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Hi there, my name is Ryan Gowdy. I am a second-generation Los Altos realtor who lives, breathes, and loves everything Los Altos. My children attend our local schools and I am a proud sponsor of LAEF. I still live in the wonderful community where I was raised. I take great pride in providing exceptional service to my clients who trust me for guidance in all things real estate. If there is ever anything that I can do support you with your real estate needs, please don't hesitate to reach out.

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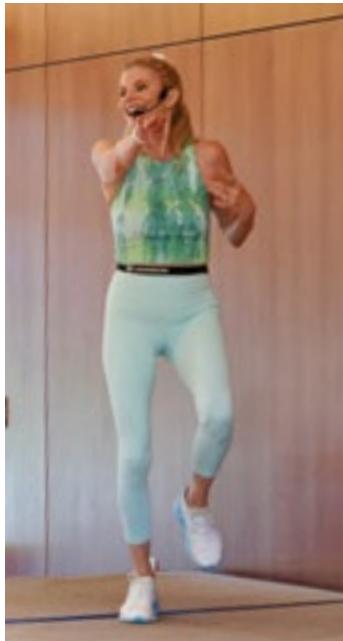
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ON THE COVER:

The Shen family – from left, Ellis, Emily, Howard and Howard's mother, Lulu – prepares to eat a hot pot spread. *PHOTO BY S.M. LIEU*

Signs greet attendees of Barbara Peterson's Jazzercise classes at the Los Altos Community Center above. Peterson leads the class from a stage, right, while her students fill the Grand Oak Room, far right. | PHOTOS BY SHELLY BOWERS



FIT & FUN

High-intensity workouts provide stress-reducing outlet

BY KAITLYN HUANG
TOWN CRIER EDITORIAL INTERN

Barbara Peterson of Los Altos has been teaching Jazzercise for a whopping 43 years, and some of her students have taken classes for just as long. Jazzercise, a form of workout that blends elements of dance, Pilates, resistance training, yoga and kickboxing, is a lifelong commitment for many.

“Someone said to me the other day, ‘How can you do that same type of thing for 40 years, week after week?’” Peterson said. “I said, ‘It’s like brushing my teeth – you know that you’re going to feel better.’”

But what truly makes people feel better after Jazzercise and come back for that second class? Curious to find the answer, I joined a Jazzercise class myself.

AGE-DEFYING MOVEMENT

On a Monday afternoon in the summer, I entered the Grand Oak Room at the Los Altos Community Center, where Jazzercise instructor Peterson holds all of her classes. As people streamed into the room carrying mats, bands and weights, a lively, sociable atmosphere developed. Peterson began introducing me to students who have been with her for years –

people ranging in age from their 30s to their 80s. Soon afterward, class started.

Pop music began blasting. Peterson, on an elevated stage, demonstrated the exercises in real time while students followed along to the music. Although there wasn’t a large group in the room, the energy was brimming.

We started with a warm-up and gradually moved into the high-intensity exercises that raise the heart rate. My muscles were burning and I was glistening with sweat by the middle of class. With each exercise combination, Peterson offered a high- and low-impact version to accommodate the various ages. To her, it was important that everyone have a fruitful workout experience.

“The philosophy is (that) it doesn’t matter your age – the more you move, the more you move, the less you move, the less you move, and eventually, as you age, it gets harder to get back in the game,” Peterson said. “So, find something that brings you deep joy and do it forever.”

Here’s the surprising part, however: The more tired I got from the exercises, the more energy the room had. All around me, there were whooping, >

“Someone said to me the other day, ‘How can you do that same type of thing for 40 years, week after week?’

I said, ‘It’s like brushing my teeth – you know that you’re going to feel better.’”

– Barbara Peterson



Jazercise attendees, who range in age from their 30s to their 80s, take breaks to encourage one another with high-fives.

PHOTO BY SHELLY BOWERS

spontaneous sing-alongs, and a culminating “Whooo!” at the end of exercise combinations that took my breath away, literally.

“Yes you can!” Peterson shouted. “Aren’t you glad you’re not home thinking about it?”

Her encouragement put a smile on my face. I looked around, and I wasn’t alone – the other students were gleaming.

After the high-intensity portion, Peterson led us through full-body strength training and stretching exercises that took us to the end of the 60-minute class. Looking back,

there’s one word Jazercise student Anne Grillot used that accurately describes my experience: “euphoric.” Maybe this euphoria is a reason for people’s long-term commitment to Jazercise.

MUSIC AND COMMUNITY

For Grillot, a Palo Alto resident who attended Peterson’s first class and has stuck with Jazercise for 43 years, much of the euphoria comes from the music, which is often a blend of modern, danceable music and hits from years ago.

“The music makes you feel good,” she said.

Napa resident and Peterson’s niece Julie McClure, who livestreams the class, also loves when Peterson sings along with the music.

“It cracks me up when she sings; that goes way back in our family,” she said.

The students added that they enjoy Jazercise’s flexibility – for example, there are usually jumping and nonjumping variations of an exercise.

“I hit 80, and I am so happy that I can do it,” Grillot said.

McClure, whose weight-loss journey began around the same time she began Jazercise, said, “I started it when I was quite heavy, and I felt like I could access it.” According to McClure, Peterson would often say, “You just do what you can do.”

Indeed, Peterson said, she’s “a firm believer in ‘keep moving, (and) don’t get off your course.’” However, she emphasized the importance of “pay(ing) attention to your body, and how it feels.”

Many additionally appreciate the community Jazercise has fostered.

McClure said attending Jazercise with “a community around a healthy lifestyle and around staying fit and active” helped her stay accountable to her weight-loss mission.

Student and San Carlos resident Carla Boggs also recalled how the Jazercise community “lovingly accepted” her into class more than 15 years ago, when she was new to the area.

“They have been by my side and watched as I went from a young, single woman to meeting and marrying my >



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husband, to having and raising my two new boys," she said of fellow Jazzercisers. "This class and this community are an important part of my life."

For some, there was also an aspect of sweating their worries away during Jazzercise class. Grillot, who is a nurse, noted that Jazzercise serves as an "outlet" that helps her "let it go" when things get "stressful, anxiety provoking and worrisome."

"The more you exercise, the lighter you feel, so that you can go back and face it the next day with that kind of a job," she said. "I think (Jazzercise students) understand: Build a bridge, and get over it. Take Jazzercise, and get over it."

Peterson echoed those sentiments.

"We all have something going on in our lives outside of Jazzercise, and my commitment with myself, my door managers and my students is: Just leave it outside," she said. "Come on in, take a break, enjoy the music (and) the camaraderie, and let's just celebrate our breath, our life, our movement together, our friendships, and make it truly a celebration; and that keeps people coming back."

Peterson holds Jazzercise classes 5:15 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays, and 9 a.m. Saturdays. She also offers Personal Touch Core Strengthening classes 4:15 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays. ♦

For more information, visit jazzercise.com/location/los-altos-community-center.



Jazzercise classes

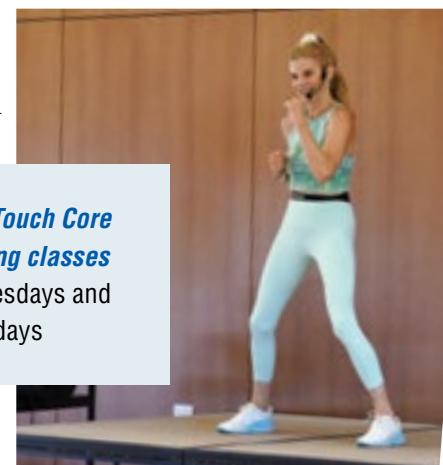
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Barbara Peterson has taught Jazzercise for 43 years. She considers it an outlet for stress.

PHOTOS BY SHELLY BOWERS

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AROUND THE WORLD



AND BACK AGAIN

LOS ALTOS ARTIST FEATURES AREA GARDENS IN LATEST EXHIBITION

BY MARY LARSEN

STAFF WRITER | MARYL@LATC.COM

Kathryn Hilton has returned to her roots – in Los Altos and in art.

Her current solo exhibition at Gallery 9 in Los Altos, “In the Garden: An Artist’s View,” features more than 30 of her richly textured depictions of local gardens, including those at the Los Altos History House and Hidden Villa.

A local – born at Stanford Hospital

and raised in Los Altos – Hilton has lived in a variety of places and traveled to many more. Working 30 years as a management consultant, she saw the world, sketchbook in hand.

A Los Altos High School graduate and an art history major in college, Hilton had originally planned on a career in art management. While that objective changed a bit, her career with Contoural, based in Los Altos,

“enabled me to travel the world and see the great collections of art all over the world,” she said.

When she had children, she said she looked for artistic endeavors that were “quick and easy – watercolors, jewelry making – things that were more portable.” While she didn’t always have the big home studio she has now, art was always part of her lifestyle. >



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Her current work features multi-step layered pieces. Starting with printed images created with a large gel plate, Hilton then adds acrylic paint and finally watercolor and pastels. The result is rich with color and texture.

Asked how she came up with the unique technique, Hilton recalled that it began with a free gel plate printing class at the Encinitas Library.

"Then I thought, how can I incorporate that with my travel sketching?" she said.

Hilton experimented with ways to get away from conventional mono-prints and create something more representational.

"Gradually, the plates got bigger, and the technique got more complex," she noted.

IN THE GARDEN

The COVID lockdowns had an influence on her recent subject matter. Living in the San Diego area at the time, Hilton joined the San Diego Botanic Garden and started visiting there every week.



Kathryn Hilton's work includes a painting of Hidden Villa's edible garden, left, featured in her "In the Garden" book, as well as a scene showcasing apple blossoms and irises lining a path at Filoli, right. | PHOTOS COURTESY OF KATHRYN HILTON

"It was a place of refuge," she said. "You start noticing what's blooming, what's not – kind of in slow motion. I got hooked."

Moving back to Los Altos a year and a half ago, she wanted that sense of peace to continue.

"I joined Filoli, Gamble, all the local gardens, and I'd bring my sketchbook," she said.

She also joined the Santa Clara Valley Watercolor Society, enjoying the group's plein air painting sessions on Thursdays.

"It's fun to explore new places as well," Hilton added.

Gardens also captivated her during her travels – from the Majorelle Garden in Marrakech to the Gardens of Versailles outside Paris. >>



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“People think art is kind of inaccessible. Just take a class. I still take classes. You can just take a class and play around and learn new things.”

~ Kathryn Hilton

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“They’re a space of inspiration for me,” she said.

In addition to her garden paintings, Hilton has done landscapes and seascapes – and occasionally something completely out of the box.

“I’ve also done some interesting commissions,” she said, such as an “illuminated manuscript a Los Altos resident wanted as tribute to his wife for her birthday.”

The piece was created in the style of the illuminated manuscripts of St. Hildegard, the 12th-century German mystic who, among other things, was an artist, author, composer and pharmacist.

“I learned a lot about St. Hildegard,” Hilton said. “It was a fun project.”

Although Hilton is a professional artist, she believes art is for everyone.

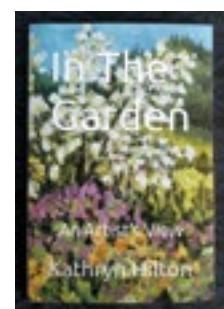
“People think art is kind of inaccessible,” she said. “Just take a class. I still take classes. You can just take a class and play around and learn new things.”

And as part of the Los Altos Art Docents group, she’s looking forward to helping introduce the world of art to elementary school students this year.

Hilton’s solo exhibition at Gallery 9 runs through Sept. 30 at 142 Main St., Los Altos. Her companion book, “In the Garden,” is available at Gallery 9, the Los Altos History Museum and from Amazon. She hopes the visual tour of 12 local sites, with a map, will inspire readers to “get out and explore the gardens.” ♦

To view Hilton’s work and for more information, visit kathrynhilton.com or her Instagram page at @hilton.kw.

Hilton’s
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Hot pot warms cool nights

PREPARE A FAMILY FEAST WITH FLAVOR AND FLAIR

BY EMILY PAN SHEN
SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER



"Every fall when the weather begins to cool and loved ones gather, *hot pot* is my family's go-to favorite that fills our bellies and warms us from the inside out."

— Emily Pan Shen



Colorful, flavorful hot pot ingredients such as corn on the cob, tomatoes, fresh prawns, leafy greens, napa cabbage, sliced well-marbled meats, assorted mushrooms and fish cakes simmer in a boiling pot of broth. | PHOTOS BY S.M. LIEU

*H*ot pot is an interactive, fun, celebratory, eat-as-you-cook feast of hot boiling soup filled with broth, thinly sliced meats and a smorgasbord of veggies, mushrooms, noodles and other tasty goodies.

Every fall when the weather begins to cool and loved ones gather, hot pot is my family's go-to favorite that fills our bellies and warms us from the inside out. Endlessly customizable through infinite choices of soup flavors, meats, dipping sauces and veggies, it is also nutritious and delicious.

Hot pot can be a meal for every day or for special celebrations. I have so many good memories of enjoying hot pot over the decades: meeting my now-husband's extended family

for the first time in Taiwan over a boisterous hot pot meal; eating epic Sichuan spicy hot pot in Taipei after my wedding; celebrating my grandmother-in-law's 80th birthday at a long table with multiple hot pots; and enjoying an intimate hot pot for four with my husband and kids every winter during the holiday week between Christmas and New Year's. Every year when the holidays approach, there's nothing I crave more than this supremely satisfying soup packed with veggies that develops in taste and richness as the ingredients are cooked.

This family feast requires up-front work but reaps maximum satisfaction and flavor. Here's how to do it at home. >>



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During the family's hot pot meal, Lulu Shen, left, adds slices of meat into the boiling soup while her son, Howard, right, pulls out freshly cooked carrot. | PHOTOS BY S.M. LIEU

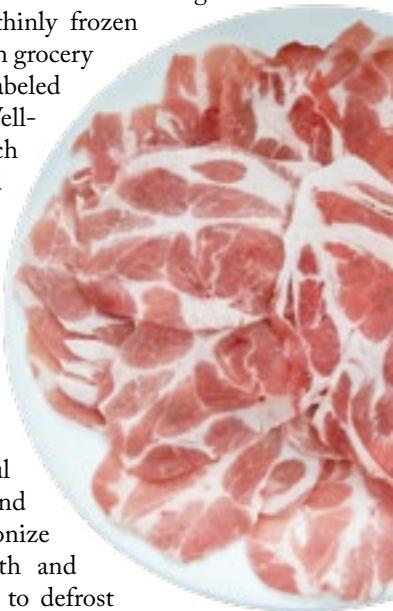
PREPARING YOUR HOT POT

• **The equipment.** You can find a basic electric hot pot cooker on Amazon or at your local Asian grocery store for approximately \$60. I also recommend metal, netted ladles for pulling items out of the soup, as well as for poaching delicate or easy-to-lose items such as soft tofu, fish filet chunks or bean thread noodles. You also will need a soup ladle.

• **The setup.** Put the hot pot in the center of the table so that each person who is eating hot pot can reach it. Ensure that younger children are safely out of reach. Each person's place setting should have a larger bowl, a sauce dipping bowl and personal eating utensils.

• **The soup base.** Start with plain water or stock. Your flavor will come from the many layers of ingredients. Or you can try hot pot flavor packs, available in Asian grocery stores, which include sets of herbs and spices to make flavored broths. Make sure you have extra water or stock on hand to replenish the liquid in your hot pot as it cooks.

• **The meat platter.** I recommend using two or three types of thinly frozen meats, often sold in Asian grocery stores and sometimes labeled "shabu shabu" meat. Well-marbled, tender cuts such as sliced pork butt and boneless beef short ribs are crowd pleasers. You don't need much – the signature of hot pot is not an abundance of meat (smaller amounts of high-quality, thinly sliced meats are key), but rather the bountiful variety of vegetables and ingredients that harmonize to create a robust broth and satisfying meal. Be sure to defrost the meat in your refrigerator the night before you need it. >



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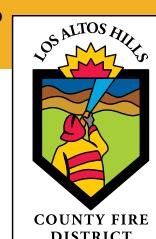
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- **The meatball, fish ball and seafood platter.** Meatballs and fish balls are available at Asian grocery stores, usually fully cooked. You can find them in open frozen bins, frozen variety packs and vacuum-sealed refrigerated packages. Again, a little bit of each kind creates fantastic flavor and variety. Following are some of my favorites.

Meatballs and fish balls: Vietnamese beef tendon meatballs, pork and vegetable meatballs, fish balls or crab balls stuffed with roe, Japanese fish cake,

imitation crab meat, shrimp balls, cuttlefish balls and even frozen dumplings. It's fun to experiment here.

Fresh seafood: Shrimp cooks up well; I recommend head-on, shell-on, raw shrimp, because the shells add great flavor to the broth. If available, live clams that have been scrubbed and soaked to release grit are a treat. Frozen, prepped squid is also attractive and easy to eat. Be sure to defrost frozen items before preparing your hot pot. If you use seafood, you may prefer to finish the broth and not reuse it, as reheated seafood soup may not retain freshness.

Note on allergies: Always check ingredient lists for allergens to make sure the food is safe for all participants to enjoy.



- **Veggie and tofu platters.** Veggie platters are the crown jewel of hot pot. I recommend a variety of leafy veggies, colorful veggies, mushrooms and tofu. All of the ingredients should be washed and trimmed into sizes that would be easy to cook and eat – 2- to 4-inch chunks or slices. A good rule of thumb is to prep a little bit of each thing, for example, a quarter of a head of napa cabbage, a small bunch of each type of veggie and mushroom. The key is to have plentiful variety, but you don't ➤

Some cooks organize hot pot ingredients on platters, like seafood and fish balls, left, and tofu and veggies, above. | PHOTOS BY S.M. LIEU



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need massive quantities of each kind because they will quickly add up to a lot of food. Some of my favorites:

Leafy veggies: Spinach, watercress, bok choy, snow pea leaf and chrysanthemum leaf. The frilly tops of napa cabbage are a must, as they make the soup particularly silky and sweet.

Colorful veggies: Beefsteak tomatoes, carrots, kabocha squash and hunks of corn on the cob. The

flavors and colors make the broth both delicious to eat and beautiful to see cooking before your eyes.

Mushrooms: Fresh shiitake, enoki and any combination of woodear, oyster, seafood, bunapi and maitake. Mushrooms add excellent umami and texture.

Tofu: Medium-firm tofu and tofu skin. Medium-firm tofu turns silky in the broth without falling apart. Some people prefer to freeze their tofu

and then defrost it, which creates holes in the tofu that trap soup and flavor. You may wish to cook tofu in netted ladles to prevent them from disintegrating in the soup.

- **Finishing starch.** To finish the meal, I love adding thin mung bean noodles to the final broth, poached in the netted ladles to prevent them from disappearing into the soup. Other options are pre-cooked, frozen udon or steamed rice. I also like to throw toasted chunks of Chinese donuts (you tiao) on my soup for texture.

- **Dipping sauce.** Make your own personalized dipping sauce, to taste. My family's classic sauce is a raw, high-quality egg, whisked with Taiwanese satay sauce, called shacha sauce, which is packed with umami and made with dried seafood, garlic, ginger, shallots, chili and oil. I also like to add a bit of minced garlic, sliced green onion, minced cilantro, soy sauce, black vinegar, sesame oil and chili oil. Alternatives include sesame sauce, Japanese yuzu dipping sauce or whatever you like.

Emily Pan Shen adds freshly chopped herbs, Taiwanese shacha (satay) sauce and chili oil with garlic to her broth, along with some mung bean noodles, for the final step in her hot pot meal. | PHOTO BY S.M. LIEU



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EATING YOUR HOT POT

Phew, that was a lot of prep! Now, to enjoy your hot pot.

The process:

1. Boil your stock in your hot pot.
2. Begin adding in ingredients by cook time, starting with items that add tons of flavor, need longer to cook and tend not to fall apart in soup – carrot chunks, corn on the cob, tomato slices, napa cabbage stalks and some meatballs or fish balls.
3. Add quick-cook ingredients. Once the broth reaches a boil again, start adding ingredients that cook quickly – green leafy veggies, slices of meat, seafood and mushrooms, remembering to remove them immediately from the broth as they cook so they don't become rubbery. As you remove items from the hot pot, put them in your bowl, dip them in your sauce and eat them. Feel free to sip the broth from your bowl as you go.
4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 as needed. Noodles are often cooked last, as they tend to disintegrate in the broth. Add more broth or water as needed.
5. If you have soup that you would like to reuse, refrigerate your hot pot after it cools, then start over the next day with any remaining ingredients.



Emily Pan Shen, left, pulls cooked meat from the boiling broth while her daughter, Ellis, drops in enoki mushrooms. | PHOTO BY S.M. LIEU

A FEW NOTES ON ETIQUETTE

- If you put certain items in the broth, be in charge of timing and take them out when they are ready.
- Establish ground rules for shared utensils. Some people are careful about using only shared chopsticks and ladles in the soup, and not sticking their personal chopsticks and eating utensils into the shared pot. Some people like to think that the boiling broth cooks off all of the germs, so they stick their personal chopsticks in. If you are the host, decide what works for your comfort level and make ground rules clear to your fellow potters. ♦

Los Altos resident Emily Pan Shen works in education, hails from Taiwan and has been enjoying hot pot for more than three decades.

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The popularity of **PICKLEBALL**

Pickleball enthusiasts from across the Peninsula play on courts at Mitchell Park in Palo Alto, above. | PHOTO BY SHELLY BOWERS

LOS ALTOS AREA NOT SPARED FROM **THE FASTEST-GROWING SPORT IN AMERICA**

BY BRUCE BARTON

STAFF WRITER | BRUCEB@LATC.COM

The 15 pickleball courts at Mitchell Park in Palo Alto are filled with people in motion. The popping sounds of plastic, wiffle-type balls swatted by pickleball paddles are constant. So is the chatter and laughter among participants.

“It’s like this 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day,” said Monica Williams of Mountain View.

Williams, a designated ambassador for the USA Pickleball Association, recently led a Town Crier reporter through an impromptu lesson, followed by an actual game on one of the 20-foot-by-44-foot courts – four of them can fit on one standard tennis court.

The 80-year-old Williams blasted a serve right past the flailing paddle of the reporter. Not a great start, but

soon after came fun volleys, shrugs, giggles, fist-bumps – in other words, a good time had by all.

Pickleball has skyrocketed in popularity over the past five years, especially over the course of the pandemic. According to USA Pickleball, citing a Sports & Fitness Industry Association study, the sport grew to 4.8 million players in 2021. Annual growth has averaged 11.5% the past five years. It is often cited as the fastest-growing sport in America.

Statistics nationwide belie the myth that the sport is mostly for senior citizens: Again, according to USA Pickleball, the average age of core players (those regularly playing in tournaments) is 47.9; for casual players, it’s 34.3. The sport is not only

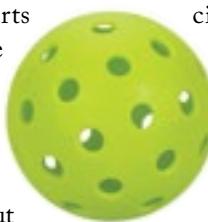
multigenerational and multiracial, but also gender neutral – the ratio of women to men players is roughly 50-50.

The popularity is evident at Mitchell Park, where the Palo Alto Pickleball Club counts 800 members – including as many as 90 from Los Altos.

A sport for all ages

Described as a hybrid of tennis, pingpong and badminton, pickleball has origins going back more than 50 years. It began as an informal family game in the U.S. Northwest and enjoyed a fairly quiet popularity until recently. Now it seems everyone is recognizing the sport’s many advantages all at once.

“Anybody can play,” Williams said. “It takes 10 minutes to learn, it takes a lifetime to master, but that lifetime >





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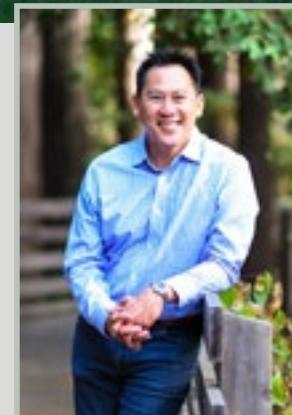
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is lots of fun because it's so social – the laughter, it's wonderful."

Many pickleball players are converts from other sports. Williams played tennis for 50 years before switching to pickleball seven years ago.

Dan Mitchell of Los Altos, 67, played racquetball for 45 years before switching. Another former racquetball player encouraged him to try it out. His first time out, he played three to four hours.

"When COVID (restrictions) kicked in, some courts shut down," Mitchell recalled. "Racquetball shut down completely because it was indoors. You could still play pickleball because it was outdoors. Half the guys I played racquetball with, I see them showing up on pickleball courts now, completely converted."

Unlike tennis and other sports that must be arranged beforehand, pickleball players can simply show up and place their paddles courtside to get into a game. The contests are relatively short – matches go up to 11 >



Members of the Palo Alto Pickleball Club, from left, Gary Weiner, Andrea Lichter, Deanne Tucker, Candy Akizuki, Jules Nelson-Gal, John Wang and Dennis Clark, participate in 2021's Palo Alto Turkey Waddle. | PHOTO BY SHELLY BOWERS

"I exercise for the health benefit. Counter to (injuries) are all the health benefits of staying active. You're going to live longer because of this." ~ DAN MITCHELL

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Journalist Bruce Barton, second from left, visited the Palo Alto Pickleball Club to study the sport's newfound popularity. | PHOTO BY SHELLY BOWERS

points, and teams or individuals must win by two. At 34 inches high, the net is lower than tennis and badminton.

The area in front of the net is called "the kitchen," and initial volleys must bypass it. Players must allow one bounce on each side before returning serve. Because the court is so small, players can plainly see and talk with one another. >

Dorit Perry of Los Altos enjoys the camaraderie and friendships that develop on the court. She started playing four years ago and now plays five days a week.

"I literally met over 200 people that I would have never known," she said. "I like it because I can just show up and have fun."

"Probably best (about pickleball) is the social interaction it generates," added player Rich Pearson. "First, you're playing with someone and that's social – you're physically playing three or four different partners in an hour. ... There's more laughing in pickleball than any other sport I ever played." >

"Anybody can play. It takes 10 minutes to learn, it takes a lifetime to master, but that lifetime is lots of fun because it's so social – the laughter, it's wonderful."

~ MONICA WILLIAMS

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Mountain View resident Monica Williams serves as an ambassador for the USA Pickleball Association.
PHOTO BY SHELLY BOWERS

Pilot programs expand

Cities around the nation, including those locally, have responded to the pickleball craze with plans for courts. The process usually goes like this: initiation of a pilot program with striping over existing tennis courts, then eventual construction of dedicated pickleball courts.

Mountain View has already launched a pilot program at Rengstorff Park, with six pickleball courts striped over tennis courts. This is in addition to three existing courts at the park. Los Altos plans to restripe tennis courts at McKenzie Park to allow for six pickleball courts. Four more are slated for Montclaire Park.

"The pickleball pilot is still moving forward," said Los Altos City Manager Gabriel Engeland. "We will stripe McKenzie early next month (September), followed by noise dampening and striping at

Montclaire. When the striping is done at McKenzie, we will also make other minor alterations in the parking lot. ... We don't have a specific date for Montclaire yet, as we are still finalizing the purchase of the noise-dampening equipment, but hope to have them operational not too long after McKenzie."

Pilot programs are a smart way for cities to proceed, Mitchell noted.

"The cost is much lower," he said. "From our standpoint, it's a little quicker to implement. It's really a double-edged sword, pickleball is. All the cities around here can see how popular it is, they have facilities and they want them used. On the other hand, there's this concern of this tidal wave of people coming in. Its popularity is the main reason to do it, and its popularity is also the main fear about it."

Many proponents tout the importance of having a pickleball hub—one >

"I literally met over 200 people that I would have never known. I like it because I can just show up and have fun."
~ DORIT PERRY



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centralized location, like Mitchell Park. Recent discussion over the Los Altos pilot program favored McKenzie as “one of the few sites that would work,” Mitchell said, because it’s located away from residential homes. A constant complaint of pickleball is the noise from the wooden paddles.

Despite the noise factor, proponents believe that dedicated courts are inevitable because of pickleball’s growing popularity.

“It’s the path we followed in Palo Alto,” Pearson said. “Five years ago, it was just a fad. I understand the rationale for starting slow, but if you look at the numbers and the growth over the last five years, (cities are) just kicking the can because (the demand for dedicated courts is) going to happen again.”

Like any sport, there is an injury risk. Williams, an instructor, always stresses “safety first.” Nonetheless, some get carried away – literally. One man she saw ran to the net to return a volley only to fly over the net and land on his forehead.

Still, the fitness advantages far outweigh the injury risk, players said.

“I exercise for the health benefit,” Mitchell said. “Counter to (injuries) are all the health benefits of staying active. You’re going to live longer because of this.”

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The odd story of how the Odd Fellows became a refuge for LGBTQ residents

ABOVE: Zoe Timmerman, from left, Jessica Dickinson Goodman, Michael Greenzeiger, Honor Wolf, Debbie Wolf and Sinéad Toolis Byrd enjoy the 2018 Odd Fellows Mad Hatter's Tea Party. BELOW: LGBTQ and transgender Pride flags fly alongside the American flag over the Odd Fellows Lodge in downtown Mountain View. | PHOTOS COURTESY OF JESSICA DICKINSON GOODMAN



BY KATHERINE SIMPSON
STAFF WRITER | KATIES@LATC.COM

The Mountain View Independent Order of the Odd Fellows Lodge historically had been “male, pale and stale.” At least, that’s the assessment of Jessica Dickinson Goodman, outreach chairperson for Mountain View’s Lodge No. 244, who pointed to pictures of previous presiding officers (called Noble Grands) from a 30-year period sometime in the 20th century. Every single face in the black-and-white images is male and white.

But with work from Dickinson Goodman and others, the Lodge has been transforming into a younger, LGBTQ-inclusive space at 823 Villa St., on the corner of Castro Street, in the heart of downtown Mountain View.

Founded in 1819, the Odd Fellows, the world’s oldest and largest fraternal organization, “aims to provide a framework that promotes personal and social development,” according to its website, with a specific goal “to improve and elevate the character of mankind by promoting the principles of friendship, love, truth, faith, hope, charity and universal justice.” >

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THE ODD-YSEY

Dickinson Goodman, and many other newer members, made her journey into the Odd Fellows through another group. In her case, it was the Odd Writers' League, run by her high school best friend Sinéad Toolis Byrd. The group had been meeting at BookBuyers, a used bookstore at 317 Castro St.

"It had this big funky couch, and we would all sit on it and read each other our bad poetry or sometimes good poetry," Dickinson Goodman said.

When the bookstore closed in 2016, the group began the search for a new Wednesday night meeting place. They tried the public library – but at the time room reservations only



The Mountain View Odd Fellows Lodge sits at the corner of Villa and Castro streets.
PHOTO COURTESY OF JESSICA DICKINSON GOODMAN



Zoe Timmerman, from left, Jessica Dickinson Goodman and Honor Wolf enjoy tea at the 2018 Odd Fellows Mad Hatter's Tea Party. | PHOTO COURTESY OF JESSICA DICKINSON GOODMAN

lasted 30 minutes. They wanted to avoid bars – they were too loud and a few members had experienced addiction. They looked into the community center – they couldn't afford the \$157 rental fee for the basement room.

Hitting roadblocks at all of the obvious places, Toolis Byrd took to Google Maps.

"She looked up every single building on Castro Street (and) tried to guess which one of them might have a back room and emailed all of them to see if she could have a place to meet," Dickinson Goodman said of the search.

Odd Fellows member Linnea Brandenburg responded affirmatively, offering to sit on the couch during the Odd >

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Writers' League's meetings, fulfilling the insurance policy requirement that an Odd Fellows member be present for any meeting in the building. Brandenburg sat on the couch for a year before Toolis Byrd and Dickinson Goodman joined the Odd Fellows.

"We joined mostly because if we were members, Linnea wouldn't have to sit through our meetings every week" Dickinson Goodman said, noting that approximately 10 members of the writing group have joined the Odd Fellows in the past five years.

Dickinson Goodman worked her way through the "order of the chairs," or the official sequence of leadership positions, and served as Noble Grand in 2019. She estimated that membership has grown from the mid-20s to just below 40 since 2017, with nearly all of the growth coming from inviting other organizations to use the Lodge as a free meeting space.

"We've sat here and hung out ... for insurance purposes," Dickinson Goodman said. "Eventually (other groups) get tired of me coming to all

"We consistently told stories about community members coming and seeing the flags and being delighted by it."

~ Jessica Dickinson Goodman



Younger members of the Odd Fellows persuaded the group to vote in favor of displaying Pride flags on the Mountain View Lodge to represent members of the group, including, from left, pansexual, asexual, bisexual, X, transgender, nonbinary and Philadelphia Pride flags. | PHOTO COURTESY OF JESSICA DICKINSON GOODMAN

their meetings and they just join the Odd Fellows."

She calls it "recruiting by social awkwardness."

Now, Dickinson Goodman is very intentional about which groups she recruits. She finds most through Meetup.com, identifying groups that are run by people of color, LGBTQ individuals and women. She said this type of cohort-based recruitment is "the most humane way to help a male, pale and stale organization become more representative of its community." >

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THE LOWDOWN ON THE LODGE

The Lodge, built in 1909 to house the First National Bank, features all the idiosyncrasies of an old building. The kitchen appliances are still original to the 1970s, when the Odd Fellows acquired the building. Dickinson Goodman said she's "pretty sure" the elevator is the first in downtown Mountain View. (Don't worry, she assured, it was freshly recertified in July.) Upstairs, the meeting hall includes rows of high-backed wooden chairs facing a central dais in a rectangular pattern.

There is a practical reason for the seating arrangement, which most Odd Fellows Lodges use, Dickinson Goodman said.

"It means that people have to look at each other's eyes to talk," she explained. "I've worked in the legislature in Washington state, and a lot of times healthy debate (requires) you to be looking at each other."

Downstairs, the entry hall is filled with couches and tables, with floor-to-ceiling windows covered by vintage lace curtains, both providing privacy and inviting in natural light. The Lodge, as quirky a space as it is, boasts plenty of rooms for meetings and outreach.

Regular groups meeting at the Lodge include the Odd Writers' League and the Oddizens, a "queer-inclusive and gender diverse" board games group. (Coincidentally, both used the descriptor "odd" before they began meeting at the Lodge.) It also hosts a Muslim women's dinner group, a western meditation group, charity pop-up art galleries and an annual haunted-house fundraiser. ➤

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The lobby of the Odd Fellows Lodge, above transformed into a croquet lawn, is often home to community meetings. | PHOTO COURTESY OF JESSICA DICKINSON GOODMAN

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Author L. Julia, seated, is a member of the Odd Writer's League. The Odd Fellows Lodge hosted a book launch for her queer murder mystery, "Listener's Remains."

PHOTO COURTESY OF JESSICA DICKINSON GOODMAN

INTERGENERATIONAL WORK

Was it the older members of the Odd Fellows who resisted Dickinson Goodman's efforts? For the most part, she said, no.

"More so than any other organization I volunteered with in that legacy organization space, the Odd Fellows wants to survive," she said.

In 2020, some members wanted to fly LGBTQ Pride flags outside the building.

"We knew a number of the members would be uncomfortable with the concept, so we worked for five months to bring up the idea to talk people through what the different flags meant (and) to try to find examples of similar organizations that hadn't violated their bylaws," Dickinson Goodman said.

At the May meeting, Dickinson Goodman and her contingent made the formal proposal. She said the group spent 90 minutes ensuring proper procedure and attempting to convince the handful of members who were uncomfortable with the action. In the end, the motion passed 21-4 and the flags went up.

"We consistently told stories about community members coming and seeing the flags and being delighted by it," she said, adding that she thinks the Odd Fellows' decision may have inspired a few businesses to fly the flags as well.

The next year when the same proposal came up for a second time, it passed unanimously. All four of the naysayers had changed their minds.

"When people ask why I do intergenerational work or work with legacy organizations, I think about those four members who voted against having Pride flags up in May of 2020 and that they changed their minds," Dickinson Goodman said. "I'm really proud of both that they put that work in to figure out if this was OK for them and of all of the queer people in the Lodge who put the sweat equity into helping them think through this issue." *

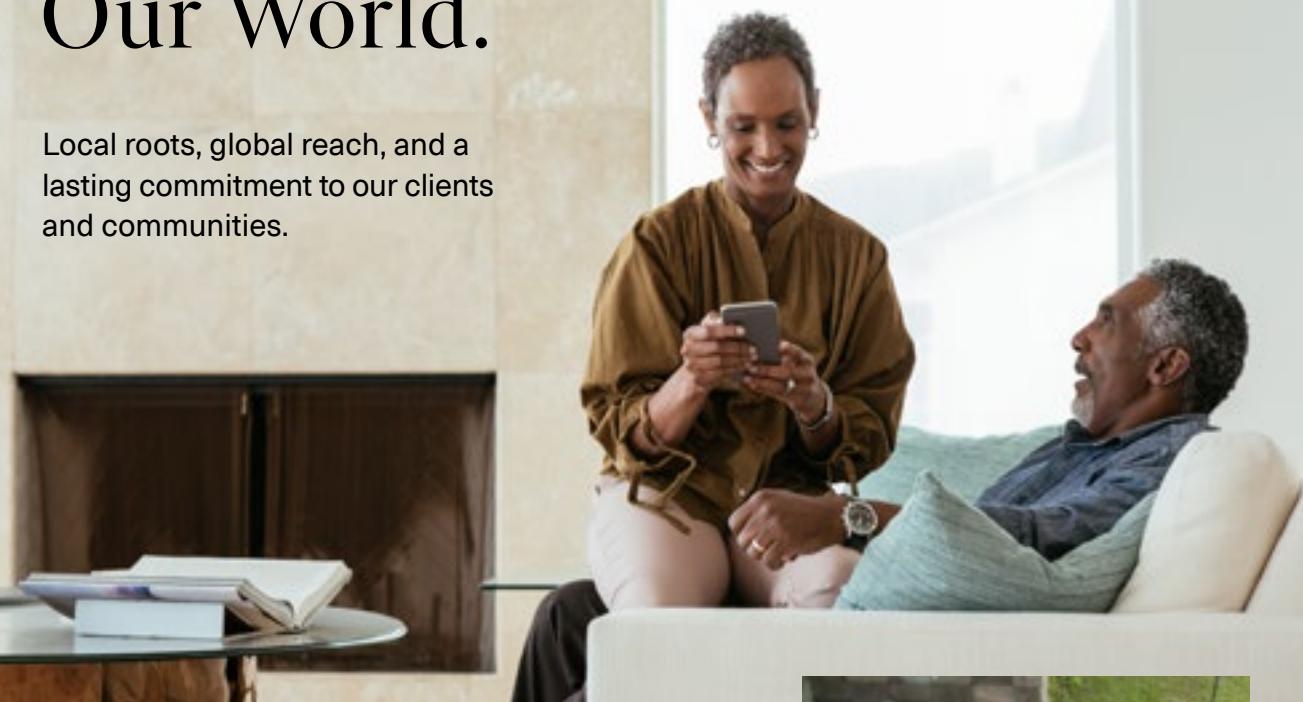


Odd Fellows members decorated the Lodge with tea tables and an "Alice in Wonderland" theme for 2018's Mad Hatter's Tea Party. | PHOTO COURTESY OF JESSICA DICKINSON GOODMAN

*For more information on
the Mountain View Odd Fellows, visit
mountainviewoddfellows.org/our-community.*

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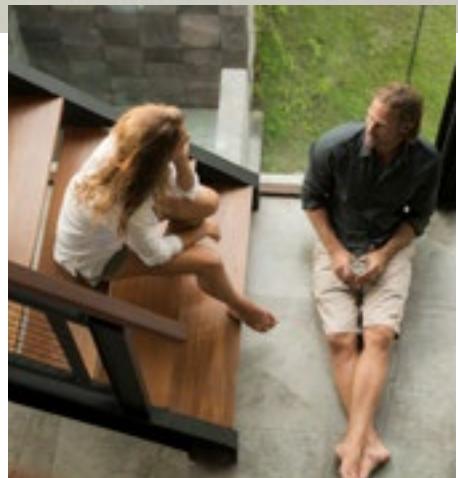
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You probably recognize this illustration of the Heritage Orchard, but do you know the name of Los Altos' signature apricot variety?

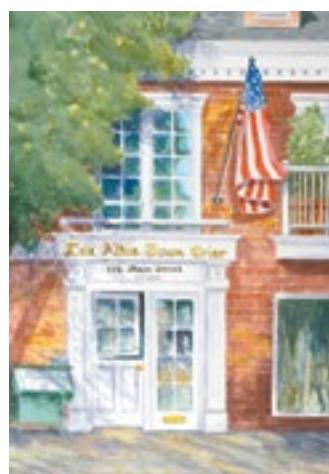


Our intern combined some of Los Altos' famous public sculptures into a piece of digital art – see if you can recognize them.



The illustration depicts a statue in Shoup Park. Can you name it?

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FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS PARADE:
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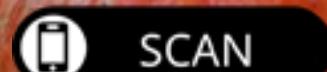
HOLIDAY TREE LIGHTING:
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PICTURES WITH SANTA:
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