

The Almanac

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GROWING TALL

How a local nonprofit is fighting climate change, teaching environmental stewardship and building community, one tree at a time

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Photos by Jack Owicki / Pro Bono Photo

Above and on the cover: Volunteers with Canopy, a Palo Alto-based nonprofit focused on planting and growing trees in Midpeninsula cities, spent a recent Saturday morning planting trees on Chilco Street near Belle Haven Elementary School in Menlo Park.

By **Kate Bradshaw**
Almanac Staff Writer

Two years ago, Menlo Park resident Kirsten Mouradian was environmentally conscious, and growing more worried. She rode her bike around town, was a diligent reduce-reuse-recycler, and used solar power.

However, she recently told *The Almanac* in an interview, “It didn’t really feel like enough compared to climate change. It didn’t seem like there was anything we could do to stop this.”

In her work as a family nurse practitioner at Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital at Stanford, she’d been alerted to the existing public health problems created by climate change. Climate change is affecting public health in long-term and more acute ways, such as by increasing vulnerable people’s risks of heat stroke and dehydration and worsening wildfires that can devastate community resources and health.

Over the last couple of years, the health threats posed by climate-change driven wildfires became painfully real. The huge effects on people’s lives when a community burns to the ground was just one of a spate of depressing possibilities she

found herself thinking about.

Then, a friend of hers asked her how to get trees planted along her street, so she went searching online. It was there she discovered Canopy, a Palo Alto-based nonprofit all about tree planting.

The nonprofit, started in 1996, grew out of a task force created in 1993 by the city of Palo Alto to study the city’s urban forest. In 2006, it expanded its mission of community-supported urban tree canopy growth to nearby communities.

Shortly after finding the organization, she found herself out on a tree walk with the organization. On that walk, she recalled, the group travelled past the sound wall near U.S. 101 where the organization had planted oak trees several years before. The trees had been specially chosen to trap pollution particles and keep them out of the lungs of neighborhood

residents.

She recalled being touched by the effort that had gone into the tree plantings to benefit local kids, and, from that moment, became a proud devotee of the nonprofit.

Today, she serves on Canopy’s board and is enrolled in its community forestry school, a first-in-its-history seminar series aimed at teaching community members all they need to know to confidently plant their own trees and lead others to do the same.

At a recent session of the forestry school that Mouradian attends, held in a classroom tucked at the back of the East Palo Alto YMCA, a group of about 30 adults noshed on potluck offerings while eagerly absorbing a lesson presented by the nonprofit’s executive director, Catherine Martineau.

Martineau, also a Menlo Park resident, was teaching the

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students how to advocate within their communities — which span from Fremont to San Jose to Menlo Park — to get city policies passed that protect trees. When, during the lesson, students split into groups based on the city they’re from to analyze their city’s heritage tree ordinance, Martineau didn’t need to study hers: She has spent over a year serving on a city task force focused on revising it.

Updating the ordinance

Since Menlo Park first passed its heritage tree ordinance in 1979, the law has been amended five times, but over the last few years, some called for an update to make the permitting process for heritage tree removals more clear, to have better enforcement of the ordinance, and to address other concerns, explained city staff.

One problem is that the ordinance’s mandate to plant

replacement trees when a heritage tree is removed isn’t always heeded, and is enforced only when officials respond to complaints.

Menlo Park Sustainability Manager Rebecca Lucky noted that over the last nine years, the city has approved an average of 700 heritage trees for removal. However, when city staff surveyed people who have applied for removal permits in the last two years, only 54% reported that they had actually planted the required replacement trees.

According to Lucky, the 17-member task force was a diverse one, made up of tree enthusiasts and former applicants for tree removal permits alike, along with developers and people who work in real estate. Between August 2018 and last June, the task force met 10 times.

“Not everyone got what they wanted,” she said. “This community really adores trees, and it came through, even with a diverse group. They compromised in a lot of situations.”

Their recommended revisions moved forward Oct. 29 when the City Council approved the first reading of the updated ordinance. If the ordinance is approved following this month’s second reading, it will take



Dirt flies as volunteers with Canopy plant a dozen oak trees on Chilco Street, which will shade portable classrooms at Belle Haven Elementary.

effect next July.

In Menlo Park, heritage trees are defined as oaks that have a diameter of 10 inches, any other tree that has a diameter of 15 inches at 4.5 feet above the ground, and other significant trees designated as such by the city.

Like the previous law, under the revised ordinance owners of properties where such trees exist and who do work on their property near them have to submit a tree protection plan and have it approved by a certified arborist; they must have a permit to remove or do major pruning to

a heritage tree. Another change: The arborist must now be certified and chosen from a list of arborists approved by the city.

The updated ordinance lays out a series of factors that must be evaluated by city staff when considering whether to allow a tree to be removed or significantly pruned. If the answer is yes to any of the questions below, removal may be permitted.

■ **Death:** Is the tree dead?

■ **Risk:** Does it pose a risk that can't be reasonably reduced to a "low" risk rating, as determined by the International Society of Arboriculture's tree

risk assessment system?

■ **Health:** Is it likely to die or fail within a year?

■ **Species:** Is it a member of a species that is invasive or not desirable?

■ **Development:** Does it interfere with a proposed development, and is there no alternative that's financially feasible or reasonable?

■ **Utilities:** Does it interfere with existing or planned public infrastructure, and is there no feasible or reasonable alternative?

When it comes to replacement trees, applicants will have to ascertain the value of the tree with an appraisal first, and will then will be expected to replace the full value of the tree they plan to remove with in-kind trees. If the property can't accommodate the number of trees removed, the applicant will pay the difference into the city's heritage tree fund.

A new requirement in the ordinance that's expected to cover most of the additional \$75,000 to \$120,000 annual cost to the city for its enforcement is that replacement trees will have to be inspected by the city, first to verify that the tree has been planted, and then, two years later, to ensure that the tree is thriving.

Beyond those requirements, staff plans to create a new database of heritage tree permits

and replacement trees. Over the next six months, staff members will aim to incorporate that database with the new permitting system the city is working with, Accela, which is expected to be launched next month, but if that's not feasible, they will seek out other software systems to track the permits and tree replacements.

In addition, the ordinance will offer conflict resolution and mediation as an option for community member appeals before or at the start of the formal appeal process.

Growing tensions

Anyone who has sat through a heritage tree appeal process in Menlo Park knows how passionate people can be about their city trees. Anyone who has sat through a lot of them can observe that heritage trees stand for more than what people can always articulate in a public comment.

Often, tree defenders point to the myriad benefits trees provide. According to the U.S. Forest Service, they moderate the climate, reduce building energy use and atmosphere carbon dioxide, improve air and water quality, mitigate rainfall runoff and flooding, boost health and well-being, and lower noise impacts. Urban forests around the country conservatively provide over \$18 billion in annual

benefits, the agency states.

Others are more blunt and simply emphasize that trees are great for property values.

Urban trees, however, have their limits when it comes to how much they can do to mitigate a community's carbon footprint. In a year, a tree can absorb up to 48 pounds of carbon dioxide, according to the Urban Forestry Network. Meanwhile, over the same period, a typical passenger vehicle emits about 4.6 metric tons of carbon dioxide, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Simply put, it takes many, many trees to make up for the impacts of driving. And even if local residents drive electric vehicles, it's likely that the people who work in the service industries that surround them don't, and have long commutes.

Asked about the uncomfortable environmental tension emerging between the dual needs to cut carbon emissions by having more housing near the Peninsula's job centers and the need to preserve the urban canopy to better sequester carbon, Martineau said Canopy's position holds that if development happens, it should be done in a way that incorporates nature and values community input.

"At some point, it's no longer a question about trees; it's a

See **CANOPY** page 16

Canopy in Action: Planting trees in Belle Haven

By **Kate Bradshaw**
Almanac Staff Writer

On a recent Saturday morning, nearly 100 people gathered at Belle Haven School, including Menlo Park's mayor and vice mayor and Facebook representatives, to plant 12 new trees along Chilco Street.

The project was a long time coming, explained Theresa Avedian, senior civil engineer with the city. Initially, the school fence had to be moved back from the road, and then the concrete cleared to prepare the ground for landscaping. Funding for that effort was split between a required contribution as part of the Bohannon Group's development agreement for its Menlo Gateway project, and a Facebook contribution.

The trees were a mix of valley, island and Engelmann oak varieties, chosen so that they'd provide shade to the portable classrooms they stand near during the summer and permit sunlight to pass through the branches during the winter when the leaves fall. They

will help students to be more comfortable, explained Lauren Swezey, sustainability and community outreach manager at Facebook.

In addition, installing trees along the side of the road can create the illusion for drivers that the street is narrower, which naturally slows them down, Avedian noted.

Leading the tree planting efforts were high school students from Menlo-Atherton High School, Eastside College Prep and East Palo Alto Academy that Canopy had recruited to participate in its Teen Urban Forestry program. Student participants, called TUFs, are trained in forestry over the course of a semester and taught to lead tree planting efforts. The nonprofit also runs a service learning program at Oxford Day Academy in East Palo Alto.

According to Jack Dorsey, tree care and youth programs coordinator, the students spend one day after school each week, either Thursday or Friday, as well as most Saturdays, and weekdays during the

summer, learning and leading programs.

Current TUFs are working to build a new park at an underutilized lot near Bayshore Christian Ministries in East Palo Alto. Over the course of the last nine months and several semesters, Dorsey said, students have gone through the landscape design process.

They are set to begin building the park on Nov. 16, according to Natalie Brubaker, education director at Canopy.

Dorsey, a former Canopy intern himself, said he's inspired by the goal of helping the students he works with to pursue careers in green fields.

Jada Riley, a senior at Eastside College Prep in East Palo Alto, is in her third year of working with Canopy as a "teen urban forester." In her time working with the nonprofit, she said, she's come to appreciate the Saturday morning ritual of going out and planting trees, even on the weekend days she'd like to sleep in.

In low-income neighborhoods in East Palo Alto, Riley



Volunteers of all ages work side by side during tree planting events, led in many cases by teen urban foresters, local high school students Canopy trains in forestry practices and science.

said, "They look at nature like it's a privilege, but it shouldn't be seen as that. It should be something that we have, something that we take care of."

She added that trees can be expensive to plant, so when the funding does come through to do plantings in those areas, the community cherishes them.

Through her training, she's learned how to work with

younger kids, which meant learning how to be more patient, she said, adding that she hopes to continue work with the nonprofit.

Junior Bresy Pedraza Perez, who's in her first year of the forestry program, said that the program has helped her find value in spending time

See **BELLE HAVEN**, page 16

Public Notices

995 Fictitious Name Statement

LYNBROOK CLASS OF 70, REUNION
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: 282745

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
Lynbrook Class of 70, Reunion, located at 70 Sioux Wy., Portola Valley, CA 94028, San Mateo County.
Registered owner(s):
JOSEPH A. COLEMAN
70 Sioux Wy.
Portola Valley, CA 94028
This business is conducted by:
An Individual.

The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on N/A.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on October 7, 2019.
(ALM Oct. 16, 23, 30; Nov. 6, 2019)

DREAMSHINE HOME
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: 282659

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
Dreamshine Home, located at 134 Mendocino St. Apt. A, Brisbane, CA 94005, San Mateo County.
Registered owner(s):
LUCIVANIA ANDRADE DE OLIVEIRA
134 Mendocino St. Apt. A
Brisbane, CA 94005
MARCELO DE ASSIS PEREIRA
134 Mendocino St. Apt. A
Brisbane, CA 94005
This business is conducted by: A General Partnership.

The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on N/A.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on September 27, 2019.
(ALM Oct. 16, 23, 30; Nov. 6, 2019)

KARAKADE THAI CUISINE
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: 282729

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
Karakade Thai Cuisine, located at 593 Woodside Rd. G, Redwood City, CA 94061, San Mateo County.
Registered owner(s):
SUPHATCHANANT NANTO
556 Larkin St. Apt. #203
San Francisco, CA 94102
This business is conducted by: An Individual.

The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on N/A.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on October 4, 2019.
(ALM Oct. 16, 23, 30; Nov. 6, 2019)

THREE OAKS CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: 282811

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
Three Oaks Clinical Psychology, located at 199 Arlington Way, Menlo Park, CA 94025, San Mateo County.
Registered owner(s):
HINDA G. SACK, PH. D.
199 Arlington Way
Menlo Park, CA 94025
This business is conducted by: An Individual.

The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 10/11/19.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on October 11, 2019.
(ALM Oct. 23, 30; Nov. 6, 13, 2019)

GOMEZ FARM
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: 282930

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as: Gomez Farm, located at 585 Shell Parkway Apt. 5103, Redwood City, CA 94065, San Mateo County.

Registered owner(s):
Oscar J. Gomez-Sacasa
585 Shell Parkway Apt. 5103
Redwood City, CA 94065
Myrian L. Gomez
585 Shell Parkway Apt. 5103
Redwood City, CA 94065
This business is conducted by: Married Couple.

The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on N/A.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on October 23, 2019.
(ALM Oct. 30; Nov. 6, 13, 20, 2019)

WONG PROPERTIES
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: 282889

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
Wong Properties, located at 751 Warrington Ave., Redwood City, CA 94063, San Mateo County.
Registered owner(s):
WONGFRATRIS LLC
751 Warrington Ave.
Redwood City, CA 94063
CALIFORNIA
This business is conducted by: A Limited Liability Company.

The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on Jan. 2, 2019.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on October 18, 2019.
(ALM Oct. 30; Nov. 6, 13, 20, 2019)

LA MICHOCANITA GRILL
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: 282980

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
La Michoacanita Grill, located at 1226 Jervis Ave., E. Palo Alto, CA 94303, San Mateo County.
Registered owner(s):
JAIME E. CABALLERO
1226 Jervis Ave.
E. Palo Alto, CA 94303
This business is conducted by: An Individual.

The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 10-29-2019.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on October 29, 2019.
(ALM Nov. 6, 13, 20, 27, 2019)

DINO FIXES
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: 282823

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
Dino Fixes, located at 1041 Ruth Ct., E. Palo Alto, CA 94303, San Mateo County.
Registered owner(s):
BERNARDINO CARDENAS
1041 Ruth Ct.
E. Palo Alto, CA 94303
This business is conducted by: An Individual.

The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 10/15/2019.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on October 15, 2019.
(ALM Nov. 6, 13, 20, 27, 2019)

CANOPY

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question about development,” she said. “If development is going to happen, how do we ensure that it is done in a way that incorporates nature still? ... The community needs to weigh in on those choices.”

What's next

As neighboring cities have proven, and as Martineau explained to her community forestry students, a heritage tree ordinance is just one of a number of policy tools that can be used to protect and preserve a community's urban canopy.

In Palo Alto, Mountain View, San Francisco and Sacramento, cities have created some variation of what's called an urban forest master plan, which lays out big-picture strategies for tree growth and preservation in a community. Canopy has a contract with East Palo Alto to help create such a plan.

But there's a long way to go. A 2017 report from the forest service states that even though California has an estimated 173.2 million city trees that provide ecosystem functions valued at \$8.3 billion a

year, the urban canopy statewide is the lowest per capita in the U.S., with about 109 square yards of city tree canopy per person compared with states like New Hampshire, at 1,514 square yards of urban canopy per person, or Alabama, with 1,182 square yards of urban canopy per person.

In addition, the area's tree canopy is far from equitably distributed. A map produced by the U.S. Forest Service that shows how much each census tract's territory is covered in tree canopy demonstrated significant disparities, with wealthier areas having a higher proportion of tree cover. Most of Atherton is in the highest category, with 42% to 89% of the town covered by tree canopy; most of Menlo Park west of U.S. 101 falls into the 23% to 41% category. Belle Haven and most of East Palo Alto fall into the lowest category, with just 0% to 11% of the area covered by tree canopy.

Lucky told The Almanac that creation of an urban forest master plan is expected to come up for consideration during the city's annual goal-setting process next year.

While calls to plant more trees are well-advised, there

are science-based best practices that should be followed, Lucky explained. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) offers a set of best practices that interested backyard foresters should consider in order to protect their property from fire risks when planting trees. And Canopy, Martineau said, also puts high priority on placing “the right tree in the right place.”

Mouradian noted that part of what she's learned about trees since she became involved with Canopy is that trees are far more responsive to their environments than the casual observer might assume. For instance, apple trees draw on reserves of carbohydrates and nitrogen they've stored up from the previous year for their spring growth. “I never thought a tree had the ability to plan ahead. ... It's a very dynamic and very interactive and very adapting thing,” she said.

Like the individual trees in Menlo Park, the city's urban forest, with the policies established in the updated heritage tree ordinance, seems well-positioned to adapt and expand in changing times. ■

BELLE HAVEN

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building community and being outside, even while living in a region focused so much on tech. She said that with her training, she has a whole new appreciation for big trees when she sees them, knowing how much work goes into them.

As part of the program,

teen urban foresters are paid the Palo Alto minimum wage — currently \$15 per hour — and receive raises as they stay with the program over multiple semesters, said Operations Director Shannon McDonald. Funding comes from individual donors and a number of local family foundations.

According to its 2018 annual report, the nonprofit generated

about 6,700 hours of volunteer work from 1,499 volunteers. It paid 18 teen urban forester interns.

Since it started, the nonprofit has planted about 1,000 trees at schools in the Ravenswood City School District, and has a new partnership with the Redwood City School District to plant trees there, as well as at schools in Mountain View. ■



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