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SUMMER 2021

LITTLE FREE LIBRARY

Book-sharing movement
fosters community
both locally and beyond

GIVING BACK

Nonprofit provides
undergarments for the
underprivileged.

TREE TRIBUTE

Hills residents mourn
fallen valley oak.

PUPARRAZI

Hounded by the
press, pets offer post-
pandemic opinions.

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Photographer captures
candid of wildlife.



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COVER PHOTO: Nicky, from left, Jen, Kate and Steve McGuigan and their dog, Whitney, stand beside their Little Free Library in Los Altos.

PHOTO BY ERIC DAVIDOVE
SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER

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SUBURBAN OASIS



CULTIVATING. Community

Mountain View resident Steve Carney waters the plants in his Latham Community Garden plot.
PHOTO BY ERIC DAVIDOVE
SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER

MOUNTAIN VIEW PUBLIC GARDENS GROW IN POPULARITY

BY MEGAN V. WINSLOW
STAFF WRITER | meganw@latc.com

ERIC DAVIDOVE
PHOTOGRAPHER

While the COVID-19 pandemic shuttered schools, restaurants and retail, it never completely subdued Mountain View's public gardens; the city's Latham, Willowgate and Senior Center community gardens stayed open throughout lockdown, albeit with new requirements such as mask wearing, social distancing and directives against the sharing of tools.

The public demand for plots remains high, and garden staff maintain extensive waitlists for each of the three sites. Hopefuls interested in the Willowgate garden, for example, have a three- to four-year slog ahead of them. ➤



A: A mulch path divides the Latham Community Garden. B, C, D: Among the produce grown at the Latham Community Garden are kohlrabi, top, strawberries and cabbage.
PHOTOS BY ERIC DAVIDOVE | SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER



The Latham Community Garden, the 0.8-acre, city-owned property at the corner of Latham Street and Shoreline Boulevard, opened in August 2019 following direction from the Mountain View Parks and Recreation Commission. It features 84 6-foot-by-18-foot plots, some of which are offered for rent to low-income families at reduced fees. Town Crier freelance photographer Eric Davidove spent a recent Sunday morning with the green thumbs of Latham.

As of June 14, gardeners had staked claim to all 248 of Mountain View's community garden plots.

To be added to a waitlist, email gardens@mountainview.gov. Include your full name, mailing address and phone number.

A: C.W. Hobbs, left, surveys his plot before digging. **B:** Linda Egger waters her veggies. **C:** Sue Kaplan cleans out her artichokes to make room for new plantings. **D:** A watermelon dangles over the side of a plot. **E:** The Latham Community Garden consists of 84 plots.

PHOTOS BY ERIC DAVIDOVE
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Los Altos Hills resident Lyn Rogers displays the undergarments she collected for *Be a Dear and Donate a Brassiere* (BAD).
PHOTO BY ANDREW YEE | SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER

NONPROFIT
PROVIDES
UNDERGARMENTS
FOR THE
UNDERPRIVILEGED

BY MARIE GODDERIS
TOWN CRIER EDITORIAL INTERN

Over the years, BAD has partnered with businesses and women's and girls' organizations to promote bra drives and organized fundraising and service events, including Communi-Tea, OktoBRAfest, Comedy Unhooked, the Makeover Day Project (where homeless women received a full makeover treatment including outfit and bra selections), as well as a Bra Bank. The Bra Bank collects donated funds for BAD to purchase two bras for any woman who has special fitting needs. BAD also currently has five drop-off locations, including Eco-Fash at 251 Main St. in Los Altos. ➤



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Women sort through undergarments at a BAD event. PHOTO COURTESY OF DEB HOAG

Although the pandemic slowed down BAD's bra collection drives, the organization continued to host meetings every third Thursday of the

month. Hunter said BAD hopes to host another Communi-Tea in the near future, where women who could benefit from the program are invited

We are making sure that every woman has a bra that fits, and that she can feel self-dignity, go to (job) interviews and just be healthy.

– EILEEN HUNTER

to a luncheon to share their stories, receive support and “shop” from the donations.

“Communi-Tea provides a safe space with other women experiencing similar traumas for an afternoon of respite and nurturing,” Hunter said. “We want all of the women to come away with a bra that fits, joy and increased dignity.”

MOBILIZING OTHERS

BAD has inspired other local residents to join the effort in supporting women. Los Altos Hills resident Lyn Rogers became familiar with underprivileged women's needs through her past work with Project Homeless Connect.

“They were lacking bras for years, and Eileen really inspired me to start doing bra drives,” Rogers said. “I felt that doing this helps women feel more confident and empowered. Many women have unused bras sitting in their drawer, and it's such an easy and great thing that people can donate.”

Over the past month, Rogers has sought out donations by using the online Nextdoor network; she's collected more than 100 items to donate to Eco-Fash.

Another volunteer, Elise Mullen from Presentation High School, rallied the support of her high school peers by organizing 2019 OctoBRA and 2020 NovemBRA drives, at which students collected a total of more than 1,300 undergarments.

“Many of the women who receive the bra and undergarments from Be a Dear and Donate a Brassiere are women faced with numerous hardships and often uncertainty,” Mullen said. “A proper, well-fitting bra has the power to promote feelings of dignity and confidence in women of all ages.”

To donate and for more information, visit sjwomensclub.org/groups/be-a-dear.

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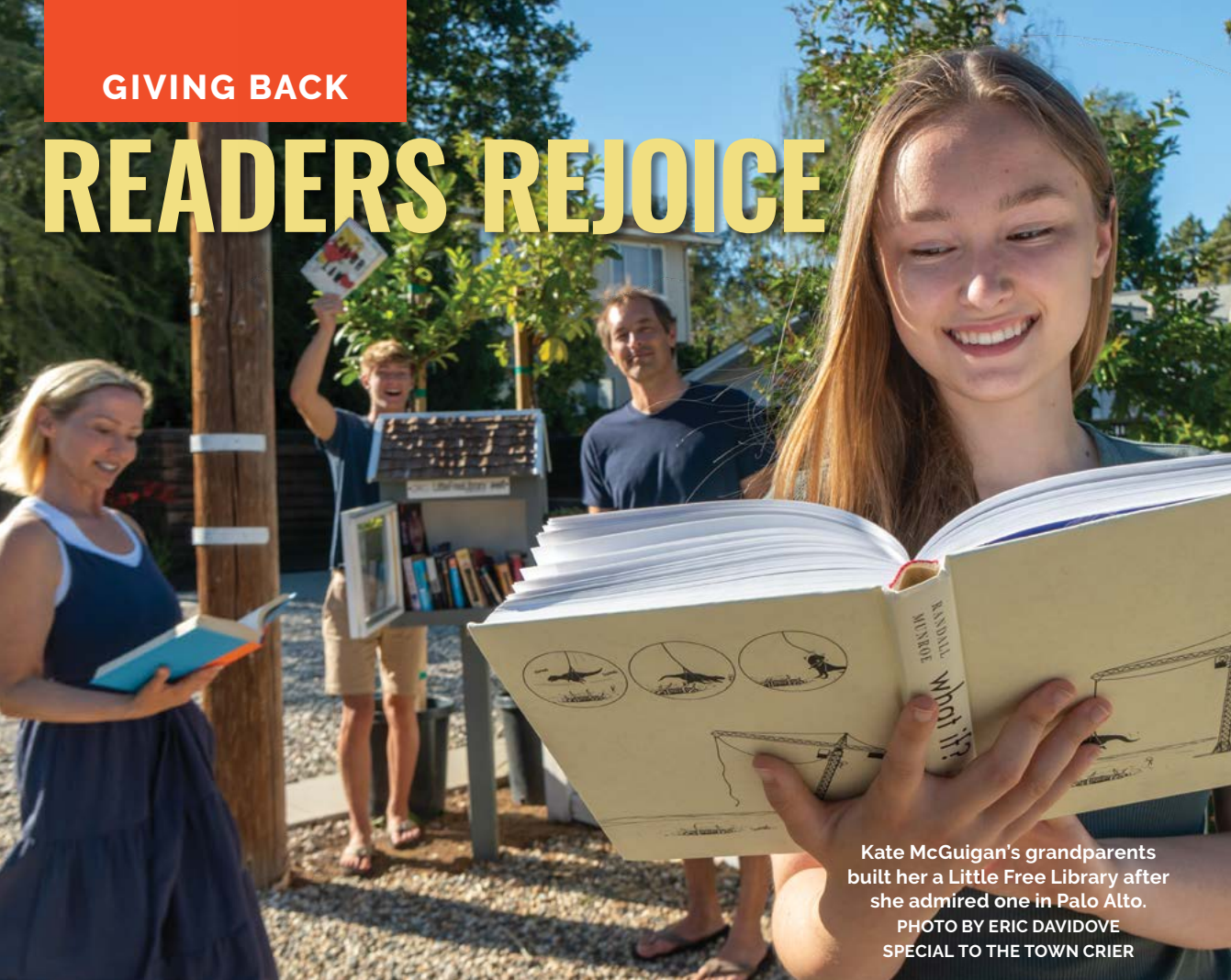
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GIVING BACK

READERS REJOICE



Kate McGuigan's grandparents built her a Little Free Library after she admired one in Palo Alto.
PHOTO BY ERIC DAVIDOVE
SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER

Book— sharing movement fosters community both locally & beyond.

BY MEGAN V. WINSLOW
STAFF WRITER | meganw@latc.com

Tootle through a Silicon Valley residential neighborhood and you're bound to eventually spot one hugging a street or sidewalk: a brightly colored box one might easily mistake for an oversized mailbox. Peek inside. Instead of letters and packages, the glass door reveals biographies, murder mysteries, young adult novels and pulp fiction. They're all free. Take one. Leave one.

Inspired by existing Little Free Library (LFL) "branches," residents within the Los Altos-Los Altos Hills-Mountain View community have constructed more than 50 of their own. Cathy Harkness of Los Altos dedicated her Queensbury Avenue branch to "anyone who doesn't consider themselves a 'reader' yet." Mountain View resident Erin Brownfield's branch, on Hamilton Avenue, was a birthday gift to her 4-year-old son because he wasn't tall enough to reach into those built for adults. ➤

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Illustration and poster design: Alexander Atkins Design, Inc.

“Little Free Libraries and sharing books through Little Free Libraries with your neighbors was really one way to feel like we’re still all in this together even when we have to be apart.”

– MARGRET ALDRICH



When the McGuigan family first stocked their Little Free Library, they did so with reading material geared toward young adults. PHOTO BY ERIC DAVIDOVE | SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER

Approximately nine years ago, Los Altos resident Jen McGuigan’s family admired an LFL in Palo Alto. Her daughter, Kate, told her grandparents about the discovery.

“Lo and behold, that Christmas, my parents showed up to our house with a fully built-from-scratch Little Free Library,” McGuigan said. “And it’s hands down one of the most memorable gifts that my parents have given their grandchildren.”

Although the McGuigans stocked their LFL with an initial donation of reading material geared toward young adults, it has largely operated autonomously since then with contributions from neighbors and random passersby. Among the more recent additions are former First Lady Michelle Obama’s memoir “Becoming,” “The Sun Also Rises” by Ernest Hemingway, a tour guide for Provence and the Côte d’Azur and a book about the sharks and rays native to California coasts.

“I love it because I’ve seen delivery people who have dropped off a box at my house run over to see what’s in there,” McGuigan said. “Or guys who are doing construction in the neighborhood use it. And that just

warms my heart. I get the biggest kick out of seeing people enjoy it.”

WORLDWIDE EXPANSION

LFL founder Todd Bol of Hudson, Wis., built the first official branch in 2009. He constructed his library in the shape of a schoolhouse to honor his mother, a teacher who loved to read, stocked it with books and installed the structure on a post in his front yard. His project garnered the support of his community, which appreciated the “take-a-book-leave-a-book” concept, and it attracted the attention of Rick Brooks, a University of Wisconsin-Madison outreach program manager. Together, Bol and Brooks grew the LFL network and registered their endeavor as a nonprofit in 2012.

Madison and Minneapolis hosted the first LFLs, the cities serving as testing grounds to determine whether the idea would “strike a chord with people,” said Margret Aldrich, LFL director of communications.

It did. There are now more than 100,000 LFLs located in all 50 states as well as within 110 countries. Annually, they facilitate the exchange of more than 42 million books. ➤



Little Free Library charter No. 74529 is located at 79 Del Monte Ave. in Los Altos. PHOTO BY MEGAN V. WINSLOW | TOWN CRIER



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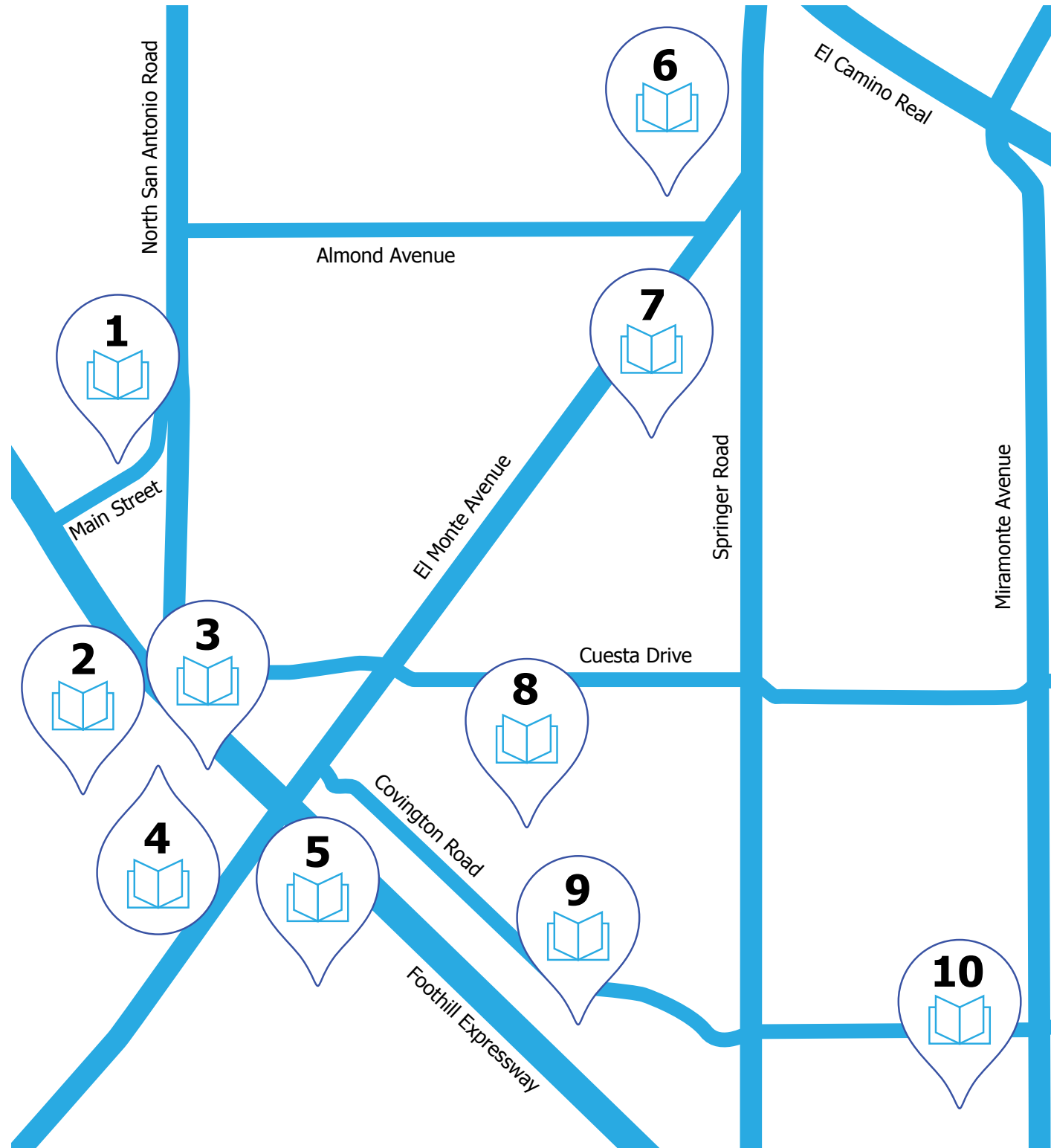


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634 Jay St.



618 Springer Terrace



741 Del Centro Way



985 Campbell Ave.



1133 Russell Ave.



Kate and Nicky McGuigan sort through their Little Free Library's current collection of reading material. PHOTO BY ERIC DAVIDOVE | SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER

LFL reached an impressive milestone just last year: In December, Russell Schnell, a Boulder, Colo., resident and atmospheric scientist for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, helped the nonprofit

reach all seven continents by erecting charter No. 115933 at the South Pole. “Books with photos of colorful trees, warm deserts, water, beaches, wheat fields and animals and birds are popular at the South Pole,” Schnell

said, according to an LFL blog post. “Everything else is white for hundreds of miles in all directions.”

EXPRESS YOURSELF

Approximately half of LFL stewards purchase official kits from the organization, and the rest do it themselves. Homemade versions include libraries shaped like roosters, Victorian mansions, VW buses and gingerbread houses. Some feature planters for flowers, and at least one McGuigan has encountered is fashioned from a wine barrel.

In North Saint Paul, Minn., steward Trudy O. created a library using an antique clock and stationed it outside a historical home built in 1887. There’s a designated children’s section on the lowest shelf and a secret compartment in the base.

When asked to describe their favorite LFL designs, both McGuigan and Aldrich mentioned Sharalee Armitage Howard, a librarian, artist

and bookbinder living in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho. When city officials told Howard the dead 110-year-old cottonwood tree in her front yard posed a safety hazard and required removal, she instructed the arborists hired for the job to leave behind a stump approximately the height of a single-story home. A glass-paneled door fringed by miniature replicas of classics like “The Hobbit,” “Little Women” and “Call of the Wild” invites visitors to a carved-out interior. Multiple illuminated shelves within house the ever-changing collection.

“That was pretty spectacular,” Aldrich said.

PANDEMIC-FUELED GROWTH

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, stewards like the McGuigans have reported a significant increase in activity around their LFL, and the organization noted an uptick in the number of charters established as well, Aldrich said. She attributes demand both to the temporary closure of traditional libraries and schools and to the feelings of isolation some people in lockdown experienced.

“Little Free Libraries and sharing books through Little Free Libraries with your neighbors was really one way to feel like we’re still all in this together even when we have to be apart,” Aldrich said.

The McGuigans discovered their LFL presented a means for staying connected.

“People would show up at the Little Free Library, and we would have an excuse to go out there, keep our distance, stand in our yard and have a chat with people,” McGuigan said. “So that was really nice. And, as a joke, I put toilet paper and hand sanitizer in the Little Free Library, and it was taken.”

For more information on the Little Free Library organization, including how to establish a branch, visit littlefreelibrary.org. A map on the website marks the location of LFLs worldwide, including within the Los Altos-Los Altos Hills-Mountain View area. 📍



Even the Los Altos Sweet Shop, at 994 Los Altos Ave., features a Little Free Library. PHOTO BY MEGAN V. WINSLOW | TOWN CRIER

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THE DOG DAYS ARE OVER

HOUNDED BY THE PRESS,
pets offer
post-
pandemic
opinions.



S.M. LIEU
WRITER AND PHOTOGRAPHER

While the Chinese zodiac identified 2020 as the Year of the Rat, perhaps a dog was a more fitting representation; humans who long considered adopting or purchasing a canine companion finally did so as they realized the lockdown afforded them more time to spend with a new family member. Freelance photographer S.M. Lieu, a frequent contributor to the Town Crier, recently hit the streets of downtown Los Altos to ask local dogs how they spent the lockdown and to inquire about their post-lockdown plans.



LINUS AND LUCY, 8 years old

BREED: Collie

PERSON: Bernadine Fong

LOCKDOWN: "We kept our routine, walking about a mile and a half to town every day. And we even had our usual birthday party, though only our doggy friends could come. We missed their people."

POST-LOCKDOWN PLANS: "Keeping the same routine. We will have a big birthday party again later in the summer with all our friends, two-legged and -four. It's going to be great!"



PORTIA AND LEXIE, 6 and 7 years old

BREED: Havanese

PEOPLE: David and Audrey Huchital

LOCKDOWN: "We went for a lot of walks like everyone else but didn't travel farther afield. As a retired champion, Lexie especially missed being perfectly groomed."

POST-LOCKDOWN PLANS: "We are thrilled we can go eat out more. Lexie is looking forward to her full grooming appointment as soon as California opens up. Portia is looking forward to wrestling with Lexie and mussing up her freshly groomed locks."



GIZMO, 11 years old

BREED: Pekingese

PERSON: Helen Robinson

LOCKDOWN: "I have a big yard I run around in chasing birds and anything else. We also take downtown walks."

POST-LOCKDOWN PLANS: "More of the same. It's great that more places are open in downtown, though, especially that oyster place. Yum."



NUGGET, 5 years old

BREED: "I'm the love child between a golden retriever and an Irish setter that hopped the breeder's fences."

PEOPLE: Tom Stevens and his granddaughter

LOCKDOWN: "What pandemic?! Every morning I follow Tom around the house so he won't sneak off to Peet's without me. All the goodies and people! We got really good at sitting outside in all sorts of weather. And we go to the beach at Carmel where I can run for hours. My New York family came back for a while because Tom's granddaughter missed me. I spent three weeks in COVID quarantine with them."

POST-LOCKDOWN PLANS: "More walks and coffee rounds, though it will be nice to sit inside for a change. Will I move to Hudson Valley, N.Y.? The ticks are awful there, and Tom will have to get an elephant or giraffe for a companion because there is no other dog quite like me."



AJ, 10 years

BREED: Yorkshire terrier (*slightly overweight*)

PERSON: Debbie Kahn

LOCKDOWN: "Just hanging and overeating, loving all the extra company. Practicing my tricks – I now do a great 'Bang! You're dead!'"

POST-LOCKDOWN PLANS: "I'm looking forward to reunion with my buddy Leo, and of course more walks. My people have decided to work partly from home because I am so used to having them around."

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LOLA,
13 years old
BREED:
Shetland sheepdog
PERSON:
Harvey Lechtman
LOCKDOWN:
“I am a little old lady now and, sadly, my person passed last August. Fortunately, Harvey has always been there for me, taking me on walks twice and sometimes three times a day. No masks.”



POST-LOCKDOWN PLANS: “We’ll continue with our walks around downtown Los Altos, and the paths around Los Altos Hills Town Hall. Harvey makes sure we stay on the flats, as the hills are getting a little too much work for me.”



GIULIA, *15 weeks old*
BREED: Lagotto Romagnolo
PERSON: Lynn Giusti



LOCKDOWN: “I’m only 15 weeks old, and this is my first trip to downtown! But my person waited six years to get me because I come from very old, true Lagotto Romagnolo stock. She picked me up in Vienna, Austria, and we took a 14-hour plane trip with a stop in Frankfurt to get home. The salons may not be open in the pandemic, but I’ve already had my first haircut – it will make my curls curlier.”

POST-LOCKDOWN PLANS: “So many things! I’ll be nice to my 13-year-old sibling, learn to be social, have a good life and eventually start a family with a Lagotto Romagnolo from another very good, very old family.”

ZACK,
6 years old
BREED:
English cream golden retriever whose parents hailed from Russia

PERSON:
Bob McCulloch
LOCKDOWN:
“Life was good. I walked every day with my retired person, Bob.”



POST-LOCKDOWN PLANS: “We’ll do nothing different – well, maybe I can get back to being a therapy dog at the local and veterans’ hospitals. I really missed that.”

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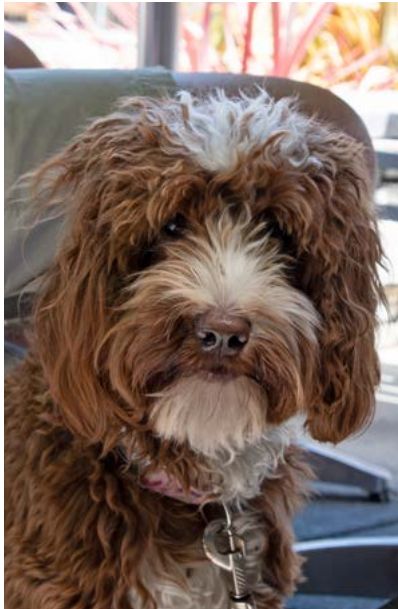
KAYLA,
13 months old

BREED:
 Labradoodle
 (with some
 Portuguese water
 dog mixed in?)

PERSON:
 Sylvia Jensen

LOCKDOWN:
 “There were no
 labradoodles at
 the rescue, so
 Sylvia got me
 when I was just
 an 8-week-old
 pup. I am very
 lucky we have a big yard to run around in. And we also
 took lots of walks and went to the dog park. My 13-year-
 old black lab sibling thinks I’m a bit too energetic and
 doesn’t like going on walks with me, though.”

POST-LOCKDOWN PLANS: “More Los Altos
 dining spots are opening up, so we can come down
 more often. I’m getting so much sun, my brown coat has
 lovely blond highlights.”



DUCHESS,
8 months old

BREED:
 Miniature
 poodle/golden
 retriever

PERSON:
 Deborah Perry
 Piscioni

LOCKDOWN: “What’s a pandemic? I go for walks
 in the neighborhood every day and meet up with my
 best friend Mike in the doggy playgroup. Deborah has
 always worked from home, so it’s been great.”

POST-LOCKDOWN PLANS: “I’ve already been to
 Carmel and Mammoth Mountain and Mount Shasta.
 There will be lots more great road trips. And more trips
 to coffee shops. I love coffee!”



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MOOSE,
7 years old

BREED:

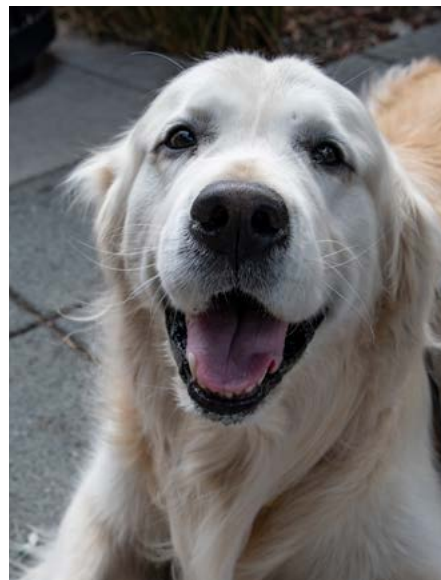
Half
English
cream

golden retriever (part of an “oops” litter of 10); regular visitor to the Town Crier office

PERSON: Linda Brinsfield

LOCKDOWN: “I didn’t miss a day of my routine walk downtown. It was great to have my people, both teachers, home all the time. I followed them everywhere, and we went on more walks.”

POST-LOCKDOWN PLANS: “Oh, I am in shock! My people are not home, so I just sleep more. At least we keep our walks around town.”



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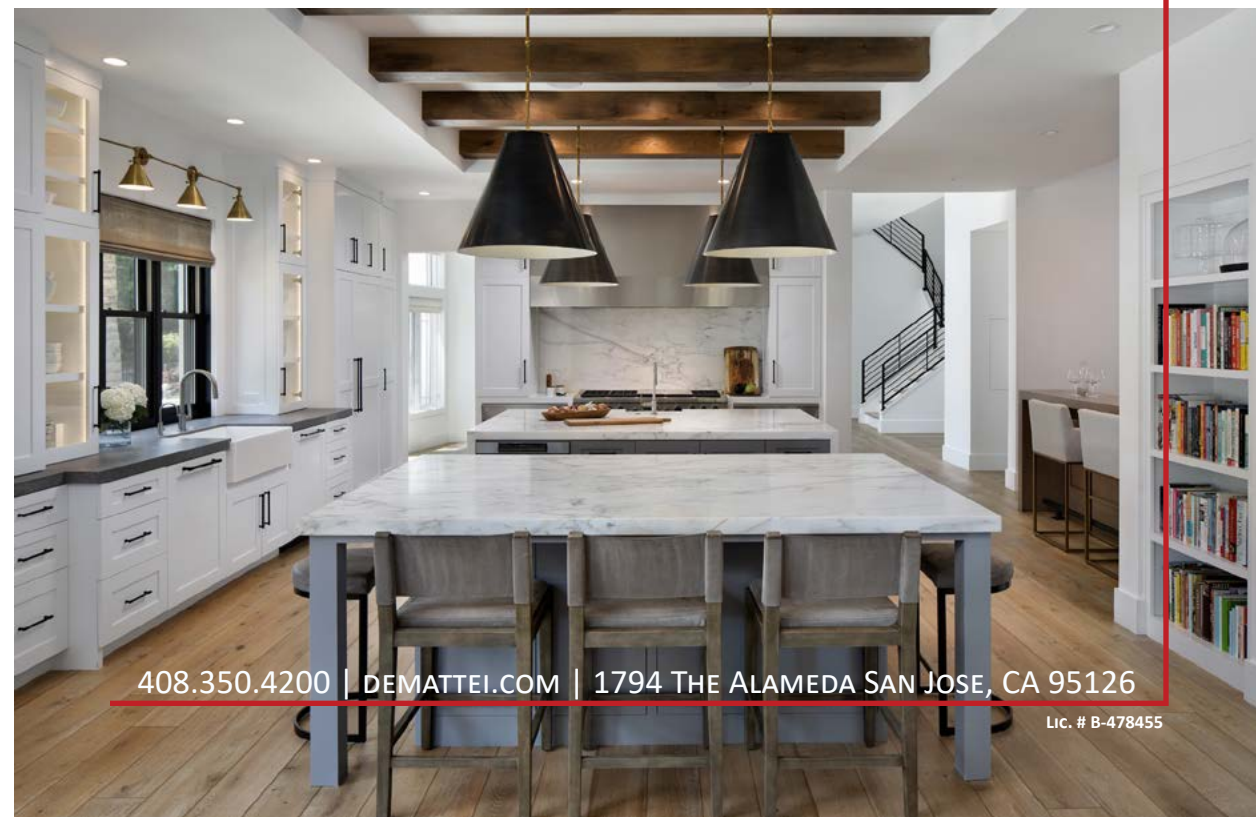
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Death of a Giant

BY MEGAN V. WINSLOW
STAFF WRITER | meganw@latc.com

For decades, the majestic valley oak stood tall, a silent sentry greeting all who entered and departed Los Altos Hills along one of the town's most trafficked arteries. The slope of earth beneath the heavy boughs created an illusion of the trunk bowing to Moody Road as it shunned Old Snakey Road above. Gravity and powerful winds proved formidable foes, and the oak finally surrendered its burden June 7. The force of impact splintered limbs.

Open Space Committee chairperson Kit Gordon encountered a fellow mourner when she arrived on scene to inspect the damage.

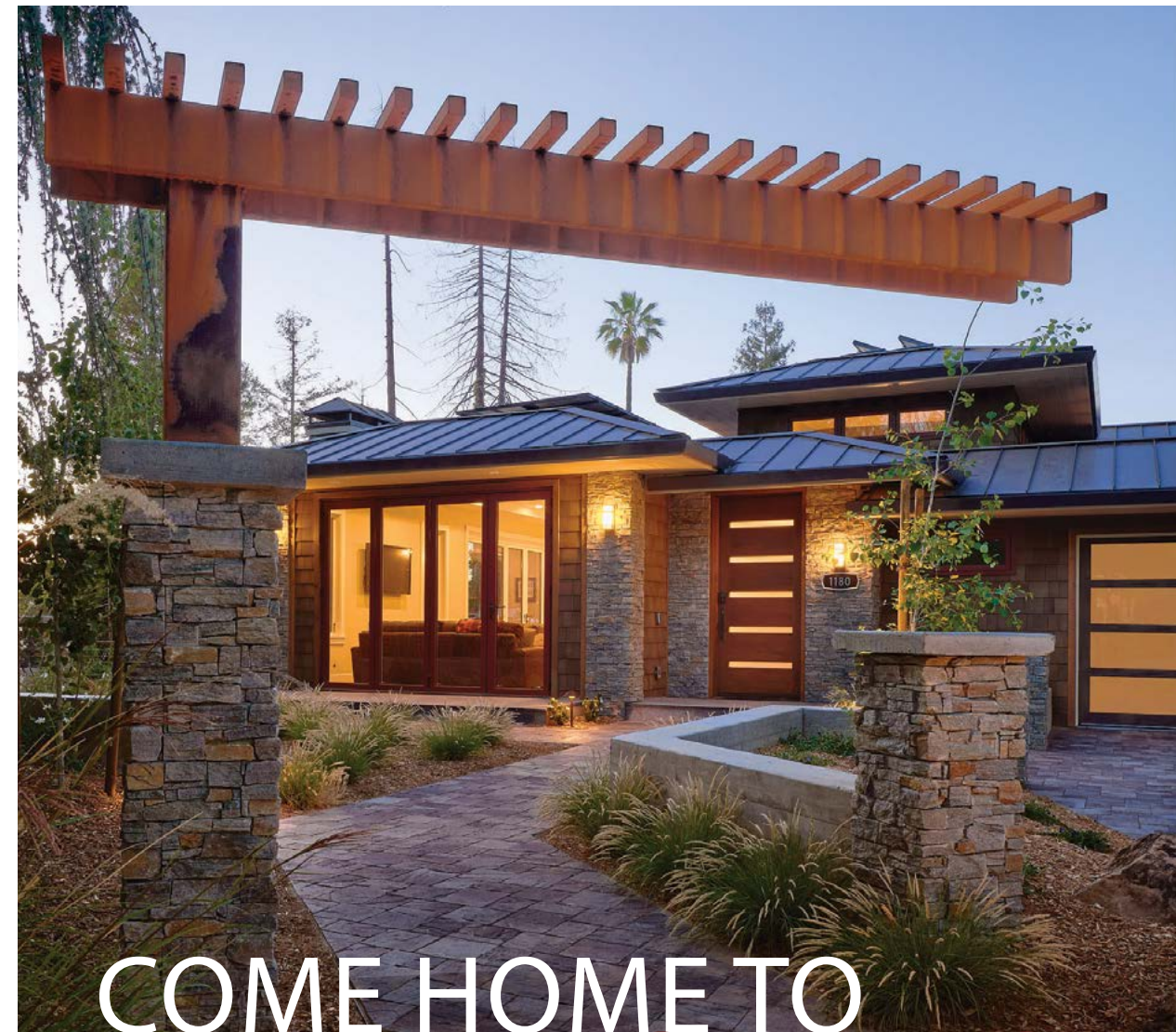
"There was a young woman standing amongst the branches nearly in tears," Gordon said during the committee's June 9 meeting. "She said she drives by that tree every day, and she was totally heartbroken to see it fall."

Photos Gordon shared of the fallen tree elicited melancholic "ohs" from the rest of the committee.

"I had a very similar tree in my backyard that toppled, and I thought it was going to continue to live, but it took several months before it finally got brown," George Clifford said. "So I would say just looking at this, I don't have a lot of hope for it."

Per Los Altos Hills municipal code, the tree's sizable girth likely granted it designation as a heritage oak tree, protecting it from removal >

Then-Los Altos Hills Mayor John Harpootlian presides over a ceremony to install a plaque commemorating town founder Rex Gardiner beneath the oak in September 2016. PHOTO BY JITZE COUPERUS | SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER



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The oak surrendered its root ball to fierce winds June 7. PHOTO BY JITZE COUPERUS | SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER

and human-inflicted damage without prior approval of the city council. But a sleeping giant represented a fire hazard; the town maintenance crew reduced the oak to logs.

Since September 2016, the oak had sheltered a plaque commemorating Rex Gardiner, a celebrated founder of the town who died in 2015 at the age of 93. John Harpootlian, when he served as mayor, presided over the plaque installation ceremony.

“With our thanks and appreciation, we dedicate this open space to Rex Gardiner’s vision, determination and leadership and hope that all of us present and generations moving forward can cherish this space and the town that he helped to create that we call home,” Harpootlian said at the time.

Gardiner’s plaque will remain at the site, Gordon said. Eventually, it might be joined by a native tree or shrub.

For more information on Gardiner and the tree, visit town historian Jitze Couperus’ website at couperus.org/Dedication. 🌳

“There was a young woman standing amongst the branches nearly in tears. ... She said she drives by that tree every day, and she was totally heartbroken to see it fall.”

– KIT GORDON



Los Altos Hills town maintenance staff clean up the remains of the fallen tree.
PHOTO BY GEORGE CLIFFORD | SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER



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Glen Schofield is a photographer known to dazzle fellow Los Altos Hills residents with his images of local wildlife, including a curious gray fox who has recently paid several visits to his yard. The Town Crier asked Schofield to share the story of his fox encounter, his camera settings and his other favorite photos of local wildlife.



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I took a few photos as I approached him on the lawn. All of the photos were taken after he noticed my presence. He didn't immediately run off but slowly moved around through our flower beds, checking me out as he moved. He then appeared to get bored, turned and sauntered off down the hill. I've seen a lot of wildlife, and this was one of the most beautiful animals that



While walking by the window in our living room, I noticed the fox curled up, sunning himself on a small lawn we have in the backyard. It was late afternoon. I keep my camera handy, so I grabbed it and went out of our back door, so I could approach the fox from a distance of about 50 yards.

I've seen – truly magnificent.

I have a Sony a9 camera with a Sony 100-400 zoom lens. Three of the photos were taken with the lens at 400mm. A fourth was taken closer, zoomed in at 133mm. (The settings were 1/1000 sec, f8 at ISOs between 4000 and 12,000.)

– Glen Schofield

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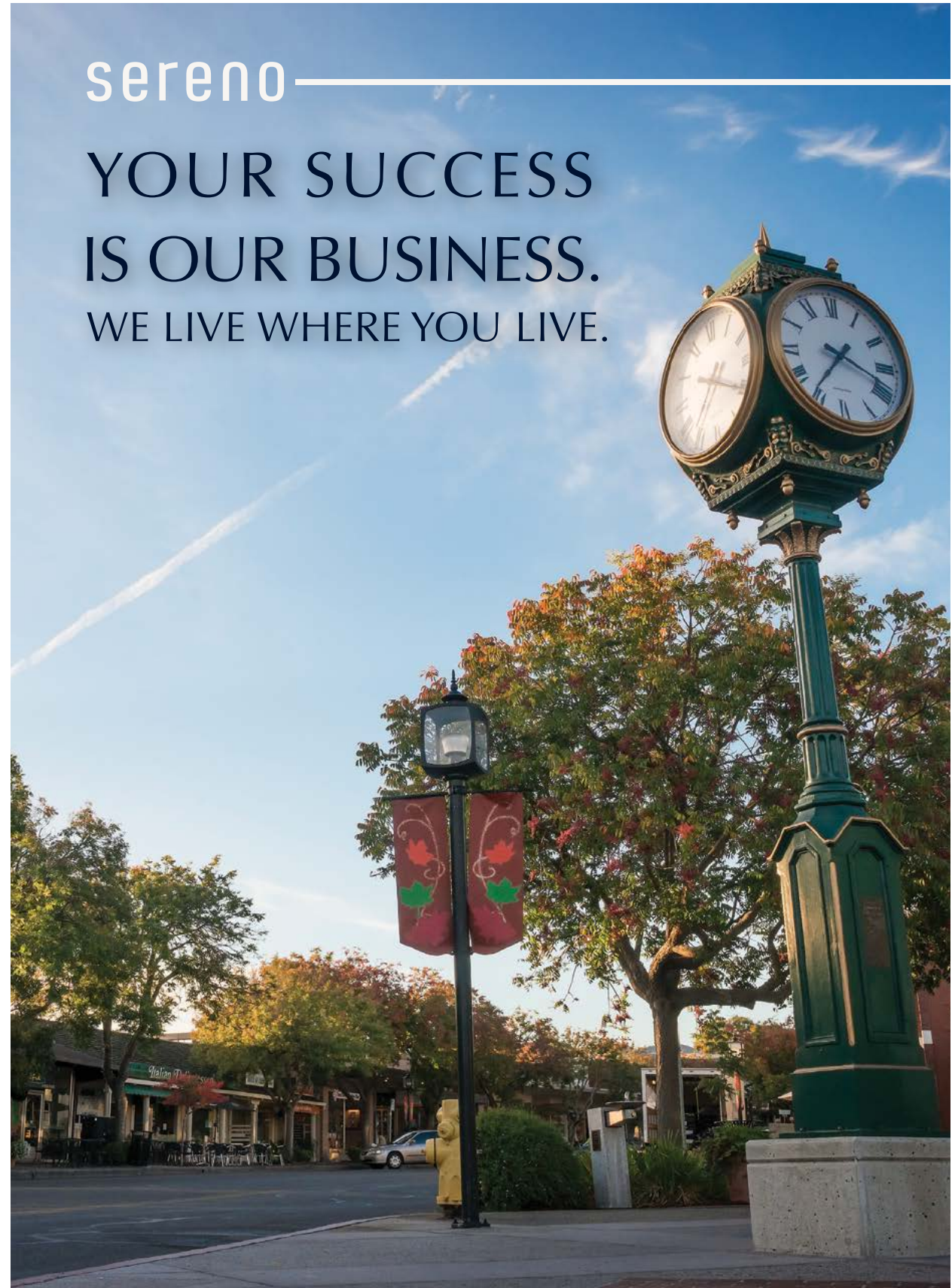


Pastor Dave Moore and family

Image by Zara Tahir

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