

LOCAL NEWS • News

LifeMoves honors John and Sue Sobrato for longtime partnership

The Sobrato Organization has supported the creation of homeless housing developments and navigation centers in the Bay Area



LifeMoves Board Chair Melissa Selcher stands behind John A. Sobrato as he speaks at “A Home For Everyone,” a benefit luncheon for LifeMoves held at the Crowne Plaza Palo Alto on Thursday, April 23, 2026. (Sal Pizarro/Bay Area News Group)



By **SAL PIZARRO** | spizarro@bayareanewsgroup.com | Bay Area News Group

John A. Sobrato and his wife, Sue Sobrato, have likely received countless plaques, awards and trophies over the years for their philanthropy in the Bay Area and beyond. But I bet no one has ever thought to give them dirt.

LifeMoves honored the Sobratos at “A Home for Everyone,” a benefit lunch held at the Crowne Plaza Palo Alto on Thursday, and the homeless-services nonprofit presented the philanthropic couple with two distinctive gifts.

John Sobrato was presented with a set of eight glasses and a decanter, with each glass engraved with a map of a LifeMoves community that he helped build. LifeMoves Board Chair Melissa Selcher said the set is purposely unfinished, so they can continue to add glasses as Sobrato helps them add communities. The Sobrato Organization has supported the creation of navigation centers and homeless housing developments in Redwood City, Palo Alto, San Jose and Santa Clara.

Sue Sobrato’s gift was a bouquet of flowers along with a purple hydrangea, which is her favorite color. Fred Smith, LifeMoves’ director of philanthropy, said they became aware of the care and attention she puts into her garden and wanted to offer something that reflected that spirit.



“They’re sometimes called the community flower because they grow beautifully alongside many others,” he said. “Your hydrangea will be set in a pot that includes soil from each of the LifeMoves sites that you’ve helped make happen. It brings those places together in a living way and is something that will continue to grow just as your impact does.”

“What draws us to LifeMoves and what keeps us committed is their model of collaboration, working with cities, nonprofits and private partners to identify opportunities and build cost-effective scalable solutions,” he said. “That mirrors the approach of the Sobrato Organization, where we believe lasting change requires the public and private sectors to work together. Stable housing is the starting point for addressing so many other challenges.”

DOUBLE DATE: Alumni from Bellarmine College Prep and Notre Dame High School got together Thursday evening for a joint alumni mixer at Jack’s Bar in San Jose. About 90 people attended the festivities to toast the 175th anniversaries of both schools this year.



“We have people here who graduated in the 1950s all the way up to 2020,” said Monica Gomez, Notre Dame’s alumni relations manager and a 1990 graduate herself.

Mike McDonald, who graduated from Bellarmine in 1957, was the dean of the group, with 1960 Notre Dame graduates Marilou Cristina and Colleen Block providing more than equal representation for the women’s side.



Mike McDonald, a 1957 Bellarmine graduate, talks to Monica Gomez, a 1990 Notre Dame High School graduate, at a joint alumni mixer held Thursday, April 23, 2026 at Jack's Bar in San Jose for the two San Jose private schools, which were both founded in 1851. (Sal Pizarro/Bay Area News Group)

GET DOWN IN JAPANTOWN: Nikkei Matsuri, San Jose's annual celebration of Japanese culture, is one of the longest-running festivals in the city. It got its start in 1977 as the Issei Legacy festival, part of San Jose's bicentennial celebrations that year, and returned the following year as Nikkei Matsuri.

The 48th annual festival returns to San Jose's historic Japantown this Sunday, with four stages of entertainment surrounding the epicenter at Fifth and Jackson streets from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Of course, there'll be food trucks and booths offering lots of culinary delights, including chicken katsu, sushi and Okinawan donuts. You can see the full lineup of performers at www.nikkeimatsuri.org.

One of the festival's long-standing traditions is to honor a community member with the privilege of starting the festival by raising the koi, which symbolizes strength, perseverance and good fortune. This year that honor goes to Lynne Santo Yamaichi, who founded Lotus Preschool at the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin in 1986.



San Jose Taiko performs at the Nikkei Matsuri Festival in Japantown in San Jose, Calif., on Sunday, April 21, 2024. (Nhat V. Meyer/Bay Area News Group)

TRANSLATED POLITICS: A South Asian tale written nearly a century ago is getting a modern update with “Kingdom of Cards,” a production by San Jose State’s College of Humanities that’s running at the Hammer Theatre Center through May 3. Nobel Prize-winning poet and playwright Rabindranath Tagore originally wrote the poetic satire, “Tasher Desh,” in the 1930s, when fascism was on the rise in Europe.

The San Jose State production has been translated and directed by Sukanya Chakrabarti, an associate professor of theater arts who also co-wrote the adaptation with Matthew Spangler, who adapted Khaled Hosseini’s “The Kite Runner” for the stage. There are more details, including showtimes and ticket information, at www.hammertheatre.com.

STICKER BUSINESS: Santa Clara County’s Registrar of Voters Office is making a last call for entries in its contest to design an “I Voted” sticker that’ll go out with November’s ballots. The contest has three student categories for grades K-8, grades 9-2 and college/trade school students.

All entries have to include the words “I Voted,” naturally, but it’s up to the individual designer whether to use visual representations of Santa Clara County. You can draw your design by hand or create it digitally, but it must be original and has to follow the official rules. Those rules, along with other information, are available at sccvote.org/sticker. The deadline to enter is April 30.

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