

San Jose wants to send homeless people back to their families
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Steinway Society presents pianist Zlata Chochieva March 29 in Cupertino
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Evergreen Times

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Sandra Day O'Connor Institute announces winners of 6th annual Civics Challenge

The Sandra Day O'Connor Institute for American Democracy is pleased to announce the ten winners of the 6th Annual Civics Challenge.

This online civics competition, open to students in grades 6 through 12, invites them to choose a civics education topic and express their knowledge through an essay, short video, or original song.

Among the eight students that received an honorable mention is Naina D., 11th grade student in San Jose.

"We are amazed by the knowledge, creativity and talent these students have demonstrated," Institute President and CEO Sarah Suggs said. "Justice O'Connor was committed to civics education and the tremendous interest in our Civics Challenge is inspiring as we look to future generations to lead our nation. We congratulate all of the winners and honorable mention recipients for their commitment to civics."

See WINNERS, page 4

Remains of WWII USAAF airman found after more than 80 years

2nd Lieutenant Robert T. McCollum to be buried at Oak Hill Cemetery in San Jose, CA on Saturday, May 3rd to be near his parents, sister and family members

William Bellou
Publisher

World War II: 2nd LT Robert T. McCollum was a decorated bombardier assigned to the 565th bombardment squadron of the United States Army Air Force (USAAF) in the European Theatre.

McCollum, who was born in Cleveland Ohio, received several medals commemorating his more than 15 successful bombing missions over Europe in a B-24J Liberator.

McCollum's squadron targeted major industrial sites, including Berlin's manufacturing centers,



McCollum received several medals commemorating his more than 15 successful bombing missions over Europe in a B-24J Liberator.

World War II: 2nd LT Robert T. McCollum was a decorated bombardier.

oil production facilities in Merseburg, factories in Münster, and shipbuilding yards in Vegesack. It also struck Vergeltungswaffen (V-weapon) sites in the Pas de Calais and took part in the large-scale attacks on Germany's aircraft production industry during Operation Argument (Big Week) in February 1944.

On a fateful day on June 20, 1944, tragedy struck over the Baltic Sea near the coast of Denmark.

B-24 mid-air collision

The 22-year-old McCollum was aboard the Liberator, when, for reasons unknown, it crashed with another B-24 in the same formation. Though the pilot and co-pilot of McCollum's plane were able to safely bail out, the rest of the crew vanished into the Baltic Sea. They were presumed dead, and the U.S. War Department issued a "Finding of Death" for McCollum on June 21, 1945.

The pilot and co-pilot were picked up by Danish
See WWII AIRMAN, page 10

San Jose to crack down on RV rentals to homeless

By Joyce Chu
San José Spotlight

San Jose has problems with slumlords and now they have problems with vanlords.

City officials are targeting vanlords, individuals who they said prey on the homeless residents by renting them inoperable vehicles. Mayor Matt Mahan along with Councilmembers Bien Doan, Michael Mulcahy and David Cohen want to study ways to restrict renting RVs to homeless people.

The Rules Committee recommended Wednesday the city conduct



San Jose created a new pilot program to get residents living in RVs off the streets. It includes towing and restricted parking zones. Photo by Joyce Chu.

an analysis of what it would take to enact a policy to prevent these rentals and to report back to the committee in two weeks. The final decision on curbing vanlords will be up to the city council.

"We know there are bad actors out

there that put dilapidated, nonworking van trailers or RVs out there, and then manipulate our unsheltered residents to rent these places in an unsafe condition, without any preparation for biohazard or hazardous waste or even a fire hazard," Doan said at the

meeting. "And I think it's important that we make sure we protect our unsheltered residents from these bad actors."

San Jose has two known individuals responsible for renting at least 20 motor homes to unhoused residents. But the pervasiveness of the practice is unknown. In 2023, police officers discovered one person had bought a handful of RVs from a tow yard, set them on Educational Park Drive and was profiting off of the vehicles. Former police chief Anthony Mata wrote in a memo last year the majority of RVs on the streets are owned by the people living in them.

Rudy Ortega, who owns and lives in his RV near Columbus Park, said cutting off this option ultimately criminalizes homeless residents, making their lives even harder.

"By restricting the sale, rental or even transfer of RVs, you're targeting
See RENTALS, page 7

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Times News

Spring is here!

By Domingo Candelas

Spring is almost here! Take advantage of the sunny and warm weather and do some spring cleaning. During the next few months, there will be multiple opportunities to get involved with my office and help beautify our neighborhoods.

Join me and my team on Saturday, April 19, as we roll up our sleeves and celebrate Earth Day with the Great American Litter Pick-Up Link here: <https://tinyurl.com/5855a2s2>

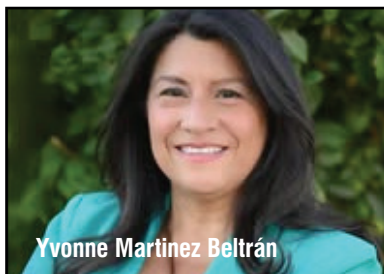
Community members of all ages are encouraged to come together to remove litter and enhance Lake Cunningham's natural beauty.

If you can't make it, don't worry! The San Jose Parks and Rec team has a series of clean-ups in various parks throughout District 8. Bring your family and friends to any of the 3 volunteering opportunities available, and make a lasting difference in your community.

Together, we can build brighter and

stronger neighborhoods!

It is my pleasure and privilege to serve as your City Councilmember.



Yvonne Martinez Beltrán

Beltrán named Woman of Year

By Dave Cortese

We're already into the busy month of March including three weeks of 'March Madness' for basketball/hoops fans, one holy month of fasting, prayer and charity for Muslims celebrating Ramadan, eight months of lighter, longer evenings and darker mornings due to daylight savings time.

We celebrated Women's History Month honoring the contributions of women to American society, culture, and history. During Women's History Month at the Capitol, we had a "Woman of the Year" floor ceremony where each member of the California Legislature will introduce and honor on the Senate floor a woman from

their district for her contributions to her community.

It will be my honor to introduce Morgan Hill City Councilwoman Yvonne Martinez Beltrán as my district's Woman of the Year! She is immersed in public service and policy that always involves equity; she is a dedicated advocate for her Morgan Hill community where she was raised, and she was appointed as the Cal Cities representative which is an organization that advocates for cities in California. She has attended Cal Cities Legislative Day numerous times in Sacramento lobbying to advance local control for cities and is heavily involved in the organization on many levels.

Women's History Month was established by Congress in the 1980s to acknowledge the significant contributions women have made in every field of American life because at that time they were largely unrecognized and unknown. The purpose of the month is to recognize and highlight women's achievements in science, technology, arts, business, and more!



Senate Report
By Dave Cortese
State Senator

Winners

Continued from page 1

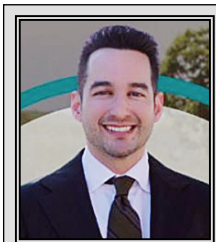
The winners of the honorable mention for the high school categories are listed alphabetically below.

Honorable Mention:

- Amelia N., 9th Grade, Stamford, CT
- Frances A., 12th Grade, Napa, CA
- Laila S., 11th Grade, Washington, D.C.
- Matilda F., 9th Grade, Montpelier, VT
- Naina D., 11th Grade, San Jose, CA
- Ronan P., 12th Grade, Metuchen, NJ
- Rudra P., 12th Grade, Tampa, FL
- Travis D., 11th Grade, Mazomanie, WI

Winning entries and additional information on the Civics Challenge and other Institute programs are available by visiting: <https://occonorinstitute.org/ccwinners>

Details for the next Annual Civics Challenge will be announced in September 2025.



Council Report

Domingo Candelas,
District 8 Councilmember

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Times **Local News**



Kama Fletcher, director of development for Neighborhood Hands, said some of their homeless clients want to be reunited with family. A San Jose program proposed by **Mayor Matt Mahan** (right) could make that happen. Photo by Joyce Chu.

San Jose wants to send homeless people back to their families

By Joyce Chu
San José Spotlight

San Jose is launching a program to relocate and reunify homeless people with their families as the city strives to end unsheltered homelessness.

Homeward Bound, a pilot program proposed by Mayor Matt Mahan, will send outreach workers to make contact with homeless individuals and pay for transportation costs to bus them out of the city. City officials have committed \$200,000 from the 2024-25 general fund and will invest up to \$1,000 per individual to help reunite them

with families in the county or outside the area.

"It's going to take many different strategies, many different tools, and we have to acknowledge that folks who are out there did not all become homeless for the same reason and may not all need the exact same thing to get off of our streets," Mahan said at a news conference Tuesday.

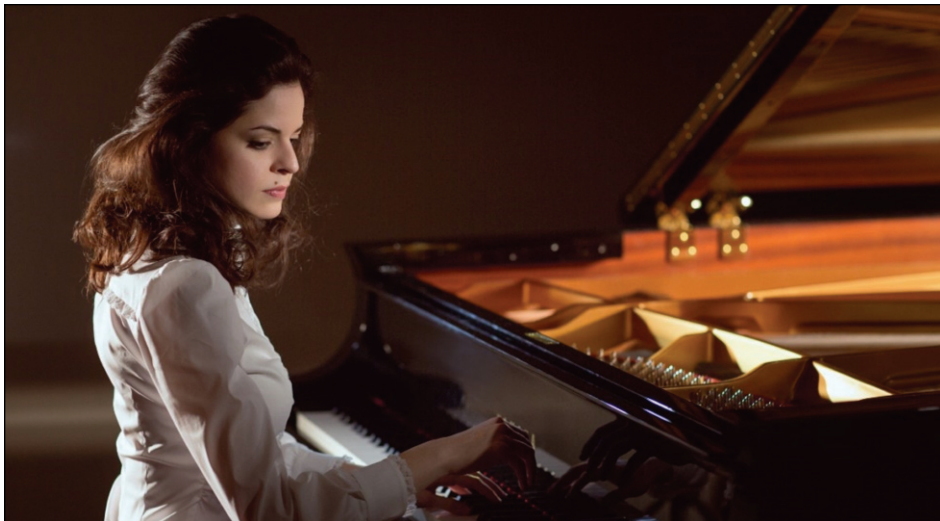
Mahan wants to achieve "functional zero" — when the number of people exiting homelessness is greater than those becoming homeless — through short-term, temporary
See HOMELESS, page 8

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Times **Local News**



Steinway Society presents pianist Zlata Chochieva March 29 in Cupertino

Russian pianist **Zlata Chochieva** (pictured) brings a program with an exacting balance of subtlety and drama that highlights her talent.

The concert is Saturday, March 29 at 7:30 p.m. in Cupertino's Visual and Performing Arts Center at DeAnza College. An informative introduction to the music precedes the concert, and a meet-the-artist opportunity follows. Tickets are available at www.steinwaysociety.com.

To meet the needs of a diverse community of patrons, Steinway Society also offers a recorded option to enjoy the concert on-demand for 48 hours.

THE PROGRAM

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R. Schumann, Symphonic Etudes, Op. 13
 Brahms, Scherzo, Op. 4 in E-flat Minor
 Rachmaninoff, Selected Preludes from Op. 23

Rachmaninoff, Selected Preludes from Op. 32

Rachmaninoff, Variations on a Theme of Corelli, Op. 42

Mendelssohn-Rachmaninoff, Scherzo from "A Midsummer Night's Dr

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Email: office@steinwaysociety.com

Zlata Chochieva made her first stage appearance at age five and gave her debut with an orchestra two years later, performing Mozart's Concerto No. 17 at Grand Hall of Moscow State Conservatory. When she was 12, she gave a full recital, broadcast on Russian television, which caught the attention of Mikhail Pletnev and later became his protégé at Central Special Music School. In 2005, Chochieva was named Honorable Artist of the North Ossetia Republic, becoming the youngest ever artist to hold such a distinction. In 2012, she graduated with distinction from Moscow State Conservatory. Chochieva continues to gain worldwide recognition, including earning top prizes in 14 international competitions.

Rentals

Continued from page 1

one of the last remaining options for shelter that unhoused individuals can afford," Ortega said at the meeting. "The true issue is a lack of affordable housing. Instead of punishing those who seek shelter in RVs, the city should focus on providing real humane housing solutions. If safety is the concern, then provide sanitation services in designated areas with proper oversight, not further displacement."

Ortega has been living near Columbus Park since 2017. He said he's only aware of one individual who is living in an RV rental.

"(Mahan) wants to clear the streets of the homeless (before) the Super Bowl," Ortega told San José Spotlight. "I think it's done purposefully. It's another one of his tactics."

The city is studying how other localities like Los Angeles are dealing with vanlords which has made the leasing of RVs for housing illegal.

San Jose estimates there are 1,000 lived-in vehicles throughout the city, and officials want

to find ways to stem the supply of RVs as well as the blight.

The city has started temporarily banning RVs and other lived-in vehicles in designated areas. Under a \$3.3 million pilot program, the city has chosen 30 temporary tow-away zones to clear lived-in vehicles for street sweeping and cleanup throughout the year. It will establish a new temporary tow-away zone every week.

Residents have been worried they'll lose their shelter if they aren't able to move their RVs before sweeps happen. Many live in inoperable vehicles.

Councilmember David Cohen said the intent of the proposal is not to target those who live in RVs but to hold those renting vehicles accountable.

"We have procedures to follow to provide rental spaces for others," Cohen said. "Our concerns are (for) people who are putting out old, inoperable vehicles and then renting them to people to live in, as opposed to people who own their own RVs—which is not at all the target of this potential ordinance."



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Homeless

Continued from page 6

solutions such as tiny homes, safe parking and sleeping sites and shelters. Reuniting individuals with their families is another option for getting thousands of homeless people off the streets.

Roughly 15% of Santa Clara County's homeless population lived outside of the county or state before they became homeless, according to a 2023 census. There are roughly 10,000 homeless people in the county, with 6,340 in San Jose. Of the city's total homeless population, roughly 5,500 are unsheltered.

Other cities such as San Francisco have a relocation program that buses homeless people out of the city. Last year, former Mayor London Breed mandated city agencies offer relocation before giving shelter or other services.

San Jose Housing Director Erik Soliván said the city will apply a similar approach, but with some key differences. Relocation is voluntary and will be given as an option alongside housing and supportive services. Outreach workers will make contact with family members before reuniting them.

"Part of the lessons learned from San Francisco was we need to do (family) verification upfront. They tried to do it on the back end," Soliván told San José Spotlight. "Beyond that ... we're not putting any expectations on our outreach workers that they're going to continue management post landing (of people) at their destinations."

Homeless advocates such as Robert Aguirre question if the program is realistic. He said some unhoused people may be estranged

from their families, who may not be capable of caring for them. He said the program shifts away from what he'd like to see more of: permanent supportive housing.

"It also is turning away from the real issue and the responsibility to house people," he previously told San José Spotlight.

Brenda Womack, who was formerly homeless and now lives with her daughter in Oregon, said reuniting with family members only works if you have a good relationship with them.

"That's the most important part," Womack told San José Spotlight. "I am with my family and I'd rather be with them."

Since it is a pilot program, Mahan said he doesn't yet know how much interest there will be in relocation.

"Our goal is to offer them options," Mahan said. "But as you know, far too often, we can't offer someone housing or even shelter, because we just don't have it."

Kama Fletcher, director of development at nonprofit Neighborhood Hands, said this program is important to some of the homeless people they serve. A couple weeks ago, she spoke with a homeless person who slept outside during the heavy storms. He told Fletcher he needed to get to Novato where his partner's brother lives but couldn't afford the bus ticket.

"While the humanitarian crisis playing out on our streets is overwhelmingly due to a severe lack of affordable housing in San Jose — which is an issue we cannot ignore or downplay — it is also true that our unhoused neighbors face many barriers in their extremely unique journeys out of homelessness," Fletcher said.

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The Sorrow of Yarrow

By **Matthew Frazier***Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper
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Evergreen Valley is a vibrant, historically rich jewel nestled in the heart of San Jose, California.

Its captivating history weaves together tales of Mexican land grants, trail-blazing aerospace innovations, and the establishment of a thriving educational community.

Rancho Yerba Buena

Our journey begins with the legacy of Antonio Chaboya, the esteemed recipient of Rancho Yerba Buena, the heart of modern-day Evergreen Valley. The enduring influence of the Chaboya family is palpable throughout the area, with landmarks like Chaboya Park, Chaboya Road, and Chaboya Middle School standing proudly as testaments to their lasting contributions, imbuing the community with a sense of heritage and pride.

Gliding into History

Flash forward to 1911, when the skies over Evergreen Valley witnessed a revolutionary movement in aeronautics! John J. Montgomery's intrepid spirit soared as he conducted groundbreaking gliding experiments, paving the way for future innovations. His most notable creation, "The Evergreen," is now home at the San Diego Air and Space Museum, a constant reminder of our valley's adventurous legacy and pioneering spirit.

**A Hub of Learning**

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Wines of the Valley

We must also celebrate the exquisite Mirassou Winery, established in the picturesque year 1854, which enriches our local heritage with its rich winemaking tradition. While the original sprawling vineyards have evolved into modern housing, the spirit of our valley's winemaking legacy continues to thrive, infusing the community with a touch of rustic charm and history.

As we approach the enchanting vernal equinox, I invite you to wander through our neighborhood parks. This month, let's embark on a vibrant quest through Evergreen Valley, seeking out the native flora that enhances our stunning landscape. A delightful tapestry of native plants interwoven with exotic species awaits your discovery!

Characterized by rolling hills and lush greenery, Evergreen Valley showcases California's enchanting natural

beauty. The California Native Plant Society is deeply connected to Northern and Southern California chapters, fostering our appreciation for the enriched tapestry of flora that surrounds us.

Among the many natural treasures, let's spotlight yarrow—a native plant radiating charm and significance. Beyond its delicate beauty lies its vital role in attracting pollinators that sustain our gardens and landscapes. Nonetheless, it's a bittersweet reality that yarrow is becoming increasingly scarce. So, let's turn this concern into a vibrant call to action!

Your mission? Venture out to local retail and wholesale nurseries throughout San Jose searching for yarrow. One remarkable destination is Collectors Corner at Almaden Valley Nursery, while Capitol Wholesale Nursery is worth the drive! Over the years, I've sourced yarrow for my landscape design clients, discovering a breathtaking array of colors that ignite the imagination.

Let's embrace the exhilarating challenge of locating yarrow this spring and use it to infuse our gardens with life! With your floral shears, snip a cutting and nurture it in your bay window or greenhouse using distilled water and rooting hormones. Every effort you invest will revitalize Yarrow in our community, transforming sorrow into action.

Together, let's cultivate a landscape bursting with the beautiful hues of yarrow—a heartfelt tribute to enrich the splendor of Evergreen Valley!



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Times **Local News**

WWII Airman

Continued from page 1

sailors patrolling the area. Due to the German occupation of Denmark, the sailors were forced to turn over both crewmen where they spent the rest of WWII in a POW camp.

Subsequent searches for his remains were unsuccessful. In 1948, the American Graves Registration Command (AGRC), which sought to recover fallen American personnel in Europe, investigated the crash, but did not locate the remains of McCollum or his crew. He was declared non-recoverable on May 12, 1950.

Fast forward more than half a century later, Royal Danish Navy divers on a training mission in 2019 came across McCollum's WWII aircraft in

about 60 feet of water at the bottom of the Baltic Sea.

The diving team first recovered a .50 caliber machine gun with a damaged serial number, one that partially matched the gun used in McCollum's missing plane. Two years later, the site was cleared of unexploded ordnance and quickly became an archaeological site due to the presence of human remains and other evidence.

Additional dives conducted

On several occasions in 2022, 2023, and 2024, Trident Archæologie, Wessex Archaeology, volunteers from Project Recover, the Royal Danish Navy, and the Langelands Museum teamed up to conduct excavations and recovery operations. Their endeavor was a success as they were able to recover human remains as



A piece of Robert McCollum's planes' wreckage recovered from the bottom of the Baltic Sea.

well as ID tags from two of the crew members. McCollum's dental records along with his DNA tests were conclusive that the identity on one set of remains belonged to Robert T. McCollum. It was a shock to military and civilians alike that McCollum's remains were successfully recovered, nearly intact, after more than 80 years.

Project Recover

Project Recover is a non-profit organization dedicated to finding the remains of our fallen service members. Moline said his team used underwater vehicles to map the crash site, using high-resolution sonar. The organization is headed by Mark Moline, University of Delaware Professor and Co-Founder of the Project Recover Partnership.

For the folks at Project Recover, it's all about bringing closure for families of service members MIA/KIA.

"My engineer is actually the one who found the first signs of remains," Maline said. "We found bits of parachute and the parachute led us to the parachute cords, and then the harness and then the remains," Moline explains. "So yeah, the bone remains were still there."

McCollum's remains were flown to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency's Forensics Lab in Hawaii, cross-referencing the bones with mil-

itary records, pulling DNA from the bones, and eventually cross-matching family members currently living in California and Colorado.

Family DNA sample match

There was a request for family DNA samples and when there is a positive match there, they know who they have. So, it's quite a process that can take around a decade, however McCollum's remains were pushed through the system swiftly, with confirmed recovered status on December 10, 2024.

DNA results

"When I was first contacted by an Army representative asking if I would agree to provide DNA for the possibility of matching my uncle Robert, I immediately agreed, along with my brother and sister in providing DNA samples, but I did not believe a match would be found in my lifetime," said next of kin, Sandy Bellou of San Jose, CA. "When the DNA results came back with a match of 5.87 million to 1, our whole family and everyone involved were astonished. I feel blessed, amazed, and honored to receive the news of Robert's recovery. There are no words that can express the gratitude that I feel for the hundreds of people that worked so hard to accomplish this goal."

Moline said he's proud of the work to repatriate of 2nd LT McCollum, and views it as a major victory, but said there's more work to be done for so many others.

"We need to resolve over 80,000 cases that are of service members that are still missing," he said. "So, we have a daunting task ahead of us. But we do it for the families."

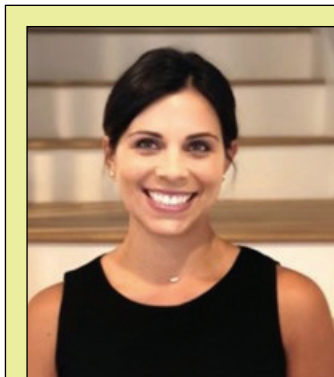
To learn more about Project Recover and how you may donate to the organization, visit <https://www.projectrecover.org/donate-every-americans-mission>

Editor's note: Sandy Bellou is a co-publisher of this newspaper. Look for follow-up stories in our future issues.



An engineer with Project Recover spotted bits of a parachute which led to finding the parachute's cords, and then the harness still attached to the remains.

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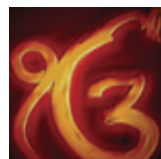

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"As-Salaamu-Alaikum" the English meaning is "Peace be upon you".
Q) What is Islam, who are Muslims, and what is the Quran?
A) Islam is a faith and way of life. Islam began in the 7th century. People who follow Islam are known as Muslims. The Quran 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
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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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Hall, Parish Office, Mission Center, Parish Gift Shop, and Memorial Garden are all located at 5111 San Felipe Rd. Please come join us in worship at any of the following times in our Chapel: Weekdays (M-Sa) at 8:30 AM; Saturdays at 4:00 PM (English) and 5:30 PM (Vietnamese); Sundays at 8:00 AM (English), 10:00 AM (English), 12:00 PM (English), 4:00 PM (Vietnamese), and 6:00 PM Youth Mass (English). The Villages Gated Community also features a Mass on Sundays at 8:15 AM at the Cribari Auditorium. For more information, please call or visit us at the Parish Office 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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