

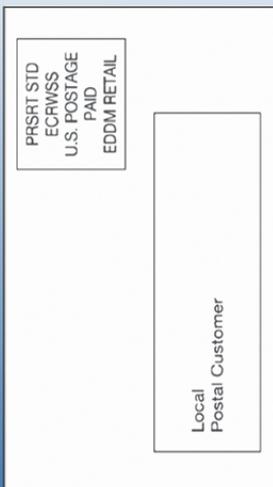


FIRES EVERYWHERE!

see page 5

Dan Dinneen Photography

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



- **CIA MK Ultra Victim: The Shaman Boy who Protected Me**
- **Legal Page: California Enacts Rent Control**
- **Thanksgiving Recipe: Apple Bundt Cake**
- **Journey-Man's Journal: Holiday Getaway to Highlands Ranch Resort**
- **Gun Buy Back at Concord Pavilion**
- **Half-Price Bookstore Returns**
- **Crossing the Border: Hard Work, Helping Others, Leads to Wealth and Happiness in Concord**
- **Movie Preview, Book Review, and Entertainment Calendar**

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computercorner
by William Claney, Tech Writer, Computers USA

Tech in English

Killer Power Failures

I am not here to say Pacific Gas and Electric California Utility (PG&E) is a mess, can't control their power lines in high winds and is unable to provide reliable service – oh, woops I just did. Power outages will be with us in the foreseeable future, but understand no matter where you live or which utility service you have, power will go out for everyone from time to time. When power fails it puts a stress on your electronic devices including computers, network routers, and monitors. Power failure stress can play havoc with storage devices like your hard, solid state drive, and backup devices. So what should you do?

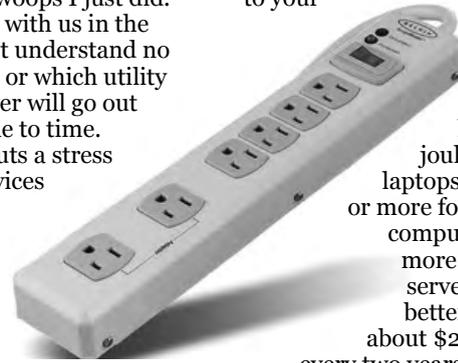
There are several things one can do to keep your computers safe from the ravishes of power failures. Buy and maintain a surge protector, buy and properly use an uninterruptible power supply known as a UPS (no relationship to United Parcel Service) then switch off computers and equipment as soon as possible after the failure until normal power resumes.

"Power strips" which are common in most hardware stores are not the same as surge suppressors which are common in most computer stores. They are different, although the look similar. Suppressors are different because they use Metal Oxide Varistors (MOV). MOVs are electronic components that diverts power spikes (zaps) occurring during lightning strikes, sparks from power lines during high winds, or from local

transformer blowouts. Ok, ok, the MOV is just a variable resistor, a method of monitoring too much voltage and eliminating it before it does damage to your delicate computer wiring. Joules rate the amount of zap the surge protector can handle. About 500 joules is minimum for laptops and 600 joules or more for standard sized computers, and 1000 or more is recommended for servers. More joules are better. Minimum cost about \$20.00. Change them every two years.

A UPS is an essential piece of equipment for safety and durability of your computer. Essentially it is a battery or a series of batteries. When the power switches off a good UPS will instantly switch on to supplement or replace the lost power. Plug your computer, monitor and router into the UPS. A good UPS rated 800VA (more is better) will run your personal computer for about ten minutes which should be enough time to quit, save work in progress and exit your application. They cost about \$100.00. Replace them every two years as well. By the way, many UPS devices have built in surge suppressors. Do NOT plug your lights, printers or scanners into the same UPS that your computer is connected to. Use a separate UPS device for that.

Lastly, when power fails, turn off your equipment. Flip the switches to off. All of them except the surge protector and the UPS. The major killer of computers is the brief power failure, power back on, then failure again. I mean a major killer. There is nothing like redundancy. Do like the government's Department of Redundancy Department and be redundant. No joke, follow these suggestions and for all that's dear, keep backups of your work in case all this fails.



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Top Photo: Belkin Surge Protector
Bottom photo: APC UPS (Uninterruptible Power Supply)

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

A Visit to Kitakami

In late October, I had the once-in-a-lifetime privilege of leading a 39-person delegation from the City of Concord to visit our Sister City, Kitakami, Japan. This special Sister City relationship was founded in October 1974 as a result of two cable television executives meeting at a conference and becoming friends. Court Kirkeeng of Concord and Dr. Zenji Katagata of Kitakami persuaded their city leaders to approve the relationship and enlisted the help of other citizens to make the partnership work. This vibrant relationship has been preserved in large part due to the efforts of the Concord Ambassadors, an all-volunteer organization which is dedicated to promoting mutual exchanges in the fields of education, culture, social affairs and economics. Open to all, the Concord Ambassadors welcome members who are interested in furthering the mutual understanding of the culture and history of Japan and the United States, creating the opportunity to develop lasting friendships, and supporting a continued international exchange between the Sister Cities of Kitakami and Concord. The Ambassadors also encourage the development of personal and business relationships between individuals and groups, including the opportunity for "home stay" visits for adults and students.



tour of Kitakami Stadium, a multi-use stadium used mostly for track and field events, Sakura Hall, Kitakami's cultural and performing arts center, and a memorial garden where dogwood trees, planted 20 years ago by past mayors of Concord and Kitakami, have now grown, and a Sister City Monument stands as a testament to the interconnectedness of our two cities. Our group visited Rikuzentakata, the site of the 2011 Great

Touhoku earthquake and tsunami, to learn more about this severe natural disaster and the recovery and rebuilding efforts underway. This tour made a significant impression on many of us as we thought about the fires raging back home. At the 45th Anniversary Celebration Dinner we exchanged gifts and stories honoring our 45-year long relationship, while



at the Farewell Party, those of us from Concord experienced aspects of Japanese culture, including a traditional tea ceremony, Japanese calligraphy, and the music of the koto. We honored the past and looked to the future. Everyone we met expressed support for strengthening the bonds of our two communities, beginning with our young people. To that end, I participated in a meeting with Kitakami Mayor Takahashi, Concord Vice Mayor McGallian, and Concord Councilmember Aliano to discuss the initiation of more month-long study abroad exchange opportunities between Concord and Kitakami high school students. As Mayor, a former Concord Ambassador board member, and a past Assistant Director of Research for the Japan External Trade Organization, I greatly enjoyed leading the Concord delegation, meeting our counterparts in Kitakami, Japan, and participating in a mutual exchange of friendship and ideas. Now, it is time to start thinking about hosting our Sister City Friendship Golden Anniversary here in Concord in 2024! For more information about how to get more involved with the Concord Ambassadors, visit www.concordambassadors.org or contact Mary Rae Lehman at mrae2@aol.com

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Be a Santa to a Senior

The local Home Instead Senior Care office, the Concord Commission on Aging and the Concord Senior Center are collaborating with residents, non-profit organizations and businesses in the community to provide cheer and gifts to senior citizens in the community who are least likely to receive a present this holiday season, and who are often lonely and financially in need.

Beginning on Friday, November 15, the "Be a Santa to a Senior" program will place special Christmas trees at various locations throughout Concord bearing gift tags which include the first name of a local senior and his or her gift wish.

"We served over 300 seniors last

year. Local Boy Scout troops delivered gifts and visited with seniors in the community," said Melvin Lee, Concord Commission on Aging Chairman. "We encourage the community to visit our local businesses and help support the program this year. This year we will serve over 450 seniors."

To participate, look for the "Be a Santa to a Senior" tree at a participating location, select a gift tag from the tree, and bring the unwrapped gift along with the gift tag by Sunday, December 8 to the Concord Senior Center, 2727 Parkside Circle or to the Home Instead Office at 3050 Citrus Circle, Suite 201, in Walnut Creek. Participating locations include:

Min's Kitchen, 3505 Clayton Road
City of Concord Civic Center, 1950 Parkside Drive, Wing A
Concord Police Station, 1350 Galindo St.

Curves for Women, 2962-C Treat Blvd.

Irvin Deutscher Family YMCA, 350 Civic Drive in Pleasant Hill

The Old Spaghetti Factory, 1955 Mt. Diablo St

Century 21, 4691 Clayton Rd Ste A
Residents can join the gift-wrapping party on Saturday, December 14, from 9 to 11 a.m. at the Senior Center. Sign up for the party by contacting concordsc@cityofconcord.org.

For more information, contact



Senior Center Program Manager, Avis Connolly at (925) 671-3419 or email avis.connolly@cityofconcord.org or Tess Locsin, Home Instead Customer Service Manager at (925) 280-9688, tlocsin@seniorsbayarea.com.



7 Reasons to Buy a Home Before the End of the Year

Are you considering putting your house hunting on hold until after the New Year? It may not seem like it but buying a home at the end of the year can have many benefits. In fact, now can be an excellent time to get a great deal on a house. Here are seven reasons why you should buy a home before the end of the year.

1 Less competition. Spring and summer are typically the busiest seasons in the real estate market. Families with school-age children will often move in the summer to coincide with the school year. For this reason, you'll find there is much less competition in the housing market. Your offer on a home is more likely to be accepted when there are fewer potential buyers putting in bids.

2 You have more time to decide. When you have fewer buyers to compete with, then you won't have to make an immediate decision on a home. In competitive markets, it's important to move quickly. But at the end of the year, you can take a little more time to make your decision. If you need to sleep on it, then you have the luxury now to do that.

3 Sellers Are motivated. This is especially true if a seller wants to close on a deal before the end of the year. You're more likely to find a motivated seller who is willing to negotiate when you're house hunting at this time of year.

4 Better prices. When there are motivated sellers, you're more likely to get a great deal on a home. At this time of year, you'll find homes that have been on the market longer. This could mean that the home was overpriced to begin with. You'll be in a good position to negotiate with the seller, who will be more open to your offer.

5 It's easier to hire movers. During the busy summer months, you may need to book a moving company several weeks in advance. You'll also be paying a premium if you're moving at the end of the month. But if you buy a home at the end of the year, there will be more movers available. It will be easier to hire a moving company on short notice. You may even get a price break since it's a slower season for movers.

6 It's easier to hire contractors. Just as it is with movers. This includes inspectors, plumbers, electricians and roofers. You'll have an easier time getting on their schedule during their slow season. They will also often complete the work more quickly since there are fewer projects competing for their attention.

7 Receive more builder incentives. Builders often offer incentives at this time year. This can include credit towards upgrades, paid closing costs, or even discounts on the asking price.

Garden of d'Lights Will Glow Your Mind

The public is invited to experience The Ruth Bancroft Garden's exciting new winter holiday event, Garden of d'Lights, an after sunset illuminary experience, that uses a unique blend of laser, spot and LED lights to bring new life to the Garden's cacti and succulents, and reveal shapes and textures unnoticed in sunlight. In addition to the light show under the moon and stars, there will be special holiday-themed entertainment from community members plus vocal and instrumental performances by various Tri-Valley music groups. Visitors can enjoy refreshments as they meander through the Garden's paths to view this innovative lights presentation.

Garden of d'Lights is part of a continuing series of events welcoming the public into the Garden and its newly completed Coit Family Visitor and Education Center. The volunteer team putting together the physical show includes artists, electricians, and "tech savants" who will have worked together for almost a year to create this event.

Garden of d'Lights dates: Weekend evenings (Fri/Sat/Sun) 5pm-8pm November 30th -December 29th. Tickets are now available Online at <https://www.ruthbancroftgarden.org/lights2019/>

The Garden and Coit Family Visitor and Education Center will also be available for company parties and other private event rentals, weekday evenings while Garden of d'Lights is going on.



Cameras are welcome. Warm clothing is suggested. Enjoy the entire 2.5-acre dry garden that has become an internationally acclaimed collection of plants from all over the world, created by Ruth Bancroft on property her

family began as a ranch in the 1880s. The Garden will have welcome over 17,000 visitors in 2019. Their community outreach programs offer over 60 workshops and classes annually and provide tours to more than 700 Bay Area students each year.



All events are fundraisers, and 100% of the proceeds are used to maintain and operate the Garden. For more information, visit ruthbancroftgarden.org/events or call (925) 944-9352. For private event rentals contact Lucy Kim at lucy@ruthbancroftgarden.org

Photos by Kelley Lotosky of Let's Spread Beauty Photography

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WOW! October 27 was an extraordinary day for local communities. Several fires, smoke, power outages, high winds, falling trees and an out-of-control Kincade fire ruled the headlines. We owe a great deal of gratitude to our Firefighters and First Responders who quickly addressed each of our incidents. Despite the numerous hazards, our area escaped relatively unscathed thanks to the efforts of several agencies including local news services.

A shout out goes to Claycord.com for keeping us informed and alert. In the two-day span, October 27-28, Claycord.com had close to 330,000 pageviews from 94,007 unique users! Here are some of its fire related coverage.

Fires, PG&E Blackouts Straining Bay Area Blood Supplies

The North Bay's devastating Kincade Fire coupled with PG&E's Public Safety Power Shutoffs have put a "significant strain" on the local blood supply, according to a national blood donation organization.

Officials with Vitalant, formerly the Blood Centers of the Pacific, announced that the fire and power outages have closed the organization's Santa Rosa donation center and warehouse, which are both in mandatory evacuation areas, according to spokesman Kevin Adler.

The closures and cancellations mean that so far roughly 250 units of blood have not been collected.

"We need over 500 donations a day in order to meet the needs of local patients," Vitalant Regional Director Fred McFadden said. "We ask that donors elsewhere make it a priority to give in the coming days to help ensure patients have the lifesaving blood when they need it."

People who want to donate blood are asked to visit vitalant.org or call (877) 258-4825.

Do Not Call 911 to Report the Smell of Smoke

We've been asked by dispatchers from several different agencies in Contra Costa County to remind people not to call 911 if you smell smoke. Only call 911 if you see flames or a plume of smoke nearby, or in case of any other emergency. Several fires are burning throughout California, and smoke is settling in the Bay Area. Please keep the emergency lines clear for real emergencies.

California Attorney General Warns Against Price Gouging During Fire Emergency

California Attorney General Xavier Becerra issued a consumer warning against price gouging in the wake of the state's wildfires, including the Kincade fire in Sonoma County.

Becerra noted that Gov. Gavin Newsom's declaration of a statewide emergency triggers a state law that makes it a crime to raise prices by more than 10 percent during a state or locally declared emergency.

The price gouging law applies to

businesses that sell food, emergency supplies, medical supplies, building materials, gasoline and other items at prices more than 10 percent greater than the previous cost. It also applies to hotel accommodations and rental housing.

Violators of the law can be criminally prosecuted and be sentenced to up to one year in jail or fined \$10,000 upon conviction.

The law also allows civil enforcement actions that can result in civil penalties of \$5,000 per violation, injunctions and restitution orders.

"Families in California are in the midst of dealing with devastating wildfires. They shouldn't have to worry about whether they're being illegally cheated out of fair prices," Becerra said in a statement.

He urged people who believe they have experienced price gouging to contact their local police or sheriff's office.

Firefighters Extinguish Blaze Behind Sloat Garden Center on Kirker Pass

OCTOBER 30, 2019 - Firefighters extinguished a blaze behind Sloat Garden Center on Kirker Pass Rd., near Olive Dr. in Concord.



This was a vegetation fire. Thanks to Dan Dinneen photographer for the photos.

Gov. Newsom Announces New Website with Resources about Wildfires, Power Shutoffs

Gov. Gavin Newsom announced the launch of a new website at www.response.ca.gov that gathers information on a variety of services and resources that can be used by people affected by wildfires and power shutoffs around the state.

The website has information on current wildfires, transportation impacts, shelter and housing options, health and government services, preparedness tips and other resources.

"California continues to rise to the challenge of power shutoffs and natural disasters," Newsom said in a news release. "This site will continuously be updated as needed to provide Californians with the resources they need."

Newsom declared a statewide emergency on (October 27) because of dangerous weather conditions that have fanned the flames of the Kincade Fire in Sonoma County as well as wildfires in Southern California.

He is visiting a Cal Fire base camp in Santa Rosa on Monday afternoon and has previously met with emergency responders, local leaders and residents in Geyserville, Napa, Petaluma and Los Angeles in the past week, according to the governor's office.

October 27 - A Day of Alerts

Mt. Diablo State Park Will Be Closed Until Monday Afternoon Due To Extreme Fire Conditions

UPDATE: ALERT: Immediate Education Along Leon Drive In Clayton Due To Fire

Firefighters Extinguish Two-Alarm

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NEWS & TALK

In case you missed it...

Blaze In Walnut Creek

Contra Costa County To Offer Charging Stations Today During Power Shutoff

ALERT: Tree Down, Blocking Clayton Rd. Near Pine St. In Concord

ALERT: Fire Closes Interstate 80 Near Carquinez Bridge

ALERT: Tree Blocking

Ayers Rd. Near Ygnacio Valley Rd. In Concord

ALERT: Six People Injured After Tree Falls In Downtown Martinez

Vegetation Fire Extinguished In Creek Behind Hobby Lobby In Concord

UPDATE: Evacuation Center Opened For Crockett Residents - Interstate 80 Remains Closed

Power Line Down, Tree On Fire On Buskirk Ave. In Pleasant Hill

ALERT: Power Pole On Fire On Olympic Blvd. In Walnut Creek - Road Closed

Power Out? Check The PG&E Power Outage Map For The Latest Information

UPDATE: ALERT: Vegetation Fire Burning On Pleasant Hill Rd. At Condit Rd. In Lafayette (South Of Hwy.24)

UPDATE: ALERT: Vegetation, Structure Fire Burning Near Lafayette Tennis Club On Camino Diablo.

UPDATE: ALERT: Structure Fire In Ygnacio Wood Neighborhood Near Oak Grove & Treat Blvd. In Concord

The Historic Oak Tree At Boundary Oak Golf Course In Walnut Creek Is Gone

Gov. Newsom Declares Statewide Emergency Due To Weather, Fires

Escalators Out Of Service At Four BART Stations As Precaution

UPDATE: ALERT: Lafayette Fire Forces Evacuation Of Area South Of Old Tunnel Rd.

11 Locations In East Bay Regional Park District Close Due To Extreme Weather Conditions

ALERT: Power Lines Down On Laurel Dr. Near Old Kirker Pass Rd.

UPDATE: ALERT: Vegetation Fire Burning On Port Chicago Hwy. At Driftwood Dr. In Bay Point

UPDATE: Lafayette Tennis Club Burns Down During Sunday Wildfire - Forward-Progress Stopped On Fire. Lafayette Tennis Club - Photo: ConFire

UPDATE: ALERT: Vegetation Fire Burning On Alhambra Ave. And Forest Way In Martinez photo credit: Jason Delbridge

Public Health Advisory Issued Due To Smoke In Contra Costa County

Tree Fire Reported, Power Lines Down On Cuesta Way Near Oakvale Rd. In Walnut Creek

ALERT: Contra Costa County Issues Proclamation Of Local Emergency

Tree Down In Pleasant Hill's Crescent Plaza

A Smoky Sunset In Contra Costa County

All MDUSD Schools Will Be Open On Monday Oct.28

UPDATE: Martinez Fire Burns 50-Acres

Wind Gusts Reach 65-mph on Mt. St.

Helena, 53-mph On Mt. Diablo

Fallen Tree Damages Two Vehicles In Driveway Of Home In Lafayette

Power Pole On Fire On Brookside Lane In Concord (Behind Lucky On Clayton Rd.)



Oct. 27 - Martinez vegetation fire. Photo: Jason Delbridge

THANKS CLAYCORD

Locally, when you see smoke, Claycord.com is one of the first news resources to go to and get immediate information according to these comments from appreciative readers.

"...all day long I checked with Claycord, and it was very helpful. I live off Willow Pass and when I returned from shopping downtown Concord, I saw a lot of smoke coming over the hills, looked like it was from Pittsburgh or Antioch. Someone called into John (Rothman, KGO) show and he thought it was the Martinez fire, but the callers said no, John had no information on it, although later he did. My point is there is nothing like a local source to keep you informed of what is going on in your community. So I agree with the comment here, thank you for the continuous and accurate updates." -- Hanne Jeppesen,

"Thank you sooo very much for all of the posts and updates today. I live in Concord and have continually checked for updates throughout the day. You have posted relevant and timely information. Today you have been the best source around. Thank you for all the effort and hard work." -- Sam I Am

"I just wanted to say thanks for all your efforts providing so many updated local news. I always went to the site just to stay in the loop on a regular basis BUT yesterday the news you guys were providing was beyond just helpful. I've lived in the Bay Area for all my 38 years (Walnut Creek currently) and never experienced anything like yesterday. I just wanted to take a moment to thank you all for keeping so many people well informed and overall safer." - Thanks, Derek Sanders

"A huge shout out for all the reporting you did over the weekend, especially yesterday where the stories were coming so fast and so fluid they were falling off the front page. My family and I were out and about with sports and relied heavily on your accurate and current reporting. Power outages, down trees, spot fires, wind conditions, road closures...YIKES. You are my number one trusted, hometown news source and accurate and up to date information. Thanks for grinding hard to keep us informed. Your team is top notch." - Warmly, JT Robinow

"Thank you first responders, firefighters, and Claycord.com for keeping us safe!"



UPDATE: Lafayette Tennis Club Burns Down During Sunday Wildfire - Forward-Progress Stopped On Fire. Lafayette Tennis Club - Photo: ConFire

UPDATE: ALERT: Vegetation Fire Burning On Alhambra Ave. And Forest Way In Martinez photo credit: Jason Delbridge

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THE LEGAL PAGE



Trademarks Protect Your Business but Not Required by Law

by Richard Bennett Salles, Patent Attorney, Foundation Patents LLP, Walnut Creek

The use of trademark symbols is not actually required by law, but doing so is beneficial. In fact, the TM and SM symbols do not have any legal significance, but instead are informal ways of telling the world that you are claiming ownership of trademark rights in a word, phrase, and/or logo. Trademark symbols exist to serve notice to the public that the mark preceding the symbol is a trademark. Notice may serve to deter others from using the mark, but can also provide evidentiary benefits in any potential infringement suits.

U.S. Trademark law (The “Lanham Act” of 1946) makes it unlawful to use a trademark (slogan, design-logo, or business/product name) to sell goods or services if the mark is confusingly similar to another business’ previously-trademarked slogan, design-logo or name.

Applying for a trademark is surprisingly tricky due to its multi-stage procedure; almost 75% of all Trademark Applications are rejected at least once by the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) before they are ultimately either Abandoned or Allowed-&-Registered in The USPTO General Registry of Trademarks.

From this U.S. Federal Registry, you can enforce your Trademark against knockoff copycats creating a “likelihood of confusion” in the marketplace. You can also secure licensing (royalties) agreements, assign (sell) your trademark to a larger competitor, and even have the ITC order U.S. Customs and Border Protection to seize foreign shipments of phony products at U.S. ports.

Before you meet with your trademark attorney, best to bring:

- Your business name (optionally an S-Corp or LLC filed in Sacramento);
- Some quick search results from

the USPTO T.E.S.S. system’s basic search function. If your name or logo is already taken, think of a novel (substantially different) variation that will pass;

- The date you began using your mark in interstate commerce;
- The date you began internally using your mark, for example with your manufacturer, vendor, supplier, or your logo designer-illustrator;
- A list of all the goods or services you sell with the mark (and logical future extensions thereof);
- A drawing or screenshot of the mark (logo-design);
- At least one “specimen in [interstate] commerce.”

You must ultimately submit at least one specimen of your mark to the USPTO

as it is used in the marketplace. Internal advertising materials are not acceptable, nor are packing materials or invoices. The USPTO typically accepts only proof of the product “on the shelf” showing the mark-logo directly on the product or its packaging, or on a working website (e.g. Amazon or Etsy) with a functioning “click to pay now” icon.

When applying for a trademark, you must decide if you want to register a simple “word mark” or if you want to register your logo-design. Since the USPTO application fee is the same for any single mark in a single “class of goods and services,” you get the most value by registering a composite mark comprising both your words and your logo.

An enforceable USPTO TRADEMARK REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE looks like the image in this article and (with payment of nominal maintenance fees), lives forever.



California Rent Control: Assembly Bill 1482 Is Law

by Yasenia Conde, Juris Doctor, Concord

When California voters rejected Proposition 10 last year, the California Legislature decided to act. Effective January 1, 2020 California renters will enjoy some of the nation’s strongest tenant protections (next to Oregon) as Assembly Bill 1482 championed by Assemblyman David Chiu of San Francisco was signed into law by Gov. Gavin Newsom on October 10. Assemblyman Chiu stated that the bill was designed to prevent rent gouging and to prohibit egregious rent increases through the state. Whether you are a renter or a landlord here is what you need to know.

Under AB 1482 there will now be a statewide 5% plus the local rate of inflation (but not exceed a total of 10%) rent cap on yearly rent increases imposed by California’s landlords. Effective this coming January, if a unit falls under the protection of AB 1482, the landlord will not be able to raise the current rent by more than 5% plus local inflation (currently at 2.7% according to the Consumer Price Index). However, if a tenant moves out, the landlord will be able to increase the rent to the then current market rate but will then be subject to the 5% cap once the tenant has been residing at the unit 12 months or more.

Local rent control ordinances that were enacted under the old Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act of 1995 will be unaffected. The new rent cap will only apply to units that have no local rent regulations in place. The only city in Contra Costa County with rent control is Richmond.

There are certain exemptions though. For example, properties that are 15 years of age or newer, have two or more units, single-family homes, townhouses or condos will not be affected by this new rent cap unless such properties are owned by a corporation. Duplexes are also exempted when at least one unit is occupied by the owner.

To illustrate what this all means - Existing rent control ordinances will continue to cover multifamily housing units that were built before June 1979 under Costa-Hawkins. Under the new AB 1482, apartments buildings and properties owned by a corporation that were

built between June 1979 and 2005 will be subject to the 5% plus inflation rent cap. Apartments buildings and corporate owned properties built after 2005 will have no rent cap until the property turns 15 years old. After the 15-year mark AB 1482 will kick in. If a unit falls under AB 1482 the landlord will be able to raise the rent above the 5% cap to bring the unit to market rent but only if the old tenant moves out. Thereafter, the landlord must comply with AB 1482’s rental increase cap, applicable to the new tenant.

How about if the landlord wants to evict the tenant instead of just waiting for the tenant to move out? That may be a little trickier. AB 1482 also enacted new

rules for evicting a tenant. This will be a huge change for cities such as Concord which allowed landlords to evict tenants for no reason or without cause. Under the newly enacted AB 1482, a landlord will only be able to evict a tenant if a specific reason is listed and documented. However, the eviction restriction of AB 1482 only applies if the tenant has been residing in the unit for 12 months or more. Valid reasons for evicting a tenant can range from the tenant failing to pay rent, allowing unauthorized roommates or pets, engaging in illegal activities, or disturbing neighbors.

Landlords who wish to evict a tenant because they want to move a family member into the unit will have to pay for the displaced tenant’s relocation under AB 1482. The intent of AB 1482 is to bring relief to California’s homelessness population and housing crisis. Whether this is the solution or not who knows. For now, all we know is that AB 1482 will remain in effect until 2030.

For Assembly Bill’s 1482 full text please visit the California Legislative information page at <https://leginfo.ca.gov>.

Yasenia Conde is a legal document assistant. She obtained her Juris Doctorate degree from the John F. Kennedy University College of Law and a Bachelor of Science in Legal Studies from the University of La Verne in Southern California. Photo Courtesy KPBS



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Your 2019 Guide to Bay Area Events

The Diablo Gazette's

ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE



VISIT CONCORD
A Northern California Original

by Elaine Schroth,
Executive Director

The holidays are always such a great time to experience Concord. Between all the fun community events and world class shopping and dining options, getting into the holiday spirit just comes with the territory. Whether you're a long-time resident or hosting visitors, here's some of what you have to look forward to this season.

In anticipation of Thanksgiving's over-eating guilt, you and your guests might want to wake up and expend a little energy in Concord's 5th Annual Turkey Trot on November 28th. The 5k/10k run and walk takes place at Todos Santos Park. Proceeds benefit the Bay Church Compassion Outreach, a program that helps supply the community's underserved with basic necessities. The run starts at approximately 8am with a free dash around Todos Santos Park for the kids at 7:40am. Participants receive a race t-shirt and swag bag while finishers also collect a custom Turkey Trot medal. Top finishers in each category will receive additional awards. Come out and enjoy some pre- and post-race drinks, snacks, fresh fruit, and of course pumpkin pie too. Sounds like a fun way to start Thanksgiving Day. Register Online at TurkeyTrotConcord.org.



Our Holiday Plan to Visit Concord



For a different kind of race, prepare for Black Friday, the shopping race to the best deals. While that can be exhausting, The Veranda offers some opportunities for a little fun to mix in with your day, for example, ice skating. The Veranda ice skating rink will be open throughout the holidays beginning November 8. If you work in a lunch break, consider the new Dave & Busters and enjoy non-stop entertainment of arcades and sports.

Consider a little family or group fun and experience the thrilling new Red Door Escape Room. Choose your adventure and see if your crew has what it takes to accomplish the creative challenges to escape in under 60 minutes. You can also plan to relax and

enjoy one of the new holiday-release movies at the cushy Veranda LUXE Cinema & IMAX theater.

Of course, there's also plenty of shopping and dining options at Concord's Sun Valley Shopping Center featuring 160 specialty stores and restaurants indoors.

The annual Concord Tree Lighting Ceremony in Todos Santos Plaza will be on Saturday, December 7th. The festivities start with Santa's grand entrance at 4pm. Mayor Obringer will lead the Annual Sing-Along while a horse-drawn carriage will offer rides around the park. Indulge in a delicious hot cocoa or coffee drinks, a cold brew, or dinner at any of the many great restaurants and bars surrounding the plaza.

Above all, be sure to stop by Concord's brand new, state-of-the-art Experiential

Visitor Center located on the first floor of Salvio Pacheco Square next to Todos Santos Plaza. The Experiential Visitor Center will bring an elevated, informative experience to visitors and locals alike to learn about all Concord has to offer. While still under construction today, the center will feature a variety of state-of-the-art interactive displays including pop-up shops, culinary demonstrations, art installations, and historic exhibits including a listening station that celebrates Concord's deep jazz roots such as the legendary native, Dave Brubeck.

For more Holiday information including special Holiday hotel packages and free parking locations, go to visitconcordca.com!

Season's greetings from Visit Concord!

Pleasant Hill Instructional Garden Open House

Gardeners, Pleasant Hill Instructional Garden (PHIG) will celebrate its 12th year of restoration of a dumping site and demonstrating that healthy gardens make healthy environments - which make healthy communities.

All ages are invited to PHIG's free Open House on Saturday, November 9 from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm, to explore and talk with expert exhibitors and engage in various activities. Families will learn about water conservation and recovery from Mike McGill of Central Contra Costa Sanitary District. University of California Master Gardener Judy Ryan will teach easy home composting techniques. Monika Olsen, Garden Manager and Teacher of University of California Master Gardener, will lead a garden tour while explaining how to test water quality, how to create a wildlife habitat, and how to provide for pollinators in your garden.

There will be plenty of expert exhibitors to chat with as well including Ask a Master Gardener, California Native Plant

Society, Central Contra Costa Sanitary District, Contra Costa Resource Conservation District, Mt. Diablo Beekeepers Association, and Sustainable Contra Costa.

Plants, bird houses, and environmentally friendly products will also be for sale.

PHIG is a National Wildlife Federation registered wildlife habitat demonstrating water conservation, recycling, use of drought tolerant and native plants, and no pesticide use. It has been honored by the City of Pleasant Hill and by Sustainable Contra Costa and others for making such an eco-friendly difference in the community.

The garden is located at 1 Santa Barbara Road in Pleasant Hill. More information is available at: www.phig.webs.com. RSVP is requested at www.Eventbrite.com.



Half Price Bookstore Returns to Concord

After closing its bookstore in downtown Concord, Half Price Books is ready to re-open at its new and bigger location in the Willows Shopping Center, 1975 Diamond Blvd. Ste. B-180 on Thursday, November 21.

The new location occupies approximately 6,600 square feet. Half Price Books will celebrate its official grand opening with free tote bags and \$5 Half Price Books gift cards for the first 100 people at the store thru Sunday, Nov. 24. One lucky shopper each day will win a \$100 gift card. Customers will receive special grand opening discounts off any one item each day. In addition to those giveaways, customers can enter in-store to win a \$500 Half Price Books gift card.

"We were thrilled to have found a great new location for our store in the Willows

Shopping Center," said Kathy Doyle Thomas, executive vice president and chief strategy officer of Half Price Books. "We know this community has many great booklovers who are happy to have our store back in their city limits, and we are happy to be back."

Half Price Books will open at 10 a.m. each day of its opening weekend. The store offers new and used books, magazines, comics, records, videos, CDs, DVDs and collectible items.

Half Price Books is the nation's largest family-owned new and used bookstore chain. With the addition of the Concord store, Half Price Books now has 126 stores in 17 states, including five stores in California.

It will be missed downtown, but welcome back to Concord.



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DIABLO GAZETTE FUN ZONE

Flash Fiction: Demon Squirrel

by Robin Gigoux

Every fall, I hear playful squirrels before I see them, their claws scratching as they chase each other over the dry and hollow-sounding bark of pine trees around my home. I was—I say was—particularly fond of a fat and chatty little guy I called Chubs.

The other day, I left home for lunch with a friend. Halfway along my driveway, on the ground beneath cone-laden pine branches, I saw a toast-colored heap that appeared to be Chubs. I exited my car to take a closer look, hoping he was merely stunned.

There on his side, Chubs lay still as a stone, eyes open, apparently unseeing. Heartsick, I concluded that my furry friend had fallen from those branches overhead in pursuit of his brethren and was a goner.

Running late, I told myself I'd deal with him later. I dreaded scooping his body into a plastic bag for the trash. When I got home, he was gone. Yay, I thought. He was just stunned, had recovered and went on about his life.

The next morning, sitting at my office desk paying bills, my cat Bo on the sill outside the open window, an acorn bounced off his hind quarters. Strange, I thought, and went on with my work. That's when I noticed Chubs, nestled in the pines nearby, hurl an acorn. I chalked his behavior up to the playfulness of squirrels.

Later that day, I noticed Chubs nestled in branches closer to my office window, chattering and twitching his tail. This time he hurled an acorn at the window, apparently aiming at me! Holy crap. Disturbed by his behavior, I left the room and listened as several acorns hit the window.

When I returned to my desk, Chubs was perched on a limb close enough that I could see his misshapen head, swollen on one side, his bloodshot beady eyes, and his front teeth, broken diagonally, now looking like large, irregular, blood-stained fangs.

This time he hurled small stones. The third one broke the window. Chattering wildly, he leapt to the flimsy screen, held on with his hind paws and began tearing a hole with his front paws. Horrified, I ran out of the office and slammed the door behind me.

Later, assuming the crazed squirrel was gone, I opened the door and stepped in, my cat at my feet. Chubs, who hadn't left, attacked Bo, shrieking and chattering like the insane animal

he had become. Afraid for my own safety and anguishing over abandoning my cat, I again slammed the door behind me and listened to shrill animal screams and thrashing for long minutes.

When all was quiet again, I entered the office expecting to find my cat and the squirrel both dead, blood and guts all over the carpet. Bo lay there, unmoving, bleeding, but alive. But blood-soaked Chubs wasn't done.



From the top of a bookshelf, the squirrel leapt onto my head, scratching, pulling at my ears and yanking my hair. Terrified, I whipped my head hard and

threw him off. He hit the wall and fell to the floor. I shoved my bleeding cat out of the room with my foot and, yet again, slammed the door behind me. I called Animal Control, but by the time a ranger got to my home, Chubs had escaped out the broken window. I haven't seen him since. My cat spent three nights at the vet and recovered, at least physically.

Now, when I hear squirrels chattering in my trees, a cold chill comes over me. I believe Chubs fell from those branches over my driveway, hit the cement head first and suffered brain damage. As he lay in my driveway stunned, eyes open, I believe he saw me peering at him and I imprinted as the enemy responsible for his injury. And crazy Chubs is out to punish me. How long do squirrels live, anyway?

Diablo Gazette: What Was your Inspiration for this story?

Robin: "Inspiration? One day, as I was leaving for a lunch date, there lay this squirrel. He appeared dead and I left. Gone when I got home, I was inspired to write this story. A kind neighbor had removed his body to the trash for me while I was gone.

Robin Gigoux, Author, "Chronicles of an Occupational Prostitute, a Workplace Survival Story", as Peechi Keane. "Insight, Hindsight & Flights of Fancy", an anthology contributing Author with "The Fridge", "Once Before I Die", "The Ghost of Joseph Martini", "What a Waist".

Contra Costa Con Comes to Concord Clarion

The inaugural Contra Costa Con comes to Concord on Sunday, November 10, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Clarion Hotel with special guests Michelangelo and Raphael from the original Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (TMNT) along with Spider-Man and a Cosplay Costume Contest.

Comics, LEGO, toys, art and much more will be featured at the show hosted by Bay Area Festivals and American Brick Builders.

Michelangelo and Raphael in the original TMNT costumes and Marvel's Spider-Man will be on hand all day to meet and greet fans with free photo opportunities.

Special guest Walden Wong is a well-respected comic book artist/inker with a wide range of experience in the comic book industry working for major publishers including DC, Marvel, Image, Dark Horse and VIZ media.

Don't put away that Halloween costume just yet. Enter into the Contra Costa Con's family-friendly Cosplay Costume Contest for cash prizes for creative characters in different age groups. Registration will be taken throughout the day. The contest will start at 2:30 pm.

New and collectibles from Disney, Transformers, Pop!, Funko, LEGO, Pokémon, G.I. Joe, Marvel, DC, Dragon Ball Z, My Hero Academia, Hot Wheels and much more will be available at the show. This includes posters, art, prints, t-shirts, hats, books, buttons, classic video games, jewelry and cards too.

Contra Costa Con is sponsored by Visit Concord, Lamorinda Presents and Bay Area KidFest 2020.

The Clarion is located at 1050 Burnett Ave., one-half block off Interstate 680. Kids under 10 are free. Information and tickets are available at www.ContraCostaCon.com.



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R	E	D	A	V	H	T	R	A	D	H	C	STUNTS	XWING	STAR WARS
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F	U	A	T	O	Y	E	I	K	A	T	B	SKYWALKER	YODA	
E	G	N	I	W	X	O	D	E	D	A	W	THE FORCE	EWOK	
H	O	X	O	E	M	P	E	R	O	R	E	DARTH VADER	STORMTROOPER	
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calendar of events

NOV. 11 - VETERANS DAY
NOV. 28 - THANKSGIVING

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>

DECEMBER 14 SOLO OPERA, “TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS” 10:30am- noon. Include breakfast treats, a concert of opera and holiday music featuring soprano Diane Squires, a fashion show, a sing-along, and 12 enter to win prizes! All proceeds benefit Solo Opera, a local non-profit opera company and their 2020 season. If you love fashion, food, and festive song, please join in for some holiday magic at Macy’s, Concord. 341 Sun Valley Mall. Tickets - \$22

OUTDOORS

Farmers’ Markets
Concord Tuesdays: Year-round, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
 Thursdays: April 18 – October 24, 4:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Martinez Sundays, 10am to 2pm, year-round, Main St. and Estudillo.
Walnut Creek Diablo Valley Farmers Market Saturday 9a.m. - 1 p.m. Shadelands Business Park, N. Wigett Lane and Mitchell Dr. Also, from
Contra Costa Certified Farmers Market - North Locust St between Giamona and Lacassie St. Sundays 9 am - 1 pm, Year Round, (925) 431-8361 <http://www.cccfm.org>

NOVEMBER 8-JANUARY 20 Walnut Creek on Ice General Public Civic Park 1365 Civic Dr. Walnut Creek. Skating Hours
 Monday–Thursday 12 pm – 8 pm
 Friday 12 pm – 11 pm
 Saturday 11 am – 11 pm
 Sunday 11 am – 8 pm
\$13-\$15. Go to <http://walnutcreekonice.com/> for more information.

NOVEMBER 9 Open House. Pleasant Hill Instructional Garden. 10 am - 2pm. One Santa Barbara Rd. Pleasant Hill. Hands on demonstrations and instruction from experts for environmentally friendly gardening, composting, recycling, and more. More information is available at: www.phig.webs.com. RSVP is requested at www.Eventbrite.com

NOVEMBER 28 5th Annual Turkey Trot 5K/10K Run/Walk. This is a fast, flat scenic course through downtown Concord. FREE Kids Dash for 10 and under. Pumpkin pie for all at the finish. Visit TurkeyTrotConcord.org for registration and event details.

DECEMBER 7
 Concord Tree Lighting Ceremony. 4PM Santa Arrives. Mayor sing-a-long, followed by Official Tree Lighting at Todos Santos Plaza, Concord.
 4:30-6:30 PM Clayton Annual Tree Lighting and Caroling. Santa Arrival at 4:30 PM. at the Grove 6100 Main St.

Ruth Bancroft Garden
 All Event details available at www.ruthgarden.com.

NOVEMBER 16 Colorful Cement Canvas Art
 Create a beautiful 18 x 20” acrylic painting of a succulent. Join Sue Fordyce, instructor, for a great time go home with

a custom piece of hardy outdoor art worthy to brag about. No artistic talent needed you are armed with a tracing so you can get the dimensions just right. Price includes a specially constructed cement board primed “canvas”, acrylics, and sealer. 10:00 am - 12:00 pm \$55 - \$65 (non-members)

Junior Botanist- Fronds & Leaves
 10:00 am - 11:00 am Junior Botanists will explore and focus on the trees and palms that grow at the Ruth Bancroft Garden. Did you know that cycads date back to Mesozoic times (65 to 230 million years ago)? The Junior Botanists will also meet our “Jabba the Hut” tree and learn why the stem is so green. This workshop is suitable for 9-12 year olds. Admission ticket or membership required to enter the garden. \$5

NOVEMBER 30-DECEMBER 29 Garden of d’Lights: Fri/Sat/Sun evenings 5pm-8pm. A new nighttime winter holiday event, using laser, spot and LED lights to illuminate the Garden. Enjoy musical entertainment and seasonal food and beverages. Garden of d’Lights is scheduled to occur every weekend evening. **Ticket sales begin October 1st.** www.ruthbancroftgarden.org/gardenofd-lights-2019/

DECEMBER 4 Tai Chi Demonstration - Demonstration will be led by the Pleasant Hill division of the Taoist Tai Chi Society and will invite you to join in to experience a few of the moves and how they can improve balance and well being. Limited spots for this free demo; RSVP required. Entry into the garden is not included in this workshop.

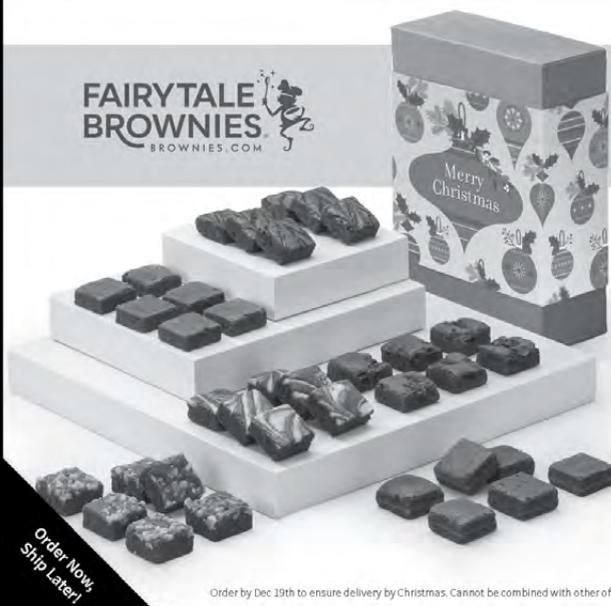
CLUB/SUPPORT GROUPS’ NEWS AND EVENTS

NOVEMBER 10 Contra Costa Con - Clarion Hotel Ballroom 1150 Burnett Ave. Concord. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Special guests Michelangelo and Raphael from the original Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (TMNT) along with Spider-Man and a Cosplay Costume Contest. Comics, LEGO, toys, art and much more. Costume contest. For more information see article on page 8. www.contracostacon.com

NOVEMBER 11 Veteran’s Day Dinner @6:30 pm. RSVP for free meal & more details. Concord Elks Lodge #1994 - 3565 Clayton Rd. Concord (925) 685-1994. www.elksconcord.org

NOVEMBER 12 The Clayton Valley Woman’s Club meeting with Reverend Barbara Barkley, author of “Seeking Grace”. Pastor Barbara has a strong commitment and passion for social justice and has done peace and assistance work in Brazil, Alabama, North Carolina and New Mexico with immigrants, women, the LGBTQ population and the homeless. She currently serves as pastor of Clayton Valley Presbyterian Church. The club meets at 10AM the second Tuesday of each month at St. John’s Episcopal Church, 5555 Clayton Rd in Clayton. New members are welcome. Contact Claudia Gray at 925 889-9429 or go to www.claytonvalleywomensclub.org.





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NOVEMBER 16 Gun Buyback - The Concord, Clayton and Walnut Creek Police Departments will be hosting a “community gun buyback event” at the Concord Pavilion from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Concord, Walnut Creek and Clayton residents can exchange their unwanted firearms for gift cards: \$200 in gift cards for an assault weapon, \$100 in gift cards for handguns and \$50 in gift cards for rifles or shotguns. Each attendee will have a maximum gift card limit of \$1000.

DECEMBER 6 HOLIDAY GIFT AND CRAFT FAIR
 9 am - 2 pm. 45+ vendors, jewelry, ornaments, yarn crafts, handmade goods, stocking stuffers, and more. Concord Senior Center, 2727 Parkside Cir. Concord. 925-671-3320

December 7-8 Gingerbread House Boutique from 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM. Concord Historical Society hosts Arts and Crafts from local artists for the perfect Holiday gifts. The Concord Museum and Event Center, 1928 Clayton Road, Concord. Parking can be found behind the Concord Museum and Event Center at Amador Ave and Marina Court.

JANUARY 8 8-Week United States Power Squadrons Marine Navigation Course offered by Diablo Sail & Power Squadron. Reading marine charts and interpretation of aids to navigation will be reviewed. Hands-on course planning and plotting, distance calculations, plotting in TRUE/steering in MAGNETIC, and plotting standards (symbols and notations on charts). All of the manual plotting methods will be compared and contrasted with GPS-based chart plotter methodologies using a software package (OpenCPN) that will be provided to all students. Wednesday evenings at 7pm at the Martinez Sea Scouts training facility (S.S.S. Albacross Sea Base, Martinez, CA) beginning on 1/8/2020. Open to all squadron members and non-members. For more information or to enroll, contact Michael Holland SN at mjholland@ucdavis.edu or (530)304-4487.

VISUAL ARTS/ THEATRE/MUSIC

LESHER CENTER
 1601 Civic Dr. Walnut Creek. Ticket info for all performances at leshercenter.org

October 11-November 9 Priscilla Queen of the Desert-The Musical Hoffman Theater, Walnut Creek. 1601 Civic Dr. Walnut Creek. Ticket info at www.Leshercenter.org

October 18-November 16 Native Gardens. Center REPeratory. Hot new comedy where gardens and cultures clash, turning friendly neighbors into feuding enemies. Margaret Leshner Theater. 1601 Civic Dr. Walnut Creek.

NOVEMBER 8-10 Diablo Ballet presents. A SWINGIN’ HOLIDAY & Nutcracker Suite at the Del Valle Theatre in Walnut Creek. TICKETS: <https://diabloballet.org/a-swingin-holiday-more/>

NOVEMBER 13 – DECEMBER 29 Main Street Arts - Christmas Show, “Bring Beauty Into Your Life”.

A gallery of wonderful paintings, jewelry, ceramics and metal sculptures for your holiday gift giving. Also we will have our beloved small wall, a place where you can find small reasonably priced paintings. Main Street Arts, 613 Main Street, Martinez. 925-269-8049. Image: 2-sided vase by Jerry Hild. www.Mainstreetarts.net.



NOVEMBER 16-17 FLUTIST ANNIE WU California Symphony presents Mozart’s first symphony and Haydn’s last, plus Puts’ Flute Concerto featuring virtuoso Annie Wu in MOZART AND HIS MENTOR, at the Leshner Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek. Tickets are available online or by calling the box office at 925.943.7469. Photo Credit-Rachel-Rodgers



DECEMBER 8 Diablo Women’s Chorale presents “Winter’s Light”. Jazzy, uplifting songs to kick off the beginning of the holiday season with songs from Lisa Loeb, George Michael, Irving Berlin, Phil Spector, and many others. 4:00 p.m. at Temple Isaiah, 945 Risa Road, in Lafayette. Purchase advance tickets online at www.diablowomenschorale.org or call 1-800-838-3006.

Ninja Filmmaker's Career Inspired at Walnut Creek Intermediate Middle School

by Jill Hedgecock (www.jillhedgecock.com)

Who knew that a middle school elective class can alter the future of a child? It was in a 7th grade movie production course at Walnut Creek Intermediate where students teamed up to create their own film when Chessa Mehlman became enamored with filmmaking. She went on to attend Ithaca College where she graduated with a BS degree in Cinema and Photography. Now, our own Bay Area native has hit the Hollywood scene with a bang and has literally jumped in with both feet. While working on the TV program, "Total Knock Out" (TKO), an obstacle course competition game show, with host comedian/actor Kevin Hart, Mehlman spent her time resetting obstacles, which basically meant she got paid to jump in a ball pit.



Mehlman enjoying her gig on the set of *Holey Moley*

Those same feet have since graced more than one red carpet and escorted her into premier parties.

Although Mehlman has created an exciting life for herself in LA, she appreciates her early years in Walnut Creek and the Bay Area.

"They are both so beautiful it is hard not to miss it. I am lucky to be able to go home often and visit my family."

As of March 2018, Mehlman works as Executive Assistant to the CEO of the ATS Team, a production company that specializes in challenge and stunt set design and construction and other production services to some of the biggest networks in the industry. Mehlman has worked as a coordinator on the sets of multiple reality TV shows and been an official behind-the-scenes photographer. Her impressive skills have landed her gigs on "American Ninja Warrior" (ANW), "Titan Games", "Holey Moley", "Big Brother", "Million Dollar Mile" and more.

The ATS Team does all the prototyping for ANW—a TV show which depicts athletes as they tackle a series of challenging obstacle courses in city qualifying and city finals rounds across the country. Only the strongest and fastest competitors land a coveted spot in the finale. The ATS Team company holds demos in their warehouse for the producers of ANW so the show's decision-makers can

decide what they like and how to adjust the obstacles. Mehlman admits to wiping out on 90% of the obstacles when she tests them. At the show's finale (ANW11), she spent a full week in Las Vegas taking photos and resetting obstacles.

"One of my best memories from testing the obstacles" says Mehlman, "was when we were doing a Ninja Junior demo and I was supposed to show the kids how the Big Dipper obstacle was done. I fell off three times in a row in front of all the kids and their parents. Then an 8-year-old stepped up and did it perfectly."

Mehlman loves her position at the ATS Team which has given her multiple opportunities for professional growth. One of her passions is photography and she has been the official team

photographer for "Holey Moley" and "America's Top Dog" (coming soon!). Her duties have expanded to include show development where she gets to help develop shows, pitch her own ideas, and create pitch decks to be brought to networks to sell. Mehlman's name even appears in the Season 2 credits of "American Ninja Warrior Junior".



Mehlman and business partner, Ian Sumner, on the red carpet and the FirstGlance Film Festival in LA. Dollar Mile

"Every day is something completely different and exciting with the ATS Team," says Mehlman, "and that is such a rare experience, especially for an executive assistant position."

Her love of photography and videography led her to create her own production company called Chasing Light Studios with long-time friend Ian Sumner. This allows her to take on a lot of commercial jobs, which in turn funds projects close to her heart, such as narrative short films. She hopes to eventually produce a feature.

"It is definitely a challenge to have a company in LA where there are a million other people," says Mehlman about Chasing Light Studios, "but the harder you work the more you stand out."

Her first major film project, "Leben", was a short film about self-discovery that revolved around the theme: "We always meet twice in life." This film was loosely based around an experience Mehlman had with her two best friends while traveling Europe after graduating high school. The film played in many theatres around the world and showed at New-

Filmmakers NY (a monthly film festival displaying up-and-coming filmmakers).

She attended the red-carpet celebration at FirstGlance Films Los Angeles, where "Leben" played on the big screen at the Laemmle Theater in North Hollywood. It was at this event where Mehlman met a couple that led her to co-produce her first film "Mandao of the Dead" which



Chessa behind the lens at her first job as an Intern at Young Hollywood.



Mehlman on the set of *Million Dollar Mile*



screened at Comic Con San Diego and Comic Con Los Angeles.

She has also produced several trailers for books including my book "Rhino in

the Room" which you can view on their website www.chasinglight.pro.

When asked what film she would have most liked to have worked on, Mehlman said it would have been amazing to get to work on "La La Land". In addition, her favorite director is Wes Anderson so she would love to learn from him and work with him on any film past or future.

Chessa's advice to people that want to become a part of film industry is to not let others scare you away.

"The best way to start is to get on as many student film sets, or other film sets as possible. Even if you are starting as a production assistant, you can watch everyone else on set and learn."

Sage advice, indeed, from a Bay Area Ninja Filmmaker who found inspiration to chase her dream in middle school at Walnut Creek Intermediate.

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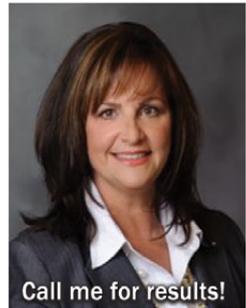
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PARSNIPS - Sweeter than Carrots, More Nutritious Than Potatoes

Eaten as a vegetable since ancient times but underutilized in today's cuisine, we think you should give parsnips a try, especially during Thanksgiving. Hearty and sweet, these tasty tap roots are a sure bet for mixing up with potatoes, carrots, and other root vegetables.

Before the potato was found to be edible, the parsnip was a major source of starch. Parsnips grew wild in Europe, and were considered a delicacy for the elite of Rome. Eventually, they were brought to America by the Europeans in the 1500s.

At first glance, they initially look like overgrown, off-white carrots. But they have a distinctive sweetness similar to a carrot but with an earthy nuttiness that goes well with almost any other vegetable. They even grow sweeter than carrots when cooked! They are more cold hardy than carrots and have a slightly stronger taste and smell. That's why they're perfect for cooking during the winter months, as are other root vegetables.

The potato is utilized more today, but parsnips are more nutritious. They are high in vitamin C, folate, manganese and potassium. Parsnips also contain antioxidants and both soluble and insoluble dietary fiber.

Make them into a mash, roast them with an assortment of other root vegetables, or add them to soups and stews for added sweetness. When cooked until tender they have a lovely

starchy flavor that pairs well with meats like lamb.

Choose parsnips that are small to medium-sized, as the larger ones tend to have a woody core that would need to be removed before cooking. You want parsnips that are pale, firm, smooth, and well-shaped. Store your parsnips in a bag in the crisper, just like you would store carrots. They will

keep for up to three weeks.

You'll find the freshest parsnips at your local farmers' market from the farmers who grew them. Swank Farms out of Hollister has two varieties of parsnips, one called Javelin, lovely and sweet. The other is just as sweet with a firm texture and ready to be roasted.



Roasted Root Vegetables

- 2 large carrots
- 2 large parsnips
- 1 large Russet potato or 4 small Yukon Gold potatoes
- 1 large white or yellow onion
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Preheat oven to 400°F. Peel all vegetables. Cut into bite-sized chunks. Place vegetables on an oiled sheet pan and toss with olive oil, and salt and pepper. Roast for 45 minutes or until vegetables are softened and ready to serve. Indulge with a little grated parmesan cheese on the top, if desired. Recipe: PCFMA Staff



David George

THE NAKED GARDENER

HAS ROSSMOOR GONE NAKED?

For all-natural, eco-friendly gardeners, November is a busy month. It's time for mulching. Cooler, often wetter weather means that winter is right around the corner. Vegetables, deciduous trees, and leafy shrubs are shutting down their leaf, fruit, and sugar production and preparing for dormancy. Now is the ideal time to cover exposed soil in flower and vegetable beds with a rich layer of natural mulch, or a cover crop such as fava beans or red clover. This will feed the healthy biology in the soil all winter and result in more fertile panting beds in the spring. Ah, there is no rest for the weary in the naked garden.

Speaking of organic gardening practices, I had the pleasure of interviewing Ted Bentley, president of the Rossmoor Walnut Creek Garden Club. Under a massive 300-year old valley oak, Ted and I talked about the Rossmoor Club's eco-friendly techniques in their 5-acre communal garden. How do they mulch, compost, avoid pesticides and eliminate herbicides? Ted related to me how Rossmoor Garden Club members have gone naked:

Around for forty years, the Club has grown to 225 members, many of whom pay \$30 per month for their lots (don't call them plots). In return, the parking area, oak-tree meeting area, miles of pathways, and containment walls for their raised beds are all maintained by dedicated volunteers. Help is also available for pest control (all natural techniques – no polluting poisons), advice (an on-call UC Cooperative Extension Master Gardener), and dedicated restrooms. Two wells provide six-thousand gallons of water per day, piped to member lots when needed.

Members grow almost everything you can imagine, and their bounty is shared with neighbors and local food banks. Their contributions, combined with other gardens in Central County, provide thousands of pounds of produce a year to needy residents.

Within the last few years, RGC members have converted to all-natural, eco-friendly gardening techniques. For example, before they would gather cuttings in wheel barrows and dump them into a long wood bin to break down over time into compost. Now, they "compost-in-place". This new gardening concept feeds the rich microscopic biology and worms in the over-wintering soil that release nutrients and create more fertile spring beds.

Ted pointed out posted signs that advise members to not use Roundup or other herbicides. He uses the 10% vinegar



and 3 oz. Dawn dish soap per gallon of water to kill weeds. They mulch margins and pathways to three inches deep with chippings from local tree trimmers - for free!

The Rossmoor garden relies on natural predatory birds, amphibians, and insects to control harmful or annoying pests. Ted pointed out a barn owl house on a post. Then we watched a hawk fly by us looking for a meal. Ted said red-tailed hawks and great horned owls are seen on a regular basis. Frogs, fence lizards, and night-time bats also protect their produce. The larger creatures, when combined with lady bugs, predatory wasps, and other carnivore insects, keep produce-damaging bugs under control.

Man's ingenuity was also on display. Ted told me that gophers are gassed with a machine that pumps carbon monoxide exhaust into the gopher hole. It is effective and has no adverse effects. Volunteers have constructed a six-foot tall fence that protects all garden plots from deer. The top of the fence is lined with close strings of barbed wire to keep the raccoons and rats out.

"We've really encouraged our members to garden with eco-friendly techniques." Ted summed up, "and avoid the poisons. It's been a pretty easy transition because members have been so responsive to the new direction."

Thanks, Ted and members of the Rossmoor Garden Club for leading the way to a healthier garden and healthier world!

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



Ted Bentley, President of the Rossmoor Garden Club



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Jill Hedgecock's bookends
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STOLEN THINGS

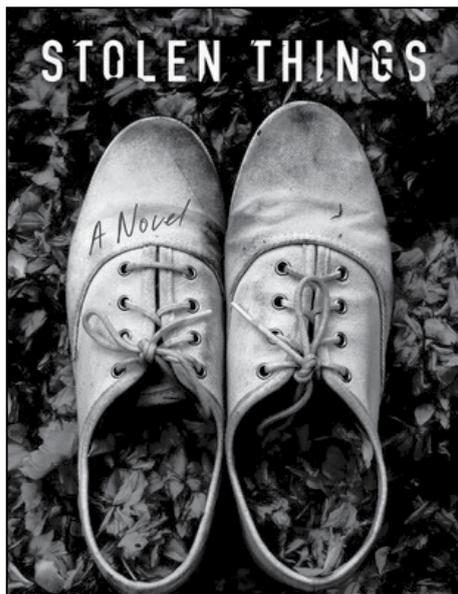
Stolen Things (2019, Dutton, hard cover, 368 pages, \$16.99) by R.H. Herron starts with a bang. Imagine going to your job as a 911 dispatcher and receiving a call from your distraught daughter. This is what happens to Laurie Ahmadi, a former cop, who quickly uses her detective skills to track down the location of her drugged teen daughter, Jojo. Laurie is livid when she discovers that Jojo has been assaulted.

It seems incomprehensible to Laurie how her daughter would be anywhere near the home of the former pro football player, Kevin Leeds. When she arrives at Leeds' home, Laurie soon discovers that Jojo's best friend, Harper, is missing. Jojo has no idea where Harper might be and she can't remember the events that led her to be inside Leeds' house. Worse, the police discover a dead body on the scene. Determined to bring the perpetrator who has harmed her daughter to justice at all costs, Laurie isn't willing to let the police handle the situation and launches her own investigation.

After her husband, Omid, the Police Chief, collapses under pressure, Laurie decides it is up to her alone to find the missing teen girl. As the hours tick by and Harper isn't found, Laurie becomes reckless. And as she delves into the events of the night, she begins to understand that she doesn't know her daughter as well as she thought.

Among other things, Jojo is involved in an organization called Citizens Against Police Brutality. Jojo, who longs to be a cop herself, and who is desperate to find her friend, starts meddling in the investigation and uncovers things she never knew about Harper. Jojo understands, just like her mother, that the longer Harper remains missing, the less likely that she'll be found alive.

Beyond being a page turner, "*Stolen Things*" tackles a variety of social issues from racism against Arabs, to gay rights, to police brutality and



corruption. The fact that it is set in a Northern California town also adds local interest.

"*Stolen Things*" is on par with other novels filled with twists and turns like "*The Girl on the Trail*" by Paula Hawkins, "*The Wife Between Us*" by Greer Hendricks and "*We Were Liars*" by E. Lockhart.

R. H. Herron has worked as a 911 dispatcher, and it shows in her deft handling of the subject material in "*Stolen Things*". She is an internationally bestselling author of more than two dozen books, including thrillers (under R.H. Herron), mainstream fiction, feminist romance, memoir, and nonfiction about writing. She received her MFA in writing from Mills College in Oakland, and she teaches writing extension workshops at both U.C. Berkeley and Stanford. She is a proud member of the National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) Writer's Board. According to *Publishers Weekly*, "*Stolen Things*" is "Riveting... Herron is definitely a writer to watch." I couldn't agree more.

movie review



PREVIEWS: A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND FROZEN 2

This month, this column is a movie preview. Movie goers can always count on the holidays to bring the year's best releases. This year will be no different. Here are two highly anticipated movies coming out at the end of this month that the whole family can enjoy.

A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood

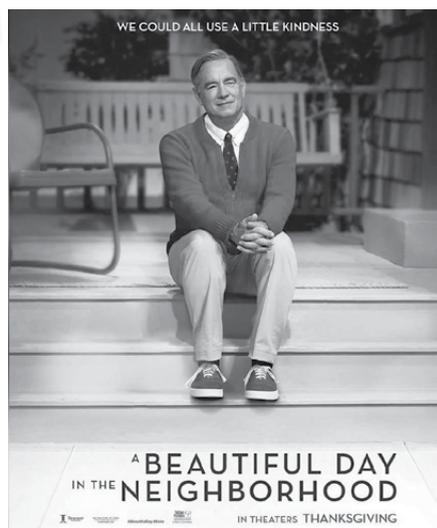
"*A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood*" is a biographical drama based on the real-life friendship between journalist Tom Junod and Fred Rogers, of "*Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*" fame. Matthew Rhys plays Lloyd Vogel (a character based on Junod), a jaded journalist

up watching the iconic kids' show to be interested.

Cast: Tom Hanks, Matthew Rhys, Susan Kelechi Watson. Director: Marielle Heller. In theaters November 22nd.

Frozen 2

Frozen 2 is the highly anticipated sequel to the Disney blockbuster that taught us all to "*Let It Go*." It continues the story of Elsa (voiced by Idina Menzel), a queen with icy powers, and her warmhearted sister, Anna (Kristen Bell). Although details of the



who reluctantly takes an assignment to profile Rogers (Tom Hanks), only to find his life fundamentally transformed. Kindness, empathy, and integrity are sure to be key themes, and viewers can expect lots of tugs on heartstrings (even the trailer's a tearjerker). Given Hanks' starring role and the revival of interest in Rogers brought about by 2018's documentary "*Won't You Be My Neighbor?*", expect viewers who grew



movie haven't been announced yet, it's safe to expect the return of Kristoff (Jonathan Groff), kind snowman Olaf (Josh Gad), and reindeer Sven, too, as well as newcomers voiced by Evan Rachel Wood and Sterling K. Brown. The original *Frozen* featured great music, strong female role models, and some scary elements, but for the most part was okay for little kids; you can likely expect the same here.

Cast: Kristen Bell, Idina Menzel, Jonathan Groff. Directors: Chris Buck, Jennifer Lee. In theaters: November 22, 2019

*Common Sense media ratings are based on child development best practices. The star rating reflects overall quality and learning potential. Credit: Photo IFC Films

Diablo Women's Chorale

WINTER'S LIGHT

December 8, 2019

Temple Isaiah
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DiabloWomensChorale.Org

The Diablo Women's Chorale - Singing Since 1942

What do you get when you mix "Fa-La-La" with "Cool Yule," add a dash of "Christmas, Baby Please Come Home," and season with a blend of other winter holiday songs? You get the Diablo Women's Chorale Fall Concert, "*Winter's Light*," on Sunday, December 8. Show time is 4:00 p.m. at Temple Isaiah, 945 Risa Road, in Lafayette.

Backed by live musicians, the Chorale will present a program of jazzy, uplifting songs to kick off the beginning of the holiday season with songs from Lisa Loeb, George Michael, Irving Berlin, Phil Spector, and many others.

The Diablo Women's Chorale was established in the summer of 1942 with the two-fold purpose of aiding the war effort and raising morale, presenting its first public concert on March 7, 1943. It remains as one of the longest performing choruses in the Bay Area. Members include women from all areas of the San Francisco East Bay who share a passion for music and a gratifying sense of community and fun. Director Stevie Greenwell is a well-known vocalist and choral educator.

Purchase advance tickets online at www.diablowomenschorale.org or call 1-800-838-3006.



aRt Cottage

by FROgard www.aRtCottage.info

Happy Holiday Boutique

Holiday Boutiques are popping up in many communities. aRt Cottage is no exception. This is a great place to purchase a one-of-a-kind gift. We have placemats, hand warmers, mugs, holiday cards, trivets, coasters, lots of paintings, jewelry, and fun sculptures, all locally crafted.

This is a way for you to support a local artists (and small business). Your gift will be fun, artsy, and definitely unique. Our Holiday Boutique is open Tuesday-Friday from 11 am – 5 pm and 1pm - 5 pm on Saturday through December 21st. What a wonderful op-



portunity to find that amazing gift. So many have passed through these doors the past eight years. On behalf of all our artists, we thank you for your support and for believing in the importance of creativity.

aRt Cottage is located at 2238 Mount Diablo Street Concord. For more information go to artcottage.info. Happy Holidays.

Art by Sharon Petersen



frugelegance

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

Apple Bundt Cake

Move over pumpkin pie, we've got a Fall favorite cake for your Thanksgiving dessert. This fabulous recipe, originally found years ago via Southern Living, is a family favorite of ours. It's a super moist apple cake with a cream cheese filling and praline frosting. (Drool!). The bad news is, this apple cake doesn't last long because everyone will love it, so make extra.

Cake Batter Ingredients:

- 1 cup chopped pecans
- 3 cups flour
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup light brown sugar
- 2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp ground nutmeg
- 1/2 tsp ground allspice
- 3 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 3/4 cup canola oil
- 3/4 cup applesauce
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 3 cups peeled and chopped Gala Apples

Cream Cheese Filling:

- 1 (8oz) package cream cheese, softened
- 1/4 cup butter, softened
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 large egg
- 2 Tbs flour
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

Praline Frosting:

- 1/2 cup light brown sugar
- 1/4 cup butter
- 3 Tbs milk
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 cup powdered sugar

First, prepare the cream cheese filling. Beat cream cheese, butter and sugar at medium speed with an electric mixer until well blended. Then add egg, flour and vanilla and beat until blended.

Next prepare the cake batter: Preheat oven to 350°. Bake pecans in a shallow baking pan 8-10 minutes or until toasted. Stir one time about halfway through for even toasting. Combine 3 cups flour, sugar, light brown sugar, cinnamon, salt, baking soda, nutmeg, and allspice. Stir in



eggs, oil, applesauce, and vanilla extract. Add in apples and pecans and stir.

Spoon 2/3 of apple mixture into a greased and floured bundt pan. Spoon cream cheese filling over apple mixture, leaving a 1" border around the edges of the pan. Swirl filling through remaining apple mixture over cream cheese filling.

Bake at 350° for approximately one hour until a wooden toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool cake in pan on a wire rack for 15 minutes. Remove from pan to the wire rack and let completely cool for about 2 hours.

While the cake cools, prepare the frosting. Bring 1/2 cup brown sugar, 1/4 cup butter, and 3 Tbsp milk to a boil in a saucepan over medium heat, constantly whisking while it boils for one minute.



Remove from heat and stir in vanilla extract. Gradually whisk in powdered sugar until smooth. Gently stir approximately 5 minutes or until mixture begins to cool and thickens slightly. Immediately drizzle over cooled cake.

Enjoy and have a Happy Thanksgiving!

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. FrugElegance is where Frugal and Elegance come together.



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Out to Lunch

by Richard Eber

Operating a successful restaurant over a long period of time is no easy task. Often, changing chefs or owners' spells disaster. Once patrons receive a bad meal or poor service, they seldom return. One eatery that has survived for over 25 years is Taheri's Mediterranean on 2999-A Oak Rd. across the street from the Pleasant Hill BART Station.

Under the supervision of owner Sean Taheri, his restaurant has relied on making every dish from scratch serving some of the best food in the region.

Upon seating, Taheri's greets you with house-baked focaccia bread with just a hint of rosemary. Dipped in extra virgin olive oil and balsamic vinegar, it is a good way to get a meal started.

In order to try different appetizers, we ordered the Mediterranean Platter. This featured hot dolmas which were very flavorful as was the hummus and eggplant puree dips for the flatbread. We also tried the Greek-themed Spanakopita pastries which rivals Michelin-rated Kokkari Estiatorio in San Francisco.

If these dishes remind you of that served by world famous Chef Faz Poursohi, it might be because after graduating from the Colorado School of Mines as an engineer, Taheri spent almost a decade managing Faz's empire. That included several restaurants in this area.

When Faz offered to sell him a struggling location in Walnut Creek, Sean

and his wife Honey-Lyn, emulated the formula for Faz's success in a less costly format that fit the demography of the region.

After several visits to Taheri's, every dish seems to be special. The soup of the day is a gourmet's delight. I tried several including the chicken noodle, and the butter nut squash. My favorite was the curried chicken. It had a rich delicious stew like consistency; good enough to be ordered as a main course.

Taheri's offers a bevy of salads. I especially liked the Cranberry-themed offering which was a delicate mixture of dried cranberry's toasted walnuts; quality creamy blue cheese drizzled with delicate raspberry vinaigrette. Their traditional Caesar with homemade croutons and abundant anchovies (requested by me) was perfectly prepared. They have 12 other salads mostly featuring chicken or shrimp combinations served large enough they can all easily be split.

Main courses at Taheri's provide several options. There is a large selection of sandwiches including a roasted chicken wrap, and a roast beef sandwich with caramelized onion, dijonaise, and

mozzarella served with au jus. It reminded me of the beloved French Dip at the now closed Hungry Hunter in Pleasant Hill. As might be expected in a Mediterranean eatery, vegetarian eggplant and falafel wraps are featured at Taheri's.

From their wood burning oven, Taheri's serves individual pizza's with their hallmark fresh ingredients from the dough on up. The Italian sausage and the house special with caramelized onions, mushrooms, sun dried tomatoes, and feta cheese were extraordinary.

On our next visit to the restaurant, I tried their house made ravioli which consisted of a good-sized portion of thin pasta filled with spinach and ricotta cheese. It was finished with a tangy sage butter and parmesan cheese. It was so tasty that I was reluctant to

TAHERI'S MEDITERRANEAN



share it with my friend. She ordered shrimp resting on top of house-made linguine served with a light cream-based Alfredo sauce and felt the same way. But for the cause of restaurant reviewing, we acquiesced and shared.

In addition to roasted whole chicken, Taheri's Chef Francisco Rios prepares a wide selection of fresh seafood featuring products provided by Newport Fish Company. Scallops, mussels, clams, salmon, halibut, crab, and other specialties can be found on their menu each day.

Looking at the dessert menu, naturally, homemade items dominated the list. On separate visits, we shared the Tiramisu covered by a berry puree, a Chocolate Walnut Tart with caramel sauce and a rich Crème Brulee topped by a caramelized sugar coating. Both were out of this world.

Taheri's also operates a prosperous catering business serving approximately 200 meals a week. Their prime clients are meetings of doctors throughout the region including John Muir and Kaiser Hospitals. They can also accommodate large parties in their covered, outside seating area.

This is a one great restaurant! Long live Taheri's.



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- Community gardens for green thumbs
- Full service beauty salon
- Library and computer center
- Workout Room along with regular exercise classes
- Arts & Crafts Area
- Community Theatre Room



ARF UPDATE

by David King

ARF Adoption Stars



Belle

Five-year-old Belle is a pleasant, laid-back lady with a very positive outlook on life. This thoroughly charming gal is a definite people-pleaser who loves exploring the outdoors and socializing with friendly humans and pups alike. She's also got a bit of a silly side, as you'll no doubt discover when you see her romping around with a few of her furrier friends. Belle is an affectionate, well-rounded dog who would be a great match for just about any type of home. Belle has a positive history with other dogs. She currently weighs 54 pounds. Belle's adoption fee has been prepaid by a generous donor.

Belle's adopter must be at least 18 years old with valid state-issued identification.

All dogs benefit from training. ARF was named 'Best in the East Bay for Dog Training' in 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 by Diablo Magazine. All adopters receive a \$50 discount off their first class.

Lilypad



Nineteen-week-old Lilypad is a darling tuxedo kitten looking for a loving home. She may be hesitant for a moment when meeting new people, but soon melts with gentle petting. Lilypad's adoption fee has been prepaid by a generous donor.

Lilypad is positive for FeLV (Feline Leukemia Virus), and can only live with other FeLV+ cats, dogs, or other non-feline animals. FeLV is only contagious to cats; it is not contagious to humans, dogs, or other non-cat animals. Lilypad must always remain an indoor kitty and needs to be fed a nutritionally complete and balanced diet.

Lilypad's adopter must be at least 18 years old with valid state issued identification.

ARF encourages family members to participate in the adoption process, especially children. Please visit www.arflife.org information on adoption and to view more cute canines and great cats. Meet your forever friend at Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation at 2890 Mitchell Drive in Walnut Creek. Adoption hours are: Noon to 6 pm Wednesday & Thursday, Noon to 7 pm Friday, and Noon to 6 pm Saturday & Sunday. Special adoption hours Tuesdays 11/26, 12/3 12/10 & 12/17, Noon to 6 pm.



Ruby Dooby Do to the Rescue

Prince is a sweet, loving, black Standard Poodle being fostered by NorCalPoodleRescue, Inc. (NCPR). He is housebroken and suitable for almost any home. He gets along with other dogs and is playful. He will be neutered before adoption. Prince has a skin condition that requires weekly baths and skin treatments with baby oil. Sebaceous adenitis is not a life-threatening condition, but there is no cure. As such, it requires someone willing to make the long-term commitment to take proper care of him.

Prince's adoption fee is \$650. Prince required gastropexy surgery to address a stomach condition. Because of his health issues, his adoption fee reflects some of his veterinary costs. If interested in Prince, please fill out an adoption interest form: <http://www.norcalpoodlerescue.net/adoptioninterestform.html>.

NCPR is a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3). In addition to tax-deductible donations, you can support their rescue efforts by donating your car, sponsoring a poodle, or buying a calendar. They are having a foster, walker, and volunteer recruitment event on Weds. Nov. 6 at Pet Food Express in Walnut Creek from 6:15 to 7 p.m. You can also attend their upcoming Holiday Brunch on Sunday Dec. 8th at Crow Canyon Country Club, 11 to 2 pm (\$55) fundraisers: For more information email them at norcalpoodlerescueinc@gmail.com.



Dog Bites

"Pawsitive" News: If your pet is microchipped, your odds of recovering a lost pet are nearly doubled. A study of ~7,700 stray animals

at animal shelters revealed that dogs without microchips were returned to their owners 21.9% of the time, whereas microchipped dogs were returned to their owners 52.2% of the time. Those microchipped animals not returned to their owners was often due to incorrect owner information in the microchip registry database. If your dog is microchipped, have you moved? Changed your cell phone number?

Lost pets are at risk of being hit by vehicles, attacked by other animals, or taken in by a well-meaning stranger that believes your pet has been intentionally abandoned. Take a few minutes before the holidays to call the microchip registry to verify that the contact information hasn't changed. If your pet isn't microchipped, a quick trip to the vet is all it takes to provide your pet with a potential life-saving safety net.

VIP Pet Care will microchip your pet for as little as \$20 which includes lifetime registration and you don't need an appointment, just call your local Pet

Food Express to find out their hours. It could be the difference between quickly reuniting you with your lost pet and a great deal of heartache.

A Bone to Pick: Black Dog Syndrome (BDS) is a term used to describe a phenomenon that black dogs in need of a new home may face an uphill battle compared to their lighter-colored furred cousins. This stigma may be due to the fact that large, black dogs are often portrayed as aggressive in film and on television. Black dogs also do not photograph well giving lighter-colored dogs an advantage when potential adopters are searching for a new pet online. A study presented at the 2013 International Society for Anthrozoology conference that showed participants pictures of cats and dogs of varying colors found yellow dogs were considered friendliest, brown dogs second friendliest, and black dogs least friendly. Darker pets were similarly judged less adoptable and black dogs were considered the most aggressive. However, science doesn't necessarily confirm that BDS is real. A 2013 Master's thesis analysis of ~17,000 dogs at two Pacific Northwest shelters found that black dogs were adopted more quickly than average at both shelters. No doubt there are a number of variables surrounding BDS. Prince was selected for my column based on his fur color this month to give a black dog a boost in exposure.

Editor's Note: Ruby is Concord's Instagram celebrity with approximately 93,500 followers on 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.

Generosity, Hard Work is Formula for Rags to Riches

Manuel Perales's life story may be one of the best 'rags to riches' tale you will hear from a Concord resident. Perales immigrated to the Los Angeles area illegally at the age of 15. He had only an elementary education and didn't speak English. Today he owns 19 El Pollo Locos with a 20th on the way. His formula for his success: work hard, have mentors, and be very generous to those in need. He is the epitome of the American dream.

Among his generosity, he recently donated 150 burritos to feed firemen in Sonoma County fighting the Kincade fire; support he has done many times for firemen of past fires. His El Pollo Loco stores are also participating in a program with both corporate and other franchisees' to package the store's unsold food each day and donate to local non-profits within their respective communities.

Perales came to the US to be with his 16-year-old brother who had also immigrated a few months earlier. Together they stayed with some relatives, briefly, in a garage conversion, then in hotels for a short time, spent nights on the streets, and slept in friends' cars. The two were on their own. They finally moved into a single apartment with nine other tenants and split the rent at \$55 per month each.

Perales struggled finding a job. "What I had was a great attitude. I was eager to learn," he stated. "Today that's what I look for in people. I look for applicants with a positive attitude because I can train them from there."

While his brother was working as a dishwasher, he would come in and just help him do the dish-

es. He wasn't paid, but the cooks at the restaurant would feed him. It was the only way he could eat.

When Perales finally found paid work, it quickly turned into three jobs: Popeyes preparing biscuits, a busboy, and a dishwasher, all at different restaurants.

"After one year, my brother and I saved \$10,000 and we bought our first house in Mexico. I was 17," he says proudly. Perales didn't spend money on clothes, and since he worked in restaurants, he didn't spend much on groceries because he was getting fed every day for free. He also didn't spend on entertainment as he had no free time.

In 1989, he was hired at El Pollo Loco as an assistant manager and within a year he became General Manager by the time he was 19. He managed a store opening in Sherman Oaks which was extremely successful. That got the corporation's attention.

He quickly rose to District Manager and then became a franchisee consultant to 27 stores.

Through his career, he moved his family about every four years. Perales had worked for the corporation for 11 years before he became interested in becoming an owner.

He finally became an owner on May 5,



Cali Leidgen and Shelby Scott deliver a care package of donated El Pollo Loco burritos, along with Gatorade, bananas, oranges and baby wipes to firefighters battling the Kincade fire.

2000 (Ironically, Cinco de Mayo). He had bought into two franchises, Salinas and San Jose. With his family living in Sacramento, he rented a San Jose apartment for himself. He realized he was missing too much family time so they moved to Concord where they have remained for 15 years.

"From day one, my goal was to have 15 restaurants, and my 15th store was the Monument Blvd. location that opened March 1."

"Most of my financial needs were met a long time ago, probably after the first five restaurants," he says. "As I buy more restaurants, the financial is not as important. Once you get your basic needs: food, shelter, and education, anything else that you make is irrelevant. What I learned in this journey is my purpose in life is helping others."

Perales says he obtained his legal status and GED a long time ago, but attributes his real education to the "University of El Pollo Loco."

"I would do it all over because it was the best learning experience. I learned the importance of having a job, making money, and not counting on anybody. I learned to do things on my own at a very early age. By the time I was 20, I had a very clear vision of what I wanted to do."

"Now I look for ways to help others. When I open a restaurant, I don't see it as adding income into my pocket, I see it as giving opportunity to people. To open a new store, I hire 50 people which generates taxes, plus there's architects, plumbers, construction workers, etc."

He also enjoys mentoring, helping people to become owners of their own business both here and in Mexico.

"I am beyond blessed. I came here at the age of 15 illegally with no education and not able to speak English, and I have done okay. If I can make it with all those obstacles, then anybody can be extremely successful if they put their mind to it."



October Whirlwind at CVCHS

October was a whirlwind of campus events and activities here at Clayton Valley Charter High School as we jumped into Fall.

On October 16th CVCHS hosted the school's first annual College-Bound Day. While everyone from staff to parents to students and administrators were wondering how the day would go, it is exciting to announce that the event was a rousing success, topped off by the 99.7% student attendance for the day. I was encouraged to see all our students engaged in activities related to their post-high school experience. Our 9th graders went on college tours across the Bay Area and Northern California, including as far as Chico. 10th and 11th graders participated in practice college entrance exams as students completed the practice ACT and PSAT respectively. Seniors took part in college workshops focused on applications, essays, financial aid, scholarships, resume building and more.

College-Bound Day was followed by CVCHS career and community service fair on Friday, October 25th. This event was hosted on the CVCHS campus and provided students an opportunity to engage face to face with prospective employers, internship providers, and other opportunities beyond campus. Overall, College-Bound Day and the career fair provided students of all grades an opportunity to visualize success beyond high school while also exposing them to the practical skills and knowledge

required to open doors for themselves following graduation from CVCHS.

If the two events above were not enough, October 16th was also the date of CVCHS' public hearing as the school continues through the charter renewal process. This evening event, attended by over 300 members of the CVCHS community, was the most important highlight of the month. Witnessing the large turnout of students, parents and faculty supporting our charter renewal at the Contra Costa County Board of Education meeting reinforced what we all know – that CVCHS students are achieving and that the school has exceeded the renewal criteria for charter schools

as established in California's Education Code. It was inspiring to see our school community come together sharing personal experiences and demonstrating the quality of education that each of our student is receiving – one that all students deserve.

One of the evening's highlights featured our Special Education Department staff and the families they serve. The County Board heard some powerful commentary about the important work

we are doing at Clayton Valley and the individual successes of these awesome kids. These stories were shared by students, parents and staff members.

Leading this department, we are fortunate to have Brian Biggs as our new Director of Special Education. Brian, along with his dedicated team of teachers and support staff, serves the needs of over 160 students who qualify for special education services such as speech and hearing impairments, processing difficulties and other learning challenges. Brian oversees a department of more than 20 professionals including teachers, classroom special assistants, a school psychologist, a marriage and family therapist, a full-time school nurse along with several independent contractors providing specialized services. In addition, CVCHS is looking to expand this team by adding another psychologist to the staff.

"Our goal for each student is to develop the necessary skills to graduate, ensure students can compensate for their challenges and become independent. We are setting these kids up for success for their post-secondary transitions,"



Brian Biggs, CVCHS Director of Special Education



Students show support for CVCHS charter renewal

says Brian. "Personally, it's rewarding to witness their daily achievements. I credit much to our outstanding program, dedicated faculty and the strong partnerships we share collaborating with our families."

As mentioned above, Clayton Valley Charter High School offers so much for so many. I would encourage community leaders to mark the evening of December 11th on your calendar. That night the Contra Costa County Board of Education will be casting their votes during open session on the renewal of CVCHS' charter. Just as the community did on October 16th, it is vital that everyone turn out again to demonstrate our support for CVCHS. We need to ensure the County Board hears all voices during this crucial meeting on December 11th. I look forward to seeing you there and thank you in advance for your ongoing support.



Gun Buyback Event at Concord Pavilion

The Concord Police Department in partnership with the Clayton and Walnut Creek Police Departments will be hosting a "community gun buyback event" at the Concord Pavilion on Saturday, November 16, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. This event is an opportunity for Concord, Walnut Creek and Clayton residents to anonymously exchange their firearms for gift cards.

The idea of a Gun Buy Back is to provide a volunteer basis for people who want to get rid of their guns and remove them from the market. There are often cases where people either inherit guns or no longer want them in the house and want to make sure that they are not able to be used by anyone else. I have one friend who inherited 60 guns from their parents and there is no commercial method to make sure that the weapons are destroyed.

Residents may be asked to show an ID or utility bill, but only to establish residency in one of the three sponsoring cities. Participants will receive \$200 in gift cards for an assault weapon, \$100 in gift cards for handguns and \$50 in gift cards for rifles or shotguns. Each attendee will have a maximum gift card limit of \$1000.

The gift cards are donated so that there is minimal taxpayer impact in this sort of event that realistically can only be done at this time by law



enforcement.

All of the guns collected will be destroyed on a later date. It is a way to dispose of guns safely without them winding up in general circulation.

For safety reasons, residents interested in turning in their guns for gift cards please adhere to the following rules:

Transport all firearms to the Concord Pavilion unloaded

Keep all firearms stored in the trunk or locked container during transporta-

tion AND arrival

DO NOT remove the firearm from the vehicle.

Please remain inside of you vehicle during the actual surrendering process

There will no walk-up firearm surrenders.

This particular effort was initiated by the City of Concord with my full support as a service to our community. Concord Pavilion is located 2000 Kirk- er Pass Rd.



Letter to Editor: Rebuttal

Does Edi Birsan Really Not Know Who His Constituents Are?

With an election year coming fast, incumbents seeking reelection should probably know exactly who their constituents are. Concord City Councilmember Edi Birsan, however, is unclear on that point.

In his October column, the District 4 Councilmember suggests that the word "constituent" is ambiguous. To him, "constituency" can mean: active voters; those who are registered to vote (active or not); those who are eligible but not registered (adult citizens); all those who live within his district (including children and residents without citizenship); those who don't live in his district but reside elsewhere in Concord; and even those who don't live in Concord at all (business owners, potential investors, neighboring communities).

There's only one problem: constituency is not as ambiguous as Birsan posits. Sure, some may interpret the word differently than others, but straying too far from the actual definition can be problematic.

Rhetorical questions about the meaning of words and phrases can help us understand unintended messaging in connotation, tone, or context. That said, the 19 questions Birsan posed in his column don't appear to strive for clarity. Quite the opposite.

In his column, Birsan asks the reader to join him in considerable mental gymnastics as he repeatedly asserts that there is no clear definition of "constituent", or if there is, it isn't universally understood. Even when understood, he argues there's no trustworthy way to determine what the "majority" wants on any given issue.

CCA considers that by intentionally obfuscating these points, Birsan is setting the stage to defend any possible acts against the expressed interests

of his constituents. We hope that for those Concord residents who do raise their voices, your councilmember will know who you are and what your perspective should mean to him or her.

Last month, Birsan asked Gazette readers 19 rhetorical questions. This month CCA will leave you with one:

"Why is Councilmember Birsan publicly suggesting that there is ambiguity with regard to whom he is elected to serve?"

To be clear, councilmembers are free to take whatever position they want on any issue. If redefining their constituency helps them to validate that position, that's their choice. Asking Concord residents to buy into that murkiness, however, is a tall order. Asking us to go along with being ignored violates crucial values.

At CCA, we hope for the sake of our entire city that Birsan's constituents in District 4 make themselves heard on all issues that greatly impact our community, whether their positions align with ours or not. Moreover, we hope that by hearing from them, Edi finds the answers to his many questions about who his constituents are, and to what weight their desires should be given in his deliberations. We also invite Birsan's constituents to return a question to him:

"How many years spent serving as a Concord City Councilmember does it take to be clear on whom you represent?"

-- Dave Hughes, Concord Community Alliance

Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of Diablo Gazette. Send any comments to diablogazette@gmail.com. Responses should be 500 words or less.

THE JOURNEY-MAN JOURNAL
by Eileen Majors and Melissa Wynn

Holiday Visit to Highlands Ranch Resort and Lassen Volcanic National Park

One way to get in the holiday mood, is to take a trip into the woods... especially that wonderland that surrounds a giant volcanic park in our own NorCal backyard. Lassen Volcanic National Park's southwest entrance at Mill Creek offers a year-round park experience from Kohm Yah-mah-nee Visitor Center. We enjoy the scenic drive past boiling mud-pots and steaming ground of this active volcano. Whether it is a fabulous fall hike or one of winter's cross-country ski and snowshoe adventures, the beauty and wonder of Lassen awaits our exploration.

Now is as good a time as any to head to the mountains. Last year, we arrived on a chilly November afternoon to be greeted by the amazing views of Brokeoff Mountain (also called Mount Tehema) standing against a crystal-blue, cloudless sky. For sheer beauty and rugged mountain scenery the Brokeoff trail is one of the best in Lassen.

In a ride that seemed to be just over the river and through the woods (roughly 50 miles) east from Red Bluff had landed us in Mills Creek at Highlands Ranch Resort, a luxurious lodge created to compliment nature. The natural wood and stone buildings seemed to fit right into the picturesque scene from the highway. We were in for an elegant stay with excellent dining and a full bar, all set in a serene meadow. Highlands' stunning 175-acre estate shows off seven beautiful cottages, each equipped with comforting amenities and loaded with rustic elegance. They offer rentals of cross-country



Guest cabin at Highlands Ranch

Photo by Melissa Wynn

soak after dinner.

Each cabin has a gas fireplace for those chilly mountain evenings and a flashlight for dark, yet starry nights. Large windows show off views in every direction. Rehberg and Owner Kevin Wilsey couldn't have chosen a better location to build this resort; perched on the edge of a sprawling meadow with Lassen Volcanic National Park right next door.

On this trip, the plan was to enjoy the beauty of the mountains and Lassen Volcanic Park in amid the warmth and comfort of luxury accommodations.

After Rehberg showed us around and explained the TV and fireplace remotes, we settled into big cozy chairs for a cup of delicious in-room coffee to watch the news on our high-definition television before sitting out back to enjoy the views.

Every comfort was considered. Hardwood and slate tile floors add to the rustic charm of the cabin's interior, resulting in the high-end look so present in every detail built into Highlands Ranch Resort right down to the heated bathroom floors. No expense was spared.

Our friends had been raving about the restaurant back in the main lodge where you can take a seat by the giant fire-

place, nestle into a corner sitting area, or join the company at the bar. We eagerly wandered back over there for dinner. We chose a cushioned booth by the window at the suggestion of our server who pointed out the incredible view of the stars twinkling over the moonlit meadow. Cloth napkins and candles graced our

handmade table that was built on-site from reclaimed wood. Our dinners were deliciously prepared and beautifully presented. I would say exquisite.

Surrounded by crisp mountain air, nestled under luxury linens, atop a very comfy bed, I slept like a baby. The morning views surpassed our expectations as we soaked in the steamy water. We soon headed over for a divine chef-created breakfast, which was included with our stay. Our view was much different than the previous evening. Daylight presented wide views of lush meadows and beautiful mountain scenes surrounding



skis and snowshoes.

We met Wendy Rehberg, proprietor, who escorted us down a stone path past several cabins to our beautiful cottage-home for the night. Named Meadow's Edge for its great location, this cottage has a two-person outdoor jacuzzi-style tub, which she immediately checked to ensure we could take a steamy



a visit during the upcoming Holidays at Highlands Ranch:

Thanksgiving Dinner Thursday, November 28

Chef Joe's Christmas Dinner - Saturday, December 21

New Year's Eve Party - Tuesday, December 31

Wine Pairing Dinner Series - First & Third Fridays, December through April

Learn more at HighlandsRanchResort.com.

Lassen National Forest Christmas Tree Adventure

If you are ready for a wild adventure, you may consider cutting down your own Christmas tree in the forest. Permits are \$10 and may be used to cut one tree on the Lassen National Forest between November 1 and December 21. Each household may purchase up to two permits. With the permit, buyers will receive a map showing cutting areas, requirements, and helpful tips. Mail-in requests must be received by Friday, December 7. About 20 minutes from the cabin on Highway 36, you can pick up a permit at the Almanor Ranger Station, 900 East Hwy. 36 (P.O. Box 767), Chester, CA 96020 (530) 258-2141

From the Bay Area, take Highway 680 North, to Highway 80 East to Highway 505 North. Head north on I-5 to Red Bluff. You will see signs to Mt. Lassen Volcanic National Park. Take Antelope Road exit. Go right exactly two miles; turn left onto Highway 36 to your destination. Visit www.nps.gov/lavo/planyourvisit/conditions.htm.

the cabins and lodge.

Our meals were delicious. Our stay was amazing at Highland's Ranch Resort.

If you are now inspired, here are a few special events you may consider for



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Concord Elks Fundraiser Was Magic

The Mt. Diablo Assembly of Magicians and the Society of Young Magicians put on a show for a dinner hosted by the Concord Elks. The benefit raised nearly \$1000 which was split to support the magicians and add to the Elks "Purple Pig", a piggy bank of funds to support several of Elks community causes.

In the picture, some of the Magicians is with Jan Waite (Elks Leading Knight) praising them for "A Job Well Done".



A Master Plan on Aging

by Lorna Van

On June 10, 2019, Governor Newsom signed an executive order calling for the creation of a Master Plan for Aging to be developed by October 1, 2020 to serve as a blueprint to address the patchwork of public services, social isolation, need of transportation, the nursing and CNA shortage, demand for In-Home Supportive Services and support of the family caregiver.

At Hillendale Home Care, I am integrally involved with helping families care for their loved one in our community. I found the governor's executive order that acknowledges the need for a thoughtfully organized plan to be a beginning step.

The challenges of meeting the diverse needs of California's aging population is great. For the first time in history, California's "grayest generation" will outnumber young children. Our state has over 6 million people age 65 and over (Contra Costa County has over 198,572 people 65+) and that number will increase to more than 8.6 million by

2030. Every week, over 10,000 Californians turn 65.

But that's only a fraction of the story. As we already know, the system is having difficulty prioritizing state resources to help older Californians "Age in Place." You don't have to look hard to see a fragmented system that lacks easy access to service, poor transportation systems, lack of affordable housing and not enough trained caregivers to meet the state's needs. For many older Californians, decent housing is out of reach. In fact, one in every five California residents over 65 lives in poverty.

Many older adults are financially wiped out by the need for long-term care and must eventually rely on MediCal when their savings run out. What can we look forward to as our population continues to grow old? Should not all Californians be empowered to age with dignity and independence?

The Master Plan on Aging will always be a work in progress; however, the time to start getting our house in order is now.



theRIGHTmove
by Terrylynn Fisher, Broker Associate
www.BuyStageSell.com

Keep Your Home Show Ready

You can maximize your chances of an offer by remembering that the buyer looking today is seeing your home for the first time. Therefore, handle every showing appointment with the same enthusiasm, preparation, and staging in place, just as it was on the day you had your professional photographs. What? You haven't staged yet because you were waiting to see if the house sold first?

The law of diminishing return says, "the longer the market time, the lower the price". Don't delay and get your home staged so that the next buyer coming through has the opportunity to view your home at its best. You may have lost that valuable first two weeks market time when the most buyers come through a new listing. And, the buyers that have already been through your home may not give you a second chance to make a first impression.

Here are some tips for keeping your home ready for a showing at any time.

STAGE - If you haven't done so, stage, or refresh the staging and primp using your professional photos to remind you how each room should be presented for the showing.

LANDSCAPE - Keep the plants and flowers watered, trimmed, and lawns mowed so the buyer who wants a yard can appreciate what you are presenting.

DECLUTTER - Put away all those personal items and knick-knacks you've brought out little by little. You want to keep your home neutral.

CLEAN - Clean windows, floors, and remove laundry, trash, and litter boxes. There should be no pet, dirty socks, or cooking odors.

VACATE - Remove your pets and leave, if possible, so that the buyer can

view the home without hesitating to open cabinets and closets and drawers or linger in a room without feeling self-conscious.

FRESHEN UP - Put out fresh flowers and/or plants in place of older tired ones. Fresh smells should be subtle, and rooms should smell clean. Febreeze and/or Lysol or fabric softener under the sofa cushions works well to add a fresh scent.

ACCESSIBILITY - Make your home available when the buyer can view your home. Many professions have odd working hours, hospital workers, firemen, police, etc. The day and time they are asking to view your home might be their only day off for days or weeks. If you are cooking dinner, continue and sit at the table and eat, while they view your home. Otherwise, wait on dinner, or eat first and clean up quickly.

Remember, this might be their first time to visit, and/or the only time they will have an opportunity to visit. The more you can do to make your home available and ready to show, the more you optimize your chances to get an offer from the next buyer coming through the door. **GOOD LUCK.**

Terrylynn Fisher, Broker, #1 in Units sold in 2018, Dudum Real Estate, DRE#01882902, Senior Real Estate Specialist (SRES), 5 YR-5 Star Professional Voted by clients, and Voted by panel of Brokers, One of Top 500 Brokers in the nation. She's got the experience. For a Buying or Selling Plan, call 925 876- 0966, info@BuyStageSell.com. DRE#00615420

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MK ULTRA VICTIM: The Shaman Boy Who Protected Us

by David King and Bill Yarborough



Bill Yarborough of Clayton has lived a successful adult life, working for a large public accounting firm and then in the financial industry. He

has also served as president for two non-profits and has written a novel for which he is currently seeking publication. Although it is fiction, it is based on his real-life experiences which is far from normal.

In the September and October's issues of the Diablo Gazette, Bill recalled his time as a young child, age 4, in what he concluded was the CIA's notorious MK-Ultra program; an experience he

endured with his younger brother and older sister. He also described the startling manner in which their repressed memories arose.

MK-Ultra was a secret mind-control program operated by the CIA in the 1950s. The New York Times first exposed it in 1974, and a number of government and journalistic investigations followed. Recently Stephen Kinzer's *Poisoner in Chief* was published with shocking details about Sidney Gottlieb—the man who headed up MK-ULTRA. The book was featured by The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and NPR's Fresh Air.

Although MK-Ultra experimented predominately on adults, it also placed children in a program designed to create super soldiers and spies. The goal was to reprogram them by putting the mind in a state of shock by using electroshock, drugs, isolation, psychological assault and other traumas. It took 30 years before Bill and his brother and sister cracked open the Pandora's box of repressed memories, an awakening that began in the 1980s.

Bill shares how these experiences impacted him throughout his life and the healing process he underwent to undo its damaging influence.

I'm often asked how my childhood experiences in MK-ULTRA impacted me. They did in substantial ways.

Before I embarked on my healing journey, I was terrified of authority figures, sometimes breaking into a stutter in their presence and on rare occasions losing my capacity to speak altogether. I was convinced I would never have an intimate relationship. In fact, simple social interactions made me uneasy, causing me to become something of a loner during periods of my life. I had a streak of paranoia, frequently fearing the worst possible outcomes. I was

driven by unknown, unconscious forces, including an obsession to become President of the United States, which I later concluded was programmed into me.

Then there were my over-reactions to situations, that I couldn't understand. One night I watched the 1964 movie "The Manchurian Candidate" and totally freaked out—unable to sleep the entire night without any idea why. Finally, it took enormous energy to keep my memories repressed, making concentration difficult and leaving me at times exhausted.

So what did I do to heal? I'm not fully healed yet, but I've made progress. After my brother, sister, and I began to remember our repressed childhood traumas, I knew I needed help. The first healing approach I used was psychotherapy. I was fortunate to have been guided by two great therapists, first in Texas, then in California. They helped me work through my memories—and led me through an array of healing modalities.

One key modality was hypnotherapy. There is a misconception that one does not have control under hypnotherapy, but I never found that to be the case. It simply puts you into a relaxed state, making it easier to get in touch with the issues troubling you. The version of hypnotherapy I like best is called Journey Work, where you travel back to a past experience, confront it, let out your feelings, offer forgiveness, then re-invent it as if it happened in a different and better way. It's a bit like the visualization athletes use to improve performance.

There are also techniques like EMDR, Reiki, and Emotional Freedom Technique often called EFT or Tapping. Following the concept of Chinese acupressure, EFT involves tapping on a set of energy meridians to relieve emotional and physical issues. It is easy to use—and you can engage in it on your own.

Early in my healing journey I did have a life-changing breakthrough that turned out to be the most powerful healing event of my life. My brother, sister, and I spent a week of daily sessions with my therapist in Texas trying to sort through our memories of electroshock, drugs, isolation, sexual abuse, psychological assault, and other traumas—which we would connect to MK-ULTRA a decade later.

In our final session that week, my therapist complemented us on our ability to withstand such shocks without becoming more psychologically damaged, emphasizing how difficult it is to survive such experiences without a contravening positive influence.

"I see no evidence that you had the benefit of such an influence during that time period," he said. "Therefore, you must be very strong individuals."

I felt empty at the complement, as if somehow it wasn't true.

Emotionally exhausted from the daily sessions, I tried to take a nap as soon as we returned home but couldn't sleep. I kept thinking that there may have been a boy in the program who helped us. Later, I asked my sister, if we could take a drive together.

"How did you feel about my therapist's comment about us being strong individuals?" I asked a few minutes into our drive.

"Empty, false," she said. "Deep down, I don't believe it's true. I've been dreaming all week about a mysterious boy. I wonder if a boy helped us survive the program?"

"Yes, that's exactly what I've wondered," I said.

Moments later, a terrifying memory arose. I recalled staring at the body of a dead boy on an altar who'd just been murdered. Overwhelming pain like a knife cut through me, leaving a gaping

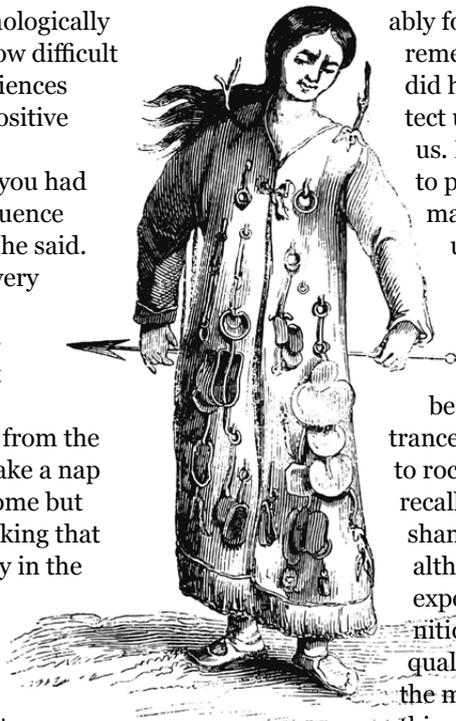
loss. My sister gasped. I instinctively stuffed the memory—and the accompanying pain—back down. But I'd experienced enough of the sorrow and its opposite, the boy's unconditional love, that the moment was transforming. I knew something had hit my sister, too, and I told her that I just recalled a murder.

"Me too," she said. "What did you remember?" I asked. "A dead boy on an altar covered in blood."

"That's exactly what I recall." As with previous repressed memories that surfaced, we compared specifics to ensure we had the same recollection. And that night we mourned the death of someone we knew knowing about—other than that his death had created a great hole in us.

As time passed, a picture emerged. I recalled that he spoke Spanish and English, and I suspected he was from Mexico. That fit with my sister's belief

that he was an Indian and came from a shamanic tribe. I concluded that he was older than we, probably fourteen. We remembered that he did his best to protect us and comfort us. He also seemed to possess shamanic gifts and used unique approaches to counteract our traumas. The one I remember the most is trance dancing—often to rock 'n' roll. I also recalled dream-like shamanic journeys, although those experiences by definition had a surreal quality. In the end, the most powerful thing he did was



to give us love in a place where there was no love. Eventually, he was murdered because he tried to help us escape.

I believe the psychological damage inflicted upon my sister and me was significantly mitigated by the actions of this boy. Unfortunately, my brother, who was younger and more vulnerable, experienced lasting and more extensive psychological damage, typical of many other individuals who were children in MK-ULTRA.

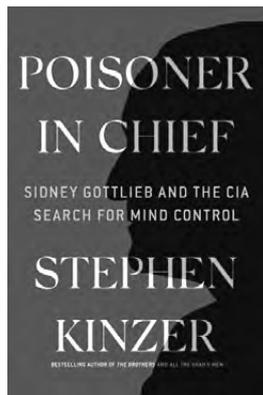
A decade later when I first heard about MK-ULTRA and its experiments on children, I read that not only American kids were placed in this program—but Canadian, Mexican, and South American children as well.

The memory of the Mexican boy had a profound impact on my life. For example, when my sister visited my brother and me during our week-long sessions with my therapist, she had commented on my lonely lifestyle.

"I think you need to find someone to build a life with." Having recently gotten re-married, she wrote down the telephone number of a local dating service and strongly suggested I call it.

"Not in a thousand years," I thought. I had no interest in an intimate relationship. But the day after I remembered the Mexican boy, that changed. Later that week I dialed the dating service and met my future wife within three months. A year later we were married, and since she came as a package deal with three children, I stepped right into a ready-made family.

There were challenges, of course, but it's the best thing that happened to me. In the end, I believe the memory of the Mexican boy and the healing avenues I've followed have allowed me to live a rewarding life.





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Views of the Valley

Photos by Micah



The Concord Library had a special visit from the Ygnacio Valley High School Robotics Club.



In October, next to Trick or Treating, a visit to the pumpkin patch is one of kids greatest joys. Photo courtesy Preston Photography and Visit Concord.



Hiking Mt. Diablo to Black Point Summit is a good trail for seeing tarantulas. Photo courtesy of Preston Photography and Visit Concord.



October 18, Martinez. Every year, Zombies come out for the Main Street Martinez Zombie Brew Crawl.

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