

**KGO-TV/ABC7**  
**SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA**  
**QUARTERLY LISTING OF COMMUNITY ISSUES AND**  
**RELATED PROGRAMMING**  
**THIRD QUARTER – July 1 - September 30, 2023**  
**REGULARLY SCHEDULED PROGRAMMING**

**During the third 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 approximately 4000 e-mails during the 3rd quarter of 2023.

# Community Outreach Events

## 2nd Quarter 2023

### **Oakland Pride Parade: September 10**

KGO proudly sponsored the Oakland Pride Parade for its largest-yet turnout since its inception. The live stream coverage began at 11AM with beautiful weather and excitement in the air for this first-ever combined event between Oakland Pride and PrideFest Oakland. On-camera interviews featured key partners of the parade like Grand Marshal Congresswoman Barbara Lee, Oakland Unified School District, Pixar and Kaiser Permanente and colorful moments of the entire parade. The day's news coverage included reporting from festive music stages following the conclusion of the parade.

### **Allies in Action: Joe Femino**

In celebration of Disability Pride Month, KGO featured Joe Femino and "IN: San Francisco," which helps people with intellectual and developmental disabilities find growth and independence. Femino is Executive Director and co-founded the organization six years ago in order to continue supporting those he believes are often underestimated.

### **Allies in Action: Julia Arroyo**

For Hispanic and Latin American Heritage Month, KGO spotlighted Julia Arroyo and Young Women's Freedom Center (YWFC), which celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. A second-generation immigrant of Mexican-Filipino descent who identifies as Xicana, Arroyo has more than two decades of experience in community, health, rape crisis and work with sexually exploited youth. YWFC provides support, mentorship, training and employment to young women and trans youth who grew up in poverty, experienced the juvenile legal and/or foster care systems or were involved with the criminal justice system.

### **Hip Wah Summer Program: July 14**

KGO's Kristen Sze hosted students with Hip Wah Summer Program from Oakland Chinatown with a behind-the-scenes tour of the newsroom and a live viewing of the 11AM News in the studio. Students Q&A'd with Kristen following the broadcast.

### **AIDS Walk San Francisco: July 16**

KGO sponsored the 37th Annual AIDS Walk San Francisco in Golden Gate Park's Robin William's Meadow. Dan Ashley MC'd the Opening Ceremony and kicked off the big fundraising walk with interviews on the ABC7 9AM News and live stream coverage starting at 10AM. This year, more than \$1 million was raised to support AIDS Walk Foundation's Co-Beneficiary Organizations. Since 1987, AIDS Walk SF has raised more than \$90M for HIV programs and services

in the Bay Area and has grown into the largest and most visible AIDS fundraising event in Northern California

**Stand With Asian Americans: August 3**

KGO's Kristen Sze moderated a panel hosted by nonprofit Stand With Asian Americans about the film "Love in Taipei," based on the book "Loveboat, Taipei" by Abigail Hing Wen. Sze interviewed Wen several years ago when the book was published.

**Salvation Army: August 17**

KGO's Cornell Barnard MC'd "Out of the Fire," a fundraising event benefiting Salvation Army and Culinary Training Academy of Napa. The Academy is Napa County's only certified culinary jobs training program that educates people who have struggled with homelessness and substance abuse. Students develop kitchen skills to support meaningful employment in local hospitality industries while instilling professionalism, confidence and dignity.

**The Jackie Speier Foundation: August 18**

KGO's Luz Peña MC'd The Jackie Speier Foundation's "San Mateo Rising: Ending Child Poverty Summit," a full day dedicated toward addressing the most profound crisis in San Mateo County – child poverty. The Jackie Speier Foundation for Women and Children addresses poverty, lack of housing and childcare and domestic violence.

**Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco: September 8**

KGO's Mimi Kwan was invited to introduce ABC7 retiree David Louie for his Lifetime Achievement Award in Community Building at the Harmony and Bliss Gala, hosted by Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco. Louie was honored for his 50+ years as a media pioneer and his extensive and ongoing community contributions.

**International Women's Forum: September 22**

Members of International Women's Forum Northern California received a behind-the-scenes tour of the ABC7 newsroom and studio. Visitors got a glimpse of how the newscast comes together and to Q&A with KGO's Tracey Watkowski, Reggie Aqui and Kristen Sze.

**San Francisco Pride's Excellence in Golf Awards Reception: September 29**

KGO's Cornell Barnard MC'd San Francisco Pride's Golf Tournament's Excellence in Golf awards, honoring LPGA Professional Jamie Leno Zimron at the Fairmont Hotel. The award recognizes people who have expanded LGBTQ+ inclusion in the international world of golf and sport.

**San Francisco Pride's Golf Tournament: September 30**

KGO's Paige McIntyre, Joe Brooks and Brandy Sotelo are teaming up to compete in the charity golf tournament benefiting San Francisco Pride. As the golf world's biggest and best LGBTQ+ event, the tournament partners with the Professional Golfers Association and First Tee of San Francisco, an international youth development organization.

## **PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **3rd Quarter 2023**

- **AIDS Walk San Francisco**
- **Cycle of Hope, Habitat for Humanity East Bay Silicon Valley**
- **Defining Courage**
- **Hispanic and Latin American Heritage Month**
- **Make A Wish Foundation**
- **Mill Valley Fall Arts Festival**
- **Oakland Pride and PrideFest Oakland**
- **Project Roadblock**
- **Starlight Foundation**



***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.***

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**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.”**

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**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**

**Friday, July 14**

**Data shows about half of calls for wheelchair rideshares go unanswered, stranding disabled users**

Ridesharing has become a convenient way of life, but that's not so for everyone. Passengers who use a wheelchair often cannot get picked up at all. In California, the numbers show Uber and Lyft provide service for only about half the calls they get for wheelchair accessible vehicles. The Americans with Disabilities Act says companies that serve the general public must provide equal service to the disabled. But that isn't always happening in real life -- those who need the most help to get around are getting the least help when it comes to rideshares. An East Bay viewer lost use of her legs three years ago. And while others can hop in an Uber in minutes, she's often left stranded. LuTillion Maxon recalls the day she dared to go out to a movie. "Waited three hours..." she said. "People at the movie theater kept coming like, 'Are you OK?'" Maxon needs a wheelchair to get around, so she got to the movies that afternoon in an Uber WAV, a wheelchair accessible vehicle.

The drop off was fine -- the problem was getting home. "It kept saying, 'No vehicles available, no vehicles available,'" she said. While regular Ubers picked up passengers in minutes, Maxon waited with her mom in the lobby -- for hours. Daylight faded. The staff offered help. "'Is there anything we could do? Are you OK, everybody was wondering... what's going to happen?' Never got a vehicle," Maxon said. It wasn't the only time she'd been stranded. "Trying to go to work, didn't get an Uber, missed work because I couldn't get to work," she said. Maxon works in an Oakland salon. Hair styling from a wheelchair is no problem -- getting there is. "If I was not in this wheelchair, and I needed a regular Uber, I'm sure it'll be no way I will have this issue. I'd probably would get a driver a million times," she said. "All people with disabilities are looking for is the same access anybody else has, to be able to pick up the app, call for a ride, have it arrive in a reasonable amount of time... unfortunately, that's not the experience most people have," said Autumn Elliott of Disability Rights California.

San Francisco's Transportation Authority has studied rideshare impacts -- it found Uber and Lyft provided wheelchair accessible vehicles for less than half the requests they received in 2019, while they fulfilled nearly all requests for regular rides. "As a public accommodation, you can't be discriminating against this population. You should be aspiring to setting targets that are equivalent so somebody who's calling up and requesting a wheelchair access vehicle does not have to wait three hours," said Joe Castiglione of the San Francisco County Transportation Authority. The data also indicates disabled folks have given up. Requests for wheelchair rides have plunged, from 44,000 in 2019 to just 8,500



this year. "One might conclude that people have stopped requesting trips because the service is so terrible," Castiglione said. Instead, many disabled passengers rely on Paratransit services, which require reservations at least 24 hours ahead and have many stops. So, to improve rideshare service for those in wheelchairs, state lawmakers passed the "Access For All" Act five years ago. It allows rideshare companies to add a surcharge of 10 cents to the fare for every ride. Companies can keep some of money if it is used to improve disabled access.

Those dimes really add up. The city's Municipal Transportation Agency says Uber pocketed \$14 million and Lyft \$7 million. But Uber and Lyft haven't given many rides for that money, both saying the money has mainly been used for outreach to disabled people and to pay contractors to supply wheelchair accessible vehicles for their platform. It hasn't helped folks like Maxon. "I kept calling for like four hours, never got an Uber over to me," she said. And when she tried using Lyft instead, the company sent her an email: she could get wheelchair rides but only in San Francisco. She lives in San Leandro. Lyft did not respond to 7 On Your Side's multiple requests for comment. An Uber spokesperson said: "Uber is committed to developing solutions that support the ability to easily move around our communities. As with all rides, Uber WAV rides are completed by independent providers and Uber cannot guarantee their availability." Maxon isn't waiting. She isn't going to movies, isn't hailing rides. "I'm crying out for help because this is a problem. I need help," she said. She schedules each outing, but she makes it to work. The state Public Utilities Commission regulates rideshare companies and it won't let the public or city officials see all of the company data, citing privacy rules. But there's a push for more transparency -- and more services to make on-demand rides a reality for those in a wheelchair. We'll keep on the story.

### **Friday, July 21**

#### **Couple waits a full year for parts to replace Prius' stolen catalytic converter**

Thieves continue to prowl Bay Area streets in the night, stealing catalytic converters. It's bad enough if yours is stolen but worse -- they are expensive to replace if you can find one. An East Bay couple waited a whole year as their car sat idle the entire time. Their Toyota Prius was in mint condition one day, then totally disabled the next. Their dealer told them driving it would damage the engine, but, "Sorry, there's no parts." They tried just about everything to get the car running again. Every day for nearly a year, Joan O'Henley gazed at her shiny blue Toyota Prius parked in front of the house. It was perfect. "I just felt sad when I looked out the window and saw, you know how perfect it was," she said. "Except unusable. So it just made me feel really sad." Joan hadn't driven the car since last July, when she started the engine one morning and it made an ear splitting noise. "Neil heard it, and he said, 'What was that,' and I said, 'I didn't do anything. I just started the car,'" she said.

Joan and her husband quickly realized thieves had cut the catalytic converter off their car -- the same crime that hit friends, neighbors and thousands of drivers across the country. Now new converters can be hard to find. "They told us they thought it would take a month to two months to get the parts," Neil O'Henley said. But summer turned to fall, and still no converter. "They basically told us, there's a huge backlog. Huge. One number was 20,000," Neil said. They contacted Toyota headquarters in Texas. The company kept promising a new part, but also kept delaying estimated delivery. "They said November, then they said January, then they said March, then June..." he said. Meanwhile, the couple bought a new car. They considered selling the Prius minus the converter. Someone suggested scrapping it for parts. They even thought of towing it to Nevada which has looser regulations. All the while, the car sat idle.

Neil kept charging the battery by dropping an extension cord out a window. "I didn't want to leave a wire laying on the ground, so I just put it out the second story window and strung it through a tree," he said. Around them, thieves kept stealing converters. "I woke up when I heard a sawing sound. And I rolled down the shade and they saw me and they basically-" Neil said. "They flashed a spotlight in his face and I said, 'Neil, just get down,'" Joan said. Thieves saw the Prius and tried to steal their converter again! Of course it wasn't there. "And they're very very quiet, they had like a Tesla or something... no lights, no sound, no engine..." Neil said. "At least we didn't get shot." They'd just heard about an Oakland man who was shot and killed while trying to stop a theft. "I was angry with thieves. How come the police and the state, you know, they can't stop this? They know they can sell these for the precious metals," he said. The couple also complained to Toyota -- saying the company was putting new converters into new cars before replacing stolen ones. "It's like, oh, let's sell some more new hybrids," Joan said.

They contacted 7 On Your Side, and we asked Toyota about this crisis. In a statement, the company said, in part, "Toyota recognizes the impact these thefts and wait-times have on our customers." The statement said Toyota's supplier has nearly tripled its production capacity since April, which should reduce the backlog. But after nearly one year of waiting, Joan and Neil got the good news. "We have a catalytic converter for you...! it was surreal," Joan said. The Prius is back on the road. "So now I feel very satisfied. Except we're worried ... it's gonna get stolen again," Joan said. A spot check by 7 on your side found three Bay Area Toyota dealers telling us they had converters in stock -- most others had wait times up to one year. But it's kind of hit and miss, they don't have many and they go fast.

### **Wednesday, July 26**

**Certificates of Deposit offer great rates for your savings, but some have a catch**

Bank certificates of deposit are paying as much as 4 and 5% now, but there are some catches you need to know about. Walnut Creek wealth advisor George Noceti helps people with their investments every day. Here he explains the traditional CD. "They usually have a fixed rate and a fixed term. And if you leave your money there for 3 months, 6 months, 9 months, 12 months, up to up to 5 years, you're locked in and then at the end of that term you get your principal back and you get whatever the CD rate is at that time," he says -- but there is a catch. "If you take the CD out early, if you need the money earlier than what the term commitment is, there's a penalty." It can cost you all the interest you earned and more. However Noceti says there is a "work around," but there is a catch with that, too. "If you want a CD where there's no penalty to take it out early, you're just going to get a lower rate," he said. "And then there's a bump-up CD, also just a term, but it's when you're in a raising interest rate environment. You can request the bank to 'bump it up' at the higher rate." But again you are going to start with a lower interest rate than you would receive on a traditional CD. There are other options out there, too. The important thing to keep in mind is these are not your grandparents' CDs and you need to make sure you know the rules before putting your money down.

### **Saturday, August 5**

#### **Bank of America imposters renew Zelle scam, telling victims 'ignore fraud warnings'**

A notorious Zelle scam is back, as bank imposters trick customers into sending them money through the quick pay app. Banks are now sending fraud warnings to Zelle users -- but it may not be enough. Crooks are always one step ahead of the banks. Imposters know Bank of America is sending out warnings when it detects a suspicious money transfer. But the imposters simply tell victims: you're gonna get an alert. Just ignore it. Rachael Adler believed the man on the phone was really from Bank of America. "The guy was very friendly, calm, kind, clearly educated... it was very creepy in retrospect," she said. Adler had just received a text -- did she charge \$432 at a Walmart in Texas? She replied "no." Her phone rang. "Hi, this is the Bank of America fraud department," said the person at the other end of the line. The man told her someone was using Zelle to withdraw money from her account. "Now I see Zelle for \$2,000 taken out of your account. Did you just do that?' 'No.' 'I also see one for \$1,500. Did you Zelle anyone for \$1,500?' 'No, I did not,'" Adler recounted.

The man told her she had to quickly send the money back to herself through Zelle. She followed his instructions. Adler had no idea the man was an imposter, and she was really sending her money straight to the crooks. Then, the imposter went one step further. He told her she'd be getting a fraud alert from Bank of America -- but she should just ignore it. "You're gonna get a text saying that we've detected suspicious transfer activity, that it could be possible fraud or scam. Don't worry about that. We're taking care of that right now in this phone call," Adler said she was told. Sure enough, a real Bank of America fraud alert came on her phone -- "Rachael Adler we have detected suspicious transfer

activity..." Just like the man said! She ignored it. Another text said "beware," and, "did she still want to proceed?" She replied "yes." And \$5,500 was gone. "It's a hell of a lot of money. It's stunning," she said.

Bank of America started sending fraud alerts to Zelle users after the scam exploded last year. Now imposters are using them as part of the scheme. "I trust nothing that the bank sends me right now. Like nothing," Adler said. Bank of America sent 7 On Your Side this statement: "Bank of America will never ask a client to send money to themselves or anyone, ever. Spoofing and fraud communications often have urgency, typos, asking clients to send money etc. They use more and more sophisticated methods to appear to be authentic from the bank. Bank of America prioritizes client protection and works with clients to mitigate risks. When sending money using Zelle, clients receive several messages alerting them to red-flags that indicate a scam. Clients with questions should call the customer service number on their debit or credit card or bank statement to confirm any questionable or fraudulent inquiries." The best way to protect yourself is never to respond to a text message or phone call that seems to be from your bank. If you do get any kind of fraud alert, call your bank directly using a phone number you know is real.

### **Friday, August 11**

#### **CA couple loses homeowners' insurance after draining their swimming pool to save water**

It's becoming harder and harder to get a homeowner insurance policy in California. State Farm and Allstate stopped writing new policies, citing wildfire risks. Others are limiting new customers. And now, several viewers tell 7 On Your Side that AAA is not renewing their longtime policies - and it has nothing to do with wildfires. These homeowners were surprised to find out aircraft and satellites were taking photos over their homes. They were baffled to find out the reasons AAA dropped their coverage -- everything from clutter in the yard to draining a swimming pool to save water. When we last met CJ Sveen of Oakley, AAA had just notified him it would not renew his homeowner insurance. AAA said he had debris and hazards in his yard. "Apparently they have some pictures and they noticed clutter," Sveen said. "I find that offensive. How dare you judge me because of my stuff!" Sveen said the yard is his workshop -- not a hazard. Sveen said, "There was no chance to mitigate, clean up, do anything, it was just, you're fired."

George Nadeau of San Rafael also got a non-renewal notice -- but this time, AAA said it was because his roof had "exceeded its useful life." "I think obviously that their drone surveillance was bogus," Nadeau said. "And that's crazy. We have one of the best maintained residences in the neighborhood. And we've kept very good care of our roof!" Nadeau sent invoices to a local agent showing he had a new roof installed on his home seven years ago and a \$4,000 upgrade just last March. He also sent photos of the finished roof. "We've lived in this house for 50

years and have maintained our roof in a very effective way. So to have an insurance company telling me that I'm not doing my job is a little bit annoying," Nadeau said. The company said the decision was final. Nadeau appealed to a local agent. "And she literally said they're looking for excuses to eliminate homeowners policies in this area. I'm 85 years old. I feel like I'm a victim of some kind of conspiracy. Give us some consideration for the good citizens we've been all these years," Nadeau said. AAA cited a puzzling reason for not renewing Marilyn Smith's policy. She and her husband had drained their swimming pool to conserve water... during the drought!

"I think I was in so much shock, I couldn't believe it," Smith said. "I mean, we were both in shock. Because the pool is empty. What's that got to do with canceling your home insurance?" The couple drained the pool after their grandchildren grew up and moved away. "We decided well, we don't use it you know, the kids have moved in different states... that saves us on maintenance... and then just the water, because it does evaporate, so you have to be putting water in there every couple of days... and that's not a small little pool. Water was becoming very expensive," Smith said. Now they use the empty pool like a hothouse to grow potted tomatoes and lettuce. But the AAA notice said the pool showed signs of "deferred maintenance." "She just flat out said because the pool was empty," Smith said. "I don't understand what their problem is. Because you empty a pool and you're saving on water." CSAA Insurance Group, the parent of AAA, said, "CSAA Insurance Group has provided homeowners insurance to AAA members in Northern California for more than 40 years. Over that time, we've helped thousands of AAA members recover from home damage and disasters.

To continue offering industry-leading insurance coverage, we must periodically evaluate our exposure to risk. After careful review of our exposure, we continue to offer insurance throughout Northern California as long as our underwriting criteria are met. CSAA Insurance Group evaluates many sources of information to assess the condition of properties we insure, including third-party proprietary aerial imagery captured by fixed-wing aircraft and satellites. Out of respect for customer privacy, CSAA Insurance Group does not comment on specific situations or policies, but we will follow-up to better understand these concerns." Consumer advocate Amy Bach of United Policyholders said insurance companies are using new technology like drone surveillance to look for potential risks. "Insure tech tools are scaring insurers," Bach said. "It's just very easy now for them to put a customer in the discard pile based on this tech information that they're using and buying. So far it's not really helping the consumer." However, it's not all gloom. After searching for weeks, Sveen found a new and cheaper policy offered by a company to members of the military, veterans and their families. So did Smith and her husband. And after Nadeau sent in all those photos of his roof, AAA reinstated his policy after all.

**Thursday, August 17**

## **Maui visitors look to travel insurance, credit card protections for canceled trips**

Edwin Sanchez and his wife had a big trip planned for Maui, then the current wildfire crisis hit. Sanchez cancelled his trip. His airline giving him credit, but his Airbnb host said "no" to a refund, and Airbnb backed her up. "The owner said that because we are supposed to go to Kihel," Sanchez says, "the owner was saying that Kihel was not affected by the fire." Edwin isn't alone. Many would-be visitors to Maui are struggling to get refunds. Which is why Insuremytrip.com's Meghan Walch says travelers should consider insuring their vacations. "If you are making a financial investment, you never know what's going to happen between now, and when you take your trip," Walch says. Syndicated travel columnist and consumer activist Ed Perkins says before buying read the fine print. "Most travel insurance is what they call 'named peril' insurance, which means it covers only the contingencies that are specified in the fine print," Perkins says. Senior industry analyst at Bankrate.com Ted Rossman says you may already have travel insurance through your credit card. "Even some no-annual-fee cards have these," Rossman says. "Certainly, if you're paying something like a \$95 annual fee you probably qualify, and then often the best perks are those really high-end cards. AmEx Platinum, Chase Sapphire Reserve, Capital One Venture X -- they tend to have even more generous benefits."

### **Friday, August 18**

## **'A mosquito must've landed on a power line': Why power keeps shutting off in CA**

As California braces for the peak of wildfire season, PG&E is switching strategies to avoid sparking another blaze. The utility has focused less on tree trimming and more on circuit breakers that cut power to a possibly damaged power line. But in the East Bay, residents say the system is too sensitive, causing constant power outages. Folks just want answers from PG&E and the utility says it's all about wildfire safety. PG&E is using enhanced safety sensors that de-energize a power line in less than one second if something hits the wire -- like a tree branch. But locals say it keeps shutting their power for no apparent reason. The running joke? "A mosquito must've landed on a power line." Karen Snow woke up to the telltale sound of a power generator down the street. "I hear my neighbor's generator down the hill and I'm like, 'Ugh,'" Snow said. "Here we go. Here we go again. Power's out." It was yet another power outage in her Lafayette neighborhood.

The power keeps going out at Richard Welty's home too. "In a period of eight days, it was off three different times," he said. "And nine times in about a month and a half or two months. It's unacceptable." Steve Lovell lost count of outages that began in early July. "It just interrupts your entire day," Lovell said. "And I wait around and it's like, well, is it gonna come on, is it gonna come on? And you don't

know." "So there's been absolutely no communication to say, hey, we're sorry, your power went out, we want to tell you why," Snow said. PG&E says it's trying to prevent wildfires in high risk fire zones, like the woodsy areas of Contra Costa County. It cut back on tree trimming but enhanced its "power line safety settings," or EPSS. If something like a tree branch hits a power line, sensors instantly cut power to the wire, preventing a potential wildfire, especially on hot windy days. But... "It's not a hot day, there's no wind..." Snow said. The summer has been mild. Residents say sensors seem to shut their power for no reason.

"If anything bumps it, including just a bird flying into it, it turns the power off. So I think that's what's happening now," said Welty. "That was the joke initially, like, 'What, did a mosquito hit the wire?' I mean, what's going on here?" said Snow. PG&E says it's adjusting the sensors but didn't say if it found any real damage to power lines to warrant the outages. Safety sensors now control power flow to 1.8 million households across Northern California. Last weekend it cut power to 8,000 Danville residents for six hours overnight. Katy Morsony of The Utility Reform Network says PG&E should insulate power lines instead. "This is supposed to prevent ignitions from occurring, but it's a major inconvenience on customers. And it also can be a safety issue for people that rely on their electricity for medical devices," she said. But PG&E says the sensor program is working. Power line ignitions dropped 68% last year.

Still, a PG&E report shows outages went up 44% last year, and lasted 71% longer compared to a five-year average. PG&E tells 7 On Your Side: "The number of outages residents in this area are experiencing is unacceptable. While we are doing everything we can to improve reliability, having the power turn off at the first sign of a hazard is preventing potential wildfires." Residents say strengthen power lines, don't shut them off. "The frustration just builds, right? And you just become too. like, I really have no patience for this anymore," Snow said. PG&E has agreed to meet next Tuesday with residents of Lafayette, Moraga, Orinda and others who have experienced repeated power outages. They promise to answer all your questions about what's causing the outages and what it's doing to prevent unnecessary interruptions. Customers who have been affected by the recent power outages can meet with PG&E in person on Tuesday, August 22 from 5 - 7 p.m. at the Veterans Memorial Center 3780 Mount Diablo Blvd.

### **Sunday, August 27**

#### **FDA warns against using certain eye drops over microbial contamination**

The US Food and Drug Administration has issued a warning against buying or using certain eye drops from Dr. Berne's and LightEyz due to microbial contamination. The drops contain methylsulfonylmethane or MSM, a naturally occurring organosulfur compound popular in complementary and alternative medicine, as the active ingredient. The FDA says Dr. Berne's agreed to recall its MSM Drops 5% Solution after sampling and testing showed contamination with

bacteria and fungus. Samples of LightEyz MSM Eye Drops - Eye Repair were found to have four types of bacteria in them, the FDA says, but the company has not responded to the agency's requests to discuss concerns or recall products. "These products are unapproved drugs and illegally marketed in the U.S.," the FDA said in an announcement Tuesday. "There are no legally marketed ophthalmic drugs that contain MSM as an active ingredient."

Consumers who have these products should discard them. "Using contaminated eye drops could result in minor to serious vision-threatening infection which could possibly progress to a life-threatening infection," the FDA announcement says. No adverse events have been reported in connection with the products, but anyone who has signs of an eye infection should seek medical care immediately. Health care professionals and consumers can report adverse events or quality concerns with any medicine to the FDA's MedWatch program.

### **Friday, September 8**

#### **Consumer groups ask CA governor to halt insurance industry discussions, say they've been left out**

Information floating around Sacramento points to an industry push for a major change in California's insurance regulations. "Rumors are abundant, but the thread through all of this is the consumer groups -- we have asked -- have been literally excluded from the conversation and negotiations by the insurance industry," says Robert Herrell, head of the Consumer Federation of California. Ralph Nader is concerned, too. "So this means that a lot of the deals that are going to be cut will be cut in secret. There won't be public hearings and groups like Consumer Watchdog will be put on the sidelines," he says. However, industry group the Personal Insurance Federation of California says: "We do not and have not had a legislative proposal." Consumer groups aren't so sure, and sent a letter to Governor Newsom and legislative leaders asking for a halt to discussions.

"This is no way to run a country. This is no way for the state of California to conduct its business," Herrell says. There is also a memo being passed around in which a handful of business groups say Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara supports an industry proposal. 7 On Your Side asked the Commissioner's office and did not get an answer to that question but were told in part: "... Many claims are flying. The Commissioner is actively at work on behalf of consumers and moving at the speed of good decisions on what's best for the health of the market." Congress-member John Garamendi was California's first Insurance Commissioner and wrote much of what regulates the industry today. "The Governor seems to be fearing a crisis," Garamendi says. "The legislature doesn't know what to do and the insurance industry seems to be writing the playbook." Garamendi says any proposal passed in this legislative session would be bad news for consumers. "If they succeed, guaranteed California policy holders are going to once again be screwed by the insurance industry," he says.



# Education

Tuesday, July 18, 2023

## **SFSU summit provides college prep to low-income, 1st generation students of color**

San Francisco State University and the organization 10,000 Degrees partnered on Tuesday, highlighting pathways to college for high school students who identify with historically marginalized groups, hit hardest in the pandemic. Access to resources, advising and assistance were all part of the day's agenda. The focus on college resources for rising high school seniors at San Francisco State University brought a full College Opportunities Summit session of 80 students with their sights set on their futures. Rising high school senior, Angelica Lamadora told ABC7 News, "I don't really have parents that have gone to college here. So it's really nice to know more about majors and colleges here in California."

Lamadora's story mirrors many in the crowd. 10,000 Degrees, behind the summit, is known for supporting low-income, first generation students of color. Maria Hernandez, the organization's Director of Curriculum and Engagement explained, "I think it's just about, Can we get students here? Are they learning something? Are they walking away with a new resource or tip that can get them through their senior year and this application process?" "I think it's about even just getting students connected with us. Do they trust us? Do they know how to find us," she continued. Part of the partnership with SFSU marks direct reflection of the college.

"San Francisco State has a history of social justice. And social justice through education is the best way that we could put our words to practice," Eurania Lopez with SFSU's Undergraduate Admissions and Recruitment said. The day's agenda was dedicated to creating a pathway and providing much needed college prep-including support with college applications, financial aid, and more. "I'm really glad that I'm able to pursue further education," Lamadora admitted. "Because I know that my family in the Philippines, they may need to pay for the education and things like that." SFSU President Dr. Lynn Mahoney with the keynote speech, making her message clear.

"It's really important to us that we give them the right welcome, the right information," Mahoney said. "And then I want to share with them that I was where they were, 40 years ago. Terrified. I didn't know if I could afford college. I didn't think I was ever going to pass chemistry and I had all these questions also." She continued, "And so I hope to reassure them and just make them feel welcomed." She said if the summit is a first step toward success, the effort

shouldn't stop here. Additional summits are scheduled in various Bay Area locations.

### **Friday, August 4, 2023**

#### **'He was a superhero': Education pioneer Dr. Marcus Foster's legacy celebrated at Oakland exhibit**

The Marcus Foster Education Institute (MFEI), an East Bay nonprofit dedicated to advancing equity in schools, celebrates a double milestone this year: 50 years of transformative work in education and the centennial birth anniversary of its founder, Dr. Marcus A. Foster. A special exhibit titled "Audacity to Believe" is on display at the African American Museum and Library in Oakland, showcasing the life and enduring legacy of the pioneering educator. The exhibit features intimate images of Foster in the classroom, newspaper clippings chronicling his life and the cap and gown he wore when he became Dr. Foster. "To me, he's a superhero. More than just fighting for education for our children, I feel like he laid a blueprint for an entire community to come together and support education," said Patanisha Williams, an Oakland native who curated the exhibit.

Foster believed that all students could be taught, regardless of circumstances. This philosophy continues to reverberate through the halls of schools nationwide and is the guiding principle of MFEI. Foster's extraordinary career saw him appointed as the superintendent of schools in Philadelphia, making him the first Black person to lead a major school district in the United States. His ability to build a coalition brought him to Oakland in 1970 to run the school district here. Many of Foster's ideas, seen as progressive during his time, remain relevant today. His book "Making Schools Work" is among the items on display at the exhibit. "In studying Dr. Marcus Foster, I was pretty amazed at how current his solutions are," Williams said.

Retired Oakland teacher Dr. Denise Saddler agrees: "If you look at Dr. Foster's actual words, in his speeches, in his book, in his writings, I think there's a roadmap for us to continue to work on." Unfortunately, Foster's life was tragically cut short when he was assassinated in November 1973 by two members of a left-wing extremist group who took issue with his policies. He had been the superintendent of Oakland School District for three years. His tombstone simply reads, "He gave his life for the children of Oakland."

Today, MFEI carries on his legacy by providing scholarships and internships to students of diverse backgrounds and funding programs that make a tangible impact on communities. Beneficiaries of these programs like Yulissa Diaz and Alexandria Hamilton know that value firsthand. They're now walking in Foster's footsteps. "I've just been inspired by all of the support and help that I've gotten from my community and from organizations like Marcus Foster that has sparked creativity in my life," said Hamilton. Diaz added, "It's very inspiring to question

systems and to really look into the community for knowledge and for solutions that we know we have." The "Audacity to Believe" exhibit is open now and runs through the end of November.

### **Monday, August 7, 2023**

#### **Optimism, excitement as 34,000 Oakland Unified students return to school**

They're back! Teachers, students and staff across 77 Oakland Unified elementary, middle and high schools are marking day one of the 2023-2024 school year. On Monday morning, campuses welcomed 34,000 kids. Among them was fourth grader Marguerite Kott who told ABC7 News, "I got up and then I got dressed. Then I went downstairs and I ate breakfast. And then got my backpack ready and then I started walking to school." Fourth grader Nyla Muhammad shared, "Best thing about being back is seeing my friends." "What I'm looking forward to is learning other stuff," she continued.

This is the first actual opening day with no imposed COVID restrictions. "Cause even last year when we opened we were still like, 'Do we let parents back on campus?' We have to invite them in and then ask them to leave. Like this time we let them come and mingle in the campus theater and our drums, the way we used to do it," explained the founding principal of EnCompass Academy Elementary, Minh-Tram Nguyen. Along with the backpacks and lesson plans, everyone is carrying with them hope for a seamless start. This comes after an admittedly rough last school year which ended in a nearly two-week-long teachers' strike. "Last year was a bit rough across the district," OUSD Communications Director John Sasaki told ABC7 News. "We had some incidents that we didn't want to see. We had, obviously, still a lot of pandemic issues were going on. And so we're really looking forward to having brand new start this year." Sasaki said OUSD still has several dozen teachers' openings, but added the district is in better shape than many others. OUSD recently had a New Teacher Institute where they trained about 160 or so new teachers. Parents explained they're pushing forward with optimism. Sudan Muhammad explained, "She'll make new friends... learning... the whole school experience..."

"I went here four years ago," he joked, as he stood outside of Claremont Middle School. "But no, I was an alum here and Claremont was a great experience for me." Crispin Kott shared, "Hopefully everything goes smoothly for everybody. We're looking forward to seeing all the teachers and all of her classmates and can't wait for her to get started." On Monday morning, the OUSD Superintendent Dr. Kyla Johnson-Trammell, Board of Education Directors, even the front office staff from the Golden State Warriors joined other district partners, touring eight different campuses - in a sense, rolling out the red carpet for the morning's big return. Dr. Johnson-Trammell told ABC7 News, "You always have to look forward. You always have to have a spirit of optimism and hope. Even with a lot

of the challenges, everyone's heart is really about how to improve things for students and families. So, that needs to be the focus and that'll continue to be the focus." "We have some intelligent children," Parent Sudan Muhammad reflected. "So, waiting for them to learn more."

### **Wednesday, August 9, 2023**

#### **Silicon Valley-based energy company launches internship program honoring late Colin Powell**

As America's top colleges wrestle with creating a more even playing field, Silicon Valley is doing the same. For decades, top companies only recruited from leading universities. A survey this summer from educational tech company Chegg shows that Facebook's top feeder schools for interns are: Stanford, UC Berkeley, Carnegie Mellon, Waterloo in Canada and MIT. But San Jose-based green energy company, Bloom Energy, is trying to change that model with a new partnership with a community college, the same one that the late Secretary of State Colin Powell attended. Bloom Energy's founder and CEO, KR Sridhar, and Bloom summer intern, Nymul Islam, joined ABC7 News Anchor Kristen Sze on our weekday 3 pm. show "Getting Answers" on Tuesday to discuss this innovative internship program that aims to diversity the Silicon Valley workforce. In this first year of this pilot program, 11 students from the City College of New York were brought to Bloom's San Jose headquarters this summer to live and work as a cohort group.

Alongside other interns from leading universities, they learned skills in mechanical, electrical and manufacturing engineering, human resources, marketing, finance, legal, business and data analytics and information technology. Bloom Energy partnered with the Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership at the City College of New York, from which the late Secretary graduated in 1958. Powell was on Bloom's board and its mission and values officer before his passing in 2021. "We're proud to honor General Powell's legacy and continue his mission, by providing a platform for future leaders," Sridhar said. For Islam, who grew up studying by candlelight whenever electricity would go out in Bangladesh, spending this summer working in clean technology has been transformative. "When I immigrated to the U.S. and found out they had constant 24/7 electricity, I was amazed by it." Islam says he had never left New York City before this internship, and this experience has opened the door to future career opportunities in Silicon Valley. Bloom Energy hopes to continue the program yearly and inspire other tech companies to expand its pipeline of diverse talent.

### **Tuesday, August 15**

#### **How will AI be taught in classrooms? These Bay Area teachers are integrating it into lessons**

A free classroom-ready resource aims to provide basic AI awareness for high school students in the Bay Area and throughout the country. Victor Lee, an

Associate Professor in the Graduate School of Education at Stanford University, wants to bring the conversation about AI into classrooms. Lee and a team helped develop what's called CRAFT, a free, public curriculum resource for high school teachers regardless of subject. The goal is to offer access and answer questions about AI, all from a reputable source. "We're trying to democratize access to artificial intelligence as a body of knowledge so that way people are equally prepared having meaningful conversations about what AI is, how it works what sort of issues we should be thinking about to use it responsibly and safe," Lee said. Lee said they made a point to recruit 10 teachers to participate from a range of schools from the Bay Area and around the country. AI is a hot topic for high school students.

"They have a lot of questions and right now in a period where people are uncertain about what AI means for the world, what AI means for their future jobs, having that time and space and actual activities to go through to help them think through it," Lee said. Jesse Bustos is one of the ten teachers integrating the AI resource into his lesson plans. Bustos teaches social studies and digital art at Sequoia High School in Redwood City. "When you program a hiring AI system how is that going to affect who is employed? And we look at what are the bigger consequences on the economy. Who are the people left out of these decisions? And I think it's been a very eye-opening experience for me and my students and enjoyable," Bustos said. The conversation has been productive in his digital art class. "We are having conversations not just about the technical skills but also the ethics of using AI and the students get a chance to voice their opinions and be a part of that discussion," Bustos said. It's about empowering teachers and the next generation in the era of AI.

"It's really important to have an organization like Stanford with leading educators and leading AI experts to be able to work together and put this out and sort of not have a specific commercial interest tied with it- we just want to get the information out there," Lee said. Teachers can take a part of a lesson or in their entirety. "We had ten teachers working with us last year and a number of teachers have reached out this year who want to work on co-design cause we're going to continue to add more and more resources and units- some of them are already available freely on the internet but we hope to package it so it's more friendly for an educational setting," Lee said. ABC7 asked Lee what some of the feedback on the curriculum they've received. "You know I think students are really appreciative of the chance to talk about something that is all around them right now," Lee said.

### **Wednesday, August 16, 2023**

#### **SF school district starts new year with massive teacher shortage**

The new school year for the San Francisco Unified School district began Wednesday. This year, the district has a large shortage of teachers. They had to shuffle around staff to make sure each classroom has a teacher. "We met our

teacher on Monday," said Terisha Staton, the mother of a daughter at Cobb Elementary. "Spoke to our teacher on facetime, and we were familiar with her face from last year so we are really excited." Others around the district say they don't have the right teachers for certain subjects. The principal at Lincoln High School sent a letter to families saying the district cannot hire a teacher for Spanish, English, Math, Biology and Physics.

Superintendent Matt Wayne was at Cobb Elementary for the start of school. He says he is unsure how many teachers they need. The district is also dealing with a decline in enrollment. He says the high cost of living in San Francisco makes it difficult to recruit new teachers. "The city can be expensive," he said. "We are working on having additional teacher housing and making it affordable for teachers to be in the city and work here and support our students." The district is trying various methods to recruit new staff. They launched a new ad campaign in August to reach teachers seeking a new job, and others who earlier have not considered a job in education. They are also continuing a program that brings in interns who don't have credentials yet and letting them teach. The district would then help those interns obtain teaching credentials.

"The state has made it somewhat easier to on-board and we want to have multiple paths for people to become teachers," Wayne said. Parents in the district say the teachers that are here are great. They hope more can get hired. "It is really important because every kid deserves a good education from the best teachers," Staton said. "They have some really good ones here at SFUSD so hopefully they figure out this shortage and get everything rolling."

### **Thursday, August 17, 2023**

#### **Bay Area mother designs website to connect parents of kids with special needs**

If your kids aren't back to school yet, it's likely they'll be going back soon. One mother who has a child with a disability says getting her daughter the proper resources has led to one challenge after the next. She's now launched a website to connect parents and guardians who have children with disabilities called [theconnectedparent.net](http://theconnectedparent.net). Violet is 15 and Molly is 10. Two girls, two separate Bay Area families, but both battling a number of serious disorders, including epilepsy. It's how their parents met each other. Violet's mom Julie is now trying to connect other parents who have children with special needs on The Connected Parent. "We're here, we're a free platform, and we want to help build up our disability community and whatever that means to you," said Julie Walters of The Connected Parent.

To some, the site could be used as a tool to search for an after-school program that allows those with disabilities. To others, it's searching for a new school to address health needs. It could be Zooming with another parent in a similar situation or finding a kids camp that allows those with special needs to attend.

"If you walk into a place of parents who have children who have additional support needs, and you say the word 'camp,' you will get a whole bunch of people saying I can't find one," Walters said. Molly's mom Bridget Britt says caring for a child with special needs is a challenge. Can Molly do this? Can she go there? It's life yes, but anything that makes life a bit easier goes a long way. She has used The Connected Parent and says it reaches a group of parents and guardians that, in her opinion, is often forgotten about.

"She's kind of done the Google search for us and given us a ready platform and saves considerable amount of time and angst and what you need. Being a special needs parent child can feel isolating, and this brings community that is so important," Britt said. Julie tells us the site is just that right now: a site. Not an app at this point but maybe someday. She says people from all over the country are now involved. While ABC7 News was speaking with Julie, a dance instructor in Southern California messaged the site to say that she had three open dance spots for those with special needs. Information that will first be researched, then likely published to the site for those who may be interested. Simple ways to try to make life a little easier for parents and guardians, and better for those like Violet and Molly.

### **Monday, August 21**

#### **'OK Program' seeks Black men to mentor Black boys for Oakland chapter**

Donald North Cross was a sergeant in the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office when he says he noticed there was big problem in the Black community. "I got tired of seeing Black men going to jail, becoming victims of homicide. I looked around for a solution to the problem. I didn't see one," Cross said. So, he started one. He now runs the OK Program, which recruits and trains Black men of all ages and backgrounds to mentor Black boys. The program starts with boys in middle school and follows them through high school. Mentors work to teach critical thinking and leadership skills. A training session was held in Oakland on Saturday for new mentors who will work in the Oakland chapter. After the training, they can become mentors if they pass a background check. "Grade point average doesn't tell us how smart they are. Grade point average tells us how disciplined they are," Cross told the group of trainees in attendance. "Trying to have our boys develop academics and social behavior. We know if they do that, they are going to be successful in society. They are going to avoid negative pitfalls so many Black men find themselves in," Cross said.

"I still remember, Mr. McKenzie told me I'm going to be a leader someday. This is when I was in high school. And I'm 46 now. And that kind of stuff stays with you," says Seth Steward, who participated in the training. Steward says he had teachers, boy scout leaders and a track coach who guided him as he was coming up. So, he knows the impact a mentor can have. He is now chief of staff to Oakland City Council Member Dan Kalb. Steward says he is impressed with the program's commitment to reducing violence. "This program really helps develop

people into good men by really focusing on the men here, the mentors, who come in regularly, every Saturday to talk to boys to help them become better people," Steward said. Robert Smith is an Oakland police officer who spent some time in foster care growing up. He has been with the program for eight years and now oversees the Oakland chapters. "We have several young men who have elected to go to college. We have a lot of young men who elect to go to trades. We have a few young men who already have military service," Smith said. The success of the programs has taken it nationally. But Cross says work still needs to be done. "We are only 6% of the nation's population, but we account for more than 50% of the homicides each year. If we can't have something that is specifically focused on that, then we are in trouble. We are really in trouble," Cross said.

### **Friday, August 25, 2023**

#### **Never too late: Adults earn high school diplomas in San Jose for free**

An inspiring story about never giving up. Ten adults received their high school diploma through a San Jose library program offered at no cost. Viviana Suarez is receiving her high school diploma. Her cap and gown were decorated as an ode to her home country of Colombia. "I feel so proud of myself today I feel excited about all this. It was a dream. And the dream came true," Suarez said. Six years ago, Suarez and her two young sons fled violence in Colombia and came to the US. "I was kind of upset because I came to this country to clean restrooms, like some immigrants do," Suarez said. Suarez didn't want a low-income job forever. Her oldest son was an avid reader, so they frequented the library. It was there she found out about San Jose Public Library's Career Online High School. A program offered for free.

"It's supposed to be around three years but it took four years because I tried to quite a lot of times," Suarez said. Suarez had two jobs and two young kids. Completing the program was not easy. "Don't procrastinate, because you always have something more important to do. Or more urgent to do. And that was the most important thing, not giving up," Suarez said. Suarez said she knew she had to continue for herself and to show her kids what education can do. "The kids live by example. They don't believe what you say - they believe what they see," Suarez said. Now Suarez is one of 10 adults earning their high school diploma and a career certificate. San Jose resident Edith Mota hopes she can eventually get a business license. "To keep working hard for my kids and show them like I can do that. I'm old but I have to try," Mota said.

Mota said it's a program worth spreading the word about. "I just recommended one of my friends so she almost finished the program too," Mota said. A graduation ceremony was held inside San Jose City Hall Rotunda Thursday night. The Career Online High School program launched in 2016 and so far 165 adults have earned an accredited high school diploma. The program has a 70% completion rate, one of the highest in the nation among similar programs. Mayor



Matt Mahan addressed the graduates, saying that they're not only making their lives better, but the community as a whole. During Suarez's speech, she shared what she called her immigrant journey that started with three suitcases. "I am grateful to be able to teach an important lesson to my children, you can start over at any time," Suarez said. "Your work is not over, and there are all these new opportunities. I hope that my children feel proud of me too and that I have created a very good life for them here.

My family and I are ready for whatever God has in store for us. I have come so far and I am proud of where I am going. I am now working in marketing helping local entrepreneurs find success in business." The San Jose Public Library Foundation partners with the California State Library and other sponsors to offer full scholarships for adult learners to enroll in COHS. You can go into any library to find out more information.

### **Monday, August 28, 2023**

#### **SF teachers, parents claim school district involved in years of 'financial mismanagement'**

Concerned teachers, parents and community allies say San Francisco schools aren't being built up, but rather broken down by "financial mismanagement." This claim comes just a day before the San Francisco Board of Education is set to discuss a "district stabilization plan." Teachers and parents are most worried about potential school closures in San Francisco. They believe the school district needs to make some big changes. But, the district says it's just trying to deal with reality. "Today, we are releasing a report that highlights of mismanagement by SFUSD," said UESF President Cassondra Curiel. UESF, San Francisco's teachers union, claims San Francisco Unified School District has been mismanaging finances for years.

"If the district's finances were managed differently, SFUSD could pay competitive wages that would attract and retain staff," said Curiel. They are worried about school closures. "We saw a news report this summer, that the president of the school board stated that 25-30 school closures," said Curiel. At Tuesday's meeting, the School District Superintendent Dr. Matt Wayne and SF Board of Education will discuss ways to align district resources and operations. The superintendent saying quote: "We are wrestling with many external factors that are beyond our control, such as declining enrollment, aging facilities and staffing shortages. We need to meet these challenges head on." However, teachers and parents today told media that the district has made some bad decisions and need to make some big changes.

"Our report found that SFUSD engaged in: Needless short term borrowing practices which have cost the district millions; Increased central office spending on upper management positions exponentially, even as attendance remained consistent and enrollment decline; Forgone millions by leaving buildings such as

this and land underutilized; failed to safeguard public dollars by contracting with consulting groups worth billions that failed to deliver on their promises," said Curiel. SFUSD says declining enrollment has impacted their state funding. By 2025, the district is expected to lose \$5 million. But San Francisco Unified is not alone. California public school enrollment has dropped 6% since the 2016-17 school year.

Bernice Casey has a 4th grader at Buena Vista Horace Mann K-8 Community School. She claims that needed repairs are not being made. "We keep hearing we don't have enough money. My concern as a parent-- they have enough money to make sure everyone along this corridor is paid...we have teachers at Horace Mann who are still waiting for wages, still waiting for their supplement for coaching," said Casey. San Francisco Unified School District buildings need about \$6 billion in repairs. On Tuesday, Superintendent Wayne is expected to share a road map for the year ahead and talk about ways to build a more streamlined, effective and financially stable school system. No vote will be taken on school closures and no action will be taken, according to the school district.

### **Wednesday, August 30**

#### **SFUSD looking at cost-cutting measures as enrollment continues to decline**

The San Francisco Unified School District is facing a severe financial crisis. The district held a special meeting Tuesday evening to address that. The district says their schools should be at 95% capacity but they're at 91%. They've gone from 53,000 students in 2012 to 49,000 students now. Tuesday's meeting is the start of what will be a months-long conversation about what they should do and what they will do. No schools have been put on the chopping block yet. Nearly every seat was full at the SFUSD special meeting to address budgeting, staffing, and planning, but most in the crowd were concerned about possible school closures. "We don't need to close any schools, it's managerial incompetency," said Noah Sloss of the San Francisco Education Alliance. But during a presentation Tuesday night the district revealed that they have lost 4,000 students since 2012 and expect to lose another 4,600 in the next nine years.

"Enrollment has declined and will continue to decline," said a staff member with the district. She went on to say that they are also struggling to staff schools that aren't full and had a 21% staffing shortage as of mid-August. The plan is to form a district advisory committee to address those issues in the months ahead. Parents we talked with said that sounds like a recipe to close schools and they believe certain communities will suffer. "When school closures happen in major cities they always target our black and brown students and those are where our students need more investing," said Allyson Eddy Bravmann who is a parent with the San Francisco Education Alliance. "If schools close, who loses out?" ABC7 News reporter J.R. Stone asked. "Black and brown children. Black and brown

children in Bayview, Hunters Point," said Virginia Marshall who is a retired teacher and education chair of the SF NAACP.

SFUSD uses a choice-based system where families can apply to schools outside of the neighborhood they live in. The dark areas of one map show where a high percentage of students live, including the southeastern section of the city. The dark section of another map shows where they go to school, largely in the west and central sections of San Francisco. "The schools serving low-income kids, more black and brown communities are getting fewer requests then their enrollment goes down, then they lose staff, then they can't make their programs," said SFUSD Commissioner Matt Alexander. "It's worth noting the school district has a policy to move towards a zone system for elementary schools which has basically been pushed to the back burner," said SFUSD Commissioner Mark Sanchez. Multiple commissioners discussed the idea of going back to the zone system to better identify where changes should be made. As of right now though, one of many ideas being talked about. The plan is to put this district advisory committee together in the next month. The school board won't actually vote on any sort of plan until April of next year, so lots of work to be done going forward. The district either needs to bring in more money, reorganize what they get, or cut money.

## **Health**

**Friday, July 21, 2023**

**Fentanyl awareness 'Jolly10K' run Saturday organized by South Bay mom after losing son to drug**

A mother who lost her son to fentanyl is organizing a 10K community run and walk that will provide solutions and firsthand accounts of what it's like to be in the grips of fentanyl addiction. Campbell resident Leslie Gentry said the conversation needs to change about the way people talk and think about drug addiction. "It's so addictive that even though kids know that they can die they're still using it. So it's so powerful and it's just taking over a whole generation," Gentry said. Gentry reminisced about her son Jolly Jones, who she said struggled with addiction. "He was big and smiley. He was a big pain in the butt, but big heart. He was loving," Gentry said. When Jones was 15 years old he experienced a football injury. "It created a permanent spinal injury, which caused him pain, and then he started using street pills and getting pills from his friends," Gentry said. The following year Gentry said her son suffered a severe brain injury.

Jones continued to take pills and eventually fentanyl. On July 24, 2021, Jones was at a faith-based men's recovery home in San Jose and experienced complications from opioid withdrawal. "He lasted three days detoxing fentanyl, and on the third night he went to sleep and didn't wake up and nobody in the

house knew that you could die from fentanyl detox," Gentry said. Jones was 22 years old. Gentry explained that, although he was a supportive son, he had a rebellious side. And on top of that, Jones was pre-disposed to addiction, since people on both sides of his family struggled with it.

"No parent should ever know what it feels like to close the casket on their child, and so I hope that nobody else does. And the more information we can get out, then the less parents have to suffer that," Gentry said. This Saturday Gentry is holding her second-annual Jolly10k fentanyl awareness event in Los Gatos. Nearly 100 people have already pre-registered. The run and walk starts at 8 a.m. but resource booths will be up by 7 a.m. The location of the event is at the Balzer Field parking lot. "I talked to the fire chief this year. He said he's willing to do it again. They're going to speak on what they see on their calls -- when they get emergency, calls what are they seeing -- what are the ways you can tell it's an overdose," Gentry said. The local Fire Department will provide CPR demonstrations and Narcan for participants to take home.

Gentry said a friend of hers, a director of a recovery center for 25 years, will share what she's seeing in the community. "We also have a couple young men who have overdosed on fentanyl and been brought back to life, and the struggle that they've gone through trying to get their lives back together," Gentry said. Gentry wants to create a positive environment with solutions and a place where people can ask the hard questions about fentanyl. "It doesn't cost you to get any information. It's a comfortable environment you can bring your kids, you can come alone, you can go on a beautiful hike. We're going to have a food truck, so if you're hungry, you can have a snack!" Gentry said. Gentry joked the 6.9 mile trail loop is kind of like her son Jolly. "It's kind of challenging and sometimes a pain in the butt totally worth it," Gentry said. All proceeds from the event will go to the Homes of a Loving Father Recovery Center in San Jose.

### **Sunday, July 23, 2023**

#### **Precautionary boil water order in Yountville lifted after concerns over E. coli bacteria**

Yountville residents and businesses no longer need to boil water as a precaution against E. coli bacteria, the town said Saturday night. Yountville and the California Department of Veterans Affairs, which owns and operates the water treatment facility, "have met mandated testing requirements for negative results for E. coli contamination in the water," the town said in a statement. "The State Water Resource Control Board has approved the use of town water," according to the statement.

The town said earlier Saturday that test results showed none of the bacteria in the municipal water supply that prompted a precautionary notice to boil water issued Thursday. Three negative test results, each taking 24 hours, are required before the boil order can be lifted, the town said in a statement. Residents were

told to fill their own containers with potable water at the fire station at 7401 Solano Ave. The town's water supplier, Cal-Vet, detected E. coli bacteria in the municipal water supply Thursday.

### **Tuesday, August 1, 2023**

#### **West Nile virus-positive mosquitos found in portions of Santa Clara County**

Santa Clara County has reported three separate positives of West Nile virus carrying mosquitos in different parts of the county from since last Tuesday. The area covers neighborhoods in Palo Alto, Milpitas, Sunnyvale and San Jose. The fear from experts of a more active mosquito season after an extremely wet winter is beginning to play out. "This year because of the rain, there are a lot of mosquito sources and we have a much higher number of mosquitoes," SCC Vector Control District manager Nayer Zahiri said. "Our surveillance teams have set up the traps almost everywhere, every day." These traps have found positive mosquitoes in Santa Clara County in three separate areas.

In Palo Alto and Stanford, in the 94301, 94304, 94305, and 94306 zip codes, which were treated by SCC Vector Control last week. Also in North San Jose and Milpitas, zip codes 95035 and 95134 will be treated Wednesday, Aug. 2. And to start August, a positive within the area of Santa Clara and Sunnyvale. Zip codes 94085, 94086, 94087 and 95051 will be treated Thursday, Aug. 3. "It's normal to see the activity of West Nile virus right now," Zahiri said. That's why vector control says work to treat and kill mosquito larva is so important. Methods vary from normal spraying to using a new drone to spray areas not easily accessible by crews.

"Our staff is checking all mosquito sources to make sure to monitor and treat mosquito larva to make sure they are not in the developing to the biting stage, which is adult mosquitos," Zahiri said. At this stage, UCSF Infectious Diseases expert Dr. Peter Chin-Hong says mosquitoes bite birds that carry West Nile Virus, like crows, and then the mosquitoes transmit the virus to humans. Dr. Chin-Hong says symptoms can vary from mild to chronic, but they can be hard to recognize. "Many people won't even know they have them and only about one in five people have symptoms," Dr. Chin-Hong said. "So, the bottom line is, it's probably easier to prevent than to actually be aware." Vector control says the best way to do this is to spray with EPA-approved bug sprays, remove standing water in your yard where larva can grow, avoid being outside in the afternoon and evening if mosquitoes are around and reach out to the county if removal help is needed.

### **Wednesday, August 2, 2023**

#### **Consuming shellfish harvested from San Mateo Co. not advised due to toxin risk, CDPH says**

The California Department of Public Health sent out a notice advising consumers not to eat sport-harvested mussels, clams, or scallops from San Mateo County. "Dangerous levels of paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) toxins have been detected in mussels from San Mateo County. The naturally occurring PSP toxins can cause illness or death in humans. Cooking does not destroy the toxin," CDPH said in a statement. This safety notification is in addition to its annual mussel quarantine that was issued in May. This applies to all species of mussels harvested for human consumption along the California coast, as well as all bays and estuaries. CDPH expects the quarantine to last through October. "This warning does not apply to commercially sold clams, mussels, scallops, or oysters from approved sources. State law permits only state-certified commercial shellfish harvesters or dealers to sell these products. Shellfish sold by certified harvesters and dealers are subject to frequent mandatory testing to monitor for toxins," CDPH said.

CDPH warns that PSP toxins affect the central nervous system, producing a tingling around the mouth and fingertips within a few minutes to a few hours after eating toxic shellfish. These symptoms are typically followed by loss of balance, lack of muscular coordination, slurred speech, and difficulty swallowing. In severe poisonings, complete muscular paralysis and death from asphyxiation can occur. You can get the most current information on shellfish advisories and quarantines by calling CDPH's toll-free Shellfish Information Line at (800) 553-4133 or viewing the recreational bivalve shellfish advisory interactive map. For additional information, you can visit the CDPH Marine Biotxin Monitoring web page.

### **Sunday, August 6, 2023**

#### **Contra Costa Co. offering free testing for Legionnaires' Disease following 2 deaths linked to spa**

The Zen Day Spa in Richmond was shut down by Contra Costa County health officials following two deaths, both linked to Legionnaires' Disease. Officials say the deaths were reported to the health department on Thursday and Friday after visits to the Zen Day Spa located at 12230 San Pablo Ave. in Richmond. Officials say a third person was infected with Legionnaires' Disease after using the jacuzzi tub at the Zen Day Spa in June. That patient recovered. "Unfortunately, two individuals have died. The third individual survived," says County Supervisor John Gioia. Supervisor Gioia says the third man tested positive in June, but the other two died this week after visiting the spa just days before. County health officials won't give any details about the three patients. But they are trying to get the warning out to others who visited the spa.

"We are looking at secure things like credit card receipts and appointment books as a way to try and get in touch with folks who might have been here," says Kim McCarl, with Contra Costa Health. Environmental health inspectors with Contra Costa County Health say the spa has never been issued a permit for a spa or pool. "Whether they were legally operating as a business here, is a city permit.

The city is checking into that. The county environmental health issues permits for restaurants. And in this case, the hot tub. And they did not have a permit for their spa," says Gioia. "Whether or not there was any criminal negligence, that is up to the district attorney. But this is also the kind of matter where we would also ask our district attorney, Diana Becton to look at."

Legionella bacteria is found in water, like lakes and streams. But health concerns arise when these bacteria grow and spread in human-made water systems such as hot tubs or swimming pools. "The way you get this bacteria is because it lives in water droplets especially in situations where there is pooling of water. Allows the bacteria to grow when that it is aerosolized, that is when an individual can inhale into their lungs," said Doctor Meera Sreenivasan, Deputy Health Officer with Contra Costa Health. "So that is what happened in here. A closed room with water that is vaporizing. There is waterfall that comes out of the hot tub, so obviously there was a lot of steam. And so, that is why the risk here was so great," says McCarl. Public officials emphasize that Legionnaires' Disease is treatable. The incubation period following exposure is typically two to 14 days. And that's why public officials are asking anyone who visited this spa over the past two weeks to get tested. The county is offering free testing.

"We are also working with the facility to collect samples so that we can test those to see if it has the same strain of bacteria that infected the individuals that were here. We should have preliminary results early next week," said Sreenivasan. Legionnaires' Disease presents as a severe form of pneumonia that can result in hospitalization, yet is treatable with antibiotics, officials said. The incubation period following exposure is typically 2 to 14 days. Legionella bacteria is commonly found in natural freshwater sources such as lakes and streams, CCH said. They added bacteria can grow and spread in human-made water systems such as hot tubs. Individuals are at higher risk for Legionnaires' Disease including people over the age of 50, CCH said, as well as those with a past or current smoking history, individuals with chronic lung disease, or those with a weakened immune system. Legionnaires' Disease does not spread from person to person, health officials said.

Officials advise anyone who may have recently visited Zen Day Spa to watch for symptoms of Legionnaires' Disease. If anyone experiences symptoms such as shortness of breath, fever, chills and cough to seek immediate medical care. Last year, a Legionnaires' outbreak was linked to a Napa County hotel's contaminated cooling tower where one person has died. Also in the same year, a Southern California couple battled Legionnaires' disease after staying at a San Jose hotel. Officials said bacteria was found in the pool and hot tub. The business owners could not be reached for comment. But county health officials say the owners are cooperating in the investigation.

**Thursday, August 10, 2023**

## **Huge plume of smoke from debris fire near Port of Oakland impacting air quality**

A fire burning in a debris pile at a recycling plant near the Port of Oakland Wednesday put off a lot of smoke that prompted warnings about diminishing air quality in the area. The fire is burning at Schnitzer Steel along Embarcadero West on the edge of Jack London Square. Oakland fire officials said Wednesday the fire was contained, meaning it won't spread but it's going to burn for quite a while. It is still burning Thursday morning, when Schnitzer Steel released this statement: Yesterday evening a fire occurred at our recycling facility at 1101 Embarcadero West. The Oakland Fire Department swiftly arrived on the scene in response and there are no reported injuries from the incident. We are working closely with the first responders to bring this situation to a safe conclusion. The Bay Area Air Quality Management District issued an air quality advisory for parts of the Bay Area due to smoke from the fire.

The smoke is expected to impact Oakland, San Leandro, Fremont and Alameda, with potential impacts as far south as San Jose Wednesday evening. Winds are expected to push the smoke south and east. The Air District is monitoring this situation closely. The heavy smoke from the fire clearing out Jack London Square, where the only people around were those who had just gotten off the ferry. "Looks very scary. I hope they're going to turn it out soon," tourist Ljuba Keenan said. Naarai Zaynah works for San Francisco Bay Ferry. She says as they got closer to the fire, many on board were shocked. "We started passing out masks to try and help protect them as much as we could," Zaynah said.

The potential health impacts, the biggest worry for everyone we talked to. "I'm going to get out of here real soon because this isn't healthy to be breathing in and if it wasn't for the dog I wouldn't be out in it," Oakland resident Jason Bolden Anderson said. OFD's hazardous material will conduct ongoing air quality testing while the smoke continues to impact the area and will work with the county to provide updates to residents. There have been fires at Schnitzer Steel in the past, the most recent in June 2020 and there have been more than half a dozen going back to 2010.

### **Friday, August 11, 202**

#### **Schnitzer Steel issued 2 air quality violations for Oakland fire that prompted Bay Area advisory**

Oakland fire fighters, assisted by other Bay Area agencies, responded to a fire burning at the Schnitzer Steel recycling facility late Wednesday afternoon. It was declared to be under control by Wednesday night, but plumes of smoke continued to rise overnight, impacting air quality throughout the Bay Area. "One of my staff members, who lives in Alameda, said that he smelled it very strongly last night in Alameda. It was kind of nauseating," said Brian Beveridge. He is the co-executive director of the West Oakland Environmental Indicators



Project, an environmental justice group focused on air quality. "So, when that pile catches fire, it's not like a camp fire. This is a fire of petroleum products, and plastics, and rubber and all these other things that are highly toxic," he said. Schnitzer Steel is a scrap metal processing facility that shreds cars and appliances for recycling. The Bay Area Air Quality Management District issued an advisory, which lasted through Thursday morning. It had a crew on scene, along with the EPA, to monitor and investigate.

"As always with any type of fire, whether it's this material fire or a wildfire, the advice is pretty much the same. Stay indoors with windows and doors closed if you smell smoke," said Ralph Borrmann with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, which issued Schnitzer two Notices of Violation for Wednesday's fire. Schnitzer Steel is located just half a mile away from residential neighborhoods, made up mostly of communities of color, which have dealt with the aftermath of several fires at facility over the past decade. The last fire at the facility was in June of 2020. The company also reached a \$4 million settlement with the state of California in 2021, for releasing particulate matter contaminated with hazardous metals into the environment. Beveridge says he understand the nature of the recycling business. But he adds, there are industry standards in place to help reduce possible toxic byproducts of these types of business.

"These are all things that industry has been doing for decades now. These are things they need to be able to solve," Beveridge said. In an email to ABC7, Schnitzer Steel writes, "At our Oakland recycling facility, we are focused on operating responsibly. The Company has made long-term investments in air emissions controls and stormwater treatment to mitigate the environmental impact of our recycling activities." Beveridge says his organization plans to file a formal complaint in their ongoing effort for tighter regulations and stronger enforcement. "We are just a little neighborhood organization. But we will do whatever we can to push for justice in this situation," Beveridge said.

### **Monday, August 21, 2023**

#### **1st-of-its-kind fentanyl antibody treatment begins human trials as overdose deaths rise**

A drugmaker funded by a South Bay company is about to begin human testing on a first-of-its-kind fentanyl antibody treatment as fentanyl remains the leading cause of death for people ages 18 to 45 and the cause of 90% of overdose fatalities. Experts say more options are needed to prevent loss of life. "Despite the availability of things like narcan, which is a rescue medication, we continue to see an all-time high of overdoses throughout the country," Cessation Therapeutics CEO Tracy Woody said. "Our big news is we have something that we think will help address this public health crisis." Born out of San Jose-based investment firm Altamont Pharmaceutical Holdings, Cessation Therapeutics has developed a new monoclonal antibody therapy.

The FDA has authorized a human clinical trial of the CSX-1004 injection that provides no high and prevents any type of overdose. The antibody attacks the fentanyl in the bloodstream before it has the chance to reach the brain. "Whether it's injected intravenously, or snorted through the nose or even taken orally, once it gets to the bloodstream, this antibody is going to grab it with high-affinity and prevent it from inducing its harmful effects in the brain," Cessation Therapeutics chief scientific officer Andy Barrett said. Unlike Narcan that's given by someone else after an overdose, the antibody would be given by a doctor before someone uses fentanyl. It has shown 30 days of overdose prevention in non-human testing. The hope is that this would be another tool in the fight against fentanyl deaths. "We're trying to get to high-risk individuals before they experience an overdose and provide a protective mechanism in the form of this antibody so fentanyl is rendered ineffective," Barrett said.

"Our goal is to keep these people alive so that they can go and get other treatments," Woody said. The Santa Clara County Fentanyl Working Group's Dr. Rachel Sussman says there are other pre-overdose treatments for opioids, like Vivitrol, and more study needs to be done before CSX-1004 goes receives full FDA approval. But, she says this could be helpful. "We do have several tools already and I think one of our challenges is making sure that those existing tools are not underused," Sussman said. "But, another tool would never hurt. And, absolutely I think that the more things we have to offer patients the better." This treatment is in the early stages of the approval process. While the first round of human testing begins Tuesday, FDA approval would not come until late 2025 or early 2026.

### **Wednesday, August 30**

#### **Mpox cases rising in San Francisco, health officials say**

The San Francisco Department of Public Health says mpox cases are on the rise again. Over the past five weeks, there have been seven confirmed cases of the disease previously called "monkeypox." Since the start of the year, the city has been averaging one case per month. There was a spike in San Francisco last year that led to a scramble to find the mpox vaccine because of a shortage. Mpox has been established in parts of central and west Africa for decades, where people are mainly infected by animals like wild rodents.

But the disease wasn't known to spark big outbreaks beyond the continent or to spread easily among people until May of 2022, when dozens of epidemics emerged in Europe, North America and elsewhere. Mpox most often causes symptoms including a rash, fever, headache, muscle pain and swollen lymph nodes. The skin lesions can last up to a month and the disease is spread via close physical contact with an infected patient or their clothing or bedsheets. Most people don't need medical treatment to recover.

### **Thursday, August 31**

#### **COVID test kits in short supply at some Bay Area stores. Here's where you can still find some**

A spike as COVID-19 cases this summer has Bay Area families searching for COVID at-home test kits. Health experts says the tests have been hard to find, and some stores have sold out. "It's better to be prepared," said Mary Currie from Novato. Mary Currie has home COVID tests on her shopping list, but she can't find them anywhere. "I went to Costco this morning, hoping to get some, then I came here to the CVS hoping to get some. They haven't had any since early August, they told me," Currie added. Several pharmacy chains in Marin County are sold out of tests, with employees telling customers to check back later. Online, we found a number of Walgreens stores showing test kits not available or in limited stock at stores in San Francisco and the East Bay.

"We're clearly seeing more transmission that's leading to more cases, more symptoms and more demand for tests," said Marin County Health Officer Dr. Matt Willis. Dr. Willis says a summer surge in COVID cases is likely fueling demand for tests, along with students going back to school. Those test kits may be in short supply into the fall season. A Walgreens spokesperson told ABC7 News, "We are seeing greater demand in this category nationwide, which may cause temporary and isolated shortages. We continue to restock those stores as quickly as possible to best meet customer demands." A CVS store in Novato just got a fresh shipment of COVID tests. We also found plenty of kits available on Amazon, some with overnight shipping. Dr. Willis says if you need to get tested right away, call your doctor. "Your other option is going to your health care provider. They have tests as well," said Willis.

### **Friday, September 8, 2023**

#### **CA lawmakers vote to decriminalize psychedelics, move forward with cannabis cafes**

A California legislative bill aimed at decriminalizing plant-based psychedelics, including mushrooms, received final approval on the Senate floor Thursday and is now on its way to Governor Gavin Newsom's desk, according to officials. SB-58, introduced by California Senators Scott Wiener, Ash Kalra and several others, passed 21-3-16 on the Assembly floor Thursday. "They're not a panacea, this is not a silver bullet, but there are plenty of people who have literally been able to turn their lives around because of psychedelics," Wiener said. Wiener has been championing the bill for several years. He believes everyone - from combat veterans with PTSD, to those who suffer from disorders, like anxiety and depression - could benefit.

Haney supported Wiener's legislation and also is advocating for his own. Haney introduced a bill that would allow certain cannabis retailers to sell food and beverages. The idea behind it would be to create cannabis cafes, similar to ones

in places like Amsterdam. The state senate passed Haney's bill by an overwhelming margin. It now needs one more vote before heading to the governor. "California should be a destination for cannabis, just like it is for wine. And one of the things that is holding us back from that right now is that we can't really offer a cannabis experience that is legal, that is safe, that is regulated," Haney said. While both proposals have gotten support from lawmakers, some in the public still have concerns. But Wiener believes they can work together to find solutions that work for everyone. "Any substance can be misused, and any substance can impact someone negatively. That's true of substances that are legal," he said. Because for him, this is only the beginning.

"The step that we are taking and hopefully we will take if the governor signs the bill is step number one in this process. We have a lot more work to do," Wiener said. Wiener said 13 of his bills were introduced during this assembly session, with four already passed back to the Senate for a final sign-off. "We are now one step closer to making our shared values a reality. These bills will streamline housing approvals, address the climate crisis, cap the out-of-pocket cost of insulin, expand access to PrEP, protect LGBTQ foster youth, decriminalize psychedelics, support small businesses, and more," he said in a statement. Several pieces of drug legislation made their way through the state capitol on Thursday. "The tide has turned and shifted dramatically on these issues in California. Support for the decriminalization of substances and the full legalization of cannabis is overwhelming now," said State Assemblymember Matt Haney.

### **Thursday, September 14**

#### **Here's how CA data broker bill would make it easier to delete personal information**

Data brokers keep track of the important events in your life and mundane details, too. They then sell that information. In California you have the legal right to have your information deleted, but with hundreds of websites to navigate, that has been more aspirational than actually doable. That may soon change because of California Senate Bill 362 authored by San Mateo State Senator, Josh Becker. "So the idea here is really to simplify and operationalize this and really give us control in an actual practical way, which is a one-stop shop," Senator Becker says. "Hit one button and delete your information from all data brokers." 7 On Your Side's Michael Finney asked the Senator if this is like a Do Not Call list. "Yes, like that. Again, Easy. Make it easy," Senator Becker said. "That's really the whole goal here. Otherwise, we know people are just too busy." This would be set up differently than the Federal Trade Commission's Do Not Call List and would be for California residents only, but its influence would spread.

"Every company, because of how big California is, has some nexus into California," cybercrime expert Chris Pierson said. "So it's going to be impossible

to do a 'Hey? Let's not pay attention to this.' They're going to have to pay attention to it. As a result, it's going provide better privacy for all Americans, hopefully." Pierson is the founder and CEO of digital protection company BlackCloak. He says this bill is about more than just privacy, this legislation will reel in online criminals. "Most of cybercrime actually starts there from deep web activities and data broker activities," Pierson said. "If you can actually find someone's name, address, personal phone number, personal email address, it makes them an easier target to hit." The bill is still working its way through the legislature but has plenty of support.

"It was quite a broad coalition," Senator Becker told 7 On Your Side. "I've seen privacy groups, people who have been focused on this fight now for years, but also like Planned Parenthood. Because people don't realize data brokers can collect location-based information, purchase history. So, for example, if somebody went to a reproductive healthcare center, and that information could be available for sale."

## **Climate & Environment**

**Monday, July 17, 2023**

**Napa Valley's 2023 grape harvest may be delayed by weeks due to cool spring, summer**

In the North Bay, there are concerns in Wine Country when it comes to grape growing. Vineyard owners say a cool, wet spring has turned back the clock on vine ripening, meaning the 2023 harvest could be delayed for several weeks putting the crop at risk of fall rains and wildfires. Vineyard crews at V. Sattui Winery are busy creating more space for grapes to grow under the hot sun of the Napa Valley, it's been a challenging season for the precious fruit so far to say the least. "Certainly one for the record books," said Tom Davies V. Sattui President and Napa Valley Grape Growers board member, Tom Davies says it began with a drought-busting winter and spring with record rainfall and below average temperatures into the start of summer. "This is my 43rd year at V. Sattui, I have a few years to look back on and this has been the coolest start in the Napa Valley in 21 years," said Davies.

That cool spell means grapes of all varieties have essentially been confused, and super slow to develop, no ripening yet. "The weather so far it's pushing the entire harvest at least three weeks or so," Davies added. Davies says some grape harvests may not happen until October or November. Which could put the crop at the mercy of fall rains and even wildfires. "If we do get early rains, El Niño, along with a late crop, that's not ideal, said Davies. Caleb Mosley is vineyard Manager for Matthiasson Wines, he says the vines remain resilient. "These vines haven't been irrigated once this year, incredible. We can grow this big, beautiful canopy

without a drop of water because we had such a good winter and spring," said Mosley. Experts say hot weather is helping the grapes ripen. A silver lining in the vineyard, the grapes are growing loosely clustered, which could reduce mildew if they get wet before harvest. "It could be a great harvest, not a big bumper crop but we could have great quality, we're farmers, so much could happen between now and then," said Davies.

### **Monday, July 31, 2023**

#### **California experiences slowest start to fire season in decades**

Fire experts say we are experiencing the slowest start to fire season in decades in California. "Now, we've had a slow start because of the precipitation, the fuels, they have that moisture content so we're not responding to those readily available or receptive fuel beds, fires that we would typically have," Capt. Chris Bruno, a spokesperson for CAL FIRE said. All that heavy moisture the Bay Area got between January and March took us out of the drought. But Capt. Bruno says it created an abundance of fuel and that fuel, like the tall brush lining the freeways, is just now starting to dry out. "We still have the normal dry-out of vegetation that's taking place this time of the year but now, it's taking place on these larger potential incident fuel beds with the tall grass that you'll see," he said. In Contra Costa County, fire officials say they usually start to see fires pop up in May, with June historically being their biggest month for fires.

"We have not seen any Red Flag fire days so far this year," Aaron McAlister, Deputy Fire Chief of the Contra Costa County Fire Department said. "We have not had any Type 3 Incident Management deployments within our county of our East Bay Incident Management Team and we've also not sent resources out of county for wildland fires." But June has come and gone, with August upon us this week, McAlister says their biggest fire of the summer so far was only eight acres. That fire burned in the hills just outside of Martinez over the weekend and officials believe it was caused by a lawnmower. Still, he says with triple-digit conditions on the way and no moisture in sight, what happened over the weekend, will likely continue until this area gets more rain. "This is our peak season and from this point forward, until it rains, we've reached the critical fire season," McAlister said. Fire officials are also urging homeowners to only mow their lawns before noon, when the temperatures are lower and the moisture levels are higher.

### **Thursday, August 3, 2023**

#### **California voters may face dueling measures on 2024 ballot about oil wells near homes and schools**

California voters may be asked twice on the same November 2024 ballot whether to keep or to ditch a law mandating new oil wells be a certain distance away from homes, schools and parks. Recently, state lawmakers have been debating

whether to reform the referendum process that makes overturning a law possible, as it has been leveraged by powerful industries to invalidate laws that are unfavorable to them. Last year, lawmakers approved so-called buffer zones around oil wells, which dot communities around Los Angeles and the state's Central Valley, as part of a package of bills aimed at tackling climate change and pollution. The oil industry quickly moved to undo the law by gaining a spot on the 2024 ballot. But on Wednesday, environmental advocates put forward their own proposed ballot measure aimed at getting voters to require buffer zones. "People who live next to oil wells get very, very sick. Californians who live next to this stuff, they have headaches, nosebleeds, nausea," said Kassie Siegel, director of the nonprofit Center for Biological Diversity's Climate Law Institute. "You do not want the oil company moving in next door."

The possibility of dueling ballot measures on new oil wells also showcases the growing political tension around California's approach to dealing with climate change, with Gov. Gavin Newsom's administration increasingly passing laws aimed at shrinking the oil and gas industry. Two measures on the same ballot could confuse voters, threatening both sides' chances of success. Outside California, nearly half of U.S. states have a process allowing voters to reject policies that state legislators have passed. Environmental justice groups have made multiple attempts over the years to establish a minimum distance between oil and gas wells near places like homes and schools. Newsom signed the law last year that banned new gas and oil wells within 3,200 feet (975 meters) of sensitive areas. A lawyer for the California Independent Petroleum Association quickly filed for the referendum to ask voters to overturn the law, and the group collected enough signatures earlier this year to put it on the ballot. Rock Zierman, the group's CEO, said keeping the law would burden oil companies in California at a time when they already have to follow what he called some of the strictest environmental and labor laws in the world.

The Legislature is weighing whether to change the referendum process, so Californians don't get confused about whether they're voting to uphold or to overturn a law. The legislation would have voters decide to either "keep the law" or to "overturn the law." That would mean a departure from a "yes" vote to keep the law or a "no" vote to overturn it. The oil industry's tactics to collect the 623,000 signatures needed to get their favored measure on the ballot has come under fire. The California Secretary of State's office said last year, it was investigating complaints alleging signature gatherers were spreading misinformation about the measure. Over the decades, Californians have been asked to vote more than once on the same issue, on measures about car insurance rates and campaign financing, among other hot-button topics.

Ballot measures in California typically need support from more than 50% of the vote to pass. If there are two conflicting measures that meet that threshold, the one that got the most votes would prevail, said Bob Stern, former president of the

nonprofit Center for Governmental Studies. But Stern said he's never heard of a referendum and a competing measure appearing on the same ballot in California. "When there are a lot of measures on the ballot, voters tend to vote no," he said. Voters also tend to vote "no" if they are confused about a referendum or initiative, Stern said. That can be a good thing for proponents of a referendum who want to garner enough "no" votes to overturn a law. Advocates who want to keep the buffer zone law say it aligns with the state's broader climate goals and will help protect residents from pollution-related health risks. Mike Young, a political director with California Environmental Voters, said the law should have been passed a long time ago. He asked, "What does that say about us that we're not willing to protect our most vulnerable communities?"

### **Tuesday, August 8**

#### **UC Berkeley team tests portable harvester device to pull water out of air**

If you ever find yourself searching for water in the middle of Death Valley, you're probably in a lot of trouble. But for Zach Zheng and his colleagues Ali Alawadhi, and Woochul Song from U.C. Berkeley, it was just part of the challenge. "We decided to take the biggest challenge, which is go to the center of the park, the Furnace Creek, you know, the, the most challenging part and then so, we were very lucky," says Zheng. Lucky, in part, because they didn't arrive empty handed. The team set up an experimental device on the valley floor that is best described as a portable water harvester. It looks something like small telescope tilted at an angle. But its purpose is to pull water out of the air. In this case, the hottest and driest air they could find for their test. "I was very excited. So I just stay there, even though it's super hot. So I just wanted to watch it, he adds. To understand his excitement, it helps to take a quick detour from the desert to the lab.

That's where U.C. Berkeley Professor Omar Yaghi, Ph.D., pioneered the water capturing ingredient at the heart of the device. A synthetic material known as a MOF, for metal-organic frame work. While it looks like a powder to the naked eye, put it under the right microscope and you'll see a chain of molecules. Prof. Yaghi explains that the specialized molecules are extremely porous, with a surface area roughly the size of a football field in just a small amount. "So, that's the space into which one can bind gases like hydrogen for hydrogen storage, carbon dioxide, carbon from the air, or in this case, water," he says. "The amazing thing is that we can even go into these on a molecular level and surgically add chemical groups or take away chemical groups to fashion the interior of the pores, so that they can selectively seek out water from the air and trap it and concentrated into the into the pores."

But the question for Zach and his colleagues was whether the portable device would be efficient enough to condense water molecules from the hyper-dry desert air. So in the baking sun, they watched and waited for the first tiny drops to appear. "Until it finally just dropped out, he says. "And it took about 60 seconds or so, I saw the drop is out and said, Oh, it works!" The Berkeley team



says the MOF-based system is different than other clean water technologies because it can be completely powered by ambient sunlight, and produces no emissions. With the latest results, they hope the water harvester can impact populations in the most drought stricken corners of the planet. Providing clean, safe and potentially lifesaving drinking water pulled from thin air.

### **Sunday, August 27**

#### **Oakland airport expansion draft EIR doesn't include plane emissions, environmentalists claim**

The plan to expand the Oakland International Airport could be a big boost to the economy and create more jobs. But some are concerned that it will be more noise and more pollution. The group Stop OAK Expansion - has an even bigger concern -- one they claim is not addressed in the draft environmental impact report. Oakland Mayor Sheng Thao says the expanding of the Oakland airport would be a big boost to the city's post pandemic recovery. But local environmental groups say there is one problem. They claim that the draft environmental impact report doesn't address the emissions that come from the actual airplanes that take off and land here at the airport. "There are big concerns for those opposed to the proposed expansion of the Oakland International Airport," said Ariella Granett of Stop OAK Expansion

The biggest of these concerns has to do with the airplanes. "It is important to be aware that 99% of a modern airport's emissions are actually from their flights," Granett said. Stop OAK Expansion is a coalition made up of 62 local grassroots organizations. They argue that the new draft environmental impact report released by the Port of Oakland - which owns and operates the Oakland airport - doesn't take into account the greenhouse gas emissions from the actual airplanes. "They claim that the impact of pollution and climate global warming emissions are significant, but unavoidable. And that's because they don't actually regulate the emissions from the flights," Granett said. The Oakland airport expects its number of passengers to more than double over the next 15 years. The proposal is to add 16 new gates and expand the international arrival facilities. Colleen Liang with the Port of Oakland spoke to ABC7 News in July. This is definitely a milestone for Oakland airport. As I mentioned earlier, we have not modernized the airport since it was built," Liang said in July. In an email to ABC7 News, the Port of Oakland responded to claims about the draft EIR by saying: "OAK continues to explore the new zero emission aviation technologies that will help us achieve our zero emissions goals." The Port of Oakland says it wants to reach zero emissions by 2040 for the airport.

It says it is working with airlines to increase the use of what's called "Sustainable Aviation Fuel," which is not a fossil fuel. OAK says it already has commitments from Southwest Airlines. OAK also joined Airport Carbon Accreditation, an international program that requires airport members to a complete review of

greenhouse gas inventories."The Port of Oakland, they are starting a process to inventory their emissions. And we applaud them in this effort," Granett said. But Granett says local, state and federal agencies need to work more closely with the aviation industry to come up with a plan to reduce airline emissions and for investments in alternative modes of transportation. "Traveling is very important. But faced with a climate emergency, there really is no economy on a dead planet. And there is no tourism and pleasure on a dead planet," Granett said.

### **Tuesday, August 29**

#### **Bay Area fire season ramps up ahead of potential PG&E public safety power shutoff**

PG&E is on watch a for potential public safety power shutoff in several Northern California counties on Wednesday, including Napa. The agency says they will shut off power depending on the weather, potential wind and the fuel moisture content of the vegetation. The PSPS watch will reach all the way up the center of Northern California, which includes Colusa, Glenn, Shasta, Tehama, Lake and Yolo counties. The agency says they will notify customers as conditions evolve. Mop up operations are underway after several small vegetation fires broke out throughout the Bay Area on Monday. In the North Bay, CAL FIRE LNU and the Vacaville Fire District responded to a 10-acre fire off Cherry Glen Road. No structures were damaged, and officials say the cause is under investigation. In the South Bay, CAL FIRE CZU contained a 1.4-acre fire in Brookdale in Santa Cruz County.

One minor structure was lost and no one was hurt. Sam Filson, Battalion Chief CAL FIRE and Santa Cruz County Fire, says it's this time of the year when fire season tends to ramp up. "Going into August, September, October is typically the time of year we see an uptick in vegetation fires in our area," Filson said. Filson said so far this season fire personnel have been focused on the fires burning in the Northern part of the state including Siskiyou and Humboldt Counties. Filson said even though it may seem like fire season for the Bay Area is off to a slower start, things can change quickly. Signing up for local emergency alerts will keep you informed. "Encourage people to be fire safe, and to be aware of their surroundings and to be aware of incidents going on - there's many different avenues to gain information about ongoing incidents including the PulsePoint app," Filson said.

### **Wednesday, August 30**

#### **Bay Area's newest nature preserve is a Cold War relic that bridges wildlife habitats**

Soaring above the new Coyote Ridge Open Space in Santa Clara County may be the easiest way to take in the vibrant colors splashed along the rugged hilltops. But making those views accessible to visitors is an engineering success

story, years in the making. Andres Campusano is the supervising technician for the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority. He says crews hand-dug specific trails to avoid disturbing asbestos-laden rock. And the work didn't stop there. "These trails here can be pretty steep, there's a lot of ranch roads," Campusano explained. "So we did hand build one section of trail that eliminated the steepest section of the of the ranch roads." The result is access to a steep open space that can be covered with native wildflowers in spring. The area is home to the Bay Checkerspot butterfly and other unique species, some endangered, others simply magnificent.

"The wildlife I've seen out here is burrowing owls, golden eagles, bald eagles, tule elk, coyotes, bobcats," Campusano said. But if the Open Space is colorful, so is its history. Tucked back in the hills is the site of United Technologies. The aerospace company once built and tested rocket engines for NASA and the military. After a destructive explosion, the company eventually closed the site, providing a historic opportunity. "And so it took conservationists negotiating with United Technologies as they started to close down operations here to get this property transferred from what was a Cold War relic into a conservation success story," general manager Andrea Mackenzie said. Mackenzie says the area is unique for other reasons, including its geography. Located across from the similarly named Coyote Valley, the areas provide a critical link for wildlife migrating between the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Diablo Range.

"People don't realize that Santa Cruz in the Santa Cruz Mountains has become almost an island, an isolated island, where tons of creatures like mountain lions do not have room to roam," she said. "They become stuck there in the Santa Cruz Mountains and genetically isolated which is bad news for the population." As crews work to put the finishing touches on shade stations and other installations, the Authority is preparing to open the Coyote Ridge to the public. They say some areas are so ecologically sensitive they'll require visitors to register for special access butterfly passes and use precautions like spraying their shoes. But the reward will be five miles of hiking trails, winding through a unique and critical habitat. "These lands belong to you. They belong to the public," Mackenzie said. "You helped us purchase them, you will hike on them, you will take care of them. And we hope when you come out here to enjoy your newest preserve, you will enjoy it with wonder and respect and awe because this is part of our future." An open space with a fascinating past, and exciting future for visitors. Coyote Ridge will open to the public this Thursday. It will also be known by its indigenous name: Mayyan Ooyakma in the Chochenyo language.

### **Thursday, August 31**

### **Wildfire smoke from CA-OR border causing poor air quality conditions across Bay Area**

The Bay Area Air District has issued an air quality advisory for wildfire smoke through Thursday after a Spare the Air Alert Wednesday. SKY7 video from

above San Francisco Wednesday, clouded, by smoke. "It is unbelievable, what a beautiful city though, what a beautiful city... when it's not smoky," James Domkoski, a Las Vegas resident said. A similar view from across the Bay in Emeryville, where the smoke was so thick, you could no longer see the Golden Gate Bridge. James Domkoski out of Las Vegas says it's a night and day difference compared to his last visit earlier this month. "Two weeks ago when I was out here, it was so beautiful, such a beautiful sunny day, it's just gorgeous, you could see everything, with Alcatraz, Golden Gate and now look at it, you can't see anything!" he said.

Conditions reached a point where the Bay Area Air District issued a Spare the Air Alert for Wednesday. "Because we believe ozone will be at unhealthy levels and there's another thing going on which is, we're getting smoke from the fires going on, on the Northern California Oregon border and some of that is filtering down to us as well," Ralph Borrmann, a spokesperson for the Bay Area Air District said. One of those fires is the Smith River Complex Fire, which has ballooned to nearly 80,000 acres. "With a wildfire, even though it's happening hundreds of miles away, the winds can carry it into the Bay Area and we can smell it, we can see it," Borrmann said. Michael Schmeltz, a Public Health Professor for Cal State East Bay says the monitors are edging right up to the 'unhealthy for sensitive groups,' meaning those with underlying health conditions will likely feel the effects of the smoke more than the general public.

"It may be warranted that you sort of reduce your outdoor activities, stay outside, have the windows closed, if you have an air filter, or an air conditioner, to start running those in the evening," Schmeltz said. Despite these conditions, ABC7 News Reporter Lena Howland found no shortage of people getting outdoors, taking in the hazy views. "I hope you know, it gets better because I feel like today was the worst day, it wasn't this bad yesterday," Christina, a Richmond resident said. As for when this smoke is expected to clear, experts tell us the Bay Area could be in luck by the weekend. "We do expect that as of tomorrow (Thursday) evening, those impacts are going to be less, the smoke gets pushed more to the east and away from the Bay Area and that should continue throughout the weekend," Borrmann said.

## **Tuesday, September 5**

### **Shipping companies recognized for helping protect migrating whales along NorCal coast**

If they could do it in their own language, thousands of migrating whales would probably want to say thank you. So now, a group of marine scientists is saying it for them. They're awarding several whale tail trophies to commercial shipping companies, thanking them for slowing down to help protect the whales from deadly collisions. "And I think it's something that's well deserved because we have a number of shipping lines, who have drastically changed their operations and drastically changed their scheduling, to ensure that they're slowing down to

ten knots for hundreds of miles off of our coastline to protect whales," says Jess Morten, with the California Marine Sanctuary Foundation and NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Morten explains that the awards are part of their Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies program, which asks shipping companies to reduce the speed of their vessels voluntarily. It's traditionally included financial incentives, until now. "And so actually, this year, for the first time in 2023, this has become an incentive program that's just based on positive progress and recognition," says Morten.

The top-tier award winners include eight major shipping companies that achieved close to full compliance. One winner, Mediterranean Shipping Company, told ABC7 News in a statement: "We are committed to making sustainable shipping a reality by doing everything in our power to protect marine life." Which is really exciting to see," adds Morten. And while the list of shipping companies participating in the program is growing, so is the technology behind it. A partnership, led by Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory, helped place special eavesdropping buoys outside San Francisco Bay. The devices essentially hear the presence of whales in the area and relay the information to managers. Callie Leiphardt is a project scientist with Benioff and UC Santa Barbara and says the system is multi-tiered. "So that includes a dynamic whale habitat model, sightings data, and the buoy data," she explains. "So real-time acoustic data and all three of these complement each other to try to fill in some of the data gaps that we're seeing. Whales aren't always calling, we don't always have boats out on the water, looking for whales. So the ocean can tell us a lot about the likelihood of whales."

## **Economy & Changing Workplace**

**Wednesday, July 26, 2023**

**Oakland International Airport considering major expansion project, seeks community input on EIR**

Leslie Campbell flies a lot. And she usually flies through Oakland. But she thinks the Oakland airport is in need of an upgrade. "Oakland has been a little dated for a while. They have done little changes, but I think an expansion will be great for the city," says Campbell, who lives in Alameda. On the table, is a new proposal to expand and modernize the Oakland International Airport. The publication of the draft Environmental Impact Report, which is one of the first steps in the process, was released last week. "This is definitely a milestone for the Oakland airport. We have not modernized the airport since it was built," says Colleen Liang. She is the Acting Director of Environmental Programs and Planning for the Port of Oakland, which owns and operates the Oakland International Airport. The proposal includes constructing a new terminal, adding 16 more gates and to expand the international arrival facilities. Along with adding more parking, it will

modernize Terminal 1 and 2, making improvements to areas like ticketing, baggage claim and security screening.

"Great! Especially with the security check lanes. There is always long lines. Everybody that flies Southwest generally flies out of Oakland. I think it'll be good," says Campbell. "We are going on an Alaskan cruise from San Francisco. Oakland seemed to be a less busy airport. We traveled southwest so this seemed the place to come," says Kirk Tolliver, who flew in from Fort Wayne, Indiana, with his wife. Officials says the expansion project is also to keep up with expected demand. Oakland currently serves 11 million passengers annually. They expect that to grow to 24 million passengers by 2038. In expanding the airport, they also hope to attract more passengers from the East Bay, many who may currently use San Francisco International Airport.

"We are the closest airport for more than 7.7 million people that live in the San Francisco Bay Area. So, definitely, it would be a convenient airport for cities in the East Bay to travel through our airport," says Liang. If the project is approved, it could still be several years before anything is built. The proposal is currently in the 60-day public review and comment period. There will be two public meetings. The first will be August 15. The second will be August 30. Anyone wanting to send a comment has until September 15.

#### **Thursday, July 27, 2023**

#### **As store signs come down, SF mayor talks of recent demand for office space**

This week, we've seen a changing look to parts of San Francisco. Some stores have closed, taken down their signs, and cleaned out their spaces in the process. The San Francisco mayor though, says there is demand to be in the city as numerous companies are now looking to lease thousands of square feet of office space. Wednesday afternoon, our crews witnessed moving crews taking items out of what was, just weeks ago before it's closure, the Old Navy store on Market Street in San Francisco. The Westfield shopping mall signage, taken down in recent days after the mall operator bailed and just as Twitter took down their sign for a branding revamp. A changing look, one noticed by some tourists.

"As I walk the streets here in San Francisco very very saddened," said Leslie Ostroski-Marmorato of North Carolina. Ostroski-Marmorato, who once spent time in the Presidio as an Army nurse, is visiting from North Carolina. "It's a catastrophic feeling when I walk the city and see that in one city block out of five buildings, maybe only two are still alive and living." The Johnston & Murphy store in Union Square is now closed. ABC7 News reporter J.R. Stone says he was just there shopping in recent weeks, now everything inside is gone. San Francisco Mayor London Breed says there are companies looking to come to San Francisco. "Right now, everybody is talking about artificial intelligence. Of the top 20 companies in the world, 13 are in the Bay Area and eight are in San

Francisco, In fact, we have 10 AI companies looking for 800,000 square feet of space in San Francisco so we got a lot of things happening," said Breed.

Speaking at a Women's World Cup viewing party Wednesday night, Mayor Breed referenced the challenges the city dealt with after the double-decker Embarcadero Freeway was damaged in the 1989 Loma Prieta quake. "And now look at this space and how we took a tragedy and challenging situation and created an opportunity to bring people together, so that's what we do in San Francisco," said Breed. And it's not all doom and gloom in the City by the Bay. World class attractions like Cable cars, Coit Tower, and Alcatraz can only be found here. Well known stores like Macy's and Apple have stayed and some say that no matter what businesses do, they love San Francisco. "Little leery about coming but we haven't experienced anything at all negative bad concerning so it's been a great experience," said Nancy Albright who is visiting from Houston, Texas. Mayor Breed says, "We are changing as a city." Now a hope that that change will be accepted and welcomed by the crowds of people seen walking along the streets of San Francisco on Wednesday.

### **Thursday, July 27, 2023**

#### **Business owners share secret to San Francisco neighborhood thriving after the pandemic**

The pandemic resulted in the closure of many San Francisco businesses, but three years later, there's a neighborhood that is doing much better financially than before the pandemic. If you walk around the Haight you'll quickly notice this neighborhood is alive and tourism is back. "We are coming from Germany," said Erik Ehlers a tourist from Europe. Many are making a stop in Haight Ashbury because of the counterculture movement and the summer of love. "We hand out for free to all of our visitors that come to promote walking through the whole neighborhood," said Robert Emmons, owner of Welcome Haight and Ashbury. Emmons has another store in the neighborhood and just opened Welcome Haight and Ashbury two years ago. "This store is doing I would say about 25% more business than our other store," Emmon said.

His store is a modern version of a museum/visitor center for the neighborhood. It's done so well that another neighborhood reached out to him asking if they could also have a customized version of this. "Two-to-three months ago we just opened up Welcome Castro in the Castro, so it's on Castro and 18th," Emmon said. Blue Bin Vintage is also seeing an uptick in sales just a year after opening. "We just had a group here earlier a French group with probably about 15 people that came in," said Sahra Amin, store manager at Blue Bin Vintage. According to the Haight Ashbury's Merchants Association, they are seeing more storefronts fill up now than before the pandemic. "Since 2021 we've actually had more than 20 new businesses come into Haight Ashbury, and we have now fewer vacancies than we did before the pandemic," said Christin Evans, board member of the Haight Ashbury Merchants Association.

The data backs up their claim. District 5, which includes the Haight Ashbury neighborhood -- along with several others including Hayes Valley and Japantown -- saw an increase in sales tax revenue in 2022 compared to pre-pandemic years. They say the secret to this neighborhood succeeding after the pandemic is "a really tight-knit community," said Evans. The owner of Love on Haight said taking care of their community meant also taking care of their employees. "We had a hard time finding solid employees, so we increased our wages by about 20%," said Sunshine Powers, owner of Love on Haight and added. "I was able to procure apartments above the shop during the pandemic so we could offer affordable housing to our employees."

### **Tuesday, August 1, 2023**

#### **Layoff tracker: Mass layoffs by tech companies big and small hit the Bay Area**

From Amazon to Twitter to Meta, and now Planet, Niantic, Lyft, Ebay, Paypal and Splunk, thousands of U.S. workers have lost their jobs in brutal mass layoffs in 2022 and now in 2023. Satellite imagery company Planet announced on August 1st, 2023 that it is laying off 117 employees, or around 10% of its workforce. In a CEO note, Planet CEO Will Marshall says the additional costs that came with expanding rapidly are no longer supported by the changing macroeconomic environment, and are therefore "making changes to prioritize our attention on the highest ROI opportunities for our business and mission, while reinforcing our path to profitability." San Francisco-based video game maker Niantic, better known as the creator of Pokémon GO announced on June 29th, 2023 that it is laying off 230 employees or approximately a quarter of its workforce. The company said it was restructuring to rein in cost and concentrate on first party games on mobile. Pokémon GO will remain a top priority "forever game". The bulk of cuts will come from closing its LA studio and reducing its game platform team, effectively ending production on games such as NBA All-World and Marvel: World of Heroes. This announcement comes a year after Niantic laid off around 90 workers and canceled multiple projects including a Transformer game.

On April 27th, 2023, Lyft employees received notification on their employment status after a note from new CEO David Risher a week earlier announced yet another round of cuts, this time an estimated 26% of current workforce or 1,072. This brings the combined estimated workers cut to 1806 or an estimated 34% of its original workforce from 2022. While our layoff tracker below watches tech mass redundancies in the Bay Area, due to the magnitude of the cuts, it is worth noting retail tech giant Amazon has announced on Monday March 20, 2023 it was laying off an additional 9,000 employees, on top of the cuts to 18,000 positions that the company disclosed in January, bringing it to a total of 27,000. This comes hot on the heels of a statement by Mark Zuckerberg a week before that Meta will lay off 10,000 more workers and incur restructuring costs ranging from \$3 billion to \$5 billion.



On March 29 2023, Electronic Arts announced a restructuring plan through an SEC filing that will see around 800 or 6% of its staff let go. On February 7 2023, Zoom announced it was laying off 1,300 or 15% of its staff. On the same day, Ebay announced it was shaving off 4% of its workforce or 500 workers, to create "additional space to invest and create new roles in high-potential areas," according to Ebay CEO Jamie Iannone in an SEC filing. On January 31st 2023, Paypal announced a round of layoffs, cutting 2,000 from its global workforce. Google (parent company Alphabet), together with a long list of tech companies executing mass redundancies, announced on January 20th that it will lay off 12,000 or 6% of its global workforce. Salesforce first announced layoffs of 1,090 workers in November and kicked off 2023 with another layoffs announcement in January of approximately 7,900 staff or 10% of its global workforce.

San Francisco-based DoorDash announced on Nov. 30 that it is shaving 1,250 jobs or 6% of its workforce in an effort to rein in operating cost in a challenging post-pandemic, macro environment. Including the most recent announcement by Salesforce, a growing list of companies have made second and third rounds of cuts. These include Stripe, which cut around 1,000 in November after laying off around 50 people (from TaxJar, a Stripe acquisition) earlier this year, and Lyft, which slashed 683 from its team after laying off 60 people in July. In May, Netflix cut 150 staff members from its workforce and laid off 450 more in June. App users: For a better experience, [click here to view the graph in a new window.](#) Note: This tracker is developing and will be updated. Companies marked with an asterisk\* reflect the total estimated number of staff laid off from multiple rounds of job cuts year-to-date in 2022. The dates mark the latest layoff announcement for all companies.

Here's a more in-depth look at the 14 largest layoffs in the Bay Area.

Meta

Staff cut: 21,000 or 13%

Reason: Cost-cutting

Meta announced it is laying off an additional 13% of its staff, or more than 10,000 employees. It would be the tech company's second round of cuts since November which saw 11,000 staff or around 13% of its workforce let go. Mark Zuckerberg, its chief executive, has declared 2023 the "year of efficiency." In a company letter to staff, Zuckerberg said "over the next couple of months, org leaders will announce restructuring plans focused on flattening our orgs, canceling lower priority projects, and reducing our hiring rates. With less hiring, I've made the difficult decision to further reduce the size of our recruiting team." According to the note, an additional 5,000 open positions will also close. The first round of redundancies was similarly announced through a staff letter CEO Mark Zuckerberg wrote on Nov. 3. At its peak last year, Meta had 87,000 full-time employees. This calculates to a loss of around 24% of its global workforce from its peak numbers.

## Alphabet

Staff cut: 12,000 or 6%

Reason: Hired too quickly restructuring post-pandemic

In one of the largest cuts made by a Bay Area tech company so far this year, Google joins the long list of tech companies executing mass redundancies, announcing on January 20th that it will lay off 12,000 or 6% of its global workforce. In his email to staff, CEO Sundar Pichai says affected US employees will be paid during the full notification period (minimum 60 days). The company will also offer a severance package starting at 16 weeks salary plus two weeks for every additional year at Google, and accelerate at least 16 weeks of GSU vesting. Departing US employees will receive their bonuses for 2022 and remaining vacation time. The company will also continue to provide 6 months of healthcare, job placement services, and immigration support for those affected. Outside the US, the tech giant will support employees in line with local practices.

## Salesforce

Staff cut: 8890

Reason: Overhiring

The tech giant in November 2022 first announced layoffs of 1,090 workers and kicked off 2023 with another layoffs announcement, this time 10% of its estimated 79,000 global workforce through a letter from its Co-founder and CEO Marc Benioff. In the U.S., affected employees will receive a minimum of nearly five months of pay, health insurance, career resources, and other benefits to help with the transition. According to Benioff's note, those outside the U.S. will receive a similar level of support, with the company aligning with local employment laws in each country.

## Twitter

Staff cut: 3,700 or 50%

Reason: New owner

After the deal to take over Twitter for \$44 billion closed, the social media company's new owner, Elon Musk, fired Twitter's CEO along with several top executives. It was previously suggested he would cut 75% of its pre-takeover workforce. He has since walked that notion back but the company did announce layoffs to half its workforce, with smaller cuts for the team responsible for preventing the spread of misinformation. According to tweets by Musk, everyone affected was offered three months of severance pay, "Unfortunately there is no choice when the company is losing over \$4M/day."

## PayPal

Staff cut: 2,000 or 7%

Reason: Macroeconomic environment

On Jan 31, Paypal announced 2000 staff or 7% of its global workforce would be laid off to downsize in a challenging market. "Over the past year, we made significant progress in strengthening and reshaping our company to address the

challenging macro-economic environment while continuing to invest to meet our customers' needs. While we have made substantial progress in right-sizing our cost structure, and focused our resources on our core strategic priorities, we have more work to do. We must continue to change as our world, our customers, and our competitive landscape evolve," President and CEO Dan Schulman says in a letter to employees. In his memo, Schulman says departing staff will be provided "with generous packages, engage in consultation where required, and support with their transitions."

## Lyft

Staff cut: 1806 or 34%

Reason: Cost-cutting to be more competitive

Lyft confirmed a third round of layoffs since 2022 in April 2023, this time shedding 1072 positions, or 26% of its current workforce. It also announced it will freeze hiring for 250 open positions and keep them unfilled. This brings the total estimated number of workers made redundant at Lyft to 1,806 or 34% of its workforce since mass layoffs at the ride-hailing company began in 2022. David Risher, the new CEO at Lyft said in a company note, "We need to be a faster, flatter company where everyone is closer to our riders and drivers so we can deliver on this purpose. And we need to bring our costs down to deliver affordable rides, compelling earnings for drivers, and profitable growth. We intend to use these savings to invest in competitive pricing, faster pick-up times, and better driver earnings. All of these require us to reduce our size and restructure how we're organized." In a Securities and Exchange Commission filing on Nov. 3, Lyft said 683 employees would be let go as part of a restructuring plan to combat a probable recession and worsening economic conditions. Those leaving can expect ten weeks of pay, healthcare coverage through next April, accelerated equity vesting and recruiting assistance. Staff who have worked at the company for four years or more will be given an extra four weeks salary. This is yet another round of layoffs since the San Francisco-based rideshare company laid off 60 employees in July 2022, after winding down its in-house car rental division and in November 2022 where 683 workers were already let go.

## DoorDash

Staff cut: 1,250 or 6%

Reason: Streamlining headcount from COVID-19 pandemic, operating expense outpacing revenue growth During the pandemic with most isolating and not leaving their homes, DoorDash sped up hiring to meet the explosive demand for its food delivery service. However, that demand has tapered and the company is now looking to cut cost. "While our business continues to grow fast, given how quickly we hired, our operating expenses - if left unabated - would continue to outgrow our revenue," DoorDash CEO Tony Xu said in a note released to staff on Nov. 30. Impacted staff will receive 17 weeks (13 weeks + 1 four-week lump sum severance pay) of compensation, as well as a February 2023 stock vest. All health benefits will continue through March 31, 2023. Those laid off will also

receive immigration support, with the company setting the termination date for March 1, 2023, giving those with visa applications (and a desire to stay in the US) as much time as possible to find a new job.

#### Coinbase

Staff cut: 1160 or 18%

Reason: Cost-cutting

San Francisco based crypto company Coinbase continues shedding headcount, cutting an additional 60 workers in November after losing an initial 1,100 -- 18% of its workforce -- in June 2022 through a CEO letter. Coinbase CEO and Cofounder Brian Armstrong attributes the cuts to growing too quickly and the need to manage costs in down markets. Transaction revenue fell 44% compared to the second quarter with fewer users active on the crypto exchange, according to the company's earnings report. The stock is also down nearly 80% this year. In the June message, Armstrong said affected members would get a minimum of 14 weeks of severance plus an additional 2 weeks for every year of employment beyond 1 year. U.S. staff will also get four months of health insurance.

#### Stripe

Staff cut: 1,000 or 14%

Reason: Macroeconomic challenges

In his note to staff announcing the layoffs, Stripe CEO Patrick Collison said the company will cut staffing numbers by around 14%. Collison cited macroeconomic headwinds such as stubborn inflation, energy shocks, higher interest rates, reduced investment budgets, and sparser startup funding as the challenges that face the business. "Around 14% of people at Stripe will be leaving the company. We, the founders, made this decision. We overhired for the world we're in...and it pains us to be unable to deliver the experience that we hoped that those impacted would have at Stripe," he said. The company will pay 14 weeks of severance for all departing employees, and more for those with longer tenure. Those departing will be paid until at least February 21, 2023. All departing staff will still receive their 2022 annual bonus regardless of their departure date. It will be prorated for people hired in 2022. The company has also promised to pay the cash equivalent of six months of existing healthcare premiums or healthcare continuation. Earlier this year, Stripe was reported to have laid off an estimated 50 people from TaxJar, a tax compliance startup that it acquired in 2021.

#### Robinhood

Staff cut: 1000 or 29% (calculated from a combination of two rounds of staff cuts)

Reason: Cost-cutting/Macroeconomic challenges

Menlo Park-based online discount brokerage company Robinhood cut an estimated 1,000 workers over two layoffs. The first round of cuts were in April 2022 where the company cut 9% of its nearly 3,900 workforce. The latest cuts, announced through a letter from CEO Vlad Tenev on Aug 2, report that 23% of its total staff will be cut. Tenev said in his blog post that earlier this year the company let go of 9% of the workforce "to focus on greater cost discipline

throughout the organization. This did not go far enough." "Since that time, we have seen additional deterioration of the macro environment, with inflation at 40-year highs accompanied by a broad crypto market crash. This has further reduced customer trading activity and assets under custody," he said. Departing workers will be offered the opportunity to remain employed with Robinhood through October 1, 2022 and receive their regular pay and benefits, including equity vesting. They will also be offered cash severance, payment of COBRA medical, dental and vision insurance premiums and job search assistance -- including an opt-in Robinhood Alumni Talent Directory.

#### Twilio

Staff cut: 900 or 11%

Reason: Grew too fast/ profitability concerns

In September, Twilio CEO Jeff Lawson published a note to inform staff that a restructure would reduce Twilio's workforce by 11%. The San Francisco-based cloud communications specialist had 8,199 employees as of March 31, 2022, according to a press release of its first quarter 2022 financial results. "Twilio has grown at an astonishing rate over the past couple years. It was too fast, and without enough focus on our most important company priorities. I take responsibility for those decisions," Lawson said in his blog. Impacted workers will receive 12 weeks of pay, plus one week for every year of service at Twilio. Departing staff can also expect to receive the value of Twilio's next stock vest.

#### Electronic Arts

Staff cut: around 800 or 6%

Redwood City headquartered videogame publisher Electronic Arts said on March 29 it will lay off about 6% or around 800 of its workforce and reduce office space. The company announced through an SEC filing, that a "restructuring plan focused on prioritizing investments to the Company's growth opportunities" has been put in place. EA, which had about 12,900 staff as of March-end last year, expects to incur between \$170 million and \$200 million in charges related to its restructuring plan. The actions associated with the plan are expected to be substantially complete by September 30, 2023.

#### Opendoor

Staff cut: 550 or 18%

Reason: Market downturn

Real Estate technology company Opendoor announced cuts to its workforce by 18% -- 550 workers -- on Nov. 3 through a note by co-founder and CEO Eric Wu. Wu said that "one of the most challenging real estate markets in 40 years" had spurred the need to adjust the business. Prior to this layoff the proptech firm had already reduced capacity by over 830 positions, primarily by reducing third party resourcing and eliminating fixed expenses. Affected workers will receive ten weeks of pay with an additional two weeks of pay for every full year beyond two years of tenure. Healthcare benefits will remain active for the rest of the month

plus an additional three months of health insurance. Job transition support will also be offered by the firm.

Netflix

Staff cut: 450 or 3%

Reason: Cost-cutting/slowing revenue growth

In June, Santa Clara-based streaming giant Netflix announced 300 jobs cut in a second round of layoffs as subscriptions fell and revenue slowed. This comes hot on the heels of the 150 workers already let go in May. The company released a statement to staff that said, "While we continue to invest significantly in the business, we made these adjustments so that our costs are growing in line with our slower revenue growth." Netflix stock is down 51.84% year-to-date as of Nov. 11.

### **Thursday, August 10**

#### **San Francisco's population is shrinking as birth rate declines, state says**

Fewer San Franciscans are having babies. That's the latest finding from California's Department of Finance. According to the state's demographer, by 2025 CA is projecting more people will die in San Francisco due to age than babies will be born. "Births have been declining in the city," said Andres Gallardo, demographer for the state, "We are seeing right now a little bit over 7,000 births a year and we expect that to decline to roughly around 6,000 in the next 40 years." According to Gallardo, there are two factors working together towards this decline. "As the population gets older, we are going to see higher death counts. Just because there is more people over 70 and 80 than before," said Gallardo. The Children's Council of San Francisco says the cost of living continues to push families out of San Francisco. "Housing is really a big problem and we hear that from all our clients and families we are working with," said Amie Latterman, chief advancement officer for Children's Council of San Francisco.

According to Latterman, 60% of San Francisco children ages 0 to 5 live in a household that struggles to make ends meet. "For families who have children under 5, the cost of childcare is substantial. It can be around 30% of your income and that is if you are making ends meet. Which really requires around \$165,000 for a two adult household with two kids," said Latterman. On average, child care can cost \$20,000 to \$25,000 a year per child. The Children's Council is hoping their nonprofit can serve future families. "The research is showing all sorts of decisions being made by young San Franciscans. They are hesitating to take on the cost of having a family here and we want the city to be family friendly," said Latterman. Every year that San Francisco's population shrinks, experts believe that can also translate to a weaker economy.

### **Friday, August 11, 2023**

#### **Cruise, Waymo get green light to give paid rides 24/7 across San Francisco**

Robotaxis now have the green light to operate in San Francisco. After a contentious public hearing with hours of public comment, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) on Thursday authorized Cruise and Waymo to begin offering paid rides to the public at all hours of the day and across San Francisco. ABC7 News reporter Lyanne Melendez tried out one of Waymo's self-driving vehicles for the first time. Watch as the ride takes a strange turn. The historic decision makes San Francisco the first city in the world to have two companies offering fully operational paid autonomous driving taxi services and put autonomous vehicles on the fast track towards widespread use in California. Hundreds of members of the public came to speak out for and against the expansion of robotaxi service in San Francisco.

The critics focused on many of the issues that had been raised over the last few months including incidents where the vehicles stalled in the middle of roads, blocking traffic and in some cases interfering with emergency responders. Supporters said they felt like autonomous vehicles were safer than human drivers. Many vision-impaired people said they felt like the autonomous vehicles gave them a greater sense of freedom and security, allowing them to ride wherever they need to go without having to worry about harassment from rideshare drivers. The vote to expand the use of robotaxis seemed like a certainty in May when the CPUC published a draft resolution, but vocal opposition from San Francisco officials has made for a bumpy ride for both companies since then. The decision was delayed twice while the CPUC worked to get more robust data from Cruise and Waymo on incidents like stalled autonomous vehicles blocking traffic and robotaxis that drove into fire scenes or blocked streets.

Until now, robotaxis have been able to operate with time and location restrictions in San Francisco, but now anyone who downloads the Cruise or Waymo apps can use the service. Video taken by a San Francisco resident shows a Cruise driverless car stalled on a San Francisco street for hours, just near a freeway exit. There will still be some geographic restrictions to where the vehicles can go as ABC7 News reporter Lyanne Melendez found out when she took test rides in Cruise and Waymo. The vehicles were unable to go to the destination that she selected because it had not yet been mapped by the companies, however, Cruise and Waymo say they are continuing to offer service to new areas. While more people will now be able to ride, don't expect to see the streets flooded with robotaxis. In previous interviews with ABC7 News, Cruise and Waymo have said they don't plan on immediately adding any new vehicles to the network, but will slowly increase their fleets.

**Saturday, August 12, 2023**

**Outside Lands generated over \$1B for SF in 15 years. Now the plan is to extend it**

Outside Lands is back in Golden Gate Park for three days of music, food, art and more. The city says everything is in place for the 15th annual festival. Over 250,000 tickets sold with people coming from all across the country. It's expected to bring in a lot of money for the city. "We have generated over a billion dollars in economic impact to the city of San Francisco and that's something, in these times, is more notable than when we started," Outside Lands Co-Founder Allen Scott said. "These people generate tax revenue for the city. Tax revenue that we don't have to pay otherwise. It creates jobs and employment. It creates revenue for small businesses," said Joe D'Alessandro, president and CEO, San Francisco Travel Association. In the last 15 years, this festival has become a massive economic boost for the city, generating over a billion dollars in economic impact for the city. The city is considering to do more events like the festival in 2024. "We are going to add a second weekend of concerts but only here at the polo fields," said Phil Ginsburg, general manager of the San Francisco Recreation and Park Dept.

The proposal which the board of supervisors will consider in Sept. would use the Outside Lands infrastructure to host another big music weekend. Organizers would also bring live music to downtown. "Another Planet has generously agree to provide three downtown concerts because we've had so much discussion about how we revitalize downtown," said Ginsburg. Headliners are Kendrick Lamar, Foo Fighters, and electronic music duo Odesza. And ABC7's very own Dan Ashley is performing Saturday at 12:15 p.m. We've seen some people selling their tickets on Facebook Marketplace, and there are still some tickets left on the Outside Lands website, but only in the Golden Gate Club. Single-day passes for that club are \$2,200 and 3-day passes are \$4,900.

## **Tuesday, August 15**

### **San Jose workers strike called off after tentative agreement, spokesperson says**

A planned walkout by San Jose city workers has been averted after a tentative agreement with the city and two unions, according to a union coalition official on Tuesday. Two unions that represent 4,500 city workers are no longer striking for the planned 72-hour walkout that was set to begin Tuesday morning. The strike was paused Monday after the unions said there was positive movement at the bargaining table. The unions represent 4,500 workers in sectors of the airport, housing department and city library. The workers called for better wages, better working conditions and asked the city to address nearly 800 job vacancies.

Officials say the tentative agreement includes a wage increase of 14.5-15% over three years for all members.

6% in Year One (Effective July 1, 2023)

5% in Year Two (4% effective July 1, 2024, and 1% effective January 1, 2025)

3.5 to 4% in Year Three (Effective July 1, 2025)\*



There will be an increase from 1 to 8 weeks of paid family leave and reinvestment in public services.

**Thursday, August 24, 2023**

**Vacant to Vibrant Program' in SF announces 17 new pop-up shops to open late September**

San Francisco just announced the names of 17 new pop-up shops that will move into empty store fronts in the Financial District downtown. The "Vacant to Vibrant Program" received 850 applications from small businesses, vendors, and artists. The pop-ups will be open in late September. Devil's Teeth Baking Company in the Outer Sunset SF is a big with locals. "The breakfast sandwich is our biggest seller," said owner Hilary Passman. Passman's business is the recipient of three months free rent, a grant of about \$8,000 from the City of San Francisco, and a chance to temporarily expand her popular bakery with a pop-up space in the Financial District. "It's very exciting. So we are going to be bringing our full menu," Passman said. Her pop-up will go up at 1 Embarcadero Center. It's part of Mayor London Breed's Vacant to Vibrant Initiative and part of the road map to recovery program she announced in February. "This program matches vacant ground floor spaces and their owners with small businesses that are either starting or are looking to open a San Francisco or second location," said Sara Dennis Phillips, executive director of Office of Economic and Workforce Development.

"It's terrific that the city is helping us, not just me. There are all sorts of diverse, creative activators that are coming down there now, and I think it's really going to make a difference," Passman said. San Francisco's Office of Economic Workforce Development and nonprofit business advocacy group SF New Deal announced the 17 awardees for phase one. They include artists, designers and a radio station. At an empty store front at 201 Jackson Street, The Gateway, two pop-ups are slated. They include a multimedia agency and Brujas, a skate collective/streetwear apparel brand in Oakland. One of the property owners participating in the program is BXP. They issued this statement: "BXP is committed to supporting a strong downtown and our vibrant San Francisco community... by hosting 4 pop-up activation at Embarcadero Center that will further our collective efforts to revitalize downtown by supporting local artists, entrepreneurs and small businesses."

Back to the bakery pop-up coming to 1 Embarcadero Center--neighboring business can't wait. Javid Bakashi is the Owner of The Humidor. "That would be great if we can get some business here or other places in the financial district," said Bakahsi. Mayor London Breed released this statement about Vacant to Vibrant. "San Francisco is open for business and it is great to see the progress being made to revitalize and rethink how our Downtown serves residents, business, and visitors," said Mayor Breed. "When I announced the Roadmap to San Francisco's Future, finding creative ways to fill our empty storefronts was

one of my key priorities, and through a number of policy reforms that will remove unnecessary zoning and permitting barriers, we are making good progress. This is an exciting next step for along-awaited program that I know will be good for small businesses, residents, and visitors to enjoy." The Vacant to Vibrant Program is accepting applications for future phases. If you're a local business, an artist, a non-profit or a property owner and, you're interested, they're hoping to hear from you.

### **Saturday, September 16**

#### **What does San Francisco need to do to fix its image now that Dreamforce is done for the year?**

San Francisco put on its best face for the recent Dreamforce Convention. During the past three days, it was all about safety and clean streets, two things we haven't seen much of near Moscone Center in the South of Market neighborhood. But what happens now that all of the visitors are gone? What are the city's plans to continue fixing its image? Marc Benioff and his mega convention, Dreamforce, will have pumped an estimated \$57 million into San Francisco's economy. But not before warning the city to be on its best behavior, telling the Chronicle, "If this Dreamforce is impacted by the current situation with homelessness and drug use, it may be the last Dreamforce in the city." Mayor London Breed seemed to call his bluff. "They have not had any problems hosting their conventions in the past and they won't in the future," expressed Breed. Still, the mayor admitted they "have never had to work so hard to clean up the city."

Police everywhere. Clean up crews on every block near Moscone. Which begs the question: Where are all the tents and the unhoused people who typically hunker down near Moscone Center and its surrounding areas? Streets that until recently were crammed with tents, looked somewhat pristine. Instead, what we saw were many of the homeless people moving in the opposite direction of Dreamforce. We asked two unhoused men where they were headed. "It's not a good feeling, it's kinda like a different kind of segregation," expressed Elvis Meeker. "They've managed to keep most of the homeless people in a couple of blocks like this part of SOMA and the Tenderloin," added Steven Bruder. We finally found the homeless encampments three long blocks from Dreamforce and a good distance from visitors. Leah Rubin manages Dacha Cafe and Bar on Mission Street. "They're just keeping a lot of the people away from that area in general that look homeless and so on and forth," explained Rubin. She also told us she had never seen the area so clean. Benioff echoed the same sentiment when speaking on Wednesday with Governor Gavin Newsom.

"It's amazing how clean the streets are, it's incredible," said Benioff. "Because we're sucking up to you. We want to keep you here," interrupted Newsom who received a lot of laughs. That may be true, but where does Benioff's frustration come from? Let's go back to 2017 when the city reported approximately 6,858

homeless people, living either on the streets or in shelters. That same year the nonprofit Tipping Point pledged \$100 million to help those organizations directly involved with the homeless. The goal was to cut chronic homelessness in half over the next five years. But they never anticipated a global pandemic. "What happened was people became homeless and when someone becomes homeless, as they are on the street longer, they become chronically homeless, said Sam Cobbs. Then in 2018, Benioff spent a lot of his own money to help pass Proposition C which taxes major companies to raise millions of dollars every year for homeless services. "There's specifically things we can do now to directly address this problem and that's why we're voting for Proposition C," said Benioff in an exclusive 2018 interview with ABC7 News. Still, one year later in 2019 the homeless population increased to about 8,035 and the latest numbers for 2022, 7,754, see a slight improvement but still not better than in 2017.

Adding to the crisis is the rapid increase in the use of deadly fentanyl, which has incapacitated many who are trying to get off the streets. "I haven't seen not too many people get off of fentanyl on their own free will. It takes help," said JJ Smith, a Tenderloin resident, who had just come back from attending a service for a 23 year-old who died of a fentanyl overdose. So far this year, from January to July, 473 people have died of accidental overdoses, 385 due to fentanyl and the city is on track to reach a record 800 or more deaths this year. But this week, some of those negative images of San Francisco have been conveniently tucked away. "Why can't San Francisco not be like this every single day?" asked Benioff. To which Governor Newsom responded, "Things have shifted, you've had it, you want accountability and everybody's job is on the line and it should be. You're right to be angry about this and it's time for cities to step up. It's no longer acceptable what's happening on the streets and sidewalks." We asked Sam Cobbs of Tipping Point now that the governor has said he wants more accountability from every city official in San Francisco, will there finally be change in the city? "I do believe that we're going to finally have change in San Francisco. But we also have to have accountability from our politicians and elected officials. We cannot continue to make homelessness the number one political issue in our city. And so that one politician is trying to solve it while another politician who wants to take their place is actually trying to undercut them because the worse it gets, the greater off their chances are, and so we need to have accountability from everyone," concluded Cobbs. In about two months, San Francisco will host the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit with leaders from different parts of the world, including President Biden. It's a big deal. The area around Moscone Center will be safe and clean, but those participating in that Summit will not, by any means, be confined there and will travel outside of that zone. What they see will be written about and talked about back home much to the benefit or detriment of this city.

## **Race & Social Justice**

## **Saturday, July 8**

### **Decades-long Obon Festival returns to San Jose this weekend**

The annual Obon Festival in San Jose's Japantown is once again coming together this weekend where the popular San Jose Taiko will be celebrating their 50th Anniversary. Longtime volunteer Ken Kamei has been going to the festival since he was child. "In those days, my parents farmed and so it was one of those highlights of summer where we all got together," Kamei said. He said in those days there would be a dance for young people at the San Jose Armory. "They haven't done that for years and years, I'm really dating myself," Kamei said. The San Jose Buddhist Church organizes the event. Head Minister, Gerald Sakamoto says records show the first Obon was held at the same location on N. 5th Street in 1935. "Aha yeah, it's pretty amazing that we have this wonderful gathering of people," Sakamoto said.

The term "Obon" comes from a Buddhist myth unique to Japanese history. A time to honor loved ones who have passed. "Whether we believe in that returning in that kind of spirit or not the idea of again coming together of celebrating of joy and being mindful of the lives that have been a part of our lives, have influenced our lives and made our lives possible," Sakamoto said. The two-day festival is for families and very much organized by families. The young and old filled a room to prepare skewers. Outside, a family-run business is building a teriyaki grill. "That's a second generation back there, he - taking that over from his father they build that brick fire pit of cinderblocks and firebricks," Kamei said. Kamei said he loves the tradition of Obon - something his grandson is now a part of.

Sakamoto is expecting around 3,000 people at any given time during the festival. It runs from 12 p.m. to 10 p.m. on Saturday and 12 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Sunday. "We just hope that people feel welcomed that they can be a part of something that's fun, be a part of something that hopefully brings community together that we can recognize in each other what we share and what we have in common as human beings. We value family, we value neighbors and community," Sakamoto said.

## **Monday, July 24, 2023**

### **Marin Co. gardener files federal lawsuit over beating by San Rafael police due to open beer**

This week marks one year since San Rafael police officers took down a gardener who had been enjoying a beer on a remote street with friends after work. The man suffered several serious injuries. And on Monday, that gardener, Julio Lopez, filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against the officers, the police department, and the city. I-Team reporter Dan Noyes was the first to break this story with body camera video from the altercation. Both of the officers involved in that violent confrontation no longer work for the San Rafael Police Department.

The department says the terms of their departure are confidential, so we don't know for sure whether they were fired or left on their own. The lawsuit against the city of San Rafael, their police department, and former officers Brandon Nail and Daisy Mazariegos was filed Monday in Federal Court, San Francisco Division. Dan Noyes: "Why is this a federal case?" Anthony Label: "Julio's rights were violated in a very violent way. Going back to the founding of our country, and the Bill of Rights, we all have the right against excessive force, unreasonable searches and seizures that comes from the Fourth Amendment."

Label represents Lopez and his wife. Lopez had wrapped a long day of gardening when he stopped for a beer along Windward Way with two relatives with whom he works. The officers arrive, ask for his ID, and when he stands to retrieve it from his front pocket, they take him down.

Daisy Mazariegos: "Sit down, just sit down."

Julio Lopez: "You have to understand-"

Mazariegos: "OK-"

Lopez: "Hey, hey, hey."

Medical records show Lopez suffered a broken nose, a concussion, and a shoulder injury that required surgery. In an exclusive interview in May, Lopez told the I-Team's Dan Noyes, "When I was on the ground, you know, I thought I'm gonna die because of all the blood, you know, it's really scary." His wife, Yesenia Cruz, said the ordeal has changed Julio: "He's not the same. He has no like the same confidence as before. He tried to be the same because he's a man that loves his family." The complaint lists more than a dozen causes of action, from Unreasonable Detention and Arrest, Excessive Force, Failure to Properly Train the Officers, Assault, Battery, Negligence. It says, "A reasonable law enforcement officer would not have used aggressive tactics" over something as minor as an open container of beer.

"Maybe they shouldn't have been drinking a beer there," said Label. "But that wasn't conduct that in any way justified the level of violence that these officers inflicted on him." The attorney tells us Lopez wants his day in court, for a jury to decide the case. Neither Nail nor Mazariegos responded to texts and phone calls for comment. A spokesman for Police Chief David Spiller emailed us that the department would not comment on pending litigation. The San Rafael city attorney did not respond to my calls for comment. The former officers now face felony charges: Assault by an Officer Under Color of Authority, and False Statements in a Crime Report. They're scheduled to make a court appearance in next month.

### **Saturday, August 5**

**Series of home invasions target Asian families in Oakland Hills, police sources tell I-Team**

Approximately 50 home invasion robberies have targeted elderly Asian families in the Oakland Hills, and they may be connected to a small group of criminals, according to law enforcement sources. The I-Team's Dan Noyes has obtained internal police memos that we can't show to protect the sources, and that information has helped us track down some of the victims. This is one of the home invasions listed in police documents obtained by the I-Team: On Monday, an 80-year-old man and his 69-year-old wife were caring for their two grandchildren when robbers broke into a second-floor window. Their daughter told the I-Team, "One man was downstairs with my parents, you know, keeping an eye on them, while the other one was upstairs, trying to get into our safe, ransacking, you know, our closet, our bedrooms, looking for valuables."

The men held the couple at gunpoint for nearly 40 minutes -- a terrifying ordeal. The daughter said, "During this time, my mom was trying to rush them out of the house by saying, 'Hey, you know, someone's going to be home soon. My son-in-law is going to be home from work soon. So we need to hurry up and get what you need.' You know, she offered them cash and said, 'hey, if what you're looking for is cash, here's cash, but just take it. Please don't hurt any of us.'" The criminals got away with \$10,000 in cash and jewelry. The family has had three other attempted home invasions, and with each one, they take a new security precaution -- the fence, the cameras, the dog. Their German Shepherd, now 11 years old, didn't stop the criminals this week.

DAN NOYES: "What's his name?"

WOMAN: "His name is Felix."

DAN NOYES: "Felix, you gotta do your job, pal."

Officials at the Oakland Police Department will not provide anybody to talk on-camera about these issues, saying it's part of an ongoing investigation. But privately, sources tell Dan Noyes they are upset about this crime spree continuing, and they want the story told. The sources gave us a copy of an internal advisory that says, "OPD has series of approximately 50 212.5" -- or first-degree robberies -- "targetng Asian homes (mostly elderly couples) in the Oakland Hills Area." We have also seen police memos detailing each of the incidents that, investigators say, appear to be connected -- committed by the same small group of criminals. This cinematographer named Tony had his front door pushed in two weeks ago, just before 4 a.m.: "I mean, it was very loud. It was like an explosion.

We thought, I don't know if something crazy happened or on the street, but it was coming from inside the house." Tony tells us one of the robbers chased him up the stairs with a knife, and he barricaded the bedroom door while his wife called 911: "We were just terrified. We were just screaming at the top of our lungs, hoping someone will hear us." The police arrived within minutes, but the criminals got away with \$40,000 in camera gear. The I-Team told him about the police alert that criminals are targeting homes owned by Asian families. Tony answered, "It's already with Asian hate crimes, and everything was already hard to exist as an

Asian in this community. And now it sounds even harder, you know?" We spoke with other victims who are on the OPD list of recent home invasions. They declined to be interviewed for fear of retaliation, but they want the information to get out, hoping someone knows who these guys are and calls the police.

### **Tuesday, August 8**

#### **Iconic red lanterns return to SF's Chinatown after being destroyed by winter storms**

Dangling high above the streets of San Francisco's Chinatown, is a sight both old and new. "They're iconic. It's part of us. It's part of Chinatown. You kind of have to have it," said Maria Szeto, the owner of Canton Bazaar. For the past ten years, these red lanterns have welcomed locals and visitors along Grant Avenue. That was until earlier this year, when the heavy rains and atmospheric rivers of the winter largely destroyed them. "They were all tattered, all torn, all faded. It was just horrible. And then you would see missing lanterns because they got blown off," Szeto said. Now, after months of fundraising, 180 new lanterns have gone up. A welcome sight for tourists and local business owners, who say the extra foot traffic the lanterns bring helps business. "There's a lot of people here walking around the streets taking pictures with their families," said Lorena Montes of KIM + ONO.

The lanterns do a lot more than just bring the tourists back to Chinatown though. They're also a way to help keep people safe. That includes Eva Lee, the co-chair of Chinatown Merchants Association. Lee says since the pandemic the neighborhood has been hit by an increasing number of anti-Asian hate crimes. She tells me the lanterns provide a form of security for those wanting to walk the streets after the sun sets. "This has been the hardest time for us, in my lifetime. Besides just the devastation of the pandemic and Chinatown being like a ghost town practically," Lee said. There will be a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the lanterns on Tuesday. And for Lee, she hopes they serve as a beacon of hope and resilience. Not just for the neighborhood that she loves, but also for the entire city. "We saw these lanterns in shreds and tattered and felt down and out, but no. This is to show you we can come back."

### **Monday, August 21, 2023**

#### **'OK Program' seeks Black men to mentor Black boys for Oakland chapter**

Donald North Cross was a sergeant in the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office when he says he noticed there was big problem in the Black community. "I got tired of seeing Black men going to jail, becoming victims of homicide. I looked around for a solution to the problem. I didn't see one," Cross said. So, he started one. He now runs the OK Program, which recruits and trains Black men of all ages and backgrounds to mentor Black boys. The program starts with boys in middle school and follows them through high school. Mentors work to teach critical thinking and leadership skills. A training session was held in Oakland on

Saturday for new mentors who will work in the Oakland chapter. After the training, they can become mentors if they pass a background check.

"Grade point average doesn't tell us how smart they are. Grade point average tells us how disciplined they are," Cross told the group of trainees in attendance. "Trying to have our boys develop academics and social behavior. We know if they do that, they are going to be successful in society. They are going to avoid negative pitfalls so many Black men find themselves in," Cross said. "I still remember, Mr. McKenzie told me I'm going to be a leader someday. This is when I was in high school. And I'm 46 now. And that kind of stuff stays with you," says Seth Steward, who participated in the training. Steward says he had teachers, boy scout leaders and a track coach who guided him as he was coming up. So, he knows the impact a mentor can have. He is now chief of staff to Oakland City Council Member Dan Kalb. Steward says he is impressed with the program's commitment to reducing violence.

"This program really helps develop people into good men by really focusing on the men here, the mentors, who come in regularly, every Saturday to talk to boys to help them become better people," Steward said. Robert Smith is an Oakland police officer who spent some time in foster care growing up. He has been with the program for eight years and now oversees the Oakland chapters. "We have several young men who have elected to go to college. We have a lot of young men who elect to go to trades. We have a few young men who already have military service," Smith said. The success of the programs has taken it nationally. But Cross says work still needs to be done. "We are only 6% of the nation's population, but we account for more than 50% of the homicides each year. If we can't have something that is specifically focused on that, then we are in trouble. We are really in trouble," Cross said.

#### **Thursday, August 24**

#### **East Oakland community leaders launch major initiative to invest \$100 million into the 40x40**

East Oakland community leaders announced a major initiative to put \$100 million back into the community. The multi-million dollar investment will go toward improving an area known as the 40x40, which is home to the largest concentration of Black Oakland flatlands residents. Rise East, which is the collective behind the effort, shared a five-part strategy for the 40x40, which includes improving schools, boosting economic opportunity, and improving health and well-being at the individual, household, neighborhood and systemic level. For those who aren't familiar, the 40x40 runs from Seminary Avenue to the Oakland-San Leandro border and from MacArthur Boulevard to the Bay. On Thursday morning, East Oakland leaders announced the effort to keep Black families in the area and to bring back families who have been displaced because of economic barriers and systemic disinvestment.



"As young people raised in the area and now serving as leaders, our vision is for a robust and vibrant renaissance in legacy Black communities -- vibrant, thriving Black Arts, cultural and commercial areas in a thriving economy and ecosystem powered by collective efforts that assure our inalienable human right to love, health, wellness, belonging, power, safety and self-determination," Carolyn "CJ" Johnson said. Johnson is the CEO of the Black Cultural Zone and member of the 40x40 Council. In a release, Rise East said Oakland is one of a few communities selected by Blue Meridian Partners to receive \$50 million in philanthropic capital. In the meantime, the collective said it's working to raise the other \$50 million in local funding. At Thursday's announcement, Mayor Sheng Thao, OUSD Superintendent Dr. Kyla Johnson-Trammel, members of the Rise East collective and a number of other East Oakland leaders were present. "I applaud the East Oakland community leaders and everyone that has been working tirelessly toward the Rise East initiative and securing this investment in East Oakland," Thao said. "My Administration is committed to working in partnership with this coalition to ensure the resources needed for the health and vitality of our East Oakland residents are provided to address historic inequities and ensure current residents continue to call this community their home."

According to the organizers, the area at the center of it all is home to more than 30,000 residents. It's said to be the largest concentration of Black residents who remain across Oakland flatlands today. Rise East reported in its release that Black families who live in the group's focus area have the lowest household income and life expectancy among Black residents compared to other racial and ethnic groups. The investment announced on Thursday morning is billed as an unparalleled opportunity to build and rebuild the Oakland the community **deserves**

### **Wednesday, August 23**

#### **'Live Out Proud': Speakers address recent anti-LGBTQ+ violence at Silicon Valley Pride kickoff**

Pride week is celebrated in the South Bay twice a year and on Tuesday elected officials and community members kicked off the week with a flag-raising ceremony in front of San Jose City Hall. This year's theme is Live Out Proud - a sentiment as important as ever. Nicole Altamirano is the CEO of Silicon Valley Pride. The organization partnered with the city for the flag-raising ceremony on Tuesday. "We see the legislations that have been sweeping this nation for the past two years and we see the tragedy that has happened in Southern California just a few days ago," Altamirano said. Speaker after speaker addressed the level of recent violence against people within the LGBTQ+ community. In Lake Arrowhead, California, authorities say a clothing store owner was killed in a dispute for flying a pride flag outside her store. Laura Anne Carleton was a married mother of nine children.

Kristopher Popovski is a member of Silicon Valley Gay Men's Chorus. "No matter how progressive you think that you are like in a state there's always work to be done," Popovski. Gabrielle Antolovich has volunteered with the Billy DeFrank LGBTQ Community Center since the 1980's. The center continues to inspire action and provide a safe space. "We're bringing mental health first aid training so that we can keep people afloat and also we're doing a lot of advocacy work and training people on how to do community organizing," Antolovich said.

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### **Sunday, August 27**

#### **Alameda Co. DA Pamela Price tackles crime in Oakland at community forum**

Alameda County District Attorney Pamela Price was joined by officials to discuss crime and prevention in Oakland. "I am not only the first Black woman to sit in this seat. I am the first foster kid to sit in this seat," said D.A. Price to a round of applause, as she sat center stage at the event. It was another in a series of community forums, this time focused specifically on public safety in Oakland. She was joined by two others: a representative from Mayor Sheng Thao's office, Chief of Education and Community Safety Brooklyn Williams, and Lieutenant Erin Mausz with the Oakland Police Department. "We do know that gang and group shootings still represent the majority of the crime in the city of Oakland," Mausz said. Rising crime and how to deal with it was one of the big topics. Price spent time explaining how her office is responding and the reforms that she was elected to implement. "We've charged over 7,600 cases, including murder and serious violent felonies," Price told the crowd during part of her presentation. And then came the questions from the audience. One woman asked about the issue of enhancements. Price responded by saying that enhancements don't deter crime and are racially biased.

"And number three, because they require longer sentences, they force us to invest in prisons," Price said. "Enhancements have been at the heart of incarceration. It is absolutely essential that we stop using them." Most understand that Price is new to the office and that her efforts will take time. But some are still convinced that this approach won't work. When asked if he was satisfied with what he heard at the community forum, Oakland resident Julian Heard responded: "No, I wasn't!" "If you are dealing with a person, (who) they deal with fear and intimidation, you can't meet them with compassion. You have to deal with them with fear and retaliation," he said. The discussion also focused on improving educational opportunities and providing better-paying jobs for young people -- both of which can serve as deterrents to crime. Rachael Grissom, who has lived in Oakland for the past 15 years, says she hopes all the changes being discussed will start to show in the future. "It was important just so that there is no speculation, so that D.A. Price could hear directly from the members of this community, how we feel what's happening with Oakland," Grissom said.