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MARCH 2019

Congratulations!
Diablo Gazette's
Jill Hedgecock
Wins the New
Apple Indie Book
Award for "Rhino
in the Room."

DAN ASHLEY'S ROCK THE CASA

with Patti LaBelle

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Jill Hedgecock Interviews George RR Martin (Game of Thrones)
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- Calendar of Events, Reviews, and Local Activities

Photo courtesy Rock the Casa

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concord mayor

by Carlyn Obringer, Email: Put MAYOR in subject line CityCouncil@cityofconcord.org

Concord Remains Committed to Retaining Cherished Local Businesses

I have recently been contacted by Concord residents concerned about the non-renewal of leases for Bangkok Kitchen and Half Price Books in Downtown Concord. I want to assure my fellow Concordians that the City of Concord appreciates and values these two long-time Concord establishments. At our February 12th meeting, the entire City Council made clear that Half Price Books and Bangkok Kitchen are valued Concord businesses and that we are doing everything in our power to keep them here.

Regarding Half Price Books, I have proudly spent my time and dollars there over the years, in part because it's one of the few retailers in our Downtown. When I first heard a rumor Half Price Books' rent might be increased, in October 2018, I asked staff to reach out to their company, learn more about the situation, and work with them to help identify potential spaces to relocate to in Concord. Since that time, Half Price Books and their property owner could not come to an agreement on their next lease, so Half Price Books is looking to move elsewhere in Concord. City staff is actively helping Half Price Books explore other locations in the city. At the time of this writing, they have letters of intent out on four alternative spaces.

As for Bangkok Kitchen, when renovations started on The Shops at

Todos Santos, a constituent shared with me that this construction was creating access and parking issues for the restaurant. I immediately contacted the city's Economic Development staff and asked that they work with the owner, Peter Bumphenboon, to ensure that accessibility and parking obstructions were removed and signage displayed so customers would know he was still open for business. At that time, conversations also began about what a potential relocation could look like if Bangkok Kitchen's rent was increased at the current site due to the significant building renovations underway. I recently identified a potential alternative space for Bangkok Kitchen and, as of this writing, Bumphenboon has plans to tour the facility.

The City has no tools to force a private property owner to lease their buildings to specific tenants. That is a private property decision. Similarly, the City has no tools to force a tenant to stay in (or leave) a location they are renting legally. That is also a private business decision. With that said, the community has communicated loudly and clearly to City leaders like myself that Bangkok Kitchen and Half Price Books are cherished pieces of the social fabric of our city. We are doing all that we can to continue that tradition.

MidiCi Italian Kitchen Brings Neapolitan Pizza to Concord



From l to r: Concord Vice Mayor Tim McGallian, Heidi Ely (owner of MidiCi Italian Kitchen), Marilyn Fowler (Concord Chamber President/CEO), and Concord Mayor Carlyn Obringer, cut the first pizzas of opening day!

MidiCi Italian Kitchen has opened in Concord and is bringing people together over a great meal like Italians do - with a menu of Neapolitan Pizza, pasta and other culinary delights.

MidiCi combines authentic Italian cuisine in an open-concept interior. It gives you the feeling of being a part of the action. Neapolitan pizzas are prepared fresh to order in a 90-second journey from dough to plate, while guests sip Italian Prosecco.

"Our goal is to offer locals a unique experience reminiscent of an Italian Piazza. MidiCi's impressive ambiance and lively atmosphere is an ideal fit for everyday lunch or dinner to a date night, birthday party or even an office after work mixer," said General Manager Heidi Ely.

MidiCi features a variety of authentic Italian dishes, including wood-fired Neapolitan pizza, pasta, salad, burrata, signature desserts, and an extensive list of local craft beers and wines. They use Italian non-GMO flour to prepare their dough in-house daily, and other classic, Italian-sourced ingredients to make their pizzas.

"The ingredients we source are farm-fresh, natural, and mostly non-GMO," said Ely. "Staples like tomatoes used in the sauce or the flour, are even imported from Italy."

Even better, the upscale dining experience is served at a uniquely affordable price. MidiCi Italian Kitchen is in the Willow Shopping Center, 1975 Diamond Blvd, in Concord. Visit www.myMidiCi.com.

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Blossoms For Barbara and the Power of Flowers

'Blossoms for Barbara' is a favorite community-wide event put on annually by the Clayton Valley Garden Club. 'Blossoms for Barbara' presents decoratively wrapped flowering plants in observation of Valentine's Day to those in the care of hospice, patients in assisted living and convalescent locations, battered woman's shelters, and recipients of Meals on Wheels. 'Blossoms for Barbara' has grown from 250 recipients yearly up to over 1,300, thanks to the continued support from the Clayton Business and Community Association, and many local business.

The gesture has touched the hearts of patients, family members, care-givers, nurses, counselors and the volunteers. This event means so much to so many, which is evident from the thank you cards and letters that the Clayton Valley Garden Club receives each year after deliveries are finished.

The first "Blossoms for Barbara" event started Valentine's Day of 2012. Club members were requested to bring in one flowering plant.

"I created this event in loving memory of my mother Barbara Manss who passed away in November 2011," said Linda Karp. "We named this event 'Blossoms for Barbara' in her memory. I wanted to bring a little joy to those who were dying, and their families which were dealing with the horrible grief of losing someone they loved."

Linda had hoped that maybe she

would get 50 plants to patients at one hospice care facility for Valentine's Day. Little did she know the outpouring she would receive, surpassing her wildest expectations.

Linda hopes to continue her quest to deliver gifts of love and compassion for as many future Valentine's Days as possible. As one TV reporter said, "Never underestimate the power of flowers."



R&M Pool, Garden, and Gifts in Clayton was once again the staging area for the Clayton Valley Garden Club's Annual Blossoms for Barbara event.



Left to right: Linda Karp, Marlene Kinney, Sharon Osteen, Dorothy Bradt, Marcia Hart, Elaine Billeter, Peggy Arundell, Carin Kaplan, Barry Hart, Cara Wahl, David Osteen

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Jennifer Stojanovich

Realtor, Better Homes Realty

Get into a Seller's Mindset

It takes more to sell a home than putting up a listing and hoping for the best. In order to make the most of your home sale, you need to get into the right mindset. Knowing what's ahead and preparing for it will set you up for success. For that reason, it's vitally important to get yourself mentally ready for the selling process. Here are our best tips on how to do just that.

Emotionally detach from your home. This is the first thing you need to do to get into a seller's mindset. We understand that this is the place where you've made many cherished memories. But in order to have a successful sale, you'll need to treat it as a business transaction. Focus on the future and the life you want to create in your new home as you release the old one.

Set a realistic listing price. It's easy to let your feelings get in the way when you're setting the asking price for your home. It's essential that you get into a research-based frame of mind. Don't rely on a feeling to determine your listing price. Instead, research comps in the area, learn about the local market, and listen to your agent's advice. Your agent will be using data from the market as well as a deep knowledge of the area to find just the right price for your home.

Manage your expectations. Every seller dreams of having multiple offers over the asking price, resulting in a bidding war. But unless you live in a really hot market, it's unlikely that will happen. Manage your expectations when

it comes to the offers you receive and be willing to look at them all fairly. Don't be afraid to consider offers that come with a lower down payment. Just because a buyer is putting down less money in the beginning does not mean they have bad credit or are a risk. It's more important to look at the bigger picture to determine if the offer is a good one that is likely to make it to the closing table.

Prep your home. Your home probably won't sell itself as-is. You will need to put in some work, and possibly some money, getting it ready for the market. This means making needed repairs or upgrades, sprucing up the curb appeal, and staging it for showing. The more appealing your home looks to potential buyers, the more likely you'll sell quickly and for a good price. But it will take some time, effort, and money to get your home ready for showing.

Finally, it's important to remember that you are part of team. When you engage a professional real estate agent to help you with the sales process, that person becomes your partner. You will be working as a team with your agent, and will need to be open to ideas, suggestions, and advice. The same is true for your agent. You'll want to partner with someone who will understand your needs and your experience with the home. By relying on each other, you'll be far more effective than if each of you were working independently.

Courtesy of www.Virtualresults.net.

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David George

THE NAKED GARDENER

RODENTS: USE TRAPS NOT TOXINS

Last night when on my midnight bathroom break, I heard a familiar scratching in my attic. Oh, no! A rat had set up housekeeping in my roof again. Norwegian roof rats are an unwelcome but now abundant import into California. They are big, smart survivors who chew just about everything to create their rat's nest. Cardboard storage boxes, old toys and clothing, even wiring insulation and HVAC duct covers are vulnerable.

Years ago, I would have taken the neat and easy approach of spreading packets of rat poison pellets. But after the rat consumes the poison and feels sick, he naturally goes outdoors to die. Dogs, cats, or scavenger birds like our resident turkey vultures can smell a dead rodent miles away. I had injected rat poison into my garden's food chain. Plus, there is a reason the labels on these products say, "Warning! Keep away from pets and children." Rat poisons kill many more creatures each year than rats, including birds and our own family members.

Call me old-fashioned, but the right approach for rodents is to control them with snap or entrapment traps. These devices are available in the same section as chemical poisons in hardware

or garden stores. Buck up your courage and deal with an icky dead thing when your trap succeeds. Follow the directions for the device, wear plastic gloves, and wash your hands with warm, soapy water afterwards and you'll be fine. You can either bury it (fertilizer), or you can do what I do – leave the fresh meat on top of a fence post for a tasty scavenger meal.

And what about insecticides? That's a similarly lethal subject that I will cover in next month's column. The bottom line is DON'T USE THEM. They kill beneficial insects in your garden in addition to your target beasts. Be kind to Earth's garden creatures and to your own pets and children. They will return your kindness in spades. It's only natural.

Q's and A's:

Q: "Hey, Naked Gardener, are you really

naked while you're gardening?"
A: That's for only my nosey neighbors and me to know; but warm sunshine on your naked back feels great. Just 10-15 minutes of exposure each week allows your body to produce enough vitamin D to keep you healthy.

Email your questions or comments to NakedGardener@diablogazette.com. In some cases, these may appear in future columns.



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computercorner

by William Claney, Tech Writer, Computers USA

**Tech in
English**

Coffee Lake, Sounds Delicious – Umm

Coffee Lake, is that a lake of coffee or something just as tantalizing? I hope it's hot and palatable, but I don't think you can drink it – instead it belongs in your computer just as soon as you can get your hands on it. Coffee Lake is Intel's codename for all 8th generation or newer desktop processors.

Intel's release of its new ninth generation (9th Gen) central processing units (CPU) marks a new and exciting phase of computer tech. The new CPU boasts 8 cores (multi-core), 16 threads and 3.6GHz speed which is a speed boost, on average about 15% faster than the 8th generation of i7s. (There were no commercially available i9 8th generation CPUs.)

According to Wikipedia, "A multi-core processor is a single computing component with two or more independent processing units called cores, which read and execute program instructions. The instructions are ordinary CPU instructions (such as add, move data, and branch) but the single processor can run multiple instructions on separate cores at the same time, increasing overall speed for programs amenable to parallel computing." Think of it as multiple CPU's in one package.

The threads are, in general terms, the pathways that a core can process simultaneously. That is, how many cores can parallel process a job.

Many jobs have the ability to be broken into separate pathways so the overall throughput of the computer is multiplied. For example, opening an app on a single core may take 20 seconds, but split that job among 2 cores and it processes almost twice as fast.

Well if your eyes haven't glazed over yet one cannot simply replace the CPU in your existing computer because it takes a whole new motherboard (mounting board) to run the new CPU.

Perhaps, it's time to renew your computer system. If your existing computer is over three years old then, yes it is time to upgrade. Today's applications are much more resource (computer power) demanding and will run slowly on older CPUs.

For example, Computer Aided Design (CAD) systems, Artificial Intelligence (AI) or Virtual Reality (VR) headsets for games and design) will struggle on computers just 3 years old, however will fly on the i9s'.

By the way if you are considering VR then you will really want to know about Microsoft's HoloLens 2 system made especially for designers. So, all you engineers out there, get to work and make the world better. But that's a story for another time...

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THE LEGAL PAGE

Where's a Lawyer When You Need One?

While it may seem like lawyers are everywhere, how do you find the right one when the need arises?

The California State Bar has certified Lawyer Referral Services in approximately 46 counties that operate as a public service. Lawyer Referral and Information Services match clients in need of legal advice with attorneys in private practice who have been screened for legal experience, State Bar records, insurance requirements and customer service standards.

In Contra Costa County, the Lawyer Referral and Information Service is operated by the Contra Costa County Bar Association (CCCBA). Attorney members of the bar join the Lawyer Referral Service to accept cases in more than 53 main practice areas from Tenant/Landlord; Personal Injury; Consumer Law; Elder Law; Immigration; Tax; Business Law; Family Law (child custody and support, adoption, divorce, etc.); Criminal Law; Employment Law; Bankruptcy; Workers' Compensation and many others. Spanish speaking attorneys are available in some areas.

To find a lawyer, call the CCCBA Lawyer Referral Service and explain the legal issue to the Lawyer Referral Specialists. They will then contact appropriate attorneys and set an appointment. A nominal fee of \$35 covers the referral and an initial 30-minute consultation with the lawyer. In many cases, the 30-minute consultation is all that is needed as the client is able to handle the issue themselves.

When more guidance is necessary, the client may choose to hire the attorney on

a limited scope basis for specific tasks. In complex cases, the client simply hires the attorney to handle the entire matter. However, clients are under no obligation to hire the attorney. Make sure you discuss the attorney's fees if before you choose to hire one.

CCCBA website provides tips to prepare clients for their first 30-minute consultation to get the most information out of your session. You can also find a list of free legal workshops in Contra Costa and in the Bay Area covering a variety of legal topics including many of the more common legal issues such as advanced health care directives, bankruptcy, conservatorship, debtors' rights, domestic violence restraining order, family law, guardianship, immigration, senior self-help clinic, small claims, tenant's rights, wills & trusts, and workers' rights.

The CCCBA has been offering this public service since 1978. In Contra Costa County last year alone, the CCCBA scheduled appointments for over 3,500 clients with another 1,500 who were redirected to another program or source of assistance.

To find an attorney in another county, visit the website of the State Bar of California and search for lawyer referral services, <http://www.calbar.ca.gov>.

The Contra Costa County Bar Association is a non-profit organization that has served attorneys and the community for 85 years. For information, visit www.cccba.org. For their assistance, call at (925) 825-5700.

California High School Mock Trial Champions

For the second year in a row, California High was named champion of the 38th Annual Contra Costa County High School Mock Trials. Second place went to Alhambra, Alacanes took third place, and Campolindo finished in fourth. The California High team beat Alhambra High (Martinez), in the final round of Mock Trials held inside the Bray Courthouse in Martinez.

In all, 17 Contra Costa County high school Mock Trial teams have been battling it out with each other over four weeks (seven evenings) inside the superior courthouse courtrooms of Martinez. Each school alternated providing a prosecution and then a defense team. Alacanes High defeated Campolindo High in the consolation match. Contra Costa County Superior Court Judge Joni Hiramoto, along with seven attorneys served as judges and scorers.

"I can safely speak for a number of my fellow judges when I say, Mock Trials is our favorite time of the year. It is a delight to watch you all master the courtroom, and it's solely due to your dedication and hard work," stated Judge Barry Baskin who was the guest speaker for the awards ceremony.

"This program is a great tool to ensure that our students understand the workings of the trial courts and thus the importance of an independent judiciary," he continued. Judge Baskin told the audience has often suggested to attorneys to come in and watch the students prosecute and defend the cases so proficiently during Mock Trials.

The teams presented the case: People vs. Klein. Previous years cases have involved murder or mayhem, but this year's trial centered on social media crime. A local college student was charged with posting a criminal threat online, and then texting a false report to police – also known as "swatting." "Swatting" is the action of calling the police with report of a fake



emergency.

Most of the teams begin their Mock Trial training when they began the new school year - which makes Mock Trials one of the longest seasons of all the participating schools' sports and academic activities.

None of this is possible if it weren't for approximately 75 Bay Area practicing and retired attorneys, senior law students, and sworn judges who volunteered their time to serve as Mock Trial Attorney Scorers and Judges.

These volunteers represented judges from Bay Area Superior Courts, the California Bankruptcy Court, the California Supreme Court, and the California Appellate Court.

Attorney Scorers included Bay Area attorneys from County District Attorney and Public Defender offices, the State Attorney General's Office, and the California Department of Justice. Also serving as attorney scorers, were non-profit, public, private, and corporate attorneys. In addition, senior students from two Bay Area law schools also lent a hand in scoring.

Mock Trial is an academic event for high school students coordinated by the Contra Costa County Office of Education, and sponsored by the Constitutional Rights Foundation. The purpose of this program is to teach students about the law and the workings of the legal system.

For all the team and individual results, visit the Contra Costa County Office of Education's Mock Trial web page <https://www.cccoe.k12.ca.us/>

Lead by teacher coach Brian Barr and attorney coaches Ken Mifsud and Larry Lowe, California High School's Mock Trial team will now represent Contra Costa County at the California State Mock Trial Competition, held in Sacramento, Calif., March 22-23. The California state finalist team will then compete in the National Mock Trial Competition, held May 16-18, in Athens, Georgia. Go Grizzlies!



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Student Summer Internships

The Office of Reentry and Justice (ORJ) operates a 12-week, part-time summer internship that will provide knowledge of and experience in the scope and responsibilities of the Office. This includes gaining an understanding of the intersections of the criminal justice, public health care, social welfare, and public policy systems, as well as the role of community-based organizations and service providers.

This is a "hands-on" internship where every effort will be made to expose students to many different partners within the office and community.

This is a paid 12-week internship (June 3 to August 23), at up to 24 hours per week.

Applicants requirements:

Enrolled in (or a recent graduate from) an accredited college or university, or a training program that leads to a diploma, program certificate, Associate, Bachelor, or advanced degree in: Criminal Justice, Social Welfare, Public Health, Public Policy, or other program that addresses the intersections between criminal justice, public health, social welfare, and public policy.

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Applications are due no later than April 30, 2019. For more information about the internship and how to apply, please visit <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/contracosta/>



Winter Adventures in Concord

by Elaine Schroth, Executive Director of Visit Concord.



Surrounded by open space for hiking, biking, walking and relaxing, Concord is primed for a unique winter adventure. Here are five fun outdoor adventures from the Visit Concord team.

1 Picnic in the Park.

Pair your lunch with one of the biggest views in the Bay Area! At 3,849 feet, Mount Diablo's summit (has a panorama of more than 200 miles of California landscape. Which is why the 6.5-mile Grand Loop trek around the East Bay's tallest peak should be on your to-do list.

2 Six Scenic Waterfalls

Have you seen Mount Diablo's cooler and splashier side? After a good rain, six scenic waterfalls encircle the mountain's rugged northern canyons. The park has numerous hiking trails throughout the area that twist through creeks, waterfalls, luscious valleys and wildflower fields. Day hikers can take it easy exploring the natural area on the 0.7 mile Mary Bowerman Trail or ramp it up on the 6-mile Mount Diablo State Park Waterfall Loop Trail, which winds through numerous waterfalls, grasslands, oak forests and, on many days, lots of sunshine. For more information on Mount Diablo hikes, go to: <https://www.mdia.org/7-popular-hikes>

3 Trails that Keep You on the Edge of Your Seat

Pump up your fat tires and get to Lime Ridge Open Space for 25 miles of mountain bike trails. Winter and spring are ideal for lush green scenery and rainbows of popping wildflowers. Lime Ridge boasts two feature trail rides and 13 open space trails for you to pedal.

4 To-Dos at Todos

Named one of three Great Places in California by the American Planning Association, Todos Santos Plaza is 2.5 acres in downtown Concord. Kick back in the heart of the plaza—a beautiful park

with picnic tables, benches, and a medley of trees (okay, there's Wi-Fi, too!) and stage.

Experience a "hoppy" change of pace by attending The Brewing Network's 10th annual Spring Brews Festival on March 30. This popular event is returns to Todos Santos as one of the best craft beer festivals in the Bay Area with unlimited tasting from over 60 craft breweries, live music and great food. For more information and tickets go to www.thebrewingnetwork.com/spring-brews-festival-2019/.

5 Grab Your Furry Friend and Head to the Dog Park

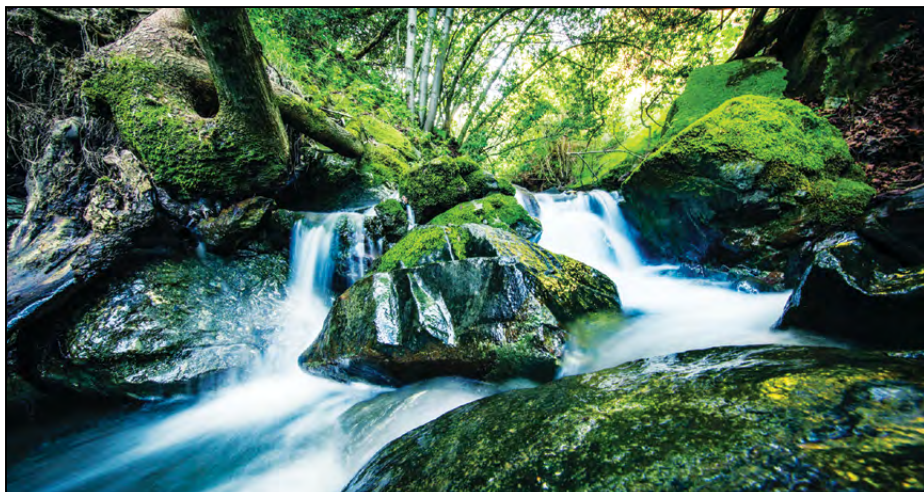


Photo by CSK Photography
Enjoying bubbles in Newhall's Paw Patch

Walking your dog is great motivation to get outside and enjoy the fresh air. Newhall Community Park offers 126 acres to explore, as well as Paw Patch, a fenced in area where your best friend can run off-leash. The Galindo Creek meanders through the park where ducks and other wild life reside at all times of the year.

Or, the 18-acre John F. Baldwin Park is home to the Baldwin Dog Park for your dogs to stretch out and run free. Both parks have children's play areas, bocce courts and picnic areas for you and your family (furry family of course) to enjoy!

Look for more fun adventures in Concord at Visit Concord's website, www.visitconcordca.com.



"Presidio: From Post to Park" Presentation at the Clayton Womens' Club

The Clayton Valley Woman's Club invites guests to attend guest speaker, Park Ranger Nate Tusa presentation, "Presidio from Post to Park." on April 9. Tusa served two years of service teaching English in Panama with the Peace Corps.

As ranger at John Muir National Historic Site in Martinez he designed and executed an educational program for 3rd and 4th graders, managed the Volunteers-In-Parks program, and led park campfire programs, full moon hikes and stargazing programs.

Golden Gate National Recreational Area in January of 2017 responsible for staffing the Visitor Center in the Presidio, acting as Lead Ranger at Fort Chamberlin Historic Site, supervising demonstrations of a 6" disappearing rifle at Battery Chamberlin at Baker Beach and managing academic interns from San Francisco State University.

The GFWC Clayton Valley Woman's Club meets at 10am the second Tuesday



of each month at St. John's Episcopal Church, 5555 Clayton Road, in Clayton. New members are always welcome.

You can also visit www.claytonvalley-womensclub.org

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Fire & Blood with George R.R. Martin and Alan Brennert

Photos by Diane Walsh

Game of Thrones' author George R.R. Martin is the featured interviewee in this issue of Books 'N' Pieces Magazine.

Interviewed by Jill Hedgecock, Martin explains his past, why he bought a small, New Mexico Theatre, his connection to wolves, and why dragons are always a good thing.

Also in this issue, Tony Bussey, Scarlett Hallway, short stories, DIY tips for authors looking to make affordable book covers, page layouts and much more.

www.BooksNPieces.com

DIABLO GAZETTE FUN ZONE

Rock The Casa with Patti Labelle



ABC 7 Anchor Dan Ashley and 98.1 The Breeze Morning co-host Carolyn McArdle emcee the concert.

Dan Ashley's 5th Annual "Rock the Casa" (RTC) concert featuring music icon Patti LaBelle sold out and rocked the house once again at the Leshner Center in Walnut Creek Saturday, March 3. Early reviews confirm that it was extraordinary evening.

"What a special evening with an amazing artist and American icon. Patti LaBelle is fantastic and the perfect headliner to mark the fifth year of Rock the CASA!" Dan reported to Diablo Gazette.

Past performers of Rock the CASA include Eddie Money, REO Speedwagon, Cheap Trick, & Melissa Etheridge.

It is oft stated in the media circle that Dan Ashley may be the hardest working man on television. But Rock

the CASA is a labor of love for him, combining his passions in music, philanthropy, community, and helping children in need. The benefit concert supports CASA of Contra Costa County, Friends of Camp Concord at Lake Tahoe, Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Bay Area, and Boys & Girls Club of Contra Costa County. Each year, this event raises tens of thousands of dollars in donations for these organizations.

"I am so grateful that Rock the CASA is able to provide meaningful financial support to so many worthy organizations that serve children in need," Ashley wrote. "Nothing makes me happier than to distribute tens of thousands of dollars to these organizations, all raised from this charity concert."

The night began backstage with a glamorous VIP party that included a raffle of donated prizes of significant value, and an auction with rare, luxurious items, autographed guitars from previous RTC feature bands, a Champaign angel, and a VIP meet & greet with Patti LaBelle. It was quite the gala.

Emcee Carolyn McArdle, 98.1 The Breeze morning co-host and Concord resident, welcomed the audience and introduced the opening act, Dan Ashley's band featuring special guest, Boston guitarist David Victor.

"Patti LaBelle is one of my favor-



ite artists and the fact that she is playing in a local, fantastic venue is SO exciting!" Carolyn said. "Plus, Dan Ashley is one of my favorite people on the planet and I'm so happy to be able to help him raise money for his charity, Rock The CASA, once again!"

CASA provides volunteers to serve children placed into foster care system because of abuse or neglect at home. Each year nearly 1000 youths, from ages up to 21 come into foster care system and are under the court's care because they are unable to live safely at home. On average CASA serves 150 of the toughest cases or 15% of these at-risk youths.

Friends of Camp Concord sends hundreds of under-served children to summer camp at lake Tahoe each year. The concert splits the proceeds evenly between the two according to the rockthecasa.org website.

It's a good cause, a great concert and exceptional community philanthropy. We look forward to Dan Ashley's 6th Rock the CASA next year.

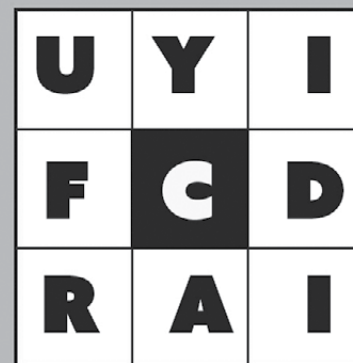


Guests were offered Champaign from the dress of this angel at the VIP Party



REO Speedwagon autographed guitar, one of several guitars auctioned off, along with many other cherished items.

PLAY A GAME? HOW MANY WORDS CAN YOU FIND?



Find as many words (four or more letters) as you can BUT, your words MUST INCLUDE the MIDDLE LETTER. **There are 17 possible words.** Check your answers below. Puzzle courtesy of

www.BooksNPieces.com

F	L	E	J	R	N	T	I	D	O	W	X
L	A	N	B	E	O	O	S	L	L	E	B
O	S	U	A	R	O	A	G	T	R	D	O
W	R	J	N	E	M	S	N	E	E	D	U
E	A	T	D	T	Y	T	I	G	C	I	Q
R	E	E	G	A	E	N	R	L	E	N	U
G	H	T	I	C	N	W	O	G	P	G	E
I	E	R	F	O	O	C	X	U	T	F	T
R	R	A	T	X	H	V	E	F	I	W	Z
L	H	U	S	B	A	N	D	L	O	V	E
W	O	Q	Z	E	U	N	E	V	N	U	B
B	E	S	T	M	A	N	C	I	S	U	M

WEDDING

BELLS

GOWN

TUX

FLOWER GIRL

RINGS

VENUE

REHEARSAL

BAND

CATERER

BEST MAN

QUARTET

RECEPTION

TOAST

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BOUQUET

BOUTONNIERE

JUNE

MUSIC

HONEYMOON

GIFTS

HUSBAND

WIFE

LOVE

Puzzle Answers from above

curd
farcy
acid
cadi
card
crud
cud
farcy
curd
farcy
acid
cadi
card
crud
cud
farcy

9 letter word:
fiduciary

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calendar of events

MARCH 17 ST. PATRICK'S DAY

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 buys a terrific breakfast. <http://www.vfwpost1525.org>

March 9 Volunteer Opportunities - The Diablo Valley Literacy Council spring workshop for Adults interested in helping other ESL (English as a Second Language) adults to learn the English language. No teaching experience is required. We will teach you to be a tutor! \$20. Registration covers materials and training. You must attend both sessions. 1-2 hours per week with your student in the home or a public place such as a local library. 9A-1PM. Go to www.dvlc4esl.org for information and to register. The Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Concord. (925) 685-3881.

Monument Crisis Center in Concord is accepting donations for several of their programs through the summer including Summer Camp and Senior Moments primarily toilet paper, paper towels, napkins, dish soap, sponges, pot holders, dish towels, foil, Saran wrap, baggies, tea, coffee, hot chocolate, unscented body wash, body lotion, cotton balls, Q-tips, deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrushes in single or 2 packs, unscented conditioner, mens' shaving cream, mens' razors, unused hotel toiletries. For more information, please visit: <http://www.monumentcrisiscenter.org/>

OUTDOORS

Farmers' Markets

Concord Tuesdays, 10am to 2pm, year-round, rain or shine.

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>

March 14-17 FORD TRI-MOTOR TOUR
Buchanan Field Airport. 6:00 AM to



6:00 PM. Step back in time to aviation's golden age. Take a flight on EAA's Ford Tri-Motor, back to an era where air travel was considered a luxury, the Roaring 20's. Cost: Viewing the aircraft is free; flights are \$70 per adult in advance, \$50 per child 17 and under. **Admission: \$50 - \$70** 51 John Glenn Dr. Concord. Tickets at www.eaa.org/shop/Flights/FlyTheFord.aspx or call 877-952-5395

RUTH BANCROFT GARDEN

MARCH 23

ALL ABOUT AIR PLANTS: 10AM-11AM. \$20 members/\$25 non-members. Register at: <https://www.ruthbancroftgarden.org/event/all-about-air-plants/>

DIY FELTED CACTI: 11AM-12:30PM. At The Ruth Bancroft Garden \$50 members/\$55 non-members <https://www.ruthbancroftgarden.org/event/diy-felted-cacti/>

APRIL 5

SPRING PLANT SALE Friday, 5:30PM-7:30 PM (MEMBERS ONLY)

Saturday & Sunday (All are welcome) 10AM – 4PM – 10% OFF non-members, 20% OFF members

APRIL 11, 18 & 25

SPRING WATERCOLORS (3-PART SERIES) \$75 members/\$85 non-members <https://www.ruthbancroftgarden.org/event/spring-watercolors/2019-04-11/>

MARCH 16-17

ST. PATRICK'S DAY FESTIVAL

One of the biggest on the West Coast, Enjoy Irish entertainment; authentic Irish beverages as well as outdoor festival favorites; even a pop-up Irish tea cottage. Saturday pancake breakfast Parade starts 9:30 AM Saturday Festival: 10 AM - 5 PM Carnival rides open through 7 PM Saturday. Shamrock 5K Fun Run & Walk starts 8:30 AM Sunday. Festival: Dublin Civic Center, 100 Civic Plaza, Dublin

CLUB/SUPPORT GROUPS' NEWS AND EVENTS

March 9

Cookie & Craft - A Beer & Cookie Pairing Event

Admission: \$12. 12:00 PM to 8:00 PM Pair four of your favorite Epidemic Ales with the four best Girl Scout Cookies of the season! S'Mores + Post Mortem Porter. Tagalongs + Nutty But Nice Peanut Butter Stout. Thin Mints + OG Nightshade on NITRO. Samoas + Affliction Amber. Epidemic Ales 150 Mason Cir. Concord

March 9

Walnut Creek Historical Society Downtown Walking Tours. Easy 90-minute guided walk on city sidewalks brings to life the early times of downtown Walnut Creek. The free tours depart at 9:30 a.m. from Liberty Bell Plaza on the corner of Broadway and Mt. Diablo Blvd. For details, call 925-935-7871 or visit the Historical Society's website at: www.wchistory.org.

March 16

Train Show and Open House

11Am-6PM. Come and see the largest HO (half o) scale layout on permanent display in the Bay Area in the only building in the entire state built especially for a model railroad. Over 4,300 feet of track covering an area of 2,500 square feet. \$3.00 ADULTS, \$2.00 CHILDREN (6-12) AND SENIORS (60-1:87). UNDER 6yrs FREE. 2751 Buena Vista in Larkey Park, Walnut Creek. <http://www.wcmrs.org/>

March 24

CONCORD WEDDING FAIR

12:00 PM to 4:00 PM Meet 60+ of the Bay Area's best wedding professionals. Win a \$10,000 wedding package or a Las Vegas Getaway! Fashion show. Couples

must register first at www.bayareaweddingfairs.com/bride-groom-registration/. Tickets online for \$15 or \$25 at door. Crowne Plaza, 45 John Glenn Dr. Concord.

March 29

East Bay Senior Resource Expo.

Crowne Plaza 9AM - 1PM. Presented by: Stonebrook Healthcare Center. Free. Booths showcasing products, resources, services and answers on how to enhance your life and those of your loved ones. 45 John Glenn Dr. Concord

March 30

Spring Brew Fest 12pm-4pm.

Todos Santos Plaza. Over 60 craft breweries, live music and great food. Early Bird tickets are \$40, \$5 for designated drivers, and can be purchased on line at thebrewingnetwork.com. Ticket includes entry into festival grounds, a commemorative glass and unlimited tasting. You must be 21 of older with a valid government issued ID to enter. See our ad on page 16.

March 30

RBHWorks Brewery Takeover Tour at Epidemic Ales

1:00 PM to 8:00 PM., an art show at their taproom called, "With RBHworks", local artists will display their paintings for sale in the taproom. 150 Mason Cir. Concord

April 20

Bay Area Craft Beer Festival

12pm - 4pm Martinez Waterfront. Over 50 local breweries and over 100 beers to sample including Home Brew! Live music delicious food, and more! Price is \$40 in advance, \$50 at the door if not sold out. Designated Driver tickets available for \$5 or \$10 day of event.

VISUAL ARTS/ THEATRE/MUSIC

March 2-10

24th East Bay International Jewish Film Festival at the Century 16 in Pleasant Hill. 125

Crescent Dr. For a list of movies, view trailers and geet showtimes visit <https://eastbayjewishfilm.org/2019/>

March 8

Arts After Dark

5:30 pm until March 08, 8:00 pm. Come after work for beer, wine and art-making stations with Community Arts teaching artists. Enjoy hand-building with clay, a dance party, karaoke, and more. Food available for purchase. Tickets are \$10 and can be purchased at the door. 111 N. Wigett Lane, Walnut Creek

March 16

"Aria Kid-ding" comic solo recital by

Kate OffEr and Eric Howe at Clayton Valley Presbyterian Church, 1578 Kirker Pass Road, on Saturday, 7:30 PM. Tickets will be available at the door for \$15. For more information call 925-672-4848 or visit www.cvpresby.org.

March 28 - April 13

'The Savannah Sipping Society' Comedy Show

Clayton Theatre Company. Endeavor Hall, 6008 Center St., Clayton, Tickets: Purchase \$20-\$25, online at www.ClaytonTheatreCompany.com or www.brownpapertickets.com

VINNIES BAR AND GRILL

LIVE COMEDY NIGHTS, 3rd Mondays every month. 7:30 PM to 9:00 PM Top Bay Area comics. Free show -- No cover, no minimum. 21+. Full bar and restaurant. Mean Dave hosts, 3rd Monday every month.. 2045 Mt. Diablo St. Concord March 18; April 15; May 20; June 17 July 15; August 19

April 4-22

PINNED BUTTERFLY by Adam ESsquenazi Douglas. Admission: \$15 - \$22. B8 Theater Company. 2:00 PM to 8:00 PM. This Peet Cocke directed play discusses when members of BKPRIDE decide to hold the very first Brooklyn Gay Pride March, a handful of secrets ignite, turning a celebration of self into a scathing dissection of bisexual erasure, prejudice within the LGBT community. 2292 Concord Blvd. Concord

CONCORD PAVILION

April 20

SAMMY HAGAR at Concord Pavilion. 7:30 pm.

MAY 15

Florence and the Machine at Concord Pavilion. 7:30 pm. 2000 Kirker Pass, in Concord.



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Views of the Valley

Photos by Micah



Walnut Creek Aquanauts Qualify Ten Athletes for National Team Squads! Photo courtesy of SportStars Magazine.



Concord Chamber of Commerce Crab Feed at Centre Concord.



Crab cake? Alpine Pastry donated this custom cake to the Chamber of Commerce Crab Feed - such delicious talent. Photo courtesy of Edi Birsan.



Costumes were out in full force on February 10 at the Crowne Plaza in Concord for East Bay Comic-con.

Live Strong Health Expo at Concord Senior Center March 1



Much was learned at the seminar on back care



Tony DeLosada of Sons in Retirement takes a break with the Diablo Gazette at the Live Strong Expo.



Coffee with Concord Mayor Obringer at Alpine Pastry and Cakes in Concord.

RUTH BANCROFT GARDEN & NURSERY

Spring Plant Sale

Friday, 4/5: Members Only Preview 5:30-7:30pm
Saturday & Sunday 4/6 -4/7: 10am - 5pm Open to all

20% off for members, 10% off for non-members
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Why Age 7 is the Right Time to See an Orthodontist

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SPRINGTIME ORANGE POPPY SEED CAKE

Spring is something of which I can't get enough. I love the whole idea of it. The seasonal rains, when we get them, transform the golden hills into mounds of bright green, and my tulip bulbs begin to sprout. It's such a colorful time of year.

I thought a bright dessert would coincide with the season. Citrus is a favorite of mine. It's so bright and cheerful. This cake has the perfect blend of tang and sweetness. So spring into baking action with me and enjoy this orange poppy seed cake favorite.

Orange Poppy Seed Cake

1 TBSP orange rind, grated
1 white cake mix
1 1/2 cups orange juice
1/3 cup canola oil
3 eggs
1 tsp orange extract
1 TBSP poppy seeds
2 TBSP flour
1/2 tsp baking powder



Frosting:

8 oz softened cream cheese
1 1/2 cups powdered sugar
4 TBSP softened butter
2 tsp vanilla extract
1/4 tsp salt

In a mixing bowl, add all the ingredients and mix on slow for 30 seconds, then 2 minutes on medium speed. Bake at 350°, 15-18 mins for cupcakes, or if using a 9x13 pan, 24-26 mins. Cool and then frost with cream cheese frosting.

Diablo Gazette Contributor Scores George R.R. Martin Interview

by William Gensburger

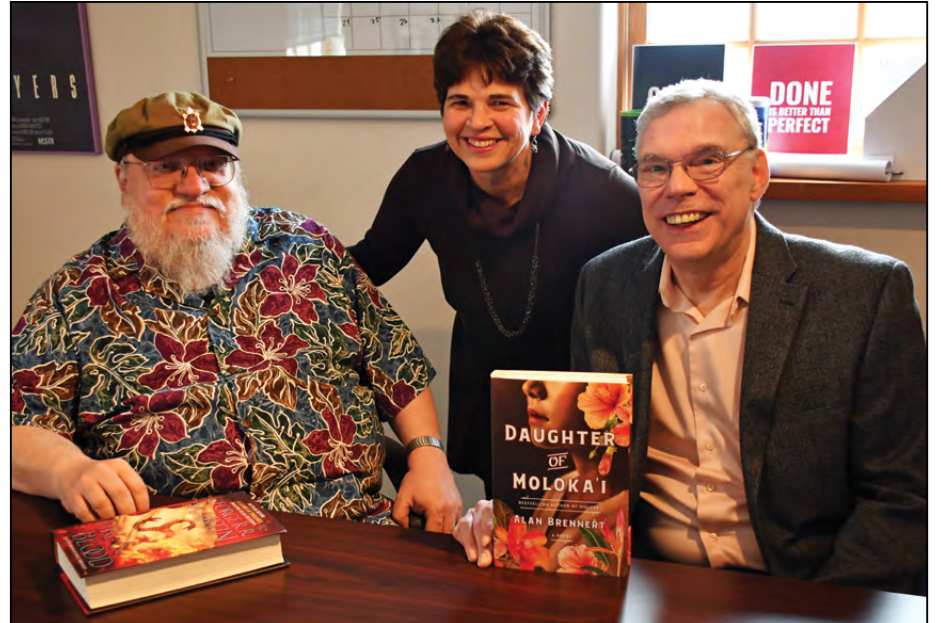


photo by Diane Walsh

George R.R. Martin with Jill Hedgecock and Alan Brennert during their February interview in Santa Fe, NM.

Diablo Gazette columnist, Jill Hedgecock, ("Book Ends", "Ruby Dooby Do to the Rescue") and award-winning Walnut Creek author, "Rhino in the Room", scored the opportunity of a lifetime to an exclusive interview in New Mexico with multiple award-winning author, George R.R. Martin (Game of Thrones author) last month, for [Books 'N Pieces Magazine](http://BooksNPiecesMagazine.com).

George Raymond Richard Martin, also known as GRRM, is an American novelist, short story writer in the fantasy, horror, and science fiction genres, screenwriter, as well as television producer. Martin is best known for his series of epic fantasy novels, "A Song of Ice and Fire," which was adapted in 2011, into the popular, long-lasting HBO series "Game of Thrones."

In addition, the interview included another respected author, Alan Brennert with whom Hedgecock had been communicating regarding their respective book releases since last July.

"Alan had generously provided an endorsement for my book: 'Rhino in the Room,' and revealed that he might have an opportunity for me to attend an author event at the Jean Cocteau Cinema, in Santa Fe, where George R.R. Martin would be interviewing Alan about his book 'Daughter of Molokai,' the sequel to 'Molokai'."

In September 2018, Hedgecock asked Brennert about a possible backstage interview with both Brennert and Martin. And in November she was invited to submit questions that she would ask Martin.

"I wanted to stay focused on topics Martin hadn't been interviewed about, so I compiled questions about his community philanthropic efforts peppered with a few questions about his writing process."

The questions were approved and Hedgecock, along with photographer, Diane Walsh, made the necessary travel arrangements to fly to Santa Fe for a February 24, interview.

"I was definitely apprehensive before the interview," Hedgecock said. "My feelings were a mix of nervous energy and anticipation. I felt pressure to make sure I provided a good first impression."

After arriving and meeting with both Martin and Brennert, the group moved upstairs to a conference room on the second floor of the theater. "I asked Diane to take some posed pictures. One of which was with the two men seated in front of their latest books. Then, spontaneously, George looked at Alan and joked: 'My book is bigger than your book.' We all

laughed, and I knew I was going to enjoy the duration of the interview."

While in New Mexico, Hedgecock and photographer, Diane Walsh, drove to Ramah, about two and a half hours from Albuquerque to visit the Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary, which currently houses several wolves with connections to George R.R. Martin: a pure Arctic wolf named Flurry who makes frequent appearances at Jean Cocteau Cinema; and six, pure white, high-content wolves, known as the Westeros pack (their only relationship to the Game of Thrones show are their names).

Martin's involvement in Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary (WSWS) came about because—while these furry beasts figure prominently in some of his novels—Martin's fan group, Brotherhood Without Banners honored his wife, Parris McBride-Martin, with a holiday present.

April's edition of the Diablo Gazette will include wolf photos by Walsh with an article by Hedgecock on the status of California's gray wolf.

Looking back, Hedgecock reflected on her experience. "As a person, I was deeply honored and humbled that he agreed to take time to meet with me. As a writer, it felt like I had presented me with a giant birthday cake. I was about to interview not one, but two accomplished authors."

For Martin, Hedgecock wanted to make sure she captured the human side of the successful author. "He does lots of interviews about GOT but I wanted to write something that revealed his philanthropic side. So, when I did my research and learned that he had bankrolled the reopening of an old cinema and sponsored the rescue of wolves and wolf-dogs, I focused my interview questions there."

In addition to the interview, Jill Hedgecock also learned that her book "Rhino in the Room" was the recipient of the 2018 Fifth Annual New Apple Book Awards for Excellence in Independent Publishing, a well-deserved recognition for a local author who can only be described as a powerhouse in her field.

Read Hedgecock's interview with George R.R. Martin and Alan Brennert in the March issue of Books 'N Pieces Magazine (www.BooksNPieces.com).

To learn more about and the Westeros wolf pack and how to contribute to WSWS visit: <https://wildspiritwolfsanctuary.org/westeros-pack>.

Read Jill Hedgecock's award-winning novel "Rhino in the Room" on Amazon.com at <https://amzn.to/2Vod6Iy>



frugelegance

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

YUM – St. Patrick's Day Corned Beef Dinner

One great trait I love about St. Patrick's Day is the traditional dinner is one of the easiest holiday meals to make. You can make this fabulous St. Patrick's Day feast for a crowd or just a small group. This year, it's just my husband and I

for our annual corned beef and cabbage dinner. I will always make this each year even if my girls aren't home or I'm not having guests over.

I buy the corned beef that comes packaged already seasoned. Follow your package directions, it typically takes three hours to cook in a large pot of water. The last hour of cooking I add vegetables of carrots, cabbage wedges and red potatoes. It's that easy, a heavenly one-pot



meal.

On occasion, I will prepare the potatoes in a separate pot to make mashed potatoes. For this, I prefer Yukon Gold potatoes. Boil them in water until soft for about 20 minutes and drain.

Chop 2 Tbsp parsley, add 2 tsp lemon zest, 2 tsp lemon juice, and 2 tsp butter and then mash. Add salt to taste. This is a lighter version than the traditional dish made with milk, sour cream and butter, yet it still has so much flavor.

After the meat is cooked, I make a horseradish crust. Use 1/2 cup breadcrumbs mixed with 5 oz. jar of horseradish and broil approx. 3 minutes. If you like mustard, you can spread a layer of that before adding the horseradish mixture.

Even when it's just the two of us, I still like to make the table a bit special with decorations and green-themed place settings and little party hats for all.

I miss the days when the kids were little. We would start the day with "tricks" the Leprechaun would do before the kids woke up like make the milk green and serve with green eggs or pancakes.

Happy St Patty's Day!



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 online at www.frugelegance.com. FruElegance is where Frugal and Elegance come together.



Jill Hedgecock's bookends
Author of *Rhino in the Room* www.jillhedgecock.com

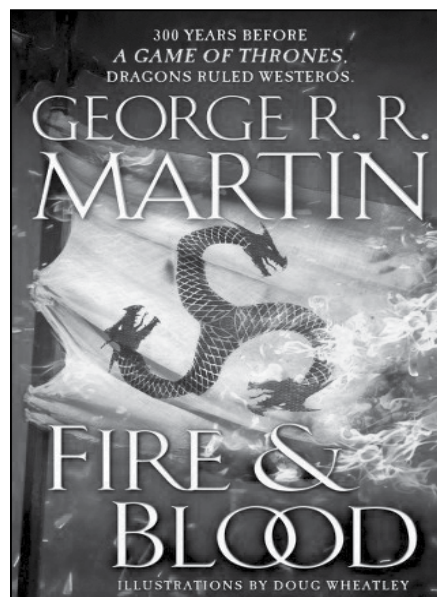
FIRE & BLOOD

by George R.R. Martin

"Fire & Blood" (2018, Bantam Books, hardcover, 719 pages, \$20.99) by George R. R. Martin is a monster of a book in size, scope, and content. The sweeping documentary covers 300 years of Targaryen history before the Game of Thrones dynasty. Despite Martin's trademark plethora of characters and settings, it's easy to get swept up in the drama of wars, king's weddings and coronations, and most especially, the dragons. While only three of these fire-breathing creatures inhabit the Game of Thrones era, "Fire & Blood" is flush with these scaly and usually colorful beasts. What the drab Balerion (nicknamed The Black Dread), the aerial mount of King Aegon I, lacked in ornamentation, the dragon made up for in fierceness. The Black Dread was largely responsible for overthrowing the kings of the Seven Kingdoms, along with Aegon's two sisters and their dragon mounts.

Births, deaths, contentious wars, arranged marriages, and conniving successors characterize the epic tale where time is measured as Before [Aegon's] Conquest (BC) and After the Conquest (AC). The story spans 1 AC to 136 AC when the dragons died.

Martin's imagination seems to have no limits. In addition to memorable characters reminiscent of Games of Thrones personalities, other descriptions of early Westeros inhabitants are familiar based on physical characteristics. Maegor I the Cruel will likely remind Game of Thrones fans of Joffrey Lannister's vile behavior, while the King's fool of Targaryen era, Mushroom, will elicit memories of the little person, Tyrion Lannister. Keeping up with the host of characters and dragons can be a challenge and Martin names the Valyrian swords of key conquerors and knights too. But it's hard to begrudge the masterly crafted details which immerse readers into the fascinating world of Westeros Martin miraculously creates through words. Equally impressive are



Doug Wheatley's illustrations of kings and dragons.

George R. R. Martin's impressive career has reached beyond the printed word. In Hollywood he worked as a writer/producer on "The Twilight Zone" and "Beauty and the Beast." His work on the fantasy series, "A Song of Ice and Fire", began in the mid 1990s. He has received many accolades for his work over the years including the Locus Award winner for Best Fantasy Novel, Hugo and Nebula awards. While he may inhabit the Seven Kingdoms through his prose, his home base lies in Santa Fe, New Mexico where he lives with his wife, Parris.

Not surprisingly given the popularity of Martin's fantasy novels, the book is a #1 New York Times Bestseller. "Fire & Blood" is the first volume of the two-part history as kings and lords divide and conquer the fascinating world of Westeros. Sweeping in scope, the novel is sure to delight both devoted Martin readers and fans of HBO's "Game of Thrones."

movie review

by Michael Ordona, Common Sense Media



"FIGHTING WITH MY FAMILY"

4/5 STARS

Based on the true story of pro wrestling superstar Paige, "fighting with My Family" follows a family of rough-hewn wrestlers from Norwich, England. Young Raya (Florence Pugh) doesn't look like the standard WWE supermodel/grappler, but wrestling is in her blood. It's also in the DNA of her loving brother, Zak (Jack Lowden), and adoring parents with a sketchy pasts, Julia and Ricky (Lena Headey, Nick Frost). When Raya gets her shot at joining the WWE, can she make it through Coach Hutch's (Vince Vaughn's) demanding program and join the galaxy of WWE stars such as The Rock (Dwayne Johnson as himself)?

This funny, heartfelt movie represents a huge step up for WWE Studios. To date, World Wrestling Entertainment has mostly been a conveyor belt for violent macho fantasies and low-bar humor. "Fighting with My Family" is something totally different: a genuinely well-made film about a family. That's due largely to the writing and direction of Stephen Merchant, who's probably best known for co-creating the original version of "The Office".

Merchant's script follows the contours of a scrappy-underdog sports movie, but it's also filled with quirky details about Raya/Paige's family (all wrestlers) and class differences in England. Before Zak brings his fiancée's parents over for dinner, for example, he begs his parents to clean up their act a little. He asks of his dad, "Can he put on a shirt?" To which jolly, mohawked, alcoholic ex-con Ricky bellows, "How posh are they?" Most important, Merchant and the cast convincingly create a family that has loved each other forever and that wrestling is a lifelong dream.

Pugh is great in the lead role. She



allows herself to be "unpretty," both physically and in the mistakes Paige makes. As her loving but deeply frustrated brother, Lowden (Dunkirk) is charming and complex. Both seem headed for big things. Headey and Frost are endearing and lively as their parents, Vaughn is well-cast as the tough coach, and Merchant is funny in a small, all-reaction role as the fiancée's dad. The movie's wrestling action, including the training, is enjoyable. While it may be hard to deeply invest in the outcome of fixed matches (just don't call them "fake," at least not around Paige's clan), the film sufficiently involves us in Paige's struggles so that predetermined "winning" and "losing" outcomes are secondary to the experience.

PG-13 Cast: Florence Pugh, Dwayne The Rock Johnson, Lena Headey
Director: Stephen Merchant

theater review

"The Savannah Sipping Society"

Clayton Theatre Company presents "The Savannah Sipping Society" by Jones, Hope and Wooten. This is a delightful comedy focusing on four unique Southern women, all needing to escape the sameness of their day-to-day routines. They become drawn together by fate (and an impromptu happy hour) and decide to reclaim the enthusiasm for the life they've lost.

"The Savannah sipping Society" will run from March 28-april 13 at the Endeavor Hall, 6008 Center St. in Clayton. For tickets or additional information call 925-222-9106 or visit: www.ClaytonTheatreCompany.com or www.brownpapertickets.com



photo by Clayton Theatre . Cast: Tamara Filner, Natalie Archangel, Kenda Sappington, Linda Sciacqua

Diablo Ballet Celebrates Its 25th Anniversary of Once Upon a Time

Diablo Ballet celebrates 25 years with a new full-length ballet from Julia Adam, accompanied live by the Contra Costa Wind Symphony at the Leshar Center for the Arts, March 22-23.

"Once Upon a Time" is a fairytale adventure where you will meet Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, Alice in Wonderland, Sleeping Beauty, Jack and the Beanstalk, Snow White and more.

This world premiere ballet is choreographed by renowned dance maker, Julia Adam, who first danced with the National Ballet of Canada and then with the San Francisco Ballet from 1988 - 2002. Adam has created over 60 works for numerous companies throughout the U.S. and Canada.

The costumes are being designed and created by Mario Alonzo, former principal dancer, choreographer, costume designer

and Ballet Master for Oakland Ballet. Alonzo has designed costumes for many prestigious choreographers around the country.

The music is comprised of sections from George Gershwin's "An American in Paris" and Benjamin Britten's "The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra" and will be accompanied live by the Contra Costa Wind Symphony

under the direction of Brad Hogarth, Music Director and Conductor.

Artistic Director, Lauren Jonas adds, "Collaborations are a very important part of Diablo Ballet's mission and I'm thrilled to work with the Contra Costa Wind Symphony," says Artistic Director

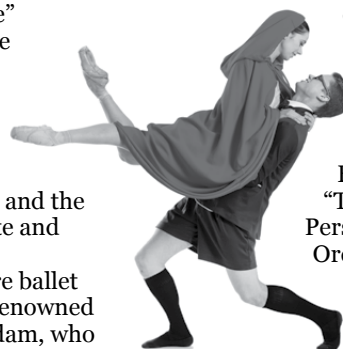
Lauren Jonas. "Story ballets that utilize a small cast of exceptional dancers have been a unique part of Diablo Ballet's history and Julia Adam is a wonderful story teller."

Children are invited to dress up as their favorite fairytale character and can stay and meet the dancers after the performances.

Prior to the Saturday 2 pm matinee, ticket holders are invited to a free Story Time at Bedford Gallery at 1 pm. Mayor Cindy Silva and costumed performers will bring the story of Cinderella to life.

For the Saturday evening 8 pm performance, ticket holders are invited to a pre-show happy hour at Massimo Ristorante at 6:30 pm with Director Lauren Jonas and choreographer Julia Adam.

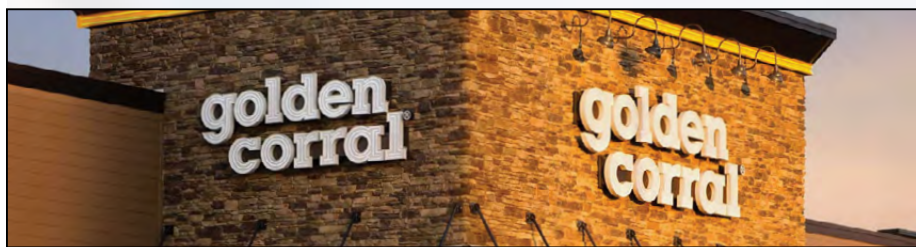
"Once Upon a Time" performs March 22 at 6:30 pm and March 23 at 2 pm and 8 pm at the Leshar Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek. Tickets range from \$15-\$50. For tickets, call 925-943-SHOW (7469) or visit www.lesherartscenter.org.



Out to Lunch

Golden Corral Opens to Big Crowds

by Richard Eber



It's 6:35 pm on a Thursday night at the Golden Corral on Diamond Blvd in Concord. A crowd numbering more than 80 patrons is patiently waiting outside for their opportunity to enter the all you can eat establishment.

Inside almost every table is full as staff scramble to provide seating for those trying to enter. This enthusiasm for a restaurant that opened their doors with little fanfare less than a month before is remarkable. Apparently, there is a market for diners who want to eat steak and heavy proteins for a fair price.

The centerpiece for the chain's popularity is the availability of sirloin steak and hamburgers seven days a week. Barbecued on a grill, flames soar as the chefs flip the meat over. John from Vallejo drove over to Concord just to eat steak. "I love meat. The Golden Corral allows me to gorge myself and eat as much as I want," he told me. Looking at his plate piled high with beef, fried chicken and ham; it appears John was getting his money's worth and then some.

Although he is busy working 16 hours a day, Franchise owner Ray Vasquez isn't complaining about too much business. He is busy training staff and trying to give his clients the best that Golden Corral can offer. Vasquez is a veteran of 30 years working for their competitor Home Town Buffet. He came over to the Golden Corral to manage a store for them some five years ago. This enabled him to qualify for being the owner of the new Concord Branch.

Even though Home Town Buffet failed at this sight, Vasquez was not discouraged. He has confidence that he has a winning formula.

"Giving consumers 18 proteins to choose from each day, keeps consumers happy." He is also aided by corporate's Research and Development producing a steady stream of new menu ideas.



For example, Vasquez explained, "We are offering a lighter side especially in our salad bar, which we are planning to expand." I placed some grilled chicken breast on top of fresh spinach, greens, with hard boiled eggs and other toppings. While this salad did not compare to what one might find at Sweet Tomatoes in nearby Pleasant hill, it was more respectable than the previous tenant and the now defunct Sizzler on Willow Pass. I appreciated that the Golden Corral did not try to overwhelm diners with heavy doses of mayonnaise.

As might be expected there were lines to get served at the meat pit where they cooked the steaks and burgers. The biggest problem patrons had was getting their items cooked more on the rare to medium rare side. Once at the table, the sirloin was tasty,

but a little on the tough side. Cutting it diagonally helped. Steak retains most of its juices this way, making it a more tender.

Other items on the menu of note was pot roast, meatloaf, and sliced ham, assorted chicken wings, and a fajita bar with Florissant looking cheese sauce. They also offered heavily battered fried shrimp and white fish the night I was there. There was also a large assortment of mashed potatoes, cooked vegetables and other buffet standards. I especially liked The Golden Corral's made from scratch biscuits which were served with margarine or a Land of Lakes buttery tasting spread.



If you want a complete dining experience, be careful not to fill up with the main courses and salad, because the dessert section is quite extensive. Vasquez says everything is made on the premises except for the pies which are delivered by corporate to the branch. The restaurant prominently displays a chocolate fountain for dipping cakes, cookies, and fruit. There is also soft ice cream and a large assortment of cakes that are especially liked by children.

In all, the Golden Corral should be enjoyed for what it is; an inexpensive place where large appetites can be satisfied. Don't expect to find the quality one might find at Ruth's Chris for a steak dinner. However, if one wanders through the buffet line, there are an abundant amount of choices to partake in.

What makes Golden Corral popular? I asked Denise from Walnut Creek who brought her son and two grandchildren. "Our family went to the one in Texas where we used to live, she said. "We always had a great time for a good price. Things are a bit more expensive now, but that is a sign of times. I'm glad they opened this restaurant in Concord."

All you can eat connoisseur Mike Wright added "the quality and the presentation has gone down in many restaurants, but the Golden Corral appears to have more diligence."

Vasquez agrees, "We opened in Concord because it is attractive to visitors throughout the area. We have an active program attracting tour buses and large groups as this is an important strategy bringing more people into our restaurant."

Golden Corral Buffet and Grill is located at 2050 Diamond Boulevard in Concord.

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aRt Cottage

by FROgard www.aRtCottage.info

Landscapes of the Mind

by Lisa Fulmer & Fro

Landscapes can be interpreted in so many ways. A traditional scenic vista can be representative of your personal experience from a vacation, your birthplace, or the view outside your window.

On the other hand, an abstract or fantasy setting might spark a curious deja-vu moment or bring back the memory of a distant daydream.

In March, the aRt Cottage is proud to be partnering with the Concord Art Association (CAA) again for an incredible new show called "Landscapes of the Mind."

Nearly 30 CAA members will take you on a wild ride from the natural world to the exciting abstract world of fantasy. Stretch your imagination and



you'll be taken to places you've never been with unique and creative visions of landscapes from the past, present and future.

There's plenty to see or purchase at the aRt Cottage! Come by and say hello to one of our daily artists in residence. Catch them in the act of creating and learn more about their artistic style and techniques.

"Landscapes of the Mind" runs from March 2-29, 2019.

A Call for Artists!

Main Street Arts Gallery is preparing for its first annual plein air exhibition, "Looking Out My Backdoor" from May 3 – May 31.

All plein air artists are encouraged to enter their works for this show. Cash awards will be granted to top submissions: 1st \$100, 2nd \$50, 3rd \$25. Additionally, the People's Choice will merit an award of \$25.

Entries will be judged by Samantha McNally, watercolor and artist and former President of California Watercolor Association (CWA), who has been painting en plein for 20 years. Gwenn Sprat and Pamela McCauley, members of Main Street Arts Gallery will also serve as award judges.

Entry deadline is April 19, 2019. To enter, go to mainstreetarts.net, print out the entry form and mail in with your entry fee. Then email your images for jurying. All details are on the prospectus which you will find on Main Street Arts website.

All artists and art lovers are also invited to attend Main Street Arts 3-year celebration on March 9 from 5-7 pm. Enjoy Wine, beverages, appetizers, music, dancing, and of course the art. The music trio Garageland Rodeo's BBC Sessions will perform their rocking blues



with lots of soul. The trio includes Bruce (Jack-knife) Campbell, Barbara Quinlan-Tudda, and Chris (CB) Bryant.

Write a poem, draw a picture, or just wish us well on the guest wall which will then remain on display throughout the

month along with new works from member artists for the March exhibit.

Main Street Arts was founded in 2016 by several of the Martinez Gallery Co-op members, in partnership with other local artists. The gallery presents a wide range of collectible fine art from fused glass, to photography, to paintings, making Martinez an important part of the Bay Area local contemporary art scene.

Main Street Arts Gallery is open 11-5 pm, Wednesday through Saturday; 10am-2pm on Sundays, and located at 613 Main Street in Martinez.



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Ruby Dooby Do to the Rescue

Tyler

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

Tyler is one "pawsitively special dog" that will need a gentle, patient guardian willing to take the time he'll need to build his confidence. This sweet, senior pittie-mix is 10-years old with a beautiful reddish, brindle coat. He is looking for a quiet home to enjoy his retirement years. At 55 pounds, he's considered a mid-sized dog. Tyler is happy with leisurely strolls for daily exercise and would love to find a soft place and person to cuddle with. He. It's best that he does not go into a home that has cats or small animals. Tyler is neutered, current on vaccinations, and micro-chipped. Tyler's adoption fee has been prepaid by a generous donor.

If you're ready to bring Tyler into your heart, please fill out a matchmaker profile (<https://www.arflife.org/files/pdf/arf-matchmaker-2019.pdf>), then visit him at Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation (ARF) facility located at 2890 Mitchell Drive in Walnut Creek. Their hours are Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday Noon - 6 pm and Friday Noon to 7 pm.

Founded in 1991, ARF has rescued more than 40,000 cats and dogs. It is a privately funded 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization supported solely by donors and receives no government funding. In 2018, ARF earned the highest possible rating - four stars - from Charity



Navigator for the 11th consecutive year. Only one percent of charities reach this milestone, and ARF is proud that 87 cents of every dollar goes directly to its programs.

Update: Not surprisingly, Vicky, the sweet 22-pound Papillion/terrier mix featured last month (Diablo Gazette, February 2109) has found her furever home.

[Ruby Dooby Do is Concord's Instagram celebrity with more than 75,300 followers. [Instagram.com/rubydooby_doo](https://www.instagram.com/rubydooby_doo). 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.]

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NEWS & TALK

In case you missed it...

Chabot Space and Science Center to Receive Moon Rock

The Chabot Space and Science Center will receive a Moon rock from NASA on Sunday to be put on public display in celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Apollo 9 Moon mission.

Apollo 9 astronaut Russell Schweickart and Chabot Executive Director Adam Tobin will lead a dedication ceremony at 2 p.m.

The Moon rock was collected on the Descartes Highlands on the surface of the Moon during the Apollo 16 Moon Mission in 1972.

The Moon rock will be on loan from NASA's Johnson Space Center and presented on behalf of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and Schweickart.

For more information, visit www.chabotspace.org.

Clayton Valley Sunrise Rotary Club of Concord, D&H Enterprises Auto Repair Donate 33 Vehicles to Camp Fire Victims



Clayton Valley Sunrise Rotary Club of Concord and D&H Enterprises recently donated 33 reconditioned cars to Cars-4-Paradise, which helps victims of the deadly Camp Fire in Butte County.

There still is a desperate need for trucks, so if you or someone you know has a truck they no longer use and want to donate, please contact Dave Kemnitz with D&H Enterprises on his cell at 925-326-5868 or by email at dave@dandhau-torepair.com.

Domino's Moving into The Old Baja Fresh Building

Domino's Pizza will soon be moving into the old Baja Fresh building on Willow Pass Rd. at Contra Costa Blvd. in Concord.

This location will also have a dining room, meaning it's not just take-out or delivery, like every other Domino's in the area.

It's expected to open within the next couple of months.

More Worked Planned for Richmond-San Rafael Bridge

Caltrans announced that repairs to Richmond-San Rafael Bridge, damaged by falling concrete in February, will take several months.

The added work means the opening of a bicycle/pedestrian path set for late spring will be delayed by at least two months, according to Caltrans.

A large concrete chunk hit a car on the bridge's lower deck the morning of Feb. 7, and more concrete fell in the afternoon. No one was injured, but the bridge was closed much of the day.

After crews replace the upper deck expansion joint responsible for the falling concrete, nearly identical work on 31 additional upper deck joints will start March 4.

"Safety is Caltrans' top priority. Out of an abundance of caution, we decided to replace the remaining sliding plate joints on the bridge beginning with those on the upper deck," said Caltrans District 4 Director Tony Tavares.

Caltrans engineers regularly inspect the span and have re-inspected all joints on the 63-year-old bridge in recent weeks, Tavares said.

Work will take place overnight from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m., with one lane of traffic to remain open in each direction.

A pathway to establish the first Bay Trail connection between Contra Costa and Marin counties was slated to open in April but will be delayed.

The installation of a four-mile long moveable barrier to separate bicyclists and pedestrians from auto traffic has been delayed to allow construction crews unfettered access to the joint repair sites. Once the barrier is installed, the bicycle/pedestrian path will follow in three to four weeks, Caltrans officials say.

The most recent inspection of the underside of the upper deck and the upper deck joints was conducted in August 2018. The last inspection of the driving surface on the upper deck was completed in September 2017. Structural integrity issues were not identified in any of the last inspections, according to Caltrans.

Salvation Army Thrift Store Moving into the Beverly's Building in Concord

The Salvation Army Thrift store is moving into the old Beverly's building on Clayton Rd. in Concord, inside the TJ Maxx shopping center. The store will open on March 20, 2019.

Semi-Pro Soccer Arrives in Concord



While the City of Concord waits for the results of a lengthy feasibility study on the development of a soccer stadium downtown, Concord has already spawned a semi-pro men's soccer team. The United Premier Soccer League (UPSL) recently announced Contra Costa Football Club as a member starting with the 2019 Spring Season.

Based in Concord, Contra Costa FC will begin UPSL play in the Western Conference Wild West Division and play its UPSL home games this season at Northgate High School Stadium, 425 Castle Rock Rd., Walnut Creek, in compliance with UPSL's Minimum Standards.

United Premier Soccer League Wild West Division Manager Nick Arellano said, "Contra Costa FC is a well-run club and we think they'll be a great addition to the already competitive UPSL Wild West Division. The Contra Costa FC staff has assembled a winning organization in Concord, and they are committed to being among the clubs competing for the UPSL 2019 Spring Season Championship."

Contra Costa FC is owned by Mark Wine, 33, CEO of Functional Muscle Fitness and the Head Strength and Conditioning Coach at De La Salle High School.

"We feel like it's the right time for the club. Our biggest goal is to bring a top-level Pro Development club to this area. We feel like there's a need to inspire the youth players that are all around and give them a place to play as older players and role models to look up to," Wine said. "We need to take the next step up and the UPSL is where we want to be to play a higher level of competition. This is something that we want to do and something that we've promised to our players. It's just one of those moments where we sensed it was the right time for us."

Contra Costa FC has played in the prestigious NorCal Premier League since its inception in 2015 and claimed the Liga NorCal Copa Cup Championship in May 2018.

"A lot of our players come from local youth clubs and that makes us unique. We're not attached to any one youth club

and because of that, we've been able to build a bigger and stronger community," Wine explained. "We have representations from almost all of them (local clubs), players which in many cases were the best players from those clubs."

Gabe Cienfuegos serves as General Manager for Contra Costa FC. Cienfuegos, 34, played collegiately at Belmont's Notre Dame de Namur University in 2005-'06 and is a youth coach at Walnut Creek Surf Soccer Club.

Derricke Brown is Head Coach. Brown played collegiately at St. Mary's College and is in his eighth season as Head Coach at De La Salle, where he's led the boys' varsity soccer team to four California Interscholastic Federation section titles in six championship game appearances. Brown also coaches at Walnut Creek Surf SC.

Jon Scoles is the Director of Player Development and serves as an Assistant

Coach. The Director of Coaching at Heritage Soccer Club, Scoles also is a Men's Soccer Coach at Contra Costa Community College.

The UPSL was formed in 2011 and is the fastest growing Pro Development League in the USA, with 400-plus teams targeted for 2019 Fall Season. Each UPSL team is individually owned and operated and is responsible for maintaining either UPSL Pro Premier Division or Championship Division minimum standards.

UPSL teams are all eligible to participate in the U.S. Open Cup Qualifying Rounds through the leagues affiliation with the U.S. Soccer Federation (USSF) and the United States Adult Soccer Association (USASA).

Become a fan and attend a game. Schedules and rosters are posted on their website at www.contracostafc.com.



No Persons Were Beheaded in the Writing of this Article

Every year in the month of September, leaders from around the world converge on New York City to attend the United Nations General Assembly. Presidents, prime ministers, kings and queens, flood New York City during this time. This is a very taxing time for the Secret Service because all foreign heads of countries and heads of state fall under Secret Service protection when on American soil. If a foreign leader is accompanied by his/her spouse, then the spouse also receives Secret Service protection.

I was driving motorcade routes with my counterpart in preparation for the visit of the first family to Palo Alto, California. The Clintons would be arriving in less than a week with their daughter Chelsea who would be starting her freshman year at Stanford University. As we were running our routes, I received a phone call from the Secret Service Duty Agent. He informed me that reporting instructions had just come out for United Nations Assembly and that I had been picked up on a detail and would be traveling to New York after the Clinton visit. I asked which detail I had been assigned and he said, "The King of Swaziland." I said, "Swaziland? Where the heck is Swaziland? Sounds like a bad amusement park." (King Mswatii has since changed the country's name to Eswatini).

When I hung up, my counterpart was laughing. "No way, you're on the King of Swaziland detail at the U.N.?" he chuckled.

I told him I was and asked what was so funny.

"I was on that detail last year. It was a trip," he said. "The King has like seven or eight wives, his guards carry spears, and he has a chanter."

"A chanter?" I asked.

"Yeah, I was posted at his hotel room door and here comes this guy from his entourage down the hall. He gets to about six inches from the King's door and just stands there. Then, while facing the door, he starts chanting in Swazi. After a few minutes he turned and walked away. This happened every day," he explained.

"Really?" I asked. "What about the guards and spears?"

"So," he said, "the King's guards travelled with him from Swaziland. They were all dressed in traditional clothing like loincloths, beads, and sandals, and they all carried ceremonial spears everywhere. It was the craziest protection detail I've ever seen. From the beginning of the visit, one of his guards had an attitude and kept butting heads with our guys and would not follow procedures. When this got back to the King, he was embarrassed and had the guard removed from his detail." Then in a more serious tone, he added, "The word is that when they returned to Swaziland, the King had the guy beheaded."

"You've got to be kidding. No way."

I was shocked to hear this. This harsh reality would weigh on my mind throughout the assignment and invoke sympathy for the guards with each encounter.

I arrived in New York the day before the King and attended our detail briefing that night at the hotel. There I met the Detail Leader, Shift Supervisors, and rest of the Secret Service team. Amongst other things, we were briefed on information

pertaining to the King, his health, his staff, his guards, Swazi traditions, protocols, and the political environment in Swaziland. We were also informed that there was no known adverse intelligence, political opposition, groups or persons of interest, regarding the King, in the United States. Emergency procedures, tactics, and assets were also discussed in case of an incident. I learned that my assignment for this detail would be the Suite Security Agent (like my Clinton motorcade counterpart had been the year before). This meant I would be posted outside the door of the King's hotel suite, ensuring only authorized personnel entered the suite.

I reported for duty the following morning at our Command Post. After our Explosive Ordinance Disposal (EOD) team completed their bomb sweep of the King's suite, I took my position outside the suite door to maintain the integrity of the suite.



September 2009, King of Mswatii III with Michelle and Barack Obama. Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org>

The King would arrive at JFK Airport in a few hours and motorcade directly to the hotel.

When the King, one of his many wives, and his entourage arrived and made their way down the hall towards his suite (and me), one of the first things that struck me was that the Swazi security guards were not wearing the traditional garb that my former counterpart had described. Gone were the loin clothes, bead necklaces, sandals, and ceremonial spears. They had been replaced by suits, ties, and dress shoes. But instead of dark blue or black suits like our agents were wearing, the Swazi's suits were an array of colors from turquoise to purple, not your basic Men's Wearhouse variety. They looked like jazz musicians right out of a New Orleans night club.

Every day, at a designated time, the Chanter would come down the hall, stand next to me, face the King's door, and loudly chant for a minute-or-two before leaving.

This was an interesting tradition as was the routine that whenever anyone entered the King's suite, they did so on their hands and knees, which seemed very odd to me.

I learned that this was a cultural tradition and a sign of respect by always being lower than the King when entering his dwelling. I always found it fascinating to observe the rituals and traditions of other cultures and the unique ways they interacted with their leaders.

One of the Swazi guards spoke English fairly well. He and I had interesting conversations regarding his homeland and culture.

On one of the days that we had some down time, I had asked if he had ever

Continued next page...



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Secret Service Continued

been to the Empire State Building. He said he had not. So, I had him grab his camera and along with two of his counterparts, the four of us took a cab to the Empire State Building.

When we arrived, security allowed us to bypass the line of tourists by putting us on a VIP elevator taking us straight to the open-air observation deck on the 86th floor. It was interesting to see the looks of amazement on the Swazi guards faces as they looked over the panoramic views of New York City from atop one of the world's most famous skyscrapers. It was a fascinating experience for me...I can only imagine the awe they must have felt.

Regarding the beheading of the guard the previous year, I have since learned that was just a rumor circulating amongst agents and it was determined that it DID NOT happen.

Several weeks after the visit I received a letter from my new friend from Swaziland. In the letter he reflected on our



His Majesty King Mswati III of Swaziland with President Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org>



Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org>
The King of Swaziland Mswati III at the reed dance festival 2006 where he will choose his next wife

conversations and thanked me for taking he and his counterparts to the Empire State Building. He closed by saying he hoped that our paths would cross again someday. I had several other UN assignments in the years that followed, but none with Swaziland. I've often wondered how he was doing. Maybe I'll drop him a line.

Alzheimer's: 8 Signs to Consider a Memory Care Community

by Christine Sevier

The cognitive decline of Alzheimer's disease doesn't always cause an immediate impact. Rather, the signs and symptoms unfold slowly over time, thus making it difficult to know when it's time to consider engaging your loved one's physician and looking into memory care communities.

The Alzheimer's Association reports that every 65 seconds, someone in America develops Alzheimer's. There are 5.7 million Americans living with Alzheimer's and it is estimated that 16.1 million American's provide unpaid care for people with Alzheimer's and other dementias.

With the growing number of diagnosis, family caregivers are overwhelmed. The psychological and emotional impacts of dementia-related conditions on a family can be very challenging.

Denial within the family can cause major conflicts, leaving one person to take on most of the caregiving role. Family members often reach a tipping point when an elopement or accident happens. Don't wait until your loved one's condition worsens, or until you are mentally and physically exhausted. Recognize the signs of a decline early and start having conversations about memory care.

Here are 8 signs it is time to consider a memory care community for your loved one:

1. Caregiver stress. As the care needs increase, watch for rising stress levels with the caregiver.
2. There is a noticeable decline in overall health.

3. Unexplained weight loss.
4. Neglected personal hygiene.
5. Unpaid bills and missed appointments.
6. Evidence of medication not being taken as prescribed.
7. Inability to manage household responsibilities such as keeping up with basic household maintenance such as increased clutter, or spills left unattended.
8. Caregiving duties are all-consuming. As the disease progresses into the late-stage, round the clock care is required. That's a key indicator to engage support. Look into respite day programs and or care communities.

For those caregivers who are currently in the trenches, take a retreat and recharge for a few hours. Choice in Aging and the Family Caregiver Alliance are hosting a free caregiver retreat offering massage therapy, creativity, and meditation for all caregiving families in Contra Costa County. There will also be respite care available.

The free retreat is on Saturday, April 6th, 9:30am – 3:00pm at The Bedford Center 1181 C Street, in Antioch. You must RSVP by calling Evie Christou at (925)778-4171 or email echristou@choiceinaging.com.

Christine Sevier is a Senior Living Advocate with Creating New Hope providing seniors with complimentary advocacy, education, placement, and community resources. www.creatingnewhope.org



What Is My Home Worth?

These days you can google "what is the value of my home" and get a range that is so broad that it's difficult to know where you are in the spectrum. When I searched the value of a home I own, the value on eppraisal.com came in between \$659,158 to \$891,802. A range of \$232,000! At another popular website, my home zestimate range shows a \$72,000 difference.

What's the problem? Is it that the data does not show permits for updates, condition factors, amenities such as pools, solar, and accessory buildings? If data is picking up sales in the recent past, or longer periods of time, the range can be skewed as to its value if you were selling your home or buying a home right now.

With the addition of Big Data to the system, it can be overwhelming to the point of being too broad, such as in my estimate example. Most of the sites have disclaimers to tell you their data is not very accurate. So then, do such sites help buyers and sellers to determine value of homes, or do they complicate the whole question of value?

As Software Developer Raymond Yee, Ph.D. defines it "Big data enchants us with the promise of new insights. Let's not forget the knowledge hidden in the small data right before us."

If you are buying or selling, buyers prefer more focused and recent data when arriving at a value to offer on a home. Often, they are comparing a home to others they've seen, have made an offer on, or even lost to other buyers. That is current market data. Appraisers must use

comparable sales within the past three months that are closest in type, style, and amenities to the subject property and within a one-mile radius.

When buying or selling, you may want to use "comparable" sales as a method of determining value of a similar home. Typically, current market value is determined using data from one to three most recent months, especially in California, given how quickly the market changes.

Do you really want a computer to decide your home's value without the benefit of the experienced Realtor representing both buyers and sellers in actual real estate transactions? Active (more than 20-25 sold homes per year) Realtors add insight into the nuances of the market that are not evident in an algorithm. They know what buyers are looking for, how they are making offers, and the terms that are prevalent in the market. They know what sellers are receiving and concessions being given if any. This information is vital to a good negotiation. In short, we use Data to help us formulate pricing, but it is refined when the nuances of a market and analysis are blended in. If you want a real estimate of value, call upon a professional in the market place, call a licensed California Realtor. We are here to help.

Terrylynn Fisher Broker Associate, Dudum Real Estate (DRE#01882902), Awarded 2018 - 5 Star Professional, Senior Real Estate Specialist, Reach Terrylynn at 925.876.0966 or Terrylynn@BuyStageSell.com (DRE#00615420).

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the concordian

by Edi Birsan, Email me: Put EDI in subject
line CityCouncil@cityofconcord.org

The Pulse of Concord and Other Outreach Gatherings

I have a long standing tradition of being willing to meet with anyone regarding anything that affects Concord.

Aside from my official office at City Hall, I am usually available to talk in my 'office' at Peet's Coffee at Oak Grove and Treat. Also, for the last 10 years I have attended the "Concord Concerned Citizens (Curmudgeon) Committee" that meets on Saturdays at around 9:30am at Berkshire Books, where I trade information (and gossip) regarding what's going on in Concord with some of our diverse and illustrious citizens. And of course there is my independent survey site: www.PulseOfConcord.com, in which I attempt to ask questions that are politically neutral on current local issues, though on occasion, I mess up and ask a bonehead question, such as one I recently which had deleted.

Sometimes the answers to the questions can be pretty far out there. For example, someone answered that they want all meat sales banned, while one group of kids wanted the city to round up all the turkeys roaming around the City (actual fowl turkeys, not simply fowl folks) and fence them in on Lime Ridge. Other responders often have views that are completely opposite to my own; these are often the most interesting.

What I have learned is the simple fact that no matter who I am talking to, or who the responder is, how far 'out there' their opinions are, or how hostile they may (appear to) be towards me, the city council or administration, their point of view may be totally valid.

In these conversations I am sometimes called all sorts of things; nevertheless I try to just listen. Sometimes these conversations simply end with an agreement to disagree; other times, after listening to a screed, there is a golden or "ah hah" moment when a kernel of truth emerges from the argument and a sudden shift occurs in understanding on the part of one or both of us regarding the topic(s)

at hand.

One thing that has helped me open up to a diversity of opinion has been an organization called Toastmasters International. This group has an excellent reputation for helping people get over their fear of public speaking. I started to go almost a decade ago to improve my listening skills in order to better evaluate what people were trying to say and how to communicate back.

I will always be a work in progress, but if you want to improve your own communication skills, there are plenty of similar organizations around. For example, I like to go to Word Weavers 400 on Monday nights at Montecito on Clayton Road.

Finally, the Pulse of Concord has been helpful to me, both before being on the Council and now. It helps me tap into the different views out there; it also helps me practice the art of asking a question, which is not that easy.

I then try to analyze the responses and share my conclusions with everyone. Sometimes the majority of responses are in line with my own opinions; sometimes not. Sometimes we're not even on the same astral plane, which usually happens when I mess up a question.

I often echo the same questions that have been asked in scientific surveys, or surveys that have been paid for by someone else, to see what the differences are between those who respond to my Pulse questions vs. those who responded to these other surveys. I have often been pleasantly reassured when they came out pretty close; even though they may have been just a shade more or less conservative or negative with respect to any particular question.

I am always looking for new and interesting questions to include in the survey; if you would like to offer a topic or a question write to me: EdiBirsan@gmail.com.

Spring Brews Fest Returns to Todos Santos March 30



The Brewing Network's Spring Brews Festival returns to Todos Santos Plaza in Concord on March 30 to celebrate its tenth year as one of the best craft beer festivals in the Bay Area.

"From 12 noon to 4 pm, get ready to get outside for a great day in the park with a lineup of the best craft beer in California you've come to expect from us," says Justin Crossley event organizer.

"We are very proud that this year's event is again a benefit for the TSBA Arts Foundation, (Todos Santos Business Association) which helps fund the summer music program in Todos Santos Park, as well as youth music programs around Concord."

The four-hour block party features unlimited tasting from over 60 craft breweries, live music and great food.

Rain or shine the beer will flow, and with the Concord BART station just two blocks away, this afternoon event will be sure to satisfy locals wanting to enjoy world class beer for a great cause.

Early Bird tickets are \$40, \$5 for designated drivers, and can be

purchased on line at thebrewingnetwork.com. Tickets at the door are \$50 if not already sold out. Ticket includes entry into festival grounds, a commemorative glass and unlimited tasting. You must be 21 or older with a valid government issued ID to enter.

For more information go to thebrewingnetwork.com or see our ad on page 16.



Concord's New Planning Commissioners

The Concord City Council considered candidates to fill three seats on the city's Planning Commission. The two incumbents, Jason Laub and Mark Weinmann, were re-appointed for a four-year term ending on February 28, 2023; and new member Craig Mitzutani was appointed to a two-year term ending February 28, 2021. Mitzutani will serve the remainder of Dominic Aliano's term. Aliano was elected to the City Council in November of 2018.

Laub, who works for RAD Urban, Inc., was first appointed to the Planning Commission in 2015. He is licensed in California as a general contractor and real estate broker and is credentialed as a LEED accredited professional.

Weinmann, who works for SAP America, Inc., was first appointed to the Commission in 2017. He is a project management professional who has also served on the Concord/Pleasant Hill Health Care Committee and the Concord Pavilion Community Outreach Committee.

Mitzutani works as senior engineer for the Central Contra Costa Sanitary District. He is also a member of the California Water Environment Association, and he has participated in a vari-



Photo courtesy of City of Concord.
L-R Planning commissioners Craig Mitzutani, Jason Laub, and Mark Weinmann

ety of city-sponsored service projects.

The Planning Commission is responsible for developing and maintaining the General Plan of the Concord planning area. It develops specific plans as necessary, making recommendations to the City Council regarding proposed General Plan amendments and municipal code modifications, and reviews planned district developments, tentative subdivision maps, and use permit applications. It meets twice per month on the first and third Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m.

Commissioners John Mercurio and Ray Barbour terms end February 28, 2021.

CVCHS FUNDS SAT/ACT PREP COURSES PROGRAM

The Clayton Valley Charter High School (CVCHS) Governing Board of Directors approved a plan which would fund SAT and ACT preparation courses for all interested 11th grade students. The program will take place over several months and be offered to as many students as possible.

SAT and ACT test scores are used for college admissions decisions and awarding merit-based scholarships to students nationwide. "The CVCHS Governing Board desires that all students have the opportunity to access four-year colleges following high school graduation, and doing well on these exams provides that access," said Kristy Downs, CVCHS Board Chairperson. "We want to provide our students every opportunity to access the college of their choice. These college entrance exam preparation courses will assist more CVCHS students in improving their performance on the SAT or ACT, showing they are ready to earn admission to and succeed in college."

The Board voted unanimously to approve CVCHS' expenditure of allocated block grant funds. For the 2018-19 academic year, CVCHS is receiving approximately \$67,000 from the State as one-time funds provided under recently passed legislation. The full preparation courses will take place over several weeks and include pre, practice and post-tests

of the same length and difficulty as the actual SAT and ACT exams.

In years past, CVCHS students were offered test preparation opportunities at a weekend boot camp where space was limited, and the \$100 fee was often a deterrent for students who could not afford the course. As a result of the new program, CVCHS students will be asked to pay only a nominal \$5 reservation fee to guarantee themselves a place in one of the courses.

In addition, courses will be offered at various times to accommodate the busy schedules of our students. This includes courses that will be offered before school, after school and on the weekends. "Studies demonstrate the more time students spend preparing for college admissions exams, the better they'll do," said Jim Scheible, CVCHS Executive Director. "Preparation and practice must be done early and often to be effective. It's our task to convince students to start their preparation early – more than a full-year before they graduate from high school. Under our new program, our juniors can participate in multiple courses in spring, summer and fall prior to the college application deadline in the Fall of their senior year. We want all of our students to be eligible for college and this new program will help us get closer to that goal."



Clayton Valley Charter School Scheible Says...

Clayton Valley Charter High School Executive Director



It's not often I get asked a question about high school assemblies that causes me to ponder at some length. But when Clayton Valley Charter High School teacher Sarah Lovick suggested a guest speaker, it made me consider: "Can you imagine what the high school experience would have been if social media existed way back then?"

Keeping Students Safe Beyond the Classroom

While I should have found humor over the "way back" reference, I was intrigued having to imagine my school days with a tech twist. Today, social media is rampant and has taken over the attention span of so much of society – especially our young people. For those of us outside of the millennial generation, it's hard to relate to the dominating force of social media during such a formative time in a young person's life.

Here are a few alarm-

ing statistics:

- 1/3 of an average teenager's time is spent Online. That's nearly 224 hours every month.
- 87% of teenagers are afraid they'll miss something if they don't routinely check social media networks.
- 70% of parents do not monitor social media use or Online gaming.

The Online pressures students face are intense. While not all students have cell phones or access to social media, an increasing number of our students do. That's why it's so important to arm parents with information and to begin a dialogue on how to keep their kids safe – a meaningful dialogue that includes the kids.

Thanks to Sarah, we introduced Thomas Dodson, founder of "Above the Fray", at our February parent night and at the school assembly. Both presentations addressed topics young people face Online and provided insights to successfully navigate a path through the digital wilderness.

"Our students and their families need to realize how easy it is for negative experiences to occur through Online platforms and how this exposure affects their minds and bodies," Sarah said. "I learned about 'Above the Fray' while searching for tools on how to handle this issue with my own kids. It's alarming how much self-esteem is being linked to social media usage. Clayton Valley knows that we need to

make parents and kids aware."

During the evening presentation, "Above the Fray" provided parents with helpful tips and tools on keeping kids safe Online and setting boundaries for technology usage. While it seems like common sense, it's important parents know the specific dangers that lurk Online. Afterwards, most parents felt the presentation was a gut check regarding the exposures impacting their kids.

We're lucky to have great teachers like Sarah on campus and involved in our students' lives. The information presented at both presentations was exactly what Sarah wanted – a reality check for all of us. It's scary what can happen Online. I didn't grow up with a cell phone, posting photos or dealing with comments on every aspect of my life. But students today live in a world where it can often be difficult for their parents to understand.

As educators, it's our job to teach our students more than just academics. It's also our responsibility to provide a safe learning environment – which now includes a safe virtual environment beyond the classroom.

Freshman Amit Elor Seeking World Dominance and a New Singlet



Amit Elor is on a mission. The College Park Lady Falcons freshman just won the CIF State Wrestling title in the 150 lbs. division. She was voted the Champion of Champions by her peers having completed a perfect undefeated season. Amit is a real threat to be a 4-time CA state wrestling champion. Last Fall she also brought home the gold medal at the 15U Pan American Championships in Mexico winning 10-0 in the finals over her opponent from Mexico.

Amit has trained internationally with the goal of becoming an Olympic gold medalist and world champion along with helping grow the sport of women's and girls' wrestling.

She is also on another mission too. She has started a GoFundMe page for the Lady Falcons to raise money for new singlets, ones that are made for girls.

"Get the College Park High School girl's wrestling team new singlets that are proper for a Lady Falcon! Please help support the lady wrestlers by getting new singlets that will hold support, durability, and style!" she says on the page.

The Lady Falcons girls wrestling are wearing singlets that are practically 20 years old and the team feels that is invalidating and distracting to the girls, coaches, referees, and peers. The old boys' singlets the girls must wear are sizes

too big or too small, as well as stretched and worn over many years of wrestling use. Some of the singlets are torn and are currently failing to hold durability during matches.

Is that any way to decorate a champion? We invite you to help the Lady Falcons with this clever GoFundMe page looking to raise \$3000.

All donors will receive a thank you email.

\$20 or more | Mailed Thank You Card

You will receive a card handmade by a College Park lady wrestler!

\$35 or more | Writing Snippet

You will receive a writing snippet based on your prompt or choice of characters and setting created by a College Park lady wrestler! - xoxo from Falcons Haley Joseph, Diana Brix, and Amit Elor

\$50 or more | One of a Kind Art
You will receive a piece of art (digital or traditional) created as per your request by a College Park lady wrestler!

- Lexi Ketron does portraits!
- Brenna Kubiak does portraits, characters, original characters, and slight scenery in a Western Cartoon-esque style. Check out her Twitter feed!
- Sammie Parton does portraits, handmade jewelry, and greeting cards!

Grapplers Kyle Parco and Amit Elor Wrestle to State Titles

Original Story by Ben Enos

Two local outstanding wrestlers made winning the California Interscholastic Federation State Wrestling Championship look easy. 132-pound Kyle Parco, De La Salle, and College Park phenom Amit Elor 150-pound, both swept through their respective brackets convincingly defending their No. 1 seeding.

In the 285-pound division, Clayton Valley's Jacob Sartorio was unseeded but medaled, eking out an 8th place finish.

A four-time state qualifier, Parco went to state still seeking his first podium visit. This time, he knew he was ready. Parco swept his way to state wrestling gold with pins of his first three opponents, a 7-5 semifinal decision over a North Coast Section rival, and 1-0 finals victory over Clovis North sophomore Ryan Franco.

Parco is no stranger to winning big matches. This summer he became the Junior National Greco-Roman champion in Fargo, ND.

"He's wrestled a lot of state-level matches all year," head coach Mark Halvorson said. "Every tournament we've gone to. I think that's helped him a lot to wrestle at that level all year."

For as accomplished as his out-of-town

competition has been, one of the toughest matchups has come from within the NCS itself. Jose Fernandez III of Upper Lake. "Every time I wrestle Jose, it's a hard match," Parco said. "He's one of the top competitors in California, so every time I get to wrestle him, it's a great opportunity."

It was Upper Lake's Fernandez who battled Parco in the state semifinals. Another 7-5 grinder victory for the Spartans wrestler.

For Halvorson, the De La Salle program notched a record 10th section title as



Photos By Berry Evans III

a team.

"The number one thing I've grown from and learned about is my mindset," Parco said after his NCS championship win. "The past few years, I don't think my mental game was there."

"My skills were there, my physical attributes were there, but mentally I wasn't really where I was supposed to be. This year, I'm in a good mental state."

It's the second straight year De La Salle has brought home an individual gold.

In the girls competition, College Park freshman Amit Elor took home gold in the 150-pound division to complete her undefeated season.

Congratulations to all. Well done. *Courtesy of SportStars Magazine.*

- Diana Brix does small landscapes, cards, and animals!
- Haley Joseph does cartoon/comic book characters and small, stylistic designs!
\$100 or more | Exclusive Wrestling Clinic
You (or your wrestler) will be invited to an exclusive one-day wrestling clinic this summer with guest clinicians including:
- Amit Elor, Lady Falcon, 2019 State Champ and Champion of Champions
- Ronny Elor, Alumni Falcon, 2010 State Champ and Fargo Champ
- and more!
Girls and boys of all levels are welcome. The date is to be decided. The clinic will

be in the San Francisco Bay Area. If you are from a different area and there are enough donors near you, a clinic may be organized in your area.

\$2,019 | Sponsorship
Your business' logo will be on the girl's team shirts or sweats (limited to one donor only and subject to the Athletic Director's approval).
Are you ready to make an impact on the future of the College Park girl's wrestling program?

Who can help these girls get their new singlets? <https://www.gofundme.com/singlets4ladyfalconsCPHS>