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railblazing quilt

Friends of Stevens Creek Trail group celebrates its 30th anniversary with unveiling. Page 3



COURTESY PHOTO

The Friends of Stevens Creek Trail group is celebrating its 30th anniversary by publicly displaying a quilt made from previous years' Trailblazer race shirts. Sunnyvale Mayor Larry Klein, fifth from left, unveiled the quilt June 21 at the Sunnyvale Community Center. Klein is pictured with Friends board members and Sunnyvale City Councilmember Linda Sell, right.

Community briefs

railblazing quilt

The Friends of Stevens Creek trail group is celebrating its 30th anniversary by publicly displaying a quilt made from previous years' railblazer race shirts. Sunnyvale Mayor Larry Klein unveiled the quilt June 21 at the Sunnyvale Community Center.

The quilt was made by Tom Frankum, a Friends board member from 1997 to 2007 who served as president in 2000-01. Frankum, who now lives in San Diego but has continued to be an active Friends supporter, is also a running enthusiast.

The quilt is set to move to Cupertino in July and Mountain View in September after being displayed in Sunnyvale.

The 29th annual railblazer Race is set for Sept. 24. The event is a fundraiser for the Friends, a nonprofit dedicated to extending Stevens Creek trail and wildlife corridor from San Francisco Bay to the Santa Cruz Mountains. For more information and to register, visit <https://www.stevenscreektrail.org/Events/trailblazer.html>.

Public Safety graduation

Five Sunnyvale Department of Public Safety recruits recently graduated from the Alameda County Sheriff's Regional Police Academy. The recruits completed more than 1,064 hours of training involving firearms, defensive tactics, de-escalation and emergency vehicle operations.

After completing a three-week in-house training program, the five recruits were set to begin their 20-week field training program to learn how to become a solo beat officer.

For more information on the department's training and recruitment, contact Capt. David Sakurai at 408-730-7176.

'IT WOULD BE LIKE DUKE UNIVERSITY GIVING UP BASKETBALL'

Japanese program may be getting cut

Fremont Union High School district students win national acclaim, but enrollment is down

By **Elissa Miolene**
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Until the moment she stepped on the stage, Maya Swaminathan felt nauseous.

The 17-year-old had been preparing for months to represent San Jose's Lynbrook High School in April at the Japan Bowl, a high-pressure national competition where hundreds of gifted students spar over Japanese language, culture and history.

She and her classmates coached each other on the flight from the Bay Area to D.C., then crammed into a hotel room to drill each other past midnight on all things Japanese. What is the name of the traditional square cloth used for wrapping gifts? (Furoshiki) Which city hosted the 1972 Winter Olympic Games in Japan? (Sapporo) What Japanese products are these regions — Shizuoka, Hokkaido and Niigata — known for producing? (Rice, tea and dairy)

Even though it was Maya's third time at the Japan Bowl, this year, the stakes felt different. Months earlier, the team heard rumors that their school district, Fremont Union High, was planning to phase out their vaunted Japanese program over the next few years — along with those at two other schools nearby.

"We thought, maybe if we win this, we can influence the head honchos to somehow not phase out the program," Maya said. "I felt like, even if I'm anxious, I have to do this."

And do it, she did. During the final round of the competition, Maya hit her buzzer early to call out the name of a Japanese manga, a graphic novel, that won a cultural prize in 1997 (Fujio Fujiko's "Doraemon"). Lynbrook brought home second place, and Cupertino High, another Fremont Union school, took first.

But it wasn't enough. Later that month, the district announced that

the rumors were true: Lynbrook, Cupertino and Monta Vista — schools that have long dominated the Japan Bowl — were planning to cut their Japanese programs due to districtwide declining enrollment. It won't happen all at once: Starting in the 2024-25 academic year, the district will begin phasing out Japanese classes one level each year through 2027-28, when only AP-level classes will remain.

The cuts are focused on the language programs with the fewest students, though that could be re-evaluated based on enrollment in language classes this fall. Chinese at Homestead High and French at Fremont High are also in the bull's-eye, though all students already enrolled in those classes will be able to finish out their full course of study.

John Malott, the president of the Japan-America Society — which has hosted the Japan Bowl since 1992 — said he couldn't believe it when he heard the news. He sent out emails to his network with the subject line: "Don't fall off your chair, but..."

"It would be like Duke University giving up basketball, or Maestro (Gustavo) Dudamel saying that the L.A. Philharmonic would no longer perform Beethoven," he said. "Here were years when I would watch the final championship rounds and see only those



DAI SUGANO — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Lynbrook High School Japanese language teacher Jeremy Kitchen, center, and incoming seniors Maya Swaminathan, left, and Samantha Tang. The two teens were part of the team that took second place in the national Japan Bowl in April.

three teams onstage because no other schools in the country could come close to them. They are formidable."

Despite their prowess, none of those schools are immune to the ripple effects of declining enrollment. Over the past five years, the Fremont Union High School District has lost 9% of its students, and its feeder K-8 districts, Cupertino Union and Sunnyvale, have seen even more staggering losses — plunges of 22% and 18% respectively from 2018-19 to today.

At the same time, enrollment in the district's world language programs has dropped 17%.

"We know there are students in these classes that love these programs, and we don't make these decisions lightly," said Denae Nurnberg, Fremont Union's data coordinator. "But this has been a long time coming."

Many other students, parents and teachers have been mourning the anticipated loss of Japanese, Chinese and French. They've

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