

JULY 2020

Distant Dining

Phase 3 Re-openings Delayed



Photo by Micah

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the concordian
by Edi Birsan, EdiBirsan@gmail.com

Defund... Say What?

There is a lot of talk around the slogan of 'Defund the Police' and recently in the City Council of Concord we have gotten a rash of about three or four form letter emails using this slogan and putting together a bunch of things that do not contribute to what the apparent goal is.

If you are of the belief that "Defund the Police" means ABOLISH the Police and their services and you are advocating that, stop reading now, as nothing here after will be of value to you.

If on the other hand (or foot or other body part that is in vogue) you believe that "Defund" means to shift funding from the Police Department, a restructure of emergency response and the assignment of non-police to different community service requests, then we may have some things we can talk about. Are their possibilities of creating a societal approach that reduces the need for police?

LET'S REVIEW THE METRICS

There has been a focus on the percentage of a city's total budget designated to police departments. However, there is no magic number that people profess to support – just whatever the percentage is, it should be less.

Some compare percentages of other cities that are lower. However, not all police budgets contain the same services. Plus, percentages are a function of the size of the budget in the first place.

Take for example Concord. Our police budget includes the Code Enforcement Department, not a traditional police function. It also includes the Family Justice Support, Court Diversion, and Civilian Emergency Response Teams.

Aside from those which are functions, there are major budget items that go into Concord's police budget that are significant-



Protestors at the Black Lives Matter protest in Clayton and at Todos Santos in Concord demand changes within the City's Police Department. Photos by Micah.

ly missing from other cities. For example, our police budget includes provisions for lifetime medical benefits for our current and past officers. Walnut Creek has no such thing. We also have pensions which is also missing from some of the smaller cities in the County.

Budget percentages is further complicated in comparison when you look at the General Funds and the size of the population that is served by it.

Richmond allocates less of a percent of their budget on the Police Department than Concord; however, they spend \$10 million dollars more on their force even though its population is 20% less.

Walnut Creek has about the same General Fund as Concord but only half the population. Thus, a significantly lower percent of the budget is spent on police. (They also tear gassed people, shot rubber bullets at demonstrators, used dogs for crowd control, failed to protect their shopping area, and killed a mentally ill person they were called to protect. None of which happened in Concord.)



Do we look at police per 1,000 population as a possible metric? Maybe. According to California city-data.com, Concord has an average of 1.1 police per 1000 residents, whereas, the state average is 1.99.

So, the metrics of percent, budget dollars, cops per 1000 all have issues. One might ask then, should the metric be: do you feel safe, or does the population feel that the cops are doing a good job?

What we need to do is to break out the police budgets so we can all see what is spent on what and we do not try to compare a budget containing healthcare and pensions (that all workers deserve) to departments that do not have it, or where the funds available are massively more available for other city services.

"Defund the Police" is very poor phrasing at best for its fundamental intention. What really matters is can we provide better service with modifications to the current model to provide community services that reduce crime over time and leads to a more racially just and equitable society. With reduced responsibilities, will this redirect our police to then concentrate more on violence and traditional crime so that residents will still feel safe?

RACISM AND EXCESSIVE FORCE

These need to be eliminated. It will take education, training with detection and accountability. All of which is not something we are going to cut from a budget. When I spearheaded the placement of body cameras, it cost a bunch of money, but it has been worth it.

Accountability must be seen to be fair to all concerned in order to build good will. The interface with non-police reviewers be it Commissions of Oversight, Police Chief Advisory Boards, Council Ad Hoc Committees, or Personnel Review Panels, etc. are all reasonable. The level of incidents may be a deciding factor in which way you go.

RESPONSE

We need to have different response abilities that work. For example, homeless encampments on private property may need a homeless outreach team to give notice of alternative services and direction

to get them moving off the sites. We need to have a place for those who will move to transitional housing and a means to deal with those who steadfastly refuse.

Maybe accident reports and traffic control can be dealt with a different level of respondent.

However, a Domestic Violence call is not going to see a psychologist show up with a lawn chair and a notebook to find out how they feel about the situation.

Mental Health is a serious and dangerous problem. We have increased training on this in Concord and have a County response team, but it needs to be available 24/7 and able to get to the incident location in minutes not hours or days. It may take county or multiple cities to combine to provide such efforts so that dispatchers can direct the teams to the locations rather than squads of police cars.

We have removed parking tickets from police officers and assigned them to Meter-Monitors, a systematic approach to such other functions needs to be done cooperatively with everyone involved.

LONG TERM INVESTMENT IN SOCIETY

Much of this can be done without police layoffs. The hope is that the savings from the restructuring of the police forces can be funneled into efforts that will lead to a better community that is more in concordance with one another in the long term. This is why I fight for more funding for the Family Justice Center, our diversion programs, affordable housing, and union wage jobs and careers. Over time, reducing headcount as officers retire or leave the department would also help contribute to a "defunding."

Society is an interlocking dimension of forces. Putting more money into parks without making the people feel safe in using them is not going to help.

Changes in priority and approaches have to be thoughtfully arranged. We are up to the task. However, please remember that Rome was not built in a day or a year, but when they screwed it up, it was destroyed in three days. This is not going to happen overnight.

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Lets not forget to thank the EMTs

By David King

"My name is Krystian. I'm an EMT in the Bay Area and I've been noticing that neither our county nor the Bay Area has reached out to any EMTs or medics about our experiences with this Covid-19.

We're tired, underpaid, over exposed and there's nobody there to stand up for us. We just get hammered with pay cuts, less people/ coworkers, PPE deficits, longer shifts (10-12 hours, occasionally 24 hours) to make up the loss of coverage. I mean it's wild."

That was the ominous email I received in late June. With all the city and county announcements and efforts to thank our essential workers, (primarily healthcare workers), how did these professionals get omitted?

So I reached out to Krystian to better understand just how stressful/risky this line of work is during a pandemic. Krystian works for Pro Transport One which serves all the area hospitals.

"People don't think about ambulance drivers (EMTs) and all the dangers we are exposed to, and what we go through to stay safe. We are exposed to tons and tons of stuff," Krystian stated.

For Krystian, he was just coming off self-quarantine when the word of Coronavirus first made headlines. He was injured and felt it would be too risky to catch the virus. In the early days, the death rates being bantered were in the 10% range by some sources.

But his injury healed and he went back to work in Mid-March, at the start of the shelter-in-place orders.

"When I returned to work, we were low on stocks on all PPE supplies, yet we still had to render patient care."

"We would try to restock our PPE

supplies at the hospitals, but they too were in short supply of PPE. So, we jimmy-rigged trash bags for gowns, and reused masks and goggles."

Keep in mind, when he is transporting a Covid-positive patient, they are the seriously ill. Krystian estimated that 80% of his Covid calls were transporting patients from assisted living to hospitals. Nevertheless, Krystian says none of his EMT associates have been Covid-19 nasal swab tested, except those who have shown symptoms.

There have been a few workers who have tested positive, "I never see them again. Clearly they go into quarantine, but I am unaware if any have returned to work." For the rest of the crew, upon arriving to their shift, they would be asked how they felt, receive a temperature check, then go about the day's work.

After we transport a Covid-positive patient, we meet back at the station, we decontaminate our ambulance and ourselves. We then attempt to restock our PPE supplies. We are still re-using some items. We put them in a plastic bag and off they go to be decontaminated and then returned for another day. He's leery and uneasy about their processing. The circumstances make for unpleasant, risky, and obviously stressful days.

So, lets remember our EMT's and show them some love too.

"We're suffering out here. We really are. We are understaffed and not protected as well as we should be. But I do this because I live to help people. I want to save lives." Thank you for your service, Krystian et al.



View of the Valley

Photos by Micah



After Walnut Creek's looting Black Lives Matter protest, Clayton Community Church prepares for its protest. Fortunately, roughly 500 protesters in Clayton were comparably quite peaceful.



Opening businesses for outside dining provided some relief to restaurants and to the community. Photo taken at The Veranda in Concord. Also note the cover photo.



BLM protest at Todos Santos in Concord executed peacefully. Right: Mayor McGallian caught handing out drinks and snacks to protestors to keep it safe and peaceful.



Tomizaki Champions Kung Fu manages safe distancing by holding training in the parking lot and via Zoom Online classes.



Main Street Arts Gallery in Martinez has reopened for visitors Thursday through Saturday 11am - 3 pm and Sundays from 10am-2pm. Masks are required. Main Street Arts features their "small wall", small works for small prices.

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Thousands of “Farmers to Families” food boxes rescued



Just weeks ago, hundreds of tons of fresh produce were rotting in farmers' fields due to COVID-19's impact on the restaurant and hotel industries. Meanwhile millions of people without jobs were struggling to find food. White Pony Express, among the largest food rescue non-profit organizations in northern California, experienced this disruption in the food chain firsthand.

Fortunately, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) quickly set up an emergency program called “Farmers to Families Food Box” to help farmers, food distributors, and hungry families. Now, two food distributors are shipping thousands of these food boxes to White Pony Express (WPE) for day-of distribution to homeless shelters, senior centers, churches, and schools serving low-income children and their families.

Under the USDA program, local and regional food distributors of farm products can submit bids to the USDA to assemble boxes of fresh produce, dairy, and meat products. As part of their bid, they select a nonprofit serving people in need. Then, if awarded a contract, they deliver the food boxes to the nonprofit for distribution.

Two food distributors, Vesta Foodservice of Hayward and CDS Distributing, located in South San Francisco, named White Pony Express as a nonprofit who would receive their food boxes. The Vesta food boxes include fruit, vegetables, butter, cheese, yogurt, and milk. The CDS boxes contain fresh carrots, romaine hearts, apples, oranges, potatoes, and onions.

WPE is incorporating these food boxes into its food rescue program to meet the

challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. For the last seven years, WPE volunteers have been rescuing surplus food from supermarkets and food distributors and delivering it free of charge to agencies serving those with the greatest need. Since COVID-19 hit, and due to partnerships like these, WPE has been able to distribute three times as much food per day to feed the growing number of hungry people.

“The food boxes from Vesta and CDS Distributing couldn't have come at a better time,” says Eve Birge, Executive Director of White Pony Express. “Our food donations had plummeted, while the demand for food had skyrocketed due to COVID-19. We are so grateful to these two companies for reaching out to White Pony Express. We will lovingly deliver the food boxes from Vesta and CDS free of charge to our community partners who will give them to those devastated by the pandemic.”

Pete Olsen, WPE's School Pantry and Food Sourcing Manager says, “When I learned about the Farmers to Families program, I felt this would be the supplement we'd been looking for. It was a dream come true when Vesta and CDS asked if White Pony Express would like to receive their food boxes. This has been a game-changer for us!”

Each week, White Pony Express is receiving about 36,000 lb. of food in the food boxes from Vesta and CDS combined.

WPE is a volunteer-powered 501(c)(3) organization headquartered in Pleasant Hill, CA. Today its mission is carried out by close to 400 volunteers and a small

staff.

Dr. Carol Weyland Conner founded WPE in 2013 when she was troubled that many thousands were going hungry while at the same time food retailers were throwing out huge quantities of healthy, fresh food. Out of this insight, the Food Rescue Program was born.

In almost seven years, WPE has rescued and delivered more than 11.3 million pounds of fresh, nutritious food, free of charge that would otherwise have gone to waste. This is equivalent to 9,400,000 meals prepared.

In 2014 the White Pony General Store was added to provide high-



quality clothing, toys, and books to the underserved in our communities—all free. Since that time, the General Store has given away over 500,000 items to those in need.

For more information on WPE, visit www.whiteponyexpress.org



Jennifer Stojanovich
Realtor, Better Homes Realty

Housing prices are holding steady

Over the past couple of months, we've watched as the pandemic has wreaked havoc on industries such as travel, tourism, and hospitality. Many have been left to wonder if the housing market would also suffer the consequences of the spread of the coronavirus. What may surprise you is that although the market has felt the effects of the pandemic, housing prices have not plummeted. Let's take a closer look at what's been happening.

Inventory is down, but house prices are up. According to Zillow, the number of homes on the market has decreased by about 20 percent from this time last year. However, home values have risen by 4.3 percent. The National Association of Realtors has also reported that although home sales plunged in April, the price of homes increased.

Demand is high, but sellers are reluctant. Data supplied by Redfin suggests that that right now, demand is outpacing supply. When the pandemic hit, many sellers across America decided to pull their listings or they are waiting to list until the worst of the crisis has passed us and markets have stabilized. The idea of having dozens of people coming in and out of their homes during a pandemic seemed too risky.

Activity is picking back up in hard-hit areas. The pandemic did not hit all areas of the country equally. In locations where infection rates were high and lockdowns strict, mortgage lock activity (where lenders and borrowers agree on the interest rate for a certain period of time) plunged between 15 and 50 percent in late March and April. Since then, activity has picked up, though, in hard-hit areas, the rebound is slower.

Buyers returning at a faster rate than sellers. Some buyers left the market in

March in April because of job losses or income uncertainty. Many are returning to the market. In fact, buyers are returning to the market at a faster rate than sellers. This means inventory is falling, but not the home prices.

History can guide us. Predicting the future in this kind of climate is tricky at best, but we can look to history to see what may happen to the market in the coming weeks and months. During previous pandemics such as SARS, housing prices held steady while transaction volume plunged. It's also important to remember that even though housing prices plunged during the last economic downturn, we are not in the same situation. The housing market and the easy availability of credit were the main reasons for the Great Recession. Our situation today is much different. It is more difficult to qualify for the credit, and those who are buying homes are more likely to be in a position to afford them.

It's also important to note that the decisive action of the federal government has also been responsible for the market's stability. The CARES Act provides protections for those with federally backed mortgages. Lenders were not able to foreclose on a home until June 30 at the earliest, and homeowners can request forbearance for up to 360 days.

What happens next? While experts can make educated guesses about what will happen in the coming months, much depends on what happens with the coronavirus. Some believe urbanites will decamp for the suburbs. Available treatments or vaccines can also affect the market. Some economists believe the market will bounce back quickly, while others think a rebound may take months or years. Time will tell.

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Police Chief Bustillos: Concord department already compliant to “8 Can’t Wait”



In a letter to the community on June 16, Concord Police Chief Mark Bustillos responded to questions about the national “8 Can’t Wait” police reform campaign related to police use-of-force policies. These are the highlights of that letter. The entire letter can be read at <http://www.cityofconcord.org/DocumentCenter/View/4714/8-Cant-Wait-CPD-Response>.

“As the new Chief of Police for the Concord Police Department, I am currently reviewing all policies, procedures, tactics, and training. I am listening carefully to the community conversations, and I am mindful of the current climate of frustration and anger related to police abuse-of-power situations, including the inexcusable killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer. I am also aware of how this sentiment affects our own community engagement and public trust here in Concord.

I understand and fully embrace the notion that the Concord Police Department is created by the community and for the community. It is our responsibility to develop rules, regulations, policies, and procedures which reflect the values of our community and utilize the best practices of our profession. I have heard from many of you who requested Concord’s response to the national call for the “8 Can’t Wait” policing reforms. In response to your requests, I would like to share the following:

1. Require de-escalation. Concord PD complies with this request. The Concord Police Department trains officers to employ these techniques when dealing with people in crisis. Concord also trains officers on topics such as mental health, crisis intervention, anti-biased-based policing, and de-escalation tactics. We were recently invited to showcase our virtual reality training curriculum to the California Commission on Police Officer Standards and Training (POST) for consideration of a statewide model of de-escalation training.

2. Require warning by officers before shooting. Concord PD complies with this request whenever feasible. The Concord Police Department provides extensive classroom, practical, and

scenario-based training for officers to make reasonable efforts to warn that deadly force may be used.

3. Department shall require officers to intervene in the event of excessive force. Concord Police Department policy requires officers to intervene with any observed misconduct including excessive force. Body worn cameras are required to be activated during nearly every interaction with the community to include incidents where force is used.

4. Require comprehensive reporting of use of force incidents. The Concord Police Department has a robust use of force reporting and review process. All uses of force are immediately reviewed at the scene by a supervisor. Officer body worn camera video is reviewed on every use of force along with witness statements, photographs, and corresponding police reports.

5. Ban Chokeholds and Strangulations. The Concord Police Department does not authorize chokeholds or strangulations.

6. Ban shooting at moving vehicles. In most circumstances, Concord PD complies with this request. However, Concord Police Department officers – when under life-threatening circumstances, coupled with an extreme hazard, and overcome by the urgency of the situation – have the discretion to fire at vehicles.

7. Require use of force continuum. Concord PD does not support this request. The use of force continuum is an outdated model that has proven to be impractical, even dangerous, when applied in real-life situations. Instead, policies should focus on requiring officers to create space and separation in an attempt to utilize de-escalation techniques.

8. Require officers to exhaust all means before shooting. This may be the area in which there is the least amount of common ground with the “8 Can’t Wait” platform. This requirement placed officers and departments in an untenable position by permitting second-guessing of split-second decisions, creating ambiguity, and lacking in objective and clearly defined reasonable force alternatives. The Concord Police Department policy only permits the use of any deadly force when: In the necessary defense of themselves, or someone else, when the officer has reasonable cause to believe they are in imminent danger of death or serious bodily injury. To effect the arrest, to prevent an escape, or to recapture a suspect when the officer has reasonable cause to believe the suspect has committed or attempted to commit a felony involving the use, or threatened use, of deadly force or serious bodily injury, or when the officer has

reasonable cause to believe a substantial risk exists that the felony suspect to be arrested will cause death or serious bodily harm if their apprehension is delayed.”

Public is invited to participate in a study session about this topic with the City Council and Chief Bustillos on Wednesday, July 15 at 6:30 p.m. For more information on this, email Bustillos at contactcpd@cityofconcord.org.



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Retired police sergeant reveals department woes - suggests ‘Mayberry’

By Richard Eber

My friend Randy is a proud retired policeman with over 30 years of service as an officer/sergeant and president of the police association for two terms. A portion of his career included conducting and overseeing internal affairs investigations. Randy is a level-headed guy who graciously shared his insights from an internal perspective as to the issues facing law enforcement today.

Looking back, did you witness in your career racist actions by your fellow officers towards those of color?

“On the question of racism, I certainly saw exchanges between employees and citizens, and employees to employees. I would not call them racist because I do not believe they were motivated by race. If I saw that something was going that way, I usually stepped in, or pulled people apart. Racism certainly has no part in policing or elsewhere.

I saw more use of excessive force or officers acting without control than I saw acts of racism. As an officer, when I witnessed these types of acts, either I or other officers would report them. Instances like these are usually due to anger, unable to stop the adrenalin or just wanting to win.

The real problem within a department lies when an officer is retained after having been identified as having problems. Officers at the least were counseled, but never were they fired.

How do you get rid of bad cops?

Some people just want to focus on the few bad actors and paint all of them with the same broad brush. Departments know through their own investigation if someone is bad. Yet, for many different reasons they don’t fire them. They allow them to resign, and then they move on to another department. Stop passing around bad cops.

Supervision is another area that could address bad cops. Bad supervision is one reason that cops can continue to do wrongful acts during their career. That is the basic reason for vicarious liability.

Community policing seems to be a hot topic today. How do you view the strategy of community policing?

True community policing needs to be

addressed. In fact, the term should be changed. It should (be) an involvement by the officers that are assigned to communities to get out of the car and interact on a different level, which most police departments do not, or cannot do properly.

Laugh as people may, ‘Mayberry’ is community policing.

Knowing your community and what problems exist is a large part of being successful as a department. Cops should get to know a person on a one to one basis.

“Are you concerned that the safety needs of law enforcement officers are being met by proposed ideas of banning no-knock search warrants, limiting police actions on crowd control during protests, and having as many options of restraining law breakers?”

I am concerned for the officers and for the public. The officers deal with the underbelly of society a lot of the time. That world is different than what the law-

abiding citizens see or think it is.

They must wear bullet proof vests just to try to come home at night. Who else does that? Why should they have to do that?

How would increasing liabilities of police officers in restraining suspects translate to the way law enforcement is enforced?

Increased liabilities for police officers might work a bit. Right now, the way that suits are lodged, they are against the officer, his supervisor, command staff, the chief and then the cities. The officer must do something outside of procedures to be held responsible and then the liability works its way up the chain of command and eventually into the deep pockets of the city.

Making the officers more liable could make some officers more apt to stop and think about what they are doing before they do it. It is a godsend to be able to stop and think when you have been trained to instantly react. When I could, I would stop and mull things over, but that is not always possible.

Can you see instances where civilians can better do jobs currently being done by the police?

Cont’d on page 15 “Mayberry”





JOURNEYMAN'S JOURNAL
by Eileen Majors, *Mountain Living*

Almanor: A Jewel of a Lake

While heading toward Lake Tahoe may be the most well-traveled route for mountain lovers from the Bay Area, others have discovered another jewel nestled in the Northern California forest, Lake Almanor. Lake Almanor lies under the backdrop of an active volcano, the mighty and majestic Mount Lassen, not far past Mount Lassen Volcanic National Park's Mineral entrance.

This lake is popular for fishing, boating, swimming, kayaking and other water sports. It boasts three golf courses, great dining spots, and a variety of lakeside resorts. Two free boat ramps are available while several of the resorts offer launching and docking for a modest fee.

The lake and its 52 miles of shoreline offer plenty of wide, open spaces to recreate. Picnic areas, scenic overlooks, campgrounds, and resorts dot the perimeter of Almanor.

Our adventure landed us at Plumas Pines Resort on the west shore where we had chosen a spacious little cabin with a kitchen and picturesque lake views.

Although, we barely used the kitchen. Instead, we enjoyed our morning breakfasts at Carol's Café, an old-fashioned café with good home cooking,



Cool drinks on the deck at Plumas Pines Resort

just down the road in Prattville. The scent of fresh baked muffins invited us in, and the flavors of the food prepared by Carol herself drew us back each day.

We headed into Chester for some shopping. We were hooked on the local shopping so much that we had a hard time getting ourselves out of the shops.

At one point we stopped and bought a loaf of sourdough, a variety of cheeses, and a decadent slice of layer cake for the sunset excursion we had planned for later that day.



Sunset by Todd Greer, Plumas Pines Resort

We headed back to the cabin with only a few hours left until sunset. I made a pot of locally roasted coffee and steamed a pitcher of half and half. We sat outside at a table on the lawn to enjoy the quiet views of the lake while we broke into the bread and cheese early.

The east shore is renowned to be the best spot to watch the sunset. We packed up the lemon cake and headed out to find a spot to sit and watch the sun go down. As if painted by hand, the skyline began to display vivid shades of orange and gold and yellow as the sun lowered to meet the mountain scene.

Once the sun had descended, we were off to dinner. We had heard about the great pizza at Buffalo Chips Pizza in the little town of Westwood just six miles from the lake. Housed in an old bunkhouse from Paul Bunyan and Babe's hometown, this pizza joint lived up to its reputation.

The next morning's agenda included wildly riding on some sporty new SeaDoo® watercraft. First, we walked down to the marina to Majors Outpost to receive full operating and safety instructions before shipping off to the west shore's wide, uncrowded waters. We had a complete blast, laughing like kids on those things. Afterwards, we walked up the dock to see their selection of other rentals we could enjoy. We perused the boats including competition ski boats and big comfy pontoon boats with slides and barbecues. (Next trip!) We already had a full itinerary for this 3-day weekend.



Boats and crew at Majors Outpost - Tent in the Marina / Lake Almanor

We had considered a full day of hiking at Mt. Lassen Volcanic National Park but opted for a simpler, more laid-back agenda. We relaxed around the resort into the early afternoon, enjoying our coffee lakeside. We drove around the entire lake and onto the peninsula. There are many resorts there and another watercraft rental as well as loads of vacation rentals and a great little market that also mimics a step back in time.

We walked inside Peninsula Market, where a fresh old-fashioned deli offers many in-house selections. We carried out an assortment of their signature entrees (plus cinnamon rolls) and a bottle of wine from their rustic cellar-



Lake Almanor Photo by Jaime Vega

like room filled with a wide selection of fine wines and other top-shelf beverages.

We loaded up the ice chest in the car and headed back to Chester to enjoy our snacks by the Feather River in the park on Main Street. It is a nationally acclaimed "Wild & Scenic River."

We then made our way around the west shore, passing a few more campgrounds on the way back to our cabin. We could see a Sacramento band, Nothin' Personal, setting up for a Saturday night show at the Bar & Grill across the street. We decided to take

in a late dinner there and catch at least one set of music. We sat on the deck overlooking the lake and enjoyed their show.

We had to head back Sunday. Next time, we will stay for a week and bring bicycles; there is a 10-mile paved trail on the lake!

Many resorts at the lake are open through October. You can find guides for dining, camping, and lodging at LakeAlmanorTravel.com.



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*A Northern California
Original*

by Elaine Schroth, CEO & President

While the past few months have been challenging to say the least, we can still celebrate some reopening phases that have aligned with the arrival of summer. Along with indoor retail shopping, outdoor recreation restrictions have also been eased to allow family camping, barbecues, picnics, and the use of dog parks and swimming pools. Some safety protocols and restrictions do still apply so check websites for the most current information before you head out.

Public places may look and feel a bit different than before, but these measures allow us to venture out and enjoy these new freedoms safely. Public safety is always the top priority and our city officials continue to work closely with local government agencies to stay informed and in compliance with all current health and safety orders. Local restaurants and businesses are certified in advanced commercial sanitation and safety protocols, and all nine Concord hotels are now "Clean & Safe" certified according to California Hotel & Lodging Association specifications.

As always, every member and guest of the community needs to continue to do their part to keep everyone safe by following the simple but important

measures of wearing a face mask in public area, practicing social distancing, washing/sanitizing hands frequently and staying home when feeling sick.

The Visit Concord team is currently on hand and available to safely assist with information and updates by phone, email or on site at the Concord Visitor Center in Todos Santos Plaza. We also recently launched the Visit Concord Store inside the Visitor Center, and online at <https://visit-concord.square.site/>. We have some great, new Concord gear, so be sure check it out. Guests are welcome to stop by between 10am and 4pm weekdays, but face masks are required to enter.

As we continue to navigate our way through these uncertain times, I want to thank our community for staying strong, committed, and caring. We are truly making a difference together. More changes and updates will follow, but for now enjoy the outdoors, go for a swim, dine at great open-air restaurant or go shopping. Most of all, stay safe and well!

Please visit the Visit Concord website for at www.visitconcordca.com for the most current updates, reopening information and local health resources.

Good to be Back to Business

CLAYCORD[®] NEWS & TALK

In case you missed it...

BART launches ridership charts to help returning commuters plan

BART announced it is making weekly online charts available to the public showing the typical number of people riding trains on its lines at various times so that riders returning to the system can make safe choices about when to commute during the novel coronavirus emergency.

The figures in each chart are "an estimation calculated from fare gate information and assumes passengers are evenly spread through all cars on a train," the transit district said in a news release. "In practice, you'll find more passengers on the middle cars, and fewer on the front and rear cars of a train."

BART plans to post the charts weekly and share on social media to provide riders with a "snapshot" of what to expect.

The agency cautions that figures are not available in real-time and may not reflect the actual number of riders on a car who have not spread out evenly to more open cars on the same train, or for trains that experience delays that result in more boarding. But the figures allow passengers with flexible schedules or those in high-risk COVID-19 categories to plan the best time to ride.

BART has determined that social distancing of six feet can be maintained with about 30 people per car. Social distancing of three feet can be achieved with about 60 people per car.

Catalano at a Clayton City Council meeting said she wants to see if the city could ask the residents who donated the flags to reimburse the city for the time it took to put up and take down the flags.



The National Enquirer article about Concord's legendary Spirit Poles

We just can't get enough of the historic spirit poles (which should be recreated by the way).

You might have heard, back in the 90s, the National Enquirer labeled the spirit poles as the ugliest publicly funded sculpture in America. If you never saw the article, now you can, thanks to our friend Joy Rosenberg.

The 91 poles, which are legendary in Concord, cost taxpayers about \$400,000. The poles were constructed and set in concrete in the middle of Concord Ave., between Salvio and Market.

Thanks to Joy Rosenberg for sharing this piece of history with us.



computercorner

by William Claney, Tech Writer, Computers USA

PASSWORD MAGIC

If there were a way to surf the web and never have to remember another password as long as you live, would you be interested? The reason I mention this is there is a magic app that says, "abracadabra and presto" and your password is automatically inserted into your website. Best of all, you don't need to memorize a thing after your first log-in. You do realize, I hope you do, that all logins require a username and password like your email address/name. We call these "credentials".

Many times, the first time you open or use an account, you installed both a username and a password then forgot what you have done. Most people do not remember this step, and it is confusing, and can result in a lockout of your site for forgetting your credentials.

While logging in to a website for the first time, you entered your credentials, then, perhaps you checked the box that said, "Remember Me". That information (your credentials) is stored in a password manager so that the next time you log in it remembers who you are. Most users think the site no longer needs your credentials, but they do. When we ask most folks what their password is and they say, "I don't have one", actually they simply forgot the process. It's okay, I am going to fix this for you. Macs, iPhones, tablets, etc. have a password manager called Keychain and it is very competent. Keychain stores your credentials and inserts them when visiting one of your favorite sites. Windows has a fair password manager, but it could use some help.

I use two password managers, one for personal information and login and another for business. I could store all my credentials on one manager, but I am redundant. Each password manager needs, well you guessed it, a master password. If you forget the master password, all your efforts to save and remember your website passwords are gone. I repeat, forget the master password to a password manager, all is lost. All. So, for me, I keep my master passwords in the password manager. I only have to remember one of them and both can be retrieved.

I use mSecure for my iPhone 7 and I use Keeper for my Windows applications. I highly recommend Keeper. Find out more about Keeper, just call your local computer expert.

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Dickey's BBQ Pit on Ygnacio Valley Rd. closes, new restaurant opening soon

Dickey's BBQ Pit on Ygnacio Valley Rd. in Concord has permanently closed. Their Concord location has also been removed from the company's website.

Dickey's signs have also been removed, and a Filipino restaurant called Berto's will be opening soon. Dickey's was in business at that location since 2011.

City of Clayton puts up, takes down thin blue line flags around downtown

The City of Clayton put-up and then removed several dozen thin blue line flags, which are meant to show support for police.

Laura Hoffmeister with the City of Clayton says these were to be donated replacement American flags by a couple of long-time residents and they did not provide the correct flag type.

Hoffmeister said as soon as it came to the supervisor's attention that this replacement flag was not the approved replacement (the standard American flag), they were removed and replaced with American Flags.

Hoffmeister said when the resident was asked if this was a misunderstanding, they stated no, they intended to provide an alternative type of American flag.

She said in order to fly the thin blue line flags, they would need to have City Council prior approval.

Clayton City Councilwoman Tuija



Safari West Wildlife Preserve reopens

Safari West, a 400-acre private wildlife preserve and breeding facility 12 miles north of Santa Rosa has reopened to the public having been shut down since the county's first shelter-in-place order of March 17.

The preserve, which first opened to the public in 1993, will make concessions to the COVID-19 coronavirus, including requiring social distancing, and adopting enhanced cleaning procedures.

Safari West offers Along safari trucks tours and safari truck charters, and other special activities, including summer camps. Reservations are needed for all visitors.

[For breaking news and other past stories go to Claycord.com]

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Chasing Bigfoot

By Jill Hedgecock

Photos by Diane Walsh, www.endlesspaws28.com

They call themselves Squatchers and they come in droves to Northern California hoping to glimpse the legendary Bigfoot. And on a weekend getaway, Diane and I embarked on the same quest, she the photographer, and I the scientist.

California has the second most reported Bigfoot encounters in the U.S., beat only by Washington. The first known West Coast sighting occurred at Mount St. Helena in the 1850s, though it was the Patterson/Gimlin film in the late 1960s that made the tall, ape-like beast famous.

But the modern-day drama began nearly a decade before the epic 1967 film clip. In 1958, a trail of very large footprints at a logging camp in Bluff Creek launched the Bigfoot craze. The large, muddy impressions of oversized feet were later revealed to be a prank by descendants of logger Ray L. Wallace in 2002, when the man's family admitted the hoax to a Seattle Times reporter. They confessed that Ray used a 16-inch carving of a human foot a friend had made from wood to leave tracks around logging gear to trick a fellow worker.

Despite several hoaxes, the debate about the existence of Bigfoot rages on even today. The FBI file on Bigfoot was declassified on June 5, 2019. The FBI's interest began when Director Peter Byrne of the Bigfoot Information Center and Exhibition sent in about 15 hairs attached to a skin fragment. The FBI usually only examines physical evidence related to criminal investigations



around whether Patty, the female captured on film by Patterson/Gimlin, is a hoax. It is this 59 seconds of footage that prevents the creature from

disappearing into the forest and out of people's minds.

My curiosity led me to meticulously research the Patterson/Gimlin film as part of a short story I published on Kindle last month (The Red Book: The Final Word on Sasquatch). During my investigation I discovered many lines of evidence that swayed me.



First, Patterson was a man of questionable character. Next, there appears to be rectangular eye holes on the freeze-frame image, and the placement of the breasts appears unusually low and look fake to my scientifically trained mind. But the most compelling evidence that the creature was contrived is the fur on the breasts. No living apes have fur around their mammary glands. Hairless nipples are an evolutionary adaptation to facilitate feeding. After putting my bachelor's degree in the biological sciences to work, my conclusion that Bigfoot is a man in a costume is based on logic rather than emotion.

Despite my belief that the film is a hoax, I found myself clinging to the hope that Bigfoot exists, so I traveled five hours north from the Bay Area to Willow Creek, California, a small town in Humboldt County that calls itself the "Bigfoot Capital of the World", to investigate.

Because The Legend of Bigfoot gift shop in Garberville lies along the route, I had to stop. Among wooden birdhouses and garden gnomes, there are plenty of Bigfoot souvenirs. From yellow placards proclaiming Bigfoot is the world's reigning social distancing champion to mugs and T-shirts brandishing the hairy beast's image. Besides a carved statue of a Bigfoot, a tall A-frame wooden house called "Bear Hollow", and a koi fountain offer fun photo ops to capture memories of the visit.

Upon entering Willow Creek, the



China Flat Museum with its giant Bigfoot statue is a must stop for any Bigfoot aficionado. Though still closed to the public due to the pandemic, docent Terri Castner, a long-term Board Member, arranged for a COVID-friendly private tour.

Founded in 1988, the volunteer-run museum houses a collection of Sasquatch footprint casts, Bigfoot-related newspaper articles, and much more. This small museum also owns an original copy of the Patterson/Gimlin film (it is housed in the local bank vault). They obtained this critical Bigfoot



history from Eric Beckford who helped Mrs. Patterson copyright the Patterson/Gimlin film.

Beyond the coveted film clip, the museum is a historical homage to this bipedal hominid.

Castner confesses that when she started volunteering at the museum, which includes historical artifacts beyond Bigfoot paraphernalia, she doubted the existence of Bigfoot. Her experience in Bluff Creek changed her mind.

She and her husband were bringing

supplies to a friend and she asked if his pond was suitable for ice skating. The friend invited her and husband to go look. They spotted huge footprints that showed icy bottoms as though they were made by a warm-blooded animal. They followed the prints for about an hour until they reached a bluff that made it impossible to keep going. Now, she's a true believer.

It is hard to discount the volume of personal encounters. Humboldt County alone has 124 documented sightings, while Del Norte County has 58, Trinity County 62, and Siskiyou 47. As recently as June 1987, a sighting was reported 7 miles north of Willow Creek. There's even a mention in the Antioch Ledger of an 1870 sighting of a "Wildman" approximately 50 miles southeast from Oakland. And then there is the image of a 15-inch Bigfoot footprint depicted in a 1947 newspaper, well before the 1958 hoax.

After the museum tour, I explored the small town (population 1,710) that has built businesses around the legendary animal. In addition to a hamburger joint selling Bigfoot Burgers, there is a Bigfoot Steakhouse, and a huge mural of Bigfoot gracing the side of Ace Hardware Building. Sadly, the September 2020 60th Annual Bigfoot Daze Celebration has been cancelled due to COVID-19.

My next goal was to explore Bigfoot Scenic Highway. The 89-mile roadway begins in Willow Creek and ends in Happy Camp. Often paralleling the Klamath River, the journey provides stunning views of the California wilderness. Most of the area remains accessible despite the pandemic, however, some of the Native American reservations remain closed because of COVID-19.

Although my quest did not result in any sightings, (as if), the breath-taking scenery was worth the drive.

On the trek home from my weekend getaway, I detoured through the Humboldt Avenue of the Giants. Staring at the dense fern understory and gazing up at thousand year-old magical redwood trees, it was easy to imagine that there are still many unknowns lurking in the forest. So while I still don't believe the Patterson/Gimlin footage documented a real Bigfoot, having observed the vastness of the wilderness, and the multitude of eye-witness accounts documented in the Bigfoot museum, I'm still rooting for the existence of the big creature.



Jill Hedgecock and her BF

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David George **THE NAKED GARDENER**

Early-harvested Veggie Challenges

The horn of plenty begins to fill in July with delicious, naturally-grown vegetables. At my home, we are harvesting early tomatoes, bush beans, pole beans, cucumbers, and several squash varieties. The COVID-19 Victory veggies are off to a great start, and no pesticides or herbicides were used in their production.

Alternating hot and milder days in July can cause problems with fast-growing summer vegetables. I received a question and photo from a reader who was struggling with the tips of her squash turning brown and mushy. This is called Blossom End Rot (BER) and is caused by too little calcium in the young plant. When days are very hot, the squash (or tomatoes or peppers) grow too quickly for their own good.

Even if sufficient calcium is present in the soil or planting mix, the young plant cannot move enough of it to the growing end of its earliest fruit. So, the blossom end turns brown and mushy with rot.



Blossom end rot. Photo by Fran Cain.

Most people think this is a watering issue, but it isn't. When the plant is bigger and more mature, it can keep up with the calcium needs of its fruit and the BER goes away. DO NOT over-water your veggies or cut down on watering to cure BER. Regular but smaller doses of water are best. If the BER does not go away, try inserting a calcium-rich Tums or Rolaids tablet several inches deep into the plant's roots.

Tomatoes also have fruit maturity issues. Plants tend to over-produce leaves and stems at the expense of fruit in hot July weather. This is especially true if

they receive regular water and grow in nitrogen-rich planting soil (regular Contra



Covid-19 Victory Veggies

Costa dirt is low in nitrogen). If you're having trouble finding tomatoes in those dense leaves, try these three simple and eco-friendly techniques: 1) remove about 1/3 of the leaves to allow more sunlight into the plant interior, 2) change watering to 3 days per week but allow several minutes more watering time, 3) mix more native Contra Costa soil (clay!) into your tomato planting beds or patio pots.

Summer vegetables benefit a great deal from a 3-inch layer of mulch in and around the planting area. Wood chip mulch prevents water from evaporating into the air, making more water available for your veggies. Wood chips also attract and provide food for soil organisms, which are necessary to furnish nutrients to plant roots. Contact your favorite local tree-trimming service to check if they can provide chipped tree mulch to you for free. Just be careful to let the fresh mulch sit and dry out for a couple of weeks then wear a face covering while spreading it into your growing areas. The fumes and mold from wet mulch can cause a toxic reaction. Another great reason to wear a mask these days!

Remember that your friendly nursery and garden centers are open once again for business. Stay safe and wear a mask while garden shopping.

Thanks, Fran C. for your end rot question and photos. Email your comments and questions to: NakedGardener@diablogazette.com. In some cases these may appear in future columns.



Mulch mountain courtesy Trverso Tree Service

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Author of *Between Shadow's Eyes*

Just Imagine...What if There Were No Black People in the World?



Tamara Shiloh's "Just Imagine... What if There Were No Black People in the World?" children's book series is a timely reminder of

how much black people contributions have positively impacted our society. In Jaxon's Magical Adventure with Black Inventors and Scientists (2017, Just

Imagine Books, 67 pages, \$8.99), fourth grader, Jaxon, reveals historical events, innovations, and discoveries made by Blacks through a fun and entertaining story revolving around the magical powers embedded in his Gran's necklace. It all starts when our narrator unwittingly makes a wish that has altered everyday home conveniences. Jaxon has said the words, "just imagine there were no black people" right before going to bed. The next morning, Jaxon, awakens to find his laptop, pencil sharpener and tennis shoes are missing from where he left them the night before. In the kitchen, a strange type of refrigerator has replaced the modern one. Things really start to get strange for Jaxon when historical figures behind key components of these inventions magically appear and explain how their legacy has shaped the modern day. Readers are introduced to Dr. Mark Dean who invented a way for the keyboard, mouse

and computer to communicate with each other, John Stanard who invented a two-door refrigerator, and Lyda Newman who invented a hairbrush for thick, bushy locks. The book is a fun read but very educational, as well. In addition to interesting content, the book has pictorial depictions of Jaxon in various parts of his home, photographs of the inventors and scientists, and even a picture of Dr. Martin Luther King. The illustrations by Jo Ann Kairys also include drawings of some of the inventions, including a lawn mower, the old-fashioned refrigerator, a theft-proof mailbox and many more. Author Tamara Shiloh's goal in writing the series is to educate children about Black history in a fun and informative way and to encourage students to par-

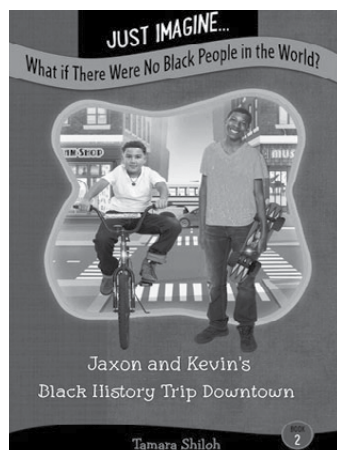
ticipate in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) programs and ultimately pursue STEM careers. She has also penned her second book of the series, "Jaxon and Kevin's Black History Trip Downtown" where Jaxon shares his magical adventure with his cousin Kevin and venture into town to meet Black inventors and scientists who are responsible for many of the things we encounter every day.

The companion workbooks provide entertaining ways to further relay the subject matter. From a coloring book, to Jaxon's journal to an activity book that includes quizzes, crossword puzzles, word searches and unscramble word challenges, these entertaining supplemental materials are perfect for teachers and parents that are homeschooling children to craft lesson plans around the topic. The books are available for purchase at www.tamarashiloh.com.

"These books are a great way for parents to inspire children to look beyond the norm and tap into their inner genius. It's there, we just have to help them find it," she states on her website. "I do not want children to grow up not knowing their history. I do not want African American children, or any other children for that matter, to think that the major role Black people played in American history is as slaves. Yes, slavery is a part of our history; however, along with the slavery came the birth of some very extraordinary African American inventors and scientists. [who] overcame and

persevered through treacherous times and still provided this country with some extraordinary innovations. Some that we still enjoy today. I do this for them," she says. "It's all relevant—Black History is HISTORY!"

Other books planned in the series include "Jaxon's Magical Visit at NASA", "Jaxon Meets Black Cowboys", and "Let's Hear It for Women Inventors and Scientists." Tamara Shiloh, a native of Northern California, has two adult children, one grandson and four great-grand sons. She resides in Point Richmond with her husband, Ernest. Tamara is co-owner of the Multi-Cultural Children's Bookstore located in Richmond's Hilltop Mall.



Covid: County delays reopening timeline

June 30, 2020 -- Contra Costa Health Services has announced that it will postpone its COVID-19 reopening timeline.

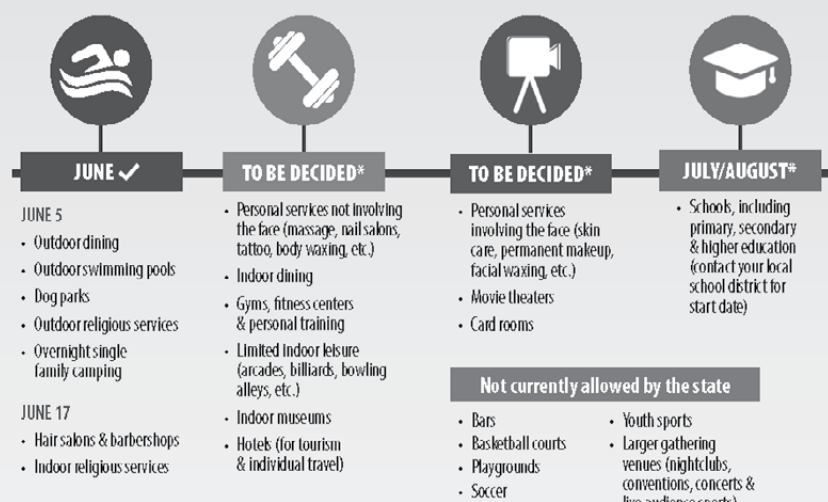
CCHS had planned to allow bars, personal services not involving close contact with the face, indoor dining, gyms and fitness centers, limited indoor leisure activities and museums, and hotels for tourism and individual travel to reopen on July 1.

These businesses and activities will remain closed in Contra Costa until county data indicate that the spread of the virus has slowed, as measured by at least a week of stable case numbers, hospitalizations and percent of tests that are positive.

The seven-day average number of COVID-19 patients in hospitals in the county has increased by 75% from June 15 to June 29. The seven-day average number of newly identified COVID-19 cases has increased from 38 a day to 87 a day. The percentage of COVID-19 tests that came back positive has also increased from 4% to 6%. This suggests the change is not simply due to more testing, but a true increase in community spread.

For more information, visit: <https://www.coronavirus.cchealth.org>. Residents can also call the Contra Costa County Coronavirus Call Center at (844) 729-8410 daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY'S ROAD AHEAD FOR OUR COMMUNITY



*Additional businesses & activities will remain closed until data indicate the spread of the virus has slowed, as measured by at least a week of stable case numbers, hospitalizations & percent of tests that are positive. Trends are monitored & evaluated daily. Our community's actions are more important than ever to stop the spread.

STOPPING THE SPREAD STARTS WITH YOU



Free Testing for Covid-19

Anyone living in Contra Costa County can now get a test for COVID-19 regardless of symptoms or the ability to pay.

There is no up-front cost for testing. You do not need medical insurance to get tested, however, if you have health insurance, your insurance will be billed.

You can get a test at sites around the county or by calling your healthcare provider. You do not need a doctor's note to schedule a test.

Drive-through testing sites are in Antioch, Concord, Martinez, Pittsburg San Pablo, and San Ramon.

Walk-in testing sites are located in Brent-

wood, Pinole, and Walnut Creek. Symptoms can include cough, shortness of breath, fever, chills, fatigue, muscle ache, sore throat, headache, vomiting, nausea, diarrhea, recent loss of taste or smell, or confusion, particularly in older adults.

A screener will take the information necessary to begin the process. You must make an appointment to be tested. Call 1-844-421-0804 or register Online at <https://lhi.care/covidtesting>. You will then get a call back to schedule an appointment. Test results are available in a few days.

Computers needed to help students

Ryan Clason, of Pittsburg, is a teacher at Concord High School. He is looking for the community to donate old computers (that would otherwise be recycled) to help students in need. Peripherals including keyboards, monitors, and mice are also needed. "I am a teacher, but I am not doing this as a district employee. I am simply a citizen who wants to help," Clason emphasized. Clason also set up a Go Fund Me account (<https://www.gofundme.com/f/d3rz9q-computers-for-the-community>) for those who have no equipment but would like to help. Those funds will be used to get parts off Amazon "...to fill in the gaps", he says.

There will be two drop off locations: 739 Ruth Dr in Pleasant Hill; July 13 to July 16 between 9am and 6pm. It is a private residence, so you may just drop what you have in the driveway.

And, El Dorado parking lot, July 18 from 11am - 1pm. Look for a blue truck.

"Oh my gosh! I can't tell you enough how wonderful that article (Out to Lunch, June 2020) about us was. We are pretty much selling out every night now. Thank you, guys. I ask them how they heard about us - so many people read the Gazette. Kudos to you guys for putting out a great paper!" -- **Randy Martin, Freewheel Pizza, Clayton**


frugelegance

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

Skinny Frozen Yogurt Sandwiches

Oh my goodness, these skinny frozen yogurt sandwiches are so easy to make. Even better, they are super sweet and satisfying. The original recipe is from Weight Watchers, but we tweaked it a bit to make it our own. We haven't had the need to buy ice cream from a store in six months. You might need to make a double batch like we do, because they will get gobbled up fast. These are a perfect summertime treat.

Items Needed:

- Honey Maid Chocolate Graham Crackers
- 1 container Sugar Free Cool Whip, thawed but refrigerated
- 3/4 Cup Zero Percent Greek Yogurt (Fage or Trader Joe's brands are our favorites)
- Roll of Saran Plastic Wrap
- Optional additions:
- 6 tablespoons Peanut Butter Powder (We use PB Fit brand) and 1/2 to 1 cup Lily's Sugar Free Baking Chips
- Diced Fruit Pieces or Chocolate PB Powder



The ingredients are very flexible so have fun and experiment. The original recipe uses Chocolate Pizzelle Cookies instead of graham crackers. We changed those because they are 1 point a piece instead of 1 point for 2 graham crackers. Sorry, but those points are pretty important for those of us who count those WW points. Plus, they are actually harder to find and cost more. (If you do want to try them, they are Online or at Homegoods).

We like to change up the flavors of graham crackers. Even with the same sandwich, try one chocolate and one honey graham. Or chocolate and cinna-



mon. Or go for a bigger treat and use thin cookies.

Directions:

- First, prep by breaking graham crackers into halves (2 squares).
- Mix thawed Cool Whip, Greek Yogurt and PB Powder using a hand held electric mixer (or whisk). The mixture should not be too thin. If it needs a little thickening, add a little more greek yogurt.
- Stir in mini Chocolate Chips (we like Lily's sugar free dark chocolate baking chips. They are small and taste great)
- Spoon a dollop of the mixture onto one square.
- Place the other square on top to form the sandwich.
- Wrap with a piece of plastic wrap and place in freezer till frozen.



Like we said before, there is so much room for tweaking to your own liking. You can add different ingredients or add more or less of some of those listed. For example, more PB powder, or leave it out if you are not a PB fan. Leave out the PB and add some cut-up pieces of strawberries, mashed up bananas, or peaches. The sky is the limit. Hope you give this a try and let us know some of your awesome creations.

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.fruglegance.com. FrugElegance is where Frugal and Elegance come together.


theRIGHTmove

 by Terrylynn Fisher, Broker Associate
www.BuyStageSell.com

5 Easy, Low Cost First Impression Tips

"You don't get a second chance to make a first impression!" was a great line in a Madison Avenue ad years ago. It still rings true every day in real estate. People often think they must invest a lot of money to make an impact. That may be true...or not. Your Realtor will help you make those decisions on what will bring more money, and on things you don't have to do.

The first impression often becomes the most remembered impression. No matter what your price range, there are things you can do to enhance the subtly of the first impression. Thinking about the first impression and experiencing more impressions reduces our risk of a wrong impression. More positive first impressions will result in higher offers on your home. They really do!

When you are selling a home, the first impression can be the tipping point for what comes afterwards. Underestimating them could be a costly "first impression" mistake. Here are five inexpensive tips that will have subtle positive impact on a buyer's first impressions of your home.

1 Have a working door lock, and one key for all locks whenever possible. What is a buyer thinking when they stand at the door, (in the heat or rain or sunshine), while the Realtor cannot find the right key, or the key sticks, or keys don't easily open the door? They think, the seller has no attention to detail; door locks are basic to home security; what other things in the home may not work?

2 The front door, dead or overgrown plants, weeds, chipped paint, are clearly visible when a buyer is standing at the door looking around, while the Realtor tries to get the door unlocked.

These are easily remedied. The window to your home is the front door. It should be clean, shiny and inviting. A bucket of paint is about \$40 to touch up chipped paint and/or paint a front door. Ask your stager or Realtor for the current design favorite colors.

3 Let the sunshine in. Open blinds and curtains and remove heavy and ornate and busy window coverings. Wash the windows and increase the wattage of bulbs in your lights. The most common thing on a buyer's wish list is "I want lots of light".

4 Water, Water, Water. Have water in your bubbly hot tub, water in your fountains, and water the plants, trees, lawn and shrubs. There is nothing more deflating to a buyer who wants a hot tub to walk out and see it empty. Dead plants and empty hot tubs make buyers worry that they don't work, and/or cost too much to water or to use.

5 Keep your thermostat at a comfortable temperature. Don't make the Realtor turn on the heat or a/c when they arrive and off when they leave. The buyer will notice if it's hot or cold, or that it takes too long to cool or heat the home. If the temperature creates an "ahhh, it's nice in here" response, your home has just made one more good impression. Add these up and you will reap the benefits in higher sales prices.

Terrylynn Fisher, Broker, CRS Certified Residential Specialist, Marketing and Negotiation Expert, Senior Real Estate Specialist (SRES), Dudum Real Estate DRE#01882902, For a Selling Plan, call 925 876-0966, info@BuyStageSell.com. DRE#00615420

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MDUSD hires new Supertintendent

Mount Diablo Unified School District (MDUSD) Governing Board of Education have selected Dr. Adam Clark to be the next MDUSD Superintendent according to a press release by President Brian Lawrence announce.

His official appointment is expected at the next Board meeting on July 13th. He would be starting at MDUSD soon after once he wraps up his duties in Vallejo. Dr. Adam Clark is currently the Superintendent in Vallejo City Unified School District.

With over 20 years in education, Dr. Clark began his career as an elementary teacher in the West Contra Costa Unified

School District. Becoming an administrator in Contra Costa County, he served as a middle school vice principal, elementary school principal, middle school principal, and high school principal. Once he transitioned into district office roles, he served as the Assistant Superintendent of Administrative Student Services in the Liberty Union High School District and as the Associate Superintendent of Educational Services in the Antioch Unified School District.

District.

"Please join me in welcoming Dr. Adam Clark to the MDUSD community," requests Lawrence.



Out to Lunch

Say Yum to great Thai food

by Richard Eber

The constantly improving culinary scene surrounding Todos Santos Park recently received a major upgrade with the opening of Yum Squared Thai Restaurant at 1965 Mt. Diablo Blvd. in Concord.

Under the guidance of Sakkapas Nukutkarn Oh and his wife Chef Navarat, this eatery joins nearby Lima and Luna as offering some of the best food in the region. After sampling their menu, Yum Squared is one of the few places I have tried that indeed captures the “true taste of Thai cuisine” (a phrase acclaimed on their website).

The two met as exchange students at Murray State. Oh then spent seven years learning the trade at the Silk Elephant in Pittsburgh, PA while Navarat returned to her homeland and graduated from one of the top culinary schools in Bangkok.

After years of traveling and cooking they moved to Brentwood and successfully opened Yum Squared in 2015, garnering enthusiastic reviews. In March they recently relocated to Concord, an unfortunate time to open a restaurant given the shelter-in-place conditions that began then.

Regardless, “We aim to serve family recipes from our childhood to enhance our customers dining experience,” Oh says. The main ingredient in those recipes must be freshness. Each day spices and produce are brought in daily including galangal root, mint, basil, tamarind, lemongrass, Kaffir Lime leaf, bamboo shoots, wild ginger, and others that make each dish pop of Eastern flavors.

Yum Squared offers a dining experience that will have your returning for more. In fact, we made multiple visits selecting various items of menu offerings each time. For starters, their diverse appetizer list includes a fresh shrimp roll with peanut sauce, satay chicken, fried calamari, and pot stickers. Take your pick, they all provide an excellent preview of coming attractions.

Seated outside during the recent hot weather, we skipped the soup course and opted for salad. Among our three visits, we tried the papaya, mango, and cucumber salads. They all featured a symphony of unique flavors highlighted by fresh limes used in the dressings. The Papaya salad features tomatoes, carrots, blanched green beans, dried shrimp, peanuts, and of course papaya. That was a perfect combination for us even though you can add extras to any of the salads. Yum Squared also has intriguing glass noodle, fruit, seafood, and beef salads that I will try in the future.

Our next course was Chef Navarat’s fried chicken with noodle. This is one of their signature dishes. Utilizing thigh meat marinated overnight with garlic,



paprika, green onion, and assorted spices, the flavors and texture are simply extraordinary. We also enjoyed their version of the traditional Pad Thai which features choice of meat or seafood, egg, crispy tofu, bean sprouts served with a tamarind sauce.

One course that should not be missed is Yum’s curry selections of seven unique



varieties. Unlike Indian, Pakistani, and Burmese versions, Thai curry tends to place emphasis on spice rather than heat in their flavor profile.

We tried their green, pumpkin, and red curries which were all delicious. Our favorite was the Green one which was slightly sweet had flavors from coconut milk, kaffir lime leaf, basil bamboo shoots, and bell pepper. Chunks of Asian eggplant provided an additional dimension to this dish. You have your choice of chicken, beef, tofu, shrimp or seafood to be added to the sauces.

Many of the menu’s entrees are stir fries that the chef will customize for her guests’ tastes.

Noteworthy, is the wild ginger which features fresh garlic, chili, eggplant, mushrooms, and basil with a choice of meat or seafood. I favor the lump crab as the meat/seafood add-on.

Virtually every item on Yum Squared’s menu is served in abundant portions to be shared.

Should there be room for dessert, coconut and green tea ice creams are always a good choice. There is also housemade, Mango Sweet Sticky Rice, Pandan Custard Bread, and other selections to be sampled. Traditional Thai beverages including sweetened ice coffee and tea are available.

In July, Oh expects to have a liquor license and will be offering Singha and other Thailand beers.

They also offer a variety of gluten free dishes. Appetizers, soups, salads, lunch and daily specials are priced in the \$10 and under range. Entrees and noodle soups range between \$12 and \$20.

Open daily between 11am to 3pm and from 4pm to 9pm. Reservations and Online ordering can be made at <http://yumquaredconcordthaicuisine.com/> or by calling 925-349-4343.



Chef Navarat



Farmers’ Market struggle for survival

By Deb Morris



Currently, farmers’ markets have evolved, albeit temporarily, to become more of a service rather than an event, where customers can purchase produce and other local products and leave quickly.

Customers’ reactions to the current way of shopping at a farmers’ market vary in degree of enthusiasm, though they love to get their produce from local farms.

Since the Concord Farmers’ Market has reopened at a different location, Concord High School, market managers have had to rearrange booth setup, cajole, encourage and restrict both farmers and customers to ensure social distancing, while also keeping up with the ever-changing state and county safety requirements.

One Concord customer said “I’m pleased that everyone is following the safety rules. It makes me feel more comfortable about shopping here.”

“I don’t like the fact that I can’t pick up the produce and touch it before buying it, but I understand why it’s done this way,” another shopper from the Concord market states.

It has been a difficult adjustment for farmers as well in the last few months. Not being able to sell at farmers’ markets was hard on their bottom line, but with more markets opening the outlook is improving. They are seeing a slow and steady increase in customers and the farmers are especially thankful for this direct-to-consumer approach and appreciate the communities’ support.

It has been a somewhat complicated transition from the way markets were operated previously to the way the safety guidelines require they operate currently. The market manager has had to adjust

to new protocols such as no sampling or touching of produce, mask requirements, rearrangement of booths, and social distancing.

“It’s been a new experience, that’s for sure. There are so many things to remember to do, while also watching the entire market to make sure everyone is sticking to all the safety rules,” admitted Concord Farmers’ Market manager Niki Fernandez.

Now in season: Stone fruit (peaches, nectarines, apricots, plums, pluots, apriums) from Diaz Farms in Fowler and J&J Ramos Farms out of Hughson; tomatoes, bell peppers from C&M Farms from Watsonville; cucumbers (pickling, Persian, English) from FT Fresh in Fresno; sweet corn from G&S Farms in Brentwood; green beans, summer squash, and eggplant from J&M Farms in Hollister.

“It’s good to see customers coming back each week to pick up their produce. More are coming back every week and that’s important to my family,” says a farmer at the Concord Farmers’ Market.

Peach Salsa

6 peaches, peeled, pitted, diced
1 pound tomatoes, diced
½ medium red onion, diced
¼ cup fresh cilantro, chopped
Juice of 2 to 3 limes
1 to 3 jalapeño peppers, depending on heat you like, seeds removed, finely diced
Salt to taste

Toss ingredients in a bowl and add salt to taste. The amount of lime juice you use will need to be determined by the acidity of tomatoes and peaches. Taste as you go. Chill for an hour or two, or enjoy at room temperature.

Good Neighbor Farmer offers Pleasant Hill grown produce Online

As Concord, Pleasant Hill, and Walnut Creek have become increasingly urbanized in recent years, few people realized this region was once known as a rich farming area. However, in Pleasant Hill, Ryan Kauffman has started Good Neighbor Farms in keeping with this heritage. Kauffman grows organic produce on a half-acre plot in a residential neighborhood. He has created a new market for consumers and restaurants who seek truly locally grown produce.

Kauffman offers a diverse group of vegetables including Arugula, Baby Kale, tomatoes, basil, lettuce, etc., that can purchased Online for a Thursday delivery.

With a BS degree in Sustainable Food Production from UC Davis and an unfulfilled dream, he started Good Neighbor Farms. Over time, word of mouth increased demand until product would sell

out.

Currently, Kauffman is looking to find some additional local acreage to expand his operations. Good Neighbor Farms is hoping the public’s desire for high quality produce will make his niche enterprise a continued success. To view and order his produce, go to www.goodneighbor.farm.



Ryan Kauffman plants a new heat tolerate variety of butter-head lettuce.



aRt Cottage

by FROgard www.aRtCottage.info

"Summer Musings" aRt Cottage's 100th Exhibit

"SUMMER MUSINGS" is our current and 100th exhibit at the aRt Cottage! It runs through August 22 featuring the works of 14 LAA (Lafayette Art Alliance) members. They are: Sharon Tama, Donna Arganbright, Pamela McCauley, Melchia Kutches, Ruth Stanton, Virginia George, David Manousos, Nora Krauss, Jill Waggoner, Shala Sepehri, Yuanqi Zhang, Ruth McMillin, and Suzun Almquist.

This is an upbeat exhibit with our gardens also open for exploring. You will find ceramics, sculptures, garden art, and many beautiful paintings on the gallery walls. The public is welcome to attend our two free artist receptions. One on July 11 from 5pm to 7 pm, and our closing reception on August 22nd from 7pm to 9 pm.

If you are not familiar, aRt Cottage is Concord's small gallery located in the North Todos Santos District at 2238 Mt. Diablo St. It was once a fruit picker's shack, built in 1925. The fruit pickers were locals who would help the farmers bring in the crop, almonds.

I purchased the "shack" in Dec. 2011 and



in Feb. 2012 the first exhibit was up...called "On the Wall" because my colleagues paint-

ed, drew, and chalked directly on the walls. I wanted to have their work "forever" and keep it as a memory for "R" Cottage. When new work came in the following month, these wall artists had to paint over their creations. But I still have the memories and "history" via photos.

From 2012 until 2020, aRt Cottage has had a new exhibit each month, and a few pop-up shows. Twelve exhibits times eight years makes ninety-six exhibits. In 2020, we have each exhibit for a two-month period. Add it up, that means exhibit "SUMMER MUSINGS" is aRt Cottage's 100th exhibit!

Little did anyone know about COVID-19 at the start of this year. But we are taking care of ourselves and each other. I see neighbors sharing and helping each other. I see smiling eyes and hands waving hello from people I have never met. Our pace seems slower and friendlier. We make eye contact when we talk to each other and our speech is softer. Just when I feel like giving up, someone comes along and gives me a helping hand. Life is good here in Concord. But, at the aRt Cottage life is beautiful and wonderful. Thank you to all who come through the door and help make this place what it is.

aRt Cottage is reopen (as of the time of this writing) with social distancing and mask wearing Tuesday through Friday, 11A to 5P and Saturday, 1P to 5P. Classes currently are private. You can call (925) 956-3342 to arrange for your private art experience. Wherever we can, we supply the materials.



Autumnal Equinox by Ruth McMillin



Japanesque - by Virginia George



Day at Beach by Ruth Stanton 12 x 30



Riding Brennan's Wave - by Suzun Almquist



By Donna Arganbright



By Shala Sepehri

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Weight Loss ABC's

By Lisa Vonnegut, CSCS

Have you gained Pandemic Pounds? You're not alone. A survey of 1,000 WebMD readers reported that 50% of women and 25% of men have reported weight gain since the beginning of the quarantine. A global pandemic isn't an easy time to reverse that trend.

Turning to google for an answer doesn't simplify the process. If you google "weight loss" there are 2.8 billion hits. Add the word "supplements" and the results are still 763 million. The sheer volume of information available –much of it conflicting–reflects the concern and confusion surrounding a vast topic.

So where do you start? Stick to the ABC's.

Attitude To create healthy new patterns, take a positive approach. Instead of feeling miserable and focusing on restrictions, imagine eating delicious foods, having an abundance of energy and increasing self-esteem. Identify sabotaging thoughts. Listen to the messages you give yourself and Eliminate the negative self-talk. Also, eradicate all-or-nothing thinking. If you make a mistake, compensate with better choices the rest of the day.

Balance The most effective weight loss plan is one you can maintain for the rest of your life. So, avoid drastic measures. Anything overly strict leads to feelings of deprivation, creating a "binge mentality".

You don't need to buy products. Any weight loss program that requires investment in a line of products is about sales and not about helping you. While there are some wonderful supplements out there, they should be exactly that: supplements to a well-balanced diet.

Eat enough. The key to fat loss is to fuel your metabolism. Inadequate calorie intake causes your body to go into "famine" mode, triggering increased fat storage.

Lose fat slowly. Most people can lose up to 1% of body weight in fat per week. Beyond that, your body will release water weight and in the case of extreme calorie deprivation, break down muscle tissue for energy. Ironically, water and muscle are essential for fat metabolism, so losing this kind of weight can backfire into rebound

weight gain.

Indulge occasionally. Incorporate favorite foods into your meal plan. yes, enjoy a guilt-free meal out or a slice of birthday cake. Balance means making good choices most of the time, so there is room for real life.

Calorie Deficit You need to create a deficit of 3,500 calories to lose 1 lb. of fat. Figure out how many calories you burn in a day and reduce it via diet, exercise, or ideally, both. Easy right? Well, not really.



Metabolic issues affect this simple formula. Creating that deficit is not as simple as calories in/calories out. If your metabolism is resilient, small changes can have a profound effect. However, if compromised, it can take more time to see the difference. Immune deficits, hormonal issues and poor gut health keep metabolism sluggish. Yo-yo dieting with periods of extreme calorie restriction followed by rebound overeating is also detrimental to metabolic resilience.

Google your Total Daily Energy Expenditure ("TDEE Calculator"). Take that rough estimate of your caloric needs and subtract 15-20% for a very conservative, sustainable calorie target. Remember, the more slowly you lose the weight, the more likely you will be to keep it off.

Add a waist measurement to your weigh-in's to have more than one way of tracking your success.

Finally, macronutrients matter.

The ideal ratio of carbohydrates, protein and fat varies greatly from person to person. Avoid diets that vilify one macronutrient—you need an adequate intake of all three.

Committing to sustainable habits is the simplest path to a healthier weight. Take the long view and make small changes—over time, they create a huge shift. Remember to keep it simple and stick with your ABC's.

[Lisa Vonnegut is a trainer and coach specializing in neural performance and wellness. Follow Lisa @bodysynergyfitcation and PM your health and fitness related questions to her.]



EMOTIONAL HEALTH

By Dr. Holly Holmes-Meredith, D. Min., MFT, Board Certified Clinical Bill Yarbrough, CHT and Certified EFT Practitioner

When our desire to help meets constraints

Tough times can bring out the best in us—and the coronavirus pandemic has triggered many acts of compassion. While the pandemic may have slowed things down where we can more clearly see those in need around us, it has also robbed us of certain means to act.

Forbes magazine reported in March that 76,000 healthcare workers volunteered to help New York hospitals fight the coronavirus. Barron's magazine reported in June that Bill Gates, Oprah Winfrey, Jeff Bezos, and many other individuals have made donations equaling \$25 million or more to help victims suffering from the Covid-19 pandemic. And local merchants such as Safeway and Trader Joe's have created senior hours where those with age vulnerabilities can shop more safely.

Others without medical expertise or great wealth have made countless contributions, such as making masks, giving donations to local food banks, delivering groceries to the elderly, and similar acts of kindness.

Some of our clients and acquaintances, particularly those in vulnerable populations, have expressed frustrations that they want to help but feel at a loss of how to do so.

In the past, when people would have attended a protest or volunteered time to a food bank, hospital, nursing home or other worthy cause, they now feel conflicted between a desire to pitch in and a desire to avoid contracting and spreading Covid-19. Such conflicts can create emotional turmoil. Compounding the stress, many people have suffered job losses, depriving them of the financial ability to make contributions to their chosen charities and causes.

Taking steps to clear negative emotions can make it easier to resolve such inner tension, and the following techniques may help clear your head allowing you to better see what you can do.

Put your mind onto something else when weighted down with a problem. Exercising, walking, engaging in a hobby, watching a movie, or chatting with a friend can help you to return to a difficult question with a fresh perspective.

Mindfulness, prayer, and meditation promotes focus. Mindfulness, the sense of being present in the moment and observing thoughts, feelings, and habits, can help you recognize those things you can do as opposed to those things you cannot control. Prayer has provided many with

answers, and meditation is well known for clearing the mind.

Yoga, Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), and Reiki. Yoga brings together both physical and mental disciplines that can help you achieve peacefulness of body and mind. There are sites on the Internet that demonstrate EFT, which is easy to learn and involves tapping on body pressure points to get release from negative emotions. Reiki, a hands-on, energetic healing technique can likewise create deep relaxation to help the body release stress.

We have both had experience working with individuals who wanted to take action but felt weighted down by conflicting emotions. For example, in several cases, individuals wanted to participate in physical activities but were hesitant to do so due to physical limitations. This conflict resulted in depression and feelings of being overwhelmed and helpless. Rounds of EFT allowed these negative emotions to lift so they could more clearly see those activities they could engage in and those to avoid. EFT has also energized some to seek out new means to mitigate their handicaps. We should note that such techniques reduced unreasonable fears but not natural fears.

In regard to the current crisis, clearing negative emotions can help you recognize helpful actions you feel comfortable pursuing and those you don't. As highlighted above many have made masks or delivered food to food banks, family, neighbors, and friends. You may also become inspired to explore new and creative ways to help or to make your voice heard on social causes by mail, phone, or virtually.

Certain social commentators have stated this groundswell of compassion and desire for social change feels different than in the past. They say there has been a shift in thinking or consciousness, where it is not so much about us and them but more about the humanity that connects us. These commentators are hopeful this shift can outlast the pandemic. So even if there are actions you are not comfortable doing now, you can always envision the actions you'll take when risks of the virus lift.

If you have questions, comments, or practices that you have used and would like to share with us, please reach out via the contact information on our websites: Holly at hypnotherapytraining.com or Bill at billyarborough.com.

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THE LEGAL PAGE

Martinez Courtside Ministries offers hope before court

By Justin Barker

Take a walk downtown Martinez on any weekday morning, and you will see firsthand the American justice system at work. Attorney's briskly walking from one meeting to the next; citizens reporting for jury duty; Sheriff's deputies escorting inmates and securing the courthouses; and perhaps a couple of news vans to report the latest developments of a high-profile case.

But one sight that may be overlooked is a small booth with a banner that reads a simple message: "Need Prayer?" The booth is operated by "Courtside Ministries" - Martinez Chapter,

a prayer focused ministry, wherein volunteers offer prayer to anyone who is in some way involved in the court system.

Mind you, in law, the term "prayer" is defined as the specific request for judgment, relief and/or damages at the conclusion of a complaint or petition. A typical prayer would read: "The plaintiff prays for 1) special damages in the sum of \$17,500; 2) general damages according to proof [proved in trial]; 3) reasonable attorney's fees; 4) costs of suit; and 5) such other and further relief as the court shall deem proper." A prayer gives the judge an idea of what is sought and may become the basis of a judgment if the defendant defaults.

However, Courtside Ministries prayers is spiritual. It is spearheaded by Martinez resident Ronald "Ronnie" Redmond, who started the Martinez Chapter in February 2017. Redmond is not a professional Pastor, as one would imagine. Rather, his full-time job is in the custodial services industry. "No, I am not a Pastor. I'm a servant for God and I serve everywhere I go," he explained.

The goal of this ministry is to provide those individuals who find themselves involved in the court system with spiritual comfort, and to provide them with a sense of hope during whatever challenges they may be facing. Redmond was inspired to start the Martinez chapter after learning of the Richmond, CA, chapter. By coincidence, the organization was founded and is based in Chicago, Illinois - Redmond's hometown.

"We have Courtside Prayer on every-other Tuesday of the month from 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. The people who come out and are a part of Courtside Prayer consist of different churches in Martinez: Morello Hills Christian Church; Creekside Church; First Baptist Church,

The Father's House; and other people who want to pray for people who need, or want, or allow us to pray for them." Redmond shared.

Although a Christian ministry, the ministry serves people of all faiths and cultural backgrounds.

Redmond explained his most rewarding moments are to see that the prayers he and his team provide offer hope to those who had none. When asked what his end goal was, Redmond replied, "I don't have a goal set, but my desire is to be pleasing to God."

Martin

Cortez, a member of Morello Hills Christian Church - Martinez has participated in the ministry for the past three years.

"I liked the idea of praying with people who needed it. There are a wide variety of people we serve outside the courthouses. It's predominantly people going in and out to meet with lawyer or judge, or to be part of a trial, but I have also prayed with police officers and lawyers," Cortez told me. "Prayers outside the jail are often for someone visiting their loved one, so we tend to pray for the person in jail. Prayers outside the superior court are usually for people stressed out with a trial. Many times, people are being sued by their own family and we pray for their relationships. Prayers outside the family court are mostly for single parents fighting for custody of their children. I've found that these are usually the most distraught individuals, who really appreciate the prayer we provide. Over the years, I've prayed for many individuals going through a divorce. However, just a few weeks ago a couple came out of the courthouse who were having their restraining order removed, and who had reconciled. It was great to be able to lift up a thankful prayer and to see the joy in this couple."

Emphasizing the true interdenominational spirit of this ministry, Cortez explained, "When people ask what church Courtside is from, it's great to be able to tell them that we are almost all from different churches."

To become involved or to learn more about Courtside Prayer, contact Ronald "Ronnie" Redmond at redmond57@gmail.com.



Courtside Ministries sets up outside the courthouse in Martinez - January 2020

Mayberry cont'd from page 5

Yes. I think that police are asked to do too many things that could be done better by a different professional. But if a law has been broken, or violence has occurred then the police need to be the first responders with a secondary type of response by someone else.

How can the police better deal with the homeless problem?

If a homeless person is not violent or has not committed any crime, then a homeless specialist/counselor should respond and take care of the situation.

If you were a young guy, would you choose law enforcement as a career path?

I would be leery about becoming a police officer today. I grew up in the East Bay and knew what it was all about. I worked in a small department where you could make a difference, and that allowed for true community interaction. It was extremely rewarding, but even so, there were many sleepless nights.



legalbriefs

by Jeffrey Hall, MBA, CPA, Esq.
Law Office of Jeffrey Hall, PC
Elder Law & Estate Planning

Common Mistakes with DIY Estate Plans

The internet offers all the information and tools we need at our fingertips to create our own estate plan, right? Probably not. Consumer Reports® created wills using the forms provided by DIY websites and asked three law professors to review them. Although the professors found that the wills drafted using the DIY services were better than wills drafted by non-lawyers on their own, they were inadequate to fully meet the needs of most consumers. Although your DIY "estate plan" may initially cost only \$49.95, it may end up being much more expensive than an estate plan designed by an experienced estate planning attorney.

Wills are only one part of a comprehensive estate plan that fully protects you and your family. Even if your DIY will meets all your state's requirements and is legally valid, the will alone is unlikely to be sufficient to address all of your estate planning needs. Furthermore, DIY packages you can buy online may not include important documents that as a non-lawyer, you may be unaware you need to fully plan for the future. This is not a criticism. We simply don't know what we don't know. This could lead to unnecessary heartache for your family and loved ones you will one day leave behind.

DIY estate plans may not conform to the applicable law. The law that applies to estate planning is determined by each state—and there can be wide variations in the law from state to state.

A DIY estate plan could contain inaccurate, incomplete, or contradictory information. For example, if you create a will using an online questionnaire, there is the possibility that you may select the wrong option or leave out important information that could prevent your will from accomplishing your goals.

Your DIY estate plan may not account for changing life circumstances and different scenarios that could arise. If you create a will in which you leave everything to your two children, what happens if one of those children dies before you? What if your will states your daughter will receive the family home as her only inheritance, but it is sold shortly before you die? Will she inherit nothing? An experienced estate planning attorney will help you think through the potential changes and contingencies and design a plan that prevents unintended results and meets your estate planning goals.

DIYers frequently make mistakes

in executing the plan. Under the law, there are certain requirements that must be met for wills and other estate planning documents to be legally valid. For example, state law differs regarding what is necessary for a will to be validly witnessed. For a valid power of attorney, some states require only the signature of the principal (the person who is granting the power of attorney) to be notarized, but some states require the signatures of both the principal and the agent (the person who will act on behalf of the principal) to be notarized. If you seek the help of an estate planning attorney, you can rest assured that all of the "i's" are dotted and the "t's" are crossed, and that your intentions will not be defeated because of mistakes made during the execution of your documents.

Assets may be left out of your estate plan. Many people do not realize that a trust is frequently a better estate planning tool than a will because it avoids expensive, time-consuming, and public court proceedings (i.e., the probate process) that would otherwise be necessary to transfer your money and property to your heirs after you pass.

Even if you have created a DIY trust, if you do not transfer title of your money and property into the name of the trust, it will be ineffective, and your loved ones will still have to endure the probate process. Further, it is likely you will acquire additional assets over the years that must go through probate if title is not transferred to the trust.

A DIY estate plan can lead to a false sense of security. If your DIY will is not valid, your property and money will go to heirs specified by state law. An unfunded trust will be ineffective. Banks may not accept a generic power of attorney you found on the internet. Laws affecting your estate plan may change.

These are just some of the mistakes or unforeseen issues that could cost your family dearly. An experienced estate planning attorney is aware of any trends in the law that could dramatically affect your estate plan and has the expertise to help you create a comprehensive plan that accomplishes your goals and will avoid unnecessary attorneys' fees, headaches, or conflict when you pass away.

Disclaimer: this article is not intended to be relied upon as legal advice nor the establishment of an Attorney-Client relationship.

Experienced Estate Planning Attorney

JEFFREY HALL, MBA, CPA, Esq.



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Ruby Dooby Do to the Rescue

JUNE

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

One-and-a-half-year-old June is a sweet, 60-pound female pit bull mix. She is also deaf. She was found as a stray puppy on the side of a road. She would do best in a quiet home with an experienced dog owner. June is:

- Best as an only dog
- Good with older kids (13+)
- Not good with cats
- Leash-trained
- Housebroken
- Happy and sweet

June is spayed, vaccinated, and micro-chipped. Her adoption fee is \$350. To meet this young girl and find out if you are a good match for each other, fill out an adoption application: <http://lovesecondchances.org/applications/adoption-application/> (allow a few days for review).

June should not be allowed off-leash because she cannot hear cars and may not be aware of other dangerous situations, but she can easily be taught other doggie behavior to make her an excellent canine companion and live a normal life.

Here are some tips for training a deaf dog. To get their attention, shake your hand near their face or use a flashlight as visual clues, stomp your foot to create a vibration, or gently touch them in the same location. Since you can't praise the dog, keep small treats nearby to reward desirable behavior. For more information, visit <https://www.thesprucepets.com/training-tips-for-deaf-dogs-1118210>.

The mission of San Ramon-based Love & Second Chances (LSC) is to help death row, abused, and neglected dogs find forever homes.

LSC is always looking for fosters who are interested in opening their homes to their rescues. <http://lovesecondchances.org>. Another way to help is to share images of June on social media. because sharing saves lives.

Paws for a Vacation If you are planning a road trip for your summer vacation with Fido, here are a few tips to help make it a good experience for all.

Pet (and human) safety will be key to a successful vacation. While on the road, avoid distractions and keep both you and your dog safe by securing your pooch in a seatbelt harness or dog crate.

Remember to plan potty breaks and exercise stops if you will be doing long hours on the road.

There are pretty strict rules in some places regarding your four-legged companions. Some national parks don't allow pets at all, while others require pets to remain on a leash whenever outdoors. KOA boasts a lot of dog-friendly campgrounds and are a great option for those planning on getting close to mother nature.

Speaking of safety, what will you do if

there is an unfortunate rattlesnake or other wildlife encounter, or your dog gets into the chocolate you packed for s'mores?



Rushing to the emergency vet could mean the difference between life and death for your pet so be prepared. Research veterinary clinics along your route and make a list of addresses so help can be one click away.

Make sure your dog is up to date on shots and bring those records along on the trip in case the unthinkable happens and your pooch bites a human or another dog.

Applying flea and tick control before you leave is a good idea too.

By all means, if the temperature is high, do not leave your dog in the car; or else, leave the air conditioner running.

A bad thunderstorm can transform even a mellow pet into destruct-o-dog. A crate and toys to distract a terrified pup can be a good remedy.

Never leave your dog tied up outdoors at a campsite while you are away. This, too, can be a recipe for disaster.

Bone to Pick. Obesity in dogs is a serious health threat. While some dogs may be getting more exercise than ever during the shelter-in-place/work from home restrictions, other dogs may be getting more treats than ever and perhaps are gaining weight.

Some of the common issues faced by dogs carrying extra pounds include diarrhea, some types of cancer, knee, back, and joint problems that can lead to arthritis, high blood pressure, and heart disease. So, the next time Fido gives you those adorable puppy eyes, instead of a treat, take your pooch out for 30 minutes of play which is the recommendation to keep off the pounds.

[Ruby Dooby Do is Concord's Instagram celebrity with more than 135,000 followers. Instagram.com/rubydooby__Do. Special thanks to Jill Hedgecock, author of "Between Shadow's Eyes" and the sequel "From Shadow's Perspective" releasing this fall. Both books feature Ruby on their covers. www.jillhedgecock.com.]

ARF Adoption Stars Moey & Manny

by Cole Kuiper

Looking for a furry friend during this trying time? Good news — ARF is now offering a no-contact virtual adoption process. If you see an animal you're interested in on our website, just fill out an online inquiry form. Once your inquiry has been received, you will be added to our virtual adoption queue.



Moey: Two-year-old Moey is a sweet and sensitive gal who can't wait to share her heart with a very special person. This sun bather enjoys being outside in the yard, rolling around in the grass, sniffing and exploring everything in the dirt. She would love to go to a home where she can feel safe and snuggle in comfy blankets. Moey is half way through her 16 week recovery plan from her leg surgery to repair a torn ligament. This plan includes daily restricted exercise, physical therapy and a limited space to be in during her final weeks of recovery. Her adopter will need to be committed to following the steps

carefully and consistently and supervising her closely.

The adoption fee for puppies (<6 months) is \$350, for adult dogs is \$250, and senior dogs (7+ years) and special needs dogs are 50% off the adoption fee.



Manny: Six-year-old Manny loves everyone! This chill dude just wants to hang out by your side, enjoy some petting, and meow at you about how wonderful his day was. He is the sweetest guy you'll ever meet. He's happy all the time and shows it by kneading and making biscuits with his feet. If you're looking for an outgoing yet laid back cat, come meet Manny! This delightful gentleman will be your best buddy in no time. Manny has IBD, and might need to receive a steroid or other immune modulating medication for the rest of his life. He may do well with cat friendly dogs.

The adoption fee for kittens (<6 months) is \$150, for adult cats is \$100, \$25 off each for multiple cats/kittens, and senior cats (7+ years) and special needs cats are 50% off the adoption fee.



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Why Age 7 is the Right Time to See an Orthodontist

By the age of 7, the first adult molars erupt, establishing the back bite. During this time, an orthodontist can evaluate front-to-back and side-to-side tooth relationships. For example, the presence of erupting incisors can indicate possible overbite, open bite, crowding or gummy smiles. Timely screening increases the chances for an incredible smile.



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