

MARCH 2021
PRICELESS

Kids:
 Win
\$50 Gift Card
 Water Awareness
 Calendar **art**
 Contest! *pg.8*

Clayton's Kohler Returns to Summer Olympics

Kara Kohler, Clayton, wins women's single sculls at U.S. Olympic Team Trials to compete in Olympic Games this summer in Tokyo pending USOPC approval.

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Letter to the City of Concord Names and Stories

I am a long time Concord resident. Recently (Jan 2020), I started my visitation to many homeless on a daily basis. Now going into 13 months.

I know so many homeless women and men by name and have learned at least part of their stories. I have watched their lives unfold this past year. A few got into housing like Ambika. A few more got into the motel rooms like Randy and Maria. Some like Bob are so clean and quiet he does not get disturbed or asked to move, and it seems a motel room for Bob may be coming soon.

Others like Teresa, Kari, Mark, Carol are suffering from major disabilities and cannot seem to fit into the system to find or get the help needed.

Roy is harmless, but he talks to himself a lot.

Amber lives in her van and works when she can. She is a great mechanic and earns funds doing what she does best.

Stephanie is sickly and weighs 100 lbs.

wet. I'm trying to find the help she needs through CORE.

Lloyd has been homeless for 5 years. This week he takes a bus to live with his mother. Lloyd is 30.

Nichole is a delightful person and is getting her hope renewed. I believe she will make it with a little help.

Anthony did sheetrock until he broke his arm, lost his job during COVID and now lives out of his truck.

"Q" is a quiet young man. He wants to live at home, but his mom's new boyfriend doesn't like him and pushes him out on the streets.

Delightful "Asia" has left this life, I will miss her smile.

These are just a few of my homeless friends. To those who would hear, could you go out and get to know the Name and Story of one or two Homeless men or women?

It never is the wrong time to do the right thing.

Thank you, -- Jack Fliemann.

Glazer names Lavonna Martin Woman of the Year

Sen. Steve Glazer, D-Contra Costa, announced that he has named Lavonna Martin as 2021 State Senate District 7 Woman of the Year. Martin is the Director of Health, Housing, & Homeless Services for Contra Costa County Health Services, in charge of providing services to those without a home to live in.

As Director, Lavonna manages a homeless service delivery system that includes street outreach, respite and emergency shelters, independent living programs for transition-age youth, and permanent supportive housing for adults, youth, and families.

She received an annual compensation

package including salary and benefits of over **\$244,000** in 2019, according to Transparent California.



In response to the COVID-19 crisis, her team procured five hotels (633 rooms) to provide non-congregate shelter options to persons experiencing homelessness.

To support the basic needs for unsheltered persons, the Division's CORE team has provided food packs, cloth and non-surgical masks, hand sanitizers, and solar battery

chargers so that our unsheltered community could charge cell phones during Shelter-In-Place.

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Mount Diablo Unified School District Superintendent says schools could reopen March 22, Union says not so fast

Mount Diablo Unified School District Superintendent Adam Clark proposed that a hybrid model of in-person and online learning could start as early as March 22.

The hybrid model has students going to school two days a week in the afternoon for in-person "support."

In a letter to the MDUSD community, published on the district website, Clark wrote that the state and county have approved the district's re-opening plan.

"We are pleased to report that several surrounding counties have moved into the Red Tier, and it appears that Contra Costa will be moving into the Red Tier on March 9 or March 16, 2021."

As of March 6, Contra Costa County was still in the purple tier of COVID-19 restrictions — the state's most restrictive level — around 10 reported cases per day, per 100,000 residents.

Clark also wrote the district collected more than 27,000 surveys from district families over scheduling preferences, and that schools are already rebuilding classes. He wrote the district has "tens of thousands of cloth and surgical masks, over one thousand gallons of hand sanitizer, thousands of safety signs and markers and plexiglass shields for staff."

"With materials secured and protocols in place, our campuses are prepared to open to students and families," Clark wrote.

The superintendent recommends a

"phased-in" reopening timeline, with staff working remotely returning to school sites March 17 and "campus previews" for students and parents on March 19. Preschool, kindergarten, and first and second graders, self-contained SDC classes, and the Bridge Transition Program would return March 22.

Grades 3-5 would return March 25, and all other grades would return March 29. Spring recess would happen April 2-9.

"I realize that this recommendation may not be perceived as ideal by all members of our Mt. Diablo Unified community," Clark wrote. "Starting this process now will allow us to effectively systematize processes and protocols to support student needs and work towards a full reopening in fall of 2021. I make this recommendation with the full understanding that we are still in a global pandemic and the safety of all stakeholders continues to be our highest priority. We will continue to work with our labor partners in good faith."

He said, "We are quickly approaching our one-year anniversary of being closed. I am beyond confident that we can serve our students in person safely."

On March 6, the Teachers Union pushed back on that plan. The Mt. Diablo Educators Association President Anita Johnson reported to KPIX 5 that going forward with opening would be a violation of the Education Employment Act.

If you've been fully vaccinated...

The CDC has issued new guidance for those who have been fully vaccinated. Fully vaccinated individuals can now socialize with each other without wearing masks or keeping their distance. Grandparents can visit and hug family members that aren't vaccinated as long as they don't have underlying medical conditions that put them at high risk for COVID-19. If you've been around someone who has COVID-19, you do not need to stay away from others or get tested unless you have symptoms.

CDC says early data show that the vaccines may help keep people from spreading COVID-19, but that they are learning more as more people get vaccinated. Until they know more everyone should continue taking basic preventive steps when recommended.

This means, you should still take steps to protect yourself and others in many situations, like wearing a mask, staying at least 6 feet apart from others, and avoiding crowds and poorly ventilated spaces in public. (Note diagram below.)

Avoid gathering with unvaccinated people from more than one other household or who is at increased risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19 or who lives with a person at increased risk.

You should still avoid medium or large-sized gatherings.

You should still delay domestic and international travel, but follow CDC travel requirements and recommendations if you do.

You should still watch out for symptoms of

COVID-19, especially if you've been around someone who is sick. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should get tested and stay home and away from others.

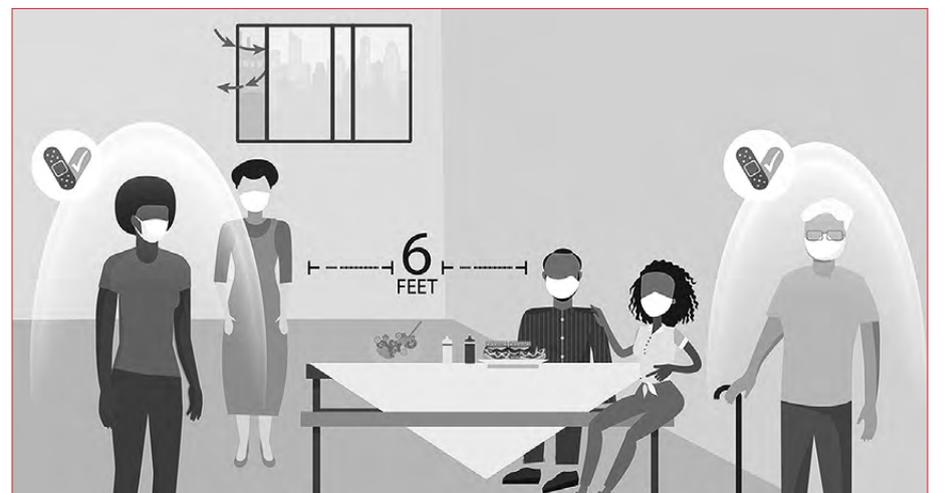
You will still need to follow guidance at your workplace.

Public health officials told the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors they're making enough progress against COVID-19 to say the county will likely emerge from the state's most restrictive purple tier within two or three weeks.

Supervisor John Gioia re-enforced the idea, saying state officials recently told him they may relax the current threshold required to move into the less restrictive red tier.

Moving into the red tier would allow restaurants to open indoor dining at 25 percent of capacity (up to 100 people), while retail stores could open up to 50 percent capacity and fitness centers could open indoors at 10 percent capacity. Churches would remain capped at 25 percent capacity.

Roth said changes are coming, but now is not the time to relax mask-wearing and social distancing protocols. "And when it's your turn, please sign up. Please get your vaccine," she said, adding that residents can sign up at multiple websites, including the county health site (www.cchealth.org) and the state's MyTurn page (www.myturn.ca.gov)



Relentless Samaritans

By David King

From time to time, we all do good deeds, offer a helping hand, show kindness to strangers and hope that the recipient may pay it forward. Then there are the relentless Samaritans, those citizens whose humanitarian dedication never ceases. And Concord has them. I am referring to Les and Sandra Ruefenacht and Jack Fleihmann, (author of the "Letter to the City" on page 2).



Les's dog, Hollis, is helping train other dogs at D4D to be service dogs for first responders with PTSD.

Retired, 80-year-old Les Ruefenacht, of Concord help founded Dogs 4 Diabetes (D4D) in 2004, that provides and trains dogs to detect hypo- and hyper-glycemia at 80%-99% success rate. Up until then, 50% detection was the standard.

D4D also provides and trains service and buddy dogs at no cost to first responders suffering from PTSD.

Then because of his woodworking skills, he began making wooden "buddy dog" toys for children with cancer and chronic illnesses in Children's hospitals across Northern California. Hospitals stopped accepting them due to the COVID pandemic.

Now, Ruefenacht builds desks for low-income students. The idea came after he and his wife, Sandra, watched a report on "World News



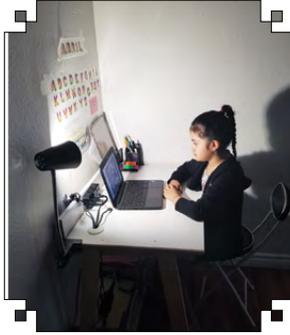
Wooden "Buddy dog" toys for children with in hospitals.

Tonight" that featured a desk-making group in Maryland. Sandra convinced him that he could do that and provide free desks to low-income students to support educational equity during the pandemic.



Ruefenacht purchases the lumber, cuts it up, sands it down, assembles and in some cases even delivers the desks to those who request it. Not bad for a one-man team.

Each desk (20 inches deep, 32 inches long and 28 inches high) includes a study lamp, a six-socket power strip and two USB ports. He said each costs about \$65 in materials. He makes 2-3 per day. To date, he estimates he's delivered over 200 desks to homes in Concord, Pleasant Hill, Bay Point, San Jose, or anyone within a 40-mile radius.



"All my life, I've been involved in doing something for others. That was impressed upon me growing up," Ruefenacht added. He plans to keep at it as long as help is needed.

Meanwhile, Sandra has been in the kitchen preparing close to 500 oatmeal, applesauce, or raisin cookies a week to give to Jack Fleihmann who passes them out to the Concord homeless.

The Diablo Gazette featured Fleihmann in August 2020. As his current "Letter to the City" indicates, Fleihmann has been preparing and delivering food, clothing, shoes, blankets, Sleeping bags, and sometimes tents to Concord homeless for the past 13 months., starting at 3 A.M. each day. Much of it is out-of-pocket, but since our August feature, he has received plenty of community support and donations. He continues to plead with the City and with the county's Core Program (Community Organized Relief Effort) for support on behalf of those with serious medical needs or are in life-threatening conditions, with occasional success. He also picks up the tab each week for the homeless at Best Little Donut Shop in Concord.

Jack's ultimate goal is to humanize the homeless. He posts his daily activities on Facebook, and introduces those he serves, most of them gracious for the immediate comfort Jack provides.

There may be others, but these relentless Samaritans are driven by heart, seeking providing love and human kindness. While they do receive donations, unlike with non-profits, for their efforts, they receive no compensation. Concord is indeed fortunate to have them.

Clayton's Kara Kohler is Back with US Olympic Team



Kara Kohler claims first spot on the Tokyo 2020 US Olympic Team this summer and be among those racing for a medal.

Kara Kohler, a 2012 Olympic bronze medalist who didn't make the 2016 Olympic team, is going back to the Games.

Kohler became the first U.S. rower to qualify for the Tokyo Olympics — and the first U.S. athlete from any sport to qualify since July — by winning the single sculls at the first of up to three trials events across the disciplines.

Women's single sculls was the only event at this week's trials in Sarasota, Florida that produced an Olympic qualifier.

Kohler, 30, won a four-woman final that also

included Gevvie Stone, 35, the 2016 Olympic single sculls silver medalist who put a medical career on hold to pursue a third Games.

Kohler earned bronze at London 2012 in the quadruple sculls, and switched to the individual event in 2018 after missing the Rio Games.

At the most recent world championships in 2019, Kohler and the stalwart women's eight brought home all of the U.S. medals in Olympic events — all bronze. Kohler was named U.S. Female Rower of the Year.



the concordian

by Edi Birsan, EdiBirsan@gmail.com

Commissions Interview Process is Broken

Systemic incompetence is a specialty of large, long established organizations; government is not exempt.

In Concord we have a group of Commissions

where residents are appointed to oversee and advise the council on things such as land use, design of buildings or the latest in regard to parks. To get on those Commissions, you are appointed by the Council after an interview of applicants. The following is an outline of the recent process to appoint Planning Commissioners that illustrates why I believe change to this process is in order.

1. The terms of the current incumbents come to an end in groups of two or three.
2. Everyone is informed to apply.
3. The application form has only a few general questions which are most vague.
4. The applicants are schedule for 10- or 15-minute interviews with the Council.
5. The Council is restricted to asking the same question to everyone regardless of applicant being an incumbent or new person.
6. We are not allowed to challenge what they put in their applications.

On top of this, there is historically about a 95% chance that any incumbent will be reappointed unless there is a major problem between them and a Councilmember. This has happened twice in 15 years in Concord that I recall.

Applicants should know if the incumbents are reapplying before they put in their applications so that they can see if there is an open seat or if they are going to be basically going into an interview for practice or to get some face time with the Council.

One of our canned questions was to ask "What is the difference between the General Plan and Zoning?" To expect that someone would be on the Planning Commission for years and not know this is an insult.

The very aspect of an interview in such a short period allotted is not reflective of the skill that is needed in the job where you must understand, research and review (with staff help) sometimes very complex and serious issues with lots of money and community impacts on them. Questions that vaguely ask if you played nice with



Concord Planning Commission on a November 4 zoom meeting. Top row, L-R: John Mercurio, Jason Laub, Craig Mizutani Bottom: Mark Weinmann, Raymond Barbour

others does nothing to indicate a skill at the job.

Furthermore, there is an obvious lack of equality in the review in that some of the applicants have been known literally for decades and their backgrounds, experiences and displays of ability are well known to the Council. In reality this can lead to the appearance of the infamous accusation of "the old boys club." While nothing is going to change that advantage, an extensive pre-interview list of questions would go far to reduce that advantage.

I have proposed (and it may happen) that we first ask the incumbents if they are reapplying and then post the request for applicants with the information on what the incumbents plans are.

Then I want to have substantially more questions in the application that relate to actual decisions that have been made or of specific enough details to give them the opportunity to demonstrate competence.

Additionally, we need a completely different approach of questions for incumbents than with new applicants since the incumbents have a history that is known to the Council. I believe one or two cities allow this aspect, but unfortunately, not Concord (yet).

We should have the encouragement to meet with the applicants one-on-one for more in-depth interviews which would also allow us on the Council to see if maybe they would be a good fit in other features of the city government.

Until then we will struggle with the self-imposed systemic limitations that frustrate applicants and at least one of the interviewers (me) going forward.

By the way, all three incumbent planning commissioners were retained.

The opinions expressed herein are those of Edi Birsan as a resident curmudgeon and screed-ist, and are not authorized by Qnon, the Pride-less Girls, the Oatmakers or any other group trying to overthrow the government or suppress voting rights in Georgia or by anyone named Georgia.

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Packing for a Long-Distance Move

Is a long-distance move in your future? While packing up to move down the street can feel like a hassle, moving across the country can be a major undertaking. You need to take extra steps to ensure that nothing is damaged, and the process is as smooth as possible. That way, when you get to your new home, unpacking will feel much less stressful. Here's what you need to do when you're packing for a long-distance move.

Downsize your stuff. Don't schlep things you don't need or use hundreds or thousands of miles to your new home.

It will cost you both additional time and money to take with you, things you no longer want. Before you start packing, determine what you can let go of. These items can then be sold or donated. It's a great way to make a little extra cash to offset the cost of your move.

Make an inventory list. You don't realize how much stuff you have until it's time to put it all in boxes. In order to keep track of everything, make an inventory list as you go. That way you'll know if there are any boxes or items that don't arrive in your new location.

Invest in quality supplies. Yes, you can save on moving costs if you ask your local market for used boxes to pack your stuff in. But when you're moving long-distance you need to invest in quality supplies. Your boxes are going to be traveling many miles and may get knocked around a bit in a moving truck. Purchase heavy-duty boxes from a moving supply company, use

bubble wrap to cushion delicate items, and wrap furniture and other large pieces in moving blankets. And don't forget to buy several rolls of packing tape -- you'll need it!

Determine where items will go in your new place. Chances are you won't be able to set up your new home exactly like you set up your current home. For this reason, you should determine where items will go in your new home. This will help to streamline the process of unpacking and save you time as you get settled in your new place.



Organize as you pack. Since you've determined where items will go in your new home, you should organize them that way when you're packing. Items that go in the same room should be packed together. First, pack the items you don't regularly use. Label everything clearly so you know exactly what's in each box. Be sure to write "fragile" on boxes with items that can be easily broken. Make it even easier by color-coding boxes by room.

Pack a survival kit. You will want to pack a survival kit that you can rely on for the first few days in your new home. These are bags or boxes that you will keep with you. Include those things you need every day like a change of clothes, toiletries, phones and laptops (with chargers), bedding, and medications. Include some things to keep you entertained the first few days like board games and movies.

Compliments of Virtualresults.net.



Spring into Action in Concord



With restrictions beginning to lift, are you bursting to spring into action? There are already some fun (yet still safe) activities cropping up in Concord that you will want to include on your activity list of Springtime entertainment.

There may not be a Spring Brewfest, but craft beer lovers can indulge their seasonal cravings on the patio as local breweries and tap houses roll out their new offerings.

Who doesn't want to try the Pineapple Upside Down Cake Hazy Pale Ale at Epidemic Ales, or 9 Ladies Dancing at The Hop Grenade and Spaceballs the Beer at Concord Tap House? That's just three of the dozens of cool new brews currently on tap at each location. You might also want to check out the great selections available on tap at Concord's best beer bar restaurants including Yard House, BJ's, Eureka! and Lazy Dog.

If you love animals and art, you are in luck. The aRt Cottage's annual All Creatures Great and Small exhibit is open now through April 23. The show features all kinds of creatures by different artists in a variety of mediums. Turn to page 14 of this edition to learn more on this.

While we are not quite ready for live concerts, Season 2 of Concord Couch Concerts has begun. Groove to the hottest tunes from local bands on Facebook Live on the first Friday of each month starting at 8PM. The season premiered on March 5, and if you missed it, you can still catch it on their YouTube Channel.

For those who want to get out and enjoy the warm spring days, fresh air and nature, check out Mt. Diablo State Park's awesome guide to Ten Short Walks (<https://www.mdia.org/10-short-walks>.) The list includes a quick reference guide to what you will find at each. Whether you relish scenic views, wildflowers, birds, butterflies, or something else, there is a trail just for you. Go often and try a different one each time to suit your mood.

If walking in the wild is not your cup of tea, how about a stroll through Concord's concrete jungle. This is the perfect time to get out and get acquainted with Concord history. The Concord Historical Society's self-guided Walking Tours are the perfect way to learn about the buildings and sites you may pass by every day. You can pick up a free map at the Concord Visitor Center and start your tour right there in Todos Santos Plaza.

Visit Concord and the Visitor Center are located at 2151 Salvio Street, Suite T, in Concord. Go to Visit Concord for more information on these events and more.

Visit Concord is committed to our community and constantly strives to find ways to help, support and grow our businesses, schools and organizations. If you have ideas you would like to share or are interested in partnering with us, please contact us at info@visitconcordca.com or call 925-685-1182.

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Executive Director resigns at Clayton Valley Charter High

The Clayton Valley Charter High School Governing Board announced that during its March 1 board meeting, the non-interested Board Members accepted the resignation of Jim Scheible as Executive Director, effective June 30, 2021. Mr. Scheible will continue as Executive Director through the end of the 2020-21 school year.

Clayton Valley Charter High School Governing Board made the announcement with the release of the following letter.

"Jim Scheible came to CVCHS during a time of turmoil and worked to heal relationships within the school and greater community. During his three years as Executive Director, Mr. Scheible was able to guide CVCHS through a successful 5-year charter renewal authorized by the Contra Costa County Board of Education. In addition, Jim headed our successful WASC accreditation renewal process. He also ably led the school through last year's statewide school closures and back to limited on-campus, in-person instruction.

Since 2018, during his tenure and in collaboration with the Board, CVCHS has increased support to meet our higher expectations such as funding SAT and ACT prep classes, AP exam fees, increases in technology, college visits for 9th graders, and free, in-school NWEA MAP, Practice ACT, and PSAT tests for all students.



Furthermore, CVCHS has been able to fund many facility and safety upgrades on campus, including investing nearly \$3 million in improvements during the 2019-20 school year. We have also provided increased wrap-around supports for students including hiring additional counselors, a full-time nurse, a full-time Marriage & Family Therapist, two psychologists, as well as counseling and MFT interns."

"During the contract renewal process in Spring 2020, I proposed a one-year contract renewal option to the Board. While the final contract was for a two-year renewal, I am choosing that this school year will be my last with Clayton Valley," said Scheible. "I look forward to supporting the transition to a new leader who can build on the foundation set for them to take CVCHS to even greater heights. I want nothing more than for CVCHS and our students to succeed beyond my or anyone's current expectations. I am privileged to have played a part in this school's journey and I will support the process of finding someone who can carry the torch forward."

The Board went on to say "We are grateful to Jim for his service and dedication to Clayton Valley Charter High School. We are proud of the work he has done for CVCHS and look forward to his future achievements."

The Board will now take on the task of finding a new leader and provide updates as the search progresses."

Concord's Olympic Continuation High School Honored

Concord's Olympic Continuation High School on Salvio Street is one of four such schools in the Bay Area and 27 statewide to receive Model Continuation High School recognition for 2021 from California Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond. There are more than 400 continuation high schools statewide.

"Traditional school settings don't work for a lot of students and we pride ourselves on providing an alternative approach to school, focusing on relationships, mental health and flexible options," Olympic principal Lynsie Castellano said.

Students who attend continuation high schools must spend at least 15 hours per week at school and receive guidance and career counseling, with some programs offering independent study, job place-

ment services and concurrent enrollment in community college.

"Student attendance and engagement in distance learning during the school closures has been difficult - especially for students who struggled with attendance issues before the pandemic," Thurmond said. "These model schools have been able to keep at-risk students on track using social and emotional learning, mentorship programs, restorative justice practices, and other innovative methods."

According to the state Department of Education, the schools are selected for recognition based on data and assessments including a peer review panel and on-site visit, although this year's visits were done virtually due to the pandemic.

CCCommunity College District receives accreditation, Diablo Valley and Los Medanos commended

In a report to the Contra Costa Community College District (District), the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western

Association of Schools and Colleges (Commission) has announced continued full accreditation of the District's three colleges but has also issued a warning. Five concerns have been raised by the Commission, four of them connected to Governing Board behavior that was widely reported by local media throughout 2020.

"I applaud our colleges who are doing tremendous work to increase the success of our students," says Chancellor Bryan Reece. "To be clear, the Commission's findings have nothing

to do with teaching or our ability to provide the support our students need. Nevertheless, we accept the findings and are ready to roll



up our sleeves and begin the hard work in addressing the areas of improvement around District governance."

"We have already begun working together to address these issues, and I am confident the trustees will continue making

progress toward addressing the Commission's areas of improvement," says Board President Andy Li.

The Commission did not find areas of concern in the three colleges. In fact, Diablo Valley College and Los Medanos College were officially commended for best practices.

computer corner
by William Claney, Tech Writer, Computers USA

Tech in English

Windows 10 S: Watch the S car go

The old joke, "Once there was a snail who was tired of being slow. He went out and bought a really fast sports car and had the dealer paint a big 'S' on each side of it. Whenever someone saw him zooming past in his new car, they would say, "Hey, look at that S-car go!" - Boy Scout Jokes.

Well, it seems that Microsoft is committed to the special S-mode for its Surface laptop computers. S-mode is a special



version of Windows 10. I suppose not enough people have voiced their opposition opinion to it, so it lives. Microsoft is making this move to be more Apple like, meaning controlling the computer environment and the applications that are allowed to run under it.

Oh good grief, and now other manufacturers are following suit and releasing their laptops with S-mode as the default standard. So, what's this S thing anyway?

According to Microsoft, "Windows 10 S is "the soul of today's Windows". It's a new version of Windows intended for school PCs, but available to everyone. It's designed to be simpler and more streamlined, so it only runs applications from the Windows Store unless you spend ano-

ther \$50 to upgrade to Windows 10 Pro.

Microsoft announced that Acer, Asus, Dell, Fujitsu, HP, Samsung, and Toshiba will ship (have begun shipping, shipped) Windows 10 S education PCs. "

I can understand the need to control the computer environment for students (as they tend to muck things up with their keen curiosity), and keeping tight control helps preserve the experience. The idea

is to download apps from the Windows Store that Microsoft scrutinized and that conform to Microsoft operating rules. Thus, fewer computer crashes from rogue software.

For the average user the S-mode can be a pain. While regular applications and programs can run by disabling the S-mode, it can be a challenge. Microsoft suggests upgrading to Windows Professional to accomplish the switch. Techs, on the other hand, can disable this feature with a few simple workarounds.

Is S-mode worth it? Well in a few words: Yes, but beware you may need to disable this feature to have a fully functional computer.

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COMING SOON: Stunning Clayton home in Dana Hills sits on a .28 acre lot bordered by open space. Remodeled throughout, dual pane Anderson windows, remodeled chef's kitchen, stainless appliances, dining room with french doors. Family room with custom built-ins and fireplace. Wood flooring on first floor, new carpets on second floor. 5 bdrm/3 bath plus Office/study unit with separate entrance and bathroom. Backyard features a custom pebble finish walk in pool with spill over hot tub, patio with deck, man cave with fireplace, planter beds, sheds, RV side storage. Call me for details.

BE SURE TO TELL OUR ADVERTISERS THAT YOU SAW THEM IN THE

DIABLO GAZETTE

In case you missed it...

Six Flags Discovery Kingdom to reopen daily in 2021



Discovery Kingdom/Getty Images

Six Flags Entertainment Corporation announced it will reopen all 26 of its theme parks in North America this year.

The announcement, however, did not provide a specific date when Six Flags Discovery Kingdom in Vallejo will be open daily. The park is currently open weekends between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m., but company officials said they are still working with state officials to set firm reopening dates for parks in California, including Concord's Hurricane Harbor.

California's Great America in Santa Clara announced in January that it plans to reopen May 22.

Huckleberry's Moving into the Mel's Diner building



Huckleberry's Restaurant will soon occupy the former Mel's Diner building on Treat Blvd. in Concord. Huckleberry's described itself as "Southern Cookin' With A California Twist!" They have 18 locations in California, including one in Benicia.

Walnut Creek City Council to consider grant funding for restaurants more accessible

The Walnut Creek City Council is seeking to make the city's restaurant grant program more accessible to businesses impacted by the pandemic.

The council approved the Restaurant Grant Program in January to provide financial aid to restaurant owners who lost business due to shelter-in-place orders and social distancing guidelines.

Out of 80 businesses that applied for the program, 23 restaurants were disqualified because they did not meet program guidelines, which state the largest revenue loss for restaurants had to occur between October to December, and that restaurants had to experience a 25% revenue loss.

The changes include creating a new program tier in which businesses experiencing a loss in revenue lower than 25% can qualify for a smaller grant and allowing restaurant owners to include revenue losses from July to September.

The program staff estimates another 15% to 20% of businesses could qualify under these new financial criteria.

BART revenue, ridership likely to lag behind pre-pandemic levels for years



Courtesy Mercurynews.com

BART budget officials announced that they do not expect the agency's operating

revenue to return to pre-pandemic levels until 2024 at the earliest, with growth not expected until late in the 2020s.

While BART officials expect the agency's budget to be balanced when the fiscal year ends June 30, due in large part to federal relief funding, BART's revenue during the 2020-2021 fiscal year is only expected to reach \$526 million, a nearly 45 percent tumble from the \$953 million the agency brought in during the 2018-2019 fiscal year.

That drop in revenue was driven principally by average weekday ridership plummeting to around 10 percent of both pre-pandemic levels and projected ridership figures.

But even with the Bay Area workforce's eventual return in some form to office buildings, agency officials don't expect ridership to return even to 80 percent of pre-pandemic levels until the end of the decade.

BART's ridership growth in recent years has been inextricably linked to the economic growth of down-town San Francisco.

BART has taken multiple steps to cut costs since the pandemic began, including a freeze on new hires, some service cuts, the elimination and deferral of capital project allocations and a retirement incentive program, which resulted in 7 percent of BART's workforce electing to retire early, according to Eiseman.

Board Director Janice Li called on the agency to consider how its operating revenue and budget will be broken down in the coming months and years, especially if the rebound of ridership is even more sluggish than expected.

"I think that really the next six-to-nine months are going to be very telling about what does BART look like going forward," board president Mark Foley said.

Blood centers call for donations, especially for O-positive



Blood centers already in need of donations due to the COVID-19 pandemic face more shortages due to severe winter weather around the country.

Local hospitals rely on a national supply of blood, which is facing a shortage due to severe winter weather in much of the country, according to officials with the Stanford Blood Center, which faces a critical need for all blood types, especially O-positive.

"O-positive is the most frequently-needed blood type for patients and, as of today, we only have about a two-day supply," said Dr. Suchi Pandey, the center's chief medical officer. "Our current collections of O-positive cannot sustain our support of our regular hospital partners as well as additional hospitals in critical need right now, so we need your help in the coming days."

Appointments to donate blood can be scheduled online at various sites around the Bay Area, including the Stanford Blood Center at stanfordbloodcenter.org or by calling (888) 723-7831 for same-day appointments; the American Red Cross at <https://www.redcross.org/give-blood.html> and Vitalant at <https://www.vitalant.org/>.

[edited from Claycord.com archives]



EMOTIONAL HEALTH

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

Researchers and Willie Nelson: Count your blessings for a better life

Rumi said it best: "Wear gratitude like a cloak, and it will feed every corner of your life." The wisdom that practicing gratitude provides many benefits is not new since the beloved 13th century Persian Poet knew it then. Rumi just lacked the scientific research and an MRI to prove it. Rumi is not the only historic figure to praise gratitude.

Research on the influence of gratitude is extensive and much has been published extolling its benefits to our psychological and physical health.

Among the scientific findings, gratitude reduces a multitude of toxic emotions, ranging from envy and resentment to frustration and regret. Likewise, researchers confirmed that gratitude effectively reduces depression and increases happiness. Even MRI scans indicate gratitude may have a lasting positive effect on the brain.

Gratitude has even been found to be more successful than other psychological therapeutic or healing techniques. In one study, over 400 individuals were tested on the impact of various therapeutic interventions. When they asked these individuals to write and personally deliver a letter of gratitude to someone who they had not thanked for their kindness, participants immediately experienced huge increases in happiness scores, greater than any other psychological intervention in the study. Other studies have yielded similar results. One linked keeping an evening gratitude journal to longer and better sleep.

This healing power of gratitude also extends to overcoming trauma. For example, Vietnam War Veterans with higher levels of gratitude were found to experience lower rates of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Given the benefits of gratitude in dealing with tragic events, it can also be a potent aide in contending with the stresses of the Covid-19 pandemic. Grateful people experience fewer aches and pains and report feeling healthier than other people. So how do you cultivate this miraculous "cure-all" called gratitude? Here are a few suggestions to follow:

Write a thank-you note. You can nurture your relationship with another person by

writing a thank-you letter expressing your enjoyment and appreciation of that person's impact on your life. Send it, or better yet, deliver and read it in person if possible. Make a habit of sending at least one gratitude letter a month. Occasionally, write one to yourself.

No time to write? Thank someone mentally. It may help just to think about somebody who has done something nice for you and mentally thank the individual.



Keep a gratitude journal. Make it a habit to write down or share thoughts about the gifts you have received each day.

Count your blessings. Pick a time every week to sit down and write about your blessings reflecting on what went right or what you are grateful for. Sometimes, it helps to pick a number such as three to five things that you will identify each week. As you write, be specific and think about the sensations you felt when something good happened to you.

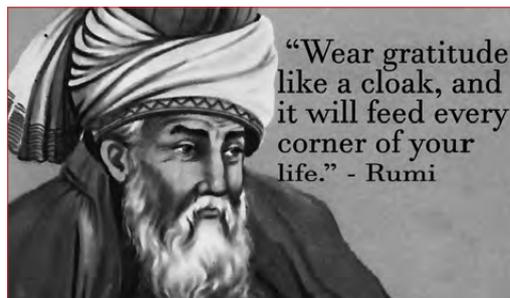
Pray. People who are religious can use prayer to cultivate gratitude.

Meditate. Mindfulness meditation involves focusing on the present moment without judgment. Although people often focus on a word or phrase (such as "peace"), why not focus on what you are grateful for (the warmth of the sun, a pleasant sound, etc.)

Through gratitude, people acknowledge the goodness in their lives. In the process, people usually recognize that the source of that goodness lies at least partially outside themselves. As a result, gratitude also helps people connect to something larger than themselves as individuals, whether to other people, nature, or a higher power.

Like the great sage Willie Nelson said: "When I started counting my blessings, my whole life turned around."

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



"Wear gratitude like a cloak, and it will feed every corner of your life." - Rumi

COVID-19 VACCINE SCAMS

- » You likely will not need to pay anything out of pocket to get the vaccine during this public health emergency.
- » You cannot pay to put your name on a list to get the vaccine.
- » You cannot pay to get early access to the vaccine.
- » No one from Medicare or the Health Department will contact you.
- » No one from a vaccine distribution site or health care payer, like a private insurance company, will call you asking for your Social Security number or your credit card or bank account information to sign you up to get the vaccine.

Check with your health care provider before paying for or receiving any COVID-19-related treatment.

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DIABLO GAZETTE FUN ZONE

Kids: Win \$50 Gift Card Water Awareness Youth Art Contest

WATER AWARENESS YOUTH ART CONTEST

WIN \$50
12 WINNERS!



past winner

DETAILS

ccwater.com/calendarcontest



Here's a fun and educational project for the kids that could earn them some prize money and a place in Contra Costa Water District's 2022 wall calendar! CCWD's annual Water Awareness Youth Art Contest is now accepting entries. There will be at least 12 winners, one for each month. They are looking for art that best illustrate the importance of water in your life. Winning entries will be published for the 2022 calendar. The winners will also each win a \$50 gift card.

HEY KIDS! Challenge yourself to learn about your public drinking water system. The best entries will be those that that illustrate:

- Why you drink tap water
- How your community uses tap water
- How you use tap water efficiently
- Where your tap water comes from
- How your tap water is treated

Think about it. How would your life be different without tap water?

WATER FACTS - Did you know that Contra Costa Water District provides water for more than 500,000 people? On average, we treat nearly 40 million gallons of water per day to be used for drinking and washing, growing lawns and food, filling swimming pools and putting out fires. Here are some water facts to help you get those creative ideas flowing for your calendar entry:

- Tap water promotes public health.
- Tap water is clean and safe to drink.
- Tap water costs about a penny per gallon.
- About half of all residential water use is outdoors in places like lawns.

You can get more fun water facts at the Contra Costa WEP Water Resource Corner Online. Go to www.cewater.com/568

CONTEST RULES - The contest is

open to children ages 8 to 18 years who reside or attend school in the Contra Costa Water District service area, which includes Antioch, Bay Point, Brentwood, Clayton, Clyde, Concord, Martinez, Oakley, Pacheco, Pittsburg, Pleasant Hill, Port Costa and Walnut Creek.

Entries must include the child's name, age, address, a parent or guardian's name, email address, and a phone number. Optional information to include: teacher's name and school.

Entries must be drawn by children. Please, no help from parents, adults, or older siblings.

Entries must be drawn horizontally on a single 8.5-inch by 11-inch piece of paper.

Entries must be hand drawn. Acceptable mediums include pen, pencil, crayon, chalk, charcoal, marker, paint, or watercolor.

If your entry is selected as a winner, you grant Contra Costa Water District a royalty-free, nonexclusive right, in perpetuity, to 1) Use the artwork in its calendar and other print publications. 2) Use the artwork in its internal and external communications, including, but not limited to, websites, advertising, presentations, and printed and digital materials. 3) Use, in connection with the contest, the artist's first name, city of residence and age. Winning artwork will be credited in the calendar with the artist's first name and city. 4) Retain a digital copy of the artwork.

Entries must not include trademarked or copyrighted materials.

Entries must not promote the use of bottled water.

Entries will only be accepted until 5 p.m. May 7, 2021.

PRIZES - Each winning entry receives a \$50 gift card; your original artwork framed with a certificate of appreciation; and a printed calendar. Prizes will be awarded at a Board of Directors meeting in the fall,

when calendars are printed. Winning entries will be announced in June.

HOW TO ENTER - There are two easy ways to submit your artwork. Enter Online at www.cewater.com/calendarcontest, by mail or in person at:

CCWD Calendar Contest
1331 Concord Avenue
Concord, CA 94520

Entries must include the child's name, age, home address, a parent or guardian's name, email address, and a phone number.

Contra Costa Water District will screen all entries based on message, merit, creativity, and originality. Finalist entries will be posted online for voting. Contra Costa Water District, with community input, will select 12 winning entries.

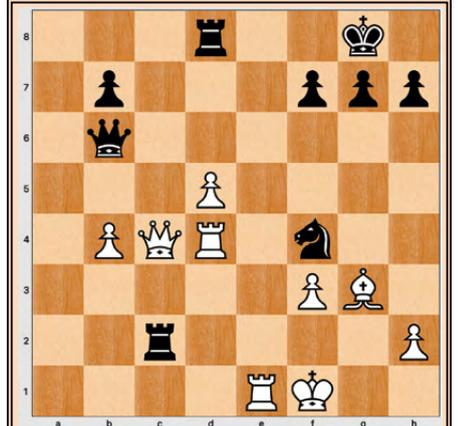
For more information about this contest, visit www.cewater.com/calendarcontest



Chess with Yoo

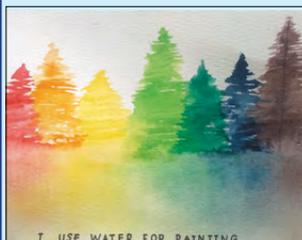
Composed by Christopher Yoo, 14, International Master, Dublin, Calif.

This tactic helped me beat a grandmaster at the Charlotte Open in February. It was an important victory as it helped me win the tournament. White (me) to move. What can you do about Black's intention to capture the queen with Rxc4?



Solution: Just let him take the queen because you have mate if he does! Rde4 Rxc4 Re8+ Rxe8 Rxe8 checkmate. He resigned after I played Rde4. There is another winning line, but it's less convincing: Qxc2 Qxd4 Qc7.

Three of the 2021 Calendar Year Winners



By Anna, Concord



By Dominique, Concord



By Shane Delacruz, Brentwood

- BARMBRACK LUCK
- BEER MARCH
- BLARNEY MATESHIP
- STONE MUSIC
- CABBAGE PARADES
- CELTIC PINCH
- CLOVER PUDDING
- CORNED BEEF RIVERDANCE
- GAME SHAMROCK
- GOLD SODA BREAD
- GREEN SPRING
- HUMOR ST PATRICKS DAY
- IRISH STEW
- JIG TEA



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

Word Search Plus

The Cure for What Ales You

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:

Named for his grandfather, this successful-business was founded by a former NFL kicker whose career ended with an injury while training with the Raiders. It helped kickstart the revitalization of what was once consider a "seedy" and "sketchy" area of town.

Hint:

Circle all the words from the list in the puzzle. The remaining uncircled letters form an anagram. Unscramble those letters to reveal the answer. Solution on page 16.

Happy St. Patrick's Day!





THE NAKED GARDENER

Container Gardening for Tiny Spaces

When it comes to gardening, any space will do. Not everyone has a large garden area to work. Even those who live in apartments or condominiums can still enjoy the benefits of gardening. A limited sized garden patio, balcony, entryway, or deck is all the usable outdoor space you need if you have sunshine and water. Let's explore what you can do with tiny garden spaces.



Container tomatoes on a tiny patio, Courtesy Shutterstock

Start with one or multiple containers, as many as you can manage. A 5-gallon capacity planter pot is ideal, but any container larger than 2-gallons will work. Avoid terra cotta pots to cut down on water loss. Glazed pottery, fiberglass, or high-grade plastic are better. And choose a light-colored exterior to keep the contents cooler on hot days. Fried roots are very bad.

In drought years such as this year, conservation of water is important. Collect grey-waste water from showers or laundries to water your tiny garden. The minimum soil depth should be anywhere from 9 – 18 inches depending on the veggies you choose. Go for 18 inches, if possible. Fill the planter with an organic-rich potting soil from your favorite garden center or make your own container mix by combining equal parts of compost, coconut coir (or peat moss), and vermiculite or perlite.

With good soil, drainage, and adequate sunshine, just about any vegetable (and citrus) can be grown in containers. Tomatoes are the most popular; plant a "determinant" variety that grows to 2-3 feet. Lettuce, chard, cabbage, spinach, broccoli, and kale can be grown in cool months. Bush green beans, carrots, peppers, squash, and green onions are good choices during warm months.



Container veggie gardening. Photo courtesy Shutterstock

Outdoor planters should have sufficient drainage to deal with rainstorms. A sign of poor drainage is soggy soil but droopy leaves. Drain holes can be drilled near the soil level. Organic matter is needed in planters, and regular liquid fertilizer applications are best since nutrients leach out. All-natural fish- or guano-based liquid fertilizers or homemade worm-cast tea can be added into the container's water.

Have you tried self-watering planters? They conserve space and water, are convenient, and easy to build for less than \$10 each. There are several YouTube videos to show you how. On YouTube.com, just search for "DIY self watering container."

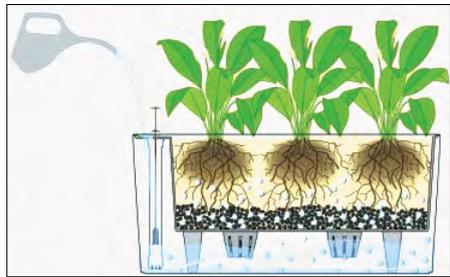
The web also offers self-watering kits that you can install into your existing planters. Many plastic containers are "food-grade" so they don't leak chemicals into the soil or



Citrus on deck in 5-gallon glazed planter.

water, but check to make sure.

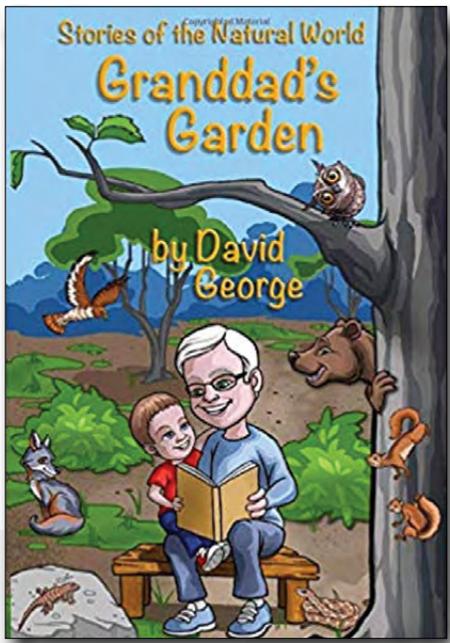
Do they work? Yes, and here's how. A self-watering planter contains a 6-8" water reservoir in its base which you can replenish through a filling tube. Organic-rich soil sits on top of the water reservoir separated by a plastic or cardboard barrier. 2-3 "wicks" of plastic or absorbent material poke into the water and draw moisture into the soil. Plant roots absorb this moisture, drying the soil, and forcing the wicks to provide more water.



Self-watering planter diagram courtesy Izamay Segura

Put those patio and entry spaces to good use. Produce your own organic veggies in easy-to-build self-watering planters. Be natural, compact, and frugal with eco-friendly container gardening for tiny spaces.

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



"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. Amazon.com.

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Garden & Nursery now open weekends until 5pm
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1552 Bancroft Rd., Walnut Creek | ruthbancroftgarden.org

Photo: Susan Andrews

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10th Annual 'GIVE BACK' Program ran from 11/1/2020 to 12/31/2020	\$1572 donated FOOD BANK of Contra Costa & Solano	786 customers Signed up for EFT/Auto payment
---	--	---

Great news, this year's 'Give Back' Program will run for all of 2021!
That means we will continue to donate \$2 for every customer that signs up for EFT or recurring credit card billing to their account.

Mt. Diablo Resource Recovery
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Could exercise be adding more stress to your life?

By Carmela Lieras, NASM-CPT



Exercise is a stressor to your body. You might be thinking, 'Really? I thought exercise was supposed to be good for me!'

A stressor is defined as: something that causes a state of strain or tension. This is exactly what happens when we exercise.

Whether we go for a run, hike, bike-ride, attend a CrossFit or Pilates class, lift weights in our garage, or even spend an hour chasing our kid around outside, exercise causes our body (and more specifically our muscles, lungs, heart, joints, tendons, and bones) to strain and create tension in order to flex, extend, bend, twist, push and pull.

With any kind of stress, you can have too much, too little, or just the right amount. While 2020 might have been the year that you reignited your exercise routine, it could actually have added more stress to your body, instead of "stress-relief".

Let me explain. Everyone has a stress (or threat) bucket; it is called your nervous system. Your nervous system controls everything in your body, from your respiration, your vision and balance, your thoughts, your blood pressure, posture, reflexes, and more. As the life stressors hit us every minute of the day, our "bucket" starts to overflow, unless we can manage that stress in a positive way. If we cannot, pain, stiffness or injury can set in. That is what "overflow" looks like.

On top of all the "normal" stress we all

must deal with (work, family, financial, political, etc.) we were given even more to worry about with the year-long COVID-19 pandemic.

While exercise is a stress-reliever for many of us, if our bodies are already taxed, we are often doing more harm than good.

So, how do you know if exercise is causing your body more stress? Ask yourself these questions:

Do I wake-up every morning feeling like I need to go back to sleep for 2-3 more hours?

Does my body feel stiff and tight no matter how much yoga or stretching I do?

Do I have pain in any joint or muscle that sort of came out of nowhere?

Have I felt crankier or experienced more mood swings with increased exercise?

Do I appear to be gaining more weight even though I have been more active?

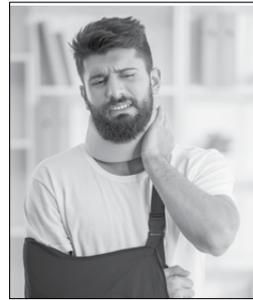
If you answered "yes" to two or more of these, I recommend scaling back on your exercise and focus on getting more steps in (10,000+), sleeping more, making sure you are hydrating, not skipping meals, and doing more activities for enjoyment rather than for burning calories.

Your nervous system is incredibly smart and will force you to slow you down by giving you stiffness, pain or injury when you least expect it.

Exercise is good for you but finding that "just right" amount takes a bit of trial and error. Take your time in finding what that is for your body and you will likely reap the amazing benefits of what exercise can provide.

legalbriefs by Douglas A. Prutton, Attorney Doug@PruttonLaw.com

Tripped Again on That Dang Sidewalk



Adam Awkward stumbled into the lawyer's office with a neck collar and a sling (Well he showed up on a Zoom call that way).

"What happened to you?" the lawyer inquired sympathetically, while thinking

to himself, "This could be some serious money!" [Hey, even lawyers are allowed to tell lawyer jokes.]

Mr. Awkward explained: "I was walking on the sidewalk on Mangled Street in Concord (street name made up to protect the innocent) and I went flying. I was lucky enough to get my hands extended or this pretty face might have got messed up."

"Well, let me ask you some questions, if that is all right," the wise lawyer said. [Yes, another lawyer joke. I am no wiser than you, my kind reader.]

"Can you describe what caused you to fall?" The lawyer asked.

"Well, I didn't really look around and examine everything. Geez! I was hurting bad, man, but the sidewalk was like, uneven."

Stroking his chin, the sagacious lawyer dug deeper into the tale (if only he had a pipe to smoke to complete the image, but there was no smoking permitted in the building). "Okay, can you describe how uneven? Did anyone take any photos?"

"Really, dude, I was in pain, serious pain. I wasn't thinking of measuring the sidewalk or snappin' a picture," Mr. Awkward moaned.

"No problem," the lawyer countered, "I can go out and take some photos later. What time of day did this happen?"

"It was around noon," Mr. Awkward answered.

"What was the weather like?"

"It was sunny, dry," Mr. Awkward responded, wondering a bit where this was heading.

"Was there anything blocking your view of the uneven part of the sidewalk?"

"Hey, wait, man, whose side are you on? I wasn't staring at the ground while I walked!" Mr. Awkward exclaimed.

"I'm on your side," the lawyer assured him in a soothing voice. "I handle these cases on a contingency fee, so the more money you get the more money I make. So, yes, my goal is to get you the most money I can, but I need to know as many details as possible. I have handled literally hundreds of trip/fall sidewalk cases over my 38 years of practice, and each is unique."

"Okay, sorry," said Mr. Awkward, "but what do you think of my case?"

The lawyer leaned forward, and Mr. Awkward listened.

"First of all, the fact that you fell on an uneven sidewalk does not necessarily mean that someone else is legally responsible for your fall. For someone else to be liable for your injuries, we have the burden to prove two things: one, that the sidewalk was dangerous, and two, that the owner of the sidewalk knew, or at least, should have known, of the danger."

The lawyer continued: "So when is an uneven sidewalk dangerous? The courts have ruled that the difference in elevation must be at least one inch for a sidewalk to be considered dangerous. This means we must get out there with a camera and a ruler and take some photos to measure the difference in elevation."

"The second part of what we must prove is called 'notice.' We must prove either that the owner of the sidewalk had actual notice of the danger, or that the owner had what is called 'constructive' notice of the danger which means that the owner should have known about the danger. Sometimes I

have been able to prove actual notice, like in cases against a city where there is proof that someone complained to the city about the sidewalk before my client fell, but actual notice is rare.

"Usually we have to prove 'constructive' notice which typically means showing that the danger was there long enough that the owner should have known about it. In many cases, an uneven sidewalk is caused by tree roots. This condition takes a long time to develop, so we argue that the owner of the sidewalk had plenty of time to observe the condition worsen over time. If the owner of the sidewalk is a private person, it is easier to prove constructive notice because that person is probably around the property often. When the owner is a City though, it is harder to prove constructive notice. If there is no proof that anyone ever complained to the City about the sidewalk, we try to find out if the City had performed work on the sidewalk, or in the area, like on the street, to show that a city employee should have observed the dangerous sidewalk."



The lawyer explained further: "Often, in trip/fall cases we bring a claim against the City and against the private property owner where the sidewalk was located. Many cities, including Concord, have ordinances that make private homeowners responsible for defects in city sidewalks that pass through the homeowner's property. (See, for example, Concord Ordinances Chapter 25, particularly sections 12.25.030 and 12.25.040. Concord also has a Sidewalk Repair Program: homeowners should call Public Works at (925) 6713448 or send an email to publicworks.sidewalk@cityofconcord.org to get more information.)

Under these ordinances, homeowners are responsible for repairing and maintaining the city sidewalks. I am handling a case against the City and County of San Francisco now and the San Francisco ordinance does not make homeowner's responsible for defects caused by city tree roots."

"Finally," the lawyer explains, "in trip/fall cases there is almost always an argument that the person who fell is responsible, or at least partially responsible, for falling. Persons walking on a sidewalk have a duty to exercise reasonable care. This means that the more open and obvious the danger the more likely it is that the person who fell was at least partially responsible."

For example, if a person walks into a huge deep hole in a sidewalk in broad daylight, the owner of the sidewalk will of course argue: why didn't you see the hole? But, if it was dark and rainy, and the defect in the sidewalk was only a two-inch difference in elevation, it is much harder to blame the person who fell. If the person who fell was also responsible for the fall, then 100% of the fault must be divided up between the sidewalk owner and the person who fell. For example, if the person who fell is found to be 25% at fault then that person is entitled to collect only 75% of his damages from the sidewalk owner."

"Anyways," the lawyer states, "let me go out to the sidewalk with my camera and ruler and let's see if you have a case!"

Martinez Approves Funds For Kayak Launch At Marina

By Tony Hicks Photo by Martinez Gazette

Martinez is on its way to becoming a kayak-friendly city. The City Council approved spending up to \$50,000 toward building a kayak launch at the guest dock at the Martinez Marina.

The idea of a kayak launch was initially part of the city's grant application for more Proposition 68 money from the state to repair the deteriorating Martinez fishing pier, which the City Council has resisted closing over recommendations from an outside expert.

A kayak launch would have to be approved separately from the pier. The grant specifically requires Americans with Disabilities Act-accessible paths from the parking lot to all amenities covered by the grant.

"There was so much community interest and support for this item, we thought it worthy of bringing forth for the council's consideration," said Deputy City Manager Michael Chandler.

The installation of the EZ Dock EZ Launch system could also include on-site kayak storage lockers.

The council officially approved the Prop.



68 application, asking for \$6,429,351 in grant money to renovate the fishing pier and breakwater and renovate the walking and jogging trail around Ferry Point.

The city would also build a new restroom, construct a shaded picnic area, add outdoor exercise equipment at Ferry Point, do ADA upgrades to the parking lot, and construct a native garden at Ferry Point. New landscaping, lighting and irrigation would be included.

"When this first started, I was only under the impression we were talking about repairing a dock that was not safe, or a fishing pier that was not safe," said Mayor Rob Schroder. "This is a much, much more comprehensive vision for that part of our waterfront. It's exciting."



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theRIGHT move
by Terrylynn Fisher, Broker Associate
www.BuyStageSell.com

When is a good time to put your home on the market?

Consider This...

Does it sound simplistic to say “when the most buyers are looking”? For the layperson, they would think that is synonymous with the busiest months for real estate, maybe between Easter and Summertime before school starts. Let me explain why the busiest months may not be the optimum months to sell a home?

In a recent quote, Past President of the National Association of Realtors Dorcas Helfant said, “Too few sellers consider inventory levels before timing their sale.” This can make a 1% to 5% or more difference in your final sale price. So, the busiest months may be the best months for buyers to buy when there is a surge of homes coming on the market for them to choose from. Whereas for sellers, having fewer homes on the market for buyers to choose from can increase their number of offers and result in higher sale prices. Ahh, that makes sense you say.

In addition, Helfant recommends you “wait until repairs are done to put your home up for sale.” To this Realtor (my opinion and not of all of my colleagues), that means no Coming Soon, where the buyers drive by watching you work on the home and wonder what is wrong that it, or why they can’t see the inside if it’s for sale. In my buyer representation experiences, in a ‘tough to be a buyer’ market, this only adds to buyer frustration and feelings of manipulation.

If you review the statistics for your area and see what months have the highest sold prices and lowest DOM (days on market), you would see a trend. You might think that June through August is optimum. But take a moment and see

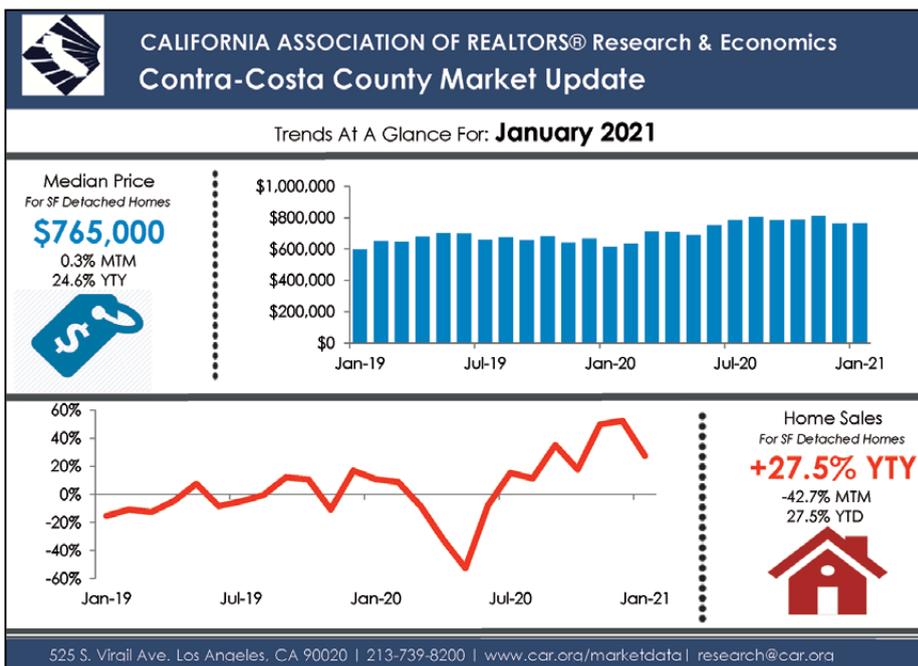
if the highest prices are gained during that timeframe? You might find that the highest sale prices and highest price per square foot occur when there are fewer homes on the market.

Less competition means more buyers bidding for fewer homes resulting in higher prices. You might also see months that everything that came on the market sold, indicating a good time for sellers to sell.

When I present sellers with their market analysis of neighborhood comparable sales, I include the market statistics data, reviewing the number of sales, days on market, and sale prices, so that we can include those factors and adjust our market strategy. If it is the time to sell and you must move, you will strategize given the market you are in at the time.

Many retirees or planners, though, have the ability to time their sale when the market might be more optimum for a higher return. In some cases, we start early (as much as a year) to plan, budget and strategize. Whatever your timing, adding in some data to the myopic neighborhood data, can broaden your appeal and reach.

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



“Appropo to the article, data for the City, neighborhoods can be provided as well”

Terrylynn Fisher
REALTOR® | CRS, SRES, CSP Elite Agent
925.876.0966 | DRE# 00615420
Info@BuyStageSell.com | BuyStageSell.com

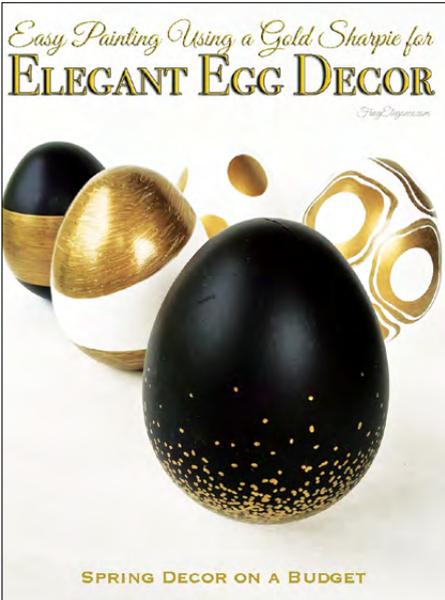
Consult with me Early, so we can Plan, Budget and Strategize!

I have not and will not verify or investigate information provided or supplied by third parties.

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

ELEGANT EGG

Easy Painting Using a Gold Sharpie for **ELEGANT EGG DECOR**



SPRING DECOR ON A BUDGET

How quickly a couple of warm days gets us thinking about our favorite Spring home decor. We love using lots of decorative bunnies, eggs, plants and flowers around the house. There is an endless selection in a wide range of prices out there as well as lots of awesome DIY projects to create something yourself. Our Elegant Jumbo Eggs are so easy to make, anyone can give it a try and feel like a pro crafter.

You will need paintable jumbo eggs and some gold metallic Sharpie markers. We found these Jumbo “Decorate Me” Eggs at our local Target, but they can also be found at local craft stores and Online. They are paintable and come in white, black or pink and were only \$1 each.

We created a few different designs. These are the simple techniques we used:



Gold circles: One little trick, use the cap from a bottle to outline the circles such as a medicine bottle cap. Stencils would work too, but who doesn’t have assorted bottles with caps around the house? You will likely have many different sizes to choose, and they are free. Draw your circles, then color them in.



Solid line pattern: We drew two lines on the Jumbo Egg, using a plastic container to create straight edges. One egg we created straight lines and the other we drew at angles. Again, color within the lines. Keep in mind, perfectly imperfect works well so do not stress about any boo-boos.

Stipple, also known as small dots: Draw lots and lots of dots. This is exceedingly difficult to mess up because you can keep putting those tiny dots wherever you want. Fill up the whole egg or just stipple a part of the egg.

These jumbo eggs can be decorated in many ways. You can also use paint or add some bling. Absolutely anything goes. You do not have to be a professional artist or a super crafter, you just have to have lots of fun.

Come see some of our other favorite Spring Decor projects like our moss-covered spring pots and our Spring door basket on our blog, frugelegance.com.

Carol and Randi, the FruGirls, are local home stagers and decorators. You can find them blogging about living an elegant life for less. FruElegance is where Frugal and Elegance come together.

Strange Lights Spotted Over Area

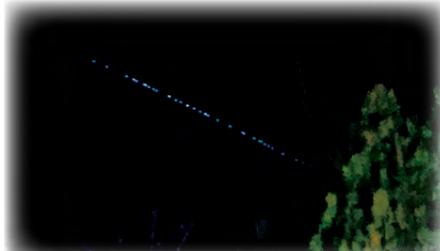
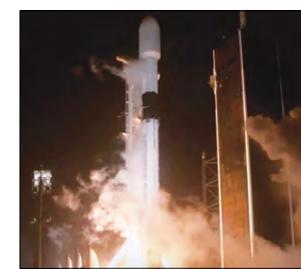


Photo: Starlink seen above Walnut Creek, Photo by Nick Tostado.

Curious residents from Walnut Creek and Martinez posted this photo of peculiar lights seen in the early morning sky. This eerie string of lights is not a UFO invasion, but Starlink, the satellite internet constellation that is under construction by Elon Musk’s SpaceX.



A SpaceX Falcon 9 launched a new set of Starlink satellites and landed the booster March 4,

The project aims to put 42,000 low Earth Orbit satellites (LEOs) for a faster (100x), cheaper internet. Because the LEOs are close to Earth, they can provide faster service. LEOs have a huge broadband vs. landline or WiFi based systems. So, get ready for gigabyte speeds.

Starlink has a ways to go. It will likely need at least 10,000 satellites in orbit before it can claim to cover a majority of the globe. Right now, it’s only about 10% of the way there. SpaceX just launched another batch of 60 Starlink satellites with its Falcon 9-based Starlink missions.

Out to Lunch

Jack's Restaurant and Bar

by Richard Eber

When the best eating establishments in the region are mentioned, Jack's Restaurant and Bar at 80 Crescent Drive in Downtown Pleasant Hill deserves to be on that list. This unique eatery, which combines casual and refined dining, has been a fixture in the local culinary scene since it was opened over a decade ago.

Serving breakfast, brunch, lunch, and dinner seven days a week, this place has evolved to become a combination blue collar-white tablecloth experience. Jack's reputation for being the dining spot for all seasons has its roots going back to when owner John Marcovici, his twin David and younger brother Chris toiled at their Mom's 24-seat cafe, Eleni's, when they were teenagers growing up in Clayton.

With their family being immigrants from the 1974 Civil War in Cyprus, Eleni's menu had an extensive Greek influence that has followed them in all their culinary endeavors.

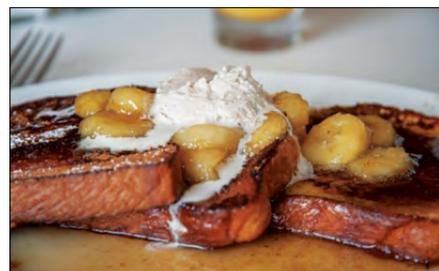
After the sale of Eleni's, the brothers plied their trade in local restaurants including stints at Savoy in Pleasant Hill and Clayton's Pioneer Inn. While earning a Master's Degree in Communications at SF State, John worked as a waiter at the iconic Greek establishment, Kokkari, in San Francisco. With brother David's expertise as a gourmet chef, the foundation had been set for when Jack's opened.



Jack's Dinner menu offers casual fare to refined dining options.

With such a diverse bill of fare, it is impossible to mention all the different items they offer. Especially noteworthy is their extensive kids' menu championed by classic favorites as Mac-N-Cheese, Spaghetti and Meatballs, grilled cheese, hot dog, etc. With nearby Sweet Tomatoes recently closing, families looking for a new place to go will be thrilled (especially the kids) with Jack's selections.

My favorite breakfast here is the Bananas Foster French Toast with a side of applewood smoked sausage and, in my case, a tall Bloody Mary. But the options here are wide, from traditional basics, to burritos, omelets, griddle staples to a slew of tasty specials for those indulge in mornng meals.



Bananas Foster French Toast

The same goes for lunch and dinner. There are many ways diners can go depending on their mood and appetites. Given their Eleni's experience, a good place to begin is with the Mediterranean Sampler

featuring homemade Tzatziki (yogurt dip), cilantro-jalapeno Hummus, Tobouli, and marinated olives served with warm pita bread.

For me, this starter is a perfect palate pleaser before I dig into a plate of Jack's lamb meatballs smothered in a peppery tomato sauce.



Owner John Marcovici with Jack's Classic Mac-N-Cheese

Sandwiches are popular here if one wants to go in that direction. There are several Greek specialties including the grilled Chicken Souvlaki, Gyro, and my favorite, a medium rare lamb burger. Jack's fried chicken breast sandwich is accompanied with outstanding coleslaw. They also serve a wide number of Angus Burgers cooked to order. Try their "Code Bleu", served with Blue Cheese, an onion ring and BBQ sauce.

Salad consumers, there are two important features regarding Jack's salad menu. One, Jack's offers 12 varieties including Caesar, Buffalo Chicken, Greek, Thai

Steak, and Bay Shrimp and others; and two, all their dressings are made in-house.

Now for the main course. I am especially fond of their spaghetti and meatballs and the tour de force, Tutto Mare, a combination of prawns, clams, mussels, and white fish finished in a wine garlic sauce atop a mound of spaghetti.

For traditional entrees, Jack's sautéed petrale sole reminds me of the dish once served at high end restaurants at Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco. Their crispy fried chicken, Yankee pot roast, lamb chops, and New York steak selections comprise "comfort food" at its finest. A cup of tangy Greek Avgolemono soup consisting of chicken, rice, lemon, egg, and cream pair well with any of these.

Dessert choices are supreme. They offer a pistachio baklava, pumpkin bread pudding, crème brûlée, or a caramelized banana split.

Come for the dining experience or come for Happy Hour. In his Online backstory, David's quips, "I made the leap from dishwasher to chef when my mom and our then-chef at Eleni's were both simultaneously incapacitated; my mom by a case of pneumonia and our chef by a case of Old Milwaukee." This is the epitome of the atmosphere, service and casual play locals come back for week after week.

"We learned that a restaurant is more than the sum of its parts or a place people go just because they are hungry, it's must also be a fun memorable time."

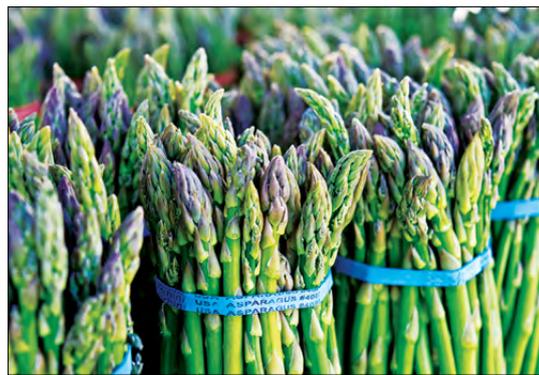
Enjoy safe outdoor dining featuring a large tent. Hours: 9am to 7:45 pm. Reservations are recommended by calling (925) 849-6195 or go to www.ilovejacks.com.



Asparagus Season is Here

by Deb Morris, PCFMA.org

Asparagus is among the first seasonal spring vegetables to appear. Spears typically begin to pop out of the ground in late February and are harvested through May or June, depending on the weather. Asparagus takes about three years before it can produce spears but once established it grows quickly, sometimes several inches in a day under favorable conditions!



California's micro-climates are ideal for asparagus production. The state produces approximately 75% of the nation's fresh market asparagus, much of it coming from the Central Valley, Central Coast, and the Stockton / Delta region.

The best part of spring asparagus is not just the delicious flavor it, but the ease with which it can be prepared. In fact, the emperor Caesar Augustus, a connoisseur of asparagus, would shout "Velocius quam asparagi conquantur!" or "Faster than cooking asparagus!" Steamed, roasted, grilled, sautéed, pickled, and baked are all methods to prepare and enjoy this savory vegetable.

Asparagus contains a nice sweetness at the moment of harvest. To avoid it rapidly changing into starch, we suggest you use those lovely, sweet spears as soon after purchase as possible to enjoy the best flavor. Consider purchasing asparagus at your local farmers' market where farmers bring just-picked asparagus as soon after harvest as possible. You won't find fresher flavor anywhere else.

Select bright green asparagus with closed, compact, firm tips. If the tips

are slightly wilted, freshen them up by soaking them in cold water. The fat spears are just as tender as the thin ones, so it's your choice which ones you like better. Tenderness relates to color, the greener the better. Keep fresh asparagus moist and eat as soon as possible after purchase.

Roasted Asparagus with Parmesan Cheese

- 1 bunch large fresh asparagus
- 1 to 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 clove minced garlic (optional)
- 1/4 cup finely grated Parmesan cheese
- Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Line a baking sheet with foil. Preheat oven to 400°F. Trim off woody ends of asparagus. Lay asparagus spears on a baking sheet and drizzle with olive oil. Sprinkle with salt, pepper, and garlic. Toss lightly and place in a single layer on the pan. Roast for about 20 minutes, or until lightly browned. Plate and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.



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Jill Hedgecock's bookends
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Author of From Shadow's Perspective
www.jillhedgecock.com

Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine

"Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine" (2018, paperback, Penguin Books, 352 pages, \$12.78) by Gail Honeyman, is the tale of a severely damaged soul trying to heal herself after a tragic childhood.

Eleanor is a 29-year-old social misfit with an unexplained scar on her face. Her life is stuck in a rut. She works in accounting in a small design firm, has Wednesday phone calls with Mummy, and drinks herself into a stupor on the week-ends—until she encounters a musician at a gig.

She becomes obsessed with this man and is convinced that he is destined to be her husband. She realizes that to make that happen she has to become more normal.

Enter co-worker Raymond, a genuinely nice guy, who befriends Eleanor when they jointly rescue an elderly man who has collapsed on the street. Their shared experience leads them to visit the old man in the hospital together, which leads them to accompany each other to additional social functions.

After Eleanor discloses her new love interest to Mummy, her emotionally abusive mother encourages her daughter to aggressively pursue her love interest. Eleanor does. She transforms her wardrobe, learns to apply makeup, and has one of the first haircuts of her adult life. Throughout the process, Raymond provides support and encouragement.

Raymond is not Eleanor's type. She is fastidious in everything she does and expects everyone to behave primly and properly like her mother taught her. She

is judgmental of all who don't meet her standards. She frowns at Raymond who talks with food in his mouth, smokes too much, texts in (gasp) abbreviations, and who doesn't wear proper shoes.

Raymond, in turn, has discovered a beautiful blonde to date. Yet, somehow these two manage to get along quite well as friends.

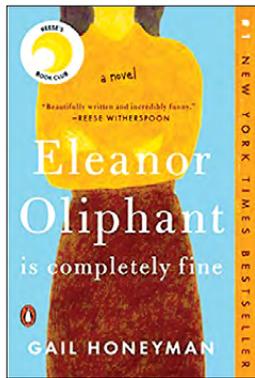
Meanwhile, Eleanor stalks The Musician on Twitter while scattering hints as to how a scar on her face happened. Eleanor eventually takes drastic measures that crumble the foundation on which she has built her life. But as she works her way back into her new reality and accepts her Mummy's flaws, Eleanor discovers an entirely

new outlook on life.

"Eleanor Oliphant" is a #1 New York Times Bestseller and a Reese Witherspoon Book Club Pick. It has won awards around the globe, including the Costa First Novel Award, the British Book Awards Book of the Year, and the BAMB Reader's Choice Award.

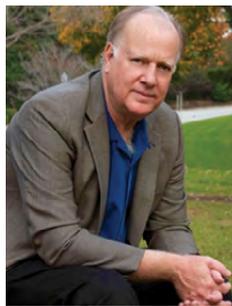
Gail Honeyman is a graduate of Glasgow and Oxford Universities. "Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine" is her debut novel. She lives in Glasgow, Scotland.

Fans of "Where'd You Go, Bernadette?" by Maria Simple and "Major Pettigrew's Last Stan" by Helen Simonson will probably enjoy the book. If you are looking for a character-driven novel that will both tug at your heartstrings and make you laugh, then this is the book for you.



Mt. Diablo branch California Writers Club Zoom workshop, featuring James Scott Bell

Renowned author James Scott Bell will be the featured presenter at the Mt. Diablo branch, California Writers Club Zoom workshop on Saturday, March 13, 2021 from 9:30 am to 12 noon. His topic will be "Write Your Novel from the Middle: A New Approach for Plotters, Panters, and Everyone in Between." He is the author of the #1 best-seller for writers, "Plot and Structure."



He says, "I've been studying plot and structure for over twenty-five years...Based on my #1 best-selling writing book, this workshop will teach a unique method for crafting a powerful, unified novel by way of the "mirror moment"—a crucial beat that happens right in the middle of great and enduring stories."

James Scott Bell is a winner of the Inter-

national Thriller Writers Award. He has taught writing at Pepperdine University and at numerous writers' conferences in several countries. He appeared as an expert commentator on *Good Morning America*, CBS Radio, and in *Newsweek* magazine during the O.J. Simpson murder trial. His book on search and seizure law is the leading authority in its field, used extensively by lawyers and judges throughout California every day.

He served as the fiction columnist for *Writers Digest* magazine and has written at least seven notable books on the craft of writing.

Register online at <https://cwcmtdiablo.org/current-cwc-mt-diablo-meeting/>. Members cost \$15, guests \$20.

A California Poet Laureate Asks "Does Poetry Matter"

The California Poet Laureate Dana Gioia will present "Does Poetry Matter in the Modern World?" at the Tri-Valley Writers Zoom meeting on March 20 at 2:00 p.m. He will talk about his odd journey to becoming a writer and discuss his new book, "Studying with Miss Bishop: Memoirs from a Young Writer's Life."

Tri-Valley Branch of the California Writers Club (CWC) hosts the meeting. The session is free and open to all who reserve a place by Thursday, March 18. To reserve, email president@trivalleywriters.org. For more information about the CWC

Tri-Valley Branch, visit <http://www.trivalleywriters.org>.



Views of the Valley



New Hope Church in participation with We LoveOurCity.org passed out free groceries across the street from Northwood Condominiums and Hillcrest Park, Concord, on February 20. Photo by Micah.



Commuters in Concord saw this bull on Hwy 4 and later on the city streets on March 4 before CHP and its owner could round it up. No one was injured.



Seagulls line up to go to work for the day. The pier is in need of repair. Martinez City Council hopes to secure \$6.5 million dollars in grant funds to come from state Proposition 68. Photo taken at Martinez Marina by Bill Nichols.



Thanks to Charles Lindsay Photography who captured this year's Yosemite Firefall. The spectacular phenomenon appears for 10 minutes daily for only 2-weeks when conditions are right at the park's 1,500-foot tall Horsetail Fall.



This new mural at Parma Deli on Clayton Road in Concord was painted by four Clayton Valley Charter art students. The idea came from Councilmember Carlyn Obringer, her husband and brother-in-law. After getting the OK from the building owner, She contacted some high schools and Mr. Hughes, Clayton Valley Charter's art teacher, responded. The students completed it in four weekends.

If you have an interesting photo to share, email it to diablogazette@gmail.com along with a brief caption about it.

San Ramon nurse appears on "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire!"

By Publisher

DeShae Alcorn, RN, BSN, and an ICU nurse at San Ramon Regional Medical Center, appeared on ABC's "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire!" on Sunday March 7. This season, the show is featuring frontline heroes along with celebrity contestants playing for charity. Networks require complete secrecy of its contestants. So until the air, Alcorn is not allowed to reveal her success or failure.

"It's definitely very hard keeping it a secret. I just remind those who ask, if I say anything I won't get paid and most people left it at that! "No one was more inquisitive than my mom though," Alcorn said.

Secret or not, we did coax few comments from her beforehand.

"It honestly felt surreal and still is surreal that I was on a national television show I grew up watching. I was in awe looking around the studio. I was extremely humbled and honored to be there!" Alcorn exclaimed.

Alcorn had initially applied for a game show where you competed to remove student loan debt. But she received a call in July 2020 saying they were no longer doing that show and asked her if she was interested in being a contestant on "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" hosted by Jimmy Kimmel. She said yes without hesitation.

The process involved a number of pre-screening forms, quizzes, phone and video interviews, but she says it was all worth it.

As for her lifeline, "I was able to bring the



Jimmy Kimmel questions DaShae Alcorn with her lifeline father. Photo courtesy ABC/John Fleenor.

smartest person I know to help with some of the questions, so I brought my dad along." They drove down to Culver City in August 2020 for the taping of the show.

"Overall, I would say my experience was one of enjoyment. We will always experience losses but as long as you do your best and inspire someone to do the same, you'll always be a winner."

Alcorn won \$32,000. Congratulations.





All Creatures Great and Small

What would our lives be like without our animal kingdom? It gives me such great pleasure to see what local artists have created for our annual menagerie of art "All Creatures Great and Small." It's all about the animals; everything from bugs to bunnies to bears.

There's nothing quite so enjoyable for me than walking through the gallery early in the morning, cup of coffee in hand, to explore each creature's personality one by one.

In this particular show, I've noticed the wide variety of mediums and materials that the artists have used. You'll see the softness of encaustic (painting or sealing with hot wax), images revealed on scratch board, upcycled items like mesh grocery bags used for texture in mixed media, and much more.

Some of these artists are brand new to me and others have shown here many times.

We strive to be inclusive and we especially love to help emerging artists break into the professional business of making and displaying art.

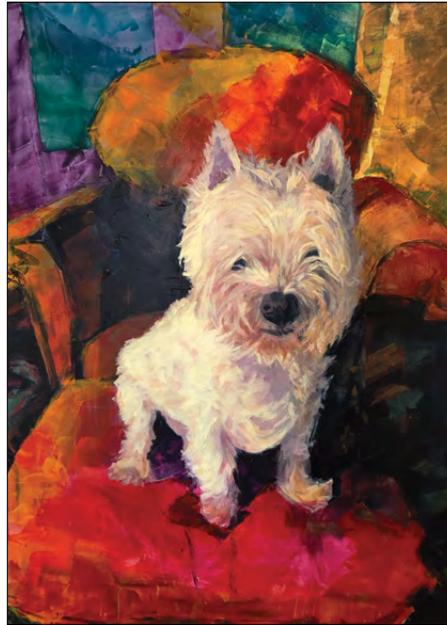
A wonderful art teacher once encouraged me by saying, "To be a professional artist,



By Jim Jordan

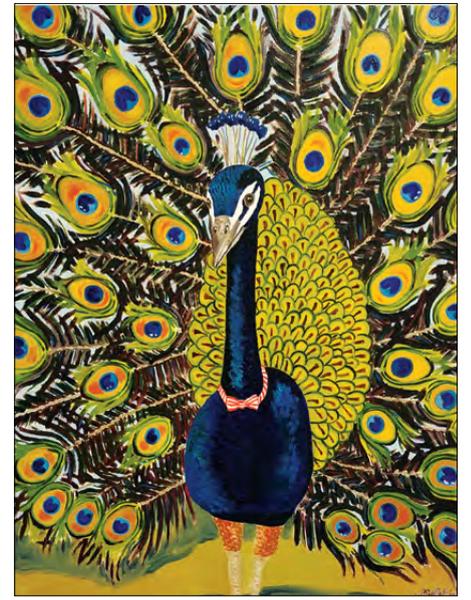
you need to do four things: First, make art. Second, get your work into a gallery. Third, sell your art. Fourth, get your art published." I am here to help artists accomplish these four steps.

It all starts with making art. If you're



By Ruth Stanton

interested in taking a customized class,



By Melchia Kutches

this is the place. I will help you explore your creative side as we try new ideas and techniques.

Come on over for a safe, socially distanced visit and meet the animals. This show will lighten your heart and make you smile.

All Creatures Great and Small runs through April 23, 2021 at 2238 Mt. Diablo Street in downtown Concord. Hours are Tues – Fri, 11am 5pm and Sat 1-5pm. Learn more at artcottage.info.



GEORGE MILLER TRAIL TO PORT COSTA

After being couped up for a year now, those eager to get out to hike the trails may want to start with some low level of difficulty. George Miller Trail comes up quite often in social media, especially among casual hikers. The Facebook group "Martinez Rants and Raves" have plenty of raves for this attraction.

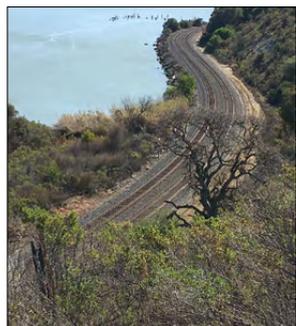
This mild scenic hike along the Carquinez Strait is a great starter to your hiking season. George Miller Regional Trail is a 3.9 mile heavily trafficked out and back paved pathway that offers the chance to see wildlife and is good for all skill levels. It is wide with an elevation gain of only 337 feet making it kid, dog, horse, wheelchair, stroller, skater, runner, cyclist and newts friendly.

We took advantage of some of the first warm days teasing us of the coming of Spring. To get here, you can park in the small Port Costa Staging Area or the Nedjely Staging Area is close to Martinez. On this Saturday afternoon, the commercial waterway was idle with only a few recreational boats quietly meandering on the strait.

One of the more interesting sites is the artistic labyrinth near the Port Costa end of the trail.



Clear views that often may be taken for granted showcase the waterfront properties of Benecia across the way. An active railroad carved between the shoreline and hilly vegetation provides a stark contrast of nature and industry that makes for interesting photography. From the vantage point high above the tracks, the train reminded me of Diablo Valley Lines, the model sets which always mesmerized me at the Walnut Creek Model Society Train Show.



A few benches and picnic tables are scattered along the trail offering panoramic views and a seat for a quick rest if needed.

For an off-road



adventure, simply follow the fire road trail, that when traveling towards Martinez, is located just beyond the eastern trail gate and the roadside parking. It gradually climbs inland along the hillside amongst towering oaks. According to the park's map it's the Franklin Ridge Loop Trail although the sign at the gate said Fire Trail. There are very few level stretches on this loop, so being our first time out in a while, we chose to stay on the paved trail.

We enjoyed our jaunt in the great outdoors, acquiring whatever physical benefits available from a two-hourish stroll that included several stops to explore, enjoy panoramic views, breathe in fresh air, and exhale a sigh of relief, free from months of a limiting lockdown.

After that hike, we drove the narrow, twisty two-lane Carquinez Scenic drive into Port Costa, which thoroughly captivated us. The town was once a booming grain port and train ferry stop for Contra Costa County.

Founded in 1879, this one street town of 190 residents, (99 households according to 2010 census), is basically a boon to antique hunters. Also, motorcyclists like to congregate here. Modernizations seemed to have taken a respite sometime in the early 70's. Cruising down the main drag, one can't help but admire the character and charm of Porta Costa with its beautifully restored two-story brick schoolhouse, homes still posting pre-election signs from either party's repertoire of slogans and slants, and



front yards keeping their "Yardi-Gras" decorations up. Clearly, the folks here like a good party.

That notion was confirmed as we waited for parking to become available in this town's lone partially paved parking lot at the end of the street outside the Warehouse Café, a quintessential and enormous dive bar, where I think all 190 residents must hang.



Restored schoolhouse. Courtesy Port Costa Conservation Society

The Warehouse Café boasts serving 250+ beer choices. Looking to grab a quick sandwich and, well, beer, we went inside. The place is large and dark with its decor inspired by something between a saloon, a carnival funhouse and a movie props warehouse.

The line to place an order was very long so we passed on refreshments. We decided to just do a walk-through as I was fascinated by two stuffed bears near, one Polar, one Kodiak near a pool table. In the back is a small thrift store with racks of clothing, leather jackets, knives, movie and other paraphernalia, etc.

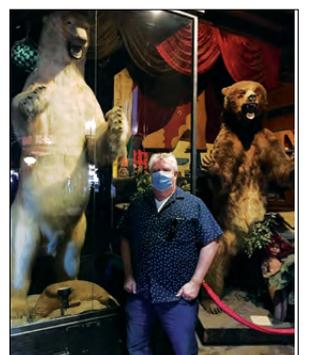
Porta Costa's 10-store (a generous estimate) business district consists of a Haberdashery, the Burlington Hotel believed to be a former brothel, and haunted according to some reports. With only two eateries and no grocery store in town being popular restaurant is probably a lock. Another restaurant, the Bull Valley Roadhouse is also rumored to be popular (imagine that with only two eateries and no



grocery store in town.) However, one publication described it as a haven for delicious southern comfort food prepared with big city flair.

There's a mercantile, and a place called Theatre of Dreams which is actually the home of the shadow boxes and vintage-paper crafts of local artist, Wendy Addison.

There's so much to admire in such a little community. And best of, this afternoon's entire exploration is close to home. I'm certain we will go back just to experience this tiny township for a full day or evening out.



Me inside Warehouse Cafe, with 250+ beers and two bears.



Theatre of Dreams and Burlington Hotel

Women's History Month

By David King

Woodrow Wilson may have been one of our hardest-working chief executives and by the fall of 1919, he looked it. Having suffered from both the Spanish Flu and a stroke, it was his wife Edith Bolling Galt Wilson that ran the county for 17 months.

Wilson had contracted the Spanish Flu on April 3, 1919, shortly after arriving in Paris to negotiate the treaty that would end World War I, the Treaty of Versailles, and planning for the nascent League of Nations, efforts for which he was awarded the 1919 Nobel Peace Prize.

Back home, however, the ratification of the treaty was met with mixed public support and strong opposition from Republican senators as well as Irish Catholic Democrats.

All during September of 1919, Woodrow Wilson embarked on a national speaking tour across the United States to make his case directly to the American people despite being frail from the flu.

On the evening of Sept. 25, 1919, after speaking in Pueblo, Colorado, Edith discovered the President in a profound state of illness; his facial muscles were twitching uncontrollably, and he was experiencing severe nausea and complained of a splitting headache.

His personal physician, Dr. Grayson, noted a "curious drag or looseness at the left side of [Wilson's] mouth." In retrospect, this event may have been a transient ischemic attack (TIA), the medical term for a "mini-stroke," which can be a harbinger for a much worse event, a full-fledged stroke.

The speaking tour was immediately cancelled and President Wilson, his wife and entourage returned back to Washington.

On the morning of Oct. 2, 1919, according to some accounts, the president awoke to find his left hand numb to sensation before falling into unconsciousness. In other versions, Wilson had his stroke on the way to the bathroom and fell to the floor with Edith dragging him back into bed.

However those events transpired, immediately after the president's collapse, Mrs. Wilson discretely phoned down to the White House chief usher, Ike Hoover and told him to "please get Dr. Grayson, the president is very sick."



President Woodrow Wilson, seated at desk with his wife, Edith Bolling Galt, standing at his side. First posed picture after Mr. Wilson's illness, White House, June 1920. Courtesy the Library of Congress

Grayson quickly arrived and ten minutes later, he declared, "My God, the president is paralyzed."

What would surprise most Americans today is how the entire affair, including Wilson's extended illness and long-term disability, was shrouded in secrecy. In recent years, the discovery of the presidential physicians' clinical notes at the time of the illness confirm that the president's stroke left him severely paralyzed on his left side and partially blind in his right eye, along with the emotional maelstroms that accompany any serious, life-threatening illness, but especially one that attacks the brain.

Only a few weeks after his stroke, Wilson suffered a urinary tract infection that threatened to kill him. Fortunately, the president's body was strong enough to fight that infection off, but he also experienced another attack of influenza in January of 1920, which further damaged his health.

Protective of both her husband's reputation and power, Edith shielded Wilson from interlopers and embarked on a bedside government that essentially excluded

First Woman U.S. President was kept a secret

Wilson's staff, the Cabinet and the Congress. Edith even tried to hide the extent of his paralysis by keeping his left side covered with a blanket.

By February of 1920, news of the president's stroke began to be reported in the press. Nevertheless, the full details of Woodrow Wilson's disability, and his wife's management of his affairs, were not entirely understood by the American public at the time.

What remained problematic was that in 1919 there did not yet exist clear constitutional guidelines of what to do in terms of the transfer of presidential power when severe illness struck the chief executive. What the U.S. Constitution's Article II, Section 1, Clause 6 on presidential succession does state is as follows:

In Case of the Removal of the President from Office, or of his Death, Resignation, or Inability to discharge the Powers and Duties of the said Office, the Same shall devolve on the Vice President, and the Congress may by Law provide for the Case of Removal, Death, Resignation or Inability, both of the President and Vice President, declaring what Officer shall then act as President, and such Officer shall act accordingly, until the Disability be removed, or a President shall be elected.

But Wilson, of course, was not dead and not willing to resign because of inability. As a result, Vice President Thomas Marshall refused to assume the presidency unless the Congress passed a resolution that the office was, in fact, vacant, and only after Mrs. Wilson and Dr. Grayson certified in writing, using the language spelled out by the Constitution, of the president's "inability to discharge the powers and duties of the said office." That resolution never came.

For the remainder of her life, Edith Wilson steadfastly insisted that her husband performed all of his presidential duties after his stroke. As she later declared in her 1938 autobiography, "My Memoir":

"So began my stewardship, I studied every paper, sent from the different Secretaries or Senators, and tried to digest and present in tabloid form the things that, despite my vigilance, had to go to the President. I, myself, never made a single decision regarding the disposition of public



Woodrow and Edith Bolling Wilson. Courtesy White House Association

affairs. The only decision that was mine was what was important and what was not, and the very important decision of when to present matters to my husband."

Over the last century, historians have continued to dig into the proceedings of the Wilson administration, and it has become clear that Edith Wilson acted much more than a mere "steward." She was, essentially, the nation's chief executive until her husband's second term concluded in March of 1921.

Woodrow Wilson died in his Washington, D.C., home, at 2340 S Street, NW, at 11:15 AM on Sunday, Feb. 3, 1924.

According to the Feb. 4 issue of The New York Times, the former president uttered his last word on Saturday, Feb. 2, "Edith."

The parallels of the days of President Wilson, the Spanish Flu pandemic and the circumstances of today are somewhat uncanny.

With overtures that the declining health or capacity of President Biden could lead to the prospect of Vice President Harris becoming the first woman president, it would seem appropriate to include an asterisk to that claim and recall that on Oct. 2, 1919, for 17 months, may well mark the first time in American history a woman became de facto president of the United States, even if Edith Wilson never officially held the post.

[Edited from an original article by Dr. Howard Markel for PBS NewsHour, 2015]

A WALK THROUGH TIME

Thomas Duane -159 years ago

with Misty Bruns

When I came across Thomas Duane's listing on the Find a Grave website, I had no idea what I would eventually uncover; a tidbit of a story full of grand ideas that inhabited the Franklin Canyon area of the lovely city of Martinez in the days when the soil was enriched with the greatness of growing fruits and vegetables, when farms and orchards were plentiful, and everyone knew their neighbor. I discovered that Thomas Duane created a strain of the Bing cherry.

Thomas Steven Duane was born February 5, 1862(63) in Canada. His father was Canada Eng., his mother from Ireland according to the 1900 census. Thomas Duane immigrated to the United State of America in 1875 and became a citizen through his father's naturalization.

Thomas married Sarah Jane Rodgers (Sadie) in 1894. Sadie's parents were Patrick and Mary Ann Rodgers, pioneers to Pleasant Hill. Thomas and Sadie had three children, Ruth, Joseph and Verna.

They made their home in the Franklin Canyon of Alhambra Valley in Martinez, California.

Thomas started the Franklin Canyon Nursery/Martinez Nursery in 1884. He was welcomed by John Muir, John Swett,



Dr. Strentzel and many other nut and fruit growers. He was a master nurseryman. With years of work, he created a

new strain of the Bing cherry. His creation earned his Bing cherry a gold medal at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis.

In 1915 a newspaper article in the San Francisco Call read:

"Contra Costa Cherries Are Shipped to Taft

Cherries measuring more than an inch in diameter and resembling lair sized plums, are being exhibited at the Contra Costa County booth in the California building at the Exposition. [Referring to the exhibition at the 1915 World Fair in San Francisco]. They are the result of several years of experimental work by Thomas S. Duane of Franklin Canyon, Oi-Ho is known as the "Burbank of Contra Costa." A box of the fruit has been shipped to former President William Howard Taft by Duane"

Here's the Women's History connection. Taft had a history with cherries. It was former First Lady Helen Taft who was responsible for having 3000 cherry trees (a gift from Japan) planted through



Cherry blossoms at the tidal basin and Jefferson Memorial.

Washington DC in 1912 which to this day is still a primary attraction to the Capitol along with the Annual National Cherry Blossom Festival there.

Thomas was a great advocate for farming children's education. And, served on the Alhambra High School District Board of Trustees for over 20 years. He lived a full and vibrant life in the Franklin Canyon area of Martinez.

Thomas Steven Duane passed away January 11, 1932. And is buried at St Catherine's cemetery in Martinez.

A special thank you to James Wilson, Joseph Palmer, John Curtis from martinezhistory.org with helping me find the pieces to put together some of Thomas Duane's life in Martinez.



Ruby Dooby Do to the Rescue

Jayce

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



Jaycee is a sweet, 35-pound male 3 year-old Shiba Inu. Jayce was living on the streets when he was hit by a car and left on the side of the road. The accident left his body paralyzed but not his spirit. Jayce has adapted to life in a wheelchair. This resilient boy knows how to run around and have fun!. Jaycee is:

- Good with kids
- Good with cats and other dogs
- Crate-trained
- Happy and sweet

Jayce is vaccinated, and microchipped. A small adoption fee may apply. To meet this special boy and find out if you are a good match for each other, fill out an adoption application. <http://lovesecondchances.org>. Allow a few days for review.

Jaycee will require assistance with bodily functions. He will also need to be supervised when he is attached to his wheels to make sure he doesn't get too tired or stressed. He is okay on leash.

The mission of San Ramon-based Love & Second Chances (LSC) is to help death-row, abused, and neglected dogs find forever homes. This foster-based rescue was founded in 2012. Their team consists of compassionate individuals who embrace the rescue's motto: "No one said it would be easy, they only said it would be worth it." LSC is always looking for fosters who are interested in opening their homes to their rescues and they also welcome donations which can also be made from on their website.

Another way to help is to share images of Jaycee on social media. Sharing saves lives.

A Bone to Pick

Clip Those Nails -- Do you hear clicking when your dog walks across a hard surface? If so, your dog's nails are too long. This can result in health problems and mobility issues for your dog. Long-clawed paws applies pressure on the wrong parts of the foot which can cause bad posture and chronic pain and may be prone to painful splitting and breaking.

There are a few exceptions where nail-trims should be minimized. For example, a hunting dog that needs to dig or tracking dogs that navigate difficult terrain for hours or days at a time (more intense off-road trails than weekend hikes.)

There are two options to clip nails: nail clippers or a dremel. Dremels can be found at hardware stores. Nail clippers are fast and effective but be careful as it is easy to cut into the quick or central nerve which causes bleeding (corn starch will quickly stop the blood flow) and discomfort. Dremels grind away the excess nail but it can be a slow process and some dogs take time to acclimate to the noise and vibrations. Veterinarians and dog salons can do the job if you aren't comfortable with the process. But this is an area of pet care that should not be neglected.

Pawsitive Patter

COVID Sniffers -- A dog's nose has 300 million scent receptors while a human's has between 5 to 6 million. The dog's superior gift is evident in the sniffer dogs used to detect firearms, explosives and drugs at airports. Now, COVID sniffer dog programs are cropping up to help screen people for COVID-19 infection at places like airports, hospitals, or sports venues. High levels of accuracy are being reported by the sniffer dogs, but large-scale studies are still needed. What's promising about this talented pup's ability is that the trained dogs can often detect the virus before a person is symptomatic.

[Ruby Dooby Do is Concord's international Instagram celebrity with more than 187K followers at Instagram.com/rubydooby_Do. She has 116,000 Facebook followers and on TikTok with 1.3 M followers. Special thanks to Jill Hedgecock, author of "Between Shadow's Eyes", "From Shadow's Perspective" and this column. www.jillhedgecock.com.]

Lindsay Wildlife warns put away bird feeders and bird baths until April 1

Even birds need to "socially distance". Due to a dramatic increase of gravely ill Pine Siskin patients in the wildlife rehabilitation hospital, Lindsay Wildlife Experience is advising Contra Costa County residents to take down their bird feeders including hummingbird feeders and suet feeders until at least April 1 to help curb the potential spread of salmonella.

Lindsay veterinary staff has treated more than 20 Pine Siskin (sparrow-like birds) patients since January 1, 2021. The hospital treated two Pine Siskin patients in all of 2019. Salmonellosis caused by Salmonella bacteria, has been confirmed which has also been reported in Pine Siskins elsewhere in the Bay Area and the western United States. Salmonella bacteria can also spread to humans.

Birds become infected with Salmonella

when they ingest food, water or contact objects (e.g., bird feeders, perches, soil)



contaminated with feces from an infected bird. Sick birds often appear weak, have labored breathing, and may sit for prolonged periods with fluffed or ruffled feathers.

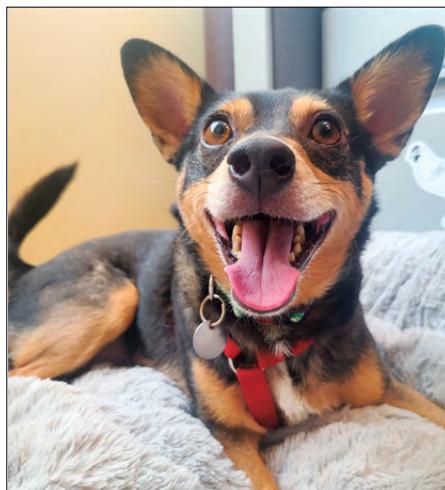
Residents can help reduce disease

ARF Adoption Stars Mint & Skiff

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, fill out an online inquiry form. Once your inquiry has been received, you will be added to our virtual adoption queue.

Mint



Three-year-old Mint is a charming, sensitive companion. He enjoys training and exploring on walks, but can take a bit of time to gain comfort with people. Mint will require an adult only home and would do best in a home with a yard, as apartment living would be too overwhelming. While Mint may enjoy having outside K9 buddies, Mint will need to be the only dog in his new home. It might take some time to become Mint's favorite, but he will make it worth your while. He enjoys playing with his stuffed toys, exploring the landscaping and playing agility games. Mint is a bit more into doing activities than he is into cuddling,

but there's nothing he loves more than a cozy bed

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.

Skiff



Two-year-old Skiff is a handsome boy who is looking for a calm and quiet home where he's given the time he needs to adjust to a new environment. Once he feels safe and confident, his sweet and affectionate nature will be revealed. He's looking forward to a home with lots of cat toys to play with and some sunny window sills where he can perch and watch the world outside. Skiff will make an oh-so-sweet companion. Skiff's adoption fee has been prepaid by a generous donor.

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.

Answer from pg. 8

WORD SEARCH PLUS:

E. J. Phair Brewing

John Jeffrey "JJ" Phair had a brief career as an NFL kicker playing for Detroit Lions and Buffalo Bills before injuring himself training with the Oakland Raiders. He began homebrewing in 1990. In 2005, he took a chance on the vacant Wild Rose Restaurant on Salvio St. at Todos Santos and opened E.J. Phair Brewing Company in 2005, named after his grandfather Ewart John Phair.



transmission by removing bird feeders. Allowing birds to feed on natural seeds rather than at bird feeders reduces contact between birds and helps slow spread of the disease.

If you are seeing sick birds in your yard or neighborhood, please immediately remove your bird feeder(s) until at least April 1 to allow the birds to "socially distance" and prevent further spread of the disease.

Double bag any dead bird and dispose of it. Be sure to wear gloves and then thoroughly wash your hands afterwards. If you find a sick or injured bird or other wildlife, please call the hospital hotline at (925) 659-8156 or email hotline@lindsaywildlife.org.

If you'd like to clean your feeders before putting them away, wash them with soapy water, soak in a solution of 1/2 cup bleach (4 oz) to 1 gallon of water, and let dry.

Once the feeders return, it is good practice to wash them weekly to help prevent feeders from becoming a breeding ground



Sick birds often appear weak and may sit for prolonged periods with fluffed or ruffled feathers. Photo courtesy of Lindsay Wildlife Experience.

for bacteria. Do not overfill feeders and avoid using platform-style feeders where birds can perch.

Lindsay Wildlife Experience hospital remains temporarily closed to the public, but will accept patients in a drop-off area each day from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.