

DECEMBER 2017

The Diablo Gazette

Arts, Entertainment and All That's *Good* in Our Communities
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NEW
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GUIDE
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The Most Wonderful of Times

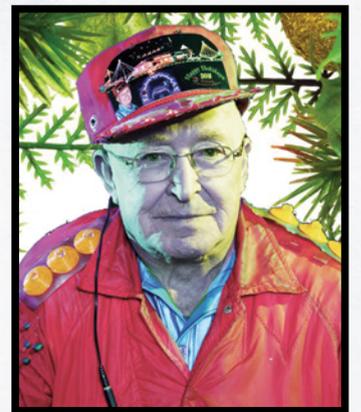
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 from the publisher *David King*

Happy Holidays from the Diablo Gazette

The Holiday season will be in full swing any day now. I just hope everyone can find the time to acknowledge those people who have become an important part of their lives. From gifts, to cards, phone calls to Facebook, it all counts. It is all well received. This edition is

full of examples of how, in the end, despite growing divisions among us, this time of year, people work hard to give, donate, volunteer, and help one another. Generosity wins out. We wish all our readers a very safe and happy holiday season.



theconcordian

by Edi Birsan, Concord Vice Mayor

Email me CityCouncil@cityofconcord.org | Add EDI in subject line

District Divisiveness

There has been a trending set of litigious attacks on cities demanding that they convert to District elections from the more traditional At Large election style. Recently the City of Martinez has been targeted and it is expected that Brentwood would be not far behind. The basis of the legal attack is the California Voting Rights Act and the belief that polarized voting in minorities exists based on ethnic, perceived race, or language. Unfortunately, the drive appears to be more a matter of generating billing hours for law firms than true care about the issues of under representation of minorities.

However, let us put aside the entire concept of the minorities and let us look at my favorite group of left handed blonde Apaches who are Hindu converts and populate our test municipality with 100% of these folks. When the municipality has a population of 100 it would seem reasonable to have At Large Elections for the City Council. Likewise, at 1,000,000 it would seem reasonable to have districts and that is solely based on population. The question then remains at what point do we make the transition from At Large to Districts in a homogenous community?

Arguments FOR Districts:

1. Districts bring direct focused representation of a single Councilmember for a specific geographic area. This allows direct accountability. It also means that there is always a go-to person for the constituents rather than a shotgun blast at a five-member council to see who responds.

2. Districts are 1/5 or so the size of the city, so in a city such as Concord, there are 65,000 registered voters. If divided by five districts that means that there are 13,000 voters who probably live in 7,000 households. To mail a flyer to those households in a district costs about \$3750 where as for the At large candidate or representative the cost is five times that.

3. Districts allow for local leaders to come forth and need substantially less money to have a viable campaign. We know that face to face contact beats mail and email, and in a six-month campaign a single candidate can hit 6000 doors. That is not enough in an At Large situation and hence we see massive amounts of money spent to reach voters.

Arguments AGAINST Districts?

1. If your elected council person is a dud then you are stuck with them for four years as in an at large situation you can reasonably call on everyone else on the council to bitch and moan with.

2. Focused power may become a small fiefdom which is internally looking without taking the interest of the city as a whole. It also creates and encourages specialization in an area that may cause a growth in ignorance in the other parts of the city.

3. It can pit one part of the city against another. However, in large cities this may be mitigated. For example, in Concord with four districts and a directly elected mayor, our districts would be the equivalent of Clayton, Moraga and Oakley combined. Note that each of those cities has a council of five so a total of 15 councilmembers compared to one for a Concord District.

The complication of attempting to answer racial polarization has had interesting affects in cities that were forced to go to districts. There is an overwhelming tendency in the short run for the same people or type of people to be elected. There are cases where there has been a sudden influx of minorities to the councils, but to the credit of our American electorate the temptation of racial voting was avoided in case after case.

So do the valid arguments on each side cancel each other out or are some more weighty than others?

For me, in large cities over 100,000, the reduction of cost of entry into the political field should, but not always, brings in more competition and better leadership. However, each city dynamic is different. Different levels of fear of provincialism prevail, making any shift towards Districts a matter of community outreach. Now the question remains if there is an outreach, who will be touched by it and respond, and are they representative? We will see.

Edi Birsan, while being Vice Mayor of Concord, is expressing his personal views (as a survivor of 67 Thanksgiving Bouts) and is not to be construed as either giving a position of the Concord City Council or our dearly departed Yaiyia.



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Christmas for Everyone Offers Free Meal and Gifts

by Howard Gellar

Christmas for Everyone has helped thousands of people in our community celebrate Christmas. These are families that do not have the resources for gifts or even a Christmas dinner. Christmas For Everyone (CFE) is a non-profit group that for the past 30 years has sought out financial sponsors and donations from the public of toys for kids, blankets, jackets, clothing, appliances sleeping bags and the like including "gently used clothing". Each year, they transform a local church center into a "shopping mall" where families can come and choose items for their families, have a complete Christmas dinner, listen to live Christmas music, get haircuts, enjoy a play center created for their kids and feel that they and their families have celebrated Christmas. Last year, CFE served Christmas dinner to over 2,500 people.

This year's Christmas Day meal of turkey, ham and all the traditional sides will be served at 115 Taratino Dr. in Martinez at the waterfront from 9:30 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. Transportation will also be available door to door or from local pick-up points in Martinez, Concord, and Pittsburg.

Corporate Sponsors feeling are the "crunch", making every small donation even that much more important. CFE has lost several corporate sponsors who in past years have donated \$30,000. They need your help!

If you wish to volunteer, they need help in hanging posters, sorting clothes, delivering food to homeland, and any type



of entertainers, and help with clean up. Check the website or facebook page for more information. www.christmasforeveryone.com

"I am now accepting donations at my home for Christmas for Everyone. I will make weekly or even daily trips to the event center to make your donating even easier. Feel free to drop off any donation to me at 252 Mountaire Parkway Clayton. You can leave bags on my doorstep," says former Clayton Mayor and local Real Estate Broker Howard Gellar who has been involved with the organization for the past four years.

Gellar can be reached by phone at 925-323-4913. For those who wish to make a monetary donation, "I do have a secured mailbox on the side of the house by my front door. Just let me know you left something in that locked mailbox so I look for it," he states. "I want to thank those that have donated in the past to this great cause and thank those of you that will make donations this year."

If you have the time, get involved. It will make this Christmas one that you will not forget.

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Goodbye Mr. Christmas

Has a Concord tradition ended? Part of what we do during the holidays is load the car and drive through neighborhoods looking at extraordinary holiday lighting. One house on Olive Drive in Concord will no longer be admired; the house of Bruce Mertz.

Bruce Mertz, the Concord man known around Contra Costa County as 'Mr. Christmas', passed away in October. He was 87. Mertz owned the home on Olive Dr. in Concord, and for 36-years during Christmas, he decorated his home with thousands of lights and custom-made characters. More than just an extravagantly decorated lighted home, Mertz's enthusiasm was so infectious, filmmaker Nick Palmer produced a 15-minute documentary about him in 2014.

"Bruce was such a special guy. His generosity was certainly no secret to anyone who came by his house at Christmastime over the years. But while making our movie, I got the opportunity to see some of the quieter, less public ways he shared that generosity with his friends and family. Whether it was covering the medical bills when one of his friends needed surgery, or covering breakfast when another friend was out of work, Bruce's kindness went well beyond his Christmas lights. I feel very lucky to have gotten to know him, and I'm so glad he was able to share so much joy with us over the years. He will certainly be missed." Palmer told Claycord.

Across the country various cities have a Mr. Christmas, so we don't know who will carry that torch for Concord or Mt. Diablo Valley next. In the meantime, Alex Dou-



rov of Livermore publishes the website CaliforniaChristmaslights.com. (Formerly Lightsofthevalley.com.). Dourov's site boasts to be the largest and most accurate and comprehensive collection of the best and brightest light and yard displays from all of California.

Dourov states, "When my family moved to Livermore in 1992, we relied on newspaper listings to find local homes decorated with Christmas lights. The

local newspaper was helpful but many times we would get lost or stumble on a "stinker". So, I created a searchable database of confirmed and verified Christmas light displays so that everyone could avoid disappointing wild goose chases based on bad information." LightsOfTheValley.com was published on

December 11, 1999. Due to expansion, it's now called CaliforniaChristmasLights.com.

There you can find the best light display in virtually any city in California.

"What originally started out as a 'fun thing to do' project became more spiritual. I received

hundreds of emails telling me how valuable the site was to them. What really touched my heart were emails from people who told me it was especially meaningful to the people that are unable to get out and enjoy the lights, they can just enjoy them at home.

"I have truly enjoyed myself

these past nine Christmas seasons by putting together this site. I was overwhelmed



at the kind comments that I have received from many of you telling me how much this site has helped you, or how it even helps 'shut-ins' be able to get a virtual tour of the Bay Area's best Christmas light displays."

We will all miss Mr. Mertz and his fantastic Christmas lit home. Who knows if there will be another Mr. Christmas, but Alex Dourov and his website could help us find one.



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Inmates at Santa's Workshop Build Toys for Children's Wish List

For the 26th straight year, many representatives from Contra Costa County non-profit agencies were on hand for the annual Marsh Creek Detention Facility's Toy Show to fulfill their at-risk children's Christmas wish lists. The representatives were able to choose from numerous newly handcrafted toys and bicycles refurbished by the facility's inmates.

A dedicated group of Marsh Creek Detention Facility inmates have been working on this project for the past year. They have been extremely busy fixing up used bikes to look and ride like brand new, and crafting colorful and beautiful wooden toys, such as, motorcycle rocking chairs, spinning carousels, cars, doll houses, baby cradles, toy tractors, train sets, and more. All the toy makers and/or bike mechanics are students in the Contra Costa Adult School, an accredited school directed by the Contra Costa County Office of Education (CCCOE), located within the jail facility.

The attendees were absolutely awestruck when walking into the Detention Center's wood shop, which had been



turned into an elaborate, colorful Santa's Workshop. Beautiful bicycles and toys were on display among Holiday decorations all coordinated by Contra Costa County Office of Education (CCCOE) teacher Paul Turner and with the help of some of his students.

This year, these organizations were able to choose from more than 1,500 handcrafted toys and 90 bicycles refurbished by inmates from the facility. These gifts will then be given to the children who are being served by these agencies during the upcoming holidays.

Both Superintendent Sakata and Sheriff Livingston commended the extremely successful partnership utilizing CCCOE's accredited shop classes to be taught in a Contra Costa County Jail. "We are so fortunate to have such a wonderful agency collaboration that creates such value to our county," said Superintendent Sakata. "With this project, these adult students will certainly bring a brighter Holiday Season to many children



Continues on page 19

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Jennifer Stojanovich

Realtor, Better Homes Realty

Should You List in Winter?

The nights are getting longer, temperatures are dropping, and the holidays are approaching. That means you should wait to list your home for sale until next year, right? That isn't necessarily true. While spring and summer tend to be the hottest seasons in the real estate market, there are arguments to be made in favor of selling in winter.

Buyers are motivated. It's common for people to relocate for work at the beginning of the year. That means those folks will be looking for a place to live. Since they will need to be in a new location by a specific date, they are more motivated to buy a home. In winter, you'll get fewer people who are "just looking" and more who are serious about a home purchase.

Buyers have more free time. Chances are the buyers who are looking at homes in winter will also have more free time to browse. Since many people take time off over the holidays, they'll often use it to do their home searching.

Less competition. Some home sellers aren't locked into a timeframe. They will be more likely to postpone their listing until the holidays are over and schedules are less hectic. With fewer homes on the market, there's less competition for those motivated buyers you'll see in winter.

Your home will look cozy. It's easier in the colder months to make your home look cozy and inviting to potential buyers.

Build a fire in the fireplace and light some candles around your home. There's nothing quite like the soft glow of the fire to make a home feel and look warm and appealing.

Curb appeal is easier. You won't need to go out of your way to plant flowers and create curb appeal. Just make sure the driveway and walkways are clear and clean the yard of fallen leaves and other debris. Consider hanging some twinkling lights and a simple, tasteful wreath on your front door.

Timing is better. If you are a seller who will also need to be buying a home in a new location, the timing can work in your favor. By listing and selling in the winter, you are free to begin your home search in early spring without the stress of trying to sell at the same time.

More agent attention. Winter is generally a slower time, even in an active market. Chances are your real estate agent won't be as busy as they are at other times of the year. This means less stress for them and more time to focus on finding you the right buyers. The same holds true for mortgage brokers and anyone else involved in the closing process.

In many circumstances, listing your house in the winter or during the holiday season can be the perfect time to sell!

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From Auschwitz to America

Escape from Auschwitz, Part 3 of 3

Bernie Rosner 85, retired lives in San Ramon. He is a holocaust survivor, one of the very few remaining in the country. This is the third installment of how he was captured, survived through two concentration camps, escaped, and eventually came to America. You can find the first two installments on our website, diablogazette.com.

To recap, Rosner was rounded up in Hungary and sent to Auschwitz concentration camp along with his Father, mother, and younger brother. He never saw them again, presumed killed the first day they arrived at camp. He was only 12. The Germans felt he might just be strong enough to provide labor and spared him. If he couldn't work, he would be put to death. After finding him being kept with a group of sick, injured, non-working prisoners, he knew his days were numbered and attempted an escape by sneaking off with a group of workers. He was caught, but fortunately, the guard let him go join the workers not knowing that he had been separated from them by the authorities. That group was transported to Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria, where he was beaten, lived in unconscionable unsanitary conditions, and nearly starved. But just before the end, the Allies had won and liberated the cadaver-like prisoners. At the age of 13, Rosner was freed and weighed 52 pounds.

After the war, in 1945, Rosner was

staying in a refugee camp in Modena, Italy, alone, ragged, and hungry. Thousands of kids like him were hustling for an extra piece of bread, gum, or candy if they were lucky. The only source for such treats was from the American soldiers stationed near the camp. "Naturally, I spent my time hanging out near where the Americans were billeted. Then one day a Jeep drove up with four GI's and their duffle bags. I immediately ran up to the Jeep, for the nearest soldier and with sign language offered my services as a porter." The soldier smiled and pointed to one of the bags which was almost as big as Rosner.

Rosner delivered the bag to his room, and the soldier rewarded him with a chocolate bar. They tried to make conversation but discovered that the only means of communicating was through broken German. Rosner recalls, "I told him about my situation, and he was visibly moved. For the next five days he spent all his free time with me, taking me to the movies and restaurants. These were treats I have never had before."

After five days, the soldier was transferred, but they continued to correspond with each other. When the soldier returned to the states, and was demobilized, he wrote Rosner a letter offering to bring him to America and become part of his family.

"What makes this even more remark-

able is that the GI who befriended me happened to be Charles Merrill Jr., the son of the founder of the Merrill Lynch financial empire.

Rosner went on to prep school, and eventually earned his law degree and moved to the Bay Area. Here, his wife met a friend whose husband's father was a Nazi, Frederic Tubach, (Fritz). Fritz grew up in Germany under Hitler. The two men, became friends and wrote a book, "An Uncommon Friendship" which found strong success here and internationally.

"My intention was not to send a moral message. My intention was simply to tell my story because I realized I had some obligations to discharge. First and foremost was an obligation to my children."

Rosner kept the pain and emotion out of whatever he told them to protect them, so he thought. "I realize now that this was not as much to protect them as it was to protect myself." Rosner also felt he owed a debt to his family he lost.

Millions of people died during the holocaust, and that story has been told many times. But where Rosner's story differs is the bond he developed with Fritz. These two individuals from starkly different beginnings were able to surmount the walls that could have divided them; and looked beyond the



Bernie Rosner and Frederic(Fritz) Tubach, an uncommon friendship. Photo Chris Stewart

conventional mindset that could easily have made them hate, if not distrust each other for life. Instead, they formed a friendship. They ignored the labels and joined forces to tell what is a warm and inspiring story relevant to today.

Clayton's Ingrid Hempell: From East Germany to Clayton

Ingrid Hempell is retired and living in Clayton. She grew up in Postwar East Germany in East Berlin under the Russian rule. She was 3 living in Berlin when the allies bombed it and Germany surrendered. This is part two of 3 articles of her life experiences growing up under communist rule before settling in America -- for which she is forever grateful. Part 1, "Bombed, Occupied, and Isolated" can be read online at www.diablogazette.com.

In 1945, after Germany had fallen, Berlin was a wasteland, and Germany and Berlin had been divided into four occupation zones, among the Americans, the British, the French, and the Russians. Ingrid lived in the zone awarded to Russian. Russia installed a communist political and economic system. Banks farms, industries were seized and re-organized. Natural resources, equipment, scientists were taken back to Russia. There was no hope of things getting better anytime soon.

Due to all the hardships, thousands

of East Germans fled to the West every week, approximately 3.5 million people. After the 1953 uprising that was crushed with great and tragic casualties, all borders between East and West Germany were closed and secured by barbed wire fences, watch towers, and armed militia. The only window remaining open was in Berlin because it was still under authority of the four Allies.

In 1957, Ingrid worked at the Weissensee Children's Hospital hoping to one day become a nurse. In the first year, she witnessed a baby dying. It affected her deeply and reminded her of stories she heard from her Mothers friend who had survived in a concentration camp. Ingrid would overhear stories of how the guards would brutally kill children. Such conversations were difficult to keep private when everyone lived in just one room.

In 1960 Ingrid's mother defected with her two half-brothers to West Germany and found a refugee shelter. She had stayed behind in the apartment and continued her schooling and hospital work.

Then the US summit with Nikita Khrushchev in Paris collapsed in May of 1960, after the Russian shot down an American spy plane. The Russian enacted Martial Law in East Berlin and placed troops everywhere. For fear that the Russians may close the Berlin border permanently, her mother plead for Ingrid to defect. "I liked my independence, my apartment, my work, my friends. I was naïve. I thought the Americans would never allow me to do that." Fortunately, her

mother convinced her to leave.

Leaving East Berlin was considered a crime deserving of jail or even death.

In one infamous case, a young man named Peter Fechter attempted to climb over the Berlin wall. Border guards shot him without warning. He fell back to the Eastern side, agonizing in pain, crying for help, but no one would. He bled to death. In all, approximately 240 people died trying to cross the wall to reach freedom.

Before the wall was built, you could cross the border by foot, train, or subway. But border guards were fierce. You had to leave all your belongings behind.

Ingrid planned her escape but on May 1960, her attempt was thwarted. Her neighbor's brother was a young East German soldier. He had discovered her plans and felt it was his duty to the Vaterland to stop her. He pulled his gun to take her to the police station. This meant she would never see her family again. She begged and cried, and fabricated a story of a fiancé in West Berlin. She convinced him that he would be ruining her life. Fortunately, the very young soldier let her go. And at 17, Ingrid found her mother in a West Berlin refugee camp and was free again at the age of 17.

From then, she finished nursing school in Bavaria in May 1963 and in June 1965 she immigrated to America to New York

with no friends, no money, no English, (speaking Russian was no help).

"I don't know if I was too courageous



or just ignorant, or both. But I was 23 years old and wanted a new life. And this country was very, very good to me. God Bless America!"

In time, Ingrid met her husband, operated restaurants, and eventually moved to Clayton where she and her husband owned and operated La Cocotte, a lovely French restaurant until she retired. Clayton adores her.

Photos courtesy: WikiCommons



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parentfootprints

by Dr. Dan Peters www.DrDanPeters.com

5 Steps to Managing Stress During the Holidays

It's most wonderful time of the year, right? Well, maybe it is and maybe it isn't, and maybe it is both. For many, the holidays signify stress, unrealistic expectations, memories (good and bad ones), commercialism, and thinking others are happier / more organized / better bakers than you and your family.

As a psychologist and the founder of a parenting community focused on making the world better one parent and one child at a time, I'm here to tell you the truth today: the holidays are stressful for most people. But no one wants to admit this! Every week I am on Facebook Live video answering questions from parents and caregivers and our most recent session inspired this post. I created this list of 5 tips to help you get through this holiday season with minimal (or at least a lot less!) stress so that you can focus on the good:

1. Identify what stresses you out. We humans are predictable animals. The adage "The best predictor of future behavior is past behavior" usually rings true. Think about what stresses you out every year. Awareness of our triggers is key to managing our emotions and behaviors.

2. Make an action plan to reduce your stress. Here's another true adage. "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different outcome." Once you have identified the things that trigger your stress, plan to do something different this year. Maybe you start shopping earlier or online. Perhaps you ask your spouse or other family members to help more. Maybe you don't go to every holiday party. Whatever it is, realize you don't have to do everything this year. Do something different and get a different outcome! Genius!

3. Identify a goal you want for yourself and your family. Think about what is most important to you for this holiday

season. Is it being together? Is it not repeating the last miserable holiday season? Is it about staying home or going away? Is it about giving? Buying less stuff? Letting your kids be instead of making them do stuff begrudgingly? Your goals are your own. Pick one or a few that are important to you and engage in actions that are aligned with your goal.

4. Don't believe the hype. It's fun to receive holiday cards from friends and see how the kids are growing and what everyone is up to, right? It is until you start comparing yourself and your family to all those beautiful families visiting all those beautiful places and doing amazing things. We all show the best version of ourselves to others on social media and on our holiday cards. No one is perfect so don't compare yourself to perfection. Don't get carried away on Facebook. Instead, stay connected to your friends in real life. Most of all, stay uber-focused on your family, what you have, and how you can be grateful for it.

5. Be kind to yourself. People, please, please take it easy on yourself. Many of us have crazy high expectations for ourselves and for the holiday experience. Be kind to yourself and do not take yourself so seriously. Laugh at yourself if something doesn't turn out right. Know that what you remember about the holidays is not necessarily what your kids will remember. Just do the best you can and try to let the rest unfold. Relish the nice moments and let the stressful and annoying ones go.

The holidays are an opportunity to pause and be grateful for family and to reflect on the past year. By following these steps, you will build on what is most important to you, keep things in perspective, and be good to yourself and your family.

Wishing you all a healthy and happy holiday season!

Holiday Jazz Concert to Benefit Fire Victims

Mark your calendar for an extraordinary night of jazz at the Jazz Room in Danville on Sunday, December 10. This will be a benefit concert to help victims of the recent Northern California fires. Hosted by Eve Marie Shahoian, Founding/Artistic Director and Founder of The Orinda Jazz Festival Carol Alban.

Singers Roberta Donnay and Kay Kostopoulos of Black Olive Jazz, and the dynamic Miss Faye Carol with Joe Warner headline the evening.

Now living in the Bay Area, award winning singer-composer-producer Roberta Donnay's music and voice can be heard on film, TV, and all over YouTube. She just completed her 9th CD, her tribute to Louis Armstrong which is being released in Spring 2018 with her group, the Prohibition Mob Band. The album's title is: "My Heart Belongs to Satchmo". Her previous record "Bath-tub Gin" made the list of Best Albums in DownBeat Magazine.

Donnay wrote the song "One World" which became a theme for the United Nations 50th Anniversary and has been performed the world over, at world peace events on five continents, it also became the theme for South Africa's World Aids Day.

Donnay's interest in jazz music was inspired from the radio, performing



with Dick Oxtot's Golden Age Jazz Band, recording with legendary jazz producer Orrin Keepnews, researching lost and obscure material from the Jazz Age, and touring 10 1/2 years as singer/percussionist with Dan Hicks & The Hot Licks.

As a performer, Donnay has opened for or performed with, George Benson, Bob Dorough, David Grisman, Bela Fleck, Bruce Foreman, John Hammond, Herbie Hancock, Dr. John, Christian McBride,

Maria Muldaur, Lewis Nash, Joe Sample, David Sanborn, Leon Russell, Bonnie Raitt, Rickie Lee Jones, Lee Ritenour, Booker T., Tuck & Patti and more.

Kay Kostopoulos is equally skilled on ballads and uptempo material receiving accolades throughout the music industry. "Her beautiful voice with wide range makes a strong case for her being considered a major jazz singer," - Jazz critic Scott Yanow.

"Quintessential San Francisco Jazz," - Wayne Saroyan of Jazz West. "Wonderful lyrical imagery that transports the listener to another environment... velvety vocal work," - Billboard. "Kay is a singer with good technique and beautiful tone," - William Sostre, Jazz Times. "Her love of the text, subtlety of word, and appreciation for the audience promise a performance as deep as those big, dark eyes starring right back



computercorner

by William Claney, Computers USA

Tech in English

Santa's Warranty

Holiday shopping can be nightmarish if you are in hurry, so it's a good thing the shopping madness starts early. The rush to buy that special gift for your special person can be stressful, but there are some important guidelines especially when picking out computer technology gifts.

The very first thing to keep in mind is not to rush when picking out a computer or peripheral (components), take your time and learn to understand what is actually inside the box. I know some of you are saying there isn't any difference - a computer is a computer, right? Well, no, computers are so specialized these days a few tips may help you decide.

One should know who stands behind the warranty, if they are big or small, have a history of standing behind the things they sell, or do they just fake it? Some of the largest companies are terrific about the things they sell, others not so much.

Consider that you have just spent the last two days setting up your computer, and the darn thing simply quits working. The time you set aside to complete your setup task has now vanished and there isn't time to do it over.

Now, consider you must return the product. Where do you go to make it right? Do you ship it back to the manufacturer or take it back to the store for a replacement?

Shipping the components back to the maker can be challenging especially with Chinese manufacturers. First, they want it in the "original" box, then they want a return item authorization (RMA), then you pay the freight to them, in China. I don't think most of you want to do this.

The solution is to take it back to the store you purchased it from, this is the easiest way to get a replacement, but now you are stuck with starting over. Maybe that's okay, but if it's not, buy your computer or computer component from a store that supports the product. That means they have the technical know how to fix, spot setup errors, replace, or warranty it for you.

Believe me, it is worth the few extra dollars to get support. Beware, most third-party computer warranties you purchase along with your computer are nearly worthless and won't perform as the sales person promised.

So, this holiday season, purchase from a company or store that directly supports your computer, one that you can trust. Ask the sales person to introduce you to the person who handles such problems; it only takes a minute to determine the sincerity of the warranty.

My best wishes to you and yours this holiday, and a happy New Year. Oh, by the way, Santa says a set of Bose desktop speakers are the best toys the elves have ever made.



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at you," -Palo Alto Weekly. "With a sizzling snap of her fingers, Kay Kostopoulos turned up the heat... brought exotic energy to Duke Ellington's 'Caravan' and Johnny Mercer's 'Out of This World'" - Stanford Magazine.

Miss Carol has appeared at the Montreal Jazz Fest, Monterey Blues Fest, DePaul University, Town Hall, UCLA Jazz Fest, Lorraine Hansberry Theater, Yerba Buena, Napa Valley Opera House, Bay View Opera House, Denver Museum of Natural History, San Francisco Blues Festival, the San Francisco Jazz Festival, Berkeley Jazz Festival, and the San Jose Jazz Festival. She has also toured throughout Europe and Canada, Italy, Germany, Midwest w/ Johnny Talbot, Marvin Gaye's West Coast Tour.

Faye Carol has recorded with the late drummer Billy Higgins and bassist Marcus Shelby "The Flow on World Stage Records" and performed

with Marvin Gaye, Ray Charles, Albert King, Charles Brown, Bobby Hutcherson, Ben Vereen, Steve Turre, Billy Higgins and Pharoah Sanders.

Additional artists slated for the evening include CHELLE and friends, and the dynamic Faye Carol with Joe Warner on keys, Pianist Sam Cady, Bassist Marc Levine, Saxophonist Noel Jewkes, and on Trumpet, Dave Bendigkeit.

Auction prizes include tickets for the 2018 Jazz Room Series, tickets for Feinstein's SF to see Eve Marie Shahoian with Mads Tolling and John R Burr on January 4, selected wines from VINE, fine dining restaurant vouchers and much more.

For more information and tickets call 925-314-3400. www.villagetheatreshows.com. Students \$15, Adults \$25, Door \$30. Village Theatres, 233 Front Street in Danville.

Your **NOVEMBER 2017** Guide to the Bay Area

The *Diablo* **Gazette's**

ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

FUNDRAISERS

- Pancake Breakfast - Supporting Veterans of foreign Wars - 2nd and 4th Sundays includes eggs, pancakes, sausage, beverage. 8 - 11 a.m. Willow Pass Road, Concord \$5, \$3 Children under 12. <http://www.vfwpost1525.org>
- November 23-3rd-Annual Concord Turkey Trot at Todos Santos Park in downtown Concord on Thanksgiving morning. The proceeds of this 5K/10K Run & Walk will benefit Compassion Outreach. Registration is limited to the first 1500 participants. Each participant will receive a race t-shirt and a custom designed Turkey Trot finishers medal. FREE Kids Dash around Todos Santos Park for kids ages 10 and under at 7:45am (just before the 5K/10K starts). Presented by Calvary Temple Church.
- December 10-Fire Benefit Holiday Concert and auction. Join Bay Area musicians Roberta Donnay, Kay Kostopoulos of Black Olive Jazz, and Faye Carol at the Jazz Room at the Village Theatre in Danville among many other talented jazz artist. 1-3PM at the Jazz Room, Village Theatres, 233 Front st. Danville. For tickets and more information go to www.village-theatreshows.com or call 925-314-3400.

OUTDOORS

Concord: Todos Santos Park OFF the Grid Mondays. offering cuisine from around the world from 5 to 9 p.m. Full lineup available

at <http://offthegridsf.com>.

Farmers' Markets

- Concord Tuesdays, 10am to 2pm, year-round, rain or shine, Thursdays 4P-8P, Todos Santos Plaza.
- Martinez Sundays, 10am to 2pm, year-round, Main St. and Estudillo.
- Walnut Creek Diablo Valley Farmers Market Saturday 9a.m. - 1 p.m. Shadelands Business Park, N. Wigett Lane and Mitchell Dr. Also, from Contra Costa Certified Farmers Market - North Locust St between Giamona and Lacassie St. Sundays 9 am - 1 pm, Year Round, (925) 431-8361 <http://www.cccfm.org>
- Holiday Ice Skating DC Solar downtown Holiday Ice Rink downtown Martinez open 7 days weather permitting. Corner of Ferry St. and marina Vista Ave. Open Now thorough January 7. www.downtownholidayice.com
- Walnut Creek on Ice now through January 15. 1365 Civic Drive. Prices \$12-\$15.
- November 30-Walnut Creek's Holiday Parade of Lights, Open House & Tree Lighting. 6:00-9:00 PM. Music and festivity will fill Broadway Plaza with the return of a holiday tradition - The Parade of Lights, Retailer Open House & Community Tree Lighting! The Retailer Open House begins at 6pm. A Special Holiday Performance begins at 6:30pm. The Parade of Lights begins at 7pm. Plus, following the parade

down Broadway Plaza Street, Santa Claus will light the center's promenade Christmas Tree!

- December 2-Concord's official Tree-Lighting, Carriage Rides, Mayor's Sing-Along and Santa's Grand Arrival. Santa's Arrival: 4 p.m. On-stage entertainment: 5 p.m. School choirs and community entertainment on stage with traditional tree-lighting and holiday sing-along. Todos Santos Plaza is a NO SMOKING and NO DOGS Allowed Environment

FAMILY EVENTS

- Galindo Home and Gardens Tours - 1721 Amador Avenue, Concord. Visit the fully-restored 1856 Victorian home of Francisco Galindo, one of Concord's founding fathers, and his wife, Maria Dolores Manuela (Pacheco) Galindo. This includes the 1875 addition by Francisco Galindo's son, Juan "John" Galindo. No reservations needed. Fee \$5 for adults and children over 12. One of only a few Victorian ranch houses in the country. By 1880, the structure was reconfigured in the Queen Anne style, with bay windows, sweeping steps, and a broad porch. Visitors can tour the 10 rooms and see 15 original pieces of Eastlake furniture. For more information go to concord-historical.org.
- November 2017-January 2018-13th annual Ice skating in Civic Park brought to you by the Walnut Creek Chamber of Commerce & Visitors. Grab a pair of skates and join in the

seasonal fun at this outdoor rink. 1375 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek

- November 17-26-Holiday Model Train Show - The Walnut Creek Model Railroad Society (WCMRS) operates the Diablo Valley Lines (DVL) model railroad, one of the most mountainous and one of the largest exclusively HO scale model railroads in the United States. This model railroad features standard gauge, narrow gauge, and interurban (overhead electric) freight and trolley lines. Nov. 17 8P-10P; Nov. 18 11A-6P; Nov 19 11A-6P; Nov 24 2P-10P; Nov 25 11A-6P; & Nov. 26 11A-6p (weekend show), Oat Buena vista in Walnut Creek.
- November 25-26-The Christmas in San Francisco Crystal Fair. County Fair Bldg. (formerly the Hall of Flowers), Golden Gate Park 9th Ave. & Lincoln Way, San Francisco. Website: www.crystalfair.com Hours: Saturday 10-6; Sunday 10-4 Admission \$12.00 (good for 2 days - each in party). Children 12 and under free.
- December 7-Pearl Harbor Ceremony at the California State University East Bay Campus Oak Room. Begins at 3:45 PM. and will commemorate the 76th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. The annual Mount Diablo Beacon Lighting will be at 5:00 PM.
- December 9-Resources for Writers: Holiday Seated Luncheon with three of our own: Michael Banister, Joanna Kraus and Kymberlie Ingalls

CALENDAR continues on page 9

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with Tilly Turner Views of the Valley



The Mt. Diablo High School held their 16th annual Hall of Fame Induction ceremony and there to share stories and see old friends were from left to right; George Armstrong, retired teacher, Jim McLaughlin, retired 44-year custodian at Diablo, and Steve Bordi, teacher/Coach and Hall of Fame past inductee. photo by Tillie Turner



Gail Van Hassle demonstrates the donated cakes for the Dessert Dash at the 3rd Annual Dinner/Auction held to raise money for the Concord Historical Society. "Hail to the Veterans" was the theme this year and many guests were introduced and applauded for their service to our country. photo by Tilly Turner



Concord Chief of Police, Guy Swanger, addresses the Todos Santos Business Association at their monthly meeting. Answering questions and reporting on homelessness, crime and growth, he informed to group of what's happening in the City and especially around the Plaza. photo by Tillie Turner



There was great turn out at the Holiday Boutique Craft fair at the Pleasant Hill Senior Center. photo by Micah



Young performers from the Walnut Creek Performance Academy entertained during the opening of Walnut Creek On Ice at 1365 Civic Dr. photo by Micah

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The Vintage Harmonic Trio to Perform at Oakhurst Country Club

The Clayton Valley Woman's Club will hold their annual Holiday luncheon at Oakhurst Country Club, Tuesday, December 12. This gathering will begin at 11:30am and lunch will be served at 12:00. The Vintage Trio will perform at 1:15pm.

The Vintage Trio are members of the St. Bonaventure Catholic Community as well as active members in the music community teaching lessons and performing in local choirs and theater groups. Their unique style can accommodate most any event, especially during the Holidays. They have a great affinity for Christmas music, having released two Christmas albums.

If you would like to attend, please contact Connie Weimar at 925-689-5415. The reservation deadline is Saturday, December 2nd. The cost is \$33.00.



CVWC is a local non-profit organization of women serving our local communities. They have been active since 1973 giving both time and monies to many local organizations plus scholarships.

Oakhurst Country Club, is located at 1001 Peacock Creek Drive in Clayton.

CALENDAR continued from page 7

Special. Sign-in from 11:00 - 12pm. Members display and sell books until our Festive Seated Luncheon 12-12:45pm. Speakers 1 - 2pm at Zio Fraedo's Restaurant: 611 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill. \$25 members, \$30 guests.

Reservation deadline: noon, Wednesday December 6th. To reserve a spot, go to the CWC Mt. Diablo website at <https://cwcmt-diablo.org/current-cwc-mt-diablo-meeting/> or email: reservations@cwcmt-diablo.org. Website: <http://cwcmt-diablo.org>

• Jelly Belly Events-November 25

18th Annual Tree Lighting 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Watch the magic as we light our 32-foot Christmas tree. Afterwards, enjoy the character parade featuring Mr. Jelly Belly and his friends. The night will end with a chance to take photos with Santa and enjoy live entertainment. Santa photos will be available after the tree lighting ceremony until 8 p.m.

• December 9 -Brunch with Santa Seating begins at 9:45 a.m. Brunch 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Get in the holiday spirit with a tasty brunch with Mr. Jelly Belly and Santa Claus. Beginning at 10 a.m. there will be food and other activities for the entire family to enjoy. This event is by reservation only. Spaces are limited. To purchase tickets visit www.jellybelly.com.

• December 9 -24 -Photos with Santa. The Jolly Big Man will be in residence throughout the month of December, so come visit him before he heads back to the North Pole. Check www.JellyBelly.com for hours. A professional photographer will be on site, but feel free to bring your own camera to capture your holiday season memories. Complimentary candy factory tours daily, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. at One Jelly Belly Lane, Fairfield. For more information (800) 953-5592 or visit www.JellyBelly.com.

• December 19-Eighth Annual Hanukkah Wonderland Celebration 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Gather around our giant Jelly Belly jelly bean-filled Menorah followed by live entertainment, food and activities. For more information on this event, visit the Vacaville Chabad event page at www.jewishsolano.com.

VISUAL ARTS/THEATRE/MUSIC

• November 24- 26-THE NUTCRACKER presented by Artistic Directors Richard Cammack and Emily Borthwick and Contra Costa Ballet. Friday, November

24 - 4:30 and 7:30pm. Saturday, November 25 - 2:00, 4:30 and 7:30pm. Sunday, November 26 - 2:00 and 4:30pm at Leshner Center for the Arts Hofmann Theatre 1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek. Tickets, Visit the Leshner Center Box Office, call (925) 943-SHOW (7469), or purchase online at <https://lesherartscenter.showare.com/eventperformances.asp?ev=874>. Price \$28 - \$38

• December 1-Celebration of Tom Petty Legacy 7:00-10:00PM. featuring The Big Jangle, a Tom Petty tribute band. No host bar. Must be 21. Presale \$25, \$30 at door. A portion of proceeds go to Sonoma County Resilience fund. 233 Gregory Lane Pleasant Hill. Presented by Pleasant Hill Parks and Recreation and Park District.

• December 1-Holiday Gift and Craft Fair, Concord Senior Center from 9:30A - 2:30P. 2727 Parkside Circle in Concord.

• December 1-3-Diablo Choral Artists presents "Carols and Lullabies" featuring "Christmas in the Southwest" by Conrad Susa, with harp, guitar, and marimba, three settings of "Ave Maria" (by Verdi, Victoria, and Biebl), Ola Gjeilo's "A Spotless Rose", Eric Whitacre's "Alleluia", and more. The evening will also include a carol sing-along. Mark Tuning, Music Director, John R. Walko, Accompanist. Friday, December 1, 8:00pm, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Pleasant Hill. Sunday, December 3, 4:00pm, Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church, Walnut Creek. There will be a reception after the Sunday concert and a drawing for gift basket at each concert. Details and ticket purchase on website: www.dcachorus.org. General Admission: adults \$25, seniors 60+ \$15, students \$5, children 5-12 free. Season Tickets available.

• December 9-The "Oakland East Bay Gay Men's Chorus" will be presenting a fine program called "A Merry Little Concert," at 7:00 pm. to coincide with our forthcoming album "A Merry Little Album." Clayton Valley Presbyterian Church concert Series. 1578 Kirker Pass Rd. Clayton. For more information: at 7:00 PM. www.oebgmc.org.

• December 12-The Vintage Trio The Clayton Valley Woman's Club will hold their annual Holiday luncheon at Oakhurst Country Club. This gathering will begin at 11:30am and lunch will be served at 12:00. The Vintage Trio will perform at 1:15pm. Contact Connie Weimar at 925-689-5415. The reservation deadline is Saturday, December 2nd. The cost is \$33.00.

• December 17-Diablo Choral Artists presents singing with the Diablo Symphony Chorus for "A Christmas Fantasia", 3:30pm, \$35. Details and tickets at 925-943-7469.

For a complete list of local clubs and meeting dates, go to diablogazette.com.

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Annual Mt. Diablo Beacon Lighting for Pearl Harbor Day Ceremony

The public is invited to attend the Pearl Harbor Ceremony Thursday, December 7, at the California State University East Bay Campus Oak Room. The ceremony begins at 3:45 PM. and will commemorate the 76th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. The annual Mount Diablo Beacon Lighting will be at 5:00 PM.

"The Beacon lighting is a tribute to those individuals that lost their lives at Pearl Harbor", says Earl "Chuck" Kohler, one of the few remaining survivors in Contra Costa County. However, the ceremony is also an opportunity to honor the survivors. When those who experienced Pearl Harbor are gone, the history is lost with them.

The Sons & Daughters of Pearl Harbor Survivors, Chapter 5 co-sponsor this ceremony with Save Mount Diablo to recognize the 54th Annual National Pearl Harbor

Remembrance Day.

Every year since 1964, the Pearl Harbor survivors and their families have memorialized Pearl Harbor Day by relighting the historic Beacon atop Mount Diablo's summit. The "Eye of Diablo" as it's known, was extinguished in 1941 just after the attack on Pearl Harbor. In 1964, Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz, Commander in Chief of Pacific Forces during World War II, relit the Beacon the first time and suggested it be lit every December 7th to honor those who served and sacrificed.

The Beacon is lit at sunset and shines all night on this single evening each year. The Beacon now shines brighter than ever since it underwent an extensive restoration process in 2013.



Mount Diablo Beacon Light



Delight the Taste Buds with Chinese Broccoli

Need something to please the taste buds and impress your guests this holiday season? Need a pungent, deliciously bitter addition to your vegetable dish repertoire? Then this leafy green will fit the bill.

It is unknown where Chinese broccoli (gai lan) was first cultivated, but it is used in many Asian countries, particularly in Vietnam

and China. A wild form of gai lan was also found growing in California in the 1920's where Italians recognized it from their homeland. They began breeding the plant in the 1930's. The Hmong people who settled in the Central Valley are now among those who grow it. Its popularity has increased as people discover its lovely, slightly bitter, mustardy flavor and versatility.

Chinese broccoli has 6- to 9-inch stalks with small bunches of tiny yellow or white buds that look somewhat like small broccoli florets. The leaves are slightly bitter, but tasty, and the whole stalk can be cooked, as opposed to the broccoli we are familiar with, where most people remove the thick stem.

It can be cooked in a variety of ways, including stir-frying, steaming and



braising. It can also be used in soups or salads.

Select gai lan that is fresh-looking with no mold or yellowing to the leaves.

It can be wrapped loosely in a plastic bag and refrigerated for up to 4 or 5 days.

Look for Chinese broccoli at most of your local farmers' market's Asian produce booths. Farmers to visit include, but not limited to, FT Fresh Produce of Fresno with a wide assortment of fresh greens, vegetables, and herbs, or Her Farm, also out of Fresno, with lovely Asian specialty produce. Many of their products cannot be found anywhere else except your local farmers' market, so stop by and try something new!

Garlic Chinese Broccoli

1/2 pound Chinese broccoli, ends trimmed

2 cloves garlic, minced

1/2 tablespoon sugar

2 teaspoons rice wine or other cooking wine

Dash of salt

Heat oil in skillet over high heat. Add garlic, stir until fragrant. Add Chinese broccoli, wine, sugar and salt. Mix well and cook until stems are slightly soft.

Recipe: PCFMA Staff

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Gingersnaps in a Snap

I love gingersnaps! They make your house smell like Christmas and they practically melt in your mouth as a great cookie should always do.

I like my cookies soft in the inside and a little crunch when you bite into them.

This recipe took me eight tries to figure out the perfect combination of ingredients, but I finally conquered the GINGERSNAP. I'm munching on them as I type this up. (I may possibly be listening to Christmas music also, but don't tell anyone).

Mrs. Butterbank's Gingersnaps

1 1/2 cups butter, softened
2 cups sugar
2 large eggs
1/2 cup dark molasses

4 cups All Purpose flour
2 TBSP ground ginger
4 tsp baking soda
2 tsp cinnamon
1/2 tsp ground cloves
1/4 tsp nutmeg
1 tsp salt

1 package sugared ginger, chopped into



small pieces. You can find it in the produce section and on the Asian food isle.

In your mixer bowl, beat the butter till creamy, add the sugar and mix well. Add the eggs and molasses until well blended.

In a separate mixing bowl, whisk all your dry ingredients together. Turn your mixer on low, slowly add the dry ingredients to the butter mixture. Mix until well incorporated, add the chopped candied ginger and mix again.

Using a medium size cookie scoop, scoop the dough and roll into a ball and roll the ball in coarse or raw sugar and place on your cookie sheet that has been lined with parchment paper.

Bake at 325 degrees for 10 minutes, just until the tops start to crackle a little. Remove from the oven to cool completely. Yummo! Trust me, your house will smell amazing.



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Additional musicians performing include: CHELLE and friends, Pianist Sam Cady, Bassist Marc Levine, Saxophonist Noel Jewkes, Guitarist James Freman and on Trumpet Dave Bendigkeit.

Several amazing items will be auctioned including:
 Tickets for the 2018 Jazz Room Series
 Tickets for Feinstein's SF to see Eve Mare Shahoian with Mads Tolling and John R Burr on Jan 4th @ 8pm
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 Facebook.com/TheJazzRoomDanville

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Master Sculptor Paula Slater for Bronze Don Pacheco Statue

Concord will be celebrating its 150th birthday in 2018 with plans that include commissioning a bronze statue of one of the city's founders, Don Salvio Pacheco. This larger-than-life-size statue will be prominently installed inside the Grant Street entrance of Todos Santos Plaza. The installation is targeted for unveiling during Concord's annual July 4th parade that travels around the plaza.

The Concord Sesquicentennial Committee, guided by Carol Longshore (Concord Historical Society) and Ron Leone (Concord City Council), is overseeing the planning and fundraising for this very special public art project.

The committee chose master sculptor Paula Slater from the respondents to a Call for Artists earlier this year. As a full-time professional sculptor for over thirty years, Slater is internationally recognized for her work creating bronze monuments. Two of Slater's sculptures were designated as State Landmark Monuments and she also had the honor of creating a large U.S. National Monument that stands at an air force base in Texas.

"After visiting the Concord Historical Society records archive, I borrowed a copy of History of Concord" to get more background information about Pacheco and the land he was granted, which became Concord in 1868. I found the book so fascinating," Slater said.

"I love to sculpt portraits of interesting people whose lives are inspiring. I especially love to sculpt historical portraits with detailed period clothing – so having this opportunity to sculpt Don Salvio Pacheco is right in my wheelhouse. My design for this project has Pacheco holding a scroll of the land grant he received in his left hand, while his right hand rests upon a map indicating the boundary of that land, which ultimately became Concord," Slater explains.

She continues, "I've learned so much about Pacheco's character, his immense generosity, his loyalty to family and friends, his trustworthiness and high



moral values. He donated the majority of his 18,000 acres of land to flood victims and many others in need and enjoyed opening his adobe home for celebratory events, such as Sunday Mass and Fiestas. He loved children, had great respect for education and founded a school. Pacheco also donated a park that he named Todos Santos (all saints). By all accounts, this very honorable and inspiring man should qualify as one of those saints - it will be my great honor and joy to sculpt his portrait!"

This project is funded in part by generous donations from corporate sponsors and civic organizations. Community residents and businesses can participate in this historical project by purchasing a brick (engraved with a custom message or names) that will be installed in the patio surrounding the statue. Visit www.ConcordHistorical.org for more details. The deadline to order a brick is 12/30/17.

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"I look forward to the Diablo Gazette at the beginning of every month, It's a good community paper. I love the stories. You have good writers." – Wayne C.



Justice League

After a successful Man of Steel, followed by a tepid Batman vs Superman—a generally dark and negative turn on the comic book alliance between the two giants—and then, most recently Suicide Squad and the successful Wonder Woman movie, Justice League was intended to cement the future of the DC superhero movies.

Upcoming stand-alone films include Aquaman, Flash, and The Batman (rumored to be sans Affleck), as well as Man of Steel 2 and Wonder Woman 2 (as soon as they can find a director not accused of sexual harassment).

With all the hype and mix of super-powers, the promise of a resurrected Kal-El, and a massive villain, how could this movie possibly be anything but a huge success. Right?

Without spoiling the plot, Batman, after realizing the loss of Superman (Henry Cavill), decides to gather other superheroes of the world to form an alliance against an impending super villain. The completed roster includes, Wonder Woman (Gal Gadot), Cyborg (Ray Fisher), Flash (Ezra Miller), Aquaman (Jason Momoa) and Bats himself (Ben Affleck). Why Green Lantern wasn't on the team, I don't know.

League maintains the dark, murky world of BvS, although enough humor has been added to "lighten" the mood, despite the mourning for Superman, and the chaos caused by Steppenwolf and his army.

More of an introduction to the new group rather than anything of major character depth, too much time is spent assembling the band than how they develop.

The young Flash steals most of the good scenes, good jokes and Ezra Miller's portrayal is boyishly charming along with his phobias and angst at his power. Lois Lane's (Amy Adams) mourning seems irrelevant to the latent knowledge of movie-goers that Supes will be back, especially given Henry Cavill's name cropping up first in the opening credits. This is not a spoiler—seriously, did anyone have a doubt? At the end of BvS we saw the dirt on his grave levitate, after all.

Steppenwolf challenges the group's combined powers in a thrilling sequence



of attacks that momentarily revives the film in a confusion that is not easy to follow and masks the overuse of the abundant CGI. It's too long-winded to explain without telling you the entire storyline—if you recognize the name Steppenwolf from the comics you pretty much know what it is.

But in the end, the solution to victory shows a lack of imagination, more of an "oops, it's time to end the film now" solution that leaves the film flat and void of a solid audience emotional reaction. If it was that easy to stop, why did it take almost two hours? And where are the people of the world? Aside from the main characters, there are almost no other people around. There is a cameo character from the original 1980 Superman The Movie. You'll know him. And if you thought Henry Cavill's face seemed odd, you're not alone; they had to CGI out his real-life mustache for his upcoming Mission Impossible 5 role. The result was...odd.

As a Justice League fan in my youth, this film disappointed me by its commercial focus on action above all else. With so much potential to develop an interesting movie, both BvS and JL dropped the ball. What the Avengers hold in strength of character seems lacking in the Justice League. Perhaps it's time to hang up the costumes and focus on the characters behind the facade.



bookends

by Jill Hedgecock, Program Coordinator Mount Diablo California
Writer's Club jillhedgecock.com

Twelve Days of Christmas

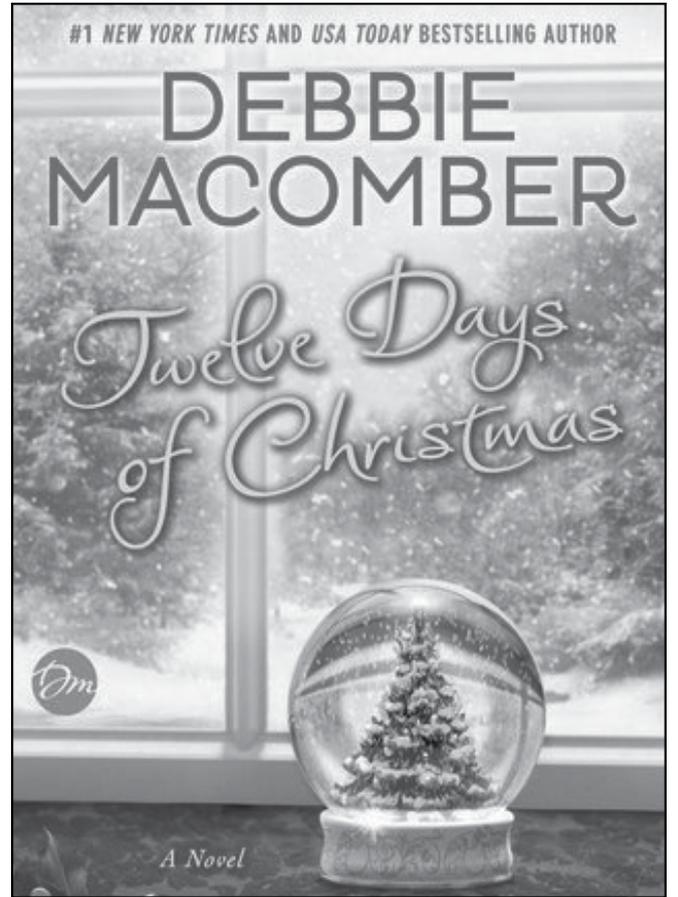
If romance novels are your guilty pleasure and you're looking for relief from the stress of shopping and seasonal festivities, then the "Twelve Days of Christmas" by Debbie Macomber (2017, Ballantine Books, paperback, 256 pages \$5.53) is the holiday book for you. Julia Padden is dissatisfied with her dead-end retail job and is on the cusp of embarking on a new career path. But to secure a coveted position in the field of social media, she's been tasked by her future employer to start a blog and entice followers.

After Julia relates an unpleasant encounter with Cain Maddox, Julia's grumpy male neighbor from across the hall, Julia's best friend suggests that she kill him with kindness and blog about the results until Christmas. Julia and Cain, given the pseudonym "Ebenezer" for the blog, both take the elevator down to their high-rise building's ground floor as they leave for work each day.

Julia's bubbly personality annoys him so she's in for a challenge. But some chance encounters with handsome Ebenezer in and around their Seattle hometown provide ample opportunity for Julia to shower Cain with holiday cheer. As her blog presence expands, Julia's followers offer on-line advice and some start their own kindness projects with favorable results. Through a serendipitous series of events, Julia meets Cain's grandfather and learns the reasons behind the chip on Cain's shoulder.

Predictably, a romance blossoms between Julia and Cain.

Ten of Debbie Macomber's novels have reached #1 on the New York Times bestseller lists. She is the author of "Sweet Tomorrows", "A Girl's Guide to



Moving On", "Last One Home", "Silver Linings", "Love Letters", "Blossom Street Brides", "Rose Harbor in Bloom" and numerous Christmas-inspired novels.

Five of her beloved Christmas novels have been adapted as movies on the Hallmark Channel, including "Mrs. Miracle" and "Mr. Miracle."

The Hallmark Channel has also produced Debbie Macomber's "Cedar Cove", based on books of the same name. Over 200 million copies of her books appear in print worldwide.

If you're a fan of books that pull at the heartstrings, then this light-hearted tale will be a delightful and satisfying read.

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20 Politically Charged Holiday Hits by David King

President Trump is proposing a lot of changes. Healthcare, taxes, and trade agreements, but the fake news (that I am starting) is he's trying to change our traditional Holiday songs, too! Can you imagine? I did, at least the titles of songs he would likely want. Here they are:

Trump's Top Ten Christmas Song Titles Countdown

- #10 "All I Want for Christmas is a Real Good Tan" by Kenny Chorney. Ironically, this is a real song title already.
- #9 "Pence On Earth" (Good will to men) - We musn't neglect our VP.
- #8 "Silver and Gold" - I wouldn't be surprised if President Trump doesn't own this one already.
- #7 "12 Holes of Christmas" - A tribute to the dozen US Golf courses owned by the POTUS.
- #6 "We Wish You a Mar A Lago" - Speaking of golf, I can imagine President Trump humming this all the way to the bank.
- #5 "Jong-un Calls" - "Jong-un Calls, Jong-Un Calls, Kim Jong go away..." An annoying earwig to say the least.
- #4 "O Atom Bomb" - Sung to the tune of O Tannenbaum, a German song, but you can bet the lyrics would have something to do with North Korea.
- #3 "O Christmas Tweet" - Same tune as above, but with English lyrics. Be sure to get the extended version, now with 280 maximum characters.
- #2 "White Christmas" - lyricists, just be respectful here.
- #1 "Deck the Wall" "Deck the wall, have Mexico pay for it. Fa la la la la la la..."

To be equally politically cynical, here are a few titles the Democrats and other opponents might suggest.

The Impeachers' Top 10 Holiday Hits Countdown

- #10 "Putin for Christmas" - "Nuttin for Christmas" by Barry Gordon gets a political update.
 - #9 "Remember the Missile Code" - sung to the tune "Under the Mistletoe" by Justin Bieber
 - #8 Christmas at Ground Zero - by Al Yankovich. Yankovich penned this parody in 1986 during the Reagan years. It's certainly prime times for this one to make a rebound.
 - #7 "Here Comes Sander's Cause" - A likely Millennial anthem. Not all Democrats were behind Hillary, you know.
 - #6 "'Twas the Night Before Clinton" - Who can forget that night, right? Hillary won't.
 - #5 "Ivan(a)ka Song" - adding an Ivanka stanza should be easy to do in Adam Sandler's "Hanukkah Song".
 - #4 "Do You Hate What I Hate?" - A beautiful song gone nasty.
 - #3 "It's Beginning to Look a lot Like More Taxes" - "...everywhere you go." Well, most of us may be singing this one soon.
 - #2 "Grandma Got Run Over By a Reindeer...So What?" Hey, she knew what she was getting into.
 - #1 "You're a Mean One, Mr. Trump" -- This one was too easy.
- Yes, all these title suggestions are sure to offend those inclined to be offended. But don't write to the publisher, unless you wish to play along and write some lyrics to accompany the song titles. If you do, I may just publish them next edition, at my discretion. Who knows, maybe there's a hit to be born. In the meantime, Happy Holidays.

The Wayward Winemaker by Bradley Bernard

Living in Wine Country has its rewards. Wine tours, wine tastings, even wine trains. The North Bay is well known around the world for producing the finest wines. It's a multibillion dollar part of the Bay Area economy.

However, my relationship with wine is a bit less formal. I like the sweet wines such as ice cold Blue Nun on a camping trip, or Ludvig Neuhaus Liebfraumilch in a bota bag at a past Grateful Dead show.

We moved to Martinez around 25 years ago, to a house whose rear faces west. Every day our patio door was hit with direct sun all afternoons and into the evenings. We used blinds, shades, and even planted Bamboo in the back of the yard to help shield us from the aggravating heat.

Eventually we built a redwood pergola out over that glass door. At the far end of this, at each of the three columns that support it, I planted grapes. I planted them for shade and beauty. Actual grape production was of no interest.

I planted White Thompson Seedless table grapes. These are not wine grapes. In time, our patio became covered with a giant canopy of vines and leaves, which grew so well that I had to cut them back each year. The shade is wonderful.

Viticulturalists and other experts say that grape vines take four years to really produce good grapes. They are not kidding.

Last fall, I found that I had so many grapes on the top of my pergola that a family of opossums had moved in, enjoying the easy life above my back patio, enjoy the shade and our bounty of grapes. Something had to be done.

First, we evicted the opossum family. Then my daughter, climbed up there to pick the grapes. We harvested the fattest, sweetest grapes you ever saw, over 200 pounds of them.

Knowing we couldn't possibly eat them all, I decided maybe I can make wine out

of them. We checked with experts who advised us that we needed special chemicals to kill the natural yeast so that we could add better yeast. More chemicals would be required to stop mold, and then we needed chemicals to clarify the wine.

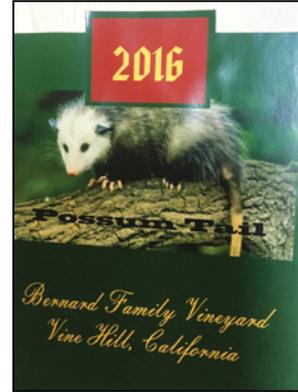
Wait, people have been making wine for centuries. Surely the ancient Egyptians didn't need these chemical additives, did they?

We cleaned the grapes, removing stems and the smaller grapes. We washed them and pressed them using a mesh bag and two large turkey pans. We squeezed enough grapes to fill a five-gallon bucket. We put a tight lid on the bucket with an airlock.

Within two days it began to bubble. I was cooking wine. I never used the chemical additives, but we were careful to sanitize everything that touched the wine. We added sanitizer to the water in the airlock to keep out any contaminants.

Within a few weeks, primary fermentation was complete. The wine was clear except for an inch or so of sediment at the bottom. The wine was transferred into a glass carboy for another couple of weeks.

Finally, it was time to taste samples of



Bradley and his Thompson Grapes

our work. We were all pleasantly surprised and excited. We bought bottles, corks, and a corking tool. Then we ordered custom labels online honoring our evicted opossums.

Our five gallons of grape squeezin' became 22 bottles of lovely white wine. Everyone who has tasted it has raved. The alcohol content is high, and the wine is very sweet.

Our 2016 "Possum Tail" was a great success and I plan to double production in 2017.

Be careful though, wine making can become an obsession. I cleared my small apple tree this fall and made nine bottles of very nice hard cider. The most difficult part is wading through the millions of conflicting directions online.

Keep it simple, sanitize everything and most of all, have fun! Saluta!



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frugelegance

by Carol and Randi -The FruGirls www.frugelegance.com

Christmas Kitchen Decor with Potted Rosemary

The holidays are such a special time and we want our holiday decor to look amazing. But we have to stay on budget since there's lots of spending going on for so many other things. Things like gift giving, family gatherings, gift giving, special holiday foods and recipes, and... oh, did I mention gift giving?

Do you remember when we shared our Christmas Kitchen blog at frugelegance.com that included lots of beautiful and FrugElegant style decorating ideas? A super fun potted Rosemary plant in the shape of a Christmas tree got quite a bit of attention. It is so easy to make, we would love to share with you how you can create one for your kitchen.

First, you will need a few items.

Christmas tree shaped rosemary plant (\$8.99 from our local Trader Joe's).

Terra Cotta Clay Pot with wide rim top and saucer (the wide rim lip at top is important).

Chalkboard Paint.
Painter's tape
Chalk or chalk paint marker.
A little

extra soil (for replanting your plant)
Wide red Christmas ribbon.
Craft glue.

Here's what you do.

Make sure clay pot is clean & thoroughly dry.

Apply painter's tape below the wide rim top part.

Paint 1-2 coats of chalkboard paint on the wide top trim area. Don't worry if any paint goes in the inside, no one will see it when the plant & soil are planted.

When the chalkboard paint is thoroughly dry, replant your rosemary plant



into the pot.

Now decorate. Write a holiday something in chalk on the painted trim. We wrote Ho! Ho! Ho! Wrap a wide ribbon, around the pot, under the trim. If the ribbon slides down, we recommend securing it in place with a little craft glue.

Not only does it look great, it's also a delicious herb to add to pinch off and add to your cooking. Plus it smells so good and makes a great gift too.

Happy decorating! Happy entertaining, and a very special Happy Holidays!

Carol and Randi, the FruGirls, are local home stagers and decorators. You can also find them Blogging about many other ways to live an elegant life for less at www.frugelegance.com FrugElegance is where Frugal and Elegance come together.



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theRIGHTmove
by Terrylynn Fisher, Broker Associate
Your Most Recent Market Data

Homes Sold Topping 2016, but Market Continues to Tighten

I always pay attention to market statistics. How did we do? For October 2016 vs. October 2017 for Clayton (94517) and Concord (94521), as of this writing, there are eight homes on the market in Clayton, a drop of 68% over last year with sold homes up 10% (at 11 homes) sold in October. In Concord's 94521 area there are 62 homes on the market, also down from last year at this time, with 50 sold, up 46% from last year. Prices in Clayton are up .06%, almost on par with last year, while Concord 94521 is up 5.4% over last year.

Remember there are niches within price ranges and neighborhoods that create specific trends and price increases based on amenities and schools.

I am often asked whether this is the right time to sell. Redfin did a study in 2013 noting that sellers netted more equity in December, January and February rather than waiting until spring to go on the market. Some of the reasons make sense, if you think about it, for selling this time of the year. There are fewer homes on the market, and while there may be fewer buyers as well, the buyers looking at this time of year may have more urgency to complete a sale by the end of the year or have more of a deadline. In addition, with fewer homes on the market, buyers will give you more attention and there may be more of an opportunity for multiple offers. Another factor for buyers wanting to lock in on good interest rates can also be a motivator; the press has noted that the Fed's may be raising interest rates next year. Buyers purchasing

with \$636,150 (the maximum conforming loan amount to give the most favorable interest rate) with just a half a percent increase in interest rates from 4% to 4.5% will pay \$186 per month more on their mortgage payment and \$66,960 more over the life of the loan. A one percent increase from 4% to 5% will increase the monthly payments more than \$281 and \$101,160 over the life of the loan.

In short, with fewer homes as your competition, perhaps small flaws and/or deficits that homes were rejected for in busier months may be accepted by the buyer in this market.

If you are thinking of selling in winter, there are several things you can do to enhance your appeal. With rain and early sunset making homes darker, light can be very important in adding a warm glow to your home. Turn on all lights, keep the thermostat at a level that there is an "ahh" when people come in from the cold and rain, and stage with seasonal touches that add warmth. Curb appeal, always important, is even more important in winter. When buyers are waiting at the front porch to get inside with pouring rain or dark nights, they are conscious of the ease of opening the door locks, condition of the paint, porch, door knobs and plants on the porch.

Terrylynn Fisher, Real Estate Broker Associate (CalBRE# 01882902) with Dudum Real Estate Group is a veteran of real estate. (925)-876-0966 www.BuyStageSell.com.

Stephen Wilcox Appointed Chancellor for Diocese of Oakland



Bishop Michael C. Barber, SJ, has named Stephen Wilcox, president of the nonprofit Wilcox Family Foundation and former interim chief executive officer of Catholic Charities of the East Bay, as Chancellor for the Diocese of Oakland. The Diocese of Oakland serves Alameda and Contra Costa counties, and includes approximately 400,000 Catholics in 84 parishes.

"Steve will bring a passion for the faith and a commitment to organizational effectiveness to our Diocesan services," Bishop Barber said. "I am grateful for his willingness to serve in this capacity for our local Church."

In his new role Wilcox will oversee the offices of Catholic Youth Organization

(CYO), Communications, Formation and Evangelization, and Mission Advancement, as well as the Diocesan Review Board and Archives. He will also serve as Bishop Barber's liaison for Catholic schools and Catholic Charities of the East Bay, serve on the Bishop's Administrative Council and lead special projects as directed by Bishop Barber.

Father Robert Herbst, OFM Conv. served as Interim Chancellor and will continue as judicial vicar and vicar for religious.

A retired senior executive of Accenture, LLP, Wilcox worked for the technology outsourcing company for 28 years, serving for several years as the lead executive of one of Accenture's largest global accounts.

He volunteered as interim CEO of Catholic Charities of the East Bay (CCEB) from September 2013 to May 2014, having served on CCEB's board since 2006 and as its chair since 2012.

He currently serves on several nonprofit boards and committees, including the board of the Red Cloud Indian School in Pine Ridge, S.D.; the Covenant House California; the Cristo Rey De La Salle East Bay High School; and the board of Emergency Management Services International, based in Culpeper, Va.

Wilcox holds a bachelor's in political science from Stonehill College, a Catholic school operated by the Congregation of the Holy Cross and a master's degree in public management and policy analysis from Heinz College at Carnegie Mellon University.

He and his wife Margaret (Peg) are parishioners of St. Joan of Arc in San Ramon and have three adult sons.

Best Gift of the Season is Life Itself

by Nik Wojcik

For most, the holiday season is about giving and spending time with loved ones, themes that rise above religious and cultural differences and bond us at the core of human nature. As we approach the time of year known for beautiful lights and spirited festivities, we hope you'll take the time to think about others, in the way that you give and in the choices you make.

In fleeting moments, decisions are made that can change the trajectory of countless lives forever. Where some tragedies are beyond our control, some are wholly avoidable with a simple commitment: don't drink and drive.

Natalie Davies. Zach Punty. Mark Poss.

Each name represents a life, and each of those lives touch families and friends. Unfortunately, each of them has been a local and recent victim of suspected drunk drivers.

On Nov. 5, 21-year-old local Davies and her boyfriend, Punty, were driving on Willow Pass Road when another vehicle crossed into opposing lanes of traffic and struck the couple in a head-on collision. Davies was pronounced dead at the scene and Punty was left in critical condition, where he struggles with a traumatic brain injury.

Just one week later on Nov. 12, Mark Poss pulled over on Highway 50 in Sacramento to help a couple push their car stalled in an emergency lane. A suspected drunk driver slammed into Poss, crushing both of his legs. The Good Samaritan is a Clayton Valley High School alumnus and father, and now faces life as an amputee.

Both incidents happened in a split second and both could have been prevented.

Although National Highway Traffic Safety Administration statistics show that drunk driving has been on a decline over the past three decades, the holiday season continues to present the greatest risk. Drunk drivers account for forty percent of traffic-related deaths during the holiday months, opposed to 28 percent through-

out the rest of the year, according to NHTSA.

It takes all of a couple minutes of planning and a few extra dollars for each of us to do our part in bringing that percentage down. It's simple, either don't drink if you're going to drive or have someone else drive for you. There are options available that can make all the difference.

Put aside some extra cash and program the number for a cab service into your phone prior to picking up that first drink. Download the Uber or Lyft apps and use them – both of which offer gift cards so you can give loved ones a safe ride home as well. Nothing destroys a night of fun like not living to see the next year or taking innocent lives as a result of a bad decision.

The best way to honor the lives of these three victims is to make better choices – a little planning and the technology in your pocket can make all the difference.

Those looking for additional ways to help can do so directly by donating to help the victims and their families. The Mark Poss gofundme page can be found at <https://www.gofundme.com/markposs>, where they are still \$66,000 away from their fundraising goal to help cover his extensive medical expenses.

Juan Carlos (JC) Araujo Orosco, Punty's former Clayton Valley High School soccer coach and family friend, set up the <https://www.gofundme.com/zachpunty> page to help raise \$12,000 to help his family manage – that goal is not yet halfway met.

These are hard stories to hear about as we dig through boxes of decorations and plan happy family feasts, but they are cautionary tales that we hope will make you think twice about the decisions you make this season. After all, the best gift we have is living.

We wish you a happy and safe holiday season, with many more to come.

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Ruby Dooby Do to the Rescue

Each month a hard to place dog in foster care will be featured to give them extra exposure to find their forever home.

BENTLEY is a 20-pound, partially blind and deaf, maltese mix. He may be labeled special needs, but this "pawsitively special dawg" only wants to be a lap dog. He's housebroken, uses a doggie door, and does not require regular grooming or exercise. This six-year-old cuddle bug has no interest in other dogs. Bentley is all about his people. Although suitable for almost anyone who wants a low-maintenance couch potato companion, Bentley's ideal adopter would work from home or be retired.

Bentley is being fostered through Underdog Rescue. Underdog's mission is to save shelter dogs that are out of time or that require rehabilitation prior to adoption. Underdog is a non-profit group that operates on donations and maintains a wish list with Amazon: https://www.amazon.com/gp/registry/wishlist/2R1518QU-C44OV/ref=cm_sw_su_w. To meet BENTLEY, submit an application. His adoption fee has been sponsored. Underdog Rescue will contact you to chat more about the dog:



<http://form.jotform.com/underdogca/dog-adoption-application>.

Editors Note: Ruby Dooby Do is Concord's Instagram celebrity with more than 49,000 followers. [Instagram.com/rubydoo-by-do](https://www.instagram.com/rubydoo-by-do). Special thanks to Jill Hedgecock, Program Coordinator, Mount Diablo Branch of the California Writers Club for her help in translating canine for this article. www.jillhedgecock.com.

Bentley

Animals With Unusual Jobs

by Shereen Motarjemi

Some of us like our jobs, but how many of us can say we feel enthused to go to work? Here are three remarkable animals that are actually eager to do their jobs. They show us that when we are driven to serve, work is joy!

SEARCH AND RESCUE DOG



"Joyful and enthusiastic" is how Kathy Gaughan describes her dog, Jarli, when he is working his nose to find lost people. And why wouldn't he feel joyful? He gets to be out in nature chasing scents, accompanied by his favorite human. But the real excitement for Jarli is that after a search, he is permitted to play his favorite game: fetch the toy!

While Jarli's motivation may be about play, Kathy has more serious reasons why she does this grueling work. "It helps the victim's family have closure," Kathy says.

She and Jarli are on call 24/7, packed and ready for the time when someone is reported missing. Frequently these victims are lost hikers or people with dementia or autism. Despondent people can also become separated, particularly around the holidays.

As soon as she gets a call about a missing person, Kathy begins strategizing her plan for the search. The skill is in covering the area thoroughly, no matter the terrain or weather, so Kathy must stay alert and focused. Using topo maps, GPS and a compass, searchers often have to navigate through rugged wilderness in harsh conditions.

In spite of the difficulties, Kathy and Jarli seem called to this work. They are a team. Kathy sees herself as a strategist and sort of Sherpa for her dog: he has this special gift of scent, and her job is to support him.

Both Kathy and Jarli have what is called 'drive'. He is driven to follow his remarkable sense of smell, to please his human, and to get his favorite toy. Kathy seems driven by a big-hearted desire to be of service. She knows that even if the missing person isn't located, the family can find some peace because they were supported by "many strangers and search dogs" at a time when they felt most afraid.

CASTOR THE POLICE DOG

It is easy to understand why Police Departments use dogs. Their noses are simply better than human eyes. Recently, when a Pleasant Hill resident with dementia went missing, the family frantically searched for hours before they called police. Within minutes, Castor located the missing man. The family had already combed that area many times, but they never saw him sitting in the car! It just took a mighty nose.

Smart and versatile, Castor is both ferocious enough to pin down a suspect, yet gentle with curious children at public events. He is a canine hero and 6-year veteran at the Pleasant Hill Police Dept. His handler, Officer James Woehrman, says that Castor loves doing police work. When he sees the police uniform, Castor immediately assumes his working dog personality: focused and eager.

Castor is a German Shepherd, born and raised in the Czech Republic. As a puppy, he was trained for European sports -- ones which require hunting skills. In addition, he comes from a long line of quality breeding practices which make hip dysplasia



less likely. In short, his training and genetics made him an excellent candidate for police work. But he still had so much more to learn once he got to Pleasant Hill. Now eight-years old, he is masterful at finding drugs and people, no matter how well hidden. His sense of smell is so keen that he can pick up the scent, even if drugs are vacuum-sealed! And if you are a bad guy, don't even try to run. Officer Woehrman says that most suspects become immediately compliant in the presence of a dog. They know they can't outrun Castor.

Castor loves fetch and is rewarded with play whenever he completes a successful search.



aRt Cottage

by FROgard www.aRtCottage.info



The Power of Artful Giving

During the Holiday exercises of gift giving and receiving, we find ourselves rushed to find the right gift, that perfect gift for those we wish to show our affection. Are we trying so hard that we often overlook some of the most thoughtful gestures of love and appreciation we could offer? Sometimes, in our pursuit of graciousness, we sacrifice sincerity.

I thought I would share a joyful example of how simple an exchange of heartfelt appreciation can be as I witnessed during last month's aRt Cottage exhibit, "Remembering Vietnam". "Remembering Vietnam" was an exhibit by three Vietnam Vets whose work depicted the gamut of emotions from soldiers to civilians during this ugly war.

Each vet received a letter from two beautiful young ladies who came to aRt Cottage to view their work and fulfill a writing assignment for a humanities class. When they were asked to sign the guest book before leaving, I saw them sitting in the corner of the gallery writing. They had each torn out three pages from the guest book and wrote a note to each of the three vets who had their work on display. These letters were posted on the wall by their work for them to read when they return.

I hope you recognize the exchange the emotional expressions of gratitude between our guests and the artists as I did in reading their letters.

"Tim, Thank you so much for sharing these extraordinary pieces of art. The amount of joy and true purity you were able to capture in the children in the photos is truly amazing. To be able to get so much happiness and positivity in such a heart-wrenching time in history has me awestruck. Much love and Happiness,

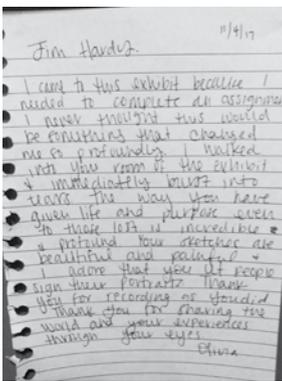
Drew."

"Steve, Amazing pieces of art. I cannot even imagine what you guys went through so your pictures are truly very touching. To be able to capture such raw, unstaged photos is just amazing. Thank you so much for sharing such real, genuine, uncut, unedited work. Very emotional exhibit. Thank you so much. -- Drew"

"Tim Dallas, Thank you. Thank you for your service. Thank you for showing us your experiences and letting us briefly see life the way you did. You've given me a perspective I've never seen before. You took a tragedy and were able to show it to us through a layer of hope -- even in hard, awful times. The joy you captured on the faces of these children is heart-wrenching, and beautiful and powerful. The way war is taught is often so different and it is incredible to see those soldiers as babysitters and caregivers, and nurturers. This has changed my view and what I thought I knew. Thank you for sharing your story. -- Olivia"

"Steve Burchik, Thank you for your service and for sharing. Your photos are incredible and gut-wrenching. Your perspective and experience have changed the way I think of the war. The contrast between the combat shots and the bustling life is crazy. You captured life and people's stories from so many backgrounds and situations. Thanks for letting us see your story. -- Olivia"

"Jim, After seeing your exhibit, I am amazed at what amazing, touching art you were able to produce during such a harsh time in history. Absolutely loved the statues. Just absolutely, unbelievably



to see how young you guys were and what you experienced at such a young age. Thank you for capturing the moments you did and turning them into such extraordinary artwork for the world to see. Your exhibit absolutely touched me to the core. -- Love & Happiness, Drew"

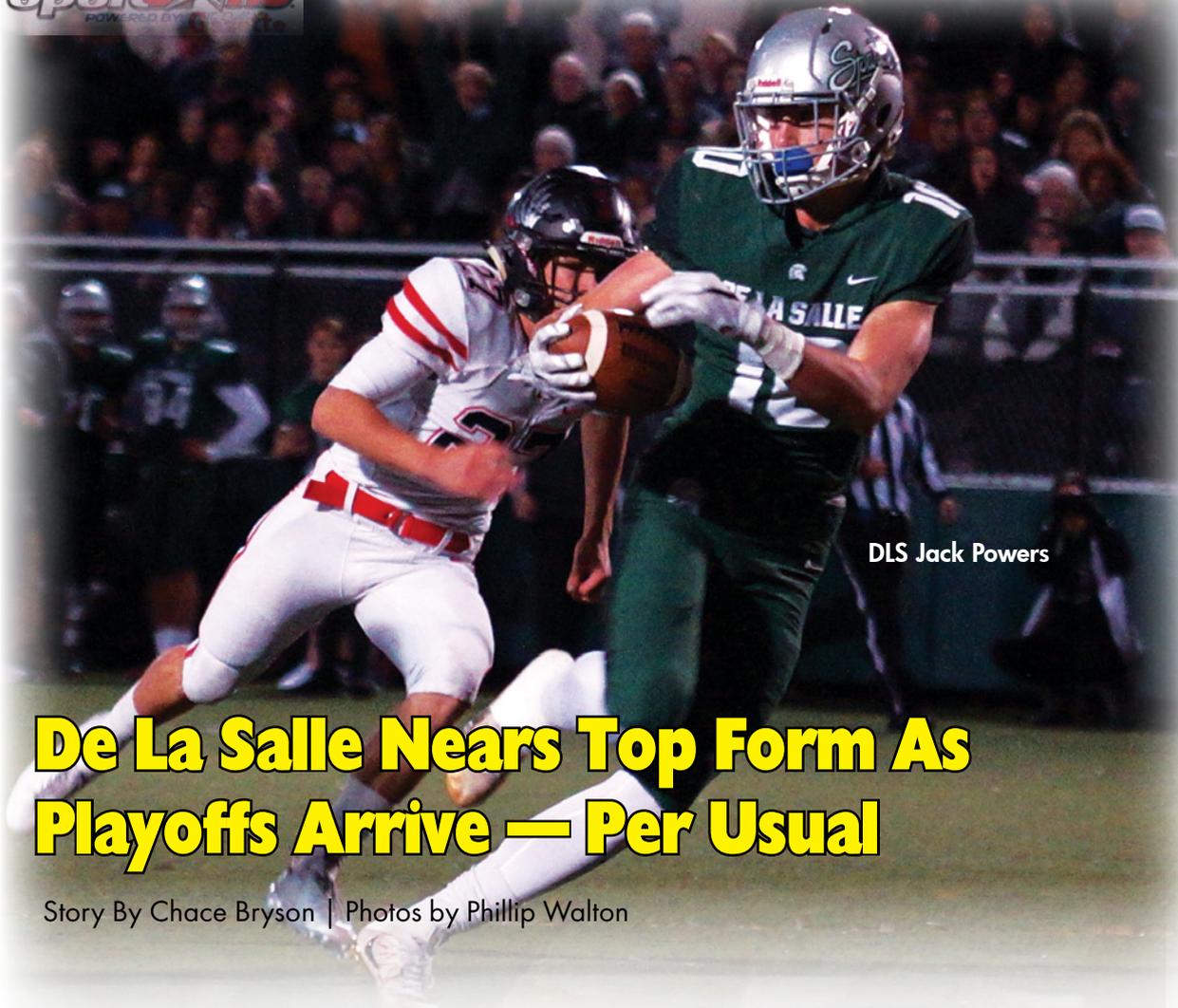
"Jim Hardy, I came to this exhibit because I needed to complete an assignment. I never thought this would be something that would change me so profoundly. I walked into your room of the exhibit and immediately burst into tears. The way you have given life and purpose, even to those lost, is incredible and profound. Your sketches are beautiful and painful, and I adore that you let people sign their portraits. Thank you for recording as you did. Thank you for sharing the world and your experiences through your eyes. -- Olivia"

The gift of art and the gift of pure

gratitude was on full display. There is great hope in the future with young adults like these girls. They even came back to meet the vets in person during their art opening. Steve Burchik, Tim Dallas, and Jim Hardy were honored as all vets should be.

Consider the power of art and the emotional impact that simple gifts can bring when you visit our Holiday Boutique in December. You will find many handmade items from jewelry to paintings and pottery on display through December 23. Come meet the artists on Saturday, December. 2nd from 2pm-4pm. Located at 2238 Mt. Diablo Street in Concord. So, Relax. Enjoy your families and remember to give simple gifts of love, creativity, and with lots of hugs.

aRt Cottage wishes all a happy holiday season.



DLS Jack Powers

De La Salle Nears Top Form As Playoffs Arrive — Per Usual

Story By Chace Bryson | Photos by Phillip Walton

For those who have followed De La Salle football teams over the years, the adage is nearly as much of an annual certainty as filing taxes. Every season around mid-November, the point is made that this is the time of the year when the Spartans seem to reach their full potential. Which, of course, is the intention of any playoff team — but De La Salle has a long history of perfecting the process.

It appears the 2017 season will be no different. Clayton Valley Charter can attest to that. Clayton Valley (8-3) was forced to call it a season after its loss. It's the second time in as many years De La Salle has halted the Ugly Eagles' season with an Open Division playoff win. Thanks to an extremely lengthy drive and the recovery of a muffed punt, the Ugly Eagles allowed De La Salle just one offensive play for the entirety of the first quarter during the teams' North Coast Section Open Division semifinal on Nov. 17. They still went into the second quarter trailing 7-0.

The Spartans' lone first quarter play was a 76-yard touchdown run by senior Kairee Robinson, down the right sideline, on the first play of the game.

"We put that new play in there this week," Robinson said of his run that opened the 45-7 victory. "I felt real good about it and told the coaches that. We came out tonight and it worked beautifully. I had my lead blocker Beaux (Tagaloo) lay some kid out, and that was it. I don't think I was ever touched."

Clayton Valley's ensuing 20-play drive ended with a fumble on the first play of the second quarter. Robinson recovered it at the 8-yard line and returned it 21 yards to the 29. Sophomore Shamar Garrett then promptly scored on a 71-yard touchdown run and the snowball got rolling downhill in a hurry.

De La Salle rolled to a running-clock victory and punched its ticket into the Open Div. final on Dec. 2 when it will look to win a 26th consecutive NCS crown and extend its fabled NorCal unbeaten streak to 290 games.

Clayton Valley's lone score of the night came on an 80-yard run by Kyree Williams with three minutes left in the game.

"Offensively we were really crisp," De La Salle coach Justin Alumbaugh said. "I think we had three touchdowns in our first five plays. It's hard to get a lot better than that."

That crispness is especially impressive considering it was just the second game in four weeks for the Spartans. De La Salle had their scheduled regular season bye in Week 10, defeated San Ramon Valley in Week 11, had the first of two NCS playoff byes in Week 12 and then dispatched Clayton Valley in Week 13. Week 14 will also be a bye.

Should De La Salle (10-1) win on Dec. 2, they could then potentially face yet another bye before playing in the CIF Open Division State Bowl on Dec. 17.

"There's an assumption that you use the bye week to get healthy, or this or that," Alumbaugh said. "No, it's football. We've still got to practice. ... In order be crisp, you've got to practice hard and physical. ... Our kids did a great job."

The Spartans have won six of the past nine CIF Open Bowl titles, but will seek redemption on the Sacramento State field this season. Not only did they lose to St. John Bosco-Bellflower in 2016, but the 56-33 final marked the most points De La Salle has surrendered since the 1979 season — that'd be the one that famed coach Bob Ladouceur took over the program.

De La Salle as a whole looked really good. Any why not? Tis the season.



CVCHS Thomas Alatini

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Friends and family visit



Tree decorating



Santa and friend

Workshop continued from page 3

throughout our community.”
 “This outstanding event always officially kicks off the holidays for me,” said Sheriff Livingston. Then he addressed the inmates who had recently been working on the toys and bikes, “I want to thank you gentlemen and those before you that have been working diligently on this year-long program. You’ll bring a lot of joy to our community’s kids with your woodshop skills”
 This is a remarkable program that served many Contra Costa County non-profit orga-



nizations including Bay Area Housing District, Bay Area Rescue Mission, Brighter Beginnings, Contra

Costa County Independent Living Skills Program, El Cerrito Rotary, Friends of Oakley, Pittsburg Police Department, Shelter Inc., The Salvation Army-Antioch Corps, Shepherd’s Gate, La Casa, and VESTIA, Inc.

During the 2016-17 school year, over 3,000 adult inmates (throughout the three Contra Costa detention facilities) were enrolled in classes ranging from academic programs, including basic literacy and GED or HiSET high school equivalency preparation, to vocational programs, including woodshop, con-

struction, and state-of-the-art computer training. By the end of the school year, 37 student-inmate(s) received their high school equivalency certificate (Hi SET) and 29 received a high school diploma. In addition, there were 328 students who demonstrated learning gains in reading or math, and 317 students earned a certificate of completion in computer applications.



Readers Rants & Raves

Dear Diablo Gazette:

I Love what you do for me! ~ Jerry T.,
 Crystal Fair director, Mill Valley

I wanted to give some “feedback” (pun intended) on Mrs. Butterbanks’ recipe for the Pumpkin Butterscotch Muffins. I actually made them and have decided the name should be Disappearing Pumpkin Butterscotch Muffins. What a great seasonal treat! It is like dessert in a muffin format. It was such an easy recipe and they are a moist, tasty delight. A side benefit is the holiday aroma they bring to the house. It is a recipe to be used again and to share. ~Beth McQueen, Pleasant Hill

[Regarding Auschwitz Survivor article:]

Dear David, the mail just delivered the October and November issues of the Diablo Gazette. I greatly appreciate your interest and your giving my story such a prestigious exposure. I have also heard from several friends who read them. [Their] reactions were moving and gratifying. I enjoyed meeting and talking with you and hope that our paths may cross again. All the best. ~Bernie Rosner, San Ramon.

I would like to send a care package to

a friend doing a tour in Afghanistan. He loves law enforcement and hopes to join the CIA or Secret Service at the end of his tour. I thought I would send a care package to him of all your published Secret Service tales. I look forward to them. ~Leslie S., Brentwood.

I am a former Vietnam Vet, stationed in Germany and visited Auschwitz. I read the October articles “From Auschwitz to America” and “Life in Postwar East Germany” and became very interested in them.. Where can I find November copies of the Diablo Gazette in Concord? I live near down-

town. ~ Oscar T. Concord

[Editor: Thank you all for reading. Around Todos Santos Plaza you can pick up copies of the Diablo Gazette in several locations including Half Price Book Store, Capriotti’s, Starbucks, Hot Dog Palace, House of Bagels, Poke, Hop Grenade, and T4. If they run out, which they always do, try the Concord Library at Salvio and Parkside.]



Got something to say? Send your Rants and Raves to DiabloGazette@gmail.com by the 20th of the month preceding issue publication. Length should not exceed 300 words. Publisher reserves right of rejection. All published letters reflect the opinion of the author only and do not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher. We are unable to acknowledge receipt or publication of your letters.

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THE TRUTH ABOUT RUTH

by Gordon Addison, resident at The Heritage Downtown

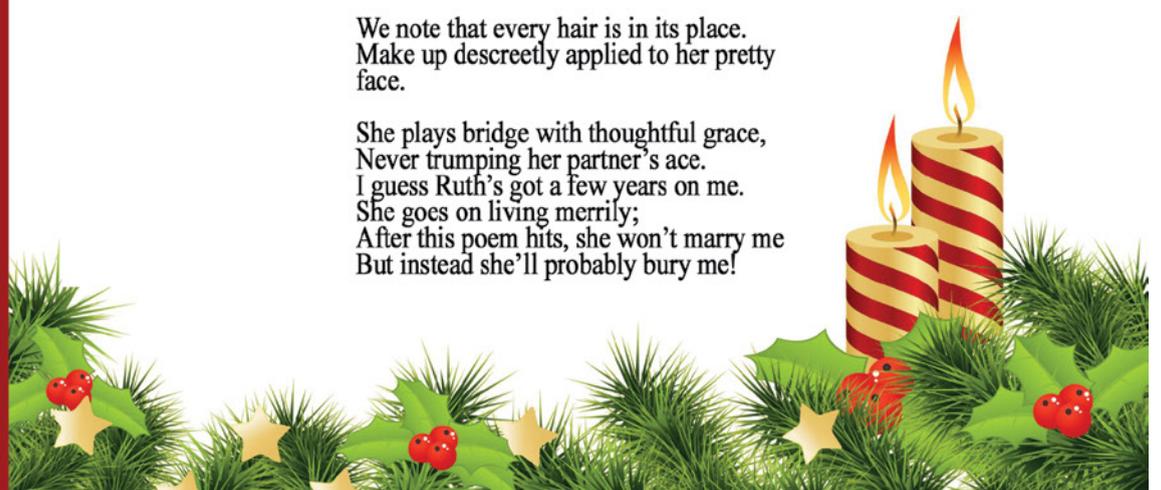
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face.

She plays bridge with thoughtful grace,
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I guess Ruth's got a few years on me.
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After this poem hits, she won't marry me
But instead she'll probably bury me!



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