Schools start seeing delta cases among students

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Arts groups get creative in reaching audiences in person and online. Here’s what they’re planning this fall.

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Read up-to-the-minute news on PaloAltoOnline.com

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- **Upfront** Apartments could replace The Fish Market  Page 8
- **Eating Out** Frozen Mexican treats come to Peninsula  Page 28
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Plan for train viaduct hits dead end in Palo Alto

City left with three alternatives for Charleston and Meadow rail crossings
By Gennady Sheyner

aced with few good options for redesigning south Palo Alto’s two rail crossings, the City Council agreed Monday to eliminate what they deemed to be the worst of the bunch: a viaduct that would elevate the railroad tracks over Charleston Road and Meadow Drive.

The council’s decision to eliminate the viaduct from consideration followed an extensive debate about the pros and cons of all four alternatives that were still on the table for grade separation — the redesign of rail crossings so that the roads and the tracks would no longer intersect.

The elimination of the viaduct leaves the council with three alternatives to choose from: digging a trench for trains between Loma Verde Avenue and the San Antonio Caltrain station in Mountain View; constructing an underpass for drivers and bicyclists under the rail tracks; and advancing a “hybrid” design that combines raising the tracks and lowering the roads.

In debating its options for the two southern crossings, the council agreed that each is flawed in its own way. The trench, while the most popular alternative, is also the most expensive and, from an engineering perspective, the most complex one. It has an estimated price tag of $800 million to $900 million and it would take six years to construct. To build the trench, the city would need to divert Barron and Adobe creeks through siphons and lift stations and pump groundwater along the entire length of the alignment, which would stretch from just south of Loma Verde Avenue to just north of the San Antonio Caltrain station.

The underpass, while less expensive and more politically palatable, has its own problems. It

Eager for your child to be vaccinated? Help is on the way ... despite some bumps in the road

A firsthand account of a mom’s vaccine trial experience with her toddler
By Angela Swartz

It all started during a Tuesday morning in June. Lying in bed, I scanned my email and found an exciting note: My 1-year-old son, Theo, had been randomly selected to take part in Pfizer’s landmark pediatric COVID-19 vaccine trial. It was one of 48 children under 2 who are taking part in the double-blinded study. He is one of 48 children under 2 who are taking part in the trial being conducted at Stanford University School of Medicine. He

Students, staff test positive for COVID as school year begins

No known cases of virus spreading on campus among students yet, officials say
By Zoe Morgan

When Angela Rodriguez decided to send her kids back to in-person school this fall, she knew it was inevitable that there would be COVID-19 cases on campus, she just didn’t expect it to happen on the first day of school.

Rodriguez got an email on Aug. 11 saying that a child had tested positive for COVID-19 at Vargas Elementary School in Mountain View, where her two children are students.

“We were in shock,” Rodriguez said. “My husband and I could not believe it.”

The Palo Alto Unified, Mountain View Los Altos Union High School (MVLA), Mountain View Whisman and Los Altos school districts have reported student and staff COVID-19 cases since school began earlier this month, although as of Aug. 20 there weren’t any known cases of the virus spreading among students on campus, district officials said.

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(continued on page 30)

(continued on page 32)

HEALTH

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(continued on page 30)

(continued on page 32)
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SAFETY NET... Eight months after two Palo Alto City Council members proposed adopting a “safe storage” law for firearms, the council is preparing to do just that. Responding to a memo that Council member Allison Cornell and then-Mayor Adrian Fine issued in December 2020, the council is scheduled to adopt an ordinance this coming Monday that would require any firearm that is stored in a residence to be secured with a trigger lock or in a locked container, when not on one’s person. In proposing the new requirement, Cormack and Fine’s memo noted that 2020 had seen a record-setting number of firearms purchases, many of them to first-time owners who may not be familiar with proper safety and storage practices. “A safe requirement can help prevent the theft of firearms and may reassure and protect our public safety personnel,” the memo stated. Palo Alto isn’t the only city to consider and, in some cases, adopt gun-safety measures. Sunnyvale has recently raised the minimum age for purchasing a semi-automatic rifle to 21, while Redwood City approved a new ordinance mandating safe storage, with a violation classified as a misdemeanor. The Palo Alto ordinance would similarly set a maximum penalty on violations at $1,000 and six months of imprisonment. From City Attorney Molly Stump’s office notes that the ordinance is “not intended to criticize firearm owners nor abridge the rights protected by the Constitution. This sort of safe storage law constitutionally balances individuals’ rights with the City’s interest in reducing gun-related injuries.” In a memo from Stump’s office, “By protecting firearms from theft and misappropriation, this ordinance is a common-sense measure that can save lives and prevent injuries in Palo Alto.”

WHITE COAT SEASON... The return of Baby Bullet express trains, which will help pick up more passengers during the peak commute period of 6 a.m. & 4-7 p.m. The changes come as more people head back to the office and classroom.

Quote of the Week

“Around Town

There needs to be accountability.”

— Angela Rodriguez, a Mountain View parent, on sending sick children to school. See story on page 5.
Locals raise cash to fight Newsom’s recall

Residents from Palo Alto area gave more than $3 million to campaign opposing recall

By Gennady Sheyner

With the California recall election less than three weeks away, the campaign fighting the effort to oust Gov. Gavin Newsom has established a commanding lead in cash raised — with local donors playing a major role.

Even though none of the 46 candidates have made a direct donation to the campaign, the roughly $58 million that the main anti-recall campaign has raised to date, the vast majority has come from labor unions and statewide political action committees. An estimated $34 million came from individuals in the Midpeninsula cities of Palo Alto, East Palo Alto, Menlo Park, Mountain View, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Redwood City, Portola Valley and Woodside. This includes $1.43 million from Palo Alto donors, a field that includes — among others — prominent tech executives, philanthropists, developers and investors.

The biggest local donor — by a wide margin — was George Marcus, founder of the real estate firm Marcus & Millichap Company and long-time donor to Democratic causes. Marcus donated $1 million to the anti-recall campaign, Stop the Republican Recall. Among all of Newsom’s individual donors, only Reed Hastings, chief executive officer of Netflix, contributed $100,000, respectively.

Hastings, Marcus and Connie Balmer, a Washington resident who contributed $1 million to oppose the recall, are the only individuals on the list of the top 16 donors to the anti-recall campaign. Others on the list include the California Democratic Party, which contributed $2.15 million to oppose the recall; Dignity SEIU Local 2015, which contributed $2 million; the California Teachers Association Independent Expenditure Committee, which gave $1.8 million; and the California Correctional Peace Officers Association, Truth in Government Fund, which contributed $1.75 million.

Marcus, well known for his Democratic activism, is hardly the only donor from this area to make a sizable contribution to the campaign fighting the recall. Atherton philanthropist Elizabeth D. Simon, who co-founded the Simons Foundation board, made two contributions to the committee totaling $375,000. Her husband, Mark Helsing, founder of the investment firm Medley Partners, contributed another $425,000.

Other notable Palo Alto residents who contributed to the anti-recall campaign are Laurene Powell Jobs, president of Emerson Collective, who gave $400,000 to Stop the Republican Recall; Marissa Mayer, former CEO of Yahoo, and former Google CEO Eric Schmidt, who now manages the investment firm Hillspire, LLC, contributed $200,000 and $32,400, respectively.

Palo Alto Weekly staff

A preview of Palo Alto government meetings next week

CITY COUNCIL ... The council plans to hold a closed session to discuss the city’s negotiations with its labor groups. The council will then discuss the city’s plans for mitigating Foothills fire risks, adopt an ordinance requiring safe storage for firearms, commission a consultant to reform and edit the council’s policies and procedures handbook, and continue its discussion of strategies to increase services for the unhouse.

The closed session will begin at 5 p.m. on Monday, Aug. 30. The rest of the meeting will follow immediately after the closed session. Those wishing to participate by Zoom can do so by dialing 669-900-6853 and using Meeting ID: 965 027 238.

UTILITIES ADVISORY COMMISSION ... The commission plans to discuss permit processes for various energy technologies; the legal framework for construction work hours and street closures; and a recommendation to the council to approve design guidelines for the 2022 electric cost of service and rates analysis. The virtual meeting will begin at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 1. Those wishing to participate by Zoom can do so by dialing 669-900-6853 and using Meeting ID: 966 9129 7246.

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD ... The board plans to discuss the Caltrain station color and facade modifications at 555 Middlefield Road. The virtual meeting will begin at 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, Sept. 2. Those wishing to participate by Zoom can do so by dialing 669-900-6853 and using Meeting ID: 966 6189 1491.

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Five-story apartment building eyed for The Fish Market restaurant site

Project would include 129 residences, retail space

By Gennady Sheyner

The building on El Camino Real that currently houses The Fish Market restaurant could be demolished and replaced with a five-story building featuring 129 apartments and ground-floor retail under a proposal submitted by Menlo Park developer Acclaim Companies.

The development proposed for 3150 El Camino Real, in the Barron Park neighborhood, is just blocks from the site of another housing proposal from Acclaim. Last year, the developer pitched consolidating several commercial and residential sites to create a 119-apartment development, with a small office and retail component, at 2851 El Camino Real, in the Ventura neighborhood. While the Palo Alto City Council has yet to formally vote on either project, members gave the Ventura project generally positive feedback in January during a preliminary hearing, with Mayor Tom DuBois calling it “an interesting opportunity.”

Both of Acclaim’s mixed-use projects are relying on a recently created zoning tool to exceed the city’s zoning regulations. Under the “planned home” zone, for which Acclaim is applying, projects can exceed height limits, density regulations and other development standards. In the case of the Fish Market site, the proposed 57-foot-tall building would go beyond Palo Alto’s citywide 50-foot height limit.

Acclaim is also requesting permission to significantly exceed the residential density standard. The proposed building at the l-acre site would have a floor-area ratio of 2.95, whereas 1.5 is normally allowed in the site’s “service commercial” (SC) zone. And the residential density of 123 dwellings per acre roughly triples the city’s typical limit of 40 residences per acre at sites zoned for multifamily housing.

Lastly, Acclaim is proposing that the city modify its open space requirements to allow just some — but not all — of the units to have private decks. The developer is envisioning a central courtyard that would allow the building to meet the city’s open space requirement despite the shortage of private open space.

“These modifications will contribute to a vibrant, mixed-use community by preserving existing ground-floor retail and adding up to 26 affordable residential units,” Acclaim wrote in the project plans.

Once Acclaim’s formal application is filed, the project will need to go through reviews by the Planning and Transportation Commission and the Architectural Review Board before returning to the council for formal approval.

If approved, the council would likely spell the end of the Fish Market once the new building replaces the existing one. The application calls for retail and offices replacing the existing restaurant space at 3150 El Camino Real. The restaurant’s future had been the subject of speculation since last year, when Acclaim purchased the property.

In May, however, the restaurant announced that it has no imminent plans to leave.

If Acclaim receives approval for its development, it would join a procession of projects that are either already in the works or will soon enter into the construction phase in neighborhoods close to the project site, including Mayfield and Ventura. Recently approved and constructed projects include the mixed-use project at 2515 El Camino Real, at the former site of Olive Garden, and the 59-apartment project at 2755 El Camino Real, which is at the site of a former Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority parking lot and which consists of small units geared toward the local workforce.

Just south of this area, in the Ventura neighborhood, the council is preparing to review a proposal from The Sobrato Organization for 85 townhouses at 200 Portage Ave., next to the former site of Fry’s Electronics. The council is also in the middle of reviewing the North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan, a new vision document for a broader 60-acre portion of Ventura, which includes the former Fry’s site at 340 Portage Ave. The plan area also includes the property at 280 Lambert Ave., where a developer has proposed 49 condominiums in two buildings just south of the Matadero Creek — a proposal that received generally positive reviews from the City Council on Monday.

The council had also approved the expansion of Hotel Parmani, which will be reconstructed as a four-story building just south of The Fish Market site. The city has also recently approved a mixed-use project at 3225 El Camino Real, which includes eight condominiums.

While the council has been eyeing the Fry’s site for residential use for decades, The Fish Market location has not previously been seen as a prime housing site. The city’s Housing Element has identified the two El Camino sites on which the development would stand as having a “realistic capacity” of 21 housing units between them. A report from the Department of Planning and Community Environment notes that the development, if approved, would exceed the city’s estimate by 109 residences.

Email Staff Writer Gennady Sheyner at gsheyner@paweekly.com.
Editor’s note: The details in this article may be disturbing to some readers.

A San Jose woman who faces an attempted murder charge after allegedly stabbing a teenager in downtown Palo Alto on Aug. 18 was previously convicted of second-degree attempted murder and child abuse in the first degree, causing severe physical injury, in a case involving her own infant child.

Kenisha Monique Thomas was committed to a psychiatric hospital in Maryland in 2012, according to a court case information database and charging documents, after stabbing her daughter in Baltimore. On April 24, 2012, Thomas, who didn’t have custody of her 8-month-old baby, reportedly became upset with social workers during a supervised visit at the Department of Social Services. She claimed she could do a better job of caring for her infant daughter, according to the charging document, which was posted online by The Baltimore Sun.

Informed that her hourlong visit was over, Thomas reportedly said, “It is about to be over,” and “Lock me up. If I can’t have her, nobody will.”

Thomas drew a kitchen knife out of her purse and stabbed her baby five times. Another social worker rushed into the room and threw a chair at Thomas and tackled her. “I hope my baby is dead,” she reportedly said.

The infant’s injuries were to her head area and neck. She was taken to Johns Hopkins Medical Center and survived.

Thomas pleaded guilty on May 7, 2014. She was found not criminally responsible and was committed to a psychiatric hospital, according to an online case information file.

The case information doesn’t state how long Thomas stayed in hospital custody. On Jan. 29, 2020, however, a Maryland judge issued a hospital warrant, which was served the same day.

The court again issued another hospital warrant on May 19, 2021. There is no notation, however, that the second warrant was served, nor if Thomas was taken into custody.

Tracy Varda, the Baltimore assistant state’s attorney in charge of the case, referred a request for a clarification to the office’s communications department. A response was not available at the time of publication.

An investigative report filed in Santa Clara County Superior Court sheds light on why Thomas came to Palo Alto. Thomas reportedly had an obsession with someone who resides on the Stanford University campus. In April, by email and telephone to the university, she allegedly indicated her desire for a romantic relationship. She reportedly stated that she intended to fly out one way to meet with the person at Stanford.

Stanford University Department of Public Safety created a threat assessment on her, according to the investigative report. Stanford University also issued a stay-away letter to Thomas, stating she was not allowed on campus.

Thomas, who had a San Jose address and had obtained a California driver’s license, according to the investigative report, told Palo Alto police she gets services from the Opportunity Center in Palo Alto. In May, the investigative report states, Palo Alto police placed Thomas on a hold, although the type of hold was also redacted in the report.

On Aug. 18, Thomas allegedly randomly attacked a 16-year-old Palo Alto High School junior at Emerson Street and University Avenue, slashing her throat with a paring knife and causing a 6-inch-long gash. The cut narrowly missed the girl’s trachea and jugular vein, according to the investigative report. Two passersby jumped in and subdued Thomas, according to Palo Alto police.

The teen had moved with her family to Palo Alto in early August, she told the school paper, The Campanile.

“I was walking around University Avenue during (my) prep with my friend and then out of nowhere, a lady came up from behind me, grabbed my hair, pulled my head back, and slit my throat. Then, I was pushed down under her. I couldn’t exactly make out what was going on around me. I heard a lot of yelling from (Thomas) and from the people around me,” she said. “If the cut was a few centimeters deeper, I would’ve died.”

Palo Alto police Lt. Con (continued on page 10)
I t’s been more than five years since the Palo Alto City Council adopted an ambitious goal of reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2030, and progress remains stubbornly slow. Since April 2016, when the council adopted its goal, the city has taken several small steps in support of this target: modifying the building code to require electrification in residential developments; implementing bike improvements to encourage alternatives to driving; installing solar panels on the roof of a public garage; and taking a formal stance against car idling. But much to the chagrin of local environmentalists, Palo Alto has not launched any bold pilot programs to further its sustainability goals, which increasingly appear to be aspirational rather than realistic. As of 2019, Palo Alto has achieved emission reductions of just 38% from the 1990 baseline level, with nearly all of it attributable to the council’s 2013 decision to make the city’s electric portfolio “carbon neutral.”

The city’s current path forward toward a more sustainable future remains murky at best. Under the latest plan, which the city’s newly created Sustainability and Climate Action Plan Ad Hoc Committee discussed earlier this month, city staff would spend the next year in analysis mode, upgrading the city’s strategic plan and commissioning a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) analysis for various sustainability programs it includes. Palo Alto’s lagging progress and protracted timeline has frustrated residents at the forefront of the city’s emission-reduction efforts. Dozens attended the committee’s first meeting and more than 40 people addressed the committee, which consists of Vice Mayor Pat Burt and council member Alison Cormack. Their message was clear: Palo Alto needs to move faster.

By Gennady Sheyner

New committee seeks to boost Palo Alto’s climate-change efforts

Group pledges to work with community to accelerate emission reductions

Drop Them Off at the Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Station

HHW Station Location
2501 Embarcadero Way
Palo Alto, CA 94303

Guidelines
• Limit of 15 gallons or 125 pounds of HHW per visit (in no larger than 5-gallon containers)
• Must be a Palo Alto resident (bring your driver’s license or vehicle registration)
• Empty containers? Put them in your blue recycling cart.

Teen stabbed (continued from page 9)

Maloney said detectives are continuing to conduct a follow-up investigation, which includes determining where Thomas has been, where she was going, and how she came to be in Palo Alto.

“We are not in a position to release that investigative information at this point,” he said.

Baltimore court records show Thomas had a domestic violence complaint and a restraining order against her in 2004. In a second

David Coale, who has long urged more aggressive action on climate change, was one of many residents who suggested that the city’s methodical approach is too slow. Coale called on the city to seek exemptions from CEQA for programs that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. He also urged city officials to actually adopt some of the pilot programs that the city has been discussing for years, which include creating incentives — or requirements — to facilitate a switch away from natural gas and toward clean electricity.

“You have to break out of the mold to go slow, and you need to go faster,” Coale said. “I have past time for these arguments to take hold. I’m pretty discouraged because it’s been so long and there’s been so little action.”

A group of eight students from Gunn High — some taking a break from class — Zoomed into the virtual meeting to send a similar message. Saman de Silva, a member of Gunn’s Green Team, criticized the city for proposing to wait another 16 months before adopting the city’s new plan for cutting emissions.

“When push comes to shove, climate change is not waiting for bureaucratic red tape, and neither should this committee,” de Silva told the committee. Resident Debbie Mytels urged the committee to immediately set goals for shutting down aged gas lines and creating a program that allows utility customers to electrify their homes through on-bill financing, a mechanism that would allow them to pay for the upgrade over time. Government action, she said, will be necessary to spur collective action on climate change.

“For a decade now, the city has been putting out programs that educate and gently nudge the public into action but we need to do more,” Mytels said. “We need to create programs that support and compel collective actions.”

Both members of the new committee agreed with the public that the city needs to be more aggressive when it comes to climate change. Burt and Cormack both supported exploring pilot programs that could be launched sooner rather than later, potentially through CEQA exemptions. They also assured the public that — contrary to popular conceptions of how committees work — the new panel is designed to speed up, rather than slow down, the city’s green efforts.

“I think the ad hoc is here to break bottlenecks,” Cormack said.

“That’s what I view this as — as a way for us to get moving faster, for us to work as partners with staff, members of the community and experts.”

According to recent staff analysis, achieving the 80x30 goal would require a series of dramatic actions, including the electrification of gas appliances in nearly all single-family homes by 2030 and widespread adoption of electric vehicles, which would have to constitute at least 85% of local car sales (up from the current rate of 30%). It may also entail adoption of a carbon tax or another type of tax measure to fund the new programs.

Burt acknowledged the challenge but suggested that even these actions may not be enough to address the new normal. Climate impacts, he said, are “no longer something in the future,” as evidenced by California’s prolonged drought and increasingly intense wildfire seasons.

“(Now) the events of the last year and even month — and the recent IPCC report — have made it apparent that that 80x30 goal was not the end. It’s a critical foundation, it’s going to be very difficult to achieve and yet we’ll have to go beyond that,” Burt said.

The committee plans to begin delving into specific programs at its Sept. 9 meetings, which will focus on residential building electrification. Its following three meetings will focus on commercial building electrification, electric vehicles and mobility programs, respectively, according to the schedule presented by staff. Later meetings will focus on topics such as wildfire protection, sea level rise, financing mechanisms for sustainability efforts and low-carbon construction materials.

Email Staff Writer Gennady Sheyner at gsheyner@pawweekly.com.
Grab a front row seat to local high school sports

We’re launching a new newsletter, the Playbook, that will give you an in-depth look at what’s going on in prep sports.

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Robert Guy Nordman
September 28, 1930 – July 18, 2021

Robert Guy (Bob) Nordman passed away on July 18 of 2021 at the age of 90. He was born on September 28, 1930 in New York City, New York, and graduated from Bayside High School in 1947 and from MIT in 1951 with a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering. Bob served in the United States Air Force from 1951 to 1953 as a First Lieutenant. Married in 1955 to Elisabeth Edson Nordman, they have three sons. Bob worked as an engineer in Southern California until 1969 when he moved to Palo Alto where he worked for Hewlett Packard as a Development Engineer and Project Manager until he retired in 1995. He received an M.S. in Engineering from Stanford University in 1971. Bob served on the boards of The Elizabeth F. Gamble Garden Center and The Associates of the Stanford University Libraries. He moved to Vi at Palo Alto in 2005 where he was active with the Library Committee.

Survived by his wife, Elisabeth Edson Nordman; his sons and daughters-in-law, Eric and Kathy Nordman of Palo Alto and their daughters Ellen and Nancy, Keith and Leslie Nordman; and Bruce Nordman and Teresa Provenzano of Berkeley and their sons Leo and Antonio. A service has been held.

Carol Wolff passed away at Sequoia Hospital on Thursday, August 5th. She had been recovering from heart surgery. She was born in Santa Cruz to Ruth and Erwin “Dave” Davidson and grew up in Menlo Park with her brothers Bob and Jack. She graduated from Woodside High School and earned a bachelor’s degree in English from San Francisco State University.

On a break back home from college, she re-connected with Ken Wolff who had grown up just a mile away in Atherton. They were married on November 6th, 1977 at Stanford Memorial Church. Carol said she married Ken, “for his two grandmothers and his families”, Elizabeth Davidson and Sarah Wood. Carol later suffered six miscarriages and had a stillborn baby girl named Abigail in 1991.

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She had been recovering from heart surgery. She was born in Santa Cruz to Ruth and Erwin “Dave” Davidson and grew up in Menlo Park with her brothers Bob and Jack. She graduated from Woodside High School and earned a bachelor’s degree in English from San Francisco State University.

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In her later years, she cherished her grandchildren and shared with them her love of swimming, reading, and arts and crafts. She sewed each grandchild a quilt, adding them to dozens of gifts she quilted for friends and family.

She was also a published author and won a Ladies Home Journal writing contest in 1992 which sent the family on an all-expenses-paid trip to Disney World. She was recently writing and illustrating a children’s book.

Carol leaves behind her husband Ken, her three children and their spouses, and 11 grandchildren.

Carol Ruth Davidson Wolff
February 4, 1953 – August 5, 2021

Carol Wolff passed away at Sequoia Hospital on Thursday, August 5th. She had been recovering from heart surgery. She was born in Santa Cruz to Ruth and Erwin “Dave” Davidson and grew up in Menlo Park with her brothers Bob and Jack. She graduated from Woodside High School and earned a bachelor’s degree in English from San Francisco State University.

On a break back home from college, she re-connected with Ken Wolff who had grown up just a mile away in Atherton. They were married on November 6th, 1977 at Stanford Memorial Church. Carol said she married Ken, “for his two grandmothers and his families”, Elizabeth Davidson and Sarah Wood. Carol later suffered six miscarriages and had a stillborn baby girl named Abigail in 1991.

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Carol leaves behind her husband Ken, her three children and their spouses, and 11 grandchildren.
An incredible lot backed up to beautiful Sylvan Park highlights this bright, spacious home that puts you close to everything that Silicon Valley has to offer. Soaring ceilings and excellent use of glass craft a light, airy ambiance from the moment you step inside, with almost 2,900 square feet of living space enjoying luxurious appointments such as hardwood floors and fine millwork. The expansive floorplan includes the living room centered by a fireplace, the remodeled kitchen with granite countertops, and the remodeled family room with backyard access that offers great space to either relax or entertain. The home’s 5 bedrooms and 2.5 bathrooms are highlighted by the inviting primary suite with a marble-appointed bathroom, and one bedroom that easily converts into office space to work from home in style. Enjoy true indoor/outdoor living in the magnificent backyard with its waterfall pool and spa, and appreciate the serenity that comes from having vibrant Sylvan Park as a backdrop. Convenient to major commute routes including 85 and 237, this home is also a short drive from great shopping and dining in both downtown Mountain View and Los Altos. Plus, children will also have access to acclaimed schools including Landels Elementary, Graham Middle, and Mountain View High (buyer to verify eligibility).

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On a Monday night earlier this year, the Palo Alto City Council waded through graphs and charts and strategies and agreed to work toward this scenario in nine years and four months: Almost every new car in Palo Alto is electric and no home uses gas for heating, hot water or cooking.

The next morning, as I walked my dog in the neighborhood, the first friend I saw asked about the meeting. I gestured to the houses nearby and said we were all going to have to stop using natural gas. She said she didn’t want to, and I said we might need to turn it off within a decade. She replied that our electricity comes from sources that aren’t good either.

Actually, our electricity is carbon neutral and comes from hydro (water going over dams), solar (mostly large projects in the central valley), methane capture (from landfills) and wind turbines (located elsewhere). This means that you can use Palo Alto electricity with confidence that it is clean energy and that there is an entire team of staff, plus the Utilities Advisory Commission, constantly working on the sources, pricing and availability of this energy.

A few blocks later, another friend offered to show me her backyard renovation in progress. In the middle of the lovely new patio was a gas connection for a firepit. I reluctantly asked if she knew how bad they were for the environment, and she said no. She said she was glad her high schooler didn’t know because she would make the family take it out!

Natural gas sounds positive and has been marketed with a pretty little blue flame for decades. But here are two crucial facts about natural gas, which most of us use to heat our homes and water, many of us use to cook our food, and some of us use to make sitting outside more pleasant in the evenings:

1) You are releasing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere when you burn it, and 2) Leaks in the natural gas extraction and distribution process create methane, which is 84 times worse than carbon dioxide in the atmosphere in terms of its ability to capture and retain heat.

Some climate action advocates use scare tactics, some talk about the future in dramatic personal fashion, some are deep in the data and shouldn’t, come to fruition such as 123 Sherman Ave., 2501 Park Blvd. and 150 Grant Ave. This failed because it would’ve required rezoning as requested by the developer. Rather than provide that plot with desired housing, there’ll be more offices now.

This same developer has now come up with the 511 Byron Ave. and 680 University Ave. proposal under the guise of providing “affordable housing” in exchange for “public benefits.” Well, let’s take a look at what’s being requested: 1) 73 units where normally 10 dwellings should be. 2) Double garage levels of move from fear, drama and technical details to the changes that all of us can make now. The terminology is chunky — electric pump water heater, which is hard to envision, and nonmetric induction, which makes me think there might be a physics quiz — but the effect is to get the gas out of your house.

Just as we prepare for earthquakes by having supplies ready, we need to prepare for that hot water heater to fail. They usually last about 10 years and when they go out, absolutely everyone in the house wants them replaced 10 minutes ago. On that Monday night, one public speaker who is very concerned about climate change shared that last year she replaced her water heater with a new gas one because she didn’t know how bad natural gas was for the atmosphere or that there is a great alternative. She’s not the only one who doesn’t know that. You are likely creating problems in your home for life on this planet — and you can start solving them today.

If you own your home, make sure there is a 240V outlet near your current water heater and bookmark the city’s page on heat pump water heaters. If you rent a home, ask the landlord if they will do this. If you live in an apartment, get together with your neighbors and ask the landlord what it would take to switch over from natural gas to electric and how you can help. If you live in a condo, show up at your next homeowners association meeting and ask when the complex can switch and how you can help. Seriously, write this down on a Post-it note or put it on your phone’s to-do list!

Now, let’s turn to the “I love my gas range, and you will have to pry it out of my cold, dead hands” narrative. I love to cook as much as the next person, possibly more. I host an annual Julia Child dinner with another family, make meals for friends with babies and friends with cancer, and basically view cooking for others as the highest form of love. And I’ve managed with a glass-on-electric range for 20 years, which is nowhere near as good as the new induction cooktops that use magnets.

Think of induction as a Tesla for your countertop — good-looking, good for the planet and super fast. A friend of mine who prizes his gas stove recently stayed at a home with induction and was impressed with how well it worked. Some restaurant chefs are switching to induction because it works as well as gas and it improves air quality and safety in their kitchens.

If you want help getting the gas out of your home, start with a virtual visit from our city’s Home Efficiency Genie, which you can schedule online or by calling 650-713-3411. It’s free this month (usually $49), and you will get expert advice for your home and your needs. It’s time for all of us to start making changes at home.

Alison Cormack serves on the Palo Alto City Council and is a member of the Climate Action and Ad hoc committee. These are her personal views. She can be reached at alisoncormack@gmail.com

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Letters

Less leaf blowing

Editor,

I read lots of discussions about leaf blowers. One simple way to cut noise, dust and pollution in half is for all of us to voluntarily agree (or ask our gardeners) to use them now. Today, I asked my neighbor if they will do this. If you live in a condo, you can help. Seriously, write this down on your phone’s to-do list!

A friend of mine who prizes his gas stove recently stayed at a home with induction and was impressed with how well it worked. Some restaurant chefs are switching to induction because it works as well as gas and it improves air quality and safety in their kitchens.

If you want help getting the gas out of your home, start with a virtual visit from our city’s Home Efficiency Genie, which you can schedule online or by calling 650-713-3411. It’s free this month (usually $49), and you will get expert advice for your home and your needs. It’s time for all of us to start making changes at home.

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Zoning free-for-all

Editor,

In its exuberance to move the city out of an affordable-housing shortage, the Palo Alto City Council agreed to resurrect a zoning tool that appears to throw out the reasonable zoning that has made Palo Alto a desirable place to live. The planned home zone, which allows builders to exceed development standards such as height and density limits in exchange for negotiated public benefits, has left us with a number of proposals that haven’t, and shouldn’t, come to fruition such as 123 Sherman Ave., 2501 Park Blvd. and 150 Grant Ave. This failed because it would’ve required rezoning as requested by the developer. Rather than provide that plot with desired housing, there’ll be more offices now.

This same developer has now come up with the 511 Byron Ave. and 680 University Ave. proposal under the guise of providing “affordable housing” in exchange for “public benefits.” Well, let’s take a look at what’s being requested: 1) 73 units where normally 10 dwellings should be. 2) Double garage levels of 15 feet more than normally acceptable. 3) A front setback of 10 feet instead of 24 feet. 4) Mixed-use development, so additional office space can be there. 5) 59 of the 73 units would be less than 500 square feet. 6) 14 of the 73 units lie between 641 and 861 square feet.

I haven’t figured out what the “public benefit” would be for this. Previously, public benefits have included things like food markets, unusual public art statues and outdoor dining space. Hopefully the planners and city council will take a long, hard look at this proposal and reduce it greatly or reject it. This is definitely not a project for low-income families.

P.S.: Where is the water to support out-of-control growth coming from?

Carol Gilbert
Byron Street, Palo Alto

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What most people don’t know will hurt us

By Alison Cormack

What most people don’t know will hurt us

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What do you think?

Do you think the Palo Alto school district’s protocols for handling COVID-19 cases are strong enough?

Submit letters to the editor of up to 300 words to letters@paweekly.com. Submit guest opinions of 750 to 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 lle@paweekly.com or 650-223-6526 or Editor Jocelyn Dong at editor@paweekly.com.
Relaxed elegance, chic ambiance and tranquil setting converge in this single-level modern craftsman of approximately 2350 sf on an enviable lot of approximately 14000 sf. Sleek interior has a crisp, light-filled design infused with posh spaces, soaring cathedral ceilings and clerestory windows.

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STYLISH INTERIORS AND A GREAT BACKYARD

Stylish living awaits in this bright, modern home offering 4 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, and over 2,100 square feet of living space, including a detached guest house. A paver pathway leads to the front door, and inside, refinished hardwood floors extend throughout the traditional floorplan. A fireplace centers the living room, the dining room is illuminated by a candle chandelier, and the chef’s kitchen includes stainless-steel appliances from Bosch and Viking. The inviting primary suite encompasses the entire upper level and features a spa-like bathroom with a soaking tub and step-in shower, while the guest home includes a kitchenette, full bathroom, and bedroom with a convenient murphy bed. And in the backyard, an entertainer’s dream awaits with a trellis-covered patio and built-in barbecue, a covered deck with heaters, and a lush lawn. Convenient to downtown Menlo Park, downtown Palo Alto, Caltrain, and US 101, this home is also served by top-ranked schools including Laurel Elementary, Hillview Middle, and Menlo-Atherton High (buyer to verify eligibility).

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In person or online — why not both? Arts groups offer full schedules and multiple viewing options this fall

By Karla Kane and Heather Zimmerman

Fall 2021 may not be unfolding as we all expected just a few heady months ago, but local arts groups have ensured that the return of music, theater and art to our lives has not been delayed, even if a full reopening has.

Building on the experience of nearly 18 months of shifting restrictions, many groups are navigating a still-changing landscape by adapting how, where and when they reach their audiences, both where we have been for a year and a half — online — and welcoming us back to their spaces, in person, with some precautions in place.

Below are some highlights of the coming season. Check the website and call before you go: Some venues now require proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test for in-person attendance, and due to changing public health restrictions, events may be canceled or delayed with short notice.

For continuing coverage, check PaloAltoOnline.com/arts, subscribe to our Weekend Express email (sign up at PaloAltoOnline.com/express) and browse event listings (or submit your own) at PaloAltoOnline.com/calendar.

Performing arts organizations

In the spotlight: After multiple postponements, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley plans to make its long-awaited return to live, in-person performances with the indie-rock musical “Lizard Boy,” by Justin Huertas (who’s also in the cast, along with Kirsten “Kiki” deLohr Helland and William A. Williams), running Oct. 6-31 at the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts. “The fast-moving plot recounts the mysterious event that changed Trevor’s life forever, launching him into a life-long search for identity and acceptance,” according to TheatreWorks’ website.

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Gotta like Fred Pitts, a tall, handsome actor who has been excellent in many roles on several Bay Area stages, who is also a medical doctor. He is also a self-confessed “history geek.”

“I’ve been reading history books probably since I was 8 years old,” Pitts said during a recent Zoom interview. “My parents had two sets of encyclopedias, and I read those.” As an adult, he had 740 history books on his home bookshelves.

Pitts was a Black student raised in the Baptist church in Ohio, but his parents put him into a Catholic school. Despite being far from El Camino Real, California’s missions were mentioned in that Ohio Catholic school. The story told, in those days, was how the Spanish conquerors and priests “saved” California’s indigenous people by teaching them Spanish and leading them to Christianity. History-buff Pitts, on a wine-tasting trip to Sonoma, stumbled across San Francisco Solano Mission a few years ago and was intrigued. He toured it, read up about it, talked with people about it all, and before long set out on his own mission, to visit all 21 California missions.

Pitts is performing his one-man show, “Aren’t You ... ?”, at Palo Alto Players through the end of August based on that experience. The title comes from the peculiar experiences he had as a single Black man, by himself, touring the missions surrounded mostly by white people, who couldn’t stop staring and wondering if he was some Black celebrity or another.

“People were coming up to me, saying, ‘You look like Richard Roundtree ... Barry Bonds ... Sidney Poitier.’ These people weren’t being mean, it was just that I was the only Black person there.”

Pitts started his tour with several missions here in the Bay Area — all but one were built along El Camino Real. One, Mission San Jose, was built across the bay, in Fremont. The idea was that each mission was supposed to be one day away, by horseback, from the next in line. Pitts learned a lot about the missions. And about people who weren’t used to interacting with Black people.

It makes for a warm and amusing show, as Pitts performs as himself and as 35 other people, ranging from a female bar customer who thought he’d chatted her up, when he hadn’t, to a Black man who also thought he was someone he wasn’t.

There are some great laughs. The show is no boring educational video, but very entertaining, a fine hour-plus in the theater. Each mission gets at least a mention, and most get a bit of healthy history making, such as how many hundreds or thousands of California Native Americans are buried at the missions, including some under a parking lot.

“The missions are all unique in their own ways,” Pitts said. He notes the reconstruction of many of them, and the lapsing into destruction of one of them (San Juan Capistrano, which collapsed during an 1812 earthquake). It’s a gentle, intelligent look at history in this age of condemning Roman Catholic priest Junipero Serra for his abuse of Native Americans, even as the Catholic Church canonized him. Serra established the first nine of California’s 21 Spanish missions.

Pitts is dedicated to learning all sides of history. “History, for me, depends on who is teaching it, and what they want you to remember. One of my teachers in school glossed over the history of slavery — that was the history that was taught then,” he said. “But you have to tell all of history. I describe it, what happened in the missions, not the rosy view of it. I mention the Chumash revolt (1824), one we never heard about in school. Or, the Nat Turner revolt (1831), which has only been talked about over the last 30 or 40 years. You have to look at everything.”

“ aren’t You ... ?” runs 8 p.m. Aug. 27, 28, 2 p.m. Aug. 29, streaming Aug. 27, 28-31 at the Lucie Stern Theatre, 1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto; in-person tickets $40; online tickets $20. Call 650-329-0891 or visit https://paplayers.org.

Email Contributing Writer John Orr at johnorr@regardingarts.com.

Works by glass artists Bruce Piczichillo and Dari Gordon are among the variety of glass and ceramic creations featured at the Palo Alto Clay & Glass Festival, Sept. 11-12.

“Essential Farmers and Farm Workers: An Exhibit of Photographs of the Silent Heroes of a Pandemic” at Art Ventures Gallery features portraits by photographer Mark Tuschman, with a reception Aug. 28.
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Virtual (continued from page 21)

Artists with disabilities dispelling myths, dissolving barriers and disrupting prejudice,” opening Sept. 11, is a celebration of disability experience — personal and “infinitely varied,” as the show’s description says. Every artist in the exhibition has one or more disabilities, whether visible or invisible, and the show offers works in a variety of media, including both traditional and digital portraiture, tactile paintings, video, installations, an interactive labyrinth, ceramics and a site-specific sculpture. With the pandemic shining a floodlight on myriad inequities in our society, the exhibition also aims to provide a space for discussion on “how disability culture can strengthen our communities through the practices of interdependence, accessibility, and inclusion.” The show, viewable both in person and online, will feature numerous accessibility components, such as audio descriptions, Braille labels, social narratives for visitors with autism and American Sign Language interpretation and live captioning during public programs. (Sept. 11-Dec. 11), cityofpaloalto.org/depts/csd/artcenter.

“The Flying Dreams” by Carlos Estevez (through Sept. 5); Antonia Wright and Ruben Milares (Sept 11-Oct. 24); Fernando Escartiz (Oct. 30-Dec. 12); David Gumbs (opening Dec. 18) at the Art Kiosk. funkcollective.org/projects/current/art-kiosk.

“Essential Farmers and Farm Workers” (opening Aug. 28) at Art Ventures Gallery. artventuresgallery.com.

“Light and Shadow” by Michael Patterson (through Aug. 31); Group show (September-October 2021) at Bryant Street Gallery, bryantstreet.com.

“Reaching Toward Warmer Suns” outdoor installation by Kiyan Williams (through Dec. 5); “Sam Richardson: Islands, Ice, and Sand” (Sept. 23-March 13); “Eamon Ore-Giron: Non Plus Ultra” (Sept. 23-Feb. 20); “Hostile Terrain 94” installation (ongoing) at the Anderson Collection at Stanford University. anderson.stanford.edu.

Note: The Anderson’s building is closed until Sept. 23 for the installation of new exhibitions, but outdoor installations on the grounds are open.

“The Marmor Collection: Frank Stella and Claes Oldenburg” (through Nov. 28) “Paper Chase: Ten Years of Collecting Prints, Drawings, and Photographs at the Cantor” (Sept. 29-Jan. 30); “Art/Object: Contemporary Works Between Mediums” (Nov. 5-Jan. 20) online and in person at Stanford University’s Cantor Arts Center. cantorartscenter.stanford.edu.

Note: The Anderson’s building is closed until Sept. 23 for the installation of new exhibitions, but outdoor installations on the grounds are open.

“Exploring Beauty: Watercolour Diaries from the Wild” (ongoing); “Sacred Places: Watercolour Diaries from the American Southwest” (ongoing); “Retrospective Exhibition: The Art of Tony Foster” (ongoing) at The Foster. Virtual tours available on The Foster’s YouTube channel. thefoster.org.

Paintings and drawings by Joseph Fuchs (through Aug. 29); new works and acrylics by Jun Meyer (September 2021); alcohol ink and watercolor by Maria Pazo (October 2021); oil paintings by Gene Zukowsky (November 2021); works by Ayelet Gal-on (December 2021) at Gallery 9. gallery9losaltos.com.

“Some Like It Hot” group show (through Aug. 29); monthly group shows by member artists at Gallery House. Also viewable online. galleryhouse.art.


Kings Mountain Art Fair (Sept. 4-6) held online for 2021. kingsmountainartfair.org.

“The Photography of J. Gilbert Smith” (through Sept. 19); “Gold Fever!” (through Aug. 29); “Annie Knapp Fitz Paints” (Sept. 9-Feb. 6) at the Los Altos History Museum. losaltoshistory.org.

“100th Anniversary Exhibition” (Nov. 5-Jan. 20) online and in person at Pacific Art League. pacificartleague.org.

Palo Alto Clay & Glass Festival (Sept. 11-12) at the Palo Alto Art Center. acga.net.

“Recent Acquisitions” (through Aug. 29), Don Scott MacDonald (September 2021); Fernando Reyes (October 2021);

“Interlaced” textile works by Josh Faught, Terri Friedman, Robert Kushner, Hang Liu, Kiki Smith, William Wiley, Xiaoxue Xie (through Oct. 1) at Qualia Contemporary Art. Also viewable online. qualiacontemporaryart.com.

Silicon Valley Sculpture 2021 Sculpture festival (Sept. 23-26) at Menlo College. siliconvalleysculpture.com.

“Summer Days” group show (through Aug. 29); Veronica Gross (September 2021); Maura Carta (October 2021); Patricia Accorinti & Vered Binyamini (November 2021); Julia Seelos (December 2021) in-person exhibits at Viewpoints Gallery. viewpointsgallery.com.

Books Inc. (Mountain View and Palo Alto) Book signing with Alicia A. Smith at Books Inc. Mountain View (Aug. 28); storytime with Stephanie Lucianovic at Books Inc. Palo Alto (Oct. 3). Online author events include: City Arts & Lectures presents Joy Harjo and Rita Dove (Aug. 29); storytime with Rajani LaKocca (Sept. 4); Jennifer Lynn Alvarez (Sept. 7); City Arts & Lectures presents Colson Whitehead (Sept. 17); Katy Rose Pool in conversation with Amanda Foody (Sept. 21); Mary Rouch (Sept. 29); storytime and draw-along with Vi-kram Madan and Nicola Slater (Oct. 2); Maggie Tokuda-Hall and Lisa Sterle (Oct. 5). bookscnc.net.

Fox Theatre Speaker Series Malala Yousafzai (Oct. 28); Jason Alexander (Nov. 18). foxwve.com.

Mountain View Library Online events include: NASA’s free-flying robots (Sept. 16); Rise and Fall of the Dinosaurs (Sept. 25); Author talk with Marjorie Liu (Sept. 30). mountainviewlibrary.org.


Santa Clara County libraries Online events include: Takes on Shakes (Sept. 11); Kristy Shen and Bryce Leung, “Quit Like a Millionaire” (Oct. 2). sclib sublicommuns.com.

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


Author Colson Whitehead appears in an online talk Sept. 17 presented by Books Inc. and City Arts and Lectures.

In the spotlight: Kepler’s Literary Foundation hosts an online event for the family on Sept. 28 with Bay Area-based author Joanna Ho, who discusses her new picture book, “Playing at the Border: A Story of Yo-Yo Ma,” due to be published this fall. The book, with colorful illustrations by Teresa Martinez, tells the story of renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma and the concert he played in the spring of 2019 at the Texas-Mexico border, where he performed Bach’s cello suites.

He’s book explores the concert and Yo-Yo Ma’s aim of using music to build bridges across borders and time. Other online author events at Kepler’s include: Saumya Roy with Geeta Anand (Sept. 8); Literary Seminars: Fleishman Is In Trouble by Taffy Brodesser-Akner (Sept. 20 and 22); Max Chaifkin on Peter Thiel’s pursuit of power (Sept. 25); Story Time with Kevin Henkes (Oct. 7), keplers.org.
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Be it sweet, savory, spicy or sour (or a combination of the above), Cibele’s Ice Cream caters to just about any little craving you might have. The owners bring flavors from their Mexican hometowns to Menlo Park—“with a little bit of twist.”

“We had our traditional corn made with mayo, cheese and chile, but recently the kids have been adding Hot Cheetos on top,” said owner Selene Garcia. “We’ve tried to keep the tradition, but we want to hear what our customers would like to try.”

The eatery is a dream come true for Garcia and her business partner, Carlos Peòa. After emigrating from Mexico City and Michoacán respectively, the longtime family friends talked about their ambitions at the dinner table. They researched how to start a business, worked out how to combine their skill sets, saved up their earnings and took out a loan. They secured a space, and opened Cibele’s Ice Cream in the spring at 1199 Willow Road, near a laundromat and Back A Yard Caribbean Grill.

“That’s a good location because it brings a lot of people,” Garcia said. “We wanted to be (near) Facebook, where we could bring in new customers and different ethnicities, and at the same time be near people who were comfortable with our food and what we served. ... Our theme is what our culture is all about, and Hispanic heritage.”

It was a slow start at first, Garcia said. “It was a bit crazy, the pandemic was still going. We were like, ‘Is this going to work?’”

But with Garcia taking on social media and the lure of delicious treats fit for summer, customers began to find their way to them. “During the hot months, it’s been a strong time for us.”

It’s the first foray into the restaurant business for both Garcia and Peòa. Peòa previously worked at a grocery store and is now responsible for Cibele’s financials. Garcia recently graduated from college and worked as a nurse assistant. Now she focuses on Cibele’s presentation, decoration, contracts, permitting and distributor relationships.

This last part is especially key as they focus on getting fresh, natural ingredients for their ice creams. “There’s no artificial flavoring, no artificial coloring,” Garcia said. “If it’s mango, it’s actually made out of mangos.” Same goes for their other flavors: If it’s nanche, it’s made out of nanche. If it’s guava, it’s made out of guava.

Ice creams have been especially popular during the warm summer months, Garcia said, but fresas con crema is another specialty. There are also beautiful botanas (snacks) with a mix of fresh-cut fruit in a pineapple or watermelon, served with tangy chamoy sauce, crisp bites of jicama and a dash of spice. Hot crepes, fresh fruit juice and creamy banana splits are also available.

The Menlo Park shop offers a taste of what’s to come. Garcia said they hope to open other locations on the Peninsula. “We’re just starting, so everything is very small, but we have a very big image in mind,” Garcia said. “Literally, from scratch paper, it came to something real—actual place.”

Cibele’s Ice Cream, 1199 Willow Road, Menlo Park; 650-561-3225, Instagram: @cibelesicecream

Email Digital Associate Editor Sara Hayden at peninsulafoodist@paweekly.com.
We will definitely resubscribe and up our amount. You do an essential and superb job in really being ‘the glue’ of the mid-Peninsula. Special appreciation to your leader Bill Johnson, who has spent his life making this area and our lives better.

- Linda and Sid L.

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Vaccine trial (continued from page 5)

is part of a larger cohort of 130 children ranging in age from 6 months to 2 years who are participating in Stanford’s study. Currently, only children 12 and up are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine. The study has enrolled a little over 4,600 participants, with 101 sites across four countries, said research nurse Jamie Saxena, one of theourke working patients in the Stanford pediatric study. Pfizer is adding 2,250 children ages 5 to 11 to the study soon, Saxena said. Parents must make a two-year commitment to the trial. The kids are divided into three age groups: 5- to 11-year-olds; 2- to 5-year-olds; and those 6 months to 2 years old. Reporting from small samples, the efficacy of the mRNA vaccine on children can be turned to the FDA for emergency approval already, she said.

Phase 1 of the study, which began in mid-April at Stanford for the 6 months to 5 years age group, found the best vaccine dosage. Theo is in Phase 2/3, which started in mid-May, testing the vaccine’s efficacy. There’s a 1 in 3 chance Theo got the placebo instead of the vaccine. The study is unblinded for participants six months after they receive their first shot. At that time, they are offered the vaccine if they didn’t receive it already. For us, that will be in January.

If the FDA gives the vaccine emergency approval for the age 5 to 11 group, we’d like to protect our children.

Spots in the study at Stanford University School of Medicine were highly sought after. We applied in April. Over 3,000 families expressed interest in participating in the study and about 200 were randomly selected, according to a mid-May email sent out to applicants. I was seven months pregnant when the pandemic took hold in the U.S. I remember checking out at a grocery store, before I stopped going to them entirely in March 2020, with a menagerie of cleaning supplies and being warned that if I was being paranoid about COVID, I would have a paranoid baby. (At the time, we didn’t know COVID is airborne and mostly doesn’t spread by touching items.)

Hello. Help me protect him?” I cried to my mom on the phone one day, worried about the world I was bringing my tiny human into.

Since the delta variant took hold in the U.S. in early July, a startling number of children across the country have been hospitalized for COVID-19, with an increase of 30% the week of Aug. 9, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Rates are lower in California, where vaccination rates are higher than the rest of the country, masks are required in classrooms and unvaccinated teachers are regularly tested, according to the Los Angeles Times.

The risk from participating in the vaccine trial is much lower than that of being hospitalized with COVID-19, according to Dr. Jose Tan, a Stanford infectious disease specialist. “Adults have been receiving this vaccine for a year and adolescents have been as well,” she said. “Through all of the previous people who have received the vaccine, it’s shown that it’s safe and it’s shown that it’s effective.”

Theo’s pediatrician, Dr. Jefrey Tan, told me more parents are asking him about whether the vaccine might be approved for their young children. Parents are also wondering what activities they can resume if they’re vaccinated but their children aren’t.

“It’s a tough question to answer,” he said. “The under (kids) really are still at risk. In a crowded setting, a park or an airplane, there’s no way to tell them they’re at risk.”

He said he generally points parents to CDC guidelines.

Not every parent is eager to have their children vaccinated against COVID. Tan said some parents are always a little more hesitant about vaccines in general.

“It’s understandable because it’s a new vaccine,” he said. “The CDC recommends it because the benefit of the vaccine outweighs any risk that has been detected so far. Kids get sick from COVID; they do get hospitalized. ... We’re not out of the woods yet.”

A hiccup in the trial June 25 was marked on my calendar for Theo’s first shot. I got an early morning phone call that day saying his appointment was canceled. The concern? Hundreds of reports of heart inflammation in young adults. Pfizer put the study on hold while the company rewrote the consent form with a warning that myocarditis, inflammation of the heart muscle, and pericarditis, inflammation of the lining outside the heart, have occurred with some younger people who’ve received shots.

In both cases, the body’s immune system is causing inflammation in response to an infection or some other trigger. Symptoms can include chest pain, shortness of breath or palpitations, according to the CDC.

The severity of cases of myocarditis and pericarditis can vary. For the cases reported after mRNA COVID-19 vaccination, most who sought medical care responded well to medications and rest. There also tends to be a spike in illnesses that cause these same inflammatory
Saran Wrap and tiny needles

I pushed Theo in his stroller into the vaccine clinic on Welch Road for his first shot in the trial on a Tuesday morning in July, juggling all the things that accompany toddlers — snacks, toys and milk. The initial visit was set to last between two and three hours but ended up taking about three and a half hours.

I reviewed the consent forms with a researcher, then they measured Theo’s height, weight and blood pressure. They loaded $100 on a debit card as compensation for taking part in the study and said they’d add $5 for each electronic diary entry on his symptoms we completed.

They also swabbed his nose to take a COVID-19 test. Lots of kicking and trying to grab the swab ensued.

It was difficult for me to watch the blood draw to check for COVID-19 antibodies. He wore numbing Emla cream covered with Saran Wrap — so he couldn’t rub it off — for about 30 minutes beforehand. His tiny arm was bruised for about a week after, but it didn’t look awful.

The hardest part of the appointment was waiting for the shot to arrive. Theo grew bored and wanted to wander the halls, but the vaccine was delayed from the pharmacy and it has to thaw once it arrives. The needle was so small! Children under 2 in the trial receive 3 micrograms of the vaccine, while 5- to 12-year-olds receive 10 micrograms. The adult dose is 30 micrograms.

After the shot we went out to the playground while we waited 30 minutes to see if he had any adverse reactions. He didn’t have any then, or for the following week, which lines up with what clinicians are seeing in other children under 2 in the study, a little extra tiredness and irritability, but no fevers, Saxena said.

For the next week, every evening we logged his temperature, indicated if he had any injection site redness, rash, tenderness, fatigue and other symptoms in the “TrialMax” app. Every week, we update whether he’s shown any symptoms of COVID-19.

They also sent us home with an at-home COVID-19 test that I can use if he has any virus symptoms.

The second visit

The next visit in early August was thankfully much shorter — an hour total.

It was similar to the first one, but without the blood draw. Again, we waited 30 minutes to see if he had any symptoms from the shot and then left.

He had a very slight fever of about 100 degrees after the second shot, but nothing more.

In September we’ll have a phone check-in about how Theo is doing. He will also have another antibodies test.

‘Making history’

I’m excited to tell Theo when he’s older about his participation. It’s one way we can show that we’re making history; clinicians are seeing in other antibody tests.

Saxena told me it’s an “incredible honor” for her to be part of Pfizer’s pediatric study.

“As a clinician, you always read research articles and I always thought of them as being the guiding principles for medicine,” she said. “People who do clinical trials are the experts in the field. To be literally leading a trial the entire U.S. has their eyes on, to me feels like I’m part of one of the most important things going on in the U.S. right now,” adding that it would probably be the apex of her career.

“I still have no idea how I got so lucky to be part of this,” she said. “The kids that are in the study are really making history; without their participation, they would not have data to bring to the FDA. The kids are really moving medicine forward and helping to control COVID-19 in the pediatric population.”

As parents we make endless choices for our children — use cloth diapers or disposable? Formula or breast milk? Sleep training or not? We make the best decisions we can with the information we have on hand, evaluating risk along with our children’s safety and happiness. You come to realize as a parent there’s only so much you can control. I hope Theo received the vaccine, rather than the placebo. There’s only so much you can control. I hope Theo received the vaccine, rather than the placebo.

For more on the trial, go to covidvaccinestudy.com/pediatric-study.

Email Staff Writer Angela Swartz at aswartz@almancenews.com.
The hybrid, which would create earthen berms for trains, is also relatively unpopular. Mayor Tom DuBois was one of several council members who proposed eliminating the hybrid along with the viaduct, though his colleagues generally agreed to keep it on the list, citing the uncertainties swirling around all the other options.

By a 6-1 vote, the council agreed to eliminate the viaduct and to direct city staff to further refine the underpass alternative, with the goal of addressing its shortcomings when it comes to traffic circulation. The council also directed staff to move ahead with a geotechnical study for the trench option, a step that city staff noted usually occurs later in the design process. Council member Alison Cunningham, the sole dissenter, suggested that it’s premature to eliminate the viaduct, an option that she noted appears to fulfill many of the objectives that the council had adopted for its multiyear planning process on grade separations.

For the council, the Monday action represents a rare step forward in the multiyear process of winnowing down its grade separation options. In recent years, the council has consistently failed to meet its approved deadlines for selecting preferred alternatives for the city’s four grade crossings: Palo Alto Avenue, Churchill Avenue, Meadow and Charleston. The Expanded Community Advisory Panel (XCAP), a citizens group that the council appointed to aid it in the selection process, had recommended closing Churchill to cars. Palo Alto Avenue will be explored as part of a broader downtown plan.

The two southern crossings, meanwhile, have befuddled both the citizens panel and the council. The committee could not reach consensus on which alternatives to support for Charleston and Meadow, with none of them mustering more than three votes. They only agreed on gathering more information before endorsing any option. The XCAP report noted that every alternative has negatives and that there was “no enthusiasm for any particular one.”

“While neighborhood opposition to the above ground solutions — the hybrid and the viaduct — was vociferous and near unanimous, there was also recognition that every day, we need to get a bike and pedestrian plan in place early, before we proceed and potentially shut down major pieces of the current bike and pedestrian infrastructure for a period of multiple years while construction goes on,” Filseth said.

The city’s effort to redesign the tracks, which began roughly a decade ago and has proceeded in fits and starts, aims to both improve safety along the tracks and to address the long traffic delays that are projected to occur on and around Alma once Caltrain completes its effort to electrify its train service and adds more trains to its fleet.

The effort received a boost with the passage of Measure B in 2016. The Santa Clara County tax measure dedicated $700 million for grade separation in Palo Alto, Mountain View and Sunnyvale. The three cities recently agreed to split the amount based on the number of rail crossings in each jurisdiction. Palo Alto, which has four crossings, would get half of the total sum under the agreement, while Mountain View and Sunnyvale, which have two crossings, would each get 25%.

In addition to removing the viaduct from consideration, the council agreed that the city should advance bike projects, including an underpass near Loma Verde, that would allow bicyclists to cross the tracks during the extensive construction period.

Vice Mayor Pat Burt and council member Eric Filseth both said they would support moving ahead with bike improvements in advance of the broader grade separation project.

“With half of our kids biking to school

(continued from page 5)

would require more property seizures than the other alternatives and it entails a host of new turning restrictions from Meadow, Charleston, Park Boulevard and Alma Street, including elimination of through traffic on Park Boulevard near East Meadow.

To accommodate vehicular traffic, the design for the underpass calls for a roundabout with two lanes on East Charleston Road, west of Mumford Place.

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“With half of our kids biking to school

(continued on page 33)
School (continued from page 5)

that we’re going to mirror our local case rates, so we’re going to have some cases.”

In one case, Palo Alto quarantined an entire special education class because not all of its students were able to wear masks. MVLA has had some students quarantine after taking part in an unmasked outdoor activity on campus with a student who tested positive.

When it comes to determining whether the virus was transmitted on campus, Austin said it can be difficult to tell. If two students in the same class contract COVID-19 but also spend time together after school or on weekends, it’s not clear where the transmission occurred.

For local districts, the state protocols for when someone tests positive also have presented a challenge: Regulations are complex and depend on a variety of factors, including a student’s vaccination status, mask use and symptoms. School districts have at times hit snags as they try to implement the health rules, which have changed substantially since last school year. And some parents report there’s been confusion and frustration as they’ve tried to abide by the detailed requirements.

‘It’s worth the effort. That being said, it is an incredible amount of tracking.’
— Leyla Benson, MVLA associate superintendent

In the past, whole classes generally had to quarantine when a student tested positive. This year, kids who come into close contact with a positive case can typically continue to attend school, regardless of vaccination status, so long as they don’t have any symptoms, meet testing requirements and everyone was wearing masks at the time of exposure. Unvaccinated students face an extra restriction of not being allowed to participate in extracurricular activities for seven to 10 days.

Others were more hesitant to abandon the hybrid, which is the cheapest option on the table, with an estimated cost ranging from $190 million to $230 million (the underpass would cost between $340 million and $420 million). Cormack and filese both suggested that given its comparatively low costs — and the many unanswered questions pertaining to the other options — eliminating the hybrid would be premature.

FILE PHOTO

MVLA Associate Superintendent Leyla Benson, who is spearheading the district’s COVID-19 tracking efforts, said she supports the new guidance because it allows students to keep learning in person.

“It’s worth the effort,” Benson said. “That being said, it is an incredible amount of tracking to identify the close contacts, identify their status, get the test results and check that they have tested in the cadence that’s required.”

The guidelines for positive cases aren’t the only thing that has changed this school year. There are no longer rules for socially distancing students in classrooms, so class sizes no longer have to be reduced.

While the state only requires that masks are worn indoors at schools, some districts are opting to require outdoor masking for grades K-8, including Mountain View Whisman, Los Altos and Palo Alto Unified, which rolled out an outdoor masking requirement on Aug. 20.

Only students ages 12 and up are currently required to be vaccinated, leaving the vast majority of local elementary schoolers unvaccinated.

Identifying cases
When Rodriguez got the Vargas exposure notification, she was particularly upset because her daughter told her that there was a student in class that day who had been coughing and sneezing. Privacy laws preclude districts from identifying which students test positive, but Rodriguez said the student who appeared sick didn’t show up for school on the following day.

“There needs to be accountability and responsibility as parents during this school year,” Rodriguez said, adding that she felt the district handled sending out the exposure notices well.

In some cases, there have been kinks in rolling out the new exposure protocols. When MVLA first notified families about a positive case earlier this month, the district told parents that all students needed to be tested twice and couldn’t participate in extracurricular activities.

However, Santa Clara County guidelines state that vaccinated students only need to be tested once, five days after exposure, and are able to participate in extracurriculars if asymptomatic. Unvaccinated students do need two tests (one immediately and one on the fifth day) to be able to attend classes and may not participate in extracurriculars. The unvaccinated student and the person who tested positive also must both have been masked at the time of the encounter for the unvaccinated student to be allowed to attend classes.

According to Benson, district officials had only just been trained on the new guidelines when they sent out the exposure email, and the workflow on the county’s website didn’t reflect the updated rules, leading to the miscommunication with parents.

(Rodriguez) also didn’t have a way for families to submit their COVID-19 test results to the district until last week.

Getting tested
Nancy Pannikkat is among the parents who received the exposure notification on Saturday and getting a second opinion on the potential cost of this alternative. The council adopted her suggestion by a 6-1 vote, with Cormack dissenting.

“At this time, it is necessary to find ways to make sure that operations do work,” Kou said. “If a trench is the way to work and cost is the only thing that’s standing in the way, and there are questions about the costs presented to us, we should have a second opinion on that.”

Email Staff Writer Gennyh Sheyney at gsheyney@paweekly.com.

News Digest

Downtown Streets Team settles lawsuit
A class-action lawsuit filed by a former employee against downtown Streets Team for nonpayment of wages was preliminarily settled on June 25 for $170,000, according to court documents filed in San Francisco Superior Court. A final settlement could be decided by the court in Sept.

The nonprofit corporation runs the Downtown Streets Team, which provides street cleaning services in Palo Alto and other Bay Area cities to help uplift homeless and low-wage workers to find employment and housing.

Jacyln Epter, a former employment specialist at the nonprofit, filed the class-action lawsuit in December 2019 on behalf of herself and other employment specialists and case managers. The legal action alleged wage theft or wage abuse for nonpayment of overtime, break and lunch-time compensation and late payment of wages after termination or resignation between Oct. 11, 2015, and March 31, 2020.

Epter is represented by the law firm Advocates for Worker Rights LLP.

An estimated 72 employees were affected by the pay disparities, according to the settlement agreement.

The allegations claimed millions of dollars in losses, Downtown Streets Team board member Owen Byrd said by phone on Wednesday. The $170,000 settlement was therefore a good one, he said.

No public agency funds are being used to pay the settlement, including any from Palo Alto, he added. “The settlement money was raised from private donors,” he said.

— Sue Dremann

Assembly approves bill that allows denser housing
A contentious bill that allows cities to enact zoning changes to enable construction of 10-unit housing developments in transit-rich and urban-infill areas cleared a critical hurdle Monday afternoon, when the state Assembly voted to approve it.

With a 44-42 vote, the Assembly gave a significant boost to Senate Bill 10, which was authored by state Sen. Scott Wiener, D-San Francisco, and which had already cleared the state Senate. The Monday vote allows for a final “concurrence” vote by the Senate before the legislation moves to the governor.

The bill needed 41 votes to get through the Assembly. Assembly member Mark Berman, D-Menlo Park, was among the 44 legislators who voted in favor of the bill.

Housing advocates have characterized the bill as a critical step toward combating “exclusionary zoning” and making it easier for cities to build much-needed housing. Assembly member David Chiu, D-San Francisco, who introduced the bill on the Assembly floor, noted that the legislation allows cities to simply ignore opponents of the bill, including citizen groups such as United Neighbors and Livable California, have criticized it as a major legislative overreach. Numerous cities, including Palo Alto, also have taken a position against the bill.

— Gennyh Sheyney

CEO to plead guilty in admissions scam
A Huffington Post reporter and the CEO of a California liquor distribution company has agreed to plead guilty to a conspiracy charge for fraudulently securing her son’s admission to the University of Southern California.

Marc Palatteia, 66, CEO of International Beverage in Burlingame and co-owner of Kentucky-based Preservation Distillery with her husband, former San Francisco 49ers linebacker Lou Palatteia, plans to plead guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit honest services mail fraud, the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Massachusetts announced Tuesday. No date has been set for her sentencing hearing.

Palatteia arranged with college placement test consultant William “Rick” Singer and others to pay $500,000 to get her son admitted to USC as a football recruit. He was not actually being considered and didn’t have a football scholarship, according to the indictment. She faced charges of conspiracy to commit mail fraud and honest services wire fraud.

Prosecution attorneys Palatteia also agreed during a 2018 phone call with Singer to mislead the IRS if anyone inquired about the payments, according to the indictment. She faced charges of conspiracy to commit mail fraud and honest services wire fraud; conspiracy to commit federal programs bribery; and conspiracy to commit money laundering.

Palatteia has agreed to a six-week prison sentence, a $250,000 fine and two years of supervised release.

She will be the 33rd parent to plead guilty in a case that involved 57 people, including athletics coaches, admissions-test monitors and others who sought end runs around the college-acceptance process for their children.

— Sue Dremann
Masks required outdoors at Palo Alto’s K-8 public schools

Elementary and middle schoolers began wearing face coverings outside this week

By Zoe Morgan

Parents walk their child into JL Stanford Middle School on the first day of school.

Students may only take a break from masking outside if they are at least 6 feet away from everyone else. According to Austin, the calculus is different at the high school level, where students are “largely” already vaccinated. Currently, anyone ages 12 and older is eligible to get the shot. Fully vaccinated students who get exposed to COVID-19 are allowed to remain on campus, so long as they have no symptoms, without school staff having to determine if masks were worn at the time of exposure.

Palo Alto’s decision to require masks outside for elementary and middle schoolers follows in the footsteps of some local K-8 districts, including Mountain View Whisman and Los Altos. Parents also had reached out to the district to encourage Palo Alto to require masks outdoors, Austin said, adding that, at a meeting on Aug. 20, all the school principals supported the change.

He acknowledged that some people may have trouble with the mandate, given many other outdoor activities don’t require a face covering.

“For some people, they are struggling with the contradic-
tion that you can walk through downtown Palo Alto and see people walking outdoors with-
out a mask in no violation. You can see people eating indoors without a violation. And yet in schools you can’t play kickball without a mask,” Austin said.

However, in the end the district decided to move forward with the rule because it would simplify contact tracing protocols, was supported by principals and aligns with nearby districts, he said.

“If this helps us to keep our doors open for the great things we’re seeing in classrooms, then it was worth it,” Austin said. ■

Email Staff Writer Zoe Morgan at zmorgan@paweekly.com.
Across
1 The “T” of MIT, briefly
5 Close friend
8 Lumps of dirt
13 Cream-filled Hostess cake
14 2016 Olympics locale
15 Bucks
16 Question presented by Jimmy Carr that starts “If you could change ...”, part 1
18 Grandmother, in Guatemala
19 Question, part 2
21 Daily news sources, still
23 Traveling through
24 Back muscle, for short
25 Crossword constructions
26 Singer ___ Lipa
28 Rap duo Kris ___
30 Plea at sea
31 Comedian’s asset
32 Kung ___ beef
33 Question, part 2
34 Earlier
35 1989 Jack Nicholson role
36 “Back to the Future” actress Thompson
37 Canadian-born hockey legend
38 “Switch” attachment
41冗 overflow from Sean Lock, part 1
42 South American slitherer
43 “Finding Dory” actor Willem
46 “CSI” evidence
47 Hindu title of respect
49 Cockney’s residence?
50 Improvise with the band
52 Rocky’s surname
53 Pithy response from Sean Lock, part 1
54 “1917” backdrop
55 “Unexpected ____ in bagging area”
56 Home of Xenia, Youngstown, and Zanesville
59 “Boyz N the Hood” actress Long
60 Demolition compound
61 Joined (up)
62 ___ d’oeuvres
64 Insult from Bob and Doug McKenzie
65 Holstein sound
66 “Curses, foiled again!”

Down
1 Despite, in poetry
2 Long, long, long time
3 Not too hard on the wallet
4 Place with a lot of activity
5 Hybrid hatchback
6 It just isn’t... “Isn’t”
7 Sluggish
8 2018 series spun off from “The Karate Kid”
9 Reed and Bega, for two
10 Palindromically titled 1976 album with “Evil Woman”
11 Southfork Ranch setting
12 Elevator passageways
15 The Rock, in “Moana”
17 d’oeuvres
20 IVF eggs
21 Family-friendly film ratings
22 Three in ___ (tic-tac-toe win)
26 Metal singer Ronnie James ___
27 Mid-road maneuver
29 Go bad
31 “1917” backdrop
32 Adobe file format
34 Earlier
35 1989 Jack Nicholson role
36 “Back to the Future” actress Thompson
37 Canadian-born hockey legend
38 “Switch” attachment
42 South American slitherer
43 “___ that what you will”
44 Painter Modigliani
45 “___ that were in the mood” (“Vogue” line)
46 Driver’s lic. issuer
47 Big name in chemicals (and audio tapes and floppy disks, once)
48 Activist lawyer Gloria
51 Danny Pudi’s character on “Community”
52 It’s good in Puerto Rico
54 Zest of ___
55 “Unexpected ____ in bagging area”
56 Home of Xenia, Youngstown, and Zanesville
59 “Boyz N the Hood” actress Long
60 Demolition compound

This week’s SUDOKU

Answers on page 12.
Fine craftsmanship and thoughtful space-planning are the hallmarks of this extraordinary 5 bedroom/5.5 bath home. Custom architectural details including open-beam ceilings, moldings and hardwood floors can be found throughout.

Elegant leaded-glass panels flank the oversized front door that opens into a welcoming foyer and formal dining and living rooms. A gourmet kitchen bridges the spacious formal and informal areas, while a double-sided stone fireplace anchors the expansive family and rec rooms. With 2 bedrooms and a shared bath on the main level, plus 4 bedrooms and 3 baths on the upper level, there is plenty of space for sleeping, working, studying and relaxation.

An inviting outdoor setting - grilling/dining and lounging areas, pool/spa, lush gardens and koi pond - surrounds the house.

With abundant amenities and an open floorplan, this home is a beautiful yet comfortable environment. No detail was overlooked! From family living to gracious entertaining, this property is perfectly suited to fulfill its next family’s dreams.

Living Area of Main House: 4,877 Sq. Ft. *
Living Area of Guest Quarters: 441.4 Sq. Ft. *
Lot Size: 26,515 Sq. Ft. **

(*Per Appraiser Kimberly Townsend, unverified | **Per County Records, unverified)

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