

Former President Jimmy Carter left a strong impression on Silicon Valley
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Incumbents replaced
New trustees join SCC Board of Education during investigation
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A family trio of soloists explores grace in the face of adversity
SEE PAGE 10



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Almaden Times

JAN. 17 - JAN. 30, 2025 ■ VOL. 38, NO. 2

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District 9 San Jose Councilmember **Pam Foley** has been appointed vice mayor by Mayor Matt Mahan. File photo.

San Jose has a new vice mayor

By **Brandon Pho**
San José Spotlight

Two-term San Jose Councilmember Pam Foley is getting a new title: vice mayor. Foley, who represents District 9, will take over the ceremonial role from District 1 Councilmember Rosemary Kamei, who Mayor Matt Mahan in 2023 appointed in an attempt to bridge political divides between labor and business interests.

Foley's new role will start Jan. 28 pending approval by the full San Jose City Council.

Foley, who like Mahan is more fiscally conservative and business friendly, will take over the responsibility of filling Mahan's role of chairing meetings — and appearing at public events — on occasions where Mahan can't show up. She said her fiscally conservative approach to governance makes her a sound pick ahead of looming budget woes.

"The concerns he wants to focus on in the city are pretty much those which residents of District 9 want to focus on," Foley told San Jose Spotlight. "In many ways I am aligned with the mayor."

But she said that doesn't mean
See FOLEY, page 4

AVAC HOSTS THE NINJA ZONE EXPERIENCE JANUARY 25:

Calling all Baby Ninjas, Lil Ninjas and Ninjas in training!

During Free Community Day, kids practice obstacle courses, gymnastics, martial arts, and freestyle movement

Almaden Valley Athletic Club (AVAC) invites families with young children to attend The Ninja Zone Experience, a day of free NinjaZone® classes designed to introduce kids to a fun and unique sport that combines gymnastics, parkour, tricking, and warrior training.

The Ninja Zone Experience will take place on Saturday, January 25th from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Parents with little ones as young as walking to 11 years old can register their kids for a full-length 45-minute NinjaZone class or a 30-minute trial class based on age.

The following is the schedule for the Ninja Zone Experience:

Full-Length Classes (reservation required):
9:00 – 9:40: Ages 3–5 years old
9:45 – 10:25: Baby Ninja for walking to 3 year olds
10:30 – 11:10: Ages 5–11 years old



HANG TIGHT - Maddox Comarsh gets ready to practice his ninja moves during AVAC's NinjaZone class. During Free Community Day (Jan 25th), kids practice obstacle courses, gymnastics, martial arts, and freestyle movement to explore their athletic and mental boundaries.

Trial/Drop-In Classes

(No Reservation Required):

11:15 – 11:45: Walking to 2 years old

12:00 – 12:30: Ages 3–5 years old

12:30 – 1:00: Ages 5–11 years old

"We're excited to introduce little ones to NinjaZone, a fun way to gain confidence, try new things, and learn fun ways to move," said Sheena Comarsh, Associate Swim School Director at AVAC. "Since AVAC opened its doors in 1976, our mission has always been to provide a safe and nurturing environment for kids to explore their athletic and mental boundaries alongside fun-loving and knowledgeable instructors. We look forward to hosting all the little ninjas in our community!"

AVAC is a licensed NinjaZone member club. NinjaZone programming develops physical skills, coordination, strength, and confidence while practicing positivity, discipline, and respect. Each child progresses at their own pace, making NinjaZone a great alternative to traditional sports. Even tots can build confidence through structured yet playful movements.

To register, please call the AVAC Swim School by calling (408) 267-4032. For more information, please visit www.avac.us.

Humane Society of Silicon Valley resumes services

It may take up to a year to rebuild fire-damaged shelter's building

By **William Bellou**
Publisher

Adoption services at the Humane Society Silicon Valley (HSSV) are back to normal, except for operating rooms after a fire that broke out on December 16 destroyed half the building and temporarily closed the space.

The crucial operating rooms are so badly damaged, the organization is searching for a surgical unit near the shelter. It's estimated that the damaged parts of the building could take at least a year to complete the repairs.

The shelter's laundry operations were damaged, along with its medical areas, shelter operation offices and all the animal-holding areas. The adoption area also sustained damages leaving only two-thirds of the floor operational. No one was injured in the fire.

To keep pet adoptions and housing going during that time, the shel-



The Humane Society of Silicon Valley in Milpitas is recovering from a fire that broke out Dec. 16 and destroyed half of the building.

ter's staff has been relocating animals to foster homes. More than 100 animals found their new homes.

The shelter has reached storage capacity for donations, so the staff is now encouraging monetary donations from the community as the staff figures out the costs associated with demolition, construction and other services including renting storage spaces.

The HSSV consists of more than 150 employees and more than 3,000 volunteers. Last year, the shelter found homes for more than 6,000 animals.

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

Times **Local News**

Pacheco and Speiser replace incumbent trustees on Santa Clara County Board of Education

By William Bellou
Publisher

Two new trustees have joined the Santa Clara County Board of Education Board following the results of the November election.

Jorge Pacheco Jr. and Jessica Speiser have replaced incumbents while a pending investigation is underway.

Trustee Jorge Pacheco Jr. replaced incumbent Joseph DiSalvo, while trustee Jessica Speiser replaced incumbent Grace Mah, who has been the subject of at least two investigations for alleged wrongdoing.

Pacheco has served as a board member for the Oak Grove School District since 2018 and president of the California Latino School Boards Association since 2019.

Pacheco said his priority is serving the county's most vulnerable students. He also advocated for improved special education and fiscal responsibility.

Speiser served on the Los Altos School District board for four years and as president of the Santa Clara County School Boards Association for the 2023-24 school year.

Speiser wants to ensure students meet grad-



L-R: Jorge Pacheco Jr. and Jessica Speiser, SCC Board of Education Trustees

uation requirements and are prepared for college or the workforce, expanding educator resources and improving transparency.

The leadership change comes months after the shocking removal of former superintendent of schools Mary Ann Dewan caused outrage in the community, resulting in Dewan subsequently suing the board and unveiling reports that suggest her firing stemmed from alleged tension with board members.

A recent state report criticized the board's leadership for failing to follow policies and the "dysfunctional" relationship between board members and the office of education's administration. And in November, interim superintendent Charles Hinman called for investigations into the county office's finances and operations over a possible misuse of public funds.

The change also comes as the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors considers changes to the office of education, including looking into appointing board trustees and making the county superintendent of schools an elected position rather than the current process of appointment by trustees.

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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Foley

Continued from page 1

she'll go along with every position Mahan takes. "I am thoughtful in my decision-making process," she said. "We have this relationship where initially we didn't really know each other, but developed a trust and respect. I am honored to be selected for this."

Kamei, who won her first election in the West San Jose district outright in 2022, held the title for two years. Mahan's selection of her was notable for political reasons.

San Jose politics are often split between a labor-leaning, progressive faction and one that's more business focused, which leans toward loosening rules on development and business taxes. Mahan, who typically aligns with business interests, started his two-year term in 2022 with a labor majority on the city council that at times hindered his ability to pass policies. With Mahan starting his first full four-year term, councilmembers have been more inclined to agree with his business-focused decisions.

Kamei has previously said she considers herself more moderate, not leaning too heavily on one side versus the other. She said Foley is "an excellent choice."

"She brings a lot of experience and is our most veteran councilmember," she told San José Spotlight. "This is going to be a tough year and we're going to have to make tough decisions. We have economically challenging times ahead — weighing different tradeoffs and budget priorities."

She said it's been a privilege to hold the title for the last two years.

"I think I have brought a lot of my own experience and sense of bridge building to the council and I look forward to working with Pam and the mayor and my fellow councilmembers," Kamei said.



Former San Jose Vice Mayor **Rose Herrera** met former President **Jimmy Carter** during a Habitat for Humanity work project in 2013, when he helped renovate 10 homes and a shade structure at Lake Cunningham Park. Photo courtesy of Rose Herrera.

Jimmy Carter's journey through Silicon Valley

By **B. Sakura Cannestra**
San José Spotlight

Former President Jimmy Carter left a strong impression on the people, including Silicon Valley leaders who spent time with him during his decades of social justice work post-presidency.

Carter died on Dec. 29, 2024, at age 100. Since his death, Silicon Valley leaders have reflected on a 2013 visit from Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, with Habitat for Humanity.

The Carters championed the social services organization and spent years helping

build affordable housing for families in need. The East Bay/Silicon Valley branch of Habitat for Humanity is hosting a memorial for Carter on Thursday — designated as a national day of mourning — at San Jose City Hall's East Plaza from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. President Joe Biden will deliver a eulogy at the Washington National Cathedral in D.C.

"The Carters were just so real, and so there was such affection for them," Michael Fox Jr., former CEO of Goodwill Silicon Valley, told San José Spotlight. "It had nothing to do with, 'He's the president of the U.S."

Continued, next page



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Times **Community News**

Carter, continued

and she's the first lady.' ... It was genuine."

Fox met Carter in 2013 at a fundraising dinner for Habitat for Humanity hosted by his father, Michael Fox Sr., at their family home in Saratoga. The Carters were in the Bay Area for multiple projects with the nonprofit, including community improvements near Lake Cunningham Park in East San Jose. The Carters helped build shade structures at the park and renovate 10 homes for low-income homeowners.

Fox said he introduced himself before others at the dinner party "mobbed" the Carters, clamoring for a conversation with the former president. Watching how the couple interacted with others was inspiring, Fox said.

"They were the most gracious, down to earth people you've ever met," he told San José Spotlight.

State Sen. Dave Cortese, then a Santa Clara County supervisor, sat next to Carter at the dinner party, along with his wife Pattie, who is now an East Side Union High School District trustee.

Dave Cortese said talking with Carter at the dinner party felt more like talking to a religious figure in how he showed vulnerability.

"Jimmy Carter was not superficial, I doubt he was ever superficial," Cortese told San José Spotlight. "He was just a deep guy, the kind of person that if you wanted to put a picture next to the word sincerity in the dictionary, you would put his picture there. ...

It's easy to open up to someone like that."

Throughout the dinner, Pattie Cortese, who holds a master's degree in interfaith studies, talked with Carter about spirituality and his work teaching Bible studies in his hometown of Plains, Georgia. She said she looked up to the couple for the work they'd done since Carter's presidency. It empowered her to work on issues that reflected her own faith and beliefs, such as working with incarcerated people.

"Some people could be president and then just retire and enjoy their life, and I'm not saying he didn't enjoy his life, but their work was clearly a ministry," she told San José Spotlight. "They stayed active in that until they literally could not anymore."

Rosalynn Carter died in 2023 at the age of 96.

That hands-on work ethic also inspired former San Jose Vice Mayor Rose Herrera, who met Carter the day after the dinner party while the couple worked on projects at and around Lake Cunningham Park. She was inspired to see the Carters working on the buildings, not just attending for a photo opportunity. She remembered being surprised to see singers Trisha Yearwood and Garth Brooks there — also ready to work on the project. It impressed her that these celebrities were also dedicated to the work they were doing.

"What (Carter) cared about was work and doing that work and doing things for the community, that was really what he was about. He was the real deal," Herrera said.



Helpful Tips:

- Know how to download your camera footage
- When mounting cameras, please be aware of places where people may have a reasonable expectation of privacy (examples: their backyard or interior of their home)
- Focus and mount your video on key points of entry or concern
- Exterior Mounting Location Options: Front door, rear door, side gate, driveway/front parking lot, second floor wide view and street view.
- Keep batteries charged in your cameras.
- Consider lighting around your cameras.

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Friday, March 7, 2025

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- 2) Judges: Adults willing to judge amazing projects
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Where: Leland High School Cafeteria

When: March 7, 2025 at 3:45 p.m.
(Judges and student registration due February 20th!)

PRIZES WILL BE AWARDED

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION, VISIT:
[HTTPS://SITES.GOOGLE.COM/VIEW/LELANDSCIENCEFAIR](https://sites.google.com/view/lelandsciencefair)



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://scooe.to/CambodianAmericanStudiesConference>

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

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Celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at Children's Discovery Museum

Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose will be open on January 20 for Martin Luther King Jr. Day and is offering special programming to celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. King.

Visitors can paint and decorate a peace sign in the Neiman Art Studio or attend one of three performances of Echoes of a Dream at 11 a.m., 12 p.m., and 1:30 p.m. The museum opens at 9:30 a.m. on January 20th.

Echoes of A Dream is an interactive presentation that uses the African storytelling style to invoke and pay tribute to the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

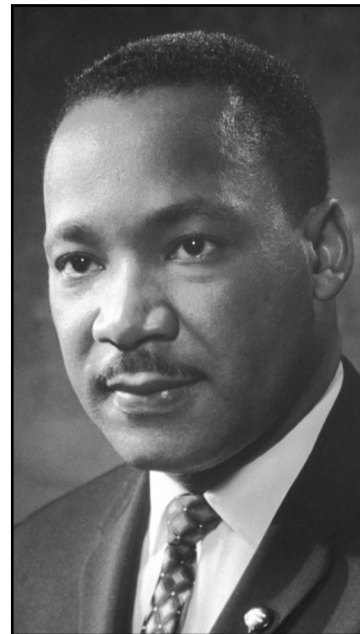
Animated with drumming, call and response, songs, and slide projection, this interactive, fun, engag-



Flutter on by and help

Help restore a pollinator and monarch butterfly habitat with Team Mahan and friends of Guadalupe Oak Grove Park! We'll be planting milkweed (the host plant used by monarch butterfly caterpillars) and other young shrubs and wildflowers that will provide the nectar rich habitat that adult butterflies and native bees depend on. The beautiful Guadalupe Oak Grove park has preserved some of the last valley floor oak woodlands in the Santa Clara Valley and the meadow restoration will enhance its beauty and value to wildlife. If you have any questions and to RSVP, please email: Dave Poeschel (dave.poeschel@gmail.com) or Mayor's office (mayor@sanjoseca.gov)

ing, and colorful presentation features Nigerian born folklorist, and Oriki Arts' visiting 2025 season artistic director, Dr. Olabisi Adi-



Martin Luther King, 1964

gun. In Echoes of A Dream, Oriki Arts takes us on a journey from a time before Dr. King, through his legacy, and ends in the here and now. Fifty-six years after his death and more than 60 years after his famous "I have a Dream" speech, can we still hear the echoes of his dream?

Admission: \$18 for children and adults; \$16 for seniors; infants under one and members are free.

For more information about the museum, visit www.cdm.org.

Upcoming local events

Beautification Day at Guadalupe Oak Grove Park

Saturday, January 25th at 10:00 AM. 5982 Thorntree Drive, San Jose, CA 95120

Lunar New Year Community Day with San Jose Museum of Art

Saturday, January 25th at 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM. San Jose Museum of Art, 110 S. Market St, San Jose, CA 95113



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Times **Local News**

Rep. Panetta announces student winners of the '24 Congressional App Challenge

By William Bellou
Publisher

United States Representative Jimmy Panetta (CA-19) announced the student winners of the 2024 Congressional App Challenge for California's 19th Congressional District.

First place went to **Anjali Vashisht** from Evergreen Valley High School (pictured) for the creation of an innovative app, VolunteerConnect. This award highlights Vashisht's outstanding achievement in leveraging technology to create a meaningful impact on her community. Ms. Vashisht will also be invited to the #HouseofCode Event in Washington D.C. in the Spring of 2025 alongside other student innovators and have VolunteerConnect exhibited in the U.S. Capitol.

Vashisht's app, VolunteerConnect, utilizes a chatbot interface to connect students with volunteer opportunities based on their personal preferences and location. By sharing their skills, hobbies, and interests, students can find activities that not only fulfill community service require-



ments for college applications but also allow them to explore careers and gain valuable experience in fields like health-care, environmental science, and the arts.

Aarv Kaashyap from BASIS Independent Silicon Valley received second place for creating the app Sustainable Companion, which empowers users to understand their carbon footprint and offers insights into local climate change trends, including temperature shifts and environmental impacts. Saket Pathak from Silver Creek High School received third place for creating the app MindfulMood, which uses journaling and interactive activities to help kids track and manage their emotions.

The Congressional App Challenge promotes student innovation, creativity, and engagement in computer science through competition and the creation of a new digital application or "app." This year, 48 students from across California's 19th Congressional District participated in the challenge, developing 31 original apps tackling issues ranging from sustainability, education, and social justice. Student participants included middle and high school students.

"Our country appreciates the talent, drive, and ingenuity of our students to discover new technological solutions to real-world problems," said Rep. Panetta.



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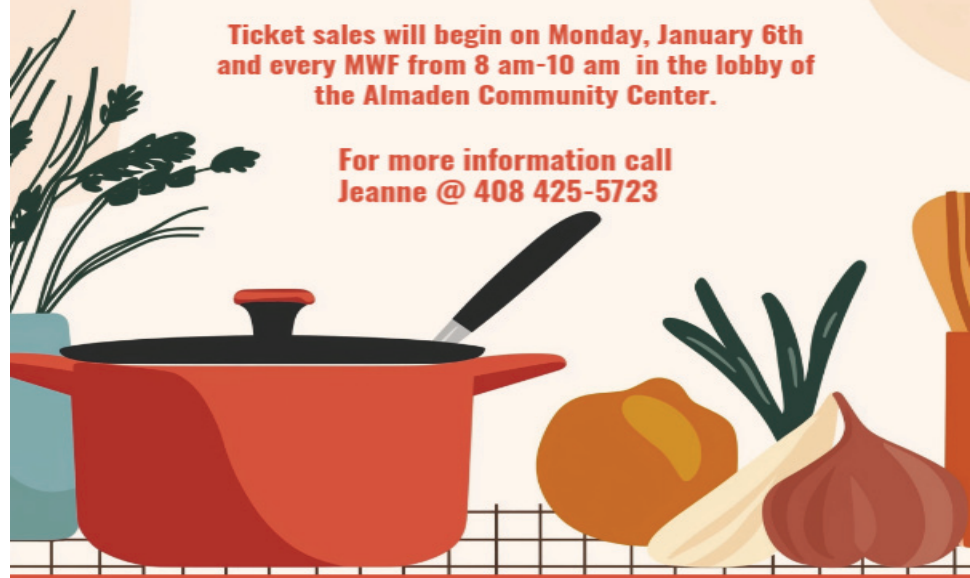
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Times **Community News**

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SJ Chamber Orchestra presents 'Drizzle, Downpour, Desperation, and other stories'

A family trio of soloists explores grace in the face of adversity

The World Premiere of a triple concerto from composer Durwynne Hsieh debuts with the San Jose Chamber Orchestra on Sunday March 23, 7 p.m. at St. Francis Episcopal Church.

Drizzle, Downpour, Desperation and Other Stories by composer Durwynne Hsieh is a triple concerto for violin, viola, and cello soloists with chamber orchestra, that is also a set of three contrasting tone poems.

Commissioned by SJCO for the Fong-Costanza Family Trio (Debra Fong, violin, Ezra Costanza, viola and Christopher Costanza, cello) as soloists, the piece explores grace in the face of adversity. *Drizzle, Downpour, Desperation* depicts a dark, rainy day and the emotions that take hold as the water falls. As for the "Other Stories", *Excess Solitude* is a reflection on loneliness, both the pain of isolation as well as the warm relief that can come from being with loved ones. *Action, Traction and Satisfaction* definitely has us on the road, but to where? Hopefully someplace good.

The three soloists sometimes shine individually, but more often interact as a trio, recognizing that the piece was commissioned specifically for a family trio of soloists, not just three players.

The piece contains elements of the classic



Fong-Costanza Family String Trio. Clockwise from top: **Christopher Costanza, Debra Fong, and Ezra Costanza.** Photo courtesy of the artists.

concerto form, with three contrasting movements arranged fast-slow-fast, passages where the soloists interact with the orchestra as well as those where they play unaccompanied, and an extended virtuoso cadenza near the end of the final movement.

The Program

Durwynne Hsieh: *Drizzle, Downpour, Desperation, and Other Stories* (commissioned by The San José Chamber Orchestra)

The Artists

Conductor: Barbara Day Turner
Soloists: Fong-Costanza Family String Trio: Debra Fong, violin; Ezra Costanza, viola; Christopher Costanza, cello.

San José Chamber Orchestra

Ticket prices: \$15 to \$75

General Admission: \$75/\$65

Senior: \$65/\$55 (ages 62 and above)

Student: \$25/\$15

Tickets and information: <https://sjco.org/>; 408 295-4416; Email: sjcorch@gmail.com. Tickets will also be available at the door.

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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

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