



Inside: Nvidia will buy chip designer for \$40 billion. A7



Sports: Giant details turmoil he, pregnant wife endured after false positive test. C1



Business: Looking to buy a used car? You and everyone else. C9



Local: Doctors take aim at former colleague. B1



The newspaper of Silicon Valley

The Mercury News

BayArea
NewsGroup

111

Volume 170, Issue 87

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2020

24/7 COVERAGE: MERCURYNEWS.COM » \$2.00

A SURREAL HOME OPENER

The show goes on at Levi's, and it's very 2020

Without the usual roar of the crowd, flat 49ers fade in 24-20 loss to Arizona



PHOTOS BY NHAT V. MEYER — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The San Francisco 49ers play the Arizona Cardinals in the second quarter at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara on Sunday.

SANTA CLARA » Smoke filled the air, but it wasn't coming from fans' grills in the parking lot before the 49ers' season opener.



Dieter Kurtenbach
Columnist

There were no fans at Levi's Stadium on Sunday. Yet announcements explaining the protocol of entering the stadium were played over the loudspeakers

anyway, bouncing around the empty grandstands. The atmosphere was eerie and uncomfortable. One could go as far as to say it was post-apocalyptic.

"That's the 2020 season for you," said 49ers running back Jerick McKinnon.

The NFL's league's unofficial motto for the 2020 season is "The Show Must Go On."

Yes, even if there was no live,

in-person audience.

A 100-year pandemic? Put on your shoulder pads.

Unhealthy air because of wildfires raging up and down the west coast? Strap on that helmet.

A new civil rights movement afoot? Just play this other song.

It seems as if nothing can stop the NFL from making television.

In the end, the Niners had a performance not worth disseminating in their first game of the year. They lost to the Arizona Cardinals 24-20.

San Francisco's inconsistent offensive play and a few questionable penalty calls that went against their defense proved to be the difference. But you'd be hard-pressed to say that the sterilized environment — one that felt antithetical to the spirit of the gladiatorial spec-

KURTENBACH » PAGE 6



49ers quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo throws a pass against the Arizona Cardinals in the fourth quarter at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara on Sunday.

MORE COVERAGE IN SPORTS

Super Bowl flashback: Once again, the 49ers failed to protect a fourth-quarter lead. C1

Raiders open with win: The Las Vegas Raiders got a 34-30 season-opening road win in Carolina. C1

WILDFIRES

Smoke could start to clear this week

But high winds expected to blow it over region might spark new fires or worsen existing ones

By Aldo Toledo
and George Avalos
Staff writers

The choking smoke that has turned the region's sky into an apocalyptic orange-red this month and pumped noxious ash into the air — described by a government meteorologist as causing the Bay Area's worst air quality in "decades" — should begin to dissipate within days and yield to normal temperatures, forecasters said Sunday.

But the winds that will help clear the region's air will bring an additional fire danger, raising the possibility of new fires and new destruc-

tion from the blazes already burning through the state's wildland.

The relatively calm forecast would be a peaceful cap to more than a month of startling weather — dry lightning that sparked massive fires, followed by record-smashing high temperatures, followed by the suffocating layer of smoke and ash.

Still, the relief in air quality might not become apparent for a few days: A considerable amount of smoke now lurking just west of the coast will be blown over the Bay Area once the breezes from the sea move through the nine-county region, accord-



ARIC CRABB — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Boats maneuver along the Oakland Estuary in Alameda as a smoke-filled sky sits over the Bay Area on Sunday.

ing to Jeff Lorber, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service.

"It looks like there will be a gradual clearing out of the

smoke throughout the week," Lorber said. "There are increasing winds off the water. That should help blow the

SMOKE » PAGE 6

CORONAVIRUS

States silent on school outbreaks

California among those that don't tell the public; teachers, parents say that's a problem

By John Woolfolk

jwoolfolk@bayareanewsgroup.com

As California's summer surge of coronavirus cases fades and more schools transition from distance learning to in-class instruction, it's likely some students and teachers will be infected. And there's no guarantee the public will find out about it.

Weeks after classrooms began reopening across the country, there's been little comprehensive information about how many have had outbreaks — and California is one of several states saying they aren't planning to release such information.

Instead, parents are being left to rely on scattered news accounts that give little sense of how prevalent clusters of infections are among students and teachers.

"A lack of information for sure," said Amber Lewis of San Jose, who has a daughter in sixth grade at Willow Glen Middle School and a son in fourth grade at Booksin Elementary. "It's hard to understand when you hear some of those individual stories. With how many schools that are back live, is it just this one and they had some sort of incident?"

It's been a problem nationally, something researchers, teachers and school officials are trying to correct. Without better information about the risks, teachers are reluctant

SCHOOLS » PAGE 6

ENCAMPMENTS

Homeless sweeps continuing despite virus moratorium

Activists fear displacing residents in pandemic will spread COVID-19

By Marisa Kendall

mkendall@
bayareanewsgroup.com

Homeless residents living in tents along Cupertino's Wolfe Road thought they were safe. Following federal health guidelines adopted around the Bay Area, city officials promised not to force them to move until the coronavirus pandemic abated.

But this month, with county and statewide shelter-in-place rules still in effect, Cupertino officials changed their minds. They plan to dismantle the camps in the next few weeks.

And they're not the only ones. Many Bay Area cities, including San Jose, Oakland and San Francisco, pledged not to remove or "sweep" homeless camps for the duration of the pandemic, to limit the spread of the virus. But despite those assurances, some sweeps have been reported in all three cities as officials look at camps they say have become too dangerous for homeless residents.

Now activists worry those displaced residents face a greater risk of contracting the virus.

"Sweeping people at all during the pandemic shows a complete lack of humanity toward the people, and a complete ignorance of the CDC recommendations regarding unhoused people and the virus," said Shaun Cartwright, an advocate and volunteer outreach worker based in Santa Clara County.

If housing is not available, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention encourages cities to leave encampments where

SWEEPS » PAGE 6

NEWS ON YOUR PHONE

Download the Mercury News mobile app for iPhone or Android.

INDEX

Business C9
Classified B7

Comics/TV B8
Lottery A2
Legals B6

Obituaries B5
Puzzles B2, C5, C6
Weather B10

WEATHER

H: 74-79 L: 55-58
Full report on B10



MediaNews Group
Subscribe:
MercuryNews.com
©2020



PANDEMIC

Stanford doctors denounce ex-colleague

Trump’s new adviser on virus harming public health, top faculty say

By Lisa M. Krieger
lkrieger@bayareanewsgroup.com

In the tight-knit world of academic medicine, scientists pride themselves on presenting a united and unflappable face to those outside their ranks. But last week, in a scathing open letter, dozens of Stanford University Medical School’s top faculty denounced former col-

league Dr. Scott Atlas for promoting what they called “falsehoods and misrepresentations of science.” Atlas, a diagnostic radiologist and senior fellow at the conservative think tank Hoover Institution, was recently appointed by President Donald Trump to the White House coronavirus task force. As an adviser counselor to the president about the virus, he has made controversial statements about controlling the virus — which has killed more than 194,000 Americans — through

“natural immunity.” He also has urged the reopening of schools and businesses. “Many of his opinions and statements run counter to established science and, by doing so, undermine public-health authorities and the credible science that guides effective public health policy,” according to the letter, signed by Dr. Philip A. Pizzo, former dean of Stanford School of Medicine; Dr. Upi Singh, chief of Stanford’s Division of Infectious Diseases; Dr. Bonnie Maldonado, professor of epidemiology and

ATLAS » PAGE 5



Dr. Scott Atlas, a diagnostic radiologist, has promoted “natural immunity” in controlling the coronavirus and urged the reopening of schools and businesses. ANDREW HARNIK THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ESCAPE FROM COVID

‘Dream’ of a Tahoe life becomes reality for some



PHOTOS BY SCOTT SADY FOR BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

Kaushik Joshi, a real estate tech sales executive in Silicon Valley, with his wife, Rajni, and children Tanushka and Avi, stand outside the house they bought near Carson City, Nevada. “COVID showed me I can do my work from anywhere in the world,” he says.

No Bay Area exodus, though home sales spike in rural areas

By Louis Hansen
lhansen@bayareanewsgroup.com

Kaushik “KJ” Joshi, a sales executive at a Silicon Valley tech firm, scrolled through online property listings in Lake Tahoe for months. The dream-surfing — a life on the water, hiking in the mountains — began well before the coronavirus pandemic upended work and family life. But after a few months of remote work at home in Fremont, he was convinced he could do his job from almost anywhere. Joshi, 48, bought a spacious model home this summer in a gated Nevada community just 20 minutes from Lake Tahoe. He ticked off the list of reasons for moving: cost of living, lower taxes, ample green space. “Come February, I feel like



The Joshi family and their dog at their home near Carson City, Nevada. In July, home sales in the Lake Tahoe area more than doubled over last year, data show.

the whole world changed on us,” he said. “COVID accelerated the decision.” Joshi might be an early trendsetter — or simply a rare case. Five months of remote work, bedroom-to-desk commutes and child-populated home offices have failed to ignite a great Bay Area exodus, according to property data and interviews with industry econ-

omists and agents. Even green lights to work from home until next year from Silicon Valley’s biggest employers haven’t triggered a widespread migration. But the wanderlust for open space, new vistas and extra bedrooms is real and measurable in the playlands of Bay Area professionals — Lake Tahoe and other waterfront and rural communities once outside a reason-

able daily commute. Before the pandemic, “Tahoe was ‘a want, a dream,’” said Breck Overall, an agent with Sotheby’s International in Truckee. “For a lot of people, all of the sudden, it’s a need.” In July, home sales in Lake Tahoe more than doubled over last year, with properties changing hands at near-record levels, ac-

TAHOE » PAGE 2

COMBATING SHORTAGE

New state law helps inmate firefighters get jobs after lockup

Criminal records can be expunged under measure signed by Newsom

By Don Thompson,
The Associated Press

SACRAMENTO » California’s inmate firefighters will have a shot at becoming professional firefighters once they complete their sentences, under a bill Gov. Gavin Newsom signed into law Friday. The new law will allow state and county inmates who train as firefighters to seek to erase the criminal records that often are a bar to employment as firefighters or in other professions. The measure “will give those prisoners hope of actually getting a job in the profession that they’ve been trained,” Newsom said as he signed the bill against a backdrop of gray ash and charred trees near Lake Oroville, site of one of the most devastating of the many fires that have charred the state in recent weeks. California has been struggling in recent years to field enough inmate firefighters because of changes in state law that have reduced the number of lower-level offenders in state prisons. Court rulings also ended some of the incentives for inmates to risk their lives fighting fires when they could earn similar early release credits with less dangerous duties. The shortage grew this year, as thousands more inmates were released early in a bid to slow the spread of the coronavirus through prisons, pushing the number of inmate firefighters down about 30% from last year. The new law may create a new incentive, by allowing former inmate firefighters, after their release, to ask a judge to withdraw their plea of guilty. The judge could opt to then dismiss the accusations. The measure excludes those convicted of certain violent felonies and sex offenses, and the ex-offender would still have to disclose the conviction if he or she applies to become a teacher. The expungement would give the former firefighters the ability to apply for any of more than 200 occupations that require a state license, an opportunity lost to most people with criminal records, according to Assemblywoman Eloise Reyes, D-San Bernardino, who authored the bill. “These individuals have received valuable training and placed themselves in danger to defend the life and property of Californians,” she said in a legislative analysis. “Those individuals that successfully complete their service in the fire camps should be granted special consideration relating to their underlying criminal conviction.”

The bill’s passage was hailed by criminal justice reform groups, and Newsom said it was supported by various unions, including those representing professional firefighters. The district attorneys association had argued against the bill, saying that expungement of criminal records should be limited to lower-level offenders, few of whom remain in state prisons. It said the incentive should be limited to those who are sent to county jails and not state lockups.

PANDEMIC FALLOUT

Patrick James Palo Alto store falls victim to coronavirus economic slump

By George Avalos
gavalos@bayareanewsgroup.com

PALO ALTO » Patrick James West Coast Classic, one of the Bay Area’s most venerable retail names, has decided to close its Palo Alto store, blaming a collapse in sales triggered by coronavirus-linked business closures. The shutdown of the men’s clothing store in Palo Alto after 40 years in operation means a store that had survived some of the worst economic meltdowns since the Great Depression couldn’t stay alive amid government-ordered business shut-

downs to combat the coronavirus. “Closing our Palo Alto location is particularly painful, as I have such fond memories of visiting with my late father,” said Pat Mon Pere, president of Patrick James. Among the calamities the Patrick James Palo Alto store managed to survive over four decades: the dot-com collapse, the economic slowdown after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and the retail and financial apocalypse ushered in by the Great Recession. Now, a growing number of retail and restaurant sites in California are closing because they haven’t been able to survive an

array of shutdowns ordered by state and local government officials during the pandemic. “A significant loss of sales” that occurred “after six months of battling the COVID-19 pandemic economically” forced the local retail fixture to close its doors, the store said in a release. The store is at 855 El Camino in Palo Alto at the Town and Country Village Shopping Center, a popular shopping mall near Stanford University. The store held a sale Friday as a way of thanking its customers. Patrick James didn’t specify a final closing date for the store.

Founded in Fresno in 1962, Patrick James has 12 locations in California, Arizona and Nevada. “Our staff has become like family, and for many years, this location was our top-performing storefront,” Mon Pere said of the Palo Alto site. The company’s stores in and next to the Bay Area are in Danville, Santa Rosa, Palo Alto, Aptos and Carmel. The retailer has 10 California locations, including Palo Alto. “I want to thank our loyal customers and staff for their patronage through the years, and encourage everyone to support your

small businesses as much as possible,” Mon Pere said. The Patrick James retail chain was founded by Mon Pere’s father, Patrick Mon Pere Sr. The elder Mon Pere died in 2018, but sons Mike, Pat and Clay are involved in the business. In the wake of the decision to close the Palo Alto store, the retailer has determined it must bolster the chain and its website presence so that the company can maneuver through the coronavirus-linked economic minefields. “We have a lot of work ahead of us to navigate these times,” Mon Pere said.

Tahoe

FROM PAGE 1

cording to Tahoe Sierra Board of Realtors data.

At the same time, Bay Area home sales grew 15%. Between pandemic-stricken March through June, sales of Tahoe mountain homes, condos and properties rose 6% over the previous year, despite heavy restrictions on real estate tours. Bay Area home sales slipped nearly 10% during the same period.

Even though the frenzy in small resort communities is intense, it's a sliver of the buying and selling within the Bay Area.

About 5,500 single-family homes in the nine-county region sold in June, according to DQNews data. Santa Clara, Alameda and Contra Costa counties each had at least six times more home sales than the resort region — which saw 182 deals for single-family homes, the best performance in recent memory, according to Tahoe agents.

But the flight of homeowners trading their primary roof in the Bay Area for a lakeside estate is relatively rare, so far.

Elliot Eisenberg, consulting economist for MLSListings, said early data from real estate sales during the pandemic have not shown a hasty mass migration from job centers to remote locations. Employees still get value from being near their offices, he said, and rural communities in California are more prone to extreme weather and fires.

Still, Tahoe resort agents are riding the wave of short supply and pent-up demand to manage bidding wars, cash offers and quick deals. In short, Tahoe property hunts are starting to look a lot like the Bay Area — at a lower price.

This time last year, a typical single-family home in Truckee took 100 days to sell, according to local sales data. In June, Truckee homes spent about 50 days on the market.

“COVID is terrible for a lot of the state,” said Truckee agent Sam Drury, “but not for Tahoe real estate.”

He said he's never seen the market as heated during his 25 years as an

agent. More than half of sales are all-cash offers, and the number of homes for sale is scraping record lows, he said. Most purchases are second homes, he said, with owners expecting to spend more time in the resort community.

Safety plays a large role. The rate of coronavirus cases is more than 10% lower in rural Placer and El Dorado counties than in most of the Bay Area. Local schools already are reporting jumps in fall enrollments.

“We've seen bubbles,” Drury said, “but we've never seen this kind of behavior full time.”

Many Bay Area residents are welcoming the conversion of their vacation home into a primary place for work and play.

Andrew Dillin, a UC Berkeley molecular biologist, and his wife, a scientist in the pharmaceutical industry, bought a second home in 2017 in the resort community of Nakoma in Plumas County.

“Being in the Bay Area full time just grinds down on you,” Dillin said.

At the beginning of the pandemic, the couple left their Oakland home for the mountains. They've adjusted their work schedules for more biking, hiking, backcountry skiing and golfing during the crisis.

With Berkeley conducting online classes in the fall, they are considering more lifestyle changes. They might sell their Oakland home, rent a smaller place in the Bay Area and spend more time at Nakoma. Dillin, 49, is researching flying lessons — a chance to buzz over the Bay Area-to-Tahoe traffic snarls for a two-hour airborne commute.

The post-virus future remains uncertain.

“We're actually having those discussions right now,” he said. “I wonder if we're ever going to go back to normal.”

The pandemic stirred a life reevaluation for Katherine and Garret Law. The semiretired couple own a condo in San Francisco steps from Oracle Park with views of the Bay Bridge.

Early in the crisis, they decamped to a remote family property in Lake County.

“These things kind of

jar you,” said Law, 70. “You start thinking about what you want to do.”

The couple drove past Delta Coves on Bethel Island in Contra Costa County several times and decided to tour it in early May, just weeks after restrictions on real estate showings were lifted. Law owns a few boats, including a 47-foot sailboat kept in the South of France where they live during the summer.

Within two weeks, the Laws bought a waterfront property. They put their city condo up for sale and are waiting for construction of their new four-bedroom, 2,200-square-foot home. They wanted more space for their children and grandchildren, and a slip for a powerboat.

They discussed the move with family, but few others. “Peer review has been on the thin side,” joked Law, a former tech hardware executive.

The crisis has brought a new mindset, he said. “You kind of think about it. Am I doing what I want to be doing?”

And the lengthening crisis could draw away others fed up with Bay Area ills, irritants and stresses.

Joshi, who works at Equinix, moved to the Bay Area in 2005. The family built a dream house, but after 15 years he has grown weary of the daily commute and growing social problems.

Fremont, with strong schools and a vibrant Indian community, has become a cocoon within the Silicon Valley cocoon, he said. Joshi wants his two children to have a more diverse academic and cultural experience than the East Bay offers, he said.

During the pandemic, he discovered he could manage his global team efficiently through regular Zoom calls. The family looked at houses and bought in Clear Creek in early July. He expects his daughter, a senior at Mission San Jose High School, to finish her schooling online. He and his wife, Rajni, have found a private school in Nevada for their son.

“Frankly, COVID showed me I can do my work from anywhere in the world,” Joshi said. “We all realize what the Valley had to offer ... (but) it came at a pretty big price.”

The Daily Commuter

- ACROSS**
- 1 Keep ___ on; watch closely
- 5 Truckers' compartments
- 9 Equestrian's command
- 13 Got rid of a squeak in
- 15 Genesis brother
- 16 Sounded a bell
- 17 Woodwind instrument
- 18 Remorse
- 20 Utilize
- 21 Third letter
- 23 ___ out; eliminates gradually
- 24 Group led by a teacher
- 26 Emcee Sajak
- 27 Plant pests
- 29 Orderly technique
- 32 ___ paper strips; party streamers
- 33 Bazaars
- 35 Newborn dog
- 37 Rushes
- 38 Classic board game
- 39 Scoundrel
- 40 “Certainly!”
- 41 Fireplace sight
- 42 Yuletide visitor
- 43 In ___; refusing to accept reality
- 45 Made of shoddy materials
- 46 Common street name
- 47 New Zealand native
- 48 Great respect
- 51 ___ dos, tres...
- 52 Org. for Lions & Bengals
- 55 Made joyous
- 58 Man of the cloth
- 60 Violent wind
- 61 Highway
- 62 Shiny surface
- 63 ___ off; hightailed it
- 64 Lively
- 65 Tallies up
- DOWN**
- 1 Bean curd
- 2 Feels miserable
- 3 Salad dressing choice
- 4 Be dead ___ against; oppose
- 5 Mantles

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12
13				14		15				16			
17						18				19			
20				21	22				23				
		24	25						26				
27	28							29			30	31	
32						33	34				35		36
37						38					39		
40				41						42			
	43		44						45				
									46				
48	49	50						51			52	53	54
55								56	57		58	59	
60										62			
63						64					65		

Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews 9/14/20

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

D	O	N		A	B	N	E	R		A	B	C	S
U	F	O	S		W	E	A	V	E		N	E	A
D	A	N	A		H	I	V	E	S		T	A	L
		N	E	G	L	I	G	E	N	T		H	U
			G	A	L	E				L	E	E	
S	T	R	I	K	E		G	L	E	A	M	I	N
C	R	A	N	E		M	O	I	S	T		C	U
R	I	N	G		C	A	R	E	S		B	I	D
A	P	T		D	A	T	E	S		H	I	N	G
P	E	S	T	E	R	E	D		T	I	N	G	E
		A	N	D			L	A	N	D			
S	T	A	B		I	N	S	I	S	T	E	N	T
C	U	R	L		N	U	M	B	S		R	O	O
O	N	C	E		A	D	O	R	E		Y	O	R
T	E	S	T		L	E	G	A	L		K	E	N

©2020 Tribune Content Agency, LLC All Rights Reserved. 9/14/20

6 “Honest ___”, presidential nickname

7 Franklin, to friends

8 Like wet floors

9 Christmas decoration

10 ___ Christian Andersen

11 ___ in a while; occasionally

12 Middle ___; historical period

14 Time between U.S. censuses

19 “___ all, folks!”

22 Suffix for lion or heir

25 Cold sore sites

27 Sore

28 Used a lever

29 Deep mud

30 Willing to reconsider

31 Sonny & Cher songs, e.g.

33 Stable newborn

34 Humerus' location

36 Theater production

38 Jails

39 Long-running Broadway play

41 Used an emery board

42 John B and others

44 Had to have

45 Summer blower

47 Like fields after a rainfall

48 Henhouse

49 Swat

50 “A ___ of Two Cities”

53 Gwynne or Savage

54 Microscope part


56 File drawer, perhaps

57 ___-shattering; too loud

59 “Caughtcha!”

Brand New Assisted Living & Memory Care in San Jose

NOW LEASING!



SONNET HILL
Assisted Living & Memory Care

429 Meridian Avenue • San Jose

EXCLUSIVE FOUNDING CLUB MEMBER BENEFITS

*Members May Choose Up to 5 Benefits:

- Locked-in base rental rate for 2 years
- 3rd month free, base rent
- Brass plaque apartment door sign
- Amazon Prime Membership (2 years)
- 42" flat screen TV & Wall mount
- Upgraded cable package (2 years)
- Custom embroidered blanket with logo & last name
- Netflix subscription (2 years)
- Accent wall paint upgrade
- SJ Mercury newspaper (2 years)

*Call for more details

Schedule Your Appointment
408-731-0019
kiki@sonnethill.com
www.sonnethill.com



Scan & Book Your Virtual Tour

WE ARE HERE FOR YOU.

Now offering 6 months no \$0 payment, 0% interest, no minimum special financing

Covid-19 Compliant Company



PROMPT, PROFESSIONAL & CLEAN
Full Service Plumbing, Drain & Sewer Cleaning
Residential & Commercial
Complete Plumbing Services

24/7 EMERGENCY SERVICES

Free In-Home Estimates
NEVER AN OVERTIME CHARGE

Our **\$77** Cable Any Drain Any Time

With Proper Access, Up To 75 Ft. Storm Drains Not Included.

Expires 9/30/2020

\$50 OFF

Any Plumbing Service

Not Valid With Any Other Offers Call For Details.

Expires 9/30/2020

CALL & SAVE \$329

Elongated Or Round Low Water Toilet Or ADA Toilet With Self-Cleaning Bowl And a 3 Year Trouble Free Guarantee!

CALL NOW!

LIMITED SUPPLY AT THIS PRICE Cannot Be Combined With Any Other Offer. ADA \$429.

Expires 9/30/2020

Senior Military Discount

Covid-19 Essential Services.

Restrictions May Apply

Be a Hero, practice social distancing

Financing Available
Easy Payment Options
Lic. #1028886
www.RooterHero.com

(408) 809-0107

