

# The Diablo Gazette

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MAY 2024

## The Rewards of Mother's Day



Photo by Envato/luruggiero

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

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## Publisher's Notes

by David King

May is a special month. We honor Mom's, Fallen Soldiers, and in this area, even cherry-picking season, in Brentwood. Which is why for the cover, I chose this lovely photo of Mom under a cherry tree. This photo by Denise Wilson Photography of Concord was a close second choice.

Wilson specializes in Family, Maternity, and Newborn Photography, and loves capturing authentic joy-filled moments of local families. With Mother's Day and Graduation coming up, check out her website at [denisewilsonphotography.com](http://denisewilsonphotography.com).

On April 27, while Clayton's Art and Wine Festival looked quite intoxicatingly fun, (pun intended), over in Bay Point, they were busy giving away over 500 bikes to the community for their annual Bike Rodeo. Thanks to Mount Diablo Recovery Center, Marathon Petroleum and the Contra Costa County Sheriff's office.

In Martinez, congratulations to Brix & Craft, Craft Cocktails Wine & Artisan Pizza on their recognition as the Martinez Chamber of Commerce Business of the Month. The award was received by owner Corey Katz at the April 17 City Council meeting. Katz and his business were recognized for their great food, top-notch customer service, and dedication to the entire Martinez community.

One bit of interesting trivia news, literally, Jeopardy elite champion, Andrew He, was identified during April's Jeopardy tournament as a stay-at-home dad from Concord!

Jeopardy fans will remember He who finished in third place in the first ever Jeopardy Invitational Tournament last month. He has made several appearances on Jeopardy and ranks among the all-time highest cash winners of nearly \$350,000.

In his earlier appearances in 2022, He was identified as from San Francisco. Maybe He had since moved to Concord?

He has been difficult to reach for comment – but Congratulations to He. If you know him, ask him to reach out to me at Diablo Gazette. He could be a great fact-checker.

Spring cleaning is the spark for many a garage sales over the next few

## Moms, Memorial and More



Photo by Denise Wilson Photography



Andrew He wins match to join finals of Invitational

weekends. Some have already begun as this sign spotted in Concord indicates.

**Happy Mother's Day and Remember to Honor our fallen soldiers.**



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# Journalists from Turkmenistan to Meet Local Journalists of Free Press

by Michael Barrington, [mbwriter.net](http://mbwriter.net)

From April 26 until May 4, the Rotary Club of Concord, in conjunction with Open World and Rotary International, will be hosting a group of seven delegates, young business professionals, all connected to journalism from Turkmenistan.

Most of them are editors of some capacity to state-run print media, and two who work on the news websites. Local television there is also state-run and derives most of its content from the print media. There is no free press in Turkmenistan.

The Turkman mission is to experience best practices in journalism, and journalism schools, and, if possible, learn from journalists working under difficult conditions.

In 1999, under President Bill Clinton, Congress authorized the creation of Open World as a Legislative Branch agency that offers bipartisan support to Members of Congress in creating cultural exchanges for Eurasian leaders to witness democracy building in action.

Few people in the USA have heard of Turkmenistan, a sparsely populated and poorly known country, with 70% of the land in the Karakum desert. It is bordered by Kazakhstan to the northwest, Uzbekistan to the north and east, Afghanistan to the southeast, Iran to the south, and the Caspian Sea to the west.

The republic, a former Russian satellite, declared independence on October 27, 1991, and adopted the name Turkmenistan. In the early years of independence, a corrupt regime led by the dictatorial rule of Saparmurad Niyazov, failed to improve the quality of life for the people, despite the interest of foreign investors in Turkmenistan's natural gas resources.

His primary interest was in propagating an elaborate personality cult. In addition to declaring himself president for life, he pursued a number of extravagant projects to this end. Atop a monument called the Neutrality Arch, a gold statue in his likeness — one of the many such statues and portraits scattered throughout the country — was designed to rotate to continuously face the Sun. He called for a "Golden Age Lake" to be constructed in the desert at a cost of more than \$6 billion, and his semi-autobiographical Rukhnama ("The Book of the Soul") was established as required reading in all of Turkmenistan's schools, even forming a part of driver's exams. He renamed days of the week, months of the year, a crater on the Moon, a breed of horse, a canal, a city, and a wide range of ideas and places after himself and members of his family.

A substantial proportion of state money — at the beginning of the 21st

century, estimated at more than half of the country's gross domestic product — was funneled off to a special presidential fund. Much of this revenue was to subsidize special construction projects emphasizing the president's prestige, including a space-age mosque.

The capital city, Ashgabat, reflects his lunatic efforts. As one writer puts it, "If you put Las Vegas and Pyongyang in a blender, the result would be Ashgabat." This systematic diversion of revenue, as well as various "reforms," resulted



Turkmenbasy Ruhy Mosque Turkmenistan Monumental-ashkabat



School Kids



Presidential Palace

in a crippling decline in education and healthcare services. The newly elected President, (son of the previous president), Serdar Berdimuhamedov, elected in March 2022, has yet to enact any noticeable reforms.

Ashgabat has one of the highest costs of living in the world, largely due to the country's inflation and import issues.

Although the constitution declares Turkmenistan to be a secular democracy and a presidential republic, the country has an authoritarian government controlled by the president and his Democratic Party, the country's only political party.

Immediately after the death of President Saparmurat Niyazov in 2006, Berdimuhamedov's father was inaugurated President following



Park in Ashgabat

presidential elections in February 2007, which did not meet international standards. The current president in an election declared neither free nor fair by international observers, won with a 73% majority.

It is a country rich in natural resources and its gas reserves are estimated to be the world's fourth largest. Its principal customer is China.

The war in Ukraine is causing the government to look at other new options as the Russian oil and gas market is losing customers.

Human Rights Watch has identified problems which were arbitrary arrests, torture, and disregard for civil liberties, including restrictions on freedoms of speech, press, assembly, religion, and movement.

The judicial system is subservient to the president, who appoints and dismisses judges unilaterally. In practice, the courts are commonly used to punish dissent and remove potential threats to the president's political dominance. To outside observers, the Turkmenistan

legislature is considered to be a rubber stamp parliament.

Like his predecessors, President Serdar wields absolute power, and is the focus of a personality cult in the state-run media. The government has an absolute monopoly of the media, and state TV and radio pump out a steady stream of propaganda.

Reporters Without Borders has called Turkmenistan an ever-expanding news black hole. Foreign news and opposition websites are blocked, and international social networks are often inaccessible.

Nearly all television stations and newspapers in the country are state-owned. Some provisions exist for private outlets, but they must secure state licensing and provide positive coverage of the government. Literary expression is likewise controlled despite efforts to enrich Turkmen literature. For a time, in order to promote Niyazov's Rukhnama, the publication of all other works was suppressed. The contrast between the two countries should make for an interesting if not enlightening series of meetings among these journalists.

Next month in Part II, we will report on the results of the Turkman delegation visit.

*Michael Barrington, is a local author: "Let the Peacock Sing", "The Ethiopian Affair", "Becoming Anya", "The Baron of Bengal Street", "No Room for Heroes and Passage to Murder". "Magic at Stonehenge" is a collection of 42 short stories. He also blogs on his website: [www.mbwriter.net](http://www.mbwriter.net).*

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

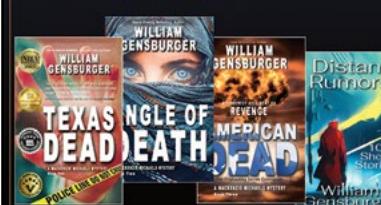
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Michael Barrington 'Your Neighbor's Shoes' [www.www.mbwriter.net](http://www.www.mbwriter.net)



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'Naked Gardener'  
[amzn.to/46EQ6sP](http://amzn.to/46EQ6sP)



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## Maximizing Your Home Sale: The Power of Strategy

Selling a home sounds easy, right? Just put the property on MLS and it sells itself. Ahh, well, you will find agents or services that will do that. However, an agent who is not just an order taker is experienced in marketing and negotiation and can maximize the impact of what you do to get your home ready for sale. Consider hiring an agent who has a plan.

You have come this far to prepare your home for sale (according to their recommendations and that of the staging expert and photographer – Tip 1). So don't stop now. Set yourself up for success with the maximum pull-out-all-the-stops, no-holds-barred approach. Here's how.

**2) Avoid pocket listing** or limited marketing approach (meaning only that agent or company knows about your home being for sale). This method limits your exposure from reaching all audiences that might be interested and consequently reduces the chance of receiving multiple offers. Would you sell anything else that way?

A strong marketing plan done correctly can be a seven to 14-day process. Can you live with the inconvenience of agent showings for a week or so to net you thousands more dollars?

You might think you are saving a little money by not going on the market. But am I wrong to suggest that if you could have received thousands more than what you saved, you would wish you had tried another strategy?

An unrestrained marketing and negotiation strategy has the possibility of getting you much more than your perceived savings.

**3) Open Houses** – Only a small

percentage of folks who go to an open house ever buy that particular house. They are gathering perspective. So why do them?

Agents who are working at another open house may be sending clients to your open house. Agents who know what their clients are looking for may send them to open houses that fit their criteria.

Neighbors come and may know someone who they might want to be their neighbor.

The number of visitors coming through the house creates a sense of urgency among potential buyers.

We might advertise only one open house to create a sense of urgency. Folks come concerned there may not be another chance to see it. All of the activity creates a "buzz" around your house – buzz equals dollars.

**4) Set an Offer Date** - There are a couple of strategies for setting an offer date. Buyers who know there is an offer date can take their time reading the disclosures, getting their loan pre-approvals in place, and gathering up their funds.

They will have less buyer remorse by not feeling rushed to make a decision and will be more likely to give you their last dollar in their offer (provided you have followed the aforementioned tips.)

Why spend more time preparing for sale than the time on the market for sale? Incrementally, each step helps build the momentum around your home sale and increases the home's exposure, and thus, in the end, its sales price, terms and conditions.

Skip steps and you risk leaving money on the table. Sure, your home will sell. But will you wonder if you could have gotten more?

## MONTHLY MARKET REPORT

March 2024

### CONCORD



#### MARKET COMPETITION

Median Days on Market **9**  
Sales-to-List Price % **102.2%**  
% of Active Listings with Reduced Prices **34.6%**

### CLAYTON



#### MARKET COMPETITION

Median Days on Market **8**  
Sales-to-List Price % **104.1%**  
% of Active Listings with Reduced Prices **14.3%**

Source: Car.org



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## County Offering Paid Elections Ambassador Training

Are you passionate about democracy and want to share facts about how elections work? Apply for a paid training session, hosted by the Contra Costa County Elections Division, to learn first-hand about election processes and security.



ages 16 and older who live in Contra Costa County. Participants will receive a \$50 stipend for completing the training.

**Elections Community Ambassador Training:** An in-person training opportunity for people who want to learn about how the county secures its elections and share that information with their communities. The training is open for people ages 18 and older who live in Contra Costa County. Participants will receive a \$150 stipend for completing the training.

To participate, you must apply by May 14 online at: <https://www.secure-election.org/ambassadors>



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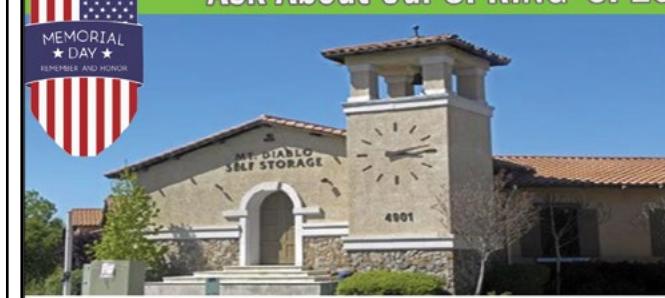


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[idiaz@claytonca.gov](mailto:idiaz@claytonca.gov)

## Clayton Mayor

# A Letter from the Mayor

May 2024

Dear Friends and  
Neighbors,

At our Tuesday, April 16, Council Meeting, the City Council welcomed Interim City Manager **Adam Politzer** to the Clayton Community. Mr. Politzer brings a wealth of experience to Clayton with over fifteen years as a City Manager. He also possesses a high level of leadership skills that he will bring to the Office of the City Manager and to the City Staff. The City Council and I look forward to working with Mr. Politzer as he offers many talents to complement our Community.

The City Council had one Action Item: Receive and accept the appointment of **Frank Gavidia** to fill the third seat on the **Community Financial Sustainability Committee**, as recommended by the City Budget & Audit Committee. Additionally, the Budget & Audit Committee recommended renewing the terms of the existing Community Financial Sustainability Committee Members, **Hank Stratford** and **Howard Kaplan**, for two-year terms expiring December 31, 2026.

All three members of the Community Financial Sustainability Committee have extensive and credible financial backgrounds:

Hank Stratford, current volunteer Clayton City Treasurer, former City Council Member and Mayor, is a **Certified Public Account (CPA)**,

**Howard Kaplan** is a

**Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA)**, and a local business leader,

**Frank Gavidia is a Certified Financial Planner (CFP)** who leads his own Financial Investment Firm.

This Team will review the financial position of Clayton and provide recommendations on how best to proceed with a sound financial plan that ensures Clayton's ability to maintain and improve our services.

And, a big thank you to all the community volunteers who participated in our annual Clayton Cleans Up on Saturday, April 20th. **A Job Well Done!**

As I mentioned in the 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 small-town charm and 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](mailto:JimD@claytonca.gov). Let's make 2024 a year to remember in Clayton. I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

*Jim*

## County Flood Control District Restoring Natural

# Waterways, Protect Endangered Species



Contra Costa County is known for its beautiful open spaces and natural waterways, which are integral features of our natural environment. I would like to share two of the County's initiatives aimed at supporting, restoring, and safeguarding our natural surroundings - the Contra Costa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District and the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy.

The Contra Costa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (FCD) is committed to flood protection, ensuring the integrity of our regional storm drainage systems, and reducing creek pollutants. At the Pacheco Marsh, the FCD has worked to restore degraded wetland habitats which has led to the return of tidal flows. As a result, the marsh has become a sanctuary for threatened species. Along the Clayton Valley Drain, the annual Giving the Natives a Chance event focuses on restoring native

plants. Since 2013, volunteers have placed 46,400 native plant plugs in this area, while also removing invasive plants and trash.

It is important to note that the County cannot carry out all this restoration work alone. Many volunteer watershed groups work throughout our region to maintain and improve our waterways. Furthermore, the County has dedicated staff for land preservation to support and protect our endangered native species.

The East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy (Conservancy) is a partnership between Contra Costa County and the cities of Brentwood, Clayton, Oakley and Pittsburg. The Conservancy implements the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Community



## Concord Mayor

# Dancing Around the Dias

### The Hokey Pokey of Just Cause Eviction

After the Council put forth its Rent Stabilization Just Cause ordinance, it then had to withdraw it, tabled while a referendum challenge was made by landlords. That effort failed to get the required signatures by its deadline and was withdrawn. The ordinance went into effect immediately on April 19. Now the Council has continued this dance by putting its foot back into the part of the ordinance that deals with single-family homes and displacement compensation for no-fault evictions.

One idea discussed with some constituents has been the idea of increasing the time of notice, such as 10 months, as a way to avoid the displacement costs simply by being fair to the tenant by offering ample time to plan for the move out. No doubt there will be other ideas discussed in the May 14 council meeting.

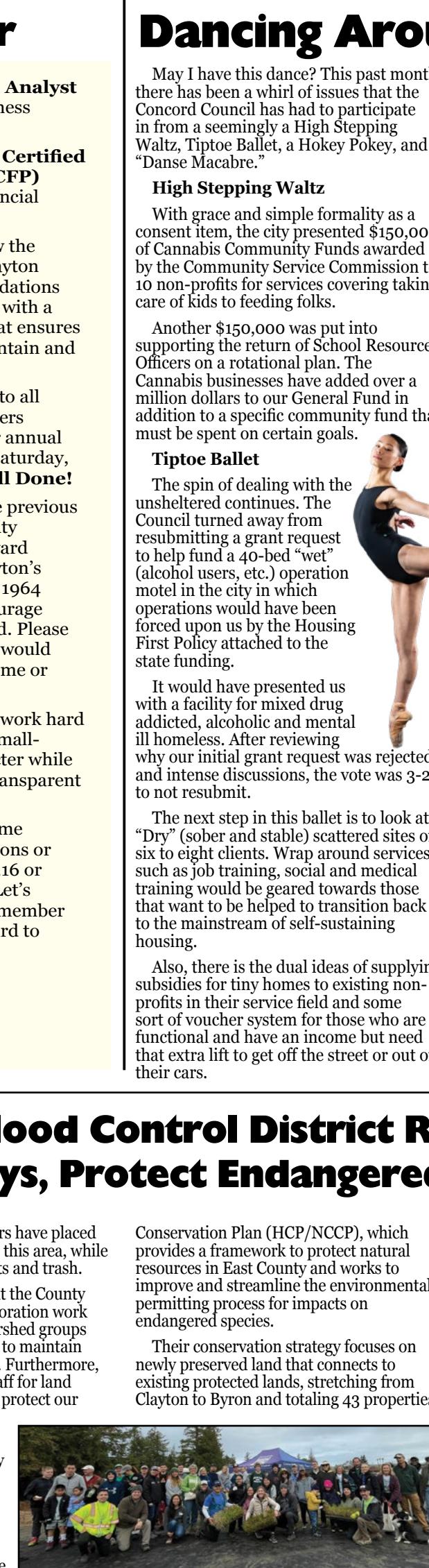
### Danse Macabre

This dance of death took place as the Councilmembers were very involved with Earth Day event that remind us that our lives can depend on taking care of the environment. And if we should fail, at least we can leave a cleaner greener planet for the next species that wants to put its foot (or tentacle) down.

Then there are the teachers of successful dance moves such as those proposed by Jon Green, author of "Gentlemen of Fortune Academia", where we might invest in teaching our children practical skills for success, to be more civilized, and other lessons of common-sense. [JonGreen702@gmail.com](mailto:JonGreen702@gmail.com).

Whatever the music, be it politics, government, or community, remember that we are all sometimes in it whether we like it or not, but when we are, choose your dance with civility and grace.

Opinions above are those of Edi Birsan and not to be distracted by his stumbling around with two left feet (Were you expecting two RIGHT feet?) [EdiBirsan@gmail.com](mailto:EdiBirsan@gmail.com)



Volunteers, Supervisor Carlson, Mayor Hoffmeister, Supervisor Glover's staff, CC Resource Conservation District, and The Restoration Trust for a great morning of Giving Natives a Chance Planting event, December 2023.. Photo: CCC Water District

across 12,000 acres. The goal is to conserve 30,300 acres. Additionally, the Conservancy has completed 11 habitat restoration projects, including the creation of ponds and the restoration of natural wetlands.

These two initiatives are crucial for sustaining our environment and supporting the well-being of our natural spaces for current and future generations.

With the help of volunteers and local watershed groups, Contra Costa County works to support the growth of local protected species and helps to maintain an ecological balance in our natural environment.

To learn more about these programs, please visit FCD <https://www.contracosta.ca.gov/5586/Flood-Control-District> and HCP/NCCP <https://www.cocohcp.org/>.



## Thomas Duane - 162 years ago

It's cherry season again, and that reminds me of our own local history and contribution to this sweet produce. Martinez farmer Tom Duane is the father of the California Bing Cherry.

When I came across Thomas Duane's listing on the Find a Grave website, I had no idea what I would eventually uncover; a tidbit of a story full of grand ideas that inhabited the Franklin Canyon area of the lovely city of Martinez in the days when the soil was enriched with the greatness of growing fruits and vegetables, when farms and orchards were plentiful, and everyone knew their neighbor. In addition to the Bing cherry, I discovered that Duane also developed the Duane Prune and Duane Plum.

Thomas Steven Duane was born on February 5, 1862, in Canada. His father was Canadian-English, his mother from Ireland according to the 1900 census. Thomas Duane immigrated to the United States of America in 1875 and became a citizen through his father's naturalization. Tom was one of five sons, and at the age of 10 was traded to another Irish family along with his brother to work at a nursery in exchange for daughters to work at the Duane fabric business. The brothers still maintained contact with their family but worked at the nursery until the age of 18 where he saved over \$500.

At the age of 22, he set off for California to start a life in the nursery business.

Here he purchased 100 acres of farmland for \$500 in Franklin Canyon in Martinez.

Thomas married Sarah Jane Rodgers (Sadie) in 1894. Sadie's parents were Patrick and Mary Ann Rodgers, founders of Pleasant Hill. Thomas and Sadie had three children, Ruth, Joseph, and Verna. They made their home in the Franklin Canyon of Alhambra Valley in Martinez, California.

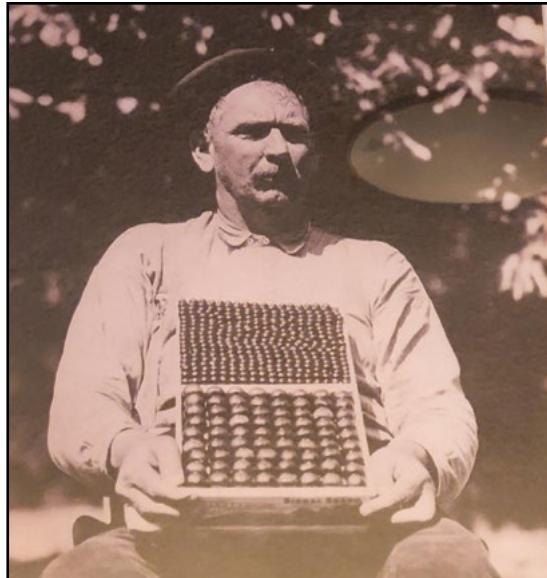
Verna is the Great Grandmother of Steve Welch of Willian Welch Wines in Martine who still own a few acres of the Thomas's original farmland purchase.

Thomas started the Franklin Canyon Nursery/Martinez Nursery in 1884. He was welcomed by John Muir, John Swett, Dr. Strentzel and many other nut and fruit growers. He was a Master nurseryman. With years of work, he created a new strain of the Bing cherry. His creation earned his Bing Cherry a gold medal at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis.

In 1915 a newspaper article in the San Francisco Call read:

### Contra Costa Cherries Are Shipped to Taft

"Cherries measuring more than an inch in diameter and resembling hair sized plums, are being exhibited at the Contra Costa County booth in the California building at the Exposition. [Referring to the exhibition at the



1915 World Fair in San Francisco]. They are the result of several years of experimental work by Thomas S. Duane of Franklin Canyon, Oi-Ho [exhibit address] is known as the "Burbank of Contra Costa." A box of the fruit has been shipped to former President William Howard Taft by Duane"

Taft had a history with cherries. It was former First Lady Helen Taft who was responsible for having 3000 cherry trees (a gift from Japan) planted at the tidal basin and throughout Washington DC in 1912, and to this day is a primary attraction to the Capital along with



its Annual National Cherry Blossom Festival there.

Thomas was a great advocate of farming and children's education. He served on the Alhambra High School District Board of Trustees for over 20 years and lived a full and vibrant life in the Franklin Canyon area of Martinez.

Thomas Steven Duane passed away on January 11, 1932, following a stroke and is buried at St Catherine's Cemetery in Martinez.

Most of the Duane ranch land was sold in 1961 for Sadie's medical expenses. Two years later, the original store was closed when Highway 4 opened.

A special thank you to James Wilson, Joseph Palmer, and John Curtis from martinezhistory.org for helping me find the pieces to put together some of Thomas Duane's life in Martinez. This article has been updated from its previous publishing in Diablo Gazette, February 2021.

Local News Items from Other Sources

## In Case You Missed It...

### East Bay Regional Park District To Receive Nearly \$1.4M In Federal Funding For Wildfire Mitigation

U.S. Representative Eric Swalwell (D-Castro Valley) secured the funding, according to the park district.

"We thank Representative Swalwell for his support and leadership in prioritizing the region's wildfire mitigation work," said Park District General Manager Sabrina Landreth. "This funding will allow the Park District to continue its interagency collaborative work at the local, state, and federal level."

The funding will be used to thin and remove vegetation, with a focus on dead and dying trees in areas of Anthony Chabot Regional Park in Alameda County. Park staff noticed significant tree 'die-off' in the area in the fall of 2020, and follow-up investigations found over 1,500 acres of dead and dying trees within regional parks.

### Former Pleasant Hill Police Officer Shot, Killed While On Duty In Idaho

The Ada County (Idaho) Sheriff's Office says former Pleasant Hill Police Officer Deputy Tobin Bolter has died after being shot during a traffic stop on Saturday.



Deputy Bolter was an officer for seven years and had been with the Ada County Sheriff's Office since January. He had also served with the Meridian Police Department and Pleasant Hill Police Department, according to the Sheriff's Office.

A suspect has been taken into custody, however, his name hasn't been released at this time.

### California Moves A Step Closer To Eliminating One Of The State's Last Teacher Assessments

by Diana Lambert – EdSource

Legislation that would remove one of the last tests teachers are required to take to earn a credential in California passed the Senate Education Committee unanimously Wednesday with little opposition.

Senate Bill 1263, sponsored by the California Teachers Association, will now move to the Senate Appropriations Committee. If ultimately approved by the Legislature, it will do away with the California Teaching Performance Assessment, known as the CalTPA.

The assessment requires that teachers demonstrate their competence via video clips of instruction and written reflections on their practice.

Eliminating the assessment would encourage more people to enter the teaching profession, said Sen. Josh Newman, D-Fullerton, author of the bill and chairman of the Senate Education Committee at Wednesday's hearing.

"Despite its well-intentioned

purpose, the demands associated with preparing for the TPA have actually had the perverse impact of reducing the overall quality of teacher preparation by undermining the capacity of teacher candidates to focus on what's most important, which is their clinical practice," Newman said.

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### Coming Soon – Another Gym In Walnut Creek (The Site Of The Old Nob Hill Foods On Oak Grove)

The old Nob Hill Foods on Oak Grove Rd. in Walnut Creek will soon be a gym called Club Studio.

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### Walnut Creek City Council Approves Next Step For New Aquatic Facility, Community Center

by Tony Hicks –



The Walnut Creek City Council earlier this week unanimously approved sending a \$77 million overhaul of Heather Farm Park to the design/development phase.

Made possible by voters passing Measure O in 2022 to increase the city's sales tax, the City Council agreed Tuesday that the Aquatic and Community Center Facility at Heather Farm Park will replace the existing community center and swim center with a new combined aquatic and community center.

The aquatic component will consist of an 18-lane, 50-meter competitive lap pool and a 25-meter family recreational pool with a beach entry, a slide, and a children's water spray device. Locker rooms will be part of the adjacent community center building. The center will operate with electricity from solar panels.

The large pool will be configured to World Aquatics standards for competition. The entire pool space will encompass more than 35,000 square feet.

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### Beautiful Turkey Vultures Spreading Their Solar Panels On The Fence At Lime Ridge Open Space In Concord



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# The Ins and Out of Breathing

"Just take a breath." Sage advice, but what does it mean??

As every good meditator knows, just being aware of the air coming in and leaving your body can have a profound impact on well-being.

Breath is the connection between the conscious and unconscious. You breathe whether you think about it or not, but you have the capacity to control it with your mind. This makes it a useful tool to impact both the conscious mind and the wiring of your survival system itself.

But there is more. In fact, if you have spent any time thinking about breath, you will most likely have discovered that there are a lot of different techniques, ideas, and debates over ways to train your respiratory system.

As a singer, I have tried many of them. At first, I found the whole conversation fairly overwhelming. Am I supposed to focus on the inhale or the exhale? Should I be breathing into my belly or my chest? And why does my neck hurt more after I do certain techniques?

Different techniques all have a place and a purpose. I am so grateful to have all of these tools at my fingertips because my respiratory needs can be as individual as the moment itself.

## Choose the Right Breathing Technique

Choosing the right breathing technique does require a bit of trial and error. But with the Check/Try/Recheck protocol, you can be

sure you are headed in the right direction for your brain.

To get you started, I made you a list. Find your goal, and then try the recommended breathing drill and see if it makes a difference for you:

**Feeling guarded, Tight, Abdominal pain?** Create spaciousness with inhalation. Imagine your breath traveling up the length of your spine and out the crown of your head. Breathe into cramped areas in your abdomen. Imagine the space opening up any tight spaces.

**Feeling congested or low energy?** Exhale, hold your breath, and shake your body until you are breathless. This can help move stuck energy and lymph.

**Chronic Stress?** Reset stressed breathing patterns with bag breathing, long exhalations, or breath holds.

**Need a boost?** Sniff vigorously (like a dog on a scent) through one nostril. Theoretically, the right nostril can be more activating, and the left can be calming, but I generally feel better after doing both of them. P.S. Adding aromas can make this a magnificent exercise.

**Improve flexion** (like in a crunch or bicep curl): Exhale on the movement.

**Improve extension** (like in a back bend or triceps press): Inhale on the movement.

Hold on to this list and reference it frequently until these breathing techniques become second nature.

## CBCA Grants Brings Smiles/Relief to School, Students, and Organizations

April was a lucrative month for several organizations as Clayton Business and Community Association (CBCA) answered the call to fund their local projects.

The Clayton Historical Society received a grant of \$13,780 to have a new HVAC system installed in the CHS Museum building on Main Street in Clayton. Pictured accepting are CHS Board Members and Docents, including CHS President, Linda Pinder.

Just back from their triumphant choral competition in Nashville, Clayton Valley Charter High School's choirs swept the awards as part of the World Stride Choir and Music Festival in Nashville April 3-7. CBCA presented a \$4,000 check to help offset the travel expenses to Nashville.

CVCHS Track is ready to hit the ground running at their upcoming Los Angeles meet, with a little \$3,500 help from the CBCA for travel expenses.

CBCA also donated \$6689 to the Mt. Diablo Elementary School PFC to purchase new playground tables.

Profits from CBCA events, like the CBCA Clayton Art & Wine Festival, are invested back into our community to help groups like the CVCHS Choirs.



## Helpful Guide to Savings Accounts

Saving money is a fundamental aspect of financial well-being. Understanding the different options available for saving is essential. Let's explore the various types of savings accounts, highlighting their benefits, to help you make informed decisions about where to save your money.

### Traditional savings account

A traditional savings account is a basic yet highly accessible option for saving your money. A traditional savings account allows you to save money while maintaining the flexibility to withdraw funds whenever you need them. This is particularly beneficial for short-term savings goals or emergency funds.

### Money market accounts

Money market accounts are another good option for individuals who need quick access to funds. Money market accounts typically require a higher minimum balance but usually pay a higher dividend rate than savings accounts. Money market accounts are perfect for achieving financial stability while having the flexibility to access your funds when needed.

### Certificates

Certificates are time-bound investments where you deposit a fixed amount of money for a specific amount of time. Generally, the longer the term, the higher the return. In addition, certificate accounts typically pay higher dividends than savings or money market accounts. Certificates are ideal for individuals or families saving for specific goals, such as purchasing a

home. By investing in certificates, you can enjoy the benefits of higher interest rates while having a set timeline to reach your target.

### Individual retirement accounts (IRAs)

An Individual Retirement Account (IRA) is a specialized savings account designed specifically for retirement purposes. It may offer unique tax advantages that encourage long-term savings. Contributing to an IRA allows you to grow your money through various investment options, providing financial security during your retirement years. Please consult a qualified tax expert for the benefits and qualifications of IRA accounts.

When considering various savings accounts and investments, it's essential to weigh the pros and cons. Factors such as dividend rates, fees, accessibility, and investment options should be carefully considered. Additionally, be mindful of your financial goals and their timelines. By understanding these aspects, you can make an informed decision about the right savings account for your needs.

At Pacific Service Credit Union, we offer various savings accounts to help you achieve financial success. From traditional savings accounts and money market accounts to certificates and IRAs, we provide many options at competitive rates and terms. For more information, please visit [www.pacificservice.org](http://www.pacificservice.org) or contact a member service representative at (888) 858-6878.

Written in conjunction with AI.

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## Contra Costa Plein Air Group Show

### Coming to aRt Cottage

The rain did its work and aRt Cottage grounds were in super bloom for the Contra Costa Plein Air Painters (CCPAP). Twelve artists were able to set up their easels and paint outside, enjoying the gardens at both the aRt Cottage and the adjoining sculpture garden on the extended property.

The group is headed up by Nancy Roberts, who chooses various locations in Contra Costa County and beyond for artists to experience painting outside. This was the second time this group has visited and painted in the aRt Cottage gardens. I am sure many of their paintings will be entered in the upcoming show which runs May through June. We are hoping you visit the gallery.

You are welcome to walk the grounds and smell the flowers, then go back in and see if you recognize some of the things that you have seen. I am certain there will also be many pieces on exhibit that you will be familiar with, like the Lafayette reservoir, Mount Diablo, Locke, Black Diamond Mines and more.

You may not be as familiar with some of the snow scenes pictured here. They are from our first Sierra Artist Retreat April 7-10 at the Twain hARTE cabin (our second location). The plan was to do some plein air painting up there too. However, we had unexpected snow and made the best of it. We found Big Foot, a Snow Woman was created and a quaint gallery were part of the field trip. We were able to hold two workshops inside by a cozy fire and encouraged each other by making watercolor self-portraits and collaging on cigar boxes. We are so looking forward to the summer retreat.

Our next Open House reception is on May 4 from 2-4 p.m. Learn more about what aRt Cottage has to offer. This is a free event. Refreshments/drinks and live music will be provided. We are located at 2238 Mt. Diablo St. (2 blocks from downtown)



## JOR Fine Art Gallery Brings Tina Turner Tribute to Clayton

Quietly located in downtown Clayton, JOR Fine Art Gallery is actually a vibrant fine art gallery holding distinction within the local arts culture. JOR showcases established and emerging artists of an eclectic variety of mediums including acrylics, oil, watercolor, photography, jewelry, mixed media, assemblage, ceramics, collage, digital art, drawing, metal and sculpture.



several of the artists represented by the JOR Gallery have created Tina-themed artworks specifically for this show.

Guest artist Francine Garcia has created a full-size Paper Mache representation named "Tina TurnHer", as the exhibit is on a moving turntable. Local artist, Fiona M. Hughes has created "Legs", two tribute paintings to honor her favorite music icon (photo of 'Legs I' attached).

Featured on the guest wall for this upcoming exhibit is artwork by local favorite, John Nakanishi.

In addition to ongoing art exhibits, JOR Gallery provides a range of events and art classes, including oil painting, macramé, ceramics workshops, paint & sip, and flower arranging. Catering to all skill levels, they are ideal for participants wishing to learn new skills and techniques in a fun and engaging environment.

JOR Fine Art Gallery, Clayton, its current exhibit, themed 'Tribute to Tina,' will continue to July 21.

With a focus on community and creativity, JOR Fine Art Gallery is artist-owned and operated by Julia O'Reilly. It is the lone art gallery in Clayton and has become a destination for collectors, and anyone looking to explore the world of art.

JOR Fine Art Gallery, Clayton, its current exhibit, themed 'Tribute to Tina,' will continue to July 21.

In homage to Tina Turner, one of the all-time favorite icons of rock and roll,

## Ebba Navas Multimedia and Oils Featured at Main Street Arts

by Mimi Wirth

Thanks to the arrival of spring, we have been blessed with the beauty of green hills, glorious flowers and the glory of new growth. Spring has also greeted Main Street Arts with a new exhibit of paintings and artwork starting May 2. Explore these original new works of art by the eleven members of Main Street Arts any day, Wednesday through Saturday from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Sunday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.



Navas from 6 to 9 p.m. on May 3.

Every month Main Street features a drawing for a free beautiful artistic creation by one of our eleven members. Simply sign up the next time you visit the gallery. You might just be the April winner of a metal sculpture by Nate Holben aka Bronze Holbein. The March winner is Joan Weinstein. Her winning prize was a fabulous handmade fused glass clock, crafted by Jerry Hild.

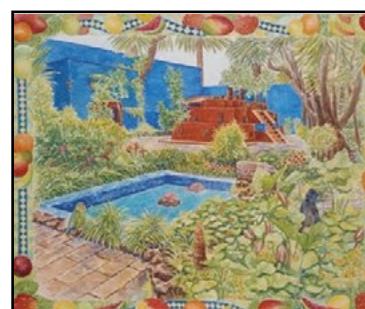
## Art Gallery at the Orinda Library Presents Ekphrasis 2024

Ekphrasis, a term derived from the days of Plato, means "art that describes or explains other art."

The Orinda Library Art Gallery is hosting its second annual Ekphrasis Exhibit through June 28, featuring over 100 works, 50 artworks and 50 writings, from some of the best local authors and artists. Our own Diablo Gazette columnist, Jill Hedgecock is among them.

This is a collaborative exhibit presented by team members of three local art groups: Bill Carmel, Lamorinda Arts Council, Linda Hartman of California Writers Club, and Ruth Stanton, Lamorinda Art Alliance.

This project consists of visual artists responding to literary pieces and writers expressing their thoughts and emotions to art from different mediums.



"In Frida Kahlo's Garden"

*Author Response: "Sixty years after you left us, the entire world is invited into your garden. Did you ever imagine Casa Azul – the source of your life and art – would become a museum to keep your story alive? Why did you both paint watermelons as your last works? Colorful lives entwined to the end. Your brilliant art endures, as does your vibrant garden. "Viva la Vida." Long Live Life!"*

Recitations, Slide Show and Artist Reception is on May 4. Artwork will be projected on a screen while writers read their work based on the artist's piece. Free refreshments will be provided. The event is free and the public is welcome. Come meet the artists and writers behind this amazing event. Some of the art will be available for purchase.

Artists reception will be held on Saturday, May 4, from 1:30 – 2:45 p.m. in the Orinda Library Auditorium. Artist Reception will follow on the patio from 2:30 – 5:30 p.m.

Orinda Library is located at 26 Orinda Way. Open Monday – Thursday, 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Friday – Saturday, 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 pm.

## Diablo Women's Chorale Presents "A Lovely Way to Spend an Evening"



The Diablo Women's Chorale's (DWC) presentation of "A Lovely Way to Spend an Evening," promises to be a magical musical experience filled with memories, dreams, hope, and the promise of love. Their harmonious program blends nostalgia with contemporary flair, performed alongside live musicians, including the Stephen Evans Cello Choir with Joe Magdalena II.

Stephen Evans, former accompanist for the DWC and holding degrees in Cello and Orchestral Performance, has directed the cello choir since 2003, also contributing to several musical ensembles, string quartets, and local symphonies.

Joe Magdalena II, the current Artist in Residence of the Stephen Evans Cello Choir and the East Bay Chamber Orchestra, showcases his classical training, artistry, and rich musical career as the composer and arranger for several songs in this enchanting program.

Director Erin Fishler, with an MA in Jazz Vocal Studies, infuses passion and precision into each piece from her vast performance and teaching experience, including recording backing vocals on a track of the Grammy-nominated album, "With Love". Accompanist Rebecca Hass

contributes skill, talent, and experience as an accomplished pianist, teacher, and composer to elevate every performance.

Established in 1942 amidst the trials of World War II, the DWC has been a musical legacy in the San Francisco East Bay since its inaugural performance in 1943. Now in its 82nd year, the DWC thrives as a secular choir that continues to attract women from around the East Bay who share a passion for spreading joy through music.

The DWC performs on Saturday, May 18, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. and Sunday, May 19, 2024, at 3:00 p.m., at Bortin Hall, Mt Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church, 55 Eckley Lane in Walnut Creek 94596. Tickets are available at [diablowomenschorale.org](http://diablowomenschorale.org).

The DWC welcomes new members in January and August and presents concerts in spring and fall each year. Whether a seasoned enthusiast or a newcomer to choral music, the Diablo Women's Chorale welcomes you.



## Hey SIR, Let's Play!

There are many organizations with noble causes to help others less fortunate, manage health, or offer support to the betterment of a community. But there is one growing group whose mission is simply to enjoy life...especially for men over 50.

**Sons in Retirement** is a fraternal organization of retired men. **SIR** is a 501(c)(4) corporation whose specific purpose is to provide for the welfare of retired men from all walks of life who are pursuing social, physical or educational activities as well as friendships for the enjoyment of their later years. In other words, these are men who want to play.

SIR activities generally meet on weekday days and evenings with a monthly luncheon and no dues. Simply afford your own participation in any of their activities. And there is a wide spectrum of activities to consider:

Golf, bowling, fishing, wine tasting, photography, cycling, bocce, pickleball, dining out, dining in, barbecues and picnics, dominoes, cards, poker, ladies' days, travel, hiking, cooking, book clubs, board games, community service volunteering, and so on. Although most activities are for "members only," there are some where spouses or significant others are welcome to join.

Sons in Retirement (SIR), founded in San Mateo in 1958 has over 90 branches and 10,000 members in Northern California and Central California. There are four branches in the Concord - Walnut Creek area. Each branch operates autonomously. To explore which branch best suits, use this brief contact information for each branch.

**Branch 19 Concord**, <https://sirinc2.org/branch19/>

Meets the first Thursday of the month



for lunch at the Pittsburg Elks Lodge, 200 Marina Blvd., Pittsburg, at 11:30 followed by an interesting guest speaker

**Branch 116 Walnut Creek**, [branch116.org](https://branch116.org) 925-322-1160 email: [branch116@gmail.com](mailto:branch116@gmail.com)

If you would like to know more about our Branch or be a guest at one of our meetings or activities, call or email us.

**Branch 8 Walnut Creek**, <https://www.sirbr8.com/> [SIRBr8Attendance@outlook.com](mailto:SIRBr8Attendance@outlook.com)

Discover what SIR offers for Active Seniors! To learn more about any of our many Activities go to our website.

**Branch 146 Walnut Creek** <https://www.sir146.com>

Luncheons at Boundary Oak Golf Course Clubhouse in Walnut Creek on the 2nd Thursday of the month. Fun and building friendships is what we're all about

**Sir, get active and go play!**

## Concord Engineering Team Wins Awards

Concord's Engineering team collected five awards at the American Public Works Association (APWA) - NorCal division awards luncheon in February.

All four of the Capital Improvement Projects that were submitted for consideration won "Project of the Year" in their respective categories.

The Hillcrest Green Infrastructure Project won for Environmental Project of the Year Award (\$5 million or more) Project Manager, Kevin Wheat.

The Whitman Sewer Replacement Project won the Environmental Project of the Year Award (less than \$5 million). Project Manager, Justin Bosch.

The Monument Path Project, managed by Tianjun Cao won for Transportation Project of the Year Award (\$5 million or more).

Transportation Project of the Year (less than \$5 million) was awarded for the Downtown Corridors Project. Tianjun Cao was also Project Manager.

The Hillcrest Green Infrastructure Project was also selected by APWA NorCal to be submitted for recognition at the national APWA Expo Conference in Atlanta, GA this September.

Additionally, Concord's City Engineer, Carlton Thompson, won Manager of the Year. Carlton has



streamlined project management, enhanced financial compliance, and fostered a new era of infrastructure sustainability.

Congratulations, Team Concord! APWA is expected to present this at the May 7 Council meeting.

(This article originally appeared in the Summer 2024 issue of Concord's City News & Activity Guide.)

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# Skylar Bistro: Chasing the American Dream by David King

Skylar Bistro enjoyed a successful and well-attended Grand Opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony on April 13.

Unique in that Skylar Bistro serves Classic favorites for breakfast/brunch such as waffles, eggs benedict, crispy bacon, fresh fruit, coffee, and the sort.

And for lunch, American classics of the comfort variety including sandwiches, burgers, salads. "all elevated with our signature homemade sauces.

But in the evening, Skylar Bistro transitions to Thai fusion with dishes such as Pad Thai and curries, all prepared with authentic ingredients for an unforgettable experience.

"We take pride in using the freshest ingredients and crafting our own sauces in-house, adding a special touch to every dish," says the bubbly owner, Nicki Bunteesud.



A Thai restaurant is a welcome international addition to an otherwise narrow choice of dining options in Clayton. How did Nicki end up in Clayton?

"I'm a spirited adventurer from Thailand where I was born and raised," She answered in her patent bubbly persona.

"About a decade ago, I embarked on a journey to the United States with a singular goal: to master the English language. Little did I know California would steal my heart.

"I've been traveling between Thailand and the U.S., exploring diverse cultures

and cuisines. I decided to make the U.S. my home. I'm chasing the American Dream with excitement and loving every moment of my adventure."

That adventure includes years of working in different restaurants from small cozy spots to larger fancier establishments.

"Trying out all these different restaurants taught me so much about cooking. Food has this amazing power to bring people together and make them happy."

Whether she's chatting with customers or seeing their smiles as they leave, it makes her happy too.

"Food is like a universal language that everyone can understand. It doesn't matter where you're from; good food always brings people closer. That's why I'm so passionate about making sure everyone has a great dining experience."

Nicki says Clayton resonates with the feeling of home. The stunning backdrop of Mount Diablo State Park, serene farms, and adorable spots like Old Creek Springs Park just brings a unique charm to the town.

"The people here exude kindness and friendliness, making it a pleasure to be a part of this close-knit community and an ideal place to establish my business."

To support Nicki's dream, just dine at 6101 Center St. or Order online for delivery at [skylarbistro.com](http://skylarbistro.com).



## SKYLAR BISTRO Now Open in Clayton



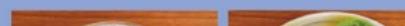
### American Classics for Brunch! 10 am - 2 pm

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## JOURNEY-MAN'S JOURNAL

by Jill Hedgecock, www.JillHedgecock.com

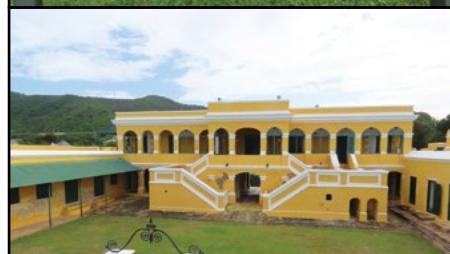
Of the three United States Virgin Islands: Saint John, Saint Thomas, and Saint Croix, my family chose St. Croix because it is off the beaten track, or maybe because the island has been called the "Culinary Capital of the Caribbean." All three islands use United States currency and phone services and do not require a passport, which minimizes travel headaches and makes all three U.S. Virgin Islands a good travel destination. You must drive on the left, but most rental vehicles have left-side steering columns, making it easier to adjust.

While the beaches are the major draw of St. Croix, there are plenty of experiences to be had for the adventure traveler. In addition to watersports like scuba diving, kayaking, and snorkeling, St. Croix offers hiking, cultural and historical experiences. Reminders of the island's historical legacy are present in the two key towns: Christiansted and Frederiksted. It is also a good launch point for a Buck Island Reef National Monument excursion. Best of all, the food is amazing.

Buck Island was a must-do on our list. This shallow water lagoon offers the unique opportunity to follow an Underwater Trail of interpretive signs. We booked a sailing tour through Big Beard's Adventure Tours. The Underwater Trail only offered basic information and was a bit underwhelming but the aquatic life was impressive. We saw a barracuda, a spotted drum fish, schools of colorful tang fish, parrotfish, and even a spotted eagle ray.

My husband and I hiked to the top of the island. It was a steep, half-mile climb, but we were rewarded with gorgeous views.

I enjoyed the sailing but was saddened by how the coral reef is struggling to survive due to disease and warming waters. Hopefully, the reefs will be



Cane Beach

restored in the future.

My husband and younger daughter went scuba diving at Cane Bay Beach and Frederiksted Pier, while my eldest daughter and I snorkeled. The coral growing on Frederiksted Pier and the aquatic life in the area were by far our favorite underwater destination. One of my best memories occurred when a spotted eagle ray unexpectedly rose from the ocean bottom to the surface and jumped out



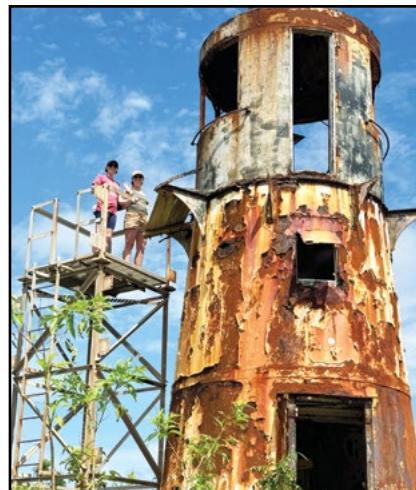
Isaacs Bay



Moko Jumbie



Ptudall



Old Lighthouse

S.Q. Orpin is the author of the gripping five-part Women's Fiction Series "CATWALK" and accompanying cookbooks.

Clifford says his stories "transport readers to enchanting worlds where childhood wonders meet adult drama." Cliff was a U.S. Marine for ten years before a 35-year career as a police officer. His novel, "Typhoon Coast", is a mesmerizing story of danger and redemption.

of the water right in front of me. We also saw giant tarpon fish, dozens of turtles, and a few sting rays at this snorkeling hot spot.

St. Croix's sugar production history is evident across the island. The conical stone structures of the associated windmills, which squeezed juice from sugar cane, are peppered around the island. Our Airbnb, Rust Op Twist, houses one of these stone structures. We stayed in the home of the former overseer and made evening treks to the former windmill to watch the sunset.

Another place to view the remnants of a sugar plantation is at St. George's Botanical Gardens. This sixteen-acre parcel contains the ruins and repurposed buildings of an 18th-century Danish sugarcane plantation, a shell museum, and over one thousand botanical wonders.

Another historical point of interest worth visiting is the seven-acre Christiansted National Historic Site. Information about the Danish era of occupation of the Virgin Islands between 1734 and 1917 is on display in the historic

buildings. Here, I learned that Alexander Hamilton lived on St. Croix as a youth.

Images of Moko Jumbies (masked figures standing on ten-foot-high stilts) appear as sculptures and murals across the island. The tall figures are said to ward away evil spirits. These larger-than-life figures parade down Christiansted Harbor Boardwalk four times a year as part of various festivals.

Our tour of the Salt River National Park and Ecological Preserve in a pedal kayak was a surprising mix of history and nature. The overview of St. Croix's history from the arrival of the first humans to the 1493 arrival of Christopher Columbus provided an interesting narrative as we paddled to get close-up views of royal terns, herons, and an egret rookery.

Our guide explained about the devastating impact of red boa on songbirds. A worker is believed to have released the snake when the Hovensa refinery closed. The boa population exploded in 2016, while birdlife plummeted. My favorite part of the tour was holding a non-stinging Cassiopeia jellyfish.

One day we hiked up to Hamm's Bluff to the remains of a crumbling lighthouse. Another day we hiked to Isaac's and Jack's Bay. The views of Isaac's Bay offered some of the most picturesque viewpoints on the island. Point Udall, which is near the start of the Isaac's Bay trail, is the easternmost point of the United States. Walking along the northern beach of Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge was another highlight. Because breeding turtles are also attracted to these white sand beaches, the refuge was only open on the weekend during our March visit. The beaches close completely between April 1 and September 1 during the turtle nesting season.

Now I know why St. Croix has been described as the "Culinary Capital of the Caribbean. Our favorite restaurants were Diane's Roti Master, The Landing, to name a few, and our top pick, La Reine Chicken Shack. The Johnnie cakes at the Chicken Shack are amazing, as are their well-seasoned and perfectly prepared chicken and fish. The Landing offers fresh fish and reasonably priced Caribbean lobster, another dining highlight. On our last night, I splurged on lobster cannelloni with wild mushrooms at Savant.

We didn't find time to tour either of the two-run distilleries (Captain Morgan and Cruzan Rum), dance with a Moko Jumbie, or take a horseback ride on the beach, but that's okay. Now, we have an excuse to go back.

## Meet the Authors Event in Lafayette

### Four Popular Published Authors To Sign Books

Papillion Coffee in Lafayette's Fiesta Square will host a meet-the-authors event from Noon to 2 p.m. on Friday, May 17. The event is free, and no reservations are required. This is a great opportunity to find a great new book, talk with the author, and get their autograph.

Mark R. Clifford, Deven Greene, Bruce Lewis, and S.Q. Orpin — the authors of more than 20 novels — will be featured at the event. Diverse backgrounds and different genres ensure that there will be

something for everyone looking for a good summer read.

Greene, a physician, and biochemist, applies her love of science and medicine to her medical thrillers, including the Erica Rosen MD Trilogy.

Bruce Lewis was an award-winning newspaper crime reporter at the Contra Costa Times before writing thrillers. He is the author of four novels in the Angel of Mercy Series and the novelette Love Storm.

## Clayton Pride Parade Planned for June 2

The third annual Clayton Pride Parade is scheduled for Sunday June 2, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. on Main Street Downtown Clayton. In addition to the parade, there will be face painting, arts and crafts, food from local restaurants and more. Anyone interested in marching, volunteering, or hosting a booth should go to claytonpride.com. Tax-deductible donations are also being accepted to help fund the event.

# CCC Kennel Club's Woofstock One of Country's Favorite Dog Show Returns

by Leslie Savoye

Woofstock, ranked as one of the top American Kennel Club (AKC) dog shows in the United States, is a favorite of confirmation dog show judges and the dog exhibitors who are vying for the coveted Best in Show title.

The Contra Costa County Kennel Club (CCCKC), which was established in 1942, sponsors the annual "Woofstock" Dog Show which will be held at the Solano County Fairgrounds in Vallejo from June 6 through June 9, 2024.

The event features four days of "Peace, Music and Dogs," tie dye attire, 60's music and joy for the exhibitors, judges, visitors and of course the dogs.

Woofstock is not just another dog show. While everyone dresses up in their 60's wardrobes, including the dogs, with rock 'n' roll 60's gold playing throughout the fairgrounds, the show has evolved into a celebration of love for all the



participants.

The show is geared toward providing the exhibitors with a venue to see beautiful dogs, meet with their friends, make new friends, shop the vendors for wonderful dog-related merchandise, see the judges "let their hair down" a little, and exhibit their dogs in a fun, relaxed atmosphere.

Contra Costa County Kennel Club members have worked extremely

hard since 2008 to create an environment where showing dogs is fun — even for the non-winners (speaking from personal experience). This show is the result of the efforts of not just a few club members, but the entire membership of the CCCKC and Yosemite Kennel Club.

With entries exceeding 2,000 dogs per day, Woofstock has become a "bucket list" event for nearly everyone in the dog show world. Woofstock brings the very top dogs from all over the country, the best judges, and the most wonderful exhibitors. So, if you want to see groovy dogs up close, the Solano Fairgrounds is where you want to be the second weekend



in June each year.

Spectators are encouraged to be a part of the experience, attend wearing a flower in your hair, sport those bell bottoms, florals, paisley and tie dyes.

CCCKC knows their responsibility goes beyond the dog show. They understand the importance of being diplomats for our dogs and serving the community.

The Club actively supports canine activities, charities, and groups dedicated to the health and welfare of dogs. The list is too long to print but includes local Sheriff's Canine Units and shelters, veterinary scholarships, Take the Lead, the AKC Canine Health Foundation, the AKC Museum of the Dog and more. Contra Costa County Kennel Club has made substantial financial contributions to these organizations, all for the love of dogs.

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

May is rife with dog holidays and awareness days. May 1st is National Purebred Dog Day. May 5th is Mayday for Mutts. May 11th is National Dog Mom's Day. May 11th to the 14th is the Westminster Dog Show. May 20th is National Rescue Dog Day. May 21st is World Dog Day. So, how well do you know dogs? **Take this quiz to test your knowledge of the canine breed.**

1) A dog shares this trait with black fire beetles, snakes, and vampire bats.

a) a sense of smell that is 100,000 times better than humans

b) a thermal sensor in its nose

c) it can hear food dropping to the floor from ten miles away.

d) two residual teeth that are not used for anything.

e) a dog has nothing in common with these other animals.

2) Dog's feet can smell like this popular snack:

a) Nachos

b) Fritos

c) Peanuts

d) Potato chips

e) Cheetos

3) How much more advanced are dogs' hearing than humans?

a) Dogs hear frequencies twice as high as us.

b) Dogs hear frequencies three times as high as us.

c) Dogs hear frequencies twenty times as high as us.

d) Dogs hear frequencies thirty times as high as us.

e) Not at all. Their hearing is the same as ours.

4) True or False: Dogs can synchronize their heartbeats to ours.

5) True or False: Dogs can see bright colors better than humans.

6) Excluding Greyhounds, these two dogs can reach the fastest speeds:

a) Border Collie and Doberman

b) Saluki and Jack Russell Terrier

c) Siberian Husky and Afghan Hound

d) Saluki and Afghan Hound

e) Afghan Hound and Vizsla

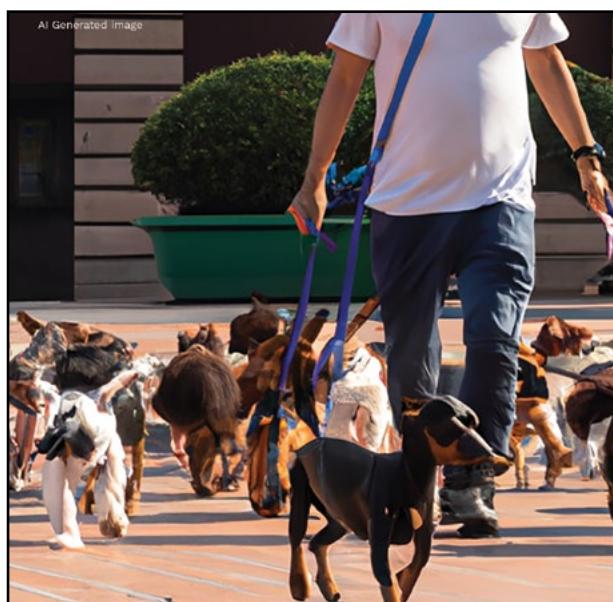
7) True or False: The direction of a dog's tail wag can tell whether he is happy.

8) This breed can pull up to twelve times its body weight.

a) Saint Bernard

b) Siberian Husky

c) Burmese Mountain Dog



d) Alaskan Malamute

e) Dalmatian

9) This dog starred in over twenty films.

a) Pal, Collie

b) Rin Tin Tin, German Shepherd

c) Terry, Cairn Terrier

d) Buddy, Golden Retriever

e) Chris, Saint Bernard

10) True or False: Dogs were the first higher living animal to go into outer space and return safely.

### Answers:

1 b - The thermal sensor helps puppies, who are blind and deaf at birth, to find their mothers. Note, a dog can hear food dropping on the floor 1/4 mile away! 2b. Fritos. 3 a - Dogs hear twice as well as humans. Paul McCartney added a frequency only dogs can hear to the end of the Beatles song "A Day in the Life". 4 True. 5 False. Dogs only see muted blues and yellows. 6 d. Saluki can reach 42 miles per hour, Afghan Hound and Vizsla can both reach 40 mph. Salukis are also the oldest dog breed. 7 True. A dog's tail wags to the right when it's happy. 8 d. Malamutes are very strong!

9 b, Rin Tin Tin was in high demand in Hollywood. Pal was the original Lassie, Terry, played Toto in the Wizard of Oz and a few other movies, Buddy played Air Bud, and Chris played Beethoven. 10. True. Two dogs, Belka and Strelka, orbited the Earth in the Sputnik 5 for 27 hours in 1960, and returned home safely.

Jill Hedgecock is a local author. 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. (Book 2), is available on amazon.com.

**CVCHS News**Bill Morones, Interim Executive Director  
Clayton Valley Charter High School

As the Interim Executive Director of Clayton Valley Charter High School (CVCHS), I am thrilled to share the remarkable journey of our robotics team as they prepare to compete in the VEX World Championship for the first time in our school's history. This achievement is a testament to the innovative, and collaborative spirit that defines our Ugly Eagle school community.

There are over 40,000 robotics teams that compete worldwide. The VEX Robotics World Championship, the largest robotics competition globally, will host the top 2,400 teams of which 800 are organized high school teams. Our Juniors Team 94517X has secured its place among

the top teams, marking a significant milestone for our school and the East Bay region.

Led by Team Captain and Programmer Eric Catalano, along with his teammates, Master Builder Santi Martinez, Quartermaster and Builder Alex Mihaylov, CAD Designer and Builder Will Gallagher, and Documentation and Marketing Manager Asher Wan, our robotics team has exemplified perseverance. Despite being a newly organized team this academic year, our students have demonstrated exceptional skill and determination.

The CVCHS robotics team encountered initial hurdles, grappling with programming, and building skills, amidst fierce competition in the San Francisco Bay Area. Despite facing

seasoned teams, including former world champions, their resilience propelled them forward, earning their place in the VEX World Championship.

The journey of the CVCHS robotics team is not only about their success on the competition stage but also about their commitment to mentorship and teamwork. Recognizing the importance of cultivating future talent, the team has actively recruited and guided freshman and sophomore teams, ensuring the sustainability and growth of the robotics program at our school.

Under the guidance of coaches JoAnna Castillo and Tyler Miller, both esteemed engineering teachers at CVCHS, the team has flourished. Their dedication to fostering a supportive and innovative environment has empowered our students to push their boundaries and reach new heights.

The path to the VEX World Championship has been paved with challenges and triumphs. From the early mornings spent refining their designs to the late nights perfecting their



Asher Wan, Will Gallagher, Eric Catalano, Santi Martinez and Alex Mihaylov win a Judges Award at Dublin Robotics Club.



Alex Mihaylov and Santi Martinez making adjustments to their robot at Dublin High School.



Alex Mihaylov, Will Gallagher, and Santi Martinez getting ready for competition at Merrill West High.

programming skills, the team has displayed unwavering commitment and passion.

Their journey has been marked by notable achievements, including winning a major tournament against previous world championship qualifiers and earning recognition at prestigious events such as the One World Showcase in Berkeley, California, and the LAUNCH VRC Signature

Event Tournament held in Cleveland, Ohio.

As they prepare to represent CVCHS on the global stage, the robotics team carries with them the pride and support of our entire school community. Their journey is a testament to the transformative power of education, teamwork, and perseverance.

Our team is fundraising for their trip to the World Championship in Dallas, Texas. CVCHS Robotics Club is a free, no-membership fee club for high school students and relies solely on sponsorships and donations to fund the robots and parts, registration fees, and travel costs.

If you would like to make a tax-free and charitable contribution, please address to: CVCHS Robotics Club – Tax ID 45-2615094. If you have any questions, please address them to JoAnna Castillo at: joanna.castillo@claytonvalley.org.

The participation of the CVCHS robotics team in the VEX World Championship is a milestone worth celebrating. It reflects not only their technical prowess but also their resilience, teamwork, and commitment to excellence. As they embark on this exciting journey, we stand behind them, cheering them on every step of the way. Go Ugly Eagles!

## Mount Diablo Blooms: 12 Good Places to See Spring Wildflowers

With early, heavy rain, wildflowers are already blooming on and around Mount Diablo and across the Diablo Range. Here are 12 of our favorite spots to visit now and in the coming weeks and months.

### 1. Mitchell Canyon in Mount Diablo State Park

For many locals around Mount Diablo, this is a fan-favorite trailhead. At the interpretive center at the start of the trailhead, there's a native plant garden and cool stuff for kids to touch and ask questions about. Trails offer a wide variety of wildflowers, stunning ancient oaks, lots of birds, and interesting geologic features.

### 2. Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve

Black Diamond Mines was once the largest coal mining operation in California, and you can still experience the life of a miner in the visitor's center.

From March through November, you can also tour the mines. (Tours require advance reservations, but tour tickets are only \$5 each, and the visitor's center is free. A \$5 parking fee may apply.)

Now nature largely has restored itself to spectacular beauty and ecological health. Look closely and you might spot entire hillsides covered in wildflowers right now!

### 3. Contra Loma Regional Park

Wildflowers are popping out all over the place at Contra Loma right now. A leisurely stroll around the reservoir will give you a good vantage point to spot a lot of them.

Contra Loma also has lots of good places to picnic, and many species of birds to enjoy. You might spot an American

white pelican or a great blue heron.

### 4. Morgan Territory Regional Preserve

Visit the morning side of Mount Diablo. The regional park sprawls across more than 5,000 acres, with trail connections to Round Valley Regional Preserve, Los Vaqueros Watershed, and Mount Diablo State Park. Its ridgetop views makes you feel like you're on top of the world.

### 5. Round Valley Regional Preserve

Round Valley has big, wide-open meadows as well as blue oak-studded hills to climb. Several tree-lined creeks cross the park, including Marsh Creek, which kids like to explore during the months when streams are running.

In addition to beautiful wildflower displays, Round Valley offers good habitat for the endangered San Joaquin kit fox.

### 6. Henry W. Coe State Park

Yerba mansa (*Anemopsis californica*) at Doolan Canyon Regional Preserve by Scott Hein

California Poppies on Shell Ridge, photo by Jannine Lefevre



Mount Diablo globe lily, a wildflower only found on and around Mount Diablo, at Morgan Territory Regional Preserve. Photo: Scott Hein

This is the largest state park in northern California. With 87,000 acres of terrain, there's plenty of opportunities for hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, mountain biking, and botanizing.

It is less than a two-hour drive from Mount Diablo State Park.

### 7. Sunol Wilderness Regional Preserve

Sunol Wilderness feels remote but is only 20 miles from Pleasanton or Fremont. The park is home to spectacular spring wildflower displays, intriguing rocks, and Alameda Creek.

The visitor's center has animals that kids can interact with and settlers' costumes they can try on. Sunol is also home to lots of interesting bat species.

### 8. Ohlone Wilderness Regional Preserve

To get into the Ohlone Wilderness,

you need to hike or ride your way in on horseback. The centerpiece of this nearly 10,000-acre park is Rose Peak, which is just 32 feet lower than Mount Diablo. Surrounding the peak are grassy ridges covered in flowers in the spring. Keep an eye out; you may see golden eagles, mountain lions, and tule elk.

### 9. Pinnacles National Park

Come see the wildflowers bloom at California's newest national park. While you are there, you might spot a California condor — the condors that recently visited Mount Diablo came from Pinnacles.

### 10. Del Valle Regional Park

This park has awesome wildflowers and a fairly new visitor's center. You can also rent boats and paddle around on the lake there.

It is easy to rent a cabin or a reserve a campsite at Del Valle (reservations open four weeks prior, which means it is a good place to go if you are planning an overnight trip with short notice).

### 11. Del Puerto Canyon

Feeling adventurous? Visit the less-traveled Del Puerto Canyon, which burned in the 2020 wildfires. Make this a scenic road trip, by taking Del Puerto Canyon Road to get there, or Mines Road. Want to hike? Park at the Frank Raines or the Minniear Day Use Area.

### 12. Mines Road

A loop from the back side of Mount Hamilton over to Mines Road or Del Puerto Canyon is one of the best routes to see wildflowers blooming.

Updated on April 25, 2024, Save Mount Diablo



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

One of my friends recently commented, "I think I have a mole in my lawn. What should I do?" My reply was, "Are you sure it is a mole and not a vole or gopher?" He became thoughtful, then said, "Hmm. Don't know but why should it matter?" It matters because how you eliminate the threat varies by creature. You cannot dispatch a vole with a gopher trap. And do not even think about using a broad-spectrum poison. Let's play CSI detective to learn the differences between these prime suspects.

#### Is it a Mole?

**Prime Suspect:** Moles are easily identifiable by their pointy snouts, dark chocolate-colored fur, and tiny blind eyes. Fully grown, they are 5-6 inches long and have webbed feet and short tail. They dig shallow underground tunnels seen as erratic lanes of cracked soil, with an occasional volcano-like roundish dirt mound.

**Apprehending the Criminal:** Importantly, moles are carnivores and do not attack plants or roots. They eat earthworms and (destructive) grubs and cutworms. They are beneficial creatures, so do not trap or poison them. By July when the soil hardens, they will become inactive.

**Preventing future attacks:** Installing underground 1/4-inch square fencing wire will protect your garden from moles (and gophers). You will need to bury it at least 18 inches below ground to be effective. Leave the wire fencing exposed 6 inches above ground also.

#### Do I have Voles?



American Moles eat worms and destructive grubs - not plants - Courtesy Shutterstock



California Voles look like small gophers and eat veggies - Courtesy Shutterstock



Master Gardener Bob Archer demonstrating a Gopher Hawk



Pocket gophers are plant eating machines - Courtesy Shutterstock

**Prime Suspect:** Voles are technically Meadow Mice but larger. They resemble a small gopher with stubby nose, relatively large yellow teeth, and a shorter tail than mice. Their unwebbed toes have claws to help dig. Like other mice, they can scamper fast above ground, scurrying between access holes along easily seen paths carved by lawn munching. Voles are active 24 hours/day.

**Apprehending the Criminal:** Voles are destructive, chewing on above-ground leaves and stems, and underground roots. After a vole attack, plants may languish with leaves turning yellow and dropping and new growth wilted, as if lacking water. Look for gnawing of bark just above ground level or raceways of shorter grass through your lawn.

**Preventing future attacks:** Exclude voles from protected areas of your garden with underground wire fencing, similar

to moles and gophers. Set mouse traps near their open access holes or along their runways for them to blunder into at night. No need to bait the traps. Protect kids and pets from trap injury with a cardboard box with small access holes placed over the trap.

#### What about Gophers?

**Prime Suspects:** Gophers are classic plant root destroyers. Adults can be 9 inches long with sharp yellow teeth and stubby tails. They seem to appear out of nowhere but can wreak havoc on gardens overnight. Their tunnels are dug deeper and larger than voles or moles, often 12-18 inches deep and 3 or more inches wide.

**Apprehending the Criminal:** If your back yard is larger, you may see a progression of fan-shaped soil mounds with plugged access holes during daytime. Trapping is by far the most effective control. Effective spring-loaded cinch traps are made by Macabee, Victor, and my favorite, Gophinator. Buy them

in pairs to insert into the gopher's tunnel in each direction. For a bit more money, purchase the Gopher Hawk system, popular among Master Gardeners because it requires no digging or underground insertion.

**Preventing future attacks:** Only underground 1/4-inch fence wire can prevent gophers from returning, buried to 18 inches depth. Gophers waddle on the surface at night, so expose the wire above ground also.

When you can distinguish these three pests from each other, your chances greatly increase for control.

**Seasonal Note:** May is the ideal month for planting your summer vegetables: tomatoes, beans, squashes and pumpkins, peppers, and others. They require soil temperatures to warm to 55 F. before they can thrive. They need full sun sunlight, regular water, and supplemental soil nutrients for abundant produce. Follow planting directions carefully for each variety or ask your friendly garden center staff for guidance. Great information is also available from the UC ANR and Master Gardeners web site at ccmg.ucanr.edu.

Do you think you have another pesty creature in your lawn or garden? Email me descriptions and photos and we will investigate the scene of the crime together. Your comments and questions are welcome as well at: NakedGardener@diablogazette.com. In some cases, these may appear in future columns.

## It takes a Clayton Valley Village

Being in a small town has its advantages if you like a quaint neighborly lifestyle. But it also has some disadvantages, especially when it comes to amenities. To offset the absence of government-provided services, community members step up.

That is what residents have done in Clayton. Clayton Valley Village is a grassroots organization, one of about 400 villages across the United States. Membership is mostly seniors coming together to support themselves.

With approximately 38% of Clayton's population over the age of 55, Clayton Valley Village was founded in 2017, committed to helping their members live independently in their own homes in Clayton for as long as possible.

Through their volunteer network they will provide transportation and an array of home-based services and support for members. They also sponsor social and cultural activities to minimize isolation and promote interaction through regular activity groups of their members.

For example, there is a group of women who play Mahjong, a Movie Group, Lunch Bunch, Bocce Group, a Group that goes on Hikes, and my favorite, a ROMEO (Really Old Men Eating Out) Group.

How much easier life can be if one had easy access for assistance at home. To that end, Village volunteers provide a wide range of programs and services:

- Transportation to medical appointments, pick up prescriptions,



and to the grocery store.

- Light home maintenance, such as handiwork services, gardening, or changing a ceiling light bulb
- Technical support for computers, smartphones, and other electronic equipment
- Delivery of food and staples.
- Social support such as daily or weekly check-in phone calls
- Monthly Educational programs, mixers and more.

"Concord has a Senior Center, Clayton does not," says President Joyce Atkinson."

To receive the services and participate in activity groups one must become a Village member and reside in Clayton. Membership is \$40 per month.

"We have roughly 75 members in our Village. And we really could use some young volunteers to help with technical support and other physical needs. We are always looking for talented and skilled people who can offer expertise in many areas including fundraising, programs, events and outreach."

To become a volunteer or become a member call 925- 626-0411. To learn more, go to ClaytonValleyVillage.org.

**Clayton Valley Garden Club**  
**Plant Sale**  
**Save the Date: May 11th 9am - 1pm**  
Endeavor Hall Parking Lot  
6008 Center St, Clayton, CA 94517  
Clayton Valley Garden Club Grows plants near downtown Clayton.




\$5 for 4" Plants, 3+ for \$4 each  
\$8 for 1 Gallon, 3+ for \$7 each  
Other items priced as marked  
Taxes included

A wide variety of plants including Vegetables, Natives, Perennials, Succulent Gardens, Color Bowls for Mother's Day Gifts and Garden Corner section with gently used items.

For more information go to:  
[www.ClaytonValleyGardenClub.org](http://www.ClaytonValleyGardenClub.org) or call 925-276-2299





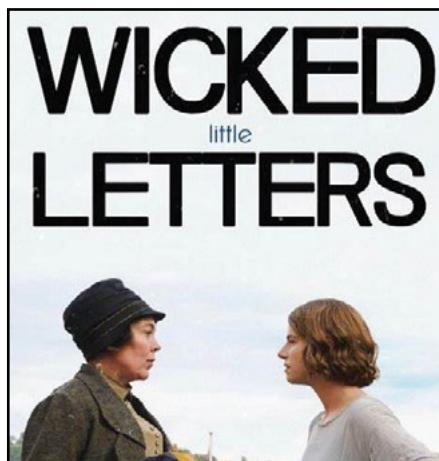
## Wicked Little Letters

Edith Swan (Olivia Coleman) has received nineteen profanity-laced letters in the mail. She is a spinster who lives with her devoutly Christian parents in the small town of Littlehampton. The letters cause physical distress to Edith's mother (Gemma Jones) and her father (Timothy Spall) decides to report the incident to the police.

Once word spreads of the incident, the townspeople quickly turn their judgmental eye to the outspoken Rose (Jessie Buckley). Rose is a young mother who lives with her partner in the flat next to the Swan family. When Rose first moves in, she and Edith spend time together and appear to form a friendship. Rose, however, likes to spend time at the local pub, speak her mind and use colorful language in public. Although liked by some of the other women, Edith begins to distance herself from the independent-minded Rose. Later, Edith does nothing to discourage the rumors that Rose is the most likely author of the letters, and since it is the 1920s, Rose finds herself in a complicated mess trying to prove her innocence.

Soon, things spiral out of control and everyone in town starts receiving nasty letters. Rose knows everyone on the receiving end, which further throws suspicion her way. Viewers will find themselves jumping from theory to theory and wondering if indeed Rose is guilty.

Behind the scenes, officer Gladys Moss (Ajana Vasan) is the only women in the local police precinct and she is told not to investigate the case. Despite her orders, Gladys is unable to ignore her hunch and begins to question the town folks while digging further into obvious clues ignored by her fellow male officers.



The film carries a theme of suppression in various ways. Edith is forced to wait on her father hand and foot, Rose has no rights or a way to defend herself against her accusers, and Gladys is kept from excelling at her job because she is a woman.

Although the topics are serious in nature, the film chooses to use humor to recount this true story. The talented cast is up to the challenge, creating humorous characters while slowly allowing the audience to empathize with each of them and their individual situations.

Then there are the letters, which are truly their own character. Do not be under the impression that the language of the letters is tame. They are saucy, unapologetically filthy ditties that will have you laughing out loud at their sheer brashness.

"Wicked Little Letters" looks to accomplish a lot in its short running time. It has historical elements, true crime, comedy and a morality tale all successfully rolled into one enjoyable little film.

Rated R In theaters

## Now STREAMING STEVE! (Martin): A Documentary in Two Pieces

Steve Martin is one of the most recognizable actors in our modern times. He has appeared in so many movies that it would be a challenge to remember them all. His extensive list of film credits could make you forget that before he began his film career, he was a wildly successful stand-up comedian.

The new Apple+ documentary of his life is an interesting undertaking. More than a checklist of his accomplishments, Steve Martin looks back on his career and tells us how he felt during his highs and lows.

Anyone familiar with his comedy act knows he was different than most comedians at the time. He was more of a personality than a guy merely telling jokes. While audiences are aware of Martin's intelligence, he would surprisingly break out into the most childish and absurd antics during his stand-up act.

His chart-topping comedy albums and frequent appearances on Saturday Night Live made the transition to movies a no-brainer. With all his success, though, he was often plagued by anxiety and loneliness.

Martin dives deep into his memories and emotions, and instead of simply name dropping celebrities or projects, he lets viewers see photos of his family and his early notes for jokes and magic tricks. The documentary includes interviews with many familiar faces, family members and close friends. While this may not be unique to the genre, it is a rare glimpse from the mostly private Martin.

It is amazing to be reminded of all the films he has made over the



years and it may inspire you to make a list of certain ones you would like to revisit. Martin does not dwell on any specific movie, which makes this clearly a film for those who would like to better know the man and his process. Although clips are provided from his many iconic roles, viewers are also treated to footage from early stand-up shows and behind-the-scenes material from some of his films.

Part two of the documentary shows Steve Martin today. He is seventy-five now and with age comes reflection and making peace with parts of his past. It also includes a surprising second act with his hit HULU series, "Only Murders in the Building," and a stage show with comedy partner Martin Short. Martin also talks about how his love of music and art have played an important role in his life over the years.

If you are a long-time fan, or new to the world of Steve Martin and curious about why he is highly regarded in the comedy community, this film is an excavation into a great comedic mind.

Rated TV MA

Currently streaming on Apple+



"Dark Matter" (Random House Reprint, 2017, paperback, 368 pages, \$9.91) by Blake Crouch takes us into a compelling sci-fi world of alternative realities with a dash of romance.

Before choosing to settle into domesticity with wife, Daniela, Jake Dessen was a brilliant quantum physics scientist who made an innovative, world-changing discovery. He loves his family and is content with his ordinary life working as a college professor in Chicago. But when Jason Dessen's multi-universe invention is put to use, Jake's life is upended. His understanding of physics is tested, and he must risk everything to return to his family.

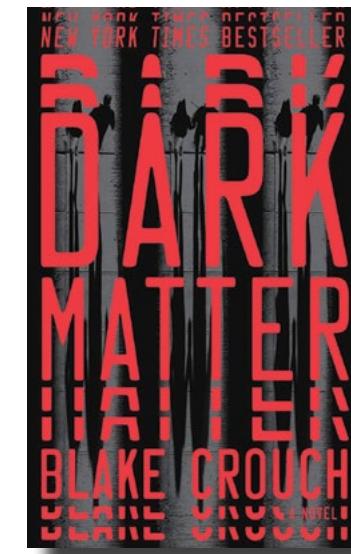
The novel opens on a typical evening. Daniela and their son, Charlie, are about to prepare a family dinner when Jason mentions to his wife that his college roommate is celebrating winning a prestigious Pavia award

for his work in physics at a nearby pub. Daniela encourages Jason to go to the local bar and congratulate his friend. As Jason walks home on that cold Chicago night, he is abducted and wakes to find himself a captive in a laboratory. After he eventually escapes, Jason discovers the life he once knew no longer exists. His wife is single and a successful artist, and his son was never born. Jason's own life is unrecognizable. Instead of being a college professor teaching physics, he has become a successful physicist who made a huge scientific breakthrough in quantum mechanics and superposition. Jason doesn't want this glamorous life. He wants only to return to his wife and son. He has no idea how to return to them, but as events unfold, Jason soon learns to be horrified by the invention (the box) that his groundbreaking work has made a reality. The consequences have not only put his life in danger,

but his wife and son's lives hang in the balance.

"Dark Matter" was a New York Times best-seller and was a nominee for Best Science Fiction in 2016. An adaption of "Dark Matter" will premiere on Apple TV+ on May 8, 2024. Fans of Matt Haig's "The Midnight Library", Andy Weir's novels, and Patrick Lee's "The Breach" will likely enjoy this novel.

Blake Crouch is a bestselling novelist and screenwriter. His novels include the internationally bestselling Wayward Pines trilogy, which was adapted into a television series for FOX. With Chad Hodge, Crouch also created Good



Behavior, the TNT television show based on his Letty Dobesh novellas. Crouch has written more than a dozen novels that have been translated into over thirty languages. His short fiction has appeared in numerous publications including "Ellery Queen" and "Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine". Crouch lives in Durango, Colorado with his family. To learn more, visit: [www.blakecrouch.com](http://www.blakecrouch.com).

# Cherries Arriving Right on Schedule

by Deb Morris, PACIFIC COAST FARMERS' MARKET ASSOCIATION

Farmers are telling us that California's sweet cherries are arriving right on schedule. Last year they had to be harvested two to three weeks late because of the heavy rain and wind. The rain and wind had continued at a time when the cherry blossoms were just setting their fruit and were unceremoniously knocked off the trees. The yield was less and the season was shorter than usual.

This year farmers are looking forward to a good yield, sweeter cherries, and an abundance of fruit through the growing and harvesting season which is about two to three months. This winter brought the perfect number of chill hours (Cherry trees need a number of cold hours between 32°F and 45°F for fruit tree or nut tree flowering and fruit production each year). They say there has been plenty of rain and sun mix, dry days interspersed with wet, to allow for the trees to produce loads of fruit.

Missy Gotelli of Gotelli Farms says the crop looks to arrive the first week in May. The trees look good and heavy with blossoms and fruit. She says, "Can't wait. Cherry season is like our annual reunion at the farmers markets - catching up with familiar faces, sharing stories, and of course, seeing everyone's face light up when they see Gotelli Farms Cherries."

Another cherry grower, Guy Allard of Allard Farms, is looking forward to beginning harvest at the end of April. "The crop looks good, decent yield, and larger fruit." He says ground water is better, giving tree roots a chance to grow deeper. His farm in Westley in the Central Valley is about 100 acres. Since 1909 they have been farming a variety of fruit and nut crops. His Champagne, Brooks, and Coral varieties should arrive at the markets first.

Harvesting a good crop of cherries depends on many factors, from good soil



and diligent care to rain and sunshine. This year looks to be a good one, thanks to Mother Nature's cooperation. This May and June, Cherry farmers are excited

for us to enjoy some of California's best sweet cherries.

You will find cherries at the Concord Farmers' Market from Diaz Farm in Hollister, Gotelli Farms from Stockton, and J&J Ramos Farms out of Hughson.

## Cherry Arugula Salad

- 1/3-pound fresh cherries, pitted
- 1/2-pound baby or wild arugula
- 2 ounces of feta, crumbled
- 1/2 cup walnuts or pecans, coarsely chopped and toasted
- 4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- Flaky coarse sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Toast pecans in a dry pan for 5 minutes. Cut the cherries in half lengthwise and place them in a large serving bowl. Add the arugula, cheese, and pecans. Drizzle with the oil and vinegar, add a few generous pinches of salt over the top, and season with pepper. Toss to combine. Taste and adjust the



## Enjoy Festival Inspired Foods with Sweet Wines

Festivals are a great way to celebrate the best our country has to offer; be it produce, seafood, or just old-fashioned caramel popcorn.

The San Joaquin Asparagus Festival takes place in Stockton at the end of April and brings to mind this wonderful course, Asparagus Ceviche.

It is a substantial salad that blends cooked shrimp and crab with raw asparagus. In most ceviche, the citrus juices cook the fish; in this case, the juices cook the asparagus.

Asparagus tends to make wines taste vegetal and calls for a wine with intense fruit flavor like Riesling.

Furthermore, the salad has jalapeño, garlic, and onion, so the spicier you like it, the more sugar your wine needs to balance the heat.

German Rieslings offer both dry and off-dry wines with high acid levels that stand up to the tart citrus. If you prefer American wines, look for Riesling from Mendocino County or Washington State. They, too, produce high-acid wines due to their cooler climates.

Another festival, California's much-beloved Garlic Festival Is heading to the Central Valley. The Gilroy-founded event is relocating to Los Banos at the Merced County Fairgrounds this summer with many suggestions on how to incorporate garlic in your tasty meals.

Garlic Vinegar BBQ'd Ham utilizes garlic, sweet onions, and your favorite vinegar-based, store-bought sauce. Gewürztraminer wine has a sweet spiciness that will work well with the ham and Caramel Corn Sweet Potatoes on the side. You can't go to a festival without finding caramel popcorn, and you won't even miss dessert if you finish your evening with these two recipes.



Salt and pepper to taste

1-2 large avocados, chopped

### DIRECTIONS

In a large bowl, toss all ingredients (except avocado) gently until well mixed. Cover and chill for 30 to 45 minutes to allow flavors to blend.

Add avocado just before serving.

**Yield:** 4-6 servings



### Garlic Vinegar BBQ'd Ham

#### INGREDIENTS

2 large sweet yellow onions, chopped  
2 cloves garlic, minced

1 large (1/2 gallon or more) bottle vinegar-based barbecue sauce  
13 pound pork ham

### DIRECTIONS

Sauté the onion and garlic in olive oil until onions are tender. Add onions to barbecue sauce and stir well.

Place uncooked ham in a baking bag. Pour about 1/2 gallon of barbecue sauce mixture into the bag. Seal the bag and marinate in the refrigerator overnight - about 8 to 12 hours. Remove the ham from the baking bag and place it on the grill. Cook ham until the meat is tender, basting often with barbecue mixture.

**Yield:** 12 servings

### Caramel Popcorn Crusted Sweet Potatoes

#### INGREDIENTS

2 (40-ounce) can yams, drained  
2 (20-ounce) can crushed pineapple, drained  
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
4 cups caramel popcorn, coarsely ground and kernels discarded  
8 tablespoons margarine, melted  
2 tablespoon all-purpose flour  
2 tablespoon brown sugar  
3 cups miniature marshmallows

### DIRECTIONS

With an electric mixer, beat yams, pineapple, and cinnamon until smooth. Pour into a greased casserole pan.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Combine the remaining ingredients and sprinkle on top. Bake 20 minutes or until marshmallows are golden brown. Serve warm.

**Yield:** 8 servings

## PUT FOOD WASTE IN YOUR GREEN CART!

### FOOD

Bones, shells, raw, cooked, or spoiled food scraps of any variety.

### FOOD-SOILED PAPER

Napkins, paper towels, paper-based take-out containers, pizza boxes, and coffee filters.

### YARD WASTE

Branches (less than 4' in length and 3" in diameter), brush, lawn and plant clippings, shrubbery, twigs, weeds, and wood chips (no dirt).



# calendar of events

## CLAYTON

### CLUBS

**Concord NorCal Helping HandsLion'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

**May 25 - August 31, Concerts in the Grove.** 6 - 8:30 PM. **May 25, Leo Vigil's Rockin' Horns** (Kalinka Earth, Wind & Fire Tribute).

### LIBRARY

**Teen Program (6th – 12th grade).** Celebrate Earth Day by creating your own desert ecosystem!

**May 04, Travel Planning Workshop,** 2:00 PM–4:00 PM. Make your travel dreams a reality! Join us in Hoyer Hall at the Clayton Community Library for a free travel planning workshop. Learn everything you need to know about independently arranging trips around the world.

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](http://www.lionsclub.org)

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

### EVENTS

**May 4, 3rd annual, Bay Area SpringFest,** Noon - 7 pm, Celebrating spring with plants, arts & crafts, music and food in Downtown Concord at tree-lined Todos Santos Plaza in the largest city of upscale Contra Costa County. There will be music on the Todos Santos stage, a dozen eclectic food vendors, beer and wine garden, free activities for kids and myriad shopping opportunities. [www.kidfestconcord.com](http://www.kidfestconcord.com)

**May 9 deadline, The Concord Art Association** Call for Artists and exhibitors for the Spring Pop-up Art & Craft Show on May 11 at Todos Santos Plaza. [www.concordartassociation.org/spring-popup-art-show-2024](http://www.concordartassociation.org/spring-popup-art-show-2024).

**May 18, Diablo Valley Corvettes, Show & Shine,** All cars are welcome. Free Nacho Bar Concord, 4:00 PM 7:00 PM. Faith Missionary Baptist Church, 4266 Thompson Drive Concord. [www.diablovalleycorvettes.com](http://www.diablovalleycorvettes.com)

**May 25-27, 33rd Bay Area KidFest,** non-stop live family entertainment, fascinating traveling attractions, arts and sports activities for children to stimulate learning and exploration, and much more. KidFest also features two food courts, nearly 20 kid-friendly rides plus arts & crafts and other vendors for an additional charge. Admission is only \$8 per person with the donation of a can of food to the Monument Crisis

### YOUR PARTNER IN BUSINESS



**CONCORD**

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

concordchamber.com | (925) 685-1181  
kcabral@concordchamber.com

Center [www.kidfestconcord.com](http://www.kidfestconcord.com)

**June 6 - September 26, Music and Market series,** every Thursday(except July 4). **June 6, Andre Thierry** (Cajun and Zydeco)

### FARMERS MARKETS

**Pacific Coast Farmers Market**  
<https://www.pcfma.org>

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY LIBRARY  
Bringing People and Ideas Together

Todos Santos Plaza.  
Tuesdays, 10AM- 2PM Year Round

### LIBRARY

**May 07, Superhero Storytime,** 10:30 am–11:00 am. Join us for stories, songs, dancing, puppets and bubbles! Your child can come dressed up in a superhero costume for Storytime! Activities are most appropriate for babies and toddlers, but all ages are welcome.

**May 08, Make Your Own Mini Comic,** 4:00 pm–5:00 pm

Learn how to make your own mini-comic, led by local artist Jessica Chrysler. Supplies will be provided. Recommended for ages 10-18. Free Comic Book Days runs from May 6-11, 2024..

Concord Library, 2900 Salvio St, Concord (925) 646-5455 <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. <http://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

**May 12-September 15, Martinez Open Air Market** 9 AM-1 PM, Join us on the 2nd Sunday of each month through September for the Downtown Open Air Market featuring Vintage, Collectibles, Antiques, Arts & Crafts, and more. You will find us on the 800 block of Main St. during the Farmers' Market. 800 Main St., Martinez

### FARMERS MARKETS

### Pacific Coast Farmers Market

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

### LIBRARY

**May 11, Friends of the Martinez Library Bag of Books Sale,** 10:30-4:00pm, Fill up a bag from anything in our store for just \$10! Members are welcome to come an hour early (at 9:30) to fill their bags first. Proceeds support the Martinez Library.

**May 2,9,16,23,30, Computer Docent Help**, 10:00 am–12:00 pm.

Our volunteer computer docents are available Thursdays between 10am and 12pm to assist with basic computer skills as well as printing and copying. If you need a little extra help getting your tech questions answered, sign up for a 15-minute.

Martinez Library, 740 Court St, Martinez (925) 646-9900 <https://ccclib.org> [www.friendsofthemartinezlibrary.com](http://www.friendsofthemartinezlibrary.com)

## PLEASANT HILL

### EVENTS

**May 18-19, Art & Wine Festival.** Saturday: 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m., Sunday: 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. This free, 2-day celebration (formerly known as the Art, Jazz, & Wine Festival) is a Pleasant Hill staple showcasing the best local talent and wine tasting the region has to offer. Whether you're looking kid-centered activities or seeking spring-filled fun, this annual event is a can't-miss festival for all ages. 60 Crescent Drive, Pleasant Hill

**May 26 - September 1, Concerts By The Lake 2024** Every other Sunday. Time: 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM By The Lake at City Hall, Pleasant Hill City Hall. 100 Gregory Ln, Pleasant Hill. **May 26th - THE GREAT SPACE COASTER** 3-part harmony favorites from the 70s, 80s and 90s

### LIBRARY

**Friends of the Pleasant Hill Library.** 1st & 3rd Tuesdays of the month.

Snacks provided by the Friends of the Pleasant Hill Library. 1st & 3rd Tuesdays of the month during the school year.

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

## WALNUT CREEK

### CLUBS

**Rotary Club of Walnut Creek** meets weekly 12:15 to 1:30 on Tuesdays at Assistance League Diablo Valley, 2711 Buena Vista Ave, Walnut Creek. <https://rotarywc.org>

**May 9, Spring Fling, SIR Branch 116 - Walnut Creek.**

June 17th, Luncheon Meeting: 11:30 AM. Call 925-322-1318 or email to [luncheon116@gmail.com](mailto:luncheon116@gmail.com) Boundary Oak Golf Course, 3800 Valley Vista Rd, Walnut Creek. [branch116.org](http://branch116.org)

### EVENTS

**May 18, 7 PM and May 19, 3 PM Diablo Women's Chorale presents A Lovely Way to Spend an Evening,** a magical musical program filled Bortin Hall, Mount Diablo Unitarian Universalist

Church, 55 Eckley Lane in Walnut Creek Tickets: [diablowomenschorale.org](http://diablowomenschorale.org)

**May 18, Ruth Bancroft Garden**

Gala, 5:00 PM - 8:30, This year's Gala at the Ruth Bancroft Garden and Nursery will focus on plants native to South Africa in the Garden's growing plant collection. We will have live music, educational materials, delicious food, specialty beverages, and more! 1552 Bancroft Road Walnut Creek. Tickets needed. <https://www.ruthbancroftgarden.org/gala/>.

**May 19, Joybound Around Town (formerly ARF)** 11am – 3pm, has been attended by hundreds of pets and people annually. Our biggest fundraisers of the year, to bring in essential funds for pets and people. Paw-rade Pet Walk. Walnut Creek's Broadway Plaza. [joybound.org](http://joybound.org) for details

**June 1, 2 Walnut Creek's Art & Wine Festival,** Heather Farm Park, offering a rich blend of culture, cuisine, and community spirit. The event, scheduled from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Saturday and until 6 p.m.

on Sunday, invites enthusiasts and families to indulge in a weekend filled with artistic expression and culinary delights.

### 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.cafarmersmkt.com](http://www.cafarmersmkt.com)

**Rossmoor Farmers Market**

Rossmoor residents and their families only. Fridays 9AM-1PM, Golden Rain Rd. <http://www.cafarmersmkt.com/rossmoor-farmers-market>

### LIBRARY

**May 04, The Japanese Tea Ceremony,** 10:30 AM–11:00 AM and 11:00 AM–11:30 AM. Enjoy a short demonstration of tea preparation for the traditional Japanese Tea Ceremony (Chanoyu) by Ikuko Thomas (tea name Kubo Ikuzen). Each participant will learn to measure the matcha, pour hot water from the small iron kettle, whip and more.

**May 07,21, Anime Club,** 2:45 pm–3:45 pm. Enjoy different anime shows with other teens (12 to 18). Shows will be decided by the group, with snacks provided by the Friends of the Pleasant Hill Library. 1st & 3rd Tuesdays of the month during the school year.

**May 14, Science Show with Mike Meneghetti,** 6:30 pm–7:30 pm. Soundwaves! Optical illusions!

Chemical reactions! Electricity and more science fun for families with elementary school-aged children. Join us for live experiments that require audience participation, and stay for a take-home S.T.E.M..

For more information: Walnut Creek Library, 1644 N Broadway, Walnut Creek. (925) 977-3340 <https://ccclib.org>

## LESHER CENTER

# may 2024

**May 2-5, The Crimson Pirate,** This treasure of an adventure story is packed with thrills and excitement. Only the brave and romantic landlubber will be permitted to learn the secret of the Crimson Pirate.

**May 2-5, Seussical Jr.** presented by Poison Apple Productions, Horton the Elephant, the Cat in the Hat and all of your favorite Dr. Seuss characters spring to life onstage in Seussical JR, a fantastical musical extravaganza that weaves together a story of being seen, heard and not feeling all alone.

**May 3, Come Together: The Beatles Concert Experience** Presented by West Coast Performing Arts Presenters, Cruisin Oldies Concerts and MANIA, 7:30 - 9:30 PM. In this live musical performance, 'Come Together' recreates the look, sound and history of the Beatles, taking you back into time to witness the Beatles phenomenal rise to pop stardom.

**May 9, Peter and the Starcatcher,** Presented by The Ballet School's Teen Production Workshop, This Tony-winning play with music upends the century-old story of how a miserable orphan comes to be The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up (a.k.a. Peter Pan). A wildly theatrical adaptation of Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson's best-selling novels,

**May 12, Sinatra, Dino, Darin & Davis: When Vegas Was VEGAS!**, Presented by West Coast Performing Arts Presenters and Cruisin Oldies Concerts, 3 PM-4:30PM, A Special Mother's Day Celebration Performance starring Jonathan Poretz. "A stylish wild cool and swinging tribute to the legends of Las Vegas" - Las Vegas Review

**May 13, Northgate Spring Concert 2024**, Presented by Northgate High School Instrumental Music Boosters, 7 - 9PM.

**May 23-26, Grease The Musical,** Presented by Poison Apple Productions, GREASE has remained one of the world's most popular and enduring musicals. Funny, frank and featuring the hit songs "Greased Lightnin'," "Beauty School Drop Out," "You're The One That I Want," and "Summer Nights."

**May 31, The Fleetwood Mac Concert Experience,** Presented by West Coast Performing Arts Presenters and Cruisin Oldies Concerts, 7:30 PM - 9 PM. Experience the timeless power of one of the greatest supergroups of our time as Los Angeles-based 'Gypsy Dreams' brings their exciting Fleetwood Mac tribute to the Hofmann Theater!

**Coming September 6, Chris Botti,** Presented by Lesher Center and Diablo Regional Arts Association, 7:30 - 9:00 PM, GRAMMY-winning trumpeter Chris Botti has been one of the most popular instrumentalists in the world for nearly three decades; he's collaborated with some of the biggest superstars on the planet, including Sting, Paul Simon, Barbra Streisand, Lady Gaga, Tony Bennett, Frank Sinatra, Aretha Franklin, Bette Midler, Joni Mitchell, Steven Tyler, Andrea Bocelli, Herbie Hancock, Yo-Yo Ma, and others.

Lesher Center for the Arts 1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek, https://

[www.lesherartscenter.org](http://www.lesherartscenter.org) Tickets: (925)943-7469 Wed-Sun Noon to 6:00 p.m.

## Other Cities

### EVENTS

**Antioch: May 16-19, 2024 Contra Costa County Fair.** Thur & Fri 12-10 pm; Sat 12-11 pm; Sun 12-10 pm. Exciting arena events, a concert series, carnival rides, livestock, exhibits and more. Contra Costa County Fairgrounds, 1201 W. 10th St. Antioch.

**Pittsburg: June 2, SIR Branch 19 will hold its Monthly Luncheon, 11 AM** with a social hour and lunch served at noon. It will be at the Pittsburg Elks' Lodge, 200 Marina Blvd., Pittsburg. SIR is a social organization of senior men who get together and participate in fun activities, such as golf, bowling, hiking, bocce, fishing, dining out, wine tasting, day trips, etc.. All are welcome. [www.sirinc2.org/branch19](http://www.sirinc2.org/branch19) or call: 925 338-1996

**Pittsburg: May 9 - September 5, The Old Town Car Shows** every other Thursday from 6-8 PM. Live music, restaurants and a fun family event. Railroad Ave., between 3rd St., and 6th.

**Crockett: May 5, Revenge Of The Fifth - 2nd Annual Geek Market** 11:00 am-4:00 pm. Craft Pop Up Market with a Geek Theme Do you like • Geeky and nerdy merchandise • Gaming and anime products • Movies and Anime-related item. Crockett Scout Hall, 991 Loring Ave, Crockett

**Livermore: May 18, Tri-Valley Writers May Speakers**, 2:00 p.m. Two editors, Eva Barrows (a developmental editor and content manager) and Lila LaBine (a novel and screenplay editor), will present "Get Ready to Publish: Selecting the Right Editor for Your Writing Project." Las Positas College in Livermore, Room 2470 in Building 2400 (Multi-Disciplinary Building). Check-in begins at 1:30 p.m. RSVP is REQUIRED at treasurer@trivalleywriters.org by May 16.

**Lafayette: June 7 - 28, Fridays, Rock The Plaza Concerts,** Lafayette, 6 PM - 8 PM. Lafayette Chamber of Commerce presents this Summer Concert Series for four Fridays in June. Live music, kids activities, food, local art, and non-profits. Mt Diablo Ave & Moraga Rd. Lafayette Plaza, Lafayette, Orinda: **Thru June 28, "Ekphrasis Exhibition,"** Lamorinda Arts Alliance (LAA), Lamorinda Arts Council (LAC), and California Writers Club (CWC). An exhibition of fine artworks that inspire literary works will be on display to be enjoyed by the public. Ekphrasis is a Greek word defined as writing that describes, explains, or is inspired by another art form, a literary device that began with Plato and Aristotle. The Art Gallery at the Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way in Orinda. [www.laa4art.org](http://www.laa4art.org)

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

## What's Clogging Our Pipes?

Central Contra Costa Sanitary District (Central San) recently participated in the largest known domestic sewage collection study to better understand what non-flushable products are being flushed down the drain. Conducted at Central San's Martinez wastewater treatment plant in October 2023, the study is a collaboration of the Responsible Flushing Alliance, the California Association of Sanitation Agencies, and the Association of the Nonwoven Fabrics Industry.

When flushed, products such as baby wipes, cleaning wipes, and makeup wipes can clog sewer pipes, damage treatment plant equipment, and harm the environment. By helping Central San better understand what materials are ending up in our sewer system, the study will help us provide more effective outreach for our customers. The key message for Central San customers is: Look for the "Do Not Flush" symbol on wipes packaging and dispose of these products in the trash.

### So, What's Being Flushed? And What Does That Tell Us?

The breakdown of items collected



from pipes at the two study locations included:

34.1% wipes are labeled with the "Do Not Flush" symbol (baby wipes, cleaning wipes, makeup wipes, etc.)

64.9% other non-flushable items (paper towels, period products, trash, etc.)

0.9% of wipes labeled as flushable

"We pulled material larger than 1-inch square directly from the bar screens, and it wasn't until everything was sorted and identified that we could see what we actually had," said Matt O'Sickey, Director of Education and Technical Affairs, INDA. "There were a lot of paper towels and baby wipes and all of the 'Do Not Flush' labeled wipes we collected were fully intact, showcasing why they should never be flushed."



### What Not to Flush — and How We Tell Consumers

According to the Proper Wet Wipes Labeling law, manufacturers of non-flushable wipes, including products such as baby wipes, cleaning wipes, makeup removal wipes and many others that are primarily used in a bathroom setting must include the "Do Not Flush" symbol on the front of the packaging.

The #FlushSmart consumer education campaign promotes the "Do Not Flush" symbol and provides information on what should and should not be flushed. The message shared with consumers is simple: Look for the "Do Not Flush" symbol on wipes packaging, and if you see it – throw the wipe out.

Extrapolating from the results of this study, refraining from flushing "Do Not Flush" labeled wipes, paper products and feminine hygiene products would capture over 90% of items clogging sewers.



## Concord's Got Talent 50 & Better Talent Show Seeks Performers

Do you dance or act or write poetry that you'd like to share at our talent show?

Then it is time for you to audition for the second annual Concord's Got Talent, 50 & Better

Show scheduled for Saturday, May 18 at the concord Senior Center, 2727 Parkside Circle.

After a successful and well-received performance last year, this funny, clever, and musical show will entertain people of all ages. All proceeds from the show will be allocated towards needed recreation scholarships for Concord senior citizens.

Anyone who wishes to be a part of this amazing production should call 925-671-



3171.

At least one member of your group must be 50 years or older.

Acts cannot exceed 3 minutes.

Performers should plan to attend the final dress rehearsal on Monday, May 13 at 5:00 p.m.

Performers can reserve additional rehearsal space by calling 925-671-3171

All comedic acts must submit their jokes in writing.

Tickets are \$13 for residents and \$18 for non-residents. Purchase at least two tickets, for a discount of \$5 per person.



## Two Events Coming to Concord This Summer You Won't Want to Miss

by Beth Javens, President & CEO

While Concord enjoys its annual events, there are two new additions coming this summer that you certainly will want to experience.

### Discover the Flavors of Concord with Sip and Dip

Visit Concord continues to highlight our many local and delicious culinary choices as we proudly present the inaugural "Sip and Dip" this June, a delicious addition to the popular Sip and Stroll tradition.

Participants will embark on a flavor-filled journey starting at the Concord Visitor Center in Todos Santos, where ticket holders will receive an assortment of items for dipping such as chips, naan, and pretzels. As everyone strolls through downtown Concord, they will sample a variety of delectable dips along the way, from zesty salsas to creamy melted cheese, making note of the favorites.

Everyone will have the opportunity to cast a vote for their favorite spot with the most tempting dip back at Visit Concord Center. The winning establishments will be crowned Sip and Dip champions, earning not only a sparkling trophy for display but also bragging rights within the community.

For the ultimate culinary conquest, those who successfully visit all Sip and Dip locations will be entered to win a grand prize: two tickets to an upcoming show at the Toyota Pavilion at Concord.

As you savor the flavors of Concord, live music will be playing throughout the evening at Salvio Pacheco Square.

For tickets and additional information, go to [VisitConcordCa.com](http://VisitConcordCa.com).

### Historical Tribute: Port Chicago Disaster 80th Anniversary

Mark your calendar for an unforgettable experience July 18-21, as we commemorate the 80th Anniversary of Port Chicago Naval Weapons disastrous explosion in July 1944 and ensuing civil rights debacle — and its profound impact on the San Francisco Bay Area.

**SUN VALLEY**  
SHOPPING CENTER  
**ZUMBA**  
FITNESS SERIES  
Join us in Grand Court for an hour of fitness and fun!  
[Shopsunvalley.com/events](http://Shopsunvalley.com/events)  
[LEARN MORE](#)

Join the several organizations including Visit Concord for a weekend filled with events and special guests honoring the lives and legacies of the Port Chicago soldiers. Attendees can immerse in the history of the largest stateside disaster of WWII featuring a lineup of educational sessions, artistic displays, musical performances, and food.

Special Guests include "The Port Chicago Mutiny" author, Robert Allen; Reverend Diana McDaniel, Port Chicago Advocate; author Steve Sheinkin "The Port Chicago 50"; Playwright Dennis Rowe "Port Chicago 50: The Play"; Composer/Bassist Marcus Shelby "Port Chicago Suite" and Hiram Crittenden — son of Port Chicago hero and advocate Jack Crittenden.

We hope to see you there.

For all things Concord, visit the Concord Visitors Center, in Downtown Concord at 2151 Salvio St., Suite T, or online at [VisitConcordCA.com](http://VisitConcordCA.com), or follow our socials @ [VisitConcordCA](http://VisitConcordCA).

### SIR 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](http://www.branch116.org) or call 925.322.1160

**Todd Wheat**

Plumber/Owner

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Contra Costa County Fairgrounds • 925.757.4400  
1201 West 10th Street, Antioch



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[ouimetbrothers.com](http://ouimetbrothers.com)

**IS THERE SOMEONE YOU KNOW WHO SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED IN OUR COMMUNITY?**

**Centenarians? Award recipients?**

**Send us YOUR news and announcements.**

**Email us: [Editor@DiabloGazette.com](mailto:Editor@DiabloGazette.com)**  
and let us know.

# Around Martinez



by Brianne Zorn, Mayor, City of Martinez

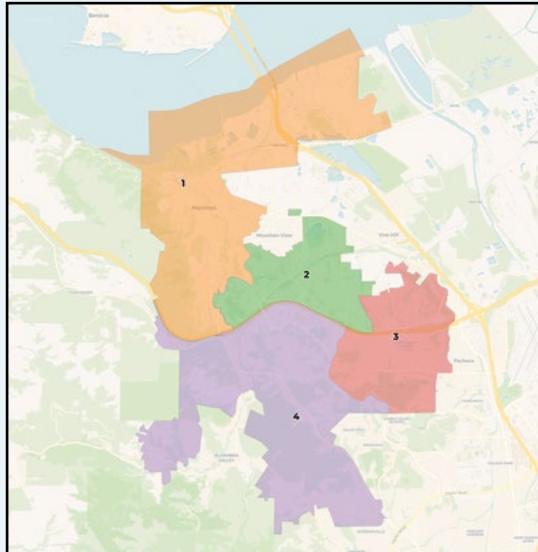
## Election 101: How To Run For Office

Being a city council member or a mayor is both challenging and rewarding. We are blamed for things when our residents are unhappy (even if we have nothing to do with it) and lauded for city successes (even if we have nothing to do with it!). Regardless, at the end of the day, we have the satisfaction of trying our best to make a positive change in your community.

Honestly, the hardest part of running for office is... figuring out how to run for office.

I ran for City Council during a unique time in Martinez's political history. It was only the second election after we adopted district elections, and although there were (and maybe still are) many who critiqued district elections, I know that without district elections, the financial burden to run for office in a city-wide election would have been a barrier to entry for me.

In 2022, the City of Martinez redistricted again, to align our district boundaries with state law and to distribute the districts more fairly throughout the city. Redistricting created a situation in which two councilmembers who lived in their district at the time of their election, now didn't live in the redrawn boundaries of the district they represented. So, the outcome of this year's election for Districts 2 and 3 will also be unique: after this election in November, Martinez City Council will be made up of representatives living in each of the four quadrants of the city.



### Are you interested in running for office?

The city of Martinez is hosting an Election 101 workshop on May 7 to present some of the information that you will need to know if you decide to run. We will answer questions about the initial steps you need to do to submit your intention to run for City Council, and how to take the first steps in forming your campaign, registering with the state, and raising funds to support your campaign. I encourage everyone who is considering taking that leap to attend. The election is not until November, but the planning starts now.

Election 101: How to Run for Office is on May 7, from 6 - 7 p.m. at the Martinez City Hall

For more information about the event, please contact the city clerk's office: [cityclerk@cityofmartinez.org](mailto:cityclerk@cityofmartinez.org).

## Get Fired Up, It's the Backyard BBQ Competition

Friday, June 14 -16, 2024, The Martinez Chamber of Commerce and Visit Martinez will host The 16th Annual King of the County BBQ Competition and Music Festival at Waterfront Park in Martinez over Father's Day Weekend.



If you are a backyard barbecue aficionado who thinks you make the best BBQ in town, consider joining the competition and firing things up with us. If you have grit, grill and competitive spirit and are feeling a bit saucy, sign-up and show off your talent. Application and guidelines can be found at <https://countybbq.com>.

Thirty to 40 of the area's best Backyard BBQ teams will compete over the two days (Saturday and Sunday) to be named 2024 BBQ King of the County and win cash prizes ranging from \$200 in first place in three categories, \$100 for 2nd place in three categories and \$50 for 3rd place in three categories. Judges will conduct a blind taste test to choose the winners.

In addition to the cash prizes, the Backyard BBQ awards also include bragging rights, trophies, swag and more.

In addition to food and arts and craft vendors, food vendors, exhibitors, and carnival rides the Chamber has lined up 10 top local bands to entertain us through Father's Day Weekend.

For more information, band line-up, volunteer, contest applications, visit: [www.countybbq.com](http://www.countybbq.com) or contact the Martinez Chamber Martinez at (925) 228-2345 or [info@martinezchamber.com](mailto:info@martinezchamber.com).



**603 Marina Vista Ave,  
Martinez  
(925) 228-2345**

[www.martinezchamber.com](http://www.martinezchamber.com)

*Explore Martinez*

## Host Families Wanted for Martinez Sturgeon Players

The Martinez Sturgeon Professional Baseball Team is currently searching for Host Families for our 2024 season. Players travel from all over the United States (and some from other countries) to spend a summer here in Martinez and play for the Sturgeon Baseball Team.

A vital part of a successful season is to have host families provide housing for the players and to create a family atmosphere for the summer. These young men will have a positive influence in our community and in your home.

To be a Host Family you will need



to be able to provide a player with their own room for the season. They will need access to a bathroom, and a kitchen and preferable a washer and dryer. Above all, provide our players with a safe and comfortable environment.

If you can be a host, please call 510-205-3409 or email: [MartinezSturgeon1@gmail.com](mailto:MartinezSturgeon1@gmail.com).

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KIDS 6-14



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WATERFRONT PARK  
MARTINEZ**

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**SIGN UP AT [WWW.MARTINEZSTURGEON.COM](http://WWW.MARTINEZSTURGEON.COM)**



## HILLSIDE TAP ROOM & EATERY

GAMETIME SAUSAGE, SPICY CHICKEN  
CRAFT BEER, & FROZEN DRINKS!

400 Ferry St. Martinez

## 2024 SCHEDULE

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	
30			1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	VAL 4:30 PM
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3	BAK 7:45 PM	VAL 6:30 PM	VAL 6:30 PM	VAL 6:30 PM	VAL 6:30 PM	DUB 6:00 PM	VAL 6:30 PM
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# Is NOW Your Time to SELL?

An estimated 5 million people have been waiting for interest rates to drop to purchase a home. Rates have already started to come down. If you are looking to sell, let's talk now and get your home ready for the Spring season!



Book an appointment with me TODAY and discover *your* options!



*"Thank you for all you've done through this process, keeping us on track and sane, helping us with contractors, and fixing problems as they arose...We're very thankful to have you by our side."*

~Buyers, Michael & Linda

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\*APR = Annual Percentage Rate. Rate of 7.90% reflect the as low as rate. Current and new members eligible. Loan amount and terms subject to approval; your rate may be different depending on loan amount, credit score and other factors. Rates are subject to change. Membership eligibility requirements apply.

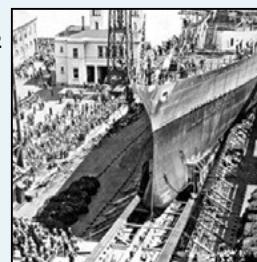
## Mare Island: Historic Core, A Modern Future

by Courtney Ayers, Realtor



Isn't it everyone's dream to live on an island? Look no further than Mare Island. This beautiful Island community surrounded by waters from the San Francisco Bay, Carquinez Strait and Napa River, was once off-limits to the public. Today the Bay Ferry runs a direct line from its shores direct to San Francisco, a short 45-minute commute for lucky inhabitants.

Renowned for its rich 142 years of Naval Shipyard history, Mare Island is now experiencing a new life and an exciting new modern future. When visiting the island, be sure to wander The Wet Mile and check out the exciting art studios, breweries, and distilleries across the island, or take a hike to enjoy the beautiful views and amazing weather.



Mare Island Brewing Company breathed life into one of the old coal sheds and has been serving up good times and award-winning brews with stunning views ever since.

Vino Godfather, a wine tasting room, took over one of the breathtaking old Mansions that line Walnut St. Visit them any weekend

for a flight and live music while relaxing on their sprawling front porch under an old magnolia tree and you will soon recognize the charm bestowed upon this small community.

Down the way, Savage & Cooke Distillery offers craft whiskey cocktails and southern fried chicken in an old naval base building that has been lovingly turned into the distillery and tasting room.

The Island's newest addition, the Quarters Coffee House, has become a center of gravity for caffeinating residents.

Mare Island is a mix of old historic and industrial structures, new homes, and magnificent nature trails. At the moment there are only around 1,078 people living on the island's sprawling grounds.

In the last year homes sold in the range of \$550k for a spacious, approximately 1700 sf 3-bedroom condominium to \$985k for a new 3,200 sf 4-bedroom home.

The future of Mare Island is bright with a new home development in the works and new businesses beginning to enter the Island. With prices soaring and space limited throughout the Bay Area, Mare Island is destined for greatness. This is the next Bay Farm!

## BEST OF Martinez — And the Winners Are...

The Best of Martinez Contest is over. The voting ended as of April 30. We will now await the announcement of winners in each of the categories as the Martinez Chamber of Commerce tallies and verifies all votes.

"Thousands upon thousands of votes were cast," according to Chamber President, Lisa Bonnington. "It is exciting to see such a strong response from the community."

In addition to learning who the Martinez community chooses as their favorite business in each category. Citizen of the Year and

Business of the Year were also nominated but those awards will be determined by a panel of judges.

Winners and runners up will be announced June 29 at the B.O.M.B! aka THE BEST OF MARTINEZ BASH!

Save the Date. More information on that event is forthcoming.



**Martinez Calendar can be found in the Calendar section. p18**

# Report on Causes of “Spent Catalyst” Refinery Accident Draws Criticism

Tom Lochner, Martinez News and Views (edited)



Photo: <https://clui.org>

A highly technical report on the causes of the November 2022 “spent catalyst” release at PBF Energy’s Martinez Refinery did little to appease the attending public and failed to address the most critical issue, some local watchdogs say.

“Instead of focusing on the mechanical aspects of the incident, the report primarily highlights failures in both worker and management practices,” said Alycia Gadde of the refinery accountability community group Healthy Martinez; she spoke via Zoom during a public comment period following a PowerPoint presentation by the independent consultant Scott Berger, whose firm, Scott Berger and Associates, LLC, was hired by the Contra Costa County Health Services Department to investigate the incident.

Gadde and several of her cohorts want timely inspections of equipment – and specifically, the stripper slide valve (SSV), a component of refineries that they contend is notoriously prone to failures, but which Berger’s report emphatically ruled out as the cause of the Thanksgiving 2022 release.

This was certainly the most prominent of a 13-month-long series of incidents at the refinery, as Congressman Mark DeSaulnier, D-Walnut Creek, noted. In an April 16 letter to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Michael Regan, DeSaulnier cited some 21 hazardous materials releases or spills, and 46 flaring incidents, that were documented by Contra Costa Health from November 2022 to December 2023.

“The significant increase in incidents is extremely disconcerting, especially in comparison with other similar facilities in the area, and calls attention to a lack of a safety culture at the company,” DeSaulnier wrote. He added that MRC is “one of the most complex refineries in the U.S.,” according to a widely accepted

industry standard, leading to “more opportunity for safety concerns if not properly maintained and regulated.”

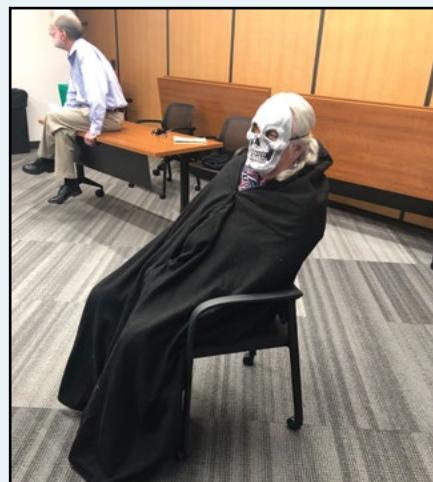
The Berger and Associates report identified eight “root causes” of the Nov. 24-25 incident. The first, singled out is “Inadequate process hazard analysis guidance re: catalyst release.”

Number eight, singled out “Gaps in site fatigue management system.” Berger mentioned that when the Nov. 21 shutdown occurred, “a key employee with a lot of expertise began a schedule of working excessive hours ... more than 20 hours per day over four days.”

Among the other six root causes, two are related to “Procedures,” one to “Stop work authority” and three to “Training.”

An additional half-dozen or so refinery critics spoke during the public comment period on April 11. No one from the refinery spoke at the meeting.

The tone of the evening may have been best represented when a woman took a seat in the chamber dressed in a black robe and wearing a skull mask. Asked later if the outfit was related to the refinery issue, she affirmed that it was, and added, “I am Death.”



## City Resumes Docent Hikes of Alhambra Hills

As it did last year, the city is again offering docent-led hikes through its new Alhambra Hills open space (I attended one last year and found it to be an enjoyable, scenic experience). The 1.5-mile hikes are free, and registration is offered through the Martinez Recreation’s Department activities page.



**Jennifer Stojanovich**  
Realtor, Better Homes Realty

## Mortgage Interest Rate

In the world of real estate, every decision counts. From choosing the right neighborhood to negotiating a fair price, homebuyers are faced with numerous choices that can significantly impact their financial future. One such decision that often arises is whether to buy down your mortgage interest rate. But is it worth it?

What does it mean to buy down your mortgage interest rate? Essentially, it involves paying upfront to lower your interest rate over the life of your loan. This upfront payment is referred to as “discount points.” Each point typically costs 1% of your total loan amount and can lower your interest rate by a certain percentage, usually 0.25%.

The primary advantage of buying down your mortgage interest rate is the potential to save money over the long term. By securing a lower interest rate, you can reduce your monthly mortgage payments, saving you thousands of dollars over the life of your loan. Additionally, a lower interest rate means paying less in interest overall, which can lead to substantial savings.

However, before you rush to buy down your mortgage interest rate, it is essential to consider a few factors:

**Your Financial Situation:**  
Buying down your interest rate requires a significant upfront payment. You need to assess whether you have the financial means to make this investment without jeopardizing

## To Buy Down or Not to Buy Down Your

## Mortgage Interest Rate

your financial stability. Consider your savings, other financial obligations, and long-term financial goals before deciding.

**Length of Stay:** How long do you plan to stay in your home? If you intend to sell or refinance within a few years, the savings from a lower interest rate may not outweigh the upfront cost of buying down your rate. On the other hand, if you plan to stay in your home for the long term, the savings can be substantial.

**Break-Even Point:** Calculate the break-even point to determine how long it will take for the savings from the lower interest rate to offset the upfront cost of buying down your rate. If you plan to stay in your home beyond the break-even point, buying down your rate may be a wise investment.

**Alternative Investments:**  
Consider whether there are better ways to invest your money. While buying down your interest rate can save you money on your mortgage, there may be other investment opportunities with higher returns.

Whether you should buy down your mortgage interest rate depends on your individual circumstances and financial goals. Before making any decisions, consult with a trusted financial advisor or mortgage professional who can provide personalized guidance based on your specific needs and objectives.

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Better Homes Realty



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Beautifully Maintained “Baltusrol” Model in Windmill Canyon at Oakhurst Country Club. 4 bedrooms plus loft, 2.5 baths, approx. 2536sf on an approx. .2 acre lot with an attached 3-car tandem garage.



\$849,000  
1927 Eagle Peak Ave, Clayton

Spectacular Diablo Ridge Condo at Oakhurst Country Club overlooking the 8th hole/par 3 with breathtaking views of serene lake and waterfall. 3 bedrooms, 2.5 baths, approx. 1554sf with an attached 2-car garage. Updated & upgraded interior.



**Jennifer Stojanovich**

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SOLD!**



\$999,000  
PENDING  
MULTIPLE OFFERS

Desirable Single Story in Windmill Canyon at Oakhurst Country Club. 3 bedrooms plus office-optional 4th bedroom, 2 baths, approx. 2053sf on an approx. .33 acre lot with an attached 2-car garage. Big back yard with expanded deck. Close to golf course & walking trails.



\$827,000  
SOLD  
MULTIPLE OFFERS

Fantastic townhome in “Countrywood” tucked away in a prime location at the rear of the complex backing to greenbelt with gorgeous views. 3 bedrooms, 2.5 baths, approx. 1568sf with a detached 2 car garage.

### Clayton Market Update

Address	Sales Price	SF	Bed/Bath	Sales Date
410 Wawona Ln	\$1,400,000	2966	4/3	3/8/2024
57 Weatherly Dr	\$1,311,000	2324	4/2.5	3/12/2024
151 Regency Dr	\$1,190,000	1927	3/2.5	3/12/2024
3400 Aspara Dr	\$1,300,000	3300	6/3	3/28/2024
132 Mt Etna Dr	\$859,000	1587	4/3	4/4/2024
608 W Myrick Ct	\$1,245,000	2010	3/2.5	4/9/2024
220 Stranahan Cir	\$995,000	1663	3/2.5	4/17/2024

### Concord Market Update

Address	Sales Price	SF	Bed/Bath	Sales Date
4081 Clayton Rd #103	\$287,000	646	1/1	3/21/2024
2129 Athene Dr	\$760,000	1226	4/2	3/25/2024
3518 Torino Way	\$1,000,000	1979	3/2.5	3/25/2024
1203 Mill Pond Ct	\$1,125,000	2749	5/3.5	3/29/2024
775 Berkshire Pl	\$1,180,000	1870	4/2	4/2/2024
4924 Laurel Dr	\$1,288,888	2661	3/2.5	4/3/2024
719 Graymont Cir	\$1,350,000	2144	3/2.5	4/17/2024

Based on Information from CCAR/Paragon MLS® as of 4/18/24. All data, including all measurements and calculations of area, is obtained from various sources and has not been, and will not be, verified by broker or MLS. All information should be independently reviewed and verified for accuracy. Properties may or may not be listed by the office/agent presenting the information.

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