The Almanac

NONPROFIT LOCAL NEWS FOR THE MIDPENINSULA

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Actor Billy Magnussen films films Silicon Valley comedy in Woodside

AMC's 'The Audacity' shot several scenes in the town

By Arden Margulis

Actor Billy Magnussen filmed scenes of AMC's Silicon Valley television show "The Audacity" in the Woodside Town Center area on Oct. 16.

The dark comedy drama follows the "warped dreams, outsized egos and ethical lapses" of Silicon Valley investors, AMC said in a press release.

Magnussen — known for "Game Night" and "The Social Reckoning," which focuses on whistleblower allegations against Menlo Park-based Meta — plays Duncan Park, a fictitious data-mining CEO who seeks to profit off of people's private information. The show was created by Jonathan Glatzer, who previously worked on HBO's "Succession" and AMC's "Better Call Saul."

The show premiered on April 12 and production of the second season started in June. While it is mainly filmed in Vancouver, Canada, "The Audacity" filmed several scenes on Mountain Home Road and its intersection with Woodside Road.

During one of the scenes, Magnussen appeared to drive

See **FILMING,** *page 17*



Seeger Gray

Actor Billy Magnussen, who plays Duncan Park on "The Audacity, sits in a car with an attached camera before filming a scene outside Roberts Market in Woodside on Oct. 16.

Local officials tout progress on safety fixes for highways 84, 35

Grassroots campaign to combat dangerous driving on mountain roads draws hundreds in person and online

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Over 100 people gathered Oct. 20 in Woodside at a town hall meeting to address growing concerns about reckless driving, speeding and collisions on highways 35 and 84.

Hosted by local and state legislators in collaboration with Caltrans and law enforcement officials, it was the first time multiple agencies came together publicly in one room to talk about solutions.

"There will undoubtedly be disagreements about what actions we should take, but by working together, we can combine enforcement, engineering and education. We will make your roads safer," said Assemblymember Marc Berman.

For the past five years, traffic issues have been a growing issue for the community but Berman told The Almanac "it's reaching the tipping point" — sparking the initiative to gather all agencies in one room for one evening.

The town hall at Mountain Terrace was organized by Berman, state Sen. Josh Becker and San Mateo County Supervisor Ray Mueller, with presentations by Caltrans, California Highway Patrol and the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office.

Woodside councilmembers Jenn Wall, Hassan Aburish and Paul Goeld and Portola Valley councilmembers Mary Hufty and Helen Wolter, who is also a senior field representative for Berman's office, attended.

About 200 additional people tuned in online to hear about Caltrans' immediate to long-term road improvement plans for the two-lane mountain highways and the collaborative enforcement programs between CHP and the Sheriff's Office. Collectively, agencies call this the 4E's: enforcement, education, engineering and engagement.

"At Caltrans, you may know safety is our highest priority ... but no single agency can solve the challenges of this corridor," said Doanh Nguyen, Caltrans acting director of District 4.

See **HIGHWAY SAFETY,** *page 18*

SPECIAL FEATURE PENINSULA PHOTO CONTEST **20**

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Congratulations

2026 Nobel Prize Laureate in Physiology or Medicine

Karl Deisseroth, MD, PhD



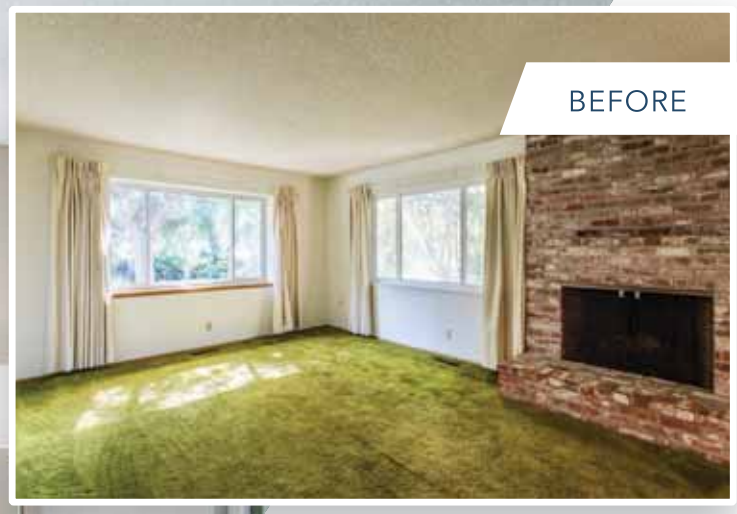
We congratulate Karl Deisseroth, MD, PhD, a Stanford professor of bioengineering and of psychiatry and behavioral sciences, on winning the 2026 Nobel Prize for his work in optogenetics. Today, thousands of scientists worldwide use optogenetics to deepen our understanding of the brain and develop new therapies for neurological and psychiatric disorders. Dr. Deisseroth's groundbreaking work embodies Stanford's mission to advance knowledge and improve lives for patients and families everywhere.

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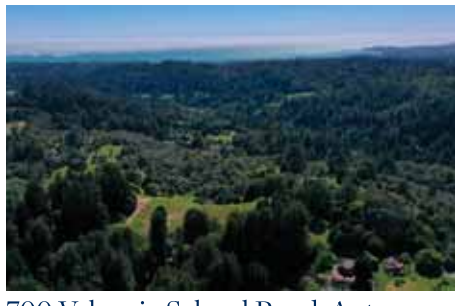
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Teri Vershel

Capturing human connection

From Madagascar to Morocco, Peninsula Photo Contest winners capture colorful creatures and moments of human connection. "Connection," shown above, captures a romantic moment between a young couple on a Southern California pier. See page 20.

'Woman of the year' convicted of fraud may dodge jail time

Sheriff: It's not in the 'public interest' to disclose alternative sentencing program

By Arden Margulis

A San Mateo County nonprofit executive convicted of laundering more than $700,000 through the now defunct mental health nonprofit StarVista may avoid jail after a judge recommended her for an alternative sentencing program.

Foster City resident Clarise Ann Blanchard, 79, pleaded no contest in October 2025 to three felonies — money laundering, identity theft and failure to file tax returns — under a plea agreement that capped her sentence at three years and four months in state prison. The San Mateo County District Attorney's Office sought a prison sentence, but Superior Court Judge Kevin Dunleavy sentenced her to six months in county jail and recommended her for the Sheriff's Alternative Sentencing Bureau.



Clarise Ann Blanchard

The Sheriff's bureau allows eligible people to serve out their sentences outside of prison or jail, such as through electronic monitoring or a work program.

District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe said the Sheriff's Office has sole discretion over whether to accept someone into the alternative sentencing program unless a judge expressly prohibits participation. Neither the District Attorney's Office nor the Superior Court is notified of the decision, he said.

The Sheriff's Office would not confirm whether Blanchard is participating in an alternative sentencing program.

"As a matter of practice, the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office does not discuss participation of specific incarcerated persons in its programs," spokesperson Gretchen Spiker said.

Spiker said the office considers several factors when determining eligibility for alternative sentencing, including public safety and a person's medical and criminal history.

Blanchard, who was honored as San Mateo County's 2008 Woman of the Year, worked at StarVista for 20 years, leading programs that assisted victims of domestic violence and incarcerated girls.

After she retired in 2022, StarVista learned Blanchard had opened a bank account in the nonprofit's name and arranged for a family foundation to deposit donations into it, according to a Santa Clara County probation officer's report. She used the money for personal expenses, vacations and medical treatments, and forged signatures and thank-you letters from StarVista to cover up the fraud, the report said.

The San Mateo County Probation Department recused itself from evaluating Blanchard because it worked closely with StarVista. The Santa Clara County Probation Department conducted the evaluation and suggested "significant" jail time but recommended leaving open the possibility of alternative sentencing programs if Blanchard made restitution payments.

StarVista was one of San Mateo County's top mental health service providers, receiving more than $17 million in county funding from the start of 2024 until it closed on Aug. 1, 2025, for programs including counseling at-risk youth and crisis lines. At its peak, the nonprofit employed more than 200 people and served more than 38,000 clients annually. It also operated crisis response teams that worked with eight local police departments and collaborated with the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office.

In an impact statement written before the shutdown, then-CEO Sara Larios Mitchell said StarVista's reputation suffered significantly after Blanchard was charged and that the nonprofit spent more than $80,000 on crisis public relations. Mitchell described Blanchard's actions

See **FRAUD,** *page 19*

Man shot in Menlo Park after vehicle collision

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Police are still searching for a suspect after a 47-year-old San Mateo resident was shot on Oct. 15, in Menlo Park while getting out of his car to exchange information following a collision, Menlo Park police said on Oct. 16.

Officers responded to the shooting near Bay and Hedge roads around 8:39 p.m. after the shooter fled in an unknown direction, police said. Police described the vehicle as a small white car, which has yet to be located.

Police spokesperson Nicole Acker said the department had no update as of Wednesday, Oct. 21.

The victim was taken to a hospital with injuries that were considered non-life-threatening. Three children, ranging in age from 8 to 14, were also in the car. None of them were injured, according to the Menlo Park Police Department.

Acker said on Oct. 21 that the man had been released from the hospital.

The investigation is ongoing and officials ask anyone with information to contact Detective Marcial Barron-Villa at MBarron-Villa@menlopark.gov or call 650-847-7438. ■

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

Menlo Park council now favors plan to open downtown road to traffic

The eastbound lane of Santa Cruz Avenue has been closed since 2020

By B. Sakura Cannestra

Menlo Park City Council is trying to find a middle ground between building a community plaza downtown or reopening eastbound vehicle traffic on the 600 block of Santa Cruz Avenue for the first time in six years.

Councilmembers revisited the plans for a public plaza in a study session at its Oct. 13, meeting, where they were asked to give feedback on the block's future. Opinions varied between maintaining the existing community gathering space and reopening the road in light of the potential for more development downtown.

The 600 block of Santa Cruz Avenue was closed to eastbound traffic in 2020 to give downtown restaurants and shops more outdoor space during the COVID-19 pandemic. The council voted in June 2025 to keep the block closed in part because of its frequent use as a gathering spot for residents.

After the discussion, the majority of councilmembers voiced support for piloting a redesign that would open the eastbound traffic lane, eliminate the bike lane and maintain

See **DOWNTOWN,** *page 19*

Embarcadero Media Foundation's new CEO is coming home to the Peninsula, with questions

By Julie Makinen

One of my first assignments as an intern at the Palo Alto Weekly was to approach strangers on University Avenue and interview them for the paper's "Streetwise" feature.

I was terrified.

My task was simple: Pose the same question to five people and return with coherent quotes. Fortunately, the editor sent a photographer along. Without that chaperone, I might still be standing on the sidewalk, working up my courage.

Three decades later, I'm returning as CEO and publisher of the Embarcadero Media Foundation, the nonprofit organization behind the Weekly, The Almanac, the Mountain View Voice, the Redwood City Pulse and our three sister publications in the East Bay.

I have considerably more experience now. But this week, I'm starting with much the same assignment: Get out into the community. Ask questions. Listen carefully.

That internship helped set the course of my life. Journalism gave this somewhat-introverted college student permission to approach people, enter unfamiliar worlds and ask questions that might otherwise seem a little nosy. It took me from the Washington Post to the Los Angeles Times to the International New York Times, from California to Hong Kong, Beijing and back again.

My ties to the Peninsula have endured through all those travels. I graduated from Stanford with a degree in human biology and returned in 2016 as a John S. Knight journalism fellow, then worked as a case writer at the Graduate School of Business. My parents have lived in Palo Alto since 1999, and my father spent more than two decades serving on the city's Historic Resources Board.

So this is both a homecoming and a new beginning.

I've had the privilege of leading newsrooms — The Desert Sun in Palm Springs and, more recently, The San Francisco Standard. Those were two different newsrooms, and two different communities. But in both cases, I found journalism offered an extraordinary opportunity to make a tangible difference in people's lives.

Community news helps us understand decisions about our schools, neighborhoods and public money. It introduces us to people we might otherwise never meet. It can expose wrongdoing, celebrate achievement and help neighbors find common ground.

That work depends on our relationship with you — which is why I'm starting by listening rather than announcing grand plans. I'm asking our employees what we do well, what gets in their way and where we have opportunities to improve. I want to ask our readers similar questions.



Seeger Gray

Julie Makinen is the new CEO and publisher of Embarcadero Media Foundation.

What do you turn to us for? What are we missing? Whose experiences deserve more attention? Are our websites, newsletters and newspapers easy to use and useful in your daily life? What would make you recommend us to a neighbor? And if you've stopped reading regularly, I'd especially like to understand why.

The communities we serve are changing, as are the ways people find and share information. We need to be willing to experiment, improve our products and reach people who don't yet see us as part of their lives. Living alongside so many of the people driving technological change here makes that work unusually interesting.

But the foundation of our work remains human: showing up, talking to people, checking facts, pursuing questions and being accountable for what we publish.

Election season brings that responsibility into sharp focus. Heading toward Election Day, we've dropped the paywall on our online election coverage so everyone can access the information they need to make informed choices. Please read it, use it and share it with friends and neighbors.

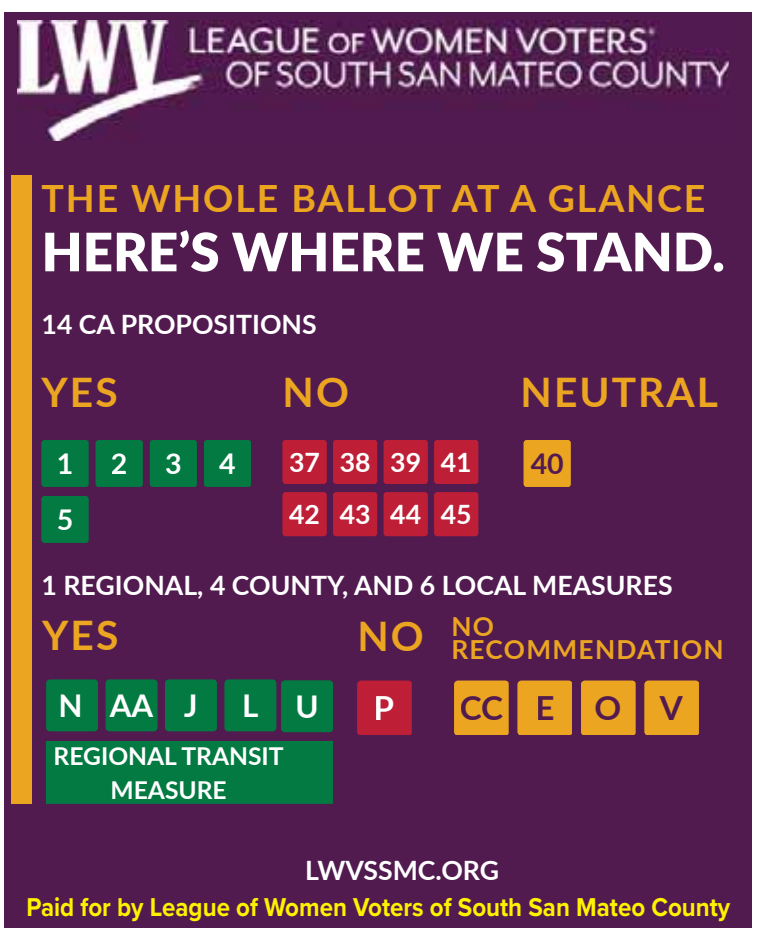
Producing that coverage free-of-charge requires real work — interviewing candidates, examining records, following campaigns, hosting in-person forums and explaining the decisions facing voters. An hour of reporting time costs us at least $30. If you value our voter guides and other election-related information, I hope you'll support us with a tax-deductible donation here. If you're already contributing, thank you — you're helping make reliable local information available to our whole community.

Our newsroom is not part of a hedge-fund-owned corporate newspaper conglomerate headquartered on the other side of the country. Nor are we the pet project of a billionaire with unlimited resources. We are a local, nonpartisan, nonprofit newsroom, rooted here since 1979. Our 501(c)3 model gives us an opportunity to build a future in which strong local journalism is sustained by the people it serves. I'm grateful to founder Bill Johnson, my predecessor Adam Dawes, our board and our staff for the work that has brought us to this point.

Now I want to hear from you. Send me your ideas, questions and constructive complaints. You can email me at publisher@embarcaderomedia.org, or call me at 650-223-6588. Tell me where I should go, whom I should meet and what I should understand about our community.

And if I approach you on the street with a notepad in hand, I promise I've gotten a little better at introducing myself. ■

Email CEO and Publisher Julie Makinen at jmakinen@almanacnews.com.





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Joint Venture survey shows optimism has 'fizzled' in Silicon Valley

Report highlights rising distrust in tech companies

By Hannah Bensen

The Silicon Valley dream is looking less convincing to Bay Area residents.

For 53% of respondents, hard work alone is insufficient to get ahead and build a good life in the area, according to a survey of 1,801 Bay Area residents conducted by Joint Venture Silicon Valley, a regional think tank, and Bay Area News Group. The survey assessed respondents' economic, social and political views.

Russell Hancock, president and CEO of Joint Venture, said Silicon Valley served for generations as the epicenter of the American Dream — a place where people could work hard, be creative, change the world, and, of course, make money.

"For the first time, here's a survey saying, 'No, that has all fizzled,'" Hancock said. "I think that's hugely significant. It's the thing that made us, and now it's not there — or some people think."

Roughly six in 10 respondents said the Bay Area and California were on the "wrong track," a figure that rose to 76% when assessing the direction of the entire country. Yet residents were more optimistic about their own futures: 81% said their lives were headed in the "right direction."

Like a steady drumbeat, housing, affordability and economic issues repeatedly topped the list of resident worries regardless of how the survey question was framed: reasons for pessimism, key concerns, or degree of importance of certain issues. Those issues, along with growing inequality, have been top of mind year after year, Hancock said.

"They just keep naming it," Hancock said. "Ninety-four percent of respondents listed housing and the high costs of living here as the most pressing problem facing the Bay Area. In the poll business, that's the equivalent of unanimity. George Washington was not elected by 94%."

See **OPTIMISM,** *page 17*

$6M settlement reached in 23andMe data breach lawsuit

Attorney General Rob Bonta reaffirms consumers' right to data privacy and protection

By Emily Margaretten

The California attorney general announced on Oct. 19 that his office had reached a $6-million settlement with 23andMe, resolving allegations that the genetic-testing company failed to protect customers' personal information and genetic data after a 2023 security breach.

Earlier this year, Attorney General Rob Bonta filed a lawsuit alleging that 23andMe, which changed its official name to Chrome Holding Co. last year, did not adequately protect sensitive information and genetic data that was then offered for sale on the "dark web" by unauthorized agents. The lawsuit also claimed 23andMe misled customers about the severity of the data breach, which impacted nearly 7 million users across the U.S.

"I am proud to fight for the privacy rights of Californians and to deliver this settlement for consumers who put their trust in 23andMe," Bonta said in an Oct. 19 press release. "Companies cannot evade California's consumer protection and privacy laws by filing for bankruptcy."

Founded in 2006, 23andMe, which was once headquartered in Mountain View, rose to prominence as the first company to sell DNA sequencing kits directly to consumers. The company later faced financial hardships and filed for bankruptcy last year.

The 23andMe Research Institute, which acquired 23andMe's assets in a bankruptcy auction, told this news organization in May that it was a "newly established independent nonprofit organization" and was not involved in the lawsuit.

Consumers have the right to ask 23andMe Research Institute to delete their data, including destroying test samples, according to Bonta's press release. Consumers can also revoke their permission for their genetic data to be used for research.

"I want to remind Californians that customers of 23andMe can delete their private genetic data — no matter who owns it," Bonta said. ■

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



Courtesy Sundry Photography/Getty Images

23andMe was previously headquartered at 899 W. Evelyn Ave. in Mountain View.

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San Mateo County declares El Niño state of emergency to prepare for winter storms

By B. Sakura Cannestra

The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors declared this winter's El Niño to be a local emergency on Oct. 20, easing the way for the county's Department of Emergency Management to make preparations with fewer bureaucratic hurdles.

Meteorologists have been ringing alarm bells, forecasting strong-to-very strong El Niño conditions this winter. Across the county, cities and local governments have been mobilizing to prepare for unusually high winds, heavy rain and large storm surges along the coast from El Niño-fueled storms. El Niño occurs when unusually warm water in the Pacific Ocean upends typical weather patterns, often triggering rainier weather in much of California.

"We cannot predict the storms, but we can prepare now," Dr. Shruti Dhapodkar, the county's director of emergency management, said at the Oct. 20 Board of Supervisors meeting.

Along with clearing the runway for emergency preparations, the proclamation established an El Niño Preparedness and Response Task Force through the end of March, headed by Dhapodkar.

The likelihood of strong winter storms brings a higher risk of floods, landslides, coastal erosion and power outages. Officials are urging residents to research if they're in a flood zone or potentially hazardous area, and to plan accordingly. San Mateo County residents can sign up for emergency notifications at smcgov.org/dem/smc-alert.

County Supervisor Lisa Gauthier said the emergency declaration improves the coordination between departments, cities, government agencies and residents by creating a framework and preparedness plan.

"The goal is to identify risks early, prepare our resources and make sure we are ready to respond when conditions demand it," Gauthier said.

It's nearly impossible to predict the severity and timing of the storms, so weather experts have been urging local leaders to make preparations now. Most cities in San Mateo County have opened sandbag distribution locations for residents and published emergency preparedness information, including Redwood City, Menlo Park and East Palo Alto. Redwood City recently launched an Adopt-a-Drain program to reduce flood risks by mobilizing residents to help keep storm drains clear of debris.

In the winter of 2022-23, heavy rains pelted the Bay Area starting on New Year's Eve, flooding homes and roads, and cutting power to some neighborhoods. In Redwood City, neighborhoods near the Bay were inundated with floodwater that couldn't drain due to higher tides. Dozens of homes suffered flood damages in Menlo Park in the same storm, as water spilled over the banks of the San Francisquito Creek, which runs through Menlo Park, East Palo Alto and Palo Alto.

One Shoreline is San Mateo County's flood protection authority and has preparedness resources and tools online. Menlo Park residents can pick up sandbags in the Burgess Park parking lot at the corner of Burgess Drive and Alma Street, and Fire Station 77, 1467 Chilco Street.

East Palo Alto residents can pick up sandbags at the Public Works Corporation Yard, 150 Tara Road.

Redwood City residents can pick up sandbags at the Public Works Services Yard, 1400 Broadway. ■

Email Staff Writer B. Sakura Cannestra at scannestra@almanacnews.com.



OBITUARIES

Local residents who died recently include:

Stuart Brewster, 99, of Palo Alto, who was born in Danvers, Massachusetts and earned a history degree from Tufts University, who spent 40 years at Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, who moved to Palo Alto in 1964 to lead the company's Innovative Division, who enjoyed reading, traveling and walking in the Baylands and who was involved in the Palo Alto Jazz Alliance, died on April 16, 2026.

Peter Kindschi, 80, of Palo Alto, who was born in Wisconsin and moved to Palo Alto as a child, who worked as customer service and credit manager at Emporium and later worked for the state of California, and who loved spending time with his wife, JoAnne Stanford, tending to his garden and traveling to Puerto Vallarta, died on Oct. 1, 2026.

David E. Torin, 93, of Palo Alto, who was born in in New Jersey and who was a physician at Stanford University's student health center, died on Oct. 7, 2026.

Dorothy Saxe, 100, who was born Michigan City, Indiana, who graduated from Northwestern University, who moved to Palo Alto in 1959, who was a member of Congregation Beth Am, served on the board of Jewish Family and Children's Federation and was a longtime trustee of the Contemporary Jewish Museum, which she helped establish, who was passionate about contemporary glass and collected more than 700 works, who donated much of her collection to area museums, including the de Young in San Francisco and who helped found the Art Alliance for Contemporary Glass, died on Oct. 13, 2026.

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



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Menlo Park mayor makes 2nd attempt to reach Bonta about controversial high-rise project on Willow Road

'Please visit Menlo Park,' Mayor Betsy Nash urges state attorney general

By Hannah Bensen

Menlo Park Mayor Betsy Nash is still hoping state Attorney General Rob Bonta will visit the site of a controversial high-rise project. She extended a second invitation to visit 80 Willow Road, the former Sunset Magazine campus, and learn about the property and its proposed hotel, office and housing development.

Bonta was in the area for a Stanford University event last week, Nash said in the Oct. 16 letter, and spoke with a former Sunset Magazine sales manager and Menlo Park resident. He told Nash that Bonta "seemed to know little about Menlo Park's builder's remedy project at 80 Willow Road" and was unaware of her Aug. 25 letter inviting Bonta to visit the site.

"Please come to Menlo Park and see how this massive commercial development would dramatically worsen infrastructure challenges, jeopardize emergency services response times ... and exacerbate our existing jobs/housing imbalance," Nash wrote in the letter, addressed to Bonta and his staff members. "I would be happy to show you around."

Located on the Palo Alto border, 80 Willow Road is a controversial development proposed for the corner of Willow and Middlefield Road that seeks to bypass local regulations as a builder's remedy project. It calls for 530,000 square feet of commercial space, including a 130-room hotel, and 665 housing units, in buildings as high as 39 stories, or 458 feet tall.

In July, the attorney general's office sent a letter alleging Menlo Park violated state housing law in its processing of the development application and warned that the city could face financial penalties, which could amount to fines of more than $6.6 million. In August, Nash sent Bonta her first letter, inviting him to tour the site and learn more about the project, and rejecting claims that the city had broken the law or was trying to avoid its obligations to build more housing in Menlo Park.

The project has also faced scrutiny from Rep. Sam Liccardo over the property's reported Russian owner, Vitaly Yusufov, and Yusufov's alleged ties to top Kremlin officials, including former Russian prime minister and president Dmitry Medvedev.

In recent weeks, Menlo Park officials refuted Bonta's

See **NASH,** *page 16*

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Photos by Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Left: Oak Knoll Elementary School mascot Ollie the Otter greets students at the fall family picnic on Sept. 17. Right: Oak Knoll Elementary School yearbooks from throughout the years, displayed at a table.

Oak Knoll Elementary celebrates school's 75th anniversary

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

When Principal Alicia Payton-Miyazaki was a student at Oak Knoll Elementary School, she played at the foot of the nearly 300-year-old oak tree that once stood at the center of the campus.

Everything in the school was connected to the tree — from learning about the life cycle to performing the annual Spring Sing event under its leaves, she recalled.

This year, Oak Knoll celebrates its 75th anniversary as it embraces its new Valley Oak tree, planted in 2024, with hopes that it will grow as large as its centuries-old predecessor, which fell during a storm in 2023.

The school has brought many alumni back to join the Oak Knoll staff as teachers. Payton-Miyazaki said that, besides herself, four other former students currently work at Oak Knoll: Hope Scheid, Alli Zeiser, Tony Yob and Melanie Vea.

"For five of us to have grown up in this community and return to it in service to the community and to the children, I think is just astounding," said Payton-Miyazaki.

In September, the school celebrated the anniversary at its annual fall family picnic. During lunchtime on Sept. 17, students sang "Happy Birthday" to the Oak Knoll mascot Ollie the Otter and ate cupcakes in celebration of the milestone.

For the 50th anniversary celebration in 2002, a time capsule was made and stored away for 25 years. Oak Knoll staff recently opened up the box to find old newspapers, a copy of the first "Magic Treehouse" book, an Otter Run T-shirt, a teddy bear from the 1990s, a student topography project, a postcard and more.

See **OAK KNOLL,** *page 16*

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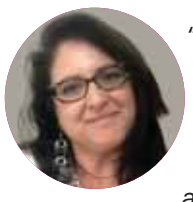
" Measure P would create another barrier to housing, including affordable homes. Menlo Park needs more opportunities for housing, local business growth, and a vibrant downtown."

Betsy Nash,
Mayor, Menlo Park



"I stand with Menlo Park residents, local businesses, and community leaders to oppose Measure P, which would inhibit investment in downtown and block affordable housing for young families, teachers, firefighters, caregivers, and emergency responders in Downtown Menlo Park."

Sam Liccardo,
U.S. Congressmember



"Now more than ever, Menlo Park needs more affordable housing, not less. Measure P undermines democratic, representative governance and blocks the construction of affordable homes and replacement parking."

Lucia Tedesco,
President, South San Mateo County League of Women Voters



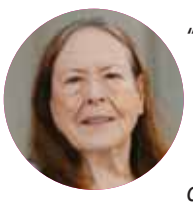
"Our firefighters deserve a chance to live in the community they protect. If Measure P passes, our firefighters, caregivers, and nurses will continue to be priced out and forced into long commutes."

Peter Carpenter,
Former President and Director,
Menlo Park Fire Protection District



"As an architect and small business owner, I've worked hard to build my business here in Menlo Park. But rising costs may force me to close my downtown office because all but one of my seven-person staff are forced to commute long distances, and the other lives in a converted garage. It's painful to think about leaving the community I'm proud to be part of."

Ana Williamson,
Small Business Owner



"I use a walker, so convenient parking and accessible routes make a real difference in my daily life. Measure P would block much-needed downtown parking and accessibility improvements and require a citywide vote for future changes."

Lynn Huidekoper,
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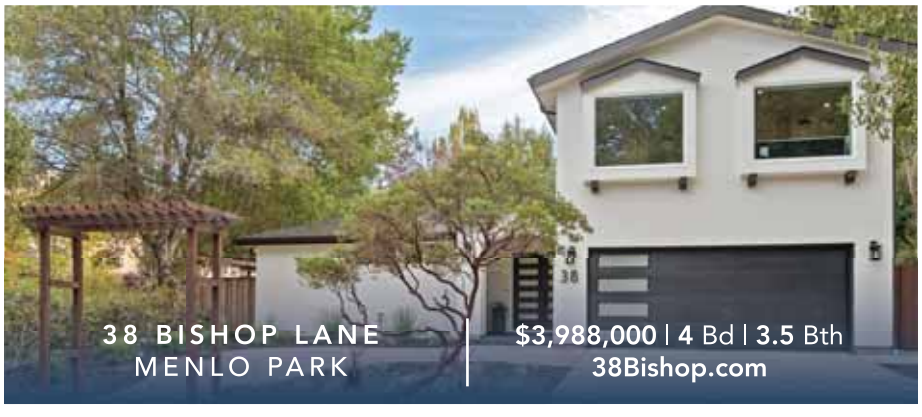














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Karl Deisseroth, Stanford's 'renaissance man,' celebrates Nobel Prize

By Hannah Bensen

The notification of Stanford University professor Karl Deisseroth's Nobel Prize came after midnight, but it didn't disrupt sandwich prep for his children the next morning.

Deisseroth was awarded the 2026 Nobel Prize in medicine or physiology for discoveries in optogenetics, a "way of understanding what cells are actually doing in the body." Deisseroth is a professor of bioengineering and of psychiatry and behavioral sciences in the schools of engineering and medicine. He obtained his MD and PhD in neuroscience from Stanford and shares the award with his colleagues Peter Hegemann from the Humboldt University of Berlin and Georg Nagel from the University of Würzburg in Germany.



Courtesy Jim Gensheimer
Karl Deisseroth

"I want to share the moment with all the people who work with me, the students and the staff and the postdocs," Deisseroth said in an Oct. 5 press conference. "I'm looking forward to celebrating by doing more scientific communication with the public. ... I'd like to share the story of how microbial proteins are helping us."

Despite the late-night news, Deisseroth was on sandwich duty Monday morning: turkey-and-salami for two of his children and almond butter-and-honey for his daughter. Deisseroth is a father of five with his wife Michelle Monje-Deisseroth, also an MD-PhD and Stanford faculty member.

"Dad, you've won all the prizes!" their 10-year-old daughter Sophie said Monday morning in reaction to the news, according to a video posted on social media by Stanford.

Deisseroth is the 37th Nobel laureate from Stanford University, and the fourth from Stanford to receive the award for physiology or medicine. The prize comes with a 12 million Swedish kroner award — roughly $1.2 million — to be split among the three researchers.

Described by Stanford School of Engineering Dean Jennifer Widom as a "renaissance man" with a love of literature and poetry, Deisseroth is a practicing psychiatrist who continues to see patients in addition to running his lab.

"This recognition is a testament to Karl's engineering mindset, his creativity, ingenuity and unwavering dedication to solving problems for the benefit of humankind," Widom said. "He's been an educator, a mentor (and) a guiding light for countless researchers worldwide."

Optogenetics helps researchers understand what the brain does for perception, cognition and action. Because the brain is a complex organ with billions of cells, it is hard to study precisely, but optogenetics uses light to make things happen and illuminate connections between different parts of the brain, Deisseroth explained. This allows researchers to map function and dysfunction in the brain.

"We can turn those on and off with millisecond precision in real time during behavior, during cognition," Deisseroth said. "We take genes from microbes and we put them into neurons, into brains, into other cells in the body, and we turn them on or off with lasers, holograms, fiber optics. It's a real confluence of engineering and medicine."

Deisseroth's colleague Hegemann is an algal biologist while Nagel studies molecular plant physiology. In the early 2000s, Hegemann and Nagel discovered a unique algal protein sensitive to blue light which Deisseroth transformed into a light-controlled switch for nerve cells. Together, the trio's interdisciplinary research "capture the full journey of discovery," he told the Stanford Report.

By understanding what causes function in the brain, optogenetics can be used in direct and indirect therapies. In one application of the former, a microbial protein can be used to treat retinitis pigmentosa, an illness that causes the retina to degenerate, causing blindness. In indirect applications, optogenetics is used to understand what cells cause a certain symptom, and to use that knowledge to design a therapy that targets those cells. Indirect optogenetics is being used to design treatments targeting autism, Parkinson's disease and schizophrenia, Deisseroth said.

Researchers are also exploring how optogenetics could be used for brain-computer interfaces, which are communication systems that allow a person to control an external device, such as a prosthesis, using brain signals. That research is farther afield, but has exciting possibilities for people with spinal cord injuries or strokes, Deisseroth said.

Optogenetics has also helped researchers understand the nature of emotions. For a century, psychologists have wondered whether emotion originates inside the brain or the body. To unravel this question, Deisseroth and his colleagues designed an optogenetics experiment that involved sticking microbial proteins in the heart of mice.

"We looked for changes in fear or anxiety responses, and we found them," he said. "It required interaction between the brain and the body for the full anxiety-like state to be manifested."

After celebrating the prize with his colleagues, Deisseroth plans to celebrate by returning to his research.

"One way to celebrate is to get right back to work," he said. ■

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



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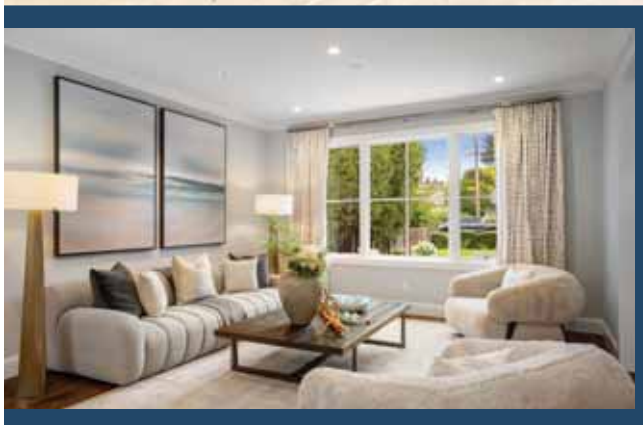
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USPS investigates theft of mail-in ballots from San Mateo County post office

By Bay City News Service

The U.S. Postal Service is investigating after vote-by-mail ballots for San Mateo County were stolen from a Daly City post office, the county's Registration & Elections Division said Thursday, Oct. 15.

The Elections Division said it was notified Oct. 14 of the mail theft that reportedly included mail-in ballots. The number of ballots that were stolen is still unknown.

The county is working with USPS to investigate.

Voters who are concerned that their ballots may have been affected by the theft may request a replacement ballot online at smcacre.gov/elections/request-replacement-ballot or in person at any vote center in the county.

Online requests for a replacement ballot must be submitted by Oct. 27 to allow sufficient time for mailing.

Voters are encouraged to look up the status of their mail-in ballots through the California Secretary of State's free ballot tracking service, "Where's My Ballot," at WheresMyBallot.sos.ca.gov. The platform notifies voters when their ballot is mailed, received, and processed by the county elections division.

There are currently three vote centers open in the county. Additional centers will open on Saturday, Oct. 24 and Saturday, Oct. 31, bringing the total to 50 vote centers. For a list of vote centers and ballot drop off locations, go to smcacre.gov/november-3-2026.

Voters with questions about their ballot status can contact the elections division at registrar@smcacre.gov or 650-312-5222.■

NASH

continued from page 10

allegations that it violated state housing law in a 65-page response letter to Bonta, which Nash said Bonta's office has yet to acknowledge. On Oct. 2, 80 Willow's developer, N17, filed a lawsuit against the city that largely drew upon Bonta's arguments.

The Palo Alto City Council also waded into the debate this week, voting unanimously in a closed session on Oct. 19 to file an amicus brief in support of Menlo Park.

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In her recent letter, Nash characterized the development as "primarily a commercial project with luxury housing," aside from 100 affordable housing units out of the 665. She also cited concerns about the development's height and referenced Liccardo's letter which urged an investigation of the property's owners and financing.

N17 developer Oisín Heneghan did not respond to a request for comment. ■

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

OAK KNOLL

continued from page 12

The school opened in 1951 as a K-8 campus with 260 students, according to previous reporting by The Almanac. Its first eighth-grade class graduated in 1958.

In 1989, Hillview Middle School opened and Oak Knoll became a kindergarten-through-fifth grade school. In 2023, the district added transitional kindergarten. Now, the campus has a total of 590 students enrolled, said Parke Treadway, Menlo Park City School District's public information officer.

At the family picnic, the hallway leading to the playground was decorated with old photos of the school, a copy of The Almanac's 50th anniversary article and yearbook photos featuring current teachers from the '90s and early 2000s.

On the grass, a rainbow arch welcomed families as a live performer sang covers of popular songs. Students were spotted running toward Ollie the Otter for hugs as they celebrated the anniversary with their friends and family.

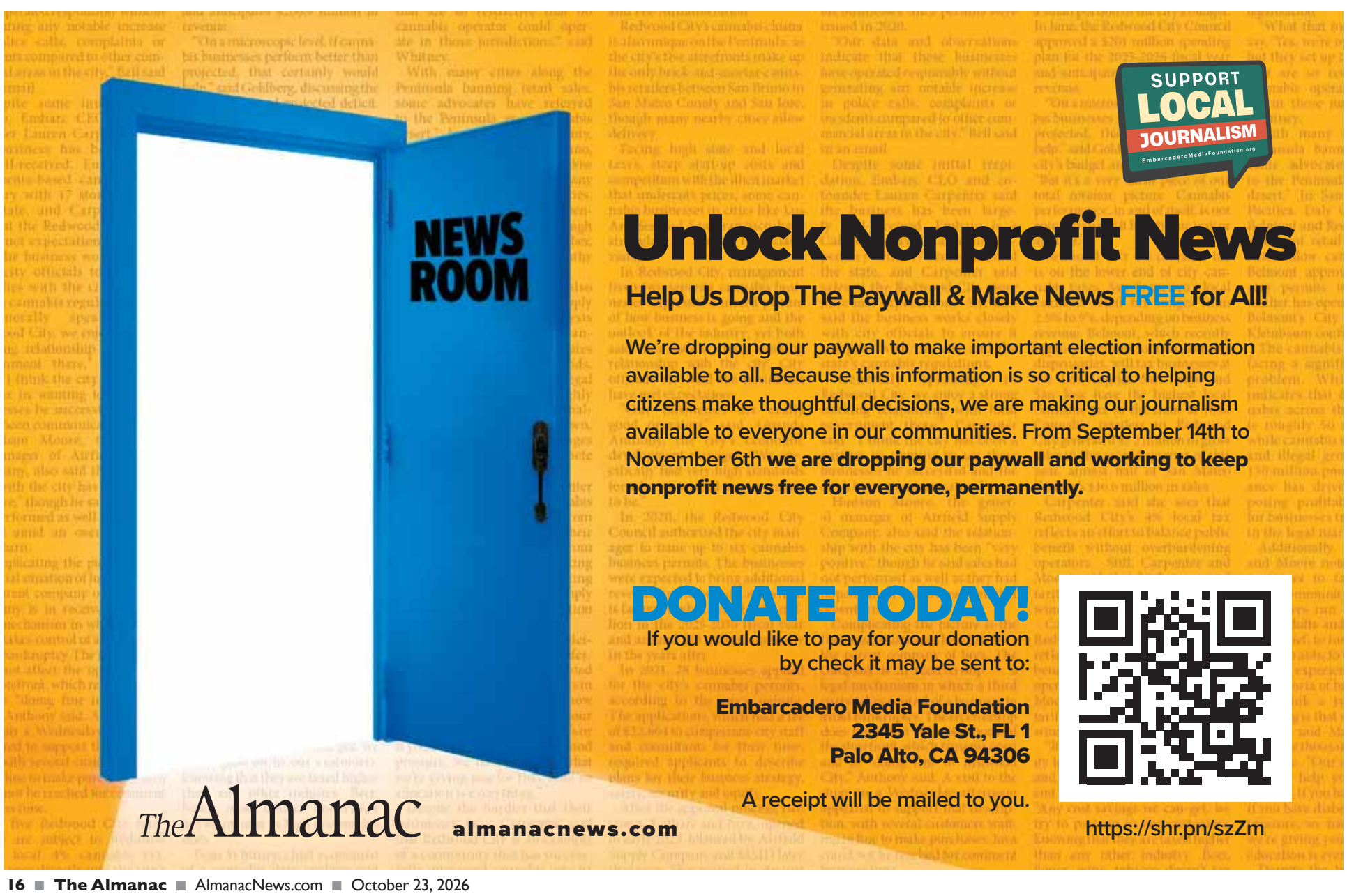
Guests also gathered around a table covered with yearbooks — the oldest copy was from 1957.

Over its history, Oak Knoll has maintained many of its school traditions and hasn't changed its campus mission for at least 25 years: "Every student an exemplary scholar, a valued friend and a courageous citizen."

"I really love this school. I think it's a combination of nostalgia ... and just the sheer teacher commitment (and) the shared values with the community," Payton-Miyazaki said. "The mission here is so strong, and it's strong at all of our (district's) schools but this one specifically resonates with me."

Decades after attending Oak Knoll, Payton-Miyazaki continues to live by the school's goal of being "a valued friend." She said even in her adulthood, she still holds some of her elementary school friendships closely. ■

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







Photos by Seeger Gray

Left: A driver sits in a cage on top of a car while crew members prepare to film a scene for "The Audacity" outside Roberts Market in Woodside on Oct. 16. Right: Crew members prepare to film a scene for "The Audacity" outside Roberts Market in Woodside.

FILMING

continued from page 1

a car through the center of the town, past Roberts Market, and yell at something. Traffic was briefly stopped as the scenes were shot. In addition to Magnussen, shooting the scene involved producers, camera operators, extras and stunt workers. In a notice to residents, the production said it staged workers at the Filoli estate to minimize impacts on residents.

At the center of the series is Park's relationship with his psychiatrist, Dr. JoAnne Felder, played by Sarah Goldberg. The cast also includes Zach Galifianakis, Lucy Punch and Simon Helberg. The show explores Silicon Valley's culture and its "jaded billionaires, psychiatrist-gurus, bio-hacked tech bros, AI labs and disillusioned teens being optimized in elite private schools," AMC said.

The eight-episode second season is scheduled to premiere on AMC and AMC+ sometime in 2027. ■

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

OPTIMISM

continued from page 7

Nearly half of respondents also reported some degree of financial insecurity, with 48% of people indicating they could not afford to pay monthly expenses and set aside income or investments for savings. Rates of financial insecurity were higher for Black residents (63%) and Hispanic/Latino residents (58%) than white (46%) or Asian (42%) residents.

In questions about family formation, a mere 56% of respondents under age 50 without kids were likely to have them. Affordability concerns and worries about the state of the world topped the list of reasons.

"When you probe, it's not because they don't like the Bay Area; they love the Bay Area," said Hancock. "[Respondents said] this is not a good place to house a family."

The poll showed negative attitudes toward tech companies and artificial intelligence. Roughly three-quarters of residents (77%) believe leading tech companies have too much power and influence, and 73% believe they have lost their moral compass. Even tech employees agree that companies have excessive power and influence (69%) and a waning moral compass (67%). Roughly four in 10 residents said that the success of Silicon Valley tech companies benefit everyone in the region.

"To me, that's a screaming headline," Hancock said. "I couldn't imagine that a generation ago."

On artificial intelligence, 47% of residents believe the technology will have a negative impact on society while 19% viewed its impact as positive; the remainder were neutral or unsure. Despite the negative slant, residents are using AI frequently: 51% are using it daily to "constantly" and an additional 14% use it multiple times per week. Still, concerns about AI extend to a wide range of issues, with at least 75% of respondents expressing some or significant concern about lagging government regulation, threats to privacy and civil liberties, career prospects, growing tech industry power, the effects on learning and teaching, job losses and economic inequality.

Nearly two-thirds of residents believe that AI is advancing "too quickly." This view is echoed by 45% of tech workers in the survey and thousands of tech employees who signed a "pace the frontier" letter in July urging the U.S. government to develop regulatory and technical tools to "buy time to address emerging risks." In an unexpected twist that rankled a technology adviser to President Donald Trump and fueled Saturday Night Live fodder, tech leaders including Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei and OpenAI CEO Sam Altman have joined the chorus of those advocating for a slowdown.

The survey also assessed key issues in the upcoming election, including the regional transit measure, which would institute a half-cent sales tax increase in several Bay Area counties and a one-cent increase in San Francisco. Forty-eight percent of respondents favored the proposal while 34% were opposed; 18% were unsure. Support was highest among Gen Z respondents (69%), Democrats (63%) and San Francisco County residents (59%). It was lowest among the Baby Boomer generation and older (40%) and Republicans (17%).

A similar partisan split was seen in support for the wealth tax, which would impose a one-time 5% wealth tax on individuals with a net worth of more than $1 billion. Overall, 63% of residents favored the tax, while 80% of Democrats and 20% of Republicans supported it.

"Folks are feeling punitive," said Hancock. "Not only is there overwhelming support for the measure, but folks feel like the measure doesn't go far enough." ■

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee' at Menlo School

Menlo Upper School Drama presents a production of "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee" from Oct. 23-25 at Spieker Performing Arts Center, 50 Valparaiso Ave. in Atherton.

The musical comedy by Rachel Sheinkin follows six young spelling bee competitors and their experiences navigating the pressures of a spelling championship and the challenges of growing up, including anxiety, puberty and finding community.

The production will be interactive, inviting volunteer audience members to join the cast as guest spellers.

Performances will take place on Friday, Oct. 23, at 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, Oct. 24, at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.; and Sunday, Oct. 25, at 2 p.m.

For tickets visit menloschool.org/tickets.

Woodside El Niño sandbagging

At the corner of Runnymede Road and Raymundo Drive, community members can fill free sandbags on Oct. 24 from 9 to 11 a.m. in preparation for the anticipated El Niño storms.

The town advises the public to bring a shovel, wear closed-toe shoes, and bring gloves. Help and instruction will be provided at the location. The town asks that drivers not block the residential driveway when arriving for the sandbagging event.

For more information visit woodsideca.gov.

—Jennifer Yoshikoshi

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Woodside, CA 94062

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

NOTICE IS HEARBY GIVEN THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE TOWN OF WOODSIDE will hold a hybrid public hearing allowing for the option to attend by teleconference/video conference or in person in Independence Hall, 2955 Woodside Road, Woodside, CA on **Wednesday, November 4, 2026, at 6:00 PM**, to consider:

675 Manzanita Way **ASRB2026-0015; XMAX2026-0006; X2DR2026-0001**

Applicant: Gary Kohlsaat, Kohlsaat & Associates Architecture

Planner: Keigo Yamamoto, Assistant Planner

Presentation and approval, conditional approval, or denial of an application for Formal Design Review (ASRB2026-0015), to demolish an existing single-family dwelling, three accessory structures, and an existing accessory dwelling unit (ADU); and, to construct a new single-family dwelling, a new detached garage, two new detached ADUs, and associated site improvements; a Maximum Residence Size Exception (XMAX2026-0006) to exceed 6,000 square feet; and, a Second Driveway Exception (X2DR2026-0001) to relocate an existing second driveway.

This application is Categorically Exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines §15303(a), construction of a new single-family dwelling, and §15303(e), construction of new accessory structures.

The application materials are available for public review by contacting Keigo Yamamoto at kyamamoto@woodsideca.gov.

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

HIGHWAY SAFETY

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Photos by Seeger Gray

Local politicians, law enforcement and Caltrans officials held a town hall meeting to address dangerous driving on Highways 35 and 84 at The Mountain Terrace in Woodside on Oct. 20.

Caltrans improvements in the works and on the way

Caltrans officials said the community's concerns about safety on highways 84 and 35 and their intersection at Four Corners in Woodside are being prioritized every day.

A hundred engineers are dedicated to this project, putting other plans on the backburner, said Amjad Naseer, acting deputy for traffic operations. During Caltrans' weekly executive staff meetings, this project is at the top of the agenda, he added.

Safety improvements to the Four Corners area have already begun. In August, Caltrans added red curbs at the intersection, enhanced the crosswalk and installed "Keep Clear" pavement markings. At the start of October, construction began to install a four-way stop, upgrade and add warning signs, install a flashing beacon at the pedestrian crossing on Highway 35 and enhance pavement striping.

Lester Lee of Caltrans also presented its immediate plans to conduct a road safety audit, begin vegetation management, replace traffic and speed limit signs, refresh striping and maintain turnouts on the highways. This will take about six months, he said.

Near-term improvements, within six to 18 months, include evaluating speed enforcement cameras, assessing speed limit reductions, adding turnout signage and installing location reference signs for emergency response. Caltrans will also assess the need for high-friction surface treatments on the pavement to prevent skidding.

Its longer-term plans are expected to take two or more years. These include installing pedestrian crossings and adding access controls at the Clouds Rest Vista Point and Sempervirens parking lot.

Some residents who are opposed to the four-way stop asked for traffic lights instead, but officials explained that the improvements being made are incremental. If findings over the next few months show that a signal is needed, Caltrans will move forward to install one, Naseer said.

"Signals themselves may not be the best solution either and also introduces maintenance issues with sustainability and power," Nguyen added.

Lee said they are hopeful that the four-way stop and increased enforcement will slow down drivers at Four Corners. He added that Caltrans plans to revisit the area early next year to conduct an engineering and traffic study to evaluate the effectiveness of current improvements.

Law enforcement efforts

According to CHP, there have been 11 fatal collisions on highways 84 and 35 over the past five years. This includes the deaths of cyclists Jakub Solovsky in July and Eric Biron in August 2025, who were both hit by cars.

On Oct. 20, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors approved a $125,000 grant for the town of Woodside to hire additional CHP officers to patrol the highways on weekends. Mueller debuted this initiative during a September Town Council meeting in response to the growing number of fatalities on the road.

"The state government doesn't work that fast, but while we get the immediate support from the county, it buys us a little time to work with our Caltrans partners to try to fund some of those longer-term solutions," said Berman.

Amid calls for more enforcement against speeding and reckless driving, CHP and Sheriff's Office leaders assured residents that they are increasing their efforts to deter motorists from zipping through winding highways and driving noisy vehicles up rural roads.

CHP officials announced they impounded a vehicle that was seen driving recklessly in an Instagram reel. After a local resident shared the video with officers, the license plate was identified and a judge approved a warrant to seize the car, said Lt. Daniel Hill.

Earlier this month, 43 citations were issued during a two-day joint traffic safety enforcement operation by CHP and the Sheriff's Office. The operation used planes and patrol vehicles to monitor traffic.

CHP issues an average of 1.5 citations a day — seven times the level of enforcement activity compared to 2025, said Capt. Patrick Etchebarne.

Residents at the meeting asked for increased enforcement late at night when cars have been spotted doing donuts and racing through the streets. Hill asked residents to share videos with time and location but encouraged the public to call 911 if they witness an active race.

While law enforcement agencies are doing their best to address the issues, "lives may still be lost," but efforts to hold those responsible for the deaths of others are taken seriously, said Hill.

"We want the community to understand that we are and we will pursue charges for those that decide to do this reckless and dangerous driving, and work with the district attorney's office to make sure that they are held to answer for that crime," he added.

'Speed cameras are a long term solution'

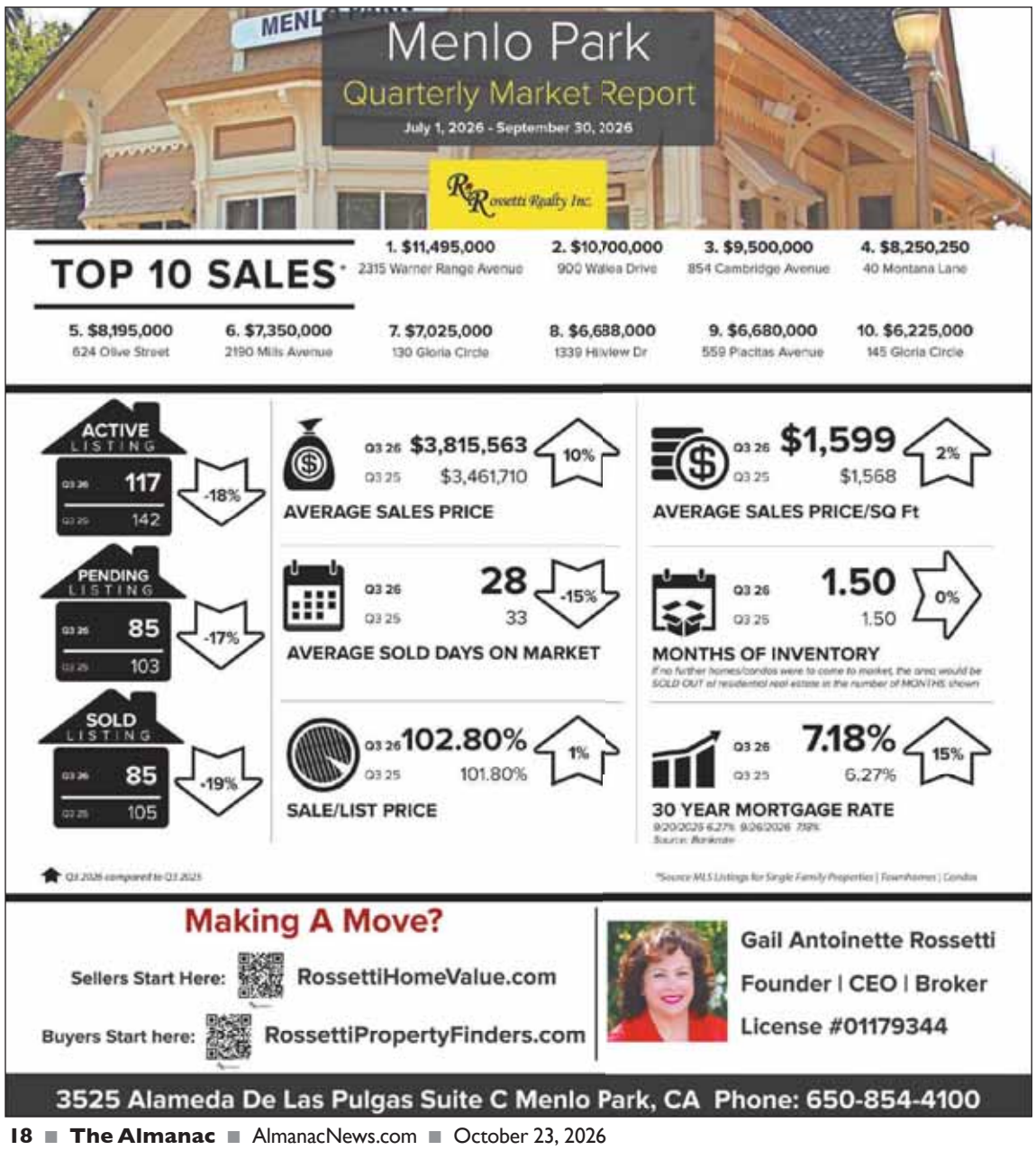
Several California cities, including San Francisco, Oakland, San Jose and Long Beach, are currently participating in a five-year speed camera pilot program. A number of residents on highways 84 and 35 said they want the same.

Berman told The Almanac that based on observing how other cities launched speed cameras, the process from approval to installation can take three to four years before cameras go online.

It has to get approved by the state Legislature, local jurisdictions have to fund the cameras and there has to be an evaluation through a road safety audit, he said.

"It's complicated. It's a bit of a longer-term solution — one that I want to look at very closely but that also requires my colleagues supporting that idea and getting legislation passed in Sacramento," said Berman during the town hall. ■

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



DOWNTOWN

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a smaller community gathering area in the parking spaces. Councilmember Drew Combs recommended piloting the configuration for six months to a year to collect data on how the community responds to the hybrid configuration and compare that to the block's current, larger plaza space and to the block's pre-COVID arrangement with both traffic lanes open.

"What I'm proposing is something that punts this to a new council in a year, but at that point they will have additional data points about how (this option) looks in practice," Combs said at the meeting.

Most members of the council previously supported building a permanent public plaza on the block, citing its frequent use by teenagers after school and its potential for staging large community events. A few public speakers highlighted these benefits, especially the success of Fourth Fridays, a free event that brings live music downtown, which launched in August and is organized by the nonprofit Downtown Menlo Fund.

Marnie Foody, the nonprofit's chair, said at the meeting that they've heard the event was a success from downtown business owners who saw their sales jump during Fourth Fridays, but getting rid of the plaza would limit their ability to continue hosting the event.

"We are seeing literally hundreds of people coming not just from Menlo Park, but from the surrounding area, to our downtown," Foody said. "We had hoped to build our series to a full schedule of events in 2027."

Although there was broad support for the concept of a community gathering space, Mayor Betsy Nash said she had done a "complete 180" on the current plans over the past month. Nash said she's frequently seen trash and blight pile up around the plaza, negating its purpose by making it less inviting.

She added that the plaza cutting off traffic on Santa Cruz Avenue might obstruct the necessary construction work on other developments near downtown. A Menlo Park developer plans to build a six-story residential building at 800 Oak Grove Ave., and the council is trying to get housing built on three downtown parking lots.

"I'd actually love to see a plaza expanded at some point and generally a larger pedestrian area downtown, I just think right now is not the time," Nash said.

Councilmember Jeff Schmidt was the outlying dissenter, who said he supported moving forward with plans to make the plaza permanent. He said he wants a public plaza for residents to use and worried that the pilot would destabilize an already "concrete proposal."

"We've done all this work, we've sunk some cost into this thing, and we're a year away," Schmidt said. "It's almost like dropping the ball at the 10-yard line before you score a goal."

City staff said they've already spent about $61,000 on furniture and $30,000 on hiring a consultant to design the permanent plaza, leaving about $250,000 for the project. Economic Development Director Collette Hanna said construction on the permanent plaza with the current plans was estimated to have been completed by the end of 2027.

It's unclear how long it'll take for the city to pivot to a smaller community space and an open eastbound vehicle lane, but City Manager Justin Murphy said the next step will be for the city council to vote on reopening the vehicle lane in a future meeting. ■

Email Staff Writer B. Sakura Cannestra at scannestra@almanacnews.com.

FRAUD

continued from page 5

as duplicitous and reprehensible but said she opposed jail time because of Blanchard's age.

"For that large of a theft, she got an enormous break by not going to prison," Wagstaffe said.

He said he believed Blanchard's age may have influenced the sentence but should not have carried as much weight.

"She's only five years older than I am," Wagstaffe said. "I would expect I'd be going to prison if I embezzled that much."

In response to a California Public Records Act request from this news organization, the Sheriff's Office also would not release records concerning Blanchard's participation in an alternative sentencing program.

Records manager Jennifer Prado said the office withholds such records to protect participants and jail staff. She cited the Public Records Act's public-interest exemption, which permits agencies to withhold records when the public interest in nondisclosure clearly outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

"The California Supreme Court has been very clear that vague and generic safety concerns are not enough to justify the agency withholding records under the Public Records Act," said David Loy, legal director of the First Amendment Coalition. "It's very difficult to see how the sheriff could carry their burden of proof to justify withholding records."

Loy said an agency might have a stronger argument in a case involving someone like a former member of a drug cartel who had cooperated with prosecutors.

"This is not that kind of case," Loy said. "There is no ostensible, obvious reason there would be a threat to the safety of someone who pleaded (no contest) to financial crimes, white-collar crimes."

Wagstaffe said Blanchard would not be the first person convicted of financial crimes to avoid jail. He said he was surprised to learn that former San Carlos Mayor Mike King, who was convicted of fraud in 2006, served his sentence in an alternative program. Wagstaffe said he learned of King's participation only because he saw him volunteering at a nonprofit as part of his sentence. ■

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

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2026
ELECTION
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The Almanac
NONPROFIT LOCAL NEWS FOR THE MIDPENINSULA

Capturing human connection

Photo contest winners embrace life's colorful moments

By The Six Fifty staff

Human connection was a major theme in this year's batch of Peninsula Photo Contest winning entries.

Best in Show shot "Compassion" captures a romantic moment between a young couple on a Southern California pier. Portraits winner "Embrace" shows a daughter's arm looped around her father's head, her dad resting his chin in her hand. And in "A Mother's Love," which won honorable mention in the moments category, we see a mother in Oaxaca about to take her young son's hand.

We live vicariously through the colorful photos capturing scenes from far-flung destinations: a market alleyway in Morocco, a chameleon in Madagascar, a Carnaval celebration in Mexico. And we find moments for introspection in local black-and-white scenes, from the view of a woman's Palo Alto hospital bed to the shot of a young protester with an American flag painted on his chest.

Some images are a study of contrasts. Landscapes winner "The Space Between" captures tall electrical towers set against the low-lying Baylands, showing "how human-made structures reshape the natural environment we're meant to preserve and protect," according to photographer Claire Rao. "Flowerbath" combines photography with paint and a chemical treatment to bring violet flowers to a somber portrait, "adding a delicate but striking contrast to the scene," judge Donna J. Wan wrote.

These are among the the 12 winning shots and 12 honorable mentions from photographers who live, work or attend school in the 650 area code. All the winning entries are on exhibit Oct. 23-Dec. 13 at the Palo Alto Art Center, 1313 Newell Road. ■

Moments

Adult winner:

"Compassion"
(BEST IN SHOW)

Teri Vershel



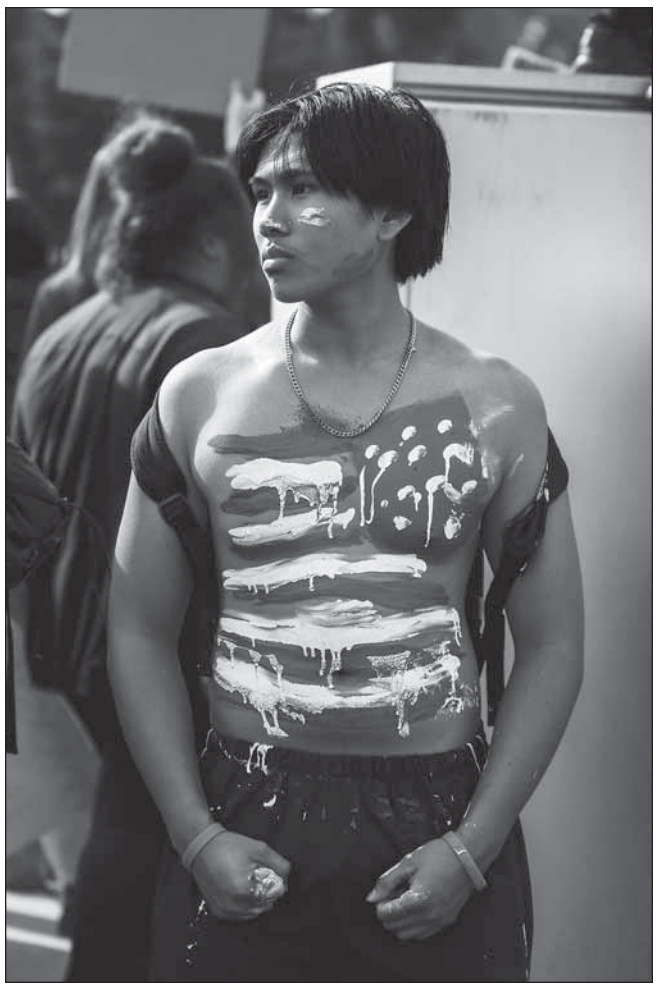
"I drove to Santa Monica for a luncheon at the Los Angeles Center for Photography (LACP) honoring Sam Abell, a master photographer and fabulous teacher. It is only fitting that this photo was made using a technique he taught me that he calls 'compose and wait.' I had composed my photo at the end of the pier and was waiting around hoping something interesting might happen. This couple walked right into my photograph without even noticing me."

— Teri Vershel, photographer



"This photo checks so many boxes of what it takes to be a truly excellent example of photographic art. The point of focus is enhanced by the contrast of colors, the selective focus on the subjects, the light illuminating the subject, and the strong leading lines provided by the railings. All of this leads our eyes to the "moment" and the emotion of it. The time: late afternoon. The sense of place: the ocean and the pier. The mood and ambiance: light and sky. The activity: In this image, the fisherman in contrast with the quiet, romantic gestures of the subjects, it all adds up to 'Best in Show.'"

— Neal Menschel, judge



Youth winner:

"I am American"

Dashel Chun



"The photo was taken quickly and instinctively as students streamed out of their classrooms and onto El Camino Real. This was pretty much my first time photographing a protest and it was my favorite photo from the day because of its symbolism and emotion."

— Dashel Chun, photographer

"The details make this photo, like the messy but recognizable flag and the bit of paint on the student's fist. The background shows us just enough to set the scene of the protest without being distracting."

— Seeger Gray, judge

PORTRAITS



Adult winner:
"Embrace"

Joanna Koziara



"Children begin life placing their whole trust in their parents. With time, somehow, the roles quietly reverse: The parent learns to lean on the child. In this image, a father and his daughter share that beautiful circle of love and trust: arm embracing, head resting and a bond that needs no words. Image was created for a personal project."

— Joanna Koziara, photographer

"We were drawn to this portrait because it's unlike any of the other submissions. The simplicity of the background and lack of color leaves nothing to distract from the connection of the head and arm."

— Seeger Gray, judge

Youth winner: "Flowerbath"

Archer Sherry



"This photo was a part of a larger portfolio focusing on the weight of being a teenage girl through themes like femininity, body image, self-perception and concealment. I took this photo in a bathtub and, once printed, used flower printing to represent inner balance and growth."

— Archer Sherry, photographer



"This is an interesting, layered portrait that combines photography with paint and what appears to be a chemical treatment, creating a textured and altered surface. The girl appears contemplative, resting her head on her knees in a bathtub behind the curtain, giving the image a quiet, somber quality. This mood is unexpectedly interrupted by the painted violet flowers on the wall, adding a delicate but striking contrast to the scene."

— Donna J. Wan, judge

WILDLIFE



Adult winner:
"Panther Chameleon Makes a Long Catch"

Shubha Tuljapurkar



"Madagascar is home to numerous species of exotic chameleons, but this one stole the show by shooting its incredibly long tongue at lightning speed to grab a grasshopper for lunch! The tip of the tongue has a fleshy, mucus-covered suction cup structure to hold the prey before the tongue retracts to eat."

— Shubha Tuljapurkar, photographer

"Good light, excellent framing, rich colors: check, check, check! The patience and sense of timing to capture this possibly unpredictable moment is to be lauded! This moment of predator and prey sets it apart from all the images we see of sea otters floating on their backs, birds sitting on a limb, colorful butterflies on a leaf, and so on. Wildlife, dynamic and active in their natural settings, as this image does, sets the higher bar."

— Neal Menschel, judge



Youth winner:
"California Mountain Kingsnake (Lampropeltis zonata)"

Tobias "Toby" Lobell



"California Mountain Kingsnake found in habitat in the coastal mountain range."

— Tobias "Toby" Lobell, photographer

"Out of many beautiful wildlife photos, this one made the best use of the animal's environment. The color of the snake pops out of the background and the light draws our attention without appearing too artificial."

— Seeger Gray, judge

LANDSCAPES





Adult winner:

"The Shape of Waiting"

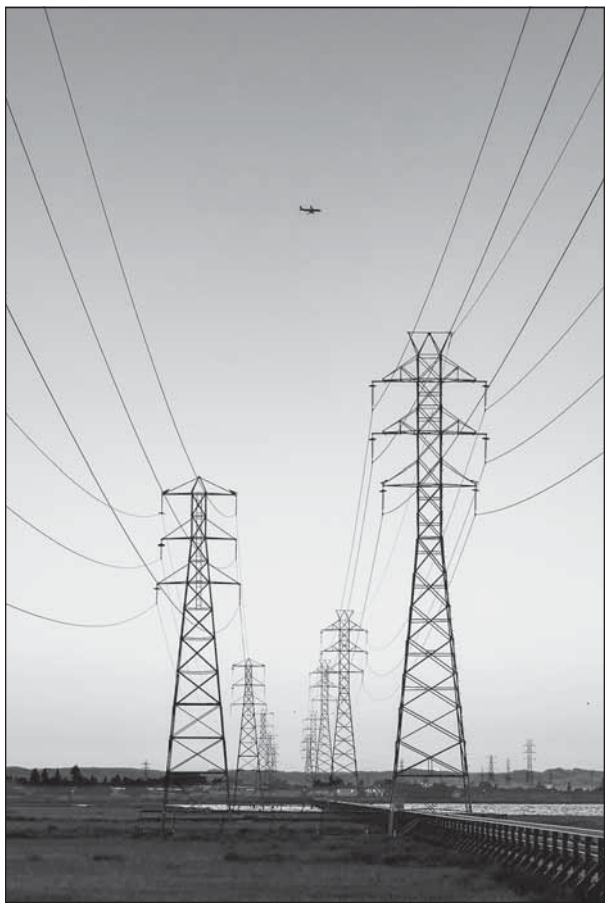
Gloria Lee

"Taken from my hospital room during one of many recent stays, 'The Shape of Waiting' reflects my longing to trade the hospital bed for the mountains beyond the window. The folds of the bedding began to resemble a landscape of their own, blurring the distance between where I was and where I wanted to be."

— Gloria Lee, photographer

"This photo presents an atypical landscape where the mounds and folds of the bedspread echo the shapes of the mountain range beyond the window. The creative perspective of looking outward from an interior space creates an interesting connection between the domestic and natural landscapes. The beautiful lighting enhances this relationship, giving the image a soft, dreamlike and contemplative quality."

— Donna J. Wan, judge





Youth winner:

"The Space Between"

Claire Rao

"I was interested in capturing how human-made structures reshape the natural environment we're meant to preserve and protect. The rigidity and repetition of the structure emphasize the scale and reinforce the widespread impact of human encroachment."

— Claire Rao, photographer

"This industrial landscape photo has a strong composition, with the electrical cables creating leading lines that draw the viewer's eye from the pylons toward the airplane in the center. The lighting emphasizes the structures and adds depth to the scene. The repeating pylons create a sense of infinity, drawing the viewer into the landscape and creating a captivating relationship between the industrial structures and the open sky."

— Donna J. Wan, judge

ABSTRACT



Adult winner:

"After the Party"

Chris Stevens-Yu



"A person in a large hat is leaving the festival after the town's Carnaval festivities. Using a slow shutter speed resulted in the appearance of a blanket of light wrapping around the figure."

— Chris Stevens-Yu, photographer

"Color, movement, composition and mystery all define this photograph. The person in the image is possibly part of a celebration or pageant, and the combination of colors and motion coalesce, eliciting a feeling of joy and cheerful emotion."

— Neal Menschel, judge



Youth winner:

"Self Reflection"



Lev Bicer

"'Self Reflection' explores the differences between how we perceive ourselves and how others see us through reflections, disturbances and a ghostly out-of-body feeling. This image was taken as a 30-second exposure, using a flashlight behind the subject to add the wings."

— Lev Bicer, photographer

"Light painting — thinking out of the box and experimentation is basic to creating original images. This image is a good example of both. Starting with the concept of doing a portrait of an individual with the combination of natural light, flash and then painting with a light source to create the bright patterns, drawing the observer's eye to the subject.

The reflection in the pool is the 'out of the box' part. Painting with light in combination with the other lighting elements often involves a bit of trial and error. That is the experimental part. All combined, creating a terrific piece of original art."

— Neal Menschel, judge

TRAVEL





Adult winner:

"Beneath the Surface"

Chris Stevens-Yu

"Taken during one of the Carnaval celebrations in Oaxaca City this past February, a group of boys take a break from the parade while their monos de calenda above them have a life of their own."

— Chris Stevens-Yu, photographer

"The contrast between the local trappings of Carnaval and the children's mundane expressions makes this my favorite travel photo. Every detail within the frame adds to the story."

— Seeger Gray, judge



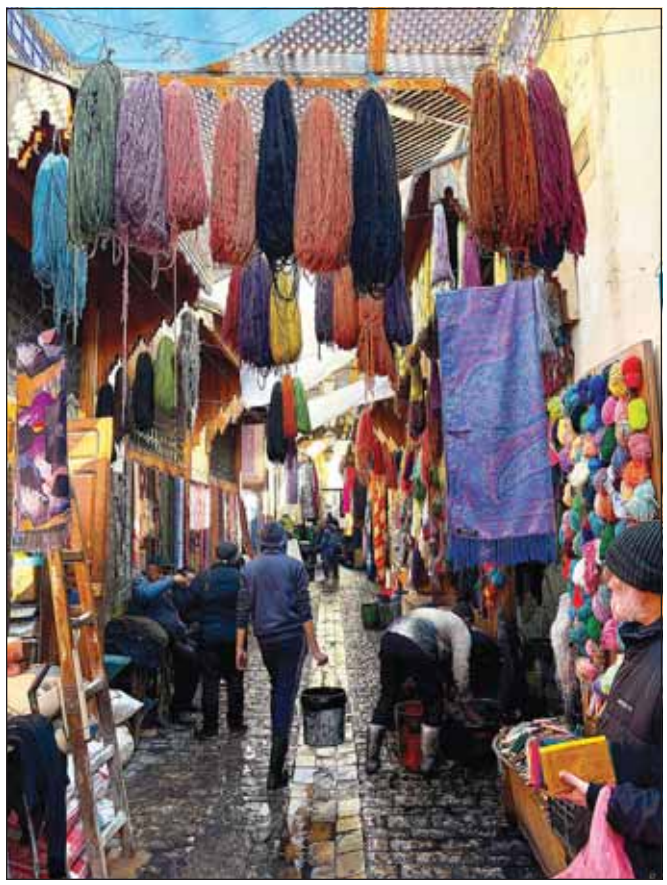
Youth winner:

"Hanging Wool in Fez"

Sianna Walia

"I captured this photo in the medina of Fez, where dyed wool is hung throughout the alleyways for customers to see. A worker carrying a bucket of dye through the market offers a glimpse into the daily life behind the colorful displays."

— Sianna Walia, photographer



"This is an intriguing photograph that leaves the location uncertain, while surrounding the viewer with vibrant colors, yarn and textiles. The man walking away from the viewer creates a sense of mystery, especially as we cannot see what he is carrying in the bucket. This ambiguity invites the viewer to imagine the story behind the scene and wonder about the place, the person and his destination."

— Donna J. Wan, judge

Honorable mentions

ADULT

Landscapes: "Rain of Fire," Amartya Mitra
Portraits: "Cinder Ella," Suszi McFadden
Wildlife: "Giraffe Neck Weevil," Steven Shpall
Moments: "A Mother's Love," Chris Stevens-Yu
Abstract: "Pacific," Nathan Hechtman
Travel: "Summer Evening on the Silk Road," William Newsome

YOUTH

Landscapes: "The Lone Tree," Kabir Dhand-Kalluri
Portraits: "Balloon Man," Archer Sherry
Wildlife: "Stillness," Alex Grady
Moments: "Passing Ghosts," Kabir Dhand-Kalluri
Abstract: "Bright Eyed Boy," Archer Sherry
Travel: "Road to Church," Isabelle Chen

SEE MORE ONLINE

All of the winning photos, plus additional ones chosen for exhibition, have been posted at almanacnews.com/the-650-explore-the-peninsula.

Peninsula Photo Contest Judges

Neal Menschel

Covering third-world politics, development and environmental issues, Neal Menschel has photographed seven U.S. presidents and numerous world leaders. He served as a staff photographer for the Anchorage Daily News and director of photography for the Christian Science Monitor. He also freelanced for The New York Times, Newsweek, MIT, Tufts, People, Geo, Front Line, Yankee, corporate clients and other publications. Additionally, Menschel instructed documentary photography at Boston University, directed photography for the Salt Institute for Documentary Studies and taught at Stanford University.

Donna J. Wan

Donna J. Wan is a fine-art photographer living in the Bay Area. She earned her BA and MBA from Stanford University and MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute. Her work has been exhibited internationally including at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Museum of Photographic Arts; New Mexico Museum of Art; and Museum of Sepulchral Culture, Germany. Awards include Critical Mass Top 50, The CENTER Project Launch and Gallerist's Choice, Lucie Foundation/APA Scholarship and the Kolga International Award. Her work has been featured in The New York Times Style Magazine, Wired.com, PDN, Feature Shoot and the San Francisco Chronicle. She has also lectured at UCLA and UC Berkeley. She is represented by Rick Wester Fine Art in New York.

Seeger Gray

Seeger Gray is the staff visual journalist at Embarcadero Media Foundation, where he photographs news and life around the Midpeninsula. Previously, he completed photojournalism internships at the Wall Street Journal, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Atlanta Journal-Constitution and Green Bay Press-Gazette. In 2025, he attended the Missouri Photo Workshop and the Eddie Adams workshop. Seeger grew up in Madison, Wisconsin, and studied journalism at Northwestern University.

Peninsula Photo Contest Acknowledgements

The Peninsula Photo Contest is hosted by the Palo Alto Weekly, Palo Alto Online and The Six Fifty. Thank you to our Peninsula Photo Contest partner, Palo Alto Art Center, and to the judges, without whom this contest would not be possible.

The Best in Show winner was awarded $500; adult winners were awarded $200 each; and youth winners were awarded $100 each. First-place winners received memberships at the Palo Alto Art Center.

Viewpoint

IDEAS, THOUGHTS AND OPINIONS ABOUT LOCAL ISSUES

We aren't gambling with El Niño this winter, and neither should you

By Ray Mueller

GUEST OPINION

On Oct. 20, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors proclaimed a local emergency for the coming El Niño season. Please don't be alarmed, yet. No storm is bearing down on us today. What we have instead is something emergency managers rarely get: time, and a strong signal about the winter ahead. We're choosing to respond to both.

Here's the frank truth about this winter. We've spent months working with weather and climate experts up and down the West Coast, and we'll keep working with them all season. None of them can tell us exactly what this El Niño will bring to San Mateo County. It could deliver the steady rain that refills our reservoirs and aquifers and carries us through the dry years that always return. That's the winter we're hoping for. It could also bring storms that arrive faster than our hillsides, creeks and shoreline can absorb them.

When the range of outcomes is that wide, we don't plan for the middle. That's the work of emergency management: We prepare for the worst so all of us can take smart, practical steps now. We aren't willing to gamble with your safety, your family's safety, or your neighbor's.

The proclamation is how we organize for that. It tells every county department, every city and every partner agency that this season requires us to plan and prepare differently. It also establishes an El Niño Readiness Taskforce led by Dr. Shruti Dhapodkar, director of San Mateo County Emergency Management. The taskforce brings our departments together with cities and partner agencies so readiness is coordinated across the whole county rather than handled one office at a time.

This is about readiness. We're asking every department to work as one county, so that when residents need us, we're already in position. If we get this right, people will remember this winter as hard weather they got through, not a crisis that upended their lives.

Some things we can say with confidence. Our highest tides of the year, known as king tides, arrive around Nov. 24 to 26, Dec. 22 to 25 and Jan. 20 to 23. Those windows overlap with Thanksgiving, Christmas and the start of the new school semester, when many of us travel and welcome family and visitors to the county. A strong storm landing on top of a king tide is the scenario we're planning around. So as you make holiday plans, build in a backup. Know which days carry higher risk, watch the forecast, and be willing to be flexible so you aren't on the roads when conditions turn.

While this is unusual, if you are person with access and functional needs, or a senior living in the unincorporated San Mateo Coastside, if you are considering traveling to visit loved ones this holiday season, it may be a good time to do so. If a winter storm hits during the king tides, we may see powerful waves and ocean levels not previously recorded in San Mateo County that could adversely impact Highway 1 travel routes. We are doing everything we can to prepare for these scenarios, but feel it's incumbent to share the information so you can prepare as well.

We also know power and connectivity may be disrupted at points this winter. Phones run down, cell towers lose power, and the internet you count on for news may not be there when you want it most. Plan as though your household will need to manage a few days without either.

Here's what we're asking of everyone this week. Sign up for SMC Alert at smcalert.org so official warnings can reach you directly.

This is the beginning of hearing from us, not the end. Over the coming weeks the county will share guidance on preparing yourself, your home, your family and your community. You'll hear it through our partners in law enforcement, fire and EMS, from city managers, city councils and your elected officials, and on the county website under "Emergency Services." Those resources are there so you can feel confident heading into whatever comes next.

Preparedness doesn't only happen in an emergency operations center. It happens in kitchens and garages, in break rooms and classrooms, on the block where you live. If each of us uses this window well, the best version of this winter is within reach: enough rain to sustain us, and a county ready for anything more. ■

Ray Mueller is vice president of the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors and chair of the San Mateo County Emergency Services Council.

Highways 84 and 35: It's time to stop mourning cyclists and start protecting them

By Kevin Rennie

GUEST OPINION

The asphalt ribbons of Highways 84 and 35 are prized for their sweeping curves and breathtaking vistas of the Santa Cruz Mountains. But for those on two wheels, these roads have become corridors of tragedy. The deaths of Eric Biron at Four Corners and Jakub Solovsky on Highway 35 are not isolated accidents; they reflect a systemic failure to prioritize human life over vehicular speed.

For too long, the approach to bicycle safety on these highways has been one of passive suggestion —a few painted lines, warning signs, or appeals to share the road. But paint is not protection. When a cyclist shares a narrow, twisting road with pickup trucks and high-performance sports cars, the margin for error is dangerously small. A driver's momentary miscalculation or reckless decision should not be a death sentence.

The solution requires more than additional signs and appeals for caution. It requires meaningful investment in safer infrastructure, effective speed enforcement and alternative routes that allow cyclists to avoid dangerous highways altogether.

We must move beyond the traditional "shared road" philosophy and prioritize Class I or Class IV bicycle infrastructure wherever feasible. Class I paths —completely separated multi-use trails —would eliminate direct conflicts between cyclists and motorists. Where separate paths/trails are not feasible due to geography, protected bike lanes —physically separated from vehicle traffic by barriers such as concrete curbs or posts —can provide an important additional layer of safety for people riding bicycles. In more constrained areas, roadway redesign, safer intersections and measures to reduce vehicle speeds must become priorities.

Equally important, we need automated speed safety cameras along these corridors. Excessive speed dramatically increases the severity of collisions, yet traditional enforcement on remote mountain highways is intermittent at best. Speed safety cameras can provide consistent enforcement and deter drivers who treat these public roads as private racetracks. California must expand authorization for automated speed enforcement to high-risk mountain highways, allowing this technology to be deployed where it is most needed.

We must also create a meaningful network of alternative bicycle routes through the mountains. Existing roads, parklands and open space offer opportunities to provide safer connections without requiring cyclists to share every mile with high-speed vehicles. Bear Gulch Road and Star Hill Road deserve evaluation for bicycle through-access, while Huddart Park, Wunderlich Park and La Honda Creek Open Space Preserve offer opportunities to develop or connect appropriate multi-use routes. The proposed Bay to Sea Trail should be accelerated with an explicit commitment to continuous bicycle connectivity. These routes should be evaluated in partnership with landowners and park agencies, with appropriate environmental protections, but access restrictions and disconnected trail networks should not be accepted as permanent barriers without exploring solutions.

A connected network of alternative routes would not only provide recreational opportunities; it would give cyclists meaningful choices about how to cross the mountains. We should not force people onto dangerous highways simply because safer potential connections remain closed, fragmented, or undeveloped.

Critics will cite cost, difficult terrain, environmental considerations and competing transportation priorities. These are legitimate challenges, but they cannot become excuses for continued inaction. We routinely invest substantial public resources to accommodate motor vehicles. We must demonstrate an equally serious commitment to protecting the lives of people traveling by bicycle.

Caltrans, San Mateo County, state legislators and regional park and open-space agencies must work together on a comprehensive safety plan for Highways 84 and 35. This must include dedicated funding for protected bicycle infrastructure, state authorization for automated speed safety cameras, meaningful speed reduction measures, and a coordinated plan to open and connect alternative bicycle routes through the Santa Cruz Mountains.

The deaths of Eric Biron and Jakub Solovsky should serve as a final wake-up call. We cannot continue to treat cyclist fatalities as an inevitable cost of mountain riding. These roads and mountains belong to everyone, not just those behind the wheel. ■

Kevin Rennie is a Menlo Park resident and member of the Menlo Park Complete Streets Commission who is writing as a private citizen.

What are the keys to revitalizing downtown Menlo Park?

By Marnie Foody

Vacant storefronts, aging buildings, and broken street infrastructure shouldn't define downtown Menlo Park. We live in an innovative, world-class community —and our Santa Cruz Avenue commercial core ought to reflect that same vitality, quality and pride. It's time for a downtown that lives up to the community it serves.

See **REVITALIZE,** *page 25*

Who stands to benefit from Measure P?

By Bob Dickinson

GUEST OPINION

The proponents of Measure P profess to be trying to "save" downtown Menlo Park. The question is for whom. It seems unlikely the answer is for the residents of Menlo Park, although the backers of Measure P would have voters believe otherwise.

If we had the vibrant downtown today that people would like to see, we would be having a far different discussion. Unfortunately, the reality is less pleasant. There is a 17% vacancy rate, which is much higher than is the case in neighboring cities. There is a Design District, consisting of stores that one only visits when undertaking a project of some sort, rather than stores that people frequent regularly.

Stores that had been located downtown for years and were frequented on a regular basis have closed or moved as rents have escalated. The new occupants of those spaces are all too often so high-end that they are out of reach of many Menlo Park residents, although perhaps not those of neighboring communities such as Atherton and Woodside.

As is often the case, the real answer can be found by following the money supporting Measure P, which quickly leads to Mickles Enterprises, a Petaluma-based property management firm that is one of the major donors. The downtown landlords and some of the merchants are apparently doing just fine and don't want anyone rocking the boat. They may prefer to continue drawing more affluent buyers rather than welcoming new residents, and potential customers, of more modest means.

While some of the backers claim that their support is due to nostalgia for downtown as it was in the past, that past is long gone and Measure P won't bring it back. It will simply lock in the status quo.

If we truly want a more vibrant downtown that the residents of Menlo Park can enjoy, Measure P is not only not the solution, it is a difficult-to-reverse step in the wrong direction that is likely to lead to protracted litigation, more "builders remedy" projects like the 80 Willow Road development and fewer city services for residents as the city struggles to cope with its financial consequences. ■

Bob Dickinson is former tech CEO and has consulted on climate impacts and adaptation since 2011. He and his wife Sylvia have lived in Menlo Park since 1983.

Why this renter is voting for Measure P

By Shannon Fischer

GUEST OPINION

As a local public school worker, a renter who loves Menlo Park, and someone who supports more affordable housing, I am voting Yes on Measure P, and I want to share why.

Measure P has one major goal: to put decisions about our city's public downtown parking lots in the hands of voters. It is not a measure for or against affordable housing. It is about the right of the people who live in and love Menlo Park to decide what happens to our downtown.

The push to remove downtown parking has been driven by the City Council, which was prepared to move forward on Nov.19, 2024. I have followed this issue closely since then. Back in 2024, the city pushed ahead with its plan to use our downtown parking lots for housing despite community objections from residents and business owners, and I'm grateful that a citizens' initiative put Measure P on the ballot so voters can decide.

Our small businesses are worried. These are the owners whose livelihoods will be directly affected, in both the short and long term.

Access matters

As people age, or as life happens, easy access to local businesses matters more and more. Shoppers would have to use a multi-level garage with still-limited parking. And the financing isn't there. A city-commissioned analysis presented in September found funding gaps of roughly $19 million to $45 million across the three developer proposals, with replacement parking alone estimated at $30 million to $54 million! It doesn't work!

Parking and traffic congestion are already a challenge. The proposed 450-plus units will bring more cars downtown and onto major streets like Santa Cruz, Valparaiso and Ravenswood avenues, which are already congested. Furthermore, none of the developer proposals include one guaranteed parking space for each residential unit. These new residents will have to rely on public parking, the same spaces the rest of us depend on to reach downtown shops and services. Living near the train station doesn't mean people won't own cars. Then where do shoppers park?

We also have no plan yet for which schools will absorb more children or how our first responders will serve a denser downtown.

'But it will revive downtown'

A housing project is not a revival plan. I recently learned that a prime cause of the vacancies was that the city was insisting that only retail and restaurants be allowed on Santa Cruz Avenue —no fitness, health or community services. Fortunately, the zoning was loosened a few months ago, and I've heard that lots of new businesses are getting ready to move in. New businesses will bring more people —people who will need to park. Downtown Menlo Fund is working to bring vibrance to downtown with scheduled events like Fourth Fridays.

GUEST OPINION

This can't be undone

Once this public land is handed over to developers, we don't get it back.

There are alternatives

Opponents claim no alternatives exist. That is not true, and Measure P gives us time to develop them. City Council candidate Laura Melahn has proposed an amended Housing Element that meets our housing goals without hurting downtown businesses or changing the character of our community.

Why this matters to me

Yes, I am a full-time renter. Yes, I work in our local schools. I care about this because I love Menlo Park: our tree-lined streets, our quaint downtown without big-box stores, the friendly small-town feel, and neighbors who look out for each other.

When a decision will permanently change the face of Menlo Park, voters should have the final say. Measure P is not anti-housing. It is pro-Menlo Park, pro-small business, and pro-living in a city with an accessible, safe downtown.

On November 3, let's stand up for democracy, save downtown Menlo Park and then come together as a city to choose viable solutions for housing. I'm voting Yes on P. ■

Shannon Fischer works as a substitute para-education aide in public schools and is an eight-year resident of Menlo Park.

REVITALIZE

continued from page 24

A prevalent argument among local housing advocates and municipal officials is that residential development is the singular catalyst for revitalizing our downtown. However, Santa Cruz Avenue has long been adjacent to established residential neighborhoods without seeing this effect. While mixed-use downtown housing —specifically situated above ground-floor retail — makes sense, high-rise apartment blocks won't magically create vibrant streets or thriving retail.

True revitalization requires targeted action: local leadership, streetscape beautification, modern retail policies, vibrant community events and convenient parking access. Eighteen months ago, a group of dedicated residents formed the Downtown Menlo Fund to turn a vision into reality. To build a thriving downtown, we must focus on five pillars:

Proactive leadership

For years, the city has underfunded Santa Cruz Avenue, causing its demise. To change course, we need a City Council that prioritizes downtown investment, collaborates with property owners and businesses, and adopts business-friendly building policies. By leveraging tools like vacancy taxes, business improvement districts, and public-private partnerships with groups to help fund capital projects, the city can drive real progress.

Access to parking

Convenient and accessible parking is essential for thriving local retail. Downtown Menlo is already severely lacking in parking spaces, discouraging new businesses from opening. To protect our downtown, we must preserve every existing space and proactively expand our parking supply. With over 200 small businesses operating on paper-thin margins, major disruptions, like prolonged construction without dedicated parking mitigations, could trigger widespread closures that would take years to recover from. Protecting accessible, convenient parking for shoppers and diners must be a top priority of our leadership.

GUEST OPINION

Streetscape beautification

Our downtown streetscape is severely underfunded and deteriorating. Dead planters, broken irrigation, outdated street furniture, and non-functioning streetlights project a town in decline. Worse, the high cost of maintaining obsolete equipment has driven the city to make shortsighted cuts —like canceling decorative lighting contracts and leaving our streets in the dark. Please join the Downtown Menlo Fund in pressing for immediate maintenance and modern upgrades to restore a safe and welcoming downtown.

Downtown beautification should start with a top-tier design for the new 600-block plaza — establishing a high benchmark for all future projects. The city's financial shortfalls shouldn't hold us back; community-funded initiatives, such as commemorative brick and street bench programs, can bridge the gap. The Downtown Menlo Fund stands ready to partner with both the city and residents to make this project a reality.

Modernize allowable uses

For years, rigid zoning restricted the types of businesses allowed on Santa Cruz Avenue. Fortunately, recent policy shifts led by local property owner Windy Hill Ventures and supported by the Downtown Menlo Fund finally allow high-demand experiential uses like day spas and fitness studios. This has already brought forward new businesses who are now negotiating leases, including a yoga studio and a family activity center. Expanding allowed uses brings foot traffic —the lifeblood of retail.

Engaging community events

To thrive, local businesses need regular foot traffic and community support. That is why the Downtown Menlo Fund initiated "Fourth Fridays," a music festival series staged along Santa Cruz Avenue. Community gatherings create connections and directly support local commerce. The next Fourth Friday is on Oct. 23. Visit DowntownMenlo.com for event details and local listings.

Menlo Park deserves a downtown with architectural integrity, modern streetscapes and thriving local businesses. By working together —residents, business owners and city leaders —we can build a downtown that generates revenue, enhances our daily lives and serves as a source of community pride. Join us at MenloFund.org to turn our vision into a reality. ■

Marnie Foody is the chair of the Downtown Menlo Fund, created in 2025 to support local businesses and downtown Menlo Park.

Public Notices

MENLO PARK INTELLIGENCE
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-305061
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) MENLO PARK INTELLIGENCE , located at 31 Willow Rd, Menlo Park, CA 94025.
Registered owner(s):
THE AI AND CYBERSECURITY INSTITUTE
31 Willow Rd
Menlo Park, CA 94025
State of Incorporation/Organization: Delaware
This business is conducted by: a Corporation.
Registrant has not yet begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on October 01, 2026.
(ALM Oct 23, 30, Nov 6 and 13, 2026)

NAUGHTY GOAT BODY SOAP
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-305180
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) NAUGHTY GOAT BODY SOAP , located at 3110 Woodside Road, Woodside, CA 94062.
Registered owner(s):
FIONA MARGARET RYAN
3110 Woodside Road
Woodside, CA 94062
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 October 16, 2026.
(ALM Oct 23, 30, Nov 6 and 13, 2026)

YADI'S LEARNING SERVICES
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-305025
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) YADI'S LEARNING SERVICES , located at 180 Buckingham Ave, APT 105, Redwood City, CA 94063.
Registered owner(s):
ADA YADIRA AYALA HEREDIA
180 Buckingham Ave, APT 105
Redwood City CA 94063
State of Incorporation/Organization: CA
This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 09/28/2026.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on September 28, 2026.
(ALM Oct 16, 23, 30 and Nov 6, 2026)

HAYWARD
HAYWARD BUILDERS CENTER
HAYWARD BUILDING SYSTEMS
HAYWARD DOOR AND WINDOW
HAYWARD HOME DESIGN CENTER
HAYWARD LUMBER AND HOME SUPPLY
HAYWARD LUMBER CO.
HAYWARD SERVICE CENTER
HAYWARD LUMBER
HAYWARD LUMBER COMPANY
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-305003
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) HAYWARD , 2.) HAYWARD BUILDERS CENTER , 3.) HAYWARD BUILDING SYSTEMS , 4.) HAYWARD DOOR AND WINDOW , 5.) HAYWARD HOME DESIGN CENTER , 6.) HAYWARD LUMBER AND HOME SUPPLY , 7.) HAYWARD LUMBER CO. , 8.) HAYWARD SERVICE CENTER , 9.) HAYWARD LUMBER , 10.) HAYWARD LUMBER COMPANY , located at 2511 Garden Road, Suite A300, Monterey, CA 93940. Mailing Address: PO BOX 16009 Monterey, CA 93942.
Registered owner(s):
HOMER T. HAYWARD LUMBER CO.
2511 Garden Road, Suite A300
Monterey, CA 93940
State of Incorporation/Organization: California
This business is conducted by: a Corporation.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 01/01/2013.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on September 24, 2026.
(ALM Oct 9, 16, 23 and 30, 2026)

ENHANCE PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-304995
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) ENHANCE PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES , located at 899 Santa Cruz Ave., Suite 200, Menlo Park, CA 94025 .
Registered owner(s):
ENHANCE PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES, PC
899 Santa Cruz Ave., Suite 200
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 01/05/2026.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on September 23, 2026.
(ALM Oct 2, 9, 16 and 23, 2026)

INDIA GROCERY OUTLET
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-305050
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) INDIA GROCERY OUTLET , located at 336 Alden St, Redwood City, CA 94063. Mailing Address: 4021 Pacific Blvd San Mateo, CA 94403
Registered owner(s):
MANUBHAI TANDEL
4021 PACIFIC BLVD
San Mateo CA 94403
State of Incorporation/Organization: Califronia
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 October 01, 2026.
(ALM Oct 9, 16, 23 and 30, 2026)

EGC COLLECTIVE
GUSTAVE WORKS
GUSTAVE COLLECTIVE
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-305177
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) EGC COLLECTIVE , 2.) GUSTAVE WORKS , 3.) GUSTAVE COLLECTIVE , located at 1970 Alden St, Belmont, CA 94002.
Registered owner(s):
ERIC GUSTAVE CARL
1970 Alden St
Belmont, CA 94002
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 October 16, 2026.
(ALM Oct 23, 30, Nov 6 and 13, 2026)

BISHOP CONSTRUCTION & CONSULTING
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-305118
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) BISHOP CONSTRUCTION & CONSULTING , located at 12970 Skyline Blvd., Redwood City, CA 94062.
Registered owner(s):
GARY LEE BISHOP
12970 Skyline Blvd.
Redwood City, CA 94062
SUSAN MARGARET BISHOP
12970 Skyline Blvd.
Redwood City, CA 94062
This business is conducted by: a Married Couple.
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 October 07, 2026.
(ALM Oct 16, 23, 30 and Nov 6, 2026)

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Case No.: 26CIV06835
TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:
Petitioner: Sarah Nicole Perlroth Thomson filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows:
SARAH NICOLE PERLROTH THOMSON to NICOLE PERLROTH THOMSON
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: 11/30/2026, 9:00am, Southern Branch of the Superior Court of California, County of San Mateo located at 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063.
A copy of this ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE shall be published at least once each week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county:
ALMANAC
Date: October 1, 2026
Stephanie G. Garratt
JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
(ALM Oct 23, 30, Nov 6 and 13, 2026)

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Case No.: 26CIV06841
TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:
Petitioner: Sarah Nicole Perlroth Thomson, on minor behalf filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows:
HOLMES OLIVER THOMSON to HOLMES OTTO TRISTAN THOMSON
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: 11/30/2026, 9:00am, Southern Branch of the Superior Court of California, County of San Mateo located at 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063.
A copy of this ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE shall be published at least once each week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county:
ALMANAC
Date: 10/1/2026
Stephanie G. Garratt
JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
(ALM Oct 23, 30, Nov 6 and 13, 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-07084
TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:
Petitioner: Soujanya Kedilaya Akirebari filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows:
SOUJANYA KEDILAYA AKIREBARI to SOUJANYA KEDILAYA
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: 11-19-2026, 9:00 AM, Southern Branch of the Superior Court of California, County of San Mateo County 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: 09-16-2026
Hon. Stephanie G. Garratt
JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
(ALM Oct 2, 9, 16 and 23, 2026)

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Case No.: 26CIV05602
TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:
Petitioner: Elizabeth Herrick and Ian Sachs for Minors filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows:
ELOISE BROOKS SACHS to ELOISE BROOKS SACHS HERRICK
PIA LILIANA SACHS to PIA LILIANA SACHS HERRICK
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: November 23, 2026, 9:00 AM, Southern Branch of the Superior Court of California, County of San Mateo located at 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063.
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: September 21, 2026
Stephanie Garratt
JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
(ALM Oct 2, 9, 16 and 23, 2026)

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Case No.: 26CIV07085
TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:
Petitioner: Brooke Williams Kvingedal filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows:
BROOKE WILLIAMS KVINGEDAL to BROOKE ALAINE WILLIAMS
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: 11/18/2026, 9:00, Southern Branch of the Superior Court of California, County of San Mateo located at 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063.
A copy of this ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE shall be published at least once each week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county:
ALMANAC
Date: 9/16/2026
Stephanie Garratt
JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
(ALM Oct 2, 9, 16 and 23, 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

Visit AlmanacNews.com/legal_notices/

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

LETTERS
Our readers write

What are we saving Menlo Park from?

Editor,

I remember when I saw, for the first time, a very polite, older lady asking me to sign a petition against building affordable housing in Menlo Park downtown. She told me that she wanted to "save our parking lots," and this initiative has since become Measure P. Then, I was stunned and didn't know what to say. Here is what I would tell her if I met her again:

You are standing your ground, your asphaltic concrete.

A Menlo Park landmark. It's a treat,

For anyone looking for something ugly and hot.

I'm confused. No child in history ever pled:

"Grandma, take me back to that lot!"

Yet you plead in court,

And demand a city-wide vote.

You say you're saving the city, but exactly from what?

You worry it'll become different.

Louder. Taller. Maybe less to your liking.

You don't love parking structures,

You don't fancy biking.

And it's totally fair

If, as a human, you're a little bit scared.

But "I like it as it is" is a preference, not a right.

And you wrapped your preference in a lawsuit, a measure, a sign,

When all you want to say is: "Don't change it, it's mine!"

Let's get this straight.

You are not saving Menlo from developers or the state,

Or traffic, or shadows, or height.

You're saving it from people. From a cook, and a baker,

A teacher, a maker,

A nurse,

And what's even worse:

Your own grandkids.

They come for Thanksgiving.

Ah, so good to have them near!

And you ask, year after year:

I wish you weren't leaving!

It's your home! Why don't you move here?

They smile. They don't reply.

They love you too much to tell you that the reason why

Is that you "saved" this town from ... whatever it is.

Its character stayed but left no room for your kids.

Next day, you drop them off at the airport gate.

Traffic is light. Parking is great.

You drive home by yourself, leave your car by the door.

Life's good. You have everything you vote for.

Menlo Park needs people, and people need homes. Please vote NO on P.

Sasha Khristich, Menlo Park

deleon
REALTY • PLATINUM

66 STEVENSON LANE
ATHERTON









RARE WEST ATHERTON OPPORTUNITY ON 2.33 ACRES

Set on more than two and a third acres in prime West Atherton, this extraordinary parcel presents a rare opportunity to create a dream estate on a truly grand scale. Tucked along a peaceful cul-de-sac in one of the country's most exclusive communities, the expansive grounds provide an exceptional canvas for a residence shaped entirely around your vision. Land of this size and caliber, with the freedom to build from the ground up, seldom comes to market. And for all the privacy and prestige of the setting, the best of Silicon Valley is remarkably close at hand, with the technology leaders, venture capital firms, and companies driving the AI era just minutes away.

Downtown Menlo Park and Palo Alto, Stanford University, Stanford Shopping Center, and the exclusive Menlo Circus Club are all nearby, while San Francisco and two international airports make the wider Bay Area and beyond easily accessible. Top public and private schools further enhance the address. Yet it is the sheer breadth of the property that gives this opportunity its distinction: room for grand gardens, gracious entertaining, and an estate with the presence to match its surroundings. In a community where land of this scale is increasingly difficult to find, there are few places left where you can begin with this much.

SCHEDULE YOUR VISIT TODAY

66Stevenson.com
Offered at $34,988,000

Notice to Buyers:

Although a good buyer's agent can add significant insight and value, you are not required to use one to purchase a DeLeon listing. If you would like to submit an offer to us directly, please contact the DeLeon Buyer's Team at **650.847.7407** and we will waive 100% of the buyer's-side commission.

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Courtesy Filoli
Nightfall at Filoli features numerous settings, including a decorated house and trail, a haunted railway and more.

SPIRITED HALLOWEEN HAPPENINGS FOR ALL AGES

A guide to spooky Peninsula festivities for adults, kids and pets

By Julia Brown and Heather Zimmerman

Halloween in 2026 can be a frightful enough time without adding fear of missing out into the mix. And with the sheer number of events in Silicon Valley between now and Oct. 31, there's no shortage of ways to celebrate.

A haunted hangar at Hiller Aviation Museum and "Nightfall" at Filoli are among the many happenings, with events for kids, teens, adults and pets. Check out our monster of a Halloween events guide before time runs out.

Family-friendly festivities

Nightfall: The grounds of the Woodside estate transform for the spooky season into a multifaceted, immersive Halloween experience. Find a trail decked out with glowing trees, giant slugs and 1,000 jack-o-lanterns, or a harvest party with food, live music, games and thousands of gourds. New this year are The Haunted Railway with eight miniature trains and The Witches' Village.

Filoli notes that while some popular dates and times are sold out for general admission, entry is included with tickets for its Champagne Lounge and fire pit experiences.

Through Nov. 1, times vary, 86 Cañada Road, Woodside. General admission is $45-$55, free for kids 3 and under. Champagne Lounge is $60-$125, free for kids 4 and under. Fire pits are $950 for up to eight guests. filoli.org/whats-on/events/nightfall.

Little Green Events: Market of Mysteries with local vendors and artists Oct. 24; plus a tarot reading pop-up on Halloween.

Oct. 24, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., free entry; and Oct. 31, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., free entry. All events are at Little Green A Plant Bar, 1101 Main St., Redwood City. littlegreenaplantbar.com/classes.

Springline Barks & Boos: This evening of free community fun for pups and their humans includes a Howl-o-ween costume contest, vendors selling spooky swag for pets, a DJ, complimentary food (drinks available for purchase) and an off-leash dog park area.

Oct. 23, 5-7:30 p.m., Springline Menlo Park, 1300 El Camino Real, Menlo Park; free admission; tinyurl.com/SpringlineBarksBoos2026.

Ada's Cafe Haunted Halloween Dance: Costumes are strongly encouraged at this dance with music by DJ Marcie. The evening also features dinner, desserts, lemonade and a special Halloween-themed drink provided by Ada's Cafe. All ages and abilities welcome.

Oct. 23, 5:30-8 p.m., Lucie Stern Theatre, 1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto; free admission; tinyurl.com/AdasHauntedHalloweenDance.

Haunted Hangar: Hiller Aviation Museum will be decorated for Halloween throughout the month of October. The museum's Haunted Hangar event Oct. 24-31 includes paint-a-plane, trunk-or-treat and a kid's festival featuring a Helicopter Pumpkin Drop.

Haunted Hangar is open Oct. 24-31; Paint-a-plane Oct. 24-25, 10 a.m.-noon; trunk-or-treat Oct. 29, 5-7 p.m. (no charge to attend; Haunted Hangar has a separate admission charge not required for trunk-or-treat); Halloween Kid's Festival and Pumpkin Drop Oct. 31, 10 a.m. to noon. All events take place at Hiller Aviation Museum, 601 Skyway Road, San Carlos, and are included with museum admission ($23 for adults, $15 for seniors 65 and up, $15 for youth ages 4-17 and free for kids 3 and under). hiller.org.

Monster Bash: Rengstorff Park comes alive with a family-friendly fall festival packed with activities and sights, including a stilt walker, a bike circus, an inflatable zone, live performances, a Treat Trail and more. Purchase food from 3 Brothers Kitchen, Grillzillas and Luv's Brownies.

Oct. 24, 10 a.m-2 p.m., 201 S. Rengstorff Ave., Mountain View. Free. mountainview.gov/our-city/departments/community-services/special-events/monster-bash.

Halloween Magic: Gamble Garden's annual event includes a magic show, face painting, trivia and crafts.

Oct. 24, 10:30-11:30 a.m., 1431 Waverley St., Palo Alto. $36-$55. gamblegarden.org/event/halloween.

Halloween Hoopla Parade and Carnival: Decorate your bike, scooter or wagon (and yourself) for a parade down Santa Cruz Avenue to Fremont Park for the Halloween carnival. New this year: Leashed dogs and their humans are invited to join the parade as "Howl-o-ween Walkers." Trick-or-treaters will receive a free bag to use at participating downtown businesses.

The carnival features balloon and tattoo artists, games, prizes, jumpers, photo opps with Halloween backdrops, craft tables, a touch-a-truck ambulance and a spooky Public Works vehicle. Live performances include Lori and RJ and Menlo Park school bands.

Oct. 24, 11 a.m.-2 p.m., parade leaves at 11 a.m. from the Maloney Street parking lot behind Cheeky Monkey, Menlo Park. Carnival is at Fremont Park, Santa Cruz Avenue at University Drive, Menlo Park. Free. menlopark.gov/Citywide-calendar/Community-events/20261024-Halloween-Hoopla-Parade-and-Carnival.

Teen Halloween Roller Derby: Teens and tweens can enjoy an afternoon of skating with Open Skate Spaces, snacks and crafts with free pizza and Mr. Softee ice cream, and a raffle. Hosted by the Palo Alto Library.

Oct. 24, 2-5 p.m., Mitchell Park Bowl, 600 E. Meadow Drive, Palo Alto. Free. tinyurl.com/TeenSkateDerbyPA2026.

Magical Bridge Costume Party: Don your costume and enjoy music from Tank! Jazz Band, sensory-friendly science with Bright Sparks Play Lab, trick-or-treat bag-making and a costume dance party at Magical Bridge Palo Alto. All ages and abilities are welcome.

Oct. 25, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., 3700 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto. Free. magicalbridge.org/event-details/halloween-costume-party.

Pumpkin Splash: Kids can jump in the pool for a floating pumpkin at the Belle Haven and Burgess pools in Menlo Park. Reservations are required, and parents must be present. Tickets include a goody bag, a pumpkin and decorations for it, and swim time.

Oct. 25, 11:30 a.m.-12:25 p.m. (split into two sessions), Belle Haven Pool, 100 Terminal Ave. or 1:30-3:25 p.m. (split into four sessions), Burgess Pool,

501 Laurel St., Menlo Park. $12. tinyurl.com/MenloParkPumpkinSplash2026.

Boo Bash Redwood City: Guests are encouraged to wear "not-so-scary" costumes at a family-friendly gathering that includes a "Spooktacular Showcase" with a Banjo Sing-a-Long, a performance by Firelight Shadow Theater and a Boo-tiful Costume Parade. Various "spooky stations" offer fun games, crafts and activities, such as a shadow puppetry workshop, Frankenslime lab, a photo booth and Halloween books from Fireside Books & More.
Oct. 27, 4-8 p.m. (entry is by reserved time slot) at the Chan Zuckerberg Community Space, 801 Jefferson Ave., Suite 100, Redwood City. Free admission (some activities have a small fee). tinyurl.com/RWCBooBash2026.

Jack O'Lantern Jamboree: The Palo Alto Children's Library hosts a Halloween dance party for young children and their families, who are invited to attend in costume. The event also includes crafts and light refreshments.
Oct. 28, 4-5 p.m., at Palo Alto Children's Library Secret Garden, 1276 Harriet St., Palo Alto. Free. tinyurl.com/PALibraryJamboree2026.

Halloween Karaoke Night: The Palo Alto Library hosts an all-ages evening of singing spooky tunes.
Oct. 29, 6-7:30 p.m., at Mitchell Park Library, 3700 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto; tinyurl.com/PALibraryHalloweenKaraoke2026.

Jack O'Jaunt: The community can vote for the scariest, cutest and most creative jack-o'-lanterns at the city of Palo Alto's annual pumpkin carving competition and display. Participants can carve their own pumpkins ahead of time at home and bring them to the display, or carve them in a workshop at Lytton Plaza on the day of the event. All participants must use real pumpkins.
Oct. 30, display and competition takes place 6:30-8:30 p.m.; carving workshop takes place 3-5 p.m. Both events take place at Lytton Plaza, University Avenue and Emerson Street, Palo Alto. $25 resident, $28.75 nonresident fee for those carving on-site (fee includes a pumpkin and carving kit, but no instructors will be present.) tinyurl.com/PaloAltoJackOJaunt2026.

Halloween & Hiking Hounds: Take your dog on a moderately paced, docent-led hike in the dog-friendly Pulgas Ridge Preserve. Costumes are optional, but leashes for pups are not.
Oct. 31, 10:30 a.m.-noon, meet at the parking area on Edmonds Road, Redwood City. Free; reservations required and close Oct. 30, 2 p.m. openspace.org/events/guided-activities/halloween-hiking-hounds.

Mitchell Park Library Storytime: Join librarian Juliana for a Halloween-themed family storytime suitable for children 5 and under.
Oct. 31, 10:30-11 a.m., 3700 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto. Free. tinyurl.com/HalloweenStorytimePA2026.

Dutch Goose: The Menlo Park restaurant will be giving out glowsticks and balloon animals, screening "It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown" and more Halloween festivities for families before they head out trick-or-treating.
Oct. 31, 4-6 p.m., 3567 Alameda de las Pulgas, Menlo Park. Free entry. dutchgoose.net.

Trick-or-treating

Trunk-n-Treat: Kids are invited to attend in costume, visit decorated car trunks, paint pumpkins, decorate cookies and enjoy other activities.
Oct. 24, 4 p.m., at the parking lot of First United Methodist Church of Palo Alto, 625 Hamilton Ave., Palo Alto; free; firstpaloalto.com.

Menlo Park Trunk-or-Treat: Kids can go trick-or-treating from car to car on the Belle Haven Community Campus, with each car's trunk decorated in a Halloween theme. Trick-or-treaters will receive a bag for collecting candy.
Oct. 28, 4:30-6 p.m., 100 Terminal Ave., Menlo Park. Free. menlopark.gov/Government/Departments/Library-and-Community-Services/Events/Community-events/Halloweek.

Hiller Aviation Museum Trunk-or-Treat: This event features decorated airplanes and cars that kids can stop by for candy. Costumes are encouraged.
Oct. 29, 5-7 p.m., 601 Skyway Road, San Carlos. Free. hiller.org/event/trunk-or-treat.

Mountain View Library Trick-or-Treat: Kids and teens can trick-or-treat on Halloween while the library is open. Costumes optional.
Oct. 31, 10 a.m.-6 p.m., 585 Franklin St., Mountain View. Free. tinyurl.com/MtnViewTrickOrTreat2026.

Live performances and dancing

Dracula: TheatreWorks Silicon Valley stages Steven Dietz's adaptation of Bram Stoker's classic horror novel, complete with magical illusions.
Through Nov. 1 at Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, 500 Castro St., Mountain View; tickets are $34-$115; theatreworks.org/mainstage/dracula.

Halloween Jam: All ages are welcome at this open-mic night for musicians featuring spooky tunes by AC/DC, Black Sabbath, Misfits, Radiohead and others. Also, dress as your favorite rockstar to take part in a costume contest.
Oct. 24, 6 p.m., at San Mateo Guitar Center, 53 W. Hillsdale Blvd., San Mateo. Free. tinyurl.com/SMCGuitarCtrHalloweenJam.

Halloween Blues Bash: This event at Club Fox features blues vocalist Lara Price.
Oct. 28, 7:30-11 p.m., at Club Fox, 2209 Broadway, Redwood City. $24.13. tinyurl.com/ClubFoxHBluesBash2026.

Careless Whisper Halloween: '80s favorites with the band Careless Whisper and an evening of themed drinks, Halloween games, best costume awards and door prizes.
Oct. 30, 8 p.m., at Club Fox, 2209 Broadway, Redwood City. $20 advance/$25 at the door. tinyurl.com/CarelessWhisperHalloween.

Dracula: A Dance Between Love and Darkness: HaoExpression Dance Company presents a dance performance based on the story of Dracula.
Oct. 30, 8 p.m. and Oct. 31, 2 and 7 p.m., at SecondStage, Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, 500 Castro St., Mountain View. $40-$60. tinyurl.com/DraculaLoveDarknessDance.

The Addams Family: The grown-up Wednesday Addams brings her "normal" date home to meet the family in this musical presented by Palo Alto Players.
Oct. 30-Nov. 15 at Lucie Stern Theatre, 1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto. $35-$75. paplayers.org/show/the-addams-family.



Courtesy Scott Lasky

Palo Alto Players stage "The Addams Family" Oct. 30-Nov. 15.

Scary Tales and Organ Concert: Spooky tales and music with organist Diane Keller and Pastor Burke.
Oct. 30, 7 p.m., at First United Methodist Church of Palo Alto, 625 Hamilton Ave., Palo Alto. Free. firstpaloalto.com.

Thursday Live on Cal Ave: The monthly music festival and event series features a special Saturday Halloween and Oktoberfest event, with live music, activities and giveaways.
Oct. 31, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., California Avenue, El Camino Real and Birch Street, Palo Alto. Admission is free. tinyurl.com/CalAveHalloween2026.

Bitten by the Bay: Costume and dance party, with different zones for cocktails, dancing and dining, including DJ Dave X in the Crimson Ballroom and a singles VIP lounge, plus a costume contest.
Oct. 31, 6 p.m.-midnight, at Hyatt Centric, 408 San Antonio Road (2nd Floor), Mountain View. $42.39 and up. tinyurl.com/BittenbytheBay2026.

Haunted Halloween with Stu Allen and Mars Hotel: A Grateful Dead tribute with Stu Allen (of Phil Lesh & Friends, Melvin Seals & JGB) and a revolving cast of musicians.
Oct. 31, 8 p.m., at The Guild Theatre 949 El Camino Real, Menlo Park. $54.18. guildtheatre.com.

Parties and events for adults

Witches and Warlocks Wine Stroll: This Halloween-themed wine stroll features over 20 tasting sites. Tickets include a collectible wine glass and a map to tasting sites.
Oct. 23, 6-9 p.m., in downtown Los Altos. $65.87 per person; downtownlosaltos.org.

FriGay Flicks: Join the San Mateo County Pride Center and CORA for a screening of "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" (rated R). Costumes are encouraged, and snacks will be provided.
Oct. 23, 6:30 p.m. (doors open at 6 p.m.), 2205 Palm Ave., San Mateo. Free. tinyurl.com/FriGayOct2026.

Alhambra Irish House Halloween: Festivities include a masquerade party with food, drinks and DJ dancing; a drag brunch show hosted by Chai, with costumes encouraged; a pre-Halloween dance party with The Soul Practitioners and live music and costume contest on Halloween night.
Masquerade Oct. 23, 9:30 p.m.-1 a.m.; drag brunch Oct. 24, noon-2 p.m.; pre-Halloween dance party Oct. 30, 8-11 p.m.; costume contest and live music, Oct. 31, 9 p.m.-1 a.m. All events at Alhambra Irish House, 831 Main St., Redwood City. alhambra-irish-house.com.

San Mateo Senior Center Halloween Party: Adults 50 and over can attend this Halloween party featuring trick-or-treating, musical performances and games.
Oct. 30, 1-2:30 p.m., 2645 Alameda de las Pulgas, San Mateo. Free; 50 and up. instagram.com/smparksandrec.

ROGER Bar and Restaurant: ROGER Bar and Restaurant at The Ameswell Hotel hosts the Billionaire's Club Masquerade, a murder mystery dinner with a themed menu, craft cocktails and wine and a live interactive show. Guests are encouraged to wear Venetian masks, tuxedos, ballgowns and other evening wear.
Oct. 30, 6 p.m., 800 Moffett Blvd., Mountain View. $120.78. rogerbarandrestaurant.com/halloween.

The Mountain House: The upscale Woodside restaurant's annual Halloween party features bottomless spiked Zombie Punch, an all-night bites buffet, live music by the Whiskey Hill Billies and a costume contest.
Oct. 31, 6 p.m. (doors open at 5:30 p.m.), 13808 Skyline Blvd., Woodside. $44.52, 21 and over. Tickets will be available at the door. tinyurl.com/MtnHouseHalloween2026. ■

Email The Six Fifty Editor Julia Brown at jbrown@embarcaderomedia.org.

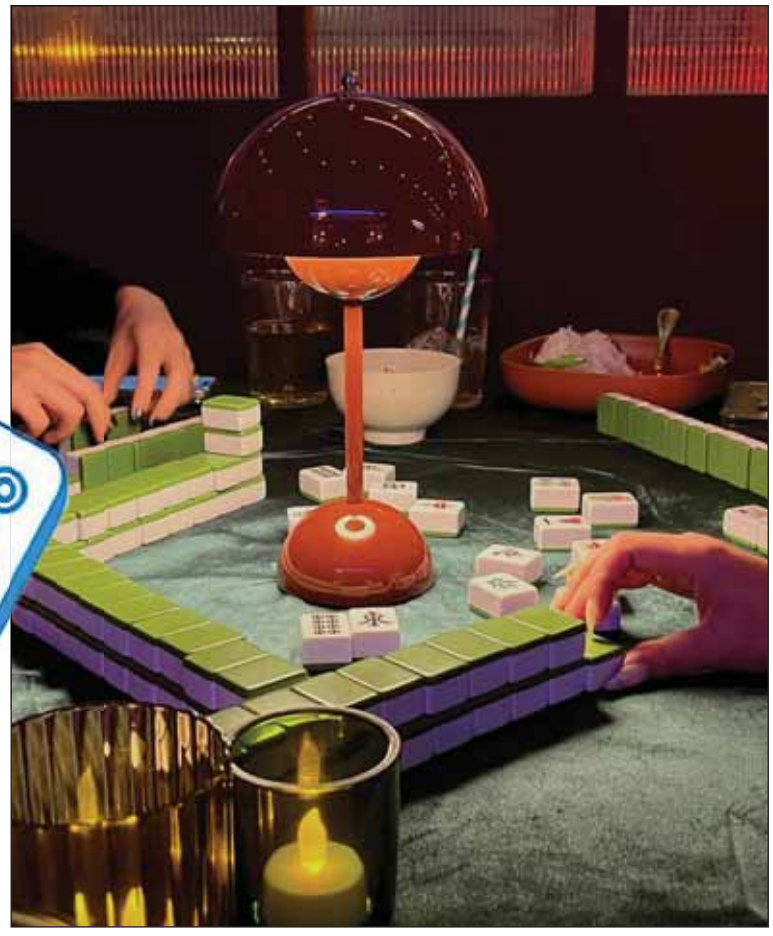
Email Arts & Entertainment Editor Heather Zimmerman at hzimmerman@almanacnews.com.

Find more Halloween events at almanacnews.com/the-650-explore-the-peninsula.



MAHJONG MEMORIES

Peninsula eateries host mahjong nights



Courtesy Mamahuhu

Mamahuhu offers Mahjong Mondays weekly from 6-9 p.m.

By Elaine Wu

When I was a kid, I remember my family getting together with their best friends every so often to play mahjong at our house for hours and hours.

All I would hear was the clicking and clacking of tiles being shuffled and assembled on their playing table, or being thrown down in disgust when someone else won a hard-fought hand. There would be tea and snacks nearby for the players to reach for, and my grandmother would make a big pot of Chinese braised beef to easily feed a crowd in between rounds.

The pairing of food and mahjong has always made getting together for a few rounds more of a social event than just playtime. It's only natural to nosh on your favorite snacks or share a meal with friends after a long session playing the popular tile game.

A recent resurgence in the popularity of mahjong has now made it trendy to know how to play. Once seen as a game for an older generation, the proliferation of mahjong apps has contributed to its newfound prevalence with a younger audience, making it easy to play with friends whether you're in the same room or not (though you do tend to miss the ASMR of those titles moving around the table.) And films like "The Joy Luck Club" and "Crazy Rich Asians" have helped pique a new generation's interest. You know something has become a bonafide trend when you see T-shirts, stationery and even blind box toys for sale at the mall emblazoned with those brightly colored tiles.



Karina Patel

Two men sit outside Mamahuhu, a Chinese American restaurant, in the Town and Country Village in Palo Alto.

In the spirit of in-person socializing, restaurants have now gotten in on the trend. Taking advantage of the need for a place to gather and have something tasty to snack on while playing, Peninsula eateries like Chinese American restaurant Mamahuhu and Boichik Bagels have recently organized casual events for both mahjong enthusiasts and curious novices.

Mahjong was invented in China around 1846 during the Qing Dynasty and was played mostly by male gamblers. In the 1920s, American businessmen marketed the game to Western expatriates living in Asia and subsequently started importing mahjong tile sets back to the United States. That's when it started gaining traction outside of China.

Stateside, famous celebrities and even President Warren Harding and First Lady Florence Harding were known to play, adding to its popularity. The American variation of mahjong became particularly popular with Jewish American women, who saw it as a way to gather and socialize at a time when many country clubs and social organizations excluded Jews, according to Stanford University research.

There are over 40 variations of the game played all around the globe, including Japanese, Taiwanese, Singaporean, "Old Hong Kong" style, Filipino, American and the official Chinese version, which is used for international competitions.

Mahjong is not just seen as a game, but also as a way to build community and foster friendships. In Chinese culture, marathon mahjong sessions are still common during special occasions like Lunar New Year's Eve, when players can stay up late into the wee hours of the morning to play, eat and socialize with friends and family.

At Mamahuhu's weekly Mahjong Monday from 6-9 p.m., all four of its Bay Area locations – including the newest in Palo Alto's Town and Country Village – offer a place for players to meet for a game with friends or

Mamahuhu, 855 El Camino Real, Ste 75, Palo Alto; 650-494-4643, Instagram: @eatmamahuhu. Open daily from 11 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Boichik Bagels, 855 El Camino Real #115, Palo Alto; 650-352-5995, Instagram: @boichikbagels. Open daily from 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.



Karina Patel

From left to right, Mary Y., Cathy Umana, Phylis Ooi and Nancy Witeck play mahjong at Mamahuhu in Palo Alto.



Courtesy Mamahuhu

All are welcome to play mahjong at Mamahuhu on Mondays.

strangers. It is extremely informal, with all levels welcome and no extra charge or registration needed. You just come in, take a seat and set up one of the several tile sets they have for you to use.

Though it's usually a four-person game, pairs and trios have been seen making it work, contributing to the casual and friendly neighborhood vibe. Mamahuhu offers beer and egg rolls for $5 to make it easy to nosh and play.

Maggie Timbo, marketing manager for Mamahuhu, said the event series closely aligns with the company's focus on fostering Chinese American culture and community. When the restaurant started it a few years ago at its Inner Richmond location in San Francisco, it was a way to help integrate themselves into the predominantly Asian neighborhood.

"The team was coming up with ways to connect with the community as we became a new part of it," Timbo said. "We've done painting classes and book clubs, but mahjong really caught on to the point where people were asking, 'When can I come in and learn to play?' We started scheduling around it and then expanding it to the other locations. But we have a lot of volunteer instructors that we've met through the years that help us teach, and it's really gotten quite exciting."

Boichik Bagels also hosts mahjong events at several of its Bay Area shops. Weekly Mahjong Mondays at its main Berkeley factory and store and Tile Tuesdays at its Concord shop have drawn a regular crowd. And periodic ticketed mahjong events like the one at their Santa Clara location Sept. 19 have welcomed both experts and beginners.

Owner and founder Emily Winston has always had mahjong gatherings in mind for several of her larger bagel shops.

"We've got the space and I have square tables that I picked out at a number of our locations specifically for playing mahjong," Winston said.

But the game isn't just about building community for her customers. For the Jewish American New Jersey native, it brings back a lot of nostalgia.

"Growing up, my mom played and had a group where she'd host at our house every so often," Winston said. "My sisters and I were usually booted upstairs. They had their own snacks but we weren't allowed to steal some. We had to go upstairs and not bother them. And so I never learned. I thought it would be a really fun thing to offer so customers can come and hang out and play here."

As I think back on my memories of mahjong sessions with friends and family, it was never merely about the game. It gave us a reason to get together and catch up over friendly competition, great food and plenty of spirited conversation. Just like a good meal, a game of mahjong is good for the soul. ■

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Karina Patel

A group of women play mahjong at Mamahuhu in Palo Alto, while a nearby guest eats dinner.



Courtesy Mamahuhu

Chinese American restaurant Mamahuhu hosts Mahjong Mondays.



Courtesy Mamahuhu

Mamahuhu offers a $5 beer and egg roll deal on Mahjong Mondays.

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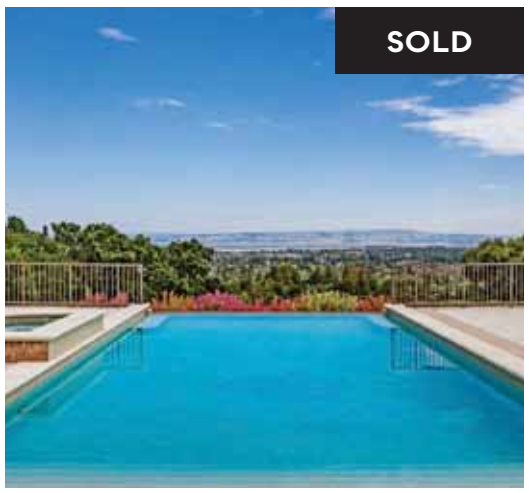
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