Road. I was miserable, and had a burger here with my dad, and I said, ‘I’d love to have my own business like the Dutch Goose.’ And he said, ‘Why don’t you make an offer?’”

The owner at the time, Tom Moroney, had run the Goose for 27 years and stayed on to show Stern the ropes. But Stern did his homework: before committing to the Goose, he worked as a cook at Sunnyside Restaurant in Lake Tahoe.

“I loved it,” Stern said of his time as a cook. “I had always had a passion for restaurants, more for cooking than anything else. But you learn pretty

quickly when you get into restaurants, if you want to be successful, you can’t just cook. You have to manage. When you cook, your back is to the restaurant and you don’t know what’s going on.”

While Stern mainly credited the community for the Goose’s continued success, he also called out Mueller and his landlord, the Beltramo family.

“Our landlord has been super supportive along the way, whether it was the COVID shutdown or the ADA lawsuit shut down, they jumped right in and helped us out and lowered rents, extended leases and helped with improvements,” Stern said.

Stern said Mueller helped the

Goose reopen, get permits and navigate constant challenges.

As for what is next, Stern said regulars have been asking the Goose to start serving breakfast.

“People want to see breakfast — I have some reservations about that because of staffing issues and those kinds of things — so we’re exploring that. We just improved our front deck and put flooring out there just last week,” Stern said. “We’re playing around with the idea of having a \$3 coffee instead of the \$8 coffees we’re all used to right now. And then some pancakes and eggs for the kids.” ■

Email Staff Writer Arden Margulis at amargulis@almanacnews.com.





Courtesy Getty Images

Houses in a hillside neighborhood in San Mateo County overlook the San Francisco Bay.

San Mateo, Santa Clara counties top state's priciest housing markets

Affordability study shows Peninsula buyers must earn nearly 5x the national average to buy a home

By Linda Taaffe

While it became slightly easier to afford a home in California at the end of 2025, the state remains one of the nation's toughest housing markets — especially in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, which again ranked as the priciest places to buy a home, according to a new housing affordability report from the California Association of Realtors.

To afford a median-priced home of \$2.07 million in San Mateo County, buyers need a minimum qualifying annual income of \$507,600, the report found. That would cover estimated monthly payments of \$12,690, including principal, interest, taxes and insurance on a 30-year fixed-rate mortgage, assuming a 20% down payment and a 6.35% interest rate.

Since the end of 2023, San Mateo County has remained the only county in California where buyers must earn more than \$500,000 annually to afford a median-priced home.

Santa Clara County ranked just behind, with buyers needing a minimum annual income of \$470,800 to afford a median-priced home of \$1.92 million, including estimated monthly payments of \$11,770. San Francisco County followed, with a minimum qualifying income of \$441,200.

Despite those steep income requirements, affordability improved slightly in both Peninsula counties. In San Mateo County, 19% of households could afford a median-priced home at the end of 2025, up from 17% a year earlier. In Santa Clara

County, 21% could afford a home, compared with 19% the previous year.

Statewide, affordability improved in most counties, with 47 of 53 posting gains compared with a year earlier.

The report attributes the modest gains to lower mortgage rates, rising incomes and slightly softer home prices. The average effective mortgage rate fell for the third consecutive quarter to 6.35%, its lowest level since mid-2022. Rates fluctuated earlier in 2025 amid economic uncertainty but trended downward in the second half of the year as expectations of Federal Reserve rate cuts helped ease borrowing costs, the report shows. California also recorded its first annual home price decline since early 2023, with prices falling 0.6% compared with the same period a year earlier.

Statewide trends

Despite the recent improvements, affordability remains historically low in California. According to the report, 18% of households statewide could afford to purchase a median-priced, single-family home of \$869,300, up from 16% a year earlier. That figure is still far below the state's affordability peak of 56% in the fourth quarter of 2012.

To afford a median-priced home, California buyers need a minimum annual income of \$213,200 to cover estimated monthly payments of \$5,330, including principal, interest, taxes and insurance. That amount remains more than double the national average and has exceeded \$200,000 in 12 of the past 13 quarters.

Affordability was somewhat better for condos and townhomes. Twenty-eight percent of California households could afford a median-priced condo of \$650,000 in the fourth quarter, up from 25% the previous year, with an annual income requirement of \$159,200.

Nationwide, more than one-third (39%) of households could afford to purchase a median-priced single-family home of \$414,900, which required a minimum annual income of \$101,600 and estimated monthly payments of \$2,540. California's required income has exceeded the national level for seven consecutive quarters.

Least- and most-affordable counties

Mono, Monterey and Santa Barbara counties were the least affordable in California, according to the index, which measures a household's ability to purchase a home based on local income levels. Only 10% of households in Mono County could afford a median-priced home, compared with 12% in Monterey and Santa Barbara counties. Buyers in each of those markets needed a minimum income of \$226,400.

Lassen County remained the most affordable, with 57% of households able to afford a median-priced home, followed by Trinity (44%) and Tuolumne (43%). Lassen also required the lowest minimum qualifying income at \$56,000 and was the only county in the state with an affordability index above 50%. ■

Email Print & Lifestyle Editor
Linda Taaffe at ltaaffe@almanacnews.com.



LAS LOMITAS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING AND OF PROPOSAL FOR INCREASING SCHOOL FACILITIES FEES AS AUTHORIZED BY EDUCATION CODE SECTION 17620 AND GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 65995

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that immediately following a public hearing on the matter, a resolution will be considered by the Board of Trustees of the Las Lomitas Elementary School District at its regular meeting on March 4, 2026 which, if adopted by the Board, will increase development fees established by the District against residential construction and reconstruction to \$5.38 per square foot and against new commercial or industrial construction to \$0.87 per square foot. The proposed fees are authorized by Education Code Section 17620 and Government Code Section 65995. Data pertaining to the cost of school facilities is available for inspection during regular business hours at the District's administrative offices at 1011 Altschul Avenue in Menlo Park. The increased fees, if approved by the Board of Trustees, will become effective on May 4, 2026 which is 60 days after the proposed adoption by the Board of the resolution levying such fee.

Douglas Gordon Rice

May 19, 1957 - November 25, 2025

Douglas Gordon Rice passed away peacefully, surrounded by his family, at UCSF Medical Center on November 25, 2025, after an eight-year battle with glioblastoma.



Douglas was born in San Francisco at Stanford University Hospital. He was the beloved son of Jane and Gordon Rice of Menlo Park, former proprietors of Shreve's Sporting Goods.

In early childhood, Douglas relocated from Palo Alto to Menlo Park. He attended The Ford Country Day School in Los Altos before graduating from Menlo-Atherton High School in 1976, where he was a member of the golf team. Douglas continued to pursue the sport while attending Stanford University and later the University of Nevada, Reno.

After college, Douglas began a 46-year career in commercial and residential construction project management, working throughout San Francisco and Northern California.

Douglas most cherished spending time with his children. He loved sharing his deep passion for jazz and big band musicians, especially Frank Sinatra, and enjoyed watching classic films at the Stanford Theatre. He appreciated a good round of golf and trips to the Oakland Coliseum to cheer on the A's and Raiders.

The center of Douglas' life was his Christian faith. He was a longtime member of Menlo Church, where he devoted many years to active involvement and service.

The Rice family extends heartfelt thanks to all the staff at UCSF Medical Center, especially the neuro-oncology team, for their compassionate care and support. We are also deeply grateful to our family and friends for the many prayers offered on Douglas' behalf, he appreciated them all. Your kindness and friendship have been a great comfort to our family.

Douglas is survived by his daughter, Ellie Rice; his son, Will Rice; Debi Rice; his sister, Carolyn Rice; his brother, Peter Rice; his nephew and niece Jason and Heather David; and his extended Southern California family.

In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation to the Brain Tumor Center, Department of Neurosurgery UCSF, c/o Mitchel Berger, MD, Director, Brain Tumor Center.

PAID OBITUARY



Town of Atherton

Town Administrative Offices
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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the **Atherton City Council** will hold a public hearing to consider proposed changes to the Town of Atherton's Master Fee Schedule concerning fees for Inclusionary Housing Ordinance In-Lieu Fee for planning services.

NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that said item is set for hearing by the City Council at its meeting on **March 18, 2026, 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 City Council Meeting via Zoom Meeting or by attending in-person in the Council Chambers at 80 Fair Oaks Lane, Atherton, CA 94027.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://zoom.us/j/506897786>
Meeting ID: 506 897 786

One tap mobile:

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Dial by your location

+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)

Meeting ID: 506 897 786

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: asuber@ci.atherton.ca.us

Text: 650-687-7084

Description: The City Council is considering a resolution for the adoption of proposed changes to the Town of Atherton's Master Fee Schedule concerning new fees for the Inclusionary Housing Ordinance (IHO) In-Lieu Fee for planning services. As part of the Atherton 2023-2031 Housing Element, the Inclusionary Housing program serves as a policy tool that ensures new multifamily development will contribute to meeting state-mandated affordable housing requirements. The Town performed a nexus study on Inclusionary Housing & In-Lieu Fee Financial Feasibility Analysis and presented the study on January 8, 2025 and on January 21, 2026. The Inclusionary Housing program was adopted by the City Council at their meeting on February 18, 2026. The In-Lieu Fee sets an amount that developers may pay for required affordable housing units that result in fractional amounts (i.e. 0.4 units) or, subject to approval by the City Council, seek an alternative to construction by paying an in-lieu fee for the full requirement. The fee structure will not exceed the "Point of Indifference" amounts evaluated in the affordable housing feasibility analysis study.

	Prototype 1	Prototype 2	Prototype 3
Tenure	Rental	Rental	For-Sale
In-Lieu Fee Findings			
Development Typology	Multifamily Apartments	Townhouses	Townhouses
Nexus Basis	\$29	\$26	\$31
Cost of Construction	\$91	\$159	\$125
Point of Indifference	\$154	\$156	\$212

Additional information regarding the Town's Inclusionary Housing Program, including the feasibility analysis, is available here: <https://www.athertonca.gov/677/Inclusionary-Housing-Ordinance>

There is a recommendation to the Council to adopt a resolution for FY 2025/2026 adding the Inclusionary Housing In-Lieu Fees for areas described above on the Town Master Fee Schedule in the Planning Section based on analysis. **A copy of the meeting agenda, staff report and draft resolutions can be found online by Friday, March 13, 2026 here:** <https://www.ci.atherton.ca.us/Archive.aspx?AMID=41&Type=Recent>

NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that said Resolutions are set for hearing by the City Council at its meeting on **March 18, 2026 at 6:00 PM** via teleconference accessible through the above-described information and in person at 80 Fair Oaks Lane City Council Chambers, at which time and place all persons interested may participate and show cause, if they have any, why the Resolution should or should not be recommended for approval.

IF YOU CHALLENGE any actions taken to adopt the proposed changes to Town of Atherton's Master Fee Schedule concerning new fees for Inclusionary Housing Ordinance (IHO) In-Lieu Fee for planning services. As part of the Atherton 2023-2031 Housing Element, Inclusionary Housing program is a requirement in the Housing Element, 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 City Council at, or prior to, the public hearing addressed to FY 2025/26 Town Master Fee Schedule Inclusionary Housing In-Lieu Fees City Clerk, The Town of Atherton, 80 Fair Oaks Lane, Atherton, CA. 94027.

If you have any questions on the item, please contact Brittany Bendix, Consulting Town Planner, at bbendix@ci.atherton.ca.us or 408-688-2432. 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

COMMUNITY BRIEFS



Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Ladera Community Church is hosting a wine-tasting event on March 8.

Wine tasting at Ladera Church

Ladera Community Church is hosting its third wine tasting, from 2-4 p.m. on Sunday, March 8, at 3300 Alpine Road in Portola Valley. The event will focus on sharing favorite wines with the group. The church encourages attendees to bring either a bottle of wine or snacks. Reservations can be made by emailing amy@ladera.org.

Ravenswood school district to host state robotics championship

Over 400 participants will gather at Cesar Chavez Ravenswood Middle School for the VEX V5 Robotics Competition Push Back, a middle school state championship tournament presented by the Robotics Education and Competition Foundation. The event on Saturday and Sunday, March 7 and 8, will feature 60 teams that will collaborate with other schools in a series of challenges.

The competition is part of a series of events that take place throughout the year. VEX Competitions represent the world's largest and fastest growing competitive robotics programs for K-12 and college levels.

For more information on the competition, visit recf.org.

Portola Valley Theatre Conservatory's musical adaptation of 'As You Like It'

From March 12 through 22, the Portola Valley Theatre Conservatory will present a musical adaptation of William Shakespeare's production of "As You Like It." This will be the second MainStage performance since the pandemic, featuring 50 local actors and musicians between the ages of 6 and 78.

PVTC describes the show as an "immersive dream-like tale of faithful friends, feuding families and lovers in disguise." The musical features an original score by Shaina Taub, actress and Tony Award-winning composer.

For tickets and performance times visit pvtc-ca.org/main-stage-productions. ■

—Jennifer Yoshikoshi

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PRADO*continued from page 1*

intercourse with him.

Police would not become aware of Prado's involvement with the boy until 2025.

The victim was 15 when he first contacted police in April 2025 after his father kicked him out of the house. The teen, who had been living with various relatives since his mother died, was surrendered to the care of Child Protective Services a few weeks later. In subsequent forensic interviews at the San Mateo County District Attorney's Office Child Advocacy Center, he told police about his drug abuse and prostitution, according to prosecutors.

The victim told police he would walk around East Palo Alto and would be approached by men, mostly construction workers, asking for intercourse, according to police reports cited by the defense. The victim told investigators he used the money for drugs and that he needed to be intoxicated in order to perform sex acts, court records show.

Then, investigators started to focus on the victim's first sexual encounter and what led him down the path of prostitution, court records show. Approximately an hour into an interview, the victim disclosed that one man, whom prosecutors allege is Prado, introduced him into sexual contact with adults.

The teenager told authorities that during their several month-long relationship, he "kinda loved" Prado but they stopped seeing each other as the victim became more focused on drugs, court records show.

How investigators identified Prado

At first, according to detectives, the victim described the man's physical appearance and identified him as a city employee named Rafael. East Palo Alto police found that Prado was the only employee with the first name Rafael who matched the victim's description.

Police reported that the victim identified Prado in a photo and recognized his house in Redwood City as the one Prado had taken him to, court records show.

The boy showed police messages he and the man he identified as Prado sent each other via Instagram, including ones from May 2024 that implied they were meeting up, according to court records. In one message, police

**Rafael Prado**

say the victim sent "I want u in me tonight" and got the response, "I'm in epa."

After reviewing those messages, police obtained several search warrants for what they allege are Prado's social media and dating app accounts, electronic devices, car and home. Court records do not detail everything they recovered.

Court records show that detectives at the Redwood City Police Department said they found a video of Prado and the boy engaging in intercourse that "clearly shows the victim's face."

The teenager later identified excerpts of the video, saying he had agreed to being recorded and that it was filmed in Prado's room. In a court motion, Hallinan denied that Prado's video was of the victim but also said he had not received a copy of the video.

From city employee to felony suspect

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Prado worked as a supervisor at the Bay Area Community Health Advisory Council, where he distributed vaccines to East Palo Alto residents and supervised adult and youth volunteers. There, he worked closely with East Palo Alto Council Member Romero, who later recommended him for a job with the city.

Prado worked for East Palo Alto as a part-time, on-call employee in various administrative roles from July 2022 to April 2, 2025, according to City Manager Melvin Gaines. It was while in this role that Prado allegedly met the victim, according to prosecutors.

Gaines told this news organization that the city is "not aware" of any job duties that required Prado to be in "isolated contact with minors." Following publication of this article, Gaines denied that Prado met the teen as part of his work for the city.

Gaines also said the city received notification of Prado's arrest on June 18, 2025. Gaines added that Prado hadn't been given an assignment by the city since April.

In his written response to questions, Gaines did not address whether East Palo Alto was notified that Prado was under investigation or if the city had launched its own investigation into Prado.

This is not the first time Prado has been prosecuted for a crime, according to court documents. In 2016, when Prado was 18, he was sentenced to 60 days in jail for embezzlement. Prosecutors said Prado has been on probation almost continuously since then, with two convictions for driving under the influence and repeated probation violations.

Prosecutors also told the court Prado has a "noteworthy" juvenile criminal history but did not provide additional details.

On July 3, 2025, Judge Jeff Jackson denied the motion to release Prado while he awaits trial. A trial date has not yet been set for Prado, who remains in custody at the Maguire Correctional Facility. His next hearing is scheduled for March 4.

Romero's character reference for Prado

Hallinan submitted several character references in support of Prado's request to be released from jail. While many were from family members and friends, one was from Romero, a long-time member of the East Palo Alto Council who has been involved in city politics for four decades.

Court records show that Romero's reference was on letterhead bearing East Palo Alto's city seal. In it, Romero stated he's known Prado for over four years and that they went door-to-door canvassing apartments with youth volunteers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"(Prado) was always kind, generous, and caring of the youth assigned to him. Moreover, he took the time to help animate and instruct the youth to be more effective in their outreach efforts," Romero wrote in the reference letter dated July 2, 2025. "I never witnessed any inappropriate behavior or comments by Rafael when he was in the presence of the youth volunteers. On the contrary, he was respectful with every youth and adult he came in contact with during our clinics and outreach engagements."

Romero told this news organization his letter was only regarding his interactions with Prado and not about the charges he is facing.

"This is not supporting or a document that is saying he is or is not guilty of what he has done. This is specifically a character reference and to make it more than that, I think would be both a misunderstanding and also, I think, patently incorrect," Romero said.

At the time he wrote the character reference, Romero said he only knew that the charges involved a minor. Romero said he did not look into the allegations when he wrote the letter because he was only asked to speak to his direct experience with Prado.

"I did not know any of the specific facts related to the

case," Romero said. "This is a character reference based on my interactions with him, not on any hearsay, and not on investigations that I have no idea may or may not have been going on."

When asked about the City of East Palo Alto seal on the letterhead, Romero stressed that his letter reflected only his personal views and not those of the city.

"It is not an official city letter, nor did I sign it as a city council member," he said, noting that it said it came from the office of Council member Romero.

'I never witnessed any inappropriate behavior or comments by Rafael when he was in the presence of the youth volunteers.'

COUNCIL MEMBER
CARLOS ROMERO

Motion to release Prado from jail

In an unsuccessful motion seeking Prado's release on his own recognizance, defense attorney Hallinan denied the allegations of drug use and intoxication against his client and suggested that the victim could be remembering other incidents that did not involve Prado.

"We have no doubt that (the victim) has experienced everything he has described, but he is dishonestly accusing Mr. Prado — perhaps the only man whose name he could produce — of conduct actually committed by other men," Hallinan wrote in his motion for Prado's release.

According to court filings by Hallinan, Prado believed the victim was over 18 because he used Grindr (a dating app primarily for men seeking same-sex hookups), was available late at night, wore makeup and conducted himself like an adult.

In her written response, Deputy District Attorney Sharron Lee said Prado had "no credible argument" for claiming he believed the victim to be an adult. "The facts are that the defendant was quite aware of (the victim's) age, and it did not stop him," Lee added.

Besides alleging that he'd told Prado his age several times after having sex, the victim told prosecutors that Prado also saw him at his middle school before they had intercourse when Prado was delivering a package on behalf of the city, according to court records.

Prado is only facing charges for his conduct after being told of the victim's age, according to Lee.

In a motion for release, Hallinan claimed the victim "is simply not a credible witness" and detailed the victim's family history, sexual experiences and drug use.

In Lee's opposition to the defense's motion, she accused the defense of victim-shaming.

"Counsel spent approximately five pages of 20 substantive pages describing (the victim's) drug use and sexual history but failed to acknowledge that the defendant's actions were what initiated (the victim) into using sex to get drugs," Lee wrote.

Hallinan said in an email, "I was very surprised that the DA wrote that those facts only serve to shame the victim when in fact they are totally relevant to the issue that was before the court. I don't know if the DA really believes that or was making a statement to cut against my argument."

"To that point, the minor's appearance and history of drug use and prostitution are totally relevant, as it is the appearance and conduct of someone who is NOT a minor," Hallinan added. "If someone appeared like this specific minor and conducted themselves the same way — including being out at all hours of the night on weeknights — generally speaking we all would be safe to assume that person is AT LEAST 18 years old."

Hallinan said in an email that since the court assumes charges to be true at bail hearings, he wanted to convince the court that Prado was not a threat to the community.

"For purpose of that legal analysis, I did not deny that intercourse had occurred because the issue in those hearings is whether the defendant was too dangerous to release without bail," Hallinan said in an email.

"Thus, our position was... the court should not find my client to be a threat to anybody because he was unaware of the minor's age at the time," Hallinan said. ■

Email Staff Writer Arden Margulis at amargulis@almanacnews.com.

LEHUA GREENMAN

"Unity is strength... when there is teamwork & collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved."

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SANDERS

continued from page 6

applause. The town hall event, titled “Who Controls the Future of AI: The Oligarchs or The People?” was hosted by Stanford College Democrats and Stanford Speakers Bureau.

Khanna and Sanders have both been recognized as progressive leaders in Congress. The senator was concluding his brief speaking tour of California at Stanford, just outside Khanna’s district, after the two met with technology leaders in Silicon Valley earlier in the day.

Khanna described his district, which includes Milpitas, Sunnyvale, Cupertino and Santa Clara, as the “epicenter of wealth concentration and AI.” He said that approximately one-third of the country’s stock market is within his Congressional boundaries.

“Tech billionaires believe they have a modern divine right to lead and rule,” Khanna told the crowd.

Sanders, whose Senate tenure and presidential campaigns have focused on the richest “one percent” of Americans accountable for extreme wealth inequality,

found a lot of common ground with Khanna when it came to standards for tech bureaucrats, too.

But where they differed in a policy response to AI is data centers. These massive centers have cropped up throughout the country in order to meet the increasing energy requirements of AI technology. A typical AI data center can use as much electricity as 100,000 households, NPR reported, as well as billions of gallons of water to prevent the computer systems from overheating.

Silicon Valley is one of the top host regions in the entire country for data centers, Palo Alto city staff told the Utilities Advisory Commission earlier this month.

Sanders supports a nationwide moratorium on the growth of data centers until political leaders and the public have a better understanding of the long-term impacts of expanding AI.

“The Congress and the American people are very unprepared for the tsunami that is coming,” Sanders said. “We have got to slow this thing down.”

After the event, Khanna declined to support Sanders’ idea, falling back on a list of seven principles he proposed to curb the detrimental effects of artificial intelligence. He said he

supports a model like the ones in Singapore and Finland, where tech companies are on the hook financially for their substantial energy use in local communities.

Palo Alto has been grappling with the strain of data center energy use on its infrastructure, which is run locally through the city instead of through a major provider like PG&E. Santa Clara, which is in Khanna’s district, operates under a similar local electric model.

“If there are data centers that are putting constraints on (the infrastructure), the tech companies need to pay for that. They can’t put that burden on the local community in Santa Clara or Palo Alto,” Khanna said in an interview after the event.

Sanders and Khanna also covered topics ranging from data privacy, AI chatbots’ impact on mental health and deep fake technology, which can create convincing photos and videos of people that never happened. Political campaigns are particularly vulnerable to deep fakes — Sanders recalled being a victim of the technology himself.

State legislators are also grappling with the problem of AI deepfakes. State Sen. Josh Becker, whose district includes Palo Alto, Menlo Park, Menlo Park and other Silicon Valley municipalities,

proposed a bill earlier this week (See story, page 7) that would increase penalties for use of AI for fraud and defamation.

But most of all, Sanders and Khanna hoped to imbue the audience with a sense of urgency about the rapidly evolving technology related to artificial intelligence. Both said they did not believe AI was inherently good or bad; Khanna described himself as an “AI democratist” rather than an accelerationist or doomer.

Sanders compared the current state of the technology to the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, except he said the changes are coming at an exponentially faster rate. He cautioned that if workers and the general public are caught unawares, then the wealthiest individuals will continue to advance AI for one reason: the pursuit of profit.

Even at a place like Stanford, a leading institution for AI research and advancement, his comments received thunderous applause.

“We are looking at the most significant investment in human history, which is bringing about the most rapid societal transformation in human history,” Sanders said. ■

Email Staff Writer Riley Cooke at rcooke@almanacnews.com.

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Editor, Peninsula Foodist

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OBITUARIES

Local residents who died recently include:

Peter Kolb Danner, 89, a Palo Alto resident and former music critic for the Palo Alto Times who studied music history at UC Santa Barbara and earned his PhD at Stanford University, gave up an active performing career to focus on teaching and writing, and who was instrumental in forming the Guitar Foundation of America. He was president of the Lute Society of America, spent time on the faculty at Menlo College and was a member of Palo Alto Lawn

Bowls Club and Avenidas who left behind a wealth of writings and a legacy of curiosity. He died on Dec. 11, 2025.

Carolyn “Lynn” Graves Mitchell, 88, a former teacher and active member of the Palo Alto community for over 60 years, who won the Avenidas Lifetimes of Achievement Award with her husband Dave Mitchell, and who, for the past 10 years, was a resident of Channing House where she was known for her whimsical drawings. A graduate of Connecticut College, Harvard and San Jose State universities, she later served as

president of the Mid-Peninsula YWCA board and on the boards of The Institute for Research on Women and Gender and The Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, and she was the director of Religious Education at The First Congregational Church of Palo Alto. She died on Feb. 6.

Oden James “OJ” McMillan, 81, a former Palo Alto resident who was born in Trenton, New Jersey and who studied mechanical engineering at Georgia Tech in Atlanta and earned his PhD at Stanford University, who worked for 15 years as a mechanical engineer, and then as a software

engineer, despite having no formal training in the field. He coached several of his children’s soccer teams and retired to Chico with his wife. Known as an exceptional listener, he followed up with thoughtful and insightful questions and occasionally delivered one of his patented zingers. He died Jan. 20.

Carolyn Green Westgaard, 57, a Palo Alto resident who grew up in Sunnyvale, studied psychology at UC Santa Barbara and earned a Masters of Science in Industrial Organizational Psychology at San Francisco State University, who had a career in human

resources at companies from startups to Sun Microsystems, and who recently retired after 22 years at SRI International. She volunteered on her children’s Girl Scouts leadership groups and at the local animal shelter and was passionate about the outdoors and environmental sustainability. She died Jan. 31, after being hit by a car, and as an organ donor, saved the lives of three people.

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

Public Notices

LL CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-302891
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) LL CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY , located at 189 Constitution Dr., Menlo Park, CA 94025.
Registered owner(s):
LOVAZZANO LOGISTICS
189 Constitution Dr
Menlo Park, CA 94025
State of Incorporation/Organization: CA
This business is conducted by: a Corporation.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 12-1-2025.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on February 05, 2026.
(ALM Feb 20, 27, Mar 6 and 13, 2026)

ERLY'S SHEAR BEAUTY
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-302932
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) ERLY'S SHEAR BEAUTY , located at 611 West Orange Ave, South San Francisco, CA 94080.
Registered owner(s):
MARAHA LICUANAN
611 West Orange 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 02/10/2026.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on February 10, 2026.
(ALM Feb 20, 27, Mar 6 and 13, 2026)

GREEN GARDEN GONZALEZ
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-302731
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) GREEN GARDEN GONZALEZ , located at 219 Jervis Ave, East Palo Alto, CA 94303.
Registered owner(s):
ARNOLDO GONZALEZ VASQUEZ
219 Jervis Ave
East Palo Alto, CA 94303
This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 01/01/2026.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on January 21, 2026.
(ALM Feb 20, 27, Mar 6 and 13, 2026)

MP JUNK REMOVAL
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-302749
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) MP JUNK REMOVAL , located at 836 Willow St, Redwood City, CA 94063.
Registered owner(s):
MARC FABRICIO PALOMINOS
836 Willow St
Redwood City, CA 94063
This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed

above on 01/23/2026.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on January 23, 2026.
(ALM Feb 20, 27, Mar 6 and 13, 2026)

DECCAN DENTAL
DECCAN DENTAL SLEEP CENTER
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-302742
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) DECCAN DENTAL , 2.) DECCAN DENTAL SLEEP CENTER , located at 1528 S EL CAMINO REAL, SUITE 408, SAN MATEO, CA 94402.
Registered owner(s):
SAMIR NANJAPA DDS, A DENTAL CORPORATION
1528 S EL CAMINO REAL, SUITE 408
SAN MATEO, CA 94402
State of Incorporation/Organization: CA
This business is conducted by: a Corporation.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 05/15/2013.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on January 23, 2026.
(ALM Feb 6, 13, 20 and 27, 2026)

SUBTLE COMPUTING
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-303019
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) SUBTLE COMPUTING , located at 311 7th Ave, San Mateo, CA, 94401.
Registered owner(s):
SKYWALK INC.
855 El Camino Real - Ste 13A-230
Palo Alto, CA, 94301
State of Incorporation/Organization: DE
This business is conducted by: a Corporation.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 01/04/2026.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on February 19, 2026.
(ALM Feb 27, Mar 6, 13 and 20, 2026)

FENCE MOD
POLLIONI
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-302948
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) FENCE MOD , 2.) POLLIONI , located at 292 Raymundo Drive, Woodside, CA 94062.
Registered owner(s):
POLLIONI GROUP LLC
292 Raymundo Drive
Woodside, CA 94062
State of Incorporation/Organization: CA
This business is conducted by: a Limited Liability Company.
Registrant has not yet begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on February 11, 2026.
(ALM Feb 20, 27, Mar 6 and 13, 2026)

HOKKAIDO BAKERY
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-303001
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) HOKKAIDO BAKERY. , located at 433 Airport Blvd. Suite 103, Burlingame, CA 94010.
Registered owner(s):
BE BLUE VENTURES, INC.
433 Airport Blvd. Suite 103
Burlingame, CA 94010
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 February 18, 2026.
(ALM Feb 27, Mar 6, 13 and 20, 2026)

GYMIO
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-302835
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) GYMIO , located at 1580 Southgate Avenue 416, Daly City, CA 94015.
Registered owner(s):
BEYOND LLC
1580 Southgate Avenue 416
Daly City, CA 94015
State of Incorporation/Organization: California
This business is conducted by: a Limited Liability Company.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 07/01/2025.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on February 02, 2026.
(ALM Feb 20, 27, Mar 6 and 13, 2026)

CERTILINK SIGNING AGENCY
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-302614
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) CERTILINK SIGNING AGENCY , located at 171 Lassen Dr, San Bruno, CA 94066.
Registered owner(s):
TRICIA LLANA MANGABAT
171 Lassen Dr
San Bruno, CA 94066
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 January 08, 2026.
(ALM Feb 13, 20, 27 and Mar 6, 2026)

X DRIVE
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-302591
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) X DRIVE , located at 1383 Laurel Street #B, San Carlos, CA 94070.
Registered owner(s):
NADER HADIZADEH RAEISSI
1383 Laurel Street #B
San Carlos, CA 94070
This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has not yet begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on January 07, 2026.
(ALM Feb 13, 20, 27 and Mar 6, 2026)

PERFORMANCE SPACE HOOPS
PERFORMANCE SPACE CLUB
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-302767
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) PERFORMANCE SPACE HOOPS , 2.) PERFORMANCE SPACE CLUB , located at 3553 Haven Ave. Ste 4, Menlo Park, CA 94025.
Registered owner(s):
PERFORMANCE SPACE LLC
2108 N ST #8596
Sacramento, CA 95816
State of Incorporation/Organization: CA
This business is conducted by: a Limited Liability Company.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 1/1/2026.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on January 27, 2026.
(ALM Feb 6, 13, 20 and 27, 2026)

HIKARI & YUME DESIGNS
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-302811
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) HIKARI & YUME DESIGNS , located at 402 Poinsettia Avenue, San Mateo, CA 94403.
Registered owner(s):
LINDSY DEANNI HERTANU
402 Poinsettia Avenue
San Mateo, CA 94403
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 January 30, 2026.
(ALM Feb 6, 13, 20 and 27, 2026)

CAUSWELLS
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-302787
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) CAUSWELLS , located at 550 Oak Grove Ave, Ste A , Menlo Park, CA 94025. Mailing Address: 32 Terrace Dr Sausalito, CA 94965
Registered owner(s):
CAUSWELLS 2, LLC
32 Terrace Dr
Sausalito, CA 94965
State of Incorporation/Organization: CA
This business is conducted by: a Limited Liability Company.
Registrant has not yet begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on January 28, 2026.
(ALM Feb 6, 13, 20 and 27, 2026)

NOTICE OF PETITION TO ADMINISTER ESTATE OF:
DAVID LEON HILL AKA DAVID LEON HILL SR.
Case No.: 26-PRO-00140
To all heirs, beneficiaries, creditors, contingent creditors, and persons who may otherwise be interested in the will or estate, or both, of DAVID LEON HILL AKA DAVID LEON HILL SR..
A Petition for Probate has been filed by: Danielle Hill in the Superior Court of California, County of SAN MATEO.
The Petition for Probate requests that:

Danielle Hill be appointed as personal representative to administer the estate of the decedent.

THE PETITION requests authority to administer the estate under the Independent Administration of Estates Act. (This authority will allow the personal representative to take many actions without obtaining court approval. Before taking certain very important actions, however, the personal representative will be required to give notice to interested persons unless they have waived notice or consented to the proposed action.) The independent administration authority will be granted unless an interested person files an objection to the petition and shows good cause why the court should not grant the authority. A HEARING on the petition will be held on March 02 2026 at 9:00 AM in Department 13 of the Superior Court of California, County of San Mateo, located at 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063.

If you object to the granting of the petition, you should appear at the hearing and state your objections or file written objections with the court before the hearing. Your appearance may be in person or by your attorney.

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

Attorney for Petitioner:
Arthur Swid Weil
671 Oak Grove Ave. Ste K
Menlo Park, CA 94025
650-322-4244
(ALM Feb 13, 20 and 27, 2026)

The Almanac is adjudicated to publish in San Mateo County.

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

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

TOWN MANAGER*continued from page 1*

the Town Council created a hostile workplace “built on corruption, abuse and dishonesty.” This report was shared to other members of the town staff and committee members, according to the town clerk’s statement.

Ledbetter’s report claims that Dombkowski and Goeld tried to manipulate him and were discriminatory toward council members Jenn Wall and Hassan Aburish. Ledbetter also claims that Wall has bullied him for being male, in violation of the California Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA).

Paul Goeld did not respond to requests for comment.

Ledbetter was hired by the town in April 2025, prior to the retirement of former Town Manager Kevin Bryant. He officially took over the reins in May, bringing over 25 years of experience in project management and local government.

The council was made aware of the whistleblower report on Tuesday, Feb. 17. According to Town Clerk Jennifer Li, Ledbetter contacted the town attorney shortly thereafter and demanded that the town pay him over \$400,000 no later than midnight on Sunday, Feb. 22, or he would release the report to the public. On Wednesday, Feb. 18, he demanded that the money be paid no later than Friday, Feb. 20, according to the statement from the town.

Also on Wednesday, the town council held a special meeting in closed session to discuss a performance review of the town manager. The council rejected Ledbetter’s demands, according to the town’s statement.

“Although the Town does not believe that Mr. Ledbetter drafted and released this report in good faith, the Town is now determining the proper steps to take to ensure that an impartial investigation of its allegations, as well as Mr. Ledbetter’s demands, is completed,” the statement said.

Dombkowski and Wall denied all allegations made in the report. This news organization has reached out to all five council members for comment, but has not gotten a response from the other three.

“This shocked everyone involved. I have never seen anything like it,” Dombkowski said. “I tried my best to support (Ledbetter) and do whatever I could so he could succeed. It’s very hard for everyone to put aside their personal reactions but our primary goal is to protect the town.”

On Thursday afternoon, the town announced that Assistant Town Manager Melissa

Cardinale was appointed as the interim town manager. The upcoming Town Council meeting for Feb. 24 has been canceled due to lack of quorum, as of Friday morning.

Blocking low-income housing

Woodside has struggled to fulfill state mandates for new housing creation and building low-income housing has been a point of contention in the community. Ledbetter alleges that Mayor Dombkowski repeatedly pressured him to postpone seeking developer proposals for building low-income housing on a site in his district known as the Raymudo parcel.

The report describes conversations “behind closed doors” in which the mayor asked Ledbetter to not act on initiatives that could bring low-income housing to his district.

“He states that I need to postpone these actions until after he is reelected and no longer Mayor, and at the first meeting in December of 2026 that this will be current Mayor Pro Tempore Paul Goeld’s ‘problem to deal with,’” Ledbetter wrote in the report.

Dombkowski said the town is already in the process of developing the request for proposals on the parcels listed in the Woodside’s housing element, which is a kind of blueprint for adding housing in the current eight-year cycle. He added that the town is trying its best to meet its mid-cycle housing goals by this time next year.

Ledbetter claims in his complaint that Goeld also asked him not to take any action to find a housing developer for the low-income housing site on High Road, in the election district Goeld represents.

“At two different dinners where I was taken to the Village Pub by Mayor Dombkowski and Mayor Pro Tempore Goeld it was made very clear to me that the two would be very unhappy with me if I followed through on the Housing Element that they had both voted on to approve,” Ledbetter wrote in the report.

Claims of sexist and racist slurs against council members Wall and Aburish

Ledbetter claims that during his first official meeting with Dombkowski and Goeld, he was taken aback by the use of derogatory terms used to describe Wall, including comments about her physical appearance, with one term describing her chest allegedly popularized by the mayor and used by Goeld and former Council member Chris Shaw behind her back.

Dombkowski said he “absolutely” denies those allegations.

“I comport myself with courtesy and professionalism toward my fellow council members. Jenn and I don’t always agree with policy decisions but I respect her opinion, even though it might differ from mine,” he said. “She is an amazing professional with a brilliant mind. These allegations that are made about any statement about Jenn are refuted by the public record of our working relationship together.”

Ledbetter also recounts racist remarks toward Council member Hassan Aburish in his allegations. The report details a dinner meeting with Goeld and Dombkowski alleging that Goeld said, that as a Jewish person, he approves of the genocide in Gaza and thinks Aburish is Palestinian. Ledbetter also claims that Goeld used the N-word to refer to Palestinians.

Dombkowski told this news organization that he has never heard Goeld use those words and has no recollection of ever being present for the dinner in Ledbetter’s report.

Ledbetter characterizes his frequent lunch and dinner meetings with Dombkowski as part of a pressure campaign but Dombkowski explained that he was trying to make Ledbetter feel welcomed. Occasionally he would invite Goeld to join them because he was next in line for mayor, Dombkowski said.

Alleged hostility from Council member Jenn Wall

Ledbetter accuses Wall of discriminating against him because he’s male, in violation of the California Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA). His report details numerous incidents of what he describes as bullying from Wall, and speculates that she might have “justifiably” believed that Ledbetter shared the alleged misogynistic views expressed by Dombkowski and Goeld.

Ledbetter describes Wall texting him about non-emergency topics excessively and at all hours — in the middle of the night, on weekends and holidays — and accuses her of having a “belittling engagement style.” He details an incident when Wall saw multiple Sheriff’s deputies near her home and allegedly sought to issue an alert on San Mateo County’s SMC Alert system over Ledbetter’s objections and the eventual denial of Sheriff’s Capt. Frank Dal Porto

“Not only was this demoralizing and problematic for the relationship I was forming with the San Mateo County Sheriff’s Office, it was also tone deaf and purposefully demeaning toward

me,” Ledbetter wrote.

On another weekend, Ledbetter accuses Wall of “abusive and aggressive texting led to high anxiety and a ruined weekend” after she contacted him at midnight with questions about a vegetation fire along I-280 earlier that afternoon.

During a heated discussion at the Feb. 10 Town Council meeting, about the Flock Safety automated license plate cameras in Woodside, Wall was also outspoken in her objections to using ALPRS. She directed multiple questions toward Ledbetter, which he describes as an “abusive line of questioning.”

Alleged misuse of power from Mayor Dombkowski

During the same Feb. 10 council meeting, the council members voted to ask the California Department of Transportation to lower the speed limit to 15 mph in front of Woodside Elementary School over safety concerns raised by the town’s Circulation Committee.

Shortly after joining the town, Ledbetter wrote that Circulation Committee Chair Ehsan Farkondeh requested the speed limit reduction be added to an upcoming council meeting agenda.

Ledbetter alleges that Dombkowski pressed him to remove the agenda item and “bury it” because the lower speed limit on Woodside Road would slow down his daily commute. Ledbetter claims he was instructed to hold off on the item until the summer.

Ledbetter added that Dombkowski pressured Farkondeh into holding off on the item and threatened to take away the committee’s direct line to the Sheriff’s Office by having it report to the council on traffic concerns instead.

Ledbetter cast doubt on Dombkowski’s motives for seeking a lower speed limit on Highway 84 between Churchill Avenue and Moore Road in support of a road median beautification project funded by private donors. Caltrans, which controls the roadway, required a speed limit of no more than 40 mph in order for trees to be planted.

During this time, Ledbetter also received a request to add an agenda item for a resolution requesting Caltrans reduce the speed limit at the intersection between Highway 84 and 35 from 40 mph to 25 mph, which the council approved on Feb. 10.

Facing Dombkowski’s alleged demands to hold on the speed limit requests for Woodside Elementary School, Ledbetter explained to him that he could no longer hold off on it when two similar requests had been

added to the agenda.

“He seemed baffled as to why I couldn’t just ‘bury it’ and that ‘the last Town Manager would have just buried it,’” the report claims. “Ironically Mayor Dombkowski played both sides on this item and voted yes in public after all his manipulation and bullying behind the scenes.”

Ledbetter questioned the relationship between former council member Shaw and Dombkowski. Shaw allegedly told Ledbetter that he and Dombkowski “spend many days of the week gossiping about town policies at the gym.”

“It appears to me that inappropriate information shared by Mayor Dombkowski to Chris Shaw allows Shaw to manipulate situations for his favor or unknown gain,” Ledbetter wrote.

“There is always conflict and discussion and back and forth leading into every public session,” Dombkowski said in response to the allegation. “Council members have a right to express their opinion as they think through these issues. That’s what the government does.”

The town will be investigating the allegations and will be making public statements in the months ahead, said Dombkowski to this news organization. He said he believes that the allegations will be shown to be without merit.

“If you know me, you know who I am, my character, integrity and commitment to doing good. The same is true of my elected colleagues, who also now bear the burden of these allegations,” he added. “It takes a personal toll on everyone involved the council, our staff and the volunteers but the Town Council is unified in its response here.” ■

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Viewpoint

IDEAS, THOUGHTS AND OPINIONS ABOUT LOCAL ISSUES

A love letter to pickleball — and a request for Menlo Park

By KT Ryan

GUEST OPINION

Divorced, a little broken and newly relocated to Menlo Park, I was not exactly eager to fall in love again — at least not with people. People, I had learned, could ruin your life in an instant.

So instead, I fell in love with a game. Pickleball.

I now spend many of my waking hours smashing, dinking and delicately dropping bright green balls exactly where I intend (and, admittedly, exactly where I don't). Somewhere between the third-shot drops and the unforced errors, something unexpected happened: The people swinging paddles around me restored my faith in humanity.

Nealon Park has become a second home to me — not because of the courts themselves, but because of the incredible community that gathers there to play: students, octogenarians, recent immigrants and lifelong Menlo Park residents. People recovering from cancer, people grieving spouses. Some of us come for therapy, some come for joy, and some come for fitness. Most come for a mix of all three. All of us come because this public space has quietly become a lifeline.

Together, we've grown into a

pickleball community of more than 1,000 players in our Nealon Park Facebook group alone. We've committed to the sport, to each other and to this place.

The city of Menlo Park has yet to do the same.

Pickleball at Nealon Park has been confined to Court No. 5, a single converted tennis court the city still describes as a "pilot program," though it was introduced here in 2020. More than half a decade later, that label no longer fits. This is not a trial run; it's a proof of concept. Yet the setup remains provisional: temporary nets that frequently need replacing, a playing surface crisscrossed with overlapping tennis and pickleball lines, and overhead lights that are reliably unreliable.

While other Peninsula cities are actively building new pickleball courts to meet exploding demand, Menlo Park appears frozen in a prolonged state of indecision over Nealon's Court No. 5. The City Council, city manager, Library and Community Services (LCS), and Public Works staff have the authority and resources to consider improvements at Nealon Park.

Aside from the notable exception of Public Works, which recently replaced broken nets and added some bench seating, meaningful action keeps getting postponed. Meetings are held. Studies are discussed. Momentum stalls. It's as if the city keeps pointing to the sky and calling "rain delay," even on a cloudless day.

Both the City Council and the city manager have cited noise as a key concern to any progress. I get it. I live nearby too, but residents deserve thoughtful solutions. Not civic inaction.

Early in 2024, the City Council directed staff to review and implement short-term noise-mitigation solutions at Nealon Park. Nothing seemed to happen. Later, the city proposed pursuing a feasibility study — costing up to \$85,000 — to analyze locations for pickleball courts, including evaluating the impact of the sport's noise. That's a lot of money to confirm two well-known facts: Pickleball is popular, and pickleball makes noise. At some point, studying the issue becomes a substitute for solving it.

How about funneling those funds directly toward improving the courts for maintenance, safety and noise?

Cities across the country — and



Devin Roberts

Pickleball combines elements of tennis, badminton and pingpong.

even nearby, like Holbrook-Palmer Park in Atherton — have addressed the pickleball noise. Sound-dampening fencing, enforced restricted hours and strategic court placement are not radical experiments; they are proven tools.

It's past time for Menlo Park to implement noise abatement at Nealon Park's Court No. 5. This might be for the short-term, by erecting a noise barrier along the residential-facing fence and by installing lighting that reliably shuts off at 10 p.m. (to enforce the permitted court hours of play), thereby ensuring peace for nearby neighbors. Long-term solutions may be to relocate the pickleball courts further away from residents.

Can the broken lights on the tennis courts be fixed, too? Tennis and pickleball are not mortal enemies. Many players carry both rackets and paddles in the same bag and want Menlo Park to care for players' safety across all its courts.

After multiple years of requests, meetings, and patience, I'm hoping for a little more city investment in pickleball.

I'm committed. Hundreds of us are. We've found community, healing and joy on these courts. In a time when loneliness is common and civic trust is fragile, that is no small thing.

Menlo Park, how can we work together on this?

I'm not quite ready for another broken heart. ■

KT Ryan is a Menlo Park resident.

LETTERS

Our readers write

Let voters decide Menlo Park's parking lot plan

Editor,

Having provoked the community's outrage at its plan to shoehorn massive housing projects into our downtown parking lots, the Menlo Park City Council now must face the music and wait for voters to speak on the resultant citizens' initiative when they head to the polls this November. At least that's what you'd expect from council members who profess to embrace the democratic process.

But you'd be wrong.

Further, with the strong likelihood that Menlo Park voters will revoke the city's power to do as it pleases with public parking lots, you'd think the city's top priority now would be identifying alternate sites for affordable housing.

Again, you'd be wrong.

Instead, Mayor Betsy Nash

and her silent majority on the council continue to push the parking lot housing plan as if no countering ballot measure existed!

So, kudos to Council member Drew Combs, who laid several reality checks before the Council at the Feb. 10 meeting. He pointed out that moving forward now can only generate ill will and serves no constructive purpose. He urged his colleagues to press the "pause" button by waiting for the community's decision in the November election.

One of the most important revelations during the meeting occurred when Combs challenged the familiar "builder's remedy" scare tactic of Council member Jeff Schmidt as fear-mongering. Combs dissected Schmidt's speculation with fact-based observations that state housing officials cannot and will not punish the city if it falls behind its housing element quotas between now and November.

Indeed, there's no rush at all considering that the city has until 2031 to approve projects

that would satisfy its mandated housing numbers.

So, for the moment, that leaves Combs as the lone voice of reason and respect on the council, while Nash pushes her pet project ahead without regard to the upcoming election and the will of the people.

*Cherie Zaslawsky
Menlo Park*

APPLY FOR COMMUNITY FUNDING BY MARCH 5

The City of Menlo Park invites local nonprofit agencies to submit proposals for the Community Funding Program. This program awards monetary support to local nonprofit agencies whose programs respond to the human service needs of Menlo Park residents.

PROGRAM DETAILS

- Funding will help subsidize any recipient based agency but cannot be the sole support of any organization.
- All recipients will enter into a contractual agreement with the City with specific objectives.
- Recipients must fully use all funds by June 30, 2027.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

menlopark.gov/cfp jaherren@menlopark.gov 650-330-6620



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No 'strangers' here

Peninsula author publishes collection of short stories about meeting of cultures

By Heather Zimmerman

Whether it's in a research lab, a Silicon Valley tech company or a classroom in Iran, Margaret Kahn speaks the language. Over the years, the Peninsula author has drawn on her wide-ranging career in linguistics and experiences living abroad to craft stories that explore the mingling of cultures between Americans and people from different countries in the area known as the Middle East.

"There are all these different Middle Eastern cultures, but you know, people from this distance often think those cultures are all the same. Of course, they're incredibly different," Kahn said in an interview with this publication.

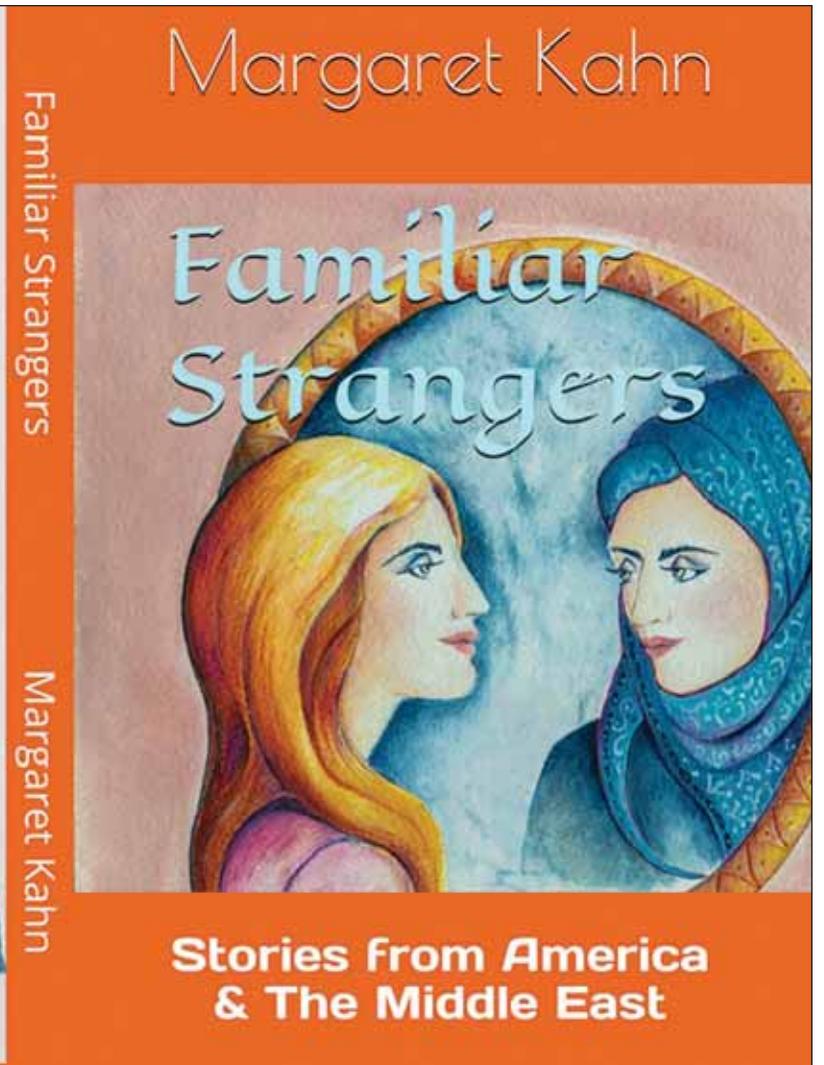
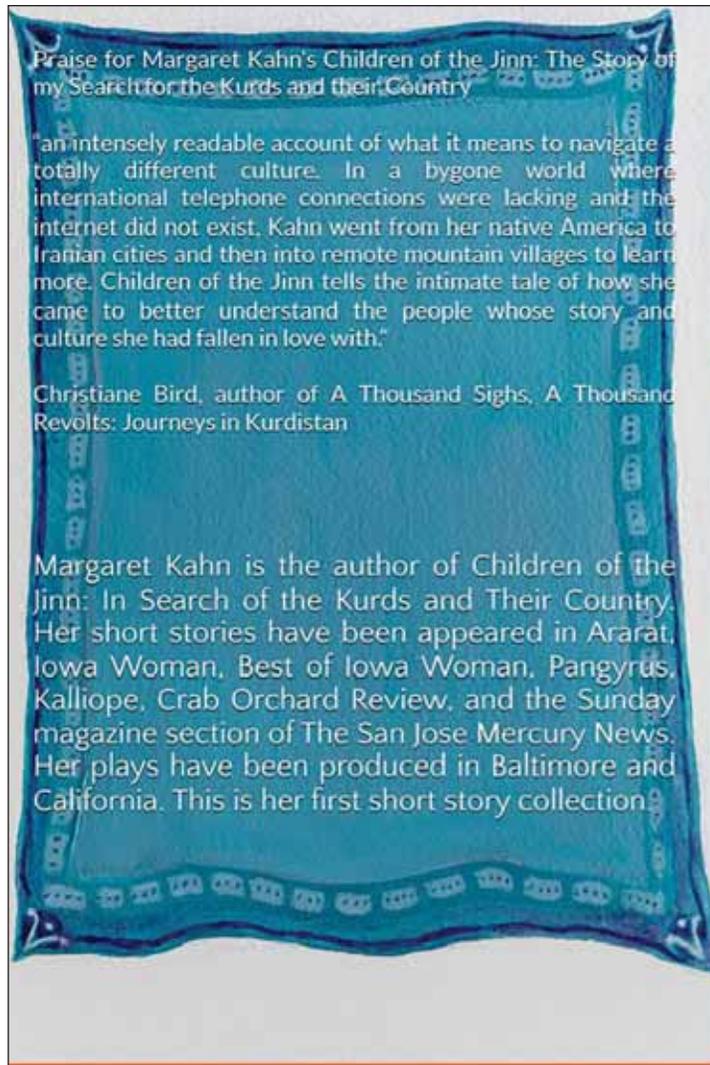
Kahn, who divides her time between the Monterey area and Menlo Park, last summer published the book "Familiar Strangers: Stories from America and the Middle East," which collects 11 of her short stories about the meeting of cultures.

She will read excerpts from her stories and discuss "Familiar Strangers" in a March 10 appearance at the Redwood City Library. She will be featured in conversation with Christine Campbell of Campbell Language Consultants and professor emerita of The Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center. Kahn will explore the inspirations behind some of the stories and answer audience questions.

Born in New York City and raised on the East Coast, Kahn majored in linguistics at Barnard College in New York and minored in writing. She said that though few people were majoring in linguistics, the subject gave her the foundation she was looking for.

"I wanted to be able to teach myself any language I wanted to learn, so I figured linguistics was the way to take that. And actually it's worked out really well because I studied phonetics, which is very helpful for learning other languages," Kahn said.

She received her master's and Ph.D. in linguistics from the



Courtesy Margaret Kahn

"Familiar Strangers" is a collection of short stories that explore the interactions between Americans and people from Middle Eastern countries.

University of Michigan. Before the Iranian revolution, Kahn lived in Iran for a year, where she taught English as a second language and studied the Kurdish language.

Her time in Iran became the basis for her first book, the 1980 memoir "Children of the Jinn: In Search of the Kurds and Their Country."

Kahn went on to work in MIT's Research Lab of Electronics, and in the late '70s she lived and worked in Egypt. She found her way to the West Coast to work in the early '80s, where she worked on text-and-speech-related projects for a number of companies, including Hewlett-Packard, as well as organizations such as the

'I wanted to be able to teach myself any language I wanted to learn, so I figured linguistics was the way to take that.'

MARGARET KAHN

Peninsula-based Sensory Access Foundation.

Kahn said she is fascinated by different cultures.

"Just the endless variation and the beauty of it. I think my year in Iran was one of the most vivid

years of my life. It was probably one of the most difficult. But it was so vivid.

And that culture is so interesting. It is so intricate. And actually, I think, you know, a lot of traditional cultures are that way. Now it feels like it's all endangered. We have more of a monoculture with social media and everybody knowing everything all over the world is very different," Kahn said.

Although many of the stories in "Familiar Strangers" have been published over the years, Kahn wanted to publish a collection now, as some of the pieces appeared in magazines that may now be out of circulation.

"You have stories of periodicals,

especially periodicals like 'Ararat' that no longer even exist and they're not accessible, and I wanted to put it out there so that they were accessible and all together," she said.

The stories date back to the 1980s, and although Kahn has revised the writing, she has not updated the time frames for the stories, leaving them as time capsules.

"I re-edited all of them. I'm always rewriting. For me, writing is really rewriting, right? You can always make it better. I re-edited the second edition of 'Children of the Jinn' as well."

See **NO 'STRANGERS' HERE**, page 20



Courtesy Margaret Kahn

Author Margaret Kahn is also a linguist who has worked in academia and tech.

NO 'STRANGERS' HERE

continued from page 19

Kahn's stories examine both the tensions and common ground found, even within families, as people move around the world and cultures mingle.

"Understanding the Enemy," the first story in "Familiar Strangers," looks at the strained relationship between a woman who survived the Armenian genocide and her adult daughter, who studies Turkish immigrant women and feels an affinity for them. As the Ottoman Empire, which later became Turkey, perpetrated the genocide, mother and daughter are at odds over the latter's work.

"It's partly a story about what happened to the Armenians. It's partly a story about what happens between generations, because that figures a lot in my stories," Kahn said.

Something that has changed since she first wrote some of the stories is a greater awareness in the U.S. about cultures in the Middle East.

"If you're going to present a story, you don't want to have to explain too much. So you know, 'show, don't tell.' But I think there's a lot more known than there was when I first went to Iran. I mean, people didn't know anything about the Kurds. I think that didn't really come across to people until the Gulf War," Kahn said. "But it's a challenge to give people enough background so that you're not constantly explaining things. You don't want to do that, but you also want to make it understandable and then I think it's become a lot more acceptable

to introduce foreign languages. It's kind of a balancing act, but it's what interests me."

The short story for which the book is named found its way to a Peninsula stage in 2012, when The Pear Theatre staged an adaptation of Kahn's story "Familiar Strangers." The experience highlighted for Kahn some of her strengths and helped her further hone them.

"I learned more from writing for theater. I think I was always a sort of a character-based writer, and dialogue has always been my strong point. But I learned more about, you know, shaping a plot and more about dialogue. Working with theater, it's very helpful and very fun, more fun than just sitting and writing by yourself," she said.

Kahn had a second play set to be staged in 2020 in the North Bay. The pandemic delayed the show by two years, but it was produced in 2022 by the Ross Valley Players. She has also written short plays that have received staged readings by The Pear, as well as San Jose's City Lights Theatre, Broadway West in Fremont and others.

Kahn said she is working on a couple of books, including a comic novel set in Egypt in the 1970s. ■

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

Kahn will read from her works March 10, 6 p.m., at the Redwood City Library, 1044 Middlefield Road, Redwood City, with books available for purchase from Fireside Books. For more information, visit redwoodcity.org.

Worth a Look



Courtesy Milwaukee PBS/Big Hassle

Violent Femmes mark their 45th anniversary in two shows March 4-5 at The Guild Theatre.

Violent Femmes

Add it up: It's been 45 years since Milwaukee folk-punk troubadours Violent Femmes burst onto the scene. On tour to mark that anniversary, the band swings by The Guild Theatre for two nights. The group, known for '80s hits such as "Blister in the Sun" and "American Music," blends elements of country blues, rock, folk and more into an instantly recognizable combination of jangly guitar and punchy percussion, underlying frontman Gordon Gano's distinctive vocals. Gano co-founded the group with bassist Brian Ritchie and the duo remains at the band's core. Violent Femmes released their 10th studio album, "Hotel Last Resort," in 2019. Their Guild shows were close to sold out as of press time, so fans might want to grab those tickets before they're gone daddy gone.

March 4-5, 8 p.m., at The Guild Theatre, 949 El Camino Real, Menlo Park; \$156-\$1,215; guildtheatre.com.

'The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee'

Foothill Theatre Arts stages a quirky musical that finds lots of heart in a spelling competition where getting the words right is just one of many things on young contestants' minds. Taking home both Tony and Drama Desk awards for best book (script), "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee" finds gentle humor and pathos in the life aspirations of a group of misfit tween spellers (played by adult actors) as well as some of the bee's equally misfit adult judges, and celebrates their stories in song.

Feb. 27-March 15 at Foothill College, 12345 El Monte Road, Los Altos Hills. \$38-\$44 (\$33-\$35 Thursdays). <https://foothill.edu/theatre/spelling-bee.html>.

Drew Daywalt

Folded paper fortune tellers (occasionally called "cootie catchers") can hold a lot of sway on the school playground, as they "predict" the futures of their young users. So it makes sense that in author Drew Daywalt's clever new graphic novel-style picture book, a paper fortune teller named Forty is able to marshal a force of playground detritus, including a potato chip and a wad of chewed gum, to work together on making a play area safer for kids. Daywalt, also the author of the bestseller "The Day the Crayons Quit," will be on hand to share "Forty the Fortune Teller" at Kepler's. The book also features illustrations by Kevin Cornell.

March 1, 11 a.m. at Kepler's Books, 1010 El Camino Real, Menlo Park; \$11.49 per person general admission/\$32.49

family admission (for two adults and up to four children; includes a copy of the book); keplers.org.

Marsha Warfield

Comedian Marsha Warfield made her name starring as a wise-cracking bailiff on the 1980s sitcom "Night Court" — she also appeared in the show's 2023 revival. But her standup career predates that: in 1979, she grabbed top honors as the winner of the San Francisco International Comedy Competition and two years before that, she appeared on "The Richard Pryor Show." She has performed on a variety of well-loved TV shows, from "Family Ties" and "Cheers" to "In Living Color" and "Touched by an Angel." In 2017, Warfield came out as gay, which was written into her "Night Court" character for the 2023 revival. She will perform two standup sets at the Bing Studio.

Feb. 27, 7 and 9 p.m., at The Studio, Bing Concert Hall, 327 Lasuen St., Stanford; \$34.56-\$43.20; live.stanford.edu/events/25-26season/studio/hysterical-marsha-warfield.

Black History and Black Futures Festival

EPACenter closes out Black History Month with a festival featuring DJ music, art activities, a Black business pop-up and a screening of "Black Panther." Guests can also take part in a hair-braiding workshop and enjoy food from local eateries.

Feb. 28, 5-8 p.m., at EPACenter, 1950 Bay Road, East Palo Alto. Free; reserve a spot at tinyurl.com/BlackHistoryFuturesFest.

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Food & Drink

Meet the Yogurt Freak

After quitting tech, this Atherton resident created a Korean-inspired yogurt brand

By Adrienne Mitchel
Photos by Seeger Gray

Diana Lee is a self-proclaimed yogurt freak. The Atherton resident and Gunn High School alum is so passionate about the gut-friendly, high-protein snack that she quit her tech job to start her own yogurt company — and she's documenting the entire journey on social media. On Nov. 12, she posted a video to social media announcing that she was undergoing a significant career change, titled "Quitting 6-figure tech job to sell yogurt."

The post garnered nearly 200,000 views on TikTok and significant attention on Instagram. Since then, she's been hosting Peninsula-based sampling events and pop-ups as she slowly builds her brand, Yogurt Freak, from scratch.

"I was just really sick of going to yogurt aisles and not seeing any flavors that I wanted," Lee said.

Lee grew up in Korea eating traditional Korean food, most of which her grandma would make at home. For gut health, she often would eat kimchi, but at age 10, she and her family moved to Palo Alto, and yogurt was much more accessible as a gut-healthy snack.

The "aha moment" for starting her own yogurt brand came after spending a few months in Korea and frequenting cafes specializing in yogurt.

"I was like, 'Why isn't this here?'" Lee said. "And then I realized that I could put my own twist on it with flavors that I grew up eating."

Inspired by Lee's Korean heritage, she tops thick, triple-strained yogurt with marmalades featuring Korean fruits or syrups made from Korean teas and finishes them with a sprinkle of crunchy freeze-dried jujube chips (which taste like a date).

While flavors rotate regularly, she currently offers yogurt featuring yuzu-Hallabong (honey citron and sweet tangerine from the Korean island of Jeju); omija (traditional Korean tea that's sweet, salty, bitter, spicy and sour all at once); and maesil (tart green Korean plums).

"I love the way that people's faces light up when they try something new, like trying yuzu for the first time, or trying omija," she said. "And it's a great way to experience new cultures."

The yogurt is strained for 16-24 hours to achieve a texture somewhere between Greek yogurt and cream cheese, with customers saying it's slightly less tangy than traditional Greek yogurt. Because the yogurt is less sour, Lee said she can use less sugar and can modify how sweet a customer wants their yogurt by

adding more or less marmalade or syrup to their cup.

Her dad, an acupuncturist, acts as Yogurt Freak's "unofficial consultant," Lee joked, explaining that his knowledge of traditional medicine helps inform her choice of ingredients. For example, omija is used in traditional Korean medicine to support liver and kidney function, enhance immunity and treat respiratory issues.

Flavor is still paramount, Lee said, but she also aims to make her products healthy. She finds that her prior work in UX content strategy at Shipt and as content and design lead at DoorDash is helping her develop her yogurt business.

"I'm taking a lot of lessons from being in tech, where you are very experimental with just getting feedback, and you are really, really, really focused on the customer," Lee said.

One way she's been getting feedback is through free sampling events. Her first ones were in early December in Atherton, Sunnyvale and San Mateo. Using social media to spread the word, about 700 people RSVPed, and nearly 300 showed up. The free samples spread the word about her product and gave Lee insights into how customers responded to various flavors and textures.

On Jan. 31, Yogurt Freak held its first pop-up, selling 4-ounce jars for \$7 and 6-ounce jars for \$9 at Boba Pup in Santa Clara. Lee sold 200 jars, with walk-ins selling out in 15 minutes. It was Lee's first time collaborating with another brand, as Boba Pup and Yogurt Freak created a yuzu-Hallabong jasmine matcha latte inspired by Yogurt Freak's yuzu-Hallabong yogurt.

Lee hopes to continue having pop-ups once or twice on weekends and less frequent weekday pop-ups. As she develops new flavors, she also plans to hold free sampling events. All pop-ups and sampling events will be announced on her Instagram and TikTok. Yogurt Freak's next pop-up will be at Mr. Sun Tea in Mountain View on March 1 from 2-4 p.m.

Lee's long-term goals are to get the permitting and facilities to make her own yogurt from scratch, scale her operations and eventually stock Yogurt Freak at grocery stores.

She's currently working on an upcoming collaboration with Snowtime in Campbell, a Korean dessert shop specializing in bingsu, a Korean shaved ice dessert. While the flavors have not yet been announced, expect yogurt bingsu to pop up at Snowtime in the near future and potentially get added to the menu based on customer response.

"I want to expose people to new flavors," Lee said. "I want them to be able to connect through food." ■



From top: Diana Lee stirs yogurt for her Yogurt Freak pop-up at Boba Pup; toppings include marmalades, syrups and freeze-dried jujube chips; Lee hands a customer her order on Jan. 31.

Yogurt Freak, Instagram: @yogurt.freak.



Courtesy Trad Bone Broth

Clockwise from the top: Brothers David Kim, left, and Jonathan Kim co-founded Trad Bone Broth, a cafe specializing in bone broth on tap; sweet iced drinks featuring broth; Korean beef soup, left, and chicken wild rice soup; Trad Bone Broth offers four types of broth on tap — European beef, classic chicken, Korean-style creamy white beef (Seoul Broth) and a vegetarian option made of Pacific kombu.

San Francisco bone broth cafe is expanding to the Peninsula

Trad Bone Broth uses beef and chicken bones to craft savory and sweet beverages

By Adrienne Mitchel

A new Peninsula cafe won't be brewing coffee or steeping tea — it'll serve bone broth.

Trad Bone Broth turned heads with its San Francisco debut in 2022, and now it's in the process of expanding to downtown Burlingame, with an expected opening in March. The small takeout-only cafe offers various broths on tap and uses these broths to craft made-to-order signature drinks (\$11-\$15). Some are savory and some are sweet, but all bone broths are made with 100% pasture-raised chicken and beef bones from farms practicing organic or regenerative agriculture, including Markegard Family Grass-Fed in Half Moon Bay and TomKat Ranch in Pescadero.

"We want to provide a really nourishing product in a really convenient form," co-founder Jonathan Kim said

A Minnesota native, Jonathan Kim moved to Seoul, South Korea, after graduating from college. During the six years he lived there, he developed a fascination and appreciation for Korea's broth culture, noting that nearly every meal came with a bowl of soup or a cup of broth.

"I did a two-year gut reset diet once I found out about broth, where I was drinking broth every day for two years," he said.

Dig into food news. Follow the Peninsula Foodist on Instagram @peninsulafoodist and subscribe to the newsletter at [AlmanacNews.com/peninsula-foodist](https://almanacnews.com/peninsula-foodist) to get insights on the latest openings and closings, learn what the Foodist is excited about eating, read exclusive interviews and keep up on the trends affecting local restaurants.

"It just felt really good, just really felt nourished by it."

After returning to the States, Jonathan Kim missed how accessible broth was, and he formed a business idea, convincing his brother David Kim to forgo law school to start Trad Bone Broth.

"It was a tough sell, but then doing all this very wholesome cooking and working with your hands probably just healed me of the need for prestige," David Kim said.

The name Trad comes from the word "traditional," representing the brothers' commitment to create bone broth in an old-school way. Broth is simmered for 20 to 40 hours in kettles, not pressure cookers. Trad's broth production process is completely plastic-free, as broth is packaged in stainless steel kegs and glass jars so that there are no micro plastics in the broth and no plastics in the trash bin.

"For us, a lot of the soul of bone broth is about doing what the grandmothers did," David Kim said. "That wisdom of giving you chicken soup when you're sick or when you're recovering from an injury wasn't spoken in scientific jargon, but is really this very sophisticated and passed-down wisdom that's in every single culture around the world."

To start their new venture, they decided to move out of the Midwest to San Francisco, where they thought broth culture would be more accepted and fit into the healthy California lifestyle.

"All our friends (in San Francisco) were like, 'It's kind of perfect broth weather because it's always 10 degrees too cold,'" David Kim said.

Four broth varieties are available on tap: European beef broth, classic chicken broth,

Korean-style creamy white beef broth (Seoul Broth) and a vegetarian option made of Pacific kombu (\$9-\$13). Jonathan Kim inherited the Seoul Broth recipe from a Korean chef, and he said it tastes more like milk than meat.

All four broths can be drunk as-is or crafted into beverages, including David Kim's go-to, the Immunity Broth, made with the classic chicken broth, ginger, turmeric, black pepper, garlic and ginseng. For first-time broth drinkers, he recommends going sweet.

"The newbies to bone broth really need to try the sweet ones, because they're 75% bone broth, full of protein and collagen, but it's like drinking a sweet latte," he said.

David Kim's favorite sweet broth is the matcha, made with the Seoul Broth, house-made coconut milk, raw honey, ceremonial-grade matcha and vanilla. Other sweet options, available hot or iced, include the chai broth, Sweet Serenity broth (made with raw honey, lavender and vanilla), chocolate sea salt broth (made with regeneratively-sourced cacao) and peppermint cocoa broth. He explained these sweet broths taste like nourishing, more satiating cafe drinks.

"I know it sounds so weird and it's kind of



hard to wrap your head around, but, man, people try those and are just hooked, and the kiddos really love them too, which is super sweet to see," David Kim said. "We've had 12-year-olds come in with their allowance money and be like, 'I'm not doing boba this week because I wanted my bone broth.'"

In addition to beverages, Trad Bone Broth also offers soups packaged in Mason jars, including Korean beef soup, chicken wild rice soup and chicken pho (\$24). New to the Burlingame store will be a selection of beauty and home products made from tallow, including candles, soap, sunbalm and other skincare products.

The Kims said that when they first opened Trad Bone Broth, people were very skeptical of the concept, but many skeptics have since become regulars. The Kims explained that people drink broth at all times of the day — some use it as a coffee substitute in the morning, others use it as a snack to hold them over until the next meal and others use broth for fasting.

"Our internal goal was to heal America's gut," David Kim said. "I think our menu is composed of these traditions that really helped us and nourished us ... so that's what we want to pass on."

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





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