

FEBRUARY 2020

Concord Gets Cozy



Megan Daoudi and her Cozy Vintage Mobile Bar. pg. 6

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Con Fire training 10,000 students in hands-only CPR

Contra Costa County Fire Protection District (Con Fire) is providing CPR training to thousands of high school students across the Contra Costa County. Contra Costa County Fire-EMS, with support from their ambulance transport Alliance partner, AMR, has launched an ambitious initiative to train every high school student in the District to save lives in our communities using simple Hands-Only CPR.



Photo by Micah. Fire Captain Ken Loo demonstrates chest compression's



Mt. Diablo High School Students participate in CPR Training

Con Fire's goal is to save lives by training more than 10,000 Contra Costa County high school students during the 2019-20 academic year. The Hands-Only CPR training, based on the American Heart Association standard, is an interactive and fun 10-minute class. Training is being conducted by uniformed Con Fire firefighters and AMR paramedics. The non-certification training includes a fun and age-appropriate video, a hands-on-mannequin practical portion, and a leave-behind reminder card – all designed for the high school student. Fire Captain Ken Loo and EMS Community Education Specialist Anna Cleese are managing this initiative.

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concord mayor

by Tim McGallian, Email: PutMAYORin@cityofconcord.org
subject line CityCouncil@cityofconcord.org

“Move forward, fight hard and succeed”

Last month I had the honor of delivering the State of the City Address at the 35th Annual Mayor's luncheon and awards ceremony hosted by the Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce.

I highlighted the City's recent accomplishments, discussed our current priorities, and shared information on our biggest challenges, which we must address head on.

Among our current priorities, Concord is focused on quality of life, fiscal stability, economic development, public safety, infrastructure, and the development of the former Concord Naval Weapons Station.

In just a few short months you will be welcomed back to our “living room,” also known as Todos Santos Plaza for the Spring Brews Festival on Saturday, March 28 and our first Music & Market concert on Thursday, May 28. We have many special events on tap this year, and I encourage you to check out our website for more information: www.cityofconcord.org/downtownevents. From our summer camps and swimming pool, Camp Concord in South Lake Tahoe and concerts at the Concord Pavilion, to our July 4th celebration and the Mayor's Tree Lighting and Sing-a-long, there is truly something for everyone in our community, and I look forward to celebrating with our community throughout the year.

Our Economic Development Team has worked hard to bring jobs to Concord through both business attraction and business expansion. We are going to see great new businesses open soon, and

we will address new regulations as they relate to Cannabis sales. We will also begin exploring opportunities to get involved in emerging industries, such as Esports.

Also, during my State of the City address, I described our budget shortfall, our urgent need for roadway and other infrastructure repairs, and how we are continuing to address the growing challenge of homelessness.

If you did not have a chance to attend the event, you can watch my speech on the City's website or on Concord TV – Comcast 28, Wave 29 or AT&T U-verse 99. As Mayor of the City of Concord, my job is to make sure we move forward, fight hard, and succeed every day. We all work hard to create the type of community that we can be proud to call our own.

As a team and as a community, we all get better when we push past what is possible. As your Mayor, I bring that mindset into every meeting, every project, and every interaction.

Thank you, Concord, for all you do to contribute to the vibrancy of our City. I look forward to working in partnership with you to achieve our mission of making Concord a City of the highest quality.

Please join me on at my next Meet Up with the Mayor on February 22 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at Centre Concord and Preschool, 5298 Clayton Rd. Our preschool is having its open house, so please stop by and get more information about the preschool programs being offered by the City of Concord.

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The Journey-man's Journal
by Robin Gigoux

Yosemite Firefall, February's 10-minute marvel

Yosemite Valley has been my all-time favorite state destination since moving to California years ago. On a field trip to aRt Cottage in Concord, I was captivated by an exquisite professional photograph, possibly by Galen Rowell, approximately 15 inches wide by 45 inches long. The photograph was beautifully mounted with no frame to distract from the magnificent image of vivid reds, yellows and oranges of fire cascading down Yosemite's Glacier Point in the dark.



Yosemite Firefall was an event that took place regularly prior to 1968 before the National Park Service put an end to the practice. Yosemite Firefall began around 1871, when Yosemite was not yet a national park, and continued on and off for nearly 100 years. James McCauley, owner of the Glacier Point Hotel atop the cliff in 1871, treated summer guests to a huge bonfire most nights, after which, around 9:00 PM, he pushed the fire's dying embers over the edge of Glacier Point to the valley floor more than 3,000 feet below.

In 1897, the Washburn brothers, who owned the Wawona Hotel, had the Guardian of the State Grant evict McCauley from the property, took over his hotel, and the spectacle stopped for a few years, until David Curry founded a camp at the base and revived the firefall to attract tourists. In 1913 the National Park Service banned the firefall but reinstated the practice in 1917. The firefall was again discontinued during World War II, ostensibly forever; but after the war, public outcry for its return was so great they relented. Despite public protest, on January 25, 1968, the National Park Service ceremoniously ended the Yosemite Firefall for all time.

The Glacier Point Hotel was destroyed by fire 18 months later and was not rebuilt. For those who never witnessed the flaming spectacle, there is a substitute. A natural phenomenon occurs in mid to late February along Horsetail Fall on the eastern side of 3,000-foot El Capitan. When skies are clear, snow is melted and flowing, and light hits the waterfall at just the right angle at the right time of day, the falling water reflects brilliant reds and oranges and appears to be on fire. Few observed or talked about this natural "firefall" until photographer Galen Rowell noticed the illusion in the early 1970s. Within months of the 100-year anniversary of the first firefall, Rowell took the first known photograph of this natural phenomenon. That single photo ushered in a new chapter in the history of the Yosemite Firefall and, within a few decades, some say this natural event

has become as famous as the original manmade firefall. It would have been amazing to have seen the "real" fire falling over Glacier Point before 1968, but to see the natural phenomenon that occurs at Horsetail Fall unpredictably is perhaps an even more incredible spectacle. The window of opportunity is indeed very short. You can always settle for images found online when searching for "Galen Rowell photographs" and "Yosemite Firefall

photos/images." Some of the latter are breathtaking videos. The natural Firefall is one of Yosemite National Park's most amazing spectacles. Due to the skyrocketing popularity of the natural Firefall, which now attracts thousands of spectators, Yosemite National Park has implemented some new rules. During the Firefall, there is a restricted zone from Yosemite Valley Lodge to El Capitan Crossover. This zone offers some of the best views of Horsetail Fall. The restrictions are in place to reduce traffic jams, which have become a problem in recent years.

Yosemite Firefall can be finicky. Although Horsetail Fall is visible from multiple viewpoints in Yosemite Valley, several factors must converge to trigger the Firefall. If conditions are not perfect, the Yosemite Firefall will not glow. First and foremost, Horsetail Fall must be flowing. There must be enough snowmelt to feed the waterfall, which tumbles 1,570 feet (480 meters) down the east face of El Capitan. This year there has been plenty of snow. Also, temperatures must be warm enough during the day to melt the snowpack. If temperatures are too cold, the snow will stay frozen and Horsetail Fall won't flow. Lack of runoff is why there is no Firefall in October when the sun hits Yosemite Valley at roughly the same angle. By October the runoff that feeds Horsetail Fall has long since dried up. Second, the western sky must be clear at

sunset. If conditions are cloudy the sun's rays will be blocked, and Horsetail Fall will not light up. Winter weather is highly variable in Yosemite, however, and days that start off cloudy can clear up by sunset. If everything comes together and conditions are just right, the Yosemite Firefall will light up for about ten minutes. To see Horsetail Fall glowing blood red is an almost supernatural experience. The discovery of the natural Yosemite Firefall is not well documented. The Awahneechee Indians, who lived in Yosemite Valley for hundreds of years, most likely knew of its existence, but there is no evidence they passed this information on to white settlers. Yosemite Valley was first reported by white

explorers in 185, but the natural Firefall was never mentioned. Even John Muir, who lived in Yosemite for several years and explored the park in obsessive detail, never mentioned the Firefall at Horsetail Fall.

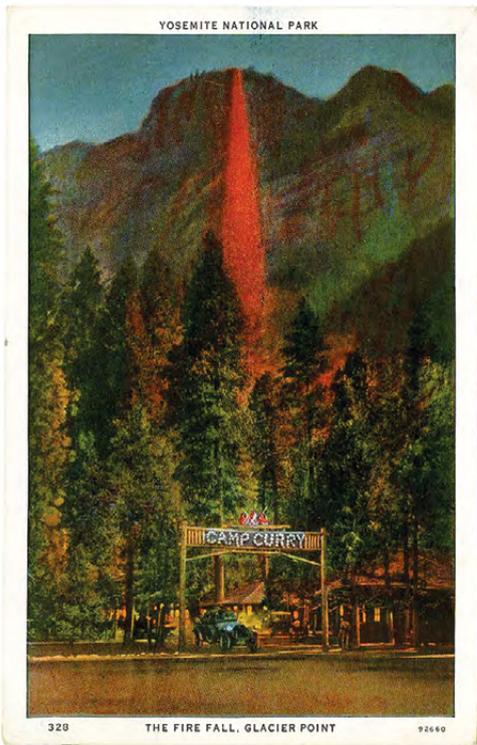
In 1973 photographer Galen Rowell took the first-known photograph of the natural Yosemite Firefall but it wasn't until the advent of digital photography and social media that the Firefall achieved global fame. As dramatic images of the Firefall spread around the world, more and more people come for a look.

For this year, peak Firefall at Yosemite should occur around February 19-22, according to adventure blogger Bonjour Becky. (See inset)

If you choose to see Yosemite's Firefall this month, book your hotel now. Rooms sell out fast. Learn more at <https://yosemitefirefall.com/yosemite-firefall-horsetail-fall/>

| Date | Firefall Potential | Sun's azimuth (°) |
|-------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| February 12 | low | 243.87 |
| February 13 | low | 244.13 |
| February 14 | low | 244.39 |
| February 15 | medium | 244.65 |
| February 16 | medium | 244.92 |
| February 17 | medium | 245.19 |
| February 18 | medium | 245.47 |
| February 19 | high | 245.75 |
| February 20 | high | 246.04 |
| February 21 | high | 234.33 |
| February 22 | BEST BET | 246.63 |
| February 23 | high | 246.93 |
| February 24 | medium | 247.21 |
| February 25 | medium | 247.55 |
| February 26 | medium | 247.86 |
| February 27 | medium | 248.18 |
| February 28 | low | 248.51 |

Yosemite Firefall 2020 Best Viewing days according to bonjourbecky.com. Best time Firefall begins by ~5:25pm each night — 10-15 minutes before sunset — and ends by ~5:40.



Repository: California Historical Society Date: 1932
Format: Postcard Publisher: Western Publishing and Novelty Co. Digital object ID: CHS2014.1547.jpg
Preferred citation: The Firefall, Glacier Point, courtesy, California Historical Society, CHS2014.1547.jpg

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Prep your home now for a Spring sale

While it may feel like Old Man Winter is never going to leave, spring is just a few weeks away. The spring season is one of the best times of the year to sell your home. By getting yourself prepared during this time, you'll be ready to list your home at the beginning of spring. Here's what you need to do over the next few weeks to get ready.

Declutter your home. When the weather prohibits you from going outside, spend your time inside getting control of your clutter and depersonalize your space. By starting now you're giving yourself plenty of time to accomplish this task. Do you need some inspiration to get started? Then check out Marie Kondo's book "The Life Changing Magic of Tidying Up" or watch her show "Tidying Up with Marie Kondo" on Netflix.

Deep clean your home. This is one step that cannot be overlooked. Your home needs to be sparkling before any potential buyers drop in. Everything needs to be done, including shampooing the carpets, polishing the hardwood and tile floors, scrubbing the bathrooms and kitchen, cleaning the windows, and making sure you get into all the nooks and crannies. If the idea of deep cleaning your home is overwhelming, then hire a cleaning company to get the job done.

Make repairs. While cleaning, take note of anything that needs repairs. This could

include a leaky faucet, a tricky doorknob, or a hole in the drywall. Make sure all lights are working. Remember, home inspectors and potential buyers are going to be looking at everything in your home. Tackling these small repairs now will save you many headaches down the line.

Paint. A fresh coat of paint does wonders to make any room feel fresh and clean. Though you may love that bright blue paint in your master bathroom, you never know if it will suit the tastes of all the potential buyers who walk through your home. Now is a good time to repaint your rooms with neutral colors, like white, beige, or gray. Neutral colors allow buyers to more easily imagine themselves in the home.

Interview agents. Take time to research professional real estate agents in your area. Talk to friends and family to get recommendations then research them online. See what kinds of reviews they've gotten from other sellers, and whether they've had any disciplinary action taken against them. When you have a few agents that meet your criteria, schedule interviews with them. Ask them about their home-selling strategies, their fees, and if they can provide you with references. You'll get a good sense of which agent best suits your needs, and if their personality is a match with yours. (Courtesy virtualresults.net.)

Blossom for Barbara rides again

"Blossoms for Barbara" is a favorite community-wide event put on annually by the Clayton Valley Garden Club founded by Clayton resident Linda Karp. "Blossoms for Barbara" presents those in the care of hospice, patients in assisted living and convalescent locations, battered women's shelters, hospitalized Veterans and elderly recipients of



Meals on Wheels with a decoratively wrapped flowering plant in observance of Valentine's Day. This annual heartwarming event started nine years ago by delivering flowering plants to 250 people in Clayton and Concord. Through the years the need for a Valentine's cheer has grown to over 1,300 annually, and now stretches into Walnut Creek, Lafayette, Pleasant Hill, Martinez, and the surrounding areas.

"Blossoms for Barbara" was created in 2011 to honor the memory of Barbara Manss, Linda's mother. "I wanted to give a loving and compassionate gesture to the families and patients in the care of hospice," Linda stated. With the support of the Clayton Valley Garden Club, local

businesses and individuals the "Blossoms for Barbara" Valentine's Event has flourished.

"Blossoms for Barbara" has touched the hearts of patients, family members, caregivers, nurses, counselors and the volunteers.

"The days were hectic, but all turned out with delightful smiles, hugs and tons of gratitude. Every place was so happy to see us and anxiously awaiting their plants. Many agencies are so thrilled with our annual event they now make annual donations to support it," Linda reported. This event means so much to so many, which is evident from the thank you cards and letters that the Clayton Valley Garden Club receives each year after deliveries are finished.



From left to right - Carol Whitmore, Cara Wahl, Patty Remoy, Carin Kaplan, Linda Manss Karp events founder and chair, Carla Thompson, Lew Thompson, Marcia Hart, Peggy Arundell, Dave Osteen, Sharon Osteen

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CLAYCORD® NEWS & TALK

In case you missed it...

County seeking nominations for Contra Costa Youth Hall of Fame

The Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors is now accepting nominations for the 2020 Contra Costa County Youth Hall of Fame Awards. These awards are presented annually to outstanding Contra Costa County residents between the ages of 12 and 18. Nominees should demonstrate exemplary behavior in one of five categories: Good Samaritan: Goes out of their way to do for others without seeking recognition Volunteerism: Lends a helping hand for the good of the community; gives their time and energy to a worthy cause or organization Teamwork: Works unselfishly for the good of the team Leadership and Civic Engagement: A natural leader who inspires others and works to make a difference in school and the community Perseverance: Worked hard to overcome obstacles and achieve success Applications and information are online: www.contracosta.ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/61936. Nominations must be received or postmarked by February 14, 2020. Recipients will be recognized at the March 31, 2020 Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors' Cesar E. Chavez Celebration in Martinez.

OSH returning to Clayton Valley Shopping Center

Same initials, different company. OSH is returning to the Clayton Valley Shopping Center on Ygnacio Valley Rd. in Concord. The building has been vacant since Orchard Supply Hardware left in Nov. 2018. The new company, Outdoor Supply Hardware told Claycord.com they expect to open within the next few months. Outdoor Supply Hardware currently has stores in Moraga, Napa, Capitola, Berkeley and San Jose. They recently purchased the OSH brand from Lowe's for an undisclosed amount, according to reports.

California Senator to propose State take over PG&E

State Sen. Scott Wiener, D-San Francisco, is proposing to have the state take over PG&E and run it as a publicly owned utility. "PG&E is a failed utility with a track record of prioritizing profits over safety," Wiener stated in a news conference on February 3. Wiener said he believes the state would do a better job than the currently shareholder-owned utility at preventing wildfires and blackouts. "Wall Street will be taken out" of the equation, he said. Under the proposed law, the State Power Authority would buy all PG&E's shares and transfer ownership to a publicly owned utility, the Northern California Energy Utility District. PG&E spokesman James Noonan responded, "We oppose Senator Wiener's proposed framework, and PG&E's facilities are not for sale. PG&E, facing billions of dollars in claims for wildfires sparked by electrical equipment failures, is currently in Chapter 11 bankruptcy proceedings while

it develops a financial reorganization plan. Noonan said, "We remain focused on fairly resolving wildfire claims and exiting the Chapter 11 process as quickly as possible."

After 105 years, Martinez refinery no longer named "Shell"

After 105 years of Shell ownership, the Martinez Refining Co., LLC is, as of February 1, the new owner of the refinery on the Carquinez Strait just west of Interstate Highway 680. PBF Energy Inc., headquartered in New Jersey, will now operate the facility under the name Martinez Refining Co. LLC. The \$1 billion deal was struck in mid-2019. The Martinez refinery employs approximately 700 people. It produces gasoline, jet fuel, diesel fuel, petroleum coke, industrial fuel oils, liquefied petroleum gas, asphalt and sulfur. It also has a "coker" unit for processing heavy crude. Published reports said an expected long-term rise in crude oil prices and the relatively high costs of doing business in California, including adherence to state environmental regulations, were factors in Shell's decision to sell.

14 Walnut Creek mail carriers drive one million accident-free miles

Driving can be a challenging task on its own, let alone driving one million miles without so much as a fender-bender. Fourteen Walnut Creek Post Office mail carriers did just that and were honored on Jan. 30 at the North Broadway Post Office. Maria Ruvalcaba, Mark Long, Terrence Madden, Paul Skinner, Joseph Roldan, Dwayne Hunt, Sharon Reemes, Kimberly Quiroz, Cindy Crouse, Nancy Glenn, Kevin Ervin, Teresa Skinner, Anna Robards and Chester Wong will all be inducted into the National Safety Council "Million Mile Club." These mail carriers have each driven the equivalent of circling the earth 40 times, all without a moving violation or accident. Each driver will be presented with a plaque from the Safety Council and automatic membership in the prestigious National Safety Council "Million Mile Club." The million-mile award is a lifetime enrollment, and it is given to drivers who have accumulated one-million miles or 30 years of driving without being involved in a single preventable motor vehicle accident.

Valentine destination wedding event at California Theatre

On Valentine's Day, Feb. 14, the Contra Costa Clerk-Recorder will host wedding ceremonies at Pittsburg's picturesque California Theatre between 10 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Couples must obtain a marriage license at the main office in Martinez. The civil marriage ceremony fee is \$60. Couples can obtain a public marriage license for \$86 or a confidential marriage license for \$90. The Contra Costa Clerk-Recorder Division holds Destination Weddings quarterly at unique and picturesque locations throughout the county. Past



computercorner

by William Claney, Tech Writer, Computers USA

TECH IN ENGLISH

Final notice to get free Windows 10

By: Will Claney

You know that Windows 7 has expired, right? So, this is the last call and final notice to get the Windows 10 upgrade software for free, but there is a catch. To avoid paying for Windows 10 software you must have a valid Windows 7 ID and you will need a professional to install it for you. The do-it-yourself (DIY) update period has expired and Microsoft no longer supports DIY free software updates. If you are a geek and know how to navigate your way around Microsoft then you can still get the free upgrade software. Larger companies that have Windows 7 installed on 25 computers or more have an option. Usually the issue for larger companies stems from applications they must use in their business so they may need to buy time. Some companies have apps that are not yet compliant with Microsoft's stricter security guidelines so, there is a pay-to-play option, but it is expensive, to buy time for the apps to improve. Be aware that there are issues installing Windows 10 on your old Windows 7 computer. Issues like interference from your antivirus software, or outdated hardware, among others can hinder a clean update. These and other

application issues are why some business are slow to update. One of the complaints I hear every day is users are not happy with Windows 10. My advice, get over it, adopt better software and let the old ways go, just "get 'er done". Buy the way, if you have older versions of Windows 8, you still qualify for the Windows 10 free upgrade, but you should get started now. Windows 10 is a better version of 8.x. Office Is Next. Last call coming up for Microsoft Office 2010 as well. If you don't have the latest version of Office or Office 365 now is the

time for planning your next move. Older versions of Office, like 2010 and older, are at their end of life in October 2020 and need replacement very soon. Microsoft is pushing the SaaS (software as a service) model very hard for the simple reason it never gets old. They keep it fresh, each time a new version or patch is available the upgrade is done on their servers and the user has instant access to it, no downloading, no fuss, no muss. (What is muss anyway?) It never gets old, until Microsoft replaces it, of course. By the way, Office version 2013 is good until October 2017. Installing the newest Office 365 can break some applications. We've seen it happen. Apps that once worked well with older versions of Office now no longer launch. There are several technical reasons for this. Primary amongst them is the issue of security and application software not keeping up with security changes. Get help. Computer professionals are talented people so hire some talent to sort through your issues and the best of luck with your upgrades. Now go do the right thing.

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events have been held at the John Muir House in Martinez, Mount Diablo Summit, and Rosie the Riveter/WWII Home Front National Historic Park in Richmond.

For breaking news and other talk, go to Claycord.com. Items may have been updated from its original post.



Keep your estate plan up to date

By Joshua Gotto

Trusts are no longer just for the wealthy. They can offer significant long-term savings for almost all California homeowners who someday wish to leave their assets to their loved ones. There is a peace of mind that comes with knowing that your legacy is secure and have probably saved the heirs thousands of dollars in time and money by avoiding the probate process. But this isn't a set-it and forget-it process, nor is it a process that anyone should contend with alone. Estate planning is a process that is best accomplished with the aid of an experienced estate planning attorney. Attorneys play a vital role in the estate planning process because of their first-hand knowledge of the myriad of ins and outs of proper estate planning, from who and when to sign the documents, to what clauses and contingencies can best accomplish your wishes. During both the initial planning process, and when amending documents later, an attorney will likely ask many questions about contingencies that most homeowners don't consider until it's too late. These questions come from knowing what could go wrong if you have passed away without considering all the potential outcomes or all the important legal issues. It's important to enlist the help of a competent professional. The question isn't, "Can I afford an attorney?" The question is, "Can I afford not to have an attorney?"

Recently a client approached me to handle the probate of their deceased fiancé's estate. Adding to the tragedy, the fiancé hadn't updated their transfer on death beneficiary form, and when they passed away, over half a million dollars in assets were scheduled to go to their ex-spouse.

Another client approached me with a will their parents made over 30 years ago. Not only did their property require probate (If you have a home in California, you almost certainly should have a trust

to avoid this), but also the will named as executor someone that is currently suffering from dementia, adding to the number of hoops the family would have to go through to settle the estate. Several times recently, clients have approached me with previously prepared trusts that were not completely executed, such as wills with missing signatures. Others had failed to fund the trust. Often, though an attorney has prepared the trust documents, the client is charged with moving assets into the trust, and even though the trust was prepared years ago, nothing had been moved into the trust. While in most cases these problems are resolvable, and your wishes will still be carried out, these simple traps can cost your loved ones significant time and money to resolve. Did you get married? Divorced? Do you have a new child or grandchild? Do you remember who you've named as the executor of your will or trustee of your trust? Did you get a new home, other property, or change your business? All of these are reasons to revisit your estate plan.

Contact an attorney to review your options. If you don't know one, the Contra Costa County Bar Association Lawyer Referral and Information Service will put you in touch with a qualified legal professional near you. You can reach The Contra Costa County Bar Association Lawyer Referral and Information Service at (925) 825-5700.

Attorney Joshua Gotto practices in Martinez, San Ramon and Berkeley. He specializes in estate planning, probate, and estate and probate litigation. He is a member of the Contra Costa County Bar Association and its Lawyer Referral and Information Service

The Great Concord aRt Heist

by David King

This is not the kind of publications that reports on crime stories, but this is the Great aRt Heist of Concord. Art theft always gets more press.

If you've been to any of Concord July 4th parades, you've seen the aRt Cottage's mobile canvass that aRt Cottage owner Frogard Butler (she goes by Fro) lovingly refers to as the Masterpiece on Wheels. The car was reported stolen on January 16 between 9 and 11am. as it was parked outside the aRt Cottage at 2238 Mt. Diablo Blvd. A few days later, the Pittsburg police found the car but had to tow it to the local tow yard. The thieves had stolen its battery and smashed its windows.

"I was debating whether I would have it smogged in March for its registration or just turning it in to get the \$1000 offered in the

California Vehicle Retirement Program, then use that to buy another used car," Fro explained. However, the program requires that the car be in running condition and must be driven into a state approved vehicle dismantler. In this case, the same place where the car was towed.

The car was a 1988 Toyota, 32 years old with 187,000 miles on it. Fro now hopes to get enough money from insurance to buy another used car for the kids to paint. With a \$500 deductible, she's concerned that won't happen. This is the second time the car has been stolen. The first time was two years ago. At the time, the car had a bad radiator leak. It would steam up and look like it was on fire after only a few miles of

driving. "I told the police, look for the car in a 7-mile radius," Fro said. "They found it at the Civic Center."

On the insurance claim form, State Farm asked what the car was worth. Fro stated "Priceless." To her and the kids, it was. "This is the kids' canvas. They paint it and enter it in Concord's July 4th Parade each year. One year we called it the 'Van Go Mobile'. The kids had painted sunflowers all over it. I was teaching the kids about Van Gogh and how to paint big and bold and leave their mark. Van Gogh was a wild painter. So, the kids got to be freely wild on the car. They just loved it."

The theme this year was going to be pets. "We were thinking about leashing up dogs and walking them with us in the parade. The kids had it all drawn out for its design. They were going to paint their pets on the car with 4th of July scarves

and flags. "The kids were saying, 'Miss Fro, Miss Fro, can we knock on the neighbors' doors and paint their car?'" Perhaps someone out there has a car they can part with. If there is, know that it is not a tax-deductible donation. aRt Cottage is not a non-profit. "We don't care what the car looks like, but it needs to run, and it needs to



be smogged," Fro said. She would love to be offered a car, but only one. "I do not want fleet week in front of the aRt Cottage," she joked.

"I hope State Farm will be 'like a good neighbor' and be there for me." Now that Van Go is Van Gone, let's hope the Great Concord aRt Heist will have a happy ending anyway. "Regardless," Fro said, "It's fun living in Concord."

Get Cozy Mobile Bar coming to a party near you

On the cover is Megan Daoudi standing next to her Get Cozy Bar, a vintage Piaggio Ape mini truck that has been converted into a mobile Prosecco and craft beer bar.

Megan and her husband Tarek, of Concord, began Bubbles and Brews SF Bay in April of 2019 as a franchisee with exclusive rights to serve the Bay Area territory. There are only 15 franchisees across the country. The corporate office is based in Virginia. It keeps active as one can imagine.

"We do all kinds of events. Weddings, fashion shows, private parties, corporate events, showers, birthdays, festivals, you name

it. Our bar has seven taps that can pour anything from beer to sparkling wines, batched cocktails, non-alcoholic mocktails and more. It's a fun thing we've gotten ourselves into," Tarek told Diablo Gazette. I don't know that we've seen anything more fun in a vehicle. If you wish to reserve this for your next event, contact Bubbles and Brews SF Bay, 415-425-6030. www.getcozybars.com. Cheers.



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ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

Time for a Beercation

Do you have your Beer Passport?



Concord's Comfort Food Week (Jan. 17-26, 2020) was outstanding. So, what's on tap in Concord for February, you ask? A Beercation. Craft beer lovers have reason to rejoice as Visit Concord and four of Concord's top alehouses have joined forces to bring back the Beer Passport. The event runs Thursday, February 19 through Sunday, May 31 at the Concord Tap House, Epidemic Ales, EJ Phair Brewing Company and The Hop Grenade. Simply pick up your Passport at any of these locations, or at the Visit Concord office in Salvio Pacheco Square, and start making your rounds. Once you have a stamp from each of the four alehouses (no purchase necessary) Visit Concord will reward you with a voucher for a free beer flight at any one of these participating locations. It's as easy as that. If you stop by the Visit Concord center, we will also give you a special commemorative, red Solo-style drinking cup and stickers (while supplies last). Plus, we'll have a monthly drawing for some fun prizes. Just submit a photo of yourself (and your friends!) enjoying your

beer adventure and you will automatically be entered in our [VisitConcordCA.com/Beer Sweepstakes](http://VisitConcordCA.com/BeerSweepstakes).

During Beer Passport season, you'll also want to spend a day at Concord's annual Brewfest on Saturday, March 28, at Todos Santos Plaza. Now in its 11th year, the Brewing Network's Spring Brews Festival is known to be one of the best craft beer festivals in all the Bay Area.

Enjoy a day outside in the park with a stellar lineup of California's best craft beers, live music and great food.

We will also be celebrating the Grand Opening of Concord's new, state-of-the-art Visitor Center, on that same day at the Plaza, so be sure to stop in while you enjoy the festivities. Discounted advance tickets for the Spring Brews Festival are now available at www.thebrewingnetwork.com/spring-brews-festival-2020/.

On another note, I'm giving a big shout-out to everyone who participated in Comfort Food -- from the restaurants, Diablo Gazette and local media, to the thousands of diners who went out and enjoyed all of the incredible offerings -- thank you all. It was our biggest and best Restaurant Week yet, and we are already busy making grand plans for next year. We look forward to seeing you at our Grand Opening. Visit Concord and the Visitor Center are located at 2151 Salvio Street, Suite T, in Concord. Go to visitconcordca.com for more information on all events. "Bottoms Up".



The Brewing Network's 11th Annual Spring Brews

The Brewing Network's Spring Brews Festival returns to Todos Santos Plaza in Concord on Saturday, March 28, from noon to 4 p.m. to celebrate its 11th year as one of the best craft beer festivals in the Bay Area. The event attracts attendees from all over the Bay Area as it is conveniently located just two blocks away from the Concord BART station. New to this year's event, Bike Concord will provide a bike valet to protect the bikes of those who choose to ride to the event. It is recommended to purchase tickets in advance. For a limited time, early bird pre-sale tickets are available at \$40 and then will jump to \$50 until sold out. Tickets include unlimited pours and a commemorative glass. Designated Drivers are \$10. However, this is a 21 and over only event so all attendees must

be of legal drinking age. Everyone must purchase a ticket to enter. It's a craft beer infused afternoon of unlimited tasting from over 60 craft breweries, live music and great food. The brewery list continues to grow every day. A list of confirmed participating breweries is available online at www.brewingnetwork.com/spring-brews-festival-2020. Rain or shine the beer will flow and surely satisfy locals wanting to enjoy world class beer for a great cause. Proceeds from the event will benefit the TSBA Arts Foundation. (Todos Santos Business Association Arts Foundation) which helps fund the summer music program in Todos Santos Park, as well as youth music programs around Concord.



SATURDAY, MARCH 28TH @ 12-4PM
TODOS SANTOS PLAZA • CONCORD, CALIFORNIA

Proudly benefiting the Todos Santos Business Arts Foundation to support local music programs

Tickets are now on sale and are \$40 pre-sale or \$50 at the gate and includes commemorative glass.

DESIGNATED DRIVERS ARE JUST \$5 **21+ Event live music!**

PARTICIPATING BREWERIES

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------|------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| 21st Amendment | Cigar City | Federation | Hop Dogma | Moonlight | RIP | Sonoma Springs |
| Alameda Island | Cooperage | Fieldwork | Iron Springs | New Glory | Russian River | South Lake Brewing |
| Alvarado Street | Crooked Lane | Founders | Laughing Monk | North Coast | Secret Trail | Speakeasy |
| Bartlett Hall | Del Cielo | Ghost Town | Liquid Gravity | Ocean View Brew Works | Seismic | Steele & Hops |
| Boochcraft Hard Kombucha | Drake's | Gilman | Long Beach Beer Lab | Perching Bird | Shadow Puppet | Three Weav3rs |
| Canyon Club | Epidemic Ales | Heretic | Mare Island | Pizza Port | Sierra Nevada | White Labs Brewing Co. |
| Canyon Lakes | Faction | High Water | Modern Times | The Rare Barrel | Societe | + MORE! |

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT: thebrewingnetwork.com

DIABLO GAZETTE FUN ZONE

HELP NAME THE NEW PARK



What should the East Bay Regional Park District name Concord's new regional park?

This ought to be fun. A new regional park is coming to approximately 2,500 acres of the former Concord Naval Weapons Station. After many years of planning, the U.S. Navy began conveyance of the parks portion of the property to the East Bay Regional Park District in July 2019.

While it is currently being referred to as "Concord Hills Regional Park," the Park District Board of Directors will be selecting the name of the new regional park later this Spring.

You can help. They are asking members of the Concord community by making your suggestions online at https://www.opentownhall.com/portals/283/Issue_8277/survey_responses/new. Once at this website look for the "your response" tab, then click on the "take the survey" button.

Select your favorite from the options provided that have been generated within put from the Concord community from previous events over the last few years. from previous events over the last few years with input from the Concord community.

- Concord Hills
- Concord Naval Weapons
- Delta Hills
- Delta View
- Diablo Creek
- Diablo Valley
- Diablo Vista
- Los Medranos (geographic name of the hills at the site.)
- Meridian Hills (another geographic name for the hills)
- Monte Del Diablo (name of the 1834 Mexican land grant and ranch of Don Salvio Pacheco; land which includes today's city of Concord)
- Todos Santos (original 1869 township name of the City of Concord)

Or, you can enter your own suggestion. We're thinking KaBoom Valley or maybe Bunkers Hills. For more information about the new park, visit he https://www.ebparks.org/parks/concord_hills/

Views of the Valley



My Little Sweetheart Dinner Dance at the Pleasant Hill Senior Center



DRUMMM Rythmic Events at Pleasant Hill Library hosted by Jeni Swerdlow photo courtesy of @jupiterphotoqueen.



Concord High School senior Christina Mazzi was honored as the 2020 Contra Costa County Student Humanitarian of the Year. Christina was the only student selected for all of Contra Costa County. A humanitarian is a person that seeks to support human welfare. We are grateful for your service Christina. Thank you!

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calendar of events

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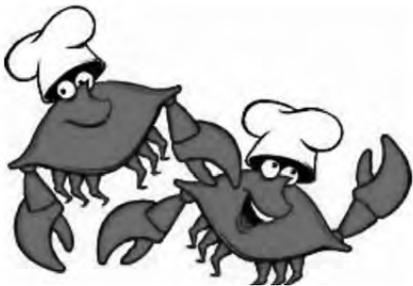
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FUNDRAISERS

PANCAKE BREAKFAST Supporting Veterans of Foreign Wars – 2nd and 4th Sundays includes eggs, pancakes, sausage, beverage. 8 – 11 a.m. Willow Pass Road, Concord \$5 buys a terrific breakfast. <http://www.vfwpost1525.org>

FEBRUARY 14
2ND ANNUAL VALENTINE DINNER/DANCE AND AUCTION. 5:30 pm. Dinner, Entertainment, complimentary wine bottle for each table, live & silent auction, drawing for big screen TV, music and dancing. Clarion Hotel. Funds support Rotocare, a free medical clinic for the uninsured. 1050 Burnett Ave. Concord. Tickets \$75 per person. Purchase tickets online at concordlovefest.com.



FEBRUARY 23
VFW POST 1525 CRAB FEED Doors open 5 PM. all you can eat crab, pasta, salad. Net dinner proceeds benefit the Post's Relief Fund, Raffle benefit Concord Veterans Memorial bldg. \$50. Walnut Creek Elks Lodge, 1475 Creekside Dr. RSVP by Feb. 14. Call 925-389-0057.

FEBRUARY 29
BLUE DEVILS PERFORMING ARTS CRAB FEED FUNDRAISER 5:00 PM to 11:00 PM. Centre Concord event, silent auction, raffle, music, dancing, and fun benefitting both Blue Devils B and C Corps. All-You-Can-Eat Dinner (Salad; Garlic Bread; Pasta; Marinated Crab; Wine with dinner; Dessert). Tickets will be \$65 each or \$600 per table. this ticket will sell out.



MARCH 7
DAN ASHLEY'S ROCK THE CASA RICK SPRINGFIELD CHARITY CONCERT to benefit Children in Need: Court Appointed Special Advocate,

Friends of Camp Concord, and Big Brothers Big Sisters. 8 p.m. Tickets: \$50-\$250. Leshner Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek.

OUTDOORS

SAVE MOUNT DIABLO FREE GUIDED HIKES
FEB. 22 OAK WOODLAND HIKE 9a.m.-11a.m. Elevation gain 500 ft. 14350 Marsh Creek Road.

FEB. 29 WILDLIKE CONNECTIVITY HIKE 9a.m.-12 p.m. Brushy Peak 4.3 mi. loop 800ft. elevation gain. More info at <https://www.savemountdiablo.org/event/wildlife-connectivity-hike/>

March 14 CONNECT WITH NATURE HIKE 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Wright Canyon, 4390 Morgan Territory Road 2.5 mi and 800 ft elevation gain.

Ruth Bancroft Garden
February 15 Curator's Garden Tour-Flowering Aloes 0:00 am - 11:00 am \$25 - \$30. Join Brian Kemble, world-renown aloe expert, for a garden walk and learn all about the Garden's unparalleled collection of aloes, including hybrids not found anywhere else in the world. Include seed-grown aloe gift from the Curators' special greenhouse collection.

MARCH 4, 11, 18 WEDNESDAY YOGA SERIES 9a.m.-10a.m. with certified yoga instructor, Kate Douglas. All levels welcome. 3 sessions. Price \$55/\$65

March 7
IKEBANA WORKSHOP: THE JAPANESE ART OF FLOWER ARRANGING-10:00 am - 12:00 pm. Suiei Sensei will demonstrate some basic ikebana techniques with branches and flowers that reflect the Ruth Bancroft Garden plant pallet. Class fee includes a ceramic container, pin frog and plant materials. Workshop \$70 members/\$75 non-members.

MARCH 28
11TH ANNUAL SPRING BREWS FESTIVAL 12N-4 p.m. 60 Breweries, Live Music, food. Todos Santos Plaza, Concord. Pre-Sale Tickets \$40, Designated Driver \$10. Must be 21 and over. <https://www.thebrewing-network.com/spring-brews-festival-2020/>

CLUB/SUPPORT GROUPS' NEWS AND EVENTS

FEBRUARY 20
NEUROPATHY SUPPORT 1:30 p.m. Concord Neuropathy Support Group will meet at First Christian Church, 3039 Willow Pass Rd. in Concord. Causes, Symptoms, and treatment will be discussed. 925-685-0953

FEBRUARY 20-APRIL 2, CERT PROGRAM - APRIL 17 - 19: DISASTER PREPAREDNESS CERTIFICATION. Free. Learn how to protect yourself, your family and your neighbors in a disaster situation when you're on your own with no emergency services to help. The 20-hour course is one night per week for 7 weeks or one weekend at the Concord Police Department on Galindo Street. ConcordCERT.org 925-603-5933

FEBRUARY 22
MAYOR'S MEET UP Join Concord

Mayor Tim McCallian for a family-friendly meet-up at 10 a.m. at the Centre Concord. This event takes place during our annual preschool open house, so you can check out our preschool program while you're there!

FEBRUARY 25
KEEP YOUR VISION 20/20 in 2020. Free workshop. 2PM-4PM. Light refreshments. Pleasant Hill Senior Center. 233 Gregory Lane Pre-registration is required. Space is limited to 50 participants! Register by contacting Danielle Habr at (925) 671-5221 or dhabr@pleasanthillca.org.

FEBRUARY 29
2020 CONTRA COSTA COUNTY TEACHER/CERTIFICATED STAFF RECRUITMENT FAIR 9:00 to 11:30 a.m., Discover a number of countywide teaching positions in a variety of fields, including all levels of K-12 education, specialty, and substitute teaching positions. Representatives of some local school districts will be offering employment interviews on site. Alhambra High School's gymnasium, located at 150 E St., in Martinez. Contact Morgan Broshar at 925-942-3489.

ARTS/ THEATRE/MUSIC

FEBRUARY 4-MARCH 13
VALLEY ART GALLERY "Joel Summerhill's Wild Jazz 5" Meet the artist reception on Saturday, February 15, 4 - 6 PM. Joel Summerhill, noted East Bay watercolorist. Valley Art Gallery 1661 Botelho Drive, Suite 110, Walnut Creek.

FEBRUARY 13-MARCH 1
WHITE GUY ON THE BUS; B* THEATRE COMPANY. Performances Thurs., Fri, Sat., at 8 p.m. and Sun. at 2 p.m. Tickets \$15-\$35 available online at eventbrite.com or at the door B8 Theatre Company has a new home!! 3503 Clayton Road. Concord

FEBRUARY 14
BEST OF THE OSCAR SHORTS - Mountain Shadow Film Society presents "Best of the Oscar Shorts" in the categories of live-action narrative, documentary and animated short films. Fri., Feb. 14 at 7:30; Sat., Feb. 15 at 4:30 and 7:30; and, Sat., Feb. 22 at 4:30 and 7:30. Walnut Creek Library, 1644 N. Broadway St. General admission tickets \$12. More information at <http://mountainshadow.org>

FEBRUARY 17
BEATLES VS. STONES - A MUSICAL SHOWDOWN with tribute bands Abbey Road and Satisfaction - The International Rolling Stones Show. Tickets are \$45/\$55/\$65



and may be purchased at the Center Ticket Office, by phone at 925.943.7469 or online at www.lesherartscenter.org. Walnut Creek Leshner Center for the Arts at 1601 Civic Drive

THROUGH FEBRUARY 23
THE DEVIL'S MUSIC: THE LIFE AND BLUES OF BESSIE SMITH. The Devil's Music: The Life and Blues of Bessie Smith. Presented by Center REPERTORY. A Play with Music By Angelo Parra. Memphis, 1937. Transport yourself for one electrifying evening with Bessie Smith, as she recounts the incredible journey of her life and career, her loves and losses, and the songs that made her the show-stopping "Empress of the Blues." This musical celebration is packed Bessie's legendary hits, "I Ain't Got Nobody," "St. Louis Blues" and "T'ain't Nobody's Bizness If I Do." Leshner Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Dr. Walnut Creek. Ticket info at Online at www.leshercenter.org.

MARCH 19 - APRIL 4
CLAYTON THEATRE COMPANY- "THE MUSICAL COMEDY MURDERS OF 1940" by John Bishop. March 19th-April 4th. \$20-\$25 Endeavor Hall 6008 Center St., Clayton www.ClaytonTheatreCompany.com or www.brownpapertickets.com 925-222-9106

FEBRUARY 15
HOUSE OF FLOYD AND LASER SHOW. Pink Floyd Concert experience. 8 p.m. Leshner Center 60 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek. \$45

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29TH OF FEBRUARY

DOORS OPEN/COCKTAILS 5:30 PM
DINNER 7:00 PM

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TICKETS \$70 VIP TABLE \$1000

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Jill Hedgecock's bookends

Author of *Between Shadow's Eyes* www.jillhedgecock.com

Distant Rumors: 16 Stories of Life and Death

Distant Rumors 16 Stories of Life and Death (Alt Publish, 2019, 282 pages, \$11.99) by William Gensburger, is a collection of short stories hitting a variety of genres from mystery, to science fiction, to dystopian. The collection of short stories takes the reader from the not-so-ordinary

life of a cleanup crew member repairing damage caused by Superheroes, to a man at war with winged insects, to a guy stuck in an all-consuming job in a futuristic Japanese corporation. A few chapters include humorous or insightful quotes that explore Zen history or on-theme to a particular attribute of the story. The glue that fuses the tales together is the exploration of the topics of death and life. The collection kicks off with a short introduction by the author followed by an ironically named story "Just a Little Death."

Can there be such a thing as a "little death"? The tale centers on an alumnus named David returning to the boarding school of his youth to serve as housemaster. One of David's first official duties is to tell one of his new charges that the boy's parents died in an airplane crash. As the narrator struggles to comfort the boy, David is forced to confront an event that upended his own young life.

"The First and Final Thing" plunges the narrator into a hunter/gatherer lifestyle. The reader is drawn into the natural world, to a place where peaceful living can be found in the simplicity of survival. It is a story about escaping the rat race and wealth and finding oneself. It's also about meeting the right person at the right time.

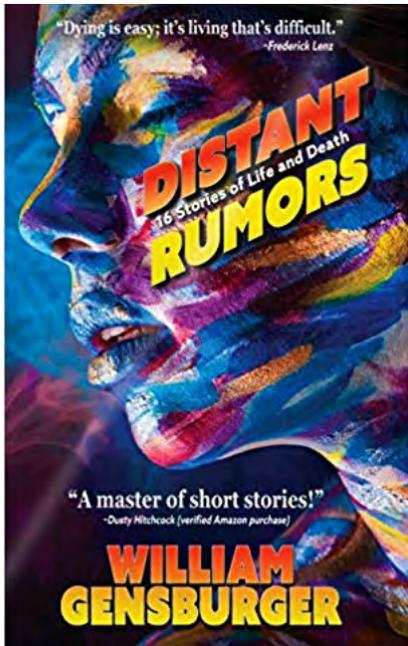
"After the Leaves" explores what it means

to be connected to other human beings after all is lost. "Ceremonial" captures the essence of "The Hunger Games" with a twist. "One Moment in the Sun" is a brilliant slice of life that sprinkles in a large dose of nostalgia, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and a metaphorical breeze.

"The Hollow Sky" examines a futuristic Japanese business called Tashami Electronics. Here, the employee's lives are determined by the floor level they occupy. Their adult existence unfolds entirely in a corporate building, where meals are taken in a cafeteria, and nights are spent on sleeping mats inside their work cubicles. When our narrator, Robert, who works on Level 5, becomes smitten with another employee, his productivity drops. Our narrator is called up to Level 199 where the unexpected happens and a choice must be made.

"Fire on a Different Mountain" wraps up the collection tackling the most egregious of all types of grief—a couple facing the imminent death of their baby. It is a nail-biting tale of love and survival that doesn't disappoint.

William Gensburger is magazine publisher (www.BooksNPieces.com) as well as a proficient graphic designer, photographer, and audiobook narrator. He has been a writer for most of his life. Having traveled around the world at a young age, he revels in his observations of life, people and the possibilities for the future. Fans of the short story collection *The Largesse of the Sea Maiden* by Denis Johnson and *All the Beloved Ghosts* by Alison MacLeod or who enjoy Ray Bradbury's writing style will likely enjoy this book.



movie review

by: Sandie Angulo Chen,
Common Sense Media

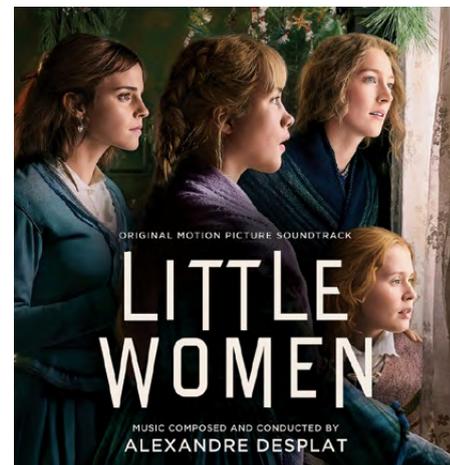
Little Women PG



"Little Women" follows the story of the four March sisters as Jo March (Saoirse Ronan) reflects upon her life. In flashbacks, aspiring author Jo and her sisters; responsible and lovely Meg (Emma Watson), quiet and musical Beth (Eliza Scanlen), and impulsive and artistic Amy (Florence Pugh), welcome their new neighbor, Laurie (Timothée Chalamet), into their creative inner circle as they help their Marmee (Laura Dern) hold down the homestead while their father (Bob Odenkirk) serves in the Civil War. As the years pass, Jo yearns for professional and personal freedom, even though her sisters don't share her ambitions, and best friend Laurie wishes they had a future together.

This beautifully acted, thoughtfully directed adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's beloved novel about sisterhood is exactly the heartfelt and uplifting modern classic moviegoers need. Twenty-five years after director Gillian Armstrong wowed audiences with her star-studded take on the March sisters, Director Greta Gerwig offers up her vision for a new generation, with a gifted ensemble cast, lush and evocative period touches, and a framing story that focuses even more on Jo's creative ambitions. Gerwig even manages to handle the age-old Laurie problem (Chalamet's Laurie is even dreamier than Christian Bale's in the 1994 film) with more nuance than previous filmmakers. She's also the first director to make Amy (the excellent Pugh) come even close to being sympathetic.

Ronan is once again revelatory as she explores Jo's passionate, opinionated, and strong-willed nature. Dern is fabulous as the patient, loving, and wise Marmee, and Meryl Streep seems to be having the time of her life as the rich, deliciously judgmental Aunt March. Although it takes a moment to adjust to the fact that Pugh plays both the impulsive preadolescent and



clear-headed debutante-aged versions of Amy, the actress is so good that it doesn't matter. Scanlen's Beth steals scenes with her quiet but powerful generosity, and Watson's Meg is beautiful and kind. The supporting men are equally impressive: Laurie's rich but sensitive grandfather (Chris Cooper), tutor/suitor John Brooke (James Norton), and Transcendentalist Civil War Veteran Father March (Bob Odenkirk) are all depicted with great care. Gerwig's lovely remake is as poignant as its predecessors, and it's also full of hope for a better tomorrow -- one the March family believed in, fought for, advocated, and modeled with their values and deeds.

Cast: Saoirse Ronan, Emma Watson, Florence Pugh, Laura Dern, Timothée Chalamet
Director: Greta Gerwig

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CTC Presents "The Musical Comedy Murders of 1940"

We should all applaud Clayton Theatre Company's (CTC) Ashley Dionne who just won the coveted Shellie award for Supporting Actress in a Musical, "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling

Bee", at the 41st Annual Shellie Awards Ceremony held last month.

Up next, CTC concludes its 8th season with "The Musical Comedy Murders of 1940" by John Bishop.

Here is a quick synopsis of the plot. The creative team responsible for a recent Broadway flop (in which three chorus girls were murdered by the mysterious "Stage Door Slasher") assemble for a backer's audition of their new show at the Westchester estate of a wealthy "angel."

The house is replete with sliding panels, secret passageways and a German maid who is apparently four different people—all which figure diabolically in the comic mayhem that follows when the infamous "Slasher" makes his reappearance and strikes again.

The show will feature some of CTC's

veteran actors along with some new faces. Throw in blizzard conditions, secret

passageways, and some musical snippets to create an Agatha-Christie-meets-Clue formula of whodunit parody. Directed by La Tonya Watts and the Assistant Director is Roxanne Pardi.



CTC's Ashley Dionne holds her Shellie Award for Best Supporting Actress in the Musical, "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee".

Running time:

2 hours with one intermission. March 19th-April 4th. \$20-\$25. Endeavor Hall 6008 Center St., Clayton. tickets may be purchased at www.ClaytonTheatreCompany.com or www.brownpapertickets.com or call 925-222-9106.

Clayton Theatre Company

The **MUSICAL COMEDY MURDERS** of 1940 by John Bishop

MARCH 19 THRU APRIL 4

ADULTS: \$25 / SENIORS: \$22 (62+)
YOUTH/STUDENTS: \$20 – (March 19 only, STUDENTS: \$10)
Tickets: www.ClaytonTheatreCompany.com or 925-222-9106
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Add longevity to cut flowers

Who hasn't purchased a bouquet of cut flowers only to be disappointed when they wilt, brown, and die in just a couple of days? No more. Once you get those lovely blooms home, follow these simple steps to keep them fresher longer. The first step to extending the freshness of cut flowers is to buy them as fresh as possible, and the best way to do that is to purchase them straight from the farmers themselves. The farmers' market is a great place to purchase the freshest flowers. Look for flowers that have no "droop" to them. Drooping flowers have been left out of water too long. When possible, purchase bouquets with buds that are just beginning to open or those with tight centers. You'll be able to watch them open as the days' progress. After purchase, make sure you get them into water as soon as possible. When exposed to air for even a short time, the cut ends of the stems will dry and seal off, preventing water absorption. Cut off at least 1/2 inch of the stem and cut at an angle, allowing for more absorption area. Hold stems under water while you cut them. Condition the Flowers before placing them in an arrangement. You will significantly increase their vase life. The process fully hydrates the flowers and allows time for the vase solution to saturate the plant tissue. To condition the flowers, place the freshly cut stems loosely in a deep

bucket of warm water, then put the bucket in a cool location for several hours before you attempt to place them in an arrangement. Before you arrange the flowers, remove any leaves, thorns, or excessive foliage from the portion of the stems that will be below the water line in the vase. If left in place, this submerged plant material can decay and shorten the life of the cut flowers. Fill the vase with fresh water, trim the stems under water and at an angle, and place in your arrangement. Changing the water daily is the best way to keep your flowers fresh. Also, avoid these common mistakes that decrease your flowers longevity. Softened water contains sodium, so you should avoid using it for cut flowers. Do NOT use aspirin, vinegar, or diet sodas in the vase solution. They will not contribute to the longevity of your floral arrangements and may, in fact, decrease it. Visit Sunrise Nursery at the Concord Farmers' Market for some of the most beautiful fresh flowers coming from Watsonville's fertile fields, 35 acres of the prettiest blooms around. Bright and cheerful bouquets are the perfect gift for someone special in your life. From alstoremeria to daisies, lilies and narcissus, to tulips and roses, you'll find a wide variety at the farmers' market, all raised here in California. These make perfect bouquets for Valentine's Day gifting – or give them just to brighten someone's day. Everyone needs flowers in their life!



Iris Sunrise



David George The Naked GARDENER

Use bugs to protect your garden

I saw my first native white flowering plum tree this morning in Walnut Creek. In another couple of weeks, flowering pears, pink flowering plums, and white cherries will bloom. This is my favorite season of the year. Nature has restored warmth, sunshine, and beauty to Northern California.



Soldier beetles looking for aphics on rose leaves

The bugs, both good and bad, are waking up from their winter sleep. By the time March rolls around, an all-out war for garden supremacy will be taking place between the beneficial predatory bugs and the destructive bugs. You can easily spot some of these destructive pests. Snails, slugs, aphids, locusts, and ants all emerge with warmer but still moisture-rich days and nights. They love to chew or suck on tender new spring growth. Can we fight back in environmentally-friendly ways? Yes, we can. But do most of us? No, we don't. Store receipts indicate that over 50% of insecticides in California are purchased by homeowners, not by commercial growers. Broad-spectrum insecticides are deadly to beneficial bugs and allow bad bugs to bounce back in greater numbers after spraying. Plus, many of these insecticides are toxic to your pets, children and fish when they spill into our water drains. Instead of spraying your garden with expensive chemical neurotoxin insecticides, let our natural predatory bugs and vertebrates go to work for us. Ladybird beetles and their larvae eat as many as 5,000 aphids each during their lifetimes. Lacewing larvae also consume aphids, the nemesis of backyard rose

growers. If you see a small creature that looks like an alligator on your plants, leave it alone. Most likely it is helping you control destructive pests. Other very beneficial predatory insects include praying mantids who eat anything they can catch, soldier bugs who also eat aphids, mealybug destroyers, minute pirate bugs, and wasps. All get more and more active as the days warm up. Predatory vertebrates include birds who eat tons of spiders, caterpillars, and ticks, and skunks and raccoons who prefer tasty meals of slugs, grubs, and garden snails (just don't surprise them at 3 AM). I have relied upon my insect and vertebrate friends for years now. I have learned to be patient with nature's predators and to tolerate a small amount of leaf damage. After all, the predators need their food sources, too. If you don't provide them a few aphids and snails, they'll leave and make your neighbor's garden their home instead.

Ask the Naked Gardener: It's that time of year again when leafy green weeds and grasses are popping up in all the wrong places. I've received several inquiries from readers the past several weeks asking if I can reprint the recipe for my all-natural, vinegar-based weed killer spray. Our tests last year showed that a 10% vinegar in water solution plus 4 ounces of Dawn dish soap worked best at killing both the weed tops and roots.



Ladybird beetle eating aphid

Grocery store, food-quality vinegar is only 5% and not strong enough. Your best bet is to purchase 20% vinegar containers online, then cut its strength in half to 10% by adding an equal amount of water, plus the dish soap. Help keep the planet safe from chemical herbicides and go naked!

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



Lacewing larvae attacking aphid

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Kickstarting those New Year habits

by Lisa Vonnegut, CSCS

Got the Winter blues? Gloomy weather, long nights with short days, and regrets about holiday excesses both financial and diet-wise can weigh down your New Year's lease on life. The struggle is real, post-holiday blues are a thing. Follow these simple tips to improve your mood, increase your productivity and enhance your ability to stick with your New Year's goals.

#1 When the weather breaks, so should you. It's hard to hold onto that initial blast of New Year's motivation when it's cold and rainy, dark in the morning and the gyms are packed. Research proves that sunlight, particularly early morning sunlight, boosts vitamin D production, stimulates your immune system and facilitates hormonal changes associated with more serotonin during the day and melatonin at night. This is a powerful antidote to seasonal depression and can lead to a better mood, better sleep, and more energy. So, take a break and get outside.

#2 When you're feeling blue, eat color. Bright colors mean a variety of nutrients. Nutrient-dense foods are filling and satisfying. Root vegetables, hearty soups and stews with multi-colored peppers and steamed or sautéed greens are warming and satiating during colder weather. Consider getting a produce box and integrating seasonal vegetables into your daily eating patterns to keep your diet fresh and appealing.

#3 Set a goal to build a habit. Motivation and willpower are urban legends. They sound like something easy, as-in "you should just get some". But the reality is that both are finite and fickle. Being distracted, tired, bored, busy, hungry, sad, anxious,

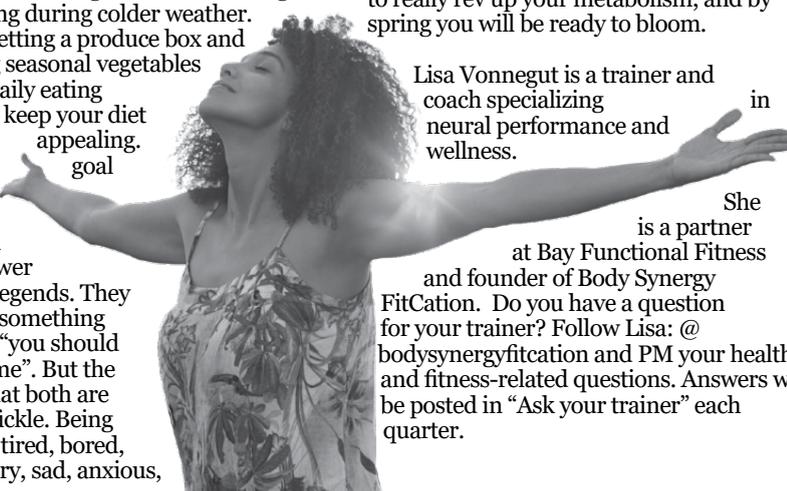
etc. will quickly wear them down. Habit change is the goal that sets you up for success. Pick a habit that is so small that you'd have to work to fail at it - a habit that you can maintain even on the busiest days. For example, begin a meditation practice with 3 to 5-minute sessions. Once that is firmly into your routine, you can gradually build on it. Small changes can create sustainable health.

#4 Novelty is your friend. Take a new type of exercise class at your local gym. Find creative recipes for winter vegetables. Try a different hike on Mt. Diablo or Briones Park. Your nervous system thrives when new experiences stimulate adaptation. This learning builds resilience. It might initially seem counterintuitive to the development of habits but remember that while creating the initial good habit builds space for positive changes, novelty keeps those changes fresh and effective.

#5 LOOK UP. Literally, look up. Get off your screens, open your eyes and be present with your environment. Looking upwards as you walk will facilitate the extensors in your spine to help you stand straighter, breathe better, improve your digestion and increase your energy. Your lizard brain might take the cue that life isn't so scary and alleviate some of the back pain, headache, gut issues, etc. that you're feeling. Add some movement and high-quality food to really rev up your metabolism, and by spring you will be ready to bloom.

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

She is a partner at Bay Functional Fitness and founder of Body Synergy FitCation. Do you have a question for your trainer? Follow Lisa: @bodysynergyfitcation and PM your health and fitness-related questions. Answers will be posted in "Ask your trainer" each quarter.



20 Trails for 2020

Every year more than 10,000 people participate in the East Bay Regional Parks Trails Challenge, a free self-guided hiking and bicycling program to explore our regional parks and to keep fit outdoors.

This is the 27th year for the challenge. There is a guidebook to help plan, chart and share your journeys available at park visitor centers or downloaded from their website <https://www.ebprparks.org/activities/trailschallenge/>.

The Guidebook includes 20 detailed trail descriptions from easy to challenging including those open to hikers, bicyclists, dogs, and equestrians, and many are wheelchair accessible. Here are the 20 great trails to choose from in the 2020 Trails Challenge. How many will you do?

Easy

Bishop Ranch Open Space: Stream View Trail/Red Tail Hawk Trail/Grey Fox Trail
 Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline: George Miller Regional Trail
 Contra Loma Regional Park: Antioch Community Park/East Shore/West Shore/Ridge/Lake View Trails
 Leona Canyon Open Space Regional Preserve: Leona Trail/Pyrite Trail
 Point Pinole Regional Shoreline: Point Pinole/Cooks Point/Marsh/Owl Alley/China Cove/Pinole Point/Bay View Trails
 Robert W. Crown Memorial State Beach: Crab Cove Visitor Center to USS Hornet: SF Bay Trail
 Sobrante Ridge Regional Preserve: Sobrante Ridge/Manzanita/Manzanita Loop/Sobrante Ridge

Moderate

Anthony Chabot Regional

Park: MacDonald/Grass Valley/Ranch/Goldenrod/Horseshoe
 Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve: Nortonville/Coal Canyon/Black Diamond/Manhattan/Chaparral Loop



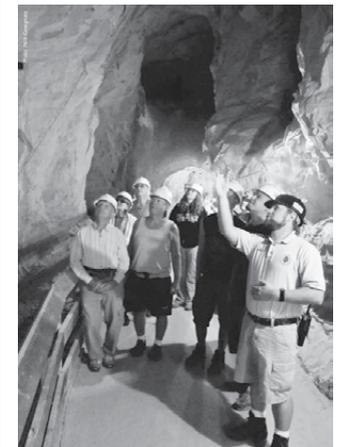
Mt. Diablo Trails View photo courtesy Scott Feuer

Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline: Hulet Hornbeck/Franklin Ridge Loop Trails
 Claremont Canyon Regional Preserve: Stonewall Panoramic Trail
 Diablo Foothills Regional Park: Stage Road/Shell Ridge Loop/Briones-to-Mt- Diablo/Buckeye Ravine/Briones-to-

Mt- Diablo/Borges Ranch/Shell Ridge Loop/Castle Rock Trails
 Dublin Hills Regional Park: Calaveras Ridge Regional/Donlon Loop/Calaveras Ridge Trails
 Tilden Nature Area: Laurel Canyon Trail/Wildcat Peak/Sylvan/Jewel Lake Trails

Challenging

Briones Regional Park: Ivan Dickson Loop (Bear Creek Staging Area to Old Briones Road/Seaborg/ Briones Crest/Spengler/Old Briones Road/Briones Crest/Deer Creek/Pereira/ Ivan Dickson Point/Pereira/Deer Creek Trails)
 Del Valle Regional Park: Arroyo Rd. Staging Area to East Shore/Heron Bay/East Shore/Heron Bay/East Shore Trails
 Morgan Territory Regional Preserve: Condor/Coyote/Stone Corral/Valley View/Manzanita/Miwok/Blue Oak/Hummingbird/Volvon/Prairie Falcon/Volvon/Condor Trails
 Pleasanton Ridge Regional Park: Woodland Trail/Oak Tree Trail/Sycamore Grove Trail/Meadow Pond Trail/ Oak Tree Trail/Ridgeline Trail/Thermalito Trail/Ridgeline Trail/Woodland Trail
 Reinhardt Redwood Regional Park: Stream Trail/East Ridge Trail/Canyon Trail
 Sunol Wilderness Regional Preserve: Indian Joe Nature/Unnamed Connector/Hayfield Road/High Valley/Welch Creek Road/Upper Maguire Peaks/Maguire Peaks/Maguire Peaks Loop/ Maguire Peaks/Welch Creek Road/High Valley Road/Hayfield Road Trails



Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve/ Antioch. Photo courtesy EBRG.org

To complete the challenge, hike five of the 20 trails – or 26.2 miles of trails within East Bay Regional Park District.

You can also submit your log, online or by mail, by December 1, 2020 and receive a commemorative pin, while supplies last. All 20 featured trails are now available on the AllTrails app. To download the free app, sign-up and log in, then go to <https://www.alltrails.com/lists/ebprp-trails-challenge-2020> and click on "Copy to my lists", followed by "Continue in App". The app indicates where you are on the trail, enabling easy return to the trail if you stray from it. You can also record your hikes, and share your photos, comments etc. with others.

Save Mount Diablo signs option to protect 154 acres on North Peak

Save Mount Diablo and the Concord Mt. Diablo Trail Ride Association (CMDTRA) recently signed an Option Agreement, 15 years in the making, to work to permanently protect roughly 154 acres of one of the most strategic and important properties remaining on Mount Diablo's main peaks. The property, east of Clayton, stretches across the north face of North Peak from the pastoral Three Spring area almost to the spectacular Falls Trail, including beautiful Cardinet Oaks and upper Young Canyon. In particular, the organizations signed an Option Agreement with Save Mount Diablo paying a \$50,000 Option Payment which will give the local land conservation organization two years to raise over \$1,040,000 so that it can then purchase a perpetual Conservation Easement on almost 154 critical open space acres owned by the Concord Mt. Diablo Trail Association on the northeast slopes of Mount Diablo. The Concord Mt. Diablo Trail Ride Association will keep about 47 acres, where the Association's buildings are located. "This property has been a high priority

for us since 1971," Ted Clement, Executive Director of Save Mount Diablo, stated. "Mount Diablo has been a very special and sacred mountain for peoples of this area for eons so we are hopeful that our communities will help us raise the necessary funds to protect this land." "We are so thankful that Save Mount Diablo has created this unique opportunity to not only protect the land,

State Park and contiguous with Save Mount Diablo's conserved Young Canyon property and its North Peak Ranch acquisition project, which the organization is buying over ten years. The land is part of a substantial wildlife habitat corridor in the Mount Diablo area. Much of the property is steep and rugged and its biodiversity is very high because it includes the complicated

geology of Mount Diablo's main peaks which support dozens of rare plant species like the Mt. Diablo globe lily and rare wildlife such as the Alameda whipsnake. Sometimes, mountain lions are seen on the equestrian trails that cross the property. The money that Save Mount Diablo will raise for this proposed acquisition project will be part of the organization's Forever Wild Capital Campaign. This Campaign has an ambitious \$15 million goal to help Save Mount Diablo expedite its land acquisition efforts, while also giving the organization the resources to steward and defend its conserved lands in perpetuity. To date, \$12,963,485 has been raised against the \$15 million goal.



Map showing Save Mount Diablo's Concord Mt. Diablo Trail Ride Association, North Peak Ranch, and Young Canyon conservation acquisition projects

but also creating funding to preserve the equestrian culture in the Bay Area," said Concord Mt. Diablo Trail Ride Association President Elaine Baker. The proposed 154 acres are surrounded on three sides by Mount Diablo



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

Valentine's treats crisis averted

What parent hasn't been through this scenario. One of our daughters told us the night before that she needed to bring Valentine's treats to share with her class, the next day! Don't you love it when that happens? First reaction was to panic before I scrambled into quick thinking mode. What's in the pantry? We always have a big box of Rice Krispies Treats to pack for their school lunches. Over in the baking supplies, there's the usual staples, dark chocolate chips and sprinkles. Fortunately, because it was Valentine's week, I had just purchased a bag of candy hearts. Jackpot! As if I'm a contestant on a baking challenge reality show, my creative juices start flowing. Here are the directions to making easy Valentine's Treats that looks awesome and tastes even better! Melt the chocolate chips in the microwave or on the stove. I usually prefer the microwave**. There's really no need for



fancy melting chocolates, baking chips work great. Next, prepare a drizzling bag. Pour the melted chocolate into a Ziplock baggie lined cup. Pinch and twist the top closed and cut the bottom tip so a nice small drizzle of chocolate can come out. Using the individual size Rice Krispies Treats, cut each in half and drizzle with the chocolate. Drizzle lots of lines, it doesn't have to look neat. Shake some sprinkles or stick a candy heart to the melted chocolate. On some, put a lollipop stick into the cut Rice Krispies Treat and dip halfway into the chocolate, decorate, and refrigerate all your prepared treats until the chocolate is firm. Wrap in cellophane or clear bag and tie with pretty ribbon. This recipe was a winner and it made a pretty gift too! They came out beautiful and the kids all enjoyed them. My Valentine's Treat crisis was averted. **A note about melting chocolate; we do not buy the specialized melting chips.

They cost more and a bag of regular chocolate chips work just great. When melting the chips, put your chocolate chips in a microwave safe dish and heat at 75% power for short intervals like 30-45 seconds. Stirring frequently and repeat till smooth.

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




aRt Cottage
by FROgard www.aRtCottage.info

Anything Goes show

aRt Cottage is entering its ninth year in Concord. The current show is called "Anything Goes" and runs through February 22nd. This is the aRt Cottage's 93rd exhibit. The cottage was purchased in Dec. 2011 and had the first exhibit in Feb. 2012. This show has a huge diversity and is showing off what artists are creating with unusual mediums. Pat Calabro has work created with paint skins, Pat Viera is showing collage made with hand painted paper. Joyce Shappee has Eco prints for sale. What are Eco prints? This artist boils plant material between watercolor paper for hours and gets stunning results. Jill Waggoner makes art with just about anything she finds. Yes, aRt Cottage has always been kind of unique and funky. Check it out Tues.-Fri. 11 to 5 and Sat. 1 to 5. 2238 Mt. Diablo St. For more on the show go to www.artcottage.info.




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Out to Lunch

Luna Ristorante celebrates 20th year

by Richard Eber

This month commemorates a historic moment in Concord culinary history. Luna Ristorante on 2118 Willow Pass Rd. celebrates its 20th anniversary. That's quite a milestone for an eatery to maintain the energy, consistency, and quality required to thrive for that long. Luna opened its doors in 2000 under the guidance of Abdel Redovane. Several years later he turned over the helm to his nephew Chef Habib El Jacifi, who operates the restaurant to this day. As an immigrant from Morocco, he has incorporated a Mediterranean flair to a menu that features

shank finished in a rich gorgonzola sauce. But also popular is their veal scaloppini, (also a chicken breast version) which comes with either a lemon caper piccata, or a Marsala wine sauce.

For smaller appetites, Luna provides some superb sandwich options: a pesto chicken with cheese and caramelized onions, meatball marinara, and a lamb with roasted red bell peppers. Daily specials include wonderful soups that can also serve as an entrée.

I find it difficult to choose among Luna's desserts options. I decided to go for a limoncello cake encased in a delicate mascarpone cream. It's divine and too good

to share. I've written about their tiramisu before, it's really hard to pass up. Other desserts of note include a Chocolate Molten cake, cream puffs with a warm chocolate sauce, and a Crème Brulee cheesecake. All are dinner winners.

Along with a first-class wine list that features a more than a respectable House Cabernet from Carmenet Vineyards, Luna Ristorante provides a luxury dining experience that has few rivals

in the Concord area.

"What we do is really not work because I enjoy the whole process of putting out a quality product for my guests to enjoy," Habib beams. The diminutive 36-year-old Executive Chef-Owner has been able to



Caprese Salad

primarily Italian faire.

The highly motivated Habib earned his chops at other fine dining establishments while still working for his Uncle. He served an apprenticeship at Herbert Keller's Fleur De Lys in San Francisco, Danville's Blackhawk Grill, and The Left Bank in Pleasant Hill. "I learned to invest the time and effort needed to make Luna a special place to visit," Habib says.

Once seated at the casual yet upscale restaurant, we were greeted with a basket of warm Italian Bigio bread fresh from Metropolis Bakery. With this we ordered a tapenade consisting of olive oil, pesto, gorgonzola cheese, Kalmata olives, walnuts, garlic, and balsamic vinegar.

Despite my concern with the quality of winter tomatoes, I ordered the Caprese salad, a pleasing classic Italian standard that includes mozzarella cheese, basil, kalamata olives, and a vinaigrette. Delicious. Luna blanches and peels their tomatoes to extract the needed flavor to make the delicate mixture work. I witnessed this while touring the kitchen.

Other notable salads include a roasted beet with goat cheese, candied walnuts and a tangy honey mustard dressing, and Luna's classic Caesar Salad, which I order with extra anchovies on the side.

All the ingredients of Luna's pasta dishes are made in house. Of the many choices, my favorite was their Lasagna with its distinct taste of saffron and cumin for a Moroccan influence. The flavorful meat sauce layered between thin noodles provided a pleasant contrast with the ricotta and mozzarella cheeses. What makes this dish a cut above is a creamy béchamel sauce topped by arugula that luxuriously surrounds Habib's creation. Our table also tried the ravioli topped with a porcini mushroom sauce that rivals the best in the area. Gluten free diners will enjoy the Marchigiana Granchio which features prawns, crab meat, broccoli, mushrooms, and sundried tomatoes served with gluten free pasta. All of Luna's pasta selections including the Linguine Carbonara and Fettuccini Pomodoro demonstrate the chef's diverse cooking style.

In addition to pasta dishes, Lunas has a small but excellent selection of savory entrees. My favorite would be the lamb



Marchigiana Granchio

survive for twenty years in a market that few others last longer than the duration of a five-year lease.

Luna Ristorante is open 7 days a week. Lunch is served 11am to 2pm Monday's thru Friday. Dinner Monday-Thursday: 5-9 p.m. Friday-Saturday: 5-10. Sunday 4:30 to 9.30. Reservations recommended especially on weekends at 925- 691-4080.

To celebrate their 20th anniversary, come down for the Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting on February 13 from 2:30-5:00 pm and enjoy some complimentary refreshments.



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Ruby Dooby Do to the Rescue

Belle

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

Belle is an affectionate approximately 4-year-old, 56 lb., female Siberian Husky. She is:

- Good with dogs, not good with cats,
- Only good with older/considerate kids,
- Well behaved in the car,
- Leash- and crate-trained,
- Protective, obedient, playful, eager-to-please, intelligent

Belle's short coat requires regular brushing. She is up to date on shots, microchipped, and spayed. Her adoption fee is \$400. To meet Belle, fill out an application under the forms tab on rescue@norsled.org, NorCal Sled



Dog Rescue is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization funded by donations. The goal of NorCal Sled Dog is to rescue, rehabilitate, foster and find homes for unwanted, abandoned and abused Northern breed dogs: Siberian Huskies, Alaskan Malamutes, Samoyeds, and mixes of these breeds. You can help by direct donations or by attending their 2020 Cheese, Wine, Chocolate and Champagne Fundraiser on March 29, 2020 from 1 to 5pm in Moraga at \$35 each or \$60 per couple (purchase tickets at www.norsled.org).

and their inappropriate behavior (e.g., yapping or urination) can make business owners resentful toward legitimate service animals. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), therapy dogs (which includes emotional support dogs) are not service dogs and actually do not qualify as exceptions to the "no dogs' rule. In California, a service dog must be able to perform a specific task that makes a daily task easier for his owner. In exchange, the dog is given an official service dog tag—not a colorful vest, although some service dog owners do use a vest for easy identification of their dog's role. Most people know that passing their dogs off as a service dog is wrong, but few probably know that it's a federal crime. So as tempting as it is to bring your dog with

you into banned areas, do the right thing and follow the rules. Pawsitive News: Yellow Ribbon on a Leash Means Beware. Have you ever seen a yellow ribbon tied on a dog's leash and wondered what it means? The short answer is that the dog needs more space and the owner is signaling other humans (and their dogs) to keep their distance. There could be any number of reasons for this request. The dog may be in season, the dog may have a medical condition and needs to remain calm, it could even have a contagious disease, the pooch might be old and grouchy, it may be leash reactive, or it is insecure and aggressive to other dogs.

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Pawsitive News: Yellow Ribbon on a Leash Means Beware. Have you ever seen a yellow ribbon tied on a dog's leash and wondered what it means? The short answer is that the dog needs more space and the owner is signaling other humans (and their dogs) to keep their distance. There could be any number of reasons for this request. The dog may be in season, the dog may have a medical condition and needs to remain calm, it could even have a contagious disease, the pooch might be old and grouchy, it may be leash reactive, or it is insecure and aggressive to other dogs.



There is also the chance that the pup is newly adopted and needs time to get used to its new surroundings. So the next time you see a yellow ribbon tied on a leash or a yellow bandana around a dog's neck, respect the request and give dog and owner the requested extra space. Great News! Power, the Siberian Husky featured in October 2019 column and Prince, the black Standard poodle from Ruby_Dooby_Do's November 2019 column have both found their forever homes. Gail de Rita, adoption coordinator for NorCal Sled Rescue said of Power's adoption. "This is the greatest adoption ever. They love each other and I can come and visit my Power any time."

*Editors Note: Ruby Dooby Do is Concord's Instagram celebrity with over 108,000 followers on [Instagram.com/rubydooby_Do](https://www.instagram.com/rubydooby_Do). This column is written by Jill Hedgecock. Her novel, *Between Shadow's Eyes* features Ruby on the cover www.jillhedgecock.com.*



Power with Maurine Ridings (Power's new owner).

ARF adoption stars: Skyla & Eve

Skyla: Eleven-month-old Skyla is a happy, curious pup that thoroughly enjoys brisk morning walks, followed by an all-day hangout session. This lovely gal can be a little shy at first but warms up quickly. Once she gets to know you, she cannot wait to get some late-night cuddles. Skyla enjoys keeping active and collecting smells on her long walks. With her smarts, she has lots of potential to be a great training partner!

The adoption fee for puppies (<6 months) is \$300, for adult dogs is \$250, and for senior dogs (7+ years) is \$125. This includes a discount on the first six-week session of a manners class.



Creek, during adoption hours: Noon to 6 pm Wednesday and Thursday, Noon to 7 pm Friday, and Noon to 6 pm Saturday and Sunday.

Eve: Six-month-old Eve is a beautiful fluffy kitten with the prettiest orange and black markings. She's a little hesitant with new people, but with a little time and patience, we feel she'll blossom into a super love bug and a typical playful kitten. She's looking for a home that will provide her with plenty of toys, a comfortable couch to curl up on and some sunny windows where she can stretch out for a nap. Eve is positive for FeLV (Feline Leukemia Virus), and should only live with dogs, other FeLV+ cats, or other non-feline animals. FeLV is only contagious to cats; it is not contagious to humans, dogs, or other non-cat animals.



You can be part of the heroic volunteer team that saves the lives of rescued dogs and cats by connecting people and animals. ARF volunteers are making a difference. For more information go to www.arflife.org, or call (925) 256-1ARF.

The adoption fee for kittens (<6 months) is \$125, \$200 for 2 kittens, for adult cats is \$75, \$100 for 2 adult cats, and for senior cats (7+ years) is \$50.

Visit Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation, 2890 Mitchell Drive, Walnut

New podcast series "Homeless in Concord" is Wworth a listen

In their new podcast series, "Listen Up Concord", the local grassroots coalition known as Concord Communities Alliance (CCA) is taking a hard look at homelessness starting from the perspective of Concord residents who are experiencing homelessness. The first episode is based around a 16-minute interview with one homeless resident, "Linda" who found herself living in a tent after a series of heart-wrenching tragedies. In this interview, one can't help but root for "Linda" as her story reveals how she perseveres, works, and struggles to regain her life off the streets. She maintains a positive spirit and sincere gratitude for those people and services that have helped her along the way.

"Homeless in Concord (Part 1)" is available to stream now at Listen Up Concord's SoundCloud page: [soundcloud.com/listenupconcord](https://www.soundcloud.com/listenupconcord). It is produced by Dave Hughes and narrated by Ivette Maruri.

For additional information on CCA, email concord.communities.alliance@gmail.com or visit ConcordCommunitiesAlliance.org.

com/listenupconcord. It is produced by Dave Hughes and narrated by Ivette Maruri. For additional information on CCA, email concord.communities.alliance@gmail.com or visit ConcordCommunitiesAlliance.org.

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Diplomacy, ruining friendships for years

The board game of Diplomacy dates back to 1959 and is a seven-player game set in Europe as it was in 1901 before World War I. It is a simple game with two types of pieces (army and fleet) and a simple goal to control 18 of 34 Supply Centers on the map placed into 74 places from Norway to the coast of Smyrna. It is a game without cards or dice but has a simple simultaneous move adjudication system where

players write down the orders for their pieces and off you go. The key part of the game is the negotiations, held mostly in secret with the other players, where you are NOT bound by anything you say or promise. Betrayal, backstabbing, outright invasions, and attacks as well as less than subtle

passive aggressiveness or failure to help an "Ally" are punctuated throughout the play of the game. After all, there are seven players and only one can win, though several can have a draw or a stalemate. It is promoted as the game of International Intrigue and has had various slogans associated with it such as: "Diplomacy, ruining friendships for years."

I love this game and have been playing it since 1965. I travel all over the world to tournaments that are an excuse to get together and have some fun. It has taught me to recover from loss, be gracious in victory or as some say, to be viscous with grace. It helped me go from a repressed introverted teenager to a rather opposite motif.

Dealing in local politics, there are lot of things that you learn and constantly need to practice in the game if you are to reach world class levels of play. Some of which are:

1. Do not take it or make it personal (the

current trend of demonization of the others, is a no-no).

2. Listen and talk to everyone, especially your enemies. After all, when your friends and allies betray you, who is left in power?

3. Keep your goals in mind and see what other's goals can be met or made the focus of the others while directing them away from your goals.

4. People ally with you for their goals, not yours.

5. Trust will rust, constantly review the situation and do not rely on past goodwill to be either remembered or repeated.

In the course of the game there are a lot of excuses and expressions for some of the more dramatic moves. However, in the real world of local

City Politics I have heard every one of these in the last ten years.

"It was true at the time I said it."

"If I wanted his opinion, I would have told him what it was."

"You did not understand the tone of what I said."

"What? I can't change my mind?"

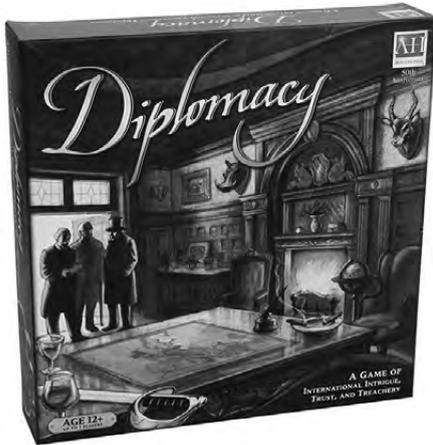
"I hope you understand that I was only promoting good policy."

"It made sense at the time, but I did not have time to tell you."

"It helped you more than me, which is why I could not support it."

"If I wanted it to succeed, I would not have asked him to introduce it."

If you want to learn more about the game, go to Google and type in search bar "Diplomacy Teach Birsan", or simply contact me at EdiBirsan@gmail.com, there are games every other month in the Bay Area as well as a Tournament coming up in April.



White Pony Express outstanding in relief for Camp Fire survivors

Nancy McPherson, AARP California State Director, presented Dr. Conner, the founder of White Pony Express (WPE), the 2019 Andrus Award for her extraordinary leadership in bringing aid to survivors of the Butte County Camp Fire, the worst fire in California's history. AARP received more than 100 nominations from across the state for this award, their most prestigious volunteer tribute.

When the 2018 Camp Fire destroyed the town of Paradise and 18,000 buildings in the Butte County area, it left thousands of people homeless and destitute. Dr. Conner quickly galvanized White Pony Express volunteers to make trips to the disaster area to bring food, clothing, and cash to the survivors. When the news coverage of the tragic situation ended, Dr. Conner's volunteers continued to help. Over the course of many months, 182 volunteers made 91 trips to the Butte County area, each taking about eight hours. They sought out survivors in remote places and gave those displaced community members 58,213 pounds of food and 1,833 articles of clothing. In addition, they gave away thousands of

dollars in cash to buy needed supplies and gas.

"Her example inspires all of us to want to make a difference," stated McPherson.

In addition to honoring the work of Dr. Conner, WPE volunteers who helped bring food and clothing to the fire survivors were also recognized. As part of the Award, AARP presented a \$1,000 check to White Pony Express.

White Pony Express operates a Food Rescue Program which picks up quality surplus food every day from supermarkets, restaurants, and farmers markets and then delivers that food—free of charge—to shelters and churches that feed the hungry.

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to changing the way America defines aging. AARP works to strengthen communities and promote the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare security, financial security and personal fulfillment. To learn more, visit www.aarp.org.

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Mushrooms: Fido's outdoor snack could turn fatal

by Jill Hedgecock



Amanita muscaria, Magic Mushroom-Photo alan Rockerfeller

The appropriately named Death Cap (*Amanita phalloides*) and Western Destroying Angel (*Amanita ocreata*) are two of the most toxic forms of mushrooms. Both of these malicious fungi occur in the San Francisco Bay Area and can pose a threat to your pet if it eats them. According to local mushroom expert, Alan Rockefeller, both species grow under oak trees, but the death cap emerges in the fall and winter, while the destroying angel appears in spring. The toxic component of these two mushrooms is called amatoxins.

If your dog is caught eating any white or whitish-green mushroom under an oak tree during these seasons, be prepared to make an emergency trip to your veterinarian. If possible, bring a sample of the mushroom with you to the clinic. The sooner the dog is treated the better. The vet can induce vomiting or administer activated charcoal to bind

destroying angel is mostly white and resembles edible mushrooms. Because identification of these nondescript mushrooms is complex, it's best to let the experts decide if your dog has eaten a toxic species.

Other mushrooms provide warning coloration that suggests that they are poisonous. *Amanita muscaria*, a red mushroom with white spots, contains muscimol and ibotenic acid toxins that can prove fatal to dogs. In the Bay Area, this mushroom is found under Monterey pine trees.

Although most often found under oak trees, western destroying angel can also grow in lawns. If mushrooms are known to sprout in your grass, applying a nitrogen-rich fertilizer (not slow release or water-soluble fertilizers) to your lawn can reduce their occurrence.

Other preventative actions that can minimize mushroom growth include measures to enhance drainage such as



Amanita ocreata, Destroying Angel Mushroom, photo Alan Rockerfeller

the poison before it reaches vital organs. Additional treatment may be necessary and could include IV fluids, blood work monitoring, and medicine to protect to the liver.

Don't be reassured if the dog seems fine. The adverse effects from the poison typically won't appear until 12 hours after consumption. Symptoms can include bloody diarrhea, vomiting, lethargy, and even coma. The dog may appear to get better a day later, then relapse 3 to 4 days after initially eating the mushrooms. The poison can cause lethal liver, and/or kidney failure.

Death Caps look relatively harmless. The medium-sized species is characterized by a whitish-green cap with a bulbous sac at the base. Similarly, the western

installation of gutters or French drains and lawn aeration. Dethatching will also reduce the accumulation of decayed material that promotes fungal growth. However, in some situations, extreme measures may be needed to protect pets and family.

"If you have deadly mushrooms in your yard," says Rockefeller, "the best way to get rid of them is by paving over the area or cutting down the host tree."

Because it is difficult to know if the mushrooms that appear in your backyard are dangerous, it is advisable to remove any that appear. The best technique is to grasp the mushrooms low on the stalk and extract both the body and roots. Wearing gloves is advisable because even though you cannot be poisoned

through skin contact, covering your hands prevents accidental ingestion if the toxin gets on your fingers. Uprooted fungi should be secured in plastic bags and discarded in the trash. Do not compost. Other types of mushroom can make your pet sick, even if they are not toxic enough to cause death. According to Alan Rockefeller, "Inocybe species have fibrous caps and are common in yards under oak, pine and fir. They cause much more immediate sickness than the death cap and destroying angel, often involving lots of drooling, but are much less often fatal." Don't worry if your dog snags a store-bought mushroom, these are nontoxic. Hallucinogenic mushrooms also usually aren't life-threatening to dogs and rarely

need treatment.

If you suspect that your dog has been poisoned, the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center can potentially provide life-saving information at 888-426-4435. Put this number into your cell phone contacts. It could mean the difference between life and death for your pet. To learn more about mushroom identification, to go on a mushroom hunt, or to attend a fungus fairs, workshops, or other forays, visit <https://www.mush.media/schedule>. Note: some events require registration. Other on-line resources include: <http://www.bayareamushrooms.org/> or <https://mushroomobserver.org/>.



Amanita phalloides, Death Cap Mushroom

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Time to move? Explore your options.

For many, the decision to move comes on as an awareness that something is no longer right or fitting about their current living situation. Other than a job transfer, another example is one of renters who face rent increases year after year and want more stability and control over their living expenses. On the opposite side of the spectrum is an elder, or boomer who no longer wants to have to navigate stairs or handle the upkeep of a home and/or yard. For families with children, pets and/or parents perhaps moving in or out, the move to more space, more yard or perhaps less yard, makes sense depending on the circumstances. Sometimes mobility or illness makes a move necessary, sometimes it's just time to move upward or out, as life changes. Whatever the reason, there are things to consider when navigating a move. One, does it make financial sense? Down payments as low as 3.5 to 5% are common as are \$ 0 down payments for veterans. If you own, is there enough equity to sell and purchase another property? The calculation can be an awakening of what you want vs what is doable, but in all cases, it's worth exploring. There are many buyers we've put into homes that thought they didn't have enough down payment or their credit needed to be improved or the payments would be too high. At the very least finding out the details helps you plan for the future if you aren't quite ready now. For the move up client, if it's just about housing expense, exploring whether a

refinance at an interest rate of around 3% to 4% to lessen the burden and allow you to stay in your current living situation might be the way to go. Or, a refinance could provide funds to add an in-law unit or an ADU (accessory dwelling unit) to your current property. When getting a loan, your credit score matters. A 650 might get you a 1% higher interest rate (example 4.25%) and payment on a new mortgage vs. a 720 score could get you 3.25% interest which lowers the payment (example only). Rather than guess, allow your lender to run a credit report. If there are minor things that can be fixed, do so, before you have to write an offer. It can raise your score into the lower interest rate range and save you thousands on a mortgage. It can jump your price range up to something in better condition for the same payment. It's well worth monitoring your credit for this purpose. Options are the name of the game. Talk with your trusted Realtor to find those buying and selling options and see if it takes you where you want to go, or stay.

Terrylynn Fisher, Broker, Dudum Real Estate, DRE#01882902, Senior Real Estate Specialist (SRES), awarded a 5 YR-5 Star Professional, and achieved Top 500 Brokers in the nation in 2019. She's got the experience... For a Buying or Selling Plan, call 925 876-0966, info@BuyStageSell.com. DRE#00615420

Deacons' Care Cottage

By: Justin Barker

A stone's throw away from the bustling 680 freeway in Walnut Creek, sits a quaint cottage with a red door. In 2019, this little cottage served 2200 neighbors in need; and provided 600 boxes of food to the hungry.

"Deacons' Care Cottage" is operated by Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church, and sits in the northeast end of the Church's property. The Cottage originally began as a small closet, but over the last 30 years has grown to become a significant community service project serving clients



in central Contra Costa County. The Deacons' Care Cottage provides an array of items, including clothes, shoes, food, kitchenware, toiletries and more to those in need in the surrounding community.

"The working poor, those having a hard time getting by" were described as the primary clients of Deacons' Care Cottage by Nan Musso, a Deacon at Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church, who helps lead the Cottage's operation.

Many clients go to the Cottage seeking business attire for job interviews and work. Clients also include those who may be in substance abuse rehab; homeless; or just need a helping hand. Many of the Cottage's clients have children, who can receive clothes, shoes, and toys at the Cottage as well.

A team of volunteers, who include non-church members, work to receive, sort, and stock the items to be given. Moreover, volunteers work with clients in-person to help them obtain whichever items they need. Musso shared that the primary responsibility of a volunteer assisting a client is to welcome them; listen to them; and help them.

Unique to Deacons' Care Cottage is that clients are provided the opportunity to

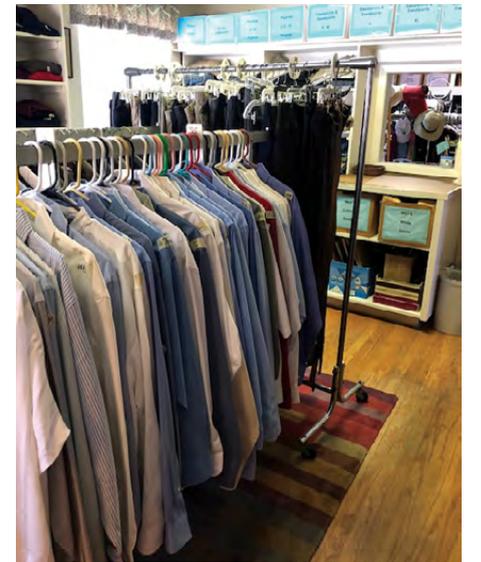
"shop" for themselves, as if the Cottage were a common store. The word shop is used lightly, as the Cottage does not sell any items, but rather, gives items to their clients in need. The most significant item the Deacons' Care Cottage provides to its clients, however, is something that can't be seen hanging on the racks or atop the shelves- dignity. That the Cottage provides clients the opportunity to better and reclaim ownership of their lives is the greatest benefit that results from the tangible care provided to clients.

"What I love most is working with such a wonderful group of caring volunteers, who are all working to make the cottage a warm and welcoming place for our clients," Musso told me. "It is also an amazing feeling to help someone who is, for example, hungry, and give them some food. Or is cold and finds the perfect warm coat that they love. There are a lot of people right here in Central Costa County in need and our society tends to treat them as invisible. Treating our clients as valued people by talking with them and helping them "shop" with dignity is important to us."

The Deacons' Care Cottage welcomes donations from community members and is always seeking help from volunteers. The Cottage's most needed donation items at this time include: men's clothing; men's shoes; children's shoes; backpacks; kitchenware (pots and pans); and towels. Monetary donations are used to buy food and things like new socks for homeless clients.

During the holiday season, the Cottage undertakes a toy drive, and provides dozens of families with Christmas presents and decorations each year; along with holiday food boxes.

To learn more about Deacons' Care Cottage, visit wcpres.org or call (925) 937-3978.



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CVCHS students are making dreams come true

CVCHS thrives today because we are unique and are allowed the freedom to be more innovative while being held accountable for advancing student achievement. It's such a great thrill when our students exceed our highest expectations. This month, we learned of three graduating seniors with amazing news to share:



Joey Soberon, Suzane Choi, Kevin Pineda-Vizcaino

Kevin Pineda-Vizcaino earned Congressman Jerry McNerney's nomination for the United States Naval Academy. Kevin was chosen from an incredibly competitive and talented applicant pool. He completed his final interview and is currently awaiting the Academy's decision in April. He was also accepted to Baylor University and is being considered for multiple scholarships. Kevin looks forward to studying Pre-Med. Graduating senior Suzane Choi was awarded a full four-year full ride scholarship to attend the University of Virginia through the QuestBridge program. She successfully competed against 15,000+ students and was one of 1,100 to earn a scholarship to one of their 40 college partners. Suzane looks forward to a career in the Nursing field and to life on the East Coast. Joey Soberon was awarded a scholarship to UC San Diego to play baseball. He is a 3-year starting pitcher on the CVCHS Varsity Baseball Team while also obtaining a 4.4 cumulative GPA. He was also the founder and president of CVCHS Recycling Club. For his senior season, Joey and a teammate are holding a fundraiser for the Make-A-Wish foundation where money is donated for every strikeout recorded by the CVCHS Ugly Eagle pitching staff. Joey looks forward to studying Environmental or Civil Law. As Executive Director, I strongly believe

that all students should have the right to achieve at the highest levels. This starts with a great education. All members of the CVCHS Board and staff share in this belief. In January, we celebrated School Choice Week and honored Martin Luther King, Jr. setting aside time to ponder his life and legacy. We remembered how hard he fought for civil rights, a struggle which

has always confronted us. Unfortunately, this challenge continues today. For CVCHS and the public education sector, at the heart of this argument is the fact that many students still do not have equal access to a high-quality education. It's the reason why the ardent spirit of Clayton Valley Charter School prospers in our community. Last December, CVCHS faculty members, parents, students and community leaders banded together to support a 5-year charter renewal for our great school. This year, CVCHS received over 800 student applications during our open enrollment period, which runs from November to January. It is amazing to witness the great lengths parents will travel for an innovative and high-quality education right here in Concord. This value is evident at CVCHS' annual Public Random Drawing, or lottery. Held in our multi-purpose room, families from around the East Bay region gathered to hear their child's name called during the grade level lottery sessions. It never gets old seeing the excitement of students jumping out of their seats and being applauded by the audience. It's the first time they realize that they are now part of the Ugly Eagles family. We applaud all our graduating seniors who work hard to advance their individual dreams and Kevin, Suzane and Joey are shining examples of what is possible with a great public education.

Travis Credit Union offering 20 \$2000 scholarships

Travis Credit Union announced it will award twenty \$2,000 scholarships to current high school seniors bound for college in the fall of 2020. Travis has awarded more than \$397,000 in



scholarships since 2004. The credit union encourages all graduating seniors with a GPA of at least 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale), bound for a two- or four-year college or university and a member of Travis Credit Union in good standing to apply. Students who live in Travis Credit Union's twelve-county service region and are not yet members may join the credit union and apply for a scholarship at the same time. Established in 2004, the scholarship program honors the late Mary Keith Duff,

who passed away in 2004. Duff was the first woman to serve on the Travis Credit Union Board of Directors. www.traviscu.org/scholarship. The 2020 scholarship application is now available online at traviscu.org/scholarship or at any Travis Credit Union branch location. Completed applications must be received at the credit union by the close of business of Monday, March 2, 2020. In addition to a completed application, applicants must submit a 250-word personal statement, a certified high school transcript and a letter of reference from a teacher. The scholarships will be awarded in mid-June by the credit union. "In the last 17 years, we have received a tremendous response from young members who have exhibited a commitment to academic excellence and community service. We look forward to recognizing even more of our deserving young members this year," adds Nelson. Headquartered in Vacaville, Travis Credit Union is a not-for-profit cooperative financial institution serving those who live or work in Alameda, Colusa, Contra Costa, Merced, Napa, Placer, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Solano, Sonoma, Stanislaus, and Yolo Counties. Good Luck students.

Corporal Ghaznawi named Police Officer of the Year

The Kiwanis Club of Concord named Corporal Murtazah Ghaznawi the 2019 Police Officer of the Year. Cpl. Ghaznawi oversees the California Office of Traffic Safety Grant for the City of Concord Police Department. He manages and coordinates several Impaired Driving operations as well as various other enforcement operations to help make our streets safer for the public. Cpl. Ghaznawi maintains very close relationships with the administration at various elementary schools in Concord. He personally provides morning and afternoon traffic enforcement at these schools when his busy schedule permits to ensure the safety of children, parents and staff. He is always the first to volunteer for school events that educate children on traffic safety. Cpl. Ghaznawi was born and raised in Concord. He maintains that law enforcement had such a positive impact on him growing up that his mission is to do the same for today's youth. Upon

graduation from Ygnacio Valley High School, he chose to pursue a career in law enforcement. He started off as a police intern at the Concord Police Department for two years before being sworn in as a full-time Police Officer. One of his favorite assignments was working as a School Resource Officer at Ygnacio Valley High School. While there, Cpl. Ghaznawi was able to connect with the students and staff; helping to make meaningful differences in the lives of the young people that he encountered daily.



President of Kiwanis Club of Concord, Concord Mayor McGallian, presents award to Corporal Murtazah Ghaznawi at the 13th Annual Police Officer of the Year Luncheon at the Old Spaghetti Factory.

This year, community leaders in Concord's Afghan community reached out to the Concord Police Department for assistance during Ramadan. Cpl. Ghaznawi acted as the liaison, facilitating extra patrols during their evening prayers and checking in periodically to make sure all their needs were met. He is a true protector of the people, an advocate for victims, and a friend to all. Congratulations to Corporal Murtazah Ghaznawi for receiving a well-deserved honor.



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College Park mat phenom Amit Elor best in the world?

By Ike Dawson, SportStars Magazine

Mt. Diablo Area has produced some extraordinary sports superstars. The next big athlete to come from this area in US Women's wrestling is a remarkable 15-year-old College Park sophomore with dazzling abilities and uncanny poise by the name of Amit Elor.

Elor is the reigning 150-pound CIF girls state wrestling champion with realistic expectations to win a U.S. Olympic gold in freestyle wrestling, a feat that's only been achieved once before (Helen Maroulis in 2016).

The half-Russian daughter of Eastern European immigrants, and youngest of six children, Elor hasn't lost a match to a U.S. wrestler in nearly four years.

She's known for her quickness, both on the mat and on the clock. Elor won a section title in just 15 seconds and pinned five straight opponents in last year's CIF



Amit Elor trains with a dummy at Forma Gym in Walnut Creek (Chace Bryson photos)

tournament in a combined time of 2 minutes, 19 seconds, averaging under 28 seconds per pin against the best 150-pound women wrestlers in the state.

"In the first match I saw her wrestle, she pinned a girl in 15 seconds," College Park coach Bob Wilhelm said. "All the rest of her matches were the same. So, after a while I told her that on her next match to instead try and get some work in, wrestle and let the girl go. It was just unnatural for her, and after watching her get into the second round of that match, I could tell I was messing her up. I told her we were never doing that again, and to go out there and do what you do."

What Elor does best is win. She has been wrestling since she was 4 years old. Here are some of the recent honors:

- Sept. 15, 2018 — Under-15 Pan American champion in Villahermosa, Mexico, 66 kilograms (about 145.5 pounds)
- Nov. 9, 2018 — UWW Cadet Saori Cup champion in Mie, Japan, 65 kg
- Feb. 16, 2019 — North Coast Section champion in Albany, 150 pounds
- Feb. 23, 2019 — CIF girls state champion at Rabobank Arena in Bakersfield, 150 pounds
- March 3, 2019 — CAUSA Junior and Cadet Folkstyle state champion in Fresno, 152 pounds
- April 28, 2019 — Marines Western Regional champion in folk style, freestyle and greco (three brackets), 158 pounds
- May 2, 2019 — U.S. Cadet national champion in Irving, Texas, 69 kg

- Aug. 4, 2019 — World Cadet Championships bronze medalist in Sofia, Bulgaria, 69 kg
- Aug. 11, 2019 — Cadet Beach world champion in Odessa, Ukraine, over 50 kg

Elor will be too young to compete in the 2020 Olympics (you must be 18 years old). However, her success should position her to challenge the world's best grapplers in 2024. Japan's Honoka Nakai is the only wrestler to have beaten Elor; a 3-1 semifinal match at Cadet Worlds in Bulgaria. Nakai, 17, is a three-time Cadet world champion and will have to move on to the junior division next year. Elor has two more shots at the Cadet world title.

The trek to Cadet Worlds included a surprise entry in the Cadet Beach world championships in Ukraine. It's where Elor became the first and only American to win a Beach world championship gold. It was her first time ever wrestling on sand.

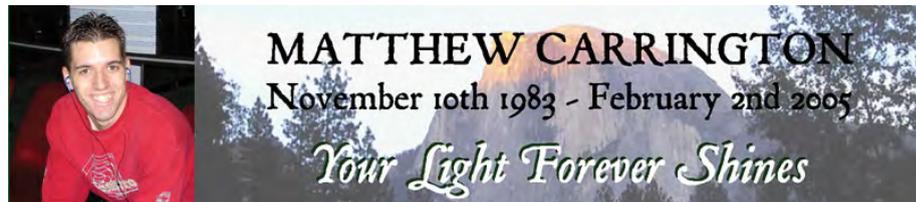
After 13 years of coaching, Wilhelm is certain Elor is the best wrestler he's ever seen, boy or girl. It's fitting that her premier entry in the Girls State Tournament last February was also the debut event for both girls and boys wrestling at the same championship venue, Rabobank Arena. Twenty years ago, you could only find a few girls on any wrestling roster, mostly featured in exhibition matches during team duals, or competing against boys in local tournaments. The CIF eventually organized NorCal and SoCal championship tournaments that were loaded with missing

spots in the brackets from 2006-2010. "I think wrestling could become just as popular as sports like soccer and gymnastics for young girls," Elor said. "I want other girls to be able to wrestle in supportive environments with great partners and coaches who support them." Those ambitions make her family very proud. "It's her attitude, her work ethic, it's the whole package," Amit's mother, Elana Elor said. "She is really special... like really special. Sometimes it feels almost too good to be true. She's so smart and is an excellent student."

Amit's career plans are carefully planned. She uses an independent high school program to study part of the year while traveling to elite tournaments or training with famed international coach Valentin Kalika who coached the only U.S. Olympic women's champion, Maroulis, at the 2016 Rio games.

She's also trained with the likes of 2016 Olympians Elena Pirozhkova and Frank Chamizo (Italy). The NCAA is still playing catch-up on women's wrestling. Elor plans to earn a college degree online while she trains for the 2024 Olympics to be held in Paris. Amit says she'll return to the education system after her wrestling career ends. "She definitely knows what the main prize is," Wilhelm said. "To be that young, thinking like she does is pretty amazing. She's also such a humble, nice person. If she makes the 2024 Olympics, I'll be there watching." Even there, bet on quick pins.

This article has been updated from its original version.



AHA! Movement anti-hazing is making progress

On February 2nd of 2005, Debbie Smith MM, Founder, and CEO of the AHA! Movement received that fateful call about her son, Matt. He had died of water intoxication in a college hazing ritual at Chico State. For Smith, a tower of fiery, bubbly inspiration, the month of February is gut-wrenching. Flashbacks, photos, the smell of the air, all act as whispery reminders of the senseless tragedy that claimed her son. An ebb in her otherwise free-flowing quest to end the practice responsible for her son's death.

This month marks the fifth anniversary of the AHA! Movement. Smith exudes positivity, light, fire, and a passion for the vulnerable child needing a voice. Her spirit flows with the conviction of a battle-tested general. From securing the first felony in hazing-related death to Matt's Law to sharing Matt's story for the first time, to the numerous news articles and documentaries, to forming the AHA! Movement, to securing the 5013C status, to developing AHA!'s ambassador program, to AHA!'s first college presentation, to the many citywide Hazing Awareness proclamations, to large-scale fundraising, to our middle school hazing prevention program, to the formation of ParentsUnited2StopHazing (PUSH), to the countless volunteers; each act and result is an ardent example of the resilience, drive, and commitment alive within the AHA! Movement.

Yet, children are still losing their lives to the act of hazing. Whether it's rush week, band tryouts, or the start of a football, soccer, swimming, or lacrosse season—groups invariably turn to hazing to memorialize enrollment. Through community, commitment, and awareness, AHA! Movement strives to end the tragic cycle of senseless deaths and give birth to a new generation of group dynamics founded on backs of awareness, accountability, responsibility, and self-love.

In 2020, the AHA! Movement has a huge year planned. It is sponsoring four 2020

PHBA sports teams, partnering with the Junior Giants to bring hazing awareness and prevention to coaches across the organization, and expanding their middle school awareness program.

In the end, Aha! Movement is saving lives. Community support has been imperative for AHA!'s success. This June, AHA! will host its second annual Home Run Derby Contest in partnership with Payless Batting Cages at Willow Pass Park in Concord. In August, AHA! hosts their second annual Day at the Ballpark with the SF Giants. And in September, they look forward to their 4th annual gala fundraiser, Monte Carlo Night. For more information please visit ahamovement.org or send an email to DebbieSmithMM@aol.com. On behalf of many parents, we thank you, Debbie Smith, and your AHA! Movement.



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