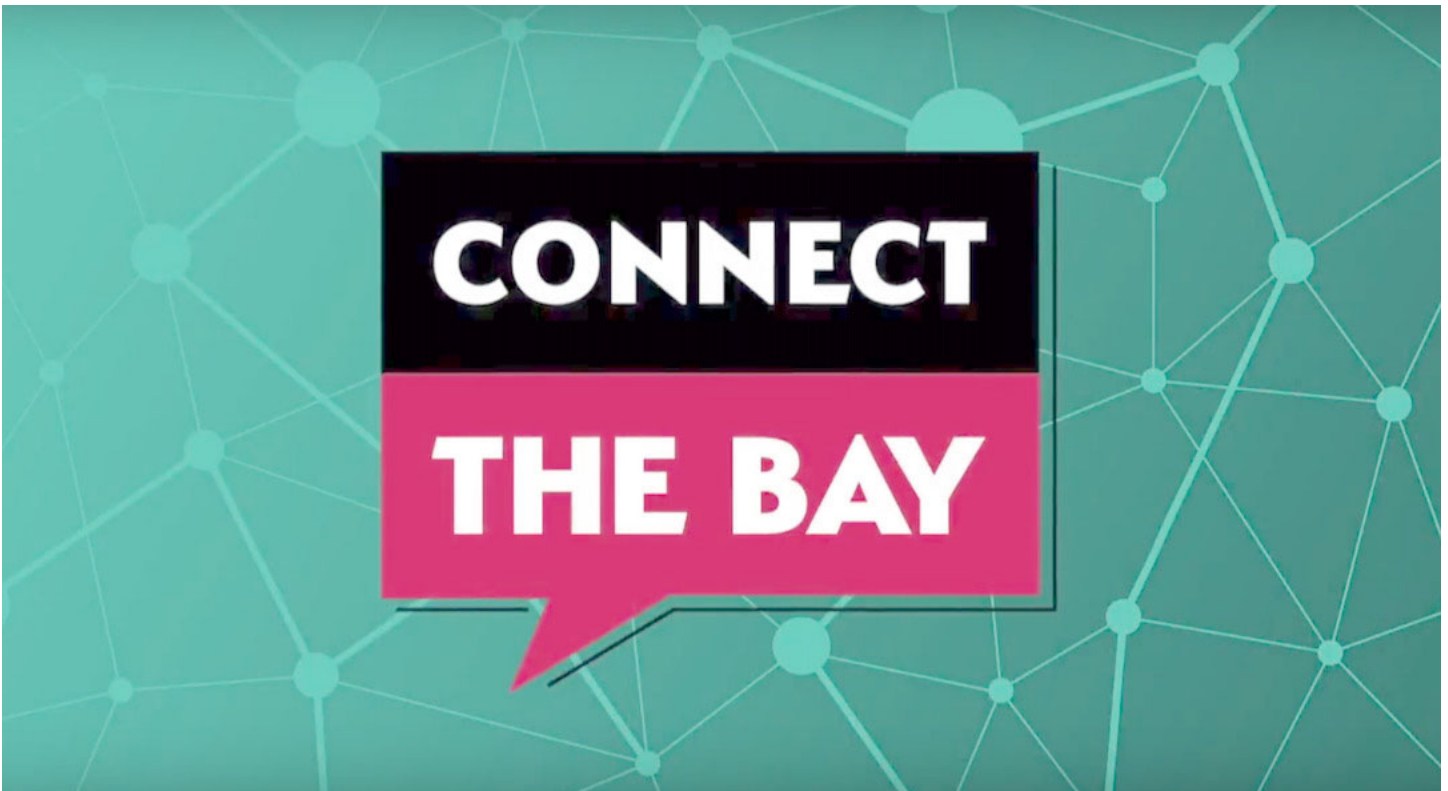




*For immediate release—Rohnert Park, CA, January 6, 2026—*

**Your AI questions answered on *AI Today*, NorCal Public Media’s latest *Connect the Bay* town hall program**



This month, Northern California Public Media (NorCal Public Media) presents its new original production ***Connect the Bay: AI TODAY***, a discussion with students, experts, educators and community leaders about the state of artificial intelligence in the areas of business, research, ethics, and school and university curricula. Questions submitted by the audience appear throughout the program.

***Connect the Bay: AI TODAY*** will air on KRCB-PBS--channel 22 on most Bay Area antenna and cable TV—on Thursday, January 15<sup>th</sup> at 10pm and repeat on KRCB on Sunday, January 18<sup>th</sup> at 7pm. It will also be shown on KPJK public television—channel 17 or 60—on Monday, January 26<sup>th</sup> at 8pm and repeat on Sunday, February 1<sup>st</sup> at 7pm.



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NorCal Public Media will also live-stream the show in The Norcal App for televisions and mobile devices concurrently with the broadcast times, and on-demand in The Norcal App starting in February.

Darren LaShelle, President and CEO of NorCal Public Media, conceived of the concept for the live studio recording of **Connect the Bay: AI TODAY**. “Viewers throughout the Bay Area rely on NorCal Public Media to keep them informed of the latest developments in technology through our local news programming,” he states. “*AI Today* is a helpful look into how AI is currently used in business and academia so that people can better understand this growing and ever-changing technological innovation that will have some impact on all of our lives.”



Recorded at CreaTV’s studio at Open San José in November, **Connect the Bay: AI TODAY** was hosted by Ramona Giwargis, co-founder and CEO of *San José Spotlight*, a South Bay online news organization.

University and business leaders featured in the show are

- Ahmad Thomas, CEO of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group;
- Khaled Tawfik, CIO, City of San José
- Dr. Cynthia Teniente-Matson, President of San José State University (SJSU);
- Dr. Mehrdad Aliasgari, SJSU Dean of the

College of Information, Data & Society;

- Dr. Maya Ackerman, author, co-founder WaveAI and Santa Clara University associate professor;
- Dr. Jorjeta Jetcheva, Associate Professor & Chair, SJSU Department of Computer Engineering

The university professionals explained the deeper investments into AI and more new technologies they are taking forward to ensure the next generation of leaders and professionals are ready for a future with these tools.

“So much of what we hear about AI is sensationalized in the national media,” said Rick Bacigalupi, senior TV producer at NorCal. “This has been an opportunity to hear from local experts, educators and students who are working with new technologies every day, right here, right now. They seem energized and excited about it.”

Sunnyvale Unified School District superintendent Dr. Gudiel Crosthwaite explained their formation of an AI Task Force which hopes to shape appropriate curriculum in K-12 education.

Also featured is Aarna Sahu, a teen based in the San José area who has been reaching young women and girls around the globe through her podcast “Aarna’s News.” On her program she interviews women leaders in the technology industry who have excelled in STEM fields, in hopes of encouraging other youth who are interested in following a similar career path.

“I hope a lot of girls are interested in STEM and AI and are motivated to do it!” Sahu declared.



Three SJSU students who are actively engaging with AI to further their social and community projects at the university presented strong arguments for the responsible and thoughtful use of AI and its impact improving their efforts.

Junior Julia Husainzada is President of the Responsible

Computing Club, whose project managers connect students across fields of study at SJSU with challenging projects from companies, groups and non-profits they can solve with the support of AI.



“We are able to ask these important questions around AI,” Husainzada said. “And figure out how it can be integrated responsibly in the student experience at SJSU.”

Senior Divija Puli participates in a class called AI for Social Good that shows students how to use AI in their efforts to help solve social and community issues.

“AI doesn’t have wisdom of its own. It just shares knowledge,” Puli said. “So even if we use AI to automate our daily lives, we have to remain mindful about how we use it and incorporate it.”

Ryan Nikopour runs the IDEAS Entrepreneurship Club and is co-founder of the SJ Hacks hackathon. Both activities involve students using AI to help them build an idea into a marketable project and even a start-up company.

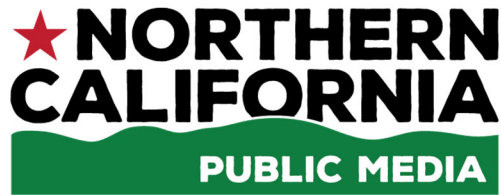
“I think that if we want to lead ourselves to a better future and have better prospects,” Nikopour explained. “That we should all engage in the social discourse of what AI should and should not be.”

The *Connect the Bay* series of town hall meetings and interstitial spots is a forum to explore community issues and a gateway to arts, culture, science, and the environment around the Bay Area. From discussions of AI and housing to an exploration of fine and performing arts, and changemakers embracing belonging and sustainability, the long-running series shares the stories of people from our communities whose creativity and imagination make our home shine like no other.

San José Spotlight is an award-winning nonprofit newsroom dedicated to journalism that uplifts marginalized voices and holds power to account. Its mission is to maintain a community-supported newsroom that ignites civic engagement, educates residents and strengthens our democracy.



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*Al Today* production partner CreaTV is the cable access station for the city of San José and founding partner of Open San José, a community hub where history and future are combined to create an incubator for dialogue, storytelling, and engagement.

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***More information and links:***

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