

Coyote Ridge
Open Space Pre-
serve to limit week-
end visitor access
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Health crisis addressed
Senator Cortese introduces bill to
address California's growing mental
health crisis – **SEE PAGE 7**

San Jose Youth
Symphony to hold
auditions for the
2024-25 Season
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Evergreen Times

MARCH 8-21, 2024 ■ VOL. 41, NO. 6

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Student builds a movement for community impact fusing service innovation and youth empowerment

iCatalyst Foundation works to amplify positive community impact

By William Bellou
Publisher

In an inspiring showcase of altruism, innovation, and youth leadership, Ishaan Mandala, a Silver Creek High School sophomore and an active member of the Santa Clara County Water District Youth Commission, is not only making waves through volunteer efforts but has also initiated a charitable organization, the iCatalyst Foundation.

Ishaan's commitment to community service is evident in his multifaceted initiatives, including teaching science and conducting workshops for children in local shelters.

"As a highly motivated sophomore, I am dedicated to philanthropy, actively leading initiatives through the iCatalyst Foundation to address community needs," Ishaan said. "Simultaneously, my passion for medicine drives me to engage in diverse research projects, aiming to enrich my critical thinking and research skills with the goal of making a lasting impact on healthcare and scientific discovery."

Beyond academic instruction,



Ishaan Mandala, a Silver Creek High School sophomore, began the iCatalyst Foundation.

Ishaan spearheads initiatives to prepare and deliver monthly meal bags, providing educational support and sustenance to those in need.

Compassion for seniors

Dedicated to inclusivity, Ishaan extends his compassion to the senior community, particularly those grappling with Alzheimer's disease. Through the Art for Seniors program, he imparts artistic experiences and brings joy and companionship to seniors facing isolation.

"Ishaan is a dedicated and compassionate youth volunteer deeply focused on fundraising initiatives to support the less fortunate," said

Founder of Seva Commons Foundation. "His passionate commitment shines through as he tirelessly serves the community by conducting science workshops and sustenance to those in need, demonstrating a genuine and heartfelt dedication to making a positive impact."

Valley Water Commission

As a dynamic Valley Water Youth Commission member, Ishaan always tries to bring a fresh perspective to critical water-related issues. His involvement in projects to generate water from the atmosphere reflects a commitment to sustainable

See MANDALA, page 3



Science Fair for 2024 attracts more than 700 students

ESUHSD celebrates STEMpalooza!

By William Bellou
Publisher

STEMpalooza! is an annual science fair competition where students present their science ingenuity with a display of months-long projects, showcase science principles through demonstrations, and showcase projects of interest.

The goal of STEMpalooza! is to provide a platform for all East Side Union High School District students to engage in authentic research in the areas of science, engineering, mathematics, and computer science and to showcase their passion for STEM. More than 700 students were in attendance at 2024's STEMpalooza! on February 10.

Leading up to the event, students work with teacher advisors to develop a project in one of six categories: 1) Climate Change / Air Quality / Sustainability 2) Computer Science, 3) Data Analysis, 4) Engineering, 5) Life Science, and 6) Physical Science. At the fair, students had the ability to highlight the science and technical skills gained throughout their project development while also fostering their critical

thinking, writing, communication, and collaboration skills.

The lead organizers for the event were Vanessa Vitug, ESUHSD's Science Coordinator, Lawrence Yee, ESUHSD's Math Coordinator, along with Raquel Ornelas (Retired Counselor), and Debra Dimas, Physics Teacher at ESUHSD. The event was also aided in large part by the teacher coaches who worked directly with students and the judges that came out to the competition to rate student projects.

Vanessa Vitug, ESUHSD's Science Coordinator was the District's lead for the event and shared, "STEMpalooza is a forum to celebrate the diversity of our East Side student's abilities and their passion for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). For many students, this may be the first time they have participated in a STEM competition. For others, this is their practice ground for other STEM fairs. STEMpalooza is a space for all students of all abilities to participate in STEM competitions and demonstrations. I am very proud of our East Side students, their teachers, and our partners for participating in this year's STEMpalooza!"

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'Joy of Giving': Alum pastor won't stop until he's raised \$1 million to fund scholarship endowment

By Pressley Peters
Special to the Times

California pastor John Goldstein '75 M.Div. is encouraging his congregation to support Yale Divinity School students by giving to an endowed fund he and his wife, Judith, created.

Inspired to support those who bring their passion and insights to life ministry—especially those least likely to be able to afford the education—Rev. Goldstein hopes the fund will train pastors for generations to come.

John Goldstein is senior pastor of Grace Church of Evergreen, located on Aborn Rd. In addition to his YDS degree, he has a B.A. from Case



John Goldstein and his wife, Judith. Photo by Ian Christmann

See JOY OF GIVING, page 3

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Times **Community News**

Joy of Giving

Continued from page 1

Western Reserve and has pursued advanced clinical pastoral education at St. Raphael Hospital in New Haven and Yuma Regional Medical Center in Yuma, Ariz.

What inspired you to raise \$1 million from alums and supporters toward YDS scholarships?

Judith and I established an endowed fund to help train pastors because pastors are needed in our world. Pastors are the spiritual leaders who help us build healthier and better lives. Pastors are prophets and preachers, servants and teachers, scholars and entrepreneurial innovators filled with a love and passion for ministry. There is much anger and discontent today, and society needs pastors to help us come together in friendly ways where we can learn from each other.

We chose to endow scholarships because we believe the ministerial commitment and call is where pastors must focus, not on tuition.

Why is the John S. Goldstein '75 M.Div. & Judith Goldstein Endowed Yale Divinity Scholarship the way to help future church leaders?

First, this is an endowment fund. The principal never gets touched. It's one gift you can make that gives forever to future generations. Second, Yale Divinity School is at the forefront of pastoral leadership development. YDS has a tradition of training from many denominational backgrounds, and they help grow leaders who will serve all people and all traditions.

God is always raising up leaders to be heard, and it's wonderful to have seminaries that aren't tied to an autocracy or a political cause. A seminary like Yale gives broader freedom to be creative, and to be open and speak and learn.

What amount are you hoping people will contribute?

I invite all people to support the endowed fund in any amount. You don't have to be

Christian to appreciate what churches and ministers do for people. Every gift will edge us toward the \$1 million goal.

I also want to challenge 20 individuals or families with greater resources to consider a pledge of \$50,000 so YDS will have the funds to support pastoral education and training at the master's level in perpetuity.

Is it rare for ministers to encourage their flocks to give outside of their congregation?

Pastors have reach far beyond their congregations. In sharing of wealth, people can accomplish more than when they are on their own.

Church stewardship programs are about everyone reaching together to do more than they are currently doing now. The concept is the same with endowment. By funding scholarship endowment, we can help people discover their talents so they can share more with the world. I believe together we can fill this endowed fund to over-flowing.

Individuals may give to the John S. Goldstein '75 M.Div. & Judith Goldstein Endowed Yale Divinity Scholarship Fund by using this link : <http://tinyurl.com/2p9ankxy> or by contacting the YDS Development Office email: divinity.alumni@yale.edu or (203) 432-8127.



Mandala

Continued from page 1

solutions for water scarcity, showcasing an intersection of service and innovation.

Water safety

Ishaan is at the forefront of water safety advocacy, actively working on a revolutionary wristband designed to detect drowning incidents. This innovative project aligns seamlessly with his broader campaign for swim safety awareness, highlighting his dedication to leveraging technology for the greater good.

What sets Ishaan apart is his visionary approach to impact.

Through the iCatalyst Foundation, Ishaan has established a platform encouraging fellow high schoolers to create local chapters and work towards the organization's mission. This initiative empowers youth and expands the reach and effectiveness of the combined efforts.

Ishaan's passion for inclusivity extends to neurodivergent children, fostering understanding and creating a positive environment beyond teaching. His passion for raising awareness of swim safety for neurodivergent children underscores his proactive approach to identifying and addressing specific community needs.

The iCatalyst Foundation actively encourages others to join the cause, emphasizing the importance of community involvement and shared responsibility.

The community commends Ishaan for his outstanding dedication, innovative initiatives, and visionary leadership. Through the iCatalyst Foundation, Ishaan is making a significant impact today and inspiring a new generation to contribute towards a positive and inclusive community future.

For more information, volunteering, or possible donations, email: icatalystfoundation@gmail.com.

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Evergreen Times
Times Media, Inc. (408) 494-7000

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
WILLIAM D. BELLOU
williamb@timesmediainc.com

ADVERTISING SALES
WILLIAM D. BELLOU: 408-494-7000

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:
DIANE BLUM, SUNAY SANGHANI, SEAN EASTWOOD, NIRBAN SINGH, FRANK SHORTT, JUDY LY, EUGENE LUU, APOORVA PANIDAPU

ART DIRECTOR
JEFF BAHAM: graphics@timesmediainc.com

PUBLISHER / CEO
WILLIAM D. BELLOU: williamb@timesmediainc.com

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
SANDY BELLOU

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Senator Cortese introduces bill to address California's growing mental health crisis

By Sean Eastwood
Times staff writer

State Senator Dave Cortese has introduced legislation that will help communities prepare for sudden closures of psychiatric and maternity wards in hospitals.

SB 1300 responds to a mental health crisis unfolding in Silicon Valley and the rest of California by increasing transparency and empowering communities to protect their mental and maternity units in hospitals.

In recent years, California has faced significant healthcare challenges that have left vulnerable populations at risk. The state has witnessed an alarming rate of maternity ward closures, with at least 46 units shutting down over the past twelve years, over half in just the last three. This trend, as reported by CalMatters, disproportionately impacts low-income, Black and Latino communities, forcing pregnant women to travel greater distances for care and placing undue strain on remaining facilities.

Additionally, California confronts a severe shortage of mental health beds. The rollout of the Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) Court program — currently expanding across the state — aims to address the mental health crisis. However, the success of CARE Courts hinges on the availability of mental health facilities, which are dwindling due to sudden hospital closures.

For example, in Silicon Valley in 2022, Good Samaritan Hospital's Mission Oaks location closed its 18-bed inpatient psychiatric facility in Los Gatos. State and local agencies and partner organizations weren't able to assess the impact of the closure in time to arrange for alternative placement. Senator Cortese's SB 1300 will establish that crucial advance notice and impact studies.

"The closure of vital psychiatric and maternity units, such as the one at Good Samaritan Hospital in my district, can be catastrophic for families and creates a public health crisis," Cortese said. "Some of these sudden hospital closures occur in lower-income areas. The outcome is 21st-century redlining, with underrepresented people cut off from essential services. SB 1300 will ensure that hospitals provide sufficient notice and conduct comprehensive impact analyses when discontinuing such essential services. This will help communities provide a lifeline to those needing mental health support."

SB 1300 extends the required notice period for the closure of maternity or psychiatric units from 90 to 120 days. It also compels hospitals to submit a comprehensive report detailing the closure's potential impact on the community. The bill is sponsored by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).

"The sudden closure of psychiatric facilities is a growing concern for families trying to support their loved ones experiencing mental illness. Bed

shortages create longer wait times, negatively impacting individuals in crisis. Often times if a facility is closed, families have to travel longer distances, increasing stress and financial burden, hindering their ability to support their loved one in need," said

Jessica Cruz, CEO of NAMI California. "SB 1300 provides critical safeguards to remove barriers to care for those living with serious mental illness and their families."

Senator Cortese has been a long-time advocate for quality behavioral

health systems. In 2022, he supported the CARE Act, which focuses on assisting individuals with untreated serious mental disorders. Demonstrating his dedication to healthcare, Senator Cortese supported the 2023-24 state budget, which allocated near-

ly \$3 billion to primary care, including significant investments in behavioral health capacity.

Senator Dave Cortese represents Senate District 15, which encompasses San Jose and much of Santa Clara County in the heart of Silicon Valley.

Regional Medical Center to shutter trauma, other services

By William Bellou
Publisher

Regional Medical Center, located in East San Jose, will shutter its trauma center and severe heart-attack services this summer, according to hospital execs.

Yet at the same time, the medical center also intends to greatly expand its emergency room capacity with a 47% increase in the number of ER beds.

The hospital plans to shut the services starting

on Aug. 12, Regional Medical Center stated. The hospital is located at 255 North Jackson Street near McKee Road.

"We have made the difficult decision to close our Trauma Center and STEMI programs," Carmela Gutierrez, a spokesperson for Regional Medical Center, said. STEMI is a severe heart attack and stands for ST-elevation myocardial infarction.

Regional Medical Center also intends to work with Santa Clara County health officials to shift its stroke services.

"We'll be working with the county to transition from comprehensive stroke to a primary stroke offering," Gutierrez said. The hospital said it will beef up emergency room capacity.

"After a rigorous assessment, the need for our emergency services has grown beyond our cur-

rent capacity," Gutierrez said.

As a result, the Regional Medical Center emergency room will greatly expand its capacity.

"We will invest \$10 million this year to expand our Emergency Department, increasing capacity to 63 from 43 beds," Gutierrez said.

That's a 46.5% jump in the number of emergency room beds the hospital will accommodate.

Regional Medical Center emphasized that it will be providing numerous services even after the shutdowns for trauma and severe heart attack problems.

"We remain primary stroke-ready," Gutierrez said. "Like many emergency departments, we will triage, provide care and stabilize for transfer those walk-in patients with trauma, STEMI and stroke-related health care needs."



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

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- Equipped with the Allison eGen Flex Hybrid System for low emissions 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.



Saratoga Symphony presents free concert: 'The Scent Of Fresh Snow' on 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.

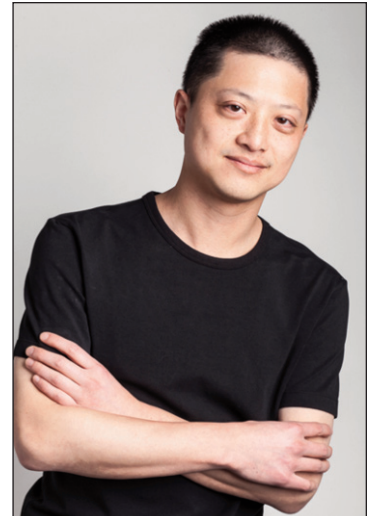
The Sibelius Symphony is an expressive musical piece, representing the Romantic Music Period. This concert features a piano concerto performed with virtuosity by Jason Chiu as soloist. He has received many awards with his active teaching and performance career.

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.



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Times Feature

OP-ED

We have to do more for students still underperforming due to COVID-19

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 demand investment in critical services like these after school programs.

By partnering with local school districts, nonprofits like Boys & Girls Clubs of Silicon Valley can play a significant role in a recovery strategy. Accessible out-of-school enrichment programs can provide students with:

1. Caring adult mentors that

help students focus on their goals.

2. Instruction to strengthen academic proficiencies.

3. 21st Century skills—critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity—they need to be successful in school, a career and life.

Through this type of program, students can learn critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication while building foundational relationships. Unfortunately, the number of students 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

Simitian calls on county to advocate on behalf of residents on AT&T proposal to yank landlines

County Supervisor Joe Simitian previewed for his colleagues and County staff that he will be asking the County to take up the issue of "Carrier of Last Resort" (COLR) landline phone service at the March 12 Board of Supervisors meeting.

Simitian's effort is in response to AT&T's application to the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to relieve itself of its obligations as a COLR. Being a COLR is intended to

ensure that everyone in California has access to safe, reliable, and affordable telephone service—meaning landline or plain old telephone service.

"There are communities across our entire county where a landline is the only reliable form of communication," said Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian. "This voice service is crucial for folks who live in areas where mobile phone and internet service is non-existent or spotty."

Should the CPUC approve AT&T's application, AT&T would no longer be required to provide landline telephone service. If another carrier does not volunteer to become the next COLR, affected County residents could have no other options.



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Four very important ways you can prepare for earthquakes in 2024 — SEE PAGE 6

California voters voted among top 150 nature walks to start 2024 — SEE PAGE 9

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Mothers' Milk Bank announces critical need for donor milk

By Sean Eastwood
Times staff writer

Nation's oldest milk bank, based here in San Jose, is inviting lactating mothers to join its network of milk donors to support premature and adopted infants.

The non-profit Mothers' Milk Bank (MMB) is aiming to expand its pool of contributors, following the heels of a new University of Iowa study on the health benefits of donated breast milk for extremely premature infants.

The importance of donated breast milk has garnered international media attention in recent months after tennis champion Serena Williams shared her milk donation in a viral social media post.

In response to the significant demand for human donor milk and the urgent need to support our com-



munities' most vulnerable members, Mothers' Milk Bank is leading a comprehensive initiative to recruit new milk donors. This initiative includes "Milk Meet-Ups," providing opportunities for individuals to begin the month-long process of qualifying as milk donors.

The Milk Donor Drive is aiming to enlist 5,000 new donors throughout 2024.

To learn about how to make a mother's milk donation, visit <https://mothersmilk.org>

Patricia Mendoza of Evergreen Valley inducted into 'The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi'

Patricia Mendoza of Evergreen Valley has been inducted into The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, the nation's oldest and most selective all-discipline collegiate honor society. Mendoza was initiated at the University of Southern California.

Membership in Phi Kappa Phi is by invitation only and requires nomination and approval by a chapter. Only the top 10 percent of seniors and 7.5 percent of

juniors are eligible for membership. Graduate students in the top 10 percent of the number of candidates for graduate degrees may also qualify, as do faculty, professional staff and alumni who have achieved scholarly distinction.

Phi Kappa Phi was founded in 1897 under the leadership of undergraduate student Marcus L. Urann who had a desire to create a different kind of honor society: one that recognized excellence in all academic disciplines. Today, the Society has chapters on more than 325 campuses in the United States, its territories and the Philippines.




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"As-Salaamu-Alaikum" the English meaning is "Peace be upon you".
Q) What is Islam, who are Muslims, and what is the Quran?
A) Islam is a faith and way of life. Islam began in the 7th century. People who follow Islam are known as Muslims. The Quran is the Divine book that guides Muslims to

practice Islam. "Hufazik Allah Waeayilatak" the English meaning is "May Allah (swt) protect you and your family". Please visit our website to learn more.



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God is One
ੴ ਇਕ ਹੈ
Rab Ik Hai

SAN JOSE GURDWARA
3636 Gurdwara Ave. San Jose, CA 95148

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

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

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We invite you to join our community of faith located in the Evergreen area of San Jose. We are an inclusive diverse community striving to serve as Disciples of Jesus Christ in the footsteps of St. Francis, offering prayerful and joyful liturgies; evangelization, fellowship, and service opportunities to the community. We offer spiritual opportunities for all ages, including children's liturgy, dynamic E.C.H.O - Jr. High, IGNITE - High School and North Star -Young Adult Ministries, along with small faith communities and opportunities to help the poor

and marginalized of San Jose. Our Preschool is the only Catholic Preschool offering quality family oriented service in the Evergreen and Silver Creek areas. Our Chapel, Gathering Hall, Parish Office, Mission Center, Parish Gift Shop, Memorial Garden and Preschool are all located at 5111 San Felipe Rd. Please come join us to worship at one of the following times and locations:
St. Francis of Assisi Chapel: Saturday 5:00PM, Sunday 8:30 AM, 10:30 AM, 12:30 PM, 4:00 PM (Mass in Vietnamese), 6:00 PM Youth Mass
St. Francis of Assisi Gathering Hall
Sunday 9:00 AM, Sunday 11:00AM, Igbo Mass - Second Sunday of the month 12:30 PM
Mt. Hamilton Grange - 2840 Aborn Road
Sunday 9:30 AM
The Villages Gated Community (Cribari Auditorium) Sunday

8:15 AM
For more information, please call or visit us at the Parish Mission Center open M-F 9:00 AM -12:00 PM; 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM. Come join us and share your presence with us so that together we may grow and share our gifts to help build God's Kingdom!



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Cantonese Service: 11:00 AM
Mandarin Service: 11:00AM
Youth Extreme Point (7th-12th grade): Every Saturday at 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM

To place a worship listing, email times@timesmediainc.com



San Jose Youth Symphony to hold auditions for the 2024-25 Season

The San Jose Youth Symphony (SJYS) will be holding its annual general auditions for the 2024-2025 Season.

The auditions will be held on Thursday afternoons (April 4th & 11th) and Friday afternoons (April 5th & 12th) between the hours of 4-9 p.m. Saturday auditions will be held all day (April 6th & 13th).

All student musicians are welcome, ages 8 and up, who play orchestral instruments (woodwinds, brass, percussion & strings) or who are interested in performing jazz.

Marching Band musicians are welcome to apply for an audition now, and then join after marching band season ends.

To submit an audition application, visit: www.sjys.org to join one of SJYS's 12 orchestras and instrumental ensembles. Your audition will be scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis. The symphony will do its best to accommodate your date preferences you list in the application.

The deadline for submitting applications is March 31, 2024.

Questions? Reach out to sjys@sjys.org

About the San Jose Youth Symphony

The San Jose Youth Symphony is one of the oldest and finest youth orchestras on the West Coast of the US. Founded over 70 years ago as part of the former San Jose Symphony*, SJYS has a rich tradition of musical performance and education.

SJYS member musicians, of ages 8 to 20, are selected from more than 650 applicants through our annual spring General Auditions. SJYS comprises 12 distinct performing ensembles: two full orchestras; a chamber orchestra; two flute choirs; concert winds, saxophone, percussion, jazz and harp ensembles; and two string ensembles. Each group rehearses weekly from September to May or early June and performs a scheduled series of concerts each season. In addition, member musicians participate in a weeklong summer camp and receive special coaching and participate in masterclasses from professional and renowned musicians in the Bay Area.

The premier group of SJYS is its Philharmonic Orchestra, led by SJYS Music Director and Conductor, Yair Samet. The orchestra performs its season subscription concerts at the historic and beautiful, California Theatre, in downtown San Jose. The orchestra also travels biannually on its International Concert Tours, and have performed in renowned concert halls in Japan, Italy, Austria, Germany, Spain, Hungary, Croatia, Czech Republic, Ireland, Argentina and Uruguay. The orchestra just recently returned from a successful two-week concert tour during the summer of 2022, traveling to the Baltics: Vilnius, Lithuania; Riga, Latvia; Parnu & Tallinn, Estonia; and Helsinki, Finland. The orchestra will be touring again during the summer of 2025!

TECH JARGON OF THE WEEK

Guardrails

By Shubhi Asthana

Have you ever stumbled into a conversation where everyone is speaking around this “techie” word – and even after you’ve broken in, it is difficult to understand the unfamiliar jargon and acronyms?

Well, there’s no need to sweat it. Let me teach you the meaning of some commonly used tech words:

Guardrails

Recently, I just provided a talk on Guardrails, and performing advanced prompt engineering to detect sensitive information at a data science class. I gave a primer on Guardrails, which is an important area of research for technologists in the LLM world.

What are the Guardrails for LLMs?

Guardrails in AI systems serve as safeguards to ensure the ethical and responsible use of AI technologies. They include strategies, mechanisms, and policies designed



to prevent misuse, protect user privacy, and promote transparency and fairness.

AI guardrails are safety mechanisms offering guidelines and boundaries to ensure that AI applications are being developed and aligned to meet ethical standards and societal expectations. Well-designed guardrails enable organizations to unleash the full potential of generative AI while mitigating the associated risks. They are a powerful lever for building trust and ensuring responsible AI use.

Guardrails in AI systems encompass multiple aspects. Primarily, they serve to safeguard against misuse, bias, and unethical practices. This includes ensuring that AI technologies operate within the ethical parameters set by society and respect the privacy and rights of individuals.

Guardrails in AI systems can take various forms, depending on the characteristics of the AI system and its intended use. For example, they might include mechanisms that ensure privacy and confidentiality of data, procedures to prevent discriminatory outcomes, and policies that mandate regular auditing of AI systems for com-

pliance with ethical and legal standards.

Another crucial part of guardrails is transparency – making sure that decisions made by AI systems can be understood and explained. Transparency allows for accountability, ensuring that errors or misuse can be identified and rectified.

Furthermore, guardrails can encompass policies that mandate human oversight in critical decision-making processes. This is particularly important in high-stakes scenarios where AI mistakes could lead to significant harm, such as in healthcare or autonomous vehicles.

In essence, the implementation of guardrails in AI systems is of paramount importance to harness the transformative power of AI responsibly and ethically. They serve as the bulwark against potential risks and pitfalls associated with the deployment of AI technologies, making them integral to the future of AI.

Do you enjoy reading this column? Send in your comments or feedback to the author at shub.saxen@gmail.com. Shubhi Asthana works as a Research Senior Software Engineer at the IBM Almaden Research Center, San Jose.



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

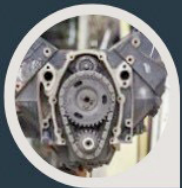
Beginning March 2, 2024, all Saturday and Sunday visits to the Máyyan 'Ooyákma - Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve (pronounced My-yahn Oiy-yahkmah) must be docent-led and registration will be required due to limited space. This change only applies to weekend visitors; all other access remains unchanged.

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.)

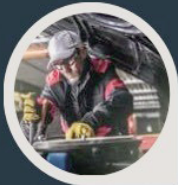
Multiple docent-led hikes ranging in distance from a quarter mile to five miles will be offered throughout the day on Saturdays and Sundays. On these hikes, visitors will experience the unique habitat and learn about the rare and threatened species that thrive there, including the Bay checkerspot butterfly. 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.

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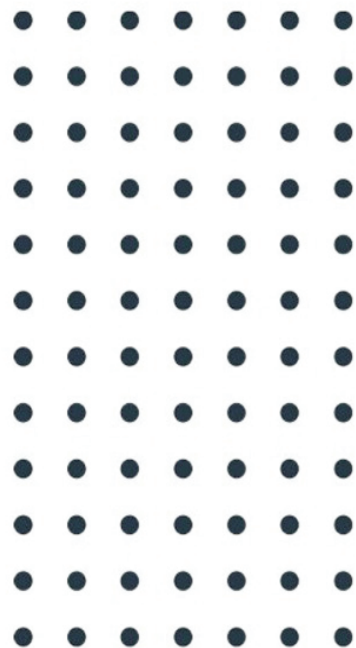
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