A SHOT OF HOPE

AS COVID-19 CASES SURGE, VACCINATIONS BEGIN  PAGE 5

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VA Palo Alto launches first COVID-19 vaccinations

Mass inoculation effort begins with front-line health care workers, at-risk patients

hospital workers and vulnerable patients at the Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System were among the first people in the country to receive their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine on Wednesday, marking a turning point in the fight to control the coronavirus pandemic.

The local VA hospital is one of only 37 facilities run by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to get an early batch of the long-awaited vaccine, developed by pharmaceutical partners Pfizer and BioNTech and approved just last week. The hospital received 2,925 doses, and the hope is to expend all of it over the next 21 days.

Development of a COVID-19 vaccine has been a linchpin of the public health response to the pandemic, with widespread immunization being the key to preventing the spread of the disease and easing public health restrictions that have shaken the U.S. economy. Hospital leaders at the Palo Alto VA say the slow churn of patients and staff getting shots Wednesday could very well be the turning point.

“I am ecstatic about this, and I am so honored to play the small part that I’m playing in this,” said Kelly Robertson, the hospital’s chief of pharmacy services. “I think this is the beginning of hopefully the end of this global pandemic that has been devastating.”

With demand far outstripping the initial supply of the vaccine, federal regulators have tightly controlled who can receive early doses. On Wednesday, the goal was focused narrowly on vaccinating patients with spinal cord injuries far outstripping demand.

The ugly political tussle culminated in DuBois, Filseth and council member Lydia Kou all three council members in the more slow-growth wing protesting that proposal, with Vice Mayor Tom DuBois accusing his four colleagues of “ramming through” appointments before new council members are sworn in and council member Eric Filseth likening the move to the recent actions by the President Donald Trump administration to hamstring the incoming administration of President-elect Joe Biden.

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regarding site SF70319M.

comments to Gavin L. at 818-898-4866

Palo Alto, CA 94303. Please direct

facility at 2415 University Avenue East

upgrade an existing telecommunications

Agreement, T-Mobile West, LLC plans to

with Sec.106 of the Programmatic

PUBLIC NOTICE - In accordance with Sec.106 of the Programmatic Agreement, T-Mobile West, LLC plans to upgrade an existing telecommunications facility at 2415 University Avenue East Palo Alto, CA 94303. Please direct comments to Gavin L. at 818-898-4866 regarding site SF70319M.

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THIRD TIME'S A CHARM? ...

650-340-7022.

for adoption. The organization

with a volunteer for the organization

coat. He had been in a foster home

no identification, nor did anyone

no injuries," Tarbox said. "He had

found. The rescue team managed to lure

rescue team managed to locate

across the vehicle's undercarriage

nonprofit's help in getting Fluff Fluff

was rescued from a car engine,

Nearly seven weeks since he

READY FOR A NEW HOME ... Nearly seven weeks since he was rescued from a car engine, a 3-month-old male kitten is available for adoption, the Peninsula Humane Society/SPCA announced this week. Named Fluff Fluff, the solid black and neutered cat was found on Oct. 30 in East Palo Alto. "Apparently the poor little thing had been stuck for two days," said Peninsula Humane Society/SPCA spokesperson Buffy Martin Tarbox. Police sought the nonprofit’s help in getting Fluff Fluff out of the car. It appeared he ran across the vehicle’s undercarriage and they heard his cries. Over the course of two hours, the rescue team managed to locate the feline with a small endoscope camera and climbed under the car, where they managed to lure him out with tuna. "He was a little thin, but overall healthy and had no injuries," Tarbox said. "He had no identification, nor did anyone come forward to claim him." The organization decided to name the cat Fluff Fluff for his fluffy black coat. He had been in a foster home with a volunteer for the organization until he was old enough to be neutered and deemed ready for adoption. The organization described him as "why but affectionate." Anyone interested in adopting Fluff Fluff for a fee of $120 can make an appointment to meet him by calling the animal shelter at 650-340-7022.

THIRD TIME’S A CHARM? College Terrace Center has had a tough time securing and keeping a grocery store at the corner of El Camino Real and Oxford Avenue since 2017. First, there was College Terrace Market, which closed after six months for multiple reasons, including obstacles in putting up adequate signs for the business. Then, Khoury’s Market came in January 2019 and stuck around for a year. The store owner claimed unending construction activity hindered business. Now, Real Produce International Market has moved into the space and is set to open its doors on Wednesday, Dec. 23. Can it avoid a short-term run in Palo Alto? The family grocery store has found success at its San Jose location next to Trader Joe’s. "Whole Foods Market and Costco, "Real Produce has ambitious plans to expand our offerings that now include a deli, grab-and-go area, fresh flowers, and a coffee area -- and become a ‘Real’ member of the neighborhood for years to come," store owner and manager Khaled Taffi said in a statement. The store plans to sell bread baked fresh daily and set up fruits and vegetables outdoors. It also has hired employees who previously worked for area companies such as Facebook, which has stopped running a cafe with employees now working from home.

BLESSINGS ON BLESSINGS ... Five Palo Alto houses of worship are part of The Bay Area Blessing, a group of the more than 65 churches that have joined a music collaboration for Christmas. On Dec. 11, the group debuted a video featuring over 140 faith leaders across more than 25 cities singing “Silent Night” and “O Come Let Us Adore Him.” Over the course of six minutes, viewers see the performers deliver the lyrics in their respective homes, some decorated for the holidays, some for decorated for the holidays, or virtual backgrounds, such as a photo of a sunset. The local churches that participated were Peninsula Bible Church, Cornerstone Community Church, Crossroads Community Church, Palo Alto First Christian Church and The Highway Church. "We hope to fill people’s homes and hearts with a message of unity, hope and cheer during this holiday season," organizers said in a press release. The video netted over 57,000 views across multiple online platforms as of noon on Dec. 16. Through the project, the coalition aims to raise funds for Second Food Bank and HomeFirst, which assists the homeless and those at risk of homelessness. The group has raised nearly $6,000 of its $10,000 goal in the first five days of the campaign. For more information and to watch the video, visit thebayareablessing.com.
Despite limitations, DreamCatchers continue to prepare students for high school

Nonprofit innovates to give students what they need during pandemic

by Lloyd Lee

L

eave it to Sarika Lansberg to get middle school kids excited about high school despite it taking place online.

As a senior at Palo Alto High School, she too knows about Zoom fatigue and all the could-have-beens if it weren’t for the pandemic. But it’s not like Lansberg feels she’s been dealt an empty hand — “It hasn’t been too bad,” she said — and she hopes to help the students at DreamCatchers feel the same way.

“I’ve always been someone who loves kids,” said Lansberg, 17, a volunteer tutor at the nonprofit organization since her freshman year. “I feel like this is something I can be a high schooler to make a difference.”

DreamCatchers helps low-income Palo Alto middle school students get ready to succeed in high school through individualized, one-on-one tutoring and enrichment activities in subjects like music, art and journalism, through which students engage with each other in groups. “(The) individualized approach is the best approach,” said Gezel Frederick, interim co-executive director of DreamCatchers. “It’s more focused and students are able to develop a relationship with the tutor, which is so necessary (because) the outcome of the learning is very dependent on that relationship.”

But, unsurprisingly, the pandemic has posed a new challenge to the organization that works on a model of close, one-on-one face-time. Students can no longer meet with their tutors or peers in-person at Palo Alto High School, where the program is based. And even the outside summer programs, which the nonprofit typically offers by negotiating free or reduced tuition with sponsoring organizations, were canceled this year.

“As time went by, parents were very concerned about the students not socializing enough,” Frederick said. “The other challenge is Zoom fatigue. Most of our students that have dropped out — it’s strong Zoom fatigue.”

Lansberg can see it at times in Angle, the seventh-grade student she currently tutors.

“It is very hard during the pandemic because it’s not like I can be sitting there with him to read books on a weekly basis,” Lansberg said. “Sometimes he doesn’t come to a session because he might forget or has something else going on.”

Along with issues of student retention, the nonprofit’s funding has dropped off as foundations have either refocused their philanthropy toward COVID-19 relief efforts or simply closed up shop due to the pandemic.

“One-third of our funding will close down,” Frederick said. “But those hurdles haven’t stopped DreamCatchers from innovating or people like Lansberg from helping younger students. The organization has created more resources for its students outside of tutoring and launched its own summer programs that encouraged students to engage more with each other, albeit over their computers.

“One thing we’ve tried to do is really expand our work beyond tutoring,” said Ryan Crowley, a classroom director at DreamCatchers and a senior at Stanford University.

Outside of schoolwork, students are given more opportunities to interact with each other through collaborative online games, such as Kahoot! or scribble.io, or simply in video chat rooms without the tutors present, to make up for missed social interaction, he said.

“And thanks in part to the Palo Alto Weekly’s Holiday Fund grant of $20,000 this year, students also had the chance to try some of DreamCatchers’ new summer enrichment programs, including a book club, persuasive essay writing workshops, muralism projects, a journalism program and, with Lansberg’s direction, Project Rise, a program to help rising high school students tailor what their next four years might look like.”

The idea behind Project Rise came from Lansberg’s own experience. As the oldest sibling in her family, she had to navigate all the resources at Palo Alto High School on her own or through the help of her neighbors. With her four years of experience, now she’s easily able to guide her little sister and the students she tutors on what to expect when they enter ninth grade.

Project Rise aims to do this with all the rising high school students in DreamCatchers, diving into discussions of the courses and clubs available at school as well as sessions in which they can think about what they’re interested in and how to fulfill that interest in high school.

“There are club fairs and different ways to find those resources in high school, but I feel that it’s nice to have someone to talk to and talk over what you like so you don’t have to do all the research on your own,” Lansberg said.

“When there’s a club list of like 300, it’s really hard to get around all of them.”

At the end of the eight-week program, the students can kick off their freshman year with a familiar group of peers they can turn to at school.

“We did a little feedback survey at the end and a lot of them thought that it was really good and that they would recommend it to the next class,” Lansberg said.

“They also thought it would be a good time to think about what they’re interested in and how to fulfill that interest in high school.”

Family continues tradition with $100K gift to Holiday Fund

HOLIDAY FUND

Donation marks 10th year in a row of support for local families, children in need

by Palo Alto Weekly staff

M

arking their 10th year in a row of support of the Palo Alto Weekly Holiday Fund, a Palo Alto family has made a $100,000 donation to assist local nonprofits that serve children, families and individuals in need.

The family, who wishes to remain anonymous, has now gifted $1 million to the Holiday Fund since 2011. The donation is a matching grant, intended to inspire and double the contributions of other donors.

In a statement accompanying the donation, the family stressed their desire to support local service organizations.

“We grew up in Palo Alto and have always appreciated the extraordinary services provided by the city, the schools and the many community-based organizations. We want to support these efforts, and the Holiday Fund is a superb way to do that,” the family said.

Since the Weekly and Silicon Valley Community Foundation absorb all the costs of the program, every dollar that is donated is distributed to nonprofit organizations without any overhead or expenses deducted.

“The generosity of this Palo Alto family is astounding, as is their commitment to stepping up to the plate year after year,” Palo Alto Weekly Publisher Bill Johnson said. “We are so grateful for their leadership example and for their confidence in the impact that the Holiday Fund is making.”

This year’s Holiday Fund goal is to raise $400,000 for programs serving kids, families and others in need. Over the last 27 years, the Holiday Fund has raised and distributed more than $7.6 million to local service organizations.

The Holiday Fund program has also enjoyed annual support from the Packard and Hewlett foundations, the Peery and Arrillaga foundations and several other family foundations. The annual Palo Alto Weekly Moonlight Run, which this year was held virtually, also raises money for the Holiday Fund.

More information about the Holiday Fund can be found on page 30 of this edition. To donate, go to siliconvalleycf.org/paw-holiday-fund. To read articles about the work of funded nonprofit agencies, go to PaloAltoOnline.com/holiday-fund.

(continued on page 35)
OPEN SPACE

As referendum drive falters, Palo Alto opens Foothills Park to all

Petition sought to nullify City Council’s vote to remove residents-only restriction at nature preserve

by Gennady Sheyner

Palo Alto’s scenic and exclusive Foothills Park officially opened up to residents from other cities on Thursday morning after a referendum petition failed to get the needed signatures to maintain the park’s long-standing residents-only rule.

Palo Alto resident Irina Beylin, who spearheaded a petition, told the Weekly that her group has been unable to get the nearly 2,600 signatures required by Wednesday’s deadline. She and other supporters of the referendum were looking to overturn the City Council’s vote on Nov. 2 to scrap a 1965 law that bars people from the park’s long-standing residents-only rule.

Beylin said the effort was hindered by the COVID-19 pandemic, which made it virtually impossible to gather signatures in person. Recent regional restrictions kept the petition circulators from collecting signatures in front of stores, schools and other public places.

Beylin said that she had requested the city allow electronic signatures or to extend the 30-day deadline to allow the creation of a secured website, but City Attorney Molly Stump said Monday that changing the process for a referendum petition would require a revision of the City Charter, which requires a public vote.

Had the petition advanced, Palo Alto would have suspended its plan to open the park to nonresidents on Dec. 17. The council would have faced the choice of either repealing the ordinance to expand access to the park or sending the issue to the voters in 2022.

The council agreed to repeal the long-standing policy on Foothills Park in response to a lawsuit from the American Civil Liberties Union, the NAACP and a group of residents from Palo Alto and other cities. The suit argued that the policy of restricting access to Foothills Park is rooted in the city’s history of racial discrimination, which included practices such as redlining, blockbusting and including racially restrictive covenants in deeds. The Foothills Park policy, the suit argues, continues to exclude people who were “denied the right to reside in the city during the era of outright racial exclusion.”

The suit also claimed that the policy violates constitutionally protected rights to freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. While most council members rejected the idea that banning nonresidents constitutes a racial policy, they had determined that the city would be unlikely to prevail in a lawsuit over First Amendment rights. On Nov. 2, they voted 5-2, with council members Lydia Kou and Greg Tanaka dissenting, to repeal the ban and to limit the number of people who can be at Foothills at one time to 750 in the first 90 days after the park opens (after that, it would revert to its current limit of 1,000 visitors).

The council also requested at the time that staff return to the Parks and Recreation Commission and the council with proposals for fees to be charged at the park, capacity limits and studies on park management and ways to preserve the park’s environmental integrity. In addition, it is preparing to kick off a process for changing its name to Foothills Natural Preserve.

Supporters of expanding access to Foothills Park have long maintained that removing the policy is a fair and decent action, noting that no other California city has policies banning nonresidents from a park. Those in favor of retaining the 1965 policy counter that the access restriction is needed to protect the nature preserve’s sensitive habitat. They also note that at the time that Palo Alto was establishing Foothills Park, other jurisdictions declined to provide funding for the park’s creation.

Prior to the lawsuit, the council was preparing to open Foothills Park to residents outside of Palo Alto on a more limited basis, through a pilot program that would allow up to 50 nonresident permits per day. The council approved that program in August, when it also indicated that it planned to send the issue to the voters in 2022.

By instead repealing the residents-only requirement, the city was able to settle the lawsuit. On Nov. 16, the council officially approved the settlement, which included a court injunction barring the city from reinstating the ban on non-residents at any time in the future. Had the referendum petition moved ahead, the settlement would have been nullified and the lawsuit would have resumed.

Beylin said that she supported the pilot program that the council approved in August, which would have slowly expanded access with greater buy-in from the broader public. By its Nov. 16 vote, the council circumvented the democratic process, she maintained.

“The current changes to Foothills Park Ordinance were approved by City Council behind closed doors without input from the public,” the referendum states. “The measure to open Foothills Park to the general public should be put on the ballot and details should be openly discussed with constituents.”

Beylin said Wednesday that the petition received about 1,200 signatures, close to half of what was needed. Beylin said she was encouraged by the outpouring of support from residents nonetheless. She said many are concerned as she is about the council’s decision to veer away from its August vote because of a lawsuit.

“People are very involved. They are really motivated. They want what’s best for the city,” Beylin said.

Proponents of expanding access to Foothills are celebrating the policy change. William Freeman, senior counsel at the ACLU Foundation of Northern California, said in a statement that the plaintiffs are “delighted that we could arrive at a constructive settlement with the city that recognizes the fundamental rights of all persons — not just the most privileged — to freedom (of) speech and enjoyment of public land.”

Retired Superior Court judge LaDoris Cordell, a plaintiff in the suit and a former member of the Palo Alto council, said in a statement: “The fact that there weren’t 2,500 Palo Altans willing to sign a referendum petition is great news. It means that, as we come to the close of a very dark year, our community has chosen inclusion over exclusion. I am thrilled to know that the park’s entry restrictions are now a thing of the past.”

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

THE CITY OF PALO ALTO OPENED Foothills Park to nonresidents on Dec. 17.

The city of Palo Alto opened Foothills Park to nonresidents on Dec. 17.
missing the Nov. 12 meeting in which the council interviewed candidates for the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Architectural Review Board. All three also told the city clerk that they were not able to attend the Dec. 9 meeting in which the council was scheduled to interview candidates for the planning commission and the Historic Resources Board. Because council member Alison Cormack was also unable to attend that meeting because of family, the council did not have a quorum and the interviews never took place.

On Monday, the three council members who had hoped to make the appointments before the end of the year chided their three colleagues from the “residentialist” side for missing the Nov. 12 meeting and preventing the Dec. 9 one from taking place.

“As mayor, it was extremely embarrassing to interview candidates with only four of us in attendance — including incumbents who have been serving the city,” Fine said. “That said, Palo Alto does not need another fight.”

“But by golly, folks, the rank hypocrisy and bad faith involved in this process truly astonishes me. It’s really below Palo Alto’s standards,” Cormack said, “I hope we all reflect on that.”

Council member Alison Cormack also expressed disappointment at the tenor of the conversation. Even though Cormack supported changing the council policy to shift the recruitments to spring, she favored sticking with the existing policy this year and making the appointments in December — a policy Cormack said her colleagues had agreed to.

Residents who had hoped to participate in interviews and it was embarrassing for me and I think it’s disrespectful.”

Kou, DuBois and Filseth all pushed back against the suggestion that they had boycotted the Dec. 9 meeting to prevent it from happening. All three told this news organization that they had prior commitments and that they were planning to watch the videos of the interviews before voting on them.

DuBois said that he had work commitments which required meetings with people in different time zones, including teams in Tel Aviv and China. In an email, he called the council majority’s move to make appointments in December a “transparent attempt to lock in their last meeting to place the Planning Commission in opposition to the Council rather than advisory to it — this is a huge waste of time and money.”

Kou said that her inability to attend was due in part to the council majority’s decision to schedule a meeting on such short notice. She told this news organization that she has regular meetings, including commitments to church committees, that in this case prevented her from attending the interviews.

“I’m not embarrassed,” Kou said Monday in response to accusations from Fine and Cormack. “I have to work and I have other meetings that I have to go to — they are standing meetings.”

Fine bristled at that explanation, and by suggestions from Kou and DuBois that the council extend the recruiting period for the Architectural Review Board. The board has two seats that needed to be filled and the only applicants were the two incumbent members, Grace Lee and Osmia Thompson (the council reappointed both by a 6-0 vote, with Kou abstaining).

“Considering we've got chasised all the time about doing our work, I find that deliberately allowing Fine said in response to Kou. “And frankly, if you guys want more ARB folks, show up to the interview on time.”

Like Kou and DuBois, Filseth also said he had another commitment on Dec. 9 and was planning to watch a video of the meeting.

“Council is a part-time job, so most of us have varying levels of other commitments,” Filseth told this news organization in an email. “It’s inevitable that those other commitments regularly compete for our time and schedule. Faced with one of those conflicts this week, I chose the other. Had the interviews actually proceeded, I’d have watched the videos as I've done other times.”

While the council stopped short of throwing out the interview process altogether, Filseth noted that the city’s existing ordinances that govern appointments don’t actually require interviews.

“They may be desirable, but they do not have to be held. And I’m truly disappointed that we couldn’t get a quorum for as many of the times we wanted to have interviews, including just last week,” Kniss said.

Several residents strongly criticized the proposals to allow lame-duck members to choose planning commissioners and to potentially forego the interview process before making appointments. Resident Hamilton Hitchings argued that allowing lame-duck council members to fill the commission with pro-growth members would be unfair to the applicants and change the face of the commission altogether, increases the likelihood that the two commissioners whose terms expire this month — Doria Summa and Ed Launig will win fresh terms. Summa has been the commission’s most consistent critic of development proposals and its most frequent and vocal dissenter on policy changes that promote more growth. Ed Launig, who fell just short in his bid for a council seat in November, received an endorsement by the Palo Altans for Sensible Growth, which tends to support members opposed with the residentialist side.

Other residents who had applied for a seat on the planning commission are Kelley Blanes, Doug Burns, Alon Carmeli, Rebecca Eisenberg, Kathy Jordan, Kevin Ma and Jessica Resimini. The council also moved ahead on Monday with an appointment of one new member to the Parks and Recreation Commission. While the process in this case was comparatively drama-free, the vote split along familiar lines. Fine, Cormack, Kniss and Tanaio all voted for Amanda Brown, making her the newest member of the commission. DuBois, Filseth and Kou all supported Brent Yamashita.

City Council (Dec. 14)

Commission: The council voted to delay appointments to the Planning and Transportation Commission until January 2021. Yes: Unanimous

Roth Building: The council directed staff to consider various alternative plans for converting the Roth Building, including selling the building, partnering with the Palo Alto History Museum to fund the building’s rehabilitation with no public funds, researching a revenue-generating lease and exploring rezoning to make the site economically viable. Yes: Cormack, Filseth, Fine, Kniss, Tanaka No: DuBois, Kou

Gun storage: The council directed the city attorney to draft an ordinance creating a safe storage requirement for firearms. Yes: Unanimous

Board of Education (Dec. 15)

First interim budget: The board waived its two-meeting rule and accepted the first interim budget report. Yes: Unanimous

Deputy superintendent of human resources: The board waived its two-meeting rule and unanimously approved the hiring of Trent Bhadurasingh as the deputy superintendent of human resources for the term of Feb. 1, 2021–June 30, 2023. Yes: Unanimous

COVID-19 update: The board heard an update on enrollment for elementary school hybrid instruction and reopening the middle and schools in 2021. Action: None

City Council (Dec. 15)

Financials: The committee discussed the quarterly financial report for the first quarter of fiscal year 2021. Action: None

Ambulance: The committee discussed the Fire Department’s new ambulance subscription service and recommended approving an adjustment to the municipal fee schedule to create the program. Yes: Unanimous

Recreation and Parks Commission (Dec. 15)

Ramos Park: The commission discussed the creation of a dog off-leash area pilot program at Ramos Park. Action: None

Architectural Review Board (Dec. 17)

Bridge: The board discussed the environmental analysis and proposed design for the replacement of the Poppy-Chaucer Bridge. Action: None

LET’S DISCUSS: Read the latest local news headlines and talk about the issues at Town Square at Palo AltoOnline.com/square
Peninsula part of regional shutdown

Calling the human toll of the COVID-19 pandemic “devastating,” San Mateo County announced it would enforce the state’s regional stay-at-home order starting Thursday, Dec. 17, at 11:59 p.m. officials said on Wednesday. The announcement came after the Bay Area’s intensive care unit capacity plunged to 12.9%, which triggered the state’s mandated order.

The order affects 10 counties. Regions around the state must employ the stay-at-home restriction on businesses and activities when ICU capacity is below 15%. The order aims to reduce the number of hospitalizations and deaths from COVID-19 infection and to prevent overwhelming the health care system.

Most Bay Area counties fast-tracked the stay-home order on Dec. 4 after Santa Clara County’s ICU capacity dropped below 15%, as a precautionary measure. San Mateo County did not join the early restrictions, however. Under the state guidelines, it must now comply.

The order prohibits private gatherings of any size, except for outdoor church services and political demonstrations. Restaurants must stop offering in-person dining, even outdoors, and can only offer takeout and delivery services. Salons and barbershops must close. Retail businesses can remain open with 20% capacity. All retail establishments must close if they cannot have customers eating or drinking within stores. Nonessential travel, hotels and short-term rentals for leisure are banned.

— Sue Dremann

Utilities

A lawsuit challenging Palo Alto’s practice of transferring funds from the Utilities Department to its general fund may force the city to refund $12 million to gas customers.

The case revolves around an assertion by Green that Palo Alto illegally transferred money from utilities to the general fund to issue an illegal tax on ratepayers. After challenging the city’s rate-setting practice, a county court agreed to hear the case. The court considered an appeal from the decision in Citizens for Fair Rates v. City of Redding. Justice Walsh concluded that case involved transfers of money from a city’s municipal utility to the general fund.

Plaintiffs in that case had argued that the Redding Electric Utility had “embedded” the cost of transferring money to the general fund in setting its rates. As such, they argued, the utility rates exceed the actual cost of providing electric service.

The Supreme Court rejected the challenge and, in overturning an Appeals Court decision, concluded that the court had erred in concluding the transfer from utilities to the general fund does not, in fact, constitute a tax. The ruling also created a standard for determining whether utility transfers are legal for such transfers in recent years. San Jose adopted its safe-storage law in 2017, joining cities such as San Francisco and Oakland that have already had such a requirement in place. Redwood City followed suit in April 2019 with an ordinance that bars residents from keeping a firearm in any residence unless they are carrying it, storing it in a locked container or have it disabled with a trigger lock.

Santa Clara County approved a similar requirement in November 2019, if it approved a safe-storage ordinance for the county’s unincorporated areas. In explaining the need for the new law, a report from county staff stated that 39,773 people in the U.S. lost their lives in firearms-related incidents in 2017, according to the Center for Disease Control. Of those, 486 were due to accidental discharge of weapons.

The report noted that 11% of the injury deaths in Santa Clara County in 2016 were due to firearms.

— Gennady Sheyner

Council candidate fights election result

Webster Lincoln, an East Palo Alto resident who ran an unsuccessful first-time bid for a City Council seat, is accusing Antonio Lopez of electioneering and asking the San Mateo County Superior Court to annul Lopez’s election certification, according to a lawsuit filed on Dec. 10.

The suit claims that Lopez violated the state election code by campaigning within 100 feet of a vote center on Nov. 3, while offering residents incentives to vote in the form of free tacos.

“Lopez ran a visible and deceiving campaign loitering and conducting an oral and phone canvass of yards, loitering and advertising for his candidacy, and displaying his name, likeness and logo,” the lawsuit states.

Defendants of the suit include Lopez and East Palo Alto City Clerk Walford Solorzano, the man responsible for certifying the council election results.

Lopez has maintained that he campaigned within legal capacity. On East Palo Alto’s last council election day, the 24-year-old was seen in a hard hat and vest walking the streets and meeting with residents in the city. Lopez said he was always at least 100 feet away from the vote center. The city staff member also said that he did not see any “quid pro quo” between the candidate and voters.

— Lloyd Lee
Your home as the bakery
Your home as the office
Your home as your favorite cafe
Your home as the gym
Your home is your every place.

Wishing you and yours a safe and healthy holiday season, and peaceful new year.
NOTICE OF PETITION TO ADMINISTER ESTATE OF: PATRICIA K. KLEIN
Case No.: 20PR188709
To all heirs, beneficiaries, creditors, contingent creditors, and persons who may otherwise be interested in the will or estate, or both, of PATRICIA K. KLEIN. A Petition for Probate has been filed by: CRAIG O. KLEIN in the Superior Court of California, County of SANTA CLARA. The Petition for Probate requests that: CRAIG O. KLEIN be appointed as personal representative to administer the estate of the decedent. The petition requests the decedent’s will and codicils, if any, be admitted to probate. The will and any codicils are available for examination in the file kept by the court. The petition requests authority to administer the estate under the Independent Administration of Estates Act. (This authority will allow the personal representative to take many actions without obtaining court approval. Before taking certain very important actions, however, the personal representative will be required to give notice to interested persons unless they have waived notice or consented to the proposed action.) The independent administration authority will be granted unless an interested person files an objection to the petition and shows good cause why the court should not grant the authority. A HEARING on the petition will be held on January 14, 2021 at 9:01 a.m. in Dept.: 13 of the Superior Court of California, County of Santa Clara, located at 191 N. First St., San Jose, CA, 95113.

If you object to the granting of the petition, you should appear at the hearing and state your objections or file written objections with the court before the hearing. Your appearance may be in person or by your attorney. If you are a creditor or a contingent creditor of the decedent, you must file your claim with the court and mail a copy to the personal representative appointed by the court within the later of either: (1) four months from the date of first issuance of letters to a general personal representative, as defined in section 60 (b) of the California Probate Code, or (2) 60 days from the date of mailing or personal delivery to you of a notice under section 9052 of the California Probate Code. Other California statutes and legal authority may affect your rights as a creditor. You may want to consult with an attorney knowledgeable in California law. You may examine the file kept by the court. If you are a person interested in the estate, you may file with the court a Request for Special Notice (form DE-154) of the filing of an inventory and appraisal as provided in Probate Code section 1250. A Request for Special Notice form is available from the court clerk. Attorney for Petitioner: Katherine Efing 438 South Murphy Avenue Sunnyvale, CA 94086-6114 (408) 732-3114 [MWI Dec. 1, 18, 25, 2020]
To Our Stanford Medicine Community

For months, we have faced the challenges of living through this pandemic together. And while we have more reasons to hope with each passing day that we will eventually defeat this virus, it is clear the crisis is far from over.

The number of COVID cases in the San Francisco Bay Area, as well as much of California, has soared over the past few weeks. Recently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention urged Americans to avoid large gatherings in an effort to stop the rapid spread of COVID-19. Hospitals across the nation are filling their beds more quickly, and our frontline healthcare workers are facing exhaustion.

This is a dangerous situation to be in, and we need everyone’s help to fix it.

Even with so much uncertainty, the science is clear. We know what works to stop the spread of COVID-19:

• **Wear a mask.** Masks can save lives, including your own.
• **Wash your hands.** Thorough handwashing stops the virus from spreading.
• **Keep your distance.** Avoid gatherings and stay 6 feet apart from those you don’t live with.

We know you have heard all of these recommendations before, but they are more important than ever.

Stanford Medicine is here for you, as always, and committed to being a part of the solution. We remain open even during shelter-in-place and continue to care for patients safely.

We know you are counting on us, and we have mobilized everyone—our care teams, researchers, students, and staff—to rise to this challenge. But we need you to know that we are counting on you, too.

It is your help that will make the difference and determine whether or not we can slow the spread of the virus in the weeks and months ahead. It is your care and thoughtfulness that will save lives and shape the future.

We are here for you and with your help, we will get through this together.

Lloyd Minor, MD  
Dean, Stanford School of Medicine

David Entwistle  
President and CEO  
Stanford Health Care

Paul King  
President and CEO  
Stanford Children’s Health
Margaret Taylor Hanks
April 30, 1942 – September 22, 2020

Peg or Peggy, as she was known to all, died peacefully at home September 22, in the company of her loving family and long-term caregiver Tanita Sipa, after a debilitating, decade-long struggle with corticobasal degeneration.

Peg was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania April 30, 1942 to Helen Murdoch Taylor and James Griffin Taylor. She attended Lower Merion High School in Ardmore, Pennsylvania, where she was admitted to the Latin Honor Society, and then attended Mt Holyoke College, from which she graduated in 1965 with a B.A. in Economics and Sociology. She followed her sister Jean west to Pasadena, where she met her husband Thomas C Hanks. She held several positions at the California Institute of Technology, including one at the Seismological Laboratory where her husband was a graduate student.

They were married in 1968 and moved to Palo Alto in 1975 where their two daughters were born. Peg volunteered in the Palo Alto Unified School District in many different ways and made many friends while doing so. While her children were in attendance at Duveneck School, Peg assisted with classroom functions and was recognized for mastering the computerized library circulation system. With her children, she moved on to volunteer at Jane Lathrop Stanford and David Starr Jordan Laboratory where her husband was a graduate student.

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Peg and her husband, along with their two daughters, seemed to have found their home in Palo Alto. They were active in the community, supporting various causes and organizations. Peg was a long-standing member of the Association of Senior Day Health and the Garden Club of Palo Alto.

She is survived by her husband Tom, sister Jean, daughter Molly and son-in-law Brian, daughter Julia and son-in-law Johnny, and granddaughter Jane. We miss her greatly.

Molly and son-in-law Brian, daughter Julia and son-in-law Johnny, and granddaughter Jane. We miss her greatly.

Jaunde Hanks, her granddaughter and daughter, Jane and Brian, her son-in-law. We miss her greatly.

Peg was a long-standing member of the Association of Senior Day Health and the Garden Club of Palo Alto. She was a hostess to hundreds of earth scientists across the country and around the world.

Peg is known to all, died peacefully in her sleep, on Dec. 13, 2020. She was 78 years old.

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Dr. Saul Wasserman
April 22, 1942 - December 11, 2020
5 Iyar, 5702 - 25 Kislev, 5781, First day of Chanukah, Resident of Palo Alto

Dr. Saul Wasserman's soul peacefully left this world on Friday, December 11. Born and raised in New York, Saul graduated from Bronx High School of Science and attended Cornell University, where he met his wife, Judith. They married in 1963, and he attended the University of Chicago Medical School. In 1968, they moved to Palo Alto, where he completed his residency in Psychiatry at Stanford University. Their daughter, Rachel, was born in 1970.

Saul worked as a beloved and respected child psychiatrist for decades, and co-founded and directed the Child/Adolescent Psychiatric Inpatient Unit at San Jose Hospital. He served on the Stanford Medical School clinical faculty and held various positions in the Regional Organization of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. In addition to his private practice, Saul was the consulting child psychiatrist for the foster care team of Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County, and for many local schools. He also served on the Santa Clara County Child Death Review, working to reduce infant and child mortality.

Congregation Beth Am was Saul’s spiritual community. He was involved in the lay minyan, the Jewish book group, weekly Torah study, and he taught classes. Torah study especially was a vibrant source of spiritual and intellectual challenge.

A man of insatiable curiosity and sharp, wide-ranging intellect, Saul was also an accomplished gardener and tropical fish enthusiast. He and Judith shared a passion for experiencing new cultures, and they traveled to over 40 countries. All who knew him admired his patience, wisdom, and kind heart.

Saul was a loving companion to his wife, Judith, for over 50 years. He also adored his children, Rachel & Yehoshua, and his grandchildren, Yosef Hershberg, Atara Hershberg, and Sara Hershberg, and thousands of friends around the world. He also adored his children, Rachel & Yehoshua, and his grandchildren, Yosef Hershberg, Atara Hershberg, and Sara Hershberg, and thousands of friends around the world.

The family requests that those who want to make charitable gifts in his memory should consider the Hospice of Santa Clara County, Congregation Beth Am, or a charity of their choice.

With his camel turtleneck tucked into pressed khaki trousers and meticulously coiffured brown hair, Dr. Saul Wasserman graced the lives of family and friends with his rich and storied ninety-five years. He was a treasured husband, father, son, brother, and friend. He was a gift to the world, and his legacy will live on through his children and grandchildren, his patients and colleagues, and all those who knew and loved him.

Dorothy Gravelle
April 29, 1925 - November 4, 2020

With her camel turtleneck tucked into pressed khaki trousers and meticulously coiffured brown hair, Dorothy Gallus Gravelle's tenderness and quiet courage made her a beloved presence in the lives of her family and friends. It is with great sadness that her family announce Dorothy passed away November 4th, 2020 suddenly, but peacefully, of complications from a recent illness.

Dorothy graced the lives of family and friends with her rich and storied ninety-five years. She was a treasured wife, mother, grandmother, sister, and aunt; a generous and loving friend to a multitude; a truly kind and gentle soul. She embraced everyone she knew firmly in her arms and in her love. Dorothy was remarkable for her unmatched listening abilities, undivided attention, and unwavering faith, which made those in her company feel heard and cherished.

Dorothy was born in Little Falls, Minnesota in 1925, to Mary and Daniel Gallus. She was the tenth of eleven siblings in a tight-knit, musical family. Dorothy excelled at mathematics, outscoring everyone in her high school class. At the age of 19, she was recruited for this talent to work as an administrative accountant in a POW camp during WWII.

Following the war, she married her lifelong love, Charles “Chuck” Gravelle in 1949. They were married for 57 years, before he preceded her in death in 2006. Dorothy and Chuck moved to Atherton, CA in 1962 where they lived for over 50 years before they moved into the Vi in Palo Alto. They made a life for themselves, textured with hard-work, travel, sports, family fun, and tradition.

Above all, Dorothy was an extraordinary and hands-on mother and grandmother who offered indefatigable interest and support to her children Doug, Steve and Cindra, and grandchildren Kelly, Stephanie and Alex. "Nana" was their rock, the rose of their lives, and every birthday, holiday, and special occasion always found them gathered around the table. Dorothy didn’t tell them how to live; she lived and let them learn by watching her do it. They learned the essentials of how to live a good life, from the practical lessons of sewing, ironing, cooking, good nutrition, and keeping a tidy home, to the larger, more essential lessons of self-esteem and self-confidence. She set the example for choosing the morally right path, being a friend to everyone, helping when less fortunate, and being a giver not a taker. Above all she led with the power of faith as her cornerstone.

In addition to motherhood, Dorothy had many interests and hobbies. She traveled internationally alongside Chuck throughout his career. She explored foreign cities on her own and met up with Chuck in the evening to share her adventures over wine and cheese. She enjoyed golfing at Menlo Country Club and Hawaii, boating at Tahoe and the Delta, bridge and cards, French cooking, art and metalworking, reading, and gardening. Today, the rose garden she planted at her home on Park Lane continues to thrive under the care of its current owners.

Throughout her life, Dorothy was an active member of the Church of the Nativity. Faith, prayer, and solitude were the source of her tender-like strength, sustaining her through many losses during her life. Her unwavering hope and confidence that she would be reunited with Chuck, her sons Stephen and Doug, her 10 siblings, and best friend Lucille, brought her comfort to her final day.

Dorothy’s strength, elegance, and generosity live on through her daughter Cynthia Gravelle, grandchildren Kelly Nicholson, Stephanie and Alex Sliwinski, brother-in-law Richard and wife Rose Gravelle, nieces and nephews Kathy and Dan Furtado, Mary Liz Perez, Stephanie and Greg Siegel, Mike and Andrea Gravelle, Barbara and Greg Thomas, Pamela Fritz Lott, Mary and Mark Kedrowski, Tom and Patty Meagher, and Marilyn and Phil Prozinski, and 18 grand-nieces and nephews.

We look forward to sharing a celebration of her life when a gathering can be held in her honor.

Donations may be made to “Foothill Auxiliary to Peninsula Family Service,” 24 Second Avenue, San Mateo, California 94401 https://www.peninsulafamilyservice.org/foothill-auxiliary/
Supporting anyone affected by breast or ovarian cancer with personalized services that inform and empower.

Support Groups • Wellness Classes • Personalized Cancer Information & Education • Cancer Journey Coaching • & more

All programs and services are free of charge.

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650-326-6686

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Compass

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It is not too late to show your support - give at mpaef.org/donate today. Full benefits can be realized if the gift arrives before December 31st, 2020.

Please contact business@mpaef.org for additional information. More details at www.mpaef.org
In response to ‘Palo Alto looks past harassment allegations, inks new deal with Downtown Streets Team’

Posted Dec. 8 at 8:03 a.m. by Michele Landis Dauber, a resident of Barron Park:

“Given the untrue statements made by Owen Byrd, the city council should have told Byrd that it would not approve the contract unless and until it received the redacted report. How could they take his word for it when he was literally making statements right there and then that were contradicted by facts in their possession, such as the state judge’s finding that sexual harassment occurred and that the Downtown Streets Team was not credible.

Renewing this contract now defies all notions of good governance by the council. This city council is not especially competent. That’s obvious.

One very significant problem is that this council, perhaps due to its own ineptness, has deferred too much power and control to City Manager Ed Shikada. And Shikada apparently could not care less about the serious, substantiated allegations issues of sexual harassment and misconduct at Downtown Streets Team. Shikada put Downtown Streets Team on the consent calendar for a three-year renewal. There wouldn’t have even been any discussion of all of this unless several members of the community (including myself and incoming council member Pat Burt) had not raised objections last week. It would have just sailed through on consent.

Shikada’s indifference to sexual misconduct at Downtown Streets Team and his poor decision making are the reason Downtown Streets Team has gone from a problem to a scandal. If this is what Shikada thinks is due diligence what else is he ignoring and mishandling?

We need new leadership.”

In response to ‘Opinion: What you need to know about the Foothills Park referendum’

Posted Dec. 9 at 9:58 a.m. by Jerry Underdal, a resident of Barron Park:

“There’s an important distinction to be made in the politics of this issue between residentialism and populism, which at this moment in our history is too often drawn on to resist changes that are reasonable and popularly supported but challenge the established order. Council members Eric Filseth and Tom Dubois, both ‘residentialists,’ are doing Palo Alto a service by laying out the argument for why, whether or not you agree with the social justice arguments brought forward in this iteration of the effort to end the residence requirement, it is wise to accept the settlement. With that simple move, Palo Alto can dramatically change the perception of our wonderful city, both outside our borders and within. Thank you, councilmen.”

In response to ‘Palo Alto struggles to forge a common vision in Ventura’

Posted Dec. 10 at 2:42 p.m. by Mark Dinan, a resident of East Palo Alto:

“I’m sure the Sobrato (Organization) can provide lots of affordable housing units if the height limit is raised to 20 stories, parking requirements are limited, and greenspace/setback requirements are adjusted. Calling for a huge percentage of affordable units while at the same time limiting density simply does not work.”

In response to ‘After political slugfest, council backs away from lame-duck appointments’

Posted Dec. 15 at 1:50 p.m. by Carol Scott, a resident of Evergreen Park:

“Good leadership entails creating a shared vision and then working with one’s constituents to figure out, together, the best way to accomplish that vision. What the pro-developer majority on the City Council has done is to state their own ‘vision’ and then try to cram it down everyone’s throat. The council and the city manager, who they hired in a closed door session without a search process, have not even tried to work with the diversity of resident groups — those who agree with them and those who do not — to try to work through the issues and come up with a solution that all of us can buy into. As a result, there has been little progress. Then, they are surprised that the voters finally have had enough and voted for a change.

The biggest and latest example of this is the ‘planning’ for the Ventura neighborhood. A working group that included residents of that neighborhood has labored long and hard to create a plan that would include additional housing but not destroy the neighborhood. The City Council then engaged a consultant, at great cost, to come up with other plans that did not take the working group’s thinking into account at all. No surprise that there has been opposition.

I hope the new Council appoints a set of thoughtful and balanced Planning and Transportation members who are not af-filiated with the real estate developer community that will help the Council work with residents and professional planners to come up with plans that we can all get behind. And then find developers willing to partner with us to help achieve them. The high-handedness of the outgoing Council majority is hopefully something we can put behind us.”

Letters

Chamber of Commerce a community advocate

Editor,

The Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce is more than a business advocacy organization. It is a face of programs committed to enhancing quality of life in our city through signature events, interactive business resources and advocacy work. The vitality of our community is expressed in the success of our businesses — the lively environment of shops, restaurants, hotels and the wide variety of services and suppliers.

Reflecting upon the current economic and public health crisis, we can all identify with the extraordinary disruptions and its critical demands. The Chamber is no exception. Like all local organizations, the Chamber has adapted to the new “virtual normal.” Our board of directors and staff reconfigured operations to effectively serve all local businesses and community members.

For example, Leadership Palo Alto, a program of the Chamber Foundation, held its spring classes and Class of 2020 graduation this week virtually. The new Senior Fellows gained sharpened skills, deeper insights and new connections, benefiting the quality of leadership and engagement throughout our community.

The Chamber has been at the forefront of providing resources to businesses struggling during the pandemic, providing free, expert-led webinars helping businesses comply with pandemic regulations (“Reboot and Recover”), partnering with the city and residents to support restaurants and retailers with special marketing and takeout promotions, and encouraging residents to “buy local.” To increase the odds of business survival, we advocated for a business roundtable addressing pandemic restrictions, outdoor street dining and parklets, for a county cap on delivery fees and a county business loan fund.

These efforts are your Chamber at work for our community. We’re proud of our efforts as a community advocate to ensure that Palo Alto survives this difficult time and regains its former vitality.

Matt Dolan
El Camino Real, Mountain View

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The Palo Alto Weekly encourages comments on our coverage or on issues of local interest.

Do you plan on getting a COVID-19 vaccination?

Submit letters to the editor up to 300 words to letters@paweekly.com. Submit guest opinions of 950 words to editor@paweekly.com. Include your name, address and daytime phone number so we can reach you.

We reserve the right to edit contributions for length, objectionable content, libel and factual errors known to us. Anonymous letters will generally not be accepted. Submitting a letter to the editor or guest opinion constitutes a granting of permission to the Palo Alto Weekly and Embarcadero Media to also publish it online, including in our online archives and as a post on Town Square.

For more information, contact Editorial Assistant Lloyd Lee at llee@paweekly.com or 650-223-6526 or Editor Jocelyn Dong at editor@paweekly.com.

Chamber of Commerce
This week on Town Square

Town Square is an online discussion forum at PaloAltoOnline.com/square

Editorials, letters and opinions

www.PaloAltoOnline.com • Palo Alto Weekly • December 18, 2020 • Page 17
**35 Edge Road, Atherton**

**Renovated Home on Nearly 1.1-Acre Lot**

Tucked away on a sprawling corner lot of nearly 1.1 acres, this updated home of over 3,700 square feet includes 6 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, ample privacy, and an ambiance that is undeniably Atherton. Enjoy a warm, welcoming feel in this home, as rich Mediterranean oak floors extend throughout, and natural light fills the space. Extensively renovated, this home offers a traditional floorplan that includes the dramatic living room with a spectacular wall of glass, a modern kitchen with a delightful breakfast nook, an elegant formal dining room, and the family room with a wet bar and fireplace. Numerous updates include solid core doors, Lutron-controlled lighting, high-speed coax and Cat6 data lines, and much more. Plus, you will find great space for outdoor enjoyment in the expansive backyard with a pool and hot tub. Close to numerous parks, as well as downtown Menlo Park, this home also enjoys access to top-ranked Menlo Park schools including Laurel Elementary, which is just steps away, and it is just moments to sought-after private schools (buyer to verify eligibility).

For virtual open houses & more photos, please visit:

www.35Edge.com

Offered at $6,988,000

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Listed by Michael Repka of the DeLeon Team, the #1 Team in Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties

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.

Michael Repka, DRE #01854880 | 650.900.7000 | michael@deleonrealty.com

中文聯絡人: Audrey Sun, DRE #01932784 電話: 650.785.5822 | www.deleonrealty.com | DeLeon Realty, Inc. | DRE #01903224
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 superb 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).

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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
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I t was more difficult than it should have been to get in, but once there it was worth every effort to see the brilliant Max Tachis in a live stream of an actual play from Los Altos Stage Company.

Tachis is astounding in Becky Mode’s funny commentary on arrogant abuse of privilege and elitism, “Fully Committed,” giving voices and actions to 40 different characters.

The 1999 play is written against the backdrop of celebrity dining in pretentious Manhattan restaurants, with one-percenter calling elite eateries and threatening, canceling and whining to people like Sam, who handles reservations for such an establishment.

Sam is the central character in what becomes a hurricane of phone calls that besiege him via two outside-line phones, Sam’s personal cell phone, the celebrity chef’s direct line, and a wall-mounted intercom connecting to the maître d’, the kitchen’s head cook and various other employees. Not for nothing is Tachis one of the San Francisco Bay Area’s best physical-comedy performers. Director Roneet Aliza Rahamim (who is also Tachis’ wife) pushes him through a grueling, high-velocity pace that has him bouncing from one side of the set to the other to answer the phones, placahe the chef or beg the maître d’ to accept another reservation.

In his job; and has to make a decision to hear if he has been cast as one side of the set to the other to answer the phones, placahe the chef or beg the maître d’ to accept another reservation.

Tachis not only takes the calls—he acts out whoever is on the other end of the line, from Carol Ann Rosenstein, who is livid because she had to wait two minutes on hold; to the maître d’, who won’t take Rosenstein’s call “because she is ugly!”, to the unctuous Bryce, who is calling to ensure the vegan menu and the barring of female wait staff for Gwyneth Paltrow’s table; to his sweet father, who doesn’t want to ask too much of his son; to his brother Steve, who wants him to come home for the first family Christmas since their mother died; to the egocentric chef who won’t give him Christmas off; and many others.

Every one of these voices has its own accent and inflections, and each is briefly presented physically by Tachis, with character changes happening less than a second apart. Really, a thrilling evening in the theater, even if only over a computer monitor. And well worth the $20 price of admission.

Maybe I am not too bright (pause to hear the chorus of groaning voices), but once there it was worth it. Really, a thrilling evening in the theater, even if only over a computer monitor. And well worth the $20 price of admission.

Max Tachis portrays Sam, who manages reservations for an exclusive Manhattan eatery, along with about 40 other characters that Sam interacts with in “Fully Committed,” a virtual production presented by Los Altos Stage Company.
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The vibrant flavors of Mexico City are making their way into your cocktail glass. At San Agus Cocina Urbana & Cocktails, beverage director Eusebio Pozos has created the Central de Abastos: a cocktail named after Mexico City’s largest market, where vendors sell vegetables, herbs, bread and elote — the iconic Mexican street corn snack. The drink’s connection to the market reaches beyond its name, with flavors from Mexican herbs and liqueurs intended to transport you to the aisles of the market. In fact, San Agus’ entire cocktail menu is composed of drinks designed to take you to Mexico City: There’s the La Merced, named after another one of Mexico City’s markets, and the Xochimilco, which is inspired by a city borough.

Notably absent from the cocktail menu, though, is Mexico’s most significant contribution to the canon of cocktails: the margarita.

“It’s really hard having craft cocktails at a Hispanic restaurant,” Pozos said. “In most people’s heads, the only thing they picture are margaritas.” Armed with a desire to nudge his customers off the beaten path, San Agus has deliberately omitted the classic cocktail from the menu to make room for the diversity of Mexico’s flavors.

“If I put a margarita on the menu, 60% of the cocktails I’m gonna sell are gonna be margaritas,” Pozos explained.

Pozos wants San Agus’ customers to transcend the margarita and explore a much wider range of Mexican spirits through a well-curated bar menu that features everything from celebrated classics to newer, obscure imports. Take destilado de pulque for example: Distilled from the traditional Aztec fermented agave drink pulque, this higher-proof version is difficult to find in the United States, and San Agus carries a version made by Juerte, the first company to import it here. Pozos’ home state of Tlaxcala, a few hours outside of Mexico City, is especially renowned for its pulque, and Pozos remembers how it’s all his father would drink during his childhood. “That (pulque) was the replacement for water,” he said with a chuckle as he described the drink’s ubiquity. “They would drink it and keep working in the farm.”

While most of his customers are unfamiliar with pulque, Pozos says that many of them have been excited by some of the other spirits on offer.

“I was surprised that Palo Alto was so into mezcal,” he said, while noting that even the most knowledgeable of his customers were likely to find something new to taste at San Agus. In an effort to support independent producers, Pozos sources from smaller mezcaleros that are not widely distributed, such as Tres Tiempos, who produce small batches of mezcal in the state of Oaxaca. San Agus also carries raicilla and bacanora: more specific versions of mezcal that have received official designations as appellations and are protected and regulated by the Mexican government in the same way that many European countries regulate wine. Pozos is fond of the comparison to wine, often telling new mezcal drinkers that the two are more alike than one would think.

“You have a diversity of agave just like you have a diversity of grapes,” Pozos said, while going on to explain that, like wine, agave spirits can also express terroir, a sense of place that factors heavily into the spirits he chooses to carry.

San Agus also serves a range of spirits not made from agave. Sotol — a distillate made from the desert spoon shrub, rum distilled from sugarcane grown in the hills of Michoacán and whisky made from heritage...
Oaxcan corn are all featured on the San Agus spirits list. In addition to base spirits, San Agus is also exploring Mexican liqueurs that add flavor, texture and complexity to their cocktails. Ancho Reyes, made by infusing neutral cane spirit with ancho chilis from Puebla, adds smokiness and depth to the La Merced cocktail, while Ancho Reyes Verde, made with fresh poblano chilis, adds more of an herbal and spicy kick to the Tepito.

Since Mexican twists on classic cocktails can often feature spiciness, Pozos is keen to expand that narrow view of the country’s influence on cocktails by incorporating liqueurs made with Mexico’s vast varieties of herbs and edible flowers, like D’Aristi Xtabentún liqueur. Produced from the fermented honey of bees that pollinate the xtabentún flower in Yucatán state, Pozos uses the liqueur’s honeyed notes of anise to round out the intense herbal flavor of house-made epazote syrup in the Central de Abasto cocktail. To balance the sweetness and earthiness of maple-tobacco syrup in the Bellas Artes, Pozos uses Granada-Vallet, a Mexican take on classic bitter Italian liqueurs, made with pomegranate and colored a bright red with natural cochineal dye from Oaxaca.

The most un-Mexican part of San Agus’ beverage menu is its wine selection, which features selections from Argentina, California, France, Italy and Spain but not Mexico. “It’s getting bigger and bigger,” Pozos said of the wine-producing culture in Mexico.

But after importation and distribution, these small batch wines can end up costing as much as $24 to sell by the glass, and Pozos has to balance his desire to highlight these Mexican wines against the biases of some customers who simply aren’t willing to pay that much for wine from a region they have never tried. Pozos remains hopeful that San Agus will serve Mexican wine one day based on the response from wine enthusiasts to Mexican producers on the menu at San Agus’ sister restaurant, La Viga in Redwood City. As winter approaches, Pozos is beginning recipe development for the next iteration of San Agus’ cocktail menu, which will be the restaurant’s third since it opened in May. Pozos takes a seasonal approach to San Agus’ cocktails, incorporating local produce that he feels might work well with Mexican flavors.

As the mercury drops, he says he’ll trade the fall flavors of persimmon-infused gin for a warming mezcal-based ponche, a traditional hot Christmastime Mexican punch sweetened with piloncillo, an unrefined Mexican cane sugar, and spiced with cinnamon. For more adventurous drinkers, Pozos will include a mezcal cocktail infused with huitlacoche, an edible fungus that grows on corn, often harvested as a culinary delicacy.

“The cocktail looks a little scary,” Pozos said with a chuckle, owing to its color and cloudiness, but nevertheless, he remains confident that San Agus patrons will enjoy it as much as he does. ■

San Agus is located at 115 Hamilton Ave., Palo Alto; 650-847-1334; sanagus.com. Under the current public health order, San Agus is still open for takeout and delivery.

Zack Fernandes wrote this for TheSixFifty.com, the Weekly’s sister publication.
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**Ring in the holidays with these fictional families**

**Eight heartfelt children’s books to spend time reading while traditional celebrations are on hold**

by Chris Saccheri

Kids have missed out on a lot this year: in-person school, birthday parties, playdates and sleepovers. And while friends and extended family have been kept at a distance, most immediate family members have been closer than ever (maybe closer than anyone ever wanted). That’s why it seems fitting to focus on books about families as we share some of our favorite children’s books of 2020 for this year’s recommended holiday reading list.

**“Lift”** by Minh Lê, illustrated by Dan Santat; Little, Brown Books for Young Readers; $17.99; ages 4-8.

Iris always pushes the elevator button. Until the day her little brother beats her to the punch. Frustrated, Iris retreats to her room and finds a mysterious, magic button that opens a door to an amazing new world. But is it more fun to go alone or share the adventure?

Lê’s text paired with Santat’s striking comic book-style illustrations lead us through Iris’s journey from jealousy to empathy. Her realization that joy can come from sharing something special makes this book perfect for new big brothers and sisters.

**“The Bear in My Family”** by Maya Tatsukawa; Dial Books; $17.99; ages 4-8.

You think you have it tough? Try living with a bear! This story’s young narrator can’t understand how his parents don’t see what he sees: The bear is loud, messy, and bossy, yet they still treat it like family. But when he encounters some bullies at the playground and the bear comes to his rescue, he realizes that maybe the bear isn’t so bad after all. A sweet, charming story about dealing with an overbearing older sibling.

**“Everyone’s Awake”** by Colin Meloy, illustrated by Shawn Harris; Chronicle Books; $17.99; ages 5-8.

This raucous and hilarious bedtime book introduces us to a family that should be sleeping but, instead, is doing everything else:

“The dog’s into the eggnog; Mom’s tap dancing to Prince while Dad is on the laptop buying ten-yard bolts of chintz.”

Their activities get wilder and weirder as the night goes on, leading to waged battles and blimps made out of underpants. The vibrant illustrations are full of clever details (see if you can find the frogs on every page) and match perfectly with the clever, rhythmic text. This is a book that demands to be read aloud!

**“Twins”** by Varian Johnson, illustrated by Shannon Wright; Graphix; $12.99; ages 8-12.

Twin sisters Francine and Maureen Carter are used to doing everything together. But as they start middle school, Francine yearns to stand out—choosing a new nickname, new look, and new opportunities—while Maureen just wants to fit in. When they wind up running against each other for class president, the competition threatens to tear them apart.

A sweet, authentic graphic novel about twin sisters facing the challenges of middle school, coming into their own, and learning to accept each other for who they are as individuals. Highly recommended for fans of Raina Telgemeier and anyone looking for graphic novels with Black protagonists.

(continued on page 31)
Here come the Holidays

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Here come the Holidays

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Whether as an individual, a business or in honor of someone else, help us reach our goal of $400,000 by making a generous contribution to the Holiday Fund.

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As of December 15, 269 donors have contributed $186,301 to the Palo Alto Weekly Holiday Fund.

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Gwen Luce & Family....................................................................100
Liz Lillard-Bernal....................................................................... 50
Kay & Don Raman........................................................................200
Barbara Allen..............................................................................100
Eugene & Mabel Dong..................................................................200
Micki & Bob Cardell....................................................................
Wendy Sinton............................................................................... 
Diane Doolittle............................................................................
Charles & Barbara Stevens........................................................
Philip Hanawalt & Graciela Spivak...........................................
Virginia Latifi...............................................................................200
Glenn & Lora Affleck...................................................................

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Enclosed is a check for $________________________

Name______________________________________________________________

Business Name____________________________________________________

Address________________________________________________________________

City/State/Zip........................................................................................

Email________________________________________________________________

Phone________________________________________________________________

I wish to designate my contribution as follows: (select one)
[ ] In my name as shown above
[ ] In the name of business above

OR: [ ] In honor of: ____________________________________________________
[ ] In memory of: _____________________________________________________
[ ] As a gift for: _____________________________________________________________________________________________________

(Name of person)

Support our Kids
with a gift to the Holiday Fund

Give to the Palo Alto Weekly Holiday Fund and your donation is doubled. You give to non-profit groups that work right here in our community. It’s a great way to ensure that your charitable donations are working at home.

As of December 15, 269 donors have contributed $186,301 to the Palo Alto Weekly Holiday Fund.

22 Anonymous...........................................................................$7,745

New Donors

Gerald & Joyce Barker................................................................200
Cherie & Robert Donald............................................................250
Linda & Jerry Elkind.................................................................250
Gwen Luce & Family....................................................................100
Liz Lillard-Bernal....................................................................... 50
Kay & Don Raman........................................................................200
Barbara Allen..............................................................................100
Eugene & Mabel Dong..................................................................200
Micki & Bob Cardell....................................................................
Wendy Sinton............................................................................... 
Diane Doolittle............................................................................
Charles & Barbara Stevens........................................................
Philip Hanawalt & Graciela Spivak...........................................
Virginia Latifi...............................................................................200
Glenn & Lora Affleck...................................................................

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Name______________________________________________________________

Business Name____________________________________________________

Address________________________________________________________________

City/State/Zip........................................................................................

Email________________________________________________________________

Phone________________________________________________________________

I wish to designate my contribution as follows: (select one)
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[ ] In the name of business above

OR: [ ] In honor of: ____________________________________________________
[ ] In memory of: _____________________________________________________
[ ] As a gift for: _____________________________________________________________________________________________________

(Name of person)


In Memory Of

Susan & Doug Woodman ..................... *
Brigid Barton ................................. 5,000
Judith Appleby ................................. 250
Martha Shirk ................................. 1,000
Jody Maxmin ........................................ *
Bill Reller ............................................... *
Dorothy Deringer .............................. 250
Werner Graf ......................................... *
Bruce Campbell ................................ 250
Judy Kramer ..................................... 150
Jerry Smallwood ............................ 1,000
Manuel & Maria Januario ................... 50
Graceann Johnson ............................ 100
Diane Sikic ........................................ 400
Giacomo Johnson ............................. 100

In Honor Of

Deborah Sutorius Hilleary ................. 100
Mary Wolbach 25
Connor & Grace Missel ...........................
Dr. David Lipson and Ray ........................
Charlie Hughes & the Ada’s Team ..........
Rich Hawa’s 87th Birthday .................
Myles, Amora, Leo & Vivi .................

As a Gift For

Logan Marsh & Gabby Perez .............. 500

Businesses & Organizations

Anne Sinnonben Design ..................... 200

Previously Published

Irene Ulewich 125
Toss & Eric Byler 75
Robyn H. Crummy 25
Stephanie Klein & Larry Baer .......... 250
Sue Kemp ...........................................
Judy Kramer 150
Barbara Klein .................................
Odie Kaye ..........................................
Michael Kascherick 500
Bruce Campbell 250
Cathy Krymman 250
Werner Winsor .....................................
Dorothy Deringer ........................ 250
Amy Crowe ................................. 500
Gary & Karen Fry ........................ 250
Bill Reller ................................. 250
Jody Maxmin .................................
Martha Shirk ................................. 1,000
Jim & Karen Lewis ...........................
Judith Appley ...................................
Vic Refa 100
Ted & Ginny Chu ............................
Penny & Greg Gallo ...........................
Brigid Barton ................................. 5,000
Brigd & Rob Robinson ................. 250
Karen & John Antonius .................. 2,000
Harry Huttell .................................
Sue Boog & Woodman ................. 250


A powerful, coming-of-age sto- ry about a biracial family where one brother presents as white, the other as Black, and the ways the world treats them differently. Darker-skinned than his older brother Troy, Donte finds himself on the receiving end of every joke, microaggression, and accusation at their elite private school. When a bully pushes Donte far too far, Donte decides to beat him at his own game: fencing.

Rhodes deftly addresses complex topics like colorism and institutional racism in a way that’s easily accessible to middle-grade readers. (Bonams points for being the rare, middle-grade sports book about fencing!) An essential read for 2020.

“The Time of Green Magic” by Hilary McKay; Margaret K. McElderry Books; $17.99; ages 8-12.

Abi’s life is turned upside-down when her father remarries and she suddenly becomes the middle child in their new, blend- ed family. Sandwiched between her traditional, white, and moody teenager Max, Abi retreats into her books as the family moves into an old, ivy-covered house.

North London. Before long, magic starts to creep up on them: first, with Abi falling lit- erally into her books and then with a mysterious creature that comforts Louis when his mother is away. The book is an enchanting blend of realistic fiction and fantasy, but at its heart, this is a story about a family struggling to adapt to a new situation. The parents are stressed and over- worked, but trying their best to hold it all together; the kids are fully realized and relatable, but working through their own unique challenges. Any modern family will relate to them.


Stead does a masterful job cap- turing Beaz’s worries and anxiety in a relatable way. An uplifting story about family, love and how change can be exciting and ter- rifying at the same time.


Stead does a masterful job cap- turing Beaz’s worries and anxiety in a relatable way. An uplifting story about family, love and how change can be exciting and ter- rifying at the same time.

A Whale of the Wild” by Rosanne Parry; Greenwillow Books; $17.99; ages 8-12.

Orcas live in a matrarchial society and young Vega is hon- ing her skills so that one day she will be trusted as the family’s wayfinder. But when a devas- tating earthquake separates her and her young brother from the rest of their family, they must rely upon her instincts to lead them back home in this dramatic and emo- tional story.

Based on the author’s own re- search trips to the Salish Sea, this beautiful book explores family bonds, survival, global warming, and a changing sea- scape. Perfect for fans of animal stories like Sara Pennypacker’s Pax or Parry’s previous book, “A Wolf Called Wander.”

Chris Sacchetti is co-founder of Linden Tree Children’s Books in Los Altos. He can be reached at csacchett@ lindentreebooks.com.

Donate online at siliconvalleyycf.org/ paypal-holidayfund

Title Pages

Title Pages

Holiday reads (continued from page 27)
As initial shipments of COVID-19 vaccines arrive throughout the United States this week and in coming weeks, Dr. Yvonne Maldonado, a Stanford professor who serves on the Western States review panel for the COVID-19 vaccines, envisions the general population could receive the vaccine by spring or summer.

Under the federal rollout plan, Phase 1A calls for the country’s estimated 20 million health care workers and 3 million residents of long-term-care facilities to be vaccinated; Phase 1B covers essential workers; Phase 1C will cover the roughly 80 million people who are 65 years and older with underlying medical conditions that make them vulnerable for severe illness from the coronavirus.

Maldonado said that while the nation’s current allocation of 100 million doses of the vaccines might seem plentiful, “We do not think that is enough.”

If the nation’s nearly 330 million people are to receive two doses each, which is necessary to reach 94% or 95% immunity, the country would need about three quarters of a billion doses. Not everyone would want the vaccine, Maldonado noted, but the point is that they should be able to get it should they choose to.

“The supply chain might be an issue,” she said.

Maldonado, who is also a liaison to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, said Wednesday that she expected the CDC’s review of Moderna Inc.’s vaccine on Thursday, Dec. 17, to be more streamlined than it was for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

“If things go well tomorrow, by Saturday or Sunday we could have the votes from the CDC and allocate the Moderna vaccine for Phase 1B health care workers. Shortly thereafter, in February, first responders and other essential workers could receive the vaccine,” she said.

More vaccines could be in the pipeline in 2021 beyond Pfizer and Moderna, she said. Johnson & Johnson’s vaccine clinical trials, which tested 30,000 people, including at Stanford, will be completed at the end of this year and could be approved in early 2021.

AstraZeneca’s vaccine is also undergoing trials and could be available in 2021. Two others, by Novavax and Sanofi, are also in process. Technical issues with the Sanofi vaccine could delay the start of its trials until February, she said.

Maldonado said that, having extensively reviewed the data on the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, the most remarkable thing she noticed is the companies’ transparency about their data. Based on that data, the vaccines “do look very safe,” she said.

At Stanford, many of Maldonado’s colleagues are excited about the vaccines. They think the vaccines are “an opportunity to really stem this pandemic,” she said.

Also receiving a dose of the vaccine was Karen Hopkins, a coordinator for the hospital’s home care program for spinal injury patients. In normal times, her job takes her inside patients’ homes to check on them, monitor their injuries and keep close tabs on those recently discharged. But over the last nine months, all of that was thrown out the window.

“Since the COVID restrictions started, we have not been able to see any of our patients in the home setting,” Hopkins said. “Telehealth has kept a semblance of home care going this year, but Hopkins said it’s hardly the same thing. She can observe wounds over a video meeting, but it’s hard to get a full assessment unless it’s done in-person. While the vaccine means she could very well return to patients’ homes, Hopkins said it’s uncertain when she’ll get the all-clear.

The first round of vaccines will also be available to Palo Alto

7-day rolling average of new daily cases
In Santa Clara County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>349</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>691</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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People hospitalized with COVID-19
In Santa Clara County

<table>
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<tr>
<th>11/17</th>
<th>11/24</th>
<th>11/28</th>
<th>12/2</th>
<th>12/15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>155</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>558</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% of ICU beds available
In Santa Clara County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>11/17</th>
<th>12/1</th>
<th>12/8</th>
<th>12/15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data for the prior week is still preliminary

Staff Writer Sue Dremann can be emailed at sdremann@paweekly.com.
PUBLIC HEALTH

Turnaround times for COVID tests are lagging around the state

by Barbara Feder Ostrov/CalMatters

S

even days a week, San Francisco’s public health laboratory operates un-
til midnight. Workers are ex-
hausted, their director says. And still, the COVID-19 specimens keep coming in their little plas-
tic tubes, with test results ex-
pected quickly to help manage California’s alarming surge of infections.

The lab was set up earlier in the pandemic to handle 700 CO-
VID-19 specimens each day; now it’s receiving about 2,000, said the lab’s director, Godfred Masinde.

“We’ve been given more than we can handle,” said Masinde, who also is president of the California Association of Pub-
lic Health Laboratory Directors.

Problems with COVID test-
ing are resurfacing across Cali-
ifornia as turnaround times for test results climb once again after a summer of frustrating delays. Many labs have been slammed with record numbers of specimens as public health organizations expanded test sites and hours and Californians flocked to get tested be-
fore Thanksgiving.

The average turnaround time for test results has risen by 30% from the first week in Novem-
ber to the last week, or from 1.3 days to 1.7 days, according to state public health data.

That may not sound like much, but public health experts say it’s critical for COVID-19 test results to be reported within one to two days because longer delays mean that infected peo-
ple may unknowingly spread the disease to others before they can isolate at home.

State health officials monitor test turnaround times closely, publicly posting a dashboard that tracks performance of the many commercial, hospital and government labs that collective-
ly process up to 300,000 speci-
mens every day. In the last week of November, 78% of test results were returned within two days on average, compared to 89% in the first week.

“In the middle of our surge, our testing capacity is getting stretched again even though we have doubled our capac-
ity,” said Dr. Erica Pan, former acting state health officer said last week at a UCSF COVID-19 briefing. “Slow testing turn-
around is happening again.”

California has spent hundreds of millions of dollars to boost the state’s laboratory capacity, contracting with commercial labs and building a massive new PerkinElmer laboratory in southern California. That lab, in Valencia, was supposed to help with the burden on other labs, but it’s still getting up and running. In the last week of No-

vember, nearly a third of its tests were returned after two days; and 72% of the test results, despite the 24- to 48-hour turnaround mandated in its contract.

However, some large com-
mercial labs like Curative, in San Dimas, are managing to keep up with the onslaught of specimens.

Others, including giants Lab-
Corp and Quest, are buckling under the strain. In the first week of November, those two labs returned results for 90% and 72% of their tests, respecti-

tively, within two days. But by the end of the month, as their caseloads rose by about one-
third, LabCorp was only able to return 37% of its tests within two days; Quest reported only 31% of tests within two days.

Quest declined to discuss its lab but noted it returns test results nationally within two to three days for all patients and within two days for priority pa-

tients. A LabCorp spokesperson said the company is returning COVID-19 test results within the two to four days specified on its website. She said it is seeing a nationwide rise in demand and plans to expand capacity.

Kaiser Permanente’s southern California laboratory, which processed all of its roughly 50,000 COVID-19 tests within two days in the first week of No-

vember, saw its caseload more than triple by the end of that month. Its ability to return re-

dults declined sharply as a result.

In contrast, the HMO’s North-
ern California laboratory was not as hard-pressed. The two laboratories serve only Kaiser patients.

“The level of surge we’re seeing now risks overwhelm-

ing the state’s ability to keep up with testing and treatment,” said Lisa Arellanes, a Kaiser Permanente executive who oversees the labs. “That’s why it’s so critical to take action now to slow the spread of the virus, including practicing physical distancing, avoiding travel and gatherings, washing hands and wearing masks.”

Stanford Health Care’s lab-

atory also has struggled. Al-

though it was able to process vaccine is wasted.

The rush is so significant that, when the vaccine is transported to the hospital’s facilities in Men-

lo Park and Livermore, it’s going to need a police escort with the lights flashing to rush through traffic with Robertson on board.

‘I am ecstatic about this. This is the beginning of hopefully the end of this global pandemic.’

— Kelly Robertson, VA Palo Alto’s chief of pharmacy services

797, and both are expected to be-

gin administering the vaccine to frontline health care workers on Saturday.

Though the initial focus is on health care workers, residents of skilled nursing facilities will be offered the vaccine through re-
tail pharmacies Walgreens and CVS beginning the week of Dec. 28, according to county health officials. Larger shipments of a second COVID-19 vaccine de-

veloped by Moderna are also expected to be available next Tuesday, following tentative ap-

proval by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

The Pfizer vaccine has been deemed safe and effective for peo-

pole over the age of 16, including those who previously contracted COVID-19. Those who have a his-
tory of severe allergic reactions to vaccines or injectable therapies may have an adverse reaction to the COVID-19 vaccine and are asked to stay at the vaccination site for at least 15 minutes for ob-

servation.

I Staff Writer Kevin Forestieri

report s for the Mountain View

Voice, a sister publication of the

Weekly. He can be reached at

kforestieri@mv-voice.com.

Stanford Health Care reports that equipment failures have slowed process-

ing are resurfacing across Cali-

fornia laboratory, which pro-

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Stanford Health Care’s lab-

atory also has struggled. Al-

though it was able to process (continued on page 34)

County data shows that CO-
VID-19 cases in skilled nursing facilities make up only 5% of the total cases but account for 44% of the deaths. Those receiving the inoculation at the Palo Alto facil-

ity did so voluntarily through an interest form sent out prior to the arrival of the vaccine.

A race against the clock

Managing the Pfizer vaccine is difficult and cumbersome to say the least. The vaccine comes in 975-dose pods, often referred to as “pizza boxes,” and must be kept at -70 degrees Celsius. Part of the reason the Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System got the vaccine is to need a police escort with the lights flashing to rush through traffic with Robertson on board.

“I am ecstatic about this. This is the beginning of hopefully the end of this global pandemic.”

— Kelly Robertson, VA Palo Alto’s chief of pharmacy services

This is a logistics nightmare,” she said. “I’ve been here 28 years and I have never dealt with some-
th ing that has to be so highly, highly coordinated.”

Santa Clara County will receive a grand total of 17,550 doses of the Pfizer vaccine this week, with many hospitals getting their fair share on Friday. Stanford will be receiving 3,900 doses and El Camino Hospital will be receiving

4600678 copy.png

Average test turnaround time

Number of days for state’s private, hospital or
government labs to return COVID-19 results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weeks from May 31 to Nov. 28</th>
<th>3.6</th>
<th>3.4</th>
<th>3.2</th>
<th>3.0</th>
<th>2.8</th>
<th>2.6</th>
<th>2.4</th>
<th>2.2</th>
<th>2.0</th>
<th>1.8</th>
<th>1.6</th>
<th>1.4</th>
<th>1.2</th>
<th>1.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source: California Department of Public Health</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

(continued from previous page)

VA’s senior care home residents, who are among the most vul-

erable to the disease. Santa Clara
Turnaround (continued from page 33)

virtually all of its samples within two days in early November, the lab could only return just over half of samples by the end of the month, according to state public health data.

Dr. Christina Kong, the lab’s medical director, said in a statement that the lab has experienced equipment failures and nationwide shortages of some of the supplies they need to process COVID-19 specimens. The lab is installing a new PerkinElmer public health lab, which is expected to handle up to 150,000 tests per day later in 2021, to ameliorate the lags.

But that’s not the only reason. Labs have had to compete for scarce pipettes and other supplies needed to process tests. Lab machines, not built to withstand round-the-clock operation, are failing, said San Francisco’s Godfred Masinde. And he’s worried about his people — the microbiologists and technicians who’ve worked overtime and without a real break for months on end, much like the overworked nurses and doctors in California’s hospitals. Masinde needs another two microbiologists, but they’re in short supply and government regulations mean a time-consuming hiring process, he said.

Still, Masinde said his lab is remodeling to accommodate new automated equipment provided by the state, including robots, to help process the ever-growing torrent of test samples. He’s frustrated by the scramble, citing years of budget cutsbacks and consolidation of California’s public health laboratories. “You can see people are fatigued,” Masinde said. “But we are trying to cope.”

CalMatters health care coverage is supported by grants from the Blue Shield of California Foundation, The California Health Care Foundation and the California Wellness Foundation. Email him at Federico Ortega at forgetown@calmatters.org.

About the cover: Charles Davis, VA Palo Alto Spinal Cord Injury Clinic, waits for about 15 minutes to make sure that the vaccine does not provoke any side effects.

PUBLIC HEALTH

How the vaccine works

Drug relies on messenger RNA to get body to produce antibodies

by Sue Dremann

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine that launched the first wave of inoculations across the globe uses a small piece of genetic material, called messenger RNA (mRNA), from the coronavirus to help the body protect itself.

This coronavirus mRNA is what instructs cells in the body to make the virus’ distinctive “spike” protein, which then triggers the immune system to react defensively by producing antibodies against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

Pfizer’s vaccine showed a 95% efficacy against the virus. It’s administered as a series of two doses, three weeks apart.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has noted there isn’t data to determine how long the vaccine will provide protection, nor is there evidence that the vaccine prevents transmission of the virus from person to person.

The FDA’s emergency authorization allows its distribution in the U.S. because of the dire emergency health crisis caused by the coronavirus, though it is not a final approval of the vaccine. Dr. Peter Marks, director of the FDA’s Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research, said in the statement: “The vaccine’s known and potential benefits clearly outweigh its known and potential risks. … Efforts to speed vaccine development have not sacrificed scientific standards or the integrity of our vaccine evaluation process.”

Drug trials enrolled 37,586 participants in a randomized, placebo-controlled international study, the majority of whom are U.S. participants. In all, 18,801 participants received the vaccine and 18,785 received a saline placebo. Researchers followed them for a median of two months after receiving the second dose.

The most commonly reported side effects of the vaccine, which typically lasted several days, were pain at the injection site, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain and fever.

“More people experienced these side effects after the second dose than after the first dose, so it is important for vaccination providers and recipients to expect that there may be some side effects after either dose, but even more so after the second dose,” the FDA stated.

The researchers analyzed 36,523 of the study participants who did not have evidence of COVID-19 for seven days after the second dose. Among these people, 18,198 had received the vaccine and the rest received a placebo. Only eight participants in the vaccine group developed COVID-19 compared to 162 in the placebo group. Of these 170 cases, one in the vaccine group and three in the placebo group were classified as severe.

COVID-19 test turnaround times

Data reported to the state of California, Nov. 29 to Dec. 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>San Mateo Public Health Lab</th>
<th>Santa Clara Public Health Lab</th>
<th>Kaiser NorCal</th>
<th>Sutter Health</th>
<th>Santa Clara Valley Medical Center</th>
<th>Stanford Hospital and Clinics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total tests</td>
<td>1,377</td>
<td>3,087</td>
<td>57,381</td>
<td>25,381</td>
<td>16,840</td>
<td>16,182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within 1 day</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within 2 days</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within 3-4 days</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within 5 days</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total within 2 days</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% change from prior period of 2-day results</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average turnaround time</td>
<td>6.4 days</td>
<td>1.5 days</td>
<td>1.7 days</td>
<td>&lt;1 day</td>
<td>1.3 days</td>
<td>1.3 days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: California Department of Public Health
Kevin Bac 1tzepl, now a ninth-grade Eastside Preparatory School student, celebrates his graduation from Jane Lathrop Stanford Middle School and says thanks to DreamCatchers from his porch.

**Holiday Fund**

(continued from page 7)

good idea to have one or two sessions during the year to have a little reunion.”

Frederick said the organization hopes to continue to build robust summer programs in the future, especially ones that will be in-person when the pandemic subsides, by seeking more funding. Lansberg said she hoped that she could expand the Project Rise program to also focus on rising middle school students.

“We know there’s a silent poverty in Palo Alto. That is the truth,” Frederick said. “We hoped that she could expand the Project Rise program to also focus on rising middle school students.

“We know the problem is in high school; we know there are problems beyond that. We know the problem is in high school; we know the problem is in elementary school. What we want to do is to continue reaching out to even more of that population.”

The Holiday Fund campaign to raise $400,000 for local nonprofit agencies serving families, kids and individuals in need is now in full swing. For more information about the campaign, go to page 30 of this edition. To donate online, go to siliconvalleycf.org/Paw-holiday-fund. More information about DreamCatchers is available at dreamcatchersyouth.org.

Editorial Assistant Lloyd Lee can be emailed at lle@paweekly.com.

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**Across**

1 Sluggish
5 Arm gesture done by kids graduating elementary school
8 Hosts in one’s apartment (remember that?)
13 The A in A.D.
14 Public radio host Glass
15 Early online newsgroup system
17 “The Caine Mutiny” novelist
18 __ squared (circle formula)
19 Act as a go-between
20 Bygone laptop company’s fiscal year division
23 “Bleh!”
25 “As Seen On TV” knife brand
26 Dinnerware collections
27 “Batman Forever” actor Kilmer
28 “Messenger” material
29 Talent for detail, maybe
32 “Call Me Maybe” singer Carly __ Jepsen
33 General ballpark
35 It may be educated
37 “How does a company reserve a symbol to trade?” and “How does it differ from NYSE?”
44 Photographer Diane
45 Button alternative
46 Greek M’s
47 Long-running forensic drama with an upcoming reboot
50 Mineral spring
53 Airport posting
54 Catchall abbrs.
55 60End of the road __
56 Largest moon of Saturn
58 Object accelerator particle
59 “Me shooting 40% at the foul line is just God’s way to say nobody’s perfect, “ for instance?
60 Royally named liner, briefly
61 No divider, they
62 Force to leave
63 Playwright Beckett
64 Suffus for Gator or Power
65 Idaho neighbor
66 Midway through a migraine, e.g.
69 “In the Heights” Tony winner ___.Manuel Miranda

**Down**

1 Ocelot foot
2 See 4-Down
3 Sonic the Hedgehog’s echidna friend
4 With 2-Down, interviewee for John Lennon retrospectives
5 __ Dots (cryogenic ice cream brand)
6 “thank u, next” singer Grande
7 Hires competitor
8 Platform for the “Animaniacs” reboot
9 Bhutan’s continent
10 Retailer that filed for bankruptcy in 2018
11 No divider, they
12 Spanish currency pre-euro
16 Briefly stated
21 Ball club VIP
22 Leicester lineup
23 “Kindergarten Cop” director Reitman
24 Model/actor Delevingne
25 Dish prepared with garlic butter and white wine
26 “thank u, next” singer Grande
27 “How does a company reserve a symbol to trade?” and “How does it differ from NYSE?”
28 “thank u, next” singer Grande
29 Talent for detail, maybe
30 For real?” response
31 ME zone, in winter
33 General ballpark
34 Holly Hunter, in “The Piano”
35 It may be educated
37 “How does a company reserve a symbol to trade?” and “How does it differ from NYSE?”
38 Storyline progression
39 Many Super Bowl MVPs
40 Capital at over 9,000 feet
41 Like 50/50 odds
42 Alphabet where X is “X-ray”
43 Bridge section
44 Alphabet where X is “X-ray”
45 Button alternative
46 Greek M’s
47 Long-running forensic drama with an upcoming reboot
48 Dish prepared with garlic butter and white wine
49 Long-running forensic drama with an upcoming reboot
50 Mineral spring
53 Airport posting
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