

**JANUARY 2021**

**PRICELESS**



# Super Grandmaster Sam Shankland, Walnut Creek's Queen's Gambit

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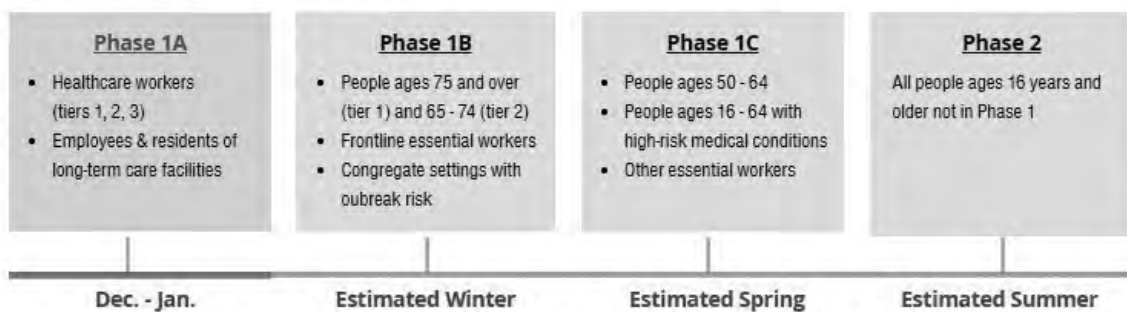
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# VACCINE ROLLOUT

## Distribution Phases at a Glance



### Phase 1A: December - January

- Healthcare personnel (tiers 1, 2, 3)
- Employees & residents of long-term care facilities



### Health worker vaccine appointments

#### 1A - Tier 1

- Acute care, psychiatric, and correctional facility hospital staff
- Residents and staff at skilled nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, and similar settings for older or medically vulnerable individuals
- Paramedics and EMTs
- Dialysis centers

#### 1A - Tier 2

- Intermediate care facilities for persons who need non-continuous nursing supervision and supportive care
- Home health care and in-home supportive services
- Community health workers, including promotoras
- Public health field staff
- Primary care clinic workers

#### 1A - Tier 3

- Other healthcare workers, including
- Specialty clinics
  - Laboratory workers
  - Dental and other oral health clinics
  - Pharmacy staff not working in settings at higher tiers

### Phase 1B: Estimated Winter

- People ages 75 and over (tier 1) and 65 - 74 (tier 2)
- Frontline essential workers
- Congregate settings with an outbreak risk

#### 1B - Tier 1

- People ages 75 and over
- Essential workers in:
  - Education
  - Childcare
  - Emergency services
  - Food & agriculture

#### 1B - Tier 2

- People ages 65 - 74
- Essential workers in:
  - Transportation & logistics
  - Industrial, commercial, residential and sheltering facilities & services
  - Critical manufacturing
- Congregate settings with outbreak risk: incarcerated and homeless

### Phase 1C: Estimated Spring

- People ages 50 - 64
- People ages 16 - 64 with high-risk medical conditions
- Other essential workers
  - Water and wastewater
  - Defense
  - Energy
  - Chemical & hazardous materials
  - Communications & IT
  - Financial services
  - Government operations / community-based essential functions

### Phase 2: Estimated Summer\*

- All people ages 16 years and older not in Phase 1

## General Public: Vaccines not expected till Summer

COVID-19 vaccine is in short supply. It will take several months before they are widely available to the general public, according to Contra Costa Health Department. The government has set guidelines to make sure these people get the vaccine first: People at high risk because of their work and those at high risk of serious complications from a COVID-19 infection.

Contra Costa County's healthcare system is gearing up to provide as many as 7,000 vaccines per day in an effort to vaccinate all eligible residents over the next six months. The county expects to triple the number of vaccines offered this week as capacity grows.

Vaccine distribution is occurring in phases (see chart on left): Phase 1A consists of three tiers, Phase 1B has two tiers, and Phase 1C. The general public falls in Phase 2, which is expected to start in the summer. Vaccines are currently being distributed to Tier 1, frontline healthcare workers and residents and staff of long-term care facilities in Contra Costa County.

Most people now eligible for vaccination will be contacted by their employers. If you believe your job makes you eligible for COVID-19 vaccination now, check with your employer. Patients at long-term care facilities will be contacted by their facilities.

"At some point, everyone

who wants a COVID vaccine will be able to get one. While we



Jennifer Conte-Chislett, an ICU nurse at John Muir receives her first vaccine dose.

aren't there yet, making vaccine available to everyone is our top priority," Contra Costa Health Services (CCHS) Director Anna Roth said.

As of now, all but 1,400 of the 43,675 doses allocated in Contra Costa have been assigned to people in Phases 1A and 1B priority groups. All the doses are expected to be given within the next 14 days," Roth said.

As of Jan. 10, 30,245 doses have been administered in the county by various health providers, including Contra Costa Health Services (CCHS) and John Muir Health, as well as the federal long-term care partnership with CVS and Walgreens. Safeway and Rite-Aid are completing their registration process with the state. Safeway (Con't pg 15 "Vaccine")

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# Audubon's Christmas count reveals more birds

## Breaks 25 year record, COVID-19 may be the reason

by Jill Hedgecock

Audubon's annual CBC began on Christmas Day 1900 and is the world's longest-running wildlife census with more than 120 years of data. But like most activities this year, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the event.

During the COVID shutdown, not only did we experience a cleansing of air quality, but also a noticeable reduction in noise pollution. Nature experienced quietude, a state of stillness, calmness and quiet.

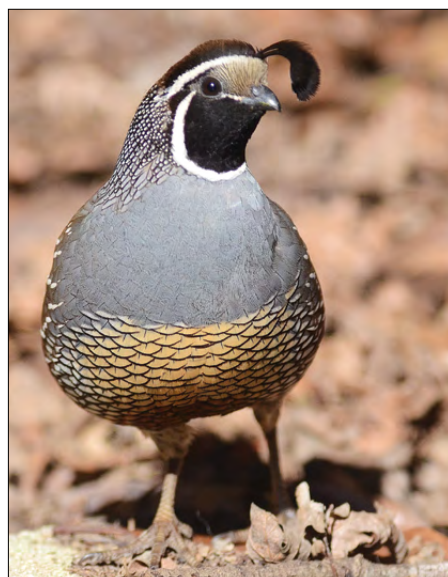
According to a September article in Science Magazine\*, Jenny Phillips, a behavioral ecologist at California Polytechnic State University, recorded White-crowned Sparrows singing in the San Francisco Bay Area and found that the sparrows were singing on average 30% softer than before the lockdown.

In just a matter of weeks, the sparrows' songs recovered the acoustic quality of songs sung decades ago with bandwidths typical of birds recorded in the 1970s. The combination of less background noise and the better signal from wider bandwidth meant the males could likely hear each other from twice as far away than before. It seems COVID-19 may have made it easier for birds to attract a mate resulting in more reproductive success.

This is one of the observations the annual Mt. Diablo Audubon's (MDAS) Christmas Bird Count (CBC) may have uncovered.

Due to Covid-19 orders, only members from the same households could bird together and only a limited number of birders were allowed to census the 15 areas. Having fewer people on the count proved a challenge this year.

Alan Bade took on a leadership role to count birds in the Old Borges Ranch area of Shell Ridge Open Space on December 19. He and his partner, Wendy, and one other birder, Maren Smith, who walked a different trail than Alan and Wendy, identified 33 species which included California quail, our state bird.



California Quail, our state bird.

"When you are solo birding, you have to observe, identify, pull out your phone to tally in eBird (or write it down), and also hope to get a picture if you are a photographer," said Bade. "Our count at Borges may have been less accurate for highly abundant species, as there were fewer of us to count."

This was Bade's third year as trip leader at Borges Ranch. His role is to make sure the appropriate habitat is surveyed without overlap with other participants on his slice of the count circle.

"It's a lot of fun!" said Bade. "My most memorable moments are being out in the field with great people seeing great birds. It doesn't get any better than that. It's especially fun when we find a good bird and enjoy it together. The first time we saw the Phainopepla three years ago was great."

Weather matters when it comes to spotting the feathered creatures that the team is tasked with counting. Bade indicated that the birds may not be as fully active in the cold. This year the fog from the Central Valley moved in and made it hard to count birds that were beyond their visual range. This was an issue at Shell Ridge he said. Shell Ridge is usually great for observing raptors. But this year they either weren't up there or couldn't be seen. He and his team mostly saw red-tailed hawks sitting in trees or telephone poles as the mist lifted at around 12:30.

"This was the foggiest CBC I've encountered—it was eerie and beautiful," said Maren Smith, "and while the birds were not plentiful, working a little harder for the list made it a fun challenge."

According to Count Leader Jerry Britten, the combined results from the 15 areas resulted in 161 different species being tallied. This exceeded their 25-year record of 160 in 1997 and well above the running average of 149. The total also significantly outperformed 2019 when only 141 species were seen.

"Although we had fewer eyes on each route," said Britten, "we had access to the remaining active part of the Concord Naval Weapons Station after a couple of years of not being allowed in the area. Access to this extensive tidal habitat boosted our numbers and species totals. We also spotted species that are rarely seen during our count, such as Red-necked Grebe, Redhead Townsend's Solitaire, and Rough-legged Hawk, to name a few."

There are many variables that affect the total number of species counted from year to year. Britten noted that there were more people counting birds at their feeders this year.

Also, some areas that had not been previously covered were censused this year. Donner Canyon has not been birded (birdwatched) on the count in many years and Sharp-shinned Hawk and House Wren were found there. Britten found Canyon Wren and Townsend's Solitaire by birding areas of western Black Diamond and Black Diamond Trail, not normally surveyed.

Could the shut-down have helped our feathered friends this year? It is hard to say. But maybe, just maybe, that softer singing gave those male White-crowned sparrows the broader exposure to a female ready to lay her clutch of eggs.

*Jill Hedgecock has a master's degree in Environmental Management and a bachelor's degree in Biology. Her love of nature inspired her to write the award-winning novel, "Rhino in the Room."*

\*<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/09/when-covid-19-silenced-cities-birdsong-recaptured-its-former-glory>.

Bird Photos by Jerry Britten

To learn more about Mt. Diablo Audubon Society, visit <https://mt-diabloaudubon.org/>



Purple finch.



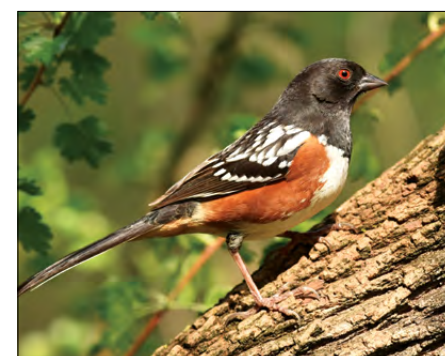
Acorn Woodpecker drills holes in dead stumps or limbs to store thousands of acorns and other nuts for the winter. Photo by Jill Hedgecock.



Barn owl at Los Vaqueros Photo by Jerry Britten



White-crowned sparrow



Spotted Towhee



Phainopepla



Old Borges Ranch, Walnut Creek Photo by Jill Hedgecock





## Real Estate Predictions for 2021

While we have no crystal ball to tell you exactly what will happen with the housing market in 2021, we can certainly make some educated predictions. Real estate was one of the big winners of 2020, and experts agree that the market will continue to be strong in the coming year. Here is a peek at what we think the biggest trends will be for real estate in 2021.

Normal seasons will return. Even though the real estate market was strong for most of 2020, it did not follow normal trends. Typically, the spring and summer seasons are the busiest, while the fall and winter seasons tend to be slower. That was not the case in 2020. The pandemic disrupted the spring market and buyers did not return until well into summer. As a result, this fall and winter have been much busier than usual. As we head further into 2021, experts predict that we will see a return to normal seasonal trends.

Home prices will continue to increase. One of the biggest characteristics of the 2020 housing market was a shortage in inventory. Sellers returned to the market at a slower rate than buyers. With fewer houses to choose from, prices increased. Home prices will continue to increase but at a slower level in 2021. More sellers will return to the market, which will provide some much-needed relief.

Home sales will slow. Record-low interest rates attracted buyers to the market to take advantage of the savings. Homes sales increased slightly year-over-year in 2020, and experts believe that

they will begin to slow in 2021.

Inventory will improve. Low inventory has been a trend in real estate for some time, and the pandemic exacerbated the problem. However, experts predict that inventory will begin to normalize and follow typical seasonal trends. In fact, some believe we may see an increase in inventory for the first time since 2019.

Millennials and Gen Z become bigger players. The oldest millennials are turning 40 this year, which means that many of them are already purchasing their second homes. Younger millennials and Gen Z buyers will also begin to enter the housing market. These generations generally make smaller down payments and take on more debt to purchase a home, and this trend is expected to continue.

WFH will continue to shape trends. In 2020, a large number of homebuyers wanted to purchase a property that would be conducive to working from home. While it's expected that some workers will begin returning to the office in 2021, working from home will still factor into trends. More workers will likely have flexibility to work from home as needed, and buyers will be looking for home offices, good Internet connections, and outdoor spaces that can be used for working. Proximity to other spaces that facilitate working remotely, such as coffee shops, cafes, and parks, will also be important. Compliments of VirtualResults.net.



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by Elaine Schroth, CEO & President



## Concord is ready for some new year comfort

The start of the new year is typically a time for huffing, puffing and salad bars, but you might want to think about pushing back a few of those resolutions until February; Concord's Comfort Food Week is back, and you really don't want to miss it.

The 4th Annual event returns January 15-31, 2021, with more days, more restaurants, new dishes, and a prize Passport. This year will likely be limited to takeout and delivery service for the duration, but warm comfort food on a chilly day is always a great way to satisfy cravings and support local restaurants at the same time.

The best way to navigate all the deliciousness is with the Comfort Food Week Passport, Visit Concord's mobile web page. Much like the Taco Trail Passport we introduced in September, this one features a directory and check-in system for all 70 participating restaurants, and sign-up is free and easy. Just check in when you pick up your order (or upon delivery) and earn points for a free "I Heart Concord" gift pack that includes a signature tee shirt, keychain, and restaurant gift card. All passport holders are also automatically entered for a daily drawing to win restaurant gift cards, plus a final drawing for a grand prize package that includes a night stay at the fabulous Hilton Concord.

Participating restaurants may offer comfort food specialties throughout the event, and some may offer discounts or

promotions. Just check location listings for specific dishes and deals, all conveniently accessible from your phone with the Passport.

Visit Concord's social media pages are highlighting tempting food and restaurant spotlights all month long. On Facebook, Concord Live! will stream fun cooking demos with local restaurants on January 14 and 21 at 6 PM.

Dining locally and giving a shout out to your favorite restaurants is needed and appreciated more than ever. So, as you venture out on your glorious quest for warm, delicious comfort food dishes that "revel unapologetically in their melty, cheesy, crispy, creamy, savory, deep-fried goodness," take some photos and tell everyone about it at #concordcomfortfoodweek, #visitconcord, #concordeats and post your glowing reviews on Yelp.

Don those stretchy pants proudly and get ready to indulge, savor and share your conquests with the world.

For details, Passport sign-up and complete list of participating restaurants go to [visitconcordca.com](http://visitconcordca.com).

Happy munching to all!

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# “The Queen’s Gambit”: The Local Masters’ Story

By Jill Hedgcock

For many, Netflix hit series, “The Queen’s Gambit” may be their first exposure to chess. According to CNN, a record 62 million households watched “The Queen’s Gambit” during the first month. The show has revitalized interest in the game.

At its core, chess is 32 game pieces on a 64-square board. The object of the game is to checkmate your opponent by attacking their king while it has no legal escape. Simple, right? Not quite. The strategies for defensive versus offensive play border on infinite.

The best chess players are rated as Grandmasters. As indicated in the movie, the game is dominated by European players, especially Russian Grandmasters.

What you probably did not know, there are two Masters of note, locally. Sam Shankland of Walnut Creek and a young prodigy and International Master, Christopher Yoo, 14, of Dublin.

Sam Shankland is an American Grandmaster and the current US Chess Champion. He is a mainstay on the US Olympic Team, a two-time Olympiad Gold Medalist (2014 and 2016), a former World U-18 co-champion (2008), and the winner of several international events. He has worked as an analyst for the reigning World Champion, Magnus Carlsen.

So how accurate is “The Queen’s Gambit” from a Grandmaster’s point of view?

Says Shankland of the show, “They definitely take some creative liberties with the actual gameplay, but “The Queen’s Gambit” does a very good job of showing the kinds of struggles a lot of chess players face, and what the lifestyle of a professional player is like.”

According to Shankland, chess is the kind of game where beginning to compete in tournaments at age eleven is a late start for elite players; most begin their training as 4-year-olds and many drop out of school at an incredibly young age to study chess fulltime. Sam Shankland’s father taught him to move the pieces when he was 6, but an afterschool class from the Berkeley Chess School in fourth grade incited his passion for chess.

“I only believed I had what it took to be a Grandmaster when I won the 2008 California State Championship at 16, the youngest ever winner at the time,” says Shankland. In his storied career, he achieved California State Champion in 2008, 2009, 2011 and 2012.

Shankland certainly did not let his delay out of the starting gate trip him up. He achieved his grandmaster title at age 19. Once he became an adult, graduated college, and was able to devote himself fully to the game, he reached the same kinds of heights that the prodigies did, even though it took him a little longer. He is happy that his parent’s didn’t pull him out of school and he doesn’t necessarily believe this would have made him a better player. Having a balanced life is important.

“I’m definitely a better person as a result of my experience as a chess player,” says Shankland. “These same traits that can make a person really unpleasant (extreme intensity, an enormously powerful drive to succeed, a hyper-competitive and aggressive nature) really show in the way I approach the game, but (hopefully!) less so in my relations with other people.”

“The biggest beginner mistakes I see are moving too quickly, not playing for the enjoyment of the game,” says Shankland, “and expecting it to be easy to improve. Much like any other sport, the people who excel the most in chess tend to be those with an extremely competitive nature and who are naturally aggressive. Chess can often make them better people as they can channel these generally negative qualities into something positive.”

FIDE is Federation International des Echecs, or the International Chess Federation. The cutoff to earn respect would vary

widely from person to person. According to Shankland, you would need to rank at about 2200 to be the best player in a local chess club.

“In order to be a Grandmaster,” explains Shankland, “you have to earn a rating of at least 2500 and have three extremely good international tournament results with a performance rating over 2600. It is an elite title, but not as much as it used to be. Today, there are over 1500 Grandmasters in the world. The unofficial “Super-Grandmaster” title would describe those who have broken 2700 in their lives, of which there have only been 121 throughout the history of chess.” Shankland is one of these Super



Sam Shankland wins US championship and exceeds 2700 FIDE rating for Super Grandmaster status.



2018 US CHAMPION! Shankland won the US Championship ahead of three of the top 10 players in the world, crossing 2700 FIDE for the first time. He also won \$50,000 in the process.

Grandmasters.

When he won the U.S. Chess Championship in 2018, he simultaneously breached the 2700 barrier for the first time in his career. His current FIDE is 2731.

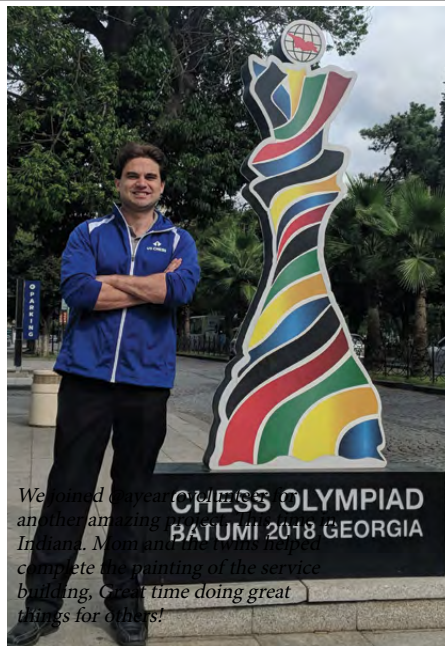
In “The Queen’s Gambit,” Harmon only takes on a trainer when she signs up to play in Paris. But training with Grandmaster’s is an important element for professional chess players.

“I’ve traveled to 52 countries as a professional player,” says Shankland, “and learned a lot from all the people I have met from all over the world. Before COVID hit, I frequently had other elite Grandmasters coming to California from Europe and Asia to train with me, including practice games, for a week or two, and I would go there as well, easily setting up five to six such sessions per year. For



Shankland Won the Fagernes International in 2015.

example, the last thing I did before the



Shankland and Team USA won the Olympiad for the first time in 79 years in Baku, in 2016.

lockdown was fly to Berlin where I trained with two other Grandmasters for a week. I then took the train to Prague, played the Prague Masters (I tied for first), and then flew home.”

Shankland’s record as an American Chess Grandmaster and two-time Olympic Gold Medalist is in a class of its own. He has written and published instructional books and videos on various aspects of the game. He just completed and released part 3 of “Lifetime Repertoires: 1.d4”, (the notation for the first move of Queen’s Gambit opening). The trilogy can be purchased at [www.chessable.com](http://www.chessable.com)

Shankland is also a coach and personal trainer.

It’s no coincidence that Shankland coaches another local chess master, Christopher Yoo, from Dublin, CA.

In “the Queens’s gambit, Harmon was a child prodigy. Yoo, now 14, also a prodigy, has been sensational. Yoo became the youngest International Master in US history in January 2019 as well as the youngest player to ever beat a Super Grandmaster, a feat that landed him on



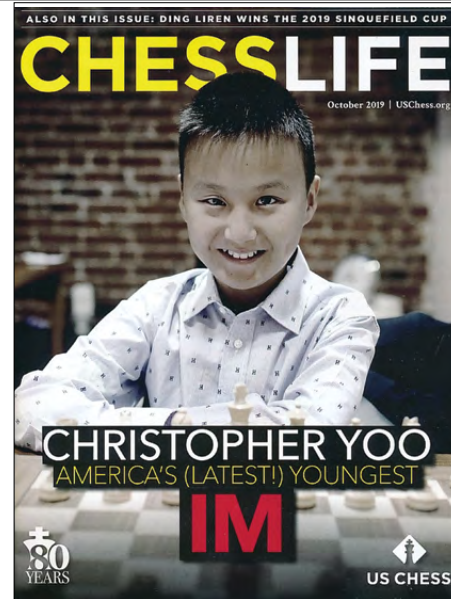
At age 7, 1st grade, Yoo won State Championship in Santa Clara in 2014.

the cover of Chess Magazine. Yoo learned chess at age 6. He was put in an after-school programs run by Berkeley chess group. “At first it was a struggle for him,” according to his father, Young-Kyu Yoo. “He was the last student to learn how the pieces move. So, the teachers didn’t pay much

attention to him. But by the end of the class, he was beating his teachers.” Within 4 months, he became the California 1st Grade State Champion.”

Yoo became the youngest California State Championship at age 11, against adults. That record at the time was held by Sam Shankland at age 16. One of the strongest level tournaments locally is the Golden Gate Open Tournament hosted at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Concord. (Currently cancelled due to COVID). Yoo has participated in this, but his goals now require even stronger competition.

“He’s trying to become a Grandmaster. To become a Grandmaster, you must do well in super strong tournaments,” Yoo



says.

He makes money playing chess but not enough to cover expenses. He made “\$15,000 in prize money in 2020, which doesn’t cover his traveling and coaching expenses. Before COVID-19 – he traveled one to two times a month to compete in



Yoo, 11, in a simul match in Novato. Yoo has never lost in over 100 games. (1 draw).

tournaments, mostly out of state, sometimes out of the country. There’s not much opportunity for tournaments of play at his level locally.

He also was awarded a \$21,000 fellowship from the US Chess Club.

As Harmon did in “the Queen’s Gambit”, Yoo has also played in several simul-games. (when one player plays several other opponents at once.) “The largest one was against 30 players. In all, he has played now over 100 simul-games and has won them all except for one draw.”

Coincidentally, that draw was against Mike Treschler, founder of the Contra Costa Chess Club.

“That’s my one claim to fame.” Treschler admitted humbly.

Yoo has also won many medals in composition (often seen as puzzles in publishing).

Yoo enters competitions whereby contestants anonymously submit “compositions”. At age 13, in the FIDE World Cup endgame competition in creating compositions, Yoo won the bronze cup overall, and gold for his age category. He’s won several medals at this.

Two of Yoo’s puzzles are on page 8, an easy to moderate level and one so advanced that even Grandmasters needed hints to solve.

To learn more about Shankland, schedule a training session, and learn about his books and video courses visit: <https://samshankland.com/#post-408>.



(David King contributed to this article)





# CLAYCORD<sup>®</sup>

## NEWS & TALK

### In case you missed it...

#### Gavin Newsom says he will not compel schools to reopen if Teachers' Unions refuse to go back

California Gov. Gavin Newsom says he's given no consideration to forcing schools to reopen if teachers' unions refuse to move ahead with in-person instruction once educators are vaccinated.

During a press conference after unveiling his proposed budget for the new fiscal year, Newsom was asked to respond to growing criticism that his recently announced plan to incentivize districts to reopen gives teachers unions the power to keep schools shuttered until the pandemic is over. He was also asked if he would consider compelling the opening of schools if unions refuse to agree to local reopening plans. Most of California's public schools have remained closed throughout the coronavirus pandemic as district officials have slow-walked re-openings.

#### Kaiser to be fined \$43K for failing to properly report COVID-19 outbreak at hospital

Santa Clara County has confirmed 60 coronavirus cases at Kaiser Permanente's San Jose Medical Center and has fined the health care company \$43,000 for failing to promptly report the outbreak.

The 60 cases including one death, are believed to be tied to a staff member wearing an inflatable Christmas tree costume in the facility's emergency department on Christmas Day.

The costume's fan likely blew coronavirus particles into the facility, which a hospital official characterized on Monday as "completely innocent and quite accidental." The staff member had no symptoms at the time. The company did not identify the emergency department employee who died, out of respect for their family.

In addition to the outbreak, Kaiser is on the hook for 43 violations of the county's health order because it failed to promptly report the first 43 positive tests that were confirmed between Dec. 27, 2020 and New Year's Day.

County officials were unaware of the outbreak until the company released a media statement on Sunday, according to the county. Kaiser will be fined \$1,000 for each violation.

#### Newsom's proposed budget would give \$600 stimulus checks to low-income residents

Low-income residents in California could receive \$600 stimulus payments as part of the state's 2021-2022 budget, Gov. Gavin Newsom said Wednesday.

The "Golden State Stimulus" payments would be dispersed to 2019 taxpayers who received an earned income tax credit from the state and 2020 taxpayers who have Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers. Residents with an annual income of \$30,000 or less are eligible for the tax credit, while ITIN taxpayers include people like undocumented residents who were not eligible for federal stimulus payments.

The governor is also seeking in his proposed budget to extend the state's moratorium on evictions during the pandemic, which is set to expire Jan. 31.

Under the moratorium via Assembly Bill 3088, residents who have lost income because of the pandemic and pay at least one quarter of their monthly rent cannot be evicted for missed payments.

In addition, the state would use the \$2.6 billion it received in federal stimulus money to support renters and homeowners who are at risk of being evicted.

#### Bay Area outpaces other areas in jobs that can be done from home

The Bay Area outpaces California's other metropolitan areas in the number of jobs that can be done from home, according to a study from the Bay Area Council Economic Institute on the ways in which the coronavirus pandemic has altered the region's economy.

Approximately 45 percent of employees in the nine-county Bay Area work in jobs that are eligible for remote work, more than the 40 percent in Sacramento, 39 percent in both San Diego and Orange County and 38 percent in Los Angeles.

San Francisco and Santa Clara counties both lead among all 58 of the state's counties with 51 percent of their jobs eligible to work remotely.

"Remote work has been critical to sustaining our regional economy through the COVID-19 pandemic," BACEI executive director Jeff Bellisario said. "But remote work also could bring significant structural changes to the economy and the way the region plans for the future."

The report found that a permanent shift in 12 cities across the Bay Area could affect some 265,000 jobs like transportation, food service and security jobs that rely on dense and bustling commercial hubs.

The shift to remote work has also caused the daytime populations of formerly dense areas to plummet. In San Francisco, 67 percent of jobs in the Financial District can be done remotely.

If all 1.79 million remote-work eligible jobs were done from home for only one day per week, more than 1 million trips by single-occupancy vehicles would be avoided per week, according to the report, a decrease of 8 percent from pre-pandemic travel.

#### Plans for pier improvements in Martinez take shape

There are plans for a series of improvements to the Martinez fishing pier and Ferry Point area, beyond basic structural repairs to the pier itself.

A public restroom, new fish-cleaning stations, new benches, kite anchors, a kayak launch, public safety cameras, a native-plant garden and interpretive panels are all on the wish list for what Martinez officials call Ferry Point Field.

Michael Chandler, Martinez's deputy city manager, said that about \$400 million will be available in this upcoming fourth round of Prop 68 grants. He also reiterated that, for the third round of funding, only 62 of 478 applications were funded, splitting about \$255 million.

The maximum grant from the fourth round, he said, will be \$8.5 million.

This whole process was kicked off in December 2019, when the City of Martinez spent about \$34,000 on a detailed study to assess the physical condition of the fishing pier on Carquinez Strait. The pier is popular with fishermen, walkers, joggers and sightseers.

The Martinez Fishing Pier Above Water Inspection Report plus an underwater inspection made in mid-October describe more than 20 spots on the pier, deemed to be either "serious" or "severe" structural problems. The report cited pilings hollowed out and weakened by tiny boring clams and isopods and by the waves; and at least one support beam under the pier planks rotted out and cracked. The Martinez City Council in October considered closing the pier for safety reasons, but it has remained open thus far.

The estimated cost to make all the needed pier repairs, Chandler said, is about \$1.93 million.

The pier was first built in 1934, and parts of it were rebuilt in 1976.



## EMOTIONAL HEALTH

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

### Resolute to achieve your resolutions this year

Are you making traditional New Year's resolutions, such as losing weight, exercising more, or drinking less alcohol? Or has the pandemic caused you to re-think your resolutions and drop some in favor of new ones? Not that healthy living isn't still a good idea during a pandemic.

A survey by OnePoll revealed 7 in 10 adults say they are tossing out some of their usual New Year's resolutions to focus on finances, positivity, and life skills with renewed motivation.

Americans use New Year's resolutions to help improve their lives. Yet, studies show less than 20% of Americans considered themselves successful in keeping those resolutions. At 80% failure rate, perhaps new strategies will be helpful in achieving your resolve.

The first step to improve the likelihood of success with your resolutions is to consider your roadblocks. From an emotional health standpoint, the following obstacles may stand in your way: negative self-talk, unconscious conflicts, limiting beliefs, or a lack of commitment. Awareness of such roadblocks is a key step to success.

There are also "manifesting" tools that help bring your desires into reality. One approach is writing your resolution in terms of an affirmation on a piece of paper so you visualize it. You should be specific about the details of what you want and write it in the present tense—as if you've already achieved it. For example, an affirmation could read, "I am successfully saving 10% of my salary each month."

An alternate or supplemental approach is to create a vision board for 2021 with cut-out pictures from magazines that visually portray what you desire. It's important to place your written affirmation and/or vision board where you can see them regularly.

Many successful businesses know that creating a detailed plan is critical to achieving objectives. You can do the same by breaking your resolutions into realistic steps. Create a game plan of specific actions or steps. Then you can check in on specific goals to gauge progress. You can even give yourself rewards for achieving milestones and/or have a support system of individuals who encourage you.

All the above methods should strengthen the depth of your commitment in achieving New Year's resolutions. Be mindful as you write out your resolutions, create a 2021 vision board, or develop detailed plans, that you may uncover additional inner roadblocks.

If the roadblocks are significant enough, you can use tools such as Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) or hypnotherapy. For example, you may feel deep down that you're not worthy of success. EFT involves tapping on body pressure points to get release from negative emotions and/or inner beliefs. It's an easy and proven method, and there are many sites on the Internet that show its use. Gary Craig, the founder of EFT, has a website: [www.emofree.com](http://www.emofree.com). (click Gold Standard EFT Tapping Tutorial on the website's bottom right).

Seeking professional assistance from a qualified hypnotherapist can help with unconscious conflicts or inner obstacles. Many practitioners are available online or in person using the above

and other therapeutic techniques to assist you. Teaching professionals often have interns who charge minimal amounts.

Besides affirmations and vision boards, prayer and meditation are powerful aids in achieving your resolutions. They can put you into an expanded state of consciousness, giving your resolutions more power. All of these approaches connect you to your deeper self, where causal and quantum fields begin creation.

But achieving your New Year's Resolution shouldn't be your sole focus. Opportunities, synchronicities, and other coincidences could come into your life, giving you clues that you may want to tweak or morph your goals into something better. For example, your initial resolution may be to improve job performance, but you may realize it would be better to seek new employment. Alertness to these possibilities can help bring forth your more inspired, creative, resourceful, and intuitive self.

Holly witnessed a number of graduates of her hypnotherapy school build their business by using these manifesting tools, allowing them to overcome difficult roadblocks to success. Holly also observed a number of her clients successfully deal with limiting beliefs, negative self-talk, and unconscious conflicts in their personal life. With the increased Covid-19 restrictions this winter, you may find more time to explore these strategies.

If you have questions or comments, please reach out to us via the contact information on our websites: [Holly@hypnotherapytraining.com](mailto:Holly@hypnotherapytraining.com) or [Bill@billyarborough.com](mailto:Bill@billyarborough.com).



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# DIABLO GAZETTE FUN ZONE

## That's Snow Fun

Lockdown has been hard on everyone. Chisel-It Ice who thrives making beautiful ice sculpture masterpieces for corporate and professional events says their business was down over 90% in 2020.

Ask any kid and they may say their fun is also down 90%. One mom decided to remedy that and ordered up a little snow fun from Chisel-It over the holidays.

Once she posted the photos on Facebook to her Mom group, Chisel-It Ice suddenly was selling thousands of snowballs. A cooler full of 100 snowballs sells for \$80.

"We've offered snowballs for years, but this year it had taken off," Robert Chislett, owner of Chisel-It Ice said.

He also provides ice luges and mini sculptures suitable for small parties of

grownups.

Bill of San Francisco hosted a snow day.

"The whole team from Chisel-It is so creative

and kind that we let them take the lead on helping us pull off a surprise snow-themed day for the kids. There are ice products we never would have



known about without their great advice, and I have to admit that after years of attending corporate holiday parties with do-not-touch ice sculptures it was pretty awesome to have one of our own that we could let the kids hit with snowballs. Just the levity we needed at the end of 2020."

These photos say it all. FUN!

There's still lots of winter left, so check it out at [snowballs.fun](http://snowballs.fun).



## Bosco: First born of 2021



We are delighted that San Ramon Regional Medical Center shared with Diablo Gazette their first newborn delivery of 2021.

Parents Monica and Jude of San Ramon welcomed their baby boy at 8:29 a.m. on Jan. 1, 2021 as they proudly show off their memorable moment with the community.

Baby boy Bosco entered this world weighing in at 6 lbs. 5 oz. and a height of 20.5." Welcome to 2021 Bosco!

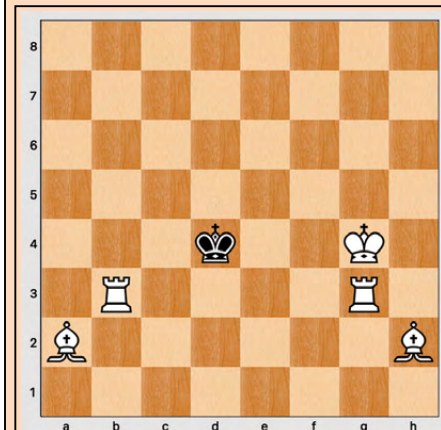


## Chess with Yoo

Composed by Christopher Yoo  
International Master, Dublin, Calif.

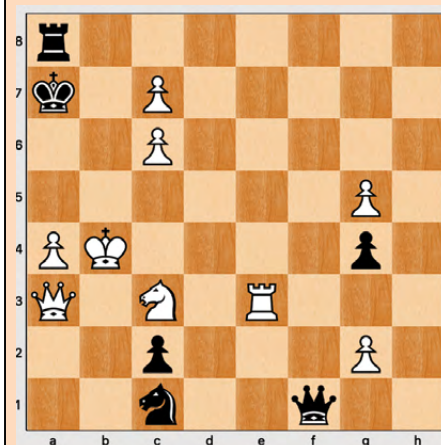
A: Level Medium (Solution below)

### White Mates in 2



B. Level HARD: (Solution below)

### White to Move and Win



Yoo composed Puzzle A at the age of 9. Puzzle B was composed at age 12. Yoo was the youngest player to ever win a FIDE World Cup medal in composition. He won the Bronze in the 2019 FIDE World Cup with this composition. No one has solved this without serious hints including former world champion Garry Kasparov. He also won Gold in the 2019 Youth Chess Composing Challenge (under age 23).

Puzzle A. Solution

1. Rg3 Ke4 2. Rb4# (if ...1. Kd5 2 Rb4#)

Puzzle B. Solution

1. Re1!! white sacrifices rook! ...Qxe1  
2. Ka5 Nd3 3. Qb4!! Qxc3 4. c8=N+!  
Rxc8 5. Qxc3 Rxc6! 6. Qxc6 c1=Q 7.  
Qa6+!~ Kb8 8. Qxd3 Qxg5 9. Qb5+ +/-

For a complete analysis of Puzzle B, go to [www.diablogazette.com](http://www.diablogazette.com).

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

ACCOMPLISH  
ADVENTURE  
APPRECIATE  
ATTITUDE  
BE SILLY  
BELIEVE  
BUCKET  
CONFIDENCE  
DIFFERENT

DREAM  
EVE  
LAUGHS  
LIST  
NEW YEAR  
NEW YOU  
PARTY  
SASSY  
SAY YES

SHINE  
SOMETHING  
STYLE  
THINK  
TIME  
TODAY  
TRUE SELF  
TRY

## New Year's Resolution



Be Warm, Stay Cool in 2021

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## Word Search Plus

### A Dirty Secret

For more fun, we made our word search a wee more challenging. We've hidden a code that will reveal a popular location in our area.

CLUE:

The founder of this world-renowned 3.5-acre collection of unique and beloved succulents and drought-tolerant plants from around the world lived to be 109 years old. It opened to the public to enjoy in early 1990s.

Hint:

Find the all the words in the word search and circle them. Then find all the letters not utilized in the puzzle to reveal an anagram. Unscramble the letters to reveal the answer. Answer on page 16.





David George

# THE NAKED GARDENER

## Natural Questions

Dedicated gardeners know that January is a busy month of preparing the garden for the new growing season. Fruit trees and roses need trimming and spraying (with an all-natural spray of course). This is a great time of the year as well to pour over online plant and seed catalogues while resting comfortably indoors while winter winds howl and rains fall – we hope.

The new year is also a time of reflection and ideas on how to improve upon last year. That won't be difficult considering the great pandemic year of 2020. While you are reflecting, let's review the knowledge we acquired this past year about naked gardening in the Diablo Gazette. How about a fun quiz? I never recommend cheating, but all of 2020's back issues are archived on the DG web site at: 'www.diablogazette.com'.

1 Which of the following bugs is NOT beneficial to your garden?

- a) Lady bird beetles
- b) Lacewings
- c) Aphids
- d) Soldier bugs

2 What should you NOT wear when gardening in hot summer sun?

- a) A broad-brimmed hat
- b) SPF-30 sun block on exposed skin
- c) Insect repellent
- d) Tight-fitting designer jeans

3 Which of the following beautiful blooming plants are easily propagated at home to save on purchases?

- a) Geraniums (pelargoniums)
- b) Sages of all types
- c) Oleanders
- d) All of the Above

4 What should you NOT do to keep your home and garden fire-safe?

- a) Trim tree limbs high up off the ground – at least 6-8 feet
- b) Plant high-resin bushes like manzanita and California lilac (ceanothus) close to your house
- c) Maintain a green, well-watered lawn as a fire break
- d) Keep plantings under trees low and trimmed of dead growth

If you're stumped, check out page 13 of this issue for the correct answers.

### Naked's Email In-Box

Fran C. writes, "I have quite a bit of this weed growing in my raised bed... It doesn't seem to have deep roots but I wonder if it's stealing nutrients from my tomato and squash. Should I pull all of it out?"

**NG:** Yes, Fran pull it out! By the photo it looks like a common weed, thyme-leaf spurge. It spreads and seeds quickly and steals valuable nutrients, especially water from your vegetable beds. If you

like showy cover crops, my favorites are crimson clover and fava beans, which add nutrients to your planting beds during the off-season.

James W. writes, "We recently started our own vegetable garden. Unfortunately, we've had a problem with caterpillars. We've been using a homemade garlic spray which has helped a little bit but they're still very active. Do you recommend anything to keep them away?"

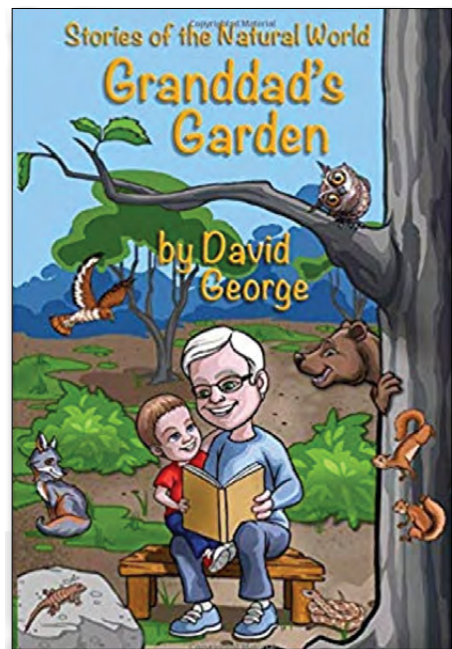


Army worm eating winter veggies. Photo courtesy James Wakefield

**NG:** Your nice photos, James, implicate a common pest called army worms. In large numbers, they can destroy winter crop leaves, such as cabbage, lettuce, broccoli, Brussel sprouts, and collards. The plants may not survive if the caterpillars are not eliminated. Picking them off with gloved hands is an all-natural control. Seal them in a bag or leave them on a remote fence post for bird food. If you spray, stick with naturally acidic ingredients, like garlic or hot pepper, mixed with a tablespoon of Dawn dish soap to clog their breathing pores, and a pinch sea salt to dry the worms out.

Thank you James W. and Fran C. for your all-natural gardening questions. Email your comments and questions to: NakedGardener@diablogazette.com. In some cases these may appear in future columns.

The Naked Gardener wishes you and your families a happier and healthier New Year!



"Grandad's Garden: Stories of the Natural World" by Naked Gardener columnist David George is his debut book of feel-good stories for troubling times. Available on Amazon.com.



Crimson Clover as cover crop Photo: Shutterstock

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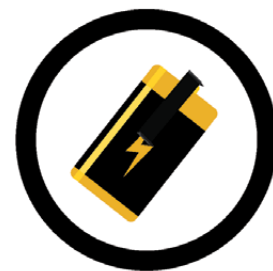


**At the curb:** Please place your Christmas tree (free of lights, ornaments, tinsel and stand) curbside on your green waste pickup day and we will recycle it at no additional charge. If your tree is longer than 3 feet, please cut it in half. Our trucks cannot pick-up trees larger than 3 feet. Flocked trees cannot be recycled and must be serviced as garbage. Please contact us to schedule pickup.

**Drop-off:** Take it to Contra Costa Waste Services (also known as RCTS) located at 1300 Loveridge Road in Pittsburg for no charge. Limit one (1) per vehicle. Please visit [www.mdr.com](http://www.mdr.com) for hours of operation.

### HOUSEHOLD BATTERY CURBSIDE PICKUP:

Please contact our office to schedule your battery pickup. Batteries are required to be in a tightly sealed container or a plastic food storage bag, labeled "batteries" and need to be curbside next to your garbage cart for removal. Unfortunately, automobile batteries are not accepted.



Please note: Collecting batteries can be a fire hazard. All customers should tape the ends of the batteries with black electrical tape to help avoid a potential spark.

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## computercorner

by William Claney,  
Tech Writer, Computers USA

## Tech in English

### Upgrade vs. New Computer

The question on many computer users' minds these days is whether they should upgrade their existing computer or buy a new one. Let's see if I can provide some insight on this matter.

If Santa didn't bring you a new computer for the Holidays and you are thinking you should get one, first consider the age of your existing computer. According to the pundits on the Internet, the consensus among them is a laptop is designed for a life of four (4) to five (5) years, and desktops are designed to last three (3) to eight (8) years. It depends on the model.

Ok then....by now we all know the Internet is always correct and accurate. Therefore, with tongue firmly in my cheek, one should not question such an authority.

Our 26 year of experience teaches us nearly all computers are at, or near the end of life by age three (3), usually because of their hard drives. The age of your computer matters and factors like the brand (of the hard drive) matter as well. Some manufacturers are better than others. Perhaps, the Internet is a tad optimistic.

Certainly, the age of a computer matters but what matters most is your assessment of your computer's performance. Is it fast or is it slow? That is a personal judgement. Fast vs. slow is in mind of the user. However, upgrading your computer because it is slow (to you) means spending about \$350.00 for a good upgrade job. Band-Aid repairs are much less expensive but do not

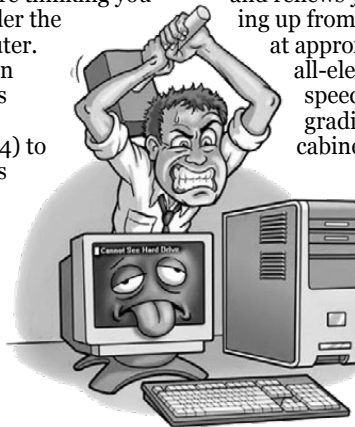
provide the performance boost you may be seeking.

I believe your first upgrade should be moving from a hard disk drive (HDD) to a solid state drive (SSD) as this is likely the greatest performance boost for your money and renews your life cycle. You are trading up from a mechanical device moving at approximately 214 mph to an all-electronic device moving at the speed of light. Think of it as upgrading from an icebox (wooden cabinet using a block of melting ice as a coolant – for you younger folks) to a refrigerator. Old tech to new tech.

Next important item, how is the video output? All the latest streaming, gaming, video and photo editing are dependent on the video card (chip on motherboard). Laptops have no upgrade for this. Desktops with a qualifying

motherboard (that thing that holds the CPU in place with all the wires coming out of it) may have a usable slot to plug in a more modern video card (adaptor). Some of the low priced desktops are not able to make this upgrade. Get a free estimate and consult your local computer expert for the answer.

In conclusion, if you want to go faster, upgrade your drives. If you want your four-year-old computer to act like a new computer, then get a new computer that is fully upgradable. Until next time, stay healthy and keep demanding more performance – we like that.



## Jill Hedgecock's bookends

Program Coordinator, Mount Diablo branch of the California  
Author of *From Shadow's Perspective*  
[www.jillhedgecock.com](http://www.jillhedgecock.com)

### JUST MERCY: A Story of Justice and Redemption

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption (2015, paperback, One World, 368 pages, \$15.17) by Bryan Stevenson is the true story of the author's journey from a recently graduated ideological Harvard lawyer to a social activist.

His transformation begins after he meets Walter Macmillan while working in Alabama. Macmillan is a young black man on death row who was wrongfully accused of the murder of a white woman in the deep south. This case ultimately changed the direction of Stevenson's life. He has since devoted his life to helping people on death row through the establishment of the Equal Justice Initiative, a nonprofit that helps tip the scales by providing free legal assistance to poor and underserved convicted people.

This book is about much more than a lawyer's coming-of-age story. It reveals the dark side of our legal system. Through Stevenson's due diligence in Macmillan's and the cases of other accused, the reader learns of crooked cops, uncaring and incompetent public defenders, and a legal culture skewed toward racial bias. It is as if Bryan put our legal system on trial and a guilty verdict was rendered that justice is not equally fair and just for all. What does it say about our society when children as young as thirteen are being tried as adults and sentenced to life without parole?

Despite the subject matter, there are stories that speak to human perseverance in the face of defeat. One example provides a testament to the capacity of a mother who forgave the killer of her child. Stevenson's view is that we have all been broken by something and that showing mercy is "empowering,

liberating, and transformative when it

is directed at the undeserving." Perhaps it is in these words where readers can find compassion.

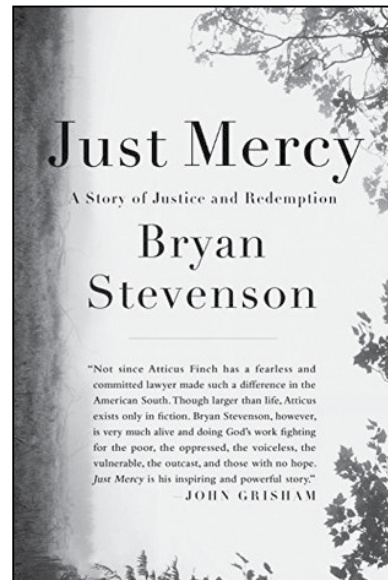
"Just Mercy" was named One of the Best Books of the Year by The New York Times as well as one of the most influential books of the decade by CNN. It was a #1 New York Times Bestseller. It was a Finalist for the National Book Critics Circle's Award in Autobiography and for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize.

Its numerous awards include the Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Nonfiction, winner

of the NAACP Image Award for Nonfiction, winner of a Books for a Better Life Award and a finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize to name a few. It was also a major motion picture starring Michael B. Jordan and Jamie Foxx.

Bryan Stevenson is the executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Alabama, a social justice activist, and a law professor at New York University Law School. He has won relief for dozens of prisoners facing the death penalty, argued five times before the Supreme Court, and won national acclaim for his work challenging bias against the poor and people of color. He has received numerous awards, including the MacArthur Foundation "Genius" Grant.

Fans of "To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee, "The Warmth of Other Suns" by Isabel Wilkerson, and "The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness" by Michelle Alexander will likely enjoy the book. "Just Mercy" gave me a new perspective on the death penalty and it is one of those thought-provoking books that will stay with me for a long while.






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### White Pony Express impressed with local support

With the pandemic still going on, WPE is very busy delivering surplus food to those in need. Since the beginning of COVID, our deliveries have tripled and the demand has skyrocketed. There are now 30+ organizations on the wait list to receive our food

items.

The response to our "Circle of Giving Playbook" has been really good, as the public has been generous in donating to WPE. The article you published has been a contributing factor.

I enjoyed reading your article "1200 Salvation Army Angels Adopted." What a wonderful thing for the Salvation Army to do and how delighted the children must have been when they received their toy! Perhaps this will inspire others to do their own "Angel" project. -- Steve Spraitzar, White Pony Express

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by Terrylynn Fisher, Broker Associate  
www.BuyStageSell.com

## Contra Costa County 2020 Real Estate

Well, as happy as everyone is/was to see 2020 go, the real estate market did better than you might have expected. Trendgraphix, a statistics resource company has a summary of 2020 real estate for Contra Costa County.

They state: Contra Costa County - December 2020 was a Seller's Market. What makes a seller's market? The number of homes for sale in December 2020, down 41% compared to last December. With more buyers than houses to buy, this creates the Seller's market.

The closed, sold, price, and days on market are just as impressive. Homes closed in December 2020 were up **36.9%** over last year, meaning most of the homes on the market sell! Seller's Market.

Homes under contract in December, 2020 were up **51.5%** over last year.

Average Days on Market was 17, down **56.4%** from last year.

Sold prices in December were up to **103%** of asking price. That is an increase of **5.1%** over last year.

Average SOLD Price was **up 17.4%** countywide over last year.

Will this continue into 2021? As things settle down politically, we will see. Interest rates at some point will be rising, slightly maybe, which affects how much house a buyer can purchase.

Buyers that purchase a single-family home now, may only be able to purchase a condo when the rates go up, since buyers are qualified on payment-to-income ratios.

This is one of the reasons buyers are so eager and will make bid after bid until they finally get a home. This fuels overbidding where homes may have multiple buyers, each trying to make the winning bid.

So, what are you to do? Well, if you own

your home, this is a happy time, it's likely worth more than ever before. You don't have to bid or worry about moving. If you are thinking of selling, there are the usual things you can do. The "list" depends on how soon you are thinking about selling.

Are you thinking of selling in the next three months? If so, contact that Realtor now for the "list" to avoid having to do everything in the last week. You may think there's not much to getting ready for market, but carpet cleaners and house cleaners, window washers, stagers and others are booking a week or two out. What if they are booked the week you need them? It is better to get on the calendar.

Are you thinking of selling in the next six months? It is never too early to plan. Contact that realtor for the conversation about what might be needed, so you can plan larger repairs or inspections and have time to decide what you can do yourself or if you will need to hire out. Handymen, contractors, window people etc., are all booked months in advance right now.

Are you thinking of selling in a year? Keep contact with your Realtor for the market updates so you can watch the market. Sometimes a December market has more buyers and fewer homes, so that might be when you will get your highest sale price.

You can watch what's going on, review the stats, (like the ones I mentioned above) and plan your exit for when it's most lucrative for you.

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



**frugelegance**  
by Carol and Randi-The Frugirls  
[www.frugelegance.com](http://www.frugelegance.com)

## Crockpot Chicken Tortilla Soup

Baby, it's cold outside! And when it's cold, there is nothing better than a warm, hearty bowl of homemade soup. Our recipe for Crockpot Chicken Tortilla Soup is one of our favorites. It is easy to make, delicious and super satisfying.

Do you use a crockpot or slow cooker? We love ours. What a time saver! Even when life gets hectic, you can still make a great meal thanks to a crockpot. Simply add all ingredients and it will cook throughout the day. You might want to double the recipe, so you have some extra.



### Ingredients:

- 3 Chicken Thighs, skin removed (or chicken breasts)
- 10 oz Can Diced Tomatoes with Green Chiles
- 1-1/2 Cups Cooked Black Beans
- 1-1/2 Cups Chicken Broth
- 1-1/2 Cups Water
- 1 Yellow Onion, finely chopped
- 3 Garlic Cloves, finely minced

- 1 Jalapeno, finely chopped
- 1/2 Teaspoon Ground Cumin
- 1/2 Teaspoon Chili Powder
- Juice from 1/2 Lemon
- 20 Tortilla Chips
- 3 Tablespoons Finely Chopped Cilantro
- 1/2 Cup Shredded Monterey Jack Cheese

### Directions:

Place the chicken, tomatoes, juices, beans, broth, water, onion, garlic, jalapeno, cumin, and chili powder in a crockpot. Cover & cook on "high" for 3-4 hours or on "low" for 6-8 hours.

Uncover, and using tongs, remove the chicken from the pot. Let cool enough to handle. Remove the meat from the bones and shred with a fork. Return the shredded meat to the pot. Stir in the lemon juice.

Crumble a few tortilla chips into each bowl. Add soup. Sprinkle with cilantro



and grated cheese. ENJOY!



*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. Look for more of their crockpot, soup and great family favorite recipes at [www.frugelegance.com](http://www.frugelegance.com). FrugElegance, where Frugal and Elegance come together.*

## Travis Credit Union Foundation donates \$36,000 to Monument Crisis Center

Monument Crisis Center donors and supporters raised \$18,000 and received a matching donation of \$18,000 from the Travis Credit Union COVID-19 Relief Initiative.

The \$36,000 received will allow Monument Crisis Center in 2021 to provide thousands of local families the nutritious food and basic essentials including toiletries, diapers and feminine products, all lifesaving supplies during this pandemic. "We feel very lucky to have many caring partners in the community. We need to be mindful that many of our neighbors are really hurting right now and demand continues to increase. Donations like this and those from the community mean the world to us and to those that we are supporting," said Sandra Scherer, Executive Director.

In the case with one local family with three children, who have been particularly affected during this pandemic, Monument Crisis Center has been a lifeline to them, by providing much needed food and essentials, along with educational programs for the children but as well as emotional support and compassion, something that this family really needed this year.

"Partner organizations like Monument Crisis Center are integral to the fabric of our communities and we value the work that they are doing, especially in the aftermath of COVID-19," says Damian Alarcon-Young, Director/AVP, Community Relations at Travis Credit Union.

If you too would like to support Monument Crisis Center, please visit their website at [www.monumentcrisiscenter.org](http://www.monumentcrisiscenter.org)/donate or text MCC to 41-444.



# Out to Lunch

## My favorite meal is Comfort Food Week

by Richard Eber

As cold weather unfolds this month in the Bay Area, even the most adamant of “season deniers” must admit that winter is upon us. As part of dealing with this phenomenon, our diet changes to embrace hearty, warm, and nutritious dishes designed to take the chill off.

Comfort foods, as they are known, provide us fuel to keep us going when the thermometer dips into the 55 degree and below range. For the last half of January, (15th-31st) Visit Concord, is helping us celebrate the cuisine of winter with Comfort Food Week. This 4th annual event is especially noteworthy in 2021 with restaurants being restricted to offering only take-out and delivery services.

Summarizing the 70 eateries taking part in this program we begin, with the Beef Bourguignon coming from the kitchen of Luna Restaurant across from Todos Santos Park. Owner-Chef Habib Eljafi is offering the ultimate comfort entrée with his rendition of French Pot Roast.. His version features chuck slowly simmered in garlic mushrooms, bacon. Vegetables, new potatoes, and Merlot wine. Served with warm sourdough.

For a less formal experience, iconic Digger's Diner on Farm Bureau Road has been pleasing generations of customers with their home cooked menu. For this event they are offering several dishes including rib eyes, short ribs, and Chicken fried steak. All are served with veggies and real mashed potatoes smothered in gravy.

Similar faire is served by Big Country Kitchen on Clayton Rd. and of course The Sugar Plum Coffee Shop adjacent to Todos Santos. Their breakfast version of chicken fried steak features house made biscuits and gravy designed for customers who are hungry with calories to spare.

Not be forgotten are old stand bys that have been providing solid comfort foods for generations of local diners. Barney's Hickory Pit on Clayton Road continues to make use of their grandfathered-in brick oven to produce arguably the best pork ribs in town. Always juicy with a taste flavored from mesquite charcoal accompanied by their special BBQ sauces, Barney's is a Concord institution.

In a similar vein, El Tapatio across from Park and Shop has been providing traditional Mexican specialties for over 30 years. With a menu reminiscent of full service restaurants of a previous generation, they provide well made, ample portions of traditional dishes. Their recipes for Grilled Chicken or Steak Fajitas, Chile Colorado, Quesadilla de Camarones, and a host of other items, have withstood the test of time.

For a less formal Mexican meal, El Faro on Monument has been pleasing their clientele since 1980. They offer customers time honored recipes such as Torta Sandwiches, Chile Relleno, and my favorite shrimp burritos. This place has always provided consistency and good value which continues to bring customers thru their doors.

Comfort food from the other side of the Pacific Ocean is alive and well in several locales. One of the best is Bronze Buddha

Thai Fusion in Clayton Valley Shopping Center at Ygnacio and Clayton Roads. For Comfort Food Week they are serving

Tom Kha Soup which features a sour coconut milk broth with mushrooms, lemon grass, kefir lime leaf topped with cilantro and roasted chili.

In the Todos Santos area, consider the Himalayan Cuisine restaurant. Chef Surya is featuring their renowned Butter Chicken (with a rich tomato cream curry) for their Comfort Food

special.

And there's La Fritanguera, next door to Sugar Plum Coffee Shop. It is perhaps the most creative eatery in Concord. Their Caribbeanesque menu serving plantains, achiote marinated pork, and special fried chicken provides a unique dining experience especially for takeout.

In addition to providing an abundance of entrée options to diners, Comfort Food week also features several vendors who provide appetizers, small plates and dessert items to their customers.

One of the best is Chef Kev's Specialty Foods. Prior to the Covid-19 his business was growing serving a line-up of spicy peanuts in some 13 local brew pubs. My favorites are the Spicy Thai and the tangy peanut brittle. With

a reduced clientele caused by in-house food service being eliminated, Kevin is surviving his home based business selling his products on line and with a select number of retailers.

For dessert, The Milk Tea Lab on outer Clayton Road is offering a creamy mango smoothie with bits of fresh fruit. Out the Dough at Olivera Crossings is providing the ingredients to bake biscotti cookies at home. Concord's preeminent Alpine Bakery and Cakes is providing their famous Princess Cake.

Lastly, we have the Pop Bar at The Veranda serving Hot Chocolate on a stick. If that doesn't say comfort, then what does?

Seventy participants in 15 days. These are tough decisions; do you choose your favorites or try something new?



Princess Cake Slices from Alpine Pastry



Habib Eljafi of Lunas Restaurant with his featured dish French pot roast.



Good ol' Comfort from Diggers Diner

## Forget resolutions, form habits

By Lisa Vonnegut, CSCS



There are a few holiday traditions that truly seem pointless (like fruitcake) or unpalatable (like fruitcake). Possibly the most counterproductive holiday tradition of all is the New Year's Resolution. In January (we say), we will finally: lose 50 lbs, run a marathon, stop eating sugar forever, or set some other goal so unattainable that most people give up within three weeks. While it's terrific to strive for self-improvement or better health, habit change is a more sustainable path to our New Year's goals.

To understand what makes a new habit stick, it is important to identify why it doesn't. Our nervous systems thrive on efficiency, and it is most efficient if we stay just as we are. Any change requires a high energy price tag to create enough volume to overpower the status quo. We might start strong with big goals, but within a short time we fade out. The solution? Keep the change so small that it is sustainable to practice even on your worst day.

### Health

While it feels satisfying to “resolve” that poor eating and (lack of) exercise habits will transform on Jan 1, the reality is that too restrictive or too rigorous plans will not survive. The good news is that there is a lot of collective energy in January to make healthy changes. The key is to create manageable bites that undramatically integrate new habits into your daily routine.

Instead of taking things out of your diet, focus on adding things in. Add a handful of greens to your smoothie. Try Greek yogurt instead of sour cream for extra protein. Drink a glass of water before (or with) your wine.

Track your food. Resist the urge to judge or make changes, and give yourself permission to be honest, and simply observe your trends for the first month. With most tracking apps, you enter something into your database once, and it stays there. By the end of a couple of weeks, tracking your food is simply a matter of clicking down a list. This also provides you the opportunity

to see where you can add more things in.

If you are adding exercise into your life, find something that feels good and interests you. Initially, don't worry about the intensity; just focus on creating a consistent space in your schedule for movement that you look forward to. Once the habit is fully ingrained in your routine, you can slowly build on it. Starting with too much discomfort will set you up to abandon it later.

Getting more or higher quality sleep is one of the best things to do for your health. While it is great to think about getting off all screens in the evening or having lights out by 10 pm, are those goals that you can manage? How about going to bed 15 minutes earlier? How about plugging your phone in the other room to avoid the temptation to scroll down social media while you are in bed? Find one thing that feels overly simple and do it.

### Self-Improvement

When looking for something that will fuel personal growth, start with something that brings you joy. Do not bully yourself into taking something on just because you “feel like you have to.” We want to add to our lives in a way that serves us, not scolds us. Pick something that can be accomplished in frequent short bursts that cannot be put on the backburner due to a work deadline or your kid's homework schedule. Perhaps you can look at two-minute meditations or use the Duolingo language app to learn some Italian phrases that you will use on your great vacation later in the year.

While it is tempting to make grand gestures at the start of the New Year, be aware that the energy required to sustain dramatic changes will likely drain your motivation to stick with them. Your nervous system will integrate consistent small habits with more ease than anything that requires a huge effort. Set yourself up for success in 2021. Do not waste time with New Year's Resolutions. Subscribe to habit change and you will give yourself the best shot at reaching your goals.

Lisa Vonnegut is a trainer and coach specializing in neural performance and wellness for BodySynergyFitcation.com

## 2021 New Year Resolution: Get Organized

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# CVCHS is moving forward in 2021

By Jim Scheible, Executive Director



With 2020 now behind us, I want to wish everyone a joyous, healthy and safe new year. To say that we have lived a lifetime during this 9-month pandemic ordeal might be an understatement. Each of us has experienced countless sacrifices to our daily routines including many of us having to face the grim reality of COVID-19 personally.

For those outside of our school community, I felt compelled to share a brief status update of CVCHS' on-campus learning as we look towards 2021. It is important that you know what steps are being taken to ensure the health and wellbeing for each of our students and staff. This is even more crucial as we enter what many are saying is the most dangerous phase of COVID-19 – even as the vaccine is on its way.

In December, Governor Newsom announced a new stay-at-home order impacting the entire state. In Contra Costa County, this order differs from past guidance in that school operations were not impacted. CVCHS is allowed to continue conducting in-person and other small-group instruction without modification. The guidance stated that schools already open for in-person learning may remain open. In our first semester, CVCHS was serving over 400 students via an in-person academic program and nearly 600 through our extracurricular activities which include sports conditioning and music practices.

Regarding safely operating schools even in a COVID-19 surge, data from the CDC and other health agencies demonstrates that there has not been an issue of on-campus spread in schools that have reopened. This has been true locally in the Bay Area and specifically in Contra Costa County as confirmed by Contra Costa Public Health.

Our own experience at CVCHS shows this trend as well. CVCHS has had several instances of individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 having also been on campus. Based on our contract tracing, all those cases were attributed to off-campus contact. There has been no spread of COVID-19 on campus between peers or staff. This is evidence that our collective efforts are working, and we are grateful to everyone who has assisted with this objective in mind.

This time of year can be especially stressful on students and we know this

is only compounded by the current circumstances. CVCHS is striving to support every one of our students and their families with counseling, webinars and online academic resources. In addition, we know the in-person learning experience is what is best for our students and it is why families chose CVCHS for their child's high school. As we return for the second semester in January, CVCHS will continue to expand the number of students we are serving in-person until we have been able to offer a seat to every student who wants to come on our campus.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown a positive spotlight for us here at



As the "Face of Our School," Debbie Learner is the front office secretary at CVCHS. Each day, she welcomes students and visitors alike making the most of the distance learning experience.

CVCHS – a great appreciation for our teachers, counselors, classified staff and administrators. No two students have been affected in the same way, but all need the support of the important adults around them. Now more than ever, educators and support staff are playing a unique role of facilitating student learning, well-being and growth.

And as families encumbered initial obstacles learning from home, our entire team stepped up to address those challenges for delivering essential services -- from online resources at home, to health and safety here at campus, to meal distribution to families in need.

There is no debate 2020 has been a challenge for many students and families. However, CVCHS has taken bold measures to ensure that our students' academic pursuits, wellbeing and growth remain paramount. Here's to a great year ahead for all of us.

## Naked Gardener: Natural Answers from page 9

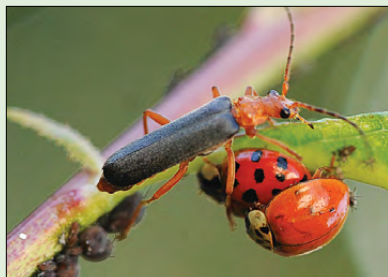
**1 c** Aphids. All of the other bugs are very beneficial and eat pesty aphids by the hundreds. A good reason not to use pesticides in a naked garden, which kill all of your bug-friends also.

**2 d** Tight-fitting designer jeans. You should always wear the other three protective items, even if you wear nothing else!

**3 d** All of the above. Your favorite garden center or online plant site is a great place to shop for interesting new varieties. But propagating your own favorites into blank areas of your garden saves money and is fun and rewarding also.

**4 b** Planting resin-filled bushes such as manzanita or California lilac near your home is a fire hazard. They explode into flame if burning embers drift into them. Be fire-wise and maintain your garden with the goal of protecting as well as beautifying your valuable real estate.

*Keep bushes low and trees trimmed high*



Soldier and ladybird beetles eating aphids. Photo courtesy UCANR.



## Views of the Valley

Photos by Micah



Tony Jetland, aka the Kite Man of Martinez, is teaching Melissa Pixcar of ABC7 how to fly one of his extraordinary kites. It's not easy. Tony had garnered quite a bit of media attention including CBS radio, SF Gate, EBTimes and ABC7. The moniker "Kite Man" was a name Diablo Gazette gave Tony in an article we published in March 2017. The name stuck.



Tony Jetland (Kite Man of Martinez) interviewed for his ABC7 evening news segment on him with Melissa Pixcar.



This decorated home off Navarone was one of the local favorites of those touring Christmas lights over the holidays. Even in the daytime it was spectacular.



The organizers of the Annual Concord 5000 run/walk didn't let the pandemic get in the way of helping the Contra Costa Blue Star Moms Holiday care Package drive.



Chisel-It Ice presented John Muir with five of these ice sculptures on the first day of vaccination

## Boost health with fresh produce

by Deb Morris, PCFMA.org

Our health is of utmost concern right now. Fueling your body with healthy nutritious foods that improve your immune system and give you more energy and stamina will help you feel better and ward off illness.

Fresh produce will give you the fuel your body needs to work in your garden, handle your errands, work a full day at your job, and take care of the kids without wilting. Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and protein will give your body the vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, fiber, and energy for all kinds of tasks throughout the day.

**Boost your energy.** Carbohydrates like whole grain pastas and breads, oats, fresh fruits and vegetables, and local honey will give you energy. Carbs are the body's preferred source of fuel. They also raise serotonin levels, keeping your mood even. The body absorbs whole grains and beans slowly because they are full of healthy fiber, stabilizing blood sugar and energy levels and giving you sustainable energy.

**Keep Well.** Your immune system benefits from a variety of whole fresh foods like antioxidant-rich berries, dark leafy greens, garlic, onions, oranges, root vegetables, and beans. Yogurt helps your digestive tract and salmon has the much-touted omega-3 fatty acids.

It is also advisable to drink plenty of water. A body doesn't work as well when it is dehydrated.

You'll find all the ingredients you need to keep you healthy and energized throughout the day and through the year from nearby farms. Diaz Farms in Fowler, Ken's top Notch out of Fresno and J&J Ramos Farms out of Hughson have sweet juicy citrus like oranges and mandarins to boost your immune system. Esquivel Farms from Watsonville and Halog Farms in Merced, J&M Farms in Gilroy and Tu

Universo from Watsonville offer delicious leafy greens, Brussels sprouts and loads of root vegetables. Winters Fruit Tree brings a nice assortment of almonds, walnuts, and pistachios for protein and healthy fats. Olive oil comes from Atlas Peak in Napa.

These farmers bring the best they can grow and harvest their produce just before bringing it to market to ensure it has the highest nutrient content and best flavor. You can purchase local produce with different and unique varieties directly from these farms at area farmers markets. Check Online for a farmers' market event nearest you at [www.pcfma.org](http://www.pcfma.org).



Start the New Year with this healthy and tasty salad a recipe from PCFMA.org.

### Celery & Orange Salad

2 – 3 orange varieties, peeled and sliced into rounds

3 full slices of red onion, 1/8 inch thick  
1 tablespoon grapefruit juice  
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil  
1/2 cup walnuts, chopped and toasted  
1 full celery stalk, plus all stalks with leaves from the celery center, sliced  
Salt and pepper

Place the celery, oranges, onions and walnuts in a bowl. Season with salt and pepper. Dress with grapefruit juice and extra virgin olive oil, toss and serve.




**aRt Cottage**

 by FROgard [www.artcottage.info](http://www.artcottage.info)

# Salon des Refuses

This New Year brings a new way of life for all of us, and as creative creatures, we can come up with some wonderful ways of reinventing our lives and businesses.

Case in point, before March 2020, how many of us even knew what a pandemic was, let alone understand what it meant and what the consequences of it would be? How many of us knew how to use Zoom or how to make our own masks? We do now.

"Salon des Refusés" is the title of our exhibit for January and February. The idea for this show came to me when a call for art from the de Young Museum went out to Bay Area artists several months ago. The Museum accepted several hundred pieces from local artists, however, there were several thousand more who did not make it.

This got me thinking about the French Impressionists and how they had initially been treated when the big shows opened at the Museum in Paris. They did not paint like the traditional Masters; they expressed themselves in a new style with color and light, painting their impressions of what they saw. And they were refused. So, Napoleon ordered the museum to host a show that would be open to all the artists who were refused and not "juried in."

aRt Cottage also refuses no one. We believe in giving all artists a fair chance, so we never have juried shows.

"Salon des Refusés" is ready for viewing in person and on our blog. We enjoy about 6 - 8 visitors each day that we are open (Tuesdays - Fridays, 11am-5pm and Saturdays 1-5pm).

aRt Cottage operates within the city and county health guidelines. We have five separate gallery rooms where work is on display. Only one person is allowed at a time in any room. Visitors must wear a mask and enter through the front door after signing in with their phone number and/or email, which serves as our contact tracing. Hand sanitizer is at the front table and temperatures are taken with a no-touch thermometer. We have a front entrance and a back exit to maintain a circular flow from room to room, to limit contact between visitors.

aRt Cottage is located at 2238 Mt. Diablo Street, Concord.



by Renaye



by Renaye



Ceramic sculpture by Allen Diskson



30" x 72",  
"Orion's  
Shoulder"  
This is an old  
growth sugar  
pine tree on a  
"cliff" overloo-  
king Pinecrest  
Lake. There is  
mist over the  
water of the  
lake. A small  
forest fire is  
smoldering in  
the distance.--  
by Colin Hall



Watercolor, "Seagull Shore" by Nora Krauss

## JOURNEYMAN'S JOURNAL

by Floyd McCluhan, Save Mount Diablo

## Discover Diablo Series expands to 36 excursions in 2021

The 2021 Discover Diablo free public hike series begins January 23rd.

Explore some of the East Bay's premiere hiking spots through Mount Diablo, including areas rarely open to the public. The Discover Diablo hike series offers interpretive family walks, guided hikes, and property tours that promises to satisfy trailblazers of all ages. It's all free to the public.

This year, Save Mount Diablo is adding

hikes and new activities to the series for a total of 36 events in 2021. New offerings will

include climbing, mountain biking, and bilingual hikes in Spanish and English. The ever-popular tarantula walk will be offered twice, and a special hike will celebrate the California State Parks centennial.

There will be a unique opportunity to take what may be a last look at Del Puerto Canyon—the site for a proposed reservoir in the Diablo Range (east of Patterson, CA). Del Puerto is rich in wildflowers, wildlife (including Tule elk), dinosaur bones, and Native American sites, all of which could soon be under water.

"There has been a renewed appreciation for the outdoors in the last year. Through the Discover Diablo Series, people are fortunate to be able to explore and discover the beauty of Mount Diablo with experienced guides," said Ann Notarangelo, Community Relations Manager for the Martinez Refining

Company. "Our refinery has sponsored these hikes since 2017 in the hopes people will enjoy learning more about the mountain, while spending quality time with family and friends."

The Discover Diablo program was started by Save Mount Diablo in 2017 to connect local communities with the amazing natural world of the Mount Diablo area and to build awareness about land conservation.

Hikes take place on one of Save Mount Diablo's conserved properties or on a collaborating partner's land that Save Mount Diablo helped to protect in years past. These include Mount Diablo State Park, East Bay Regional Park District, and Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation lands.

Discover Diablo hikes are guided by experts steeped in the natural history and lore of the region. Save Mount Diablo hopes the Discover Diablo series will spark a passion for the Diablo Range and deepen people's connections to the land and nature. All Discover Diablo hikes are subject to, and will honor, all applicable COVID-19-related restrictions then in place for our area.

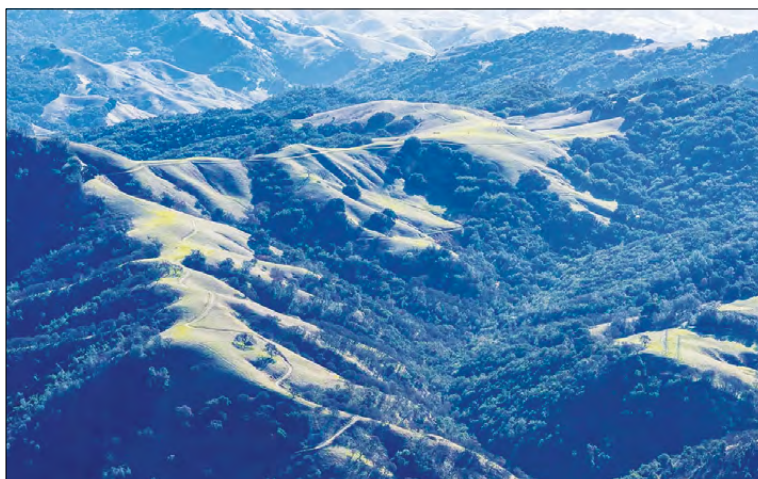
According to Ted Clement, Executive Director of Save Mount Diablo, "It is the goal of the Discover Diablo program to build connections between people, Save Mount Diablo, and the land, helping our communities develop a strong sense of place and a deepened appreciation for our collective backyard. Most importantly, we want to cultivate a love of the land in participants, as that is what it will take to ensure the preMount Diablo natural area is taken



Hikers testing out their photography with Discover Diablo on a clear March day in 2019 at Curry Canyon Ranch. Credit: Laura Kindsvater, Communications Manager, Save Mount Diablo.



Del Puerto Canyon Hike February 13 9:00 am - noon. Photo courtesy Save Mount Diablo.



View from the Mary Bowerman Trail. Photo courtesy of Save Mount Diablo

care of for generations to come. This year we are excited to offer an expanded and diverse set of offerings to invite more people out to connect with nature and Save Mount Diablo."

There is something for us all to discover in the nooks and crannies surrounding Mount Diablo, so be sure to hit the trails in 2021 and find your own individual

inspiration!

RSVP required. Registration for hikes in March onward will open two months prior to each hike's date.

To view their schedule of upcoming hikes, go to:  
<http://bit.ly/Discover-Diablo-Hikes-Calendar>.





the concordian  
by Edi Birsan, [EdiBirsan@gmail.com](mailto:EdiBirsan@gmail.com)

## Concord is looking for a Safe Parking site host

In Concord we have been looking for a place to host a Safe Parking program for those temporarily sleeping in cars, and to get some people to run it. The County's Homeless division is not going to provide it and their one property on Arnold Industrial Drive (the former Homeless Shelter) which has a parking lot already with 24-hour guards is reserved as a Covid Overflow Isolation Center for the duration of the pandemic. Along with Councilmember Carlyn Obringer, I had a conversation with a group that is involved in this effort elsewhere and these are some of the aspects that came out of that conversation.

### Target Population:

First priority is Families in Cars, second is individuals in cars.

No R.V.s

Clients to be free of drugs and alcohol and not mentally ill.

An ideal client is one that is working and looking for housing.

All Clients must come from CORE or 211 referrals and will be interviewed and background checked.

It is NOT a drop-in site. Efforts will be made to not give it publicity.

### Limits:

6 to 8 cars per site. Cars are to be placed two car lengths apart in the lot.

Time period of parking is 8PM to 6AM. All cars must exit site by 6AM or be towed out.

Operation is for four months at the site after which time the site would be shut down.

### Staff:

Organization to provide one staff person on site for 10 hours, 7 days a week. It is estimated that this will take a pool of three workers which would be paid \$18/hour with no benefits other than unemployment and required social security match. Workers may be assigned on three or four day shifts. It is expected of the staff that this will be a second job.

### Site is:

Fenced and ideally has a gate.

Facility is to provide its own insurance. Services at site:

The site should have bathrooms such that the staff manages the key to get people in and out.

Organization would provide some min-or supplies such as Coffee/Tea, blankets, and ideal would be a microwave.

The above is expected to cost \$43,000 for the four months and we have an organization that may be able to handle it if we have a host site.

So, folks what do you say? If anyone knows of a host in Concord, contact me at [EdiBirsan@gmail.com](mailto:EdiBirsan@gmail.com).

*Edi Birsan, your friendly Concord Councilmember is writing this as himself and this is not reflective of an official statement of the City of Concord or any other attempted organization. Nor is this provided under any incitement to storm any Federal Building and desecrate the concept of democracy.*



## Concord council approves plans for Hampton Inn Hotel

by Sam Richards

Concord City Council approved for the development of an 86-room, 48,100-square-foot Hampton Inn Hotel on a triangle-shaped piece of land just east of Highway 242 bounded by Market Street, Clayton Road, Pine Street and Willow Pass Road. The Hampton Inn is a chain of moderately priced, upper midscale hotels with limited food and beverage facilities owned by the Hilton Worldwide.

It is seen as support primarily for business travelers.

Council members shared concerns about parking and traffic, but what generated the most discussion was what could become of the hotel five, 10 or 20 years after it is built.

Councilwoman Laura Hoffmeister was concerned that what opens as a Hampton Inn, with a set level of amenities, could at some point sell to another operator that operates a lower-budget operation like others in the city that have degraded into sources complaints and frequent police

calls.

"I know we've had hotels that promised us the moon ... and they sell their (brand) and it goes downhill from there," Hoffmeister said.

To address that concern, the council will also require the hotel developers, or later owners of the hotel, to come before the council again for permits if a lesser standard of service is proposed.

The city owned the 1.24-acre site off Market Street until 2017. The land was sold to the TDI Automotive Group, which had eyed building a Chevrolet dealership there and obtained the permits to do so. However, TDI ultimately didn't build the dealership and in June 2020 sold the land to WRSJG LLC, which has built and operated other Hilton properties.

## Regional stay-home order remains in effect

Nearly three weeks after going into effect, the Bay Area's regional stay-home order remains in effect due to the lack of hospital beds for patients in need of intensive care. As of Jan. 7, the Bay Area had just 3.5% ICU availability, according to state data.

Health officials say capacity must meet or exceed 15% before the stay-at-home order will be lifted.

In Contra Costa County, health officials announced on Jan. 5 that all hospital facilities in the County - including John Muir Medical Center in Concord - are now operating under contingency care status in response to an unusually high volume of patients. People who have appointments or other business at these facilities should be aware that some care and services may be delayed. Residents are asked to avoid nonessential trips to these facilities and to contact their providers for more information.

COVID-19 vaccinations are underway and people in all tiers of Phase 1A of the County's vaccine plan are now eligible for no-cost immunizations. Phase 1A includes healthcare workers along with employees and residents of long-term care facilities. As of Jan. 7, more than 20,000 vaccine doses have been administered in Contra Costa County. People who live and work in the County are encouraged to visit the CCHS vaccine web page.

Since testing began, Contra Costa County has reported 44,274 positive cases, with 5,340 positive cases in Concord, including 945 cases in the last 14 days. To review a demographic and geographic breakdown of cases, please see the County's COVID-19 dashboard.

Contra Costa residents and businesses can also call the COVID-19 Call Center at (844) 729-8410 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. daily.

## Openings for Concord boards and committees announced

The Concord City Council announced the opening of multiple recruitments for the City's committees, boards and commissions, including the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, Board of Appeals, Concord Pavilion Community Outreach Committee, Design Review Board, Personnel Board and the Planning Commission.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee is seeking three individuals willing to serve a four-year term ending February 28, 2025.

The Board of Appeals is seeking two members and one alternate willing to serve a two-year term ending February 28, 2023, and three members and one alternate willing to serve a four-year term ending February 28, 2025.

The Concord Pavilion Community Outreach Committee is seeking two members to serve a two-year term ending February 28, 2023,

and two members willing to serve a four-year term ending February 28, 2025.

The Design Review Board is seeking two design professionals willing to serve a four-year term ending February 28, 2025.

The Personnel Board is seeking two members willing to serve a four-year term ending February 28, 2025.

The Planning Commission is seeking three members willing to serve a four-year term ending February 28, 2025.

Board members are not compensated for their service on the Board and must operate under the CHF bylaws.

Applications are due to the City Clerk's Office by Friday, February 5, 2021, at 5:00 p.m.

Forms are available at the City's website at [www.cityofconcord.org/BCApplications](http://www.cityofconcord.org/BCApplications)

Questions can be directed to City Clerk, Joelle Fockler. (925) 671-3390 |

(Vaccine cont'd from pg. 2)

will begin offering shots at one location this week with additional sites coming on board in the next two weeks.

"We continue to redirect every resource available to getting shots in arms," Contra Costa County Deputy Health Officer and COVID Operations Chief Dr. Tzvieli said.

The County has opened several vaccination sites across Contra Costa at health centers and other large facilities to vaccinate eligible individuals. CCHS has also begun shifting staffing from COVID testing sites to vaccination efforts to increase capacity. "We also have activated our volunteer Medical Reserve Corps to give vaccine, and the health department is working with fire agencies to use paramedics to administer vaccine."

County health departments aren't the only ones who are stepping up. Private health systems such as Kaiser, Sutter and John Muir Health and pharmacies are also coming online to provide vaccinations

as more people become eligible. CVS and Walgreens are already vaccinating those living in long-term care facilities and their staff.

About 900,000 Contra Costa residents will be eligible for vaccine once the County reaches Phase 2 of the distribution plan. To reach community-immunity levels, 75% of those eligible (725,000 people) would need to be vaccinated in the county. In order to immunize 725,000 people over the next six months, roughly 7,000 people will need to be vaccinated every business day on average. That will require a significant boost in vaccinations from current levels. During the first few weeks since a vaccine became available in mid-December, 30,245 shots have been given - about 1,200 a day.

Both vaccines require two doses over a four-week period.

Visit <https://www.coronavirus.cchealth.org/vaccine> often for updates.



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## Ruby Dooby Do to the Rescue

# IZZY



Izzy is a 55-lb, super cuddly 4 1/2 year-old, pit bull. Talk about a hard luck story. Izzy's story is heart-breaking. She was forced to live outside for years, infested with fleas and had no medical attention.. She suffers from allergies, has missing teeth, and had a bout with cancer. The tumor has been removed and the cancer may have been successfully removed, but there are no guarantees that it won't return. Despite her hardships, this sweet girl adores people. She is:

- good with kids and people
- a snuggler
- NOT good with other dogs and cats
- housebroken
- crate-trained
- walks well on leash, but is dog reactive

This girl deserves a home of her own where she can live out the rest of her years in the comfort denied to her for so many years. Izzy is up-to-date on vaccinations, microchipped, spayed, and generally healthy at the moment. Hospice care may be required in the future. Her adoption fee is \$300 but is negotiable if hospice care becomes necessary.

Izzy is being fostered by CalPaws K9 Rescue was established in October 2019. It is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization run by an all-volunteer staff, consisting of experienced animal rescuers located across the San Francisco Bay area and beyond. They offer a safe haven for dogs of all ages and breeds. To adopt Izzy, read the requirements and determine if you meet them then fill out the on-line application at: <https://www.calpaws.org/adopting>. Donations welcome.



## January is Walk Your Dog Month

**Pawsitive News** - January is Walk Your Dog month. So how about a New Year's Resolution to encourage you to walk off the holiday poundage and get Fido out of the house? How far to walk will be dependent on the age and breed of your dog. Young puppies and senior dogs need less exercise. A rule of thumb for these age groups is about a twenty-minute outing, but multiple walks for energetic pups are a good idea. Most adult dogs benefit from between 30 minutes to two hours of physical activity per day with tiny dogs and short-nosed breeds like pugs and bulldogs that may get winded easily tending toward the shorter timeframe. A daily jaunt will help your dog maintain its weight too. There are added benefits for older dogs too. Exercise can help a senior dog's stiff joints loosen and keep their digestive system healthy.

**The Seeing Eye** is the oldest existing guide dog school in the world. It was started on January 29, 1929 in Nashville, TN. The first guide dog training school on the West Coast was founded in 1942 in a rented home in Los Gatos. One of the first graduates was a German Shepherd named Blondie who was later paired with Sgt. Leonard Foulk. The school moved to San Rafael in 1947 where it continues to operate as Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB) today. This year GDB completed a 28,000 square foot Puppy Center. The highly trained dogs graduating from this facility have improved the lives of countless visually impaired people.

**Bone to Pick** - It's not true that dogs are more resistant to cold weather hazards than people because they have fur. Short-haired dogs in particular are susceptible to frostbite and hypothermia and while other dogs bred for colder climates are more tolerant of cold weather, no pet should be left outside for long periods when the temperature drops into the 30s. It is also a myth that added weight gives Fido extra protection from cold when, in fact, the health risks associated with the body fat outweigh any extra warmth from the added padding.

*Ruby is Concord's online celebrity with approximately 160,000 followers on [www.instagram.com/rubydooby\\_do/](https://www.instagram.com/rubydooby_do/). 93,000 Facebook followers and 800,000 followers on TikTok. This column is written by Jill Hedgecock. Her novels "Between Shadow's Eyes" and "From Shadow's Perspective" feature Ruby on the cover. [www.jillhedgecock.com](http://www.jillhedgecock.com).*

## arf Adoption Stars Benedict and Lady

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 are 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.

### Benedict

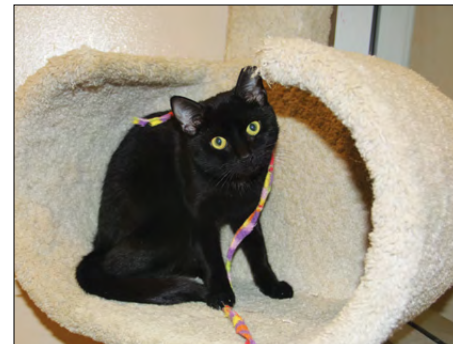


Eight-year-old Benedict is a sweet, mellow man. He enjoys spending his time relaxing outside and getting lots of pets from his favorite people. He gets along well with other calm dogs but mostly likes to roam around. He would do well in a quiet home where his easy-going demeanor will fit in perfectly.

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.

### Lady



Seven-month-old Lady is an adorable gal with a precious round face. She is tentative in new environments and will need some time and patience to build her confidence. Once she feels safe and loved, she'll blossom into your best little friend. As she becomes more adjusted, she'll enjoy having a whole basket full of cat toys to keep her busy and some nice window ledges she can occupy to watch the world go by.

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.

## Authors Hedgecock and Locke noted for books' advocacy of maligned breeds

By David King

Diablo Gazette couldn't be prouder of contributor Jill hedgecock. She was recently featured on thebark.com, an online magazine about the caring, training, understanding and living with dogs. Jill was one of two authors whose published works included breeds of dogs whose reputations are maligned in media. Jill was tapped for her two most recent novels, "Between Shadow's Eyes" and its sequel, "From Shadow's Perspective". Here is a brief excerpt from that interview.

**Bark: What triggered you to write about breeds that are often misrepresented by the media?**

Jill: "I started writing a dog rescue column in Fall 2017 for The Diablo Gazette, a Bay Area entertainment magazine. In discussions with the publisher about the mascot and title of my column, he suggested using Ruby, a red zipper-nosed Doberman with a large Instagram audience, as the avatar and "Ruby Dooby Do to the Rescue" as the column title. "At the time, I didn't know that much about the Doberman breed, but because Ruby had a large following, it sounded great to me. It wasn't until September 2018, when my column featured an interview with Ruby's owner, Charles Lindsey, that I realized how sweet Dobermans can be. The idea that I could educate people on the breed's soft side was the impetus for switching the dog breed in my novel."

**Bark: How do your books depict or debunk preconceived notions about your respective dog breeds?**

Jill: "In the first novel, "Between Shadow's Eyes", Shadow comes into Sarah's life after the loss of her father. Sarah isn't looking to adopt a dog, but as in real life, dogs tend to



Jill Hedgecock, "Ruby Dooby Do to the Rescue" columnist and author of "Between Shadow's Eyes" features doberman, while author Christopher Locke's book features pit bull, ring a doberman, and Christopher Locke whose book stars a pit bull. that's Ruby on the cover of Jill's book.

find us. Like most canines, Shadow senses her new owner's vulnerable state and readers get to see the sweet, loving, loyal side of Dobermans. In "From Shadow's Perspective", Shadow is the foundation for her adjustment to her life as an orphan and transition to a new high school. "In both books, I include an afterword that talks about the breed and how it has often been maligned by the media." For the full interview go to <https://thebark.com/content/dobermans-and-pit-bulls-star-young-adult-books>. All Jill's books are available at amazon.com.



Answer from pg. 8

## WORD SEARCH PLUS: Ruth Bancroft Garden

By trial and error, Ruth Bancroft discovered how to use succulents in landscape. She created dynamic planting combinations by using contrasting textures, forms, and colors. In 1988, Frank and Anne Cabot were inspired to form the Garden Conservancy, a nonprofit dedicated to preserving significant American gardens, and The Ruth Bancroft Garden became the first preservation project of the newly formed organization. The Garden opened to the public in the early 1990s.

Ruth Bancroft (Sept. 2, 1908-Nov. 26, 2017)

