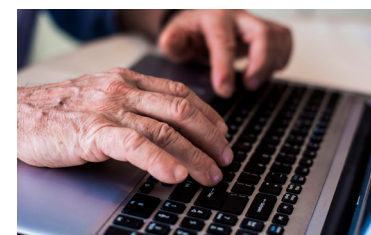




Pizza, fried chicken sandwich and salads are among the favorite dishes at the newly opened Junction in Santa Rosa. **JESSICA PAUL @ JESSICAPAUAPHOTO**



Tasks that once seemed simple for older adults may now seem unexpectedly stressful due to the need to adapt to new technology. **GETTY IMAGES—ISTOCKPHOTO**

For many older adults, technology not optional

By Rob Shore
SPECIAL TO THE IJ

They are retired physicians, researchers, clergy and teachers: bright, capable people who spent decades mastering complex professions, now feeling like technology is slowly pushing them to the margins of everyday life.

Tasks that once seemed simple — mailing a package, downloading an app, logging into an account — have become unexpectedly stressful. Even the technologies designed to make life easier often do the opposite.

Claire went to the local post office to file a claim for a damaged package. The postal workers suggested she submit it online instead. Reasonable enough, except she had no idea how to upload photos from her phone to the USPS website.

Grant wanted to download a walking app his friends recommended. He found it easily in the App Store, but he had long ago forgotten his Apple password (and the one he had handwritten on his “list” was wrong). He felt uncomfortable navigating the account recovery process needed to reset it.

Elinor knew her system for managing passwords (a thick binder full of handwritten logins kept in a dresser drawer) was no longer safe. She installed 1Password after hearing it was more secure, but she eventually stopped using it after becoming uncertain how to fully integrate it across her Mac and iPhone.

WHEN TECHNOLOGY QUIETLY BECAME MANDATORY

For a long time, technology felt optional.

It was useful, occasionally entertaining, sometimes even exciting. People printed MapQuest directions before road trips, exchanged messages on AOL Instant Messenger, joined neighborhood ListSrvs and spent evenings researching family trees online.

But somewhere along the way, technology stopped being an accessory to daily life and became the gateway to it. Paper boarding passes disappeared. Parking meters required apps. Restaurant menus migrated to QR codes. Bank branches reduced hours while online banking grew more complex. Even watching television now often requires navigating multiple streaming services, subscriptions, passwords and software updates.

Today, many ordinary tasks require a surprising degree of digital fluency. Checking medical test results may mean logging into a patient portal. Paying a utility bill might involve navigating multi-step verification codes sent by text message.

See **DINING** on Page B2

See **TECH** on Page B2

Grab a slice

Mill Valley beer garden opens second location

By Heather Irwin
THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

On the eve of The Junction’s May 11 opening, the sprawling hilltop beer garden already felt like the neighborhood gathering place Santa Rosa didn’t know it was missing. Friends and family filled the expansive patio for a preview night while children swarmed the playground slide in gleeful chaos and adults clustered around pizzas, fried cheese curds and spicy chicken wings. Craft beer and espresso martinis flowed as dogs circled hopefully beneath the tables, waiting for stray crumbs.

Among the crowd was Gaspare Bernardo, who operated The Villa for more than four decades. Sitting with his family over pizza, Bernardo — now in his 80s — watched the transformation of the longtime restaurant space that had been dormant for years. According to co-owner Liz Fiedler, he was simply happy to see life return to the building.

Fiedler, her husband Dez Fiedler, and business partner Jimmy Simpson saw possibility in the shuttered property when few others did.

The reopening marks a fitting second act for the former Villa restaurant, which had been vacant for more than three years, slowly deteriorating above Montgomery Drive. After a year of renovations and a top-to-bottom reimagining of the decades-old Italian landmark, the original doors were finally ready to open again.

“We feel so lucky that we got to inherit this iconic spot,” Fiedler said. “We really didn’t realize how much the space means to the community.”

Now in its second week of business, The Junction already hums with the confidence of a seasoned neighborhood



The Junction co-owners Jimmy Simpson, left, and Liz and Dez Fiedler at their restaurant in Santa Rosa on May 18. **CHRISTOPHER CHUNG — THE PRESS DEMOCRAT**

restaurant. The owners, veteran restaurateurs who also operate a sister beer garden in Mill Valley, have tapped into a familiar formula: approachable food, ample outdoor seating and an atmosphere designed equally for families, groups of friends and lingering afternoons.

Even during the dinner rush, blistered pizzas move steadily from the kitchen, and the restaurant’s 30 beer taps rarely sit idle.

THE VIBE IS THE DRAW

The Junction leans fully into its role as a family- and dog-friendly gathering space, pairing casual counter service with sweeping views toward Trione-Annadel State Park. The menu sticks to familiar crowd-pleasers at approachable prices, positioning the restaurant as an easy choice for

midweek dinners, post-soccer-practice meals and weekend brunches.

Inside, the 150-seat dining room and bar can feel cavernous and a little loud during peak hours. Outside, the mood softens beneath oversized umbrellas on the palm-lined patio, where fire pits encourage diners to settle in for another round.

Nearly every inch of the former restaurant has been reworked. Gone is much of the faded 1970s aesthetic, replaced by clean lines, soaring open-panel windows and more than 4,000 square feet of outdoor lounge space.

Near the entrance, a screen-free arcade features shuffleboard, foosball, vintage Skee-Ball machines and a photo booth — thoughtful additions clearly intended to keep chil-

dren occupied long enough for parents to enjoy a leisurely meal.

Parking remains one of the few challenges. During busy hours, cars line the steep driveway and some diners opt to park below and walk up. A nearby overflow lot helps ease congestion, but consider the climb an excuse for that extra beer and side of cheese curds.

What was once an empty shell with an uncertain future now feels firmly restored as a lively communal space — one poised for another half-century of neighborhood memories.

“Not many places get a fully packed house the first weekend they open, and that’s saying a lot since we have over 500 seats,” Fiedler said. “We are so honored to be a part of its history.”

Marin County Fair announces 2026 music lineup

By Daniel Bromfield
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The Marin County Fair has announced its lineup of musical performers for this year’s fair, which runs July 1 through 5 at the Marin Center fairgrounds at 10 Avenue of the Flags in San Rafael.

The theme for this year’s fair is “Stars, Stripes and Stories,” commemorating the United States’ 250th anniversary.

The Family Stone, featuring members of Sly and the Family Stone — the pioneering Bay Area band led by the late Sly Stone, who lived in Marin in the 1970s — performs at 7:30 p.m. July 1. This year marks the 60th anniversary of Sly and the Family Stone, which

formed in 1966.

Pioneering reggae band Steel Pulse performs at 7:30 p.m. July 2.

Linda Perry, Grammy-nominated pop songwriter and lead singer of 4 Non Blondes — known for their 1993 hit “What’s Up?” — performs at 7:30 p.m. July 3 for the fair’s Pride Day. Perry’s newest solo album, “Let It Die Here,” came out in May in conjunction with a documentary of the same name.

July 4’s Stars & Stripes Music Fest kicks off at 3:30 p.m. with Pink Floyd tribute Pete Floyd and continues with yacht rock band Mustache Harbor at 5 p.m., Neil Diamond tribute Super Diamond at 6:30 p.m. and Fleetwood Mac tribute Fleetwood

Macramé at 8 p.m.

Lupita Infante, Grammy- and Latin Grammy-nominated regional Mexican artist and granddaughter of Mexican music and film legend Pedro Infante, performs at 7:30 p.m. July 5 for the fair’s Latin Heritage Day.

All fair tickets (\$20 to \$30) include general admission to the headline concerts on a first-come, first-served basis for standing room and seated options. On July 1, youth ages 12 and younger, ages 65 and older and veterans get in for free. Children ages 3 and younger and active-duty military personnel get in for free on all other days.

More information and tickets at marinfair.org.



Lupita Infante performs on July 5 at the Marin County Fair. **GREG WATERMANN**

HARBOR SEAL PUP SEASON

Here's how to be a good neighbor

By Krista Maloney
MARINE MAMMAL CENTER

Spring and early summer are the busiest months of the year at the Marine Mammal Center. Our rescue hotline rings constantly, and our hospital in the Marin Headlands fills with patients. Many of them are harbor seal pups, born right here on local beaches from March through June. It's a season we love, and one that comes with an urgent message for anyone who walks the California coast: the most helpful thing you can do for a marine mammal is often the hardest thing to do. Stay back.

We understand the impulse. You spot a small seal alone on the sand, its big eyes blinking up at you, and your instinct says something must be wrong. But harbor seal mothers routinely leave their pups on the beach while they head out to sea to forage, sometimes for hours at a time. A pup resting alone is almost always just waiting for mom to return. It is not

abandoned. It is not dying. It is doing exactly what harbor seal pups do.

Here's where good intentions become dangerous. If people or dogs crowd a resting pup, the mother's instinct is to flee. If she's scared away repeatedly, she may abandon that pup permanently, leaving a healthy newborn without the nutrition and nursing it needs to survive. Last year, over 235 animals, which is more than a quarter of the marine mammals our trained responders rescued, had been affected by human or dog disturbance. Half of Marin County's disturbance cases fell into the "severe" category that included physically touching, feeding, moving or pouring water on animals. These behaviors, while often well-intentioned, can lead to life-threatening separations for harbor seal pups. Research by the Marine Mammal Center shows that most people are well-intentioned and want to help but don't know how and end up taking the wrong action.



The Marine Mammal Center is the largest marine mammal hospital in the world. **CLIVE BEAVIS THE MARINE MAMMAL CENTER**

So what should you do when you see a marine mammal on the beach? Give it space, at least 50 yards, roughly half a football field. Keep dogs leashed and at that same distance. Watch from afar and enjoy the encounter; it's a genuine gift to see wildlife in the wild. And resist the urge to alert everyone around

you. A small crowd, even a well-meaning one, is still a crowd. The question we hear most is: how do I know if an animal actually needs help? If you see an animal with an open wound, one that is tangled in ocean trash or plastic, one that is coughing, having seizures or clearly struggling to breathe, or a

very young pup that is so skinny you can see rib or hip bones, call our rescue hotline at 415-289-SEAL (7325). Our team will assess the situation and, if needed, safely bring the animal in for care. Don't try to intervene yourself. The animal you report may end up spending weeks at our Sausalito hospital,

the world's largest marine mammal hospital, where it will be treated by veterinarians and cared for by volunteers before being returned to the ocean. Since our founding in 1975, the Marine Mammal Center has rescued and treated more than 27,000 marine mammals along the California coast and in Hawaii. But the animals that never need to come to us at all, because beachgoers gave them the space to thrive on their own, are the success stories we celebrate most. Marin's coastline is home to extraordinary wildlife. This season, be the neighbor these animals need and share the shore responsibly.

Krista Maloney is the director of marketing and communications for the Marine Mammal Center. Marin Humane contributes Tails of Marin and welcomes questions and comments. Visit marinhumane.org, find us on social media @ [marinhumane](https://twitter.com/marinhumane), or email bloch@marinhumane.org.

MARIN SOCIAL SCENE

Elks' May Madness party and Come to the Table fundraiser

By Daniel Bromfield
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The San Rafael Elks raised more than \$10,000 at its annual afterparty for the May Madness Car Show and Parade on May 9 at the terrace at the Elks Clubhouse in San Rafael. The event was attended by 150 people, including Dean Aure, Sydney Fairbairn and Bob Meier, of Novato; Sue Drake, of San Anselmo; Bill and Gia Cosbie, Lisa Dal Gallo, Ken Hauser, Eric Holm, Charlie Hunter, Lena Kokalis, Jennie Tisell, Janice Varlow and Sean Walsh, all of San Rafael; and Kevin Scanlon, of Tiburon.

Come to the Table raised more than \$40,000 at its annual celebration and fundraiser on May 9 at St. Andrew Presbyterian Church in Marin City. The event was attended by 140 people, including Gerri Miller, of Belvedere; Tiawana Bullock, Juanita Douglas, Felicia Gaston, Maralissa Mack, Debra Turner and Florence Williams, of Marin City; Barbara Bogard, Anne Devero-Rosenfeld, Shirley Hasley, Rebekah Helzel, Carl Laur, Jen Levine, Nancy Miller, Joan Murray and Barbara Rothkrug, of Mill Valley; Don McCrea and Floyd Thompkins, of Novato; and Suzan Berns, Sarah Leipsic, Marguerite Moriarty and Elana Rosen-Brown, of San Rafael;



Rabbi Elana Rosen-Brown accepts a trophy at Come to the Table's fundraiser. **PHOTOS BY SHAN**



Shirley Hasley and Felicia Gaston at Come to the Table's fundraiser.

and Barbara Holmes, of Sausalito.

If you have news about the fundraising and benefit scene in Marin County or about an event that just took place, email calendar@marinij.com. Please send high-resolution (300 dpi, 2

MB) JPG photos no later than 9 a.m. on the Monday immediately following your event. Please identify the names and towns of everyone in each photo (from left), and give us a photo credit for the photographer. Please tell us how much money your



Juanita Douglas at Come to the Table's fundraiser.



Anne Devero-Rosenfeld at Come to the Table's fundraiser.



Tiawana Bullock at Come to the Table's fundraiser.

organization raised and how many people attended your event.

TECH

From Page 1

Transferring money between accounts can require passwords, authentication apps, biometric recognition or confirmation emails arriving on another device entirely.

It's not that older adults "can't use technology." Many used computers professionally for decades. The challenge is that technology today rarely stays the same for very long.

THE EMOTIONAL SIDE NOBODY TALKS ABOUT

Clients I work with through Senior Tech Tutor Marin will often laugh something off by saying, "I'm just a tech dummy." Usually, that sentence is covering something deeper. Many older adults spent decades being highly competent people. They ran companies, taught students, managed hospitals, led congregations, practiced law, raised families and solved difficult problems for a living. Now they sometimes find themselves hesitating before clicking a button on a phone screen, worried they might accidentally lock themselves out of an account or expose themselves to a scam.

The frustration is rarely just about the technology itself. There is embarrassment in needing help to perform tasks that now seem routine to everyone else — ordering an Uber while traveling, retrieving a forgotten password, scanning a QR code at a restaurant, figuring out why the television suddenly stopped working after a software update.

There is also exhaustion. Websites, apps, passwords, menus, and settings change constantly. Just when someone finally becomes comfortable using a system, an update rearranges the interface and forces them to learn it all over again.

And many are reluctant to keep asking family members for help. Adult children are busy with careers and parenting. Grandchildren move quickly through screens without always understanding how unfamiliar the technology can feel to someone encountering it differently.

What I hear most often is not resistance to learning, but fatigue from constantly having to relearn.

ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE

Despite the frustrations, most older adults are not giving up on technology. In fact, many are working hard to adapt to it.

I regularly see clients who were once intimidated by their devices gradually become more confident after learning a few foundational skills — understanding how passwords work, recognizing scam attempts, organizing photos, using password managers or simply becoming comfortable asking questions without feeling embarrassed.

Progress is often less about mastering every new app or operating system feature and more about reducing fear. Once someone understands that they are unlikely to "break" their iPhone by tapping the wrong thing or that confusion during a software update is normal, the anxiety level begins to drop. Confidence tends to build slowly, then all at once.

Patience also matters. Many older adults did not grow up in a world where systems changed every few months. They learned technologies that stayed relatively stable for years, sometimes decades. Today's digital world expects constant adaptation, often without instructions, and that adjustment can be mentally exhausting.

But what stands out most is not inability. It is a combination of curiosity and persistence.

Again and again, I see older adults willing to keep learning because they understand what is at stake. Staying connected to family. Managing finances safely. Traveling independently. Accessing healthcare. Remaining self-sufficient for as long as possible.

Technology is no longer separate from daily life. For many seniors in Marin, learning to navigate it has quietly become part of maintaining independence itself.

Rob Shore is a community volunteer and the founder of Senior Tech Tutor Marin, where he provides older adults with patient, one-on-one, jargon-free help using iPhones, iPads, Macs, and everyday technology. He can be reached at 831-221-0018 or shorespeak@gmail.com. More information is available at shorespeak.com.

DINING

From Page 1

BEST BETS

Margherita Dining Pizza, \$22: The 14-inch pies land somewhere between New York and California styles, with blistered edges, thin crusts and restrained toppings. The Margherita combines fresh and dry-aged mozzarella with tomato sauce, basil, smoked salt and Parmesan. The generously sized pizzas are meant to be shared. Also worth trying: the Forbidden Fruit (\$26), topped with roasted pineapple, capicola and red onion, and the Shroomer (\$28), a white pie layered with mushrooms, Taleggio, mozzarella and sunflower-seed pesto. For children, the Kid's Cheese Pizza (\$20) arrives lightly baked with extra cheese and, as the menu promises, "Nothing Green," proving the kitchen fully understands the very specific tastes of a 5-year-old.

Mozzarella Cheese Curds, \$10: Bite-sized fried curds from Valley Ford Creamery arrive crisp and chewy, paired with marinara and



The main dining area with a view at The Junction in Santa Rosa on M May 18. **CHRISTOPHER CHUNG — THE PRESS DEMOCRAT**

housemade Ranch. Their neatly uniform shape also eliminates the perennial cheese-curd complaint: nobody gets stuck with the tiny pieces.

Fried Brussels Sprouts, \$10: You can almost tell yourself you're eating healthy cruciferous vegetables, aside from the hot honey and hazelnut crumble that tops these sprouts. I mean, it's not like they're French fries, right?

Korean Wings, \$12: Buffalo

wings with an Asian twist. Crisp whole wings coated in sticky gochujang sauce deliver a lingering sweet heat. They may be too spicy for younger diners, which simply leaves more for everyone else.

Italian Chop Salad, \$14: A hearty mix of greens topped with soppressata, provolone, pepperoncini and Champagne vinaigrette — a classic chopped salad that remains surprisingly difficult to find locally.

Chocolate Chip Cookies, \$5: Two warm chocolate chip cookies sprinkled with sea salt arrive soft and just underbaked. Valley Ford Creamery soft serve, with a texture closer to gelato than traditional soft serve, is also available.

The Junction is at 3901 Montgomery Drive in Santa Rosa, 707-800-7631, thejunc.com. Open 11:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturday and 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Sunday.

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