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Almaden Times

DEC. 19, 2025 - JAN. 1, 2026 ■ VOL. 38, NO. 26

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Toy Box distribution shortage reported by Sacred Heart

As Sacred Heart Community Service continues its 61st Annual Holiday Program, the organization is facing an urgent shortage of toys just days before its Toy Box distribution begins.

Sacred Heart's Toy Box Program opened for pre-registered families, allowing parents and caregivers to select new toys for their children from Sacred Heart's Pop Toy Room. The program serves children ages 1 to 17 and provides three toys per child. This year, Sacred Heart aims to distribute 18,000 toys to 5,000 children, but current inventory levels fall far short of that goal.

Sacred Heart is urgently requesting donations of new, unwrapped toys and monetary contributions to ensure every registered child receives gifts.

Community members can drop off toy donations at Sacred Heart's donation station at 1381 South First Street, San Jose Thursday, December 18: 7:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. and Friday, December 19: 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Financial donations can be made at: www.sacredheartcs.org

San Jose Dance Theater's 60th anniversary Nutcracker performances to feature 'Chimney Sweep' cameo roles

In celebration of the 60th Anniversary of The Original San José Nutcracker, San Jose Dance Theatre is delighted to introduce a special new tradition: Guest Community Chimney Sweeps, featuring notable local leaders and beloved public figures in cameo appearances throughout Nutcracker weekend.

Traditionally, chimney sweeps have long been considered symbols of good fortune — folklore says that shaking a chimney sweep's

See *NUTCRACKER*, page 8

San Jose residents to get rebates on energy bill in January

By Keith Menconi
San José Spotlight

Customers with San Jose Clean Energy, the city's primary energy provider, are set to get a break on their energy bill come January.

With the company's reserves flush with cash, it has announced a plan to distribute \$25 million in rebates to about 330,000 of its customers.

"Energy costs were lower than expected in 2025, which allowed (San Jose Clean Energy) to build reserves beyond what is required for financial stability," company representatives wrote in a news release. "Because (San Jose Clean Energy) is community-owned, those dollars don't go to shareholders — they go back to customers."

The pot of rebate money will be split 50/50 between the city-backed energy seller's commercial and residential customers.

For residential customers, who make up the



San Jose's solar project in Kern County. Photo courtesy of San Jose Clean Energy.

vast majority of the company's customer base, that comes to a one-time flat bill credit of \$40. The rebate will appear on their January PG&E bill as a separate line item labeled "SJCE Community Energy Credit."

Eligibility for the rebate extends to nearly all residential customers in good standing with the company as of Oct. 27, the release said. The one exception is the roughly 11,700 customers who have produced more energy than they have consumed over the past 12 months, typically because they use solar panels. These cus-

tomers will be excluded because they have already received surplus energy payments.

Meanwhile, commercial customers will receive rebates ranging from \$130 to \$3,760 depending on the quantity of energy they consume.

The city launched San Jose Clean Energy in 2019 as a means of providing residents with electric power from low-emission sources, including wind, solar, geothermal and hydroelectric. Today, the company sells energy to

See *REBATE*, page 8

HomeFirst hosts 'Beers & Bows' holiday gift-wrapping event

Supports children who are experiencing homelessness

By William Bellou
Publisher

HomeFirst recently hosted Beers & Bows, a community event where volunteers wrap presents for children experiencing homelessness. The event was held at Hapa's Brewing Company in Willow Glen.

"The holidays can be a time of joy and abundance for some, but a challenging time for others," said Annette Pizzo, HomeFirst Director of Community Engagement. "With Beers & Bows, we aim to reduce stress for parents and ensure that all children - despite their families' financial circumstances and housing status - are able to receive a holiday gift and feel the holiday spirit."

HomeAid Northern California generously



Volunteers display some of the presents wrapped for homeless children during HomeFirst's sponsored event Beers & Bows; a volunteer wraps a present ready for delivery to a child experiencing homelessness.

donated enough presents for the approximately 430 children whose families are served through HomeFirst's Santa Clara County-based programs. The gifts include Legos, games, soccer balls, dolls, action figures, art supplies, toy cars, and books. The presents, which are suited to a variety of ages and interests, will be distributed to parents by HomeFirst staff.

About HomeFirst

HomeFirst is a nonprofit organization work-

ing passionately to end homelessness. We serve the Bay Area community through low-barrier programming (prevention, outreach, shelters, and interim and permanent housing programs) and systems leadership — meeting each person where they are by offering support and resources that address immediate and long-term housing needs. The agency is currently honoring its 45th year of service.



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Times **Community**

Sacred Heart is issuing urgent call for donations of frozen turkeys, hams, and chickens for Christmas

By Sean Eastwood
Times staff writer

Sacred Heart Community Service has issued an urgent call for donations of frozen turkeys, chickens, and hams to meet their goal of distributing Christmas food boxes to 3,200 community members starting Monday, December 15th.

Sacred Heart relies on the generosity of neighbors to help ensure every family has a joyful, nourishing holiday meal. Donations can be dropped off at 1381 South First Street in San Jose during the hours listed below.

Each Christmas

food box contains about 50 pounds of 6 non-perishable goods, fresh produce, bread, and a choice of turkey, chicken, or ham, totaling about \$200 worth of groceries.

With rising food costs and ongoing cuts to SNAP benefits, these holiday boxes offer relief to families making difficult choices between rent, fuel, and food.

Hours: Monday to Thursday: 7 am to 4 pm
Saturday: 9 am to 12 pm

1381 South First Street, San Jose, CA 95110

Make a monetary donation:

<https://www.sacredheartcs.org/holidays25>

To donate food items or make an online gift, please visit <https://www.sacredheartcs.org/holidays25>.

To volunteer, visit <https://www.sacredheartcs.org/volunteer>.



San José Public Library reveals top checkouts of 2025

San José Public Library members' reading trends feature a children's favorite as overall leader for a second year in a row.

As another year comes to a close, San José Public Library (SJPL) is excited to share the most checked out titles by its library members in 2025.

From humorous graphic novels to transforming historical fiction, this year's top picks celebrate the diverse interests of our community and highlight the library's pivotal role in fostering a love for reading and learning.

The following titles are the top checked-out books of 2025 at SJPL:

Taking the crown as the most checked-out title in the "Adult" age group, Kristin Hannah's *The Women*, sweeps readers into a compelling coming of age story.

The prequel to *The Hunger Games*, *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* by Suzanne Collins, remains the top pick for "Teen"

readers for two consecutive years.

Once again, a Dav Pilkey title shines on top in the "Children" age group, *Dog Man: The Scarlet Shredder*, was the most checked-out title for that age group.

Dog Man: The Scarlet Shredder by Dav Pilkey also claims the number one spot as SJPL's top checked out book across all age groups, genre, and formats, exemplifying the unquestionable popularity of the Dog Man series. For a second year, author Dav Pilkey is one of only two authors listed in SJPL's top ten Children's book-list.

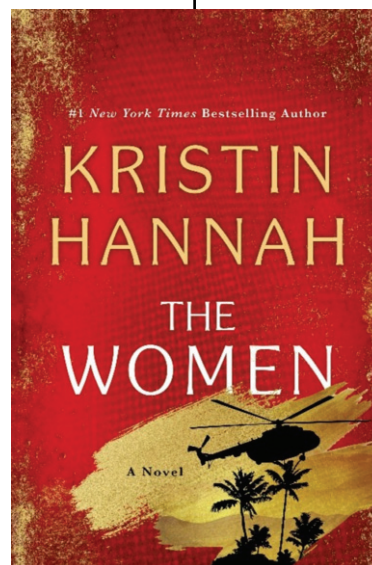
View the complete list of the San José Public Library's top ten borrowed books in the adult, teen, and children's age group at: <https://www.sjpl.org/BestOf2025>.

There, you can also view the top five checked out books in Spanish, Vietnamese, and Chinese, regardless of age, genre and format.

SJPL serves over 760,000 library card-

holders and recorded an impressive 8.1 million items checked out over the past year. To borrow items from SJPL, all you need is a library card, which is free, easy, and rewarding to have.

For more information, visit: [sjpl.org/membership](https://www.sjpl.org/membership)



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EXECUTIVE EDITOR
WILLIAM D. BELLOU
williamb@timesmediainc.com

ADVERTISING SALES
WILLIAM D. BELLOU
408-494-7000

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

ART DIRECTOR
JEFF BAHAM
graphics@timesmediainc.com

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

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
SANDY BELLOU

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The best Christmas present

By Kevin Larsen
Special to the Times

As the holiday season approaches, I often find myself reflecting on its true meaning. With age comes perspective, and the spirit of Christmas prompts deeper contemplation each year.

One evening, a vivid dream brought me to the North Pole. Welcomed warmly, I joined the elves in their workshop and enjoyed a cup of hot chocolate topped with melting marshmallows. The camaraderie of the elves and the presence of Rudolph were reminders of the kindness found at the Pole.

Soon after, Santa Claus arrived, greeted respectfully by everyone. He approached me directly and posed a thought-provoking question: "What is the best Christmas present one can ever receive?" I suggested it might be something monetary, but he replied, "No, it's free and not everyone realizes what it is." Before I could inquire further, Santa departed, and his question lingered with me for years.

This season, upon reflection, I believe I have discovered the answer. My fondest gift from Christmas was the time spent with family: my



mother preparing a wonderful meal, my father gifting me a football and joining me for a game outside, and the warmth of family embraces. The uplifting music contributed to this atmosphere, underscoring that the intangible gifts of time, love, and care are truly invaluable.

Modern distractions, such as electronics, often detract from these simple pleasures. For many years, I struggled to express affection and appreciation to my loved ones. However, this year, I made a conscious effort to share smiles and care more openly, which I now understand to be the essence of Santa's message.

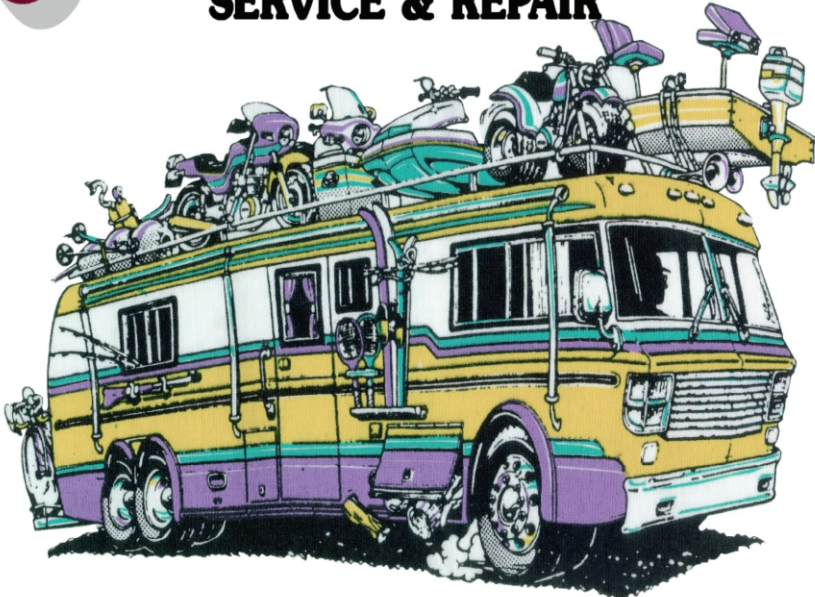
The lyrics for "Silent Night" (Stille Nacht) were written by Austrian priest Joseph Mohr in 1816:

Silent night! Holy night!

*All is calm, all is bright.
Round yon virgin, mother and Child.
Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace.
Sleep in heavenly peace.
Silent Night! Holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight,
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia;
Christ, the Savior, is born!
Christ, the Savior, is born!
Silent night! Holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth!
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth!*

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Times **Local News**

Panetta, LaHood reintroduce bipartisan legislation to simplify retirement savings options for seniors

By William Bellou
Publisher

U.S. Representatives Jimmy Panetta (CA-19) and Darin LaHood (IL-16) reintroduced the Retirement Simplification and Clarity Act.

The bipartisan legislation can provide more flexibility and clearer guidance to Americans navigating retirement savings decisions. The bill would empower individuals with options and digestible information for securing their financial futures.

"Navigating the various methods of saving for retirement can get very complicated, very fast," said Rep. Panetta. "This bipartisan bill helps Americans plan for retirement by making the process simpler and giving them more flexibility. By helping Americans make informed decisions about their savings, we can strengthen their financial security for retirement and the years ahead."

Specifically, the Retirement Simplification and Clarity Act would implement key recommendations from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to streamline the complicated 402(f) notice process. A 402(f) notice is the document provided to

individuals who leave an employer and request a distribution from their 401(k) plans. The notice outlines distribution options and their tax implications.

Under the bill, the IRS would be directed to redesign this notice in clear, straightforward language. The revised version would provide plain explanations of all distribution options, including rolling over savings into a new plan or leaving them in the current one, so that individuals can make well-informed decisions about their retirement funds. Additionally, the legislation would broaden in-service rollover options by allowing individuals aged 50 and older to transfer funds from their employer-sponsored 401(k) accounts into an annuity account.

Most relaxed cities in America listed

Some cities help residents slow down with green space, low congestion, and supportive community amenities, which is so important, especially during the hustle and bustle of the holiday season.

To help you find a little more calm this season, LawnStarter ranked America's Most Relaxed Cities.

The website compared the 500 biggest U.S. cities across seven categories, including mental health, sleep, commute times, finances, and access to outdoor and wellness amenities, among 42 metrics.

Why is LawnStarter ranking the Most



Relaxed Cities? Our front yards welcome us home from stressful commutes and our backyards often are an oasis of calm amid everyday life.

How does San Jose stack up in some key categories for large cities (1st = Most Relaxed)

- Mental Well-Being Rank - 3rd
- Physical Well-Being Rank - 1st
- Environmental Stressors Rank - 3rd
- Financial Well-Being Rank - 6th

How does San Jose compare with other large California cities (1st = Most Relaxed)?

- San Francisco - 2nd
- Irvine - 4th
- San Diego - 5th
- Oakland - 14th
- Chula Vista - 22nd
- Los Angeles - 28th
- Sacramento - 40th

Ranking: America's most relaxed cities:

- 1 San Jose CA
- 2 San Francisco CA
- 3 Seattle WA
- 4 Irvine CA
- 5 San Diego CA
- 6 Plano TX
- 7 Honolulu HI
- 8 Lincoln NE
- 9 Madison WI
- 10 Minneapolis MN
- 11 Raleigh NC
- 12 Chicago IL
- 13 Jersey City NJ
- 14 Oakland CA
- 15 New York NY
- 16 Washington DC
- 17 Austin TX
- 18 Portland
- 19 Gilbert AZ
- 20 Omaha NE



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Gang-related youth crimes a problem for San Jose, need common-sense reform

By Mayor Matt Mahan

Over the last several years, we've watched something deeply troubling unfold in our city: kids—some as young as twelve, thirteen years old—are being pulled into violent crimes by adults who know exactly how to exploit our system. Nearly 1/3rd of all gang-related crimes are committed by youth here in San José.

And the truth is: our current juvenile laws make it easier for gangs to use children as weapons.

Right now, in California, a juvenile under 18 cannot even waive their Miranda rights or speak with law enforcement unless an attorney signs off first. And predictably, attorneys always advise them to stay silent.

So, when a 15- or 16-year-old is being manipulated by an older gang member, we can't ask them to identify the adult, we can't stop the recruitment, and we can't stop the cycle. It's a loophole that gangs understand better than most lawmakers.

At the same time, our sentencing structure for juveniles is vague, inconsistent, and capped in ways that don't match the seriousness of the crimes we're seeing.

Because today, even the most serious offenders often stay in county juvenile hall—and here is the kicker: they have to be released by 25. For example, if a person commits a horrific murder the day before their 18th birthday, and they are tried in juvenile court, the longest they could be sentenced is seven years. No matter if they

show remorse, no matter the nature of the crime, and no matter how much rehabilitation they demonstrate, their punishment is capped.

Transfer to adult court requires proving a young person is beyond rehabilitation, which is an almost impossible standard to meet—even in homicide cases. If they're 13, and committed a serious crime, they may not enter a secure facility at all.

We saw that when a 13-year-old stabbed and killed a 15-year-old at Santana Row over Valentine's Day weekend this year. I hope we don't see that again for the 17 year-old who shot three people and terrorized thousands last weekend on Black Friday at Valley Fair.

All of this adds up to one outcome: adult gang members exploit kids because the system treats those kids as low-risk, low-consequence tools. But it doesn't have to be this way.



From the Mayor
Matt Mahan
Mayor, San Jose

All of this adds up to one outcome: adult gang members exploit kids because the system treats those kids as low-risk, low-consequence tools. But it doesn't have to be this way.

We can protect our kids by pursuing targeted, common-sense reforms:

- Increase penalties for adults who recruit minors to commit crimes.
- Allow officers to Mirandize juveniles—with an adult guardian present—so we can actually identify who is manipulating them.
- Modernize juvenile sentencing so the most serious, violent offenders can be held longer and get real rehabilitation—not a revolving door.

We need to address the loopholes in our criminal justice system. And we need to protect our kids by making sure they have role models, afterschool programming and something productive to do on weekends and summers. But we can't do it alone.

The San José Youth Empowerment Alliance focuses on community-based programming and City-based intervention and neighborhood services.

This year, the City also partnered with the SJ Quakes to put on a pilot program called Saturday Night Lights (SNL), which provided soccer coaching to kids at two

East Side schools. And we saw real results—100% of 8th grade Futsal participants were promoted to high school, including 4 students who were at-risk of being held back, and school attendance went up 30% for program participants. (Thanks to Councilmember Candelas for helping us get this program funded this time around!)

I'm going to do my best to make sure SNL is expanded in the coming year along with another after school program we currently support, the Bay Area Women's Sports Initiative (BAWSI), which harnesses the power of sports to reach young women and students with disabilities, and empower them to develop their leadership and life skills.

Our SJ Sharks also make major investments in the community they call home. They put on numerous programs including Reading is Cool, Stick to Fitness, and a multitude of afterschool hockey clinics and training sessions.

We need more partners like the Sharks and Earthquakes to join us in expanding programming for our young people so there are always safe alternatives to the streets where kids can belong and thrive.

Because our young people deserve better than being thrown into a justice system that isn't built to protect them—and far better than being used as pawns by people who see them as disposable. We need to do better for them and for the future of our city, our state and our country.



The Almaden Senior Association is a diverse group of enthusiastic active adults 50+ who enjoy new learning opportunities, new experiences, and new adventures. Join us today. Meet new people and get involved with classes and programs that will enhance your life and open new doors.

Save the Date:

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Join us for all you can eat soup until they are gone. Four homemade soups served with fresh bread and dessert. Tickets go on sale Monday, January 5th from 8am-10am and every M/W/F in the Almaden Community Center lobby \$14, Cash or check

For more info call Jeanne at 408-425-5723

All events and trips are for those 50 years and over. Payments are cash or check only (sorry no refunds).

Almaden Senior Association
at the Almaden Community Center
6445 Camden Avenue, San Jose, CA 95120
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Please note: I have not and will not be verifying or investigating any information supplied by others.

Times **Local News****Rebate***Continued from page 1*

nearly all San Jose residents, though PG&E still transmits and distributes the power and also handles billing.

San Jose Clean Energy officials said the upcoming rebate is intended in part to offset the expected increase of a state-mandated fee paid by PG&E customers, which could begin Jan. 1.

"Issuing the credit now ensures that customers see a benefit on their

January 2026 bills — typically a high-bill period — prior to the implementation of new (San Jose Clean Energy) rates in March 2026," San Jose Clean Energy Director Lori Mitchell wrote in a memo sent to the City Council.

A spokesperson for PG&E said its rates have declined over the past two years and are expected to drop again at the start of the new year.

City officials say San Jose Clean Energy has benefited from a mild

summer this year, which helped reduce energy consumption and lower costs. With money pouring in, the company's rate stabilization reserve — which will fund the rebate payments — more than doubled over the last fiscal year, reaching \$106 million, according to the memo.

Councilmembers, who oversee San Jose Clean Energy, signed off on the rebate plan during their Tuesday meeting. During deliberations, Mayor Matt Mahan cheered the

rebate and the modest financial windfall it will bring to residents.

"In a time when California's No. 1 concern is cost of living ... I am glad

that we are showing that when we achieve savings, we can return those to folks and do our best to keep rates low," Mahan said at the meeting.

**THANK YOU FROM HAPPY HOLLOW FOUNDATION**

In appreciation of the generosity of sponsors, donors and friends who supported the 2025 Hooray for Happy Hollow event benefiting Happy Hollow Park & Zoo.

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Happy Hollow Foundation is dedicated to preserving and enhancing Happy Hollow Park & Zoo so that it remains a community asset that is highly valued and accessible to all. Scan the QR code to learn more!



The Original San José Nutcracker, San Jose Dance Theatre is introducing a special new tradition: Guest Community Chimney Sweeps, featuring notable local leaders and beloved public figures in cameo appearances at Nutcracker weekend performances. Among those appearing this year are (left to right) **Elizabeth Sweeney**, Executive Director of San Jose Dance Theatre; **Nicole Haskins**, Artistic Director of San Jose Dance Theatre, San Jose Mayor **Matt Mahan**, and **John Torrey**, Board President of San Jose Dance Theatre.

Nutcracker*Continued from page 1*

hand brings luck for the year ahead. In this milestone production, each guest will bring their own magic, personality, and San José spirit to this whimsical role, honoring both the past and future of this beloved holiday production.

"This is such a joyful way to honor our community while celebrating 60 years of Nutcracker magic in San José," says Elizabeth Sweeney, Executive Director of San Jose Dance Theatre. "Each guest sweep embodies the collaborative, community-centered heart of SJD." "

San Jose Dance Theatre is proud

to welcome the following guest chimney sweeps:

Guest Chimney Sweep Appearances

• December 13, 2:00 PM: Viscount Michael North – San Jose Restaurateur

• December 13, 7:30 PM: Elizabeth Sweeney – SJD Alumna & Executive Director

• December 14, 2:00 PM: Ron Murieta – Arts Industry Support Director, San Jose Office of Economic Development & Cultural Affairs

• December 20, 2:00 PM: Shan Berries – Radio Host at Mix 106.5, Founder of Shades By Shan Cosmetics & The MamaBerries Foundation

• December 20, 7:30 PM: Holly Barr – Realtor & Founder of Willow Glen Charm

• December 21, 2:00 PM: Matt Mahan – Mayor of San José

Each guest artist will appear live on stage in their scheduled performance, contributing to the joy, humor, and theatrical sparkle of this long-standing holiday tradition.

This special addition is part of San Jose Dance Theatre's ongoing celebration of its Diamond Jubilee year, honoring the generations of dancers, families, and local supporters who have made The Original San José Nutcracker a cherished cultural landmark for six decades.

About San Jose Dance Theatre

Founded in 1964, San Jose Dance Theatre is a premier nonprofit arts organization dedicated to excellence in dance training, performance, and community enrichment. For 60 years, SJD has brought the magic of The Nutcracker to Silicon Valley and provided world-class ballet education to young dancers across the region.

**Helpful Tips:**

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- 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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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.

G.R.I.T. is for adult women led by OSC founder Landa Keirstead. The small group meets in 2 hour sessions, once per week for six-weeks

Contact One Step Closer for more information and to enroll
one.step.closer@sbcglobal.net 408-778-3567

Times **Local News****Symphony San Jose presents Hopelessly Romantic Jan. 24, 25**

Symphony San Jose presents sweeping melodies, intense emotions, and symphonic brilliance in this program of Romantic greats at the California Theatre January 24th at 7:30 p.m. and January 25th at 2:30 p.m.

Franz Schubert's Overture to Rosamunde was originally composed for the play Rosamunde, Princess of Cyprus and has since become a concert hall favorite, captivating audiences with its elegance and charm.

Geneva Lewis, recognized for expressive artistry and technical mastery of the violin, brings the spellbinding beauty of Jean Sibelius' Violin Concerto to life. From its haunting opening to its fiery finale, it is a breathtaking journey through soul-stirring melodies.

The program concludes with Robert Schumann's Symphony No. 4 as every note pulsates with life, every phrase tells a story, and the music resonates with the full depth of human emotion. Its soaring melodies, rich orchestral colors, and bold harmonic progressions, make Schumann's final symphony



Left: Conductor: **Francois Lopez-Ferrer**. Right: Violinist **Geneva Lewis**



one of his most innovative and deeply personal works.

AN ADDED ATTRACTION: Music Notes occur one hour prior to the concert in the main auditorium and includes an informative discussion, fun facts, insights, and interviews with featured guests. It is free of charge to concert ticket holders and designed to deepen the audience's appreciation of the music to be featured during the performance.

THE PROGRAM:

Franz Schubert: Overture to Rosamunde
Jean Sibelius: Violin Concerto

Robert Schumann: Symphony No. 4

TICKETS: Phone: 408.286.2600; Website: www.symphonysan-jose.org

Email: jmeyers@symphonysan-jose.org

Box Office Ticket Hours: Monday through Friday, 10am to 5pm.

SPECIAL DISCOUNTED YOUTH TICKETS:

Youth Single Tickets: Adult patrons may purchase single tickets for accompanying guests 17 years of age or younger at half price. Contact Ticket Office for more information.

History San Jose looks forward to 2026 events

By **Bill Schroh, Jr.**

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Kwanzaa Wishes, and Happy Holidays!

As we close out 2025, I would like to thank all of you for your support of History San José over the past season. Whether you attended an event or festival, visited the park, became a member, or gave a donation, your support means the world to us!

Without supporters like you, we would be unable to offer new events and festivals, create exciting education programs, and provide you with the best museum experience we can offer! Just because the year is almost up doesn't mean that our work at HSJ comes to a halt. Yes, we will take a breath, enjoy the Holidays with our families and friends, and

regroup- but we are also hard at work planning our amazing 2026 season!

As you all know, history can be viewed through many different lenses. Two people could live through the same moment, but their narratives are often very different. This is happening at History Park right now! We will be looking at the mid-1960s through

two different angles this weekend. First, our brand-new exhibit: South Bay Flashback: Riffs, Rhythms, and Revolution. The exhibit explores the politics of the counterculture that underpinned much of the music of the 1960s through pieces from Bill Guardino's private collection.

Guardino's posters, fliers, underground newspapers and business cards chronicle the bands, venues, publications, and radio stations that made up San Jose's Rock and Roll landscape in the 1960s. Meanwhile, a totally different view of the mid 1960s will be taking place at our annual members' Heritage Holiday Tea. Our midcentury holiday themed tea, complete with silver and pink tinsel trees, period decor, and a

See *HISTORY*, page 11



History San José
Bill Schroh, Jr.
President & CEO

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ry. People who follow
Islam are known as
Muslims. The Quran is
the Divine book that
guides Muslims to

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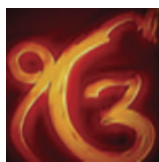


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Times **Local News**

Lawsuit challenges San Jose's license plate surveillance cameras

By Sean Eastwood
Times staff writer

A lawsuit has been filed accusing San Jose and its police department of routinely violating the California Constitution by conducting warrantless searches of the stored records of millions of drivers' private habits, movements and associations with the use of ALPRs.

ALPRs are high-speed, computer-controlled cameras that automatically capture images of the license plates of every driver that passes by. There are currently nearly 500 ALPRs – collecting millions of records per month about people's movements – and keeps this data for an entire year. The cameras, the ACLU suit alleges, represent “invasive mass-surveillance technology without any suspicion that the driver has broken the law.”

The lawsuit, filed in Santa Clara County Superior Court by the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) and American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California (ACLU-NC) on behalf of the Services, Immigrant Rights and Education Network (SIREN) and the Council on American-Islamic Relations – California (CAIR-CA), challenges San Jose police officers' practice of searching for location information collected by automated license plate readers (ALPRs) without first getting a warrant.

The ACLU also has filed a Freedom of Information request, seeking disclosure of records that reveal that immigration agents in California “have threatened, brandished guns, and arrested those who record their raids.”

The lawsuit states: “A person who regularly drives through an area subject to ALPR surveillance can have their location information captured multiple times per day,” “This information can reveal travel patterns and provide an intimate window into a person's life as they travel from home to work, drop off their children at school, or park at

a house of worship, a doctor's office, or a protest. It could also reveal whether a person crossed state lines to seek health care in California.”

The San Jose Police Department currently permits its officers and other law enforcement officials from across the state to search



Automatic license plate reader cameras. Photo courtesy of Electronic Frontier Foundation.

the ALPR database to instantly reconstruct people's locations over time – without first getting a warrant.

“This is an unchecked police power to scrutinize the movements of San Jose's residents and visitors as they lawfully travel to work, to the doctor, or to a protest,” the lawsuit said.

San Jose's ALPR surveillance program goes beyond the norm in most California police departments. Few California law enforcement agencies retain ALPR data for an entire year, and few have deployed approximately 500 cameras.

The lawsuit, which names the city, Police Chief Paul Joseph and Mayor Matt Mahan as defendants, asks the court to stop the city and its police from searching ALPR data without first obtaining a warrant.

The lawsuit contends that the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution protects location information reflecting people's physical movements, even in public spaces.

“The California Constitution is even more protective of location privacy, at both Article I, Section 13 (the ban on unreasonable searches) and Article I, Section 1 (the guarantee of privacy),” according to the suit. “The SJPD's widespread collection and searches of ALPR information poses serious threats to communities' privacy and freedom of movement.”

Homelessness no longer top issue for Bay Area residents

By William Bellou
Publisher

The proportion of Californians who are “very concerned” about homelessness has declined to below 30% percent over the past six years.

According to annual surveys conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California, the percentage of Bay Area residents expressing significant concern about the presence of unhoused individuals in their communities fell from 63% in 2019 to 28% in 2025.

Homelessness remains a primary concern in the Bay Area, as 76% of respondents identified themselves as either “very concerned” or “somewhat concerned.” Only 24% were “not too concerned” or “not at all concerned.”

Cost of living and economic conditions were cited as the leading concerns facing the state by 32% of survey participants. Housing costs and availability ranked second, with 14% identifying it as their top issue. Threats to democracy and problems associated with elected officials were both named by 11% of respondents, while only 6% regarded homelessness as the most pressing statewide concern—a notable decrease from the 20% reported in 2020.



San Jose cleared its largest homeless encampment in Columbus Park earlier this year. Photo by Joyce Chu.

Despite decreasing levels of concern, homelessness in California reached record highs in 2024, with 187,084 homeless individuals accounting for nearly 30% of the U.S. homeless population, based on the latest point-in-time count. Homelessness in Santa Clara County also hit unprecedented levels in 2025, exceeding 10,700 people.

San Jose currently has 6,503 homeless residents, representing an increase of 237 people from the 2023 count; however, its unsheltered population has decreased to approximately 60% (3,959 individuals). This marks an improvement from 2022, when nearly 5,000 were unsheltered and only 1,675 had access to shelter.

History

Continued from page 9

period-inspired menu looks at the art, architecture and clothing styles of the mid-century design movement. Both things were happening at the same time yet show very different views of the 1960s!

While winter is a time of celebration, it can also be a time for reflection. I am sad to report that two important members of the History San José family passed away over the last few months. In October we lost Robert J. Bettencourt, a long-time bene-

factor of History San José. Rob was instrumental in bringing the Pasetta House, which was the home of his grandparents, to History Park.

On November 29th Loc Vu, founder of the Immigrant Resettlement & Cultural Center (IRCC) and the Viet Museum passed away. He founded the Viet Museum in 2008 because he felt that it was important to share the Vietnamese American experience so that future generations would know the stories of their ancestors. These two giants of San Jose will be missed, but their legacies will live on at History San José.

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