

The Diablo Gazette

Arts, Entertainment and All That's *Good* in Our Communities
Concord, Clayton, Walnut Creek, Martinez, Pleasant Hill
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MARCH 2024

CoCo Cares,
Clayton Angels,
Have We
Become Civil?

"I don't want
any other
babies to be
sad!"

pg. 9

Adelaide, stricken with cancer, who turns 6 in March, offers to donate her babies (toys) to kids without.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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Book Review, Movie and Streaming Review, Calendar of Events by City and much more...

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THE
STORY



Publisher's Notes

by David King

In this edition, we get to learn about ABC-7's Dan Ashley (pg. 19) whom we all know from watching him anchor evening news for years. During his extensive journalism career, he has witnessed much. He discusses some of those experiences with our columnist and author Michael Barrington.

Dan serves our communities in many ways. Annually, Dan puts on a charity fundraising concert at the Leshner Center for the Arts called "Rock the Casa" to support local youth programs.

Each year he teams up with rock stars most of us grew up listening to on the radio. On Rockthecasa.org, Dan posts an extraordinary photo gallery of his past Rock the Casa headliners: Eddie Money, Cheap Trick, Greg Kihn, Melissa Etheridge, Reo Speedwagon, Rick Springfield, and Patti LaBelle.

This year, Rock the Casa will be a tribute to the iconic Tina Turner with Phantom of the Opera singer, Franc D'Ambrosio.

In 1994, I met Tina when she came to K101 in San Francisco, where I worked at the time. We hung out, we were close, we smiled — all in the time it took the photographer to take this photo of us.

I had inadvertently surprised her before the shot. There was a long line of station personnel waiting to get their photo with Tina. When I arrived, no one was stepping forward, so I just walked up next to her and asked if I get a photo.

My Tribute to Tina Turner



My 1994 impromptu photograph with Tina Turner

Known as a powerful, energetic, and iconic singer, at that moment she was a gentle, almost timid, sweet, and very polite celebrity.

I have since used this photo on more than one occasion. One year, a media buying agency in Florida had asked all of her station representatives from around the country to send a photo of themselves so that she could visualize whom she was speaking to on the phone.

Radio is a competitive industry. In the Bay Area, I could be competing against 20 or more direct competitors. The representatives that stand out tend to have the advantage of winning a larger share of the business. I sent this picture of Tina and me. Needless to say, she was thrilled and the station received the largest media contract from that client the station had ever experienced.

Now, thanks to Dan's tribute concert in April, I get to whip this photo out again. So, thank you, Tina, I will always remember our minute together.

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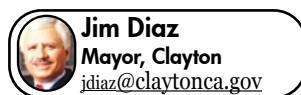


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Jim Diaz
Mayor, Clayton
jdiaz@claytonca.gov

Clayton Mayor

A Letter from the Mayor

March 2024

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Robert (Bob) Hoyer, Clayton's first Mayor.

Mr. Hoyer, a Founding Father of the City of Clayton, and pillar of our Community, passed away, at age 102 years old, on Tuesday, February 20, 2024. He was very influential in the development and growth of our wonderful small-town community. He will be missed. May Bob Rest In Peace.

For those of you not in attendance at our Tuesday, February 20, 2024, Council Meeting, The City Council set the stage for our Strategic Plan. The Council reduced the initial nine (9) Strategic Objectives down to five (5). They include:

- Public Safety, Infrastructure and Accessibility (Roads, Sidewalks and ADA),
- Community Parks and Recreation,
- Economic Development - Promoting available spaces, growing number of families into the community, improving downtown activity,
- Balancing the Budget,
- Maintain the aesthetics of the City of Clayton (Landscape Maintenance

District [LMD]).

These Strategic Objectives individually are all very important, but they are not ordered in priority. The prioritization will take place at a future City Council Meeting.

Also at the February 20 Council Meeting, the City Council approved an Ad-Hoc Committee to address parking in the Downtown area.

As I mentioned in my previous Mayor's Column, the City Council and I look forward to the planning for Clayton's 60th Anniversary of its 1964 Inauguration. We encourage everyone to get involved. Please contact City Hall if you would like to volunteer your time or expertise.

As your mayor, I will work hard to maintain Clayton's character while running an open and transparent local government.

You can reach out to me directly with any questions or concerns at 925-673-7316 or JimD@claytonca.gov. Let's make 2024 a year to remember in Clayton. I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Jim



Edi Birsan
Concord Mayor
cityofconcord.org

Concord Mayor

Stabilization/Rent Control/Just Cause and Single-Family Homes Overview

By a vote of 4-1, the city of Concord passed the first reading of an ordinance on rent stabilization and just Cause: Lets break down these two distinct parts.

The first part's most salient aspects are:

Rent stabilization will apply to multifamily rental complexes of two or more units built before Feb. 1, 1995.

The ordinance excludes single-family homes, ADUs and individual condominiums.

It limits yearly rent increases to the lesser of 3% or 60% of CPI.

The Ordinance establishes a process utilizing a Hearing Officer whereby property owners could request higher rent increases, above the Ordinance cap, to obtain a fair return on their investment property and to recover various types of expenses, some of which are specified.

The second part deals with what is a Just Cause to evict someone and what is a No-Fault Eviction condition. Just cause for eviction would apply to most rented units in Concord, including rented Single-family homes and rented condominium units but not to rented ADUs. The salient features are:

A tenant may be evicted for "at-fault" reasons. Valid causes include not paying the rent, crimes, nuisance, destruction etc.

There are tenant protections. The ordinance defines what happens when a multifamily building is taken off the market and people are evicted having not done anything wrong.

It also defines what to do when the landlord wants to move in a family member and evict the tenant during their lease.

None of it applies to ADU's.

There is some confusion regarding the single-family homes that an individual



has rented out. Most of these homes were originally rented out on a year's lease and then automatically extended month to month. There is no limitation in the ordinance on how high the single-family home rate can be when the lease, including the month-to-month, expires.

Therefore, the expectation is that should the landlord not want to renew the lease, they would engage with the tenant and raise the rent as a last resort.

The only time the displacement costs for a no-fault eviction should take place on a single-family home is when the Landlord has given the tenant a 1-year or longer lease and the Landlord wants to break the lease to move in an entitled family member or themselves.

In that case, the limit on the displacement cost is two months' rent and \$2000. Remember this is the landlord breaking the lease.

I hear fears from single-family homeowners that revolve around the displacement costs as well as the concept 'but it is my house.' You have to remember that while it is your house as an owner, it is another family's home. You are not going to be involved with displacement costs unless you are breaking the lease.

Views expressed here are the interpretation of Edi Birsan as a 40-year homeowner in Concord and not the basis of legal or illegal advice.



SUPERVISOR
KEN CARLSON

District IV
Contra Costa County
SupervisorCarlson@contra.org

Stand Together Contra Costa and the Importance of the Immigrant Community

When most people think of immigrant services, they think of federal government agencies, like United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) or the Department of State. However, there are several services for immigrants depending on their needs provided at the County level. These services are spread across several departments and range from refugee resettlement to MediCal to legal services.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau 2022 American Community Survey, approximately 27% of the total population of Contra Costa County is foreign-born, and of that 27%, over 40% are not U.S. citizens. That is a large portion of the population needing services.

Today, I am sharing about our unique program for immigrant legal services known as Stand Together Contra Costa (STCC). STCC started as a pilot program in the Contra Costa Public Defenders' office

in 2017. The proposal came at a time when immigrants in our community faced a lot of uncertainty and fear. Stand Together Contra Costa (STCC) is a collaboration between the County and community-based organizations (CBOs) to provide immigrant legal services, community outreach, and public education to ensure immigrant families have access to accurate and trusted information.

Because attorneys are not provided by immigration courts, many immigrants lack legal representation. Roughly 85% of people newly placed in removal proceedings are unrepresented, and only win about 19% of the time. However, STCC is the only program providing pro bono deportation defense legal services in Contra Costa County and when they provide legal representation, they win 80-90% of their cases. STCC offers free legal immigration consultations to community members who currently work, live, or study in Contra

Costa.

STCC also provides the Rapid Response Hotline where community members can report suspected ICE activity. The Rapid Response Hotline is staffed with live dispatchers who will walk individuals through their rights and send a trained observer to verify ICE activity when necessary.

Outside of legal services, STCC provides holistic services that connect non-citizen clients to resources and services through the County and CBOs. Through these partnerships, clients have access to mental health care, workforce development, senior and children support services, and youth enrichment. Later this year, STCC will be hosting community engagement and resource events throughout the County.

On February 12, the U.S. Justice Department opened a new immigration court in Concord, with 21 courtrooms to

process cases. During the budget hearings last year, my colleagues and I felt it was necessary to expand the STCC's capacity to meet the need and allocated \$850,000 in additional funding to hire additional attorneys to address the waitlist. With the new court opening, I felt it was important for our immigrant community to know about these services and increase their access, I allocated an additional \$50,000 for specific outreach in District IV.

STCC is an important program to ensure our immigrant community feels included, welcome, and safe in Contra Costa. Immigrants are part of the fabric that makes our community an extraordinary place. For more information on this program or the upcoming events please visit standtogethercontracosta.org/.

Martinez Mayor Zorn's column is in the Martinez section. p12

calendar of events

CLAYTON

CLUBS

Concord NorCal Helping Hands Lion's Club.

<https://www.lionsclubs.org>
Rotary Club of Concord.

<http://www.concordcarotary.org>

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

EVENTS

March 3, Let's go Green Exercise Hike at Mount Diablo State Park, 8:30 – 11:30 PM. 313 Mountaire Pkwy, Clayton

<https://www.meetup.com/bay-area-hiking-walking-wellness-club/events/298916523/>

March 8-17, Clayton Theatre Company's "But Why Bump Off Barnaby?" by Rick Abbot. Times vary. When Barnaby Folcey is murdered at a family gathering at Marlgate Manor, it becomes clear that he had a motive to murder everybody else, but no one had a reason to want him dead. Tickets and showtimes www.claytontheatrecompany.com

March 25, Spring Blooms of the Northern Foothills, 9 AM – 12 PM

Join us for a hike with EBRPD Naturalist Kevin Dixon Three Springs staging area, Clayton. FREE. bit.ly/SpringBlooms-station-tour

LIBRARY

March 06, African Village Celebration

with Onye Onyemaechi 2:00pm. A performance by percussionist and educator Onye Onyemaechi to create the experience of African village life.

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

CONCORD

CLUBS

Concord NorCal Helping Hands Lion's Club. www.lionsclub.org

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

EVENTS

March 2, Concord Naval Weapons Station Tour, 2PM, FREE bus tour. <https://savemountdiablo.org/event/concord-naval-weapons-station-tour/>

March 11, PGA HOPE Concord (Womens) - Spring, 9 – 11 AM. PGA HOPE is the flagship military program designed to introduce golf to Veterans and Active Duty Military. Skylinks at Buchanan Fields Golf Course, 1091 Concord Ave, Concord <https://www.pga.com>

March 24, Contra Costa Celebrates Star Wars Rebels 10th Anniversary, 10 AM – 4 PM. Contra Costa Con. All things STAR WARS celebrating 10th Anniversary of Star Wars Rebels with Jim

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Cummings. Cosplay contest cash prizes. Hilton Concord, 1970 Diamond Blvd, Concord <https://www.eventbrite.com/o/bay-area-festivals-12924475431>

March 24, Concord Wedding Fair, 12 – 4 PM. You could walk out as the winner of a WEDDING PACKAGE GRAND PRIZE! Concord Plaza Hotel, 45 John Glenn Dr, Concord <https://www.bayareaweddingfairs.com>

March 30, Spring Brews Festival, 12 – 4 PM. The Brewing Network's Spring Brews Festival returns to Todos Santos Plaza in Concord Saturday, March 30th to celebrate its 13th year as one of the best craft beer festivals in the Bay Area! Todos Santos Plaza, 2175 Willow Pass Rd, Concord.

FARMERS MARKETS

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

LIBRARY

March 09,16, 23,30, Drop-In Tech Help 10:00am–4:00pm. Do you have basic computer and technology questions? Need help with eBooks, emailing, printing, or basic web searching?

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/>

St Vincent de Paul Food Pantry, Every Saturday from 9am to 10am. Located between Castro and Estudillo Streets. (Behind St. Catherine of Siena. Any one in need of food welcome! Call 925-788-7409 for further information

EVENTS

March 2024 Live Music on the Patio Martinez Five Suns Brewing: 10th March, 11:00 am, Chad & Bruce Duo, 17th March, 11:00 am, The Three Frantics in Martinez, 24th March 24, Noon, Skylark, covering songs from Patsy Cline, Tina Turner, Stevie Nicks, Cranberries and more. Five Suns Brewing, 587 Estudillo St, Martinez, CA 94553-1117, United States, Martinez, <https://www.fivesunsbrewing.com>

LIBRARY

March 9, 16, 23, 30 Martinez Library Storytime 10:00am–Build early literacy skills with stories, songs, fingerplays and fun. Ages 1 to 5. All ages and abilities welcome.

FARMERS MARKETS

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

PLEASANT HILL

EVENTS

March 16, Family Day! Limitless! Painting With A Twist. 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM. It is very important that upon registration you list if each guest is over 21 (it affects seating) This is a 2 hour class and all ages welcome! 548 Contra Costa Blvd #E, Pleasant Hill <https://www.paintingwithatwist.com/studio/pleasant-hill/event/3609960/>

March 24, Spring Doll Show, 10 AM – 3 PM, Zio Fraedo's, 611 Gregory Ln, Pleasant Hill. <https://www.facebook.com/bayareadollcluborg>

LIBRARY

Friends of the Pleasant Hill Library. 1st & 3rd Tuesdays of the month. *Pleasant Hill Library, 12 Monticello Avenue. For more information please call 925-673-0659. <https://ccclib.org>*

WALNUT CREEK

EVENTS

March 9, California Writers Club—Mt Diablo Branch Workshop: What Writers Can Learn from Actors and Directors w Amanda McTigue, 10 AM - 1 PM. Check-in begins at 9:30 a.m. at Zio Fraedo's Restaurant, 611 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill. Guests welcome. The cost for the meeting, including lunch, is \$45 for members and \$50 for non-members. Register <https://cwcmt Diablo.org/meetings-and-workshops>.

March 15-17, Walnut Creek Bead and Design Show, 10 AM – 6 PM Everyone is welcome –bohemians, designers, and bead collectors. Explore the handmade arts, and visit Concord Plaza Hotel, 45 John Glenn Dr, Concord www.beadanddesign.com

March 17, First Communion Celebration, 10:00 AM. We invite kids from ages 4-7 to come and talk about who Jesus is and how sharing Holy Communion together is one way we can experience Jesus' love and sacrifice in a very personal way. Saint Matthew Lutheran Church, 399 Wiget Ln, Walnut Creek

March 17, St. Patrick's Day Bash, 1 – 8 PM, w/ The Cranberries + U2 Tributes, Food Truck + More! Retro Junkie 2112 N Main St, Walnut Creek. retrojunkiebar.com

March 18, SIR Branch 116 Luncheon. Guest speaker is Janet Hoy from the League of Women Voters. Topic: Information and Misinformation. Boundary Oak Golf Course, 3800 Valley Vista Rd. Walnut Creek. Call 925-322-1318 or email to luncheon116@gmail.com.

March 24, Carondelet Easter

Egg Hunt, 10:30 AM, Bring your kiddos of all ages and join us for a morning of Easter crafts and family fun! Carondelet Athletics Complex, 3737 Valley Vista Rd, 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. www.cafarmersmkts.com
Rossmoor Farmers Market Rossmoor residents and their families only. Fridays 9AM-1PM, Golden Rain Rd. <http://www.cafarmersmkts.com/rossmoor-farmers-market>

LIBRARY

March 06, Read to a Dog 4:30pm–5:30pm. Kids aged 6-12 are invited to sign up for a one-on-one reading session with a therapy pup.

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

LESHER CENTER

March 3, Rite of Spring, Presented by Diablo Symphony Orchestra 2 PM

March 7-9, Pinocchio

March 15, Ray Charles & Friends

March 16,17, Mozart Serenades

March 24, Contra Costa Wind Symphony's Spring Concert

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

March 23, Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa Rock Out Hunger Gala, Blackhawk Country Club. 5:30-10:30pm. Cocktail hour, silent auction, gourmet dinner, live auction and dancing. Info: <https://loavesfishescc.org>

March 23,24 The Amazing Bubble Man, Berkeley, 8 PM, Louis Pearl has been thrilling audiences around the world for over 30 years with the art, magic, science and fun of bubbles. He is a favorite at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. 2020 Addison St, Berkeley amazingbubbleman.com

April 4, SIR Branch 19 will hold its Monthly Luncheon, 11 AM, Pittsburg Elks' Lodge, 200 Marina Blvd., Pittsburg. The featured speaker will be Cristan Newman, Director of Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at CSU East Bay. SIR is a social organization of senior men who get together in fun activities www.sirinc2.org/branch19 925 338-1996 for more information.

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CVCHS News

Bill Morones, Interim Executive Director
Clayton Valley Charter High School

Clayton Valley Charter High School Unified Sports Empowers Students Of All Abilities

Academics, athletics, and a safe learning environment are the pillars of success here at Clayton Valley Charter High School (CVCHS). As the new Interim Executive Director, I am committed to enhancing these priorities so our students receive all the benefits of their CVCHS experience.

On February 9, CVCHS hosted the Special Olympics Northern California's Unified Sports program to ignite friendship and athletic competition. Nearly 300 special needs students from 18 East Bay schools visited our campus to participate in a basketball tournament and skills contests.

The Unified Sports program creates a more inclusive school community and empowers students of all abilities to be their best inside and outside of the classroom.

Students with special needs are part of a team – often for the first time – and get the opportunity to showcase their abilities. They make new friends and become a true part of their campus culture. For our CVCHS students, they have the opportunity to learn from students whom they may have never otherwise seen on campus. They are able to make new friends and uplift their classmates while having fun playing sports.

Over 100 CVCHS students volunteered to organize this special day. Each was trained for different roles and responsible for refereeing games, coordinating the skills drills, keeping score, awarding ribbons, and assisting student participants where needed.

While the Unified Sports event was not sponsored by any particular CVCHS student group, both the Associated Student Body (ASB) Leadership and Renaissance classes were on-hand all day to volunteer as were members of our Boys Basketball and Girls Basketball teams. Additionally, our Women's Ensemble and Competitive Dance team performed during Opening Ceremonies.

Unified Sports at CVCHS exemplified our faculty's commitment to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment where all students feel valued and empowered to succeed. By promoting collaboration, empathy, and respect, Unified Sports not only enhanced our overall school community but also contributed to the personal and social



development of our students.

I would like to thank our teachers, coaches and outside volunteers who also made this event a success. They include Jenna Ebert (ASB teacher) and Jesse Medrano (Renaissance teacher) both who were instrumental in the planning process and coordinating the student volunteers. Additionally, a special shout out to Frank Allocco, Boys Basketball coach, and Paul Kommer, Girls Basketball coach, for the support via their team participation. I would be remiss if I did not mention our incredible SP ED Department faculty for their engagement and outreach efforts to other schools. And finally, I want to thank Sherri Roberti from Contra Costa County Office of Education for her

support and ultimate coordination as well as Lauren Martin, representative of Special Olympics Northern California.

As we continue to champion the values of unity and inclusion here at CVCHS, I am proud to have witnessed the positive impact of Unified Sports on our students and the broader school community. It was a testament to the power of athletics to transcend barriers and bring people together in celebration of diversity and shared humanity.

Special Olympics Northern California relies on the expertise and dedication of more than 27,000 volunteers. They are on the field coaching these passionate student-athletes in 11 different sports. And as we saw here at CVCHS, this organization is changing lives, one day at a time. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer or sponsor, I recommend visiting the Special Olympics Northern California website to learn more. Together, we will strive to create a more equitable and welcoming environment where every student has the opportunity to thrive and succeed.

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California High Wins Contra Costa County Mock Trial Title

For the seventh consecutive year, California High School has won the Contra Costa County Mock Trials championship that took place on February 13, 2024, at the A.F. Bray Courthouse in Martinez.

"Mock Trial is unlike any other program that exists in our county, largely because of the partnership that exists between education and the court system," Contra Costa County Superintendent of Schools Lynn Mackey said.

Each Mock Trial team works with teachers and/or attorney coaches to prepare their version of the criminal case, both from the prosecution and defense perspective. Students assume the roles of trial attorneys, pretrial motion attorneys, witnesses, clerks, and bailiffs. Through these role-playing techniques, students learn about the content and processes of law in an exciting and vibrant way. By studying the case and preparing strategies and arguments for trial, students also increase their public speaking skills, analytical abilities, and team cooperation.

This year's competition featured the fictional trial of Tobie Clark, in-house counsel for Sunshine Medical Components, Inc. ("SMC"), a billion-dollar medical technology company. Clark is charged with the homicide of SMC's chief executive officer Kieran Sunshine. The prosecution argues Clark should be convicted of first-degree murder.

Seventeen schools from across Contra Costa County and more than 140 judges, local attorneys, and volunteers signed



California High School Mock Trial Team.
Photo by Contra Costa County Office of Education

up to preside over, score trials, or serve as courtroom coordinators. Carondelet High School, Clayton Valley High School, De Anza High School, Dougherty Valley High School, Hercules High School, Heritage High School, Las Lomas High School, Monte Vista High School, and Richmond High School participated in this year's Mock Trial competition.

"Mock Trial supports, educates, and empowers students to engage in hands-on learning opportunities to become future leaders in our community and the world. We are very grateful for the support from the Superior Court, the Contra Costa Sheriff's Department, and the dozens of judges, coaches, and legal professionals who volunteered their time," Mackey stated.

Led by Coach Brian Barr, California High will now represent Contra Costa County at the California Mock Trial Finals in March. Hosted by CCCOE, the 43rd annual Mock Trial competition consisted of 44 separate trials that took place in-person at the A.F. Bray Courthouse.



Sons in Retirement (SIR)

A way for semi-retired and retired men over 50 to partake in social activities, make new friends, stay active and have fun.

Social activities include: •18 and 9 Hole Golf •Fishing •Bocce •Group Dining •Travel •Book Clubs and much more that also include spouses and friends.
IT'S LIKE JOINING A COUNTRY CLUB WITHOUT HUGE MEMBERSHIP FEES, MONTHLY DUES AND NO MONTHLY COMMITMENTS!

To learn more about the Las Trampas Branch 116 or to become a member visit
www.branch116.org or call 925.322.1160

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Get Yourself Market Ready

Every home seller is unique and so are their goals. A majority of folks over 57 years of age are downsizing, while a majority under 57 are upsizing. However, within each group lies an endless set of individual circumstances directing these motives. Whether you are thinking of retiring, moving toward family or friends, marrying, coupling, divorcing, widowed, expanding your household, taking on roommates, buying investment or retirement property, buying your first place, or selling your last place, each has a distinct set of needs and goals.

If you are thinking of selling your home during the busiest time of the year, now is the time to get it ready. Local statistics show the highest prices in 2023 were obtained during March, April, May and June. That means sellers had to get ready early in the year, get it on the market, get an offer and get closed (sold) during those months.

Here are some valuable tips you can use to get your house market-ready.

Declutter and Organize — First impressions matter, and if your house is a mess, which can easily turn off potential buyers. Before marketing, take the time to declutter and organize each room.

Decluttering and organizing your space will go a long way in appealing to potential buyers and help them see themselves living in your home. Less clutter inside a home also helps a place appear larger and cleaner, which should attract more buyers. Also, put rooms back to their intended purpose. A confused floor plan will not appeal to buyers.

Deep Clean Your Kitchen and Bathrooms — The kitchen and bathrooms are focal points for many buyers, and often influence their overall opinion of the house. These are the two most utilized rooms in a home. Ensure these spaces dazzle by giving them a thorough deep cleaning. Pay attention to details like scrubbing grout lines, polishing fixtures, and decluttering countertops. A sparkling kitchen and bathroom can leave a lasting positive impression on potential buyers.

Maintain Your Yard — Your home's exterior is the first thing potential buyers see, and they make a decision in the first 60 seconds. It is important to make a good impression



from the moment they arrive.

A well-maintained yard not only enhances curb appeal, but also shows buyers the home has been well taken care of. Start the viewing off with a positive impression. As the saying goes, "You don't get a second chance to make a first impression."

Take the time to spruce up your yard by mowing the lawn, trimming bushes, and clearing away any debris or dead plants. Paint the front door, replace the light fixture and doorknob, have a working key.

Remember, the goal is to create a welcoming environment that entices buyers to step inside and imagine themselves living there. It is no secret that a beautifully landscaped front yard can elevate an ordinary house into a charming home and will help homes sell faster and for more money.

Find a Listing Agent — A skilled listing agent is your partner in minimizing stress when selling your home. Some sellers need to sell quickly and will adjust their asking price accordingly. Others are testing the market and are not in a rush at all. Lean on your agent for advice on decluttering, staging, and enhancing your home's appeal to potential buyers. They will help you strategize, act as an intermediary and advocate for you in negotiations, explain market conditions and decipher what they mean to your sale. Their insights into market trends and recommendations for reliable contractors and stagers are invaluable.

Now you are market-ready.

"Let me know if you are looking to sell. Your priorities and goals in the selling process are my priority." — Terrylynn Fisher, Realtor.



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Oysters, a Winter's Treat

Even though winter is winding down, we can still savor a light meal that matches the last of the winter foods with wines that bring out their best qualities.

Oysters are truly a delicious treat and must be cooked or eaten from a live state. Live oysters are tightly closed or will snap shut if tapped. If the shell is open, the oyster is dead and cannot be eaten safely. Some say oysters are only safe to eat in months with the letter 'r' in their names. This rule is based on a variety of possibilities: oysters in the northern hemisphere are much more likely to spoil in warmer months, warmer temperatures trigger spawning in some oysters (resulting in an unpleasant texture), and warmer temperatures increase the concentration of phytoplankton contaminated with arsenic that oysters could ingest. Luckily, technology is on our side and commercially collected oysters are generally safe as long as they are alive.

Muscadet (moosk-a-day) is my favorite wine to pair with oysters. Made from the Melon de Bourgogne grape, it is crisp and dry with mineral and citrus zest flavors. Muscadet is made exclusively on the west coast of France in the Nantes region. Its proximity to the sea has made it a longtime companion to oysters. If you can't find Muscadet, a Sauvignon Blanc or Chablis will provide the necessary acidity. Serve with fresh bread and a tart Mignonette sauce.

To end the meal, a delicate terrine of seasonal citrus can be paired with the Orange Muscat used to make it. The Muscat grape is very different from the Melon de Bourgogne grape. Muscats are incredibly floral wines and often made quite sweet. There are multiple varieties of Muscat and they are grown all over the world. Wines like Moscato and Muscat de Rivesaltes are both made from Muscat grapes. Orange Muscat is used for dessert wines in California and Australia and has an aroma of orange.

So, go on. Pair Up!

Maria Terry is a Certified Sommelier and Wine Educator in Northern California. Lasommelierre@gmail.com

MARTHA STEWART'S MIGNONETTE

INGREDIENTS

1 shallot, finely chopped
1½ teaspoons coarsely ground pepper
½ cup sherry vinegar
½ cup champagne vinegar or white wine vinegar

DIRECTIONS

Stir together shallot, pepper, and vinegars. Let stand 20 minutes before serving.

Yield: 1 cup



Photo by John Kernick

CITRUS TERRINE IN MUSCAT GELÉE

INGREDIENTS

2 large red grapefruits
1 large white grapefruit
2 navel oranges
2 tangerines
1 tablespoon candied grapefruit strips
4 teaspoons unflavored gelatin (less than 2 envelopes)
½ cup plus 3 tablespoons cold water
1¼ cups Orange Muscat such as Essensia
½ cup sugar

DIRECTIONS

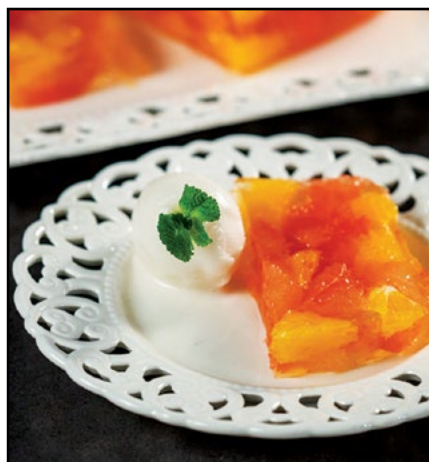
With a sharp knife cut peel from fruits, including all white pith. Cut sections free from membranes and remove any seeds. Chop candied grapefruit strips.

In a cup, sprinkle gelatin over 3 tablespoons cold water and let stand for about one minute to soften. In a small saucepan, bring Muscat and sugar to a boil, stirring until sugar is dissolved, and boil 2 minutes. Remove pan from heat and stir in gelatin mixture until dissolved. Stir in remaining water and transfer mixture to a bowl set in a larger bowl of ice and cold water. Cool mixture slightly, stirring occasionally.

Pour a thin layer of gel on bottom of 1-quart nonreactive terrine or loaf pan and arrange fruit sections and candied grapefruit decoratively. Carefully pour remaining gel over all.

Chill covered until firm, at least 4 hours, and up to 2 days. Dip a thin knife in hot water and run knife around edge. Dip pan into a larger pan of hot water 3 to 5 seconds to loosen. Invert a serving plate over pan and invert onto plate.

Yield: 8-10 servings



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Amazing Ideas Pitched in Final Contra Costa Youth Shark Tank Competition

Ten students from across the county gave their final pitch to the sharks in the Contra Costa Youth Shark Tank Competition on February 6. Congratulations to the three winners whose ideas were simply jaw-dropping extraordinary.

Fatimah Hussain, Dougherty Valley High School took First Place, winning \$1,000 with her Workout Wizard. Workout Wizard is a web app that improves at-home workouts using computer vision. It offers a range of specific exercises to choose from. Your computer watches your technique to determine if you are doing the exercise properly. If not, it offers real-time feedback for more beneficial, pain-free and less injurious exercising. Equally as remarkable, Fatimah is a self-taught programmer and designed the algorithm. The product is still in beta testing.

For \$500, Second Place went to Romen Jain, 10th Grade at Monte Vista High with "Eldersafe", a free mobile app to promote senior safety inside their home. The app identifies potential safety hazards within a home where elders are subject to injury (falls) and recommends products to make the home safer. The business model collects affiliate fees from the recommended products. He projected a \$1M to \$2M in annual sales once the app receives mass distribution.

Third Place and \$250 went to Archit Kundu a 5th Grade at Bella Vista Elementary in Lafayette for his business

CONTRA COSTA SHARK TANK YOUTH COMPETITION

2024 WINNERS

First Place: Workout Wizard, Fatimah Hussain (12th grade)

Second Place: ElderSafe, Romen Jain (10th grade)

Third Place: Experimental Kids, Archit Kundu (5th grade)

idea, "Experimental Kids. Archit noticed that on the market, kid science kits were expensive (\$60) and full of toxic chemicals. Experimental Kids kits include making a lava Lamp and crystal growing using toxic-free ingredients. Kits sell for just \$7. Gross sales of \$350 profited \$170.

The 'shark tank style' competition was created by Maya Hammerman, a Campolindo High School student, to inspire kids in Contra Costa County to explore entrepreneurship.

Scan the QR code to watch each presentation of all 10 extraordinary ideas or go to contracostasharktank.org.



Clayton's Angels

By David King

Clayton is a town full of angels.

On Thursday, February 15, it came to the attention of Brandy Leidgen that there is a shelter whose play area has nothing for children to do when they go there to visit their mothers. She decided to help and posted on Facebook that she was looking for a few stuffed animals.

The post read: "It was brought to my attention yesterday that a playroom for kids 0-6 years old, sheltering while their mom gets better/healthy looks like (photo added). Plus, the backyard only had a sorry little basketball hoop for kids to play. The lady who runs the house asked if there was something we could do to fix up the kids' playroom and it was only a dream to have a play structure in the backyard for the kids to play and feel safe."

Clayton's community rallied virtually overnight.

Jennifer Lauricella got involved as she was instrumental in organizing donation pick-up all weekend throughout Clayton. She had surfed Clayton's Buy Nothing Facebook Group for items. Buy Nothing is an online community whereby items and services are exchanged for no money. "Buy Nothing. Give Freely. Share creatively" is its mantra.

Although a small group, the response was overwhelming. Items collected were books, bookshelf, a kitchen playset, an easel, kid couch, tricycles, outdoor toys, toy chest, table and chairs, toys for children up to age 6.

Her daughter, Millie, 9, decided she would chip in and asked her Mom if she could help make it nice for the kids.

Millie is as active as a nine-year-old can be. She plays soccer, basketball, dance, and is a Girl Scout. Still, she found time to get involved. She combed her bedroom, collecting her own toys to help decorate the playroom. By Monday, Millie and her Mom went over to the playroom and worked for hours making it perfect for the kids.

"Millie loved it and is begging me to do more playrooms for the kids," Jennifer emphatically told us. Millie had noticed the infant room needed some work. She told her Mom, "I know it's tiny but there must be something we can do." Millie's plan is to return and put in more work.

When Katherine Young saw the Facebook post a few days later, she explained to her daughter, Adelaide, what was happening.



Millie proudly shows off her room decorations to make it nice for the shelters visiting kids.

"There is a place that Mommy's must go until they get better. When the children go to visit, they don't have many toys there and they are scared."

Adelaide responded, "I don't want any other babies to be sad. These are my babies (referring to her own toys) and I'm happy to let them go and make other kids happy. I want the little babies there to be happy."

Here's the kicker. Adelaide, who will turn six in March, has cancer. She had surgery on February 9 to remove bone in her leg that was taken over by cancer. She is currently walking with a walker. She has a trip planned to go to Houston, Texas for more advanced trial treatment. A GoFundMe account has been organized to help the family with those expenses. It has already surpassed its initial goal of \$12,000.

You can read Adelaide's full story at



Adelaide who is receiving treatment for cancer has a GoFundMe account to help with travel expenses.

GoFundMe.com. Your heart will swell. Here, she and her family are fighting for her life, and they are finding the time and the heart to give to others. Simply Amazing.

In a matter of a few days, not one but two playrooms were completed. And two play structures have been purchased and donated and are on their way.

"The number of strangers that I met that were such beautiful humans! The number of people that came together to make this happen makes my heart so incredibly happy. The kids have beautiful playrooms now to enjoy with their Moms. It would have never been possible without so many people coming together!" Brandy tearfully says.

Truly, Clayton is a town full of Angels.



Scary-Good Garden Creatures

We all know by now of the beneficial role those slimy red-brown earthworms play in aerating and fertilizing our garden soil. But were you aware of the beneficial qualities of other equally creepy critters found in our local backyards? Arachnids (spiders and scorpions), amphibians (frogs and salamanders), and reptiles all play major roles in naturally controlling harmful insects and larger pests. Don't be creeped out; they are gardeners' friends.

Amazing Arachnids

Spiders are true "Blue Bloods" of the garden – they actually have blue blood. Female spiders have huge appetites for garden pests, especially flying insects. Each spider that you do not crush will rid your backyard of thousands of pests during the growing season. But steer clear of black widow, brown widow, and recluse spiders and their poisonous bites.

Contra Costa is blessed with another common arachnid, the diminutive California forest scorpion. Most are about the size of a quarter, but some grow to about half-dollar size in their favorite habitat: moist, dark, cool places like under decomposing logs. They sting then eat harmful beetles and other insects. There are six other scorpion species native to Northern California also. Stay clear of their tail stingers.

Astonishing Amphibians

Pacific chorus (or "tree") frogs actually live on moist ground or in rock crevices and not in trees. In favorable conditions, they reproduce quickly to form "choruses" of a hundred frogs or more clustered around ponds and streams. They eat an



ants, mites, flies, and other obnoxious insects or larvae.

Fence lizards are one of the few vertebrates that can detach and regenerate their tails after being attacked. Also, lizards carry a protein in their blood that, when ingested by a tick, kills the Lyme disease bacteria in the tick's gut – effectively curing the tick of the disease and preventing it from being passed on to us.

Most folks are afraid of snakes and react with horror at spotting one in their garden. Hey, I get it. But other than rattlesnakes, common garden snakes in our area are enormously beneficial for controlling larger pests such as gophers, mice, rats, and voles.

The California kingsnake in fact kills and eats rattlesnakes, as well as rats. If you spot one of these magnificent creatures, let it be. Harmless Pacific gopher snakes follow gophers and voles into their underground lairs where they trap and kill them. And diminutive ring-necked snakes, only 10-15 inches long and completely harmless, clear out a huge number of larger insects, beetles, and crickets each year.

For more information about beneficial creatures, read the book, "Natural Enemies Handbook: The Illustrated Guide to Biological Pest Control" by Flint and Dreistadt. It can be ordered from the UC ANR online book catalogue at anrcatalog.ucanr.edu.

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



abundance of small spiders, ants, flies, and other pesty insects. Consider yourself fortunate if you hear their "ribbit-ribbit" chorus during spring nights. Less common are California red-legged frogs, American bullfrogs, and western toads, but all help out in our area by eating flies, grasshoppers, beetles and other pests.

Tree salamanders, California giant salamanders, and California (orange-bellied) newts live in moist areas typically under leaf litter or logs. In wet months, they eat snails, slugs, and crickets. Newts will also eat mosquito larvae when

submersed in ponds during their mating season, which is now. Salamanders and newts will hibernate underground in cool, damp chambers during hot dry months.

Rapacious Reptiles

Consider yourself lucky if you spot western fence lizards sunning themselves on your fence posts or doing "push-ups" on a warm rock. Like their cousins, alligator lizards and western blue-tailed skinks, these common Contra Costa reptiles lunch on crickets, spiders, ticks,



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aRt Cottage

by C. Hensiek, President Concord Art Association

Utility Boxes Art Project in Final Phase

Have you spotted the brightly painted traffic control boxes at many intersections in Concord? The City of Concord, the Concord Art Association, and local artists have collaborated over the last five years to beautify city roads with public art. Driving down Clayton Road, Willow Pass Road, Monument Boulevard, and other major thoroughfares in Concord, you can now see utility boxes with scenes of Mt. Diablo, children at play, musical cats and dogs, wisteria blossoms, hummingbirds, wild turkeys, and myriad other subjects.

This utility box art project began in 2019 with artwork themed "Music and Market" brightening eleven traffic control and other boxes in and around Todos Santos Plaza. In 2021, artists painted traffic control boxes at downtown intersections with artwork inspired by the theme "Celebrate Concord." Then in 2022 the City of Concord invited Concord Art Association to issue a call for artists to create designs with the theme of "Concord Reflections" for fourteen new traffic control boxes located throughout the city.

The final phase of this project began in 2023 with a call for artists to create concepts for six additional new traffic control boxes on Clayton Road and Concord Boulevard. Twenty-four beautiful designs were submitted for consideration by the City of Concord Parks and Recreation Committee. The final designs were presented to the City Council for approval in January 2024. Painting began in a city-owned warehouse in February. The boxes



Renaye Johnson utility box art depicting four seasons of Concord



Thea Jue utility box will present colorful Koi.

will be installed sometime this year.

Two of the artists painting boxes for this phase are Renaye Johnson and Thea Jue. Experienced artists and CAA members, both Johnson and Jue paint in a representational style. They were inspired by the natural environment of the Concord area. Their boxes are colorful with bold designs that will enhance intersections in the eastern part of Concord. The boxes will be installed this year as part of an overall traffic control box replacement project in progress.

Johnson's box features images of the four seasons in Concord with artwork depicting such iconic scenes as California poppies in full bloom, a cactus

with its fruit, falling leaves, pumpkins, and a leafless tree against a winter sky. Jue is painting one of her favorite subjects, a pond full of brilliantly colored Koi.

See Concord Art Association member artwork including pieces by Johnson and Jue at two shows opening soon — March 6 to April 25 "Brush Strokes and More!" at aRt Cottage, 2238 Mt. Diablo Street in Concord. Open Wednesday-Saturday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The other show, currently running at Visit Concord in Pacheco Square until the end of March, is the concept art for the fourteen traffic control boxes painted in the 2023 phase of the utility box art project. Visit Concord is located at 2151 Salvio Street, downtown Concord, open Monday-Friday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.



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Directed by La Tonya Watts
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Explore the Contra Costa Beer Trail

by Beth Javens, President & CEO

This March Visit Concord invites you to imbibe along the Contra Costa Beer Trail, the ultimate county experience for craft beer lovers. With over 35 local breweries, tap houses, bottle shops, and beer bar restaurants participating, there is no shortage of options as you seek to savor East Bay's unique and flavorful brews.

In Concord, the brewing gems bringing exceptional beers and a community vibe are:

Concord Tap House: The Concord Tap House boasts 24 rotating taps, featuring an impressive array of craft beers and ciders. Their menu is a delightful fusion of chef specialties and pub food favorites, often infused with multicultural flair.

Epidemic Ales: Beyond their amazing brewery, craft beer delights and popular partner food trucks, Epidemic Ales' team creates special releases that tell a story, such as the D-Day brew honoring veterans on Veterans Day, and their Lady Boss IPA, released on International Women's Day, March 8, celebrating women everywhere.

The Hop Grenade: The Hop Grenade is a premier craft beer taproom and bottle shop, as well as the world headquarters of The Brewing Network, a podcast for brewers and beer lovers. With 21 rotating taps of impressive craft beers, Hop Grenade offers the perfect pairings including an IPA Bratwurst, beer-brined smoked chicken sandwiches, and Fire Corn Popcorn.

Side Gate Brew invites you to literally come in the side gate and join the fun.



Located around the corner from Todos Santos Plaza, they serve a variety of beers - lagers, sours, seltzers, and more. Kids and pets are always welcome.

Additional participants in Concord include: BJ's Brewhouse and Restaurant, Sun Valley Mall; Eureka!, Willows Shopping Center; Lazy Dog, Willows Shopping Center; Yard House at The Veranda

Martinez: Del Cielo, 701 Escobar, and Five Suns Brewing, 626 Main Street

Pleasant Hill: Jack's Tap, 60 Crescent Drive

Walnut Creek: Bierhaus, 1360 Locust; Broderick Roadhouse, 1548 Bonanza; Calicraft Brewing Company, 2700 Mitchell Dr.; Mike Hess Brewing in the Orchards Shopping Center; Hops & Scotch, corner of Treat and Oak; Ol Beercafe & Bottle Shop, 1541 Giammona Dr.; Rotator Taproom, 1415 Pine St.

To guide your beer exploration, pick up a copy of the Beer Trail Map at the Concord Visitor Center or print one from VisitConcordCA.com. Not on the Trail but incredibly convenient, be sure to include a day at Brewing Network's Spring Brews Festival on March 30, at Todos Santos Plaza in Concord. Choose from among 50 of the best craft beer breweries in California in one location, accompanied by live music and delicious food.

Cheers to a month of beer exploration and community celebration. Learn more at VisitConcordCA.com.

For the Love of Pets
by Jill Hedgecock, Jillhedgecock.com

Planning for Veterinary Care

Responsible pet ownership starts before acquiring the animal. Besides having the financial means to feed and house the animal, potential pet owners must consider if they can afford to pay for their pet's health care. Dog and cat owners should plan for the costs to meet legal requirements to spay/neuter, license, and vaccinate their pets, as well as annual exams, teeth cleaning, and other preventive care.

Before committing to pet ownership, consider acquiring a pet that is right for your budget. Small dogs require smaller doses of expensive medication. Some breeds are known for hefty vet bills such as French bulldogs. They are predisposed to genetic issues. Before acquiring a bird or reptile, investigate the fees for a visit to an exotic animal veterinarian.

With proactive planning, pet owners can often minimize unexpected expenses. One way to avoid the heart-breaking choice of having to euthanize a beloved pet due to the high cost of treatment is to buy pet insurance. Many policies cover a substantial proportion of unexpected medical expenses associated with expensive vet treatments for parvo, cancer, accidentally ingesting a poison, or injuries from being hit by a car. Training a pet is another way to avoid vet bills. An under-socialized dog is more inclined to get in a dog fight, resulting in the owner needing to pay for care for their pet's, and possibly the other dog's, vet bill.

Not all veterinary practices charge the same fees or operate the same. Shop around for a vet that meets your budget and find out if they accept a payment plan. VIP Services offer routine vaccinations and preventative care in certain Pet Food Express businesses. Banfield Pet Hospital offers wellness packages. Walnut Creek's Modern Animal is a membership-based veterinary practice that operates around the clock, allowing pet owners to minimize expensive emergency clinic costs.

On February 7, 2024, Pleasant Hill opened a Veterinary Emergency Group. This unique emergency veterinary care model operates with an open concept floor plan. It allows owners to stay with their pets during treatment and is a full-service operation capable of performing diagnostics onsite. Their facility has a quarantine area, a quiet room for cats, a comfortable room if euthanasia is required, and will provide rooms for owners to spend the night near their animals.

If veterinary care becomes cost prohibitive, do not let your pet suffer. Consider starting a GoFundMe page or apply to Waggle, a pet-dedicated crowdfunding solution. If you own a purebred or near purebred animal, breed-



Kevin Baker, Medical Director of Veterinary Emergency Group, in Pleasant Hill cuts the ribbon at the opening ceremony on February 7, 2024

specific rescues may be able to help. It is possible to get low cost spay and neuters from a variety of sources which are listed on the Contra Costa Animal Services website. Also, check out veterinary services offered by local colleges. With proper planning, owners can find services that meet their needs and pets can receive the health care they deserve.

Jill Hedgecock is a local author of several novels featuring animals. Her new release "In Shadow's Reflection" is the third novel in her young adult Doberman series. This novel, along with "Between Shadow's Eyes" (Book 1) and "From Shadow's Perspective" (Book 2), is available on amazon.com.



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Around Martinez



Citywide Repaving is Anything but Boring

by Brianne Zorn, Mayor, City of Martinez

Measure D, the Martinez Road Improvement and Maintenance Measure is a one-half percent (0.5%) sales tax that provides funding exclusively for Martinez road improvement and maintenance needs. The City Council received the annual report on the 5-year resurfacing plan at the last council meeting. There were not a lot of members of the public who attended that meeting and I sometimes wonder if people find repaving plans dull. But, if you have ever driven over a pothole regularly, you can agree that getting it fixed is anything but boring. So, let's talk a little more about Measure D and our City-wide paving maintenance plans.

Measure D was approved by voters in 2016 and has a 15-year lifespan. Each year, the City generates approximately \$4.5 million to use towards pavement improvements. The maintenance plan groups repairs geographically on a 5-year rotation. This logical and predictable maintenance program is easier to manage by staff and allows residents to be able to anticipate construction. It also supports cost-effective bid packages and allows contractors to reduce mobilization costs.

Simple repairs to roads in good or fair condition are an entire order of magnitude less expensive to implement than repaving or reconstructing a road. When the right treatment is applied at the right time, the City can stretch pavement dollars further.

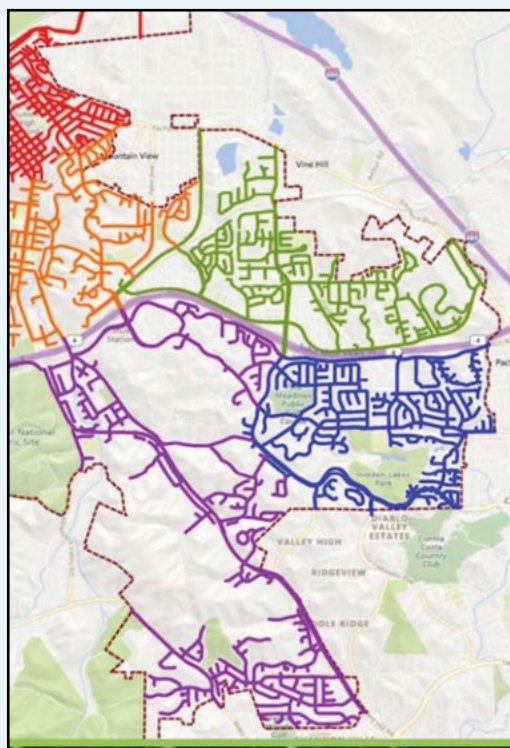
This strategy has been working. When Measure D went into effect, our Pavement Condition Index (PCI) was in the 40s ("poor") out of a perfect score of 100. Today, we have a PCI of 69 ("good"). When our Public Works Director reported at the recent Council Retreat that we are on track during this 5-year cycle to have a PCI of 70 or greater ("very good"), we broke

into applause. Exciting, indeed.

I encourage everyone to take a look at the 5-year paving plan to understand when you can expect your neighborhood to receive street maintenance or repairs. Don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions on the timeline or want to provide input.

What about issues that need repairs that can't wait?

The best way to request maintenance within the city is through a Service



City-wide resurfacing plan, group geographically

Request. These requests are sent straight to the Public Works department for evaluation and action. This can be for street repairs, parks maintenance needs, or water system issues. The service request button is on the City's homepage.



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Explore Martinez

March Madness at Main Street Arts

by Paula Oesterling.

"Images of Assemblage" art by Dave Kwinter

March 1 will be the opening of a new show, "Assemblage Sculpture" at Main Street Arts in Martinez.

Dave Kwinter will be celebrated as the "Guest Artist" in the gallery. Kwinter has been a Bay Area resident for years. He is a retired attorney with a varied background. After years of painting, Kwinter found that, "3D art is more fun than being confined to two," so he started making "assemblage" pieces. He finds the various components for his works in thrift stores, on the street, flea markets...just about everywhere. Kwinter combines his "treasures" to assemble sculptures that keep the viewer wondering about the complexity and the story of each creation. "The job of an artist is to deepen the mystery," he states.

All are invited to meet Dave Kwinter at the gallery reception, Friday, March 1 from 6-9, and enjoy the refreshments and art.

In January's art give-away, Ian Hostetter won a painting by Eric Carlstrom. This month the gallery will give away a painting by Bonnie Fry. To enter, simply sign up when you visit the gallery. No purchase is required.



"Cork" by Dave Kwinter

Take an intimate look into the world of fine arts. A preview of the new exhibit can be viewed at www.mainstreet.net.

Main Street Arts Gallery is open 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. on Sunday and is located at 613 Main Street in Martinez.

Should Martinez Follow the Model of Walnut Creek, Pleasant Hill, and Concord?

Martinez Rants and Raves asks: Should we be seeking a "modern downtown"? And if we were to rebuild ourselves in the image of the others, would people come here?

At a City Council meeting, a consulting company, TRI Corfac Commercial, which is a large real estate brokerage engaged by our city, presented their preliminary findings. Among their comments were that a single-story commercial building is as economically viable as an empty lot, and that to stimulate their goal, our zoning should be modified to allow higher-rise commercial buildings. And that we should encourage aging owners to sell-off buildings to developers by raising the values if high-rise development was allowed.

Vertical-residential was mentioned



Rendering not part of TRI presentation. Photo as posted on Martinez Rants and Rave.

partially in the context of major development, 1,000 dwellings, to the north-west of downtown, likely along the edge of the Marina though the specifics were limited.

If you'd like to know more about their plans, consider coming to the State of the City Breakfast on Tuesday, March 12. A TRI representative will join Mayor Zorn as a keynote speaker.



Save the Date!

March 12, 2024



State of the

City



Featuring Mayor
Brianne Zorn

Presented by
The Martinez Chamber of Commerce

in partnership with the City of Martinez

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The Carquinez Region Offers Affordable Waterfront Lifestyle

by Courtney Ayers, AMP Real Estate & Staging



Photo posted on Martinez Rants and Rave by Chris Wills

When it comes to quality living standards, eyes are turning to the Carquinez Region. This beautiful region is comprised of six waterfront communities situated along the shorelines of the Northeast Bay Area in Contra Costa and Solano Counties: Crockett, Port Costa, and Martinez in Contra Costa County, and Benicia, Mare Island and Vallejo in Solano County. These sister cities are characterized by their waterfront access, enjoyable micro-climate, historic Downtowns, quality of life, proximity to San Francisco and Oakland, and best of all, affordable housing. Bound together through location, proximity and history, each of these communities offers its own unique destinations and experiences.

The Region as a whole is experiencing a renaissance with new restaurants, wineries, breweries, coffee roasters, art galleries and small retail boutiques opening across the region. Now is an exciting time to see, experience and taste what the region has to offer. In this six-part series, I will unmask each of these hidden gems, starting here with the City of Martinez.

MARTINEZ, Home of the Martini

Residents find Martinez to be a fun and vibrant place to live and play. This beautiful waterfront community sits on the banks of the Carquinez Strait. Surrounded by rolling hills with expansive hiking and biking trails, Martinez is an outdoor enthusiasts paradise. From Mt. Wanda and John Muir National Historic Site to the regional shoreline, there are endless areas to explore while retaining connection to the city's downtown.

Energized by a rush of boutiques, restaurants, breweries, craft bars and coffee houses, downtown has become a hub for entertainment and community activities.

Many wonderful restaurants have opened in Martinez over the last few years such as Roxx on Main, a farm to table style restaurant with live music, Vic's, a homestyle restaurant that brings in the crowds, and Taco Daddy, a modern taco spot that converts to a club/lounge at night — a nice complement to mainstays Troys and Slow Hand BBQ, both of which are award winning regional favorites.

Martinez boasts three wineries just outside downtown. William Welch Wines, one of the three, opened a tasting room on Main Street. Two downtown breweries, Five Suns Brewing and Del Cielo attract craft beer enthusiasts.

Beer and wine are not the only libations imbibed in Martinez. The martini in particular is popular here. Why? Martinez is home to the first Martini. With such an iconic drink having its birthplace here, it is no wonder there are fabulous craft bars such as Barrelista/Barrel Aged (a coffee house by day and cocktail bar by night) and Bentley's (inside Market and Main). Each year, regional bars and restaurants vie to win the coveted "Best Martini" award in the annual martini competition.

When you become in need of some "me time," Martinez boasts fabulous spas and salons, such as The Mud Room and Citrus and curated boutiques like The Hive, Busy Work and Artisan Market. not to mention the amazing vintage shops like Faded Gold and Retro Now.

Every Sunday, rain or shine, the farmers' market draws large crowds downtown for organic produce, flowers and yummy bites.

Beyond downtown, Martinez has an independent movie theater and several shopping centers strategically located among peaceful, family-friendly neighborhoods with wonderful shopping and dining including award winning Lucia's craft sandwiches, Kinder's BBQ and Pasta Bella, to name a few.

Many families come to Martinez for its schools. Much of Martinez is zoned to the Martinez Unified School District with high-ranking schools.

Locationally, Martinez provides easy access via public transit, freeways and backroads to other cities and neighboring counties.

This beautiful city has both very affordable and luxurious homes from Craftsman, Victorians and Spanish revivals to ranch style, two stories, and estates. Prices range from \$350k for a 1-bedroom condominium to \$3m for a sprawling estate and everything in between. With so much going for Martinez, home ownership in this charming waterfront city is becoming more and more desirable.



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PBF Fine for Carquinez Strait Violations Reduced

by Craig Lazzeretti, *Martinez News And Views*

PBF Energy has been in negotiations with the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board over an Administrative Civil Liability assessment in the amount of \$13.8 million for allegedly exceeding effluent limitations into the Carquinez Strait from its Martinez refinery and failing to submit climate change adaptation information.

According to PBF's recently published 2023 annual report, the company and water board have agreed on a reduced assessment of approximately \$4.5 million, half of which could be in the form of an Enhanced Compliance Actions settlement ("ECA"), Supplemental Environmental Project ("SEP") or a combination of the two. The settlement still needs to be finalized and approved by the water board, according to the report.

A spokesperson for the water board said the agency could not yet comment on the matter as it remains under negotiation.

MUSD Contract Stalemate

by Craig Lazzeretti, *Martinez News And Views*

A mediation session held between the Martinez Unified School District and its teachers' union so far has failed to bring about a resolution, with the stalemate now set to move on to the "fact finding" process. Both sides will present factual evidence to a panel that will make recommendations for a settlement.

The two sides have remained far apart throughout the process, as the school district faces growing budget woes amid declining state revenues and the impact of 19% employee pay raises granted over the past two years. The union has pushed for another hefty raise similar to what was granted over the past two years, arguing that it is necessary to attract and retain quality teachers in an area with steep living costs. The district has countered that the money simply doesn't exist with it facing over \$2 million in budget cuts heading into the 2024-25 school year.

MUSD's "last, best" offer to MEA was for a 4% total compensation increase (3% in salary and 1% in health and welfare benefits contributions) for the current school year. The union wants a 9.5% salary increase.

If the three- to six-month fact-finding process does not yield a settlement, the district says that a "second impasse" will result and the parties will "have completed their legal duty to negotiate." At that point, the school district can impose its last, best offer on the union, and the union will have the right to strike.

Meanwhile, the school board is set to discuss making roughly \$2.3 million in budget cuts for the 2024-25 school year at Monday's board meeting. The cuts could result in the loss of 19 certificated full-time equivalent (FTE) positions and eight classified positions. If MUSD voters pass a parcel tax renewal in this month's election, 5.6 FTE positions would be saved, according to the district.

Even with the cuts, the district still anticipates having to resort to deficit spending in coming years. Declines in enrollment and attendance-based funding, along with the expiration of one-time funds and rising special education costs, have hammered MUSD's finances.

March into Spring with Greens

by Deb Morris, *PACIFIC COAST FARMERS' MARKET ASSOCIATION*

After a winter of dense stews and carb-heavy recipes, it is time to lighten up your meals with fresh and delicious spring greens and baby vegetables. Include spring lettuce and baby spinach, fat spring leeks, fragrant spring garlic and green onions, big stalks of asparagus, and the new spring crop of artichokes in your meals. Toward the end of the month into April, you will discover the arrival of sweet green peas, flavorful fava beans, and tasty spring herbs.

Find these delicious but unusual greens at the farmers' market. You will seldom find them anywhere else. Enjoy something different this spring in salads, soups, pastas, eggs, and casseroles.



Amaranth leaves: Also called pigweed. Grown and harvested in the summer months. We're talking about the leaves, not the grain amaranth. The leaves taste a bit like spinach. Best when simply sautéed, but good in salads, soups, and casseroles or with eggs.

Green garlic or spring garlic: Best in the early spring. This type of garlic does not produce large bulbs like regular garlic. It has a mild garlic flavor. The entire plant, from greens to bulb, can be consumed. Use as you would any garlic with added greens.

Spring onions: Good throughout the spring months. Compared to green onions, they have a small, round, white bulb at their base. They have a slightly stronger flavor than scallions. Use as flavor for any dish for moderate onion flavor.

Yam (sweet potato) leaves: Grown year-round, but good in spring. Brightly colored green with heart shaped leaves, they taste similar to spinach and can be eaten raw or cooked. Add to soups, salads, or sandwiches.

throughout the spring months. Young pea vines or shoots and leaves that are tender and mild with an herbal flavor. They typically come from snow or snap peas. Add raw pea greens to salads, sandwiches, bowls, pasta, and soups for crunch and textural variety.

Ramps: Early spring is best for these. They are a species of wild onion and have a flavor similar to garlic and onions. They look like scallions but have broad leaves and a purplish stem. Use in any recipes calling for onions or garlic. Both bulb and greens can be eaten.

Mustard greens: These grow year-round. This peppery and spicy green has ruffled small leaves and can be used in a variety of ways, from salads to soups. They're used in both traditional Southern dishes as well as Asian recipes.

Mâche: Good in late winter to early spring. Also called Lamb's Lettuce, this tender salad green grows in bunches and has small, delicate leaves. They have a nutty taste and can be eaten raw in salads or cooked, steamed or sautéed and served as a vegetable.

Lighten up your meals this spring and add some exciting new tastes to your recipes. They are full of healthy nutrients, offer interesting textures, and fill your plate with flavor. Find them at your local farmers' market.

Pea greens or shoots: Available



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The 96th Annual Academy Awards

This is probably the first time the Best Picture nominees literally span from A to Z. The offerings this year are amazing in their scope and there is truly something for everyone.

American Fiction

This film tackles current racial stereotypes in America and does it with a good dose of humor. Where it is easily enough to fill an entire storyline, this movie digs deeper and shows a main character dealing with a stalled career, an aging parent, strained relationships with siblings, and the hope of a new romance. Jeffrey Wright is funny and sincere and Sterling K. Brown continues to show his range in an unexpected role.

Anatomy of a Fall

This taut legal drama toggles back and forth between the accident on trial and the layers of a marriage. The tension continues to ratchet up and viewers are kept on the edge of their seats and probably squirming in them as we see a marriage put under a microscope.

Barbie

As the blockbuster of the bunch, everyone wondered what a Barbie movie would look like. Screenwriters Greta Gerwig and Noah Baumbach took the assignment and ran with it, delivering not just a musical, whip-smart funny flick with its finger on the zeitgeist, but went a step further and had something important to say about the challenges women face in our current society. Under

Gerwig's crafty direction, going to the movies became an in-person event for the first time in a long time and a celebration of female relationships.

The Holdovers

Alexander Payne had Paul Giamatti in mind for the role of Professor Paul Hunham in this throwback charmer. Giamatti's character is buoyed by the fine performance of Da'Vine Joy Randolph as a grieving mother, and Dominic Sessa as the neglected teen. The way each of these characters play off each other as they reluctantly bond over the winter break does not make for a traditional holiday film, but you will probably find yourself returning to it for years to come.

Killers of the Flower Moon

Martin Scorsese continues to give audiences intense stories that are well-researched. This time, he again collaborates with Leonardo DiCaprio and Robert De Niro to tell the story of the Osage murders in Oklahoma in the 1920s. The pleasant surprise is the stunning performance by newcomer Lily Gladstone, who not only holds her own with these powerhouses but is truly the heart of the film.

Maestro

As a passion project, director and star Bradley Cooper chose to focus on the complicated relationship between American composer Leonard Bernstein and his wife/actress Felicia

Montealegre. As magnanimous a personality that Bernstein exudes, it is Carey Mulligan's performance as his long-suffering wife that compels the viewer to the end.

Oppenheimer

Would audiences show up for a three-hour film about J. Robert Oppenheimer, the inventor of the atomic bomb? The answer is a resounding yes. Opening the same time as Barbie, the unusual pairing ended up playing off of each other, with many moviegoers watching both films back-to-back. The stunning visuals almost requires watching it on the big screen.

The complicated life of Oppenheimer was in good hands with director Christopher Nolan, who is no stranger to complicated plots. He expertly juggles times in Oppenheimer's personal life with the hearing to renew his security clearance, all while under the intense testing of the atom bomb.

Past Lives

In a movie about lives that could have been, this quiet film stayed on the minds of moviegoers and proved that audiences want grown-up storylines. With a summertime release, it held its own against the

blockbusters, as viewers were invested in the romance between Nora and Hae Sung.

Poor Things

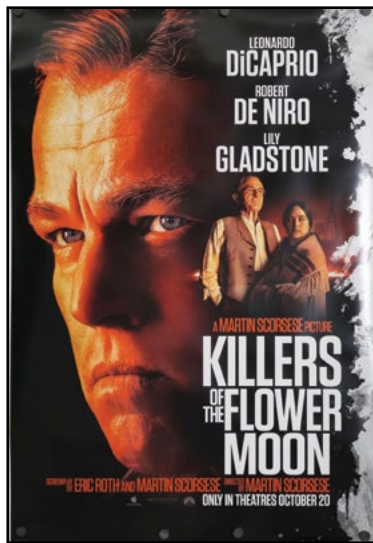
Bizarre and visually stunning, this is a difficult movie to categorize. Is it a gothic fairytale, a horror film or a statement on feminism? It is all of these, and the viewer is best advised to put all normal movie expectations aside and simply experience the film. Emma Stone goes all in to embody Bella Baxter and not only make us understand her, but root for her happiness.

The Zone of Interest

A difficult movie to watch, but an important one. Set in Auschwitz during World War II, the film never shows us a prisoner. Instead, the focus is next door to the concentration camp at the home of Commandant Rudolf Höss. He lives in a large home with his wife Hedwig and their young children. The home is always bustling with activity and Hedwig enjoys the prestige of her beautiful garden, bossing her staff around and savoring the perks of obtaining "discarded" items such as fur coats and jewelry. Watching the juxtaposition of this lifestyle, while literally seeing smokestacks in the background, makes this a unique way to emphasize the atrocities of the Holocaust.

My prediction is the Oscar will go to...Oppenheimer. I believe that the academy has wanted to give the award to Christopher Nolan for some time now. He did an amazing job with The Dark Knight trilogy, but in the end, they were superhero movies, a tough category to win the top award. He came close with Dunkirk in 2018. This time around he has found the proper vehicle for his intricate, layered, time-jumping, mind altering, level of storytelling.

The 96th Annual Academy Awards will air on March 10, 2024 at 5pm PST on ABC and can be streamed on HULU Live.



What to Read During March Madness: Sooley and other Basketball Books

In honor of March Madness, I selected "Sooley" (Anchor, 2022, paperback, 368 pages, \$18.00) by John Grisham. "Sooley," the nickname for Samuel Sooleymon, a 17-year-old South Sudanese athlete is the tale of a boy who travels to the United States to play in a basketball tournament in the hopes of earning a coveted spot on a college team. Sooley attracts the attention of a recruiter because he is tall and still growing, plus he has an infectious smile. Unfortunately, his skill at finding the basketball net leaves much to be desired.

Sooley spends hours perfecting his shooting skills and soon becomes a starter and a key player for his underdog team. Then his success story takes an unexpected turn. One message in this novel is that hard work pays off.

"Sooley" is more than a story about

hoops. It is also a tale of college coaches, the importance of family and friendship, and the tragic consequences of civil war violence against Dintas in Sooley's home country of South Sudan.

"Sooley" is a #1 New York Times bestseller and a Sunday Times best-seller. The novel is so well-crafted, and the details felt so real, that I performed an internet search to see if the novel was inspired by a real person. It was not. It didn't matter. I could not wait to turn the next page.

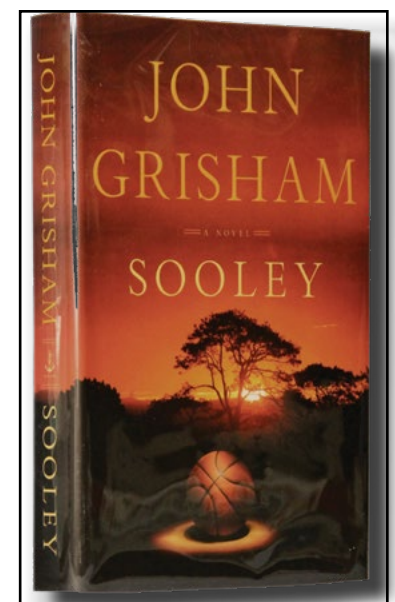
Although many popular nonfiction books have been written surrounding the sport of basketball, basketball-inspired novels are harder to find. Of note are Joseph O'Neill's "Netherland," Craig Leener's trilogy series, starting with "This Was Never About Basketball," and for young adults, Kwame Alexander's "The Crossover"

is a good option.

John Grisham is the author of 47 consecutive #1 bestsellers, which have been translated into nearly 50 languages. Prior to becoming a full-time writer, Grisham was a criminal and personal injury lawyer. His best-selling novel is "The Firm" and he released the sequel, "The Exchange" in October 2023. His third Jake Brigrance novel, "A Time for Mercy," is being developed by HBO as a limited series, starring Matthew McConaughey.

Grisham is a two-time winner of the Harper Lee Prize for Legal Fiction and was honored with the Library of Congress Creative Achievement Award for Fiction. When he's not writing, Grisham serves on the board of directors of the Innocence Project and of Centurion Ministries, two national organizations dedicated to

exonerating those who have been wrongfully convicted. John lives on a farm in central Virginia.





How Do Realtors Determine Your Home Asking Price?

Selling your home is a significant financial transaction, and setting the right asking price is crucial to attract potential buyers while ensuring you get the best value for your property. Have you ever wondered how realtors arrive at that magic number? Lets delve into the intricate process that real estate agents follow to determine the perfect asking price for your home.

Understanding the Local Real Estate Market

One of the primary factors that influence your home's asking price is the current state of the local real estate market. Realtors meticulously analyze recent sales data, considering the prices of comparable properties in your neighborhood. By assessing market trends, they can identify whether it is a buyer's or seller's market, allowing them to adjust the asking price accordingly.

Property Features and Condition

No two homes are exactly alike, and real estate agents take the unique features and condition of your property into account when setting the asking price. Features such as the size of the lot, number of bedrooms and bathrooms, and any recent renovations can significantly impact the perceived value of your home. The overall condition, including any necessary repairs or improvements, also plays a pivotal role in the pricing strategy.

Comparative Market Analysis (CMA)

Realtors often conduct a Comparative Market Analysis (CMA) to determine an accurate asking price. This involves

assessing recently sold properties with similar characteristics to your own. By examining the sale prices, days on market, and specific features of these properties, real estate agents can fine-tune their evaluation and provide a realistic asking price for your home.

Economic Factors

External economic factors, such as interest rates and economic conditions, can also influence the pricing strategy. A robust economy generally leads to increased home prices, while economic downturns may have the opposite effect. Realtors stay abreast of these factors to ensure their pricing recommendations align with the broader economic landscape.

Seller's Motivation and Timeline

Understanding your motivation for selling and your desired timeline is crucial for realtors when determining the asking price. If you are looking for a quick sale, pricing your home competitively may be the key. On the other hand, if time is less of a concern, a higher asking price may be justifiable. Balancing these factors ensures that the asking price aligns with your specific goals.

Setting the right asking price for your home involves a strategic blend of market analysis, property evaluation, and economic considerations. Realtors leverage their expertise to navigate these complexities and provide you with a well-informed and competitive asking price.

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Change Changes us Physically

Suddenly, you feel capable of making those big changes that you have so far avoided. And your goals are driving you to make those changes now. Yet, despite the newfound sense of motivation, it's still a bit daunting, isn't it?

Some changes are easy; water will flow downhill, my house will get dirty, my body will atrophy — all without my doing a darn thing. But intentional changes can be quite challenging, even when we know exactly what needs to be done.

Acknowledging the parts of ourselves that could use a tune-up, a behavior in need of a tweak, or a perspective that has grown stale, is a crucial step towards feeling more fulfilled and aligned. When I think about this future version of myself having successfully made these changes, it always sounds amazing, but that doesn't mean it will be easy. Internal changes usually require a hefty dose of courage.

Why is this?

Shifting away from homeostasis requires energy, and often a lot of support. Our brain feels safe with the status quo even if the status quo is less than ideal. In order to bring about change, we first need to make sure our brain feels safe.

With a few basic insights from cutting-edge neuroscience, we can make this change process not just a little bit easier, but a lot more effective.

Our bodies are one of the most powerful tools in our toolbox during a season of change. I can support myself when going through a season of change by actually checking in with my physical body every day. Even when the changes are emotional or behavioral, checking in with your body physically every day with a series of easy movements during a change process will help your brain gradually



adjust to a new homeostasis.

If you already have a yoga or Thai Chi practice, these are perfect anchors. If you do not have a standard routine, use a few of these simple moves as your daily check-in: balance challenges, squats, arm circles, forward bends, calf raises, and/or bird-dog exercises.

A standard set of exercises can ensure that the changes I am making are moving me in my desired direction at a sustainable pace. Making sure that my movement is actually improving can serve as my compass, indicating whether I am on the right track or veering off course. The nervous system is always communicating with itself, so any changes I see in my movement reflect changes that are happening elsewhere.

Much of who we are is stored in our body's cells. For example, how I hold my head, the way that I breathe, these things mirror the state of my nervous system. If these elements are improving, my range of motion, balance, and strength should improve as well.

You are off to a big and wonderful thing. Let your body support you on the journey.

Twelfth Year for Blossoms for Barbara to Deliver Valentine Love

Blossoms for Barbara founder, Linda Karp and her Clayton Garden Club volunteers delivered 1,500 flowering blossoms to those under hospice care, isolated elderly, veterans and shut-ins, including 500 to local healthcare heroes filled with "love and appreciation" for Valentine's Day.

Linda continues to bring a little joy to those who were dying, and their families which were dealing with the horrible grief of

losing someone they loved.

This event makes such a wonderful impact throughout the community. The hope is to continue to touch even more hearts and gift even more flowering plants to those so much in need of a little love

and kindness. It's hard to believe how much love and joy one little flowering plant can bring.

Donations toward this annual event can be mailed to Clayton Valley Garden Club, c/o Blossoms for Barbara, P.O. Box 633, Clayton, CA 94517.



Events founder, Linda Karp, volunteers in front of John Muir Hospital in Walnut Creek



Healthcare workers inside Urgent Care in Walnut Creek receive Blossoms for Valentines



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410 Wawona Ln, Clayton

Gorgeous "McKinley" Model in Eagle Peak overlooking hills-city-valley & beyond! 4 bedrooms, 3 baths, approx. 2966sf on an approx. .17 acre lot with an attached 3 car garage. Downstairs bedroom & full bath. Fantastic view lot perfect for entertaining offers an expanded deck with trellis covered pergola, spa & RV/Boat parking. Must see!



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1055 Pebble Beach Dr, Clayton

Exquisite "Belvedere" Model in Peacock Creek on a Premium Lot Backing to Open Space with Incredible Views! 5 bedrooms plus bonus room/loft/optional 6th bed & den, 3.5 baths, approx. 4076sf on an approx. .26 acre lot with inside laundry & 3 car garage. Outdoor kitchen island, pool/spa & possible RV/boat parking.

Clayton Market Update

Address	Sales Price	SF	Bed/Bath	Sales Date
2801 Morgan Territory Rd	\$1,740,000	3350	4/2.5	12/18/2023
8034 Kelok Way	\$1,260,000	2843	4/3	12/18/2023
124 Mt Etna Dr	\$940,000	1627	4/2	12/26/2023
5610 Frank Pl	\$1,049,000	2443	4/3	12/26/2023
5909 Herriman Dr	\$1,118,000	2846	4/3	12/29/2023
1055 Pebble Beach Dr	\$2,072,000	4076	5/3.5	2/2/2024
1833 Eagle Peak Ave	\$1,090,000	2313	4/2.5	2/16/2024

Concord Market Update

Address	Sales Price	SF	Bed/Bath	Sales Date
1265 Grimmwood Pl	\$875,000	1774	3/2	1/23/2024
5722 Roanwood Way	\$987,000	1919	4/2	1/25/2024
1536 Eclipse Way	\$1,100,000	2566	5/3.5	1/29/2024
3190 Ida Dr	\$715,000	1108	3/2	2/2/2024
4601 Wilson Ln	\$935,000	1846	4/2	2/5/2024
5510 Roundtree Dr #A	\$442,000	914	2/1/1	2/8/2024
3089 Santa Paula Dr	\$1,126,000	2183	4/2	2/14/2024

Coco Farms' CoCo Cares Program is Working for Concord



Kolaboration Ventures Company's Coco Cares program provides hundreds of volunteer hours each month to support local nonprofits including White Pony Express and Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano Counties

In the 2016 November elections, Voters favored to legalize cannabis by a 61% to 39% margin, a technical landslide. Yet to win a permit to open a retail dispensary, there was still much resistance. Opponents feared and warned of easy children access and increases in violent crime in nearby neighborhoods.

Kolaboration Ventures, the parent company of all their cannabis companies, for Concord's CoCo Farms, these fears have not come to realization. With 24-hour security, there has been no crime wave. Tucked away in Stanwell Circle, they are safely away from schools.

In fact, to date, they have proven to be a valuable community partner to Concord and in the other communities they are operating within — especially in helping address the issue of homelessness or soon -to -be homeless. In Concord they have committed ongoing hours of volunteer work to local nonprofits while seeking homeless or near homeless to employ.

To win the license to dispense in Concord and in Antioch, they offered a corporate citizenship program, CoCo Cares.

CoCo Cares is a program name that they use in both Antioch and Concord. "The program is designed to identify homeless people or near homeless people and help these individuals get on their feet," stated Chuck Wesley, Chairman and CFO of Kolaboration Ventures Corporation.

Wesley says there are three critical components of getting one on their feet. "First, we give them a full-time job. Then we pay for their housing for up to six months. And the other thing is transportation. As needed, we provide transportation or pay for transportation."

Within six months, if the individual is saving their money, they should be at a point where they can begin to become self-sufficient and exit the homeless population. In some cases, they extend support to an individual beyond six months if needed.

"We had to compete for the right to have a license. Coco Cares was a part of our presentation, and it is a requirement for our use permit in Concord." They made a commitment to provide a minimum number of volunteer hours per month to local nonprofits. The primary beneficiary of that commitment

is White Pony Express, but also the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano Counties.

To oversee CoCo Cares, they hired Garrett Toles as their Community Relations Manager. "My job was to establish a program where we could assist the city with its out-of-house population.

He began seeking out and establishing relationships with different agencies and nonprofits to see who could accept the number of volunteer hours now required by the City, which is four volunteer hours times the number of employees at Coco Farms each month, roughly 200 to 220 total hours per month. This contribution as well as helping out-of-house individuals become self-sufficient is a tremendous help to all involved, the City, non-profit, CoCo Farms and of course the individual.

In Antioch, CoCo Cares' objectives are the same — help make individuals self-sufficient. But their nonprofit support comes through cash donations, not volunteers.

A major recipient is Opportunity Junction, a nonprofit agency that caters primarily to the medical field. It serves Antioch and Concord with career training. The program combines 12 weeks of computer and life skills training with up to four months of paid work experience.

Leanne Matthews, Concord, is one individual whose life has benefitted from CoCo Cares. Due to two hip surgeries and recovery, Mathews was out of work for an extended period, and eventually found herself unable to pay rent. She became homeless and was living in cars, tents, camps and shelters.

"I was at the Concord Shelter, I looked down on the table and I saw this wanted ad for a job at CoCo Farms. I called and filled out an application online. I got a call back and went on an interview, and they hired me! It has changed my life. I'm not in a shelter anymore. I have my own place, and it's all because, Coco Farms gave me that chance."

Matthews's position is community relations associate and works community service at White Pony Express.

"I have a little glitch in my background and that was stopping me from moving forward, and CoCo Farms gave me a second chance. I am profoundly grateful."



State of the City 2024

Mayor Edi Birsan

Concord Mayor Edi Birsan delivered the annual State of the City address at the Hilton Concord on February 15. The sold-out luncheon was hosted by the Greater Concord CA Chamber of Commerce.

In his 37-minute speech, Birsan covered a number of topics, including the City's response to homelessness, major construction projects, public safety, new businesses coming to Concord, and more! Here are a few highlights.

Revenue — Measure V and Sales tax continue to be the revenue source for the city. Thirty-three percent in sales tax, 27% property tax, and 26% from Measure V funds, half of which goes to the general fund for capital improvement projects.

Concord received \$27 million from the Federal America Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) that was divided to support the unhoused, \$5,000 grants to 370 small businesses, grants to 22 non-profits, Infrastructure/public safety/special events, general fund, and to offset COVID-related expenses.

Infrastructure — To learn the status of any of the construction projects, the city has an online interactive construction map. It shows the location of each project and in what stage of development they are in. Projects could be road maintenance, parks, sewer and stormwater, traffic signals, buildings and grounds, and other miscellaneous projects. Go to: Cityofconcord.org/CIP

Homelessness — A priority for the City of Concord, Birsan states that its new mobile resource center that brings resources to the homeless at various locations has proven to be a more successful outreach technique than having a brick-and-mortar center.

The city has also budgeted for interim motel housing especially to support homeless families. The goal is to move these families into more permanent housing.

"When you see them (CORE workers aiding the homeless) giving food or giving clothing, it's not that they are enabling the homeless, they are our neighbors. We are trying to keep them alive till we get to the point where they can cooperate in their own recovery," he stated. "When we look at the homeless, they are us. The overwhelming number of homeless in the City of Concord graduated from City of Concord schools. They are our

neighbors."

Housing — There are currently 300 new housing units getting ready to be built.

Concord Naval Weapons Station — the anticipated Term Sheet presentation has been postponed until March 19 in order for Brookfield to do more outreach within the community.

Public Safety — Birsan received applause for acknowledging Concord's police force, stating that police have been unfairly criticized to the point where folks are unable to see what our police have done for us.

The addition of 12 drones and License plate readers has been instrumental in apprehending suspects as well as providing invaluable service on 28 search and rescue missions.

Business — In 2023 there has been a slate of new business openings in Concord that add to the nearly 9,000 business licenses on file.

Concord Community Academy — For those interested in learning how the City of Concord operates, six classes are offered April 12-May 11. Register on the city website by March 8.

Birsan ended his presentation with this statement.

"When the town of Pacheco was destroyed and the people came here, the people in the first six months said we are going to live in Concord in concordance with one another. We cannot as a society or as a city continue with the concept of division. Remember these seven words. 'Indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.'

"No matter what our differences may be, whether in our economic system, our political system, our past social ills, or greatness, we need to be together.

"We need to engage one another and be open to changing whatever views we have based on new ideas, new experiences, and the experiences of others. We need to listen to each other. Remember, we are in Concord, living in concordance with one another."

Watch the speech in its entirety Online at Cityofconcord.org/civicalerts or by scanning the qr code.



Thank You, Employees & Volunteers!



“The Story” Returns to NorthCreek Church

Tableau Vivants, or Living Pictures, are static scenes containing one or more actors or cast members, depicting artwork.

Before radio, film and television, tableau vivants were popular forms of entertainment. Cast members are motionless and silent, in costume, and are carefully posed with props and/or scenery.

“The Story 2024” will include 13 of these living pictures. Each depicting biblical themes from the prophets of the Old Testament to the apostles of the New Testament.

“The Story” is not an art show. It is an experience that brings beautiful orchestrated musical arrangements and narration that connects the storyline from each beautiful, re-created painting and sculpture. Some pieces of art you will find familiar, like Leonardo da Vinci’s “Last Supper,” and some of the pieces are lesser-known works that still clearly illustrate a scene from the pages of scripture.

“The Story In Art” began in 2012 and quickly became a NorthCreek tradition. Over the past 11 years The Story has been performed during the Christmas season to over 31,500 attendees, and this year it will be shared as we prepare for Easter.

Over 300 volunteers have worked year round to bring The Story to life. From the construction crew, sewing department, fabricators, welders, artists, make-up teams, cast members, choir, and orchestra, with the sole purpose of carefully preserving not just the artistry of the pieces that you will see, but most importantly the truth of the Scriptures.

The Story shares “the story” of the bible from beginning to end. With music, narration, and reproduced works of art, we capture scenes directly from the



pages of scripture that summarize the Old Testament, illuminate the nativity, focus on Christ’s life and ministry, bring a greater understanding of his death and resurrection, and explore how the new testament church spread like wildfire around the globe.

The Story is remarkable. Six masterful performances are coming March 21-24.

NorthCreek Church is located at 2303 Ygnacio Valley Rd. in Walnut Creek. Go to www.thestoryinart.com for showtimes and tickets. This article is courtesy of thestoryinart.com.

Opioid Crisis Takes Toll on Small Business and Workers

By Natalie Blanning

The opioid crisis in California has inflicted profound harm on individuals and families, as well as the intricate fabric of small businesses and the workforce statewide. Small businesses, integral to California’s economic heartbeat, sustain millions of jobs and play a vital role in contributing to the state’s economic vitality. But when workers develop opioid use disorder, it disrupts productivity and increases healthcare costs — neither which are sustainable for businesses who typically have very small profit margins.

Many workers, particularly in industries such as construction, agriculture, and manufacturing, are vulnerable to injuries and acute pain conditions that may lead to opioid prescriptions for pain management. However, reliance on opioids can quickly spiral into addiction, jeopardizing not only the health and well-being of workers but also their livelihoods and ability to support themselves and their families.

To address these concerns, California lawmakers should prioritize efforts that focus on education, prevention, and access to newly developed and soon to be FDA approved non-opioid alternatives for pain management. These breakthrough treatments are incredibly exciting because of their potential to transform the fight against opioid use disorder and overdoses. Already, a bipartisan group of lawmakers in

Washington have introduced legislation (the Alternatives to Pain Act) that would ensure that seniors enrolled in Medicare can access and afford the new treatments, and nearly a dozen states across the country have introduced bills to drive awareness, accessibility, and affordability of non-opioid alternatives.

California should follow suit. Non-addictive non-opioid pain treatments can provide safer and more sustainable solutions for individuals suffering from serious pain. By advocating for awareness of non-opioid treatments, lawmakers in Sacramento can help reduce reliance of Californians on addictive medications and mitigate the impact of the opioid crisis on small businesses and the labor force.

It is crucial for us to seize this opportunity to confront the opioid crisis directly. By passing legislation that encourages education, prevention, and access to non-opioid alternatives for pain management, policymakers can safeguard vulnerable groups from the devastating effects of addiction and build healthier, more resilient communities statewide.

About the Author: Natalie Blanning is executive director for Consumer Alliance for a Strong Economy, a non-partisan advocacy organization representing entrepreneurs, small business owners, farmers and consumers.

Local News Items from Other Sources

In Case You Missed It...

Concord Naval Weapons Station Redevelopment Term Sheet Meeting Postponed To March 19

by Claycord.com

Brookfield Properties has completed the process of drafting a proposed Term Sheet for the redevelopment of the former Concord Naval Weapons Station.

The Council’s consideration of the Brookfield Term Sheet by the LRA, originally scheduled for February 20, 2024, has been postponed at Brookfield’s request to allow the community additional time to review both the Term Sheet and staff report. The term sheet is a document that establishes procedures and standards for the negotiation and drafting of a Project Specific Plan and a comprehensive proposed Disposition and Development Agreement.

The City Council is now set to consider the Term Sheet at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, March 19, 2024.

Shake Shack Walnut Creek Will Open March 5th

by Bay Area Telegraph,
<https://bayareatelegraph.com>



On March 5th, this iconic restaurant chain will open its second East Bay location at Mt. Diablo Blvd. and Locust St. in Downtown Walnut Creek – and they’re pulling out all the stops. The new Shack is one of the biggest Shake Shacks to date, offering two levels of seating and plenty of room for hungry customers. And you’ll find two brand-new limited-time shake flavors: Tiramisu and Dreamsicle. For the Bay Area only, they’re rolling out the Golden State Double – a double cheddar cheeseburger topped with pickles and garlic aioli and featuring 100% California grass-fed beef from Oakland-based Cream Co. Meats.

The first 100 guests will receive a limited-edition Shake Shack gift, .

McDonald’s Offering Free Food To California App Users

Each Thursday until March 29, Californians who use the company app can take advantage of Deal Days with a minimum \$1 purchase to receive the following for free:

March 7: Happy Meal, March 14: Sausage McMuffin with Egg, March 21: 6pc. Chicken McNuggets

California app users can also get 20 percent off any order over \$10 and a \$0 delivery fee for all orders over \$15 using Mobile Order & Pay, according to a company news release.

Get Your Easter Bunny Photos

by Visit Concord visitconcord.com

In partnership with Cherry Hill Programs, snap up the cuteness and create memories that’ll last a lifetime. Sunvalley Shopping Center, 1 Sun

Valley Mall, Concord, 10 AM - 8PM. Reservations required. <https://whereisbunny.com>

Free Humphry Slocombe Ice Cream + Shop Grand Opening

by Visit Concord visitconcord.com

For their grand opening on march 25, 11 am- 8pm. They will give out free scoops to celebrate with their new neighbors. Guests will be asked for an optional donation of \$1 when they grab their free scoop.

Humphry Slocombe will donate all proceeds to Project Open Hand, their ongoing charity partner. Project Open Hand’s mission is to improve health outcomes and quality of life by providing nutritious meals to the sick and vulnerable, caring for and educating our community. Humphry Slocombe Concord, 2045 Diamond Blvd. Concord

Contra Costa Winegrowers Announce Spring Wine Tasting Trolley Tour

by Contra Costa News contracostanews.com

The Contra Costa Winegrowers Association announced its Spring Wine Tasting Trolley Tour will be held on March 24.

The event will be held from 12:00 pm to 5:00 pm with 6 locations and 8 wineries. The event is \$120 per ticket.

Meet the winemakers, vintners, and sample wines from barrels and bottles. Take the opportunity to purchase futures and bottles for your very own wine cellar. The best way to enjoy this beautiful wine country is aboard the wine trolley. Trolleys loop around to stops every 20 minutes, and last pick up is at 4:45 p.m.

Any questions please call or text (925) 383-0244. Tickets at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/spring-wine-tasting-trolley-tour-2024-contra-costa-winegrowers-tickets-824939224427>

ARF Animal Rescue Foundation Is Now Joybound

by Claycord.com



After 32 years as the Animal Rescue Foundation, one of Contra Costa County’s longest-serving animal rescue and adoption nonprofits got a new name and makeover today. Animal Rescue Foundation will now be known as Joybound People & Pets.

“If you’ve ever seen a dog give a happy wag or a cat lovingly nuzzle up to its person, you’ve seen Joybound in action,” said CEO Susan Lee Vick. “The name Joybound reflects our longstanding commitment to forming and supporting strong human-animal bonds to bring greater health and happiness to dogs, cats, and their human families.” 2890 Mitchell Drive, Walnut Creek
<https://joybound.org>

More stories at Claycord.com



Behind the Camera with ABC 7's Dan Ashley

Sometimes we can see a neighbor for years without knowing much about them. We can see a TV personality every day for years and never know who they really are.

Rock the Casa is an annual musical charity event organized and presented by ABC 7's Evening News Anchor, Dan Ashley. It generates funds for Court Appointed Special Advocates which provides volunteers to serve children placed in the foster care system. An equal percentage of the proceeds support Boys & Girls Clubs, Big Brothers Big Sisters and Friends of Camp Concord, which sends hundreds of underserved children to summer camp at Lake Tahoe each year.

It was good news when Dan Ashley, who has been a newscaster for San Francisco's ABC 7 for more than twenty-five years, agreed to sit down with me for an interview. After graduating from the University of North Carolina in 1985 with degrees in English and Speech Communication and working in local TV stations, he arrived ten years later in the Bay Area.

I wanted to get into his skin and learn more about the man himself. Dan is well known not just as a TV personality but as a humanitarian who supports many charities in the Bay Area. He is also the lead singer of his own rock band, and I thought that might be a good place to start.

So, how come you are a lead singer?

"I was never really into music until as a kid I sang in junior choir. Just for my own pleasure I also decided to take some voice lessons. I never had any musical ambitions beyond that. It was only twenty years later, at a charity golf tournament, after speaking to the leader of a band that was playing, I was invited to sing. I was terrified and refused but he insisted. I found a song I knew and mugged my way through it. I was shocked when I was asked to join the band as lead singer. I insisted that they throw me out if I couldn't perform. But I did. I'm still convinced they only hired me because I was 'that guy on TV' and it gave them a bit of status. I practiced for six months with them, and the rest is history, as they say."

Since then Dan has released his own solo album.

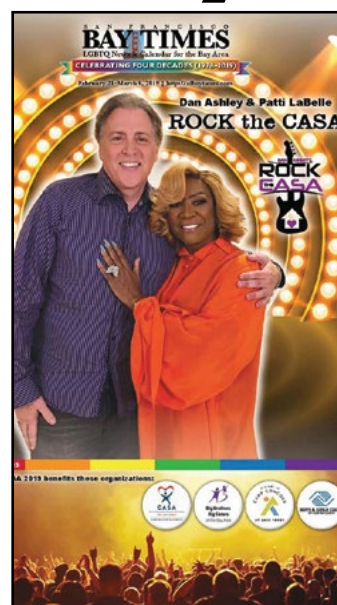
What is your most memorable experience as a TV reporter, excluding your interview with President Obama in the White House?

No question about it. It was when I went to Auschwitz with Linda Breder, an amazing woman who survived three years there. I struggled to take in the cleanliness, orderliness and quiet of the place. The large open lawn-like areas. My mind was filled with what I had learned and seen in newsreels: the horrors and atrocities that had been committed there. I just couldn't equate what I was seeing with what I knew was the real history.

We also went on a tour of Birkenau which was also a terrible place. Returning to Auschwitz, we found the gates locked, and we had left twenty thousand dollars worth of equipment inside. I was making a four-part special for TV. The three police on duty refused to allow us to enter. It took about forty



Dan Ashley and band performing at the Outside Lands concert



Dan with Patti LaBelle at the 2019 Rock the Casa event.



Behind the scenes at ABC 7 with the teleprompter anchors use.



In 2005, Dan traveled to Auschwitz-Birkenau recreating the journey by train to the camps. Thousands of Jewish pilgrims also made the trip including Holocaust survivors.

minutes of arguing, begging, and cajoling until one of them convinced the others to let us enter, but only to collect our equipment. As soon as we picked it up, I told our cameraman to start shooting and delayed our exit for twenty minutes." Dan added a quirky comment that he is probably the only person who begged to be allowed into Auschwitz!

Another occasion that has stayed with him was being assigned to the Columbine shootings. "I dreaded going," he said. Around the satellite village where the TV trucks were parked, the atmosphere was somber as if we were all in church."

Dan explained that most reporters try to avoid these tragic assignments. What touched him, however, was a woman who came to his trailer door with a plate of freshly baked cookies and thanked the team for letting the country know what had happened. He laughed as he explained that the warm weather changed overnight and the next day it snowed. There was a rush by hundreds of reporters to the Burlington coat factory in Denver to buy cheap topcoats.

What is your most fearful experience?

"Having to report on hurricane Hugo [1979] as it hit South Carolina." It affected 2 million people and killed 67. He went on air while the winds, sounding like an express train, howled and the building shook. He said he was able to put on his professional face for the broadcast, but inside he was terrified. "I honestly thought I was going to die."

interviewing Rosie O'Donnell before she became famous, the director's canvas chair he was sitting on collapsed. It was hilarious, but Dan was embarrassed. However, Rosie showed just how professional she was by turning attention to herself.

"If that had happened to me," she joked to the camera, "it would be all over every news channel in the state with folk making fun of my weight."

"If I give you three wishes, what would you make?"

"Nobody has ever asked me that before, so I might need some time to think about it. I guess I would like to see an

end to the polarization in the country. Where people would agree to differ, but respect each other in the process and work for the common good." And your second wish. "That there be an end to the opioid crisis. Not just helping addicted people with rehab or removing street dealers, but getting to the root cause. I imagine it will require lots of goodwill and dollars and I'm not sure either one is available.

"My final wish is to travel. I would like to do more traveling with my wife, Angela. I've had the opportunity to see a lot of the world and I would really love to see new places for several months at a time. There are so many interesting countries on my bucket list that I would like to visit."

Regarding Dan Ashley's Rock the Casa, this year will be a tribute to the late Tina Turner. The show will feature her best-known music and will be performed by Franc D'Ambrosio, best known in the Bay Area as the Phantom of the Opera. He will be joined by the Oakland Symphony Orchestra and an added rhythm section. This concert is on April 27, at the Lesh Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek.

Generous, remarkable and a true professional, Dan lives in Walnut Creek, and he is your neighbor.

On another occasion when

Have You Read the Authors Who Also Write for **The Diablo Gazette**

Available on Amazon Books & Kindle

Michael Barrington 'Your Neighbor's Shoes' www.mbwriter.net

William Gensburger Editorials www.misterwriter.com

Jill Hedgecock 'BookEnds' & 'For Love of Pets' www.jillhedgecock.com

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