

LOS ALTOS · LOS ALTOS HILLS · MOUNTAIN VIEW

OFF **TO** CAMP

A LOS ALTOS TOWN CRIER PUBLICATION · WINTER 2024 **magazine**



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TEACHES
ART IS FOR
EVERYONE

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Circulation: 16,000. Mailed directly to households in Los Altos, Los Altos Hills and select areas of Mountain View.

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ON THE COVER:

Sweet Treats week at Art Buzz Kids at Rancho Shopping Center gives campers the opportunity to create art pieces that look like desserts. PHOTO COURTESY OF TAMI VAZQUEZ.

Spurring Creativity

ART BUZZ KIDS TEACHES
ART IS FOR EVERYONE

BY ADRIENNE MITCHEL

STAFF WRITER | adriennem@latc.com



Art isn't only for artists.

That's what Los Altos resident Arezou Bahman aims to teach at her franchise location of Wine & Design in Rancho Shopping Center.

"I'm not an artist," she said. "If I can do it, anybody can do it. You don't have to be an artist to do art."

While the North Carolina-based franchise may be associated with adult-only paint-and-sip, the Los Altos location has an extensive Art Buzz Kids program – inspired by Bahman's experience raising her kids in Los Altos.

"One of the things that I felt like we needed more of was a creative way to have birthday parties," she said. "As a mom, I felt like there weren't enough options. It's a space for everybody – any age, any skill level."

During the summer, Bahman runs weeklong themed camps, culminating in a Friday art gallery where campers can show off their creations to their parents.

"We tell the kids, 'It's a secret; you can't tell your parents anything so that it's a big surprise,'" studio manager Tami Vazquez said.

And the kids are good at keeping the secret, Vazquez added.

Weeklong themes range from Shark

Week to Roller Coaster Design, A Pirate's Life for Me, Welcome to the Jungle, Sweet Treats and more.

"We just want the kids to be really creative and just have fun exploring different mediums and coming up with ideas," Vazquez said. "We really focus on having them come up with their own ideas.

It's not like, 'You have to do this, and it's going to be blue.' It's like, 'What would you like? How would you like to decorate it?'"

Kade Sazegari, a 10-year-old camper who attends Covington School, has been taking Art Buzz Kids classes since before Bahman opened her brick-and-mortar outpost approximately three years ago. Gnomes, Castle Creator and Messy Art are just some of the themed camps he's participated in. "I really want to go next year," Kade said. "The thing I really like about the camp is there's new mini camps. I like how you can get messy, but it's OK. And another thing I like about it is there's something different going on every day."

While he's become an Art Buzz Kids regular camper, Kade wasn't always interested in art.

"I thought art was just for those talented people, but it's actually fun and messy," he said.

Vazquez's favorite part of the summer camps is seeing campers be proud of their art.

"They're, like, 'Look what I made!'" she said. "They're very proud, and it's a confidence booster."

For 9-year-old Asia Feldman, a student at Gardner Bullis School, the camp was a confidence booster.

"I was nervous that no one would like me," Asia said. "But everyone is really nice and the teachers help you if you need it."

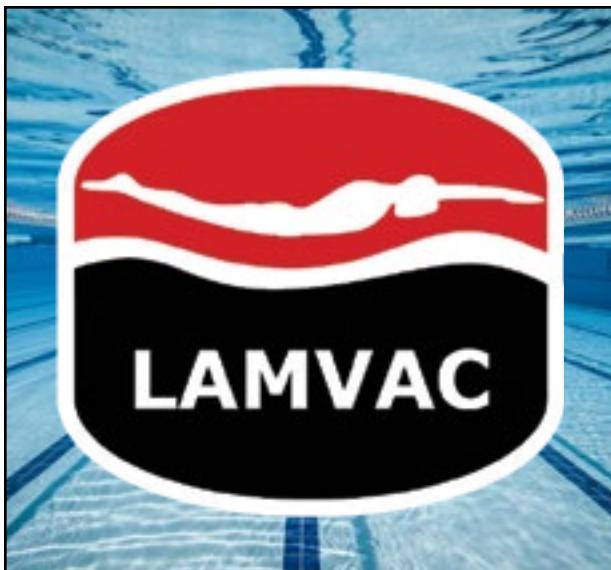
Asia said she plans on coming back for the 2024 summer camp session. ➤



I thought art was just for those talented people, but it's actually fun and messy.
~ KADE SAZEGARI

Camper makes felt hats and aprons during Gnomes week at Art Buzz Kids. PHOTO COURTESY OF TAMI VAZQUEZ.





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Campers create bakery-themed art pieces during Sweet Treats week at Art Buzz Kids. PHOTO COURTESY OF TAMI VAZQUEZ.

And for owner Bahman, her business is a way to give back to the community by providing people a space to explore their creativity.

“The joy I get when people are shocked to see what they’ve created has been the best part,” she said. “You don’t need to have any experience to do it and feel good about it and create something and just be proud of it.” ♥



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wineanddesign.com/losaltos-ca/art-buzz.



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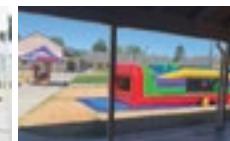
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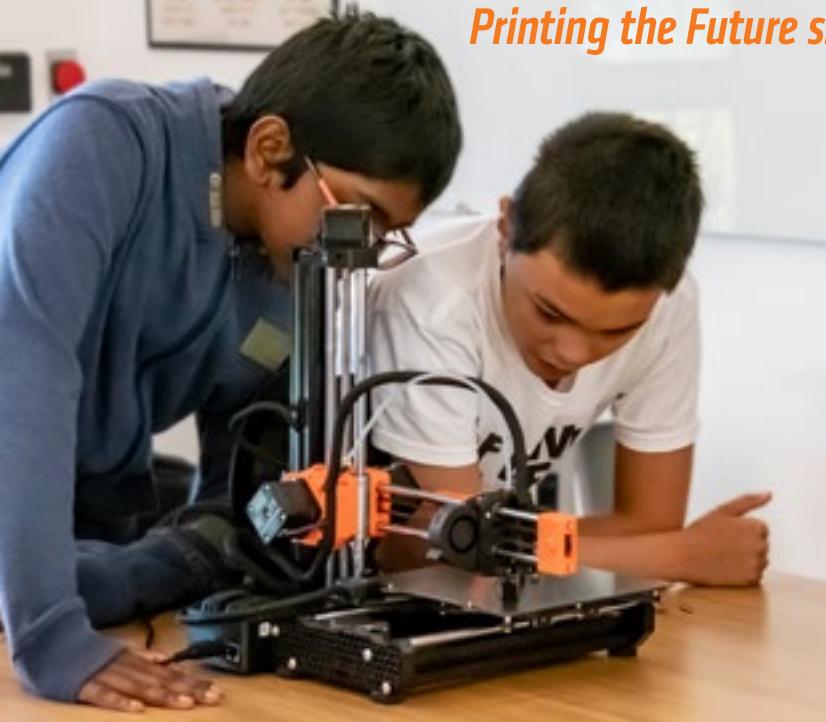


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3D DESIGN

Printing the Future shows anything is possible



BY ADRIENNE MITCHEL
STAFF WRITER | adriennem@latc.com

“**E**verything.”

That was 11-year-old Henri Beran’s response when a Town Crier intern asked him to choose his favorite part of the Printing the Future summer camp.

“You can make anything,” he said.

And that is exactly what camp founder and Los Altos High School student Madison Lee had hoped her campers, ages 6-13, would take away: whatever they could imagine.

“This one kid designed a robot with hands shooting out of it,” she said.

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Printing the Future campers collaborate on a design project at the Los Altos Community Center. PHOTO BY S.M. LIEU/SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER.

“It was really interesting seeing how the kids used their imaginations to turn it into 3D.”

Lee’s interest in 3D printing began in first grade, when she was diagnosed with a rare bone disease called aneurysmal bone cyst.

“Hearing the doctor tell me that I had no bone marrow and that my bone is empty translated into me thinking that I’d need amputation or a prosthetic,” she said.



While she’s now recovered and did not need prosthetics, her interest in prosthetics, particularly those that were 3D-printed, only increased. Lee finally got her hands on a 3D printer at Graham Middle School, but when she started at Los Altos High, she learned many of her peers didn’t have experience with 3D printing.

“They felt that it was way too late for them to learn, despite having a bunch of classes available,” she said. “And that’s when I realized that despite living in this area, where we’re really familiar with tech and we have tech all around us, there’s still this disparity between schools.”

Lee started a club called Helping Hands at Los Altos High, where she 3D printed prosthetics for those in need. But she also wanted to give the opportunity for younger students to learn about 3D printing. So, she applied to a fellowship hosted by the Dragon Camp Foundation. The fellowship provided the funds for her to purchase two 3D printers for her summer camp held at the Los Altos Community Center.

Hands-on learning

A typical camp day starts with a lesson on Tinkercad, an online 3D modeling program. After creating a basic design using their newly acquired skill, campers partake in a design challenge. One example of a design challenge is the “You Design, You Build” challenge, where campers must transform their partner’s 2D design into 3D. After break time, campers have the opportunity to use the 3D printer before finishing off their day with another project, like designing a bridge that has to fit certain dimensions and requirements.

“I like the creativity of it and how you can make whatever you want and bring it to life,” said 11-year-old camper Lawrence Fung.

Lee recalled that on the first day of camp, she held a survey: On a scale of 1 to 5, how well would you say you know how to 3D design or 3D print?

“A huge majority was just a flat-out 0 or a 1,” Lee said. “And nearing the end of it, I asked the kids again, and the answers were 4s and 5s. And that was really fulfilling to see.”

Lee donated one of the 3D printers to the Los Altos Community Center. As of this article’s publication date, Lee is not planning on running



“ I like the creativity of it and how you can make whatever you want and bring it to life ”
~ LAWRENCE FUNG

the camp again this summer, citing funding and scheduling issues.

After graduating from Los Altos High at the end of this school year, Lee plans to study biomedical engineering.

“One thing I hope everyone can take away is, regardless of your age, don’t be afraid of trying something new,” she said.

For more information, visit printingthefuture.org.



Los Altos High School student Madison Lee teaches campers about 3D printing through hands-on learning. PHOTO BY S.M. LIEU/SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER.

NATURE

EXPLORE YOUR

wild side

PATHFINDERS NATURE MENTORING CONNECTS KIDS WITH NATURE

BY ADRIENNE MITCHEL
STAFF WRITER | adriennem@latc.com

“It’s the best camp ever,” said 8-year-old Ellis Shen about Pathfinders Nature Mentoring. Ellis’ best friend, 9-year-old Claire He, agreed. The pair had been posing as sisters during the weeklong summer program and couldn’t stop gushing about all the creatures they had spotted during the camp – jellyfish, hermit crabs and newts. ➤



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“The newts were so cute, and they were purple with bright yellow-orange spots on their bellies,” Claire said. “We had to release them because they’re wild animals. They’re so adorable.”

At Pathfinders Nature Mentoring, each day presents a unique opportunity for children to explore and appreciate nature in the Bay Area – from creeks and beaches to meadows and forests. Drew Harwell, founder and director of Pathfinders Nature Mentoring, grew up in Palo Alto and developed a deep love for nature as a child. His mom would take him to local parks like Foothills Nature Preserve, the Baylands and San Francisquito Creek, which ultimately inspired him to study ecology in college. He hopes to inspire his campers to love nature the same way his mom inspired him.

“This is really my personal passion of wanting to connect children to nature,” Harwell said. “That’s what led me into this work. I know how powerful it was for me growing up.”

CONNECTING WITH NATURE

Harwell started Pathfinders Nature Mentoring in 2016 in response to Tender Tracks Outdoor Nature Awareness Preschool moving from the South Bay to Marin County in 2015. Harwell’s daughter went through the program, but the closure meant his younger son wouldn’t have that opportunity.

“I was strongly encouraged by a lot of other parents to start this program, because they were like, ‘If you don’t do this, we’re not going to have this experience for our own children,’” he said. “And I also just wanted not only my own children, but just other children growing up in this way of being connected to nature. A lot of what we do is to provide that nature connection.”

A typical camp day starts with a storytelling session that inspires an activity. For example, Harwell will tell the campers stories of when he and his brother did a wilderness skills survival course near Mount Shasta and learned to build a shelter before teaching the campers how to build a shelter.

“I use a lot of storytelling to inspire them into the activities that we’re going to do,” he said. “I really just love the experimental, adventuring, playful connection ➤



Drew Harwell, founder and director of Pathfinders Nature Mentoring, shares his love for the outdoors with campers at Huddart Park in Woodside. PHOTO BY SHELLY BOWERS/SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER.

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with nature, so everything I'm doing in terms of these activities is really just finding ways to help children develop their own nature connection."

One way Harwell brings out the campers' playful nature, he said, is by using nature names. Campers can pick anything in nature they feel a connection with, like Fox or Axolotl. Harwell goes by Drew Dragonfly because of his cool experiences with dragonflies in nature.

"For the ones who really get into it, they're like, 'No, don't call me Tom. Call me Turtle.' It's like, 'Sorry, Turtle,'" Harwell said. "It's really cute how excited they are to get into it."

Harwell said he implements a balance of structured and unstructured time to enable campers to explore on their own.

"Sometimes having that freedom to explore without an adult prompting or giving guidance allows them to come up with some pretty amazing things and really cool discoveries that I couldn't have necessarily planned out," he said.

And the kids love the freedom.

"I like that I can do anything I want to do," 10-year-old Joshua Lam said. "I can whittle, I can carve sticks, I build shelters here. We can build stuff out of sand and we can dig into the sand at the beach. We can go into the creek, we can find newts. We can catch water striders at the creek."

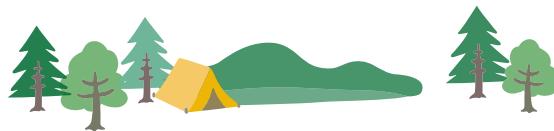
For Harwell, it's not just about teaching; it's about mentoring.

"The mentoring part is different from traditional teaching because you're focusing on the long-term connection you have with your students," he said. "The mentoring is about working with children for a longer period of time and having a more in-depth connection and relationship with the whole family and seeing them continue to grow in their nature journeys." ★



Camp counselor Karl Zahlhaas Liebner talks with a camper at Huddart Park. PHOTO BY SHELLY BOWERS/SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER.

For more information, visit pathfindersnature.com.



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