

State kids score among worst in country for math, language  
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**Dumpin' Trump**  
Will Silicon Valley lawmaker's plan to toss Trump off ballot work?  
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OCTOBER 2023 ■ VOL. 19, NO.10

# Willow Glen **Times**

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## Empowering athletes' minds

Local high school student tackles mental wellness in sports and creates podcast with initiatives to support athlete mental resilience

By William Bellou  
Publisher

In the heart of our community, a passionate advocate and student-athlete is breaking barriers and silencing the stigma surrounding mental health in sports.

Lavanya Verma, Founder of the transformative podcast "In My Head: The Internal Battle," is on a mission to elevate athlete mental wellness, reaching athletes on the college and junior levels. Through engaging conversations with experts, coaches, and fellow athletes, Lavanya is fostering a culture of mental resilience and well-being in the sporting world.

As a dedicated student-athlete, Lavanya recognizes the challenges that athletes face, not just on the field but also within themselves. In My Head: The Internal Battle serves as a vital platform, shedding light on the importance of mental well-being among athletes. With nine insightful episodes available on Spotify,



Lavanya Verma

Lavanya has conducted enlightening interviews and discussions with coaches, a mindset coach,

and fellow student-athletes.

"There is way more to sports than just physical performance; it's a mental game as well. By openly discussing mental wellness and resilience, we can break down the barriers that prevent athletes from seeking help," Lavanya explains.

The impact of "In My Head" has been far-reaching, boasting an audience of over 300 dedicated followers and amassing more than 500 listens on Spotify Podcasts. Lavanya has not only sparked conversations but also hosted webinars focused on mental resilience, partnering with a seasoned mindset coach. These webinars have reached more than 50 high school and junior athletes, equipping them with valuable tools to navigate the pressures of competitive sports while maintaining mental well-being. This webinar recording is also hosted on youtube and it has more than 70 views.

See VERMA, page 3



Students walking along the walkway to the Academic Village building 2 at the Madera Community College campus. Photo by Larry Valenzuela, CalMatters/CatchLight Local

## Want a degree without classes and lectures? Calif. Community colleges test new approach

With Competency Based Education, 'No more grades, lectures, seminars or deadlines'

By Adam Echelman

Eight community colleges in California are testing out a new education model, one that defines success by the skills a student learns, not the time they spend in a classroom. But changing the traditional education system isn't easy.

Eight state community colleges start pilot program

A revolution is in the making at California's community colleges: No more grades, no more sitting through lectures or seminars, no more deadlines. In a pilot program taking shape across eight of the state's community colleges, the only requirement for some associate degrees will be "competency."

See COLLEGES, page 3

## Automotive sideshows endanger lives for the sake of 'likes' & shares

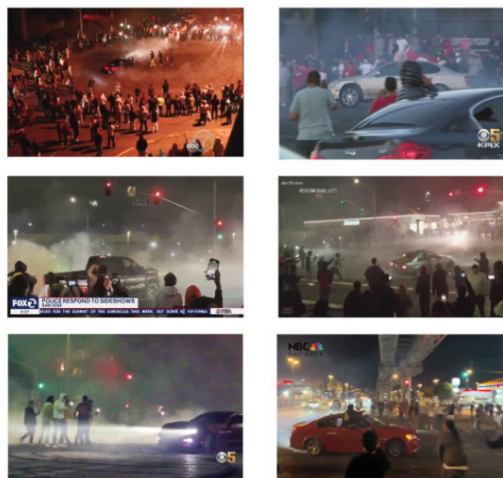
By Matt Mahan  
Mayor

Last November, the San Jose Police Department issued over 700 citations to people who chose to put their own lives and the lives of their neighbors on the line for the sake of likes, clicks and shares.

This was the largest "sideshow" bust to date in our city - and though our officers are working day in and day out to shut down these events, we need the entire community to get involved to stop them. This includes the largest companies who call Silicon Valley home.

These dangerous and illegal events that have literally taken lives are fueled by social media. They are increas-

### SIDESHOWS HURT SAN JOSE



ingly spread, consumed, and attended primarily for the purpose of generating content to get likes and build a social media following.

And we want to work with the companies whose platforms sideshow participants are using, to find a solution for the good of our entire city. I have sent a letter asking these companies to come to the table and talk through solutions.

Research shows that sideshow posts can attract hundreds of people in a matter of minutes. We are asking social media platforms to work in tandem with our police department to suspend the accounts of people who post content promoting these events for 30 days the first time they do it - and indefinitely if they continue to use the platform to promote dangerous, criminal activities like sideshows.

We're inviting these companies to City Hall to discuss other ideas for how we can work together to prevent sideshows, and together, join us in sending a strong message that such behavior will not be tolerated - not in the

See SIDESHOWS, page 3

SEE OUR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS INSIDE THIS ISSUE - PAGE 11



# ATTENTION GOLFERS

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Please note: I have not and will not be verifying or investigating any information supplied by others.



Times **Community**



## Colleges

Continued from page 1

Students who can prove that they have the relevant skills can earn that degree.

### More flexibility in attaining two year associate degrees faster

In theory, this model, known as “competency-based education,” could provide students with more flexibility and the potential to attain degrees faster in key job sectors. The pilot is geared toward working adults, many of whom left community colleges at record rates during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the state’s population of K-12 students continues to shrink, leaving colleges with fewer students right out of high school, the pilot aims to attract adults who are already in the workforce by “valuing their lived and work experience,” said Madera Community College

President Ángel Reyna.

If successful, these community colleges will set themselves apart from every other two-year institution in the country. The pilot, which launched in 2021, provides eight California community colleges with up to \$515,000 over the course of four years to each design a single associate degree program using this new model.

The goal is for students to be able to enroll at some point in the 2024-25 academic year, said Aisha Lowe, an executive vice chancellor at the California Community College Chancellor’s Office. In practice, colleges must overcome bureaucratic and logistical hurdles to make the new system work. At least one community college says it is struggling to hit the state’s deadline.

The challenge is to create something that works “but isn’t so different that colleges can still wrap their heads around it and engage,” Lowe said. “It’s definitely unprecedented.”

### A new way to measure learning

The new model restructures the requirements of a degree to reflect what students have learned, rather than the amount of time they spend in class.

Currently, all college degrees require a certain number of hours spent in a classroom, either in-person or virtually. An associate degree, which California’s community colleges offer, requires roughly 3,000 hours spent in a classroom or on homework in a traditional academic year. That’s why some refer to it as a “two-year degree.”

Teachers get paid in part based on the number of hours they teach. Because of the high number of part-time students, the state funds colleges and universities based largely on the number of hours that a student spends in class, not the number of students themselves.

In this current system, students may be

required to sit through classes to get college credit even if they can demonstrate they already have some of the requisite skills. Students who may have less time for school because of work or family obligations lose out too, said Charla Long, the president of the Competency-Based Education Network, a consultant for California’s pilot program.

“We’ve created an inequitable system because it’s so time bound,” she said.

In the new system, students seeking an associate degree in early childhood education at Shasta College in Redding will take 60 different exams, each one testing a specific skill, said Buffy Tanner, the college’s director of innovation and special projects. Students in the program will have materials to teach themselves, teachers will be available to answer questions and counselors will be able to provide wraparound support.

Currently, a student is required to take 20 semester-long classes for that same degree. Students in the new program will be able to take an exam up to three times and can move as quickly or as slowly as they want, Tanner said. In-state students in the new program who do not qualify for financial aid will pay the same total tuition, just shy of \$2,800 for an associate degree, not including the cost of books, classroom supplies, or other miscellaneous fees. Shasta College, like the other colleges in the pilot, is still trying to figure out how much to pay faculty in the new system.

### Not a fit for all learners

Not every student can succeed in this self-paced format. Tanner said the plan is to vet students for the program through questions about their lives and study habits: “Do you need external deadlines? What kind of self-discipline do you have?”

“We have to make sure students fully understand what they’re getting into,” she said.

### A growing phenomenon

Such alternative education systems have existed for decades. Since the 1970s, some colleges and universities have experimented with new models of teaching and learning that offer more flexibility and try to evaluate students based on what they know, not on how much time they spent in class, Long said.

In 1997, a group of 19 governors from Western states agreed to develop a private, nonprofit institution, known as Western Governors University, to provide “competency-based” education. With roughly 150,000 students today, it’s the largest higher education institution in the country. Though headquartered in Utah, the university is entirely online and boasts students from all 50 states.

Other large for-profit and non-profit university systems have experimented with the same model, including Capella University, an online college, and Southern New Hampshire University. California followed. In 2018, at the behest of former Gov. Jerry Brown, the state created a new community college, known as Calbright, which is free, entirely online, and exclusively “competency-based.”

“This is radically different, and an incredibly powerful way to support our students,” Calbright’s blog says about its model.

This story was produced with support from the Education Writers Association’s Reporting Fellowship program. Adam Echelman covers California’s community colleges in partnership with Open Campus, a non-profit newsroom focused on higher education.

## Sideshow

Continued from page 1

City of San Jose and not on TikTok, Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram or anywhere else online.

It will take all of us – public and private entities – collaborating to keep our community safe.

We all have a role to play. We all see this content each day, and it’s our responsibility

to report it. The companies can’t stop it, if they can’t find it. Luckily there are thousands of us who care about creating a safer city, and together, we can get there faster.

Sideshows hurt San Jose. And we all need to do our part to stop them.

*Editor’s note: You may send your comments and suggestions to Mayor Matt Mahan via email: mayoremail@sanjose-ca.gov, or call 408-535-4800*

## Verma

Continued from page 1

One of Lavanya’s significant achievements has been collaborating with the Mental Health and Wellness Center at Silver Creek High School. By teaming up with this center, Lavanya has facilitated the sharing of resources and knowledge about mental resilience among high school athletes within the school. This collaborative effort showcases Lavanya’s dedication to nurturing a supportive environment for athletes, both within and beyond her podcast’s scope.

But Lavanya’s efforts don’t stop there. She’s currently channeling her energy towards presenting seminars that will focus on advocating for athletes’ mental health and conducting presentations regarding mental resilience specifically for each athletic team at her school. Additionally, she is also building an inter-school

committee, focused on involving other schools in the Bay Area to help prompt athlete mental health.

“Every athlete deserves to feel heard and valued through their struggles. It is vital to create an environment where it’s okay to open up about our internal battles, and also celebrate the personal victories we achieve,” Lavanya says.

In a world where the physical prowess of athletes often takes center stage, Lavanya is an inspiring force that reminds us of the critical role that mental well-being plays in every athlete’s journey. Through her podcast, webinars, collaborations, and upcoming club, she’s breaking barriers, fostering resilience, and ensuring that every athlete’s well-being is given the spotlight it deserves.

For more information about “In My Head” and to join the conversation, visit In My Head: The Internal Battle at <http://www.inmyheadtheinternalbattle.com> and follow the podcast on Spotify!



## NEWS AND NOTES

## Valley Currents

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



Photo: Conductor **Lidiya Yankovskaya**, courtesy of the artist and Symphony San Jose

## Symphony San Jose presents 'Myths, Fairy Tales, & Legends' Sept. 30 and October 1

Symphony San Jose's 2023 – 2024 Season opens with a musical story book Saturday, Sept. 30 (7:30 p.m.) and Oct. 1 (2:30 p.m.) at The California Theatre, 345 South First Street, San Jose.

The journey begins with an imaginative retelling of three classic tales: a cautionary myth by Lera Auerbach, a tragic love story from Richard Wagner, and a magical fantasy told through Sergei Prokofiev's famous ballet music.

### The program

**Lera Auerbach:** Icarus

**Richard Wagner:** Prelude und Liebestod from Tristan und Isolde

**Sergei Prokofiev:** Cinderella

**Conductor** Lidiya Yankovskaya

Lidiya Yankovskaya, conductor, is a fiercely committed advocate for Slavic masterpieces, operatic rarities, and contemporary works

on the leading edge of classical music. She has conducted more than 40 world premieres, including 17 operas, and her strength as a visionary collaborator has guided new perspectives on staged and symphonic repertoire from Carmen and Queen of Spades to Price and Prokofiev.

**Tickets:** Single ticket prices: \$55 - \$115; phone: 408.286.2600 ext. 1; website: <https://www.symphonysanjose.org>; email: [jmeyers@symphonysanjose.org](mailto:jmeyers@symphonysanjose.org)

**Walk-Up Box Office:** 325 South First Street, San Jose, 95113. Located between San Carlos and San Salvador Street next to the California Theatre. Ticket Office Hours: Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Concert Length:** Approximately 1 hour 50 minutes, with intermission.

## Will Silicon Valley lawmaker's plan to toss Trump off ballot work?

By **B. Sakura Cannestra**  
*San Jose Spotlight*

A local state assemblyman wants to remove former President Donald Trump from the March primary ballot, but the law may not be on his side.

Trump's eligibility to be on the ballot hinges on the outcome of his federal indictment over the Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol.

The first trial date in Trump's federal indictment is March 4, but the jury selection and other procedural steps will likely push it out farther. That's according to Larry Gerston, a political science professor emeritus at San Jose State University.

"It'll be a miracle if that trial is held before summer," he told San José Spotlight.

Assemblymember Evan Low and eight other California legislators sent a letter to Attorney General Rob Bonta over the weekend calling for him to seek a court opinion on whether Trump is eligible to hold public office.

A number of states are questioning Trump's eligibility for the primary ballot, citing section 3 of the 14th Amendment. Section 3 states that if someone takes an oath to uphold the Constitution and then supports "insurrection or rebellion against the same," they cannot hold public office.

Gerston said barring someone from running under Section 3 of the 14th Amendment requires being found legally guilty of having engaged in an insurrection.

If a state did try to remove Trump from the primary ballot before his Jan. 6 case had a verdict, Gerston said he would likely sue. Without a court decision on the federal case, any calls to remove Trump from primary ballots are based on accusations, Gerston added.

According to Eddie Kirby, Low's spokesperson, the law's precedent shows a conviction may not be needed to disqualify Trump from the ballot, citing eight past cases.

"No conviction is required for removal from the ballot legally or historically," Kirby told San José Spotlight. "The point of the letter is to speed up the court's decision making on whether or not Donald Trump is disqualified because of the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution."



Assemblymember **Evan Low** is pictured in this file photo.

The secretaries of state have looked to the courts for answers, as the final decision on eligibility hinges on Trump's existing federal case. Lawsuits have been filed in Colorado and Minnesota seeking information on his eligibility ahead of the primaries, based on the 14th Amendment argument outlined by University of Chicago law professor William Baude and University of St. Thomas School of Law professor Michael Stokes Paulsen.

Low represents District 26, which includes Cupertino, a portion of San Jose, Santa Clara and Sunnyvale, and the unincorporated areas of Burbank and Fruitdale. He thinks California's attorney general is in a "unique position" to seek court opinion on the topic of Trump's eligibility.

"Whatever the courts decide, it is important that they do so quickly to avoid further political strife," Low told San José Spotlight.

But Gerston doesn't think legislators have a shot at removing him without a verdict.

"The best these folks can hope for ... is to wait to see what the judiciary says," Gerston said. "I understand people are desperate to try to shape the primary system in such a way to deny former President Trump, but you know those are the rules and you've gotta go by the rules."

## Safeway Holiday Ice Rink presented by Kaiser returns to San Francisco's Union Square

Opening Celebration to take place  
Wednesday, Nov. 1 at 5 p.m.

Willy Bietak Productions announced the return of The Safeway Holiday Ice Rink in Union Square presented by Kaiser Permanente, open to the public daily from November 1, 2023, through January 15, 2024. Set in San Francisco's iconic Union Square, The Safeway Holiday Ice Rink is the only outdoor ice rink in the City and is one of the Bay Area's favorite annual holiday traditions.

The season of outdoor skating and special on-ice events kicks off with an Opening Celebration on Wednesday, November 1 at 5 p.m. The Safeway Holiday Ice Rink's roster of events includes the return of the highly anticipated Drag Queens On Ice, Learn to Skate presented by Kaiser Permanente, Simba

Saturdays presented by Disney's The Lion King, Flashback Fridays presented by 80s+, Silent Skate, and Polar Bear Skate. Tickets are on sale now at [www.unionsquareicerink.com](http://www.unionsquareicerink.com).

"Kaiser Permanente is pleased to sponsor the San Francisco holiday ice rink, located in San Francisco's Union Square, once again. This beloved and popular holiday tradition is a fun way to keep families active during the fall and winter months," said Tarek Salaway, senior vice president and area manager for Kaiser Permanente's Golden Gate service area. "Skating can improve balance and strength and is a great workout for cardiovascular health. We hope to see you, your friends and family on the ice!"

The hours for the Safeway Holiday Ice Rink in Union Square presented by Kaiser Permanente are 10 a.m.–11 p.m. daily through January 15, 2024, with special extended hours December 18–29 (8:30 a.m. - 11 p.m.) on weekdays. The rink will close at 9:30 p.m. on December 31, 2023. (Learn to Skate Presented By Kaiser Permanente Saturdays & Sundays | 8–9 a.m.).

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# Mission Chamber Orchestra season opener to feature dances, songs and melodies from past

*Pay what you can afford option makes ticket prices affordable*

Mission Chamber Orchestra of San José (MCOSJ) opens its 2023-4 Season with a concert programmed and conducted by Juan Cristóbal Palacios, one of the four finalists in its search for a new Music Director.

“Dances, Songs and Melodies from the Past” on Saturday, September 30th at 7:30 at the Hammer Theatre Center in San Jose features music ranging from Boccherini’s best loved cello concerto, through folksong inspired works by Kodály and John Rutter, to the dancing rhythms of Beethoven’s 7th Symphony.

Conductor Juan Palacios was born in Caracas, Venezuela. His career has encompassed conducting, composition and education, and has taken him to countries around the world including South and North America and Europe.

For this season opener “I chose a varied

program where each of the works represents independent thought, but they as a whole express a feeling of freshness” says Palacios. “Rutter’s pavane songs, Kodály’s traditional melodies, and Beethoven’s dance-like symphony will take us on a beautiful musical-historical journey full of emotions, freshness, reflection and passion”.

Performing as soloist in Boccherini’s cello concerto is Palacios’ lifelong friend, Germán Marcano, one of the most important cellists in the Latin American music scene. He was principal cellist of the Simón Bolívar Symphonic Orchestra and has premiered and recorded many works by Venezuelan and Latin American composers.

Says Palacios “Our friendship and passion for music began as early as elementary school. By the time we were adolescents we... began to realize that music was going to be our life.

This unique opportunity to start the season seemed like the ideal situation to share



the stage, not only with the extraordinary musicians of MCOSJ, but also with a great friend that life has given me.”

MCOSJ’s subscription concerts this season give the audience the opportunity to enjoy thrilling live music in intimate venues with programs chosen and conducted by the four outstanding candidates for Music Director. It’s a unique chance to be part of this important transition for the orchestra. Ticket prices are affordable - General: \$25, Senior: \$20, Student: \$15, Child: \$10 - and the “pay what you can afford” option ensures the concerts are accessible for everyone to enjoy.

Event: Mission Chamber Orchestra of San

José Concert  
 Saturday, Sept. 30, 7:30 p.m.  
 Hammer Theatre Center, 101 Paseo de San Antonio, San José  
**Juan Palacios, Guest Conductor**  
**Germán Marcano, Cello Soloist**  
**John Rutter** Suite for Strings  
**Zoltán Kodály** Dances of Marosszék  
**Luigi Boccherini** Concerto G. 482  
**Ludwig van Beethoven** Symphony no. 7  
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**OCTOBER 14<sup>th</sup>**  
 Santa Clara County Horsemen’s will host in October from 3-6pm, at their clubhouse and arena: 20350 McKean Road, San Jose, CA 95120. Fall festival in the countryside with a mounted drill team performance and a variety of horse breeds on display. Participate in fun horse crafts, games and grooming station. They’ll have a seasonal photo backdrop and delicious BBQ. To RSVP : <https://horsemens.org/event-4576502/Registration>

**DECEMBER 16<sup>th</sup>**  
 San Martin Horsemen’s will host in December at Harvey Bear Park: Harvey Bear Ranch entrance at E. San Martin Avenue & New Avenue, San Martin, CA 95046. Ride, lead or join without a horse along a flat, paved 2 mile loop and jingle all the way with bells on the horses! A great time spreading holiday cheer interacting with children and families along the route. Event begins at 12noon. RSVP or questions: [toni.whedon@cbnocal.com](mailto:toni.whedon@cbnocal.com).



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## TECH JARGON OF THE WEEK

# Content Personalization

By Shubhi Asthana



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:

### Content Personalization

Content personalization is a branding and marketing strategy in which webpages, email and other forms of content are tailored to match the characteristics, preferences, or behaviors of individual users. Data is crucial to support organizations’ personalization strategies. With relevant and updated data, companies can better understand their visitors and customers and use this understanding to create personalized content. This content can potentially boost user satisfaction, improve customer experiences, and increase the probability of lead and purchase conversions.

Examples of personalized content include the following:

- interactive quizzes
- emails
- retargeted ads
- e-commerce recommendations
- gamified apps

Content personalization benefits both customers and brands. Informative, relevant and tailored content on a website or in an email makes customers feel valued. They also feel that the company has invested time and effort in understanding them and creating content they would find useful. These emotions go a long way toward enhancing their experiences with the brand. Great customer experiences (CX) play a vital role in strengthening customer-brand relationships.

Content personalization improves customer experience, which plays an essential role in strengthening customer-brand relationships.

In addition, personalized content that aligns with their specific preferences and unique needs (or wants) encourages customers to spend more time and money on a company’s products or services. Thus, it can boost an organization’s sales and revenues. In the long term, it can garner customer loyalty and trust, and increase the likelihood that the brand will achieve preferred status in its customers’ hearts, minds, and wallets.

Real-world examples of content personalization

Spotify, Netflix, and Amazon are all well-known for delivering personalized content to their users.

- Spotify makes song, artist and album recommendations based on the user’s past listening history, engagement behavior patterns and what other similar user personas are listening to.
- Netflix’s recommendation engine uses data about viewing history, user interactions, title information, duration of user sessions and device type to recommend new shows or TVs to users.
- Amazon generates product recommendations from page views, purchase history and other behavioral data. Users can see these recommendations on both Amazon’s website and app.

Amazon generates product recommendations from page views, purchase history and other behavioral data. Users can see these recommendations on both Amazon’s website and app.

### About the Author

Do you enjoy reading this column? Send in your comments or feedback to the author at [shub.saxen@gmail.com](mailto:shub.saxen@gmail.com). Shubhi Asthana works as a Research Senior Software Engineer at the IBM Almaden Research Center.

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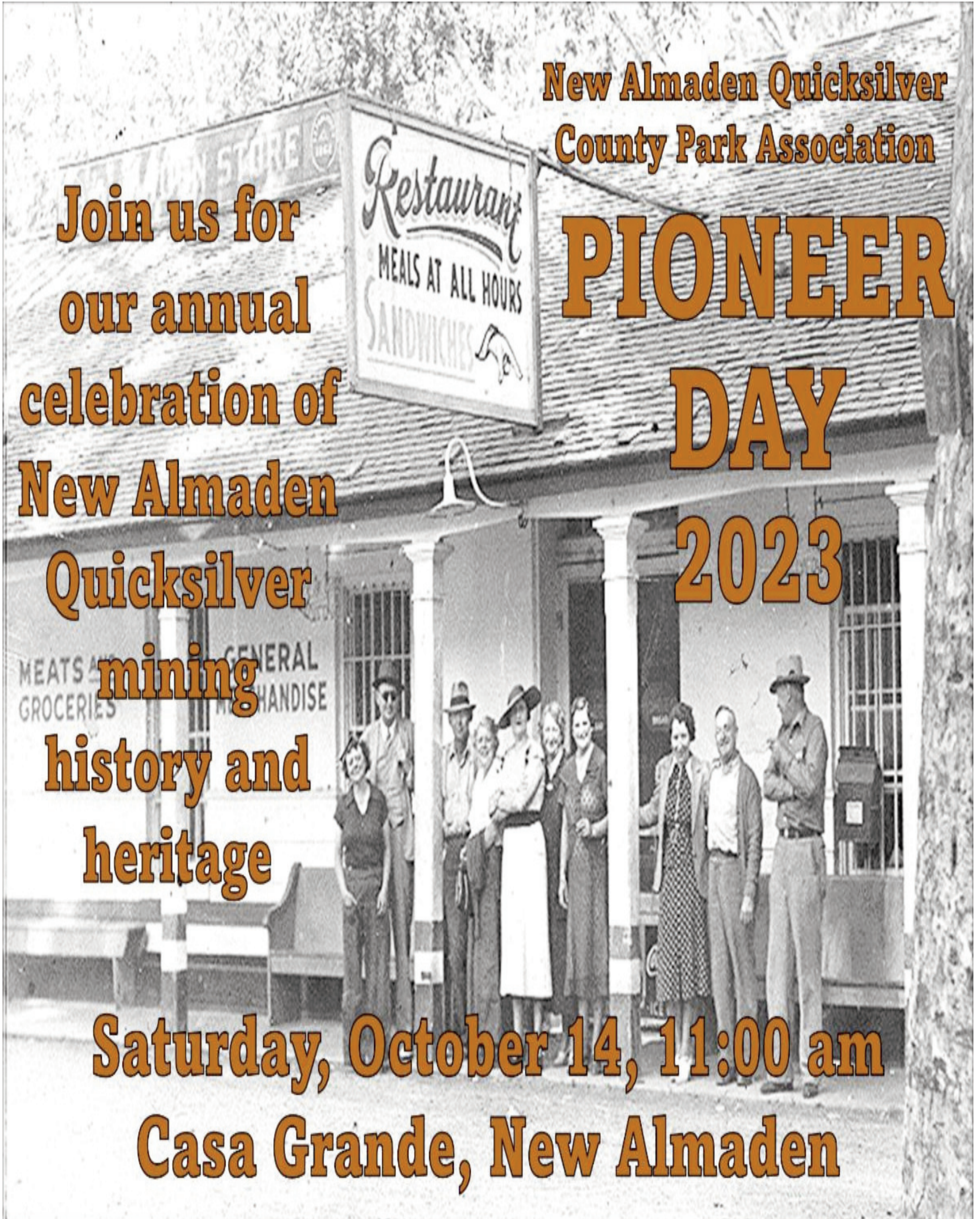


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our annual  
celebration of  
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mining  
history and  
heritage

**PIONEER  
DAY  
2023**

Saturday, October 14, 11:00 am  
Casa Grande, New Almaden





Times **Community News**

# State kids score among worst for math, language

By Dan Walters  
*CalMatters*

Gov. Gavin Newsom and other political figures like to brag about California's role as a national or even international leader in all things wonderful.

They tend, however, to gloss over or ignore indications that California is falling short in some very important indices of societal achievement, such as public education.

When measured against other states, much less other nations, California's nearly 6 million public school students rank among the lowest in national education testing for mathematics and language skills.

The latest round of National Assessment of Educational Progress test results, released last fall, revealed that California's

fourth- and eighth-graders were once again in the bottom tier of states in reading and math.

Moreover, California's unusually long school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic reduced achievement even more, as a recent report from the Public Policy Institute of California revealed.

Before the pandemic, 51% of students met standards in English language arts, or ELA, and it had dropped to 47%. In mathematics, proficiency declined from 40% to 33%.

"Only 35% of low-income students met state standards in ELA and 21% were proficient in math," PPIC reported, "compared to 65% of higher-income students in ELA and 51% in math."

Also, PPIC noted, the nationwide tests of reading and math proficiency "shows that California has consistently lagged behind most other states ... 38th in math and 33rd in reading."

We may not need more evidence that Californians lack competence in basic skills, but last week we got another data dose from the Program for the International



Assessment of Adult Competencies, a global program of testing supported by the U.S. Department of Education.

A new analysis of its data reveals that in "numeracy" — the ability of adults to use mathematics in daily lives — California ranks near the bottom of states, virtually identical to Georgia and other states in the second lowest tier. Within California, just one of its 58 counties — Marin — scored in the highest tier.

The numeracy report was issued just a few weeks after the state Board of Education adopted a new framework for math instruction that advocates claim will increase the computational acumen of California students by making it more culturally relevant.

Board member Gabriela Orozco-Gonzalez, an elementary school teacher in Montebello, said, "The framework's focus on fundamental concepts, open-ended tasks, justice, student inquiry, reasoning and justification aligns with effective mathematics teaching practices. I am encouraged by the incorporation of strategies to support diverse learners, such as promoting multilingualism, facilitating group work, employing visual aids, and establishing cultural connections."

Tom Loveless, a former senior fellow at the Brookings Institution who wrote a book on the Common Core standards, was one of many critics during a three-hour hearing prior to adoption, saying the framework sends a "message that math facts can be treated lightly."

The climactic board meeting reflected years of often bitter debate, dubbed the "math wars," over how best to raise math skills, not unlike a similar conflict over language skills dubbed the "reading wars."

Traditionalist supporters of phonics emerged triumphant in the battle over reading but traditionalists lost on math. Ultimately, the board made a few tweaks aimed at placating critics but left the original concept of downplaying rote skills and early introduction to algebra largely intact.

Too many of our students and adults are "innumerate" — the mathematical equivalent of illiterate — and that has vast societal impacts, from lessening Californians' ability to manage personal finances to depriving the economy of workers with critical skills.

We'll see if California's new woke math curriculum improves its standing, or drives us even lower.

*Dan Walters is a CalMatters columnist.*

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Students from Windmill Springs School enrolled in the O'Neill Sea Odyssey program,

## County funds expansion of environmental education

**S**anta Clara County is supporting two organizations dedicated to accessible environmental education.

Proposed by County Supervisor Joe Simitian, the County approved grants for the expansion of two local youth programs: the Youth Science Institute (YSI) and O'Neill Sea Odyssey (OSO).

"I'm pleased our County can help bring these resources to a wider audience. These programs create an opportunity for better understanding and inspire kids to learn and do more," said Simitian.

Founded by Jack O'Neill in 1996, OSO provides free first-hand marine science learning for 5,000 fourth through sixth grade students and students with disabilities annually. Eligible students who have completed a Student Access Project that aligns with OSO's curricula take part in the program onboard OSO's 65-foot catamaran, with follow-up lessons taught ashore. OSO's emphasis on creating accessible content for underprivileged students means that the Sea Odyssey experience is often a participant's first experience on open water.

The \$250,000 allotted by the County will enable OSO to expand its educational programming to 80 additional classes from under-resourced Santa Clara County schools. This impact reaches beyond the experience itself; a study of the lasting impacts of OSO revealed that 75% of participants retained knowledge from the

curriculum years after attending.

"Many parts of Santa Clara County are connected to our ocean through their local watershed," said Tracey Weiss, executive director of OSO. "This County grant will allow Santa Clara County students to understand how they are connected to our ocean ecosystem and provide youth with a hands-on learning experience that creates a connection to our natural world and positively impacts our local schools and communities."

Locally known, YSI is a non-profit founded in 1953 with the goal of inspiring its participants to learn actively and to become invested in their ecological surroundings. The group provides hands-on learning through its science summer camps, school and community events, and safaris at its education centers in Alum Rock Park, San Jose; Sanborn County Park, Saratoga; and Vasona Lake County Park, Los Gatos.

"For decades, YSI has been giving County Park visitors and program attendees an engaging and interactive experience," Simitian said. "Their hands-on, nature-based, science education makes learning fun for kids, families, and the public. It's a great asset to have right here in our County parks."

Reaching 30,000 students annually, the \$125,000 grant to YSI will expand the organization's reach and cover both programming and transportation for an estimated 3,987 students. Transportation costs especially can be a financial barrier for

participating institutions.

"YSI is grateful for the County's support," said Erika Buck, Executive Director of YSI. "This funding will allow us to expand our programming with a focus on under-resourced schools. This will ensure that all children, regardless of socio-economic status, have access to our hands-on, science education programs at Sanborn and Vasona County parks."

Standardized testing has consistently ranked California below the national average in science, with wider disparities among students of color or underprivileged students. Improved accessibility to science education programs also functions to boost academic interest in the sciences.

These County grants are an expansion of Simitian's prior support of youth science education and sustainability. He has previously backed Grassroots Ecology, which in partnership with the San Jose Conservation Corps provides ecology-focused education and job training to young adults; and the Palo Alto Junior Museum and Zoo, along with several other science and conservation-focused groups; and Acterra's "You(th) Be the Change" project, a six-lesson program aimed at raising awareness of climate change.

In fact, Simitian's support for outdoor environmental education dates back to his time in the State Legislature when he authored legislation establishing a state Outdoor Environmental Education Program.

"This is one of those areas

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where there is broad agreement about the value quality programs provide, but little clarity about who should take on the job, and how we should pay for it," he said. "That's why a partnership between proven nonprofits and our County makes so much sense. It also allows us to focus the effort on underserved youngsters."

"Educating the next generation to be good land stewards is crucial for the future," said Simitian. "We need to make sure young folks have a chance to develop a passion for the sciences today, so others down the line can enjoy and learn from our area's natural environment."

## Legislature passes Senator Cortese's Bill protecting inmate religious practices

**T**he California Legislature passed Senator Dave Cortese's Senate Bill (SB) 309 on September 13, setting clear rules about religious clothing, headwear, and grooming for people being booked into prison or jail.

SB 309 is rooted in research that shows when inmates can practice their religion while in detention, they're less likely to be violent or engage in other adverse behaviors.

The Senate passed the bill on a concurrence vote and the bill now heads to the desk of Governor Newsom.

"SB 309 is about civil rights. While safety and security in correctional facilities is our top priority, to strip someone of religious clothing while they are booked into a detention facility is to strip away their basic civil rights," Cortese said. "Whether you're a Muslim wearing a hijab, a Jewish person with a yarmulke, or a Sikh wearing a turban — you never lose your First Amendment rights. SB 309 is about preserving dignity and hope. For many, faith represents hope for the future."



# Toyota Crown a family hybrid sedan acts like an SUV

*Premium model accelerates 0-60 mpg at a whopping 5.1 seconds*

By Sean Eastwood  
Times staff reporter

The 2023 Toyota Crown has a raised platform giving it an SUV driving feel with up to 340 HP.

The 2023 Toyota Crown is a cross between the Toyota Camry and Toyota 4Runner, two popular vehicles.

As a premium offering, the 2023 Toyota Crown is a hybrid in two ways, its efficient engine and its raised driving position, an SUV trait. It's the idea of providing a more versatile vehicle for a family not quite interested in a full-on SUV. The new vehicle is about four inches taller than the Avalon and nearly as tall as some mid-sized SUVs.

The new Crown features a hybrid powertrain, with the XLE and Limited models including 2.5-liter, four-cylinder engines with 236 horsepower and three electric motors.

The top-line Platinum model includes the new Hybrid Max setup. It matches a



*The Toyota Crown provides a more versatile vehicle for a family not quite interested in a full-on SUV.*

turbocharged 2.4-liter, four-cylinder with an electric motor on the rear axle for a whopping combined 340 horsepower!

The XLE and Limited have continuously variable automatic transmissions (CVT); the Platinum uses a six-speed automatic.

All-wheel-drive is standard throughout the lineup.

#### Fast acceleration

Acceleration is rated at 7.2 seconds for the 0-to-60 miles per hour standard for the XLE and reviewed Limited offerings.

The Premium completes the standard in 5.1 seconds.

With its hybrid powertrain, the XLE and Limited trims have EPA estimates of 42 miles per gallon in city driving, 41 mpg on the highway. The Premium trim is rated at 32 mpg in the city and on the highway.

#### 19 inch wheels

Standard are 19-inch wheels on the XLE and Limited, with 21-inch wheels optional on the Limited and standard on the Platinum.

Standard equipment is standard Toyota, with a long list of safety, comfort and performance features. All Crown trims feature: eight-way power-adjustable front seats with heat, dual-zone automatic climate control, and ambient interior lighting. Limited and Platinum trims add a panoramic sunroof, leather upholstery and ventilated front seats, and heated rear seats and a heated steering wheel.

#### Trunk space

The Crown has 15.2 cubic feet of trunk space and the rear seats fold down. A power liftgate is not available and the small button to open the trunk is positioned on the right side of the trunk lid below the LED light strip.

## Steinway Society - The Bay Area presents award-winning pianist Anne-Marie McDermott Oct. 29 Live & Livestreamed

By William Bellou  
Publisher

Steinway Society - The Bay Area presents multi-award-winning classical pianist Anne-Marie McDermott on October 29, at 2:30 pm at the Visual and Performing Arts Center in Cupertino, CA.

To meet the needs of a diverse community of patrons, Steinway Society also offers a livestream option to watch the concert live and provide "unlimited listens" for 48 hours afterward. Program notes and a complimentary recorded pre-concert lecture by classical music expert Dr. Gary Lemco are available for ticketholders at [www.steinwaysociety.com](http://www.steinwaysociety.com).

McDermott balances a versatile career, performing solo recitals, concerts, and chamber music as a soloist and collaborator. McDermott has performed internationally with many leading orchestras.

As a soloist, McDermott has recorded the complete Prokofiev Piano Sonatas, Bach English Suites and Partitas (named Gramophone Magazine's Editor's Choice), and most recently, Gershwin's Complete Works for Piano and Orchestra with the Dallas Symphony and Justin Brown.

"Every time I hear McDermott in person or on recordings, I conclude anew that she's one of the great American pianists of her generation. Her depth of insight, precision of phrasing, and command of the piano on all levels, are ceaselessly marvelous."

—David Patrick Stearns, The Philadelphia Inquirer

In addition to her many performance achievements, McDermott serves as the Artistic Director of the famed Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival in Colorado. She is also



Classical pianist Anne-Marie McDermott takes the Steinway Society - The Bay Area stage at the Visual and Performing Arts Center in Cupertino, CA on October 29. Photos courtesy of the artist and Steinway Society.

Artistic Director of The Ocean Reef Chamber Music Festival and The Avila Chamber Music Celebration in Curaçao. As an adjudicator, she most recently served on the jury of the Sixteenth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in 2022.

As a chamber music performer, McDermott is a longtime member of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. McDermott studied at the Manhattan School of Music, was a Young Concert Artists auditions winner and received an Avery Fisher Career Grant award.

Single Live Tickets: \$45 to \$70; General Admission: \$70/\$60/\$50; Senior & student: \$65/\$55/\$45; Livestream online: \$25 per household / live + unlimited listens for 48 hours The Visual and Performing Arts Center is located at: 21250 Stevens Creek Blvd, Cupertino

(located at De Anza College)

Purchase Tickets: <https://steinwaysociety.com>; Box Office: 408.300.5635; Email: [office@steinwaysociety.com](mailto:office@steinwaysociety.com)

Steinway Society - The Bay Area is a nonprofit organization based in Silicon Valley. Now in its 29th season, this dedicated group of musicians, pianists, teachers, and arts lovers promotes excellence in piano performance and music education. Each season, Steinway Society presents a series of classical piano concerts featuring international award-winning pianists, as well as an active school music program. For more information on season subscriptions, individual tickets, the artists, and Steinway Society, go to [www.SteinwaySociety.com](http://www.SteinwaySociety.com) or contact (408) 300-5635.



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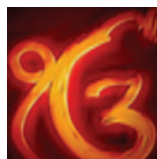


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