

San Jose won't split from sister city over Ukrainian conflict
SEE PAGE 4



No mask required
Santa Clara County announces new indoor masking guidelines
— **SEE PAGE 10**

Santa Clara Co. Sheriff Laurie Smith announces plans to retire
SEE PAGE 13



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Times

MARCH 18 – MARCH 31, 2022 ■ VOL. 35, NO. 6

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Students at Santa Teresa High School in the East Side Union High School District continue to wear masks outdoors. Photo by Lorraine Gabbert.

San Jose schools say COVID masks can stay — if students want

By Lorraine Gabbert
Article courtesy of San José Spotlight

While some San Jose school districts are allowing for optional masking in step with new state and public health mandates, others are still requiring them.

Almost two years after Gov. Gavin Newsom closed schools due to COVID-19, he announced indoor masking in schools would no longer be required as of March 12. Although case rates and hospitalizations are declining, he still recommends schools continue to mask. As of early March, Santa Clara County no longer requires masks indoors.

Masks will still be required in high transmission settings such as public transit, homeless shelters and correctional and health care facilities.

See MASKS, page 21



Thomas Jordan as The DJ in Pioneer High School's "It's Still Rock 'N Roll to Me."
Photo by Andrew Stein

Pioneer High School Drama students to perform 'It's Still Rock 'N Roll to Me'

Nightly performances: March 25, 26, 30, 31; April 1, 2 at 1290 Blossom Hill Road, Performing Arts Center

By Jane Johnson
Special to the Times

Normal. We've all been pining for a return to "normal."

Now imagine you're a teen, two years into your high school career, who doesn't even know what "normal" looks like at high school, because the past two years are all you've experienced. Or, you're a high school senior, and the past two years played out vastly different than the first. You remember what "normal" was like. And you can sense the return coming just as your years of predictable school and path are coming to a close.

Let's rally behind these kids. Let's come together as a community and celebrate them and the positive things they're doing to return normalcy to themselves and their greater community. Let's have fun again together!

The Show

What better way to express and live joy than to share fun, upbeat nostalgic music that spans generations? To share an experience that, as Sophomore Luke Jennings describes is more than a review, more than a concert. "It's a chance to sing those songs,

See ROCK 'N ROLL, page 17



Ian MacDonald, Tracey Ananmalay and Lola Fahlen have a passion for ocean swimming. Photo by Lorraine Gabbert

Almaden Masters program swimmers face challenge of year-round ocean swimming

By Lorraine Gabbert
Times Senior Writer

On a beautiful, clear day in February, people are relaxing on the sand or walking their dogs at Seacliff State Beach, but Tracey Ananmalay and Lola Fahlen are here to swim—even though the water is 52 degrees.

The challenge of ocean swimming year-round might not be for everybody, but for the two friends, it's everything. Regardless of the season, they take to the water, unphased by being occasionally tossed about like ragdolls in the churning waves.

Ananmalay, who started open water swim-

ming in August, finds it very grounding.

"Whatever my mindset going in, I leave the water feeling calm and relaxed," she said. "The sense of well-being from ocean swimming is quite remarkable."

Conditions permitting, she swims in the ocean two to three times a week and has completed 56 open water swims.

Fahlen admires her friend's determination, especially as she never imagined it was something Ananmalay would choose to do.

"I'm so amazed she was so instantly comfortable in the water," Fahlen said. "I stop and watch

See SWIMMING, page 16



Ian MacDonald, Tracey Ananmalay and Lola Fahlen practice the buddy system and have a healthy respect for the ocean. Photo by Lorraine Gabbert.

SEE OUR LISTINGS OF LOCAL REALTORS, CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING AND HOME IMPROVEMENT ADVERTISEMENTS INSIDE THE BACK COVER

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Single-level home in the Glencrest area of Almaden Valley. Enter through an iron privacy gate which opens to a park-like front yard. Living room with corner fireplace. Kitchen has quartz slab counters and plenty of cabinetry. Dual pane windows, central air conditioning, newer water heater, 3-year new HVAC system, and more. Close to Glenview Park, Almaden Quicksilver County Park, Almaden Golf and Country Club, Almaden Lake Park, trails, restaurants, shops, schools, library and more. Williams Elementary School, Bret Harte Middle School and Leland High School.

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COMPASS



1001 Laurie Avenue | Offered at \$2,448,000

Nestled in the heart of iconic Willow Glen, this utterly gorgeous home is a seamless blend of 1940s charm and 2020s state-of-the-art amenities. Completely updated inside and out with high-end comforts and expert landscaping, this home has world-class charm and unrivaled curb appeal, making it a showpiece in every sense of the word.

HOME SUMMARY • 3 bedrooms • 2 full bathrooms and 1 half bathroom • 2,156 square feet of living space • Situated on a 6,770 square foot corner lot



1570 Monteval Lane | Offered at \$1,750,000

Pride of ownership is apparent in this gorgeous Almaden home, which has been meticulously updated! Inside, its open concept floorplan and bright, airy atmosphere make for comfortable home living and remote work. With multiple bedrooms and a home office, it can easily accommodate guests. A large gated front courtyard and intimate rear grounds patio provide numerous settings for entertaining guests amidst the property's mature foliage. Part of the peaceful Montevideo community, the home is away from the hustle and bustle of Silicon Valley, while still close enough to allow you to take advantage of all that the South Bay has to offer.

HOME SUMMARY • Four bedrooms and two full bathrooms • 1,770 square feet of living space • Situated on a roomy 7,949 square foot lot



46 Raindance Court | Offered at \$898,000

This gorgeous modern townhome features an open concept floorplan and bright, airy atmosphere that makes for comfortable home living and family gatherings. An intimate patio in the back is the perfect spot for entertaining guests on a warm summer's evening. Part of a peaceful Deer Run II community in San Jose. Its central location makes commuting a breeze, while also giving you the ability to take advantage of the area's spectacular dining, parks, and entertainment options.

HOME SUMMARY • Three bedrooms, two full bathrooms, and one-half bathroom • 1,452 square feet of living space



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Biden's approach 'steadfast, careful'

Dear Editor,

I commend President Biden for his steadfast and careful approach to the calamity in Ukraine. His steps in the economic sphere have gotten the message to the Russian government, if not to Vladimir Putin himself; that the world will not stand idly by while this needless carnage takes place.

Biden has taken aggressive steps, but with a consistency that does not give Putin an excuse for yet more horrendous actions. Coupled with the sanctions targeting Putin and his supporters, Biden has initiated vital humanitarian aid.

Biden also realizes that Russian energy sources play an enormous part of that country's failing economy. He is using these facts to encourage the more rapid development of renewable energy in the

**LETTER
TO THE
EDITOR**



U.S.A.; all very necessary actions. Please continue on this path, Mr. President!"

Tony Loeb
San Jose

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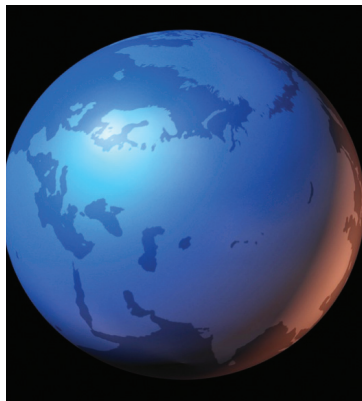
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California legislature introduces bill to divest Russian investment

California has Russian investments exceeding \$1 billion

State Dave Cortese (D-Silicon Valley) joint-authored a bill last week with Senate Majority Leader Mike McGuire which would require California, its agencies, CalPERS, and CalSTRS to divest from Russian-based companies and assets.

"As a state, it is our responsibility to ensure we are not fueling this global crisis that has caused tremendous human suffering," Cortese said. "I hope that other governments follow California's lead



in standing for peace and taking swift action against this unjustified attack on Ukraine."

"The world is watching the atrocities taking place in Ukraine. It's sickening," Senator Mike McGuire said. "We must stand strong for the people of Ukraine. That's why we all must mobilize to stop Russia in its tracks. California has unique and remarkable economic power in this circumstance. As the fifth largest economy in the world, we must use this power for good. We can help stop this autocratic thug, Putin, by advancing this critical legislation and enacting our own financial divestments."

Senate Majority Leader McGuire and the legislative coalition will be advancing a bill that will call on all state agencies, including the Golden State's massive pension funds, CalPERS and CalSTRS, to divest from any and all Russian assets immediately.

It's believed California has Russian investments exceeding over \$1 billion, primarily in its pension funds. At this point there can be no excuse to invest in and support Putin, his oligarchs, and the Russian economy.

Valley Currents

cur | rent (adj.) Present, topical, timely, newsworthy. (n.) Movement in a definite direction, a flow.

San Jose won't split from sister city over Ukraine conflict

By Lorraine Gabbert

Article courtesy of
San José Spotlight

Rather than break ties with its sister city in Russia over the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, San Jose officials are choosing to keep communication lines open.

The City Council voted unanimously Tuesday, March 8 to send a letter of peace and support to sister city Ekaterinburg, Russia, encouraging its residents to stand against President Vladimir Putin.

A sister city is a long-term partnership between two communities in two countries, according to Sister Cities International. Sister cities were initially created in the 1950s to foster peace, but can also promote tourism, trade, educational and cultural exchanges and projects. San Jose has at least eight sister cities including Okayama, Japan and Dublin, Ireland.

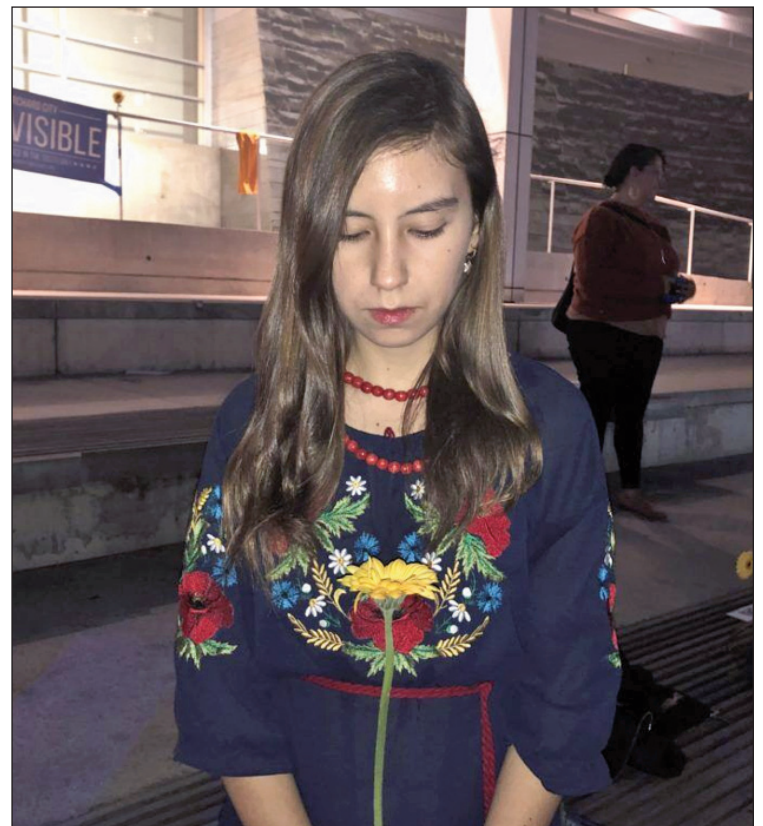
Councilmember Sylvia Arenas originally called for a suspension of diplomatic relations in solidarity with the local Ukrainian community. Arenas also suggested San Jose explore a sister city relationship with a Ukrainian city.

"My intention... was to be symbolic to our community here in San Jose and also in the South Bay," she said.

Mayor Sam Liccardo said in a statement that rather than seeking to isolate Ekaterinburg, San Jose should forge stronger bonds with them, and support their dissent. He said sister cities promote dialogue despite of and because of the deep differences of national governments—and the voice of the Russian people may provide the last, best hope for peace in Europe.

"I appreciate that we're all trying to just find ways we can be of some use in what is a horrible, horrible situation of Russian military aggression against innocent civilians and innocent people in Ukraine," Liccardo said.

Councilmember David Cohen initially suggested San Jose send two letters—one government-to-government and one to the sister city organization—saying the City Council "is heartbroken to see what the Russian government is doing in Ukraine." Cohen said he didn't want to use the letter as a threat of suspension, but an expression



Stanford University student **Kateryna Pistunova**, who has family in Ukraine, said it was uplifting to see the turnout at the vigil. Photo by Lorraine Gabbert.

of support.

But Councilmember Sergio Jimenez, who serves on the board of Sister Cities International, said a government-to-government letter might have a chilling effect on the sister city relationship and suggested only sending a note to the "people of the city."

"I suspect during this time of conflict that many mayors and other elected officials in the country are trying to cover their own butt if you will," he said, adding a government-to-government letter would have the same impact as San Jose severing its relationship with Ekaterinburg.

San Jose residents stood with the Ukrainian community on Tuesday, holding a vigil at City Hall with signs, flags, yellow Gerber daisies and candles against the backdrop of City Hall lit in the blue and yellow of the Ukrainian flag.

Students from Ukraine spoke about their concern for their families at the event led by Orchard City Indivisible, a progressive advocacy group.

Kateryna Pistunova, a Stanford University student, told San José Spotlight the war in Ukraine demonstrates democracy and freedom.

"If people believe these values are important, they should help the fight in Ukraine," she said, adding it was uplifting to see dozens of people show up for the event.

Pistunova, born and raised in Ukraine, said the streets now lie in ruins and while her mother hides in the cellar without electricity or water, her father is out fighting. She is scared to miss a text message from him as it could be his last.

Two weeks into the invasion, Russian bombs are still devastating Ukraine, including a strike on a Mariupol hospital maternity ward. Although efforts to evacuate civilians from bombed cities have resumed, many remain trapped in areas of heavy fighting.

"It's easy to feel helpless in times like this," Pistunova said. "But... now's the time to act."

Resident Nancy Taylor said she's concerned for Ukraine and cries every time she watches the news, but it helps to stand with others at the vigil.

Fellow resident Nancy Anders agreed.

"It's kind of a relief to be able to do something in the community where we live," she said.

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Times Notebook

CalBike urges the legislature to stop AB371 and save bike-share

The California Bicycle Coalition (CalBike) is opposing AB 371 by Assembly Member Jones-Sawyer.

This bill imposes an insurance requirement which the CalBike coalition believes is unprecedented and could put bike and scooter share systems out of business across the state. CalBike helped defeat a similar provision in the 2020 legislature.

"We've only begun to see the potential of low-cost shared bikes and scooters to enhance public transit and provide low-impact, safe mobility for people who can't afford cars or who prefer not to drive," said Dave Snyder, CalBike's Executive Director. "We should be expanding bike-share, not killing it."

The bill is currently in the Senate Insurance Committee.

Almaden residents Buenk and Stromfeld named to Rochester Institute of Technology IT Dean's List

Almaden residents **Miko Buenk** (top photo), mechanical engineering technology program major; and **Max Stromfeld**, graphic design program major, have been named to the Dean's List at Rochester Institute of Technology for the Fall 2021 Semester.



Full-time degree-seeking undergraduate students are eligible for Dean's List if their term GPA is greater than or equal to 3.4; they do not have any grades of "Incomplete", "D" or "F"; and they have registered for, and completed, at least 12 credit hours.

Rochester Institute of Technology is home to leading creators, entrepreneurs, innovators and researchers. Founded in 1829, RIT enrolls about 18,600 students in more than 200 career-oriented and professional programs, making it among the largest private universities in the U.S.

The university is internationally recognized and ranked for academic leadership in business, computing, engineering, imaging science, liberal arts, sustainability, and fine and applied arts.

San Jose Police would get more officers, more training in Liccardo's budget plan

San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo released his March Budget Message late last week outlining a proposed budget for the 2022-23 fiscal year that prioritizes public safety, beautifies San Jose and offers "solutions to homelessness."

"For the first time in decades, we see

declines in the cost for retirement benefits for the next half-decade, as a result of our long-standing efforts to implement sensible pension reform in collaboration with our employees and voters," Liccardo said in a statement. "The dividend from Measure F and our many years of sacrifice will fund bold efforts to address homelessness, crime, and blight, such as by constructing 1,000 quick-build apartments for the homeless, adding dozens of additional police officers to the force, and employing unhoused residents to clean and beautify our city."

The budget forecast assumes that all of \$125.4 million of services funded this year with the help of federal relief aid and one-time City funding will expire, leaving the city with a nearly \$100 million service-

level deficit. As a result, Liccardo has set his priorities on "homelessness, public safety, blight, and "resilience."

Liccardo wants to hire 15 full-time police officers next year and continue growing the police force over the next five years.

He also wants \$323,000 allocated for officer training and \$800,000 to implement recommendations from the police reform committee, one-time funding for new equipment and ongoing funding for a downtown neighborhood walking patrol.

Aislin Sim of Almaden Valley named to Dean's List at Iowa State University

Aislin Sim of Almaden Valley has been named to the Dean's List at Iowa State University, representing the top 2 percent.

Aislin, a Junior, is a Bachelor of Applied Science – BAsC, Chemic Engineering Major.

Each semester the university issues a Dean's List comprised of those students

who have carried at least 12-credit hours of graded or S-F courses with a 3.50 GPA or above for the semester.

Iowa State University of Science and Technology offerings are administered through eight colleges, including the graduate college, that offers over 100 bachelor's degree programs, 112 master's degree programs, and 83 doctoral degree programs, plus a professional degree program in Veterinary Medicine.



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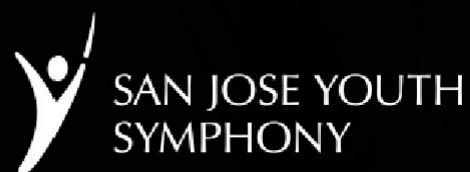
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The deadline for submitting the audition applications is:

Thursday, March 24, 2022

QUESTIONS? Reach out to sjys@sjys.org.

SJYS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization (EIN 91-2166427) that has scholarships and financial aid offerings available based on a showing of need.

Sacred Heart Community Service expands services into downtown San Jose location

Sacred Heart Community Service announced plans to expand programming to a new home at 550 South First Street in downtown San Jose.

The new space provides a space for thousands of families in Silicon Valley to reach financial stability by accessing homelessness prevention services, attaining heating and energy/utility assistance, finding employment, and accessing public benefits.

Since 1998, Sacred Heart has been operating out of nearby 1381 S. First Street when the organization served just 10,000 community members annually. Over the past 24 years the demand for services at their 1381 S. First Street location has grown exponentially. Today, they serve nearly 50,000 families annually, staffing has increased from 15 to more than 100, and volunteers number in the thousands.

"Ever since I started working at Sacred



Heart, we've needed to expand. We do a LOT with a LITTLE. Not only do team members lack basics (like a desk space), our case managers have sometimes had to help people in crisis in hallways and common rooms. We are thrilled to add new space so that we can continue to provide critical services to our community's families with dignity and respect."

In addition to purchasing a new home, Sacred Heart has also completed building renovations at 1381 South First Street, including expansion of the food and clothing programs, and adding community and learning spaces. Renovations on both buildings should be completed in 2022.

"This is an opportunity to join us in celebrating the new space and learning from our staff and community members how Sacred Heart impacts us all."

Today, Sacred Heart serves nearly 50,000 families annually, staffing has increased from 15 to more than 100, and volunteers number in the thousands.



Tire slasher damages dozens of cars on San Jose street

By William Bellou
Publisher

Residents on Chemeketa Drive in South San Jose woke up Tuesday, March 8 to find that someone had slashed the tires on dozens of cars.

Neighbors say more than 40 vehicles had their tires slashed forcing motorists to shell

out hundreds of dollars for new tires.

"No one deserves to wake up and have their tires slashed," said victim David Aldana.

"Some people couldn't go to work. I couldn't go to school."

David Aldana said this wasn't the first time that cars on the street were targeted.

"There was some window breakages about two years ago," he said. "Somewhere around 20-30 vehicles also got their windows broken with pellet guns."

Police are now patrolling the area and neighbors are reviewing their security camera video in hopes of helping police catch the vandal or vandals responsible for the tire carnage.

Legislative Republicans call for gas tax suspension

Democrats kill proposal in a vote 18-40

California State Legislative Republicans held a press conference Monday calling for the immediate suspension of California's 51 cent per gallon gas tax to relieve some of the burden of record-high gas prices.

Assembly Republican Leader James Gallagher (Yuba City) said California drivers are paying outrageous gas prices while the state enjoys a \$45 billion surplus.

"More than \$6 per gallon for premium is a hardship on many California residents," said Gallagher. "Reducing a gallon of gas by \$.51 will help and can be done with the State's large surplus."

Following the press conference, Republican lawmakers forced votes on proposals to suspend the gas tax and backfill projects from the state's \$45 billion surplus. During the Assembly floor session, Republicans moved to advance AB 1638, which would suspend California's state gas tax for six months, and backfill the revenue from the state's budget surplus, which could exceed \$69 billion. The motion was killed on a 18-



40 vote, with all Republicans voting to suspend the tax and every Democrat voted against the measure.

Democratic leaders said no to the tax suspension "because we are reluctant to 'tamper' with the gas tax. They said they want to come up with an alternative way, such as rebates, to ease the burden for drivers, especially those commuting dealing with close to \$6 gallon prices in the Bay Area.

"Capitol Democrats had the chance to provide struggling Californians with immediate relief at the gas pump. They refused," said Assemblyman James Gallagher (Yuba City). "High gas prices and inflation are devastating California families, but Capitol Democrats' only solution seems to be 'buy a Tesla.'"

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Times **Community News**

Indoor masking changes arrive

By Mike Wasserman
Special to the Times

Good News Santa Clara County!

The County Public Health Department confirmed that all masking metrics have been met and indoor masking is no longer required.

It is still strongly recommended that the public wear masks when indoors in public spaces – regardless of vaccination status.

Governor Newsom also announced that masks will not be required in schools and child care facilities, but will continue to be strongly recommended. Local school districts will be able to require more stringent policies if they choose.

The State still requires masks for everyone in high transmission settings like public transit, emergency shelters, health care settings, correctional facilities, homeless shelters and long-term care facilities.

Homelessness

As a newly elected County Supervisor in 2010, I started asking questions about the public cost of homelessness, which led to the Home Not Found study.

This groundbreaking research revealed that by housing our most vulnerable residents, we can reduce the costly burden on public services. Home Not Found has helped guide successful strategies including the 2020-2025 Community Plan to End Homelessness – a collaborative effort led by Destination: Home.

So how are we doing?

New data shows significant progress: Thousands of people have been permanently housed and homelessness prevention efforts are working.

Progress on 2020-2025 Community Plan Goals:

- Nearly 6,000 people are no longer

unhoused and are now in permanent housing in Santa Clara County in just the last 2 years!

- More than 96% of people connected to permanent supportive housing have remained in their homes for more than a year, in another sign of a successful Housing First strategy.
- Year-round temporary shelter capacity increased by almost 20% to 2,227 beds.

- 33% fewer people are falling into homelessness since January 2020!

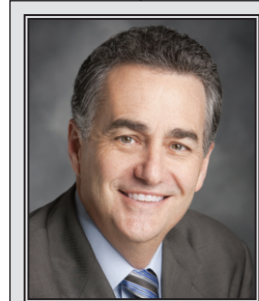
While homelessness remains a devastating humanitarian crisis, the work our community is investing in – building affordable housing and expanding prevention efforts – is having a lasting and significant impact in breaking cycles of homelessness.

Election workers needed (Bilingual speakers needed)

Be a part of applications for election workers for the June 7, 2022 Statewide Direct Primary Election. The 2,000 election

workers are needed to assist at the Registrar of Voters' office and at more than 100 Vote Centers located throughout the County. Bilingual speakers are strongly encouraged to apply. All new hires will receive paid, mandatory training classes to ensure elections are administered in accordance with California Elections code. The classes will be held in-person with proper social distancing. For more information, contact the Registrar of Voters' Office at (408) 918-9169 or click on the link below. Democracy in action! The County Registrar of Voters' office is now accepting applications. Hourly Rate starts at \$25.22 per hour. For more information, Visit: www.sccvote.sccgov.org/extra-help-opportunities

Supervisor Mike Wasserman is the President of the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors. He represents District 1, which includes Gilroy, San Martin, Morgan Hill, and 300,000 people in San Jose. Call 408-299-5010; or email: district1@bos.sccgov.org with your comments and concerns.



County Report

Mike Wasserman,
County Supervisor

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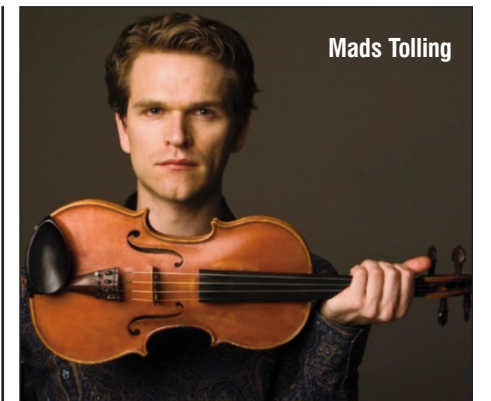
Ainsley House Garden Concert Series returns

Features award winning outdoor performances

Live Music returns to downtown Campbell as the Campbell Museum Foundation and the SJG School of Music host a Spring Garden Concert Series in the Ainsley House Garden.

The series features a lineup of talented and award-winning musicians playing a variety of styles that will entertain, enliven, and engage everyone who attends.

The concerts are outside in the lovely Ainsley House Garden—the perfect venue for a show, surrounded by blooming flowers and in the open air. Please plan according to the weather. The seating will be unassigned theater style. The Ainsley House will be closed for tours on the concert dates, but the Museum Gift Shop will be open.



Mads Tolling

Concert line up

- April 24: **Chris Cain**, Blues Guitarist
- May 22: **Kristen Strom Jazz Quartet**
- June 26: **Mads Tolling** (pictured above), Jazz Violinist

The Garden opens for reservation check-in at 1:30 p.m. and the music begins at 2:00 p.m. Tickets are \$30 per person and includes wine, or sparkling non-alcoholic beverage, and light appetizers, and are on sale now at <https://www.campbellmuseums.com>

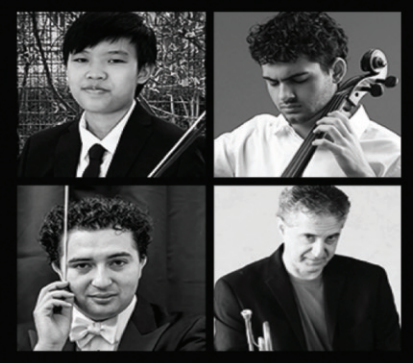


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Times **Feature**

Tech Jargon of the week
Smart Compose

Have you ever stumbled into a conversation where everyone is speaking around this “techie” word – and even after you’ve broken in, it is difficult to understand the unfamiliar jargon and acronyms? Well, there’s no need to sweat it. Let me teach you the meaning of some commonly used tech words:

Smart Compose

A few months back Google introduced “Smart Compose,” a new Gmail feature that helps users complete their sentences. Smart Compose scans the content of users’ messages and suggests phrases and words, based on things that Google knows about English (i.e., sentences that begin with H often turn

out to be “How are you?”) and things Google knows about you. It builds on Gmail’s “smart reply” feature, in which quick responses like “Thanks!” or “See you there” can be sent with a touch of a button.

If you use Gmail regularly, you’ve probably interacted with Smart Compose, whether you know it by name. Smart Compose offers word and phrase suggestions, based on similar judgments, as the user types in real time. You write “Take a look,” and ghostly text might appear to its right: “and let me know what you think.” Its assumptions are more personalized, and they feel that way because it is constantly, visibly, guessing what you’re thinking.

An example of artificial-intelligence

At the core, Smart Compose is a great example of artificial-intelligence (AI) technology being used. It uses AI to guess what you’re going to type before you type it. It bases some of this on the recipient and email subject, as well as your typical writing habits.

The AI is programmed to not only perform tasks, but also to adapt. To start, Smart Compose was trained on publicly available bodies of email text. (Among the most widely used for such projects is the dataset of some 500,000 emails collected during the discovery phase of the Enron investigation.) The machine learning applied to the dataset helps create a model which can then be applied to new test inputs.

Once that model was trained to deal with some of the more obvious idiosyncrasies of email communications — corporate disclaimers and phrases like “Sent from Outlook” — Google began training it on anonymized text from actual Gmail users.

Armed with the dataset of typically used phrases — currently more than 20,000, according to Google— the model can then start incorporating more contextual clues: What was the subject of the email? Is the email asking a question? Is it express-

ing a happy sentiment, or is it offering condolences? Phrases are scored based on their utility — how much typing they save, basically — as well as the A.I.’s confidence in the prediction.

These features consider how people use them. If, for example, it suggests a certain completion, and enough users take it, that one will be more likely to appear in the future. If a canned reply is never used, this is a signal that it should be purged; if it is frequently used, it will show up more often.

In a way, we are automating the replies to emails using AI. We can be sure of only one thing that will result from automating email: It will create more of it.

Do you enjoy reading this column? Send in your comments or feedback to the author at shub.saxen@gmail.com. Shubhi Asthana works as a Research Senior Software Engineer at the IBM Almaden Research Center, San Jose.

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Times News Briefs

Santa Clara Co. Sheriff Laurie Smith announces plans to retire

Santa Clara Co. Sheriff Laurie Smith (inset) has announced she will retire at the end of her term in January.



"This job will never be finished and it is with some regret that I announce my retirement from service at the end of my term in January of 2023," Smith said.

Smith, 69, has served in the Sheriff's Department since 1973, 24 years as sheriff. She was one of the first female permanent undercover vice cops.

On December 15, 1998, Smith became the first female sheriff in California.

Smith has resisted calls for her resignation in recent months over allegations of corruption and jail mismanagement by a grand jury last December.

"As a public official, sometimes you make powerful enemies," Smith said. "My plight is no different and I am confident history will show the first elected woman Sheriff to serve in California was not only honorable -- but her accomplishments will speak far louder and be remembered longer than the false stories that will be repudiated by truth."

Residents will vote in June and a new sheriff will be sworn in January 2023.

San José Public Library Foundation calls on city to restore library funding

As COVID-19 begins to loosen its grip on civic life, the San José Public Library Foundation is urging local leaders to fully restore hours and staffing at San Jose libraries to pre-pandemic levels.

The Foundation held a press conference on March 10 to shine the spotlight on the essential role of San Jose's libraries in our post-COVID recovery and the imperative of full funding for this critical community lifeline.

In order for libraries to provide this lifeline, they must be fully funded.

Proponents of restoring Library funding state that the roughly \$2 million needed to restore normal hours and staffing is extremely small when compared to the City's operating budget of more than \$1 billion.

Cortese's low carbon construction bill aims for climate restoration

State Senator Dave Cortese (D-Silicon Valley) has introduced SB 1297 to continue his innovative work on climate restoration.

Cortese is working with stakeholders from environmental justice groups, labor, and industry to craft a plan for California to not only adapt to, but to reverse climate change.

"It's part of a movement to restore our climate," says Senator Cortese.

"SB 1297 is a vital opportunity for California to chart a global path forward in climate restoration. Removing carbon from our building and construction materials and using them to sequester carbon can be done safely, permanently, and economically -- with an incred-

ibly high impact."

In Santa Clara County, Cortese led the charge to declare a countywide "climate restoration emergency that demands immediate action to halt, reverse, restore and address the consequences and causes of global warming" and on Earth Day's 50th Anniversary, along with Earth Day Network, and the Foundation for Climate Restoration, launched a local governments campaign that called on all cities and counties to adopt climate restoration.

SB 1297 calls on the state to develop a strategic plan to advance carbon reduction across all building and construction materials and maximize carbon sequestration. Notably, this would greatly expand the reach of our state's current embodied carbon reduction goals and include materials such as cement, concrete, aggregate, lumber, cross-laminated timber, steel, and more. It would require stakeholder input and for state agencies to develop plans, accounting frameworks, and otherwise encourage the use of building materials where feasible with low or negative embodied carbon emissions, to help maximize the level of carbon sequestration in the built environment.

As stated in SB 1297, California uses enough aggregate, concrete, and other building materials that it could store all carbon emissions from major industrial sources in the built environment.

Philharmonic Orchestra's Spring Concert March 26

Philharmonic Orchestra's Spring Concert will feature Competition Winners and the Harp & Jazz Ensembles on Saturday, March 26 at 4:00 p.m. at the California Theatre.

Program

- Suppé – Light Cavalry Overture
- Mozart – Violin Concerto No. 4 in D Major, K. 218 (Greyson Haryanto, violin)
- Castro – Concerto for Harp Quartet and Orch. (featuring SJYS Harp Ensemble)
- Elgar – Cello Concerto in E minor (Hudson Fey, cello)
- Kalniņš – Symphony No. 4, "Rock Symphony"
- Bolvin – Free Climb, featuring the SJYS Jazz Ensemble

The Orchestra has performed with many internationally renowned artists in concert and on tour. They include Jon Nakamatsu, Gold Medal winner of the 1997 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, Axel Strauss, professor of violin at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Taylor Eigsti, renowned jazz pianist and two-time Grammy Award nominee, and Max Zorin, critically acclaimed violinist and faculty member of the Penn State School of Music.

In addition to the standard symphonic repertoire, the orchestra has collaborated with many local and international leading arts groups, among them, the San Jose Symphony Orchestra, the Asian Youth Orchestra, the Okayama Youth Orchestra, San Jose Taiko, Firebird Youth Chinese Orchestra, Mariachi Cobre, San Jose Children's Musical Theater, the Batucada nana Latin Ensemble, the Crystal Children Choir, the Homestead Jazz Ensemble, the Latin Jazz Ensemble from San Jose State University, and the Los Gatos Ballet in its annual full productions of The Nutcracker.

Online tickets available now for purchase by visiting: www.sjys.org/product-category/tickets; tickets are also available for purchase at the California Theatre Box Office on concert day one hour before the Concert (3 p.m.)

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Rebuilding Days

Our Rebuilding Day program provides major and minor repairs and renovations resulting in life-changing improvements for the homeowners and organizations served.

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Safe at Home program addresses home repair and maintenance issues that may otherwise present a safety risk or that limit access to or within the home.

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San José Mayor highlights investments, progress of the passage of American Rescue Plan

Remarks made on first anniversary of the American Rescue Plan

Mayor **Sam Liccardo** (inset) highlighted last week the many ways the historic investments from the American Rescue Plan act (ARP) has helped San José recover from COVID-19 ahead of the one-year anniversary of the enactment of the ARP, Friday, March 11.

A critical component of the ARP was direct relief funding for American cities and states, and these funds have helped the city address critical needs as San José continues to recover from COVID-19, while also making investments in the future.

"The American Rescue Plan funds allowed us to be creative in addressing the looming challenges left by this pandemic and help our most vulnerable residents," said San José



Mayor Sam Liccardo. "We were able to create jobs for 500 low income young adults through the Resilience Corps, through occupations that will sustain our city and make

it more resilient. As we approach the anniversary of the passage of ARP I am deeply grateful to President Biden as we use these funds for critical investments in public safety, health care, affordable housing, and more in San José."

\$212.3 million in ARP funds were given directly to the City of San José, which was then used for housing stability, emergency rental assistance, beautifying San José, delivery of essential services, the creation of meaningful jobs for young San Joséans through the Resilience Corps, digital inclusion, food distribution and more.

Some examples of the spending include:

Category	Total
Beautify San José including:	\$19.3 million total
• San José Bridge	\$4 million
Resilience Corps	\$17.8 million
Housing Stabilization including:	\$26.3 million total
• Emergency rental assistance	\$14.5 million
Emergency Interim Housing	\$4 million
Homelessness	\$4.2 million
Child and Youth Services	\$3.8 million
Digital Inclusion	\$5.3 million
Food Distribution	\$14.8 million
Small Business Recovery	\$14.7 million

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Times **Feature**

The challenge of clay capillary action

By Matthew Frazier

One of the items I have alluded to briefly in a past article entry was “Capillary Action” within the context of The Challenge of Clay we face right here in Santa Clara Valley.

This holds true for our neighboring valleys as well I imagine: Blossom Valley and Evergreen Valley included. When I speak of “capillary action,” I am thinking of an aspect of Hydrology which was pointed out to me during my training in the CalWEP curriculum in the fall of 2020 when I was working towards becoming a QWEL-certified professional. Qualified Water Efficient Landscapers are expected to understand the basics of this subject.



Water Wise
Matthew Frazier,
Certified Water
Manager

To the best of my knowledge, within the context of clay soil, when we apply water to our clay soil, here on our valley floors, the water infiltrates the upper crest and moves outwards in elliptical arcs and waves as it covers more surface area than it does depth. The water is drawn laterally in all directions, away from the point of application, wetting the upper crest of the soil and making its way in a terrestrial fashion.

For the shrubs and trees which are native to Santa Clara Valley, this can be quite advantageous: Forcing the roots to search for water near the surface and forcing those roots to expand and cover more surface area. The analogy, or demonstration, which was presented to me and the other QWEL candidates during the training, was that of an object that appeared to be a base with multiple glass pipettes, positioned vertically. When water entered this device, it was drawn laterally to another pipette then drawn vertically upwards through vacuum pressure. This demonstration was given to show “capillary action” with water. Water moves into spaces with the aid of vacuum pressure created in a tight space.

For our clay soil, water must completely saturate each individual clay particle before it can make its way farther throughout the soil. My conversations with certified arborists over the years revealed that the majority of roots are near the surface, especially with clay soil. For the years I worked in retail and wholesale garden centers and nurseries, I advised clients and customers to apply water at a slow rate so that that water could infiltrate the soil at such a rate as to not create runoff. If the rate of application, even with drip and spray irrigation, exceeds the infiltration rate of the soil, we will see runoff. A

technique shared with me long ago, from an irrigation contractor/technician, was what they called the “Three and Three Rule” which I most likely mentioned in one of my earlier articles. This technique, as I understand it, advocates running our irrigation timers at 9pm, midnight, and 3am for a 3-minute cycle each time, three times per week at these times during the hot and warm weeks of the year. In the curriculum for the QWEL training, we were introduced to the metrics of distribution uniformity and irrigation efficiency which I will not discuss in detail at this point but I invite any who are interested to look into this. Going back to the point of capillary action, knowing about this phenomenon can be a good piece of wisdom, especially when dealing with our challenging clay soil here in Santa Clara Valley and out neighboring valleys within Santa Clara County.

During the year and ten months I worked at Santa Clara Valley Water District, as a water-waste inspector and water-wise outdoor surveyor, I had the opportunity to speak with many homeowners and residents about irrigating their landscapes and yards efficiently. As a surveyor, I would show residents how to set their irrigation controllers in such a way as to engage and implement this Three and Three Rule shared with me by that irrigation contractor/technician.

Though I did not endorse the use of specific products out in the field, I would show these residents how to set the run cycles on multiple programs with these controllers. With regard to this article, I invite our readers to arrange a free meeting with an irrigation surveyor through your local water agency or water district and talk to them about setting shorter and more frequent irrigation cycles for your landscapes and yards, especially going into spring and summer.

In the next article, I would like to share with you what I have learned about the importance of limiting turf lawn fertilizers in the process of irrigation as well. I ask and I invite any and all inquiries you may have. It is my pleasure to share this insight with you and converse with you in the process. You can find my contact information below. Thank you each and all. And I wish you the very best in your irrigation endeavors. Be well.

Matthew Frazier is a Certified Water Manager, Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper, and Qualified Stormwater Manager. You may contact him at: (408) 656-5622 – Mobile/Text; or by email: kitchenfrazier@hotmail.com

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Mahan introduces government proposal linking progress on key issues to future pay raises for politicians and department heads

Mayoral candidate **Matt Mahan** (right) called upon the San Jose City Council this week to evaluate his plan to hold elected officials and top department heads accountable for results on key priorities like homelessness, crime and dirty streets.

The Mahan Accountability Proposal would end automatic raises for politicians and department heads and require top officials to make progress on key problems before earning future raises.

"You don't get a raise at work if you don't make progress. Neither should politicians and top department heads," Mahan said.

Mahan's proposal would lay out key performance metrics for each of the six priorities outlined in the Mayor's 2022 Budget Message and establish clear benchmarks like lower crime rates, fewer people living on our streets and cleaner streets, and then hold top officials accountable to meeting those goals.

Mahan pointed out that this type of accountability proposal is nearly universal in most businesses and non-profit organizations and is not unique to government.

"A few years ago, we passed a law that



required California legislators to pass a budget on time or forfeit their paychecks for every day they could not accomplish this key goal. Since then, every budget has been on time," said Mahan.

"It is just common sense that if we want our government to work better, we need to stop rewarding failure," said Mahan.

Swimming

Continued from page 1

her and I'm like, "This is Tracey. Look at her go."

Before entering the sun-dappled sea, Fahlen, 52, and Ananmalay, 56, joined by their friend Ian MacDonald, 58, watch the pattern of the waves and gauge the wind. They don wet suits, swim caps, goggles and hand paddles, adding ear wax to keep the water out. Fahlen, who swims out further from shore, adds a brightly colored inflatable tow buoy to improve visibility.

"On a day like today, there's no better decision in the world," Ananmalay said smiling.

The two did the polar bear dip on New Year's Day together at Hooper's Beach in Capitola.

"It was so fun and so cold," Fahlen said.

Both women swim in the Almaden Masters program at Crossgates Swim Club, where Fahlen is a swim coach. Ananmalay teaches fifth graders at Los Alamitos Elementary School.

Fahlen became hooked on open water swimming in 2017, when she participated in the Lava Man triathlon in Hawaii.

"The fantastic thing about ocean swimming is you get out of there and you just feel terrific," Fahlen said. "You feel victorious. If you have any worries, you have to put them aside. You have to survive the ocean."

They have both been caught unexpectedly by waves. Ananmalay recently had what she refers to as "a washing machine event" that she chalks up to a learning opportunity. It wasn't the first time she's been hammered by the waves and left gasping for air. On her third outing, she was caught repeatedly by the surf, finally crawling up the sand, exhausted.

"I've had interesting swims with this one," Fahlen said. "I never had a swim and thought, 'Oh boy, this is rough,' until Tracey took me to swim at Seacliff. Some of the currents and waves in the afternoon are brutal. Two times now, the ocean has spit me out."

Ananmalay said before jumping in, smart swimmers watch for sneaker waves, check what the tides are doing, the temperature, the winds. And they listen to the National Weather Service.

Fahlen finds ocean swimming thrilling and deeply satisfying.



Lola Fahlen admires her friend **Tracey Ananmalay's** determination, especially as she never imagined it was something she'd choose to do. *Photo by Lorraine Gabbert.*

"The highs and recovery from cold water swimming are exhilarating," she said. "You're just one swim away from a good mood."

When the sea is calm, MacDonald finds swimming relaxing. Before entering, he takes time to watch the cadence of the waves.

"I don't worry about the sharks," he said, "but I worry about the waves. Being slammed to the ocean floor is not fun."

Although there have been shark sightings at Seacliff, Fahlen doesn't let it stop her from swimming there, but she does have a healthy respect for the predators.

"If you're considering open water swimming, be aware of the challenges and your environment," she said.

Fahlen participated in the annual Alcatraz Invitational and is tempted to do it again this year as Ananmalay and MacDonald are diving in. The mile and a quarter race through the icy sea is not for the faint-hearted.

"You train and train and train," Fahlen said. "You have to overprepare due to weather and sea conditions. There are strong currents and winds. You have to be ready."

Ananmalay, who wore a swimsuit rather than a wetsuit until November, said cold water swimming provides mental health and brain chemistry benefits. She said people's body temperature continues to drop

30 minutes after leaving the water.

"You feel great," she said. "It has a positive, uplifting effect."

Ananmalay also appreciates the natural beauty and aquatic life from pelicans to seals, as well as the company of friends.

Fahlen said they "grin like idiots" when they get out of the water.

Ananmalay wishes she had started ocean swimming earlier.

"But here I am now," she said. "We have a lot of fun."



Tracey Ananmalay (left) and **Lola Fahlen** have been friends for a long time, but only recently dived into open water swimming together. *Photo by Lorraine Gabbert*

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Times **Feature**

Hannah Farley, Brenna Gallagher, Farah Azim, and Victor Hernandez tune in "At The Hop".

Rock 'N Roll

Continued from page 1

and tell the stories, in a more unique way that's not a concert, not a review, but an actual show with commercial breaks and I think that really attracted me to the show."

The show leads off with Junior Tommy Jordan, "your favorite disc jockey, Tommy J!" spinning tunes in this radio broadcast from the '50s & '60s. Try to stop your toes from tapping and your heart from singing along through 51 numbers, blocked into genres and segued via vignettes. Just listening to the rehearsals in the background this writer couldn't help but smile and feel weights lifted.

There are sweet, nostalgic, slower songs weaved in including, as Tommy shared "I am a huge Elvis fan - we have a whole block of songs that are Elvis songs that are my favorites - I absolutely love 'Are You Lonesome Tonight' and 'I'm Sorry' by Brenda Lee - it's just gorgeous, I love it."

Talking with the few students for this article, you gain a sense of the cross-section of songs available to please the senses, and the wide-ranging appeal this show will have.

In addition to Tommy's appreciation for Elvis, Senior Victor Hernandez especially enjoys the Motown section. "I love that type of music and all the numbers are fun to perform, to sing and dance. But Motown for sure has a really nice place in my heart. The Miracles' 'Shop Around' I definitely like. And Chuck Berry's 'Roll Over Beethoven' and 'At The Hop' by Danny and The Juniors."

Fellow Senior, Brenna Gallagher, included "Cupid" by Sam Cooke, Chubby Checker's "The Twist" and "Tears On My Pillow" by Little Anthony and the Imperials. Luke's favorites include "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" by Marvin Gaye. It's also a duet with close friend, Riley Blackwell. He appreciates "Going Out of My Head" by Little Anthony, and "My Guy" by Mary Wells.

In addition to the segues, expect two fun skits from some of your favorite TV comedies of the period. Without giving them away, they are sure to make you laugh appreciating apt comedic timing on display.

At least three cast members are no strangers to "show biz" having performed locally in the valley for years. The caliber of excellence they, along with the whole

cast, bring to this performance is sure to delight the local community with the bonus of a performance venue close by. Head to dinner in Almaden and finish your evening on an even higher note.

These performers, along with the entire cast, have worked hard beyond "normal" circumstances in hopes for an audience not only to appear, but to appreciate and truly relish a fun night out of amusement and entertainment. Victor, a featured dancer and vocalist, reflected "With everything going on, everybody needs amusement and performing in general has always been part of my high school career. It's really good getting back and getting in the spring of it again - it's really fun! Seeing all the production going on, it's just really, really good seeing everything coming back to life." Tommy agreed, "It's so much better now, you get to bounce that energy off the audience...I'm so excited!"

A Well-Rounded Team

Behind the scenes, there's a lot going on for these students. Brenna observed "I've always looked up to the Seniors, no matter what class (grade) I'm in, so going from a sophomore, and a little halt during that time (due to Covid), I felt like just a student during that time, not really like a grade level. And then here I am as a Senior, there are no other upperclassmen and I'm at the top. So I've made it a point to myself to give the underclassmen, and even the juniors, that memory and that experience that I felt (from before Covid). It was really different and I want to make sure they have that same welcoming experience that I did."

"It means a lot to me when the seniors and upperclassmen from my time visit because I'm reminded of my goal for the underclassmen. It's just really sweet (when the alumni come by &/or return to see a show.)"

Besides Drama, Brenna competes with the school's Competitive Sport (stunt) Cheer team. Similarly, but different, Victor is a Cheerleader, and also heavily involved with clubs on campus including Peer Mentoring and Be the Change, as well as running his own Etsy store. Tommy tried something new this year and went out for Track & Field, immediately drawn to and excelling in shot-put and discus. Luke dove in head first to his first full-time school gig joining ASB

See *ROCK N ROLL*, next page

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Times **Local News**

Rock N Roll

Continued from previous page
leadership and continuing his love of and passion for Drama. These are just some of their current pursuits.

One of the hallmarks of Pioneer Drama includes both its diversity of cast members and its incredible talent to weave them all together into both a cohesive company and a stellar performance. And by diversity, I mean all types of diversity. Kids from all walks of life are welcomed including the most committed and outgoing football player through the shyest student who isn't sure how to join clubs or get involved. This program is a place of welcome, "a family!" as Brenna put it. Students have multiple goals in life, most very divergent from a path related to the arts, but they leave PHS Drama not only with an appreciation of music, dance, theater and performing, but with skills sorely needed by corporate America, and frankly often lacking in the current candidate pool. To leave Drama with an ability to compose yourself in front of not just one or two others, but a room packed full of people, to have presence, to communicate and present at a high level, you are learning these skills and taking them with you to whatever your next steps after high school may be, be it to college or directly to the workforce. Who wouldn't want for their child, their community, to be strengthened in preparation for what awaits?

The Pandemic

Tuesday, March 10, 2020 - this writer attended one of the full rehearsals for "Newsies." To say that production would've

been on par with Pioneer's previous production of "Les Miserables" is definitely with merit. It was two weeks from opening night, and already more than show-ready. The last touches of costuming were being put in place and run-throughs fine-tuned. Everything changed on Friday, March 13th. We all know and have been impacted ever since. The impact to the performers, and families, and community, were in minor disruptive to say the least, and in major down right devastating. When you talk with these young people, and hear their resilience, it's uplifting. They shared the realities for them, the way they've coped. From Luke: "The biggest impact of Covid for me then was (loss of) community...losing that sense of community was really hard for me...I felt very isolated... I think that was partly why 'I'm definitely going to continue with Drama - that had that sense of community that I've been looking for."

"I've met a lot of people. I'm (friends with) so many different bubbles of people - people on the football team, people who are really good at math, I know many people in many different circles. So I think it worked out really well. I put a lot of value on connection. I just ask them about their day. And show that I care about them. I think that builds a bond quicker."

Tommy found outlets in skateboarding, working out and ways to remain social with friends across online gaming - a common social networking outlet during Covid.

For Victor, it was commitment to what was started: "The pandemic motivated me. I needed an outlet and something to get my mind off of it for sure. Being so involved

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Feature



Melissa Sheil as Lucille Ball in "Vitameatavegamin."

with drama already I had to continue that. I had to see it through. I wasn't going to stop until I had my last performance, my last curtain call you would say. Also the same with cheerleading and the other clubs I'm involved with. I wanted to keep them going and not give up on that."

Similarly, Brenna's commitment to insuring underclassmen have as similar to an experience as her memory serves tries to bridge that gap created by Covid.

These are just four members of the cast. Imagine the stories of them all.

Director Mrs. Ashley Coleman said, "When life as we knew it came to a halt, people suffered a loss in many different ways. But amongst all the loss, I noticed a global "shift" toward the arts. People turned to music, film, dance, and theatre to lift their spirits. Performing Arts Communities from around the world worked magic to make the arts accessible to all from the comfort and safety of quarantine. So, in selecting a Spring Musical for 2022, our goal was to choose something that captured the essence of that which kept us going--- joy. "It's Still Rock and Roll to Me" is pure joy. The music is upbeat, the energy is high, the dancing is infectious, and the performers are passionate. We look

forward to sharing this joy with our beloved and greatly missed community."

Performances of "It's Still Rock 'N Roll To Me"

To see these students all put forth the high energy, joy, talent and desire to share a special night with all of us, their community, is more than a hopeful sign for our collective futures. Come to one - or more! - of their performances - nightly doors close at 7 pm. Tickets on sale at: phsdrama.ludus.com or walk-ups (starting at 6 pm each evening). Performances are nightly: March 25th & 26th, and again March 30th through April 2nd at 1290 Blossom Hill Road, Performing Arts Center.

Luke contrasts this show with more technical shows as "it's instead about these people are doing something, performing for people, it's songs that we all like, it's the joy of performing." Victor wants "the audience for sure to have fun and get to relive the numbers; and jive out with us and take away so much beauty of theater. As Tommy hopes "I'm elated to be back in the classroom and able to put on actual stage productions. I forgot just how fun they are... I just hope we get good (audience) turnout. I hope people love it."

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Times **Feature****Masks***Continued from page 1*

One of the school districts that will keep masks on is Alum Rock Union School District. Superintendent Hilaria Bauer said the district will continue the policy to keep students and employees protected, as the majority of its students are unvaccinated.

"We have been blessed with little opposition from our families," she said, "and staff feels it is the best protection we have right now."

San Jose Unified School District spokesperson Jennifer Maddox said the district will align with state and public health guidelines. Starting March 14, masks will no longer be required at SJUSD schools.

"Wearing a properly fitted mask will be strongly recommended, and we will support those who choose to continue to mask," the school district said in a statement. "This updated guidance begins a transition to treating COVID like other illnesses, such as the flu."

Although Maddox said parents and students have not made mask wearing an issue throughout the pandemic, within the last couple of weeks the district started hearing from families who wanted the policy relaxed.

"I think everyone is ready to get closer to a return to normal," she told San José Spotlight, noting the district is unsure how many students and workers will unmask. She suspects a large number will continue to wear them.

Other school districts are still determining a timeline for updating mask policies.

Aaron Brengard, director of safety, child welfare and attendance for Evergreen School District, said the district lifted outdoor masking requirements on March 3. He said the school district is discussing plans to allow optional indoor masking.

The school district is also working to develop an innovative, site-based metric that affects masking and other mitigation strategies. It would report COVID infections to the county within 24 hours for contact tracing and dictate whether masks should be worn at each school. The district would also notify employees and families connected to the infections.

In November, the school district allowed students to unmask during sports. It had planned to make outdoor masking optional in January, but omicron changed that. Brengard said COVID cases climbed from four before break to 398 the following week.

"We've been waiting for an opportunity for those numbers to go down," Brengard told San José Spotlight. "We monitored testing and our (COVID) cases are low. We are at seven for this week."

Before making any changes, the district made certain it had a full inventory of personal protective equipment and spoke with students about the social and emotional impact of removing masks. They explained if conditions changed, masking would return.

Since the change in policy, only a small number of students have removed their masks outdoors, Brengard said, including his eighth-grade daughter. He said she likes wearing her mask as it covers her acne, and she doesn't have to wear makeup.

At Santa Teresa High School in the East Side Union High School District, some students still choose to wear masks outdoors. Student Lily Nakagawa said she is willing to wear a mask at school.

"I don't really mind it," she said. "I'd rather wear a mask and stay in-person at school than have to go back to online."

Superintendent Glenn Vander Zee said the district is implementing an optional indoor mask policy. He said while residents have advocated for masks to be optional, some students say removing them may cause anxiety.

"This will be a difficult adjustment for many because we've gotten used to wearing masks," he told San José Spotlight.



Santa Teresa High School student **Lily Nakagawa** (right) said she's used to wearing a mask indoors at school. She'd rather wear a mask than return to distance learning. *Photo by Lorraine Gabbert.*

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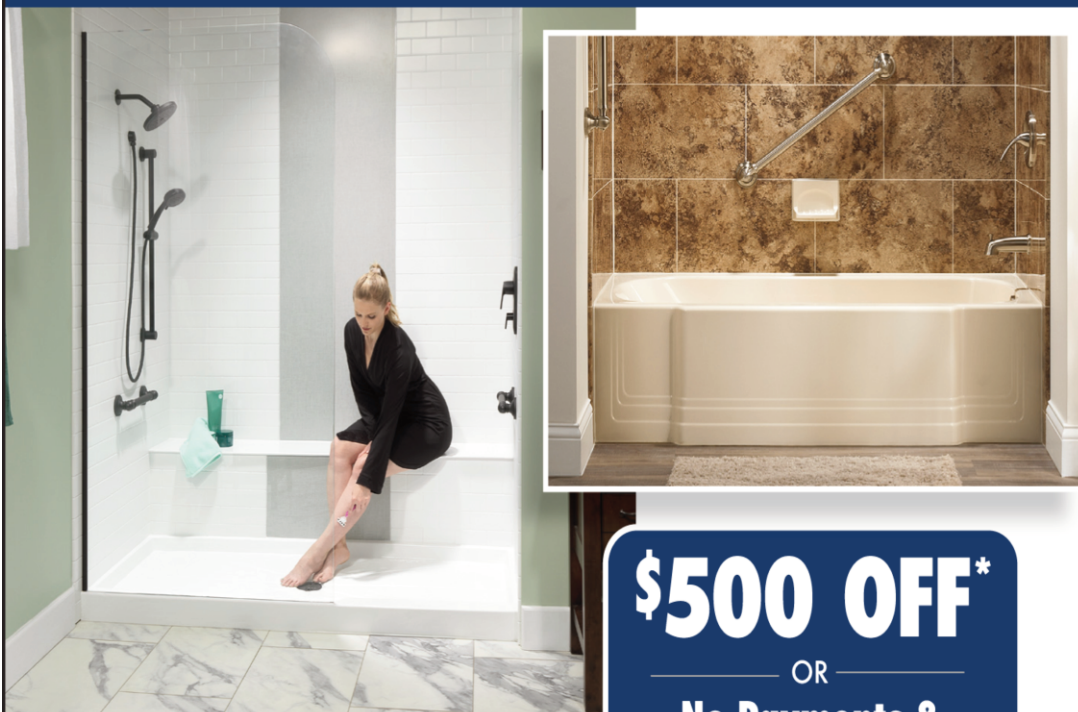
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Single-level home in the Glencrest area of Almaden Valley. Enter through an iron privacy gate which opens to a park-like front yard. Living room with corner fireplace. Kitchen has quartz slab counters and plenty of cabinetry. Dual pane windows, central air conditioning, newer water heater, 3-year new HVAC system, and more. Close to Glenview Park, Almaden Quicksilver County Park, Almaden Golf and Country Club, Almaden Lake Park, trails, restaurants, shops, schools, library and more. Williams Elementary School, Bret Harte Middle School and Leland High School.

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