

# The Diablo Gazette

Arts, Entertainment and All That's *Good* in Our Communities  
Concord, Clayton, Walnut Creek, Martinez, Pleasant Hill  
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## NOVEMBER 2023



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Thank you, MRC, for your generous sponsorship.

Martinez Refining Company Clubhouse (formerly Shell Clubhouse) 1635 Pacheco Blvd. Martinez



### Diablo Gazette Columnist, Jill Hedgecock Receives Jack London Award



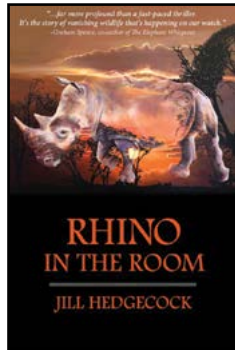
Congratulations to our Diablo Gazette contributor, Jill Hedgecock, for winning the Jack London Award bestowed by the California Writers Club (CWC) in a ceremony on October 22, 2023. Jack London awards are given to one person from each of the 22 branches of the CWC every two years.

Jill served as the Program Chair for the Mount Diablo branch for eight years, was a co-chair for the branch's Young

Writers Contest (YWC) for two years, and has judged this contest for over a decade. For four years she has judged the National Scholastic Art & Writing Awards for high school students, an important fundraiser for the YWC.

Jill twice received the Distinguished Service Award from Mount Diablo, is a frequent presenter at her branch's Writer's Table sharing information on topics such as book endings, book trailers, travel writing, muse boards for authors, and more. She has participated as a panelist and moderated numerous writers' panels for the branch's holiday meeting. She has been a featured speaker for the Tri-Valley, Napa, and Sacramento branches.

Jill is an award-winning and internationally-published author of four novels. Her debut young adult novel, "Rhino in the Room", received a New



Apple Literary Award for Excellence in Indie Publishing.

Her monthly book reviews "Bookends" and pet columns "For Love of Pets" appear in The Diablo Gazette, as are many other of her submissions. Jill's short stories, personal essays, and nonfiction and environmental pieces have appeared in multiple anthologies, newspapers, and magazines.

Obviously, I am very proud of Jill and grateful for all of her contributions.



### Merrily We Sip N' Stroll Into The Holidays

by Beth Javens, President & CEO

Save the date, Friday, December 1st (5:30 to 8:00 pm) when Concord welcomes the holidays in grand style with an unforgettable evening.

#### Holiday Sip N' Stroll: A Charming, Self-Guided Tour

The night will start with the Holiday Sip N' Stroll, an engaging self-guided tour around historic Todos Santos plaza, where locals and visitors can stop in Concord restaurants and businesses and savor sample sizes of treats and drinks, specially prepared to infuse your evening with the magic of the season.

Hosted by Visit Concord and the TSBA (Todos Santos Business Association), the Holiday Sip N' Stroll lets you celebrate Concord small businesses while indulging in holiday favorites. Past bites and sips have included cinnamon bites, mulled cider, Christmas Ale, cookies and a host of other fun surprises. An event map will be available on [Concordtsba.net](http://Concordtsba.net) that will list each participant.

It's a wonderful way to support local businesses while bringing in the holidays. For ticket and other information go to [VisitConcordCa.com](http://VisitConcordCa.com)

#### Santa Claus and Carriage Rides for the Kids

As if the evening couldn't get any more magical, Santa Claus himself, accompanied by his famous reindeer, will make a special appearance. Children will have the opportunity to take pictures with Santa and even feed his beloved reindeer. Carriage rides around the park are just \$5



Carolers from the 2019 Tree Lighting Sing Along

per person.

#### Creative Holiday Decor and Festive Sing-A-Long

The Concord Art Association will host a free 'make your own holiday decor' booth, giving you a chance to craft your own unique holiday decorations and take home a piece of the holiday spirit.

Culminating the night's festivities will be the Mayor's Sing-A-Long at 7:30 p.m., setting the stage for the eagerly awaited lighting of the Christmas Tree. Witness as the plaza comes to life with a radiant display of lights, a heartwarming tradition to officially kick off the holiday season.

#### Convenient Parking and a Warm Welcome

For your convenience, free parking will be available at the nearby Salvio Street Garage and Grant Street Parking Garage.

Prepare for an enchanting evening of merriment to start the holiday season. Gather the family, friends, and neighbors to sip, stroll, and create those treasured holiday memories.



### To the Moon and Back

Just in time for the holiday season, Intel releases a burst of new products. If you have not purchased a new computer in a while, now may be the time to do it because these new components are awesome. The new Intel 14th generation CPUs have just been released featuring increased speed, more processing power, and greater throughput.

The main feature of these new CPUs is throughput. I will address the geek speak later, for now, it is about the speed of accessing and processing mountains of data. Speed is simple enough to understand, the internal clock moves faster which means the processor moves faster handling more data. When data moves faster, the computer responds faster and thus more throughput. Throughput is the amount of information that can be addressed and processed at one time.

Think of throughput as one would view a stack of files sitting in your inbox. How many of those files you could process in a day? It depends on the processor, desktop, and storage.

Think of a computer as if it were you. You sit behind a desk, so you are the processor or CPU, the smarter you are the faster things get done. RAM represents the size of your desktop, and the file cabinets are your storage. One pulls data from storage, puts it on a desktop then processes the files. If you have a big desktop, you can quickly lay out multiple files all at the same time and process them simultaneously. A small desktop means only a limited number of files can be opened. To process files not on the desktop one would have to swap files to and from the storage, which is time-consuming.

When you combine faster speed with larger throughput the result is impressive computing power. For example, the computer that guided Apollo 11 is like a schoolroom desktop, small. The first mission to land astronauts on the surface of the moon (called Apollo Guidance Computer or AGC) is like, "...comparing a horse-drawn carriage to a modern sports car. They were both state-of-the-art in their respective times and served their

purposes well. However, the Intel i9 14th generation processor is exponentially more powerful than the Apollo Guidance Computer," according to Microsoft Bing search and NASA.

#### 50 Million Times More Powerful than Apollo Guidance

Now for some of the geek stuff. The Intel i9 14th generation processor (aka i9-14900K) has 24 cores vs. one for the AGC. The i9 moves 64 bits of data at once and can address (load and access) 192 Gigabytes of RAM vs. 4 kilobytes of RAM for the AGC, that is 50,331,648 times greater. Think of it, 50 million times greater. Referencing our analogy, consider RAM as if it were a desktop where files are open, and the CPU is making the data fly from one open file to another. The new CPUs can now address a desktop that is over 50 million times larger than the original computers that took man to the moon, and back. That defines awesome.

Contact your local computer specialist and let them know you want throughput, and you will be awesome too.



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[www.cityofconcord.org/1135/Gift-and-Craft-Fair](http://www.cityofconcord.org/1135/Gift-and-Craft-Fair)

Interested in being a vendor? You can register online at [www.concordreg.org](http://www.concordreg.org).



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By Terrylynn Fisher, Broker Associate  
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## Let's Save Some Money and

## Have Some Fun With Our Savings

**PROP 19** : It was something for those over 55's and those that love them. While there are fewer advantages than we all thought when this was passed, some things are worth noting.

Prior to Prop 19, if you were over 55 and sell a property and purchase another for \$1 less than what you sold, you could transfer your property tax base to your new property in certain counties in California who reciprocated this tax advantage, one time.

AFTER Prop 19, you can transfer that tax base up to three times anywhere in California. For folks that have transferred their tax base once or twice, you can still move years later and use this tax advantage. The forms are located on the Contra Costa County Tax Assessor website.

### PGE Energy Savings Assistance Program

Have you got mom or dad, or aunt, uncle, friend that have lived in their homes for many years, now on fixed incomes who cannot afford some upgrades that might help with their utility bills? (They can be either owners or renters.)

There is a program that has some parameters, such as income limits, \$36,450 for one person, \$49,300 for two persons, etc. — or on medical, or disability, etc., who would qualify.

It pays to check because the upgrades would be for insulation, replacing old refrigerators, furnaces or water heaters if approved. These upgrades do not have to be paid back. The current income limits and program is effective June 1, 2023, to May 31, 2024. Check out the full program on [pge.com/energysavings](http://pge.com/energysavings).

The exceptions for qualifying are not easy to locate on the website, so call 1-800-933-9555 and speak to someone. What have you got to lose?

### Enjoy even more savings on entertainment

Reading books and watching movies make up much of our entertainment choices. Consider taking advantage of these simple savings recommendations. Enjoy yourself.

**BookMooch.com** — For those that still like a book in their hands, this is a book swap service that does not charge a fee, although you do pay postage. You might want to send a book or post a review and rack up your points. You can elect US Only swaps to keep the postage fees down.

The Contra Costa County Library website offers free digital books you can take out for no fee. Readers love this service. [Www.ccclib.org](http://www.ccclib.org)

**Libby** (formerly OverDrive) is an award-winning reading app that provide many popular fiction and nonfiction titles.

**Enki Library** provides titles from small press and independent publishers.

**Skillsoft IT** offers Pro eBooks and videos offers a wide range of technology topics including coding, business and IT, and certification starting at just \$19/mo.

**TumbleBooks** provides children's eBooks and curriculum.

**Cinemark Movie Club** — [www.cinemark.com/movie-rewards-info](http://www.cinemark.com/movie-rewards-info) - if you are movie buff, or go a few times a year, this is definitely a good deal. \$9.99 per month. One FREE ticket per month and 20% off concessions. It makes a great gift that pays for itself. If you don't go for a couple of months, you can roll over the FREE ticket



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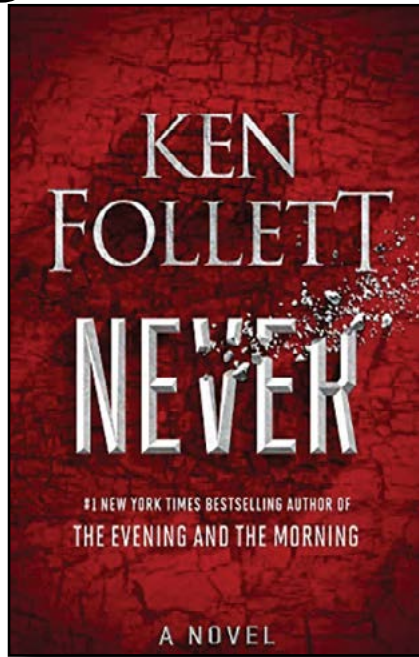
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# Never by Ken Follett



“Never” (Viking, 2021, hardcover, 816 pages, \$27.64) by Ken Follett is the masterfully crafted thriller that weaves intercontinental politics into a terrifyingly believable tome about nuclear war and the tenuous state of international relationships.

The novel opens in a futuristic America where a woman President visits Munchkinland, a haven for top political leaders in the event of a nuclear war. This ominous beginning launches the reader into the intriguing life of United States President Pauline Green as she juggles real world terrorist threats along with ordinary marital and parental responsibilities.

As the political stability between North and South Korea disintegrates, Pauline grapples with suspicions about her husband’s fidelity, and how her teen daughter’s rebellious years will affect her re-election prospects. Bigger problems surface in Green’s global peace-keeping efforts when a stolen United States drone attacks Sudan. The event wreaks havoc with the United States’ relationship with Korea and China.

Three other key storylines complete this epic novel. Both the environmental and human consequences of climate change are exemplified when drought conditions and agricultural irrigation diversions shrink Lake Chad. The dropping lake water levels result in the devastation of the livelihoods of the residents of Chad’s fishing community.

A widowed mother from Chad, Kiah, who is determined to immigrate to France, hires a sketchy human trafficker to take her and her young son out of the country. During her journey with a busload of refugees, Kiah befriends an undercover CIA agent, Abdul John Haddad. Haddad, who is secretly searching for Hufra, the hideout of terrorist leader, Faribi, tries and fails to remain aloof toward Kiah and her son.

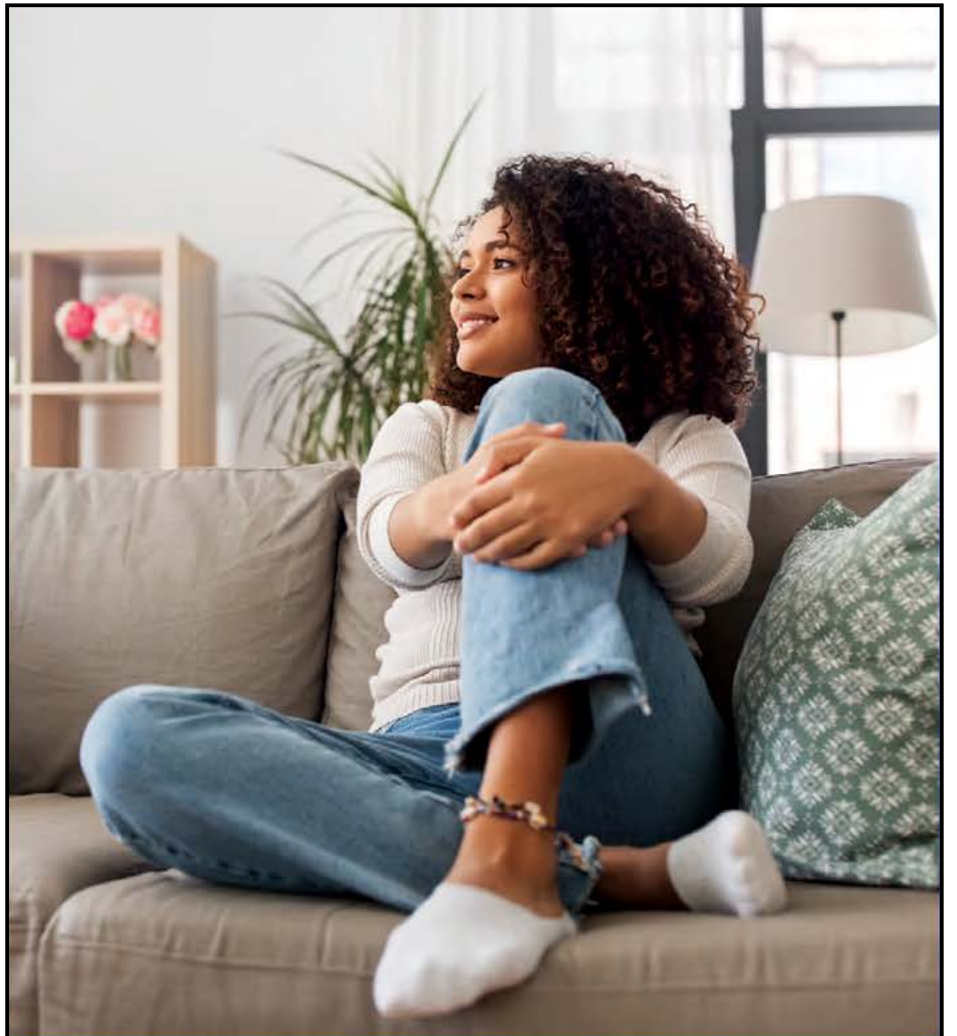
As China’s relationship with the United States becomes strained, a brilliant Chinese political strategist,

Chang Kai, offers the fascinating political viewpoint of a young man attempting to modernize the mindset of the “Old Guard” to subvert a nuclear war. Tamara Levit, a CIA operative who colludes with Tab Sadoul, a European Union attaché in Chad, adds a romantic element to the hefty subject matter.

At over 800 pages and spanning three continents, “Never” could be a bruiser of a read. Yet, Follett’s scenario of how small, yet significant, events can push the earth’s political superpowers toward the earth’s destruction, resonates with terrifying reality. To say this is a page turner is an understatement.

“Never” is a New York Times best-seller and was the “Sunday Times” Thriller of the Month in November 2021. Those who love Tom Clancy’s, Daniel Silva’s and Lee Child’s novels will probably enjoy the epic tome of “Never”.

Follett has sold over 175 million copies worldwide. His work has been published in over eighty territories and thirty-seven languages. Learn more at [www.ken-follett.com](http://www.ken-follett.com).



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**The Deadline for A Holiday Ad in  
The Diablo Gazette is December 20th.  
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# calendar of events

## CLAYTON

### CLUBS

**Concord NorCal Helping Hands Lion's Club.**

<https://www.lionsclubs.org/en/start-our-approach/club-locator/details?id=148928>

**Rotary Club of Concord.**

<http://www.concordrotary.org>

**Cars 2nd Chance**, vehicle / car donation programs turning vehicle donations into cash for charities administered by the Clayton Valley Concord Sunrise Rotary Charitable Fund. <https://cars2ndchance.com>

### EVENTS

**Thru 2023**, Wednesdays & Sundays, "Life in Clayton 1850-1870." 2-4 PM. 6101 Main St., Clayton. Visit [claytonhistory.org](http://claytonhistory.org).

### LIBRARY

**November 1, Día de los Muertos/Day of the Dead Crafts.**

Wednesday, from 2-2:45 p.m. Children's Program. Artist Rachel Palacios will demonstrate and help children of all ages with creative crafts. Children seven and below must be accompanied by an adult.

**November 2 Teen Thursday – If You're Board Switch it Up!** 3:30 – 5:00 p.m. Teen Program. First Thursday of the month get your game on at the Clayton Library. You can play one of the Library's Switch games like Mario Kart, Super Smash Bros., and Just Dance or you can play one of our fun tabletop games. For Grades 6-12.

**November 15 Fratello Marionettes present Jack & the Beanstalk.** from 2 – 2:45 p.m. Children's Program. Join us for a fun-filled marionette rendition of the classic tale "Jack & the Beanstalk" presented by the Fratello Marionettes. Best for ages 4 and up.

Clayton Library, 6125 Clayton Rd. For more information please call 925-673-0659. <https://ccclib.org>

## CONCORD

### ARTS

**aRt Cottage.** 2238 Mt. Diablo Street Concord. (925) 956-3342 [www.artcottage.info](http://www.artcottage.info)

### CLUBS

**Concord NorCal Helping Hands Lion's Club.**

<https://www.lionsclubs.org/en/start-our-approach/club-locator/details?id=148928>

**Rotary Club of Concord.** <http://www.concordrotary.org>

### EVENTS

**November 3-February 14, 2024, Ice at the Veranda** is returning this winter. Tickets may be purchased online in advance or on-site, on a first-come, first-served basis. The Veranda, 2001-2003 Diamond Blvd, Concord. <https://shoptheveranda.com/ice/>

**November 3 & 4, The Contra Costa Mineral & Gems Society** will be hosting their event at Centre Concord, 5298 Clayton Rd. Concord [www.diablorocks.com](http://www.diablorocks.com).

## YOUR PARTNER IN BUSINESS



**November 5, 8th Annual Mouse-Con Disney Fan Convention,** 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Admission is only \$10.00, (Children under 12 are free) Concord Plaza Inn (formally Crowne Plaza Inn) 45 John Glenn Dr, Concord <https://mouse-con.com/home.Shtml>

**November 18, 19, Concord Historical Society's Holiday Market,** 11 AM, Come enjoy this year's Holiday Market with 20+ Crafters, Bakers, Artists, and More! Free Admission to the Holiday Market, the historic Galindo Home and the Concord Museum. 1928 Clayton Rd, Concord

**November 23, Concord California Turkey Trot** 5K, Newhall Park, 1351 Newhall Parkway, Concord



**November 25, Concord Art Association Presents: Small Business Saturday Pop-Up Sale!** 11 AM- 4 PM, Come join us at our 2023 pop-up sale where all types of small businesses will be selling their merchandise! Salvio Pacheco Square, 2151 Salvio St, Concord

**December 7, National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day Ceremony** at Cal State University, 4700 Ygnacio Valley Road, Concord, 3:35PM. Beacon Lighting at 5 pm. For more information call, 925-685-0953

### FARMERS MARKETS

**Pacific Coast Farmers Market** <https://www.pcfma.org> Todos Santos Plaza. Tuesdays, 10AM- 2PM Year Round

### LIBRARY

**November 14 Mother Goose Storytime** with Stay & Play, Join Ms Rosa for sweet stories, songs and lapsed rhymes a playtime just for baby and caregiver! 10:30AM – 11:00AM Concord Library, 2900 Salvio Street Concord. For full list <https://ccclib.org>

## MARTINEZ

### CLUBS

**Martinez Rotary Club** meets weekly, 5-6 PM on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month. Campbell Theatre, 636 Ward Street., Martinez <http://www.martinezrotary.org> Pleasant Hill. <https://pleasanthillrotary.org/>

### EVENTS

**November 4, Texas Hold Em Tournament,** 6:30 PM hosted by Martinez Rotary, benefitting White Pony Express. Entry Fee: \$60, rebuys and add-on \$20 If you sign up prior to Oct 16, you will get extra chips. Dinner

Served. [www.martinezrotary.org](http://www.martinezrotary.org)

**November 4, Dirty Cello...**cello like you've never heard before, 2 PM, From China to Italy, and all over the U.S., Dirty Cello brings the world a high energy and unique spin on blues and bluegrass. Martinez Campbell Theater, 636 Ward St, Martinez November 25, Holiday Sparkle Sip & Shop 2023, 1 PM - 4 PM, Main Street Martinez DBA Downtown Martinez & Co.

**November 18, Live Bingo, Soroptimist International of Martinez,** 6:00 - 9:30 PM. Martinez Refining Company Clubhouse, 1635 Pacheco Blvd, Martinez. <https://www.soroptimistmartinez.org>

### FARMERS MARKETS

**Pacific Coast Farmers Market** <https://www.pcfma.org> Sundays, 9AM-1PM, Year Round. 700 Main St. Martinez.

### LIBRARY

**November 4, Friends of the Martinez Library: Quarterly Book Sale,** 10:30am-4:00 PM. Bag of Books Sale. Grab your bags and come down to the Martinez Library. Fill a bag for just \$5.00. Come and enjoy the thrill of finding treasures to add to your home library!

Martinez Library: 740 Court St, Martinez. For full list <https://ccclib.org>

## PLEASANT HILL

### CONCERTS/MUSIC EVENTS

**November 11, Author Roy Mash,** discussing the power of word choice in writing, will be the featured speaker at the monthly lunch meeting of the California Writers Club-Mt. Diablo Branch. 10:45 AM, Zio Fraedo's Restaurant, 611 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill. To register for the meeting online, visit <https://cwcmtdiablo.org/meetings-and-workshops>.

### LIBRARY

**November 6, Author Talk with Parini Shroff: Read Contra Costa 2023,** 6:30 pm-7:30 pm. Join us for an in-person discussion with Parini Shroff, author of the novel The Bandit Queens. The Bandit Queens follows Geeta, a young woman whose no-good husband walked out on her.

Pleasant Hill Library, 12 Monticello Avenue. For more information please call 925-673-0659. <https://ccclib.org>

## WALNUT CREEK

### FARMERS MARKETS

**Contra Costa Certified Farmers Market** <http://www.cccfm.org>

Sundays 9AM-1PM, Year Round. Locust Street between Cole and Lacassie St <http://www.cccfm.org/walnut-creek-market/>

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

**Rossmoor Farmers Market** Rossmoor residents and their families-sonly. Fridays 9AM-1PM, Golden Rain

Rd. <http://www.cafarmersmks.com/rossmoor-farmers-market>

### LIBRARY

**November 3,4, Friends of Ygnacio Valley Library Book Sale** - Members Only, 6:00pm-8:00pm, If you're not already a member, you can join at the door for \$15. Come browse through thousands of new and gently-used books in a wide range of topics

Ygnacio Valley Library, 2661 Oak Grove Road, Walnut Creek

**November 6, 13, 20, 27, Tai Chi,** 10:15 - 11:15 AM. T'ai-chi Ch'uan is an ancient Chinese art which combines meditation in movement and healthful exercise. The training includes the practice of a 37 posture form which teaches relaxation, balance and strength

Walnut Creek Library, 1644 N Broadway. For more information please call 925-673-0659. <https://ccclib.org>

### LESHER CENTER

**November 24-26, Contra Costa Ballet's The Nutcracker,** Presented by Contra Costa Ballet

**November 30-December 1, Laurie Sings A Song For You Christmas,** Introduction: A Cabaret Concert inspired by the music of Karen Carpenter

Leshar 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.

## Other Cities

### EVENTS

**November 4, Fall Fun Fest,** 2 - 4 PM, Join Pillar for an afternoon of face painting, games, bouncehouse, and snacks! This year highlighting Cancer Support Community. Pillar Cowork and Childcare, 3515 Mount Diablo Boulevard Lafayette

**November 12, Armando's Presents...The Sunday Paper** live at the Townhall Theatre! 2 - 6 PM, The Sunday Paper is a musical force backed by tight arrangements, led by a powerhouse musicians. "Bay Area Funk", Town Hall Theatre Co-Lafayette, 3535 School Street Lafayette

**November 18, Tri-Valley Writers Chapter of the California Writers Club,** Nina Schuyler, an award-winning novelist and short story writer, who teaches creative writing at UCSF and Stanford Continuing Studies, will present "Making Metaphors and Other Stylish Moves" at the Tri-Valley Writers November 18, 2023 meeting, 2 PM, room 2470 at Las Positas College 3000 Campus Hill Dr. in Livermore. Register at <https://www.trivalleywriters.org/speaker-meeting-registration-and-payment/>

**December 7, SIR Branch 19 will hold its Monthly Luncheon,** 11 AM, Pittsburg Elks' Lodge, 200 Marina Blvd., Pittsburg. This will be the Annual Holiday Luncheon with entertainment, raffles and a special meal. Members are invited to bring guests. [www.sirinc2.org/branch19](http://www.sirinc2.org/branch19)

**SUBMIT YOUR CALENDAR ENTRIES** by the 20th of the month before Issue month. [diablogazette@gmail.com](mailto:diablogazette@gmail.com)



### It's Time For Our 12th Holiday Boutique

This year is certainly going by fast. I cannot believe that it's already time for our 12th Holiday Boutique. We have many new participating artists with quite a variety of items that we have never had before. Of course, there will be paintings, but also ceramics, knitted/crocheted crafts, felted pieces, jewelry, assorted cards and much more.

Our Holiday Boutique doors will be open Wednesday through Saturdays from November 4 through December 21 from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Artists will be available at the artist reception on November 11 from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. to answer any

questions about their work. Our free receptions are always open to the public.

We saw many new faces this past month as people came through to view the beautiful work on exhibit here. Many of them came for our stop on the East Bay Gallery Tour. We hope to be one of the galleries participating on that tour again next year.



Candle holder ... Donna Arganbright

The aRt Cottage is not just a gallery, but also a working studio for artists who take classes here or use it for their studio time. If you are looking for a friendly environment for creating your own projects, or want to learn how to make art, we are here



Carissa with her roses

to teach and encourage you. Students come to us on a weekly basis. Classes at aRt Cottage are \$20 per hour which include supplies and most of the materials you need for your projects.

Our newest student, Carissa, has just completed her red and white acrylic roses. It is her first painting. She is hoping to show it in the Holiday Boutique along with some of the other artists and their craft items pictured here.

aRt Cottage: 2238 Mt. Diablo Street Concord.

### Main Street Arts Exhibits Black and White Theme for Holidays

While Martinez's Main Street Arts gallery, 613 Main Street, is well known for featuring fine art created by local artists, its continuing community outreach activities make it an important addition to the area.



"Young Zebra" by Samantha McNally

Friday events are new this year and have been a spirited addition to Downtown Martinez.

#### Win Art from Featured Artists

Unlike other galleries in the area, visitors may win artwork to bring home. Each month, a piece of artwork from the featured artist is raffled off. November

Beginning November 1 through the end of December, the Main Street Arts will feature a "Black and White" theme on their "Guest Wall". Each member of the gallery has submitted works in black and white. This promises to be a dramatic display of artists' collective talents.

In addition, Holiday art will adorn the front windows of the gallery during this same time period with their Christmas tree fully

decorated with hand-painted and hand-sculpted ornaments that would obviously be even more enjoyable on your own tree. Or make a perfect holiday gift for everyone on your list. The Gallery is open Wednesday-Saturday from 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. and on Sundays 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.



"Trees" by Olga Jusidman

will feature a mixed media work by Gwenn Spratt. Her piece to be awarded is valued at \$300. Visitors need only to enter their name and contact details when visiting. There is no purchase required to enter or win.

#### Beyond the Gallery

Main Street Arts actively supports the community of Martinez. A regular participant in the downtown community activities throughout the year (Zombie Beer Crawl, Holiday Sip and Shop, etc.), it also donates artwork to local organizations for auctions and raffles and provide funds to support Alhambra High School Art Scholarship programs, and for local murals.



"Running on Empty" by Paula Oesterling

#### First Friday Reception

On the First Friday of each month, Main Street Arts can be seen highlighting one of its eleven members for the evening as well as highlighting the varied works of its other talented members. On this day, the gallery offers up fine wine and hors d'oeuvres until 9:00 p.m. (Provided bi-monthly by the exceptionally talented Kate and Catie). These

It is an extraordinary complement to the Martinez community. www.mainstreetarts.net



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FEBRUARY 23, 2024 PLEASANT HILL COMMUNITY CENTER 320 CIVIC DRIVE, PLEASANT HILL, CA 94523

5:00 PM - DOORS OPEN

6:00 PM - ALL YOU CAN EAT DINNER (SALAD, GARLIC BREAD, PASTA, MARINATED CRAB, DESSERT)

8:00 PM - LIVE BAND & DANCE

ALL FUNDS RAISED WILL BENEFIT THE COMMUNITY ARTS PROGRAMS OF BD PERFORMING ARTS!

SINGLE TICKET: \$75.00

TABLE OF 10: \$675.00 (INCLUDES 2 BOTTLES OF WINE)

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Spanish tapas are perfect for holiday entertaining because they are small plates of foods that can often be consumed without the use of forks. Here are a few of my favorite recipes and wine pairings that will make them sing.

Look to Spain for wines to pair with tapas. An intense white grape known as garnacha blanca in Spain, and grenache blanc in the south of France, is worth seeking out.

To me, it tastes like a cross between chardonnay and sauvignon blanc. It has rich notes of apple and pear-like chardonnay; however, it is usually made without oak barrel influence. On the palate it carries a hint of citrus and the same fresh acidity found in sauvignon blanc.

Enjoy the tapa listed here. Enjoy the

tapa listed here, Red Potatoes with Smoked Salmon with a garnacha blanca or a sauvignon blanc. Delicate smoked salmon with a creamy garlic mayonnaise, known as aioli in France and "alioli" in Spain, brings out the fruity flavors in the wine.

For the red wine pairing, choose the quintessential Spanish wine, Rioja. Made from the tempranillo grape, it has three levels of quality: Crianza, Reserva, and Gran Reserva. The Reserva and Gran Reserva levels are aged for at least three to five years, respectively.

I recommend the Crianza level for this fun bite-size appetizer – crispy Jamon & Manchego Pinwheels.

Rioja Crianza is fruitier and less oaky than its older siblings and makes it a fun, less serious wine.

For something sweet at the end, try a Pedro Jimenez, a sherry-style wine that comes from southern Spain. It has dried fig, coffee, and nut flavors and is delicious with fig or nut-based desserts. Consider a succulent fig stuffed with rich mascarpone cheese that balances the alcohol in the wine. The honey blended with cinnamon, cardamom, and allspice adds an exotic kick that echoes the spice notes in the barrel-aged wine.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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

### Red Potatoes with Smoked Salmon



#### INGREDIENTS

12 small red potatoes, 6 oz. smoked salmon, Parsley for garnish

#### Alioli (Spanish for aioli):

2-4 cloves of garlic (to taste)  
1/4 tsp. sea salt  
1 cup olive oil  
2 eggs, at room temperature

#### DIRECTIONS

Cut small circles from each end of the potatoes and cut in half to make bite-size half-circles that will stand without wobbling. Toss the red potatoes with olive oil, salt, and pepper and roast in 350° oven for about 15 minutes or until fork tender. Remove and let cool.

Mash the garlic and salt together to make a paste. In a food processor, blend one whole egg plus one yoke with the

## Holiday Tapas For Entertaining

garlic/salt paste. While the food processor is running, slowly drizzle in olive oil until the mixture thickens. It will be thinner than store bought mayo, so the easiest way to dispense it will be to put it into a plastic squeeze bottle.

Top each potato with a squeeze of alioli and a small chunk of smoked salmon. Add a sprig of fresh parsley for color.

Yield: 12 (2 each) servings

### Jamon - Manchego Pinwheels



#### INGREDIENTS

1 Package Frozen Puff Pastry Sheets, (17.5 ounce), thawed  
2 tsp. grainy mustard  
5 oz. Spanish jamon, thinly sliced  
5 oz. Manchego cheese, thinly sliced

#### DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 350°. Spray a baking sheet with nonstick oil spray.

Roll the thawed pastry out onto a flat surface. Spread mustard to taste on the pastry sheets. Cover the pastry with a layer of ham and then cheese.

Roll the sheets, beginning at the long side. Cut into 1-inch-thick sections. Arrange the sections on the prepared baking sheet.

Bake for 10 to 12 minutes.

Yield: 12 (1 each) servings

### Fresh Figs, Mascarpone Cheese, and Spiced Honey



#### INGREDIENTS

24 small (or 4 large) fresh, ripe figs, stems trimmed, halved lengthwise  
1 cup mascarpone, softened  
1 cup mild honey  
3/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1/2 teaspoon ground cardamom  
1/2 teaspoon ground allspice  
sprigs fresh mint for garnish

#### DIRECTIONS

Arrange the figs cut side up among four plates. Use the back of a teaspoon to gently press into the center of the flesh and create a small indentation. Add a dollop of mascarpone to the center of each fig half.

Place honey and spices in a small heat-proof bowl and set over a pan with simmering water. Cook over medium heat, whisking to blend, until the honey is liquefied and warm, 1 to 2 minutes. Drizzle honey over each fig, garnish plates with mint sprigs.

Yield: 12 (2 each) servings



Selling a home is a significant undertaking, but selling a home with tenants adds an extra layer of complexity. With the right approach, you can successfully navigate this situation while maintaining a positive landlord-tenant relationship. Here are strategies you can use to ensure a successful sale while still respecting your tenants' rights and needs.

#### Start with open and honest communication.

Be upfront with your tenants about your intention to sell the property. Establishing open communication sets a positive tone and helps manage expectations from the outset. Address any concerns they might have and be receptive to their input.

#### Thoroughly review lease agreements.

Carefully examine the lease agreements you have with your tenants. Understand the terms related to notice periods, access for property showings, and any clauses that pertain to the sale of the property. This knowledge will guide your approach and ensure you are adhering to legal obligations.

#### Choose an appropriate time.

Choosing the right timing for the sale is crucial. Consider your tenants' lease periods and their convenience. Opt for a time that minimizes disruption, such as waiting until the lease naturally expires or coordinating the sale during a time that works well for your tenants.

#### Provide incentives.

Encourage your tenants to cooperate during the sales process by offering incentives. Reduced rent, covering moving expenses, or even a rent freeze could motivate them to keep the property well-maintained and allow access for showings.

#### Prepare the property for success.

Prior to listing the property, collaborate with your tenants to ensure it is in top-notch condition. Schedule professional cleanings, repairs, and staging. The better the property looks, the more appealing it will be to potential buyers.

## How To Sell a Home With Tenants

#### Be transparent in marketing and showings.

When marketing the property, be truthful about its tenant-occupied status. Highlight the advantages, such as immediate rental income for investors. During showings, respect your tenants' privacy by scheduling viewings at mutually agreeable times and providing sufficient notice.

#### Keep tenants in the loop.

Throughout the sales process, keep tenants informed about scheduled showings, offers, and any developments regarding the sale. This transparency fosters goodwill and cooperation.

#### Address tenant concerns and apprehensions.

Your tenants might have reservations about the sale. Take the time to address their concerns promptly and thoroughly. By understanding and addressing their worries, you can maintain a positive atmosphere and smooth out any potential roadblocks.

#### Familiarize yourself with tenant rights.

Each jurisdiction has specific tenant rights and regulations. Make sure you're well-versed in these laws to ensure that you provide the proper notice period for showings and respect your tenants' rights throughout the process.

#### Explore tenant buyouts.

In certain situations, offering a tenant a buyout to terminate the lease early might expedite the sales process. While this is not always necessary, it is an option worth considering if it benefits both parties.

#### Rely on professional expertise.

Selling a home with tenants requires finesse and expertise. Consider working with a real estate agent who specializes in such scenarios. Their experience can be invaluable in navigating challenges and ensuring a successful outcome.

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# Consider it SOLD!

**\$1,299,000**

8034 Kelok Way, Clayton

**Gorgeous Falcon Ridge Two-Story with Views!** Downstairs den/bonus room with full bathroom. 4 bedrooms, 3 baths, approx. 2843sf on an approx. .17 acre lot with inside laundry & an attached 3 car garage. Updated throughout. Sensational backyard oasis is perfect for entertaining with views from Valley to Delta.

**\$1,199,000**

5909 Herriman Dr, Clayton

**Mitchell Canyon Estates!** 4 bedrooms, 3 baths, approx. 2846sf with an attached 3 car garage plus huge workspace & loft above. Downstairs En-suite plus 2 additional bedrooms & full bath. 2nd floor loft & primary suite offer views of Mt. Diablo. .3 acre lot features long side yard for RV/boat storage.

**SOLD! OVER LIST \$1,400,000**

48 La Canada, Clayton

**Regency Meadows!** Terrific two story nestled at the end of a court situated on an approx. .33 acre lot featuring huge sports court and big side yard for possible RV/boat parking. 5 bedrooms, 3 baths, approx. 2857sf with inside laundry & an attached 3 car garage. Downstairs bedroom & full bath.

**SOLD! \$683,000**

41 Long Creek Cir, Clayton

**Marsh Creek Villas!** Updated townhome with Santa Fe inspired custom craftsmanship. 3 bedrooms, 2.5 baths, approx. 1457sf with an attached 2-car garage. Downstairs bedroom or den. Spacious primary suite offers gorgeous views of Mt. Diablo.

**Clayton Market Update**

Address	Sales Price	SF	Bed/Bath	Sales Date
40 Tule Ct	\$829,880	1939	3/2.5	9/28/2023
57 Weatherly Dr	\$918,000	2324	4/2.5	10/6/2023
48 La Canada Ct	\$1,400,000	2857	5/3	10/10/2023
2 Seminary Ridge Pl	\$1,600,000	3757	4/3	10/13/2023
41 Long Creek Cir	\$683,000	1457	3/2.5	10/18/2023
1275 Shell Cir	\$835,000	1709	3/3	10/23/2023
1 Nottingham Cir	\$1,225,000	2326	4/2	10/24/2023

**Concord Market Update**

Address	Sales Price	SF	Bed/Bath	Sales Date
5497 Silver Sage Ct	\$1,275,000	2470	4/3	9/28/2023
3905 Clayton Rd #6	\$413,000	1050	2/1.5	10/2/2023
2813 Saint Joseph Dr	\$980,000	2049	4/2.5	10/4/2023
4408 Winterberry Ct	\$1,060,000	2886	4/2.5	10/6/2023
3950 Joan Ave	\$981,000	1506	3/2	10/10/2023
2775 Wilmore Ct	\$860,000	1871	4/2	10/16/2023
1060 Green Point Ct	\$890,000	1607	3/2.5	10/20/2023

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**CLAYTON NEWS**

## Clayton Council Directs City Staff to Explore Options for Citywide Maintenance Shortfalls

Earlier in the year, I had discussions with our City Manager regarding the level of service for citywide maintenance. There was an early proposal we discussed to increase spend in this area citing the need for additional resources. At the time, I balked at the idea as our City Manager had only been on board for a short amount of time and I did not think there was sufficient information to make that assessment. I suggested that we engage a consultant to perform an analysis of what is actually being done and how long it takes.

I am glad that the City was able to obtain an actual robust assessment. The details can be found on page 31 of the October 3 Council meeting agenda packet.

The assessment found that our maintenance team has approximately 18,500 hours of work that needs to be

performed. With six Full-time employees (FTE) in the Maintenance department, the City has approximately 9,000 hours of labor available. Contract labor represents an additional 4,000 hours. That leaves a shortfall of approximately 5,500 hours of work, which means that there is plenty of activity that is not happening.

Many times, that can be cumulative. For example, putting off trimming in some areas can make it more difficult in the future. Other times, it can pose increased safety risks as is the case when delaying road striping, or street repairs, etc. Sometimes, deferring work may not have a material immediate impact, but could contribute to an overall less aesthetically pleasing environment.

Based on the maintenance information presented, staff asked for a \$400K appropriation from reserves to cover

certain maintenance activities. It called for outsourcing one year of maintenance work that focused on trimming and certain irrigation work, but not mainline breaks. It also made mention of the need to hire an additional FTE and create an on-call agreement to handle standby demand, but those items were not included in the proposal.

I believe this is a piecemeal approach and opposed it. I conveyed that it would be much more palatable to look holistically at areas where we know there are shortfalls so that we can make informed choices about prioritization and the level of service that our community wants and is willing to pay for.

Ultimately the Council took no action on appropriating \$400K as was recommended. Instead, we gave direction to staff to come back with a holistic look at our current service delivery levels and

what it takes to maintain that, ascertain what is currently not happening, and what the backlog of deferred activity is.

And if we do not move forward with this outsourcing approach, what action would the City then need to take to reduce service levels? From there, it will be a prioritization and phasing exercise for what we are willing to pay for and how.

Your input is also important. At what level of service is the community comfortable? Should the City be doing more, much more, less, much less, or about the same? And how much are you willing to pay for it? I am interested to hear your thoughts so please share or send me a note.

Read more: <https://claytonca.gov/fc/agendas/council/2023/100323.pdf>

**the concordian**  
by Edi Birsan  
[EdiBirsan@gmail.com](mailto:EdiBirsan@gmail.com)

## Thanksgiving, Thanks-receiving and No Thanks

In our history, we shifted the devotion of our Thanksgiving from “(insert pronoun) Most Divine God Blessing” to family, community, and Thanks that the awkward dinner discussion-from-hell is over.

Often, the “Thanks” are for having this or that or for surviving this or (insert pronoun) presence. As I get older, I see more Thanks for NOT receiving and most definitely not having to deal with this or that.

We give Thanks and we receive Thanks. Receiving is often done forgetting that there is a grace in receiving. For what you may have regarded as trivial or automatic kindness is for someone else a near lifesaving sense of acknowledgment of value. This can be true for those who will be overwhelmed by a wave of depression this time of year.

For some, the traditional jolliness of Halloween gives way to a forced sense of giving thanks to others. Please, never say to someone else’s thanks: “It was nothing.” When something is important enough for someone to say thanks, then it is important to honor that recognition and not to reduce it.

Along with Halloween, Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday. It is a time we can look around and feel connected with one another for what we have shared in life. And offers us hope for the future to build on what has been good for us the past year.

I give thanks for having the opportunity to make things better for our community.

I give thanks to those who care enough to sit with me and go over where they think I can make things

better, and for those who believe I have made a mistake.

I give thanks that we have a community that knows there is a struggle to keep our community whole and remember that we are supposed to be indivisible with liberty and justice for all.

Most of all, to those who have echoed their hatreds, biases, willful ignorance, and disgraceful spew of intentional pain infliction, to you I say: “No Thanks.”

*By Edi Birsan of EdiBirsan@gmail.com and is not a statement of policy of any organized or struggling government entity and is in some sense a plea to be Thankful for the Niners for their efforts regardless of the scores.*

## JOURNEY-MAN'S JOURNAL

by Jill Hedgecock [www.JillHedgecock.com](http://www.JillHedgecock.com)

# Meet the Woolly Wonders at Menagerie Hill Ranch

Looking for a fun fall activity? A tour of Menagerie Hill Ranch in Vacaville, about an hour's drive northeast of Concord, offers a unique opportunity to learn about and hand-feed a little-known South American animal called the alpaca.

Deb Galway and Kirk Howard started their alpaca breeding program on their ranch when their kids were in 4H. Back then, they raised many different farm animals. Today, the focus of Menagerie Hill Ranch is on raising alpacas and chickens. It is easy to understand how Galway and Howard became enamored with alpacas. For one thing, they look like colorful, soft, long-necked teddy bears.

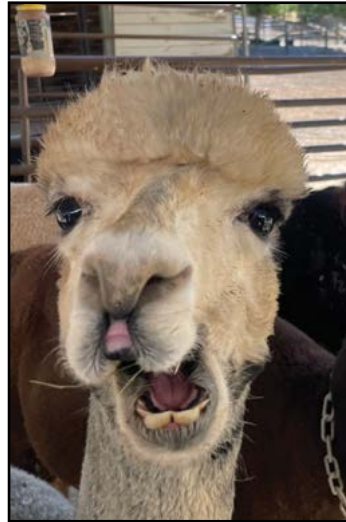
Alpacas are relatively new farm animals in the United States. Eighty-seven percent of the world's alpaca population lives in Peru where the animals are valued for both their wool and meat. Only the wool is a commodity in the United States. Prior to 1984, alpacas were mostly found in zoos. Their rarity persisted because of a ban on exporting them by Peru, so only a few thousand alpacas lived outside South America in 1991. Twenty-two years later, nearly 600,000 alpacas were dispersed across multiple countries. Today, the Alpaca Owners Association estimates California is now home to an estimated 14,000 animals.

The intimate setting of the tour allows owner, Deb Galway, to provide detailed information about the breeding, care, and uniqueness of this domesticated creature. I joined one of Galway's informative tours in August.

Galway pointed out a llama in the enclosure where young alpacas are kept. They keep llamas on the ranch as guard animals to protect young alpacas from coyotes.

"To us, it seems simpler [to use llamas to protect the young alpacas rather than dogs] because they eat the same things and they cohabitate and their medical care is the same," she explained.

"Alpacas are 150 to 200 pounds. Llamas are 300 to 400 pounds," Galway pointed out. "The llama fiber



Alpacas only have teeth on their lower jaw.

is not as nice as the alpaca. The shape of the ears is different. Oddly enough, alpacas hold their tails down while llamas tend to hold their tails up."

One of my favorite tour stops was at the maternity pen where females, known as hembras, who are due to give birth six weeks or sooner are housed. During my visit, three pregnant females plus a mom and her three-month-old offspring were present. Babies, called cria, make an adorable "mmm" noise, almost like clearing the throat.

Feeding fistfuls of hay to the boys, called machos, was also a tour highlight. Alpacas are not prone to bite and only have teeth on their lower jaw. The girls were then herded into a shed for a close encounter where the wool



Alpaca fibers have about 3x the insulation power as sheep wool.



Galway poses with an alpaca scarf.

could be examined, and where Galway explained about the myriad of colors.

Alpaca fiber is like sheep's wool, except it's warmer and less itchy. It is hypoallergenic and environmentally friendly during processing.

Some of their alpacas go to homes to keep the grass down — Galway calls them pasture pets—while others go to other breeders. Despite ranking an A+ in the cute department, being docile, and not prone to bite, alpacas rarely make good pets because they are naturally aloof, and they sometimes spit to defend themselves. Potential owners should also know that alpacas live 15 to 20 years and that it is best to keep more than one since they are herd animals.

Our final stop was the barn where fresh eggs and various alpaca products, including cookie cutters and dryer balls made with alpaca wool, can be purchased from their store.

Tours are by appointment only, are limited to small groups of eight or less unless prior arrangement is made and are suitable for children over three. Ranch tours cost \$25 per person, \$15 for children under 12. The tours take about an hour. Menagerie Hill Ranch also rents out their alpacas for weddings and photo shoots.

For directions to the ranch and other info, go to [www.menageriehillranch.com](http://www.menageriehillranch.com).

*Jill Hedgecock has a master's degree in environmental management and a bachelor's degree in biology. Her love for animals inspired her to write the award-winning novel, "Rhino in the Room," and the sequel, "Queen of the Rhino".*



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

November is the time of year when I am reminded of our food insecure neighbors.

Many older and younger alike cannot afford to eat healthy, nutritious daily meals, much less afford a Thanksgiving spread for their family.

Did you know that community gardens in our area, such as the Gehringer Community Garden and the Lafayette Community Garden, contribute tons of fresh, organically grown fruits and vegetables?

Contra Costa Master Gardeners donate thousands of pounds of produce to the Pleasant Hill Crisis Center grown each summer in their Walnut Creek demonstration garden at the corner of N. Wiget and Shadelands Drive.

Community gardens are also wonderful places to meet new friends who share an enthusiasm for produce gardening. Community Gardens and cooperatives are all over Contra Costa County and offer a public space for families to grow fresh, healthy and nutritious food. There are many local resources and organizations to support this process.

The Gehringer Community Garden rents out planting and growing plots or raised beds to residents of Concord who do not have enough space of their own to grow fresh, natural produce. Experienced staff and volunteers provide growing advice. You can contact them at: [gehringergarden@gmail.com](mailto:gehringergarden@gmail.com).

If you or a family member have time and experience to share, local community gardens regularly seek volunteers to help tend and manage the community plots where produce is grown to donate. Most offer opportunities for volunteers to take home a portion of the fruits of their labors for their own dinner tables. Here is an online list of local community gardens they currently assist:

**Adaptive Learning Center,**

## Community Gardens Help Our Disadvantaged



Master Gardener demonstration garden in Walnut Creek

Concord, a non-profit dedicated to providing a community for adults with neurodevelopmental disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorders, provides a community garden that helps support its clients' personal growth. <https://alc-ca.org/>

**Belle Terre, Lafayette,** is an Eden Housing development that provides rental homes for lower-income seniors. Raised bed planters are individually worked by residents. <https://edenhousing.org/>

**Concord Library** managers converted an underused patio off the Children's Room into a container garden for fresh vegetables. Educational programs accompany the growing seasons.

**Crestwood Mental Health Facility,** Pleasant Hill, is a provider of mental health services. Program managers

converted an underused patio into a container garden. Residents and clients of the facility use the garden. <https://crestwoodbehavioralhealth.com/>

**Discovery House, Martinez,** is a residential substance abuse treatment facility for adult men in Contra Costa County. Residents of the facility use the garden. <https://cchealth.org/aod/>

**La Casa Ujima, Martinez,** is a residential substance abuse treatment facility for adult women in Contra Costa County. Residents of the facility use the garden. <https://ujimafamily.org/>

**Lafayette Community Garden** serves residents of Lafayette and surrounding communities. Gardeners collectively work raised beds. <https://lafayettecommunitygarden.org/>

**Luxi House, Concord,** offers a

residential program to young pregnant women between the ages of 18 and 20. Produce from the garden is used by the residents.

**Monteverde, Orinda,** is an Eden Housing development that provides rental homes for lower income seniors. Raised bed planters are worked by residents. <https://edenhousing.org/>

**Newell Guest House, Pleasant Hill,** is a residential treatment facility for adult men with psychiatric disabilities. Staff and residents work the garden, which includes raised beds and in-ground planting.

The Contra Costa Public Health Department website has helpful information about utilizing community gardens to address food insecurity. <https://cchealth.org/foodsecurity/gardening.php>.

Please consider donating to the Contra Costa and Solano Food Banks, Meals on Wheels, or another worthy distributor of free meals to the disadvantaged in our local communities.

### Beware Wild Mushrooms

Periodic light rains have returned to Contra Costa, so be on the lookout for those mycological gems: wild mushrooms. Most tend to pop up in wetter months beginning in November. Some may be toxic to you, your kids, and especially pets. Mushrooms can spring up in lawns or backyards that kids or pets can access. If you have vulnerable kids, pets, or both, use gloves to pull out the mushrooms and toss them into your trash or green waste can. Do not harvest them for food unless you have vast experience identifying good from deadly.

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

# Around Martinez



## A Lot of Ways to Enjoy Martinez Holidays

by Brianne Zorn, Mayor, City of Martinez

The Holiday Season is just around the corner. The season can feel a little overwhelming, so take your time with your family and friends on Thanksgiving to give thanks for all the good that has happened this year. And can I suggest an #optoutside alternative on Black Friday by enjoying all that the surrounding Martinez landscape has to offer: a bicycle ride on Franklin Canyon Road, a hike in Briones, Mt. Wanda, or Almond Ranch, or a simple stroll at the Martinez waterfront?

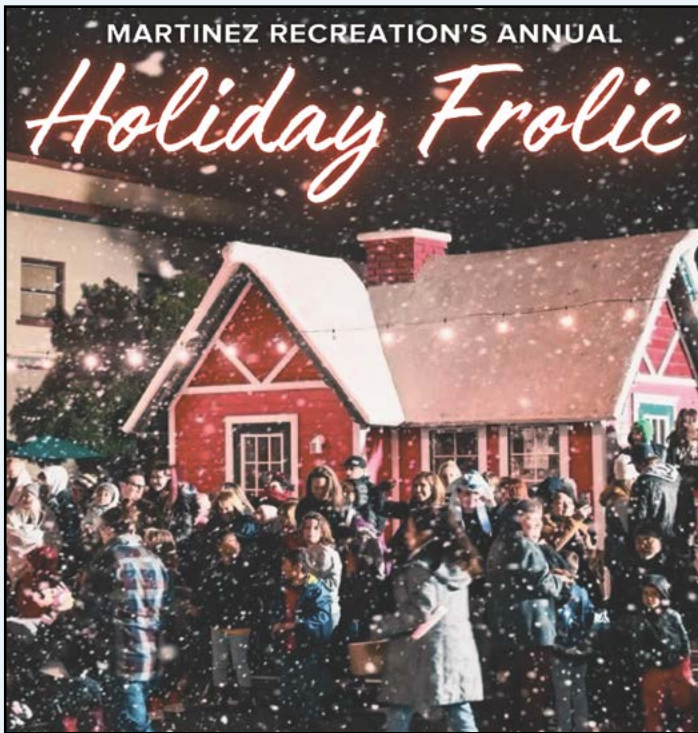
Then, filled with gratitude and renewed energy, come downtown to kick off the holiday season Martinez style with some local shopping on Small Business Saturday.

There are many Holiday events planned for us to enjoy in Martinez, so mark your calendars and prepare for a wonderful season.

**Holiday Sparkle Sip & Shop** on Small Business Saturday — November 25. Local shops will offer specials, discounts and giveaways. Make your way to Main Street Plaza at 5:30 pm for the Tree Lighting (and a visit from Santa!)

**Santa House** — November 26 - December 23. Visit with Santa and take unlimited selfies.

**Holiday Frolic** — December 1. Bring the family for a fun evening of carnival games, face painting, and



crafts. The activities begin at 4:00 p.m. The light-up parade begins at 7:00 p.m. Pickup your free light wand to join in the fun. Frosty's Holiday Boutique at the Martinez Senior Center (open Friday and Saturday) exhibits vendors with handmade items for your holiday shopping. Doors open at 3:00 p.m.

sweaters because it is time to join the jolliest bunch of Santas this side of the Bay walking the downtown corridor of Downtown Martinez sampling craft breweries stationed at participating small businesses along Main Street.

**Community Hanukkah Celebration** — December 7 - 15.



**Santa Beer Crawl** — December 9. Dust off your Santa suits and ugly Christmas

Traditional lighting of the menorah will be done every evening at dusk at the Main Street Plaza.

**Seven Days of Giveaways** — December 14 - 20. Downtown Martinez & Co. has partnered with over 25 downtown businesses to bring the community seven days of downtown giveaways via social media drawings.

I look forward to seeing you there. Some events require ticket purchase. For more information, visit [downtownmartinez.org](http://downtownmartinez.org).

**Small Business Saturday HOLIDAY Kickoff**

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 25TH** DOWNTOWN MARTINEZ

**Holiday Sparkle SIP & SHOP**  
1:00 - 4:00PM  
Stroll downtown Martinez tasting 25+ wines while shopping unique one of a kind downtown shops and businesses. Small businesses will offer specials, discounts, giveaways and more.

**COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING**  
Presented by Martinez Refining Company  
MAIN STREET PLAZA  
4:00 - 5:30PM  
Christmas Music & Holiday Characters  
5:30PM  
Tree Lighting  
Appearance from Santa

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visit [downtownmartinez.org](http://downtownmartinez.org) for tickets & details

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# Chambeaver Has Its Name, Winner Awarded

When it came to the contest for naming the Martinez Chamber of Commerce beaver mascot, temporarily named Chambeaver, the Harrington's made it a family affair. Allison and Tim also submitted names from their children Desmond and Violet.

Tim's name submission, Marina, was chosen from over 65 submissions that were presented to a committee consisting of representatives from the Give a Dam organization, John Muir Association and the Martinez Historical Society.

The Harrington's were presented with a Hotel Savings Card and a Beaver Basket. "You can now expect to see Marina



Chamber of Commerce President Lisa Bonnington, and Marina present Tim and Allison Harrington their award for submitting the winning name, Marina, in the name the Chamber's beaver mascot contest.

sightings throughout the community," said Lisa Bonnington, Martinez Chamber of Commerce President/CEO. "She is very excited to explore and learn more about Martinez!"

Congratulations Tim.

# Martinez Makes List of Top Historic Districts

by Craig Lazzeretti, *Martinez News And Views*

Martinez was recently ranked by worldatlas.com among the Northern California small towns with the best historic districts.

The website had this to say about Martinez's historic district.

"Less than an hour from San Francisco, you will arrive in Martinez. A must-see stop here is the John Muir National Historic Site. John Muir is often referred to as the Father of National Parks. His published works in the late 19th and



early 20th century poetically advocated for the importance of experiencing and protecting nature. This led to him being a key player in the creation of Yosemite, Sequoia, Petrified Forest, Mount

Rainer and Grand Canyon national parks. During your visit to Martinez, be sure to spend some time enjoying nature. Stroll through one of the over 15 public city parks including Waterfront Park, Mountain View Park, Rankin Park and Hidden Lakes Park."

# MUSD Attendance is Good News for Funding, but Enrollment Declining

by Craig Lazzeretti, *Martinez News And Views*

The Martinez Unified School District Board of Trustees received a mixed report on the district's enrollment and attendance trends at its Oct. 23 meeting.

On a positive note, attendance was up in the first two months of the 2023-24 school year compared with the same period last year. Average daily attendance is used to calculate state funding. The overall attendance rate for 2023-24 stood at 95.6%, compared with 94% last year.

This is good news for the district's budget, with a projected increase in funding of nearly \$200,000 from what was budgeted in June.

Average Daily Attendance (ADA) funding is based on a three-year average, so increases in attendance not only affect the current year's budget but also those in future years, Andy Cannon, the district's chief budget official, explained to the board.

An attendance increase of 170 students today, he said, "would have huge ramifications over the next two, three, four years going forward."

Enrollment History				
School Year	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20
Total Enrollment	3,772	3,879	3,983	4,159

However, the enrollment picture is not as rosy as it continues to fall overall. MUSD reported a preliminary enrollment figure of 3,760 students for the 2023-24 school year, down nearly 10% from the 2019-20 school year and an anticipated enrollment decline to 3,694 students in the 2025-26 school year.

The district's declining enrollment is not a surprise given the declining population of the city and county in recent years. According to population estimates from the California Department of Finance, Contra Costa County's population fell from 1,165,927 in April 2020 to 1,147,653 as of Jan. 1, 2023; Martinez lost nearly 1,000 residents during that period, now down to 36,543.

This article was originally posted online at Martinez News and Views

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# For Foster Families, this Pleasant Hill Couple is a Life Saver

by David King

Meet Claudia and Mike Mercier, founders of Contra Costa Foster Friends (CCFF). CCFF provides critical and ongoing support for foster kids and their caregivers including a Resource Center that provides essential items to foster families at no charge to them. At any given time, there are 800 kids in care in Contra Costa County plus many more foster-adopted children. The Merciers have been a licensed foster home through Contra Costa County for 18 years. In that time, they have fostered 14 children from infants on up. They have adopted two of them to join their five biological kids. "I really felt like it was a calling, I just had a deep sense that I was called to bring children into the home," Claudia says.

Fostering can be extremely stressful. According to Claudia, nationally, 50% of foster families quit after their first placement, and 80% after their second placement. "For the first ten years of our fostering, we really fostered in isolation," Claudia says. After 10 years they began connecting with a few families that could assist them when needed. "It was a game change to have that backup."

That was the initial motivation for creating our Contra Costa Foster Friends. It all started in January 2018 with two other families with an online forum, and within a few years, it grew to 350 families.

It became a nonprofit entity and now effectively serves the entire Contra Costa County foster care population. "We wanted to flood foster families with so much support that they could keep their foster doors



open."

They spent years building a comprehensive menu of support including social events, support groups, and an online forum for families to post real-time questions and needs. They were also sourcing tangible goods for essential needs such as car seats, strollers, clothes, and toys, etc. but with no place to store these items.

Marin Foster Care Resource Center knew that CCFF wanted to bring a resource center to Contra Costa County and graciously funded its launch. They bought all the racks and shelves and the hangers, etc. and gifted the first six months of rent, (which ended in May of this year.) The Resource Center is open at 367 Civic Drive, Suite #7 in Pleasant Hill. Anyone Fostering a child in Contra Costa County can shop there for free. All items in the resource center have been donated by the community.

"We are a brick-and-mortar shop for foster children, full of essential items at no charge for foster children in Contra Costa County. We have a special room dedicated to foster teens because 50% of children in care



are teenagers."

Now with rent to pay, they are actively pursuing grants and private donations to fund its operations.

"My husband is the treasurer and

the grant writer. We have close to 60 grant letters of inquiry or applications out, but grants take time to process."

Some grants are just starting to trickle in. Private community donations will help until the bigger grants come. Unfortunately, many grants require a minimum two-year nonprofit status. With CCFF at the 15-month mark, it will need to skimp to survive until next August to hit the two-years as a nonprofit mark.

Nancy Bennett, a Keller Williams Realtor, who has fostered 26 kids in the past 16 years says CCFF has changed her life. "I got into fostering because I really wanted to have kids in my life, and I was not able to have children, so I started learning more about fostering and all the trials, tribulations, joy, pain...and opportunity — not only for myself, but more importantly, for the kids to be able to provide a stable environment, and obviously a lot of love. My realtor life provides me with a lot of flexibility (with time).

"CCFF Resource Center is phenomenal.

Claudia has created a sense of community where you meet other foster parents and are able to talk about some of the stuff that regular people don't understand. Before the Resource Center, I was over at Walmart buying clothing, getting pajamas, diapers and sometimes food. With the Resource Center, I can have that availability of stuff without having to spend \$300. I can see Claudia at either her Monday night workshops or at the Resource Center to say, 'Can I just tell you about this?' Or 'I need a car seat and I need three bottles.'

"Sometimes, the kids are out of control, and we as foster parents, have to stabilize them, hold them, and let them have these big feelings. But what do we do with all of that stuff that we have taken on? Having this community and finding support after enduring a hard week is just beautiful. We can't post this stuff on Facebook. This community is important!"

Others can help. CCFF is hosting a social media fundraiser throughout November in honor of its one-year anniversary. On December 7, they will celebrate with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Resource Center for all to see.

Go to Facebook and Instagram, Contra Costa Foster Friends. Or go to the website, [www.ccfosterfriends.org](http://www.ccfosterfriends.org).

"There is a touch of Christian in Claudia," Bennett says. "This is going to continue to grow, and that helps foster parents not only stay foster parents, but potentially attract new foster parents, which is what we need at this point in time. There is a lot of need for kids right now to go to local foster homes."

## Four Restaurants You Should Visit in Downtown Concord

by David King

### LUNA RESTAURANT

Luna Restaurant has certainly earned its reputation as one of Concord's finest Italian eateries. But sometimes there's more than meets the pallet. It had some unique guests this past month. Mutual of Omaha brought out a couple of wild animals to Luna's, an alligator and capybara. How many remember the TV show Mutual of Omaha's "Wild Kingdom"? Although the show is no longer running, "Wild Kingdom" paid a visit to Lunas anyway as part of representative Rich McDaniels Financial Services client appreciation event.

Also, two recent Moroccan nights presented some sensational belly dancing entertainment for the diners. You can count on owner/Chef Habib Jacifi to always deliver a fine dining experience. 2118 Willow Pass Rd.



Luna owner Habib's son Mohammed Ali, 4, bravely pets the alligator.



### SUGAR PLUM COFFEE SHOP

Sugar Plum is Concord's second-oldest-running restaurant and is celebrating its 64th anniversary in November. Over the years, Sugar Plum has seen several owners, and many of its servers have spent a lifetime there. Current Owner Claudia Lemus says she began working there at age 15.



Owner Claudia Lemus with former owner Ray Rosenblatt.



She obtained a Business Administration degree and then returned to take ownership in August 2020.

After installing some upgrades to the restaurant, COVID lockdowns persisted. It was an extreme hardship for her new ownership. "It was rough," Claudia said. Feeling a deep obligation towards her friends turned employees, she was determined to keep them working full-time. With the help of some creative promotions and community support, she endured.

"I am so grateful for the community. They kept us running during that period with takeout orders, purchasing gift cards and accepting outdoor dining," Lemus said.

In November, make a date to honor this iconic downtown diner and enjoy a 50s-style breakfast or lunch. Personally, my wife and I like sitting at the counter in front of its open kitchen to watch the fascinating orchestration and hustle of short-order service. 1815 Colfax St.

### A TOUCH OF EUROPE

One cannot help but root for success for A Touch of Europe and its new owner, Hristiani Peneva. A Touch of Europe is a unique store that offers just that, the essence of Europe, where you can enjoy European delights, specialty coffee, feta cheese bombs, to a host of dry meats, sandwiches, pastries, wines, and salads.



Historically, and still a European grocery market, Peneva has been hard at work giving the location a new facelift and introducing new features including a large selection of moderately priced European wines. Its large seating area is the perfect place to hang out European-style and enjoy a wine flight and charcuterie snacks after work.

Peneva immigrated to the United States from Bulgaria in 2006. Her parents came first during the 2002 Winter Olympics as Bulgarian Folk dancers and chose to become citizens here. Eventually, they located to Concord because of its large Bulgarian community.

Here, Peneva's independence and drive has been a requirement for her. Her parents traveled often leaving her alone to fend for herself during her years attending College Park High School.

Now, 29, her enthusiasm for her old country, her natural charm, radiating smile and determination has given the place a renewed life to becoming an integral part of Concord's community.

In October alone, A Touch of Europe was honored in a ribbon cutting ceremony by the Chamber of Commerce, a featured stop in the Kiwanis "Taste of Concord" event, and supporter of Creative Concord Art event at the Todos Santos park.

Whether for a morning pastry and coffee, a deli lunch, or just an after-work hangout, by all means, gather some friends and give this place a visit. 1880 Colfax St.

### HIMALAYAN CUISINE

Himalayan Cuisine is quietly one of the best Nepalese/Indian



cuisine restaurants in Concord. It has been featured with rave reviews in local publications as well as online and most recently featured in the Kiwanis "Taste of Concord" event.

Owners Sarala Gautam and her sister-in-law Rama Neupane have embraced their close family ties ever since the tragic death of Rama's husband from a river rafting accident in Nepal in 1993, while she was pregnant.

While each have a lifetime of experience preparing Nepalese and Indian cuisine, their main push is to keep the business intimately involved with the community. The restaurant has been around for years, but these two ladies took ownership in 2021, a time greatly hindered by Covid restrictions. It has been slowly recovering since.

Their menu includes Vegetarian, Non-Vegetarian, Gluten-Free, Vegan and Seafood. Our foods are prepared fresh using locally grown produce which are purchased weekly at the Concord's Farmer's market.

Choose among the favorite standard fare of Nepalese and Indian cuisine which can be custom prepared to suit your level of spiciness.

"We would like to grow the restaurant," said Gautam. Himalayan Cuisine has a spacious seating area for dining in. Or, take out or enjoy a variety of flavorful dishes at your catered event.

Give this restaurant a visit and support these wonderful ladies. Located downtown next to Todos Santos Plaza somewhat hidden from view at 2118 Willow Pass Rd.

See their menu online at <https://himalayancuisines.com>



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

# Ten Reasons To Be Thankful For Pets

Thanksgiving is a time of reflection and gratitude. In the spirit of this holiday, here are ten reasons to be thankful for the joy that pets bring to our lives.

1) They make us laugh. Whether it is a puppy licking our face, a bunny's twitching nose, a kitty pouncing on a toy, or a goldfish's O-shaped mouth opening and closing as though talking to us, pets can be highly entertaining.

2) The fuzzy ones keep us warm. Is there anything better than a warm kitty or bunny on your lap or a dog lying on your feet? When these furballs snuggle on your bed with you, the bitter cold of winter becomes more tolerable.

3) Therapeutic benefits abound. From the gurgling water of an aquarium and calming effects of watching fish swim, to the healing power of a purring cat, pets can lower your blood pressure, reduce the severity of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and help with depression. Even snakes have been shown to reduce anxiety.

4) Their companionship is a surefire cure for loneliness. Touch is a basic human need and pets can fulfill that necessary element of human happiness. Caring for pets also gives us a sense of purpose.

5) They are conversation starters. Pets offer so much to talk about, and they are a wonderful way to find something in common with our fellow human beings.

6) Pets bring us together in new social settings. Whether you find yourself at a dog park, or a cat café, or joining a pet bird club, or attending a herpetology meeting, the love of pets brings us together in surprising ways.

7) There are heart-healthy benefits. Pets can make you more physically active when we walk the dog, lug bags of food home from the pet store, or empty the water in a fish tank. The responsibilities of caring for our pets often force us to exercise.



8) Pets can challenge us mentally. Whether we are learning how to train our dogs or bunnies tricks or engaging in dog sports, such as dock-diving or agility, or finding new ways to make a parrot's cage environment more enriching, our pets make us think in new and exciting ways.

9) They teach us empathy. Studies have shown that children with autism have more prosocial behaviors when raised with pets.

10) Pets make us happy. According to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty

to Animals, 70% of families surveyed reported an increase in family happiness after getting a pet.

Now that we have recognized all the wonderful gifts our pets bestow on us, make sure to keep them safe this holiday season. Keep turkey bones, chocolate, and bread dough out of reach of our furry friends. Also, floral arrangements that contain chrysanthemum and autumn crocus are toxic to dogs and cats when consumed. And most importantly, be prepared. Keep the nearest emergency veterinary clinic phone number close at hand. Stay safe everyone. I am grateful you read my column today. Happy Thanksgiving!

*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.*

## Gosh, It's Time for Winter Squash!

by Deb Morris, PACIFIC COAST FARMERS' MARKET ASSOCIATION

Winter squash is often thought of as just a decorative gourd used during the fall season. Most people are unfamiliar with the wonderful variety of hard-shell winter squash that's available. They offer delicious, mildly sweet flavor and ease of cooking. Roast, then cube, mash, or serve in the shell with a bit of brown sugar and butter.

Widely available at your farmers' markets this season, there are often varieties not seen at your supermarket like honeynut (a smaller version of butternut), Hubbard (a big gray-green oblong squash), buttercup (dark green and small), and carnival (small, mottled yellow and green variety). Try some of these varieties this fall and winter:

**Acorn Squash:** Nutty, meaty taste. These are popular because of their small size—one squash can be cut in half and baked for two generous servings. The biggest drawback is that the rind is quite hard, and therefore difficult to cut.

**Butternut Squash:** Sweet, moist and nutty taste. Pale yellow-orange color. This variety is popular because it is easy to use. Its rind is thin enough to peel off with a vegetable peeler. Elongated gourd shape.

**Hubbard Squash:** It has a bumpy, thick skin with a golden, bluish-gray or green color. The flesh is rich and slightly sweeter than the banana.

**Kabocha Squash:** This one is round with a flattened top and dark green color punctuated by white streaks. The deep orange flesh is flavorful but less moist than most other squash, akin to the fluffiness of a Russet potato.

**Spaghetti Squash:** Generally mild squash taste. Yellow inside and out. After it is cooked you can dig a fork into the flesh and pull out long yellow strands that resemble spaghetti. Though it tastes like squash, the "noodles" can serve as a low-calorie substitute for pasta.

**Delicata Squash:** A very tasty little squash with thin skin that does not require peeling. Its pale yellow skin has dark green stripes and its yellow flesh tastes somewhat like a sweet potato. Cut lengthwise, scoop out seeds, and roast drizzled with olive oil, salt, and pepper.

### Cooking with Winter Squash

Winter squash is not usually peeled before cooking. It is usually steamed, boiled or roasted. Seasonings used with



winter squash are similar to what goes well with sweet potatoes: brown sugar, vanilla, cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice, or cloves. Cooked garlic adds a nutty mellowness, herbs bring out the natural flavors. They can be eaten in the shell or scooped out and mashed like potatoes.

Be very careful when cutting into the harder shelled varieties like acorn. They slip and slide when you try to cut into them. You might have to place the knife on the squash and tap the knife with a hammer to get started. Of course, use a very sharp knife.

### Kabocha Squash Soup

- 1 kabocha squash, seeded, peeled, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1 carrot, diced
- 1 onion, finely diced
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 to 3 tablespoons heavy cream
- Parsley for garnish, optional
- 4 cups vegetable stock
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Carefully cut and skin kabocha squash, remove seeds. Cut into 1-inch cubes. Dice onions and carrots.

In a stock pot on the stove, add butter. When melted, add carrots and onion. Cook on medium heat for a few minutes until the onion is almost translucent and lightly browned. Add kabocha and vegetable stock. Stir.

Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium-low. Cook until kabocha is soft, about 45 minutes. Add heavy cream, season with salt and pepper, and stir to combine.

Blend with an immersion blender until smooth or place in a standing blender, blend, and add back to the pot. Add salt and pepper, to taste. Stir. Serve with a garnish of parsley and a drizzle of cream, if desired.



Hollywood loves to tell the story of the little guy beating the system. "Dumb Money" is about ordinary investors sticking it to major hedge fund and investment companies.

You may remember a crazy news story in early 2021 about GameStop stock shooting up in value and throwing Wall Street into a tizzy. This all happened on the advice of Keith Gill, a man who went by the name Roaring Kitty and gave stock advice on the internet.

In the film, he is played by Paul Dano, and he is a guy you can root for. He is married with a baby and struggling to make ends meet. He works at a small investment firm by day, but at night he logs onto his computer in the basement, dons a headband and kitty t-shirt, and shares stock tips.

His many followers are also regular people hoping to better their situations by investing in the stock market. We see an amalgamation of characters: the single mother who is a nurse (America Ferrera), the college student (Talia Ryder) with mounting debt, and the exasperated GameStop employee (Anthony Ramos). The movie does an exceptional job at bringing these characters to life so that viewers feel invested in their individual story lines.

When Gill tells his followers to start buying up GameStop stock because the big investors are betting on its failure, all hell breaks loose. The stock goes way

## Dumb Money



up. Some of Gill's followers see their portfolios explode and some Wall Street bigwigs, like Gabe Plotkin (Seth Rogen) of Melvin Capital, start to lose billions...fast!

Most people purchase the stock through a trading app called Robinhood. They get pressured to limit trading and soon Robinhood and Keith Gill speak before Congress, trying to explain the whole mess. Gill wants Americans to know it is a rigged system that is unfair to the individual investor.

Anyone who followed this story in the news knows all that transpired, and the film does not really give you too much more of the story. With all the references to trading rules and regulations being thrown around at lightning speed, do not look to this film to educate you on how the stock market works.

Instead, this is best viewed as another crazy thing that happened during the pandemic. A few people shook things up for a brief time and Wall Street was reminded that ordinary people can make waves.

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## Concord Celebrates Completion of Monument Blvd. Pathway

At a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Oct. 13, Councilmembers, staff, and community members gathered to celebrate the completion of the Monument Boulevard Class 1 Pathway.

The pathway, which runs between Cowell Road and Systron Drive, was built with the intention of creating a safer way for pedestrians and bicyclists along the Monument Corridor to access the Downtown Concord BART station and the downtown area.

This \$5 million project was made possible through a \$4.3 million "One Bay Area" grant. This is a program

that the Metropolitan Transportation Commission adopted more than a decade ago to better integrate the region's federal transportation program with its Sustainable Communities

Strategy. The idea is to better align regional transportation planning with land use and housing in order to meet state greenhouse gas reduction targets.

In addition to the pathway, this project includes features such as pervious pavement, bio-retention areas, and landscaping improvements.

## Martinez Excited at Plan to Make Waterfront A Regional Destination

By Tony Hicks

Martinez is planning to redevelop a waterfront that will become a regional draw. The locals know all about the waterfront. But the city of Martinez wants to change the area to attract more people from the region.

As long as they don't change a lot of it because this waterfront is beautiful," said Martinez resident Kalama Schreiner.

Martinez Mayor Brianna Zorn said, "This time around, we finally have, in my opinion, 100% support from the City Council.

On Sept. 6, the City Council got a look at what's being called the Waterfront Marina Trust Land Use Plan. Zorn couldn't name a definitive price because the city is working hard at getting money from outside sources, and the plan will be done in phases, which will likely be how the money comes. Both the draft plan and Zorn said it could be as high as \$120 million if everything is included.

The possibilities seem numerous. The shoreline area slated for redevelopment encompasses 70 acres in three parts: the marina, a portion of North Court Street, and the area near Martinez Yacht Club and the Eagle Marine vessel repair business.

The marina includes 332 boat slips, a park, open space and a few marine-related businesses. Another 65 acres of trust land, held by the East Bay Regional Park District and leased to the city, includes bocce courts and Joe DiMaggio Field (home of the semi-pro Martinez Sturgeon baseball team), trails and a horse arena.

Some of the land is the city's and some is the state's, which would have to approve much of the plan.

There are more than 300 acres to the west, also EBRPD land, including wetlands of the Radke Martinez Regional Shoreline running to the hills of Franklin Ridge about 750 feet above the idyllic scene.

The water part of the plan, done with outside planners and with public input, includes the \$2.5 million phase already

happening to renovate the fishing pier.

There will also be a complete redesign and reengineering of the eastern seawall and breakwater, the funding for which the city has already applied.

The plan includes a marina village with a promenade, connecting visitors to the other waterfront amenities like "enhanced maritime recreation opportunities, an educational and events center, and expanded regional trail network through an area of restored tidelands."

There will be a restaurant, cafe, bait shop, and an education center, plus a community stage and an expansion of the existing skate park, additional picnic areas, tidal wetland restoration to the east, and augmented access across the railroad. There has also been talk of a pop-up fish market during commercial fishing season.

Among the possibilities include kayak launches and other human-powered craft opportunities.

Zorn said she's a kayaker, and that the fact Martinez isn't a part of the San Francisco Bay Water Trail area "is a major miss."

The Pacheco Marsh renovation project, just to the east on the other side of the bridge, will have three kayak launches. Project planners have said they want to connect kayakers to future launches in Martinez.

The opened-up wetlands, connected directly to the Carquinez Strait, would have elevated boardwalks, viewing decks and a picnic area within the tideland.

Everything would be constructed with sea level rise in mind.

The full project will take years. There are regulatory bodies that need to be satisfied, environmental reports, fundraising, contracting with builders and vendors, more public meetings where there will be more public input. But the city is pointed in the right direction, according to its mayor.



## Christmas for Everyone

By Howard Geller

For nearly 26 years, my wife Debbie and I have been involved with Christmas for Everyone (CFE). This 39+ year-old non-profit organization has helped thousands of people in our community celebrate Christmas with their families.

These are often working families who do not have the extra resources for gifts or often even a Christmas dinner. Last year, CFE served dinner to over 2,000 people.

Due to new strains of COVID, the flu season and inflation, we expect this year's need to again be bigger than before. Corporate sponsors are feeling the "crunch" making every smaller donations even more important.

With COVID almost under control, CFE has again regrouped and changed the way they have done things in the past. Here are the primary changes and how you can help:

- CFE will again be serving dinners in person on Christmas Day. Can you volunteer to prep and prepare food?
- Volunteers will package and deliver Home Bound Meals to the elderly and those unable to leave their homes for various reasons. Can you volunteer for this?
- Families can come to the Light of Grace Korean Presbyterian Church in Martinez (distribution and work site) Christmas day to "shop" for gently used clothing and coats. Can you donate your gently used clothing, sort clothing or assist when the families come to shop?
- Please donate new toys for children of all ages, especially teenagers, donate cash for the food

(desperately needed), purchase warm socks, coats, gloves or lap blankets.

- This year they are especially looking for volunteers comfortable handling food in the prep kitchens Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. We are also looking for drivers to deliver food to Hospice homes, Meals on Wheels recipients, Home Bound Elderly the day of and the days after until our food run out.

Debbie and I will once again accept donations at our home and deliver those items to the Martinez distribution church. Our address is: 252 Mountaire Pkwy, Clayton (Dana Hills). Please leave your donations on our front porch or checks in one of our locked mailboxes. Questions? Contact Howard at (925) 323-4913.

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

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

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

Go to the CFE website: CHRISTMASFOREVERYONE.COM



## Can't Touch Your Toes?

your fingers to your toes?

Now try the VOR drill. Pick one spot to stare at straight in front of you. Or use your finger as a target.

Do you feel like you could stretch your hamstrings all day and never get them any looser? You might be right. Stretching may not be your solution.

Let me be clear. Not every human body is designed to get palms to the floor.

That said, maximum hamstring flexibility is important for avoiding injury and improving performance, especially if you tend to be tight in this area.

Your tight hamstrings may be your brain's best attempt at keeping you safe. Your eyes and your vestibular system govern up to 80% of movement if they are not working optimally, your brain may create tension in the body to slow you down, in an effort to prevent your head from hitting the ground.

To take the brakes off your movement, we may need to train these higher-order systems. Here is one simple drill that combines vision and vestibular training. It is called the Vestibulo Ocular Reflex (VOR) drill. Let's give this a try and see how it impacts our hamstrings.

First, CHECK your starting hamstring range of motion. How close can you get



Scan the QR code for a video demonstration.

Nod your head up and down as quickly as you can, but as slowly as you need to in order to keep the target clear. Start with 5-10 seconds of this movement.

Now, recheck your hamstrings. Did you improve? Do this drill 3-5 times a day to keep those hamstrings open.

No change? Change the speed and/or duration of the movement to make it easier or more challenging.

If this drill actually tightens your hamstrings more, it is a good sign that your vision and vestibular system may need some re-training. Try this drill seated, slow it down, and recheck.

This vertical VOR is a great place to start your training.

For more information on how to train the visual or vestibular systems, visit [www.neurologyofpresence.com](http://www.neurologyofpresence.com)





## Concord High School Wins “Best Band of the Bay” at Fleet Week

Congratulations to the Concord High School Band for winning Fleet Week’s High School Band Competition at Golden Gate Park in San Francisco on October 9. This was the first time the band has participated in the contest and are proud to have beaten two-time champions Pittsburg High School.

Eight bands were selected to compete, and this was the first time for Concord High. The band prepared for the competition for three months with one goal in mind, to win it. As band member, Natalie Cervantes quoted in a TV interview, “It’s on, Donkey Kong.”

Over the years, Pittsburg and Concord high school bands have competed in competitions and have developed a rivalry.

In addition to the title “Best Band of the Bay”, Concord High School was awarded \$10,000.

In 2022, \$30,000 in prize money was donated across the competing eight schools.

Kudos to CHS Band Director, Martin Lejano.

Scan the qr code to view the performance. (approx. 25 minutes)



The United States Marine Corps 1st Marine Division Band perform patriotic songs at Fleet Week’s High School Band Challenge.



Concord High band members proudly display their First Place winnings, \$10,000 to support their school music program.

## Ygnacio Valley High School Teacher Named One Of California’s Teachers Of The Year

Ygnacio Valley High School engineering teacher Joseph Alvarico has been named one of five 2024 California Teachers of the Year.

Alvarico is the only Northern California teacher to receive the honor this year, as the other four teachers reside in Los Angeles and Santa Barbara counties. He was named a Contra Costa County Teacher of the Year in September and one of Mt. Diablo Unified School District’s Teachers of the Year this past spring.

“I am both thrilled and humbled at the same time to have been selected as one of the 2024 California Teachers of the Year,” Alvarico said, in a statement.

“This distinction is a reflection of the long hours and unwavering commitment that I have put into my teaching career.

Alvarico has also received many awards and accolades over the years; however, it is the impact he leaves on students that matters most to him.

“Seeing my students work toward and achieve their dreams is the biggest reward I get from teaching,” Alvarico said. “The icing on the cake is for my students to return as professionals and give back to this community I serve.”

Born in the Philippines to a family of educators, Alvarico has a Bachelor of Science degree in biology and a Bachelor of Secondary Education degree.

After immigrating to the United States, he has spent many years instructing middle school and high school students in the subject of robotics at Mt. Diablo Unified School District. With his on-the-job experience in the tech industry,



he combines real world experiences into his lessons while also focusing on community building with his students.

The district said Alvarico “strives to show all his students their potential and the possibilities available when they leave high school, no matter their economic status.”

“My gratitude extends to multiple people in my life who have guided me along my professional path

and supported my classroom every step of the way. Maraming salamat sa inyong lahat! (Thanks to all of you.) Without you, I wouldn’t be able to give my students the greatest service that I possibly could. I am excited to continue making a positive impact on the lives of my students, our local community, and the educational world at large.”

The Contra Costa County Office of Education nominated Alvarico through its county-level competition. The California Department of Education says the selection committees reviewed applications; evaluated teachers’ rapport with students and their classroom environments, presentation skills, and teaching techniques; and interviewed the teachers.

“I am proud that one of our Contra Costa County teachers of the year has been named one of the state’s top educators,” Contra Costa County Superintendent of Schools Lynn Mackey said, in a statement. “...it’s a great honor for him to be selected as a California Teacher of the Year. Congratulations to him, his colleagues and MDUSD for the support they have given him throughout this process and his career.”

## PG&E Offering Free Gas Appliance Safety Checks And Pilot Re-Lights

To help customers prepare their gas appliances for safe use during the cold weather months ahead, Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) offers free in-home safety checks. During the safety checks, PG&E also will relight pilot lights for customers who have heaters or other appliances that have been turned off during warmer months.

Free safety checks help ensure that gas appliances, including water heaters, furnaces and ovens, are operating safely and efficiently, reducing the risk of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning within the home. Carbon monoxide is especially dangerous because it cannot be seen, smelled or heard.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, each year more than 400 Americans die from unintentional CO poisoning not linked to fires, more than 100,000 visit the emergency room, and more than 14,000 are hospitalized.

Since the start of 2023, PG&E has responded to 3,160 incidents in the Bay Area where the presence of carbon monoxide is suspected.

Before the colder winter months, PG&E encourages customers to schedule an inspection. Customers can call to schedule appointments or to avoid hold times, go online to [pge.com/pilotlights](http://pge.com/pilotlights).

If you suspect carbon monoxide or smell the distinctive “rotten egg” odor of natural gas in or around your home or business, you should get out immediately and call 911 and PG&E at 1-800-743-5000.

### Winter Gas Safety Tips

Install carbon monoxide detectors to warn when concentration levels are high.

All California single-family homes are required to have carbon monoxide detectors.

Carbon monoxide detectors should be installed on every floor, near sleeping areas and common areas.

These devices should be tested twice a year, and batteries replaced if necessary.

Check the expiration date – most carbon monoxide detectors have a shelf life of five to seven years.

Never use products inside the home that generate dangerous levels of carbon monoxide, such as generators, outdoor grills, or propane heaters.

Never use cooking devices such as ovens or stoves for home heating purposes.

When using the fireplace to stay warm, make sure the flue is open so venting can occur safely through the chimney.

Make sure water heaters and other natural gas appliances have proper ventilation.



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**Laura Hoffmeister,**  
Concord Mayor  
cityofconcord.org

## Visual Arts Growing in Concord



This month, I am highlighting a little-known group that is providing more art in our community through the painting of utility boxes at various intersections. You might have noticed the visual enhancements to some of these otherwise utilitarian metal boxes around town. This project enhances the vibrancy of the city, allows artists to showcase their work and discourages vandalism on utility boxes.

Concord Art Association (CAA) is celebrating 60 years of activity in Concord, making it the oldest art association in Contra Costa County. Founded in 1963, The CAA is a California nonprofit group that supports and engages local artists to collectively enrich our community through art education, exhibits, special events and outreach programs. Members are artists and supporters of the arts and Bay Area residents.

CAA regularly collaborates with organizations and schools to ensure everyone in our community has access to art. Some of their outreach efforts include, free public art shows; art displays in local businesses and offices; art-themed fundraising events; scholarships for art majors at Diablo Valley College; teacher grants for classroom art supplies and projects, and the collaboration with the City of Concord to create public art on utility boxes throughout the city.

Concord Arts Association has completed the painting of 15 in downtown area with theme of Celebrate Concord and another 14 to highly visible corners on Monument Blvd., Clayton Road, Farm Bureau Road, Kirker Pass Road, Alberta, Port Chicago, Willow Pass Road, and other major streets



themed as Concord Reflections. Six more are planned for 2024. Membership in the Concord Art Association is open to all artists (any mediums, style, skill) and all supporters of the arts, for more info [www.concordartassociation.org](http://www.concordartassociation.org)

### Upcoming Concord Art Events

Some upcoming Art events in Concord include:

**November 18-19** — Concord Historical Society Holiday Market on from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Crafters, bakers, artists, soap makers, and more will be available for your holiday shopping in the CHS Event Center (the former Masonic Hall).

**November 25, from 11 am – 4 p.m.**, visit CAA's Small Business Saturday Pop-up Art Sale in Salvio Pacheco Square 2151 Salvio St. You can also check out Visit Concord at Salvio Pacheco Square which hosts "Celebrate" fall art exhibit through January h, Monday – Friday from 10:00 a.m.- 3:00 p.m.

**November 4 - December 21** — The aRt Cottage Annual Holiday Boutique Wednesday – Saturday, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., where you can enjoy a variety of work by local Bay Area artists. 2238 Mt. Diablo Street.

Have you discovered the aRt Cottage yet? This hidden gem is a vibrant and creative sanctuary tucked away in the heart of Concord. Voted two years in a row as Best East Bay Gallery in Diablo Magazine readers.

### Thanksgiving

Happy Thanksgiving to all!

Please consider volunteering or helping with many of our community organizations that help provide food and meals for those less fortunate.

Consider helping at the Food Bank, Meals on Wheels, Salvation Army, Monument Crisis Center or other local churches that provide food pantry and meal services.

The Food Bank has collection barrels year round at the local Library branches and will have in the some major grocery stores soon [www.foodbankccs.org](http://www.foodbankccs.org) for locations.

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- Send a check, made payable to [VFW Post 1525](#), to PO Box 79, Clayton, CA 94517

Your purchase honors a deceased veteran and helps a local veteran in need.

## Wreath Laying Ceremony at Memorial Gardens

VFW Post 1525 is seeking more wreaths for the upcoming annual wreath-laying ceremony at Memorial Gardens.

Wreath laying ceremonies are held annually in participating locations across the U.S. Each year VFW Post 1525 and its Auxiliary, work to raise funds to lay a wreath on as many of the approximate 2600 veteran graves as possible at Memorial Gardens in Concord.

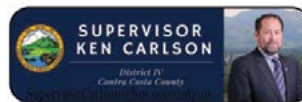
Wreaths Across America is a 501 (C)(3) nonprofit organization founded to expand the annual wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National cemetery to Rember the fallen, honor those that serve and teach the next generation the value of freedom.

A few more wreaths are need to meet their goal. To support this annual ceremony, you can sponsor a wreath,



lay a wreath at the event, and join the cities of Clayton and Concord and co-site sponsors American Heritage Girls and Walnut Creek Elks for annual ceremony: December 16, 10:00 a.m., Memorial Gardens, 2011 Arnold Industrial Way, Concord.

To sponsor a wreath, simply scan the qr code in the above.



## Get Registered, Get Ready, and Vote!

As a lifelong public servant, I have a deep appreciation for our election process. As a Concord Police Officer, the City Council decided our budget. As a member of the Pleasant Hill City Council, and now a member of the Board of Supervisors, the public's belief in my ability to govern is a responsibility I take very seriously.

With every election comes opportunities. Opportunities that have direct impacts on everyone in our community and nation. Every single vote is counted and matters. Last year, some local races were so close that the winner was decided by less than ten votes.

Voting expresses our beliefs and fulfills our constitutional duty. The Contra Costa Election Division takes this very seriously and has made several efforts to raise awareness about registering and maintaining updated voter information. Election Division Staff have visited several high schools and the Contra Costa Community College District to make registration and pre-registration available on-site hoping to energize the next generation of voters.

I remember voting in my first election in 1980 and the importance of making time to vote. Today, voting has evolved to be more convenient. Contra Costa County is a vote-by-mail County which means you will receive your Presidential Primary Ballot in February for the

March 5, 2024 election. These ballots can be returned in several ways – by postal mail (postage is paid), dropped at a permanent ballot drop box, or by returning it to an in-person voting center or the Clerk-Recorders-Elections' office in Martinez. If you still prefer to vote in-person, that option is also available on election day.

If you moved recently or are not already registered to vote, you can visit [contracostavote.gov/elections](http://contracostavote.gov/elections) for information. If you are a returning voter, whether you voted in the last election or not, you can use the "my voting information" tool to find your current precinct and other voting information.

For the upcoming presidential primary, the presidential candidates that appear on your ballot will only be those within the party you are registered for. If you declared "no party preference" and would like to participate in a specific party's primary, please contact the Election Division. Otherwise, you will receive a primary ballot with no presidential candidates listed.

If you have additional questions, please visit the Election Division's website at [www.contracostavote.gov](http://www.contracostavote.gov) or call (925) 335-7800 for more information.

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