

# Around the Valley

## S.J. City Hall unable to display Belgium's colors



**AROUND TOWN**  
SAL PIZARRO

Cities around the world conveyed their support for Belgium and its people, illuminating public structures in the black, red and gold of the Belgian flag. You saw the colors on the Eiffel Tower, the Empire State Building, San Francisco's City Hall and airport and even the Campbell water tower.

At San Jose City Hall, the flags were at half-staff, but the rotunda remained lit by white lights, as usual. Is the Bay Area's biggest city less compassionate than its neighbors?

The answer is much more mundane. The 11-

year-old rotunda doesn't have the infrastructure for rapid lighting changes. Right now, special rotunda lighting is contracted out, takes a few days to set up and costs between \$5,000 and \$10,000 a pop.

David Vossbrink, the spokesman for the City Manager's Office, tells me that there have been discussions to install a permanent system that would allow for lighting changes like that. But the price tag — likely more than \$100,000 — would have to be considered alongside other general fund items, and you can

bet budget-conscious San Joseans would howl that the city has better ways to spend its money.

San Jose residents, of course, feel as much compassion about the tragedy in Brussels as anyone else. "When terror strikes any village, town or city on our small planet, we grieve together," San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo said. "We will not forget Brussels, and we will stand with our global neighbors, and for their freedom from oppressors who cloak their brutality in fraudulent distortions of faith."

And throwing lights on a building in a symbolic gesture wouldn't make that sentiment any stronger.

But even symbolic gestures can be memorable, and that shouldn't be an afterthought for a place recently labeled as the most forgettable big city in America.

**ART DIRECTOR IN TRANSIT:** Jennifer Easton, who has spent the past 11 years working in San Jose's Office of Cultural Affairs — including the past two as Public Art Director — is switching tracks to become public art director for BART.

Easton told me it's a bittersweet goodbye, as she'll miss San Jose but is looking forward to tackling a new challenge. Of course, she won't be gone for long, as she'll be part of planning public art for the BART sta-

tions in the South Bay when the connection gets closer to the finish line.

**DANCE SURPRISE AT CRISTO REY:** Choreographer Laura Edwards, who was in San Jose as part of Justin Bieber's tour, surprised students at Cristo Rey San Jose Jesuit High School on Friday. Edwards gave the students an insider's look at her job, took part in a motivational question-and-answer session and showed off some hip-hop moves.

The visit was arranged by Edwards' former dance teacher, Kathi Donnelly, the local co-founder of non-profit Dharma Girls.

**SHORELINE LAKE IS HOPPING:** Families looking for outdoor activities for

Easter weekend might want to check out the inaugural Easter Bunny & Egg Extravaganza at Shoreline Lake in Mountain View on Saturday. Activities will include egg-dyeing stations, an egg roll on the lawn and an egg hunt at 10:30 a.m. Get details in the March section of Shoreline's events page, <https://shorelinelake.com/upcoming.html>, and reserve an activity pass for kids by calling 650-965-3779 or emailing [events@shorelinelake.com](mailto:events@shorelinelake.com).

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### One frame



PATRICK TEHAN/STAFF

## Coming together for Purim

Irene Abrams, 81, and Amitai Smyla, 11, of San Mateo, decorate baskets filled with treats, which will then be donated to a local food bank, during an inter-generational Purim celebration Wednesday at **Moldaw** Residences in Palo Alto. The event involved senior citizen residents of the **Moldaw** Residences and students from Gideon Hauser Day School, who paid the seniors a visit to sing for them in observance of Purim, a Jewish holiday that commemorates the saving of the Jewish people from Haman, who was planning to kill all the Jews. This took place in the ancient Persian Empire. The students sang Purim songs for the seniors, then broke out into smaller groups to decorate the baskets.

### Milpitas

## Milpitas woman dies in rollover crash

By Milpitas Post

An 18-year-old Milpitas woman has been identified as the driver killed Saturday in a rollover collision in north Milpitas, according to the Santa Clara County Coroner.

About 4 p.m., Milpitas police officers responded to a collision on northbound

North McCarthy Boulevard south of Dixon Landing Road. Adriana Gonzalez went off the roadway to the right for unknown reasons, said Milpitas police Lt. Henry Kwong. The gold 2007 Nissan Quest minivan struck a curb and street light before going down an embankment into a grassy area. Gonzalez was pro-

nounced dead by paramedics, he added.

Multiple traumatic injuries are listed as the cause of death, the coroner said on Tuesday.

Gonzalez, who graduated from Calaveras Hills High School in 2015, will be sorely missed, school Principal Carl Stice said.

"Adriana was a very

sweet young lady who was well liked by everyone at Calaveras Hills High," he added.

Investigators are asking the public for information. Anyone who witnessed the collision or had been driving in the area is encouraged to call police at 408-586-2400 or the Crime Tip Hotline at 408-586-

### Mountain View

## Officer credited in saving toddler's life

By Jason Green  
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MOUNTAIN VIEW — A police officer is being hailed as a hero after he saved the life of a 2-year-old boy.

Officer Curtis Lau was called to a home on March 14

and found the boy, identified as Eduardo, staring blankly and not moving, police said Tuesday.

Lau turned Eduardo over and patted him on the back to see if there was anything lodged in his throat. When that didn't work, the officer

started performing CPR on the boy. Seconds passed before Eduardo blinked and gasped for air, according to the statement. Emergency medical personnel then rushed the boy to the hospital.

"I have no doubt that Offi-

cer Lau saved that child's life, and I am extremely proud of how he handled the situation," said Sgt. Wahed Magee, who was with Lau when he responded to the call.

On Monday, Lau visited the boy and brought him a stuffed teddy bear.

### San Mateo

## Man arrested in groping of teen on bus

By Jason Green  
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SAN MATEO — A suspect in the groping of a 17-year-old girl aboard a Sam-Trans bus last week has been arrested, according to police.

Police said the incident was reported about 11:20 a.m. March 15, when the

man boarded a bus at South B Street and First Avenue and sat down next to the victim. He allegedly tried to put his arm around her shoulders and touched her face even though she told him to stop.

The man also tried to put his hand under the victim's shirt and asked her for a kiss, according to police.

Police said the victim refused the man's advances. He got off the bus near the Hillsdale Shopping Center.

Tips poured into the police department following the release of a photo of the man that was taken by a security camera on the bus. They led to the identification of Mounir El Gendy, 70, of San Mateo.

El Gendy's arrest was announced in a statement Tuesday. Police said he was booked into San Mateo County Jail on suspicion of sexual battery and annoying a child.

Police thanked the public for its help.

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### Burlingame High School

## Board will weigh transfer of teacher

*Educator was a target of principal, supporters say*

By Aaron Kinney

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BURLINGAME — Supporters of a popular Burlingame High School teacher have one more chance to persuade the San Mateo Union High School District not to transfer him to a school in San Mateo.

The district's board of trustees will consider Thursday night whether to move Kevin Nelson, who teaches AP economics and government, to Aragon High School next year over the protests of students and parents who claim he's been railroaded.

The district's proposal appears to stem from conflicts between Nelson and former Burlingame Principal Di Yim and other teachers. Yim announced her resignation in January, citing family obligations, after a little more than two years on the job.

The move has sparked outrage on campus and in the community. More than 2,400 supporters have signed a [Change.org](http://Change.org) petition asking the district to reconsider the transfer.

"Mr. Nelson is the best teacher I've ever had, and a lot of stu-

dents would attest to that," said Uma Krishnan, who started the petition. "And the way they are treating him is wrong."

Krishnan, 18, graduated from Burlingame last year. She said Nelson changed her life as a sophomore when he encouraged her to check out Girls Who Code, an organization that aims to bridge the gender gap in the technology industry. She eventually spent eight weeks at Twitter learning Web development and now plans to pursue a double major in cognitive science and computer science at UC Berkeley, where she is a freshman.

Nelson, 52, claims Yim appeared to target him, beginning in 2014 when she tried to eliminate his economics course. He said he had angered other faculty members by filing complaints against them for what he perceived to be substandard or unethical behavior.

"I'm in trouble for being the whistleblower," he said.

A spokeswoman for the district said Superintendent Kevin Skelly could not discuss Nelson's transfer because it is a confidential personnel matter.

The board is scheduled to meet at 7 p.m. Thursday at the San Mateo Adult School, 789 Poplar Ave. in San Mateo.

### School scene

#### School honored for student-exchange aid

Christopher High School in Gilroy has been named one of 80 AFS Top Global Learning Schools for 2016.

The award, given by the National Society for High School Scholars and the student-exchange group AFS-USA, recognizes schools for hosting international students, encouraging American students to study abroad and incorporating intercultural learning initiatives into curriculum.

### Police blotter

Crime news from selected cities.

#### LOS GATOS

**Los Gatos and Saratoga streets, 8:40 p.m. Friday** A 39-year-old man was placed under arrest for possession of stolen property and driving someone's vehicle without permission.

#### CAMPBELL

**South First Street, late Friday** Someone defaced a building with spray paint.

**400 block of Kuehnis, Thursday** Police say someone hopped a fence of a residence and used a can of spray paint to deface a wall.

**1800 block of South Bascom Avenue, 9:40 p.m. Friday** A wallet and cell phone were stolen.

**900 block of Steinway, 6:09 p.m. Friday** A bag of tools was reported stolen.

**1700 block of South Bascom Avenue, 1:26 a.m. Friday** A 28-year-old man was caught shoplifting.

#### SUNNYVALE

**1500 block of Parrot, 1:22 p.m. March 16** Someone broke the sliding glass door of a residence but fled when the burglar alarm sounded.

**1600 block of Nightingale 5:10 p.m. March 15** Someone forced open a sliding glass door of a home and stole jewelry.

See more blotter items at [www.mercurynews.com/crime-courts](http://www.mercurynews.com/crime-courts).