

Nearly 6 out of 10 third graders scored below grade level on California's reading tests
SEE PAGE 4



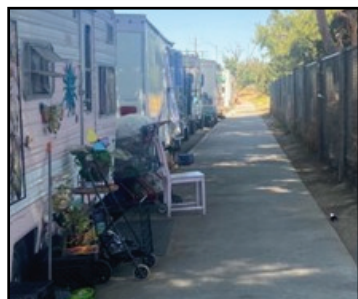
Mahan wants 1,000 city workers to have AI tools, be up to speed on ChatGPT
SEE PAGE 9



AUGUST 2025 ■ VOL. 34, NO. 8

Willow Glen Times

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RVs and vehicles parked with expired tags in San Jose could be immediately towed starting Aug. 7. File photo.

San Jose to cite and tow vehicles with expired tags

August 7 deadline fast approaching

By Joyce Chu
San José Spotlight

San Jose plans to clamp down on vehicles with expired tags, which will affect thousands of homeless residents across the city.

Starting Aug. 17, vehicles with a registration more than six months out of date may be immediately towed without warning. This crackdown on expired registration will hit homeless people living in their vehicles. The city has more than 2,000 lived-in vehicles, and about 36% have expired registration.

"It's going to be horrible, these people (will) have no place to go," Rudy Ortega, who lives in Columbus Park where dozens of RVs are encamped, told San José Spotlight. "These people are going to be forced into encampments they don't want to be in."

California law requires a vehicle to have up-to-date registration if it's driven or parked on public roads, but enforcement hasn't been a priority due to the city transportation department's small parking compliance unit.

See TAGS, page 10

Spirit of '45 Day

WWII living history event and 1940s Swing Dance at History park August 16

By William Bellou
Publisher

Take a trip back in time to the 1940s with live big band music, swing dancing, fashion and car shows, a WWII tent city,



History Day concludes with President Truman's announcement of Japan's surrender, and a homecoming victory parade.



A parade paying tribute to the end of World WWII at last year's Spirit of '45 event at History Park in San Jose. Every August, the end of WWII is celebrated, and this year marks the 80th anniversary of that date.

homecoming parade, food trucks and activities for the whole family at this year's Spirit of '45 Bay Area event celebrating the end of WWII Saturday, August 16 from 2 p.m. – 10 p.m.

Since this year marks the 80th Anniversary of the end of WWII, the Spirit of '45 Bay Area celebration will be a special one. On August 14, 1945, the day President Truman announced that the most destructive war in human history was over, spontaneous celebrations broke out around the world.

As the sun goes down, the victory celebra-

tion continues as History Park transforms into a USO-style swing dance under the glow of the Electric Light Tower. The sounds of a live big band will have you jump and jive to the music of the 1940s.

Preservation of honor

Since 2007 an alliance of organizations and individuals have been working together to preserve and honor the legacy of the men and women of America's WWII generation so that their values and achievements will continue to inspire future generations - especially the youth

See SPIRIT OF '45, page 5

National Night Out to be held Aug. 5

By William Bellou
Publisher

More than 38 million neighbors across more than 16 thousand communities around the nation will participate in National Night Out held on August 5.

The event is an annual community building campaign that promotes police and community partnerships and neighborhood spirit to make our neighborhoods safer, more caring places to live.

National Night Out is a crime prevention event that is sponsored nationally by the National Association of Town Watch and co-sponsored locally by the San Jose Police Department.

National Night Out is designed to:

- Strengthen neighborhood spirit and police/community partnerships
- Heighten crime prevention awareness
- Generate support for, and participation in, local crime prevention efforts
- Build connections within the community and get to know your neighbors

On Tuesday, August 5, neighborhoods participating in National Night Out throughout San José are asked to join in a city-wide effort to strengthen their community through various gatherings. Light up your street by turning on outside lights and spending the evening with your community and local police department. It is an evening full of crime prevention tips, community member messages, music, giveaways, and fun.

For questions or event information contact the Crime Prevention Unit at (408) 277-4133.



The event is an annual community building campaign that promotes police and community partnerships and neighborhood spirit.

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Photo by Valcohen Photography

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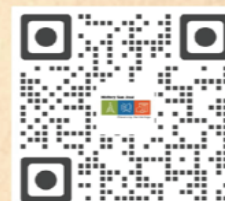
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Event Parking: \$10



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Meet and Greet

Spirit of '45 is a program of the Digital Clubhouse Network, a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization

Far too many California children can't read

Nearly 6 out of 10 third graders scored below grade level on California's reading tests during most of the last decade

By Denise Amos

Groups supporting Black students, such as the state's NAACP chapter, urged a switch to phonics. But other groups supporting English learners and bilingual students wanted to keep the state's current, flexible instruction system, which features other disciplines that also help kids pick up English.

The result: inertia and stagnant test scores.

California ranked 40th last year in fourth-grade reading on national tests. For Black fourth-graders, California tied for last place with only 7% proficient, and for Latino students, it tied for 24th place with 19% proficient.

This isn't just an academic prob-

lem.

Kids who don't read by fourth grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school. We know what follows.

When the California Assembly passed a bill last week adopting the so-called "science of reading," a literacy approach that emphasizes phonics, it was a sign of progress. More than 40 states have taken similar measures, but California was one of the last holdouts. Now it's up to Gov. Gavin Newsom.

System hid struggles

It shouldn't have taken so long.

Until now, most of California's districts used one of a handful of reading instructional systems. Mostly they encouraged students to recognize words via memorization, or guess words based on the context of a sentence or the pictures illustrating the text.

That works for some young readers, but for many others the system hid their struggles. Youngsters could look like they were learning to read, even though they weren't. In later grades, when there are no pictures or too many unfamiliar words to memorize, these readers would falter, and their reading troubles would hinder learning in other academic subjects.

This is California's reading crisis. But even with this new bill, the



Children listen to storytime at the Ralph Hawley Head Start Center at the YMCA. California ranked 40th last year in fourth grade reading on national tests, which has sparked concern among early educators in the state. Photo by Florence Middleton for CalMatters

state is not moving far enough, fast enough.

The bill advances phonics and other skills like comprehension and reading fluency, but its adoption is only voluntary. The state would only be encouraging school districts and teachers to revamp their reading instruction, not mandating it.

That was the compromise needed to pass the measure, bill proponents said.

Two similar attempts to make it mandatory failed in prior sessions, after opposition from teacher's unions and some education groups.

That's where the risk lies. Without a mandate that lays down deadlines, it's hard to predict how widespread the science of reading

will be and how quickly it could take hold.

Louisiana and Mississippi, two states not usually known as academic frontrunners, experienced meteoric rises in reading test scores a few years after adopting similar literacy systems. Mississippi moved from 49th in the nation in fourth grade reading in 2013 to ninth in 2024. Louisiana jumped from last place in 2019 to 16th last year.

Both states made their science of reading training mandatory and required districts to adopt the related instructional materials.

California is trying to entice districts with funding.

Newsom has budgeted \$200 million to pay for teacher training, as

See **READING**, page 6

Willow Glen
Times

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<https://www.sjpd.org/community/crime-prevention/security-camera-registration>

Times **Local News**



Spirit of '45

Continued from page 1
of our nation. The 14-acre History Park is home to the largest Spirit of '45 events in the Country, where it was founded.

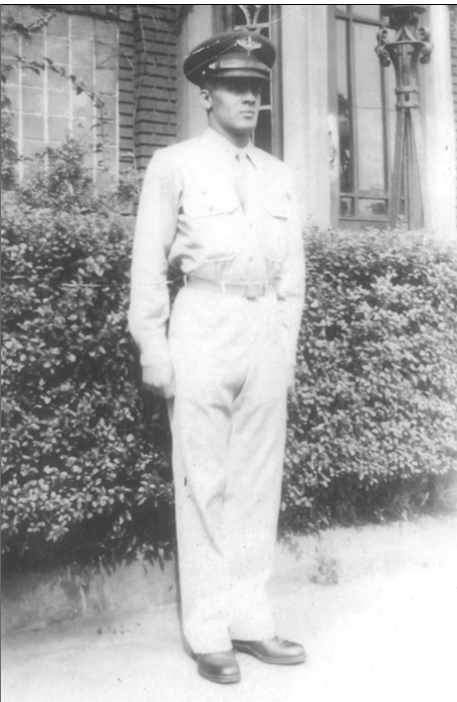
New Home Front gallery exhibit
On Saturday, August 9th, "V" for Victory in the Valley: World War II Stories will open in the McKay Gallery in the Pasetta House at History Park. The exhibit will be open for special extended hours from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. during Spirit of '45.

The new exhibit brings the Home Front experience to life though the stories of San José families that contributed to the war effort, such as Captain Samuel L. Washington's service as a Tuskegee Airman, Edith Smith a Civil Air Patrol Cadet, Marilyn Larson of the Pulpaneck Navy WAVES, and Kristena Nelson De Luz), a Dietician in the Army Medical Corps.

The exhibit displays all of their uniforms, along with artifacts from History San José's collection, including a Civil Defense helmet, a riveter (just like the Rosies used!), a Navy Ships cookie tin, a ration book, and an Army blanket with 187 patches from World War II service members. "V" for Victory in the Valley: World War II Stories will be on view through October on Saturdays and Sundays from 12 noon to 3:45 p.m.

To participate in the full slate of History San José's WWII commemorative activities, view the "V" for Victory in the Valley: World War II Stories exhibit during Spirit of '45 Living History Day on Saturday, August 16. The exhibit will be open for special extended hours from 2pm to 6pm during Spirit of '45.

Tickets are on sale now -- Veterans and Rosies receive free admission. To learn more about Spirit of '45 Living History Day & Swing Dance, and purchase tickets visit <https://tinyurl.com/scesw4nu>



Kristena Nelson De Luz (left), a dietician in the Army Medical Corps, and **Captain Samuel L. Washington**, a Tuskegee Airman are part of the new Home Front exhibit at History Park.

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OSC has opened a new program for women based upon equine interaction and equine-assisted-learning, designed to develop self-awareness and self-acceptance, confidence and resilience, and safe boundaries.

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Contact One Step Closer for more information and to enroll
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Reading

Continued from page 4
part of several literacy initiatives he touted during a recent press conference. The Assembly just passed a budget proposal that includes the funding.

"It's not just rhetoric; there's \$200 million to reinforce that cause," Newsom said.

Also part of those plans, all of California's youngest elementary students will be screened for reading issues starting this fall, and Newsom vowed to spend \$500 million to send literacy coaches and specialists to hundreds of schools around the state.

This certainly sounds good, but as always, the follow-through will determine whether it's politics or progress.

Districts will need more support, because many may not be ready to make a switch. Schools will have to foot the bill for new books and teaching materials. Many districts don't have that kind of money. Some are tackling their own budget deficits and making sacrifices, including laying off teachers.

Civil rights issue

This is going to take a great commitment. The least-resourced districts will need state help affording it. And the state should do some of the work early by vetting the growing list of reading programs being offered to districts, so millions more dollars aren't wasted on curricula and materials that don't move reading scores.

Some school districts have already started transitioning to a more phonics-friendly curriculum. Antoine Taylor, a literacy coor-

dinator for Los Angeles Unified School District, offered a glance at how the science of reading could look in schools. Out of about 20 students in his classes, half are at different stages of learning to speak English. He estimates he's spent about 30 minutes daily working in small groups, much of it on phonics, spelling and learning words.

He said he has folded it into daily reading sessions, but he also continues practicing other skills, such as reading aloud, asking students questions about texts, and getting bilingual students to speak and demonstrate comprehension.

Other teachers, when they get exposed to phonics, will embrace it too, he predicts — as long as they get the training and the books and supplies they need.

"Most of the teachers in the district are aware of the science of reading," said Taylor, who has taught 28 years. "Most teachers want their students to do better."

California's schools have their work cut out for them, educating about 3 million students from low-income families and 1.1 million English learners.

Phonics proponents are optimistic California's teachers will be receptive, though it'll still be years before we see any changes, at least in test scores.

As Marshall Tuck, CEO of EdVoice, recently put it: "We have one of the greatest gaps between high-income kids and low-income kids of any state in the country. This is a civil rights issue that demands urgent action and collective action."

Denise Amos is an editor and columnist at CalMatters.

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How heat can adversely affect your vehicle

By Sean Eastwood
Times staff writer

California's summer climate poses significant challenges not only to air conditioning systems but also to vehicles. Elevated temperatures accelerate battery depletion, increase the risk of engine overheating, and compromise tire integrity. Additionally, the threat of wildfires introduces further hazards that may go unnoticed. Fortunately, most heat-related automotive problems are preventable with proper precautions.

Impact of Heat on Battery Performance

Contrary to common belief, high temperatures are more detrimental to car batteries than cold weather. Elevated heat expedites chemical reactions within the battery, thereby reducing its operational lifespan. A battery that appears to function normally can fail unexpectedly during periods of extreme heat, particularly if it is older than three years. According to California's Car Care Council, summer heat leads to fluid evaporation inside the battery, which damages its internal components.

Recommended actions:

- Test your battery prior to long journeys.



- Remove any corrosion from terminals.
- Replace batteries older than three years.

Increased Likelihood of Engine Overheating

High ambient temperatures place additional strain on a vehicle's cooling system. Chase R. Nacol of AAA emphasizes the importance of components such as water pumps, cooling fans, belts, and hoses in maintaining optimal coolant and airflow. Malfunction of any part of this system can result in engine overheating.

Recommended actions:

- Monitor the dashboard temperature indicator; respond promptly if levels rise above the midpoint.
- Schedule regular inspections and maintenance for the cooling system, belts, and hoses.
- If overheating occurs, pull over safely, deactivate air conditioning, and allow the engine to cool before inspecting coolant levels.

Tire Blowouts and Pavement Temperature

Elevated pavement temperatures combined with underinflated or worn tires significantly increase the likelihood of blowouts. Doug Shupe of AAA Texas notes that deteriorating tire condition, when combined with excessive heat, heightens this risk.

Recommended actions:

- Check tire pressure monthly.
- Inspect tires for cracks or tread wear.
- Ensure that the spare tire is adequately maintained.

Effects of Wildfire Smoke on Vehicles

Wildfire smoke and ash can impair both cabin and engine air quality. The Car Care Council recommends frequent replacement of cabin air filters during fire season, as these filters trap airborne contaminants and preserve interior air quality. Engine air filters require similar attention to protect the airflow sensor and prevent costly damage from particulate accumulation.

Recommended actions:

- Replace the cabin air filter more frequently during wildfire season.
- Utilize the recirculate setting to minimize intake of external air during periods of heavy smoke.
- After exposure to smoke, have the engine air filter inspected and replaced if necessary.

Other Heat-Related Issues

Excessive heat can degrade transmission fluid, diminishing its lubricating and cooling properties and increasing the risk of transmission failure. Regular checks of all vehicle systems are advised to mitigate

expensive repairs.

Recommended Items for Summer Preparedness

Automotive experts advise California drivers to keep the following items on hand during summer months:

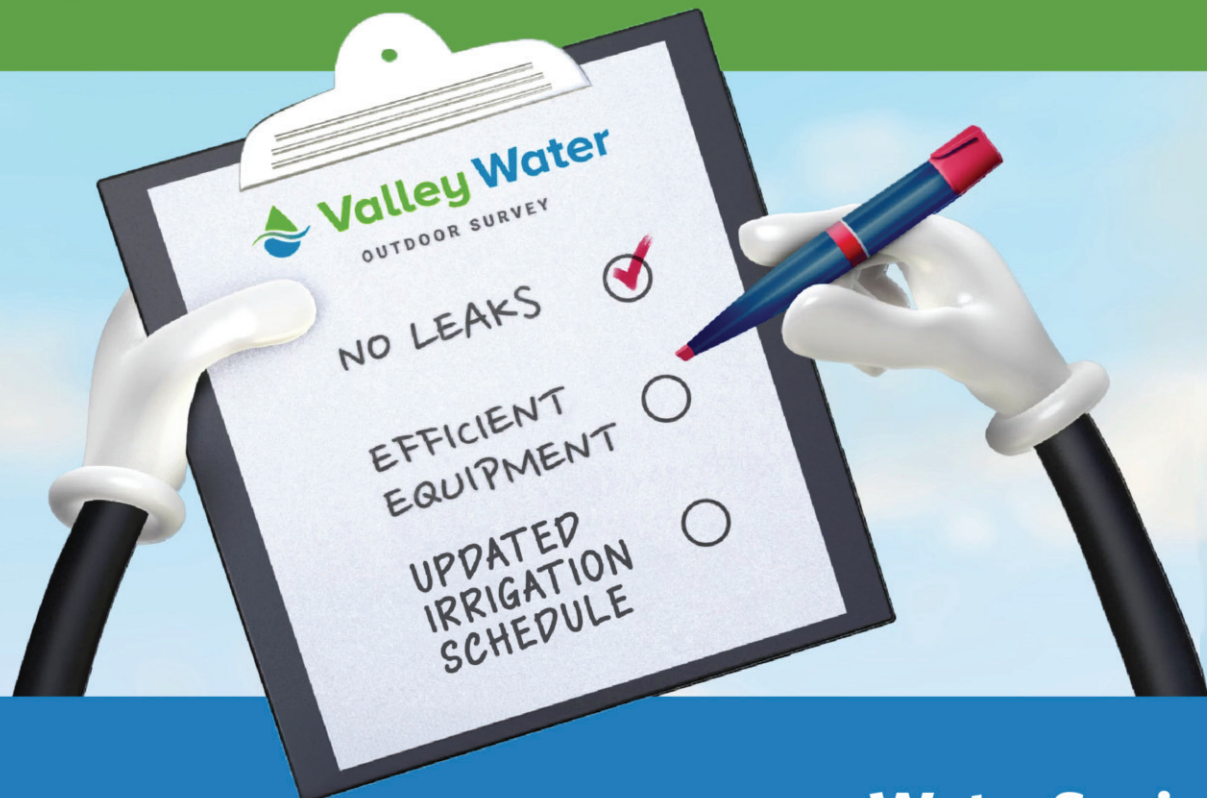
- Water for hydration and emergency radiator use.
- Jumper cables due to increased battery failure risk.
- Spare tire kit, including jack and tire iron.
- Phone charger and portable power source.
- Flashlight with fresh batteries.
- Basic tool kit (screwdrivers, pliers, etc.).
- Emergency contact information for roadside assistance and mechanics.

Guidance for Breakdowns During Summer

In the event of a breakdown during hot weather, experts recommend the following procedures:

- Move the vehicle to a safe location away from traffic.
- Turn off the engine to prevent further damage.
- Activate hazard lights to increase visibility.
- Remain inside the vehicle if conditions permit, using air conditioning sparingly.
- Contact roadside assistance or emergency services as needed.
- Refrain from opening the radiator cap until the engine has cooled.
- Use water to top off the radiator only in dire emergencies, and only if available.

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WATERWISE

Resilient beauties: curating a stunning garden with California's native plants for clay soil

By Matthew Frazier

California is home to a remarkable array of native plants that not only adapt well to the challenges posed by clay soil but also contribute to sustainable landscaping practices. For gardeners eager to embrace this approach, here are exemplary plant choices that demonstrate resilience and beauty.

Shrubs:

California Sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*): This evergreen shrub makes a vibrant addition to any garden with its grey-green foliage and aromatic leaves. Thriving in the harsh conditions of clay and alkaline soils, its drought tolerance makes it a reliable choice for these environments. California sagebrush also attracts pollinators, providing an added benefit to your landscape.

Coyotebrush (*Baccharis pilularis*): Known for its toughness and wild charm, coyote brush is another evergreen shrub that flourishes in clay soils. It produces small, fluffy flower clusters in late summer, which provide food for a variety of birds and insects. Its ability to establish quickly makes it an excellent choice for erosion control and habitat enhancement.

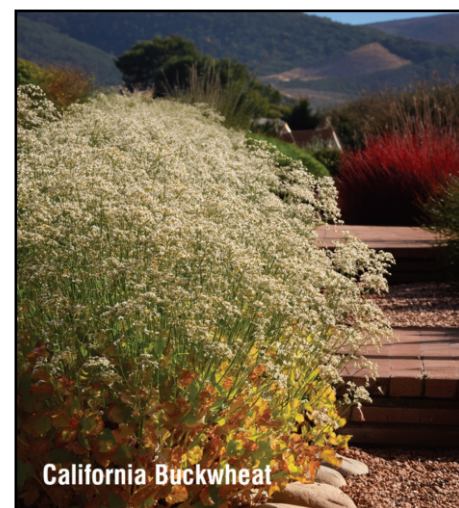
Ceanothus (*Ceanothus* spp.): This genus offers an impressive variety of species that boast exquisite blooms in shades of blue, purple, and white, making them a favorite among gardeners. Many ceanothus varieties are well-suited to clay, providing not just color but also drought resilience. Their unique flowers attract a multitude of pollinators, enhancing the ecological value of your garden.

California Buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*): This perennial is an outstanding choice for clay environments, characterized by its delicate clusters of tiny flowers in various hues ranging from creamy white to pink. Beyond its aesthetic appeal, California buckwheat is an ecological powerhouse, providing vital support for native pollinators and helping with soil stability.

Other Options:

California Redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*): This stunning shrub or small tree bursts into life with clusters of vibrant pink flowers in early spring, which contrast beautifully against its heart-shaped leaves. An adaptable species, redbud thrives in clay soils, offering year-round interest with its attractive branching structure.

Orange Bush Monkeyflower (*Diplacus aurantiacus*): A perennial delight, this monkeyflower dazzles with its vibrant orange blooms, typically appearing in spring and continuing through summer. It's well-adapted to clay conditions and



California Buckwheat



Water Wise
 Matthew Frazier,
 Certified Water
 Manager

attracts various hummingbirds, making it both a visual and ecological asset.

California Yerba Santa (*Eriodictyon californicum*): This perennial herb features strongly fragrant, velvety leaves and clusters of tubular, pale blue flowers. Known for its medicinal properties, yerba santa thrives in clay, offering both beauty and practical applications in herbal remedies.

Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*): Toyon is an evergreen

shrub or small tree known for its striking clusters of red berries that appear in winter, providing food for wildlife. This tough plant thrives in clay soils and is an excellent choice for creating a hearty and vibrant landscape.

Coneflowers (*Echinacea* spp.): Including the popular "Cheyenne Spirit," these colorful perennials flourish in a variety of conditions, including clay soils. Their daisy-like blooms not only add charm to the garden but are also known for attracting butterflies and other beneficial insects.

Coreopsis (*Coreopsis* spp.): Coreopsis, with its cheerful yellow blooms, is a pleasant addition to any garden. These drought-tolerant plants thrive in clay, providing vibrant color while also being hardy enough to withstand varying conditions.

Important Considerations:

Soil Amendment: While these native plants are well-adapted to clays, incorporating organic matter like compost into your soil can immensely improve its drainage and enhance plant vitality. This simple step provides a healthier growing environment.

Specific Cultivars: It's essential to conduct research on specific cultivars, especially within the Manzanita family, as some are better suited to clay than others. Choosing the right variety can mean the difference between a flourishing garden and one that struggles.

Drainage: Proper drainage is crucial in clay soils to prevent root rot and other moisture-related issues. Implementing strategies such as raised beds or amending organic matter can also help protect your investment in these stunning native plants.

By thoughtfully selecting and nurturing the right native plants, you can cultivate a thriving, sustainable garden that celebrates the rich biodiversity of California while effectively addressing the challenges presented by clay soil. Happy planting!

If you have a question or suggestion for this column, email KitchenFraiser@hotmail.com.

Times **Community News**

IN MEMORY

Maureen E. Ryan
July 14, 1947 - July 6, 2025

Stone Church Board Member

Maureen was born in Fort Thomas, Kentucky to Elmer and Betty Veneman. She was educated through college in Kentucky's Catholic schools.

After graduation, she went to work for AT&T; First in Cincinnati, then New Jersey, New York City, and finally climbed the corporate ladder transferring to CA as a network design analyst and global sales representative.

After retirement from AT&T, she represented an exclusive line of ladies clothing. She took those skills to the Career Closet where, with the help of her clients, she

dressed women for success as they tried to re-enter the work force.

She dedicated her time, talent, and treasure to Stone Church of Willow Glen where she served on a variety of boards, committees, and governing bodies. She also sang in the church choir.



She enjoyed golf and was once the Handicap Champion at The Villages Golf and Country Club. Also, her beach house in Aptos and travel with her husband Michael were sources of great pleasure. She loved The Villages where she resided for twenty-eight years.

Maureen was an elegant lady and a beautiful soul who will be missed by family and friends alike. Any donations should be made in Maureen Ryan's name to the Career Closet and/or Sacred Heart Community Center. A special thanks for the love and care of Tam Votothe.



Mahan wants city workers to have AI tools

Mayor would like 1,000 to be up to speed on ChatGPT

By William Bellou
Publisher

Before San Jose Mayor Matt Mahan attends a ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new business, his staff consults ChatGPT to assist in drafting talking points.

"Elected officials engage in substantial public speaking," noted Mahan, whose recent schedule has included events ranging from restaurant and semiconductor startup openings to a festival highlighting lowriding car culture. While some politicians may hesitate to disclose chatbot assistance in speechwriting or budget preparation—such as drafting a \$5.6 billion fiscal plan—Mahan aims to set a transparent example. He is encouraging many of the nearly 7,000 government employees serving Silicon Valley's largest city to adopt artificial intelligence technologies.

According to Mahan, integrating AI tools can streamline repetitive tasks and enable the city to provide more effective service to

its approximately one million residents. Although he is not alone in advocating for an "AI-first" strategy among public and private sector leaders, some organizations have found that implementing these technologies can introduce additional challenges or errors.

The mayor would like 1,000 employees, about 15% of its workforce—to be trained in AI applications by next year. These will include responding to pothole complaints, optimizing bus routes, and employing vehicle-tracking surveillance cameras to aid law enforcement efforts.

"Our approach encourages experimentation, transparency, identification of issues, collective problem-sharing among agencies, and collaboration with vendors and internal teams to resolve them," Mahan explained. "Adopting new technologies always entails some challenges."

Andrea Arjona Amador, head of electric mobility programs at the city's transportation department, was among the first to utilize these tools. She leveraged ChatGPT to secure a \$12 million grant for electric vehicle chargers by creating a customized AI agent to organize correspondence related to various grant proposals and manage critical deadlines, streamlining the preparation of a 20-page application.

To date, San Jose has invested over \$35,000 in acquiring 89 ChatGPT licenses—each valued at \$400—for municipal staff, according to sources.



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Times Local News

Tags

Continued from page 1

There are at least 4,200 vehicles with tags six months or more past expiration, a city analysis of 2022-2023 California Department of Motor Vehicles data found.

Six parking enforcement officers will patrol the streets and ticket or tow vehicles with expired registration. The team will be comprised of three new officers and three officers shifted from other programs. In addition, the city is planning to bring four officers to ticket RVs that have been parked for an extended time on streets in lesser impacted areas, with the intention to get them to move elsewhere. The cost for both programs is expected to be just more than \$1 million this fiscal year, with ongoing costs of \$1.1 million, taken from the general fund. Revenues from citations are expected to bring in approximately \$55,000 this fiscal year and \$125,000 in future years.

"We've always thought that the (transportation department should) not be punitive. We strive for compliance," Colin Heyne, spokesperson for the city transportation department, told San José Spotlight. "But we and the councilmembers and the mayor have gotten lots and lots of complaints about expired registration."

Heyne said the plan is to ticket vehicles with tags that are six months to a year expired, and tow vehicles with expired registrations of more than a year, though it depends on factors like the condition of the vehicle.

"We want to get the registration fee in part because it pays for safety improvements on our streets," Heyne said. "So it helps improve the streets for everybody."

Heyne said the city won't tow a vehicle if someone is inside. Instead, workers will contact the police department for assistance to vacate the vehicle before removing it. The department has no plan to coordinate with the housing department or nonprofits to offer services for people who could be displaced, he added.

Ortega is living in a pop-up camper and has a car with tags that expired more than

a year ago. He can't update his registration because the car can't pass a smog test, and he doesn't have the money to fix it. He said his life would be upended if his car gets towed.

"I wouldn't be able to work. I would then have no money to survive," Ortega said.

The planned enforcement of vehicle tags comes as San Jose expands a program to ban lived-in vehicles on designated streets across the city. Last year, the city instituted temporary RV bans across 30 highly impacted zones through the \$1.6 million pilot program known as Oversized and Lived-In Vehicle Enforcement (OLIVE). The city plans to enforce the ban across 50 more sites this fiscal year at a cost of \$1.9 million. The new tow-away zones are concentrated in District 7 and near San Jose Mineta International Airport.

The pilot program added a supportive enforcement feature. San Jose will ticket lived-in vehicles parked in lower-priority sites to encourage residents to move.

"We have to be smart and strategic with limited resources, and we feel this move, along with our expanded enforcement of oversized and lived-in vehicles, will address some of the most common parking-related complaints we hear," John Ristow, director of the transportation department, said in a statement.

Homeless advocate Gail Osmer, who works with people living in their RVs, said sweeps and temporary tow-away zones simply move people from one neighborhood to another.

"What a waste of money," Osmer told San José Spotlight. "Not a lot of people have been going out and offering them any kind of services."

The city has two safe parking sites, one on Berryessa Road and another at the VTA Santa Teresa light rail station, where people can park their RVs without fear of getting swept. The combined 128 spaces across both sites isn't enough for the more than 2,000 people living in their vehicles.

"We need at least four, five more (safe parking) sites," Osmer said.



San Jose legendary community leader Frank Falcini dies SEE PAGE 4

Air Force Cadet Athena Chang of San Jose is selected as the Student of the Year SEE PAGE 6

Willow Glen Times

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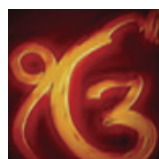
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