

LOS ALTOS • LOS ALTOS HILLS • MOUNTAIN VIEW

# Familyfocus

A LOS ALTOS TOWN CRIER PUBLICATION

WINTER 2025



## NATURE CAMPS

Hidden Villa campers get close to nature

*and more...*

## BOARD GAMES

are anything but boring

## SUMMER CAMPS

New classes this summer in Los Altos

A portrait of Cynthia A. Wemyss, a woman with short, dark, wavy hair, smiling. She is wearing a black blazer over a white top, a silver chain-link necklace, and silver hoop earrings.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS



### 5. NATURE CAMPS

Hidden Villa campers get close to nature



### 10. BOARD GAMES

Board games are anything but boring



### 16. DISASTER PREPARATION

Don't be scared - Be prepared



### 18. SUMMER CAMPS

New classes this summer in Los Altos

## Los Altos Town Crier

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# HIDDEN VILLA CAMPERS

get close to nature without having to go far



NATURE CAMPS



BY MAYA DUTT  
TOWN CRIER EDITORIAL INTERN



Children in the Bay Area are often surrounded by the hustle and bustle of urban life and forget that nature is outside their doorstep.

A nonprofit summer camp snuggled in the verdant preserves of Los Altos Hills is a reminder of that.

Hidden Villa is a 1,600-acre property with historic buildings and a farm that offers an outdoor summer program for youth in elementary school through high school. There are day camps for those in grades K-4 (for \$850), overnight Community Camps for students in grades 4-7 (\$1,025-\$2,050), Farm & Wilderness camps for kids in grades 8-10 (\$1,025-\$2,050)

and backpacking trips for high schoolers (\$1,050-\$2,200).

Financial aid is offered to students who cannot afford those prices, according to Hidden Villa Summer Camp Director Ben King.

While at Hidden Villa, campers participate in activities such as archery, swimming, hiking and arts and crafts.

“Hidden Villa focuses on helping kids make connections with nature, with each other and with themselves,” King said. “It’s a place where we celebrate kids being kids, give them the opportunity to unplug from technology and connect to the world around them.” >



Campers at the Hidden Villa summer camps in 2024 share a fun moment together while hiking.  
PHOTO COURTESY OF HIDDEN VILLA.



He added that day campers usually arrive at about 9 a.m. and gather for a morning circle. Afterward, they break off for choice activities – such as exploring the ranch or taking care of animals – then dive into the pool for a swim before gathering to eat their packed lunch. After an afternoon siesta, campers break off into another round of choice activities. The day closes off with a group activity and then campers are picked up at 4 p.m.



Overnight campers do these activities as well but also have more responsibilities, such as taking care of the animals on the farm, King said.

“Hidden Villa focuses on helping kids make connections with nature, with each other and with themselves”

Ben King - Hidden Villa Summer Camp Director



Jessica Zuckerman DuVal, director of development and communication, said the hardest program is the 12-day Bay to Sea backpacking trip. Campers hike over the Santa Cruz Mountains to the Pacific Ocean, averaging approximately 5 miles a day, she said. The strenuous trip gives campers noticeable confidence and a greater appreciation for nature once they complete it, according to DuVal.

“After coming back from their backpacking trip, a group of teenagers were so proud and you could tell this group of young people just connected,” she said. “There was this group of teen boys in particular, and I remember asking them for a highlight from the trip and they (said) ‘The sunset at Black Mountain; everyone should go see it because it was so peaceful and touching.’ To hear these young people appreciate a sunset they shared together is beautiful and that’s what I love.”

Programs like the Bay to Sea backpacking trip have a long history. It’s been around about as long as the camp, founded in 1924.

In that time, traditions have been established. One of them is float night, when campers create floats and launch them in the pool. King said they hold hands and sing a pop song with ad-libbed lyrics that describe their experience at camp. Then they make two wishes, one for Hidden Villa and one for the world.

“What blows me away the most is the similarities of what (high school seniors) and (fourth graders) wish for, just in different words,” King said. “That shows me that there is this incredible energy that people feel when they are here. These cares and desires in kids, they really are discovering it here.”



For more information on Hidden Villa and its programs, visit [hiddenvilla.org](http://hiddenvilla.org).



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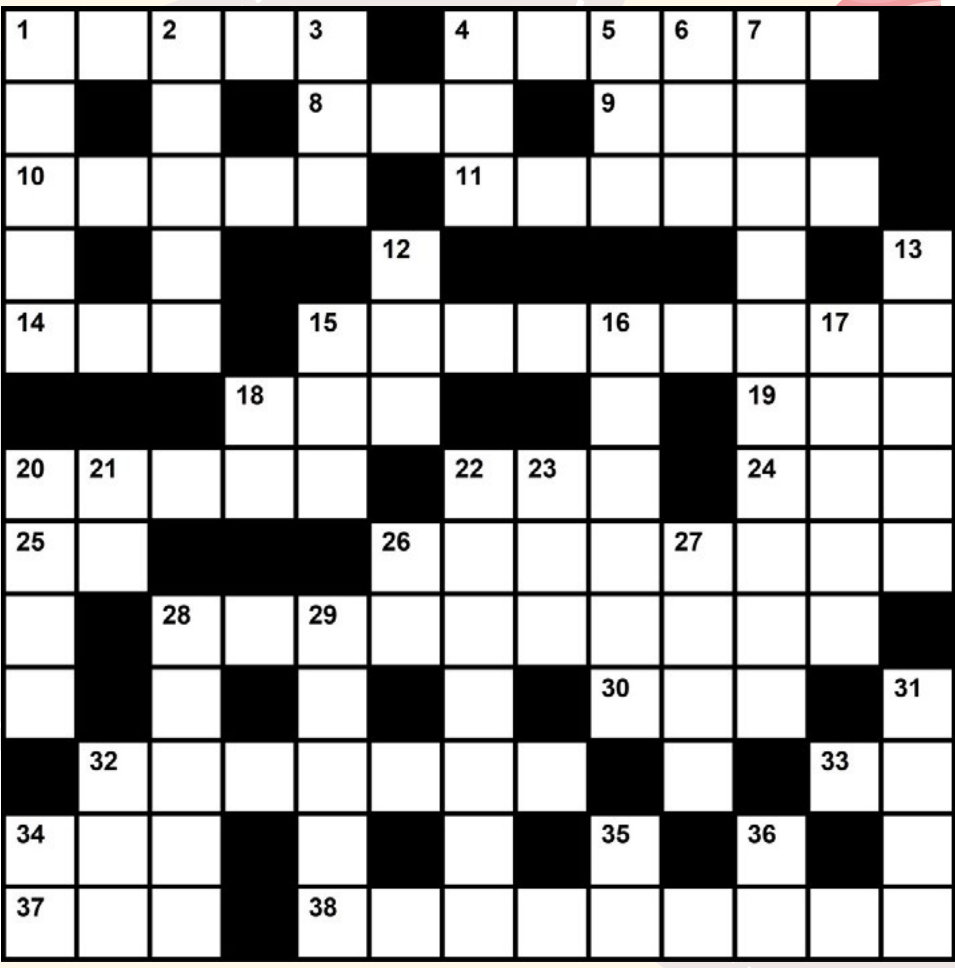
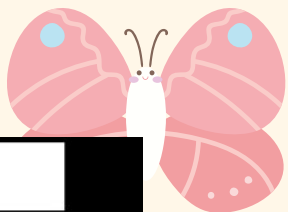
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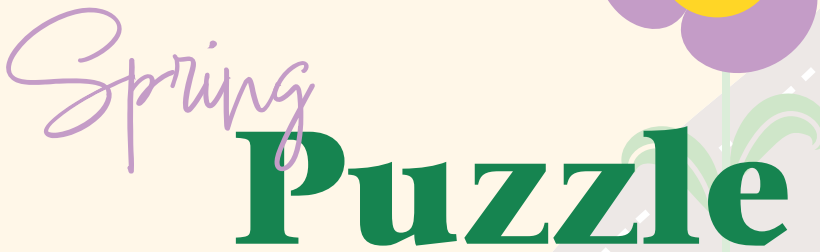
Across

- 1 Easter creature
- 4 Traditional Easter cake
- 8 Time period
- 9 Mom often has a \_\_ of treats at Easter
- 10 Traditional Easter meal
- 11 Spring is a time of \_\_\_\_
- 14 Towel word
- 15 Easter eggs are often made of this
- 18 Cultivate the garden
- 19 Historic beginning
- 20 Looks for eggs!
- 22 French for key
- 24 Energy
- 25 Used before a vowel
- 26 They often come to Easter dinner!
- 28 Candies given out at Easter (2 words)
- 30 Make a hole for a new plant
- 32 Egg containers
- 33 Hello!
- 34 \_\_ cushion
- 37 Exerciser's target
- 38 Eggs are often \_\_\_\_ at Easter

Down

- 1 Easter celebrates the new \_\_\_ of Christ
- 2 Comes closer
- 3 Even so
- 4 Cul-de-\_\_
- 5 Entrepreneur's degree
- 6 Indian bread
- 7 Easter tradition in the south (2 words)
- 12 That girl
- 13 Marshmallow chicks
- 15 Lettuce
- 16 Unwrapped, a present for example
- 17 They go green in spring
- 18 Height, for short

- 20 Easter bonnets!
- 21 International body
- 22 Having a hidden meaning
- 23 Retriever, for short
- 26 Guidelines, abbr.
- 27 DIY project fastener
- 28 Common pants
- 29 Enjoyed
- 31 Morning chatterbox in the garden
- 32 Baby wear at the table
- 34 Father
- 35 Medical man
- 36 Tech department





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# Board games are anything but boring

BY PRISHA MOHAPATRA  
TOWN CRIER EDITORIAL INTERN



ILLUSTRATION BY RACHEL ARONSON | TOWN CRIER EDITORIAL INTERN

In a world filled with instant gratification and digital trends, board games can offer something refreshing. They provide a chance to disconnect from screens and reconnect with people, fostering genuine interactions and experiences.

Board games can provide a blend of entertainment and engagement, challenging players to strategize, collaborate and unleash their imaginations. Unlike the passive consumption of digital entertainment, board games demand

active participation, critical thinking and often, a healthy dose of laughter.

For those looking to play such games, perhaps even trying new ones, the owners of Next Level Board Game Cafe in downtown Mountain View offered several suggestions. Rebecca Wang and Sean Forman opened the business last year, providing games and food.

Of the more than 200 games on the shelves, the owners suggested the following for families who want to play more than Monopoly. ➤



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**Ticket To Ride.** Players collect sets of colored train cars to claim railway routes connecting cities across a map. The longer the routes, the more points they earn. This strategic game involves route planning, resource management and blocking your opponents to come out on top. With various maps available, the game is different every time.

**Catan.** This is a game of strategy requiring players to settle the island of Catan by collecting resources such as wood, sheep and ore. Players use these resources to build settlements, roads and cities, earning victory points along the way.

**Splendor.** Players collect gems to purchase mines, transportation and shops. These acquisitions allow them to acquire more valuable gems, ultimately earning more points. Splendor is known for having simple rules but also offers strategic depth.

**Poetry for Neanderthals.** This party game involves one player trying to communicate words and phrases to their teammates using only single-syllable words. If they use any words with more than one syllable, they get bonked with an inflatable club etched with the word “No!”



Next Level Board Game Cafe in downtown Mountain View helps players choose the best board game for them and offers a space where people can play various games with friends.  
PHOTO BY MATTHEW LEE-ASIONG | TOWN CRIER EDITORIAL INTERN.

**Hues and Clues.** Players try to guess a secret color based on clues given by one player, known as the “mastermind.” The mastermind can only give clues using color cards, leading to creative interpretations and sometimes hilarious misunderstandings. Communication is key in this game – as is understanding how others think. ➤



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Wingspan, a board game that allows players to be bird enthusiasts, is one of the options available to play at Next Level Board Game Cafe in downtown Mountain View. PHOTO BY MATTHEW LEE-ASJONG | TOWN CRIER EDITORIAL INTERN.

**Wavelength.** Two teams compete to read their teammate’s mind by guessing where a concept falls on a spectrum. For example, the spectrum might be “Useless Invention” to “Useful Invention” and the clue giver provides a word like “napping pillow.” This game requires teamwork, communication and a shared understanding of concepts, often leading to surprising and engaging gameplay.

**Codenames.** Two teams compete to see which can be the first to identify their secret agents. Spymasters give one-word clues that can relate to multiple words on the board and teams must carefully consider the clues to avoid contacting the assassin, which ends the game immediately. Codenames is suited for large groups, encouraging creative thinking and collaboration.

**7 Wonders.** Players lead ancient civilizations by drafting cards to build structures, develop technologies and gather military might. This fast-paced card drafting game is played simultaneously, with all players competing at the same time.

**Azul.** The abstract strategy game requires players to draft colorful tiles to decorate their palace walls. Points are awarded for creating specific patterns and completing rows and columns. 🎲

*Next Level Board Game Cafe is open 5-10 p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesday, and 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Thursday through Sunday.*

*It is located at 888 Villa St., Mountain View.*

*For more information, visit [nextlevelboardgamecafe.com](http://nextlevelboardgamecafe.com).*

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Friday, March 14	4:00pm-9:00pm	Academy Training
Saturday, March 15	9:00am-5:00pm	Academy Training
Sunday, March 16	9:00am-2:00pm	Disaster Scenario/Skills Graduation Day

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# DON'T BE SCARED, *BE PREPARED*

BY ANN HEPENSTAL



**T**he recent wildfires in Los Angeles County may have you thinking about emergency preparedness. Here in the Los Altos area, we primarily face risks of earthquakes and wildfires, although other disasters are also possible. You can take steps that will help you prepare your family for any disaster. Review our Five Principles of Preparedness to check your family's current status and take steps to strengthen your preparedness.

## 1. REGISTER FOR EMERGENCY NOTIFICATIONS

Take a moment now to sign up or update your registration with AlertSCC (or your home county's emergency notification system). Register at the website [alertsc.org](http://alertsc.org) to get the AlertSCC emergency notifications in Santa Clara County, sending out alerts via phone calls, emails and text messages. Visit [AlerttheBay.org](http://AlerttheBay.org) to register for alerts in other Bay Area counties (e.g. where family members work, live, attend school).

- Register your home address and contact information for all your phones, in order to receive alerts tailored for your neighborhood.
- Put the contact numbers in your phone's address book so you recognize it as an emergency alert:
- 408-808-7871 (alerts sent by Santa Clara County).
- 650-947-2800 (alerts sent by the City of Los Altos).
- Set the ringtone for these numbers to "emergency bypass" so it rings even when your notifications are silenced.

## 2. KNOW HOW TO GET OUT

Make a plan with your household for how to get out in an emergency.

When you're out in public (e.g. at a store, your faith community, work or school), know how to get out of the building or to find a place to take cover.

At home, know two ways out in case of a house fire.

And, make a plan in case you need to evacuate from your home:

- You already know your "usual way" to the freeway.

- Identify another route out of your neighborhood, in case your usual route is blocked by emergency equipment or by traffic.
- Look on a map to find a "back way" to go that may be quicker in an evacuation.
- Identify a route you could walk or bicycle, just in case.
- Practice your plan! Load up your household (including pets) and drive your evacuation routes. Discuss where you could go after evacuating (e.g. a friend or family member's home, or a hotel). Talk about where you could meet if you're in different places.

During a wildfire or other event, you should evacuate if you are concerned about your safety in your home. Local authorities may give an evacuation warning, telling you to be ready to go; or an evacuation order, when you must go. However, your family may need more time to evacuate (e.g. small children, pets, people with mobility restrictions or special needs, limited evacuation routes) or you may feel unsafe – go early, don't wait!

## 3. KNOW WHAT TO DO

When an earthquake occurs, you need to know: Drop, Cover, Hold On. You drop to the ground (or lock your mobility device) so the earth movement doesn't make you fall, and then you crawl under a sturdy piece of furniture and hold on.



After any disaster, you need to know how to help yourself, your family, or a neighbor. Learn what to do:

- Get trained on basic first aid skills.
- Take Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training to learn how to help while keeping yourself safe.
- Take skills training such as CPR or Stop the Bleed.



4. MAKE A PLAN, MAKE A KIT

Build your emergency supplies kit or update it. You can find websites with good recommendations for what to put in your kit.

- Food and water: store at least 1 gallon of water per person, per day, plus extra for pets. Store shelf-stable foods (like canned goods) that your family will regularly eat so that you can rotate them back into your daily menus and replenish with fresh cans. (How many days depends on your risk tolerance and storage space, but store a 7-day supply.)
- Medications: store a supply of any prescription medications needed by your household (including pets), along with commonly used over-the-counter medications like ibuprofen.
- Maintenance: an annual event (such as New Year's Day, a special birthday, a national holiday) can be a good reminder to refresh the water, food, medications, batteries, etc. in your kit. Review the kit contents against the needs of your family and pets as they change over time (diapers, tampons, foods, medications.)
- Storage: Your kits will need to be accessible, yet put out of the way in a cool, dry, shaded spot (e.g. in an interior closet, or outdoors in a shed.)

5. KNOW HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR HOUSEHOLD

Review your communications plan so that your family members will be able to contact each other after an emergency event:

- Is your communications plan up to date with correct phone numbers? Does it have an out-of-state contact who can relay messages between family members?
- Do you know how to access your voicemail from someone else's phone? How to change your outgoing voicemail message from a different phone? That can help you pass messages to each other.
- Does your family have a meeting point in case an event happens when not everyone is home? Make a reunification plan.
- If you have children: Are the emergency contacts and phone numbers that you gave the school all up to date? (and – did you tell those contacts you listed them? Do your children know who these contacts are?)



JUST START!

Strengthening your household's emergency preparedness will increase your family's safety and give you some peace of mind. Get more help from local resources and websites:


- Emergency preparedness classes such as the ones taught by Santa Clara County Fire Department, see [sccfd.org](http://sccfd.org).
- Download a free copy of the booklet 26 Steps: Personal Emergency Preparedness Workbook at [campbellcert.org/26steps](http://campbellcert.org/26steps).
- Visit [losaltosca.gov/emergencyprep](http://losaltosca.gov/emergencyprep) to get templates, lists for disaster kits, and more information.
- Visit [do1thing.com](http://do1thing.com) to get more information and to sign up for their free monthly reminder prompting you to work on one area of preparedness. 🍀

*A Los Altos resident, Ann Hepenstal is the principal of Pacific Preparedness, LLC which provides emergency management consulting services to local governments. Ann's emergency management experience includes work for Intel Corporation, the city of Los Altos, the town of Los Altos Hills, and the city of Saratoga. Ann was selected as the Santa Clara County Emergency Manager of the Year in 2019 and she holds the Emergency Management Specialist certificate from the California Office of Emergency Services.*

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## TOWN CRIER REPORT

The city of Los Altos is offering several new summer camps this year for kids in addition to the return of popular options like Redwood Grove Summer Camp and Camp Jelly Bean.

## NEW CLASSES THIS SUMMER IN LOS ALTOS:

### CODING WITH ROBOTS

Code for Fun is offering a class called Coding with Robots: The camp on computer science and robotics will allow for hands-on learning through an interactive robot on topics like loops and algorithms, according to the city. Kids will work together on projects like choreographed robot dance routines. The class runs July 7-11, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The cost is approximately \$612 for residents and \$687 for non-residents.

### ROBOPETS ROBOTICS

Snapology will have RoboPets Robotics, a class about creating, engineering and icon programming. The week will allow kids to build robot friends based on types of animals. The class is June 30-July 3 at the Los Altos Community Center. It is \$267 for residents and \$318 for non-residents.

### CHESS CAMP

Chess Wizards will offer a Chess Camp with all materials provided, including lessons, games and prizes. Two camps are available the week of Aug. 4-8 at the Los Altos Community Center, one in the morning from 9 a.m. to noon and the other in the afternoon from noon to 3 p.m. Class cost is \$354 for residents and \$422 for non residents.







## Campi Group Proud to Be Named #1 Los Altos Hills Sales and Listings in 2024

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**Sotheby's**  
INTERNATIONAL REALTY



23450 Ravensbury Avenue | Sold for \$8,500,000



26063 Todd Lane | Sold for \$12,500,000



12720 Viscaino Road | Sold for \$6,250,000



27421 Sherlock Road | Sold for \$4,700,000



27876 Via Ventana Way | Sold for \$4,295,000





12190 Padre Court | Sold for \$5,800,000



### GARY CAMPI | CAMPI GROUP

gary@campi.com | 650.917.2433 | Campi.com

Connect with Us @CampiGroup  

Meet with Us @195 S. San Antonio Road, Los Altos, CA 94022

Each Office is Independently Owned and Operated | Lic. # 00600311

### Campi Concierge Real Estate Services

Exquisite Property Preparation | Impeccable Designer Staging  
Decades of Local Relationships | Unmatched Global Exposure  
Customized Local Marketing | White-Glove Service  
Extraordinary Results

*Campi Concierge Real Estate Services provide a seamless, end-to-end experience going beyond traditional real estate practices, offering bespoke solutions that include property design, staging, and preparation. This elevated approach is tailored to maximize a property's appeal and value while removing the stress of the selling or buying process. This comprehensive approach ensures that every detail, from design to final sale, is handled with precision and care. Campi Concierge Real Estate services are perfect for those seeking a hassle-free, high-end experience that delivers exceptional results.*

**Contact Us Anytime To Learn More**



Other classes focused on sports, aquatics, academics, special interests and other options are also available. Registration for residents starts March 3; March 10 for non-residents. The city is also offering exclusive early registration for residents and non-residents who attend the city's Parks & Recreation Open House Sat., March 1, from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. A city spokesperson said there will also be a drawing opportunity to win a complimentary week of summer camp at the event. The city does not offer any financial aid at this time.



Kids and staffers at a previous City of Los Altos summer camp jump for joy while on a hike in the woods. PHOTO BY MAL TAAM | SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER.



## Train Like the Stars

Learn the Secrets of Top Hollywood Actors & Broadway Performers with a Coach Who's Been There

# NOW ENROLLING!

**Ages 14 and up**

Register for group classes or one-on-one coaching, either online or in-person

### Robyn Brings Experience from Television, Movies & Broadway

#### Credits Include:

##### T.V.

"N.C.I.S." CBS  
"Law and Order True Crime" NBC  
"The Closer" TNT  
"Angel" WB  
"The Mentalist" CBS  
"Starved" FOX  
"N.C.I.S. L.A." CBS

- 60 + national commercials

##### Film

• Wes Anderson's "The Life Aquatic" - opposite Bill Murray, Cate Blanchett and Jeff Goldblum  
• "The Celestine Prophecy"

##### BFA:

*The Juilliard School*

##### MFA:

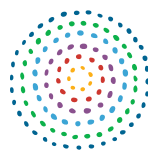
*The Shakespeare Theatre Company*



[www.cohenactingstudio.com](http://www.cohenactingstudio.com)

[Robyn@CohenActingStudio.com](mailto:Robyn@CohenActingStudio.com)





Ventana  
School

2025

# Summer Camp

Incoming First through Sixth Grade

*Register Now!*

\*Grade levels refer to the grade your child will be **enrolled in** during the 2025–2026 school year

## Weekly Themes

Week 1 (June 16 – 18, 20)	Masterchef Junior
Week 2 (June 23 – 27)	Tinkering
Week 3 (July 7 – 11)	Theater
Week 4 (July 14 – 18)	Science
Week 5 (July 21 – 25)	Arts & Crafts
Week 6 (July 28 – Aug 1)	Wonderful Water

Camp runs Mondays through Fridays from 9 AM to 3 PM  
Extended care is available until 4:30 PM

*For more information and to register,  
visit  
[losaltosca.gov/parksrec/page/register-camps-classes](https://losaltosca.gov/parksrec/page/register-camps-classes).*



For more details and registration information:  
[www.ventanaschool.org/summercamp2025](http://www.ventanaschool.org/summercamp2025)  
[summercamp@ventanaschool.org](mailto:summercamp@ventanaschool.org)  
(650) 948-2121



Ventana School  
1040 Border Road  
Los Altos, CA 94024

Conveniently located off 280 and Foothill Expressway  
between El Monte Avenue and Magdalena Avenue.



## SUMMER @ SIL ENROLLING NOW!

**ABOUT SIL**

Our summer schedule is packed with fantastic opportunities this year! SIL offers year-round, 1:1 mastery-based education, in all courses.

*\*For credit and enrichment options available.*

**SUMMER PROGRAMS**

- GEOMETRY, FUL YEAR (for credit)
- MULTIVARIABLE CALCULUS, SEMESTER (for credit)
- Fundamental Prep Workshop for Calculus
- Fundamental Prep Workshop for Algebra
- Writers Workshop
- Debate Camp
- Science Camp
- Spanish Programs 1-4
- Grade Transition Workshops



**Non-SIL students are welcome!**

*More Information*



**650.941.4350**  
sileducation.org



SCHOOL FOR  
INDEPENDENT  
LEARNERS


## Puzzle Answers

From page 8


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37	A	B	S			38	D	E	C	O	R	A	T	E	D		

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- Edward Jones | Cynthia A. Wemyss **2**
- Elizabeth Thompson | The Agency **23**
- Fremont Hills Country Club **10**
- Grimes Natural Landscape, Inc. **14**
- Harker School **7**
- Hyperspace Los Altos **12**
- Jerry Haslam | Coldwell Banker **17**
- Los Altos Hills County Fire District **15**
- Nicholas French | Christie's International Real Estate Sereno **9**
- Peninsula Youth Theater **22**
- Pinewood School **11**
- Ryan Gowdy | The Agency **13**
- School for Independent Learners **22**
- The Granary Quilt Shop **6**
- The Welsh Group **24**
- Ventana School **21**



## SUMMER THEATRE CAMPS



**Acting, musical theatre, improv, and more!**  
Day camps for ages 5-15  
Summer internships for teens

# PYTNET.ORG



# My clients say it best.

“Elizabeth and her amazing team took care of all the details to get my home ready for market — I didn’t have to worry about anything! Elizabeth’s marketing expertise and deep understanding of the local market were invaluable.”

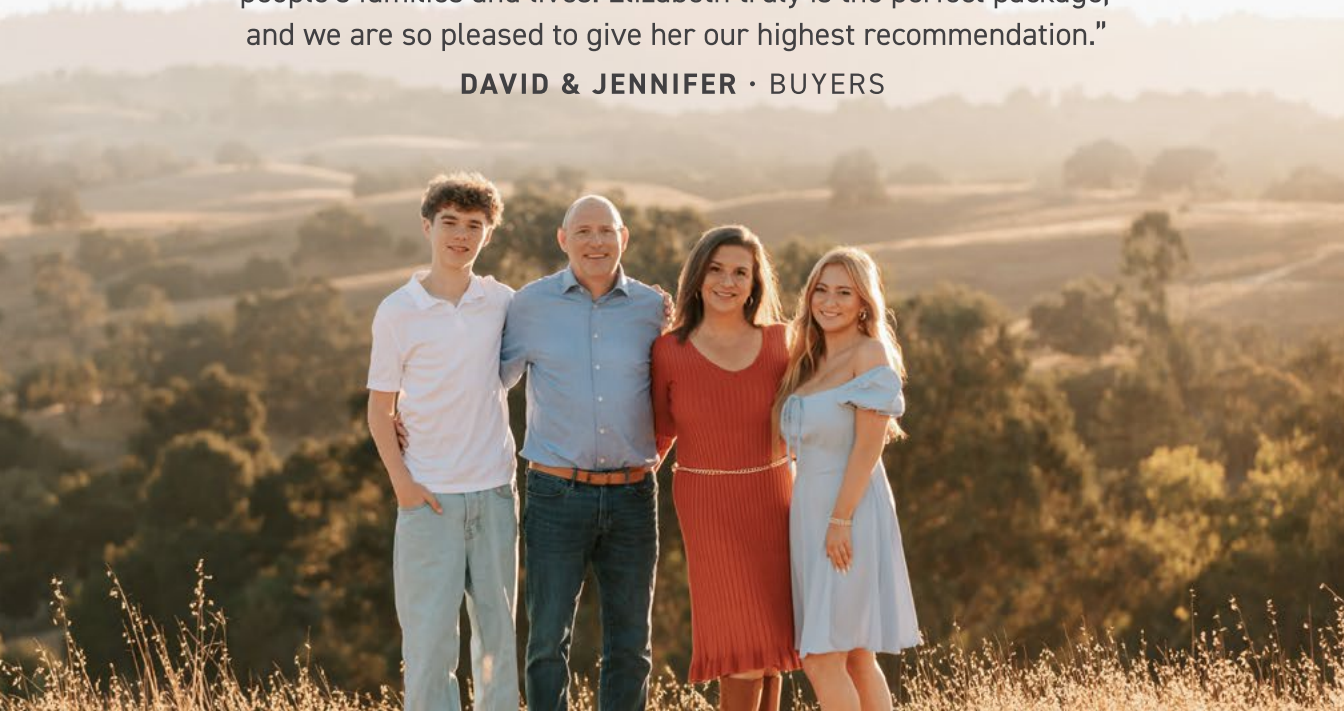
**MAUREEN • SELLER**

“Having Elizabeth Thompson as our realtor was a great experience. She has a can-do attitude and a great sense of humor. We would not hesitate to use Elizabeth’s services again, either as buyers or sellers.”

**CAROL & DAVID • SELLERS**

“Elizabeth is not only extremely good at being a Real Estate Agent professionally, but she also has the empathy, patience, and awareness to know what to do and say at the right moment. I really believe it’s because she truly cares for her clients, and she wants to see them do well in this important life decision. She knows it’s not just a financial transaction, but it is ultimately about people’s families and lives. Elizabeth truly is the perfect package, and we are so pleased to give her our highest recommendation.”

**DAVID & JENNIFER • BUYERS**





# COMPASS

## Your Los Altos Spring Calendar

### Events

March 14th - St. Paddy's Beer Stroll  
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

March 23rd - Head West Marketplace  
11:00 AM - 5:00 PM

April 12th - 62nd Downtown Easter Egg Hunt  
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

April 26th - Art in the Plaza  
11:00 AM - 3:00 PM

### Dates to Remember

2/28 - Ramadan begins

3/4 - Fat Tuesday

3/5 - Ash Wednesday

3/9 - Daylight Savings Begins

3/14 - Pi Day

3/17 - St. Patrick's Day

3/20 - First Day of Spring

4/20 - Easter



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DeniseWelsh@Compass.com