Living in
Los Altos
Los Altos Hills
Mountain View

A side of Bacon
Los Altos Hills pig Kevin Bacon sows social media following

Also inside:
- Festival superfans
- For love of the stroll
- Local events calendar

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Fall 2018
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Kevin Bacon hogs social media spotlight

Pig attracts attention at local barn

Westwind Community Barn manager Torie Dye pets her pig, Kevin Bacon. The pig is named for the actor famous for roles in films such as “Footloose” and “Mystic River.”

By Celeste Tran
Town Crier Editorial Intern

He isn’t as famous as the actor of the same name, but Kevin Bacon has gained celebrity status in Los Altos Hills. His claim to fame has nothing to do with acting, though some might call the local Kevin Bacon a ham.

Kevin – a pig living at Westwind Community Barn – is not shy when it comes to social media. The 18-month-old hog is featured weekly on the horse barn’s Facebook page and even has his own hashtag: #SaturdayswithKevin.

While interning with Los Altos Hills Parks and Recreation last year, Anna Garverick created the hashtag, which has evolved into a creative collaboration between Parks and Rec and the barn. Sarah Robustelli, the town’s community services supervisor, and Chris Knopf, recreation specialist, manage Kevin’s social media presence.

They often use upcoming events at the barn or holidays as themes for the weekly Facebook posts.

“Otherwise, (we use) anything cute, funny, trending or silly,” Robustelli said.

In videos posted on Facebook last summer, Kevin can be seen rolling in mud and snacking on watermelon to beat the heat. A recent photo of him sleeping in his pen appears with the caption “Forward my calls, Sincerely Kevin Bacon.”

Kevin works for food, but there are times when even that’s not enough to get him to behave on camera. Yes, this boar can be a boor.

“Like all celebrities, he can be uncooperative at times,” Robustelli said.

Torie Dye, barn manager since 2014, owns Kevin Bacon. Dye said a worker at the barn originally adopted him.
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at a horse show in Southern California but wasn’t able to keep the piglet, so she took him in. At first, his name was Piggy Smalls, but Dye said she renamed him Kevin Bacon after the actor known for starring roles in the movies “Footloose” and “Mystic River.”

The Los Altos Hills Kevin spends his days in an easygoing fashion. Dye said he’s fed twice a day – which doesn’t count the fruit and vegetable snacks he receives from fans – and enjoys splashing in his pool, playing in grass and straw and interacting with visitors.

Kevin also does tricks. Dye said he can sit, clap his hooves, spin around and climb up stairs and ramps.

Dye described Kevin as “energetic and friendly” and said he likes spending time with the numerous guests who visit him at the barn. He often trots right over to his fence to greet them. Dye added that he gets along well with the other animals at the barn – especially the horses and dogs.

“He’s an all-around friendly pig,” she said.

To see what Kevin’s up to on social media, visit facebook.com and type “Westwind” in the search bar.

Kevin Bacon, shown during his piglet days, poses for a portrait. A Westwind Barn worker adopted the pig at a horse show but was unable to keep him.
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PASSEGGIATA

The Italian art of the stroll

Bringing the passeggiata to Los Altos Hills

By Mary Larsen
Staff Writer/maryl@latc.com

If you see a group of people on a leisurely after-dinner walk along the twists and turns of Los Altos Hills pathways, they might be on a passeggiata.

Thanks to the efforts of a few avid travelers, the Italian tradition of the evening stroll has made it to the area.

After traveling widely in Italy, Los Altos Hills residents Gail Solomon and her husband, Ernie, were well acquainted with the passeggiata.

“It’s a walk after dinner when everybody wants to be away from their hot apartment,” she said, adding that it’s a multigenerational affair there, with everyone from babies to teenagers and
grandparents joining in.

Some of the other local strollers also expressed a special fondness for Italy. When Ingrid Sperow first saw a Nextdoor post about the Los Altos Hills incarnation of the event, she said to her husband, Tom, “Hey, there’s a passeggiata – these people must be cool!”

Sperow, chairwoman of the Los Altos Hills Parks and Recreation Committee, also helps with getting the word out via email and Nextdoor.

“I find that a lot of people here in Los Altos Hills look for ways to build community,” she said. “That’s why I think it’s so great that Gail did the passeggiata.”

Sperow pointed out that while there are plenty of events in the lowlands, such as at town hall, it’s different when you live farther up in the hills.

**A social event**

After last year’s inaugural gathering, just before the Fourth of July, Sperow invited the group to a neighborhood block party she was organizing, which further cemented the new friendships.

There are now 13 names on the email list for the passeggiata; the biggest group so far was 12 walkers. One of them last year included the Sperows’ mini horse.

The pace is leisurely, and the goal is not exercise,
though they do get a bit of that. Aside from the neighborly camaraderie, getting out of the house after dinner is one of the walks’ main benefits.

“You do feel better after you get home,” Solomon said, “instead of sitting at home watching the news.”

Sperow, who once lived in Rome, noted that the passeggiatas are part of life in Italy.

“Everyone will do it in their little village or in their neighborhood,” she said. “There will be a piazza or there will be a closed-off street, and it’s just a stroll up and down the street. Everyone dresses up. There’s a saying, ‘Fare bella figura,’” which she translated loosely as “putting on one’s Sunday best.”

Although the Sperows’ children don’t participate in the Los Altos Hills strolls, things were different in Italy.

“I remember in Italy, there was no discussion – you just went,” Sperow said. “Because for the little kids, there was always an ice cream along the way. … It’s a real social event. And you might go get a coffee at one of the local bars, or a gelato.”

Asked if they’ve ever considered strolling elsewhere, like in downtown Los Altos, where they might be able to stop for a drink or coffee afterward, Sperow said the
A walk in the hills

The route of the July 10 passeggiata wended around Elena Road. Along the way, there was talk of fruit trees, mountain lions and deer, the conversation muffled by an occasional passing car. Gail said the group sometimes practices the foreign languages they know during the walks: “Parli Italiano?”

After 20 minutes or so, the group reached Foothill Lane – the turnaround point. There was no gelateria in sight, but there was a blackberry bush. Tom Sperow proved most adept at gathering the juicy berries, producing a handful to share with the group. His wife quipped that if they were more plentiful, they could make blackberry wine for the last passeggiata of the season.

Blackberries eaten, it was time to mosey back, minus participant Leah Frei, who, after walking from home to the meeting place, now said goodnight. When the Solo- mons reached their street, they also bid arrivederci. Until the next passeggiata.

The group prefers to meet closer to home. Last year participants met at town hall and walked from there a few times, but they found even that a bit far. The walks are scheduled in the summer months, when it stays light into the early evening for the drive back.
There’s a magnetic feeling to that moment when you let a song and an open stretch of grass or pavement pull you into the dance.

Behind the scenes, event organizers and musicians have planned for this moment, picking show times and set lists designed to invite you in and keep you moving. Your fellow dancers in Mountain View and Los Altos help, too – a few dozen public festival superfans in the area are known for logging hours in motion, starting the dance and seeing it through to the end. They’re the brightly dressed people with the quirky style that you’ll spot at special events up and down the Peninsula most every weekend.

“We dance from heart,” Mountain View resident Marillie Rodriguez explained.

Mood and music

The smell of vanilla wafts around Rodriguez, 72, whose self-designed jewelry of feathers and clay beads swings as she demonstrates the moves that keep her young. With pink hair, buzzed on the sides, a fanciful octopus scrawled across her cheek in purple eyeliner, a pirate skull belt, wolf shirt, cut-off shorts over electric blue patterned leggings, a self-made jacket lined with shells and brocade and boots made for dancing, you can see the party coming with Rodriguez.

The Filipino-American dance lover was a “rebellious child from the beginning,” she reminisced while chronicling an unconventional life punctuated with Latin, Mediterranean and entirely invented modes of dance. She’s been known to last five hours on the dance floor at events like Mountain View’s A La Carte & Art. She finds the experience part artistic expression, part pure exercise.

“You just stand straight and be yourself,” she said of her hybrid style that draws from traditions ranging from cha-cha to contemporary. “It depends on my mood and the music.”

Rodriguez finds that her diminutive size (and, perhaps, puckish look) attracts young dancers who think she’s a kid herself.

“I’m small and not a threat to them. I really enjoy pleasing people, especially kids,” she observed.

Reflecting on a very modest life she lives on a small budget, she related the idea that “poor is a state of mind” to why people ask her about her perpetual smile and presence at public events.

“It’s free, it’s contagious and people remember you,” she said of her ebullient persona. “People don’t dance because they’re ashamed. I don’t care – laugh at me!”

Clare Angle shimmies with a new young friend at one of Los Altos’ Outdoor Summer Concerts in Grant Park.
If you take a visual survey of who’s standing up and moving at local events, you spot people who are willing to stand out in a sea of still bodies because they love the way dancing changes the experience of live music.

At the last of the Los Altos Outdoor Summer Concerts, resident Bruce Devert swayed with his picnic companion Clare Angle to Rick Torres’ Elvis cover band, reviving the traditional clinch of couples dancing that has faded in the decades since the King reigned. For long stretches, they danced alone among the families picnicking passively. Their moves attracted a stray toddler for a brief circle dance and then, a duo again, they swayed against the twilight sky of Grant Park.

The power of just one or two charismatic dancers can change the tone of an entire dance floor – Cynthia Larson, the lead singer for the Santa Cruz-based Tsunami Band that plays at local events, said she recognizes certain people as powerhouses. If a crowd is slow to warm up, or rebound after a break, she’ll calculate – “Nobody’s dancing, we’re going to do a song I know is Karen’s song, she’ll get out there when nobody is and they’ll get started. OK – we’ll play to you, and your energy will draw everybody else in. Lots of times people

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want to see somebody else on the dance floor. They want permission.”

The power of the familiar

Read Zaro, who produces music events through his company T.E.C. Productions, said festivals along the Peninsula tend to have relatively commercial musical tastes – which is to say, an audience interest in contemporary, radio-oriented rock. The Top-40 hits get interspersed with a little soul, funk or R&B, but large local public events like the art and wine festivals in Los Altos and Mountain View don’t stray much further, musically, than Latin music (particularly popular at Mountain View’s September event) and, occasionally, cutting-edge country.

“We’re not seeing a bunch of swing dancers out there. You might see a little line dancing. Otherwise it’s get out there and do your thing and have a good time – when it’s slow, you dance slow; when it’s fast, you dance fast,” he said, noting that structured dancing like the Electric Slide – or ballroom – is long gone, replaced by a free-for-all.

Janet Pennee’s purple hair and comfy, flowing clothing also stand out as a regular sight at local art and wine

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festivals and other music events. She said that over the past decade, she’s developed a list of favorite local bands such as The Houserockers and Caravanserai, a Santana tribute band.

“When we dance, it’s not the Twist or anything, it’s just moving – I don’t know what they’d call it, we just move,” she said of the free-form dancing that aggregates in front of the main stage at local events. “There’s a bit of ’60s dancing, and of course when you go to country and western, there’s line-dancing steps.”

She has a friend who joins her at festivals – but only to eat and observe. Pennee is comfortable dancing alone, or with the companions she’s met on the dance floor.

“I don’t talk a lot at these events – I go there to dance,” she said. “It makes you feel good, because a lot of us sing along to the songs, and it makes you feel good after a two-hour dance. It’s two hours of exercise, and it’s really good for me – I’m a diabetic and I have to move.”

Moving and grooving

Pennee loves the atmosphere of a participatory crowd, but she said she’s always willing to be the one to get up and take the first steps that start a dance party. As she’s
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gotten to know the other regulars on the festival dancers circuit, she’s seen the whole range – from those with classical training to enthusiasts who gyrate to a beat in their own heads, independent of the band.

“They’re having such a good time, why correct them?” she asked philosophically. “As long as they’re enjoying themselves.”

“I truly believe that if the band is good enough, people will move – unless it’s ungodly hot. If it’s got a good dance groove and it’s music people identify (with) and like, they will get up and dance,” Zaro said.

In addition to the regulars such as Rodriguez and Pennee, Zaro sees a cadre of Zumba types chasing a rhythm to move to. Many bands maintain mailing lists of regulars who will follow an act from event to event.

The Houserockers are a “sure bet,” Zaro said, as an exemplar local act, because “their formula works” – and they’ve got a great mailing list of supporters who will turn out and buoy the party. The 10-piece “rock & soul” band, based in Los Gatos, covers the music of everyone from Earth, Wind & Fire to Van Morrison. Over the course of 50-60 shows in a year, they’ve honed a knack for reading audience chemistry at festivals and marrying their set list to a given event’s vibe.

“When people are a little bit relaxed and locals mesh well with the fan base of the band, that’s when you have all the elements that you need for an exciting and fun

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party,” Houserockers bandleader Paul Kent said. “We’re a dance band – we typically play later in the day – and we’re known for a high-energy approach that gets people up out of their seats.”

His job as bandleader is to read the crowd and adapt accordingly. Warming up a crowd might require mid-tempo songs that convey the dancing atmosphere without being “full in your face as fast you can go,” Kent said. Think Van Morrison’s “Domino” or Steely Dan’s “Peg.”

The eclectic range of The Houserockers’ set list, which might swing from the Rolling Stones to Bruno Mars, reflects the individual interests musicians bring to the collaboration.

“We are bringing in songs we love, that we think we can interpret really well, what we would love to play and love to sing. That creates an infectious party vibe,” Kent said.

Fun with the ‘festicrew’

After a decade of observing local festivals, Kent characterizes Mountain View’s Art & Wine Festival as having “vibrant intensity” and Los Altos’ event as more “joyful silliness that defines the party” – conga lines sometimes included.

“Music really gets to people,” Pennee reflected on the reactions she sees around her on the dance floor. “People get up, especially if you have some of the golden oldies – people remember all the lines and verses; it’s like a sing-along.”

Larson said that for Tsunami Band, its focus on ’60s, ’70s and ’80s rock has evolved to include some “surprises” ranging from Jimi Hendrix to Aretha Franklin. The band throws the occasional ballad, like a Beatles love song, into the middle of a set, but only as a “showstopper” – something that leaves people standing on the dance floor, maybe not dancing, but still transfixed.

“A lot of stuff that we do is familiar to people of all ages, it’s some of the most famous music recorded and it just becomes a communal, collaborative thing,” Kent said of The Houserockers’ approach. “That’s how we know we’re successful – if everyone is really feeling it together, not just the person you came with.”

He calls the devoted cadre of local live-music fans the “festicrew” – and said they don’t just make the musicians feel supported, but are “really the lifeblood of outdoor summer live music in the Bay Area.”

“In this valley, we all work so hard in our day jobs, and at least for our band, our goal is to give people a couple of hours to put Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., aside and just enjoy,” Kent said. “That’s what music is there for – just to take you away.”
A feast for families

Seasonal events brighten fall and winter seasons

Town Crier Staff Report

**A flurry of family-friendly**
events await local residents – from concerts to plays, trick-or-treating and holiday tree lightings. A list of what’s happening when and where follows.

**Mountain View Farmers’ Market**
9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sundays
Caltrain Station, 600 W. Evelyn Ave.

The award-winning farmers’ market features 80 farmers and food purveyors selling a variety of seasonal produce, baked goods, fresh flowers and more. Parking is available along Hope and Bryant streets and on West Evelyn Avenue.

*For more information, visit cafarmers-mkts.com/mountain-view-farmers-market.*

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EVENTS

Los Altos Farmers’ Market
4-8 p.m. Sept. 27
State Street

The Los Altos Village Association hosts its final farmers’ market of the year Sept. 27, featuring local produce, flowers, baked goods, prepared foods, live music and more.

For more information, visit cafarmers-mkts.com/los-altos-farmers-market.

‘Go Goats!’
3:30-4:30 p.m. Sept. 29, Oct. 13 and Nov. 3
Hidden Villa, 26870 Moody Road, Los Altos Hills

“Go Goats!” participants can feed goats dinner, milk a mother goat and learn goat facts. Children ages 5 and up are eligible to attend; a paying adult must accompany all attendees under the age of 12. Tickets are $30.

For more information, visit hiddenvilla.org.

Ye Olde Towne Band
1:30-3:30 p.m. Sept. 30
Shoup Park, 400 University Ave., Los Altos

The old-fashioned band hosts a free park concert featuring a variety of music, ranging from rousing marches to popular musicals, all under the baton of John DeLoach, who has served as conductor of Ye Olde Towne Band since 2004. Attendees can pack a picnic or use the park’s barbecues. A playground is available for young children.

For more information, visit windband.org/oldtowne.

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EVENTS

TheatreWorks’ ‘Fun Home’
2, 7, 7:30 and/or 8 p.m. Tuesdays through Sundays Oct. 3-28
Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, MainStage, 500 Castro St.

Based on the memoir of graphic novelist Alison Bechdel, “Fun Home” explores the author’s youth in a loving, dysfunctional family whose secrets of sexuality echo her own. The Tony Award-winning musical – with music by Jeanine Tesori and book and lyrics by Lisa Kron – includes mature language. Tickets are $45-$105 general admission, with discounts available for seniors, students, educators and children.

For more information, visit mvcpa.com.

Peninsula Youth Theatre’s ‘The Frog Prince’
11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Oct. 6
Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, SecondStage, 500 Castro St.

The 45-minute adaption of the fairy tale – in which a princess meets a slimy prince frog – stars puppets. Tickets are $12 general admission, with discounts for large groups. Additional school shows are scheduled 9:30 a.m., 11 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. Oct. 5.

For more information, visit mvcpa.com.

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‘Big Buzz about Bees’
2-3 p.m. Oct. 6 and 13
Hidden Villa, 26870 Moody Road,
Los Altos Hills
The interactive class enables children (with a guardian) to touch the parts of and look inside a working beehive, learn about beekeepers and taste local honey. Tickets are $25 for an adult with the first child, and $10 for each subsequent attendee.
For more information, visit hiddenvilla.org.

Little Pumpkin Party
1-4 p.m. Oct. 20
Hidden Villa, 26870 Moody Road,
Los Altos Hills
Families can visit an old-fashioned pumpkin patch. Activities include picking pumpkins, watching apple cider being made, plumping up scarecrows and meeting the Autumn Garden Fairy. Attendance is limited to 50 families. Tickets are $15 per person.
For more information, visit hiddenvilla.org.

Trick-or-Treat and Tour Town Hall
2-4 p.m. Oct. 26
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Costume-clad children at the Halloween Spooktacular in Los Altos in 2017 select treats from a friendly witch.

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costumes and tour the town hall offices and chambers, Heritage House and Parks and Recreation building. Tours and trick-or-treating are conducted every 30 minutes.

For more information, call 947-2506 or email cknopf@losaltoshills.ca.gov.

Halloween Party
6:15-9:45 p.m. Oct. 26 and 27
Hidden Villa, 26870 Moody Road, Los Altos Hills

Attendees can take a 45-minute guided Halloween trail tour, collecting treats along the way. The party includes hot cider and a magician. Three tours are available: 6:30-8:30 p.m., 6:45-8:45 p.m. and 7:15-9 p.m. Tickets are $25; children must be accompanied by a paying adult.

For more information, visit hiddenvilla.org.

Trick-or-Treat Downtown
1-6 p.m. Oct. 27
Mountain View

Children ages 12 and under can participate in Halloween festivities in costume, including games and crafts, 1-3 p.m. in Pioneer Park, and then trick-or-treat at participating businesses 3-6 p.m.

For more information, visit mountainviewdowntown.com/event.

Pumpkin Carving with a Cop
3-5 p.m. Oct. 27
Los Altos Youth Center, 1 N. San Antonio Road

Bring pumpkins to carve with Los Altos police officers. The officers work alongside attendees and answer questions. Admission is free; carving tools and refreshments are provided.

For more information, visit the calendar page at losaltosca.gov.
Halloween Spooktacular
Noon to 4 p.m. Oct. 31
Downtown Los Altos
Children can trick-or-treat at stores in downtown Los Altos that display an orange pumpkin. The event also features crafts, games and balloon art from 2-4 p.m. at Veterans Community Plaza. Attendees must bring their own treat bags.

For more information, visit downtownlosaltos.org.

Holiday Stroll
5-9 p.m. Nov. 9
Downtown Los Altos
Attendees can view the illuminated trees, shop and stroll the streets filled with carolers. Free carriage rides are available, in addition to holiday music at Veterans Community Plaza.

For more information, visit downtownlosaltos.org.

‘Los Altos Has Talent’
6 p.m. Nov. 9
Los Altos Youth Center, 1 N. San Antonio Road
Sixth- through 12th-graders are scheduled to perform at the “Los Altos Has Talent: Teen Talent Show.”

For more information, visit the calendar page at losaltosca.gov.

Roald Dahl’s ‘Willy Wonka’
2 and 7:30 p.m. Nov. 10 and 17, 1 and 6:30 p.m. Nov. 11, 7:30 p.m. Nov. 16 and 1 p.m. Nov. 18
Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, MainStage, 500 Castro St.
Featuring songs from the 1971 film starring Gene Wilder, the musical embarks on a tour of Willy Wonka’s chocolate factory along with Charlie Bucket and other

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golden-ticket winners. Tickets are $26 general admission, with discounts available for large groups, seniors, students and children.

For more information, visit mvcpa.com.

Los Altos Festival of Lights Parade
6 p.m. Nov. 25
Downtown

Now in its 41st year, the Los Altos Festival of Lights Parade attracts a crowd of all ages to Main and State streets for a display of illuminated floats, marching bands and costumed characters.

For more information, visit losaltosparade.org.

Los Altos Stage Company’s ‘Into the Woods’
3 and 8 p.m. performances Nov. 29 through Dec. 23
Bus Barn Theater, 97 Hillview Ave.

The musical, which intertwines fairy tales including “Little Red Riding Hood,” “Jack and the Beanstalk” and “Cinderella,” asks the question: “What happens after ‘happily ever after’?” The show won multiple Tony Awards and was adapted for the movie screen. Tickets are $20-$30.

For more information, visit losaltosstage.org.

Los Altos Holiday Tree Lighting
6-8 p.m. Nov. 30
Veterans Community Plaza, corner of Main and State streets

The event features live holiday music and a visit from Santa before the Los Altos Village Association illuminates Veterans Community Plaza with the city’s official tree lighting at approximately 7 p.m.

For more information, visit downtownlosaltos.org.

Mountain View Holiday Open House
6-8 p.m. December (date TBA)
Downtown

Sponsored by the Central Business Association, the Mountain View Holiday Open House promotes shopping and dining at participating downtown businesses. The Madrigals, the Mountain View High School choir, perform carols along Castro Street.

For more information, call 964-3395 or visit mountainviewdowntown.com/event.

Holiday Barn Lighting
2-5 p.m. Dec. 2
Westwind Community Barn, 27210 Altamont Road, Los Altos Hills

Attendees can sample cookies and hot cider, partake in
wine tasting, play seasonal games, make crafts, have their faces painted, pose for photos with Santa, ride a pony and visit a petting zoo. Local student groups perform traditional carols and holiday music. The barn is scheduled to light up at 5 p.m.

For more information, call 947-2518 or email srobustelli@losaltoshills.ca.gov.

Community Tree Lighting Celebration
5:30-7:30 p.m. Dec. 3
Civic Center Plaza, 500 Castro St., Mountain View

The event features live holiday music, refreshments and seasonal lights. Children can take photos with Santa. Admission is free, but attendees are encouraged to bring a can of food for Community Services Agency.

For more information, call 903-6331.

Peninsula Youth Theatre’s ‘The Elves and the Shoemaker’
7:30 p.m. Dec. 7 and 11:30 and 1:30 p.m. Dec. 8
Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, SecondStage, 500 Castro St.

The adaptation of the classic folk tale follows two elves who help a poor shoemaker in an effort to change his luck. The performance is approximately 45 minutes long. Tickets are $12.

For more information, visit mvcpa.com.

‘An Irish Christmas’
7 p.m. Dec. 20
Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, MainStage, 500 Castro St.

Award-winning Irish dancers Caterina Coyne, Tyler Schwartz and Connor Reider lead the audience through Christmas in Ireland, with dancing, singing and traditional Irish music. Tickets are $35-$60, with $25 tickets available for students.

For more information, visit mvcpa.com.

Caroling in the Hills
7:30-9 p.m. Dec. 20
Los Altos Hills Town Hall, 26379 W. Fremont Road

The gathering starts with drinks and treats, after which carolers travel to Los Altos Hills neighborhoods to sing. Children, adults and members of surrounding communities are invited to participate. Carolers are advised to wear warm clothes and bring a flashlight. In case of inclement weather, caroling will be held at town hall only.

For more information, call 948-6455 or email scott@inet-sciences.com.

– Compiled by Christina Cheng
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