

Weekly

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special publication



GOODBYE 2020

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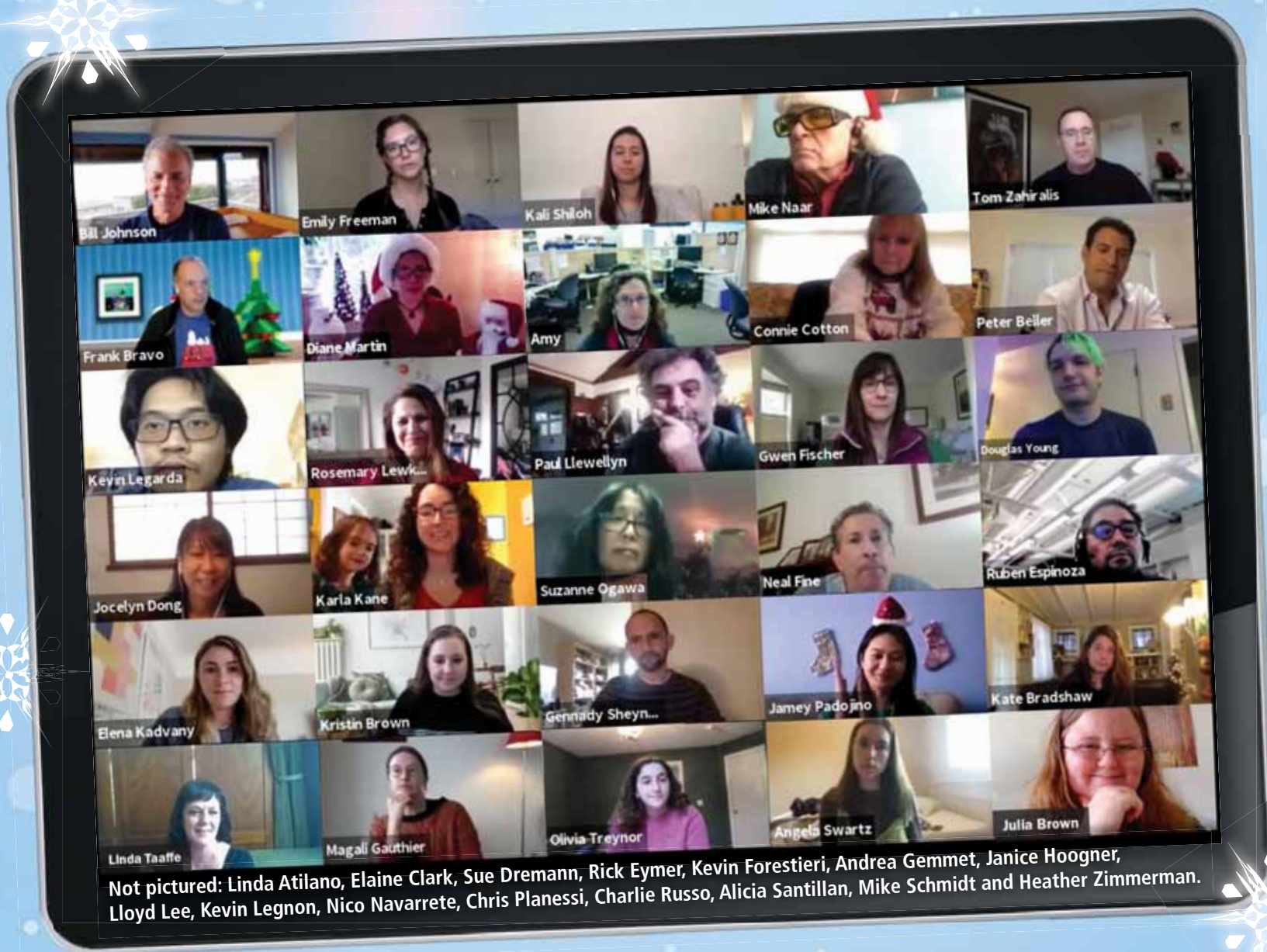
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2020: A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER

Key moments that defined 2020 – and modern history

by Palo Alto Weekly staff

The past 12 months have been historic, life changing and unparalleled and most likely will stand out as key markers in modern history, dividing the pre-COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 eras.

While the first few weeks of January started off fairly uneventfully, by the time the novel coronavirus outbreak was on our local radar, normal life along the Midpeninsula was already over. The unprecedented halt of everyday life came suddenly, and we had no idea how long or how extreme its impacts might be.

We thought the March shelter-in-place orders were only to be for a few weeks, but nine-and-a-half months later, the Midpeninsula remains in a much different place: Telecommuting is the norm; students are distance learning at home; and it's still uncertain when most retail shops, restaurants and theaters may fully reopen.

Amid this life-altering pandemic, 2020 also brought unprecedented fires that burned out of control for 37 days in the hills above Palo Alto and in the greater Bay Area, as well as a month of protests in the streets as residents joined a

national movement calling for social equality and police reforms.

The city found itself in the national spotlight during 2020 for other unbelievable events, including the miraculous rescue of a Palo Alto couple who went missing in the wilderness for nine days.

We witnessed the rise of community heroes: neighbors, merchants, students and retirees armed with ingenuity and selflessness like Palo Alto resident Howard Kushlan, whose one-man effort to lend a hand mobilized dozens of like-minded volunteers to run errands and help those most vulnerable in the community.

There were also elections, bribery scams, high school graduations, the introduction of a new Barron Park donkey and a host of other “normal” community happenings set against this surreal and challenging pandemic backdrop.

As we close 2020, December is a long way from where we started in January. Here is a look at how the year unfolded and evolved into a new normal.

(continued on page 8)



Clockwise from top: Protesters march past the Stanford Theatre on University Avenue in protest of the death of George Floyd and police brutality on June 11; A Palo Alto High School graduate cheers as she hangs out the window of her car during a citywide high school graduation car parade on June 3; A voter fills out their ballot at the Palo Alto Art Center on Nov. 3. Photos by Magali Gauthier.



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Letter from the Editor

Navigating through
this upside-down year

by Jocelyn Dong

Bringing clarity to uncertain, confusing situations is what journalists aim to do. We run toward fires rather than away from them. We dig for information to find out what really influenced governmental proposals. We do our best to sort fact from fiction.

But let's face it: 2020 gave us all a run for our money. From March onward, it was one crisis after another.

The year began innocently enough. We were in high gear in early January preparing for California's primary election, which had been moved to early March, and conducting endorsement interviews with the seven people vying for state Sen. Jerry Hill's seat. Our candidates' debate, held in the Palo Alto Art Center Auditorium to a standing-room-only crowd, followed on Feb. 5. At the time, we didn't give a second thought to the gathering of so many to engage in the democratic process together; today, being able to do so safely would be a cause for celebration.

Of course, even then, the novel coronavirus — as health experts called it before the now-pervasive "COVID" took hold — was sneaking into Santa Clara County. Unknown to us on the night of the debate, the first COVID-19 death in the nation was about to occur the very next day in San Jose. Though part of a journalist's job, ideally, is to get ahead of the news, the full reality of what this pandemic would wreak was dawning on us even as it was on the rest of the community.

The shock of the March 17 shutdown threw our work at the Weekly into disarray, starting with layoffs and furloughs. For the health of our journalists, who are essential workers, the company decided to have them work from home, as much as would be possible. With reporters and editors living in cities from San Francisco to San Jose, that meant we immediately had to switch to more electronic means of news-gathering and communicating. The losses in doing so may not be apparent to the layperson, but being less present in the city and its neighborhoods and less available to meet up with sources in person made it all the more challenging to stay apprised of goings on, check out news tips and collect reliable information.

And yet, our journalists buckled down, kept on task and found new ways to do their jobs.

Chief Visual Journalist Magali Gauthier is one person who

absolutely cannot do her work from home. Once the health order was enacted, she had to risk her personal safety day after day to capture in photos the tremendous shift happening in people's lives, even as she herself was making the same calculations as others to keep herself out of harm's way. With face masks and sanitizer, disinfecting wipes and gloves, and frequent testing for COVID-19, she steadily documented how the virus was impacting the Peninsula.

Since entering anyone's home or even getting close to someone was inadvisable, Magali used her creativity to document moments through windows, from distances and out of doors. Using these approaches, she went everywhere from pop-up COVID-19 testing clinics and struggling retail shops to a mortuary and a busy food bank warehouse. If you haven't seen her collection of photos, "Life under the coronavirus," shot over the past 10 months, go to tinyurl.com/LifeUnderCoronavirus.

The learning curve on our coronavirus coverage, led by reporter Sue Dremann, was steep. But it was only the first of numerous crises to land at our doorstep in 2020, each bringing its own brand of uncertainty. The killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25 led to the eruption of pent-up anger nationally and locally over racial injustice and police brutality. Magali, reporter Lloyd Lee and others on staff hit the streets to capture this unprecedented outpouring of passion and activism. With an eye toward covering not just headline-making protests but actual change, we've followed efforts to dramatically improve policing practices in Palo Alto and Santa Clara County and will continue to do so into the new year.

The community had barely gotten its footing after that when a natural disaster struck in August: Lightning sparked wildfires in the Santa Cruz Mountains. We reported on the mass evacuations of tens of thousands of residents from their mountain homes — made harder for everyone against the backdrop of the pandemic. For the better part of a month, we sought to find as much certainty as we could, looking for indications of whether Palo Alto residents living in the hills would need to evacuate, and whether the fire crews — or the wildfires — were getting the upper hand.

In tandem with the public health menace, the greatest ongoing confusion this year revolved around the education of our kids: from the school district's attempt to keep campuses open before the March shutdown to its sudden about-face

(continued on page 7)



Jocelyn Dong

The Weekly's year-end news quiz

There was more happening in 2020 than just COVID-19. Here are 10 questions to test your recall of the year just ending.



by the Palo Alto Weekly staff

Keeping up with the headlines throughout 2020 was a daunting task for anyone. The trajectory of the COVID-19 disease, outrage over racial injustice and the devastating wildfires kept Palo Alto residents on their toes. As the book closes on 2020, find out how closely you were paying attention to local news with the Weekly's year-end quiz. The answers are on page 20.

- Which tech entrepreneur was spotted on one of Antonio's Nut House's final days of business in August?
 - Mark Zuckerberg
 - Elon Musk
 - The ghost of Steve Jobs
 - Peter Thiel
- Whom did Palo Alto middle schoolers support for president in the November election?
 - Donald Trump
 - Kanye West
 - Joe Biden
 - Elon Musk
- To make the City Auditor's office operate more effectively, the City Council this year did what?
 - Hired a new city auditor after a yearlong recruiting process and a nationwide search
 - Completely dismantled the department and outsourced its functions to a private firm
 - Added two performance auditor positions
 - Adopted a citywide audit plan, highlighting areas that demand special focus
- What noticeable change happened in the California Avenue business district in 2020?
 - With parking no longer an issue during the pandemic, the city stopped enforcing its parking restrictions
 - California Avenue was closed to cars as part of an effort to encourage outdoor dining and give people more space to walk and bike
 - The city completed its largest infrastructure project of the year: a new 636-parking space garage
 - All of the above
- This year, in the primaries, registered Iowa voters were able to participate in a caucus and vote out-of-state in California.
 - True
 - False
- What curiously began flying off store shelves when Palo Altans first realized the seriousness of the coronavirus?
 - Oranges
 - Mint-scented soap bars
 - Earl Grey tea bags
 - Zinc lozenges
- How long did the Black Lives Matter mural stay on Hamilton Avenue?
 - Three weeks
 - Seven days
 - Four months
 - About two months
- Which creatures made an appearance for their mating ritual in the Santa Cruz Mountains this fall?
 - California red-legged frogs
 - Hairy tarantulas
 - Baylands gray foxes
 - California tiger salamanders
- What is the name of Palo Alto's new donkey who moved into Barron Park?
 - Mickey
 - Buddy
 - Clara Belle
 - Shrek
- What musical instrument did residents in Midtown play to encourage their neighbors to come out at 6 p.m. for a "daily wave" when the shutdown was enacted?
 - Vuvuzelas
 - Flugelhorns
 - Kazoos
 - Timpani

Now go to page 20 for the answers!

Letter

(continued from page 6)

under order of the county, from the initial snafus and failures of distance learning to intense emotional debates over reopening.

Even when the district made concrete plans to reopen schools gradually, its inability to bring both teachers and parents along in lockstep made reopening a major issue in the Board of Education election in the fall. Strong feelings on many sides pitted public health risk against declining student well-being. As a community newspaper, we heard all sides of the upset and turmoil among parents, students, teachers, staff and district leaders. Sorting out the knowns from the unknowns and the rumors from the communication breakdowns took hard work on the part of education reporter Elena Kadwany, and the issues are ongoing.

In a normal election year, we would pull out all stops to cover the various races, issues and

candidates. This year was no different, but complicating matters were a relatively new all-mail ballot system, swirling concerns about election fraud and a nationally divisive political atmosphere that prompted us to provide far more explanatory journalism about the voting process than in any prior year.

And what a contrast the fall campaign season was from the March primary. Instead of the crowded state Senate debate at the Art Center, our two debates with the candidates for City Council and Board of Education migrated to Zoom. And instead of endorsement interviews in the publisher's office, we met in our office's garage, where the candidates sat 12 feet away from the nearest masked reporter. Nonetheless, Elena and reporter Gennady Sheyner this election season provided the same in-depth coverage of the candidates and issues on which readers have come to rely.

So it's been a year. As much as all of us want to be past the pandemic, it's worthwhile to pause

and reflect on the end of 2020. It represents a milestone, a point at which we can acknowledge that we're still here, perhaps worse for wear but together in spirit, and with mass vaccinations on the horizon.

In 2021, we hope to be able to return to addressing the larger issues of normal Silicon Valley life, from a continuing housing crisis to the changing business climate to the challenge of restoring civil discourse and tolerance for diverse opinions.

On behalf of all the journalists at the Weekly, I'd like to thank you, our readers, for your ongoing support. It has meant a lot this year. We look forward to coming out from underneath the cloud of the pandemic and working together with you, in person, toward a better community. ■

If you'd like to support the Weekly and local journalism, please visit PaloAltoOnline.com/join.

Weekly Editor Jocelyn Dong can be reached at jdong@paweekly.com.

Answers to this week's puzzles, which can be found on page 23.

B	T	S		C	A	N	A	D	A		F	A	S	T	
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1	2	9	4	6	7	3	5	8
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4	5	6	8	1	3	2	7	9

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A year like no other

(continued from page 5)

JANUARY

Housing advocate becomes mayor

The Palo Alto City Council elects its youngest member and most passionate housing advocate, Adrian Fine, to serve as mayor in 2020. He immediately splits with the rest of the council by supporting the contentious housing bill SB 50.

College Terrace loses another market

After just one year in business, Khoury's Market at Palo Alto's College Terrace Centre announces plans to close, marking the second grocer at 501 Oxford Ave. to shutter in two years.

Nonprofit faces harassment scandal

One of Palo Alto's most visible nonprofit organizations, the Downtown Streets Team, becomes embroiled in a scandal in which its top executives are accused of sexual harassment, creating a hostile work environment and encouraging a drinking culture.

Coronavirus arrives in the Bay Area

The first known case of the novel coronavirus finds its way into the Bay Area in January when a traveler infected with the viral disease arrives in Santa Clara County from Wuhan, China. The case is reported on Jan. 31.

FEBRUARY

Missing couple found alive

In an outcome called a "miracle," search-and-rescue volunteers navigating their way through dense vegetation on Feb. 22 find Palo Alto residents Carol Kiparsky and Ian Irwin about 3 to 4 miles away from their vacation cottage in Marin County, from which they had gone missing nine days earlier. The couple, whom rescuers had lost hope of finding alive, survived on the tops of fiddlehead ferns and a few seeps, or puddles, containing muddy water.

State goes on high alert

Gov. Gavin Newsom puts California on high alert on Feb. 26 after the state identifies 31 people with the coronavirus, quarantined and in various states of health, including two unrelated cases in Santa Clara County.



Hundreds of people wait in line outside of Costco in Mountain View on March 15, just days before the first shelter-in-place order is set to go into effect.

MARCH

First coronavirus death prompts state of emergency

On March 4, the governor declares a state of emergency in response to the first-known California death of a patient with COVID-19. In the Bay Area, San Mateo County reports its first two cases on March 2, and Santa Clara County sees reported cases increase from two on Feb. 28 to 20 by March 6 and indications that the virus is being transferred through contact in the community.

As COVID-19 cases climb, panic ensues

A quiet anxiety grips the Midpeninsula in early March as residents face the possibility that the coronavirus will knock on their doors. People scour grocery and drug stores to prepare to hunker down in their homes in case stores run out of supplies or they find themselves infected and need to go into quarantine.

'THE CURRENT COVID-19 OUTBREAK CLEARLY HAS THE POTENTIAL TO TURN INTO A SEVERE PANDEMIC. ... IT IS IMPORTANT TO **RECOGNIZE HOW DIFFICULT THE TIMES AHEAD MAY BE** AND HOW YOU MUST NOW **TAKE ASSERTIVE ACTION TO PREPARE FOR THEM.** ... COVID-19 IS SPREADING IN OUR COMMUNITY, THE EXTENT OF WHICH IS UNCLEAR. IT HAS LIKELY BEEN SPREADING FOR WEEKS, PERHAPS MONTHS.'

— Dr. Scott Morrow, San Mateo County's health officer, says in a statement on March 5.

Stanford creates rapid coronavirus test

Stanford Health Care develops a test for COVID-19 and begins using it to verify suspected cases of the illness at its hospitals. The announcement of the new test comes as Stanford University discloses on March 5 that it is treating a "few" patients who have tested positive for the virus.

Mass exodus: Stanford asks students to leave campus

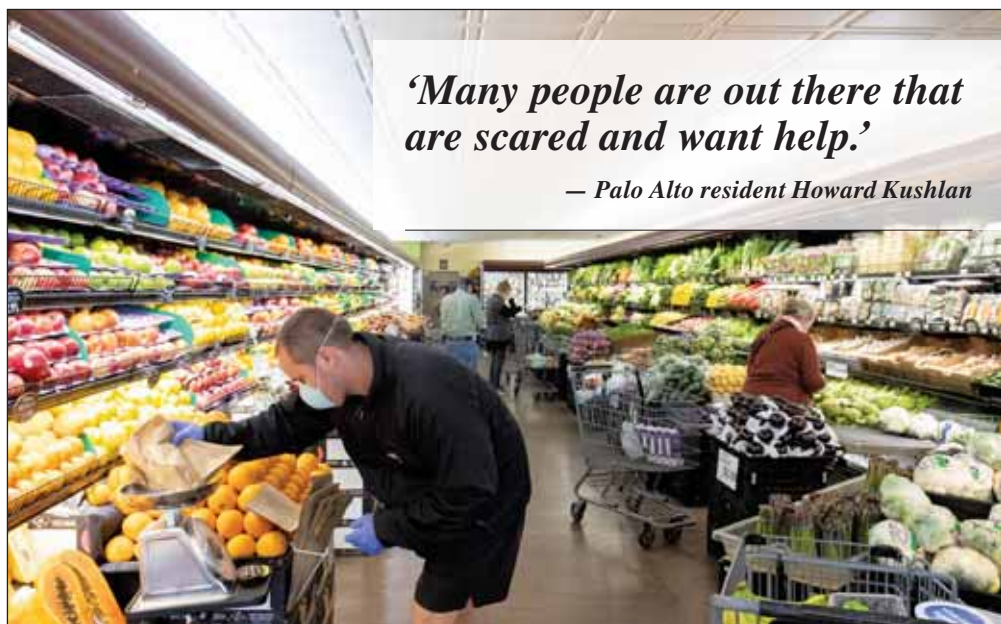
Stanford University becomes the second major U.S. university to cancel in-person classes to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus after already having moved all classes online for the remainder of winter quarter on March 6. Five days later, the university asks its approximately 7,000 undergraduates to vacate the campus by the end of the week and eliminates in-person classes for the upcoming spring quarter. Several other California colleges soon follow suit.

'Definitely, we thought we might die.'

— Carol Kiparsky tells the Weekly while recounting her experience of surviving in the wilderness without food or water.



Palo Alto couple Ian Irwin and Carol Kiparsky made national headlines after search-and-rescue teams found them alive in the wilderness nine days after they went missing.



'Many people are out there that are scared and want help.'

— Palo Alto resident Howard Kushlan

Howard Kushlan weighs some produce at Piazza's Fine Foods in Palo Alto on April 1. Kushlan has organized a group of volunteers who complete tasks like grocery shopping for seniors and other community members at risk during the coronavirus crisis.

Magall Gauthier

Local tech companies find best defense: 'WFH'

Silicon Valley's tech giants give their employees the same message: Work from home. By the end of the first week of March, Google, Facebook, Amazon, SAP and Palantir Technologies implement work-from-home protocols that will last indefinitely.

First death from coronavirus

Santa Clara County announces its first-known coronavirus-related death on March 9: a woman in her 60s with chronic health conditions who had been hospitalized at El Camino Hospital in Mountain View for several weeks. However, in April, county leaders learned that a San Jose woman had died of COVID-19 on Feb. 6, making her death the first in the nation.

A pandemic declared

The World Health Organization (WHO) declares the outbreak of the respiratory illness a pandemic on March 11.

First public health order issued

Santa Clara County issues its first mandatory, legal health order in response to the coronavirus outbreak, banning all events of 1,000 people or more starting on March 11. The directive is the first of its kind in the nation.

Local state of emergency

The city of Palo Alto declares a local state of emergency on March 12, followed by East Palo Alto on March 17.

'It's scary because (I'm) in the high-risk demographic. You don't know how many years you have left anyway, and you don't want to go this way.'

— Millie Chethik, 80, says from her Palo Alto home, where she has been living in voluntary isolation.

Schools are ordered to shut down

Less than 24 hours after Palo Alto district leaders back a plan to keep campuses open, Santa Clara and San Mateo counties announce on March 13 that all public schools will be forced to shut down for three weeks, starting on March 16. By March 17, 98.8% of schools in California have temporarily shuttered.

(continued on page 10)



A classroom at Henry M. Gunn High School in Palo Alto remains empty on April 3.

Magall Gauthier

COMMUNITY

When the going gets tough, call in the community

Whether picking up medications for seniors or launching a rent-relief campaign, locals stepped up to the plate this year to help neighbors in need

by Palo Alto Weekly staff

When Santa Clara County leaders ordered a shutdown on March 17 to protect residents from the novel coronavirus and prevent hospitals from becoming overwhelmed with the sick and the dying, the move sent a shockwave that hit low-income residents particularly hard.

"Unessential" workers who were already struggling to get by — gardeners, child care workers, hairdressers and others — found themselves abruptly incomeless. The unemployment rate in East Palo Alto hit 12.4% by April, or five times the average in April 2019; and even in wealthier Palo Alto, 5.5% of residents were suddenly not receiving a paycheck, up from 2% a year earlier.

The federal government stepped in with the CARES Act to expand unemployment benefits and provide stimulus checks, while cities like Palo Alto and local counties enacted eviction moratoriums to keep people from being turned out onto the streets. But government aid notwithstanding, safety net nonprofits needed to quickly scramble to catch the thousands of residents whose lives had suddenly turned upside down.

Second Harvest Food Bank was deluged in April with seven times the number of calls as it usually receives on its hotline. The food bank went from serving about 270,000 hungry people a month to a half million. The Health Trust's Meals on Wheels program in April started delivering four-and-a-half times the normal number of weekly meals.

A coalition of nonprofits came together to launch the First of the Month campaign, a fundraiser to pay rent for tenants, who are still responsible for eventually paying their landlords. By the end of the year, the three groups — Kafenia Peace Collective, Dreamers Roadmap and Live In Peace — reported raising \$2.3 million to aid 372 families, whose average monthly rent was \$2,000.

If there has been a silver lining in the face of this year's yawning needs, it has been in evidence in the actions of ordinary people who jumped in to do heroic acts of kindness for neighbors and strangers. When hospitals announced they lacked personal protective equipment for frontline workers, local residents with sewing skills immediately pulled out their Singers to churn out masks by the thousands. Individuals bought takeout meals for delivery to exhausted health care workers. A mobile car mechanic offered to give free tuneups to medical professionals, giving them peace of mind during fraught times.

"You have no idea. ... I am so appreciative," said one grateful

recipient of the service who works with the elderly and the infirm and hadn't brought his car to a mechanic for fear of becoming exposed to the coronavirus.

Seniors and other vulnerable residents also were left unmoored by the shutdown. To avoid catching the virus, they curtailed visits to pick up medication, stopped walking their pets and didn't want to call for outside help when household items broke. That's where people like Palo Alto resident Howard Kushlan came in.

Since early March, Kushlan has spent his days helping neighbors as part of a corps of volunteer residents that he unintentionally inspired to take action after sending a call out to those in need on social media.

The Palo Altan now knows the best place to get eggs, where to find Clorox wipes, who's in need of distilled water for their sleep apnea machine, which neighbor has a prescription waiting to be picked up and just about every shopping policy at every food store in Palo Alto.

"I just put a post up saying, 'I'm happy to do whatever you need; if you need groceries, if you need supplies, if you need shopping, whatever,'" Kushlan said. "And then it just sort of caught on. Other people ran with it, and it's taken on a life of its own."

Within the first month of the pandemic, Kushlan's post inspired more than 200 residents from well beyond his downtown neighborhood to join in and volunteer to help vulnerable residents throughout the community. That number has held steady since March.

Through a Google Doc that he set up, people can add new requests for assistance or remove requests that have been fulfilled.

"It's awesome. People just go in and get things done," he said.

Over the months, he's seen an increase in delivery requests from seniors, most of whom have been living in isolation, he said.

"There's a lot of uncertainty, and so many people are out there that are scared and want help," said Kushlan, who grew up in Palo Alto and now runs Crux, a marketing and political consulting firm.

For Thanksgiving, determined to feed both stomachs and spirits, he and volunteers delivered dinners to shut-ins.

Kushlan said that one good thing that's come from this experience is that he's gotten to know his neighbors.

"In times like these, you have to step outside your comfort zone, and that's when people's best is brought out," he said. ■

EDUCATION

Pandemic turns 'education on its ear'

With campus reopenings in limbo, students pivot to online learning

by Elena Kadvany

On Friday, March 13, Palo Alto students and teachers left their campuses for what they thought would be a three-week closure to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus.

They couldn't have known that an unparalleled disruption to education was taking root, and that nine months later many of them would still be learning from home on their computer screens.

"The virus has turned education on its ear across the entire nation," Superintendent Don Austin said. "In time, I would like to look back at the year as a point when we built and exhibited resilience in the face of never-ending challenges in areas largely beyond our control and expertise."

The pandemic forced schools that had only dabbled in remote learning to become full online operations overnight. Many parents became de facto home-school teachers. Administrators rushed to purchase hundreds of bottles of hand sanitizer and industrial-grade air purifiers while managing intense fear and division in the community. Parents, teachers and students stayed up late week after week to voice their concerns about school closures to the Board of Education over Zoom — both those who staunchly opposed reopening and those desperate for in-person support.

It was an emotional year for the school community, exacerbated by constantly changing public health restrictions that frustrated the school leaders, who frequently had to scrap plans put in place just days before, and teachers and parents who felt that communication from the district was neither transparent nor swift enough.

Campuses initially closed that Friday in mid-March, less than 24 hours after Palo Alto school officials had backed a plan to keep campuses open but offer limited online learning alternatives to students who chose to stay home. Leaders had expected to reopen after spring break but by April 1, all 32 of Santa Clara County's school district superintendents and the county superintendent of schools signed a joint letter agreeing their campuses would be closed for the rest of the school year.

Many agreed the spring months' education amounted to "crisis learning" that was not at the level that both parents and schools expected.

By summer, opposition was mounting among teachers as the district and teachers union negotiated working conditions for reopening schools in the fall. The union sent what would be the first of several open letters lobbying the school board to delay a return to in-person instruction. The board for months held fast to its support for bringing students back to school in person as soon and as safely as possible, particularly students without help at home or who struggle with remote learning.

And in July, the announcement from Gov. Gavin Newsom that public and private schools in counties on the state's

coronavirus watch list could not reopen for in-person instruction until they've been off the list for 14 days threw another wrench into the district's plans to reopen elementary schools the next month.

The new school year started in August fully online, and heated debate continued over whether and how to reopen schools. By September, the district was able to reopen some campuses to serve students who had been identified as struggling academically or who needed quiet, supportive places to learn, as well as some students with disabilities. The next month, a staggered reopening of the elementary schools began and families who wanted their students to learn in person could choose a hybrid option.

The district's youngest students returned to campuses that looked and felt vastly different, with desks separated by clear plastic barriers, mask requirements and socially distanced recess. The district started publicly reporting COVID-19 cases among students and staff and created contact-tracing teams. Roughly 2,100 students returned to in-person instruction.

Emblematic of the unpredictability of this year, the district's plan to reopen the middle and high schools in January was disrupted by the state's new regional stay-at-home order, which took effect in Santa Clara County in early December. Under the order, schools that are already opened for in-person instruction can remain open; however, the district quickly realized there was "no viable path" to reopening the middle and high schools as planned, raising the possibility that some students will go more than a year without returning to in-person learning.

The district is now discussing ideas for on-campus activities for small groups of high schoolers that could start in January and bringing back sixth graders for in-person instruction in mid-March. At the state level, the pending Assembly Bill 10 would require public schools to reopen in stages by early spring depending on the public health data in their counties. And the California Teachers Association is pushing for teachers to be vaccinated early, after health care workers.

The coronavirus was the theme of the November school board campaign, as was eroding trust in the school community, which motivated several candidates to run. When the votes were tallied, incumbents Jennifer DiBrienza and Todd Collins won reelection and parent Jesse Ladomirak was elected to her first term.

In 2021, the newly constituted board will be facing more fraught reopening decisions and the difficult work of sustaining real focus on central issues such as closing the achievement gap and student mental health — while the long-term impacts, both academic and social-emotional, of extended school closures largely remain to be seen. ■



Claire Cheng, a Gunn High School senior, participates in a student-led tutoring session on Zoom from her home in Palo Alto.

A year like no other

(continued from page 5)

Santa Clara County ramps up health restrictions

In addition to closing schools, Santa Clara County's new legal directive issued on March 13 bans gatherings of more than 100 people and puts a conditional moratorium on smaller gatherings of 35 to 100 people. The restrictions come as the county announces its second coronavirus death and sees its cases increase three-fold within five days. The county now accounts for more than a quarter of California's 277 cases.

'These are tough decisions and we have to make them quickly. ... We anticipate many, many more cases in the days and weeks to come.'

— Santa Clara County Health Officer Dr. Sara Cody says during a press conference on Friday, March 13.

Residents ordered to stay home

Bay Area public health officials shut down all non-essential businesses effective March 17 and order residents of six Bay Area counties, including Santa Clara and San Mateo, to stay at home for three weeks. People can only go outside their homes for

necessities such as grocery shopping or to pick up medication — all the while keeping 6 feet apart from each other.

California shuts down

Gov. Gavin Newsom issues a statewide shelter-in-place order effective March 20, shutting down all but essential functions in response to grim state predictions that 56% of the state's 40 million Californians could become infected by the new coronavirus in the next two months.

Overnight, the Midpeninsula turns into a ghost town

On the first day of the shelter-in-place order, traffic drops by 50% on Bay Area roads and Caltrain ridership plummets 90%. Within days, hotel occupancy rates in Palo Alto decline from 80% to below 20%, and by the end of the month, the leisure and hospitality industry reports 12,100 job losses in the north and south bay combined. To survive the forced closures, mom-and-pop eateries and fine-dining kitchens alike pivot to delivery and takeout. Some owners become their own delivery drivers or turn their restaurants into drive-thru grocery stores.

Communities fight to stave off mass evictions

Santa Clara and San Mateo counties put moratoriums in place before April rents are due to stave off mass residential and small business evictions amid mounting wage losses and economic hardship caused by the pandemic. Palo Alto, Mountain View and Menlo Park pass their own urgency ordinances to provide additional protections.



Midtown residents Tom Culbertson, right, and his son, Owen Longstreth, play vuvuzelas to signal to their neighbors it is time to come out for the "daily wave" — an effort to maintain some semblance of a connection during the shelter-in-place mandate.

'IT MAY TURN OUT TO BE THAT THE ECONOMIC IMPACT IS MORE SERIOUS THAN THE ACTUAL HEALTH IMPACT TO THE VAST MAJORITY (OF PEOPLE).'

— Peter Katz, owner of local burger chain *The Counter*, says just after the shutdown.



Testing tents pop up

Stanford Health Care erects coronavirus testing tents in Menlo Park and on the Stanford University campus in mid-March in anticipation of more people coming down with the virus. (As of March 24, 27,650 tests had been conducted statewide, according to Gov. Gavin Newsom.)

School closures extended

Local county health officers and school superintendents announce on March 26 that hundreds of public schools in six Bay Area counties, including Santa Clara and San Mateo, will remain closed through May 1. Five days later, the state cancels in-person classes for the rest of the school year. Students move to remote learning from computers at home.

Emergency funds created, depleted

An urgent need for emergency assistance among residents who unexpectedly find themselves out of work as a result of COVID-19 health restrictions takes the community by surprise when a \$11.2 million financial assistance program launched by Santa Clara County to help out-of-work residents runs out in two days.

Regional health order extended

The regional shelter-in-place health order that includes Santa Clara and San Mateo counties is extended until May 3 as COVID-19 cases continue to increase. Santa Clara County emerges as the epicenter of the outbreak in the Bay Area with the number of cases rising from 138 on March 17, when the first health order took effect, to 890 on March 31 when it is extended. The number of deaths climbs from three to 30 in the same period.

'OUR HOSPITALS ARE BEGINNING TO FILL WITH COVID-19 PATIENTS. WE NEED MORE TIME.'

— Santa Clara County Health Officer *Dr. Sara Cody* says during a press conference on March 31.



With social-distancing rules in place, synagogues and churches throughout the Peninsula devise creative ways to virtually connect during Passover and Easter Week, including AME Zion Church in Palo Alto, where the Rev. Kaloma Smith delivers an Easter Sermon via live stream on April 12.

APRIL

Hospitals brace for equipment shortages

Hospitals brace for a shortage of masks, gowns, respirators and other critical protective equipment, prompting overwhelming community response from individuals and groups such as the Palo Alto-based nonprofit *WizChinese*, which donates more than 50,000 masks to hospitals, first responders and senior care facilities.

'I didn't get to say goodbye to them. I'm ... not getting to savor that last bit of time that we're supposed to have!'

— Gunn High School senior *Liza Kolbasov* says of her classmates, after the district decided to keep classes online for the rest of the academic year.

COVID testing falls short

Santa Clara County needs to be able to test roughly 4,000 people per day for COVID-19 before the stay-at-home order can be relaxed, County Executive Jeff Smith tells the Board of Supervisors on May 5. As of the previous week, the county had reached only about 1,000 tests per day, Smith confirms.

Stores open for curbside pickup

San Mateo County allows book stores, florists, clothing stores, toy shops and other retailers to open with curbside pickup on May 18, joining a wave of Bay Area counties beginning to transition into the second phase of reopening. Santa Clara County, one of the last to begin reopening, allows curbside pickup on May 22.

(continued on page 14)



Second Harvest of Silicon Valley volunteers *Hana Urst* and *Steven Jing* place packaged food in the trunk of a client's car at the *Avenidas Rose Kleiner Center* in Mountain View on June 16.

Food banks see surging need

Less than a month after the pandemic brings the Bay Area to a halt in March, local food banks report an astronomical rise in requests for food. *Second Harvest of Silicon Valley* is receiving seven times the usual number of calls to its hotline and begins providing food to more than a half million people in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties each month.

MAY

Residents ordered to stay home indefinitely

Bay Area leaders predict a local spike in COVID-19 cases during the summer and roll out new health orders on May 4 that extend shelter-in-place regulations indefinitely. But they allow construction workers, gardeners and outdoor retailers that can accommodate physical distancing to reopen in the six Bay Area counties, plus Berkeley.



William Warrior, Palo Alto's animal control officer for 40 years, shares a tender moment with his dog, *Lilly*, at the animal shelter in Palo Alto on April 28 before retiring at the end of the month.



Support our Kids with a gift to the Holiday Fund

Last Year's Grant Recipients

49ers Academy.....	\$20,000
Able Works.....	\$5,000
Acknowledge Alliance (Cleo Eulau).....	\$5,000
Ada's Café.....	\$5,000
Adolescent Counseling Services.....	\$7,500
All Students Matter.....	\$15,000
Art in Action.....	\$5,000
Art of Yoga.....	\$5,000
Bayshore Christian Ministries.....	\$5,000
Big Brothers Big Sisters.....	\$5,000
Buena Vista Homework Club (Caritas).....	\$10,000
CASA of San Mateo County.....	\$5,000
CASSY.....	\$10,000
DreamCatchers.....	\$20,000
East Palo Alto Academy Foundation.....	\$7,500
East Palo Alto Kids Foundation.....	\$10,000
East Palo Alto Library (formerly Quest).....	\$5,000
East Palo Alto Tennis & Tutoring.....	\$10,000
Ecumenical Hunger Program.....	\$10,000
Environmental Volunteers.....	\$5,000
Family Connections.....	\$5,000
Fit Kids Foundation.....	\$5,000
Foundation for a College Education.....	\$7,500
Friends of Junior Musuem & Zoo.....	\$5,000
Health Connected.....	\$5,000
Heart and Home Collaborative.....	\$15,000
Hidden Villa.....	\$5,000
Jasper Ridge Farm.....	\$5,000
Kara.....	\$7,500
Live in Peace.....	\$5,000
Marine Science Institute.....	\$5,000
Music in the Schools Foundation.....	\$5,000
Musikiwest.....	\$5,000
New Voices for Youth (Social Good Fund).....	\$3,000
Nuestra Casa.....	\$7,500
Palo Alto Art Center Foundation.....	\$5,000
Palo Alto Housing.....	\$5,000
Palo Alto Music Connection.....	\$5,000
Peninsula Bridge Program.....	\$5,000
Peninsula College Fund.....	\$5,000
Peninsula Volunteers.....	\$5,000
Ravenswood Education Foundation.....	\$7,500
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Rise Together Education.....	\$10,000
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St. Francis of Assisi Youth Club.....	\$5,000
TheatreWorks.....	\$5,000
Vista Center for Blind & Visually Impaired.....	\$5,000
WeHOPE.....	\$15,000
YMCA - EPA.....	\$10,000
YMCA - PA Family.....	\$5,000
Youth Community Service.....	\$20,000
Youth Speaks Out.....	\$10,000

Child Care Facility Improvement Grants

Gatepath (Abilities United).....	\$5,000
All Five.....	\$10,000
Grace Lutheran Preschool.....	\$5,000
The Learning Center.....	\$5,000
Palo Alto Community Child Care.....	\$10,000
Palo Alto Friends Nursery School.....	\$6,000
Parents Nursery School.....	\$5,000
High school scholarships.....	\$8,000

Non-profits: Grant application & guidelines at
PaloAltoOnline.com/holiday_fund
Application deadline: January 11, 2021

Each 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.

And with the generous support of matching grants from local foundations, including the Packard, Hewlett, Peery and Arrillaga foundations, your tax-deductible gift will be doubled in size. A donation of \$100 turns into \$200 with the foundation matching gifts.

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

With your generosity, we can give a major boost to the programs in our community helping kids and families.

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

As of December 29, 385 donors have contributed \$487,076 to the Palo Alto Weekly Holiday Fund.

35 Anonymous.....\$269,145

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All donors and their gift amounts will be published in the Palo Alto Weekly unless the boxes below are checked.

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* Donor did not want to publish the amount of the gift.

Changes or corrections to listings may be made by contacting Kali Shiloh at kshiloh@paweeekly.com.

Upfront

News Digest

Anonymous donor gives \$250K to Holiday Fund

The Palo Alto Weekly Holiday Fund has received a \$250,000 gift from an anonymous donor, setting a new record for the annual grant program that benefits needy families, children and individuals on the Midpeninsula.

Following another recent \$100,000 anonymous donation from a Palo Alto family that has contributed to the fund each year since 2011, this second large donation will push the Weekly's Holiday Fund past its \$400,000 goal, according to Palo Alto Weekly Publisher Bill Johnson.

The Holiday Fund is a 28-year-old tradition dedicated to aiding local nonprofits in serving the community. Since its inception, the program has raised and distributed more than \$7.6 million.

The anonymous donor also contributed \$100,000 to the Holiday Fund of the Almanac, the Weekly's sister publication. ■

—Palo Alto Weekly staff

City funds mobile medical clinic for vaccines

Seeking to boost the city's ability to distribute COVID-19 vaccines and provide medical services to low-income residents, the Palo Alto City Council approved \$354,550 last week for a mobile clinic that will be operated by the Ravenswood Family Health Network.

The new mobile clinic is being funded through the federal Community Development Block Grant program, with \$150,000 from Sutter Health.

Ravenswood, an East Palo Alto-based nonprofit, will work with other health providers on COVID-19 testing and vaccinations. After the pandemic, Ravenswood will use the mobile clinic to provide other health services. The clinic will be in Palo Alto at least two days a week, Luisa Buada, CEO of Ravenswood Family Health Network, said at the Dec. 23 meeting.

Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian, who helped to coordinate the grant from the city to Ravenswood, told the council: "Historically, there has been a challenge for providing health care to folks of modest means in the north county." ■

—Gennady Sheyner

Self-administered COVID-19 testing launches

Palo Altans now have another, more convenient option for COVID-19 testing: The city is providing free, self-administered tests at a pop-up booth in the Mitchell Park Library parking lot at 3700 Middlefield Road.

The testing booth debuted on Tuesday, Dec. 29, and will be there every Tuesday and also every other Wednesday starting Jan. 13 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., the city announced.

Curative, a local COVID-19 testing company, hosts the kiosk where people can self-administer the test by using an oral swab. Participants cough deeply three or four times, swab various areas inside their mouths and put the swab in a vial that is deposited in a biohazard bag. They return the bag to an on-site Curative worker, according to the company.

The results usually come back in 24 to 48 hours, but due to high demand might take as long as 72 hours, the company noted this week. The test has a 90% accuracy rate, according to Curative.

People can sign-up for an appointment at cur.tv/MitchellPark.

The testing supplements the existing bimonthly, appointment-only tests currently offered at Mitchell Park Community Center by Santa Clara County. For information, go to cityofpaloalto.org/testing. ■

—Sue Dremann

Public Agenda

A preview of Palo Alto government meetings next week

CITY COUNCIL ... The council will hold a swearing-in ceremony for four members: Pat Burt, Lydia Kou, Greer Stone and Greg Tanaka. The council will also elect a mayor and vice mayor and pass resolutions of appreciation for outgoing council members Adrian Fine and Liz Kniss. The virtual meeting will begin at 6 p.m. on Jan. 4. Those wishing to participate by Zoom can do so by dialing 669-900-6833 and using Meeting ID: 362 027 238.

UTILITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE ... The commission plans to discuss the projected impacts of electrification on gas rates and discuss the lifecycle emissions for gasoline, natural gas and electricity consumed in Palo Alto. The virtual meeting will begin at 4 p.m. on Jan. 6. Those wishing to participate by Zoom can do so by dialing 669-900-6833 and using Meeting ID: 966 9129 7246.

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD ... The board plans to hold a virtual meeting at 8:30 a.m. on Jan. 7. Those wishing to participate by Zoom can do so by dialing 669-900-6833 and using Meeting ID: 990 0735 9509. The meeting agenda was not available by press time.

Osei Johnson, 9, kneels with other protesters during a moment of silence in front of Palo Alto City Hall on June 1.



Magali Gauthier

A year like no other

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JUNE

Outrage over police brutality and racism spills onto the streets

Starting on June 1, thousands of residents take to the streets in Palo Alto, East Palo Alto and Menlo Park during multiple peaceful protests against police brutality and racism in the wake of the death of George Floyd, a Black man suffocated on a Minneapolis street while in custody of police the previous week. His death prompted a month of protests nationwide.

'THIS CITY, THIS COUNTRY, IS WAY TOO COMFORTABLE WITH BLACK PEOPLE BEING UNCOMFORTABLE.'

— Student Cleo Goodwin says during a Palo Alto rally on June 6.

City lifts short-lived curfew after backlash

Less than 48 hours after imposing a nighttime curfew for June 2-11, Palo Alto City Manager Ed Shikada lifts it in the face of community backlash. Using his powers under the city's coronavirus emergency declaration, he had ordered the curfew to protect commercial districts and neighborhoods from potential criminal activity predicted to take place concurrently with Black Lives Matter protests.

Outdoor dining and limited indoor services resume

Churches, retailers and restaurants that offer outdoor dining are allowed to start welcoming back patrons on June 5 in Santa Clara County and on June 6 in San Mateo County under revised health orders that allow for outdoor dining and limited indoor services.

Schools plan for 'hybrid learning' in the fall

After weeks of uncertainty about the fate of student learning amid the pandemic, the California Department of Education on June 8 releases suggested guidelines for the reopening of schools in the fall that focus heavily on physical distancing in classrooms and creating smaller cohorts of students who are on campus at any given time. Local school districts unveil various plans to reopen with hybrid models that include a mix of online and in-school classes.

Outdoor dining moves into the streets

People enjoy their first sit-down restaurant meals in nearly three months after Mountain View, Menlo Park and Palo Alto each close major streets in their downtowns to traffic to make room for outdoor dining areas and shops starting in mid-June as part of an effort to support local businesses during the ongoing shelter-in-place order.



Magali Gauthier

Diners eat at tables along California Avenue in Palo Alto on June 25.

'There is importance around returning to some form of normalcy, and normalcy does not look like what we're doing right now.'

— Palo Alto Unified School District Superintendent Don Austin says at a mid-June board meeting regarding plans to reopen campuses in the fall.

Community Event

Wish hearing aids sounded better?

Join us to learn why Earlens®, a revolutionary new hearing solution, was recently named a top 100 Invention for 2020 by Time Magazine. Unlike conventional hearing aids, the Earlens solution uses a small lens to directly vibrate the eardrum – delivering the broadest frequency range available for clear, natural sound.



Join us for our upcoming webinar:
An Exciting Alternative to Hearing Aids
Tuesday January, 13th at 11am

Register at: <http://earlensevents.com/EHCwebinar0113print>



‘It was wonderful to put food on plates, drinks in real glasses and serve our guests. ... The first big exhale in awhile.’

— *La Bodeguita del Medio on California Avenue posts on Instagram during the first weekend of Palo Alto’s Summer Streets dining program.*

New Sheriff reforms

Following public outcry and protests urging police reform, the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors votes unanimously on June 23 to adopt a proposal requiring the Sheriff’s Office to implement several policy reforms and consider other recommendations in an effort to reduce police violence and excessive use of force.

Fearing lawsuit, city allows President Hotel conversion

In a dramatic about-face, the Palo Alto City Council agrees on June 23 to approve the conversion of the iconic President Hotel on University Avenue from an apartment complex to a boutique hotel.

Santa Clara County added to COVID-19 watchlist

Santa Clara County records its second-highest single-day COVID-19 case count — 122 — on June 23, raising concerns about the trajectory of the virus and causing the state to issue a notification that the county is on a “watchlist” because of the increase. (Counties on the watchlist have not met the state’s benchmarks for reopening, which are determined by positive case rates, hospitalizations and capacity.)

JULY

Palo Alto makes grim budget cuts

Faced with enormous anticipated budget shortfalls in the upcoming fiscal year due to the economic shutdown, Midpeninsula cities begin to slash their budgets. Palo Alto

authorizes over \$40 million in cuts, including the elimination of its shuttles program, and agrees to eliminate more than 70 City Hall positions, dropping the staffing level to under 1,000 for the first time in at least two decades, according to city staff.

Black Lives Matter mural sparks national debate

A temporary, 245-foot-long and 17-foot-wide Black Lives Matter street mural in front of Palo Alto City Hall commissioned by the city’s Public Art Program to bring awareness to racism and police brutality makes national headlines in July when the National Police Association asks the city to remove a portion of the mural that contains an image of Joanne Chesimard, a civil rights activist in the Black Liberation Army who escaped prison and fled to Cuba after being convicted of killing a New Jersey State Police trooper in the 1970s.

Stanford to reopen with fewer students

Stanford announces on July 1 that it will reopen in the fall with travel restrictions, fewer students on campus and primarily online instruction.

‘A Stanford University education will look vastly different when the fall quarter begins.’

— *President Marc Tessier-Lavigne and Provost Persis Drell announce on July 1.*

State and county clash over restaurant reopenings

An unexpected clash between the state’s and Santa Clara County’s health orders puts Palo Alto restaurants on high alert over the Fourth of July holiday weekend after state officials tell south county restaurants that outdoor dining isn’t allowed. Palo Alto police warn the city’s eateries that the same directives could be given here. On July 6, the state gives Santa Clara County the go-ahead to proceed with its plan to further reopen the economy.

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SOCIAL JUSTICE

City confronts its own racism

Global movement of protests comes to Palo Alto, challenging city to reform systemic racism

by Lloyd Lee

Despite the raging COVID-19 pandemic, thousands took to the streets in Palo Alto, East Palo Alto, Mountain View and Menlo Park in early June as part of a nationwide call for racial justice and police reform following the death of George Floyd, a Black man who was suffocated on a Minneapolis street while in the custody of police. His death was the third high-profile case within a month involving the death of a Black person at the hands of police officers and became the tipping point for the global movement of Black Lives Matter protests.

The month-long demonstrations, which began along the Midpeninsula on June 1, marked the largest outdoor gatherings following the shelter-in-place orders that went into effect in March. By their very presence, residents made it clear that systemic racism was an issue too urgent to allow to continue.

Ayinde Olukotun, a Menlo School graduate who co-organized a four-mile march through Palo Alto, said she couldn’t ignore how Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin suffocated Floyd for 8 minutes and 46 seconds — a timestamp that protesters later used as the length for their moments of silence. The march attracted thousands to Palo Alto, including U.S. Rep. Anna Eshoo, Palo Alto Mayor Adrian Fine, Menlo Park Mayor Cecilia Taylor, East Palo Alto Mayor Regina Wallace-Jones, author and activist Julie Lythcott-Haims, Golden State Warriors’ Stephen Curry and former judge LaDoris Cordell, and called attention to harmful police policies and entrenched racial problems within the Midpeninsula.

Testimonies from Black residents and community leaders about their experiences in school or interactions with local law enforcement shattered the illusion that Palo Alto was a progressive city without racism. Their experiences exposed that Palo Alto still has a lot more work to do if it wants to achieve social equality.

With mounting public pressure, Palo Alto City Council responded swiftly: On top of a symbolic resolution to affirm that Black lives matter, the city pledged to re-examine its police department policies and consider the “8 Can’t Wait” campaign, which outlines law-enforcement standards aimed at reducing police violence; approved a temporary Black Lives Matter mural installation, arguably in record time, to be placed in front of City Hall; and revisited the decadeslong, controversial policy restricting nonresidents from using the 1,400-acre city-owned Foothills Park.

Though calls to defund the police completely were denied and some policy proposals were challenged by various residents, Palo Alto made significant strides in the months following the local Black Lives Matter protests.

In August, after another incident of police brutality caught national attention with the shooting of Jacob Blake, the council moved to adopt several police department policy revisions recommended by the Human Relations Commission.

These policy changes included specifying the types of de-escalation techniques officers must use to avoid violence, banning several types of strangleholds and expanding its use-of-force policy, clarifying that “all options would be exhausted before shooting.”

City Council members agreed in November to also increase police oversight by possibly

expanding the independent police auditor’s ability to review certain internal complaints related to harassment, discrimination or retaliation. If implemented next year, the decision would reverse the council’s December 2019 vote to remove this duty from the auditor’s scope.

In the same November meeting, the council also agreed to explore a new program that would give some calls now handled by armed officers to mental health professionals instead, a move intended to resolve situations for which standard police training in de-escalation may not be adequate.

This year also saw another reversal: the charging of former police Sergeant Wayne Benitez, who retired in October 2019 after the city was sued over Benitez’s alleged excessive use of force in arresting resident Gustavo Alvarez. At the time, City Manager Ed Shikada refused to disclose whether Benitez’s exit was a termination or voluntary.

“We don’t comment on circumstances,” Shikada said.

The District Attorney’s Office initially declined to pursue charges against Benitez but then told news outlets in June that it was re-considering the case.

“Peace officers who use more force than necessary hurt more than the person they are trying to arrest. They damage the deservedly excellent reputations of the vast majority of officers who work every shift to help people. And they strain the bonds with their communities who expect and deserve that police officers will protect and serve them fairly and professionally,” District Attorney Jeff Rosen said in the statement.

If convicted of assault under the color of authority and lying on a police report, Benitez could face up to two years in jail, the District Attorney’s Office said.

In addition to police reform, the city decided to scrap a newly approved pilot program allowing a limited number of nonresidents access to Foothills Park and opened the preserve to the public on Dec. 17, after the American Civil Liberties Union, NAACP and a group of residents filed a lawsuit, alleging that the nature preserve’s 1965 resident-only law violated nonresidents’ rights to travel, free speech and free assembly, and stemmed from the city’s history of racial discrimination. A group of residents launched a petition to put the nonresident ban to a vote and maintain the policy in the interim but failed to collect about 2,600 signatures needed by the Dec. 16 deadline.

While the city made some important steps toward achieving racial justice, more remain on the city’s agenda awaiting completion.

The city is still looking to have its law enforcement agency join Santa Clara County’s Psychiatric Emergency Response Team program, which would help police officers determine which calls involve mental health issues. Talks to hire more community service officers who can answer low-level calls, such as car accidents involving no injuries, continue. And calls for increased transparency from the police department remain to be answered.

With the temporary Black Lives Matter mural removed, the city also hopes to install something more permanent at King Plaza, which is named after monumental civil rights leaders Martin Luther King Jr. and his wife, Coretta Scott King. ■



An aerial view of the temporary Black Lives Matter mural on Hamilton Avenue shows images that the 16 artists created in each letter of the art piece.

Courtesy Benny Villareal

PUBLIC HEALTH

The virus that changed everything

In an instant, a pandemic reshapes life on the Midpeninsula

by Linda Taaffe

In early March, local health officials began to sound the alarm on the novel coronavirus, a respiratory disease that had made its way into the Bay Area in January and was starting to spread within the community.

“It is important to recognize how difficult the times ahead may be and how you must now take assertive action to prepare for them,” Dr. Scott Morrow, San Mateo County’s health officer, warned residents on March 5 as Bay Area counties began rolling out the country’s first legal directives limiting the size of social gatherings after the state reported its first-known coronavirus death the previous day.

By March 17, those words began to resonate when Bay Area public health officials shut down all non-essential businesses in six counties, including Santa Clara and San Mateo, and residents were ordered to stay at home for three weeks. A statewide shutdown followed three days later after virus projections showed that 56% of California’s 40 million residents could become infected by the new coronavirus within two months.

Overnight, the Midpeninsula turned into a ghost town: On the first day of the shelter-in-place order, traffic dropped by 50% on Bay Area roads and Caltrain ridership dropped 90%. Within days, hotel occupancy rates in Palo Alto declined from 80% to below 20%, and by the end of the month, the leisure and hospitality industry reported 12,100 job losses in the north and south bay combined. Local tech companies told employees to work from home indefinitely, and Stanford University shifted classes online and asked its approximately 7,000 undergraduates to vacate the campus by March 20.

In the wake of the swift and uncontrolled spread of COVID-19, local medical centers, pharmaceutical companies and health officials accelerated the development of new health protocols, testing methods and treatments to stop this mysterious virus.

Stanford Health Care was among the first to roll out a diagnostic test approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration that rapidly identified people with the illness within 12 to 24 hours. Stanford announced on March 5 that it would be using the new coronavirus test in-house to verify suspected cases of the illness at its hospitals after officials confirmed that the health center was treating a “few” patients who tested positive for the disease.

Palo Alto resident Monica Yeung-Arima, who returned home infected with the virus after traveling to Egypt, was among the earliest patients to be screened for COVID-19 with Stanford’s new test kit. Doctors met her in the parking lot at Palo Alto Medical Foundation’s urgent care clinic and whisked her into a room for an exam. Days later, she became one of the first people in the nation diagnosed with COVID-19 to be treated with the clinical-trial antiviral drug remdesivir that Foster City biopharmaceutical research company Gilead Sciences Inc. had developed to treat Ebola. After five days of treatment, she began to feel better and was

released from the hospital.

By the end of March, Bay Area cities took up the mantle to test their first responders, health care workers and members of the public using technology from Menlo Park company Avelino. The testing drive-thrus launch with the city of Hayward. City and public health leaders said the testing sites were intended to take pressure off hospital emergency rooms and improve the region’s ability to suppress new transmissions through isolation after testing. Stanford Health Care also set up testing tents in Menlo Park and on Stanford University campus in anticipation of more people coming down with the virus. By March 24, according to Gov. Gavin Newsom, 27,650 tests had been conducted statewide.

Despite pop-up testing sites, Santa Clara County hospitals continued to lag in testing, prompting Santa Clara County to issue a new order on June 10 requiring hospitals and clinics to test at least three categories of people: patients within their systems who have COVID-19 symptoms, have been exposed to COVID-19, or who need to be tested frequently because they are at higher risk of exposure through their work in health care or at a grocery store.

After cases continued to spike over the ensuing months, the state unveiled a new COVID-19 tracking system in August to create a more stringent process to determine when counties can move forward with indoor business operations. Santa Clara County found itself placed in the most restrictive tier, indicating widespread transmission.

Three months later, with vaccines on the horizon, Newsom ordered a statewide curfew prohibiting all non-essential work, movement and gathering between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m.

“This pandemic is like a high-speed train, and our projections tell us that we are on target to derail by the third week of December if we don’t apply brakes right now with all our collective might,” Santa Clara County Health Officer Dr. Sara Cody said while unveiling the new mandatory health directives.

As 2020 comes to an end, there still is no clear end to the crisis. Over the past nine months, the county’s shelter-in-place order has been extended twice and reinstated as recently as December. Residents have become accustomed to exchanging tips on how to get tested for the coronavirus and how long it’ll take to receive results. Restaurants, retailers and service providers continue to teeter back and forth between limited indoor operations and curbside and outdoor-only services to a full halt in some cases, and schools remain unclear on when campuses will be allowed to fully reopen.

As of Dec. 29, the county reported 67,423 cumulative cases of COVID-19 and 673 deaths.

The first 5,850 doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine, which arrived in Santa Clara County at about 7:30 a.m. on Dec. 15, heralded what battle-weary public health leaders called “a glimmer of hope in the long fight” against COVID-19. ■

A year like no other

(continued from page 5)

Within a 48-hour period, hair salons reopen, shut down again

On July 13, the same day that hair salons and gyms reopen in Santa Clara County after being shuttered since March, the county’s Public Health Department announces that those businesses, among other sectors, will have to re-close on July 15 by state mandate that applies to counties on its watchlist.

Schools prohibited from reopening in the fall

Gov. Gavin Newsom announces on July 17 that public and private schools in counties on the state’s coronavirus watchlist cannot reopen for in-person instruction until they’ve been off the list for 14 days. This means that schools in Santa Clara County that had hoped to reopen must plan for full distance learning at the start of the new school year.

Former CEO sentenced in admissions scam

Manuel Henriquez, the former CEO of a Palo Alto-based venture capital firm, is sentenced on July 29 to six months in prison for paying more than \$500,000 in a national college admissions scam that involved more than 50 parents, sports staff and test proctors. He helped his daughters get admitted to college by ensuring they did well on college entrance exams five times.

AUGUST

Stanford reverses course on reopening

Due to spiking coronavirus rates, Stanford University reverses course on its reopening plan, announcing on Aug. 13 that undergraduate students will not be coming back to campus in the fall.

Palo Alto backs restrictions on police use of force

Endorsing a set of revisions to Palo Alto Police Department policies based on recommendations from the city’s Human Relations Commission, the City Council agrees to strengthen the policies on use of force and vows to pursue broader initiatives to promote racial justice.

Wildfires spark, burn out of control for weeks

The CZU Lightning Complex fires in San Mateo and Santa Cruz counties ignite during a lightning storm on Aug. 16, forcing the evacuations of 77,000 residents as firefighters struggle to contain it. The wildfire burns 86,500 acres over the next 37 days. Smoke from multiple blazes around the Bay Area envelope Palo Alto on Aug. 21, prompting the Stanford Department of Public Safety to close the Dish area to hikers due to unhealthy air. The city of Palo Alto shuts down Arastradero Preserve and Foothills Park. The fire isn’t fully extinguished until Dec. 23.

‘I was born and raised here, and I’ve never seen anything like this. This is 10 times worse than anything I’ve ever seen.’

— Andy Kerr, co-owner of Alice’s Restaurant, located at State Route 84 and Skyline Boulevard, says of the wildfires.

Candidates step forward for council, school board

As the deadline for filing for candidacy in the November 2020 election passes, Palo Alto voters have a diverse field of 10 candidates for City Council, including council incumbents, newcomers



Thick smoke from the CZU August Lightning Complex fires makes its way into the Russian Ridge Preserve in San Mateo County on Aug. 18.

Wildfires brought 'apocalyptic' smoke and flames to the Bay Area.



The smoke-covered sky glows an orange hue over U.S. Highway 280 from Sand Hill Road towards Woodside in Menlo Park on Sept. 9.

Magali Gauthier

and civic-service veterans. Six people have decided to run for Board of Education, including school board incumbents and two residents inspired by concerns in the school community over the coronavirus and school reopenings.

Man threatens Santa Clara County health officer

A Gilroy resident who investigators believe has ties to the militant, far-right “Boogaloo” movement is arrested on Aug. 27 for allegedly sending more than 20 threatening and profane letters to Santa Clara County Health Officer Dr. Sara Cody over her directives to keep businesses and schools closed and orders that the public should wear masks.

State changes COVID-19 tracking of counties

In an effort to create a more stringent process that determines when counties can move forward with indoor business operations, California launches a new color-coded COVID-19 tracking system on Aug. 28. San Mateo and Santa Clara counties both fall in the purple color category — the most restrictive tier indicating widespread transmission.

SEPTEMBER

Stanford bans campus visitors

Stanford University bans visitors who are not affiliated with its academic programs from entering much of its campus on Sept. 1, a sweeping restriction that university leaders say is necessary to resume research and teaching in the fall quarter.

Santa Clara moves into state's less restrictive red tier

On Sept. 8, Santa Clara County moves to the less restrictive red tier in California's color-coded COVID-19 tracking system, clearing the way for more businesses — including nail salons, massage parlors, gyms and fitness centers, shopping malls, museums and zoos — to reopen at limited capacity if the county can keep its numbers down for two weeks. Restaurants, places of worship and

movie theaters, however, are ordered to remain closed under the county's stricter guidelines.

Schools reopen for high-need students

After being closed for six months, some Palo Alto Unified schools reopen on Sept. 9 to serve small groups of struggling and special-education students in person.

City disbands auditor's office

After years of complaining about internal strife and subpar performance in the Office of the City Auditor, the Palo Alto City Council moves on Sept. 29 to cut every position in the small office and to outsource its operations to the Chicago-based consulting firm Baker Tilly US.

OCTOBER

On-duty officer charged with assault and lying on report

Wayne Benitez, who retired from the Palo Alto Police Department in 2019, faces charges of unlawful assault stemming from an incident at Buena Vista Mobile Home Park in 2018 during which he allegedly slammed the head of a handcuffed man against a windshield while on duty and then lied about it on a police report.

'Peace officers who use more force than necessary ... strain the bonds with their communities, who expect and deserve that police officers will protect and serve them fairly and professionally.'

— County District Attorney Jeff Rosen says in an announcement of charges against former Palo Alto Police Sergeant Wayne Benitez.

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ENVIRONMENT

2020: A year that went up in smoke and flames

A major wildfire scorched the Santa Cruz Mountains, the Midpeninsula experienced extreme heat, and smoke obscured the sun

by Sue Dremann

The largest wildfire to burn the Santa Cruz Mountains in more than 100 years ushered in an autumn of “apocalyptic” smoke and flames to the Bay Area, with three wildfires to the west, east and north. Hazardous smoke that rained ash, along with other air-quality conditions led some experts and Gov. Gavin Newsom to point to climate change and land-management practices as the culprits.

A series of heat waves began in late May, successively drying trees, shrubs and grasses and priming them for ignition. On Aug. 15, a heat wave combined with a rare, massive dry-lightning cell passed over the Bay Area. Lightning strikes from the spectacular celestial show, which included house-shaking thunderclaps that sent household pets scurrying under beds, sparked dozens of blazes. Three local fires turned into out-of-control infernos.

The CZU August Lightning Complex Fire scorched 86,509 acres in Santa Cruz and San Mateo counties and devastated some of the area's largest redwood preserves. The fire destroyed 1,490 structures and damaged 140 others. One person died. About 77,000 people — a number larger than the population of Palo Alto — were ordered to evacuate in San Mateo and Santa Cruz counties.

The fire caused the closure of open space preserves. Palo Alto residents living in the foothills were warned to prepare to evacuate as the fire came up to the west side of Skyline Boulevard, also known as State Route 35.

The CZU fire was not the largest nearby blaze, however, to impact Palo Alto and surrounding communities. The SCU Lightning Complex fire tore through five counties — southeastern Santa Clara, Alameda, Contra Costa, San Joaquin and Stanislaus — destroying 396,624 acres and razing 222 structures. The LNU Lightning Complex fire to the north in Napa, Sonoma, Lake, Yolo and Solano counties burned 363,220 acres. Smoke from these and other large fires deposited ash throughout the area and created hazardous health conditions triggering 30 consecutive days of Spare the Air alerts.

The awe-inspiring power of nature wasn't through with the Bay Area yet, however. Residents awoke to eerie, orange skies and trees that appeared silhouetted against the dim light on Sept. 9, which was caused by smoke from the August Complex fires in Mendocino County — a blanket so thick it blotted out the sun.

Scorching temperatures skyrocketed on Sept. 6, reaching records as high as 108 degrees in Palo Alto and higher elsewhere, which lasted into the week. The city of Palo Alto opened a cooling center at Mitchell Park Community Center to help residents escape from the dangerous heat.

The CZU fire was finally contained on Sept. 22, more than a month after it began. In early October, as parts of the land still smoldered, open-space land managers said it could take years for the plant and animal communities to recover.

Land managers and cities took the wildfires as a wakeup call. The redwood

forest is getting drier and the summers are longer with shorter rainy periods, Noelle Chambers Thurlow, vice president of conservation for Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), said in October. POST's more than 8,000-acre San Vicente Redwoods Preserve, which it co-owns with the Semprevirens Fund, was badly burned.

Peter Cowan, POST director of conservation science, said in a Nov. 9 blog that the agency has been assessing the fire damage and the measures staff had taken prior to the wildfire to see what helped reduce the severity of the damage. Crews are repairing damaged roads and culverts to protect streams from sediment and are replacing scientific equipment to monitor the fire's impacts on wildlife populations.

The CZU fire prompted some residents and government leaders in areas where wildland and urban living interface to reassess their fire-management plans. The Town of Portola Valley convened an ad hoc fire preparedness committee in June, prior to the CZU fire, to make recommendations to the Town Council regarding communications and outreach, evacuation routes, home hardening and insurance and vegetation management.

Those plans were met with increasing urgency after the CZU fire. Woodside Fire Protection District, along with Portola Valley, vigorously insisted in a letter this fall to Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District that additional and immediate land-management measures at Midpen's preserves, particularly those near Windy Hill and The Sequoias senior community, be enacted. Midpen agreed to have more collaborative discussions, according to the fire district.

Midpen is also working on a longer-range wildfire resiliency plan. A public hearing review of the plan's draft Environmental Impact Report is tentatively scheduled for Jan. 27.

Palo Alto has also updated its website “Ready, Set, Go!” with more information on residential wildfire preparedness. In late August, the city developed a new webpage showing regional fire status and resources. This year the city developed an evacuation map for residents to download online and in conjunction with Santa Clara County Fire Department, the city is formalizing the Palo Alto evacuation zones in the Zonehaven software system, which shows areas under threat of or in evacuation.

City staff are communicating with neighborhood leaders in the foothills area to listen to their concerns and provide safety information and they have provided support for an emergency exit through Foothills Park through Gate 5 if it is needed, spokeswoman Meghan Horrigan-Taylor said.

In December 2019, the Utilities Department published their CPAU Wildfire Mitigation Plan, required by State Senate Bill 901, which seeks to minimize risks that the utility's distribution system might cause a fire ignition. That policy includes sending direct messages to customers when they anticipated the fire risk could potentially cause a power shutoff. ■

GOVERNMENT

Flipping the council

The election gave Palo Alto's residentialists a clear advantage. How will they use it?

by Gennady Sheyner

In a year marked by dizzying change and existential anxiety, Palo Alto voters were in no mood for surprises when they went out to cast — or, more likely, mailed in — their ballots this fall.

Faced with a deep and diverse pool of 10 candidates who ranged from City Hall veterans looking for a fresh chance to serve to political newcomers with bold ideas, residents flocked to the familiar.

Both incumbents, Lydia Kou and Greg Tanaka, were re-elected to new four-year terms.

Greer Stone, a Gunn High history teacher and former member of the city's Human Relations Commission, also won a council seat, four years after falling short in his first bid.

But the biggest winner on Nov. 3 was Pat Burt, a former two-time mayor who spent nine years on the council before his last term ended in 2016. A longtime community leader who helped spearhead most of the city's major initiatives — from grade separations of the railway to the infrastructure plan to a proposed business tax — Burt will find himself in a very familiar position at the center of the council's political spectrum. His candidacy was endorsed by neither the Palo Altans for Sensible Zoning (PASZ) — a political group that endorsed candidates on the council's slow-growth "residentialist wing" — nor by the Santa Clara County Democratic Party, which favored the three "progressive" candidates who advocated for bold action on issues such as housing and police reform: Raven Malone, Steven Lee and Cari Templeton. While being a household name doesn't always guarantee a fresh election (as the experiences of Larry Moody in East Palo Alto and Lenny Seigel in Mountain View demonstrate), Burt cruised to victory and held a lead of nearly 1,000 votes over the second-place finisher, Kou, when the final tally was certified, finishing with 14,353 of Palo Altans' votes.

While the election results will not dramatically transform the council's roster — with only two of the seven seats being filled by new members — it will radically alter the political dynamics. For the past four years, the council's more pro-growth-leaning members have enjoyed a narrow majority — a power that they used to chip away at the city's stringent requirements for ground-floor retail; lower housing-impact fees for new developments; and remove the downtown limit on office development. All of these issues were decided by 4-3 votes (and, before 2018, by 5-4 votes).

Only two members of this four-member majority — Alison Cormack and Greg Tanaka — will return to the council next year. With Mayor Adrian Fine opting not to seek a fresh term and Councilwoman Liz Kniss terming out, the camp favoring

slower city growth will now have a clear edge as Stone joins fellow PASZ-endorsed council members Kou, Vice Mayor Tom DuBois and Councilman Eric Filseth in a likely political alliance.

Burt, who has opposed many of the recent actions by the four-member majority (including recent proposals to scale back ground-floor protections for retail and to allow lame-duck council members to appoint next year's commissioners) and who has been aligned with Stone in their mutual distaste for state housing legislation such as Senate Bill 50, may turn the residentialists' slim 4-3 edge into a commanding 5-2 advantage.

On some issues, that may not matter. The council has been in virtual lockstep (with Kou often being the sole dissenter) when it comes to supporting policies that encourage more below-market-rate housing. They all voted, for example, to spend \$10 million of public funds to support the 59-unit development known as Wilton Court, which targets low-income residents and adults with disability. The council has also united to pursue grade separation at rail crossings, cut the city budget, plan for recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and pursue reforms in the Police Department, which include recent revisions to use-of-force policies.

In other areas, the residentialists are expected to flex their new power. This could mean more restrictions on new office space, higher development-impact fees to support affordable housing, stronger support for retaining laws that require ground-floor retail and increased skepticism toward proposals for market-rate housing.

As the year came to an end, the spirit of compromise that has guided the council's COVID-19 recovery gave way to a nasty political donnybrook over appointments to the Planning and Transportation Commission. Even as the council approved in November a new handbook specifying that appointments should occur in the spring, the four-member majority moved to vote on appointments in December, thus giving the lame-duck council members a chance to name advisers to the next council. All three council members in the minority then skipped the planning commission interviews, effectively preventing them from taking place (one member of the four-member majority also couldn't make it). The appointments will now take place in 2021.

With the year-ending squabble, Palo Alto is facing a question that can also extend to the nation as 2020 comes to an end. Will the political battle escalate next year, as power shifts from one faction to another? Or should their residents, having placed their faith in a moderate political veteran, expect a new era of cooperation and consensus? ■



Magali Gauthier

Amy McCarter places her ballot in the voting machine at the vote center at Palo Alto Art Center in Palo Alto on Nov. 3.

A year like no other

(continued from page 5)

Concerns swirl over election integrity, voting by mail

Heated political division in the country, warnings about election fraud and a fairly new all mail-in voting system in Santa Clara County prompt the Registrar to double its efforts to reassure the county's 1 million registered voters — the most ever for an election — that their ballots will be counted. After Republicans set out unofficial ballot drop boxes in other parts of the state, Palo Alto residents question the authenticity of boxes at City Hall and Mitchell Park Library, but these fears are soon allayed. Palo Alto voter turnout hits 88.7%.

Two economists win Nobel Prize

Stanford University economists Paul Milgrom, 72, and Robert Wilson, 83, are awarded the 2020 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences for "improvements to auction theory and inventions of new auction formats." The award also comes with 10 million Swedish kronor, equivalent to about \$1.1 million.

Elementary students return to campus for in-person classes

Following weeks of heated debate, Palo Alto Unified's youngest students return to

school on Oct. 12 after the district opens its elementary school campuses to small cohorts of children alternating in mornings and afternoons as part of a hybrid model of in-person and online learning.

County allows some indoor activities to resume

Indoor dining and indoor gatherings, such as worship services, resume on Oct. 14 with limitations after Santa Clara County moves into the less restrictive orange tier under the state's color-coded reopening system.

NOVEMBER

'Residentialists' win City Council majority

After an unusual election season characterized by countless Zoom debates, Palo Alto voters elect Pat Burt and Greer Stone to the City Council and hand incumbents Lydia Kou and Greg Tanaka fresh terms. The results reshape the council, handing a clear majority to those who favor slower city growth. Despite the pandemic, Tanaka brings in more than \$88,000 to fund his campaign, the most of any candidate.

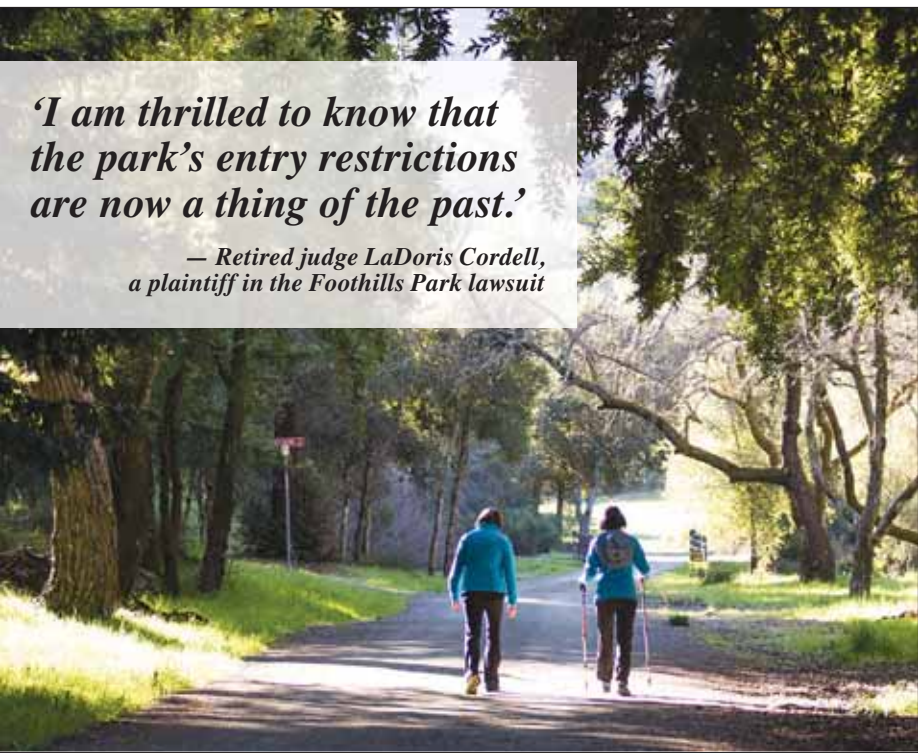


Magali Gauthier

Nancy Smith teaches her first grade class of in-person and full-distance learning students at Fairmeadow Elementary School in Palo Alto on Oct. 12.

'I am thrilled to know that the park's entry restrictions are now a thing of the past.'

— Retired judge LaDoris Cordell, a plaintiff in the Foothills Park lawsuit



File photo/Vernica Weber

Hikers walk towards Wild Horse Valley in Foothills Park, which opened to nonresidents on Dec. 17.

City of Palo Alto opens Foothills Park to all

Prodded by citizen activists and a high-profile lawsuit involving the ACLU and NAACP, the City Council votes to remove a long-standing ban on non-residents at Foothills Park. The park officially opens to all on Dec. 17.

'Not coming back is easier. We chose hard. I hope that we're a district that chooses the tougher route every single time.'

— Superintendent Don Austin says Nov. 10 while acknowledging that the district's reopening plan is imperfect.



Magali Gauthier

Castilleja School in Palo Alto on Oct. 28.

Castilleja's expansion plan advances

After years of debate and months of public hearings, the Planning and Transportation Commissions on Nov. 18 recommends a set of conditions to the City Council that would allow Castilleja School to rebuild its campus and expand enrollment.

Middle, high schools to resume in-person classes

Palo Alto Unified District board members unanimously vote on Nov. 10 to resume in-person instruction at the middle and high schools starting on Jan. 7 despite some students', teachers' and parents' concerns.

Barron Park donkey dies

Jenny, one of Palo Alto's beloved donkeys who called the Barron Park neighborhood home, is euthanized on Nov. 18 after a two-week decline in her health, according to her handlers.

Sheriff's Office embroiled in bribery scheme

Four people, including top brass in the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office and the chief security officer at Apple, are indicted on Nov. 19 in bribery schemes for donations to Sheriff Laurie Smith's reelection campaign in exchange for highly coveted gun permits.

Curfew ordered

In an attempt to rapidly stanch the spread of COVID-19 in California, Gov. Gavin Newsom on Nov. 19 orders a month-long curfew, prohibiting all non-essential work, movement and gathering between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m.

Santa Clara put back into purple tier

Santa Clara County moves back into the state's most restrictive tier on Nov. 30 after experiencing record-shattering numbers of daily new COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations. Local health leaders also require anyone returning to the county from travel of more than 150 miles to quarantine for 14 days.



Federica Armstrong

Licensed Vocational Nurse Van Tran receives her first injection of the newly developed coronavirus vaccine while Nurse Practitioner Kim Butler holds her hands. They both work at the Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System.

'THIS PANDEMIC IS LIKE A HIGH-SPEED TRAIN, AND OUR PROJECTIONS TELL US THAT WE ARE ON TARGET TO DERAIL BY THE THIRD WEEK OF DECEMBER IF WE DON'T APPLY BRAKES RIGHT NOW WITH ALL OUR COLLECTIVE MIGHT.'

— Dr. Sara Cody says on Nov. 28 while unveiling the county's new mandatory health directives.

DECEMBER

A new donkey arrives

A fluffy, chocolate-colored donkey named Buddy moves into Barron Park to share the paddock adjacent to Bol Park with the neighborhood's other famous miniature donkey, Perry.

First coronavirus vaccines administered

Hospital workers and vulnerable patients at the Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System are among the first people in the country to receive their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine on Dec. 16, marking a turning point in the fight to control the coronavirus pandemic. State and county leaders start to make plans for prioritizing which groups of people will get the vaccine and estimate that it could be four to six months before most of the general public will be inoculated.

Stay-at-home order expected to last into 2021

Local health officers on Dec. 21 predict that the Bay Area's stay-at-home order could last well into January if the current wave of new cases and hospitalizations is not abated soon. The Bay Area's ICU capacity sat at 13.7% as of Dec. 21. ■

Information compiled from reporting by Palo Alto Weekly staff.

About the cover

Illustration by Doug Young. Photos by Magali Gauthier, Sammy Dallal, Federica Armstrong, Charles Russo and Olivia Treynor, with contributed photos.



Courtesy Karen Holman

Barron Park donkey Perry, left, and new companion Buddy, right, meet for the first time on Dec. 5.



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Year-end news quiz answers

Missed the news quiz? Go to page 7 of this edition.

- B.** Tesla CEO Elon Musk was one of the people who visited Antonio's Nut House on California Avenue for its last days of business for the foreseeable future in August. The owners have long hoped local tech entrepreneurs who frequent the dive bar would help keep the Nut House alive, but nothing came to fruition before they decided to close temporarily.
- C.** On Nov. 2, almost 2,000 middle school students in Palo Alto participated in a virtual, mock presidential election after spending weeks learning about politics, civics and U.S. government in their social studies classes. The first-time voters overwhelmingly supported former Vice President Joe Biden (more than 80% at all three schools).
- B.** After years of internal squabbling in the City Auditor's Office, the council decided this year to institute the biggest change since voters created the office in 1984: eliminating the auditor positions and relying on an external firm for auditing services. The council considered several different firms this year before it voted in September to sign a two-year contract with the firm Baker Tilly US.
- D.** The district was one of many areas across the city where parking restrictions were lifted in March. The city's Summer Streets program, which allowed restaurants to host customers outdoors, also debuted in the district over the summer. But Palo Alto demonstrated this year that it remains a car-centric city when it opened a new parking garage at 350 Sherman Ave.
- A.** For the first time, Iowans across the world were able to participate in their state's caucus in 99 select satellite locations approved by the Iowa Democratic Party. On Feb. 3, Stanford University saw its first-ever Iowa caucus.
- D.** As panic-shopping kicked in during the first month of the pandemic, many residents flocked to wholesale markets and grocery stores to stock up on water bottles, frozen food and toilet paper. Of course, many more sought out items that could reduce the chances of infection such as masks and hand sanitizer. But one item that strangely seemed to keep flying off the shelves? Thanks to one of many pieces of misinformation floating online: zinc lozenges. (For the record, they do not protect against COVID-19.)
- C.** Though city officials said that the mural painted on June 30 had the potential to last for more than a year, the city removed the artwork on Nov. 10, with plans for a more permanent art installation at King Plaza.
- B.** Male hairy tarantulas only start roaming in the fall in search of a mate and were spotted near the Stanford Dish and other open space areas from August to October.
- B.** Buddy, a 21-year-old miniature donkey from Woodside, was adopted by The Donkey Project on Dec. 5 after Jenny, the community's standard donkey, was euthanized after falling ill.
- A.** Each night, Tom Culbertson and his son, Owen Longstreth, played vuvuzelas to signal to their neighbors it was time to come out and say "hi" in an effort to maintain some semblance of a connection during the shelter-in-place mandate, an idea sparked by neighbor Farish Haydel. ■

CityView

A round-up of Palo Alto government action this week
There were no government meetings this week.

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Pulse

A weekly compendium of vital statistics

POLICE CALLS

- Palo Alto**
Dec. 23-Dec. 29
- Violence related**
Welsh Road, 8/31, 8 a.m.; child abuse/physical.
Ash Street, 10/13, 10 a.m.; battery/sexual.
San Antonio Road, 11/19, 2 p.m.; sexual assault/rape.
East Meadow Drive, 12/17, 12:43 p.m.; sexual assault attempt.
El Camino Real, 12/21, 8:20 p.m.; strong arm robbery.
El Camino Real, 12/26, 11:23 p.m.; domestic violence/battery.
445 Bryant Street, 12/27, 5:03 p.m.; arson.
- Theft related**
Commercial burglaries 4
Grand theft 1
Identity theft 1
Petty theft 4
Prowler 3
Residential burglaries 4
Residential burglary attempt 1
Shoplifting 4
- Vehicle related**
Auto recovery 1
Auto theft 2
Bicycle theft 1
Driving w/suspended license 4
Embezzled vehicle 1
Hit and run 1
Misc. traffic 2
Stolen catalytic converter 3
Theft from auto 4
Theft from auto attempt 1
Vehicle accident/minor injury 3
Vehicle accident/prop damage 1
Vehicle tow 1
- Alcohol or drug related**
Driving under influence 2
Drunk in public 1
Possession of drugs 2
Possession of paraphernalia 2
- Miscellaneous**
Found property 3
Misc. penal code violation 1
Other/misc. 6
Psychiatric subject 3
Suspicious circumstances 2
Trespassing 1
Vandalism 3
Warrant/other agency 8

- Menlo Park**
Dec. 22-Dec. 29
- Violence related**
1000 block Laurel Place, 12/26, 3:05 p.m.; domestic battery.
200 block Hedge Road, 12/29, 3:55 p.m.; spousal abuse.

OBITUARIES

A list of local residents who died recently:

Michael Gulevich, 59, former Palo Alto resident, died on Nov. 6. **Chrisoula Efendaki**, 88, Palo Alto resident, died on Dec. 10. **Jean Barker Drummond**, 94, a Palo Alto native, died on Dec. 14. **Jerome K. Berg**, 84, businessman and longtime Palo Alto resident, died on Dec. 21. **Tami Poffenroth**, 63, former Palo Alto resident, died on Dec. 22.

To read full obituaries, leave remembrances and post photos, go to Lasting Memories at PaloAltoOnline.com/obituaries. Free online obituaries can be submitted at Lasting Memories. To inquire about paid obituaries, contact Kevin Legarda at klegarda@paweekly.com. ■

Jean Barker Drummond

July 12, 1926 – December 14, 2020

Jean was born in Palo Alto, California to Chester and Katherine Barker. She had one sister, Margery Blockley. Jean graduated from Palo Alto High School in 1944 and Whitman College in 1948 with a B.A. in Sociology. Jean graduated from U.C. Berkeley in 1983 with a Masters in Social Work, then became a social worker, focusing on the frail elderly. She took drawing and painting classes for many years. Travels included the Panama Canal and Caribbean, Denali National Park, New Mexico and Arizona, and the Sierra Nevadas, as well as many spiritual retreats. Jean was passionate about nature and preservation, and wrote poetry. As a lifelong member of the First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto, Jean's faith remained strong, even when she could no longer attend services. Jean resided at SunnyView Retirement Community in Cupertino, CA from 2004-2019, where she volunteered in their library. She moved to Cherry Blossom Cottage in Portland in 2019. She is survived by her daughters Kathy Evans, Carol Maresh, and son Bruce Drummond. Due to the pandemic, no services are planned. If so moved, donations to the First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto <https://www.fprensa.org/> or Alzheimer's Association <https://www.alz.org/> in Jean's memory would be welcomed.



PAID OBITUARY

Cristobal Jose Sanchez

January 27, 1926 – December 10, 2020

Cristobal (Chris) Sanchez, a Palo Alto resident for 64 years, passed away at his home on 12/10/20. He was one month shy of his 95th birthday. Chris was born and raised in Texas. He had strong family ties to the historical development of that State. Parochial school educated, Chris began working for Pan American World Airways in 1943. As a purser, he flew mail routes through Central America and down the Eastern Coast of Venezuela.



His career with Pan Am was interrupted in 1944 to serve in the Army during World War II. Following the war, Chris returned to Pan American where he served as purser and then flight service director, taking him to every part of the world for 45 years. He was selected to work on many of Pan Am's inaugural flights. He received a commendation from General Wm. Westmoreland for his service on R&R flights out of Saigon during troop and refugee evacuations at the end of the Vietnam War. After his retirement from Pan Am, he took a position with Neiman Marcus at Stanford Shopping Center. There he enjoyed working in the epicurean shop for 15 years where he could showcase his extensive knowledge of fine wines. Chris spoke several languages, enjoyed fine foods, books, and music. He definitely had a way with words! Above all, he loved his family, raising all 4 of his children in Palo Alto. He is preceded in death by his daughter Celeste Gene Sanchez. He is survived by his wife of 70 years, Marilyn (nee Memmott), his son Christopher (Debra) of Palo Alto, daughters Christine (David) of Rocklin California, and Laura (Bill) of Boise Idaho. He was the beloved grandfather of eight and great grandfather of 2. A private family memorial is planned for a later date per his wishes.

PAID OBITUARY

Public Notices

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File No.: FBN670931
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) Trademarkia Professional Corporation,
2.) Trademarkia Professional Law Corporation, 3.) Trademarkia, located at 1580 West El Camino Real, Suite 10,

Mountain View, CA 94040, Santa Clara County.
This business is owned by: A Corporation.
The name and residence address of the registrant(s) is(are):
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Registrant began transacting business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 1/10/2020.
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Arts & Entertainment

A weekly guide to music, theater, art, culture, books and more, edited by Karla Kane

2020 vision: The year in film

Streaming services stepped up as viewers hunkered down, seeking connection

by Peter Canavese

2020 turned the world upside down in so many ways, causing upheaval to our every way of life. Though movies are a relatively trivial example of the existential threat posed by COVID-19, Bay Area movie theaters were effectively shut down for most of the year, giving new life to socially distanced drive-ins and a major shot in the arm to streaming services as Americans hunkered down in front of their TVs for their escapism. Disney+ emerged as a front-runner in the streaming war and Quibi lost big, with Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, HBO Max, AppleTV+ and others still hanging tough.

By necessity, the line between cinema and other sight-and-sound art forms has never been thinner than in 2020. We had Steve McQueen's "Small Axe" (Amazon Prime Video), a series of five

telefilms from a major filmmaker that were never intended for theaters. As live theater became all but an impossibility for the foreseeable future, superb filmed Broadway performances of "Hamilton" (Disney+), "David Byrne's American Utopia" (HBO), and "What the Constitution Means to Me" (Amazon Prime) became extra-precious gifts.

And despite many high-profile films being rescheduled to 2021 and beyond, 2020 saw major blockbusters begin to bypass theaters and head straight home: Disney's "Mulan" and Pixar's "Soul," as well as Warner Brothers' superhero movie "Wonder Woman 1984" on HBO Max.

In the rush to release content for home viewing, 2020 became a bounty of American independent films. But enjoy it while it lasts, as fresh independent films are liable to dwindle dramatically

as the supply runs out and film production in the COVID era becomes prohibitively expensive. Movie theaters face imminent bankruptcy, so cineastes should take extra care to explore the "virtual cinema" offerings keeping some theaters alive via online ticket sales for streamed independent and foreign films (SF's Roxie Cinema has one of the most active platforms).

So this year, Your Friendly Neighborhood Film Critic abandoned his theater-going routine and went "wee wee wee" all the way home. Mindless "comfort food" may have done the work of preserving sanity on the wane, but as so many in isolation longed for human contact, it was the year's most intimate and empathetic films that nurtured the better angels of our nature, offering one way to safely extend our reach into the outside world.



Left to right, Ventura and Vitalina Varela in a still from Pedro Costa's "Vitalina Varela." Courtesy of Grasshopper Film.

The top ten films of 2020

(Author's note: Streaming service noted in parentheses when film is not currently available through multiple on-demand video services.)

10. 'Driveways'

In a year that was anything but, sometimes you just need a film that's nice. "Driveways" was that lovely warm hug of a movie this year. On paper, the tale of a single mother (Hong Chau) and her young son (Lucas Jaye) befriending the grumbly old war veteran next door (Brian Dennehy in his final film role) sounds schmaltzy and old hat. But Andrew Ahn's gentle touch (along with the acknowledgment of tough realities) and three outstanding performances make "Driveways" the film you didn't know you needed to put a smile on your face.

9. 'Sound of Metal'

(Amazon Prime Video)

Riz Ahmed's heavy-metal drummer and addict Ruben faces a traumatic life change in the narrative filmmaking debut of screenwriter Darius Marder ("The Place Beyond the Pines"). Temporarily and tentatively reliant upon a new community, Ruben crawls through the stages of grief, achingly resisting acceptance of his "new normal," the love offered by his girlfriend (Olivia Cooke), and the caring mentorship of a community leader (Paul Raci, in one of the year's best supporting turns).

8. 'Fourteen'

Writer-director Dan Sallitt explores a friendship over time in this quietly observant drama. Brooklynite Mara (Tallie Medel) enjoys a closeness with best friend Jo (Norma Kuhling), but the latter's mental health issues and drug abuse take an ever-more-distressing toll on her and the friendship as the years slip by. Sallitt's delicate touch and the empathic performances build a potent tragedy around a recognizable, cruelly isolating problem with no clear solution.

7. 'City Hall'

(PBS)

The brilliant Frederick Wiseman stays true to form with his latest four-and-a-half-hour documentary film to paste up a collage of details defining an American institution — in this case, the city of Boston, Massachusetts. The film shadows Mayor Marty Walsh in his duties, but this microcosm of the political challenges facing modern America also follows Wiseman's pattern of finding meaning in the mundane (from a city-inspector walkthrough to a weekly garbage pickup) as well as the everyday heroic (public servants and community organizers addressing evictions and economic advancement).

6. 'Never Rarely Sometimes Always'

Set where the reality meets the remove of a social issue, writer-director Eliza Hittman's abortion drama takes us on the sad journey of a 17-year-old girl seeking an abortion under a patronizing patriarchy. In beautifully understated performances, Sidney Flanigan and Talia Ryder capture a friendship tested by crisis. In scenes like the one that gives the film its title, Hittman gut-punches us with the blithe bureaucracy and moral judgment that often stand in the way of a girl's difficult personal choice.

5. 'Lovers Rock'

(Amazon Prime Video)

Percy Bysshe Shelley called poetry "the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds." Perhaps the best compliment one can pay "Lovers Rock" is that it feels like a cinematic poem, taking a very specific, very personal experience and translating it into a cinematic language that makes it identifiably universal. This telefilm in Steve McQueen's "Small Axe" series expands our understanding of London's culture of West Indian immigrants circa 1980, but its swoony, sweaty depiction of romance blossoming at a reggae house party movingly reminds us of something 2020 robbed from us: communal public experiences.

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4. 'Nomadland'

Chloé Zhao wrote, edited, and produced this part-commentary, part-character study based on Jessica Bruder's 2017 non-fiction book "Nomadland: Surviving America in the Twenty-First Century." In exploring the alternative culture of Americans living out of RVs — alternative, that is, to the American Dream rat race — Zhao places professional actors (like David Strathairn) amongst real-life nomads for heightened authenticity. The soul of the film, however, resides in Frances McDormand's leading performance, an utterly convincing study in the psychology of willful isolation.

3. 'First Cow'

Kelly Reichardt scores again with this adaptation of Jonathan Raymond's novel "The Half Life." Filmmaker and novelist collaborated on the screenplay, which convincingly transports us to 19th-century frontier America while keeping one foot planted in our not-so-evolved 21st-century landscape. In dramatic terms, "First Cow" tells the story of an unlikely friendship born of an entrepreneurial business arrangement between John Magaro's white itinerant cook and Orion Lee's Chinese-immigrant striver, but at heart, the film serves as a meditation on capitalism, from its infancy to its late stage occupying a space between ingenuity and crime.

2. 'Collective'

Documentary filmmaker Alexander Nanau explores two timely topics in the nonfiction film of the year: the fragility of society and the crucial role of investigative journalism. Nanau observes as a deadly nightclub fire in 2015 reshapes Romania's political landscape: In particular, health care

negligence and fraud — in shamefully overwhelmed pre-COVID-19 hospitals — reveal the depth of governmental failure and corruption. Key to the nation's fortunes is an unlikely last bastion of the news: a sports magazine that pivots to hard news.

And the best film of 2020 goes to:

1. 'Vitalina Varela'

There's a transcendence to Pedro Costa's filmmaking that earns the term "art film." In this spinoff from Costa's "Horse Money," the writer-director collaborates with the titular heroine — a Cape Verdean in Lisbon — to tell her own story of seeking the truth about her late estranged husband. Varela's mesmerizing performance compliments Costa's peerless work, alive and gorgeous from its subject to its mise en scène to its painterly cinematographic interplay of shadows and light.

Honorable mention:

"Hamilton," "What the Constitution Means to Me" & "David Byrne's American Utopia." ■

Peter Canavese is a freelance movie critic and author of the website *Groucho Reviews*. You can reach him at pcanavese@bcp.org.

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SILVAR REALTORS® Award Over \$52,000 in Grants, Scholarships, Donations in 2020

Silicon Valley REALTORS®, through individual and district contributions and through the Silicon Valley REALTORS® Charitable Foundation, awarded over \$52,000 in grants, scholarships, and donations in 2020.

The Silicon Valley REALTORS® Charitable Foundation, the charitable arm of the Silicon Valley Association of REALTORS® (SILVAR), donated \$39,500 in 2020 to different non-profit organizations that help homeless and low-income individuals and families in Silicon Valley. The 2020 CFT grant recipients include Adolescent Counseling Services, Animal Assisted Happiness, Community Services Agency, East Palo Alto Kids Foundation, Jeremiah's Promise, Mentor Tutor Connection, Westwind 4-H Riding for the Handicapped, and Youth Community Service. The REALTOR® charitable foundation also awarded scholarships to graduating seniors from public high schools in the REALTOR® association's service area.

SILVAR districts gave to local non-profit groups in their services areas, as well. Cupertino-Sunnyvale District presented \$875 each to Sunnyvale Community Services (SCS) and West Valley Community Services (WVCS), Los Gatos-Saratoga District \$2,500 to the Family Giving Tree (FGT), and Los Altos-Mountain View District \$500 to the

Madrigals of Mountain View High School.

In the absence of live fundraising events due to COVID-19, SILVAR's five districts partnered with the local non-profits to brighten the holidays for individuals and families in need. Members of the Cupertino-Sunnyvale District made personal donations SCS and WVCS, and Los Altos-Mountain View District members to Community Services Agency.

Members of the Menlo Park-Atherton and Palo Alto Districts donated to Life Moves, and Los Gatos-Saratoga District members donated to FGT. Both non-profits created links exclusively for donations from SILVAR REALTORS®. To date, REALTOR® donations to both sites amount to over \$8,500.

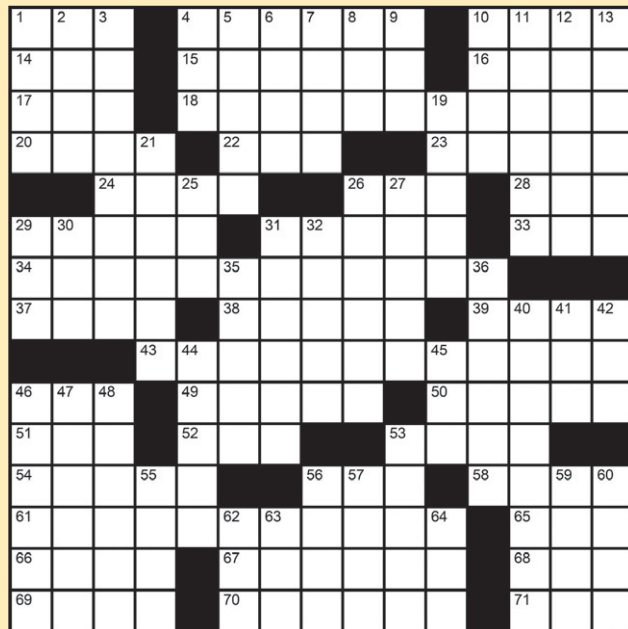
The Charitable Foundation Trust also supports further education for U.S. veterans. The John Tripp Silicon Valley REALTORS® Scholarship grants \$500 awards to veterans enrolled at Foothill and De Anza colleges. The late John Tripp was a Korean War veteran and past president of SILVAR and REALTORS® charitable foundation.

Information provided in this column is presented by the Silicon Valley Association of REALTORS®. Send questions to Rose Meily at rmeily@silvar.org.

Across

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- 15 Cover-ups
- 16 Daily Bruin publisher
- 17 ___Caps (candy for moviegoers, when we went out to movies)
- 18 Country singer who donated \$1 million to Covid vaccine research
- 20 Warmonger
- 22 "Over here"
- 23 Ronan of The Irish Tenors
- 24 Programming language with a coffee-cup logo
- 26 Ewe in the movie "Babe"
- 28 Square root of 2, rounded down
- 29 "Gone With the Wind" surname
- 31 Give a big hand
- 33 Got hitched
- 34 Pioneering Vice President-Elect of the United States
- 37 Network (abbr.)
- 38 Digital watch maker
- 39 "That's a relief"
- 43 Show with an unprecedented sweep of seven Emmy Awards
- 46 "___ longa, vita brevis"
- 49 Fine-tunes
- 50 Oven controls
- 51 "Cold Mountain" extra
- 52 Apple phone software
- 53 "It ___ what you think"
- 54 "Foundation" author Asimov
- 56 Evil-___ (witch and ally of Skeletor)
- 58 Drive-___ menu
- 61 Former British Army captain who walked laps for charity in April 2020, raising over 32 million pounds by his 100th birthday
- 65 Dull routine
- 66 Poet Pound
- 67 Noisy pig
- 68 "Death ___ Salesman"

"Some Good Things From 2020" — it's been a tough year, but... by Matt Jones



Answers on page 7.

- 69 Element #10
- 70 Buddhist temple
- 71 Initialism that became increasingly prevalent in 2020

Down

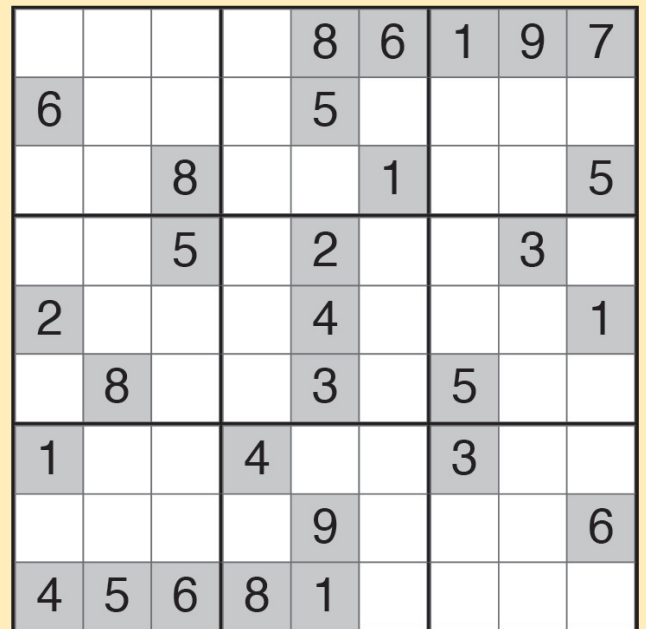
- 1 Shindig
- 2 "Bob's Burgers" daughter
- 3 Downtempo R&B songs
- 4 Callous fellow
- 5 Word on Hawaiian license plates
- 6 "Blue" or "White" river
- 7 Efficiently
- 8 Crafty initials?
- 9 "Cleopatra" animal
- 10 Boxer Tyson
- 11 "Don't hesitate!"

- 12 "Citizen Kane" actor Everett
- 13 Soaked up some sun
- 19 Game maker since 1972
- 21 Units of purity
- 25 "Batman Forever" actor Kilmer
- 26 Deserves
- 27 Defunct Houston hockey team
- 29 Approvals
- 30 Bale stuff
- 31 Winter driving needs
- 32 Rash action
- 35 Outburst usually acknowledged by others
- 36 Run at full speed
- 40 London hub
- 41 "Electric" fish
- 42 Calendar units (abbr.)

- 44 A Marx brother
- 45 Floppy followers
- 46 Gotten up
- 47 Blow up, perhaps
- 48 Mall pizza eatery
- 53 How errors may be noted
- 55 Words with "early age" or "impasse"
- 56 Like some odds
- 57 "Oh ___!" (song from the "Imagine" album)
- 59 Elizabethan collar
- 60 Home of Arches and Zion National Parks
- 62 Swabbie's swabber
- 63 "Mamma ___!" (musical based on ABBA songs)
- 64 "Golden" time

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This week's SUDOKU



Answers on page 7.

www.sudoku.name



2021

NEW YEAR

We look back with utmost appreciation and gratitude to our amazing clients and wonderful community that have made our success possible.

We look forward to a happy, healthy 2021 together. From all of us here at DeLeon Realty, Happy New Year!

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