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March 2026

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Photo by Micah

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Publisher's Notes
by David King

A Shout Out to CD & Power and Rosie the Riveters

I want to give a shout out to CD & Power for generous sponsorship supporting the Papa Jake statue project. Their commitment to honoring our veterans is worthy of recognition. CD & Power provides reliable backup power solutions including generator sales, rentals, installation, and maintenance. Their team supports businesses, municipalities, and critical facilities with emergency power services to keep operations running during outages and everyday operations. And they are a certified Woman-Owned Business. <https://www.gotpower.com/about-us/>

Speaking of Women, the Rosie the Riveters are looking to purchase a bench at the foot of the Papa Jake statue.

This project is about more than a statue; it's about patriotism, hard work, and ensuring future generations remember the sacrifices endured by heroes like Papa Jake and the Rosies.

The statue committee is working in collaboration with the Rosie the Riveters to combine fundraising

efforts. In alliance with Rosie the Riveter WWII Home Front National Historical Park, they are like-minded in their mission to preserve history and honor the spirit, patriotism, and work ethic of the Greatest Generation for future generations.

If other companies, organizations, or families would like to become sponsors and support the Papa Jake statue, they can visit: papajakelarson.com/sponsorships.

They are also accepting tax-deductible donations of any size to help bring the Papa Jake statue to life. Please visit their website to make your contribution.

The timing for the unveiling oois targeted for 2027 on D-Day (which is apropos). But that will require the sculpting processes to start very soon. Sponsorships such as these help the project complete on time as large upfront deposits are required.

On behalf of the project committee, I thank all the sponsors, and to those who have already purchased bricks and tiles or made donations.

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German Occupation of the Netherlands May 1940 - May 1945

(Part 2)

by Nell Fliemann

Nell Fliemann, Oakland, is 103 years old and is the mother of Jack Fliemann of Concord. She is one of a very few people still alive to tell the story of living through German occupation during World War II.

In 1933, Nell lived in Holland. She was only 10 years old and would have no understanding that Hitler's rise to power in Germany would relatively soon change her life. It was sudden.

She has written her experience of life under the German occupation of the Netherlands in a 50-page booklet that she and Jack has shared with the Diablo Gazette. This is the second installment of her story.

You can find the first installment from our February edition on our website diablogazette.com or by looking at Past Issues.

Persecution of Jewish Citizens

Shortly after we were invaded, pages and pages full of obituaries appeared in the newspapers. Entire families, father, mother and children were listed. Some Jewish parents had killed their children and then committed suicide to escape the horrible fate awaiting them in concentration camps. Persecutions of Jews in Germany had been going on for years and Dutch Jews were well aware of this.

The announcements appeared for a few days and then stopped. Within a few days after the German occupation, already thousands of Dutch citizens had lost their lives; soldiers who defended their country, some Jewish families, as well as people killed in the bombings of Rotterdam.

Soon all Jewish persons were required to wear a large yellow star of David. My sister's boyfriend made the mistake to show his sympathy with the Jewish people and wore a Star of David. He was picked up immediately and was lucky to return after a few months. He had been in Dutch prison.

Young Jewish men were ordered to staff the offices where Jews had to register. We noticed a nicely dressed Jewish young man walk by our home on a daily basis on his way to his job at the registration office. There were fierce penalties for those who failed to register. Jews were forbidden to use public transportation, or even their own bicycles. They had to walk and could only shop in Jewish owned stores. We knew various Jewish families. My sister and I played tennis with a Jewish couple. Until then I had never paid attention to who was and who was not Jewish.

At first we were told that our own Government would stay in power. But when some acts of sabotage occurred, this was immediately used as an excuse to put in a German Government. Orders now came from the Germans and changes were many and fast. Nice large homes

were requisitioned everywhere to house German Officers. Some of the owners of these houses were Jewish, others were not, they simply had to find a place elsewhere. The Germans did not care. They took whatever buildings they desired to house soldiers, and to set up their Army Headquarters and offices. Our freedom was now a thing of the past.

Deportations started in the spring of 1942. The first groups of Jews were herded into cattle trains for transport to Germany and Poland. The train shipments were very noticeable to the Dutch, who traveled a lot by train; many Dutch citizens commuted to work by train.

Railway stations in Holland are usually in the center of town. These shipments of human cargo were in full view of the public. In 1997 my husband Jack, and I visited Auschwitz in Germany. It is now open to the public and is a gruesome reminder of these evil times.

Some Jews went into hiding. Those who helped Jewish people were putting their own life on the line and also had difficulty providing them with food. If a person was found to be hiding Jews, they were sometimes shot on the spot.

Compulsory Labor of Young Men



A 1943 Nazi poster announcing the work requirement (arbeidsinzet) for Dutch men born in 1921, with reporting requirements for the local office in Gouda based on birth month. One of an increasing number of calls for forced labor during the German occupation of The Netherlands. Beneath the poster is an image of Dutch workers being escorted by German troops. On display at the Bunkermuseum Terschelling. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Men between 16 and 60 were called up for compulsory labor in factories and on farms in Germany. They were shipped there to replace German men who had been drafted into the Army. Many Dutchmen chose to go into hiding in their own home, where



Germans arrest Jews in the Jonas Daniel Meijerplein in Amsterdam, February 1941. Photo courtesy Wikimedia Commons

they still received food stamps. The dreaded Secret State Police, the Gestapo, held razzias, as they called the searching of houses.

Rounding up young men, became a daily occurrence. My cousin, Frans Wilking was sent to work in a factory in Germany. He returned at the end of the war but died at a fairly young age. My youngest brother Fred was married during the war. He had worked for an international trading company. For lack of trade, they had to let their employees go, so he stayed home and hardly ventured out. One day he left his house to have his hair cut at the barber shop not far from his house.

He walked through two gardens crossed the street and was promptly picked up by a German soldier. His mother-in-law spoke fluent German because her parents were German. She had the gift of gab, marched off to the German command post, and told the simple guards that her husband was a high-ranking Dutch Army officer. They were impressed by that and let Fred go. Many young men fled and found their way through Belgium and France, to Spain, which was not occupied by the Germans. Here there were organizations that helped refugees find passage from Portugal to England.

A year or so later my then boyfriend, Kees Oudshoorn, and three of his buddies, traveled to the northeast of Holland, and found work as farm hands on a dairy farm in Friesland. In return for work, they received food and shelter and were protected. When the war ended all four young men returned home safely. It was easier for people

to hide in the countryside than it was in the cities. My oldest brother, Piet, worked as a chemical engineer with Shell Oil. By order of the Germans, the Company was going to send him to Germany. He quit his job and became a grammar schoolteacher, which gave him a permit to remain employed in Holland.

An uncle of mine, Brouwer was his last name, owned an inland cargo barge. The Germans ordered him to continue transporting goods, but now it was for the Germans. He had little choice. A British fighter plane strafed the boat one day and sank it, killing my uncle and his two sons, my cousins.

While my boyfriend Kees went into hiding, I started dating a good friend of his. I do not recall why Ernst was free to move around. He and I met frequently; one day a messenger told me that he had voluntarily left for Germany to go and work in the film industry. He was quite photogenic and had an artistic bent. His brother had been working in the German film industry since before the war. That news was an unexpected shock for me. My parents and I felt that he was a traitor.

Once a week I would take the streetcar to The Hague and attend dancing lessons. Rather than return home after dark, I had a standing invitation to spend the night with a

girlfriend in The Hague. Miep and I knew each other from grammar school. Her mother was a widow. One night the mother brought home a few German Officers. I was highly uncomfortable, and Miep confided in me that she was most unhappy about her mother's choice of companions. Thereafter, I stopped going to Miep's home.

Dutch Army Officers were deported to German camps. My brother's father-in-law was one of them. His wife was the one who previously saved Fred from being apprehended. Camp conditions were very bad and they were poorly fed. After the war Colonel Reeser returned home in poor health and died a few years later.

Next month, "Dutch Underground Movement"



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

Council Update:

Concerts in the Grove to Return



We recently renewed our contract with the promoter for Concerts in the Grove, and we are looking forward to another great season in 2026, May to August.

This concert series has become a favorite summer tradition, bringing people together in the heart of our community for evenings of live music, where friends gather, families spread out their blankets and lawn chairs, and residents of all ages enjoy a fun and welcoming downtown atmosphere.

Our promoter plays a key role in making each concert night a success. They screen and hire the bands, coordinate contracts and technical requirements and manage both onsite and behind the scenes logistics, including serving as emcee during the events. The promoter helps ensure that each concert runs smoothly and professionally.

We are also seeking sponsorships for the concert series and other City events to help support these efforts and expand what we can offer. If your business or organization would like to get involved, please visit: <https://tinyurl.com/Clayton-Events>. We look forward to announcing the 2026 lineup in the near future.

Welcoming New Members to Our Team

We have added several new staff

members who will serve our community in important roles, including a new police officer who will strengthen public safety, two new Community Services coordinators who will organize activities across town and improve how events and programs are managed, and a maintenance worker who has moved into a full time role after many years of dedicated seasonal service. Bringing this maintenance position on full time reflects both the value of his experience and our commitment to maintaining our parks, streets, and public spaces.

Council Discussion on Future Funding Measures

At our February 3 Council meeting, we discussed the timeline for potentially renewing the Landscape Maintenance District Special Assessment and for a possible sales tax measure to be placed on the November 2026 ballot. Staff outlined the key steps for public education, outreach, and meeting the legal requirements necessary to place any measure on the ballot.

We will continue to provide clear information and opportunities for input as these discussions move forward.

First Pride Summit for the County To Meet in Clayton on March 7

by Peggy Spear

On noon on Saturday, March 7, at the Clayton Valley Presbyterian Church, Clayton Pride, a newly minted 501(c)(3) organization, will host the first-ever Pride summit. There, Pride representatives and the public can gather to form ideas of how to better work together to represent Pride throughout the county.

“The Summit is the first step in attempting to create a cohesive network of organizations throughout Contra Costa County that individually serve the LGBTQIA+ community,” says Clayton City Councilmember Holly Tillman, a member of the Clayton Pride board. “If there is synergy in joint support, you bet there will be more meetings in different cities.”

As a City representative supportive of the Pride parade since the beginning, Tillman has seen the positive impact on her community. “As we embark on our fifth annual parade, it’s exciting to see how far we’ve come and what we’ve accomplished.”

The Clayton Pride Parade and Festival will be held in June. For more information on March 7 Summit, visit www.claytonpride.com.

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the
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CLAYTON MARKET UPDATE

Address	Sales Price	SF	Bed/Bath	Sales Date
2 Rialto Dr	\$999,000	1648	3/2	1/12/2026
980 Oak St	\$1,320,000	2583	5/3	1/20/2026
337 Sacran Ter	\$820,000	1939	3/2.5	1/23/2026
5607 Lassen Ct	\$905,000	1543	3/2	1/23/2026
139 Regency Dr	\$992,000	2010	4/2.5	2/11/2026
9006 Elk Dr	\$1,310,000	2543	4/2.5	2/11/2026
3056 Windmill Canyon Dr	\$1,025,000	1816	3/2	2/18/2026

CONCORD MARKET UPDATE

Address	Sales Price	SF	Bed/Bath	Sales Date
1042 Bermuda Dr	\$1,077,000	2091	5/2.5	1/15/2026
4121 Kensington Dr	\$765,000	1277	4/2	1/23/2026
5506 Alaska Dr	\$679,000	1252	3/1.5	1/26/2026
3060 San Miguel Ct	\$1,138,000	2561	4/2.5	1/28/2026
2055 Sierra Rd #82	\$365,000	1218	2/1.5	2/3/2026
1116 Vista Point Ln	\$990,000	1898	4/2.5	2/9/2026
4770 Olive Dr	\$870,000	1700	3/2	2/11/2026

Based on information from CCRAR/Paragon MLS® as of 02/13/26. All data, including all measurements and calculations of area, is obtained from various sources and has not been, and will not be, verified by Better Homes Realty. All information should be independently verified by your broker. Properties may or may not be listed by the office/agent presenting the information.



Jennifer Stojanovich
Broker/Owner, Better Homes Realty

Know the Difference Between Fire-safe Space and AB38 Defensible Space Compliance

There seems to be a lot of questions lately about the difference between a defensible space inspection and an AB 38 inspection, and it's completely understandable.

A defensible space inspection, typically conducted by our local Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, focuses on clearing vegetation and maintaining proper fire-safe space around your home.

AB 38, however, comes into play when you're selling a property located in a High or Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. During a sale, sellers must provide documentation showing defensible space compliance and disclose certain home hardening features such as ember-resistant



Defensible space recommendations can be found on fire.ca.gov/dspace. Learn the requirements up to 100 feet from structures.

vents and fire-resistant roofing.

My advice to sellers is do not wait until you're in contract. If you are even thinking about selling, schedule your defensible space inspection early and start gathering documentation. It can prevent last-minute delays and keep your escrow on track.



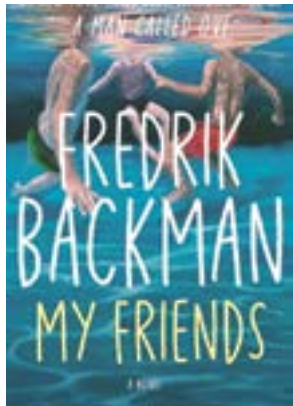
Jill Hedgecock's bookends
Author, *Pizzo and Between Shadow's Eyes*

My Friends

"My Friends" (Atria Books, 2025, hardcover, 448 pages, \$19.99) by Fredrik Backman is the story of four teenagers (Ted, "the artist", Ali, and Joar) growing up in difficult family situations.

The narrative centers around a valuable painting, how the artwork called "The One of the Sea" came to be created, and eventually how the teenagers' lives turned out.

The tale is mostly told from the perspective of forty-year-old Ted, who has unwittingly ended up on a train accompanying eighteen-year-old, Louisa, the recipient of the artist's last dying wish, which was to gift the "The One of the Sea" painting to Louisa.



Ted and Louisa's juvenile way of relating to each other also becomes enduring as the tale progresses. The valuable painting, a character in itself, creates a bit of suspense when it gets left unattended on the train and even caught in the rain.

My absolute favorite aspect of the book is the insightful moments about art, how it connects people in ways that words cannot, and the different ways humans experience art.

Backman also includes quotes about art and life from notable people, such as Einstein. Sometimes these moments hold such truth they almost feel like a gut punch, but in a good way.

"My Friends" is a #1 New York Times Bestseller, a Fallon Book Club Pick. It was the Winner of The 2025 Goodreads Choice Awards for Best Fiction and ranked a Most Anticipated Book of 2025 by Goodreads, "USA TODAY", and many others.

Fredrik Backman holds the #1 New York Times bestselling title for multiple novels, including "A Man Called Ove," "My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry," and "Anxious People."

His books have been published in over forty countries. He lives in Stockholm, Sweden, with his wife and two children. Connect with him on Facebook @BackmanLand or on Instagram @Backmansk.

Despite the tragic family lives of the four teens, the deep bond between these survivors carries them through difficult times during the summer the teens turned fourteen. Joar's two goals that August included helping the artist enter an art contest, and stopping his father's beatings, even if it meant using the knife hidden in the bottom of his backpack.

Given the dire conditions of the teen's circumstances, this book could be a tough read. But Backman interspersed enough humor and heart-warming moments between the teens to make the dark moments palatable for me. He gives readers frequent breaks by interspersing comedic scenes during Ted and Louisa's train journey. Louisa's sharp-wit and outrageous comments also offer laugh out loud moments throughout the book.

14 Years and Blossoms for Barbara Still Sending Love

by David King



Blossoms for Barbara volunteers with Linda Karp (in red) prepare to deliver Valentine flowers to the healthcare workers at John Muir Hospital.

"Clayton Valley Garden Club's Blossoms for Barbara" has become a favorite, community-wide event spearheaded by founder Linda Karp, with the annual support of the Clayton Garden Club brigade of volunteers. Each year, in observance of Valentine's Day, volunteers deliver decoratively wrapped flowering plants to those in hospice care, patients in assisted living, survivors in battered women's shelters, hospitalized veterans, and elderly recipients of Meals on Wheels. What began as a simple act of kindness has grown into a cherished tradition rooted in compassion.

This year marked the fourteenth anniversary of the heartwarming surprise. In its first year, flowers were delivered to 250 people in Clayton and Concord. Over time, however, both the need and the community's response have steadily grown. Today, more than 1,500 individuals in surrounding areas receive Valentine's cheer annually.

The inspiration behind the event is deeply personal. "I created this event in 2011 to honor the memory of my dear mother, Barbara," Linda explains. "I wanted to give a loving and compassionate gesture to support the families and patients in the care of hospice." From that initial tribute, a lasting legacy of generosity has taken root.

Thanks to the strong and continuous financial support of the Clayton Business and Community Association, John Muir Foundation, along with local hospice agencies, businesses, and individual donors, "Blossoms for Barbara" has flourished year after year. In fact, the total number of compassionate gifts delivered over the past 14 years now exceeds 16,580, a remarkable testament to sustained community involvement.

As the years progressed, the mission expanded in meaningful ways. In 2021, the organization began delivering Valentine's plants to healthcare heroes serving in COVID units at John Muir Hospital. That addition has continued, and today more than 550 local healthcare workers are included among the annual recipients.

Reflecting on the journey, Linda says, "We could have never imagined being able to spread so much love and joy. 'Blossoms for Barbara' has touched the hearts of patients, family members, caregivers, doctors, nurses, counselors, volunteers, and the whole community." The gratitude is evident in the thank-you cards and letters received each year.

"It's hard to believe how much love and joy one little flowering plant can bring," Linda adds.

Jerry Smith, Clayton, a volunteer summed up the experience with this little poem in honor of all who help make this happen:

Roses are red, violets are blue
Blossoms for Barbara happen 'cause of nice people like you.
We find these people
In a difficult place
And may this little flower
Put a smile on their face.



De La Salle Spartans, Pittsburg High Marching Band Score Superbowl Experience

by David Scholz



De La Salle Spartans run plays at Levi Stadium to aid NBC Network crews prepare camera angles for broadcasting the Superbowl.

Super Bowl memories come in all forms De la Salle Spartans are no stranger to be a part of the National stage; and Pittsburg High Marching Show Band has excelled on the International stage. Both programs were invited this year to participate in preparations for Superbowl LX last month carving out their own Superbowl memories.

The bulk of the nationally recognized De La Salle High School's 2025 football roster will have special ones to relive for years to come that few can claim—setting foot on the playing field at Levi Stadium and running plays.

In the lead up to the Super Bowl on Feb. 8 between the Seattle Seahawks and New England Patriots, Spartans head coach Justin Alumbaugh's charges spent a couple of hours on the turf of Levi Stadium assisting the NBC network film crew with their preparations for the broadcast.

He explained that players were directed to run through both team's best plays as well as assisting even with the shots such as the introductions to ensure NBC had the best camera angles for all the action and individual players, like Seattle quarterback Sam Darnold, when millions watched the broadcast on the biggest stage in sports come Super Sunday.

"They needed guinea pigs," joked Alumbaugh, "and I have a lot of guinea pigs."

"I think this is awesome," continued the coach of opportunity for his young men. "It's an unbelievable experience they won't forget."

Senior Mya Telona, who played on De La Salle's offensive and defensive lines, was among the upper classmen who took part in the pre-Super Bowl preparations. For the experience, Telona lined up on the defensive side of the ball, wearing No. 97 for Patriots and being assigned No. 91 for the Seahawks.

He noted the squad initially ran through the respective teams' plays at their home field in Concord from Tuesday through Thursday to familiarize themselves with them.

Then on Friday, they trekked to Santa Clara.

While it had been nearly two months since they had strapped on the equipment and laced up their cleats, Telona noted it didn't take long for players to recapture the old energy. He relished being able to execute those plays at Levi Stadium.

"The whole experience was amazing," he said.

Senior Brayden Knight, DLS' starting quarterback this past season, handled both the roles of Darnold and New England quarterback Drake Maye when the Spartan players were put through their paces by the NBC



crew.

"It was awesome," he said.

Looking back on the experience, there weren't too many challenges, "it was more fun than anything," he said, including running out of the tunnel and seeing themselves on the stadium's Jumbo Tron.

"For me being able to throw a football (at Levi Stadium) to my guys made it special," Knight continued.

At one point the network crew asked to run plays like the two-minute drill more up tempo so it would reflect the speed of the actual game. But Knight noted the Spartans run more of a pro set, so that wasn't too much of a stretch for them to go faster.

"We were prepared for that having done it during the season and we were able to do it at Levi," Knight

said.

If there was anything he lamented, it was how quick the whole experience went by looking back.

But a wonderful takeaway for the players was each received a recording from NBC to treasure experience at Levi Stadium.

"That made it fun so we could remember it for our lifetimes," he said.

Rapper LaRussell and Pittsburg High Marching Band Ignite Super Bowl Pep Rally



Scan the QR code to view the music video of the LaRussell song "I'm From the Bay." in collaboration with the Pittsburg High Marching Band.



Pittsburg High School Marching Show Band "The Pride of Pittsburg & Contra Costa County"

On Thursday, Feb. 6, the Pittsburg High School Marching Show Band (PHMSB) joined Bay Area rapper/artist LaRussell and his band Yee Section and Oakland's Co-Llab Choir for an exuberant Super Bowl Home



Tuft Pep Rally co-sponsored by Levi's and San Francisco record label Empire as part of the week-long Superbowl LX Experience series of pre-event activities.

The PHMSB is composed of more than 200 students. Their commitment to the show band starts shortly after the final bell rings for summer break and continues throughout the school year. This extraordinary program has reached levels of worldly notoriety.

In 2022, PHMSB performed in the Cabalgata de Reyes in Madrid, Spain. They have also participated in events in London, Rome, Paris and The New York Macy's Thanksgiving Parade.

The Pittsburg High Marching Show Band is directed by Jennifer Martinez (educator), who has won numerous teaching awards including Contra Costa County Teacher of the Year for the 2024 - 2025 school year, and assistant directors, Juliana Martinez and Fernando Lozano.

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calendar of events



Fundraisers

“Papa Jake” Larson monument Brick Drive. Be forever a part of this bronze monument in Martinez Igancio Plaza honoring War Hero Jake Larson. Engrave your name on a brick. All brick purchases are donations and are tax deductible. papajakelarson.com.

Cars 2nd Chance, vehicle / car donation programs turns donations into cash for charities Clayton Valley Concord Sunrise Rotary Charitable Fund. www.cars2ndchance.org/

Clayton

March 13-22 Clayton Theatre Co. presents “The Sweet Delilah Swim Club” by Jones Hope Wooten. Thursday through Sundays, Endeavor Hall 6008 Center St., Clayton 925-334-0880 claytontheatrecompany.com

March 7 Contra Costa County LGBTQ+ Organization Summit Noon-4:00 p.m. Clayton Valley Presbyterian Church, 1578 Kirker Pass Rd. Join representatives from other Contra Costa cities to support countywide LGBTQ+ community events. Coordinated by Clayton Pride, a 501(c)(3) non-profit.

Concord

Concord Chamber First Fridays Coffee - 2nd Friday of the month, 8:30 AM - 9:30 AM at Gratitude Coffee Bar, 1655 Willow Pass Rd. Suite B (Park n Shop). Business leaders and community members come together to network, share updates, and hear the latest from the Chamber and the community. Members Free, non-members \$10.

March 6 -Concord’s Got Talent 6:00 p.m. Come for a night of show stopping performances and fun. Calling all musicians, singers, dancers, actors, stand-ups and more to audition for your 3-minute spotlight. Proceeds benefit the Senior Scholarship Program. Call 925-671-3017 for audition time. Concord Senior Center.

March 28 15th Annual Spring Brews and Music Festival. Craft beer, wine, cider, live music, crafts

and food. Free admission all ages. For 21+, unlimited tastings with commemorative tasting glass. \$65. Noon - 4:00 p.m. eventbrite.com

April 4 Gehringer Community Garden Open House 1:00 -3:00 p.m. UC Master Gardeners of Contra Costa County come out to witness the launch of the new CA natives Demonstration Garden. California natives displays, handouts, free seed packets. UC Master Gardener volunteers will be on site to answer your gardening questions. Refreshments. Free admission. 1790 Lynwood Dr. Concord.

April 11 Concord Rec Expo and Job Fair 1:00-3:30 p.m. Discover the recreational programs for all ages. Explore sports, summer camps, fitness classes, aquatics, and enrichment programs. Free recreation swim and free lap swim during the event. Concord Community Pool, 350 Cowell Rd.

May 2 -3 Concord Historical Society’s Spring Tea - at the Galindo Home. 72 Amador Ave. Two seatings, 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. each day. Call Carol at 925-899-9737 for ticket information. Reserve early.

Pleasant Hill

March 17-19 Geology and Plate Tectonic lectures. 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Instructor Martin Steinpress. Mt. Diablo Adult Education-Lifelong Ed, One Santa Barbara Rd. Rm. 210 Pleasant Hill. Register at www.mdae.mdusd.org.

March 28 “egg” stravanza Giant Egg Hunt and Bunny Hop. For kids ages 5-10. 10:00 a.m. at Pleasant Hill Park, 147 Gregory Lane. Under 5 will have a separate non-competitive egg hunt area with their grown-ups. Bring baskets. Donuts and juice compliments of Pleasant Hill Lions Club. Bunny Hop dance party follows the hunt. Courtesy of Pleasant Hill Recreation and Parks District, Pleasant Hill Lion’s Club and Julie McCoy LPY Realty.

April 10 Whiskey Tasting Pleasant Hill Chamber invites adults 21 and over to experience the fine art of whiskey tasting with whiskey sommelier, Frank Jakuba 6:00 p.m., - 9:00 p.m.

Includes bites from Pleasant Hill restaurants, live entertainment by Debra Del Mastro and Company. Pleasant Hill Senior Center chateau Hall, 233 Gregory Lane. Tickets: \$125 ea. or \$200 for two. <https://tinyurl.com/3n2a8jz2>

Martinez

March 5 Mayor’s State of the City at IBEW Local 302 Union Hall, 875 Arnold Dr. 8:30 a.m. Mayor Brienne Zorn will share key updates and priorities for the City’s future. Sold Out.

March 7 Park Ranger Guided Birding Walk on Mt. Wanda. Bring binoculars, water, and sturdy

closed-toe shoes. No dogs. Meet at Mt. Wanda Trailhead Parking lot at the corner of Alhambra Ave. and Franklin Canyon Rd. at 8:30 a.m.

March 12 Assemblymember Anamaria Avila Town Hall 7:00-9:00 p.m. at Martinez City Hall, 525 Henrietta St.

At the Martinez Campbell Theater

> **March 6-22 Arms and the Man**, a B8 Theater Company. An anti-romantic comedy by George Bernard Shaw, Reserved tix \$24, Discount Thursday \$18.

> **March 8 Open Mike** presented by Onstage Repertory Theatre \$3 cover. Full Bar.

Walnut Creek

Walnut Creek Merry Mixers Dances 7:30 to 10:00 p.m. Free coffee and water, no-host bar, \$20 corkage. Outside liquor prohibited. \$20, \$15 members. Walnut Creek Elks Lodge 1475 Creekside Drive. 925-969-9693 Membership dues \$25

> **March 6 100 PRUF** preceded by Will’s Bolero basic lesson at 7:00 p.m.

> **March 19 (3rd Thurs) Natural Blend** preceded by potluck

> **April 03 (1st Friday) Take 2** preceded by dance lesson

> **April 16 (3rd Thurs) Claudio Medeiros Trio** preceded by potluck

March 16 Walnut Creek Career Fair at Hilton Walnut Creek 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Meet with Walnut Creek employers

MARCH 27-29 The Story in Art. Live life-sized recreations of famous works of art that tell the story of God’s plan. The best Easter performance in the Bay Area. Thirteen cast members, meticulous costumes, and detailed character makeup. Stunning. North Creek Church, 2303 Ygnacio Valley Rd. Secure tickets and reservations online at storyinart.org. or call 925-20-9036.

At the Leshner Center

> **March 13-14 Kaiser Permanente’s College Notes 2026** Top a capella groups from universities across the country.

> **DLUX Puppets’ Peter Pan.** Fly into Neverland with Wendy and Tinker Bell. Features stunning digital scenery, songs from the 50s, to the 80s. Life size puppets and live performers. For all ages.

> **March 27-28 Diablo Ballet’s romeo and Juliet**

> **March 29-April 19 Lost in Yonkers** by Neil Simon.

> **April 16 -26 Improvised Clue: The Unscripted Murder Mystery** A Synergy Theater improvised two act-comedy. Thurs - Sat 8:15 p.m., Sundays 3:15 p.m.

Other Areas

Benicia:

> **April 18 2nd Annual Local Author Book Festival** - Benicia Library 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. To register as an author, please contact Geoffrey Jacobs 707-746-4347. or GJacobs@ci.benicia.ca.us. Must register by April 11. Limit 30 authors. benicialiteraryarts.org

Pittsburg:

> **April 02 SIR Branch Luncheon** 11:00 a.m. Speaker Irene Lo MD, will speak on Contra Costa

Health Plan. Pittsburg Elks Lodge, 200 Marina Blvd. Pittsburg. 925-338-1996. www.sirinc2.org/branch19

Library Events

> Clayton

March 18 House Smart: Practical Maintenance and Safety Upgrades for Every Homeowner. Adult Program. Wednesday, March 18 from 11:00 am – Noon. Join us at Clayton Community Library for a free presentation on home safety and maintenance. Andy Boggeri of AB Construction will share practical advice to keep your home secure and up-to-date in 2026. This program for seniors is co-sponsored by Clayton Valley Village. Registration is free and open to the public.

> **Martinez 740 Court St.**

March 10 The Arc of a Woman’s Life: Herbal Support for Women’s Health 6:00-7:00 p.m.

> Pleasant Hill

March 10 Pokemon Party 6:00 - 7:30 p.m. Bring your Pokemon cards to trade and play. Includes crafts, treats, and fun surprises. All ages.

March 24 Magic Science Show 6:30- 7:00 p.m. Explore the wondrous world of STEM at this action-packed presentation featuring chemistry and physics demonstrations!

> Walnut Creek

Mondays, February 2 through April 13. AARP Tax Preparation 10:00 a.m.-3:00p.m.. AARP Foundation Tax-Aide volunteers will provide free tax assistance.

March 21 Friends of Walnut Creek Library Book Sale

March 30 Mini Bouquets and Boutonnieres 4:30-5:30 p.m. Get prom-ready with flowers that are as unique as you are! Join us for a hands-on floral design workshop where teens will learn how to create their own mini bouquet and boutonniere using fresh flowers. A professional florist will guide participants step-by-step

1644 N. Broadway,

> **Walnut Creek Ygnacio Valley**

> March 14 Diablo Women's Chorale Celebrates Women's History Month select ensemble will perform .

Clubs

Clayton Clubs

GFWC Clayton Valley Woman's Club 9:30 a.m. Serving the communities of Clayton and Concord, meets on the 2nd Tuesday of the month September - June. Clayton Community Church, 6055 Main St, Clayton. www.claytonvalleywomansclub.org

Clayton Valley Concord Sunrise Rotary meets weekly at 7:00 a.m. at the Clayton Valley Charter School Administration Building, 1300 Alberta Way, Concord www.claytonvalleyrotary.org/

Concord Clubs

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

Rotary Club of Concord. www.concordcarotary.org

Toastmasters Meeting Improve your speaking skills and leadership skills. Check out Word Weavers Toastmasters Club on the 1st, 3rd or 4th Monday of the month at 7:00 PM at John Muir Hospital in Concord, 2450 East Street, in the Kunkel conference room. https://400.toastmastersclubs.org/

Martinez Rotary Club meets bi-monthly, 5:00-6:00 P.M. on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month. Grace Episcopal Church, 130 Muir Station Rd., Martinez. www.martinezrotary.org

Walnut Creek Clubs

Diablo View Rotary meets Tuesday nights from 5:45 to 6:45pm at Bourbon Highway 1677 N Main St. Walnut Creek. diablovrotary.org/

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. www.rotarywc.org

Is there someone who should be recognized in our community? Centenarians? Award recipients? Send us YOUR news and announcements. Email us: Editor@DiabloGazette.com and let us know.

SUBMIT YOUR CALENDAR ENTRIES by the 20th of the month before Issue month. diablogazette@gmail.com

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Garden Fresh

Spring Vegetable Soup with Pesto



INGREDIENTS

Soup:

- 1 cup(s) dried navy or white beans, rinsed
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon(s) fresh thyme, finely chopped
- 2 medium leeks, diced and rinsed well
- 2 medium carrots, diced
- 8 ounce(s) Red Bliss or Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 1 pound(s) plum tomatoes, cubed
- 2 cup(s) low-sodium vegetable broth
- 4 ounce(s) green beans, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
- 1 small zucchini, cubed
- 1 cup(s) fresh shelled or thawed frozen peas

Pesto:

- 2 small garlic cloves
- 2 cup(s) (loosely packed) fresh basil leaves
- 1/4 cup(s) finely grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoon(s) extra-virgin olive oil

DIRECTIONS

Cover beans with 6 cups cold water in a large pot. Bring to a boil; remove from heat. Let stand, covered, 1 hour.

Drain beans; return to pot. Cover with 3 quarts cold water. Add bay leaf and thyme; bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium; simmer, partially covered, until beans are barely tender, about 2 hours.

Add leeks, carrots, potatoes, tomatoes, broth, and 2 cups water. Simmer, partially covered, until the beans are tender, about 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Make pesto: Finely chop garlic in a food processor. Add basil; process. Add cheese and oil; process until combined.

Add green beans and zucchini to pot. Cook, uncovered, 20 minutes. Add peas; cook until soft, 5 to 10 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Divide among bowls; top each with 1 heaping teaspoon pesto. Yield: 6 servings

Every year, spring feels like a new beginning. Many people make New Year's resolutions to eat more healthfully starting in January; I think spring is a more natural starting point.

Here is a wonderful dish that takes advantage of fresh produce and provides a wine pairing to go with it. Keep in mind that vegetables are notoriously difficult to pair with wine because they have bitter flavors. I chose a red wine lower in tannin, since bitter tannins in the wine will become more pronounced with bitter foods.

Spring Vegetable Soup with Pesto has so many healthful ingredients; I feel healthier just reading the recipe!

The good news is that it incorporates ingredients that soften the bitterness of the "green" ingredients and make it more wine friendly.

The starchy richness of the beans and potatoes along with the sweetness imparted by the carrots and peas are helpful to a wine pairing.

When choosing a partner for tomato-based soups, you'll also need a wine with good acidity. I immediately think of Italian grapes because of their naturally higher acids. Dolcetto comes to mind because it has relatively lower tannins as desired. If you can't find a Dolcetto, my go to low-tannin/high acid red wine is Pinot Noir.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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

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Strength, Balance, and Resilience Do Not Begin in the Muscles

As we get older, many of us are told the same message: move more, move faster, work harder to keep what you have. But neuroscience is telling a more nuanced, and hopeful, story.

Strength, balance, and resilience don't begin in the muscles.

Every movement you make is guided by signals from the brain: information from your eyes, inner ear, joints, and internal pressure systems. When those signals are clear, movement feels stable and confident. When they're noisy or incomplete, the body compensates, often with tension, stiffness, or pain.

We can get the brain-body connection up to speed with just a few minutes of intentional work a day. The goal is not to push through, but to rebuild internal maps of alignment, balance, and safety. Instead of large, exhausting exercises, the work is slow and precise. Movements are smaller. Attention is deeper.

One simple place to start is to activate the transversus abdominis, a deep abdominal muscle that supports the spine and improves balance. This type of slow, controlled breathing also stimulates the vagus nerve, helping shift the body out of stress and into a calmer, more regulated state. It is also my number one drill for back pain.

Here is how to do this drill:

1. Position: Lie on your back with knees bent and feet on the floor. Or sit upright if lying down isn't comfortable.

2. Find neutral pelvis: Gently rock your pelvis forward and back a few times, then settle in the middle where your lower back has a small, natural

curve and your pelvis feels balanced, not tucked or arched. Sometimes placing a rolled towel under your lumbar spine can be immensely helpful for finding and supporting this position.

3. Hands: Place fingertips just inside the front hip bones.

4. Inhale through the nose: Let your belly expand as though it were filling with air. I like to think about sucking the air into my belly like a milkshake. It is not anatomically correct, but that cue works really well for a lot of people.

5. Exhale slowly through pursed lips: As the air leaves, let the lower abdomen gently draw inward and upward without moving the bones of the pelvis. Imagine you just took a pair of jeans out of the dryer; they are a little tight, but you are determined to get them zipped. Suck it in, but don't move the pelvis. This is the best way to isolate the transversus abdominis.

6. Effort: Because the transversus abdominis is the deepest layer of the abdominals, activating this corset muscle can be quite a subtle experience. In fact, many people need to focus on relaxing the more superficial abs in order to feel it, with no tightening of the shoulders, jaw, or glutes.

7. Pause briefly at the end of the exhale, then inhale into the belly again.

8. Repeat 6–10 slow breaths, staying relaxed and without moving any bones.

Scan the QR code to watch the video if you would like me to walk you through this exercise more visually.

When these deep systems improve, people often notice steadier walking,



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easier breathing, reduced pain, and greater confidence in everyday movements.

Sometimes, the most powerful way forward is to slow down—and rebuild from the inside out. It really can be this simple!



Solutions, puzzle page 18

WORD SEARCH: PODCAST GENRES

Y	U	O	F	V	B	L	V	Q	B	A	O	H	B	L	V	J	T
E	M	D	T	E	M	I	R	C	E	U	R	T	B	H	H	N	S
M	U	S	I	C	I	F	N	S	S	S	L	W	F	Q	P	N	
H	N	O	F	W	Q	T	D	T	S	V	L	I	I	E	O	L	G
M	T	O	M	Q	L	Q	K	E	E	C	K	I	N	R	D	Y	L
E	G	Y	O	D	E	O	N	F	S	R	W	I	T	E	E	I	E
G	I	G	U	Y	T	T	Q	B	O	N	V	S	B	C	S	M	V
Y	W	O	H	L	I	Q	T	R	Y	O	U	I	L	Y	B	S	A
V	R	L	I	F	E	S	T	Y	L	E	D	C	E	V	G	G	R
H	P	O	L	I	T	I	C	S	F	S	N	J	S	W	I	A	T
N	V	H	T	L	S	T	F	I	A	C	E	K	I	B	O	M	Q
S	C	C	C	S	E	H	V	C	E	Y	D	E	M	O	C	I	L
D	N	Y	M	M	I	E	E	B	H	N	R	K	A	B	H	N	A
B	E	S	E	L	F	H	E	L	P	A	C	S	O	C	B	G	W
Y	W	P	A	R	E	N	T	I	N	G	H	E	G	U	R	E	C
L	S	I	M	A	S	Q	B	I	S	S	E	I	V	O	M	V	R
E	R	T	F	I	C	T	I	O	N	H	B	B	Y	N	H	Q	B

BUSINESS	GAMING	MUSIC	SCIENCE
COMEDY	HISTORY	NEWS	SELF HELP
FICTION	INTERVIEW	PARENTING	SPORTS
FITNESS	LIFESTYLE	POLITICS	TRAVEL
FOOD	MOVIES	PSYCHOLOGY	TRUE CRIME

SUDOKU

9		7		4			3	
1				5	3	7		
6				7		4	2	1
	6		7				5	
	9		3			2		4
	5	1	4		6			
2	1	3						8
		6	8	9	7			
				3	1	6	4	5

WORD SCRAMBLE

Unscramble these five AUDIO words:

- PONEHMROIC _____
- SENHOPDAEH _____
- SOUCITCAS _____
- TACSPOD _____
- LOMEVU _____

WORD LADDER

RULES: Convert the top word into the bottom word by changing one letter per line.

- Use 5-letter, English words only.
- No rearranging letters.
- Each ladder is a separate puzzle.

LADDER #1

LEAST
L _ _ S _
_ _ _ S _
_ _ _ SE
CHASE

LADDER #2

PLANT
_ _ AN _
_ _ A _ _
_ _ ATE
STATE



Walnut Creek Enjoys Busy Start to 2026

by Kevin Wilk, Mayor, Walnut Creek

It is my honor and privilege to serve as Walnut Creek's Mayor. This year has gotten off to a busy start in Walnut Creek.



Walnut Creek Police Chief, Ryan Hibbs

We welcomed the new Police Chief, Ryan Hibbs, and had a great turnout for a meet and greet on February 4. Chief Hibbs has more than 24 years of policing experience

and was a Captain with the Walnut Creek Police Department prior to his selection as Chief. He is committed to public safety for the City and strengthening trust with our residents. Chief Hibbs also embraces community policing, with officers getting a chance to get to know residents in informal settings, such as a monthly "Coffee with a Cop."

February also marked a major step forward in the City's largest ever construction project. The Aquatic and Community Centers at Heather Farm Park are more than 50 years old, and their age is showing. We held a ceremonial groundbreaking as we launched phase two of the project. Our plan is to have the new facilities open by the end of next year. The bulk of the funding for this effort comes from Measure O, a voter approved half-cent sales tax.

Other projects funded largely by Measure O include new artificial turf fields at Heather Farm Park, which will allow for safer play and year-round use, while needing less maintenance and water. And field lights were installed at Tice Valley Community Park to extend the use of sports fields there.

Many of us were surprised by the

intensity of the mid-February storms that caused damage throughout the Bay Area. Fortunately, there was no damage to Walnut Creek thanks to the strong preparation by our Public Works crews. They were there to tidy up and get the City ready for the next round of storms. Speaking of which, we encourage residents to prepare in advance just as the City does.

You might not think about eating outside in winter, but Walnut Creek's outdoor dining program continues to grow. Our Council offered a grant program to encourage development of outdoor dining spaces, and we currently have ten public and private outdoor locations for residents to enjoy meals.

The state of Walnut Creek's economy is good; we are fiscally healthy, but not wealthy, and try to manage our funds wisely. Interest in new development in the City is strong. Toyota will be building an 80,000 square foot, two-story dealership downtown. Restoration Hardware wants to take over vacant property in Broadway Plaza with a new 30,000 square foot commercial development that will include a furniture showroom and restaurant. And on the horizon, Porsche has proposed a three-story dealership.

It's not all just business for Walnut Creek. The City has a thriving arts program. The Bedford Galley has a stunning exhibition of work from legendary Bay Area artist Viola Frey, who moved from two-dimensional works to three-dimensional forms. The "Foundations" exhibit is on display through April 5. I hope you can see it before it closes.

The Leshner Center for the Arts is our homebase for cultural activities. Coming soon will be "College Notes 2026," with top acapella groups from universities around the country performing, as well as a revival of Neil Simon's "Lost in Yonkers."

We invite all central county residents to pay a visit to Walnut Creek.

East Bay Students Explore Healthcare Careers Amid Workforce Shortages

More than 60 East Bay high school students gathered in Concord at the Cal State East Bay Center on February 11, 2026, for the fourth Academic Advantage medical careers event, aimed at strengthening the future Bay Area healthcare pipeline.

Hosted this year by Dr. Brad Williams, DMD, MD, of Muir Oral, Facial, & Dental Implant Surgery, the event brought together students from across Contra Costa County with medical and dental specialists, as well as allied health professionals, for firsthand insight into careers in medicine, dental, and related healthcare fields.

Students attended presentations, participated in small-group discussions, and met one-on-one with healthcare professionals and career counselors to learn about academic preparation, college planning, and real-world career

experiences.

Academic Advantage was originally launched in 2021 as a long-term response to what providers were seeing across the healthcare system: increasing retirements, burnout, and fewer students entering medical training programs.

"Healthcare continues to be one of the fastest-growing sectors, and that is expected to continue as our population ages and technology advances," said Dr. Williams. "But navigating a career in healthcare can feel long and daunting.

In addition to career exploration, students were invited to apply for two \$250 scholarships and multiple job-shadowing opportunities from each featured speaker. Scholarship recipients and the selected student for the job-shadowing experience will be announced in early March.

Groundbreaking Ceremony Signals the Beginning Transformation of Heather Farm Park



Conceptual rendering of the new Heather Farm Aquatic and Community Center. design approved by Walnut Creek Council.

On February 18, city leaders, commissioners and community supporters gathered at the park to celebrate the long-awaited groundbreaking of a \$77 million redevelopment project that will replace the aging Aquatic and Community Centers. Both facilities, now more than five decades old, have served generations of residents and have outlived their useful lives.

Mayor Kevin Wilk joined representatives from the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Commission and the Walnut Creek Aquatic Foundation to commemorate what city officials describe as the largest construction project in Walnut Creek's history.

"This is the biggest construction project the City has ever done, and we are so proud to be able to bring the new pools and community center to our residents," Wilk said in an earlier announcement.

The ambitious effort is funded largely by Measure O, the voter-approved bond measure passed in 2022 to improve parks, recreation facilities and community spaces throughout the city. Residents who supported the measure will now begin to see those dollars at work in one of Walnut Creek's most beloved public spaces.

Plans call for combining the current Community Center and Clarke Swim Center into one modern, integrated facility designed

to better serve today's needs. The 4.7-acre site will feature a large indoor gathering space, several multi-purpose rooms and classrooms, and outdoor event terraces that expand programming possibilities.

Aquatics will remain a centerpiece of the redevelopment. The new complex will include a 50-meter lap pool for competitive and fitness swimmers, a recreational pool for families and swim lessons, a bathhouse, and a dedicated mechanical pool building.

The Walnut Creek City Council formally accepted the conceptual plan on April 16, 2024, setting the stage for design completion and construction. With the groundbreaking now complete, the project moves from planning to reality.

During construction, the existing Community Center will be demolished to make way for the new combined facility. Clarke Swim Center, however, is projected to remain open to the public throughout much of the construction period, helping minimize disruption for swimmers and local teams.

Residents should expect typical construction hours from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., with occasional weekend work authorized as needed. Some construction noise is anticipated, and fencing and other safety barriers will be installed to protect pedestrians and park visitors.





Do I Owe Tax?

Sale of Personal Residence – Whoa, this is a big topic

Oftentimes, sellers are unaware that there may be tax owed upon the sale of their home. First let me say, I am a Real Estate professional, and not a tax advisor; you should consult your tax professional and/or attorney for any tax question. You should also read IRS Publication 523 “Selling Your Home.” This is different from selling rental property or an exchange.

Here is a partial eligibility test to determine if the property is a personal residence.

- You didn’t acquire the property though a like-kind exchange in the past five years
- You are not subject to Expatriate Tax.
- You owned the home for two of the last five years and lived there for at least two (one, if you became disabled) of the five leading up to the sale.

Once you are sure the home qualifies as your personal residence, then you move on to whether you have capital gains tax to pay upon the sale. A single person may qualify for a one-time exclusion on their gain (profit) of \$250,000, or \$500,000 if married filing jointly. That portion could be tax free.

But what about the amount of profit over that is subject to sales tax? For example, you bought your home for \$500,000. Today you are selling for \$1,000,000.

As a single person, you would exclude \$250,000 and possibly owe tax on the other \$250,000 over the \$500,000 you paid. As a married couple, you could

meet the \$500,000 exclusion and be on your merry way with no tax owed.

But if you are selling for say \$1,500,000, you still meet the \$500,000 exclusion if married and you both meet the resident requirements (\$250,000 if single). The remaining \$500,000 (or \$750,000 as a single person would/could be considered taxable capital gain.

Fortunately, some home improvements can reduce your capital gains liability. Here are some examples of things you did to your home that could reduce the capital gains tax. Certain updates and room additions, deck, garage, patio, ADU, retaining wall, pool, new roof, windows, doors, siding, heating & A/C system, duct work, built in appliances, updated kitchen/baths, flooring, carpeting, fireplace. (See page 10 of the IRS Publication 523).

Losing your spouse can affect your exclusion

Many of us want to live in our homes forever, even if our spouse is no longer with us. Potentially, as a single person your exclusion from capital gains is \$250,000, a huge reduction from the \$500,000 you had as a married couple with one exception.

One of the heartbreaking things for me is that many may not know the exception that allows a surviving spouse to keep that \$500,000— if you sell your home within two years of the death of your spouse.

If you are the “live in the home forever person” and you intend for your heirs to inherit it, it may not

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matter. But, if two years and two months later you decide to move nearer children or downsize, you have just given up a potential \$250,000 exclusion on the gain on the sale of

your property for being unaware of the timeframe. It is hard to talk or think about when you are grieving, but an important to note for your financial future.

Dignity Rolls in for Concord's Unhoused

by Peggy Spear

For the unhoused in and around Concord, Thursdays at the First Christian Church is the place to be. It's the location of the Concord Mobile Dignity Center (CMDC), the first of its kind in Concord.

“We offer case management and housing information, showers, a change of clothes, a hot meal provided by Loaves and Fishes, and medical assistance by Rotocare. Last week we actually sent someone to the emergency room.”

“The CMDC is a new collaborative outreach program that provides essential services and supportive



Concord Councilmember Carlyn Obringer checks out the showers at the CMDC.

resources to Concord's unhoused community in a single, accessible location,” said Concord City Councilmember Carlyn Obringer. The program is funded by a \$1.6 million grant by the city.

But the city is not running this unique program alone. It is being run in collaboration with many local organizations. The main operator is

Caminar, a nonprofit homeless and mental health resource program, partnering with NAMI Contra Costa, Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa, White Pony Express, RotaCare, First Christian Church and the Pleasant Hill Seventh Day Adventist Church. “This is the first of two CMDC's we hope to have,” said LaTanya Johnson, program manager at Caminar. “Ultimately, we hope to become self-sustaining.”

Johnson said that the CMDC can serve up to 30 people each week. It is open from 3 to 8 p.m.

On the inaugural day, Feb. 12, Johnson said they saw 12 people, seven who took advantage of the 13 available showers.

“It was so cute,” Johnson says. “One woman was so happy she cried. ‘I haven’t had a shower in two years!’ she said.”

Besides the Loaves and Fishes meal, the unhoused who take advantage of the CMDC are given nonperishable food to take with them. Johnson said that all the attendees came on foot.

She gives a special shout-out to Pleasant Hill’s Seventh Day Adventist Church for helping provide them with the showers.

“It’s from a different community, but they are always ready to help out to help make CMDC a success,” Johnson said. “For our second locations, we are scouting possible locations nearer to Pleasant Hill.”

All in all, both Obringer and Johnson say the



Councilmember Carlyn Obringer and Concord Mayor Laura Nakamura present at the ribbon cutting launch of the mobile Dignity Center. Photo courtesy Obringer Facebook.

CMDC’s inaugural week on Feb. 12 was a success. To learn more about CMDC, visit the City of Concord’s Strategic Plan website, <https://www.cityofconcord.org/1036/Homeless-Strategic-Plan>.

The one thing Johnson says the CMDC needs to run smoothly is more volunteers. To help out, email Johnson at Ljohnson@caminar.org.



Disease, Pests, Climate Threaten Native Oaks

Can you imagine living in our beautiful Central County communities without our magnificent native oak trees? Our native oak trees are under constant threat. Habitat loss, imported diseases, nasty pests, and climate change combine to destroy thousands of local oaks each year. We can each play an important role in protecting these beautiful giants from destruction. What are the most common risks our local oaks face?

Water Damage

We have five local varieties of oak across our varied Contra Costa microclimates. The evergreen coastal live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), massive valley oaks (*Q. lobata*), and black oaks (*Q. kelloggii*), central county hills, with blue oaks (*Q. douglasii*), and interior live oaks (*Q. wislizeni*) found on the slopes of Mt. Diablo.

The amount of available water is key and is also one of their threats. Oaks adapt to our dry summer conditions and cannot tolerate wet soil in hot weather. To protect them in your garden, keep irrigated water to a minimum under tree canopies or "drip lines". Also remove excess soil or mulch from around their root crowns, and plant low water use plants, such as California natives or succulents, under their canopies.

Common Diseases

Oak Root Rot is caused by a fungus (*Armillaria mellea*). This fungus grows into the tree's root system when soil is too wet for extended periods. Besides

weakening or killing the oak, it can infect other plantings around the oak's roots. The fungus cuts off the flow of water and nutrients from roots. Water sparingly around oaks to prevent it.

Sudden oak death (SOD) is caused by an introduced non-native pathogen, *Phytophthora ramorum*. SOD has grabbed headlines by killing over a million oaks throughout coastal California. Bay laurel trees, tanoaks, rhododendrons, and camellias are common host plants (they become infected but survive). Remove these species from around your tree and don't plant nursery-bought cultivars under oaks either. Don't spread the disease by relocating trees or firewood from outside our local area.

Pests

Oaks are amazingly resilient against pests, and in fact support more beneficial bugs than are threatened by dangerous pests. Many common pests in our area such as aphids and oak moth caterpillars damage oak leaves but do not kill the tree. With time, oaks will recover. But three pests can kill oaks and deserve professional treatment.

Oak bark and ambrosia beetles both attack oaks and California buckeyes. Like fir tree borers, the beetles drill small holes in bark to lay eggs near a tree's vascular system. Larvae feed on the veins and cut off the flow of water and nutrients. Call a professional if you see sap oozing from small holes in the bark. They may be able to save the tree if caught early.

The glass-winged sharpshooter is a



To protect oaks in your garden, keep irrigated water to a minimum or "drip lines" and plant low water use plants, such as California natives or succulents, under their canopies.



Oak bacterial leaf scorch



Oak bark beetles

large leafhopper that feeds on oak trees. The pests introduce harmful bacteria which cause Leaf Scorch in oaks. If you notice leaves that look scorched by heat but without a heat wave, call a professional, as it can kill over time.

Climate Change

Many pathogens and pests thrive in warm, wet climates. Frost and freeze kills disease spores and pests before they can do damage to oaks. Dry weather slows the spread of wet soil pathogens. Time will tell if our local oaks are adaptable enough to survive climate change.

Seasonal Notes: Take advantage of forecasted rains to apply a layer of home-grown compost around the plant base. The end of March is a good time to germinate vegetable seeds.

Mark your calendar for April 4, 2026, for the launch of the new Gehringer Community Garden, a demonstration garden of Calif. natives. Master gardener volunteers will answer questions. Free



glassy-winged sharpshooter

seed packs, free attendance, and refreshments. From 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. at 1790 Lynwood Dr, in Concord.

It's Spring Garden Maintenance Time

by Angela Dawne, Landscape Designer

Once you have installed that perfect garden or landscape, there are two times a year when maintenance is timely and crucial, now and at the end of summer. Your garden is beginning to wake up after the long, dormant months of winter with the first consistent warm breeze of spring. This signals to us gardeners that it is finally time to return to the garden.

While it is tempting to start digging in at the first sign of sun, experts suggest waiting until night temperatures consistently stay above 50°F to protect overwintering pollinators like bees and butterflies, as well as not damaging the tender new plant growth that's emerging.

Once the ground has thawed and dried, you can begin these essential steps to revitalize your outdoor space.

The Great Cleanup

Start by clearing the stage. Remove fallen branches, matted leaves, and any lingering winter debris that can smother new growth or harbor pests.

Perennials & Grasses: Cut back dead stems from last year. For most perennials, trim to the basal growth; for ornamental grasses, leave about 2-8 inches of old growth to protect emerging shoots.

Weed Early: Tackle "cool-season" weeds while they are still small and the soil is damp. Removing them now

prevents them from establishing deep root systems or dropping seeds later.

Prune for vitality

Early spring is the ideal time to shape many woody plants while they are still dormant. Prune summer-blooming shrubs like roses, butterfly bushes, panicle Hydrangeas and Dogwood that bloom on "new wood."

But wait to prune spring-flowering plants like Magnolias, lilacs, Azaleas, Camellia and Wisteria until after they bloom, or you will accidentally cut off this year's flower buds.

The golden rule of spring pruning is to determine if your plant blooms on "new wood" (growth that appears this year) or "old wood" (growth from last season). Pruning a plant that blooms on old wood in early spring will remove the flower buds it spent all winter protecting.

Mulch for protection

To give your garden a professional finish, apply a 2 to 3-inch layer of fresh mulch. This not only looks polished but also suppresses weeds and retains essential moisture as the weather heats up.

By taking these deliberate steps now, you aren't just spring cleaning, you're setting the foundation for a vibrant, healthy sanctuary that will flourish all summer long. Let's get started.



Laura Nakamura
Concord Mayor
cityofconcord.org

Community Action

Students House Wood Ducks at Newhall Park

One of the greatest joys of serving as Mayor is seeing how a simple conversation can grow into something meaningful for our entire community. Last month, that spirit came to life at Newhall Community Park — not through a formal program or major project, but through residents, students, educators, and city staff working together to care for the natural spaces we all share.

Last April, I met Concord resident Vicki Anderson, a wildlife photographer who focuses on ducks. As we walked through Newhall Park, she pointed out something many visitors might overlook: a population of wood ducks and the nesting challenges they face as natural tree cavities become scarce. These ducks have made homes not only at the park, but also in the nearby Turtle Creek neighborhood.

Wood ducks are among North America's most striking waterfowl. Unlike many other ducks, they nest in tree cavities near water, making them especially vulnerable in developed areas where suitable nesting sites are limited. Nest boxes can provide a safe alternative, helping offset the loss of natural habitat while supporting healthy populations.

Inspired by Vicki's observations, I reached out to JoAnna Castillo, teacher at Clayton Valley Charter High School.

She leads civil engineering students who apply their skills to real-world challenges, and she immediately saw the educational and environmental value of building nesting boxes.

She quickly involved her students, who researched designs online and constructed four wood duck nesting boxes complete with predator guards to protect future hatchlings.

I connected Castillo with the Public Works Department to explore installation at Newhall Park. At the February 10 City Council Meeting, three students brought the finished boxes and presented them, explaining their work, and the purpose behind it.

The very next day, City crews installed the boxes and predator shields at the park, just in time for nesting season.

If the boxes are successful, visitors may witness an amazing moment called "jump day." After hatching, wood ducklings stay in the nest only briefly. When it's time to leave, the mother calls

from below, and the tiny ducklings launch themselves from the box one by one, bouncing on the ground before hurrying to the water with her.

A wood duck's jump day reminds me of this project and others like it which don't follow a formal script.

After the box installations, Vicki shared a message that captures the spirit behind the effort:

"I cannot thank everyone enough for getting this project accomplished. It shows how great our Concord City staff and community are in making all spaces in Concord better for the environment, natural habitats, and citizens who enjoy the open spaces."

I share Vicki's gratitude. Efforts like this remind us that civic engagement doesn't always begin in a meeting room. Sometimes it begins with noticing the wildlife around us, the needs of our environment, and the opportunities to have an influence close to home. As in this case, when residents share knowledge, educators create opportunities for students, and city staff help translate ideas into action.

Concord is more than streets and buildings. It is also creeks, trees, parks, and open spaces that depend on thoughtful stewardship from all of us, a powerful reminder of how much can be accomplished when a community works together.

If you visit Newhall Community Park in the coming months, keep an eye on the trees near the water. You



may be lucky enough to witness a wood duck family's dramatic first leap into the world.

California strongly protects native wildlife: Most wild birds are protected under the California Fish & Game Code. It is generally illegal to

1. Take, possess, or destroy birds, nests, or eggs.
 2. Disturb active nests.
 3. Harm wildlife without permits.
- Violations can carry fines and/or criminal penalties.

More on this from Clayton Valley Charter High on page 18.



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Oscars' Best Picture Nominees

When the Motion Picture Academy expanded the Best Picture category from five to ten in 2009, it opened the door for more commercially successful films, along with international and independent movies, to be recognized. If you have a love of films, it can be quite a task to see them all before the March 15 telecast. This year offers a wide variety, with something for everyone's film taste. All the nominated movies are currently available to see in theaters, video on demand, or streaming on various paid platforms.

Bugonia

Any film by director Yorgo Lanthimos is guaranteed to be a strange trip. His latest is no exception. Emma Stone, who won an Oscar for her role in Lanthimos' previous film, "Poor Things," plays the CEO of a major company who finds herself held captive by two men who believe she is an alien. This cat-and-mouse plot keeps you on your toes.

Rated R (Streaming on Peacock)

F1

When an old friend asks Sonny Hayes (Brad Pitt) to join his struggling Formula 1 racing team and mentor their potential star, Sonny sees a chance to achieve the greatness that eluded him thirty years ago. Expect exciting visuals and a dive into the engineering side of what makes the cars go fast. There is minimal plot to get in the way of the action, so put on your seatbelt and go!

Rated PG-13 (Streaming on Apple TV)

Frankenstein

Many filmmakers have tried their hand at telling this classic story. Here, we see horror master Guillermo del Toro's interpretation. Serving as writer and director, del Toro's retelling pits creator against creation, giving the creature far more communication skills than usual. This allows the viewer to understand how Dr. Frankenstein sentenced his monster to a tortured life. It is visually stunning.

Rated R (Streaming on Netflix)

Hamnet

Taking some facts from young William Shakespeare's life, "Hamnet" fleshes out what family life may have been like in the Shakespeare household. But here, the main character is not the famous bard; it is his wife Agnes (Jessie Buckley). Buckley's brilliant performance is the main reason to see this movie. She is a strong contender for Best Actress. A full review of this film appeared in the February 2026 issue of the Diablo Gazette.

Rated PG-13 (In theaters and video on demand)

Marty Supreme

Aside from Timothée Chalamet's powerhouse performance, this film sets itself apart by not showing the viewer the typical athlete's rise to fame. When we meet Marty Mauser, he is already considered one of the greatest table tennis players in the world. Unfortunately for Marty, it did not give him the fame and notoriety he feels he deserves. He will stop at nothing to achieve his goal and get through the barriers created by others and his own ego. This film moves at a frenetic pace with plenty of yelling, similar to Director Josh Safdie's 2019 movie, "Uncut Gems."

Rated R (Video on demand)

One Battle After Another

The title says it all. The action never lets up as Bob (Leonardo Di Caprio) tries to protect his daughter Willa (Chase Infiniti) from her parents' revolutionary past. Violent with sprinkles of dark comedy, everyone delivers a powerhouse performance, with scene-stealing Benicio del Toro as the cool and collected Sergio.

Rated R (Streaming on HBO Max)

The Secret Agent

Marcelo (Wagner Moura) is a former technology professor who arrives in the city of Recife to collect his young son, who has been staying with grandparents. Set in 1977 Brazil, viewers see the professor's life unfold through flashbacks and a research student in current times who tries to piece together Marcelo's life through audio tapes and news clippings. With corruption and dictatorship all around, it is difficult to put the pieces together. It is a slow burn.

Rated R (Video on demand)

Sentimental Value

This family drama, centering around a filmmaker and his two daughters, is a character study in parent/child relationships, living with anxiety and depression, and the lifelong bonds of sisterhood. Be patient with this film. There are no action or huge dramatic scenes, but once you get to its heavy emotional core, it is well worth the journey.

Rated R (In theaters and video on demand)

Sinners

One of the earliest releases of all the nominated films, this one was released in the spring of 2025 and continued to dominate the box office the rest of the year. Director Ryan Coogler deftly mixes horror, period drama, and a musical to deliver a genre-bending crowd pleaser. Set in 1932 rural Mississippi, Michael B. Jordan takes on the roles of twin brothers hoping to leave their checkered past and start a juke joint in their hometown. Wunmi Mosaku and Delroy Lindo each received supporting acting nominations. This is the film I believe will take home the Best Picture award.

Rated R (In theaters and streaming on HBO Max)

Train Dreams

The lush cinematography alone is worth watching this film. Fortunately, the story of Robert Grainier (Joel Edgerton), a logger from the Pacific Northwest, will equally capture your attention. Robert's life is simple, complicated by the challenges hard-working people faced at the turn of the 20th century. Highlighting the fact that every life is significant, this ordinary man's life will linger in your mind long after the credits roll.

Rated PG-13 (Streaming on Netflix)

Except for "Bugonia" and "Train Dreams," most of these films surpass the two-hour mark. If you wish to watch them all before the Oscars telecast, I suggest you get started now.



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Artist of the Month, Ester Benbanaste

A Journey of Expression, Light and Renewal

by Julia O'Reilly

Artist Ester Benbanaste's work is rooted in a lifetime of creative exploration shaped by culture, movement and personal evolution.

Born in Istanbul in 1963, Benbanaste was immersed early in a rich artistic and intellectual environment. She graduated from a French college, where she developed a strong cultural foundation, and later pursued stylistic and fine art studies that deepened her understanding of form, color and emotional composition.

Although her artistic instincts began in childhood, her professional career took shape in Turkey, where she became known for expressive oil paintings. Working primarily in an expressionist style, Benbanaste explored themes of femininity, vulnerability and inner strength through nude figures and floral compositions. Her brushwork carried emotional intensity, often emphasizing movement and atmosphere rather than strict realism.

During her years in Turkey, she held eight solo exhibitions and participated in more than thirty-one group exhibitions, establishing herself as a respected presence in the contemporary art scene.

A decade ago, Benbanaste relocated to the United States, marking a transformative chapter in both her life and her art. The move prompted experimentation and expansion beyond traditional oil painting. While her classical foundation remained strong, she began exploring mixed media techniques, particularly acrylic pouring combined with resin.

This newer body of work introduced luminous surfaces, layered textures and a dynamic relationship between fluid motion and controlled composition. Gold tones and rich blues frequently appear in her contemporary pieces, symbolizing warmth, renewal and protection; themes that echo both her heritage and her evolving artistic voice.



Ester Benbanaste will be opening her first solo exhibit April 11, at JOR Fine Art Gallery in Clayton with a public reception.

Despite her embrace of new materials, oil painting remains central to her identity as an artist.

"I always loved painting with oil," Benbanaste says. "Then I started experimenting and began doing acrylic pouring with resin. I truly enjoy the process. In my next solo exhibition, I will be showing oil paintings as well as acrylic pouring works."

That balance between tradition and experimentation defines Benbanaste's artistic journey. Her work reflects both discipline and spontaneity, a dialogue between classical training and contemporary exploration.

Ester Benbanaste will be opening her first solo show in JOR Fine Art Gallery on Saturday, April 11. Reception will be on the same date from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. and is open to the public. The exhibition ends on Sunday, May 03. The exhibition's name is "Spring in Gold."

Color of Spring Fine Arts Show May 2 - 3

The Concord Art Association in conjunction with the Concord Historical Society present the Colors of Spring Members Only Fine Art Show and Art and Craft Sale May 2 and 3.

The event, at the Concord Museum Event Center, 1928 Clayton Road, in Concord, is open to the public both days, and parking will be available behind the Galindo Home at Marina Court.

Organizers are seeking artists and crafters to display their work at the event. The deadline to sign up for Fine Art Show and Art and Craft Sale is Wednesday April 15. Membership in the Concord Art Association is required for the Fine Arts Show. Join the CAA at <https://www.concordartassociation.org>. Questions or more information, contact the CAA at concordartassociation@yahoo.com.

Martinez Arts Assoc. Showcases Member Exhibitions Around Town

Martinez Arts Association (MAA) is presenting new exhibitions featuring member artists at venues throughout the city.

Photographs by Lorena Castillo are currently on view at Roxx on Main. The Martinez Library is featuring a selection of paintings by Mason Robert, while Five Suns Brewing is showcasing abstract oil paintings by Denise Hillman. The Campbell Theater will also be exhibiting work by Alexis Moorehead.

Founded in 1968, the Martinez Arts Association is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting the arts and arts education in the community.

For more information, visit www.martinezarts.org.



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Introduction to Night Sky, Milky Way, and Astrophotography

March 21, 2026 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Rick Haley/Photographer

Please join nationally acclaimed photographer Rick Haley for a learning adventure focused on photographing the celestial wonders of our solar system, galaxy, and universe. This introductory course for photographers requires no prior experience with night sky photography and no expensive equipment.

The Arts Page



Teacher/Student Show

Art is for everyone. For the month of March, aRt Cottage will be having a teacher /student show. We are thrilled to exhibit the beautiful creations from instructor and artist, Mark Jezierny and his students. This exhibit will remain through the end of April.

Jezierny has been an adult education teacher through the Mount Diablo Adult Ed program for many years. His classes are located at the Pleasant Hill Campus.

The exhibit opens with an artist reception on March 7 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. It is open to the public as the artists hope to have many visitors. Children are always welcome. This is a free event and includes music and refreshments.

The exhibit will remain on display until the end of April.



Instructor and artist, Mark Jezierny,, is doing a demo for some of his students.



Sunset Trail, Mark Jezierny



Mirror Lake at Yosemite, Donna Mularkey



Large Giraffes, Sandra Artru



Brittlecone Pine, Gary Hook;



Shiloh, Elizabeth Burkart



General meeting with artist Don McCartney

The ADAS General Meeting with Art Demo is scheduled to take place on Tuesday March 10, at 7:30 p.m. at Black Hawk Gallery, 3416 Blackhawk Plaza Circle, Danville.

Don McCartney, originally from Murfreesboro, Tennessee, built a distinguished career in editorial design after graduating with honors from Ringling College of Art and Design in 1968.

After early work in St. Louis, he moved to San Francisco and joined Rolling Stone magazine, leading to prominent art direction roles with several publications, including the San Francisco Examiner and San Francisco Chronicle, where he earned national awards.

In 2002, he founded Don McCartney Graphic Arts and later developed a distinctive series of abstract watercolor works combined with engraved imagery to create layered, limited-edition prints.

He lives in San Rafael, California, with his wife, artist Kay Carlson.



Landscapes and Wildlife

For March, the gallery is pleased to feature guest artist Linda Darsow Sutton, an award-winning plein air painter known for her landscapes and wildlife. Linda says, "I'm proud to be a tree-hugging, dirt-worshipping wildlife painter." She is also drawn to painting landscapes and shares that "the natural environment encourages a never-ending quest to observe nature more intimately."

The public is invited to attend a reception on March 6 from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., held in conjunction with First Friday. Guests will have the opportunity to meet the artist and view her vibrant work. Gallery members will also have all new artwork on the walls in March.

Visitors to the First Friday reception can meet many of the gallery's resident artists, enjoy refreshments, and enter the monthly free art giveaway, featuring an original metal artwork by Nate Holbein.

Now in its tenth year in downtown Martinez, Main Street Arts Gallery continues to be a welcoming destination for art lovers and collectors. Located at 613 Main Street, the gallery is open Wednesday through Sunday and showcases a wide range of media, including painting, sculpture, ceramics, glass, jewelry, and mixed media.

Main Street Arts is located at 613 Main Street, Martinez

Open Wednesday-Saturday 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., Sunday 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. and Martinez First Fridays 6:00-9:00 p.m. mainstreetarts.net



Barely bothered by Linda Sutton



Clean Up Aisle Six by Linda Sutton



Joan Pinto's "Between Light & Line" exhibit

In Clayton, JOR Fine Art Gallery's contemporary art exhibit, "Between Light & Line" continues through May 3 featuring the works of guest artist Joan Pinto.

This thoughtfully curated exhibition explores the dynamic relationship between light, form, and line through a diverse range of artistic styles and mediums. Featured works highlight both emerging and established artists, offering visitors a fresh and inspiring visual experience.

Pinto's expressive and refined ceramic pieces add depth and dimension to the show.



Yi Ding Solo Exhibition

In Memory of Beijing - The Forbidden City

This exhibition continues through April 5. Yi Ding's work blends realism with a semi-impressionistic approach. Through thoughtful composition, layered textures, and a sensitive use of light, her art invites viewers to slow down, observe, and experience the harmony between logic, feeling, and visual beauty.



Students Turn Engineering Skills into Community Impact



CVCHS students present their wood duck boxes to the Concord City Council and James Thompson of the City of Concord Parks Division.

At Clayton Valley Charter High School, learning goes beyond textbooks. The school's Engineering and Design Academy gives students a chance to apply what they learn in math and science to real projects that matter.

The Academy operates as a "school within a school," mixing traditional classes with hands-on work. Students don't just study engineering concepts they put them to use. They design, build, test, and improve projects while working in teams, much like they would in a professional setting. From drafting architectural plans to programming manufacturing systems and creating prototypes, students gain practical skills along the way.

But it's not just about technical know-how. The program also emphasizes teamwork, communication, and problem-solving. Students are encouraged to explore their interests and think about possible career paths while tackling real challenges. Along the way, they gain confidence in their abilities and learn how to manage long-term projects from start to finish.

That preparation comes together during the Senior Capstone project. This year, students took on a project that reached beyond campus and into the community.

After learning about the need for safe nesting spaces for wood ducks, students decided to help. Using skills from their Civil Engineering and Architectural Design classes, along with Computer-Integrated Manufacturing coursework, they researched proper nesting box designs and sustainable materials. They then built wood duck nesting boxes that will be installed at



Turning a design into a reality, CVCHS students work collaboratively to build nesting boxes for Newhall Park.

Newhall Park.

This wasn't a classroom exercise. The boxes were created for real use and to meet a real community need.

Earlier this month, students Forest Sinclair, Rai Diaz, and Stephanie Vasquez presented the completed boxes to the Concord City Council. They explained their design process and shared their hope that the boxes will soon provide safe homes for wood ducks and their ducklings.

Projects like this show how classroom learning can have a direct impact. Under the guidance of teachers Joanne Castillo and Tyler Miller, students are turning ideas into action and making a difference in their own backyard while building skills that will serve them long after graduation.

In Case You Missed It...

Local News Items from Claycord.com and Other Sources

Boot Barn is Coming to Pleasant Hill

Boot Barn is moving into the old Party City building on Contra Costa Blvd in Pleasant Hill. Construction is currently underway. They plan to open March 17.

Nearly 900 Homes Proposed For Former Coast Guard Site In Concord

Developers are seeking to build a residential community of 800-900 primary dwellings units on the 59-acre former Coast Guard housing site at 3295 Haleakala Street long known as long known as Victory Village and Quinault Village. The former military housing villages is the city's largest vacant parcels.

Located near the North Concord BART Station, the property's redevelopment aligns with the City's broader housing and land-use goals, including increasing residential density and maximizing underused sites to help meet state housing targets and community needs.

City planners estimate the full project — from zoning and environmental review to construction — will span multiple years, requiring subsequent council approvals, environmental analysis under CEQA, and community engagement before any building can begin.

Kit Jory Steps into Role of Public Works Director



Public Works Division Manager Kit Jory has been promoted to Public Works Director for the City of Concord, effective February 16, 2026.

In this new role, Jory will be responsible for the City's infrastructure maintenance (roads, trees, buildings, medians, sewer, storm water, and parks) and will oversee a team of 94 skilled and dedicated public employees.

Since 2022, he has served as the Public Works Division Manager. In this role, he has led the City's successful overhaul of maintenance operations across parks and made substantial advances in the City's Urban Forestry Program.

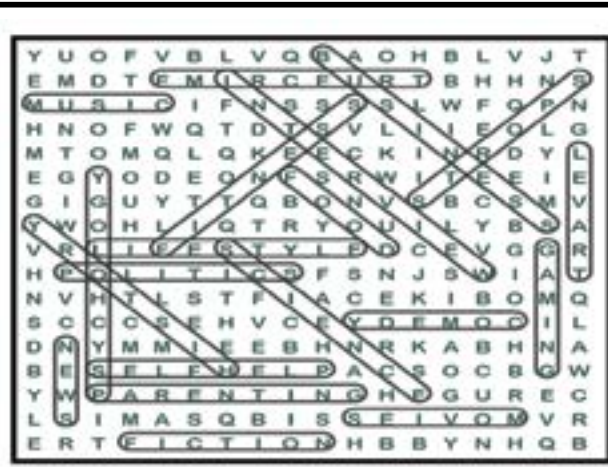
Joybound Thrift Store Re-Opens in Concord



Joybound recently celebrated its re-opening of its Thrift Store, Cat Lounge & Adoption Center in Concord at 1950 Market Street, Suite 1, directly next door to their previous thrift store location. <https://joybound.org/adopt/thrift-store/>

Contra Costa Libraries Receive Funding Boost From the Carnegie Corporation.

The Contra Costa County Library is pleased to announce that three of its historic branches—Antioch, Concord, and Walnut Creek—have been selected to receive \$10,000 each from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. This gift, totaling \$30,000 for the county, is part of a nationwide initiative commemorating the upcoming 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.



9	8	7	1	4	2	5	3	6
1	2	4	6	5	3	7	8	9
6	3	5	9	7	8	4	2	1
4	6	2	7	8	9	1	5	3
7	9	8	3	1	5	2	6	4
3	5	1	4	2	6	8	9	7
2	1	3	5	6	4	9	7	8
5	4	6	8	9	7	3	1	2
8	7	9	2	3	1	6	4	5

WORD SCRAMBLE

MICROPHONE
HEADPHONES
ACOUSTICS
PODCAST
VOLUME

WORD	WORD
LADDER #1	LADDER #2
LEAST	PLANT
LEASE	PLANE
TEASE	PLATE
CEASE	SLATE
CHASE	STATE

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

Rabbits Make Great Pets for Busy Households and Children

Rabbits make great pets. They can bond with their caregivers, are fast learners that can be taught tricks and games and are a soft bundle of fun.

Like cats, rabbits can be litter box trained. They make great pets for busy households and for school-aged children because they're most active in the mornings and evenings.

But please avoid the temptation to add a bunny to your child's Easter surprise. It is widely discouraged because many Easter rabbits end up in shelters and rabbit rescues when the novelty of the cute bunny a child found in their Easter basket wears off.

Understanding the needs of a pet rabbit and adopting older rabbits is a great formula for successfully bringing a new, loving animal into a home.

Rabbits are social animals and thrive in pairs, so leaving two (or more) home alone for long hours is not a problem. Pet rabbits are safest when kept indoors because wildlife, such as owls, and other domestic cats can attack them. They don't need a lot of indoor space, making rabbits ideally suited for rabbit-proofed apartments. With a lifespan of 8 to 12 years, they make great long-term companions.

If rabbits sound like your kind of pet, there are many rescue organizations or county animal services where you can find that special bunny.

Contra Costa Rabbit Rescue (CCRR), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, has a wide variety of sizes and types of bunnies in need of a good indoor home including three adorable and highly entertaining bunnies called the Butterscotch trio (Bonnie, Foxy, and



Bonnie, Foxy and Sonic, also known as the Butterscotch Trio. These inseparable bunnies are looking for their next home.

Sonic). This fun-loving trifecta are bonded and will only be adopted together. Although three rabbits might seem like a lot more work, the trio shares the same space, litter boxes, and food/water. Part of socialization for rabbits is grooming, and these bunnies groom each other.

The adoption fee for this trio is only \$150, a bargain considering all CCRR rabbits come spayed and neutered, immunized, and many come housebroken including the Butterscotch trio). Learn more at the website adoptapet.com.

Or, come check out available rabbits at these upcoming adoption events: Sunday, March 8, Pet Food Express at 500 Center Ave. Martinez from 1:00-4:00 p.m., Saturday, March 21 at Pet Food Express in Concord at 785 Oak Grove Rd. from 12:30-3:30 p.m., or Saturday, March 28 at Pet Food Express in Walnut Creek at 1388 So. California Blvd. from 3:00-6:00 p.m.

Loaves And Fishes of Contra Costa Selects John Pamer for Impact Award

Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa (LFCC) announced that John Pamer, Chief Executive Officer of Diablo Valley Federal Credit Union, has been selected as the recipient of the LFCC Impact Award, recognizing his exceptional leadership and long-standing commitment to hunger relief and food security in Contra Costa County.

The LFCC Impact Award honors individuals, organizations, or businesses that have made extraordinary contributions to alleviating hunger and advancing equitable access to nutritious food.

Pamer has been a steadfast champion of LFCC's mission, helping to mobilize community support and resources that directly benefit neighbors experiencing food insecurity. Under his leadership, Diablo Valley Federal Credit Union has served as the presenting sponsor of the annual Concord Turkey Trot, one of LFCC's most visible community fundraising events. Turkey Trot has raised more than \$104,700 over four years to support free, hot meal services and food distribution across the county.

"I am honored to receive this recognition from Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa," said Pamer. "LFCC's work is essential to the health and stability of our community. I am proud to support an organization that shows up every day to ensure our neighbors have access to nutritious meals and dignity."

Diablo Valley Federal Credit Union is a not-for-profit financial cooperative serving central Contra Costa County. www.diablovalleyfcu.org

www.loavesfishescc.org



Why Tampico's AHA Stroke Certification Matters

by Francisco Sudiagal



Administrator Marjorie Elks proudly displays the American Heart Association's Skilled Nursing Facility Stroke Rehabilitation Certification.

For older adults and their families, a stroke often brings worry, deep concern, and difficult choices about recovery. This is why the American Heart Association (AHA) Skilled Nursing Facility Stroke Rehabilitation Certification is so meaningful, and why Tampico Healthcare Center should be recognized for its accomplishment.

The certification is awarded only to facilities that meet evidence-based standards to improve care and recovery outcomes. It signals that a program follows critical guidelines, coordinating services carefully after hospital discharge and monitoring care quality consistently. Seniors can be assured that such facilities provide clear communication about the rehabilitation plan and work toward reducing the likelihood of readmission.

Tampico deserves

congratulations for becoming the first skilled nursing facility in California to receive AHA Stroke Certification. With the project spearheaded by the 2024 California Association of Health Facilities Nurse of the year, Kristianne Ong, Tampico is also the first in the state to hold both Stroke and Heart Failure certifications, setting a new standard for post acute rehabilitation.

The certifications have not gone unnoticed by the healthcare profession. In recognition of the exceptional commitment to care represented by both certifications,

John Muir Cardiovascular Services has partnered with Tampico for its cardiovascular patients. Additionally, Tampico was recently invited to the 2026 AHA International Stroke Conference for a poster presentation of "Quality Driven Transitions for Stroke Patients".

Seniors in Contra Costa County can be reassured that high quality stroke rehabilitation is available close to home, provided by a healthcare facility worth celebrating statewide.



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- Light Housekeeping
- Medication Reminders

Around Martinez



Bringing New Life to Old Train Depot

by Brianne Zorn, Mayor, City of Martinez



This March, the Martinez City Council will consider the next step in bringing new life to the Old Train Depot at 401 Marina Vista Avenue. The City plans to release a Request for Qualifications and Conceptual Proposals to find the right development partner to help transform the long-vacant building into something that will engage the community. The goal is simple: restore the historic Depot and turn it into an active, welcoming destination that connects Downtown to the Marina and waterfront.



Martinez Train Depot. (Photo by Google Maps)

Built in 1877, the Depot was Martinez's first train station and played an important role in the city's growth. It expanded in 1916 and was remodeled several times over the decades. Since 2001, however, the building has sat vacant and has been used mainly for storage. While some exterior charm remains, much of its historic detail has been lost, and the structure needs significant rehabilitation. Environmental cleanup is already underway to prepare the site for future improvements.



Martinez Train Depot, early 1900s. (Photo by Martinez Historical Society)

The City has completed required state processes, including offering the site under the Surplus Land Act, and commissioned a historic evaluation. With those steps complete, Martinez is ready to move forward.

The City is seeking creative ideas such as food, retail, cultural, or educational uses that would draw people in and complement Downtown. Certain uses, including cannabis retail, bail bonds, adult entertainment, firearms sales, and general office space, will not be allowed.

Developers will submit proposals this spring, with interviews expected in May and a recommendation to the Council as early as June 2026.

The Depot sits in a highly visible gateway location, near freeways, rail, and Downtown businesses. We hope to implement our vision to create an inviting space that brings people together, supports local restaurants and shops, and strengthens Martinez's connection to its beautiful waterfront.

City Council Raises Recreation Fees

by Tony Hicks

The Martinez City Council on Wednesday unanimously approved raising recreation fees for the first time since 2024, bringing the city an additional projected \$50,000 to keep up with rising demand and costs.

According to a staff report, the last time the city raised fees, its income recovery rate for recreation investment was 26%, about where it's remained since.

The new fees will bring that number up to \$28%.

The report said "industry practice for recreation programs is to recover approximately 40% to 60% of costs through user fees, with the remaining costs appropriately subsidized due to community-wide health, equity and quality-of-life benefits these programs provide."

Costs have escalated, including those related to staffing, maintenance, aging infrastructure and utilities. Participation numbers have also gone up.

In recommending raising rates, city staff looked at fees charged by neighboring agencies with comparable populations, amenities and proximity in Hercules, San Pablo, Oakley, Pleasant Hill and Danville.

Staff also looked at program capacity levels and tracking systems to minimize unnecessary costs in underperforming programs and developing consistency and better accuracy in reporting.

Staff made recommendations in multiple areas.

At Rankin Aquatic Center, the price of pool passes will go up by 13% to 18%. Swim lessons will increase by 6% to 33%. Pool party rentals will increase by 3% to 20%.

Hourly rates for lifeguards, pool lanes and full pool rental rates will also increase, though rates weren't specified.

Sports field rentals will increase hourly rates by 12% to 15%. Tournament fees increase 3%, field prep fees go up by 20%, and the scoreboard/PA system fee will increase 7%. Player fees for city-sponsored youth groups will increase \$2 per player.

Outdoor sport court rentals will go up by \$10 an hour, and facility rental will increase by 8% to 11%. Special event fees will add a 10% administrative fee for events, plus a cancellation fee of 50%

of permit fees if canceled within 30 days of the event.

Youth camp registration fees will increase by 2% to 4%, and a fee will be added for extended care, which is a new offering. Park facility reservations will go up by 8% to 17%.

Scholarship awards for eligible program participants will rise from \$150 to \$200 per participant.

Mayor Brianne Zorn asked staff for program capacity numbers at its next recreation programs update.

"A lot of the 'by the numbers' are comparing ourselves to ourselves, but we don't compare to what we could be," Zorn said. "I think that the upward trend is great, but without comparing to what the capacity might be. I think that will really give us really good trend data to be able to better inform decisions moving forward."

The council approved the recommendations after exempting fees for city-sponsored events.

The council also asked staff to come back at a future date with a restructured fee schedule for multiple day events — even weekly events all year — for which the city doesn't charge for additional days beyond two days.

Zorn said she believes the city can offer more programs, and asked staff to look into expanding its programming and an expanded marketing and PR plan for programs.

"I think we can do so much more," Zorn said.

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March 2026

COMMUNITY EVENTS

<p>Thursday March 5th 8:00AM - 12AM</p> <p>STATE OF THE CITY</p> <p>TICKET INFO ON WEBSITE</p>	<p>Friday March 6th 8 - 8 PM - DOWNTOWN</p> <p>FIRST FRIDAY DOWNTOWN</p>	<p>Saturday March 7th</p> <p>10 AM - DOWNTOWN</p> <p>YOUTH BASEBALL & SOFTBALL PARADE</p>	<p>10 AM - BOYS & GIRLS CLUB</p> <p>MCE MURAL UNVEILING</p>
<p>Saturday March 21st</p> <p>10AM - 3PM - SENIOR CENTER</p> <p>BUSY BEE CRAFT FAIR</p>	<p>10AM - 3PM - MARINA</p> <p>FREE COMPOST GIVEAWAY</p> <p>SIGN UP ONLINE!</p>	<p>Every Sunday</p> <p>10AM - 1PM - DOWNTOWN</p> <p>DOWNTOWN FARMERS' MARKET</p>	<p>SAVE THE DATE! April 1, 2026</p> <p>5PM - CELEBRATION 7PM - CITY COUNCIL MEETING</p> <p>MARTINEZ ANNIVERSARY OF INCORPORATION</p>

More event details on our City Calendar at www.cityofmartinez.org/events

The City of Martinez turns 150! Celebrate with us at www.cityofmartinez.org/150

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Or go to www.cityofmartinez.org/150



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NewsWrap Short Stories of Local Interest

by Craig Lazeretti, Martinez News and Views and Martinez Chamber

PBF's Martinez Refinery Hit with \$10 Million Penalty for 2020 to 2024 Violations

PBF Energy's Martinez Refining Co. (MRC) will pay \$10 million in fines and \$600,000 for mitigation projects as a result of four years of environmental violations from 2020 to 2024.

The Contra Costa District Attorney's Office and Bay Area Air District, both of which brought the action against the refinery, jointly announced the settlement Feb. 20.

New Jersey-based PBF Energy will also make compliance improvements at its Martinez refinery.

The Air District issued 163 notices of violations pertaining to health and safety, business and professions, and fish and game codes over four years, including MRC's 2022 Thanksgiving night release of spent catalyst that covered parts of Martinez in a white ash-like substance.

MUSD School Board Finalizes Budget Cuts Totaling Roughly \$2.5 Million

Trustees for the Martinez Unified School District on Feb. 9 unanimously voted to cut roughly \$2.5 million from the 2026-2027 budget.

The cuts allow the district to maintain a state-mandated 3% reserve fund while rejecting some initial suggestions for cuts.

The board still has tough decisions to make, the district will continue deficit spending in 2026-2027, which a staff report said will increase if salary raises are enacted for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

The board did receive some good news. Average daily attendance (ADA) numbers, which help determine how much state funding districts receive, are above projections this year.

The Local Control Funding Formula accounts for 75% of the district's general fund revenue. In all four grade groupings, average attendance is above projections. If the trends hold, the district will 230,000.



The Way We Ate

Recipes and excerpts from "A Little of This and a Little of That", published by the Martinez Historical Society, © 2019

A peak in the culinary history of Martinez, these verbal hand-me-down family recipes requires tasting as one goes. These are recipes from a time when nothing was wasted and cooks used what was on hand from foraging, home gardens, and hunting.

Of course, any recipe worth passing down generations comes with an accompanying family story.

Lee Caya was an excellent dog trainer. He raised springer spaniels and entered them in field trials under the category of sporting dogs. He often would take first place, bringing home medals, trophies, and pheasants.

Jewel discovered the perfect recipe. She handed it down to my mother-in-law, Catherine, worked downtown Martinez at Beard's Jewelry Store. She handed it down to my wife, Terry Jack Lucido.



CREAMED PHEASANT AND BARLEY CASSEROLE

Ingredients:

1 large pheasant (or **chicken**), cut in small pieces

1 c. barley, cooked

2 c. either chicken or vegetable broth

1 can either cream of mushroom or celery soup

¼ c. white wine (or lemon juice)

4 Tbsp. Worcestershire sauce

Some caraway seed bay leaf

DIRECTIONS

Lightly dust pheasant pieces with flour and brown in a little olive oil. Layer pheasant pieces in the bottom of a casserole dish. Mix well all remaining ingredients and pour over pheasant in casserole with a lid. Bake at 325° for 1½ to 2 hours. Remove bay leaf before serving.

GENERATIONS

Jewel Beard Caya - Employer, Friend
Catherine Amato Lucido - Mother-in-law
Terry Cox Lucido - Daughter-in-law

Special thanks to Mary Goodman, author of "A Little of This and a Little of That".



The Papa Jake Larson Statue Project

Honor a Bay Area Hero

Papa Jake Larson is our local World War II Veteran and a beloved storyteller who touched millions by sharing his firsthand history with the world through TikTok.

We are creating a memorial statue to honor Papa Jake's memory, service, sacrifices, and incredible impact on future generations.

This statue will stand as a permanent reminder of the men and women who served and the importance of remembering their stories.

You can help make this memorial a reality. Every donation, no matter the amount, brings us one step closer.

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LEARN MORE AT PapaJakeLarson.com



New Bella's Spot Bar and Grill's Serves up Classic Italian Pastas and Comfort

by Rich Eber

Going back to my formative years growing up in San Francisco, I have always had a weakness for family style North Beach Italian food. After migrating to the East Bay, it became difficult to find this style of cooking.

I am glad to report the new Bella's Spot Bar and Grill in Martinez can be added to my short list of Italian dining. Bella's Spot opened in December 2025, with a vibrant and welcoming grand opening celebration. It's located at the Muir Shopping Center at 512 Center Avenue in the Muir Shopping Center.

Bella's Spot is the vision of local entrepreneur Gurnam Jassi (better known as Jesse), who re-imagined the former Pasta Bella space with a renewed focus on classic Italian cooking and remodeled to include a full bar.

To lead the kitchen, he brought in Martinez native Chef Tim, who earned his chops working in favored establishments such as Kinder's, California Grand Casino, and P.F. Chang's.

The menu emphasizes fresh ingredients and well-executed sauces. Bella's marinara made with sautéed onions, celery, bell peppers, garlic, tomatoes, and spices serves as the



Angel Hair OPG. OPG stands for oil, Parmesan, and garlic. Add on large shrimp to complete a perfect classic pasta dish.

foundation for several dishes, while the Bolognese adds depth with Italian sausage and beef. These sauces shine in pastas such as lasagna, gnocchi, and spaghetti with traditional meatballs, as well as in several sandwich offerings.

Chef Tim's Alfredo sauce, prepared with a classic roux, fresh cream, nutmeg, garlic, and Chardonnay wine, stands out as a highlight. Seafood dishes are also thoughtfully prepared, including grilled shrimp served over angel hair pasta using larger, premium prawns for superior flavor and texture.

My dining experience began with an elegant and delicious Bruschetta which featured toasted artisan bread drizzled

with garlic, butter, marinated tomatoes and basil, balsamic glaze, and olive oil and topped with grated Parmesan.

It was a wonderful teaser for the coming main attractions.

Perfectly prepared butterflied grilled shrimp served with angel hair pasta was our next selection. Bella's Spot uses the larger 13-15 prawns that have a superior flavor and texture than the smaller shrimps, making Angel Hair OPG a superb selection.

I also sampled the grilled Tuscan Chicken, which was also delicious. Other noted dishes from this category include Chicken and Eggplant Parmesan. This and all of Bella's Spot sandwiches, come with a large portion of crispy seasoned French fries.

While their lasagna is their most popular entree, their most popular non-Italian item is fish and chips. Chef Tim insists on using Alaskan Cod, which is firmer with a superior flavor, than less costly product.

Families are well accommodated with an extensive kids' menu, and children under 12 receive a complimentary scoop of gelato.

The service is attentive, polite and



A large crowd enjoyed the many pasta and other Italian dishes at Bella's Grand Opening event on December 18. Photo courtesy of Thomas Rimpel.

fast. Portions are large and the price is moderate. And judging from the full house on a Wednesday night, Bella's Spot has already garnered a local go-to reputation. Their Online review points out, "It's a perfect place for couple/family dinner, chill weekend bar with sports (six huge TVs on every wall), and more." Another summarily states, "Real yum Italian food with great service!"

Bella's Spot is open daily from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., with extended weekend hours, and offers Happy Hour from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. Reservations are recommended on weekends and can be made by calling 925-387-8610.



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512 Center Ave. in Muir Station Shopping Center, Martinez

What Does Concord's AFFH Rezoning Mean?

by Pablo Benavente

At the January 27th Concord City Council meeting, we held an important public meeting on our Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) program. I want to take a moment to explain what AFFH is, why this decision was required now, and how community input directly shaped the outcome.

AFFH stands for Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing. It is rooted in the federal Fair Housing Act and strengthened in California through Assembly Bill 686. The goal is to ensure that all residents, regardless of income or background, have meaningful access to neighborhoods with strong schools, economic opportunity, and community amenities.

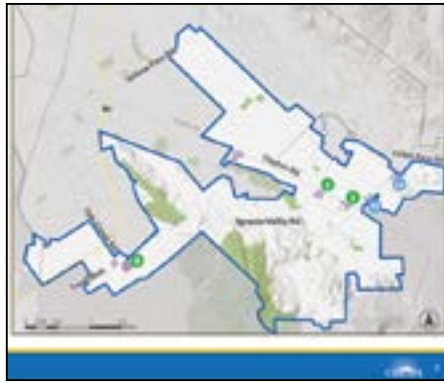
This conversation is happening now because Concord's Housing Element for 2023-2031 was certified by the State in October 2023. As part of that plan, the City is required to take concrete steps to expand housing opportunities in higher-resource neighborhoods. Failing to do so carries serious risks, including loss of local control through the builder's remedy, legal challenges, and loss of critical state funding.

It is also important to clarify what this program is and is not. AFFH is a rezoning effort, not a construction mandate. Rezoning allows residential development to be considered on certain sites, but it does not require property owners to build, demolish existing businesses, or displace residents. Any future housing would be privately initiated and subject to the City's normal review processes.

Over the past several months, I heard extensively from District 4 residents and others about traffic congestion, school proximity, pedestrian safety, emergency access, and the cumulative impacts near Treat Blvd. and Oak Grove Rd. Those concerns were real, detailed, and grounded in daily experience.

My goal was not to avoid our legal obligations. My goal was to meet them responsibly.

As a result of public input and City Council discussion, we did not simply accept the initial recommendations by staff. While the Planning Commission voted to forward staff's original proposal, the City Council took additional steps to amend it to better reflect the concerns raised by residents. In particular, the number of units proposed at the Palm Lake Apartments site was reduced from 300 to 165, directly responding to the traffic, safety, and neighborhood impacts shared by the community. A dental office site that staff did not recommend was not added, and density was redirected to vacant and underutilized sites that are better positioned to absorb growth.



AFFH sites: Kmart, Clayton Rd., Clayton Faire, Clayton Rd., 8. Palm Lake Apartments, Oak Grove Rd. and Treat Blvd., 16. 5390 Myrtle Dr., 18. 1539 Kirker Pass Rd. (Image: Presentation screenshot)

Ultimately, the Council directed staff to move forward with AFFH overlay zoning on the following sites:

- Site 1, Kmart: up to 471 potential housing units
- Site 2, Clayton Faire: up to 248 potential housing units
- Site 8, Palm Lakes: up to 165 potential housing units, reduced from the 300 originally recommended
- Site 16, 5390 Myrtle: up to 60 potential housing units
- Site 18, 1539 Kirker Pass: up to 56 potential housing units

Some have asked why large sites like the Naval Weapons Station or CSU East Bay were not included. The reason is timing. State law requires that housing sites be realistically developable within the next eight years. Those long-term projects will be addressed in future Housing Element updates.

Others have raised concerns about environmental review. Recent changes in state law removed the requirement for an Environmental Impact Report for rezoning actions that implement a certified Housing Element. That said, community engagement does not end here. Residents will continue to have opportunities to weigh in as individual projects are proposed.

This was not an easy decision, and no outcome will satisfy everyone. But I do believe we landed in a more balanced and thoughtful place than where we started. We met our legal obligations while reducing unnecessary concentration of impact and responding directly to community concerns. This is how local government should work.

The views shared here are my own, and I remain committed to listening and engaging with residents directly. If you would like to reach out to me or sign up for my newsletter for updates on this and other City issues, please visit pablobenavente.com.



Measure X's Innovation Fund

In 2020, voters passed Measure X, a 1/2 cent sales tax, to fund the county's community needs, and six years later, it continues to show its impact through the services reaching residents across Contra Costa. One of those efforts is the Innovation Fund.

With the latest round of Measure X Innovation Fund awards moving forward through July 2026, these investments are translating into practical support for families, workers, and communities who need it most.

One of the most immediate benefits comes from St. Vincent de Paul's new micro loan program. This effort gives residents a safe, affordable option when an unexpected expense threatens their stability. Instead of turning to high risk lenders, families can access small, low cost loans that help them stay on their feet and avoid long term financial strain.

Young people are also gaining new opportunities. Oakland Tech Exchange is expanding paid tech internships that give Contra Costa students hands-on experience, mentorship, and industry-recognized skills. At the same time, the organization is increasing digital access by refurbishing and distributing devices through our county libraries, ensuring more residents can participate fully in today's digital world.

For newly arrived immigrant and refugee families, Lincoln's Antioch

Schools Newcomer Inclusion Project is offering direct support with school enrollment, transportation, healthcare access, and community navigation. These services help families settle into Antioch with confidence and build a foundation for long term success.

Essential workers are receiving expanded health outreach through Hijas del Campo, which brings information, resource navigation, and wellness support directly to migrant farmworkers. By meeting workers where they are, the program ensures timely, culturally informed assistance.

Support4Recovery is opening new sober living beds specifically for Spanish speaking residents, addressing a long standing gap in recovery housing. Meanwhile, The Gemma Project is providing women returning from incarceration with case management, life skills training, and connections to housing and employment.

Rising Juntos and Urban Habitat are training East County residents as clean energy and climate resilience ambassadors, helping neighbors access rebates, prepare for extreme weather, and participate in environmental planning.

Measure X puts our community's dollars to work, delivering real solutions that strengthen our future.



There Will Be No Scurvy in the Valley

by Edi Birsan, Concordian edibirsan@gmail.com

More than fifteen years ago Anna Chan (the Lemon Lady) spoke to the Concord-Diablo Rotary about her individual efforts to pick lemons from residential homes in the Clayton-Concord area and give them away. This inspired the creation of the Picker Squadron as a standard service project for the Rotary Club. The idea was that while individuals can make an impact, having a sustainable long-term commitment is what Rotary Clubs like to do.

The area was a fertile field for orchards and groves that spread throughout the area in the last century. When I moved to my own home in Concord in 1983 there was a block size pear orchard 50 yards down Oak Grove. When new home developments were made in the 1950's it was common to have a fruit tree planted. In fact, I was told that the Presidents-named street development off of Bailey Road was required to have a fruit tree planted in each house lot.

Now the trees are all much larger and some are in the second and third generation of replacement. However, the large family networks that eagerly picked fruit and distributed it in the neighborhood have had a serious decline. Massive fruit trees dot the residential streets with many of them dropping their blessings to the ground attracting less than blessed creatures. There is no household that can consume all the fruit of a 15-year-old



The founding Picker Squadron

lemon tree let alone a grapefruit tree that many seniors on blood pressure medication are forbidden to eat. Further, the fermenting fruit contributes to the occasional drunken bird flying full force into your backyard window.

To date the Rotary Club of Concord-Diablo has collected over 27 tons of fruit and given it to the food pantries, food banks and the homeless center on Arnold Industrial. If you have some fruit trees, and winter lemons and grapefruit are dropping all over, contact the Picker Squadron at EdiBirsan@gmail.com or text to 510-812-8180.

So far, we hold true to our motto: There will be no scurvy in the valley.

Brought to you by Edi Birsan founder and current recycled leader of the Picker Squadron and I should hope that Ceasar Chavez would approve.

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California High School's Mock Trial Team Wins Ninth-Straight County Title

California High School continued its Mock Trial legacy, capturing its ninth-consecutive Contra Costa County Mock Trial championship, the Contra Costa County Office of Education (CCCOE) announced during an awards ceremony on Feb.19.

Coached by Brian Barr, California High School edged Miramonte High School in the championship trial, held on Tuesday, Feb. 17, 2026, at the A.F. Bray Courthouse in Martinez. Retired Superior Court Judge Leslie Landau presided over the final round. With the victory, California High School represents Contra Costa County at the California Mock Trial Finals in March.

Deer Valley High School earned third place after defeating Acalanes High School in the consolation trial.

"This year, milestones were reached in many ways - whether a team won its first trial, a witness delivered an unforgettable performance, or a student overcame stage fright," said Contra Costa County Superintendent Lynn Mackey. "These experiences help shape our youth for the future, and they would not be possible without the continued support of the Superior Court, the Contra Costa Sheriff's Department, and the many judges, coaches, and legal professionals who volunteer their time to the Mock Trial program."

Hosted by CCCOE, the 45th-annual Mock Trial competition featured 48 in person trials held at the A.F. Bray Courthouse. Twenty high schools from across Contra Costa County participated, supported by more than 150 judges, attorneys, and volunteers who served as trial presiders, scorers, and courtroom coordinators.

In the quarterfinal competition, Acalanes High School defeated Alhambra High School, California High School defeated Monte Vista High School, Deer Valley High School defeated Campolindo High School, and Miramonte High School defeated Heritage High School. California High School advanced to the final after defeating Deer Valley in the semifinals, while Miramonte defeated Acalanes. California then captured the title after a nailbiter matchup against Miramonte in the final.

Participating Contra Costa County high schools included Acalanes High School (Lafayette), Alhambra High School (Martinez), The Athenian School (Danville), California High School (San Ramon), Campolindo High School (Moraga), Carondelet High School (Concord), Clayton Valley High School

(Concord), College Park High School (Pleasant Hill), De Anza High School (Richmond), Deer Valley High School (Antioch), Dougherty Valley High School (San Ramon), El Cerrito High School (El Cerrito), Hercules High School (Hercules), Heritage High School (Brentwood), Las Lomas High School (Walnut Creek), Making Waves Academy (Richmond), Miramonte High School (Orinda), Monte Vista High School (Danville), Richmond High School (Richmond), and San Ramon Valley High School (San Ramon).

Each Mock Trial team worked closely with teachers and attorney coaches to prepare for both prosecution and defense cases. Students assumed courtroom roles as attorneys, witnesses, clerks, bailiffs, and pretrial motion attorneys, gaining hands-on experience with legal procedures while developing public speaking, critical thinking, and teamwork skills.

This year's case, *People v. Fromholz*, centered on Haley Fromholz, a chef and contestant on the reality television show "Recipe for Success", who is charged with murdering celebrity judge Morgan Sears using poisonous "heartstopper" mushrooms during the show's semifinal challenge. Charges included first degree murder, with involuntary manslaughter as a lesser included offense.

The Mock Trial program is supported by Teach Democracy, which hosts the California state competition.

TEAM FINISHES

- 1st - California High School (San Ramon Valley Unified School District)
- 2nd - Miramonte High School (Acalanes Union High School District)
- 3rd - Deer Valley High School (Antioch Unified School District)
- 4th - Acalanes High School (Acalanes Union High School District)

OUTSTANDING COURTROOM ARTIST

- 1st - Kim Le, Alhambra High School
- 2nd- Karla Navarro, Las Lomas High School

OUTSTANDING COURTROOM JOURNALIST

- 1st - Keerthi Eraniyan, California High School

Congratulations to all.

Martinez Celebrates Lunar New Year in Spectacular Fashion

Photo by Thomas Rimpel

In Contra Costa County, no city celebrates the Lunar New Year as spectacularly as the city of Martinez.

While February 17, 2026, is the first day of the Lunar New Year, the Year of the Fire Horse, on Saturday, Feb. 22, thousands of spectators line Main Street to watch this annual cultural and colorful festival. Activities included farmers market, martial arts demonstrations board breaking, crafts, and give aways, percussions, lion dancing, good luck red envelopes, lanterns and a for the finale, 96,000 firecrackers.

The event grows every year and is worth marking your calendar to

witness in future. Main Street is lined with thousands of enthusiastic and eager spectators.

This celebration began in 2017 as a John Swett Elementary (JSE) event funded by the JSE Parent Teacher Association.

It was so well received by the Martinez community, it eventually moved to Main Street drawing thousands of spectators.

At the Marina, the Kiteman of Martinez, Tony Jetland, lit up the night sky on Lunar New Year by piloting his incredible colorful L.E.D. horse inflatable which alternates colors as it flies.



Above: Tomizaki Lion Dance team performs the good luck lion dance while handing out red cards filled with \$5 bill to random spectators. The cultural festival culminated in the lighting of 96,000 firecrackers.

Below: For scale, Tony Jetland, aka Kiteman of Martinez, stands next to his horse inflatable which he piloted to honor the Lunar New Year, the year of the Fire Horse, with one of his spectacular L.E.D. inflatables on Feb 17 at the Martinez Marina. Photo by Tony Jetland.



Pleasant Hill State of the City Highlights Progress and Priorities

The Pleasant Hill Chamber of Commerce hosted its annual State of the City event on February 19, bringing together business leaders, elected officials, community partners, and residents for an informative and forward-looking conversation about Pleasant Hill's progress and priorities.

Held at Back Forty BBQ, the event highlighted key accomplishments from the past year while outlining strategic initiatives that will shape the city's future.

Mayor Zac Shess highlighted the City's continued growth, infrastructure improvements, and commitment to supporting local businesses while maintaining fiscal responsibility. He outlined priorities for the year ahead focused on strategic development and enhancing quality of life for residents.

Rec and Park Board Chair Derek Wurst shared updates on parks and recreation initiatives. From park improvements to recreational programming, Pleasant Hill Rec and Park plays a vital role in fostering

community connection and outdoor engagement.



Pleasant Hill Mayor Zac Shess

Jeremy Carlson, Chamber Executive Director had this to say, "Pleasant Hill moves forward when leadership and community come together with purpose. The Chamber is proud to host this event each year because it creates a space where vision, accountability, and collaboration align. With our new Mayor stepping into his term,

there is clear focus on strengthening economic vitality, supporting our local businesses, and fostering thoughtful growth."





WHISKEY TASTING

Join us for an evening to experience the **Fine Art of Whiskey Tasting** with **Frank Jakuba**

Enjoy a Taste of Pleasant Hill - bites from local restaurants

Be entertained by the talented **Debra Del Mastro and Company**

Tickets \$125.00 each or 2 for \$200.00



When:
Friday
April 10th, 2026
6-9 pm

Where:
Pleasant Hill Senior Center
Chateau Hall
233 Gregory Ln, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523



Live your life.

Visit a Carlton community near you to see how we make life lighter, easier, and more enjoyable.

What You'll Love

- ✔ Exceptional Senior Living Support
- ✔ Healthy, Delicious Dining
- ✔ Convenient Transportation
- ✔ Welcoming Community & Social Events

Open House • Saturday, May 2

Tour apartments, meet our team, and learn more about life at Carlton.

Prefer an earlier visit? You're welcome any time. We'd love to meet you!



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