

Here's who's running for Santa Clara County supervisor
SEE PAGE 10



All shook up
Four very important ways you can prepare for earthquakes in 2024
— **SEE PAGE 10**

San José Chamber Orchestra presents **FANTASIA** on February 11
SEE PAGE 7



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Times

JAN. 19 – FEB. 1, 2024 ■ VOL. 37, NO. 2



(L-R) Justin Lai, Daniel H. Xu, Ryan Qin, Daniel Xu, Gavin Liu during their martial arts performance (Photo credit: J. Xie)

2024 Leland Bridge Night to be held Feb. 3 at Leland High School

Joyous annual fundraising event for Leland High School students

Leland Bridge Night will return again this year on Saturday, February 3, 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. in the Leland High School Cafeteria!

Featuring a variety of students performances and raffles, Leland Bridge Night is an excellent way to celebrate Chinese culture and the school's talented students, with the chance to win some prizes.

Annual fundraiser

Leland Bridge Night is the annual fundraising event hosted by the Leland Bridge Parents Group, a non-profit organization made up of Chinese American parents whose goal is to foster communication between Leland High School and the surrounding Chinese

American community and raise money for the school. Since 2018, this event has consistently sold around 300 tickets and helped achieve a fundraising goal of \$20,000 for Leland High School each year.

Proceeds generated from Leland Bridge Night are used to fund various projects and initiatives at Leland, such as renovating the Media Center, Cafeteria, and providing financial support for course instructors. Proceeds are also used to improve several programs such as Speech & Debate, Music, Journalism, Robotics, and college application essay reviews. The funds also help with Leland's landscaping and recycling efforts.

To purchase tickets, visit: www.lelandbridge.org/lbn-2024. For more information, contact Leland Bridge Treasurer by email, finance@lelandbridge.org

SJ Chamber of Commerce names Toeniskoetter new CEO and Adams new Chairman of the Board

The San Jose Chamber of Commerce has selected **Leah Toeniskoetter** (pictured) as its new president and CEO, and Nicholas Adams Chairman of the Board.

Toeniskoetter is the founding director of public policy think tank SPUR San Jose, as well as a senior manager at Deloitte and daughter of prolific developer Chuck Toeniskoetter.



She is the third CEO for the group in three years, in the wake of the chamber—formerly known as the Silicon Valley Organization—dissolving its political action committee and losing hundreds of members after it ran racist campaign ads in 2020.

"Leah Toeniskoetter has significant experience successfully launching new initiatives and

See *CHAMBER*, page 4



Hermelinda Figueroa, 80, works on an assignment during an English as a second language class at the San Diego Continuing Education Mid-City campus. Photo by Adriana Heldiz - CalMatters

Enrollment increases at community colleges after dropping during the Covid-19 pandemic

By Adam Echelman
CalMatters

When students started leaving college during the COVID-19 pandemic, California's community colleges feared losing state funding, which is based partly on enrollment. But now, one group is offering hope: students over the age of 50.

The state's 116 community colleges recently saw an 11% increase in students over the age of 50 compared to the previous year - the highest percentage increase of any age group and just above the rate for students under 20. In contrast, students 20 to 29 continued to leave.

Upswing in older adults' enrollment

The enrollment numbers represent a shift for older adults, who left college at record rates during the start of the pandemic. By fall 2021, California's community colleges had lost roughly 20% of their students compared to fall 2019, bringing the system to its lowest enrollment figures in decades.

College administrators say the

rising number of students over 50 is a result of many factors, but they often point to the return of in-person classes after the end of pandemic-era restrictions.

In general, student opinions are divided about online education. About 15% of California community college students surveyed in 2022 said they wanted more online classes, while 12.5% said they wanted more in-person classes, according to data from the Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges. But for beginner-level students taking English as a second language at San Diego's College of Continuing Education, many of them older, the preferences are clear.

"I come to these English classes because here, I don't feel alone. I chat with my classmates, and they greet me back," said Hermelinda Figueroa, 80, who comes to her two-hour class three times a week.

The San Diego College of Continuing Education lost about half of its English as a second language students during the pandemic,

See *COLLEGE*, page 3

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

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

Times **Community News****College***Continued from page 1*

but most of the students who left were beginners, said Jan Jarrell, a dean at the college. She said many beginner students were uncomfortable with technology or lacked reliable access to it. Teachers struggled to adapt, too.

"It's all about person-to-person for me. When I use computers, I feel like I've lost an eye. I just don't get it," said Figueroa, squinting as if to emphasize the way she might look at a screen. She enrolled last year when more in-person classes became available.

Sitting behind Figueroa in class, Estene Petit-Homme, 50, is part of another demographic that's boosting enrollment: recent immigrants. He traveled from his home in Haiti to the San Diego-Tijuana border, where he asked for asylum in February.

His application is one of a record nearly 1.6 million asylum cases on backlog in the immigration court system, according to a nonprofit research group associated with Syracuse University. While he waits for his day in court, he said he wants to learn to speak English better.

This fall, the San Diego College of Continuing Education has just shy of 6,700 English as a second language students — more

than before the pandemic. Many of these students are over 50.

In Lake Tahoe, the local community college saw a nearly 60% increase in students over the age of 50 in the 2022-23 academic year, compared to the previous year. The main driver isn't English; it's two classes that focus on health and fitness for older adults, especially retirees.

"We were surprised by how well the Zoom classes did, but it's not nearly as good as what we're seeing now that the doors are fully open," said Lake Tahoe Community College President Jeff DeFranco, speaking of the wellness programs.

Improving online skills

Other students in the same age group are still working but use the community college as an opportunity to improve their on-the-job skills. DeFranco said about 35% of the college's students over 50 are firefighters, emergency medical technicians or police officers who study at Lake Tahoe Community College because it has an established program focused on public safety. These students take classes as a way to get a job, to gain the skills needed for a promotion, or in some cases, because the classes are required by their current employer.

As the number of students older than 50 fluctuated in the past few years, other trends emerged. More community college classes are now held in person than at the peak of



Evergreen Valley Community College

the pandemic, but about half of classes are still online, according to Chancellor's Office data from the 2022-23 academic year. Before the pandemic, about 21% of classes were online.

For years, the percentage of part-time, degree-seeking students rose. Today, it's about two-thirds of the student population, according to data from the chancellor's office. These part-time students are more likely to juggle work and family obligations, in addition to school.

To lure students back and encourage them to take more courses, colleges and lawmakers have spent millions in COVID-relief dollars on marketing campaigns and incentives.

Last year, the number of students under the age of 20 increased at a rate just below that of students over 50, driven mostly by high school students who take community

college courses. These youngest students now represent the plurality on campus.

While the growth is uneven, the total number of students increased by about 5% in the 2022-23 academic year compared to the year prior, according to data from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. It marks the first year of enrollment gains since the start of the pandemic. Official statewide data from the current fall semester is not available yet, but individual districts are already predicting more gains.

Incentive program for books and tuition

The San Jose Evergreen Community College District reported enrollment for the fall was up nearly 20%. The district could only provide preliminary data across age groups, but a spokesperson said the "biggest growth" came from students over the age of 40.

"These enrollment numbers reflect a lot of hard work by a lot of people," wrote Interim District Chancellor Beatriz Chaidez. "They also indicate that our community continues to see the value of its local colleges."

Data reporter Erica Yee contributed to this reporting.

Editor's Note: To find out more about the opportunities for enrolling in the San Jose Evergreen Community College District go to: <https://sjeccd.edu>

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Chamber

Continued from page 1

organizations, shaping public policy, and fostering community impact, making her an exceptional choice to lead the Chamber into a new era," the chamber said in a statement.

Toeniskoetter succeeds Derrick Seaver, the chamber's most recent CEO, who resigned in August.

"The Chamber of Commerce supports and speaks for a wide spectrum of businesses, from our favorite locally owned stores that are core to our neighborhoods to Fortune 500 enterprises that drive global change," Toeniskoetter said in the statement. "It is an honor to step into this leadership role in service of our diverse community and to advance the economic vitality of San Jose and beyond."

The chamber said Toeniskoetter's experience aligns with its "commitment to advance economic growth through convening, collaborating and championing the San Jose business community."

Toeniskoetter did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Rev. Reginald Swilley, a partner at the Minority Business Consortium in San Jose, said the chamber has long been doing the bidding of large, multibillion-dollar corporations, by taking their money and donating to politicians who write policies to benefit big business. All the while, Swilley said the chamber claims to benefit all businesses, while supporting policies that make it harder for small businesses to thrive and contributing to a massive wealth gap.

"The new CEO of the chamber should com-

mit to working for the economic strength for the bottom 50% of our community, because that's where the small businesses are," Swilley told San José Spotlight. "I would like for the chamber to actually make sure that its policies help build the economic structures of our communities, and our small businesses. If you have an economic system where the regular people have enough, then everybody benefits."

Swilley said the chamber has shown the community what it stands for by previously spreading racist ads through its political arm, and by its continued opposition to measures to increase worker wages and hours, which he said would benefit San Jose businesses by giving residents more money to spend locally, but which have been staunchly opposed by large corporations.

"This is who they are, they will use anything they can for another dollar," Swilley said.

Silicon Valley Business PAC Director Victor Gomez, who previously led the chamber's political action committee before leaving to start his own in 2018, said he hopes Toeniskoetter isn't afraid to make enemies.

"You better be hated by some on the other side of the issues, because if you're not, then you're probably not doing your job," Gomez

told San José Spotlight.

Gomez added that even if the chamber decides not to revive its political action committee, the chamber itself needs to revive its advocacy and muscle.

"It's going to be very important for the chamber to show up to every single City Council meeting and Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors meeting, and for them to deliver a message that this business community is hurting right now and the city and county need to step up and take action," Gomez said.

Nicholas Adams becomes Chairman of the Board

The chamber also announced that **Nicholas Adams** (inset left), the chamber's vice chair who San José Spotlight reported was one of two finalists for the CEO role, has been elected chairman of the board. Adams is president and CEO of a public relations firm called NINICO Communications. Adams is a fourth generation San Josean. He has been involved with award-winning work for brands from Fortune 50 to local small businesses.

"It's an honor to be elected chairman of the board to serve an organization that has had a successful impact on my business and our region," says Mr. Adams. "I look forward to working with our board and my friend of over 15 years – Leah – to usher in a new chapter for the Chamber, putting our members first."

Contact Joseph Geha at joseph@sanjosespotlight.com or @josephgeha16 on Twitter.



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See page 11, and call 408-494-7000 for more information.

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Times **Local News**

'23 District 10 accomplishments

By Arjun Batra

It's truly remarkable how swiftly the year has passed. Serving as your councilmember has been an honor. I want to thank our community for attending in-person and on Zoom regularly scheduled Talk with Batra sessions to generously give their input, feedback and suggestions.

I wish to highlight some of our joint achievements that have defined our shared journey throughout this year.

Here are a few items we have accomplished together in 2023:

Public Safety

• **New Lights at Hoffman Via Monte**

Hoffman Via Monte is a Project Hope neighborhood that has long suffered from poor lighting conditions that contribute to public safety concerns. My office requested almost \$1M dollars in new and replacement lighting in the neighborhood through the Com-

munity Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. Broken into three separate projects, each project met all the grant criteria and were recently approved for grant funding! The projects are targeted to be completed by the end of 2024.

• **4th of July Celebrations with Fireworks Safety**

Fireworks handled incorrectly can be dangerous and even fatal – not to mention the threat of fire that can harm people and property. By hosting city-sponsored fireworks displays, neighborhoods can come together to safely celebrate the Fourth of July holiday, giving our fire and police departments the capacity to respond to other emergencies. In support of safely using fireworks, my request for \$150,000 was approved to support future 4th of July Fireworks Festivals at Almaden Lake Park.

• **Fraud Prevention Workshop**

Partnered with the Almaden Senior Association to host the first Fraud Prevention Workshop in District 10. It was a success and contained such important information for all ages that we plan to host it again in 2024.

• **Model for Police Complaints Investigations Selected**

San Jose City has been debating for three years the model it should use for investigations of complaints against police. It was again proposed that the selection of the model be delayed till a permanent IPA has been hired and is in place. However, CM Bien Doan and I advocated for choosing the model before appointing the new IPA, ensuring that the incoming individual is fully aware of and buys into the model and the responsibilities



District 10 Report
Arjun Batra
Councilmember,
District 10

right from the beginning of their tenure.

Traffic Safety

• **Safety Around Schools**

Worked with the community to have high visibility crosswalks installed at several locations including around Leland High School, Bret Harte Middle School, Los Paseos Elementary, and Martin Murphy Middle School.

• **Supporting Community Requests**

Other community-requested projects, like an enhanced crosswalk with flashing beacons at Camden & Graystone, a radar speed sign at Camden & Creekview, and the installation of speed humps on three residential streets are in the works! I have supported the use of cameras as a deterrent to speeding.

Homelessness & Housing
• **Good Neighbors**

I have tried to emphasize the need for striking a balance between maintaining order and expressing compassion, tackling safety concerns both for those within and outside interim housing and safe parking locations. I will continue to do so in 2024 with an eye toward utilizing every available avenue to enhance the successful transition of the unhoused into interim housing and from interim housing into permanent housing, while maintaining a clean and safe environment in the surrounding neighborhoods.

• **Piloting a high-tech solution**

Successfully requested District 10 be the location for the new Object Detection Pilot Program being run by the City's IT Department. Over the next few months, as the AI gets "trained" we should see quicker turnaround of services such as pothole repairs, graffiti removal, and illegal dumping removal along the pilot route, including Las Colinas Lane.

Convenience & Transparency
• **Transparency**

Requested and received approval for some internal process changes that have and will result in better understanding of staff memos and more informed decisions by your Council representatives.

• **Building Permit Relief**

Proposed to the Planning and Building Department ideas for streamlining the permitting process that were ultimately developed into the new Best Prepared Designer Program, which allows professionals who enroll in the program to take full responsibility for building code compliance, thus bypassing the Building Division's standard plan review process. Depending on the scope of the project, building permits can be issued in as few as three to five business days.

Constituent Service

• **Two-way communications**

The community's voice is of utmost importance to me. So, we created multiple avenues for the community to give us their input including the regularly scheduled Talk with Batra.

• **Clean-ups**

In addition to three Dumpster Days and a Shredding Day, we hosted the first ever District 10 eWaste event, honoring the requests for this service from several residents. With 60% or more of dumped items being recycled, we also helped extend the life of our current landfills, saving us all money in the long run while making more space in our homes!

• **Responsive Service**

Received and processed over 11,000 email requests sent to district10@san-joseca.gov since February 1, meeting our 72-hour first response Service Level Agreement (SLA) approximately 93% of the time, and our 14-day resolution SLA approximately 94% of the time.

These are just some of the things we saw improved in 2023.

As we look back, let us also look forward to working together to shape our path forward. Thank you for being an integral part of this journey.

I can't wait to see what we accomplish together in 2024!

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Valley Water

Times Local News



Priyanka Hegde

South New Hampshire University names Priyanka Hegde and Julissa Lee of Almaden to Fall '23 President's List

Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) announces that two Almaden Valley residents have been named to the Fall 2023 President's List. The fall terms run from September to December.

Full-time undergraduate students making the President's List from Almaden Valley include **Priyanka Hegde** and **Julissa Lee** (pictured above).

Hegde is a Business Major with Marketing and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Skills. Lee is a Business Administration major with office services expertise, with the goal of helping organizations thrive through efficient and client-focused operations.

Residents earning a minimum grade-point average of 3.700 and above for the reporting term are named to the President's List. Full-time status is achieved by earning 12 credits over each 16-week term or paired 8-week



Julissa Lee

terms grouped in fall, winter/spring, and summer.

Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) is a private, non-profit institution with a 91-year history of educating traditional-aged students and working adults. Now serving more than 225,000 learners worldwide, SNHU offers approximately 200 accredited undergraduate, graduate, and certificate programs, available online and on its 300-acre campus in Manchester, NH.

Valley Water Board of Directors appoints Nai Hsueh as 2024 chair

By Sean Eastwood
Times staff writer

Valley Water Board of Directors elected **Nai Hsueh** (pictured above), District 5 representative, as board chair in 2024. Richard Santos, representing District 3, was elected vice chair last week.

The board vote launches Director Hsueh's third tenure as chair. Director Hsueh served as board chair in 2013 and 2020.

Chair Hsueh, a registered civil engineer in California, worked at Valley Water for three decades. Chair Hsueh takes the leadership role as Valley Water faces challenges such as climate change,



Nai Hsueh

inflation, and aging infrastructure.

"We are here to do good things for the community," Hsueh said. "I see the role of the chair not as a person with more authority than other board members, but as the coordinator and doer for the board, working with everybody to make sure things happen. With a functional board, we will continue to be a high-performing organization, which will benefit the community."

Hsueh was first elected to the Valley Water Board of Directors in November 2012 to represent District 5, which includes the cities of Cupertino, Saratoga, areas of Sunnyvale and southwest San Jose. She was re-elected in 2016 and 2020.

Vice Chair Santos is embarking on his fourth tenure as Vice Chair, previously serving in 2004, 2009 and 2017. Vice Chair Santos, a retired firefighter and native of Alviso, represents District 3, which includes Alviso, Sunnyvale, Santa Clara, Milpitas and Berryessa/Alum Rock.

Immediately following the handing over of the gavel, board members praised outgoing chairperson John L. Varela for his leadership as Chair Pro Tem in 2022 and Chair in 2023. Director Varela's service was highlighted with a video featuring some of the agency's key achievements during his tenure as board chair.

San José Chamber Orchestra presents FANTASIA, February 11 at St. Francis Episcopal Church

San José Chamber Orchestra (SJCO) continues its 33rd concert season with FANTASIA in Willow Glen at St. Francis Episcopal Church on Sunday, February 11 at 3 p.m.

The program features the West Coast Premiere of conductor Alyssa Wang and soloists James Blanchard on flute and Matthieu Cognet on piano.

"SJCO is looking forward to conductor Alyssa Wang making her



SJCO debut with the program FANTASIA, featuring four unusual, yet complimentary musical works from two esteemed composers of the past and two composers of the present," said Music Director, Barbara Day Turner.

The evening promises to be uniquely satisfying and entertain-

ing." Music by Daniel Kidane, Germaine Tailleferre, Dobrinka Tabakova, and Benjamin Britten.

The Program

- Daniel Kidane: Be Still
- Germaine Tailleferre: Concertino for Flute, Piano and Strings featuring James Blanchard, flute and Matthieu Cognet, piano
- Dobrinka Tabakova: Fantasy Homage a Schubert
- Benjamin Britten: Young Apollo featuring Matthieu Cognet, piano

Tickets: Online: <https://sjco.org>
Phone: 408.295.4416; Box Office: sjcorch@gmail.com Tickets also available at the door Feb. 11, 2024.

SINGLE TICKET PRICES: \$15 to \$75: Adults: \$65/\$75; Seniors: \$55/\$65 (Age 62 and above); Students: \$15/\$25
Photo of conductor Alyssa Wang by Robert Torres.



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Times **In Memory**

Ellen Sharon (Erdman) Stout

May 9, 1941 - Oct. 29, 2023

Teacher at Los Alamitos Elementary School

Ellen Stout passed away peacefully on October 29, 2023, at the age of 82. She was born to Ellen and Edward Erdman on May 9, 1941 in Mellen, WI. Married to Bill Stout for 54 years. Ellen was a teacher at Los Alamitos Elementary. She is survived by her husband, Bill Stout; her sons: Andrew, Daniel, and Thomas; 10 grandchildren; and her brother Ethan Erdman. Service will be held on January 13, 2024, at 3pm at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Los Gatos, CA. More details at: www.legacy.com



Nancy Jo Witt

Dec. 16, 1950 - Jan. 1, 2024

Long time Bret Harte Middle School teacher

Nancy passed away on New Year's Day from complications related to type I diabetes. She was born in North Dakota. Nancy married Paul Witt in 1973.

Nancy received her bachelor's degree from Creighton University. After working as a Medical Technician in Boston and Detroit, she moved to Almaden, CA with her husband Paul in 1983 where she earned her teaching credentials at SJSU. She taught science for many years at Bret Harte Middle School.



She loved reading, sewing, knitting, bridge, and tending to her rose and dahlia gardens. She was known for sharing beautifully decorated holiday cookies & fudge and her involvement in the Almaden Women's Club and Assistance League.

Nancy is survived by her daughter Julie, grandson Bruce, and her siblings Sue (John) Foley, Jackie (Roel) Gallo, and Steve (Kathi) Pratschner.

She will be memorialized at Los Gatos Memorial Park in the spring. Please send donations in her memory to the Assistance League of San Jose.



John Malcolm Murray Jr.

February 7, 1954 - December 16, 2023

Helped improve and maintain Almaden Little League baseball fields

John Malcolm Murray Jr. was born on February 7, 1954, in Vancouver, British Columbia, to parents John and Dorothy Murray, and passed away at his home in San Jose, CA on December 16, 2023, at the age of 69. He was the third of five children and their first-born son. He was a cherished brother to Sue, Marilyn, David and Donald.

During his early years, he enjoyed playing baseball, surfing and crafting his golf game in Newport Beach, CA. He would become a scratch golfer and coach to many golfers in need of guidance.

John worked hard from an early age to eventually be a successful real estate broker, running his own brokerage in San Jose, CA where he would buy his first and only home in Almaden Valley. John worked in real estate for over 40 years and built a large community of friends and clients that he nurtured continuously by always going above and beyond in his role as a friend and broker. During this time, he met his best friend, work associate and golf partner, Ed Perkins.

He would marry his first wife, Eileen Brown in September of 1983 and took in her first-born son, Clinton Brown. Together, they would have two more sons, Brett and Shane Murray. John became their baseball coach, golf coach and life coach. He would do whatever it took to make sure that he was always there for them, and he was.

In October of 2002, John would marry his second wife, LeeAnn Schaeffer and extend his home to her and her two sons, Christopher Ales and Jeffrey Spicer. Their home would always be full of life, friends, and laughter, as they loved to host. Things they enjoyed doing as a family were cheering on the San Francisco Giants and San Jose Sharks, playing Texas Hold 'Em, barbecuing Tri-Tip steak dinners, and of course he loved cruising around on his Harley-Davidson.

John didn't only raise five fine young men, but many other people that regard him as a father figure. John took after his father in that he was always thinking about other people before himself. He took great pride in improving and maintaining the Almaden Little League baseball fields at no cost to the league. He would help improve his clients' homes by doing maintenance or landscaping all on his own to help increase the potential value.

He was a remarkable man, mentor, and most importantly, a caretaker. He will be greatly missed.

The Celebration of John Murray's Life was recently held at Cinnabar Hills Golf Course in San Jose, CA.

Almaden Times
SERVING ALMADEN VALLEY SINCE 1986 ■ ALMADENTIMES.COM

City leader scalini age of 101 SEE PAGE 6

ELECTION 2024 Here's who's running for San Jose City Council and mayor SEE PAGE 10

The Bay Area presents pianist Janice Carissa SEE PAGE 8

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NEWS

ment at School

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Four very important ways you can prepare for earthquakes in 2024

By Glenn Pomeroy
Special to the Times

No one knows exactly what 2024 will bring, but we all know that the Bay Area is earthquake country and that the next quake could strike at any time.

Did you know that California has more than 500 active faults and that most Californians live within 30 miles of an active fault?

The greater San Francisco Bay Area is sitting on top of three major faults and scientists say there is a 98% chance of a magnitude 6.0 or greater quake hitting the Bay Area in the future. Many of us remember the magnitude 6.9 Loma Prieta earthquake in 1989 that killed 63 people, injured thousands, and caused about \$6 billion in damage, including destroying parts of I-880 in Oakland and rendering the Bay Bridge unusable for about a month.

So, as we step into the New Year, one of the most important resolutions you can make is to help protect your family, your loved ones, and yourself from preventable earthquake damage.

Here are four things you can do to prepare this year.



Get Organized with an Emergency Safety Kit:

Create an easy-to-reach emergency kit with essentials for each family member – and your pets! The American Red Cross recommends a three-day supply of food and water, along with items such as medications, a cell phone charger, flashlights, a first aid kit, and a whistle for signaling help. These emergency supplies can make a big difference after an earthquake or

other emergency.

Strengthen Your House:

Take some time to learn about your home and understand its unique structural risks. Many older homes in the Bay Area – especially those built before 1980 – are at risk of earthquake damage because of outdated building codes.

And did you know that many homeowners in the Bay Area may be eligible for the Earthquake Brace + Bolt (EBB) grant program? EBB

offers up to \$3,000 to qualifying homeowners to help them strengthen their homes with a seismic retrofit. The program has helped more than 23,000 California homeowners strengthen their homes and help protect their families from earthquake damage. Registration for EBB opens January 10th – visit EarthquakeBraceAndBolt.com to learn more.

Different house styles may need different safety measures. Raised foundation homes, living space over garage homes, post and pier homes, hillside homes, and mobile/manufactured homes are all common types of houses throughout the Bay Area, and each has unique vulnerabilities. Visit StrengthenYourHouse.com to learn more about your home type and the specific retrofit you might need.

Create an Emergency Plan:

Communication is key during emergencies, especially because some family members may not be at home during an earthquake. Text messages may work better than phone calls during and after seismic events, so make sure everyone has emergency contact information saved on their phone, memorized, or written down. Practice your preparedness plan and keep copies in easy-to-reach locations. And make sure all family members know where the emergency sup-

plies are kept.

Secure Your Home:

Look around your home and identify anything that could be a risk if the ground starts to shake. During an earthquake, heavy furniture can topple over if it's not anchored and secured to studs. Move large, heavy items away from doors. Install flexible connections for gas lines and appliances to reduce fire risk. Brace overhead fixtures that could come crashing down and move beds away from windows. A lot of earthquake injuries are caused by household items and furniture falling and hitting people – taking simple precautions can reduce the risk of injury and help protect your family.

It is not a matter of if, but when the next big quake will strike the Bay Area. Make earthquake preparedness a priority this New Year. Organize supplies, create an emergency plan, secure your living space, and understand your home's structural risks. Prepare for the next earthquake now, and rest easier knowing you've taken concrete steps to protect your home and family for many New Years to come.

Editor's note: Glenn Pomeroy is CEO of California Earthquake Authority (CEA). Since 2008, Glenn Pomeroy has led the not-for-profit CEA—the largest earthquake insurance provider in the United States and one of the largest in the world.

Here's who's running for Santa Clara County supervisor

By Jana Kadah
San José Spotlight

In about two months, Santa Clara County residents will be asked to select a candidate in the primaries who can govern through a landmine of challenges over the next four years.

Three of five seats on the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors are up for election this year. Districts 2 and 5 are open contests, with current officeholders terming out, while in Districts 3 the incumbent is running unopposed. The primary is set for March 5, 2024.

The top two vote-getters in each race will head to a runoff in November, unless one candidate wins by more than 50% in March.

Here's a roundup of Santa Clara County candidates running in the primary:

District 2

With Supervisor **Cindy Chavez** terming out, there are five candidates seeking to fill her seat and represent the district centered in San Jose, which includes swaths of downtown and East San Jose.

Alum Rock Union School District board member **Corina Herrera-Loera's** No. 1 priority is inequity—particularly in East San Jose. Through her roles as county deputy juvenile probation officer for 18 years and current Alum Rock trustee, she's been able to address ongoing inequality while also advocating for youth to be connected to their identities.

Jennifer Celaya, founder of nonprofit New Beginnings, is a fresh face in a race full of politics and is running without the backing of special interests. She is a Native American woman with tattoos. Celaya is aware that's not what a typical elected official looks like, but is what people in her community look like, and she believes they deserve a voice. Her top priorities are expanding social services, mental health support and housing across the county.

Former San Jose Vice Mayor **Madison Nguyen** is a well-known politico looking to make a comeback. She began her career in public service as a Franklin-McKinley School District board member in 2002 and later became the first Vietnamese American San Jose councilmember in 2005 and vice mayor in 2011—serving on the council until 2014. Her goals are to increase affordable housing projects on county-owned land and tackle homelessness with more mental health, substance use and workforce development programs.

Betty Duong, Chavez's chief of staff, is also eyeing the seat after decades of work in the county. Duong worked in the county executive office for several years where she led the Vietnamese American Service Center project, the first of its kind in the nation. She was special counsel for the Vietnamese American Workers' Rights Project at Legal Aid at Work, and also the campaign manager for Measure A, an affordable housing bond measure that was approved by voters in 2016.

Nelson McElmurry is a practicing attorney and father of four who wants to advocate for county residents. The San Jose native's priorities include homelessness and affordable housing, mental health and crisis support, public safety and restorative justice, access to afford-



Numerous candidates are running for seats on the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors in 2024. File photo.

able child care and creating a business-friendly environment.

District 3

Incumbent Supervisor **Otto Lee** is running unopposed. He won his District 3 seat in 2020 on a platform of environmental activism, addressing homelessness and improving mental health care.

Lee's political career began in 1996 when he began serving on the Sunnyvale Planning Commission before being elected to the City Council in 2003 and serving a term as mayor.

Lee worked as an intellectual property attorney and served in the U.S. Navy for 28 years. He earned a bronze star for helping to lead the drawdown of U.S. troops in Iraq.

District 5

Supervisor **Joe Simitian** is terming out of his north Santa Clara County seat—which represents Cupertino, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Mountain View, Palo Alto, Saratoga, Stanford and por-

tions of Sunnyvale and San Jose. Five candidates are competing to replace him.

Mountain View Councilmember **Margaret Abe-Koga** is looking to continue her work at the regional level. Abe-Koga said she's most concerned with climate change and the needs for more mental health services. As supervisor, her priorities would be working with local cities to address those issues, as well as public safety and the housing and homelessness crisis.

Sally Lieber is a "corporate free candidate," according to her campaign site. Lieber was elected to the California State Board of Equalization in 2022 and currently serves as its chair. She also previously served on the Mountain View City Council and in the California Assembly. She said she has the experience and knowledge to focus on each of the county's policy areas: medical and mental health care, social services, environmental protection, homelessness and the criminal justice system—to name a few.

Barry Chang is a former Cupertino mayor and councilmember looking to serve at the county level. His priorities are traffic congestion, environmental protection, affordable child care, mental health services and senior services, according to his campaign site.

Peter C. Fung is a doctor and director of the El Camino Healthcare District. His priorities are mental health services, financial accountability and affordability for all. He said his work in the medical field equips him to solve some of the county's most pressing issues.

Sandy Sans is a business owner and father living in Los Altos. He is the founder of real estate business Los Altos Holdings Inc. Sans holds a master's degree in material science engineering from UCLA and an undergraduate degree from University of California, Davis.

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