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FAMILY FOCUS

A LOS ALTOS TOWN CRIER PUBLICATION

WINTER 2026



THE AGE OF AI

Raising kids in the age of AI:
Finding balance, not bans

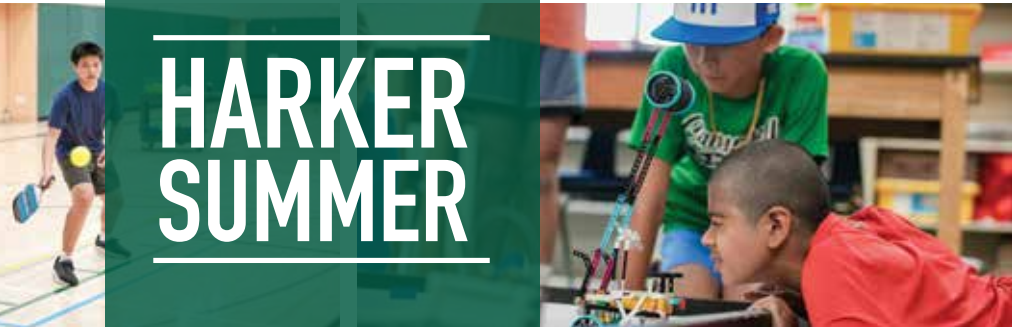
CAMPS ARE COMING

Hidden Villa, Los Altos start sign-ups

MINDFUL MOVEMENT

When pain gets in the way of
healthy habits

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MANAGING EDITOR
Christina Casillas

MAGAZINE EDITOR
Curtis Driscoll

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS
Lucy Chen
Loren Stump

WRITERS
Kim Gladfelter
Danielle Kamis
Myles Mellor
Amelia Yuan

COPY EDITORS
Vanessa Connell
Mary Larsen

MULTIMEDIA ADVERTISING SALES
Danielle Amaral
Maria Crowder
Janice Fabella
Linda Monterrey

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Melissa Rodriguez

PRODUCTION STAFF
Lucy Chen
Loren Stump

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
PUBLISHER
Dennis Young

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER,
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER
Howard Bischoff

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ON THE COVER:

Los Altos Hills resident Grayson French at 9 months old posing as a paperboy for the Los Altos Town Crier. French is now 9.
COURTESY OF KATHY DIGIACOMO

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEATURES



THE AGE OF AI

Raising kids in the age of AI: Finding balance, not bans

5



CAMPS ARE COMING

Hidden Villa, Los Altos start sign-ups

10



MINDFUL MOVEMENT

When pain gets in the way of healthy habits

18

PUZZLE

CROSSWORD 16

RAISING KIDS IN THE AGE OF AI:

Finding balance, not bans

BY DANIELLE KAMIS, MD

Artificial intelligence is no longer a futuristic concept – it's already part of our children's daily lives. From homework help and language translation to creative tools and conversational chatbots, AI is increasingly embedded in how kids learn, play and socialize. Unsurprisingly, many parents are asking the same question: How much is too much?

As a psychiatrist, I want to start by offering reassurance. The goal is not to eliminate technology or AI from children's lives. That would be neither realistic nor beneficial. Instead, the task before parents is more nuanced: to guide children toward healthy, intentional use while protecting them from habits that can undermine attention, emotional regulation and real-world connection.

AI IS A TOOL – BUT TOOLS SHAPE THE BRAIN

Children's brains are still developing, particularly the areas responsible for impulse control, sustained attention and emotional regulation. AI tools – especially those that are fast, personalized and endlessly responsive – can be incredibly engaging. In some cases, too engaging.

This doesn't make AI inherently harmful, but it does mean that boundaries matter more for children than for adults. Without structure, kids may begin to rely on AI for answers instead of effort, for stimulation instead of imagination, or for connection instead of relationships.

SHOULD PARENTS TRY TO REDUCE AI USE?

Rather than asking whether to reduce AI use, a better question is whether we are shaping it.

Research on screen time consistently shows that how technology is used matters more than how much. Passive, isolating or compulsive use is associated with worse outcomes. Active, goal-directed and socially supported use is not.

In other words, parents don't need to ban AI – but they do need to be involved. →

HEALTHY HABITS AND BOUNDARIES TO CONSIDER

Here are several evidence-informed principles I often recommend to families:

1) Prioritize purposeful use

Encourage AI as a learning aid – helping with research, writing outlines, coding or curiosity-driven questions – rather than as a source of endless entertainment or companionship.

A helpful rule of thumb: AI should support thinking, not replace it.

2) Set clear time and context limits

Designate specific times for technology use, and protect key developmental anchors:

- No AI or screens during meals
- No AI use before bedtime
- No replacing homework effort with AI shortcuts

Sleep, boredom, and unstructured time are essential for brain development.

3) Keep AI use in shared spaces

Especially for younger children, AI tools should be used where parents can casually observe – not to police, but to stay connected. This also opens the door to conversation about what kids are learning and how they're using the technology.

4) Teach digital self-awareness

Children should understand that AI is designed to be engaging. Naming this openly helps kids build insight rather than shame.

You might say: "These tools are built to keep your attention. Let's practice noticing when it's helpful – and when it's taking over."

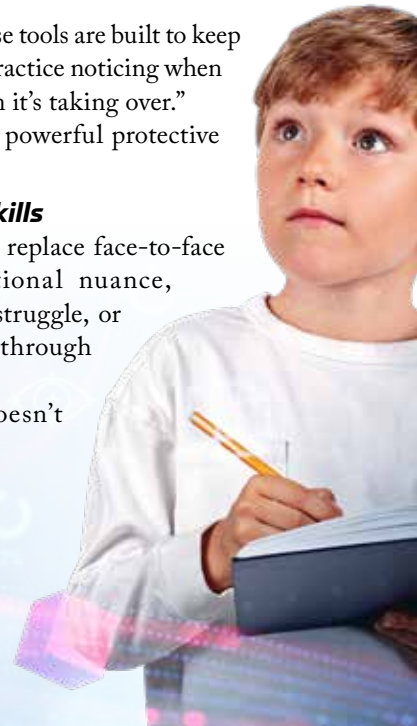
That awareness is a powerful protective skill.

5) Protect human skills

No technology can replace face-to-face relationships, emotional nuance, creativity born from struggle, or resilience developed through effort.

Make sure AI doesn't crowd out:

- Play
- Physical activity
- Reading
- Conversation
- Problem-solving without instant answers →



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Sold for \$5,550,000
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Sold for \$8,500,000
10560 Blandor Way, Los Altos Hills

Sold for 13% OVER Redfin and Zillow Estimates



Sold for \$11,500,000
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Sold for 13% OVER Redfin and Zillow Estimates



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STRIKING THE RIGHT BALANCE

The healthiest approach to AI is neither fear nor blind acceptance – it’s mentorship. Parents don’t need to be technical experts, but they do need to model thoughtful use, curiosity and limits.

Children learn far more from what we do than what we say. If we are constantly distracted by our own devices, it becomes harder to argue for balance.

Ultimately, AI will be part of our children’s future. Our job is not to shield them from it entirely, but to help them develop agency, discernment and self-regulation – skills that will serve them long after today’s technology evolves into something new.

Balance is not about perfection. It’s about presence. 🍷

Danielle Kamis, MD is a lifestyle psychiatrist with a practice in Los Altos, as well as an Adjunct Clinical Assistant Professor at the Stanford University School of Medicine. For more information, visit kamismd.com.



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CAMP S ARE COMING:

Hidden Villa, Los Altos start sign-ups

BY AMELIA YUAN

Town Crier Editorial Intern



While summer is still months away, registration for local summer camps has already started.

Hidden Villa, the wilderness preserve and organic farm located in Los Altos Hills, offers camps for students in grades K-12. With both day and overnight options available depending on students' grade, it has a wide variety of camps this summer.

Paige Burns, Hidden Villa's summer camp director, characterized all the camp offerings as a great environment for students who are nature lovers.

"Campers that come to our camp are folks who love to be outdoors. They like to get their hands dirty working with farm animals or in the garden. They are folks that like to hike, or maybe they are just curious about what it might feel like to be out in nature," she said.

The Hidden Villa Day Camp is for children who will be entering kindergarten through fourth grade next fall. Hidden Villa offers seven weeklong sessions, the first one starting June 15 and the last one starting July 27. Each day begins at 9 a.m. and ends at 4 p.m. Extended care is available from 8-9 a.m. and 4-5 p.m. Campers will participate in activities including hiking, arts and crafts and spending time with animals.

Hidden Villa offers five overnight camps – Farm & Wilderness Camp, Bay to Sea Backpacking, Community Camp, Counselors in Training and Leaders in Training – for students entering fourth grade to 12th grade. While each camp has a different focus, they are all technology-free and facilitate values of environmental stewardship and community building,

according to Burns.

Burns also said that the overnight camps are unique because all campers, except for rising fourth and fifth graders, sleep outside: "Not in tents, not in shelters, but actually under the stars, which is really special. Some people are nervous for that, and then they end up saying it's the best sleep they've ever gotten."

Started in 1945 by the Duveneck family, Hidden Villa's camp was the first multi-racial overnight summer camp in America. The program continues to maintain a legacy focused on diversity, inclusion and connection.

"We talk a lot about race and class equity, LGBTQ+ inclusion. Those are huge pieces to what we do, and with those topics, they're only addressed in an age appropriate way," Burns said.

She added that Hidden Villa's →



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Kids exploring the creek with the counselor from the Hidden Villa Day Camp in 2024
PHOTO COURTESY OF PAIGE BURNS OF HIDDEN VILLA

longstanding values remain consistent even while new topics are engaged with.

“I know folks can come here and feel that they don’t have to be anybody other than who they are. So I think that’s something we’re staying true to,” she added. “Topics change and we

stay with the times. We do a reflection with our overnight campers, every morning after breakfast ... and those will always be up to date.”

Hidden Villa also offers a “robust financial aid program” that all families can apply for to limit the barrier of cost.

The city of Los Altos Parks and Recreation Department is also offering its own internal camps – Camp Jellybean and Redwood Grove Summer Camps – in addition to a variety of contracted camps.

Camp Jellybean is for preschoolers ages 3-5 and is located at the San Antonio Club. According to Candace Avina, the recreation coordinator responsible for internal programs, Camp Jellybean has a ratio of six campers to one counselor. Campers will engage in a variety of activities and games, practice exploring their senses and play outdoors.

Located on the 6-acre Redwood Grove Nature Preserve, the five camps included under the Redwood Grove Summer Camps cover an age range of 3-11. Additionally, there is a counselor-in-training program available for students ages 13-15 for youth to develop leadership skills. All Redwood Grove Summer Camps introduce campers to the outdoors and environmental stewardship →

2026 Summer Art Camps



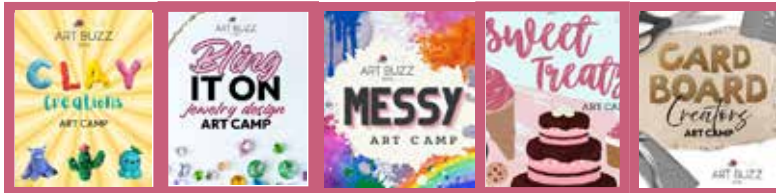
Deep Blue Sea
June 8-12

Eras Art Camp
June 8-12

Idol Slayer
June 15-19

Dragon Valley
June 15-19

A Pirate's Life
June 22-26



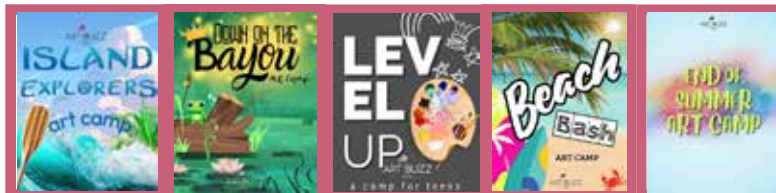
Clay Creations
Jun 29-Jul 2

Bling It On
Jun 29-Jul 2

Messy Art Camp
July 6-10

Sweet Treatz
July 13-17

Cardboard Creators
July 20-24



Island Explorer
July 27-31

Down on the Bayou
July 27-31

LEVEL UP
Aug 3-7
TEEN/TWEEN***

Beach Bash
Aug 3-7

End of Summer
Aug 10-12
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AGES 6-12

** Teen/Tween Camp
Ages 10-15

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PHOTOS TOP LEFT AND MIDDLE COURTESY OF PAIGE BURNS OF HIDDEN VILLA. PHOTO TOP RIGHT COURTESY OF HIDDEN VILLA. PHOTO BOTTOM RIGHT: NICOLE CARBONE | SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER.

alongside classic camp games such as tag or arts and crafts.

“We touch on what exactly is around them. For example, we have the bird of the week, and then, with the creek we like to talk about erosion,” Avina said.

She added that this summer, the Redwood Grove Summer Camps have increased their environmental focus.

“We are trying to gear a better understanding of the environment more so than we’ve done in the past, by trying to integrate those themes into different games or different experiments that we do during the week,” she said.

According to Katy Brecher, the recreation coordinator responsible for the city’s contracted programs, there will be 25-30 contracted camps offered this year that cater to “a broad range of interests.”

Camps start the week of June 8

and run through the week of Aug. 3, the week before the Los Altos School District school year resumes, with both day and full-day options. A majority of camps take place at the Los Altos Community Center, the Egan Junior High School gym or the Blach Intermediate School gym. Certain camps are held on the contracted organization’s facilities, including the Shoreline Aquatic Center in Mountain View and Rise Performing Arts Center in Los Altos.

The camps cover areas including sports, STEM, general academics, arts and dance. This year, the city has worked to update the program offerings to meet community interests

and find unique programs.

“We’ve really focused on hands-on programs that promote engagement for the kids. And bringing in new programs is one of my bigger focuses for evolving things. This summer, we have a new dance contractor based out of Rise Performing Arts Center... We have wood crafting, which is also a new program, and it’s unique,” Brecher said.

Registration for all the Los Altos Parks and Recreation camps begins March 2 for Los Altos residents and March 9 for all others. Early registration is available during the open house day, set for 5:30-7:30 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 26. 🐾

For more information on Hidden Villa, visit
hiddenvilla.org/programs/summer-camps/region-HV/

For more information on Redwood Grove Summer Camps, visit
losaltosca.gov/322/Internal-Summer-Camps

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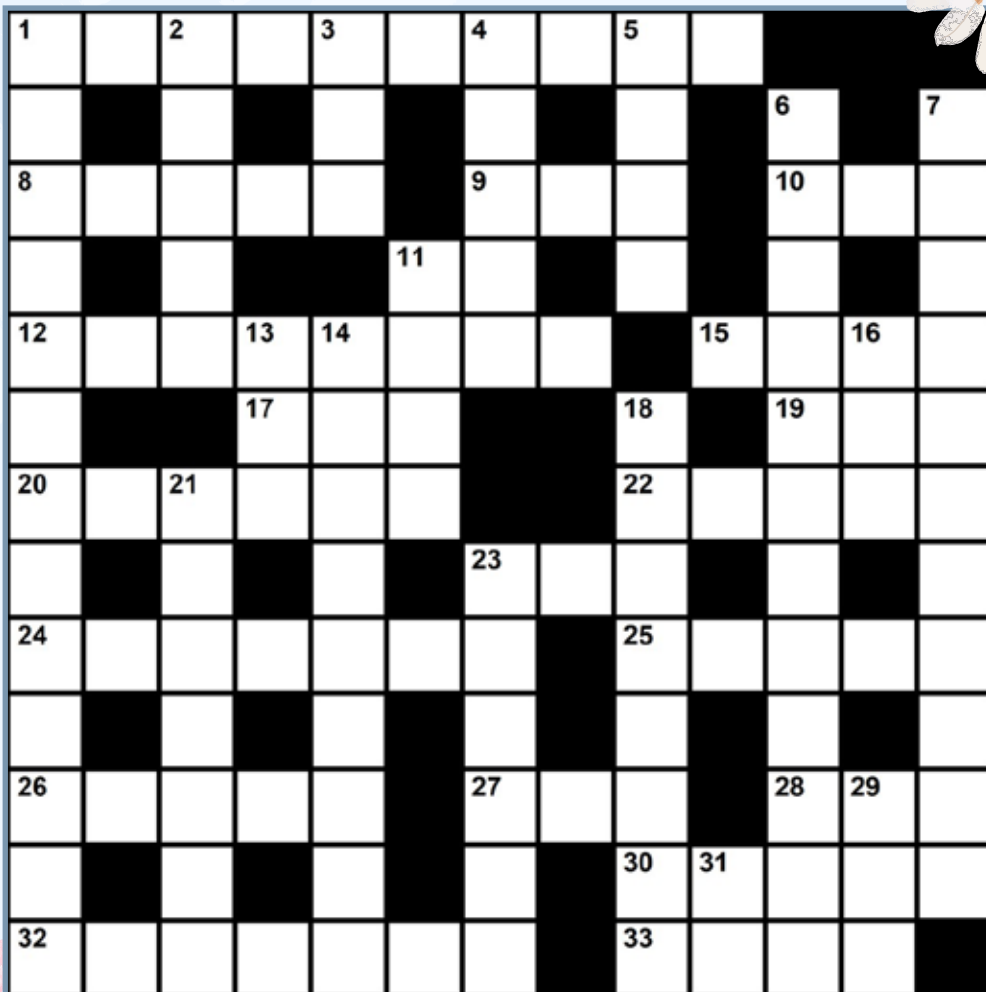
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Answers on page 22

Crossword

PUZZLE

BY MYLES MELLOR

Across

- 1. County Park on Los Altos-Cupertino border: Rancho _____, 2 words
- 8. Pacific, for one
- 9. Winter sport equipment
- 10. ____ - tip: type of steak
- 11. Musical scale note
- 12. Physical activity that's good for all the family
- 15. Extremely enthusiastic
- 17. Put on clothes
- 19. Night before a holiday

- 20. Baby
- 22. Bed sheets, etc.
- 23. Pebble Beach view
- 24. San Francisco Bay-Delta

- 25. Desert plants with spines
- 26. Had a family meal at home, 2 words
- 27. Chef Emeril's exclamation
- 28. Sushi bar fish
- 30. Stadium for sports or entertainment
- 32. Small falcon
- 33. ____ -away food

Down

- 1. Mountain View Park on the San Francisco Bay, 2 words
- 2. Brother's or sister's daughter
- 3. ____ negotiable
- 4. Retreat
- 5. Spring flower
- 6. Almost 7-mile trail from Cupertino to Mountain View, 2 words
- 7. Great place to hike in Los Altos Hills, 2 words
- 11. Color delicately
- 13. Nutritional abbreviation
- 14. Picnic box, for example
- 16. "____ Got the World on a String"
- 18. Table setting protection, 2 words
- 21. Dads
- 23. Sign representing something
- 29. Compass point, abbr.
- 31. Royal Academy, abbr.

City of Los Altos Parks & Recreation

CAMPS

Spring and Summer

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REGISTRATION DATES

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Registration Opens to All: March 9

Classes begin April 8

For more information and to register, visit
LosAltosRecreation.org or call (650) 947-2790





WHEN PAIN GETS IN THE WAY OF HEALTHY HABITS:

New options to support healing

BY KIM GLADFELTER

Every January, you tell yourself this is the year you'll move more.

You picture morning walks, getting back to Pilates, maybe even returning to golf, hiking or pickleball. You know movement is good for you to support your energy, your mood and your long-term health.

But oftentimes an old injury flares up. A tendon starts aching again. A joint stiffens after exercise. You try to push through at first, but soon movement starts to feel risky. You often pull back because pain keeps interrupting your best intentions. If this sounds familiar, you're not alone.

Many people start the new year with the goal of moving more, only to have old injuries or chronic pain derail their plans. When pain keeps returning, even the most committed routines fall apart – not from lack of motivation, but from lack of healing support.

When pain changes how you live

Pain doesn't just limit movement – it affects your life. When every walk, workout or class carries the fear of a setback, you naturally become cautious. Over time, that caution can turn into avoidance.

You may still try to “do the right things”: stretching, light exercise or group classes. But if the underlying

tissue never fully heals, those efforts can feel frustrating or even pointless. Instead of building confidence, movement becomes something your body starts to compensate for, which can cause long-term issues. That's often the moment people feel stuck.

Why some pain doesn't resolve on its own

Not all pain responds to exercise alone. Chronic tendon irritation, joint overload and long-standing connective tissue issues don't always heal well once the body's repair process has stalled. In these cases, simply “doing more” can actually make things worse.

This is where regenerative therapy can play an important role, though these tools are not common in most physical therapy clinics. Even if they are, therapists or other practitioners are often not properly trained on how to use them to achieve the best outcomes.

Regenerative therapy: shockwave and EMTT is a non-invasive treatment designed to stimulate circulation and cellular activity in tissue that has struggled to heal. Just to be clear, shockwave therapy does not actually “shock” you. In clinics specializing in regenerative care, multiple forms of shockwave therapy are available, allowing treatment to be matched to the type and depth of the tissue involved →





Julie Tsai Law

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Julie has been a consistent top-performing agent since the start of her real estate career in 2002. She has completed hundreds of real estate transactions for buyers, sellers, and investors at every level. She was named one of the top 250 Realtors nationwide and Bay Area by the Wall Street Journal and RealTrends.

Julie inherited a passion for real estate from her parents who ran a successful real estate development company in Taiwan for over 20 years. She specializes in guiding clients through buying and selling new construction, home remodeling or expansion, and investment properties.

Fluent in Chinese Mandarin and Taiwanese and knowledgeable in Asian culture, Julie provides a unique edge for her clients when negotiating and navigating real estate transactions in the Bay Area.

Julie holds a BS in EECS from UC Berkeley, and an MBA.

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– whether the issue is soft tissue, joint-related or deeper structures.

Rather than masking pain, this approach aims to improve tissue health so your body can tolerate movement again without repeated flare-ups.

For many people, this is the turning point at which walking, exercise or recreational activities stop triggering flare-ups.

Why how you exercise matters

Even when tissue begins to heal, the way you return to movement matters just as much as that you return. Pilates is often recommended for people with pain, but not all Pilates is the same. Joseph Pilates originally developed his method as a rehabilitative system, emphasizing controlled movement, alignment, breath and whole-body coordination. Over time, many modern studios shifted toward high-volume classes and faster pacing. While these formats can be effective for fitness when you do not have any issues, they often move away from Pilates' original rehabilitative purpose.

Therapeutic Pilates is much less common. It requires instructors who are comprehensively trained to understand pain patterns, joint mechanics and movement compensations in a one-on-one or very small group environment. When Pilates is taught this way, it becomes a bridge between rehabilitation and everyday life. Movements are adapted to you. Progressions are intentional. The focus is on restoring trust in your body rather than pushing through discomfort. Instead of wondering whether exercise will make things worse, you learn how to move in a way your body can support – and benefit from – long term. →

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When the pieces work together

What helps most people move forward isn't one single solution, but an integrated approach:

1. Regenerative shockwave therapy to support tissue healing.
2. Individualized physical or occupational therapy to restore movement patterns.
3. Classical, therapeutic Pilates to rebuild strength, control and confidence.

Together, these elements help shift the focus from avoiding pain to building resilience.

You may notice that walking feels easier. That exercise no longer triggers the same setbacks. That movement begins to feel good again rather than painful.

A more sustainable way to stay active

Healthy living isn't about pushing through pain or accepting repeated setbacks year after year. For many people, sustainable movement requires addressing pain at its root – and rebuilding strength in a way that respects how the body actually heals.

Clinics such as PhysioFit Physical Therapy & Wellness take a unique approach: combining advanced regenerative tools with individualized therapy and classically grounded therapeutic Pilates. The focus isn't high-volume workouts or quick fixes, but long-term movement confidence.

As the year unfolds, the real question isn't whether you want to be healthier – it's whether you have the right support to make those habits last. When pain is addressed properly, movement stops feeling like something you have to manage – and starts feeling like something you can enjoy again. 🐾

Kim Gladfelter is the owner, physical therapist and Pilates instructor at PhysioFit Physical Therapy & Wellness, 1000 Fremont Ave., Suite 108, Los Altos.



PUZZLE ANSWERS

From page 16



LIST OF ADVERTISERS

- Bullis Charter School 8
- Campi Group/Golden Gate Sotheby's International Realty 7
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- Elizabeth Thompson/The Agency 15
- Grimes Natural Landscape 6
- Harker School 2
- Julie Tsai Law/Compass 19
- Linden Tree Books 20
- Los Altos Parks & Recreation 17
- Nicholas French | Christie's International Real Estate Sereno 13
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