

THE OUTLOOK

WEST VALLEY || JANUARY 2026 || VOLUME 11, ISSUE 1 || outlook@sascc.org



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MAYORS OUTLINE THEIR
PRIORITIES
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CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE FOR
AN AGING COUNTY
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Vijay Kumar, owner of T-Birds Pizza, talks with a customer inside the Los Gatos restaurant, where regulars often stop in not just for food, but conversation.
Photo by Mandy Mao

Inside T-Birds Pizza: A Los Gatos story of faith, family, tradition, and community service

BY MENDY MAO

As you walk off the street and into the brightly lit interior of T-Birds Pizza at 444 N. Santa Cruz in Los Gatos, you are enveloped by the scents of baking crust, savory herbs, and exotic spices. Contrary to the howling wind outside, the pizzeria stays warm and welcoming, a reprieve from

the harsh weather. Customers congregate and chat over tables adorned with vintage car decorations.

A Los Gatos favorite since it opened in 1987, T-Birds Pizza came under new ownership three years ago. Now, owner Vijay Kumar and his wife Shabnam Rani continue the pizzeria tradition with a twist — serving pizza on real San

Francisco sourdough crust while introducing flavors inspired by their heritage.

While still serving all the local flavors that made T-Birds a neighborhood staple, the couple has infused their culture into the menu, making T-Birds the only location in Los Gatos to serve butter chicken pizza.

Kumar bought the pizzeria to have more flexibility to focus

on his missionary goals in India. He and his wife aim to use any extra restaurant proceeds to fund school and church development there.

"I sold my old restaurant and bought this one to travel to India and do more work," Kumar said. "We save from whatever we earn, so we have enough money to start the church there in India. We also

started three schools, because at least I can help with the education for the kids."

The couple immigrated in the 1990s and initially struggled, Kumar working long hours as a taxi driver and Rani picking up shifts as a waitress until she decided to pursue a nursing degree. They balanced all this while juggling schedules as

PIZZA, PAGE 7

Sheriff's office aims to curb fraud with educational seminar



Santa Clara County Supervisor Susan Ellenberg hosted Santa Clara County Sheriff's Deputy Robert Yee on her show, "& Just One More Thing," to discuss scam and fraud prevention. Screenshot from the show

STAFF REPORT

As online and in-person scams continue to rise, particularly targeting older adults, the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office will host a free fraud prevention seminar next month at the Saratoga Senior Center.

The "Stop Scams Against Seniors" seminar will take place on Wednesday, February 18, from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. at the center, located at 19655 Allendale Ave. The event is open to the public and designed to help older adults,

FRAUD, PAGE 8

Get prepared for the 2026 primary election

BY AMY VU, PRESIDENT,
LWV OF SOUTHWEST SANTA
CLARA VALLEY

To help you prepare for the June 2 statewide direct primary election, which determines the candidates that advance to the general election in November, let's take a look at how California's primary election system works and which state and county offices are on the ballot.

In California, except for the U.S. President, county central committees, and local

offices, most offices are "voter-nominated." This means that the top two candidates from the primary election, without regard to political party, move on to the general election. General elections for an office are required even if one candidate receives more than 50% of the vote in the primary election. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction and certain special elections operate under different election rules and are not governed by the top-two voter-nominated system.

ELECTION, PAGE 3

STAY INFORMED - January-February

City of Saratoga, Town of Los Gatos, and City of Monte Sereno Council, Commission, & Committee Meetings

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WHO WE ARE

The Outlook is a collection of community newspapers serving Los Gatos, Saratoga, Monte Sereno, Santa Clara, and Cupertino. We deliver accessible, uplifting, and hyperlocal journalism that fosters connection, encourages civic engagement, and highlights the people, events, and everyday moments that enrich community life for all ages.

GET IN TOUCH

Send letters to the editor, story ideas, feedback, and questions to outlook@sascc.org. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

CORRECTIONS

We are committed to accuracy and fairness. If you notice an error or believe a story requires clarification, please email outlook@sascc.org with "Correction" in the subject line. We will review all requests promptly and publish corrections or updates as appropriate.

ADVERTISING

Interested in reaching readers in Los Gatos, Saratoga, Monte Sereno, Santa Clara, and Cupertino? Contact us at advertise@sascc.org for advertising opportunities.

City of Saratoga



PEBTAC (Trails Advisory Committee):

Jan. 20, 4 p.m. (Planning Conference Room)
saratoga.ca.us/350/PEBTAC-Trails-Advisory-Committee

City Council:

Jan. 21, Feb. 4, 18, 7 p.m.
 (Council Chambers)
saratoga.ca.us/241/City-Council

Youth Commission:

Jan. 27, 7-10 p.m.
 (Linda Callon Room)
saratoga.ca.us/337/Youth-Commission

Finance Advisory Committee:

Feb. 9, 4 p.m.
 (Linda Callon Room)
saratoga.ca.us/359/Finance-Advisory-Committee

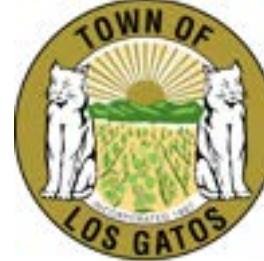
Library & Public Art Commission:

Feb. 9, 7-9 p.m.
 (Linda Callon Room)
saratoga.ca.us/330/Library-Commission

Planning Commission:

Feb. 11, 7 p.m. (Council Chambers)
saratoga.ca.us/357/Planning-Commission

Town of Los Gatos



Development Review Committee:

Jan. 20, 27, Feb. 3, 10, 10 a.m. (Council Chambers)
losgatosca.gov/188/Development-Review-Committee

Note: these meetings are often cancelled. Please check the webpage for updates.

Town Council:

Jan. 20, Feb. 3, 7 p.m.
 (Council Chambers)
losgatosca.gov/16/Town-Council

Community Health and Senior Services Committee:

Jan. 22, 4 p.m.
losgatosca.gov/278/Community-Health-Senior-Services-Commiss

Historic Preservation

Jan. 25, 4 p.m.
 (Council Chambers)
losgatosca.gov/190/Historic-Preservation

Planning Commission:

Jan. 28, Feb. 11, 7 p.m.
 (Council Chambers)
losgatosca.gov/189/Planning-Commission

Parks and Sustainability Commission:

Feb. 2, 6-8 p.m. (Parks & Public Works)
losgatosca.gov/282/Parks-and-Sustainability-Commission

Conceptual Development Advisory Committee:

Feb. 11, 4 p.m.

(Council Chambers)
losgatosca.gov/200/Conceptual-Development

Complete Streets and Transportation Commission:

Feb. 12, 7:30 a.m.
 (Parks and Public Works)
losgatosca.gov/2555/Complete-Streets-Transportation-Commission

City of Monte Sereno



City Council:

Jan. 20, Feb. 3, 7 p.m. (Council Chambers)

Site and Architectural Commission:

Jan. 21 (Special Meeting), Feb. 4, 7 p.m. (Council Chambers)

Agendas & meeting info: tinyurl.com/35w4sdsy

Meeting places, Zoom links, and call-in information are contained in each respective meeting agenda. Agendas are typically uploaded the Friday before each meeting. All meetings are subject to change or cancellation.

Check the meeting links prior to each meeting or call your local town clerk for questions.

Saratoga City Clerk's office: 408-868-1216

Los Gatos Town Clerk's office: 408-354-6834

Monte Sereno City Clerk's office: 408-354-7635





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NEWS & EVENT BRIEFS

BY LLOYD RUSSELL AND BRANDY MADDOX

SARATOGA

LESLIE ARROYO APPOINTED INTERIM SARATOGA CITY MANAGER

The Saratoga City Council has unanimously appointed Assistant City Manager Leslie Arroyo as interim city manager following the departure of City Manager Matt Morley.

Morley, who has served in the role since spring 2024, will leave Saratoga on Feb. 9 to become city administrator for the City of Gilroy, citing family ties and the opportunity to serve his hometown.

Arroyo has been with the City of Saratoga since 2023. The city is preparing to begin the recruitment process for a permanent city manager.

WEST VALLEY COLLEGE AWARDED \$3.9 MILLION FEDERAL GRANT FOR SEMICONDUCTOR TRAINING

West Valley College has been awarded a \$3.9 million federal grant to develop a new semiconductor certificate program, becoming the only California community college selected in this national funding cycle.

The four-year grant, awarded through the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), will support the creation of a semiconductor fabrication lab and workforce training program designed to prepare at least 120 students per year for high-skill, in-demand jobs.

West Valley was one of just 18 institutions nationwide to receive the highly competitive award.

MANASSE NAKAMATSU DUO

On January 23, from 7:30-9 p.m., the world-renowned duo of clarinetist Jon Manasse and pianist Jon Nakamatsu will perform at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church at 13601 Saratoga Avenue. Manasse is the principal clarinetist at the American Ballet Theater Orchestra, and Nakamatsu is the only American gold medalist of the Van Cliburn International Piano Contest. Admission is free with a recommended \$30 donation. More info at tinyurl.com/manassenakamatsduo.

CANDLES N' COCKTAILS

Saratoga Arts will be hosting its annual Candles 'n Cocktails on February 7, from 1-3 p.m., at the Montalvo Arts Center. This is a DIY workshop on

how to make your own soy wax candles by measuring out your choice of fragrance, hand pouring all-natural soy wax, and designing your own label. You will also create beeswax taper candles and a decorated votive candle holder with candles. The cost is \$55 for members and \$60 for non-members. Visit saratoga-arts.org/Candles-N-Cocktails to register.

VILLAGE LOVES NOTES

The Saratoga Village Development Council will host its annual Love Notes in the Village around Valentine's Day. This is a tradition where participants write heartfelt messages that are displayed in business windows along Big Basin Way. The community is invited to stroll, read the love notes, and enjoy the Village's charm.

EVACUATION PREPAREDNESS

The City of Saratoga, in partnership with the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council, will host an evacuation preparedness seminar on Wednesday, Feb. 25, from 5-8:30 p.m. at the Joan Pisani Community Center. The event will feature presentations from emergency response officials, informational resource tables, and practical guidance to help residents prepare for and respond to evacuation situations. The seminar will focus on local procedures, available resources, and concrete steps residents can take to improve readiness. Visit saratoga.ca.us/EvacuationPreparedness to learn more.

LET'S WORK! VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The Saratoga Parks & Recreation Commission invites residents to support local open space through its annual "Let's Work!" volunteer program. Held seasonally on select Saturdays at Quarry Park, the program brings community members together to help remove invasive, non-native plants and protect the park's natural habitat. Volunteer days typically run from November through April, weather permitting.

Volunteers ages 15 and older may participate independently, while youth ages 10-14 are welcome with an accompanying adult. Workdays are scheduled throughout the season, with registration opening in advance for each session. Register at tinyurl.com/saratogaletswork2026.

LOS GATOS

LIONS CLUB CIOPPINO DINNER

The Los Gatos Lions Club is hosting its annual Cioppino Dinner on January 31 from 6-10 p.m. at Howley Hall in St. Mary's Church, located at 219 Bean Avenue. The evening consists of a 4-course dinner, a raffle, a live auction, and a wine locker raffle. The price per person is \$100. Purchase tickets at tinyurl.com/lglionsclubcioppino.

MONTHLY MONDAY MOVIE

The Los Gatos Thrives Foundation hosts a "Monthly Monday Morning Movie" every first Monday of the month at the Los Gatos Theatre from 9:45-12:45 a.m. For \$10, you get a movie, coffee, and a pastry. Everyone is welcome. Visit losgatosthrives.org/monday-movie to see the movie of the month. Founded in 2023, Los Gatos Thrives Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to strengthening community and belonging in Los Gatos, with a primary goal of creating a modern, all-ages community center.

ROTARY CRABFEST

The Los Gatos Rotary Club will have its annual CrabFest and Auction on February 7, from 5-7 p.m. This is their biggest fundraiser of the year and supports local charities and scholarships. The evening will consist of all the crab, pasta, soup, and salad you can eat, followed by a live auction. The event will take place at St. Andrews Episcopal Church, located at 13601 Saratoga Avenue, in Saratoga. Tickets are \$40 for children and \$100 for adults. Purchase them at tinyurl.com/lgrotarycrabfest2026.

LEARN TO PLAY MAHJONG

Have you always wanted to learn to play Mahjong, the game that was established in China way back in the 19th century? The Los Gatos Library will have a class from 4:30-6 p.m. on February 12 in its Technology Lab. Registration opens on January 22 at 4:30 p.m. The library is located at 100 Villa Avenue. Visit losgatosa.libcal.com/event/15497766 to register.

STEINBECK HISTORY TOUR

NUMU will be hosting the John Steinbeck History Tour on Feb. 27 from 11-11:45 a.m. Most people don't know that Steinbeck was a Los Gatos local! An archivist from the Martha Heasley Cox Center for Steinbeck Studies at SJSU will conduct the tour. Admission is free with registration. Register at numulosgatos.org/events/steinbeck-tour.

What to know about California's June 2, 2026 primary election

ELECTION, FROM PAGE 1

California State Constitutional Offices

State offices are elected every four years in nonpresidential election years, with four-year terms generally limited to two per office. Some officials may serve more than eight years if they were first appointed to fill a vacancy and later elected to two full terms.

All constitutionally defined state offices are up for election this year, including governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, controller, treasurer, attorney general, insurance commissioner, and members of the State Board of Equalization.

California State Legislature

There are 80 members of the State Assembly and 40 members of the State Senate. Assembly members serve two-year terms while Senate members serve four-year terms.

Members of the Assembly and Senate elected in 2012 or later may serve a maximum of 12 years in the California State Legislature, whether in the Assembly, the Senate, or a combination of both.

Members of the Assembly and Senate who were elected prior to 2012 can serve two four-year terms in the State Senate and three two-year terms in the State Assembly.

All State Assembly offices are up for election in 2026. Only even-numbered State Senate districts will hold elections this year.

STATE LEGISLATURE	CURRENT REPRESENTATIVE	FIRST ELECTED	CAN RUN FOR RE-ELECTION?
Assembly, District 23	Marc Berman	2016	Yes
Assembly, District 24	Alex Lee	2020	Yes
Assembly, District 25	Ash Kalra	2016	Yes
Assembly, District 26	Patrick Ahrens	2024	Yes
Assembly, District 28	Gail Petrelli	2022	Yes
Assembly, District 29	Robert Rivas	2018	Yes
Senate, District 10	Aisha Wahab	2022	Yes

To find out which district you live in, use the Find My Representative tool on the California State Assembly website, assembly.ca.gov/assemblymembers/find-my-rep.

United States House of Representatives

California has 52 representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives, all of which are up for election every two years. There is no term limit for U.S. House members.

Voters should confirm their current district with the California Secretary of State, their county elections office, or at selc.senate.ca.gov/proposed-congressional-map.

The four U.S. House districts representing Santa Clara County currently are:

- District 16: Sam Liccardo
- District 17: Ro Khanna
- District 18: Zoe Lofgren
- District 19: Jimmy Panetta

Santa Clara County offices

Santa Clara County has four elected countywide offices:

- Board of Supervisors (five districts)
- County Assessor
- District Attorney
- Sheriff

In 2026, voters will elect:

- District 1 Supervisor
- District 4 Supervisor
- County Assessor
- District Attorney
- Sheriff

Supervisors serve four-year terms with a three-term limit. All other countywide offices have four-year terms with no term limits.

Greg Monteverde is currently acting county assessor. Neysa Fligor won the Dec. 30, 2025 special general runoff for county assessor and, after certification, will be sworn in to complete Larry Stone's term. Fligor must run again in 2026 if she seeks a full term.

Santa Clara County Superior Court Judges

Santa Clara County has 77 Superior Court judge

positions. In 2026, 29 judges are scheduled for re-election. Superior Court judges serve six-year terms with no term limits. If an incumbent judge files for candidacy and has no opponents, they are re-elected automatically without appearing on the ballot. Find the judges who are up for re-election in 2026 at vote.santaclaracounty.gov/superior-court-california-judicial-officers.

Voters are encouraged to review their districts, learn about the candidates, and confirm election dates and rules through official county and state election resources.

Get to know your mayors

Chuck Page, Saratoga Mayor



Saratoga Mayor Chuck Page (center) alongside his fellow councilmembers at the Council Reorganization where he was appointed mayor for the third time. *Courtesy photo*

I'm honored to be serving my third term as Mayor of Saratoga. I moved here in 1998, and from the moment I arrived, I knew that Saratoga was a special place. There's something about our neighborhoods, the people, and the sense of community here that sticks with you.

I believe in rolling up my sleeves and being part of the solution, not just talking about it. That's the approach I bring to everything I do — whether in business, volunteer work, or city leadership.

Before moving here, I earned a B.S. in mathematics and business administration and started my career at IBM in New Jersey. I went on to hold executive positions at IBM, Microsoft, and several computer sales companies. Later, I applied my technical and sales experience to the recycling and waste management industry before starting my own insurance and financial services business, now located right here in Saratoga, on Big Basin Way.

I love having a business in the historic Saratoga Village. My employees have developed a sense of Saratoga, and when clients visit, we enjoy having restaurants and coffee shops within walking distance. I have gotten to know a lot of the dog walkers and visitors to our community. Running a business in the heart of the community has given me even more insight into how Saratogans feel about various issues and how important it is to support our local economy. Many community members have stopped by my office to ask a question, share their thoughts or, sometimes, get my perspective on an issue. There are days when I think that I should have an egg timer on my desk — three minutes for government

conversations, and then we need to talk insurance or investments. I haven't implemented the egg timer, though, I just care so much about Saratoga that I want to learn more about what every community member is feeling.

Public service has been a constant thread throughout my life. I've been elected to the Saratoga City Council three times (2006, 2010, and 2022), now serving as mayor for the third time, and I've served on a number of regional boards, from the League of California Cities to the Silicon Valley Water Commission and two Saratoga Blue Ribbon Public Safety Committees. The work that I led on the Wildfire Public Safety Committee, and the subsequent city council investment in our recommendations, has led Saratoga to be named one of only 11 cities in the state as a "Fire Risk Reduction Community." That puts our city ahead of others when it comes to insurance companies providing insurance and, eventually, discounts and other benefits.

However, my true passion is at the neighborhood level — connecting with residents, hearing their concerns, and finding practical solutions together. Over the years, I've led initiatives like installing parklets on Big Basin Way to help restaurants survive tough times and worked with groups like the Saratoga Rotary and Friends of Saratoga Libraries.

I'm direct. I call things as I see them. I value honesty, especially when it comes from residents who care about this city. If you have an idea, a concern, or a critique, I want to hear it. There's no bureaucracy that should get in the way of real conversation. For me, leadership isn't about titles;

it's about listening, engaging, and helping our neighborhoods thrive.

Right now, my priorities are centered on keeping Saratoga safe, vibrant, and connected.

That means supporting local businesses, strengthening emergency preparedness, and ensuring that our community spaces reflect the values of the people who live here. I have been committed to creating a more wildfire-aware community and implementing things that will help protect our city in the event of a wildfire. Stay tuned for more information about this in the coming months.

I encourage every resident to get involved, whether through volunteering, attending city meetings, or

simply sharing your thoughts with me. You can email me at cpage@saratoga.ca.us, or connect in person at Office Hours at the Saratoga Farmers' Market the first Saturday of every month, from 10 a.m. to noon. I'm working with staff to have regularly scheduled Meetings with the Mayor, where I'll visit different shops and restaurants in Saratoga and provide listening sessions so that community members can share their thoughts in a casual environment.

Outside of work and public service, I'm a family person. I'm blessed with two amazing daughters, and we just celebrated my grandson's first birthday on Christmas Eve. My wife, Lori, and I got married in

Saratoga a few years ago and I'm absolutely privileged to have two grandsons via her daughter. I enjoy seeing the city through different lenses — whether it's attending a local event, walking the neighborhoods, or just having coffee at a favorite spot. These moments remind me why Saratoga isn't just a place on a map. It's a community worth investing in.

Being Mayor of Saratoga isn't something I take lightly. I'm here to serve, to listen, and to act. And I hope that by getting to know me a little better, you'll feel more comfortable joining the conversation, sharing your thoughts and contributing your time and talents to this city that we all love.



Mayor Page connecting with residents at a rainy Saratoga Farmers' Market on January 3. *Courtesy photo*

Rob Moore, Los Gatos Mayor

As I begin my new role as Mayor of Los Gatos, I am deeply honored to serve the town I love. For those I haven't yet met, my name is Rob Moore. I've served on the Los Gatos Town Council for the past three years, and last month, my colleagues appointed me to serve as mayor.

At 27, I am the youngest mayor in our town's history. I understand that this may raise questions for some, and I welcome them. My hope is that as you get to know me, you'll learn how seriously I take this responsibility, how much I care about this community, and how committed I am to being a mayor for all of Los Gatos — every neighborhood, every generation, and every perspective.

I grew up here, attending Noddin Elementary, Union Middle School, and Leigh High School. Like many who are lucky enough to call Los Gatos home, I spent my childhood biking through neighborhoods, hiking our foothills, and constantly learning what makes this town special. After attending college at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, I made a conscious decision to return home and give back to the community that shaped me.

Before joining the town council, I worked in government at the local, state, and federal levels, as well as in the nonprofit world. Along the way, I learned an important lesson: the closer my work was to the local level, the more tangible and meaningful its impact became.

As mayor, my first responsibility is to listen and respond to the needs of our community.

That's why I've identified five priorities to guide my focus this year — shaped by conversations with residents,

door-knocking at more than 7,000 homes during my campaign, and three years of service on the town council.

In addition to the core responsibilities of every mayor — public safety and sound financial management — my priorities are: housing; youth, seniors, and families; street safety and traffic; preparedness; and community vitality.

Housing will be one of the defining issues of the year ahead. The council is likely to consider a significant number of major housing proposals in 2026, many constrained by state law. My focus will be protecting Los Gatos' character, strengthening local decision-making, reducing legal risk, and expanding affordability. I believe we can best safeguard the town's interests by thoughtfully directing our limited resources toward the proposals most out-of-step with our community's values. I will also pursue initiatives such as promoting pre-approved ADU plans, publicizing renter protections, and advancing a more comprehensive approach to homelessness.

Supporting youth, seniors, and families is essential to our town's future. Our young people face unique challenges, and helping them thrive strengthens the entire community and enhances the lives of our seniors, as well. I plan to create opportunities like Youth Town Halls, encourage intergenerational connection through community service, support the creation of a Los Gatos Community Center, and continue building on the work being done to support our older adults.

Street safety and traffic remain top concerns. I will advocate for practical, visible improvements — from mirrors



Los Gatos Mayor Rob Moore performing his first ribbon-cutting as mayor for the Los Gatos Chamber of Commerce's Magical Memories holiday program. *Courtesy photo*

at Highway 17 off-ramps and red "daylighting" curbs protecting pedestrians at key intersections, to piloting universal bus passes for students.

We've made progress on e-bike safety, and I look forward to sharing more updates in the months ahead.

Preparedness is about ensuring Los Gatos is ready for whatever comes our way — from wildfire to extreme weather. It also means environmental stewardship.

Implementing the statewide plastic bag ban, supporting electrification efforts, and pushing for funding for the Los Gatos Community Garden are all part of that responsibility.

Finally, community

vitality. Los Gatos thrives because of its small businesses, nonprofits, and volunteers. I plan to honor that spirit by recognizing a Small Business of the Month and a Resident of the Month, expanding my communication, and continuing close collaboration with our school districts, the county, and state partners.

These priorities are by no means exhaustive, and the council will collectively tackle hundreds of matters next year, but they reflect my values and focus.

Los Gatos has always succeeded because neighbors with different views are willing to listen, talk things through, and find common ground. I hear clearly from residents

that communication matters. I take that seriously. If you have opinions or ideas, related or not to what I shared above, I would love to hear from you. I will continue to host community coffees, happy hours, and other engagement opportunities. I will also continue sharing information by posting on social media, speaking at events, and sending out my monthly newsletter.

I don't expect everyone to agree with me, but I do believe everyone deserves to feel heard and respected.

That commitment will guide me every day I have the privilege of serving as your mayor.



Mayor Moore gets sworn in alongside Vice Mayor Maria Ristow. Moore's fiancée, Kylie Clark, did the honors. *Courtesy photo*



STRENGTHEN SENIOR SERVICES

Two projects. One community. It's up to us.

Dear SASCC Community,

As we enter a new year, it's impossible not to feel encouraged by the incredible strength and generosity that lives within this community. Time and again, when older adults in our region needed support, you've stepped forward in meaningful ways. That spirit of shared responsibility is at the heart of who we are.

And as we look ahead to 2026, that spirit matters more than ever.

Extensive government cuts to funding for senior services are on the horizon. While we don't dwell on the negative, we're realistic about what this means. It's a bitter pill to swallow, but there are many in the local and regional political world that

see the West Valley as an affluent region, demographically and economically out of touch from the areas of the county that "deserve" the most support. They don't see the poverty, isolation, and food insecurity that exists in the shadows of high tech bedroom communities.

At SASCC, we believe that strong communities act with intention, prepare for the future, and support one another. We must mobilize to reinforce the systems that help older adults thrive.

As we kickoff the new year, we're inviting you to join us in completing two essential projects that will strengthen senior services in the West Valley.

REMODEL THE SARATOGA ADULT CARE CENTER

GOAL: \$150,000

For nearly four decades, SASCC's Adult Day Program has helped older adults with Alzheimer's, dementia, and other cognitive and physical disabilities find connection, purpose, and structure. We offer them the dignity that comes with staying in their community instead of being institutionalized. Despite our tremendous value, the center hasn't seen a facelift since Ronald Reagan was president! SASCC has partnered with the West Valley College Cilker School of Art & Design to refresh the environment so we can continue to serve with the comfort, safety, and beauty our participants deserve.

This remodel honors our history and prepares the Saratoga Adult Day Program for the next generation of care. Your support will fund:

- New flooring for safer mobility
- Upgraded patio and outdoor spaces
- Fresh paint and murals
- New cabinetry and storage
- Comfortable, supportive indoor seating
- Updated outdoor seating for recreation and socializing
- Garden enhancements and landscaping
- Labor and cleanup to bring it all together

MODERNIZE RYDE'S SCHEDULING SOFTWARE

GOAL: \$50,000

Reliable transportation is essential for independence. RYDE helps older adults reach medical appointments, grocery stores, community events, and more. To maintain reliability and meet growing demand, our scheduling system must evolve with the needs of the people we serve.

With your help, we will transition to Via's Microtransit scheduling software, a modern system designed to improve the rider and staff experience.

This investment will supercharge RYDE and enhance the daily experience of older adults, their families, and caregivers throughout our community. This upgrade will:

- Enable online scheduling through a client-facing app
- Offer real-time ride tracking
- Improve driver coordination and volunteer support
- Provide secure in-app payments
- Reduce delays through improved scheduling tools
- Strengthen reporting and program management
- Support plans to expand service areas and increase capacity

Both of these projects are fully restricted, that means every dollar you give will be used for the project you select. If you would like to make an unrestricted donation to fund any of our other programs and services, just mention that in the notes section.

It's up to us. Our older adult community deserves stability, dignity, and high-quality services. With your support, we can strengthen the systems that make that possible. Thank you for everything you do to help us build a community that grows with us as we age. I am grateful for your partnership, your compassion, and your belief in this work.

Warmly,

Tylor Taylor | Chief Executive Officer
Successful Aging Solutions & Community Consulting (SASCC)

P.S. If you would like to schedule a meeting, coffee, or call with me to talk about the details of these projects or our other work, feel free to send me an email at tylor@sascc.org - I'd love to speak with you.



YOUR GIFT GOES EXACTLY WHERE YOU CHOOSE.

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COMMUNITY



Shabnam Rani, Kumar's wife and co-owner of T-Birds, makes the restaurant's special butter chicken pizza. Photo by Mandy Mao

Serving pizza and a purpose at T-Birds in Los Gatos

PIZZA, FROM PAGE 1

parents of two young boys.

"It's not easy for immigrants, it's hard work," Rani said. "A lot of no sleep and stress, a lot of challenges, but we overcome. We want to put in that work so whatever we make here, we can help others. And it gives us satisfaction that somebody will benefit from our work."

Eventually, they saved up enough for Kumar to start his own Indian restaurant in Sunnyvale, which he ran for 13 years. They were able to send their two sons off to college, a milestone that would have been impossible back in rural India.

"First thing when we wake up in the morning, we thank God," Kumar said. "There's no place better than this country. This is the land of opportunity. You can work hard and accomplish anything, even if you don't have education. Our heart was to start something in India to give back. It's only possible because I'm here, in this country."

Kumar and Rani wake up at 4:30 a.m. six days a week to open and run the restaurant. Kumar typically works at the restaurant until 9 p.m., while Rani goes off to her full-time nursing job and returns in the afternoon to help. Despite the difficulties, the couple remain steadfast in their mission, believing strongly in the importance of giving back. In the Bay Area, Kumar has volunteered weekly at West Valley Community Services for six years.

"We have a heart to help others," Rani said. "We want to reach out to those people who need help because we have the resources to help them. So they can [have a] better life, better education."

Kumar and Rani allow a small church called Proclaim Jesus to host its sermons at T-Birds during its closing hours on Sundays from 4-6 p.m., offering free pizza to congregants. Pastor Joe Bieber applauded the couple's kindness.

"Vijay is such a good man of love and kindness," Bieber said. "I see people all the time come over there, and he's giving them free pizza or he knows people by name. People come in there, not to get pizza, but just to talk with them. He's not just a business owner. He's so relational and really cares for the people of that city."

Gesturing outside at the painter who he had just shared a meal with, Kumar explained the warm atmosphere he tries to cultivate in the pizzeria.

"My customers are like family, and I treat them like family," Kumar said. "I want everybody who comes through this door to feel [at home]. That's what my heart is."

Finish painter Adam James Coldsnow met Kumar and Rani six months ago while doing a cabinet install nearby. He stopped in late at night for pizza and became good friends with the couple. As he re-painted the outside

window of the shop as a free favor, he recommended the butter chicken pizza.

"They've been an inspiration in a lot of ways for me, for deepening my practice and faith," Coldsnow said. "Anyone that would go to India to open a Christian church is bold. That's inspirational, spreading the word. They're living examples of true faith."

"They truly love the community, and they are so generous," Bieber said. "He feeds the homeless out of there, he takes care of people less fortunate. The love that those guys have is something that is so important for the whole Bay Area, and I would encourage people to go over there and get

some pizza and meet them."

Looking around the warmly lit shop, Kumar again affirms his gratitude for the life and opportunities he has today.

"A lot of people in India are still living in poverty to this day," Kumar said. "I grew up one of them, and God helped me to come here. Even though I didn't have anything, I was still, in my heart, wanting to help other people. My wife, she was the same way. We work very hard, but we are very happy because we have a mission to change somebody else's life."

T-Birds Pizza is open from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. all days except Sunday.

First thing when we wake up in the morning, we thank God. There's no place better than this country. This is the land of opportunity. You can work hard and accomplish anything, even if you don't have education. Our heart was to start something in India to give back. It's only possible because I'm here, in this country.

- Vijay Kumar



Kumar sits at a booth inside T-Birds, a local staple since 1987 that he and his wife have infused with flavors inspired by their Indian heritage and a mission rooted in service. Photo by Mandy Mao

Saratoga Federated Church upholds tradition of community service

BY DHATRI IYER

Saratoga Federated Church (SFC) was formally founded in 1920, and after a century of establishment in the community, the church is still committed to its long-standing purpose: service.

SFC offers a variety of different volunteering opportunities that anyone can participate in, such as a "Trunk or Treat" event where kids are able to celebrate Halloween in the church's parking lot, quilt-making for pediatric oncology patients, and carol singing.

For lead Pastor Sally Bryant, who has pastored at SFC since 2008 and attended since 2002, service has always been a focal point. On one of her first Sundays at the church, the lead pastor said, "For every dollar we raise for ourselves, we want to raise an equal amount for outreach."

"I thought, I have found my church," Bryant said. "And I got very involved in it."

According to Pastor Bryant, most volunteers, who at first only expected to volunteer once, end up coming back to serve at more events.

"It builds relationships among the people that are serving," Bryant said. "Often, [volunteers] meet for the first time at the service project, and



Kids decked in their Halloween costumes gather in the parking lot of the Saratoga Federated Church to participate in the church's "Trunk or Treat" event. *Photo courtesy of Sally Bryant*

now they know somebody new and have something in common."

SFC volunteers span generations. Recently, youth group members helped clear up the Saratoga Heritage Orchard by the Saratoga Library. During an on-campus service event to help the homeless, younger volunteers worked to create "blessing bags" for recipients, which

included water, a protein bar, socks, and a card.

On January 10, the church hosted "Night to Shine," where volunteers collected and donated prom dresses to impaired and disabled teens who were unable to attend their school's prom event. During the event, the volunteers did dress fittings for the teens, allowing each one to have their signature

prom dress moment despite not attending the dance.

The SFC has also worked with Successful Aging Solutions & Community Consulting (SASCC) in the past, with volunteers making lunches for the Saratoga Senior Center.

Many residents develop lasting relationships with the church — relationships that often deepen during difficult

moments. Church members regularly step in during times of loss, assisting families when a loved one dies.

The church also hosts GriefShare, a facilitated support group for people navigating loss, along with a broader care ministry that supports individuals and families through illness, hardship, and major life transitions.

"I wonder if maybe the reason [people feel] close to us is that we've been in the community for so long and so we're able to come alongside them at a time when they're hurting," Bryant said. "That gives me hope for our future and the future of our society."

Bryant said that seeing the impact these initiatives have on people of all ages underscores the value SFC places on community service.

"It has been such a gift to see the ways in which people are serving their communities and loving their neighbor," Bryant said. "Today, there's too much division in our community. Community service is a real bridge between people of different backgrounds and faiths, and it brings us together — reminding us that we all share common humanity."

Seminar to provide practical tools to help seniors prevent fraud



The Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office hosted the same seminar at Cupertino's Quinlan Community Center in May and June.

Photo from sheriff.santaclaracounty.gov.

FRAUD, FROM PAGE 1

caregivers, and family members recognize and avoid common scams.

The presentation will be led by Deputy Robert Yee of the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office, who has been actively involved in community education around fraud prevention. The seminar will cover a range of scams frequently reported by older residents, including romance scams, Medicare fraud, fake tech support calls, utility scams, and impersonators posing as government officials.

Participants will learn practical strategies for protecting their personal and financial information, with an emphasis on slowing down and verifying unsolicited communications received by phone, email, mail, social media, or in person. Attendees will also have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss real-world scenarios.

According to Yee, scams

represent a rapidly growing problem nationwide. In a conversation with Santa Clara County Supervisor Susan Ellenberg, he noted that reported scam losses nationwide totaled more than \$16 billion in 2024, according to data from the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center, with losses increasing sharply in recent years.

Older adults are disproportionately affected, accounting for the highest number of reported scam complaints and billions of dollars in losses annually. California consistently reports among the highest numbers of scam complaints and losses nationwide, placing local communities at the center of the issue.

The Saratoga seminar comes at a time when financial concerns may be especially top of mind for older adults, as tax season approaches and broader economic uncertainty

continues. Organizers see the event as both timely and preventative, equipping residents with tools to reduce risk before fraud occurs.

The seminar will also connect attendees to local support services available through the Saratoga Senior Center, including Senior Adults Legal Assistance (SALA) appointments, AARP Tax-Aide, and technology support, which can help seniors navigate digital communication more safely.

The event is free to attend, and doors will open 15 minutes before the scheduled start time. No registration is required.

For additional information on scam prevention and protective resources, residents can visit the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office scam prevention webpage at tinyurl.com/sccsheriffscamprevention or contact the Sheriff's Office at (408) 808-4400.

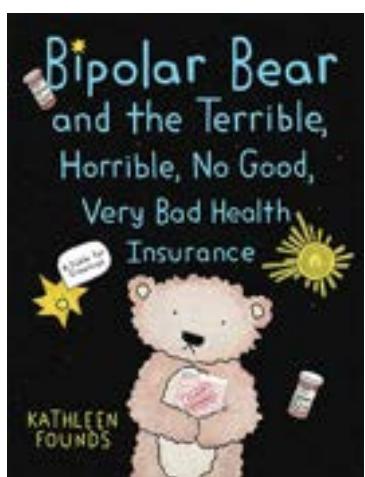
Author Kathleen Founds to discuss when to persist and when to pause

Writing through doubt and delay: Kathleen Founds at South Bay Writers meeting

BY SHARI CLARE,
VICE PRESIDENT,
SOUTH BAY WRITERS

Knowing when to persist and when to pause can make or break a writing project. At its February meeting, the South Bay Writers will welcome author Kathleen Founds for a talk on how writers can recognize those moments in their own work, titled "Holding on and Letting Go: A Timeline for Writing Your Novel."

Founds' first novel, "When Mystical Creatures Attack!" is a cleverly written



Cover of Kathleen Founds' book, centered on navigating the American health insurance system with a bipolar diagnosis. Courtesy image

"novel in stories," about an idealistic teacher who has a nervous breakdown and then corresponds with her former students from an inpatient psychiatric facility. Some stories within the novel were inspired by her experience teaching writing to women at Hope House, a halfway house in Redwood City for women struggling with addiction. The novel, published in 2014 by the University of Iowa Press, was listed as a New York Times notable book, and received the University of Iowa John Simmons Short Fiction Award.

Based on the favorable response to her first novel, agents were eager to see more of her work, and she began a second novel, "The Ghost Mom's Guide to the Afterlife." However, she didn't have the time, space, or money to express her ideas adequately, so she made the tough decision to set it aside.

With a sense of thwarted potential, she didn't see a path for how to finish writing it. Rather than giving up altogether, she turned her attention to a more personal project, which became the graphic novel "Bipolar Bear & the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Health Insurance: a Fable for Grownups." The book was

largely based on her experience fighting for the treatment she needed for her bipolar disorder.

Following that novel's publication in 2022, and after a long journey of writing, letting go, and overcoming obstacles, Founds was finally ready to return to the novel she had begun nearly a decade earlier. "The Ghost Mom's Guide to the Afterlife" is now on its way to publication in the coming year, and members of her critique group, the Rough Drafts, are confident that it will be worth the wait.

Founds grew up in Santa Cruz County, the daughter of two nurses who worked at Watsonville Community Hospital. She attended public schools before receiving a scholarship to Santa Catalina High, a private Catholic girls school in Monterey. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in creative writing and religious studies from Stanford, where she studied with several renowned authors, including Tobias Wolff, who was among the first to take notice of her potential as a writer.

After graduation, she joined a yearlong service program and worked as a dropout prevention counselor at a middle school in southern Texas. That experience altered her original plan to pursue



Kathleen Founds will speak at the February 14 South Bay Writers meeting at the Saratoga Senior Center. Courtesy photo

taught fiction writing and basic English for the past 14 years.

In addition to her novels, Founds has written many shorter works, which have appeared in publications such as The Sun, Good Housekeeping, The New Yorker Online, McSweeney's Internet Tendency, The Rumpus, Salon, and in the anthology "My Name Was Never Frankenstein." She also serves as PTA president for the middle school her older daughter attends.

At the February South Bay Writers meeting, Founds will reflect on her experiences navigating the creative process alongside the realities of the American insurance system. The meeting takes place on Saturday, Feb. 14, at 10:30 a.m. at the Saratoga Senior Center, 19655 Allendale Ave., Saratoga. Admission is \$10 for members and \$15 for nonmembers. More information is available at southbaywriters.com.

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TECHNOLOGY

Saratoga High student researches effects of playing chess on brain health with UIUC professor

BY DHATRI IYER

Saratoga High School junior Neha Sharan visited the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) this summer to conduct research on the effects of playing chess on the brain with professor Inki Kim. Sharan is the founder of Girls4Chess, a nonprofit organization with the mission of increasing girls' participation in chess by providing access to mentorship and activities.

Girls4Chess conducts tournaments with average attendance ranging from 20 to 30 participants. Attendees span all ages, from kindergarten students to high schoolers. The organization was recently selected as a recipient of a US Chess women's grant, with only 10 organizations chosen nationwide from an applicant pool of roughly 300 to 500 programs.

The mission of Girls4Chess is especially important to Sharan, who first started playing chess at age 6. She was often one of the only girls in the room during competitions — an experience that motivated her to create the nonprofit. The gender disparity is prevalent at all levels of chess: US Chess reports only about 14% of its members are female.

"Chess is male-dominated," Sharan said. "I would be a little uncomfortable [going to tournaments], just because there weren't that



Professor Inki Kim watches as student Neha Sharan compiles data on brain connectivity through chess. Courtesy photo

many people to talk to. I'd have to go out of my comfort zone. That's why I try to make more events for girls so they can make friends at chess tournaments and feel like it's a better environment for them."

With a growing interest in neuroscience as well as chess, Sharan sought to combine the two passions by researching the effects of chess on the brain. After reaching out to

numerous professors, she connected with Kim, whom she corresponded with regularly via email and Zoom before officially meeting in late June.

Sharan began collecting data for her research. She analyzed older adults while volunteering to teach chess lessons at the Cupertino Senior Center, as well as younger players who participated in

her chess tournaments.

To collect data, Sharan asked participants to answer survey questions about how they felt after winning or losing a game and whether they experienced anxiety during competition.

In June, Sharan spent a week on the UIUC campus meeting with Kim and furthering her research. She worked with EEG and eye-

tracking systems to study brain function during chess play.

The experience of working with an established professor was new to Sharan, who had not conducted research at this level before.

"The professor isn't checking in on you every five minutes, so you have to make sure you're doing your work," Sharan said. "Sometimes I would have to give presentations and explain chess topics, so I had to be very well prepared."

While the research did not draw definitive conclusions, the data Sharan collected contributed to a growing body of exploratory work examining how competitive activities like chess may influence emotional and cognitive responses. Sharan said the project was designed as an exploratory study, and that additional participants and longer-term data would be needed to draw firmer conclusions.

Although Sharan does not currently compete in chess tournaments and instead focuses on organizing events through Girls4Chess, she said she still loves the game.

"A lot of girls don't play chess, so when I conduct my tournaments, it's really cool to meet other girls who are interested in playing," Sharan said. "That's what keeps me motivated — seeing how many people come to our tournaments and want to be involved."

Learning to question the internet critically

From teens to seniors, digital literacy affects us all

BY AUDREY YOUNG

The world is becoming increasingly data-driven, so much so that 90% of all existing data has been created in just the last few years. Yet among all the changes happening around us, one thing about the internet has stayed constant: it is not designed to help people easily distinguish fact from fiction. And with the rise of AI, navigating information online has only become more complicated.

Today, we face new questions: What online content is AI-generated and what isn't? How do we tell a scam from something real? Which sources are credible, and which are not? These are skills that most people assume are intuitive but in reality, many

adults, and even teens, find them challenging.

Digital literacy is something I've often thought about in the back of my mind, but my AP Government "Voice, Choice, Power" project motivated me to get involved with it.

I started at the Saratoga Senior Center, where I saw firsthand that older adults are especially vulnerable to misinformation.

The goals I had for my project were two-fold: to make digital literacy both accessible and accurate. At first, I worried no one would show up, but eventually, an older gentleman, senior center worker, and a high school student walked in. Initially I planned to present the information on my slides, but it quickly turned into an open discussion and it proved to be far more successful than I anticipated.

Because our group was so diverse in age, we started by defining what we meant by a "fact." We realized that even facts can feel subjective. Merriam-Webster defines a fact as "information or a piece of information presented as true or accurate," but whether something is considered true depends on if it's widely accepted and or has repeated scientific proof.

After hearing how each generation encounters the online world differently, it is clear that people of all ages have their own challenges to navigate: teens often assume they're tech-savvy but may not verify information; adults are overwhelmed by volume; older adults may be unfamiliar with modern online cues. The conversation highlighted both the demand for this knowledge and the gaps that exist, reinforcing the need to

continue these discussions beyond a single setting.

Those gaps are not isolated. Digital literacy, media literacy, and misinformation are deeply connected. At its core, digital literacy means being able to find, evaluate, and use information online responsibly. Many adults struggle not because they're "bad with technology," but because the digital world has evolved faster than anyone was prepared for. The real-world consequences like identity theft, health misinformation, financial scams, and political polarization are already visible.

Although this event was a small step, it has shown that expanding digital literacy is both possible and necessary, especially in a world that is becoming more AI-driven every day. This session happened to reach older

adults, but starting earlier is just as important.

Teens can practice checking multiple sources before sharing content or noticing when a video seems edited or AI-generated (which is becoming more and more difficult!). Young and older adults need these skills to simply navigate the online world confidently. Every age group has something to learn and something to lose if digital literacy isn't taken seriously.

Our very first AP Government assignment on Federalist Paper 10 taught me that "we can't eliminate factions, but we can control their effects," an idea that resonates when thinking about misinformation today. We can't stop misinformation from existing, but we can equip people with the tools to navigate information responsibly.

PERSPECTIVES

Why community colleges may be the most important institutions in an aging county

BY SAMUEL LEALE

Santa Clara County is aging in ways that are already reshaping how people work, learn, and plan for the future.

People are living longer, staying in the workforce later, and navigating more complex transitions between education, employment, caregiving, and retirement. At the same time, the county faces growing workforce gaps across health care, caregiving, transportation, public service, and community-based roles that support older adults.

This convergence raises a practical question: are our institutions equipped to respond?

Discussions about aging often focus on services such as health care, housing, and benefits. Those systems matter deeply. Aging is also an education and workforce challenge. As careers lengthen and roles shift, people need accessible ways to retrain, earn credentials, and remain connected to opportunity. Community colleges play a central role in that response.

Longer lives, changing careers
The traditional arc of education followed by decades of work no longer reflects how many people live. Adults are changing careers in midlife, returning to school after caregiving responsibilities, or seeking credentials to remain employed longer than expected. Others are preparing for new roles connected to the needs of an aging population.

While universities are

structured around degree pathways that are often time-intensive and expensive, nonprofits bring deep community knowledge but are rarely resourced to deliver education at scale. Employers understand workforce needs but depend on partners to help build talent pipelines.

Community colleges operate where those needs intersect. Their open-access model, local focus, and responsiveness to labor-market data make them uniquely positioned to support people navigating longer and more complex working lives.

The connector role

Community colleges connect systems that often operate separately.

They work with employers to understand workforce demand, collaborate with public agencies responding to demographic change, and partner with nonprofits that understand the lived realities of aging, caregiving, and community support.

When those perspectives align through education and training, pathways become clearer. People can see how learning translates into work and how work connects back to community needs. In an aging county, this connective function is increasingly important.

A local example taking shape

At West Valley College, this work is already informing how programs, partnerships, and workforce pathways are being shaped to meet Santa Clara

County's aging future.

Through early engagement with Senior Guided Pathways, the college is aligning education with workforce needs related to aging, examining programs not only for enrollment potential, but for how they support the county's broader service and labor ecosystem. The focus is practical and local, with an emphasis on building capacity before demographic pressures intensify.

Why this matters for Santa Clara County

Santa Clara County is known for innovation, yet lasting change depends on institutions capable of translating ideas into sustained practice. Community colleges provide that stability.

They train workers, support career transitions, and adapt programs as community needs evolve.

As the county continues to face workforce shortages and demographic shifts, education will remain a critical part of the response. Community colleges are embedded in local communities in ways few institutions can replicate, making them central to how regions prepare for what comes next.

If Santa Clara County is going to age well, it will rely on institutions that are flexible, accessible, and deeply connected to local life. Community colleges already do that work every day. Their role in shaping the county's future is becoming increasingly clear.

 West Valley College

HAPPENING AT WEST VALLEY COLLEGE

- **Senior Guided Pathways (SGP).** A county-focused initiative aligning education, workforce training, and community partnerships related to aging.
- **Community Caregiver Certificate.** Workforce training aligned with growing county demand.
- **Senior Guided Pathways to Teaching.** Supporting midlife and older adults entering education roles.
- **Looking Ahead.** Early conversations around a future Center for Aging.



Intergenerational conversations at West Valley College bring students and professionals together around career pathways – an example of how community colleges support longer careers and evolving workforce needs in an aging county.

Courtesy photo

Best practices for cleaning your ears

BY MARCIA FARRIS

It seems that the topic of cleaning one's ears is a frequent subject for discussion. Therefore, this column will address several aspects of safe cerumen removal.

Many of us remember being told never to put anything smaller than our elbow in our ear. While that adage is much older than many of us, it is still good advice. Also, most people don't need to clean their ears! That's because the natural movement of cerumen (wax) is towards the outside of the ear and it will fall or wash out. Cerumen is a natural ear protector because it helps to lubricate the ear, traps dirt, and acts as a water repellent. Thus, it's usually best to leave it alone.

Q: I was told never to use a Q-tip or a hair pin to remove the wax. Why not?

A: Cotton swabs or other similar objects will leave fibers in your ears which can exacerbate the problem. Such objects often push the cerumen further into your ear canal and can eventually become impacted against your ear drum. Impaction can result in reduced hearing, pain, tinnitus or ear infection. Any sharp object placed in your ear can cause more problems than it solves. For example, a sharp object can irritate your ear canal or actually scrape your ear seriously enough to cause bleeding. You can also perforate your eardrum – with either a cotton swab or a sharp object. There are a number of "horror stories" about cotton tipped swabs accidentally being shoved far into the ear and causing permanent damage.

Some folks have even used screwdrivers or toothpicks in an attempt to remove wax. Again, incredibly dangerous and ill-advised.

Q: What about "candling" to clear the wax?

A: That is another very dangerous old "home remedy." This technique can result in burning your hair, having melted wax drip into your ear canal or ear drum. Supposedly candling causes a vacuum that will "suck the wax out of your ear." Exclusive of the dangerous aspect of this technique, it doesn't work! Doctors report finding cerumen buildup in the ear canal even after patients claim they used the technique.

Q: My hearing aids get blocked by my ear wax. What should I do?

A: Cerumen in a hearing

aid earmold can usually be removed fairly easily. Most hearing aids have wax guards that can be changed by the hearing aid wearer. There are also tools designed to remove wax from the earmold. However, if the cerumen blocks the very tiny tubing, then the audiologist or hearing aid specialist might simply replace the tubing; or, they might choose to remove the blockage from the tubing.

Q: If I'm not supposed to use cotton swabs to remove my ear wax, what am I supposed to do?

A: There are several safe procedures that can remove cerumen. Over-the-counter ear wax removal products are readily available. Follow the instructions carefully! The other caveat is that you must

be certain that you do not have a perforated eardrum (a hole in your eardrum). Your doctor might advise against using OTC ear wax removers if you've had certain ear surgeries or suffer from recurrent ear infections. Seeking professional removal of cerumen is also available. Ear, nose, and throat (ENT) doctors, Primary Care Physicians (PCPs), trained nurses, and some specially trained and licensed audiologists can safely remove cerumen.

The bottom line: no cotton tips, lit candles, or sharp instruments in your ears! If necessary, see a professional for cerumen removal.

Please do not hesitate to send in questions! Send them to The Outlook or directly to: hear@gizmology.com.

Between the Pages: More winter reads

BY LLOYD RUSSELL



As I write this article, rain is pouring down for the 5th day in a row. So I think it's appropriate that this month's article shows you some more winter-themed books. And I have to say that, like last month's list, we have an eclectic group of books to talk about.

Let's get started:

"The Diamond Eye," by Kate Quinn

Kate is a master of historical fiction. The Rose Code is my favorite of hers, but they are all really good. This one centers on a young woman in 1937 who is a mother and works in a library. The invasion of Ukraine by Hitler turns her into a sniper and a wartime heroine. Nicknamed Lady Death, she is feted for having killed 300 Nazi soldiers. When the war ends, she is sent to America on a goodwill tour. While there, she befriends Eleanor Roosevelt but also finds herself facing a new enemy. You will definitely want to read The Diamond Eye.

"The Great Alone," by Kristin Hannah

I featured one of Kristin's other books in the last edition of The Outlook. Well, like Kate's, all of her books are terrific. This one takes place in Alaska. A POW comes back from the Vietnam War a changed man. After experiencing some employment issues, he makes the rash decision to move his family to Alaska. This works out during the warm months, but takes a sharp turn for the worse during the winter months. His 13-year old daughter and his wife end up having to fend for themselves. This is historical fiction because of the timeline and the impact of the Vietnam War. But, primarily, it's a top-notch piece of fiction.

"The Snow Child," by Eowyn Ivey

This one is different than most books you have read. You can call it a fantasy stuffed inside reality. A couple with no children (they lost one at

birth) move to Alaska from the U.S. (do you see a pattern developing here?) After living there for a year, they decide to build a snowman, complete with clothes and even a coat. One day they find that the clothes and coat are gone. And, shortly after that, a little girl shows up wearing those same garments. Is she real? Or is she just a figment of their imagination? You will have to read it to decide.

"The Road," by Cormac McCarthy

This novel was released in 2006. It has garnered over 1 million ratings on Goodreads and has an average of exactly 4.00 out of 5.00. This is a post-apocalyptic story of a father and son who have nothing but each other. They want to get to the coast even though they don't know what they will find when they get there. With no resources, and traveling in the dead of winter, they have only themselves to rely on.

"Snow Falling on Cedars," by David Guterson

This story takes place on a small island north of Puget Sound, in Washington State. A local fisherman drowns, and a Japanese American man is accused of murder. To complicate matters even further, the accused's wife is Japanese American and had a romance with a Caucasian boy. And, on top of all that, the memory of the Japanese residents during WWII being exiled from the island lingers in the minds of the population.

THIS MONTH'S TRIVIA

Which author was notoriously uninvited from The Oprah Winfrey Show in 2001?

- A. Deepak Chopra
- B. Cormac McCarthy
- C. Helen Fielding
- D. Jonathan Franzen

Answer to last edition's question: B. Harper Lee.



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The Anti-Aging Effect of Good Oral Health

by Dr James Lin
Los Gatos Dentist

As we age, staying healthy becomes more about prevention than just treatment. You may already be managing conditions like heart disease or diabetes—or simply want to maintain a high quality of life. But there's one area often overlooked: the mouth.

Research shows that oral health is deeply connected to one's total well-being—physically and emotionally. This philosophy, known as whole-health dentistry, recognizes that what happens in one's mouth can impact their entire body.

Scientific research confirms these links:

- Heart Disease: Gum disease (periodontitis) increases inflammation throughout the body. Bacteria from infected gums can enter the bloodstream and contribute to clogged arteries, raising your risk of heart attack or stroke.
- Diabetes: Gum disease makes it harder to manage blood sugar, while high blood sugar worsens gum problems. It's a cycle that requires proactive care.
- Dry Mouth (Xerostomia): Common in older adults due to medications, dry mouth reduces saliva's protective effects, increasing the risk of cavities and infections.
- Cavities & Tooth Loss: Wear and tear on natural and restored teeth happens over several years of daily use. Aging can lead to exposed vulnerable areas and increasing the likelihood of decay.
- Gum Disease: Nearly half of adults over 65 live with some form of gum disease, which can lead to tooth loss and complicate other health issues.

Neglecting oral health can mean more doctor visits, unexpected expenses, and a lower quality of life. But it doesn't have to be this way.

"Dr Lin and his staff are top-notch in every aspect of the consumer experience! Great scheduling and friendly customer service and most importantly he and his staff are thorough and thoughtful in taking the time to communicate and engage us in care decisions and procedures."



We understand that many older adults still want thoughtful, comprehensive dental care, but put off dental visits due to a fixed income or no longer having dental insurance. Others may have avoided the dentist for years due to negative past experiences. If that's you, you're not alone. Your story matters to us.

No Insurance? No problem!

We welcome patients without insurance and offer clear, honest pricing through our Dental Savings Plan. We focus on prevention and long term solutions to help you avoid costly problems later. We take pride in our ability to communicate options so you feel confident in your decisions.

If your smile has ever held you back—from eating comfortably, socializing, or just feeling like yourself—we want to help you define your version of victory. Maybe that means living pain-free, restoring confidence, or simply enjoying a meal without worry. Our job is to meet you where you are and guide you from there.

Ready to feel heard? You have just found the right people. Give us a call! Let's get to know each other and take the first step toward better health.

Sincerely,
James Lin, DMD, FAGD

JAMESLIN DMD
COSMETIC • IMPLANT • FAMILY DENTISTRY

408-358-2161 (M-Th 8:30am-5:00pm)
www.DentistInLosGatos.com

14777 Los Gatos Blvd, STE 103
(Hwy 85 & Los Gatos Blvd, by Starbucks)

ASK the EXPERT

Dr. Christine Throm, Audiologist
Past President-California
Academy of Audiology (2018)



Top 5 Hearing Resolutions for 2026

Let's get this year started off right!

Christine Throm, Au.D.

After the hustle and bustle of the holidays (and all the indulgence!) most of us begin the new year with resolutions to be healthier and more intentional. One thing you may not think of when making your New Year Resolutions is your hearing!

We've compiled a list of five hearing resolutions to make for 2026. Let's get this year started off right!

- **Resolve to prioritize your hearing health - and overall health!** Did you know that hearing health is closely tied to overall health? Stay informed about hearing health, including new technologies like hearing aids and assistive listening devices.
- **Resolve to exercise your brain!** Did you know that hearing isn't just done with our ears? Our brains do most of the work when it comes to hearing. Resolve to focus on the quality of your listening, whether in personal conversations or during work. Minimize distractions, give people your full attention, and try to avoid the temptation to tune out. Having in-depth conversations with great friends is the perfect way to exercise your brain and keep it active, which will also keep it in tip-top shape for hearing!
- **Resolve to protect your future hearing today.** Since most hearing damage is noise-induced, and is cumulative, resolve to always carry earplugs with you wherever you go. Commit to protecting your hearing by wearing ear protection in noisy environments, such as concerts, sporting events, or while using loud machinery. Earplugs are very cheap and can be bought at any drugstore, so grab some today and be prepared!
- **Resolve to keep your annual hearing screening appointment.** Doing an annual hearing evaluation is the easiest and most effective thing you can do to pro-actively protect your hearing health. It only takes a few minutes of your time, and it is painless. Studies show that people who faithfully keep annual hearing evaluation appointments have better hearing overall. This is because they catch any hearing loss early and can effectively stop the progression of hearing loss using a variety of methods. **There is no reason not to do hearing screenings, so book one today!**
- **Resolve to optimize your hearing, if necessary.** If you have even minimal hearing loss, consider hearing aid options. Hearing aids can help to keep your brain active, hearing the joyful sounds of life, and can prevent further hearing loss, so if you have minor hearing loss, hearing aids are a worthy investment to prevent it from progressing.

Free Community Seminar

Want more information about hearing health? Dr. Throm is happy to present her acclaimed, medically based, *Listen Up Café* lecture series!



Friday, January 16, 2026: Top 5 Resolutions for Better Hearing

Friday, February 20, 2026: Listening with Love: Communicating when hearing loss is in the mix

Friday, March 20, 2026: The History of Hearing Aids: Where we've been and where we are going
(*Dates and location subject to change*)

We'll have good coffee, light refreshments, and a great discussion—see you there!

Seating is limited for these FREE events.

(Call or email us for a free information sheet if you are unable to attend.)

Please call for time and location information (408) 673-4052

If you already have hearing aids, check out the latest options in smart hearing devices—you may be shocked at what the newest hearing devices can do! Your quality of life may be due for an upgrade – so come in today!



We're proud to have served Los Gatos, Saratoga, Campbell, Cupertino, San Jose and the entire Bay Area for 50 years!

Our team has the knowledge and tools to determine the cause of your hearing loss. If a hearing loss is detected, we have premium hearing aid technology that can help!

Providing the right solution for **Your Life. Your Style.**



Dr. Christine Throm
Owner/Audiologist

Dr. Kelly Brennan
Audiologist



LGA
Los Gatos Audiology

(408) 673-4052

15899 Los Gatos-Almaden Rd. Suite 8, Los Gatos, CA 95032
(on the corner of National and Los Gatos-Almaden Rd.)

www.LosGatosAudiology.com

SARATOGA FOOTHILL CLUB
2025-2026

PUBLIC EVENT SERIES

INSIDE THE ANDERSON COLLECTION:
A FAMILY'S PASSION FOR PUBLIC ART
SUNDAY, JANUARY 25 | 4:00PM - 5:30PM



Stanford University is home to the Anderson Collection, one of the world's foremost private assemblies of modern and contemporary American art. Join us for a conversation with Diane Levinson about the evolution of this distinctive collection and the vision of its founding family.

Diane Levinson is an artist, educator, and arts advocate, with a particular focus on the intersection of art and culture. She teaches an "Art in your Backyard" series at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute that spotlights the breadth of modern and contemporary artworks in Bay Area museums.

THIS EVENT WILL TAKE PLACE AT
THE SARATOGA FOOTHILL CLUB
20399 PARK PLACE, SARATOGA 95070
TICKETS AVAILABLE AT THE DOOR AND ONLINE
SARATOGAFOOTHILLCLUB.ORG/PUBLIC-EVENTS



Corrections:

Last month's issue incorrectly listed the date of the Aegis Gallery of Fine Arts Holiday Soirée. The correct date was Saturday, Dec. 13, from 2-6 p.m. The event was mistakenly listed as taking place on Dec. 12.

In last month's briefs, the Saratoga Tree Lighting Ceremony was incorrectly referred to as the Celebration of Light. These were two separate events held on different dates. The Tree Lighting Ceremony took place on Nov. 28, while the Celebration of Light was held on Dec. 6.

THE YEAR TURNS

So we step, with
gratitude for the path
behind,

Anticipation for the
road ahead.

And the steady breath
of becoming.

One hand to memory
The other to possibility

Every crossing
asks for both.

beginnings

endings

transitions

Better Real
Estate Agents
Happier Clients

Brian Bernasconi
Dan Rubnitz

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