CRISIS AT THE KENNELS

WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON WITH PETS IN NEED

Upfront Jackie Speier’s retirement leaves political opening
Upfront Public school enrollment continues to shrink
Title Pages Councilman releases ‘people-fying’ poetry
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We’ve shared an historic journey together since March 2020. As we all learn to live with COVID-19, aging seniors are still most affected, and the challenges are now much larger in scope for our diverse senior community.

Peninsula Volunteers, Inc.’s vital services for seniors are more critical now than ever. The pandemic’s disproportionate impact on older adults has led to more widespread loneliness, isolation and health vulnerabilities. Hunger has more than tripled in Bay Area counties, jeopardizing the health and well-being of older adults. Now nearly 1 in six seniors is facing hunger risk and cannot cover the cost of basic needs.

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You have been with us every step of the way. Because of you, we extended our reach during the pandemic, preparing and home delivering almost 288,000 nutritious Meals on Wheels from our Menlo Park kitchen, placing over 47,500 wellness care calls and visits, holding 12,462 combined virtual and in person sessions with active seniors and with Alzheimer’s clients to engage in exercise and stimulating learning activities, providing 4,093 transportation rides for medical and grocery needs and 23,750 volunteer hours. We continue to partner with local companies and restaurants to secure additional meals for those in need and continue to envision new and better ways to expand our support for our senior community in the new environment.

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* A $500 donation will support one month of daily Meals on Wheels for two seniors; or full services for a week at Rosener House for an adult with Alzheimer’s; or sixteen 30-minute personal training sessions at Little House; or 100 transportation rides at the subsidized rate.

VISIT US ONLINE TO READ THE STORIES OF LOCAL SENIORS LIKE NORMA, WESLEY, AND ANNETTE

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For nearly 75 years, Peninsula Volunteers, Inc., a duly recognized 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization, has enabled seniors to age in place, driven by a profound legacy of caring and our core values of respect, commitment, trust, dedication, and compassion. Our essential programs serve over 6,000 Peninsula households and address the most pressing issues of aging adults by offering critical services to sustain their daily physical, nutritional, emotional, and mental health while achieving dignity and independence in their lives. PVI’s innovative programs: Nutrition Services/Meals on Wheels; Adult Day Services at Rosener House; Health, Wellness and Lifetime Enrichments offerings at Little House; and on-demand Transportation Services at Little House., the Roslyn G. Morris Activity Center.
Pets in Need ends city contract, exec to resign

Beleaguered animal services organization also plans to end its operation of the city’s animal shelter in a year

By Sue Dremann and Gennady Sheyner

A l Mollica, the executive director of Pets in Need, will resign from his position, the organization said in an email on Thursday. Mollica and the organization’s board of directors are still discussing the date he will leave and a plan of succession, the email said.

The announcement is the latest bombshell dropped this week related to the Aug. 2 deaths of seven puppies in an overheated van. On Monday, Pets in Need, the city of Palo Alto’s animal services contractor, announced in a fiery letter that it is ending its contract with the city, alleging the city has breached its agreement with the nonprofit.

The 55-year-old nonprofit organization itself has come under harsh criticism since police announced the citations of three employees in the deaths of seven puppies. Twenty other dogs in the same van became overheated during transport from the Central Valley to Palo Alto on Aug. 2. The three employees were charged with failure to give proper care and attention to an animal and inhumane transportation of an animal by the Santa Clara County District Attorney’s Office on Oct. 26.

A police investigative report found that 27 dogs transported from other shelters in the Central Valley for housing and potential adoption were packed into a poorly ventilated and improperly cooled van. The animals were not given water. Many of the dogs were panting and in distress by the time they arrived at the Palo Alto shelter, according to the police report. They had traveled in 90-plus degree heat for at least four hours.

Multiple board-certified veterinarians, including none working for the nonprofit, have said the dogs likely died of heat stroke, asphyxia or multiple causes. The nonprofit is not being charged.
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Nominees should be 65+ and live on the mid-Peninsula. You will find the nomination form for the Avenidas Lifetimes of Achievement Award at www.avenidas.org.

Contact mdavis@avenidas.org for more information.

The deadline for a complete nomination is November 30th. Mail to Avenidas
450 Bryant Street, Palo Alto

Avenidas
PUBLIC HEALTH

Dr. Sara Cody: COVID-19 could be with us indefinitely

It’s likely people will need periodic booster shots in the future, Santa Clara County health officer says

By Sue Dremann

Santa Clara County Health Officer Dr. Sara Cody explains a new county health order during a press conference in San Jose on July 2, 2020.

Cody also clarified how transmissible the virus is among children. Discussing the recent Food and Drug Administration approval of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for children ages 5 to 11, Cody cautioned that it’s a misconception to think children aren’t susceptible to getting COVID-19.

Part of the confusion for parents stems from changing viewpoints as researchers learn more about the virus.

Health officials initially thought COVID-19 would spread much like the flu, starting with children who would then pass it to adults. Later, they believed children were less likely to catch the virus.

“Now it looks like kids are just as likely to get infected as adults,” Cody said.

Nationwide there have been nearly 2 million cases among children. More than 8,000 children have been hospitalized, with one-third needing intensive care. At least 94 children have died.

Are children less susceptible?

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The trend toward microtransit

Palo Alto hopes to start an on-demand, ‘microtransit’ program, much like the ones in other cities such as Cupertino’s Via-Cupertino, which launched in 2019.

The trend in microtransit

Palo Alto isn’t the only Santa Clara County city moving toward on-demand shuttles. Milpitas has recently received a VTA grant to move ahead with an 18-month program called Milpitas OnDemand, which it plans to roll out in partnership with the consulting firm RideCo. According to a report that city staff released last month, the program would charge $2.50 per ride and is expected to see about 120 daily riders within six months of the rollout.

Much like the Palo Alto program, the one in Milpitas is receiving funding from the VTA grant. When the council voted last month to accept $500,000 contribution of local funds, Office of Transportation staff believe the program could support about 500 daily riders, which would exceed the usage of the now-defunct Embarcadero and Crotstown shuttles.

According to the council’s final report from the city’s Office of Transportation, demand shuttle programs that offer on-demand pickup and drop-off locations will be scattered throughout the city and outside of the city’s borders, having the potential to serve a wide variety of riders, from working adults, in which 71% of respondents expressed concerns about vehicle sanitation when riding public transit. A pre-booked seat on a small shuttle, the company maintains, could be a good alternative for riders who are not ready to board a bus full of people.

The company also noted that microtransit systems allow cities to go to “geo-fence” regions that are underserved by public transportation to create an on-demand ride-hailing service specifically for those communities.

“Riders who live more than a mile away from a fixed-route stop could rely on an on-demand microtransit service to pick them up and take them to the nearest stop,” the TransLoc article states. “By acting as a feeder to fixed-route services, transit agencies will access a larger percentage of the population. That means more riders, fewer empty buses, and greater community engagement.”

Getting the program up and running

Palo Alto’s program cleared its first procedural hurdle on Nov. 8, when the council voted to accept the VTA grant, which requires a $500,000 contribution of local funds. Office of Transportation staff believe the program could support about 500 daily riders, which would exceed the usage of the now-defunct Embarcadero and Crotstown shuttles.

According to the staff, the two shuttle services had a combined daily ridership of 418 and 364 in

TRANSPORTATION

City gets $2M to launch on-demand shuttles

New ‘microtransit’ program gets boost from Santa Clara County’s Measure B

By Gennady Sheyner

When Palo Alto leaders made steep budget cuts last year in response to plummeting revenues, the public shuttles that cruised around town were among the first things to go.

With little debate, the City Council voted in May 2020 to halt the 20-year-old Palo Alto Shuttle program, which was designed to serve local students, seniors, Caltrain commuters and others seeking to get around town without an automobile. Though the move saved the city about $500,000 in annual costs, the elimination of the Embarcadero and Crotstown shuttles also took away a key transit option for hundreds of residents — one that has yet to be restored.

Now, the city is getting ready for a new shuttle program that will bear little resemblance to the one that was left behind. Rather than relying on fixed routes and set schedules, the small shuttles will run on demand and cover all parts of Palo Alto. Pick-up and drop-off locations will be scattered throughout the city and rides will be arranged through a phone app. For those who require assistance, door-to-door service will be provided, according to a report from the city’s Office of Transportation.

Fueled by a $2 million grant from the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), the city is preparing to make a move into the “microtransit” arena next summer, with the goal of having the new shuttles hit the streets before the 2022 school year.

Chief Transportation Official Philip Kamhi said last month at a meeting of the council’s Finance Committee.

Having received funding through Measure B, the 2016 tax measure, Palo Alto’s next challenge will be finding a vendor to run the service, which Kamhi suggested could be a challenge given the ongoing constraints in the labor supply.

“Frankly, it’s hitting transit hard around town and outside of the city, including to the Sunnyvale Caltrain station and Rancho San Antonio Preserve. Known as Via-Cupertino, the program charges $4 per ride, or $2 for seniors, students, low-income residents or individuals with disabilities. Much like in the proposed Palo Alto microtransit programs, riders use their phones to arrange pickups.

The trend toward microtransit alternatives goes well beyond the Peninsula, with Sacramento and Napa among California cities to recently launch the new services. According to TransLoc, a subsidiary of Ford Mobility that focuses on microtransit solutions, programs that offer on-demand shuttles help improve accessibility, flexibility and safety. An October blog post from TransLoc cites a July survey of 1,200 working adults, in which 71% of respondents expressed concerns about vehicle sanitation when riding public transit.

(continued on page 21)
School’s dwindling size causes district to propose enrollment lottery

Palo Alto Unified is considering running an intra-district lottery for Fletcher Middle School next school year

By Zoe Morgan

With the student body at Ellen Fletcher Middle School shrinking by over 30% since 2015, the Palo Alto Unified School District is considering offering families throughout the district the opportunity for their children to attend the school next fall.

Superintendent Don Austin presented a proposal to the district’s Board of Education on Tuesday that called for creating an intra-district lottery to attend Fletcher for the 2022-2023 school year. The lottery would allow families who live within the Palo Alto district’s boundaries, but who aren’t zoned for Fletcher, to apply to switch their children into the school.

The district’s board was receptive to the proposal, although no formal vote was taken. District staff are expected to return at a future board meeting with a more detailed plan.

Fletcher is substantially smaller than either of the district’s other middle schools, sitting at roughly half the size of Jane Lathrop Stanford Middle School. According to enrollment data that the district collected last month, Fletcher has 502 students this year, compared to 820 at Frank S. Green Jr. Middle School and 979 at JLS.

Austin said that the board plan is to propose doing a “controlled” lottery next fall as a starting point, with the potential to take additional actions to shore up the school’s population in future years.

“It would have little or no downside that we could come up with, except with the acknowledgement that it may not be enough for long term sustainability,” Austin said.

The exact size of the lottery hasn’t yet been finalized, but Austin told the board that he wants to move towards having 600 students attend Fletcher. In an interview after the meeting, Austin said that he doesn’t expect to reach 600 next year, but that it’s a longer term goal.

“If we were in the ballpark of 550 next year, I’d be very happy,” Austin said.

At this point, Austin said Fletcher is approaching the size of a large elementary school.

“There’s no denying that it’s a problem that needs our attention,” Austin said.

After speaking with school staff, he said that the district is proposing doing a “controlled” lottery for Fletcher because they prefer a smaller school.

“I think that starting (with a lottery) is a great idea that gives families who are interested in this option the chance to pick it,” DiBrienza said.

Other board members were similarly supportive of the proposal. Board member Collin Rag said she saw no downside in trying a lottery but asked whether the district plans to take additional steps if the lottery doesn’t yield enough new students.

Austin said that the district doesn’t plan to take any action beyond a lottery in time for next school year because it would be too rushed, but it would instead look into possible options for future years.

Email Staff Writer Zoe Morgan at zmorgan@paweekly.com.


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Wednesday, Dec. 1
10:00 a.m.
Jack Holder’s Restaurant
3153 Meridian Ave.
Suite 20
San Jose, CA 95124

COMMUNITY MEETING
Thursday, Dec. 2
2:00 p.m.
Oshman Family JCC
3921 Fabian Way
Pavilion Room, Bldg. C, 1st Floor
Palo Alto, CA 94303

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Tuesday, Nov. 30
10:00 a.m.
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Upfront

EDUCATION

Social studies teacher Nicole Bliss speaks with her seventh grade students at Ellen Fletcher Middle School in Palo Alto on Nov. 17.
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Sophisticated in design this 3 bed/2.5 bath contemporary home blends the best of urban living with the charm of North Palo Alto. The main floor features a sensational great room with space for living and dining, as well as an exquisitely appointed kitchen for the home chef, anchored by a marble island, Thermador appliances, and sleek full-height cabinetry.

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Offered at $3,200,000
Living Area: 2,223 Sq. Ft.*
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Offered at: $3,200,000
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Lot Size: 3,541 Square Foot Lot*
*Per County records, unverified
Public school enrollment plunges for second year in a row

By Zoe Morgan and Angela Swartz

School administrators attribute enrollment decreases in part to families moving out of the area because of skyrocketing housing costs, now that many parents can work remotely, and students choosing to attend charter schools. The 2020 U.S. census also shows the number of young people on the Midpeninsula is shrinking, even as the overall population grows.

Because most Midpeninsula school districts are funded primarily with local property taxes, rather than based on the number of students, the enrollment decline doesn’t translate into less money for these districts. As long as property tax revenue doesn’t decline, districts will end up with more money for each remaining student.

Palo Alto Unified School District

The Palo Alto Unified School District saw its enrollment drop by nearly 1,000 students last school year over the prior fall, and then by another roughly 275 this fall. The school district currently has 10,476 pupils.

Before the pandemic, the district was seeing its numbers dip more slowly. Palo Alto saw 2.1% declines in enrollment in each of the past two years preceding the pandemic.

As with many districts, Palo Alto’s enrollment plunged last fall, declining 8.4%. Superintendent Don Austin said that although many districts expected to see a rebound this fall, he took a more conservative approach and thought it was likely to stay flat. Instead, enrollment dropped another 2.6%.

“I did not expect a big rebound, but yeah, it was a little bit of a surprise that we were down again,” Austin said.

The decline in Palo Alto’s student body is more pronounced in private school enrollment figures for Midpeninsula school districts. Although schools have generally seen enrollment decline in recent years, the pandemic dramatically accelerated that trend in many districts.

California public school districts collect enrollment data every October. Because the state hasn’t released final numbers for this school year, the 2021–22 data was self-reported by school districts to theWeekly and the Almanac to examine eight years’ worth of enrollment figures for Midpeninsula school districts. Although schools have generally seen enrollment decline in recent years, the pandemic dramatically accelerated that trend in many districts.

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E ach year the Palo Alto Weekly Holiday Fund raises money to support programs serving families and children in the Palo Alto area. Since the Weekly and the Silicon Valley Community Foundation cover all the administrative costs, every dollar raised goes directly to support community programs through grants to non-profit organizations.

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$20,000

East Palo Alto Kids Foundation

$15,000

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$10,000

YMCA East Palo Alto Branch

$10,000

Fresh Approach

$10,000

Hidden Villa

$10,000

Reading Partners

$10,000

Rise Together Education

$10,000

Peninsula Volunteers

$10,000

Adolescent Counseling Services

$7,500

East Palo Alto Academy Foundation

$7,500

Learning Home Volunteers

$7,500

Learn in Peace

$7,500

Midpeninsula Community Media Center

$7,500

Peninsula Healthcare Connection

$7,500

Women’s TV

$7,500

Acknowledgement Alliance

$5,000

Act in Action

$5,000

Art of Yoga

$5,000

Bay Area Friendship Circle

$5,000

All Five

$5,000

Bayshore Christian Ministries

$5,000

Big Brothers Big Sisters

$5,000

CASA of San Mateo County

$5,000

Canopy

$5,000

Environmental/Volunteer

$5,000

Family Connections

$5,000

Gifts To Women

$5,000

Music in the Schools Foundation

$5,000

Musiklegend

$5,000

Monterey County Educational Center

$5,000

Palo Alto Art Center Foundation

$5,000

Palo Alto Chamber Orchestra

$5,000

Palo Alto Players

$5,000

Rich May Foundation

$5,000

Silicon Valley Bicycle Exchange

$5,000

East Palo Alto Library

$5,000

Street Life Ministries

$5,000

ThesauriWorks

$5,000

Vista Center for Blind & Visually Impaired

$5,000

Fit Kids Foundation

$5,000

Friends of Asian Museum & Zoo

$5,000

Herban Health

$5,000

Jasper Ridge Farm

$5,000

Kearfott School Project

$5,000

Magical Bridge Foundation

$5,000

Marine Science Institute

$5,000

Palo Alto Music Connection

$5,000

My New Red Shoes

$5,000

PAirt

$5,000

East Palo Alto Library

$5,000

Peninsula Bridge Program

$5,000

Rebuilding Together Peninsula

$5,000

Rosario Renda Center

$5,000

Silicon Valley Urban Debate League

$5,000

St. Francis of Assisi Youth Club

$5,000

Christmas Bureau

$3,500

Friends of Youth

$3,000

Blossom Birth

$2,500

Pets in Need

$2,500

Child Care Grants

AbilityPath

$10,000

All Five

$10,000

Children’s Center of the Stanford Community

$10,000

Grace Lutheran Preschool

$10,000

Palo Alto Friends Nursery School

$10,000

Parents Nursery School

$10,000

The Learning Center

$10,000

High school scholarships

$16,000

Non-profits:

Grant application and guidelines at PaloAltoOnline.com/holiday_fund

Application deadline: January 14, 2022

Give back locally with a gift to the Holiday Fund

www.PaloAltoOnline.com • Palo Alto Weekly • November 19, 2021 • Page 11
Seven puppies that died in the care of Palo Alto-based nonprofit Pets in Need on Aug. 2 likely succumbed from heat stroke and/or asphyxiation, three final necropsy reports on the animals concluded.

The bodies of three of the puppies were sent for necropsy analyses to multiple board-certified veterinary anatomic pathologists at the University of California, Davis in early August. Their conclusions, but not the full reports, appear in Palo Alto police investigators’ 37-page redacted report.

The pathologists could not determine a specific cause of death because the natural process of decomposition had begun. But heat stroke and/or traumatic asphyxiation (in which the nose and mouth are covered) were the top considerations for the cause of death, the pathologists stated.

The puppies had no evidence of known disease or sickness, the necropsies found. The animals were healthy, happy and active when they were given to Pets in Need by San Jose residents Patricia Santana Valencia, Margaret Evans and Ingrid Hartmann, according to the police report. A video made by the Chowchilla Animal Control volunteer who gave the puppies to Pets in Need also supports that observation, according to the police report.

Happy, healthy puppies

Pets in Need’s report, which re-acted the last names of the wit- nesses and others interviewed by the investigators, sheds addi- tional light on the hours before the puppies died during transport from the Central Valley, with temperatures in the 90s, and what occurred once they and 21 other dogs arrived at the Palo Alto Animal Shelter.

The puppies, a mix of black Labrador retrievers and black labs, had been born to the dogs of Chowchilla residents, the police report states. Wanting to sur- render them for adoption, the residents called a Chowchilla Animal Control officer, who is named Michelle in the report, and she in turn reached out to an experienced volunteer, San- dy, for help locating shelters that could take the puppies.

Michelle told them they could and that Shelter Operations Manager Patricia Santana would be coming to the area to pick up other dogs on Aug. 2. Michelle arranged to pick up the puppies from the owner that morning at around 11 a.m. and to deliver them to Sandy, who would keep them until the shelter or anyone to hang them off to Pets in Need.

Michelle told a police investig- ator the puppies were kept in a vehicle heating up and were in a small kiddie pool and pen. They were happy and healthy. Michelle brought the puppies to Sandy’s home and the two women vaccinated the dogs and placed them in a large, shaded kennel area of the backyard, she told police.

A video taken of the black-and-white pups, which this news organization viewed, shows them wagging their tails and bounding up against the kennel to lick a person’s right. Their eyes look bright.

Sandy told police she noticed the puppies had large bellies, in- dicative of worms, which is not unusual for puppies of their age. They happily ate treats and food, she told police.

Planning to meet Pets in Need staff at a truck stop at 4 p.m., she placed the puppies in four kennels with plenty of room for them to stand up and lay down, she told police. Her car was air-conditioned.

When she arrived at the truck stop, she checked on the pups. Two had been car sick. One had vomited and another had defecated. She was cleaning up when she noticed the Pets in Need crew arrived. Santana, Evans and Hartmann each took one or two puppies and placed them in the group’s van. Sandy said she didn’t see how many crates the puppies were placed in.

A long, hot journey crammed into a single, covered crate

Santana, Evans and Hartmann placed all of the puppies into a single crate with internal dimensions of approximately 29 inches long, 22 inches wide and 23 inches tall, the police report stated. The crate was covered with a towel or cloth to prevent any possible disease transmis- sion, the report noted. The van had air conditioning sufficient to cool the front of the van where the dogs were placed, but it didn’t have a system capable of adequately cooling the back.

The trip, which can last more than four to six hours depending on traffic, took place during a hot day. The recorded tempera- ture for Madera County on Aug. 2 at about 4 p.m. when Pets in Need picked up the puppies was 100 degrees Fahrenheit. The recorded temperature at Los Banos at 5:45 p.m. when the van arrived was 95 degrees, according to the police report.

During the trip and their Los Banos stop for gas, the Pets in Need crew didn’t remove any of the animals to let them go to the bathroom. They didn’t provide the animals with any water, although they did check on them, they told police. One staff member said the puppies became quiet during the one- and-a-half-hour trip from Los Banos to Palo Alto.

Shortly after the van arrived at the Palo Alto shelter, staff heard the three women scream- ing. They pulled the puppies out of the single crate and placed them on the shelter floor. The animals were stiff and hot to the touch.

Staff tried to resuscitate them, poured water and placed cold, wet towels on them to bring their temperatures down, but the puppies could not be re- vived, according to the police report. The single kennel the puppies had been in was full of vomit and diarrhea, a witness told police.

Other witnesses who work at the shelter helped bring in the 20 remaining dogs and a guinea pig, which were still alive.

The inside of the van was still extremely hot even though the doors had been open for 15 to 20 minutes, multiple witnesses told police.

One of the witnesses said she re- marked to Santana how hot the van appeared to be in dis- tress. They were very hot, the witness remarked to Santana how hot the van appeared to be in dis- tress. They were very hot, the witness remarked to Santana how hot the van appeared to be in dis- tress. They were very hot, the witness remarked to Santana how hot the van appeared to be in dis- tress. They were very hot, the witness remarked to Santana how hot the van appeared to be in dis- tress. They were very hot, the witness remarked to Santana how hot the van appeared to be in dis- tress. They were very hot, the witness remarked to Santana how hot the van appeared to be in dis- tress. They were very hot, the witness remarked to Santana how hot the van appeared to be in dis- tress. They were very hot, the witness remarked to Santana how hot the van appeared to be in dis- tress. They were very hot, the witness remarked to Santana how hot the van appeared to be in dis- tress. 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emailed statement.

“It’s unfortunate that PIN found it necessary to blame the city for things not working out as hoped for all parties. Several capital improvements to the Palo Alto Animal Shelter have been made in coordination with Pets in Need. To date, the city of Palo Alto has invested $1.5 million, completing office and classroom building and medical suite renovation projects at the Palo Alto animal shelter, as well as minor improvements and repairs to the existing kennel building that were completed early in the contract term.”

“The city completed the design of a new kennel building, but the construction cost estimate was greater than the remaining available budget. Due to the approximately $500,000 funding gap and delayed schedule in the construction of the new kennel building, Pets in Need requested that the city prioritize using available funding to provide upgrades to the existing kennel building that improve the day-to-day conditions for the animals. These upgrades include acoustics, lighting and mechanical system, drainage upgrades, epoxy floor and paint and replacing the existing kennel caging system,” the city stated.

“City staff last updated the City Council in June. At that time, the council approved a contract amendment for additional design work for the existing kennel building. Staff, in coordination with the consultant and Pets in Need, have completed the design work and are in the process of purchasing new kennels. The improvements to the existing kennel building are anticipated to cost $400,000, the city stated.

“The decision by Pets in Need to initiate its divorce from Palo Alto leaves the city with the same dilemma it was facing in 2017, when the council began its quest to outsource animal services — a function that has historically been performed by city employees. The operation fell into limbo in 2012, when Mountain View opted to pull out of its partnership in the shelter, taking away its $400,000 in annual contributions to the operation. A subsequent attempt by then-City Manager James Keene to shut down the shelter fizzled in the face of intense community opposition, prompting the city to issue a request for proposals and to ultimately negotiate an agreement with Pets in Need.

“The new development also deals a massive setback to the city’s plan to ultimately replace its shelter at 3281 E. Bayshore Road, an undersized facility that a 2015 assessment determined no longer meets modern standards for animal care.”

While the city has made some upgrades to the shelter since then, the five-year partnership with Pets in Need envisioned a multi-year fundraising campaign by the nonprofit to support construction of the new facility. The planned departure of Pets in Need effectively halts the city’s plans to replace the shelter while leaving it with the same question that the council wrestled with since 2012: How to maintain a popular municipal service at a time of flagging revenues and budget cuts?

“With Pets in Need effectively halting the city’s three-year partnership on Monday, “particularly under current circumstances.”

“Our partnership with Pets in Need has been an important one, providing sheltering services for our community and the cities of Los Altos and Los Altos Hills,” he said. “The city will evaluate options and determine next steps in order to provide a smooth transition.”

Email Staff Writer Sue Dremann at sdremann@pawweekly.com.

About the cover: As Pets in Need faces turmoil, the nonprofit cuts its animal services contract with Palo Alto. Photo by Daniela Beltran B. Cover illustration by Douglas Young.

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www.PaloAltoOnline.com • Palo Alto Weekly • November 19, 2021 • Page 13
Puppies

(continued from page 12)

Shelter in Selma, California, where the 20 dogs were picked up, told police they have never had any issues dealing with San- tana, who has been in charge of the transport runs, and Pets in Need. Witness reports also de- scribe the emotional distress of the three staff members who were on the trip when they discovered the death of one of the puppies.

But the incident raises many questions about how the transport of the puppies by a 55-year- old animal advocacy agency could have gone so wrong and the need to change protocols — something the Pets in Need staff told police he was already starting to implement a day after the incident.

A witness to the courtroom of Hart- mann, the human resources manager, the other two employ- ees had experience with animals and transport. Santana, Hart- mann had only been hired about three months before and was on the trip to learn about how the transport operation worked. Evans, the behavior manager, had worked for Pets in Need for two years and had been on other transport runs with Santana. San- tana, the shelter operations manager, had worked for Pets in Need as executive director of its Redwood City shelter, the police report noted.

Santana has recently been put in charge of the Palo Alto and Redwood City shelters. Executive Director Mol- lica terminated the prior Palo Alto operations manager. The termination was not related to the puppy incident, according to the police report.

From Macartney, the city’s lead animal control officer, who is employed by the police depart- ment, filed the initial complaint to police for investigation of animal cruelty on Aug. 3 after learning about the puppy deaths. Macartney, a retired police officer for 19 years, told police he would never have transported seven large puppies in a single crate.

Pets in Need didn’t have any specific protocol or checklists for their transporters, employ- ees told police. The shelter had supposedly followed national guidelines for pet shelters and transportation from the Guide- lines for the Care and Treatment of Animals. According to those guidelines, animals should not be lying on top of each other or being packed too tightly to sit and stand independently.

The transport vehicle should have adequate ventilation and a thermometer placed at the level of the animals. The van should have a minimum ambient tem- perature for pets during unex- pense and a maximum tempera- ture of 80 degrees. Extra food and water are recommended since the temperature is usually stressed, but if water cannot be provided, the animals should be given water no more than twice a day, according to the guidelines.

The standards specifically ad- dress the transport of puppies and kittens: “Due to increased vulnerability, extra care must be provided when transporting puppies and kittens including: preventing animals from heat- temperature extremes; maintenance of adequate hydration and nutri- tion; and protection from infec- tious disease before and during the transport process.”

The transportation methods employed on Aug. 2 were standard for Pets in Need, however, including not providing water, employees told police. Although Santana, Evans and Hartmann knew about the heat vulnerability, they took the van — the smaller of two — because it could accommodate Hartmann on the transport trip. The police said the van had air conditioning in the front but no vents or air conditioning in the animal compart- ment, the police report noted.

The witnesses said Pets in Need didn’t as a rule give ani- mals water during transport trips; Santana said it was because the animals was voracious. But one person interviewed by police said she has suggested in the past they provide water but was overruled in suspended drip bottles and therefore take in the water more slowly. The suggestion was never implemented.

Certain measures that other staff members had implemented with potential to help in transport runs were not being used. One staff member who went on a transport run recalled that during a trip they had taken a kitten was lying on top of one another with no water. They knew there was a possibility the kitten wouldn’t survive but the kitten seemed stable enough to make the trip. There was no kitten food nor a warm blanket to make it more comfortable. The kitten didn’t survive the trip, she told police.

She created emergency kits with food, warm blankets and other supplies to be taken on the trips. Only one employee was known to have water for the animals. About six years ago, Pets in Need be- gan requiring that transporters call either of two veterinary doc- tors at the clinic if an animal is vomiting or sick before bringing them to the shelter. The veteri- narians must give their approval. Because the shelter had vomited and another deceased, staff should have called one of the veterinarians before trans- porting the seven puppies, police said.

Staff also said they didn’t know whether there had been similar incidents in the past. The shelter had often returned late at night after all other staff had gone home.

Pets in Need has provided only limited statements and answers to multiple questions about the allegations. Asked to comment on the police report and nec- essary correspondence, the city re- iterated its frustrations with the city in an email it provided this news organization on Tuesday evening.

The city’s alleged shortcom- ings led the shelter operator to announce on Monday that it would terminate its contract with Palo Alto and would no longer provide services after 2022.

“Earlier this week, Pets in Need informed the city that it intended to terminate its current contract with the City of Palo Alto to op- erate animal shelter services. We have carefully reviewed information that suggests that this decision was driven by the city’s unresponsiveness and delay on important issues that would en- able us to fulfill our responsibilities under the contract,” the email said.

“that unresponsiveness has continued throughout the inves- tigation into the events of Aug. 2. Pets in Need did not receive the Sept. 14 police report until Nov. 3, and even now the full results have not been made available. They have not been shared with us. We need this information to fully understand what happened and how we can improve — the data and improve- ments necessary so that a tragedy like this never repeated. We remain at a disadvantage when we try to institute changes and improve- ments necessary so that a tragedy like this never repeated. We remain at a disadvantage when we try to institute changes and improve- ments necessary so that a tragedy like this never repeated. We remain at a disadvantage when we try to institute changes and improve- ments necessary so that a tragedy like this never repeated. We remain at a disadvantage when we try to institute changes and improve- ments necessary so that a tragedy like this never repeated. We remain at a disadvantage when we try to institute changes and improve- ments necessary so that a tragedy like this never repeated. We remain at a disadvantage when we try to institute changes and improve- ments necessary so that a tragedy like this never repeated. We remain at a disadvantage when we try to institute changes and improve- ments necessary so that a tragedy like this never repeated. We remain at a disadvantage when we try to institute changes and improve- ments necessary so that a tragedy like this never repeated. We remain at a disadvantage when we try to institute changes and improve- ments necessary so that a tragedy like this never repeated. We remain at a disadvantage when we try to institute changes and improve- ments necessary so that a tragedy like this never repeated. We remain at a disadvantage when we try to institute changes and improve- ments necessary so that a tragedy like this never repeated. We remain at a disadvantage when we try to institute changes and improve- ments necessary so that a tragedy like this never repeated. We remain at a disadvantage when we try to institute changes and improve- ments necessary so that a tragedy like this never repeated. We remain at a disadvantage when we try to institute changes and improve- ments necessary so that a tragedy like this never repeated. We remain at a disadvantage when we try to institute changes and improve- ments necessary so that a tragedy like this never repeated. We remain at a disadvantage when we try to institute changes and improve- ments necessary so that a tragedy like this never repeated. We remain at a disadvantage when we try to institute changes and improve- ments necessary so that a tragedy like this never repeated. We remain at a disadvantage when we try to institute changes and improve- ments necessary so that a tragedy like this never repeated. We remain at a disadvantage when we try to institute changes and improve- ments necessary so that a tragedy like this never repeated. We remain at a disadvantage when we try to institute changes and improve- ments necessary so that a tragedy like this never repeated. We remain at a disadvantage when we try to institute changes and improve- ments necessary so that a tragedy like this never repeated. We remain at a disadvantage when we try to institute changes and improve- ments necessary so that a tragedy like this never repeated. We remain at a disadvantage when we try to institute changes and improve- ments necessary so that a tragedy like this never repeated. We remain at a disadvantage when we try to institute changes and improve-
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which would no longer include the spacious coastal area south of Half Moon Bay and east of Woodside. Those cities would now fall into the new District 18, which is represented by Rep. Anna Escho, D-Palo Alto. A portion of Redwood City would also shift from District 14 to District 18, an adjustment that could deter political aspirants from the city to vie for Speier’s seat. The same applies to East Palo Alto, which is currently in Speier’s district but which would be in Escho’s under the draft map, which is subject to further adjustments before its expected adoption in late 2021.

The portion of San Francisco that is part of District 14 would also shift, moving from the western neighborhoods of Sunset and Parkside to the Ingleside and Excelsior neighborhoods in the south and southeastern sections of the city. But even despite these uncertainties, the race to succeed Speier is expected to have no shortage of candidates, numerous elected Democrats who were interviewed by this news organization predicted Tuesday.

“I think there will be a big scramble,” said Jerry Hill, who represented the Mid-Peninsula in the state Assembly and the state Senate between 2008 and 2020 and who served as a San Mateo council member and a county supervisor before then. “A lot of people will be running, certainly, because of the fact that this is a once-in-a-generation event.”

Assembly member Kevin Mullin, D-South San Francisco, who has been representing the northern portion of San Mateo County in Sacramento since 2012, is expected to be the prominent candidate should he choose to enter the race, according to Hill and other current and former elected officials. Mullin currently serves as speaker pro tempore in the Assembly, the second highest position in the Legislature’s lower chamber. He won 75% of the votes in his most recent reelection effort, in 2020, and his political resume includes a stint as district director for Speier during her days as a state senator.

In a Tuesday statement, Mullin called Speier an “icon and a legendary figure in San Mateo County and California legislative and political history.” And as her district director, he said he “was awed by her ability to stand up to powerful interests regardless of potential political consequences.”

“It was the embodiment of integrity, with a fidelity to the public interest above all other considerations,” Mullin said. Mullin’s statement made no mention of his own political plans, Susan Newman, his communications director, said the office has nothing else to share at this time.

State Sen. Josh Becker, a Menlo Park resident with a proven record of winning in San Mateo County, is also viewed as a possible candidate for Speier’s seat, according to Hill and other Democrats who spoke with this news organization. His senatorial district covers much of Speier’s turf, though it’s not clear whether his hometown will fall under her congressional district under the new maps. Currently, Speier represents the Belle Haven neighborhood in Menlo Park, while Escho represents the remainder of the city. The draft map currently under consideration would shift Belle Haven to Escho’s district.

Becker, who was elected to the Senate in 2020 and who has strongly advocated for climate-change legislation, would not confirm Tuesday whether he will seek Speier’s congressional seat, which candidates are allowed to do even if they don’t reside in the district. In a statement Tuesday, he called Speier a “true superhero” who has “done so much for the people of the Peninsula, our state and our country.” He did not, however, respond to an inquiry about the political implications of her decision not to seek reelection.

“That should be our focus today: honoring all that she has accomplished. Her legacy is tremendous at every level of government,” Becker said in a statement.

Palto Alto Vice Mayor Pat Burt was among those who cited Mullin and Becker as the two most prominent potential contenders in San Mateo County, though he was quick to note that neither has declared his intention to run.

“There are a few real top-tier folks currently in San Mateo County and none are yet indicating whether they are open to pursuing this spot,” Burt said. “I think they’re both exceptionally capable.”

Assembly member Marc Berman, whose district includes Menlo Park, Palo Alto and Mountain View, said he is not considering a run for Speier’s seat because he does not live in her congressional district (notwithstanding the fact that this is allowed by law). He predicted, however, that there will be no shortage of candidates.

“It’s not every day, it’s not every year, it’s not every decade that a seat opens up on the Peninsula,” Berman said.

Berman declined to speculate about who will vote for seats but noted that any successful candidate has to have a demonstrated ability to build relationships across the dozens of small communities that make up San Mateo County. Unlike Santa Clara County, which is dominated by San Jose, and San Francisco, which is both a city and a county, San Mateo County doesn’t have a clearly established power base.

“I think San Mateo County is a unique place,” Berman said. “It’s a lot of small cities — the big city that sucks it all up. So it has to be someone who has developed relationships in all those communities, someone who has shown an ability to get along with colleagues.”

While the decentralized nature of San Mateo County makes it hard for local mayors and council members to win broad political support, the county’s composition also gives a national advantage to members of the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, who benefit from a broader geographical reach and greater name recognition (the advantage is somewhat mitigated by the fact that the county has district elections, which limit each supervisor’s political base to their specific district). Speier herself served as a county supervisor between 1980 and 1986, before she began her 20-year stint in Sacramento.

Several political veterans who spoke to this news organization thus see David Canepa, president of the Board of Supervisors, as the two most prominent potential candidates for Speier’s seat. William Silverfarb, Canepa’s policy aide, did not respond to this news organization’s inquiry about Canepa’s possible political future. William Silverfarb, Canepa’s policy aide, did not respond to this news organization’s inquiry about Canepa’s possible political future.

Another name that has come up in interviews is that of Redwood City Vice Mayor Giselle Hale, who did not respond to an inquiry about her potential candidacy.

“Her constituents always feel a strong comfort level and confidence in her leadership,” Hill said. “You can’t say that about a lot of people.”

Burt called Speier “a courageous person in both Congress and in her personal life” and lauded her “great compassion in general and a great commitment to her district.” Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian, who as a former state senator also represented a large swath of San Mateo County, called Speier a “first-rate legislator,” while Belmont Mayor Charles Stone said she was a “legend in her own time.”

“She is a woman who has done more for the Peninsula than most people could do in 10 generations. Her story is one of tragedy and triumph, and I’m incredibly grateful to her for her service in San Mateo County,” Stone said.

Menlo Park City Council member Ray Mueller called Speier’s legislative legacy “immense” and her accomplishments “historic and long.”

“But what I will remember most is how fiercely she fought for those who needed her most, whether the opponent or the political cost. It was and remains a passion born from the heart,” he said.

Staff Writer Kate Bradshaw contributed to this report. Email Staff Writer Bennady Sheyn et at gsheyner@paweekly.com.
Enrollment (continued from page 10)

some areas of the district. Barron Park Elementary School now has fewer than 200 students. Ellen Fletcher Middle School has roughly 500, which is much lower than the 800 to 1,000 students at each of the district’s other two middle schools.

Fletcher’s shrinking population has prompted the district to consider running a lottery for the school next year, which would allow families in other parts of the district to apply to have their children attend Fletcher.

Declining enrollment even before the pandemic

The K-8 Ravenswood City School District, which operates schools in East Palo Alto and Menlo Park, had the region’s “most severe” enrollment decline pre-pandemic, according to the San Mateo-based Enrollment Projection Consultants. The district has seen a nearly 44% decline in non-charter school enrollment since 2015-16 school year. There are 1,501 students enrolled, 260 fewer as of this fall.

Students enrolled at charters authorized by the district ballooned from 18% of the total student population in the 2014-15 school year to 45.4% this school year. Students are choosing the charter schools KIPP Valiant Community Prep and Aspire East Palo Alto and the private Primary School in East Palo Alto. This means the district loses students and the government funding affiliated with them. The district is one of the few privatized state-funded districts on the Midpeninsula.

District leaders declined to comment for this article.

The Los Altos School District’s enrollment has been declining for years, but during the pandemic that trend has accelerated. Last school year, the population at district schools dropped by 10.6%. This fall, there was another 6.5% decrease. In total, the district’s enrollment has fallen from 3,999 students in 2019 to 3,344 today.

Superintendent Jeff Baier said some students moved out of the state or country, with others moving to other parts of California and some switching to private or charter schools. The pandemic has also made it more difficult to track where students end up, Baier said.

The district’s numbers don’t account for Bullis Charter School, which the state doesn’t include in the Los Altos School District’s enrollment total.

Bullis’ enrollment increased 5.2% last school year (from 1,039 students in 2019 to 1,093 in 2020). This year, it decreased 2.4% to 1,067 students. The charter school’s enrollment is currently capped at 1,111 students under the terms of an agreement with the Los Altos School District.

High school district outliers and small school districts

The Mountain View Los Altos Union High School District is one of the few local school districts that was seeing its student body grow before the pandemic hit. For the past two years, the district’s enrollment has essentially flattened.

That’s a marked difference from what MVLA was experiencing before COVID-19 disrupted education. In the five years from 2015 to 2019, the district’s enrollment shot up by over 500 students.

To the north, enrollment in the Sequoia Union High School District increased almost 1% from the 2019-20 (10,238 students) to 2020-21 (10,327 students) school years. Preliminary 2021-22 data shows enrollment decreased by about 2% (to 10,109 students) from last year.

Individual schools in the district, like Woodside and Menlo-Atherton, saw declining enrollment over the last two years of 11% and 6%, respectively.

At the elementary level, Los Lomitas Elementary School District, which has one school in Menlo Park and one in Atherton, “lost families during the pandemic to people moving and a few learning pods, who ultimately returned,” said Superintendent Beth Polito in an email. The Las Lomitas Elementary School District has 1,099 students enrolled this year, down about 9% from the fall of 2019 (1,208 students).

Applications rise at local private schools

Forbes reported last June that the pandemic bolstered private school enrollment when parents saw how differently private schools handled learning at the onset of the pandemic. Although some local elementary-aged students last fall returned to classrooms, at least on a hybrid basis, many public high school students did not. On the other hand, many private schools resumed full-time in-person learning during the last school year.

“The pandemic revealed a view behind the ‘school system’ curtain, which promulgated some families to move and to change education paths,” said Karen Aronian, a parenting and education expert, in an email. “The whiplash turnstile of remote, hybrid, in-school, quarantine, and repeat has left public school families during the last school year. Some school students did not. On the other hand, many private schools resumed full-time in-person learning during the last school year.

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We thought these kids may return to the public (school) sector once those schools reopened but instead, they stayed and brought siblings to join them,” he said in an email.

The number of applications to Pinewood School, which has three campuses in Los Altos, has increased 20% across grades K-12, said Lisa Longbottom, director of admissions, in an email. The school enrolls 600 students.

Email Staff Writers Angela Swartz and Zoe Morgan at aswartz@almanacnews.com and zmorgan@paweekly.com.
Holiday Fund

(continued from page 5)

I have ever met.

At the time, they shared partially
an interest in baking and getting
their nails done.

“Christine is just a very ‘soft’
person overall. So I felt instantly
very comfortable around her, and
she was super nice and under-
standing and was very easy to talk
to,” Solis said.

Evelyn, Friends for Youth matches anywhere from 30 to
50 mentors with mentees, asking them to commit to spending
time together. At least 15 of them have been involved for
More than 85% of them do. And
some continue on for years. The
organization states it currently
serves about 300 mentors, mentees
and their families, or 1,200 people
from San Francisco to San Jose.

Rivian Automotive, LLC, Attn: Mobility, Job Ref #: SBDSE21IV, hrmobility@rivian.com

Staff Software Engineer

Staff Software Engineer with Rivian, LLC, in Palo Alto, CA. Serve as a technical lead for the core services of the digital commerce platform. Must possess a Master deg or foreign equiv in Comp Sci, Comp Engg or a closely related field & 5 yrs of progressively responsible exp building large-scale enterprise grade systems. Email resume to Rivian, LLC, Attn: Mobility, Job Ref #: SBDSE21IV, hrmobility@rivian.com

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Sr Devops Engineer, Linux/RTOS

Sr Devops Engineer, Linux/RTOS with Rivian Automotive, LLC in Palo Alto, CA. Lead tools & build-release activities for software (images/packages) on snip or milt hardware boards utilizing C/C++, Python, Ansible, Docker, Kubernetes, Git, GitLab, and BitBucket. RQMTS: Masters degree or foreign equiv in Comp Engg or a closely related field & 2 yrs exp as an Engineer in Software Engg or DevOps functions. Alt, employer will accept a Bachelors degree or foreign equiv in an acceptable field as stated above + 5 yrs progressively responsible exp as stated above. Exp must incl: Working w/Embedded Linux, QNX and RTOS operating systems, incl system admin, build software such as BitBake & package mgmt software; working w/programming and scripting languages including C/C++, Python, & Ansible; blog/C/C++ pipelines using Jenkins, Artifactery, & Maven; troubleshooting & finding a root-cause using Jenkins; using Docker & Kubernetes; & working w/leading source code management systems incl Git, GitLab, & BitBucket. Email resume to Rivian Automotive, LLC, Attn: Mobility, Job Ref #: DEL21SK, hrmobility@rivian.com

Sr Big Data Software Engineer

Sr Big Data Software Engineer with Rivian, LLC in Palo Alto, CA. Dsgn, build, and deploy highly optimized cloud-based query engine to retrieve data arriving from our connected vehicles. RQMTS: Masters degree or foreign equiv in Comp Sci, Comp Engg or a closely related field & 5 yrs of progressively responsible exp in programming Python, Go, Java or C/C++. Exp must incl: Utulng AWS big data products incl Aurora, Redshift, S3, Elastic Cache, DynamoDB, & Kinesis; designing and building highly scalable distributed systems; working w/ REST API services, cloud security models, SQL and NoSQL models; & utulng software development technologies, processes, & tools incl Agile software development. Email resume to Rivian, LLC, Attn: Mobility, Job Ref #: SBDSE21IVS, hrmobility@rivian.com

Vice President, Product

Mercari, Inc., is seeking a Vice President, Product in Palo Alto, CA to hold virtual meetings across Japan and USA to ensure the team is working on the right projects, get in the know of any upcoming challenges or conflicts, help in removing blocks early on, adjust specific parameters to improve service operations. In addition, as an incentive to try the service, the awarded contractor will offer free rides for one month at sign-up.

A key goal of the program is to provide a service to seniors and students, as well as residents who choose not to own vehicles.

The city estimates that between 2014 and 2018 there were about 25,875 people in the city in an average year who were “transit-dependent.” This includes 4,697 low-income individuals with disabilities, 3,954 low-income individuals, 4,557 in-

Shuttle

(continued from page 7)

2018 and, 2019 respectively. In making its ridership projections, city staff also noted that despite a plunge in transit use during the pandemic, Palo Alto’s downtown Caltrain station had the highest ridership in the system in September 2020, with an average of 620 weekday riders.

That said, it remains to be seen whether the city’s pivot will generate the type of demand for well over a decade. To further the goal, the city launched

Upfront

The annual Holiday Fund charitable giving drive is in full swing, with a goal of raising $500,000 for local nonprofits serving children and families. For more info about the Holiday Fund on page 11 of this edition or go to PaloAltoOnline.com/holiday_fund.

Email Staff Writer Gennady Dong at jdong@paweekly.com.

“Before the pandemic, these

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Email Staff Writer Gennady Dong at jdong@paweekly.com.

“Before the pandemic, these

she noted. Once the numbers are
adjusted for age, Cody thinks they
could be higher.

Facing the backlash
Cody said her experiences with the 
COVID-19 pandemic have been 
sobering.

A highly vocal group of people, who 
are in the minority, has been spreading 
enormous amounts of misinformation in this country, 
she said. And public health of-
ficers have become the targets in 
unprecedented ways.

“Most of my colleagues in pub-
lic health have experienced a level of 
vitriol that I have never experi-
enced before,” she said.

For two years, protesters have 
demonstrated against her deci-
sions and at times it’s gotten per-
sonal. One sign depicted Cody’s head decked in a colorful corona-
virus headress.

“I thought it quite attractive,” 
she said.

The situation hasn’t always left 
room for levity. In September 2020, the Santa Clara County 
Sheriff’s Office arrested a man 
with connections to the far-right “Boogaloo” group who allegedly 
wrote Cody 24 threatening and 
profane letters.

More broadly, she said, health 
care and public health workforce are 
exhausted by this pandemic and 
the constant battle against 
hostility and disinformation. It 
will take resources — including financial — to rebuild a robust 
public health system for when the 
next pandemic strikes.

Cody has great concerns re-
garding the future should another 
global health crisis emerge.

“It’s the decay in public trust and 
government that troubles me,” she said. People might be less willing 
to listen to their leaders, she said.

As the Thanksgiving holiday 
approaches, Cody said people 
need to use good sense regarding 
whether to gather with family and 
what precautions to take. Cases 
are again on the rise. The county 
never completely got out of the 
summer’s surge, she said.

If people do plan to gather, they 
should probably do a rapid at-
home COVID-19 test before get-
ting together. If they are sick, 
they shouldn’t attend a gathering. Unlike 
last season when there was a huge spike in winter cases, Cody isn’t 
imporling people this year to stay 
home. With vaccines readily avail-
able and other precautions such as 
masking and social distancing well-
publicized, Cody said it’s up to indi-
viduals to assess the risk.

“It’s like driving in the winter. 
We don’t tell people not to drive in 
the winter,” she said. But if one 
has an old car or would be travel-
ing in deep snow or a blizzard, 
they might consider limiting their 
travel or not going out at all.

“You adjust your risk to the cir-
cumstances,” she said.
Joseph John Sclimenti born in Cleveland, OH, passed away peacefully at home in Chowchilla, CA, surrounded by his loving wife and two sons. He celebrated 60 years of marriage on July 29, 2021. He had a passion for his family and life. Joseph was an award-winning advertising executive for over 40 years starting at the Parma Post in Ohio. He and his family moved to the bay area in 1971 where he continued his work at the Redwood City Tribune, Palo Alto Times, Los Gatos Weekly and later became publisher for the Good News in Middlefield Ohio.

Joseph had many other talents and interests, including acting, drawing and was also a world class fast draw competitor. He enjoyed playing and coaching baseball, golf and loved listening to his jazz music. Also, anyone who knew him experienced his gift for telling the best jokes ever. He loved making people smile and laugh. The ultimate amateur chef who made food an enjoyable part of his life, as well as ours.

Joseph is survived by his loving wife Marge (nee Valenti), and his two sons Joey and Frankie.

PAID OBITUARY

POLICE CALLS

Page: Nov. 11-Nov. 16

Violence related
El Camino Real, 11/1, 10:33 a.m.; simple battery
California Avenue, 11/8, 2:23 p.m.; family violence
University Avenue/Maple Street, 11/9, 11:40 a.m.; domestic violence/battery
El Camino Real, 11/6, 3:30 p.m.; strong arm robbery
High Street/Hamilton Avenue, 11/10, 7:45 p.m.; domestic violence
Aracatadero Road, 11/12, 1:10 p.m.; simple battery
University Avenue, 11/1, 12:00 a.m.; family violence
El Camino Real, 11/14, 1:53 a.m.; domestic violence/battery
Wawona Street, 11/15, 1:15 p.m.; sex crime.

Theft related
Commercial burglaries ................. 1
Grand theft .................................. 7
Identity theft ............................. 4
Petty theft .................................. 1
Residential burglaries ................. 2
Shoplifting ............................... 1
Vehicle related ........................... 1
Auto theft .................................. 1
Bicycle theft .............................. 2
Hit and run .................................. 9
Lost/stolen plates ......................... 1
Stolen catalytic converter .......... 2
Theft from auto ......................... 18
Theft from auto attempt .......... 4
Vehicle accident/minor injury ........ 8
Vehicle accident/prop damage .... 3
Alcohol or drug related ............... 1
Driving under influence .............. 1
Drunk in public .......................... 3

Miscellaneous
Criminal threats ......................... 3
Found property ......................... 2
Lost property ............................ 2
Missing person ........................... 1
Psychiatric subject ..................... 3
Vandalism ................................ 4
Warrant/other agency ................. 5

Menlo Park
Nov. 10-Nov. 16
Violence related
Marsh Road, 11/14, 1:21 p.m.; battery

Threat related
Fraud ....................................... 1
Residential burglaries ................. 1
Vehicle related ........................... 1
Auto theft .................................. 1
Bicycle theft .............................. 2
Driving without license .............. 2
Hit and run .................................. 1
Theft from auto ......................... 2
Vehicle accident/minor injury ...... 3
Vehicle accident/no injury ......... 2
Vehicle tampering ...................... 2
Alcohol or drug related ............... 2
Driving under influence .............. 2
Drunk in public .......................... 2
Possession of paraphernalia ....... 1

Mental Health
Bipolar .................................... 2

Vandalism ................................. 4
Warrant arrest ............................ 2

PAID OBITUARY

Riley Frost Griner born in 1999 – November 6, 2021

Riley Frost Griner, age 21, of Mountain View, CA passed away on Nov 6th, 2021.

Riley went to Castro Elementary School, Jordan Middle School, Los Altos High School, and San Jose State University as a Computer Science major. Riley struggled in college, and left after his first year. Seeking independence, living on his own, he had a brief career as a butcher, which paid off his debts and worked up his savings as he considered his other career possibilities. Riley was just getting started in life, almost 22. The isolation of Covid-19 has taken its toll. He was hospitalized for a non-Covid infection, and then passed away suddenly soon after being released.

We loved his sweet, curious, nature. We remember him rock climbing, backpacking, cooking, dancing, and playing guitar. He was carrying a video camera, and recording his guitar playing. When we were looking for Riley we could find him with a book, in a tree, sound asleep.

Riley was the twin brother of Kate Alma Griner, and child of Thomas and Rebecca Griner. He had a large, close-knit, local family. He is also survived by his grandparents; Clark and Ruby Dolores Christensen, and aunts and uncles; Jennifer Gonsalves, Mike A. Akatit, Robert Griner and Margaret McConnell, Ellen and Paul Coker, Mary Cudahy and Sean Collier, his cousins; Ty Mayer, Finn Mayer, Alex Coker, Gabriel Coker, Brennan McConnell-Griner, Joseph Cudahy, Emma Cudahy, and M. Clayton Cudahy. He was pre-deceased in death by his grandmother Christine Griner, and his beloved cat Meander.

Services will be private. If you wish to attend a public service in summer 2022, please email rlg2090@gmail.net. Kindly no flowers at this time. In memory of Riley’s passing, please take extra care of yourself.

PAID OBITUARY

DONALD MARC LEVY March 27, 1935 – November 7, 2021

Born in Lynbrook, New York, Donald Marc Levy had a full life that saw him married to Rachel Michelson Levy for 64 years, with children Marc D. Levy and Dena B. Levy (Mark Goldstein), grandchildren Aaron D. Levy (Andrea Stewart) and Isabel B. Goldstein, brother Robert Levy (Kathleen Alexander), and countless friends.

Anyone who knew Don is aware of his keen intelligence. At the age of 16, he left home to attend college at the University of Wisconsin - Madison. He earned his master’s degree at MIT and then returned to UW for his Ph.D. He eventually moved to Iowa City to teach at the University of Iowa in the Department of Electrical Engineering and, in 1979, left academia to work at Ford Aerospace. He ended his career at Lockheed Martin, where he won numerous awards for his work.

An avid bridge player, he had over 300 master points and was an NABC Master and close to making Life Master. He met his wife, Rachel, over a lunchtime bridge table. More recently, one of his greatest joys upon moving to The Avant senior living community in Palo Alto was the opportunity to continue playing duplicate bridge. The ability to move play online was a source of considerable comfort during the pandemic.

Don traveled extensively with his family. When he had the opportunity to spend a year working at the Western Australia Institute of Technology in Perth, Australia in 1976, he jumped at it. Thus began a lifelong love of traveling around the world.

Don and Rachel cruised regularly, often bringing their children with them. Their love of travel extended to their children and grandchildren.

Don’s interests also included tennis, which he played throughout his life, and photography. A philanthropist, he was an avid supporter of the performing and the visual arts as well as education. But he counted among his greatest successes watching his children grow and thrive, and then his grandchildren doing the same.

He will be deeply missed.

Memorial services will be held at Temple Brith Kodesh in Rochester, New York, Dec. 12 at 1 p.m. and will be available via Zoom. Please email donlevymemorial@gmail.com for details.

In his honor, a donation to the Alzheimer’s Association or another charity is most welcome.

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Visit Lasting Memories
An online directory of obituaries and remembrances. Search obituaries, submit a memorial, share a photo.

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Guest Opinion

Faith leader survey points to new affordable housing possibilities

By Angie Evans

Palo Alto is too expensive. The average monthly rents have reached over $3,600. The median home sale is $3.2 million. Gone are the days when you could expect your child’s teachers to live in the neighborhood or when hardworking families could scrump to buy a starter home. Palo Alto doesn’t have enough housing for low-income or middle-income neighbors. But it doesn’t have to be this way. If we focused on creative solutions that subsidized the cost of land for new, affordable housing, we could dig ourselves out over the next decade. Queue the churches that have been added as potential housing sites in Palo Alto.

The city of Palo Alto must identify sites and policies for 6,086 new, affordable homes by Jan. 31, 2023. We don’t have to build or permit these homes through this process but we do have to demonstrate a willingness to make them feasible here. These sites and policies will be outlined in the Housing Element of the General Plan, which the City Council must review and the state must certify.

The Housing Element Working Group, appointed by City Council in April 2021, meets monthly during this 18-month process to work through the details of the Housing Element. Included in the city’s site selection for future homes is 10 churches zoned for 148 homes in total. Each site allows for anywhere between six homes and 45 homes at a density of 30 dwelling units per acre. If you viewed congregations as a policy approach, they could include an overlay that allows any faith-based institution to build affordable housing, or they could increase the density at the 10 churches they’ve already selected, making hundreds or even thousands of new homes possible. The group is almost done with site selection and will move on to policies in the coming months, but will these policies be ambitious enough to spur new, affordable homes?

AB 1557 outlines how density can and should be used as a proxy for affordability in the Housing Element process. While density doesn’t always mean more affordable rents, affordable housing developers cannot feasibly build below what we call the “density deficit.” Santa Clara County is considered “suburban,” so townhome-scale development is presumed affordable at 20 units an acre. State density bonus laws, however, permit moderate-scale apartments at twice this density for 100% affordable development. If affordable housing is a goal of our housing element, shouldn’t our minimums be at least equal to the state density bonus laws? Palo Alto has consistently looked toward lower densities as a way to maintain local control. But it’s time to consider some changes if we want a more affordable city.

Despite Palo Alto’s reputation as an out-of-touch suburban enclave in Silicon Valley, our community has a long history of embracing economic diversity and public service. Many of the south bay’s homeless services and programs were modeled after the 1930s Hotel de Zink shelter that was founded here. In 1973, Palo Alto was the first California city to adopt an inclusionary zoning policy to spur more affordable housing production. This policy requires market-rate developers to build affordable homes. So when did things change and how can we work together to move back toward the core values that made our community a leader in the region?

Earlier this year, when the nonprofit Palo Alto Forward began convening faith leaders from local congregations to talk about how to bridge the gaps between temporary shelter and permanent, affordable housing, we didn’t have specific goals in mind. The best community engagement starts with questions—not answers. We met with dozens of leaders over nine months. Since land is the most expensive part of affordable housing development, meeting with land owners who are dedicated to serving the community, like churches, felt like a good place to start.

In September, we began surveying them to see where there were trends. Were they even interested in building affordable housing, and who would do it? Churches reported current uses such as preschools and other community serving facilities on-site and adjacent or attached to nearby parsonages. These homes for clergy are critical for local congregations who want their leadership to remain in the community they are serving and need affordable housing on these sites might be a welcome addition.

When asked if congregations would be interested in building affordable housing on their lots, most expressed some level of interest. When asked if they would be open to exploring a city-led process to explore this further, over 90% responded “Yes” or “Maybe.” Congregations are looking to the city for guidance.

Two-thirds of those congregations had explored the development of affordable housing using their land but had experienced roadblocks. Reasons for not moving forward include shared lots and alleys, zoning designation, proximity to single-family homes, and neighbor reactions to previous and current programs. What was surprising to see is that 85% of respondents expected backlash from neighbors if they built affordable housing.

Developers and elected officials have created the dilemma we are in, not people who reside in single-family homes!

Limited supply and unending demand means that the price of land and housing will continue to rise with limited periods of moderation. Building housing (which admittedly is needed), while at the same time approving the construction of new office buildings, will not solve our housing shortage situation. Developers need to hear in no uncertain terms that more office buildings are not wanted. Instead, they need to build housing that is truly affordable to low- and moderate-income people.

Joe Hirsch
Georgia Avenue, Palo Alto

Letters

Excess job crisis

Editor,

The New York Times op-ed, which was mentioned in the Around Town column of your Nov. 12 issue, totally misdescribes what the community said by its vote on the 2013 Maybell Referendum. The thesis behind the op-ed is that residents are to blame for the housing crisis we have in the Bay Area. I disagree. The op-ed states that “over the past eight years the San Francisco area added 676,000 jobs and only 156,000 housing units.” That statement by itself explains the problem we have in the Bay Area (not just in Palo Alto). We don’t have a “housing crisis,” we have an “excess of jobs crisis” brought on by a lack of “common sense leadership crisis.” Elected officials throughout the state have approved, and continue to approve (and encourage), commercial developments that create way too many jobs compared to available housing.

For example, a developer has recently proposed to build 300,000 square feet of office space and 33 homes as part of a project in Redwood City. That’s an increase of between 1,200-2,000 jobs with housing for maybe 100 people, which, if approved, would clearly exacerbate the jobs/housing imbalance. Such approvals have got to stop.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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

What’s the solution to the city’s animal services conundrum?

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Shining Examples

By Sheryl Nonnenberg | Photos courtesy Pace Gallery

Mary Corse brings an etheeral light show to Pace Gallery

The art world is notorious for overlooking or dismissing the contributions of women artists, especially in movements that involve "macho" media such as sculpture, assemblage, and installation art. Pace Gallery in Palo Alto is attempting to rectify the situation by presenting the work of Mary Corse, a Southern California artist who was affiliated with the light and space movement of the 1960s. The gallery is featuring seven pieces, paintings and light boxes that, although executed recently, reflect the artist's lifelong fascination with light and perception.

This spare, elegant show is on view until Jan. 29. The light and space movement was a sort of West Coast answer to minimalism, with its emphasis on cool, objective geometry that visually rejected the painterly angst of abstract expressionism. Its most famous proponents were Larry Bell, Robert Irwin and James Turrell. Mary Corse was right in the thick of this group, having worked in sculptural form. She did a series of light boxes in the mid-1960s that she has revisited here with four pieces, "Untitled (Electric Light)," all created in 2021. These works rely much more on technology, utilizing argon, light tubes and high frequency generators. Encased in Plexiglas, these works emit light, flicker and are lit from inside, according to Pace Gallery's press release, thanks to "Tesla coils that wirelessly transfer electromagnetic fields through the walls."

It isn’t really necessary to know how these sculptures were made, or from what materials, because standing in front of them is not so much visual as it is visceral. Free of the need to examine the formal elements (color, form, line, texture, etc.), we are able to understand one of Corse's strongest credos, "Art is in the experience."

In the third gallery area, two more boxes have been installed. These pieces are smaller and rest on white stands (where the complicated wiring system is hidden from view). There is almost a feeling of being in a sacred place, due to the ethereal glow from the boxes and the added drama of the darkened space. Corse's art does not translate well in reproductions; it really is necessary to encounter them in person.

Explained Pace President Elizabeth Sullivan, "Mary Corse's work inspires and transforms ways we receive — and most importantly, perceive — light, space and ourselves."

It is impressive to realize that, at age 76, Corse is still working, still striving to create — and still has the same motivations that drove her as a young artist in Los Angeles 50 years ago. Her work has been shown at major museums and in 2018, she had a retrospective at the Whitney. So why isn’t she as well-known as her contemporaries? The prevailing theory cites the fact that she moved her studio away from the downtown art scene in Los Angeles in the 70s in order to raise her two children in Topanga Canyon. The Whitney catalog maintained that, although she was still working, "moving and distancing herself from feminism was a hedge against being marginalized as a ‘woman artist.’"

Whatever the backstory, it is nice to have the opportunity to see Corse's engaging, innovative work. In a year darkened by the pandemic, a show that focuses on light seems both timely and hopeful.

Works by Mary Corse are on view through Jan. 29 at Pace Gallery, 229 Hamilton Ave., Palo Alto. For more information, visit pacegallery.com.

Email Contributing Writer Sheryl Nonnenberg at nonnenberg@aol.com.
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**Book Talk**

A HEROINE IN PARIS ... 
Bestselling author Meg Waite Clayton will talk about her latest book, “The Postmistress of Paris,” with Julia Flynn Siler online at 6 p.m., Dec. 7. To register for the event, go to paloaltoonline.com.

**Freshe**

A monthly section on local books and authors

**People-lying poetry and politics**

**East Palo Alto City Council member Antonio López discusses his new poetry book, ‘Gentefication.’**

By Kate Bradshaw


**Tell me a little bit about your backstory.**

East Palo Alto is one of the few affordable places in the Bay Area. Male migrant workers, they tend to come together, and then they bring their family shortly after. My dad came in the early 1980s and was sending letters to my mom. They got hitched, then went up to the Bay Area. In 1985, they bought the home that I still live in today, on Pulgas Avenue. My folks kept their heads down most of the time.

I don’t come from a political family or anything like that. My dad worked in dishwashing for a very long amount of time, then he became a waiter. My mom was a stay-at-home mom for many years. ... At that time, East Palo Alto was going through a lot of violence. The crack epidemic was in full boom. People were afraid of leaving their homes. We would keep our curtains down, our blinds drawn, it was that kind of environment.

I was young enough to experience the change of the recovery, of people coming together in community groups to make the streets safer. But I’m old enough to have remembered that violence and that shift.

**How has your political work informed your poetry and vice versa?**

I think East Palo Alto has always been fed this narrative, and we’ve internalized it, unfortunately, that we can only do a certain amount of things; that our community can only accomplish this amount because of income level. That we can’t enter into certain jobs in Silicon Valley. And no question, right? At some point, it’s a question of structural inequality, that the individual can only do so much.

However, if you look at our track record, there have been so many moments when you think, ‘These guys aren’t gonna make it,’ and yet we’ve done it. When we look at the current gentrification we’re facing, I think people of color and working-class folks, or both, can’t afford to be cynical. Optimism is a form of social justice, it’s the lifeblood of being able to keep insisting on something better for your children and for your generation.

Poetry, in its most distilled fashion, teaches you to have honesty. It’s about challenging the speaker and the reader to revisit an image, a topic, a person or ethnic group that they once dismissed. It’s about suspending and staying. It teaches you to look at something and really meditate on its beauty, its shock, its aspects, and then presenting that to the reader. A poem, if it is successful, is not about being pretty, is not about hitting you in the gut. It’s about transforming. It’s about changing the world. Changing yourself, and the world starts with yourself. Poetry is a lens above all for me. And that allows me to look at the fruit and look at the beauty and look at the challenges in a way that is internalizing, but also expands our vision of what’s possible.

**Tell me about your book, ‘Gentefication.’**

This book is about my own personal journey from coming from my Title I-K to higher education, the “academy” or ivory tower. I think black and brown kids, first-generation (especially) are taught from an early age that education is success. It is the epitome of the American dream. It is the vehicle through which you access mobility, and not just for yourself but for your family.

So I’ve gone to these schools. I’ve gone to these prestigious institutions. My work tries to complicate that narrative and ask what are the underpinnings of that system? What are the effects of that on a student, on a first-gen kid, the kind of microaggressions and macroaggressions, and just violence in general of the academy? It also celebrates. There’s a lot of love and humor. I’m just trying to complicate the story of a first-gen son of immigrants and his experience in higher education.

The book is designed like a course book. Gentrification is crossed out, because that’s where we start. This is what the community is facing: gentrification. We know what it is; we know it’s a pervasive force in our cities, including EPA. But then, using language, using English, using poetry, to transform our sense of what we can do, now I turn it from gentrification to gentrification — coming from gente elicitation — coming from gente lification — coming from gente...
Palo Alto, wearing these long white tees and sagging pants, looking like a little rebel troublemaker. I had never set foot in Atherton. My first time. I wasn’t sure if it was a place where there’s still such divides — the land of innovation here and the land of scarcity on the other side, it’s really important that we understand how we can grapple with this as a community, that we’re not just having the same people preaching to the converted who are getting fatigued. And that involves raising awareness, advocating, and writing. People say I’m funny — it’s because that’s how I respond to trauma.

In my poetry you’ll see a lot of humor, you’ll see a lot of those kinds of eufled-up moments, but then you’ll laugh. You gotta laugh as a human being.

So what are you working on now? Is it too early to ask if there are other books on the way?

So there’s a couple things I’m working on. I’m writing) about what it’s like being councilman. I want to give people a glimpse into that, but also make sense of all this shit that’s happening.

I’m 27. These things I’m dealing with involve serious money and serious issues. And it’s easy. Like, on Tuesday, we had to talk about the homeless encampment on Beale Street, and I’m dealing with people’s lives. Those are big things to hold.

There’s all these contradictions throughout my life. Poetry allows me to like make sense of all it. It allows me to step back and say, is there beauty? Is there revelation? Is there insight that I can give to my community about myself?

As a poet and politician, how are you juggling your responsibilities? What is your life like right now?

It’s like a hill — there are moments when, going upslope, it’s just really tough. I ask myself, have given enough to the community? Have I voted on this thing? I have to really acknowledge and affirm the support I’ve had in my family. I’m so fulfilled — I’m so full, as a person, as a son, as a citizen, as a partner, as a brother, as a resident, as an elected. I’m advocating the best way I can.

Where can people find your book?

You can go to my publisher directly, fourwaybooks.com, or my website, barriescrite.com.

Email Staff Writer Kate Bradshaw at kbradshaw@almanacnews.com.

So far, two or three teachers that we had that were in McNair for a little bit, but most of my life revolved around East Palo Alto and being a kid there. Black, brown, Polyneesian kids, Latino kids. My encounter with whiteness was in a very wealthy space. There were these things that would happen to me. I had no idea if they were slights against me, people being untoward to me, if they were being disrespectful. And so writing came at a time in my life where I needed to tell my story, because I felt like other people were telling it for me, or they didn’t know my story. Or I just had these frustrations about all these issues.

The reason I’m so invested in advocacy is because at one point in time, I was a 14-year-old kid that thought no one was telling my story. No one was doing justice to what I was going through.

To this day, I’m still trying to make sense of the crazy stuff that I went through as a younger kid. In middle school, there was one point where we didn’t go to school for like a month because we kept having bomb threats. As a kid, we didn’t take it as scary or a violent thing that we’re losing all that education. It was like, ‘Yeah, we don’t go school!’

I think there’s a lot of these things where people who come from EPA, don’t grasp how short-handed we’ve been. I don’t say that to be cynical, I’m saying it because, as Jay-Z says, ‘You can’t deal what you don’t reveal.’ I think we owe it to ourselves to understand.

So little of what we’re going through has to do with our own individual merit. As a city, we don’t have institutionalized systems of wealth. It’s up to us to shape it. But that’s going to be painful; you’re gonna make mistakes.

So writing was a response to all these structural issues, knowing that I bring something unique to this table.

To this day, I’m still trying to make sense of it all. I’m so full, as a human being, as a community, that we’re not just preaching to the converted who are getting fatigued. And that involves raising awareness, advocating, and writing. People say I’m funny — it’s because that’s how I respond to trauma.

In my poetry you’ll see a lot of humor, you’ll see a lot of those kinds of eufled-up moments, but then you’ll laugh. You gotta laugh as a human being.
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Across
1 Regular doofus
2 Spits some bars
3 “The Crown” crown
4 ___ Parker (fashion brand)
5 1998 figure skating gold medalist Kulik
6 Deodorant brand
7 Contestant who may show up seemingly out of nowhere
19 Facts and figures about a flat paddleboat?
21 Noteworthy span
22 Mississauga’s prov.
23 “The Orville” creator MacFarlane
24 Prognosticator
26 “The Matrix Resurrections” star
30 French Polynesia’s capital
31 1950s French president Rene
34 Long stories about a “M*A*S*H” character’s featured instrumental breaks?
38 Quickly
39 Sanctifies, in a way
40 Big name in violins and jet skis
43 “Strange” prefix
44 Physiques
46 “Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings” star Simu
47 Suffix after potent or caliph
52 “Don’t sweat it!”
57 Attendee
58 Davidson of “SNL”
59 Word before workings
60 ‘21 World Series champs
61 River in World War I headlines
62 Megan Thee Stallion song about which Weird Al tweeted: “Just listened to this. Not a very faithful cover version, if you ask me.”

Down
1 Lacking new ideas
2 Job offerer
3 Early earwig?
4 Brendon of Panic! at the Disco
5 One who doesn’t take defeat well
6 Identify with
7 Page— (calendar brand)
8 Falafel holders
9 Quest participant
10 Ski resort near Salt Lake City
11 Gossip
12 Toronto team, casually
15 Completed, in Hollywood parlance
18 90 degrees from norte
20 Genuflection joints
25 “Don’t sweat it”
27 “Mad TV” cast member Paul (the only openly gay cast member at the time)
28 Train station figs.
29 Admin’s domain, for short
30 “Que ___?” (Spanish greeting)
31 Savage of “MythBusters”
32 His items were too big, hard, and hot
34 Jamie Foxx’s Oscar film
35 Specialty of Emo Philips or Milton Jones
36 16-bit hedgehog
38 Quickly
39 Sanctifies, in a way
40 Big name in violins and jet skis
43 “Strange” prefix
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“A Lot of Back and Forth”— here are a few examples, by Matt Jones

Answers on page 21.

Answers on page 21.

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This week’s SUDOKU

Answers on page 21.

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