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Times

DEC. 22, 2023 – JAN. 4, 2024 ■ VOL. 36, NO. 26

Sacred Heart needs toy donations and volunteers in order to meet goal of helping 6000 local children

By William Bellou
Publisher

Sacred Heart Community Service (SHCS) proudly continues with its Holiday Toy and Food program designed to support families in need during this season.

Toy Box Program

Sacred Heart is delighted to reintroduce its Toy Box program, aiming to distribute 18,500 gifts to families in need. Donors are encouraged to visit Sacred Heart's donation station (Monday through Friday, 8 am - 4 pm, and Saturdays, 9 am - 12 pm) or make a financial donation using the following link: <https://www.sacredheartcs.org/holidays23>

Please note only families who have pre-registered will receive gifts. No walk-up appointments are available.



Toy Box Distribution Dates and Times:

- Thursday, December 21st: 10:00 am - 6:00 pm
- Friday, December 22nd: 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Volunteer

Sacred Heart is currently seeking volunteers to support its holiday activities. Distributing 18,500 gifts takes the coordinated effort of

an entire community. If you are interested, please visit: <https://www.sacredheartcs.org/volunteer>
SHCS firmly believes in the power of unity and giving from the heart during this holiday season. Together, this organization believes we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of those in need as we spread love, hope, and nourishment in our community.

Joe Simitian launches congressional campaign to succeed retiring Congresswoman Anna Eshoo

Simitian shows early momentum with over 130 local elected endorsements and over \$600,000 in federal campaign funds

By William Bellou
Publisher

Joe Simitian announced he's running for Congress.

Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian declared his candidacy for Congress in District 16 last week with the endorsements of over 130 local elected officials throughout the district.

Simitian said he's ready to be the strong leader we need on issues important to district voters.

"I will fight to reverse climate change, protect reproductive rights, and tackle the housing crisis," said Simitian. "On the Board of Supervisors and in the State Legislature,



I took on tough problems and powerful interests and won. I'll do the same in Congress."

Simitian launched his campaign following the decision of Congresswoman Anna Eshoo, who held the seat for over three decades, to not seek re-election.

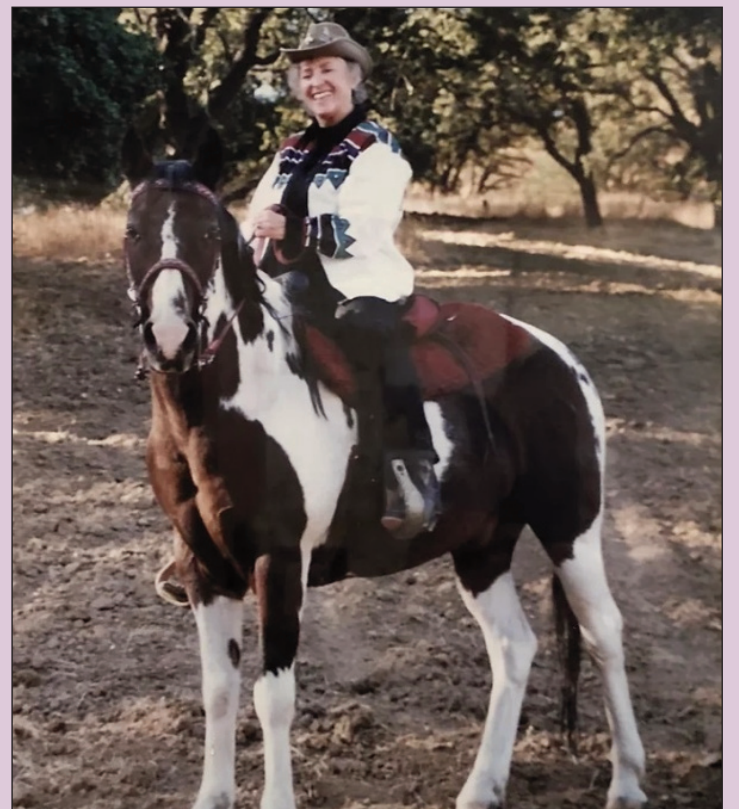
"Our community has been served exceptionally well by Congresswoman Eshoo. I will follow her tradition and my own practice of prioritizing constituent service. I will advance the values and issues that are the hallmark of our Valley: innovation, inclusion and fairness," Simitian said.

Tapping your car's hood could save a life!

It's that time of the year again when the weather is changing, and the nights are colder.

If you, your family or friends who live in California or another state and park your car outside, this message is important!

Please take a quick minute to tap on your hood before you start your engine. Small animals may have crawled under the hood to keep warm. You could save a life!



"Kitty" Monahan served on the Santa Clara County Park and Recreation Commission from 1990-1998.

Kitty Monahan Dedication Celebration highlights her contributions to Almaden

Monahan image unveiled

By William Bellou
Publisher

Almaden residents were invited to attend the "Kitty Monahan Dedication Celebration" on November 28 at Casa Grande located on Almaden Rd. Monahan passed away last year at age 89.

The event celebrated Santa Clara County's renaming of the Alamos Creek Bridge to Kathleen "Kitty" Monahan Bridge and Almaden Quicksilver County Park's Yellow Kid Trail to the Kitty Monahan Trail and dedicated the picnic table donated by the New Almaden Quicksilver County Park Association.

The ceremony opened with remarks by Santa Clara County

Supervisor Joe Simitian who talked about Kitty's life and contributions to New Almaden.

Simitian unveiled the new signage, as well as markers denoting a bridge and a trail renamed in Monahan's honor. Alamos Creek Bridge crosses the creek on Alamos Road, approximately one mile south of Bertram Road. A memorial picnic table has also been placed in the park.

Visitors to New Almaden Quicksilver County Park and the mining museum therein will now be greeted by the new sign bearing the image of the late Kitty Monahan, who helped lead Santa Clara County's purchase and preservation of the 4,000-acre park, where mercury mining in the 19th-century

See MONAHAN, page 3

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

Times **Cover Story****Monahan***Continued from page 1*

jumpstarted California's Gold Rush economy.

About Kitty Monahan

Kathleen Monahan, who preferred to go by Kitty, passed away on July 25, 2022, at the age of 89 at her home in New Almaden.

"Kitty was the heart and soul of New Almaden," said Supervisor Joe Simitian, who represents the Almaden area and spearheaded the request. "She did so much to safeguard the environment for future generations, and it's fitting that her name will be associated with the waters and lands she loved."

Monahan, a resident of New Almaden since 1972, was a beloved preservationist, educator, and historian who spearheaded efforts in 1976 to get Santa Clara County to purchase the 4,163-acre Almaden Quicksilver County Park. She was determined to preserve not just the natural beauty of the Almaden Valley but to preserve the Valley's history, especially its history of 19th-century mercury mining. Almaden was, at one

time, the largest mercury mine in the United States.

In 1983, Monahan helped found the New Almaden Quicksilver County Park Association, or NAQCPA. She later served on the Citizens Advisory Committee of Santa Clara County's Open Space Authority.

During Kitty's lifetime she spent at least 14,000 hours volunteering for the County's Park system; she came to be known as the unofficial mayor of New Almaden. She was recognized with a Presidential Volunteer Service Award in 2014, and a lifetime achievement award by the Santa Clara County Preservation Alliance in 2022.

"Kitty led a life of leadership and good works. And it wasn't only her environmental service; she was captain of her high school basketball team, she was a nun for 19 years, and she was a math teacher at William C. Overfelt High School," said Simitian. "A resident of New Almaden got in touch with me and suggested re-naming the bridge for her. I thought it was a great idea."

When Simitian asked her brother, Richard Monahan, he agreed. "Kitty bridged so many things. Alamitos Creek can be another one," he said.



Santa Clara County Supervisor **Joe Simitian**, left, and an unidentified man unveil new signage and a picnic table in memory of **Kitty Monahan**, who helped lead Santa Clara County's purchase and preservation of New Almaden Quicksilver County Park. Monahan died last year at age 89, and Simitian said that since then, the county has "taken steps to honor Kitty and her contributions to New Almaden, our parks system and our community." (Courtesy photo)

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Join the San Martin Horsemen's Association!

Do you like horses? Do you and your horse need some new things to do and places to go? Do you like getting to know other people who like horses, too? Then perhaps you should check out San Martin Horsemen's Association. SMHA has been serving the community and horsemen for over 30 years. You have probably seen them in the 4th of July Parade in Morgan Hill, or perhaps at the Grand Nationals at the Cow Palace. Maybe you saw the fantastic 12 Man Ride the Quadrille unit put on for San Martin School's 100th Anniversary. Or maybe you've followed a horse trailer that says, "Please don't ride my tail." Where ever they go, they sure grab your attention. But there is a lot more going on behind the scenes, with many activities for youths and adults of all riding styles and disciplines. You don't even need to have a horse!

San Martin Horsemen's Association has been here to enlighten its members and the community about horse and rider safety, environmental issues, veterinary tips. It has also been there to support County and State Park & Recreation trail maintenance and actively support the 4-H and most equine activities in the area.

On the third Wednesday of every month, the Association has its General Meeting at a local restaurant at 7:00 PM. There is always a program of interest to the horse minded. They also have monthly pleasure rides at different locations like Dinosaur Point, Mt. Madonna, Henry Coe State Park and Salinas River Beach. There are ice cream social pleasure rides, and the Halloween Poker ride where horse and rider can come in costume and win prizes for their imagination and ingenuity. There are camping trips at Point Reyes and Jack Brooks.

The Association has sponsored CSHA sanctioned horse shows, CSHA sanctioned Trail Trials, Gymkhanas, a parade unit, a quadrille unit as well as team penning, roping and cutting clinics. These are great schooling opportunities for kids and adults alike. There is really something for everyone and their horse.

Visit <http://smhorse.org/membership/> to join today!

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County of Santa Clara and community partners collect 408 firearms at San José Gun Buyback event

By Sean Eastwood
Times staff writer

The County of Santa Clara partnered with the Sheriff's Office, District Attorney's Office, City of San José, San José Police Department, County of Santa Clara Public Health Department, and County of Santa Clara Behavioral Health Services to host a gun buyback event at the Reid-Hillview Airport.

During the event, 408 firearms were collected, along with 70 replica/airsoft/bb-style guns, 133 handguns and 275 rifles, including 1 Uzi, one sawed-off shotgun, and one rocket-launcher. Additionally, 20 were ghost-guns and more than a dozen were assault-style weapons. There was \$40,050 distributed in compensation.

"Residents of the 408 Area Code stepped up to voluntarily turn in at total of 404 firearms at the San José Gun Buyback at Reid-Hillview Airport on December 2, and that has us feeling extra grateful this holiday season," proclaimed Supervisor Otto Lee.

Supervisor Lee added, "We're also very thankful for the Sheriff's Office,

Valley Currents

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



District Attorney, City of San José, San José Police Department, the County's Public Health Department and Behavioral Health Services, and my colleagues on the Board of Super-

visors for working together to make this event possible, and safe."

The weapons are in safe storage with the Sheriff's Office until they are sent out for destruction.

Residents may turn in unwanted firearms through the Sheriff's Office's Gun Relinquishment Program. Call 408-299-2311 for more information.

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Times **Local News**

San Jose receives \$12.9M federal grant to increase safety along dangerous corridors

Federal funds from Safe Streets and Roads for All grant program to be used for safety improvements to help city meet Vision Zero goals

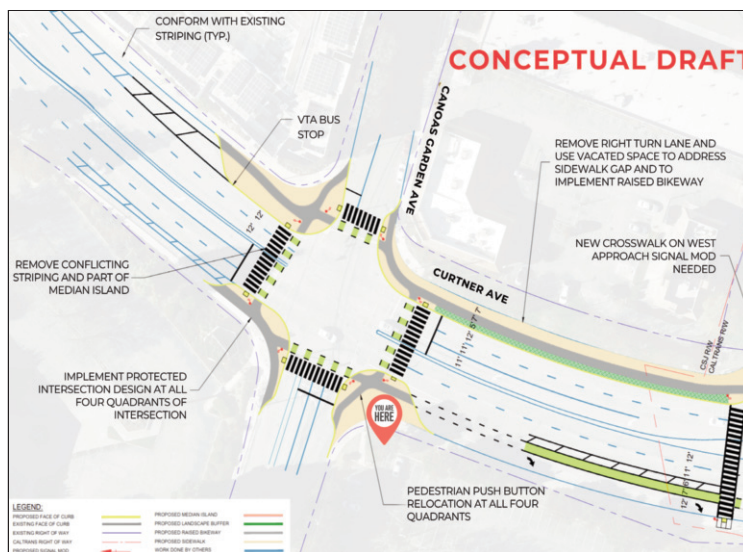
Mayor Matt Mahan was joined by Vision Zero Task Force Chair, Councilmember Pam Foley (D9) and Vice Chair, Councilmember Bien Doan (D7), transportation officials, and the mother of a traffic fatality victim to announce a \$12.9 million federal grant awarded to the City for traffic safety improvements at four locations Dec. 13.

The Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant program, administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation,

announced earlier the same day that San José would be awarded the full amount requested.

“San José’s pedestrians and cyclists deserve to travel safely around our city,” said Mayor Mahan. “We’ve reduced traffic fatalities this year thanks to strategic investments in enforcement, education and improved infrastructure. This federal support will enable us to save more lives in the years ahead.”

The announcement was made as speakers gathered near the site of one of the four projects, along Curtner Avenue between Canoas Gardens and Highway 87. There, the City’s Department of Transportation is proposing a project with sev-



eral safety elements. They will build a protected intersection that keeps bicyclists separated from vehicle traffic in their own physically separated lane.

A raised, separated bikeway is also proposed along the north side of the street. Pedestrians will benefit from

the added separation from vehicles, as well as from a new section of sidewalk that is currently missing. Traffic along the stretch will be better controlled with a pair of traffic signal modifications. Three people were killed along this stretch of Curtner Avenue between 2017 and 2021.

“In response to increasing traffic fatalities in San José and across the nation, we’re doubling down on our efforts to build transformative street safety projects,” said John Ristow, Director of Transportation. “The Safe Streets and Roads for All grant is an amazing opportunity to make significant improvements to some of our most troubling locations.”

City representatives were joined by Gina LaBlanc, a traffic safety advocate who lost her son, Kyle LaBlanc, in 2016, when he was killed by a driver as he walked along Curtner Avenue.

“I am very grateful to know that with this new grant, much-needed safety infrastructure can finally be built at this location,” said Gina LaBlanc. “My son Kyle was not the only life lost here. My heart goes out to the other families who have lost loved ones and also those who have been injured. Like Kyle, all of these people matter. It is my sincere hope that with these new changes, pedestrians and cyclists will be able to get where they need to go without losing their lives or becoming seriously injured.”

The other locations included in the grant award are:

Monterey Rd at Curtner-Tully Roads:

- Project scope includes protected intersection, full signal modification, pedestrian time extension using pilot video detection and transit boarding island.

- This project will make it safer for people walking, biking, and taking transit at one of the highest fatal and severe injury intersections in San José. There were seven fatal and severe injuries in five years, including three pedestrian fatalities in a span of a single year.

Capitol Expressway at Senter Road:

- Project scope includes protected intersection and a full signal modification.

- This project will make it safer for people walking and biking to cross one of the highest fatal and severe injury intersections (seven fatal and severe injuries in five years) in San José. It is located near Andrew P. Hill High School and Rocketship Rising Stars Academy.

East Santa Clara Street at 11th Street:

- Project scope includes a new pedestrian refuge island, sidewalk extension, new bulbout corner, signal modification, and raised bikeway.

- This project will enhance safety for pedestrians and cyclists crossing at one of the highest fatal and severe injury intersections in downtown San José (two fatal and severe injuries in five years).

The projects will kick off in 2024. Construction is anticipated to begin in late 2027 and take approximately two years to complete.

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Times Local News



Pianist and composer **Nicolas Namoradze** performs for Steinway Society – The Bay Area at Montgomery Theater in San Jose, with a diverse repertoire on January 21, 2024. Photo by Nathan Elson courtesy of the artist and Steinway Society.

Steinway Society Bay Area welcomes Pianist and composer Nicolas Namoradze to the Montgomery Theater January 21

By William Bellou
Publisher

Pianist and composer Nicolas Namoradze came to international attention in 2018 upon winning the triennial Honens International Piano Competition in Calgary, Canada—among the largest prizes in classical music.

Namoradze’s recitals around the globe have been met with universal critical praise, and recent album releases have received extraordinary accolades, including the Choc de Classica, Record of the Month in Limelight, Instrumental Disc of the Month in BBC Music Magazine, Editor’s Choice in Gramophone, Editor’s Choice in Presto Classical and Critics’ Choice in International Piano.

Among the most critically acclaimed musicians of his generation, Namoradze was bestowed the 2020 & 2021 Young Pianist Award by the UK Critics’ Circle, which called him “very much more than a top-flight pianist.” Recent highlights include recitals at concert halls including New York’s Carnegie Hall, London’s Wigmore Hall, Konzerthaus Berlin and the Tokyo Bunka Kaikan; festival appearances at Tanglewood, Banff, Gstaad, Santa Fe and more; and performances with orchestras including the London Philharmonic, Budapest Fes-

“Set to become one of the truly important artists of his generation.”

–American classical pianist Emanuel Ax

tival Orchestra and Sinfonieorchester Basel.

Namoradze earned his master’s at The Juilliard School and his doctorate at the CUNY Graduate Center. He is currently pursuing post-graduate studies in neuropsychology at the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience at King’s College, London, where his research interests include the effects of mental practice and mindfulness on musical performance. Namoradze is the author of the book “Ligeti’s Macroharmonies,” published by Springer in the Computational Music Science series, and his compositions are published by Muse Press.

THE PROGRAM:
Bach-Busoni, “Ich ruf zu dir, Herr” BWV 639
Bach, French Suite No. 1 in D

minor BWV 812

1. Allemande
2. Courante
3. Sarabande
4. Minuet
5. Gigue

Bach, The Art of Fugue, BWV 1080

1. Contrapunctus VI
2. Contrapunctus VII

Fauré, Preludes Op. 103

1. No. 3 in G minor
2. No. 6 in E-flat minor
3. No. 9 in E minor

Ligeti, Etudes

1. 1. No. 11, “En suspens”
2. 2. No. 13, “L’escalier du diable”
3. 3. No. 16, “Pour Irina”

INTERMISSION

Nicolas Namoradze, Memories of Rachmaninoff’s “Georgian Song”

- Pärt, Für Alina
Pärt, Variationen zur
Gesundung von Arinuschka
Rachmaninoff-Namoradze, Adagio from Symphony No. 2, Op. 27

Scriabin, Sonata No. 4 Op. 30

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OSC has opened a new program for women based upon equine interaction and equine-assisted-learning, designed to develop self-awareness and self-acceptance, confidence and resilience, and safe boundaries.

G.R.I.T. is for adult women led by OSC founder Landa Keirstead. The small group meets in 2 hour sessions, once per week for six-weeks

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The battle continues to halt Proposition 19 tax hike

The Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association is fighting to reverse one of the largest property tax increases in state history, a little-noticed provision of Proposition 19 that revoked the ability of parents to pass property to their children without any change to the property tax bill.

Proposition 19 passed narrowly in November 2020, and the provision affecting intergenerational transfers became effective on February 16, 2021, barely three months after the votes were counted.

Previously, parents could pass their home and up to \$1 million of assessed value of other property to their chil-

dren, and that property was excluded from reassessment. The property tax bill would not change as a result of the transfer. That was the law under Proposition 58, passed by more than 75% of voters in 1986. Ten years later, voters passed Proposition 193 to extend the same rules to transfers between grandparents and grandchildren if the children's parents are deceased.

But that all changed with the passage of Proposition 19, a measure that won a squeaker of a victory after a costly and deceptive advertising campaign that neglected to tell voters the whole story. Under Prop. 19, only a principal residence is eligible for an exclusion from reassessment, and only if the children move in within one year and the home becomes their principal residence, permanently. Some family farms also qualify for an exclusion.

All other property will be reassessed to market value as of the date of transfer. Children who can't afford the new tax bill will be forced to sell family property.

Your HJTA is fighting to reverse this tax increase. As an interim measure, we sponsored Senate Bill 668, introduced by Sen. Patricia Bates (R-Laguna Niguel), to extend until 2023 the effective date of this enormous change to the tax code. Sadly, others in the state Senate blocked this bill from moving forward.

However, Sen. Bates has joined us in supporting Assembly Constitutional Amendment 9, introduced by Assembly Member Kevin Kiley (R-Rocklin), which would reinstate Propositions 58 and 193 to the state constitution. ACA 9 will restore Proposition 13 benefits to children, preserving the legacy of parents and grandparents who have worked for decades to pay off mortgages on homes and small businesses, and who hope to pass those assets to the next generation so they can have a better, more secure future.

Editor's note: You can go online to reinstate58.hjta.org download the organization's petition which can be shared with friends and neighbors. The deadline is January 16, 2024.

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San Francisco has been named the 11th best city to celebrate the New Year.


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2023's Best Cities for New Year's

With venues hiking their prices significantly during New Year's, putting a strain on people's wallets that have already been hit hard by inflation, the personal-finance website WalletHub today released its report on 2023's Best Cities for New Year's, along with its infographic of 50+ New Year's Facts – Traditions, Spending & More.

To determine which cities are the best for safely ringing in the new year without breaking the bank, Wal-

letHub compared the 100 biggest cities across 26 key metrics. The data set ranges from the legality of fireworks and the nightlife options per capita to food affordability and forecasted precipitation for Dec. 31.

Best Cities for New Year's

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Orlando, FL | 11. San Francisco, CA |
| 2. San Diego, CA | 12. Louisville, KY |
| 3. New York, NY | 13. Pittsburgh, PA |
| 4. Las Vegas, NV | 14. Philadelphia, PA |
| 5. Atlanta, GA | 15. San Antonio, TX |
| 6. Miami, FL | 16. Seattle, WA |
| 7. Los Angeles, CA | 17. Houston, TX |
| 8. Chicago, IL | 18. Nashville, TN |
| 9. Denver, CO | 19. Birmingham, AL |
| 10. Washington, DC | 20. Anaheim, CA |

Times **Local News**



Joe Simitian discusses the County's Veterans Service Office with a local veteran.

Santa Clara County Supervisors vote to add 'reinforcements' to County Veterans Service Office

By Sean Eastwood
Times staff writer

After much discussion, veterans and the County Veterans Services Office (VSO) were told that help is on the way.

The Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors voted to add additional Veteran Service Representatives (VSRs) to the VSO during the Mid-Year 2023-2024 budget process. The VSO is the primary method by which the County serves its resident veterans; connecting them to the services and benefits to which they are

entitled. This action, proposed by County Supervisor Joe Simitian and co-authored by County Supervisor Otto Lee, is designed to help the more than 64,000 veterans living in the County.

"Serving the veterans is part of the County's mission," said Simitian. "I've been frustrated that our Country hasn't had the staffing necessary to fully assist our veterans when they return from duty; this is a logical next step in improving our service to local veterans."

Each VSR is CalVET/Veterans Administration certified and helps local veterans apply for all possible benefits for which they qualify and have earned. "The addition of these positions is just the beginning, and frankly, is insufficient to address the larger issues," said Simitian. "But if we're going to help our veterans, we have to address the increased demand for services, the burden on staff, and the resulting turnover."

Hollister: the only town in California where residents feel safe enough to leave doors unlocked at night

Grandparents often talk about an era in which homes would be left unlocked at night, unconcerned about any threats to their security.

Times have certainly changed, and for millions across America, it would be unthinkable in this day and age to leave their home unlocked at night. Yet, there are pockets of America where this trust in community safety still endures.

AutomateLife.net commissioned a comprehensive study to find out where in America people are still comfortable enough to embrace the old-world charm of an unlocked front door as night falls. They surveyed 3,000 respondents and the places that made up the top 5 were as follows:

#1 **Hollister, California** leads the pack, heralded for its safety, coming in as the 30th safest city in the state. Here, residents enjoy quiet streets and low crime rates, with violent crime at 2.8 and property crime at 7.7 incidents per 1,000 residents in 2020, indicating a downward trend and a stable sense of security.

#2 **Madison, Mississippi** emerges as a beacon of safety, with its crime rates a shad-



ow of the national figures—54% lower overall. It's a place where porch swings and neighborly chats are as common as the magnolias blooming in profusion, and a sense of belonging is as deeply rooted as the oaks lining the historic district.

#3 In **New Braunfels, Texas**, affordability meets community charm, and the crime rate sits 35% lower than the national figure. This town is known for its welcoming atmosphere, rich German heritage, and family-friendly events that underscore its community-focused spirit.

#4 **Owatonna, Minnesota** stands proud in 4th place, its safety a product of community bonds and vigilant protectors of peace. Here, the crime rate is comfortably lower than other cities of its size, fostering a warmth that extends beyond the friendly "Minnesota Nice."

#5 Finally, the coastal charm of **Barnstable, Massachusetts** is evident not just in its maritime heritage but also in its security. With a 1 in 94 chance of encountering crime, this enclave of Cape Cod holds tight to a legacy of colonial architecture and oceanfront tranquility, outpacing similar communities in safety and splendor.



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- Trips to local and not so local places of interest.

Stop by the front desk at the Almaden Community Center and ask for an application. Currently Membership is free. Membership includes a copy of the newsletter and offers you discounts on classes through San Jose PRNS.

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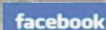
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Elf

escapades

The Christmas story continues...

By Kevin Larsen

Hello again everyone!

I'm the Elf who wrote to you last year in the *Almaden Times* Dec. 12, 2022 issue, page 9. AlmadenTimes.com.

After getting back home last year, I got a dream job at a big box store. They just loved my work ethic, and I was able to teach the employees how to smile and emote joy so the shoppers would buy more.

This thing called money is interesting, but after a while I realized something was missing. As much as I loved peeking into the new toy boxes, I was having trouble finding my true calling, so I decided to go back up to the pole and ask Santa; so I packed my bags and headed for Diridon Station working my way up north.

I got permission to make my North Pole visits any time I wanted. On one visit I asked Santa if I could sing in the North Pole Choir but little did I know the elves were mischievous in nature and they ran behind me, all shaking their head "NO," to Santa. Just as I looked for his response, Santa looked down and shook his head "No." Mrs. Claus stepped in and told Santa to be nicer to me.

The girl of my dreams...

When I was young and naïve, I thought, who wants a girl around anyway, they are just bad luck but the occasional thoughts of being with her, I decided were nice, so I kept them in the back of my mind.

I look back on meeting the girl of my dreams

with my cold feet, it was all crazy. Being with the love of my life are memories that speak to me of goodness of our world. With her, everything was warm and delightful in my body and mind and just being around her, I was so contented from head to toe.

I remembered the best part of her was she was not dependent on anyone, and she was not afraid to speak out on anything and say what was on her mind. Perhaps she was related to Mrs. Claus as the elves told me, for she struck me as being worldly. She came from a country that makes sure boys and girls and women and men all are considered equal. The elves at the pole also sent me letters to bolster my courage in courting her.

Bike peddling with her

At age 9, my mom cut my hair and I had a pure bred black Labrador Retriever who took a shiny Christmas ornament off the tree without breaking it and plopped it out on the floor when confronted. He was a duck hunting dog.

I lived near her and she was a goddess. Her presence was a bolt of thunder. I was a brat stationed in the neighborhood because my family moved there and she would show me how to gather cloud berries and jump into nature. I noticed she had a nice smile and good hair.

I first saw her at school from a distance but was shy and afraid to say hi. One day, for some reason, courage was inside me and I biked over to her house and rode outside in circles. Her mother thought I was crazy and her dad smiled and knew I had a crush on her. She came out and said she was going to the store on her bike and if I liked, I could come along.

I looked up in the sky and said to myself, "There is a God," for right from the start I knew she was an angel and I was put under her spell. I fell in love with her voice and how she handled herself and when we got back to her house, I told her I lived just down the street. She winked at me as I put my kickstand up and that caused me to almost crash.



The next day after school, I brought a softball and glove and knocked on her door to see if she wanted to play catch. Her father opened the door and was smoking a pipe. He said, sure, you come in anytime you like. I then got the courage up to ask her as I looked not at her but straight up to the sky, "Ya want to go out and throw the ball?" "Sure," she said and I handed her the ball and leather mitt. As we headed to the park she asked, "Where's your mitt?" I told her I didn't need one, trying to be cool and manly.

When we got to the big green field everything was going well. After the first 10 minutes I told her, "Hey why you looping the ball to me, come on let's see what you got and I made a sound with my fist going into the palm of my left hand. Throw me a whammy!"

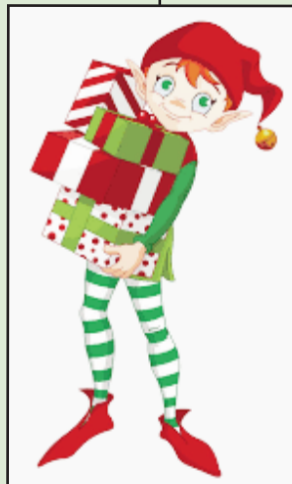
I noticed she grimaced at me with her facial expression as she took a step back then wound up and catapulted the ball releasing it straight at my face. I got a bit scared at first but then decided to try to catch it barehanded as perhaps to try to impress her. It hit my hands so hard I lost balance and fell backward.

As my hands were stinging, I knew I had been thinking incorrectly about these creatures' called women. I had thought they were the weaker sex. "Hey, I yelled, why you throw it so hard?" and she told me, "BECAUSE YOU TOLD ME TO! I'm not a little girl you know, I'm

Captain on the Lacrosse Team and pitch for the girls Softball Team."

As it began to rain, I took off my jacket and draped it over her shoulders because that's what I saw in an old movie. We walked toward her house she said, "You're shivering, are you going to be OK." I said with strength, "Oh Ya, I'm just fine," but my teeth were chattering.

When we got to her house she said, you're soaked, you sure you're OK?" I accepted the hot chocolate she made and inside her house I decided not to talk. I just put both hands around the cup and looked inside it. When it was time to leave the rain subsided. I kicked



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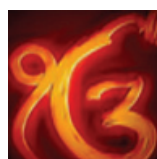


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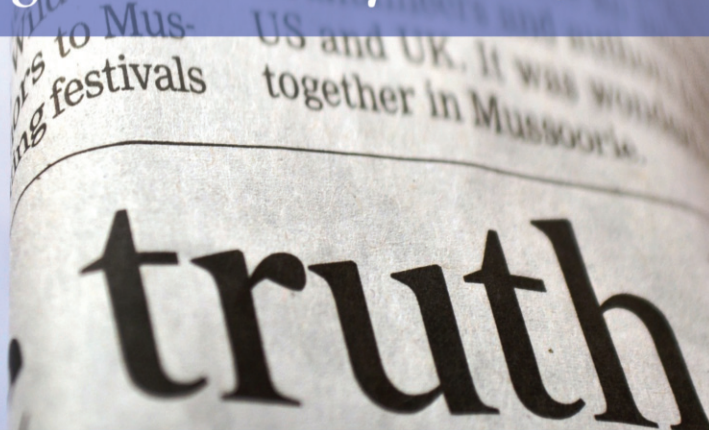
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