

**PEARSALL DEBUTS**  
Fifty days after being shot, 49ers rookie plays first game.  
**SPORTING GREEN, B1**



**REMINDERS OF A DISASTER**  
The Oakland hills fire brings back memories of deadly flames there in 1991.  
**BAY AREA & BUSINESS, A5**



**OPENING STRONG**  
Oakland Symphony plays first show with new leader.  
**DATEBOOK, B9**

# San Francisco Chronicle

SFCHRONICLE.COM MONDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2024 CONTAINS RECYCLED PAPER \$3.00

## Lurie surges ahead of Breed in poll

**Outsider:** Candidate touts his lack of City Hall experience

By J.D. Morris

In his ascendant campaign to unseat Mayor London Breed, wealthy nonprofit founder Daniel Lurie is asking San Francisco voters to do what they haven't done in more than a century: elect a mayor who never has served in government before.

Lurie would be the first person since 1911 to be elected mayor of the city with-

out those credentials. An heir to the Levi Strauss fortune by way of his late stepfather, Lurie touts a resume consisting largely of his time leading Tipping Point Community, the anti-poverty organization he created about two decades ago.

Lurie sees his dearth of public-sector experience as his primary selling point: He argues that San *Lurie continues on A10*



Lea Suzuki/The Chronicle

**A rise in polling for San Francisco mayoral candidate Daniel Lurie comes in the wake of a massive wave of campaign contributions.**

**Survey:** Heir now tops field in city's ranked-choice system

By Christian Leonard

Nonprofit founder Daniel Lurie is pulling ahead of his competitors in the San Francisco mayoral race, according to a new poll commissioned by the Chronicle.

Roughly 23% of likely voters said Lurie is their top pick for mayor, nearly identical to the 24% who said the same of Mayor London Breed. But when

accounting for voters' second-, third-, fourth- and fifth-place picks — reflecting San Francisco's ranked-choice voting system — Lurie led Breed 56% to 44% in the final tally.

The results reflect a turn for Lurie, an heir to the Levi Strauss fortune who has funded his campaign with millions of his own dollars. The Chronicle's previous poll, con- *Poll continues on A10*

While leading the Stanford basketball team is a challenge, raising a child with autism is even tougher for coach and his wife



Photos by Santiago Mejia/The Chronicle

**Stanford University men's basketball coach Kyle Smith checks on son Bo, 14, who has autism, after wrapping up practice. Kyle Smith and wife Katie live on campus with their three teenage boys.**

## Right person for the job

By Ron Kroichick

On a warm August afternoon, as he and his family navigate Stanford University's sprawling campus in their oversize golf cart, men's basketball coach Kyle Smith finds relief in the smile spreading across his son Bo's face.

Bo had been fidgety to start the ride, bobbing to the beat of classic rock on his iPad headphones. He doesn't let his mom, Katie, touch his leg. Then the Smiths come upon Tanner Fountain, a swirl of the sensory stimulation Bo craves — the water, the noise, the spray. Katie stops the cart and Bo



**Kyle Smith embraces his son Bo, helping him clean his face at their home on the Stanford campus.**

**ONLINE**

For the latest game results for the 49ers and more, go to [sfchronicle.com](http://sfchronicle.com)

immediately unfastens his seat belt, removes his Crocs and dashes to the fountain. He hops into the water, fully clothed, and joyously prances around.

"I think we found his favorite fountain," Kyle said.

Bo Smith, 14, doesn't say a word. He has autism and hasn't spoken in years, beyond an occasional "No!"

Three days earlier, Bo bit his middle school teacher's aide. *Autism continues on A8*

## SFUSD gets new boss, ends planned closures

By Jill Tucker

The San Francisco school board took sweeping action, halting the chaotic and controversial school closure process and replacing the district's embattled superintendent with an experienced administrator on loan from City Hall.

Maria Su, director of the Department of Children, Youth and Their Families, will take the reins of the San Francisco Unified School District system, replacing Matt Wayne, who resigned under pressure following a series of missteps and a clunky rollout of his school closure plan. Su was among several top city administrators that Mayor London Breed sent to the district a few weeks ago to help address the cascading crises.

Su will run the 48,000-student district with about 8,000 employees and a \$1.3 billion budget.

School board President Matt Alexander announced the decision to halt plans for school closures for now as well as the change in leadership following an emergency school board meeting late Friday.

In a closed-door session, the board accepted Wayne's resignation by a 6-1 vote and approved a separation agreement that includes paying him his \$325,000 salary and funding his

*SFUSD continues on A7*

## Sonoma County latest target for a tech utopia

By Rachel Swan and Julie Johnson

Months after a coalition of billionaires hit pause on its plans to build a walkable city in rural Solano County, another tech-centric group is moving forward on its dream to create its own community near Wine Country.

The proposed enclave, called

Esmeralda, would spread across 267 acres just southeast of Cloverdale in Sonoma County. Though the site is now a vast tangle of oak-studded grassland by Highway 101, industrial yards and a municipal airport, Esmeralda's developers envision it as a future tech utopia with the look of a rustic Italian village. Their still-gestating plan provoked excitement —

and suspicion — online and off. "Extremely cool," one commenter cheered on the social media site X.

Journalist Gil Duran scoffed. "New network state 'city' dropping near Cloverdale in Sonoma County," Duran wrote in a post, referencing the vision among some in tech for a decentralized digital-first community that seeks to replace existing in-

stitutions and systems of governance.

Rolling out the Esmeralda concept in a series of posts on X, founder Devon Zuegel presented videos and renderings that could have made the opening shot in a Disney film: flagstone alleyways lined with flowerpots; buildings with terra-cotta roofs; tree groves and farmland *Esmeralda continues on A7*