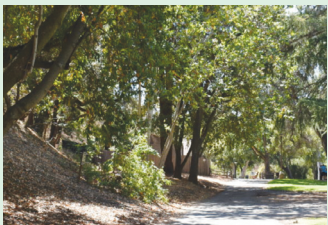
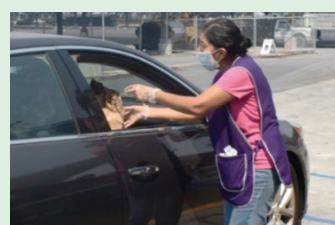


San Jose dedicates funds to maintain its oldest park —  
**PAGE 4**



**Are there enough Police?**  
Mayor separates facts from fiction related to police staffing  
— **SEE PAGE 2**

Santa Clara County schools help stamp out student hunger  
**SEE PAGE 10**



AUGUST 26 – SEPT. 8, 2022 ■ VOL. 39, NO. 18

# EvergreenTimes

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## REMINDER!



**14TH ANNUAL HOT  
SAN JOSE NIGHTS –  
A FREE FAMILY EVENT**

**Airport Day  
returns Sept. 3  
at Reid-Hillview**

By William Bellou  
Publisher

For 14 years, Hot San Jose nights – Airport Day has been a huge family fun classic car show and airplane show for the entire family. This year the event takes place Saturday, Sept. 3 from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. The event including parking is free.

“Bring your chairs and coolers and enjoy the day with us,” said event founder, Michael Hennessy. “We will have great live music and  
*See AIRPORT DAY, page 18*

## San Jose fire captain's three children, ex-wife killed in crash

*Fire Station 16 in Evergreen organizes online fundraiser for funeral costs*

By William Bellou  
Publisher

A San Jose fire captain is grieving the loss of all three of his children in a traffic collision Sunday, August 14 near Hollister on Highway 156.

Capt. Steve Biakanja's twin 14-year-old daughters Leigh and Lucy and 12-year-old son Ben were killed in the crash, according to a GoFundMe fundraiser organized by San Jose Fire Station 16 in Evergreen. The collision also claimed the life of his ex-wife, Lisa Biakanja.



## TRAGIC LOSS ON HIGHWAY 56



In a statement, the CHP said a 2014 Tesla was eastbound on the highway when it crossed over the solid double yellow lines and crashed into a 2015 Freightliner traveling in the opposite direction. The four occupants of the Tesla suffered fatal injuries, according to the CHP.

“In the wake of great tragedy, San Jose Fire Station 16 is asking for your support to raise funds for Captain Steve Biakanja as he navigates a new reality following the recent deaths of all three of his children in a terrible auto accident,” the GoFundMe page said. Station 16 is located in Evergreen on King Rd.

“With your help, we can do our best to ease the burden of this tragedy and to honor the memory of his beloved children.”

The funds will be used to cover the children's funeral costs, as well as counseling, meals and other forms of support for Biakanja and his wife, Thuan, according to the page.

According to the GoFundMe page, Leigh was a Sea Cadet who enjoyed learning about science and playing softball. Lucy loved animals and raised chickens and doves as a hobby. Ben left behind a collection of World War II memorabilia, an “avid interest of his.”

As of 6 p.m. Wednesday, the GoFundMe fundraiser had raised its goal of \$200,000. Here is the link: [gofundme.com/f/BiakanjaMemorialFund](https://gofundme.com/f/BiakanjaMemorialFund)

Anyone who witnessed the traffic collision can contact Officer N. Stewart at 408-848-2324.

## Knife-wielding thieves target Peter's Bakery

By William Bellou  
Publisher

The ever popular Peter's Bakery, located on Alum Rock Ave., was targeted by thieves in the overnight hours Wednesday morning, August 17.

Peters' Bakery co-owner Cap Peters said some bakers were held at knifepoint. Surveillance footage showed the two minutes it took for the crooks to get away with the bakery's cash box.

Five young people were seen on the bakery's surveillance video



walking into the bakery from the back at around 1:20 a.m. Manuel Goulart, an employee who witnessed the robbery, said three of his

colleagues were held up at knifepoint.

One employee was grabbed by the neck and was held with others

at knifepoint while another man emerged from the kitchen carrying the baker's cash box with an estimated \$1,000 in cash.

No one was hurt and a police report has been filed and all of the employees are continuing to work.

Police are investigating the crime and are asking the public for help in identifying the suspects. Surveillance video of the attack has been shared nearly a thousand times on social media.

Peter's Bakery has been operating in San Jose since 1936.

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Times **Community News**

# The facts about police staffing

By Mayor Sam Liccardo

The last time that police staffing aroused controversy in San Jose, I refused the demands of some protesters to “defund the police” in 2020. They responded at one demonstration by painting expletives on my wife’s and my home. I defied the demands of the protesters for a simple reason: our community wants—and our public safety demands—more police officers. I worked over multiple budgets to save and identify the dollars to expand officer staffing at SJPD by more than 200 officers in the last half-decade, and to increase the police budget by 50% since I became mayor in 2015.

When neighbors helped me clean the graffiti from our home, however, I didn’t expect facts to get wiped away with it.

Last week, San Jose’s police union—known as the San Jose Police Officers Association (POA)—burst on the headlines warning of a “mass exodus” of officers from the SJPD based on their survey of some of their members, purportedly due to the City’s lack of investment in the officer’s compensation. The next day, County Supervisor Cindy Chavez—financially backed by the police union in her mayoral campaign—repeated their warnings of doom through robo-calls, text messages, and media.

All of this would be very alarming, of course,

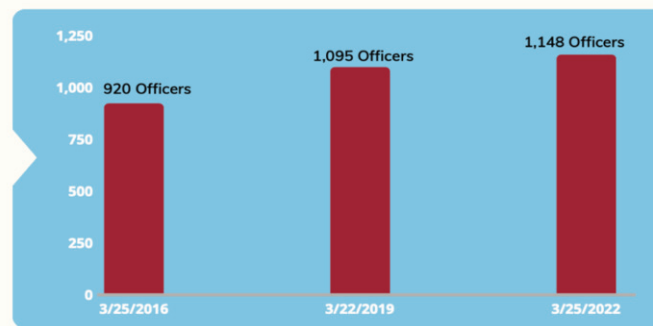
if it were true. So we checked the facts with a non-combatant in these political wars, the City’s Human Resources Department.

It’s not true. Here’s what we learned, in three bullet points:

- As of 2021, the average annual salary of a San Jose police officer, including overtime, exceeds \$189,000. That’s not a typo; it’s about \$189,200. And that doesn’t include benefits like pensions or health care. That number includes wages for sergeants, lieutenants, and captains, but even among the lowest ranking “officer” classification, the average salary exceeds \$164,000. Among the 17 large departments in the Bay Area to which we are routinely com-

## SJPD SWORN STAFFING

3/25/2016 - 3/25/2022



\*Data provided by the San José Police Department

pared in police wage surveys, San Jose has the third-highest paid officers in the region. Keep in mind that when it comes to officer salaries, Bay Area leaps a very high bar: San Jose metro has the highest police salaries in the United States.

- The vacancy rate of SJPD officers is currently about 3%. And that’s after I proposed and the Council agreed to add funding for 20 new officer positions to SJPD a few weeks ago, when vacancy was near zero. The police union even admitted last week that “it is not inaccurate to state that the vacancy rate for sworn officers is low,” but asserts the City should adopt the union’s new, creative approach for tracking vacancies— a subject to which we’ll return shortly.

- SJPD has expanded its ranks by more than 200 sworn officers since 2017, aided by a strong pay package that routinely lures officers from other local police departments — known as “lateral” hires. Of course, we must continue adding more—and that’s why I proposed (and

the Council approved) a budget in June that added another 20 officer positions, and that’s why we’ve built-in additions of dozens more officers in the projections for each of the next five years’ budgets.

### So, Why the Scare Tactics — and Why Now?

So, why is the police union and a POA-backed politician scaring residents over a “mass exodus” talk now? Simply, the police union is negotiating with the City for higher wages in a new police contract. The City has offered to increase wages by 7% over two years, but the police union’s latest demands include a 14% pay increase, with a \$5,000 “cash bonus.” Obviously, police officers should be compensated well—and they are. They’re the highest paid group of employees in the City, as noted above, with POA members earning an average salary of more than \$189,000. But we must ensure that we have sufficient taxpayer dollars to hire more officers, and not merely to pay officers more.

### Explaining the POA’s “Alternative Universe”

In two ways, the police union offers an “alternative universe” of assertions about police staffing, strikingly different from the objective data presented by the City’s Human Resources Department:

#### (1) “Vacancies”

First, although the POA admits in writing that the current 3% vacancy rate for “sworn officers is low”, the union claims that the City should define “vacancy” differently. The POA would like the City to count positions as “vacant” if they are filled by rookie officers undergoing on-the-job supervision with Field Training officers, or if the officers are injured. To my knowledge, neither San Jose nor any other big city has ever counted “vacancies” in

See *POLICE*, page 7

*“Truth is the first casualty in war.”*

*–Ethel Annikin, 1915*

*“.....while wage negotiations and political campaigns subject the truth to their own unique variety of butt-kicking.”*

*– Sam Liccardo*

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Liccardo



Mahan

## Liccardo becomes fourth San Jose Mayor to endorse Mahan

By William Bellou  
Publisher

Councilmember Matt Mahan, who is promoting his common-sense solutions mayoral campaign, has earned the endorsement of San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo.

Liccardo is not seeking re-election in November because of term limits.

“On important issues from homelessness, to crime, to affordable housing, Matt Mahan offers a common-sense plan for progress, accountability, and pragmatic solutions,” said Mayor Sam Liccardo. “Matt is the kind of common-sense Democrat we need in leadership to ensure that our government works as hard as

*“Let’s stop the false attacks and start debating serious issues.”*  
— Mahan

our San Jose families, at a time when too many families struggle to balance budgets amid surging inflation,” Liccardo said.

Liccardo urged a greater focus on the important issues in the race for Mayor and called his endorsement of Mahan a “rejection of the politics of fear,” decrying the “disingenuous scare tactics” coming from the campaign of Cindy Chavez around issues of police staffing, public safety, and women’s reproductive freedom.

“Councilmember Mahan strongly supported our budgetary decisions to add dozens of officers to the SJPd, to institute walking patrol beats in every police district, and to support expansion of Planned Parenthood’s health services to women in need.” Liccardo continued, “Let’s stop the false attacks and start debating the serious issues.”

Mahan’s grassroots campaign has organized more than 25,000 community supporters.

Three former Mayors of San Jose previously announced their endorsement of Mahan – Chuck Reed, Tom McEnery, and Ron James.

# Valley Currents

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

## San Jose dedicates funds to maintain its oldest park

By Lorraine Gabbert  
San José Spotlight

The oldest municipal park in California just celebrated its 150th birthday, and yet its upkeep doesn’t get the love and respect it deserves.

Nestled amid the rugged foothills of the Diablo mountains, Alum Rock Park offers 720 acres for residents and became critical open space during the COVID-19 pandemic when people were stuck indoors. Children who sat for hours in front of computers during distance learning escaped from the pandemic in nature, rolling hills and playgrounds.

But the park has not always been well-funded or maintained. When the city’s parks department presented its annual report on its 260 parks in March, Councilmember Magdalena Carrasco, whose District 5 included the park before last year’s redistricting, made an impassioned plea highlighting the inequities of parks in East San Jose. She cited issues that included graffiti-ridden, unkempt bathrooms, unmaintained grass and an old playground.

During the last three fiscal years, the operating budget for the park has hovered around \$1.6 million. There was one-time funding of \$200,000 for repairs to Cherry Flat Dam in 2020-21. Funding has been considerably lower than the other large regional parks, according to city data.

Lake Cunningham Park received a little over \$3 million last year. Almaden Lake and Guadalupe River parks received about \$3 million and \$5.6 million, respectively.

In this year’s budget, the City Council set aside \$170,000 for a parks facility supervisor dedicated to Alum Rock Park and a \$70,000 vehicle to navigate the terrain, according to Councilmember David Cohen, whose District 4 now includes the park.

“It’s a big park, very different than most of the



San Jose resident Robert Gaitan and his children Astrid, 5, and Augustine, 8, enjoy wandering through Alum Rock Park. Photo by Lorraine Gabbert.

other city parks,” Cohen told San José Spotlight. “It’s difficult with the large inventory of parks that the parks department has... to give it the attention it deserves.”

Previously, one person was in charge of all the parks in District 4 and most in District 5, he said, which led to the coverage being spread too thin. Cohen said a dedicated maintenance manager will help provide focus to get work done at Alum Rock Park.

The park is a wildlife sanctuary for black-tailed deer, brush rabbits, gray squirrels and bobcats. Hikers and cyclists can spot red-tailed hawks and turkey vultures soaring above the trails.

East Side seniors David and Lois Krueger, who live near the park, fell in love with it 60 years ago. Lois, 87, said they’ve walked every trail. David, 88, said they love getting out in nature.

**‘Coming out to this park almost every day to walk keeps us alive’**

“Coming out to this park almost every day to walk keeps us alive,” he said.

San Jose resident Robert Gaitan and his children Astrid, 5, and Augustine, 8, enjoy wandering through the park, a place he’s been visiting since he was a child.

“I like being out in nature and getting fresh air,” he told San José Spotlight. “It’s being able to be away from the city and take the hiking trails way up

See ALUM ROCK PARK, page 6

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## Calvary Chapel church has \$200,000 in COVID fines dismissed per 6th District Court ruling

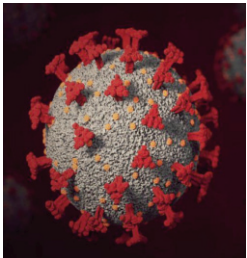
### Santa Clara County still continuing to pursue 2.3M in penalties

Calvary Chapel San Jose has had its fines dismissed by a state appeals court.

The church and its pastors were held in contempt of court and fined in 2020 and 2021 for violating state and county limits on indoor public gatherings during the COVID-19 pandemic by holding large religious services and was ordered to pay \$200,000 in fines.

On Monday, August 8, California’s 6th District Court of Appeal reversed the lower court decisions, citing a May 2020 ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court in February 2021 that a ban by Gov. Gavin Newsom on indoor worship services in counties where COVID-19 was surging violated freedom of religion.

The appellate court noted that the restrictions on indoor gatherings also applied to secular gatherings but were stricter for worship



services than for secular activities such as going to grocery stores.

The ruling “is a great win for the sake of liberty and displays the justification for the courage shown by this church” and its pastors, Robert Tyler, a lawyer for the church, told the San Francisco Chronicle.

Despite the ruling, Santa Clara County said it will continue to pursue \$2.3 million in penalties against the church for violating other COVID-19 rules that weren’t affected by the decision.



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### Times Community News

## Alum Rock Park

*Continued from page 4  
away from everything.”*

### Looking back

With 27 mineral springs thought to have restorative properties, the park was a health spa from 1890 to 1932. It also included a hotel and saloon. People traveled by steam train from downtown to sit in its hot springs, swim in its pool, stroll through the tea garden or dance in the pavilion. Remnants of the railroad bridges and stone grottos remain.

To mark its anniversary, Cohen said the parks department and San Jose Conservation Corps excavated some of the baths and restored nearby trails.

East San Jose resident Jennifer Wool, 60, has been visiting the park since she was a little girl. She remembers stories of her grandmother taking the trolley to sit in its mineral baths. Wool considers the park beautiful and loved playing in the creek when she was small.

Cohen sees Alum Rock Park as a multi-generational asset. His children attended summer camps, visited on school field trips and still go hiking, biking and running there. His father also loved hiking on its trails. “It has a long history of being a center of recreation for residents of San

Jose and the Bay Area,” he said.

The Youth Science Institute, a nonprofit science and nature center which teaches children about native wildlife, is a favorite for school field trips with its museum and live animals like owls, snakes and frogs.

In the summer, the shouts and laughter of children enjoying nature and science camps provided by the parks department can be heard as they explore the park.

San Jose resident Daryl Vargas, 31, first visited Alum Rock Park during a middle



Mature trees lend shade to Alum Rock Park’s trails.  
Photo by Lorraine Gabbert.

school track meet. He appreciates the peace and quiet, shade from the trees and a chance to unplug.

**‘I lose the cell phone signal and I think that’s a blessing’**

“It’s great to come out here,” he told San José Spotlight. “I lose the cell phone signal. I think that’s a blessing. You can detach yourself from everything.”

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Times **Community News****Police***Continued from page 2*

that manner, for some obvious reasons. First, rookie officers who are working in Field Training are actually making arrests, investigating crimes, and responding to 911 calls. They're also collecting a salary. By any standard definition, that makes their position "full." Second, any officer out for two weeks because of, say, a knee injury, is still collecting a salary with benefits. If the POA defines such positions as "vacant," then it follows that the City should go hire somebody else to fill the position. That logic breaks down on the next step. Should the City fire all of the rookies and injured officers to avoid paying them a salary? If not, then the City must pay two salaries for the same position, blowing up the annual budget by several million dollars. It's not hard to understand why the POA's definition of "vacancies" won't work in any city.

What's remarkable about the low, 3% vacancy rate at SJPD is the larger economic context: employers in every sector struggle to fill positions amid a historically low unemployment rate, particularly here in the Bay Area. Every other city department has a far higher vacancy rate, for example.

**(2) The Fallacy of Fleeing Officers**

Last week, the POA also told any media outlet willing to listen that 206 officers have "departed" the city since January of 2021. The facts from the City's Human Resources Department starkly differ: only 37 SJPD officers having at least twenty weeks of experience voluntarily left the Department for other work — about 2% percent of SJPD's officers per annum. Only 12 of those 37 went to work for another police department, every one of them outside the Bay Area. Plenty of other officers did leave SJPD since January of 2021—126 to be exact—but for very different reasons. Specifically, three (3) officers died, fourteen (14) were either fired or resigned in lieu of termination, twenty-one (21) rookies didn't make it out of 20-week field training, and two were demoted to civilian positions within SJPD. By far, retirement constituted the reason for most of the departures—eighty six (86) in all—but those retirement numbers were fully anticipated by HR. Why so many retirements? Officers hired in the 1990's receive a generous pension that pays 3% of their salary for every year worked, and in many cases, it actually costs the officer more to keep working (and paying into their retirement) than to retire. All of those 1990's hires are now coming into retirement age, and to nobody's surprise, they're retiring.

To be clear, concurrent with departures come new arrivals; since 2021, SJPD reports that it has hired 208 officers into the Department. That's why SJPD's vacancy is so low.

Additional context seems important: the fact that 37 officers (out of more than 1150) chose to leave SJPD since January of 2021 seems unremarkable to any employer in the Bay Area familiar with the pandemic-era "Great Resignation," combined with the "Great Exodus" from California's coastal cities. Simply, police officers are doing exactly what other Bay Area residents are doing: leaving the area for less expensive communities. None of the 12 officers who we've identified who left to another department has gone to serve as an officer in another Bay Area city, let alone one paying more money.

**Taking the Plank Out of Our Own Eyes....**

County Supervisor Chavez's focus on purported staffing SJPD shortfalls seems ironic, given the multiple reports about far more sub-

stantial understaffing at her own County Sheriff's Department. This June, her County Sheriff threatened to shut down two County court-houses due to a "staffing crisis" that shrank the number of County deputies from 530 deputy sheriffs in 2019 to only 370 today.

It also comes as the County's policy of permanently "depopulating the jail" — which Supervisors Chavez and Ellenberg proposed last year — has come under scrutiny amid County's own data showing that more than 40% of arrestees released pretrial are failing to comply with their release conditions, by committing new offenses or by failing to show up for court. The spinning turnstile at the jailhouse door has overburdened SJPD officers arresting, citing, and rearresting 134 offenders ten times or more — some as many as 30 times—since January of 2020, seemingly without any consequence. While local judges have abandoned their pandemic-era "zero bail" orders, the County's continued push to depopulate its jails will persist; since at least 2017, the County has implemented a process of releasing misdemeanor arrestees after booking with mere "jail citations," without regard for the severity or violence of the arrestee's prior record. As County jail populations have dropped dramatically, we've seen no concomitant expansion of the County's inpatient drug or mental health treatment for arrestees. Unsurprisingly, violent crime has increased. And Supervisor Chavez has voted repeatedly to halt the funding and construction of a new (albeit smaller) jail to replace the Main Jail, in a seemingly blind hope that we'll embrace a utopian, jail-free future.

Hearing Supervisor Chavez speak out on this issue may also leave some with a case of déjà vu. About two decades ago, then-Vice Mayor Cindy Chavez and the City Council approved retroactive increases in retirement benefits for police officers and other City employees. They appointed retirement board members who applied optimistic assumptions and rosy interpretations of the retirement plans' shaky financial condition. The POA and other unions backed her in her unsuccessful 2006 mayoral run then, as now, with dollars, volunteers, and campaign muscle.

Two years after Chavez's departure from the City Council, the City's Auditor and external analyses revealed that San Jose had incurred billions of dollars of unfunded liabilities for pension and retiree health benefits due to multiple factors, including retroactive benefit expansions and rosy assumptions. The result: skyrocketing mandatory contributions to the City's retirement funds forced hundreds of layoffs, a hiring freeze, and severe cuts in city services—including police—for the following decade. Our taxpayers will shoulder that multi-billion-dollar debt for another decade still, based on the current amortization schedule. There is good news on the horizon, though: with the passage of Measure F in 2016 and strong fiscal discipline, we have finally turned the corner this year, and the annual retirement cost burdens on our taxpayers have finally begun to drop. Nonetheless, we cannot forget the lessons of history: a lack of fiscal discipline by the City Council twenty years ago triggered severe pain for our residents and workforce, from which we have only begun to recover.

We should support our police officers with good salaries, and we do. Let's ensure that we have fiscal restraint to stretch our residents' tax dollars to pay for the expansion of public safety and the many other services that they deserve.

*Sam Liccardo is mayor of the City of San José.*

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Times **Feature**

## Aloha Ke Akua Ohana Hula Ministry and Stumes4Joy, Ukulele Minsistry perform at Atria Senior Living

Atria Senior Care in Evergreen presented residents with a Hawaiian Luau on Saturday, August 13.

The Strums4Joy Ukulele Ministry strummed their ukuleles and sang, while the Aloha Ke Akua Ohana Hula Ministry danced to several songs to the delight of the audience.

Founded in 1996, Atria offers senior assisted living housing in more than 380 communities throughout the United States and Canada.



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### Rebuilding Days

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### Safe At Home

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# Santa Clara County schools help stamp out student hunger

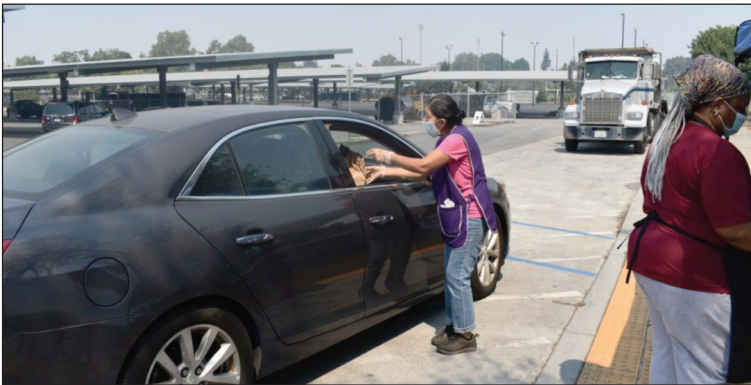
**By Loan-Anh Pham**  
*San José Spotlight*

Any San Jose student could receive a free school meal during the COVID-19 pandemic. Now California is making sure that doesn't stop with the start of this school year.

California is the first state in the country to pass the Universal Meals Program, which requires schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to students regardless of family income. California lawmakers will allocate \$650 million each year to the program. The

state has already provided \$150 million in funding for kitchen infrastructure improvements and staff nutrition training.

Even in Santa Clara County, one of the wealthiest counties in the nation, food insecurity is real and impacts the area's most vulnerable populations including homeless residents and students. One in three children in the county are at risk of facing food insecurity, according to local food bank Second Harvest Silicon Valley. Compounding the problem is inflation, which has increased food prices



An East Side Union High School District student receives a free meal in 2020 during COVID-related school closures. Students will continue to receive free meals this school year. *File photo.*

ciation for the availability of these meals," Vander Zee told San José Spotlight.

While schools have a responsibility and unique ability to work directly with students and families, free meals are only the first step, said Omar Davila Jr., a child studies assistant professor at Santa Clara University. Education policy needs to factor in all facets of a student's experience to provide the most effective resources, he told San José Spotlight.

"Universal programs are good, but insufficient," Davila said. "Inequality affects different groups in different ways, whether we're talking about gender, whether we're talking about race, nationality and so on."

Food insecurity also disproportionately impacts marginalized communities. Davila said socioeconomic status has a major impact on students, even in higher education.

"A UCLA study found that two of every three undocumented children in California were experiencing food insecurity," he said. "We know that even when we compare students who have the same academic skill sets, who are the same on paper, low income students are still less likely to graduate from college."

At Alum Rock Union School District, a free meal program has been in place for more than a decade in response to the dis-

and hit family budgets. Schools have stepped in throughout the summer to offer meal programs and keep students and families fed.

The new universal program addresses the stigma of food insecurity, said Tracy Weatherby, vice president of strategy and advocacy at Second Harvest Silicon Valley.

"We shouldn't be dividing kids up into 'free,' 'reduced' and 'paid,'" Weatherby told San José Spotlight. "There's also the fact that a lot of families don't apply because of stigma. They don't want to be seen as needing help."

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, school meals were mainly the responsibility of the federal government through the U.S. Department of Agriculture National School Lunch Program, which provided free or reduced-price meals based on a family's income. That shifted to the states during COVID-19, said Marjorie Freedman, a San Jose State University professor emeritus in nutrition.

"No child can pay attention if they're hungry," Freedman told San José Spotlight. "Look at the cost of food now with inflation. It's absolutely crazy how much basic necessities cost."

The shift to universal meals during the pandemic enabled more food to be served, said Glenn Vander Zee, superintendent of East Side Union High School District. During the 2018-19 school year, the school district served an average of 3,700 breakfasts and 5,640 lunches a day. But during the 2021-22 school year that number jumped to 4,725 breakfasts and 7,640 lunches, an increase of 28% and 35%, respectively.

"The community has demonstrated both the need and appre-

*Even in Santa Clara County, one of the wealthiest counties in the nation, food insecurity is real and impacts the area's most vulnerable populations.*

### Notice of Public Meeting & Hearing

#### San José Municipal Water System

#### Public Health Goals Report on Water Quality

The City of San José Municipal Water System has prepared a Public Health Goals Report on Water Quality pursuant to California Health and Safety Code Section 116470 (b). The report includes water quality information for the **Evergreen, Edenvale, and Coyote Valley** areas of San José. If you are interested in sharing your comments on the report, please join us:

**Public Meeting**

**Tuesday, August 23, 2022**

**3:00 – 4:00 P.M.**

**San José Municipal Water System**

**3025 Tuers Road**

**San José, CA 95121**

**Public Hearing/Report Adoption**

**Tuesday, August 30, 2022**

**1:30 P.M.**

**City of San José - City Hall Council Chambers**

**200 East Santa Clara Street**

**San José, CA 95113**

This report is on file and available for public review at the office of San José Municipal Water System, and available online at [www.sjmunewater.com](http://www.sjmunewater.com). If you have any questions, please call us at (408) 277-3671.

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## Report: 2022's Best & Worst Community Colleges in America

*Evergreen college places 39th out of 677 colleges and 6th in California*

With Americans struggling financially due to rising inflation and a year of community college nearly three times less expensive than a year at a public four-year college, the personal-finance website WalletHub released its report August 16 on 2022's Best & Worst Community Colleges.

To determine where students can receive the best education at the least expensive rates, WalletHub compared community colleges across 19 key indicators of cost and quality. Evergreen college placed 39th out of 677 community colleges across the nation and placed 6th in California.

"We are excited to be named as one of the top 40 best community colleges in the United States out of nearly 700 institutions and #6 in California. At Evergreen Valley College, our focus is on making connections that count," said Tammie Y. Gilkerson, Ed.D., President, Evergreen Valley College. "With the country's fourth most diverse faculty driving our career and education outcomes, we are incredibly proud of our student's accomplishments and the impact we are making in the community."

Community colleges offer students the ability to get higher education without having as much financial strain. Students who earn their general-education credits at a community college before transferring to an in-state public four-year university can potentially save a lot of money.

During the 2021 to 2022 academic year, tuition and fees for full-time, in-state enrollment at a public two-year college averaged \$3,800 per year versus \$10,740 at a public four-year institution and \$38,070 at a four-year private school.

The data set ranges from the cost of in-

state tuition and fees to student-faculty ratio to graduation rate.

### Top 40 Community Colleges

1. State Technical College of Missouri (MO)
2. Northwest Iowa Community College (IA)
3. Alexandria Technical & Community College (MN)
4. Manhattan Area Technical College (KS)
5. Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture (NE)
6. Mitchell Technical College (SD)
7. Montgomery College (MD)
8. Tillamook Bay Community College (OR)
9. Mt. Hood Community College (OR)
10. Naugatuck Valley Community College (CT)
11. Northwestern Connecticut Community College (CT)
12. Manchester Community College (CT)
13. Irvine Valley College (CA)
14. Kauai Community College (HI)
15. Capital Community College (CT)
16. Moraine Park Technical College (WI)
17. College of San Mateo (CA)
18. Fox Valley Technical College (WI)
19. Blue Mountain Community College (OR)
20. Clackamas Community College (OR)
21. Kapiolani Community College (HI)
22. Howard Community College (MD)
23. Lakeshore Technical College (WI)
24. Santa Fe Community College (NM)
25. Aims Community College (CO)
26. Hutchinson Community College (KS)
27. Saddleback College (CA)
28. Hibbing Community College (MN)
29. De Anza College (CA)
30. Carroll Community College (MD)
31. Asnuntuck Community College (CT)
32. St. Cloud Technical and Community College (MN)
33. Las Positas College (CA)
34. Washington County Community College (WA)
35. Frederick Community College (MD)
36. College of Southern Maryland (MD)
37. Monroe County Community College (NY)
38. Prince George's Community College (MD)
39. Evergreen Valley College (CA)
40. Kansas City Community College (KS)

# Yash Kilam: Teenage humanitarian advocates for those with disabilities

*'Use passion to make a change in the world'*

By Carla Dempsey  
Special to the Times

While most 16-year-olds are focused on learning to drive and sleeping in on summer mornings, Yash Kilam of Fremont, California is keeping his full attention on helping others.

The rising senior at Mission San Jose High School spends a great deal of his time researching and lobbying for legislation that protects and supports those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It's a cause that hits close to home, he said.

"When I was diagnosed with ADHD, I was told I was smart. But apparently not smart enough to know why I stood out like a sore thumb among my peers. I began to learn about disabilities and realized how inclusion is still a tall order," he said.

Yash said the social awkwardness he experienced as a young child inspired him to become a changemaker.

For his 10th birthday, instead of gifts, he asked his guests to contribute to his fundraiser for Las Trampas, an organization dedicated to assisting individuals with developmental and neurological disabilities.

Kilam raised \$4,000+ for the organization and was then invited to tour the facility to get a closer look at the technologies purchased with the help of the donation.

There he met individuals who used a wheelchair, tube-feeding, and an alternative method of communication. His fundraising resulted in the acquisition of a Proloquo2Go touch operated learning device for non-verbal communication.

"Upon suddenly having the world at his fingertips, Danny tried to say a joke using the keypad and he broke into an infectious laugh. Danny has cerebral palsy. Danny's joy was gratifying, humbling, and, above all, motivating. I had a connection in that moment, and I knew that all I wanted to do was help people," he said.

As Marcus Aurelius said, "Reject your

sense of injury and the injury itself disappears." Who better to advocate for inclusion of people with neurological disabilities than someone who experienced this firsthand? "The best sport coaches are those that have played the game," he said. Kilam found his calling.

In high school, he pushed to start a club at his school that focused on advocating for those with neurological disabilities, but he



said school student council turned his idea down twice.

After his club was rejected, Kilam decided to not give up and started the nonprofit Disability Rights Association in 2021 along with his club officers.

Following the footsteps of his idol Ed Roberts, he was determined to overturn any obstacle that will come in his way of advocating for disability rights. "Everything happens for a reason; one must not lose heart as one has to lose to win. With a nonprofit, we have a larger presence and many more opportunities to make a difference," he said.

In less than a year, the nonprofit has garnered 3400 followers. "As the founder of the Disability Rights Association, a non-

See KILAM, next page



Times **Feature****Kilam***Continued*

profit dedicated to raising awareness and advocating for people with disabilities, I launch letter-writing and petition-signing campaigns with my team officers and our three thousand members," he said.

Kilam says as the nonprofit continues to gain strength, he never loses sight of the fact that there is so much more to do in terms of educating, informing, and assisting those with disabilities. His team wrote to House Representative Rohit Khanna, Senator Diane Emily Goldman, and Senator Alejandro Padilla to urge them to support the passage of bills imperative to the safety of students with disabilities. In their letters to elected officials, they demand allocation of federal funds for school personnel training specific to the needs of students with disabilities as well as the appointment of certified crisis intervention personnel to make evidence-based decisions for misconduct of students with disabilities.

**'We need to come together and stand strong'**

Inspired by the Crip Camp that gave us changemakers like activists Ed Roberts and Judith Heumann that collectively lead to advocate handicap access in public transports, 504 education plan, first disabled students union and many more changes we now see,

***Yash plans to recruit students with neurological disabilities to form a support club to help peers through school life challenges.***

Yash plans to recruit students with neurological disabilities to form a support club to help peers through school life challenges. "We need to come together and stand strong," he said. His team is initiating collaboration with local organizations like PHP, PACE, DSP Berkeley to form a large local network of students volunteering to helping students. "The social acceptance will help us feel good about ourselves, motivate us to advocate for change and make school life fun and rewarding," he said.

Yash may only be a high school student, but his message to his generation is to use passion to make a change in the world. "We are learning more about how to make our voices heard, exercise our civic duty, and striving to make the world more inclusive and a better place to live," he said. Yash Kilam is confident that his generation has the grit and heart it will take to overcome obstacles towards disability rights.



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## NOTICE OF ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION OF INTENTION TO LEASE SURPLUS SCHOOL PROPERTY

### MT. PLEASANT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** that on August 10, 2022, the Board of Education of the Mt. Pleasant Elementary School District, in accordance with Education Code section 17466, adopted Resolution No. 22-23 - 09 expressing its intention to seek proposals for the lease of the former Valle Vista school site located at 2400 Flint Avenue, San Jose, CA, and setting a date on which proposals for the lease of the property will be reviewed by the Board. Proposals will be reviewed by the Board at the regularly scheduled public meeting to be held on October 12, 2022 at approximately 7:00 p.m. unless continued to November 9, 2022. For specific information about how to join and participate in the meeting, please go to <https://www.mpsed.org/domain/2029> for instructions.

To obtain a copy of the Request for Proposals or for questions regarding this process, please contact the District Chief Business Official, Tracy Huynh, at [thuynh@mpsed.org](mailto:thuynh@mpsed.org) or at 408-223-3720.

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## Times News Briefs

### Federal funds boost VTA's Zero Emission Bus Technology

Santa Clara Valley transit riders will have access to more clean, green rides as federal funds flow in to build up VTA's Zero-Emission bus technology.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) announced the award of \$15 million dollars in federal funding to help VTA build up its zero-emission bus technology and enhance workforce development by retraining existing workers, and recruit and train new workers, in operating and maintaining buses powered with new technology.

The funding will enhance VTA's transition to zero-emission technology with on-route chargers for Battery Electric Buses at the Milpitas Transit Center, a key multi-modal transit hub. The on-route chargers will extend the range the electric buses can travel.

#### Zero-emission fleet by year 2040

The federal grant will also help VTA install additional depot chargers at its Cerone bus yard. VTA currently has 10 battery electric buses in its fleet. Like all California transit agencies, VTA is required to have a fully zero-emission fleet by the year 2040.

In addition, this federal funding will be applied to 6 battery electric buses and charging infrastructure for the City of Mountain View's Community Shuttle Service.

The \$15.6 million dollar funding is made possible through President Biden's 2021 Infrastructure Law, supported by South Bay congressional representatives Khanna, Eschuo and Lofgren, and California U.S. Senators Padilla and Feinstein.

VTA's on-route charging pilot will start around 2024/2025 and Mountain View's electric buses are scheduled to hit the road as soon as 2026.

### San Jose gets sued for ignoring its billboard rules

By Joseph Geha

San José Spotlight

A billboard advertising giant is suing San Jose over a decision to allow a competitor to erect two digital billboards on airport property.

Outfront Media alleges in its lawsuit filed last month that the San Jose City Council "abused their discretion" and violated city policies by authorizing billboards from Clear Channel Outdoor, according to court filings. The city should have held a competitive process to collect bids for billboards from other vendors, including Outfront, the lawsuit says.

An attorney for Outfront Media did not respond to requests for comment, nor did a spokesperson for Clear Channel.

The lawsuit adds another chapter to a long debate over whether the city should allow new billboards on public land, following the council's landmark decision in 2018 to lift a nearly 50-year ban on such advertisements.

The council made history with a decision earlier this year to amend an airport master plan and authorize Clear Channel to install two 1,000-square-foot digital billboards south of Highway 101 at Mineta San Jose International Airport.

## Celebrating 10 Years!

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Times **Feature**

## Study of more than 190,000 pet owners uncover some interesting statistics

By Times Media news staff

With National Dog Day fast approaching on August 26th, the leading dog DNA testing company Embark conducted a study of over 190,000 pet owners in all 50 states to evaluate the state of dog care across the country.

In the report, they uncovered surprising facts like how California's dogs have the most playdates.

Embark also found interesting insights such as California ranking 1st in the highest percentage of states with dogs watching TV "often" or "always."

Here are the results of the study:

**Dogs watch TV "often" or "always" in:**

1. California
2. Missouri
3. Illinois
4. Massachusetts
5. New York

**Pet owners take their dogs out to socialize with other dogs weekly or multiple times a week in:**

1. California
2. West Virginia
3. Texas
4. Nevada

5. Colorado

**Top states for dog care**

**These states ranked in the top five for overall dog care, including health, family integration, and behavior:**

1. Alaska
2. New York
3. New Hampshire
4. Oregon
5. Massachusetts

**Health supplements**

**Pet owners feed their dog's health supplements in:**

1. Colorado
2. New Mexico
3. Washington
4. Oregon
5. Nevada

**About the study**

Embark and TOP Data conducted a study of over 190,000 Embark customers, plus 1,977 additional pet owners in all 50 states, to find out where pet owners are going the extra mile to care for their dogs in the United States. We also uncovered some surprising insights about types of pet care that are more popular in some US states and less popular in others. The survey compared survey responses in all 50 states across three key dimensions:

1. Overall dog health (40 points)
2. How pet owners integrate their dogs into their families (35 points)
3. Dog behavior and training (25 points)

The study evaluated those dimensions using a total of 31 metrics. Each metric was graded on a 100-point scale, with a maximum score of 100. Finally, we determined each state's weighted average across all the metrics to calculate its overall score. We then ranked those scores from highest to lowest.

To view the entire study, visit: <https://embarkvet.com/resources/state-of-dog-care>

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Times Career Corner

Praise in Public

By Angela Copeland

We're at an interesting point in time when it comes to business culture.

People with many backgrounds and experiences are working together more now than ever before. Some team members are young who have never worked at an in person job and have always had a cell phone. Others are older people who started working before laptop computers or the internet even existed. Some employees have only worked at big corporate companies, while others have been at startups. These people all have different working styles. They are now collaborating to-



gether, via the tiny camera on their computers. Variations make communication differences quite interesting to observe. You probably have some coworkers who will only call you if there's a scheduled meeting on your calendar. Others may send you an unplanned message, asking if you have time to talk, even when there's no meeting scheduled. And, then there are a handful that will call with no notice. These differences are driven by multiple factors, including generation and work experience. Similarly, people have different habits when it comes to written communication. Some people prefer email, while others like Slack. Within email, there are fairly distinct differences. Some emails are sent from one person to another single person. Others include many extra people as a carbon copy, for informational purposes. Some

emails will have recipients included as a blind carbon copy, to reduce the number of replies. And, other emails will add additional people to existing email chains. Over the years, I've started to believe that there is an inverse relationship with email and the size of the company. In other words, the smaller an organization is, the more recipients will be included on a single email. People at startups tend to copy many people at once. This keeps everyone up to date, and is seen as being more efficient. Within a large company, it's more common to see email chains that include only the bare minimum number of people. The sender doesn't want to involve anyone who doesn't need to be on the email. The same trend seems to also be true in meet-

ings between two companies. A small company will bring many attendees to a meeting in an effort to show that the company is legitimate. A large company will send one or two representatives, who serve as the sole points of contact. No matter the venue, one thing hasn't changed. Praise in public, and criticize in private. Calling someone out in a meeting in front of others does nothing but hurt your relationship with them. If you're asking a colleague for something via email and aren't getting the results you want, call them or email them -- directly. Don't copy additional people. Even if you aren't trying to put them on the spot, this is how it will likely feel. No one wants their shortcomings to be pointed out in front of others. Adjust your approach, and you'll get better results. Angela Copeland, a leadership and career expert, can be reached at copelandcoaching.com.

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## Times News Briefs

# Cal OES, California Military Department partner to create nation's first Firefighting Strike Team

*Partnership to strengthen the state's ability to quickly respond to climate-driven disasters*

**M**ATHER Air Force Base (Mather AFB) - Highlighting the state's commitment to innovative solutions to tackle climate-induced natural disasters, the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) and the California Military Department announced the creation of the first all-hazards fire engine strike team - known as Team Blaze - operated by a state military department.

## Task Force Rattlesnake

Each with the capacity to carry a four-person crew, these engines complement the Military Department's existing Task Force Rattlesnake hand crew program consisting of Soldiers and Airmen. Since the start of operations in 2019, Task Force Rattlesnake has cut, cleared and treated at-risk wildfire project areas in central and northern parts of California.

"We have always valued the California Military Department's partnership during times of need, especially during wildfires or other natural disasters. These new engines will not only add to their capabilities, but also help augment our state's wildfire and rescue resources more broadly," said Cal OES Director Mark Ghilar-ducci.

The state's Military Department maintains a firefighting program at their military bases, with trained personnel providing firefighting prevention, mitigation and protection services to California and military bases and camps.

## At the ready

"We are proud to collaborate with Cal OES to ensure there's another fleet of fire engines and expert staff at the ready. This Strike Team builds upon the state's response efforts during times of need," said California Military Department Major General Matthew P. Beevers.

From responding to wildfires in rural settings, to protecting structures in urban areas and performing urban search and rescue operations, these engines are outfitted to support a variety of emergency situations. For example, type VI engines can do the following:

- Carry a 4-person crew
- Get into tight areas
- Carry 300 gallons of water
- Quickly attack fires

These engines add to the already robust California Fire and Rescue Mutual Aid System fleet of more than 270 fire engines across 60 local partners statewide that can respond to incidents of all types.

Cal OES facilitates the California Fire and Rescue Mutual Aid System, which currently moves local government resources across the state in support of all-risk emergency response on behalf of local, state, and federal government fire organizations. Cal OES assigns local government fire agencies with fire apparatus to maintain surge capacity during day-to-day duties and major events/emergencies.

• Type VI Strike Team Fire Engine Video at Mather Airbase, includes:

- California Military Department SOT
- Cal OES SOT
- B-roll
- Type VI Strike Team Fire Engine B-roll rough terrain
- Type VI Fire Engine Explorer

## ABOUT CAL OES

The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services serves as the state's leadership hub during all major emergencies and disas-



ters. This includes responding, directing, and coordinating state and federal resources and mutual aid assets across all regions to support the diverse communities across the state. Cal

OES also supports local jurisdictions and communities through planning and preparedness activities, training, and facilitating the immediate response to an emergency through the longer-term recovery phase.

## ABOUT CMD

The California Military Department has a dual mission, with both state and federal obligations. We are comprised of the California Army National Guard, Air National Guard, State Guard and Youth and Community Programs Task Force. Our mission is to remain ready to respond to federal and domestic missions and minimize the impact of natural disasters and other emergencies on people, property, and the environment. The California Mil-



tary Department is committed to serving our local communities and remaining always ready, always there.

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## TENNIS TIPS

## 5 Winning Tips to Lobbing

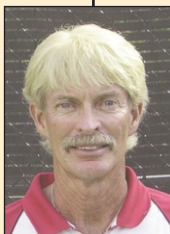
By Ken DeHart

## 1. 2 key reasons to Lob

Lob with a Purpose – there are two main reasons to lob:

1. To win the point
  2. To get out of trouble
- The Offensive Lob is designed to win the point
  - 1. Aim point - about 10 feet over the opponent's head - hit quickly so they have little chance to run it down or react to the sudden elevation of the shot.
  - 2. Location - best placed over their backhand side of your opponent – be aware of lefties when you plan your lob.
  - 3. Disguise - prepare for the lob as though you are going to hit a drive then at the last moment lift the shot into a lob.
  - The Defensive Lob is designed to get you out of trouble buy time and keep you in the point.

Height is the key factor in this shot – high to buy extra time to recover. It also forces the opponent to decide to play a difficult shot out of the air or let it bounce.



## 2. 5 Tips on how to Set up the Lob

- a. Offensive - Get your opponents looking for the passing shot by hitting crosscourt and down the line with shots aimed about waist to chest high above the net with lots of topspin.
- b. This strategy should draw your opponents closer to the net so as to be able to cut off the angles you have been using to pass them.
- c. Use your first offensive lob on a shot when they least expect it a little later in the game, set or critical situation.
- d. This “surprise” will make them a little hesitant to close in so tight and open up your passing shots once again.
- e. Defensive – anytime you are in an awkward position, forced wider than the alley, force to retreat well behind the baseline or facing players that charges quickly to the net – Lob high and deep. This height and depth will give you recovery time while forcing your opponents back deeper into their court. This deeper court position will make it less likely they can put the ball away quickly – buying you time to get into a sound defensive position.

## 3. 5 Tips on where to Lob

- a. Always aim over the opponents' backhand side (notice if they are left handed)
- b. Few players have the strength or timing to power a backhand overhead – even on a short lob
- c. This tactic forces them to decide if they want to go for a dangerous angle or defensively put it back into the court – which keeps you in the point
- d. If they choose to let the ball bounce, they are now forced deeper into their court and must play a backhand groundstroke. As a high ball bounces, there is a blind spot as the ball passes in front of your eyes from out of the air to on the ground. The high backhand requires an earlier point of contact than the forehand so they must retreat even further behind the ball to have a powerful point of contact.
- e. If the lob is played to the forehand overhead is almost always struck more powerfully. From this side, the arm can reach further back than on the backhand side. Players may even reach back and does a “sky hook” like a hook shot in basketball.

## 4. 8 Tips on when to Lob

- To start the match - In doubles, on the first two points of the match when the serving team is looking into the sun.

This allows you to get the return of serve into play using the largest space you can find against their best serve.

- To confuse – A well placed lob makes the receiving team have to switch positions and often retreat to the service line which give you time to organize to attack

- To take away a powerful ground stroke – The lob makes the server not able to use their forehand in the deuce court off your return. Instead, they



have to chase the ball down and hit a high bouncing backhand in the ad court while their partner is forced to switch from the ad court over to the deuce court.

- If the lob is deep, it allows you to move forward so your team has now captured the net and gone from defense to offense with one simple shot.
- To buy time – the lob allows you to get the ball up so you have time to recover into a better position to play the next ball with a shot you may prefer.
- It gives you a bigger safer target to aim for – the sky
- It makes your opponent anxious to attempt to put the “easy” ball away before you can assume an offensive position in the court
- To take over the net position – a deep lob that bounces and forces your opponents back near the baseline. This will allow you and your partner time to come up to the service line. From this position you will be able to determine if they are going to try to lob. You will now be able to play an overhead or close in if they try to drive the ball from deep in their court.

To defend against an Australian formation or “Modified I” formation – if the net player in the Australian position plays too close to the net, it becomes easy to lob diagonally crosscourt to the deep corner to defeat this alignment.

- To defend against an aggressive poaching team – it is difficult to poach or have an all-out attack on the net if the receiving team keeps lobbing down the line or looping crosscourt when are in a total offensive scheme.

- To defend against a fast closing serve and volley player – if the server closes too fast it becomes easy to lob over their head as they have to stop and back up to play the deep lob return. It is difficult to close quickly when the server has to retreat and change directions to cover a deep lob over their partners head. The server is now forced to play a high backhand in the ad court instead of a low forehand volley or groundstroke in the deuce court.

## 5. 7 Tips to practicing the lob

1. Practice tossing the ball up and directing the lob to a 9 foot by 9-foot area in the corner of the court near the baseline and sideline.
2. Practice tossing the ball up and away from you, so you have to run wide or back up to lob to a 9'x9' target near either alley or the baseline.
3. Have a friend feed you a deep slow high ball and you attempt to lob to your deep targets.
4. Have a friend feed you a wide or deep challenging ball that you must run down and place into your deep targets.
5. Have a friend serve to you from both the deuce court and ad court while you practice lobbing the return into the deep targets near the baseline
6. Have two friends play against you. One serves from the deuce court baseline while the other one is at the net. You practice returning serves deep over the net players head to the targets. This forces the server to retreat to track the lob down and play the ball to your half of the doubles court. Repeat from the ad court as well.
7. Remember – when you can't see the sun – they can – lob into the sun! You will see the difference.

*Editor's note: DeHart is Director of Racquets – Alpine Hills Tennis & Swimming Club, PTR Hall of Fame, PTR International Master Professional & USPTA Master Professional, USA High Performance Coach, and NorCal USPTA Hall of Fame. To suggest a topic or comment on Ken's column, you may reach him at: Kendehart@aol.com; Facebook: Ken DeHart Tennis; or call (408) 892-3806*

## Times Feature



## Airport Day returns Sept. 3

Family friendly classic car show, static airplane show, and more! Event goes encouraged to bring canned food for Second Harvest Food Bank

*Continued from page 1*

fun food all day. School robotics teams and ROTC will also be participating. And don't miss the Civil Air Patrol presenting the Color Guard during the National Anthem in the Opening Ceremony at noon. This is a great day for children to participate in a learning environment and have fun too!”

## Aircraft

More than 40 static airplanes will be on display.

San Jose State University aviation program, one of the nation's oldest and the only public institution in California, is welcoming event goers to sit in their aircraft and talk with students and faculty. This gives everyone a chance to learn more about the educational opportunities we provide. The program offers a BS in Aviation with an emphasis in professional flight, operations, aviation management, and Maintenance Management.



## Fun for all

For 14 years, Hot San Jose nights – Airport Day has been a huge family fun classic car show and airplane show for the entire family Saturday, September 3 from 10 a.m. – 3 pm. The event including parking is free.









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## Times Feature

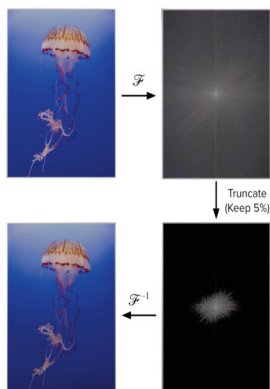
# The Pain in the Sparse

By Apoorva Panidapu

Wouldn't it be nice if this article was over in just a couple sentences? (It'd certainly be less work for both of us.) But, unfortunately, there would probably be a major loss of information. You'd have little to no idea about what in the world we're talking about, nor could you reconstruct the missing information with the tiny glimpse you got from those few words. No bueno. This means that this wouldn't be a very good article (and that I'm not a very good writer!)

Turns out, we have this same difficulty of trying to simplify information in the field of compressed sensing. We have some high-dimensional signal, like an audio or image (which typically takes a lot of energy and storage to work with), and we want to compress it without losing too much of its quality or information in reconstruction. After all, a picture is worth 1000 words, and we don't want that to become like 10.

Let's first look at a standard compression example. We have some signal,  $x$ , which is the cute jellyfish in this case, and we can represent  $x$  as  $\mathcal{F}S$  where  $\mathcal{F}$  is a Fourier transform and  $S$  is a sparse vector, i.e., an array in which most of the elements are zero.



Here,  $x$  and  $S$  are almost equivalent representations of the jellyfish, we just need to multiply by the transform to go back and forth between them. (You don't have to worry too much about what a Fourier transform is, it's just a nice way to decompose the image.)

To compress the image  $x$ , we can Fourier transform it (to get the top right image), throw away a lot of the coefficients and only keep, say, 5% (to get to the bottom right image), and finally inverse transform it to get a pretty faithful image back (the bottom left image).

This standard compression is easy to do and is actually already built into your phones and computers!

But if we're throwing away like 95% of the coefficients, why did we collect all that information in the first place?

What if we instead started with only a few measurements of the image?

Say we had some measurement that is only around 10% of the original image  $x$ . Let's call this  $y$ . Then, we can write:

$$y = Cx = C\mathcal{F}S$$

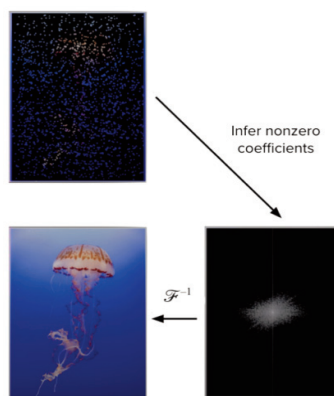
(Recall that  $x = \mathcal{F}S$ , which is why  $y = Cx = C\mathcal{F}S$ .) Here,  $C$  is like a pixel mask that selects some sample of the pixels in  $x$  at random. The reason it is a random sample is because if we only had measurements of some corner, we can't really accurately infer the rest of the image.

So we have some measure  $y$  (the first image on the top left), and we want to try to solve for a sparse vector  $S$  that is consistent with  $y$ . If we do this, we can then inverse transform to get back to the original image  $x$ .



## Gems in STEM

By Apoorva Panidapu



The reason we like sparse solutions is because they can be compressed more easily (since most of the entries in the array are zero), meaning they need less storage, thereby making solving problems with them a lot more efficient!

Turns out there are actually infinitely many  $S$  that satisfy the equation  $y = C\mathcal{F}S$ , so the real question is how do we find sparse  $S$  to successfully compress the image?

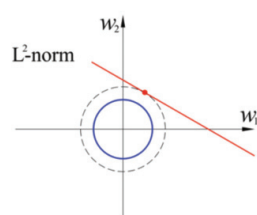
To do this, we use something called L1-norms, which are known to give us sparse solutions!

You're probably already familiar with something called the L2-norm, which is just how you find distance to a point in geometry. For example, if you have a point  $W = (w_1, w_2)$  in the xy-plane, the distance of that point from the origin is the square root of the sum of the squares of  $w_1$  and  $w_2$ . Or, to write it more clearly,

$$L_2 \text{ norm: } ||W||_2 = \sqrt{w_1^2 + w_2^2}$$

Now, remember from before that we have infinitely many solutions  $S$  that satisfy the linear equation  $y = C\mathcal{F}S$ . We can represent this as a line of possible solutions, depicted as the red line in the image below!

We're now going to get slightly more technical, so try your best to follow along! It's okay if this doesn't make total sense, I'll clarify the "moral of the story" at the end.



Suppose we wanted to find a specific solution  $S$  that had the smallest possible L2-norm. Well, each circle you see in the image has an equal L2-norm (which makes sense because every point on the circle is the same distance from the origin, called the radius). Then, we can make this circle bigger and bigger until it intersects the red line.

This point of intersection is exactly the point that has the smallest, or minimum, L2-norm—voila!

But, remember, we don't want the smallest L2-norm, we want to find the sparsest  $S$ !

So, what we would actually want to do is to minimize the L0-norm, which just counts the number of nonzero entries in a vector  $S$ . Thus, if we looked for the smallest L0-norm, we would be finding the vector with the least nonzero entries, which is exactly what it means to find the sparsest solution  $S$ !

Uh oh, stop right there. Houston, we have a problem. Unfortunately, the L0-norm is not technically well-defined as a norm, which sadly means we can't easily minimize it—this is actually a very combinatorially hard problem!

Turns out, there was luckily this big advancement in computation when people realized that,

See GEMS, page 21



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growth, reaching out to people in need and wherever you get to know people by name. We offer children's religious education (CREATE); Youth Ministry (BLAST & X-STATIC); Scripture Study (day & evening); Senior's Group and many other adult ministries as well. Saint Anthony parish is located in Almaden Valley at 20101 McKean Road, San Jose, 95120. Our weekend Masses are at 4 p.m. on Saturday at our historic church at 21800 Bertram Road in New Almaden, CA 95042 and on Sunday at 8:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., and 5:30 p.m. at the McKean Road location. Our Parish Office is open Monday 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. and Tuesday thru Thursday, 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. and 1 - 4 p.m. For more information, stop by the Parish Office or call (408) 997-4800, or visit our website at [www.churchstanthony.com](http://www.churchstanthony.com). Fr. Larry Hendel, Pastor.



God is One  
ਰਬ ਇਕ ਹੈ  
Rab Ik Hai

#### SAN JOSE GURDWARA

3636 Gurdwara Ave.  
San Jose, CA 95148  
The word Sikh (see-kh) means "disciple" or "student." A Sikh is a practitioner of the faith founded in the 15th century by Guru Nanak in Punjab of old British India. A Guru who is a "teacher" or "enlightener" completes the relationship of teaching and learning. Sikhism is monotheistic and stresses the equality of all men and women. Sikhs believe in three basic principles; meditating on the name of God (praying), earning a living by honest means and sharing the fruits of one's labor with others. Currently there are close to one million Sikhs living in the USA and Canada and 25 million Sikhs living around the world. Sikhism is the 5th largest religion in the world. At the Gurdwara (House of God) in San Jose we welcome all. We pray daily for peace and prosperity for everybody in the world. Come to visit and enjoy Langer (food) in our kitchen which is open 365 days of the year and serves complementary vegetarian meals. We also encourage you to enter our history room on site and walk the beautiful

grounds. Learn more about us and community events we sponsor by visiting our website; <http://www.SanJoseGurdwara.org>

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We invite you to join our community of faith located in the Evergreen area of San Jose. We are an inclusive diverse community striving to serve as Disciples of Jesus Christ in the footsteps of St. Francis, offering prayerful and joyful liturgies; evangelization, fellowship, and service opportunities to the community. We offer spiritual opportunities for all ages, including children's liturgy, dynamic E.C.H.O. - Jr. High, IGNITE - High School and North Star - Young Adult Ministries, along with small faith communities and opportunities to help the poor and marginalized of San Jose. Our Preschool is the only Catholic Preschool offering quality family oriented service in the Evergreen and Silver Creek areas. Our Chapel, Gathering Hall, Parish Office, Mission Center, Parish Gift Shop, Memorial Garden and Preschool are all located at 5111 San Felipe Rd. Please come join us to worship at one of the following times and locations:

St. Francis of Assisi Chapel: Saturday 5:00 PM, Sunday 8:30 AM, 10:30 AM, 12:30 PM, 4:00 PM (Mass in Vietnamese), 6:00 PM Youth Mass  
St. Francis of Assisi Gathering Hall  
Sunday 9:00 AM, Sunday 11:00 AM, Igbo Mass - Second Sunday of the month 12:30 PM  
Mt. Hamilton Grange - 2840 Aborn Road  
Sunday 9:30 AM  
The Villages Gated Community (Cribari Auditorium) Sunday 8:15 AM  
For more information, please call or visit us at the Parish Mission Center open M-F 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM; 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM. Come join us and share your presence with us so that together we may grow and share our gifts to help build God's Kingdom!

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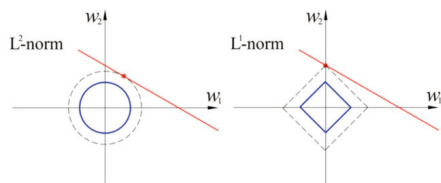


## Times Feature

## Gems

Continued from page 19

since we can't use the L0-norm, we can use the L1-norm instead!



What is the L1-norm?

Take the same example as before. If we have a point  $W = (w_1, w_2)$  in the  $xy$ -plane, the L1-norm is the sum of the absolute values of  $w_1$  and  $w_2$ . Or, to write it more clearly,

$$L_1 \text{ norm: } \|W\|_1 = |w_1| + |w_2|$$

We can actually solve for the solution that has the smallest L1-norm solution using a variety of methods, and it usually gives us the sparse solution that we want!

Why is this true? Well, every diamond you see in the image has an equal L1-norm (same idea as the circles before). Then, when we grow this diamond, the first intersection of the red line (aka the set of possible solutions) is usually at a sparse solution! Like, in this image, the intersection is at a point where  $w_2$  is 0, which is sparse since one of the two components is zero. The intuition behind this is that the diamond is spikier than a circle, meaning its more likely to intersect the red line at a sparse solution than the circle.

The idea of the L1-norm giving sparse solutions generalizes even better in higher dimensions! This is because these diamond norms get pointier and spikier, which means the norm has a better chance of hitting sparse so-

lutions.

It's kind of like how you would have a higher chance of being poked in the hand by a hedgehog than a turtle.

Moral of the story: if we want to find a sparse solution  $S$ , we should minimize the L1-norm.

The best way to do this is to write our problem as something called a convex optimization problem, where we're minimizing the L1-norm of  $S$  subject to some constraints. (Convex optimization problems are nice and typically easier to solve because the property of convexity lends itself to several powerful theoretical tools in computation.)

If you're curious, the optimization problem for our image compression equation is written as something like this.

To find sparse  $S$  for  $y = C\mathcal{F}S$ ,

$$\begin{aligned} \min \|S\|_1 \\ \text{subject to } \|C\mathcal{F}S - y\|_2 = 0. \end{aligned}$$

To find yourself a solution, you could easily code this up with some additional conditions for the variables!

Ta-da! We have now figured out how to compress an image with less work but not too much information loss. (Even if it did take us more than a few lines to understand it).

Until next time! If you have any questions or comments, please email me at [apoorvap-writes@gmail.com](mailto:apoorvap-writes@gmail.com).

*As a recap: this column, Gems in STEM, is a place to learn about various STEM topics that I find exciting, and that I hope will excite you too. It will always be written to be fairly accessible, so you don't have to worry about not having background knowledge. However, it does occasionally get more advanced towards the end.*

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