

News

The Palo Alto Adult School is ready to celebrate its 100th anniversary, albeit one year later

Local politicians will mark occasion with special recognitions, awards

by Emily Margaretten / Palo Alto Weekly

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From left, Argentina Pennant, Olga Arevalo, Shuhuang Wang and Te Yuan Tang share their personal stories during a group lesson in their ESL class at Palo Alto Adult School on March 21, 2016. Photo by Veronica Weber.

While the COVID-19 pandemic delayed the Palo Alto Adult School's centennial celebration, this has only amplified the triumphant feeling of the occasion that is taking place this Sunday, Sept. 11.

Principal Tom Keating described the event as an outdoor extravaganza that, along with food, entertainment and giveaways, will showcase the school's community education, preschool family and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs.

The three programs are a cornerstone to the school's 100-year commitment to meeting the lifelong learning needs of its community that serves about 5,400 students annually.

Established by the Palo Alto Unified School District in 1921, the community education program offers a diverse range of courses. "We have courses in languages, the arts, woodworking and anthropology, you name it. Whatever we can find that the community would be interested in," Keating said.

The courses cost a nominal fee, typically ranging between \$100 to \$200, with many courses much less or free. The ESL courses, meanwhile, are supported by state and federal grants and entirely free to the public.

The preschool family program, a nationally recognized program that has been in existence for 75 years, focuses on parent education. Children from birth to 5 years old attend preschool during the day while their caregivers go to parenting classes in the evening and also participate in the preschool one day a week.

Keating described the programs as pivotal to the greater Palo Alto community that generates interest from adult learners across the Bay Area. "I think the bottom line with it all is that it gives them a sense of community or a place to hang out together and learn things. So, it's really a tremendous experience for the community and for us educators," he said.

Keating anticipated that more than 200 people will attend the centennial celebration, which will capture the spirit of learning by displaying the contributions of the school community, from special food stations, like Belgian chocolate making and tamale baking, to musical programs that include the Peninsula symphonic band and taiko drumming. The celebration also will have activities for children, an electrical vehicle exposition and \$500 in giveaways from businesses.

In recognition of the adult school's achievements, local politicians will be presenting awards at the centennial celebration. This includes a Certificate of Congressional Recognition from Rep. Anna Eshoo and a California Legislature Resolution plaque from Assembly member Marc Berman. Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian already presented an official commendation to the school.

Most of all, though, Keating is looking forward to celebrating with the community, many of whom have been involved with the adult school for decades. The event is about two things, he said.

"One, just to celebrate with our students and teachers. Just to honor and celebrate them. And secondly, to let the rest of the community know, 'Hey, come on out, check this out, we'll have food, entertainment, you can learn about the environment and hopefully have a good time.'"

The centennial celebration will be held at Palo Alto High School, in front of the Performing Arts Center at Centennial Plaza from 3-5 p.m. More information can be found at paadultschool.org.

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Thank you to the Adult School for everything you do for our community! This is definitely a celebration worth attending. So many local employees have attended this school and have made such a positive impact on our community!



Patsy Obayashi sews fabric to the couch she is reupholstering in the popular upholstery class led through the Palo Alto Adult School. Embarcadero Media file photo by Veronica Weber.



The office of the Palo Alto Adult School. Embarcadero Media file photo by Veronica Weber.