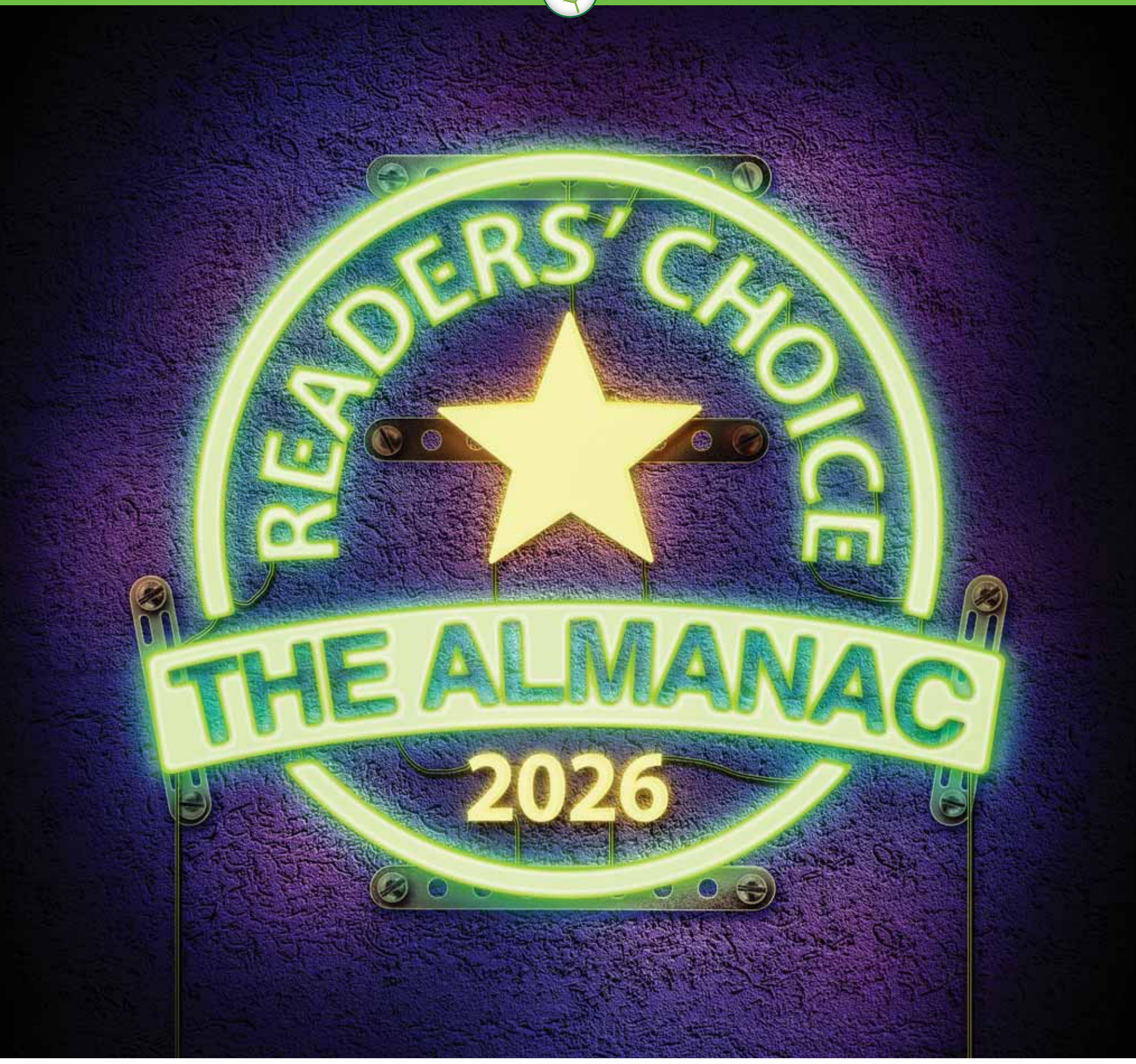
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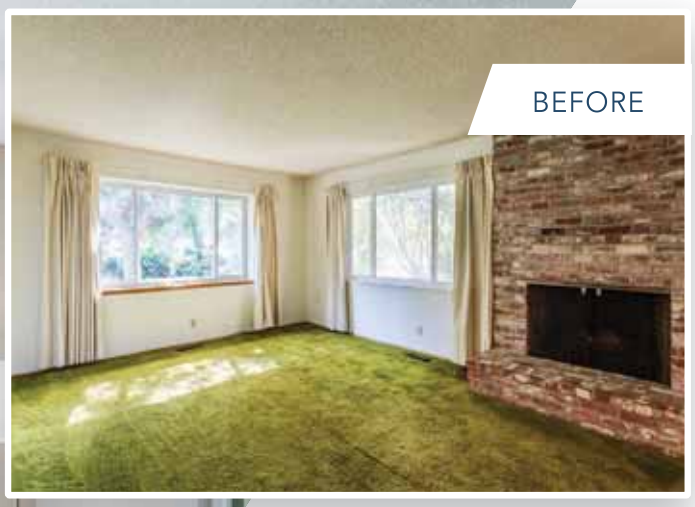
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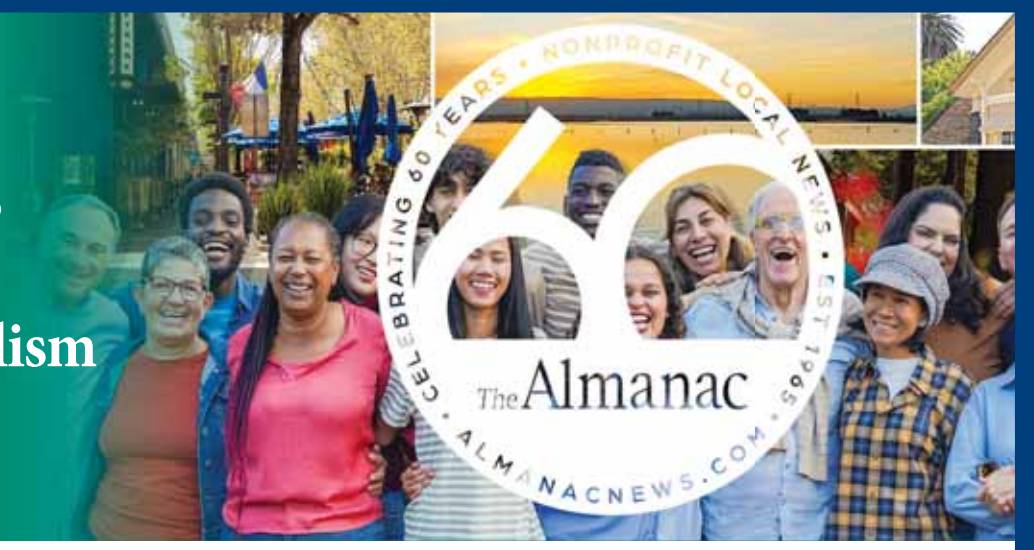
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Courtesy Cindy Asrir

Jakub Solovsky, an avid cyclist from the Czech Republic who lived in East Palo Alto, died in a head-on collision in Woodside on July 11.

Friends, family remember Jakub Solovsky, cyclist killed in Woodside head-on collision

By Sydney Feldman

Larry Abrahams remembers the day he and Jakub Solovsky arrived at Castle Rock State Park near Los Gatos after a cold, rainy bike ride, "soaked and miserable." Abrahams said he turned around and went home, but Solovsky continued on the full 80-mile ride.

"That was Jakub — he did not have a fancy bike or gear, but he loved riding and challenging himself and others," Abrahams said, calling Solovsky, who died on July 11, a "kind, considerate, yet challenging partner and leader."

That rainy day was the last time they rode together. Solovsky, 34, died in a head-on collision on Highway 35 in Woodside earlier this month. He was riding southbound when a black Porsche traveling in the opposite direction struck him. The car's 28-year-old driver was speeding and failed to navigate a curve in the road, according to California Highway Patrol officials.

The crash that killed Solovsky

See **JAKUB SOLOVSKY,** *page 16*

49ers coach Shanahan accepts blame for Palo Alto car crash

Head coach suffered multiple injuries in collision

By Gennady Sheyner

San Francisco 49ers head coach Kyle Shanahan accepted blame on Tuesday for the car crash that occurred in downtown Palo Alto on July 14, when the Tesla he was driving crashed head-on into a Mercedes SUV according to reports from the San Francisco Chronicle and other media outlets.

Shanahan reportedly suffered significant injuries, including a serious concussion, broken ribs and a broken nose, during the crash at about 6:12 p.m. on Alma Street and Hamilton Avenue. Palo Alto police confirmed the incident on Saturday, shortly after ESPN broke the story about the crash, but they declined to provide details about what exactly happened or who was at fault.

Public records indicated that while the driver of the Mercedes appeared to have been at fault for the collision, Shanahan's phone use may have been a contributing factor. But in a conversation with the San Francisco Chronicle and other news agencies Tuesday, Shanahan accepted blame for the crash, the Chronicle reported.

Shanahan told reporters in his office that he momentarily took his eyes off the road when his phone fell between the seats of his Tesla before he swerved into the northbound lane of Alma

See **SHANAHAN,** *page 15*

Menlo College student faces new charges in second rape case

By Arden Margulis

A Menlo College student accused of sexually assaulting a 12-year-old girl after allegedly providing her with marijuana and alcohol is facing new rape charges after police say they found a second alleged victim.

Andres Aguilar, 19, allegedly gave a 17-year-old girl alcohol and then raped her in San Jose on April 4, one month before he allegedly raped the 12-year-old girl after giving her marijuana and alcohol in his dorm room on the Atherton school's campus, San Mateo County prosecutors said.

The Atherton Police Department said it learned of the second alleged victim after getting a search warrant for Aguilar's phone following his arrest. On it, they discovered texts from the 17-year-old girl confronting Aguilar, Deputy District Attorney Kara Szkotak said in an interview with this news organization. Police were able to identify the girl, who provided details about the alleged assault.

> 'Unfortunately, it's underreported on college campuses.'
>
> KARA SZKOTAK, DEPUTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

The 17-year-old told police that Aguilar raped her in San Jose while she was intoxicated. When her parents learned she was missing, they tracked her phone to locate her. Her parents later found her and Aguilar in a car and when confronted, he allegedly drove off and took the girl to his dorm room, where he left her. Prosecutors also say he also allegedly stole her bank card and some cash.

In both cases, Aguilar is accused of providing alcohol or marijuana to underage girls before sexually assaulting them. As first reported by this news organization, Aguilar allegedly raped a 12-year-old girl on May 5 after giving her alcohol and marijuana. During the assault, the girl repeatedly told him "no" and to stop, according to District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe. Afterward, Aguilar allegedly had Plan B emergency contraception delivered by DoorDash to the college because he was concerned the girl would become pregnant, prosecutors said.

The following day, the girl's teacher reported the allegations to child protective services.

Szkotak said that victims of sexual assault on college campuses may try to minimize what happened and can be reluctant to come forward to authorities.

"Unfortunately, it's underreported on college campuses. Many victims think, 'It was just a one-time thing' or 'the perpetrator didn't know what they were doing' or 'we were both drunk,'" Szkotak said. "The difficulty with college campuses is a lot of women and men tend to brush it off as just a 'college experience,' when they are actually victims of rape."

Szkotak said that by coming forward, victims help themselves and can help protect others.

"Sometimes, it's for their own sake. Victims report after an assault that, 'I feel something is wrong with me.' As we see with this case, a lot of times the perpetrator ends up walking away and doing it to someone else," Szkotak said.

The San Mateo County District Attorney's Office filed an amended complaint during Aguilar's arraignment and added several enhancements, in addition to new counts of kidnapping, forcible rape and theft. Aguilar has pleaded not guilty to all charges.

If convicted, Aguilar faces a minimum sentence of 15 years and a maximum of life in prison.

Menlo College previously told this news organization that it takes all allegations of criminal conduct seriously but declined to say whether it sent out notices of the alleged assault to students or staff. The private college did not respond to questions from this news organization about the discovery of another alleged victim who was brought to the campus.

Aguilar has been held without bail since being arrested on May 12. A preliminary hearing on July 8 was rescheduled while police investigated the possibility of a second victim. ■

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

Readers' Choice winners 20

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READERS' CHOICE THE ALMANAC 2026

Grateful owner meets firefighters who rescued dog-paddling pooch from Bay

By Sydney Feldman





Photos by Karina Patel

Above: Maribel Juarez holds her 7-year-old dog, Prieta, and poses for a photo with the Menlo Park firefighters who rescued the lost dog that was found swimming in the San Francisco Bay on July 16. Left: Director Robert Silano, left, Board of Directors President Virgina Chang Kiraly and Director Chuck Bernstein are shown here at the Menlo Park Fire Protection District Board Meeting on July 21, where they met the rescued pup, Prieta.

The Menlo Park Fire Protection District Board had a special guest at its meeting on Tuesday, July 21: Prieta, the 7-year-old dog that Menlo Park firefighters recently rescued from the San Francisco Bay.

Prieta was reunited with her owner, East Palo Alto resident Maribel "Mary" Juarez, on July 16 after being missing for almost two weeks. At the meeting, Juarez expressed deep gratitude for the firefighters who saved the shivering and wounded dog.

"I don't go anywhere without her," Juarez said in Spanish through an interpreter. "She's like my partner."

The soggy dog was extracted from the Bay by Menlo Park firefighter Tyler Estkowski, who leaned over the bow of Menlo Fire's Airboat 77, reached into the water and scooped Prieta up with one arm.

While in the Bay, Prieta was beset by seagulls and suffered a gash in one cheek. She had swum almost half a mile from Cooley Landing Park in East Palo Alto, where she had been spotted by someone who called 911 to alert authorities.

After being bundled in a jacket and brought to shore, the Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA reunited Prieta with her owner. Juarez said she'd been searching for her dog since the Fourth of July and had visited local animal shelters several times in hopes of finding her pet.

Virginia Chang-Kiraly, Menlo Park Fire's board president, called the rescue one of the most dramatic she's ever seen.

"This is the happiest ending for all of us," Chang-Kiraly said after thanking the airboat's crewmembers who plucked the "brave little" dog from the Bay. ■

Email Editorial Intern Sydney Feldman at sfeldman@almanacnews.com.

Becker's AI transparency law to take effect Saturday

By Eric Urbach / Bay City News Service



Magali Gauthier

State Sen. Josh Becker, right, speaks in Palo Alto on Oct. 31, 2023.

After several years of delays, legislation from two Bay Area lawmakers that is being called a landmark artificial intelligence transparency law by academics and advocates is set to go into effect Saturday, Aug. 1.

First passed in 2024, the law will require AI-generated content like images and videos to contain easily accessible embedded details about its origin and history that will help users to identify content that is AI-generated, along with providing users a free AI detection tool.

"Three years ago, the problem hit me in the face," said state Sen. Josh Becker, D-San Mateo, one of the co-authors of the legislation, along with Assemblymember Buffy Wicks, D-Oakland, and Rick Chavez Zbur, D-Los Angeles.

Becker said learning of AI scams surrounding deep fakes and election misinformation galvanized him to take action.

"I realized we kind of have to come up with a way to let people know was something AI or not," he said.

Metadata is a part of all digital content, often used to describe various aspects such as an author of a book or the name of a song. This law will require AI developers to automatically apply when and where a piece of content was created once the AI content is generated. This information will be attached to the piece of content into the future, so viewers can always trace back its point of origin.

According to Becker, embedding origin details into the metadata of AI content will be harder to fake as opposed to a watermark, or a visual indicator that an image or video was generated with AI, which could easily be added to real content or removed from AI-generated content.

While this effort marks a step forward in transparency, Becker said the work will be ongoing as technology develops and changes. For now, Becker said that this law is the cumulation of three years of effort and work to figure out what will be most effective.

California decided to delay implementation of the transparency law to align with the European Union's AI Act, which takes effect on Sunday. While Europe's regulation touches various aspects of AI regulation, California's transparency requirements largely line up with Europe.

Becker added that enforcement will be a key part of ensuring the legislation is effective, noting that violators will be liable for a civil penalty in the amount of $5,000 per violation, which can be litigated through a civil action filed by the state's attorney general, a city attorney or county council.

The next phase of the law's rollout will occur in January, when large social media companies will be required to detect and disclose this data for the content they distribute, while also providing users with an interface to show if the content was AI-generated. ■

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Peter Neumann, SRI scientist and computer safety expert, dies at 93

By Gennady Sheyner



Courtesy Helen Neumann

Peter Neumann, shown with his daughter, Helen, has died at the age of 93.

Peter Neumann, a Palo Alto resident whose youthful encounter with Albert Einstein sparked a lifelong passion for computer security and propelled him toward becoming one of the world's leading experts in the field, has died at the age of 93.

A Greenmeadow resident who had spent decades as a computer scientist at SRI International in Menlo Park, Neumann is best known for his work on developing systems to improve computer security. He died in May, according to his friends and family.

Born in Manhattan, Neumann was a student at Harvard University in 1952 when he joined his mother, the artist and mosaicist Elsa Schmid, for an important assignment: making sketches of Albert Einstein.

"While my grandmother was sketching, he and my dad were chatting," said Helen Neumann, Peter's daughter. "I think that was one of the greatest moments of his life."

The topic of computer security would remain Neumann's passion for the next seven decades. According to his obituary in The New York Times, he was one of the first programmers at Harvard to have access to a personal computer, a machine that was named Mark IV. He moved to Germany on a Fulbright fellowship, according to Helen Neumann, before returning to join Bell Laboratories, where he focused on ways to correct coding errors.

According to an article in the Communications of the ACM, an industry publication for computer scientists, he fostered "a worldwide community of researchers, historians, and journalists who work to catalog and publicize the risks of computing's expanding role in daily life." This included founding a publication dedicated to computer errors and launching the ACM Risk Forum, which was dedicated to computer risks.

The paper notes that his conversation with Einstein informed one of his core tenets: that "complexity in computing is not merely an engineering nuisance but a moral problem, because complex systems hide their failures and harm their users in ways simpler systems do not."

Neumann and his family moved to Palo Alto in 1971 and lived in a house on Shasta Drive. He worked at SRI, spending 50 years as a senior principal scientist and later a chief scientist, according to ACM.

While work consumed most of his time, he also loved music and enjoyed practicing tai chi at Cubberley Community Center, according to Helen Neumann. He played the piano and the bassoon and, as a teenager, attended the Greenwood Music Camp, which stoked his love for chamber music.

"That was one of the biggest passions in his life," Helen Neumann said.

Her family lived frugally, she said, and rarely took vacations. She was thus surprised when he announced in 2024 that he would like to make a $4 million donation to the San Francisco Symphony to preserve its chorus. His family ultimately agreed to go public with the gift because it wanted to set an example of an "ordinary guy" who had saved up his whole life so that he could make an incredible gesture in the end, Helen Neumann said.

"He was really altruistic and if he believed in something, he was all in," Helen Neumann said. "Like with the choir, he really put his money where his mouth was."

David Moss, a friend and neighbor of Neumann, commended him for his many decades of dedication to his work, which he continued until the very end of his life. Moss, who has lived near Neumann for more than 40 years, said he enjoyed hearing Neumann play music with his friends in the living room, with the door wide open.

At one point, Moss interviewed Neumann about his work for a project about Silicon Valley. He said he was particularly struck by Neumann's ability to continue working and pursuing new projects until the very end.

"I asked him where he got his ideas and he said, 'I have projects stretched out into the future and I've always had projects stretched out into the future, from the very beginning.' If one area was taken care of, there were four other areas to go," Moss recalled. "Most of us wait to be told what to do. He was the one who was always out there, challenging his colleagues to think broadly in these other areas." ■

Email Gennady Sheyner at gsheyner@almanacnews.com.

San Mateo County Sheriff's Office works to combat underage drinking

By Sydney Feldman

For the past year, the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office has been working with the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) to reduce underage drinking and promote alcohol awareness education.

After receiving a $75,000 grant awarded by the ABC, deputies from the Sheriff's Office and ABC personnel inspected 71 businesses in San Mateo County, according to a July 27 press release.

During the grant period, deputies issued 19 citations and held 11 community education sessions on the dangers of underage drinking and driving under the influence.

They also conducted 12 specialized operations at licensed retail businesses throughout San Mateo County to identify adults who furnished alcohol to minors and address violations before they led to larger public safety issues, the Sheriff's Office said in the press release.

The Sheriff's Office announced plans to reapply for the grant. ■

Email Editorial Intern Sydney Feldman at sfeldman@almanacnews.com.





Ravenswood Assistant Superintendent Will Eger leaves district for his next challenge

After helping oversee more than $200M in campus improvements, he'll become superintendent of Newark Unified School District

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

A decade ago, the roofs of Ravenswood City School District's campuses were leaking rainwater, students were shivering in chilly classrooms and buildings were falling apart. Today, the district has renovated campuses with new classrooms, playgrounds, football fields and more.

The transformation has been attributed to its strong team of administrative leaders but as of next school year, one of the administrators behind many of those projects is leaving to tackle the challenges of another school district. Former Assistant Superintendent Will Eger is bringing his skills and experience across the Dumbarton Bridge as the new superintendent of Newark Unified School District.



Seeger Gray

Will Eger, assistant superintendent of the Ravenswood City School District, is leaving to become superintendent of the Newark Unified School District after helping oversee campus renovations, including the modernization of Belle Haven Elementary School.

After graduating from Harvard University, Eger taught algebra and geometry for two years, then he decided to leave the classroom and work at the district level for Boston Public Schools. This is where Eger began to understand district finances, a crucial part of the work he would later do for Ravenswood, which serves Menlo Park's Belle Haven neighborhood and East Palo Alto.

"I needed a higher vantage point to be able to see the system more broadly and that led me to go work for a district. I've always been attracted to the most challenging problems," Eger said.

When he moved back to the Bay Area, he found Ravenswood to be a place where he felt he could make positive contributions to help the community of historically underserved students.

In 2020, Eger became the chief business officer of the district and was later promoted to assistant superintendent of finance, operations, data and technology in 2024. He came into Ravenswood with goals to improve financial transparency and efficient budgeting processes, especially with over $90 million in funds available through bond measures H and S.

Starting in 2018, Ravenswood voters approved four bond measures totaling over $200 million.

The district's progress in using the funds, however, had continuously been stalled by debates on campus designs and construction processes. Rising construction costs meant project delays were becoming increasingly expensive, adding millions of dollars in costs, Eger said. He took it upon himself to learn about how to get the construction projects on track, how to get designs approved and "start getting shovels in the ground."

Over the last few years, the district has been able to complete the renovation of three of its campuses through Eger's leadership: Belle Haven Elementary School, Los Robles Ronald McNair Academy and Ravenswood Middle School. Classrooms are now fitted with new ventilation and sound systems, warm-toned lighting and large windows that bring in natural lighting and all campuses have added more greenery.

During his time with the district, Eger said he was focused on action, referencing Elvis Presley's song lyrics: "A little less conversation, a little more action." If a community member told him that they needed a new football field, he listened and moved on to figure out how to make it happen.

"It's important to listen to the community and get direction from the community. I think what they really want is action and results," he said.

Eger wanted to break the district's internalized stigma that "Ravenswood can't have nice things." Over the years, the transformation has shifted the community's expectations to, "We can have nice things and we're going to have them," he said.

"Our schools are in a wonderful place because of Will," said Superintendent Gina Sudaria. "It's pretty extraordinary that Will has helped us get not only a bond, a lease, a school remodel, but do that multiple times through the end."

With newly renovated schools across the Belle Haven neighborhood and East Palo Alto, Eger hopes that it'll attract the community to stay in the area and start a "ripple effect for generations."

Similarly for teachers and staff, he encourages those who truly feel they belong in the field to stay in public education.

"That's where the kids are, that's where the impact should be had, but figure out what you're best at in that area, and be the best at it," Eger said.

Eger began his own career in education when he was 17 years old, working with students at the City Year program in Boston through AmeriCorps. Since then, he said his goals to provide "excellent education for all students," haven't changed.

Eger was born in San Francisco and grew up around the globe, living in Singapore, Indonesia, Philadelphia, Sydney and New York. He said his worldwide perspective has given him a stronger idea of the realities behind the lack of effective and equal education in the United States.

"Growing up overseas, you kind of have this idealized version of American history where Martin Luther King Jr. marched and Rosa Parks didn't get up from her seat on the bus, and after that we fixed our racial issues and overcame division," said Eger. "We moved back to America and it was very clear that wasn't true."

After six years at Ravenswood, Eger feels he has done his part in helping the district meet the needs of all of their students.

"The team is so good that they're able to do the work without me, which has been really fun to watch them grow and thrive and get to that place," he said.

As Eger embarks on his new role in Newark, he hopes to provide the district, which has experienced a lot of transitions in the last seven years, with long term stability, planning and help build a strong culture to help students succeed.

"I'm hoping to work myself out of a job by getting the district to be so functional that I'm not really needed anymore," he said. ■

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

Poll finds voters support November transit sales tax measure

Proponents say vote is crucial to maintain services

By B. Sakura Cannestra

Proponents of the November ballot measure supporting public transit published updated polling numbers today, showing a majority of Bay Area voters support the half-cent sales tax.

The Connect Bay Area citizen-led initiative's latest polling numbers show 54% of voters support the measure, according to a press release from proponents released on July 29. The initiative cleared a major hurdle earlier this month after proponents gathered enough signatures to qualify it for the November ballot. As a citizen initiative, the measure would need a simple majority to pass.

The measure would devote a 1-cent sales tax in Alameda, Contra Costa, San Mateo and Santa Clara counties and a one cent sales tax in San Francisco to Bay Area transit authorities. The taxes would last 14 years. It would generate about $980 million annually, which would be divided among local transit agencies to stave off service cuts and improve existing infrastructure.

Caltrain and BART are in especially dire financial straits. Much of their revenue comes from ridership, which has not yet reached pre-COVID-19 levels. Caltrain officials have warned that without another revenue source, they will need to reduce train frequency to every hour, end weekend service and stop running trains by 9 p.m. on weekdays.

Adina Levin, executive director of the transit advocacy nonprofit Seamless Bay Area, said Caltrain's ridership has been rebounding ever since the corridor switched to electric trains. Without the measure, she worries Caltrain's progress would make a "screeching reverse."

Seamless Bay Area is part of the coalition supporting the Connect Bay Area initiative, so Levin helped gather signatures in person at Palo Alto farmers markets and at Caltrain stations around the area — efforts that she said were "pretty gratifying."

"We would go out on ... the trains that carried people to Giants' games, and said 'You know, the train that's going to take you home after the Giants' game and the one that's going to take you there on the weekend is going to get cut,'" Levin said. "When you let people know what was going on, many, many, many people wanted to keep the transit system running and improving, and signed."

Some revenue from the measure will go directly to VTA and SamTrans, as part of Santa Clara and San Mateo counties' opt-in deals. SamTrans is expecting about $50 million annually, which would go toward improving accessibility, and the quality and safety of existing transport corridors, such as turning the Dumbarton railroad corridor into a new bus route.

While the early polling numbers and feedback from transit users are encouraging to tax proponents, Levin told The Almanac there's still work to be done outreaching to voters about the November measure.

"A result in the mid-50 (percent range) means we can't go to sleep, but if we're out getting the message out, then that is a very winnable campaign," she said. ■

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Woodside residents weigh in on council member's violation of the Brown Act

Public calls for Mayor Pro Tem Paul Goeld resignation, reprimand

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

The Woodside Town Council faced heat from the public at its July 28 meeting, with members divided over holding Mayor Pro Tempore Paul Goeld accountable for divulging confidential information to then-Town Manager Jason Ledbetter.

Ledbetter accused Goeld of sharing information with him from a closed session meeting, which is a violation of the state's open meeting law, known as the Brown Act. The allegation was sustained in an investigation into a number of accusations against town officials in Ledbetter's whistleblower report.

A dozen members of the public voiced their concerns about Goeld remaining on the council for the rest of his term and called for the town to reprimand him. Some asked for both Mayor Brian Dombkowski and Goeld to resign, and many asked for the council to reopen the investigation into Ledbetter's allegations.

In February, Ledbetter publicly released his 14-page report detailing allegations that included disclosing closed session meeting discussions, making racist and sexist comments and delaying action on low-income housing projects. Goeld, Dombkowski, Councilmember Jenn Wall and Town Attorney Jean Savaree were named in the report.

Out of the 11 allegations, the only one sustained in the town's independent investigation was Goeld revealing closed session information to Ledbetter about his hiring. Ledbetter said Goeld shared details about Wall advocating for a female town manager candidate and using alleged "gender bias claims" during the confidential meeting.

Other allegations made against Goeld included making sexist and racist comments toward Councilmembers Hassan Aburish and Jenn Wall, and attempting to postpone progress on building low-income housing on High Road. Investigators found there was insufficient evidence to prove those claims.

Before the council was presented with a report on the investigation from the town's external counsel Rick Bolanos, Goeld gave a public apology as he recused himself from the meeting.

"I agree my disclosure was inappropriate, and I regret that lapse of judgment," Goeld said. "It is my hope that this sincere acknowledgement of my accountability and this apology are acceptable, and that no further action will be necessary."

Bolanos, who works for San Francisco-based law firm Liebert Cassidy Whitmore, was appointed by the town's liability insurance carrier to represent Woodside concerning Ledbetter's allegations. He said in his report that due to "threatened litigation the council has been advised not to comment publicly about Ledbetter's employment or the town's investigation into his claims."

Bolanos added that the council had received Goeld's apology and accepted his recommendation that additional training be conducted concerning the town's code of ethics and conduct.

The community members who spoke at Tuesday's meeting said they were dissatisfied by the report, unhappy about lack of ethical behavior from the council and the lack of accountability among council members. Others, including Wall, complained that the agenda's description of the discussion was "purposely vague," and staff did not provide a written report, giving the council and residents no time to process or prepare a comment.



Michael Molcsan

Mayor pro tem Paul Goeld speaks during a Town Council meeting at Independence Hall in Woodside on July 28.

On the meeting agenda, it was listed as one of the final items of the evening under "Oral Report From Legal Counsel: Personnel investigation: Richard Bolanos, Partner, Liebert, Cassidy Whitmore."

"Besides the claims against Councilmember Wall, I was frankly not surprised by any of the allegations," said former Councilmember Ned Fluet, who called for the council to adopt a resolution on censure and to not hand the mayoral seat to Goeld during the annual rotation in December.

In a separate discussion at the start of the meeting, Goeld took a stand in support of a group of

See **PAUL GOELD,** *page 17*

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Michael Molcsan

Community members gather outside Independence Hall in Woodside on July 28 to call for safer roads after the death of cyclist Jakub Solovsky.

Cyclists pressure Woodside Council for action after cyclist dies

Western Wheelers member died in collision with car on Highway 35

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Woodside's Independence Hall was filled with neon colors on July 28 as members of the Western Wheelers dressed in orange, green and yellow cycling jerseys, showed up in honor of their member Jakub Solovsky, who was killed in a head-on collision on Highway 35 earlier this month.

The group of Peninsula bicyclists came to the Town Council meeting with a call to action: make Highway 35, locally known as Skyline Boulevard, safer for the whole community. The curvy two-lane state highway has long attracted speedsters in sports cars and souped-up motorcycles who put the law-abiding public at risk when they treat the road as a racetrack.

"This is not a cycling issue," said Anne Paulson during the public comment session. "This is Skyline residents, kids visiting friends, hikers, walkers, legal drivers and cyclists versus recreational lawbreakers menacing us, and that needs to stop."

While many bicyclists have died in car collisions across Woodside roads, Solovsky's death hit close to home for many local riders who knew him as a friend or a mutual acquaintance. The recent uptick in cyclist deaths in the area have inspired community action to drive change.

"All the local residents see speeding cars all the time. This incident and others show again and again that we need to make changes," said Palo Alto resident Deirdre Crommie.

Solovsky was killed about 10 miles south of Four Corners, at the intersection of highways 35 and 84, a popular spot that draws crowds of car enthusiasts and motorcyclists on weekends. Last year, Redwood City cyclist Eric Biron died after being hit by a pickup truck near the intersection.

Locals point to speeding and lack of enforcement as a cause of continued fatalities on the road.

Redwood City resident Cindy Asrir asked the Woodside Town Council to pressure Caltrans, which controls the state highway, to lower the speed limit, install speed cameras and implement traffic calming measures.

"You, as a town bordering and containing highways 84 and 35, can influence the Sheriff's Office, CHP, Caltrans, and the Legislature," Asrir said. "Skyline is a known raceway to drivers, most of whom do not even live here. We need to change this now to protect our community, and so more lives are not senselessly lost."

Public Works Director Louis Sun reported that Woodside has been working with Caltrans and law enforcement agencies on multiple projects around Highway 24, Woodside, Canada, Kings Mountain and Sand Hill roads. The San Mateo County Sheriff's Office and CHP will be conducting a joint enforcement effort on Aug. 8, Sun added.

Last November, Caltrans held a community meeting to present its ideas to improve the intersection at Highway 35 and 84. Plans included a four-way stop, "stop ahead" signs in all directions, "yield to pedestrian" signs at crosswalks and turn restriction signs.

Councilmember Dick Brown said that Caltrans expects to start construction on Four Corners in one month and has been working with Sun and the town on how to slow traffic and improve safety.

In addition to safer roads, cyclists also called for the town to get in contact with San Mateo County's district attorney to urge him to hold the drivers involved in these fatalities accountable.

"When there's recklessness involved, it really needs to be

See **CYCLISTS,** *page 17*



Michael Molcsan

A bicyclist speaks at the Woodside Town Council meeting at Independence Hall.

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Patrick Kelly and Xavier Maximus Clark of PAX Duo play at the debut Fourth Fridays event in downtown Menlo Park on July 24.

Fourth Fridays kicks off with music, crowds in downtown Menlo Park

Event series to continue on August 28, September 25

Story by Arden Margulis
Photos by Michael Molcsan

Hundreds of residents flocked to downtown Menlo Park on July 24 as businesses stayed open late and local artists performed free live music for the debut of Fourth Fridays, a new effort to revive a typically quiet Friday night scene and draw foot traffic back to local merchants and restaurants.

Businesses including Mademoiselle Collette, Feldman's Books, Gallery House and Gitane stayed open later as musicians performed at several locations from 6 to 9 p.m.

The event was hosted by Downtown Menlo Fund, a nonprofit founded in 2025 by Marnie Foody, Ben Eiref, Paul Charrette and Laura Melahn to support downtown. Melahn is also a candidate for Menlo Park City Council.

LeVant Dessert owner Maya Fezzani said Friday nights in Menlo Park are typically a "ghost town."

"The city is really not helping us. We used to have so many events before COVID. Since COVID, we have not had anything," Fezzani said. "I think Menlo Park deserves a nice, vibrant atmosphere."

Before the pandemic, the city hosted a summer block party that closed a stretch of Santa Cruz Avenue to cars and featured live music and entertainment. Fourth Fridays is intended to help bring that energy back to downtown.

"We could not be happier about how the first Fourth Fridays is going. The Members has the community dancing in the plaza. Bistro Vida is full. Roma is full. And overall Santa Cruz Ave is bumping," Melahn said during the event.

Afterward, she said the event reflected the vision behind the Downtown Menlo Fund.

"That's the whole idea: Bring people out to enjoy the town together. When we started the Downtown Menlo Fund, we imagined a more lively future for downtown. Now, so many people are working together to make that happen. ... Come on out Aug. 28 for Round 2!" Melahn said in an email after the event.

Main Stage

Cover bands The Members and The Wanderers performed sets on the main stage at the pedestrian plaza in the 400 block of Santa Cruz Avenue, which the City Council intends to turn into a community gathering space.

Santa Cruz Avenue

In addition to performers in stores and at the pedestrian plaza, several acts were spread out through downtown. PAX Duo played saxophone and guitar in front of Café Vivant and singer and guitarist Norman Kahan performed near the

See **FOURTH FRIDAYS,** *page 13*



The Members performs on Santa Cruz Avenue on July 24.



A woman dances to the music by The Members.

FOURTH FRIDAYS

continued from page 12

former Pharmaca space.

Balloon artist Steven Koehler made swords and animals for children in front of Cheeky Monkey.

Gallery House

Gallery House stayed open three hours later than usual, hosting a performance by Los Altos singer-songwriter Corrie Dunn and serving refreshments from 6 to 8 p.m.

Steve Shpall, a photographer who is part of Gallery House, said the gallery was hoping to increase its awareness.

"For us, this is about promoting people coming into the gallery to see it and learn that there's an art gallery downtown. We want them to think about coming back when they're looking for art," Shpall said.

He said that while the gallery may only see a couple of people all day, over 30 people had already visited in the first hour of the music.

"I think that people really are craving community connection ... coming to a gallery where there are beautiful things and music — it just enlivens your spirit and brings us together," Carol Garsten, a jewelry artist who organized the music at Gallery House, said. "It's good for economic vitality. It's also great for the community."

Mademoiselle Colette

Mademoiselle Colette manager Barbara Sampaio said her team is thrilled about the event. "This is really nice for us. We've been getting a lot of visitors: a lot of longtime clients have been coming in for some desserts and new clients as well," Sampaio said.

Singer-songwriter Gaby Castro-Moroder performed original songs along with covers of pop hits in front of the store.

Bow Wow Meow

In addition to staying open later, Bow Wow Meow offered free samples of dog supplements, including liquid pumpkin, goat's milk and beef bone broth.

"It's definitely a good way to get the word out on our products. A lot of dogs that stopped by have been sampling our liquids, and pretty much, it's been a 10 out of 10. All dogs really like it!" Bow Wow Meow manager Sam Orrego said.

Other businesses

Feldman's Books hosted Melodious Thunk and Gitane had a performance by Dave Nesbitt Jazz Band.

Bistro Vida and Bar Loretta owner Ali El Safy said his restaurants had 40 to 50 more patrons than on a typical Friday night.

"The whole community is now coming out to support the restaurants and other businesses too," El Safy said.

Fourth Fridays returns to downtown Menlo Park on Aug. 28 and Sept. 25, with businesses expected to stay open late and free live music planned throughout downtown. ■

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



Jeanne Ichnowski poses next to her artwork on display at the Gallery House in downtown Menlo Park.



Patrons of Bar Loretta dine at tables in downtown Menlo Park.



Barbara Sampaeo, second from the right, gathers with coworkers behind the counter of Mademoiselle Colette in downtown Menlo Park.

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Thomas John Fiene

October 28, 1934 – July 18, 2026



Dr. Thomas J. "Tom" Fiene, 91, an extraordinary physician, humanitarian, and beloved family man, passed away in the early morning of July 18, 2026. In a beautiful testament to a lifelong romance, he was reunited hours later with the love of his life and "sweetie pie", Nancy Jordan Fiene.

Born in La Crosse, Wisconsin on October 28, 1934, to John and Hilda Fiene, Tom grew up alongside his younger brother, Jim, and sister, Sue. Early in his childhood his family moved to Green Bay, Wisconsin where he spent summers working on local farms using horse-drawn plows, picking beans, and milking cows by kerosene lamp light.

Academically, Tom excelled in physics while also an enthusiastic musician, thespian and athlete. Still in high school, he played the double bass with the Green Bay Symphony Orchestra. A turning point came during his senior year following an appendectomy. Inspired by the care and dedication of the physicians during his hospitalization, Tom decided to pursue a career in medicine.

Though awarded a coveted appointment to Annapolis U.S. Naval Academy, Tom was disqualified due to color-blindness. Instead, he chose to attend Carleton College in Northfield, MN on full scholarship, where he embarked on a transformative journey. While there, his most cherished discovery was in art history class — where he fell in love with both art history and the effervescent Nancy Josephine Jordan. The two were married shortly after graduation, beginning a devoted partnership and extraordinary love story, having just celebrated their 69th wedding anniversary.

Tom remained deeply connected to Carleton throughout his life, serving on the Alumni Council and receiving the Alumni Exceptional Service Award in 2011. Tom earned his medical degree from the Northwestern University School of Medicine. He then completed an internship at the University of Colorado, Denver, followed by residency in Internal Medicine and a fellowship in Cardio-Pulmonary at Stanford University. After that, he served as a captain in the military as Chief of the Cardio-Pulmonary Division at the Andrews Air Force Hospital in Washington, D.C. After completing his military duty, Tom and Nancy returned to Palo Alto with their family, where he joined the Menlo Medical Clinic. He practiced as a partner there for 32 years until his retirement in 2000.

Dr. Fiene became a cornerstone of the local medical community, serving also as an Adjunct Clinical Professor at the Stanford University School of Medicine, a role he continued serving for many years after retiring from practice. Renowned by his peers, students, and patients for his extraordinary diagnostic skills, bedside manner, and teaching abilities, Tom touched the lives of everyone he met with his profound compassion, brilliant mind, and deep dedication to serving others. Dr. Fiene was widely admired not only for his clinical expertise, but for his fierce advocacy for underserved populations and community service. Beginning in 2009, he volunteered as a teacher at the Stanford Pacific Free Clinic in San Jose, bringing quality healthcare to vulnerable communities while inspiring generations of Stanford medical students to recognize and serve those in need. He served on the Stanford Hospital Biomedical Ethics Committee, providing wise counsel on complex cases involving transplants, end-of-life care, and advocacy for homeless patients. Tom also generously contributed his leadership to community organizations, serving on the boards of Channing House, the Palo Alto Chamber Orchestra, and the Portola Valley Ranch Association. In 2013, he was honored with the Avenidas Lifetime Achievement Award for his exemplary professional and volunteer contributions to the community.

Beyond his remarkable career, Tom's greatest joy was his friends and family. He and Nancy created a warm, loving home and raised three daughters and a son who brought endless pride to his life. He filled his children's lives with fun and adventure — hiking, camping, backpacking, boating and visits to the beach. While the kids were off collecting seashells, he would carefully mix plaster so they could make sand castings. At Christmas, he meticulously constructed gingerbread houses from panels baked by Nancy for the children to decorate. He hand stenciled beautiful Christmas cards. He also crafted beautifully handmade toys like dollhouses with electricity and puppet theaters. Having grown up working on farms, he loved gardening and developed a passion for the art of bonsai — carefully nurturing 16 trees grown from seedlings. He also managed the community vineyard at their home in Portola Valley, learning how to craft Cabernet. Traveling was another passion shared by Tom and Nancy. They traveled to all corners of the globe, with great interest in the many aspects of the places they visited — the history, politics, traditions, art, geology, and food. They had an insatiable appetite for learning and loved attending lectures at Stanford. They were voracious readers and active in multiple book clubs.

Tom is survived by his daughters, Julie Fiene Yeager, MD (husband Fabian Yeager), Sarah Fiene, and Kate Wray; his son, Thomas Fiene, Jr.; his five cherished grandchildren, Jordan Doscher Yeager (wife, Katie Selin), Austen Roxanne Yeager (husband, Edward Toumayan), Brooks Fabian Thomas Yeager, Gavin Thomas Wray (wife, Alex Roberts), Madison Helene Wray; and his great-granddaughter, Olivia Elise Wray. Tom lived a life defined by warmth, integrity, service, and devotion to his loved ones. His legacy as a healer, mentor, friend, husband, and father will live on in the countless lives he enriched. He moved through the world with genuine empathy, humility, humor and care for everyone around him. He made a lasting impression on all who crossed his path.

Nancy Josephine Fiene

June 9, 1934 – July 18, 2026

Nancy Jordan Fiene passed away surrounded by her four children on Saturday, July 18, 2026. In a beautiful testament to their lifelong romance, she was reunited with her beloved husband, Tom Fiene, her Sweetie Pie, who passed just hours earlier. A true original who brought boundless energy, intelligence, and joy to everything she touched, Nancy left an indelible mark on all who knew her. She was known for her radiant smile and genuine curiosity.

Born on June 9, 1934, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Nancy was the oldest daughter of Harold and Helene Jordan. Raised in Minnesota with her younger sister, Judy, she discovered two lifelong passions early on: nature and music. She began piano lessons at the age of five and embraced adventure through Girl Scouts, including a memorable canoe-camping trip on the Canadian border — an experience that sparked a deep love for the outdoors.

Nancy attended Carleton College, a time that shaped the rest of her life in momentous ways. Following the advice of her music professor to take organ lessons so she would "always have a job," Nancy embraced countless musical opportunities. But one of her most cherished discoveries was in an art history class — where she fell in love with both art history and the love of her life, Tom Fiene of Green Bay, Wisconsin. The two were married after graduation, beginning a devoted partnership and extraordinary love story that spanned nearly seven decades. As a result of that art history class, her passion for art, architecture and design continued to grow and she was a dedicated docent at both the Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University and the Frank Lloyd Wright Hanna House for 30 years.

Nancy's deep reverence for nature stayed with her throughout her life. She fell in love with the Rocky Mountains while she and Tom lived in Denver during his medical internship, and later developed an enduring devotion to the Sierra Nevada mountains after they moved to Palo Alto. She was always happy exploring mountain trails and immersed in the natural world. She shared this love of adventure with her family, filling weekends with camping trips, backpacking, hiking, skiing, canoeing, sailing, picnics, and beach outings. Her antenna was always up in search of the next big adventure, leading her to discover the Trinity Alps Resort in the Trinity Alps Wilderness. The annual week-long family reunion there has remained a cherished highlight for generations of Fienes.

While Nancy possessed many talents, music was her true calling. A beloved piano teacher in Palo Alto for decades, she nurtured generations of young musicians for more than 20 years. Her mastery as an organist was equally impressive. In 1980 she earned a Master's degree in organ performance at San Jose State University. She studied on the Stanford Memorial Church organ under Herbert Nanney, head of Stanford's doctoral program in organ performance.

When world-renowned organist Marcel Dupré passed away in 1971, she was asked to perform Dupré's challenging "Variations on a Noel" at a memorial service held at Stanford. Throughout her life, she frequently served as a guest organist for local church services and weddings and performed recitals on both the organ and the piano.

She also shared her deep love of music with the Channing House community by bringing musical performances to the residents. Drawing on her extensive connections in the music world, she arranged for residents to enjoy a rich and vast array of talented musicians.

Nancy was a true intellectual with an insatiable appetite for learning. She was a voracious reader who didn't merely read books — she studied them, carefully lining pages with sticky notes filled with detailed connections, cross-references, and observations. Right up until the end of her life, she attended lectures across every subject at Stanford. Together with Tom, they were avid world travelers. Exploring every corner of the globe, they immersed themselves in the local culture, politics, geography, art, and music everywhere they went.

Nancy shared her endless energy through active community involvement. She was a dedicated leader and member in numerous community organizations, including the League of Women's Voters, the local Garden Club, Current Events group, folk dancing group, multiple book clubs, and PTA president. She also served on many boards and was the president of the Palo Alto branch of the Music Teachers Association of California. Affectionately known as the "Energizer Bunny," Nancy moved through life at 100 miles an hour, squeezing more into a single day than most could accomplish in a week—all with a wide smile, unwavering poise, and deep gratitude.

Her home was filled with joy, creativity, and unique traditions. Holidays were legendary: constructing intricate gingerbread houses at Christmas, decorating traditional Ukrainian eggs at Easter, and hosting an annual Halloween pumpkin-carving party that friends anticipated all year.

Nancy and Tom were the ultimate entertaining team. Receiving an invitation to a Fiene dinner party was widely regarded as "winning the golden ticket." An exceptional gourmet chef, Nancy meticulously curated unique menus. With an exquisite eye for design and aesthetics, her tables were beautifully set, her home filled with expressive art and decor, and her gatherings designed to spark lively, warm, and meaningful conversations with diverse voices.

Nancy was a vibrant, effervescent treasure. Her deep devotion to her friends and family, and profound love for the world around her leave a legacy that will continue to inspire all who were fortunate enough to know her.

A memorial service is planned for the fall.

PAID OBITUARY

SHANAHAN

continued from page 5

Street, hitting the Mercedes. He told the reporters that he had been "wracked with guilt since the crash," according to the Chronicle.

As this new organization and others reported Tuesday, crash records from the California Highway Patrol indicated that the Tesla driver was holding a cell phone at the time of the crash. While the report didn't include any names, the description matches Shanahan. It cites as a factor in the collision the male driver's "inattention" and violation of a state law that prohibits use of a handheld wireless phone while operating a vehicle.

The crash report indicates that the Tesla was going south on Alma Street at about 6:12 p.m. when it collided with a Mercedes GLC-300 driven by a 21-year-old woman. While police said that no one had been cited as of July 26, the crash report indicated that the woman appeared to have been at fault, Shanahan's cell phone use notwithstanding.

After Shanahan accepted blame, Palo Alto police attributed the initial report to an error in transmitting the crash report to the state database. Lt. Nicolas Martinez confirmed that Shanahan's statement was correct and that he was found at fault for the collision.



Screenshot courtesy YouTube

San Francisco 49ers Head Coach Kyle Shanahan speaks at a press conference in June 2026.

"We are in the process of correcting that error," Martinez said in a statement. "It is the officer's discretion at the scene of the collision as to whether they issue a citation to either party. It is not uncommon for officers to elect to not issue a citation to either party involved in a collision. Neither party in this situation was provided preferential treatment."

Addressing speculation about why the July 14 accident wasn't previously announced, Martinez noted that the department's practice is to only issue press releases for accidents that involve a fatality.

According to the crash report, neither driver was reportedly drinking and both were wearing seatbelts, according to the report. Airbags in both vehicles deployed during the collision. Shanahan was transported to a local hospital with serious injuries. Emergency responders reported that one of the drivers was "bleeding from the head," according to radio dispatch.

The 49ers are set to begin the regular season on Sept. 10 and it remains unclear whether Shanahan will be available for the game. During a Saturday press conference, General Manager John Lynch said Shanahan remains in "concussion protocol" and that his availability will depend on his recovery and feedback from medical staff.

The team also announced on Saturday that Assistant Head Coach Chris Foerster and team coordinators will handle head coach responsibilities during his recovery period.

Lynch said that the top priority for the team and for Shanahan's family is to "get him back right."

"He's a tremendous head coach but this is bigger than that. It's about his well-being and we're going to take the time necessary, and I think we are well equipped to do that," Lynch said. ■

Email Gennady Sheyner at gsheyner@almanacnews.com.

OBITUARIES

Local residents who died recently include:

Sanford Lawrence Cascade, 74, a longtime resident of Palo Alto who was a devoted brother, uncle and great-uncle and a supporter of Jewish charitable causes, died on July 25, 2026.

Dr. Thomas J. "Tom" Fiene, 91, a longtime Palo Alto resident who was a physician, Stanford clinical professor and advocate for underserved patients, practiced at Menlo Medical Clinic for 32 years and volunteered at the Stanford Pacific Free Clinic, and who was known for his compassion, diagnostic skill and devotion to family, died on July 18, 2026.

Nancy Jordan Fiene, 92, a longtime Palo Alto resident who was a beloved piano teacher, accomplished organist and dedicated arts docent, who taught generations of young musicians and served her community through numerous civic and cultural organizations, and was known for her curiosity, boundless energy, love of nature and devotion to family, died on July 18, 2026.

Jane Edwards Williams, 81, a Menlo Park resident who was a pediatric nurse at Stanford Hospital and Kaiser Redwood City before becoming a licensed marriage and family therapist, helping thousands of patients and clients during her career, was known for her empathy, love of travel and devotion to family, died on July 11, 2026.

Carolyn Tucher, 88, a longtime Palo Alto resident who served eight years on the Palo Alto school board, co-founded the Palo Alto Art Center's Cultural Kaleidoscope program, and was known for building bridges between Palo Alto and East Palo Alto through education and the arts, was a dedicated community leader, avid hiker and lifelong lover of Colorado's mountains and wildflowers, died on June 18, 2026.

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2025/2026 STREET RESURFACING PROJECT
PROJECT #2025-PW01

1. **NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** that sealed bids will be received at the office of the Town Clerk of the Town of Portola Valley at 765 Portola Road in the Town of Portola Valley for the street resurfacing and all appurtenant work, in strict accordance with the Contract Documents on file at the office of the Town Clerk of the Town of Portola Valley, California. Telephones will NOT be available to bidders. FAX bids or bids received after the designated time will not be accepted.
2. **DATE OF OPENING BIDS:** Bids will be received at the office of the Town Clerk of the Town of Portola Valley, California, until 11:00 a.m. Tuesday, August 18, 2026, at which time they will be opened and read aloud.
3. **LOCATION OF THE WORK:** The work to be constructed hereunder is located in the Town of Portola Valley, CA.
4. **DESCRIPTION OF THE WORK:** The work to be done on this project consists, in general, of hot mix asphalt resurfacing and base repairs. The work includes preparing pavement surfaces prior to hot mix asphalt placement; removing existing traffic striping, pavement markings, and raised pavement markers; performing full-depth base repairs; cold planing; placement of hot mix asphalt materials; lowering and adjustment of utility covers; reconstruction and fog sealing HMA dikes; street sweeping; installing new traffic striping, pavement markings, and raised pavement markers; perpetuating survey monumentation; implementing a water pollution control plan; maintaining traffic and furnishing traffic control throughout construction; and all appurtenant work thereto required by the Plans, the Standard Specifications, and these Special Provisions and as directed by the Public Works Director.

Staging area: The Town's facility area at Town Center at 756 Portola Road, and/or the Town's parking lot at Ford Field at 3399 Alpine Road can be used as a staging area with advanced coordination with the Town.

5. **COMPLETION OF WORK:** Time is of the essence. The Work must be completed within thirty (30) working days after the commencement date stated in the Notice to Proceed. The Town intends to issue the intent to award / low bidder notification by September 2, 2026. All work must be completed by October 30, 2026.

6**. AWARD OF CONTRACT:**

(a) The Town reserves the right after opening bids to reject any or all bids, to waive any informality (non-responsiveness) in a bid, or to make award to the lowest responsive, responsible bidder and reject all other bids, as it may best serve the interest of the Town. If the Town elects to award a contract for performance of the project, the contract will be awarded in accordance with California Public Contract Code Section 20103.8 (a) to the responsible bidder submitting a responsive bid with the lowest base bid, regardless of add alternate bids.

(b) As a condition of award, the successful bidder will be required to submit bonds, and insurance prior to execution of the Agreement by the Town. Insurance and bonds shall be submitted to Town within ten (10) calendar days of Town issuing notification to lowest bidder. Failure to meet this requirement shall constitute abandonment of the Bid by the Bidder and forfeiture of the Bid Bond. Award will then be made to the next lowest bidder.

7. **BID SECURITY:** Each bid shall be accompanied by a certified or cashier's check or Bid Bond in the amount of at least 10 percent of the total bid price, payable to the Town of Portola Valley, as a guarantee that the Bidder, if its Bid is accepted, will promptly obtain the required Bonds and Insurance, and will prepare the required submittal documents and execute the Agreement.
8. **BIDS TO REMAIN OPEN:** The Bidder shall guarantee the Total Bid Price for a period of 90 calendar days from the date of Bid Opening.
9. **CONTRACTOR'S LICENSE CLASSIFICATION AND MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:** In accordance with the provisions of California Public Contract Code Section 3300, the Town has determined that the Contractor shall possess a valid Class A or C-12 with classifications as needed Contractor license. The Bidder shall possess a valid license in the specified classification at the time that the bid is submitted as required under California Business and Professions Code Section 7028.15, unless exempt thereunder. Failure to possess the specified license at the time of submitting a bid shall render the bid as non-responsive and must be rejected.

The general contractor in combination with its subcontractors must have a minimum combination of:

Three (3) years of experience in resurfacing public streets with hot mix asphalt and three

(3) years of experience in performing base repairs on public streets.

And: Over the past three (3) years successfully completed three (3) projects involving the placement of at least 1,500 tons of hot mix asphalt on public streets in each project. Total of each project amount must have been more than $500,000.

10. **CALIFORNIA WAGE RATE REQUIREMENTS:** In accordance with California Labor Code Sections 1770, 1773, 1773.1, 1773.6 and 1773.7 as amended, the Director of the Department of Industrial Relations has determined the general prevailing rate of per diem wages in accordance with the standards set forth in Section 1773 for the locality in which the work is to be performed. A copy of said wage rates is on file at the office of the Town. The Contractor and any of its subcontractors shall pay not less than said specified rates to all workers employed by them in the execution of the work and shall post a copy of said wage rates at the project site.
11. **RETAINAGE FROM PAYMENTS:** The Contractor may elect to receive 100 percent of payments due under the Contract from time to time, without retention of any portion of the payment by the Town, by depositing securities of equivalent value with the Town in accordance with the provisions of Section 22300 of the Public Contract Code. The value of such securities, if deposited by the Contractor, shall be as determined by the Town, whose decision on valuation of the securities shall be final. Securities eligible for Investment hereunder shall be limited to those listed in Section 16430 of the Government Code, or bank or savings and loan certificates of deposit.
12. **FORM, ADDRESS AND MARKING OF BIDS:** Bids shall be made on the Town forms for the Project. The envelope enclosing the Bid shall be sealed and addressed to the Town of Portola Valley, and shall be delivered or mailed to the Town Clerk, Town of Portola Valley, 765 Portola Road, Portola Valley, CA 94028. The envelope shall be plainly marked in the upper left hand corner with the name and address of the Bidder and shall bear the words "**Bid for Town Project No. 2025-PW01**" followed by the title of this Project and the date and hour of opening Bids. The certified or cashier's check or Bid Bond shall be enclosed in the same envelope with the Bid.
13. **PROJECT ADMINISTRATION:** All communications, requests for information (RFIs), and bidder inquiries shall be directed to Armando Lee, Project Manager. Responses requiring clarification of the Contract Documents shall be issued by formal addendum. Written questions shall be submitted to Armando Lee no later than five (5) business days prior to bid opening. Responses shall be issued through addendum to all plan holders.
14. **REGISTRATIONS WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS:** No contractor or subcontractor may be listed on a bid proposal for a public works project unless registered with the Department of Industrial Relations pursuant to Labor Code section 1725.5. This project is subject to compliance monitoring and enforcement by the Department of Industrial Relations.

BY ORDER OF THE TOWN COUNCIL, TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY

Date: July 31, 2026

By: Armando Lee, Project Manager
Email: alee@portolavalley.net



Photos courtesy Cindy Asrir

In the mug shot below, Jakub Solovsky belonged to Western Wheelers, a recreational bicycling club.

JAKUB SOLOVSKY

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occurred less than a year after another cyclist died at the intersection of highways 35 and 84 in Woodside, known as Four Corners. At the site, a white bicycle memorializing the victim is flanked by signs calling for drivers to slow down.

Solovsky was a visiting postdoctoral student from the Czech Republic, working on computational simulations related to carbon sequestration as a research scientist at the Reservoir Engineering Research Institute in Palo Alto. He lived in East Palo Alto.

The 34-year-old was a member of the Western Wheelers, a recreational bicycling club for riders of all experience levels. Cindy Asrir, a fellow Wheeler, said Solovsky would do the hardest and longest rides, but would always circle back to check on slower riders, making sure no one was left behind.

Shawnery Hardin, who rode with Solovsky regularly, said Solovsky was the "king of social repeats."

"After a difficult climb, he would always double back down the hill to make sure all of the other riders made it up safely," Abrahams said.

While Solovsky was an advanced rider, he always put the group dynamic ahead of his personal goals, his fellow cyclists said.

"A lot of people at his level get caught up in their numbers, but he seemed to have a really healthy attitude toward managing his fitness, and on the group rides, it was the people and group who came first," said Irene Hu, adding that Solovsky "cheerfully" did many slow rides with her while she was injured.



Jakub Solovsky

Solovsky's younger sister Kateřina Škardová described her brother as a "very special person" and said she echoed many of the sentiments his cycling friends expressed.

"It was amazing to read about the exact same things that come to my mind when thinking about him — how he would casually cycle huge distances and elevations, acting as if it were completely normal, always wanting to beat his last accomplishment, but still making compromises so he could share the experience with others," Škardová said. "Jakub took that same all-in approach to everything he did: his scientific work, ultramarathons, disc golf and the many other hobbies he picked up throughout his life."

People who knew Solovsky described him as quiet yet influential.

"Some people are more about actions than words, and I would say Jakub was definitely that," Asrir said. ■

Email Editorial Intern Sydney Feldman at sfeldman@almanacnews.com.

CYCLISTS

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upon the district attorney to actually file charges and bring one of these people to actually serve some time, as opposed to sweeping things under the rug," said local cyclist Tomas Byma.

The South Coast Traffic Advisory Panel for San Mateo County Supervisor Ray Mueller's office has made recommendations to address the dangers of Highway 84 and 35. A report released in May finds that the most common traffic violations are speeding, unsafe passing, tailgating and noise violations.

The advisory panel recommends increased enforcement from CHP and the Sheriff's Office on the weekends, concentrated law enforcement events three to four times a year and to set up driver feedback signs at high-risk areas. It also proposes having "ghost police cars," with low visibility police decals, posted in known speeding areas.

Asrir said the conditions for cyclists on Woodside roads have progressively gotten worse over the past 15 years and the growing trend of car racing clubs on social media have made the situation worse.

Roadside photographers such as Bay Moto-Photo are encouraging dangerous behavior from drivers and motorcyclists who make dangerous maneuvers to attract the photographer's attention, according to the South Coast Traffic report.

The advisory group recommends citing these photographers for "commercial photography in the Caltrans right-of-way without an encroachment permit."

"I was shocked by the cars going by four, five, six, at a time, 100 MPH, and they have their mufflers open and they're videoing themselves," said Councilmember Paul Goeld, about a visit he made to Clouds Rest Road near the site of Solovsky's death. "Why can't we prosecute somebody who's videoing themselves with 105 miles an hour on their speedometer?"

Goeld added that he had corresponded with State Sen. Josh Becker, D-Menlo Park, and Assemblymember Marc Berman, D-Menlo Park on these issues.

Woodside council members said they welcomed the public commenters' feedback and acknowledged the increasing dangers of speeding cars on Woodside's highways. The council agreed to hold a discussion on the topic in the near future, and to coordinate with county and state officials. Members said they also might hold a study session on the South Coast Traffic Advisory Panel's recommendations. ■

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



Michael Molcsan

Woodside Councilmember Paul Goeld listens to a speaker at the July 28 meeting.

PAUL GOELD

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local cyclists advocating for better enforcement and safety measures on Skyline Boulevard following the death of East Palo Alto cyclist Jakob Solovsky in a head-on collision with a speeding car. A reporter from KTVU was present for that portion of the meeting.

"I did not appreciate Mr. Goeld grandstanding on the death of a bicyclist taking advantage of the opportunity that there was a television (station) in the room," said Woodside resident Lexi Reese. "It felt to me a blatant play on the public sympathy to talk about how vocal an advocate he is for cycling. ... It seemed too staged."

Fluet added that he was also "profoundly disgusted" by Goeld's actions to "try to diminish his own ethical violations."

After an hour of public comment, all council members except for Wall remained quiet.

"I'm stunned that my fellow council members have no further comment," said Wall. "I'm absolutely speechless to hear all of that public comment from residents and to say nothing"

Councilmember Dick Brown explained that he had no response due to the council's comments being on the record, which could potentially affect the town's credibility in threatened litigation. Wall's comment appeared to encourage Aburish and Dombkowski to address the public.

"I share a lot of the same thoughts and feelings as many of you about accountability of public figures and the importance of transparency. ... I absolutely agree that things need to be taken seriously," Aburish said.

"I apologize for any statements that I've ever made that were insensitive in any way or hurtful," said Dombkowski. "I hope I have not made those statements but if anything is perceived that way, it is completely against who I am and the actions that I take to be better for the town."

In response to the public's demands, Wall's motion to hold a hearing to consider whether a censure, a reprimand or other remedies should be taken by the council against Goeld failed in a tie vote, with Dombkowski and Brown opposed.

"It is shameful that the town is the object of so much suspicion," said longtime Woodside resident Steve Lubin. "It is the council's responsibility to open this investigation to public input and to shed more light on what has and is occurring." ■

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





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TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY

NOTICE OF ELECTION

MEASURE ESTABLISHING A CHARTER TOWN AND REAL PROPERTY TRANSFER TAX

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the following measure is to be voted on at a General Municipal Election to be held in the Town of Portola Valley on Tuesday, the 3rd day of November, 2026:

Town of Portola Valley Autonomy Measure. Shall the measure maintaining Portola Valley's independent status be adopted, providing: wildfire prevention/vegetation management; 911 emergency response/police patrols; local zoning/planning services; storm drain repair; and general government services; by adopting a charter for the Town of Portola Valley solely for, and establishing a real property transfer tax of $10 per $1,000, paid by buyers or sellers of property, until ended by voters, providing approximately $2,000,000 in locally controlled funding annually, with independent oversight?	YES NO

Published: July 31, 2026

Veronica Dao
Town Clerk
Town of Portola Valley

Employment

MULTIPLE POSITIONS
Mainspring Energy, Inc. seeks the following positions in Menlo Park, CA: Global Logistics Specialist (Ref# PS-GL): Continuously optimize logistics processes to enhance efficiency and reduce costs. Telecommuting permitted. Annual Salary: $95,000 – $109,592/Yr. Senior Recruiter (Ref# GV-SR): Work with the People Operations team and hiring managers to source, engage, schedule, and coordinate highly technical candidates throughout the interview process. Telecommuting permitted. Annual Salary: $120,000 - $151,800/yr. Email resume with Ref# to careers@mainspringenergy.com.

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For employment advertising, please visit AlmanacNews.com/employment_ads/.

Public Notices

ROBINSON & COMPANY REAL ESTATE
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-304442
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) ROBINSON & COMPANY REAL ESTATE , located at 3603 Alameda de las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025.
Registered owner(s):
ROBINSON FINANCIAL CORPORATION
3603 Alameda de las Pulgas
Menlo Park, CA 94025
State of Incorporation/Organization: CA
This business is conducted by: a Corporation.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 07/01/2026.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on July 14, 2026.
(ALM Jul 31, Aug 7, 14 and 21, 2026)

JML FIDUCIARY SERVICES
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-304521
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) JML FIDUCIARY SERVICES , located at 240 MAIN STREET SUITE B, HALF MOON BAY, CA 94019. Mailing Address: PO BOX 1797 Boulder Creek, CA 95006
Registered owner(s):
JULIE M LOCOCO
240 MAIN STREET SUITE B
HALF MOON BAY, CA 94019
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 July 22, 2026.
(ALM Jul 31, Aug 7, 14 and 21, 2026)

HOMEGLOW HOUSE CLEANING
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-304308
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) HOMEGLOW HOUSE CLEANING , located at 3212 Rolison Road, APT 3, Redwood City, CA 94063.
Registered owner(s):
MIRIAM MICHELLE RODRIGUEZ ESPINOZA
3212 Rolison Road, APT 3
Redwood City, CA 94063
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 June 30, 2026.
(ALM Jul 31, Aug 7, 14 and 21, 2026)

PROSPERA BUILDER
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-304509
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) PROSPERA BUILDER , located at 318 REDWOOD AVE APT F, REDWOOD CITY, CA 94061. Mailing Address: 3875 Bohannon Drive #4031, Menlo Park, CA 94026
Registered owner(s):
ERVIN JEOVANNY DISCUA
318 REDWOOD AVE APT F
REDWOOD CITY, CA 94061
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 July 22, 2026.
(ALM Jul 31, Aug 7, 14 and 21, 2026)

SANGNGSTYLIST
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-304335
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) SANGNGSTYLIST , located at 1148 Crane St, , Menlo Park, CA 94025. Mailing Address: PO Box 613042 San Jose, CA 95161
Registered owner(s):
SANG KIM NGUYEN
PO Box 613042
San Jose, CA 95161
This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 11/20/2021.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on July 03, 2026.
(ALM Jul 17, 24, 31 and Aug 7, 2026)

REALTY ALPHA SERVICES
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-304486
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) REALTY ALPHA SERVICES , located at 7 41st Ave #106, San Mateo, CA 94403.
Registered owner(s):
BEHZAD BOROUMAND
7 41st Ave #106
San Mateo, CA 94403
This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 06/30/2026.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on July 20, 2026.
(ALM Jul 31, Aug 7, 14 and 21, 2026)

NOEL COURT APARTMENTS
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-304492
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) NOEL COURT APARTMENTS , located at 1101 Noel Drive, Menlo Park, CA 94025. Mailing Address: 4370 Alpine Rd., #201 Portola Valley, CA 94028
Registered owner(s):
TIMOTHY M. BLAINE
4370 Alpine Rd., #201
Portola Valley, CA 94028
KATHLEEN T. FRIEDRICH
4370 Alpine Rd., #201
Portola Valley, CA 94028
This business is conducted by: a Married Couple.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 07/12/2010.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on July 21, 2026.
(ALM Jul 31, Aug 7, 14 and 21, 2026)

THE PINES APARTMENTS
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-304520
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) THE PINES APARTMENTS , located at 3455-65-85 Alameda De Las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025. Mailing Address: 4370 Alpine Road #201 Portola Valley, CA 94028
Registered owner(s):
H TERRENCE BLAINE
4370 Alpine Road #201
Portola Valley, CA 94028
MARGARET H BLAINE
4370 Alpine Road #201
Portola Valley, CA 94028
TIMOTHY M BLAINE
4370 ALPINE ROAD #201
Portola Valley, CA 94028
This business is conducted by: Copartners.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 12/01/1975.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on July 22, 2026.
(ALM Jul 31, Aug 7, 14 and 21, 2026)

LIDA HAIR STUDIO
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-304420
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) LIDA HAIR STUDIO , located at 812 Santa Cruz Ave, Menlo Park, CA 94025.
Registered owner(s):
SHAHRBANOU ZAHMATKESH
812 Santa Cruz Ave
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 July 13, 2026.
(ALM Jul 31, Aug 7, 14 and 21, 2026)

JENNTLE ESTHETICS
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-304260
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) JENNTLE ESTHETICS , located at 126 SERRAMONTE CENTER, SUITE 766 #26, DALY CITY, CA 94015. Mailing Address: 1559 SLOAT BLVD. SUITE B, PMB #162 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94132
Registered owner(s):
JENNTLE ESTHETICS LLC
1559 SLOAT BLVD. SUITE B, PMB #162
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94132
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 June 25, 2026.
(ALM Jul 10, 17, 24 and 31, 2026)

FINGERHUT ELECTRIC
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-304262
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) FINGERHUT ELECTRIC , located at 860 Campus Drive, #108, Daly City, CA 94015.
Registered owner(s):
DAMON L KNUTSON
860 Campus Drive, #108
Daly City, CA 94015
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 June 25, 2026.
(ALM Jul 10, 17, 24 and 31, 2026)

TONGO FITNESS
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-304436
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) TONGO FITNESS , located at 1312 Academy Avenue, Belmont, CA 94002.
Registered owner(s):
HANNAH TONGO
1312 Academy Avenue
Belmont, CA 94002
This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 5/1/2026.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on July 14, 2026.
(ALM Jul 24, 31, Aug 7 and 14, 2026)

COMPUTERCARE
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-304296
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) COMPUTERCARE , located at 700 Airport Blvd #110, Burlingame, CA 94010. Mailing Address: PO BOX 326 Burlingame, CA 94010
Registered owner(s):
4RITZ INC.
700 Airport Blvd #110
Burlingame, CA 94010
State of Incorporation/Organization: CA
This business is conducted by: a Corporation.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 12/08/2004.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on June 29, 2026.
(ALM Jul 10, 17, 24 and 31, 2026)

REYES BUILDING SOLUTIONS
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-304453
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) REYES BUILDING SOLUTIONS , located at 430 Valley Dr, Brisbane, CA 94005 .
Registered owner(s):
ALEXJANDRO G REYES
430 Valley Dr
Brisbane, CA 94005
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 July 15, 2026.
(ALM Jul 24, 31, Aug 7 and 14, 2026)

LMP CONSTRUCTION
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-304374
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) LMP CONSTRUCTION , located at 722 WARRINGTON AVE, REDWOOD CITY CA 94063.
Registered owner(s):
LEONEL MIRANDA-ONTIVEROS
722 WARRINGTON AVE
REDWOOD CITY CA 94063
This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 01/15/2026.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on July 08, 2026.
(ALM Jul 17, 24, 31 and Aug 7, 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-05219
TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:
Petitioner: Sydney MacKenzie Lehman filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows:
SYDNEY MACKENZIE LEHMAN to SYDNEY LEHMAN DEVILLA
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: 9/10/2026, 9:00am, Civil Division 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: 7/6/2026
Stephanie G. Garratt
JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
(ALM Jul 17, 24, 31 and Aug 7, 2026)

The Almanac is adjudicated to publish in San Mateo County.

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

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The deadline is Sunday at 11:59 p.m.

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THE ALMANAC
2026

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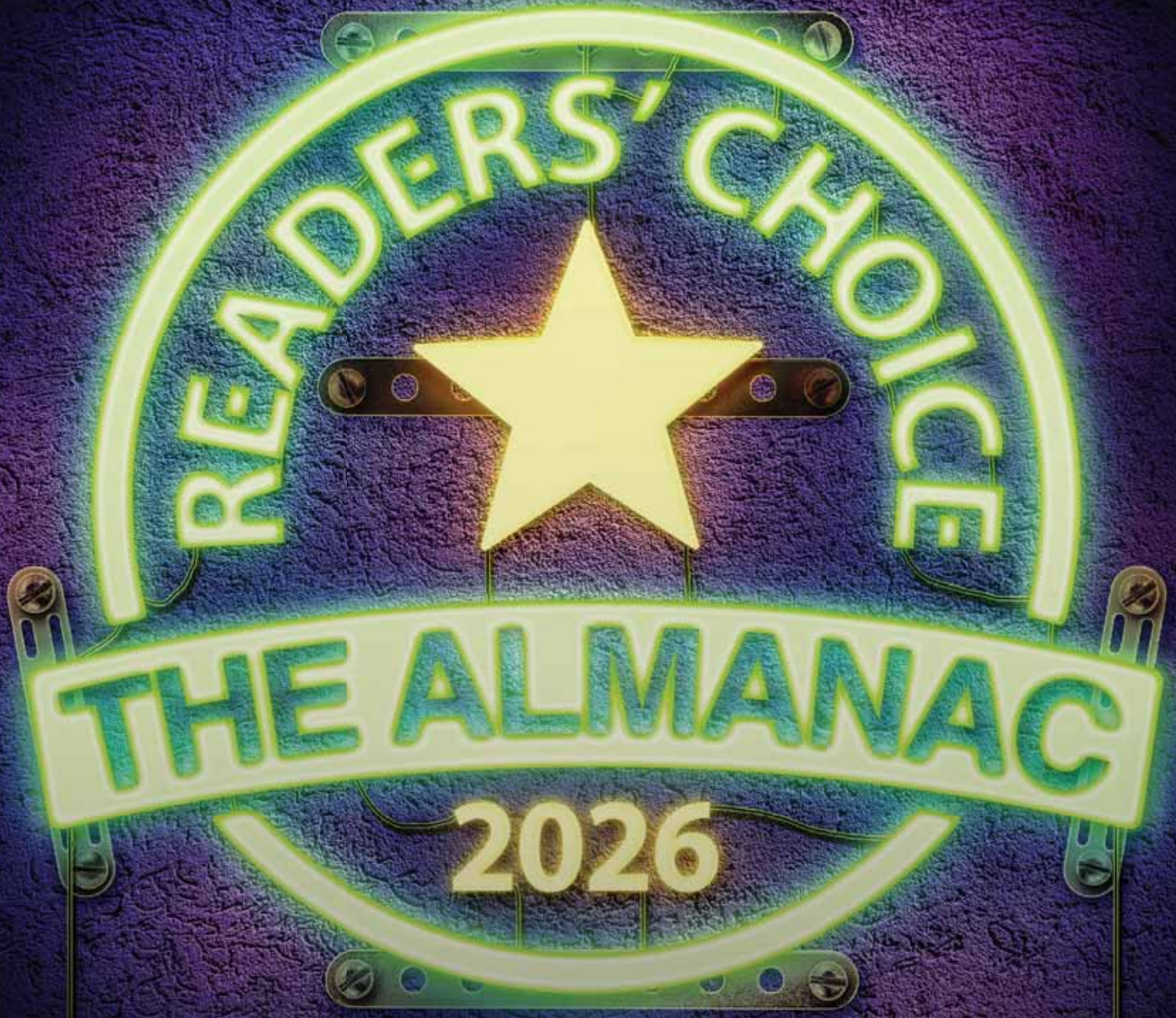
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Your next favorite starts here

More than 7,000 reader votes helped shape this year's Almanac Readers' Choice Awards, recognizing the restaurants, shops, service providers, and local businesses that make Menlo Park, Woodside, Portola Valley and Atherton such special places to call home.

The 2026 winners feature a mix of longtime favorites and exciting newcomers, highlighting the businesses that continue to earn the community's trust and enthusiasm. From memorable dining experiences to favorite local boutiques and essential services, these are the places readers recommend most.

Whether you're searching for a new favorite or revisiting a beloved local staple, this reader-powered guide is your starting point for discovering the best our communities have to offer.

Cover design by Douglas Young.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Best Art Gallery/Frame Store

A.Space Gallery

A.Space Gallery in Menlo Park secured the "Best Gallery" title by offering the community a versatile, expertly curated destination for fine art and private events. A.Space is open 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and by appointment.

A.Space Gallery, 773 Santa Cruz Ave, Menlo Park | (650) 731-7730

Best Live Music

Alice's Restaurant

This restaurant serves classic food like burgers, fries, morning scrambles and pie from a rustic-looking cabin among the redwoods and has live music on Thursday and Friday nights.

17288 Skyline Blvd., Woodside
(650) 851-0303 | alicesrestaurant.com

Best Place for a Date

Bistro Vida

Bustling Parisian-style bistro in downtown Menlo Park serving classic French cuisine for 25 years. Inspired by the Parisian bistro culture, Bistro Vida serves up French-influenced dishes with a slight Mediterranean twist.

641 Santa Cruz Ave., Menlo Park
(650) 462-1686 | bistro-vida.com

Best Place to Meet People

Alice's Restaurant

See Best Live Music

FOOD & DRINK

Best Bakery

Mademoiselle Colette

Bringing the art of French pastry to life through traditional techniques and high-quality ingredients, Mademoiselle Colette menu features a celebrated selection of hand-rolled croissants to delicate desserts that reflect a deep passion for culinary craft.

816 Santa Cruz Ave., Menlo Park
(650) 644-8469
mademoisellecolette.com

Best Bar

Bar Loretta

A recent expansion by Bistro Vida, Bar Loretta has become a community favorite destination for drinks, offering a sophisticated yet welcoming atmosphere next door to Bistro Vida. The bar also honors local history, as it occupies the site where the Grateful Dead played their debut performance in 1965.

639 Santa Cruz Ave., Menlo Park
(650) 462-1686 | bistro-vida.com

Best Breakfast

Alice's Restaurant

This restaurant serves classic food like burgers, fries, morning scrambles and pie from a rustic-looking cabin among the redwoods and has live music on Thursday and Friday nights.

17288 Skyline Blvd., Woodside
(650) 851-0303 | alicesrestaurant.com

Best Dessert

Cafe Borrone

With outdoor dining in a plaza complete with a fountain, live jazz music and art exhibits, Cafe Borrone has been a beloved neighborhood landmark in the heart of downtown Menlo Park for decades. The cafe is known for its prepared-from-scratch food made from organic and sustainable ingredients.

1010 El Camino Real, Menlo Park
(650) 327-0830 | cafeborrone.com

Best Hamburger

Dutch Goose

The Dutch Goose has solidified its status as a Menlo Park mainstay by pairing its award-winning, Certified Angus Beef burgers with a long-running, relaxed happy hour. Since 1966, this institution continues to thrive by fostering an unpretentious, community-focused atmosphere where patrons are treated like family.

3567 Alameda de las Pulgas,
Menlo Park | (650) 224-1682
dutchgoose.net

Best Happy Hour

Dutch Goose

See Best Hamburger

Best Ice Cream/Frozen Yogurt

Cibele's Ice Cream

Cibele's Ice Cream has captured the "Best Ice Cream" title by offering an authentic Mexican paleteria experience, defined by a commitment to fresh, natural ingredients. The vibrant menu ranges from traditional fresas con crema and house-made paletas to refreshing botanas, providing a unique cultural twist on local frozen treats.

1199 Willow Road, Menlo Park
(650) 561-3225

Best Independent Coffee and Tea House

Cafe Borrone

See Best Dessert



Courtesy Dutch Goose

Dutch Goose — Best Hamburger and Best Happy Hour

Best Pizza

Amici's East Coast Pizzeria

Amicis has been serving up pizza — along with pasta, soup and salad — to Menlo Park patrons for the past decade. The thin-crust New York-style pies are cooked in traditional brick ovens next to an open flame.

880 Santa Cruz Ave., Menlo Park
(650) 329-8888 | amicis.com

Best Place to Buy Meat

Bianchini's Market

Since 1998, shoppers have counted on Bianchini's Market for fresh local produce, gourmet cheeses and groceries from small producers whose items aren't found at chain stores. Readers praise the family-owned market for its meat counter and deli sandwiches, which can be ordered online and are ready for pickup on arrival. The market also offers delivery in as little as one hour.

3130 Alpine Road, Portola Valley
(650) 851-4391 | bianchinismarket.com

Best Sandwich

Bianchini's Market

See Best Place to Buy Meat



Courtesy Bianchini's Market

Bianchini's Market — Best Sandwich, Best Take-Out, Best Place to Buy Meat, Best Produce and Best Grocery. From left: Chris, Kevin and Joyce Bianchini at Bianchini's Market, the family-owned market that has served the community for over 50 years.

Best Take-Out

Bianchini's Market

See Best Place to Buy Meat

RESTAURANTS

Best American Restaurant

Alice's Restaurant

This restaurant serves classic food like burgers, fries, morning scrambles and pie from a rustic-looking cabin among the redwoods and has live music on Thursday and Friday nights.

17288 Skyline Blvd., Woodside
(650) 851-0303 | alicesrestaurant.com

Best Asian Restaurant

Chef Kwan's

Chef Kwan's has become a Peninsula institution, earning a loyal following with its American-Chinese cuisine and welcoming generations of families to its tables. The restaurant creates time-honored recipes with quality ingredients and careful preparation, continuing a tradition of bold flavors and warm hospitality that has made it a local favorite.

630 Menlo Ave., Menlo Park
(650) 322-4631 | chefkwans.com

Best Casual Dining

Alice's Restaurant

See Best American Restaurant

Best Dining with Kids

Alice's Restaurant

See Best American Restaurant

Best French Restaurant

Bistro Vida

Bustling Parisian-style bistro in downtown Menlo Park serving classic French cuisine for 25 years. Inspired by the Parisian bistro culture, Bistro Vida serves up French-influenced dishes with a slight Mediterranean twist.

641 Santa Cruz Ave., Menlo Park
(650) 462-1686 | bistro-vida.com

See **READERS' CHOICE,** *page 22*



Courtesy Bistro Vida

Bistro Vida — Best French Restaurant, Best Romantic Restaurant and Best Place for a Date



Courtesy Alys Grace

Alys Grace – Best Boutique

READERS' CHOICE
continued from page 21

Best Italian Restaurant

Avanti Pizza Fresh Pasta

Avanti Pizza Fresh Pasta offers authentic Italian homemade specialties for your eating pleasure. They pride themselves in using only the freshest ingredients when making pizzas, pastas and salads. Special care is given to the preparation of every pizza and they are baked to perfection.

3536 Alameda de las Pulgas, Suite 4, Menlo Park | (650) 322-1211
avantipizzafreshpasta.com

Best Japanese Restaurant

Dashi Japanese Restaurant

Dashi Japanese Restaurant offers Asian and Japanese cuisine including sushi, sashimi and light bites in a sophisticated, minimalistic and welcoming atmosphere.

873 Hamilton Ave., Menlo Park
(650) 328-6868
dashijapaneserestaurant.com

Best Mexican Restaurant

Amigos Grill

Amigos Grill is a family-owned Mexican restaurant in Portola Valley, known for its sleek cantina vibe, spacious patio, and late-night hours. The menu features flavorful favorites like ceviche, burritos and tacos, all served in a welcoming, modern setting.

3130 Alpine Road, Portola Valley
(650) 207-5317 | amigosportola.com

Best Outdoor Dining

Alice's Restaurant

See Best American Restaurant

Best Romantic Restaurant

Bistro Vida

See Best French Restaurant

RETAIL

Best Bicycle Shop

Woodside Bike Shop

Woodside Bike Shop sells accessories and bikes for all ages, ability levels and budgets. It carries mountain bikes, BMX bikes, cruisers, road bikes, electric bikes and even unicycles. Full-service repairs and custom builds are also offered.

1800 El Camino Real, Suite C, Menlo Park | (650) 299-1071
woodsidebikeshop.com

Best Bookstore

Kepler's Books

With its broad collection of books, magazines and literary events, Kepler's Books & Magazines has been a beloved cornerstone in the community since it opened in the 1960s. In response to the pandemic, the independent bookstore's nonprofit arm, the Kepler's Literary Foundation, created Refresh the Page, a series of online conversations, classes and seminars for adults and youth that has become part of its offerings.

1010 El Camino Real, Menlo Park
(650) 324-4321 | keplers.com

Best Boutique

Alys Grace

Alys Grace has distinguished itself as more than a fashion boutique, offering a thoughtfully curated collection of contemporary designer apparel and accessories paired with highly personalized styling.

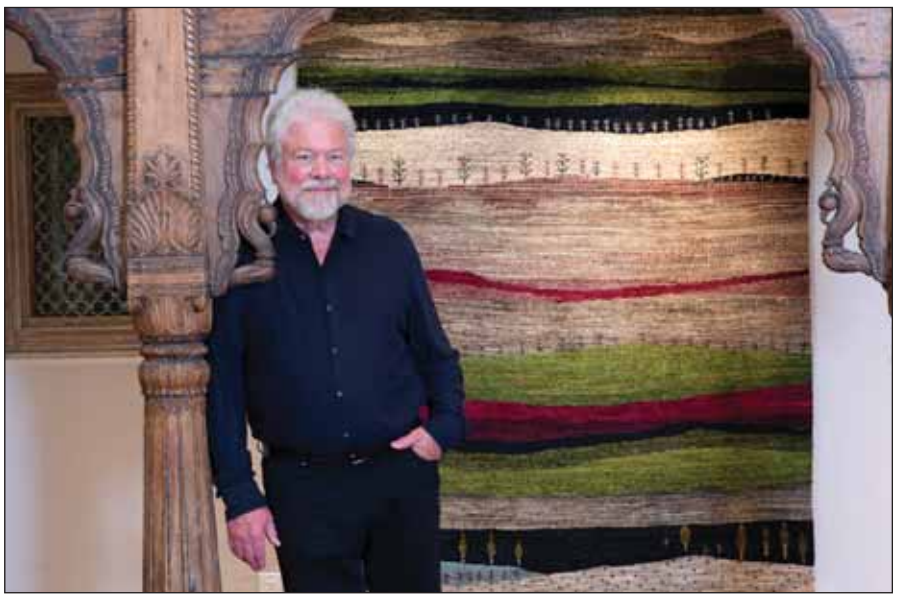
899 B Santa Cruz Ave, Menlo Park
(650) 326-9914 | alysgrace.com

Best Floor Coverings

Stephen Miller Gallery

Stephen Miller Gallery has earned a reputation for exceptional handwoven rugs that blend artistry, craftsmanship and timeless design. The gallery is trusted by homeowners and leading interior designers alike for its expertise, personalized service and commitment to finding the perfect piece for every space.

800 Santa Cruz Ave., Menlo Park
(650) 327-5040
stephenmillergallery.com



Courtesy Stephen Miller Gallery

Stephen Miller Gallery — Best Floor Coverings

Best Gift Shop

Ladera Garden & Gifts

Ladera Garden & Gifts is a one-stop shop for garden supplies, gifts and flower arrangements. Juan and Mercedes Navarro, who have operated the full-service nursery for nearly 40 years, provide custom floral arrangements as well as home goods and nursery items.

3130 Alpine Road, Ste. 380, Portola Valley | (650) 854-3850
laderagardenandgifts.com

Best Grocery

Bianchini's Market

Since 1998, shoppers have counted on Bianchini's Market for fresh local produce, gourmet cheeses and groceries from small producers whose items aren't found at chain stores. Readers praise the family-owned market for its meat counter and deli sandwiches, which can be ordered online and are ready for pickup on arrival. The market also offers delivery in as little as one hour.

3130 Alpine Road, Portola Valley
(650) 851-4391 | bianchinismarket.com

Best Hardware

Portola Valley ACE Hardware

Local in every way, the business has been locally owned since its inception, staffed by employees from Portola Valley and nearby communities, and grounded in a deep



Courtesy Shady Lane

Shady Lane — Best Place to Buy Jewelry. From left: Robbie Mellows, Bonnie Keller, Natalie Keller, Judi Eichler, Diane Cohen and Gabe Mellows are among the talented artisans featured at Shady Lane in Menlo Park.

pride for its hometown. With a focus on adding value to the lives of local residents, it's often open after hours — often during power outages or storms — to ensure the community has access to what it needs.

112 Portola Road, Portola Valley
(650) 851-0116
portolavalleyhardware.com

Best Home Decor and Furnishings

Anthem

Anthem offers an exclusive collection of home decor, tabletop, lighting, furniture, accessories, jewelry and gifts — a "collection of the finest products, designed to inspire and delight."

889 Santa Cruz Ave., Menlo Park
(650) 440-7400 | anthemsf.online

Best Nursery

Ladera Garden & Gifts

See Best Gift Shop

Best Place to Buy Jewelry

Shady Lane

Shady Lane has been offering one-of-a-kind jewelry pieces, intricately woven scarves, artisan glass sculptures, wood carvings, handcrafted soaps and an array of other items handcrafted by local and international artists and designers. The boutique is open for in store shopping as well as online shopping and curbside pickup. The store also offers gift wrapping.

325 Sharon Park Drive, Menlo Park
(650) 321-1099 | shadylanegallery.com

Best Place to Buy Shoes

Fleet Feet

Fleet Feet in Menlo Park helps customers find products that improve their fitness experience. Staff assesses foot type and gait cycle and has 3D scanners to measure feet, making footwear recommendations uniquely tailored to each customer.

859 Santa Cruz Ave., Menlo Park
(650) 325-9432 | fleetfeet.com

Best Produce

Bianchini's Market

See Best Grocery

Best Specialty Store

Cheeky Monkey Toys

A perennial winner in this category, Cheeky Monkey Toys is a family-owned shop that specializes in finding "just the right toy" for each customer. Since opening its doors in Menlo Park in 1999, the shop has provided interactive toys designed to stimulate children's minds to generations of local families.

640 Santa Cruz Ave., Menlo Park
(650) 328-7975
cheekymonkeytoys.com

SERVICES

Best Auto Repair

Portola Valley Garage

Portola Valley Garage's skilled technicians have been providing minor tune-ups and major overhauls since 1948. In addition to repair services, the garage offers 24-hour vehicle drop-off, online appointments and loaner cars.

4170 Alpine Road, Portola Valley
(650) 851-7442 | pvgarage.com

Best Barber

Menlo Park Barber Shop

The barbers at Menlo Park Barber Shop pride themselves on developing close relationships with clients, giving excellent cuts and "blending craft and tradition with a strong dose of humor."

2100 Avy Ave., Menlo Park
(650) 391-9008
menloparkbarbershop.com

Best Day Spa

LaBelle Day Spa & Salon

For decades, LaBelle Day Spa & Salon has helped Silicon Valley clients to look and feel their best from head to toe. Moisturizers, serums and oils; treatments for problematic skin conditions, such as rosacea; scrubs, toners and eye care — everything for the face and body is available here with a one-on-one approach. LaBelle's custom-designed facials, created from ingredients from the salon's own Bella Schneider Beauty Skincare line, are a customer favorite.

Town & Country Village #33 & #95,
Palo Alto | (650) 327-6964
labelledayspas.com



Courtesy YogaSource

YogaSource — Best Yoga

Best Dental Office

Grace Dental

At Grace Dental, the staff is dedicated to transforming smiles and improving lives. They are a leading Invisalign® Diamond Provider and are proud to be in the top 1% of Invisalign® dentists worldwide, bringing you unparalleled expertise and exceptional orthodontic care.

90 Middlefield Road, #1, Menlo Park
(650) 323-0264
gracedentalpediatric.com

Best Dry Cleaner

Ladera Cleaners

For more than 30 years, Ladera Cleaners has helped customers properly care for their clothes, coats, comforters and other delicate handmade items. The shop, which has been a Readers' Choice winner year after year since 2015, offers one-day dry cleaning, mending and reweaving services, as well as alterations for wedding dresses and other items.

3130 Alpine Road, Portola Valley
(650) 854-2291 | laderacleaners.net

Best Fitness Classes

Studio K-Fit

Studio K-Fit offers high-intensity, but low-impact workouts focused on strength, mobility and cardio through high-intensity interval training. Class sizes are small so that instructors can focus on each individual. The studio also offers lifestyle coaching and personalized nutrition guidance.

3708 Florence St., Redwood City
studiokfit@gmail.com
studiokfit.com

See **READERS' CHOICE,** *page 24*



Courtesy Portola Valley Garage

Portola Valley Garage — Best Auto Repair. Carlos at Portola Valley Garage helps keep customers' vehicles running smoothly.

READERS' CHOICE

continued from page 23

Best Florist

Ladera Garden & Gifts

See Best Nursery

Best Gym

Studio K-Fit

See Best Fitness Classes

Best Hair Salon

Antonio Cremona Salon

Clients at Antonio Cremona Salon enjoy a relaxing and stylish environment where they feel pampered while receiving professional hair care services. The stylists prioritize personalized service to enhance the clients' natural beauty and confidence by offering hair services, including coloring, haircuts, styling and more.

104 Portola Road, Portola Valley
(650) 851-5757
antoniocremonasalon.com

Best Home Improvement/ Contractor

Harrell Design + Build

Whether you seek a full-service experience for home remodeling in Los Altos or a surrounding Bay Area community, you can rely on Harrell Design + Build to provide a home transformation that merges artistry with expertise. The award-winning team of designers and accomplished craftspeople are dedicated to breathing new life into your home.

2284 Old Middlefield Way,
Mountain View | (650) 230-2900
harrelldesignbuild.com

Best Hotel

Hotel Nia

Hotel Nia offers an upscale retreat in the heart of Menlo Park, featuring sophisticated accommodations, lush outdoor spaces and thoughtfully curated amenities. Guests appreciate its stylish design, exceptional dining, attentive service and convenient location to Stanford University.

200 Independence Drive,
Menlo Park | (650) 322-1234
marriott.com/en-us/hotels/
sjcmn-hotel-nia

Best Manicure / Pedicure

A Touch of Elegance Nail Care

Customers can expect quality service, a friendly staff and reasonable pricing at A Touch of Elegance Nail Care, a longtime favorite of Almanac readers. In addition to manicures and pedicures, A Touch of Elegance also offers facials and other services.

1150 Crane St., Menlo Park
(650) 321-0679

Best Photographer

Tiffany Zabala Photography

Tiffany Zabala Photography is known for creating timeless, light-filled images that capture genuine emotion and authentic connections, making every portrait, family session or milestone celebration feel both natural and unforgettable.

tiffanyzabalaphotography.com



Courtesy Harrell Design + Build

Harrell Design + Build — Best Home Improvement/Contractor.

Best Plumber

Guy Plumbing & Heating

Guy Plumbing & Heating is a fourth-generation family-owned business that provides a wide range of services and operates a full-service showroom specializing in the sales and installation of Toto washlet bidet seats, as well as parts for Hansgrohe, Kohler and House of Rohl.

1265 El Camino Real, Menlo Park
(650) 323-8415 | guyplumbing.com

Best Preschool

Kirk House Preschool

Kirk House Preschool provides a welcoming school environment where children feel secure, accepted and loved. Through play and exploration, children learn about their world and have their individual, physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs met.

Menlo Park Presbyterian Church,
1148 Johnson St., Menlo Park
(650) 323-8667
kirkhousepreschool.org

Best Private School

St. Raymond School

St. Raymond School combines academic excellence with a values-based Catholic education that nurtures the whole child. With small class sizes, dedicated teachers and strong family involvement, the school offers a close-knit learning environment where students are encouraged to thrive both in and beyond the classroom.

1211 Arbor Road, Menlo Park
(650) 322-2312 | straymond.org

Best Yoga

YogaSource

YogaSource was built on the belief that "the practice of yoga should be both demanding and gratifying." It boasts a wide curriculum of yoga classes, including Vinyasa, Power, Yin, Restorative, Hot 26, Pilates and much more. ■

158 Hamilton Ave., Palo Alto
(650) 328-9642 | yogasource.com



Courtesy Studio K-Fit

Studio K-Fit — Best Fitness Classes and Best Gym. From left: Jennifer Hermesmeyer, Liz Andersen, Kat Hwang, Adam Joy, Kendrick Ribeiro, Cat Lewis, Jeff Young and Katie Cromie at Studio K-Fit in Menlo Park welcome members with expert coaching and a supportive fitness community.

Stay connected with the latest local news, community stories and updates at **AlmanacNews.com**.



Title Pages

Summer reads for everyone

Mysteries, fantasy tales and real-world explorations of history and science are on this season's reading list

By Heather Zimmerman and Ellis Yang

Whether in a far-flung vacation spot, a local beach or park or a sunny spot at home, summertime beckons readers to spend some time with a good book. Peninsula authors have you covered — even for those who want to write a book of their own. In this section, YA author and Los Altos High School Librarian Gordon Jack talks about the personal inspiration for his debut adult novel, "Poppy Montgomery Gets Even." Plus, find a sampling of new and recently published works by Bay Area authors.

Visit almanacnews.com/arts-culture to read about a memoir by Stanford University professor and labor lawyer William B. Gould IV, who shares his perspective on history-making events in the U.S. and abroad that he was part of, including resolving the 1990s baseball strike. Also online, find upcoming book events.



'Ideal Life'

Who doesn't want a do-over in life for big mistakes, an opportunity to go back and fix little awkward moments or even just a chance to use that clever comeback you thought of hours later? Redwood City-based New York Times best-selling author Evelyn Skye gifts those heady powers to the protagonist of her new novel. In **"Ideal Life,"** Talia Morgan acquires a magical watch that can rewind time, which could really come in handy in getting her life back on track after her neuroscience startup fails. The watch lets Talia rewind the last 24 hours and change whatever she wants in that time period, but she soon learns that the temptation to "optimize" everything in her life with a replay doesn't make things as perfect as she hoped.

To be published Aug. 18; Simon & Schuster. Skye will appear Aug. 22 at Fireside Books in Redwood City.



'The Art of How Dogs Sleep'

From their famous loyalty to their boundless enthusiasm and friendliness, dogs always have plenty to teach us humans, even when they're just getting some shut-eye. With her debut picture book, **"The Art of How Dogs Sleep,"** local author and illustrator Alison Kim pays tribute to canines' disarming penchant for being able to nap just about anywhere at any time and in just about any pose. In playfully examining the many ways that pups enjoy getting their rest, the book also serves as a bedtime story encouraging the youngest readers to follow dogs' example — as perhaps we all should.

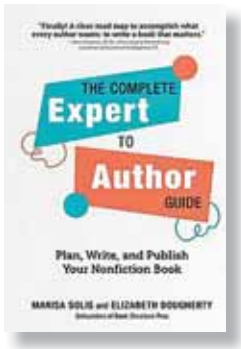
Published April 21; Little, Brown and Company. Kim will appear Aug. 23 at Linden Tree Books.

'Firewalkers'

The city by the bay has long been a favorite target of CGI catastrophe in movies, but what would it be like if the worst descended upon us all? The sci fi-fantasy novel **"Firewalkers,"** imagines a post-apocalyptic San Francisco, where two siblings eke out a living as bounty hunters. They hail from the previously tight-knit Walker family, scattered by a cataclysmic combination of war, pestilence and brutal storms, with other siblings hiding out in remote Alaska or simply wandering the world. It takes another brutal blow — the murder of their father — to reunite them, but the Walkers fall afoul of a scientist and his crew of genetic misfits, leading them on a journey through both curious realms and dangerous outposts. "Firewalkers" is the debut novel of Tyler Martin Hanley, a name that's likely familiar to longtime readers of the Palo Alto Weekly and its sister publications. Hanley was on the Weekly's editorial staff for over a decade, writing and editing features, film reviews, opinion pieces and other stories.

To be published Aug. 9; Barnes & Noble.

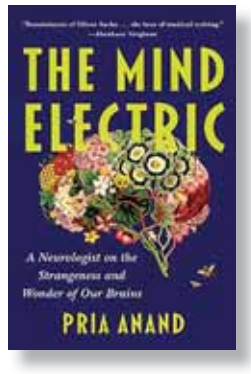




'The Complete Expert-to-Author Guide'

As home to Stanford University and the birthplace of Silicon Valley, the Peninsula is blessed with an abundance of braininess, but for those who'd like to share that knowledge more widely, being an authority in any particular field doesn't automatically make it easy to write a book. That's where Elizabeth Dougherty aims to help. The Palo Alto editor and book coach's newest work, **"The Complete Expert-to-Author Guide,"** co-written with Marisa Solis, offers practical, step-by-step planning for anyone, whether it's an educator or an entrepreneur, to transform their expertise into a nonfiction book. The guide provides key tools for writing and structuring a book, along with insights into the publishing world.

Published June 16; Simon & Schuster.



'The Mind Electric'

Neurologist Pria Anand combines medicine, memoir and literary storytelling in her debut book **"The Mind Electric: A Neurologist on the Strangeness and Wonder of Our Brains."** With the book — which encompasses patients' experiences from hospitals in Boston to communities in India, the Caribbean and West Africa — Stanford alum Anand examines how cultural narratives influence the treatment of neurological illness and considers whose stories have historically been overlooked. She offers an accessible introduction to contemporary neurology and raises broader questions about empathy in medical practice.

Published June 10; Simon & Schuster. ■

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

Email Editorial Intern Ellis Yang at eyang@almanacnews.com.

Los Altos school librarian's new mystery follows an octogenarian scam victim out for revenge

'Poppy Montgomery Gets Even' celebrates the 'joy of the amateur sleuth'

By Angela Swartz

When a lonely 80-something-year-old woman finds herself investigating murders at her friend's retirement home, she stumbles into many hijinks and forms a meaningful community in the new novel "Poppy Montgomery Gets Even."

Its author, Palo Alto native Gordon Jack, who is a Los Altos High School librarian, found inspiration for the story, which is both funny and suspenseful, after his mom was scammed three times while a resident of Channing House in Palo Alto. He describes the book, published June 9, as a "revenge fantasy."

"It's meant to be funny and light," he said. "And even though there's murder in it, it's supposed to be sort of a page-turner, so I feel like it's a good summer book."

A Palo Alto High School graduate, Jack now lives in San Francisco. He holds a bachelor's degree from Claremont McKenna College, a master's degree in education from Stanford University and master's degree in library science from San Jose State University. He started his career as a copywriter before becoming an English teacher, then a librarian.

Although not named in the book, Jack said it's safe to that the story takes place in Palo Alto.

This is Jack's debut mystery novel, but he wrote two young adult novels — "The Boomerang Effect" in 2016 and "Your Own Worst Enemy" in 2018.

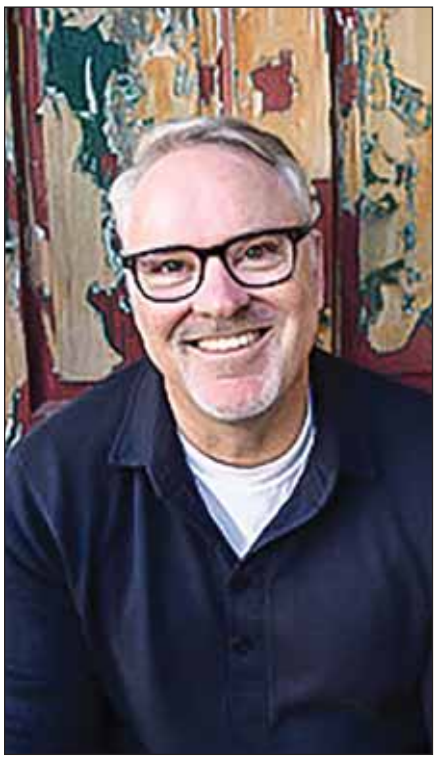
Jack celebrated the release of the book at Linden Tree Books in Los Altos with a launch party on publication day. He said his books are filled with "drama" and "trauma" and jokes.

The following interview has been condensed for clarity and space.

The Almanac: I read you were inspired to write this when your mom was scammed multiple times. Tell me about that.

Gordon Jack: Each time she beat herself up for being so dumb and falling for the same tricks. ... It's incredibly maddening because you know these people are ... taking advantage of these kind, generous people who ... just want to help and there's no way to catch them.

I think originally it was inspired by the "Thursday Murder Club." I read that book, and I was like, "This is super fun and funny." ... This book didn't start off as a mystery, it started off as kind of like a heist. It's such a long process of writing a book. .... All these things (movies and books) came out during that time. Each time I thought the book was gonna just sink because it just felt too similar. Right when I got my agent for the book, the movie "Thelma" came out, and I was like, "Oh no, that's another story of an octogenarian scamming her scammer." Then there was "Only Murders in the Building" and "A Man on the Inside." Suddenly, seeing so many of these humorous mysteries. You have all the Baby Boomers who are getting older and want to see themselves reflected in TV and movies and books. But part of it is just this joy of the amateur sleuth. ... I think there's an interesting response to maybe the loneliness that happens when you get older and you're not forced to live with other people. ... There's also this longing for community that those stories kind of have. I tried to put it in my book as well.



Courtesy Simon & Schuster

Author Gordon Jack.

> 'Even though there's murder in it, it's supposed to be sort of a page-turner, so I feel like it's a good summer book.'
>
> Gordon Jack

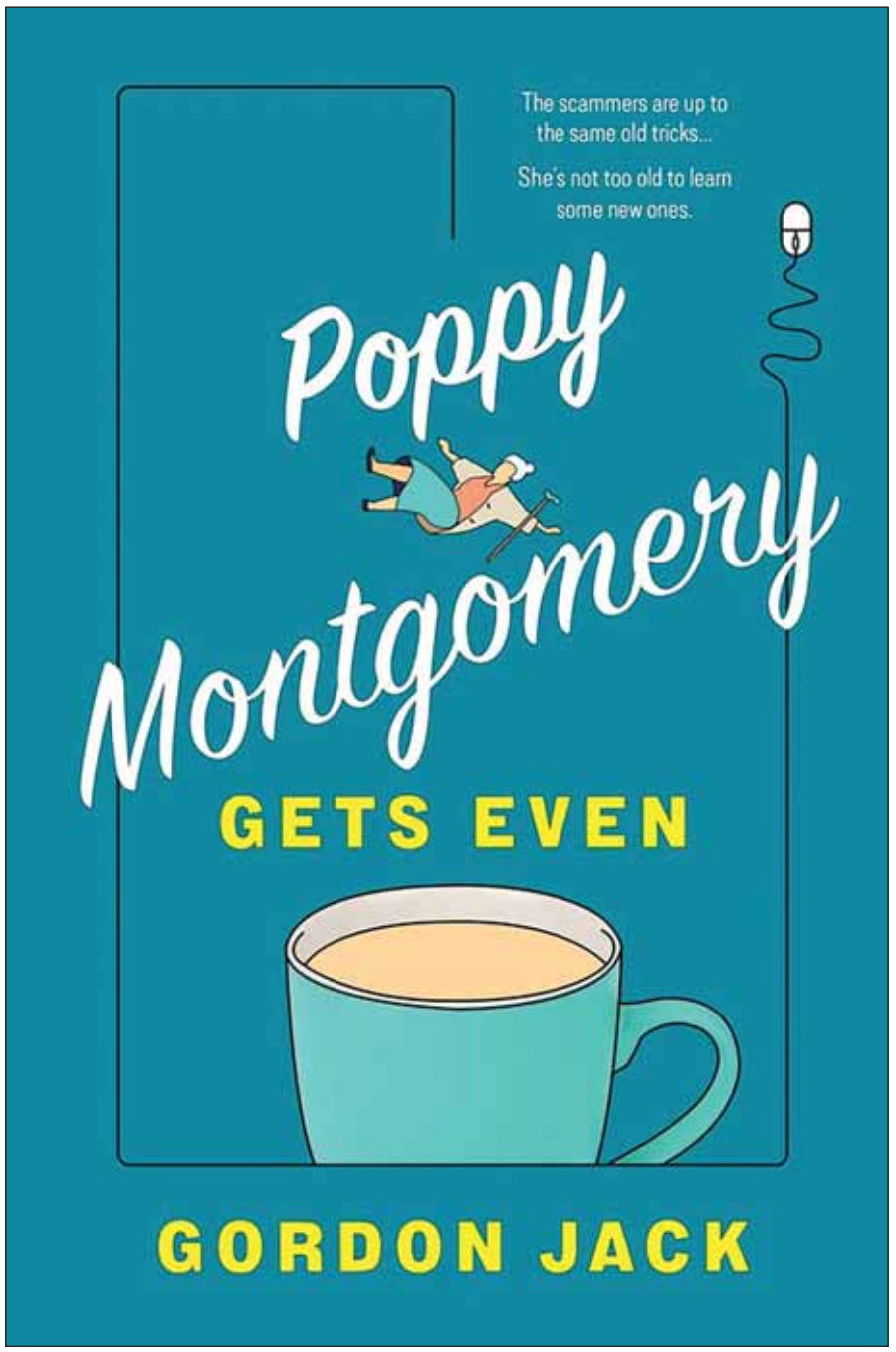
The Almanac: When did you start working on the book?

Jack: 2023, (20)24. ... It takes me about two years to write a book, and then in this case I needed a new agent, because it was an adult fiction rather than young adult fiction. Then we had to find a publisher, and so that whole process was at least like a year, year and a half, and then once you have all those, you start rewriting. ... My publisher wanted to move it more into the mystery genre. ... I just started adding murders to the story, so it changed a lot from what it was to what it eventually is now.

The Almanac: I found the book quite funny. What was your barometer for deciding if something was funny enough? Did you run jokes by family members, or do you just have an innate sense of humor?

Jack: I can only write if I'm being entertained while I write, so usually the things that entertain me are humorous books. I'm a big fan of P.G. Wodehouse and Maria Semple. ... I read a lot of them and get inspiration there, and then I started reading more humorous mysteries once I kind of knew what I was writing, so I read more of the Osmond series and the Vera Wong series.

My sister (Sheila Grau) is a writer. She writes middle grade, more fantasy, but she's a really funny writer too, so I will send her stuff. She's my first critique partner. She'll help me know if something's working or not.



Courtesy Simon & Schuster

"Poppy Montgomery Gets Even" is Gordon Jack's first adult novel. He has written several books for younger readers and is also the librarian for Los Altos High School.

The Almanac: Will this be a series?

Jack: I'm new to this mystery genre, and so I'm learning what readers' expectations are. I went to a big mystery reader conference in San Francisco back in February, and every author I met says, like "This is book six in the series" or "This is book eight in the series." When you think about Sue Grafton (who) has her Alphabet series, where, like, "'A' is for Alibi," "'B' is for Burglar," so it's just part of the genre. I don't know if I have it in me to do something that long.

Originally I was thinking that I would like to do three books, one from each of the woman's point of views, but my editor wants me to keep it in Poppy's point of view for the next book. At least there'll be a book two. Then we'll see if they want to publish any more after that. It's still fun. I still like hanging out with these ladies.

The Almanac: Are you considering just working on your writing full time, or do you enjoy having the library work as well?

Jack: I like having both. ... I'm approaching my last year at the district. I retire after next (school) year, so I am hoping this is part of my retirement plan, because I like doing it, but it's ... hard for me to see doing it full time just because I have such little stamina for writing. I'm good for like two hours a day, maybe three, and then after that I just feel tapped out of ideas and I need to step away. ... Even if I don't ever get published again, I like doing it, so it'll be part of it. ■

Angela Swartz is a Contributing Writer.

"Poppy Montgomery Gets Even," Gordon Jack. Mysterious Press. Hardcover: $25.12, E-book: $17.99. gordon-jack.com.

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Less than an hour from the East Bay, Delta Coves is attracting Bay Area homebuyers seeking a waterfront lifestyle surrounded by open space and natural beauty. Located on Bethel Island at the gateway to more than 1,000 miles of California Delta waterways, the private community features a swimmable lagoon, private boat docks and resort-style amenities. Homes by Blue Mountain Communities and Davidson Communities range from approximately 1,600 to more than 4,000 square feet, with prices from the $500s to the $2 millions. Residents enjoy boating, paddleboarding, fishing, fitness facilities, social events and year-round recreation on and around the water.



Read the spotlight



HAVE YOUR CAKE AND READ IT TOO

Cake Picnic founder Elisa Sunga presents her cookbook at Kepler's Aug. 7

By Karla Kane



Cakes are often associated with celebrations — birthdays, graduations, weddings and other special occasions where loved ones gather together. For Bay Area resident, baking enthusiast and author Elisa Sunga, cake itself is the cause for celebration, a way to build community and make new friends, centered around sharing slices of tasty goodness.

Sunga is the creator of Cake Picnic, a potluck where every attendee brings an entire cake to share. The inaugural picnic was held in a San Francisco park a couple of years ago. When Sunga posted her invitation for that very first gathering, she hoped for the best but wasn't sure if it would pan out.

As she recounts in her new cookbook, "Cake Picnic: Recipes for the Love of Cake & Friends," she was surprised to find that 183 people — with 183 cakes — showed up, proving "people everywhere were hungry for a joyful community gathering."

The idea has now been expanded and formalized into an official, trademarked, ticketed roving series. Some events have drawn more than a thousand people (and cakes). Last fall's event on San Francisco's Treasure Island featured over 2,000 cake creations, according to the San Francisco Chronicle.

Sunga has taken the sweet idea a step further with the May publication of her book. Published by Chronicle Books, it's part cookbook — offering baking tips and 50 cake recipes organized by themes, such as season, location or ingredients — and part how-do guide to help readers throw cake-based shindigs of their own.

For example, readers can find ideas for the perfect cakes to bake for a beach picnic, a floral-themed event or an autumn harvest gathering (Butterscotch Pumpkin Oat Cake, anyone?). It also gives advice on being a good picnic guest, from practical concerns such as how to transport cakes and store leftovers to tasting etiquette and conversation ideas.

Sunga comes to Kepler's Books in Menlo Park Aug. 7



Courtesy Chronicle Books

Elisa Sunga is the founder of Cake Picnic and author of the cookbook of the same name.

to promote the book. Following her presentation, there will be a book signing and mini cake picnic in the plaza outside the store, with Kepler's providing beverages. Those who want to bring a cake to share can indicate that when registering and will receive more information from Heather Birchall, the program manager for premier events for Kepler's Literary Foundation.

"It'll be really lovely; people will spill out (onto the plaza) and be greeted by this colorful, sweet feast," Birchall said of her vision for the evening. "The staff, we are all keyed up to make our own cakes as well." Birchall, for one, plans to bring a Victoria sandwich. "That's kind of the classic British cake, a very simple one," she said.

Though it will be a smaller-scale, more informal picnic, "We'll definitely make a fuss of everybody who comes. It's going to be a more intimate cake picnic, a chance to meet the author and ask her questions about why Cake Picnic has exploded into this incredible thing," Birchall said.

Until recently, baking was Sunga's passion project while she worked at Google by day. But as of a few weeks ago, she told this news organization in an email interview, sharing the joy of Cake Picnic and taking the event on tour is now her full-time career.

"Historically, musicians and artists went on tour. Isn't it amazing that we can also now go on tour for things like cake? It has been so fun to see so many people travel to Cake Picnic; crossing state borders and taking international flights just to join in on the fun!" she said.

Ahead of her Kepler's event, Sunga answered questions about what inspired the Cake Picnic concept and advice from her book that may surprise readers. The Q&A, conducted via email, has been lightly edited for clarity and brevity.

Embarcadero Media: Can you please share a bit about how you were inspired to create the Cake Picnic concept? Why cake in particular?

Aug. 7, 5-7 p.m. at Kepler's Books, 1010 El Camino Real, Menlo Park; $21.99 general admission or $53.49 including a copy of the book; keplers.org/upcoming-events-internal/cake-picnic. Participants can indicate when registering if they plan to bring a cake to share (not mandatory).
More information on the Cake Picnic Tour and cookbook is available at cakepicnictour.com. Upcoming tour dates will be announced via Instagram: @cakepicnictour.

Elisa Sunga: Back in April 2024, I wanted to eat a lot of cake but I didn't want to bake it all by myself. I thought, "What if I created an event and made it a requirement that every person attending has to bring a whole cake? That way we can all share a lot of cake and make new friends." I had no idea how popular it would get! Cake is such a big project that takes multiple days and lots of planning. It is so nice to be able to share it with others.

EM: How did you get interested in baking?

ES: I started baking in March 2020 during the pandemic. I had a lot more time and it seemed like everyone was baking sourdough and banana bread. I wanted to join in! Since then, I fell in love with baking as a creative and social pursuit.

EM: How has the Cake Picnic idea spread around the world from your original event?

ES: Ever since I posted about it, I have started to get so many emails and DMs asking to bring Cake Picnic to Seoul, Paris, Dublin, Morocco, and so, so many more places. I would love to bring it to as many places as possible! When I reflect back on it now, Cake Picnic is all about butter, sugar, flour, and more — what's not to love and want to be a part of?

EM: What are a few of your favorite recipes and cakes from the book?

ES: I love so many recipes in the book, but right now my favorite chapters are the Chocolate Cake Picnic and Salty Sweet Cake Picnic. At every Cake Picnic tour stop, I beeline for all of the chocolate cakes and fill my cake box with as many as I can. I also love the Salty Sweet Cake Picnic because it is a perfect balance of notes and the cake recipes in this chapter are so craveable to me. Also, the techniques and ingredients are not the usual so it's a little bit more fun!

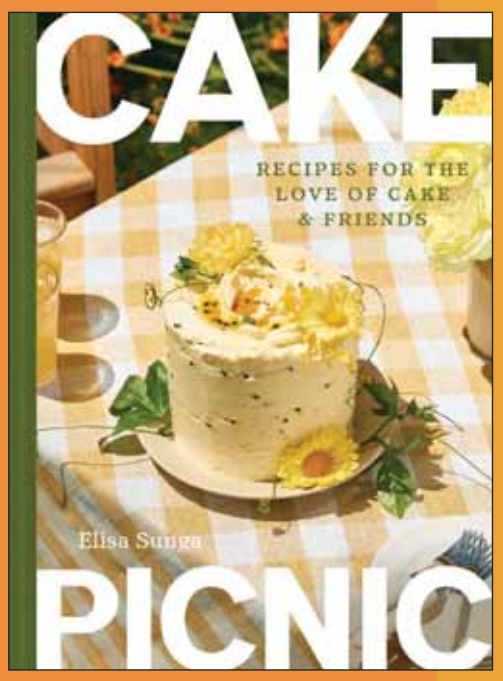
(The recipes in those sections include Peanut Butter and Chocolate Rye Cake, Chocolate Gingerbread Spelt Cake and Guinness and Hazelnut Chocolate Cake in the chocolate chapter; and Chocolate Cake with Potato Chip Toffee, Lemon Curd and Saltine Cracker Cake, Apple Cake with Pretzel Buttercream, Banana Sticky Toffee Pudding and Gjetost Caramel Cake in the salty sweet chapter).

EM: The book is not just recipes, but also tips for readers to throw their own cake picnics. What's a piece of advice from the book that might surprise readers?

ES: The setting and environment for any event is so important! All of the tiny little details mean so much. From the background music to color schemes, each of these play an important role in creating the event mood and vibe. Plan early! ■

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

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Courtesy Chronicle Books

Left: The cover of "Cake Picnic" by Elisa Sunga. Courtesy Chronicle Books. Below: Elisa Sunga's "Cake Picnic" organizes cake recipes by theme, such as "New Year Cake Picnic."





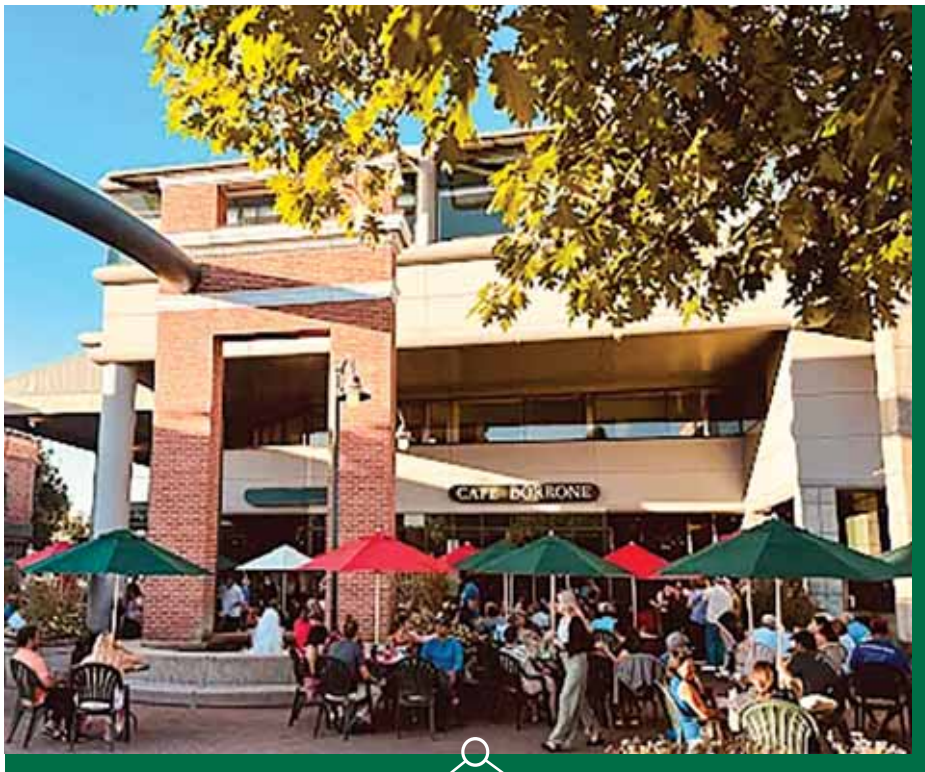
Courtesy Chronicle Books

"Cake Picnic" includes a recipe for fig jam and chamomile sugar bundt cake, suggested for an afternoon-tea event.



Courtesy Chronicle Books

The lavender and lemon poppy seed cake recipe in "Cake Picnic" is recommended for a floral-themed event.



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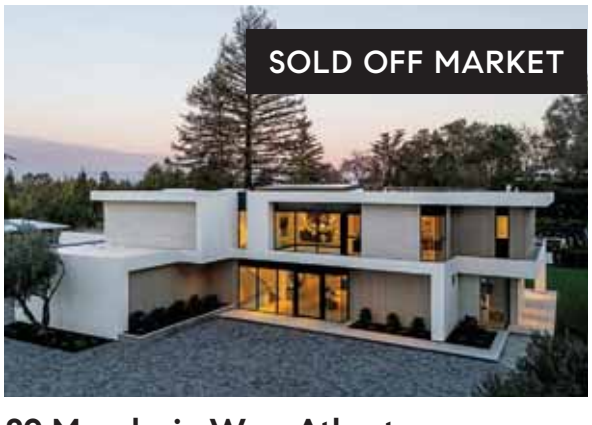
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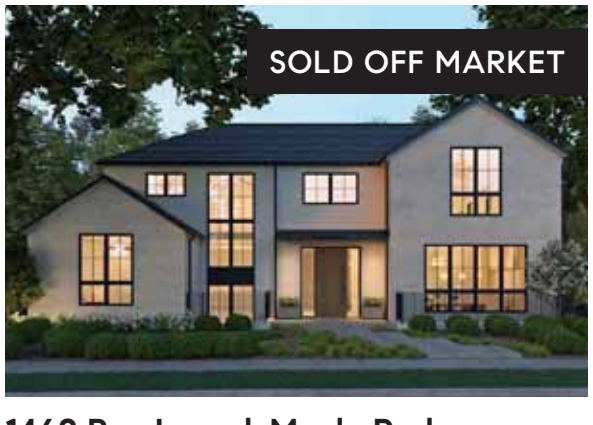
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