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## May Day to Memorial Day, Activities Abound

CVCHS Choir Members in New Orleans after completing a six-day tour of New Orleans. pg. 4  
 Photo courtesy CVCHS

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- Mother's Day Treats, Movies, Books, Concerts, Calendar and more...

**32nd Bay Area KidFest 2023**

**May 27, 28 & 29 Memorial Day Weekend Downtown Concord**  
 Mt. Diablo High School, 2450 Grant St.

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**Publisher's Notes**  
By David King

# Tales From the Grave

Misty Bruns, author of the column "A Walk through Time", is passionate about her research. I have never really put much thought into what goes into her articles. She visits local cemeteries and graveyards and takes note of headstones, especially of the 1800s and thus a story-to-be told begins.

"Graveyards are around churches, cemeteries are not," she points out. "As a kid, my mom and I would often visit cemeteries," she says. They would learn the names, read the epitaphs, and the dates. "We always found it interesting."

Misty says she has ancestors buried in Rose Hill Cemetery at Black Diamond Mines. I visited Rose Hill. I read the names and dates engraved on the headstones and then in a morbid math exercise, I figured out the age of each person buried, and moved on.

But for Misty, that's not enough. She wants to know their story. How did they live, how were they known. Her research begins by finding nuggets of information wherever she could, turning them into pieces of a puzzle. "You can gather a lot of information just from a headstone."

To gather enough information to build what she feels is a complete story to tell may take her months, and in some cases years. The research is all basically done Online.

Misty is a volunteer photographer for FindAGrave.com. This communal website helps families find the whereabouts of ancestors as they discover their genealogy. She can upload a name or photo of a gravesite and see if it has been previously recorded. Other tools she uses are Family Search (compiled by the Mormon Church), Census records, and old archives

of newspapers, magazines and other publications.

"I feel a great pride in researching and putting the pieces together of who the person was and connecting them to a family. It's really fulfilling for me."

In today's edition, on page 18 Misty tells the story of Katie Aiken. "I have seen this broken headstone for years." Katie's stone had her parents' initials, birth and died dates. Since Katie was born and had died between census, Misty was able to search census records of her parents, and discovered Katie also had brothers and sisters. The story thickens.

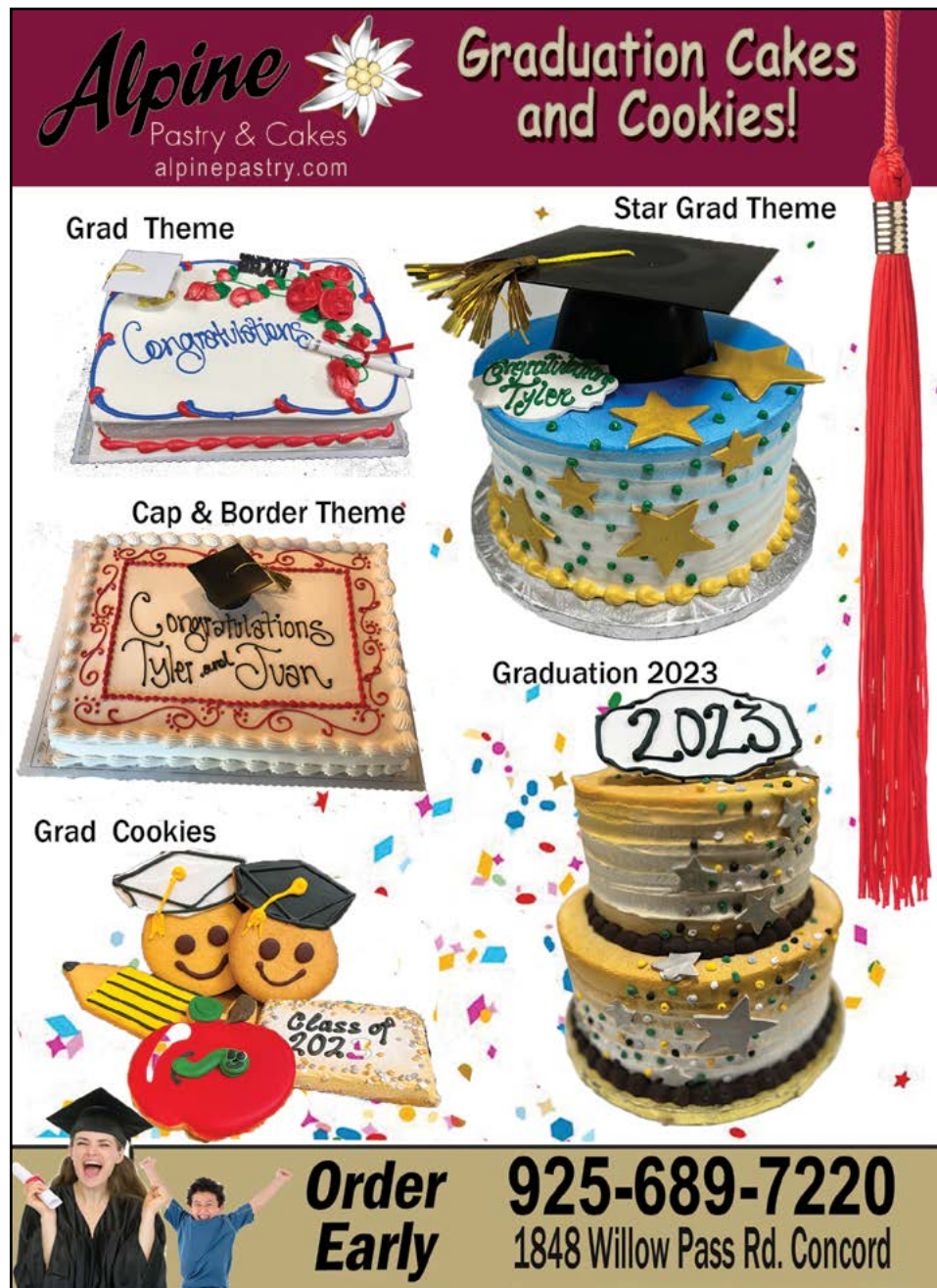
The Antioch Library online has newspaper clippings from Contra Costa Gazette from 1860-1922, Antioch Ledger 18870-1922 as well as others. Misty searches for any published notifications of the person's death.

In Katie's case, there was none. So, Misty searched her last name for any information. She was able to find one report of Katie's school record which offered clues to several paths for Misty to be able to tell a Katie story.

"It's hard work but I enjoy putting the pieces together. I was able to put this nearly forgotten girl's name back in the universe." Now Katie and family are connected on the internet for future inquiries.

"With Katie, it probably took a year to connect her to a family with a story that could be told. The internet has certainly made such research a lot easier."

Thank you, Misty, your column is always fascinating.



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**MAY 13 | CROSSMAN CONNECTION**

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**MAY 27 | ROD THE MOD**

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**JUNE 10 | VYBE SOCIETY**

Top 40 Hits

**JUNE 24 | PRIDE AND JOY**

Hits from 60's to 80's

**JULY 8 | FOREVERLAND**

Michael Jackson, 14-man tribute band

**JULY 22 | CHICAGO TRIBUTE AUTHORITY**

Chicago tribute band

**AUG. 5 | HOUSEROCKERS**

Best hits 60's, 70's, 80's and beyond

**AUG. 19 | FLEETWOOD MASK**

Fleetwood Mac Tribute Band

**SEPT. 2 | ALAMEDA ALL STARS**

Celebrating Gregg Allman

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For more information about the Concerts in the Grove series, please visit the City website or ClaytonConcerts.org. Scan the QR code shown here to donate to support Concerts this year!



**The Naked Gardener**  
David George, UC-Certified  
Master Gardener

Gardening can be serious work this time of year. Digging, planting, weeding, and hauling bags of this and that. Your back health especially can be a victim of this springtime toil. But there are other injuries lurking in the bushes and planters. Taking care of your physical health while gardening should be a top priority. My friend and fellow Contra Costa Master Gardener, Joie Spinelli recently reminded me of some great gardening safety practices.

“The most frequent gardening injuries are to the back and result from bending over too far — never more than a 30-degree angle.” Joie says. “Or carrying too-heavy loads.” Also, working with saws, axes, hatchets; even shovels and hand tools in an improper way or when they are not

sharp can result in serious injury. And then there are falls from extension or step ladders. The ground is pretty hard when you hit it at full speed. One of the most serious risks for long-term injury is from flying debris or sprays getting into your eyes, especially if you are not wearing safety goggles.

Joie recommends that you do most of your planting work at waist height, if possible, either at a working table or alongside a raised



This careless gardener is causing undue risk of injury

“All gardeners should have zero tolerance for accidents and injuries,” Joie says. “Rely on help and the right equipment for the job, such as wheelbarrows and carts for heavy hauling. Keep hand tools sharp, clean, and used properly. And always have a first aid kit nearby for the inevitable blisters, scrapes, and splinters.”

Thanks, Joie, for some great advice for avoiding serious injuries in the garden. Gardening can be fun when done safely.

For more detailed online gardening health and safety notes, go to: [https://safety.ucanr.edu/Master\\_Gardener\\_Safety\\_Resources/](https://safety.ucanr.edu/Master_Gardener_Safety_Resources/).



A young gardener lifting compost using a healthy back angle

bed. That minimizes stooping and bending injures to backs. Keep ladder use to a minimum by pruning your fruit trees low so top branches are within arm’s reach. Never use ladders on

uneven or mushy ground.

“And don’t forget to keep hydrated during hot days by drinking plenty of water,” Joie continues. “Dehydration can creep up on you and affect your decision-making.” Wear good-fitting gloves when working with soil or tools, but not with shredders because they can pull your hand right in.

The Naked Gardener always recommends not using poisonous chemical pesticides, fungicides, or herbicides to prevent harm to untargeted plants, critters, pets, and children.

**Happy World Naked Gardening Day**

This year’s memorable date is May 6, when gardeners across the planet immodestly celebrate their close relationship with nature and pick up a healthy dose of Vitamin D (courtesy of the sun). Just Google it for the exposing details (and some fun photos.)

Email your comments and questions to: [NakedGardener@diablogazette.com](mailto:NakedGardener@diablogazette.com). In some cases, these may appear in future columns.

**CVCHS NEWS**  
Dave Fehle, Executive Director  
Clayton Valley Charter High School

**Closing Out the CVCHS School Year**

With just over a month before the end of the 2023 academic year, CVCHS students have been busy completing course projects, participating in athletic and musical competitions, and getting ready for graduation. I’d like to share a few highlights happening here and off-campus.

**Art Expo Displays Unique Talents**

An annual tradition here at CVCHS is our Arts Expo. It provides a great opportunity for our students to showcase their unique talents outside of the classroom. This year, CVCHS students exhibited numerous works encompassing sculpture, graphic arts, photography, jewelry, painting, drawing, video and mixed media.

The Art Expo is judged by local professional artists who

carefully consider each entry and award cash prizes as well as certificates and medals. CVCHS is fortunate for the generosity of our sponsor, Rotary Club of Concord/Clayton Valley, which supports the Arts here at CVCHS. All student exhibits will be posted online, and winners will be announced in May.

**Spring Athletic Teams Soar**

You could say that our last semester of school is coming down to the wire – and so are many of our Spring athletic team competitions. I am proud of our CVCHS student-athletes and what they have accomplished this season. There are many who deserve recognition, but none more worthy than the 17 members of the CVCHS Track & Field team who qualified for this year’s Arcadia Invitational in Southern California.

Our Girls 4x800 sprint medley took first place with Isabelle Ruff helping to secure the victory by going from fourth to first in the last leg of the relay. Our Boys 4x800 ran just under eight minutes in the invitational heat placing them in eighth out of 20 participating teams. Additionally, all of our runners and jumpers finished in the top 10 for each of their competitive events. Congratulations to everyone on the Track & Field team and our coaches who help inspire our student-athletes to be their best.

**CVCHS Choirs Win Awards**

In the musical competitions, the CVCHS Choirs just completed a fabulous six-day tour to New Orleans, Louisiana (NOLA) over Spring Break. Students competed in the WorldStrides Heritage Festival held at the University of New Orleans against high school choirs from around the country.

CVCHS choirs were thrilled to receive the coveted Sweepstakes Award for the highest overall point average of any other choir program at



CVCHS Track & Field Team at the Arcadia Invitational

the festival.

The Women’s Ensemble took a gold medal, while Concert Choir and Show Choir brought home silver awards. Senior Sarah Andrews was awarded a prestigious Maestro Award for her outstanding solo performance in “Change the World.”

While in NOLA, students enjoyed a variety of activities including a wetlands tour, riverboat jazz cruise, Cajun cooking class, and a masquerade ball awards ceremony. For many students, it was their first experience in the South, and for others, their first airplane ride. And of course, they ate a lot of beignets, gumbo, and jambalaya.

**Seniors Determine Academic Futures on Commitment Day**

On the annual Commitment Day, CVCHS Seniors celebrated the next steps toward their academic futures. Each student wore sweatshirts, t-shirts, hats and other apparel recognizing their commitment to continuing their education at a four-year university, community college, the military or vocational school.

Seniors gathered in the Upper Quad to acknowledge to their families and the school community their intentions for their post-high school journey. It was a wonderful day for celebrating all of their accomplishments here at CVCHS and making final preparations for our graduation ceremony on June 1 at the Concord Pavilion.

Here’s to closing out another great Ugly school year.

Happy Mother's Day

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## When to Sell Your Home Depends on Many Factors

Deciding to sell your home can be a big decision. It is important to consider a variety of factors before putting your home on the market. Timing is one of the most important things to consider, as the real estate market can fluctuate. This can impact the price you end up getting for your home. Here are some factors to consider when deciding when the best time is to sell your home.

One of the most significant factors affecting the real estate market is seasonal fluctuations. Spring and summer tend to be the most popular seasons to sell homes as the weather is more pleasant, and people have more free time to look for homes. Additionally, families with children may prefer to move during the summer months to avoid disrupting the school year. Winter can be a slower season for home sales due to colder weather and the holiday season, although in areas with mild winters, it may not make a substantial difference.

It is important to consider the state of the economy when deciding when to sell your home. In a strong economy with low unemployment rates and high consumer confidence, home prices tend to rise.

In a weak economy, home prices may decrease, and there may be fewer buyers in the market. Currently, while home values are starting to moderate, they are still much higher than they were just a few years ago. Now could be a good time to see a sizable return on your investment.

It is important to consider interest

rates when deciding when to sell your home. Low-interest rates can make it more affordable for buyers to purchase homes, which can increase demand and drive up prices.

Conversely, high-interest rates can make it more difficult for buyers to afford homes, which can decrease demand and drive down prices. Interest rates for mortgages have been climbing steadily over the last year. But many experts forecast that they will begin to drop this year.

Local market conditions such as the availability of jobs, schools, and amenities in your area can all impact the demand for homes. Additionally, the availability of homes for sale in your area can also affect the price you receive for your home.

Finally, be sure to consider your personal situation when deciding when to sell your home. If you need to sell your home quickly, you may need to price it more competitively and sell it during a slower market. Alternatively, if you have the luxury of time, you may be able to wait for a stronger market to sell your home.

The best time to sell your home will depend on a variety of factors, and it is important to consult with a real estate professional to help you make an informed decision. They can help you assess the current market conditions, evaluate your personal situation, and determine the optimal timing to sell your home.

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\$695,000  
3124 Windsor Pl, Concord  
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1774 Indian Wells Way, Clayton  
Rarely Available "Grove" Model in Black Diamond at Oakhurst Country Club backing to 11th green with views of golf course and Mt. Diablo. Updated with downstairs primary bedroom and primary bath. 2 bed plus loft/optional 3rd bed, 2.5 baths, approx. 1797sf.



\$799,950 PENDING  
1463 Indianhead Cir, Clayton  
Stunning "Willow" Model in Chaparral Springs at Oakhurst Country Club backing to golf course with 13th fairway and Mt. Diablo views. 3 bedrooms, 3 baths, approx. 1709sf. Downstairs bedroom and full bath.

### Market Update - Clayton

Address	Sales Price	SF	Bed/Bath	Sales Date
1268 Shell Cir	\$807,000	1709	3/3	4/4/2023
1155 Moccasin Ct	\$921,000	1343	3/2	4/5/2023
403 Chupean Pl	\$850,000	1939	3/3.5	4/12/2023
1199 Gamay Dr	\$975,000	2032	4/2.5	4/13/2023
10 Mt Alpine Pl	\$1,215,000	2141	4/3	4/14/2023
1191 Shell Ln	\$835,000	1709	3/3	4/17/2023
935 Kenston Dr	\$1,185,000	1550	4/2	4/21/2023

### Market Update - Concord

Address	Sales Price	SF	Bed/Bath	Sales Date
1313 Spring Meadow Ln	\$925,000	1588	4/2	4/3/2023
3051 Treat Blvd #120	\$340,000	805	1/1	4/4/2023
972 San Miguel	\$1,250,000	2565	4/3.5	4/6/2023
2073 La Orinda Pl	\$1,021,500	2152	4/2.5	4/7/2023
1641 Allegro Ave	\$750,000	1448	3/2.5	4/13/2023
4474 Barberry Ct	\$1,150,000	2349	4/2.5	4/14/2023
1412 Delaware Dr	\$820,000	1128	3/2	4/18/2023



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# calendar of events

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## CLUBS

**June 1, SIR Branch 19 Monthly Luncheon** 11 AM with a social hour and lunch. The featured speaker will be Fred Fuld, who will speak about AI, Space Travel, and Robotics. SIR is a social organization of senior men who get together and participate in fun activities, such as golf, bowling, bocci, hiking, dining out, wine tasting, day trips, etc.. All are welcome. Pittsburg Elks' Lodge, 200 Marina Blvd., Pittsburg.

**June 10, Classic Car Show presented by Walnut Creek Elks Lodge.** Participants and Sponsors register now. Sponsorship call Judy Godar 925-937-8995. Registration fee \$40 includes meal. A portion of proceeds to benefit Elks charity projects. Register Online at <https://bpoel1811.square.site/>

## FARMERS' MARKETS

**Pacific Coast Farmers Market**  
<https://www.pcfma.org>  
**Concord** Todos Santos Plaza  
Tuesdays, 10AM- 2PM Year Round  
Thursdays 4PM - 8PM June 1-Sept 28  
**Martinez** Sundays, 9AM-1PM,  
Year Round. 700 Main St.

**Contra Costa Certified Farmers Market**  
<http://www.cccfm.org>  
**Walnut Creek**, Sundays 9AM-1PM, Year Round. Locust Street between Cole and Lacassie St  
<http://www.cccfm.org/walnut-creek-market/>  
Kaiser Permanente 1425 South Main

**Diablo Valley Farmers Market**  
<http://www.cafarmersmkts.com/diablo-valley-farmers-market>  
North Wiget Ln. and Mitchell Dr. Shadelands, Walnut Creek, Saturdays 9AM-1PM Year Round 1799 Locust St.

**Rossmoor Farmers Market**  
<http://www.cafarmersmkts.com/rossmoor-farmers-market>  
Opens May 19. Rossmoor residents and their families only. Fridays 9AM-1PM, Golden Rain Rd, Walnut Creek

## EVENTS

**May 5-7, Concord Historical Society's Spring Tea and the Concord Art Association's Colors of Spring Show**, 2 seatings a day, 11AM and 2PM. Entry fee \$50. Concord Museum and Event Center, 1928 Clayton Rd. Concord <https://concordhistorical.org/events/>

[spring-tea-save-the-date/](https://www.kidfestconcord.com/)

**May 6, Bay Area SpringFest 2023** - Noon - 7PM. Bay Area SpringFest celebrates the beginning of spring with plants, arts & crafts, music and food in Downtown Concord at tree-lined Todos Santos Plaza in the largest city of upscale Contra Costa County, free admission and free nearby parking. There will be music on the Todos Santos stage, a variety of food vendors, free activities for kids and myriad shopping opportunities. 2175 Willow Pass Rd, Concord. <https://www.kidfestconcord.com/>

**May 6, Ruth Bancroft Annual Gala**, 5:00PM, Join us for our - Journey Through the Garden - come explore Ruth's rare plants and get to know more about the curated collection. This year we will be highlighting plants native to Latin America. <https://www.ruthbancroftgarden.org>

**May 7 - July 9, Sundays 1PM - 4PM. Galindo Home and Gardens** Admission: \$5 Come take a tour. No reservation is required and starting now through September the Concord Historical Society has organized a quilt display throughout the rooms of the Galindo home! 1721 Amador Ave, Concord

**Saturday May 13, Pleasant Hill Garden Study Club**, Pre-Mother's Day Plant Sale, 9 am to 2 pm New - California native plants, including native milkweeds. For more information, call 925-323-9314, or go to [www.phgsc.com](http://www.phgsc.com). Winslow Center, 2590 Pleasant Hill Road at Taylor Blvd., Pleasant Hill.

**May 18-21, Contra Costa County Fair**, Thursday, Friday & Sunday: Noon - 10 PM. Saturday: Noon - 11 PM. Enjoy live music on our Main Stage, entertaining shows, Antioch Speedway events, fantastic fair food, traditional exhibits, youth livestock, our NEW AND FREE Family Fun Zone, and more! Contra Costa County Event Park, 1201 West 10th St., Antioch

**Friday, May 19, CVCHS Induction Hall of Fame** at the at Centre Concord 5298 Clayton Road Concord. The event will start at 5:00pm with a social (no host wine and beer), followed by dinner at 6:30pm and the induction ceremony at 7pm. Tickets: <https://rb.gy/j5fw> Adult tickets are \$50 each, Kids 12 and under \$25 each. Ticket(s) will be mailed to you.

**May 19, 38th Annual Mayor's Cup Golf Classic**. 11AM-7PM. Concord Mayor Laura Hoffmeister. The event will support the charities Concord Junior Giants, Concord Ambassadors, and the First Tee of Contra Costa Youth Golf Program. Diablo Creek Golf Course at (925) 686-6266. Diablo Creek Golf Course. 4050 Port Chicago Hwy. Concord

**May 20, AM Larks, Editor, Author, and Book Critic will present "Published! Tips and Tricks from an Indie Editor"** 2PM. Larks will share advice on submitting to blogs, journals, agents, and publishers. Tri-Valley Writers Chapter of the California Writers Club. Las Positas College,

room 2470, 3000 Campus Hill Dr. in Livermore, email your RSVP to [treasurer@trivalleywriters.org](mailto:treasurer@trivalleywriters.org)

**Sat, 20 - Sun, 21 May, Art, Wine & Music Festival Pleasant Hill.** Enjoy the VIP Premium Wine tent and VIP Craft Beer tent along with individual beer and wine for purchase along Crescent Drive. <https://www.pleasanthillchamber.com/events/details/art-wine-music-festival-2022-8524>

**May 20, Concord's Got Talent**, 5PM-7PM, Join us on May 20 at 5 p.m. for a funny, clever, and musical show to entertain people of all ages. Concord Senior Center 2727 Parkside Cir. Concord [cityinfo@cityofconcord.org](mailto:cityinfo@cityofconcord.org) Phone: (925) 671-2489 Tickets are only \$5! APurchase them here: <https://tinyurl.com/48zvvpkd>

**May 21, Downtown Throwdown**, 2PM-7PM, CYC will be hosting the 2nd Annual Downtown Throwdown Boxing event live in Concord's, Todos Santos Plaza. Admission: \$35.00. Todos Santos Plaza 2175 Willow Pass Rd Concord. Email: [info@ccmail.org](mailto:info@ccmail.org). Phone: (925) 671-7070. Buy tickets: <https://rb.gy/fbcfe>

**May 27-29, Bay Area Kidfest.** Saturday & Sunday, 10am - 6pm. Memorial Day



Monday, 10am - 5pm Bay Area KidFest has been the premier family event in the San Francisco Bay Area for over three decades. Our 32nd KidFest is scheduled for the May 27-29, 2023 three-day Memorial Day Weekend in the largest city in upscale Contra Costa County. KidFest has been voted the Best Family Event or Community Fair/Festival in the East Bay by readers of Bay Area Parent magazine. <https://www.kidfestconcord.com>

**MARTINEZ CALENDAR SEE PAGE 21**

## ARTS/THEATRE/MUSIC

**Friday, May 12, Jazz Café Returns to Stanley Middle School.** 6:00PM. Among the student ensembles that will be performing are the Stanley Jazz Crusaders, the Stanley Jazz Messengers, Stanley Chorus, Campo Jazz Ensemble and the Acalanes Jazz Ensemble. 3455 School Street, Lafayette.

**May 21, CV Woman's Club Hosts Mark Shaw** for Diamond Terrace Performance, a delightful afternoon of music, wine, appetizers and desserts with singer, Mark Shaw to benefit the CVWC Scholarship. Shaw is a local Realtor with RE/Max by day, crooner by night. He plays Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Bobby Darin with a high energy and bewitching suave singing richly interpreted standards and popular songs of the teens, 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s. 6401 Center St, Clayton, CA. from 4 p.m. - 6 p.m. Reservations are limited. For reservation information (\$35), please visit:

[www.claytonvalleywomensclub.org](http://www.claytonvalleywomensclub.org) or call 925-685-0394 for more information.

**Sunday, May 21, Diablo Women's Chorale.** We would appreciate Diablo Gazette publicizing our upcoming Concert "In the Key of Spring" on Friday, May 19 at 7 PM or at 3 PM at Walnut Creek United Methodist Church, 1543 Sunnyvale Avenue, Walnut Creek. For advanced ticket information: [DiabloWomensChorale.org](http://DiabloWomensChorale.org)

**Clayton Concerts in the Grove**



**May 13 Crossman Connection Country**

**May 27 Rod the Wheel Rod Stewart Tribute**

**Concord Music & Market Series Starts June 1**, In conjunction with live music runs the weekly farmer's market. The City of Concord partners with the Pacific Coast Farmer's Market Association highlighting all the great fruits, vegetables, food, and more the Bay Area has to offer. The Concord farmers market is home to over 30 different local vendors from all over the area. Todos Santos Plaza, 2175 Willow Pass Rd. Concord

## Leshner Center for the Arts

**May 7, Viva España!** Presented by Contra Costa Wind Symphony, 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM

**May 12, 13, Contra Costa Ballet's Sleeping Beauty.** Presented by Contra Costa Ballet. The spell. The kiss. The happily ever after. Times vary.

**May 14, Sounds of the Americas: Sounds of Brazil** Presented by Diablo Symphony Orchestra, 2:00 PM - 4:15 PM. From the Brazilian tambourine to inspirations for Charlie Chaplin.

**May 11-15, Robin Hood**, Presented by Fantasy Forum Actors Ensemble. Join Robin Hood's band of merry men for adventure!

**May 18, Little Women** Presented by The Ballet School's Teen Production Workshop

**May 23, Northgate Spring Concert 2023**, Presented by Northgate High School Instrumental Music Boosters, 7:00 PM - 9:25 PM

**May 26, Diablo Ballet's A Midsummer Night's Dream** Presented by Diablo Ballet

**June 2, Delfeayo Marsalis and the Uptown Jazz Orchestra**, Presented by Leshner Center and Diablo Regional Arts Association, 7:30 PM - 9:00 PM

Leshner Center for the Arts 1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek, <https://www.lesherartscenter.org>

Tickets: (925) 943-7469 Wed-Sun Noon to 6:00 p.m.

# In Case You Missed It..

Local News Items from [Claycord.com](http://Claycord.com) and Other Sources

## Contra Costa Transportation Authority Launches Bay Area's First Autonomous Shuttle



The Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA) said it just launched the Bay Area's first autonomous shuttle program that will be open to the public.

The Bishop Ranch Autonomous Shuttle Program will run through fall 2023, providing free, driverless electric shuttles to four key destinations within San Ramon's Bishop Ranch business park.

CCTA said the program will be available to the community from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The shuttles hold up to eight passengers, plus an attendant, and have a maximum speed limit of 15 miles per hour.

PRESTO shuttles don't have drivers, pedals, or steering wheels, but do have an attendant to make sure riders have a safe and pleasant experience. The Beep command center also remotely monitors

the shuttles at all times to ensure the shuttles are operating safely.

More information on how to use the shuttles can be found at [ridePRESTO.com](http://ridePRESTO.com)

## BEWARE! The Rattlesnakes Are Out In Our Local Open Space



It's springtime and the weather is warmer, which means the snakes are out in our local open space.

If you're out hiking, biking, jogging or just enjoying the outdoors, always remember to keep an eye on your surroundings, and don't let your dogs off leash (if dogs are permitted).

## East Bay Regional Park District Acquires Finley Road Ranch Property Adjacent To Morgan Territory Regional Preserve And Mount Diablo State Park

The East Bay Regional Park District has purchased the 768-acre Finley Road Ranch property located off Finley Road in Contra Costa County at the western edge of Morgan Territory Regional Preserve and the southern edge of Mount



Diablo State Park.

The acquisition preserves forever one of the largest remaining pristine open spaces adjacent to Mount Diablo State Park. The property was officially acquired on April 24, 2023. Park District board of directors voted to authorize purchase of the property on March 7, 2023.

"The acquisition is an important step toward a long-desired staging area at the end of Finley Road," said Park District Board Director John Mercurio. "Access to western Morgan Territory Regional Preserve and southern Mount Diablo State Park has been limited over the years and this property is an important step toward improving public access."

Park District General Manager Sabrina Landreth: "The acquisition supports the Park District's mission of habitat preservation and providing public access for recreation, and furthers California's 30x30 Initiative goal of conserving 30 percent of the state's lands and coastal waters by 2030."

## Egg Laying Ambassadors Have Busy First Few Months Of 2023 At Lindsay Wildlife Experience In Walnut Creek



The following information is from the Lindsay Wildlife Experience in Walnut Creek:

Did you know that we have over 5 egg laying ambassadors at Lindsay? These ambassadors include Topaz the Golden Eagle, Valkyrie the Swainson's Hawk, Lucienne the Mourning Dove, Chucki the Chuckwalla, and Emmy the Pond Turtle. Even our ambassador Black Widows will lay egg sacs. Egg laying is a good indicator that these ambassadors are healthy and comfortable in our care, so our Animal Keepers are always excited to find an egg! So far this year, our Animal Keepers have found 5 unfertilized eggs, 4 from Topaz and 1 from Valkyrie.



**legalbriefs**  
by Douglas A. Prutton, Attorney  
[Doug@PruttonLaw.com](mailto:Doug@PruttonLaw.com)

## Give Me a Work Break, Please!

Exhausted Ernie flops into the lawyer's chair and with blood-shot eyes and furrowed brow and relays the following story:

"I've been working my buns off at Concord Cement my whole life, counselor. All I ask is that I get at least one day off every week so I can go fishing or whatever, but my supervisor sometimes schedules me to work seven days straight. Can he do that?"

"Funny you should ask me that Ernie," the lawyer responds, "because the California Supreme Court in a recent case involving Nordstrom employees just addressed that very issue."

There are two laws, what we call statutes, which come into play. Labor Code section 551 provides that every employee "in any occupation of labor is

entitled to one day's rest therefrom in seven." The other statute, Labor Code section 552, states that no employer "shall cause his employees to work more than six days in seven."

These statutes raise a couple of principal issues that employers and employees have fought over. The first issue is whether these statutes require a day off every week, or whether they should be applied on a rolling basis. Take this example. On Monday, July 3, an employee is given a day off. She then works nine days in a row and takes her next day off on Friday, July 14. The employee complains that she had to work nine days in a row, when the statutes state that she is entitled to a day of rest every seven days. The employer counters that the employee got a day of rest each week – on Monday for the

week starting July 3 and on Friday for the next week. Who is right?

The Supreme Court concluded that the employer is right. The Supreme Court said that the statutes "are most naturally to be read to ensure employees at least one day of rest during each week, rather than one day in every seven on a rolling basis."

Another issue raised by these statutes concerns the interpretation of Labor Code section 556 which states that the one rest day in seven statutes do not apply "when the total hours of employment do not exceed 30 hours in any week or six hours in any one day." Nordstrom argued to the Supreme Court that so long as an employee works less than six hours on any day of a particular week, that employee can be made to work seven days that week without a rest day. The Supreme Court rejected that argument. The Court concluded that employees are entitled to a rest day every week unless they work no more than six hours each and every day of a given week.

The final issue addressed by the Supreme Court in the Nordstrom case concerns the word "cause" in the day of rest statutes. The statutes say that an employer shall not "cause" employees to work more than six days in seven. What does "cause" mean? The Supreme Court said it means that an employer "may not encourage its employees to forego rest or conceal the entitlement to rest." The "employer's obligation is to apprise employees of their entitlement to a day of rest and thereafter to maintain absolute neutrality as to the exercise of that right."

"So, Ernie, when are we going fishing!"

**Chess with You**  
by Christopher Yoo, 16,  
Grandmaster, Dublin, CA.

White to move and win.  
Hint: Pins, skewers, and mating nets!



### SOLUTION

1. Bc2

Threatening Bd1, which is a hard threat to deal with.

1. Bd3? Ne5 2. Be2+ f3= The bishop needs to be on d1, so f3 does not come with tempo.

1...Ne5 2. Bd1+ f3 3. exd4!

Making use of the fact that the f3-pawn is pinned as Black cannot take the rook. The geometry works in White's favor.

3...Nxf7

3...Qxd4 4. Nxe5! This prevents Kg7, as the king cannot go to g7 from h5.

4. Rh2+? Kg6 5. Nxe5+ Kg7!= forking the knight and bishop, black get his material back.

4...Qxe5

4...Qxd1 5. Rh2+ Kg5 6. Rxf7+

5. Rh2+ Kg6 6. Bc2 Skewering the king to the bishop, leading to a decisive material advantage.

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## YOUR NEIGHBOR'S SHOES

by Michael Barrington, mbwriter.net

# Escape From Kabul : An Afghan Interpreter's Desperate Plight and Journey to Concord

Jamil Hassan, Concord resident and interpreter for US and NATO forces, shared with us firsthand details of the fear, confusion, complications and harrowing experience of trying to leave the country with his family. With the Taliban on the offensive, he was a marked man, his life in danger. This two-part revealing series based on my three-hour interview with him and his recently published book, "Promises Betrayed", shows that he is fortunate to arrive in Concord.

Who can ever forget the frightening and shocking images of Afghan people trying to hang on to fuselage of a huge US Air Force C 17 as it sped down the runway. Some appeared to fall off. Others it was reported were found dead in the landing gear when it landed in Qatar.

It was noon, the day after the Taliban had taken over the capital city, Kabul, August 16, 2021. For Jamil Hassan and his family, the past twenty-four hours had been a nightmare. After eight years as an interpreter at the highest level working for NATO, the US and Afghan forces, he was terrified.

Months previously, like many employees of the coalition forces, he had the opportunity to apply for a special visa so he could emigrate to the USA. But he was newly married, had a beautiful wife, a two-year-old daughter, a well-paying job, and no desire to leave his country. He was also assured that despite the draw-down and reduction of troops, his employment was secure. It came as a shock when on July 15, his employment was unexpectedly terminated. One month later on August 15, he received a frantic phone call from his brother-in-law, telling him to "Turn on the TV. The Taliban are taking over Kabul. Do not leave your house."

Jamil was born during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in Paktia, an eastern, Pashto speaking province, about 100 miles southeast of Kabul. Having lived under the terror of civil war during the Mujahideen chaos followed by the first Taliban regime, he was a young



August 19, 2021 Jamil Hassan with his family inside Kabul airport, right after crossing the airport gate, Kabul, Afghanistan.



Jamil Hassan with General David Petraeus during his visit at ANA's 207th Corps, Herat, Afghanistan.



2008 – On a mission with Italian forces along the highway from Herat to Qala-e-Naw, the provincial capital of Badghis province, Afghanistan



August 20, 2021 – Under a US Air Force C-17 Cargo plane on the tarmac of US Air Force Base Al-Uleid, Doha, Qatar. The C-17 in the background was the plane Hassan, his family and 400 other Afghans flew in from Kabul.

teenager when the US invaded the country, October 7, 2001. (His two older brothers would later work for coalition forces and eventually find their way to Concord. His father, younger brother and sister currently remain in Kabul unable to leave.)

Forced to relocate to a Dari speaking region due to his father's work, he attended grade school, and became fluent in the language, the second most commonly spoken in the country. Urged by their uncle who had incredible foresight, the boys attended a private school with an intensive English program.

Later Jamil landed a job as an ESL teacher and managed an English computer training center. He was



2009 – Providing linguistic services for MG Jalandhar Shah Behnam (left), ANA's 207th Corps Commander, and BG Paola Serra (right), RC-West Commander, Herat, Afghanistan.



2009 – At the office of ANA's 207th corps Commander with Italian Army Col. Ignazio Gamba (right) and four members of ANA (left) who were set free by the Taliban. The Afghan soldiers were captured in a Taliban ambush in Badghis province, Afghanistan, and were released after months-long negotiations brokered by local elders and tribal leaders. Taliban used to make prisoners of war (OWs) grow beard and give them traditional Afghan clothes at the time of their release.

twenty years old. Then in 2008 against his families wishes, he passed all the tests and obtained work as tri-lingual interpreter speaking Pashto, Dari and English with the NATO/Italian forces.

"Those early days were chaotic," he explained, "there was so much confusion and lack of understanding of the country, its culture, and languages. Often interpreters who spoke Pashto were assigned to a Dari speaking region and vice versa." The screening of interpreters was haphazard, and Jamil recounts the case of a US officer telling his Afghan soldiers to carry extra 'magazines' in case of an ambush. It was translated as 'brochures in case the men got bored.'

In 2010, wanting to graduate from high school, he took a job with US forces which enabled him to go to school during the day and work at night translating documents. Accepted into university, he was forced to give up work and focused on obtaining a degree in

Law and Political Science. From 2017 after graduation, until 2021, he was employed as a senior translator by the NATO led 'Resolute Support Mission,' responsible for advising and training long term security units.

**LIKE ALL PERSONNEL WHO HAD WORKED FOR THE 'INFIDELS,' JAMIL KNEW HE WAS NOW A MARKED MAN**

Like all personnel who had worked for the 'infidels' Jamil knew he was now a marked man, that his life was in danger and that Taliban door-to-door searches would take place. His one thought was to remove as much incriminating evidence as possible. He had already submitted papers to obtain an SIV (Special Immigrant Visa), but his interview at the US Embassy was not scheduled for another two weeks. Cleaning out his computer, he eliminated his Coalition profile and deactivated his accounts. But it was impossible to completely remove ten years of posts on Facebook and social media. Bit by bit he tore up documents and asked his wife to burn them in the kitchen, then flushed the ashes down the toilet. It took ten hours to dispose of everything.

A former colleague texted from Italy advising him to get out of the country as fast as he could. He suggested he try to obtain clearance with the Italians, due to having worked with them. Basic essentials were squeezed into two backpacks and a suitcase. A smaller handbag contained passports and his SIV application, plus dozens of letters of recommendation including one from 4 Star General John Nicholson, and a photo with 4 Star General David Petraeus.

At 8:45 AM the family took a taxi to the airport Eastern Gate. Thousands of shouting, screaming people were pushing, shoving, struggling to gain entrance in a disordered mass. After a two-hour search, he found the Italian representative, but it took almost three hours to fight their way back to the Eastern Gate. A phone call to the Italian Coordinator advised that they were done for the day. There was no more room in the airport, that they should "go home or sleep outside the gate. The next flights were at 6:00 AM." Opting to stay in line, another phone call just after midnight announced that all Italian morning flights had been canceled.

After fourteen hours of waiting outside the airport, being crushed, trampled on, without any food or water, having lost his wife and child for a number of hours and his wallet stolen, Jamil fought his way through the crowd towards the US Military section. His passports and SIV papers were finally accepted by a US Marine and the family crossed the line and through the gate. Another three hours in line for security checks and finally they were left crammed into an aircraft hangar where they were given water and MREs (meals ready to eat). At 4:00 AM and not having slept for thirty-six hours, they were seated on the cargo deck floor of a C17 together with 450 other Afghan refugees. Their next stop was Qatar.

Part II. To be continued, "From Kabul to Concord" June 2023 edition.

Michael Barrington is a local humanitarian and author: his memoirs, "The Bishop Wears no Drawers", a historical fiction novel, "Let the Peacock Sing" and romance novel, "Becoming Anya". www.mbwriter.net.

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Spring and Summer for us at Visit Concord usually means visits from friends and family. They love our local weather and find Concord the perfect escape from the cold weather that lingers in their hometowns.

For guests coming your way, Visit Concord has created special Stay and Play packages that offer a variety of local flavors mixed in with some of our favorite things to do.

Visit Concord has created unique themes for Stay and Play packages that cater to the various tastes of your visitors. This allows you to add a personal touch to your loved ones' stay.

Guests simply book their hotel stay at one of Concord's nine hotels. Then let Visit Concord know which Stay and Play package you want, and we will take care of the rest.

Concord offers hotel rooms that appeal to every budget from serene suites and allergy-friendly rooms to comfy, economical accommodations. All champion exceptional hotel cleaning practices to meet health and safety expectations.

Many hotels offer friendly indoor and outdoor places for all of you to gather, including fireside and poolside. Most are open for breakfast but are close to delicious dining options. And virtually all offer a place for Fido.

### Here is a sample of Stay and Play packages:

The Experiential includes a welcome basket full of Concord SWAG, a map of local Beer and Wine trails and Beer Trail cup.

The Outdoor Adventure offers Concord merchandise including a doggie bag holder, Mount Diablo trail maps and more.

The Concord Jazz Festival (August 2, 3 and 4) has its own Stay and Play package with Concord Jazz Festival shirts, stickers, pins, wine stopper and more.

The Sip & Savor package provides your guest a bottle of wine (with ID Check), a Visit Concord wine tumbler, and a discount at one of Concord's favorite restaurants, Molli Restaurant and Lounge, amongst other items.

The Concert package includes Visit Concord sunglasses, fanny pack, lanyard and more.

The Visit Concord Taco Trail package has plenty of taco trail SWAG including t-shirt, bucket hat, pins and Taco Trail map.

To book a room at one of the Concord Hotels go to <https://www.visitconcordca.com/hotels/>.

After booking, please contact Visit Concord at [info@visitconcordca.com](mailto:info@visitconcordca.com) or call (925) 685-1182 to complete your Stay and Play package.

While here, your guests can enjoy outdoor adventures on Mount Diablo, Lime Ridge Open Space or Markham Nature Park & Arboretum. They can make it a family getaway with a day at Six Flags Hurricane Harbor and another at Six Flags Discovery Kingdom in nearby Vallejo.

Everyone can take in live music at Concord Pavilion or a free concert in Todos

Santos Plaza. There is simply so much to discover and do in Concord and you will still have time to hop over to Napa or San Francisco for additional exploration.

For more ideas, check out Visit Concord's itinerary page at [VisitConcordCA.com](http://VisitConcordCA.com) contact Visit Concord at [info@visitconcordca.com](mailto:info@visitconcordca.com).

See us at the Concord Visitor Center in Downtown Concord, Monday thru Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., for one-stop shopping for tickets to local attractions and even more ideas for your visiting guests to enjoy.

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# The Joy of Greek Wine

Greece is one of the most beautiful places in the world. The sea is bright blue, and the buildings are sparkling white. The wines are terrific, and the cuisine of the area is perfect for a spring meal. Take the night off and let the professionals make most of the food for this meal; they travel quite well so they make good take out.

Volcanic eruption created the island of Santorini about 3600 years ago. My favorite Santorini white wine is made from assyrtiko (pronounced "ah-seer-tee-ko") grape. The wine has intense citrus flavors like sauvignon blanc (a good substitute if you can't find assyrtiko) but has a wonderful smoky, mineral quality that is likely influenced by the volcanic ash soil.

Greek wines, like Italian wines, are truly made to go with regional cuisine. Serve the assyrtiko with an appetizer plate that has a little of everything. There are so many great Greek starters: dolmas (pronounced dole-mah are grape leaves stuffed with rice, spices, and ground meat), hummus (pronounced "humm-us" is a garlic chickpea spread) that is great with soft pita bread, tabouleh (pronounced "tah-bool-eh" a fresh bulgar-based salad, or falafel (pronounced "fuh-lah-full" a deep-fried chickpea ball) dipped in tahini (pronounced "tuh-heen-ee" a garlicky sesame sauce).

Foods that include flavors of garlic, lemon, and mint match beautifully with a refreshingly acidic wine. Additionally, the nutty sesame in the tahini or caramelization of the deep-fried falafel pick-up smoky notes in the wine.

Greek xinomavro (pronounced "tzeen-oh-mauve-row") has deep red flavors of pomegranate accented by floral violets and a hint of smoky tar. It is similar to the elusive Italian Barolo wine but comes at a fraction of the cost. Grab a Greek sandwich called a gyro

(pronounced "year-oh") made with thinly sliced shawarma (pronounced "shuh-warm-uh" made from meats like spit-roasted spiced lamb, chicken, or veal) to enjoy with this earthy wine. The Greek yogurt and cucumber topping called tzatziki (pronounced tot-zee-kee) gives the sandwich a refreshing bite and balances the medium-high acid found in all Greek wines. If you can't find a xinomavro and don't want to spend for a Barolo, pick up a pinot noir from Northern California or Oregon.

Tonight is a good night to splurge on dessert wine. Vin Santo (pronounced "veen sahn-to") is classically made in Italy, but Greece has a version made from sun-dried assyrtiko grapes. The grapes are dried for 8-10 days and then the wine is aged for about two years in oak. It has a rich amber color and enticing caramel and nut aromas. On the palate, it is sweet with flavors of vanilla, caramel and spice. The Feta Cheesecake listed below is less sweet than the wine (always what you look for when pairing for dessert) and the caramelized pine nuts offer a nuttiness that complements the wine nicely.

So, go on. Pair Up!

Maria Terry is a Certified Sommelier and Wine Educator in Northern California. [www.LaSommelier.com](http://www.LaSommelier.com)

## Feta Cheesecake

### INGREDIENTS

**1 9" crumb crust of your choice, graham cracker, Nilla Wafers, etc.**

**4 ounces. Greek feta cheese, strained well**

**8 ounces cream cheese, softened**



Courtesy of Winemag.com  
Photo by Ashton Worthington

**2/3 cup sugar**

**2 eggs (at room temp.)**

**1 cup sour cream**

**2 teaspoon vanilla**

### Pine nut topping

**2 tablespoons brown sugar**

**4 tablespoons golden syrup**

**2 tablespoons cream**

**2 tablespoons butter**

**1/2 cup pine nuts**

### Port Poached Figs

**1 cup port wine**

**1 teaspoon lemon juice**

**1/2 teaspoon vanilla**

**2 teaspoon sugar**

**1/2 cup sliced fresh or dried figs**

### DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Prepare and bake crumb crust; set aside.

In a large bowl, stir together cream cheese and sugar until soft and creamy, then beat in eggs, one at a time. Stir in sour cream and vanilla, blend well. Pour into baked crust.

Mix pine nut topping ingredients and carefully pour on top of the cake.

Bake for 20-25 minutes or until center jiggles slightly when pan is gently shaken (center will set upon standing). Let cool completely. Cover with wax paper and refrigerate for at least 8 hours or overnight.

Reduce port slowly with vanilla bean, lemon juice and a small amount of sugar. Add sliced dried figs (or fresh when in season) and poach until soft.

Yield: 8-10 servings

## Cherries Will Be Available at Market in Early May

by Deb Morris, Pacific Coast Farmers Market

Growing cherries requires a lot of patience, constant vigilance, and hard work to bring a successful and abundant crop to market. The work of pruning, watering, and fertilizing goes on through the entire year for a harvest that takes daily hand picking for only two or three short months. This year the trees received more than enough chill hours (the number of cold hours between 32 and 45 degrees that a fruit tree or nut tree requires for flowering and fruit production each year), rain, and lower temperatures from December through March.

Last year's January and February left a lower-than-average harvest because of the drought. However, this year's cherry season seems to be off to a good start, according to the local farmers we spoke to. Even with the winter's wind and rain, crop totals look to be average or slightly above average and will be harvested a week or so later than last year.

Hilma Lujan, owner of Lujan Farms from Hughson in the Central Valley, says their cherry yield will turn out to be "average, compared to other years. Our cherries should arrive the first or second week in May." She says their peaches may arrive before the cherries.

Francisco Resendiz of Resendiz Farms, who farms in Hughson as well, says he is predicting cherries should arrive at markets May 10. He explained, "Everything is a week to 10 days behind, pretty much everywhere, due to the weather this year."

Farmer Mike Billigmeier, of B&B Farm in Linden, is looking forward to stone fruit season, of which cherries are a part. Billigmeier says, "It looks like we're going to have a good year, though it's hard to judge what the harvest will be like compared to last year during the drought." He grows Coral, Brooks, Bing, and a new Royal Hazel variety of cherries, along with peaches, apricots, and nectarines.

He says they should be harvesting around the first week of May, which is about two to three weeks



later than during the last few years of drought. Their orchards do not appear to have had consequential damage due to the wind and rain from this winter, but it is taking longer for the fruit to set and develop. The first cherry varieties to appear at local farmers' market will be the early Corals and Brooks, followed by other varieties.

Guy Allard of Allard Farms in Westley, says, "The cherries are setting up well and we think that there should be enough groundwater for summer irrigation." Among the varieties that he thinks will be ready by the first week in May are Champagne, Coral, and Brooks.

In Morgan Hill, Chris Borello of Borello Farms says the cold weather has been great for their trees and the rain provided enough water throughout the winter. "All but one of our orchards fared well with the rain

since they have good drainage. One of our orchards along the creek flooded out and caused significant damage to the irrigation system. It's likely a large percentage of those trees will die because they were underwater for an extended period of time." Borello says the crop looks very promising and they anticipate being at the markets with cherries in early May.

Harvesting healthy crops depends on many factors, from good soil and diligent care to rain and sunshine. Our local cherry farmers are coming through another season relatively unscathed. You can look forward to this May and June to enjoy some of California's best sweet cherries.

### Arugula, Cherry and Almond Salad

1/2 pound fresh sweet cherries, pitted

1/2 pound arugula

2 ounces Parmigiano-Reggiano, thinly shaved (3/4 cup)

1/2 cup almonds, coarsely chopped

3 tablespoons good extra-virgin olive oil

1 tablespoon white wine vinegar

Flaky coarse sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Cut the cherries in half lengthwise and place in a large serving bowl. Add the arugula, cheese and almonds. Drizzle with the oil and vinegar, crush a few generous pinches of salt over the top and season generously with pepper. Toss to combine. Taste and adjust the seasoning, if necessary.



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**theRIGHT move**  
By Terrylynn Fisher, Broker Associate  
www.BuyStageSell.com



**Staging, the Ultimate Repurposing**

In the last year, 52% of sellers and 39% of home buyers were baby boomers. They are on the move more than any other generation. What are they going toward? Retirement communities, independent living, and the top reason cited is to be near family, with a marked increase since COVID.

Politics may play a factor, as they move from one state to the next per the New York Post. Movebudda.com says that for every fifty-one people moving into the State of California, 100 are moving out. This is the highest state migration in the entire country. Even though many moved their children to states that had open schools during Covid, this migration out of state has been going on since 2010.

A recent study cited that 47% of Californians are "thinking" about moving out of California.

According to Forbes, twenty-six million Americans over the age of 50 live alone. Many of them still live in their large family homes for many years, leaving single family homes in short supply in many communities. So younger generations looking for housing are relegated to condominiums, and townhomes.

Migration, supply, rising rents, and the dream of homeownership are still the forces driving the real estate markets.

How does this relate to staging your home for sale? Well, as you know, I am a huge proponent of home staging, which became prominent in the 1970s. Can it be effective? Yes.

Study after study has shown that the cost of staging is far outweighed by the benefits of a faster sale and a greater average price for the home.

The home stager of today is a sophisticated and evolved practitioner compared to the humble beginnings in the 1970s when moving the cat box out of the house was a start to the preparation



for a home sale.

Below see the before and after of vacant rooms versus staged rooms. Could I show you the hoarder house or teenager room prior to staging? Sure. But the empty room versus the staged room is just as dramatic to buyers walking through a home. Most folks are not adept in visualization. Staging offers a vision to space to help buyers imagine living there. Small changes can make big differences in your bottom line when selling and create excitement about a new home when buying.

Below are actual before and after of empty rooms to staged rooms in recent projects. Would you pay more for a clean, polished, good smelling automobile, bike, or home? You might, as you know there are no lurking issues.

Typically, professionals that stage also understand the value of prepping the home with a home inspection, pest inspection and addressing the things that will ease the mind of a buyer. Overall, most staged homes are move-in ready. And if not, their flaws are evident for buyer consideration. Full disclosure and fairness to buyers is key. Give them the information and they can make an informed decision.

Staging is good for everyone: the buyer, seller, and the home. In this recycling society, repurposing a home is the ultimate accomplishment.

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Dressed To Sell LLC has its own fleet of moving trucks, a fully stocked furniture, art and accessory warehouse, allowing a quick response and lead times. Our passion is turning spaces into showplaces!

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**Terrylynn Fisher**

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Consult with me Early, so we can Plan, Budget, and Strategize!  
I have not and will not verify or investigate information provided or supplied by third parties.

## Protecting the Mental Health of Seniors

by Dr. James Mittelberger, MD, MPH

We spend so much time talking about our physical health when it comes to aging, we forget to consider the toll aging takes on our mental health.

Consider the changes older adults witness. Children grow up and move away. They may need to move out of their homes. Some lose their independence as they age. Cognitive functions may decline. They see their physical functions decline which can be depressing. Friends, relatives, and tragically children die.

Older adults often face unique challenges that may impact their emotional and mental wellbeing. That is why it is critical to raise awareness about the importance of mental health in this population. Because when a person's mental health begins to affect their daily lives, it is time to intervene.

"Older adults experience emotional challenges just like everyone else and they may need someone to talk with to help them cope with their feelings," says Behavioral Health Consultant Alicia English of the Center for Elders' Independence. "They may need someone to talk with to help them cope with their feelings, but they may not always be willing to take those steps to seek that help. That's why it's important as family members and caregivers to be available or help find a professional for them to speak with."

Talking to a mental health professional does not mean a person has a mental illness. Rather, everyone can benefit from learning new skills to cope with challenging emotions. Additionally, older adults experience mental health diagnoses at the same rate as everyone else and can benefit from mental health treatment with a professional, such as a psychiatrist, psychologist, or counselor.

The good news is that mental health disorders are treatable, and people can have positive outcomes. It is crucial

to address emotional and mental health challenges when they arise as early interventions and treatment work well and can prevent hospitalizations.

There are several steps that older adults can take to promote their emotional and mental well-being. For instance, engaging in regular physical activity, eating a balanced diet, and getting enough sleep can help boost mood and reduce anxiety. Additionally, socializing with others and participating in activities that bring joy and purpose can also have a positive impact on mental health.

Furthermore, older adults may benefit from participating in counseling or therapy sessions. This may involve talking to a mental health professional about personal struggles, learning new coping skills, or developing strategies to improve communication and relationships with loved ones.

Mental health is just as important as physical health, and older adults should prioritize taking care of their emotional and mental wellbeing. Everyone can benefit from seeking help from a mental health professional, and early interventions and treatment can prevent hospitalizations and improve quality of life.

*James Mittelberger, MD, MPH, is a Clinical Professor of Medicine at UCSF, and is board certified in Internal Medicine, Geriatrics, and Hospice & Palliative Medicine. He is the Chief Medical Officer at Center for Elders' Independence which offers all-inclusive PACE senior healthcare at its location in Concord.*

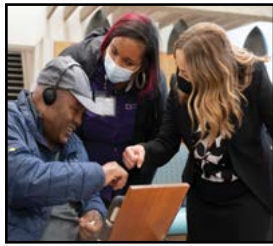


Photo courtesy CEI, Center for Elders' Independence

## Neuroplasticity by Jessica Raaum Foster, NeurologyofPresence.com

### Remove the Threat Bucket to Your Brain to Manifest Change

Have you ever tried a diet or an exercise plan and did not get the results you wanted? You put the work in, but nothing really shifted. There is a neurological reason for that – and no, you do not need to "try harder" next time.

Change, even if it may ultimately improve things, is threatening to your brain. Change takes energy and is therefore something to be wary of from your brain's perspective. Because of this, our ability to create lasting change relies on our capacity to manage the extra burden required for change to occur.

If you have not been successful at your health goal yet, it is probably because it was already more than you could handle. Pushing or "trying harder" only increases the load on your nervous system. This is not sustainable if it even works at all.

There are two ways to navigate this dilemma: One, make the challenge simpler or easier. Two,

#### INCREASE YOUR CAPACITY.

How exactly does one increase one's capacity to tackle a challenge? By emptying your "threat bucket".

The threat bucket is an analogy taken from current pain research that depicts pain as an alarm that is signaled when our brain detects too much threat (the neuro word for stress) and our "buckets overflow."

Yes, lifestyle matters. We can all name the things in our life that fill our personal threat buckets. If you can adjust some of those, great.

But did you know we can also remove

threat from the nervous system itself? If any element of your nervous system is functioning sub-optimally (often from injury or lack of use), it may be filling your threat bucket up before your feet even hit the floor in the morning.

Retraining functional deficits in your nervous system, especially in your vision or vestibular (balance) systems, can have a huge impact on decreasing threat levels in your bucket and can drastically increase your capacity to tackle new skills often required for change to occur.

While specificity is often important for overcoming pain, there are a few simple things you can do to empty your neurological threat bucket:

Move your eyes. Go outside and look at the world around you. Look up, down, and side to side.

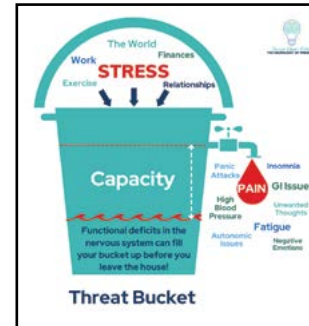
Pay attention to your other senses: taste, touch, sound, smell.

Bounce, jump, cartwheel, spin, dance. Move through the world in multiple planes.

Breathe low into your belly and try and extend your exhale. This can fuel your brain and improve your chances for success.

By including your nervous system in your plan for change, you are increasing your capacity to handle the task, and your chances for success will improve dramatically.

*Jessica Raaum Foster is a Neuro Performance Coach. For more information: [www.NeurologyofPresence.com](http://www.NeurologyofPresence.com), IG: @JessicaRaaumFoster, FB: @NeurologyofPresence Email: [NeurologyofPresence@gmail.com](mailto:NeurologyofPresence@gmail.com)*



## Staying connected to your roots makes your health blossom

**Center For Elders' Independence** is here to help you flourish through personalized PACE healthcare and services that keep seniors living safely and independently at home, because home is where your roots are.

East Bay seniors 55 and older with health needs can rely on us for medical, dental, and vision care, plus services like transportation, a senior gym, group activities and more, all with no deductibles for you.



Call 833-802-1150 or visit [Elders.org](http://Elders.org) to find out if you qualify for PACE





# Local Sites Are Plein to See

A picture is worth a thousand words. Come experience it when you view paintings by the Contra Costa Plein painters on exhibit May 3 - June 23.

Plein air is the art of painting outdoors, working quickly to capture fleeting effects of light and color, motion and space.

Immersed in a world of sights, sounds and smells, plein air artists are energized to express the spirit of the place and the day, each with their own unique voice.

In this exhibit you will be taken on a colorful journey to the Sonoma Coast to Markham Park, Mount Diablo, Big Break, the Black Diamond Mines, Borgess Ranch, Almond Orchards in full bloom, and more.

Artists featured are Nancy Roberts, Hamil Ma, Lori Larks, Heather Martin, Rothwitha Kress, MaryLou Correia, Linda Geniesse, Mary Young, Iris Sabre, Patrice Newell, Andrea Bishop, John Tullis, Rebecca Davies, Kathleen Gadway, Petyer



Alhambra Creek by Nancy Roberts

McNiell, Renaye Johnson, Kristen Ockert, Lorraine Wells, Debbie Mattison, Irene Bee Cain, Samantha McNally, Warren Dreher and Mary Frazier.

Nancy Roberts, organizer of the group, explains it best. "Contra Costa plein air is a friendly group of artists who get together to paint at scenic locations all around the Bay Area and beyond. Our exhibit at art Cottage is a nice sampler of plein air work created by our members, showcasing a wide range of media, styles and experience levels. We're all connected by our

love of nature and the comradery of painting with like-minded humans."

New artists are always welcome and can find out more by visiting the group's website, [contracostapleinair.blogspot.com](http://contracostapleinair.blogspot.com).

An Open House Reception for the artists is on Saturday, May 13 from 2 p.m. - 4 p.m. All are welcome. The artists are always interested in discussing their work. Meet the artists, have a light refreshment, and listen to some live music.

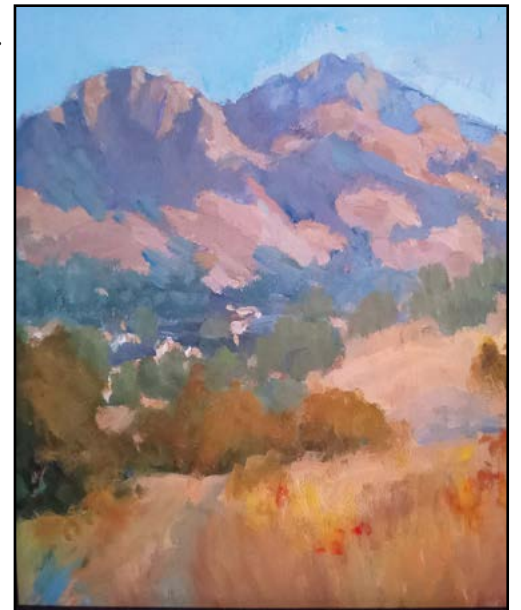
aRt Cottage is located at 2238 Mt. Diablo St. in Concord; open Wednesday - Saturday from 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. There is no entry fee. Learn more at [artcottage.info](http://artcottage.info).



Sonoma Coast by Mary Frazier



Backlit Magnolias by Heather Martin



Mt. Diablo from Green Valley by Mary Lou Correia

# COME SEE THE WORLD CHAMPION CONCORD BLUE DEVILS

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# JULY 9, 2023

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SCAN ME



# “Art Meets Literature” Unique Exhibit Features Diablo Gazette Contributors

By Publisher

An Inaugural Ekphrasis Exhibit will run from May 2, at 10 a.m. through June 2 in the Art Gallery at the Orinda Library, located at 26 Orinda Way, Orinda.

We are thrilled that many of our regular Diablo Gazette contributors were invited and are taking part in this project: Michael Barrington (art & writer), Fran Cain (writer), David George (writer), Colleen Gonzalez (writer), Jill Hedgecock (art & writer).

“Ekphrasis” is a Greek word that means, “art that describes or explains other art.” This project consists of visual artists responding to literary pieces and writers expressing their thoughts and emotions to art from different mediums. This is a collaborative project between the Mount Diablo branch of the California Writers Club, the Lamorinda Arts Alliance, and the Lamorinda Arts



Council.

A reception will be held on Saturday, May 6, between 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. in the Orinda Library Auditorium where art works will be projected on a screen while writers read their work based on the artist’s piece. Jill Hedgecock and Fran Cain have been invited to speak at the reception. Jill will be speaking about her initiator artwork, Contentment, and Fran will be speaking about her writer response to an art piece.

Free refreshments will be provided. The event is free and the public is welcome.

Come meet the artists and writers behind this amazing event. Some of the art will be available for purchase.



“Contentment by Jill Hedgecock

# Diablo Ballet Announces, A Midsummer Night’s Dream In Triple Bill to Close 29th Season

Diablo Ballet will present “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”, May 26 – 27 at the Leshner Center for the Arts. This triple bill features a brand-new A Midsummer Night’s Dream by Julia Adam, an encore presentation of Stanton Welch’s Orange; and the premiere of “Such Longing” by Richard Alston set to the music of Chopin.

Diablo Ballet will conclude their 29th Anniversary with a brand-new production of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” by Julia Adam based on Shakespeare’s charming story of a world where humans encounter the realm of magic. With lush costumes and sets by Christopher Dunn and Amanda Farris, the ballet will be set to Felix Mendelssohn’s



beautiful score and will include Level 2 - 5 students from Diablo Ballet School.

Also included, is an encore performance of the sweeping contemporary ballet “Orange”

set to music by Antonio Vivaldi and choreographed by Stanton Welch, the Artistic

Director at Houston Ballet. “Orange”, is part of Welch’s color series of Ballets: “Indigo”, “Blue”, “Green”, and “Orange”. Diablo Ballet premiered the ballet April 7, 2022.

Rounding out the program, Diablo Ballet will premiere British choreographer Sir

Richard Alston’s “Such Longing”. Set to the music of Chopin’s Mazurka Opus 17, no 7 and Nocturne Opus 27, no 2, the dance work portrays Chopin as a young man in Paris, in exile from Poland. In Paris he poured his intense feelings for his homeland into music full of such a deep longing to return home.

Single tickets are on sale now (\$25 - \$52) with senior and youth pricing available.

Diablo Ballet will also present a virtual option, which will be a recording of the live performance, streaming June 2 - 11, 2023 and available for viewing at any time during this timeframe. Virtual tickets are on sale now through June 11 for the early bird price of \$32 per household. On May 3, the price will increase to \$37 per household.

For tickets, call 925-943-SHOW (7469) or visit or www.diabloballet.org.

**Ekphrasis Collaborative Exhibit**  
**Art Gallery at the Orinda Library**

**May 2 to June 2, 2023**  
**Reception Sat. May 6, 3-5 pm**

Ekphrasis is a Greek word meaning Writing that describes or explains Art. Art can also describe or explain Writing.  
Discover 100 Ekphrastic visual & written works.

**Exhibit Info: 925.359.9940**  
[LamorindaArts.org/ekphrasis](http://LamorindaArts.org/ekphrasis)  
[ekphrasis@lamorindaarts.org](mailto:ekphrasis@lamorindaarts.org)

**May 6: Recitations in the Library Auditorium & Light Refreshments in the Garden Room**

**Clayton THEATRE Company**

**AUDITIONS**  
for the 2023 Fall Production

Adapted by Nina Faso, Stephen Schwartz  
Songs by various artists

**Monday, May 22, 7:00-10:00 p.m.**  
**Tuesday, May 23, 7:00-10:00 p.m.**  
**Endeavor Hall, 6008 Center Street, Clayton**  
**No Appointment Necessary**

Rehearsals will begin September 5  
Show dates are October 13-15, 20-22, 27-28  
Strike is October 29, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

- Auditions are open to non-Equity performers
- Please provide a headshot and résumé
- Actors all ages over the age of 18 are encouraged to audition
- Please prepare a two-minute monologue and 32 bars from a Broadway show

A pianist will be provided

Download the audition form on the audition page at  
[www.ClaytonTheatreCompany.com](http://www.ClaytonTheatreCompany.com)

All roles are open. Clayton Theatre Company is committed to non-traditional casting. All are encouraged to audition. Join our mailing list to stay informed about Clayton Theatre Company’s special events and future auditions.

**COME BE A PART OF SOMETHING GREAT!**

PO Box 991 • Clayton CA 94517 • 925-334-0880 • www.ClaytonTheatreCompany.com  
Clayton Theatre Company, Inc. is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization

**For the Love of Pets**  
by Jill Hedgecock, [Jillhedgecock.com](http://Jillhedgecock.com)

**SCOOTER AND TARA DON'T WANT CRACKERS:  
THEY WANT A FOREVER HOME**

May 31 is World Parrot Day. This celebration of feathered psittacines was started by the World Parrot Trust in 2004 to raise awareness that wild parrots need our help. One in three parrot species are threatened in the wild in part because of the pet trade. Parrot enthusiasts can help parrot populations recover by only purchasing domestically bred birds or, better yet, by adopting a feathered friend from Concord-based Avian Rescue Corporation (ARC). ARC currently has approximately 100 pet birds under their care. Charlie and Ron Howard, founders of ARC, are committed to finding the best homes for their avian rescues to provide them with a happy life. Unlike puppies, parrots can be very selective about their people, and ARC works with potential bird adopters to find a good match.

Meet Scooter and Tara, two parrots looking for a forever home. Scooter is a male umbrella cockatoo who has been under the care of ARC for about 1 1/2 years. Although it is difficult to tell the sex of some parrots, male umbrella cockatoos lack a distinct iris, unlike the females, so Scooter is definitely a boy.

Cockatoos have a white feather crest on the top of their heads that they can raise to make themselves look larger, something no other type of parrot species



Tara

which includes the cage and toys.

ARC has other types of cockatoos, macaws, as well as several Amazon parrots, conures, and cockatiels looking for forever homes.

In addition, if you are not in the market for a parrot companion, you can honor World Parrot Day by making a financial donation either by sponsoring a specific rescued bird or making a general donation to this 501(c) (3) organization.

ARC also has an online store for T-shirts and wooden perches. Donations of pet toys or rust-free cages or volunteering to help with cage cleaning and interact with the birds to help socialize them are also great opportunities to contribute.

For more information about Scooter, Tara, or to shop at their online store or contribute financially to ARC, visit [www.avianrescuecorp.com/](http://www.avianrescuecorp.com/).

*Jill Hedgecock is a local author of several novels featuring animals. "Between Shadow's Eyes" and "From Shadow's Perspective" feature a ghost-seeing Doberman. "Rhino in the Room" and the sequel "Queen of the Rhino" include information about safari animals. All available on amazon.com.*



Scooter

can do. This adds to their charm. They also love to dance.

Scooter is an affectionate guy who needs a human who would love a cuddle buddy and will give him all the attention he needs.

Tara is a 22-year-old female blue and gold macaw. She has been in rescue for two years. She is a good choice for a first-time bird owner. This shy girl is not a biter, chewer, or a screamer. While she does have a feather plucking tendency, she has gradually been allowing more of her plumage to grow back. Tara loves her independence, and while she is content sleeping in a locked cage, she would love to find a home that allows her freedom to come and go as she pleases from her perch to her cage during the day.

Adoption fees for either will be somewhere around \$1,000 to \$1,200,

**ARF ADOPTION STARS**  
Looking for a furry friend? Visit [arflife.org](http://arflife.org) to view all of ARF's adoptable animals.

**Lincoln**



Lincoln: 6-year-old Lincoln is a handsome and refined gentleman. He enjoys a good walk, socializing with other chill dogs, and loves a good nap! Lincoln has chronic kidney disease and will require ongoing management. We recommend that he does not go into a home that has cats or small animals. He currently weighs 40 pounds. Lincoln's adoption fee has been prepaid by a generous donor. Lincoln is being cared for in a foster home, so is available to meet by appointment only.

**Mandible**



Mandible: 5-year-old Mandible is a gorgeous boy looking for a loving home!  
He may be timid at first, but like any reasonable fluffy buddy, he warms up very quickly when you show up with yummy snacks.  
If you really want a treat — come meet him!  
He is a true sweetie who would make the best lounge companion ever.

**ARF Dog adoption fees:** \$250 for an adult dog, \$375 for a puppy (<6 months), \$150 for a special-needs dog, \$200 for a special-needs puppy (<6 months), and \$150 for a senior dog (7+ years).  
**ARF Cat adoption fees:** \$125 for an adult cat, \$175 for a kitten (<6 months), \$200 for two adult cats, \$300 for two kittens, \$75 for a special-needs cat, \$100 for a special-needs kitten (<6 months), and \$75 for a senior cat (7+ years). Adoption fees are waived for US military Veterans.

**CV Woman's Club Hosts Mark Shaw for Diamond Terrace Performance**

On Sunday, May 21, Clayton Valley Woman's Club (CVWC) is presenting a delightful afternoon of music, wine, appetizers and desserts with singer, Mark Shaw. This Spring fundraiser's proceeds will go to benefit the CVWC Scholarship.



Shaw is a local Realtor with RE/Max by day, crooner by night. Charming and irresistible, he plays Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Bobby Darin with a

high energy and bewitching suave singing richly interpreted standards and popular songs of the teens, 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s.

Four years ago, CVWC hosted Shaw who performed to a sold-out crowd.

This year's event will be held at Diamond Terrace, 6401 Center St, Clayton, CA. from 4 p.m. – 6 p.m. Reservations are limited.

For reservation information (\$35), please visit: [www.claytonvalleywomensclub.org](http://www.claytonvalleywomensclub.org) or call 925-685-0394 for more information.

**The Deadline for advertising in the June 2023 issue of THE DIABLO GAZETTE is MAY 19th (925) 298-9990**

**MAY DOWNTOWN PLEASANT HILL 20-21 PLEASANTHILLCHAMBER.COM**

PLEASANT HILL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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—20— FESTIVAL —23—

Saturday & Sunday 10 am - 6pm  
Special evening concert Saturday 6:30  
Beer Garden, Premium Wines  
Food trucks, KidZone, Music, Vendors and more!

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"We leave the scene clean!"

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Whether you want to brighten your home or business exterior, these are just two of the many exterior cleaning services we specialize in.

Contact the top service provider as seen on Angi for all your pressure washing needs. Highly recommended with many positive reviews. Visit our website to learn how we can help you!

[www.ETCPressureWash.com](http://www.ETCPressureWash.com)  
(925) 822-4528



# The New Health Chiropractic Center Offers \$10 Exams for Its 10th Anniversary

If you have been suffering from neck or back pain, headaches, loss of sleep, or bouts of depression or anxiety, the New Health Chiropractic 10th Anniversary could interest you. They are offering an initial exam for just \$10 throughout May's anniversary celebration to anyone and everyone who requests an appointment. More on that later in this article.

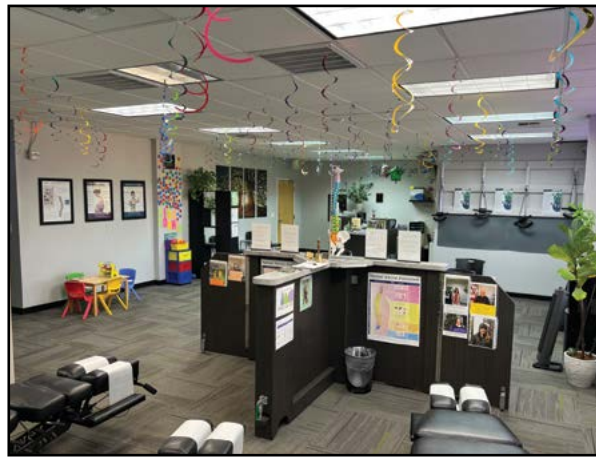
It would be hard to find a more dynamic couple than Drs. Tommy and Vanessa Wolf, a young couple who met in college, married, and chose Concord to be their home and to launch their business, The New Health Chiropractic Center.

Both received their undergraduate degree at Cal state Long Beach in Kinesiology. They did not know each other there as Dr. Tommy graduated three years ahead of Dr. Vanessa. Dr. Tommy grew up in Antioch while Dr. Vanessa grew up in the San Diego area. However, they both went to Life Chiropractic College West in Hayward where they met and obtained their Chiropractic Degree.

They decided to go into business together and began their practice on May 13, 2013, in a small 10' x 10' office space on the corner of Treat and Cowell in Concord. Before having to move upstairs to a 450 ft. space. Still growing, after four years, they relocated to their current locations in Park & Shop Shopping Center, 849 Willow Pass Rd. Suite 450. They have added two employees and a chiropractic intern. Meanwhile, their family grew as well. The Wolfs welcomed two sons, Stryker and Walker.

The pair enthusiastically integrated into the community. Dr. Tommy served as President of the Clayton Valley/Concord Sunrise Rotary Club, and Dr. Vanessa was President of Concord's Todos Santos Business Association for six years. She now serves on the board.

As for their business success, Dr. Vanessa said, "We pride ourselves in that we have a very high energy office. The music is always playing. We have edutainment days that may include themes and we may be in costumes. We want people to feel good and



feel that positive energy when they leave."

Their clients can positively attest to the atmosphere. "We polled our patients to describe our office in one word and the three top words were fun, welcoming, and educational."

After going through the corrective adjustments, patients attend weekly lifestyle group sessions. With a topic or question of week or day, they are constantly educating on health and the nervous system and how chiropractic can help in a variety of different health areas. "They get their adjustments and leave with some Board of Health education so they can take control of their health and wellness themselves," Dr. Vanessa explains.

Dr. Tommy says they use the highest technology in the profession, offering digital spinal x-rays and nerve scans, [electromyography (EMG)], to measure the spine and nerves. EMG measures muscle response or electrical activity in response to a nerve's stimulation of the muscle. The test helps detect neuromuscular abnormalities.

"We can guide patients' lifestyle based on the ways stress caused from their current lifestyle is affecting

the central nervous system," Dr. Tommy states. "Our digital nerve scan measures the amount of stress on the nervous system. We talk about physical, chemical and emotional stress and how that negatively affects our health and causes detrimental effects on our nervous system leading to chronic pain or disease. We can target our care and adjustments more specifically, so patients get improved pain management and wellness lifestyle coaching.

"The technology measures the beginning of disfunction rather than the end stage of the disfunction. For example, a blood test will measure the later stages of a chronic disease. We can address the issues at its beginning," he says.

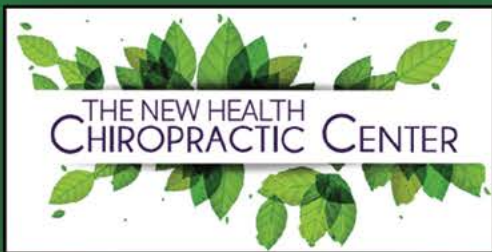
Most patients come in with neck or back pain, but once corrected, many will experience sleep improvement, digestive improvement and mood improvement. It can also lead to a decrease in anxiety, depression, and stress in addition to pain relief.

In the past 10 years, Drs. Tommy and Vanessa have helped many patients. And they wish to help many more with their wellness education.

The Concord Chamber of Commerce will host a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony on May 12, with light refreshments, from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM. All are invited to attend and meet and greet these two energetic doctors. If you do, you will receive a certificate for a complimentary first visit, a value up to \$230.

And what about the \$10 exam? All you need to do is request an appointment to receive this opportunity. An exam includes consultation, exam, nerve scan, and x-Rays (if needed). That offer will end May 31. To set the appointment, see their ad below and call click, or scan the QR code.

They both enthusiastically agree, "We love it in Concord." Given all you have done to serve the community and its residents these past 10 years, the people of Concord are happy you do.



Celebrate our 10th Anniversary with this limited time offer. **Scan/Click the QR code or Call Us** today to set your appointment and start feeling better!



Drs. Tommy & Vanessa Wolf

## 10th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OFFER



- Complete Chiropractic Exam and Evaluation
- Diagnostic Nerve Scans
- Any Needed Digital X-Rays

**Only \$10**  
(Value \$230)



The New Health Chiropractic Center was established by Drs. Tommy and Vanessa Wolf in 2013. When surveyed, their patients described the experience as fun, welcoming, and educational. With the newest technology, you will get a profound understanding of your specific condition so that you can regain control of your health. Take advantage of this promotion and get your answers today.



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# Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus

"Lessons in Chemistry" (Doubleday, April 2022, hardcover, 400 pages, \$17.99) by Bonnie Garmus is as much as a humorous character study as it is a statement of society's views of women in the 1960s. But it is more than that. Somehow mixed into this quirky tale of a woman chemist turned TV cooking show celebrity is how to make science entertaining.

Our primary protagonist, Elizabeth Zott, believes in the sciences and it is her sole mission in life to study abiogenesis — the theory that life arose from nonliving matter. The problem is that she is a woman before her time. Convention in the 1960s was that women should aspire to snag a husband and raise babies. Much to the chagrin of her male colleagues at Hastings Research Institute, Zott is anything but conventional. Elizabeth Zott will not let anything stop her in her quest to further her research, so when she doesn't have the proper equipment, she decides to collect a few beakers from her colleague, Calvin Evans, under false pretenses. Evans is a brilliant chemist, who has been nominated for a Nobel prize multiple times. But he is also known for holding a grudge. But instead of being angered by Zott's ruse, Evans falls hard for her, and the two socially challenged misfits soon become participants in a different type of chemical reaction.

Zott's life takes many dramatic turns because of her love for Evans. She becomes a rower, which was a passion of Evans. The two lovebirds also adopt a former bomb detection dog named Six Thirty. Six Thirty, it turns out, is exceptionally smart as are his two owners. Zott teaches the dog words, and his vocabulary nears a thousand words by the end of the novel. Six Thirty, who becomes an integral part of the story, even narrates a few scenes in the book.

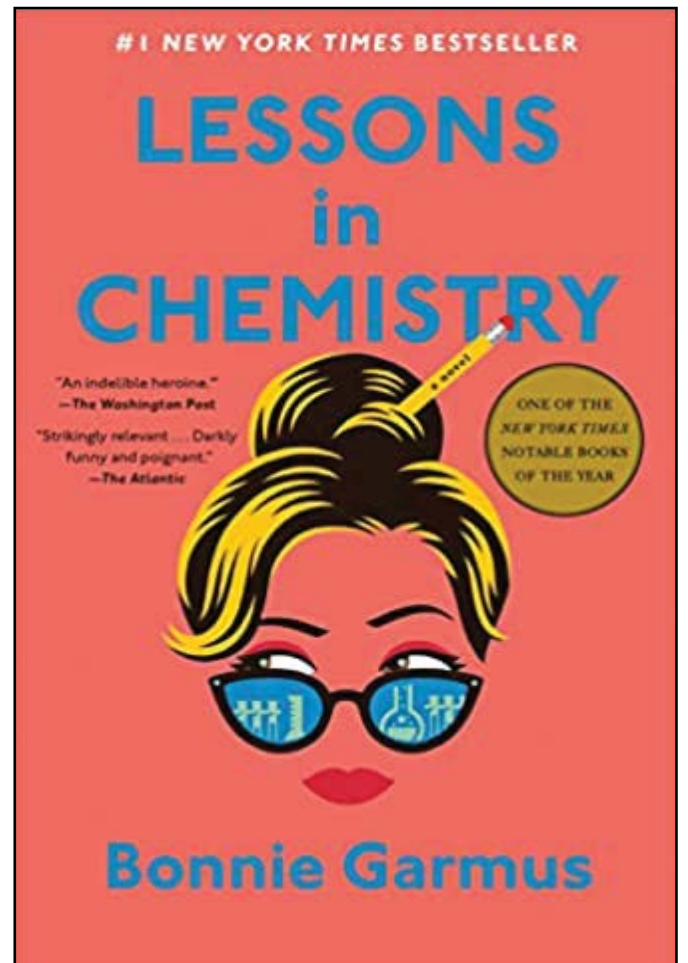
Elizabeth Zott's misfortunes include being fired after becoming accidentally pregnant. Her financial

situation forces her to take a job as a television personality on a cooking show called "Supper at Six." The problem is Elizabeth has her own ideas on how to create a meal, which she views as another form of chemistry. The results are often hilarious, but also sometimes life changing for her women viewers.

In "Lessons in Chemistry", Zott helps us explore questions such as what makes a family and what might be possible if women are given equal opportunities. The book also offers a fascinating exploration into the science of food preparation all told with a dash of humor and a pinch of sarcasm. In an era of the "Me Too" movement, "Lessons in Chemistry" reminds us how far opportunities for women have progressed since the 1960s.

"Lessons in Chemistry" is a New York Times Bestseller, a GMA Book Club Pick, and was considered a best debut by Goodreads in 2022. In 2022, it achieved Best Book of the Year by Barnes and Noble, "The Washington Post", "NPR", "Oprah Daily", "Entertainment Weekly", and "Newsweek". The novel has been translated into 40 languages. It will be released as an Apple TV+ series this year, starring Brie Larson, Lewis Pullman, and Beau Bridges. Fans of "Anxious People" by Fredrik Bachman, "Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow" by Gabrielle Zevin, and "The Maid" by Nita Prose will not be disappointed.

"Lessons in Chemistry" is Bonnie Garmus' debut novel. Like Elizabeth Zott, she is a rower. But unlike Zott (who can't swim), Garmus is also an open water swimmer. She is a copywriter and creative director. Garmus has raised two daughters and currently lives in London with her husband and her dog, 99.



## Air

Do not expect to see Michael Jordan in the new film, "Air." This is not a biopic. Instead, this film delves into how Nike made a deal with a yet to be iconic sports figure and forever changed the world of athletic endorsements.

Whether you were alive in the early 1980s, or you are getting a glimpse into an unknown past, Director Ben Affleck carefully recreates the period. Much like his 2013 Best Picture Winner, "Argo," Affleck creates the vibe of a well-made TV movie from the 1970s or early 1980s.

The film centers around Sunny Vaccaro (Matt Damon), a sports scout hired by CEO Phil Knight (Ben Affleck). Sunny's job is to find Nike the next superstars and sign them to endorsement deals. It is hard to think of a time when the brand Nike was not synonymous with huge sports figures, but in the early 80s, Nike was a running shoe looking to branch out.

When Sunny sees footage of Michael Jordan, he feels he is witnessing future greatness and he is willing to put his own career on the line to convince Nike to sign Jordan. This is further complicated by the fact that Jordan has his heart set on signing with the more prestigious shoe company, Adidas.

This is the story you did not think you wanted to know. Engaging and at times tension-filled, you will find yourself rooting for the quirky characters and wondering what will happen, even though you know what happens.



So how do you get around not showing a major character like Michael Jordan? There are many ways the story incorporates Jordan without showing him and it's a wise choice. Viola Davis as Jordan's mother, more than commands the attention in all of the scenes she is in without needing a larger presence. She reminds us that Jordan is a young player, not the future legend, and he has parents who are looking out for their son.

Lastly, a great plus to this film is its length. With all the drawn-out movies these days, it is refreshing that "Air" tells its story in 1 hour and 52 minutes. The viewer is spared the typical bloated storylines and unnecessary character development that does not feed the main plot. Even if you are not a sports fan, "Air" should offer you an enjoyable time at the movies.

Rated R  
In Theaters



## Pretty Baby: Brooke Shields

Documenting the life of model/actor Brooke Shields, we see all the makings of a child star. Her mom is her agent, wheeling and dealing her daughter's career, and Brooke hobnobs with famous celebrities like Michael Jackson, John Travolta and John F. Kennedy, Jr. It is impossible to talk about the most memorable pop-culture moments of the 1980s and not include Brooke Shields.

Her first starring role was in the 1978 film, "Pretty Baby." Shields starred opposite Susan Sarandon and Keith Carradine, playing a twelve-year-old prostitute living with her mother in a 1917 New Orleans brothel. In real life, she was also twelve. At the time, there was much controversy surrounding the director's choice to use a young child in the role. Teri Shields, Brooke's mother, defended consenting to her child's appearance in the movie by saying it was an "art film."

Shields continued starring in sexy roles in films like "The Blue Lagoon" and "Endless Love." As she pursued acting, her modeling career flourished and at fifteen, she headed the infamous Calvin Klein jeans campaign. Once again, there was outrage regarding Shields' young age and the sexually suggestive nature of the ads. Some networks banned the commercials and others required them to be edited before airing.

The documentary is filled with clips from her movies and modeling career. Shields also speaks about the controversy and offers anecdotes for what was going through her young mind. Even though we talk today of how overly sexualized our society is, it is



still quite shocking to see her portrayed as a sex symbol. Other than being tall, Shields had the face of a teenager, albeit a beautiful one, and no amount of makeup made her look older than her years.

As an adult, Shields continued to have very public situations that people had strong opinions about. From her relationship with her alcoholic mother, her marriage to tennis star Andre Agassi and a verbal attack by actor Tom Cruise over her book about post-partum depression, Shields' life went through constant scrutiny. Throughout the film, however, we see a woman who can speak openly about her past and is comfortable with the career she has built for herself. She worked hard to be more than just a pretty face and with daughters of her own, it is clear she would not make the same choices for them.

This film reminds us there are human beings behind the celebrities we flippantly pass judgements on. In the case of Brooke Shields, she was thrust into an adult world and paid the consequences for the adults who should have been looking out for her.

Rated TV-MA  
Now streaming on Hulu

# CLAYTON NEWS



**Jeff Wan**  
Mayor, Clayton  
Jeff.wan@claytonca.gov

I am happy to announce that the Council has hired a new full-time City Manager, Bret Prebula.

Bret has a master's degree in business administration and started his career in government 15 years ago as a Department Analyst with the County of Napa. Bret advanced quickly in his career, taking roles as the Administrative Manager for the County of Napa Department of Corrections, a Principal Management Analyst in the Napa County Executive Office, the Assistant Treasurer-Tax Collector for Napa County, and the Finance and IT Director for the City of Napa. From there, Bret moved forward as the Finance Director for the City of Benicia, and most recently as the Assistant City Manager for the City of Benicia.

This concludes a hiring exercise that has occurred over the last several months and is critical to the efficient operations of the City. I look forward to his leadership and new ideas as we move the City forward.

I also wanted to share information about an exciting project the City is making progress on that has the potential for significant savings as well as making the City more energy efficient as a whole. We have been working with Climatec, a vendor we engaged to assess potential savings across all of our energy uses including gas, water, and electricity. Phase I of their work was the assessment and was done at no cost or obligation to the City. Recently the City entered into Phase II of our agreement, contingent on the City being able to secure funding for the project.

The project will include a number of energy and cost efficiency elements including: solar arrays that will power all of the City's buildings, in addition to providing shade structures for city vehicles; new lighting across our buildings, parks, and streets; new HVAC

## Our New City Manager

systems at Endeavor, the Library, and the Maintenance Building; Building automation systems controlling utility usage, EV charging stations at the Library, and irrigation control systems with master valve flow meters to shut off water flow in the event of a breakage.

All of these things combined will cost approximately \$2 million, with an overall savings of approximately \$4.7 million over the life of the equipment. We also applied to the California Energy Commission (CEC) for an energy efficiency loan. The CEC credit facility is designed for local governments and is offered at a 1% interest rate. While there are potentially other funding options, the CEC credit facility is the most favorable and we should hear back regarding our application sometime in May. If we are able to secure funding through the CEC, there will be savings to the general fund as soon as the project is complete, which we expect to take approximately one year.

While no single effort will solve the fiscal challenges that the City faces, with this effort combined with other activities the City is working on we are making progress. These challenges did not start overnight, and we will not solve them overnight either. It is likely that as we prepare the upcoming budget the City will continue to reflect a deficit. But through persistent effort we will ensure that we are exploring all available levers we have to address fiscal sustainability.



There is something for everyone at the Clayton Library with events sponsored by the Clayton Community Library Foundation. All events take place at 6125 Clayton Road. For more information, please call 925-673-0659 or visit cclib.org/events.

**Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month Treasure Hunt** is a Children's Program in honor of Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month. Search the shelves for notable Asian American and Pacific Islanders. Pick up a game sheet and find all the images in the children's section to win a prize. Answer the questions on the back of the game sheet to win an extra prize. May 2 – May 31.

**Clayton Knit & Crochet** – On the first Wednesday of each month from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. Knit, crochet, and make friends in this free adult program. Staff will be present for the first hour to answer questions.

**Camp Clayton** – Kids can enjoy STEAM focused events, drop-in programs, and take-home activities on Wednesdays from 2 p.m. – 3 p.m. No registration required. May 10: STEM Discovery Zone: Simple machines. May 24: STEAM themed activities to do here or take home. May 31: Wind down with music, quiet crafts, and puzzles.

**Lap Sit Storytime** – Thursdays. From 11:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. Best for ages 0-3. Explore the joys of movement, books and songs, while building early literacy skills you can practice at home. From 11:30 – noon, toddlers ages 3 to 5. Board at the Library – Thursday, April 6 from 3 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. Enjoy board and card games for tweens, teens, and adults. Check out strategy games, card games, word games, drawing games, and more for in Library use at the front desk.

**Computer Tech Assistance** – Adults, do you need help with your technology? Every Friday from 10 a.m. – Noon, visit our knowledgeable volunteer for a half hour of one-on-one assistance. You can bring your own device or work on one of our available computers. Sign up for an appointment at the Library Desk or call. Adult Program.

**Homework Help** – Every Saturday from 10 a.m. – Noon. Homework Help is available for elementary school students

## Clayton Library Calendar

in all subjects. Assistance for Grades 6 - 9 is available based on subject knowledge of volunteers working. Please ask library staff for more information. Appointments are strongly recommended and last 30 minutes. To make an appointment please call or stop by the library.

**Make Your Travel Dreams a Reality.** Saturday, May 13 from 2 p.m. – 4 p.m. Adults, let Dr. Joseph Whitehouse show you how to achieve your travel dreams. Learn insider tips and tricks that will help you plan and prepare for the trip of a lifetime.

**Spring Puppet Craft with Lisa Taft** – Wednesday, May 17 from 2 p.m. – 3 p.m. Children can learn to make flowers that will never droop. Lisa will help create pop-up flower puppets, perfect for Spring.

**Tai Chi** – Beginning on Thursday, May 18 this program will be offered the first & third Thursdays of the month from 12 p.m. – 1 p.m. to adults. Enjoy a gentle and energizing class with Tai Chi movements. Classes are taught by Carolyn Lee in the style of Professor Cheng Man'Ch'ing. Beginners are welcome, no registration required.

**Teen Thursday: DIY Paracord Bracelet Workshop** – Thursday, May 18 from 4 p.m. – 5 p.m. Learn how to create a single cord survival bracelet. Multiple colors to choose from and all supplies will be provided.

**Clayton Memory Café** – Saturday, May 20 (third Saturday of every month) from 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Adults participate in cognitive activities designed to perk up memory. These gatherings are free and open to all older adults with or without current memory concerns. A small snack will be provided. (If you have a food allergy or restriction, please contact the library at least 24 hours prior to your visit.) Clayton Library is not responsible for Memory Café attendees. Attendees must be accompanied by a caregiver or loved one for the duration of the Memory Café if assistance or supervision is required.

**Clayton Library Book Club.** Tuesday, May 23 (fourth Tuesday of each month) from 6 pm – 7:45 pm. May's book for discussion is "The Personal Librarian" by Marie Benedict and Victoria Christopher. June's book is "This Time Next Year We'll be Laughing" by Jacqueline Winspear.



*A Walk Through Time* with Misty Bruns

## Katie Aitken-144 years ago

Historic Rose Hill Cemetery tempt stories of yore to be told.

"Weep not father and mother for me for I am waiting in glory for thee." That is what Katie Aitken's headstone says at Rose Hill Cemetery at Black Diamond Mines in Pittsburg. As you look at the stone that has

weathered the elements of time, it lies as a reminder of a little girl that lived a life with her family at the Mount Diablo Coal Fields.

I could not help but wonder, did she not have a family? And so, I embark on the mission to reveal the story behind this lone 144-year-old headstone of Katie Aitken.

Katie was the daughter and sister of immigrants from Scotland. Her father James, mother Barbara, and brother, David, came to America somewhere between 1865 and 1870.

How do we know this? Because of the Scotland Births and Baptism records. This record shows that David was born May 2, 1865, in Scotland. So, the three of them came to this country together. On their journey west their family began to grow.

First, Katie was born on August 12, 1871. Her sister Jessie was born in Indiana in



Broken stone marking the grave of Katie Aitken

1873. And we know the Aitken family was in Contra Costa County by 1875.

In February, 1876, daughter Marion (Marian) was born in Somersville and on November 4, James became a naturalized citizen.

Katie's father worked in the coal mines as a miner. Katie and her siblings attended the Somersville school. In the December 13, 1879, issue of the Contra Costa Gazette, there is a school report section. It shows Katie's name and her attendance record. It is so nice to see her name, but in 11 days she will have passed away on Christmas Eve, December 24, 1879.

There are no newspapers listing her death, at least not that I was able to locate over the near twenty years of researching what happened to poor Katie. Eventually, my detective work was able to piece together the puzzle.

We find the Aitken family in the 1880 census still living in Somersville. Katie's parents with children, son David, 15, daughters Jessie, 7, and Marion (Marian),

SCHOOL REPORT.—Following is the report of the Somersville Public School for month ending Dec. 5th, 1879:

GRAMMAR DEPARTMENT.				
NAME OF PUPIL.	Attendance.	Department.	Scholarship.	Number Days.
FIRST DIVISION.				
Maggie Douton.....	85	88	91	.....
Eileen Martin.....	85	85	89	.....
Mary Turley.....	80	80	85	.....
Moses Lando.....	80	80	85	.....
Flora Lightowler.....	75	78	78	.....
Mary Thomas.....	85	88	78	.....
Katie Warner.....	94	90	78	.....
George Scammon.....	93	80	74	.....
Minnie Daly.....	92	89	72	.....
Shonie White.....	82	100	72	.....
Richard Loughey.....	100	100	*	.....
Willie Murray.....	100	100	*	.....
SECOND DIVISION.				
Tom Fadden.....	82	75	89	.....
Willie Kestel.....	91	80	89	.....
Minnie Todd.....	89	86	86	.....
Sarah Humphreys.....	89	86	86	.....
Phoebe Adams.....	94	92	85	.....
Katie Aitken.....	95	91	81	.....
Hannah Murray.....	88	91	80	.....
Ernest Spowar.....	77	80	78	.....
Tom Martin.....	85	89	74	.....
Mary Hollywood.....	79	75	73	.....
Lizzie Murray.....	88	91	*	.....
Drucilla Bardett.....	90	100	*	.....
THIRD DIVISION.				
Lizzie Babcock.....	100	95	96	.....
Tommie Floyd.....	85	92	95	.....
Theodosia Smith.....	93	88	94	.....
Tommie Daly.....	84	78	89	.....
Johanne Mills.....	86	80	79	.....
Tommie McGeehan.....	79	78	73	.....
Tommie Buxton.....	77	75	70	.....
Johanne Dalton.....	68	88	81	.....
George Loughey.....	83	100	*	.....

MARY KELLEY, Teacher.

The Somersville School records of Katie for the month ending December 5, 1879. She passed just two weeks later.

**A Sudden Death.**

James Aitken, a resident of Gabriola Island, and father of Wm Aitken, of the firm of Parkes & Aitken, of this city, died suddenly at his home about 7 o'clock this morning.

When Mrs Aitken arose this morning her husband was in bed, apparently in good health. While getting the breakfast she heard a gurgling noise in the room, and when she entered it Mr Aitken was just on the point of expiring. The cause of his death is supposed to have been apoplexy, as he suffered from a shock of that nature few years ago.

Deceased was a native of Scotland, 58 years of age, and has resided in this Province for 7 years. He leaves a family of four children, all grown, three of them living in this vicinity and one in Utah.

The funeral will take place at two o'clock tomorrow afternoon, Rev E G Taylor officiating.

Article of the death of Katie's father, James, is just one piece of the puzzle to uncover the story of Katie Aitken and family.

industry. They eventually ended up in the Nanaimo District on Gabriola Island where they watched their children grow, building their lives, their families and their heritage which now lives on through books and articles and even advertisements.

William, who was born in Somersville in 1878, became a prominent tailor on Gabriola Island.

It is only through this one broken headstone that we may never have known that Katie had lived. One reason for that is that Katie was born in 1871 and died in 1879 which is between census records. She may have only been on this earth for a brief period of time, but she traveled through this country and ended up in Somersville, watched new

siblings be born, went to school, and made friends. She has left her story here for us to share. I hope you have enjoyed learning a little bit about Katie and her family and just remember. She lived.



An ad promoting the tailor work of James from Gabriola Island off the coast of British Columbia.



# May's Days

MAY 2023						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
30		2	3		5	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28		30	31	1	2	3

When learning to fly a small plane, I was taught Mayday drill which is when you were in dire straits and in danger of crashing. Are we in a Mayday situation, locally? Spending time on Nexdoor, we could very well conclude that criminals are lurking outside of our door, crooks waiting to smash your car windows and steal your Mother's Day gifts just for the sheer demonic pleasure of it.

Do not even get me started on the negative views of news, government, and science.

Folks, get a grip on reality. The roads are getting fixed. Science is real and is the only thing that has ever made a consistent improvement in life. People who care are still trying to get into local government. And somewhere there is a winning lottery ticket.

Mother's Day is here to remind us of the dreamy stereotype of parents, regardless of your dad being a Jewish Mother, or grandparents did the role, or a distant orphanage stepped up to try to make things better.

For all of us who have experienced a less than Hallmark Card version of Motherhood, let us not wallow in the shadow of past disappointments but rejoice that they are behind us.

The flowers will still bloom, and the mysteriousness of life and the thinking of cats will still give us wonderment and a challenge to go forward.

May starts with May Day, May 1, a celebration of the common laborer. But not in the avion sense, Then in a few days, May 4, reaches for the stars when we say, "May the fourth be with you." This day that honors out-of-this-world heroics is followed two days later, May 6, for the International Free Comic Book Day. This worldly event started right here in Concord by Joe Fields of Flying Colors at Oak Grove and Treat and has since grown to be recognized in over 60 countries.

May rounds out the mid-month with Mother's Day, May 14, and ends on a somber note on Memorial Day, May 29. But all along remember this: we do all this together as a community in concordance with our traditions and hopes. Carry on Concord.

*The above are the private views of Edi Birsan and are not to be confused with the results of an overdose of Prozac or Hot Cocoa. Tell him of your favorite May Story at: EdiBirsan@gmail.com*



## County Is Working to Address Climate Change

As the changing climate increasingly impacts our lives, the Board of Supervisors has developed systems to improve local policies while making lasting changes to how the County conducts business.

Within the Contra Costa Conservation and Development Department there is a division you may not be aware of, the Sustainability Team. Sustainability is tasked with making our communities cleaner and healthier for families, children, and future generations. To accomplish this, Sustainability oversees the development of the County's Climate Action Plan (CAP), staffs the Sustainability Commission (a citizen advisory group), and staffs the Board of Supervisors' Sustainability Committee.

The Sustainability Team has a quarterly newsletter about the programs and initiatives the County is implementing right now to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The newsletter also includes programs residents can participate in to make their homes and businesses more energy efficient. Be sure to check the Sustainability Resources page for information on rebates and incentives available for residents and businesses.

The Sustainability Team develops and implements the Contra Costa County Climate Action Plan (CAP), which is the County's strategic approach to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from sources throughout the unincorporated areas in the County. The CAP reflects the County's programs and actions to decrease energy use, improve energy efficiency, develop renewable energy, reduce vehicle miles traveled, increase multi-modal travel options, expand green infrastructure, reduce waste, and improve the efficiency of government operations.

The current CAP was adopted back in 2015 by the Board of Supervisors. The CAP is being updated along with the County General Plan through Envision

Contra Costa 2040 and is estimated to be completed in 2024. In the meantime, the Sustainability Team has developed Interim Work Plans that outline the actions the County undertook in 2021 and 2022 to address climate change, and where it will focus in 2023 and 2024.

There are seven goals outlined in the Interim Work Plan, which aim to increase the effectiveness of climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. These goals are clean and efficient built environment, resilient communities and natural infrastructure, no-waste Contra Costa, reduce water use and increase drought resilience, a clean transportation network, climate equity, and leadership.

The Sustainability Commission allows community members to provide input and suggestions to County staff and the Board of Supervisors on sustainability issues. Each supervisorial district has a voting representative and an alternate member. They provide input on the CAP implementation, how to best engage County residents and businesses on sustainability, and how to ensure equity and fairness in the County's sustainability efforts. The Sustainability Commission meets every other month on the fourth Monday from 5-7 p.m. These meetings are open to the public.

Supervisors John Gioia and Federal Glover sit on the Board of Supervisors' Sustainability Committee. This committee focuses on the implementation of the County's CAP. They review the work from the Sustainability Team and the Sustainability Commission and make policy recommendations to the Board of Supervisors to approve. Over the years, the recommendations have led to permanent improvements in our County and the environment. For more information on Sustainability, please visit <https://www.contracosta.ca.gov/6780/Sustainability>.

## Trumark Homes Donates \$12,000 to El Monte Elementary School for New A/V System

Trumark Homes hosted a ceremonial check presentation on April 19 at Concord's El Monte Elementary School with school and city officials. The homebuilder donated \$12,000 to El Monte Elementary School to provide a new audio/visual system for the school's auditorium.

El Monte students joined representatives from the City and Trumark Homes for the ceremony which was planned to coincide with the school's spring play debut, the Disney© KIDS musical, "Aladdin." This is the first production at the school since the new equipment was installed.

John Willsie, Chief Administrative Officer and General Counsel of Trumark Homes, presented the check. "We are thrilled to be able to support the faculty and students at El Monte Elementary School with this donation," said Willsie. "Championing the arts and enrichment of the students and broader community for years to come is rewarding and aligns with our company values." Willsie is a Concord resident whose children

attended schools in the Mt. Diablo Unified School District.

"Our students and staff are so appreciative to Trumark Homes for this investment in our school and the upgrade to our auditorium's technology..." said El Monte Elementary Principal Jeffrey Miles. "The impact of gifts like this cannot be overstated, and we are grateful for this opportunity to debut the new A/V system for our spring production."

"This is an exciting day for El Monte Elementary School and the student performers..." said Concord councilmember Obringer.

The Trumark Group was recognized as 2019 Developer of the Year by "Builder and Developer" and 2018 Builder of the Year by "Professional Builder." Trumark Homes recently held a ribbon cutting ceremony with Concord officials to launch sales at Penny Lane, a luxury townhome community located near El Monte Elementary School.



El Monte Elementary School Principal, Jeffrey Miles (6th from left) accepts a \$12,000 check from John Willsie of Trumark Homes (7th from left) with officials from the City of Concord, Mt. Diablo Unified School District, El Monte Elementary School and Trumark Homes. Officials in attendance included Laura Hoffmeister, Mayor of Concord (10th from left); Cherise Khaund, Area 4 Trustee, MDUSD Board of Education (11th from left); and Carlyn Obringer, District 2 City Councilmember (12th from left/far right).

# Around Martinez



 **Brienne Zorn,**  
Martinez Mayor  
bzorn@cityofmartinez.org

## Native Blooms in Our Own Backyard

As our social media feeds fill with super blooms in Southern California, we are inspired to go outside and enjoy the spring flowers. In our area, many people make the 45-minute drive to Mitchell Canyon on Mt. Diablo for the annual wildflower display. But, Martizians can also head to the local open spaces that surround our lovely city and be treated to native wildflower blooms in our own backyard.

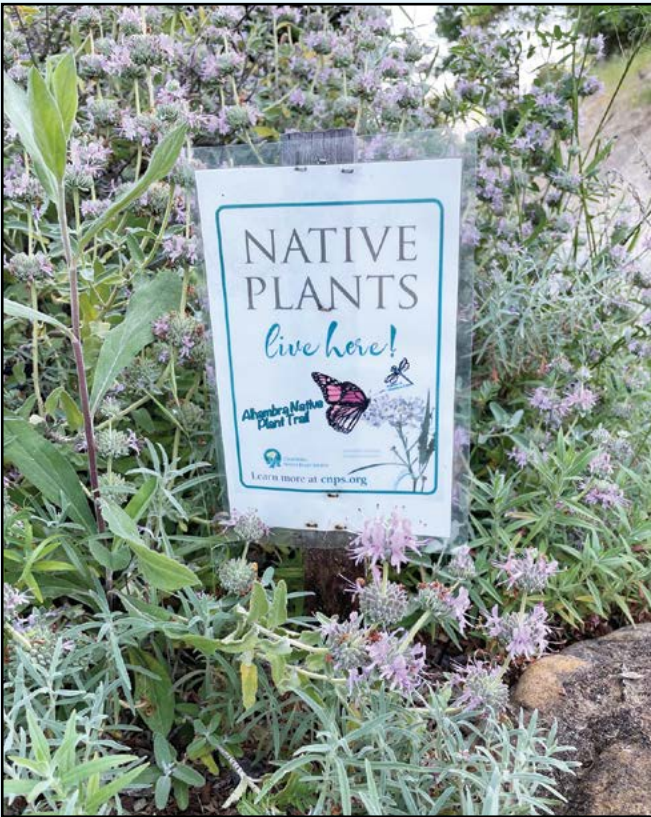
My favorite hike is at the end of Old Briones Rd. Driving to the higher elevation trailhead ensures lovely views of the valley as soon as you step out of your vehicle and wildflowers line your approach to the ridgetops.

Mt. Wanda is a tried and true hike, albeit a steep one. Grasses and flowers line the trail, and with the new connection to Almond Ranch, it feels like you are stepping back in time as you cross under the historic windmill.

The George Miller Trail is a great paved trail that is the most accessible trail in Martinez. Beautiful wyethia and poppies will greet you before you even begin your hike.

For a more urban alternative, a variety of diverse native species can be viewed at the John Muir Historic Site where local volunteers and native plant enthusiasts, such as Elaine Jackson, have developed a native garden.

In 2010, these native plant enthusiasts decided to expand and partnered with Friends of Alhambra Creek, National Park Service, New



Native Plants at the John Muir Historic Site, poppies in foreground and shrubs. photo credit: Elaine Jackson

Leaf Collaborative, City of Martinez, Contra Costa Resource Conservation District, Contra Costa Fish and Wildlife Committee, Martinez Kiwanis, and the California Native Plant Society to create the “Alhambra Native Plant Trail”.

The goal is to enhance biodiversity, adding local native plants that will help our beneficial insects and birds, while bringing the natural beauty of our native landscapes into our town. The trail starts at the Martinez Amtrak native plant garden and meanders through town via ten small, easy-access public native gardens and a multitude of private gardens and ends at the John Muir Historic Site. There are also a few pots.

“We say there is no excuse for not planting a few natives. If you



Franklin Ridge flowers, photo credit: Brienne Zorn (with the large sunflower, grass, and poppies)

don't have a plot, a pot will do,” says Jackson.

Are you interested in planting native wildflowers in your garden? Once established, native plants overall will take less water, won't require pesticides, and invite beneficial pollinators for the benefit of us all. Ask your local nursery to direct you to

their native plant section so you, too, can join the Alhambra Native Plant Trail and bloom each spring.

[Elaine Jackson, Martinez Botanist, contributed to this article]

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# This is the Year of Creative Financing

by Courtney Ayers, Breaking Ground Real Estate, Dre #02121181

If you are a first-time home buyer, had read my article in last month's Diablo Gazette or have listened to the news recently, then chances are you heard about the amazing "DREAM for All" program and its collapse after only 10 days.

The collapse of this program, which was meant to be a lifeline to those who dream of buying their own home but lack the down payment to do so, left many people devastated and at a loss for options. Scores of Realtors across the Bay area had anxious qualified buyers left devastated by the program's untimely demise.

With the market heating up and homes still getting multiple offers (I know of one in Pleasant Hill that had 200 disclosures sent out in only three days that resulted in 70 offers!), many buyers feel as though they have reached the end of the line.

Despite the devastating collapse of the "Dream for All" program, there are other lifelines out there. Chenoa

and Zip are two programs geared towards helping first-time buyers ("first-time" just means no properties in the last three years). There are also grants available depending on which city you are considering making a purchase. In addition, several creative financing options such as wrap around mortgages, seller carries, and agent credits are all tools we are seeing being employed to close the sale as this is the year of creative financing.

In addition to any programs, grants and options above, one of the best ways to find a deal is by using a local Realtor. Local Realtors are familiar with the region's market and are knowledgeable of the value of area homes. Your local Realtor should also be well connected and know of an off-market or coming soon property.

"Dream for All" may have died but the dream is still alive — and when you work with the right people, that dream can become a reality.

# MARTINEZ CALENDAR



**Martinez Farmers Market.** Every Sunday year-round, 9 AM - 1PM, located on Main Street from Las Juntas St. (800 block) - Castro St. (600 block)

**May 5, The City of Martinez Presents: Composting Workshop.** To help Martinez residents get a comprehensive understanding of composting, how to do it successfully, and the impact it has on the environment, The City of Martinez is hosting a workshop. 525 Henrietta St. Martinez

**Saturday, May 13, Quarterly Bag of Book Sales.** 10:30 AM to 4 PM. The public can come get a grocery bag-sized bag of books for \$5. <https://www.friendsofthemartinezlibrary.com>. 740 Court Street Martinez.

**May 12, 13, 14, "Roulette Wheel In Space" and "Bureaucracy"** written and directed by Bill Chessman, 8PM except Sunday 2PM. Campbell Theatre, 636 Ward St., Martinez. <https://www.campbelltheater.com>

**Radio Plays 2023** Performed and Recorded Before a Live Audience in Martinez!

**Roulette Wheel In Space** Friday, May 12 @ 8PM

**Bureaucracy** Saturday, May 13 @ 8PM

Sunday, May 14 @ 2:30PM

Written and Directed by Bill Chessman

**Price: \$15**

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**May 14, Open Air Market Returns.** Join us on the 2nd Sunday each month from May through November for the Downtown Open Air Market featuring Vintage, Collectibles, Antiques, Arts & Crafts, and more. You will find us on the 800 block of Main St. during the Farmers' Market.

**May 20, Live Reggae on the Patio** 3PM. Slow Hand BBQ - 601 Main St, Martinez.

**May 26-28, Disney's Newsies Jr.** Inspired by the rousing true story of newspaper publishers raise prices at the newsboys' expense, the charismatic Jack Kelly rallies newsies from across the city to strike against the unfair conditions. Poison Apple Productions, 847 Arnold Dr. Martinez. <https://poisonapple.org>

**June 16, 17, 18, King of the County at the Annual King of the County BBQ Competition & Music Festival.** Friday, June 16th - 5PM-9PM, Sat -11AM-8PM and Sun from 11AM-6:00PM over the Father's Day Weekend. The Competition and awards are on Saturday and Sunday only. Our competition draws between 30-40 local Backyard Barbecue Teams over the 2-day competition. Many of our competitors are local family teams that return every year in hopes of defending the title or dethroning previous victors and royals.



This popular FREE community festival offers fun for the entire family, with over 10,000 attendees over the Father's Day Weekend. Come enjoy live music and entertainment from top local bands, arts & crafts booths, wine, beer, commercial exhibitors, carnival rides and more eclectic food vendors and other special attractions. So, do you think you make the best BBQ in town? Are you ready to fire things up? Do you have the Grit, the Grill and the Competitive Spirit? Are you feeling a bit saucy? If you are interested in joining the royal family of Backyard Barbecue Teams that have gone before, application and guidelines can be found at <https://countybbq.com/bbq-competition> or [www.countybbq.com](http://www.countybbq.com) Waterfront Park in Martinez

## MARTINEZ CHAMBER OF COMMERCE EVENTS

**Thursday, May 04, Networking Mixer** - Martinez Yacht Club. 5:30 PM thru 07:00 PM

**Monday, May 22, Drive Out Hunger 2023 Charity Golf Tournament,** 9:30 AM thru 05:00 PM. Play a round of golf to support Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa. Shot Gun Start and Cocktail Reception at End of Round. 18 holes of golf, box lunch, silent auction, prizes and awards reception with buffet at the End of Round. Blackhawk Country Club, 599 Blackhawk Club Drive. Danville. Get your tickets today. <https://rb.gy/x24hw>



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## Get your Martinez calendar item listed in The Diablo Gazette

Send to:

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# Are You Ready For Some Sturgeon Baseball?

The Martinez Sturgeon season begins on May 26. In addition to attending home games, this year, every Pecos League game gets televised through an online paid subscription per game for \$10.

The team has had an iPhone set up behind the dugout or behind the backstop that shows the game from a one-dimensional view and people would pay to watch. This year, there will be multiple cameras and Tony Hicks, a longtime announcer for minor league baseball in the East Bay. CCTV will broadcast the games locally.

## More Host Families are needed for players

According to Martinez Sturgeon General Manager, Eric Halverson, they are still in need of a dozen host families. Host families are essential since the players are all volunteers. They do not get paid by the league. They do get some support from the booster association, such as gas cards and food vouchers plus a little cash from the 50-50 money collected at the game.

Host families should provide a room, a place for them to sleep, access to a bathroom, and access to the kitchen so that they can make their meals and do whatever they need to do. Many hosts like to cook and provide for them at their own discretion.

"Some of the host families have fallen in love with their players and didn't want them to leave. They really enjoyed having them around. We've always had good feedback from the people that have hosted players in the past," Halverson says.

One requirement of players is that they have to give back to the community with different types of support. They will be in the July 4 parade, usually walking behind Joe Dimaggio's boat, the Joltin' Joe.

They will also help with the King of the County BBQ Festival and volunteer at the Kids Baseball Camp.

"It's always a mad scramble at the beginning [of the season], but we tend to get it handled," GM Eric Halverson says.

"They are all driven athletes, and most are right out of college. The players are here to try to make it to the big leagues and on their best behavior. They know that if they mess up, they're gone."

## The Martinez Sturgeon Youth 2023 Baseball Camp

Coaches will give general hitting, pitching and baserunning instruction for kids ages 6-14. Activities include drills, games, and baseball related fun. Players and coaches from the STURGEON will rotate stations with kids on hitting, fielding, baserunning and throwing.

Players should come fully dressed in baseball pants and uniform. Players are required to bring their own gloves and bats. Parents are welcome on the field at all times and can take photos at all times. Camps will be held every Monday from June 5 - July 31. At the Joe Dimaggio Field #3 at Waterfront Park Camps are \$35. Sign up at [www.martinezsturgeon.com](http://www.martinezsturgeon.com).

## Season Opener Event Movie Night Showing "Sandlot"

On Saturday, MAY 27, meet and greet with the team and enjoy movie night at Contra Costa Theater showing none other than "Sandlot", a baseball movie classic. Its director, Dave Mickey Evans, will be there to do Q and A and sign autographs, and talk about the movie. Tickets are \$50 with proceeds going to the Sturgeon Boosters to help support the players.

"That's a big event for us," exclaims Sturgeon General Manager Eric Halverson. Martinez Sturgeon home opener on Sunday, May 28.

# Martinez's 5-year Capital Improvement Plan

by Sam Richards

The City Council listened to an update on the city's five-year Capital Improvement Plan.

Councilman Mark Ross admits it is things like infrastructure, water delivery, streets and sidewalks and streetlights are the bread and butter of a city's public responsibilities.

"It's not at the top of most people's thriller list, but this is what government is supposed to do," Ross said near the end of the March 29 CIP capital projects workshop.

Among the most expensive projects on that five-year plan are street paving (\$27 million stretched out over five years); water main replacement (\$10 million); water storage tank replacement and repair, including seismic upgrades (\$13.3 million); marina seawall repair and related dredging (\$4.6 million); and building a park in the new Pine Meadows subdivision, off Morello Avenue, on the former golf course land (\$2 million).

The eastern seawall repair project, proposed for 2025-26 though as yet unfunded, That project would include repairs and renovations to the eastern seawall and other areas of the seawall to reduce silt accumulation and periodic

maintenance dredging, and will involve both design and construction of the improvements.

Another major waterfront project would be renovation of the Martinez Marina Fishing Pier, which will include structural repairs, Americans with Disabilities Act decking replacements, new steel cable railing and breakwater repairs to the southeast corner. This project, too, could be in line for federal funding.

City Engineer Ali Hafezi told the council that \$18,855,000 has been approved for the 2023-24 projects, and another \$15 million for 2024-2025 projects. Projects in the CIP for years three, four and five of the five-year plan have not yet been funded, but he expected that about \$18 million or so per year is expected to be available.

Other prime topics of discussion at the workshop were much smaller, more localized projects. Such as planned safety improvements at Center Avenue and Glacier Road (\$50,000), near Hidden Valley Elementary School.

The entire five-year list of capital improvement projects can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/2494uwnt>

# Public Gets First Peek at Alhambra Highlands

by Craig Lazeretti, Martinez News and Views

The highly anticipated public access to Alhambra Highlands began Saturday morning, April 29, with the first docent-led public hike of the property that the city acquired as a result of a June 2022 ballot measure. This is the first step toward making the 300-acre property off Alhambra Avenue south of Highway 4 fully open to the public after the city completes management and maintenance plans.

I took part in the first hike, which included Mayor Brianna Zorn, City Manager Michael Chandler and council members Debbie McKillop and Satinder Malhi, along with a few dozen residents who had signed up. Four leaders led individual groups up to the picturesque ridgeline and back at varying speeds.

Photos tell the story better than words, but here are a few quick observations:

It is no wonder the city's voters passed this measure, given the sweeping views, rolling hills, towering oak trees and lush green landscape that marked our hour-and-a-half hike. We also passed property once owned by John Muir.

Those taking part in the hikes should be sure to bring along water and sturdy walking shoes. Much like Mount Wanda, the first part of the hike is marked by a steep, bumpy incline before encountering flatter, smoother terrain. Jamie Fox, who helped spearhead efforts to create the open space, said he hopes that one day a connection can be created between Alhambra Highlands and Mt. Wanda, which is part of the John Muir National Historic site operated by the National Park Service. While the main trail we walked is well-trimmed, much of the surrounding area features tall grasses because of the winter rains; watch for



ticks.

Much has been made of the cows that populate the Highlands and the need for hikers to try to steer clear of them as much as possible, especially if encountering mothers and their calves. The cows we encountered, including a galloping herd that appeared in a hurry to get somewhere, kept their distance. They seemed as intent on avoiding us as we were of avoiding them.

Residents can sign up for the free hikes at the city Recreation Department website at this link: <https://secure.rec1.com/CA/City-Martinez/catalog>.

Hikes are offered on Saturday mornings from 9 to 10:30 a.m. or Thursday evenings from 6:30 to 8 p.m. The trailhead is next to Bethany Baptist Church, where hikers can park. Currently, the only public access to Alhambra Highlands is through docent-led tours; individuals are not allowed to hike on their own.

*Martinez news and views: an independent, reader-supported local news source for the residents of Martinez, California.*

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MON- MONTEREY AMBERJACKS DUB- DUBLIN LEPRECHAUNS							SRF- SAN RAFAEL PACIFICS LAN- LANCASTER SOUND BREAKERS							MRY- MARYSVILLE DRAKES BAK- BAKERSFIELD TRAIN ROBBERS							<a href="http://www.martinezsturgeon.com">www.martinezsturgeon.com</a>															

**JOURNEY-MAN'S JOURNAL**  
by Jill Hedgecock [www.jillhedgecock.com](http://www.jillhedgecock.com)

**New Zealand: A Modern-Day Jurassic Park and Much More**

Those who have read my Journey-man columns must know by now that I am a birder and my husband, Eric, and I love trekking. Consequently, New Zealand, with the promise of unique bird life and stunning landscapes, landed at the top of our vacation bucket list this year.

The best months for hikers to travel there are from November to April as its summer overlaps our winter. Upon that advice, we booked this adventure for late February anticipating an amazing three-week experience, and this trip exceeded all expectations making it one of my all-time favorite destinations.

New Zealand consists of two islands, North and South. As amusingly stated in Movehub.com, "They were the final part of the world to be discovered by the human race. We thought we had inhabited everywhere, but some East Polynesians went on a canoe trip and found two huge islands full of defenseless birds around 1250-1300, about 300 years before the Dutch arrived in 1642. In historical terms that is crazy late."

New Zealand boasts of its low crime rate, plenty of clean water and friendly people (who call themselves Kiwi). The roads are narrow, and motorists drive on the left, but at least their drivers are courteous. A favorable exchange rate of about 60 cents on the dollar and the ability to book a direct flight from San Francisco are alluring reasons to travel there.

Once arrived, we followed the travel guide recommendation and split our vacation into one week on the North and two weeks on the South Island.

On the North Island, we took on the challenging volcano hike at Tongariro, went birdwatching at parks, wetlands, and at the wildlife sanctuary of Zealandia. We hiked to multiple waterfalls and through prehistoric-like tree fern forests. The broadleaf forests were so pristine I envisioned a T-Rex emerging from the dense foliage.

There were so many unique experiences. We explored geothermal geysers and experienced indigenous Polynesian culture in Rotorua. At the Whakarewarewa Thermal Village, we sat eating corn on the cob cooked in a thermal pool, then watched a Maori cultural performance. Where else can you do that?

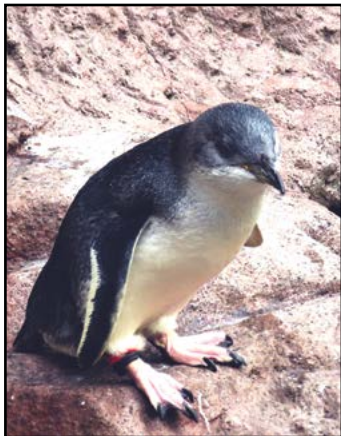
New Zealand makes exceptional wines and is home to world-class golf courses. In Wellington, Eric golfed at the Royal Wellington course while I opted for wine tasting in the Martinborough region. New Zealand produces some of the world's best "sawv blac" (sauvignon blanc) as the locals like to say. I learned on the tour that some Kiwis and the Aussies aren't too excited about one type of wine and will often tell him they'd like to taste the "ABCs" – anything but chardonnay. I had no such prejudice and



Paragliding over Lake Tekapo



Takahe



Little Blue Penguin



Kea in flight



Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa



Native wood carving



Antarctic ATV call Hagglund

natural history collection including a preserved colossal squid specimen which weighs over 1000 pounds and has an eye about the size of a football.

The South Island encompasses many beautiful shades of blue water, including turquoise oceans, lakes, and glacial waters.

After travelling down the east coast and visiting Pancake Rocks and hiking Truman Track, we helicoptered up to, and walked on, the Franz Josef glacier.

Next up was the 21-mile three-day Great Walk (Routeburn) which took us through some of the most beautiful scenic overlooks we've ever encountered. This area is so pristine the waterfalls were clean enough to drink from without filtration. Seeing the charming little blue penguins' evening migration at the Royal Albatross Center in Dunedin was a once in a lifetime experience. As we traveled north, we stopped at Tunnel Beach and the Moeraki Boulders. Lake Tekapo was a "must see" because of its aquamarine

lake water, its status as the largest Dark Sky Reserve in the southern hemisphere, and because its home to the Church of the Good Shepherd, one of the most photographed buildings in the country.

We concluded our trip at an unplanned stop that had been recommended by a local Kiwi. The fabulous International Antarctic Centre

in Christchurch provided a unique opportunity to experience extreme temperatures and a simulated -18.5 degree windstorm in the Antarctic storm room. Views of rescued little blue penguins warmed my heart while the outdoor all-terrain vehicle, called Hagglund, toured around a simulated Antarctic terrain/obstacle course which thrilled my daredevil side.

New Zealand is a birdwatcher's paradise. The island's isolation and lack of native mammalian life (except for bats) resulted in the evolution of unique birdlife. From the ground-dwelling and flightless kiwi, weka, and takahe, to colorful green and purple wood pigeons and little blue penguins, the avifauna diversity thrilled me.

Zealandia, a fenced sanctuary in Wellington on the North Island, allowed me to get close to kaka parrots and takahe. The night tour, where it is possible to see the nocturnal and shy kiwi, was sold out, which was disappointing. We encountered the kea, an alpine parrot, during our Routeburn trek.

There were so many fantastic and unique experiences that it's hard to select highlights. The Tongariro Alpine Crossing lived up to its reputation as the best one-day trek in New Zealand and one of the top ten single-day treks in the world.

This is an epic 12-mile volcano hike with a 2,600-foot elevation gain and requires a reasonable level of fitness.

Adventure sports on the South Island, such as the helicopter glacier experience and paragliding above the stunningly beautiful Lake Wakatipu were fantastic. And our three-day, 21 mile, 4,600-foot elevation gain, Routeburn Great Walk took us through lush green forests, many cascading waterfalls and over the iconic Harris Saddle. The sweeping views were like travelling through a stack of postcards.

We assumed our three-week itinerary included ample time for a comprehensive tour of NZ. We were wrong. There are nine more Great Walks. We also missed out on

visiting the famous glow worm caves, the night tour at Zealandia to see kiwi, and the dark sky project tour at Lake Tekapo. We couldn't fit in river rafting, kayaking, and exploring the fjords of Milford Sound. Though there is so much more to see, our time in NZ experiencing its many natural wonders, adventure sports, and unique wildlife was an epic and unforgettable vacation.



Routeburn



Tongariro Volcano



Tunnel beach descent

enjoyed the unique, crisp yet buttery chardonnay at Poppies Winery to buy a bottle.

Wellington's Te Papa Museum, which is a must-do, included an amazing ground-breaking exhibit on Gallipoli (NZ's contribution to World War I) prepared by Weta, an award-winning film effects company that is also responsible for many of the "Lord of the Rings" film's special effects. In addition to the special exhibit, art and cultural displays, Te Papa houses a phenomenal



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