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Police chiefs, community leaders recommend steps to make officers more accountable

by Gennady Sheyner

Problems of police reform take center stage

R on Davis believes reforming the police is not enough. It’s time to reimagine it.

Davis, who served as East Palo Alto police chief between 2005 and 2013 before becoming executive director of President Barack Obama’s President’s Task Force on 21st-century Policing, observed that the nature of police work, whether in Palo Alto or East Palo Alto, hasn’t changed in decades. Police departments remain similar, in structure and design, to how they were in the 1940s and 1950s, he said.

But given the historic function of police in a society where racism permeates systems, this failure to change has created a problem.

“We police in pretty much the same way and we police for the same reasons,” Davis said June 25 at a virtual town hall sponsored by the Palo Alto Weekly and Palo Alto Online. “But we were designed to enforce Jim Crow laws. We were designed to contain and to oppress communities of color. So until we remove that structural racism, that systemic racism, then everything else we’re reforming, we’re just putting Band-Aids on the festering wound of racism.”

The conversation, titled “Race, Justice and the Color of Law,” was moderated by Henrietta Burroughs, executive director of East Palo Alto Center for Community Media.

It brought together police chiefs and community members to discuss the topics of systemic racism, police transparency and ways to overcome obstacles that for decades have stood in the way of change.

(continued on page 12)

District proposes fall plan

Middle, high schoolers to learn online; elementary students to be on campuses

by Elena Kadvany

T he Palo Alto school district is taking a “middle of the road” approach to reopening schools this fall. Superintendent Don Austin said this week, with elementary school students returning to campuses in person while middle and high schoolers likely will be primarily learning remotely.

The district released its proposed reopening plan on June 30, which is subject to approval by the school board. The plan came out soon after the Santa Clara County Public Health Department issued its requirements and recommendations for safely reopening schools in the fall.

The biggest evolution in the plan is the proposal for the middle and high schools. As recently as last week, the district was still considering a hybrid model, with groups of students alternating coming to school in person two days a week. School board members voiced support last week for prioritizing distance learning, particularly for high schoolers.

On Tuesday, Austin said staff were unable to create a program for a hybrid model that they felt confident in moving forward with.

“The details, once you really get into that blended model at the secondary level, became so problematic that we found ourselves becoming more complicated in a time where we all believe (having

ECONOMY

City to close University Avenue to cars for a month

Diners enjoy outdoor meals as worries about the coronavirus continue

by Lloyd Lee

M usic, chatter and echoes of clanking silverware and plates replaced the usual hum of traffic on University Avenue last weekend.

“It feels like we’re in a different place — like I’m on vacation,” Solette Westerberg said.

Westerberg, a Sunnyvale resident, enjoyed lunch with her husband and two children at Local Union 271, a farm-to-table restaurant that had close to 40 customers at one time during the lunch hour on Saturday. Everyone was outside seated at physically distanced tables and assisted by masked servers.

As part of the city’s Summer Streets program, University Avenue was closed on June 26-28 from Cowper Street to High Street in an effort to support local businesses as Santa Clara County’s shelter-at-home order continues. Starting Friday, July 3, at 10 a.m., the city will close the street everyday of the week until Aug. 2.

Turning University Avenue into a bike-and-pedestrian mall follows the closure of California Avenue two weeks ago, which was quickly embraced by business owners, residents and members of City Council. Mayor Adrian Fine has been vocal in council meetings and on Twitter about the pleasures of sitting outside on both avenues without cars. Restaurateurs who have a stake at University agreed.

“This is amazing,” said Gary Gill, owner of Curry Pizza House. “This is what we were looking for.”

With outdoor dining, Gill said he can have more tables to serve diners than he could when he was limited to the inside of his restaurant, and the ability to operate beyond takeout orders gives him the chance to rehire some of the eight staff members he laid off.

Curry Pizza House and other eateries, including Local Union 271 and Cafe Venetia, are seeing that foot traffic translate into higher sales.

Data independently collected by Ross Mayfield, founder of Frontline Foods’ Silicon Valley chapter, showed that the 34 food businesses he surveyed, which include ice cream shops, cafes

(continued on page 13)
This is a probability game.

— Jennifer Miller, a resident of Menlo Park, on opening University Avenue for street dining during the pandemic. See story on page 5.

A LIFELONG DREAM … Notre Dame de Namur University’s Class of 2020 includes a Palo Alto resident. Rosemary Finnerty, 91, completed her degree in human services in the spring and was recognized with the “Inspirational Academic Excellence” award, which is the university’s highest academic honor. “It’s never too late to get a degree,” she said. She also received a congratulatory message from Rep. Jackie Speier, D-San Francisco-San Mateo, who heard about her accomplishment in recent media reports. Finnerty spent the past five years attending night classes on several topics, including French cinema and Hispanic culture, which opened her mind to new ideas and perspectives. In her senior seminar, Finnerty pursued a project where she provided services from her parent’s church, St. Albert the Great, to video recordings of weekly meetings normally held in person. Before moving to Palo Alto in 1983, Finnerty lived in New Jersey and worked as an executive assistant for the Colgate-Palmolive Company in New York City, which paid for her associate degree in liberal arts. She became friends with her former boss, the company’s CEO, Rouben Mark, who offered to pay for her bachelor’s degree. Finnerty wanted to hold a big graduation party to celebrate the milestone with her family from the east coast (she has two nieces and nephews in New York and 45 or more grandnieces and grandnephews), but the event was postponed due to current health orders that prevent large gatherings. Sheltering at home has prevented Finnerty from finding opportunities to practice her degree. In the meantime, she’s working on her memoir titled, “My Secret to a Beautiful and Fulfilled Life,” in which she’s reflecting on recent events.

TAKING A HIKE … Local hikers and joggers cannot stretch their muscles again at the Stanford Dish starting Monday, July 6. The university plans to reopen the trail for regular summer hours, 6 a.m.-7:30 p.m. daily, with a series of new rules that adhere to local health orders to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Most of the changes aim to maintain 6 feet of distance between others seeking respite in the fresh air. The main 3.3-mile loop has been reconfigured to direct traffic one-way in the counterclockwise direction to allow for people to safely pass (that means people must commit to completing the loop). Visitors are also advised against touching surfaces such as gate entrances, fences, trash cans and signage. A full list of the rules can be found at dish.stanford.edu.

STRIKING STATEMENTS … On Tuesday, as 16 teams of artists painted murals with the message "Black Lives Matter" written in large block letters on Hamilton Avenue outside of Palo Alto City Hall, an 18-year-old man was putting up posters that called attention to recent reports of police brutality. The man, who requested anonymity, was acting alone as he plastered the posters of quotes, many of which were published in local and regional newspapers, from lawsuits, Department of Justice investigations, local law enforcement officers and people of color who faced arrest dating from as far back as 1994 to this year. Some lined a sidewalk facing the display, including one that read “the and another officer then grabbed (the man) & dragged him out of the window of (his) car,” which was attributed to a complaint, which Mario Melendez filed in January against Mountain View Police Officer Benjamin Kourt. “Kourt became annoyed with Melendez during a traffic stop and dragged the man out of his car,” according to the poster, which added that Melendez was hospitalized for his injuries. Another poster included a quote from former Palo Alto police Sgt. Wayne Benitez, who was seen on video telling an unarmed, gay and Latino resident of Buena Vista Mobile Home Park that he’s “going to be bleeding a whole lot more” after the former officer slammed him into the hood of a car. “Benitez later retired from PAPD keeping his $118K yearly pension,” the poster stated. Other posters name-dropped Palo Alto police officers who remain employed after the alleged use of racial slurs and unlawful beating of a Black resident were reported.
PUBLIC HEALTH

County to let hair salons, gyms reopen — provided they meet new safety rules

County leaders say revised order marks new phase in response to COVID-19 pandemic

Marking a new phase in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Santa Clara County leaders issued an order Thursday that could allow hair salons and gyms to reopen in mid-July and that will require all businesses to strictly follow a new set of rules to ensure social distancing.

The order comes at a time when the county, much like the state at large, is seeing a steady rise in coronavirus cases. The county reported 185 new cases on Thursday and one new death, raising the total death count to 159. The increased number of hospitalizations has prompted Gov. Gavin Newsom to include Santa Clara County on the state’s “monitoring list” of 19 counties with troubling trend lines.

Sara Cody, the county’s health officer, said the order recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic will not go away any time soon. And while it could allow new business sectors to reopen on July 13, pending the state’s permission, it also creates new safety requirements for all businesses.

Under the new guidelines, businesses must continue to allow employees to telework where feasible and to move as many operations as possible outdoors. They will have to fill out and submit to the county their social-distancing protocols. They also will be required to follow density limits, with no more than one employee per 250 gross square feet of the space that is open to the public.

Employees who test positive for COVID-19 will be required to immediately alert the business, which would have to report it to the Public Health Department.

In introducing the measures, Cody noted that the county has seen the number of COVID-19 cases rise in recent weeks. While the county has significantly increased its testing, the numbers reflect a “true increase in the prevalence of COVID-19” — not a mere rise in detected cases resulting from more testing.

“We are at an inflection point,” Cody said. “We’re at a point in this pandemic where it’s crystal clear that COVID-19 will be with us for a long time. So we need to adapt to a new way of being, a new way of living, that keeps us all safe and that allows us to do things that we miss and that we cherish and that we find more meaningful.”

County leaders also noted that some businesses won’t be able to follow the new protocols and, as such, will not reopen any time in the near future. This includes indoor dining and indoor swimming and other indoor activities in which always keeping a mask on is infeasible, county Counsel James Williams said. These activities have been shut down in Santa Clara County since March 17, when the county’s first shelter-in-place order took effect.

Rather than providing guidance for particular business sectors, the order seeks to “set a new normal for what we can expect when we enter any business facility or engage in any kind of activity,” Williams said.

He also noted that businesses that promote close or large gatherings, including nightclubs, stadiums, concert venues and arenas, will remain closed.

“All activities that cannot be done with social distancing are prohibited,” Williams said.

The Thursday order requires approval from the state, Williams said. If this approval is granted, hair salons, nail salons, gyms and other activities that can safely accommodate small gatherings and follow the county protocols would be allowed to reopen as soon as July 13. If the state grants the waiver after July 13, these businesses would reopen at that time.

County Supervisor Mike Wasserman said he is hopeful that Newsom and his team will “recognize all the work that the people and businesses of Santa Clara County have done to reopen our remaining businesses and approve our request.” The order, he said, allows additional activities to resume while setting standards to keep the community safe.

“Our businesses need to be adaptable and flexible to comply with these important new safety measures,” Wasserman said. “I’m confident they will be.”

Cody said the Thursday order marks the end of a “phased reopening” that has characterized the county’s response since March and the beginning of “a new stage that we believe will be stable for some time.” She noted that even with the recent increase in cases and state’s decision to include Santa Clara County on its monitoring list (in recognition of a growing rate of hospitalizations), Santa Clara County still has fewer cases of COVID-19 per 100,000 residents than any other Bay Area county and any major urban area in the state.

“We need to conduct our lives a bit differently because we’re in it for the long haul,” Cody said. ■

Staff Writer Gennady Sheyner can be emailed at gsheyner@paweekly.com.
News Digest

Effort to lower voting age hits roadblock

For Rachel Owens, the events of the past month have amplified the message that she and dozens of her peers have been preaching for the past year: Young people should have a greater voice in local government.

Owens, who will be a senior at Palo Alto High School this fall, is president of Vote16 Palo Alto, a group that is championing a proposal to lower the voting age for local elections to 16.

The group’s bid to give youth more representation ran into a seemingly insurmountable obstacle last week: an exhausted City Council ready for its summer break. Despite pleas from dozens of speakers in a series of meetings, the council declined to consider the proposed ballot measure on June 23, its final meeting before its summer vacation.

Councilman Greg Tanaka proposed at the June 22 meeting that the council schedule a full discussion of the upcoming election and, specifically, the Vote16 Palo Alto initiative. Mayor Adrian Fine immediately shut down the discussion, saying the item is not on the council’s agenda.

Theoretically, the city can direct staff on Aug. 3 to craft a resolution and then approve it at a special meeting before the Aug. 7 deadline for submitting measures. But given the time it takes to prepare a resolution and perform all the necessary analysis and legal review, this course of action is highly unlikely.

—Gennady Sheyner

Federal lawsuit alleges police pattern of abuse

As Palo Alto explores reforms to its Police Department, city leaders are also responding to fresh accusations that two recent high-profile arrests in the El Camino Park neighborhood are part of the agency’s broader trend of deception and discrimination.

Over the past month, as demonstrators across the nation rallied to oppose police brutality and promote social justice, the City Council has heard dozens of comments from residents at meetings calling for the city to discipline officers involved in the 2018 arrest of Gustavo Alvarez at his home in Buena Vista Mobile Home Park and the 2019 arrest of Julio Arevalo in front of Happy Donuts.

The city has already paid $572,500 to settle the Alvarez suit, which also has sparked an FBI investigation, according to NBC Bay Area. On June 24, Arevalo’s attorney Cody Salfen, who also represented Alvarez, filed a federal lawsuit against the city over the July 10, 2019, arrest of Arevalo. The suit alleges a “decades-long pattern and practice of tolerating, promoting and encouraging PAPD officers’ thuggery, violence, dishonesty, barbarism and maiming of individuals like the plaintiff in the present matter.”

Filed by Salfen and Samuel J. Gordon in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, the suit pertains to an arrest of Arevalo by Agent Thomas DeStefano, who claimed he had seen Arevalo engage in what appeared to be a hand-to-hand drug transaction. The arrest was captured by the doughnut shop’s surveillance camera and by DeStefano’s body-worn camera, footage that the department released earlier this month. Neither footage shows the drug transaction that DeStefano references. It does show DeStefano asking Arevalo to stop and Arevalo attempting to walk away. DeStefano then attempts to detain Arevalo and takes him to the ground, which led to Arevalo being arrested.

“Arevalo engage in what appeared to be a hand-to-hand drug transaction,” the suit states. “The suit alleges a ‘decades-long pattern and practice of tolerating, promoting and encouraging PAPD officers’ thuggery, violence, dishonesty, barbarism and maiming of individuals like the plaintiff in the present matter.’”

—Gennady Sheyner

Fire starts in homeless encampment

A rapidly spreading vegetation fire broke out in a homeless encampment Wednesday afternoon and caused the evacuation of homes in an East Palo Alto neighborhood.

Crews from the Menlo Park Fire Protection District responded shortly after 2 p.m. to the wind-driven fire, which was threatening residences on Shoreocean Drive and along Beech Street, fire Chief Harold Schapelhouman said in a statement.

The fire broke out in recently cut dry grass and was moving into thicker vegetation and trees bordering Shorebreeze. Police evacuated the homes, according to the online safety-alert app Citizen.

Investigators found several encampments of homeless people and suspect that drug paraphernalia at the fire’s origin point might have ignited the recently cut grass. It was the third fire of the day, with the two other much smaller fires attributed to a man setting small fires along the U.S. Highway 101 and University Avenue corridor in the morning, he said.

“We’ve seen a major increase in the number of encampment fires in the last couple of months as well as wildfires-related fires, especially here in East Palo Alto. We will be up-staffing with more units and personnel for the upcoming holiday,” Schapelhouman said.

The fire destroyed some fences, but no homes ignited.

—Sue Dremann

PUBLIC ART

After painting Black Lives Matter mural, artists ask: What more will be done?

by Lloyd Lee

On Hamilton Avenue in front of Palo Alto City Hall, a nearly 245-foot-long and 17-foot-tall vibrant street mural materialized this week, becoming the latest rallying cry in the local effort to further the Black Lives Matter movement.

The public art project, which spells out “Black Lives Matter” in block letters on the road, was proposed by community members and unanimously supported by the City Council and Public Art Commission. Nia Taylor and Ally Richter, current and former art commissioners, respectively, quickly put out a call for artists, netting 89 applicants. From those, 16 budding and seasoned Bay Area-based artists, including solo artists, two duo collaborations and an art club from San Jose’s The Harker School, were chosen. Each artist or group of artists was given a letter in the phrase to paint and a $700 stipend. Their work began early in the morning on June 30.

“I’m just trying to display history out here, put it in people’s faces and make them aware,” said Demetrics Washington, 29, a Sacramento-based muralist. Washington, who was recently highlighted in the media for leading a similar project in front of the state capitol, was assigned to paint the “B” in the mural.

His letter features the Nile River, Egyptian pyramids and black hieroglyphic symbols of peace and love, among others, against a yellow backdrop that nods to the now iconic mural painted near the White House — the one that launched the plastering of “Black Lives Matter” in front of government buildings and city halls nationwide.

“This is a step in a good direction,” said Taylor, who is currently the sole Black member of the art commission. “I think there’s been a lot of African Americans in this community who have often felt underrepresented.”

As artists went about their work, each letter began to evoke a timely reminder of Black life and, more solemnly, death. The letter...
“M” includes a golden portrait of Breonna Taylor, the 26-year-old Black medical worker who was fatally shot by Louisville Metro Police Department officers in her apartment. It was painted by muralist Nico Berry and his daughter Simone. In one “T,” Briem Brown, 20, a San Jose State University student, painted Black Greek muses of history, music and love poetry to reflect her own dual heritage and to tell viewers that “Black women are the root to everything,” she said.

The letters of the mural, taken together, express the multi-faceted impact that the three-word phrase has had since the death of George Floyd in the custody of Minneapolis police officers. It recalls the injustices Black people have been subjected to, the achievements they have made so far, the demands that still need to be met and the fact that Black lives matter.

But it also brings up the question that countless Black community members, including the protesters and speakers of Palo Alto’s Juneteenth rally on June 19, have anxiously asked: How long will this last?

The city’s mural, like many others, is temporary. Depending on weather and traffic conditions, the water-based latex paint used for the mural is expected to last anywhere from one to three years. Public Art Program coordinator Nadya Choprina said none of the artists carried the illusion that the mural would last forever.

None of the artists carried the illusion that the mural would last forever. Stuart Robertson, who added Pan-African colors and his home country’s flag of Jamaica in the quilt-like patterns of his “R,” was clear-minded about the fact that, like all art, the city mural is performative — “a gesture,” he said.

“We could do without the mural,” said Robertson, 28, a painter who recently earned his masters of fine art degree from Stanford University. “But it’s good that the community is generating awareness. It’s a way to make the conversation more visible.”

Kenan Moos — the 21-year-old who organized a June 5 protest against police violence in Los Altos and came out with his drone Tuesday to film the mural’s creation — said the project was “a very, very small part of what needs to be done.”

“Performative is good and bad,” Moos said, echoing Robertson’s sentiment. “The bad side of ‘performative’ is a lot of people feel that it’s all that needs to be done. The mural is great in terms of making a statement, but the statement needs to be followed up with the City Council’s actions.”

Over the past month, city leaders have taken a closer look at the Police Department’s policies as local protests, which have drawn thousands of community members, took place against police brutality and systemic racism. The council has also formed ad hoc committees to review police policies and make monthly reports to the public.

Other local and national demands include increased diversity initiatives, whether in classrooms, newsrooms or government. Through the Public Art Commission, Taylor hopes that the city’s approval of a mural will not be enough.

“At the end of the day, this mural will wash away, cars are gonna drive over it and it’ll eventually disappear,” Robertson said. “We hope that the trend or the interest doesn’t disappear with it.”

Additional artists who contributed to the mural include Adam Amram of Palo Alto; Masuma Ahmed of Palo Alto; Shiraaz Bhabha of Palo Alto; Cece Carpio of Oakland; Sarah Joy Espinoza-Evans of San Jose; Ruth Feseha of San Jose; Janet Foster of Menlo Park; Elizabeth Duplaine Foggie of Oakland; Richard Hoffman of San Jose; Ann McMillian of Mountain View; and Sasha and Ben Vu of Oakland.

Editorial Assistant Lloyd Lee can be emailed at llee@pawweekly.com.
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- Carrie M.

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As fireworks continue, city leaders pledge action

Leaders: Enforcement of law needs to be accompanied by cultural change
by Sue Dremann

 Loud explosions on East Palo Alto’s city streets form the backdrop for a public meeting on June 29 of city leaders, who convened virtually to discuss the growing problem of nightly fireworks plaguing Palo Alto, East Palo Alto and Menlo Park residents.

This year’s massive and persistent explosions have included M-80s, M-1000s and mortars that shower yards and homes with sparks. The illegal pyrotechnics have already set things on fire: This month, the Menlo Park Fire Protection District has put out six blazes, including ones that threatened homes. Chief Harold Schapelhouman said during the meeting, which was chaired by East Palo Alto Mayor Regina Wallace-Jones.

East Palo Alto police chief Chris Pardini said the fireworks activity, which has been going on for weeks, is thought to be due to pent-up stress from the COVID-19 stay-at-home orders, canceled fireworks shows and the accessibility of large fireworks in nearby states, particularly Nevada. The devices also are more powerful because vendors are selling consumers the fireworks they usually reserve for professional shows, which have been canceled due to public health concerns.

Next week, Pardini said, he plans to release information about the department’s current investigations into the illegal fireworks.

As for catching the people who are igniting fireworks, it’s difficult, Pardini said. By law, police can only arrest or cite someone if they have directly witnessed shooting off the fireworks.

This year, some home camera systems showed that people are driving around the city discharging fireworks from their vehicles, according to Pardini.

He is asking the public to review their home-security cameras and share any information with police to help track the location of the fireworks.

ShotSpotter, a gunshot-tracking system that the department uses, does record the sounds of fireworks, but the technology can’t be used in real-time by police because it only sends alerts for gunshots.

The department plans to use the system’s archived data to identify fireworks hot spots in the city, however, Pardini said.

Schaapelhouman recommended video surveillance, such as using cameras on a pole or at strategic locations, similar to what is used in the Santa Cruz Mountains to sweep large areas for fires and fireworks explosions. Although controversial, the agency also has drones that could be used to find offenders, he said.

For the July 4 holiday, Pardini said he will triple East Palo Alto’s staffing. Menlo Park police Chief Dave Bertini said he is doubling staffing, with increased patrols in the Belle Haven neighborhood.

Aside from enforcement, the fireworks can only be stopped through a culture change, Pardini and others said.

Menlo Park City Councilman Ray Mueller suggested the police offer a buyback program for fireworks.

“The issue I see in enforcement is you are asking someone who has made an investment and spent money not to use it,” he said.

The police chiefs said they have not seen a buyback program anywhere for fireworks. The main impediment is funding, they said. Schapelhouman was against a buyback program. He said that one time when the city located 600 pounds of fireworks in a home, the fire district stored them in a metal container for later disposal by the proper authorities. It took two years for the explosives to be moved. In the meantime, the gunpowder was sweating, which posed its own problems, he said.

East Palo Alto City Councilman Ruben Abrica suggested bringing in the city’s many organizations and activists to help talk to people in neighborhoods about fireworks and to distribute information to residents.

“Some people have the will, authority and compunction to go and talk to those people directly. Otherwise, we are going to end up being disappointed and pointing the finger at the police and I don’t think that’s fair,” he said.

Other city leaders agreed that volunteers from nonprofit organizations and emergency-preparation groups could help disseminate information and deliver a unified message to neighbors who are involved in setting off the explosions. Organizing on a block-by-block basis and creating “quiet block” campaigns would help engage the community in pinpointing the trouble spots. Pardini said such community interventions could help.

Wallace-Jones apologized for the fireworks.

“I will not offer any excuse for that except to say I do plead a little forgiveness and goodwill from our neighbors,” she said.

The city has been dealing with the pandemic and protests sparked by the killing of George Floyd while in custody of Minneapolis police, which until now, have occupied much of officials’ and staff’s attention, she said.

Turning to the fireworks problem, she said no one has been sitting on their hands. She plans to hold another meeting after July 4 to discuss how the strategies they discussed, such as training the block volunteers and adding a surveillance mechanism to support the police, are progressing.

Staff Writer Sue Dremann can be emailed at sdremann@paweeekly.com.
“Now is our time. It’s our Emmett Till moment. It’s our 1968 moment. It’s a once in a generation moment to uplift the entire system.”
— Olatunde Sobomehin, CEO, StreetCode Academy

Everyone agreed that the measures are reasonable and that most departments already have many of these policies in place, either because of state or local mandates. Palo Alto Police Chief Bob Jonsen noted that the department has just adopted a ban on carotid holds, requiring de-escalation of situations, mandating that officers intervene when a colleague is using excessive force and prohibiting cops from shooting at moving vehicles.

Paul Bains, president and co-founder of Project WeHope and pastor of Saint Samuel Church of God in Christ, concurred. Bains, who also works as chaplain to police departments in Palo Alto, East Palo Alto and Menlo Park, said racism in America tears at the fabric of everything from fair housing and a fair justice system to food security.

“One policy change that would make an immediate difference in the police department — repealing a provision that allows police officers to have citizen complaints expunged from their records, in some cases after as little as two years — was highlighted by Winter Dellenbach, an attorney and community activist who founded Friends of Buena Vista Mobile Home Park.

“This provision, she said, makes it difficult for police departments to ensure that they don’t hire officers with histories associated with it,” Jonsen said. “And maybe they get a second chance, but for police officers, it’s a lifetime thing that police unions would uphold that in some cases, the arbitrator would say, ‘Yes,’ Davis said. “This is one of those structures that, although it had honorable intent, has had a very damaging effect. You should not use discipline from 10 years ago to keep penalizing someone who has been given such enormous power, the power to take freedom, the power to take life — there is no complexity with that.”

Sobomehin also called the policy on purging records wrong, particularly given the fact that 2.3 million people are incarcerated, in many cases for non-violent crimes, and don’t have the same luxury. “To me that’s hypocritical, when there are literally a quarter-million children who are locked up for life for a non-homicidal thing they did as a kid,” Sobomehin said. “Now we’re not allowing for records to be expunged for children, but for police officers, who have the power to take lives, to take futures, (records) are now expunged.”

“This is wrong, this is serious,” Dellenbach said. “If you’re trying to make sure you’re not doing lateral hires for misconduct, if you’re trying to track a record, this is not good practice.”

When asked whether he would support a law that would eliminate the policy on purging records, Jonsen said that he is committed to keeping his officers accountable but argued that the system of disciplining an officer is complex. Some of these policies, he noted, are rooted in state laws — including the Peace Officers Bill of Rights — and would be difficult to abolish. “There has to be a system that’s designed, and this is where it gets complex, to where there’s a balance and there’s a fair due process associated with it,” Jonsen said. “It’s such a complex structure that to disentangle it on a state-wide or even national level is going to take some work, it’s not going to happen overnight,” Jonsen said.

Davis took a clearer position. “I think the answer should be ‘Yes.’” Davis said. “This is one of those structures that, although it had honorable intent, has had a very damaging effect. You should not use discipline from 10 years ago to keep penalizing someone who has been given such enormous power, the power to take freedom, the power to take life — there is no complexity with that.”

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On arbitration
Existing police union contracts, which make it hard in many cases for police departments to discipline officers facing misconduct allegations, are a major obstacle to getting rid of bad officers, Davis and his colleagues said.

Pardini concurred and noted that in some cases, the arbitration process makes it easier for officers to challenge and overturn suspensions and terminations.

“We see, and where it comes back to haunt police chiefs, is when you have a serious case and you try to terminate someone and they go to arbitration,” Pardini said. “And maybe they get a suspension, but you don’t want the Termination report based on what they’ve done and how they conducted themselves, and they get ordered back into the job.”

One possible reform, Pardini said, is taking arbitration out of the hands of attorneys and employing retired judges, who are better suited to fairly evaluating the cases.

Davis noted that arbitrators often make the same mistakes and that police chiefs in evaluating misconducts and the chief, in some cases, may lose before the case even starts. An arbitrator may also see a financial benefit in “splitting the baby” and reducing the proposed punishment, a result that may help retain their employment as arbitrators. He suggested that arbitrators be required to use the same standards as chiefs in evaluating an officer’s misconduct.

“If we’re going to make some major changes in this profession, I think the time is now to do that.”
— Bob Jonsen, police chief, Palo Alto

Jonsen warned that changes to arbitration practices are something that police unions would be very resistant to, particularly when a new chief comes in and starts implementing significant changes.

“There’s concern that a new chief could come in and start disciplining people excessively, with no protection (for officers),” Jonsen said.

Davis agreed that changing the rules would be tough but argued that arbitration should be put on the table during contract negotiations. “It’s going to be a heck of a fight, but it’s going to be worth it if you can get a good appeal process that’s fair to the officer but also fair to the community and the arbitration panel,” Davis said.

On the path forward
The urgent task of reforming police work and addressing systemic racism will have to involve the entire community, the police chief, and the community activists agreed.

Dellenbach said the community has a “historic window” that won’t be open for long and that residents
and restaurants, experienced an average 30.4% increase in revenue when compared to the previous Father's Day weekend (June 19-21) — a period that’s already typically good for businesses, he said. What is the highest percentage came from a restaurant on the main strip with a 400% increase in revenue, whereas the sharpest decline was from a cafe on University with a 25% decrease.

“My hope is that this is a success, not just for small businesses that are at the forefront, but for the community,” Mayfield said.

The impact on businesses that don’t serve food has been less clear.

The diversity of retailers on one street — a mattress shop, a cosmetic store, Mill’s Florist and a high-end hotel — was one of the reasons why the city didn’t immediately shut down the nearly five-block strip for an entire week.

That could, for example, be Haiku Gardens Cigars and Tobacco shop, a high-end cigar store that sits near the end of the road closure and right next to the train with the extra outdoor space?

Billy Kader, owner of Hingham since 2001, said he won’t be feeling any of the immediate effects of the Summer Streets program. Instead, something more drastic such as reopening the corridor is needed.

“Instead, something more drastic such as reopening the corridor is needed.”

High Street, may be the one outlier. According to Cowper, gain with the exception of the Creamery, which sits just outside the border of the road closure by High Street, may be the one outlier.

What’s your opinion about the Summer Streets program? Join the discussion about it on Town Square, the community forum at PaloAltoOnline.com/square.

“Billy Kader, owner of Hemingway Cigars and Tobacco shop, a high-end cigar store that sits near the end of the road closure and right next to the train with the extra outdoor space,”

Closure

(continued from page 5)

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Justice

(continued from page 12)

and police leaders had to jump through it to keep the keystone and institute police reform.

Sobomehin said the time is now to “reimagine what our community could look like.” Davis proposed a “truth and reconciliation process” to examine systemic racism. The truth may hurt, he said, but “selective ignorance is fatal.” Bains said that it’s going to “take everyone to lean in to resolve those systemic issues.”

“Every voice should be at the table and not on the menu,” Bains said.

Jonsen also said he is committed to moving ahead with changes in the Palo Alto Police Department to improve transparency and accountability.

“What’s really profound right now is the energy among the community and the quickness with which people are pushing, not like any time I’ve ever experienced in my career,” Jonsen said. “That’s exciting for this profession, because the time is now. If we’re going to look to make some major changes in this profession, I think the time is now to do that.”

Staff Writer Sue Dremann can be emailed at sds@paweekly.com.

Reopening

(continued from page 5)

fewer) moving parts is going to be the key to success,” he said. “We think ... the distance learning approach for secondary students is the best chance at us getting through a school year in a way that matches the pacing of the past.”

The district’s secondary schools plan diverges from the county’s allowance for middle and high school students to attend school in person with certain precautions in place.

Under the district’s proposal, however, middle and high school students would only attend campuses for small group activities, such as science labs, student government, clubs and study. Extracurricular activities will be available in socially distanced settings, the district’s report states.

Students in middle and high school would receive grades in the fall, and all schools and classes would follow an established schedule that includes education conducted in real time, also known as “synchronous” learning. The schools will take attendance daily.

The district also plans to open “PAUSD,” an in-person support center for middle and high school students who are struggling academically and/or facing unique challenges, such as safety concerns or limited internet access at home.

Beginning Sept. 11, about a month into the new school year, the district plans to evaluate the secondary schools’ offerings on a weekly basis throughout the year, with weekly updates to parents, with a minimum of one week’s notice before any significant changes are made.

Austin said he hopes the students could return to face-to-face instruction at some point. “I’d be really disappointed if it wasn’t the whole year,” he said of the distance learning model.

The plan for elementary schools

The district is also still in negotiations with its teachers union about the plan is imperfect and will more likely be adjusted in the fall. A session was scheduled for July 2.

“When you’re on very unfamiliar territory, the middle of the road is where you want to be,” President Todd Collins said.

Staff Writer Sue Dremann contributed to this report. Staff Writer Elena Kadwany can be emailed at ekadwany@paweekly.com.

As part of Palo Alto’s Summer Streets program, University Avenue will be closed to traffic everyday through Aug. 2.

Its owners have every incentive to keep the shop open everyday, even if Morsey is unsure the store will have the same draw of customers since people are working from home. And though she hopes that the program will uplift her store and the surrounding businesses, Morsey also believes that the city should not allow any semblance of the normal life most people are itching for.

“People are still treating the weekend as a weekend,” she said. “I think there has to be a balance. We still have to stay safe.”

Editorial Assistant Lloyd Lee can be emailed at lle@paweekly.com.
COMMITTED TO TRANSPARENCY
2.5% Commission Paid to Buyer’s Agent
Waived if DeLeon Buyer’s Agent

3787 Woodside Road, Woodside

Supreme Privacy, Timeless Luxury on 3.15 Acres in Woodside
Nestled on a verdant 3.15-acre lot (per county) in peaceful Woodside, this stunning estate presents superb privacy, timeless luxury, and incredible space for entertaining on a grand scale. Lofty ceilings craft an airy atmosphere throughout the home and tall, wide windows allow an abundance of natural light. Expansive formal rooms enjoy elegant appointments, the super kitchen is sure to inspire your inner Top Chef, the handsome office can meet all work-from-home needs, and the lower level includes a theater for fantastic movie nights. Offering 6 bedrooms, 5.5 baths, and 7,168 sq. ft. of living space (per county), including a 1-bed, 1-bath guest house, this home will have you feeling a million miles away from the frenetic pace of Silicon Valley thanks to extraordinary grounds that include a pool, barbecue patio, and pathways that wind their way to the serene banks of Bear Gulch Creek, yet you will still enjoy the convenience of being just a short drive to the amenities of the Town of Woodside, and be close to Interstate 280 for Bay Area commuting. Adding the finishing touch, children may attend the acclaimed Woodside Elementary School (buyer to verify eligibility).

For virtual open houses & more photos, please visit:
www.3787Woodside.com
Offered at $11,988,000

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Data from BrokerMetrics® based on MLS sales from January 1, 2019, to December 31, 2019, in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties combined, residential properties, with no off-MLS sales included in the rankings.

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中文諮詢請聯繫Audrey Sun, DRE #01933274 電話: 650.785.5822 | www.deleonrealty.com | DeLeon Realty, Inc. | DRE #01903224
BRIGHT AND LUXURIOUS ON MORE THAN ¼-ACRE LOT

1011 Runnymead Court, Los Altos

Offered at $2,988,000

On a corner lot of more than one-quarter acre in sought-after Los Altos, this beautiful 4-bedroom, 3-bathroom home is well-equipped to meet the needs of a modern family. Hardwood floors, detailed ceilings, crown molding, and plantation shutters give this home a luxurious feel, while skylights and wide windows craft a light, bright atmosphere. Nearly 2,300 square feet of living space includes the comfortable living room with fireplace, the kitchen with a sunny eat-in area, and the family room with a fireplace all its own. Double doors open to the private master suite, which features access to the peaceful backyard that offers a large deck, lush lawn, and fantastic space for outdoor entertaining. From this great location, you will be just steps to Heritage Oaks Park, less than a mile to the Rancho Shopping Center, and just a short drive to Highway 85 for Bay Area commuting. Plus, children may attend acclaimed Los Altos schools (buyer to verify eligibility).

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For more information, video tour & more photos, please visit: www.1011Runnymead.com

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Emanuel George Gandes  
April 10, 1925 – June 2, 2020

Emanuel (Manny) Gandes, 95 years young, died peacefully of natural causes on June 2, 2020 while surrounded by his loving family. Emanuel was born on April 30, 1925 in Naxxar, Malta to Anthony and Carmela (Bonnavia) Gandes. Emanuel was a shy but active child who loved the sea. He spent as much time as he could swimming and fishing when he wasn’t helping his father out at the family bakery. After World War II, Emanuel ventured out to London for a couple of years before immigrating to East Palo Alto, California in November 1957, where his older brother, Charles, had already settled. Upon arriving in California, he felt the love of his life, a Maltese beauty named Margie Spiteri. Emanuel and Margie were married in San Francisco on July 8, 1961.

Once married, they moved to a small apartment in Palo Alto at the corner of Lytton Avenue and Waverly Street (still standing to this day). After three years of apartment life, Emanuel was more than anxious to take on the pride of ownership. They would purchase what would become their lifelong home on Channing Avenue in Palo Alto in July 1964. Emanuel didn’t waste any time on making the home their own. He was literally tearing out the closets on the day they moved in. Emanuel and Margie always worked side by side with whatever project they tackled. They raised two children, Diane (born in December, 1962) and Jeff (born in November, 1965), and worked hard, saved and sacrificed to provide them with the best possible examples, guidance and a strong foundation.

Emanuel was a “jack of all trades” and a master of many. In 1958, he built a breathtaking all-wood Glen-L Audeen ski boat. The boat would become the centerpiece of many wonderful trips where Emanuel would teach so many to waterski, always patiently waiting in the sun and providing guidance and encouragement. His beautiful boat was passed down to his son, Jeff, who has lovingly restored it over the years and has always kept it in pristine condition. It has been a source of family fun for generations and his legacy will live on through it for many future generations to come. Emanuel had many talents besides boat building. Although he only had limited formal education, he could cook, bake, garden, sew, fix absolutely anything with a motor and remodel an entire house from the ground up. He was also an absolutely fabulous dancer. Emanuel was always quick to build and configure a solution to any problem. In fact, he held two patents - one for a flexible boat hitch and another for a collapsible barbecue.

Emanuel was a proud member of Sheet Metal Workers’ Local No. 104 and spent 30 years in the sheet metal profession. Whether he was building a clean room at Fairchild Semiconductor or Hewlett Packard in the early days of the computer industry or a kitchen ventilation system for one of the local restaurants, Emanuel was always recognized as the best at what he did.

In 1982, Emanuel retired and he and Margie embarked on the next phase of their life. They loved to travel and they criss-crossed the US in their motorhome, went on several cruises, and traveled to many parts of the world. Emanuel loved fishing and they would spend several weeks each summer in Canada catching salmon. He would often travel back to his beloved Malta to spend time with his sisters, family and friends. In June of 2019, at the age of 94, he travelled one last time to Malta with Margie, his daughter, Diane, and granddaughter, Olivia. The memories of this trip will be treasured forever.

Over almost 60 years of living in Palo Alto, Emanuel and Margie made many lasting friendships through the community of the St. Albert the Great church and Companions on the Journey. Those who knew Emanuel, loved his kind smile, gentle nature and curious mind. He is survived by his wife of 59 years, Margie (Spiteri) Gandes; children Diane Baum (Andrew) and Jeff Gandes (Laurie); five grandchildren Megan Gandes, Sarah Gandes, Andrew Gandes, Benjamin Gandes, Olivia Baum; sister Josephine (Galdes) Fenech; sister-in-law Mary (Spiteri) Gandes, brother-in-law Spiro Spiteri and nieces, nephews, great nieces and great nephews both in the US and in Malta. Preceded in death by his parents, brother Charles Gandes and sisters Salvina Gandes, Rose Gandes, and Tereza Gandes. A virtual memorial service was held on Friday, June 19, 2020.

To honor Emanuel’s memory, donations may be made to the Companions on the Journey at www.companionsonthejourney.org/give/, St. Jude’s Children Research Hospital https://www.stjude.org/donate/donate-to-st-jude.html, or Mission Hospice www.missionhospice.org/donate/.
Guest Opinion

Council reduced the size of the HRC because of me

City silences underrepresented voices on a commission explicitly set up to advocate for underrepresented voices

by Steven Lee

To the numerous women in our community who had pushed so hard for a CEDAW ordinance, this was a big win. Unfortunately, their victory was short-lived. Over the course of eight months, the council continued to postpone its consideration and eventually it simply referred the ordinance to its Policy and Services Committee, where it continues to linger, unaddressed, after almost two years.

Off the record, council members have told me that they don’t think gender discrimination is a problem in Palo Alto nor do they plan to bring it back to council for a vote and implementation.

Sexual harassment

The council’s lack of concern over sex discrimination was re-affirmed in its recently handling of the Downtown Streets Team contract. Despite well-publicized credible accusations of serious incidents of harassment by Downtown Streets Team leadership, the council summarily approved the contract’s renewal. I and a colleague strongly advocated for the very standard practice of providing records and reports regarding the alleged harassment prior to signing a new contract with the alleged harasser. The council, however, viewed my demands for transparency — the same transparency a private organization would seek as a matter of course — as overstepping and intrusive.

In actions that a reasonable person could perceive as retaliation, the council pushed for canceling HRC’s meetings, and ultimately, as happened last week, reducing the size of the commission to eliminate incumbents, such as myself, who were up for reappointment. The thought of retaliation would not have occurred to me if these decisions were not accompanied by private text messages and emails from council members, scolding me for speaking out against their status quo.

These stories are just some of the many things that have happened behind the scenes in the pursuit of change and progress.

Even as I’ve been disappointed and rebuked by the Palo Alto establishment, I have and will continue to find comfort, strength to fight the good fight from you — my fellow Palo Altans and neighbors who speak out and work tirelessly every day to make Palo Alto a more welcoming, inclusive, forward-looking and responsive community for all.

It is with you — and because of you — that no matter what comes, I will continue to serve this amazing community as long as I can and in whatever ways that I can.

Onwards, Palo Alto!

Steven Lee is a Palo Alto Human Relations Commissioner whose seat was recently eliminated by the City Council. The views expressed above are his alone. He can be emailed at stevenalot@gmail.com and followed on Facebook at facebook.com/StevenLeePaloAlto.
F or those accustomed to celebrating Fourth of July with big parties, parades, chili cook-offs, fireworks and concerts, the Independence Day holiday is going to feel a bit ... different this year. But just because the usual festivities and large mass gatherings may be off due to COVID-19 concerns, it doesn’t mean you can’t have fun. After all, a holiday is a holiday and sometimes, it’s the simple things that mean the most.

Perhaps you are looking forward to the premiere of the film of the original Broadway production of “Hamilton” on Disney+. Maybe you’ll have a backyard barbecue with your (very) nearest and dearest. Maybe you just curl up with a good book and enjoy a day off. We’ve gathered a few ideas, in case you need some inspiration.

HOLD A PERSONAL CHILI COOK-OFF

For some Palo Altans, the Fourth of July means it’s chili time. But crowded lines and communal food are not exactly advisable this summer. Never fear, the International Chili Society, which sanctions chili-cooks nationwide, publishes online a number of award-winning recipes in a variety of styles from across the country. To check out the possibilities, go to chillicookoff.com/winning-recipes.

Michael Brown, of San Carlos catering company MB’s Place, won top honors at last year’s Palo Alto Chili Cook Off for his renowned three-way chili. Brown recently talked with us about his catering business and cooking techniques, and shared tips on becoming a chili champion. See the interview on this page.

If laboring over a pot of beans and meat for the Fourth of July isn’t your thing, you can order chili from Brown by calling 415-748-4222. MB’s Place is also available for delivery on DoorDash.

MORE OPTIONS FROM LOCAL CHEFS

Palo Alto’s Zola (565 Bryant St.) is offering a Fourth of July grill kit including summer corn and fava beans, potato salad, smoked pork ribs, dinner rolls and apricot brown-butter crumble, available for pickup on Friday, July 3, from 3-7 p.m. The kit is fully cooked and just needs reheating. It feeds three to four people and costs $75. To order, go to zolapolaloio.com.

Woodside’s Village Bakery is offering a Fourth of July “backyard” barbecue featuring smoked brisket, ribs, chicken, potato salad, corn, strawberry shortcake, cocktails, wine and beer from 12:30-4 p.m. at 3052 Woodside Road. Orders can be picked up or eaten at a small number of tables. To pre-order for pickup, go to eventbrite.com/e/July-4th-backyard-barbeque-tickets-110806264520.

CHALK FULL OF FUN (VIRTUAL) CHALK FESTIVAL

Norfolk, on July 4, Redwood City’s Courthouse Square and its surrounding areas turn into a glorious, colorful gallery of incredible chalk art. This year, the Chalk Full of Fun Festival, sponsored by the Redwood City Parks and Arts Foundation, is sending the fun home instead, with a virtual festival and a contest for kids, teens and adults. Interested artists can create a chalk drawing at home, upload photos of the work (including one with the artist) and share on social media (use the #RWChalkfest hashtag) and be eligible to win a prize. An online gallery of entries will be created on the festival’s website, where weekend participants can also find tips on working with chalk (don’t forget the sunscreen). To enter, or for more information, go to rwco.org/chalk-full-of-fun.

INDEPENDENCE CARAVAN PARADE

While most traditional parades are canceled, Los Altos Hills is hosting a July 4 vehicle caravan parade, which will include emergency vehicles and classic cars, rather than its usual pedestrian and bike procession. The vehicles will cruise through town starting at Town Hall at 10 a.m. and ending at Fremont Road. According to the town’s website, residents are encouraged to walk to the street nearest them on the parade route or gather at Purissima Park or the Gardner Bullis campus and to maintain social distancing while watching the festivities. For more information, go to losaltoshills.ca.gov.

A (VIRTUAL) OLD-FASHIONED FOURTH OF JULY

While it’s closed for in-person visits this time around, the San Mateo County History Museum is offering an online version of its annual “Old-Fashioned Fourth of July” celebration. Activities for children, including instructions on making ice cream, flags and whirligigs, and historic festive photos from the 1800s, will be posted on the museum’s site at historysmc.org/old-fashioned-fourth.

A REFRESHER ON REFRESHMENTS

Palo Alto’s City of Cocktail is offering a Fourth of July cocktail bartending class at 5 p.m. on July 4. For $79 per person, participants will receive two hours of “activity-based bartender learning,” with all equipment provided and pizza appetizers included. Class size will remain small, to comply with health guidelines. For more information or to register, go to cityofcocktail.com.

Menlo Park’s Left Bank Brasse- rie is also debating its new “Americ- an Bar” cocktail menu, inspired by the post-World War I American expatriates in Paris. Over the holiday weekend, cocktail specials include the “Bee’s Knees” (gin, honey, lemon and lavender) and a daiquiri inspired by Ernest Hemingway, available for pickup or delivery (655 Santa Cruz Ave., Menlo Park). Go to leftbank.com.

TAKE A HIKE

Take advantage of the beautiful weather and get out into the great outdoors. Many Santa Clara County and San Mateo County parks, open space preserves and city parks are now open, with some restrictions (sorry kids, still no playgrounds allowed). Conditions can change quickly, so confirm that your preferred park is accessible (as well as its parking lots and restrooms, in case you need them). Hikers should maintain at least a 6-foot distance between their and other parties and bring masks to use when social distancing isn’t possible. For information on parks and preserves, go to openspace.org, parks.smcgov.org, sccgov.org or check with individual cities on municipal park access.

FIND YOUR NEXT FAVORITE SOUNDTRACK

Sure, live concerts aren’t a safe choice right now, but summer’s still a great time to discover new music by local artists. Our sister publication TheSixtyFive.com has been publishing interviews with and information on Peninsula-connected musicians with new music recently released, including Call Me Ace, Rob Woods and The Corner Laughers. Even better, on Friday, July 3, the music platform Bandcamp.com is waiving its fees, meaning 100% goes to the musicians, making it especially supportive way to find new music in time to add it to your holiday weekend playlist.

Chili tips from Michael Brown, winner of last year’s Palo Alto Chili Cook Off

How to create award-winning chili at home

By Elena Kadvany

S adly, there will be no socially distanced version of the annual Palo Alto Chili Cook Off this year, a festive Fourth of July event that for decades has brought people to Mitchell Park in Palo Alto and Castro Valley.

“Ultimately I have the best award-winning three-way chili in the entire world, I believe. But that’s just what I believe,” Brown said.

Brown’s three-way chili gets its name from the three types of chili (brown, black and white kidney) and three types of meat (ground chuck, boneless, skinless chicken breast and filet mignon) he uses. Brown started making chili last year. He had been thinking about his late father, who used to make chili from a frozen brick of meat and spices. He wanted to create a fresh, updated version using more of one meat at a time. Two gallons of chili and brought it to a gathering at a friend’s house where a group of people, he said, went quiet for a few minutes.

“When the conversation stops ... you know you’re onto something,” he said.

Good luck asking Brown for the (continued on page 19)
Chili

(continued from page 18)

full recipe; he holds that tight to his chest. But he does have tips for home cooks who want to try their hand at making chili for the Fourth of July. Using fresh ingredients is key, as well as consistency. “Consistency is very important. Make sure you’re using the same amount of each product you cook with,” he said.

He cooks all the meat separately. He encouraged creative seasoning — “put your own twist on it” — with herbs like rosemary, thyme and cilantro.

Brown likes to top his chili with cornbread. To check whether the chili has been cooked all the way through, he found himself with 5 or 4-year-old — melting down Now Brown has been planning on taking his catering business on the road. Brown said he’s seen a recent spike in sales due to media lists encouraging people to support local Black-owned businesses in the wake of the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police. Brown has been planning on purchasing a concession trailer to take his catering business on the road, and the increase in business means he’ll be able to do that much sooner, he said.

He’ll also soon be serving his three-way chili on Sundays at the San Carlos Farmers Market, which remains temporarily closed due to the pandemic but is set to reopen soon.

Chili remains his most popular item, but MB’s Place also serves other dishes including a vegetarian chili, fried chicken, tri-tip, burgers and smoked meatball sandwich. • Email Elena Kadavany at ekadavany@pawekly.com

Michael Brown opened his catering business, MB’s Place, after sales of his award-winning three-way chili proved popular.
Darius Johnson grew up in Palo Alto’s Ventura neighborhood, practically down the street from Antonio’s Nut House on California Avenue.

The longtime dive bar reopened on Monday after a monthslong pandemic-forced closure with Johnson leading the kitchen. Taqueria Azteca, which for three decades had served Nut House patrons, closed permanently earlier this month due to the coronavirus shutdown.

Johnson, a self-taught chef, is now serving chicken wings, lumpia, tacos, burgers and other bar fare out of the Nut House at 321 California Ave. Socially distanced tables have been set up in the parking lot adjacent to the bar for outdoor dining, and bright-yellow peanuts have been spray-painted in front of the entrance to remind people to stand 6 feet apart while in line. (Alcohol can only be served with food under local public health mandates, so people must first order food before getting a drink.)

The menu reflects Johnson’s roots in Palo Alto. There’s handmade meat- and vegetable-filled lumpia because one of his best friends growing up was Filipino. He named his burger, which comes with pickles and remoulade he makes himself, after Michael Meyer, a local woodworker whose son he went to Ohlone Elementary School with.

Johnson, a Gunn High School graduate, got the gig at the Nut House through another hometown friend: Palo Alto native Lars Smith, co-owner of State of Mind Public House & Pizzeria in Los Altos.

Smith was in talks with the Nut House owners to take over the kitchen but realized he didn’t have the time or staff to make it happen, he said, so he suggested they tap Johnson instead. Smith also grew up in the Ventura neighborhood and has known Johnson since he was about 5 years old. Johnson helped Smith open State of Mind in 2018.

During the shutdown, Johnson had been serving tacos, Japanese curry, barbecue and other dishes out of his mother’s house in Palo Alto through his catering company, Bay La Soul. He describes his cooking style as “soul food,” not in terms of Southern-style cuisine but rather cooking with soul. “I believe everybody has their own soul food,” he said.

Also on the menu are quesadilla tacos — two tortillas with a layer of melted cheese in between — and regular carne asada, chicken or black bean tacos. He plans to expand the menu as he settles in.

Johnson said his dream is to have his own restaurant, so the Nut House was an unexpected but welcome opportunity.

“It’s kind of weird it took a pandemic, but I’m completely ecstatic about it and I’m grateful for the opportunity,” he said.

Bay La Soul is open at the Nut House daily from noon to 9 p.m. The kitchen closes at 8 p.m. but will serve items like chips and salsa for the last hour.

The owners of the Nut House are still looking for a permanent home for the dive bar before the lease expires in December, including potentially a space down the street on California Avenue.

Staff Writer Elena Kadvany can be emailed at ekadvany@paweekly.com.
They grew up in Palo Alto, or moved here in the 1960s and 1970s, attracted by the weather, the reputation of the schools and the opportunity to study or work at Stanford University.

These African Americans — longtime local residents and now senior citizens — stayed and built families and careers. But all have endured painful and repeated incidents of racial discrimination over decades in a city where the Black population has hovered between 2% and 3% for the past 50 years.

Cautiously hopeful that the growing Black Lives Matter movement could stir welcome change, five of these longtime residents agreed to share some of those experiences in recent interviews with this publication.

Over and over they recounted how they or their family members had been detained and questioned by school or police authorities — sometimes at gunpoint — while going about ordinary activities such as driving, pumping gas or walking downtown or in their own neighborhoods.

Longtime resident and lawyer Bill Green served on a police advisory commission established in Palo Alto during the 1970s after a white resident in the Crescent Park neighborhood called the police on the basis that someone looked like a thief.

Over看到children were pulled aside and questioned by police while walking, bicycling, driving or socializing in their own Palo Alto neighborhood.

“Our boys especially were stopped all the time,” Loretta Green said. “The first question was always, ‘Get out of the car; where’d you steal the car?’ They were even stopped in our neighborhood and asked for ID — many times. The (police) told them their rule was to stop people who look like they don’t belong, so I guess we look like we don’t belong.”

One son — tasked with picking up his younger sister from her after-school program by bicycle — begged his parents to relieve him of the chore after being questioned multiple times by police about the bike he was towing for his sister.

Another time, police called the Greens to suggest that their fifth-grade son had broken into the principal’s office at 10:30 p.m. and stolen money when he was actually home in bed. The evidence was that his baseball glove — which a teacher had picked up on the playground and placed in the principal’s office — had been found there.

Some years later their daughter, by then a student at the University of California, Berkeley, was walking to visit her mother at a downtown Palo Alto newspaper office when she was blocked by a police car and questioned about a homicide she knew nothing about.

The repeated, upsetting incidents take a corrosive psychological toll, the longtime residents said. Children come to fear and expect that police are not going to help or support them.

“Palo Alto is a nice town but it’s a white town and people don’t realize their biases,” said Loretta Green who, before retiring in 2004, was an award-winning columnist for the San Jose Mercury News and the former Palo Alto Times and Peninsula Times Tribune. “We all have biases — I’m sure I have biases, too. For racial minorities it’s very damaging because it’s cumulative — it just piles up and piles up and then you wonder why somebody goes off. They’re just sick of it and they do something crazy and get killed.”

Longtime Palo Alto resident LaDoris Cordell relayed similar experiences.

As a young lawyer in the mid-1970s, Cordell was riding in a car with her then-husband and a friend when they were stopped by police at the corner of Midfield and Willow roads. Cordell was ordered to stand against the wall of a grocery store at gunpoint while the vehicle was searched, she said.

“I was absolutely terrifying and thoroughly embarrassing,” said Cordell, a retired judge from Stanford University who served on the Palo Alto City Council from 2003 to 2007.

“It wasn’t just one cop — it was two or three with guns. Once I was allowed to turn around, I was told there’d been a robbery at Baskin-Robbins by three Black men on foot.

“Here I was, female and in a car with two African American males — not on foot. I’m a lawyer; I went to Stanford Law School; I’m doing everything I’m supposed to do to be successful and move forward and at that time it didn’t matter. All they saw were three Black people.

“I got no apology. I was just looked at as a criminal suspect. It really said to me, ‘This is how you’re seen first before they find out who you are.’”

Sara Boyd, a retired vice-principal at Menlo Atherton High School, and her husband, Harold, a retired Stanford administrator, raised two sons in the Palo Alto home where they still live.

“We had an extremely frightening experience when the police picked up one of our sons while he was stopped at a gas station in Los Altos,” Boyd recalled. “He’d taken a karate class at Stanford and he had his sticks in the back of the car.”

Their son was told karate sticks could be a lethal weapon. The officers asked him whether he would use the sticks to defend himself if someone tried to hurt him and, when he answered in the affirmative, they took him to jail, Boyd said.

“We’d never had any trouble with the police and suddenly we had to find a bail bondsman — it was very frightening but I wasn’t going to go home without him.”

The charges were later dropped.

Boyds said her husband, once stopped for a minor traffic infraction, was asked whether he was “going for a gun” when he reached toward the glove compartment to retrieve his vehicle registration.

“The police officer was so hostile to him,” Boyd said. “The assumption is that all Black people carry guns, especially Black men. We don’t have guns. We detest violence. That was irritating. Why was he talked to in such a hostile manner?”

Of the recently publicized killings of Black people at the hands of police, Boyd said: “I cringe because that could have been one of my sons. It isn’t pleasant for us, but we do what we have to do to survive, and we try to do the right thing.”

Retiree Michael Harrison grew up in Palo Alto — his grandfather first came here in the 1920s — and graduated from Palo Alto High School in 1968.

As a child in the late 1950s, he walked frequently from his grandparents’ Crescent Park home to play at his cousins’ house in Midtown.

“A group of guys at the corner of Channing and Newell were always there and they’d yell the N-word over and over every time I walked by,” recalled Harrison, now retired after 28 years with the pharmaceutical company Alza.

Harrison said he would keep walking without responding.

“What were my options? I’m one Black kid and they’re four or five white guys,” he said. “I’d probably be the one who got in trouble if there were a fight so I just stayed to myself. But I remembered who they were and basically I did not befriend any of them throughout high school.”

As a young lawyer, Cordell said she found a community of African American friends in East Palo Alto, where she launched her law practice, but chose to raise her two daughters in Palo Alto.

“I decided to stay here primarily because of the schools and I was not disappointed — my daughters can American friends in East Palo Alto, where she launched her law practice, but chose to raise her two daughters in Palo Alto.

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Jerry Harrison, an African American man, arrived in Palo Alto from North Carolina in 1922 in search of a better life, according to his grandson Michael Harrison.

He worked as a railroad porter as well as shining shoes at the Hotel President on University Avenue. His wife, Ruth Odessa, cleaned clothes, said Michael Harrison, who grew up in Palo Alto and still lives here at age 69.

“They were very frugal,” he recalled. “My grandmother used to serve us milk with water added to it.”

The Harrisons saved enough to buy a small house in Palo Alto’s Crescent Park neighborhood, but because it was illegal to sell to Black residents, Jerry Harrison asked a Jewish friend to buy the property “and they transferred it into my grandfather’s name,” Michael Harrison said. “It’s a long story, but I remember he was able to buy the property.”

The Harrison family’s story wasn’t uncommon. Housing restrictions in neighborhoods throughout Palo Alto. When the Southgate neighborhood was subdivided in 1923, for example, all properties carried deed restrictions specifying that no persons of African, Japanese, Chinese or Mongolian descent were to use or occupy the houses, according “Palo Alto: A Centennial History,” published in 1993 by Ward Winslow and the Palo Alto Historical Association.

These types of restrictions existed in Palo Alto neighborhoods for decades until the U.S. Supreme Court voided racial restrictions in 1948. Despite the high court’s ruling, many restrictions lingered in deeds and bylaws.

There were groups in Palo Alto that condemned such practices, such as the Palo Alto Fair Play Committee, which in the 1950s began pushing for open housing. Members lobbied the government to adopt new laws and created an integrated housing development near the intersection of Greer Road and Colorado Avenue with Black, Asian and white residents. The development became a quiet success, Winslow wrote. But a local survey around that time indicated that most still said they would not rent to African Americans only.

And then there was Joseph Eichler, who became the first local developer to refuse to abide by the exclusionary standards and insisted that his homes were to be sold to anyone and everyone who had the money, according to Matt Bowling of Fair Housing Palo Alto. In 1958, when the trade group Associated Home Builders Inc. refused to support his position of selling to everyone, Eichler resigned from the group. By the time Eichler died in 1974, he had built roughly 11,000 homes in California and Palo Alto. His subdivisions opened the door for Black and Asian buyers in Palo Alto. In the 1960s, ’70s and ’80s, the nonprofit Midpeninsula Citizens for Fair Housing no longer exists, but the problem of housing discrimination has not disappeared, said Harrison, who lives in a house close to the one his grandparents purchased.

“(Housing discrimination) is going to be an issue as long as there are Black and white people in Palo Alto, and everywhere in the country,” he said. “I’m happy things are changing some, but it’s a long way from where it should be.”

—Chris Kenrick

![After a white resident called the police on a Black neighbor out for a stroll, longtime Palo Alto residents Loretta and Bill Green launched a series of conversations to help people understand that a Black person in the community is not a cause for concern. “If you see some behavior that’s criminal, you can do something, but the mere presence of a Black person is not criminal,” Bill Green said.](https://www.paloaltonews.com/news/2020-07-07/not-all-neighborhoods-were-created-equal-in-palo-alto)

Not all neighborhoods were created equal in Palo Alto

A look at how real estate policies undermined Black homeownership

A venidas announced on June 24 that it is cutting back on several programs at its enrichments centers as it pivots to a contactless service model.

A venidas announced on June 24 that it is cutting back on several programs at its enrichments centers in Palo Alto and its adult day health care center in Mountain View as the organization pivots to a new virtual and contactless service model.

The senior services nonprofit will no longer provide seniors assistance with minor home repairs through its Handyman Services program and has scaled back its door-to-door transportation service. The Redwood Cafe at its newly renovated center on Bryant Street in downtown Palo Alto and the Avenidas Blooms volunteer group that distributes floral arrangements to the sick and elderly also are among the programs that have been cut.

Senior day care programs at Avenidas Rose Kleiner Center in Mountain View and the Senior Planet@Avenidas tech center in Palo Alto will scale back operations, according to the June press release.

The organization also announced that it is laying off seven of its 53 employees.

“To take on these belt-tightening changes, Avenidas CEO and President Amy Andonian stated in the press release.

“Although our buildings have been and will remain closed for an unknown amount of time, we are delivering as many existing and new services and programs as we possibly can ... to meet the new needs of our vulnerable senior population,” she added.

Andonian said Avenidas staff members will continue to work remotely Monday through Friday to help seniors, their families and caregivers as everyone navigates the health crisis.

The shutdown, the organization has pivoted from providing on-site and in-person services to delivering groceries, supplies and medicine to those in need, fielding a hotline and calling seniors to check in with them as needed. The group also has transitioned many on-site classes to Zoom and has launched virtual support groups.

At the Rose Kleiner site in Mountain View, Director Kristina Lugo said staff is managing participants’ health through phone calls and physically distanced visits.

“Even in the face of these challenging times, we can see this as an opportunity to innovate in new ways to reach an even bigger and more diverse senior population with our ‘Avenidas Without Walls’ strategic initiative,” Andonian said.

Founded in 1969, Avenidas has operated classes, enrichment programs and outreach services for local seniors in the community for more than five decades. The organization completed a major renovation of its Bryant Street location in April 2019 that doubled its downtown space and led to the opening of a second campus at Cubberley Community Center, which initially opened as its headquarters for 18 months during the construction, but continued to offer programs long term.

For more information about Avenidas, visit avenidas.org.

Associate Editor Linda Taaffe can be emailed at ltaaffe@paweeekly.com.

Avenidas cuts programs as it pivots to virtual era

Nonprofit switches to new service model for classes, transportation services

by Linda Taaffe

Contributing Writer Chris Kenrick can be emailed at ckenrick@paweeekly.com.

Living Well

Racism (continued from page 21)

kids, were treated, mostly at the high schools. Black kids were getting suspended or disciplined at disproportionate rates given how small their population was. I’d get calls — sometimes from parents, sometimes from teachers — who said this and were concerned. It was all part of the systemic racism issue.

In 1982 Cordell was appointed to the Santa Clara County Municipal Court by then-Gov. Jerry Brown. Six years later, she won the election for Superior Court, where she served until leaving to become vice president at Stanford in 2001.

When asked about the issue of passing racial profiling in the 1980s or 1990s, “there was all this push-back,” she said. “Now we know it happens.” She noted that there were civil rights cases in the past, in previous decades, that, in previous times, would not have been believed.

“Thank goodness for cell phones,” she said. “Anything you record will make a difference, because all of this has been going on for a long time,” she said.

Contributing Writer Chris Kenrick can be emailed at ckenrick@paweeekly.com.

After a white resident called the police on a Black neighbor out for a stroll, longtime Palo Alto residents Loretta and Bill Green launched a series of conversations to help people understand that a Black person in the community is not a cause for concern. “If you see some behavior that’s criminal, you can do something, but the mere presence of a Black person is not criminal,” Bill Green said.
Senior Focus

ANTI-INFLAMMATORY EATING ... Karen Ross, a registered dietitian with the cardiac rehabilitation program HeartFit for Life, will discuss common causes of inflammation and ways people can add anti-inflammatory foods to their diet in a free Zoom session Tuesday, July 14, at 1 p.m. The event is co-sponsored by HealthTrust, HeartFit for Life and Avenidas. To register, email register@avenidas.org.

Wise Owls ... The Wise Owl Players, a group of seniors who perform dramatic readings — now through Zoom — are looking for participants to rehearse and perform “The Senior Storybook,” a folk tale about the wisdom of elders. Tuesdays from July 14 through Aug. 25. Program cost is $85. For more information, contact director Enid Davis at eahdavis@yahoo.com. To register, contact Tracy McClure at trmccloud@avenidas.org or call 650-289-5436.

AGING BRAIN STUDIES ... Stanford psychology researchers are working to shed light on the question: Why do some older adults remember better than others? In a study published May 29 in the scientific journal eLife, the researchers found that memory processes in older adult brains look similar to those previously observed in the brains of young adults. For seniors who had trouble remembering, evidence for those processes was noticeably diminished. The study found that, on average, recall ability declined with age. However, regardless of age, stronger hippocampal activity and replay in the cortex was linked to better performance. The ultimate aim of the research is to develop new, sensitive tools to identify people who are at increased risk for Alzheimer's disease before significant memory decline occurs, the researchers said.

Items for Senior Focus may be emailed to Palo Alto Weekly Contributing Writer Chris Kenrick at ckenrick@paweekly.com.

Connecting LGBTQ Seniors ... Avenidas’s LGBTQ Senior Empowerment and Connection group is for LGBTQ seniors wishing to meet online to discuss their needs, experiences, resources and ideas on how to age successfully. This support group encourages social engagement and self-care. To join an online chat every Monday at 2:30 p.m., email tkingery@avenidas.org and put “LGBTQ group” in the subject line.

CLubs and Free Classes ... The Avenidas tech center is offering a free online lecture series on entertainment, the internet of things and tech tools to identify people who are at increased risk for Alzheimer’s disease before significant memory decline occurs, the researchers said. This support group encourages social engagement and self-care. To join an online chat every Monday at 2:30 p.m., email tkingery@avenidas.org and put “LGBTQ group” in the subject line.
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A must see!

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YOUR REALESTATE COMPETENCY

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, REALTORS® have transitioned to video conferencing, using tools like Zoom, Skype, Facetime Live, Microsoft Teams and many others. It is important to remember even as we all work from home, video conference meetings are professional meetings, and participants should practice good etiquette.

Here are some best practices for online video conference meetings from Zoom and other resources:

1. Save your invitation confirmation, which provides the meeting ID number, password, and a link to the meeting that is unique to you.
2. Download Zoom or another conference app you plan to use. Sign in and familiarize yourself with the audio and video settings.
3. Find a quiet place without background noise, where you won’t be distracted or interrupted by a television, phone calls, barking dogs, etc.
4. When you are let in by the host, click “Join Audio” so you can hear the speaker.
5. Have a work-appropriate background. Nobody wants to see your bedroom or personal collections! You want participants to focus on the meeting and not on your background. Use a virtual background to eliminate background distractions.
6. Use the video option when possible as it gives you a greater presence at the meeting. If you are using your mobile phone, for security reasons add your name instead of your phone number, so the host and other participants can identify you.
7. Don’t look sloppy. Your outfit should match the expectations of your audience. Be professional-looking. Use a professional photo in place of video if you are not appropriately dressed.
8. Join the meeting early, at least 3-5 minutes before the start of the meeting. Be patient and wait until the host lets you in.
9. Mute your microphone when you’re not called on to speak.
10. Do not interrupt the speaker. Use the chat function to ask questions. And don’t be rude in the chat. Everyone can see the chat box, even the speaker!
11. Be aware that you are on camera. Avoid doing other tasks like checking emails, looking at your phone or, worse yet, snoozing. Look into the camera when talking instead of looking at yourself.
12. If you need to go the bathroom while on a Zoom call, don’t forget to turn off your video and audio. You don’t want everyone to remember you brushing your teeth and gargling, or flushing the toilet, because they will!

Information provided in this column is presented by the Silicon Valley Association of REALTORS®. Send questions to Rose Meily at rmeily@silvar.org.
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And a huge "thank you" to all the good neighbors in Palo Alto doing their best to shelter in place.

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WEST ATHERTON RANCHER

358 WALSH ROAD, ATHERTON

NUMBERS
Offered at: $9,995,000
4 Bedrooms
4 Bathrooms
1 Pool Bathroom
House: 4,500 sf
Lot: 2.2 acres

OVERVIEW
1 Story Modern Ranch House
Open Floor Plan
Den
Wine Room
Wet Bar
Extremely Private Location
Gated Property
Sylvan Setting
Pool, Spa, and Sauna

AMENITIES
Prime Atherton Location
Approx. Downtown Menlo Park and Stanford
Shopping Center

SCHOOLS
Los Lomitas ES
La Entrada MS
Sequoia Union HS

358WALSH.COM

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