

**CRANE CRISIS**

PAGE 3 > Police standoff with man who scales perilous height



**HOMELESSNESS**

PAGE 11 > Population drops to 10-year low



**CLEAN SLATE**

PAGE 12 > Young people lose the tattoos



## Students join push for racial, social equality amid national movements

BY SEMIRA SHERIEF  
*Mosaic Staff Writer*

After the killings of nine African-Americans at a historic black church in Charleston, South Carolina, a unified voice has emerged calling for the removal of the Confederate flag from public buildings in southern states.

Not long after the tragedy, major retailers such as Amazon, eBay, Sears and Kmart have announced their decision to stop selling any merchandise depicting the flag.

For Kemi Giwa, a recent graduate of American High School in Fremont, this is welcome news.

"It's a step towards justice," Giwa said. "The flag is a symbol of racism, violence and torture. The more people support its removal, the more we will unite as a country."

Giwa has been trying to call attention to racial injustice since last summer, after African-Americans

Michael Brown and Eric Garner died at the hands of white policemen. Both incidents sparked public outrage when the policemen were not held accountable for their deaths.

She believes that part of the problem with racial tensions in this country is what Americans aren't willing to discuss, such as the concept of "white privilege," the social advantages whites have over other racial groups.

White privilege is not noticed by whites themselves



Kemi Giwa

GO TO PAGE 10



# No more wait for Golden State



At a sold-out Oracle watch party, Elgan Williams screams with joy watching his Golden State Warriors win the NBA championship. (Hannah Chebeleu/Mosaic) **STORY, page 6**

## Three years in, bag ban yields big litter impact



(Esteban Barajas/Mosaic)

BY BRADY N. DELGADILLO  
*Mosaic Staff Writer*

Tamara Chang recently walked into a downtown San Jose Safeway with her canvas bag in hand. At this juncture, the city's ban on single-use bags has fully intertwined with Chang's daily routine.

"I don't even remember what things were like before the ordinance," Chang said.

Since January 2012, the Bring Your Own Bag Ordinance has restricted grocery stores and retailers from providing their customers with plastic bags. Instead, customers must bring their own bags, pay a 10-cent fee for paper bags, or simply carry their

GO TO PAGE 8

## Chronic pain not visible, but not fictional



Leanne Miron feeds grape leaves to goats at the Ohlone Elementary School farm in Palo Alto. (Rachel Lee/Mosaic)

By JOELLE DONG  
*Mosaic Staff Writer*

Melodic notes flow from Leanne Miron's violin. A slight breeze blows through her chestnut hair. Leanne's father, Scott, stands atop a ladder, gracefully picking gold-

en plums from a tree. The gentle buzz of honey bees underscores Leanne's music.

It's a serenity that belies the Miron's hidden agony.

Leanne, 16, has been in pain for the past five years, while Scott has been in pain for the past eight.

Scott has chronic migraines, an affliction shared by Leanne, who also has chronic tendinitis in her right arm and a sudden-onset bilateral snapping hip syndrome that causes her hips to spasm.

The migraines rendered Scott,

GO TO PAGE 8

# Conversation Club offers casual comfort for English learners

BY BRADY N. DELGADILLO

Mosaic Staff Writer

Maria, a native of Mexico, has been in the United States for a year, but still cannot find a job or fully connect with American culture.

The complications do not arise from a lack of education. She has a bachelor's degree in psychology from a Mexican university but cannot put it to use because she does not speak fluent English.

"When I came here, I couldn't work with psychology," she said. "We need to talk with people, and it's difficult for me to understand all the patients."

At the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Library in San Jose, a club of diverse adults share one common goal: learning to converse in English. The ESL Conversation Club's pur-

pose is to create a welcoming environment for adult English learners to practice their skills with the help of a trained facilitator.

They agreed to speak to Mosaic about their experiences learning English under the condition that their last names not be disclosed, out of immigration concerns.

Dawit, from Ethiopia, said it is scary to even attempt a conversation with a stranger out of fear they will not understand him.

"You don't have confidence anywhere you go if you don't speak English," Dawit said.

Lu, from China, said she feels that she is at a disadvantage attending graduate school in the United States because she does not speak fluent English. Nevertheless, she continues to pursue a master's degree in material science engineering.

"My English is not very well so to totally understand what my teacher is talking about is difficult," Lu said. "I have to spend more time with my studies than other students."

Many of the club members are highly educated in their home countries, but resort to low-skill jobs or face unemployment while they learn English.

Karin, from Peru, earned a bachelor's degree in social work in Peru but is unemployed. Karin said she must first complete an exam and interview at San Jose State University to validate her bachelor's degree. Being in the Conversation Club has allowed Karin to practice her English skills and work toward preparing for the exam.

Though it is a classroom setting with a facilitator, the club is run through discussions. Many of the members feel it has been effective

because they have meaningful conversations that relate to current events.

"I've been to other ESL clubs and it's different people and different classes, but in this one I have really learned," Karin said.

Marcia, a physical education teacher from Brazil, is accompanying her husband through his final year of graduate school. Unlike her classmates, Marcia is learning English simply for the pleasure of it. She enjoys the club because of the diverse accents and people.

The consensus of the members is that being a part of the ESL Conversation Club has allowed them to build confidence.

"This is a really good opportunity to let us speak out," Lu said.



## SARA ASHARY

One look at Sara Ashary, 17, tells you she is extremely talkative. Despite this, her favorite social media is Twitter, even if she has to limit herself to 140 characters. A rising senior, Sara attended Silver Creek High School but will be attending Middle College in the 2015-2016 school year. Sara enjoys writing and runs her own blog. Her dream job is something where she can talk to people, travel, and tell stories: journalism fits the bill almost perfectly.

By Kaitlyn Wang

were homeless people everywhere. Brady Noah Delgadillo, who prefers to be called Noah, was born and raised in a small community in Sun Valley, Idaho; he seized the opportunity to go to Mosaic to broaden his experience as a journalist. In addition to his involvement with journalism, he is also student body president, vice-president of the Idaho Association of Student Councils, and founder of the journalism club at his school.

By Jacky Tsang



## JOELLE DONG

Rising junior Joelle Dong enjoys a busy life. In addition to her classes at Palo Alto High School, Joelle spends her time participating in broadcast journalism, speech and debate, model United Nations, and theater. She also works with Humans of Palo Alto, a photojournalism blog. Joelle is a new resident of the Bay Area, having moved to Palo Alto from Seattle two years ago. She loves everything California has to offer, such as the sun and a variety of cuisines.

By Megan Robalewski



## ESTEBAN BARAJAS

Esteban Barajas, also known as Steven, is a multitasking photographer and rising senior at Monterey High School. Once he graduates, he is hoping to attend the University of Portland Oregon.

Currently, Esteban works for the company LifeProof, and hopes to work for Nikon. He hopes to take up wedding photography as a profession, and alternatively would like to be an athletic or physical trainer, as he himself is involved in athletics, including soccer. Steven also has an affinity for travel, and is nowhere close to sating his hunger for traveling anytime in the near future.

By David Early



## DAVID EARLY

David Early was born and raised in San Jose. Early will be attending SJSU in this fall to study film. David's love for photography started when he was younger, and noticed that his grandmother would never go anywhere without her camera. He is an urban explorer. For fun he explores abandoned buildings. The scariest experience while exploring was being chased out of an abandoned automotive factory by sketchy people, but even that won't stop his love for photography.

By Esteban Barajas



## HANNAH CHEBELEV

Hannah Chebelev, 17, attends Mountain View Academy and will be the senior class president next year. During her free time, Chebelev enjoys exploring the wilderness and playing flag football, volleyball and gymnastics. It's not uncommon to see her running in the early morning as well. Her open and accepting disposition allows her to talk to anyone about nearly anything. She credits her friendly personality to her childhood experiences. Chebelev grew up in an artistic environment and hopes to be involved in an art-related career in 10 years.

By Rachel Lee



## RACHEL LEE

Seventeen-year-old Rachel Lee from Mountain View High School enjoys watercolor, painting and filming. She was the president of the Red Cross Club, newspaper editor, and an avid tutor for disadvantaged students. One of her favorite memories was a trip she took to Tibet with her family. Lee enjoys immersing herself in different cultures while traveling. Rachel's dad would get out of his car and photograph scenes. He is one of her main role models for photo journalism. In the Mosaic program, she wishes to better her skills in photography.

By Hannah Chebelev



## BRADY N. DELGADILLO

Brady isn't from California; the first thing he noticed when he arrived in San Jose was that there



## TOMÁS ANTONIO MIER

Born and raised in the Bay Area, Tomás Antonio Mier is an upcoming senior from Santa Clara High School. Mier is active as the ASB communications commissioner, president of several clubs and editor-in-chief of the student newspaper, The Roar. Sports journalism has since become Mier's preferred journalistic subject, and he hopes to continue pursuing this passion. Mier is also very proud of his role in Raza Latina, a club dedicated to celebrating Latino and Hispanic heritage.

By Matt Pinkney



## MATTHEW PINKNEY

Matt Pinkney sits at his desk with a notebook and a pen with one goal: to write a novel. After half a decade of work, he is nearly done with his book, "Birth by Flame," a fantasy adventure story set in an imaginary land. His love for reading began with the Harry Potter series, which led him to co-found the Harry Potter Club at Pioneer High School where he says students get to "nerd out" and talk about Harry Potter. Pinkney joined journalism and drama this past year. In the journalism class, Pinkney started as a staff writer for the "Highlights" section of his school's newspaper, the Pony Express. Pinkney aspires to write for the entertainment section next school year and publish his novel before college applications.

By Tomás Mier



## AYSHA REHMAN

Aysa Rehman is an upcoming senior at Milpitas High School with a strong interest in journalism. She is also a passionate artist who sees political ideas and current issues reflected in street art. In the future, Rehman would like to become editor-in-chief of her high school newspaper, The Union, where she is currently web editor. She is also interested in the medical field, and is considering a career as an emergency room doctor or an emergency responder so she can help people in conflict.

By Shannon Yang



## MEGAN ROBALEWSKI

For optimist Megan Robalewski, "the glass is always half full even when it's three-quarters empty." In school she was convinced that she was a math person but her teacher encouraged her to pursue journalism. This fall Megan will be on the executive board of The Shield newspaper at Westmont High in Campbell, and will lead the school's DECA club, a business and marketing competition organization. In her free time, she enjoys surfing, social media, eating cheese and watching Netflix. Find her, espresso or peppermint tea in hand, putting smiles on faces while basking in the chill vibes of the West Coast.

By Joelle Dong



## RUIWEN ADELE SHEN

Ruiwen Adele Shen participates in competitive cheerleading and journalism. Shen was born in China but raised in Fremont. She considers herself both a pessimist and an optimist, but tries to see both aspects of a problem and form her opinion based on what she has experienced. She wants to continue her education after high school and attend a four-year university, though she doesn't know what she wants to specialize in. Whatever she ends up doing, she hopes to be both happy and successful.

By Semira Sherief



## SEMIRA SHERIEF

Self-proclaimed shy, Semira Sherief hails from a family of four in San Jose and takes all honors classes at Pioneer High School. She wants to go to a four-year university, and considers herself an optimist. She wrote for the sports section last year for her school newspaper, in part because she revels in writing about a subject about which audiences are passionate. Next school year, she will be the Highlights editor of her high school newspaper, because she most enjoyed featuring star athletes in writing for sports.

By Ruiwen Adele Shen



## JACKY TSANG

Jacky Tsang is a dedicated student at American High School in Fremont. At his school, Jacky is involved

in Key Club, UNICEF, the student newspaper and photography. He holds multiple officer positions in the clubs. Jacky believes that it is crucial for people to be aware of their surroundings and of the circumstances on current events; journalism allows him to put this belief to use. Jacky's favorite quality about himself is his tremendous amount of dedication. Looking towards the future, Jacky is certain that he wants to live in an urban environment. Washington D.C., New York, and Seattle are his ideal locations.

By Brady N. Delgadillo



## KAITLYN WANG

When people meet Kaitlyn Wang, they feel a sense of ease. You can talk to her about anything and she automatically can relate with you. Wang is a charming 16-year-old attending Foothill High School in Pleasanton. After high school, she hopes to continue her education to pursue law. When she is not busy in National Honor Society, mock trial, AP classes, and being the editor-in-chief of her school newspaper, InFlight, she likes to write poetry and read.

By Sara Ashary



## SHANNON YANG

Coming across as shy and soft spoken, 15-year-old Shannon Yang is a rising junior at Gunn High School in Palo Alto. She works for her school paper and expresses a passion for journalism that has driven her to possibly pursue it as a career. Interested in social issues pertaining to her community, Shannon deeply cares about the issues of race and gender. She identifies herself as a feminist, and believes that everyone deserves equality. If Shannon could make one wish that would change the world, she wishes for everyone to have an education.

By Aysa Rehman



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# Burrito offer coaxes man who spent night in high-rise construction crane

BY MATTHEW PINKNEY

*Mosaic Staff Writer*

A 14-hour standoff between police and a man atop a nine-story construction crane ended peacefully June 22 in San Jose.

At 8:30 p.m. June 21, 39-year-old Alam Skandar of Sacramento entered a construction area on North Sixth Street near East Santa Clara and East St. John streets and climbed onto the crane, according to San Jose police. He spent most of the night in the cab of the crane, shouting down at an officer who attempted to negotiate with him.

Nearby resident Vini Berekh, who followed the incident through the night, said, "We could hear him yelling all night ... down on Seventh Street."

Skandar kept saying "how he was homeless and he had gone without food for a long time," said Shaunn Cartwright, a neighbor who witnessed the entire incident.

Skandar began descending from the crane peacefully at 10:10 a.m. and was taken into police custody at 10:30 a.m. According to the San Jose Mercury News, Skandar began climbing down after being offered a burrito from a nearby cafe.

At the time of his arrest, police were unsure of Skandar's motive for the climb.

"A lot of times, (there are) mental health issues. It sounds like some family issues," Lt. Rick Weger said.

Cartwright said Skandar said that "he wanted the media to cover this and ... investigate how the city spends its money and treats its homeless."

Skandar was arrested without incident on suspicion of trespassing. He was booked into Santa Clara County Jail, and was set to be questioned.



Alam Skandar stands atop a 90-foot-tall crane where he spent 14 hours before being taken into custody (left) by San Jose police. (David Early/Mosaic)



Tim Watson, the VTA bus driver who helped rescue a kidnapped boy in Milpitas earlier this month, throws the first pitch at the June 19 San Jose Giants game after arriving by helicopter at Municipal Stadium in San Jose. (Hannah Chebeleu/Mosaic)

## 'Giant' tribute given to bus driver who helped thwart kidnapping

BY JOELLE DONG

*Mosaic Staff Writer*

When Tim Watson was helicoptered onto the field to throw out the first pitch at a June 19 San Jose Giants game, his entrance resembled his rise to fame: quick, exciting and dramatic.

Watson, a Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority bus driver from Fremont, came into the public eye after thwarting a June 5 kidnapping and has since been hailed as a hero and deluged with media interviews.

"I've received letters from as far as New York, Washington, Arkansas, British Columbia, Santa Ana, Cupertino," Watson said. "These are people that don't know me and they're not close, except for the Cupertino letter, but they're reaching out. This message is getting out very far, worldwide."

Watson is using his fame to stress the importance of being vigilant.

"Gotta spread public awareness, you know, you just really gotta watch your children, you know they're slippery, get out

in a second," Watson said.

Watson also credited anti-human trafficking training he received in April.

"This was a team effort by the Milpitas Police, Fremont Police, the librarian, my VTA dispatch, the transit agency, and then of course me using all those tools that were given to me by training and upbringing to react on it," he said.

The training program, administered by Santa Clara County, is aimed at combating human trafficking in Silicon Valley. After Watson's story broke, several organizations expressed interest in the program, said Santa Clara County Supervisor Cindy Chavez.

"We're training people in all different walks of life," Chavez said.

Watson's story has resonated with the public, fascinated with the story of an average Joe turned hero.

"People were here early because they wanted to see him throw out that first pitch," said Juliana Paoli, the San Jose Giants' chief marketing officer. "The second we heard that that was going to be happening, we tried to spread the word

as much as we could, because we knew that people wouldn't want to miss it."

Watson, a Newark Junior Giants youth baseball coach, said he appreciated the fanfare.

"It's overwhelming, but it's a good overwhelming," Watson said. "When I was flying in looking down, that's when it all hit me. That's kinda like, wow: all this, it's for my honor."

"It was very humbling and overwhelming, getting out there, just being like: Please; don't let me look like 50 Cent," he added, alluding to the rapper's infamous wayward first pitch at a Mets game last year.

Watson and his family never expected this acclaim, and are making it a point to stay grounded.

"That man will never change. He's gonna be the same before it, after it, doesn't matter. Always very humble, modest," said his son Tyler Watson. "He doesn't feel like it should have gone as big as it has for him. As far as the little boy, being back together with his family, that's huge, but for him he just feels he was doing what any father would do."

# New California testing proves challenging for some students

BY JACKY TSANG

Mosaic Staff Writer

After two long weeks of AP exams, junior Shayda Dehnou of Mountain View High School expected a stress-free time until finals week. But before she could relax, she realized she had another round of standardized testing, which ended up taking a lot of time.

“Way too much time was given for the test; everyone finished within an hour before the testing period was over,” Dehnou said.

Over 3 million students in California recently finished the new standardized test, the Smarter Balanced Assessment, which is the new way to determine how students progress academically. Although some officials feel the test was successful, the experience left some high school students frustrated, as the testing ate up instruction and recreation time.

“During those two weeks, I had to stray away from course materials which made the later weeks super rushed,” junior Felicia Liang from Washington High School said, adding that she had to miss a science camp she had already gotten permission to attend. “I went through a lot of trouble getting sig-

natures only to be told I can’t go.”

Smarter Balanced is the name more commonly used for the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress. Developed by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, the test was administered this year in more than 18 states, including California.

“There was a statewide Smarter Balanced field test last year and many of the technical glitches were addressed at that time,” said Pam Slater, spokeswoman for the California Department of Education. “Students took to the online testing much better than the old paper-and-pencil tests, since this is the medium where they feel most comfortable.”

Students were tested in English and mathematics, and the assessments were computer adaptive, meaning questions were based on the student’s ability. For example, if a student answered a question correctly, the next question would be more challenging. The California Department of Education determined that the testing period could not exceed 8.5 hours, but schools had leeway administering the exams.

Also, in order for students to be familiar with the material, math and English teachers from third to 11th grades were required to

teach a 30-minute special lesson. Thus, this assessment consumed a lot of instruction time.

Smarter Balanced was one of two national organizations selected to create standardized tests aligned with Common Core Standards. Both organizations received \$330 million from a federal program, Race to the Top, an education reform to improve teaching and learning.

The Common Core Standards require students to think critically and spend time solving problems, allowing the 43 states that adopted them to measure students’ analytical capabilities. The standards are intended to train students for college and career goals.

“We are at a new level in education,” Slater said. “Common Core has been necessary for several years; the world is changing, what students should know is changing and students can learn how to work in teams to help the nation.”

These changes in the California educational system are being widely accepted. Rather than using their old method to determine students’ college readiness level, California State University officials plan on using the Smarter Balanced results to place students in appropriate entry-level courses.

But even with this incentive, some students are reluctant to participate in the assessment.

“I opted out because I wasn’t going to a Cal system, so I didn’t feel like I needed to take it, and it took a lot of time,” said Christina Ge, who will be a senior in the fall at Foothill High School in Pleasanton.

Mary White, director of educational services at the Santa Rita Union School District, said Smarter Balanced’s goal is to provide assessments that measure how much students understand the Common Core State Standards, which were implemented in California in 2010.

Prior to the official Smarter Balanced test, students received a taste of the standards through a practice test in 2014. From that moment on, schools began transitioning to a Common Core curriculum.

White believes the Smarter Balanced Assessment results will not be able to provide accurate measures of students knowledge since it’s still relatively new.

“Smarter Balanced really needs two or three good years to work and give data to the state and district on how kids are learning,” White said. “This is the first official year Smarter Balanced is coming out. Give it time.”

## Summer program helps students create apps



Make School co-founder Jeremy Rossmann lectures students in Sunnyvale. (Rachel Lee/Mosaic)

BY SHANNON YANG

Mosaic Staff Writer

Fifty-year-olds with advanced degrees aren’t creating the next big apps and games — teenagers working over Mac computers are.

That’s why Jeremy Rossmann, co-founder of Make School, told a group of about 90 students in Sunnyvale on June 22 to create remarkable apps that someone would “decide to take time out of their day to show it to a friend.”

Held in the Plug and Play Tech Center in Sunnyvale, Rossmann welcomed students to the first day of the program. He shared tips on respect, community, attitude and, of course, “making.”

“Ideas are worthless,” Rossmann established. “Execution is what matters.”

The company, whose name is a reflection of the app-creation-based education it values, runs a two-year college placement program and an eight-week summer program. The Summer Academy runs through Aug. 15. It walks students through the process of coding and creating an iOS game or app.

Most participants in the Summer Academy are high school and college students between the ages of 13 and 25. Many already have attended hackathons or completed their own computer science projects.

“We’re generally looking for students with the Maker Mentality,” co-founder Ashu Desai said.

One of the most valuable things about Make School for Morgan Chen, 19, of Albany, is that students are surrounded with passionate and smart people.

“Make School does a good job of taking a lot of people who care and putting them in a space together,” said Chen, who participated in the Summer Academy in 2014 and then the gap year program.

“We don’t do any marketing to parents,” Desai said. “The students are the ones who just say, ‘I’m really passionate,’ so they decide to spend their summer making apps.”

One of these passionate students is Alan Chen, 15, of Palo Alto (he has no relation to Morgan Chen). After hearing about the Summer Academy, he was convinced it was a worthy investment.

“The tuition is actually pretty substantial, but they are bringing in experts from the field and people will teach us valuable things,” he said. “What we’re gaining from the experience will outweigh the cost.”

Alan Chen plans on creating a puzzle or

arcade game, and feels that the experience will give his summer purpose.

“Instead of playing games all day, I could do something useful,” he said.

Gautam Mittal, 15, of Palo Alto, participated in 2012 and 2013. He said it was filled with lectures from technology experts, collaborative work time, game nights, lunch talks and visits to San Francisco, where he met the founder of Reddit.

One way that Make School students improve is through collaboration.

“I was around peers who wanted to be better,” said Phillip Ou, 20, of Venice, who like Morgan Chen attended the Summer Academy in 2014 and the gap year program.

“It’s an incredibly supportive community,” said Teresa Ibarra, 17, of San Francisco, a graduate of Lowell High School who will be attending Harvey Mudd College in Claremont in the fall.

The skills of Make School’s alumni have carried over beyond the program. Mittal interned at Edmodo before entering high school. Ou is an intern at Snapchat. Morgan Chen works full-time at Pandora.

But Make School helps students land more than internships and jobs. Ibarra won the ESA Loft Fellowship and was flown out to the White House for her Make School app, First World Problems.

The app includes short, funny mini-games, similar to Dumb Ways to Die. In one, the player scrambles to an outlet as his phone reaches 1-percent battery life.

“The app makes fun of the way we treat things here as actual problems,” Ibarra said.

“It was terrifying, but it was fun,” Ibarra said about her three days at the White House. “I got to see a lot of women of color. They were these great young people who were also passionate about social issues.”

Last year, 24 percent of Make School Summer Academy’s students were female and 18 percent were underrepresented minorities. By giving out scholarships and marketing to these groups, Make School hopes to further close these gaps.

“These are not the greatest numbers but we are always working on making it better,” Desai said.

Despite challenges, Make School is focused on product. Eighty to 90 percent of students finish an app by the end of the summer, and about half ship to the App Store.

“Don’t give up,” Rossmann reminded students.

## College hopefuls navigate tenuous funding at state’s public universities

BY JACKY TSANG

Mosaic Staff Writer

Nicole Yuen just graduated from Irvington High School in Fremont. In the fall, she will not be attending a four-year university in California, but will be spending two years at Berkeley City College before transferring.

She chose this path because she can’t afford the four-year route.

Yuen is bucking a trend. According to a 2015 report by the American Association of Community Colleges, enrollment at two-year public institutions declined for two years in a row in 2013. But Yuen believes the rising cost could deter students from wanting to attend a four-year university, and some may prefer the two-year community college route.

“If I really wanted to, I could attend a UC, but that would result in a ton of student loans which I just don’t want to deal with,” Yuen said. “And community college is just a lot cheaper and a better alternative for me.”

In spite of Gov. Jerry Brown’s budget that includes an extra \$120 million for the UC system, university officials plan to increase tuition in the near future. For now, the influx of government funding will help UC maintain its tuition at the current levels for at least two years, UC spokeswoman Dianne Klein said.

“The budget agreement also provides \$25 million for undergraduate resident enrollment growth at UC,” Klein said. “This funding could be a substantial first step toward achieving UC’s goal of enrolling almost 10,000 new California undergraduate and graduate students over four years.”

Last winter, UC President Janet Napolitano introduced a five-year plan to predict tuition increases. Essentially, tuition fees will be \$12,800 next year, which is a 5 percent increase from the previous year. The plan prompted protests at the regents meeting in San Francisco because of the already high tuitions that UCs have.

Students who want to go to a UC campus see this growth as a problem that will hurt them. Like Yuen, some students have taken community college as a way to avoid massive student loans.

“More students have started to consider attending a community college due to the much cheaper cost,” said Nikita Gupta, an incoming senior at Irvington High School. “But the hike in tuition is not enough to deter me from going to a UC, although it may impact my family’s income greatly.”

Similar to how the UC plans on increasing enrollment, California State University hopes to use the \$120 million in Brown’s proposal to do the same.

But the proposal doesn’t fully address the needs of the 23 campuses across California. Officials planned on expanding enrollment by approximately 12,300 students for spring and fall 2016. They plan to hire more staff, academic advisors and tenure-track faculty to give students a higher chance of success.

“CSU is a great alternative to a UC,” said Yuen, who plans to enroll in an art program. “It’s just I prefer going to a UC than a CSU because of some of the distinguished programs at UC Davis, Berkeley, Santa Cruz; they interest me more than the programs offered at CSU.”

Although the Cal State system didn’t receive all of the funding requested, there are no plans, unlike UC, to increase tuition over the years.

But to some students, the price of higher education will benefit them in the long run.

“Tuition may be high but going to a four-year university can lead to great success; it really depends on what the student chooses to do with the opportunity given to them,” Gupta said. “A four-year university can act as a platform to a successful future only if students are willing to work hard and try their best.”

# Little Saigon district thrives in San Jose



Angel Xuan Dao Phan displays a photo taken of her in an Indonesian refugee camp now on display at her shop in San Jose's Little Saigon. (Hannah Chebeleu/Mosaic)

BY MATTHEW PINKNEY  
Mosaic Staff Writer

A year ago, 23-year-old Vietnamese native Hai Nguyen first stepped foot in San Jose and instantly felt at home.

"When you live here in San Jose, you feel like you're in Vietnam," Nguyen said, referring to the large concentration of Vietnamese people and culture in his neighborhood.

Nguyen, like many of San Jose's 160,000 people of Vietnamese descent, lives in the neighborhood known as Little Saigon. This area of East San Jose between Story and Tully roads is the heart of Vietnamese culture in San Jose. Little Saigon is a unique blend of both traditional Vietnamese and modern American culture.

One of Little Saigon's landmarks is Grand Century Mall, located on Story Road. This shopping center caters directly to the Vietnamese community. Restaurants specialize in Vietnamese dishes like pho soup and nuoc mia, a sweet drink made from sugar cane. Stores sell products from all over East Asia, like the Face Shop, a Korean-based cosmetics chain.

On the Vietnamese Lunar New Year, or Tet, the plaza comes alive with firecrackers and traditional lion dancers.

"[The plaza is] pretty fun on holidays," said Khanh Phan, a Little Saigon resident for five years. "It was really crowded each time I went."

The neighboring Vietnam Town shopping center offers different varieties of food, from Vietnamese to Korean and even gelato.

"[Vietnam Town] could bring more people into Vietnamese culture," said Phan. Phan said he has noticed more diversity in Little Saigon

since he first came to the area. Other business owners see that as a positive development.

"We need a lot of businesses to bring a lot of people to the area," said Angel Phan, owner of Angel's Beauty in Grand Century Mall. Angel Phan is not related to Khanh Phan.

Angel Phan left Vietnam in 1999 to join her extended family, who were settled in Atlanta. She came to San Jose from Atlanta soon after. When she arrived in San Jose, "everything was so beautiful. I didn't want to go back [to Atlanta]," she said.

Angel Phan has since sponsored her parents' move to San Jose in 2009. She has also been working since 2004 to bring her younger siblings to America. She is still waiting for them to arrive.

"I come from a poor family in Vietnam," she said, explaining why she wants to reunite with her siblings.

Angel Phan went to beauty school and opened her own salon in 2002. In 2011, she opened Angel's Beauty and has continued to work in the mall for the past four years.

"I feel very lucky to be part of a community with people opening businesses and customers coming and saying 'Hello,'" she said.

One of Angel Phan's proudest moments was competing in a beauty pageant in Oakland. She said, "I did so well [in the pageant] because I was a self-made woman."

For the Vietnamese who live here, Little Saigon is a way to reconnect with their past and be part of a new community that feels as real as the ones they left behind.

As Nguyen said, Little Saigon truly feels like a piece of Vietnam in San Jose.

## Books Aloud gives voice to impaired readers



Volunteer Hugh Cox records an audiobook version of "Gone Girl." (Rachel Lee/Mosaic)

BY RACHEL LEE  
Mosaic Staff Writer

Each week, Angie Inchauspe of Los Altos sorts through shelves of colorful audiobooks, pulls out a select few, and slips them into designated cardboard boxes.

After sealing the packages with a layer



Elizabeth Browning (r) files audiobooks at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Library in San Jose. (Rachel Lee/Mosaic)

Books Aloud was established in 1973 to meet the challenges of reading a printed page for those who are blind, visually impaired, learning disabled or physically disabled. The program is funded by donations.

Its clientele often cannot read conventional print. They rely on the audiobooks, mini-libraries and specialized books that Books Aloud provides.

Books Aloud audiobooks are recorded on cassettes and e-readers to cater to older and younger generations. Mini-libraries are collections of portable, user-friendly audiobooks and e-readers that the program gives to local schools and senior homes. Specialized books include novels with laminated pages for clients who have

trouble turning pages.

Books Aloud is a service that currently impacts the lives of over 2,600 clients around the Bay Area.

"We fill a very small niche in this area, but it's a much needed one," said Nancy Consentino, an office manager and event planner for Books Aloud. "If people lose their audiobooks, we just mark them as lost and excuse them. It's not like the public library -- everything is free."

This bodes well for clients like Glorian Quigley, a 90-year-old blind woman from Santa Clara. Quigley has listened to record-

ings from Books Aloud for over 40 years.

She stresses the importance of the free services -- especially for those with a limited income -- and the simple exchange of recordings that is completed with the assistance of volunteers.

"It has put a new dimension of enjoyment, education, and pleasure in my life," Quigley said. "With this service, I can now visually experience the world around me and travel to many new places through the recordings, even though I'm unable to do that physically."

A cornerstone of the program lies in the contributions of volunteers.

Inchauspe assists with the circulation and administration of Books Aloud. She helps select which books are mailed out, packages the books and organizes the yearly fundraiser gala in October.

The organization is also run with the help of volunteers who lend their voices.

Hugh Cox, a six-year volunteer, became a reader after years of being told his voice was very distinct. Cox goes into their studio once a week and reads a wide selection of books, ranging from children's stories to adult non-fiction.

While he finds value in extending his voice to service the public, he would like to connect and interact with the people he reads to.

"One of the things I miss is that I have no idea who these people are. You don't get to see them -- that's what I wish I could do," Cox said.

Technology has played a key part in the development of this organization. Over the years, Books Aloud has almost skirted around the use of CDs. The organization generally caters to older generations who are comfortable using cassettes with simple start and stop buttons.

Yet it isn't opposed to incorporating newer technology. Recently, it has begun using Nook e-readers as a visual component to the program's audio recordings. The Nook has been particularly successful with elementary school students who are more accustomed to this type of technology.

The program intends to build an online system to host the use of free audiobooks for those with disabilities. Before Books Aloud can move forward with this possibility, it must overcome a pressing obstacle.

"The reason we can do this is because the people who own the rights to the books we record don't charge us any royalties, on the condition that we only distribute to people who are disabled," said John Leventon, the program's production manager for 27 years. "So we couldn't just put it all over the Internet and let anybody have access to it."

Books Aloud brings about experiences that are valuable for both the clients and the volunteers.

"You just walk away feeling you've really done something for someone less fortunate in the community and that's what we should be doing in life," Inchauspe said.

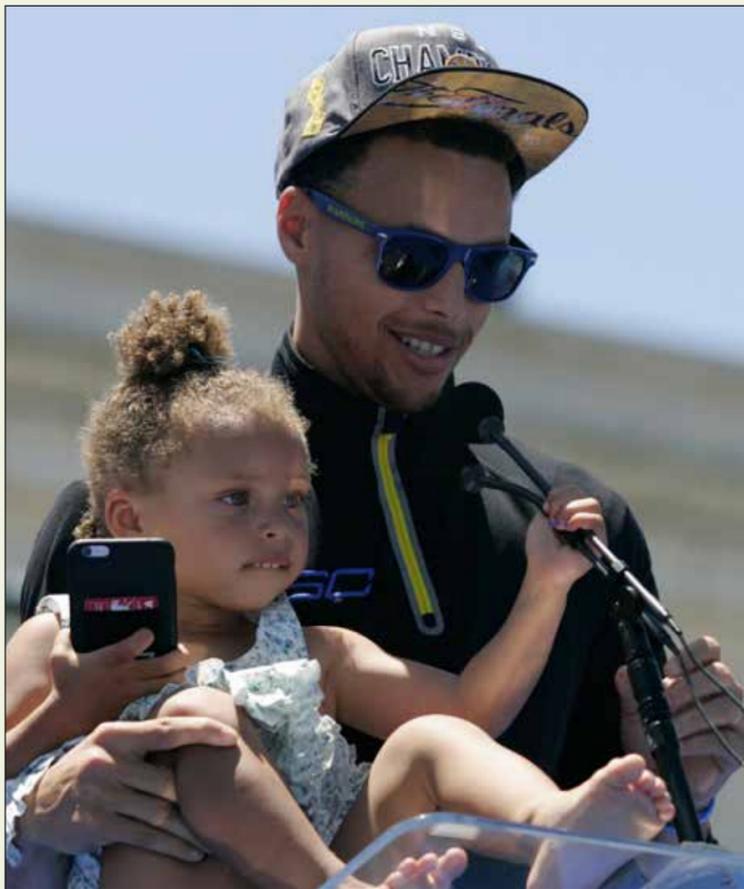


A Books Aloud quilt at the library. (Rachel Lee/Mosaic)

of tape, she ensures they are mailed out to the correct address. These packages and the books within them will introduce people to a new, literary world they otherwise would not have access to.

Inchauspe is a volunteer with Books Aloud, a nonprofit organization that records audio books for the disabled. She joined because her son benefitted from similar programs.

"I have a son who has tremendous learning disabilities. Through the years he became fairly successful at life ... and a lot of it was because of organizations like this," Inchauspe said.



Stephen Curry with daughter Riley. (Rachel Lee/Mosaic)



A maritime cyclist arrives on Lake Merritt. (David Early/Mosaic)



(David Early/Mosaic)



Klay Thompson takes



The Game Six broadcast from Cleveland plays at the Oracle Arena. (Esteban Barajas/Mosaic)



Stephan Curry gestures to the crowd in the NBA Championship parade. (David Early/Mosaic)

## WARRIORS' TITLE WIN

# Bay Area uncorks 40 years of elation

BY SARA ASHARY and  
TOMÁS ANTONIO MIER

Mosaic Staff Writers

A blue and gold sea of people lined the edges of Lake Merritt in Oakland to welcome their Golden State Warriors back from a long-fought war.

After 103 battles, they were home victorious. Dub Nation, a crowd estimated at between 500,000 and 1 million people, gathered to see their heroes.

On June 19, people of all ages and from all over the Bay Area and beyond attended the Warriors Victory Parade in Oakland.

Sitting in a lawn chair and covered in a blanket was 48-year-old, Oakland native Deborah Nelson, a lifelong fan who arrived at 2 a.m. to claim some of the closest seats to the main stage.

"Look at where I'm sitting, I wouldn't change this for anything. I wouldn't change it for the world," Nelson said.

Not too far from Nelson stood Nathan Belete of Dallas. He flew in just for the parade and rally. Living 1,500 miles from Oakland,

Belete watched all of the Warriors games on TV through NBA League Pass.

"There's nothing like watching the team. I watched all the games at 9:30 p.m. and then watched the postgame interviews late at night," said Belete, who grew up in the Bay Area. "I'm always the only Warriors fan in Dallas."

The parade began at 10 a.m. with floats and double-decker buses cruising along the parade route in downtown. Warriors players and staff, and community members rode in the motorcade. They were joined by politicians including Rep. Nancy Pelosi, D-San Francisco; Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom, as well as Seattle Seahawks running back and Oakland native Marshawn Lynch.

The parade ended with finals MVP Andre Iguodala and Stephen Curry, the regular season MVP, hoisting the NBA championship trophy.

The Warriors' victory signified something more than a trophy. The whole Bay Area was gathered in Oakland with pride, knowing that "Oaktown" had something very positive to talk about.

"They said Oakland couldn't make it to anything big without something bad happening. We proved them wrong. Oakland did something this year. We are the champions," said Demarto Smith, a 28-year-old Oakland resident who watched the parade downtown with his family.

Once the parade arrived in front of the Kaiser Convention Center, Oakland Mayor Libby Schaff commenced the rally celebration with a speech acknowledging the team and the town.

Fans were antsy and anxious to finally see the players and coaches speak after listening to owners and politicians. Some fans interrupted the speeches chanting, "Stay in Oakland," referring to the team's pending move to San Francisco.

"The championship showed how proud we are as a city and that we deserve to keep the team," Deborah Nelson said.

After the long wait, head coach Steve Kerr headed toward the podium and humorously said in a short speech, "Somehow in nine months, I thought I had to teach Steph and Klay to shoot from far away and teach Bogut

how to be the best defensive center in the league."

Kerr later came back on the stage, this time in Draymond Green's arms. Green began his speech spraying the crowd with a bottle of champagne. He made the crowd laugh with his mild irreverence towards LeBron James and the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Highly-anticipated, Stephen Curry and his 2-year-old daughter Riley took the stage to finalize the rally and thank the fans.

"I can't say enough how important and beautiful it is to see all this blue and yellow out here supporting us," Curry said, "Thank you all of Dub Nation. We did it."

Toward the front of the crowd sat a group of Warriors staff including Jhyl Reid, who has worked for the Warriors for 25 seasons as a ticket sales representative and managed the luxury suites.

Following the team for so long, Reid said she felt a part of it. The feeling was mutual among 500,000 of her fellow Dub Nation citizens.

"I consider myself a champion," she said.

# Female tech leaders highlight ongoing need

BY MEGAN ROBALEWSKI

Mosaic Staff Writer

Sitting comfortably in a conference room at Intuit's Mountain View campus, Senior Product Manager Aruna Harder tells a story of how her mother, a longtime employee of IBM, intended to join her husband in an IBM retirees club, but was met with laughter as he explained to her that "there are no women in that group."

Years later, the younger Harder enjoys a career in the tech industry. But reflecting on her mother's experience reminds Harder that it has not always been a welcoming place for women.

Female computer scientists have long taken notice of their gender's lack of representation. A study by the American Association of University Women found that in computer and mathematical occupations, 26 percent of employees were women as of 2013, down from 35 percent in 1990.

The underrepresentation of women in the tech industry has prompted executives and employees in the field to encourage more female college graduates to pursue careers in the tech industry, citing diverse career options and the need for more role models.

Current female employees notice the scarcity, and many find it hard to ignore.

"I am still in meetings and I count the number of women there," Intuit software engineer Michelle Zhang said.

Intuit software engineering intern Julie Nergararian said she also finds herself doing the same thing, but that the workplace has become more inclusive.

"It's mostly guys but it doesn't feel exclusive. And I think that's changed a lot in recent years," Nergararian said.

Advocates say girls should be encouraged to pursue technology at an early age through programs such as Girls Who Code, which hosts summer immersion programs to teach computer programming to high school girls.

The organization partners with tech com-

panies and prepares girls to study computer science in college, by both teaching them technical skills and connecting them with guest speakers like Sheryl Sandberg, chief operating officer of Facebook.

Abhi Choudhri, who works at a small tech company in Palo Alto, says the presence of more female employees is vital for an inspiring, productive environment.

"If there were more women there would be more respect," Choudhri said.

Karen Peacock, a vice president and general manager at Intuit, strives to initiate a dialogue about women's roles in the tech industry.

"We as women can always help each other

# NBA shoots for Latino audience

BY TOMÁS ANTONIO MIER

Mosaic Staff Writer

The sounds of different voices and accents yelling “Waaaarriors” echoed in the field in front of Oakland’s Kaiser Convention Center on June 19 as fans waited for their team to celebrate Golden State’s first NBA title in 40 years.

Among the voices, families speaking in Spanish were heard in every corner of the city’s downtown. Mexicans, Peruvians and Puerto Ricans, all helped to fill the grassy area in front of Lake Merritt. Holding kids on their shoulders, the proud *papás* pointed out their favorite players.

“We’re champions baby after 40 years,” 47-year-old Pittsburgh resident Gonzalo Barajas said as he held his son Giovanni’s hand. “I didn’t want to miss this.”

Amaury Pi-González, a former Spanish announcer for the Warriors, says the team’s winning streak has boosted its Latino fan base.

“The team wins and suddenly the whole world is a fanatic,” he said.

But the team’s recent championship might not be the only reason why Latinos are more attracted to basketball. In 2010, the NBA launched a marketing campaign geared towards the Latino community, in order to increase the Latino viewership.

The initiative, called *éne-bé-a*, appears to be working. In the 2013-14 season, Hispanics aged 18-34 viewed an average of 390 minutes of NBA games, a growth of 14.4 percent compared with the 2003-04 season, according to Nielsen.com. Average time spent by African-Americans in the same age group was an average of 844 minutes. It was 290 minutes for whites.

The campaign features Spanish commercials on Latino sports channels such as Univision Deportes, ESPN Deportes and Fox Deportes. The NBA also sponsors “Noches Latinas” (Latino Nights) once a year when all teams wear special training shirts in Spanish recognizing Latinos. Eight out of the 30 NBA teams also wear special jerseys in Spanish like “Los Lakers” and “El Heat.”

Aside from Noche Latina and commercials, ESPN Deportes, ESPN’s affiliate Spanish channel, transmits 25 to 30 games and all of the finals games nationally and have new social media platforms.

Peruvian Warriors fan Fernando Orellana believes that the Spanish channels’ added coverage of the NBA has helped Latinos gravitate toward basketball.

“I have friends who only used to talk about soccer, and now they’ve started to talk more about basketball,” said Orellana, a Berkeley resident and long-time fan.

He believes the Warriors’ “old school” playing style has also influenced the Latino involvement.

“It’s the shooting and not so much of the slam dunk that attracts the Latinos the most,” he said. “If you see Latinos, because of height, we can’t slam dunk very much.”

For years, Hugo de Hoyos would invite his Latino friends to accompany him to watch games at Oracle Arena and no one wanted to go with him because Golden State wasn’t very good. Now, many of De Hoyos’ friends are begging for a ticket to any Warriors game.

De Hoyos, a Mexico native and Golden State Warriors season ticket holder, was one of the 15,000 fans at Oracle Arena for a watch party of the sixth game of the NBA Finals. He has followed the Warriors since 1989, long before the *éne-bé-a* campaign began. During the Warriors finals series against the Cleveland Cavaliers, De Hoyos watched all of the games live on ESPN Deportes.

“I prefer to watch games in Spanish because I want my kids to learn how to speak Spanish well. The rule at home is ‘no English,’” De Hoyos said.

Sakisa Sorrosa, the NBA Vice President of Marketing, said in an interview with the Latin Post that the NBA was the first U.S. professional sports league to sign a deal with a Spanish TV station back in 2000.

“Our research showed that many of our Hispanic viewers like to watch the game in English but still read about the game in Spanish. We use our websites, including social media platforms to connect with fans,” she said in the interview.

At the Warriors victory parade, Pi-González, who announced Golden State games in Spanish on Telemundo 48 back in 2000, transmitted live from the local Spanish network studios. He hopes Spanish game transmissions return to the Bay Area after the Warriors’ title this year.

“This is something positive for the Hispanics who live here. Sport unites all races,” he said.



A selfie with the Larry O'Brien NBA Championship Trophy. (David Early/Mosaic)



Fans yell themselves hoarse cheering their basketball heroes. (Rachel Lee/Mosaic)



The NBA champion Golden State Warriors are buried in confetti and streamers. (David Early/Mosaic)



Brittani Sippwebb shows her delight. (David Early/Mosaic)

## to close industry's gender gap

and we can be role models for each other in a number of different ways. I very much care about helping women know that they can be successful in whatever field they're passionate about, even if they're the only woman in the room,” Peacock said.

Zhang said the presence of female mentors promotes discussion about the benefits of inclusion and diversity within the industry, ultimately making it a more welcoming place.

“If people don’t push the issue, it won’t work itself out,” Zhang said.

Young women who excel in areas other than math and computer science can consider other careers within the industry

that involve creativity, collaboration and altruism. Jenn Tran, an Intuit interaction designer, researches the role of design in software development. She has no coding experience.

“I love the collaboration and working with people. I always loved working in the service industry and I still feel like I’m working in the service industry,” Tran said.

Peacock also believes that women should get involved in technical careers because they offer a wealth of opportunities.

“As an engineer, you can create products that make a difference in people’s lives every day. It’s incredibly satisfying to build something that other people use and love,”

Peacock said.

She encourages women who can’t find a place in the existing tech industry to carve out their own.

“You don’t have to do it in the way that the 10 men in front of you approached it. You can do it in a way that’s unique to you,” Peacock said.

“The world of opportunities around technical fields has blossomed. The things that you can do in coding now versus what you could do 20 years ago is a night-and-day difference. It’s become such an exciting field that a lot more people, both men and women, are going into technical fields. I love this job.”

**PAIN, FROM PAGE 1**

previously a middle school teacher, unemployed for eight years while Leanne's pain disorders hampered her passion for music. With no concrete cause or visual manifestation, both Miron's have faced a healthy amount of disbelief.

They are among over 125 million Americans who suffer from similarly invisible disabilities, according to the Invisible Disabilities Association, an organization that advocates for people with invisible illnesses.

Among her challenges, Leanne felt forced by teachers into writing with her debilitated hand. Peers questioned her capabilities during physical education class.

"At school when they would say 'it's all in your head' or 'you're making it up' or 'you don't have a right to express concern,' it was really demeaning. I felt like they were discounting it, because I wasn't making things up," Leanne said.

Both Leanne and Scott felt medical professionals accused them of overstating the degree of their pain.

"An otherwise healthy adult male, you're such a rarity that they refuse to believe the severity of the pain is as true as you say it is," Scott said.

Leanne was at the peak of her pain, in the hospital, when she encountered similar doubt.

"One orthopedist said to me 'you're doing this to yourself. You can control it. But someone acting and doing what my body was doing ... it's just not possible,'" Leanne said.

When the pain forced Leanne to use a wheelchair, the skepticism of her peers and teachers faded. People began fawning over her.

"It was like that defined me, when really

it was my first day in a wheelchair, suddenly everyone wanted to help. All eyes were on me; the pity was overwhelming," Leanne said, pausing before hesitantly adding that it was a "breath of fresh air" to have her condition treated seriously.

After a summer in an intensive pain management program, she was able to walk back to school. People rushed up to her, applauding "how great it was that she was all better now," although she was still in tremendous pain. Unable to practice her music, Leanne was deprived of her main emotional outlet.

"I couldn't focus, I couldn't play violin. I was just out of control, irrationally angry at myself. I put this guard up. I'd just sit there smiling, but then go home and not be able to move for hours because of the pain," Leanne said. "Even with my therapists, I wasn't able to let my guard down. I was just trying so hard to keep it there and not let it crack. I'd wonder if I really was being overdramatic."

Psychiatrist Maria Daehler attributes this visual orientation to habits developed during early childhood. She said parents educate young children on how to react to what they see in daily life, such as wheelchairs and casts, but not on ways to handle unseen illnesses like pain.

"When you see something visual, your memories are usually of people beyond yourself and you have something more concrete. Those are easier to connect to because you've learned about reacting to the visual markers before, so you can empathize," Daehler said. "When you hear that someone has chronic pain, the only way to empathize with it is to imagine that you have it yourself. And in order to do that, you have to remember your own memories of pain. But it's so



Leanne Miron plays violin, using music to help manage her stress. (Rachel Lee/Mosaic)

difficult for someone to recall their own experiences with pain that often times you will disconnect from their own memories of pain and tell the person that the pain is made up or in their head."

Invisible Illness Awareness Week was created around 2002 to educate the public on unseen illnesses such as chronic pain, but Daehler says more information needs to be dispersed.

"Awareness is being spread, and needs to be spread. Right now the taxpaying public marginalizes and mistrusts people with these conditions," Daehler said.

The ignorance-induced doubt set Leanne's focus on finding validation by fixing her disabilities. But as her father sought ways to deal with his pain, Leanne was inspired to

realize her own.

Scott discovered that being outdoors helped his migraines, and in August secured a position teaching farm science that includes tending to plums, vegetables, herbs, a sheep, a goat, and chickens at Ohlone Elementary School's farm in Palo Alto.

Leanne began accepting extra time on tests and assignments, and learned to practice violin more efficiently. Now, she is preparing to tour France with her youth orchestra.

Resolving her internal struggle has allowed her to move on.

"Mostly I just finally understood that invisible pain is just as real as visible pain."

## Local farmers: Feeling parched by record-breaking drought

BY KAITLYN WANG  
Mosaic Staff Writer

As the record-breaking drought in California is midway through its fourth year, local farmers are feeling the brunt of the lack of water.

Water has long been hailed as the cheaper, more accessible piece to maintaining gardens and farms. But what happens when the easiest part is now the hardest?

"If the drought continues into next year, the whole valley will be in big trouble," said Phil Cosentino of J & P Farms in San Jose. "The rest of this year will be OK. But if it continues, we will have sky-high prices."

Other farmers have already seen the effects.

"Profits have decreased," Uriel Gonzalez of Nuñez Organic Farm in Watsonville said on a recent Friday while selling his produce at the San Jose Downtown Farmers' Market. "What once was \$10,000 is now \$3,000 or \$4,000."

Nonetheless, the downtown San Jose Farmers' Market was as lively as ever the

morning of June 19. Fruits and vegetables were laid out on red tablecloths as Marsha Habib, the owner and farm manager of Oya Organics in Hollister, tended to customers.

"The apricots are smaller this year," she said, gesturing to the baskets of small orange fruit, "because we're dry farming."

As cities and counties cut back on water to meet the state-mandated water restrictions, farms without their own water source often have to turn to other alternatives. The agricultural water supply in Hollister is called blue-valve water. Regulated by San Benito County, blue-valve water receives much of its allocation from the federal Central Valley Project, which has now dried up for agricultural contractors.

Habib is forced to get her water from domestic wells, which are not designed to water farms. But with the water restrictions really crunching down, every bit of water counts.

Gov. Jerry Brown's April 2015 executive order to cut down urban water usage did not originally extend to farms. But on the federal level, farms that received water from the Central Valley Project no longer do. Water

allocations dropped from 50 percent in 2011 to zero percent in 2014.

"We were already restricted last year and even more so this year," Habib said.

Farmers do their share of cutting back on what and how much they are planting as well.

Lettuce needs to be watered more often, but with a smaller amount each time. Tomatoes, on the other hand, can go longer between each watering cycle but require more.

The drought has also played a role in what crops Habib plants. She tries to dry farm or not water the plants at all if possible. The tomatoes and the apricots, Habib said, have seen no water this season, but it also means that the produce is smaller and there is less of it.

"We are cutting back on what we are able to grow. Our farm in total is 12 acres; we are planting all 12, but we should be expanding. This year we would have planted 8 more acres, but we aren't. So essentially, we've cut down 8 acres of farm," Habib said.

Despite the scarcity of water and the cutting down of available produce, Habib says

she hasn't noticed produce prices rising.

"I'm kind of alarmed. We're running a huge risk. If something goes wrong with that well, we may not be able to fix it in a timely manner. It could cost us our livelihood if we don't have water," she said.

In Santa Clara County, many farms receive their water from wells and aquifers, and there is far less groundwater available now than in years previous.

"They're (the farmers) nervous and everyone's nervous," said Gary Kremen, a Santa Clara Valley Water District board member.

Smaller farms like Habib's are at a disadvantage because they are not able to move around looking for more water. As the Central Valley dries up, big farms are moving into places that still hold groundwater.

"Farmers are trying to do the best that we can with limited resources," Habib said. "It's not like we're fighting the cities for water, but we're all sharing the same limited resources, and farmers have to grow food for everyone."



At the San Pedro Square Farmers' Market, Marsha Habib says her apricots are noticeably smaller due to the drought. (Hannah Chebeleu/Mosaic)



(Hannah Chebeleu/Mosaic)

**BAGS, FROM PAGE 1**

items. In San Jose, the city's Environmental Services Department found a 40 percent to 50 percent reduction of litter as a result of banning single-use bags. The reduction of pollution was the fundamental effect that department director Kerrie Romanow wanted to see. The results of the bag ban were promising enough that Romanow cancelled a plan to substantially raise paper bag fees.

"The paper bags were supposed to move from 10 cents to 25 cents," Romanow said. "We chose to not change the paper bag prices to 25 cents because the community had adapted so easily."

Romanow said the ordinance was necessary to reduce litter in streets and creeks, decreasing danger to aquatic wildlife and leading to better water quality.

While Romanow and her department continue to promote the ban, groups like the American Progressive Bag Alliance remain opposed.

Phil Rozenski, alliance member and senior director of the retail plastic bag producer Novolex, believes the policy is ineffective in part because of lackluster consumer education.

"Whatever bag you're using, people need to know where you can recycle them," Rozenski said. "Everyone needs to have a choice with a bag they can use."

Most reusable bags are used three times before they are disposed, Rozenski said, adding that the litter reduction has been overstated.

"It is such a small factor that it is impossible that it will have a long term impact," Rozenski said.

Residents of San Jose seem to have adjusted well to the change. Many consumers already carry their backpacks around the city.

"I just usually remember (my bag)," said Allison Wilhelm, outside of a San Jose Safeway. "I didn't work hard to adjust."

# ONE MAN'S DAILY UPHILL CLIMB

## Nigerian native pushes cart through Silver Creek Hills for higher purpose

BY SARA ASHARY

Mosaic Staff Writer

In the Silver Creek Valley area of south San Jose, a middle-aged Nigerian man with strong, firm hands and clean, long fingernails can be found pushing a red shopping cart around the steep hills of the well-to-do community.

With determination, he does not stop for rest. He proudly looks down at his feet, making sure each long stride is as strong as the last.

His name is Sanni Lanre.

He pushes his cart vigorously up and down the hill every single day. He believes "God sent me here. He gave me this challenge to do."

He attends East Foothill Church. He became a born-again Christian when he was 20. Now 45, Lanre believes pushing the cart is his destiny. Throughout the years, he has been the subject of neighborhood gossip.

Resident Midhat Sohail said, "Before I used to think that he was a poor man in poverty. But then I saw him still pushing his cart in the pouring rain. That seems a little abnormal."

Another resident, who did not want to be identified, said, "I guess God gave him a mission to do, but I do not think he is doing anything useful with his time"

The hills Lanre walks are long and steep with miles of dry, golden colored grass.

Recently, Lanre held lengthy conversations while pushing a 50-pound-cart up a hill. He outpaced two teen reporters on assignment.

Lanre is a huge Golden State Warriors fan, a Republican, and a regular church-goer. He talks with politeness and tries not to make assumptions or judgments. He said he was a college student at Ambrose Alli University in Nigeria. He majored in chemistry until he dropped out.

Lanre claimed his father was a well-off Nigerian business owner before he died. Sanni's mother is a church worker. His two brothers are businessmen. He has not seen them since he moved here. His mother has visited him many times.

Sometimes he misses Nigeria, but he loves America. His favorite thing about America is freedom.

"When you go to all the other parts of the world, like Third World countries, then you can really value America at its best," he said.

To the neighborhood, Lanre is a curiosity.

Peter Ligeti, founder of Nextdoor for



Sanni Lanre pushes his shopping cart up Silver Creek Road next to traffic speeding toward a country club, (David Early/Mosaic)

Silver Creek Valley Country Club, a private social network, has stopped online discussion threads of Lanre many times.

"People were oddly injecting themselves in his life. They wanted to help him when the guy did not want any help," said Ligeti. "The best thing to do is to respect his privacy and give him peace."

There are questions how Lanre makes a living.

"God takes care of me," he said. "I see money on the floor sometimes. Recently, a man sent me money. Like thousands of dollars or something. And people are always offering things."

He is not homeless. Lanre rents a room in a home off of Coyote Road.

No matter what, he goes up and down the hill four to five times a day.

There were days he went up and down the hill eight to nine times. He has pushed the cart for 12 hours straight. Some nights, his journey begins at midnight. Most days he starts after 9 a.m. and completes his rounds by 5 p.m.

"The cart helps with the level of hard

work I need to do for God," he said. "Whatever I do, I am told by my holy master."

Lanre is aware that many people think he is homeless or psychotic. He does not mind.

Aaron Curtis, a preacher from East Foothill Church of Christ, described Lanre as a friendly, warm, open, and interesting man.

"Sanni is one of our most faithful and has a consistent presence in our congregation," said Curtis. "Whenever my 2-year-old daughter sees him, she yells, 'Tio Sanni!'"

When Curtis was asked if Lanre had a chance of being mentally ill, he said no.

"If anything," said Curtis, "it would just be the cultural gap."

Lanre puts it more plainly. "To do what I am doing, you have to be determined, hard working, or crazy."

A reporter asked him which one he is. "Determined," he said.

At the end of each day, Lanre routinely stops at Starbucks. Toward the end of the meeting, the barista at Starbucks asked two reporters if they went up the hill with him.

"Yes," they said.

"You guys are crazy," said the barista.

"Yeah," Lanre agreed. "They are actually the crazy ones!"



(David Early/Mosaic)

## Students seek boost from college prep centers

BY RUIWEN ADELE SHEN

Mosaic Staff Writer

Leena Yin was a 2013 valedictorian of Mission San Jose High School, among the most competitive in California and the United States. With a 4.0 GPA, she was the star of the Chamber Chorale and an officer of many clubs. She was involved in theater and debate, and took six AP tests.

And yet, the high-achieving Yin felt the need to get private college counseling to improve her chances at college admission.

"I felt like it would give me a competitive edge from my peers, and I trusted my parents to know best about the decision," said Yin.

California voters banned affirmative action in 1996, which meant that race or gender could no longer be taken into consideration for admissions to college. Yet some members of Asian communities, in spite of being accepted into colleges at higher rates than that of other ethnic groups, not only believe that racial quotas still exist, but that the bar is set higher for them. In trying to get a competitive edge, many are flocking to prep schools and college counselors.

"In the past four, five, six years, we've seen a measurable jump in interest," says Joon Moy of Elite Educational Institute, a test prep center with branches throughout California and abroad. "Most of our clients are Asian-American, which is not surprising given that this is Silicon Val-

ley-South Bay."

About 37 percent of students accepted to the University of California system in 2014 were Asian or Pacific Islander, even though they represented only 31 percent of 2014 applicants, according to the University of California Office of the President. By comparison, 27 percent of students accepted were white while they represented 28 percent of applicants. Latinos, which made up 3 percent of applicants, constituted 29 percent of students accepted.

Michele Siqueiros, president of the nonprofit organization Campaign for College Opportunity, says that some students do not even have the resources to eligibly apply for UCs and CSUs. The campaign lobbies for increased funding so that more students of all ethnicities and socioeconomic statuses can go to college.

"Three in ten Latino students have the A-to-G requirements (needed) to be eligible for UCs and CSUs. The other 70 percent cannot even apply. And Latinos are the largest minority group in California," Siqueiros said.

In spite of their acceptance rates, many Asian-Americans feel compelled to take prep classes.

"Because everyone does it, you are doing yourself a disservice if you don't," said Sarosh Vachha, a 2014 graduate of Mission San Jose High School currently at UC Davis.

Prep centers offer SAT, ACT, SAT II,

and AP tutoring. Most of them also offer college counseling to walk students through the application process, recommend activities that would polish their resumes, and advise them on which parts to highlight in their essays. Some centers even edit essays, a practice that some believe is controversial.

Many students who attended prep centers felt that the pressure comes not only from parents, but from the community at large—Asians who strongly value education and the overall competitive Silicon Valley ethos.

"The whole [prep school] industry is a response to a demand, and that demand arises from culture; then parents discuss among themselves, it becomes entrenched, and it propagates itself," says Raymond Liu, a 2013 alumnus of Mission San Jose High School and student at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "But I feel obligated to say that I don't blame parents for their actions; It's part of their culture, a deep-seated sense of duty and responsibility."

Many Asian-American students believe that their parents' immigrant values also drive the push toward prep centers. Immigrants come to America to succeed and, having little knowledge of this country's culture and customs, depend on education as an opportunity for social mobility. This is the reason why they are willing to spend thousands to polish their children's academic credentials. Taking an SAT sum-

mer prep class could range from \$800 to \$2,700.

"It's not an Asian thing though, using money to get ahead; in fact, it's a historically American thing... but the Asian definition of success is [generally] more narrow, no room for artists or musicians" says Yin.

"Having no prior information, [parents] just took safest route possible, which was to boost scores, focus on academics," said Allen Peng, who studies journalism and Asian/Pacific/American studies at New York University.

Families with enough resources rightfully do prep school, Siqueiros said, "but colleges should take care to measure the resiliency of a student, because they have vastly different starting points."

Some of those who start on the privileged side of the spectrum feel that prep classes and college counseling gave them an unfair advantage.

"We are paying for others' experience, for them to market us to colleges. The ethics of that are fundamentally wrong, like buying our way into better opportunities. College apps are a game played by everyone to frame themselves best, and this is not the only time we will do that," said Yin, a biology student at Stanford University. "But at the same time, sometimes I think 'do I even deserve to be here?'"

## Cheer athletics defy conventional wisdom

BY RUIWEN ADELE SHEN

Mosaic Staff Writer

When most people think of cheerleading, they think of girls with skirts and not of a tall, muscular guy with basketball shorts and a booming voice.

“Competitive cheerleading isn’t a weak, girly, or prissy sport,” said Cedric Bushnell, a former South Bay Elite cheerleader. “In high school, I dismissed competitive cheer because I thought it was pom-poms, or high school cheer. I was a football player, but all the girls on that competitive cheerleading team out-conditioned me.”

Competitive cheerleading, or all-star cheerleading, is a sport with more than 400,000 athletes in the United States. Although its name may evoke images of slim, pretty girls yelling from the sidelines, this branch of cheerleading is much more.

Competitive cheer routines consist of opening sequences that can be anything from a dance, a stunt, tumbling, or jumps. Cheerleaders, either flyers or bases, form pyramids where individual “stunts” join together into a complicated structure. A stunt requires balance and flexibility from the flyers and steadiness and strength from bases who lift and toss their partners high above their heads.

Tumbling requires the most skills. Round-offs, back handsprings, backflips, and layouts are considered necessary in most routines. Jumps consist of highly regulated arm positions, hands in fists, and pointed toes. Above all, cheerleaders must keep smiling, regardless of any sickness or injury.

When competition season rolls around, athletes are pushed to their limits, and often one mistake, like a shaky stunt, will knock them down ten places. Cheerleaders are judged on precise details: group tumbling and jumps must be in sync, transitions can’t be sloppy, smiles should not waver, stunts

## Abstract in a mall



The architecture of the Westfield San Francisco Centre, and its trademark spiral escalators, creates a dizzying pattern. The structure was built in 1991. (Esteban Barajas/Mosaic)

must not wobble, and formations must be clean.

“The workout is unlike anything else. I started out very interested in the acrobatic and stunting part of cheer, but the sense of teamwork and support and life skills you get is great too,” said Bushnell, currently a coach at California Allstars Livermore.

California Allstars has become a powerhouse in this sport since its founding in 2001 with the second highest record on world titles. Tannaz Emamjomeh and Jeff McQueen first started California Allstars by coaching about 12 girls in a San Marcos YMCA. They now have six locations throughout California, Nevada, and Arizona and is the number one competitive cheer program in California according to Varsity, the cheerleading regulation organization. California Allstars has become a cheer institution, harboring

“cheer-lebrities” like Gabi Butler and Kiara Nowlin and winning multiple Worlds and Summit championships.

The Emamjomeh sisters, Tannaz, Ranna, and Neda all graduated from the University of Louisville and each lead a different gym. Neda heads the California Allstars Livermore location, which has increased from 60 to 300 athletes since its founding in 2010. With four male coaches, including Bushnell, and two female coaches, they have twelve teams.

A team typically practices twice a week, with the coach leading them through a two-hour session of conditioning and routine run-throughs.

“If you say you need to stop, we’ll make you do three more and then let you stop,” Neda Emamjomeh is fond of telling the athletes.

Besides sportsmanship, California Allstars tries to instill leadership and discipline. Trainers designate no team captain, but instead encourage a community of athletes who support those who are struggling.

“Cheer is strictly a team sport that requires trust and a strong team bond,” said Brian Cotariu, one of the team dads. “The Cali staff helps you become a better athlete and helps you reach goals that you never thought possible.”

Some parents and cheerleaders agree this is what sets California Allstars apart.

“Cali isn’t focused on winning but on the wellbeing of athletes,” says Bushnell. “However, we understand that it takes training to get that discipline and progress, and winning comes as a result of a champion mindset.”

## Swim parents lauded in Olympians’ success

BY MEGAN ROBALEWSKI

Mosaic Staff Writer

From June 18 to June 21, spectators at the Santa Clara Grand Prix gathered to see swimming stars like Michael Phelps and Missy Franklin.

However, for many of the athletes, the real heroes of the event were their parents.

The invaluable role of parents inspired three-time Olympic gold medalist Rowdy Gaines to found Swim Today, an organization that encourages parents to get their children involved in competitive swimming.

Gaines, a Florida resident, says Swim Today encourages participation in swimming because of the values it brings to children like self-confidence, time management, and focus.

“Swimming changed my life,” Gaines said. “It taught me a lot of values I don’t think I would have ever learned.”

He added that because everyone swims in their own events, all participants in the sport can reap the benefits.

“No one sits on the bench in swimming,” Gaines said.

Swim Today hosted a session at the Grand Prix on June 20, speaking to parents about the benefits of a swim team, with appearances from Dick Franklin, father of four-time Olympic gold medalist Missy Franklin, and Pat Dwyer, father of gold



Three-time Olympic gold medalist Rowdy Gaines, left, interviews Dick Franklin (father of Olympian Missy Franklin), Pat Dwyer (father of three-time Olympic gold medalist Conor Dwyer) and local father Joseph Kim at the Santa Clara Grand Prix. (Esteban Barajas/Mosaic)

medalist Conor Dwyer.

The fathers voiced their satisfaction with the way the sport helped their children learn responsibility. Dwyer said children learn independence because “it’s the kid in the pool against themselves.”

Franklin, of Centennial, Colorado, and Dwyer, of Winnetka, Illinois, also shared parenting strategies that led their children to future success, both crediting a balance of allowing independence and offering sup-

port.

Franklin added that he never pushed Missy to train harder than she was comfortable with.

“It was about Missy enjoying it,” he said, adding that he allowed her to set her own pace because “intrinsic fun is the best motivator you’ll ever have.”

Missy’s early morning practices were hard on the family, but her father remained dedicated to helping her.

“It wasn’t about us,” he said.

Franklin’s dedication to his daughter paid off when she earned her first Olympic gold medal. His pride in her achievement, however, still came second to his pride in her hard work.

“It was surreal. We had no expectations. We were just delighted that she had made the Olympic team,” Franklin said.

Joseph Kim, a father of a 10-year-old boy who enjoys participating in competitive swimming, also said the sport has given his son a network of supportive friends.

Regina Gudzinskas, of Walnut Creek, brought up therapeutic benefits, saying that getting her son involved in swimming helped control his attention deficit hyperactive disorder. She also said swimming helps him manage excess energy and maintain focus.

After speaking with parents of swimmers, Gaines got in the water to give swim lessons to the children as many observed, including father of four John Corrigan. Corrigan’s children all participate in swimming, and he serves on the board of their swim club in Hollister.

Corrigan said his children also benefit from learning self-reliance and the value of individual achievement.

“I know what they’re like when they don’t swim,” he said. “And I like them better when they do swim.”

### RACIAL EQUITY, FROM PAGE 1

because they’re in the privileged category, said Tomás Jiménez, professor of sociology and comparative studies in race and ethnicity at Stanford University.

“You’ll see the advantages appear in income, access to good schools, political influence,” Jiménez said. People are often reluctant to voice their opinion on controversial issues, he said, because they are afraid they will say something wrong and “make the issue even worse.”

But to bring about change, “dialogue has to be conducted for greater understanding. Race is a touchy subject, but if you have a message to get across, you have to make that clear,” Jiménez said.

This is what Giwa was trying to accomplish by launching a “Social Inequality

Awareness” movement at her school last fall. However, she quickly felt shunned by school administrators.

“The school staff was neutral; they didn’t want to be seen as supporting a specific side,” Giwa said.

She managed to get many students to attend protests in San Francisco and Oakland and sign petitions for racial equality.

Jamie Kennerk, a white student who recently graduated from American High School, said she found the movement eye-opening.

“There’s a lot of ignorance in certain places. Just the concept that there could be power with a skin color blew my mind,” she said.

Giwa feels that she could have gotten

further with the movement had she been supported by her school administrators. She wanted to hold a Black Student Union rally in hopes of bringing more awareness to students but administrators shut down the idea.

Chris Fulton, activities director for American High School, said he “wouldn’t necessarily say a rally wasn’t allowed,” but he “talked to BSU about not doing it.”

“Having rallies at the school, in the traditional sense, are almost always entirely related to specific things such as homecoming and other prep rallies” he said. Fulton believes the rally wouldn’t be one to “represent everyone.”

Giwa, along with other students, took offense at the administration’s lack of support. As the school’s third smallest minority,

they felt they were the ones ultimately not supported — according to state data. African-Americans represent fewer than 6 percent of students on campus.

“The rally would have been a way of acknowledging the fact that there is a problem in society,” Giwa said. “We need more people in high positions to address a problem.... By being silent (school officials) were condoning the huge problems going on right now in America.”

Giwa believes it is sad that a tragedy had to happen for people to realize how harmful and racist the Confederate flag is, but its removal would be a step in the right direction.

“It should have been taken down a while ago, but the fact that they finally decided to take it down is big progress,” she said.

## FACES *of* STRUGGLE



Homeless Vietnam War veteran Michael Malick outside the Little Orchard Shelter in San Jose. (Esteban Barajas/Mosaic)

### *As county makes dent in South Bay homelessness, work remains*

**BY AYSHA REHMAN**  
*Mosaic Staff Writer*

The number of people living on the streets of Santa Clara County dropped 14 percent since 2013, the lowest the area has seen in a decade, according to a homeless census released this week.

The 2015 homeless count, which took place on Jan. 27 and 28 in the 15 cities and unincorporated areas of the county, recorded 6,556 homeless throughout the county. In San Jose, the numbers have dropped 15 percent since 2013. During the same two-year period, South County saw an increase of 344 homeless.

The homeless census data is collected by 335 volunteers along with employees working with the city and county. Community members also helped to recruit volunteers, and divided into groups of two. The teams went out and conducted surveys, and a mobile app was utilized to keep track of encampments and youth. Among the key findings it was noted that 63 percent reported being homeless for a year or more, an increase from 56 percent in 2013, and 71 percent were unsheltered.

Despite the county's achievements, some members of the homeless community are still frustrated with the lack of lodging. Vietnam veteran Michael Malick has gone between homeless encampments and the Boccardo Reception Center since 2007. Others like him have waited more than five years for affordable housing.

"I've been all over the United States, and I have

never ever seen it as bad as it is here," Malick said. "Homelessness in Santa Clara County is ridiculous. I was staying at this abandoned church. We shouldn't have been there, but I'm a homeless vet. It has a roof over it, it's safe, comfortable."

Being a veteran who served on the front lines, Malick says he feels neglected and that his situation echoes that of so many others on the streets.

"It's so expensive here," he said. "Property owners and landlords look down on us. (They say) we could be dangerous, we're hostile...It's tough."

County Supervisor Mike Wasserman says while efforts to combat homelessness are being made by local organizations, he still believes that more can be done to solve the problem.

"The overall decrease of 1,075 homeless is encouraging, but the data underscores the need for a regional approach to solving homelessness," Wasserman said in a news release. "Permanent housing is so important: it breaks the cycle of homeless moving from one encampment or city to another."

There are about 600 families with vouchers currently looking for housing in Santa Clara County, but the low vacancy rates and high rents keep them locked out of the market, county officials said. Between 2011 and 2014 the county housed 865 chronically homeless people. Over 4,000 temporary and permanent housing units are required to meet the immediate need to move unsheltered individuals and families off the streets. In San Jose, the average rent is \$2,829, according to Rent Jungle, an online rental search tool.

"There is nowhere near enough housing for us to put people into," said Claire Wagner, a spokeswoman for HomeFirst, an agency that provides shelter and housing for the homeless throughout the county. "It's a very bleak picture. In many cases, we get people vouchers, help them get connected to a source of income like Social Security or veterans benefits, and there is still no landlord that will take them. Most landlords don't want to deal with people who were homeless."

While the homeless numbers have declined, the demand for services is putting a strain on local organizations. At the Sacred Heart Community Service's pantry and clothes closet, there's always a long line, staff said. Families, single people and many children enter empty-handed but leave with packages and garbage bags full of household and personal items.

The pantry has seen a decrease in donations of both canned goods and prepared foods, said Teresa Ponikvar, the pantry's manager. There is also a shortage of hygiene items, and as a result the closet runs out of supplies more quickly.

Despite all of the improvements and efforts made to alleviate the homeless problem, there are still homeless people who feel their situations are not appreciated.

"We're all fighting and working to get better things," Malick said. "But veterans are second- or third-class citizens as far as I'm concerned."



Alicia Garcia Gomez spends her days at St. James Park in San Jose. (Rachel Lee/Mosaic)



Homeless people relax in St. James Park in San Jose. (Rachel Lee/Mosaic)



James Garcia has been homeless for two months. (Rachel Lee/Mosaic)



Michael Wilson, left, and Frank Mims, both homeless, recently forged a strong friendship. (Esteban Barajas/Mosaic)

## A 'CLEAN START'

## Tattoo removal program promotes second chances



Amanda Temores undergoes the removal of her wrist tattoos in San Jose. (David Early/ Mosaic)

BY JOELLE DONG  
Mosaic Staff Writer

On a late June evening, Jonathan Rodriguez thumbed at the rose emblazoned on his right forearm. The skin was peeling slightly and the tattoo had subtly faded.

As a participant in the Clean Slate Tattoo Removal Program, he just had his first removal treatment earlier that day. The program, run under the San Jose Mayor's Gang

Prevention Task Force, provides free tattoo removal for reformed youths, erasing gang-related and other visible tattoos that would prevent them from moving away from troubled lifestyles.

The program requires entrants be between the ages of 14 and 25, live a gang-free lifestyle, be working or in school, and be committed to completing community service and living-skills courses. But given its purpose, Clean Slate is flexible and understands human error: Dropouts are allowed one chance to re-enroll, provided they still meet the requirements.

"What's special about Clean Slate is that individuals are not only gaining that physical transformation, but they are also making some transformations internally, making better choices so they can have a better life," said Raúl Perez, Clean Slate program coordinator.

Rodriguez, a "reinstated" participant, grew up in San Jose with three younger sisters. His father left when he was young, and as a child, he didn't like spending time at home, so he would spend it on the streets. It began as riding bikes and playing football with the neighborhood kids, but as the kids got older, the activities grew into drugs, alcohol and gang activity. Rodriguez was in and out of Juvenile Hall and then jail. When his mother decided to move away from the gang scene, Rodriguez wasn't ready.

But then he saw his life for what it was.

"I got tired seeing the same people, same thing over and over. There's no point in it, no future. It's like a circle," Rodriguez said.

He became a father, and was ready to change. Now, Rodriguez lives in a halfway house, and is determined to stay on the outside for his 3-year-old daughter Kataya.

"I need to be there to protect her, to make sure she knows she's wanted," Rodriguez said.

The first time he enrolled in Clean Slate, his daughter's mother had just left him, and he struggled with alcohol. He wasn't prepared to commit to the program. But now Rodriguez has taken to religion, and with the encouragement of his pastor is ready to change. He's reconnected with his father, who now supports him in Clean Slate and school, and earned his high school diploma in June.

"Growing up, I always thought you should just put yourself on the line and try to help others," Rodriguez said.

He is currently training to be an Emergency Medical Technician at Mission College, and plans to join the military, which requires him to be free of any visible tattoos. Erasing the markings of his past is a large part of leaving it all behind.

"I regret every bit of it, but I just gotta let go and do better for the future, for my mom, my daughter and any future girl that I meet," Rodriguez said.

While the program focuses on removing gang-related tattoos, they will remove any that may prevent someone from progressing in life, Perez said.

Jessica Koenig, 25, is also a "reinstated" who was inspired to return because of her child. Koenig was first involved with Clean Slate when her husband discovered the program. She was pregnant and reluctant, not prepared to give up drugs. Her husband was

disqualified because of an arrest, and after having her baby, she started using drugs again and dropped out. Her son, Dylan, was 8 months old when he was placed in the custody of Child Protective Services.

"I didn't even realize he was gone," Koenig said.

Her son is now 2, and Koenig has completed a drug rehab program, received her high school diploma, and is working toward becoming a veterinarian. She said she feels removing the tattoos is an important part of her recovery.

"It all ties in together, I wouldn't do one thing without the other," Koenig said.

She said she has faced discrimination for her appearance professionally.

"When I go in and ask for an application, it's already a 'no,' because my tattoos are so visible. I feel it and I want to stop being stared at," Koenig said.

Amanda Temores, 28, like Rodriguez, grew up immersed in gang life.

"We have a big family and our parents were on drugs, so we kinda took care of ourselves. My older sister helped take care of us, and we just followed in her footsteps: a lot of fighting and gang activity," Temores said.

Temores was thoroughly immersed in the gang family, until a close friend was killed in high school. She scratched out her homemade gang tattoos and distanced herself from the group by focusing on school, eventually attending college on scholarships. Years later with a new marriage and a son, she is having four markings expunged from her skin.

"I like it. I feel like that part of my past is leaving, and now I don't have to look at them and they're not going to be a constant reminder," Temores said. "I've been through a lot, heard a lot; seen a lot. Done a lot. But I was able to get out."

## Bringing stories TO LIFE through murals



Muralist Mike Borja paints a tiger face late into the night in downtown San Jose. (Hannah Chebelevu/Mosaic)

BY AYSHA REHMAN  
Mosaic Staff Writer

On an otherwise mundane wall, local artist Mike Borja is completing a large mural of a tiger composed of several multicolored triangles. He's adding a splash of color and vibrancy, bringing life to a blank canvas at South First and East San Salvador streets in San Jose. As he paints the bright orange and red hues of the tiger, the mural slowly comes to life.

Borja has been working on the mural for about two weeks, adding to his vast collection of works, featured at galleries, ranging from 3D printed electrical sockets, to murals featuring fantastical animals and scenery.

This mural is located on the left exterior wall of the The Studio, an indoor climbing gym. Borja arrives to work around 2 p.m. and works long past sunset. Sometimes he receives help from fellow artists who stand alongside him and paint.

Borja's inspiration for the tiger mural dates back to his youth. It evokes memories of his stuffed tiger toy named Tigger. Many of Borja's artwork ideas are from personal experiences and dreams, but much of his work is based on what he gains from interacting with others. He likes to listen to the stories people tell, especially when something in his art sparks their

memory or a personal experience.

"This one guy came up to me and mentioned that tigers are lucky, and then other people say 'I love tigers' and you could just see the reaction of people," he said.

Borja, 32, doesn't usually have a specific focus when considering ideas for his work, instead he pursues ideas that stand out to him.

"When I get this 'aha' moment, it's like, eureka," Borja said. "Or I'm really spontaneous, that's my other way of doing it. I create a lot of things that I don't like, and then I just brush it aside, start on something new."

Borja teaches art in Los Altos at the Drawn2Art studio. He also shares a studio with three other artists and one musician in the Dream Daringly, Execute Fearlessly collective, based in San Jose.

He attended the Academy of Art in San Francisco in 2004 where he began studying computer arts. But he decided to try more physical forms of art, so he started painting in 2006. Since then, he's been on and off the art scene, taking a break from 2010 until recently.

Borja has done several group and solo shows at San Jose's Kaleid Gallery, and is one of 90 South Bay artists who has had their work showcased there. His artwork is both whimsical and dreamlike, said Donny Foley, manager of the gallery.

"His paintings bring a sense of adventure and a lot of wisdom to the audience," Foley said. "He uses symbolism that you need to really look for to notice, but his work is enjoyed by all ages."

Borja said those wishing to pursue art should focus on being creative instead of doubting their abilities.

"Just keep creating art, and if any fear comes into place, any fearful thoughts, pay attention to them but don't spend too much time thinking about [them]," Borja said. "Those are very wasteful thoughts, and the more you create, the better you get."

For Borja, art gives him a way of seeing his ideas come to life.

"Art is not work to me," he said. "I feel like being creative and creating art resonates around the community and it inspires people to make their own things. It's like putting your dreams and visions into something physical, whether it be a painting or martial arts."

