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DEC. 27, 2024 - JAN. 9, 2025 ■ VOL. 42, NO. 1

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## Noon Year's Eve Celebration at Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose

Celebrate the arrival of 2025 at the Purple Museum by participating in the "count-down to noon across time zones" with family hugs, performances from special guest Choo Choo Soul, and the Museum's version of the famous Ball Drop in Times Square with tons of confetti.

Museum Ball drops are at 12 p.m., 1 p.m., and 2 p.m. At the different drops, "shoutouts" are given to different countries and what people in those countries might be doing at that time.

When: Tuesday, December 31, See *NOON YEAR EVE*, page 9



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## Peter Pham wins WWF's 2024 Youth Conservation Leadership Award

By Ryan Zlatanova  
*Special to the Times*

Climate activist Peter Pham of San Jose is the recipient of the World Wildlife Fund – US Youth Conservation Leadership Award for 2024.

This prestigious award is given annually to a young conservation leader for outstanding contributions to the environmental field. It provides a monetary award as well as access to a global platform and experts.

The WWF Youth Conservation Leadership Award which celebrates young environmental leaders across the United States, recognizes Peter's contributions with a \$5,000 grant to further his academic and professional development. Pham plans to use the monetary portion of the award to pursue a master's degree in public policy.

Peter Pham is a climate activist, environmental leader, policymaker, and public servant. Born and raised in San Jose, California, Pham is a co-founding youth leader and board member of Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action,



Climate activist **Peter Pham** of San Jose is the recipient of the World Wildlife Fund – US Youth Conservation Leadership Award for 2024.

a grassroots group dedicated to fighting climate change through local initiatives. Pham has served as a commissioner for public lands, transportation, and redistricting; a board member for several local environmental organizations; and a contributor to the development of microplastic-eating bacteria to aid in combatting pollution. He studied public health at the University of California, Berkeley, and currently works in clean tech.

### Think global, act local

In 2019, Pham was part of a youth group that

took a hard look at the state of climate action in the US and realized that there is much it can do to push the needle.

"There is so much attention on the federal level, but the gridlock in national politics often means that climate action will be slow at that level," Pham said.

State and local policy, however, is significantly easier to influence. Its impact is often immediately felt. Not only that but there are often far fewer people advocating for climate

See *PHAM*, page 4

## San Jose sets special election dates to fill open seat

By Brandon Pho  
*San José Spotlight*

San Jose officials and residents are gearing up for the race to replace disgraced former Councilmember Omar Torres and lift downtown from a troubled past few years.

The San Jose City Council has opted to hold a special election to fill Torres' seat on April 8, with a June 24 runoff if necessary and results certified in August. City leaders will open the election nomination period from Dec. 16 to Jan. 10. During that time, they'll also take applications from residents interested in becoming an appointed interim councilmember, who will



represent District 3 until voters decide who fills the remainder of Torres' term through 2026.

Councilmembers have agreed to make the interim appointment after the election filing period closes — ensuring no special election candidates have an incumbent advantage.

The last time the city held a special election to fill a vacancy was 2015, when voters elected former Councilmember Kansan Chu to the California Assembly. The end cost was nearly \$1.2 million.

County elections officials say the special election to fill Torres' open seat could cost \$2 million to \$3.2 million per election. That cost isn't accounted for in this fiscal year's budget, so funds would have to be appropriated from the general fund. The estimate for a runoff election would be included in the budget for next fiscal year.

The District 3 seat's new officeholder could tip the scales of power between labor and business interests in the Bay Area's largest city. Torres' successor will have another task: picking up the pieces of an unprecedented scandal. Torres' Nov. 5 arrest and resignation — amid an ongoing criminal investigation into alleged child

See *SPECIAL ELECTION*, page 10

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

Times **Community News**



## Kaiser Hospital Groundbreaking Ceremony

A groundbreaking ceremony for Kaiser Permanente's new, state-of-the-art, all-electric hospital recently took place last month at Hospital Parkway and International Circle. This modern facility will replace the 50-year-old hospital. The ceremony, which included a blessing dance by the Calpulli Tonalehqueh Aztec Dance Group, marked the beginning of a project that will bring significant advancements to healthcare in the area. The new hospital, scheduled to open in the fall of 2029, will feature 300 private patient rooms, cutting-edge medical technology, and a focus on patient comfort and safety.

## Valley Water Board of Directors appoints Tony Estremera as 2025 chair

The Valley Water Board of Directors elected **Tony Estremera** as the board chair for 2025. Richard P. Santos was elected as vice chair.

Chair Estremera has been a member of the Valley Water Board since 1996 and is now serving his fifth term as chair. He previously held the chair position in 2001, 2007, 2014 and 2021. Chair Estremera represents District 6, which encompasses areas of Central and East San Jose, including the Mayfair neighborhood.

Chair Estremera has extensive experience in government, having served in both appointed and elected positions. He has participated in various task forces, committees and boards in Santa Clara County. Chair Estremera earned his Bachelor's degree from



Santa Clara University and a law degree from UC Berkeley's Boalt Hall School of Law. He is an active member of the State Bar of California and the Santa Clara County Bar Association. In 2019, he retired from his role as the Directing Attorney for the Legal Aid Society of Santa Clara County.

Director Santos is beginning his fifth term as vice chair, having previously served in 2004, 2009, 2017 and 2024. A retired firefighter and native of Alviso, Vice Chair Santos represents District 3, which includes Alviso, Sunnyvale, Santa Clara, Milpitas and Berryessa/Alum Rock.

Immediately after the election of chair and vice chair, all the directors expressed their gratitude to outgoing chairperson Nai Hsueh for her leadership, service and commitment during 2024.

At the start of the meeting, Valley Water held a ceremonial swearing-in for newly elected Director Shiloh Ballard, representing District 2, re-elected Director Hsueh, the representative for District 5, and Director Santos. All three officially took the oath of office on Dec. 6, 2024.



## Report: Best states for college students

With nearly 3.9 million high schoolers expected to graduate in 2025, the largest class in U.S. history, the non-profit organization SmileHub just released two reports: Best States for College Students and the Best Charities for Education in 2025.

To highlight the best states for college students and the ones that have more work to do, SmileHub compared each of the 50 states

based on 28 key metrics. The data set ranges from the share of people aged 18-35 to earning potential for college graduates to average quality of universities.

**College Life in California** (1=Best, 25=Avg.):

- Overall Rank: 5th
- 23rd – Cost of Higher Education
- 10th – Nightlife Options per Capita
- 6th – Share of Population Aged 18-35
- 1st – Average Quality of Universities
- 3rd – Earning Potential for College Graduates

To view the full report and your state's rank, visit: <https://smilehub.org/blog/best-states-for-college-students/22>

## The Firebird

January 25 & 26, 2025  
At the California Theatre

With music as enchanting and lavishly colorful as the title character, *The Firebird* is the perfect way to **celebrate the new year.**

This suite comes from the 1910 ballet that launched **Stravinsky's** international career. Opening the program is **Sibelius'** most-famous composition, *Finlandia*, evoking the struggles of his native homeland with equal parts ominousness, pride, and festivity. **Brahms' Variations on a Theme by Haydn** is one of the famed Romantic composer's most popular works. Argentinian conductor **Carlos Vieu** brings **Sonia Possetti's** spirited *Bullanguera* from his homeland to complete this program.

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Santa Clara County Office of Education

## Cambodian American Studies Conference

January 31 – February 1, 2025 | 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
Santa Clara County Office of Education  
1290 Ridder Park Drive, San Jose, CA 95131

The Cambodian American Studies Model Curriculum will incorporate diverse perspectives on the Cambodian genocide, including survivor testimonies, to ensure high-quality educational materials. Following the passage of Assembly Bill 167 in 2021, which amended California Education Code sections regarding the Cambodian genocide, the California Department of Education is collaborating with county offices to develop this curriculum. Feedback from researchers, community partners, and Cambodian ancestry community members prompted the model curriculum team to expand its focus to include Cambodian American experiences beyond the genocide, resulting in the curriculum's renaming. The final content will encompass the histories, cultures, and heritages of Cambodian American communities.

### This conference will assist educators by:

1. Introducing the CASMC curriculum to K-12 educators
2. Connecting educators with community members and cultural practices
3. Offering immersive cultural experiences

Register at : <https://sccoe.to/CambodianAmericanStudiesConference>

For questions, please contact: **Kristina Ravo**, Coordinator History-Social Science and Civic Engagement at [kravo@sccoe.org](mailto:kravo@sccoe.org) • (408) 453-4354

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## Pham

Continued from page 1

action on the local scale. In this gap, Pham and his peers saw an opportunity to harness the groundswell of youth energy for climate action and create something tangible in the shape of Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action.

"We identified a need, found our niche, and created a strategy," Pham said.

Since its conception, Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action has grown from an advocacy group to an established non-profit organization with several staff members. It has already made waves by contributing to:

- Establishing new building standards for the city that make construction more sustainable and efficient and reduce the demand for fossil fuels;
- Legislation to create more clean water infrastructure in schools;
- Establishing state penalties for offshore oil spills to protect marine wildlife;
- Improving forest management and wildfire preparedness in the state;
- Channeling \$2 million in funding for climate-focused curricula in schools;
- And over 25 other state bills



"There is so much attention on the federal level, but the gridlock in national politics often means that climate action will be slow at that level," said **Peter Pham**. Photo courtesy of Peter Pham

that impact more than 39.5 million Californians.

Pham emphasizes that there are myriad connections between fighting climate change and protecting nature from destruction and biodiversity loss. His advocacy has extended to helping protect key areas like California's Coyote Val-

ley and boosting urban reforestation in San Jose.

"I envision a future where kids like me don't have to step away from enjoying life to solve existential crises."

### The journey to leadership

Pham described the path that led him to become a conservation

leader as "a gradual awakening" that ended with "a eureka moment." He comes from a family of Vietnamese immigrants who fled political turmoil and avoided engaging in politics because they came from a place where it was life-threatening to participate. As a student, Pham made an impression on one of his educators who asked him if he had ever considered running for office. He refers to that moment as "planting the seed" which was then "nurtured to life" by others around him who encouraged him to find his voice and consider ways to be a change-maker.

The spark that pushed him into action came from the 2018 Camp Fire, the deadliest and most destructive wildfire in California history. Pham watched his mother struggle with asthma while the devastation across his home region threatened the stability his immigrant parents had worked so hard for.

"Despite being taught my entire life to stay out of politics and to keep my head low, I made a decision to join and lead in the youth climate movement because it became clear that our institutions were not doing a sufficient job of stewarding the environment and humankind," said Pham.

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Times **Local News**

## Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose to host El Día de los Tres Reyes Magos cultural event

Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose will host its 27th annual El Día de los Tres Reyes Magos cultural event on January 11, 2025 from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Special programming starts at 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

The celebration will feature art activities, tortilla making, Rosca de Reyes tasting, photo opportunities with the Three Kings, ballroom dancing with Studio M, and lively folklórico dance performances and instruction from local dance groups Los Lupeños Juve-



nil, Brenda Lopez Folklorico Group, and El Grito de La Cultura.

Attendees are encouraged to perform their talents at our open mic event. Miss World America 2024, Athenna Crosby, who is a San Jose

native and proud Latina-American, will host an engaging bilingual storytime about the Tres Reyes for attendees.

The Día de los Tres Reyes Magos event was originally conceived and



designed in partnership with an advisory board composed of local leaders from the Latino community. Twenty-seven years later, it has become a much anticipated and popular program, and the

Museum is thrilled to continue this joyful tradition.

"We believe it is important to create programs where people from all backgrounds can explore the rich customs and traditions that represent the diverse cultures in Silicon Valley," said Jéssica Torres, Director of Education and Programs at the Museum. "It's critical that children and families see themselves and their culture represented in the community and in community organizations such as ours."

### About El Día de los Tres Reyes Magos

The Three Kings (or Epiphany – the Feast of the Three Kings) is widely celebrated by many cultures around the world and is observed in many Spanish-speaking countries. The holiday celebrates the three kings' arrival in Bethlehem with gifts for the baby Jesus. Our program brings to life these rich traditions of family gatherings, gift giving, music, dance, and art activities.

Admission: \$18 for children and adults; \$16 for seniors; infants under one & members are free. Tickets: <https://www.cdm.org/event/el-dia-de-los-tres-reyes-magos>

### About Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose

Kids lead the way at Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose, exploring and discovering through open-ended, play-based learning. More than 150 hands-on exhibits and programs in sciences, humanities, arts, nature, and health spark curiosity and ignite family fun where children build life skills in creative and critical thinking, problem solving, and confidence. The nonprofit celebrates people and diverse cultures, creates authentic connections, and builds global understanding.

For more information about the Museum, visit [www.cdm.org](http://www.cdm.org)



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## TECH JARGON OF THE WEEK

# Responsible AI

By Shubi 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:

### Responsible AI

The increasing use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has sparked public interest in how best to responsibly embrace – and regulate – path-breaking technologies. Citizens want to understand how AI can reshape industries, replace jobs and ethical considerations that are going on in AI development. In short, what is responsible AI and how is it being implemented.

Responsible AI is a set of principles and normative declarations used to document and regulate how artificial intelligence systems should be developed, deployed, and governed to comply with ethics and laws. In other words, organizations attempting to deploy AI models responsibly first build a framework with pre-defined principles, ethics, and rules to govern AI.

Today, the models and data that they are trained on are far from perfect. They may introduce intended and unintended negative outcomes. Often, the data sets used to train machine learning (ML) models introduce bias

into AI. This is caused by either incomplete or faulty data, or by the biases of those training the ML model. When an AI program is biased, it can end up negatively affecting or hurting humans -- such as unjustly declining applications for financial loans or, in healthcare, inaccurately diagnosing a patient.

Responsible AI frameworks aim at mitigating or eliminating the risks and dangers machine learning poses. For this, companies should make their models transparent, fair, secure, and reliable, to say the least. At a base level, responsible AI should be built around development standards that focus on the principles for responsible AI design. As these principles differ per organization, each one should be carefully considered. AI should be built with resources according to a company-wide development standard that mandates the use of the following:

- Shared code repositories.
- Approved model architectures.
- Sanctioned variables.
- Established bias testing methodologies to help determine the validity of tests for AI systems.
- Stability standards for active machine learning models to ensure AI programming works as intended.

AI models should be built with concrete goals that focus on building a model in a safe, trustworthy, and ethical way.

### About the Author

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



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Times **Community News**



### Noon Year Eve

*Continued from page 1*

2024, 9:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. (Ball drops at 12, 1, and 2 p.m.)

Admission: \$18 for children and adults; \$16 for seniors; infants under one & members are free Tickets: <https://www.cdm.org/event/noon-years-eve/>

The Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose is located at 180 Woz Way in Downtown San Jose.

#### About Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose

Kids lead the way at Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose, exploring and discovering through open-ended, play-based

learning. More than 150 hands-on exhibits and programs in sciences, humanities, arts, nature, and health spark curiosity and ignite family fun where children build life skills in creative and critical thinking, problem solving, and confidence. The nonprofit celebrates people and diverse cultures, creates authentic connections, and builds global understanding. Welcoming more than 10 million visitors since 1990, the award-winning museum inspires creativity, curiosity, and lifelong learning inside the stunning 50,000 square foot purple building designed by the late world-renowned Mexico City architect Ricardo Legoretta, and outside in the half-acre nature space.

For more information about the museum, visit [www.cdm.org](http://www.cdm.org).

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All shook up for very important ways you can prepare for earthquakes in 2024. SEE PAGE 6

150 nature walks voted among top 10 for 2024. SEE PAGE 9

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**Evergreen Times**

NEWS

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## IN MEMORY

# Mignon Gibson

1951-November 27, 2024

Ever laugh with delight at the rubber duckies in the fountain outside the Bistro? Ever marvel at the intrepid San Jose pioneers whose stories are captured at History Park on Senter Road near Happy Hollow? Ever spot a tall, smiling woman with a hastily pinned chignon topped with a battered straw hat and wearing a flowing Chinese robe who was walking a curious, lively Affenpinscher? If so, you were touched by the spirit of Mignon Gibson, Verano resident who died

November 23 after a brief illness.

Lover of The Villages open space, public historian, and spiritual seeker, Mignon leaves a legacy in her “baby,” History Park, known originally as the San Jose Historical Museum. Mignon worked at the museum for 23 years and served as Museum Director from 1982-1997. Under her leadership, the Historical Museum flourished, developing local history programs, and bringing together many local culture groups to celebrate their histories.

About those ducks? Discovering a sale on rubber ducks at the Dollar Store, Mignon scooped them up. She checked with Jerry Neece, then on the Club Board, about floating them in the Bistro fountain as a touch of whimsy. The bobbing duckies brought smiles to golfers, diners, and visiting grandkids. Her last stash of rubber duck-



ies was given to Jerry, who floated a single duckie in the fountain the day after Mignon's death.

Next Spring a Celebration of Mignon's Life is being planned at History Park to bring together Mignon's friends and admirers who were touched by her life and legacy.

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## Special election

Continued from page 1  
sex abuse — fueled a resident-led recall initiative, scrutiny over the city charter and a divide over how to fill his vacant seat.

Several residents are either considering or lining up for a run to represent the city's downtown core, including Mayor Matt Mahan's Deputy Chief of Staff Matthew Quevedo, Latina Coalition of Silicon Valley Executive Director Gabriela Chavez-Lopez, Planning Commission Chair Anthony Tordillos, engineer Carl Salas, attorney Irene Smith and county housing policy analyst and long-time politico Aimee Escobar.



THE BAY AREA





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**LIVING HOPE APOSTOLIC MINISTRIES**  
<https://www.livinghopeam.org>  
Village Square Branch Library (4001 Evergreen Village Square San Jose, CA 95135). (408) 592-7562  
Pastor Shelia Sapp  
"Bible Study" (Group Study Room) every Saturday at 12:00pm  
OUR MISSION: Evangelizing our community and the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.  
OUR MINISTRY: Training ministers on how to use their love for God to reach those in need of His love.  
OUR PASSION: Transforming lives within our community with God's love.

and outreach, we strive to nurture and grow a strong faith community of believers, a family of all ages, where each member feels welcomed, loved, valued and empowered to serve. Children are especially welcomed and cherished as an important part of God's family.



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<http://www.eicsan-jose.org>  
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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

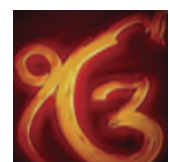
practice Islam. "Hufazik Allah Waeayilatak" the English meaning is " May Allah (swt) protect you and your family". Please visit our website to learn more.



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promise to our members. If you are looking for an active Christian faith community, we invite you to experience Holy Spirit Parish Community. All are welcome! We are located at 1200 Redmond Avenue, San Jose, CA 95120. Mass is celebrated at 8:30 a.m. Monday - Friday. Our weekend Mass schedule is Saturday 5 p.m., Sunday 8 a.m., 9:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. Rite of Reconciliation is every Saturday at 4 p.m. or by appointment. Our Parish Office is open Monday - Thursday 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. and Friday 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Call 408-997-5100 for recorded information or 408-997-5101 to speak with someone in our parish office.



*God is One*  
**ੴ ਸਿਕ 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.SanJose-Gurdwara.org>

### ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI CATHOLIC CHURCH

5111 San Felipe Rd., San Jose, CA 95135  
408-223-1562.  
[www.stfrancisofassisi.com](http://www.stfrancisofassisi.com)  
or [www.stfrancisofassisipreschool.org](http://www.stfrancisofassisipreschool.org)  
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 Pre-school 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!



**thepoint.church**  
**THE POINT CHURCH**  
3695 Rose Terrace Cir San Jose, CA 95148  
(408) 270-7646  
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Spanish Service: 11:00 AM  
Cambodian Service: 11:00 AM  
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](mailto:times@timesmediainc.com)**

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