

The Sourdough Kids' Bread for Blankets



Keira, Devin and Leena Lambda knead dough for their loaves of sour-dough bread to be sold to buy blankets for the homeless as Dad, Manoj supervises.

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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 local businesses 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.

The program will mostly be using Amazon Wish List due to Covid. However, there with the traditional gift tags at Old Spaghetti Factory and Min's Kitchen in Concord.

Virtual Tree

There are two ways you can buy gifts. Go online to beasantatoasenor.com, enter Concord as the location, and you will see a list of seniors in Concord that have requested gifts. Place the gift in the Amazon shopping cart and purchase. Amazon will deliver your gift to the City of Concord's Senior Center who will sort, wrap with the help of local Cub Scout troops, and labeled. Girl Scout Troops will be writing letters that will be added in with the present. Volunteers will deliver the gifts to the appropriate agency before Christmas.

"This year there are 299 seniors on the list," said Kathryn Monroy, Recreation program manager for the City of Concord, and staff liaison to the Commission on Aging.

In addition to the Virtual Tree, Old Spaghetti Factory, 1955 Mt. Diablo Street, and Mins Kitchen, 3505 Clayton Rd. each has a tree with ornaments (gift tag) with



the request from the senior. Simply take the gift tag with you, and buy that gift and bring it along with the gift tag back to the place where you picked the ornament.

In Clayton, the Better Homes Realtor office of Jennifer Stojanovich and George Vujnovich has adopted 50 seniors at the Stonebrook Healthcare Center in Concord. If you would like to be assigned a senior to adopt, please contact their office and they will provide you with the name and wish list for an elderly member in our community. You can email: betterhomesast@yahoo.com or stop by their office at 6160 Center St, Ste E to pick an ornament with a senior's name. All donations will be due by December 20.

Volunteers will then transport the unwrapped gifts to the Senior Center for processing. For more information about "Be a Santa to a Senior" please visit their website at www.beasantatoasenor.com or call Kathryn Monroy at 925-671-3004.

Five Winners Tie in Concord Taco Trail Challenge

The second annual Concord Taco Trail Challenge has officially wrapped up with a bang. A total of five competitors successfully completed the full passport trail that features a whopping 47 total check-in locations.

Jeff Child, Justin Cook, Spencer Silvestre, Robert Furlow and Ernesto Hernandez were the top finalists who achieved elite "Trail Master" status by visiting all participating locations during the Challenge period that occurred between September 15 and October 15, 2021, rendering the contest a tie.

Visit Concord honored the group at a special event at the Concord Visitor Center in Todos Santos Plaza. CEO & President Elaine Schroth selected Hernandez's name in a random drawing among the finalists as the new 2021 Concord Taco Trail Champion.

All finalists received a Trail Master certificate and gift pack, while Hernandez also received the 2021 Taco Trail Champion trophy.

In a separate competition, the coveted Golden Taco trophy for Fan Favorite Taqueria was awarded to Taqueria Los Arcos on Clayton Rd, who scored the most check-ins during the Challenge period of all participating restaurants and taquerias.

With nearly 1,000 sign-ups for the free mobile Taco Trail Passport, this year's event had a significant increase in the number of participants and restaurant visits over last year. In contrast with this year's five top finishers, last year's Champion, Leyanne Amos, was the only competitor to visit all 32 designated check-in points during the event.

While the Taco Trail Challenge event for this year has ended, the Taco Trail passport continues on through next September. Taco fans can start by downloading the free mobile passport through the Visit Concord website. Participants can still earn a Taco Trail shirt with just 10 check-ins. Or, go for Trail Master status by visiting all locations.

For more information about



Ernesto Hernandez is awarded the trophy as Champion



Taco Trailmasters Jeff Child, Justin Cook, Spencer Silvestre, and Ernesto Hernandez. Not shown, Robert Furlow.



Fan Favorite Taqueria Los Arcos on 4530 Clayton Rd.

the Concord Taco Trail, including a downloadable Taco Trail map of all participating locations, go to visitconcordca.com, or follow Visit Concord on Instagram ([visitconcordca](https://www.instagram.com/visitconcordca)) and Facebook ([VisitConcordCA](https://www.facebook.com/VisitConcordCA)).



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California minimum wage to increase in January

Year	Employers With 25 or Fewer Employees	Employers With 26 or More Employees
2019	\$11.00	\$12.00
2020	\$12.00	\$13.00
2021	\$13.00	\$14.00
2022	\$14.00	\$15.00
2023	\$15.00	\$15.00

Workers making minimum in California are set to receive a bump in pay starting in January.

The state's current minimum wage is \$13 an hour for companies with fewer than 25 employees and \$14 for larger companies. Smaller companies will start paying \$14 an hour beginning Jan. 1, 2022. Larger workplaces with more than 25 employees will pay \$15 an hour.

Yearly increases to California's minimum wage have been in place since 2017, when the pay was bumped to \$10 an hour for small companies and \$10.50 for large companies. The last increase is scheduled for 2023, when small companies will be required to pay \$15 an

hour. The federal minimum wage has not budged since being set at \$7.25 an hour in 2009. However, state legislatures can enact their own wage increases and set higher minimums.

California's minimum wage is the second highest in the country. Washington, D.C., has the highest with \$15 an hour.

Counties and cities can establish even higher minimum wages than what is set at the state and federal levels.

Something special is coming to Concord

As we joyfully celebrate the holidays with family and friends this month, I am also excited to tell you about something special we can all look forward to in the New Year.

Creative Concord is a legacy initiative bringing the arts to Concord in a big way and you can be a part of making it happen.

Over the next several months, ten contemporary murals will be painted on select buildings throughout the city. These incredible works of art will be a beautiful and lasting tribute to our community and will serve to establish Concord as a definitive cultural experience destination.

The large murals will be painted by top artists and reflective of the things that make Concord the vibrant, unique, diverse and historically rich city that we all love. The projects will start just after the new year and will be completed by late spring. The ultimate intent is to strategically elevate Concord's presence and perception as burgeoning artistic center in the East Bay. This strategy has been launched by many other creative cities across the country to showcase their community as a great place to live, work and celebrate the arts.

In June 2022, a month-long series of events will celebrate the "unveiling" of the completed projects through live music and dance performances and a variety of temporary art installations. The events will be free and open to the public and will also include interactive activities like community painting sessions, artist talks, and a Maker Faire. The events will benefit the community both culturally and economically.

Creative Concord is supported by Visit Concord, the City of Concord, Concord



One of the most treasured murals is on Salvio Street. Hand-painted by Bay Area Muralist Dan Fontes, it depicts a 4th of July street scene in 1894 inspired by an album of Ruth Galindo's, grand daughter of Concord's founder.

Chamber of Commerce, Concord Art Association and Local Edition Creative. We invite you to learn more about being a founding sponsor or key stakeholder for this rare, one-time opportunity. For more information, please contact Sage Loring at sage@localeditioncreative.com.

And remember, if you have family or friends coming to town for the holidays, Visit Concord is offering Stay & Play Packages with your confirmed reservation at any of our nine hotels. Themed packages are filled with goodies like local gift cards, restaurant coupons and wearables. For more information go to: <https://www.visitconcordca.com/hotels/specials-deals/stay-play-hotel-packages/>,

The Concord Visitor Center is located at 2151 Salvio Street, Suite T in Concord. Contact us at info@visitconcord.com or 925-685-1182. Website: www.visitconcordca.com.

Happy Holidays and we look forward to seeing in the beautiful, art-filled New Year!

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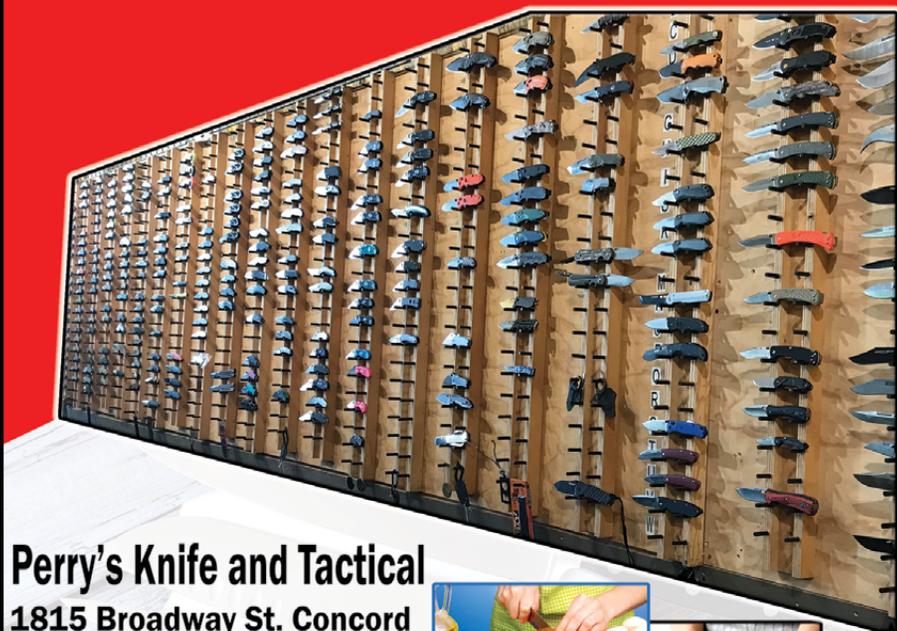
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The City of Concord and the Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce have relaunched the Shop Concord program to support the city's small businesses.

For the second year, the City of Concord has again contributed \$10,000 from its general fund to underwrite bonus gift card with every purchase, while supplies last. Simply purchase a \$100 e-gift card through Shop Concord and receive a free \$50 e-gift card in return, which can be used for purchases at any participating business. In addition, a \$50 and \$20 e-gift card option are also available, whereby consumers receive a \$25 and \$10 e-gift card, respectively, in return.

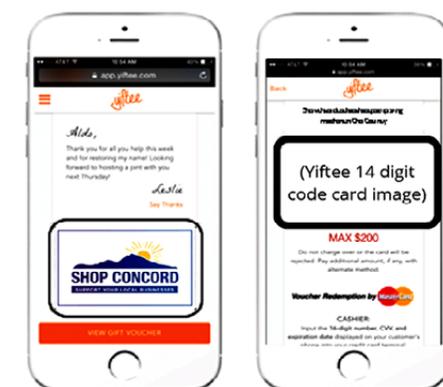
The e-gift cards can be purchased on the City of Concord's Yiftee page until the allotted \$10,000 is distributed. The page also includes a list of participating local merchants. The value of the cards purchased can be redeemed at any participating Concord business. The digital nature of the gift cards allows customers to split the original and bonus portions to keep for themselves or gift to others via text or email.

Businesses can continue to sign up for Shop Concord even after the initial launch, so customers are encouraged to check back frequently to see the expanding merchant list.

As of this press date, there are approximately 70 local participating merchants. There is still time for local business owners to sign up to participate in the Shop Concord program. Instructions for how to become a participating merchant are online at www.concordfirst.com/shop-concord.

Act now. Last year's promotion sold out in a matter of days, distributing all the \$10,000 in matching gift cards.

Even so, do not let "sold out" deter you from purchasing local gift cards as we all benefit when you do.



How to Redeem

Customer presents eGift Card on a mobile device or printed on paper. Transactions will process as a credit card, not a gift card and can only be redeemed at the participating locations. Key in the 16-digit code, CVV, zip code, expiration as required by your PoS.

You may not use the gift card for tipping.

Be sure not to charge more than the prepaid amount, otherwise the transaction will be declined.

To process a payment that exceeds the eGift Card value, enter the card value first, then use another payment method for the remaining transaction amount.

Online/mobile gifts always show the current balance. To check balance on a printed gift, go to

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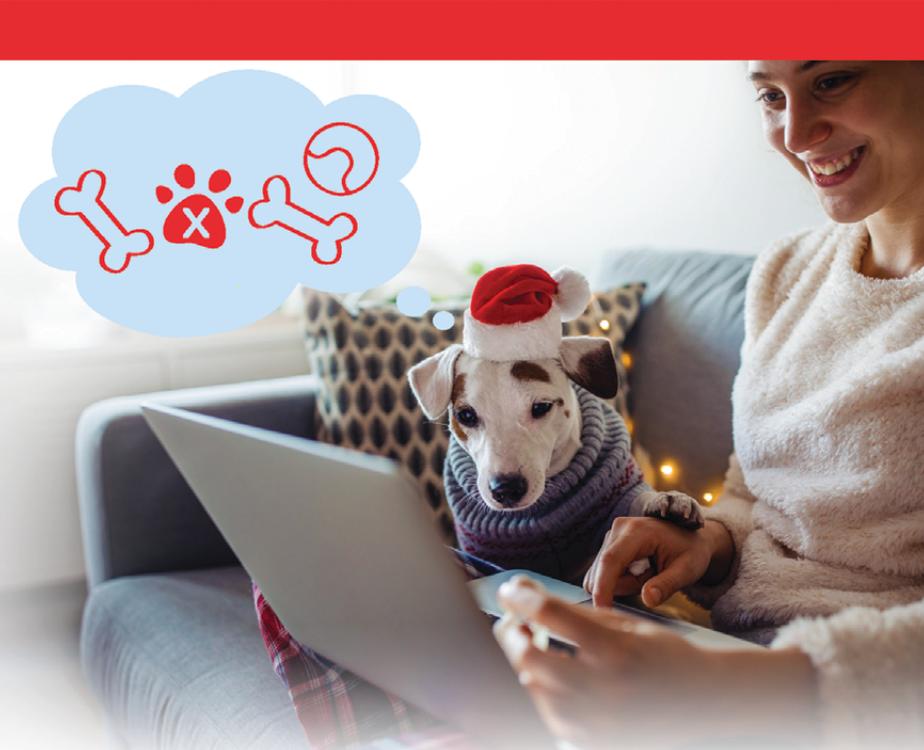
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Dear Santa:



The folks in Concord and our adjacent towns wish you a most merry and happy Christmas. We have been looking forward to your visit and have some of the absolute best Alpine Pastry cookies for you. We have especially been careful to not use our fireplaces often so that the air will be cleaner for you and after all the soot does not go well with red and white trims. We have collected a bunch of wishes for your elves and their friends to consider and would be most grateful if they can be delivered:

1. For our unsheltered neighbors, give a warm blanket of hope to heal their broken spirits and a place to begin a new path to a better life.
2. For the birds of Todos Santos, give their innards a little more determination as they fly by so our statue of Don Salvio Pacheco can be avoided.
3. We need more good people and kindness to one another.
4. The white picket fence downtown on Galindo at Clayton Road continues to attract car crashes. Do you have some fairy dust to stop that?
5. Can we get outside bathrooms at Todos Santos?
6. A directly elected Mayor.
7. Affordable housing that is scattered through the city so we can have neighbors learn to live together.
8. Can someone make Algebra easier so it does not destroy the spirit of our children?
9. Make Covid go away or mutate into a cure for cancer or stupidity.
10. Instead of giving the bad people coal in their stocking, since coal is unhealthy, can you use rocks and smack them on the head with the sock?
11. Can you find the people making Internet viruses and do terrible things to them?
12. Can we have some reasonable periods of rain this winter to end the drought without floods?
13. Our first responders need a boost to know they are appreciated and honored.
14. Finally, may the hope of forgiveness and action in redemption be the best gift of the season for all.

This brought to you by some newspaper delivery person and is the sole product of Edi Birsan and is not associated with any imprisoned reindeer or underpaid elves in need of a pension plan.



Holiday Host Gift Ideas

Entertaining during the holidays can be stressful. There is so much to manage, from cleaning and decorating the house to organizing and cooking a meal. That's why it is such a thoughtful gesture to bring a small gift to your host. It's a terrific way to say thank you for all the hard work they put into creating a wonderful event. While a bottle of wine or a bouquet of flowers are always a good choice, there are many other suitable gifts out there as well. These are our top picks for host gifts this holiday season.



store shelves. You don't even need to spend a fortune to score a good bottle.

A beautiful cookbook - Does your holiday host love to cook? A beautiful new cookbook can be the perfect gift. Think about the kinds of meals or treats that your host loves to make. Did they get on the sourdough bread bandwagon during the pandemic? Or do they tend to make dishes with exotic spices and flavors? There are so many wonderful new cookbooks out there, from southern barbecue to vegan.

Garden essentials - Gardening is another hobby that seriously took off during the pandemic. If your host has a green thumb, then we promise they would love to get garden essentials as a gift. There really is so much to choose from. You can gift them with several packets of seeds from your favorite supplier, a pair of classic herb snips, or even a sturdy pair of gardening gloves.

A fun or challenging puzzle - Puzzles have long been a great way to relax and unwind, especially when it's too cold to go outside. Puzzles even made a huge comeback during the pandemic, helping to keep us occupied why we all stayed inside during lockdown. If your host is known as a puzzle aficionado, then bring them one as a gift. You can choose a puzzle with a theme that they enjoy (say, kittens or gardens) or challenge them with one of the most difficult puzzles you can buy.

Gifts for their pet - Finally, if your host is a pet parent, then gifting a little something to their best friend can make you their favorite guest. For dogs, you can buy them a fun toy or even a cute outfit for the holidays. Those with cats would enjoy toys stuffed with catnip, a soft bed, or even a custom portrait. Many folks adopted pets during the pandemic, and bringing your host something they can use to pamper their newest family member will surely be a big hit.

Extra-virgin olive oil - Instead of that bottle of wine, bring a bottle of your favorite extra-virgin olive oil as a gift for your host. This is another great choice for home chefs. Olive oil is used in so many recipes, and there is a big difference between a really good bottle and those you find on the grocery

Reader's Digest's website, rd.com, offers wonderful lists of each of these gift ideas to help you choose the perfect host gift for your next invite.

Compliments of VirtualResults.net.

Happy Holidays

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Bread for Blankets

By David King



Sourdough bread is baked fresh daily using the recipe of the Tartine Bakery.

Move over San Francisco, Lafayette now has the Sourdough Kids. Three siblings Leena Lamba, 7, Devin, 5, and Keira, 2, are baking loaves of sourdough to sell to the neighborhood in their effort to raise money to buy blankets for the homeless. They call their project “Bread for Blankets.”



Four loaves wrapped and ready to be delivered.

Inspired by Concord’s Jack Fleihmann

From their neighbor, parents Manoj and Jennifer Lamba heard stories of Concord’s Jack Fleihmann and his extraordinary humanitarian effort to provide daily hot meals, water, clothing, blankets, and much more, to Concord’s homeless over the past 18 months. Fleihmann recently was awarded the Jefferson Award for this.

Inspired, the Lambas felt that they could pitch in to help the cause and create a learning experience for the kids. So, they

came up with the idea of selling bread to raise money to buy blankets. “The whole idea is to get them to understand that they could use their time, rather than on something for themselves, but to serve others. So, we are finding ways for them to be able to put meaningful touches on this project and be valuable,” Jennifer said.

Manoj works at ClassDojo, which is a communication app for teachers and families in elementary schools helping create positive experiences that can encourage students for any skill or value — whether it is working hard, being kind, or helping others. His role is Product Director.

During the month of December, loaves will be baked with parental supervision. The Sourdough Kids oversee all of it, including branding, delivery, collections, thanking the neighbors and donors, and supporters.



The kids created their own logo for the packaging.

To start, they are making eight loaves daily using the infamous San Francisco’s Tartine Bakery bread recipe. Sales began with the neighbors’ orders, but they hope to expand to their soccer team and classrooms for as much as they can manage.

“The kids deliver the loaves and collect the \$20 donation. With that money we will purchase blankets and deliver to the folks in Concord who need them.”

“We’re hoping this helps the community and offers our kids a chance to learn the true spirit of Christmas. I want the kids to do the rounds with Jack to do the blanket delivery,” Jennifer stated.

If you would like to order or donate, you can contact them at breadforblankets.com.

Views of the Valley

How many volunteers does it take to give out 600 turkey dinners?



Councilmember Dominic Aliano does some heavy lifting organizing and directing this year’s turkey drive.



Volunteers collected the turkeys and delivered each to their destinations.

On November 22, volunteers distributed 600 turkey dinners to those who would otherwise and often go without.

I wonder if it is understood just how large such an effort can be. Do we take volunteering for granted and underappreciate its invaluable contribution to our community?

As a personal quest, this is Councilmember (and incoming Mayor) Dominic Aliano’s second year organizing this Drive, which appeared to be in jeopardy.

“I didn’t think I was going to be able to do it again because of fundraising concerns and supply chain issues,” Aliano stated.

Yet many people and organizations helped with food distribution, including Concord City Councilmembers, Unity Council, Monument First 5, Central Regional Group First 5, Monument Impact, Community Youth Center, Boys & Girls Club of Contra Costa County, Concord Police Department, VFW Post 1525, Visit Concord, Mt. Diablo Resource Recovery and Contra Costa Building and Construction Trades Council, Local 104, Local 483, Local 342, Local 159, Local 324, Local 16, Local 302, Local 549, Local 152, Local 3 (Bricklayers).

“I am just incredibly grateful for everyone that supported this event because there are families who are experiencing hunger and I hope these turkey dinners could help. I know they do not fix everything yet sometimes a simple gesture, like these turkey dinners, can make a positive difference in a person’s life. In the end, it is just the right thing to do.”

Turkeys were purchased at Nob Hill and brought to a distribution location as volunteer drivers then delivered to various destinations throughout Concord.

“Hopefully, these Thanksgiving dinners added joy to the holiday for people experiencing economic difficulties,” Aliano said.

I am sure it did. Thank you Councilmember Aliano for spearheading this drive. and to all of you who donated and participated in this generosity.

How many? This many.



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BUSINESS UNUSUAL: Prepare your small business for 2022



Small business owners pivoted their way through last year with incredible resilience. So, what will 2022 bring? No one knows, of course. But instead of heading down the rabbit hole of possible challenges, focus on and fine-tune what you can control. Here are some ways to help you prepare for the year ahead:

Start with a goal. Working towards a meaningful goal will make long days bearable and keep you focused when challenges try to distract. Make your goal your daily mantra. Post it everywhere and make sure your team understands its priority. And when you achieve that goal, celebrate.

Fine-tune your website. Increasingly, customers are researching their purchases online before buying. Feature your products and services front and center on your site. Include as many details about your business, as possible. This will empower buyers to shop with you because they will feel informed.

Give your customers e-commerce options. They can then purchase at any time, even when your store is closed.

Consider selling an item or service that compliments your business and provides additional revenue.

Assess your resources. Do this now and diminish the chance of work stoppages during the year. Review each of your team

and make effective use of their individual strengths. Fix anything that lessens the customer experience whether it's at your store or online. Have a contact list ready for everything from graphic design to web maintenance for when you need it.

Do one thing that is out of your comfort zone but good for your business. One suggestion: If you have not begun talking to your customer on social media, start now. This is key to having your customer know you, your business, and your story, making them loyal in good times and in tougher times.

Show yourself as an expert in your industry. Prepare and share tips, insights, and hacks whenever possible. This will encourage customers to not think twice about spending their money with you even when budgets are tight.

Schedule a day each month to acknowledge your team for their work. Bring in lunch, treats, or gift cards. It does not have to be expensive, just authentic. This will motivate your staff and engage them to be their best at work and with your customers.

Taking time now to organize your business for the future year will increase your productivity, decrease your stress, and present more opportunities for success.

Sheri Nelson is a passionate marketer helping local businesses make a connection with consumers. She spent 27 years in Bay Area radio before launching The Local Shop. Follow her on Instagram for more tips at the_local_shop_bay_area or email her your questions at sheri@welcometotheshop.com.

Mike's Auto Body to give away four more cars in December to make 100 total

It's called Mike's Auto Body's Benevolence Program and on December 15, Mike's Auto will be giving away its 100th vehicle at a presentation at the Concord Pavilion starting at 4 p.m.

"It has been so rewarding for the past 21 years, presenting these cars to deserving individuals and organizations who are working to improve their skills and become independent," stated Sal Contreras, the Benevolence Program Director at Mike's Auto Body. "We always say that at Mike's, we are providing a hand up as opposed to a handout. The recipients are working towards making a better life for their families and all they need is reliable transportation to make it happen."

The Mike's Benevolence Program is an ideal charity model for body shops because it involves the insurance companies, local non-profits, and your local community. Everything is donated, the cars, parts, paint, mechanical inspections, tires, and one full year of insurance. The body and paint technicians donate their time and talents.

"We are fortunate to have Farmers Insurance®, Enterprise Rental, CSAA Insurance, Liberty Mutual/Safeco Insurance, and Recycled Rides collaborating with Mike's in presenting four refurbished cars to four deserving families," Contreras said.

On October 25, Mike's Auto Body gave away its 95th and 96th vehicles.

Student Jonathan Zhang received a 2012 Volkswagen Sport Wagon. Zhang is studying at Skyline Community College and will transfer to UC Davis for the spring semester majoring in Mechanical Engineering so his new VW will enable him to get to school and back from his home.

The other recipient Rocio Orozco Chavez was presented with a 2013 Toyota Corolla. When Rocio was notified, she was selected as the recipient of the Benevolence car, she shouted out, "I am doubled blessed today, it is my birthday today". The car was completely refurbished by the crew at Mike's Antioch location. The Chavez family of Antioch has a daughter named Brisa who suffers from a homozygous Factor XII



One of the many cars awarded by Mike's Auto Body's Benevolence Program over the past 17 years. Photo courtesy Mike's auto body!

deficiency, which requires two trips every week to the doctor in Oakland.

Each year the collision repair industry comes across cars that are "written off" by either the owner or the insurance company. Often, these are older vehicles that just need some mechanical and bodywork to get them back on the road and perfectly safe to drive. Because the people at Mike's strongly believe that these cars are going to waste when there are people out there who really need them, this MSO with 17 locations in northern California's East Bay decided to do something about it starting back in 2000.

"We feel very fortunate to be involved with such a wonderful program and are very excited to be able to give back to the area communities that have supported us for the past 49 years," Owner of Mike's Auto Body Mike Rose said. "After receiving hundreds of applications over the years and reading the heartbreaking stories, we only wish that we could do more. But hopefully with increased publicity of our Benevolence Program other shops will adopt a similar program of their own."

Since 1972, Mike Rose and his family has built Mike's Auto Body into a 17-shop organization with two locations in Concord, Antioch, and Walnut Creek and one in Lafayette, Pittsburg, Alameda, Pleasanton, Brentwood, Richmond, Fairfield, Napa, San Ramon, Fremont, and Vallejo.



Carl "CW" Wolfe
Mayor, Clayton, CA
cw@claytonca.gov



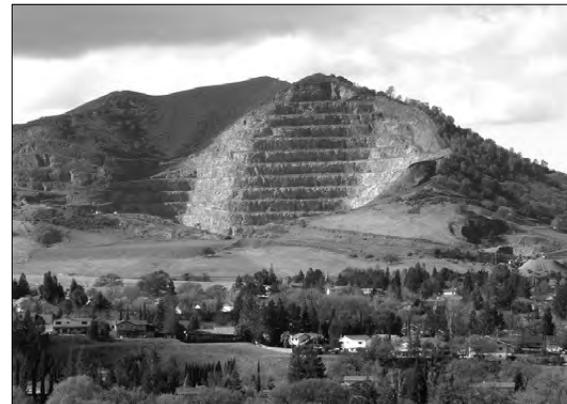
CEMEX quarry detonation rocks Clayton

On November 11, 2021, at 12:40pm, a detonation at the CEMEX Quarry sent out a shock wave, felt throughout Clayton. While CEMEX is not in the jurisdiction of the City of Clayton, we contacted CEMEX to find out what happened and to see how we can work together to mitigate any similar future situations.

CEMEX communicated to us that they determined an unforeseen seam in the geologic formation was not detected during preparation of an area in the rock where the detonation was to occur. Once detonated, energy exited the seam, creating over-pressure that moved through the air and was physically felt. This is an extremely rare instance. No safety protocols were compromised during this event, nor were there any injuries. Officials will continue to work with CEMEX to ensure Clayton's safety.

My term as your Mayor has ended, so this will be my final article. My thanks to the Gazette for the opportunity to have this important forum to help inform Clayton's citizens. It has been my honor to serve as your Mayor. I have learned a great deal, gained valuable experience, and developed relationships to benefit Clayton.

In this pandemic year, all our City Council meetings took place virtually and, unfortunately, my public appearances were also limited. I was, however, able to make some in-person speaking engagements, on behalf of Clayton, to honor our Veterans, present proclamations to our Eagle Scouts, and to light the Clayton Christmas tree. It would have been great to have hosted the



Mayor's Conference in Clayton to show-off our city, but the pandemic halted these in-person meetings as well. Clayton is first on the list to host a meeting when they resume sometime in 2022.

My thanks to former Mayors, Julie Pierce, Keith Haydon, Howard Geller, and Bob Hoyer, for their guidance and support. My appreciation as well to Vice Mayor, Peter Cloven. His collaboration with me during a remarkably busy time was invaluable. Thanks to our City Manager, Reina Schwartz, for all her knowledge and assistance, and to our City Attorney and City staff for their excellent work, and to AJ Chippero for his solidarity.

Finally, it is a privilege to serve with my fellow Councilmembers as we work toward the betterment of our great city.

All the best to our new Mayor!

I wish every Claytonian peace and all the joys of the season. Happy Holidays.

Christmas for Everyone by Howard and Debbie Geller

For over 20 years, Debbie and I have been involved with Christmas for Everyone (CFE). This 35-year-old non-profit organization has helped thousands of people in our community celebrate Christmas with their families. These are often working families who do not have the extra resources for gifts or many times even a Christmas dinner.

Last year, CFE served dinner to over 2,000 people. Due to COVID, we expect this year's need to again be bigger than before. Corporate sponsors are feeling the "crunch" making every smaller donation even more important.

COVID has caused CFE to regroup and change the way they have done things in the past. Here are the primary changes and how you can help.

- CFE will not be serving dinners in person Christmas Day. Instead, volunteers will package boxed dinners for families to pick up and take home. Can you volunteer to prep and prepare food?
- Volunteers will package and deliver Home Bound Meals to the elderly and those unable to leave their homes for various reasons. Can you volunteer for this?
- Families can come to the Light of Grace Korean Presbyterian Church in Martinez (distribution and work site) one week before Christmas to "shop" for gently used clothing and coats. Can you donate your gently used clothing, sort clothing



or assist when the families come to shop?

Can you donate new toys for children of all ages, donate cash for the food (desperately needed), purchase warm socks, coats, gloves or lap blankets?

Donations may be brought to 252 Mountaire Pkwy, Clayton (Dana Hills).

Please leave your donations on the front porch or checks in one of our locked mailboxes. Debbie and I will deliver donations to the Martinez distribution church. Questions? Contact Howard at: (925) 323-4913.

The Light of Grace Korean Presbyterian Church is located at: 68 Morello Avenue, Martinez. Starting December 7th, donations can be made Monday-Saturday between 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM and Sundays from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM. You may contact the CFE Director Mary Breshears-Perez at (925) 228-2233 to volunteer or get more information.

Checks should be made payable to Christmas for Everyone. (Non-Profit #46-4947045)

Checks can also be mailed to: CFE, 391 Taylor Blvd. #140, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523.

Go to the CFE website: ChristmasForEveryone.com.

Facebook Page: Christmas for Everyone (Watch the news videos from prior years)

Thank You! Happy Holidays.

calendar of events

YOUR PARTNER IN BUSINESS

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FUNDRAISER

Salvation Army Adopt-A-Child, Adopt-A-Family and Adopt-A-Senior. Provide new clothing and/or gifts unwrapped for Salvation Army's "AngelTree". Gifts for all age ranges need to be brought to Concord location 3950 Clayton Rd. For more details, call 925-676-6180.

January 15

Concord Elks Host Blood Drive

The Red Cross has been making a humanitarian impact for more than 130 years and has been collecting blood for over 70 of those years. The Concord Elks feel that by hosting the Red Cross we are helping to strengthen the blood supply and give back to our community. For every donation given they can save up to three lives.

To make a donation Appointment call 1-800-733-2767 or go to www.redcrossblood.org.

Type your zip code in the red 'Find a blood Drive' box on the upper right corner. Scroll to the January 15, 2022 blood drive and click on the red 'See Times' box. Select your appointment time. To give your Blood go to: Concord Elks Lodge #1994 3565 Clayton Road, between 9am - 3pm.

EVENTS

Farmers' Markets

Concord Tuesdays, 9:00am to 2:00pm, year-round, rain or shine. Todos Santos Plaza, Concord

Martinez Sundays, 9:00am to 2:00pm, year-round, 700 Main St.

Walnut Creek Kaiser 1425 South Main 10 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Rossmoor - Fridays 9:30am. to 1:00pm., Golden Rain Rd.

Shadelands - Saturdays 9:00am.-1:00 pm. North Wiget Ln. and Mitchell Dr. Sunday 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. North Locust St. between Cole and Lacassie St. (925) 431-8361 <http://www.cccfm.org>

December 11

24th annual Monumental Toy Drive 12:00 PM-4:00 PM. Over 1000 new toys to be given to low income children. Visit with Santa, Prize Raffles, Craft & Body Glitter, Free Children's Haircuts. Each child will receive one toy. Children must be with an adult to receive a gift. Commerce Ave. #D in Concord. For more information contact Miguel at 925-348-2907.2250

December 11

Mt. Diablo Branch California Writers Club "How to Decide What Publishing Model is Best for You." Presented by writers Heidi Eliason, Todd Bequette, Lucinda Jackson. Check-in at 11:00 AM, Writer's Table 11:15 AM, Lunch 12:00,

Business meeting, 12:45, Hybrid meeting. Cost: \$25 for members in person, \$35 for guests. (Includes Holiday buffet) Zoom: Members \$10, Non-CWC members, \$15. www.cwcmrdiablo.org Zio Fraedo's, 611 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill.

December 12

A Christmas Concert 7:30 PM

First Presbyterian Church - a musical celebration of Christmas featuring the choir, praise band, and a brass quintet. Admission is free for all ages, and there will be a reception following the concert. 965 Colfax St. Concord.

December 17-18

Bethel Baptist Church Drive through Nativity exhibit. 6pm-9pm. 3578 Clayton Rd.

December 20

Comedy Night at Vinnies

2045 Mt. Diablo St. 7:30 PM to 9:00 PM. Hosted by Mean Dave. Every 3rd Monday of the month Mean Dave hosts a comedy showcase at Vinnie's Bar & Grill in downtown Concord with an eclectic lineup of comedians from all over the Bay Area and those traveling through the bay.

MARTINEZ

December 11

Santa Beer Crawl

1:30 PM - 4:30 PM. Dust off your Santa suits and ugly Christmas sweaters because it's time to head to Downtown Martinez for some holiday cheer! Join the jolliest bunch of Santas this side of the bay as they walk around the downtown corridor of Martinez, sampling craft breweries stationed at participating small businesses along Main Street. Visit santabeercrawl.com for tickets and details!

WALNUT CREEK

RUTH BANCROFT GARDEN

1552 Bancroft Rd. Walnut Creek RuthBancroftGarden.org.

November 11 - December 23

Garden of D'Lights - a Holiday lights and lasers experience. Meander through 3.5 acres of colorfully lit garden. Thursday-Sundays, admission times are 5:30pm, 6:30pm and 7:30pm. Ticket information and sales at ruthbancroftgardens.org.

December 10

"Elf" Outdoor Family Movie Night 5:30 PM -7:30 PM. Civic Park 1375 Civic Dr. Walnut Creek.

December 23-31

24th Annual Dungeness Crab Party. Walnut Creek Yacht Club. 1555 Bonanza St. 5:00 PM - 10:00 PM. \$65 per person plus tax and gratuity.

The Walnut Creek Model Railroad Society

Diablo Valley Lines - The Walnut Creek Model Railroad Society (WCMRS) operates the Diablo Valley Lines (DVL) model railroad, one of the most mountainous and one of the largest exclusively HO scale model railroads in the United States.

Monthly Show December 31 8:00 PM. Enjoy several running

model trains running through miniature cities and mountainous terrain. Located at 2751 Buena Vista Ave. Walnut Creek. (Admission): \$3 Adults, \$2. Children (6-12) / Seniors. FREE for kids 5 years and younger.

EXPERIENCE MODEL RAILROADING ON A GRAND SCALE



645 Loring Avenue Crockett CA

Matching funds provided by Crockett Community Foundation

THE CARQUINEZ MODEL RAILROAD SOCIETY

OPEN HOUSE EVENT

Saturday and Sunday

December 11th and 12th

10am to 4pm

Visit cmrtrainclub.org for more details

December 11-12, 2021

The Carquinez Model Railroad Society Winter Open House 10am - 4pm. Experience model railroading on a grand scale. \$5, youth under 16 are free with an adult. 645 Loring Avenue Crockett CA across from C and H Sugar. Face masks are required.

December 18

Tri-Vally Writers Meeting 2:00 p.m. Kendra Murray and Ralph Scott will use audience submissions to demonstrate how audiobook specialists communicate the writer's vision in a talk at the Tri-Valley Writers meeting Saturday, December 18 at 2:00 p.m. at Pleasanton's Four Points by Sheraton. RSVP at reservations@trivalleywriters.org by Wednesday, December 15. No walk-ins. Fees for CWC adult members are \$14; nonmembers, \$18. CWC student members (ages 14-22), \$6; student nonmembers, \$10. trivalleywriters.org.

VISUAL ARTS/ THEATRE/MUSIC

LESHER CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Diablo Ballet 28th Season 2021-2022.

"Nutcracker Suite", Live. Streaming is available for viewing at any time during **Dec. 3 - 12th February 11-12, 2022** "Cinderella's Wedding" **April 7, 2022** - "28th Anniversary Performance" **May 20-21, 2022** - "Copplélia"

For in theatre or virtual tickets, call 925-943-SHOW (7469) or visit www.lesherartscenter.org

Phone and Online Tickets include additional fees. Leshersartscenter.org 1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek

December 9-23

A Christmas Carol presented by Center REPeritory. Brimming with music and dance, love and laughter, spectacular special effects and scary ghosts. Critics have called it "THE Christmas Carol to see in the Bay Area." Join the thousands who make this theatrical event a part of their annual holiday traditions.

December 10-12

Magic with Alex Ramon. 7:30 PM - 9:30 PM. Maraget Leshar Theatre. Join Alex Ramon's for his 11th performance at the Leshar Center - a family friendly magic show with highly visual illusions and audience interaction. Enjoy the impossibilities.

December 11-23

Visit to the North Pole Join Santa and Mrs. Claus in the North Pole, during this immersive, live theatre experience. Watch as the Holiday magic brings a smile to your entire family! Visit To The North Pole is an exclusive visit with Santa and Mrs. Claus in their kitchen and workshop. Each timeslot is privately arranged for your family only.

Each timeslot is intended for you and up to five (5) additional family members, with photo opportunities, and each visit includes memories that will last a lifetime!

It is important that you arrive before your scheduled timeslot - Santa and Mrs. Claus are very busy this time of year and may not be able to visit with your family should you arrive late. Please schedule your visit with plenty of time to arrive.

December 16-17

Holiday Happenings presented by Concord High School Choir and the El Dorado Singers. Diablo Valley College Performing Arts Center, Pleasant Hill.

January 13-23



Spontaneous Charles Dickens,

A completely improvised two-act comedy in the style of the inimitable novelist, 2022, Thursdays - Saturdays at 8:15 pm and Sundays at 3:15 pm. \$25.00 Buy online at www.lesherartscenter.org or by phone at (925) 943-7469. The Leshar Center for the Arts, Vukasin Theatre, 1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek

VERANDA on ICE

November 5-February 14, 2022

75 minutes, \$16 Season pass \$109 Veranda, 2001 Diamond Blvd. Concord.

HQ Gallery

Novmeber 4-January 22

Reflections Art Show. Featured Artist Annette laurel Batchelor. 333D First St. Benecia hqqallery.net

Concord aRT Cottage

November 9-December 22 **10th Annual Holiday Boutique** Great gifts from 20 local artists and makers. Arts, crafts, gifts. 2238 Mt. Diablo Street, Concord. Visit: aRtcottage.info.

Happy New Year 2022



David George **THE NAKED GARDENER**

Beware the poisons in your all-natural garden



Poinsettias can burn the skin. Photo: Shutterstock

Danger can lurk in even the most all-natural garden. Monsanto and Dow Chemical are not the only sources of poisons and toxins that may be present. Mother nature also produces a whole array of toxins and poisons.

Each year, hundreds of thousands of calls come into national Poison Control Centers regarding plant and mushroom-caused sickness. There is no easy "test" for knowing which plants around our gardens are poisonous. Some plants may cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or stomach cramps. Others have substances which irritate the skin, mouth, or tongue. Immediate burning pain is common, and sometimes tongue swelling or breathing problems occur.

Thanks to our abundant October rains, mushrooms are popping up all over. Mushrooms are the flowering bodies of much larger fungi, their white tendrils often stretching for miles underground. These fungi perform a crucial service to our plants and trees, providing nutrients from beyond a plant's reach to its root system in exchange for sugars. Even though most mushrooms are non-toxic.

Only about 3% of known mushroom varieties are poisonous. The few that are seriously poisonous are common and indistinguishable from edible varieties without training. Stay away from pop-up mushrooms and remove them from areas where small kids or pets can reach them.

Some other common toxic or poisonous plants in our area include poison oak, poison hemlock (yes, the plant that killed Greek philosopher Socrates), cotoneaster, oleander, belladonna (resurrection plant or pink ladies), nightshades, most lilies, lantana, larkspur, hellebores, angel's trumpets, azaleas, delphinium, English laurel, foxglove,

heather, hydrangea, jimson weed, most fruit seeds (contain arsenic), pampas grass, periwinkle, rhododendrons, toyon, and even poinsettias. Whew! And these are just the most dangerous.

Winter season is also the height of tree and bush berry ripening. They brighten our winter days with bright red, yellow or blue berries. These are Mother Nature's Christmas gifts to our wild birds and are full of nutrition for them. But if you see your kids or pets going after them, pull them away. These berries can cause serious stomach or intestinal upset to us mammals.



Cotoneaster berries are toxic to pets. Photo: Shutterstock

Heating and cooking usually do not eliminate the plant's toxicities. Teas and homemade medicines made from plants can be poisonous. Eating a small amount of a plant may not be a problem, but large or repeated doses may be harmful. Young children and pets are particularly vulnerable due to their smaller size and their tendency to chew or eat anything in the garden no matter how nasty it tastes.

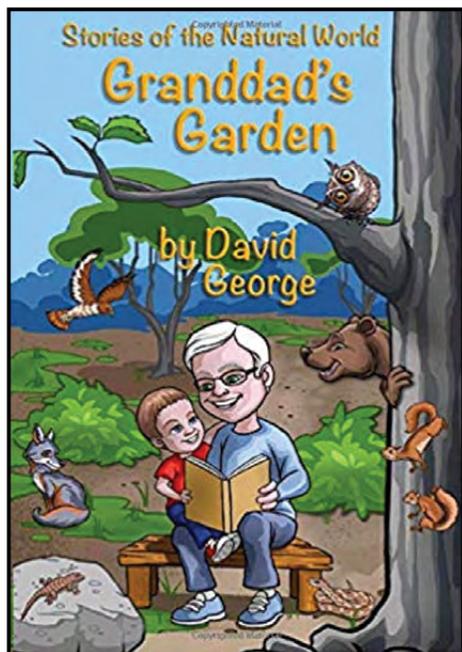


Death Cap Mushroom and Poison Oak are common garden poisons. Photo courtesy BayAreaMushrooms.org, and Shutterstock.

Call the California Poison Center hotline at 800-222-1222 if you, a loved one or pet has had exposure to toxic or poisonous plants, or head for the nearest emergency room. For a list of dangerous plants that you may find around your garden go to:

https://ucanr.edu/sites/poisonous_safe_plants/Toxic_Plants_by_common_Name_659/

Many thanks to the UC Agriculture and Natural Resources (UCANR) division for portions of this month's content. Email your comments and questions to: NakedGardener@diablogazette.com. In some cases, these may appear in future columns.

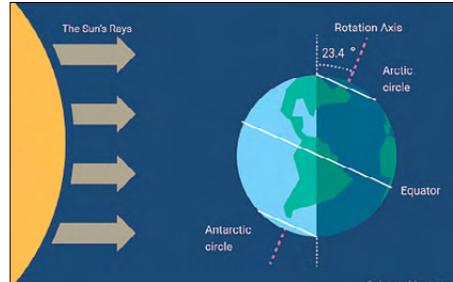


Welcome the Return of the Light

By Julie Ross

While I was browsing online for holiday greeting cards to send out this year, I came across many - way more than I would have thought - with messages celebrating the winter solstice. Hmmm. I guess the season can be somewhat divisive with mixed spiritual and cultural beliefs, but one thing we all share is our status as Earthlings and the accompanying rules of the universe.

The winter solstice in our half of the world occurs when the Northern hemisphere is tilted on the Earth's axis as far from the sun as it can be, resulting in a day with the fewest hours of sunlight and signaling the beginning of winter. As the message on one of the solstice cards boldly announced: "Axial tilt is the reason for the season!"



Other cards were less scientific and more whimsical, bordering on the magical. A woodland elf riding a galloping cat through the snow graced the cover of one, another displayed a folk-art sun smiling over a raven perched atop an unadorned evergreen tree, and on another, unicorns posed next to a birdbath. And inside of each card, a message with a solstice blessing. Surprisingly charming!

I had always thought of the December solstice in a negative way, as the gloomy shortest day of the year. Such glass-half-empty thinking on my part. The solstice is not just the start of winter, but as the

greeting cards proclaimed, an opportunity to celebrate the return of more sunlight as the days get longer.

The winter solstice is actually not a whole-day event, but only lasts a moment. In California in 2021, the time to salute the new season, the exact time our hemisphere is tilted as far as possible from the sun, is 7:59 on the morning of Tuesday, December 21. Mark your calendar now before you forget. While you're at it, make a note to go outside at noon to cast your longest shadow of the year.

In the late afternoon, brew up a batch of wassail to fill your home with its warm, spicy, comforting aroma. When it gets dark, spend some time in the soft light of candles and lanterns while you put your feet up and enjoy a mug. Adults may add a splash of rum or cinnamon whisky. Aaaaah.

Wishing a peaceful, happy, and meaningful holiday season to all.

Winter Solstice Wassail

- 2 quarts apple cider
- 1 1/2 cups orange juice
- 3/4 cup pineapple juice
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon lemon juice
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- Dash of ground cinnamon
- Dash of ground cloves

Put all ingredients into a pot and bring to a boil. Lower heat and simmer for 20-30 minutes. Discard cinnamon sticks and pour wassail into mugs. Adults may add a splash of rum or cinnamon whisky. Enjoy.

Feel the Energy!

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aquarianeranewageshop.com

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11 AM - 6 PM SUNDAYS
CLOSED TUESDAYS




pair up!

Holiday Appetizer Party

By Maria Terry



I have been to parties where the appetizers are so delicious that I am full by the time dinner comes around.

This is why I like the idea of a party based solely on appetizers. An appetizer party is less complicated and keeps the guests in motion. The best part, with so many food choices, you have an array of wine possibilities. I like to offer three whites and three reds to keep the selection balanced.

My favorite inexpensive starter pairing is sparkling wine and potato chips. The bubbles are the perfect foil to the salty, crispy chips. Add a creamy dip made with mascarpone cheese in place of sour cream, and you've taken it to the next level.

For a bright addition to the menu, the tangy acidity of Greek dolmas (Costco, Whole Foods, Trader Joes) demands a white wine with verve. To match regionally, seek out an Assyrtiko, a smoky and lemony wine that comes from the Greek island of Santorini. If you can't find a Greek white, pick up a zippy Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand.

A rich Viognier rounds out the white wine selections. Paired with Crostini topped with creamy brie and Major Grey's Chutney (Safeway), the tropical, spicy, and floral elements match up beautifully.

As the evening progresses, I will bring out the dry red wines with warm foods. Start with mushrooms and sausage when Pinot Noir is one of your selections. The earthiness of the mushrooms makes a great complement to the earth notes in the wine and the Stuffed Mushroom recipe listed here is one you can make up ahead and pop in the oven just before you need them.

Next, contrast the light body and tannins of the Pinot with the heft and weight of a deep Syrah. It pairs well with the mushrooms, or you can bring out the bright fruit of the wine by pairing it with some Balsamic Caramelized Onions atop good quality hotdogs or sausages stuffed into soft rolls. Cut each dog in half or thirds for the right size portion.

Although the party may not have a specific ending, as the night progresses offer a sweet Port with pungent Stilton blue cheese and Sugared Walnuts. It is certain to be a welcome pairing as the evening draws to a close.

So, go on. Pair Up!

Maria Terry is a Certified Sommelier and Wine Educator in the San Francisco Bay Area. www.LaSommelierre.com

Mascarpone Dip

Mix together equal parts mascarpone and sour cream and season with your favorite powdered dip mix like Hidden Valley Ranch.

Crostini

Slice a baguette in 1/4" rounds. Drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle liberally with kosher salt. Bake at 275° for 15 minutes.

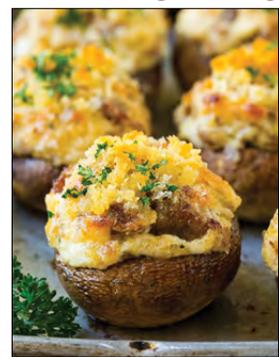
Stuffed Mushrooms

INGREDIENTS

- 3 Italian hot sausages, w/o casings
- 1 1/2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- 1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese, room temperature
- 1 large egg yolk
- Olive oil
- 24 large (about 2-inch-diameter) mushrooms, stemmed
- 1/3 cup dry white wine

DIRECTIONS

Sauté sausage and oregano in heavy large skillet over medium-high heat until sausage is cooked through and brown, breaking into small pieces with back of fork, about 7 minutes. Using slotted spoon, transfer sausage mixture



to large bowl and cool. Mix in 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese, Worcestershire sauce, and garlic powder, then cream cheese. Season filling with salt and pepper; mix in egg yolk.

Brush 15x10x2-inch glass baking dish with olive oil to coat. Brush cavity of each mushroom cap with white wine; fill with scant 1 tablespoon filling and sprinkle with some of remaining 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese. Arrange mushrooms, filling side up, in prepared dish. (Can be made 1 day ahead. Cover and chill.)

Preheat oven to 350°F. Bake uncovered until mushrooms are tender and filling is brown on top, about 25 minutes.

Yield: 2 dozen

Balsamic Caramelized Onions

Slice onions into thin half moons and sauté in butter over medium-low heat for about 15 minutes until soft and golden brown. Add just enough balsamic vinegar to coat the onions and cook until vinegar begins to thicken. Season with salt.

Sugared Walnuts

Fry nuts in about 1/4" of canola oil for about 5 minutes or until just starting to brown. Remove with a slotted spoon onto newspaper and sprinkle with sugar to coat.

Holiday food traditions within PCFMA are diverse

By Deb Morris, PCFMA



Brussel sprouts bacon and pecans

Holiday customs in California are as diverse as its population. People from around the world have brought many wonderful and eclectic food traditions to our shores and incorporated them into our everyday lives.

We are fortunate to have a climate in California that allows fruits and vegetables to grow year-round. New inhabitants found they can easily grow their distinct and varied produce in a new country.

There are as many different traditions as there are families, each one unique, yet familiar, even among my associates at PCFMA.

Favorite foods this time of year consisted of recipes featuring winter squash, persimmons, pomegranates, Brussels sprouts, citrus, and potatoes were most mentioned.

Ashley Olivera-Cortez, PCMA's Direct Marketing Coordinator says her family's favorite thing to do is, "Watch football, drinking mulled cider, and watch movies. We make our traditional roasted garlicky Brussels sprouts with bacon and pecans."

Another member of our staff, Mia Simmans, Market Manager, says she and her family, "light the candles for Hanukah and make latkes." Her favorite thing about working at the farmers' markets this time of year is the festive feel they have.

Jason Rodriguez, Market Manager, says, "My family gets together to make the traditional tamales at Christmas – and I get to taste-test them!" He also loves all the winter squash available during December.

Regional Manager, Lis Garon mentions, "My family and I typically make pancakes the day of Christmas and drink mimosas, Irish coffee, eggnog, or hot toddies. I love my mom's prime rib recipe and I love the beautiful wreaths sold at farmers' markets."

Dimitri Hagnéré, Market Manager, states his family piles in the car and tours Candy Cane Lane and looks at holiday lights. "We have Dungeness crab and hot cider for the

holidays, and I make cannoli from scratch, a family tradition."

Others enjoy seeing their family, having cookie baking sessions, playing Santa for the kids, and savoring the holiday atmosphere that permeates the air.

We hope you hold on to your traditions and enjoy this holiday season with the ones you love.

Ashley's Garlicky Brussels Sprouts with Bacon and Pecans

Fresh Brussel sprouts halved, about 2 lbs. (de-stem and remove outer leaves)

- 6 to 7 slices of bacon, thick cut
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 to 5 cloves garlic
- 1/4 cup pecans
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 3 teaspoons dried thyme
- 2 to 3 teaspoons dried oregano
- 2 to 3 teaspoons balsamic vinegar
- 3 to 4 teaspoons maple syrup
- Grated Parmesan cheese for serving (optional)

Preheat oven to 350°F on middle rack. Use a baking pan or casserole dish to roast.

Cut stems off and remove outer excess leaves on sprouts; cut in half. Mince garlic and rough-chop pecans. Coat everything with 2 tablespoons of olive oil and season with salt, pepper, thyme, and oregano. Transfer to baking pan/casserole dish and roast for 17-20 minutes.

Cook bacon in a frying pan, just enough so it is still flaccid but fully cooked through. Rough chop bacon into pieces and transfer to pan with sprouts. Toss in the bacon and drizzle balsamic vinegar. Roast for another 5-8 minutes.

Remove from oven and drizzle on maple syrup and toss. Add grated or shaved parmesan to serve over these Brussel sprouts, if desired.

Happy Holidays from all of us at PCFMA.

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COVID-19 UPDATE:
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SEASONS GREETINGS

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\$45

Medium Units 10x10
Starting at ~~\$225~~
\$112.50

Large Units 10x15
Starting at ~~\$300~~
\$150

Seena Farhadi, Walnut Creek, receives 2021 Yours Humanly Children Have the Power to Empower® Award.

Northgate student Seena Farhadi received the Children Have the Power to Empower® Award for the outstanding acts of goodness he performs on behalf of children in need through LEAP, the Learning Enrichment and Assistance Program he founded in January 2021.

With kindness and dedication, Seena works with organizations such as Homeless Outreach Program for Education and Foster Youth Services to pair tutors with homeless and foster youth in the Mount Diablo Unified School District (Contra Costa County, CA) who are struggling academically and in need of support and mentoring. In so doing, he is giving these students access to resources and opportunities they would not otherwise have, and he is kickstarting important community dialogues about educational equity and the needs of homeless and foster youth.

Congratulations to Seena.

Learn more about the Children Have the Power to Empower®

CHILDREN HAVE THE POWER TO EMPOWER AWARD

Seena Farhadi
Walnut Creek, CA

JOURNEY-MAN'S JOURNAL

By Jill Hedgecock Photos by Diane Walsh

Unfolding the Mystery of the Northern Saw-Whet Owl



Northern whet-saw owl. Photo by Julie Woodruff

By profession I am a scientist with a M.S. degree in Environmental Management and a passion for wildlife conservation. I am also a birder.

One of the most common owls in forests across northern North America is the Northern saw-whet owl. This cute tiny owl (roughly 7 inches) with a catlike face, oversized head, and bright yellow eyes, is a fierce predator of mice and other small mammals.

Because saw-whet owls are also only active at night and are migratory, these tiny owls are difficult to see in the wild and little is known about them. When I learned about a local researchers banding event, I jumped at the opportunity to join them for the late-night adventure.

It was already dark on Oct. 28, 2021, when photographer Diane Walsh and I pulled into the Las Trampas parking lot in San Ramon. We soon joined four other owl enthusiasts and were led by volunteer, Stephen Gergeni up a steep grade to the base camp area. Here, we joined the lead saw-whet owl researcher, Julie Woodruff, and another volunteer. Julie Woodruff became involved in studying this tiny owl in 2010 at Chico State and has been banding the owls in the Bay Area for over a decade to better understand the species.

Our collective goal was to capture saw-whet owls in mist nets. The J-shaped configuration of thin netting extending 10 feet high had already been assembled with an audiolure placed in the middle of the net array when we arrived.

She releases her data to the United States Geological Society in accordance with her permit. Owl data are also utilized by Project

Owlnet to document the general numbers of migrant saw-whet owls in various regions across North America.

The protocol for our banding event involved Woodruff and a portion of the field trip attendees taking turns to walk along a narrow, muddy path next to the nets looking for captured owls every half hour. With only our headlamps and flashlights to guide us, these short walks proved quite an adventure. In between these forays, Woodruff explained the banding process that would happen if we caught any owls and answered questions about the species while we waited.



Northern saw-whet owls are the most commonly banded bird in North America, yet few people have actually seen one because of their small size and secretive nature. Their brown plumage provides the perfect camouflage against the backdrop of tree trunks. Because these tiny owls prefer dense forest habitat and are nocturnal, opportunities to observe them are rare. In addition, saw-whets stay silent while they travel because they are preyed upon by other owls, particularly great-horned owls.

Saw-whets are aptly-named because their call resembles a saw being sharpened on a whetstone. But it is the beep, beep, beep song that Woodruff uses to lure the birds into the mist nets. Saw-whets also make whiney and guttural sounds, high tsst calls, squeaks, as well as high-pitched barks. We heard a fe-

male saw-whet owl respond to the audiolure early in the evening but the nets remained empty during the first net checks.

Woodruff has generally had good success finding the owls in the Bay Area. Her best night occurred in 2019 when she caught 4 owls in one evening in Briones.

Studies have shown that most individuals of the species migrate in the fall, about 6.5 miles each night, to overwinter in milder climates, including the Bay Area. They'll migrate and linger in areas for an additional 7 to 10 days along their journey. The number of saw-whet owls that choose to migrate each year can depend on prey abundance. Also, females appear to be more inclined to migrate than males. Sometimes the same owls get captured in the same area multiple times.

"In 2019, we caught a one-eyed owl three-times!" said Woodruff. "Apart from missing an eye, she was in great health."

All the owls captured in the Bay Area have been local, but she was able to track owls that have travelled from as far away as Iowa.

Given the perils saw-whets face during migration, they are remarkably long-lived. Saw-whets typically live up to seven years. The oldest known specimen, 9 years-5 months, was captured in Minnesota.

For these owls, the raising of the chicks is a family affair. The male does the heavy lifting after the female leaves the nest when the nestlings are about 18 days old. But while female saw-whets keep the nest clean, a mess accumulates when the males take over. By the time the young owls leave the nest, about two weeks later, the nest cavity has a thick layer of feces, pellets, and rotting prey.

Woodruff's research could ultimately help save the species, which is listed as an Audubon Society climate-imperiled species.

"Over 72% of their range where they breed in boreal and mountainous forests of the US and Canada are estimated to be lost due to climate change," said Woodruff.

She further explained that the survival of the species is imperiled due to increased wildfire risk, heat waves, and flooding due to rains over the century.

As the evening came to a close, a critter was spotted during one of the last net checks. It was a bat and not our target species. Nontarget species, called "bycatch", are recognized as a possibility in Woodruff's permit. Although she is adept at extricating bats, she accepted Stephen Gergeni's offer

to disentangle the animal.

Gergeni studies bats and is an expert at removing these flying mammals from nets unharmed.



Although we walked away without capturing any owls that night, by the end of the banding season, Woodruff had caught 14 owls. The experience was an enjoyable quiet evening under glittering stars and sharing it with fellow naturalists who relish experiencing nature was an added bonus.

You can help saw-whet owls by avoiding using pesticides to kill rodents and if you live near forested habitat, by installing man-made nest boxes (contact Dr. Therrienat, therrienat@hawkmountain.org). To learn more about saw whets: Project Owlnet, visit <https://serc.si.edu/citizen-science/projects/project-owlnet-o>.

Jill Hedgecock is the author of the novel, "Rhino in the Room."



"Space: The final frontier. These are the voyages of the starship Enterprise," or should that read the voyages of Starlink?

In a little over 100 years, since December 17, 1903, when Orville and Wilbur Wright made the first powered, controlled flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina in the Wright Flyer, humans have evolved flight to include space. Fast forward to 2021. Our next great adventure is SpaceX Starlink.



A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket and Crew Dragon spacecraft carrying NASA astronauts Douglas Hurley and Robert Behnken lifts off during NASA's SpaceX Demo-2 mission to the International Space Station May 30, 2020. REUTERS/Thom Baur

The Voyage of Starlink

Starlink Satellite Internet service is here and now, and it is fantastic. It is active, available and running speed and reliability circles around the offerings from HughesNet, Viasat, OneWeb and others. Elon Musk, the inventor of the Starlink service, is the genius engineer of our time.

Starlink started launching satellites into space some years ago. Their latest launches have enough satellites in space to blanket the earth with fast Internet service. There are now about 1600 satellites in low earth orbit and the company is expecting that number to grow into many thousands.

Starlink's service is distinctive because of low earth orbits. That translates into low latency. The lower latency the better. Latency is the delay time between your computer and the response from the satellite. Typical high orbit satellites require about three to four seconds communicating with your computer each way, i.e., high latency. Therefore, a typical "round-trip," is about 6 seconds. Meaning it takes several seconds to ask for data and then wait to receive it. By itself 6 seconds seems to be no big deal unless you do this all day long.

Low earth satellites communicate much faster.

The engineers at SpaceX have managed to get latency to a quick 20-45ms. That translates into speeds similar to Comcast or AT&T earth-bound services. Its speed varies slightly upon which low earth satellite it points. Therefore, to be clear, Starlink has a latency below a second.

Who benefits?

Starlink offers basic 50Mbit (50 Megabit) speeds, with faster service available, that is similar to earth-bound stations like Comcast, Wave and AT&T. Basic service is over twice the speed of competing satellite services. Availability is incredibly good to excellent, and is especially suited for rural areas. Think Morgan Territory Road and residences in that location. (Side note: Camp Four Paws, Third Eye and rural Real Estate companies, this is for you. Finally!)

The service is a wee, tad pricy at \$99.00/month but the timesaving and increased speed round trip to and from the Internet is worth the cost especially if you have large files, multiple files or graphics to move or games to play. Connection dependability is assured because the satellite antenna is self-adjusting. If one satellite is not working well for you, switch to another. The service

automatically finds the next satellite and attaches to it.

Starlink sends a "self-install" kit to their customers so installation and setup may need an expert's help. Call your local computer professionals for installation help or advice.

Get Back Up



Computer Down?

Get Back-Up Fast with CUSA Care: Backups \$4.99/Mo.

Call Now, you know, before you need it. 925-672-9989 We do all the work.

ComputersUSA is CUSA Care

DIABLO GAZETTE FUN ZONE

And The Diablo Beat Goes On...

“Solstice with the Mostest”

By Nathalie Archangel & Mark Montijo



Drummer Boy” (even better with David Bowie) to the bizarre but somehow still charming: “Grandma Got Run Over by A Reindeer.”

From “Silent Night” to “Carol of the Bells,” Holiday songs have the power to instantly transport us to a moment frozen in time and induce near toxic levels of nostalgia.

Even large corporations cannot resist the call of the season. Whose eyes have not misted up just a bit during one of the more formidable renditions of “(There’s No Place Like) Home for the Holidays?” even when it is being used to sell beer.

In recent years, there has been greater visibility for other holidays celebrated at the end of the year which has led to an even larger catalogue of holiday songs.

“The Hanukkah Song” in its various iterations is now something of a December staple.

Kwanzaa songs such as “The Happy Kwanzaa Song” and “A Kwanzaa Song” are both beautiful and uplifting.

The present-day American repertoire also contains some lovely and fun songs about the season itself. “Winter Wonderland” has left several generations wondering just how closely Parson Brown resembles a snowman.

It is that time again: the weather gets colder, Christmas lights are twinkling, Amazon trucks are even more ubiquitous than usual, and all those familiar holiday melodies are wafting out of radios, shops, computers, Tik Toks and TVs.

So many of the great singers and musicians have contributed to the Holiday musical library.

We can all hum them - from the elegance of Bing Crosby’s “White Christmas” or “Little

Pagan holidays are traditionally well represented in novelty tunes such as the Halloween anthem “Monster Mash” but generally disappear by November. But not this year.

Nineteen Hand Horse leaps into the holiday song fray with “Solstice with the Mostest,” a CD and downloadable single which may be the first bright, sparkly and danceable song dedicated to the longest, darkest night of the year. This Country/Americana toe tapper invokes the classic Country duet (think George and Tammy or Porter and Dolly) with a little Rat Pack thrown in for good measure (think “Baby It’s Cold Outside”).

Co-lead singer Mark sports a Cowboy Dean Martin look on the cover while his wife (yours truly) does her best Doris Day meets Debbie Harry at the end of Covid ravaged 2021.

Scan the QR code and give it a listen and enjoy the video. A joyous Solstice to all!

Solstice with the Mostest by Nineteen Hand Horse



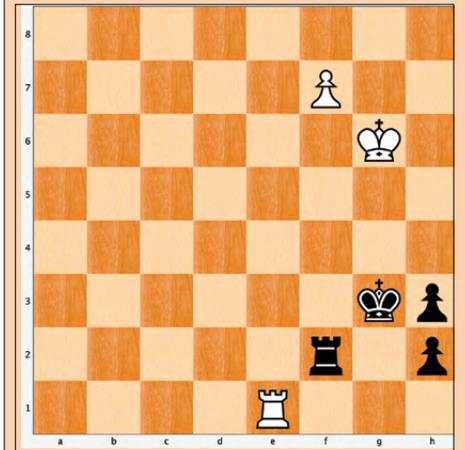
Download at nineteenhandhorse.com



Chess with Yoo

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

White to play and draw.



Solution:

Black has a winning plan of Kg2 followed by promoting the h-pawn. The only way White can draw is to deflect the rook on f2 to promote the f-pawn. There are five possible ways to do this, but only one works.

1.Rd1! The Black rook has to be on d2 for White to draw. b2,c2,a2,e2 do not work.
1.Rc1? Kg2 2.Rc2 Rxc2 3.f8=Q Rc6+!
This in-between check blocks Qa8.
4.Kh5 h1=Q-+

1.Rb1? Kg2 2.Rb2 Rxb2 3.f8=Q h1=Q
4.Qa8+ Kh2-+ The b8-square is covered now.

1.Ra1? Kg2 2.Ra2 Rxa2 3.f8=Q h1=Q The a8-square is covered now.

1.Re3+? Kg2 2.Re2 Rxe2 3.f8=Q h1=Q
4.Qa8+ Kg1 5.Qa1+ Kh2 Black is winning because the e5-square is covered by the rook.

1...Kg2 2.Rd2 Rxd2 3.f8=Q h1=Q
4.Qa8+ Kg1 5.Qa1+ All the key squares from which White can deliver perpetual check are not controlled by the rook on d2. 5...Kh2 6.Qe5+ Kg2 7.Qe4+ =

Annual Christmas Nativity Drive-Thru

Bethel Baptist Church, 3578 Clayton Rd., Concord, has brought back its annual Drive-through Nativity Scene. On December 17 and 18, between, 6:00-9:00 p.m. enjoy a live outdoor presentation of the true meaning of Christmas from the comfort and safety of your own vehicle.

Step back in time as you relive the glory of the events surrounding the birth of Jesus, to the cross and finally the empty tomb that has brought hope to so many people. This evening event is complete with scenes, live actors, and beautiful decorations and lights.

Due to the pandemic, the event was cancelled last year.

For further information, contact the church at (925)798-7470, Ext 1. Visit our website at www.bethelbaptistca.org or follow us on [facebook.com/BETHEL-BAPTIST-CHURCH-CA](https://www.facebook.com/BETHEL-BAPTIST-CHURCH-CA)



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MERRY CHRISTMAS

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| CANDY | CAROLS | CELEBRATE |
| CHIMNEY | ELVES | FAMILY |
| FEAST | FROSTY | FRUITCAKE |
| GOOSE | HOLLY | JESUS |
| JOLLY | MERRY | MISTLETOE |
| NATIVITY | NORTH POLE | ORNAMENTS |
| PRESENTS | REINDEER | RUDOLPH |
| SANTA | SCROOGE | SLEIGH |
| STOCKING | TREE | SNOWMAN |
| SNOWBALL | SLEIGHBELLS | |



Solution on page 14

In case you missed it...

CLAYCORD NEWS & TALK

Tolls on Bay Area's seven bridges set to rise in 2022

December 3, 2001- The cost to travel over seven of the Bay Area's bridges will increase by \$1 on Jan. 1, 2022.

Regular tolls for two-axle cars and trucks and for motorcycles at the San Francisco-Oakland Bay, Antioch, Benicia-Martinez, Carquinez, Dumbarton, Richmond-San Rafael and San Mateo-Hayward bridges will rise to \$7 from \$6, according to the Bay Area Toll Authority.

Tolls for vehicles with three or more axles will also rise by \$1.

The tolls will increase to \$17 for three-axle vehicles, \$22 for four-axle vehicles, \$27 for five-axle vehicles, \$32 for six-axle vehicles and \$37 for vehicles with combinations of seven or more axles.

The toll increase at the region's state-owned toll bridges is the second of three toll increases approved by the Legislature in 2017 via state Senate Bill 595 and by voters through Regional Measure 3 in 2018.

The first increase went into effect in 2019, and the third will go into effect in 2025.

There is a legal challenge to Senate Bill 595 and Regional Measure 3 pending before the California Supreme Court, so the toll increase collected will be placed into an escrow account managed by an independent trustee until the litigation is resolved.

Revenue from the previous toll increase in 2019 is also being held in escrow, according to the Bay Area Toll Authority.

Fines reduced for toll violations on Bay Area's bridges

December 1, 2021 - The Bay Area Toll Authority announced that fines for toll violation notices will be reduced for anyone who received them on the region's seven state-owned toll bridges dating back to the start of 2021.

The BATA, the agency tasked with administering toll revenues from the Bay Area's toll bridges, announced that the penalty for first violation notices is dropping effective immediately from \$25 to \$5, and the penalty for second violation notices will drop from \$70 to \$15.

People who paid the penalties dating back to Jan. 1 will receive a refund starting in February 2022, according to the toll authority.

The changes, approved by the BATA in October, are part of its tolling equity action plan announced earlier this year.

Other changes set for implementation later in 2022 affecting FasTrak accounts.

Lindsay Wildlife releases "Grinnell", the UC falcon



photo: Grinnell the peregrine falcon who nests on the UC Berkeley Campanile tower along with his partner Annie, was recuperating at the Lindsay Wildlife Rehabilitation Hospital in Walnut Creek after he was found injured at the Berkeley Tennis Club. (Dr. Krystal Woo)

By Tony Hicks - Grinnell, the famous peregrine falcon who nests with his family at University of California at Berkeley's

Campanile tower, got out of the hospital and is likely on his way back to school.

Walnut Creek's Lindsay Wildlife Rehabilitation Hospital said it released Grinnell at UC's Lawrence Hall of Science in the Berkeley hills, where biologists determined Grinnell could easily find his way back to his nest.

Grinnell was brought to Lindsay on Oct. 28 after he was found at the Berkeley Tennis Club sitting on a garbage can and not moving or flying away. Doctors found injuries from a possible intraspecies fight, including damage to his upper beak, a wound near his chin and throat, and an injured left wing.

Grinnell had minor surgery on his wing and received two weeks of rehabilitation, including homecare with a volunteer species manager and falcon expert.

Lindsay's lead wildlife veterinarian Krystal Woo said Grinnell's recovery was especially rewarding, as peregrine falcons can be challenging to treat.

Knights of Columbus presents International Free Throw Champion (FTC) trophies to three local youths.



Roberto Bracamontes, FTC Coordinator for Christ the King Parish Christian Youth Organization (CTK-CYO), Griffey Williams, 12, CTK - CYO and Claire Tryon, Oakland Diocese Chapter/CYO FTC Chairman

Griffey Williams, Danville 12, CTK-CYO, Pleasant Hill, shot perfect scores in three levels, 15 out of 15 at Council, 30 out of 30 at Oakland Diocese Chapter and 30 out of 30 at the California State Level. Two other youths were also Supreme winners but not pictured, Jackson Ramirez, 10, of St. Anne's, Oakley and Caleb Cook, 13, of St. Agnes, Concord also scored perfect scores at all three levels.

The Knights of Columbus competition has been ongoing for 50 years.

Claire Tryon, FTC coordinator, has been the FTC Chairman for Oakland Diocese and Knights of Columbus for 30 years.

Mail carriers starting rounds earlier during the holidays

November 29, 2021 - Mail carriers for the U.S. Postal Service will start their rounds earlier than usual in the Bay Area during the holiday season to keep up with heavy volumes of mail and packages expected over the next month.

Neighborhood letter carriers will be out as early as 6 a.m. during the postal service's peak season, which runs from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day, according to a post office spokesperson.

The U.S. Postal Service will deliver between 850 million and 950 million packages over the holidays. In all, an estimated 12 billion letters, cards and packages will be processed and delivered.

The busiest week is expected to be December 13-18, when nearly 2.3 billion pieces of mail, including greeting cards and packages, will be processed and delivered, according to the post office.

\$175,079 Lottery winner bought ticket at 7-Eleven in Concord

November 27, 2021 - A \$175,079 winner of the Fantasy 5 state lottery game bought that ticket at the 7-Eleven at 1097 Mohr Lane in Concord. The lucky individual's ticket had picked all five of the winning numbers.

(Updated from claycord.com)



EMOTIONAL HEALTH

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

Past Life Regression Therapy: It's Not What You Think

Do you ever ponder engaging in past life regression therapy? If so, what possibilities spring to mind? Will you recall being a wealthy business magnate in nineteenth century America or a dirt-poor serf in medieval Europe? Will you have been a well-known historical figure or, more likely an obscure person forgotten by history? Maybe you will remember all the above along with many other previous lives.

physical issues and illness.

The following examples show how past life regression provides therapeutic benefits. To maintain anonymity, we have changed certain details.

Holly worked with a woman who was the only one in her family who never went into the ocean during their Hawaiian vacations because of a deathly fear of the water. During a past life regression, she remembered she was drowned as a witch during the Middle Ages. After the regression, she realized her fear had nothing to do with her current life and was able to overcome it.

Bill knew a young woman who was always the life of the party and unable to slow down. During a past life regression, Bill recalled a past life where both the woman and he were monks living a cerebral life divorced from the outside world. He



Past life regression does not necessarily mean you have lived previous lives. There are many working theories of what might be happening when people experience a past life in hypnotherapy.

Whatever the theory, the interesting part is that past life regression work can provide therapeutic benefits going beyond the novelty of recalling a past life. Here are some theories explaining past lives:

- Your subconscious records historical information from books, conversations, lectures, and other exposures to facts. These facts emerge from your subconscious in hypnosis, and you interpret them as a past life.
- Your imagination creates past life experiences the same way that your imagination creates dreams. Proponents of this theory believe you can work with past life experiences the way you can work with dreams and glean important patterns, insights, and understanding of your current life.
- Your past lives represent archetypes or metaphors. The archetypes you embodied in past lives help you work with the core issues and life roles you are experiencing during your present life. For instance, if you are driven to fight for the underdog or under-privileged, you may have past life experiences of being a benevolent leader or a revolutionary. The overlaying of the archetype of a past life may help identify present life's weaknesses and strengths.
- Your past lives are the consequence of reincarnation. This is the most popular and widely accepted theory of past lives. Most major world religions, including early Christianity, believe the soul is reborn into multiple lives to work through lessons and grow in consciousness. This cycle continues until there is an experience of enlightenment, or a complete remembering that we are divine and an expression of God, the Tao, the creator, or whatever the belief of the ultimate source.

Various theories explain past life memories. You do not have to believe in reincarnation or even in past lives to engage in past life therapy and gain benefits in this lifetime.

Past life regression has proven effective for many kinds of issues that people work through in therapy: phobias, feeling stuck in patterns, relationship issues, questions of life purpose, grief and loss, death and dying,

suspected the woman's present choices were influenced by the maxim, "been there, done that, try something new!" As it turned out, she, too, had independently recalled the life of a monk and started to bring more balance into her life. Another interesting aspect of regression work is that we tend to have "traveled" in previous lives with people we feel connected to in this life.

These examples hint at spiritual effects from past life regression, particularly when you recall multiple past lives. As you reflect on various lives, you may see how the actions taken in one life can have a cause and effect on another life.

Such a broader perspective can create an awareness that you are creating lessons for yourself through different lives to provide opportunities for spiritual growth. You may come to see that you are not just your body, or an individual preoccupied with your own wellbeing, but comprehend something greater - a sense of oneness and understanding that life is for loving, learning, and conscious evolution.

Other regression theories which are more in line with biology and physics lead to an expanded world view and a feeling of connectedness:

- Your past life experiences tap into your DNA and the genetic memory of your ancestor's lifetime. In western Newtonian "show me" culture, this genetic theory of past lives is popular with some regression therapist.
- Your past lives tap into the quantum field. Within the realm of quantum theory, some believe that you are one and part of a unified field. Since there is no time or space in the quantum reality, all past lives are happening simultaneously as parallel lives.

If you are interested in experiencing a past life regression, you can choose a self-guided process available on CDs, although, the skill and guidance of a well-trained regression therapist is recommended.

The International Board for Regression Therapy's website at IBRT.org lists good choices for regression therapists. A well-trained regression therapist uses non-directive language and asks open-ended questions to ensure the client is generating their own past life content uninfluenced by the therapist.

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

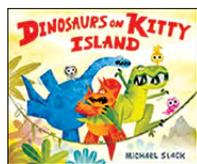


Jill Hedgecock's bookends
 Author *Between Shadow's Eyes* and *Rhino in the Room*.
www.jillhedgecock.com

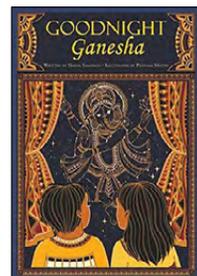
Many good books from local authors if you know where to look

Finding a book from a local author can be as rewarding as finding that quaint "hole in the wall" restaurant, rare item from an antique store or unique artwork from a local artist.

Fortunately, there are still a few independent bookstores in the area who support works from local authors in a variety of genres. Supporting locally owned businesses helps build strong communities. Likewise, purchasing books from authors in your neighborhood helps keep money circulating through the community. Books make a fine gift for any age. Here are a few prominent titles from local authors you will find in local stores.



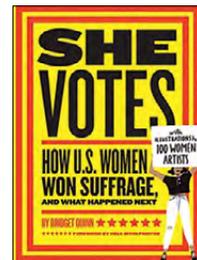
Kitties on Dinosaurs by Michael Slack is an adventure story about a playdate between kitties and cautious dinosaurs that does not go quite as planned.



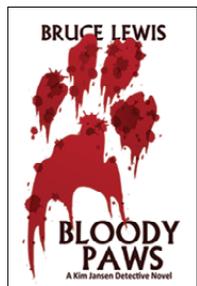
Goodnight Ganesha by Nadia Salomon is a picture book featuring two children visiting their grandparents in India find there is so much fun to once nighttime falls over the city.



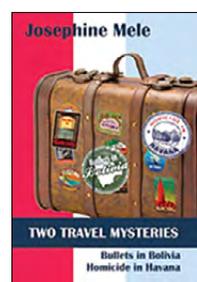
Rating Your Bunkmates and Other Camp Crimes by Jennifer Orr (ages 8-12) is about twelve-year-old, socially awkward Abigail who is looking for a friend, but when her camp bunkmate's phone is stolen, she must solve the mystery to achieve her goal.



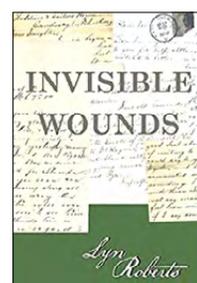
She Votes: How U.S. Women Won Suffrage, and What Happened Next by Bridget Quinn is a cool history book aimed at adult and teen readers with artwork from 100 women artists.



Bloody Paws: A Kim Jansen Detective Novel by Bruce Lewis (\$19.95) is about the reunification of veterinary college sweethearts Jim Briggs and Helen Williams after a tragedy hits in Portland Oregon where Briggs operates a mobile canine care service.

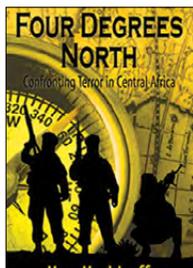


Two Travel Mysteries: Bullets in Bolivia, Homicide in Havannah (\$9.00) by Josephine Mele combines a close-up look at Cuba and Bolivia along with fascinating whodunnits. It is a page-turning blend of travelogue and mystery that will keep you up at night trying to solve the puzzle amid exotic locales.



Invisible Wounds by Lyn Roberts (\$18) is a powerful portrait of one man's struggle to heal from his trauma experienced in both war and personal life.

Four Degrees North by Ken Kerkhoff (\$12) is the story of Alan Burke

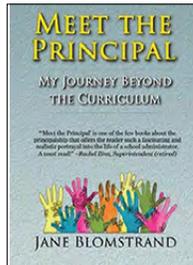


who struggles to save his wife after she is abducted in Africa and held hostage by Boko Haram, an Islamic terrorist group.

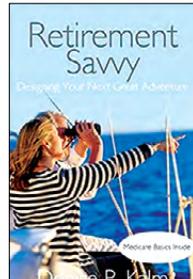
Grandpa by James Benney (\$9.00) is a moving tribute to the San Francisco Bay Area's rich history and a soulful retelling of one man's outstanding life.



Meet the Principal by Jane Blomstrand (\$13.95) is a collection of stories from one principal's experiences. Some are funny, some are sad, some may surprise you, and some may touch your heart.



Retirement Savvy by Denise Kalm (\$15) is designed for people who planned carefully for their financial future but may not have thought much about what they would do with all that time.



Voices of the Grieving Heart by Mike Bernhardt (\$16.95) does not tell readers how they should feel. Rather, the contributors to this book offer their own truths with the hope that others might help others heal from their own losses.



Everybody Can Dance! by Kara Navolio is a great rhyming picture book about inclusivity with an uplifting message.

Say Goodbye to Plastic by Sandra Ann Harris (\$15) shows readers how to reduce their plastic footprint in their kitchen, bathroom, office, and dining room.

I am incredibly grateful to both Flashlight Books and Reasonable Books for carrying signed copies of all three of my suspense novels (\$11.99-\$13.49). If you have an animal lover in your life that loves a good page-turner then these are perfect gifts.



Barnes and Noble also features a local author section. You can find these titles and other titles on the shelves dispersed among these locations.

Berkshire Books - 3480 Clayton Rd. Concord.
 Barnes and Noble - 2025 Diamond Blvd. Ste 125, Concord
 Flashlight Books - 1537 N. Main St., Walnut Creek
 Reasonable Books - 3645 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Ste C, Lafayette
 Happy Shopping!



aRt Cottage
 by FROgard

2021 has been a good year for aRt



Painting in the garden

We embarked upon 2021 not quite knowing what to expect from the pandemic, but here at the aRt Cottage, we are ending the year on an incredibly high note. We have been delighted and honored to have nurtured so much creative growth in our community these past twelve months.

We hosted several weekend workshops that spotlighted local art teachers who delighted their students with many creative products and techniques, from collage to clay sculpting.

People of all ages enjoyed our plein air painting classes in the garden. We filled the gallery with unique exhibitions, and we safely hosted our bimonthly artist receptions giving artists and art lovers welcome opportunities to connect with each other in person.

We were proud to be one of the stops on the Soul Boxes tour, part of a national art movement to raise awareness about the impact of gun violence.

Art sales have increased, new artists have come out to show their work, and we strengthened our partnerships with the city and local art organizations. We were even voted as the Best East Bay Art Gallery by Diablo Valley Magazine readers.

Some of my favorite highlights from the past year have been seeing kids I used to teach, all grown up now, who brought their friends in to show where they learned how to have fun making art. Some now have their own websites



Pat Viera, left, sells her lion collage.

or sell their work on Etsy, and others are taking art classes at college. It is wonderful to see them as confident and creative adults.

If you are looking for unique gift ideas, stop by our Holiday Boutique and browse among the many handmade gifts and original art. The Holiday Boutique ends December 22 aRt Cottage is located at 2238 Mt. Diablo Street in Concord.

We hope you and yours have a warm and wonderful holiday season in store



Kira, acrylic artist at work



Former youth student Aleah visits Fro

"When I ask how guests found aRt Cottage, many say 'We saw you in the Diablo Gazette!' and it makes me smile."— Fro, aRt Gallery



CVCHS tackles pandemic learning loss

By Dave Fehle, Interim Executive Director, Clayton Valley Charter High

The pandemic has changed many aspects of our lives. Learning loss is real and has had emotional and social impacts on our students. When I accepted the position as Interim Executive Director, I was assigned with getting our students and school back on track. So, as we conclude our first semester of the 2021-22 school year, I am pleased to say that our students are off to a great start across all grade levels, departments, and subjects. These results are a testament to the efforts and dedication of our teachers, administrators, and staff collaborating with students and parents to achieve results.

The number of students eligible for targeted case management (course support) has been reduced by 45% from last year's levels and is now below pre-pandemic levels by 11%. The average student GPA for Quarter 1 was 3.19. Of note, we are pleased with the progress of our 9th graders. The average passing rate (grade of "C" or higher) for English, Math, Science, and History is more than 91%.

National Letter of Intent Signing Day

Before our Thanksgiving break, CVCHS hosted its annual National Letter of Intent Signing Day where five scholar-athletes made commitments to top-tier colleges. Friends and family were on-hand to witness the signings and celebrate the achievements of these amazing scholar-athletes.

Congratulations to Jordan Woolery – Softball @ UCLA; Daniela Perez – Soccer @ Sarah Lawrence College; Jacob Krieg – Baseball @ Oregon State University; Laine Moreas – Soccer @ Point Loma Nazarene University; and Samantha Frary – Lacrosse @ Ohio Wesleyan University.

– Baseball @ Oregon State University; Laine Moreas – Soccer @ Point Loma Nazarene University; and Samantha Frary – Lacrosse @ Ohio Wesleyan University.

MDUSD files Appeal to California Supreme Court over facility fees

CVCHS and MDUSD (District) are still in a legal dispute over our facility fees. In 2019, a Contra Costa County trial court issued a judgment and CVCHS filed an appeal. In October 2021, the Court of Appeal unanimously agreed with CVCHS, reversed the lower court's ruling, and remanded the case back to the lower court. Last month, the District filed an appeal with the California Supreme Court.

More than two years ago, CVCHS made a good-faith effort towards our negotiations by presenting a check for more than \$925,000 to the District, bringing the total paid to \$2.2 million over eight years. Despite our agreement to all the District's terms and offering more than they originally asked for in court, the MDUSD Board of Education rejected our offer to resolve the issue and continued litigation.

All told, both the District and CVCHS will have spent close to \$2 million in attorney's fees, money which could have been better spent on hiring teachers, providing raises, and supporting students. If the Supreme Court does not accept the case, the District will owe approximately \$1 million to CVCHS for the overpayments it made in good faith. In addition, the District also owes CVCHS



Scholar athletes commit to major colleges. Jordan Woolery – Softball @ UCLA; Daniela Perez – Soccer @ Sarah Lawrence College; Jacob Krieg – Baseball @ Oregon State University; Laine Moreas – Soccer @ Point Loma Nazarene University; and Samantha Frary – Lacrosse @ Ohio Wesleyan University.

millions in Measure C money approved by voters in 2010 and punitively withheld by the District.

CVCHS has made many reasonable attempts to engage the District and resolve this dispute. We need our community's help to demand an end to the expensive litigation and the release of Measure C funds. Please take a moment today to contact the MDUSD Board of Education either by making a public comment or writing an email.

Thank you for your continued support of Clayton Valley Charter High School. Winter holidays are times for coming together with friends, family, and colleagues to share what is important in our lives here at school and at home. I would like to express my gratitude to our school community.

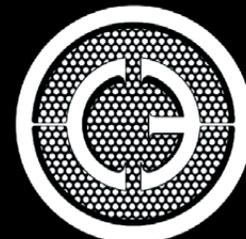
All the best to you and yours during this Holiday Season!



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Four Steps to pain-free downsizing or preparing for a move

One thing is certain, the last few years have taught us to reevaluate how we want to live and work going forward.

Let's face it. Moving is a lot of work. If a move is in your future, it's helpful to start with the end in mind to guide the process no matter how far off you are planning. Here are four steps to follow towards a pain-free move.

Choose not to stress out over it

While it is good to have a plan, give yourself permission to take it slow. Start by doing one room at a time or one closet at a time. Tackle something that you can finish so you feel you accomplished something. Spread out tasks over time - days, weeks, months so you are minimizing the stress of getting it done last minute. Begin with small projects such as photographs, collections, kitchen utensils. If the thought of sorting through belongings and getting rid of things makes you anxious, then start in a neutral room, like the guest room, office or kitchen. Completing a task, no matter how small, helps get the momentum going.

Develop a system

An easy and simple system is to use different color sticky notes or tapes. Slap green on things you are keeping, yellow on items you are giving away and pink on things you are discarding. If you are downsizing, you might decide for every cookbook or platter, for example, you keep one and give two away.

It also helps to assess how often you

use 30 wine glasses during the course of a year. Maybe you keep ten.

Decide what goes and what stays

Keep things you really use, want to use (be honest), need for everyday use, and/or like to look at or evoke memories. If you are downsizing it is necessary to purge. If you are buying bigger or a similar home, think about what is worth paying the movers to move and consider the décor.

You might change up the scale of furniture depending on the new home, or update your décor or style. If so, you may not need some of your furniture and can donate it. This allows you to furnish the new home over time, when you know what you need and where.

Making some of these decisions ahead of time, saves time. The worst feeling is walking into the garage a year after moving and having unpacked boxes. Thinking ahead, streamlines the process of moving in and moving on.

Order your presale inspections

This is one thing that can save oodles of stress during your contingency period. If you have disclosed what you know about your home, there is less likelihood that a buyer will come back and renegotiate after the offer is accepted. But if there is anything that could be problematic, you have time to decide what you want to do to remedy it. Once an offer is accepted, the buyer gets to have a say in that.



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Monthly Market Report

Single Family Homes



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What's an ADU and how can you benefit?

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) have been known by many names: granny flats, in-law units, backyard cottages, secondary units, and more. No matter what you call them, ADUs are an innovative, affordable, and effective option for adding much needed housing in California. ADUs have grown exponentially in number as more cities, counties, and homeowners become interested in increasing the supply of affordable housing.

Homeowner benefits of ADUs

ADUs are an affordable type of home to construct in California because they do not require paying for land, major new infrastructure, structured parking, or elevators. ADUs can provide a source of income for homeowners. For cities ADUs count towards their state mandated affordable housing numbers. ADUs are built with cost-effective wood frame construction, which is significantly less costly than homes in new, multi-family infill buildings.

ADUs allow extended families to be near one another while maintaining privacy. ADUs can provide as much living space as many newly built apartments and condominiums, and they are suited well for couples, small families, friends, young people, and seniors.

ADUs give homeowners the flexibility to share independent living areas with family members and others, allowing seniors to age in place as they require more care.

In October 2019, California Governor Newsom signed into law Assembly Bill 68 (AB68), making it easier and more affordable

to build accessory dwelling units.

AB68: ADU rules in California

To begin with, AB68 provides for faster ADU plan review times by requiring approval or denial within 120 days of receiving the application.

Local agencies are prohibited from imposing strict requirements that exceed state mandates.

The law established more flexible ADU size and set back requirements and allows both regular size and "junior" ADUs to be on the same property.

It also allows ADUs for multi-family units and duplexes and prohibits local agencies from charging "impact fees" for ADUs under 750 sq. ft.

Regardless of its physical form, an ADU is legally part of the same property as the main home it resides near. It cannot be bought or sold separately as a condominium might. The owner of the ADU is the owner of the main home.

Installing an ADU in your backyard will certainly increase your property value. After all, it is an additional permanent living space on your lot. The kitchen, bathroom, and bedrooms are viewed as additions to your primary home.

To discuss your options and see how these new rules can help you, contact your Contra Costa County resource, ADU4You, a one stop shop that handles the entire project at a fixed, affordable cost. 925-979-5516 or sales@ADU4You.com.



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

My Workplace is Hostile!

Frankie Frazzled has had enough. He is convinced that he has been the victim of a hostile work environment. He wisely consults with an experienced local employment lawyer, instead of responding to television and radio ads and billboards of beautiful lawyers touting their great successes (I am sad to say I personally know some of these marketing wizards).

Anyways, back to Mr. Frazzled, it seems he worked as a manicurist at Concord Nail Design (anonymous name designed to protect the innocent). One day, a man came into the store requesting a pedicure. Frankie began the pedicure, but then the customer told Frankie he had a hotel room and some massage oil and asked if Frankie would give him a massage. Frankie responded, "We don't do that kind of service." But the man persisted by propositioning Frankie.

Frankie immediately went to the front desk and told his manager about what the customer had said. He told the manager he did not feel comfortable providing the pedicure. The manager told Frankie "Just go finish the pedicure and get it over with." Frankie provided the pedicure but during the 30 - 45-minute procedure the customer made five or six, shall we say, inappropriate comments.

Frankie wants to know if he has a hostile work environment case. I respond as follows:

"Frankie, the phrase 'hostile work environment' is widely misunderstood. There is no law that generally forbids hostility in the workplace. If an employee could sue an employer whenever the workplace was 'hostile' we would need to build many more court houses to manage all the cases. What the law does forbid is 'harassment,' but, and this is the key, the harassment must be because of the employee's race, sex, age, religion, etc. There is a list of what is known as 'protected categories.' If the harassment is due to some other reason, typically there is no law violated. If the harassment gets bad enough, the employee's only remedy usually is to make a worker's compensation claim alleging an emotional work injury.

"In your case," I explain to Mr. Frazzled, "the harassment by the customer relat-



ed to 'sex' and so, we can overcome that hurdle in making your claim. The other hurdle we must overcome is that you were not harassed by your employer, you were harassed by a customer. Also, the law sets a high bar on what it considers harassment. Unless the harassment is 'severe or pervasive,' it is not serious enough for it to be considered a legal violation. This means that if the sexual harassment is not serious (like a rape for instance), it must be pervasive, occurring repeatedly."

"So," Frankie, responds, "I probably don't have a case then?"

"Hold on," I reply. "I'm not finished. In your case, the focus is not so much on what the customer said, but on how your manager responded. The law is well-established that an employer can create a hostile work environment by failing to take immediate and appropriate corrective action in response to a customer's (or co-worker's) sexual or racial harassment. Several courts have ruled that an employer's response to a third party's unwelcome sexual advances can independently create a hostile work environment.

"In your case," I continue, "the court will let us argue to a jury that your manager's response discounted and effectively condoned the customer's sexual harassment and actually went a step further by conveying that you were expected to tolerate the customer's harassment as part of your job. The court will let us argue that your manager should have taken corrective action, like requiring the customer to immediately leave the premises. Whether a jury would ultimately conclude that the manager's conduct amounted to a hostile work environment is unknown, but we have enough to proceed forward with the case."

The facts of Mr. Frazzled's case and the legal analysis are taken from Fried v. Wynn Las Vegas, decided by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals on November 18, 2021. (Photo courtesy of Zandi Slant)



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Ruby Dooby Do to the Rescue

APOLLO

Each month ruby features a hard to place dog in foster to help them find their forever home.

Apollo is a six-year-old male Belgian Malinois under foster care by CalPaws K9 Rescue.



He did not have an easy life before he was surrendered to the shelter. He lived much of his life in a backyard or crate.

His front leg is slightly deformed, and X-rays show an untreated break.

His front canine teeth are nubs. Because of his tough life thus far, he is wary of strangers and can be fussy about who he trusts. Apollo is:

- Loyal (once he gets to know you), willing to please, funny, and sweet
- Dog-friendly with proper introduction
- Active, loves fetch, and going for walks
- In need of an experienced owner

Apollo is fully vaccinated and neutered. He has formed an amazing bond with his foster mom. He needs someone who will be patient with him as he learns to trust them.

The rescue and his trainer will help with getting a routine and getting him acclimated with his new home.

His current foster would love to keep him but is moving to Europe. She would be interested in a long-term foster situation if someone who would be willing to care for him while she is out of the country.

The perfect family to adopt or foster should be experienced with abused dogs.

Apollo has arthritis and receives medication to help with his bad leg.

The adoption fee is \$350. If you are interested in meeting this dog, please review CalPaws K9 Rescue's adoption process and then fill out an online adoption form at <https://www.calpaws.org/adopting>.

CalPaws K9 Rescue is an all-volunteer

501(c)(3) non-profit organization established in October 2019. Donations are used solely to benefit the dogs in their care.

A Bone to Pick

Puppies make bad holiday gifts.

While it can make a child's dream come true, that little ball of fur comes with responsibility.

When problems develop, many owners want a quick fix and use punishment or shock collars. This can lead to additional problems.

The time commitment required to train a dog should be considered when weighing whether to add a fur baby to the household.

Avoid giving Xylitol to your dog. Many people may not know of a hidden danger in some processed foods.

Xylitol is a sugar alcohol extracted from fruits and vegetables such as corn, raspberries and plums. It is used in sugar-free gum and mints, chewable vitamins, sugar-free jams, cake mixes, peanut butter, ice cream and pie mixes and an artificial sweetener.

Vomiting, collapsing, seizure and lethargy are symptoms of xylitol toxicity which can develop from 30 minutes to 12 hours after ingestion. Check labels before offering your dog any of these sweets.

Diggin' It.

Memorialize your pet Online. A new website, Nationalpetmemorial.com, allows you to honor your pet that has "crossed the rainbow bridge." Simply upload photos and enter your favorite pet moments for a lifetime of memories.

Each Memorial will include an official certificate with its name and place in the NPM Registry. It could also make for thoughtful gift. Cost is \$9.99 with the promotional code "LOVEMYPET".

Ruby is Concord's fur celebrity with approximately 1.7M TikTok followers, 177K FB, and 230K followers on IG. Ruby is also featured on the cover of novels, "From Shadow's Perspective" and "Between Shadow's Eyes". www.jillthedgecock.com.



2022 Be Elite Flag Football Season | Clayton Valley Charter

Welcome to Be Elite Flag Football at Clayton Valley Charter High School Registration is now open for all players.

SITE DIRECTOR: NICK TISA

Season: The season will run 10 straight weekends, starting January 23rd and finishing on March 27th, with a one-hour practice time and a one-hour game (no other practices will be scheduled).

Game Dates: All games and Practices are on Sundays, with the exception of Super Bowl Sunday in which games will be played on Saturday of that weekend.



@NTISA28

@BE_ELITE_ATHLETE

REGISTER NOW AT:

BeEliteAthlete.com

We are happy to announce that Flag Football is now at Clayton Valley Charter High School. The Be Elite Flag Football program is offered to all participants from Kindergarten through 8th grade.

Be Elite was started and created by high school coaches and players that were wanting to find a way to create a unique Flag Football program that would incorporate student-athletes as Mentor coaches and to show youth athletes a positive, energetic, fundamental, and competitive experience.

Please contact Nick Tisa (Nick.Tisa@ClaytonValley.org) for any questions or more details. See our ad on page 19 Link below to sign up: www.beeliteathlete.com/sites/clayton-valley-charter/



HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

There will be **no change** to our residential collection for both Christmas and New Year's Week. Please have your carts out for normal service.

Christmas Day:

December 25, 2021 (Saturday)

New Year's Day:

January 1, 2022 (Saturday)



The Recycling Center & Transfer Station - RCTS is **CLOSED** Christmas and New Year's Day. Visit www.mdr.com/rcts

ARF ADOPTION STARS

by Cole Kuiper **Betty & Kia**

Looking for a furry friend? Visit arflife.org to view all of ARF's adoptable animals or read more about ARF's adoption process. If you see an animal you're interested in on our website, just fill out an online inquiry form!

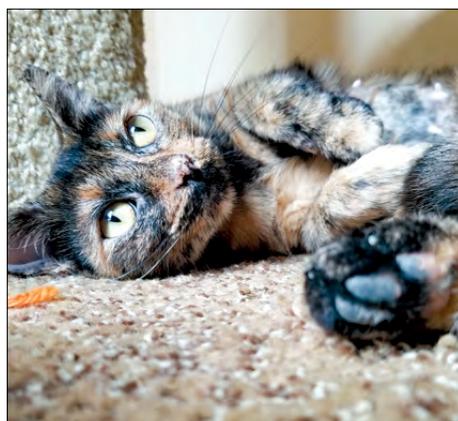
Betty



Six-year-old Betty is a sweet beauty looking for her lifelong snuggle buddy. This tri-paw'd girl will love nothing more than to be close to you for all the affection, and butt scratches she can get. She is a loyal little lady and will make a wonderful companion. Betty has a positive history with other dogs. She currently weighs 17 pounds.

ARF adoption fees: \$250 for an adult dog, \$350 for a puppy (<6 months), \$125 for a special-needs dog, \$175 for a special-needs puppy (<6 months), and \$125 for a senior dog (7+ years).

Kia



Two-year-old Kia a beautiful, super friendly girl ready to find her forever home. This recent mom is ready to see what the world has to offer and let her adorable personality shine. Loving and playful, Kia will fill any home she is in with companionship and endless affection. Plus, Kia's adoption fee has been prepaid by a generous donor.

ARF Adoption fees: \$100 for an adult cat, \$150 for a kitten (<6 months), \$150 for two adult cats, \$250 for two kittens, \$50 for a special-needs cat, \$75 for a special-needs kitten (<6 months), and \$50 for a senior cat (7+ years).

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PANCAKE SPECIAL
FRENCH TOAST
FRENCH TOAST SPECIAL
BELGIAN WAFFLES

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Sandwiches

GRILLED HAM AND CHEESE
TUNA OR EGG SALAD SANDWICH
TUNA MELT
HAM SANDWICH
FISH SANDWICH
1/2 LB FRENCH DIP
GRILLED CHICKEN BREAST SANDWICH
MONTEREY CHICKEN SANDWICH
PHILLY CHEESE STEAK

GRILLED CHEESE
CLASSIC BLT
BLTA
TURKEY SANDWICH
CLUB SANDWICH
PATTY MELT
HOT PASTRAMI ON RYE
REUBEN SANDWICH
HOT LINK OR HOT ITALIAN SAUSAGE SANDWICH

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CALIFORNIA BURGER
MEXI BURGER
DELUXE BURGER
HALF POUND BURGER

Lunch Plates

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3 CHICKEN BREAST TENDERS
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GARDEN SALAD
GARDEN PLUS SALAD
CHEF SALAD
GRILLED CHICKEN SALAD

