

Seniors Living Well

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Setting age-record for Tahoe swim Page 14

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Pleasanton Senior Center celebrating big anniversary



How the Tri-Valley institution keeps visitors feeling active and connected

BY NICOLE GONZALES

Around noon everyday, dozens of seniors meet in the Pleasanton Senior Center dining hall to see what new greetings will find them. The daily lunch service offers much more than just food; it's a chance for friends, family and newcomers to mingle and offer support to one another.

Local residents have been gathering at the center — and finding community and purpose inside its walls — for three decades now.

Having opened its doors in 1993, the city-operated Senior Center on Sunol Boulevard reached its milestone 30th anniversary this month. Over the years the center has been established as a Tri-Valley institution, offering vital resources to its visitors.

“The Pleasanton Senior Center has been a dedicated space for

seniors to discover, connect and thrive,” said Zack Silva, city recreation supervisor. “For 30 years now, seniors have visited from all over the Tri-Valley to experience our stable opportunities for recreation, resources and socializing.”

“The center offers informational presentations, fitness programs and socially driven drop-in programs — these offerings serve as the backbone of the Senior Center community and help achieve the center’s mission,” Silva added.

Year-round, the staff and volunteers work to organize trips, outings and classes for local visitors. The center offers dozens of exercise classes, from zumba to yoga to core training. Most of these activities are provided for free or at a low cost.

The center is made up of a library, large dining hall, gift shop and various recreation rooms.

In one room visitors can play an intense game of ping pong, while in the room next door a group of women may be leading a crocheting class, and tucked away to the side is a one-room woodshop where guests can come in to create handmade trinkets.

Ken Morgan, a woodcarver, oversees the woodshop’s drop-in hours. Morgan spends most of his free time in the shop, along with fellow shop supervisors Cindy Pitner and Frank Hartley.

“The old rule was that folks couldn’t come in here unless they were 55 and older. Then the center opened up to younger and middle-aged adults,” Morgan said. Although primarily in the woodshop, Morgan has enjoyed using the center’s other resources like the exercise classes.

Hartley, who comes from an engineering background, builds woodworking items like a fully



At top: The Pleasanton Senior Center, which opened in 1993, celebrates its 30th anniversary this month. Over the years, the center has proved to be a vital institution for local seniors, offering resources, support and activities. (Photo courtesy City of Pleasanton). Above: An archival image of the Pleasanton Senior Center during its construction. (Photo courtesy City of Pleasanton)



NICOLE GONZALES

The Pleasanton Senior Center features a library, dining hall, various recreational rooms and The Peddler Shop gift and trinket store.

functional wooden pinball machine with complete electrical wiring and a timer.

“We work on projects like this. It’s interesting to see all the new tools and creations people come up with,” Hartley said. “Before COVID-19, more people came in here and then it started to slow down. But now slowly it’s starting to pick back up.”

Silva shared that the center has recently introduced a new list of activities to be offered at the center.

“The city plans to continue its role as a popular Tri-Valley destination for seniors by offering innovative programs,” he said. “Recently we have introduced new programs such as calligraphy, ikebana flower arranging and pickleball workshops.



NICOLE GONZALES

Ken Morgan, woodcarver, sits in the Senior Center woodshop with a selection of his creations. Morgan runs the shop during its drop-in hours, welcoming any new or familiar visitors.

We strive to offer something of interest for all seniors in Pleasanton.”

In celebration of the milestone anniversary, the center has organized a series of events throughout the month. This upcoming Thursday (Sept. 28) the center plans to host its anniversary social at 2 p.m.

Music, games and crafts will be available for free at the celebration.

Visitors can also look over a selection of resources related to transportation, health care and recreation.

“We understand the importance of the Senior Center to the community. Its attendance is consistently high; over 7,500 visits or deliveries are managed each month through the Senior Center,” Silva said. “We have dedicated staff, volunteers and

participants who bring the center to life.”

The Pleasanton Senior Center is located at 5353 Sunol Blvd., less than a mile from downtown Pleasanton. Regular operating hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mondays through Fridays. To learn more, visit cityofpleasantonca.gov or call 925-931-5365. ■

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Pleasanton woman sets age-record for Tahoe swim

Susie Krause, 81, completes 1-mile Sharkfest for third time

By JEANITA LYMAN

While Pleasanton's Stoneridge Creek senior living community offers its residents a range of fitness opportunities, its facilities might not be the first that come to mind as the daily training grounds for record-setting open water swimmers.

But that is what they have been for Susie Krause over the past several years and three competitions in the Lake Tahoe Sharkfest.

Organizers of the annual 1-mile open water swim near the northeastern shores of Lake Tahoe emphasize that the endeavor is for experienced swimmers only, specifically those who are able to swim a mile in a pool in 40 minutes or less — something that has come easily to 81-year-old Krause as the result of her daily fitness routine at Stoneridge Creek.

"I started doing it three times a week in our pool here, and I would swim a mile each time," said Krause, who set the record on Aug. 13 by becoming the oldest woman to ever complete the Sharkfest, with a time of 43 minutes, 13 seconds.

Her son, who lives and works near Lake Tahoe, was the one who initially encouraged her to put her swimming skills on display at the open water swim six years ago.

"He came up with this idea of doing the Sharkfest, and that's how that came about," Krause said. "And here I was 75 years old at the time."

That was 62 years after Krause's first and only open water swimming competition when she was 13 — which she won, despite approaching it as a casual experiment. However, growing up in the pre-Title IX era during which there was no women's swimming team for her to compete on as a teen led her to put her skills to use in synchronized swimming.

"It's more of an artform, but it's difficult," Krause said. "There's a lot of sculling and going underwater and slips and turns and so forth. I really enjoyed synchronized swimming, so that was more my expertise."

But timed, competitive swimming is in Krause's blood.

"My father had been a very good swimmer on the Yale team back in the 1920s," Krause said. "He was on the intercollegiate champion team in 1923, and he was very good at doing the breaststroke."

Decades later, Krause learned to swim with her father via his strong breaststroke abilities.

"I would swim on his back, and he would do the breaststroke and then I would let go and he'd just kind of let me paddle along," Krause said.

Krause's own children, including her son, were also drawn to the water.

"Our son and daughter were both on the swim team, and they were both competitive swimmers when they were young, and then our daughter did some swimming in high school," Krause said.



COURTESY SUSIE KRAUSE

Susie Krause poses with her family, including her son and grandson who also earned medals in the most recent Lake Tahoe Sharkfest. It was her son who first discovered Sharkfest and encouraged Krause to compete amid her regular lap swimming at Stoneridge Creek.

Both of her children are also Sharkfest competitors, with her grandson joining their ranks for the most recent event.

"My son took second; before he had taken first in both of them," Krause said. "Our grandson last-minute kind of signed up, and he'd been on a swim team for about two summers.

We got a first, a second, and a third place in this last Sharkfest. It's been a family affair."

While it had been five years since Krause last competed in the event for her second time at 76 years old, she said that she felt physically up to

See **SWIMMER** on Page 19




COUNTY WIDE AREA PLAN SURVEY


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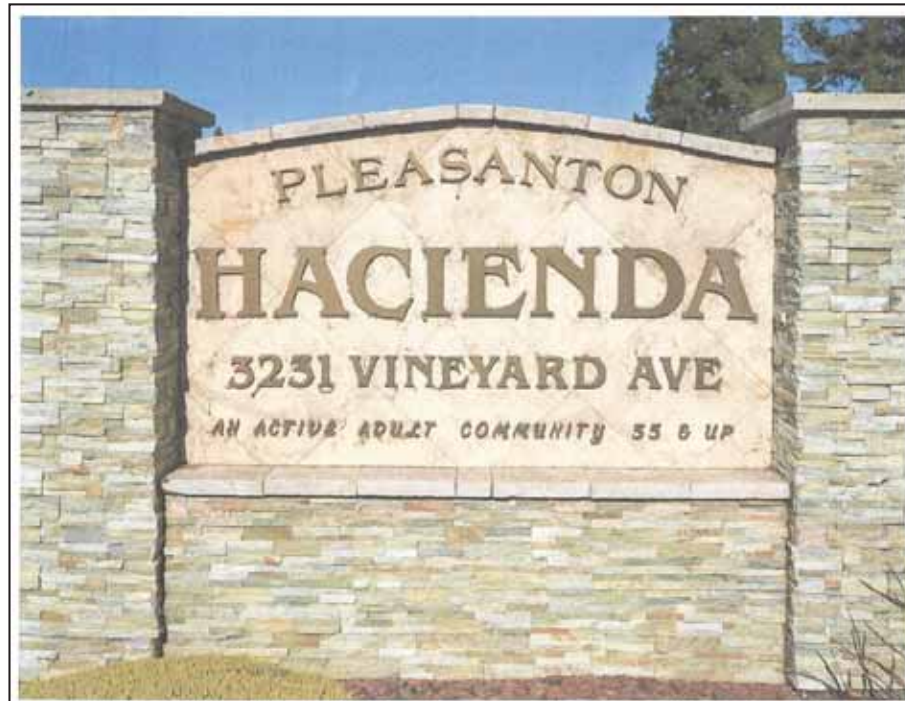
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Real estate in Pleasanton: 'There's still a lot of competition'

Some buyers not scared of rising rates, accepting 'new reality' of local market

By DAVID STARK

While buyers are faced with fewer choices and higher interest rates, they still want to call Pleasanton home.

"Most homebuyers still want to be homebuyers, and the mindset now is they are going to bite the bullet and make that payment," said Steve Medeiros, 2023 president of the Bay East Association of Realtors.

Medeiros was referring to the impact that higher mortgage interest rates and the lack of homes for sale are having on sales prices and buyer behavior.

Prices in Pleasanton peaked at more than \$2 million during March 2022. During that same period, interest rates were beginning to increase from the mid-3% range to the high-4% range.

Over the following months, prices dropped as mortgage rates continued to climb. By January 2023, the median sales price was approximately \$1.4 million while mortgage rates were in the mid-6% range.

The current interest rate for a 30-year fixed-rate mortgage is hovering in the 7% range. Rates were in the 5% range a year ago. Strong demand reversed the declining price trend. During August, the median sales price for a single-family detached home was approximately \$1.8 million.

Medeiros said higher mortgage interest rates kept buyers out of the market, "until they came to the conclusion that rates aren't going to go down anytime soon and they understand they have a new reality."

The buyers currently in the market are pushing prices up again. "There's still a lot of competition because there is less inventory. There are just more buyers than sellers," Medeiros said.

The seller's reaction to rising interest rates has resulted in fewer homes on the market. Sellers literally stayed home during the first two years of the COVID-19 crisis, which resulted in months of extremely restricted supply. Market conditions changed during 2022

as the world reopened and homeowners in Pleasanton began taking advantage of low interest rates and rising prices. By July 2022, with interest rates in the mid-5% range, there were 86 single family detached homes listed for sale in Pleasanton — which was more than double the number of homes for sale during July 2021.

As rates increased, sellers realized moving could mean significantly higher mortgage payments. They opted to stay home and enjoy their existing monthly payment. As a result, there were only 32 homes listed for sale in Pleasanton during August 2023.

Those who do have their home on the market have had to be realistic. "It's not like it was a year ago; sellers now have to be mindful that there may be buyers priced out of the market," Medeiros said.

He added that the limited supply of homes for sale does not negate the need for sellers to do some prep work. "You can't just throw an as-is on the market now," Medeiros said.



BAY EAST

David Stark reflects on the current state of the Pleasanton real estate market in his latest column for the Weekly.

"Some people do but they're not going to get the price point they want. If you want to get that price point, you're going to have to put a good product out there."

Circling back to homebuyers, Medeiros referenced the basic concept of supply and demand. Even as rising rates make it challenging for some buyers to act on their demand for homeownership in Pleasanton, complicated by a limited supply, they are still making it happen.

Buyers continue to be drawn to Pleasanton and are willing to make larger mortgage payments because it is still an attractive community. "Pleasanton will always be a marquee market because it is considered to be the perfect small town," Medeiros said. "There will always be high demand for Pleasanton." ■

Editor's note: David Stark is chief public affairs and communications officer for the Bay East Association of Realtors, based in Pleasanton.

What Type of Home Matches Your Vision of Retirement?

I'm your Seniors Real Estate Specialist, I've been expecting you

1. FOCUS ON FAMILY
If family plays an extensive role in your life, you'll probably need space to accommodate them. That might mean an extra bedroom or a play area for weekly grandchild visits. Or a multi-generational floor plan that carves out a living suite for an adult child's family—or yourself.

4. STAYING PUT
Moving is hard work! If you want to minimize moves, focus on finding a "forever" home that will continue serving your needs if your health and mobility falter. Many buyers age 50+ prioritize one-floor living and aging in-place amenities.

7. HAPPY HOBBYIST
Will retirement provide more time to devote to a favorite hobby—or to tackle new skills? Make sure your home includes space for your pursuits, such as a woodworking shop, a painting studio, or a crafts room. Outdoor enthusiasts may need room to store large equipment, like a fishing boat.


2. TRAVEL AND TAKING IT EASY
Perhaps home is where relaxation is the name of the game, and it's easy to travel because the property "takes care of itself." In this case, look for a home that minimizes maintenance and landscaping chores, perhaps focusing on townhomes or condos with homeowners' associations.

5. EATING AND ENTERTAINING
Maybe you love cooking or hosting gatherings. In this case, prioritize a home with adequate entertaining space indoors and outside. And if you view retirement as a time to let your culinary skills shine, make sure your next home also includes the kitchen of your dreams.

Contact Diana for your complimentary "Moving on Guide". She can assist with a stress free transition to your next home.


3. SOCIAL BUTTERFLY
If you thrive on social interactions, an age restricted community may be an excellent fit. Often, they offer a full schedule of activities and events where residents can easily make new acquaintances and build relationships.

6. STILL WORKING
If you aren't ready to relax into full retirement or need to continue working for financial reasons, make sure your next home can accommodate remote work (a dedicated office, quiet location, etc.) or is near appealing, in person job opportunities.





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County agency seeking input from older adults

Needs assessment to help direct staff on what services are most vital

By Christian Trujano

The Alameda County Area Agency on Aging is continuing to ask older adults to respond to its 2024-28 Countywide Area Plan for Older Adults survey so that the agency can determine their needs and identify issues that matter specifically to senior communities.

"It's really important that older adults respond so that the county, and government in general, can have a contemporary understanding of what the concerns and needs are for older adults," Alameda County Supervisor Nate Miley told the Weekly.

"People are living longer," Miley added. "So it's important that the government understands what the needs are of older adults so we can begin to provide services that are meeting those needs ... we want to make sure that they age successfully and age gracefully."

The Area Agency on Aging, also known as the AAA, is a county department that uses federal money from the Older Americans Act federal initiative to fund programs such as the Meals on Wheels program,

which delivers food to senior citizens. It is also one of the major funding sources for senior centers across the county and helps fund other services such as transportation, case management and family caregiver support.

But the agency doesn't just offer these different services at random.

Every four years, AAA sends out a needs assessment survey to its older communities so that it can collect the data and incorporate it into its Countywide Area Plan for Older Adults. This year, there has been a bigger emphasis on collecting that data due to the fact that the last update to the plan happened before the pandemic.

"We're really looking at the lens of lessons learned," Jennifer Stephens-Pierre, director for the AAA, told the Weekly. "We want to take what we have found out in COVID ... and we want to make sure that we are addressing those issues in this plan."

Stephens-Pierre, who has led the agency for the last four years, said that as someone who champions elder justice and older adult services, it is important for her to hear directly from older adults about

their current needs given how much has changed in regard to how the county provides and offers services thanks to the pandemic.

She also said it's important to know what services need to get updated or reimagined because the fact is that older adults were the most impacted population from COVID.

"We need our older adults to tell us if we're on target, or to help us identify issues that we may not be aware of," Stephens-Pierre said.

She said that the countywide plan, which is a living document that gets used by different departments throughout the county, will be looking to mainly address food insecurity, disaster preparedness and social isolation, which has been a huge issue for older adults prior to and after the pandemic.

However, one of the biggest challenges that she said the agency will also have to address is the digital divide that has come out of the pandemic.

Older residents have considerably felt the impact from the sudden shift to online and virtual services, according to a journal

published in the National Center for Biotechnology Information titled "Overcoming the Digital Divide in the Post-COVID-19 'Reset': Enhancing Group Virtual Visits with Community Health Workers".

According to the journal, "less than one-third of Medicare beneficiaries aged over 65 years have reported digital access at home, and those aged over 75 years and with less than high school-level education are less likely to use technology for health care needs."

Stephens-Pierre said that while her agency has done things like providing older adults with iPads and helping them install Google speakers, there is still a huge educational divide in that a lot of seniors don't have access to Wi-Fi and don't know how to navigate the online world.

"As a result of the pandemic, a lot of things have switched over to online," Miley said. "If older adults don't have a sense of technology, have the devices to get connected and understand this, then they're going to be at a place where their needs aren't being responded to digitally and it's going to make them even more vulnerable as a population."

So Miley and Stephens-Pierre really stress how important it is for older adults to respond to the county survey, which will also incorporate data collected from July to August from the California Department of Aging's first ever statewide needs assessment for adults 55 years and older.

"There's a plethora of concerns out there and the issues of older adults can be minimized if they aren't speaking out and speaking up," Miley said. As someone who's a champion of older adults, I really feel it's important that we value and recognize the contribution that older adults have provided to our society, to our communities, to our families, and others and we can't do that if we don't understand their needs and concerns."

"We need to hear from you," Stephens-Pierre said. "don't let us guess what's best for you ... this is the chance for older adults to be at the table to tell us what their needs are."

The county's survey has been extended until Oct. 31 and can be accessed at www.surveymonkey.com/r/ACCWAP24-28. ■

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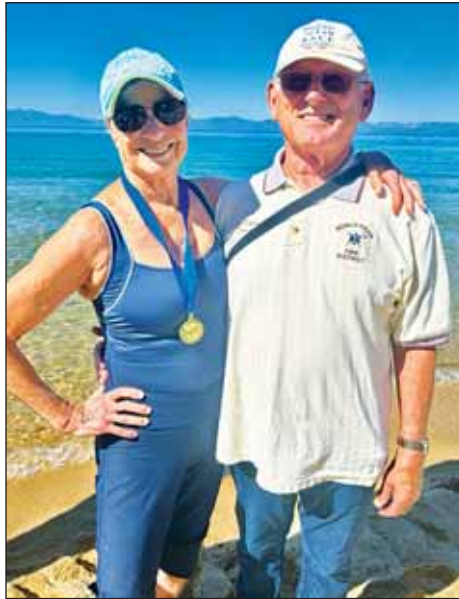
the challenge for the most part, with one exception being the elevation at Lake Tahoe and its impact on breathing.

“Strength wise, I felt physically really strong, really in good shape, but the thing that’s difficult is here I’m in a much lower altitude, and up in Tahoe I go up to 6,000 feet to do the swim,” Krause said. “I had to breathe every stroke instead of every three or four strokes.”

Krause said that the most recent Sharkfest would likely be her last, given the difficulty she faced with the altitude change compared to past years. However, she continues to challenge herself at the pool in Stoneridge Creek, as well as taking advantage of the other fitness facilities and a wide range of classes on a daily basis.

This has included an “Oceans 7” challenge — meant to replicate 150-mile distance and time spent swimming the seven open channels that are the peak of many open water swimmers’ careers — within the Stoneridge pool, which Krause was eight miles from finishing upon speaking with the Weekly on Sept. 6.

“That’s kind of been motivating me, and kind of keeping me challenged and so forth, and that’s another thing that I did to keep me in the pool and swimming the laps,” Krause said. “I’m probably doing as much physically as I used to, except I’m doing classes which I never used to do. Before, I was cycling and kayaking and skiing and running, and I played a lot of tennis, did that kind of thing, and I never really went to a gym until I came in here.”



COURTESY SUSIE KRAUSE

While Krause’s husband hasn’t competed in Sharkfest, the couple do enjoy many outdoor activities together.

With her daily presence at the Stoneridge fitness facilities, Krause said she aims to inspire her neighbors at Stoneridge, and that she is hoping to pass the Sharkfest torch on to her granddaughter.

“I’ve got a granddaughter who’s also been doing some swimming, and maybe I can hand it over,” Krause said. “I try to encourage people here because a lot of people are very supportive of me and they’ve been saying that I’ve been an inspiration to them. So I’m just trying to encourage people to keep exercising and keep going.” ■

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