

Warm Water Wellness



October 2023 Update

Greetings!

We bring you this report with our sincere gratitude for supporting Warm Water Wellness Inc in our efforts to reopen the Mack E. Mickelson Arthritis and Rehabilitation Center pool and bring access to warm water therapy back to San Mateo County. It is well-known that the Mickelson pool at the Mills Health Center was a vital community resource that helped disabled individuals and seniors stay active and independent.

We are pleased to report that several months ago, **Sutter Health announced that they will reopen the pool in early summer 2024!** On September 28, 2023, Sutter announced that **repairs/reconstruction of the Mickelson pool will begin in November 2023.**

Since forming Warm Water Wellness Inc in 2021, we have worked tirelessly to publicize our opposition to the pool's closure and advocate for warm water therapy... at council meetings, commission meetings, and Zoom meetings, as well as through individual conversations and officeholder meet-and-greet events. We've made significant progress in explaining the impact of the pool's closure and educating our elected officials and others about the need for warm water therapy pools. Through our work, Warm Water Wellness is now recognized as the local expert on therapy pools.

Although we welcome the above news from Sutter, our work is not done. We need to make sure that Sutter follows through on their commitment to reopen the pool. We also need to ensure that the reopened facility will offer sufficient hours and access. We will not rest until everyone who needs the benefits of a therapy pool has access to one.

Our [change.org petition](#) has over 5,000 signatures – a major milestone! If you have not already done so, please sign the petition. Plus, check out our website at [warmwaterwellness.org](#) for the most recent news along with a wealth of information on therapy pools.

We can't say it enough. **Thank you for your support!** Everything we've accomplished could not have happened without the encouragement, advice, and financial resources provided by people like you. We are so very grateful.

Sincerely,
Lindsay Raika, CEO

About Us

Warm Water Wellness Inc was formed as a non-profit in October 2021 in response to Sutter Health's closure of the Mickelson therapy pool in San Mateo.

Our mission is to strongly promote warm water therapy resources in San Mateo County for seniors, disabled adults, children with special needs, and individuals with other medical conditions.

Board members include former therapy pool users and supporters.

“ My much-loved 10-year-old nephew, Alfonso, received treatment at the pool to take away some of the ache of his cystic fibrosis. ” – R.G., San Mateo

The Mickelson Therapy Pool

The Mack E. Mickelson Arthritis and Rehabilitation Center Therapy Pool was built 27 years ago at Mills Hospital in San Mateo (now known as Mills Health Center) with \$4M in community donations. It is the only fully accessible warm water therapy pool on the Peninsula. Those who used the pool came from cities and towns all over the county, as well as surrounding communities.

Sutter Health assumed management of the pool in 2007 and users witnessed decreased maintenance and staffing. Pool hours were reduced and some classes canceled in January 2020. The pool was closed by Sutter Health in March 2020, allegedly due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“ This pool helped me regain my strength after major surgery due to a cancerous tumor in my femur. ” – E.B., Foster City

Why is this pool so important?

Warm water therapy is widely accepted and recognized as an effective yet gentle form of exercise that is particularly beneficial for chronic and disabling conditions.¹

San Mateo County residents are “graying.” By 2030 (just 6 years from now), people over the age of 65 will represent 30% of San Mateo County’s population, and the number of disabled persons over 65 will increase by 148%.² Currently, 1 in 4 people in the U.S. is disabled, and that number will grow with the increasing senior population.

The numbers (and our own experience) tell us that warm water therapy pools are absolutely vital, necessary, and deserved by both the senior and disabled communities. Through regular use, pool users remain independent, exercise safely and regularly, and need less assistance as they age.

“ I have muscular dystrophy and a warm-water pool is the only place I can exercise in a way that strengthens and supports my degenerating muscles. I used to drive from San Francisco because this pool is a rare gem that is accessible, beautiful and essential to maintaining my health. ”
– K.M., San Francisco

¹ Apdaparkinson.org, 2021. [AQUATIC EXERCISE](https://www.apdaparkinson.org/uploads/files/Aquatic-Book_8-08---edited-2015-oUM.pdf)
https://www.apdaparkinson.org/uploads/files/Aquatic-Book_8-08---edited-2015-oUM.pdf

² San Mateo County Area Agency on Aging: [Area Plan Update 2023-24](https://www.smchealth.org/general-information/area-plan)
<https://www.smchealth.org/general-information/area-plan>

Our Impact

EDUCATION

Recognizing the need for education on the benefits and the value of warm water therapy pools, we researched and published detailed information on these pools, their requirements, and why we are fighting to return them to the Peninsula. Through our presentations, correspondence, and personal conversations, *every city councilmember* in the County became fully aware of the impact of the Mickelson pool’s closure and the harm being wrought on the most vulnerable in our community.

FOCUS

Through articles, op-eds, and letters, we increased awareness of the benefits of warm water therapy pools. This drew the attention of the public, local and state legislators and other organizations to the plight of former pool users.

ALLIANCES

We established strong collaborative relationships with the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, the Peninsula Health Care District, the Sequoia Healthcare District, the San Mateo County Central Labor Council, every city council in the county, and many others concerned with the health and well-being of the community. As a result of this outreach, each of these entities sent a resolution, proclamation, or letter to Sutter Health corporate calling for the reopening of the Mickelson pool.

“Shame on Sutter Health for putting profits ahead of actually providing care for people who are trying to heal.”

– K.M., San Francisco

Highlights

We researched local community pools for possible therapy use; all were found lacking in essential therapy pool amenities.

We wrote to the many individuals, companies and foundations who donated to the pool's construction, advising them of the impact of the closure.

We contacted Sutter Health management many times, both locally and at the corporate level, inviting them to discuss the situation with pool users and other interested stakeholders.

We published a reference paper entitled "The Need for Warm Water Therapeutic Resources on the Peninsula."

We created a website as an informational resource on the benefits of warm water therapy and ramifications of Mickelson Center's closure.

We attended numerous meetings (virtually and in person) requesting that the Peninsula Health Care District, the Sequoia Healthcare District, and the County of San Mateo Supervisors urge Sutter Health to reopen the Mickelson pool.

We spoke at regular meetings of all 20 City/Town Councils in San Mateo County, as well as to many individual city councilmembers, encouraging them to pass resolutions, proclamations or write to Sutter Health about reopening the pool.

Highlights

We produced op-eds, letters to the editor, and press releases for *the San Mateo Daily Journal*, *SFGATE*, *Mercury News*, *Everything South City*, *Climate*, *Opera News*, *Patch*, *Indybay*, *NBC*, *KRON4*, *KPIX 5*, *BOLLYINSIDE*, *The Almanac*, *Redwood City Pulse*, and *KCBS*.

We gained the support of:

Congressman Kevin Mullin

State Senators Josh Becker and Scott Wiener

Assemblymembers Marc Berman, Diane Papan and Phil Ting

San Mateo County Board of Supervisors

All 20 City/Town Councils in San Mateo County

The San Mateo County Central Labor Council

The San Mateo County Commission on Aging

City of San Mateo Senior Citizens Commission

Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy, LLP

We held, along with Supervisor Canepa and the [Raging Grannies](#), a successful protest rally outside the closed pool, attended by more than 100 pool users, supporters, and local officials.

“My husband went to the pool for therapy after breaking his leg in a ski accident... made a huge difference in his recovery!” – R.G., Saratoga

Thank you!

A heartfelt thank you to all who provided financial support:

Dennis Barnard
Rose Marie Bauer
Vera Berg
Sandra Berry
Lorna Buster
Joseph Cotchett
Susan Fan
David Folkman
Pamela Fritzsching
Paula Gravina
Kimberly Griffin
Joanne Izumizaki
Hazel James
Roxanne Joe

Harvey Kaplan
Patricia Kennedy
Karen Krueger
Doug & Tracey Leighton
Karen Lewis
Carolyn Lyon
Lauren & Matt Miskelly
Karen Myers
Mary J. Niess
Cynthia Robbins
Anne Sallot
Michael Schrader
Prakash Sharma
Susan Simmons

Matt Sosnick
Marlene Spano
Jane & Steve Stahl
Dr. Susan Stevens
Angela Steyer
Jim Tillotson
Barbara Varesco
Lynn Varesco
Astrid Varteressian
Karen Yee
Carol May Young
June Zolezzi
Brian Zywieciel



And to those who offered their time, support and guidance:

San Mateo County Board of Supervisors
The City/Town Councils of: Atherton, Belmont,
Brisbane, Burlingame, Colma, Daly City, East
Palo Alto, Foster City, Half Moon Bay,
Hillsborough, Menlo Park, Millbrae, Pacifica,
Portola Valley, Redwood City, San Bruno,
San Carlos, San Mateo,
South San Francisco and Woodside

San Mateo County Central Labor Council
Peninsula Health Care District Board of Directors
Sequoia Healthcare District Board of Directors
San Mateo County Commission on Disabilities
Peninsula Special Interest Lions Club Charities, Inc.
Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy, LLP
The Legal Aid Society of San Mateo
Raging Grannies



July 24, 2022 rally in front of the Mickelson Center

Additional thanks to the following elected leaders who went above and beyond in numerous ways, including writing letters to Sutter Health, speaking at our rally, spending hours on the phone and in Zoom meetings with Warm Water Wellness Board members, and applying pressure behind the scenes:

Congressman Kevin Mullin
State Senator Josh Becker
State Senator Scott Wiener
Assemblymember Marc Berman
Assemblymember Diane Papan
Assemblymember Phil Ting
San Mateo County Supervisor David Canepa
& Staff
San Mateo County Supervisor Noelia Corzo
& Staff
San Mateo County Supervisor Ray Mueller
San Mateo County Former Supervisor
Carole Groom
San Mateo County Central Labor Council
Executive Secretary-Treasurer Julie Lind
Belmont Former Mayor Charles Stone
Burlingame Vice-Mayor Donna Colson
Burlingame Former Mayor Ann O'Brien
Keighran
Half Moon Bay Councilmember/Formal Mayor
Robert Brownstone
Hillsborough Councilmember/Formal Mayor
Alvin Royse
Millbrae Mayor Ann Schneider

Millbrae Councilmember/Formal Mayor
Gina Papan
Redwood City Mayor Jeff Gee
San Bruno Mayor Rico Medina
San Carlos Councilmember/Formal Mayor
Sara McDowell
San Carlos Former Councilmember Laura
Parmer-Lohan
San Mateo Mayor Amourence Lee
San Mateo Deputy Mayor Lisa Diaz Nash
San Mateo Former Mayor Eric Rodriguez
Peninsula Health Care District Chair
Lawrence Cappel
Peninsula Health Care District Director
Frank Pagliaro
Peninsula Health Care District Director
Dennis Zell
Peninsula Health Care District Former Director
Helen Galligan
Sequoia Healthcare District Director
Kimberly Griffin
City of San Mateo Senior Citizens Commissioner
Ellen Wang

Special thanks also go to:

Joseph W. Cotchett (pro bono attorney)
Kathleen D'Elia (former paralegal/case analyst
at Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy)
David Dubinsky (CEO of the Pomeroy
Recreation & Rehabilitation Center)
Cheryl Fama (former CEO, Peninsula Health
Care District)

Pamela Kurtzman (CEO, Sequoia Healthcare
District)
Teri Shugart (pro bono attorney)
Bill Silverfarb (legislative aide to Supervisor Canepa)
San Mateo Daily Journal
Everything South City

And much appreciation to our community volunteers:

Thelo Aikene
Glenn Barnhill
Linda Carney
Helen Chacknova
Cleo Cruz
Rev. Edward Dumke
David Folkman
Alanna Foster
Dr. Melvin Friedman
Dr. Elaine Lambert
Barbara Lande
Jenny Lau
Tracey & Doug Leighton
Karen Varesco Lewis
Gary Loeffler
Marla Lowenthal
Judy Lynn
Stanford and Judy Martin
Lori Muller
Karen Myers
Linda Pene Nagare

Nancy Phelps
Sophia Pitre
Ginnie Plato
Susan & Steven Raike
Dan Ryan
Cathleen Sandberg
Syroun Sanossian
Dr. Jennifer Schachner
Susanne Scher
Xenia Sicat
Dr. Susan Stevens
Gigi Steyer
Dr. Edgar Suter
Erika Van Winkle
Barbara Varesco
Lynn Varesco
Lisa Weiner
Beth Weiss
Jill Wolters
Lindsay Zywieciel

Looking Ahead...

Our Board of Directors is committed to the return of warm water therapy pools to San Mateo County. To this end, we plan to:

- Continue to press Sutter Health to honor its commitment to reopen the Mickelson therapy pool and encourage them to fully restore prior community access.
- Continue to keep the public informed by publishing articles, issuing press releases, and sending letters.
- Keep public officials and legislators engaged with our cause.
- Search for opportunities to increase access to warm water therapy pools in San Mateo County.
- Stay in touch with therapy pool users, donors, and supporters.
- Work with the medical community to embrace and support the increased need for warm water therapy.

Please continue to share our work, and the benefits of warm water therapy, with your friends.



A Mickelson therapy pool patron enjoys therapeutic bodywork from Aquatics staffer Ginnie Plato in 2015.

We look forward to the day when we can all celebrate the reopening of the Mack E. Mickelson therapy pool!

Announcement from Sutter Health

Mickelson Center Update

June 21, 2023

Sutter Health



Sutter Health is committed to reopening the Mickelson Center warm water therapy pool which was closed at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our teams have assessed the work needed to reopen the pool and following that analysis, we've committed to investing in the project and are moving forward. We are in the process of applying for necessary permits before work can begin, and anticipate that the pool will be ready for our patients in early summer 2024, pending no unforeseen delays.

We are committed to listening to and including our community as we re-open the pool. In an effort to ensure transparency throughout this process, we will continue to provide updates as they are available at this website:

<https://vitals.sutterhealth.org/mickelson-center/>

Warm Water Wellness

The Warm Water Wellness Board amassed countless hours meeting and strategizing, presenting at city and county council meetings, writing letters and emails, and meeting with interested individuals and groups, all to ensure that the voices of those affected by the Mickelson therapy pool's closure are heard.

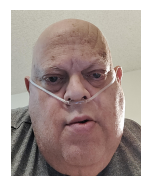
Executive Staff



Lindsay Raike, MA, CEO & President, was a patron of the Mickelson therapy pool for over 20 years to manage her chronic pain condition. As an educator and specialist in expressive arts therapy, she is passionate about supporting and advocating for individuals with chronic pain/disabilities and their loved ones.



Romy Bauer, CFO, was a patron of the Mickelson therapy pool for over 15 years to help manage chronic pain and other symptoms of Ehlers-Danlos syndrome. She is a professional writer and licensed California real estate broker.



Michael Schrader, Vice President, took full disability retirement in 2008, following a 40+ year career in heavy construction. He started using the Mickelson therapy pool in 2016, reduced his reliance on a 4-wheel walker and achieved a weight loss of over 140 lbs. He looks forward to celebrating his 70th birthday in the warm healing waters of the Mickelson pool.



Jane Stahl, Secretary, is a supporter of therapy pools and witnessed the Mickelson pool's crucial role in her husband Steve's health. She held positions in administration, marketing, customer support, and event planning before retiring as a department manager from Stanford University.



Brian Zywiciel, CPA, Treasurer, was a patron of the Mickelson therapy pool for 11 years. Prior to a spinal cord injury in 2009, he was president of the Savant Group, a Registered Investment Advisor.

Board Members



Pam Heman, *Director*, was a patron of the Mickelson therapy pool for decades. After a badly broken ankle, Pam's physician recommended pool therapy. It was so healing that she continued for 22 years until the closure of the pool. She worked at Mills-Peninsula Hospital for 29 years, most notably as the events manager in the Planning and Marketing Department.



Steven Stahl, *Director*, was a regular patron of the Mickelson therapy pool for more than 20 years for loss of strength and balance, and rehab. He was a software consultant for 20 years and later a real estate appraiser for 15 years.



Astrid Varteressian, *Director*, worked in real estate and furniture manufacturing for 45 years, before being sidelined by spine and joint issues. She was a patron of the Mickelson therapy pool for 8 years.

Warm Water Wellness Inc is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that promotes aquatic therapy resources for seniors and disabled individuals of all ages.

Tax ID 87-4048687
(Donations are tax-deductible.)

Warm Water Wellness Inc
P.O. Box 86
San Mateo, CA 94401
warmwaterwellness.org
info@warmwaterwellness.org



or kindly mail a check to our P.O. Box

Follow us on

