

# Mountain View VOICE

JULY 5, 2019 VOLUME 27, NO. 24

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catch  
WEEKEND | 19



SADIE STINSON

## FRIDAYS IN THE PARK WITH PYT

Young thespians from Peninsula Youth Theatre perform "The Reluctant Dragon" outside the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts on June 28. Family-friendly free performances will be held every Friday at 6:30 p.m. through Aug. 16.

## Dense housing projects kick off transformation of East Whisman

By Kevin Forestieri

Two developers are seeking to build some of Mountain View's densest housing projects to date, kicking off plans to dramatically change the East Whisman area of the city from light industrial and office

buildings to urban mixed-use. The two proposals, located on Logue Avenue and East Middlefield Road, would bring a combined 831 housing units to East Whisman, and both promise a mix of rental and ownership units. The projects are also among the tallest the city has

seen — the Middlefield project would include two seven-story buildings, while the Logue project proposes an 11-story building that would stand 128 feet tall.

The projects are a sign of changes to come for East

► See **EAST WHISMAN**, page 15

## \$830K needed for overnight parking at Foothill College, president says

By Elena Kadvany

Nearly 20 community colleges and districts as well as the Community College League of California and Association of California Community College Administrators have formally come out in opposition to a state bill that would allow homeless students to sleep overnight in campus parking lots.

Locally, the Foothill-De Anza Community College District is remaining publicly neutral but watching closely as Assembly Bill 302, which was proposed by Assemblyman Marc Berman, D-Palo Alto, makes its way through the state legislature.

In an interview, Foothill College President Thuy Nguyen called Berman's effort "admirable" but said questions remain

about the financial and operational challenges created by the bill.

"The question is whether this

*'The question is whether this is a good idea that should be required of all.'*

PRESIDENT THUY NGUYEN, FOOHILL COLLEGE

is a good idea that should be required of all," she said.

Rolling out safe overnight parking at Foothill would not

be as easy as some people think, Nguyen said. The college would have to increase its limited nighttime security, potentially by contracting out the work, and consider how to accommodate students who might have children or families who would sleep in a vehicle with them, she said. The bill would also require

► See **OVERNIGHT PARKING**, page 9

## Judge finds witness tampering in ADA lawsuit

RICO CASE FINDS LAWYERS ATTEMPTED TO SILENCE WITNESS

By Mark Noack

Two defendants have been caught tampering with a witness in a lawsuit against a San Jose law firm that has sued thousands of California small businesses for minor accessibility violations. A federal judge last month determined that an attorney and a compliance consultant linked to the Mission Law Firm had illegally eavesdropped on a phone call with a witness and later coached him to act dumb on the stand.

The Mission Law Firm, headed by attorney Tanya Moore, has become notorious for filing countless lawsuits against small restaurants and shops, including ones in Mountain View, for violations under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Many small business owners describe the lawsuits as essentially being a shakedown. These so-called "drive-by" lawsuits have seized on asphalt cracks, table heights and faded parking lines to threaten large violation fees. In most cases, the business owners agree to pay out-of-court settlements to avoid the legal cost of defending themselves.

Court records show that Moore's firm has sued more than

450 businesses in the greater Bay Area and reportedly upward of 2,000 across the state over accessibility violations. Businesses in Mountain View have been targeted in these suits, including Ava's Market, Blossom True Value Hardware and (as of March) Taqueria La Espuela. While the Mission Law Firm has attracted scorn in the business community, it has rarely been challenged in court over its practice.

That changed when Tanya Moore and her colleagues were hit with a civil suit last year. Burlingame-based attorney Moji Saniefar filed a sweeping case against the Mission Law Firm and its roster of frequent ADA plaintiffs, alleging they were essentially operating a criminal enterprise that should be treated under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act.

Moore's attorneys did not respond to a request for comment by the *Voice*.

The case is personal for Saniefar: her father's restaurant in Fresno closed as a result of one of Moore's suits, and it took her family three years to fight the case. That case against her family's restaurant later fell apart

► See **ADA LAWSUIT**, page 14

Judy  
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\*Buyer to verify



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# Voices

AROUND TOWN

Asked in downtown Mountain View. Photos and interviews by Ray Levy-Uyeda

*What issues should be discussed in the next presidential candidate debate?*



“Probably green energy policy. I don’t feel like that was addressed in the last two debates.”

**Adam Brown**, Mountain View



“Gun control and climate change.”

**Sarah Hem**, Los Altos



“Immigration. (For) social justice reasons. Being able to see families and their children be reunited or not separated in the first place.”

**Jeff Tsai**, Sunnyvale



“I’d like them to talk about what they’re going to do with the camps at the border.”

**Abigail van Roode**, Mountain View



“Climate change. It truly is an existential crisis.”

**Melissa Stahl**, Mountain View

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■ CRIME BRIEFS

**MVPD ARRESTS FREMONT FIRE SUSPECT**

A woman accused of starting a 5-acre fire with a flare gun in the East Bay was arrested in Mountain View last week, according to a statement released Monday.

Fremont police sought the arrest of the 43-year-old woman after she was suspected of starting a vegetation fire in the hills east of Mission Boulevard on Sunday, June 23. Witnesses described how she got into an argument with a man and, as the altercation escalated, fired a flare out of a modified pellet gun at him.

The flare missed the victim, but landed in dry brush and sparked a brush fire. Thirty people were evacuated from about a dozen residences and structures close to the fire, which grew to 5 acres before it was contained after three hours. No one was injured in the blaze.

The woman fled the area on foot, heading towards the hills, and could not be located, according to the statement. Police officers found what they called a “modified flare gun” at the scene.

Fremont police received a signed warrant for the arrest of the woman on June 24 for assault with a deadly weapon, unlawfully causing a fire of a structure or forest land and corporal injury to a person from a prior dating relationship, police said in the statement.

Mountain View police encountered the woman around 10 p.m. on Wednesday, June 26, when she was reportedly seen staggering out into the street near Middlefield Road and N. Whisman Road. An officer pulled over to talk to assist the woman after she was nearly hit by a passing car, according to police spokeswoman Katie Nelson.

Police later discovered the woman, identified as Christina Haller, had a warrant for her arrest in connection to the fire and assault. She was taken to Santa Rita Jail in Alameda County and was arraigned July 2 on a felony charge of recklessly causing a fire.

► See **CRIME BRIEFS**, page 12

■ POLICE LOG

**AUTO BURGLARY**

- 1100 block N. Rengstorff Av., 6/24
- 2900 block N. Shoreline Blvd., 6/24
- 1600 block N. Shoreline Blvd., 6/25
- 800 block California St., 6/25
- 1100 block Castro St., 6/25
- 800 block California St., 6/25
- 200 block Hope St., 6/25
- 400 block Bryant St., 6/26
- 1000 block N. Rengstorff Av., 6/26
- 2400 block Charleston Rd., 6/26
- 2000 block W. El Camino Real, 6/26
- 300 block Hope St., 6/27
- 900 block Villa St., 6/27

**COMMERCIAL BURGLARY**

- 700 block E. Evelyn Av., 6/28

**CRIMINAL THREATS**

- 1200 block Terra Bella Av., 6/24

**RESIDENTIAL BURGLARY**

- 1800 block W. Middlefield Rd., 6/24

**STOLEN VEHICLE**

- 600 block Rustic Ln., 6/25

**VANDALISM**

- 200 block S. Rengstorff Av., 6/24
- 800 block California St., 6/25
- Hwy 85 & E. Middlefield Rd., 6/27

■ CORRECTION

Due to an editing error, an incorrect headline ran on last week’s story about El Camino Hospital’s budget. The headline should have read “El Camino Hospital beats expectations with \$142M profit.” The article also erroneously stated increasing hospital prices would generate \$23.6 million in additional revenue in the 2019-20 fiscal year. The price increase is projected to generate \$19.9 million.

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MAGALI GAUTHIER

**Emma Athey** crosses Bryant Avenue using a newly installed crosswalk. The Mountain View High School student successfully lobbied city officials to install it and another crosswalk to make it safer for students walking to school.

## Why did the freshman cross the road?

TEEN LOBBIES CITY FOR NEW CROSSWALKS TO MAKE GETTING TO HIGH SCHOOL SAFER

By Nisha Malley

**E**mma Athey spent her freshman year walking to Mountain View High School each morning. When she arrived at the intersection of Bryant Street and Brower Avenue, she was surprised to find a lack of safety measures for people crossing, despite the high foot traffic by students.

“There was no designated spot for pedestrians to cross,” Athey said.

Not more than a month later, she contacted the Mountain View Public Works Department, talked with city engineer

Maryam Amir, and pitched her idea to school administration, urging them both to install crosswalks at the intersection. After a 10-month process, a construction team recently completed the project, painting two crosswalks in the first week of June.

“For a freshman to take the charge and have the perseverance that she did with the City Council, it was lovely,” Assistant Principal Teri Faught said.

The city conducted an environmental study to assess the site’s traffic, according to Lorenzo Lopez, the city’s senior traffic engineer. The

study found that pedestrians and bicyclists heavily used the intersection, while many students chose to jaywalk at various points along the street. Distracted drivers who were texting as they approached the intersection added to the city’s concerns, Lopez said.

Lopez said the city hopes that a painted crosswalk will funnel students to a safe, marked intersection and alert drivers to the presence of pedestrians.

The city also installed pedestrian crossing signs with reflective panels and painted double-yellow

► See **CROSSWALK**, page 9

## Grand jury report blasts VTA for inefficiencies, poor oversight

By Mark Noack

**T**he taxpayer-funded agency in charge of offering transit solutions to Santa Clara County’s traffic jams is currently embroiled in a mess of its own.

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), the multi-billion dollar agency that plans and operates the county’s road and transit network, has been called out as one of the most

inefficient organizations of its kind.

A new county Civil Grand Jury report released last month found that VTA is spending more and accomplishing less than nearly every other comparable transit agency in the United States.

Just over the last decade, the cost of running VTA’s buses and light rail system has nearly doubled, mainly due to labor costs. Meanwhile, fewer riders appear to be using VTA transit

services than they have in the last 30 years. Ridership on bus and light rail has dropped nearly 20% just over the last decade. Taken altogether, this means VTA is losing about \$9.30 per rider, according to the report.

The grand jury report lays much of the responsibility for this dysfunction on the VTA Board of Directors. The 12-member governing board consists

► See **VTA**, page 11

## Despite cuts, school board approves budget with deep deficit spending

By Kevin Forestieri

**C**oming down from a period of spectacular growth and booming budgets, the Mountain View Whisman School District adopted a budget earlier this month that mixes red ink with a large drop in per-student spending.

Even with school board-endorsed cuts to staffing and programs, budget documents show \$7 million in planned deficit spending over the next three years. Despite concerns about a balanced budget, some of the cut staffing and programs approved in February were restored in the final budget, and trustees are already making a list for what else to restore if more money becomes available.

The budget for the upcoming 2019-20 school year, unanimously approved on June 13, includes deficit spending of just under \$3 million, which was tempered by numerous cuts recommended by Superintendent Ayinde Rudolph. Fewer instructional coaches will serve the same number of classroom teachers, family outreach staff known as school community engagement facilitators (SCEFs) are getting cut and the districtwide summer school program will be eliminated. School support staff for at-risk youth are also being cut, in part because they were never budgeted as permanent positions, Rudolph said.

“These were only for one year, and they were always contingent on funding,” he said.

A vacant administrative position overseeing special education will also go unfilled; Rudolph said the position was considered unnecessary. Bus drivers, maintenance staff, an accountant, a translator and an administrative secretary are all positions that were eliminated by the district’s leadership in 2018.

Estimates in February show those cuts were supposed to bring 2019-20 deficit spending down to \$1.5 million, but that number nearly doubled to \$2.9 million in the months that followed. Textbook adoption that was originally postponed for two years made it back into the budget, which will draw from funds

provided by the city’s Shoreline Regional Park fund, and the new Vargas Elementary School will have its own designated librarian. The district had previously planned to rotate librarians from other schools run the Vargas library, an idea that was later rejected by the school board in March.

The budget assumptions do not include potential raises for teachers and classified employees, which added an extra \$2.4 million in costs last year.

District spending has gone up significantly as property tax revenue reached staggering new heights, with annual double-digit growth for the last three years. Per-student expenditures have increased by 73% in the last five years, reaching a high point of \$15,797 for the 2018-19 school year. Due to a sudden drop in tax growth and the round of budget cuts that followed, per-student spending is expected to sink back down to \$15,003 in the upcoming school year.

The softening of the local economy puts pressure on the school district’s budget in multiple ways. The district has sought to pay for the construction of Vargas Elementary School through developer fees, but when construction slows, so does the money. When developer fees dry up, the district has to dip further into lease revenue — generated by leasing school sites to Google and a private school — that would have gone into the general fund.

Although still deep in the red and far from the board’s own stated goal of having a balanced budget by the year 2020, school board members reviewed June 13 a priority list for “reinstatement” of budget cuts, in the event that more money becomes available. Rudolph’s recommendations called for bringing back districtwide summer school as a first priority, followed by at-risk supervisors, reinstatement of community engagement coordinators and rehiring instructional coaches for teachers.

Board members strongly disagreed with the priorities and

► See **BUDGET**, page 6

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## County buys affordable housing complexes with Measure A funds

By Kevin Forestieri

Santa Clara County's \$950 million housing bond has helped pay for the construction of more than 1,000 new affordable units since it passed in 2016, almost entirely aimed at helping the neediest residents at risk of homelessness.

But not all of that money is flowing into new construction. Late last year, the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors pivoted towards preserving existing affordable housing projects, voting in December to invest more than \$29 million in three housing properties in San Jose. With an eye toward buying more properties in the future, supervisors said policies need to be in place to ensure a county takeover doesn't inadvertently displace tenants or make things worse for the existing residents.

There has been plenty of interest lately in leveraging the county's Measure A funds for affordable housing preservation, Supervisor Cindy Chavez said at the July 2 board meeting. Doing so can bail out property managers in financial straits, improve the quality of life in aged apartments and earmark more units for formerly homeless residents in need of senior, disability and

other support services.

Supervisors voted in December to purchase two deed-restricted affordable housing properties known as Markham Plaza in San Jose and provide \$10.2 million in loans to renovate the properties. Under the terms of the agreement, 100 units would be redesignated "permanent supportive housing" for high-needs residents most at risk of chronic homelessness. The property developer, Core Companies, is also seeking more Section 8 Project-Based vouchers.

The deal was seen as an effective way to preserve more than 300 apartments that were plagued by problems. Core Companies reportedly faced rising expenses over the last 12 years while rental revenue — restricted by tax credit regulations — stayed flat. The financial crunch led to decreased staffing, which in turn has caused more tenant dissatisfaction, higher turnover, more wear and tear on the units and leasing challenges, according to a county staff report.

But Chavez said she worried about the existing tenants who may be at risk of displacement under the deal with the county. Many of the residents are living

on a tight budgets, relying on food stamps and Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and don't have Section 8 housing vouchers. Even a modest rent increase by the property manager would leave these families with less than \$100 a month for food.

"What we wanted to make sure of is that we were not, as we're investing in the preservation of housing, displacing people," Chavez said.

Supervisors voted 4-0 to craft guidelines that would ensure the county does not push any current residents into homelessness, including weighing the "rent burden" on the low-income families and the range of support services needed to retain tenants. County Supervisor Joe Simitian was absent.

To date, county supervisors have approved \$234 million in Measure A spending, the vast majority of which has helped pay for the construction of 1,437 new housing units. The remaining \$29 million has gone into preserving the Markham Plaza and Curtner Studios apartments in San Jose. None of the housing developments supported by Measure A funds are located in Mountain View. ■

Email Kevin Forestieri at [kforestieri@mv-voice.com](mailto:kforestieri@mv-voice.com)

### BUDGET

► Continued from page 5

essentially flipped them upside-down, arguing instructional coaches and supervisors for at-risk youth were going to have the greatest positive affect on students.

"For each dollar, what is the maximum impact we're going to have in terms of students and student gains, so we should frame (the priorities) along those lines," said board president Tamara Wilson.

Board member Ellen Wheeler also made a pitch for some type of after-school program for low-income families and working parents with children at Mistral Elementary. Earlier in the meeting, close to a dozen parents — mostly speaking in Spanish — urged the board to consider a program similar to the Beyond

the Bell program co-sponsored by the city.

Mistral Elementary School, home to the district's Dual Immersion language program, used to have access to after-school child care through Beyond the Bell when it was part of Castro Elementary. By splitting the program off as its own separate school in 2015, those services were no longer available to needy Mistral families. About 44% of Mistral students qualify for free and reduced-price meals, making it the district's third-highest concentration of low-income families, behind Castro and Theuerkauf elementary schools.

Parent Bridget Harrison presented a letter on behalf of 200 parents urging the board to consider investing in an after-school program at the school, calling it a badly needed resource

for families working full-time jobs to stay in Mountain View. Mistral parent Imelda Moreno, speaking through a translator, said she worries children from low-income families need a supportive environment to play and do homework, many of whom live in small apartments.

Mistral did not qualify for a Beyond the Bell program, making it the only school with more than 40% low-income students without the after-school program. The alternative, the districtwide "Right at School" child care program, costs \$480 each month, which is unaffordable to many of those families, according to the letter.

Board members did not take a formal vote on either the priorities for budget reinstatement or the after-school program. ■

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## Foothill College grads aim for their next adventure

By Ray Levy-Uyeda

Most college graduation ceremonies mark the ending of something, but at Foothill College, June 28 marked the beginning of a new journey as students received their diplomas.

Most students received their associate of arts degree and 45 students received their bachelor of science degree, only the second class to earn a four-year degree at Foothill. The program boasted a 100% passage rate of the California dental hygiene licensing exam.

At Foothill, teachers are able to form relationships with students because they understand the experience of attending a community college, as exemplified by the faculty speaker, Debbie Lee, who has taught math at the college since 2007. In her address to students, Lee chronicled her journey growing up in San Francisco as a Chinese American woman, then as a community and state college student, and becoming the first in her family to graduate from college.

Lee said she achieved her academic success in spite of racism

and stereotyping from other students and instructors. She was told that “her English was pretty good,” that she ought to remain quiet and deferential to other students and authority figures, and learned that she could not navigate the world without first confronting other people’s assumptions about her.

She encouraged graduating students not only to embrace who they are, but go further by questioning which people or institutions create definitions of belonging and dictate how they experience their identity. “I challenge you to think about these stereotypes,” she said. “Grades do not define who you are. Stereotypes do not define who you are.”

Faculty and staff were forthcoming with expressions of joy and affection for the students. Foothill College President Thuy Nguyen urged the class of 2019 to be fighters for justice and promoters of social good, and closed her remarks with, “I love you, congratulations!”

Daisy Rosalez introduced Eman Magzoub, the recipient of the first Service Leadership Award, and used her time on stage to talk about her own story,



RAY LEVY-UYEDA

**Chetna Kumar** (left), Ashley Fletcher and Tia Geri listen to a student speaker during Foothill College’s graduation ceremony on June 28.

noting that Foothill nurtured her both academically and personally. Rosalez said she grew up in San Bernardino, where the local high school has a 50% non-completion rate. Before attending Foothill, she joined the military and worked in fast food restaurants, gaining first-hand experience in both public service and the injustices levied against those working minimum wage jobs, she said.

Rosalez asked her peers to think about all of those who would follow in their footsteps, many of whom were the first in their families to graduate from college. “It is in your daily actions that you speak to the world about who you truly are,” Rosalez said.

Students were celebrated as they received their diplomas, with faculty announced where they would attend school in the

fall, winners of dean’s awards, honors scholars, first-generation college students, and affinity group memberships.

After the ceremony, faculty and staff lined the walkway to the reception area near the Smithwick Theater, offering hugs and words of advice and wisdom to the departing students. ▣

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# Google funds free shuttles through 2024

By Mark Noack

Mountain View's free community shuttle service will be getting an upgrade. In a new deal inked with the city, Google has agreed to continue paying for the transit system for another five years, ensuring the service will remain in place through 2024.

With the benefit of that time, city officials say they hope to take more control over the service and better integrate it into the area's larger transportation network.

"This is great news for the continuation of the pilot program and service, which many local residents have come to rely

on in their daily routines," said City Manager Dan Rich. "With this extension, Google will have committed more than \$20 million from the program's launch in 2015 through 2024."

After launching in 2015, the community shuttle service has slowly drawn in a growing ridership, reporting it served over 200,000 passengers last year. But up to this point, it was never clear how long the service would remain in place.

The program, which reportedly cost about \$2 million a year to operate, has been renewed by Google officials on an annual basis. While city officials made it clear they appreciated the free

service, they also acknowledged that the pilot could only continue as long as Google wanted it to.

Under the new five-year funding phase, Google officials will reportedly hand off the shuttle program's day-to-day administration. City officials intend to analyze ways to improve the shuttles and link them to other services.

More information about the community shuttle service, including routes, maps and schedules, can be found on its website, [mvcommunityshuttle.com](http://mvcommunityshuttle.com). ▣

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VOICE FILE PHOTO

Google agreed to fund Mountain View's free community shuttle program through 2024.

## OVERNIGHT PARKING

► Continued from page 1

community colleges to connect homeless students using the parking facilities with housing, food and financial resources.

"There's way more complication than one would initially think of something as ... simple as, 'If they can park during the day, why can't they park overnight?'" Nguyen said.

Preliminarily, the Foothill-De Anza Community College District estimates that implementation of the bill could cost its campuses about \$830,000 each per year for additional security, custodial support, fencing, signs and, if a parking lot is not available close to bathrooms, portable toilets. This cost could vary greatly depending on the level of infrastructure spending required to support each parking area, according to Foothill.

If the Commission on State Mandates determines AB 302's requirements to be a reimbursable state mandate, the state would reimburse community colleges. But that determination is not guaranteed.

"One of the challenges with the bill for many community colleges, including Foothill, is the financial one. Where are we going to find the money?" Nguyen asked, suggesting that local tech companies or wealthy donors could potentially contribute.

Senate Committee staff has recommended the bill be amended to allow community colleges to opt out if they show they are addressing student homelessness in other ways, including by providing emergency housing grants, hotel vouchers and rapid re-housing referral services. Exempt colleges would have to report to the Community

College Chancellor's Office on the services provided to homeless students, the number and type of students served and whether they remain in school or graduate.

Other amendments include adding a Dec. 31, 2022, sunset date; moving up the implementation date from July 1, 2020, to April 1, 2020; requiring that students who use the lots be enrolled in at least six units per semester; and requiring the Community College Chancellor's Office to conduct a follow-up survey on student homelessness and release the results by 2022.

The California Faculty Association, California School Employees Association, the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges and Student Senate for California Community Colleges all formally support AB 302.

At a summit on student homelessness at Foothill in June, students, faculty, community leaders and elected officials spent a day brainstorming short- and long-term solutions to the issue. Ideas ranged from the feasible — providing 24-hour study areas and laundry services and expanding a campus food pantry — to the more ambitious, including building student housing and fining owners of vacant "ghost houses."

During the summit, students who have experienced homelessness urged their campus leaders and elected officials not to shy away from out-of-the-box solutions that will help struggling students in the near term.

As a result of the summit, Nguyen said Foothill plans to pilot a smartphone application that will list available housing and food resources on campus and in the community. She also

wants to talk with local cities and the county about prioritizing affordable housing and accessory dwelling units for community college students. She's working with the Foothill administration as well to make housing assistance and information part of the enrollment and orientation process for new students, just as financial aid and other support programs are.

***'The community college leaders accelerated the conversation of food insecurity and housing insecurity well before the bill.'***

PRESIDENT THUY NGUYEN,  
FOOTHILL COLLEGE

"When students do not have money because of their family status to be able to pay for books, then we ask them, 'Do you need financial aid?' We don't make the assumption that students have an ability to pay for books," Nguyen said. "If we go at it from that mindset, then we ask the question, 'How can we provide information or even actual services to (homeless) students?'"

While she won't take a firm position on AB 302, Nguyen is supportive of another bill that would change the way financial aid is calculated for community college students by taking into account the total cost of attendance, including housing. Senate Bill 291, which is co-sponsored by the California Community

Colleges and the Community College League of California, is now pending in the Assembly's Higher Education Committee.

Berman's bill has brought to the forefront a student homelessness crisis at California community colleges, where nearly one in five students are either homeless or do not have a stable housing, according to a recent survey conducted by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office and The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice. But there is little agreement on whether overnight housing is the right solution to address this segment of the state's housing crisis.

Supporters see AB 302 as a way to provide fast-acting, much-needed relief for students who live out of their cars and struggle to find somewhere safe to park at night.

"This is not meant to be a long-term solution, but the crisis exists today and we can't pretend like it doesn't," Berman has said.

Opponents, however, have criticized the legislation as a one-size-fits-all, temporary fix that will take resources away from long-term solutions, such as more substantial financial aid for community college students. Citing concerns about cost and liability, some

community colleges have asked that compliance with the bill be optional.

"We are concerned that this well-meaning approach masks the deeper issue of lack of resources, such as financial aid for California's community college students, and instead potentially subjects students to sanitation and safety issues," the Community College League of California said in an opposition statement. "We are concerned AB 302 perpetuates the structural inequities in California's higher education system."

The bill passed the Assembly in May on a 60-8 vote and is set for a July 9 hearing at the Senate Judiciary Committee.

The safe overnight lot bill is one of several possible solutions, in Nguyen's eyes, including giving students Airbnb gift certificates for emergency, short-term housing (which Foothill is working to do) and prioritizing students for affordable housing in the area.

"Quite frankly, the community college leaders accelerated the conversation of food insecurity and housing insecurity well before the bill," she said, "but this bill has lit a fire of, 'Then, what are we going to do, if it's not this?'" ▣

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## CROSSWALK

► Continued from page 5

lines by the intersection to discourage drivers from cutting into the lane of opposing traffic when turning.

According to Lopez, Athey's request was one of hundreds that the department receives annually through the city's online system AskMV. "We may

not even be aware of the problem," Lopez said. "The residents and the drivers are the eyes and ears around this city."

Faught credited Athey with compelling school administrators to tackle an ongoing issue that otherwise may have idled on the school's list of items of address.

"She was the linchpin in getting this whole thing implemented," Faught said. ▣

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by Magali Gauthier

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## VTA

► Continued from page 5

entirely of political appointees who must currently be serving as city council members or on the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors. Often, board members face a steep learning curve, and it doesn't help that they often lack any experience in transportation, finance or management of an agency of this size, the report says.

What results is that VTA board members quickly become overwhelmed with their duties, which include reading through board packets hundreds of pages long. It becomes too difficult to govern the transit agency in addition to the communities they were elected to serve, so VTA board members tend to focus their attention on their own communities instead of VTA. VTA reports generally go unread, and board members tend to make decisions to benefit their own constituents that are not in the interests of the county as a whole, the report maintains.

After reading the grand jury report, Mountain View Councilman John McAlister described it as "all true, and it's long overdue." For about two years, McAlister has represented Mountain View, Palo Alto, Los Altos and Los Altos Hills on the VTA board. In that time, he says he has been disappointed by the lack of interest and engagement by some of his colleagues. There doesn't seem to be any political will to correct the problems, he said.

"Some board members are there because their mayor planted them, or they're there to pad their resume," he said. "There's no true continuity on the board, and then there's no feeling of responsibility because you have this continual change of characters."

The grand jury report echoes a common complaint from North County city leaders who say that San Jose exerts outsized influence on the VTA board. San Jose is allocated five board seats, while another five are split between the other 14 cities in the county. The county Board of Supervisors receives two seats.

In part, the report blames this dominance by San Jose political interests for the problems with the county's underperforming light rail system. The light rail line extends more than 42 miles, running from Mountain View south through much of San Jose, yet it has failed to link to many obvious destinations such as jobs centers, shopping districts or the San Jose International Airport. Taken on its own, the light rail costs taxpayers about \$11 in subsidies for each passenger who uses it — about three times more



MAGALI GAUTHIER

VTA, which runs the county's light rail and public buses, came under fire in a new Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury report that called it one of the most inefficient transit agencies in the country.

than bus transit.

"A case can be made for dismantling or phasing out the light rail system altogether," the grand jury report noted. "A large reduction in the taxpayer subsidy of VTA operations could be achieved by focusing future investment in transit solutions other than light rail."

However, the VTA board actually seems to favor doubling down on light rail and expanding the service. The transit agency is currently considering a pair of light rail extensions to bring it to the Eastridge shopping center in San Jose and near the Netflix headquarters in Los Gatos. The 2.4-mile Eastridge extension will cost \$453 million to complete (\$146 million has already been spent). If built, it is expected to generate a net total of 611 new riders.

**'Some (VTA) board members are there because their mayor planted them, or they're there to pad their resume.'**

COUNCILMAN JOHN MCALISTER

At a meeting on June 6, the VTA board voted unanimously to approve the final environmental impact report for the Eastridge extension, one of the last steps before the project moves forward. San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo, who sits on the VTA board, acknowledged the project doesn't make sense unless its usage wildly exceeds its projections.

"It's not because of the ridership today, because the ridership today doesn't support this kind of investment," Liccardo said. "But what we see happening in the city in terms of opportunity is an incredibly vibrant corridor.

If we can get this right, this transit system will be at the core of that."

According to the grand jury report, the case for expanding light rail is weak and based entirely on political pressure. The authors of the report say they found "virtually no support" for the Eastridge expansion among VTA staff, and the project seemed to be happening solely to satisfy goals in Measure A on the 2000 ballot.

The best way to fix VTA administration would be to change its governance, the report concluded. Having fewer members but giving them longer office terms would give the board more expertise and institutional knowledge. The report also recommends directly electing board members to their seats, rather than having them appointed.

The VTA board is starting to investigate this possibility. McAlister is leading a new board enhancement committee tasked with restructuring VTA governance. The committee has only convened one meeting so far, but it eventually will deliver recommendations back to the full board.

"My gut preferences would be to make VTA an independent board not made up of elected officials," McAlister said. "But I don't want to rush it. It's like the Mueller report. I want to take the time to get it right."

The VTA board has not yet commented on the findings in the civil grand jury report, but it is required by law to issue a formal response within 90 days. In a blog entry, VTA board chairwoman Teresa O'Neill, a councilwoman from Santa Clara, could only say that the report's recommendations would be investigated.

"We intend to carefully review the report provided by the Civil Grand Jury," she wrote. "The report will help to inform the work we are currently performing." ■

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■ OBITUARY

CHRISTOPHER G. DAWES

Former CEO of Lucile Packard Children's Hospital Stanford, Christopher G. Dawes, died on June 29 as a result of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), better known as Lou Gehrig's disease. He was 68 years old.

Dawes stepped down from his post as president and CEO of the hospital in March 2018 to focus on his health. "I am particularly proud of the excellent clinical services we have created, several of which are nationally ranked, the investments we have made in the Children's Health Research Institute (CHRI), the network we have created to provide more access to the care we provide and, of course, our new 'main' building," he said at the time, in an open letter shared on LinkedIn.

According to his biography on the hospital website, Dawes was instrumental during its developmental years, building it into the nationally renowned medical institution it is today.

"We went from being a very lovely community hospital, nicely designed and family-friendly, to a world-class children's hospital drawing patients from across the United States and around the world," said Susan Packard Orr, a longtime member of the hospital's board of directors and daughter of its founder, Lucile Packard.

Some of Dawes' contributions as CEO include directing a \$500 million program to build centers of excellence in various medical specialties, including heart and cancer care; brain and behavior; and pulmonary disease. He also developed a network of care for children and mothers, and oversaw the hospital's expansion into a state-of-the-art 361-bed facility in Palo Alto, which opened in 2017.

Born in Great Britain, he and his family moved to California when he was a child. His first career dream was to become a commercial airline pilot, according to his biography. However, he launched his career in hospital administration after earning a bachelor's degree in public administration from San Diego State University in 1974. A decade later, he received a master's degree in business administration from McLaren School of Business at the University of San Francisco.

He took on the role of chief operating officer at Lucile Packard Children's Hospital Stanford in 1995 after spending 10 years working in senior administrative positions at Pacific Presbyterian Medical Center in San Francisco (which later became the California Pacific Medical Center), Santa Clara Valley Medical Center in San Jose and Stanford Health Care. He moved up the ladder, becoming CEO in 1997 upon proving himself a strong leader during the failed merger attempt between Stanford Health Care and University of California, San Francisco.

"I wasn't sure about becoming a CEO, in part because there's a lot of politics, a lot of diplomacy and I was more interested in day-to-day operations," he said in a 2017 interview with Lucile Packard Children's Hospital. "I learned fairly quickly that as a CEO, you're not there to problem-solve. You are there to help coach and guide people so that they will make the right decisions. My job is to provide the vision, hire good people, set the direction and let them do the problem solving."

His former colleagues hold fond memories of him. "Beyond his effective leadership, what I will remember most about Chris are his kindness and dedication to the mission of helping children in need," said Stanford University President Marc Tessier-Lavigne. "He leaves behind a significant legacy at the Lucile Packard Children's Hospital Stanford, having taken the institution to a new level. He truly created the children's hospital of the future."

Lloyd Minor, dean of the Stanford School of Medicine, shared similar sentiments. "Chris was a tireless advocate for children's health. Through his passion and dedication, he helped bring extraordinary advances in clinical services to our young patients," Minor said. "An exceptional colleague and leader, he will be greatly missed by the entire Stanford Medicine community."

Dawes is survived by his wife, Elizabeth "Beth" Dawes of Los Altos; his children, Scott Dawes of San Jose (Brittney), Matthew Dawes of San Francisco and Sara Dawes Hughes of Spokane, Washington, (Caleb); and two great-nephews. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health.



# Trump administration drops citizenship question from census

By Bay City News Service

The American Civil Liberties Union confirmed Tuesday that the administration of President Donald Trump has dropped its bid to include a citizenship question on the 2020 census.

The administration's action comes after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in a 5-4 vote last

week that U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross' reason for including the question — allegedly to aid voting rights enforcement — “seems to have been contrived.”

The high court said the agency could not include the question unless it was supported by a reasoned explanation.

The ACLU represented a coalition of immigrant

advocacy groups in one of two lawsuits in which the Supreme Court ruled. Those two cases were filed in a federal court in New York and the other one was filed by 18 states and a group of cities and counties, including San Francisco and Monterey County.

ACLU attorney Dale Ho said in a statement, “In light of the Supreme Court’s ruling, the Trump administration had no choice but to proceed with printing the 2020 census forms without a citizenship question. Everyone in America counts in the census, and today’s decision means we all will.”

Four other challenges, including one by the state of California, were filed in federal courts

in California and Maryland, but had not yet reached the Supreme Court.

In all six cases, federal trial judges issued preliminary injunctions blocking the question. The states and organizations filing the lawsuits argued that a citizenship question would result in an unfair undercount of non-citizen immigrants and Hispanics.

California officials had estimated a citizenship question could result in an undercount of up to 1.6 million state residents, leading to a decrease in federal funding for public services.

State Assemblyman Marc Berman, whose district includes Mountain View and Palo Alto, said in a statement after the

Supreme Court ruling that there was no question that the Trump administration “is intentionally and systematically trying to intimidate Californians.”

“Whether you were born here 90 years ago, or moved here yesterday, you are a Californian. Californians don’t get bullied, and we don’t get intimidated,” Berman said.

San Francisco City Attorney Dennis Herrera said in a statement after the ruling, “This decision is a triumph for all Americans and the rule of law. The administration’s question was designed to skew the census and undercount the population in a way that benefited Trump’s agenda, no matter the cost.”

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### CRIME BRIEFS

► Continued from page 4

#### MAN FOUND WITH \$1K STOLEN SPEAKERS

A 49-year-old man was arrested last week after police found him with speakers valued at more than \$1,000 that were reported stolen.

Officers found the man, a

transient, on the 1000 block of San Rafael Avenue in the Terra Bella area around 3:50 p.m. on Wednesday, June 25. The man was reportedly sitting on the ground with his belongings and garbage strewn about, according to police spokeswoman Katie Nelson.

Among the things on the ground were several speakers still boxed up, which the man

told police he found in a dumpster. Officers examined the boxes and determined they had been stolen, Nelson said.

The man was arrested on suspicion of receiving stolen property, misappropriation of lost property and resisting arrest. The man allegedly tried to walk away when officers told him the speakers were stolen.

—Kevin Forestieri

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# 'Historic discussion' as Manzanita Talks on regional traffic problems move forward

MOUNTAIN VIEW, MIDPENINSULA CITIES MEET WITH LOCAL TECH COMPANIES TO SEEK SOLUTIONS

By Kate Bradshaw

Efforts to bring together public and private sector leaders to talk about how to address regional transportation problems moved forward on June 13 with what Joint Ventures Silicon Valley President and CEO Russell Hancock called a historic discussion.

It was the third in a series of five such meetings that Joint Ventures has convened called the Manzanita Talks, which aim to explore creating a "sub-regional transportation management association (TMA)" a nonprofit that develops and manages a transportation program to give commuters viable alternatives to driving solo to get to work. TMAs generally include cities and/or businesses.

Officials from East Palo Alto, Los Altos, Menlo Park, Mountain View, Palo Alto, Redwood City, Sunnyvale and Atherton are participating in the talks, as well as representatives from

Facebook, Genentech, Google, Intuit, LinkedIn, Palantir and Tesla.

City Council members don't often meet with people from the private sector, especially outside of "contentious places" like council chambers or law offices, and most bring with them a "chip on their shoulder" based on the sector they represent, Hancock said.

Those from the private sector, Hancock said, often feel vilified for creating jobs, and believe that they're being blamed for traffic and housing problems, as well as being pressured to pay for everything. They've already invested millions in their own companies' transportation programs, while the public sector appears to be doing less, he said.

Public sector people, he added, feel frustrated because they believe that people from the private sector don't understand that cities "can't just build transportation infrastructure overnight" and can't go "winging around

with solutions" or making grandiose statements. Infrastructure projects have to be carefully studied, with environmental impact reports completed and many levels of city processes conducted first, all of which are time-consuming.

Despite those differences, he said, "none of the partners stormed out (of the discussion). Everybody is still talking."

Joint Ventures Silicon Valley is going to spend the summer doing research and analysis, and will come back to the group in September with alternatives and recommendations for funding and governance structures that might work.

While the effort initially was intended to address the "first and last mile problem," characterized as the challenge of connecting people with transit options near where they live and work, the effort now incorporates goals to encourage commuters who travel five to 10 miles to work to use alternatives

to driving solo.

Hancock said that the eight tech companies taking part in the talks run some 1,600 buses in total that bring people from all over the Bay Area to their workplaces. Those employees alone equal in number 11% of all Caltrain daily riders, and they have a combined 3,000 bikes on their campuses, Hancock said.

Despite efforts by those companies, five out of six city officials surveyed expressed ambivalence toward the transportation demand management programs they'd required of development projects in their cities.

How to make those tech bus and shuttle trips more efficient, whether by encouraging private sector companies to partner with each other or with the public sector and whether these companies should take on greater efforts to provide bus services to the contract workers they employ, is something that will be evaluated in Joint

Ventures' research.

The group is also looking at the possibility of forming a subregional transportation management association, or at least linking the existing transportation associations to achieve better outcomes and economies of scale. Many, but not all, of the existing associations operate within the boundaries of single cities and provide transportation routes that don't necessarily capture the needs of people who work and live in different cities, Hancock said.

The Joint Ventures study also is expected to analyze three key components of what makes Peninsula traffic so painful: getting on and off U.S. 101, traveling east to west, and the needs of communities that have significant cut-through traffic.

Conversations about how to fund whatever is recommended in the study, Hancock said, will begin in the fall. ▀

Email Kate Bradshaw at [kbradshaw@almanacnews.com](mailto:kbradshaw@almanacnews.com)

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# Governor endorses Josh Becker for state Senate

RACE FOR SEAT INCLUDES FORMER ASSEMBLYWOMAN SALLY LIEBER OF MOUNTAIN VIEW

By Matthew Vollrath

Josh Becker, a Menlo Park resident running for California state Senate in District 13 next year, landed an endorsement last week from Gov. Gavin Newsom. A Becker campaign press release quotes Newsom's comments about the candidate: "Josh is a long-time, dedicated community leader. Josh Becker has earned my confidence and endorsement."

The District 13 incumbent, Jerry Hill, will be leaving the

Senate next year due to term limits.

Former Assemblywoman Sally Lieber of Mountain View is also running for the District 13 seat, as is Shelly Masur, a member of the Redwood City City Council, Michael Brownrigg of Burlingame and Annie Oliva of Milbrae.

Becker, a former venture capitalist and entrepreneur, has collaborated with Newsom for nearly 20 years, he said. Back when Newsom was a supervisor



Josh Becker

in San Francisco, the pair worked together on the Full Circle Fund, an organization Becker founded to provide grants to nonprofits working to improve the Bay Area. Becker said both he and the governor "favor bold action" around issues of transportation, homelessness, and the environment.

"Obviously (this endorsement) creates tremendous momentum for us," Becker said, "but only in combination with local

endorsements and support on the ground."

In addition to Newsom's, Becker has received over 40 other endorsements from local elected officials. These include two U.S. congressmen, numerous city council members, and nine local mayors, including Ray Mueller of Menlo Park and Daniel Yost of Woodside.

Key issues for Becker are climate and transportation, including government investment in solar power and electric vehicles, and public education. He noted

that only half of San Mateo County third-graders currently read at grade level, and that admission to the University of California system is becoming increasingly difficult for in-state students, problems that he hopes to address if elected.

District 13 runs from South San Francisco to Sunnyvale, and includes the majority of San Mateo County and part of Santa Clara County, including Mountain View. ▀

Email Matthew Vollrath at [mvollrath@almanacnews.com](mailto:mvollrath@almanacnews.com)

## ADA LAWSUIT

► Continued from page 1

after Moore's disabled plaintiff, who alleged he was trapped in his wheelchair in the restaurant's restroom, was later found walking on his own two feet.

### Witness tampering

The new allegations of witness tampering center on Moore's ex-husband, Randy Moore, and her son, Geoshua Levinson.

Randy Moore has served as a frequent plaintiff attorney in similar ADA and safe drinking water lawsuits. Levinson allegedly operates as a scout for the law firm, visiting businesses in advance and surreptitiously photographing the interior. Any violations that are found are later packaged into a lawsuit with a disabled person listed as the plaintiff, Saniefar's suit alleges.

In cases when defendants challenge the allegations, Levinson has provided sworn declarations in support of his findings,

referring to himself as a certified access specialist (CASP). Often these declarations are enough to convince business owners that they will lose the lawsuit, and they agree to a settlement. In some cases, Levinson has later been hired by businesses to help them become ADA-compliant.

Saniefar was suspicious of Levinson's credentials. In his 2010 CASp application, Levinson asserted he met the minimal work experience requirements, claiming he had worked as a project manager for four years starting in 2006, when he would have been 16 years old. Lying to obtain a state contractor license is a criminal act.

Saniefar filed a subpoena to question Levinson's listed employer during those years, a contractor named Timothy McAdams.

McAdams, who now lives in Florida, had a longstanding friendship with Randy Moore and Levinson. As he later told the court, McAdams said he "panicked" when he first received

notice in March that he was being subpoenaed in the case.

He quickly called up Randy Moore, and asked what the whole matter was about. Moore encouraged him to call up Saniefar, and let him listen in on the conversation.

During the conversation, Moore sent a string of 69 text messages to McAdams, essentially prompting him on what to say to her. These texts include questions for him to ask her ("What's this about?" and "Tell me what you are after"), as well as suggestions for him to not to disclose anything ("Stop answering" and "I don't know anything"). Moore's texts also asked McAdams to affirm that Levinson had worked as his project manager.

McAdams later testified that he was ignorant of what was going on. When he spoke to Randy Moore and Levinson, they both urged him to say as little as possible.

"You don't have to answer any questions at all. You can just sit

there and be stupid," McAdams recalled Levinson telling him.

In his deposition, McAdams said he was frustrated that he was thrown in the middle of this case. Instead of downplaying what he knew, he decided to tell everything he could.

"I was angry that I got drug into something that I have no clue what the hell it's about," McAdams said. "And I'm being told to not remember things that I don't even know."

McAdams testified that Levinson had never worked as his project manager. In fact, Levinson's only experience working for him was a one-week stint when he was shadowing him. He also revealed that Levinson and Moore had repeatedly tried to influence what he would say in his deposition.

With this testimony, Saniefar in April filed for sanctions against both defendants, urging the court to see their actions as criminal witness tampering.

"It was shocking, you just don't think that people would do that, especially an attorney licensed through the California state bar," Saniefar said. "This shows that level of egregious conduct that two of the defendants have been engaged in to protect their enterprise."

Attorneys representing the Mission Law Firm dismissed McAdams' testimony, describing him as a drug addict and alcoholic who had mental problems. They assured the court that Randy Moore could only hear McAdams when he listened in on the phone call. They insisted that Moore's text messages telling McAdams to say nothing were actually evidence that he thought the phone call was a bad idea.

In a hearing last month, U.S. District Judge Lawrence O'Neill was scathing in his response. He repeatedly called out Moore and Levinson for telling blatant lies in their testimony. It simply wasn't plausible to believe they

were being truthful, he said.

"The circumstantial evidence here is screaming loudly," O'Neill said. "The bottom line here is that there was witness tampering by both of the defendants ... and the court finds it is such serious witness tampering that the court cannot condone it."

In his ruling, the judge struck the answers by both defendants, a rare action that means the actions by the defendants have been so inappropriate that the court is revoking their ability to defend the case.

The ruling against Moore and Levinson is a major win for the larger RICO lawsuit, which includes numerous other defendants. That case is still ongoing.

The new allegations follow other criminal charges against other ADA-lawsuit attorneys. In May, Scott Johnson, a Sacramento attorney who had also filed thousands of ADA lawsuits, was indicted on federal tax fraud charges. Johnson had allegedly understated his income from his legal settlements. He currently faces up to three years in prison.

Despite the recent scrutiny, Tanya Moore and her colleagues have continued to file ADA lawsuits against local businesses, although she now operates as the Moore Law Firm. In recent months, her firm has sued businesses including the San Jose restaurant Mini Gourmet, a Burlington Coat Factory department store in Campbell, and the Palo Alto cafe Pluto's.

Michele Bernal, co-owner of Blossom True Hardware in Mountain View, said she was savoring the turn of events. Moore had targeted her shop for \$20,000 in 2013, she said.

"It's good to hear that this is all coming back to bite her in the butt," Bernal said. "Hopefully, she's going to get her law license revoked." ▀

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VOICE FILE PHOTO

Michele Bernal is the co-owner of Blossom True Value Hardware, which was targeted by a law firm that's now the subject of a lawsuit over the many ADA lawsuits it's filed against small businesses.

## EAST WHISMAN

▶ Continued from page 1

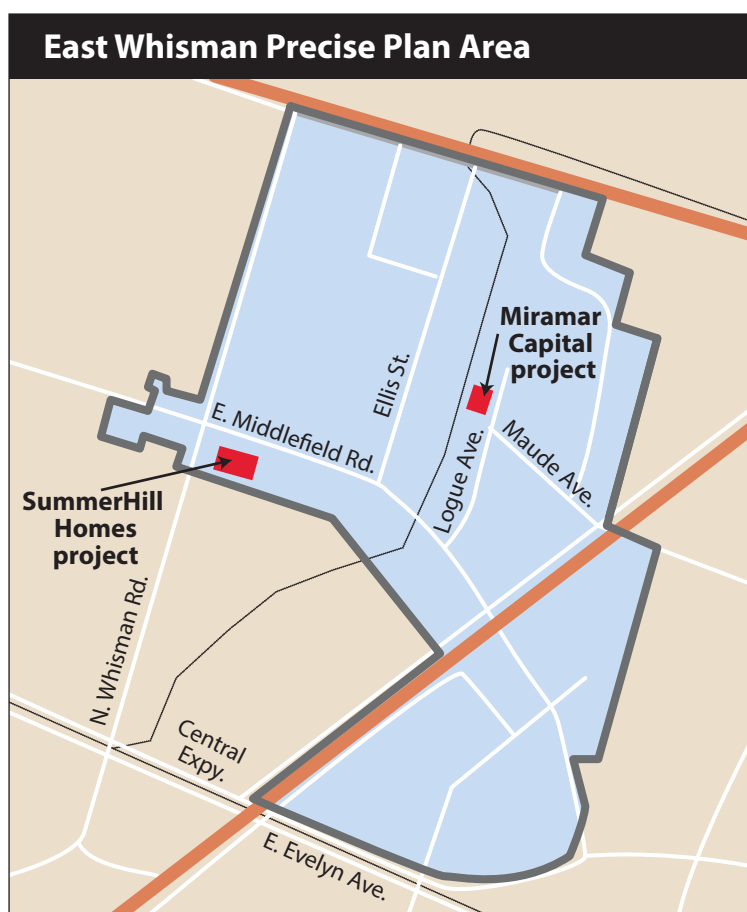
Whisman, which is the area south of Highway 101 between North Whisman Road, the Sunnyvale border and Central Expressway (excluding Whisman Station). The Mountain View City Council has sought to rezone it into an urban, pedestrian-friendly neighborhood that closely balances office and residential growth.

Today, East Whisman is mostly covered in one- and two-story office buildings with huge expanses of surface parking. Council members are expected to vote in the fall on the new vision for the area detailed in the East Whisman Precise Plan, a blueprint for future development.

Even with the precise plan months away from approval, developers have sought to get a head start on transforming the area, putting forth so-called gatekeeper projects with dense housing and office space in the past year.

Perhaps the most eye-opening project is at 400 Logue Ave., where developer Miramar Capital is proposing to build 367 residential units on a 2.5-acre site. The existing single-story office building would be demolished and replaced by two residential buildings, one 11 stories tall with 134 one-, two- and three-bedroom ownership units, and the other a six- or seven-story structure with 236 rental units.

The Logue Avenue project, which was reviewed at a Development Review Committee meeting last month, is proposing two-level subterranean parking with about 400 spaces, and is expected to run afoul of at least a couple of zoning restrictions in the draft East Whisman Precise Plan. The maximum height for buildings in the precise plan is 95 feet,



Mountain View's **East Whisman Precise Plan** calls for redeveloping nearly 370 acres of low-density office buildings into a balanced mix of offices and housing. Two residential development proposals, by Summerhill Homes and Miramar Capital, are already moving through the city's planning process.

and the project is unlikely to meet the plan's standards for building setbacks, according to a report by the developer.

Aiming to address the concerns of city planning staff earlier this year, the report notes that the buildings will be broken up into three components — the base, middle and top — each with its own materials, colors and details to break up what would otherwise be a towering facade.

Also in the city's planning pipeline is a project by SummerHill Homes, which is proposing to build 464 homes along a stretch of Middlefield Road east of North Whisman

Road, about one-third of a mile away from Miramar's Logue Avenue project. SummerHill's plans for the property have changed dramatically since it was first proposed in January 2018, and it now has five buildings ranging from four to seven stories tall. The project includes 194 ownership condos, 270 apartments and a 0.4-acre public park.

David Conklin, speaking on behalf of the owners of the Middlefield property, urged the city's Environmental Planning Commission at its June 19 meeting to support the project as the first step toward transforming East Whisman.

Mountain View envisions responsible, balanced growth in the area, he said, and SummerHill's mix of rental and ownership homes would set a good tone for what could one day become "one of the most desirable places to live and work in Silicon Valley."

Conklin also warned that if city leaders turn down the project, it would dash any near-term plans to redevelop the property.

"In the absence of the city's support for this project, the current owners will revert to what they've done since they developed these (buildings) in the 1960s, which is to continue leasing them as commercial R&D facilities," Conklin said. "(The city) will miss a great opportunity to see residential development on the site for the foreseeable future."

Both the SummerHill and Miramar projects are moving forward early because the developers are subsidizing the construction of a new school on the other end of town. The Los Altos School District recently agreed to purchase land in the San Antonio shopping center for \$155 million, and is planning to defray the costs through a complex process known as the transfer of development rights (TDRs).

The school district is purchasing a property zoned for high-density development, and has agreed not to fully develop the land and instead "sell" developers the remaining 610,000 square feet of density allowed on the property. Miramar Capital is purchasing 72,000 square feet of development rights to supplement its Logue Avenue project, which allows the project to exceed the limits of the East Whisman Precise Plan. SummerHill Homes purchased 10,000 square feet of extra density from the school district.

The TDR deal with the Los

Altos School District gave both projects swift approval to go through the city's planning process as gatekeeper projects, putting them far ahead of other redevelopment proposals for East Whisman.

The early start, however, means both housing projects are subject to rules and requirements that are a moving target, and staffers at the Planning Commission meeting pointed to several ways in which SummerHill Homes' project fall short of the draft East Whisman Precise Plan. One of the roads between the buildings, for example, is between 11 and 15 feet narrower than the standards for the area, which combined with the out-of-compliance building setbacks would create a stark canyon effect.

City staffers also said the project falls short on requirements to provide 100 square feet of common open space per unit, and that SummerHill sought to use non-compliant open areas on the site to count toward that requirement.

A majority of planning commissioners agreed that SummerHill was asking for too much, but by varying degrees. Commission member Joyce Yin said the city would be setting the wrong pace for future East Whisman projects by flatly ignoring parts of the precise plan, and that she leaned toward allowing no exceptions. Commission chair Pamela Baird said future iterations of the project should comply with more of East Whisman's zoning restrictions, but that the city should be careful not to throw too many hurdles at a project that's the first out the gate and partially funding a new school.

"I don't want to put too many impediments on this project going forward," she said. ▀

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COURTESY OF THE CITY OF MOUNTAIN VIEW

**Apartments and ownership condos** are being proposed by Summerhill Homes for a stretch of East Middlefield Road that's currently occupied by single-story offices.



**An 11-story housing project** is being proposed on Logue Avenue by Miramar Capital. It's among the most dense housing proposals to date and would stand 128 feet tall.

# Summertime and the livin' is jazzy

FOR MIDPENINSULA JAZZ LOVERS, THE SEASON LOOKS BRIGHT

By Yoshi Kato

With summer in full swing, the days are long and the local live jazz offerings particularly plentiful.

A long-running favorite for jazz fans, **The Stanford Jazz Festival** will see Still Dreaming, the collective led by saxophonist Joshua Redman (whose quartet opened the Stanford Jazz Festival last year) make its Bay Area debut with drummer Dave King (of The Bad Plus fame) to conclude the festival at Bing on Aug. 3, with trumpeter Ron Miles and double bassist Scott Colley rounding out the all-star quartet. Between now and then there are both intimate and larger-scale concerts by Stanford Jazz Workshop faculty and others in Dinkelspiel Auditorium and Campbell Recital Hall, including the beloved SJW All-Star Jam on Aug. 2.

**Jazz at Filoli** has pretty much perfected the art of live jazz (and more) on a Sunday afternoon. The base level ticket includes a drink ticket for beer, white wine or flavored sparkling water, and lunch boxes



CHARGED PARTICLES

## Charged Particles

(left to right: Murray Low, Aaron Germain and Jon Krosnick) will perform at Portola Vineyards on Aug. 18.

can be pre-ordered. Vocalist Sara Niemietz and guitarist/composer W.G. Snuffy Walden headline on July 14, pianist Larry Vuckovich and his Contemporary Swinging Hard Bop Ensemble play July 28, and vocalist Nicolas Bearde pays tribute to Nat "King" Cole's centenary on Aug. 11. Conguero, educator and all-around good guy John Santos closes at the 2019 live jazz season at Filoli on Aug. 25 with his sextet.

**Portola Vineyards** in Portola Valley is offering three more stylistically varied concerts for its Summer Jazz series (paired with

wine tasting). Cabanijazz, led by conguero and Pacific Mambo Orchestra member Javier Cabanillas, performs July 14, while on Aug. 4 the Five Ten quintet out of the East Bay (with its 510 area code) will offer its brand of globally electrified fusion featuring steel pans and Brazilian percussion. Local favorites Charged Particles close out the series on Aug. 18 with a tribute to the iconic pianist, composer and bandleader Chick Corea.

Free outdoor jazz concerts are once again presented every Thursday at the **Stanford Shopping Center** (except on the

Fourth of July), starting at 6 p.m. through Aug. 22. Attendees can sit in the courtyard outside of Nordstrom to hear harpist Destiny Muhammad (July 11); the fusion quartet Mino Yanci (July 18); '50s West Coast jazz-meets-bossa nova singer/songwriter Avi Wisnia (July 25); "Spanglish Rumba/Ska" purevivors Makr' (Aug 1); R&B/soul/funk/ska practitioners Stymie & the PLJO (a.k.a. Pimp Jones Luv Orchestra, Aug. 8); blues harmonic maestro Aki Kumar (Aug. 15); and Flamenco Gypsy dance and music octet Barrio Manouche (Aug. 22). ▣

## INFORMATION

**What:** 2019 Stanford Jazz Festival.

**Where:** Various venues on the Stanford University campus.

**When:** Through Aug. 3.

**Cost:** \$8-\$110.

**Info:** Go to [stanfordjazz.org/stanford-jazz-festival-2019/](http://stanfordjazz.org/stanford-jazz-festival-2019/).

**What:** Jazz at Filoli 2019

**Where:** Filoli Historic House & Garden, 86 Cañada Road, Woodside.

**When:** July 14, July 28, Aug. 11, Aug. 25; 1 p.m.

**Cost:** \$85/\$75 for Filoli members.

**Info:** Go to [filoli.org/jazz/](http://filoli.org/jazz/)

**What:** 2019 Portola Vineyards Summer Jazz.

**Where:** Portola Vineyards, 850 Los Trancos Road, Portola Valley.

**When:** July 14, Aug. 4, Aug. 18, 6 p.m.

**Cost:** \$12-\$24.

**Info:** Go to [portolavineyards.com/events.html](http://portolavineyards.com/events.html).

**What:** Stanford Shopping Center 33rd Annual Summer Jazz Series.

**Where:** Stanford Shopping Center, 660 Stanford Shopping Center, Palo Alto.

**When:** Thursdays through Aug. 22 (except for July 4); 6 p.m.

**Cost:** Free.

**Info:** Go to [sfjazz.org/stanford](http://sfjazz.org/stanford).

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# Viewpoint

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Mountain View  
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## ■ WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

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## Solving the housing 'crisis'

NEW IDEAS NEEDED TO ADDRESS SHORTAGE OF HOMES

By Robert Pollak

As an aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008, when it was decided to bail out investors and let middle- and lower-income people fend for themselves, millions of single-family homes went into foreclosure. These homes went into the coffers of well-capitalized partnerships and syndicates. They were the ones with the money to pick up bargains. Today, rental housing is owned mainly by large partnerships and corporations far removed from renters.

Many RV and manufactured home parks were also gobbled up, and now mom-and-pop RV places are uncommon. Large New York Stock Exchange corporations own RV parks.

Corporations know how to maximize profits — raise rents, postpone repairs, etc. One day late with the rent and an

### Guest Opinion

eviction notice is immediately issued. Then you are faced with late payment and other fees and, if you can't pay, eventual homelessness. Residents at the lower end of the economic scale suffer the most. Renters are captive victims.

As we crawled out of the financial crisis, there was not enough foresight to ramp up housing construction. Governments and developers did not build enough inventories to keep up with population, thereby creating a shortage. Was this deliberate?

In addition to a housing deficit, industries in the area became successful beyond our wildest dreams — Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Alphabet, to name a few. Their well-paid technocrats can afford to pay exorbitant rent.

This created the housing

"crisis." We don't really have a crisis. London, Dresden, Warsaw and other cities had a crisis after World War II. What we have is a lack of will to solve problems associated with providing a roof over us.

Alphabet and Stanford University have offered some contributions, and Santa Clara County issued housing bonds. Alphabet and Stanford will target their contributions toward benefiting their employees, and county bonds are minimal. That's not going to help the general population.

We need leaders that can think out of the box. For example, London after WWII decided on factory-built (mass produced) houses. They built hundreds of thousands. By the end of the program, a house could be erected in 40 hours.

We have factories that produce homes — attractive, modern, earthquake-resistant,

energy-efficient, durable modular homes. Google offered land — why not have a few thousand manufactured homes installed there? In a year or less we could make a dent in the housing shortage. Manufactured homes are a long way from the last century's "boxes." I would be proud to live in one of them.

Another example: Minneapolis decided to eliminate single-family zoning, which creates space for second homes to reduce the shortage.

There must be other cities here and abroad with new ideas. We have enough brains in this area to come up with solutions. This doesn't address the homeless problem — that's another more intractable, real crisis, bound to get worse.

The present system isn't working. Do something. Now.

*Robert Pollak lives on West Middlefield Road in Mountain View.*

## ■ LETTERS

VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

### RESPECT

What gives Donald Trump the right to insult, demean and degrade publicly any who cross him or fail to pay him the proper "respect"?

What respect is due a multiply accused rapist, adulterer, serial liar and thief who steals from workmen by denying them the wages they have earned by working on his company's projects.

The foregoing actually points to someone who, rather than twittering madly against others, should instead be by the side of the road picking up trash in an orange jumpsuit,

*Ed Taub  
Devoto Street*

### RENT CONTROL SUBCOMMITTEE

In an article published June 28 ("Subcommittee to propose rent control changes"), you reported that the Mountain View City Council on June 25 had created a three-member subcommittee to consider proposing amendments to the rent control law just approved by city voters in November 2016 (Measure V).

The subcommittee includes two council members (Margaret Abe-Koga and Chris Clark) who opposed Measure V. Indeed, both of them supported a deceptive alternative measure (W) placed on the 2016 ballot by the City Council majority to split the vote and forestall any real control over apartment rent increases.

Your article reports that Councilwoman Abe-Koga had raised the prospect of amending Measure V in a goal-setting meeting and had cited, as her concern, the displacement of some tenants in connection with a few cases of old apartments being replaced by new condos. The suggestion is that it would be better to eliminate rent control on 15,000 old apartments and force tens of thousands of renters out of Mountain View than to see more applications to demolish a few hundred apartments and build condos instead.

That would be a poor deal for our city. And, in fact, apartment owners do not even have the "right" to replace apartments with condos. The City Council majority has just been going

along. Some might think that the City Council would leave it to the landlords to campaign to repeal Measure V through their own "sneaky" initiative that finally gathered enough signatures to qualify for the ballot. But what most readers don't know is that I wrote the City Council months ago about the likelihood that the landlords' initiative would be declared invalid for its internal

misrepresentations in contravention of California Elections Code section 18600 as occurred in the legally binding case of San Francisco Forty-Niners v. Nishioka (1999) 75 Cal. App. 4th 637, 645.

While I hope to be proven wrong, it appears that the pro-landlord City Council majority is up to no good. We shall see.

*Gary Wesley  
Continental Circle*

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# Arts & Events

MOUNTAIN VIEW VOICE

## From Bach to the movies

MUSIC@MENLO TAKES A TWO-CENTURY JOURNEY

By Janet Silver Ghent

This year's Music@Menlo festival highlights seven "Incredible Decades," transporting audiences from the age of Bach through the romantic era to the Roaring Twenties and the new millennium. While last summer's seven-city "Creative Capitals" journey featured music from seven European cities, this year's event crosses the ocean into the 20th century, as jazz and popular music coming out of the New World inspired composers worldwide.

Spanning two centuries of chamber music, the 17th annual festival runs July 12 to Aug. 3 at the Center for Performing Arts at Menlo-Atherton High School and Menlo School, both in Atherton.

"Bach Ascending," the first concert program, opens in the 18th century, with the first "Brandenburg Concerto" as well as a suite from Handel's "Water Music." Pianist Wu Han and cellist David Finckel, co-founders and co-artistic directors of the festival, said they are particularly excited about performing those pieces at Menlo for the first time.

Moving through the ages, programs include "Beethoven Launched," which also includes Haydn and Mozart; "Classical Twilight," featuring Schubert's "Winterreise" song cycle, with Han on piano; the "Romantic

Revolution," with the music of Schumann, Chopin and Mendelssohn; and "Moscow to Montmartre," spanning such disparate composers as Rachmaninoff and Debussy.

"I've been drooling over that piece for a long time and finally feel I'm old enough to take the challenge," Han said of "Winterreise." Based on 24 poems by Wilhelm Müller, the melancholy song cycle was composed in the year of Beethoven's death, and just a year before Schubert's own sad demise at age 31. Finckel translated the libretto from the German to help her get the feeling of the piece, which Russian baritone Nikolay Borchev will sing. "It's beautiful and heart-wrenching," she said.

The penultimate "Roaring Twenties" concert shatters classical boundaries, with George Gershwin's "Lullaby" for string quartet, a Ravel sonata imbued with bluesy Gershwin influences, and a romantic piano quintet by Erich Wolfgang Korngold, who left troubled pre-war Vienna to score Hollywood movies.

The Korngold piano quintet, which Han is "dying to hear," is rarely performed. Both she and Finckel are eager to introduce it to Menlo audiences.

"People don't know the name Korngold," said Finckel, but the quintet features "themes that show up later in 'The Adventures of Robin Hood,'" which Korngold scored.



COURTESY OF NINA AI-ARTYAN

**Music@Menlo** co-founders and co-artistic directors, pianist Wu Han and cellist David Finckel, are set to perform in the first concert.

"This is where that music of Hollywood came from — immigrants from Vienna. Thank God we have them."

Finally, "Music at the Millennium" blurs classical distinctions with Mark O'Connor's playful "F.C.'s Jig" (short for "Fiddle Concerto") for violin and viola and John Adams' "Road Movies" for violin and piano. Calling his title "total whimsy," Adams points to the "swing mode" in the piano part as well as the "tricky cross-hand style" in the final movement.

Multimedia lectures with musicologists illuminate each of the seven key decades, showing historical and cultural influences on music, such as the upheavals and revolutions of the 19th century and the technological innovations of the last century, when radios, record players, and later, the computer, brought music of all genres into the home.

While all festivals have a theme, this year's Music@Menlo illustrates how "music is created in relation to history," Han said during a phone interview from New York, where she and Finckel, called classical music's "power couple," are artistic directors of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.

Although the chamber repertoire is massive, "we're never at a loss to find interesting ways to present it," Finckel added, using an analogy to the Grand Canyon, which he and Han visited recently. "Every time you turn a corner, it looks different. There's no end to the variety of ways the Grand Canyon looks. The literature of chamber music is kind of like that."

By concentrating on seven specific decades, it's far easier to give audiences a clear picture of the evolution of classical music, Finckel observed. "It's not the whole pie, but it's seven very delicious slices, each one with its own flavor," he

said. "I think these seven decades have contributed to the strength of that house of chamber music that we're building. Each of these decades has its own room. It just makes the structure itself stronger and more interesting and more enjoyable."

What sets Music@Menlo apart from other summer festivals is its education component, not only with a lecture series but with master classes, informal Café Conversations and a series of Carte Blanche concerts in which the artists curate their own programs. In addition, the festival hosts a Chamber Music Institute and international program, training pre-professional musicians as well as talented children, offering them an opportunity to learn and perform with professionals. In the Aug. 2 Overture Concert, 11 students in the festival's international program will perform pieces by Beethoven, Brahms and César Franck with the festival's mainstage artists.

Violinist Arnaud Sussmann, who is also associate director of Menlo's international program, emphasized the festival's educational component.

"I've been going there for 10 years and I can't tell you how many summers I've been blown away by what I've learned," he said. "Most festivals you go, perform and have a wonderful time. At Menlo you really go to learn something extra."

In terms of performing, Sussmann will fiddle in O'Connor's "Jig" and play viola, not his usual instrument, in a Mendelssohn string quartet. He will also play second violin in Korngold's piano quintet, a challenging piece with intricate rhythms he will be performing for the first time.

But beyond performing, he said, "teaching is another huge passion of mine." He sees his mission as

mentoring talented young musicians just as he was mentored when he left France at age 15 to study at Juilliard with Itzhak Perlman, whom he refers to as "my teacher, Mr. Perlman."

These days, Sussmann is passing those lessons on, not only at Menlo, but at Stony Brook University on Long Island. "One of the most beautiful things about what we do in this music world, or in the art world, is that the skills we learn cannot be just passed on through a book. You need a mentor. You need someone who is going to pass on the information that was passed on to them through their mentor."

"Teaching really helps your own playing, because you have to sit back and analyze things and listen from the outside," Sussmann said. "If you're a great teacher ... hopefully, you can apply (those lessons from listening) in your own playing."

Acquiring new audiences for classical concerts is a perennial concern. Sussmann, 34, uses social media to reach out. In addition, running the summer program for young musicians with pianist and educator Gilbert Kalish is heartening.

"Every time I go to Menlo, I feel better about the future of classical music, when you see the level, the dedication, the artistry of the young musicians we see there," he said. "Music@Menlo becomes its own enclave, idealistic world for a few weeks and it's all because of the genius of David and Wu Han."

Both Han and Finckel said education has been a central part of Menlo's mission from its inception — not simply through mentoring new generations but by opening audiences to music they may not know.

"If you look back on Music@Menlo on the internet, you would see 17 years of education-centric and performance-centric programs," said Han. "We're not just looking at music that is pleasing but music that is meaningful." ■

Freelance writer Janet Silver Ghent can be emailed at [ghentwriter@gmail.com](mailto:ghentwriter@gmail.com).



Russian baritone **Nikolay Borchev** will sing Schubert's "Winterreise" song cycle at this year's Music@Menlo festival.

### ■ INFORMATION

**What:** Music@Menlo Chamber Music Festival and Institute.

**Where:** Center for Performing Arts at Menlo-Atherton, 555 Middlefield Road, Atherton; and Menlo School, 50 Valparaiso Ave., Atherton.

**When:** Friday, July 12, to Saturday, Aug. 3.

**Cost:** \$34-\$84 per concert, \$15-\$35 for patrons under 30, with some free events.

**Info:** Go to [Music@Menlo.org](http://Music@Menlo.org)

■ RESTAURANT REVIEW



## A good catch

### The Fish Market remains a local institution with seafood classics and modern touches

Story by Monica Schreiber  
Photos by Sinead Chang

When The Fish Market was first reviewed in 1994, the restaurant was a local institution even then.

Founders Fred Duckett and Robert Wilson fired up their famous mesquite grill during the Gerald Ford administration, when the term “Silicon Valley” was barely in the lexicon and a

gallon of gas cost about 60 cents.

Today, with four other Bay Area locations and two in Southern California, as well as its own seafood processing and distribution company, the Palo Alto Fish Market — still in its original location — is one of the true grande dames of the local restaurant scene. Duckett died in 2006; Wilson continues to be involved in

► See **FISH MARKET**, page 20



**Above:** Diners sit around the bar at the Fish Market, a Palo Alto institution for over 40 years.

**Top:** The cioppino offers an ample portion of seafood in a slightly peppery stew with tomato chunks.

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Seafood and fish fill the display case at The Fish Market in Palo Alto.

### FISH MARKET

► Continued from page 19

the operations.

The shiny and new tend to occupy the attention of critics, but what of those rare places that have managed to transcend trends and withstand the enormous pressures, economic and otherwise, of the industry? I made a few visits to the El Camino Real mainstay for a little nostalgia and to get a sense of how The Fish Market has managed to stay relevant while its hometown barely resembles the sleepy college town it was on opening day in 1976.

The culinary ethos here has always been as no-nonsense as the restaurant's name: a focus on fresh, lightly seasoned, char-broiled fish served with simple sides and no pretense. The menu changes slightly every day depending on the catch. One thing that hasn't changed is the basket of pre-dinner Boudin sourdough bread and butter.

"Many restaurants no longer provide bread as a standard offering, but it is one of our hallmarks," Vice President of Operations Dwight Colton told me in a phone interview. "I think our customers would revolt if we changed that



The line-caught swordfish is grilled and served with a side of vegetables.

practice."

Complimentary bread or not, fans of trendy fusion or complex sauces might be feeling a yawn about now. But The Fish Market's focus on classic, quality seafood has proven an enduring recipe for success. They also have made some smart menu tweaks over the years, such as adding a small sushi menu about a decade ago and, more recently, ahi poke.


Everything about this poke was on point: shimmering cubes of ruby-red yellowfin tuna delicately bathed in sesame oil and

soy and served atop a crunchy seaweed salad. A wasabi kick heated things up on the back end. Airy wonton chips, served alongside the generous mound of glistening fish, were light and crunchy. Poke perfection.

The Baja-style crunchy fish tacos (\$14.75 for two) also showcase The Fish Market's more modern side. Corn tortillas enveloped a huge hunk of moist, grilled swordfish, topped with cabbage, cheese, chipotle ranch and pico de gallo. A delicious mesquite grilled artichoke (\$9.95), served with a zingy



Ahi tuna poke is a more recent addition to The Fish Market's menu.



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garlic-lemon aioli, rounded out our appetizers.

The linguine with Manila clams (\$19.50) has stood the test of time with its classic wine-and-garlic sauce, just a touch of heat from red pepper and a generous serving of sweet, plump clams. The cioppino (\$25 small, \$36 large), on the menu since the restaurant's earliest days and described therein as "famous," is still a solid choice, with two large crab legs, shrimp, mussels, calamari and rockfish in a slightly peppery stew made extra chunky with tomatoes. This signature dish didn't quite feel "famous" to me (and I daresay Sam's Chowder House now has the rightful claim to the best cioppino in the area). This one tasted a little flat and was too heavy on the tomato chunks, suggesting a hearty pomodoro pasta sauce more than a seafood stew.

The Ecuadoran seabass (\$28.95) initially looked somewhat plain and disappointing, an unadorned piece of fish, a tad on the paltry side with a ho-hum scoop of vegetables and a side of French fries. But one bite erased any doubt and made clear why The Fish Market still has a lobby full of people waiting for tables on weekend nights. Simple, delicate, moist and smoky, the perfectly grilled piece of fish was a testament to the primordial exquisiteness of open-flame cooking. And those plain-looking, lightly seasoned vegetables turned out to be fresh, crunchy and delicious.

Desserts are old school and comforting, along the lines of key lime pie (\$8.50) and warm apple crisp a la mode (\$9.50). I happily tucked into a dessert special on offer over Fathers' Day weekend, a warm upside-down apple pie (\$9.50) with a

caramelized walnut crust and cinnamon ice cream.

My visits to the restaurant came at peak weekend dinner times and the servers had to move at warp speed through the large dining room. Yet no one missed a beat. Service was always efficient, friendly and well-timed. Cocktails like the "Mandarin Mule" (\$11) were generous and expertly mixed, like in, well, the good old days. No trendy, oversized ice cubes in Lilliputian glasses here.

Still, time marches on, and eventually it is almost always deemed that changes must be made. Colton told me they are planning significant renovations to the restaurant in 2020 to give the place a more modern look. I can't decide yet if I like that idea, but I suppose you have to trust a restaurant group that seems to have been making smart decisions for more than four decades. ▣



Linguine with Manila clams is a classic dish that has stood the test of time.

**DINING NOTES**

**The Fish Market**

3150 El Camino Real, Palo Alto  
650-493-8862  
thefishmarket.com

**Hours:**

Monday-Thursday,  
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■ MOVIE OPENINGS

# Oh what a tangled web...

'SPIDER-MAN: FAR FROM HOME' BEARS THE MARVEL STANDARD

★★★ (Century 16&20, Icon)

With tongue knowingly in cheek, "Spider-Man: Far From Home" plops us firmly into teen-movie territory, even more so than Tom Holland's first solo Spidey movie, "Spider-Man: Homecoming." Peter Parker, "a 16-year-old kid from Queens," just wants to bury his recent pain and focus on winning the heart of classmate MJ (Zendaya), but he's surrounded by reminders of "the Blip" (the world crisis caused by Thanos and resolved by the Avengers) and fallen heroes.

Peter's class trip to Europe swiftly goes haywire when "an Avengers-level threat" begins laying waste to Venice. With a plume of green smoke, a new hero arrives on the scene to fight the extradimensional Elementals: Quentin Beck (Jake Gyllenhaal), a.k.a. Mysterio. Turns out S.H.I.E.L.D. is also on the scene, in the persons of Nick Fury (Samuel L. Jackson) and Maria Hill (Cobie Smulders).

Immediately, Beck sidles up into the mentorship role Robert Downey Jr.'s Tony Stark has left vacant, meaning Parker has three father figures competing for primacy: the sensitive Beck, the angry Fury and the seemingly hapless "Happy" Hogan (Jon Favreau), who has begun seeing Peter's Aunt May (Marisa Tomei). Putting aside

the teen rom-com and superhero theatrics, "Far From Home" serves above all as a coming-of-age story for Peter, who bears not only the weight of expectations every teen feels but, much worse, the weight of the world as the potential heir to the world's greatest hero.

A dastardly villain does emerge, a zeitgeisty one who bellows, "I control the truth!" With at least two fake-news jokes, Peter's lies to cover his secret identity, and a series of illusions and fake outs, "Far From Home" demands reflection on a post-truth world. Marvel deserves credit for the ways it has so far managed to freshen up formula, harness genres to its purposes and hold a mirror up to contemporary society.

By my count, the story globetrotts through eight countries, often with eye-catching scenery, and director Jon Watts presides over dizzying, acrobatic action sequences that freely explore the possibilities in following around the high-flying Mysterio and web-slinging Spidey (performance-capture is also used to good effect).

This action comedy moves with alacrity (super-scored by Michael Giacchino), and if the laughs are often corny, they're sold well by the cast, including Jacob Batalon, Angourie Rice and Tony Revolori as



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Tom Holland stars as Peter Parker on a class trip to Europe in "Spider-Man: Far from Home."

high schoolers, and Martin Starr and J.B. Smoove as their teacher chaperones — all inadvertently put into harm's way by the stressed-out Peter. Gyllenhaal's canny performance goes a long way, and Holland continues to believably channel a teenager who makes mistakes and doubts himself, but finally realizes that he's the only one

with the specialized skills to save this day. (Don't miss the consequential mid-credits and post-credits scenes, which continue a plot full of surprises and advance the film's central theme.)

Rated PG-13 for sci-fi action violence, some language and brief suggestive comments. Two hours, 9 minutes.



■ MOVIE REVIEWS

## YESTERDAY ★★★

"Yesterday" proceeds from a cutesy what-if premise: Following a 12-second global blackout, the Beatles songbook spirits out of existence, except in the mind of one man — 27-year-old Jack Malik (Himesh Patel), a singer-songwriter languishing in obscurity. Before you know it, Jack's introducing the world to "Yesterday" (one of 15 Beatles tunes Patel covers in the film), living the artist's dream of "I wish I'd written that." There's situation comedy in the indignities that face an unknown musician, but it's not long before smirky songsmith Ed Sheeran (playing himself) turns up to hire Jack as an opening act. Though the musical angle dominates, it's a red herring for an equally unbelievable romantic comedy. All you need is love ... and a better script. If one turns off one's brain, "Yesterday" can be enjoyed as an empty vessel loaded up with great tunes. Rated PG-13 for suggestive content and language. One hour, 56 minutes. — P.C.

## TOY STORY 4 ★★★★★1/2

High-tension action-adventure has always been a key ingredient in the "Toy Story" films, but "Toy Story 4" may well be the most consistently anxiety-inducing of them all. There's a palpable sense that the characters are pushing their luck, not unlike the creative personnel of Pixar Animation Studios. Conventional wisdom among the filmmakers, fans and even casual filmgoers accepted 2010's "Toy Story 3" as a perfect, emotionally satisfying ending for the series, but "Toy Story 4" makes a convincing case for Sheriff Woody saddling up again. Woody (Tom Hanks), Buzz Lightyear (Tim Allen) and the rest of their toy family continue to be the playthings of young Bonnie, but Woody no longer has the security of being a favorite toy. When Bonnie creates a life by fashioning a googly-eyed friend named "Forky" (Tony Hale) out of a spork, a popsicle stick, and other arts-and-crafts odds and ends, Woody grants himself a new lease on life by becoming Forky's much-needed protector. "Toy Story 4" remains hugely appealing to adults in its punchy humor and searching existential thoughtfulness. Rated G. One hour, 40 minutes. — P.C.

■ NOW SHOWING

**Aladdin (PG) ★★ Century 16:** Fri. - Sun. **Century 20:** Fri. - Sun.

**Annabelle Comes Home (R) Century 16:** Fri. - Sun. **Century 20:** Fri. - Sun.  
**ShowPlace Icon:** Fri. - Sun.

**Avengers: Endgame (PG-13) ★★★★★1/2 Century 16:** Fri. - Sun. **Century 20:** Fri. - Sun.

**The Biggest Little Farm (PG) Aquarius Theatre:** Fri. - Sun.

**Booksmart (R) ShowPlace Icon:** Fri. - Sun.

**Child's Play (R) Century 16:** Fri. - Sun.

**Echo in the Canyon (PG-13) Guild Theatre:** Fri. - Sun.

**Godzilla: King of the Monsters (PG-13) ★★1/2 Century 20:** Fri. - Sun.

**John Wick: Chapter 3 - Parabellum (R) Century 16:** Fri. - Sun. **Century 20:** Fri. - Sun.

**The Last Black Man in San Francisco (R)**  
**Century 20:** Fri. - Sun. **Palo Alto Square:** Fri. - Sun.

**Late Night (R) Century 20:** Fri. - Sun.

**Men in Black: International (PG-13) ★★ Century 16:** Fri. - Sun. **Century 20:** Fri. - Sun.

**Pavarotti (PG-13) Palo Alto Square:** Fri. - Sun.

**Rocketman (R) Century 20:** Fri. - Sun. **ShowPlace Icon:** Fri. - Sun.

**The Rocky Horror Picture Show (1975) (R) Guild Theatre:** Saturday

**The Secret Life of Pets 2 (PG) Century 16:** Fri. - Sun. **Century 20:** Fri. - Sun.

**Spider-man: Into the Spider-Verse (PG) ★★★★★ Century 16:** Fri. - Sun.  
**Century 20:** Fri. - Sun. **ShowPlace Icon:** Fri. - Sun.

**Toy Story 4 (G) ★★★★★1/2 Century 16:** Fri. - Sun. **Century 20:** Fri. - Sun.  
**ShowPlace Icon:** Fri. - Sun.

**Wild Rose (R) Aquarius Theatre:** Fri. - Sun.

**Yesterday (PG-13) ★★ Century 16:** Fri. - Sun. **Century 20:** Fri. - Sun.  
**ShowPlace Icon:** Fri. - Sun.

**Aquarius:** 430 Emerson St., Palo Alto  
(For recorded listings: 327-3241) [tinyurl.com/Aquariuspa](http://tinyurl.com/Aquariuspa)

**Century Cinema 16:** 1500 N. Shoreline Blvd., Mountain View [tinyurl.com/Century16](http://tinyurl.com/Century16)

**Century 20 Downtown:** 825 Middlefield Rd., Redwood City [tinyurl.com/Century20](http://tinyurl.com/Century20)

**CineArts at Palo Alto Square:** 3000 El Camino Real, Palo Alto  
(For information: 493-0128) [tinyurl.com/Pasquare](http://tinyurl.com/Pasquare)

**Guild:** 949 El Camino Real, Menlo Park (For recorded listings: 566-8367) [tinyurl.com/Guildmp](http://tinyurl.com/Guildmp)

**ShowPlace Icon:** 2575 California St. #601, Mountain View  
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**Stanford Theatre:** 221 University Ave., Palo Alto  
(For recorded listings: 324-3700) [Stanfordtheatre.org](http://Stanfordtheatre.org)

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**CONCERT ON THE PLAZA: TRIO SOL DE MEXICO**

Trio Sol de Mexico will perform. Concertgoers are encouraged to bring blankets to sit on the lawn. In addition to the music, there will be a food truck, a "pop-up park" area for children and for adults, beer and wine. July 5, 6-7:30 p.m. Mountain View City Hall, 500 Castro St., Mountain View. Search facebook.com/events for more info.

**THEATER**

**'The Language Archive'** A quirky, comic drama about communication — its potential and its limits — this modern romantic parable features a linguist at a loss for words, especially the vocabulary of the heart. July 10- Aug. 4; times vary. \$25-\$60; discounts available, pricing subject to change. Lucie Stern Theatre, 1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto. theatreworks.org

**PYT & City of Mountain View's Theatre in the Park** As part of Peninsula Youth Theatre and the city of Mountain View's children's theater in the park program, kids will perform "Peter Rabbit" in a celebration of the stories of Beatrix Potter. July 5, 3-6 p.m. Free. Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, 500 Castro St., Mountain View. Search facebook.com/events for more info.

**Ventriloquism and Puppets with Tortoise and Hare** Los Altos Library presents a puppet program for children of all ages, featuring Tortoise and Hare. July 10, 3-3:45 p.m. Free. Los Altos Library, 13 South San Antonio Road, Los Altos. scl.evanced.info

**'Voices of the Earth: From Sophocles to Rachel Carson and Beyond'** Compiled by Rush Rehm and Charles Junkerman, "Voices of the Earth" deals with the troubled relationship between humans and the natural world. Along with powerful wilderness images and soundscapes, the staged reading features environmental pioneers, nature writers and more. July 11-14; times vary. \$15; discount for students, seniors. Stanford Nitery Theater, 514 Lasuen Mall, Stanford. stanfordreptheater.com

**CONCERTS**

**Audiotistic Bay Area 2019** The annual two-day Audiotistic music festival returns to the Bay Area with performances by various artists. July 13-14; 2 p.m. \$100-\$175. Shoreline Amphitheatre, 1 Amphitheatre Parkway, Mountain View. Search eventbrite.com for more info.

**Erik Jekabson Sextet featuring John Santos** Erik Jekabson Sextet will perform along with Latin percussion master John Santos. July 12, 8-9:30 p.m. \$49; discount for students. Campbell Recital Hall, 541 Lausen Mall, Stanford. stanfordjazz.org

**'Music is Magic' Concert Series** In partnership with the city of Palo Alto, the Magical Bridge Foundation presents a summer concert series, featuring local artists and musicians. All concerts are family-friendly and sensory-friendly. Every Friday through Aug. 30. 6-7:30 p.m. Free. Magical Bridge Playground - Mitchell Park, 600 E. Meadow Drive, Palo Alto. Search facebook.com/events for more info.

**San Francisco Symphony: Gemma New Conducts Beethoven's Ninth** New Zealand-born conductor Gemma New joins forces with the Grammy Award-winning San Francisco Symphony, chorus and soloists in concerts featuring Beethoven's monumental Ninth Symphony. July 13 at 7:30 pm. and July 14 at 4 p.m. \$30. Frost Amphitheater, 365 Lasuen St., Stanford. live.stanford.edu

**Twilight Concert Series 2019** Santana tribute band Caravanserai performs as part of the city of Palo Alto's free summer concert series. July 13, 6:30 p.m. Free. Mitchell Park, 600 E. Meadow Drive, Palo Alto. cityofpaloalto.org

**Thursday Night Live: The Cheeseballs** The Cheeseballs will perform as part of the "Thursday Night Live" event series presented by the city of Mountain View and Live Nation. July 11, 5:30-8:30 p.m. Free. Castro Street, Mountain View. mountainview.gov

**Michael Tilson Thomas & Gil Shaham: Music of Tchaikovsky** Michael Tilson Thomas leads the San Francisco Symphony in the inaugural series performance of an all-Tchaikovsky program, featuring violinist Gil Shaham. July 10, 7:30 p.m. \$30-\$110; \$15 lawn tickets for youth under 18. Frost Amphitheater, 365 Lasuen St., Stanford. fsymphony.org

**Music@Menlo 2019 Opening Concert** The summer's opening program brings together a colorful selection of music composed between 1710 and 1720, setting the stage for Bach's resplendent First Brandenburg Concerto. July 13, 6-8 p.m. \$15-\$74. The Center for Performing Arts, 555 Middlefield Road, Atherton. musicatmenlo.org

**Pamela Rose: Great Women of the American Songbook** Pamela Rose and her band of jazz musicians will perform a set paying homage to the women songwriters and performers who played roles in the evolution of the "Great American Songbook." July 6, 2-3:30 p.m. \$33 or \$43 premium; discount for students. Dinkelspiel Auditorium, 471 Lagunita Drive, Stanford. arts.stanford.edu

**Prelude Performances** Prelude Performances feature young artists from the Chamber Music Institute. Representing a cornerstone of the festival's educational mission, these concerts offer both veteran concertgoers and new listeners of all ages an opportunity to discover great music. July 13, 19, 21; times vary. Free; ticket required. The Center for Performing Arts, 555 Middlefield Road, Atherton. musicatmenlo.org

**Summer Sings Program** Schola Cantorum Silicon Valley's Summer Sings Program offers "drop-in" choir. Eileen Chang, founder and director of the New Choir, San Jose, and director and conductor of Honors Choir and Chamber Choir, conducts Bach's "Magnifica" and Schubert's "Mass in G." July 8, 7:30 p.m. \$17; free for students under 25 with ID. Los Altos United Methodist Church, 655 Magdalena Ave., Los Altos. scholacantorum.org

**MUSIC**

**Open Mic @ Red Rock Coffee** Performers sing in front of a supportive audience and meet fellow musicians and artists during Open Mic Mondays at Red Rock Coffee. Sign-ups start at 6:30 p.m.; show starts at 7 p.m. Red Rock Coffee, 201 Castro St., Mountain View. redrockcoffee.org

**FESTIVALS & FAIRS**

**2019 ACGA Clay and Glass Festival in Palo Alto** The ACGA Clay & Glass Festival in Palo Alto is a celebration of clay and glass art. More than 140 juried artists will display fine and functional clay and glass work. Activities include pottery-making, Ikebana and glass art demonstrations. July 13-14, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Free; valet parking available. Palo Alto Art Center, 1313 Newell Road, Palo Alto. clayglassfestival.com

**Farmer's Market** The Downtown Los Altos Farmer's Market, where shoppers can find fresh vegetables and fine foods, continues every Thursday through Sept. 26, 4-8 p.m. Free. Located on State Street between 2nd and 4th streets, Los Altos Hills. losaltoschamber.org

**Los Altos Art and Wine Festival** The 40th annual Arts & Wine Festival hosts fine arts and crafts booths and offers live entertainment, kids' area, food, wine and beer. July 13-14, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. 88 Main St., Los Altos. Search eventbrite.com for more info.

**TALKS & LECTURES**

**Brandon R. Brown** In his work, "The Apollo Chronicles: Engineering America's First Moon Missions," author Brandon R. Brown, himself the son of an Apollo engineer, revisits the men and women who toiled behind the lights 50 years after the moon landing. July 9, 7-9 p.m. Free. Books Inc. Mountain View, 317 Castro St., Mountain View. booksinc.net

**Kalyn Josephson** Kalyn Josephson launches her debut novel, "The Storm Crow," a fantasy that follows a fallen princess as she ignites a rebellion to bring back the magical elemental crows that were taken from her people. July 13, 3-5 p.m. Free. Kepler's Books, 1010 El Camino Real, Menlo Park. Search eventbrite.com for more info.

**Mathangi Subramanian** Award-winning Indian American writer Mathangi Subramanian shares her critically-acclaimed debut novel, "A People's History of Heaven." July 10, 7-9 p.m. Free. Books Inc. Mountain View, 317 Castro St., Mountain View. booksinc.net

**MUSEUMS & EXHIBITS**

**Josiah McElheny: 'Island Universe'** Josiah McElheny's "Island Universe" examines both cutting-edge art and physics. The monumental installation of five hanging chandeliers is a visual response to recent theories of the multiverse, an elaboration of the Big Bang theory. Through Aug. 18, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; closed Tuesdays. Free. Cantor Arts Center, 328 Lomita Drive at Museum Way, Stanford. museum.stanford.edu

**Kahlil Joseph: 'BLKNWS'** Kahlil Joseph, a visiting artist in the new Presidential Residencies on the Future of the Arts program, presents his work "BLKNWS," a two-channel video projection that blurs the lines between art, journalism, entrepreneurship and cultural critique. Through Nov. 25, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; closed Tuesdays. Free. Cantor Arts Center, 328 Lomita Drive at Museum Way, Stanford. museum.stanford.edu

**'The Medium Is the Message: Art since 1950'** Using works created since 1950, this exhibition explores the relationship between subject, content and the materials that informed each object's production. Through Aug. 18, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; closed Tuesdays. Free. Cantor Arts Center, 328 Lomita Drive at Museum Way, Stanford. museum.stanford.edu

**Artist Reception for Tinna Dinesen** Using oil and cold wax, artist Tinna Dinesen brings a new look at abstract painting to Viewpoints Gallery. July 12, 5-8 p.m. Viewpoints Gallery, 315 State St., Los Altos. viewpointsgallery.com/

**'Gadgets Galore! Transforming the American Household'** Los Altos History Museum presents "Gadgets Galore! Transforming the American Household," an exhibit that looks at gadgets and where they originated, on display at the J. Gilbert Smith House. Los Altos History Museum, 51 S. San Antonio Road, Los Altos. losaltoshistory.org

**West Bay Model Railroad Association Open House** Trains will run on a scenic two-level layout while club members answer questions. July 13 and Aug. 10; 1-4 p.m. Menlo Park Caltrain station, 1090 Merrill St., Menlo Park. business.menloparkchamber.com/events

**FILM**

**Kerry Tribe: 'The Elusive Word'** The 2017 film "Afasia" pairs the verbal journey of Christopher Riley, a photographer and friend of the filmmaker who struggles to speak after experiencing a left-hemisphere stroke that left him aphasic, with Tribe's own narrated effort to relearn the Spanish language. Through Sept. 30, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; closed Tuesdays. Free. Cantor Arts Center, 328 Lomita Drive at Museum Way, Stanford. museum.stanford.edu

**Summer Outdoor Movie Night: 'Incredibles 2'** The city of Mountain View Recreation Division and Youth Advisory Committee present a screening of "Incredibles 2" as part of the summer outdoor movie night series. July 12, 8:30-10 p.m. Free. Cuesta Park, 601 Cuesta Drive, Mountain View. Search facebook.com/events for more info.

**'LIKE' "LIKE"** is an IndieFlix original documentary that explores the impact of social media on people's lives. July 12, 6:30 p.m. Free. Computer History Museum, 1401 N Shoreline Blvd., Mountain View. computerhistory.org

**LESSONS & CLASSES**

**Baby Sign Language** This class covers the basics of sign language, taught by Stefanie Jatta, an American Sign Language trained instructor. A 20-minute "Play and Learn" session follows each program, allowing babies and their caregivers more time to interact with each other. July 10 and Aug. 7, 1-2 p.m. Free. Los Altos Library, 13 South San Antonio Road, Los Altos. scl.evanced.info

**Goat Yoga** Hidden Villa presents an hourlong yoga class led by certified instructor Jesse Muzzy, followed by 20 minutes of playtime with baby goats. July 13 and July 21, 10-11:30 a.m. \$35. Hidden Villa, 26870 Moody Road, Los Altos Hills. hiddenvilla.org

**OUTDOOR RECREATION**

**Fun for Families: Free Second Saturdays at Gamble Garden** Garden Director Richard Hayden and volunteer garden guides lead children on a nature hunt around the 3-acre garden. Other activities include nature-inspired arts and crafts and a guided tour of the first floor of the Gamble House. Every second Saturday through Dec. 14, 10-11:30 a.m. Gamble Garden, 1431 Waverley St., Palo Alto. gamblegarden.org

**SPORTS**

**Professional Ultimate Frisbee** Spectators can watch a professional ultimate frisbee game played by the San Jose Spiders. Halftime entertainment is tailored to kids ages 3-17 and will give them a chance to run around on the field and catch a disc thrown by a Spider. Food, refreshments and Spiders Swag available for purchase. July 6, 7-9:30 p.m. \$5.06. Foothill College Stadium, 12345 S. El Monte Road, Los Altos. Search eventbrite.com for more info.



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