

The Almanac

NONPROFIT LOCAL NEWS FOR THE MIDPENINSULA

APRIL 24, 2026 | VOL. 61 NO. 33



WWW.ALMANACNEWS.COM

Woodside students blossom in school's garden

Second graders' art and flowers to feature at native plant sale

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Second graders in Woodside Elementary School's garden plucked edible flowers and grasses, munching on them as they collected salamanders, slugs, beetles and ants. Even at this young age, the students are becoming well-versed in native plants, gardening and wildlife.

In recognition of April as Native Plant Month, Woodside students and community members have been working hard to promote the practice of gardening and native plant appreciation. In preparation for an upcoming plant sale with the Woodside Atherton Garden Club, Woodside Elementary's second graders participated in a native plant painting contest and grew California poppies in their school garden.

As far back as the 1970s, the Woodside Atherton Garden Club has hosted a biannual plant sale.

On Saturday, May 9, the garden club will be selling native plants, including the student-grown California poppies, along with vegetables, roses, grasses and more, at the Woodside Library's native plant garden, where the second grade class's paintings will be on display. The painting contest, led by Woodside teacher Brian Myrtetus, will award three students with a milkshake from Buck's Restaurant down the road.

In 2023, California officially designated April as Native Plant Month to promote their conservation and restoration. Members of the Woodside Atherton Garden Club said the group was "instrumental in advocating" for this resolution to pass.

"Creating awareness around native plants is important because not only are they water-wise, but they support the local pollinators, birds and animals," said

See **GARDEN**, page 20



Michael Molcsan

Second grade students pick peas in the school garden to have with their snack at Woodside Elementary School in Woodside on April 17.

Man sues YouTubers over alleged pepper-spray attack at Mountain View Costco

Claiming damaged eyesight, lawsuit seeks \$3M and shutdown of channel

By Arden Margulis

A man who says his eyes were injured when a group of YouTubers pepper-sprayed him at a Mountain View Costco has filed a lawsuit seeking millions of dollars in damages, as well as a court order forcing them to end their channels.

Paul Rubino, a maintenance worker in Milpitas, alleges his eyesight was damaged after he was attacked by a group of four "First Amendment auditors" on March 28 while shopping at the Costco on North Rengstorff Avenue.

According to Mountain View

police and Rubino, as he was leaving the store, Rubino asked the group why they were filming shoppers. After a brief verbal confrontation, the group allegedly followed Rubino to his car and pepper-sprayed him.

A police report alleges that Northridge resident Richard Maza, 51, deliberately provoked the encounter in order to claim self-defense in pepper-spraying Rubino and attract views for his channel to monetize the interaction.

"They were terrorizing people that were just trying to do their shopping," Rubino said in an interview with this news organization. "It was one of those

things that I felt the need to step in to protect people. And it quickly turned into a threatening situation where these guys followed me."

Rubino said that when he tried to leave, the group followed him to his car and tried to get his address from a package in his car. Maza put his camera through Rubino's open car window as he was trying to leave and when he pushed it away, Maza pepper-sprayed Rubino.

"It was a shock," Rubino said. "I've never experienced anything like that before and the next thing I know, these guys are taping me and they're enjoying what's going on."

The group that was at the Costco included Maza, who posts on the channel "Freedom of the Press," Richard Troyan of Canada, who is behind a channel titled "True North Transparency," and father and son duo Conrad and Nick Rankin who run iiMPACT Media. They refer to their videos as "First Amendment audits," because there's a constitutional right to film in most public places. Then the "auditors" upload their videos of people's reactions to sites like YouTube.

Maza was arrested by Mountain View police and charged with two felonies stemming from the incident. Police

claimed that Maza mocked the people he pepper-sprayed on social media, which is "not typical of victims who are truly defending themselves," officers said in a police report.

Police stated that videos on Maza's channel where he uses pepper spray have three times the views of his other videos.

Rubino and his attorney say that while YouTube may not be legally responsible for the content, the company has an ethical obligation to stop profiting from the videos. Mountain View-based Google, which owns YouTube, did not respond to

See **ATTACK**, page 12

INSIDE

SPRING HOME & REAL ESTATE

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Authors' Salon

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RESORT-LIKE GROUNDS AND RARE VIEWS

Set behind gates on over an acre of complete privacy, this Mediterranean estate of more than 7,600 square feet is a rare retreat in Atherton. Expansive formal rooms exude elegance, while a walk-out family room opens directly to the grounds, blending indoor and outdoor spaces with ease. The chef's kitchen is equipped with high-end appliances and dual islands, creating a space perfect for gathering friends and family. Five bedrooms, including a primary suite with a steam shower, offer serene and luxurious retreats, and an imperial staircase along with an elevator connect the two levels gracefully.

The grounds are extraordinary, designed to feel like a private five-star resort. An oversized pool with an elevated spa sets the scene for leisurely afternoons, while a fireplace and broad terraces create inviting spaces for relaxation or entertaining. Lush landscaping and level lawns frame the home, offering both privacy and a sense of openness, all complemented by rare Western Hill views that few Atherton properties can match. Moments from Las Lomas schools, Stanford University, and the venture capital hubs along Sand Hill Road, this estate combines seclusion, convenience, and a lifestyle defined by elegance, comfort, and timeless sophistication.

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650.918.8118 LICENSE# 01855861



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Redwood City
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Local News

MENLO PARK | A THERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY



Seeger Gray

Afshan Keval, center, shows pre-K students how to cut watermelon for a fruit salad while Director Kristy Roos-Taylor, left, looks on, at Menlo-Atherton Cooperative Nursery School in Menlo Park on April 16.

Still playful at 75

Menlo-Atherton Co-op Nursery celebrates a milestone

By Brianna Sosa

Toddlers waddled into the Menlo-Atherton Cooperative Nursery School one by one on a recent Friday, each clutching colorful bouquets half their size to present to director Kristy Roos-Taylor for teacher appreciation day.

The nursery school has been serving local families since 1951, and is celebrating its 75th anniversary in May. Roos-Taylor has worked at the nursery for 27 years, and said it's been incredibly fulfilling when

parents tell her "how the co-op changed their lives, changed their families, changed the way they would have parented ... in a much more positive way."

After the children settled in, they spread out across the classroom to choose their activities. A few dunked their hands in paint and started on art projects. Others clamored to the outdoor sandbox and the water station.

Students won't learn to read or write at the co-op. Instead, they'll play dress-up, build with blocks or climb on the

playground, all of which hone fine and gross motor skills, according to Roos-Taylor.

"I have hung on very tightly to a play-based philosophy," Roos-Taylor said, acknowledging that it isn't the norm nowadays.

In the heart of Silicon Valley, it can be difficult to get families to buy into the nursery school's way of teaching, according to Roos-Taylor. "Parents want more and faster and better, and they want their young child to

See **NURSERY SCHOOL**, page 16

Judge sinks TIDE Rising's lawsuit against high school district

TIDE Academy in Menlo Park can close this summer as planned

By Arden Margulis

A federal judge dismissed a lawsuit against the Sequoia Union High School District filed by parents of TIDE Academy students hoping to block the closing of the school.

Northern California District Judge Trina Thompson ruled Monday, April 20, that the parents failed to "plausibly allege" that the closure of TIDE would

deny meaningful access to public education that could not be replicated at another school.

The Sequoia Union Board of Trustees unanimously voted on Feb. 4 to close TIDE, a small school in Menlo Park that has a disproportionate number of students with disabilities and who are socioeconomically disadvantaged compared to other district schools. The board said that due to TIDE's declining enrollment and its budget deficit, it

needed to close the 6-year-old school and transfer its programs to Woodside High, which would save Sequoia Union \$14 million over four years.

The 200-student school opened in 2019 on a new campus, and parents said teens who struggled at the district's much larger comprehensive high schools thrived at TIDE.

The district does not know

See **TIDE**, page 18

Sequoia district parents call for the return of honors classes

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Three years ago, honors courses were eliminated from the Sequoia Union High School District, but the topic has resurfaced as parents prepared for the school board's April 22 discussion on streamlining course offerings.

SUHSD Students First is a parent group that is advocating for the return of honors and advanced standing classes. The elimination of honors classes for ninth graders, also known as detracking, was intended to boost academic performance and opportunities for less-advantaged students by encouraging students of all levels to work together.

The school district aimed to improve equity, cooperation and participation among students through "heterogeneous" or blended classrooms. Since honors courses were eliminated, the district reports that the number of students taking Advanced Placement (AP) exams has grown by 52% since 2018.

Students First is preparing to step up to the podium for the board's discussion in hopes that trustees will take a vote to reinstate honors classes. Since 2023, the group has gathered over 1,200 signatures from community members calling for the restoration of advanced courses.

"The idea of having a full range of courses available allows students to pace themselves at a level where they can challenge themselves as much as or as little as they want," said Michael Deksheniaks, a parent with Students First. "By taking out the honors course track, you effectively strip out the middle, and that creates a big gap for service to all students."

The district's most extensive discussion on detracking occurred in September 2023, when staff explored the impact that heterogeneous classes would have on students of different academic backgrounds.

In December 2024, the district received an independent analysis by the Hanover Research Group, which highlighted some indicators that streamlining courses led to increased enrollment

and improved performance in advanced tracks among historically underrepresented groups.

"Study after study, including longitudinal research tracking nearly 6,000 students, shows that students at every ability level learn more in heterogeneous settings than in tracked ones," according to the district staff report.

Since schools reopened after the COVID-19 pandemic, Deksheniaks said parents have observed that their ninth-grade children's high school coursework is less rigorous than their middle school classes.

During last year's Dec. 18 board meeting, parents expressed concerns that children with learning disabilities would not be able to access higher level courses without the middle ground of honors classes. One parent called it discriminatory.

"The leap to AP and the pacing of AP classes is too hard for (kids with learning disabilities)," said one parent during public comment. "By not offering honors classes, students can't show colleges they can handle harder classes and can't compete with students who are taking nothing but AP classes."

Another public commenter highlighted that Carlmont High School, with a student body that is 40% white and 30% Asian, is the only campus within the district to offer advanced English classes to ninth graders.

"We are only providing AS English I in places where the population is predominantly white and Asian," they said. "At M-A, Woodside and Sequoia, that opportunity is simply not available."

On the board meeting agenda, district officials noted that there have been requests for the restoration of honors classes for the next school year, saying that the "district and site administrative leadership continues to believe that a common ninth grade experience in core courses has significant merit, while acknowledging that there are community members who disagree."

See **HONORS CLASSES**, page 18

Public Notices

Exemption from School Parcel Tax

An exemption from the Portola Valley School District \$471 parcel tax is available to eligible seniors (age 65 or older by June 30), or persons receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). Applicants must occupy the property they own, located within the boundary of the School District. The exemption application is available at www.pvsd.net or by calling (650) 851-1777. Application and supporting documents must be submitted by June 15. (ALM Apr 24, 2026)

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING AND OF PROPOSAL FOR IMPLEMENTING SCHOOL FACILITIES FEES AS AUTHORIZED BY EDUCATION CODE SECTION 5 17620 AND GOVERNMENT CODES 65995

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that immediately following a public hearing on the matter, a proposed resolution(s) will be considered by the Governing Board of Portola Valley School District at its regular meeting on May 14, 2026, at 6:30 p.m., which if adopted by the Board will implement development fees established by the District against residential construction and reconstruction at \$3.23 (60 percent of \$5.38) per square foot and against new commercial or industrial construction at \$0.52 (60 percent of \$0.87) per square foot. Education Code Section 17620 and Government Code Section 65995 authorize the proposed fees. Data pertaining to the cost of school facilities is available for inspection during regular business hours at the District's administrative offices. The fee, if approved by the Governing Board, will become effective on July 13, 2026, which is 60 days after the proposed adoption of the resolution levying such fee by the Governing Board.

(ALM Apr 24 and May 1, 2026)

SAFE PATH LIVING

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-303491

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:

1.) SAFE PATH LIVING, located at 1450 Lincoln Avenue Unit 13, Burlingame, CA 94010.

Registered owner(s):
FUNCTIONAL SOLUTIONS LLC
1450 Lincoln Avenue Unit 13
Burlingame, CA 94010

State of Incorporation/Organization: CA
This business is conducted by: a Limited Liability Company.

Registrant has not yet begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above.

This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on April 08, 2026.

(ALM Apr 17, 24, May 1 and 8, 2026)

QUIRARTE PAINTING AND HOME SERVICES

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-303444

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:

1.) QUIRARTE PAINTING AND HOME SERVICES, located at 1514 W Selby Lane, Redwood City, CA 94061.

Registered owner(s):
HECTOR QUIRARTE
1514 West Selby Lane
Redwood City, CA 94061

State of Incorporation/Organization: CA
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 April 03, 2026.

(ALM Apr 10, 17, 24 and May 1, 2026)

THE UPS STORE #6096

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-303581

The following person (persons) is (are) doing

business as:

1.) THE UPS STORE #6096, located at 6748 Mission St, Daly City, CA, 94014. Mailing Address: 459 Farallon Avenue Pacifica, CA 94044

Registered owner(s):
MOHIT SEHGAL
459 Farallon Ave
Pacifica, CA, 94044

AKSHAY SEHGAL
459 Farallon Ave
Pacifica, CA, 94044

This business is conducted by: a General Partnership.

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 April 15, 2026.

(ALM Apr 24, May 1, 8 and 15, 2026)

TRAYS4US LLC

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-303608

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:

1.) TRAYS4US LLC, located at 711 Bayview way, Redwood City, CA, 94062.

Registered owner(s):
TRAYS4US LLC
711 Bayview Way
Redwood City, CA, 94062

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 03/08/2026.

This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on April 17, 2026.

(ALM Apr 24, May 1, 8 and 15, 2026)

BEHIND THE PAGE TUTORING

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-303404

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:

1.) BEHIND THE PAGE TUTORING, located at 315A Central Avenue, Menlo Park, CA 94025.

Registered owner(s):
EMMA BERARDINI
315A Central Avenue
Menlo Park, CA 94025

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 March 30, 2026.

(ALM Apr 24, May 1, 8 and 15, 2026)

THE UPS STORE #8157

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-303580

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:

1.) THE UPS STORE #8157, located at 201 Grand Ave Suite 1, South San Francisco, CA, 94080. Mailing Address: 459 Farallon Ave Pacifica, CA 94044.

Registered owner(s):
MOHIT SEHGAL
459 Farallon Ave
Pacifica, CA 94044

AKSHAY SEHGAL
459 Farallon Ave
Pacifica, CA 94044

This business is conducted by: a General Partnership.

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 April 15, 2026.

(ALM Apr 24, May 1, 8 and 15, 2026)

MILKY TEA WORKS

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-303320

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:

1.) MILKY TEA WORKS, located at 724 PALOMA AVE, BURLINGAME, CA 94010.

Registered owner(s):
LOUIS SREMAC
724 PALOMA AVE
BURLINGAME, CA 94010

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 March 20, 2026.

(ALM Apr 3, 10, 17 and 24, 2026)

INQUIRY LAB COACHING

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-303275

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:

1.) INQUIRY LAB COACHING, located at 855 Jefferson Ave, BOX #104, Redwood City, CA 94063.

Registered owner(s):
NORBERT KEITH TAVARES
855 Jefferson Ave, BOX #104
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 March 1, 2026.

This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on March 16, 2026.

(ALM Apr 3, 10, 17 and 24, 2026)

R&B ELECTRONICS SERVICE COMPANY LLC

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-303349

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:

1.) R&B ELECTRONICS SERVICE COMPANY LLC, located at 1103 ODDSTAD DR, REDWOOD CITY, CA 94063.

Registered owner(s):
R&B ELECTRONICS SERVICE COMPANY LLC
1103 ODDSTAD DR
REDWOOD CITY CA, 94063

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 March 24, 2026.

(ALM Apr 3, 10, 17 and 24, 2026)

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN MATEO

Case No.: 26-CIV-02075

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:

Petitioner: MARILYN ELISABETH HALES

filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows:

MARILYN ELISABETH HALES to ELISABETH HALES HOLMES

THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted.

Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file a written objection that includes the reasons for the objection at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing to show cause why the petition should not be granted. If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing.

NOTICE OF HEARING: MAY 27, 2026, 9:00 AM, SOUTHERN BRANCH of the Superior Court of California, County of SAN MATEO located at 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063-1662.

A copy of this ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE shall be published at least once each week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county:

ALMANAC

Date: 3/26/2026

STEPHANIE GARRETT

JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT

(ALM Apr 24, May 1, 8 and 15, 2026)

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN MATEO

Case No.: 26-CIV-02337

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:

Petitioner: Renee Clarice Mendoza filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows:

CLARICE RENEE MENDOZA to RENEE CLARICE MENDOZA

CLARICE C. MENDOZA to RENEE CLARICE MENDOZA

RENEE C. BUSACKER to RENEE CLARICE MENDOZA

RENEE BUSACKER to RENEE CLARICE MENDOZA

RENEE MENDOZA to RENEE CLARICE MENDOZA

RENEE C. MENDOZA to RENEE CLARICE MENDOZA

THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted.

Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file a written objection that includes the reasons for the objection at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing to show cause why the petition should not be granted. If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing.

NOTICE OF HEARING: June 3, 2026, 9:00 a.m., San Mateo of the Superior Court of California, County of San Mateo located at 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063.

A copy of this ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE shall be published at least once each week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county:

ALMANAC

Date: 04/03/2026

MC

JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT

(ALM Apr 17, 24, May 1 and 8, 2026)

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN MATEO

Case No.: 26-CIV-01817

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:

Petitioner: Peggy Chi filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows:

MARISSA HU to MARISSA CHI

THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted.

Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file a written objection that includes the reasons for the objection at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing to show cause why the petition should not be granted. If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing.

NOTICE OF HEARING: 5/20/2026, 9:00AM, Southern Branch of the Superior Court of California, County of San Mateo located at 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063.

A copy of this ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE shall be published at least once each week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county:

ALMANAC

Date: 03/19/2026

Hon. Stephanie G. Garratt

JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT

(ALM Apr 3, 10, 17 and 24, 2026)

The Almanac is adjudicated to publish in San Mateo County.

• Fictitious Business Name

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The Almanac

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San Mateo County says funding dispute puts \$1 billion at risk

By Miranda de Moraes

More than \$1 billion that San Mateo County and its 20 cities are counting on over the next decade may never make it home due to what local officials say is a broken state Vehicle License Fee funding formula.

At a Redwood City press conference on April 7, county and city officials urged the state to release money it says it's owed and to permanently fix the Vehicle License Fee (VLF) mechanism that has left San Mateo County among the few counties excluded from funding.

"San Mateo County is one of only three counties that is being treated unfairly due to a flawed California funding formula created to address a state budget deficit long ago," said Joan Dentler, state Sen. Josh Becker's chief of staff, on behalf of the senator. "I will fight for every dollar our county is owed and push for a permanent fix so we can finally end this cycle of uncertainty."

Local leaders blame the state for sticking with an imperfect tax system that has harmed San Mateo County and its cities. Some state officials and critics have said the funding gap has been known for years and that local governments should have adjusted to it.

How the VLF system works

At the center of the controversy is California's Vehicle License Fee mechanism, which has provided 55 of California's 58 counties with roughly \$12 billion in funding for the most recent 2024-25 fiscal year, according to Kenneth Kappahn, a principal fiscal analyst with the Legislative Analyst's Office. San Mateo County was one of the three left out.

The VLF is like a property tax on a car, paid to the California

Department of Motor Vehicles and then handed back to local governments, according to the state's Legislative Analyst's Office. For decades, it was at about 2% of a car's market value. In 2004, voters lowered it to 0.65% as a popular tax relief program. It has remained there, reducing a key source of local revenue.

To offset the loss to schools from the lower tax rate, the state has backfilled school funding through its General Fund.

But some school districts do not qualify for General Fund money from the state because they receive sufficient funding from property taxes, noted Paul Steenhausen, a principal fiscal analyst at the California Legislative Analyst's Office. These are known as basic-aid districts, a category that 19 of San Mateo County's 23 districts fall under.

Basic-aid districts are not always located in wealthier property-tax areas. East Palo Alto's Ravenswood City School District is basic-aid, while Burlingame School District is non-basic-aid, said Justin Mates, a county assistant executive, because the equation to determine a basic-aid district relies on a constellation of factors that include student attendance, and not just property values.

Because basic-aid districts rely largely on property tax revenue for funding, they are legally unable to share this revenue with local governments, which would otherwise serve as VLF backfill, Mates added.

The problem first surfaced in fiscal year 2011-12, when San Mateo County was hit with a \$432,000 shortfall, Mates said. The state wrote this backfill for San Mateo County into the governor's proposed budget for fiscal year 2013-14 without any

See **FUNDING**, page 10



Miranda de Moraes

San Mateo County Supervisor Jackie Speier addresses a crowd of roughly 200 people at Fire Station 9 in Redwood City to call for a solution to the state's Vehicle License Fee backfill dilemma.



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Redwood City woman sues Uber over sexual assault allegations

By Miranda de Moraes

A Redwood City woman has filed a lawsuit against Uber Technologies, Inc., alleging she was sexually assaulted by her Uber driver, minutes away from her Redwood City home.

The March complaint landed on the desk of San Mateo County's Superior Court just weeks after Uber was found liable for driver sexual assault for the first time ever in a bellwether case that could suggest the fate for over 3,000 other lawsuits like this one.

The alleged assault took place in the fall of 2018, after the plaintiff, who was only referred to as Jane Doe, attended her best friend's wedding ceremony at City Hall in Redwood City and celebrated at a restaurant in San Mateo for dinner.

Doe, who was unable to safely operate a car and has long relied on rideshare services, started experiencing a severe migraine while at the restaurant, which prompted her to call an Uber back to her home in Redwood City, about a 20-minute drive away, the complaint stated. She sat in the front passenger seat, as she usually did, because she was uncomfortable in the rear seat.

During the ride, the driver commented that the plaintiff was "pretty." She did not reciprocate the comment and believed the ride would proceed without incident, her complaint stated.

Instead of going to the plaintiff's home, the driver diverted from the route and turned onto a smaller, covered side street and brought the vehicle to a stop, according to the complaint. He opened Doe's door and forcibly restrained her, placing his

forearm against her neck, pinning her against the seat while she remained partially restrained by her seatbelt, unable to escape.

The driver said, "I'm going to kiss you now," undressed himself, reclined the passenger seat, and forcibly removed Doe's undergarments, the complaint alleged. She experienced a trauma-induced freeze response.

The driver then proceeded to rape her without a condom, according to the complaint. Afterward, the driver returned to his seat and brought the plaintiff to her residence.

Upon arrival, Doe exited the vehicle and immediately told her brother and mother what had happened, discovering that her wallet had been taken during the incident, according to the complaint. Within days, Doe sought medical care, including testing for sexually transmitted infections and HIV.

Doe attempted to report the incident to Uber by email within about one week but did not receive a meaningful or substantive response, the complaint stated. She did not immediately report the assault to law enforcement due to fear of victim-blaming, not being believed and the risk of further psychological harm.

Uber told this news organization that it does not comment on pending litigation, but said it is

"deeply committed to the safety of all users on the Uber platform."

"Sexual assault is a horrific crime, and we remain focused on investing in technology, policies, and partnerships that strengthen safety, help prevent harm, and support survivors," the ride-sharing company said in a statement.

According to the complaint, the assault significantly exacerbated Doe's preexisting mental health conditions, including PTSD, depression, anxiety and insomnia, and resulted in multiple involuntary holds in mental health facilities. It profoundly impacted her ability to trust others, engage in personal relationships and feel safe in everyday environments.

As of Monday, April 20, Uber has lost the first two lawsuits made against the ride-share company for sexual assault by a driver, in its first trials of more than 3,000 related to sexual assault and sexual misconduct.

In the first Uber assault case to go to trial, which involved an Oklahoma resident's claim that an Uber driver in Arizona harassed and then raped her during a ride in 2023, a jury in February found that the driver was indeed an agent of Uber and held the company responsible for its actions.

The woman won \$8.5 million in compensatory damages, but the jury declined to award

punitive damages. Uber asked the district judge who presided over the trial to throw out the verdict and order a new one.

On Monday, a federal jury in North Carolina found Uber liable for a sexual assault by a driver in 2019, awarding the victim a far smaller sum of \$5,000 for the damages. Thousands of similar lawsuits await a verdict.

In light of these recent wins for the victims of sexual assault by Uber drivers, Charles Ray, the attorney representing the Redwood City case, said that while those cases are "interrelated," his team looks forward to litigating their case with "our specific, unique facts that have occurred."

"Every day the law changes," Ray noted. "In some ways, that's a good thing, in some ways, that can be troublesome, and we need to make sure that we keep it on the right track."

Yet, the attorney said Uber has a great responsibility to ensure the safety of its passengers.

"We understand that our client's claims are from back in 2018... [and] that certain reforms may have been put in place since 2018 when this incident occurred," Ray said. "That doesn't change our client's position on liability extending." ■

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Jerry Pierce

May 8, 1952 – April 12, 2026

Jerry Pierce passed away April 12, 2026 at his home in Redwood City, California, surrounded by his family. A true Renaissance man of the modern era, Jerry was defined by his passion for the great outdoors, his technical expertise, and his keen eye for the beauty of the natural world. Jerry had three separate lives: as technologist, family man, and avid outdoor enthusiast focusing on his photography and hiking. Jerry was born May 8, 1952 in Claremont, California. He spent his childhood in Claremont, moving to Joshua Tree with his parents during high school. He graduated from Yucca Valley High School and attended Lehigh University in Pennsylvania, where he met his beautiful wife and best friend, his first year of college when she was looking for volunteers. After graduating from UC Berkeley and Stanford University, Jerry and Barbara eventually settled in Redwood City where they raised their two daughters, Andrea and Amanda. His home life was spent surrounded by these women who loved him. His career spanned over four decades of rapid technological evolution working on a range of technical issues at SRI and Universal Studios where he helped with the standardization and launch of DVD, and Digital Cinema. He brought out of the box thinking, ability to strategize a product approach, and to guide design of a product for industry acceptance. Jerry was an avid backpacker and world traveler who saw the world with his lens and a pair of hiking boots. His adventures took him across the globe accompanied by Barbara and other close friends. He was a true family man, spending time with his daughters and grandchildren in Boise and Long Beach. He was generous with his time and skills, volunteering with his wife, and rowing club, and hosting numerous websites for local organizations and candidates. Jerry is survived by his wife Barbara (Apffel) Pierce, his daughters Andrea (Pierce) Koenig and Amanda Pierce, their spouses Martin Koenig and Melissa Lopez, and his grandchildren Miles and Analiese Koenig and Waverly Pierce-Lopez, his sisters Linda (Pierce) Picciotto and Janet (Pierce) Self, and a global community of engineers. Jerry is remembered by his family, friends, and the community of explorers he touched. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests taking a walk in nature or volunteering in your community in his honor.

A celebration of life will be planned at a later date.



PAID OBITUARY

LifeMoves CEO departs after loss of \$6M San José shelter contract

Leadership change 'not driven by any single event,' according to nonprofit

By Emily Margaretten

After losing a \$6 million contract to run a San José shelter, LifeMoves, a regional provider of interim housing with locations in Mountain View and Redwood City, is in the midst of a leadership shakeup.

CEO Aubrey Merriman, who served at the helm of the nonprofit for five years, left the organization on April 7, according to LifeMoves spokesperson Maria Prato.

Despite the timing, his departure was a mutual decision that was not driven by any single event, Prato told this publication.

"[Merriman's] leadership, expertise and skillsets were instrumental during a five-year period of significant growth," Prato said in an emailed statement. "With LifeMoves and the homelessness sector evolving rapidly, all agreed that new leadership will bring fresh perspective and approach to guide

future strategic priorities."

The former CEO did not respond to a request for comment. But in a shared statement with LifeMoves, Merriman said he was proud of LifeMoves' staff and highlighted the growth the nonprofit has seen over the past five years.

"Alongside our government and private-sector partners, we've expanded LifeMoves' reach and served more clients than at any point in our 40-year history," he said.

Chief Operating Officer Nick Hodges, who joined LifeMoves five months ago, has stepped in as interim CEO while the nonprofit looks for a permanent successor, according to the LifeMoves statement.

Merriman's departure follows a shakeup at one of the nonprofit's

interim housing sites in San José at Branham Lane, which opened in 2025. As reported by San José Spotlight, the 204-unit facility has been beset by structural and managerial problems, including the arrest of an employee last month for allegedly selling drugs to residents. Days after the arrest, the city terminated a \$6 million contract with LifeMoves to run the site. The interim shelter is now slated to become permanent supportive housing, according to Spotlight.

The complaints in San Jose echo allegations of similar problems with the management of LiveMoves' Mountain View shelter in 2023.

Prato told this publication that the nonprofit will continue to focus on supporting its clients and will provide a continuity of care.

"We are committed to working with the city of San Jose to ensure



Aubrey Merriman

See LIFEMOVES, page 18



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San Mateo County first in Bay Area to ban sale of kratom

By Bay City News Service

San Mateo County on April 21 became the first county in the Bay Area to ban the sale of kratom, a substance that state health officials say has been found to cause harm and addiction.

“There are known health risks due to kratom and its alkaloid derivatives, including overdoses, deaths and other adverse effects,” said San Mateo County Public Health Officer Dr. Kismet Baldwin-Santana at Tuesday’s Board of Supervisors meeting.

Anything that we can do to be proactive and prevent any overdoses and deaths, it would be much appreciated.”

Kratom is a tropical tree native to Southeast Asia that acts on opioid receptors and

can produce stimulant and sedative effects, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

Kratom contains the alkaloid 7-hydroxymitragynine, or 7-OH, which can be extracted from the leaves and synthesized into highly concentrated products such as liquid extract shots, gummies, drink mixes, and tablets. It is sold at retailers like smoke shops and gas stations.

While often marketed as an herbal supplement, kratom products can lead to addiction and potential overdose, according to the California Department of Public Health. From 2020 to 2022, 27 people died in California due to kratom.

In recent years, exposure to kratom has surged across the country, according to the U.S.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The National Poison Data System, which tracks data from poison control centers nationwide, found that reports of kratom exposure increased by 1,200% in 2025 compared to 2015.

Kratom is not banned at the federal level, but the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has issued stark warnings against kratom and 7-OH use and does not regulate kratom products. Because kratom and 7-OH-containing products are not FDA-approved, they are illegal to sell as drug products.

“Customers face exposure to products with highly variable potency, zero standardized manufacturing oversight and well-documented links to severe addiction and overdose,” said Supervisor Ray Mueller.



Courtesy FDA via Bay City News

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has identified Tropic Thunder Kratom Shot as containing 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH) as an ingredient.

There is also no comprehensive statewide law banning kratom.

The lack of explicit laws banning kratom have made enforcement challenging, but

Gov. Gavin Newsom began escalating crackdowns on kratom sales this year through existing food and drug safety

See **KRATOM**, page 12

Val Blanchette

March 27, 1933 - February 20, 2026

Eleanor Anna Valerie Blanchette - Val to all who knew her, passed away peacefully on February 20th, 2026 at the age of 92, surrounded by her youngest child, his wife and their twin girls, and a menagerie of horses, dogs, cats - one of which she named, and even a steer Robert and his wife raised; her last year of life was filled with love, affection, and constant attention, for which we are all forever grateful.

Born on March 27, 1933 in Liverpool, England,

Val lived a long and meaningful life defined by her deep love for family, her strength, and quiet generosity. She witnessed nearly a century of life; from post-war England, to Canada, then Arizona, to raising her family in Portola Valley, then to South Bend, Indiana, a short stay in San Juan Bautista, and finally to Florida.

Val was known for her wit, her humor, her kindness, and her dedication to helping those in need. Val will continue in the minds of those who knew her, because, she was quite simply, unforgettable.

She was the proud mother of six children, to whom she dedicated her life. Her home was always a place of warmth and acceptance - the door was always open, to everyone. Val earned a double-master's degree from Stanford, while raising six kids, and dedicated her professional life to medicine and health care.

She is survived by five of her six children; eight grandchildren; one great-grandchild - with another arriving soon; and many extended family members and friends who will miss her dearly.

If you would like to recognize Val's memory, please reach out to someone in need, lend a hand to someone misunderstood - find a simple way to reach across a divide; this is how you can see that Val's light shines in our world today.

A service will be held on June 6th, on the Mid-Peninsula she loved, at a time and place to be determined. We will post details in the coming weeks. Family and friends are invited to attend and celebrate a life well lived.



PAID OBITUARY

FUNDING

continued from page 7

resistance. The county did not see another shortfall until fiscal year 2019-20, he said.

California had a large budget surplus at the time because of the COVID-19 pandemic, so the state jumped in to help and plug the shortfall again, according to Kappahn.

However, Mates said the county faced an “increasingly contentious fight to get that money” starting with the fiscal year 2021-22 shortfall, when the state’s Department of Finance no longer included the county’s shortfall in its budget. That’s because state spending started to exceed its revenue.

The county and its cities were able to win this fight year after year, with the state finding just “enough coins underneath the cushion,” said Steenhausen.

That is, until last June, when the state declined to fully reimburse the county and its cities for the first time, given the state’s annual deficit of around \$35 billion the last few years, Mates said. Local leaders secured \$113 million in backfill for fiscal year 2023-24, but San Mateo County and its cities were still left about \$38 million short, Mates said.

The state’s defense has been that its reimbursements have been one-time gifts, no strings attached, according to the Legislative Analyst’s Office.

In fiscal year 2024-25, the countywide shortfall reached \$119 million. County officials submitted a reimbursement claim to the state in August for inclusion in the 2026-27 state budget, Mates said.

In August, San Mateo County

sued the state alongside its 20 cities and the counties of Mono and Alpine, which were also excluded from the backfill mechanism.

The lawsuit alleges the state violated California law by withholding nearly \$38 million from San Mateo County and its cities, money local officials say supports housing, health care and public safety.

What it means locally

This funding makes up nearly one-fifth of the county’s General Fund, with a \$119 million shortfall in the last completed fiscal year alone. The county estimates, conservatively, that in a decade it could lose at least \$1 billion in funding if the state fails to make good on its backfill payments.

Redwood City’s February budgetary report projected annual shortfalls of up to \$19.7 million beginning in fiscal year 2028-29, which is at least \$6.3 million more than what was expected in June 2025. City staff attributed its projected shortfalls to this Vehicle License Fee problem. With litigation pending, the city has revised its backfill assumption from \$4.8 million in June to \$0.

The press conference last week at the fire station was intended to raise awareness of this VLF mechanistic issue and appeal for inclusion in the state budget.

“Today our message to Gov. Newsom and state leaders is clear: we need two things to correct this inequity — full payment of the outstanding amount owed, and a permanent legislative fix so this never happens again,” Noelia Corzo, the president of the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors,

told attendees.

The speakers at Fire Station 9 warned of critical consequences from the loss of state backfill funding, which they said would reverberate across public safety, health, education, labor, housing, nonprofits, government and other sectors across the Peninsula.

If the funding is not restored, San Mateo County would lose \$13 million from its public safety budget alone, according to the Sheriff’s Office and Central County Fire. Officials said that would end programs addressing domestic and gun violence and could shut down multiple fire engines, increasing response times by about five minutes for each engine taken out of service.

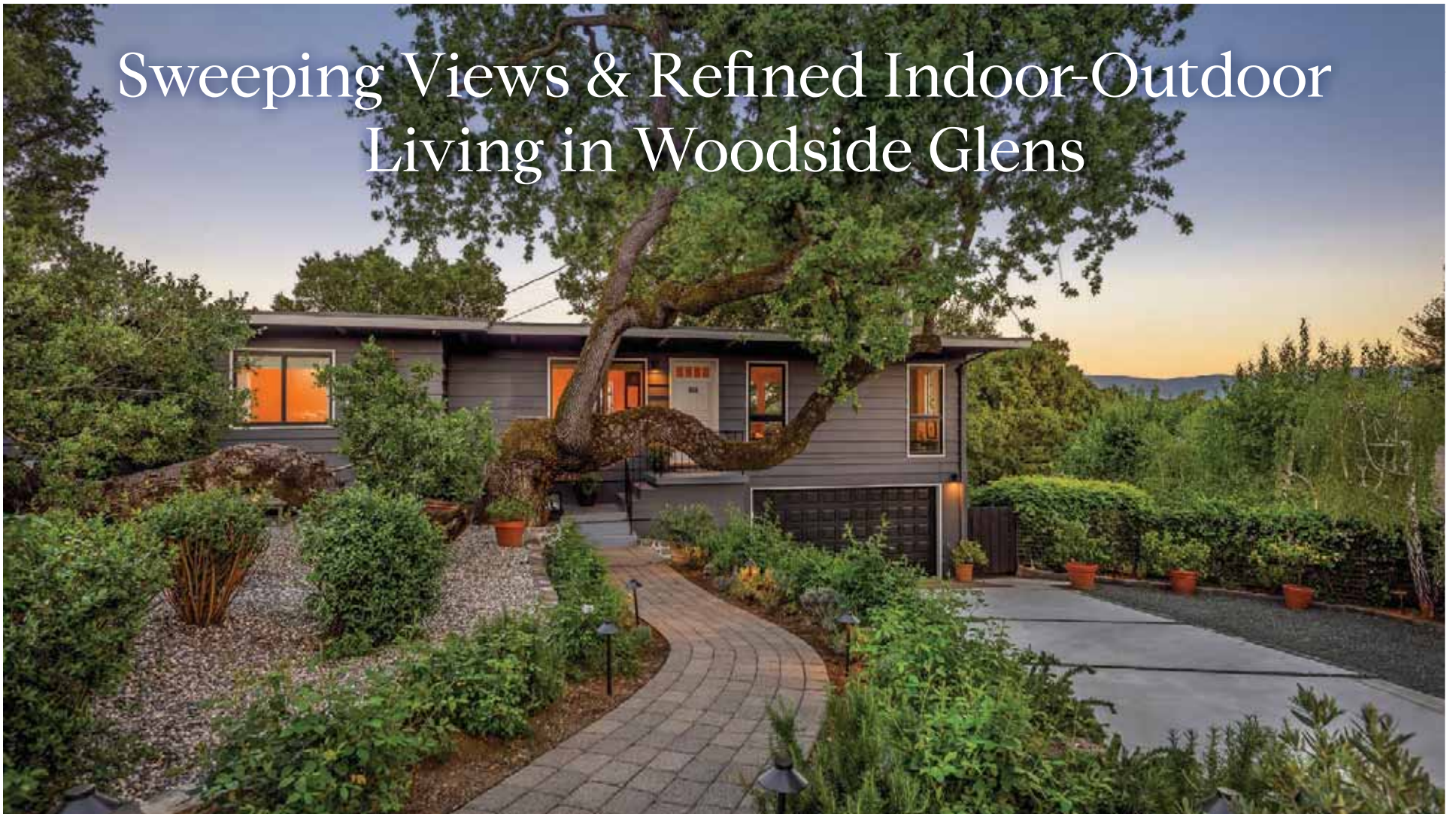
Eight shelters would shutter without this funding, eliminating housing for 5,000 at-risk individuals, and slashing \$7 million for mental health services, said Laura Bent, the CEO of Samaritan House, a nonprofit that assists the county’s working poor.

U.S. Congress member Kevin Mullin underscored the fact that the state’s failure to make good on backfill payments is taking money from local taxpayers that was contributed fair and square. Moreover, he said he considers San Mateo County a “donor economy” because it drives not only the state budget, but also the national budget.

More traffic, air pollution, displacement and other effects of the lost funding don’t just hurt San Mateo County, but the whole state, said Julie Lind, an executive with the county’s Labor Council. ■

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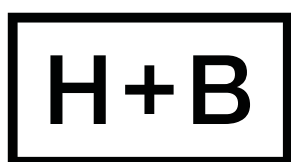
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KRATOM*continued from page 10*

laws. There has been state legislation introduced to explicitly ban kratom sales for those under 21, but it is still underway. “It’s created a frustrating gray area,” Mueller said.

Mueller, who introduced the ordinance, said he first became aware of local sales of kratom when he saw a large banner outside of a smoke shop in Menlo Park that was marketing the substance. He tried to get state authorities to step in,

but months of delays in coordinating enforcement made it challenging.

“We had to wait,” Mueller said. “During that entire time, frankly, I was incredibly frustrated knowing that kids could walk into that shop and purchase.”

Supervisor Jackie Speier agreed that taking local action is needed to allow the county to circumvent possible enforcement delays from the state.

“The state may, in fact, through the Legislature, take action at some point,” she said. “But it’s also always slow, and

the special interests are very powerful there. So I’m grateful to you for taking this action.”

A dozen members of the public spoke during public comment, urging the board to modify the ordinance to ban 7-OH products only and differentiate between natural leaf kratom and 7-OH.

They spoke about their personal testimonies using kratom leaf to help with issues like pain management.

“I spent years struggling to manage my chronic pain until I discovered whole leaf kratom

powder in 2019,” said kratom advocate Jennifer Gillis at the meeting. “It truly gave me my life back. My story is not unique, and kratom has been a lifeline for so many people like me who just want to live meaningful lives.”

But both kratom leaf and 7-OH, the highly concentrated and synthetic version, are not FDA-approved and unregulated.

The Board of Supervisors voted 5-0 to approve the ban. The ordinance makes it a misdemeanor to sell or distribute both

kratom and 7-OH products. Retailers in violation could lose permits to sell tobacco products and other county-issued licenses.

While some may be opposed to a blanket ban of all kratom products, the state could introduce legislation to make exceptions.

“In the future, the state may pass legislation to carve out exceptions, which will preempt the county ordinance adopted,” Mueller said. “But until that time, it’s an unacceptable risk to our community to wait.” ■

ATTACK*continued from page 1*

requests for comment. YouTube and Google are not named as parties to the suit.

In Rubino’s lawsuit against all four YouTubers, he is being represented by Redwood City attorney Andrew Watters.

Watters is pursuing his own separate lawsuit against the group after encountering them at Praeger’s Market in Menlo Park and posting his own video of the interaction.

“I think they’re profiting from these violent incidents, and that’s something we’re going to explore,” Watters said.

As of April 22, it does not appear that video of the Mountain View incident has been posted on any channel and videos from the Menlo Park incident, which were viewed by this news organization, have been taken down.

Rubino said that he has suffered vision loss, pain and trouble sleeping after being pepper-sprayed. Doctors told Rubino that he sustained an 80% corneal abrasion for 10 days. While his vision has improved since the March 28 incident, Rubino said in an interview that it continues to be impacted.

Rubino described the pepper spray as causing excruciating pain and said it’s like he’s looking through frosted glass. He said that he has been on modified assignment for his job because of his injury.

In both lawsuits, Watters said that the group’s actions amount to racketeering by using threats or actual violence to extort people. Watters alleges that the

group is intentionally causing confrontations so they can film what comes next.

“It’s like an arsonist who is also a firefighter. The firefighter goes and sets a fire and then he becomes a hero when he extinguishes it,” Watters said. “They’re profiting from it, and they do it intentionally to provoke a reaction.”

In Watters’ personal lawsuit, he is appealing the denial of his initial request for an order preventing the group from interacting with him as the lawsuit works its way through the court system.

On March 29, the day after the Mountain View incident, and while Maza was still in jail, Troyan and Conrad and Nick Rankin were seen in downtown Menlo Park, where Troyan was filmed pepper-spraying a man in front of the Ace Hardware.

The Menlo Park Police Department said that, with the help of Mountain View police, they have sent a case to

the San Mateo County District Attorney’s Office, which was still deciding whether to pursue charges against one or more of the YouTubers at the time of this story’s publication.

For the Mountain View incident, Rubino is seeking attorney’s fees and \$3 million in damages: \$1 million for his injury, medical costs and pain and suffering, multiplied by three as allowed under the civil Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act. He is also asking that the group be forced to divest from their channels and any related companies, along with being referred to the FBI for criminal charges.

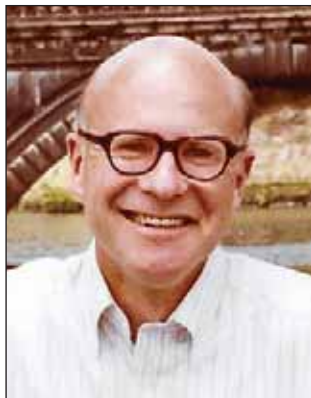
“This has been a very traumatizing thing, not just the pain but also the emotional impact. I haven’t been the same dude,” Rubino told this news organization. “Someone needs to answer for that.” ■

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

Dwight Delong Clark

January 21, 1934 – February 22, 2026

Dwight Clark, a long-time Stanford fixture who founded two cultural exchange organizations for young people in Asia and the U.S., was born in Great Bend, Kansas to Dwight Delong Clark Sr. and Ruth Bales Clark. The family moved to Fort Collins, Colorado, where Dwight excelled as a student, youth leader, news radio host and writer. He graduated from high school as student body president, one of four winners nationally in a Voice of Democracy audio-essay contest, and winner of a competition for radio announcing in Los Angeles.



Dwight entered Stanford University in 1952 and earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in political science. He became Dean of Freshman Men at Stanford and soon thereafter, Assistant Dean of Men. He led a group of Stanford students to Hong Kong in 1963 for a summer-long volunteer experience, setting Dwight’s course for the next 60 years.

In 1963, Dwight formed Volunteers in Asia, connecting college students with volunteer opportunities throughout Asia. Later, VIA added a reciprocal program bringing Asian students to the US for travel and learning experiences. Dwight retired as President of VIA in 2003 and created a new organization, Learning Across Borders, for student exchanges within Asia. Both organizations persist today, as does Parami University, the first liberal arts university for Myanmar students, with which Dwight was deeply involved.

Dwight became interested in pacifism and nonviolence early on. He was an organizer of the first anti-nuclear testing demonstration at Stanford in 1957 and arranged for Stanford students to register voters in the south in the early 1960’s. Dwight maintained his simple lifestyle and Quaker connections throughout his life.

Dwight’s curiosity about people, their interests and motivations, made him an ideal mentor. He was a master of connecting people based on shared interests. His wisdom was dispensed through questions, and gentle encouragement. This genuine interest in others made him a marvelous friend, warm and generous, funny, always with a bright smile on his face.

Dwight is predeceased by his two brothers, John and Mark. Survivors include his sisters-in-law Susanne and Sandra Clark, and numerous nieces and nephews. Celebrations of Dwight’s life are scheduled for September 26-27 in Palo Alto.

PAID OBITUARY

COMMUNITY BRIEFS**Menlo School Drama presents ‘Legally Blonde’**

Menlo Upper School Drama presents “Legally Blonde: The Musical” for its spring production at the Spieker Performing Arts Center, 50 Valparaiso Avenue in Atherton, from May 1 to 3. The production marks Menlo Drama’s first musical with its new director Mark Schneider.

The show, based on the film and novel by Amanda Brown, follows protagonist Elle Woods’ journey through Harvard Law School. The musical will feature a total of 52 students, dance numbers and themes of perseverance, identity and breaking stereotypes.

“Elle’s journey is about much more than proving someone wrong,” said Schneider in a press release. “It’s about discovering that your individuality is your greatest strength. Our students have embraced the show’s energy, humor, and heart in truly inspiring ways.”

For tickets and details, visit menloschool.org/tickets.

Immigration and justice talk at Ladera Church

Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Stephen Trott and Santa Clara County Superior Court Judge Franklin Bondonno are featured at an

event exploring topics around immigration and justice on Tuesday, April 28, from 7-8:30 p.m. hosted by Ladera Community Church, 3300 Alpine Road in Portola Valley.

The event will feature an interview and Q&A with Trott and Bondonno to discuss birthright citizenship, legal vs. illegal immigration and justice.

For more information visit ladera.org/events.

Ladera Emergency Preparedness and Firewise Fair

Residents of Ladera and nearby communities are invited to learn about preparing fires, home insurance and more at the Emergency Preparedness and Firewise Fair from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, May 9, at the Ladera Recreation District, 150 Andeta Way in Portola Valley.

The fair will feature educational activities that will demonstrate how the sign up for emergency notifications, home assessments, creating evacuation plans and what to pack in an emergency go-bag. Speakers and presentations will also discuss topics about home insurance, a Q&A with Fire Marshal Kim Giuliacci from the Woodside Fire Protection District and a Woodside resident’s home-hardening journey.

— Jennifer Yoshikoshi



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Their vision transformed a small team into a powerhouse of innovation, redefined what it means to be "client-centric," and paved the way for a more specialized real estate experience.

Today, we congratulate Michael and Rachel on the announcement of their well-deserved retirement. Whether they are traveling the globe, or taking to the skies, we wish them nothing but clear skies and fair winds.

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We are thrilled to introduce **Alex Wilbur DeLeon** as our incoming CEO. Alex is a second-generation real estate leader with a formidable educational background from UC Berkeley and Georgetown. She is uniquely prepared to carry the torch of excellence that Ken and the Repkas lit over a decade ago.

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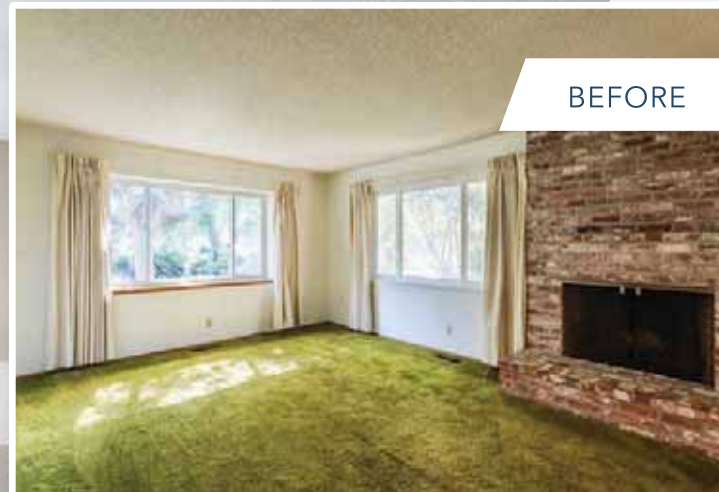
Rest assured, the transition will be as meticulous as our service. Over the next few months, Michael, Rachel, and Alex will be working side-by-side to ensure that every client and every project continues to receive the world-class attention you've come to expect from DeLeon Realty.

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Photos by Seeger Gray

Clockwise from top left: Students at Menlo-Atherton Cooperative Nursery School look at a tub full of silkworms; students work together to operate a pump on the playground; parent Meagan Wendstrand watches pre-K students play on the playground.



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NURSERY SCHOOL

continued from page 5

be reading before they're developmentally ready," she said.

Roos-Taylor stressed that preschool children learn how to socialize and make friends through play. The school prioritizes modeling how kids should engage with each other and overcome conflict.

Jennifer Clarke said the co-op's play-based learning has been invaluable for her 4-year-old son Caleb's social and emotional development. He says, "everybody plays," when he doesn't feel included, and uses his words instead of getting physical when he's upset, she said.

"I know that my kid is going to go into school able to learn because he's emotionally ready," Clarke said. "He's not going to go in there knowing how to read, but he's going to go in there with the tools on how to interact so that he can focus on learning."

The co-op's teachings don't end with the toddlers — parents are required to attend monthly classes that cover a range of topics, like screen time, managing temper tantrums and learning

how marriages affect children.

"We're not just there for the kids. We're there for the parents, too. It's about the family," Roos-Taylor said.

75 years after the school's founding, its primary principle of active parental involvement has withstood the test of time. Parents help by working one day a week in the classroom and serving on committees.

Many parents in Friday's class said they welcomed the opportunity to engage with their children at school.

"You just never get this time again, why not spend as much time if you're able to, to be with your child and seeing them grow and be involved?" said Jay Lee, father of 2-year-old Noemi.

When the co-op was founded in the 1950s, many of the mothers were stay-at-home parents. Since then, the Bay Area's high cost of living has made a dual-income household the norm, and the school's sizable requirement for volunteer hours can prevent some families from enrolling.

Co-op mom and alumna Hillary Sinnott, thinks the

school is worth the sacrifice. "I work and so it's not necessarily super simple for me to come do a co-op ... but I do," Sinnott said. "I've never had to wrestle my kid to get him to go to school," she said. "He loves it here."

The heavy time commitment produces a tight-knit support system among parents. Joanna Rasch, a mother of a 2-year-old boy, said parents send meals to pregnant moms and sick parents. "It's an amazing community," she said. "People are friends for life."

Roos-Taylor spoke of alumni families who still travel together or go on joint camping trips after their kids have left the program.

For the first time, alumni, current families and teachers will come together on May 16 to celebrate the school's decades-long impact in the Menlo-Atherton community. As the preschool's 75th year nears, its motto rings true: "You can't keep a good school down." ■

Brianna Sosa is an Editorial Intern.

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Fugitive arrested in killing of two men at 2018 party in East Palo Alto

Julian Santana Rico charged with murder for killing Eduardo Alvarado Sandoval and Mario Andres Vidales Mendez

By Gennady Sheyner

A 25-year-old man who allegedly shot and killed two men at a Halloween party in East Palo Alto in 2018 was arrested by federal authorities in Mexico on April 16, according to the nonprofit group that worked with the East Palo Alto police to identify the shooter.

Julian Santana Rico, a former East Palo Alto resident, was identified by the police in 2020 as the man who shot and killed Stockton resident Eduardo Alvarado Sandoval, 22, and East Palo Alto resident Mario Andres

Vidales Mendez, 23, after an altercation during the Oct. 14, 2018 party, according to this publication's previous reporting.

Police said Rico came uninvited to the party, which was held in the yard of A-1 Auto Service and Towing, a business near the intersection of Pulgas Avenue and Bay Road. At about 2:45 a.m., Rico became involved in a physical dispute, police said. He allegedly shot four people before fleeing the scene.

Sandoval and Vidales Mendez



Julian Santana Rico

reportedly died at the scene, while two other men were transported to nearby hospitals with what police initially described as life-threatening injuries but that were upgraded to stable later in the day.

In 2020, the East Palo Alto Police Department partnered with the Palo Alto-based nonprofit Mothers Against Murder to offer a \$20,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of Rico. Roger Smith, who works with the nonprofit, told this organization that the 2018 shooting was "heartbreaking."

"We're very pleased that after this many years to find this guy," Smith said.

Rico is currently being held at Maguire Correctional Facility in Redwood City, according to court records. His arraignment was postponed to April 28.

Veronica Sandoval, mother of Eduardo Sandoval, said in a statement that she plans to be in court on Monday "for our son, for our family, and for the justice he deserves."

"My son went to a party and never came home," she said. "For eight years, we have lived with unimaginable pain, waiting and

praying for this day."

Margaret Petros, executive director of Mothers Against Murder called the arrest "long overdue." According to her organization, Rico fled to Mexico immediately after the shooting. He was arrested with the assistance of the U.S. Marshals, returned to the United States and booked on murder charges.

Court records show that Rico is being held without bail on two murder charges as well as attempted murder. ■

Email Gennady Sheyner at gsheyner@almanacnews.com.

TIDE

continued from page 5

what it will do with TIDE's \$50 million campus at 150 Jefferson Drive that was built for the school using funds from a voter-approved bond in 2014, district Public Information Officer Naomi Hunter said Tuesday.

On Feb. 13, a group of parents who called themselves TIDE Rising filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against the school district alleging that closing the school would discriminate against students with disabilities in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

and Rehabilitation Act. The parents said that by closing the school, the district is denying disabled students access to equal education and compared TIDE Academy to a wheelchair ramp for students with neurological conditions.

"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," a memorandum for the lawsuit said.

However, Judge Thompson said that students would still have

access to educational programs at the district's other schools.

"Plaintiffs do not connect any advantages of necessity provided by TIDE which could not be replicated at other schools," Thompson wrote in her 10 page ruling. "The services necessary to the students with disabilities ability to access a public education, such as students' IEPs and Section 504 plans, will remain available to students wherever they attend school."

Individualized Education Programs, known as IEPs, and 504 plans provide accommodations to students with disabilities. The judge previously denied parents' request for a

restraining order preventing TIDE's closure while the case was ongoing.

TIDE Rising also alleged that public deliberations to close the school were a farce and that behind closed doors, district leaders had already made their decision.

Thompson said the parents' other claims were largely irrelevant if there was no plausible violation of the ADA; she dismissed the case outright and said allowing TIDE Rising to amend the complaint would be "futile."

"We respect the passion that TIDE parents have for their

school, and we understand this has been a difficult process for all involved," Superintendent Crystal Leach said in a press release. "The district, however, has a legal and governance responsibility to act in the best interests of all its students, which includes sound financial stewardship. We are gratified that the court recognized the legal soundness of the board's decision."

Representatives of TIDE Rising and their lawyers did not immediately respond to requests for comment. ■

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

LIFEMOVES

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any transition at Branham Lane and as an organization, support the advancement of all housing as a part of the solution for ending homelessness in Silicon Valley," Prato said.

Looking back at LifeMoves

LifeMoves launched over a decade ago, after the merging of InnVision and Shelter Network, with the aim to help people experiencing homelessness move into stable housing. The nonprofit has 26 sites in the region. Besides running interim housing sites in Mountain View

and Redwood City, a new transitional housing project is scheduled to open in Palo Alto this spring.

In the 2024-25 fiscal year, LiveMoves served 6,317 individuals and families in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties, providing temporary housing as well as case management and other support services, according to the nonprofit's most recent impact report.

Early on, LifeMoves drew praise from state leaders, including from Gov. Gavin Newsom who celebrated the opening of one of its shelters in Mountain View in 2021. The 100-unit housing complex

on Leghorn Street was built in eight months using modular, prefabricated materials. At the time, Newsom touted the quickly built homes as an innovative, less expensive model for tackling the state's homelessness crisis.

But the Mountain View site faced strong headwinds, not unlike some of the issues reported at Branham Lane. A year-long Voice investigation in 2023 revealed that the nonprofit struggled to place residents in permanent housing, despite promises to do so within three months.

A dearth of affordable housing in the region was one reason for the longer stays at the

Mountain View site. But residents also told Voice reporters that they did not receive case management or other support services they were promised while participating in the program, leading several to return to living in their vehicles.

The Voice investigation also uncovered allegations of mismanagement and abuse in Mountain View, including reports of sexual harassment, physical altercations and health hazards related to unsanitary bathrooms and showers.

Merriman did not respond to the Voice's repeated requests for comment on the publication's findings at the time.

Two years later, however, at a celebratory opening of the Branham Lane shelter, Merriman reflected on some of the lessons learned from Mountain View. He told this publication that it was an iterative process and the Mountain View site was the "beta" for subsequent housing projects, including the one at Branham Lane.

"[It's] inherently imperfect," Merriman said at the time. "[We're] trying to be smarter about it and carry on." ■

Email Staff Writer Emily Margaretten at emargaretten@almanacnews.com.

HONORS CLASSES

continued from page 5

Students First claimed that the school district administration and board has "systematically avoided, for the last three years, to vote on this issue."

"It became very clear to us as parents and members of the community that the decision to do this was made behind closed doors in a very non-transparent way, and it was self-justified by

the members of the board and effectively a policy decision was made without the appropriate input of the community," said Deksheniaks.

For years, parents have reached out to the district to return to the discussion of restoring honors and advanced courses, but Deksheniaks said that it has been a "mired process" where other groups' concerns, such as the closure of TIDE Academy, have taken precedence.

"We're seeing a slow-rolling response to the issue," he said.

At Wednesday's board meeting, Superintendent Leach planned to recommend the board acknowledge the years of analysis and community engagement about the current course offerings and affirm the district's commitment to a common ninth-grade experience in core courses.

Leach also suggested that the board direct staff continue

monitoring student performances through reporting cycles and confirm that any changes to heterogeneous classes will only come as a result of the strategic planning process.

In a press release, Student First encouraged community members to attend the meeting to urge the school board to restore honors classes for next fall.

"Located in the heart of Silicon Valley and global innovation,

SUHSD should lead the nation in providing equitable access to rigorous academic opportunities for every student," the group wrote.

The district board meeting occurred after The Almanac's print deadline. For an updated story on the meeting, visit almanacnews.com. ■

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



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High gas prices gouge Silicon Valley households

By Mike Langberg /
San José Spotlight

Surging gas prices will cut \$1.1 billion from household income in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties this year and eliminate 2,600 jobs, according to estimates from a San Jose economic think tank.

A recent report from Joint Venture Silicon Valley shows total economic output in the two counties will drop by \$706 million if the current increase of \$1.36 per gallon since the beginning of the year continues unchanged through 2026.

Sticker shock at the pump is widespread, with the average gas price per gallon soaring nearly 30% to \$5.98 at the end of March and premium gas hitting \$6.33 per gallon.

Consumers are spending more to fill their tanks, leaving them with less money to spend elsewhere as increased energy prices push up inflation and the cost of living.

“Reducing disposable income has ripple effects throughout the economy,” Heidi Young, a senior researcher at Joint Venture and author of the gas prices report, told San José Spotlight. “That’s the big take-away: We’re all affected.”

The impact is greatest on low-income families, Young added, because they spend relatively more of their income on gas and at the supermarket, another area of the economy hit by rapid price increases.

“We already know our region in general has higher prices for groceries — and this will exacerbate that,” Young said.

The tectonic rise in gas prices is due to the U.S. and Israel’s attack on Iran that began Feb. 28 by cutting off oil supplies that move through the Strait of Hormuz.

But the fallout from higher pump prices goes beyond gas and groceries. The report said there’s an anticipated loss of 2,600 jobs from business belt-tightening — either through layoffs or open positions left unfilled — that will cut across a wide range of industries, from housing and hospitals to restaurants and retail.

Construction is one such category, because contractors rely on gas and diesel for transporting workers and materials as well as operating machinery on job sites.

“Across the board, we’ve had to look at our pricing,” Amy

Pacheco, chief financial officer of O.C. McDonald Company, a commercial plumbing and mechanical contractor in San Jose, told San José Spotlight.

O.C. McDonald, which just marked its 120th anniversary, operates a fleet of 50 vehicles, mostly pickup trucks and vans, which their employees typically drive home at night — even though some live as far away as Gilroy and Hollister.

The company has a 10,000-gallon underground fuel tank that allows for bulk gasoline purchases. Pacheco said a recent refill cost \$4.63 per gallon — well below retail pump prices, but still a whopping 50% above the \$3.08 per gallon O.C. McDonald paid in January.

“We can’t stop driving and we can’t drive less,” Pacheco said.

Instead, the company has to look elsewhere for cost savings and will ultimately have to pass some increases along to their clients, Pacheco added.

Jeff Bellisario, executive director of the Bay Area Council Economic Institute in San Francisco, said the psychological effects of such a sudden jump in gas costs could cause consumers and businesses to rein in their spending, even though the economy as a whole is still healthy.

Wages on average are going up faster than prices, he said, and the total number of jobs is growing, with unemployment holding steady.

“I don’t think this is the tipping point that sends the economy under,” Bellisario told San José Spotlight. ■



GARDEN

continued from page 1

Chris Kitch, a member of the club. Native plants are also naturally pest resistant and require less water to maintain, she said.

Second graders really dig gardening

Myrtetus, who has been teaching in Woodside for two decades, has been actively involved in maintaining the school’s garden for years. Every Friday, he takes his classes out to the garden to teach them about planting and harvesting.

Kitch suggested that Myrtetus hold a poster contest to highlight Native Plant Month and encourage his students to get involved in the plant sale. Their paintings depict redwood and oak trees, native flowers and insects.

Woodside’s second grade class shows great enthusiasm for trying new things and getting their hands dirty in the garden. With

planters growing an abundance of peas, lettuce, chard, lemons and kale, the students don’t hesitate to try new vegetables.

“Kids just love getting their hands in dirt and just anytime away from a book or the classroom, something that’s hands on,” Myrtetus said. “Lots of times, they don’t even know that they’re learning. They’re discovering insects, they see seeds sprouting and they’re just excited to take it all in.”

On one recent Friday afternoon, Myrtetus prepared a salad from vegetables harvested from the garden. When he called the students to line up, they skidded toward him, kicking up a cloud of dirt. On the menu was a garden salad with cucumbers and tomatoes dressed in olive oil, honey, salt and pepper. The vegetables were quickly devoured.

“It’s fresh, it’s from the garden,” said Myrtetus to the students. “You grow this lettuce.”

He told The Almanac that he enjoys seeing his students

excited to try new things and see how the independence they gain from being able to explore and care for the garden allows them to have the confidence to try unfamiliar foods.

“They don’t realize they’re eating healthy,” he said.

That afternoon, he also introduced the children to chive and cilantro flowers and peas. He had the students repeat after him: “Give peas a chance.”

Community members can spot the Woodside Elementary-grown poppies and artwork at the Woodside Atherton Garden Club plant sale from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on May 9 at the Woodside Library, 3140 Woodside Road. The event will also feature a free children’s activity to make a Mother’s Day floral project and a boutique selling flower arrangements, gardening books and gift baskets. ■

Email Staff Writer

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jyoshikoshi@almanacnews.com.



Clockwise from top left: Woodside Elementary second grade students eat the fruits of their labor; teacher Brian Myrtetus gives instructions; a sample of nature-themed student artwork. Photos by Michael Molcsan.

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Pinewood.edu/Summer-at-Pinewood**STANFORD EXPLORE: A Lecture Series on Biomedical Research****Stanford**

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MaccabiSportsCamp.org/wp**(415) 997-8844****Spartans Sports Camp****Mountain View**

Spartans Sports Camp, Inc. is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation and all proceeds benefit the Mountain View High School Athletic Department. Spartans Sports Camp has raised over \$550,000 since 2012! Follow Spartans Sports Camp on Facebook and Twitter!

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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.

Why summer camp still matters for kids today

By Jim Politis

GUEST OPINION

In communities like Portola Valley, Woodside and Menlo Park, families have long valued opportunities that help children grow beyond the classroom.

For many, summer camp has quietly played that role for generations.

Nearly 50 years ago, a simple idea helped spark what would become a lasting part of the Peninsula community. A local educator began gathering kids together for a summer experience built around play, connection and time outdoors. What started small eventually grew into programs like Mountain Camp Woodside, on the Woodside Priory School campus, part of a

broader tradition that continues today.

While much has changed since those early days, the core value of camp has not. If anything, it has become more important.

Today's children are growing up in a very different world. Research from psychologist Jean Twenge highlights how technology, especially smartphones and social media, has reshaped childhood. Kids are more connected than ever, yet many report feeling more isolated, anxious and less confident in face-to-face interactions.

At the same time, opportunities for unstructured play and

independence have declined. Children are often highly scheduled, moving from one organized activity to the next, with fewer chances to simply interact, explore and figure things out on their own.

From a child development perspective, those experiences matter.

Children don't just grow through instruction; they grow through experience.

Summer camp provides one of the few environments where kids can develop these skills naturally. They build friendships, navigate challenges and learn to communicate without the distractions of screens or constant adult intervention.

Research from the American

'Children don't just grow through instruction; they grow through experience.'

Camp Association supports this. High-quality camp experiences are linked to growth in independence, resilience and social awareness, skills that extend well beyond the summer months. What makes camp unique is how those skills are developed. They're not taught in a classroom. They're practiced in real life.

It's joining a group of kids you've just met. It's working through disagreements and moving forward. It's trying something

new and realizing you're capable of more than you thought.

These moments may seem small, but over time, they build lasting confidence.

In Peninsula communities, where families often prioritize both academic and personal growth, camp offers an important balance. It provides a setting where kids can step away from structured environments and simply be kids while still developing the skills that matter most.

After more than 15 years working in youth development, one thing is clear: camp is more than just a summer activity. It's a place where children learn how to connect, adapt and grow.

And in today's world, that may be more important than ever. ■

Jim Politis is camp director at Mountain Camp Woodside.

A time of laughter in a time of fear

By Mickie Winkler

GUEST OPINION

Political division and war are creating panic, and our politicians are both polarized and afraid — afraid for their futures and their families. This fear extends throughout our communities nationwide. I have lived in China and Russia and have learned how precious freedom is. I was mayor of a politically astute city, and know how democracy works, day to day. What do I feel now? Sorrow? Frustration? Yes, and I'm almost frozen with fear.

The phrase "frozen with fear" accurately describes the power of fear. It shuts down our critical thinking. The amygdala, the brain's emotional center, gets hijacked by fear until, effectively, our prefrontal cortex shuts down. That's the area responsible for logical, high-level reasoning — and thus problem solving is impaired, and our ability to effectively confront our gargantuan threat disappears. We, the people, need our best brainpower now more than ever to fight effectively for democracy, so that it endures beyond 250 years.

You may remember the saying, "laughter is the best medicine." Well, it is, and I have used it throughout my time as a mayor and councilwoman.

I think about the time I was standing in a fast (15-item) check-out lane and the customer ahead of me unloaded some 30 items from his cart. I was angry, as were others in the line with me. And then I started to laugh, and it was catching. We all laughed and enjoyed the camaraderie. I learned from a therapist that whenever anger or fear threatens to overtake me, I should just stimulate my sympathetic nervous system. In other words, I should laugh. "Laughter, good out-loud belly

laughter," relieves stress and promotes better thinking," she promised. "It puts you back in control."

Yes, humor taps into creativity; it enables a shift in perspective. It is the tool we can enjoy that enables us to get back to the critical thinking, to caring for ourselves, to collaborating and communicating with others from different political parties and differing backgrounds, a tool we all need right now, one that promotes the realization that "I am not crazy" or wrong to be afraid and that I'm not alone in this. The powerful relief of endorphins that such moments stimulate is liberating. These are the events that change us, and, in fact, change our political landscape, indeed. Humor allows us to keep going. Humor and wit give us strength that actually lessens pain, lessens stress and promotes better thinking.

My motto — my goal — as a political satirist is to "make you laugh — and even think."

"Send in the clowns" Stephen Sondheim instructed. "Where are the clowns?" he asks. Here I am. And there they are — all around us, available to you and to me. Pay attention to the clowns and enjoy a good laugh. And then, my dear fellow countrymen, when we are awash in healing from humor, we can use our minds to focus on and quash the real and scary threat of fascism. ■

Mickie Winkler is the former mayor of Menlo Park. She has lived and written humor around the world and happily continues in Palo Alto.

Respect the process — and the voters — in San Mateo County superintendent race

By Jim Lawrence

GUEST OPINION

In any election, voters deserve clarity, fairness and respect for the rule of law. That standard should apply just as strongly in the current race for San Mateo County Superintendent of Schools on the June ballot.

By all available facts, Chelsea Bonini has done what the law requires. Her candidacy has been accepted by the San Mateo County Registrar and Elections Division, and her credentials have been reviewed by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing — the very body charged with determining whether an individual meets California's legal standards for educational leadership.

That is not a matter of opinion. It is the process established under California law.

Reasonable people can disagree about candidates' ideas, priorities and leadership styles. That is the essence of democracy. But questioning a candidate's basic eligibility after the appropriate authorities have reviewed and accepted it — without pursuing a formal legal challenge — undermines public confidence in the system we all rely on.

If there are those who genuinely believe the law has been misapplied, there is a clear and appropriate path forward: the courts. That is how disputes over eligibility are resolved in a society governed by law — not through repeated public insinuations

that sidestep due process.

Equally troubling is the tone of some of the criticism. Suggesting that a candidate's lawful participation in an election is the product of "privilege," rather than the outcome of established legal procedures, risks reducing serious civic discourse to personal attacks. That does not elevate the conversation; it diminishes it.

Elections should be contests of vision, experience and ideas — not efforts to delegitimize opponents outside the framework of the law. When we blur that line, we do a disservice not only to the candidates, but to voters who deserve a campaign focused on the future of our schools, not distractions about process that has already been duly followed.

The bottom line is simple: The proper authorities have spoken. Bonini is on the ballot. She has the right to present her case to the voters, just like any other candidate.

Let the campaign move forward on the merits. Let voters decide. And let's conduct this election with the level of fairness and respect that our community — and our democratic institutions — deserve. ■

Jim Lawrence is the former mayor of Foster City. The views expressed here are Jim's own and not those of any organization with which he is affiliated.

BREAKING THE MOLD

Meet the Silicon Valley organizations and artists taking a creative approach to tackling the plastic problem

By Karla Kane

Plastics: They're convenient, ubiquitous and now a considerable environmental problem thanks to their slow decomposition rate, ties to fossil fuels and association with disposable goods that end up polluting the planet in both macro and micro forms.

When buying something made of plastic, "you're committing to something that lasts for 500 years," said David Schick, co-founder of the award-winning nonprofit Peninsula Precious Plastics. "So if you're gonna accept the convenience of plastic, then you need to accept the burden of plastic."

For Peninsula Precious Plastics and its associates, that means saving plastics from being tossed into landfills and instead remaking them into products that are intended to last. It also means educating the community about the issue. The idea is to treat plastics not as disposable, but as a resource that should be used as thoughtfully and responsibly as possible.

The San Carlos-based educational nonprofit works with students, artists, entrepreneurs and civic groups to facilitate ways to upcycle plastic, find opportunities for developing creative design and STEM skills, and spread awareness of the plastic waste problem. It's headquartered in a warehouse that serves as a community makerspace; sharing techniques and ideas is a crucial part of the organization's ethos.

While many of us toss our plastic waste into recycling bins, only around 9% of plastic actually ends up being recycled, Peninsula Precious Plastics co-founder Andrea Schick said, and much of what is accepted for recycling ends up shipped overseas.

"We can really actually make a significant dent locally by having groups come in and bring clean plastic and make it into items," she said.

Making the process personal

At periodic "meet and melt" events with Peninsula Precious Plastics, participants clean, sort, shred and remake plastic into all kinds of new products, getting a personal, hands-on understanding of the issues — and the possibilities.

"One of the things I really like about our work is being able to interact with people in such a way that's more than just a presentation. It's being able to have people physically make something out of plastic, and that is so much more memorable than ... any slideshow or any science demonstration that we could do," co-founder and CEO Nick Schick said.

Colorful confetti-patterned clipboards, combs, holiday ornaments, animal-shaped keychains, flower pots, furniture and elements of art installations are among the items created by Peninsula Precious Plastics-associated makers. These products are sometimes sold as fundraisers for organizations like Mountain Parks Foundation (look for their banana slug-shaped products in the Nature Store at Henry Cowell State Park.)

And those items can be aesthetically and creatively satisfying as well, giving makers the chance to flex their creativity and showcase the colorful and artistic potential of plastic waste.

"I don't tend to think of plastic in a positive way at all, so it's refreshing to see, 'Oh, there's actually something beautiful and useful that you can make out of this repurposed plastic,'" Andrea Schick said, holding up her favorite multicolored clipboard.

While Peninsula Precious Plastics does accept donations of plastic, storage room at the space is limited, and the larger goal is for the community to take an active role.

"We want the people who bring the material to be involved in the process as much as possible, because we want to make it



Magali Gauthier

Peninsula Precious Plastics co-founders Andrea and David Schick hold some clipboards that were created using upcycled plastic at the nonprofit's San Carlos warehouse.

personal," David Schick said.

Peninsula Precious Plastics was founded by the San Mateo-based Schick family, with the idea sparked in 2020 when Nick Schick — then an Aragon High School student and now an environmental science major at University of California, Los Angeles — and his after-school tech club wanted to do something about climate change.

They came across Precious Plastic, an organization started in the Netherlands that offers open-source tools and information for combatting the plastic problem, and realized there were steps they could take locally. Once the Schicks started collecting their own plastic waste from daily life, the scale of the problem became evident.

"We were amazed by how quickly our family alone helped fill up so much space with plastic that we used purchasing groceries," Andrea Schick said.

Nick Schick created plastic clipboards to donate to Laguna Honda Hospital as his Eagle Scout project, and Peninsula Precious

Plastics, inspired by the international Precious Plastic movement, kept on sourcing equipment, networking and growing into the expanded organization it is today. Andrea Schick said she loves being able to connect with makers locally and globally who are working on innovative ways to tackle the plastic problem and share their ideas with others around the world.

In January, the nonprofit received a 2026 Sustainability Award from Sustainable San Mateo County. It's worked with many organizations, including the California Academy of Sciences, the California Environmental Literacy Initiative and the Monterey Bay Aquarium, and with businesses like Cocoplum Sunglasses, which uses recycled pill bottles, and Swellcycle Surfboards.

Peninsula Precious Plastics' San Carlos makerspace includes shredding machines, an oven, injection molds and all sorts of other equipment. Students and other makers ages 13 and over are trained on how to use them

and are able to design their own product ideas. Becoming an official nonprofit organization allows Peninsula Precious Plastics to receive grants, which helps fund expenses like the electrical costs of running its machinery.

Near the entrance of the workshop is an arrangement of bins, each filled with tiny colorful plastic bits, organized by color. If it looks a lot like a candy store, that's because the bins were formerly used to display varieties of jelly beans at the now-defunct Talbot's Toyland in San Mateo, then at Byrd's Filling Station, whose owner later donated them to Peninsula Precious Plastics.

Plastic types are categorized by number, and Peninsula Precious Plastics works with all kinds of everyday items, such as bottle caps, takeout containers and yogurt cups.

"We encourage people to bring us clean, dry, plastic with the numbers 2, 4, and 5 on it because of all the plastics — they have the lowest VOCs (volatile organic

See **MOLD**, page 25

Employment

TECHNOLOGY

Robinhood Markets, Inc. has an opening in Menlo Park, CA for Senior Product Designer (9902345): Defining & refining future products by exploring new offerings & expanding existing ones. Teamwork oriented. Minimum Requirements for Position: Bachelor's degree in Design, Engineering or a related field and five years (5) of progressively responsible years of experience in job offered or related occupation. Education or experience must include: Utilize Figma or Adobe suite for creating visually cohesive, appealing, and on-brand interfaces. Create user journey mapping, information architecture, and wireframing. Conducting usability tests, interviews, surveys, and A/B tests to help validate design decisions and prioritize features based on data. Utilize Protiope or other prototyping tools to craft how users interact with a product (microinteractions, animations, states). Creating reusable design components and maintaining consistency at scale. Requires understanding of tokens, accessibility, and documentation. Ability to interpret metrics from tools like Amplitude, Mixpanel, or Google Analytics to understand KPIs, conversion funnels, and behavioral data. Applying accessibility standards (WCAG) and inclusive design principles to ensure products are usable by people of all abilities. Salary Range: \$195,000 - \$224,000/year. Background checks req. See benefits at <https://careers.robinhood.com/benefits>. Email resume with job title (Senior Product Designer) & job code (9902345) to rhjobs@robinhood.com.

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Review: In reimagining classical epic, 'Anon(ymous)' casts too wide a net

The Pear Theatre offers strong performances
in visually captivating production of flawed script

By Michael J. Vaughn

'Anon(ymous),' playwright Naomi Iizuka's take on Homer's "Odyssey," offers captivating images, intriguing characters and beautiful ensemble work. Much of it, however, is mercilessly scattered by trying to force it onto Homer's framework.

I hope someday we will have enough of artists hijacking classic works for their own purposes. Do modern refugees bear a resemblance to Odysseus's 10-year wandering? Absolutely. They also bear a resemblance to the millions upon millions of people uprooted from their homes by this messy, violent century.

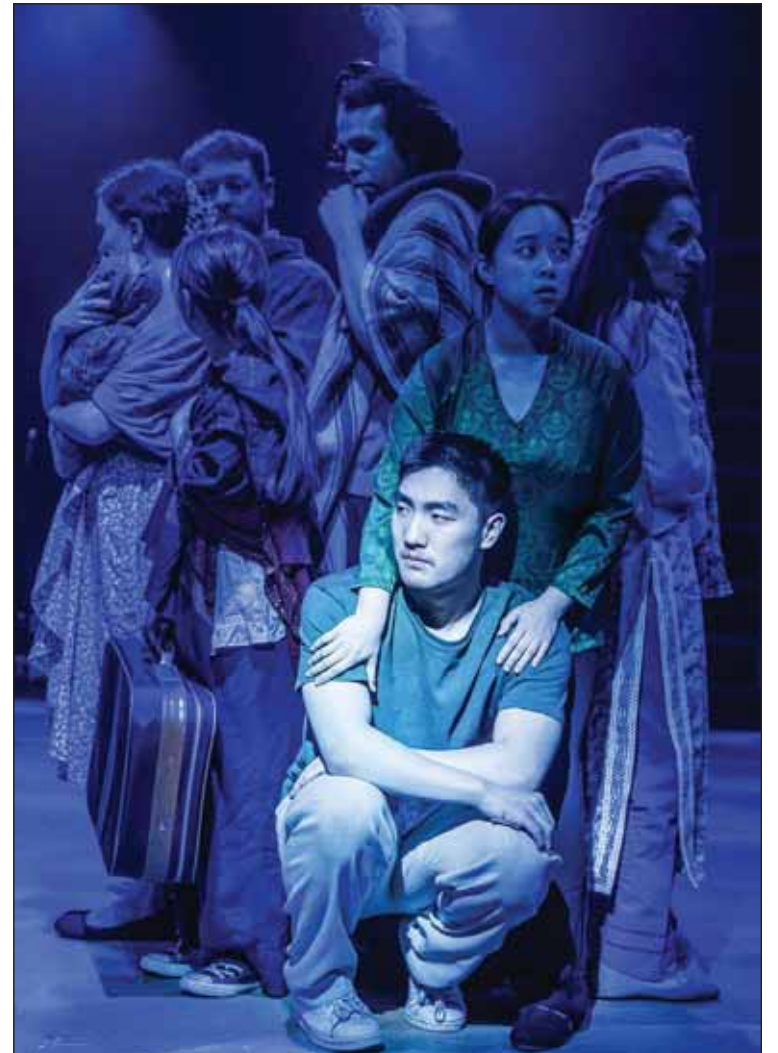
Remove it completely from its Homeric allusions, and this play contains some engaging personalities. Anon (Zhang Bai Han) is separated from his mother, Nemasani (Natalie To) after their boat of refugees is destroyed by a terrible storm. Anon is resuscitated on a beach by Calista (Isabelle Polito), a charmingly ditzy American who assumes that her heroics entitle her to keep Anon as a pet boyfriend. Her pursuit is interrupted by Naja (Qian Zhang), an enchanting goddess who rescues Anon from Calista.

We have the seeds of a great story here, but already the cracks are showing. Calista is funny but cartoonish (as are all Americans in the play). Anon's plight is all too common and relatable, but is some goddess going to deus ex machina him from all his travails? And in the back of our minds, aren't we all just checking the Homeric plot points from our college lit classes?

To be clear, none of these aspersions are meant for the players of The Pear. Under director Vinh G. Nguyen and fight director Bessie Zolno, the ensemble delivers balletic shipwrecks, terrifying bomb scares and edgy fights performed to perfection (and the puppet dolphins are an irresistible addition).

As Anon, Zhang Bai Han has an engaging way of being stunned into frozen postures by the wild goings-on, and then, just as suddenly bursting into action (a very teen-boy combination). Qian Zhang's portrayal of the goddess is sweet and beautiful. Raven Douglas is pure sass and vinegar as Anon's traveling partner Pascal.

The Vaughn-Muncks, husbands Christian and Zach, both show a talent for divine creepiness. Christian is exactly like



Courtesy Mikenzie Gilbert

Anon (Zhang Bai Han, center) is surrounded by the ensemble in The Pear's production of "Anon(ymous)."

the suspect in most true crime podcasts as the sweat shop boss Makus, demanding that Nemasani abandon her grief for her lost son and marry him.

Inevitably, the Cyclops appears, in the form of Zyclo (Zach Vaughn-Muncks), a one-eyed butcher who specializes in brain sausage, and his Hannibal Lecter vibe has the patrons edging toward the exits. He's joined by his pet bird, performed by Efsun Alper Sweet with a Vegas-style assemblage of metallic lounge-ware and an hilarious repertoire of tics and screeches.

Actor Dan C., meanwhile, gave the blind restaurant owner Ali an ingratiating quirkiness, and Kristy Aquino was equally engaging as Nasreen.

I also enjoyed the inventiveness of lighting designer Raven Manalo, who at one point simulated a passing vehicle using a series of lights placed beneath the seats. The 90-minute, no intermission format was also appreciated (and possibly a trend), allowing spectators to stay fully invested in the action.

It could be that the fatal flaw

of the play is a matter of focus. Take all these interesting characters through a more realistic narrative and you might have something deeper to say about the always relevant subject of refugees and immigrants. Take the other fork into Greek wilderness (as the Coen Brothers did with "O Brother Where Art Thou"), and you might get a delicious sendup. Iizuka seemingly wants it all, and doesn't really get it.

Recently, Steven Spielberg warned Hollywood that it needs to invest more in original stories and slow down on mega-movie sequels. I have to agree, and while we're at it, let's try using our imaginations and stop riding ancient coattails. ■

*Email Contributing Writer
Michael J. Vaughn at
michaelyvaughn@hotmail.com.*

'Anon(ymous)' runs through May 3 at The Pear Theatre, 1110 La Avenida St., Suite A, Mountain View. Tickets are \$45. thepear.org or 650-254-1148.

MOLD

continued from page 23

compounds),” which are harmful to human health, David Schick said. A device that scans materials to decipher what type of plastic they contain is used when a number isn’t visible.

Outreach to schools and students continues to be a crucial part of Peninsula Precious Plastics’ mission. The nonprofit is currently working with many Bay Area schools and getting more requests all the time, according to Andrea Schick. Many creative design projects have come from teen volunteers.

“What I love about having students at our shop is they ask so many good questions about plastics,” she said. Students who work with Peninsula Precious Plastics as youngsters often go on to spread what they’ve learned when they move on to college, or come back when they can.

Rubbish Bags and Inventurous

Tara de la Garza is a member of the Palo Alto Public Art Commission and the Cubberley Artist Studio Program. Originally from Australia, de la Garza now lives on the Peninsula. She’s been addressing the issue of plastic in her artwork for some time, but in the past few years, she realized she wanted to do even more to both spread awareness and directly take action locally.

“I guess I felt frustrated by the reach of my message. And so I decided to start the nonprofit Inventurous as a way to inspire a community as well as get more people involved in collecting especially difficult-to-recycle plastic,” she said.

Inventurous works with Peninsula Precious Plastics and shares the mission of engaging people to help create valuable items out of waste plastic, as well as making techniques and processes open source, so they can be replicated in other communities.

Inventurous’ first big project is the brand Rubbish Bags — purses and tote bags designed by de la Garza and made from bags that would otherwise end up as rubbish.

“What I really wanted to do was creatively recycle locally. So what can we do with our materials locally that inspires people to, firstly, use less, and secondly, to think of it as a resource, not as a waste stream?” she asked herself.

She identified that newspaper delivery sleeves are particularly difficult for municipal waste companies to recycle (they tend to clog the machines), so she enlisted community members and groups, including in the Greenmeadow neighborhood of Palo Alto and local libraries, to collect bags from New York Times deliveries



Magali Gauthier

Artist Tara de la Garza recycles items such as newspaper delivery sleeves to create handbags in her studio at Cubberley Community Center in Palo Alto.

specifically, which come in a distinctive blue hue.

“So there are places now that are collecting for me, and not only is that great for me because it’s a single-stream source that is clean, it’s also just getting people to sort of subconsciously think about what they’re doing with their stream, and that’s the bigger goal: behavioral change,” she said.

She started out by making wallets, inspired by designs she saw on the Precious Plastic network, then wanted to go larger. In her Palo Alto studio, she creates pleather (plastic leather) material by heating and pressing the shredded plastic, then assembling it into bags along with upcycled leather from old couches and other bits and pieces (at the time of this interview, she had recently been given a large supply of black plastic from Stanford University’s Hoover Institution, which has a pleasing texture when pressed.)

Rubbish Bags are currently for sale online, as well as sometimes through the local sustainable goods store Ethos, which has branches in Los Altos, Los Gatos and Capitola.

Prices range depending on the design and how many hours of work goes into each bag. The bucket tote model, for example, starts at \$96 while the “mini” model starts at \$196, with options for add-ons such as crossbody chains.

“A lot of people who buy them are people who collect bags or who have some interest in sustainability as well as fashion,” she said.

While some of the machinery feels high-tech, much of the bag-making process also utilizes old-fashioned design principles, leathercraft techniques and manual work.

“I think there’s something charming about that, and also when people see what it is we’re doing here, they can sort of see there’s a potential to do a lot of things,” she said.

The HDP and LDP plastics de la Garza works with are the least toxic types, she said. “We’re not burning it, we’re fusing it. We’re melting it at a point that it doesn’t

release any VOCs,” she said. “But even still, I just make sure that I have filtration systems so that it’s absolutely clean.”

She also enjoys helping others realize their plastic project ideas, holding open days in her studio several times a year for people to come in, explore the materials and make recycled treasures of their own. She’s been designing a soap holder, inspired by the thought of “How can I get people, instead of buying plastic jars, plastic bottles to put shampoo in, to use a shampoo bar instead?” de la Garza said.

“Just looking at little ways that we can do that, get that behavior change happening in the community,” she added.

‘Everybody can do something’

The long-term hope “is for a future where our business is redundant and we no longer have the materials to make creative projects from plastic,” Inventurous’ website states. In the meantime, these local organizations offer ways for the community to get involved.

Ultimately, “for those that can choose, they should not choose plastic, whenever they can. That’s really the message,” David Schick said. “Everybody can do something, even if they can’t come here to help us or they can’t donate to us, they can at the very least think twice about buying something made out of plastic.” ■

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

See Tara de la Garza’s work at Cubberley Artist Studio Program’s open studios April 25, 1-5 p.m., at Cubberley Community Center, 4000 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto. tinyurl.com/April2026CASOpenstudios.

Learn more about de la Garza’s work at inventurous.org or on Instagram: @inventurous. Learn more about Peninsula Precious Plastics at peninsulapreciousplastics.org or on Instagram: @peninsulapreciousplastics.

TOWN OF WOODSIDE
2955 WOODSIDE ROAD
WOODSIDE, CA 94062

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

NOTICE IS HEARBY GIVEN THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE TOWN OF WOODSIDE will hold a hybrid public hearing allowing for the option to attend by teleconference/video conference or in person in Independence Hall, 2955 Woodside Road, Woodside, CA on **Wednesday, May 20, 2026, at 6:00 PM**, to consider:

Townwide **ZOAM2026-0001**
Town of Woodside **Planner: Sage Schaan, Planning Director**

Continued review of a Resolution of Intention and Recommendation to the Town Council to Amend Municipal Code Chapters 151 (Site Development/Driveway) 153 (Zoning) to update regulations for accessory dwelling units (ADUs) to allow additional flexibility for the construction of ADUs, such as amending requirements for second driveways, development within basic setbacks, floor area exceptions, increase in the number of ADUs allowed on lots less than one acre, and other updates necessary to be consistent with current State law; and an update to Paved Area and Surface Coverage Exceptions related to the installation of surface coverage at ADUs and other buildings for increased fire safety.

This resolution is exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”), pursuant to Public Resource Code Section 21080.17 (CEQA is not applicable to local ordinances regulating the construction of Accessory Dwelling Units).

All interested parties are invited to submit written comments to jpaping@woodsideca.gov and/or attend in person or virtually at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86068472736> and give testimony.

BRANFORD MARSALIS JUN 26
AT DINKELSPIEL AUDITORIUM

JUN 21 INDIAN JAZZ JOURNEY FEAT. MAHESH KALE AND GEORGE BROOKS	JUL 18 ANAT COHEN
JUN 27 BILLY CHILDS	JUL 19 THE WESTERLIES
JUN 28 LUCIANA SOUZA	JUL 21 JEREMY PELT
JUL 11 NICOLAS BEARDE	JUL 23 STEFON HARRIS
JUL 13 CHRISTINA GALISATUS	JUL 25 YILIAN CAÑIZARES
JUL 16 MICHAEL MAYO	JUL 28 GEORGE CABLES
	JUL 30 TAYLOR EIGSTI

Schedule and artists subject to change without notice.

STANFORD JAZZ FESTIVAL
JUN 21—JUL 31

FULL LINE-UP AT STANFORDJAZZ.ORG

Food & Drink



Courtesy La Corneta Taqueria

A line forms to order food at La Corneta Taqueria in San Francisco. Hand-painted murals decorate the walls of the dining room.

Downtown dining debuts

These 8 new eateries are coming to downtown Palo Alto

By Adrienne Mitchel

Downtown Palo Alto's dining scene is constantly shifting, with old businesses shuttering and new ones moving in. With recent closures of popular restaurants such as Son & Garden and Sushirrito, new eateries are set to take their place. Here are eight restaurants joining the neighborhood.

Bistro Demiya

Cupertino residents Demi Ebara and husband Arthur de la Cueva are opening their sixth Bay Area restaurant this summer in downtown Palo Alto.

Bistro Demiya is an elevated version of their casual chain Demiya, which specializes in Japanese curry. Expect 70% of the menu to be new, focusing on yoshoku, a style of Japanese cuisine that reimagines Western dishes through a Japanese culinary lens. Dishes will be served tapas style, with breakfast offered on weekends. A selection of Japanese sake and beers will be available.

Located in the former Poke One space, the restaurant seats about 25, with an additional 10 in the backyard.

Ebara moved to the U.S. from Japan in 2011, opening the first Demiya in San Jose in 2016. She noticed that Americans



Courtesy La Corneta Taqueria

La Corneta Taqueria, which is expanding to downtown Palo Alto, offers a variety of Mexican food, including burritos, tacos, quesadillas, nachos, tostadas and more.

often associated Japanese food with just sushi and ramen and wanted to showcase home-style cooking, particularly curry rice. She hopes to eventually take the company public and turn Demiya into a franchise.

Demiya, 407 Lytton Ave., Palo Alto; Instagram: @demiya_inc.

La Corneta Taqueria

A 31-year-old taqueria is expanding to the former SliderBar

location. La Corneta Taqueria was founded by Joel Campos in San Francisco in 1995 and has since expanded to Burlingame and San Carlos.

Now it makes its way to University Avenue, serving the

same burritos, tacos and plates it's known for in other cities. La Corneta Taqueria is expected to open before Cinco de Mayo, May 5, according to co-owner David Perez-Campos.

La Corneta Taqueria, 324 University Ave., Palo Alto; Instagram: @la.corneta.taqueria.

Mints & Honey

Peninsula brunch restaurant Mints & Honey is expanding to Emerson Street. The cafe was founded in San Carlos by sisters Dot and Canna Teng in 2017 and expanded to Burlingame in 2022.

A variety of sweet and savory waffles and toasts are on the menu. Find waffles served with housemade rose jam, organic yogurt and honey or with prosciutto, ricotta, fig jam and a soft boiled egg. Toasts include ones topped with mango, avocado, basil, Tajin and honey or with curry chicken. Sandwich options include smoked salmon, turkey avocado, albacore tuna salad and more.

Mints & Honey offers an expansive coffee and tea menu, with various flavored lattes (think lavender or Nutella), iced tea lemonades such as passionfruit honey jasmine or butterfly pink lemonade, matcha beverages (including matcha caramel and matcha mango lattes), fruit teas and milk teas.

An opening date has not yet been announced.

Mints & Honey, 728 Emerson St., Palo Alto; Instagram: @mintsandhoneycafe.

Peng's Kitchen

A new Chinese restaurant is coming to the former home of Son & Garden. The restaurant has more than 60 locations in China and Hong Kong, according to its Instagram. An opening date has not yet been announced.

Peng's Kitchen, 535 Bryant St., Palo Alto; Instagram: @peng.s_kitchen.

Rikyu

The team behind Los Altos omakase restaurant Hiroshi is opening a matcha cafe in the former TOMO Tea House footprint. In addition to matcha and coffee beverages with housemade syrups, Rikyu will also offer Japanese sandos (including katsu-style chicken, Japanese A5

wagyu beef and shrimp katsu), chirashi and matcha desserts.

Owner Daiji Uehara expects a mid-May opening, pending final inspection.

Rikyu, 121 Lytton Ave., Palo Alto; Instagram: @rikyupaloalto.

Taste of Anatolia

A cafe specializing in Turkish coffee, tea, breakfast and sweets is coming to the former Round Table Pizza on University Avenue. According to its Instagram, Taste of Anatolia will offer boxes of colorful Turkish delights and assorted baklava. An opening date has not yet been announced.

Taste of Anatolia, 263 University Ave., Palo Alto; Instagram: @toa_tasteofanatolia.

Urban Momo

A local Indo-Nepalese chain is opening its fourth location in the former Sushirrito space. Established in San Jose in 2017 by Sama and Bharat Acharya, Urban Momo specializes in Nepalese dumplings as well as Indo-Chinese dishes. Urban Momo expanded to San Mateo in 2018 and to Pleasanton in 2024. The chain also has a sister restaurant, Himali Bistro, in Burlingame.

The menu at Urban Momo's newest location will be more Nepalese-focused versus Indo-Chinese, more comparable to Himali Bistro's offerings, according to Ajay Narayan, a restaurant consultant working on the project.

Standout Nepalese dishes include kwati, a soup made from nine types of sprouted beans and lentils; mustang aloo, a spicy potato dish made with Sichuan pepper; and momo, which will come in vegan, vegetarian, chicken and lamb varieties.

Narayan expects Urban Momo to open in downtown Palo Alto sometime this week.

Urban Momo, 448 University Ave., Palo Alto; Instagram: @urbanmomopa.

Zingster's

A halal Nashville hot chicken and smashburger joint is opening in the former Cafe 220 space this week.

Established in Fremont in 2025, Zingster's is hosting its grand opening Friday at 5 p.m. on University Avenue. For its grand opening, Zingster's is giving the first 100 customers a free burger and offering 20% off all purchases plus a raffle.

Zingster's, 220B University Ave., Palo Alto; Instagram: @zingsterspaloalto. ■

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



Adrienne Mitchel

Prosciutto and ricotta waffle platter at Mints & Honey in San Carlos.



Courtesy Urban Momo

Chicken sekuwa, or Nepali grilled chicken, at Urban Momo.



Courtesy Rikyu

Rikyu in downtown Palo Alto will offer chirashi, or deconstructed sushi bowls.

Dig into food news. Follow the Peninsula Foodist on Instagram @peninsulafoodist and subscribe to the newsletter at www.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.

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