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# Diablo Gazette™

June 2026

## \$628,000,000 PENDING



**Concord City Council unanimously accepts the proposed Navy Term Sheet to purchase the Concord Naval Weapons Station. 2422 acres area for \$628M from the U.S Navy with the support of project's developer, Brookfield Residential.** Photo: Josh Roden, President, Norcal, at developer Brookfield Residential working with the city of Concord to redevelop the Concord Naval Weapons Station, stands on a hillside overlooking the former naval base. (Martin do Nascimento/KQED)

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# Why is June Such a Special Month?

June has been our Special Edition now for the past six years, and this edition is no exception. Largely, the local advertising community congratulates the graduating class as these students enter a new phase in their life. We all wish the graduates good vibes and future success. Here are a few other topics inside that make this edition special.

Clayton Valley Charter's center pullout is a wonderful tribute to its graduating class. This edition will be handed out to attendees at the commencement ceremony and Diablo Gazette is proud to a part of their occasion for the seventh year.

Memorial Day ceremonies seemed particularly moving this year and well attended. Two local WWII veterans, Earl "Chuck" Kohler and "Papa" Jake Larson, had their war experience televised nationally over the Memorial Day weekend. Both productions are incredible and warrant watching



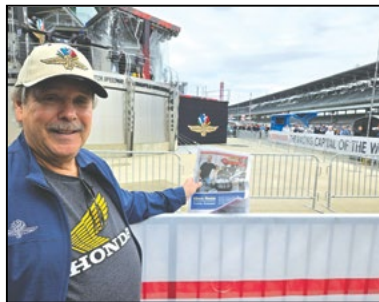
which can still be done Online.

Concord is about to change. City Council has hired a new City Manager who starts in June as we also say goodbye to Valerie Barone. She is retiring after 14 years as Concord City Manager.

Concord City Council unanimously accepted the Navy \$628M term sheet for the Concord Naval Weapons Station development project. It has infused new life and enthusiasm into that project which seemingly has been languishing in purgatory.

Diablo Gazette contributor and author, Jill Hedgecock, has been graced with spectacular news in her publishing world. She was offered a Free ebook deal from BookBub for her novel "From Shadow's Perspective", the second book of her trilogy about a ghost-seeing Doberman. This led to more than 7,000 downloads in one day and was ranked #13 Best Sellers list on Kindle, and #1 in Teen & Young adult categories for coming of Age; Fantasy & Supernatural Mystery; and Thriller and Suspense categories.

Two new members have joined the Diablo Gazette's Elite Travelers Club. Tim Carr of Concord appeared in the pits at the 110th running of Indianapolis 500 with a copy of the Gazette. David Scholz



Tim Carr brings the Diablo Gazette into the pits at the 110th running of the Indianapolis 500.



David Scholz brings along the Diablo Gazette to Linz, Austria. Here he's in the heart of the city just a few steps from the Danube River.

of Pleasant Hill introduced Diablo Gazette to the City of Linz, Austria. Thank you for traveling with the Diablo Gazette, welcome to the club, gentleman.

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## Central San Invites Community to 80th Birthday Bash - June 13

All are invited to Central Contra Costa Sanitary District's (Central San) once-in-a-decade sewer party.

In celebration of 80 years of service, Central San is hosting a free, community-wide Open House on Saturday, June 13, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at their headquarters and treatment plant in Martinez.

The event will feature fun for all ages, including free food and ice cream, behind-the-scenes tours of the wastewater treatment plant, big trucks, hands-on games and activities, educational exhibits, photo opportunities, toilet racers (like go-karts, but with toilets), and much more.

In addition to plenty of fun, the Open House offers an opportunity to learn more about where your wastewater goes and meet the people who operate and maintain your sewer system every day.

Central San serves nearly 500,000 residents and more than 15,000 businesses throughout central Contra Costa County. Whatever goes down your drains travels through Central San's 1,500 miles of neighborhood sewer pipes to its treatment plant, where they clean more than 13 billion gallons of wastewater every year.

Space is limited for the treatment plant tours, so preregistration is encouraged. No registration is needed for the other activities, you are feel free to drop by and enjoy. Central San asks that you bring a reusable water bottle



Central San racing toilets

and leave pets at home (except for service animals).

Free off-site parking and shuttle service will be available at:

Contra Costa County Assessor's Office, 2530 Arnold Drive, Martinez

Contra Costa County Public Works Department, 255 Glacier Drive, Martinez

Accessible parking only will be available at 5019 Imhoff Place, Martinez.

For complete event details and to preregister for a tour, please visit: [centralsan.org/80th](http://centralsan.org/80th)

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## German Occupation of the Netherlands May 1940 - May 1945 (Part 5: Hunger Winter)

by Nell Fliehmann

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

In 1933, Neil 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 has shared with the Diablo Gazette.

This is the fifth installment of her story. You can find the first four installments from previous editions at [diablogazette.com](http://diablogazette.com) beginning with the February 2026 issue

### September 5, 1944, Crazy Tuesday in Dutch, Dolle Dinsdag



Dolle Dinsdag (English: Mad Tuesday) took place in the Netherlands (at the time occupied by Nazi Germany) on 5 September 1944, when celebrations were prompted after broadcasts incorrectly reported that Breda had been liberated by Allied forces.

Rumors were spreading that our liberation by Allied forces was at hand. They had conquered Antwerp, in Belgium, and it was thought that the Allied forces would march on and liberate the Netherlands.

Germans and Dutch collaborators, who had openly sympathized with the Germans, began to panic and fled to Germany. It was a day of great confusion in many parts of Holland.

Unfortunately, the Germans were able to stop the advancing allied forces. Most of the south and east of the country was liberated in October 1944. The people there went berserk and celebrated their freedom from the oppressors.

The western part of Holland had to wait six more months until they were liberated. And so began the worst part of the occupation for my family and myself. On September 17 railway strikes began and the supply routes from and to Germany were almost completely stopped.

### Hunger Winter of 1944-1945.

In October 1944, the Dutch government in exile in London called for a national railway strike in all of Holland to hinder German military



Photo of people waiting for their turn at a food distribution location, during the Hungerwinter in 1944 in The Hague in the last year of the German occupation. Street photography by Dutch photographer Menno Huizinga Courtesy Wikicommons.

activities. In retaliation the German authorities blocked all food supplies to the occupied west of the country. Now the food situation became very dire. This was premeditated slow starvation.

In the cities people were dying from malnutrition, especially babies. In all 20,000 Dutch Persons died. Sometimes our doorbell would ring and a total stranger would ask for just one potato, which we always gave.

Tmus and I bemoaned the loss of Bobby, our fox terrier. He had suddenly disappeared. It had been bothering my father more and more that the dog was being fed table scraps. My mother explained to her daughters that Bobby had been given away to the milkman who could feed him better. We never quite believed that story but preferred not to know and always wondered what really happened. Bobby was my sister's dog and was very mischievous.

The hunger winter of 1944/45 was the coldest winter in years; there was no coal, a few hours of electricity and no gas. We heated only one room with coal bought on the black market, and went to bed right after our meager dinner, since there was no light to read by and sleep would keep at bay the hunger and cold.

For a month or two there was no water. Neighbors at our end of the street got together and had a well dug in someone's back yard. Each person was allotted one pail of water a day. My father, though weak from hunger, made daily trips to fetch us water in buckets.

The shortages of food were mostly felt in Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and surroundings, which is where we and my oldest brother lived.

Piet got married in 1944. His wife became pregnant with twins. The babies, Peter and Willem Van Altena were born five months after the war ended. She made do with homemade diapers, and secondhand baby clothes.

Marion, the wife of my other brother Fred, had given birth to her oldest daughter during the worst of all times, in January 1945. The baby was born in a school, where they had improvised a maternity ward in a big hall. When the warm baby entered this world in a freezing cold room, steam was rising from her little body.

The baby survived that winter and Ineke Vandenburg Van Altena is now 70 years old. (as of this writing)

Next month, "Foraging for Food"

## Memorial Day Ceremony Honors Contra Costa County Fallen at The Grove



A large turnout from the Clayton and Concord communities, joined by local elected officials, gathered at The Grove in Clayton on Memorial Day to honor those who served and made the ultimate sacrifice. Organized by VFW Post 1525, the ceremony featured retired Marine Lt. Col. Mike Hudson reading the names of Contra Costa County service members who have died in service since the Vietnam War. Attendees also heard moving remarks from Gold Star Mothers, who shared the lasting impact of their loss on their families. Marines lowered the American flag to half-staff, while Sea Scouts solemnly placed tags on the memorial monument. The following service members were honored. (Photos: Lt. Col Mike Hudson, Marines, Sea Scouts Tags placed on Memorial Monument)

### Vietnam

Specialist 4 Ronald Baker, USA  
2nd LT Walter Raymond Boettcher Jr. USA  
Specialist 4 Thomas Bush USA  
Sgt Daniel Casey USA  
Sgt Paul Coe USA  
1st Sgt Orville Frits USA  
Specialist 4 Frank Gonerman USA  
PFC Raymond Hauser USA  
Specialist 4 Daniel McKechnie USA  
Specialist 4 Tom Melendres USA  
PFC Michael McCullough USA  
2nd Lt. Jerry Novakovich USA  
PFC David Parks USA  
PFC Ronnie Pimentel USA  
Cpl Daniel Rezende USA  
Specialist 4 William Scheidt USA  
Specialist 4 Joseph Sherlock III USA  
Sgt Bruce Sours USA  
Specialist 4 Ollie Stapleton USA  
Cpl. John Sterling USA  
PFC Robert Ward USA  
Capt Richard Callanan USAF  
PFC Albert Alencastre  
LCpl Randall Choate  
LCpl James Flickinger  
1st LT Edward Hayen II  
LCpl Gerald McGinley  
LCpl Willard Nelson  
LCpl David Oberle  
PFC Terry Stout  
Sgt. Emii Ziss

### Post 9/11

PFC Benjamin Tollefson USA  
SA Jonathan V Veiner Vega USAF  
Cpl Sean Langevin USA  
Sgt John D Aragon USA  
LCpl Sara Castro Mata USMC  
SPC Ricky Wickle USA  
Cpl Kyle D Crowley USMC  
SN Luckey Danyelle USN  
SSgt Daniel R Scheile USA  
Maj James Ahern USA  
Cpl Joshua Corral USMC  
CPT John Hallet USA  
Cpl Mick Bekowski USMC  
Sgt Gabriel Guzman USA  
SPC Joseph Graves USA  
PFC Benjamin Zieske- USA  
SSgt Stephan J Wilson- USMC  
Pvt Nicholas Dodson USA  
SPC Joseph C Norquist USA  
SPC James J Coon USA  
CPT Mark Pine USA  
PFC Scott Barnett USA  
LCpl Erick Hodges, USMC  
PO3 Vincent C Hernandez USN  
Taylor Hannah USA  
Kevin Dexter USMC  
2nd Lt Peter Zhu USA





# Council Preparing to Place Two Revenue Measures on November Ballot: Local Sales Tax and Increase in Landscape Maintenance District Base Rate

Top of mind for the City is the proposed renewal of the Landscape Maintenance District, commonly known as the LMD, and a proposed Transaction and Use Tax, or local sales tax. Both items are expected to appear on the November ballot.

These are important discussions because they go directly to how we maintain current services, protect the quality of our public spaces, and address long-term financial needs.

The LMD has been a major source of funding for City operations for many years, supporting landscape maintenance, parks, trails, open space, and related services throughout the community.

The proposed sales tax is intended to help address structural deficits where the City does not have other realistic options to maintain current service levels over the long term.

The City's structural deficit is driven by a basic imbalance between revenue and costs. Like many California cities, we rely heavily on property tax revenue. I

n Clayton, the majority of City revenue is based on property taxes. However, annual growth in assessed values is capped under Proposition 13.

At the same time, the City's costs are not capped. In recent years,

the cost of services, supplies, and labor has risen dramatically. That means the cost of providing the same services continues to grow faster than the revenue available to pay for them.

Over the past several months, the City has shared information with the community about finances and service levels. Soon, this will also include updates from the City Manager, including a newsletter focused on these issues, as well as information on the City website about current project work around town. The goal is to give residents clear, accessible information about what the City is doing today, what challenges remain, and what decisions are ahead.

At our most recent meeting, the Council aligned on the key details for both measures. For the proposed sales tax, that included ballot language, the election timeline, and the process for the argument in favor.

The Council is expected to consider the necessary resolutions on June 16, with submission to the County no later than August 7. The Council also discussed having the full Council author the argument in favor, if permitted by law.

For the LMD renewal, the Council aligned around a 10-year extension, with no change to the existing method of apportionment. The

proposal would set a new base rate equal to the current rate plus 10 percent, with a CPI-based annual adjustment. The additional funding would support capital projects and help keep pace with inflation.

The Trails and Landscape Committee would serve as the oversight body, with membership reduced from 11 to five.

The description of LMD-funded services would remain generally the same, with updates for clarity and consistency. The same June 16 and August 7 timeline applies, and the Council also discussed having the full Council author the argument in favor, if permitted by law.

Between now and November, the City will continue sharing information with the public. Two town hall events are currently planned for August 26 and October 7, and more details will be shared as those dates get closer.

These decisions matter because they affect the City's ability to maintain the services and community assets residents rely on every day, including parks, trails, landscaping, public areas, and core services. If these measures do not pass, the City would face very difficult choices.

The LMD currently provides about \$1.3 million in funding, compared

with a total City budget of roughly \$7 million when the General Fund and LMD are combined. At the same time, the City is already facing an approximately \$800,000 General Fund deficit.

Closing a gap of that size would require significant reductions, and there are limited places to make them without affecting services residents see and rely on.

Police services alone account for approximately 50 percent of General Fund spending, which means any effort to balance the budget through cuts would quickly raise difficult questions about service levels across the City, including public safety, maintenance, landscaping, parks, trails, and other core operations.

The Council's role at this stage is to define the proposals, place them before voters, and provide clear information about what is being considered. The voters will ultimately decide in November. In the months ahead, I encourage residents to read the City's updates, attend the town halls, follow the information posted on the City website, and ask questions. An informed discussion will help residents understand both the needs and the choices ahead.



# Consider it SOLD!



**\$849,000** PENDING

49 Tule Ct, Clayton



**\$1,049,000** PENDING

55 Regency Dr, Clayton



**\$999,000** PENDING

2000 Curry Canyon Rd, Clayton



**\$1,488,000** PENDING

367 Mt. Washington Way, Clayton



**\$1,550,000** SOLD  
Buyer Representation

9013 Elk Dr, Clayton



**\$943,000** SOLD  
Buyer Representation

14 Weatherly Dr, Clayton



**\$880,000** SOLD  
Overlist

1531 Eclipse Way, Concord



**\$651,000** SOLD  
Overlist

5070 Bonwell Dr, Concord



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**CLAYTON MARKET UPDATE**

Address	Sales Price	SF	Bed/Bath	Sales Date
510 Mt Davidson Ct	\$1,310,000	2960	5/4	4/17/2026
23 Capistrano Ct	\$1,150,000	2032	4/2.5	4/17/2026
5817 Mitchell Canyon Ct	\$1,185,000	2501	4/2.5	4/21/2026
105 Crow Pl	\$1,040,000	2467	4/3	4/27/2026
152 Regency Dr	\$993,000	1648	3/2	4/30/2026
1921 Eagle Peak Ave	\$740,000	1595	3/2.5	5/12/2026
14 Weatherly Dr	\$943,000	1895	4/2	5/13/2026

**CONCORD MARKET UPDATE**

Address	Sales Price	SF	Bed/Bath	Sales Date
5506 Nebraska Dr	\$1,095,000	2060	4/2.5	4/20/2026
5070 Bonwell Dr	\$651,000	1222	3/1	4/27/2026
1430 Bel Air Dr #103	\$359,000	940	2/2	4/30/2026
1048 Peppermill Ct	\$1,415,000	2896	5/3	5/5/2026
3754 Walnut Ave	\$959,000	1538	3/2	5/6/2026
1531 Eclipse Way	\$880,000	2292	4/2.5	5/13/2026
4095 Phoenix St	\$1,295,000	1656	4/2	5/14/2026

Based on information from CCR/Paragon MLS as of 5/18/26. All data, including all measurements and calculations of area, is obtained from various sources and has not been, and will not be, verified by broker or MLS. All information should be independently reviewed and verified for accuracy. Properties may or may not be listed by the office/agent presenting the information.

THE CITY OF CLAYTON PRESENTS

# CONCERTS IN THE GROVE

MAY 16 - AUGUST 22 | 6:00 - 8:30 P.M. >>>>

**JUNE 13 THE CHEESEBALLS**  
Dance Band

**JUNE 27 EAST BAY MUDD**  
Soul and R & B

**JULY 11 THE BELL BROTHERS**  
Country with line dance instructors

**JULY 25 THE HOUSEROCKERS**  
Pop/Dance Hits

**AUGUST 8 MIDNIGHT FLYER**  
Eagles Tribute Band

**AUGUST 22 PRIDE & JOY**  
R&B and Motown Music

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## What Buyers Notice in the First 30 Seconds

They say first impressions matter, and in real estate, that statement couldn't be more true. Many homeowners think buyers make decisions after walking through an entire home, but the reality is buyers often start forming opinions within the first 30 seconds.

Before they even step through the front door, buyers are paying attention. Is the lawn maintained? Are bushes overgrown? Is the front porch inviting? Does the paint look fresh? Even small things like dead plants, clutter, or a worn-out doormat can create an impression before a buyer ever sees the inside.

Once inside, buyers immediately notice how a home feels. Is it bright and welcoming? Does it feel open? Is it clean? Sometimes homeowners become so accustomed to their own space that they stop noticing little things that stand out to someone seeing it for the first time.

One of the biggest things buyers notice is clutter. A home doesn't need to be empty or look like nobody lives there, but too much furniture, overflowing counters, and crowded rooms can make spaces feel smaller than they really are.

Smells also matter more than people realize. Strong cooking odors, pet smells, smoke, or even heavily scented air fresheners can distract buyers. You want buyers focused on the home itself,

not wondering where a smell is coming from.

Lighting is another big one. Buyers love bright spaces. Opening blinds, cleaning windows, and replacing dim light bulbs can make a surprising difference.

And while kitchens and bathrooms are still important, buyers often focus on something bigger: whether they can picture themselves living there. Can they imagine holiday dinners around the table? Morning coffee on the patio? The goal isn't perfection. It's creating a feeling.

As Realtors, we often spend time helping sellers prepare before a home ever hits the market because sometimes small changes can make a big impact. Buyers may only need 30 seconds to form an impression, but that first impression can influence everything that happens after. A buyer who walks in feeling excited and connected to a home often views the rest of the property through a different lens than someone who walks in already noticing distractions or concerns.

In real estate, you rarely get a second chance at a first impression, and sometimes the smallest details can make the biggest difference.

## CBCA Donates \$20,000 to Clayton Historical Society

Clayton Business and Community Association donated \$20,000 to the Clayton Historical Society and Museum. The annual endowment will help keep the museum operating preserving Clayton's history.



Photo from CBCA Facebook

The funds are generated by successful CBCA events such as the annual Art and Wine Festival and Oktoberfest and each year distributed to benefit the community in a variety of ways.

## Clayton Valley Coach Herc Pardi Inducted into Pittsburg High 19th Hall of Fame

Herc Pardi was inducted into the Pittsburg High School 19th Hall of Fame football class on May 30, featuring nine individuals plus the 1965 and 1995 teams.



Contra Costa County Superior Court Judge Leonard Marquez, left, and former Pittsburg High School Coach Herc Pardi are two inductees in Pittsburg High's Hall of Fame football class this year. (photo courtesy of Roxanne Pardi)

Former Coach Herc Pardi was the only North Coast Section football coach since 1991 to lead his team to victory over Concord's De La Salle High. No section rival has beaten DLS since then.

Players from the 1965 team include Contra Costa County Superior Court Judge Leonard Marquez, who was appointed to his position in 2018.



## Pearl Harbor Survivor "Chuck"

# Kohler Honored at National Memorial Day Concert in Washington DC

Pearl Harbor Survivor, Earl "Chuck" Kohler was not present for this year's Memorial Day Ceremony held at the Grove Park in Clayton like he usually is,

He was in Washington DC as a guest of honor for the 85th annual National Memorial Day Concert conducted on the West Lawn of the Capitol which was broadcast live nationally on PBS, locally KQED, on May 24. Hosted by actors Gary Sinise and Mary McCormick, the recognition and tribute to Kohler was emotionally powerful. His story was narrated by acclaimed actor Jonathan Banks, complete with Pearl Harbor slides and footage and dramatic music underneath.

Kohler is one of the last 11 living eyewitnesses to the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

"I'm so excited about going to the White House," Earl "Chuck" Kohler the 102-year-old Navy veteran told me, "I feel truly honored not just representing myself, but all those who were injured and gave their lives."

### A teenager at Pearl Harbor



Kohler was just 17 years old when Japanese aircraft appeared over Pearl Harbor shortly before 8 a.m. on a quiet Sunday morning in Hawaii. "And at that age, how were you able to get enlisted?" His son Mike Kohler answered, "His

father signed the papers because he believed Chuck might quickly decide military life was too hard and he would return home."

Stationed on Ford Island in the center of the harbor, he was thrown into chaos as bombs and torpedoes ripped through the naval base.

He was struck by shrapnel and flying debris in the neck and shoulders yet survived the initial assault. He has yet to receive a Purple Heart for his injuries. "It was probably the first bomb to fall on Pearl Harbor," he said, "so I may have been the first casualty of the war."

"We were ordered to take cover and get into a construction ditch, but I refused, I didn't want to die like that. I and another sailor demanded a .50-caliber machine gun at the Ordnance building," which is an enormous weapon for a seventeen-year-old sailor who later admitted the biggest gun he had ever fired before that day was a .22 rifle on his family farm in Minnesota.

"Throughout the fight I helped fire the machine gun from the ground while Japanese aircraft swept over Ford Island in the second wave of attacks. I then carried ammunition back and forth to other guns."

The fighting around him was intense. Japanese dive bombers targeted Ford Island hangars, airfields, and battleships moored nearby. Aircraft strafed personnel on the ground while anti-aircraft fire erupted from ships and shore batteries across the harbor.

"My greatest fear was not bombs or bullets, but the threat of court martial for disobeying my officer's orders not to shoot back," Kohler said. "The worst part was watching ships explode and capsizes while knowing sailors were

trapped inside. The images of burning battleships and dying men has stayed with ever since."

The attack lasted less than two hours, but its impact was catastrophic. Eight battleships were damaged or sunk, more than 180 aircraft destroyed, and 2,403 Americans killed. The strike shattered the Pacific Fleet and propelled the United States into World War II.

Years later, Kohler would reflect on the moment that defined the rest of his life.

"Somewhere in that morning, " he paused, "I lost that 17-year-old sailor."

### A life shaped by war and remembrance

Born in rural Minnesota during the Great Depression, Kohler enlisted in the Navy in April 1941, just months before the attack that would define his generation. He went on to serve throughout World War II and remained in the Navy for 14 years before eventually settling in California's East Bay.

Now, more than eight decades after Pearl Harbor, he is among only a handful of survivors still living.

This year's Memorial Concert program marks the 250th anniversary of the United States and honored generations of military service dating back to the American Revolution. Producers say Kohler's participation underscores a growing urgency: the nation is rapidly losing its last living links to World War II's defining moments.



### A legacy that must be told

For decades, Kohler has devoted much of his later life to ensuring the story of Pearl Harbor is not forgotten. He has become a central figure in remembrance ceremonies tied to the Mount Diablo Beacon overlooking California's East Bay.

Each December, the beacon atop Mount Diablo is lit in honor of the victims and survivors of Pearl Harbor, continuing a tradition rooted in wartime fears along the West Coast after the 1941 attack.

During World War II, the light was extinguished out of concern it could be used as a navigational reference for enemy aircraft or submarines. In later years, its relighting became a symbol of remembrance and resilience.

Today, the annual illumination serves as a tribute to those who lived through the attack and to the generation that fought in the second World War.

Earl "Chuck" Kohler is your neighbor. He lives in Clayton.



Scan to view the PBS broadcast of the National Memorial Day Concert tribute to Chuck Kohler.

## Civil Grand Jury Watches Government, But Who's Watching Them?

by David King

The Contra Costa County Civil Grand Jury is annually impaneled to investigate city and county governments, special districts and certain nonprofit corporations to ensure functions are performed in a lawful, economical and efficient manner. Recommendations resulting from these investigations are listed.

This year, a just released report 2602 is a highly critical Civil Grand Jury review of Contra Costa County's Internal Audit Division (IAD), concluding that the County's internal auditing system is outdated, lacks independence, and does not comply with professional auditing standards or California law and says the current structure undermines both independence and public accountability.

### Among the Findings

The Grand Jury says the County's internal audit operation has major structural problems.

One of the more egregious findings is the Internal Audit Division has not had an outside quality review in more than

25 years, even though auditing standards require one every 3-5 years.

It cites examples indicating the audit division is functioning in what the report calls a major conflict of interest and "independence impairment."

Oversight from the Board of Supervisors is described as weak and largely symbolic.

The audit division operates under a governing administrative bulletin written in 1975 that has never been modernized to reflect current standards.

The County does not publicly post completed internal audit reports or annual audit plans online and lacks several standard safeguards expected in modern government auditing.

### Jury Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends sweeping reforms, including:

Creating a dedicated Audit Committee and adding outside/public financial experts

Ending the practice of auditors helping prepare the County's financial reports

Requiring quarterly reporting to supervisors

Publishing audit reports publicly online

Bringing the division into compliance with Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) and Government Accountability Office (GAGAS) standards

The County must respond to Court regarding recommendations offered by the report.

Last year when the Clayton City Council had to respond to its Civil Grand Jury Report 2505. The Council responded with an emphatic "no" to most of the report's recommendations, citing the investigators used inaccurate figures, dismissed audited figures and other information provided and misunderstands local government procedures and functions.

In addition, believing the report was detrimental to the City's reputation, the

local Political Action Committee, Clayton Watch, submitted a petition to the Court requesting a correction or amendment to their report.

Did they do it? It doesn't appear so.

"The new Pinole Civil Grand Jury Report 2604 shows what good oversight looks like: facts, benchmarks, and transparency," said Gary Hood, a member of the Clayton Watch and Clayton resident who filed the petition.

"Last year's Clayton report did the opposite. It started with a conclusion, then worked backward and failed badly to support it.

"Maybe it's time for the Civil Grand Jury to look in the mirror. A watchdog should be held to the same standard it demands of everyone else. Political influence has no place in the process. The public deserves independence, objectivity, and facts. And maybe it's time someone on the judiciary side of the street did their job. Who watches the watchdog?"

# calendar of events

**June 5 National Donut Day**

**June 19 Juneteenth**

**July 4th 250 Years!**



## 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](http://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/](http://www.cars2ndchance.org/)

## Clayton

**June 12 & 26 Family Movie Night.** Bring blankets, lawn chairs and the kids and to watch movies under the stars at the Clayton Valley Farms. Snacks and treats available. Reservations required, Text Farmer Mike to 925-525-6272. 1100 Russelmann Park Rd. Clayton.

**July 6-10; 13-17 Summer Stage 2026. “The Lion King”.** A two-week theatre camp for kids age 7-14. 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Instructed by Clayton Community Theatre Managing Director, Roxanne Pardi, and Artistic director and Choreographer La Tonya Watts. Final performance on June 17.

## Concerts in the Grove

> **June 13 6:00 - 8:30 p.m. The Cheeseball** dance band

> **June 27 East Bay Mudd 9-piece party machine.** Soul and R&B.

## 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.

**June 6 VFW Post 1525 All In or Walk Away Texas Hold'em Tournament. 7:00-11:00 p.m.** Maximum 64 players. \$80 Buy in. Fundraiser for Veterans in need. Grand Raffle Prize 1956 Vintage 30-

**June 8 Mt. Diablo High School Class of 1976 50th Reunion Meeting** at Round Table Pizza on Port Chicago Hwy & Olivera. This gathering is for 1976 classmates as we count down to our 50-year reunion in July. More info: [ReunionMDHS76@gmail.com](mailto:ReunionMDHS76@gmail.com).

**June 12 Concord Night Market** Cultural performances, artisan vendors, food trucks, live music kids activities and more. 5:00 - 9:00 p.m. Every 2nd Friday of the month through November. Todos Santos Plaza

**June 13 Adaptive Learning Center (ALC) Arts and Crafts Fair.** Explore ALC artists collection of handmade creations, including T-shirts, bags, paintings, drawings, animations, jewelry, photography and more. 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. 3227 Clayton Rd. Concord.

**June 20 Vette-O-Rama 54** All Corvettes Type V Car Show. Raffle prizes and Music. Todos Santos Plaza 2151 Salvio Street Concord. Presented by Diablo Valley Corvettes. [diablowalleycorvettes.com](http://diablowalleycorvettes.com).

**July 17-19 Port Chicago Remembrance Weekend** Honor the legacy, courage, and enduring impact of the Port Chicago Sailors and all who have served. Commemorative events will take place throughout the weekend of July 17-19. Presented by Port Chicago Alliance. [portchicagoweekend.org](http://portchicagoweekend.org)

## Pleasant Hill

**June 8-July 27 Diablo Women's Chorale Summer Workshop** for youth singers (middle and high school) and mixed voice adult choir (men and women). Open to public, no audition required. Weekly classes meet Monday evenings from June 8 to July 27, 2026, at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 3051 Putnam Blvd, Pleasant Hill. Sign up at [diablowomenschorale.org](http://diablowomenschorale.org).

**June 13 Citywide Garage Sale.** Register your garage at [pleasanthillgaragesale.com](http://pleasanthillgaragesale.com)

June 25 Feeling Safe in the Community presented by Commission on Aging. 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. Free safety and awareness workshop in partnership with the Pleasant Hill Police Department and Contra Costa Fire. Council Chambers, 100 Gregory Lane. Register at [PHillCa.gov/COAEvents](http://PHillCa.gov/COAEvents).

**July 4 - 50th Annual 4th of July Celebration:** The 4th of July Commission puts on a day of events, starting early with the Firecracker 5k, followed by the downtown Parade,

the Party in the Park, and ending with a fireworks show at College Park High School. For details and to register for the 5k go to <https://phjuly4.com/>

## Sunset by the Lake

**June 7 AC & the Heatwave**

**June 21 The Floorshakers**

**July 5 The Bell Brothers**

## Martinez

**June 6 Patriotic Concert** at John Muir Historic site. Diablo Regional Concert Band will perform classic patriotic favorites in celebration of the 150th Anniversary of Martinez's Incorporation and America's 250th Anniversary. 1:00 p.m. 4202 Alhambra Ave. FREE.

**June 6 - July 17 Martinez Sturgeon Baseball Camp** Monday's 9:00 - Noon, Kids age 6-17. Joe Dimaggio Field #3 at Waterfront Park, Martinez. Proceeds benefit the Martinez Sturgeon players. \$40. Sign Up at [martinezsturgeon.com](http://martinezsturgeon.com).

**June 13 Central San 80th Anniversary Open House** Join Central San for a once-in-a-decade sewer party! This free, all-ages event will feature complimentary food and ice cream, tours of Central San's wastewater treatment plant, big trucks, hands-on games and activities, educational exhibits, and much more. For more information, please visit: [centralsan.org/80th](http://centralsan.org/80th)

**June 13 Martinez Beaver Festival.**



Returning for its 17th year, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. at Susana Park, at Estudillo and Susana Streets. Hosted by Worth a Dam. Free. See a giant beaver skull, a 1500-gallon aquarium on wheels, 18-piece jazz band, children's parade, live display of raptors, and an award winning chalk artist. [Martinezbeavers.org](http://Martinezbeavers.org).

**June 14 Open Air Market** Always the second Sunday of each month through October. Downtown Main St. 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

**July 20-27, 27-31 John Muir Mountain Day Camp.** 8:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. Two one-week camps packed with exploring nature trails, painting, baking sourdough bread, journaling as Muir did, and discovering local plants and animals. For children ages 7-12.

\$400 [johnmuirassociation.org](http://johnmuirassociation.org)

For more Martinez Community events, go to Martinez Section, page 20.

## At the Martinez Campbell Theater

634 Ward St.

> **June 5-21 Frederick Douglass “I Was Born a Slave”** a narrative of his passage to freedom. Presented by Onstage Repertory Theatre. A staged reading of several books and speeches. Reserved tickets from \$24, Discount Thursday \$18. Reserved \$24, Discount Thursday \$18. [campbelltheater.com/frederick-douglass](http://campbelltheater.com/frederick-douglass).

> **June 14 Open Mic 6:00 p.m.** \$3 cover.

> **June 20 “Radio Plays”** Auditions 12noon to 3:00 p.m. No monologues. Audition format is “read-from-script” non-union, No-pay. Questions? Contact Bill Chessman [guitarwebguy@yahoo.com](mailto:guitarwebguy@yahoo.com).

## 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



> **June 5 - 100 PRUF – preceded by a dance lesson**

> **June 19 -Natural Blend,** preceded by potluck

> **July 3 - Claudio Medeiros,** preceded by a Cha Cha lesson.

## Leshner Center

1601 Civic Dr. Walnut Creek. 925-943-7469.

> **June 12 Pacific Mambo Orchestra** Grammy award-winning Latin Big Band. 7”30 - 9”30 p.m.

> **Pride Public Art Walking Tour** June's Public Art Walking Tour is taking a special Pride Month route. Docent-led tour highlights the City's most vibrant and colorful works in the downtown area. Ticket required, pay what you can. 10:00 a.m.

## Other Areas

### Crockett:

≥ **June 6 Town-wide Yard Sale** 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Sales all over town including Downtown Plaza. Find antiques, art, car parts, toys, furniture, plants, office supplies and more. Maps available the day of for \$2 at the Downtown Plaza. at 2nd and Pomona. (includes a reusable commemorative bag, filled with other items)

**July 19 Sugartown Festival**  
11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m..Rolph Street transforms into a vibrant celebration with live music from four different bands, artisan vendors, beer garden, food and family entertainment. Admission is Free. sugartownfestival.com

**>Pittsburg:**

**>June 4 SIR Branch 19 Luncheon** 11:00 a.m. with social hour and lunch served at noon. There will be an interesting guest speaker. SIR is a social organization of men who participate in fun activities, such as golf, bowling, hiking, bocce, fishing, dining out, wine tasting, day trips, etc. All are welcome. Our motto: "Make friends for life." Pittsburg Elks Lodge, 200 Marina Blvd. Pittsburg. 925-338-1996. www.sirinc2.org/branch19

**>July 9 SIR Branch 19 Luncheon** with social hour and then lunch at Pittsburg Elks' Lodge, 200 Marina Blvd. Guest speaker. SIR is a social organization of men who participate in fun activities, such as golf, bowling, hiking, bocce, fishing, dining, wine tasting, day trips, and more. All are welcome. Call 925-338-1996 for more info. or go to www.sirinc.org/branch19.

**Library Events**

**>Clayton** 6125 Clayton Rd.  
**June 1- August 1 Summer Reading. Plant A Seed, Read!** The Contra Costa County Library's 2026 summer literacy program is all about feeding your body and your mind. Whether you're planting a flower garden, growing your next meal, or fueling your brain, the library is your greatest resource in finding everything you need this summer.

**June 1 to August 1**, every Reader who completes a passport or the online challenge with Beanstack is eligible for a free book and a chance to win prizes. Visit your local library or cclib.org for more information.

**June 17 —The Comedy Magic of Gernar the Magician.** Children's Program. 2:00–2:45 p.m. Prepare to be astounded and amazed in this magic show for the whole family. Program made possible through the generous support of the Clayton Community Library Foundation.

**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 Thursdays 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** 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/



**A Sparkling Celebration**



If you are celebrating a graduation this June, a little sparkle makes the occasion feel even more festive.

The bubbles do not need to be alcoholic, or even made from grapes, but serving them in tall, elegant glasses instantly adds a sense of occasion.

Sparkling wines are made around the world. Still, only those produced under strict French regulations from grapes grown in the Champagne region of France may properly be called Champagne.

Other sparkling wine regions have names of their own. Cap Classique, for example, is a South African sparkling wine made in the traditional method, with its secondary fermentation taking place in the bottle. Often produced from Sauvignon Blanc and Chenin Blanc grapes, it is known for bright citrus flavors and fresh, lively aromas.

Simple Grilled Shrimp is delicate, so it pairs best with a beverage that is equally clean and crisp. For a sparkling wine match, look for the word "Brut" on the label; Brut wines are dry and carry very little perceived sweetness.

For underage graduates, or for anyone who prefers a nonalcoholic option, sparkling water with a wedge of lemon on the rim is a great alternative pairing.

So go on, pair up!  
*Maria Terry is a Certified Sommelier and Wine Educator in the San Francisco Bay Area.*

www.LaSommelier.com



**Simple Grilled Shrimp**

**INGREDIENTS**

- 16 jumbo shrimp, raw, deveined, shell on
- Extra-virgin olive oil, about 1/2 cup, for brushing
- Coarse salt and black pepper
- 2 lemons, halved

**DIRECTIONS**

Preheat a griddle, grill pan, or barbecue to high heat. Butterfly the shrimp by slicing them nearly through lengthwise, leaving the shells on to help keep them moist and tender on the grill.

Brush the shrimp with oil, season with salt and pepper, and grill for about two minutes per side, until the shells turn bright pink and the shrimp are opaque.

Place the lemons on the grill during the last minute to warm them and draw out their juice. To serve, squeeze the grilled lemon halves over the shrimp.

Yield: 4 servings'

**Congratulations Class of 2026!**

**SUBMIT YOUR CALENDAR ENTRIES**

by the 20th of the month before Issue month. diablogazette@gmail.com

**Concord's Music & Market Concert Series Returns June 4**

2026 LINEUP	
04 JUNE	<b>Andre Thierry</b> Cajun, Zydeco and Soul
11 JUNE	<b>Dead &amp; Breakfast</b> Grateful Dead Tribute
18 JUNE	<b>Neon Velvet</b> High Energy Dance Party
25 JUNE	<b>Tommy Castro &amp; The Painkillers</b> Blues & Rock Sensation
02 JULY	<b>Funk Shui Band</b> Funk, R&B and Soul Band
09 JULY	<b>Super Diamond</b> The Neil Diamond Tribute
16 JULY	<b>Zepparella</b> All-Female Zeppelin Tribute
23 JULY	<b>Green-182</b> Green Day and Blink 182 Tribute
30 JULY	<b>Court n' Disaster</b> Popular Country Music
06 AUG	<b>Twist on Taylor</b> Taylor Swift Tribute
13 AUG	<b>Carlos Reyes</b> Latin Jazz
20 AUG	<b>The 3 Queens of Motown</b> Tina Turner, Diana Ross and Aretha Franklin Tribute
27 AUG	<b>Aja Vu</b> Steely Dan and Chicago Tribute
03 SEPT	<b>Strange Daze</b> The Doors Tribute
10 SEPT	<b>Steve Snyder's Big Band</b> Tribute to Concord Jazz Festival
17 SEPT	<b>Sacred Fire Band</b> Santana Tribute
24 SEPT	<b>House of Floyd</b> Pink Floyd Tribute

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# In Case You Missed It...

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

## Orinda Seventh Grader, Aiden Meng, Spells His Way to Finals at National Spelling Bee

Aiden Meng, a seventh grader at Orinda Intermediate School, placed second at the 2026 California State Junior High Spelling Bee.

Meng qualified to represent the Bay Area at the 2026 Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C. on May 26-28. He was one of 50 seventh- through ninth-grade students competing in the junior high championship.

Meng advanced as one of nine finalists who breezed through the first round of finals before being tripped up by the word "catometope" in the second round of the finals.

The contest was decided by a 90-second spell-off among two remaining finalists.

The winner was Shrey Parikh, 14, of Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.

## Traffic Signals Across Contra Costa County Are Getting Smarter

The Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA) marked the advancement of its Countywide Smart Signals project, at a groundbreaking event in Danville on May 28.

The project will modernize approximately 365 intersections

spanning all nine cities and towns, in Contra Costa County and focuses on major routes of regional significance.

Upgrades to traffic signals could include signal synchronization, vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle detection, emergency vehicle preemption, transit signal priority, high-speed network connections, remote-view sensors, and battery backup systems, depending on local jurisdiction needs. Initial upgrades will begin in communities such as Danville and Concord.

## Lindsay Wildlife Experience Breaks Ground on New Nature Cove

On May 20, Lindsay Wildlife Experience broke ground on Ky & Laura's Nature Cove, an immersive new exhibit and educational space where seven of the museum's non-releasable birds of prey, including a Golden Eagle, will be housed. This \$2 million project will revitalize the museum's footprint, a multi-sensory, outdoor, space. The largest single expansion in its history.

### Spiderman

Seen on Clayton Rd. and Detroit on May 15 in a battle with the nemesis, Litterbug.

NextDoor photo by John Buchano.



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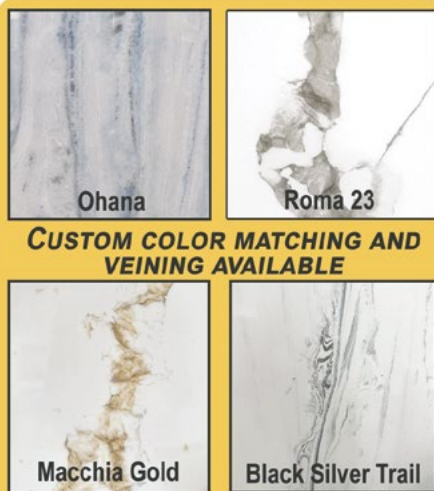
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## Three Habits That May Help Protect Your Brain From Dementia

Studies have shown that Sudoku or word games alone will not protect you against dementia.

Most of us know the standard advice for brain health: stay active, eat well, keep your mind engaged. Good advice. But recent research on dementia prevention has quietly grown more specific and some of what it points to may surprise you.

Three practices in particular have shown consistent protective effects. Two of them you can start today with no equipment and no gym membership.

**1 Speak more than one language.** Studies have found that people who regularly use multiple languages show delayed onset of dementia symptoms—sometimes by several years. Researchers believe the mental effort of managing two linguistic systems builds a kind of cognitive resilience over time. You don't need fluency. The practice of learning and using a second language appears to be protective on its own.

**2 Write with complexity.** This one is less well known. Research examining written language samples found that people who write with greater density of ideas, more connections and more nuance per sentence, tend to show stronger cognitive resilience as they age. Journaling, letter-writing, even poetry: the act of putting complex thoughts into words may be doing more for your brain than we've appreciated.

**3 Combine movement with mental effort.** This is where the research gets particularly interesting. Exercise creates the conditions for

neurogenesis, the biological process by which the brain generates new neurons. Movement literally prompts your brain to grow new cells. But new neurons need to be actively used to survive. Cognition, thinking and deciding are what give those new neurons a reason to form lasting connections.

The implication is significant: movement and mental engagement aren't just independently good for you. Together, they appear to be more powerful than either alone.

Research also suggests that higher-intensity exercise, interval training and/or resistance work near your capacity will produce more neurogenic activity than gentle movement alone. Walking is beneficial. But pairing more demanding physical effort with tasks that require your full attention may offer stronger protection.

Activities like dance, martial arts, or any physically demanding practice that also requires learning and coordination seem to hit this combination well. The brain and body are working together, not separately.

The core idea is simple enough: The more your brain has to show up for what your body is doing, the more both of them benefit. That's not a supplement. That's a lifestyle.

If you'd like to explore what this could look like in your own life, attend "Get Your Brain in the Game", a free webinar on June 23 at 12:30 PM. Go to [neurologyofpresence.com/braingame-731104](http://neurologyofpresence.com/braingame-731104) or scan the QR code.



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**Solutions page 27**

**WORD SEARCH - BREAKFAST**

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

BACON	DONUT	JUICE	QUICHE
BAGEL	EGGS	MUFFIN	SAUSAGE
BISCUIT	FRUIT	OATMEAL	TOAST
CEREAL	GRANOLA	OMELET	WAFFLE
CROISSANT	GRITS	PANCAKE	YOGURT

**SUDOKU**

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

**CRYPTOGRAM**

Each letter in the quote below is consistently substituted for another letter. (If A=H, then A=H every time).

*BY MAXKX'L HGX MABGZ*

*B'OX EXTKGXW BG FR EBYX,*

*BM'L MATM VNKBHLBMR*

*FBZAM DBEE VTML, UNM BM*

*WHXLG'M DBEE IXHIEX.*

*-MKTVR FHKZTG*

**WORD SCRAMBLE**

Unscramble these DOG BREEDS:

OELPDO \_\_\_\_\_

GALEBE \_\_\_\_\_

HNUSCDDAH \_\_\_\_\_

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**DO YOU KNOW?**

How many photos do people around the world take every single day?

9 million, 98 million, 1 billion, 5 billion

Puzzles column by Marc Rokoff  
[RokoPuzzles.com](http://RokoPuzzles.com)



## What's up with an Open House?

Zillow has a survey that says nearly 50% of buyers say they visited at least one open house during their search, and 43% found those visits “very” or “extremely” helpful in determining whether a home was the right fit.

Besides Zillow, Realtors can tell you that many of their buyer clients view an open house before calling them because they just want to “see what’s out there.”

Many times, it can be the beginning of a decision to buy a home or whether to list their home and move up to the next home. It’s research to see how big 1300 or 3300 square feet feels inside, how updated something is or how much work a home might need in order to move into a bigger home or neighborhood.

What’s the attraction of an open house? Not having to make an appointment is one reason. Buyers can view the home almost anonymously, freely for as long as they wish, giving them more time to kick the tires so to speak. These are showings with the focus of finding the right home. It’s homework. When viewing, you don’t have to worry about disturbing anyone or their pets as all are typically away when a Realtor is holding an open house.

It gives one an opportunity to see a repair mentioned in a disclosure or report, or review any upgrades noted. In addition, you can see the

neighborhood “vibe” and perhaps ask questions about schools, parks, and amenities.

Oftentimes, a buyer’s Realtor is holding an open house elsewhere and has given the buyer a list of potential open houses in their price range and criteria to view. Later, they will come back with their Realtor to the ones that made the cut.

For sellers, there are few downsides if you prepare for an open house and remove any/all valuables, religious items, and/or collections or fragile items. It can add a bit of excitement and create a buzz around a home. Neighbors will drop by. They like to see what other neighbors have done in their homes.

Overall, it creates demand for the home and perhaps encourages a decision to buy before someone else makes their offer, especially if a buyer has made several unsuccessful attempts to get a home.

Usually, a busy open house has more folks visiting the home in a couple of hours than a day of appointments would be able to accommodate as the seller will schedule shorter durations to accomplish getting the most people through the home.

So, get out while the weather is nice and visit those open houses.

### MONTHLY MARKET REPORT APRIL / 2026

CLAYTON		CONCORD	
Existing SFR Median Price <b>\$1.15M</b>	MARKET COMPETITION Median Days on Market <b>11</b>	Existing SFR Median Price <b>\$810k</b>	MARKET COMPETITION Median Days on Market <b>8</b>
% Change from Last Year <b>-2.5%</b>	Sales-to-List Price % <b>101.3%</b>	% Change from Last Year <b>-5.0%</b>	Sales-to-List Price % <b>102.1%</b>
	% of Active Listings Who Reduced Prices <b>27.8%</b>		% of Active Listings Who Reduced Prices <b>30.5%</b>
MARTINEZ		WALNUT CREEK	
Existing SFR Median Price <b>\$925K</b>	MARKET COMPETITION Median Days on Market <b>18</b>	Existing SFR Median Price <b>\$1.60M</b>	MARKET COMPETITION Median Days on Market <b>8</b>
% Change from Last Year <b>+14.9%</b>	Sales-to-List Price % <b>100.6%</b>	% Change from Last Year <b>-0.2%</b>	Sales-to-List Price % <b>100.0%</b>
	% of Active Listings Who Reduced Prices <b>32.7%</b>		% of Active Listings Who Reduced Prices <b>17.6%</b>

SOURCE: Car.org



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## Congratulations Class of 26!

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**The Naked Gardener**  
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nakedgardener@diablogazette.com

# The 1-2-3s of Wildfire Safety

Is your home in or near a wildland space or high fire risk area? If so, wildfire weather is coming, so now is the time to be planning for the 1-2-3's of wildfire safety. One- Evacuation Preparedness, Two- Home Fire and Ember Protection, and Three- Fire-Safe Landscaping Practices.

## 1 Evacuation Preparedness

In a real emergency, you will only have a few minutes to save yourself, your family, and pets from harm. Prepare now so you can safely leave in 15 minutes or less. How? Stock a Go-Bag with essential clothing, water, medications, laptop computers, paperwork, lights, batteries, emergency radios, and anything else you'll need to escape within minutes.

Leave the Go-Bag by your door during Red Flag weather warnings or Evacuation watches. Plan where you will be staying temporarily and your route. Make sure that your vehicle is full of fuel, and that you can get the whole family in one car. Study your local evacuation zone and routes provided by the Contra Costa Fire Protection District. Plan how to shelter in place during certain emergencies for three to seven days without power or water. Learn the differences between Evacuation Watches (prepare to leave), Warnings (go), and Orders (go NOW).

## 2 Home Fire and Ember Resistance

You should have a Class-A or better fire-resistant roof; pitched roofs are better than flat in a firestorm. Overhanging tree limbs should be trimmed away. Eave, attic, and foundation vents should be

covered with 1/8-inch mesh screens to resist hot embers. No burnable debris should be allowed to collect or stacked underneath your decks or around the home foundation. Clean gutters of leaves and sticks or install metal gutter covers. Home-attached gates should be metal or of non-combustible material. Chimney tops should always have spark arrestors. Dual-pane windows and tempered glass don't heat up or shatter easily.

## 3 Fire-safe Landscaping Practices

Fire safety literature divides a home's landscaping into three distinct zones.

"Zone-0" is within five feet of the house. Recent recommended changes to Zone-0 require that homes located in elevated wildfire risk areas have no plants at all within the immediate two feet of a home's walls, or roughly the width of most roof eave overhangs. The next three to four feet of Zone-0 should be planted with low-growing green, irrigated plants, or potted plants that can be moved away from walls in an emergency.

"Zone-1" comprises landscaping from five to 30 feet from the home. This area should be "clean and green", with any deadwood removed from bushes and trees, bushes under trees trimmed low, and trees trimmed of all limbs 10-12 feet above ground level. Plantings should be spaced apart and separated by mineral soil or non-combustible pathways to slow the spread of ground-based fire.

"Zone-2" for landscaping is 30-100 feet

and designed for larger properties and lots that back to open wildland spaces. The density of trees should be reduced, weeds and climbing bushes should be cut down ("abated"), and leaf or tree clutter should be raked and removed. Remember that fire spreads uphill much faster than downhill, so take slope into consideration when creating a defensible space around your home.

These changes can cost significant money, so do the projects most important to your priorities first, then pace the others when funds are available. California faces constant natural threats, and wildfires are the most destructive. If you believe that your home is not threatened by wildfire, talk to some of the victims of the Palisades fire last year who believed the same.

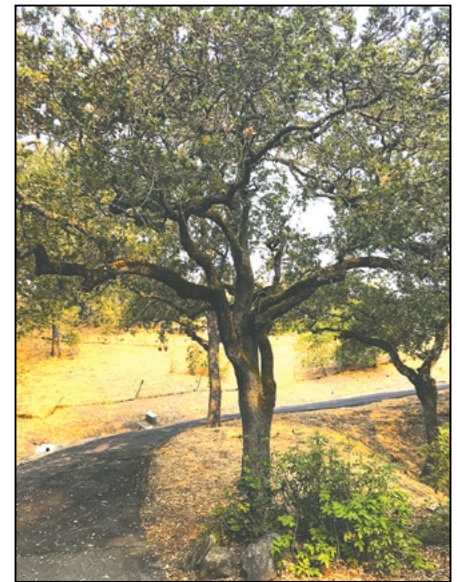
**Review eight low cost ways to fire harden your home at diablogazette.com.**

**Seasonal Notes:** June is the beginning of harvest season for blackberries, blueberries, cherries, and early plums. This is also the best time to apply your second dose of balanced, organic fertilizer or home-grown mulch to fruit and citrus trees for high yield and large fruits. As days turn hot and dry, check your irrigation channels for leaks, and your trees and shrubs for wilting or dieback. Increase water frequency to prevent lasting damage.

Email your comments and questions to: NakedGardener@diablogazette.com.



Fire-safe landscaping zones, courtesy Moraga-Orinda Fire



Trim grass, weeds, and bushes low to the ground and trees high above the ground.

# The Low-Maintenance Oasis: Yard Secrets for Busy Families.

by Angela Dawne, Landscape Designer



Your landscape should be a place to unwind after a bustling week, not a growing list of weekend chores.

For the busy homeowner, the secret to a beautiful, stress-free yard comes down to a simple design rule: putting the right plant in the right job.

Instead of fighting against nature, a smart landscape uses plants that actually want to grow in your garden's specific soil and sunny or shady conditions. By choosing the correct trees, shrubs and perennials that (alms) naturally thrive on their own, you immediately cut down on constant watering, pruning, and fertilizing.

You can also let technology do some of the heavy lifting. By installing an automated irrigation system with smart timers your plants are more apt to get what they need without you lifting a finger.

When you match the right plants with the right locations, your yard stops being a second job. Instead, it becomes your favorite place for a Friday night barbecue or a quiet Saturday morning coffee.

It pays to invest in a landscape design that lets you spend your weekends relaxing, not weeding.

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# Family, Craftsmanship, and Custom Design Drive Ordaz General Marble & Granite

by David King

For more than three decades, the Ordaz family has built a reputation throughout the Bay Area for transforming ordinary bathrooms into elegant, custom-designed spaces. As one of the region's leading manufacturers of cultured marble, cultured granite, cultured onyx, and custom bathroom surfaces, Ordaz General Marble & Granite has become a trusted name among homeowners, contractors, and remodeling professionals alike.

What began as a family business has grown into one of California's largest manufacturers of engineered marble products, while maintaining the personal service and attention to detail that only a family-owned company can provide.

Founded by Francisco Ordaz, who has nearly 40 years of experience in the industry, the company has spent the last 34 years in business as Ordaz General Marble and Granite. Today, the next generation of the family plays an integral role in the business. Son Xavier oversees production operations, daughter Brenda manages the office and customer relations, while Francisco and his wife continue to guide the company's vision and day-to-day operations.

"Our business is truly family-run," says Ordaz. "Everyone has a role, and we all work together to make sure our customers get the highest quality products possible."

While the company's Concord location serves as its showroom and customer center, manufacturing takes place at its Antioch facility, where raw materials are transformed into custom bathroom products. Unlike many suppliers who purchase pre-made components, Ordaz manufactures its own cultured stone products from scratch.

From custom vanity tops and integrated sinks to shower pans, wall panels, benches, bathtubs, and specialty accessories, every piece is cast and fabricated in-house. The company has also developed its own proprietary techniques for veining and color creation, allowing customers to select custom colors and finishes tailored specifically to their homes.

"We create our own techniques and even custom-make colors for customers," says Ordaz. "A lot of what we do is unique because we're manufacturing it ourselves."

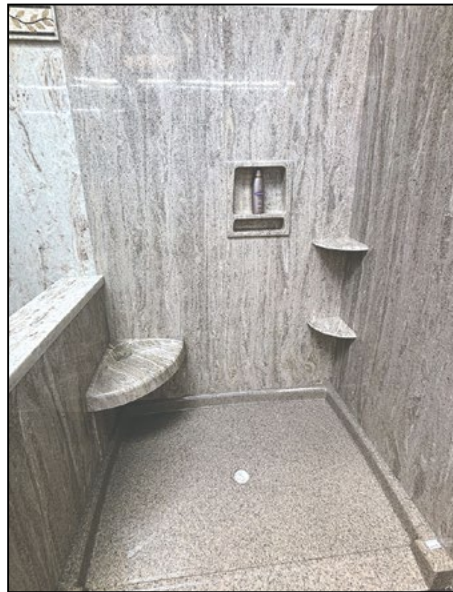
Visitors to the Concord showroom can explore more than 30 bathroom displays showcasing a wide variety of colors, materials, and design styles. It is one of the largest bathroom surface showrooms in the Bay Area, giving customers the opportunity to see complete bathroom concepts before making design decisions.

Ordaz General Marble & Granite currently specializes exclusively in bathrooms. Working closely with homeowners and contractors, the team helps bring remodeling visions to life while offering products that combine beauty, durability, and value.

The company's cultured stone products provide the appearance of natural stone while requiring less maintenance, no grout, and offering a more affordable alternative. Many of the raw materials used in production are sourced within the United States, further supporting quality control throughout the manufacturing process.

As bathroom design trends continue to evolve, one thing remains constant: the Ordaz family's commitment to craftsmanship, customer service, and manufacturing excellence. More than three decades after opening their doors, they continue to prove that family values, hard work, and specialized expertise are a formula for lasting success.

For Bay Area homeowners seeking custom bathroom solutions, in shapes, color and design, Ordaz General Marble & Granite remains a local success story—one built by family, powered by craftsmanship, and dedicated to creating beautiful spaces that stand the test of time.



One of 30 custom shower designs in the Ordaz Showroom in Concord.



Ordaz manufactures custom cultured marble and granite in Antioch.



Example of the many custom colors and veining designs created in the Ordaz plant in Antioch

## CENTRAL SAN CELEBRATES

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[CENTRALSAN.ORG/80TH](http://CENTRALSAN.ORG/80TH)

Join us for a **FREE**, community-wide event celebrating Central San's 80 years of service!

### EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

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- Toilet racers (like go-karts, but with toilets!)
- FREE food and ice cream
- Interactive games, crafts, and activities
- Tours of our award-winning treatment plant and other facilities
- Educational exhibits
- Plus, plenty of surprises!

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**We can't wait to see you there!**



Brenda, Guillermina, Francisco and Xavier

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# Class of 2026



**Grand Altair – Mariam Gandy**



**Leadership Altair – Leif Sullensono**



**Service Altair – Madison Bautista**



**Scholarship Altair – David Yoshimoto**

Congratulations on reaching this significant milestone in your academic journey! As Executive Director of Clayton Valley Charter High School, it brings me great pride to extend my heartfelt congratulations to each and every one of you.

As we prepare to celebrate your accomplishments, I am filled with admiration for the dedication and hard work you have demonstrated throughout your high school years. Your resilience, determination, and passion have propelled you to this moment of success, and I have no doubt that you will continue to achieve great things in the future.

I am particularly excited to join you and your families at the Toyota Pavilion at Concord on June 4, 2026, where we will come together to honor your achievements and celebrate this remarkable milestone in your lives.

Unlike traditional valedictorian and salutatorian selections, the highest recognition a CVCHS student can achieve is an Altair Award in Scholarship, Service, Leadership, or the Grand Altair. These four awards were established by the first graduating class of Clayton Valley in 1960. Altair candidates are nominated by members of the Senior Class, and the final selection is determined by a special committee comprised of student leaders and teaching staff.

## **GRAND ALTAIR – MARIAM GANDY**

The Grand Altair is awarded to the student who holds a 4.0 GPA or higher and exemplifies all three areas: Scholarship, Leadership, and Service. Mariam represents the very best of an Ugly Eagle — an outstanding student, confident leader, and dedicated community member. CVCHS is inspired by her level of leadership, character, and commitment. Mariam will be attending the University of California – Los Angeles (UCLA).

## **LEADERSHIP ALTAIR – LEIF SULLENSONO**

The Leadership Altair is awarded to the student who motivates and encourages others to reach for a goal while investing their own efforts to do the same. True leaders are respected not because of their titles, but because of their honest character and the confidence they inspire in others. Leif will be attending the University of California – Irvine.

## **SERVICE ALTAIR – MADISON BAUTISTA**

The Service Altair is awarded to the student who best exemplifies the virtue of selfless giving. Recipients volunteer their time and effort not because it is expected of them, but because they possess integrity and a genuine commitment to the greater good of the school and community. Madison will be attending the University of California – Santa Barbara.

## **SCHOLARSHIP ALTAIR – DAVID YOSHIMOTO**

The Scholarship Altair is awarded to a student selected from the top six seniors, judged not only on grades but on the rigor and difficulty of their coursework. David will be attending Diablo Valley College.

As you embark on the next chapter of your journey, remember that your time at CVCHS has equipped you with the knowledge, skills, and values to succeed in whatever path you choose. Stay true to yourselves, embrace new opportunities, and continue to make a positive impact on the world around you.

CVCHS wishes each of our graduating seniors all the very best as you begin your new adventure and prepare for a bright future. You will always be remembered for having the courage to be “Ugly Strong” in your pursuit of a high school diploma. Congratulations, Class of 2026!

*Bill Morones*

Bill Morones  
Executive Director  
Clayton Valley Charter High School



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Micah Muhlestein



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Gabriela Rivas-Azucena  
Gabriella Weeks



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Nathaniel Lauricella



Jamie Chen  
Izabella Vega Elizondo



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Paul Kluchnikow  
Carlos Navarrete Membreno



Amelia Chikilevsky



Nathan Gold  
Jonathan James Prestosa

**Berkeley UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA**  
Vincent Dellasantina  
Katalina Medina  
Stephanie Tint



Jillian Ryanne Arangorin  
Sebastian Barajas-Sotomayor  
Iola Brown  
Jackson Buechter  
Samantha Campbell  
Luka Sahin  
Matthew Sterrett Sofia Xiaris



Colt Kearns  
Sean Lopez  
Leif Sullensono  
Kirsten Tahari



Mariam Gendy  
Andrea Ledezma  
Evan Lynch



Sophie Casillas  
Mathias Fernando Grasa Arcos  
Minh Pham



Tremom Adams  
Parker Moy



Nathan Do  
Riana Soskina  
Tyler Suzuki



Madison Bautista  
Sophia Bushnell  
Kalash Lamichhane  
Jackie McCarley  
Megan Meyerson



Brian Chen  
Michelle Makarov  
Bradyn Netz  
Kris Singh  
Daniel Sterrett  
Juliana Villar  
Rachelle Vitalicio  
Emmett Wakefield

**UCCS University of Colorado Colorado Springs**  
Julian Walker



Ruby Jane Merriweather  
Sarah Velasquez



Christina Joshua  
Chloe Olson



Benjamin Griswold  
Addison Hagge  
Brooke Horton  
Brayden Kelly  
Sarah Kern  
Alyssa Krutilla  
Bree Meyer  
Apollonia Suel  
Abigail Tolson Haylee Wong



Alexander Azevedo  
Finley Dunn  
Audrey Frazel



Madine Wohali



Izabella Chavez  
Sofia De La Cruz  
Robert Keller  
Eva Zehm



Angie Lee  
Sodaba Merzaie



Ryan Camerlo  
Lana Ching  
Logan Kiraly



CLAYTON VALLEY CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL

# Congratulations

## LET'S ALSO CELEBRATE THESE MEMBERS OF THE CLASS OF 2026!

Samira Abdul-Qadir  
 Sebastian Abel  
 Mollie Adams  
 Iman Ali  
 Nicole Alvarado  
 Sameer Amanzai  
 Sabrina Arakozie  
 Angel Arroyo  
 Caitlyn Asnault  
 Yashneet Aulakh  
 Louis Avitia Saucedo  
 Bushra Barez  
 Dion Beverly  
 Jack Bolcerek  
 Collin Brown  
 Derrick Brown  
 Madden Calhoun  
 Chevelle Carpenter  
 Valeria Carranza Diaz  
 Emma Nouelle Castro  
 Angel Cazarez  
 Sid Chapman

Naomi Chrobak  
 Lucas Claggett  
 Aaralyn Clark  
 Alyssa Clevidence  
 Carter Colston  
 Matthew Conkle  
 Jorge Cruz-Martinez  
 Ethan Davis  
 Luis De Lira Aguila  
 Diego Diaz Quijada  
 Finnian Duggan  
 Elan Farias  
 Jaylah Fears  
 Aluughsoor Fitial  
 Leah Flamino  
 Julien Gabrysiak Rinehart  
 Giselle Gaitan  
 Damihan Gamino  
 Alejandro Garcia Jr.  
 Mariana Garcia  
 Noah Garcia  
 Aniyah Garcia-Bustos

Jacob Gentry  
 Mihaela Georgieva  
 Sara Gonzalez Mendoza  
 Gabrielle Grijalva  
 Alicia Gurung  
 Gabriel Gutierrez  
 Jacob Harms  
 Ruby Harrison  
 Credence Hayes  
 Tyrese Haygood  
 Sean Healy  
 Giovanni Hernandez Ortiz  
 Connor Hill  
 Liza Hoseny  
 Gabriela Iniguez  
 Raiden Jacobs  
 Oliver Jarvis  
 Kelsey Joaquin  
 Kyla Joseph  
 Cesar Juarez  
 Phinius Kane  
 William King

Katherine Largaespada  
 Trenton LeBeau  
 Grace Leon  
 Isaac Lopez Orellana  
 Omid Maloky  
 Makaio Martin  
 Dylan Mehl  
 Ismael Montiel Ordonez  
 Kayla Moore  
 Josiah Morris  
 Gavin Moss  
 Isaiah Muhlestein  
 Mariam Noorzad  
 Vanessa Orta  
 Miranda Ortiz  
 Jahlia Padaong  
 Kenneth Padilla  
 Jacob Pimentelli  
 Campbell Popovich  
 Ruben Ramirez  
 Landon Redeker  
 Rahil Rezaee

Oliver Robinow  
 Aalimah Rodriguez  
 Shedrick Ronque  
 Samuel Rubalcava  
 Abdul Musawer Sadat  
 Sayedbahir Sadat  
 Joseph Saunders Jr.  
 Christian Seymour  
 Leila Simionas  
 Maxim Slepets  
 Christopher Smith  
 Leila Speed  
 Caleb Sweeney  
 Cooper Theunissen  
 Karma Thompson  
 Marco Tredinnick  
 Lana Valdez  
 Abygail Van Noord  
 Dominic Wagner  
 Ryan Ward  
 Andres Watts  
 Cory Winfrey Jr.  
 Daniel Zamora



Mark DeSaulnier  
 Tenth District California  
 U.S. House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515  
 June 4, 2026

Dear Class of 2026,

I am writing to extend my personal congratulations on your graduation from Clayton Valley Charter High School.

Your high school diploma is a very special tribute to all your hard work, and you should take great pride in your achievements. It is truly a mark of your outstanding character and tireless commitment to learning. Your passion and enthusiasm for success will serve you well in the future.

You represent the next generation of leaders in our community, and I look forward to hearing of your accomplishments to come.

It is my honor to join your teachers, family, and friends in celebrating with you as you achieve this significant milestone. I am honored to represent you all in Congress, and I encourage you all to continue to strive for excellence in the years ahead. Congratulations!

Sincerely,  
  
 Mark DeSaulnier  
 Member of Congress

STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
  
 CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION

Presented to  
 Clayton Valley Charter High School  
 Class of 2026

*I want to join with others to honor your dedication to professional development, self-sufficiency, and personal growth as you graduate from Clayton Valley Charter High School. The skills you have acquired will enable you to proceed with confidence into your future. Your dedication and pursuit of excellence will continue to have a positive impact on your life, your family, and your community.*

On Behalf of the People of the 9<sup>th</sup> Senate District,  
 Congratulations!  
 June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Senator Timothy S. Grayson  
 9<sup>th</sup> Senate District

ANAMARIE AVILA FARIAS  
 ASSEMBLY MEMBER, 10<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT

May 14, 2026

Clayton Valley Charter High School  
 1101 Alberta Way  
 Concord, CA 94521

To the Graduating Class of 2026,

It is a distinct honor to extend my warmest congratulations to the Clayton Valley Charter High School Class of 2026. Today marks a significant milestone, one that represents years of dedication, academic rigor, and personal growth. As you gather with your families, friends, and the dedicated faculty who have supported you, please know that your achievements are a source of immense pride for the Concord community and the state of California.

As you prepare to turn the page to this next chapter, you stand at the threshold of a world filled with limitless potential. Whether you are heading to a university campus, embarking on specialized vocational training, or entering the workforce, you carry with you a foundation of excellence built right here in Concord. The resilience and adaptability you have developed as part of the Clayton Valley legacy are the very qualities that will distinguish you as you navigate the complexities of our modern world.

My hope for you is that you remain steadfast in your pursuit of knowledge and bold in your ambitions. The road ahead will offer both challenges and triumphs. Meet both with integrity and the same determination that brought you to this graduation stage. California's future relies on the energy and vision of young leaders like yourselves, and I have every confidence that you will contribute meaningfully to our society in the years to come.

Congratulations, Class of 2026! As you embark on this exciting new journey, I wish you great success in all your future endeavors. May you approach every opportunity with the same passion and excellence you demonstrated at Clayton Valley.

Sincerely,  
  
 Assembly member Anamarie Avila Farias  
 California State Assembly, District 15

Contra Costa County Office of Education  
 77 Santa Barbara Road, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523 • (925) 942-3388  
 Lynn Mackey, Superintendent of Schools

May 12, 2026

To: Clayton Valley Charter High School Class of 2026

Congratulations to the CVCHS Class of 2026 on reaching this significant milestone. Completing your high school journey is no small accomplishment, and it is a pleasure to recognize all that you have achieved along the way. Your commitment, resilience, and determination have brought you to this moment, and you have much to be proud of.

As you move forward from CVCHS, you are stepping into a future filled with possibilities. Whether your next chapter includes college, trade school, the workforce, or another opportunity, you have my best wishes as you pursue the path that feels right for you. No matter which direction you choose, I am confident you will apply the skills, strength, and confidence you developed during your high school years.

The experiences and lessons gained here will continue to shape you as you grow and explore new opportunities. I encourage you to stay curious, embrace change, and remain open to learning as you build the future you envision.

On behalf of everyone who has supported you along the way, congratulations once again. May your future be bright, fulfilling, and guided by purpose wherever it may lead.

Sincerely,  
  
 Lynn Mackey  
 Superintendent of Schools  
 Contra Costa County

Learn • Work • Achieve / www.cocostschools.org



**Laura Nakamura**  
Concord Mayor  
cityofconcord.org

# A Bright Future: Next Steps for the Concord Naval Weapons Station

Concord is a community built on a foundation of hard work, beautiful open landscapes, and the promise of a vibrant future. There is nothing more celebratory than watching our city grow in ways that honor these values. We are on the cusp of creating a thriving hub of excellent, family-sustaining labor jobs, beautifully designed housing options for all, and vast acres of pristine open space for families to explore. The transformation of “the Base”—the former Concord Naval Weapons Station (CNWS)—is the canvas upon which we are painting this terrific new chapter for our city.

On May 26, 2026, the City Council and I achieved a monumental milestone for Concord. With immense pride and excitement, we officially approved the financial agreement for the Naval Weapons Station development project, known as the “term sheets.” These historic agreements with the U.S. Navy and our master developer, Brookfield, set the financial foundation and purchase terms for the redevelopment. It is a massive leap forward that officially paves the way for a world-class, master-planned community that will bring incredible economic vitality, jobs, and housing to our region.

## CNWS: A Rich History, A Bright Horizon

The Concord Naval Weapons Station began its journey in 1942 as the U.S. Naval Magazine, Port Chicago, serving as an annex to the Mare Island Naval Shipyard. Located in the Tidal Area, the facility expanded rapidly to support the nation’s efforts during World War II.

In July 1944, the area was the site of the largest stateside disaster of World War II, when a massive ammunition detonation tragically killed 320 people, including more than 200 African American sailors. In the wake of the tragedy, 50 African American sailors bravely stood up against unsafe working conditions in what became known as the “Port Chicago Mutiny.” Their courage became a cornerstone of the early civil rights movement, and in 2024, tall the U.S. Navy officially and rightfully exonerated 50 sailors.

Over the subsequent decades, the CNWS supported our nation through the Vietnam and Cold War eras. Recognizing the military’s changing needs, the Navy vacated the Inland Area in 1999. Today, while the Tidal Area remains an active military port under Army command, the Inland Area is the area of focus for the Base reuse project.

## Opening the Gates to Open Space

Key environmental protection and stewardship occurred in 2019, when the U.S. Navy transferred approximately 2,500 acres of breathtaking open space to the East Bay Regional Park District. In 2021, this land was aptly named the “Thurgood Marshall Regional Park – Home of the Port Chicago 50,” honoring the legendary civil rights lawyer and Supreme Court Justice who defended those 50 brave sailors and helped pave the way for the military’s desegregation.

The Park District is actively designing road improvements and anticipates opening portions of the park south of Bailey Road within the next two to three

years. Future visitors can look forward to:

- A state-of-the-art visitor center focusing on local history and the Port Chicago disaster.
- Expanded public access, transit connections, and miles of trails for hiking, biking, camping, and picnicking.
- Protected habitats and dedicated wildlife corridors ensure our local native species flourish.

## Crafting a World-Class Community

Since 2006, when the U.S. Department of Defense designated the Concord City Council as the Local Reuse Authority (LRA), our community has come together in numerous public sessions to shape a vision for the Concord Community Reuse Project.

The current Area Plan outlines an inspirational blueprint for Concord’s future:

- **12,272 Vibrant Housing Units:** Built to accommodate families of all backgrounds, with 25 percent allocated for affordable housing, alongside 16 acres dedicated to permanent supportive housing.
- **Thriving Economic Hubs:** Approximately 6 million square feet of premier commercial space designed to attract dynamic businesses and create high-quality, local labor jobs.
- **Green and Connected Spaces:** 868 acres of local parks, trails, and bike paths, as well as transit-oriented development near BART to promote

walking and cycling.

- **Community Investment:** Financial contributions dedicated to building a brand-new community center and library.

In one of my first significant contributions as a city councilmember, we voted to partner with Brookfield as the master developer in 2023, a vote I was proud to make after the delays and missteps of prior years. Our approval of the Term Sheets on May 26, 2026, is the green light we have been working towards. These agreements secure the purchase terms for the initial transfer of roughly 1,000 acres, outline rolling 12-year reinvestment periods to ensure the City’s project revenues go right back into supporting this world-class development and maintain the Navy’s commitment to environmental cleanup.

## What’s Next on the Horizon

The U.S. Navy is concurrently reviewing the Term Sheet. With the approved term sheets providing clear financial direction and growing momentum, the City and Brookfield are eagerly diving into drafting the Specific Plan and final entitlement documents. There will be many public discussions on these next steps in the near future.

We anticipate these final agreements will return to the City Council by summer 2029, with shovels hitting the ground shortly after for the initial development phase. We are building a brighter, more prosperous Concord together!

[www.concordreuseproject.org](http://www.concordreuseproject.org)

## Board of Supervisors Appoints Aaron McAlister to Lead Con Fire

On May 12, the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors appointed Aaron McAlister as Fire Chief of the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District (Con Fire).

McAlister has served with Con Fire since 2016 and most recently served as Deputy Fire Chief of Administration, overseeing Communications/Fire Dispatch, Information Systems, Support Services, Finance, and Human Resources. Prior to that, he served as Assistant Fire Chief and played a key role in strengthening the District’s operational readiness, facilities, staffing, and regional coordination.

“Chief McAlister has demonstrated strong leadership, operational expertise, and a deep commitment to public safety throughout his career with Con Fire,” said Board Chair Diane Burgis. “Through a highly competitive selection process, he distinguished himself as the top choice to lead the District.”

McAlister replaces Chief Lewis Broschard, who retired in March after more than 30 years in the fire service, including 18 years with Con Fire.

“I am honored by the Board’s confidence and grateful for the opportunity to serve as Fire Chief,” said McAlister. “Con Fire’s firefighters, dispatchers, fire prevention staff, support staff, professional staff, and leadership team are among the very best in the fire service. I look forward to ... protecting

lives, property, and the environment throughout Contra Costa County.”

McAlister holds a Master of Arts in Homeland Security from the Center for Homeland Defense and Security at the Naval Postgraduate School and a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice from California State University, Sacramento. He is a Certified Fire Chief through the California State Fire Marshal and holds a Chief Fire Officer credential from the Center for Public Safety Excellence.

The cost of this position for the remainder of the fiscal year is approximately \$79,324 with the total ongoing cost projected at \$634,595 annually. Funding for this position is included in the District operating budget.

Contra Costa Fire provides fire protection and emergency medical services to more than 790,000 residents across 13 cities and 11 unincorporated communities throughout Contra Costa County.#





**Mt. Diablo Resource Recovery**  
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**No Sharps in Your Carts**

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California’s Sharps Mail-Back Program ships a 1.5QT FDA-cleared sharps container and a prepaid return shipping box directly to your door at no cost to you.

**What’s accepted:**  
Hypodermic, pen, intravenous needles, lancets, and other devices used to penetrate the skin



# The Arts Pages

## Through the Lens of Faith — Edgar Tumbaga's Journey Back to Art

by Julia O'Reilly

Edgar Santillan Tumbaga's artistic journey is one of resilience, rediscovery, and faith. Today, his striking photography captures breathtaking landscapes, glowing sunsets, wildlife, and night skies, but his creative path began many years ago in elementary school, encouraged by his second-grade teacher, Ms. Caruso.

As a young student, Edgar developed a love for art and continued taking art classes throughout junior high and high school. Art became both a creative outlet and a passion. However, during his senior year of high school, Edgar experienced a heartbreaking tragedy when he witnessed the sudden death of his father from a heart attack. The devastating loss deeply affected him, and in the years that followed, he lost not only his desire to create but also his confidence in his artistic abilities.

Over time, Edgar slowly found himself drawn toward photography. What began as a hobby soon became a meaningful form of expression and healing. He found joy in capturing God's creations through his lens, from peaceful beach scenes and dramatic landscapes to the unforgettable sunsets of Puerto Vallarta, Mexico.

Encouraged by family and friends, Edgar began sharing his photography publicly by submitting works to galleries, local colleges, coffee shops, libraries, and community centers. One of his early exhibition experiences was with the Impulse Gallery through the Pittsburg Arts Collaboratives (PACO), which helped reignite his artistic confidence.

A special turning point came when Edgar reconnected with his longtime Youth Bible Study friend, Gil. Together, they ventured on nighttime photography excursions, photographing the Milky Way, full moons, the San Francisco and Oakland Bay Bridges, and the vibrant San Francisco skyline after dark.

Edgar also credits another close friend, Laurie, for inspiring and motivating him to pursue photography more seriously. Their travels together to galleries, museums, and national parks further deepened his appreciation



for visual storytelling and fine art photography.

Edgar's journeys throughout California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Seattle, Canada, and the Southwest's National and State Parks allowed him to witness and photograph some of nature's most majestic beauty. Through these travels, photography evolved from a pastime into a true artistic calling.

Today, Edgar continues exhibiting his photography throughout the Bay Area and beyond. His work has been featured at venues including Vidrio Galleria, Art Guild of the Delta, Marina Galleria, Brentwood Community Center, Oakley and Brentwood Libraries, Old Towne Art Centre Galleria, JOR Fine Art Gallery, Blackhawk Gallery, Pittsburg Arts & Community Foundation (PACF), and many other community art spaces.

In addition to gallery exhibitions, Edgar actively participates in local art and community events including First Fridays, Art in the Park, Small Business Saturday, Holiday Boutiques, and various art socials throughout the region.

Although Edgar once believed he had lost his artistic ability, life opened another creative door for him. Through photography, he discovered a renewed purpose, one rooted in gratitude, faith, and an appreciation for the beauty surrounding us every day. His work not only captures stunning imagery, but also reflects a deeply personal journey of healing, hope, and inspiration.



"Inspiration Point" Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah is currently on exhibit at JOR fine Art Gallery in Clayton.



## Art Scholarship Awarded

by Denise Hillman

Martinez Arts Association (MAA) awarded its annual MAA Art Scholarship to graduating high school senior Ryanne Keyser at a ceremony held at Alhambra High School on May 26. The award was presented by MAA volunteer Gina Garitson.

Ryanne has been practicing photography for the past two years and plans to continue studying the medium in college, with the goal of pursuing a career in journalism.

The MAA scholarship committee was impressed by both the quality of her photography and the thoughtful way she articulated her future goals in her written application.

In addition to presenting public art events, supporting arts education is one of MAA's core initiatives. The organization provides scholarships as well as teacher grants for art supplies to local schools. Funding for these programs comes from business grants, donations, and fundraising events such as the annual Art in the Park festival (August 16), always the third Sunday of the month in Susana Park.

More information about the Martinez Arts Association and its programs can be found at [www.martinezarts.org](http://www.martinezarts.org).



Photo by Ryanne Keyser



## A Grate Way to Make a Living

by David Scholz

Art takes many forms, even edible ones, as cheese carver Sarah Nep demonstrated at a recent meeting of the Concord Art Association.

"It is an everyday object that we take for granted," said Nep, of Walnut Creek. "But, a lot of unexpected things can be made into art," she added.

Her first foray into working in this medium came when her husband volunteered her to carve a cow for a California Cheese and Butter Show, which at time she admitted was really scary. "I didn't know you could carve cheese."

Nep figured it was a one and done proposition but such would not be the case. The chubby little calf she carved was a huge hit and then the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board came calling. More than 30 years later, she has forged her niche and carved in nearly every state from Hawaii to Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

Nep characterized cheese as "a good experimental kind of medium" that she likened to "a well-wedged piece of clay."

The material's lack of permanence is further appealing to her and thus kind of freeing to her.

"It is not like a (fine piece) of marble or wood that you have to make something from it," Nep continued.

Working in cheese can range in size from 5 lbs. to 5,000 lbs. or more, with 22-pound wheels and 40-pound blocks the most common sizes and easy to get.

Nep describes the process for cheese carving as basically reductive sculpture, removing cheese to find the sculpture within.

Anyone who has been in the dairy aisle and thought of turning cheese into something, Nep says go for it. Any of the semi-firm cheeses like Cheddar, Monterey Jack, or Gouda cheeses work well for carving. Parmesan wheels also work well. But soft cheeses and Swiss types present a challenge.

She cited clean kitchen tools like knives and a cheese grater as some items that can be used. If there are clay or pumpkin carving tools around, those also work well for making that vision come to life. "Of course, this is easier said than done," she mused.

"You are not going to be great at it the first time. We have to give ourselves some grace when we start."

June is National Dairy Month, so Nep will be using this month to do more on social media each day to share why she loves carving cheese.

In July, Nep is back at it carving at the Alameda County on Friday, July 3 and July 10. Then from August 6 to 9, she is off to the Napa County Country Fair.

Nep sees cheese carving as simply fun, easy and a tasty art form that can't help but put a smile on someone's face, no matter how sideways the day has gone.

To view Nep's creations, visit [www.cheesecarver.com](http://www.cheesecarver.com). So, bon appetite.





## "The Wonders of Plein Air" Exhibit



"Benicia Ferry Landing" by Nancy Roberts

Enjoy the fascinating work of local artists at the plein air exhibit at the aRt Cottage in Concord. Some of the paintings on exhibit include familiar sites of Contra Costa County.

Artists currently represented in this exhibit include Nancy Roberts, Lori Larks, Mary Young, Rosawitha Kress, Shalaka Mulherkar, Maria Parks, Angela Cox, Maria Omelianenko, and David Scholz.

These paintings and more will be available through June 25. aRt Cottage is open Wednesday through Saturday 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. You may also see students working on projects such as ceramics, watercolor, or acrylic paintings. There is always activity happening in the gallery.

Coming July through August the gallery will exhibit art from the Las Juntas - East Bay Artist Guild. The opening reception for that show will be Saturday July 11. Membership into the Las Juntas -East Bay Artist Guild is open to all who love making art or admiring art.

aRt Cottage is located in downtown Concord at 2238 Mt. Diablo St. For more information check out our blogspot at artcottage.info.



Vacaville Festival Square by David Scholz



"Morning Stroll" by Marie Parks



"Barn in the Hills" (Tao House) by Rosawitha Kress



"Sycamore Poppies" by Lori Larks



## Art in All Its Forms

by Denise Hillman

The Main Street Arts Gallery, a beloved downtown Martinez destination, is celebrating 10 years since opening in 2016. The gallery's 12 member artists represent a wide range of styles and media, with guest artists featured on a rotating basis every other month.

From May 1 through June 28, the gallery presents guest artist Iretta Hunter, a watercolorist whose vibrant work explores a variety of subjects, often from unusual angles and close-up perspectives.

"I like to work with patterns and designs created in plants, rocks, and vegetables," says Hunter. Many of her paintings are created one vertical stripe at a time, with each section subtly shifted up or down, without cutting the paper, creating intriguing edges and textures that invite a closer look.

Also featured in June is longtime member and watercolorist Samantha McNally. Known for her realism and delicacy in floral and nature-inspired subjects, McNally also teaches, serves as an art juror, and is a demonstration artist. She is a signature member and past president of the California Watercolor Association and studied at Ramapo College, Ridgewood School of Art, and the School of Visual Arts in New York City. She continued to hone her eye for fine detail work during a 15-year career as an embroidery designer in New York City's Garment District.

In honor of Martinez's 150th anniversary of incorporation, the gallery's display windows feature Martinez-themed artwork throughout June.

The public is invited to a reception on June 5 from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m., held in conjunction with First Friday. Guests can meet the artists, enjoy refreshments, and enter in a free monthly prize drawing. June's giveaway is a watercolor painting by Samantha McNally, "Pigeon Point Lighthouse."

Now in its tenth year, Main Street Arts Gallery continues to welcome art lovers and collectors alike.

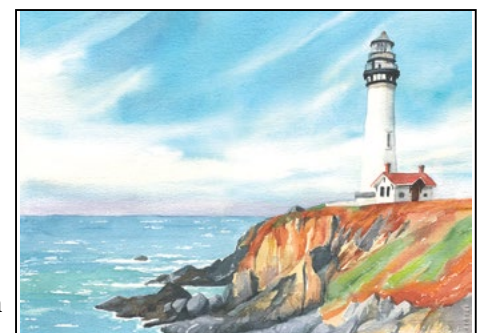
Main Street Arts is located at 613 Main Street in Martinez. Open Wednesday-Saturday 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., Sunday 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. and Martinez First Fridays 6:00-9:00 p.m. www.mainstreetarts.net



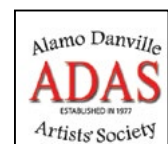
"Rose" by Iretta Hunter



"Trail Stars" by Iretta Hunter



"Pigeon Point Lighthouse" by Samantha McNally



## Father's Day Art Social at Blackhawk Gallery

Celebrate Father's Day with Art & Classic Cars! Sunday, June 21 from 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. for a Father's Day Art Social at 3416 Blackhawk Plaza Circle, Danville, CA.

Find the perfect artwork or unique gift for Dad while enjoying the classic car show at the Plaza. It will be a beautiful way to spend Father's Day, making special memories with family and friends.



## JOR Fine Art Gallery Presents Gene Howard Art Demo

Spend an inspiring afternoon with artist Gene Howard at his Abstract Art Demonstration on Saturday, June 13, from 2:00-4:00 p.m. at JOR Fine Art Gallery.

Experience the creative process behind Gene's vibrant abstract paintings,

Enjoy a fun and engaging live demonstration, and explore his beautiful solo exhibition.

JOR Gallery is located at 1026 Oak Street, Suite 102 in Clayton. jorfineartgallery.com



# Concord Council Appoints New Concord City Manager

On May 12, 2026, the Concord City Council approved the Employment Agreement for Jerome "Jay" Wilverding to be the next City Manager. Mr. Wilverding will start June 22, 2026.

Jay said, "I look forward to leading the City of Concord to continue to meet the needs of the community and make it a great place to live, work and raise family."

Mr. Wilverding, originally a Pennsylvania native, moved to California after completing his Bachelor of Science at Wilkes University in Business and Finance. Jay has decades of public and private sector experience, including over 25 years in financial and managerial roles. He spent over two decades of his career in the East Bay, including Concord and Walnut Creek.

Since 2010, he has worked in local government, serving as Chief Accountant for Contra Costa County and later as the Auditor-Controller for San Joaquin County. His most recent role was as County Administrator for San Joaquin County, where he managed a \$2.9 billion county with an employee base of approximately 8,000.

On his appointment, Mayor Laura Nakamura said, "We are happy to appoint Jay to this position as his experience and expertise will bring a fresh perspective to the City and help



Jerome "Jay" Wilverding will be Concord's new City Manager beginning June 22, 2026.

us to continue to provide the highest quality of services our residents expect."

As a former Contra Costa County resident of 25 years, Jay welcomed the opportunity to relocate to Concord and be readily accessible upon beginning his role with the City.

The Concord City Manager, appointed by the City Council, is responsible for overseeing the City's day-to-day operations and implementing the Council's policies and goals. Longtime City Manager Valerie Barone will retire in June 2026.

# Navy Term Sheet Approval Major Feat To Conclude Barone's 14 Year Tenure As Concord City Manager

After more than three decades of dedicated public service, Valerie Barone approaches her final days as Concord City manager retiring at the end of the fiscal year, June.

Barone joined the City of Concord in 2008 as Assistant City Manager and was appointed interim City Manager in February 2012 and then City Manager in April 2012. During her tenure, she guided Concord through the challenges of the State's elimination of redevelopment, the Great Recession, COVID-19 pandemic, stabilizing the City's General Fund Operating Budget and restoring reserves to 30%. Her leadership also drove infrastructure upgrades including major roadway investments.

In her retirement letter, Barone shared, "I am deeply grateful for the leadership of the Council and the dedication of our employees, whose hard work has made Concord a thriving community where families can grow, businesses can prosper, and residents can flourish. I want to thank all the residents, organizations, and employees I've had a chance to work with while serving the Concord community."

Barone departs just as the City Council approved the Navy Term Sheet, a step towards the redevelopment of the Concord Naval Weapons Station, a process that has taken over 20 years to accomplish.

"This milestone we just achieved with the Navy on price and terms of payment for the acreage that is to be transferred to the City under an Economic Development Conveyance is a BIG deal," Barone says.

It is the first time there has been agreement on price and terms of payment which allows Brookfield to move into the specific planning and infrastructure planning phases of the project.

"I'm glad this occurred prior to my retirement; it was a lot of work to get here. My 14 years as Concord's City Manager have been deeply rewarding, both professionally and personally. I am proud of this organization and of the progress we've made together.

"Two accomplishments stand out as personal highlights for me: helping establish Contra Costa County's A3 Mental Health Emergency Response System, and the City Council's recent approval of the Navy term sheet. Reaching this milestone with the Navy just before my retirement is a gratifying way to conclude my service. I leave with great pride in the work we have accomplished and am optimistic about Concord's future."



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# Let the Culinary Battle Begin: Luna Launches Monthly Chef Showdown Series

by David King

Concord's dining scene is about to get a little more competitive and a lot more delicious.

Known for its elevated cuisine and vibrant atmosphere, Luna Ristorante is launching an exciting new monthly event that pits talented chefs against one another in a live culinary showdown. The concept is simple: two chefs, one kitchen, four courses, and a room full of diners who will determine the winner.

The inaugural Chef Showdown takes place June 18 at 6:00 p.m. and features Luna's own Executive Chef Habib Jacifi facing off against Bay Area culinary personality Nakima Williams, better known as Chef Klumzzy.

Chef Klumzzy has built a loyal following throughout the San Francisco Area through her company, Klumzzy Cuisine. She is widely recognized for her signature "Klumzzy Potatoes", oversized gourmet baked potatoes piled high with premium toppings such as lobster, steak, and shrimp. A culinary school graduate with experience preparing international cuisine, she frequently hosts pop-ups at restaurants and events throughout the region.

While the competition will take place in Luna's kitchen, both chefs will prepare dishes that are not currently featured on Luna's menu, ensuring guests experience something completely new from each competitor.



Chef Habib Jacifi vs. Nakima Williams known as Chef Klumzzy

Throughout the evening, diners will enjoy a four-course tasting menu while rating each dish on a scorecard. At the end of the event, votes will be tallied and a champion crowned.

More than just a competition, Jacifi sees the Chef Showdown as a way to bring together chefs, food lovers, and the larger culinary community.

Diners pay \$85 for four courses and may enhance the experience with wine pairing. Indulge and vote.

"I want to do this once a month," said Jacifi. "Every month we'll invite a chef from somewhere in the Bay Area to come cook against me. We're going to have fun, create great food, and let the guests decide the winner."

The monthly series is already seeking future challengers. Chefs from local restaurants, catering companies, food trucks, pop-up kitchens, and independent culinary businesses are encouraged to apply. Those interested in participating can contact Luna by phone, 925-691-4080, or email, habibjacifi@gmail.com and submit their name, contact information, and culinary background for consideration.

With great food, live entertainment, audience participation, and a little friendly rivalry, Luna's Chef Showdown promises to become one of Concord's most anticipated dining events.

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# Around Martinez



## The Best Kind of Election: Voting for Art

by Brianne Zorn, Mayor, City of Martinez



Scan the QR code and vote for your five favorite utility box art submissions.

As part of the City's Sesquicentennial celebration, we have launched a Utility Box Art Project to transform five ordinary utility boxes in Martinez into vibrant artworks that highlight the spirit of our culture and history.

This Project is a community-centered celebration: art is made by our community and chosen by our community. The artwork is intended to tie into the Sesquicentennial theme, "Past, Present, Future, Together", highlighting what makes Martinez such a wonderful place to live.

The City invited artists of all ages to submit proposed art in April of this year. With the community submission phase complete, now it is time for the Online Community Voting phase!

Every submittal is posted to the City of Martinez website for viewing and voting. Mobilize your friends and family to vote for your favorites. There are submittals from professional artists, amateur artists, and kid artists in the mix.

The top five winners will be selected in July, and their artwork will be presented to City Council for final approval in August. Selected artists will receive a stipend of \$750, and the approved artwork will be installed with vinyl wraps in October to wrap up our Sesquicentennial Year (literally).

I started my political career on the volunteer Parks, Recreation, Marina, and Arts Commission (why, yes, Leslie

Knope is my spirit animal).

The very first project where I got to participate as a commissioner was the vote on the utility box art pilot project in 2020. Each box told a unique story and allowed us to highlight local artists. Today when I drive around, each glimpse of a brightly colored utility box brings me a happy memory and a current joy.

On City Council, we adopted a Public Art Policy in 2022 that sets the guidelines and procedures for reviewing, approving, and installing art on city property in Martinez.

The Policy provides that Public Art should reflect the City's social, cultural, and historical values; contribute to quality of life and economic vitality; encourage civic pride; and provide opportunities for education and community engagement.

Since the passage of this policy, we have approved three murals and one sculpture. I hope this policy will encourage organizations to submit art projects for consideration and will continue to expand our renowned art culture in Martinez.

Let's add color and character to our city landscape and celebrate the sesquicentennial with a permanent nod to community and creativity.

Click on the QR code at the top of this page for more information on the Utility Box Art Program and to vote for your Top Five!

## Fire Up Father's Day Weekend at the 18th King of the County BBQ & Music Festival

by Publisher and Martinez Chamber of Commerce. Photos by Thomas Rimpel

Get ready for three days of incredible BBQ, live music, family fun, and community celebration as the King of the County BBQ and Music Festival returns to Martinez Waterfront Park on Father's Day Weekend, June 19-21.

Hosted by the Martinez Chamber of Commerce, and presented by Martinez Refinery Company, our team at Diablo Gazette love sponsoring this event each year for what it brings to the community on Father's Day weekend.

Now a community tradition, this event draws more than 20,000 attendees each year for a waterfront weekend filled with live entertainment, amazing food and shopping selections, kids' fun zone and activities for all ages.

Admission is free, as is parking, making it the perfect Father's Day Weekend destination for families throughout the Bay Area.

Festival goers can enjoy live music from eight top local bands, while enjoying extraordinary BBQ and other delicious food, local wine and beer, kids rides, arts and crafts and commercial exhibitors. Visit countybbq.com to see the full band schedule and festival information.

Festival hours are Friday 5:00 - 9:00 p.m., Saturday 11:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. and Father's Day Sunday 11:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

### Backyard BBQ Competition Brings the Heat

The heart of the festival, a BBQ Cook-off on Saturday and Sunday that pits 25-30 BBQ teams from across the region to battle it out for the coveted title of "King of the County."

Witness returning champions, family teams and first-time competitors all slow cookin', smoking and grilling looking to claim bragging rights while taking home trophies, swag and cash prizes.

All entries are judged through a blind tasting process overseen by event committee leadership and table monitors to ensure a fair and competitive experience for every team.

Whether you come for the BBQ, the music, the shopping, the rides or the family-friendly atmosphere, the King of the County BBQ and Music Festival is the perfect event to celebrate with Dad.

For additional festival information, vendor opportunities, or competition details, visit countybbq.com or contact the Martinez Chamber of Commerce at (925) 228-2345.



The Backyard BBQ contestants, 2025. Below: scenes from 2025 King of County BBQ



AUGUST 29, 2026

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### JUNE 2026 COMMUNITY EVENTS

- 6/03 Pride Flag Raising & Ribbon Wall Launch
- 6/05 First Fridays
- 6/06 Martinez Community Cleanup
- 6/06 Meet Me on Main
- 6/06 Great American Patriotic Concert
- 6/11 Downtown Martinez Car Show
- 6/13 Compost Giveaway
- 6/13 Sesquicentennial Hike - Rankin Park
- 6/13 Beaver Festival
- 6/14 Open Air Market
- 6/25 Small Business Workshop Series
- 6/28 Juneteenth Celebration

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MARTINEZ, CA

## 4TH OF JULY Daylong Festivities

**Parade** By Downtown Martinez & Co MAIN STREET ★ 10 AM

**Baseball** Martinez Sturgeons Game JOE DIMAGGIO FIELD ★ 12-30 PM

**Fun Fest** Kid Zone, Food Trucks, Music, & Kite Show WATERFRONT PARK ★ 5 PM

**Fireworks** A Fantastic Finale! By City of Martinez MARTINEZ WATERFRONT - 9-30 PM

2026

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

# Bringing Papa Jake Home: Bronze Monument Project Reaches Exciting Milestone

by David King

Even after his passing, World War II hero Jake "Papa Jake" Larson continues to inspire millions around the world.

On Memorial Day, Larson's remarkable story reached a national audience when he was featured in CNN's documentary *Why We Dream*. Yet for many residents of Martinez, Papa Jake is more than a historical figure. He is a beloved member of the community whose legacy of courage, humility and service deserves to be remembered for generations to come.

That legacy is taking shape in bronze.

Thanks to the efforts of local organizer Brandy Leidgen and a dedicated team of supporters, plans are moving forward for a life-size bronze statue of Papa Jake to be installed at Martinez City Hall. The goal is to unveil the monument next year, ideally on D-Day, commemorating the historic invasion of Normandy that Larson helped plan and fought in as part of the assault on Omaha Beach. That pivotal battle helped liberate France and ultimately contributed to the defeat of Nazi Germany.

The project recently reached a major milestone. The clay maquette is a detailed scale model of the statue. This has been presented to and officially approved by both the Larson family and City of Martinez officials.

Created by internationally acclaimed master sculptor Paula Slater, a maquette captures an extraordinary level of detail, to make the statue as life-like as possible, from military medals and belt buckles to clothing textures, buttonholes and even subtle personal features unique to Larson himself.

For more than 30 years, Slater has earned international recognition for her ability to capture the human form with remarkable realism and emotion. Her sculptures can be found in public monuments, memorials and private collections across the country. Known for bringing her subjects to life through clay, Slater's work combines technical precision with artistic expression, creating sculptures that tell powerful stories.

"My hands just seem to know what to do with this magical substance called clay," Slater says on her website.

The statue now enters its next phase. The approved maquette will be digitally scanned and transformed into a three-dimensional model before being enlarged into full-scale foam sections. Those sections become the foundation for the life-size sculpture, where Slater will meticulously apply clay and refine every detail.

Once completed, a silicone mold will be created and divided into sections before being sent to Berkeley's renowned Artworks Foundry. There,

skilled artisans will use the traditional lost-wax casting process and premium silicon bronze to create the final monument. The bronze sections will then be welded together, polished and finished by one of the nation's premier patina artists, whose specialized techniques give the sculpture its rich, enduring bronze appearance.

"This is such an exciting milestone in bringing this tribute to life for future generations," said project organizer Brandy Leidgen and close friend of Larson and family before he passed last July. He was 102.

While the project has made tremendous progress, approximately \$100,000 still needs to be raised to bring the monument across the finish line.

Community members have an opportunity to become a permanent part of this historic tribute by purchasing commemorative engraved bricks, making donations or becoming corporate sponsors. Every contribution helps ensure that future generations will learn about the sacrifices of Papa Jake and the men and women of the Greatest Generation.

To donate, purchase a commemorative brick, or learn more about sponsorship opportunities, visit [PapaJakeLarson.com](http://PapaJakeLarson.com).

Together, we can ensure that the courage, character and legacy of Papa Jake Larson stand proudly in Martinez for generations to come.



Above: The maquette of Papa Jake Larson. Below: Master Sculptor Paula Slater and monument organizer, Brandy Leidgen, display the Jake Larson maquette and one of Don Salvio Pacheco used his statue now standing at Todos Santos Park in Concord which Slater also sculpted.

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Martinez Sturgeon Schedule						
6/2026 Schedule						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1 BAK 7:45	2 BAK 7:45	3	4 DUB 6:00	5 SRF 6:00	6 BAK 6:00
7 SRF 2:00	8	9 AUS 6:00	10 BAK 6:00	11 DUB 6:00	12 DUB 6:00	13 AUS 6:00
14 SRF 2:00	15	16 DUB 6:00	17 DUB 6:00	18	19	20 AUS 6:00
21 DUB 2:00	22	23 DUB 6:00	24 AUS 6:00	25 SRF 6:00	26	27 DUB 6:00
28 AUS 2:00	29 BAK 7:45	30 BAK 7:45				

7/2026 Schedule						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1 AUS 6:00	2 DUB 6:00	3 AUS 6:00	4 DUB 12:0
5 SRF 2:00	6	7 DUB 6:00	8 SRF 6:00	9	10 SRF 6:00	11 BAK 6:00
12 PEC 2:00	13 BAK 7:45	14 BAK 7:45	15	16 DUB 6:00	17	18 SRF 6:00
19 AUS 2:00	20	21 AUS 6:00	22	23 AUS 6:00	24 SRF 6:00	25 BAK 6:00
26 SRF 2:00	27	28	29	30	31	

# MUSD to Pay Fired Superintendent \$282,344.02 in Severance, Delay Search for Successor

by Craig Lazeretti, Martinez News and Views

The Martinez Unified School District will pay fired Superintendent Gigi Patrick \$282,344.02 in severance to comply with the terms of her contract, MUSD Chief Business Official Andy Cannon confirmed this week.

Under the terms of the three-year contract that Patrick signed last year, the district was obligated to pay her 12 months of salary and benefits or the amount due for the remaining length of the contract, whichever was less, if the Board of Education chose to terminate her employment before the contract's expiration. Patrick took over as superintendent on July 1, 2025.

In a 3-2 vote on April 27, the Board of Education fired Patrick "without cause," giving no explanation for what prompted the decision. Board President Tania Brugger cited strict confidentiality rules regarding personnel matters.

Whatever prompted the decision, the three board members apparently concluded that Patrick's performance was so detrimental to the district that it was better to pay her a year's salary and benefits to simply leave, rather than try to remedy whatever concerns had emerged. Assistant Superintendent of Personnel Services Janelle Eyet, who was promoted to interim superintendent, is currently performing both roles.

Brugger was joined by trustees Logan Campbell and Brenda Leal in voting to oust Patrick. Trustees Courtney Masella-O'Brien and Anne Horack Martin, the longest-tenured members of the board, voted no.

The board's decision to fire Patrick "without cause," and to pay her severance, also suggests that she was not found to have engaged in any abuse of authority or neglect of her duties.

Meanwhile, the Board of Education agreed at Monday's meeting to keep Eyet in the interim superintendent role at least through the start of the 2026-27 school year, and perhaps a lot longer.

Trustees decided to hold off beginning a search for a new superintendent, saying they did not want to rush into a new hire, and at least some indicated that a search may not be needed at all if Eyet succeeds in the interim role and wishes to take the job on a long-term basis.

Brugger said at Monday's board meeting that it would be difficult to conduct a comprehensive search for a new superintendent so close to the new school year. "Rushing the process could limit the quality and depth of the candidate pool," she said.

Brugger recommended that the

board bring back a contract extension through Dec. 31 for Eyet at its next meeting. Her four colleagues agreed.

The board earlier this month approved a contract for Eyet through June 30 that gives her a higher pay rate than Patrick had. The contract matches Patrick's \$250,000 annual salary, plus includes a 6% longevity bonus for her years of service with the district, bringing the total to \$265,000.

Some board members expressed optimism Monday that Eyet may be the right long-term fit for the district.

"I would like to keep the possibility open that we won't need a search next year," Horack Martin said.

Leal expressed similar confidence in Eyet's leadership: "I think it is a good idea to spend the next six months creating relationships and leading us forward, and I do hope that we can continue on with your leadership."

Trustees agreed that should a search be needed, the district should handle the recruitment in-house without utilizing an outside firm, as it has in the past.

While agreeing that the district should not rush into hiring a new superintendent, Masella-O'Brien expressed concern about Eyet's



Gigi Patrick shortly after her hiring last year

workload in performing two roles simultaneously.

Brugger said that an improved budget outlook may give the district flexibility to hire additional help at the district office. The district has been grappling with a multi-year structural budget deficit that has precipitated significant cuts, but Gov. Gavin Newsom's May budget revise included additional funding for public school districts.

"We've talked about hiring someone to help with HR, especially when it gets down to (labor) negotiations and things like that," Brugger said. "Absolutely, we need to give her all the support she needs."

To read this article in its entirety and with commentary, go to [MartinezNewsandViews.substack.com](http://MartinezNewsandViews.substack.com)




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# Walnut Creek Welcomes Summer with Community Celebrations, Pride, and Opportunities to Connect

by Kevin Wilk, Mayor, Walnut Creek

June is one of my favorite times of year in Walnut Creek. The weather is beautiful, school is wrapping up, and there is real energy in our community as we head into summer. From cultural events and Pride celebrations to civic engagement opportunities and community gatherings, there is something for everyone to enjoy this month.

We kicked off the month on June 1 with a Pride flag-raising ceremony at City Hall at noon. This annual event honors the LGBTQIA+ community and reaffirms the City's commitment to equity, inclusion, and belonging for all. The Pride flag will fly at City Hall throughout June as a symbol of welcoming, love, acceptance, and solidarity.

Pride Month celebrations continue throughout June with several opportunities to connect and celebrate.

On Saturday, June 20, the Bedford Gallery will host a Pride Public Art Walking Tour exploring Walnut Creek's public art collection and encouraging community conversation.

The Leshner Center for the Arts will also host a Pre-Show Pride Mixer on Wednesday, June 24 ahead of "Jagged Little Pill: The Musical."

Throughout the month, residents can participate in the Community Pride Chain at select Arts + Recreation facilities, sharing messages about pride and belonging.

### Cultural Festivals Return

The weekend of June 6 and 7 is when the beloved and renowned Arts and Wine Festival is back in town at Civic Park. Enjoy the arts and crafts, wine and craft beer, and fantastic music from two stages in Civic Park.

June also brings the return of Fiesta Cultural on June 12 and 13 at the Leshner Center for the Arts. Now in its fourth year, this celebration of Latin American arts and culture continues to grow as one of Walnut Creek's signature community events.

Activities will include live music and dance performances, a Friday evening headliner performance, and a free Saturday street fair surrounding the Leshner Center featuring the diverse traditions and cultures of Latin America.

### Infrastructure Improvements

The Public Works Department recently completed the Shadelands and Wiget Green Infrastructure Improvement Project at the corner of Shadelands Drive and Wiget Lane.

The project includes a new bioretention basin designed to treat roadway runoff before it enters local waterways, along with drought-resistant landscaping and more than 80 percent native plant species that support pollinator habitats.

In addition to helping Walnut Creek meet regional stormwater requirements, the project creates a more welcoming space for pedestrians as the landscaping continues to grow and mature.

### Coffee with Cops

Meet and talk to our WCPD for Coffee with a Cop on June 16 from 9:00 -10:30 a.m. at Koin Coffee in the Shadelands. It's a relaxed, informal morning with Walnut Creek Police officers, dispatchers, and staff, offering enjoyable conversation and good coffee. This is a great reminder that community connection often happens in everyday moments, too.

### Community Voices Vital to Guide General Plan

This month also marks an important opportunity for residents to help shape Walnut Creek's future as the City begins work on updating its General Plan.

The General Plan serves as the community's long-term roadmap and helps guide decisions related to housing, transportation, parks, open space, public services, and neighborhood development for decades to come.

Community participation will play a vital role throughout the process, with many opportunities to have your voice heard.

The public is invited to attend a joint study session with five City commissions on Thursday, June 25, at 6:00 p.m. in the third-floor conference room at City Hall. This meeting is one of many opportunities to gather public feedback as the process moves forward.

Summer is a time to get outside, try something new, and enjoy all that Walnut Creek has to offer. I hope to see you out and about this June.



# Pride in Contra Costa County

June is Pride Month, and there's a lot happening across Contra Costa County worth knowing about.

In Concord, the Rainbow Community Center hosts its annual Pride in the Plaza festival on Saturday, June 6 at Todos Santos Plaza, a free, family-friendly event that's become a fixture of the community.

Clayton held its own Pride Parade and Festival along Main Street on Sunday, May 31, now in its fourth year.

Pride Month is also a good time to highlight the resources available year-round to LGBTQIA+ residents. Because Pride isn't just a celebration, it's a reminder that LGBTQ+ people deserve to live openly and with dignity, and that our county has a role in making that possible.

As federal protections have come under pressure, local government has a responsibility to hold the line, and Contra Costa County will.

Residents looking for support have options across the county, Contra Costa Health Services operates a monthly Gender Clinic providing outpatient care for transgender and non-binary patients at chealth.org.

The Rainbow Community Center, based in Concord, provides mental health services, youth and senior programming, and HIV education among other programs. They can be

# PRIDE MONTH



reached at [rainbowcc.org](http://rainbowcc.org).

For crisis support, the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is available 24/7 by call or text.

Contra Costa County is at its best when every resident feels they belong. The celebrations this month are a reminder of that, and resources exist because our commitment doesn't end when June does.

To learn more about the Countywide LGBTQIA+ Services Assessment Report, visit [tinyurl.com/CoCoLGBTQIANeeds](http://tinyurl.com/CoCoLGBTQIANeeds).



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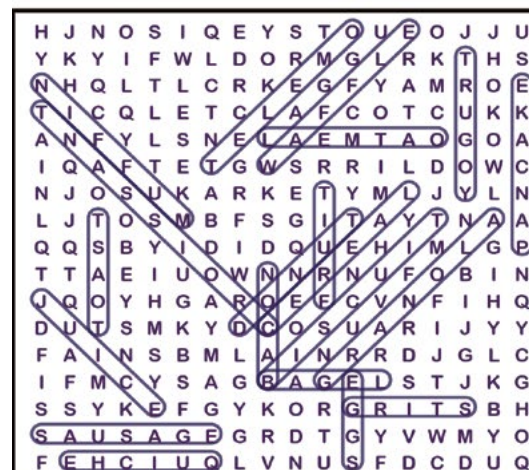
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Solutions from Puzzles page 11

Puzzles by Marc Rokoff RokoPuzzles.com



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

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- BEAGLE
- DACHSHUND
- CHIHUAHUA
- DALMATIAN

### CRYPTOGRAM

If there's one thing I've learned in my life, it's that curiosity might kill cats, but it doesn't kill people.

-Tracy Morgan

### DO YOU KNOW?

5 billion photos

# Walnut Creek Aquanuts Win at Junior Nationals & Pan American Championships

by David King and Jamie Qualk

The Walnut Creek Aquanuts (WCA) Artistic Swimming Team made waves on two continents this spring, earning top honors at both international and national competitions.

In April, WCA's 12-and-under athletes represented the United States and Walnut Creek at the Pan American Championships in Santiago, Chile. Led by former Team USA coach and Olympic champion Tammy McGregor, the young athletes delivered a remarkable performance, capturing four gold medals, one silver medal, and the overall high-point title in the 12-and-under division.

Competing in their first international event, the Aquanuts won the team competition over strong squads from Peru and Brazil. Katerina Qualk and Emelia Day earned gold in the duet event, while Qualk added three more gold medals by winning both solo events and the figures competition. The team also captured silver in the combo event, helping secure the overall high-point award.

At the same time, Walnut Creek's Junior team was competing across the continent at the Junior and Senior National Championships in Buffalo, New York. Despite overcoming injuries and last-minute personnel changes, the Aquanuts claimed the Junior National Championship title, the overall high-point award, and the Coach of the Year honor.

The challenges facing the team were so significant that assistant coach Camryn Carrasco, Heather's daughter, returned to competition after more than three years of retirement to swim in the team's gold medal-winning Acrobatic routine.

"I felt nervous the entire day leading up to the event, but once I stepped on the deck, I felt excited to swim again," Camryn Carrasco said.

Coach Heather Carrasco, who will be inducted into the International Swimming Hall of Fame in 2026, credited her athletes' resilience for the team's success.

The Aquanuts showcased impressive depth by entering two Junior squads in the National Championships. Their "Chess"-themed routine earned gold in the Acrobatic Team event, while their "Circus"-themed routine captured silver.

The teams also placed second and fourth in the Team Technical event. Walnut Creek added another gold medal on the final day of competition in the Free Team event.

Individually, Eloise Krigbaum earned silver medals in both the Senior Free Solo and Senior Technical Solo events. Jamie Starck captured bronze in Junior Free Solo. Kaylee Wang and Rowan Goldman won silver in Mixed Duet, while Goldman added another silver medal in the Junior Male Solo event. Wang was also named the Junior High Point Athlete.

The success continued later in May when the team competed at the 2026 Region B Artistic Swimming Championships, held May 15-17 in Walnut Creek. The Aquanuts secured qualification spots for the 2026 Junior Olympic Championships, scheduled for June 27 through July 4 in Ypsilanti, Michigan.

Looking ahead, the world-renowned Walnut Creek Aquanuts will host an international artistic swimming competition June 16-19 at the University of Hawaii in Honolulu, continuing the club's long tradition of excellence on the national and international stage.

Based in Walnut Creek, the Aquanuts are one of the most successful artistic swimming programs in the United States, developing athletes who compete at the highest levels of the sport.



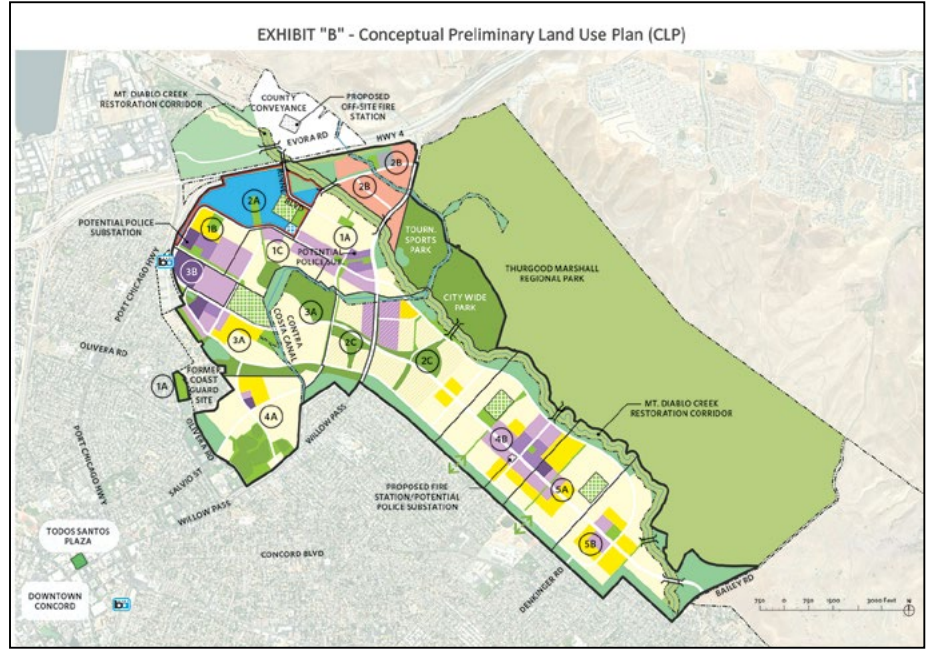
USA Score reveal that won the PanAM Games Gold



Katerina Qualk earns four gold medals in the Pan American games in Chile.

# Concord Approves Historic Navy Land Transfer Agreement, Clearing Path for Redevelopment of Naval Weapons Station

by David King



After years of negotiations, the City of Concord has reached a major milestone in the redevelopment of the former Concord Naval Weapons Station. On May 26, the Concord City Council, sitting as the Local Reuse Authority (LRA), unanimously approved a term sheet agreement with the United States Navy that establishes the financial framework for transferring approximately 2,422 acres of former military property to the city for redevelopment.

The approval represents one of the most significant steps forward in the decades-long effort to transform the inland portion of the former weapons station into a mixed-use community that will eventually include housing, commercial development, parks, and public amenities.

The agreement, known as the Navy Term Sheet, was negotiated between the Navy, the City of Concord, and master developer Brookfield Residential. It establishes both the purchase price and payment structure for the property under an Economic Development Conveyance, a federal program that allows former military properties to be transferred for community redevelopment.

"This is a three-party negotiation," explained Concord Director of Community Reuse Planning Guy Bjerke.

"The city is purchasing the land from the Navy, but Brookfield is funding those payments. Any agreement had to work for all parties and ultimately support the project's ability to be developed successfully."

Brookfield was selected by the City Council as master developer in 2024. Since then, representatives from the city, the Navy, and Brookfield have spent nearly two years negotiating the financial terms of the transfer.

While the process took longer than anticipated, project leaders said there were no major disputes.

"We'd get a small group of Navy representation, city representation and Brookfield representation, and we'd all come up with a concept or an idea," said Emily Boyd, Director of Business Strategies for Brookfield Residential Land. "Then we'd all have to go back to our higher powers to make sure everyone could get on board. In the end, we were pretty pleased with the results. The asks that were made didn't seem unreasonable or unexpected."

Under the agreement, payments to the Navy will occur over the project's anticipated 30-year buildout. The financial structure includes a \$4.6 million deposit upon the initial land transfer expected in 2030, followed by four annual guaranteed payments of \$10 million plus interest between 2033 and 2036. The Navy will also receive a percentage of proceeds from future land transfers and half of the city's share of profits from development phases that exceed Brookfield's targeted investment returns.

If the project



After the May 28 City Council meeting, the Local Reuse Authority Team, City Council, and Brookfield Residential Team pose to mark this historical decision.

CNWS Cont'd page 30

# Pleasant Hill Summer Concerts: Sunset by the Lake

The Pleasant Hill Civic Action Commission produces the Sunset by the Lake Summer Concerts. The concerts began May 24, and will be held every two weeks through August 30. Concerts go from 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. and are held at the Pleasant Hill City Hall, 100 Gregory Lane.

For questions, contact [communications@phillca.gov](mailto:communications@phillca.gov).

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JULY 5	THE BELL BROTHERS	AUG 30	THE BIG JANGLE



## CNWS cont'd from page 29

performs as projected, the Navy is expected to receive approximately \$628 million over the life of the development.

One concession made during negotiations involved the Navy receiving 50 percent of the city's profit participation once Brookfield achieves an internal rate of return above 18 percent. City officials determined the arrangement was necessary to secure the transfer agreement.

Bjerke noted that Navy officials made it clear they were eager to complete negotiations and move forward.

In discussions with councilmembers, Bjerke cautioned that rejecting or attempting to substantially renegotiate the term sheet could have jeopardized the entire process. According to Bjerke, the Navy indicated the current proposal represented its final position and that alternative disposal options could be considered if an agreement was not reached.

With the term sheet approved, attention now turns to preparing a Specific Plan and the entitlement documents necessary for development. Brookfield will begin refining land use plans and conducting additional community outreach to help shape the project's future.

"We're really excited," Boyd said. "It's been years that we've been working through this. It's been a wild ride, but the exciting part is we're finally ready to get started."

Construction activity is anticipated to begin with major infrastructure work around 2029, following environmental



Brookfield Residential team celebrating the Council's approval of the Navy Term sheet.

clearances and planning approvals. Residential and commercial construction could begin as early as 2031 or 2032.

"We are very excited about the Concord City Council approving the Navy Term Sheet and moving the project forward," said Josh Roden, President of Northern California for Brookfield Residential. "It continues to be a great experience working with the community, city and Navy to advance Concord Naval to the next phase and kick off the Specific Plan."

For Bjerke, who has worked on the project for years, the council's approval brings both satisfaction and perspective.

"It's first a sigh of relief," he said. But with decades of development still ahead, he recognizes that many challenges remain before the vision for the former naval base becomes a reality.



## Redistricting: A Return to the Past or a Path Forward?

by Edi Birsan, Concordian [edibirsan@gmail.com](mailto:edibirsan@gmail.com)

History does not repeat itself, but those who fail to recognize the dynamics and complexities of present-day crises often ensure that its lessons go unheeded.

Politicians, religious leaders, historians, and public figures alike have long reached for historical parallels to simplify fear and amplify emotional response. While outrage in the face of injustice is entirely warranted, it must be grounded in a clear analysis of current realities rather than reflexive comparisons to the past.

Tension is sharply elevated by recent Supreme Court rulings on civil rights and the growing wave of redistricting efforts aimed at dismantling majority-minority congressional districts.

These developments may ultimately extend to city council districts in California communities, and municipalities throughout Contra Costa County.

### The Redistricting Campaigns of 2016–2019

Between 2016 and 2019, Contra Costa County cities with at-large council seats transitioned to smaller, geographically defined election districts. The legal foundation for these campaigns rested on the concept of racially polarized voting under the California Voting Rights Act which addresses the pattern that voters disproportionately declined to support candidates preferred by communities of color, effectively denying minority-favored candidates

a viable path to electoral victory when judged only on demographics of the elected.

Compounded by decades of residential segregation, the result was a systematic underrepresentation of minority communities on governing bodies.

### Four Underlying Failures

Understanding this moment requires confronting several interrelated failures honestly:

#### 1. The Persistence of Racially Segregated Communities

Residential segregation was not an organic outcome; it was engineered through hatred, discriminatory policy, and deliberate exclusion. This stands in direct contradiction to a foundational American ideal: that anyone, regardless of origin, is entitled to liberty and justice. While meaningful progress on integration has been made, there remains far to go.

#### 2. Race-Based Voting Behavior

That a significant portion of the electorate has historically cast votes on the basis of race, gender, or ethnicity rather than qualifications and policy is a civic failure that cannot be minimized or rationalized away.

#### 3. District Elections is Necessary but an Incomplete Remedy

The deliberate creation of majority-minority districts was, in many respects, a pragmatic response to the

failures described above. It succeeded in elevating minority representation to a meaningful degree, but does it constitute a lasting or sufficient solution to the deeper behavior of racially polarized voting?

#### 4. The Rise of Identity Politics

Both major political parties have become deeply entangled in the manipulation of identity for electoral gain. This manifests in the elevation of figures whose public profiles represent minority communities while their policy positions work against those communities' core economic interests. It also sidelines accomplished individuals whose qualifications are subordinate to their demographic profile.

This substitution of identity for substance and action is what is commonly referred to as identity politics, and it serves neither justice nor progress.

### A Path Worth Fighting For

There is legitimate reason to doubt that the current reactive posture against civil rights will advance equality. There is considerable risk that it will instead deepen racially polarized voting rather than diminish it.

That said, I have long supported district elections. Simply, it significantly reduces the cost of running for office which in turn lowers barriers to entry for candidates of modest means. It also brings elected officials into closer proximity to the communities they serve. Smaller districts also

allow for shoe leather, (door to door campaigning) to replace hard cash as an effected outreach. These are outcomes that benefit constituents of all backgrounds.

Equally worth defending is the principle that was pounded into me from youth, that any elected official, regardless of personal background, carries the obligation to govern in the interest of all and that the measure of representation is not demographic resemblance but genuine accountability and effective service.

The current cycle in which voter-profile manipulation is answered with more extreme voter-profile manipulation produces neither justice nor stability.

What is needed is a sustainable, unified path forward—one that addresses the real and ongoing harms of our history without reducing every citizen to the characteristics they did not choose.

That path will require more than hope. It will require sustained, principled work by all of us.

*Above are the opinions of Edi Birsan entering his mid-life crisis at 76 and carrying genes of 40% island Greek and Asia Minor, 30% Hispanic, 15% North African, 5% Rumania/Bulgaria Eastern Europe, 1% Finland (Viking snuck in somewhere), 1% middle east and of course 1% Neanderthal that accounts for...well you fill that in.*

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

**My Pet is Eating Grass! Is it Sick?**

Grass eating is a normal dog and cat behavior when done in moderation. Researchers do not fully understand why dogs and cats indulge in grazing on lawns. Various theories have been proposed for a dog's tendency to do this, such as hunger or mild stomach upset, compensating for insufficient dietary fiber, instinctual behavior, boredom, or craving attention. Likewise, cats are believed to eat grass to ease stomach upset or help pass hairballs. A frequent misconception is that dogs do this to make themselves vomit. Scientists have debunked this myth for dogs, but it may hold some merit for cats.



While grass may ease a dog's hunger, it has little nutritional value and is poorly digested. A dog on a low fiber diet may be consuming those pointy blades to fill its stomach and add roughage. Adjusting a dog's diet with carrots, pumpkin, sweet potato, or green beans will not only increase its dietary fiber, but these vegetables add nutritional value to the dog's gastronomic repertoire and can help retain food in the gastrointestinal system reducing hunger.

Dogs share most of their DNA with wolves, which are known to consume grass. Plant material is a small percentage, but a natural part of a dog's ancestor's diet. So, instinct may be a possible explanation for a dog's tendency to dine on the lawn.

Grazing on the lawn may have behavioral roots. Some dogs may be bored and are exploring the textural delights and chewing experience. Other pups may be craving attention. Four-legged pets with owners who routinely discourage their dogs from indulging in a backyard salad by redirecting their behavior to a fun game may have learned how to attract their human's attention. These crafty pooches may have learned that if they eat grass and they can entice their owners to engage in a game of catch.

Like dogs, cats can't digest grass.

But felines are more likely to vomit after ingesting grass compared to their canine counterparts. It is believed felines are seeking the laxative effects because of hairballs.

Should an owner discourage this behavior? In general, grass-eating is harmless. Only a small percentage of dogs will vomit after eating grass, and a cat may need to discharge a hairball to improve its health.

But under certain circumstances, intervention may be required. If the grass has been treated with pesticides or herbicides, it is best to discourage a pet from consuming those enticing greens.

Lawns contaminated with fecal material can harbor parasites like roundworms or hookworms that can infect your dog.

Also, if the dog routinely indulges in dining on the lawn to the point of vomiting, the dog should not be allowed to continue this vegetarian tendency. Dogs engaging in extreme overindulgence in grass can experience intestinal obstruction, resulting in serious health problems. Symptoms of gastrointestinal blockage include vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite, weakness, and abdominal pain. A pet that is routinely and excessively eating grass and vomiting may be a sign of illness, and a trip to the vet is recommended.

*Jill Hedgecock is a retired environmental scientist and an award-winning author of the Doberman trilogy series: "Between Shadow's Eyes," "From Shadow's Perspective," and "In Shadow's Reflection." Her books are available on amazon.com.*

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## The Path of Duty and Honor: If George Washington Returned

by William Gensburger and JC Ryan

This novel presents a provocative premise—George Washington reappears in modern America and is immediately confronted with social instability, institutional distrust, and a political system strained by division and competing interests.

The novel places Washington inside a contemporary landscape shaped by media warfare, shifting alliances, and blurred lines between public service and power.

“This isn’t about glorifying the past,” said Gensburger. “It’s about pressure-testing the present. If a foundational leader walked into today’s reality, would our systems hold or collapse under scrutiny?”

Blending historical perspective with modern geopolitical tension, the book explores themes of leadership under pressure, civic responsibility, and the widening gap between founding principles and current practice.

The release comes at a moment when public discourse around governance, national identity, and institutional trust continues to intensify ahead of the country’s 250-year milestone.

The idea for the story originated

from ABC-7’s Dan Ashley who, along with Gensburger, began the idea as a screenplay that never was completed.

Ashley gave Gensburger his blessing to turn it into a novel and was happy to receive a mention in the introduction of the book.

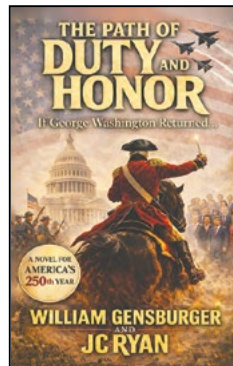
Readers have embraced the novel with 5-star reviews.

“This is one of the most enjoyable books I have ever read. The dialogue... sometimes brought tears to my eyes, wishing for a political climate from the old days. An outstanding work that is soon to be a best-selling novel.” ~Tom Mason

“The concept of bringing back George Washington, especially at times like this, was brilliant. As a US citizen who served our country in the Army (with bone spurs), this work really made me proud. Anyway, 5-stars.” ~Stan Burg

“I absolutely loved this story! I think we have forgotten what an incredible experiment our democracy is. His words reminded me that it is up to ‘We the People’ to ensure that our republic lives on.” ~JoAnn Morales

Learn more about the book at [www.President1.com](http://www.President1.com)



## “Bridget’s Rescue” checks off bucket list for author, retired teacher

by David Scholz

Phil Scimonelli, 67, a retired teacher of 30 years, has always enjoyed writing poetry and short stories.

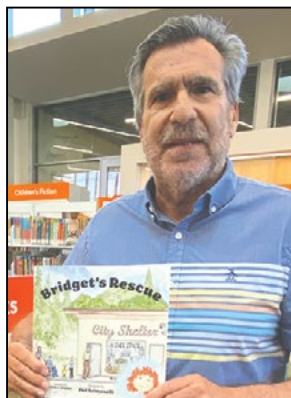
As a 4th grader, he recalled the particular joy he got when a teacher chose him to read his piece of creative writing about a photograph aloud in class. Thus, a seed was planted.

Scimonelli taught GATE (Gifted and Talented Education) and 6th grade Math and Science in the Lancaster School District in Southern California. He also involved himself in activities such as coaching basketball, chess club, talent shows, and holiday choir. The Concord resident occasionally wrote poems and short stories along the way.

“Once I retired, I had time to enjoy the process of creating stories that put a smile on people’s faces,” Scimonelli said.

Such is the case with his children’s picture book, “Bridget’s Rescue”. While a challenge, he found writing it a rewarding experience having now sold nearly 500 copies. “I am not doing it for the money; it’s a bucket list thing,” he emphasized.

“Bridget’s Rescue,” follows the Murphy family through the pet adoption process and introduces children to animal shelters, how their family should prepare for adoption, and the important steps one needs to take before bringing a pet home. The book encourages pet adoption and includes a “catch phrase” at the bottom of each page for a further teachable moment.



When self-publishing, Scimonelli noted the importance of asking for help. He found the local California Writing Club’s Mount Diablo Branch (CWC) just such a resource.

He joined CWC a few years ago, during which time he started entering poems and short stories into contests. Various branches run different contests, and if chosen, it results in the piece being published.

His wife, Roisin, serves as his muse and number one critic. She isn’t shy advising “that needs a rewrite”, which he greatly appreciates.

To date he has had works published through CWC in five different anthologies and has placed

in the top two for his holiday themed writings. “It was an amazing feeling,” said Scimonelli. “Wow! Someone else enjoyed my work.”

“I often incorporate pet dogs in my stories. My piece in “One Day” is about a senior with is aging pet dog,” said Scimonelli. “I’m an avid fisherman, and of course we have stories.”

While he revels in the joy of writing and seeing his work in print, he offers a reality check.

“Be prepared for rejection. Write what makes you happy,” said Scimonelli. “If other people don’t see the joy in your work, you will forever.”

“I will continue to enter competitions and who knows, there may be another children’s book in the future.”



“The Doorman” (MCD, 2025, paperback 402 pages, \$19.00) by Chris Pavone is the fast-paced story of Chicky Diaz, a twenty-eight-year veteran doorman of the exclusive Bohemia, a prestigious, high-end residential apartment complex on Central Park West in New York City. Chicky has witnessed the comings and goings of the building’s occupants for years. But the lives of Chicky, socialite Emily Longworth who lives in the penthouse, and Julian Sonnenberg, an art gallerist, who lives in the least expensive unit, are about to intertwine.

Chicky is a man teetering on the edge of financial ruin. The unpaid medical bills from his now-deceased, cancer-stricken wife, coupled with the college tuitions of his three daughters, had burdened him with over three-hundred thousand dollars of debt. To keep afloat, he moonlights as a bouncer, but an unfortunate encounter with a drug lord one night puts Chicky in an impossible situation.

Emily Longworth has it all. Stunning looks, a wealthy husband named Whit, two beautiful children, and a penthouse view of New York’s cityscape.

Unfortunately, Whit likes to hurt women and his wife no longer satiates his desires. Emily is bidding her time until she syphon’s enough money to leave her husband. But her loneliness soon entices her into an extramarital affair with Julian, who shares her love of art.

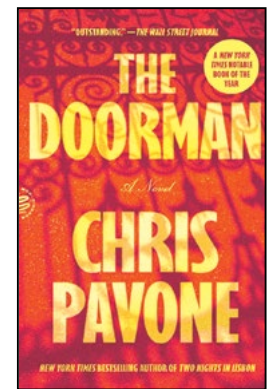
Julian Sonnenberg has a wife and

two teenage children. He’d watched the beautiful Emily from afar and can’t believe his good fortune when she takes an interest in him. His recent diagnosis of a fatal health condition leads him to a reckless decision.

The action culminates on an unfortunate evening when the police shooting of a Black man causes outraged protesters to storm the city streets, which coincides with the arrival of trained gunmen at the Bohemia, who take Chicky hostage to gain access to four apartments. On this fateful night, an evening when Chicky had added a concealed weapon to his standard uniform, these three main characters make decisions that instigate irreparable consequences.

“The Doorman” was named one of the Best Thrillers and a Notable Book of 2025 by the “New York Times.”

Chris Pavone is the bestselling author of six thrillers, including “The Expats,” and “Two Nights in Lisbon.” His novels have won Edgar and Anthony awards, appeared on all the major bestseller lists, and have been shortlisted for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize. “Two Nights in Lisbon” and “The Expats” have been optioned for film and television.



There have been many changes in the twenty years since the first “Devil Wears Prada” film premiered. The most significant to the plot of the new “Devil Wears Prada 2” is the demise of journalism and print media.

In the sequel, we catch up with Andy Sachs (Anne Hathaway), who achieved her dream at the end of the first film and has been working as a serious journalist. Unfortunately, the paper she works for folds, leaving her desperate for work. She receives an opportunity to help the struggling Runway magazine, the place where she got her start while being tortured by her boss, Miranda Priestly (Meryl Streep). Andy needs the job, but has to consider if, after twenty years, she can return to the impossible-to-please editor-in-chief.

If Priestly’s character faced challenges in the first film, they are nothing compared to her attempts to keep the fashion magazine relevant in today’s social media-obsessed landscape. She remains someone who does not want to accept help, so Andy being sent in by the magazine owner does not create a happy reunion for the two.

Where it may sound like this is a dark and dour sequel, it is far from the truth. Most of the original cast is in place and ready to dole out their snarky remarks.

All the actors still have amazing chemistry with each other, and the audience is treated to celebrity cameos galore.

Fashionistas will relish the new wardrobes sported on Hathaway, Streep and Blunt, but do not forget to check out the amazing threads on Stanley Tucci. Hathaway’s character obviously learned her lessons from the first film, as she is dressed impeccably throughout.

Several plot twists keep viewers entertained and make up for the lack of freshness many sequels fall into. It is always entertaining to see characters transform, especially young ones, and one of the joys of the first film was watching Andy discover the person she truly wanted to be. It is also tough to top the physical makeover montage in the original.

Here, the characters are grounded in the paths they have chosen for themselves and must use their strengths to show everyone that what they do best can still have value in today’s culture. Fans should still thoroughly enjoy the ride.

PG-13

In Theaters

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