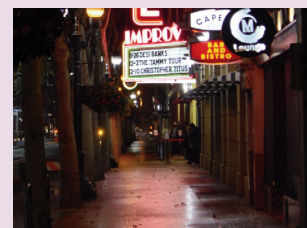


Máyyan 'Ooyákma - Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve to limit weekend visitor access **SEE PAGE 5**



COVID 19 fallout
The effects of the pandemic on students are far from over
— **SEE PAGE 4**

Mayor says San Jose is safest Bay Area city — not everyone agrees **SEE PAGE 9**



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MARCH 1 - 14, 2024 ■ VOL. 37, NO. 5

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San José Unified School District teams up with Bay Area Panthers to Enhance Community Engagement

Goal: Inspire the next generation of athletes

To kick off its partnership, the Bay Area Panthers have declared the March 31 game against the Arizona Rattlers as "San José Unified Day!"

The San José Unified School District (SJUSD) announced a new partnership with the Bay Area Panthers Feb. 15 to foster community engagement and promote youth involvement in sports.

As part of this collaboration, the Bay Area Panthers will offer three complimentary tickets to all members of the SJUSD community, allowing students, parents, teachers, and staff to experience the thrill of indoor football firsthand.

To kick off this partnership, the Bay Area Panthers have declared the March 31 game against the Arizona Rattlers as "San José Unified Day," marking a special occasion for the District's community to come together and celebrate.

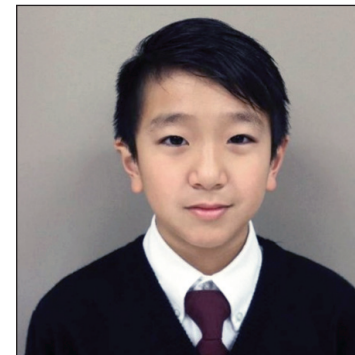
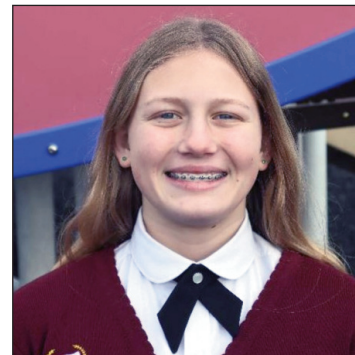


"We are excited to collaborate with the Bay Area Panthers to highlight the potential benefits of sports for our youth," expressed Nancy Albarrán, Superintendent of San José Unified School District. "This partnership underscores our recognition of the diverse impacts sports can have on our students, both academically and personally."

The Bay Area Panthers will seek

to repeat as Indoor Football League (IFL) champions in 2024. Featuring fast-paced and high-scoring action, the IFL is the world's premier indoor football league. Playing at the SAP Center in downtown San José, the Panthers games are always exciting, family-friendly affairs. As the franchise continues to build, the team has recognized

See **PANTHERS**, page 3



Alice Harper (left) and Matt Liu are the NSDAR American History Essay Contest award winners.

Almaden students win awards for essays hosted by Los Gatos National Society Daughters of the American Revolution

By **William Bellou**
Publisher

Two Almaden students have won awards at the American History Essay contest hosted by the Los Gatos Chapter of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution.

NSDAR American History Essay Contest award winners are Alice Harper (8th grade) and Matt Liu (5th grade).

Pam Walker, American History Essay Contest Committee Chairperson of the Los Gatos Chapter NSDAR, coordinated the contest.

"On May 14, 1897, John Philip Sousa played his new march, The Stars and Stripes Forever. The song would become the national march of the United States on December 11, 1987."

The essay question that was posed to the students this year was: "Imagine you are a newspaper reporter for the Philadelphia Times. Your newspaper editor has asked you to write an article about the new song performed that day. Your article needs to talk about Sousa's life and the story behind the song. It is the first performance of the song so make sure your article includes thoughts about the music and how the audience reacts to what was seen and heard that day."

The purpose of the NSDAR American History Committee is to pro-

mote American History by honoring significant historical people, places, dates and events. All grade five, six, seven and eight students in a public, private, or parochial school or those who are home schooled are eligible to participate in the essay contest. The contest is conducted without regard to race, religion, sex or national origin.

"We are honored to recognize the accomplishments of these fine people." Said Chapter Regent, Sue Ross.

About the NSDAR

The National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) is a women's service organization whose members can trace their lineage to an individual who contributed to securing American independence during the Revolutionary War. Today's DAR is dynamic and diverse, with more than 185,000 members in 3,000 chapters in the United States and abroad. DAR members annually provide millions of hours of volunteer service to their local communities across the country and the world. DAR chapters participate in projects to promote historic preservation, education, and patriotism. More than one million members have joined the organization since its founding in 1890.

For more information in learning more about DAR membership, visit losgatosmembers.californiadar.org



San Jose City Councilmembers spearhead negotiations to reopen of Raging Waters in Evergreen Valley. File photo.

Evergreen Valley's Raging Waters expected to reopen this summer

By **William Bellou**
Publisher

Water park enthusiasts may soon rejoice and cool off again this summer with the likely return of Raging Waters.

The San Jose City Council will vote on Feb. 27 to approve California Dreamin' Entertainment as the water park's new operator for the 2024 season. If passed, the park, located in Evergreen Valley, will

See **RAGING WATERS**, 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**

Panthers

Continued from page 1

the parallel impact the players and coaches can have in supporting our local community.

"The best thing about sports is the sense of community and shared emotion that it can create. We have built a great roster for the 2024 season, and a big part of our building process has been focusing on community-driven players," said Rob Keefe, Panthers Head Coach. We could not be more excited than to have our players and staff members experience the wonderful Bay Area by volunteering, engaging, and serving in the community.

The partnership between SJUSD and the

Bay Area Panthers underscores the importance of community engagement and the positive impact that sports can have on young people. In addition to providing complimentary tickets, the Bay Area Panthers will be engaging with students at SJUSD's schools throughout the 2024 spring term to mentor the students on the importance of doing well in school, leading a healthy lifestyle, teamwork, and dedication.

"The Panthers are committed to the city of San José and supporting youth initiatives," team President Yosup Shim commented. "We embrace that our Bay Area fans expect excellence on and off the field. Our organization looks forward to working with SJUSD to broaden our outreach in San José. Rise with us."



Raging Waters

Continued from page 1

welcome back visitors when warm weather returns in a couple of months.

The City of San Jose considered four companies seriously for the park's lease, and chose California Dreamin' Entertainment, which also operates a similar water park in Sacramento, to run Raging Waters until September 2025. The new operator plans to invest millions into the park for renovations, including food trucks and an outdoor wine garden. The city will take in 6% of its gross revenue which will be used to revitalize Lake Cunningham.

The iconic waterpark shuttered its operations last September when park operator Palace Entertainment terminated its 20-year lease with the city.

Councilmembers Peter Ortiz and Domingo Candelas said the proposal to bring back the water park is a win for San Jose, not only

to maintain an important revenue stream for the city, but also to provide needed jobs in the area.

"Keeping the park open gives our young people a work opportunity that a lot of times they don't often have," Candelas said.

Candelas, who represents District 8, grew up going to Raging Waters. He said the wave pool was his favorite part of the park.

The 23-acre theme park houses 14 water slides and a 350,000-gallon wave pool which are in mostly good condition. The water park secured its first park manager from a response from a classified ad that appeared in the Evergreen Times in early 1985.

Raging Waters was the only theme park in the South Bay besides Great America, which is scheduled to close by 2035. Cedar Fair Entertainment Company, which owns California's Great America in Santa Clara, sold the property for \$310 million to San Francisco-based Prologis, a national real estate firm.

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The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on students—are far from over

By Mark Washbush

It may be 2024 but learning delays and regressions—the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on students—are far from over. The last few years negatively impacted students’ academic and emotional growth so much that the effects will most likely be felt for years to come as students fall further and further behind.

From closed schools to remote learning and quarantines, collectively, we are now reckoning with COVID’S legacy. From the very beginning, young people reportedly experienced elevated levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and disconnection which has lingering effects today not only socially and emotionally—but academically as well. Global and national statistics bear this out with the average public-school student losing the equivalent of a half year of learning in math and a quarter of a year in reading.

Sadly, rates are even higher for minority students and those that are economically disadvantaged,

pushing the disparity between these students even farther. It could take at least four years for student achievement to return to pre-pandemic levels, according to a recent analysis by scholars from Harvard University and Stanford University. It’s clear, we need to be doing more to address this troubling reality. So where do we even begin?

Every school needs high-quality after-school enrichment programming

Participation in programs that start after school ends help students improve their attendance, school performance, self-confidence, and emotional wellness while decreasing disciplinary incidents. The Promising Afterschool Programs Study, a study of approximately 3,000 low-income, ethnically diverse elementary and middle school students, found that those who regularly attended high-quality programs over two years demonstrated gains of up to 20 percent and 12 percent in standardized math test scores respectively, compared to their peers who were routinely unsupervised during the afterschool hours. As educators, parents, and community members, we owe it to these students to continue to advocate for them and



left without after school options is rising. According to the Afterschool Alliance, as many as 24.6 million children do not have access to an after-school program due to cost, lack of transportation, or lack of available programming.

There are so many things left open-ended or unresolved after the pandemic, and for many years to come

we probably won’t fully understand the magnitude of what we—and especially our young people—experienced during COVID. But that doesn’t mean we can’t do something to support students now. We owe it to our children to close the opportunity gap to achieve greater economic, political, and social equity among youth and the communities in which they live, ensuring that we as a community realize the effects of COVID-19 are ongoing and ensure we are proactive about programs that assist with their education, their life, and their future. We need to invest in after-school programs and ensure these students have our support. After all, students of today are the future of tomorrow.

Mark Washbush is Chief Operating Officer of Boys & Girls Clubs of Silicon Valley.



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Trips and Events: Tickets on sale M,W,F 8am to 10am in the Almaden Community Center Lobby.

Graton Casino: Tues., March 19, Price: \$50. \$20 back in Free Play
Come with us to **Graton Casino** by bus for a day of gaming. Depart at 8AM from the Almaden Community Center and return around 6:30pm. For more information call Rich at 408-219-8641

Event:

St Patricks Day: Saturday, March 16th, 2024 12pm-3pm
Come celebrate St. Patrick’s Day at noon with lunch including corned beef, cabbage, carrots, chicken, potatoes, green salad, coleslaw, rolls, dessert and punch. Entertainment will be Bagpipes and drums by members of local pipe bands. Prices \$22.00 members \$25.00 non-members, Check or cash. For more information call Jeanne at 408-425-5723.

For more information, go to <https://almadenseniors.org>

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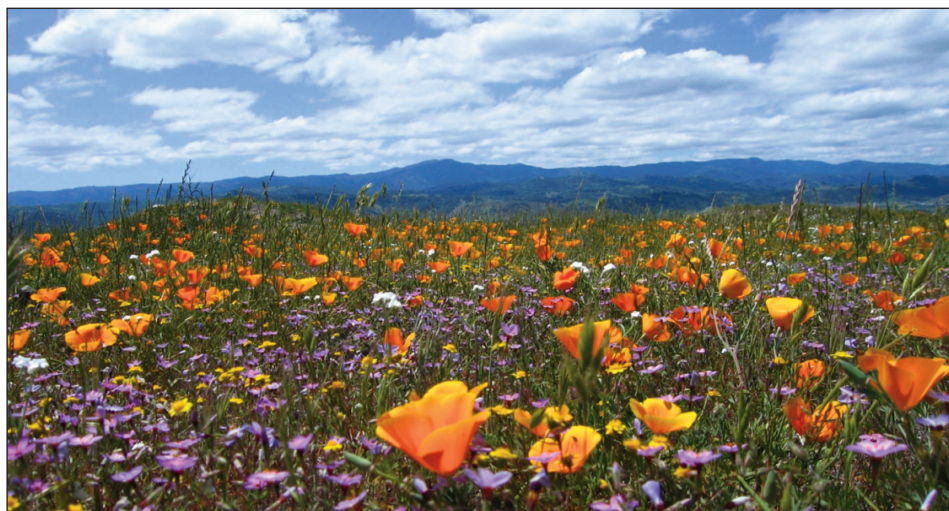
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Times **Local News**



POPPY'S GALORE - Máyyan 'Ooyákma - Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve must be docent-led and registration will be required beginning March 2, 2024 on weekends due to limited space.

Máyyan 'Ooyákma - Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve to limit weekend visitor access

By Sean Eastwood
Times staff writer

Beginning March 2, 2024, all Saturday and Sunday visits to the Máyyan 'Ooyákma - Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve (pronounced My-yahn Oiy-yahkmah) must be docent-led and registration will be required due to limited space. This change only applies to weekend visitors; all other access remains unchanged.

A Butterfly Pass is still required year-round to access the trails inside the Habitat Protection Area. Wednesday through Friday, visitors with a Butterfly Pass may access the Habitat Protection Zone without a docent. (The Preserve is closed Mondays and Tuesdays year-round for scientific research and management.)

Multiple docent-led hikes ranging in distance from a quarter mile to five miles will be offered throughout the day on Saturdays and Sundays. On these hikes, visitors will experience the unique habitat and learn about the rare and threatened species that thrive there, including the Bay checkerspot butterfly. Visitors will also learn how they can play a role in protecting the landscape and the wildlife that live at the Preserve.

Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve connects over 1 million acres of important habitat in the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Diablo Range. The preserve is comprised of rare, sensitive serpentine grasslands, this unique landscape is a biodiversity hotspot for endangered plants and animals.

Salary Sacrifice: Average Californian prepared to forgo \$13.7k of their salary not to have to commute in 2024

By Sean Eastwood
Times Media staff writer

As the corporate world inches back to traditional workspaces, the welcome 3-year respite from daily commutes, courtesy of the pandemic, is under threat.

The once-undeniable perk of skipping the daily commute - a timesaver and stress reducer for many - is now at stake.

According to research, the average American devotes an astonishing 330 hours each year to commuting, time that could be spent on personal pursuits or with family. With this backdrop, Gunther Volvo Cars Coconut Creek launched a study to understand how much employees value their work-from-home (WFH) arrangement and their aversion to resuming the commute.

Surveying 3,000 employees currently working remotely but facing requests to return to the office, either full-time or in a hybrid model, the study posed a straightforward question: 'How much of your salary would you sacrifice to avoid commuting in 2024?'

Regional data paints an even more colorful picture of this trend. Californians, dealing with the double whammy of long commutes

and enticing paychecks, are leading the charge. They're game to let go of a hearty \$13,759 per year to keep their home coffee brews and casual work attire. They are followed closely by residents of Washington and Utah, willing to let go of \$13,017 and \$12,843, respectively.

On the other end of the scale, Montanans appear quite happy to commute again - here they would be prepared to take a salary cut of just \$429 in order to continue working from home.

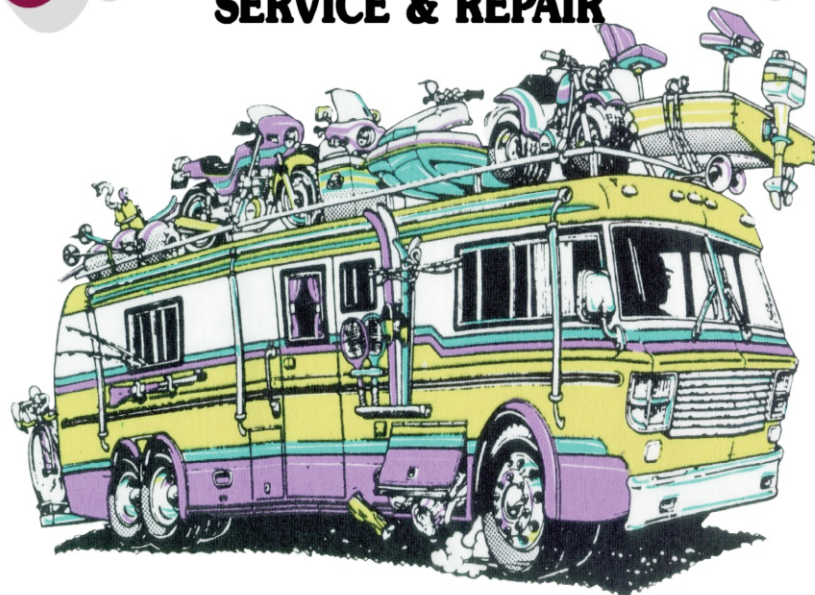
"The results of our survey highlight a shift in priorities. Employees have had a taste of what a commute-free life can be like, and they're placing a substantial value on that flexibility and time saved", says Joseph Gunther IV of Gunther Volvo Cars Coconut Creek. "As we navigate forward, it's important for companies to consider these preferences as part of their strategic planning."

Top 10 States Where Workers Would Sacrifice the Most Salary to Avoid the Commute:

- California: \$13,759
- Washington: \$13,017
- Utah: \$12,843
- New York: \$12,693
- Colorado: \$12,631
- Maryland: \$12,157
- Massachusetts: \$11,951
- New Jersey: \$11,414
- Louisiana: \$11,189
- Rhode Island: \$11,107

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Times **Local News**

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority embraces the future with a new fleet of hybrid buses



The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (SCVTA) is excited to announce the arrival of the first two of 92 state-of-the-art hybrid buses equipped with the revolutionary Allison eGen Flex Hybrid System.

VTA anticipates a steady delivery rate of six buses per week starting this week. The complete fleet is expected to be operational in the coming month as VTA decommissions most of its remaining diesel buses. Each new Hybrid bus has a price tag of roughly \$822,800.

The Allison eGen Flex Hybrid System allows these buses to operate in an all-electric mode for up to 10 miles, significantly reducing emissions and noise in sensitive areas. This system not only enables the buses to operate accessories such as air conditioning and heating more efficiently but also improves fuel economy by up to 25% compared to conventional diesel buses.

Key Features of the New Hybrid Buses:

- Equipped with the Allison eGen Flex Hybrid System for low emis-

sions and fuel efficiency.

- Enhanced passenger experience with a 36-passenger seat layout, USB mobile charging ports, and innovative wireless Stop Request Buttons.

- Reduced maintenance costs and downtime through the elimination of inefficient belt-driven accessories and electric hybrid regenerative

braking.

With these new hybrid buses, VTA is set to offer its passengers a quieter, cleaner, and more efficient public transportation option.

As VTA moves forward with this exciting transition, the authority invites the community to join in celebrating this milestone towards a cleaner, greener future. Stay tuned

for updates on the rollout and the positive impacts these buses will have on public transportation in Santa Clara County.

San Jose preps plan to rework and improve one of its most dangerous roads – King Road

By Annalise Freimarck
San José Spotlight

One of San Jose's most dangerous roads is gearing up for a major upgrade.

King Road, a six-mile street bounded by Berryessa Road to the north and East Capitol Expressway to the south, is slated for improvements. The city's transportation department is finalizing a plan that targets safety and traffic flow. From 2018 to 2023, eight people, including an infant, were killed on King Road and 21 were seriously injured due to collisions from 2018 to 2022, according to city data.

Rosie Lopez, manager of medical clinic Milagros de México, located at the intersection of Story Road and King Road, said the street needs more safety features to address its danger.

"(Drivers) don't keep their distance," she told San José Spotlight. "There's no safety."

The plan — funded with more than \$399,000 from a Caltrans grant and more than \$51,700 from the city — will be a collaboration between San Jose and Vision Zero, a program aimed at reducing and ending traffic injuries and fatalities. The draft includes improvements for the entire street, such as a median at some sections of the road, a bus and emergency vehicle-only lane and more crosswalks. The average distance between crosswalks is roughly 1,000 feet, Project Manager Wilson Tam said, which is about a five-minute walk.

The city began working out the
See KING ROAD, page 8

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Times Local News



Saratoga Symphony presents free concert: 'The Scent Of Fresh Snow' March 10

By William Bellou
Publisher

Enjoy a free orchestra concert of classical music with beautiful melodies and exciting rhythms presented by the Saratoga Symphony on Sunday, March 10 starting at 3 p.m. at West Valley Presbyterian Church in Cupertino.

Two music program pieces, including a Ballet Waltz,

have snow in their titles, and they support this with their music sounds and moods.

The Sibelius Symphony is an expressive musical piece, representing the Romantic Music Period. This concert features a piano concerto performed with virtuosity by Jason Chiu as soloist. He has received many awards with his active teaching and performance career.

Conductor Dr. Jason Klein talks to the audience about each program piece before it is performed, adding an educational experience to the concert.

DATE & TIME: Sunday, March 10, at 3:00 pm

Editor's note: West Valley Presbyterian Church is located at 6191 Bollinger Road in Cupertino, CA 95014. For more information, visit: www.saratogasympphony.org/concerts Donations appreciated. NO ticket or reservation needed. Open seating in church.

San Jose sets fines for catalytic converter thefts

By Jana Kadah

Reported thefts of catalytic converters are trending down in San Jose, and city officials are strengthening policies to ensure that thefts keep dropping.

The San Jose City Council unanimously approved a policy that makes it a misdemeanor to possess a catalytic converter that is not attached to a vehicle without proper documentation, punishable by up to six months in jail and \$1,000 per violation Feb. 6. Mayor Matt Mahan and Councilmember Arjun Batra were absent.

Proper documentation includes the bill of sale for the converter or photos of the car that housed the converter. Body shops must provide documentation that the owner of the converter relinquished it.

Catalytic converters control vehicle emissions of harmful gasses from going into the environment. Thefts of those converters have surged nationwide in recent years because the precious metals in the converters — including platinum, rhodium and palladium — make them lucrative to steal and sell, garnering between \$250 to \$800 apiece.

San Jose Police Department officials said in 2023 the number of stolen catalytic converters dropped to 836 compared to 1,843 the year before. But the financial burdens on victims remain significant. Depending on insurance coverage, replacing a catalytic converter can range from \$1,000 to \$3,000.

"The cost of replacing a catalytic converter is beyond reasonable for any working-class person," Councilmember Peter Ortiz said. "To that end, the goal of our policy is to send a clear message to thieves: if you steal from the working class, we will come down on you with the full force of the law."

Thieves stole more than 240,000 catalytic converters across the country in 2022 — a 288% increase from 2021, according to the latest data by the National Insurance Crime Bureau. California was overrep-



The San Jose City Council approved a policy making it a misdemeanor to possess a catalytic converter that is not attached to a vehicle without proper documentation. Photo courtesy of San Jose Police Department.

resented, making up 37% of all catalytic converter thefts across the nation.

SJPD Lt. Brent McKim, who heads the financial crimes unit, said San Jose residents have spent approximately \$4 million to replace stolen catalytic converters over the past three years.

"That doesn't even account for the lost wages, when a family is without their vehicle for days or weeks while their car is in the shop," McKinnon said. "This indiscriminate crime extends across virtually every neighborhood, impacting residents' livelihoods. In the worst cases, victims have been physically harmed or killed attempting to stop the crime."

Prior to this policy, SJPD could only arrest or fine someone if they were caught in the act of stealing a catalytic converter.

SJPD also created a program that would etch an ID number on residents' catalytic converters for free so if someone tried to sell it it could be identified if found. However, the program failed to take off — rendering it ineffective. In 2022 and 2023, only 435 residents used the etching services, according to police.

In November, officers stopped a stolen vehicle containing 14 stolen catalytic converters — none of which were etched with an ID number, McKim said.

The fine for each undocumented catalytic converter is \$1,000 for the first offense, \$2,000 for second offense and \$4,000 for third and subsequent offenses in a 12-month period.

"Though we hope by this point, the thief would've gotten the message," McKim said.



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Times **Local News**

10,000 DEGREES partners with the Shark's Foundation and Tech CU to support college success program

\$25,000 grant to fund 'Money Matters: Budgeting for College' program designed for San Jose Students

The Sharks Foundation and Tech CU award 10,000 Degrees with a \$25,000 education grant.

10,000 Degrees, an organization dedicated to empowering students to enter and graduate college in eight Bay Area counties and Utah, has received a \$25,000 grant from the Sharks Foundation and Tech CU to help support the organization's 'Money Matters: Budgeting For College' program for San Jose students.

'Money Matters' is an interactive financial aid literacy curriculum designed by 10,000 Degrees to help high school students from low-income backgrounds learn about college affordability to develop and achieve their postsecondary goals.

The Sharks Foundation and Tech CU \$25,000 Community Assist Grant will help fund the 10,000 Degrees 'Money



Matters' program for the 2023 - 2024 academic year. Additionally, the Sharks Foundation and Tech CU will engage 10,000 Degrees students by volunteering in upcoming

'Money Matters' workshops at 10,000 Degrees partner high schools in San Jose's East Side Union High School District (ESUHS).

"10,000 Degrees is incredibly grateful for the support we have received from the Sharks Foundation and Tech CU, and for their commitment to our students and programming," said Kim Mazzuca, 10,000 Degrees president and CEO. "At 10,000 Degrees, our goal is to help students enter and graduate college. However, transitioning from high school to college is not easy for many students, particularly for first-generation college students or students who have been historically underserved."

"The Sharks Foundation is committed to closing the educational equity gap for low-income students in the Bay Area, particularly in East San Jose, through our organizational objective to put Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging at the forefront of all we do," said Jenné Johnson, Sharks Foundation senior manager. "The 'Money Matters' program is an essential tool for high school students to adequately prepare for managing their money through and after college and set them up for success for a lifetime of responsible spending."

Almaden Times
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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

NEWS

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King Road

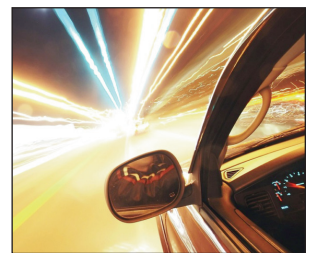
Continued from page 6
plan in December 2022, and officials have heard from more than 500 community members during public meetings. The plan is expected to be finalized in April before heading to the San Jose City Council for approval.

There's no set start date — as the city will need to secure environmental clearance and begin the civil engineering process. Those steps will take roughly two to three years if all goes according to plan, and construction will begin shortly after. Tam said the project will create transformative change, rather than quick fixes, which the city will apply in the interim to increase safety before the project breaks ground.

"It's not just about building more crosswalks or better signals at the intersections, but more about how we can improve transit reliability," Tam told San José Spotlight.

Roads intersecting King also have a high number of collisions ending in fatalities or serious injuries, according to city data from 2018 to 2022. Story Road had 11 fatalities and 42 serious injuries, Tully Road had 14 deaths and 39 serious injuries and Capitol Expressway had 12 deaths and 45 serious injuries. Last year, San Jose scored \$12.9 million to add safety improvements to four corridors.

Cindy Liu, owner of Yami Bowl, a restaurant near King



Road's northern end, said she is concerned how future construction will affect her business. She opened a few months ago and said other construction in the area already directs potential customers away.

"I don't really want to see that, but if you can do just a one-time finish, it's OK," she told San José Spotlight. "It depends how long it's going to be."

Councilmember Domingo Candelas represents District 8, which includes parts of King Road. He said the city will take into account the concerns of small business owners and try to keep the effects of construction minimal.

He said while residents wait for the improvements, they need to be mindful of their driving, including their speed.

"It takes all of us to create safer communities," Candelas told San José Spotlight. "When we're in a rush to get to a meeting, that may come at a cost and that cost may be very heavy."

The city is hosting a meeting on Feb. 26 from 5:30-6:30 p.m. at 625 S. Sunset Ave, room 2 in San Jose for residents to voice their opinions on the King Road plan. A full list of upcoming meetings can be found on the project's website.

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Times **Local News**

Mayor says San Jose is safest Bay Area city — not everyone agrees

By Brandon Pho
San José Spotlight

The mayor of San Jose recently made a sweeping declaration online about his city's safety record.

Mayor Matt Mahan's office calculated that San Jose boasted the lowest homicides per capita compared to Oakland and San Francisco in 2023. His office used state population data and reporting by NBC Bay Area, which attributed its crime statistics to the San Jose Police Department. The mayor hailed San Jose police for solving 100% of homicide cases between 2021 and 2022.

But not everyone feels this makes San Jose the safest, nor is it a proper barometer for community safety. Community leaders say there are other areas affecting safety where San Jose falls behind, such as traffic fatalities and economic hardship.

Margaret Petros, executive director of the Silicon Valley nonprofit Mothers Against Murder, advocates for families of homicide victims — but said public safety is more complex than

that. "Every other day I read a press release from the San Jose Police Department about traffic fatalities," Petros told San José Spotlight.

"Hit and runs, DUIs — how many of these auto fatalities are victims of crimes?" Petros told San José Spotlight. "What types of services have been provided to their families? I bang my head on brick walls about this."

Jose Valle, who was formerly incarcerated and works with community organizing group Silicon Valley De-Bug, said criminal activity often arises from economic hardship and questions how Mahan's safest city declaration reconciles with his push to expand the city's police force.

"Looks like we're doing good. So should we spend more on the police or should we invest more on trying to solve some of the social ills in our city?" Valle told San José Spotlight.

Despite the City's recent efforts, San Jose, a city with roughly 1 million residents, still has one of the smallest police departments of any major U.S. city. The short-staffed police department had 1,063 sworn officers as of August last year, according to the department, including 24 recruits in field training and 41 recruits in academy training.

Tom Saggau, a spokesperson for the San Jose Police Officers' Association, said low homicide rates don't eliminate the need for more officers.

"Homicides ticking down has absolutely zero to do with whether or

not there are enough officers to respond to calls appropriately. That's not a fair assessment on staffing," Saggau told San José Spotlight.

He said a better indication of safety in San Jose — and police department hiring needs — is 911 response time.

Saggau pointed to the department's current performance in responding to priority 2 calls, which deal with injury or property damage, as well as all missing children under the age of 12 and disabled people. The goal for

priority 2 calls is to achieve a response time of 11 minutes or under. The department has averaged more than 20 minutes on those calls, according to San Jose's annual report on city services.

He also said some homicides that happen within a home setting, such as a domestic disturbance, can't be prevented by an increased police force.

"You could have a cop on every street corner — that's not going to pre-

vent that crime," Saggau told San José Spotlight.

"Our officers work day and night to protect our neighbors from all threats — whether it be theft, assault, domestic violence, drug possession or child abuse, and we can always do better," Mahan told San José Spotlight. "Hiring more police officers will give our department more bandwidth to solve crime, keep our residents safe and reduce response times when every second counts."

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Eugene Brancoveanu as Rigoletto and Melissa Sondhi as Gilda in Opera San José's production of "Rigoletto," at San Jose's California Theatre February 17-March 3, 2023. Photo credit: David Allen

Opera San José presents Verdi's timeless tragedy: Rigoletto February 17 – March 3, 2024

By William Bellou
Publisher

Opera San José's 40th anniversary season continues with a thrilling production of Verdi's *Rigoletto* at San Jose's California Theatre, February 17-March 3.

Boasting some of opera's most memorable music, including the signature aria "La donna è mobile," this gripping work follows the jester Rigoletto, his innocent daughter Gilda, and the corrupt Duke of Mantua whose callous treatment of women launches a storm of vengeance, murder, and tragic self-sacrifice.

The production will feature an exciting roster of talented singers, including OSJ favorite, baritone Eugene Brancoveanu in the title role of Rigoletto*. Soprano Melissa Sondhi, Opera San José's Wadhvani Artist-

in-Resident who starred earlier this season as Juliet in OSJ's *Romeo and Juliet*, returns in the role of Gilda, and tenor Edward Graves, recently seen as Gastone in San Francisco Opera's *La traviata*, makes his OSJ debut as the Duke of Mantua*. (* The 2pm, Sunday, Feb. 18 performance will feature baritone Robert Balonek as Rigoletto and tenor WooYoung Yoon as the Duke of Mantua.)

The production is led by visionary director Dan Wallace Miller, acclaimed for his work with Seattle Opera and other national companies, while Jorge Parodi guest conducts for the South Bay opera company – both making their OSJ debuts.

For more information or to purchase tickets (\$55-\$195), the public can visit operasj.org or call 408-437-4450 (open Monday through Friday, 9:00am-5:00pm).

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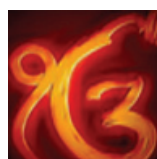


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