

**KGO-TV/ABC7**  
**SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA**  
**QUARTERLY LISTING OF COMMUNITY ISSUES AND**  
**RELATED PROGRAMMING**  
**FIRST QUARTER - January 1 - March 31, 2023**  
**REGULARLY SCHEDULED PROGRAMMING**

**During the first quarter of 2023, KGO-TV/ABC7 aired the following regularly scheduled local newscasts identified on air as “ABC7 News” with a total cumulative average of approximately 140 hours per month:**

**Monday – Friday      5:00-7:00AM**

ABC7 News Mornings- Anchored by Reggie Agui, Kumasi Aaron, Meteorologist Drew Tuma, Traffic anchor Jobina Fortson.

This morning news program provides viewers with late-breaking local, national, and international news, weather, traffic, health, financial and consumer news.

**Monday – Friday\*      11:00AM-12:00PM**

ABC7 News Midday Live- Anchored by Julian Glover, Kristen Sze, Meteorologist Drew Tuma.

This late morning news program provides viewers with late-breaking local, national, and international news, weather, health, and consumer news. Anchors conduct live or taped interviews with local newsmakers and discuss hot topics in the news of the day.

**Monday – Friday\*\*      3:00-3:30PM**

ABC7 News Getting Answers- Anchored by Kristen Sze.

This news program is a live interactive interview program in which viewers can submit questions to live newsmaker guests. Topics include Covid health, local politics, and community leaders.

**Monday – Friday      4:00-5:00PM**

ABC7 News at 4pm- Anchored by Larry Beil, Kristen Sze, Weather Spencer Christian and Meteorologists Sandhya Patel, Seven on Your Side Consumer Reporter Michael Finney.

This news program provides viewers with late-breaking local, national and international news, weather, health, technology and consumer news. Anchors conduct live interviews with local newsmakers on topics of daily interest.

**Monday – Friday      5:00-5:30PM**

ABC7 News at 5pm- Anchored by Dan Ashley, Ama Daetz, Meteorologist Sandhya Patel.

This news program provides viewers with late-breaking local, national, and international news, weather, health, technology, and consumer news.

**Monday – Friday 6:00-7:00PM**

ABC7 News at 6pm- Anchored by Dan Ashley, Ama Daetz, Meteorologist Sandhya Patel and Weather forecaster Spencer Christian, Sports Larry Beil. Seven on Your Side Consumer Reporter Michael Finney.

This news program provides viewers with late-breaking local, national and international news, weather, health, climate change, consumer news and sports.

**Monday – Friday 11:00-11:35PM**

ABC7 News at 11pm- Anchored by Dan Ashley, Ama Daetz, Meteorologist Sandhya Patel, Sports Larry Beil.

This news program provides viewers with late-breaking local, national and international news, weather and sports.

**Saturday & Sunday 11:00PM-12:00AM**

ABC7 News at 11pm- Anchored by Dion Lim, Weather Spencer Christian, Sports Chris Alvarez

This news program provides viewers with late-breaking local, national and international news, weather and sports.

**Saturday & Sunday 5:00-6:00AM / 6:00-7:00AM**

ABC7 News Mornings- Anchored by Liz Kreutz, Meteorologist Lisa Argen

This news program provides viewers with late-breaking local, national and international news, weather and sports.

**Saturday & Sunday 9:00AM-10:00AM**

ABC7 News Mornings- Anchored by Liz Kreutz, Meteorologist Lisa Argen

This news program provides viewers with late-breaking local, national and international news, weather and sports.

**Saturday & Sunday 5:00-5:30PM & 6:00-6:30PM**

ABC7 News at 5pm & 6pm- Anchored by Dion Lim, Weather Spencer Christian, Sports Chris Alvarez

This news program provides viewers with late-breaking local, national and international news, weather and sports.

***\*Titled- "Midday Live"***

***\*\*Titled- "Getting Answers"***

## **THE LOCALISH NETWORK- KGO-TV/ABC7 / 7.2 HD**

KGO-TV/ABC7's D2 sub-channel aired the "Localish Network" which broadcasts numerous half-hour programs covering a variety of topics featuring locally sourced yet nationally relevant stories such as Glam Lab, Bit Sized, Secretly Awesome, and Worth the Wait to name a few. The network also airs MORE IN COMMON, a program featuring inspiring stories of Americans who come together despite their differences, and ALL GOOD, a program highlighting the people making positive differences in their communities.

## **SEVEN ON YOUR SIDE**

Michael Finney headed KGO-TV/ABC7 consumer affairs unit that provided consumer information / product recalls during local 4:00PM and other ABC7 newscasts and provided investigations / resolutions during 6:00pm newscasts. Seven on Your Side consumer counselors answered letters, email and hotline telephone calls from viewers seeking help with a wide variety of consumer problems. The unit received over 4000 e-mails during the fourth quarter of 2022.

# Community Outreach Events

## 1st Quarter 2023

### **Allies in Action: Vicky Lynn**

KGO/ABC7 recognized Victoria (Vicky) Ho Lynn, founder and president of Angels for Humans, Animals and Nature, for her devotion to educating the public on animal and environmental welfare. The work of Lynn and AHAN seeks to find animals their “forever home,” even if it means across an ocean.

### **Allies in Action: Brandon Nicholson**

In celebration of Black History Month, KGO/ABC7 spotlighted the CEO of The Hidden Genius Project, Brandon Nicholson. The community organization connects young Black males with the skills, mentors and experiences they need to become high-performing entrepreneurs and technologists.

### **Allies in Action: Zara Babitzke**

For Women’s History Month, KGO/ABC7 honored Zara Babitzke, founder of Ambassadors of Hope and Opportunity Project (AHO). She says the Marin-based nonprofit is a calling of the heart, a safe place where at-risk young adults can find the support they need to overcome hardship and achieve their personal goals.

### **Alamo-Danville Newcomers Club: January 10**

KGO/ABC7’s Dan Ashley presented to the members of the Alamo-Danville Newcomers Club an inside look at television news. He described experiences reporting from the front lines of many major stories, as well as his work as a prominent philanthropist and recording artist and rock and roll singer.

### **Rock for Shelter: January 21**

KGO/ABC7’s Dan Ashley was the headline performer for Rock for Shelter, an evening of incredible music, fundraising and celebration in support of SHELTER, Inc.’s mission to prevent and end homelessness. Proceeds benefit Solano County-based services, including eviction prevention programs, housing at SHELTER Solano, a year-round shelter offering complete case management, rapid re-housing combined with supportive services, specialized programs for veterans, domestic violence survivors, disabled and re-entry populations, and permanent supporting housing in Vallejo.

### **Young Men’s Service League: January 29**

KGO/ABC7’s Sandhya Pate spoke at the Young Men’s Service League’s (YMSL) Crystal Springs Career Fair. Members of the nonprofit YMSL are moms and their teenage sons who volunteer together to serve local communities during their four years of high school.

### **San Francisco Unified School District: February 7**

KGO/ABC7's Mimi Kwan hosted students from SFUSD's Independence High School's media production class. The group visited the station's control room and watched the newscast live in the studio. The group also learned about multimedia journalism with KGO Streaming Presenter/Producer Karina Nova.

### **Be the Match Donor Drive: February 14-16**

KGO/ABC7 promoted the Be the Match Donor Drive at St. Mary's College of California and featured the "students as superheroes" adding more minority and multi-racial volunteers to the national bone marrow registry helping patients with blood cancers like leukemia, lymphoma and other life-threatening diseases.

### **Black Joy Parade: February 26**

KGO/ABC7 sponsored the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Black Joy Parade in Oakland with promotion, live coverage on the 7.2 channel and 24-7 stream, and an edited re-broadcast on 7.1 the following weekend. KGO's Jobina Fortson, Julian Glover, and Kumasi Aaron hosted the parade coverage, celebrating community, culture and the Black experience. The parade saw more than 10,000 attendees, 96 Black-led contingent groups, 164 Black-owned vendors, 14 stage performances and 163 volunteers.

### **Roots Fund Auction Gala: March 5**

KGO/ABC7's Kumasi Aaron volunteered as MC for The Roots Fund Auction Gala in New York City. Funds raised supports educational programs to nourish and enrich the lives of communities of color in the wine industry.

### **SFUSD Lincoln High School: March 10**

KGO/ABC7's Rick Rubin presented to the students of Abraham Lincoln High School's Digital Media Program. He took them through the history of KGO-TV and technology milestones, including the station's start in 1949 atop Mount Sutro. He compared the size of old gear to current multi-channel, digital and livestream capabilities and described the groundbreaking, social justice work of special programs like the award-winning Lowballed documentary.

### **San Mateo Union School District Career Expo: March 14**

KGO/ABC7's Mimi Kwan met with San Mateo Union High School District students/parents for the annual Career Expo. A cell phone camera, tripod, light, stick microphone and monitor were set up for an interactive activity. Students conducted mock interviews "on camera" and watched themselves on the monitor to review how they could improve their presentation skills.

### **Bay Area Furniture Bank: March 16**

KGO/ABC7 sponsored the Design Heroes Charity Event, benefiting Bay Area Furniture Bank (BAFB). KGO's Casey Pratt volunteered as MC. BAFB works to address the homelessness crisis, including providing furniture and household items to the formerly unhoused.

### **San Francisco Chamber of Commerce: March 22**

KGO/ABC7's Tracey Watkowski and Kristen Sze spoke on the "Meet the Press" panel at the San Francisco Standard at an event benefitting Leadership San Francisco (LSF). LSF is a program with the SF Chamber of Commerce dedicated to educating and developing community trustees who will make a significant contribution to strengthen and transform our community.

### **ICA Cristo Rey Academy: March 23**

KGO/ABC7's Jobina Fortson MC'd ICA Cristo Rey Academy's annual business lunch, which supports the work study program that KGO participates. This innovative program helps students earn a portion of their education cost, gain job experience and connect the importance of classroom learning with real services to a business.

### **Injecting Hope Community Screening: March 23**

KGO/ABC7 hosted a Community Screening of Tara Campbell's Injecting Hope documentary at the Tenderloin Museum in the neighborhood facing similar challenges of the drug overdose crisis and those caught in addiction. Tara moderated a powerful panel Q&A with two San Francisco Supervisors and local community leaders about the program, community concerns and possible solutions. It was a full house with standing room only.

### **Family Connections Centers: March 24**

KGO/ABC7's Gloria Rodriguez shared the "Magic of Storytelling" with preschool children at the Family Connections Centers' Excelsior location. Family Connections serves 1900 people each year through early childhood education, family support services, summer and afterschool programs and basic needs assistance. 90% of participants are low-income, 70% are English language learners, 98% are people of color, and 2/3 were born outside of the U.S. KGO, through Disney and First Book, has donated 2500 books to help Family Connections share the love of literacy.

### **National Coalition of 100 Black Women: March 24**

KGO/ABC7's Kumasi Aaron MC'd the Oakland/Bay Area Chapter's 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Madam CJ Walker Luncheon and Empowerment Forum. The event celebrates the first African American self-made millionaire who was a pioneer in business and community and honors her legacy by recognizing Black women in the community for their outstanding accomplishments.

### **Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, Chinese Historical Society of America: March 25**

KGO/ABC7's Dion Lim MC'd the Wong Kim Ark Day celebration marking the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in US v. Wong Kim Ark :: 169 U.S. 649 (1898) that the Constitutional guarantee that all persons born in the United States are citizens applied equally to Chinese Americans. The case is representative of Chinese American leadership in civil rights for all Americans.

# **PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS**

## **1st Quarter 2023**

- **Black History Month**
- **First Book, Magic of Storytelling**
- **Project Roadblock: drunk driving prevention**
- **Starlight Foundation**
- **Women's History Month**



***KGO-TV/ABC7 also airs syndicated programming on its main D1 channel that includes Children’s Core Programming as described in the Children’s 398 Report which is filed separately in the Public Inspection File.***

**\* \* \* \***

**In addition to the local news and public affairs programs described in this report, KGO-TV/ABC7 carries all of the ABC Television news & public affairs programs listed and described in the report filed as “Network Programming.”**

**\* \* \* \***

**KGO-TV/ABC7 applies feedback from the community in determining the key local issues, problems, and needs. Some of the station’s most significant treatments of these issues are described on the following pages:**

**CONSUMER PROTECTION**

**EDUCATION**

**HEALTH**

**CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT**

**ECONOMY & CHANGING WORKPLACE**

**RACE & SOCIAL JUSTICE**



# **CONSUMER PROTECTION**

**Tuesday, January 3, 2023**

**Here's a breakdown of what damage is covered (and not) by insurance in a major storm**

The Bay Area suffered a lot of damage after the New Year's Eve storm. There is a lot of damage, but fortunately much of the losses will be covered by insurance. In light of the upcoming Level 5 Storm arriving on Wednesday, 7 On Your Side's Michael Finney breaks down what damage will be covered by insurance and what damage won't in a major storm?

Let's start with your homeowners insurance. Most policies cover wind damage to your home. That includes a tree that falls. With water, it gets tricky. But here is the basic rule -- if water falls, it is covered. If water rises, it is not covered, unless you have flood insurance. So if your basement floods, your homeowners policy will probably not pay for the damage.

If your roof is damaged and rain gets in, you are most likely covered. Mold damage gets very complicated, so you should check your policy. Flooded cars are covered, but only if the owner carries comprehensive coverage. It is the same with a falling tree. If you have comprehensive coverage, you are most likely covered. Most newer cars have comprehensive coverage because finance companies require it for an auto loan. If your home, car, etc. suffered damage, take a lot of photos and document everything.

**How to find a contractor to fix storm damage**

**Wednesday, January 11, 2023**

Thousands of Californians suddenly have storm damage to their homes or businesses -- and they need repairs. But contractors may be overwhelmed, and fraudsters may be lurking. Fallen trees, smashed roofs, flooded rooms. Homeowners want to fix the damage as soon as possible... but state regulators say slow down before making big repairs. For homeowners across the Bay Area, waiting out the storms is just the beginning. "When a tree falls on someone's house, my heart goes to that poor homeowner, and where I hope we get a good contractor to get them back in their house," says Lisa Wittke Schaffner of the North Coast Builders Exchange. The next challenge is how to fix major damage to their homes. "Avoid rushing into repairs, no matter how badly they are needed," says Natalie Watmore of the Contractors State License Board.

The Contractors State License Board (CSLB) says folks may be so eager to fix the damage, they could fall into a trap. "Get at least three bids and avoid hiring the first contractor who comes along, especially if they're doing door to door," says Watmore. Predators often target victims in disaster zones, going door to

door, offering swift repairs. Some may be legit, others may be unqualified, unlicensed or unscrupulous. "They often say, 'Oh, I have leftover materials from another job I just did, do you want me to fix your driveway?' and they do a completely shoddy job. And it's really hard for the consumer to have any recourse," says Watmore. "You could give someone money, and then your job's not done right. And then chasing them down is a very scary place," says Wittke Schaffner. "If they don't have a website or a name on their truck, I would say probably your eyebrows need to go up a little bit."

Instead, consumer advocates say to find a licensed contractor for the type of work you need. The CSLB website has a complete list of those in your area. They also urge consumers to get all contract terms in writing, and show the contract to your insurance provider to make sure your policy will cover the work. Remember, by law, a contractor cannot charge you a down payment of more than 10 percent or \$1,000 dollars, whichever is lower. Also, the contractor may only take additional payments as the work progresses. "And do not sign a digital contract. Always ask for a written printed paper copy of the contract," advises Watmore. You may be worried about finding any contractor at all, with demand so high after the storms. But the CSLB does provide a list of all licensed contractors on their website.

### **Cash in your CA inflation relief cards ASAP before scammers get Wednesday, January 18, 2023**

As we've reported, millions of Californians received their Middle Class Tax Refunds on debit cards. Now, for the first time, the Franchise Tax Board is urging cardholders to withdraw the money off those cards as soon as possible -- due to the threat of fraud. It's a stunning turnabout. More than nine million debit cards have gone out, loaded with about \$5 billion of taxpayer money, one time payments meant for inflation relief. But hackers have taken a bite -- officials won't say how much -- but they are urging cardholders to cash in the cards before scammers do.

Tom Koerber of San Rafael and his husband received a \$700 debit card from the state to ease the pain of inflation. But when they tried to use it, they found the money was already gone. "The recorded message says, 'You have zero balance.' And I said, 'Oh, that's odd,' because we've never used it," Koerber said. "I thought, well, we've been hacked." Koerber was even more surprised to see where the thief spent his money. "All in Alabama. One at a Burlington Coat Factory, one at a Ross store, and one at a children's hospital in Alabama," he said. Elizabeth Webb of San Francisco never got to use her card either.

Someone drained the cash just days after she activated her card -- as it sat in her kitchen drawer. "We need to get boots, we want to get rain gear... I go to use the card, it says declined," Webb said. "Wiped out my complete card." She tried to report it to the debit card company, Money Network of Wisconsin. "Complete

waste of time," she said. "No matter what button you push it says, 'Due to the high volume of calls, we're not accepting calls, goodbye.'"

Tatiana Villeda of Hayward and her husband realized scammers had used the \$350 they had remaining on their \$1,050 debit card, spending it at a Marshalls store in Texas and a pizza place in Illinois. "And I'm like, wait, I'm in California, and never traveled to Texas," she said. Money Network tells fraud victims it will take up to 90 days to investigate their claims and decide whether to refund their money. "It's unsettling because it is our tax dollars that should be returned to us that we paid into," said Tom Koerber. "I mean, that's, that's millions of dollars of our money, we pay taxes, this is our money that we're getting back. But we're not getting it back," said Elizabeth Webb.

The Franchise Tax Board won't reveal how many taxpayers filed fraud claims, but said Money Network reports the fraud rate is less than 1% as required under its contract. And yet officials said in an email that cardholders should "withdraw their funds or transfer them to a bank account as soon as possible to reduce the threat of fraud." State Assemblyman Jim Patterson (R-Fresno) also is urging constituents to empty their debit cards immediately. "Apparently these fraudsters are able to drain these accounts without having the card in their possession," said Assemblyman Patterson.

"When you get the card, activate it and then go to the ATM, the bank and get all the money. If you wait between the time you activate and the time you use, the balance, it could be gone," he continued. It appears that activating the card opens it up for remote fraud -- that is, hacking the accounts online. And folks tell 7 On Your Side it's getting harder and harder to reach Money Network to dispute the transactions. If it happens to you, let us know about it. 7 On Your Side can help.

### **Here's what the tax deadline extension means for Californians** **Friday, January 20, 2023**

With all the rain, flooding and landslides, California has been through a lot. Because of that, the federal and state governments are giving most Californians until May 15 to do their taxes. CPA Larry Pon says there is more than just that. "So anything that would have been due from Jan. 8 to May 15, has been extended to May 15. So what does that mean?" Larry asks. "It covers the fourth quarter estimate payment, which is due on Jan. 17. In addition, some other deadlines that would have been April 18 are moved to May 15, such as funding your individual retirement account."

Who qualifies? All of those living in the following counties: Alameda, Colusa, Contra Costa, El Dorado, Fresno, Glenn, Humboldt, Kings, Lake, Los Angeles, Madera, Marin, Mariposa, Mendocino, Merced, Mono, Monterey, Napa, Orange, Placer, Riverside, Sacramento, San Benito, San Bernardino, San Diego, San

Francisco, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano, Sonoma, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Tulare, Ventura, Yolo, and Yuba counties.

"You don't have to be affected by the storms, the floods or whatever," Pon says. "So if you look at your map, it's all the coastal counties for sure, and all the big counties, you know San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, Santa Clara Santa Cruz especially, you know, all the big counties recovered." If your county has not been added to the list, Pon says it could be later, because of this report. "Stay tuned because once people see your graphic, once your graphic is on the screen, they're going to look and say, 'Wait a minute. I think they forgot me!' So we might get a further announcement from the IRS, saying, 'Oops, we missed someone or something like that,'" he says.

Now let's pivot over to the Middle Class Tax Refund. There is confusion on whether it will be taxed. Again Larry Pon: "We're waiting for clarification for the IRS to give us some guidance to finance, because in the tax community there's some that says, yes, there's some that says no."

#### **Thursday, February 2, 2023**

#### **Will you have to pay taxes on the Middle Class Tax Refund you received?**

About 16 million Californians received a Middle Class Tax Refund from the state in 2022-- a one-time gift meant to offset high gas prices and crippling inflation. But now, millions are finding out they may have to pay income taxes on those payments. 7 On Your Side's Michael Finney says the IRS may (or may not) take a chunk of your money. The state has been sending out 1099 tax forms to millions of Californians who got an inflation relief payment of \$600 or more. It means they must report the income to the IRS. However, the feds are still deciding whether to tax the payments or not. So, can you avoid the tax? It may be possible.

The Middle Class Tax Refund arrived at what seemed like just the right time, with gas prices hitting \$7 a gallon and grocery bills soaring, the state rushed out inflation relief payments. "We could use it for groceries," said Tom Koerber of San Rafael. "Christmas presents for our grandkids," said Don Brendel of San Francisco. Millions received payments ranging from \$200 per person to \$1,050 for families, but now the feds may take a bite. "It's going to be up to the IRS," said Norman Golden, an IRS enrolled agent. Yes, the IRS is still deciding whether or not you must pay taxes on your relief payment.

"I would hope and imagine that the IRS within the next month would come out with some ruling," said Golden. Golden says if the IRS believes the payments were meant for economic relief, they'd qualify for a tax break. "It has to be for the promotion of general welfare. It was at a time when it was going to counteract inflation, higher gas prices, which is part of inflation. So there's a very good

argument that it would qualify," said Golden. But there is no ruling yet, even as taxpayers are filing returns. Golden says the IRS may be reluctant to let go of potentially huge tax revenues. California spent more than \$9 billion on relief payments.

"You think of all the people in California that, that got this and you pick an average tax rate, that's going to be a lot of money that federal government is going to lose out on," said Golden. If you got a \$700 payment, for example, and you're in a 25% tax bracket, you would have to pay \$175 of your payment to the IRS. Golden says to report the income, but then ask to back it out -- citing the so-called "general welfare" exclusion. If you're denied, he says, be happy you get to keep the rest of the money. "Sometimes you just hate to say it, but throw in the towel and just say, 'Well, that's how it is,'" said Golden. The good news is, you do not have to pay state taxes on this income. Also, if your inflation relief payment was less than \$600, you won't get a 1099-MISC/ The IRS will not have a record of this income, though it is still reportable on your federal returns.

### **Tuesday, March 7, 2023**

#### **California lawmakers introduce suite of bills to disclose, cut back on 'junk fees'**

How would you like to save money when buying an event ticket or electric vehicle, or when renting a car or home? How? By knowing all the hidden fees and charges from the get-go, you will be able to comparison shop. A package of six bills being introduced in the California legislature would expose many hidden fees and restrict some add-on charges. State Senator Nancy Skinner (D-Berkeley) says, "These fees are making it too costly for many families to attend a concert, go to a sporting event take a vacation or stay at a hotel. That's not fair." Often fees are not disclosed until you are at the end of the online purchasing process and sometimes even at the end of the actual use. Some hotels have been accused of hiding fees until checkout. "The bottom line is, consumers deserve to know what they are paying for, how much and upfront," says CALPIRG's Sander Kushen. "It is that simple."

Assembly-member Marc Berman (D-Menlo Park) says his bill focuses on lodging fees: "We are not saying you have to eliminate the fees, you just have to be transparent about them, so hotels are free to charge cleaning fees, resort fees, destination fees, but have that in the upfront price so consumers would know when they are price shopping." The bills take on a lot of consumer gripes: tackling home rental fees, small businesses loan fee add-ons and stopping car dealers from charging more for an electric vehicle than the manufacturer's suggested retail price. "On some of these issues, there is a good change of bipartisan support," Robert Herrell from Consumer Federal of California told 7 On Your Side's Michael Finney. "The reality, Michael, is 85% of consumers have had this happen to them. If it hasn't happened you to you, it has happened to someone you know."

**Thursday, February 9, 2023**

**Target, customers being targeted by scammers, say feds**

Chances are you still have a few unspent gift cards sitting in a drawer somewhere. Here's a warning about gift cards purchased from a popular retailer. Amy Gac gets her internet service from Comcast. The Palo Alto resident received a call from someone offering her 50% off if she signed up for another two years. The catch? She would be required to pay for the next full year of service upfront. "I'm told you have to do this by gift card from Target -- that Comcast and Target had made a deal," said Gac.

The caller instructed her to go to a nearby Target store to purchase the cards. He told her if she did it within 100 minutes they would throw in a \$100 Visa gift card. She was suspicious, but decided to take the caller up on his offer. "So I really wanted to take advantage of the deal. And as my friend said I was money-drunk, meaning that I kind of wasn't thinking things through," she said. She purchased the Target cards and submitted her card ID and access codes as required. She would later learn the scammer immediately drained her cards of their funds.

Last year the Federal Trade Commission warned that Target gift cards had become the favorite for scammers. Target gift cards totaled \$35 million in payments to scammers -- two times more than any other brand of gift cards. "Before the card was even taken out of the wrapping, it was cashed out and spent at a Target store," said Eddie Dehdashti of San Francisco. He says his family has had trouble with gift cards purchased from Target at least twice. The latest when he purchased a \$200 gift card from Target for a friend. "When they tried to use it, there was nothing in it," said Dehdashti.

The FTC says scammers instruct their victims to purchase gift cards of any kind from Target more than any other retailer. "We take these crimes very seriously," Target spokesman Brian Harper Tibaldo told 7 On Your Side by email. "We have signs in our stores and share general safety tips with our team members so they can stay alert and help guests as best as they can." Target declined to help Gac recover her losses, but did agree to assist Dehdashti with a full refund. "I think they could let people know there are scams out there," said Gac. "I think they need to kind of review their gift card and their own card's purchases, refunds, some sort of audit to find out what's going on," said Dehdashti. 7 On Your Side has had numerous complaints about Target gift cards over the holidays and in most cases Target has declined to assist customers get their money back. Bottom line: if someone asks you to pay them with a gift card of any kind, think twice.

**Saturday, February 11, 2023**

**Bay Area legislator wants more consumer protection for cryptocurrency investors**

Should the wild, wild west be tamed? That's the question being asked in California about the crypto industry -- a financial sector that prides itself in being independent of most government regulators. But some want to change that. Patrick Duffy knows his numbers. The CPA decided recently to dip his toes into the crypto market. He's glad he moved slowly. "It went down, and it was going further down. So I said, 'Well, I think it's time to cut my losses,'" Duffy said. Duffy originally invested \$500. hat shrunk to \$230 in just nine months. He withdrew his money, but the company kept \$40. That's something he still doesn't understand. "I figured the ease of going in should be the ease of going out," Duffy said. Numerous others who contacted 7 On Your Side complained about the fees as well.

"Since the (January) 4th, I have not been able to withdrawal any funds," wrote one viewer. "The company support personnel are telling me that I have to pay a security deposit of 10% because my account's under review for fraudulent activity." Another wrote: "To take out \$1,000, \$10,000 or \$100,000 or \$300,000, I first have to pay them \$30,000 in advance." A new bill, Assembly Bill 39, from Assembly-member Tim Grayson of Concord, would require cryptocurrency companies to be licensed in California to do business here.

The bill is being supported by the Consumer Federation of California. "This is really an industry where it's sort of 'buyer beware' on steroids," said Robert Herrell, executive director of the Federation. New York in 2015 became the first in the nation to require crypto companies to get a license they call a "bitlicense." It declined to license the now-bankrupt FTX. "And literally when FTX collapsed, because of the protections that people in New York had, New Yorkers were better protected when FTX collapsed than California was," Herrell said.

Last year the legislature passed a similar licensing bill in California but Governor Newsom vetoed it, saying it would be too costly and the state should see what federal regulators do. Duffy disagrees and says more oversight is needed. "If they're regulated, at least the state can come in and say something to them. They can be audited. They can be looked at," he said. Overall, the cryptocurrency market lost \$2 trillion in 2022.

### **Saturday, March 4, 2023**

#### **ATM thieves use glue and 'tap' function to drain accounts at Chase Bank**

ATMs provide great convenience -- but they're also longtime targets of thieves. Some use skimmers to steal your account number, or stand nearby to rob customers. Now there's a new kind of ATM fraud -- and a warning to watch out if you use the "tap" function on your debit card. The tap feature uses radio waves to access your account -- no need to insert your card. But some Chase Bank customers say thieves used the tap feature plus some ordinary glue to steal their money. Pamela Bongiorno shows 7 On Your Side how she got scammed at this

ATM. "So I was using the ATM machine on the right hand side," she said. "My partner was here, the guy next to him was here. I inserted my card, it didn't work." Then, a man in line offered advice.

"Oh, if you have a chip in your card, you could tap it," Bongiorno said. So Bongiorno tapped her card. This time it worked. She got her cash, thanked the man and walked off. "And then the next morning I look at my bank account..." she said. To her shock, Bongiorno saw three more withdrawals from her account -- \$940 was gone. "I said to my partner, 'That guy scammed me last night,'" she said. The same thing happened to Rob Bell at the same ATM. When the card reader didn't work, a man leaned in. "I didn't think anything of it, I just thought he was using the ATM," Bell said. "There's a problem with the slot function. You have to use the tap function." So, Bell tapped his card, took his cash and walked off. Later he found two accounts had been drained -- \$560 gone.

Justin Sindelar tapped his Apple watch at that ATM, and withdrew \$40. Later, he found five more withdrawals in a row -- \$960 was gone. "Wait a second, I definitely did not withdraw that much money," he said. "I think someone walked up to the ATM right after I used it..." Victims complained to the bank manager. "I've reported this to the police, it's happening up and down Mission Street," Bongiorno said she was told. The manager told Bongiorno how the scam works - it starts with glue. "She told me that they put glue in the card reader of the ATM machines. So you can't, you can't use your card," she said. So customers tap their card instead -- and here's the trick. When you tap, the account remains open for more transactions, unless the customer proactively logs out.

Some customers don't know this. But scammers do. They wait for the victim to leave, then walk up and continue making withdrawals on their account. All three victims filed a fraud claim with Chase Bank. All three were denied. The bank said the customers authorized those withdrawals. "And that's definitely not true," said Sindelar. "I said, 'This is ridiculous,'" Bongiorno said. "Why would I do four separate transactions right in a row? Right?" "They should have a picture of who actually did," Bell said. Victims said Chase would not review surveillance video because the amounts were below \$5,000. So Bongiorno filed her claim again. And again, and again. Chase finally replaced her money. And after our inquiries, the bank refunded Sindelar and Bell, too.

Chase told 7 On Your Side: "When using an ATM, be vigilant in protecting your PIN number and making sure you have logged out of your account." "I will never use that little tap function again," Bongiorno said. Chase did not say why multiple withdrawals did not trigger a fraud alert, or why the bank did not review surveillance video -- but each transaction requires entering a PIN -- which the thieves had apparently captured. So always, cover the keypad, and log out before you walk away.

**Friday, March 10, 2023**



## **Taxes 2023: 7 On Your Side, experts answer viewer questions during live Tax Chat**

7 On Your Side and a team of tax experts from United Way Bay Area answered questions on Friday about changes to the tax law, new deductions, deadlines, and much more. United Way Bay Area's Free Tax Help can get your taxes done right by one of their experts for free! You may qualify for more than \$8,000 in refunds and earned income tax credits. Call 211 or visit [UWBA.org/taxhelp](http://UWBA.org/taxhelp) to get started today. Other experts helped out during the tax chat included the IRS, California Society of CPAs, and Golden Gate Society of Enrolled Agents. Read some of the viewer's questions answered by experts below.

**Question:** In November we moved into an apartment in SF and our leasing agent for Green Tree Property offered a promotion/gift of \$1500 for moving in, and now I received a 1099-MISC in amount of \$2000, is it right that the investment property reports what is a gift as an 1099 MISC taxable income?'

**Answer:** According to the tax code, all income received is taxable, unless there is a specific exclusion. Yes, the promotion you got is taxable and should be reported on Line 8z of Schedule 1, Form 1040.

**Question:** With the change in filing dates, does that impact due dates of estimated tax payments? Do they continue to be owed 4/15, 6/15, 9/15, and 1/15/24? Or is there a change to reflect new calculation dates?

**Answer:** Assuming you are in the 44 counties covered by the Winter Storm Relief in California, your 1st, 2nd, & 3rd quarter estimated payments can be paid by October 16, 2023 without penalty. Your 4th quarter payment is still due January 16, 2024.

**Question:** I would like to know if I can add my parents as dependents as they are both on Social Security and do not file taxes.

**Answer:** You can claim your parents as dependents if they meet the following conditions: No earned income Gross income limit for 2022 is \$4,400 Generally Social Security Income is not counted You provide over of their support If so, they can be claimed as dependents. The Other Dependent credit is \$500/person. You will also be able to include their medical expenses on your tax return.

**Question:** Hi, I recently started my own business. I still work for my former company, part time, that was destroyed by the pandemic. Are there any concerns or "Red Flags", I should be concerned about, when filing both sources of incomes ? W9 vs 1099 vs taxed income? I have been with my company for 30 years and this is all new to me.

**Answer:** Reporting self-employed income along with W2 income raises no red flags as it is pretty common in this gig economy. If you receive 1099s, you should keep a record of your expenses to report on a schedule C. If there are no expenses, schedule C is not required.

**Question:** My credit union loan was secured with transfer from savings into a certificate. When the loan was PIF, I cashed in the certificate. Is the earned interest on the certificate just interest or capital gains?

**Answer:** The interest income will be taxed as interest income. This will be reported on Form 1099-INT.

**Question:** I received EDD benefits in 2021 for which I paid taxes. In 2022, EDD claimed they were not suppose to have paid me for a week and deducted the amount from my 2022 EDD benefits. I am still awaiting a hearing to dispute their claim. How do I report the money that was deducted in 2022 but had already paid taxes on in 2021?

**Answer:** I would ask EDD if they will report the deduction in 2022, if so, there is no need to amend 2021. 2022 income would just be lower by the 2021 amount you paid back.

**Question:** Hi what tax deductions are available for head of household that owns a home and uses a room for an office for work from home? Also I did purchase some equipment to print/design items for sale but didn't really get around to putting it up online for sale. Can I still claim that? Just trying to minimize my tax liability. Last year I had to pay 17k total for state and federal due to withdrawing from my 403b to for a down payment to purchase a home. It was considered taxable income and totaled with my w-2 income. Please let me know what deductions can help me save money.

**Answer:** As a home-owner who itemizes you can deduct interest on your mortgage and property taxes paid during the year. For a home office, expenses are only deductible if you are self-employed. Unfortunately, there are no home-office deductions for W2 employees. Based on your income, you could qualify for the Child tax credit. If you start your print/design business, then you would be considered a self-employed individual and can report income and expenses on Sch C. There are hobby rules to be considered. I would suggest you find a tax professional.

**Question:** Is E- filing tax return safe? There's a lot of stories about hackers.

**Answer:** E-filing is much more efficient than filing on paper. As long as you use a reputable vendor, it is very safe and quick. If you use a tax professional, the IRS requires strict cybersecurity standards we need to implement.

**Question:** What are some common mistakes young adults make when filing their own taxes for the first time?

**Answer:** In my opinion, one of the biggest mistakes some young adults make is not filing their tax return because their income is below the filing requirement but then failing to recuperate their withholding in form of a refund. The second mistake is not getting on the same page with their parents about being claimed as a dependent.

**Question:** I am aware of the IRS and FTB extensions for counties affected by recent storms. Can you advise if the FBAR filing which is separate from the 8938 has also been extended from its usual 4-15 due date and what is the new date for the FBAR? Thank you.

**Answer:** There has been no guidance regarding an FBAR filing extension, so we can assume the deadline is still April 15 given that it is filed with a different entity.

**Question:** Has the tax filing deadline for the IRS and the FTB been delayed to Oct 16, 2023 for ALL people in the CA 'disaster area' (which is all of the Bay Area and most of CA) -- even if you WEREN'T that affected by the winter storms? Or do we have to prove/show that we were 'affected' by the winter storms somehow?

**Answer:** The extension applies for all California counties, except Imperial, Kern, Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, Shasta and Sierra. You do not need to prove you were affected by the storms and the extension is automatic.

**Question:** With W2 deadlines looming over employers, what if the W2 you received is in correct? My previous employer has issued W2 via ADP payroll company. I started to work on my 2022 taxes and to my surprise they failed to list the employers 'state' identification number for filing my state taxes. I called the California tax board and they were no help. I have tried to reach the employer but he's not responding. I don't know what to do or who to turn to. I thought maybe Michael can help me?

**Answer:** Try using six nines (999999) for the state identification number.

**Question:** I'm Michelle, a 60 y/o woman, married with no minor children. I own a primary residence in my name only. My spouse and I are thinking of selling the house and retiring in the next 1-3 years. Question 1) What actions are required to qualify for the \$500k married deduction of the capital gains tax from selling the home? Does my spouse need to be on the mortgage? Question 2) Should I create a trust? Will the tax benefits be the same if the house is sold and proceeds go to the trust? Do you recommend any helpful books or trust advisors who charge by the hour or on a sliding scale?

**Answer:** The requirements for you to qualify for the \$500k capital gains exclusion is to live in the property for two years out of the last 5 years prior to the sale date. Your husband does not need to be on the mortgage. Trusts are an estate planning tool, not a tax sheltering tool. Trusts are a very complex topic and we recommend you find a professional to assist you.

**Question:** I realize we in the Bay Area can wait to file our taxes until October. Question: Does this mean that if you owe taxes you can wait until then and NOT accrue interest or penalties on that money? Will this apply to the State as well as the Federal Govt?

**Answer:** Yes, the extension applies for filing and payments without penalties or interest.

**Question:** I purchased a 2023 Chevrolet Bolt EUV on November 11, 2022-the day the car hit the lot. My turbo tax said Chevrolet vehicles do not qualify for any part of the Federal Electric Vehicle Tax Credit. I know that the rules changed in the fall under the inflation reduction act. Can I get any credit at all?

**Answer:** The Inflation Reduction Act was signed by President Biden on August 16, 2022 which made substantial changes to the Electric Vehicle Credits. Since your vehicle is manufactured by General Motors, there are no EV credits because GM exceeded the 200,000 EV vehicle limit.

**Question:** Will a married couple get more of a refund if they file jointly or separately?

**Answer:** It depends on your income, but married filing separately requires more knowledge of community property state tax law. Incomes over \$1M could benefit more from MFS.

**Question:** If I received the Golden state stimulus check do I still need to report it on my taxes even though both the IRS and the state of California did it is not going to be taxed ? I'm preparing my taxes myself and i don't know how to report the income from the stimulus and then get it to not be applied as part of my income. But I did read somewhere that an enrolled agent said it needs to be reported. Thank you for any help you have on this issue.

**Answer:** If you received a 1099-MISC from CA, we recommend that you report it to avoid any IRS notices created by the automatic system due to the matching principle. You can report the income on Schedule 1 line 9 and back it out on line 8z.

**Question:** Do I still need to prepare and pay my taxes before the extension date expires? Because of the special emergency declared areas in the Bay Area I understand we don't have to file an extension and returns aren't due until November. But if we owe do we have to pay now?

**Answer:** The extension is until Oct 16, 2023. It is automatic and it applies for filing and payments.

**Question:** I received a 1099 indicating I was sent a middle class refund from California. Problem is I never received the refund. Do I report this as income even though it wasn't received? How can I find out where my refund is? Thank you.

**Answer:** We recommend reaching out to the Franchise Tax Board to find your payment. The Middle Class Tax Refund is not taxable for the IRS or CA.

**Question:** Did I hear that if you filed with a Standard Deduction you can still add Charitable Contributions also?

**Answer:** No, this did not get renewed for 2022. This only applied to 2020 and 2021 as part of the Covid tax relief legislations.

**Question:** 2021 state taxes said I owed them \$7000. Fearing the worst, I paid it. Come to find out they owed me \$120. I have been calling and they sent me an unreadable copy of the tax return. I have yet to get my \$7000 + 120 returned. Can you help me? Thank you.

**Answer:** Unfortunately, the only ones who can answer that question is the Franchise Tax Board. You could hire a professional and sign a POA so they call and resolve it on your behalf.

## **Education**

**Friday, January 13, 2023**

### **OUSD board votes to keep 5 schools open, rescinding previous plan for closures**

On Wednesday, the newly elected Oakland Unified School Board voted to rescind the planned closure of five schools. This comes after the district's financial shortfall initially prompted the district to begin closing and merging schools in early 2022. The school board's vote to rescind school closures in Oakland was based on a statement in the resolution stating that read: "OUSD is not in financial crisis -- there is a healthy fund balance and the District is projecting budget surpluses on all years of the multiyear plan."

There is some truth to that. Oakland Unified has one-time monies from the state and could cover the cost of keeping those schools open. But the funds are expected to eventually run out. In May 2022, ABC7 interviewed former board member Shanthy Gonzales. "The County Office of Education has been quite, and the state have been quite clear that we cannot continue to use one-time funds to pay for ongoing operating expenses of the district," Gonzales said.

On the other hand, Oakland Unified is expected to finally pay off the \$60 million loan received 20 years ago by the state and that puts them in a better financial position. But in order to get out of receivership, not only do they have to pay off that debt, but they have to demonstrate that they are being fiscally responsible. Mike Hutchinson presented the resolution. "We had already budgeted money for what we were calling 'welcoming schools' that would absorb student from the closed schools. Within the resolution that we past yesterday, it gives us the option to reallocate that money to offset any added costs that rescinding the closures might bring," Hutchinson said. Oakland will have to rely on enrollment, which continues to decline.

In her report, the Superintendent projects that next year, 2023-2024, Oakland Unified will see 458 fewer students. Without students, the district gets less money from the state. "The way we increase enrollment and increase attendance is by supporting our neighborhood schools and making them the best schools that we can," Hutchinson said. But when it came to last night's vote, you can say

that the board put "the cart before the horse" -- voting without ever seeing a fiscal impact analysis, which is always required before a vote of this nature. Here's the explanation: "It is not possible to finalize the analysis on such short notice (less than a day) and so staff will publish its analysis on Jan. 25, 2023."

**Tuesday, January 31, 2023 11:41PM**

### **SJSU's new president starts role after previous school leader resigned during investigation**

San Jose State University's new president is getting to work and with that comes stability for the school. She's the first president since the previous leader resigned as federal officials investigated the school for sexual harassment allegations. Now both the new president and the student body say they're ready for a new era. Dr. Cynthia Teniente-Matson was announced as the new president in November of 2022, she started on the job January 16, 2023. "I'm really proud to be leading the oldest university on the west," Dr. Teniente-Matson said, "A university with so much rich history and great alumni. Teniente-Matson comes to SJSU from Texas A&M University-San Antonio where she served as president. Her new role at San Jose State marks a return to the CSU system, having served as a vice president at Fresno State for more than a decade between 2004 - 2015. The new president saying she has big goals for SJSU especially as it continues to recover from the pandemic. "What does education look like in 2023 and beyond?" the president said of the goals moving forward, "What are the degrees that we need to be offering? What are the experiences that students need to have?"

Teniente-Matson says continuing to grow San Jose State's enrollment will also be a priority along with affordable housing solutions for students and better connecting to the business and nonprofit worlds. Since December of 2021 the university has had an interim president. That's when former President Dr. Mary Papazian resigned in the wake of the sexual harassment investigation of the school by the Department of Justice and US Attorney's office. A dark time the university is still coping with. "I'm meeting with students, talking with students and I think my predecessors have expressed deep sorrow and regret for what happened," Dr. Teniente-Matson said, "I wasn't here then, so my intent is to lead forward with the sole purpose and intention of ensuring every student is safe and secure, feels comfortable, reaching out for resources can share experiences. We've put a lot of practices in place to mitigate anything like this ever happening again."

We spoke with students about what they're hoping for in the new president, especially in the wake of the investigation. The one common ask is accessibility. "Having that important face as being a president you kind of have to show your students that you're there with good intent," said SJSU student Yasmine Villas, "To kind of make sure that you're not letting things happen, like that sexual assault." Student Naomi Ong adding: "Making sure that she's easily accessible

to everyone on campus is definitely really important and I hope that she's able to directly communicate that she will be ready for anyone." Teniente-Matson says she's ready to meet those needs. "Look for me," she says to students, "Look for me on campus, reach out to me on social media, I look forward to connecting with you."

**Friday, February 10, 2023**

### **Bay Area education nonprofit wants every student to have a Black male teacher**

If you close your eyes and envision a teacher or even a teacher that you had growing up, do you visualize a Black man? Statistically speaking, your answer is likely no. According to the Stanford Graduate School of Education, only 2% of America's teachers are Black men. The National Education Association had confirmed that bleak number as well. "There's all kinds of data that suggests, especially for our Black boys in particular, but for our students of color, that if you have teachers that look like them as early as possible, there's all kinds of gains that they have," Jason Muse, a first-grade teacher at George Washington Carver Elementary School in San Francisco, said. "It has all kinds of implications for the achievement gap and then subsequently, wealth gaps, things like that. Education is key to you being able to actualize yourself and life."

In addition to teaching first grade, Muse is a Man the Bay fellow through Urban Ed Academy, an education nonprofit. Urban Ed Academy was originally founded as a Saturday school to match young boys of color to mentors who look like them. Man the Bay is taking that mission a step further. The cohort's goal is for every student to have a Black male teacher before sixth grade and provide those Black male teachers with wraparound training and support. "I was deprived of a Black male teacher my entire education until college," Muse continued. "I went to UCLA and I actively sought that out. It was an African American Studies class that I didn't even need for my major." Randy Seriguchi is the executive director of Urban Ed Academy. He says Man the Bay has 18 fellows between the San Francisco and Oakland Public School Districts and heavily recruits from Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

"In order to make it even possible for them to participate as teachers, we have to anchor in a different type of teacher benefit package and for us that meant attacking housing," Seriguchi said. Urban Ed Academy covers all professional and living expenses for fellows while they go through the four-year program. "Those stresses distract from attentiveness to the kinds of things that you need to worry about in the classroom," Muse went on. "Is my lesson plan thorough so that I can maximize gains for my students? Am I paying attention to which students are falling behind and which students aren't? Am I managing behavior in a way that's conducive to the social-emotional development of the students?" Muse continued. "All of those things play a role in maximizing what we can do in the classroom. I think what has been a godsend from Urban Ed is they're like,

'You know what, don't worry about your rent, don't worry about utilities, don't worry about those kinds of things. Bring your best self to work every day.'" So, how does a nonprofit pull off free rent in one of the most expensive regions in the world? "A little ingenuity, creativity, but most importantly collaboration with big time partners starting with Black homeowners and Black property owners," Seriguchi responded.

Urban Ed Academy's strategy is to employ Black spending power and keep Black property owners in the community. "As expensive as housing is here in the Bay Area, forecasting out how much we're going to spend, we know whoever we partner with is going to get a good chunk of change," Seriguchi said. "We've been intentional, very blessed, but intentional that the spending power on our side rests with Black folks was number one. There's of course conversations at the state level around reparations, this was our small way in playing a part in that." A building that sits along 3rd Street in Hunter's Point has been in Martin Luther McCoy's family since the 70's. At one time, his father employed hundreds of Black San Franciscans out of the building through a patrolling company. "My father was often asked why he had this office in this neighborhood and one of his strongest responses that I often remembered was, "If we don't work for and hire each other, then who will?" There's an office work space downstairs and four educators live upstairs in McCoy's building.

They share the property with another non-profit. Muse lives at a different building just minutes from his school and in the same neighborhood as many of his students. "From extracurricular activities, to seeing them in community centers, to seeing them at church on Sunday," Muse went on. "To getting involved at the local YMCA, or whatever it is, right? Your students can see you as a full person." Muse's students even know he's a DJ on the side. 1st graders Juelz and Rocky explained to ABC7 News anchor Jobina Fortson that their teacher knows their favorite songs and that they enjoy learning reading and math in class. When asked if Muse looked like he could be family, Rocky replied, "yes."

When asked why he said, "Because we have the same skin color." According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, when Black students have at least one Black teacher by third grade, they're 13% more likely to enroll in college. Two Black teachers? 32% more likely. For low-income Black boys, their on-time high school graduation rate climbs by almost 40%. Man the Bay fellows were the only Black men enrolled in SFUSD's credentialing cohort for the 2020-2021 school year. Unlike most Man the Bay fellows who come directly from undergrad, Muse has been teaching for over a decade. "The conditions of the pandemic have actually made it really difficult for a lot of teachers," Muse said. "A lot of teachers actually left and I was considering it, but this opportunity allowed me to kind of stay where I was in education." It's clear Muse is needed right where he is. To learn more about Urban Ed Academy or the Man the Bay program, please visit [urbanedacademy.org](http://urbanedacademy.org).



## **SJSU aims to increase number of Black engineers to help create diverse, worldwide solutions**

**Thursday, February 16, 2023**

Despite strides to increase diversity in our country, the Black community's representation in the field of engineering falls way behind. During Black History Month, San Jose State University hopes to build this group on campus in the hopes that they can find solutions for the Bay Area and the world. Black history surrounds the San Jose State University campus. The John Carlos and Tommie Smith statues, the Martin Luther King Jr. Library and, on display this week, the faces of prominent Black engineers in Silicon Valley and beyond.

It's a group that SJSU Biomedical Engineering Associate Professor Folarin Erogbogbo wants to grow.

"We focused on diversity in Silicon Valley for a long time," Erogbogbo said. "San Jose State University is one of the most diverse institutions on the planet and Silicon Valley is very diverse. However, we forget about the people on the margins." The reality is that, as of 2021, only 5% of all engineers in the U.S. are Black. The Black Alliance of Scientists and Engineers at SJSU has helped Black students connect to professionals in the engineering field since 1977 and continues to do so.

Alliance mentor Prof. Erogbogbo actively works to increase the number of Black engineers by connecting SJSU engineering students with professional engineers in Silicon Valley and across the United State. But even with these efforts on the diverse San Jose State campus, engineering graduate Quinten Long says very few of his classmates looked like him. "As you get down into the requirements, the students and the numbers kind of drop significantly and you start seeing the same faces over and over again," Long said. "And of those faces, not a lot of them were African American, maybe there were one or two." SJSU prides themselves in placing their College of Engineering students into Silicon Valley and Long is an example of that.

The San Jose native works as an electrical engineer in the South Bay and was named the BEYA STEM Black Engineer of the Year for 2023. Representation matters and Long hopes others like him can help create solutions for everyone. "Engineering is all about solving problems," Long said. "You don't want one person solving a problem. You want a group of people solving a problem, because someone is always going to have different perspective or outlook of what you want and how you see the answer coming about." So to solve the lack of diversity issue in engineering, through events like the one on campus this week and "The Black Engineering Week: Closing the Digital Divide" in June, SJSU hopes students can learn to project themselves onto these men and women and be the next success story.

"We want people to have an avenue to be able to come to San Jose as one of the premiere institutions that caters to Black students and allows them to transition to Silicon Valley," Erogbogbo said. Because solving the world's problems takes all of us.

### **Wednesday, February 8, 2023**

#### **San Francisco 5th graders test out their skills as news reporters**

Fifth graders at St. Anthony Immaculate Conception School in San Francisco's Mission District recently had a chance to learn about news reporting. ABC7 News reporter J.R. Stone visited their school and gave them a chance to report inside their classroom. Some talked about soccer and football, others brought up Roblox games, and some asked their classmates about Kim Kardashian. Talking to kids about being a reporter or newscaster is fun, but letting them do it themselves is even better.

"Hi, I'm Edwin Hernandez!" "My name is Valentina Ramirez." "I'm Scarlett Quintero." "I'm Edward Vega from ABC Channel News!" "I love rain because you can play in it," said Hernandez. This is the first time that many of these kids have ever held what we call in the biz, a stick mic. And it didn't always go perfectly. "My name is Ashley and I'm reporting," is what one student said as we recommended she hold the microphone a little closer to her mouth.

With practice, the 5th graders in Ms. Cristina Flores's class did loosen up. Ashley even told us her favorite part of the classroom. "The library right here," she said. And we quickly learned that each student here truly has an imagination of their own. "I'm Jean Carlos Santos and I like Roblox because there are millions of games, maybe even billions but who knows." "My favorite YouTuber is SniperWolf. My favorite videos is when she talks about TikTok." "I'm reporting on the book series 'Heroes of Olympus.' One reason why I like the book series Heroes of Olympus is because I like Greek mythology in general," said one student. Yes, everyone eventually had something to say, once we found their passion. "My name is Michael Gonzalez and I have two bunnies, one brown and one white," said Gonzalez. Maybe a couple of future sports broadcasters too.

"I'm Elijah Mitchell recording in the World Cup and Messi just scored a goal against Barcelona," said Mitchell. "I like to play football and one time when we won against the Vikings, I made about four sacks and two touchdowns," said another student. Even switching roles and getting questioned by someone with a microphone was a first for these kids. "Are you lying to us?" we asked one student. His response was simply, "Yes!" as the class erupted in laughter. But perhaps when they questioned each other, the journalist in each of them really came out. "I'm going to be interviewing her about the Kardashians," said one student to which her friend replied, "That's random!"

The next lesson will surely now have to be on length of presentation. But for some, like our new friend Valentina, maybe a podcast or YouTube show would allow for some of her extra thoughts. "My favorite book is 'The Last Dream to London.' One of my favorite things from 'The Last Dream to London' is that it is very informative, and it has a lot of details that inform us about what the book is about," said Valentina. At the end of the day, the kids at St. Anthony's told us they enjoyed reporting, and most agreed that interviewing each other was easier than talking on camera all by themselves.

### **Friday, February 17, 2023**

#### **Giant blood vessel immersive experience open Saturday in SF for Bay Area kids**

On Saturday, families will have an opportunity to get a super-sized look into the human body in a free, immersive experience for all ages. It's happening at the Mission Science Workshop in the Excelsior District in San Francisco from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. It's a giant portable blood vessel the size of a school bus, where kids can walk through to get an immersive look inside the human body. "Where kids and students and families will be able to see how an artery works, with red blood cells, white blood cells, platelets, all the different layers," said Sonia Gandiaga, executive director for the Mission Science Workshop said.

It's a project has been in the works for more than a year now, with a little help from consultants and real medical professionals to make this vessel, as realistic as possible. "In response to COVID, we just kind of wanted to go over the top. So we wanted to say, let's make this something really cool, a fully immersive experience that they can kind of go inside, and we're also going to make it really interactive," said Bart Evans, program director of the Mission Science Workshop said.

Evans came up with this vision since many underprivileged schools in the area don't have as much opportunity for hands-on, outside-the-classroom learning. "We mostly work with Title I schools, schools that are high need, they don't have a lot of resources," Garndiaga said. Which is why they'll be bringing the field trips to them, at more than 90 schools across San Francisco and Oakland.

"And kids are really interested and they have very basic questions about how does breathing work? How is air different when it comes in and out? Things that an adult might take for granted," Evans said. "I think that it can feel icky sometimes too, so I think we're taking that icky and we're flipping it like whoa." The Mission Science Workshop is located at 4458 Mission St. in San Francisco.

### **Tuesday, February 28, 2023**

#### **CA bill would require early dyslexia screening for K-2nd grade students**

One in five children in the U.S. is diagnosed with dyslexia, and while 40 states already have early screening at schools, California does not. One state senator has introduced a bill that would make it mandatory. Ami Molinelli and Lorca Hart saw early on that their son was struggling in school. "Reading and really struggling to read and write," explained Hart. Having their son screened in second grade for dyslexia was a game changer because they were now able to get him extra support.

"The anxiety dissipated, the self-esteem started to come back and we started to see him flourish," said Molinelli. State Senator Anthony Portantino found out he was dyslexic late, in the eighth grade. He has introduced a bill requiring California schools to have a 30-minute screening test in grades kindergarten through second. "What we're getting from that 30-minute assessment is who's on a path to a reading challenge so we can intervene to help them," said Portantino. The kind of tool to assess California children has yet to be determined.

That tool could very well come from UCSF's newly-developed screening test, which can detect literacy weakness, an early sign of dyslexia. But the California Teachers Association has concerns that a mandate would take time away from the classroom since teachers would do the screenings. The United Educators of San Francisco is in favor of screening children but only if the resources are behind it.

"What we need though is the funding and support from a state and federal level in order to do it well. We're short on special education teachers across the nation. This is not a new occurrence. This job is very, very difficult," expressed Cassondra Curiel, president of the United Educators of San Francisco.

Governor Gavin Newsom has been very outspoken about his dyslexia. Money has been set aside in his budget for research and implementation of this type of screening. There is also concern that the screening could harm English learners and place them by mistake in special education classes. "That's the right question to ask. The answer is simple. The bill specifies that we'll have linguistically sensitive screeners and it will be done in a way that doesn't not disproportionately affect that group," added Portantino.

Numerous studies have shown a correlation between dyslexia and incarceration. A 2000 Texas study found that half of their inmates had dyslexia. For Molinelli and Hart, it's a matter of social equality. "For families who do not have advocacy resources or financial resources, their students are not going to obtain their full potential, and this is what this bill could really provide," said Molinelli.

**Wednesday, March 1, 2023**

**Oakland school board rejects proposed resolutions to cut budget, lay off staff**

There are new developments in Oakland Unified School District's effort to reduce costs and raise salaries for some workers after a board meeting that went into the early morning hours of Wednesday. The board voted against two resolutions. One would have made reductions to the budget, including eliminating some positions, and the other would have reduced classified staff. The resolution to reduce classified staff included laying off 98 positions. Board documents say this was being considered due to lack of funds or work, because of factors such as declining enrollment and increasing costs. The documents also said that other classified areas should be increased. That would mean raising salaries for teachers and other district staff. Members of the community weighed in during public comment.

"There is not support widely in the community and certainly not from the Black Organizing Project for cutting these kinds of classified positions," Ebony Johnson said. "These positions, which are the foundation of the school district. They are the positions that are required to make sure our schools are safe. They are the positions that build the most nurturing, deep relationships with students, with families, and so we are not in support." One board member called it very disappointing that the resolution to reduce classified staff failed.

March 15 is the deadline for layoff notices. The board will have to come back with new proposals for cuts if they want to move forward with salary raises. Their next meeting is March 8th. The meeting came the night before Oakland Unified holds a recruitment event on Wednesday for anyone interested in being a part of its staff for the 2023-24 school year. Multiple positions are available including school site staff, full-time teachers, classroom support staff, and substitutes. The in-person event will be held inside Oakland High School's multi-purpose room from 4-5:30 p.m.

### **Thursday, March 9, 2023**

#### **An inside look at a 5th grade classroom using ChatGPT**

With the rise of artificial intelligence programs like ChatGPT, some teachers are concerned about plagiarism and cheating among students, leading some school districts to ban them. Other teachers like Donnie Piercey, who instructs fifth graders in Lexington, Kentucky, are taking a different approach and turning to the online tool to help in the classroom.

"Like every other educator, I had that concern. Is this something that students are only going to use to cheat? So I started to think about like, 'OK, what role is AI -- artificial intelligence -- going to play in the classroom?'" Piercey, the 2021 Kentucky Teacher of the Year, told "Good Morning America." "And the more that I thought about it, I realized that there's a lot more good that can come about through AI as opposed to negative things that can come in the classroom."

ChatGPT, short for Chat Generative Pre-Trained Transformer, refers to an online chatbot service developed by the artificial intelligence company OpenAI. Users can type in complex questions and queries, similar to a search engine, and ask the computer program to generate answers, information and even poetry. Piercey decided to give ChatGPT a try and now uses the chatbot to generate prompts and exercises for students. For example, Piercey welcomed "GMA" into his classroom and demonstrated how he used ChatGPT to create paragraphs that he then used in a grammar exercise with students, asking them to determine whether the text was written by ChatGPT or their classmates. He has also used ChatGPT to generate personalized plays, which he then turned into reading exercises for students.

The veteran teacher said ChatGPT has its benefits and has helped bring out students' interest and creativity as well. "The big thing that I've looked for as a teacher over the last 17 years is what things can I bring into my lessons that inspires my students to be creative. With AI, with ChatGPT, I've always looked for a way that I can use this tool to inspire my students to become better students, to really master content," Piercey said. Some of Piercey's students say they think ChatGPT is here to stay and are open to embracing the tool. "If it keeps on expanding, that's basically typical for what this generation is doing right now," fifth grade student Isabella Whitice told "GMA." "If you keep AI like, safe, it's going to be really helpful," fellow fifth grade student Caleb Roberts added.

Across the country in Oregon, Tobin and Cherie Shields teach high schoolers and college students and have also been utilizing ChatGPT in their instruction. "It's going to make our educational system more accurate and it's going to make it more interesting and more accessible and more creative, where I think a lot of educators think it's going to do the opposite," Tobin Shields told "GMA." Cherie Shields recently wrote an opinion article for "Education Week" defending the use of the AI tool. "I do think employers in the future are going to be asking employees to work with AI," she told "GMA." "It's just a life skill that we are going to have to perpetuate forward if we want our students to be viable in the workplace."

One of the features of ChatGPT and other similar services is its ability to come up with answers and perform simple tasks -- draft an email or outline in seconds, for instance -- but that usability and the convenience factor worries some educators who say the AI technology could lead to more cheating among students.

Randi Weingarten, the president of the American Federation of Teachers, one of the largest teachers unions in the country, previously told "GMA" she was concerned about the rise of ChatGPT and AI tools in schools. "It is scary because as schoolteachers, we want kids to write in full paragraphs but we want it to be their original work," Weingarten said. Some have already attempted to

limit the use of ChatGPT in schools, including public school districts in New York City and Los Angeles. Seattle Public Schools, meanwhile, banned ChatGPT in December but later reversed course and permitted teachers to use ChatGPT as a teaching tool. "We can't afford to ignore it," district spokesperson Tim Robinson told the Associated Press in late January.

Speaking with Axios earlier in January, Robinson had said that the district was concerned students would be able to generate answers and content using the AI system rather than thinking through things themselves. "Original thought and original work is required of students, and the concern here is that sites like this can produce content that is not original," he said at that time.

## **Health**

**Thursday, January 19, 2023**

### **Errors with common medical device led to 5-hour delay in COVID treatment for Black patients: study**

As we continue to navigate the tripledemic of COVID-19, RSV, and the flu, local health leaders are raising concerns over a key medical device that often determines if a sick patient is hospitalized or not. Sutter Health and Oakland-based Roots Community Health Clinic argue in a paper recently published in the American Journal of Epidemiology that a device that measures the amount of oxygen in your blood may not be accurate for patients with darker skin tones and that key difference leads to a five hour delay in treatment for Black patients. It's a device used in practically every healthcare setting in America from emergency rooms, to ambulances, and doctors offices: the pulse oximeter. The device fits around the tip of your finger and painlessly measures the amount of oxygen in your blood.

"The technology itself appears to be flawed and does not take into account skin tone," said Dr. Noah Aboelata. Dr. Aboelata is the founder and CEO of the East Oakland based Roots Community Health Center. She co-authored the paper published in the Journal of Epidemiology that highlighted inaccuracies in the pulse ox devices and the alarming impact. "We think of our tools as being unbiased and very objective, but when we found out that this tool in and of itself was biased, and was showing readings in the normal range more frequently for darker skinned people, when in fact, their oxygen was below the normal range, that is just devastating," said Aboelata.

Think back to the early days of the pandemic - when hospitals were overflowing with COVID patients. A person's oxygen reading determined if they received supplemental oxygen, which was in scarce supply. A patient's blood oxygen level was one of the only objective measures from the CDC to determine if someone should be admitted to the hospital. Patients with a 95% blood oxygen reading or

above were routinely discharged from the hospital. Those with a 94% reading or below were admitted and placed on oxygen. A 1% difference impacted a patient's treatment.

"Everything is at stake," said Dr. Stephanie Brown. "The oxygen reading in the blood determines your treatment trajectory for COVID." Dr. Brown serves as clinical lead for Sutter Health's Institute on Advancing Health Equity. She joined Dr. Aboelata as a co-author on the paper. Brown saw the impacts of the device's alleged inaccuracies firsthand working in the ER at Sutter Health's Alta Bates Medical Center in Oakland. "To see someone in front of my face, who looks to be working harder to breathe, and seems to be sicker than what I see in front of me. That's a tough kind of mind game to play on a daily basis," said Brown. Both doctors believe the devices potentially contributed to the higher COVID-19 death rate for Black patients when compared to white patients. Take Alameda County for example, where Black people have died of COVID-19 at nearly twice the rate as white people. "There's no doubt in my mind that this faulty device has led to death," said Dr. Aboelata.

Doctors Aboelata and Brown are now calling on the device manufacturers to improve accuracy for darker skinned patients. They're also calling on the manufacturers to warn people of the inaccuracies since the devices are sold directly to consumers at local drugstores. "Are you actually willing to go to court to block these manufacturers from selling these devices in California?" asked ABC7 News Race and Culture Reporter Julian Glover.

"Absolutely. We know that this has to be fixed," Dr. Aboelata responded. There is an additional procedure to measure to the amount of oxygen in the blood called an arterial blood gas (ABG). The ABG is a blood test that draws blood from an artery, typically in a patient's wrist. However, the procedure can be painful, and due to the shortcomings of the pulse oximeter devices darker-skinned patients are unfairly subjected to a more painful screening, which isn't fair, Dr. Brown argues.

### **Friday, February 3, 2023 9:01PM**

#### **Recent storms could lead to terrible tick season for Bay Area, especially in this county**

In the North Bay, the downside of all the rain we've had could mean a very dangerous season for ticks - and Marin County could be ground zero for the hungry pests. "Nasty creatures! I don't like them," said Anian Segal from Novato. Let's face it, ticks are gross. But experts say they love wet weather and the Bay Area has seen a lot of that.

"Ticks like rain and combined with temperate weather means ticks will be out looking for a meal," said Wendy Adams from the Bay Area Lyme Foundation. The Bay Area Lyme Foundation says Marin County has some of the highest tick infection rates in California, at around 30%. Possibly due to all its open space



and wetlands. Ticks can carry the bacteria which causes Lyme disease. An image from a microscope shows the bacteria literally out running the immune system, using a corkscrew motion to bore through tissue and blood vessels. "It's important if you've been bitten by a tick, you may not have a rash but see your doctor right away," Adams added. Marin County parks are posting warning signs on hiking trails to beware of Ticks.

Experts say If you're on a hike, preventing tick bites is easy if you cover up. Wear a long-sleeve shirt and pants and tuck your pants into your socks. "I'm already seeing ticks on my dogs," said Marin Humane Veterinarian, Dr. Belinda Evans. Marin Humane Veterinarian Dr. Belinda Evans says, our pets need extra protection from ticks, and they should be routinely checked, like Rosie. "Is it lump or a tick, you can part the fur to tell if it's significant or not," Evans added. If you find a tick on your pet, a tweezers or this tick remover can help. Flea and tick medications can kill the pests if they jump on your dog or cat. "I don't want them on my dog, I don't want to be a host either," Segal added. Be safe out there, and beware of those hungry pests. "I think it'll be a bad season, we may have a trouble with that," Evans added.

#### **Saturday, February 4, 2023 9:02PM**

#### **Recall, CDC alert prompt concern over preservative-free eye drops**

A warning was issued this week by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention about eye drops linked to dangerous infections. The preservative-free dry eye treatment is also blamed for causing at least one death. Amid growing concerns, doctors are explaining how to protect your eye health. To avoid chemicals, many Americans reach for preservative-free artificial tears to lubricate tired, dry, itchy eyes. "The preservatives are generally in the eye drop to keep it from having bacterial growth. But they also cause a bit of irritation to the ocular surface if they're used too often," said oculoplastic surgeon Dr. David Samimi with Dignity Health California Hospital, noting that is why they're a popular option. But this week, when the CDC issued an alert linking EzriCare Artificial Tears to dangerous and potentially deadly bacterial infections, his patients had concerns.

"This particular bacteria called, Pseudomonas Aeruginosa, is one of those aggressive kinds of players. It can kind of melt through the skin of the eye and aggressively kind of eat through tissue. This kind of strain actually has resistance to a lot of the larger antibiotics that we use," he said. The CDC identified 55 cases in 12 states, including California. At least five of them resulted in permanent vision loss and one reported death near Seattle. Manufacturers issued a voluntary recall. How the bottles got infected is under investigation, Samimi said. Yet, he said people shouldn't fear or avoid preservative-free drops. But, always practice good hygiene.

"Try and avoid having anything touch the tip of the bottle. And you can rest the bottle on the bridge of your nose. That way you're looking right at the drop,"

Samimi said. Preservative-free drops have a shorter shelf life, but even the ones with chemical agents should be discarded when they expire. "Rule of thumb would be around two to four months. After that, you probably want to discard them because they may have bacteria growing in them or the preservatives may be inactive," he said. And while individually wrapped packets of drops can help reduce the risk of bacterial infection, check the dates because doctors say the safety and effectiveness is unknown beyond the expiration date.

**Sunday, February 5, 2023 7:22PM**

### **Is it time to move on from COVID-19?: Here's what health experts say**

Just weeks away from California ending its coronavirus State of Emergency, the experts say signs are pointing to the end of the pandemic.

But as ABC 7 News reporter Tara Campbell finds, experts say when exactly is still up in the air. "Certainly the worst worrisome part of the pandemic is at an end," said Dr. Maria Raven, Chief of Emergency Medicine at UCSF Medical Center. She says the emergency department is seeing between zero and four cases of COVID a day a long way from the height of the pandemic. "Given both the relatively low number of cases that we're seeing and the severity of the current version of the virus it feels like it's time to move on," she said. And in just a few weeks, California will be moving on ending its coronavirus State of Emergency on February 28.

On Friday, the State says it won't require students to get the COVID vaccine for schools. "Kids are going to get COVID the way they get RSV and the flu, which by the way are far more dangerous for them at this point than COVID. It's a reality but I think it is going to be okay for kids to go back to school regardless," Dr. Raven said. And in another move away from pandemic protocols, the Federal Government announcing come fall it's cutting off free COVID vaccines; testing and treatment will also depend on insurance coverage.

"We probably won't see a huge impact on the population like we did ever before for COVID-19," said Dr. Peter Chin-Hong, Infectious Diseases Expert UCSF. "Even if there are scary new variants the soil in which it's landing on is very inhospitable right now because so many people have some sort of immunity," he said. And he says we're likely not too far from the pandemic becoming an endemic - meaning it's still around, but not disrupting everyday life. "We are near the end, but the word endemic implies predictability and we don't have that yet," Dr. Chin-Hong said. Get through the fall, he says without a surge and it will be time to call it over. "If I were to bet a hundred dollars, I'd say we'll likely see a quiet time until next winter," he said. Then he says COVID-19 becomes more like just another winter virus.

**Tuesday, February 14, 2023**

### **CA bill would mandate HPV vaccine for all students entering 8th grade**

A bill has been introduced in Sacramento to require students entering the 8th grade to have the HPV vaccine. This would apply to students attending public and private schools in California. The HPV vaccine has been on the market since 2006 when the FDA approved it as a way to prevent cervical cancer in women. But it also benefits men in the prevention of penile cancer. The recommendation is to have children vaccinated against HPV between the ages of 8 and 12. On average, teens become sexually active by 15.

Assembly-member Cecilia Aguiar-Curry has introduced a bill that would require all incoming 8th graders to get the vaccine. "People keep saying well it's just a woman's issue, no it's not just a woman's issue, it's a people's issue. I have a philosophy that anything I can do to prevent cancer I'm going to do that," expressed Aguiar-Curry. Those students who are home-schooled or with a medical condition would be exempt. "I know the people are going to be at my doorstep yelling and screaming at me but this is a fact of saving lives," she added. Opponents to the bill are already weighing in.

"This whole mandatory thing, there is no choice, parents have no choice, children have no choice," said Donald Harte who opposes the bill. In 2005, San Francisco was one of a few cities in the United States conducting clinical trials. Now 17 years later, we spoke to the lead investigator of that study in the Bay Area. "With this HPV vaccine, there is no legitimate debate, there are no side effects, there is no toxicity and it is now shown unequivocally to prevent infection and cancer, so there is no reason why young people shouldn't get this vaccine," explained Dr. Jacob Lalezar. Hearings on the bill will begin in March.

### **Friday, February 17, 2023**

#### **Should kids under 12 play tackle football? One California assemblymember proposes ban**

For thousands of kids across California, tackle football is once again on the chopping block. A Sacramento area assemblyman introduced a new bill this week. If passed, any child under the age of 12 would be banned from participating in the sport. "My opinion is, of course, I don't agree with it," said coach Chewy Orr. Coach Chewy is the head coach of the Oakland Dynamites youth football club. He says for many of the kids in his program, the game teaches kids valuable life lessons and is more than just a sport. "Especially for us in the inner city, this is a tool we use to keep kids and parents active and busy," coach Chewy said. Several years ago, the state passed stricter regulation around youth tackle football. They created requirements around the amount of time hard contact is allowed and forced coaches to obtain certain health-related certifications.

Coach Chewy says while he understands people's concerns, he thinks the sport has come a long way in ensuring safety. "We can only contact an hour per week. We also supplemented contact with using bags," Coach Chewy said. But not

everyone agrees. And some, like Dr. Brian Feeley with UCSF say tackle football is still an unsafe sport, especially for young children. "A concussion for a younger kid is much more detrimental for their long-term brain health than it is when you're an adult," Dr. Feeley said.

Statistics from the CDC show that youth tackle football athletes between the ages of 6 and 14 sustained 15 times more head impacts than those who played flag football. They also had a median of 378 head impacts per athlete during the season. And Dr. Feeley believes, despite the improvements, current equipment is not good enough yet. "It doesn't prevent a concussion. A helmet doesn't lower your risk of a concussion, even if you have a more fancy helmet," Dr. Feeley said. If the new bill becomes law, coach Chewy worries about the implications it could have for the 300 kids in his program. Young people, he says, rely on it for role models and opportunities they otherwise probably wouldn't have. "A lot of kids and parents depend on this outlet each year. So it'll be tough." said coach Chewy.

#### **Thursday, February 16, 2023**

#### **San Francisco to end COVID-19 public health emergency declaration Feb. 28**

The San Francisco Department of Public Health announced Thursday that the city would end its COVID-19 public health emergency declaration, along with additional health orders on Feb. 28. This will be in alignment with the end of California's COVID-19 State of Emergency.

"Today's announcement is a testament to the extraordinary efforts of San Francisco residents, and to the progress that we have made collectively as a city to prevent the worst outcomes of COVID-19," said Health Officer Dr. Susan Philip in a statement. "While the ending of the public health emergency declaration and health orders does not mean the end of COVID-19, we are in a better place than we were three years ago, and the effective tools we now have such as at-home tests, vaccines, boosters and treatments will continue to save lives."

SFDPH will also be rescinding its "Safer Return Together" order, which outlined certain masking and vaccine requirements for workers in high-risk facilities. The agency said it would issue two orders, to go into effect on March 1, which would affect hospitals, skilled nursing facilities and other healthcare and jail settings.

Under the order, staff in these settings will still be required to wear a mask when interacting with patients, clients, or people who are incarcerated. Masking requirements for the general public in these settings will end. In addition, masking requirements in homeless shelters for both the general public and staff will also end.

#### **Monday, February 20, 2023**

## **5th person confirmed to be cured of HIV**

Researchers are announcing that a 53-year-old man in Germany has been cured of HIV. Referred to as "the Dusseldorf patient" to protect his privacy, researchers said he is the fifth confirmed case of an HIV cure. Although the details of his successful treatment were first announced at a conference in 2019, researchers could not confirm he had been officially cured at that time. Today, researchers announced the Dusseldorf patient still has no detectable virus in his body, even after stopping his HIV medication four years ago.

"It's really cure, and not just, you know, long term remission," said Dr. Bjorn-Erik Ole Jensen, who presented details of the case in a new publication in "Nature Medicine." "This obviously positive symbol makes hope, but there's a lot of work to do," Jensen said. For most people, HIV is a lifelong infection, and the virus is never fully eradicated. Thanks to modern medication, people with HIV can live long and healthy lives.

The Dusseldorf patient joins a small group of people who have been cured under extreme circumstances after a stem cell transplant, typically only performed in cancer patients who don't have any other options. A stem cell transplant is a high-risk procedure that effectively replaces a person's immune system. The primary goal is to cure someone's cancer, but the procedure has also led to an HIV cure in a handful of cases.

HIV, or human immunodeficiency virus, enters and destroys the cells of the immune system. Without treatment, the continued damage can lead to AIDS, or acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, where a person cannot fight even a small infection. With about 38.4 million people globally living with HIV, treatments have come a long way. Modern medication can keep the virus at bay, and studies looking into preventing HIV infection with a vaccine are also underway. The first person with HIV cure was Timothy Ray Brown. Researchers published his case as the Berlin patient in 2009. That was followed by the London patient published in 2019. Most recently, The City of Hope and New York patients were published in 2022.

"I think we can get a lot of insights from this patient and from these similar cases of HIV cure," Jensen said. "These insights give us some hints where we could go to make the strategy safer." All four of these patients had undergone stem cell transplants for their blood cancer treatment. Their donors also had the same HIV-resistant mutation that deletes a protein called CCR5, which HIV normally uses to enter the cell. Only 1% of the total population carries this genetic mutation that makes them resistant to HIV.

"When you hear about these HIV cure, it's obviously, you know, incredible, given how challenging it's been. But, it still remains the exception to the rule," said Dr.

Todd Ellerin, director of infectious disease at South Shore Health. The stem cell transplantation is a complicated procedure that comes with many risks, and it is too risky to offer it as a cure for everyone with HIV. However, scientists are hopeful. Each time they cure a new patient, they gain valuable research insights that help them understand what it would take to find a cure for everyone. "It is obviously a step forward in advancing the science and having us sort of understanding, in some ways, what it takes to cure HIV," Ellerin said.

### **Tuesday, February 21, 2023**

#### **Saint Mary's College student helping others find donors after battling leukemia**

Dylan Cazin, 22, a Saint Mary's College of California student, helped recruit blood stem cell or bone marrow donors at recent Be the Match drives at his college. He knows how high the stakes are. Cazin was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia in 2017. "It definitely was a shock when we got the news," Cazin said. "For my family and I, cancer was the last thing we expected for me to have. It all just happened so suddenly. I was in a musical performing one weekend and I fell down sick and went in for some bloodwork and talked to my doctor. And I was actually starting to feel a little bit better but my white blood cell count was off the charts. So they rushed me to the hospital."

Cazin started treatment the next day and soon found out he needed a bone marrow transplant. "I just really tried to keep a positive attitude when I was waiting for my match," Cazin said. "I went through a re-induction phase of chemo so I was pretty much blasted with chemo and went into remission and while I was waiting for my match, I was able to do an immunotherapy." Thankfully he found a match. He underwent radiation, chemotherapy and immunotherapy in preparation for the transplant and eventually lost his hair. The transplant was a success. Darlene Bennett also helped sign up students for the Be the Match bone marrow registry at Saint Mary's College. She's married to Randy Bennett, coach of the high-ranked Saint Mary's College men's basketball team.

The Be the Match Registry helps people who need bone marrow donors because of blood cancers such as leukemia or lymphoma or blood disorders like sickle cell disease. During every drive where she volunteers, Bennett thinks about her little brother. Derek Darby was 3 years old when he was diagnosed with leukemia. He needed a bone marrow transplant. "I actually was a match," Bennett said. "However, he had to be put in remission before the transplant would actually happen. And he didn't survive." Derek passed away at the age of 6.

"He was a cute little feisty thing and very, very brave," Bennett said. "Always did so well with every treatment and such. And he had decided he wanted to be a doctor because of being in the hospital all the time. It's tough. He should have

been a little boy playing outside and having a great time and enjoying school and he was going under treatments and just not the life that any kid should have. No child should suffer like that." Through her work, Bennett hopes she can help save someone else's life. Cazin is now lead ambassador for his campus Be the Match club and will celebrate five years of being cancer free in June. He hopes to meet the donor who saved his life. "

Having the opportunity to meet him is just something I get so emotional even thinking about," Cazin said. "He gave the gift of life so there's really no way we can thank him enough for what he's done for me and my family." A patient's likelihood of finding a matching donor on the Be The Match Registry is estimated to range from 29-79%, depending on ethnic background, according to Be the Match. People of color have a harder time finding a match because there are fewer people of color on the registry. Be the Match is working to change that.

### **Wednesday, March 1, 2023**

#### **Doctor urges that cardiovascular health be a year-round priority as American Heart Month ends**

American Heart Month just ended but health experts want to remind you that heart health should be a year-round priority. Genes play a big role when it comes to our risk of cardiovascular disease but Dr. Florence Comite, endocrinologist and founder of the Comite Center for Precision Medicine and Health, says genetics doesn't have to be your destiny. She said her New York City-based center looks at people holistically, at their entire makeup. Instead of a one size fits all approach, Comite said they look at the individual and try to predict future health and reverse it so they don't get a heart attack.

They've been doing this for over two decades and are working on getting information online for digital health. She gives some suggestions on reversing heart disease. "Get some measurements with your doctor, for example, of fasting, glucose, or sugar, insulin," Comite said. "Look at testosterone -- actually in women and men -- something called free testosterone. And then look at the cholesterol risk ratio, or CRR, which is total cholesterol divided by good cholesterol, and that's an indicator of where you are." She said if somebody has high cholesterol in their 20s, they want to reverse that. She said someone can eat well and do everything right but sometimes genes can rule.

Comite said if you're diabetic, the risk of heart attack is equivalent to someone who's already had a heart attack. She says over 90% of us have a disorder of glucose metabolism, so we really need to pay attention to our sleep, food and exercise for our heart health. "It's best to be aware of all your habits, starting with eating enough protein, getting enough sleep," Comite said. "The food you eat is an important factor, and so is exercise. I would put it in that order: sleep, food

and exercise. Practice meditation if that is something you love to do because that can help your genes in a way that's positive."

### **Wednesday, March 1, 2023**

#### **Eli Lilly cuts insulin prices up to 70% amid pressure to slash costs**

Eli Lilly will cut the price of its most commonly prescribed insulin products by 70% and expand a program that caps patient costs at \$35 per month, the company said on Wednesday. "While the current healthcare system provides access to insulin for most people with diabetes, it still does not provide affordable insulin for everyone and that needs to change," David Ricks, chair and CEO of Eli Lilly, said in a statement. "The aggressive price cuts we're announcing today should make a real difference for Americans with diabetes," he added. The Indianapolis-based drug maker faced a bipartisan pressure campaign from members of Congress, which included a two-year Senate probe of insulin prices that concluded in 2021.

The Inflation Reduction Act, enacted in August, set a \$35 price cap on insulin products for Medicare recipients. During his State of the Union Address last month, President Joe Biden called on Congress to extend the \$35 price cap on insulin products for all patients. The price of Humalog, Eli Lilly's most frequently prescribed insulin drug, will drop 70% beginning at the end of this year, the company said. The discount affects a slew of Humalog products, including Humalog U-100, Humalog Mix 50/50 and Humalog Mix 75/25.

## **Climate & Environment**

### **Friday, January 13, 2023**

#### **Clean Water Act reinvigorated but future environmental challenges still ahead in Bay Area, state**

Environmental groups say the creeks and streams swollen by our recent storms are a perfect example of a system the Federal Clean Water Act was designed to protect, an interlaced web of sometimes seasonal waterways that flow into San Francisco Bay. Teams from the San Francisco Estuary Institute, and other groups like San Francisco Baykeeper, keep a close watch on pollutants that ultimately reach our wider ecosystem. "And that's why it's so important to be able to control those things at the source and that's what the Clean Water Act does for those waters that are protected. If you can stop those pollutants from where they start before they wash into the Bay. As you can get rid of them, you can have a clean and thriving Bay ecosystem. Once they get into the bay, it's real hard to then clean it out later," said Eric Buescher, managing attorney for Baykeeper.

And for now, California's Environmental Protection Agency will have a broader mandate to do that. Rules just finalized by the Biden administration re-confirm



the agency's jurisdiction over many inland waterways that were challenged during the Trump administration. "There are more than three-quarters of the tributaries that flow into the bay are intermittent streams and creeks that are dry for large portions of the year or large portions of several years when we're in a drought. Those intermittent streams and creeks return when there's water," Buescher said. Other wetland areas around the Bay are also potentially affected, including a saltmarsh property on the shoreline of Redwood City that's been at the center of a development battle for more than a decade. But while the Biden administration policies restore much of the reach of the Clean Water Act, another major challenge could be just months away. Sam Sankar is with the group Earthjustice, which is helping to challenge a case currently before the United States Supreme Court. "The worst case scenario is that the Supreme Court takes an extraordinarily restrictive view of the language of the Clean Water Act," says Sankar.

The suit was brought by an Idaho couple, challenging the reach of regulations applied to waters on their private property. But environmental groups argue that it's also a crucial test case -- supported by a range of industries -- eager to roll back or restrict the EPA's use of the Clean Water Act, only applying it to larger bodies of water. "And that smaller waters, and wetlands really weren't in the mind of Congress at all. That would be I think, from my perspective, just flatly wrong. If you look at the record, and if you look at the actions of the Congress of the time and, indeed, the stable regulatory history over nearly 50 years of the implementation of the Clean Water Act," Sankar said.

If the reach of the act is rolled back, some observers believe California could be forced to legislate more sweeping laws at the state level. Always with the possibility those could eventually be challenged in another wave of lawsuits over a regulatory system used for more than half a century to protect the waters of America. Coincidentally, October marked the 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act, which has been the subject of some debate from the beginning. President Richard Nixon originally vetoed the bill, congress then voted to override his veto.

### **Tuesday, January 17, 2023**

#### **California Academy of Sciences study finds 28 new gecko species**

The new species documented by the California Academy of Sciences for 2022, run the gamut -- from crusty marine creatures like clam and sea stars, to colorful toads and tiny scorpions. But they say one species of reptile, the humble gecko, jumps out for its biodiversity. "So what was interesting to me about these, as we described 28 new species in one paper. And that's, that's a rarity. For vertebrates. You might get mites or something where you get that many but to have a vertebrate, where you have that many new species is really exceptional," says Academy research associate Dr. Aaron Bauer.

Bauer has been working for decades around the island nation of New Caledonia, near Australia. He says that nearly every mountain and valley has its own unique species of the native gecko. But that biodiversity could be facing a specific threat, because New Caledonia's economy is centered heavily on mining. Sparking concerns similar to countries like Brazil where gold mining and deforestation are also adding to pressures on the Amazon habitat, and the species that rely on it. "Every single place in the island has its own unique species. So you can't go in as a mining company anymore and shave the top off one mountain and sort of say, It's OK, because we've left the rest behind every single place really has its own unique species," he explains. He says the geckos have evolved independently to survive in the diverse micro-habitats on the island. And researchers believe the discovery of so many species could help inform the way we view other organisms around the planet that rely on genetic diversity for survival.

"And if we don't know what that real biodiversity is, if we underestimate that biodiversity, it's not just an inconvenience or an incorrect number in a list someplace. So it really truly affects the way in which resources are going to be applied to conserve these things." And perhaps, our ability to protect world's diverse creatures and their habitats in the future. In total, researchers with the California Academy of Sciences documented 146 new species of animals, plant and fungi for 2022.

#### **Thursday, January 26, 2023**

#### **California Academy of Sciences researchers breed sea stars to help protect coastal ecosystem**

Keeping track of sea stars along our coastline has been an urgent mission for Rebecca Johnson, Ph.D., of the California Academy of Sciences. She and her teams of volunteers watched as several species, including the giant Sunflower Star, were decimated by a wasting disease possibly triggered by a marine heatwave roughly a decade ago -- which unleashed a chain effect on the ecosystem. "The loss of this huge starfish allowed for one of its prey items -- the purple sea urchin -- its population to explode. And so with an exploding population of these sea urchins came a decline in kelp, because sea urchins are voracious predators are herbivores of kelp," Johnson said.

She says the explosion of hungry purple urchins has evolved into a long-term threat to the kelp forests, which provide major benefits from sequestering carbon, to providing critical habitat for marine life. They've been particularly destructive to the Bull kelp, prevalent along the Northern California coast. "Kelp forests are amazing. I mean, they're nurseries and habitat for tons of different species of fish, for many, many different invertebrates, for otters on the more southern coast. But they also protect the coast from storm surge. They, you know, they buffer the waves," adds Johnson.

While many species have recovered along the coast, Johnson says the Sunflower Star is still largely missing. And with the pressures from climate change, there is ongoing concern about what the future might hold. Enter senior biologist Riah Evin, with the Academy's captive breeding program. Like an expecting parent, she's currently watching over the tiny specks that will grow into adult "bat stars." And while bats aren't endangered themselves, Evin says the secrets they're unlocking could one day help other species like the Sunflower Stars.

"Using what we've learned raising bat stars, to help that species, those are critically endangered species. And just learning more about their background, what their life cycle's like, what their nutritional needs are, and that is a great gateway to actually do some sort of release program," Evin said. She explains that plans to release any species would likely be far off in the future. But there is increasing interest worldwide in learning about the biodiversity of Star populations -- the research geared in part to learning which genetic traits might allow a species to survive pressures like warming ocean waters or marine diseases.

"So this was kind of our catalyst to make sure we can do it here in-house and use it as a jumping-off point to hopefully work with other sea star species," she says. Academy researchers are doing similar work with coral, which is also facing pressure from climate change and fluctuation in the marine environment. They're hoping that the work on both species will help scientists better understand the changes along our coast and, perhaps, better manage the fragile ecosystems and the predators like sea stars that help keep it in balance. There are now calls by some experts to reintroduce sea otter populations to the north coast, which also prey on sea urchins. The hope is that, like the sea stars, the otters would help the kelp forests by keeping the hungry urchins in check.

### **Tuesday, January 31, 2023**

#### **San Francisco's Presidio springing to life after this year's series of storms**

Wildlife ecologist Jonathan Young is measuring the effects of our recent storms, which he says have brought the San Francisco Presidio's often secluded watersheds roaring back to life. In the case of this marsh near Crissy Field, they've flushed in a mix of fresh water and salt water that's still able to support the oysters and other coastal creatures that call the area home. "And testing the salinity just now, it was at about 27% around the depth they're at. So it's pretty good considering the amount of freshwater that came into the system with that storm," says Young.

But to appreciate the true scale of the storm's impact, you have to trek deep into the Presidio hills. That's where secluded seeps and springs like El Polin are flowing with Sierra-like runoff. The water feeds a meandering system of wetlands, some of them seasonal, which in turn support an astounding variety of wildlife.

"And during droughts, you don't get that much rain. So those seasonal wetlands rarely fill up or when they do fill up, it's a sad little amount of water not enough for a lot of the wildlife that depend on it," he says.

But this year's storms have delivered runoff, and much more. Tucked in the dunes on the south side of the Presidio sits a newly-created pond, expected to last for much of the year. Young says it's likely to be a critical habitat for the Chorus Frog, a species that was nearly extinct in the city, until it was reintroduced in the Presidio. "So the first warm night we get, there's going to be a lot of egg masses laid, which could be any day really. So to the frog stay in this area when they hatch, so they'll hatch, they'll turn into tadpoles, which are gill breathers, which require water freshwater. And then over the course of several weeks, they're starting to develop, and they'll eventually turn into froglets," Young explains.

And the availability of water will eventually reverberate across a complex ecosystem, from insects to the coyotes that live and breed in the park. While some of the habitats are remote, others are already on display for visitors strolling the wetlands in areas like Crissy Field. "Yeah, a lot of a lot of migratory waterfowl are going to be dependent on these freshwater wetlands," Young said. "As they migrate from north to south along the Pacific Flyway. They need places to rest and recharge and eat food. So they find these wetlands where a lot of the aquatic vegetation is going to be growing which is their food." And for the time being, flowing with water.

### **Wednesday, February 1, 2023 3:33PM**

#### **Study uncovers underground flood risk in Bay Area due to storms, climate change**

Powerful storms offer clear evidence of how vulnerable parts of the Bay Area are to flooding. But now, a new study is raising concerns about a kind of "double threat" right underneath our feet. It's being driven by sea level rise that's literally pushing saltwater inland and raising the water table -- and potentially threatening to undermine the system of levees and seawalls that protect our shoreline.

"They're definitely vulnerable because they are, you know, the groundwater is running under them. So they're not preventing the groundwater from -- or sea level rise from -- still causing groundwater rise in the inland areas. So even though you have a levee, you're still gonna get flooded from below as the groundwater rises," said Kris May with the Pathways Climate Institute. May, along with Ellen Plane of the San Francisco Estuary Institute, analyzed groundwater data for low-lying areas in four counties: San Francisco, Marin, Alameda and San Mateo.

Their mapping suggests that key infrastructure will be increasingly vulnerable to being flooded from below, especially during storm events. "Yeah, so most of our infrastructure is within six feet of the ground surface. And so we're talking about,

you know, buried sewer lines, both wastewater and storm water sewers. In some places, buried electrical lines, all sorts of different things that are under the ground," Plane said. In the case of storm water and water treatment systems, they say water entering broken or degraded sewer pipes could overwhelm capacity, increasing flood risk during storms. The report also raises concerns about the former military or industrial sites in areas like Hunters Point, Richmond and Alameda, where rising groundwater could push toxic materials to the surface.

"Because as that groundwater rises, it can cause that contamination to move and spread in new ways, potentially in new directions," Plane said.

With the pace of sea level rise expected to accelerate as glaciers melt, the report suggests an urgent need for resilient solutions, including expanded tidal marsh and horizontal levees in place of shoreline development. "That vegetation, it drinks the groundwater, so it can actually help depress the groundwater, at least somewhat and give you more of a little bit more time before the groundwater becomes more of a problem. And so really creating more green space between communities and the Bay is just so needed," May said.

#### **Thursday, February 2, 2023 2:22AM**

#### **California snowpack at 205% above average, but dry trend raises worries**

The mountain snowpack that supplies a significant amount of California's water got an incredible boost from recent powerful storms and is outpacing the state's wettest season on record, state water officials said Wednesday. But it's too soon to know if the winter will be a drought-buster, they said. Water content in the state's mountain snow is 205% of normal to date and 128% of the April 1 average, when the snow is at its historical peak, according to measurements taken by the California Department of Water Resources. Historically one-third of California's water supply has come from melting snow.

"Our snowpack is off to an incredible start, and it's exactly what California needs to really help break from our ongoing drought," said Sean de Guzman, manager of the department's snow surveys and water supply forecasting unit. "However, for every day that it doesn't rain or snow, we gradually return to drier conditions," he said. De Guzman conducted a manual measurement high in the Sierra Nevada at Phillips Station, south of Lake Tahoe, a location that demonstrates California's varying snow fortunes - sometimes buried in white and sometimes bare ground. His survey there found a snow depth of 85.5 inches (217.17 centimeters) and a water content that was 193% of the Feb. 1 average at the location.

The massive snowpack was largely left by nine atmospheric rivers that lasted from late December through mid-January. The storms dumped 32 trillion gallons of rain and snow on the state, allowing state water managers to boost water supplies for farms and cities. Most of California remains in moderate to severe

drought, though that's better than several months ago when a huge swath of the state was in extreme or exceptional drought, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. The amount of water in the snowpack, technically described as snow water equivalent, currently outpaces California's record 1982-83 season, according to the department. But the weather has turned drier, with only modest systems passing through. DWR Director Karla Nemeth pointed out that February "is a traditional wet month that is actually starting off pretty dry" and the forecast is for dryness to continue.

"Does our big January actually bust the drought in California? It's too soon to tell," Nemeth said. Nemeth also suggested that the April 1 date is no longer reliable because climate change is changing the timing of the peak snowpack. She also cited recent years in which runoff has dropped off dramatically and storm conditions have shut down and been followed by excessive dry periods. "I don't want to be the downer here," Nemeth said. "But I do want to make sure that everyone understands that we need to exercise caution."

"If you ask me for the recipe for success on that snowpack, it would be these nice little periodic snowstorms and rainstorms between now and April 1 just to preserve what we have," said David Rizzardo who is an engineer with the California Department of Water Resources. "We still have months to go before the water year is over, that is April 1 so we want to be cautiously optimistic," said Katherine Kao Cushing, Ph.D. Professor Cushing, of San Jose State University's Environmental Studies program, says going forward we need to do a better job of preventing flooding and capturing storm water to channel into ground aquifers during extreme weather situations. She also says we're not yet in a perfect water or snow situation. "I think the message is, you know it took us years to get in a kind of a drought stricken state; it will take years for us to get out even though this season in particular has been filled with extreme events," said Professor Cushing.

The precipitation has filled some reservoirs but others remain below historic average storage to date. Among the state's largest reservoirs, Lake Oroville was at 65% of capacity and 112% of average as of midnight Tuesday. But Shasta Lake was lagging at 56% of capacity, 87% of its historic average to date. The storms also caused damaging flooding and landslides. There were at least 20 storm-related deaths, and a boy remains missing since being swept away by a swollen creek in San Luis Obispo County.

### **Wednesday, February 8, 2023**

#### **How crushed shells are helping restore Bay Area oyster and clam ecosystems, combat climate change**

At San Francisco's Presidio, wildlife ecologists are using nesting pods made with ground-up oyster shells, designed to attract and nurture tiny, growing oysters. It's a shoreline project that may eventually help their broader ecosystem. "We

anticipate more oysters coming in, and not just more coming in and settling, but those that settle, survive and grow, and hopefully can reproduce on their own seeding more of the Bay with their planktonic larvae," explains ecologist Jonathan Young. Meanwhile, a short drive north along the Sonoma County coast, researchers from UC Davis are also using ground-up shells, this time from clams. Their goal is to help combat a threat from climate change. It's caused by pollution from fossil fuels that are making seawater more acidic.

"The idea that I am working on is that purposeful addition of shell material into sediments can interact with that acidic seawater, and actually buffer against the changes that we're seeing due to the climate change," says researcher Hannah Hensel. Hensel began collecting the shells near the UC Davis Marine Laboratory at Bodega Bay. She wanted to learn if an acid-buffering calcium component in the shells could help keep the tidal habitat less acidic, first testing her theory in lab experiments. "So we did see a buffering effect," she says. "And in addition to the chemistry changing and data suggesting that that was the case, we also saw with the clam growth, that the clams grown with shell hash grew more shell than those without it."

Hensel is hoping that mixing shells into the squishy breeding ground can help young clams survive and develop in a more balanced shoreline environment, even if surrounding oceans become more acidic. Meanwhile, back at the Presidio, Young says the shell-laced Oyster pods are also having success. The pods are drawing in residents attracted to the chemistry of their new homes, which they may associate with the optimal breeding environment. "Which means planktonic larvae floating around the Bay have found these structures, have landed on these structures and had been growing on these structures," Young explains. Ultimately, they are two research projects, both leveraging nature-based techniques, to create a healthier ecosystem for California.

### **Thursday, March 2, 2023**

#### **Half of California freed from drought after back-to-back storms drench state, report shows**

The historic string of storms that drenched the state this year had many wondering whether California's drought could soon be over. According to a report released Thursday, the U.S. Drought Monitor says some parts of the state are now drought-free. That includes portions of California's central coast and valley. Some parts of Southern California remained in the "moderate" category of drought, while other parts of the region are now categorized as "abnormally dry" - one step away from eliminating drought conditions.

The report reflects the rain that was received through Tuesday of this week. That's when areas like Woodland Hills got roughly 10 inches in a 72-hour span. At the end of last year, the U.S. Drought Monitor included "extreme" drought

portions of the state, as seen in red on the Oct. 2022 map below: That level of drought has now been eliminated. In January, about 35% of California fell into that category. Despite the large reduction in drought intensity, experts caution that parts of the state still remain in the "severe" or "moderate" categories of drought. The recent storms have actually filled many of the state's reservoirs, which could even overflow once all of the snow melts. Officials say the drought conditions across the state are improving and the water supply is looking much more promising than a month ago.

"This is big," said Paul Pastelok with AccuWeather. "This is big on how much we've gotten hit." The state's major reservoirs are located in Northern California, which is where most of the rain and snow has fallen. As of midnight Monday, Shasta Lake is up to 84% of its historical average, compared to 57% at the beginning of January. Oroville is higher than its historical average at 116%, up from 71%. In the Bay Area, Lexington Reservoir, one of the largest in Santa Clara County, has filled up with much of the recent precipitation. "When you go out to Lexington Reservoir, it's a huge difference from what you saw in September from what you're seeing now. It's beautiful to see the water rise up on the banks," said Santa Clara Valley Water spokesperson Matt Keller.

ABC7 News asked California's Department of Water Resources (DWR) what they think about the federal drought monitor's assessment. "We're somewhere in the vicinity of 127% of the average statewide precipitation right now. And certainly, some areas are recovering rapidly from drought. In terms of reservoir storage, it takes longer to recharge groundwater basins. Some of our groundwater basins have been severely depleted over multiple years of drought for more than a decade. That's where we have a disconnect between water supply availability and just this one year's hydrology," said Jeanine Jones with DWR. DWR focuses on water supply. The agency said California has made major progress so far this season. But, there's a long way to go.

"A huge improvement over the past two years. We need to see how some areas catch up, particularly in terms of groundwater capability," said Jones. Valley Water in Santa Clara County says they're making sure they have the infrastructure to store water and put it to use. And, they're looking at other water supply projects. "We cannot rely on Mother Nature. Mother Nature with climate change is going to be boom and bust. During those bust years, we really need to have a local reliable water supply and that's why we're looking at recycled wastewater and recycled water and purified water programs," said Keller. Water experts say all the rain this season is great, but it won't wipe out the megadrought we are in. Scientists predict the megadrought will continue for years to come. They say we need to continue with water conservation and we need several more wet winters to bring our reservoirs back to levels we saw before the megadrought.



In Southern California, Pyramid and Lake Perris are remaining stable. Castaic has increased from 55% of historical averages on Jan. 1 to 71%. Castaic had retrofit work done in 2021 and with the increased rain, it's returning to a more normal level. "Keep in mind, there is a healthy snowpack sitting just upstream of those reservoirs, and so as we start seeing the warmer temperatures come during the springtime, we're hoping to see a lot of that runoff make it into those reservoirs," said Demetri Polyzos with the Metropolitan Water District. So what happens next? Well, it all depends on Mother Nature. Once the snowpack starts melting, the reservoirs could overflow.

"We're going to start to see these reservoirs, which nine of them are already filled from the rainwater, so then you add on snow melt and we may have some problems with that as far as flooding goes," said Pastelok. MWD expects some of the reservoirs up north will release water. It hopes to capture as much of that water as it can. Another winter storm will bring heavy snow to the Sierra this weekend. The storm could bring an additional five feet of snow, meaning this is a record-breaking season

#### **Thursday, March 2, 2023**

#### **AccuWeather meteorologist breaks down impact of recent wild weather in Bay Area, state**

This past year, residents in the Bay Area and California have experienced extremes, from record-breaking heat to rain and snowfall.

Paul Pastelok, lead long range forecaster and senior meteorologist at AccuWeather, says there are many positives to the added precipitation. It's a benefit for agriculture, eliminating the drought and giving us a longer ski season. "A majority of the drought will be done across the state over the next month, with perhaps exception of the southeast part of the state and extreme northern areas. It has been a while since we have been able to say that," he said. But there are some negatives to all of the rain and snow. A big concern is flooding.

"If we go back, in 1997/98 -- a very wet and snowy wet season for California, right around New Year's Day into early January -- there was a series of warm, pineapple connection events that lead to tremendous flooding across the state. Yosemite Valley was hit hard. Campsites washed away, along with many buildings and structures. Any type of warm system adding rain in the lower elevations along with snow melt can lead to a significant flood event, maybe not like 1997/98, but bad," Pastelok says. He says sea surface temperature anomalies are having an effect on the upper-level patterns, making them more amplified, especially on the west coast.

When it comes to wildfires, he says if we can shorten and interrupt the dry period with precipitation in May and June, we can try to hold back wildfire season.

"Eighty-five percent of the wildfires that develop are caused by people in the United States, probably leaning more toward 90% in California. The people of California are to blame for the water shortage, not the droughts every year. The increasing population in California is starting to catch up and there is just not enough water being produced for everyone. The drinking water shortage will always be a problem in California no matter the outcome of the wet season," Pastelok says.

## **Economy & Changing Workplace**

**Wednesday, January 4, 2023**

**Salesforce to layoff about 10% of staff in latest round of job cuts in tech industry**

Salesforce said Wednesday that it will cut approximately 10% of its workforce and reduce its real estate footprint, making it the latest tech company to slash expenses as broader economic uncertainty continues to hit Silicon Valley particularly hard. In a letter to employees announcing the job cuts, Marc Benioff, Salesforce's chair and co-CEO, admitted to growing headcount too much earlier in the pandemic and said most of the job cuts will take place over the coming weeks. "I've been thinking a lot about how we came to this moment," Benioff wrote. "As our revenue accelerated through the pandemic, we hired too many people leading into this economic downturn we're now facing, and I take responsibility for that." As of January 2022, Salesforce reported a headcount of 73,541 global employees.

The tech sector, which was initially buoyed by a sudden and intense pandemic-fueled shift to online services, has since had to confront consumers returning to their offline lives. At the same time, the industry has been pummeled by a seemingly perfect storm of economic factors over the past year, including rising interest rates, looming recession fears and consumers and businesses rethinking expenses. Like Benioff, a number of other tech founders and CEOs have since admitted they failed to accurately gauge pandemic demand. As a result, tech firms including Amazon and Meta have announced company-wide layoffs. Dan Ives, an analyst at Wedbush Securities, wrote in investor note Wednesday that the cloud-computing giant "clearly is seeing headwinds in the field and thus is trying to quickly adjust to a softening demand environment." The analyst added that the company "clearly overbuilt out its organization over the past few years along with the rest of the tech sector."

Shares of Salesforce were up more than 3% in early trading Wednesday following the announcement. Like other tech companies, Salesforce's stock suffered steep declines last year. Against that backdrop, Salesforce made a significant change to its C-Suite: co-CEO and Vice Chair Bret Taylor said he would step down from his roles at the company at the end of January. In his letter

Wednesday, Benioff said impacted employees in the United States will "receive a minimum of nearly five months of pay, health insurance, career resources, and other benefits to help with their transition." Those outside the United States "will receive a similar level of support," Benioff wrote. "The employees being affected aren't just colleagues," Benioff said. "They're friends. They're family. Please reach out to them. Offer the compassion and love they and their families deserve and need now more than ever. And most of all, please lean on your leadership, including me, as we work through this difficult time together."

### **Wednesday, January 18, 2023**

#### **Microsoft expected to cut 10,000 jobs, company says**

Microsoft plans to lay off 10,000 employees as part of broader cost-cutting measures, the company said in a securities filing on Wednesday, making it the latest tech company to reduce staff because of growing economic uncertainty. Speaking before the layoff announcement at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland, on Wednesday, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella said that the company was not immune to a weaker global economy.

"No one can defy gravity and gravity here is inflation-adjusted economic growth," he told WEF founder Klaus Schwab in a livestreamed discussion. In a memo to staffers Wednesday, Nadella also cited changing demand years for digital services years into the pandemic as well as looming recession fears. "We're living through times of significant change, and as I meet with customers and partners, a few things are clear," he wrote. "First, as we saw customers accelerate their digital spend during the pandemic, we're now seeing them optimize their digital spend to do more with less."

Microsoft had approximately 221,000 full-time employees globally as of June 30, 2022, according to a US Securities and Exchange Commission filing, with some 122,000 of those staffers based in the United States. Nadella said the job cuts represent less than 5% of the company's total workforce and the reductions will be complete by the end of its fiscal third quarter this year, which ends in March. He said the company will incur a \$1.2 billion charge in its second quarter related to "severance costs, changes to our hardware portfolio, and the cost of lease consolidation." "These decisions are difficult, but necessary," Nadella wrote. Multiple tech companies have made deep cuts to their workforces since the start of the year, as inflation weighs on consumer spending and rising interest rates squeeze funding. The demand for digital services during the pandemic has also waned as people return to their offline lives.

Amazon announced that it plans to lay off 18,000 people and Salesforce said it is cutting 10% of its staff. Facebook parent Meta also recently announced 11,000 job cuts, the largest in the company's history. In October, Axios reported that Microsoft had laid off under 1,000 employees across several divisions. Tech CEOs, from Meta's Mark Zuckerberg to Salesforce's Marc Benioff, have blamed

themselves for over-hiring early on in the pandemic and misreading how a surge in demand for their products would cool once Covid-19 restrictions eased.

While the overall labor market remains tight, layoffs in the tech sector have mounted at a staggering pace. A recent report from outplacement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas found tech layoffs were up 649% in 2022 compared to the previous year, versus just a 13% uptick in job cuts in the overall economy during the same period. Microsoft will announce second quarter earnings on January 24. The software company's Azure cloud computing business drove revenue growth over the three months through September, as sales in its personal computing division decreased slightly.

Even as Microsoft makes significant cuts, Nadella said the company will continue to invest in "strategic areas for our future" and pointed to advances in AI as "the next major wave" of computing. His letter to employees comes amid rumors of a significant investment from Microsoft into OpenAI, the firm behind the AI chatbot, ChatGPT.

### **Sunday, January 22, 2023**

#### **Tech expert explains how Google layoffs will impact Silicon Valley and beyond**

Thousands of tech employees, who were wondering if they might be the next for layoffs in the industry, learned their fate Friday. Google's parent company said it would cut its staff by 6% in its largest-ever round of layoffs. Once sitting atop of the financial mountain during the pandemic, tech companies are feeling the effects of a return to normalcy. The bottom line for giants like Meta, Microsoft and now Google is forcing employees to feel the heat. "The revenue is not justifying the amount that we have," SJSU Professor and Tech Expert Ahmed Banafa said. "This is why you heard at the end of 2022, this talk about how, 'you have to work hard, we're going to evaluate people.' The minute you hear something like this is an indication when the company is looking very carefully at the bottom line and trying to cut costs." And Banafa says those cuts start with employees, like we saw Friday at Google.

"I have a lot of friends that work at Google, so I'm really worried about them," Banafa said. "I'm afraid to call them." Twelve thousand employees from Google's parent company Alphabet join the other tens of thousands recently cut from companies across Silicon Valley as they weigh budget decisions for 2023. This comes just a matter of months removed from the tech sector hiring 200,000 plus employees, more than double what we saw in the previous decade according to Banafa. "During the pandemic, Google increased the number of employees by about 30%. What they're doing is, they're doing what I call, 'the great reset'," Banafa said. "They're going to go back to the 2019 era. And even with the cuts we have, we're not even close to that. We're still above that level."

Banafa says these cuts have a trickle-down effect because thousands of employees now have less money to spend, leading to cuts in other industries. But this is not permanent. Employees are being hired back at other tech companies or in other tech roles in non-tech companies. So this may be a temporary downswing, but Banafa says this isn't 2008 or the "Dot Com, Dot Gone" era and it won't slow down the prominence of Silicon Valley. "We have hundreds and hundreds of companies in Silicon Valley and Silicon Valley has never been defined by one company," Banafa said. "It's just defined by the product and the innovation."

### **Saturday, January 28, 2023**

#### **Rising egg prices prompt some to rent a hen and coop from popular Bay Area business**

The high price of eggs has many folks turning to a unique business that will rent you a chicken and a coop for a week, or even months. It's a story we first brought you last summer but inflation has ruffled some feathers, prompting new interest. Eric Strother was checking in on his backyard henhouse in Sebastopol Friday and all the ladies inside. All the hens are available for rent. "We've had a lot of demand for the hens, booking a lot of rentals in the last couple of weeks," Strother said. We first spoke to Strother last summer about his unique business model only months after launching Rentbackyardhens.com. Since then inflation has driven up the price of groceries, especially fresh eggs. "I think it's getting people to think they can be more self-sufficient looking at their backyards differently, where they had lawns, they're thinking maybe I could put a chicken coop back there," he said.

Strother says all prospective renters are prescreened. If it's a good fit, he'll deliver two egg laying hens, a coop and organic feed anywhere in the Bay Area. Rental prices range from \$175 to \$475 dollars, depending how long you want to rent. Eric gives personal instruction on caring for the hens. There's so much interest, he plans to build more coops soon.

### **Friday, February 3, 2023 2:00AM**

#### **Black-led group strikes deal to revitalize Oakland Coliseum site, could bring \$5B megaproject**

There are plans and a new vision for Oakland's Coliseum complex. An African-American led sports and entertainment group has entered an agreement with the city to help bring affordable housing, retail and possible new professional sports teams to the site. But, the land sale and redevelopment plan could be complicated because the Oakland A's still own half of the property. There's a new plan and vision for Oakland's aging Coliseum complex, which could bring a \$5 billion megaproject to the 200-acre site with sports, entertainment, a hotel and new housing.

"We're talking about affordable housing, so that we can keep those who have lived here in Oakland for generations, so their families can continue to live here," said Oakland Mayor Sheng Thao. The city has entered an exclusive development agreement, with AASEG, a Black-owned development team led by East Oakland native Ray Bobbitt who wants equity to be the focus. "It's an opportunity for the African American Community to create employment in an area where a lot of us grew up in," said Ray Bobbitt from African American Sports and Entertainment Group. Bobbitt's group says the renovated coliseum site could play host to concerts and professional sports teams, including an WNBA franchise.

"Right now, we're trying to get as many bids in so we can potentially have a team here, hopefully there's an announcement shortly," said former WNBA player Alexis Gray-Lawson. The project could bring some much-needed tax revenue to the city. But any plans to redevelop the area would require approval from the Oakland A's, which owns about half site. Team representatives did not attend Thursday's news conference. "This party is going to try and work with the A's to come together, in terms of what we can do to develop this land," said Oakland City Councilmember Noel Gallo. The A's have a lease to play their games at the coliseum until 2024, and are still negotiating with the city to build a new ballpark at Howard Terminal. "Certainly, the A's are welcome to be a part of this, I want to make it clear, they're not being kicked out. We welcome them be a part of revitalization of the site," said Oakland City Councilmember At-Large Rebecca Kaplan.

The group has two years to come up with a redevelopment plan, Ray Bobbitt says the opportunity is amazing for his hometown. "It's a great way to kick off Black History Month, I can't tell you how much it means," said Bobbitt.

### **Tuesday, February 7, 2023**

#### **Special meeting to focus on recent skyrocketing natural gas prices in CA**

The California Public Utilities Commission and the California Energy Commission will hold a special joint meeting Tuesday to address the recent spike in natural gas prices. On Monday, Governor Gavin Newsom sent a letter to Washington D.C. asking for a federal investigation. "I think he has a good case for investigating what happened," said UC Berkeley's Severin Borenstein.

Borenstein is faculty director of the Energy Institute at Haas. He was referring to California Governor Gavin Newsom's call, in the form of a letter, for a federal investigation into natural gas price spikes in California and other West Coast states. Newsom sent the letter to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. "There's some precedent that during the California electricity crisis in 2000/2001 one of the problems was that a pipeline had been disrupted from an explosion, but another problem was the pipeline company was actually restricting the flow on it in order to raise prices even higher," said Borenstein. Since late November

of last year, there have been huge increases in the cost of natural gas. While it is agreed amongst all sides that cold weather played a role here, the governor says, "but those known factors cannot explain the extent and longevity of the price spike."

Borenstein says that spike was around 80% in much of Northern California and 300% in parts of Southern California. He also said that despite there being less pipeline capacity coming into California and storage facilities not being what they were, there should still be questions here. "It could be simply supply and demand but it might not be; and it's really important to be on top of that and to make sure that anyone thinking of manipulating the market recognizes that there is likely to be an investigation," said Borenstein. Californians will soon see some relief on their utility bills from the annual California Climate Credit. As for Tuesday's meeting, officials will explore this price spike and possible protections for ratepayers going forward.

### **Friday, January 13, 2023**

#### **These Bay Area metro areas saw thousands of households move away from 2018 to 2022, data shows**

U.S. Postal Service data analyzed by the ABC7 data journalism team shows San Francisco, Oakland and Berkeley combined had a net loss of at least 250,000 households from 2018 through the end of 2022. It had the fourth-highest loss when comparing metro areas across the country. The San Jose, Sunnyvale and Santa Clara metro area lost more than 93,000 households, while Vallejo lost at least 7,257, Santa Rose and Petaluma lost at least 5,663, and Napa lost at least 3,562. The New York and Jersey City metro area had the highest net loss with a decrease of more than 805,000 households during the last five years. On the opposite end, Houston had one of the biggest gains in newcomers during the five-year time period, with nearly 50,000 new residents and businesses.

Palm Desert, Palm Springs and Walnut saw some of the biggest gains in California. The U.S. Postal Service collects data every time a change-of-address form is filled out, so while it's not capturing every individual moving to a different address, it seems to reinforce trends that other data analysis has found. Kelly Brown is one of those individuals. She said there were many factors in her decision to leave California for Texas, including disappointment that Governor Gavin Newsom wasn't recalled. She was also highly critical of the state's extended COVID-19 lockdown. "I really wanted to be in a place with a lot more freedom, a lot more personal responsibility," Brown said. One year later, she admits to missing her home and friends and the Northern California landscape. She is considering moving back but wants to give Texas one more year.

### **Thursday, February 9, 2023**

#### **25% fewer Muni buses possible as SFMTA faces potential \$214 million deficit**

They say the wheels on the bus go round and round, but soon many of the wheels on city buses could be stopping. According to new projections by the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, the city's transit operator could be facing a budget deficit as high as \$214 million by 2026. A scenario that the agency says could force it to drastically cut services. "Residents who are service workers, residents who are low income people, people with disabilities, seniors who rely on public transportation will be impacted significantly as their transit options will be cut," said Vinita Goyal.

Goyal is the executive director of advocacy group San Francisco Transit Riders. She says the problem is multi-faceted. For one thing, an infusion of federal money from the COVID-era is coming to an end. But Goyal also believes issues like more people working from home and safety concerns have contributed to ridership numbers still falling below pre-pandemic levels.

SFMTA says if these projections become reality, there could be 25% less buses on the roads in just a few years time. "Which can create what we call a death spiral, where they cut service, we have fewer people ride, so there's less fare revenue so they have to cut more service," said Sen. Scott Wiener. Wiener has been fighting to avoid that from happening for months. He tells me that he's been pushing both Gov. Newsom and the California legislature to include funding to help public transit agencies avoid fiscal cliffs. A tough sell in a year where lawmakers expect a deficit of over \$20 billion.

"The governor had a tough budget proposal to make and he proposed cutting about two billion dollars in transit capital funds," Wiener said. But for Goyal, finding some solution is important. Because she says public transit can impact us all. "When we start seeing transportation as a means to connect to other priorities that communities have - to housing, to food justice, to access to jobs," Goyal said.

### **Tuesday, February 28, 2023**

#### **What's in store for San Francisco Bay Area's economy post-pandemic?**

When it comes to the nation's economic recovery from the pandemic, we know the Bay Area has not fared well. When we study the overall economic outlook, one thing is certain: the pandemic brought permanent changes and there is no going back. Here's what we know - the slow recovery is a surprise to no one. The San Francisco metro area which includes the East Bay, Peninsula and some of the North Bay, ranked 24th out of 25 similar regions. "I think most people were unsurprised, if anything maybe surprised that they didn't rank last, so maybe that's a little bright spot," expressed Abby Raisz, research manager for the Bay Area Council Economic Institute.



Only the Baltimore region fared worse. Five times as many people in the entire Bay Area, worked from home from 2019 to 2021. As a result, San Francisco alone has seen more than a 24% increase in office vacancy. "Remote work it will stay with us, but we don't necessarily think we should be talking about 25% vacancy rates for the next decade," anticipated Jeff Bellisario, executive director of the Bay Area Council. The city also saw \$96 million less in sales tax revenue in 2021 versus 2019. "We took a gamble on investing so much in the tech industry and that industry, when a shift to remote occurs once in a life-time pandemic, it's really hard to bounce back from that," added Raisz.

From 2019 to 2021, the number of people who left the Bay Area for another state increased by 33%. It's no secret that much of the Bay Area's recovery will rely on the rebirth of downtown San Francisco. The first strategy, make it clean and safe and they will come. The second strategy is to diversify. "Resilient economies are diverse and there is an opportunity to retain tech, keep tech here and invite in new industries and businesses," explained Katherine Daniel, the director of Economic Recovery Initiatives for the city of San Francisco. There are proposals to offer tax incentives. The third strategy is to find new uses for those old offices spaces that should include housing. Economists are optimistic that the worst is behind us and that Bay Area is still the best investment with tech still leading the way in our recovery.

### **Wednesday, March 1, 2023**

#### **Recent college grads are 'emotionally' unprepared for 9 to 5 jobs, study shows**

Recent college graduates are not "emotionally" ready for the workforce, according to a new study which looked into the mental health and wellbeing of young professionals. Social media, political and cultural divisiveness, pandemic disruptions and more, all make a list of factors impacting the professional lives of young adults who graduated in the last few years. "Because we have this mental health overlay now, anxiety, depression, suicidality and substance abuse, it's just seems to be a lot harder. And the world's kind of a harder place to enter into," Santa Clara University Psychology prof. Dr. Thomas Plante told ABC7 News. "And so it's no surprise that people are going to struggle with this."

Dr. Plante weighed in on a recent survey by the Mary Christie Institute. It sampled 1,005 adults, between 22 and 28 with at least a bachelor's degree, uncovering most are emotionally unprepared to survive in the 9 to 5 workplace. Among key findings, more than half admitted to seeking help for emotional problems including anxiety or depression in the previous year. Another 53% noted experiencing burnout at least once a week. The survey also found 39% blamed their colleges for not teaching them workplace skills or emotional and behavioral standards. "I don't think you can blame colleges for this, because students come to us already burnt out, stressed from high school and everything else," Dr. Plante added. "We have the influences of social media, we have the

influence of gun violence, we have the influence of climate change, we have the influence of discrimination and racism, and we got a lot of things on our plate," he said.

The population also navigated a coming of age during the COVID-19 pandemic, which kept many in the comfort of their own home. "I've had some of these students who come from privilege. They were at their home in Hawaii and they were at their home in Aspen. And they kind of didn't like being off campus, but they could adapt pretty well. They had the technology, they had the resources to be able to adapt," Plante told ABC7 News. "And some people were the exact opposite." Beyond accessibility, all were unable to hone in on typical real-life experiences during the pandemic.

"They're now getting to that real world. They're getting to an office environment where there's a lot of tension with coworkers, there's an opportunity to get fired or get a demotion, and they're just not ready for it," Andrew Crapuchettes, CEO and founder of RedBalloon.work said. RedBalloon is a job board which prides itself on uniting businesses and job seekers who, "Value and preserve the freedom to work." Crapuchettes described, "If you want to spend less time focusing on the current excitement on Twitter or the current political ideologues, and instead want to actually just focus on your job - that's what RedBalloon does."

"If you have an employer where you spend all your time and effort focusing on things that have nothing to do with the business, and you're putting them through DEI training, instead of getting them the training they need to be good at their job - that actually can be demoralizing to people," he added. Though he acknowledges mental health hardships, he also said employers are reporting young adults out of school just don't have a desire to work, or work hard. "What we're hearing over and over again is that young people don't want to work. They simply are a generation that hasn't been hungry, they don't have this desire to work," he described. "And so they'll do interviews with people who simply are like, 'Well, I could show up at 10 if that works,' and the employers like, 'How about eight,' and they're like, 'I just don't see that happening.'"

Whatever the influence, the study points to the prevalence of mental health issues among recent college graduates as they begin their careers. Dr. Plante told ABC7 News, "All of a sudden, boom - they're into the work world that might also involve commute, it might also involve very few vacations or breaks and so forth. And that's going to be, to be fair, that's going to be a transition for anybody. " "We live in the world we live in. We have to adapt and accommodate," he continued. "And we do have a lot of tools in our toolbox that we can offer to help people cope and manage."

**Thursday, March 2, 2023**

**Record-setting year for cruising out of San Francisco predicted**

It's full speed ahead for the cruise industry. The number of cruises departing out of San Francisco is expected to break a record this year. More people are booking cruises now than any other time of the year. Booking are way up according to the Cruise Guy, Stewart Chiron. "All the ships now are fully operational. The occupancies are almost at or exceeding 100%," Chiron said. Rich Yee of South San Francisco goes on a cruise once every two years. However, his last cruise in 2020 ended in tragedy.

Rich lost one of his best friends on that trip, Wilson Maa of South San Francisco. "Best man at my wedding, City College days. I knew him quite well," Yee said. Despite his experience, he plans to one day go back on a cruise. "I still would go on a cruise, yes," he said. But he will be extra cautious. "I would go with the idea that I still would get it. I would just be very careful," Yee said. COVID vaccines and boosters are no longer required except for at a few destinations in Asia.

Andre Coleman of the Port of San Francisco says the city is expecting its second straight record year for cruises. "Coming out of the pandemic in 2022, folks were excited to cruise again," said Coleman. He expects 116 ships to cruise out of San Francisco this year. That's three more than last year's record season. He says each trip contributes about \$500,000 to the local economy.

### **Friday, March 10, 2023**

#### **Silicon Valley Bank shutdown rattles Bay Area start-up owners, tech industry**

Regulators ordered Silicon Valley Bank to be shut down and it has become the second-largest bank failure in U.S. history since Washington Mutual in 2008. The bank failed after depositors -- mostly technology workers and venture capital-backed companies -- began withdrawing their money, creating a run on the bank. In San Francisco on Friday, some people were distraught about the closure of Silicon Valley Bank and were hoping to withdraw money from their accounts. Others were confused, saying they wondered how this shutdown could happen so suddenly.

"It seems like very sudden. Maybe we should give it some time to let things settle out," said startup owner Xian Ke. "There is FDIC insurance (for accounts) up to \$250K, so I don't know how many people are affected. My balance is insured. I wasn't super worried." Startup founder Saureen Shah does not bank with SVB but he said, "We are working on diversifying where we want to put our funds right now." Regulators took over Silicon Valley Bank this Friday morning. It was a surprise move after shares of its parent company, SVB Financial, plunged more than 60% this week. The bank had \$209 billion in assets and \$175.4 billion in deposits at the time of failure, the FDIC said in a statement. It was unclear how much of the deposits was above the \$250,000 insurance limit at the moment.

Silicon Valley was heavily exposed to tech industry and there is little chance of contagion in the banking sector as there was in the months leading up to the Great Recession more than a decade ago.

Major banks have sufficient capital to avoid a similar situation. "The bank communicated a few days ago that it would have to support some of its asset base, sell off some of its assets that are not under the price that they had paid for it-- these assets," said Professor Olaf Groth, UC Berkeley Haas School of Business. Groth said the assets are now underwater and Silicon Valley Bank had to sell them off. "The other problem, is the bank so hopelessly overexposed on cash from all of these entrepreneurs. Ninety-six percent of all its asset base is based on cash from startups," he said.

If you bank or do business with SVB, Groth says there are some important things to consider. "Try to keep calm. The situation's not helped by the panic that the currently unfolding. Let the regulators do their work. Let the bank management do their work. We're going to have to restructure and work this bank out. But quick and hasty withdrawal of everything at this point is not helping anybody," Groth said. Silicon Valley bank was not a small bank, it's the 16th largest bank in the country, holding \$210 billion in assets. It acts as a major financial conduit for venture capital-backed companies, which have been hit hard in the past 18 months as the Federal Reserve has raised interest rates and made riskier tech assets less attractive to investors. Venture capital-backed companies were being reportedly advised to pull at least two months' worth of "burn" cash out of Silicon Valley Bank to cover their expenses.

Typically VC-backed companies are not profitable and how quickly they use the cash they need to run their businesses - their so-called "burn rate" - is a typically important metric for investors.

Diversified banks like Bank of America and JPMorgan pulled out of an early slump due to data released Friday by the Labor Department, but regional banks, particularly those with heavy exposure to the tech industry, were in decline. Yet it has been a bruising week. Shares of major banks are down this week between 7% and 12%.

Customers desperate for answers came to the Silicon Valley Bank branch in Menlo Park to learn the fate of their money after the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation seized all assets following the SVB collapse. Only members of the FDIC were on-site Friday. They explained to customers that the bank will reopen on Monday, at which point customers can get back their money up to \$250,000, the insured amount by the FDIC. Customers with more in SVB will receive a receivership certificate for the remaining amount of their uninsured funds.

However, the reality is, anyone or startup with more than the insured \$250,000 may or may not get that money back. According to SEC filings, that's roughly 95% of money deposited into SVB or more than \$150 billion. "The bank was

instrumental to the whole valley, to many, many start-ups," Instock.com's Yego Anchyskin said. "Not only in Silicon Valley, but all over the U.S. and other countries. Some people may worry, but we prefer not to worry too much, but to think about the best course of action." "Let's see what happens Monday, that's about it," Refiberd's Sarika Bajaj said. "Hopefully everything works out. But, we'll see."

## **Race & Social Justice**

**Thursday, January 26, 2023**

**San Ramon Valley High School issues apology for racist remark made by student during basketball game**

Administrators at San Ramon Valley High school in Danville are apologizing for a racist remark made by students during a basketball game Wednesday night. According to a statement from Principal Whitney Cottrell, the students used racist language toward a member of the Dublin High School team while he was shooting a free throw. "I want to be clear that in no uncertain terms, racist language or racial slurs will not be tolerated, whether our students are in school or elsewhere," she said in a statement sent out to parents Thursday.

"I implore you to use this opportunity to talk to your students about the vital role we all play in interrupting acts of hate and what it means to be an upstander -- someone who intervenes on behalf of someone who is being harmed. We know some students think it's just a funny joke to use racist language and slurs, but that is just not the case. It's offensive, and unacceptable, period," Cottrell's statement continues to say, encouraging parents and students to follow the "if you see something, say something" approach by reporting similar incidents to the school."

"I challenge you all to take an intentional step this week to build environments where everyone feels welcomed and safe. We encourage you to engage in conversation with your students about the damaging effects of slurs and biased language such as the n-word." Cottrell says disciplinary action is being taken.

**Wednesday, February 1, 2023 6:50PM**

**Art by Chinese and Latino immigrant women to be showcased in SF's Lunar New Year Parade**

While recent mass shootings have saddened many of our communities, a new public art project has brought together Chinese and Latino immigrant women designers. Sixteen unique flags--that share stories of resilience and strength--will debut during San Francisco's Lunar New Year parade this weekend. Afterwards, they'll be on display in San Francisco's Chinatown at the Chinese Culture Center. The city of San Francisco is ushering in the Lunar New Year and

its much-loved traditions. This weekend's parade will include 16 Chinese and Latino immigrant women marching with special flags they personally created. Those women include Selena Low and Lupita Iraheta.

It's all part of a special cross cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual art project called "How I Keep Looking Up." Lead artist Christine Wong Yap, a visual artist and a social practitioner who focuses on mental health and belonging, worked closely with the immigrant women from Chinatown and the Mission District. The women are from the Chinese and Latino communities.

"By creating this space, I hope to share with the platform of the parade with our communities, with this whole city, not just our fear, our tragedy, our pain, our grief, but our joy, our love, our connection, our community, and our cultural pride," said Wong Yap. "These beautiful artworks give us so much hope," said Jenny Leung, Executive Director of Chinese Culture Center in San Francisco. It's hope at a time when the community is heartbroken because of the tragedies in Monterey Park and Half Moon Bay. Organizers say these immigrant designers and the flags they created offer healing and hope. "It's about hope, resilience, joys during this time. We want to be able to share these stories. All these flags have such beautiful stories behind them. We didn't want to just share them in times of tragedy but also together in times of hope, joy, and celebration," said Leung.

"It makes me feel hopeful and it's a true testament to the resilience of our community and our immigrant communities because we always continue to look up-- no matter what the obstacle," said Susana Rojas with Calle 24 Latino Cultural District. Whether they are Chinese or Latino --- these artists share stories of resilience. "This flag represents me and my story. When I came to this country, I did not have the hopes to stay," said Lupita Iraheta who came from El Salvador. "Now, I work with Latino families (in San Francisco) -helping provide resources for them."

Iraheta applauds the art project. "For me, it's very important to bring attention to the power of women and the power of all humans," said Iraheta. "I was able to share my story with other artists, other communities who I now consider friends. I'm very proud to share these friendships and these common stories of immigration and resiliency." Through a translator, Selena Low explained the meaning of her flag.

"The bigger hand is mine. The smaller hand belongs to my child. In the two hands is a set of keys. The keys represent all this time coming to America, the difficulties and struggles I've been through as an SRO resident dealing with housing and finding affordable housing for my family," said Low. "The inspiration for this flag comes from my own experience as a tenant organizer. I feel in this city, it's very expensive. It's very hard to find affordable housing. I just want to represent, to give voice to that in this design I created with Christine." Through all the ups and downs, these women, these communities share a collective

experience. And they hope you will recognize it and reflect on it. "We will not only continue to look up. We will strive together and we will win together," said Rojas.

### **Monday, February 6, 2023 10:22PM**

#### **SF synagogue leaders ask for hate crime charges against man following shooting**

Leaders at the Schneerson Synagogue are calling for District Attorney Brooke Jenkins to file hate crime charges against 51-year-old Dmitri Mishin, who was arrested last week for firing a gun inside their synagogue. "We want hate crime charges," said Alon Chanukov, the junior rabbi at the center. "When they actually charge him officially, we hope that is what he is on trial for, and that is what he is accused of." Chanukov says he was made aware of anti-Semitic social media posts on Mishin's accounts. Chanukov says Mishin posted a video of him lighting something on fire outside their synagogue a week before he walked in with a gun and fired blank rounds.

"We didn't think much of it at the time," Chanukov said referring to the video of the fire. "Now we know he has been to our center before. We thought it was maybe a homeless person, or a teenager, but he has a twitter account where he posted starting a fire outside the synagogue" San Francisco police arrested Mishin on Friday. He has not been formally charged. The San Francisco District Attorney's office says they will make a decision on Tuesday on charges. Chanukov says he has seen other anti-Semitic items posted on his twitter.

"His Twitter account has Nazi propaganda," he said. Agencies like the Anti-Defamation League are once again calling for an end to violent rhetoric spread online. "We're at a time where the Department of Homeland Security has told us the U.S. remains in a heightened threat environment," said Seth Brysk, the regional director of ADL. "In particular they cited things like lone offenders and small groups motivated by a range of ideological beliefs." Despite the incident, synagogue leaders are telling their congregation to keep showing up. "We are running full service," Chanukov said. "We don't want this hate to bother us. We are still opening our doors and inviting everyone to come."

### **Friday, January 20, 2023**

#### **Unveiling the secrets of Chinatown's Eastern Bakery in San Francisco**

It's hard to imagine a business that's been around 98 years would have many secrets. But Eastern Bakery in San Francisco's Chinatown has its share. There's the secret recipe behind its sought-after coffee crunch cake. Or it's other secret recipe for its famous mooncakes. But there is another secret that, well, is not so secret if you listen to the owner greet visitors. "What is it that you want?" asks Orlando Kuan to a customer in Spanish. They ask him where he is from and he replies that he's from Lima, Peru. Kuan was born in the South American nation

and emigrated to the U.S. with his family when he was in his 20s. Besides Spanish, he speaks English and Chinese. "I speak two Chinese dialects, both are Cantonese," said Kuan, who was forced to learn Chinese as a child. His is an immigrant success story. One that has added to the mystique of Chinatown.

His family opened Golden Gate Bakery on Grant Street. The bakery is famous for its delicious egg custard tarts, but has such erratic hours of operation that fans created a Facebook page just to let the public know when it's open. Eastern Bakery also has its own cult following. After a 1996 speech in San Francisco, then President Bill Clinton popped in for a mooncake. "He was looking for a mooncake, the lotus one. And we had to cut it for him because he wants to eat it now," said Kuan as he looked at photos of the president's visit that hang inside his bakery. Kuan said Clinton ended up buying a big case of mooncakes. Mooncakes are what makes Eastern Bakery stand out. They are traditionally eaten during the Mid-Autumn Festival, which is typically held in September. It's a time to celebrate the year's harvest with large family gatherings. Kuan is proud of Eastern Bakery's mooncakes. "Even if you go to China you don't get this quality mooncake," he explains.

Kuan said they are the only bakery that makes the filling in the United States, instead of importing it from China. "We grind the lotus seed, cook it for eight hours with vegetable oil and sugar. It has no preservatives. It's a secret recipe," he said. In the 1960s, David Lei worked at Eastern Bakery for the previous owner. He said the baker then, Kwan Yo Shing, guarded the original mooncake recipe. "The baker when he started making the filling, he kicked everybody out and only had one assistant with him because he didn't want anyone else to know the process," said Lei. He remembers lines of workers busy making mooncakes around a big table. Some would make a ball out of the filling, then others would cover the filling with a special dough that was then put inside a mold and banged several times until it took its shape and imprinted a special Eastern Bakery logo on top.

Lei, who went on to be director of San Francisco's Lunar New Year Parade, said working long hours as a dishwasher and preparing mooncakes at Eastern Bakery shaped the course of his life. "I think my success in life was really based on that job. I learned to do tasks that were boring and tried to make them more interesting. It was good for a young person to learn these lessons early in life," said Lei. Mooncakes are not the only lure. Another is the coffee crunch cake. Customers like Winston Fong, stop by for the coffee crunch cake. He said its not only full of flavor but, for him, also nostalgia of coming to the bakery with his father. "We would take BART out here and see some of my uncles and have coffee crunch cake. The sugar, the crunch, and the coffee taste. A lot of nice memories," said Fong. Not surprisingly, Kuan said it's a secret recipe.

"We got it from the previous baker. It's crisp, it's candy on the outside and a high quality sponge cake with coffee whipped cream." Kuan has owned Eastern



Bakery for 37 years. He has not reopened the inside of the store since the pandemic began. Instead, he greets customers from a small table at the door. After 98 years, he does not want to think about what will happen to the bakery when he calls it quits. "I don't know, I have to ask God. It's about 100 years. What do you expect. Nothing lives forever. I will try to stay here as long as possible," he said as he sat next to his table of goodies, singing a traditional Chinese song and chatting with customers in English, Spanish or Cantonese, but always with a smile on his face.

### **Saturday, January 21, 2023**

#### **Berkeley billboards raising awareness about antisemitism left defaced, nonprofit says**

A Jewish nonprofit group says two of their billboards in Berkeley about antisemitism have been defaced in the span of just a couple of days. Drive along the streets of Berkeley and you might see billboards like this one. Designed in hot pink with messages designed to grab people's attention in a bid to fight back against antisemitism. "We have Jewish resources and education for people who just want to know a little bit more," said Archie Gottesman. Gottesman is the co-founder of JewBelong, the nonprofit who has billboards in 22 states. She says two of the group's billboards in Berkeley were vandalized this week after someone spray painted phrases like "Free Palestine" across them. "I believe in human rights for Palestinians and human rights for Israelis, and for peace," Gottesman said. Gottesman says the group has been in contact with the Berkeley Police Department, which is investigating the incident as a hate crime. "It's ongoing, and they're going to try and figure out. I think they're going to be looking at cameras and things like that," she said. Putting the billboards aside, the most recent data from the Anti-Defamation League shows that documented reports of harassment and violence against Jews are the highest on record. Here in the Bay Area, antisemitic flyers have popped up in cities like San Francisco, Palo Alto and Danville. JewBelong says they remain undeterred, and plan on continuing to put up billboards here in the Bay Area and around the country. "I'm not going to go away because there's bullies who were painting over our billboards. We're going to put them up again and come back and be strong," said Gottesman.

### **Friday, January 27, 2023**

#### **Lunar New Year SF: Symphony features all Asian composers for Year of the Rabbit show**

The San Francisco Symphony is staging its annual Lunar New Year show on Feb. 5 starring legendary soprano Sumi Jo, guest conductor Earl Lee and a program that celebrates modern Asian composers. "This concert is especially important for the Chinese and Asian community right now because of the AAPI hate issues that have arisen since COVID, and I think it's an incredible opportunity for the community to gather," said Amos Yang, assistant principal

cellist of the San Francisco Symphony. Yang, who grew up in the public school system in San Francisco, noted the changes in the city post-pandemic and emphasized the need for a show of solidarity now more than ever. "As an Asian American, it's really important to get the message out that we are not alone," he said. "In a city like San Francisco where there is such a large population of Asians, it's a community, and it's strong and it's vibrant, and we should be there for each other."

Earl Lee, assistant conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and current Ann Arbor Symphony music director, leads the orchestra in performing works by Asian composers including An-Lun Huang, Huang Ruo, Tyzen Hsiao, and Zhou Tien inspired by folk traditions and music. Renowned soprano Sumi Jo joins Lee and the symphony in singing works by Du-Nam Cho, Huang Tzu, Hong-ryeol Lee, and Geung-Su Lim. The celebration begins at 4 p.m. with pre-concert lobby festivities that are open to all ticketholders. The preshow features an array of entertainment and activities, such as a numerologist, fortune teller, lion and dragon dancers, and students from the Au Co Vietnamese Cultural Center performing music on traditional instruments.

The concert features a wide range of orchestral works rooted in both Asian and Western musical traditions. Conductor Earl Lee and the orchestra will open the program with An-Lun Huang's energetic and vibrant Saibei Dance from Saibei Suite No. 2. Soloist Sumi Jo joins the Symphony to sing, "Three Wishes of a Rose," by composer Huang Tzu. "This Lunar New Year concert, the symphony and I were talking about the possibility to promote Asian composers of our time who live in the United States," Lee said. "Of course there is some wonderful music by composers in Asia but we're here and I think it would be very meaningful for our community living in San Francisco and all over the United States."

In thinking about the program, Lee wanted to highlight Asian contribution and history to this country. "A funny story... I was talking to Zhou Tien (a composer) and I said, 'I wish there was a piece about railroad workers in the United States,'" said Lee. "And he looked at me kind of dumbfounded and said, 'You know, I have one, right?' So I asked him to immediately send me a score and recording of it. I listened to it and I fell in love with it. I suggested it to the symphony and they liked it, so we're performing it." Proceeds from the event support the symphony's artistic, education, and community programs. This concert is presented in partnership with the San Francisco Arts Commission.

### **Sunday, February 5, 2023**

### **SF Chinese New Year Parade lights up downtown - thousands attend**

In Chinese folklore, firecrackers ward off evil spirits. And after lighting off of hundreds of firecrackers, this year's San Francisco Chinese New Year Parade began. Welcome, to the year of the Rabbit. "We got to see the lion dance and all

the little kids that are dressed up. I love all the rabbit floats. So it is great," said Cyrea Gomez, who lives in San Jose. She came out with her daughter.

Organizers want this event to entertain, but also to educate. From the rabbit floats to the lion dances to the hundreds of children representing various cultural clubs, all the pageantry of Chinese culture and tradition were on display.

"Mostly the dragons and fireworks. That's what I love!" said 11-year-old Kainoa Kalama, who attended with his mother. "I like all the coordinated dances by the schools," said Alana Tillery, a Baltimore resident who was in San Francisco on a business trip. Even the rain, which at times was moderate, wasn't enough to dampen the mood. Thousands lined the streets of downtown San Francisco along the 1.3 mile parade route, which began at Second and Market Streets, ran around Union Square and ended in Chinatown.

"We didn't let the rain stop us from having a good time and stop us from celebrating Lunar New Year in San Francisco. This is amazing and this is one of the best parades that happens here," said San Francisco Mayor London Breed, who was in the parade. In fact, this parade dates back to the 1860s and has become the largest lunar new year parade outside of Asia. California State Senator Scott Wiener, who represents San Francisco, was also in the parade. He says the parade is especially important this year. "This parade is incredibly important for San Francisco and the Bay Area, especially with all of the attacks and violence directed at our Asian American communities. We all need to link arms and rally around and show solidarity. And fun as a community," said Wiener.

### **Saturday, February 4, 2023**

#### **Bay Area school teaching Black history all year long as study finds US students could learn more**

As we celebrate Black History Month, shocking results from a new survey suggest that much more work is needed. And now one Bay Area school is making sure that students learn about Black history every day of the year. At Love Elementary School in Alameda, students are learning early on to stand up for what's right and speak out against what's wrong. "It's not just important to be nice to people. It's important to be anti-racist. So we have lots of books to help them," said fourth grade teacher Ryan Brazil.

Black History Month is a time when many students learn about the influential role Black Americans have had in U.S. History. A new survey suggests there's work to do. The company Brainly questioned nearly 1,300 kids. It found that one in four students doesn't know that Barack Obama was our nation's first Black president. Only about a third of those surveyed knew Rosa Parks played a role in the civil rights movement. Educators at Love Elementary School say they are making sure their students get the best education they can thanks to their social justice curriculum. "We examine how race plays into our society and what we can

do about that. We make sure what we are teaching is culturally relevant and its age appropriate," said Principal Tina Lagdamen. "We want our students have a better world. We believe that through our social justice framework, they can learn about their own history and be more accepting about the diversity and be critical thinkers as part of society."

In Mrs. Brazil's class, students are learning a lot. "We talk a lot of about Martin Luther King Jr. We listen to his speech," Brazil said. The lessons extend beyond the 28 days in February. "Black History Month is 365 days a year," Brazil said. "I've been to every classroom," said Parent-Teacher Liason Mikayla Royal. Royal has two boys in the school district. She also coordinates a program called "Kings and Queens" -- teaching students about African-American history.

"We need to learn about this history. It's been far too long that we haven't been inclusive for the whole year. When you go to school and you're Black, you want to see other things that look like you as well. So, I think everyone should have that in their school," Royal said. Whether it's learning about Black History or about another race or culture or gender, teacher Ryan Brazil said it's about learning to love and appreciate each other. "We're learning about people. All different people. Don't care what color you are or who you love. We're just learning about human beings," Brazil said.

### **Tuesday, February 28, 2023**

#### **SF man says perseverance, tenacity pushed him to become 1 of just 4 Black sommeliers in the world**

ABC7 News is celebrating Black History Month and highlighting people who are working to Build a Better Bay Area. One San Francisco man is doing that through his love for wine, a desire for more diversity in the industry, and a determination to never give up. Do you think you have what it takes to be a master sommelier? You'd have to be pretty good at blind wine tasting. Only about 5% of the people who take the exam pass it.

And Chris Gaither is one of them. "It's something that came with a lot of perseverance and a lot of tenacity," Gaither says. Seeing Gaither in Ungrafted, the San Francisco wine bar he co-owns, it's hard to imagine he didn't know too much about wine until college, when he got a job at a restaurant where he needed to. And he liked it. "Eventually I became one of the people at the restaurant that knew about all the producers," Gaither remembers. "I would have my coworkers asking me, 'Hey, what is this one tastes like? What does that one tastes like? Can you talk to my table over here about this one coming from Campania? What is that Taurasi?'" Chris recalls.

He decided to pursue wine as a career, moving from Georgia to California for a coveted internship at The French Laundry. "From the moment I got here, I was invested," Gaither says. "And then coming to San Francisco, and becoming a

part of the wine community in San Francisco. I really, really enjoyed it and haven't looked back." Gaither set his sights on becoming a master sommelier, a person who specializes in all aspects of wine service and wine and food pairing. He passed the advanced sommelier exam on the first try, and also met Rebecca Fineman, the woman who would become his wife.

"We met when we were waiting for results at the advanced exam," Fineman says. "Which, at the time, was being held at Disneyland." The two ended up getting married, opening Ungrafted and becoming parents, all while trying to become master sommeliers. Rebecca passed the exam in three tries, but Gaither kept coming up short. "It was it was really really difficult," Gaither recalls. "She did most of the work. And I'm truly grateful for it. But she also motivated me. She said, you know you can do this." "I think what I said was, you have to do this," Fineman says.

Master sommelier diploma has four stages that culminate in a three-part exam that covers theory, service and tasting. Gaither says, "You have to taste six wines, blind, not knowing what they are. And you have to describe them in no uncertain detail. And you have to get most of them correct in terms of what you're calling them. And you have to do that in 25 minutes." While Gaither has it down now, that part took him seven tries to pass. And in 2022, 10 years after starting his process, Gaither became a master sommelier. "The first feeling was just relief," Gaither says. "I finally did it done. It's over." Now Gaither, being one of only four Black master sommeliers in the world, is reflecting on his experience in the wine industry. "I've been either the only or maybe one of a handful of Black people at every restaurant I've worked at in my whole career," Gaither says. "And yes, every place I've talked to I felt 'Oh, wow. Okay. All right.' Something in me just wanted to keep going."

Now every Thursday, Chris does blind tastings at Ungrafted for fun, sharing them online with his followers, and inviting others to try in person as a part of the restaurant's wine society and club. A welcome to the world of wine, for those who might not always feel it. "I'm hoping that this shows people that it can be done," Gaither says. "And then this motivates and encourages other people that look like us to do it." In addition to Ungrafted, Chris Gaither and his wife are also opening another wine bar at Thrive City at Chase Center called GluGlu. It's set to open this summer.

### **Monday, March 6, 2023**

#### **Settlement reached in favor of Black Bay Area couple lowballed \$500K in home appraisal**

The subjects of ABC7 News documentary [Our America: Lowballed](#), whose story of an appraiser undervaluing their Marin City home due to alleged racial discrimination that shifted state and federal housing policy, settled a lawsuit against the appraiser. Paul and Tenisha Austin's story went viral when ABC7's

Julian Glover reported in 2021 that the value of their home skyrocketed by \$500,000. The family believed their home appraisal came in low during a refinance, so they "white washed" their home by taking down family photos, artwork, even hair products- and had a white friend stand in.

The appraiser who performed the low appraisal has to pay the Austin's an undisclosed amount of money, required to agree not to discriminate in the future, attend a training session regarding the history of segregation in real-estate discrimination provided by the Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California, complete state-assigned continuing education, and is required to watch Julian Glover's documentary "Our America: Lowballed."

The Austin's previously settled a suit against the appraisal management company that dispatched the appraiser that came in \$500k lower than expected. Paul and Tenisha Austin have shared their story at the White House, California Reparations Task Force and recently the Appraisal Subcommittee. Paul and Tenisha's story has gone on to change state and federal law.