

Staying Healthy

SPRING 2022

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Run for Education

PPIE's 10th annual fundraiser back at fairgrounds later this month



CHUCK DECKERT

Photos show participants off to the races at the 2018 PPIE Run for Education at the Alameda County Fairgrounds. The marquee fundraising event supporting local schools is on track to return fully in person on April 24. The fun run/walk features multiple distances, including a special kids-only race.

By SHIRI MARWAHA

The family-friendly 10th annual Run for Education will be held in person this year on April 24 at Alameda County Fairgrounds in Pleasanton.

After two years of being remote because of the pandemic, participants in 2022 can enjoy running or walking in the fundraiser together, but participants unable to make it to the event can still take advantage via the virtual option available.

The Pleasanton Run for Education began in 2013 and has been supporting the Pleasanton Partnerships in Education Foundation ever

since. Residents excited about getting back to normalcy can look forward to the event that helps provide funds for staffing, technology and other support for the 15 public schools in Pleasanton.

"The whole country shut down like March 16 (2020) and within a matter of weeks, we transformed it into a virtual run to race around America, that's pretty phenomenal," PPIE Executive Director Steve McCoy-Thompson told the Weekly.

"The revenue that we raise helps to find important supplemental staff like reading and math specialists and support counselors," McCoy-Thompson said of the Run for Education.





"It also helps to fund our programs. We call it the business school engagement program where we get business volunteers who provide career guidance to students."

For people who have been cooped up for a long time, the Run for Education offers yet another chance in 2022 to break free with an in-person event.

"The Pleasanton Run for Education provides a fun opportunity for the Pleasanton community to gather together in support of our schools," Kelly French, president of the PPIE Board of Directors, said via email.

According to French, the response from the community is promising and registration numbers are projected to be higher than pre-pandemic participation.

"PPIE is really looking forward to getting the community back out and in person at our signature event," French said.

The event creates a safe environment with an itinerary that includes talks from public speakers, along with music, food and activity accompanied by fun and frolic while raising funds for Pleasanton schools at the same time, according to organizers.

"We almost have a carnival style atmosphere," McCoy-Thompson said. "They're giving away food and drinks, and when people enter they get really nice shirt. We'll give everybody a participation medal, we have an award ceremony after that."

PPIE has organized a 5K for both runners and casual strollers and starts at 8 a.m. April 24. The 10K and 15K start at 7:50 a.m. and both courses pass through downtown Pleasanton and fairgrounds.

Kids under the age of 11 are included in a 1/4-mile challenge which starts at 9:15 a.m. with a fun award ceremony in the end.

All participants will be presented with a



CHUCK DECKERT

The annual PPIE Run for Education offers a little something for everybody, runners, joggers and strollers alike.

medal and top three performers will receive special placement at the end of the race.

The fundraising run is a great way to spend time with family, friends and community members, and it attracts people from all walks of life, organizers said.

"I look forward to speed walking with our Board of Trustees, as we gather for this fun, in-person, community event this year," Pleasanton Unified School District Superintendent David Haglund said. "I'm grateful to our friends at PPIE for hosting the Run for Education, this is a special event that has brought our community out to support our schools for a decade."

Although not mandatory, people are encouraged to maintain social distance and wear a mask at the outdoor event, organizers said. For more information or to register, visit ppierun.com. ■

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Screening and preventative care are vital in fight against colorectal cancer

Awareness month highlights new recommendations, continued health inequity

By JEANITA LYMAN

As the third leading cause of death in the nation, with the American Cancer Society estimating it will cause 52,980 deaths this year alone, colorectal cancer is something that all too many are aware of year-round.

But as medicine and understanding of the disease continue to progress, health professionals are seeking to reduce that number by recommending screening for younger patients, and continuing to draw attention to persistent racial inequities.

While this year's Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month particularly seeks to help get people between the ages of 45 and 49 in for regular screening, health experts are also seeking to bring awareness to disparities in treatment rates between Black patients and the general population at all ages when it comes to accessing screening and preventative care.

Despite its deadliness, doctors are finding that colorectal cancer is particularly responsive to preventative and early treatment, with advances in medicine over the past two decades greatly reducing deaths from the disease, and leading to new screening options.

New age guideline

Following several studies that suggest colorectal cancer tends to be more severe when found in patients younger than 50, which had been the previous age at which colorectal cancer screening was recommended for patients without increased risk factors, the U.S. Preventive Task Force updated its guidelines last May to lower the age of recommended screening to 45 years old.

"It looks like in these younger patients, it's a more aggressive cancer, and to address that they lowered the age of screening," said Dr. Anderson Rowe, gastroenterologist at San Ramon Regional Medical Center.

The updated recommendations continue to emphasize the importance of screening for

those between the ages of 50 and 75 as top priority, with a high level of confidence that regular screening in this population has a net benefit, while pointing to a moderate net benefit for those ages 45 to 49. Screening for those age 76 or above is only recommended in select cases by the task force, citing evidence that suggests a minimal net benefit from regular testing in this age group.

Lowe said that while the science seems to be clear that colorectal cancer is more serious in patients between 45 and 50, despite being less prevalent, it's not yet clear as to why this is.

Racial discrepancies in screening and outcomes

While deaths from colon cancer overall have been reduced with medical advances in the 21st century, Lowe said he remains concerned that this has not been the case across all demographics, particularly in Black patients, where rates of diagnoses and deaths continue to be on the rise compared to other demographics.

Similarly to the recent findings about the disease's increased deadliness in patients between 45 and 49, Lowe said that this discrepancy in outcomes across demographics is also poorly understood by scientists and doctors at this point, who haven't been able to pinpoint the reason.

However, Lowe said it is clear that rates of screening are persistently lower in Black patients. This has been the case for more than 15 years, he said, and something he and other professionals have sought to use Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month to bring attention to each year.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the rates of colorectal cancer screenings more than doubled for Black, Hispanic and Asian populations in America between 2000 and 2015, yet the highest rates of screening continued to be reported in white adults.



COURTESY GETTY IMAGES

Options for screening

One reason screening and preventative care for colorectal cancer is emphasized so heavily is because of its effectiveness.

According to Lowe, with nearly 98% of colorectal cancer cases starting as polyps, the goal is to find polyps and remove them, which has high rates of success when they're detected early, reducing risk by approximately 90%.

With the introduction of the colonoscopy 18 years ago having reduced deaths from colorectal cancer by approximately 30% since, Lowe said that new forms of screening that can be less intimidating for patients have been front and center in the fight against colorectal cancer.

"For patients who are hesitant to get a colonoscopy, the important thing is that there are other alternatives they can use to get screened instead," Lowe said.

One of these is Cologuard, which was

released in 2014 as a less-invasive alternative to the colonoscopy, which looks for blood and DNA mutations in stool samples that might suggest polyps. It's equally as sensitive to detecting active cancer cells as a colonoscopy, Lowe said, as well as polyps over a centimeter in size.

Lowe noted, however, that when it comes to detecting polyps smaller than a centimeter, the colonoscopy remains the most effective screening tool. Despite their relative invasiveness, colonoscopies have the advantage of only being recommended once every 10 years in most cases, whereas Cologuard is recommended every three years.

Nonetheless, the biggest message health officials and medical professionals tried to drive home throughout March was the importance of screening and prevention for colorectal cancer in particular. ■

Supporting environmental health

Pleasanton celebrating Earth Day all through April

By SHIRI MARWAHA

In honor of Earth Day, the city of Pleasanton is hosting celebrations each Saturday throughout the month of April, beginning this weekend.

The focus of the event is to encourage the Pleasanton community to explore the themes among the population to "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Rejoice" — the "4 Rs" dear to environmentalists.

April 22 is observed as Earth Day and marks the birth of the modern environmental movement that began in 1970.

In lieu of just one day, Pleasanton will hold a month-long celebration starting with an "Author Spotlight" with Jessica Hernandez, author of "Fresh Banana Leaves". The event is scheduled for this Saturday (April 2) at Alviso Adobe Community Park at 3465 Old Foothill Road.

Next up, a creek cleanup will be held on April 9 between 10 a.m. to noon at Marilyn Murphy Kane Trail, 3200 West Lagoon Road.

Registration for the event is required at pleasantonfun.com; course code 5468.

The third event is a "Fix-It Workshop" on April 16, between 10 a.m. and noon, which will be held at the Pleasanton Senior Center at 5353 Sunol Blvd. Registration is required and for more details, go to pleasantonfun.com. Course code 5465

Onsite shredding at the Pleasanton Civic Center will be held on April 23, between 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 1-2 p.m. at 200 Old Bernal Ave.

That's not all that day; the other event is "Author Visit" where local children's author Keely Parrack will share her children's picture book, "Morning, Sunshine!" This will be held at the Alviso Adobe Community Park.

In a first-ever public event, a special screening of the documentary film "Hometown Water: The Lifeline of Pleasanton" will be held on the day before Earth Day. The film is produced and presented by the students of Pleasanton.

The screening is hosted by the Go Green



CITY OF PLEASANTON

Alviso Adobe Community Park is hosting several special events during the next month as the city celebrates Earth Day all month long.

Initiative and presented by the city's Community Education Series. In a post screening Q&A session with Zone 7 Water Agency personnel, the public is invited to ask questions and queries regarding "water, the precious natural resource".

The documentary will be screened on April

21 at 7 p.m. at Firehouse Arts Center, 4444 Railroad Ave. Learn more at www.gogreeninitiative.org. The free event requires registration; course code 5525.

Finally, an Arbor Day celebration will be held April 30 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Alviso Adobe Community Park. ■

Once a boon in pandemic, pet adoptions now on decline in Pleasanton

Valley Humane Society works to address shelter overcrowding, support families in need pre-surrender

By SHIRI MARWAHA

Valley Humane Society is a private nonprofit that aims to build healthier relationships between pets and people, but as of late adoptions of dogs and cats are on a decline, leading to overcrowding at the Pleasanton animal shelter.

“Well, first, it’s not because everyone that adopted during the pandemic is returning their pets,” Executive Director Melanie Sadek told the Weekly. “Statistically, it’s not proven to be true.”

According to Sadek, there’s a 16% decrease in the number of dogs entering the shelter now compared to the pre-pandemic.

A sudden surge in the demand for pets at the beginning of the pandemic had resulted in a shortage of pets at the shelter.

“We ran out of dogs in California in early 2020 and so people were kind of pushed to go into the internet and buy online,” Sadek said.

Online purchase of pets gained traction and online stores like Best Friends reported a 400% increase in

pet sales, according to Sadek.

“Even the Animal Legal Defense Fund is reporting that California is the No. 1 importer of dogs and cats in this country,” she said.

This change has an adverse impact on shelters in the neighborhood arising a need for community intervention to spread the word and encourage people to adopt from local shelters, according to Valley Humane Society.

“We need to get people to share the care and understand that if we want life-saving outcomes for dogs and cats in California,” Sadek said. “We need to all be working together and collaborating, (otherwise) the system doesn’t work and animals are going to end up dying.”

Community members can help by adopting pets or providing support to help people from having to leave their pets at the shelter because of financial problems and food insecurity.

“We are very focused on trying to stop animals from entering the shelter (by) supporting people who are dealing with food insecurity. We

provide hundreds and thousands of pounds of free food,” said Sadek.

Valley Humane Society also heavily promotes its available animals online.

“We have a program, where they can post the animal that they need to re-home and help promote that animal so that the dog and cat (don’t have) to go into a shelter,” according to Sadek.

People who have adopted pets from shelters have had great experiences and bonding with their pets.

“We adopted two pups from the Valley Humane Society, Scout is a red pit bull mix and Lacey is a black lab mix. We got Scout in November of 2021 and recently got Lacey in February 2022,” resident Jackie Massey said. “We love them to pieces.”

People in the community who cannot adopt pets can still help by volunteering to promote the animals and programs, according to Sadek. “We all have a network around us. And so even though we can’t take shelter pets, that doesn’t mean that they can’t promote the animals that



VHS/V. BISHOP

These puppies are among the animals to be sheltered at Valley Humane Society in recent months.

are available and help them find a new home.”

According to Sadek, people have a misconception animals are in the shelter because they’re unhealthy.

“There’s lots of reasons why dogs and cats end up in shelters. And most of the time, it has nothing to do with them. It has to do with life situations around the owner who can’t provide care,” she said.

Sadek implored people to adopt local pets and provide them with a loving home this spring.

“We really rely so heavily on the community to come in and adopt because when you’re adopting, you’re creating more space for animals that are genuinely in need,” Sadek said. “It’s an incredible system of life saving that connects animals with their new families.” ■

City officials, volunteers plant new trees in Springtown for Amplify the Urban Forest

Collaborative initiative in Livermore made possible by Cal Fire grant

By CIERRA BAILEY

There are 65 brand-new trees in Livermore’s Springtown neighborhood planted recently as part of the “AMPlify” the Urban Forest Arbor Day community event.

The event was a collaborative effort between the Rotary Club of Livermore Valley, JustServe and the city of Livermore, which saw more than 200 volunteers of all ages show up to help beautify the city and contribute to its environmental health, according to a statement from the city.

Livermore public works landscape supervisor Joe Prime coordinated city staff to prepare for the event, which included pre-digging holes.

“It’s beautiful to see what can occur when people work together toward a common goal. Today was such a day, and it was wonderful to plant 65 trees in such a short time,” Rotary Club president Angelika Voss-Quinn said during the March 12 festivities.

Volunteers were able to write their names on tree tags that will remain on the trees over the next few years, until they outgrow their stakes.

City officials said Livermore was one of 28 cities in California awarded the new trees as a recipient of the Cal Fire Amplifying the Urban Forests Circle 4 grant.

In attendance at the event with shovels in tow were City Councilmembers Bob Carling and Brittni Kiick as well as Kiick’s two children, Cora and Max.

“Amplifying the urban forest by planting trees in Livermore helps mitigate the impact of climate change,” Carling said in the city’s statement.

“Adding to our urban forest with such a great diversity of trees helps us meet our climate



CITY OF LIVERMORE

Daisy Troop 31287 participate in the event.

goals and also allows everyone to enjoy nature,” Kiick added.

In addition to the local agencies that worked together to organize the effort, the California Urban Forests Council, West Coast Arborists and Cal Fire were also partners in the process.

“Partnerships and collaborations in our program are vital. These many partners, especially here in Livermore, allowed this event to take place,” said Nancy Hughes, executive director of the California Urban Forests Council, who also attended the event in person and pitched in with volunteers.

Additional sponsors included the Western Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture, California Climate Investments, The Britton Fund, Invest from the Ground Up and Taylor Guitars. Ace Hardware in Livermore donated shovels.

City officials said that Livermore residents are encouraged to visit the trees — which are located on a former golf course in Springtown off of Bluebell Drive (near Hollyhock Street) — and observe how they grow over time. ■

Hope Hospice continues Family Caregiver Education Series

Next session is ‘Living With Dementia: New Diagnosis and Next Steps’

Tri-Valley nonprofit Hope Hospice is in the middle of its 2022 Family Caregiver Education Series, offering free webinars each month geared toward those caring for a loved one living with a terminal diagnosis or disabling chronic condition.

“The 12 interactive webinars cover a variety of topics and provide education, support, and resources relevant to family caregivers ... regardless of whether your loved one is a Hope Hospice patient,” the nonprofit said on its website.

The April session recently had its topic changed to “Living With Dementia: New Diagnosis and Next Steps”.

The web classes run from 10-11:30 a.m. via Zoom. Register online at HopeHospice.com/family or call 925-829-8770. Recordings of past sessions are available on the website as well.

The upcoming schedule, as described by Hope Hospice, includes:

April 14: Living With Dementia: New Diagnosis and Next Steps. “Hearing a doctor confirm that the memory issues you (or a loved one) have been experiencing are, in fact, early symptoms of dementia would understandably be cause for concern.

“While it may only be natural to think about the worst-case scenario, receiving a dementia diagnosis early on is actually a good thing — it gives you and your family more time to plan for the challenges that lie ahead. Our dementia specialists share resources and strategies to help individuals

and families prepare for the changes that a dementia diagnosis will bring.”

May 12: End-of-Life Issues: Hospice and Palliative Care. “End-of-life care refers to both the medical care and the emotional support that patients and families receive when death is imminent.

“Hope Hospice clinical staff will share general information about what to expect in the final days of life, transitioning to comfort care, selecting hospice services, and making funeral arrangements.”

June 9: Self-Care for the Caregiver. “The stress that family caregivers experience as their loved one declines can be staggering. The constant fluctuation of changing roles, uncertainty about the future, and fatigue may ultimately result in compromised health and family dysfunction.

“This webinar will focus on understanding the causes of stress, strategies for coping, and the importance of seeking support and utilizing resources.”

July 14: Handling Grief and Loss. “No matter how thoroughly one has prepared for the inevitability of death of a loved one, when the time comes it still can be a shock to the system.

“In this webinar, a local marriage and family therapist will discuss the complexities of grief and loss, including anticipatory grief and ambiguous loss. Participants will be provided with coping strategies to help them both during the final stages of life and after their loved one has passed.” ■

—Jeremy Walsh