

Diablo Gazette

November 2025

NO KINGS

A Unicorn and a frog see eye to eye
at the No Kings protest in Walnut Creek



A core principle behind all No Kings events is a commitment to nonviolent action. On October 18, more than 7 million citizens rose up at more than 2,700 events in all 50 states, DC, and cities worldwide to say: America has no kings, and the power belongs to the people.



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*Available first come, first serve basis



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As Diablo Gazette's October edition was set to be printed, the City had just relayed a message that Concord City Manager Valerie Barone had announced her retirement at the end of the year, 2025.

However, with much pleading from several councilmembers, who felt that didn't give the Council enough time to find a replacement, Barone has agreed to stay until the end of the fiscal year, which is June 2026.



Barone will be leaving with more than three decades of dedicated public service. This included serving in the Peace Corps, and community service roles with cities Walnut Creek and

Milpitas. She joined City of Concord in 2008 as Assistant City Manager and became Concord City Manager in April of 2012. The City is initiating a search for her replacement.

Additional details about the recruitment process will be available in the coming weeks.

Diablo Gazette and Claycord.com are proud sponsors of the just passed project to erect a bronze statue of "Papa Jake" Larson in Martinez. Larson, who recently passed at 102, was a Martinez resident and was a highly decorated Veteran of WWII. He helped plan and

Leave a job, leave Earth, leave the country

fought in the Omaha Beach landings that eventually liberated France. Read more on this and learn how you can participate on page 20.

Looks like Diablo Gazette has more international readers, as veterinarian Dr. Deborah Aparicio of Concord shared our October 's issue with her staff and associates in Kenya.



I will add this to our album with other international travelers, i.e. from Oxford, Normandy's Omaha Beach, Oktoberfest in Munich, Germany, and in front of Edinburgh Castle. All are great reading spots, don't you think?

Have a Happy Thanksgiving!



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Gift & Craft Fair

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2025

10:00 AM-3:00 PM

CONCORD SENIOR CENTER | 2727 PARKSIDE CIRCLE

Complete your holiday shopping while supporting local artists in your community! We have over 70 vendors selling items like jewelry, knitted goods, quilts, custom gifts, embroidered items, decorations and more!

Questions? Contact us!

925-671-3320 | concordsc@cityofconcord.org

www.cityofconcord.org/SCEvents



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Main: Turkey Dinner with Stuffing,
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Time to Reserve Your Office and Holiday Parties!



Clayton's Comprehensive Infrastructure Renewal and General Fund Savings Project is now complete

In 2023, the City of Clayton signed a significant agreement with Climatec (climatec.com), in order to make improvements to the City's infrastructure and pursue increase savings in the following areas: lighting, water, HVAC and Building Automated Systems (BAS), solar and electric vehicle charging. Our goal was to dramatically reduce the City's energy consumption, improve maintenance and operational needs and save the City energy costs for years to come.

The funding for this initiative came primarily from a \$1.9 million California Energy Commission (CEC) 1% loan through the Energy Conservation Assistance Act, in

addition to a less than \$150,000 investment from the City's American Resuce Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

In early 2023, we created the Energy Services and Infrastructure Renewal Ad Hoc committee, made up of Vice Mayor Jeff Wan and myself, and part of our duties included providing oversight on the Climatec project, along with City staff, to ensure that the project stayed on course and that communication back to the community and entire Council was accurate and timely.

The scope of the project, which is now complete, included all new LED lighting on City-owned streetlights,

pathways and city-owned building lights to enhance public safety and to maintain longer lasting equipment resulting in energy savings.

The next step was to install a new smart irrigation system, with a dashboard, that now allows the City to track major leaks, monitor flow and reduce water waste in the event of a break, resulting in long-term water saving costs.

The new HVAC modernizations, in City-owned buildings, have improved air quality, while the complementary BAS ensures that the HVAC systems maintain regulated temperature in all facilities. This included adding occupancy sensors which turn off indoor lighting when facilities are not being used.

Final step was the installation of a solar-mounted parking structure in the Maintenance building parking lot, which would provide energy to City Hall, the Maintenance shop, the Clayton Community Library, shade to police vehicles, and to a brand new two-vehicle EV Charging Station, located in the library parking lot.

In total, the City is now producing much of its own renewable energy and is projected to achieve Net Zero Energy status, meaning it will generate more renewable energy on-site than it consumes annually, very soon.

Additional energy saving

improvements, began in September, when our partners at PG&E informed us that they would be completing a total LED light conversion of all of their PGE-owned streetlights (300+ streetlights) throughout the City.

Because of this project, and all of the hard work of our City staff, committee members and partners at Climatec and PG&E, we are now eligible to apply for an estimated \$300,000 Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) refund from the Federal government, which we are in the process of applying for right now.

The total lifecycle savings are \$4,735,375. The net savings to the General Fund for years 1 through 5 will range from approximately \$230,000 to \$916,000 for this five-year period.

At the November 18, 2025, City Council meeting, staff will be proposing some modest budget savings as a part of a series of FY2025-26 budget balancing revisions. City staff will be monitoring electrical bills for additional budget savings over the next several months

Thank you to everyone at Climatec and its vendors, PG&E and our City Manager, Kris Lofthus, who brought this project over the finish line in September. To celebrate the

"Infrastructure" continued on page 8.





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www.jenniferstojanovich.com

**CLAYTON
MARKET
UPDATE**

Address	Sales Price	SF	Bed/Bath	Sales Date
1826 Yolanda Cir	\$1,100,000	2443	4/3	9/18/2025
47 La Canada Ct	\$1,050,000	2390	4/2.5	9/19/2025
14 Mt Eden Pl	\$1,110,000	2135	4/2	10/1/2025
3052 Miwok Way	\$1,450,000	3373	5/3.5	10/2/2025
5647 Southbrook Dr	\$1,368,000	3026	4/2.5	10/10/2025
1290 Easley Dr	\$1,285,000	2391	4/2.5	10/15/2025
4701 Keller Ridge Dr	\$765,000	1595	3/2.5	10/16/2025

**CONCORD
MARKET
UPDATE**

Address	Sales Price	SF	Bed/Bath	Sales Date
745 San Marcos Ct	\$1,040,000	1580	3/2	9/24/2025
1568 Schenone Ct #B	\$507,000	1250	3/1.5	9/25/2025
5200 Myrtle Dr	\$955,000	2115	4/2	9/29/2025
4285 Carter Ct	\$770,000	1621	4/2	9/29/2025
1275 Windermere Way	\$900,000	1284	4/2	10/3/2025
3674 Northridge Dr	\$1,425,000	1744	4/2	10/6/2025
1604 Chestnut Ct	\$880,000	1608	3/2	10/8/2025

Based on information from CCR/Paragon MLS as of 10/20/25. 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.

Clayton Watch fighting to amend Civil Grand Jury Report on City of Clayton

by David King

Last June the Contra Costa County Civil Grand Jury released its scathing Report 2505, "Clayton: Small City, big Concerns," characterizing Clayton City Council of gross dysfunction and operating at near financial ruin and offered a series of procedural recommendations.

The council responded mostly with disagreement with almost all of its findings, citing the report was filled with errors, guided by misinformation, and rejected the recommendations. So, that was the end of it right?

Not so fast.

While the Council is ready to move on, Diablo Gazette received a copy of a 56-page petition submitted by the Political Action Committee, Clayton Watch, submitted to the Contra Costa County Superior Court of California, date-stamped on Oct. 23, asking for the court to amend the record.

According to Gary Hood, a founding member of Clayton Watch, Clayton Watch feels the Grand Jury Report maligns Clayton and that damage needs to be mitigated with the facts.

With the report as is, the concern is should Clayton have future recruiting needs to fill key government and law enforcement positions, the report can dissuade top candidates, as well as be weaponized in future political campaigns to misinform voters.

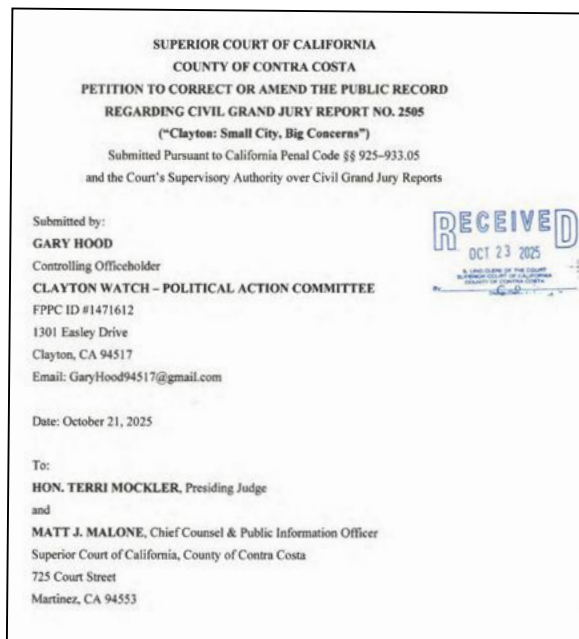
The first challenge was to confirm that Clayton Watch even had standing to challenge the Grand Jury Report, which it claims it does for being a duly registered civic organization acting on matters of community concern, government transparency, and accountability.

The petition was submitted after several written requests to simply review the report and correct misstatements with verified facts, but those requests were at first unanswered, then eventually rejected.

There is no precedent for such action. Further complicating a formal review is that the Jurors who conducted the investigation are protected by anonymity, and have all been replaced with a new set of Jurors.

The petition cites several problems with the original report, notwithstanding its prejudicial title. Supported by exhibits, the petition identifies six additional specific factual and procedural deficiencies in the report.

The report misstates the general fund revenues, expenditures and balances by relying on unaudited figures. The exhibit provides the audited figures which Hood says dispels the Jury's findings.



Cover letter of the petition filed with the superior Court of California, Contra Costa County.

The report criticizes the City for not taking action for revenue enhancement; the exhibit verifies actions that were taken.

Citing extreme turnover in City manager positions, the petition points out that it is overstating that turnover by counting interim assignments.

Regarding Brown Act violations, the petition accuses the Civil Grand Jury of not understanding the functions and procedures of special committees and that no Brown Act violations occurred.

Speaking of procedures, the petition charges that it was the Grand Jury that failed its legal obligations by not providing the Council and any other affected agencies with a copy of the report prior to publication as required by Penal Code 933(f).

Since the original Report cannot be changed, the petition asks that an amendment be filed with the provided factual remedies and suggestions presented.

Copies of the petition were sent to the presiding Judge, Hon. Terri Mockler, Matt Malone, Chief Counsel and Public Information Officer, County Supervisor Ken Carlson, Clayton City councilmembers, President of the Grand Jurors Association and others.

Now waiting for the Superior Court's response, Hood seems to be swimming in uncharted waters.

Ironically, The Civil Grand Jury Association, a statewide organization that trains and educates Civil Grand Jurors, met in San Luis Obispo on October 26 and 27. The theme of the conference, "Civil Grand Jury, the Cornerstone of Transparency and Accountability".

Perhaps Clayton Watch's efforts will be a training tool in the future.

Read the entire petition and its exhibits [here](#).

Living History Kids Day at the Clayton Museum

By Clayton Historical Society & Museum

The Clayton Historical Society & Museum is delighted to welcome a new volunteer this year, Patti Pratt. Pratt's creativity and enthusiasm have already brought new life to the museum's educational programs.

This fall, Patti launched a Junior Docent Program, giving local students the chance to explore history through hands-on learning.

The program kicked off with a Living History Day in early October, where Patti and her young team made butter and pies, played a recreated Native American game, and learned about its cultural role in tribal life.

Patti's vision is to hold monthly Kids Days at the Museum on Wednesday afternoons, from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m., when local elementary students are dismissed early. Each session will feature a themed project or activity that connects children to Clayton's heritage in engaging ways.

The first Kids Day featured Corn Husk Doll making, where participants discovered that traditional dolls often had no faces, a reminder that love does not depend on appearance.

The children also learned about the evolution of Jack-O'-Lanterns, tracing Halloween traditions back to the 1840s when immigrants from Ireland and England carved turnips into luminaries. Once in America, settlers found pumpkins easier to carve — a lesson brought to life when the museum demonstrated just how tough carving a turnip can be. The children then designed their own Jack-O'-Lanterns, and two winning designs were carved into the museum's official pumpkins.

The day also included sweet treats reminiscent of the 1800s with donut holes delivered "the old-fashioned way," by horseback. The children learned how people once traveled, met the horses, Alex and Cash, and enjoyed feeding them carrots. Riders Micki McCabe and Teri Reilly generously shared their time and stories, making the afternoon unforgettable.

Looking ahead, Patti plans to offer summer training sessions for new docents and hopes to organize quarterly Living History Days presented by the Junior Docents themselves.

Special thanks to Junior Docent Madison for her assistance, and to friends and neighbors Jennifer Carrigan, Tamara Steiner, and Marcia Mason for helping with the day's activities.

And, of course, heartfelt thanks to Alex and Cash for being such gentle and gracious guests!

If you're interested in becoming a docent at the Clayton Museum, call (925) 671-0240 or visit www.ClaytonHistory.org to learn more.

Top to bottom: 1. Kate Happy and Patti Pratt, 2. Jr. docents Anya and Madison, 3. earning how to beat a rug, on Living History day, 4. Craft days making jack-o-lanterns, 5. Feeding horses, Alex and Cash



calendar of events

COMICS FOR CASH!

Paying cash for Comic Book Collections from 1940-1990.

I also offer free appraisals at no cost.

Contact James at 925-330-2030

November 15 - Carlton Senior Living Open House. Tours, treats, and live music. RSVP 1-800-227-5866. Alllocations. Carltonseniorliving.com.

Fundraisers

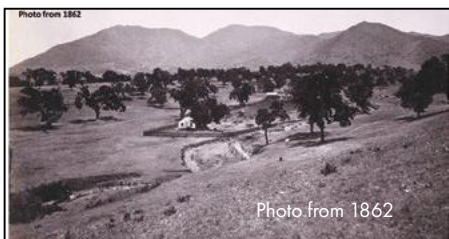
"Papa Jake" Larson monument Brick drive. Be forever a part of this bronze monument in Martinez Igancio Plaza honoring War Hero Jake Larson. Engrave your name on a brick. All brick purchases are donations and are tax deductible. papajakelarson.com.

November 27 - Concord Turkey Trot. 5K Run/Walk benefiting Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa. Starts 8:00 a.m. at Newhall Park in Concord. Must have a paid registration, except children age 2 and under and must be in a stroller. Free t-shirt and medal for all participants. Rain or Shine. Four races: Individual \$35, Family 4-Pack \$119, Kids Run \$5, Charity 5K Run/Walk \$99. No refunds. This is a Diablo Valley Credit Union annual event.

November 29 - Blood Drive, Sun Valley Shopping Center 12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Donate and get a 2025 Holiday t-shirt. 1 Sunvalley Mall, near the UFC Gym off Contra Costa Blvd.

Clayton

November 13 - Clayton Historical Society Annual Meeting. "Diablo Valley Before Joel Clayton," presented by Nancy Niemeyer. 6:30 p.m. Wine and Desserts served. Endeavor Hall, 6008 Center St.



December 6 "Holidays in the Grove" City of Clayton and CBCA have organized carolers, marching bands, tree lighting, photos with Santa and Mrs. Claus. Also a canned food drive and many more surprises. The Grove Park downtown Clayton. 5:00 p.m.

Concord

November 9 - Concord

Historical Society Speaker Series" Former Danville Police Commissioner, Ken Jonah, will speak about scams targeting the elders and ways to avoid becoming a victim. Concord Museum and Event Center, 1928 Clayton Rd. FREE

Concord Chamber First Fridays Coffee - 1st 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.



November 15 - Candy Cane Lane Craft and Gift Fair 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. Free craft for children. Vendors and handmade gifts, hot drinks, Photo with Santa. Hosted by Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 525 and its auxiliary. Concord Veterans Memorial Building, 2290 Willow Pass Rd. (near Todos Santos)

November 16 - Santa Paws 9:00 -10:30 a.m. Bring your pet to meet Santa. Grand Court inside Sun Valley Shopping Center. All animals must be on a leash or lightweight carrier and up to date with their shots.

November 22 - Coffee with the Mayor 10:00-11:00 a.m. Meet with Concord Mayor Carlyn Obringer in an informal setting while patronizing a local Concord business. Creamery and Bake Shoppe. 500 Clayton Rd.

November 22-23 - Concord Historical Society's Holiday Market. 11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., quilts, blankets, soaps lotions artwork pottery, candles, jewelry and more. Free Tours of the Museum and Galindo Home. 1928 Clayton Rd. Concord.

December 7 - Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day ceremony. 3:45 p.m. Beacon lighting at 5:00 p.m. Ceremony at Cal State University, Ygnacio Valley Rd. in Concord.

Pleasant Hill

November 7 -Pleasant Hill Night Market. Final night. Food, beer truck, vendors, corn hole and other

activities plus live music. 200 Golf Club Rd.

November 15 - Deadline for musicians to file applications. Musicians: rock, blues, latin, funk, soul or any other style of music, applications are currently available to perform in the **2026 Sunset by the Lake Summer Concert Series.** Applications can be found at www.phillca.gov/summerconcerts.

November 22 Light Up the Night 4:30- 7:30 p.m. Pleasant Hill's winter holiday festival. Crafts, activities, treats, performers, Santa and the lighting of the Christmas Tree. Downtown Crescent Drive. Pleasant Hill.

Dec 6 - Mt. Diablo Adult Education Open House and Arts & Craft Sale. 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Over 1000 original works of art and crafts by students and instructors. Toys, jewelry, ceramics, paintings, quilts, knits, and more. Folk guitar minstrels dance demo, 1 Santa Barbara Rd. Pleasant Hill.

Martinez

November 8 - Free Personal Emergency Preparedness Class. The Martinez Community Emergency response Team is hosting a free disaster preparedness talk CERT will discuss identifying your most likely disaster risks and how to prepare and survive those events. Campbell Theater. 1:00-3:00 p.m. 636 Ward St. Please register at martinez.cert@gmail.com. MartinezCERT.org

November 8 - AAUW Pleasant Hill-Martinez Program 10:00-11:00 a.m. County Registrar Kristin Connelly will discuss voter outreach, the mapping project, and the November 4th election. First Congregational church of Martinez, 229 Court Street.

November 9, December 14. Open Air Market, 9 AM. Embrace the charm and allure of unique finds at the Downtown Open Air Market, a monthly treasure trove of Vintage, Collectibles, Antiques, Arts & Crafts, and more. 718 Alhambra Ave.

November 21 - Pink Friday Outdoor Evening Holiday Market, Sip N Shop, Candy Cane Lane, on Main Street Live Entertainment, Toys for Tots, Christmas Tree Lighting. 5:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

December 13 - Santa Beer Crawl 30 plus vendors, ugly Christmas sweaters and who knows how many Santas will align Main St. Each participating business will be the next beer station. So go spread some holiday cheer! Tickets now on sale. Must be 21. downtownmartinez.org/santa-beer-crawl. 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Sundays - Farmers Market Main St. Martinez

At the Martinez

Campbell Theater

>November 7-23 - Boeing Boeing by Marc Camoletti Set in the 1960s, bachelor Bernard has a flat in Paris and is happily engaged to three stewardesses. which works fine as long as their flight schedules only bring them home every three days. / \$22 discount Thursdays \$15

>November 15 - Pre-show mixer, an evening with "Boeing Boeing" Director Michael McGarty. 6:30 p.m. It's a party, a directorial presentation and a play all rolled into one!

>November 29 - "Partners in Crime" A spontaneous Murder Mystery 2:30 p.m. \$15
>636 Ward St, Martinez,
www.campbelltheater.com

Walnut Creek

Walnut Creek Merry Mixers Dances 7:30 to 10:00 p.m.

>November 14 Take 2 John & Lynn. Plus Will's Nightclub 2-step basics and walkarounds 7:00 p.m. Natural Blend

>November 28 - 100 Pruf, preceded by 6:30 potluck

>December 4- Oaktown Strutters - Holiday Ball preceded by 6:30 potluck

Walnut Creek Elks Lodge #1188 at 1475 Creekside Dr. merrymixers.life \$20 guest/\$15 member.

November 8, Heather Farms Plant Sale 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.. 540 Marchbanks Drive. gardenshf.org

At the Leshner Center

1601 Civic Dr. Walnut Creek

>November 7-8 "Diablo Ballet's production of "The Nutcracker Suite." Single tickets are on sale now with senior and youth pricing available. New dances and costumes; perfect for all ages. For tickets, call 925-943-SHOW (7469) or visit www.diabloballet.org. \$30-\$59

November 21 -23- Fiddler on the Roof Jr. Presented by Poison Apple Productions. Youth performers.

November 11-12 Dare to Dream Jr. A Disney Musical Reviewy Presented by The Performing Arts Studio Theater Program of The Ballet School Performing Arts.

Other Areas

Crockett:

> November 29 - Small Business Holiday Sip and Stroll Hosted by Crockett Chamber of Commerce 12:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Maps will be provided of participating merchants.

Job Opening

Vice President of Strategy and Innovation
in Walnut Creek, Calif.
Salary \$230,450

Please reference this ad and send resume to:

Canadian Solar (USA) Inc.
1350 Treat Blvd. Ste 500
Walnut Creek, CA 94597
or krista.heids@csisolar.com

Job Opening

Sr. Java Developer
in San Ramon, Calif.
Telework option available

Please reference this ad and send resume to:

CAE Technology Services Inc.
2603 Camino Ramon, STE 200
San Ramon, CA 94583
or velmurugan@caetechnology.net

Lafayette:

November 21, 23
-“Over the River and Into the Woods.”

The Diablo Women's Chorale (DWC) presents a joyful and nostalgic concert. From “No Roots” to “Bridge Over Troubled Water”, DWC brings to life autumn's warmth, hues, and harmonies.

Performances are Friday, Nov. 21, at 7:00 p.m. and Sunday, Nov. 23 at 3:00 p.m. at the Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church. Tickets are available at diablowomenschorale.org.

Library Events

Clayton

Homework Help. Wednesdays from 3:30-5:30 p.m. Homework Help is available for elementary school in all subjects. Assistance for 6th through 12th grade is available for select subjects. Contact library staff for more information. Call or stop by the library to make a 30 minute appointment. Drop-ins available if no one is waiting for an appointment. Homework help will not be available on Wednesday, November 26.
6125 Clayton Road, Clayton CA 925-673-0659

Concord

November 10 Art Therapy 1:00-2:00 p.m. Use your creative expression and destress with this free art program led by the Library Wellness Team every second and fourth Monday of the month.

> **November 17 -Drop-in Tech Help** Need help with eBooks, emailing, printing, or basic web searching? Drop in to the Concord Library for help from one of our tech volunteers!

November 18 Online Forever Book Club The Book Club for Adults will meet virtually at 4:00

p.m. on the third Tuesday of every month to discuss various kids and teen titles. Conversation will be casual and friendly! This month we will be discussing “Divine Rivals” by Rebecca Ross. Contact Kristen at Kristen.crim@library.cccounty.us for the link to join.

Martinez

November 22 - James Watch Party a nd Chat - Read Contra Costa Watch the recording of Percival Everett's Read Contra Costa presentation and stay for a casual chat about the book, James. Tea and cookies will be provided. No registration required. Go to ccclib.org/read-contra-costa

Pleasant Hill

Monticello Ave, Pleasant Hill

November 13 - Computer Help- Docents are volunteers who answer simple technical questions and offer basic instruction on library computers. They help you get started, so you can take those skills and continue to explore and learn on your own Computer.

Walnut Creek

1644 N. Broadway, Walnut Creek.
Novmeber 12 Kids Movie Matines 4:00-5:45 p.m. A family-friendly movie afternoon! This month we will be watching “The Super Mario Bros.” Movie (PG, 2023). For special accommodations, please contact the Library with 72 hours notice.

Walnut Creek Ygnacio Valley

November 8 Read Contra costa Watch P arty Watch a live stream of Percival Everett discussing his book, “James,” winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the National Book Award for Fiction. Everett's novel is a powerful retelling of Mark Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. 11:00 a.m. -1:00 p.m.

Clubs

Clayton Clubs

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

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

Christmas Events

The Thanksgiving turkeys are not even being thawed for their long days of roasting in ovens across the area, and Pleasant Hill and Concord are first out of the blocks with details for their annual Christmas kick-offs.



CLAYTON

Saturday, Dec. 6, 5 p.m The City of Clayton is partnering with CBCA for the annual “**Holidays in the Grove**” event. This year's program, will feature a canned food drive, carolers, marching bands, tree lighting, arrival of Santa and Mrs. Claus, and photos with Santa, and other surprises.

PLEASANT HILL

Saturday, Nov. 22, Light Up the Night Festival. 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. Come downtown and help celebrate the start of the holiday season. Along Crescent Drive visitors can check out performers on two stages, ride the holiday train, do crafts, visit booths, and be there for the Lighting of the Christmas Tree and arrival of the big guy himself, Santa!

This year, Main Stage performers will include MiniMode Dancers, Teatr Skazka Ballet, and the Folklorico Studio A Dance Company.

MARTINEZ

Friday, Nov. 21, Pink Friday 5:00-9:00 p.m. Come out under twinkling lights for the Free outdoor market under with 40 unique vendors.

Sip n Shop, enjoy wine tasting and shopping. first 300 participants will receive a free tote bag. (must be 21 or older). Tickets \$45, \$50 day of.

See the **Candy Cane Dancers** down **Candy Cane Lane**, Ferry and Main St. to Main St. Plaza with free candy canes.

Live entertainment with the **Martinez Ukulele Group**, and photo ops with Pink Nutcracker character. enjoy singing with acappella group **Aca-word**.

Toys for Tots, Drop a toy off at MNuision Credit Union, 634 Ferry St. to make holidays a little happier for children less fortunate.

Christmas Tree Lighting as 7:30 Main st. Plaza with a surprise visit from Santa.

CONCORD

Friday, Dec. 5, 5:30 to 8 p.m.

The Annual Tree Lightings & Mayor's Sing-Along. Enjoy pictures with Santa, letters to Santa, real reindeer, crafts, and shopping. On-stage entertainment will include performances by local children groups, talented high school musicians, dancers, and the 925 Band.

The Official Concord Tree Lighting will take place at 7:30 p.m.

In the lead up to the Annual Tree Lightings, the City of Concord and the Todos Santos Business Association recently launched the Todos Santos Snowy Scenes Showdown. Downtown businesses are invited to decorate their front windows with festive holiday and winter-themed displays.

The public will vote for their favorites from Dec. 5 through Dec. 31. All participating businesses will be showcased during the tree lighting and sing-along event on December 5, 2025. To sign up or to learn more, businesses should email Lisa.Roeber@cityofconcord.org. The deadline for sign-ups is November 14, 2025.

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Jennifer Stojanovich
Realtor, Better Homes Realty

Wildfire safety now required for sellers in high-risk zones

If you're thinking about selling your home and it's mapped in an area of high fire, you might want to add one more thing to your to-do list before you put that "For Sale" sign in the yard: a visit from Con Fire.

Yes, you read that right. As more of our beautiful hillsides are mapped as high fire hazard zones, new rules are in place to help keep our neighborhoods safer from wildfires. That means before a home can change hands, it often needs a defensible space inspection to make sure it meets current fire-safe standards.

I've had the pleasure (truly!) of meeting with Fire Inspector Joe on a few of my recent listings, and he's been incredibly helpful in guiding homeowners through the process.

Here are a few key things he's been pointing out:

Trim back vegetation within five feet of the house. That cozy shrub under your kitchen window? It may need to scoot over.

Remove any dead or dry vegetation. Yes, even that little plant you swore you'd revive one day.

Maintain at least 36 inches of separation between plants. It's not personal, plants just need their space.

These requirements aren't just helpful; they are now mandatory if

you're selling a home in a high fire zone. And many insurance companies are following suit, requiring proof that a home meets wildfire preparedness standards before they issue a new policy.

The bottom line? A little yard work now can make a significant difference later for your home's sale, your neighbors and your own peace of mind.

Want to know if your property needs this inspection or how to schedule one? You can visit CAL FIRE's defensible



space inspection site here:

And of course, if you ever need a local real estate expert who now also knows a thing or two about fire-safe landscaping, I'm just a phone call or email away.

Stay safe and stay smart, Clayton.

"Infrastructure" continued from pg.5

completion of this project, we are planning to host a ribbon cutting ceremony, open to everyone in the community, sometime in November. Stay tuned for more details.

Because of these combined

efforts, we as a City have advanced our conservation efforts, improved our infrastructure needs, updated our operational equipment, provided staff with supportive technology enhancements and are mitigating rising energy rates. We are now a smarter, greener and more efficient community, allowing us to reinvest our savings into other infrastructure

needs and confirm our commitment to this community for generations to come.

Other News:

Join me on Wednesday, November 5, at 6:00 p.m. for a State of the City Town Hall at Hoyer Hall. I was joined by our City Manager, Kris Lofthus, and the entire leadership team at City

Hall to talk about our progress this year and the City's goals for the future. We hope you can join us, but if not, the presentation will be live-streamed and recorded and we will post it on the City's website for future reference.

WORD SEARCH - JIGSAW PUZZLES

A	I	C	L	T	D	H	L	G	C	R	S	D	J	E	I	N	G
F	Y	V	S	W	O	P	W	M	O	T	F	U	V	M	Y	J	W
G	O	U	N	W	A	B	M	T	W	S	M	M	C	F	F	S	Y
V	M	Q	T	N	S	I	A	T	C	R	I	O	A	O	R	I	N
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B	H	R	G	N	G	R	S	S	R	E	N	R	O	C	J	Z	N
B	S	N	U	N	U	O	R	O	J	Q	B	F	O	O	L	Z	F
O	H	T	B	T	A	S	Y	W	K	S	O	L	O	M	R	L	O
H	K	H	S	L	C	R	C	E	H	E	R	J	S	P	S	E	A
B	F	C	M	E	G	I	R	A	A	E	K	O	C	L	C	J	T
N	I	D	V	B	C	M	P	A	T	I	E	N	C	E	U	H	D
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ARRANGE	EDGES	MATCH	PUZZLE
BORDER	FIND	MISSING	ROTATE
COMPLETE	FOCUS	PATIENCE	SHAPE
CONNECT	HOBBY	PIECES	SNAP
CORNERS	INTERLOCK	PICTURE	SORT

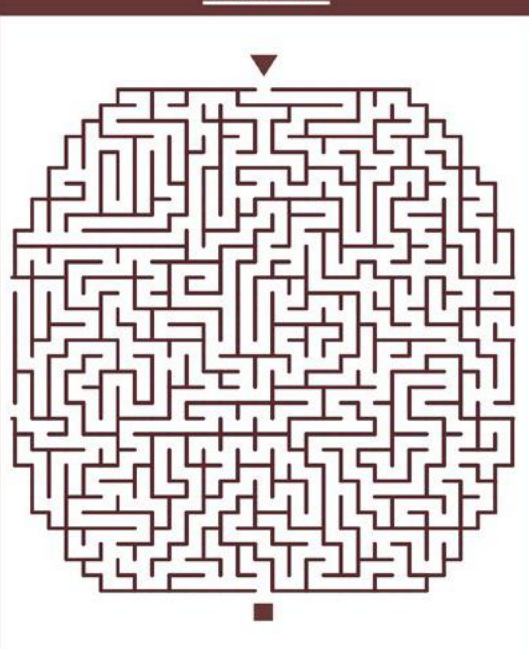
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	7		5	3		6		2
5				4		9		8
6		2		7	8	5		

WORD SCRAMBLE
Unscramble these five **FOOD** words:

MAREN	_____
SKATE	_____
SCONAH	_____
BELGAS	_____
PACKEANS	_____

MAZE



By Marc Rokoff ©2025
www.RokoPuzzles.com
PUZZLE ANSWERS ON PAGE 23



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

Eagles Soar This Fall with Pride, Talent, and Community Spirit

It's been a wonderful fall season at Clayton Valley Charter High School, one filled with community connection, creativity and unmistakable Eagle pride. Each week, I'm reminded of how our students' achievements reflect the very best of CVCHS: academic excellence, artistic expression and a deep sense of belonging.

We kicked off the month celebrating community spirit at the CBCA Clayton Oktoberfest, where our Performing Arts students brought their energy and enthusiasm to the heart of downtown. Through live music, mask-making and face painting, they not only entertained the community but also strengthened the bond between our school and the city we proudly call home. Their joyful participation captured the spirit of CVCHS, talented and community-minded students giving back while doing what they love.

On campus, we gathered under the lights for one of the most memorable traditions of the year, Senior Night. The stands were packed; the crowd electric and our Eagles delivered another commanding victory on the field. But beyond the score, the night was about honoring our Seniors and their dedication, leadership and years of commitment to our school. With patriotic tributes woven throughout the evening, it was a celebration of pride in both our students and our nation.

Meanwhile, our Marching Band and Color Guard have been raising the bar with every performance. Their



Senior Night was a celebration of pride in CVCHS students, school, and nation.

precision, artistry, and discipline have already earned them first-place finishes at both the Feste Del Mar and Liberty Band Reviews, along with top honors in Field Conductor, Percussion, and Color Guard categories. Enduring countless hours of practice and teamwork, their performances remind us that excellence is built one note, one step and one shared goal at a time.

Beyond the field and stage, our students continue to excel in innovation and technical education. The Engineering Academy, Manufacturing, and Robotics programs recently participated in Manufacturing Day 2025 hosted by Bishop Wisecarver in Pittsburg. This hands-on event allowed students to connect classroom

learning with real-world applications in CNC (Computer Numerical Control) machining, automation and robotics. It was an inspiring opportunity to explore STEM careers at a leading woman-owned company, and our students rose to the occasion by problem-solving, competing in creative challenges, and gaining new insight into industries shaping the future.

Our campus is buzzing with anticipation for the Fall Drama Production of Eurydice, opening November 7-9. This poetic reimagining of the Greek classic promises a moving and visually stunning performance from our talented student cast. Tickets are now available at claytonvalleyarts.org and I encourage everyone in our

community to come out and support the arts.

One thing remains constant, the heart of Clayton Valley Charter beats strong. Whether it's through academics, athletics, or the arts, our students continue to demonstrate excellence, creativity, and character.

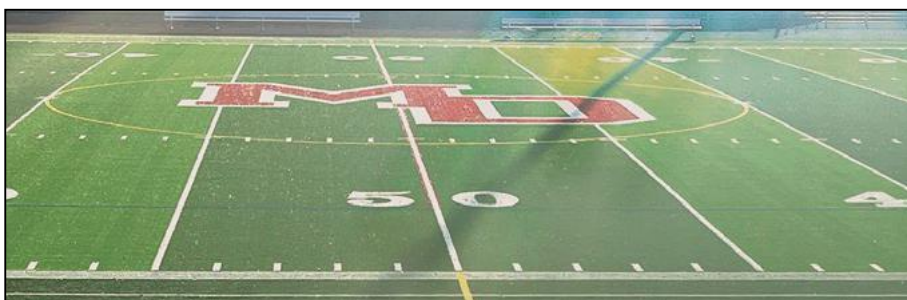
I invite everyone in our community to join us at one of our athletic competitions, theatrical performances, or community events and witness firsthand the talent, pride, and Eagle spirit that make CVCHS so special.

This fall, we've seen again that when Eagles soar together, there's no limit to how high they can fly. Go Eagles!



CVCHS Performing Arts students showcased their spirit downtown during the CBCA Clayton Oktoberfest.

Mt. Diablo High School football field restored with the aid of \$250,000 donation from Las Vegas Raiders



The Mt. Diablo High School football team will play its next home game on a fully restored home field that has been returned to its previous state-of-the-art condition less than two months after a destructive fire that was started by illegal fireworks melted the artificial turf, forcing the Red Devils to play their first three home games off site.

The team and Mt. Diablo Unified School District are deeply grateful to the Las Vegas Raiders, who pledged a donation of \$250,000 to assist with the cost of restoring the field, after learning about the fire and needed repairs.

"As a lifelong Raiders fan and past season ticket holder, I couldn't be more pleased with their generous contribution," said Mt. Diablo Unified School District Superintendent Dr. Adam Clark. "The Mt. Diablo High School student body, alumni and community deserve a learning environment that they

can be proud of. With the help of Mark Davis, owner of the Raiders, we have restored the field to its original state!"

Although the turf was repaired last month, the Mt. Diablo High School logo was installed more recently this month, because it had to be special ordered. Since that installation, the team has played several "away" games.

The team is excited to play on its completely restored home field for its "Homecoming" game at 7 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 31, as it hosts cross-town Mt. Diablo Unified School district competitors, the Ygnacio Valley High School Wolves.

The Raiders' donation will cover the cost of the insurance deductible, which the District would have had to pay out of its own funds toward the total repair costs of nearly \$350,000.

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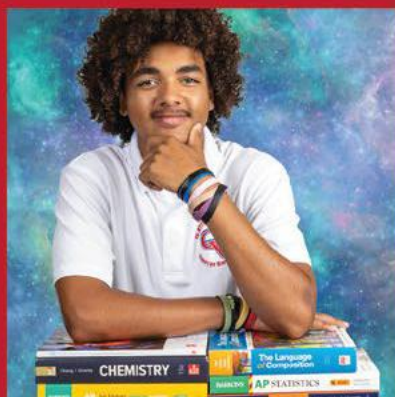
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SCHOOL**



You will love your life in Martinez

Nestled along the Carquinez Strait, Martinez offers a rare blend of small-town charm, natural beauty, and Bay Area convenience. Known for its tree-lined streets, historic downtown, and welcoming community, Martinez is one of the region's most desirable places to live.

Residents enjoy a relaxed pace of life surrounded by parks, hiking, biking, kayaking, a beautiful waterfront park and Marina with its new fishing pier, and waterfront trails with even more exciting waterfront development goals for the future.

Martinez claims to fame include being the distinguished home of baseball great, Joe DiMaggio, and for being the birthplace of the martini, which it celebrates with a martini gala every year.

Martinez is loaded with unique lifestyle activities you won't find elsewhere. You can enjoy an historic themed wine-tasting room on Main St. or step back in time at the John Muir House and Museum.

Did you know Martinez has the largest bocce club in the country with more than 2400 members who compete six nights a week on 15 bocce courts at Waterfront Park.

Baseball fans can attend a Martinez Sturgeon minor league game.

The city hosts many events, including a spectacular Sunday morning farmers' market, Sip and Strolls, Zombie beer crawl, Santa beer crawl, Halloween Spooktacular Trunk-or-Treat, summer

outdoor movies, all in a downtown that features extraordinary dining, antique shops, art gallery, breweries and that's just a partial list.

Residents have easy access to major job centers in Walnut Creek, Concord and beyond, while the Amtrak station serves as an accessible rail connection to the rest of state or country — perfect for traveling and receiving visitors.

Martinez real estate features a mix of classic Craftsman homes, mid-century properties, and newer developments, providing options for first-time buyers, growing families, and retirees alike. There is something for everyone in Martinez from condominiums to farmland, homes to income property, horse properties, lots of land, and more.

As to the real estate market, Martinez is holding strong with 43 homes for sale in September 2025, with closes up 72.2% from last year. Perhaps the drop in interest rates spurred the pending sales, as they are up 33.3% from last year, meaning October home sales will also be strong.

What truly sets the city apart is its deep local pride. Many who leave for college or career opportunities eventually return, drawn back by the welcoming spirit and quality of life that define Martinez. Homeowners have purchased affordable homes here and have stayed.

Excellent schools, walkable neighborhoods, and a vibrant local culture make Martinez a standout among Bay Area communities.

MONTHLY MARKET REPORT SEPTEMBER/ 2025			
CLAYTON		CONCORD	
Existing SFR Median Price \$1.07M % Change from Last Year +17.8%	MARKET COMPETITION Median Days on Market 26 Sales-to-List Price % 98.5% % of Active Listings Who Reduced Prices 18.8%	Existing SFR Median Price \$835K % Change from Last Year -3.0%	MARKET COMPETITION Median Days on Market 15 Sales-to-List Price % 100.8% % of Active Listings Who Reduced Prices 39.8%
MARTINEZ		WALNUT CREEK	
Existing SFR Median Price \$875K % Change from Last Year +12.3%	MARKET COMPETITION Median Days on Market 26 Sales-to-List Price % 99.8% % of Active Listings Who Reduced Prices 46.2%	Existing SFR Median Price \$1.48M % Change from Last Year -2.6%	MARKET COMPETITION Median Days on Market 12 Sales-to-List Price % 100.0% % of Active Listings Who Reduced Prices 34.1%
SOURCE: Car.org			
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Food and Wine Gift Giving

Most holidays I tend to suggest the best wines to give as gifts based on their ability to pair with the most foods. This year I am providing the recipe for a delicious homemade food that is great for gift giving and the wine to pair with it.

A classic breadstick made from scratch is something very special. Parmesan Grissini is great with any wine: sparkling, rosé, red or white. This recipe includes crushed fennel seeds, which add the subtle flavor of black licorice, crushed red pepper to give a kick of spice and, of course, Parmesan cheese.

The perfect pairing partner is a buttery Chardonnay aged in oak barrels. Wines that have undergone malolactic fermentation tend to be buttery and smooth. The oak will complement the low notes of the licorice and the Parmesan will echo the buttery/dairy flavor provided by the lactic acid from the secondary fermentation.

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

Parmesan Grissini

INGREDIENTS

2/3 cup(s) bread flour
3 teaspoon(s) active dry yeast
1 teaspoon(s) sea salt
1 teaspoon(s) crushed fennel seeds
1/4 teaspoon(s) crushed red pepper
3 cup(s) olive oil
1 cup(s) warmed milk
1/4 cup (1 ounce) finely grated Parmesan



DIRECTIONS

In a bowl, combine bread flour, dry yeast, sea salt, fennel seeds, and red pepper; make a well in the middle.

Pour olive oil and warmed milk in well. Stir until dough comes together. Add Parmesan and mix until incorporated.

Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead until smooth, about 5 minutes. Shape dough into a ball and return to bowl. Cover with plastic wrap; set in a warm, draft-free place; and let rise until doubled in size, about 1 hour.



Lightly flour work surface again, then turn dough out and knead lightly for 1 minute. Using a rolling pin, roll dough into a 12- by 15-inch rectangle about 1/4 inch thick. Using a sharp knife, cut dough into strips just under 1/2 inch wide. Lightly flour hands, then quickly roll strips until they're slightly rounded.

Transfer to a parchment-lined baking sheet, leaving space between each strip. Set aside to rise again, 15 to 20 minutes. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Bake in batches on middle shelf until golden brown, 15 to 20 minutes, flipping breadsticks halfway through. Let cool completely. Yield 25-30 Grissini.

Giving Thanks At Thanksgiving



Giving Thanks at Thanksgiving (GTAT) will be providing a free meal on November 27, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at First Lutheran Church, 4000 Concord Blvd, Concord.

This annual family-friendly event will feature a full traditional meal with fresh fruit and warm gifts for attendees to take home.

If you would like to get involved, donations and volunteers are welcome.

GTAT will accept donations of gently used or new gloves, knit hats, disposable raincoats/ponchos, new socks, and/or grocery store gift cards, click here. Monetary donations are also accepted.

This event is sponsored by local churches, and all donations to GTAT/First Lutheran Church organization are tax-deductible.

For 19 years, GTAT, a volunteer committee and ministry of First Lutheran Church, has served up to 300 free meals each Thanksgiving Day to a warm, welcoming, and safe location; encouraging community togetherness and reducing food insufficiency. For more information, fleconcord.org



The Naked Gardener
David George, UC-Certified Master Gardener
nakedgardener@diablogazette.com

Culinary herbs are loaded with health benefits

Often-overlooked healthy home-garden additions to your meals are herbs. Herbs are derived exclusively from leaves and are usually fragrant when crushed. They can be eaten fresh, cooked or dried to add flavor to dishes. You can also make teas, syrups, and infused vinegar with them.

But the primary use of herbs throughout history has been as homeopathic medications to fight or avoid illness. Culinary herbs are rich in healthy antioxidants, phytochemicals, vitamins, and anti-inflammatories that help protect against cancer, heart disease, stroke, and other nasty illnesses.

A USDA study found that one tablespoon of fresh oregano has the same antioxidant activity as one medium-sized apple. Other herbs help reduce blood clots, act as diuretics, and lower blood pressure.

Growing herbs is easy. They need a full sunshine spot in your garden or patio and prefer well-drained but consistently moist (not soggy) soil. Overwatering causes herbs to bolt (grow quickly then flower) or form mildew.

They can thrive in low-nitrogen soil or in a pot filled with half garden soil (for minerals) and half organic potting soil. Pinch or snip stems to encourage new growth and to keep the plant compact.

Pests large and small like to nibble occasionally, so protect their trunks and roots and the plants will regenerate new leaves. Most herbs are perennials; they will thrive for many years.

Herbs are power-packed sources of health-promoting compounds. For example, let's look at the four famous herbs referenced in the Simon and Garfunkel 1960's hit, "Scarborough Fair."

Parsley, *Petroselinum crispum* is a traditional garnish rich in vitamins A, C, and K. Its fiber supports digestion, and compounds promote kidney health and strengthen bones. It's high in calcium, magnesium, and phosphorus for bone health, plus the antioxidants apigenin, myricetin and lutein help avoid cancer. Parsley has diuretic properties that lower blood pressure and help excrete excess salt and water.

Sage, or *Salvia officinalis* (culinary) is full of cancer resisting antioxidants and anti-inflammatory compounds. But its best-known benefit is to support brain health and cognition. Clinical trials of sage extracts show improved memory in both healthy adult and Alzheimer's subjects.

Rosemary is also in the sage family, *Salvia rosmarinus*. A scientific study of its aroma resulted in improved memory recall and alertness of office workers in rosemary-infused cubicles versus those with no aroma infusion. Rosemary contains carnosic acid, which protects brain cells from free radical damage associated with Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases.

Thyme is from the mint family, *Thymus vulgaris*, or common thyme, is also rich in antioxidants and phytochemicals, especially when

consumed fresh. Its health benefits are primarily from the active compounds, thymol and carvacrol. These have been shown to support respiratory health, fight bacterial infections by boosting the immune system, and potentially reducing inflammation associated with heart disease and diabetes. It has a long history of treating coughs and bronchitis, and is used as an all-natural expectorant and blood vessel dilator.

Other nutrient-packed herbs include Thai sweet basil (calcium and essential vitamins), chives (prebiotics, antioxidants, allicin to lower blood pressure, and vitamin K for strong bones), cilantro/coriander (antioxidants, phytochemicals and vitamins), oregano or marjoram (both high in antioxidants and anti-inflammatories).

To maximize their freshness benefits, add herbs to prepared meals near the end cooking or as fresh-diced garnish. In addition to their health benefits, herbs add flavor to meals without calories. Try spaghetti Bolognese topped with fresh basil leaves or a chicken dish with fresh sage leaves, my favorites.

Seasonal Notes: In November, focus on the garden once or twice a week. Plant spring bulbs or CA natives now. Fruit and landscape trees can be trimmed and diseased/dead wood removed. Monitor winter veggie gardens for pests and water if the weather is dry. And harvest gourds for your Thanksgiving table; they make great conversation starters.



Rosemary aromas and leaves help improve memory. Photo courtesy David George



Parsley is packed with vitamins and antioxidants. Photo courtesy David George



Above: Common thyme supports respiratory and immune systems, Photo courtesy UCANR. Right: Culinary sage is packed with cancer-resisting antioxidants. Courtesy Texas A&M.



Fallen trees lead to joint Tree of Lights ceremony in Concord

Search for new trees in PH, Martinez now underway
by David Scholz



When not one but two Hospice East Bay remembrance trees recently fell within days of each in late October due to natural causes, (in Pleasant Hill and Martinez), officials of the nonprofit had no choice but to go to a plan B, a joint Tree of Lights Ceremony.

The communal event will now take place at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 2, at Concord's Hospice of the East Bay Tree of Lights site on the grounds of John Muir Hospital in the parking lot at East Street and Almond Avenue. Hospice East Bay has been celebrating the Tree of Lights at this same location for at least 15 years.

"We are saddened to announce that two beloved oak trees which have stood at the heart of our Pleasant Hill and Martinez Tree of Lights ceremonies for generations fell due to natural causes over the past week. Fortunately, no one was hurt and only minimal property damage occurred," said Hospice East Bay officials in a statement.

For thirty-nine years, the Tree of Lights ceremonies have offered a graceful way to offer solace to bereaved families while also helping Hospice East Bay sustain a thriving bereavement program to support them throughout the year. The organization is now working closely with city staffs of Martinez and Pleasant Hill to identify new trees for these communities.

"Though the setting will change, the spirit of the Tree of Lights remains the same," said Mats Wallin, Chief

Development Officer for Hospice East Bay. "As we come together under our new tree, we're not starting over—we're continuing a tradition of light, love, and remembrance that will keep growing for generations to come."

Going forward, establishing new trees for future Tree of Lights ceremonies will require thoughtful investment, from creating a safe power connection to installing the lights, with total costs estimated between \$15,000 and \$20,000.

The community is invited to be part of this continuing tradition and help to reestablish and rededicate the new Pleasant Hill Tree of Lights for generations to come. For more information, visit www.HospiceEastBay.org/newtree

Pleasant Hill's Oak tree unexpectedly came down on Oct. 21, blocking Gregory Lane. It fell at around 7:00 a.m. along Gregory Lane just west of Cleaveland Road at the entrance to Pleasant Hill Park and Aquatic Center and next to the city's Recreation & Park District offices.

The tree was last inspected by a certified arborist about two years ago within the standard inspection cycle for mature trees, according to the city. At that time, the tree was showing signs of aging and was under annual supervision by park maintenance staff.

The sudden falling of Martinez's Tree of Lights, along Morello Avenue, followed less than a week later on Oct. 26.

New Arts and Recreation Director Selected for Walnut Creek

The City Manager of Walnut Creek has chosen Kris Farro to serve as the new Arts and Recreation Director from the nationwide search, and more than 125 applicants. She will begin on December 15.

Kris Farro brings more than 25 years of leadership experience in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, with a background in recreation and public art. Most recently, she served as Director of Community Services for the City of Stockton, where she oversaw the Stockton–San Joaquin County Public Library system, the City's Recreation Division, and the Public Art program.

"Her experience and enthusiasm will serve our community and organization well. Kris is a strong collaborator and leader, and she will be a great addition to our team," said City Manager Dan Buckshi.

Farro holds a Master of Public Administration (MPA) and a



Bachelor of Science in Recreation Administration.

Carolyn Jackson served as interim director; she is also the General Manager for the Leshner Center for the Arts.

The art of healing and inspiration, artist Mersa Shirkhodai

by Julia O'Reilly



Walnut Creek artist and teacher Mersa Shirkhodai recently hosted a beautiful student art exhibition in Emeryville sponsored by Goli Ice Cream and Design by Ari. The October 18 event celebrated creativity, community, and the joy of artistic growth.

In her interview, Mersa shared that her love for art began at an early age. While many parents encouraged their children toward traditional careers, hers recognized that they had "an artist in the family."

She began teaching art young, long before it became her profession. Later, she earned a bachelor's degree in photography and graphic design, refining her eye for color, composition and storytelling.

Life brought challenges when she

had to rebuild her world as a single mother in a new country. Through those experiences, she said, "Art helped me rebuild myself. It became my strength and my way to heal."

With more than two decades of teaching experience, Mersa continues to inspire students to discover their confidence and creativity. Beyond her classes, she performs live paintings at weddings and events, transforming fleeting moments into lasting art.

For Mersa, art is not only about beauty, but also about transformation, healing and joy.

Follow her on Instagram, @artbymersa or visit artbymersa.com.

Diablo Valley Women's Chorale to perform "Over the River and Into the Woods"

The Diablo Women's Chorale (DWC) will present its fall concert, "Over the River and Into the Woods" on November 21 and 23 at Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church. The program features a diverse selection of music that explores themes of nature, devotion and love, performed with live band accompaniment.

Blending contemporary hits like "No Roots" to jazz standards such as "Cry Me a River," alongside enduring classics like "Bridge Over Troubled Water," the repertoire is designed to reflect the emotional and seasonal transitions of autumn.

Leading the ensemble are Director Erin

Fishler, who draws on her background in performance to shape the Chorale's expressive sounds, and Rebecca Hass, a composer and recording artist whose musicality brings depth and nuance to the piano accompaniment.

Founded in 1942, the Diablo Women's Chorale has long been a fixture in the East Bay's cultural landscape. The group continues to bring together women of all ages who share a passion for singing and spreading joy through music.

Performances are scheduled for Friday, November 21, at 7:00 p.m. and Sunday, November 23, at 3:00 p.m. at 49 Knox Drive, Lafayette, diablowomenschorale.org



FINE ART GALLERY

Rick Haley is a Bay Area based landscape and nature photographer with over four decades of experience. Known for his mastery of the Zone System, Rick approaches photography as an expressive art form capturing timeless moments that reveal the quiet beauty of the natural world.

Appointments are available.
Contact 925-768-5662

1026 Oak Street, Suite 102, Clayton
website: jorfineartgallery.com
email: joreillyfineartgallery@gmail.com

Moments in Time



Featuring
Rick Haley
Solo Photography Exhibit
Nov 8, 2025 – Feb 2, 2026

OPENING RECEPTION:
SATURDAY, NOV 8, 4–6 PM

PRIVATE RECEPTION:
SATURDAY, JAN 17, 2026 5–7 PM



The Arts Page

aRt Cottage to feature Conrad jewelry and Quinlavin abstract paintings

aRt Cottage will be featuring the work of Jill Conrad and Tom Quinlavin November through December 20.

Jill Conrad has always been a creator inspired by the natural world. In 2017, she recommitted to her passion for creating jewelry under the name Velvet Planet Jewelry.

"My pieces are made primarily in silver and bronze and feature natural stones and semi-precious and lab-created gems formed via lost wax casting, precious metal clay or fabrication techniques. The result is a colorful, whimsical and nature-based line of decorative handiwork," states Jill.

Abstract painter Tom Quinlavin, Jill's husband, continues to make waves in the California art scene, building on a rich artistic legacy that began in New York's legendary East Village Art Scene of the 1980s

Quinlavin received his BFA with an emphasis in painting in 1982 from Long Island University, C.W. Post, and by 1983 had moved to the East Village, immersing himself in one of the most vibrant and experimental art communities of the era.

For nearly a decade, he developed his voice as an abstract painter, embracing bold color, expressive form, and fearless experimentation.

In 1994, Quinlavin relocated to California, where he has remained an active and influential figure in the Bay Area arts community.

Quinlavin's work is deeply rooted in the emotional and visual impact of abstraction. Guided by the ethos of legendary painter Hans Hofmann, "Never be stingy with color, Quinlavin's work continues to push the boundaries



of color, shape, and technique.

In recognition of his contributions to contemporary art, Quinlavin is included in the Smithsonian Archives of American Art (AAA) as part of the Ted Stamm slides of works of art and exhibitions, circa 1968–1986, 2018 collection, a significant acknowledgment of his place in American art history.

The reception for the artists is Saturday, November 8, from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. This event is open to the public. Dates of this exhibit are November 1 - December 20.

aRt Cottage will be closed November 26 - December 3.



Small Works Exhibition and Creative Ornaments

Main Street Arts Gallery is welcoming the holiday season with a new exhibition featuring 12" x 12" works of art by their twelve member artists in a wide range of mediums, including paint, glass, metal, and ceramics.

These distinctive, small-format pieces make ideal gifts or additions to any art collection and will be on display throughout December.

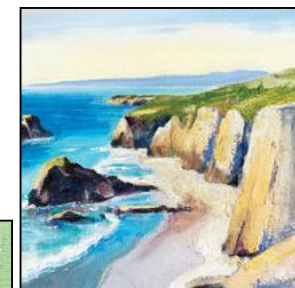
In addition, the gallery holiday tree will be adorned with handmade original artistic mini paintings and ornaments.

Each month, Main Street Arts Gallery hosts a free prize drawing for an original artwork by one of its members. November's giveaway features "Little Victories", an original oil painting by Denise Hillman. Visitors are encouraged to stop by and enter for a chance to win.

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



"Swallowtail on a Flower" by Samantha McNally 12x12



"North of Fort Briggs" by John Tullis 12x12

Left: "Dancing Still Life" by Pam McCauley 12x12
Right: "Little Victories" by Denise Hillman, November's drawing prize

Blackhawk Gallery - ADAS General Meeting, with Art Demo, Tom Anderson

The ADAS General Meeting with Art Demo is scheduled to take place on November 11, at 7:30 p.m. at 3416 Blackhawk Plaza Circle in Danville.

Tom Anderson, has a PhD in Physiology, is a serial entrepreneur in the life sciences, teaches biology at junior colleges in California, loves telling stories and is a major fan of the painters of the Dutch Golden Age.

He takes great joy in finding the hints that artists give us to help us understand the stories they are telling us. Tom will share things from his forthcoming book, "Vermeer Stories". He will tell us how he, as a scientist, became so transfixed on Vermeer. He will explain the stories that Vermeer is telling us, and how looking at Vermeer paintings can help us find our place in our world.



"View of Delft" by Johannes Vermeer

Jor Gallery presents "Winter's Glow"

A new exhibit and opening reception is planned at Jor Gallery in Clayton.

Enjoy an evening of art and inspiration.

Celebrate the opening of the new exhibit, "Winter's Glow", at the opening reception on Saturday, November 8, from 4:00–6:00 p.m.

Meet the artists, explore fresh creative works, and enjoy a beautiful fall evening in downtown Clayton.

"Winter's Glow" exhibit will run through February 2, 2026.

JOR Fine Art Gallery
1026 Oak Street, Suite 102,
Clayton.

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NOV 8th - FEB. 2, 2026

RECEPTION: NOVEMBER 8th
FROM 4-6 PM

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CAA exhibits at Centre Concord and Visit Concord

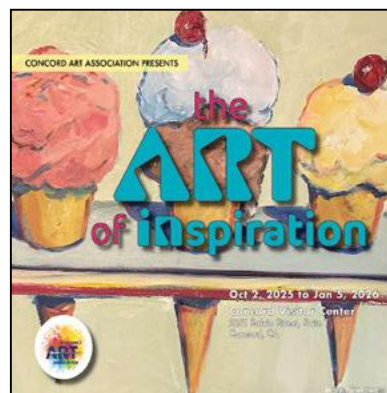
At Gallery CAA (Concord Art Association) inside Centre Concord, the exhibition "Fall Into Winter" is on view through January 16. This show highlights a variety of 2-D work from local artists. The gallery, located at 5298 Clayton Rd., Concord, is open Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

CAA also hosts an art gallery inside Concord Visitor Center at 2151 Salvio St., Suite T.

The current exhibition, "The Art of Inspiration," explores a wide range of interpretations on the theme of inspiration by local artists and continues through January 5.

A public reception will be held on Friday, November 7, from 4:00 –6:00 p.m., where guests can meet the artists and enjoy refreshments. The Visitor Center is open Monday–Friday, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

On November 29, CAA will celebrate Small Business Saturday with a special pop-up event featuring local vendors with handmade arts and crafts. The event runs from 11:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. in Salvio Pacheco Square, near the Concord Visitor Center.





Carlyn Obringer
Concord Mayor
cityofconcord.org

It is important to support those who support our community

As Mayor of Concord, and the Councilmember who represents District 2 and Downtown Concord, I have been working since February, in partnership with the Todos Santos Business Association (TSBA), to secure private sector support to keep the successful Downtown Security Guard and Day Porter Program going as a public-private partnership.

The Downtown Program, launched in 2023 with federal COVID relief funds and a \$50,000 contribution from Brenden Theatres, has reduced negative incidents downtown from approximately 100 per month at the program's start to just 15. More than 1,200 large trash bags of debris have been removed, and the day porter scrubbed countless public touch and contact points.

When I attend the National League of Cities Conference or the U.S. Conference of Mayors, I often hear corporations promote their contributions to local communities, so I was surprised when it took more than four months and multiple calls to get a response from businesses around Todos Santos Plaza, especially from those that are part of large corporations.

None of the companies that I spoke with had any interest in participating in a public-private partnership for the Downtown Program despite it benefiting both customers and the businesses themselves.

For example, the Downtown P program power washed the pigeon droppings in front of the Chase Todos Santos branch multiple times, yet Chase voiced no interest in supporting

the program, even though at the October 14th City Council meeting, Chase wanted to provide the City of Concord's depository banking services. I voted no.

Starbucks showed no interest in supporting the Downtown Program even though the Todos Santos store generates the most calls for security guard service.

I share these experiences in the hope that the people of Concord will keep this in mind when conducting business or shopping and choosing between large corporations or small local businesses. Community support is an inherent value when shopping locally.

This is why I have always held my "Coffee with the Mayor" events at locally owned, independent coffee shops that do support our Concord Community, like Alpine Pastry, Gratitude Coffee Bar, the Creamery Shoppe, and Touch of Europe.

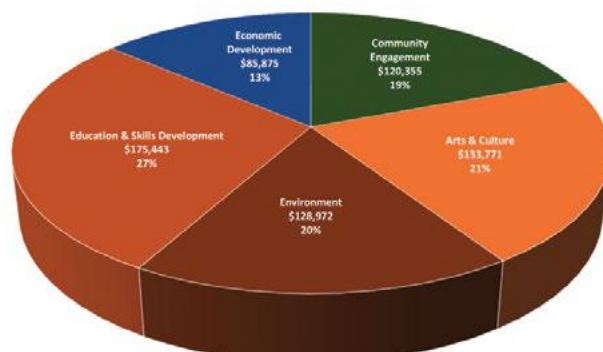
I recently celebrated International Credit Union Day where I learned more about the credit union mission of banking with a community mindset. I am thrilled that Concord is home to three credit unions, Diablo Valley Federal Credit Union, Pacific Service Credit Union, of which I am a member, and Patelco Credit Union.

Finally, I want to thank Brenden Theatres for its continued generosity, and Barcelon Properties for its new contributions to the Downtown Program. Their partnership exemplifies the spirit of civic collaboration that keeps Concord vibrant, welcoming, and strong.

Martinez Community Foundation partners with City of Martinez and Republic Services to support local non-profit organizations

The Martinez Community Foundation was established in 1993 with an endowment as part of an industrial accident settlement. The endowment provided that monetary awards be given to eligible Martinez non-profits engaged in the Foundation's five designated areas: education, arts and culture, community engagement, environment and economic opportunity.

This year we are proud to announce our partnership with the city of Martinez and Republic Services as we continue to support the work of our local non-profits. Through the generous donations of our three organizations over \$35,000 has been provided to the following recipient organizations: Loaves & Fishes of Contra Costa, John Muir Association, St Vincent de Paul & St Catherine of Siena, Worth a Dam, Grance Episcopal Church, Meals on Wheels of Contra Costa, Bay Area



Bike Project, Diablo regional Concert Band, Martinez Education Foundation, RES Success, Joe DiMaggio Hometown Hero Project, Safer and Sober Grad Night, Christmas for Everyone, Friends of Alhambra Creek, and Martinez Art Association.

It is thanks to the continuing generous support from our community that the Martinez Community Foundation is able to make these donations to so many worthy groups.



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No Change in Service Thanksgiving Week!

Residential:

Pickup services will continue as scheduled. Please set out your carts by 5 AM on your regular pickup day.

Businesses:

If your establishment will be closed on Thanksgiving Day and you need to reschedule service, please contact us in advance.

Need to do a self-haul run?

Our Transfer Station at 1300 Loveridge Road will remain open on Thanksgiving Day from **5 am - 6 pm for commercial customers** and **7 am - 6 pm for the general public**.

Our Administration Offices and Customer Lobbies will be closed Thursday, November 27, for Thanksgiving Day.

For details and service updates, visit www.mdrr.com



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Sapiens

Who am I? It is the implicit question behind every child's desire to hear the story of their birth.

In "Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind" (Harper Perennial, 2025 (Tenth Anniversary edition), 464 pages, \$22.39) by Yuval Noah Harari, the author delves into the question of "Who are we as humans?" More specifically: "Who are Homo sapiens and where did we come from?"

In his sweeping analysis, Harari delves into all aspects of what it means to be human from our domination over five other hominid species. He explores how our diet shaped us. He investigates how politics and the economy has defined our past and possibly predicts our future.

Harari opens the book with an evaluation of the evolution of our species. Nearly seventy thousand years ago, there were at least six distinct types of humans. Today, there is only one, Homo sapiens.

Harari explains we did not conquer all the other human species to evolve into the sapiens version, rather we co-evolved and outcompeted the others.

Harari tackles questions like: Why didn't the Neanderthals conquer us when we are smaller? Was there ever interbreeding?

Among other things regarding our development, he purports theories as to why we are a social species, how our large brains and upright stature created unique challenges and advantages for us.

From here, Harari describes how the Cognitive Revolution changed sapiens because we could live in a dual reality of our physical world and the imagined reality of gods, nations, and workplaces.

The research behind this novel is impressive. Harari identifies the first use of money back in 3000 BC. He covers the Agricultural Revolution

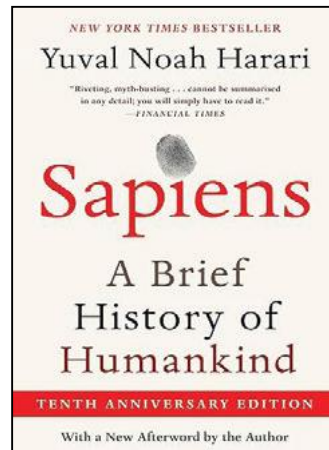
and the transition from the sapiens' wandering forager lifestyle to a sedentary situation where humans spent time growing crops. Then along comes the Industrial Revolution and all the changes and alterations that go with it. As the book progresses, he also rockets into what the future may hold.

"Sapiens" is a weighty read and well worth the time investment. It has been endorsed by Bill Gates, Natalie Portman, and former President Barack Obama.

Professor Yuval Noah is a historian and philosopher. In addition to "Sapiens", he has penned other books including "Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow", "21 Lessons for the 21st Century," and "Nexus: A Brief History of Information Networks from the Stone Age to AI."

His books have been translated into 65 languages, with 45 million copies sold,

Harari has a PhD in History from the University of Oxford and is a Distinguished Research Fellow at the University of Cambridge's Centre for the Study of Existential Risk. Follow him at www.ynharari.com.



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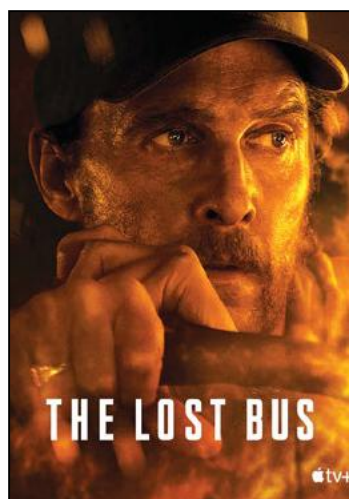
The Lost Bus

Rated R Now Streaming AppleTV+

Based on actual events, "The Lost Bus" recounts a harrowing story during the 2018 Camp Fire in Paradise, California.

Kevin McKay (Matthew McConaughey) is a school bus driver who is barely hanging on to his job and his personal life. He gives the bare minimum, and on the day of the largest fire in California's history, he struggles with a teenager at home with a fever and a maintenance check at work that he has put off for too long. When dispatch calls needing a bus to transport children who are being evacuated to a nearby school, McKay waits in anticipation for another driver to respond. Identified as the closest driver in the area, McKay realizes the short trip could earn him much-needed brownie points at work.

The task is simple. Twenty-two children need to be transported from their school, which has received evacuation orders, to a safe school ten minutes away. Their teacher, Mary Ludwig (America Ferrera), is eager to load her students onto the bus and hurry home to her family but ends up riding along when McKay asks for her help.



The film toggles between the bus journey and the emergency response teams. We watch as the fire quickly grows out of control, leaving firefighters and first responders to update their priorities on a minute-by-minute basis. For the busload of children, this means the drop-off they are being sent to is no longer safe, and with radio signals down, this news does not reach McKay.

This film becomes a nail-biting journey as the fire blazes throughout the county. The cinematography is top-notch, as the re-enacted inferno feels as insurmountable as it actually was. The driving sequences are just as stressful when you watch the bus career through the narrow rocky roads, with McKay plowing blindly through flames and smoke.

For Northern California residents, the movie has a personal connection and the filmmakers do not shy away from Pacific Gas and Electric's responsibility in this tragedy.

Watching these ordinary citizens become heroes will inspire viewers to recognize that courage resides in everyone, and you never know if tomorrow may be our day to meet a challenge in front of us.



JOURNEY-MAN'S JOURNAL

by Kevin Parker , Photos by Kevin Parker

Yosemite

Happy Isles to top of Nevada Fall

Hiking the Yosemite Valley is as close to touching a higher power as one can experience. Among the most iconic routes in the natural sanctuary are the Mist Trail and John Muir Trail (JMT), some of the most scenic and most traveled in the world.

This loop, which climbs past Vernal and Nevada Falls before descending via the JMT, offers the full spectrum Yosemite experience: jaw dropping views, physical challenge, and moments of serene reflection.

The trail from Happy Isles begins as a mostly paved path that gains elevation right from the start. Expect crowds for the first mile, all drawn by the magnetic beauty of this storied hike and the ease of access from the Yosemite Valley.

Upon reaching Vernal Fall Footbridge and crossing over the Merced River, fill up on water and use the restrooms, it will be your last chance.

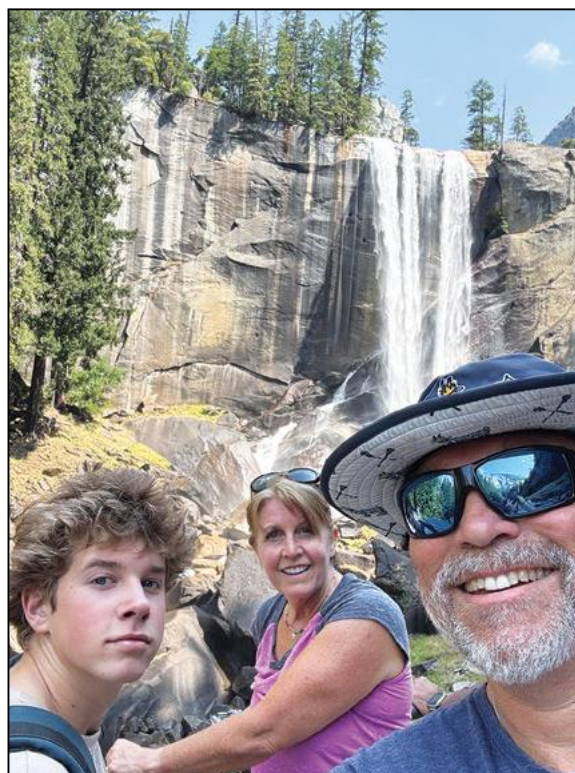
The Mist Trail is a marvel of trail engineering and by far one of the most popular trails in the world. Incredible trail routing, the roar of Vernal Falls and the cool and refreshing mist are almost magical. Expect wet trail conditions and traffic along this portion of trail. At the top of Vernal Falls, pause for a view from the crest and find a shady spot for a quick snack.

Cross a wooden footbridge as you begin your ascent towards Liberty Cap, a massive granite dome. Prepare for countless switchbacks, rock steps, steep climbs and loose footing alike. Mist Trail routes you near the bottom of Nevada Fall and gains elevation as you reach the crest of Nevada Fall (5,907 ft). Find a shady spot to relax on the Merced River as you've reached the high point for this hike.

From the top of Nevada Fall, the JMT offers a much gentler descent and numerous photo spots all along the trail. Sweeping switchbacks replace the steep steps of the Mist Trail, making it easier on tired legs and ideal for backpackers. This portion of the trail is mostly shady which was a welcome trail aspect given we were hiking down in the heat of the day over Labor Day Weekend.

JMT connects back to Mist Trail as you navigate back down to Vernal Fall Footbridge and then back down a very steep JMT. Once you reach the valley floor, it's smooth sailing on firm trail that will take you back to Happy Isles.

This hike is a masterclass in all Yosemite has to offer. From the misty waterfalls to panoramic vistas, it's a journey that challenges your body and nourishes your soul. Whether you are an expert hiker or a first-time visitor, these trails are a must-do on your next visit to Yosemite.



L-R: Wyatt, Krista, and Kevin Parker at Vernal Falls.



Liberty Cap and Nevada Falls



Hiking to Nevada Falls

JMT & Mist Trail loop via Clark Point
Distance: 8.15 miles (park map has incorrect mileage)
Elevation Gain: 2,338 ft
Time: 4.5 hours
Trailhead: Happy Isles, Yosemite Valley

In Case You Missed It...

Local News Items from Claycord.com and Other Sources

John Muir Health recognized by American Heart Association and American Stroke Association for providing high-quality cardiovascular and stroke care

John Muir Health's Concord and Walnut Creek Medical Centers have once again earned national recognition from the American Heart Association for excellence in heart disease and stroke care.

Both hospitals received Gold Plus awards for Heart Failure and Stroke care, reflecting their success in reducing hospital readmissions and helping patients spend more healthy days at home.

Additional honors include placement on the Stroke Elite Honor Roll and Type 2 Diabetes Honor Roll for both locations, and Walnut Creek's inclusion on the Stroke Advanced Therapy Honor Roll.

New play structures at Concord's Todos Santos Plaza



The new play structure at Todos Santos Plaza in Concord looks great. It's a lot larger than the last one.

Two Hospice Tree of Lights fall within one week

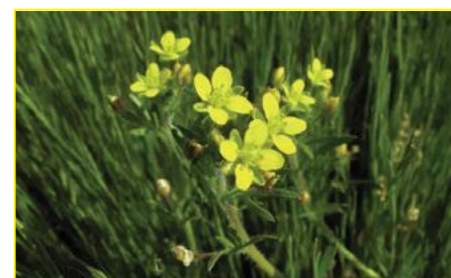


Photo via Claycord.com courtesy Lisa Chambers via Claycord.com

A longtime Pleasant Hill icon, unofficially known as the Hospice Tree of Lights, came down late night of Oct. 20. The heritage oak tree along Gregory Lane near the park fell. Residents nearby described the sound as a thunderous crash, like a transformer exploding. Five days later on October 26, The Hospice Tree Of Lights in Martinez fell.

For this year, Hospice East Bay will combine ceremonies with the Concord Tree of Lights ceremony on Tuesday, December 2, at 5:00 p.m. at John Muir Medical Center, Concord Campus (East Street & Almond Avenue). Learn more on page 14.

Rare plant 'rediscovered' In East Bay after 68 years



A yellow-flowered California native plant that has rarely been seen for 68 years has been rediscovered in Vasco Caves Regional Preserve in eastern Contra Costa County.

The caper-fruited tropidocarpum (*Tropidocarpum capparideum*) was found on March 3 by botanist and environmental consultant Heath Bartosh.

Bartosh was searching for the plant on local ridgetops for the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy when he and his colleague rediscovered the endangered species.

Native plants are important for supporting a more diverse ecology of butterflies, birds and other animals, including humans.

The plant was first documented in 1888.

Contra Costa police scanners go dark after encryption switch

Law enforcement radio traffic throughout Contra Costa County has gone dark as agencies complete the transition to fully encrypted radio systems. The change means that the public and media can no longer listen to live police, sheriff, or CHP dispatches online or via scanner apps.

Officials say the move is meant to protect sensitive information, including names, addresses, and medical details transmitted over the air during emergencies.

The transition follows statewide guidance from the California Department of Justice requiring law enforcement agencies to safeguard personally identifiable information under new privacy standards.

Rep. Harder Introduces Bill To Ban Secret Meetings Between Utilities And Regulators

Rep. Josh Harder (CA-09) introduced legislation Thursday that would prohibit private or undisclosed meetings between California utility companies and state regulators, following hearings on another potential PG&E rate hike.

The Curb Private Utilities Corruption (CPUC) Act would require the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to make all interactions with the utilities it regulates publicly available online, according to a press release.

"It's absolutely insane that every time PG&E wants a rate increase the CPUC just gives it to them, no questions asked," Harder said.

Harder noted that PG&E raised rates six times last year while earning nearly \$2.5 billion in profits and is now seeking additional increases through 2030. The bill comes as part of Harder's broader push to hold utilities accountable.

Around Martinez



Martinez Fishing Pier's Grand Reopening, Nov. 8

by Brianne Zorn, Mayor, City of Martinez



It seems everyone has a connection or a story to fishing in Martinez. Tim Farley forwarded me a picture of his dad, uncle, and aunt from when they were children fishing off the old Martinez pier in 1933.

Our current Fishing Pier was first built in 1934 and portions rebuilt in 1976. It has been enjoyed by thousands of area visitors each year, as it is one of the few public piers in ocean or bay waters in California where recreational fishing does not require a fishing license.

The newly renovated Pier includes structural upgrades like new decking, railings, lighting, and amenities like benches and picnic tables. Besides these top-side renovations and improvements, the substructural reinforcements

I walked Ferry Point at the Martinez Waterfront yesterday afternoon. The sun, low in the sky, re-flected off the fishing lines cast into the water. I used to love seeing poles poking out from the rail-ings on the Fishing Pier with the fishing lines resting quietly on the water's surface waiting for a bite. I realized yesterday that it had been over a year since I had seen anyone fishing at the Pier since we closed it for necessary renovations. We're excited to announce the Grand Reopening of the Martinez Fishing Pier on Saturday, November 8, at 9:00 a.m. We are looking forward to cele-brating this milestone with our community and we invite you to join us.

Martinez has a rich fishing history, particularly driven by Portuguese and Italian immigrants who established a major commercial fishing and canning industry in the late 1800s, centered on the Carquinez Strait. The Italian Fishermen Monument at the Martinez Marina honors the legacy of the Italian commercial fishermen and their families who came to the area. The fishing industry thrived in Martinez, and by 1882, two of the twelve Pacific coast salmon canneries were located in Martinez and processed thousands of pounds of salmon. A state ban on commercial fishing in the San Francisco Bay in 1957 ended the commercial fishing industry in Martinez.

Fishing runs in the soul of the people in Martinez and fishing still remains a popular recreational activity at our waterfront. Many people remember their families fishing, both commercially and recreationally.

and work on the Pier's sheet pile breakwater are expected to extend its lifespan by another 50 years. This renovation has been a years-long process, with plan-ning beginning in 2019 and propelled to success in 2023 with a \$2.5 million federal grant from HUD, secured with support from Congressmen Mike Thompson and John Garamendi to make this renovation possible.

For the first time in many years, a community fishing derby for Martinez children will be held once again in 2026 to celebrate the renovation of the fishing pier. I look forward to introducing another generation of children to fishing in Martinez.



Patrick, Ted, and Catherine Farley (Tim Farley's Dad, Aunt, and Uncle) fishing off the old Martinez pier in 1933. Photo credit: Tim Farley



WHITE STRUGEON CAUGHT IN 2013

Photo courtesy of pierfishing.com/martinez-pier/

Caught off the Marina pier. The main fish that you will catch off the Martinez pier are striped bass and white sturgeon. In the summer, bullhead and perch are common catches.

For the latest updates and specific regulations, anglers should regularly check the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's website for current fishing information.

Martinez Looks to Turn the Corner on Affordable Housing

by Craig Lazzeretti, Martinez News and Views

Martinez is starting to see some dividends from various initiatives to jumpstart development. Incentives built into Martinez's new Housing Element are yielding preliminary results, but much work remains to meet 2031 housing targets

According to the city's annual housing progress reports submitted to the state Housing and Community Development Department's (HCD), Martinez saw the production of 135 housing units in 2023 and 2024, including 14 low-income units, 13 very-low units and 14 units as classified for moderate incomes.

The clear majority of growth, however, came in the above-moderate-income category, reflecting the reality that developers prefer construction projects tailored toward more affluent buyers.

Martinez's 2023-31 RHNA calls for the creation of 1,345 units, including 175 units designated extremely low income, 350 designated very low-income, 201 designated low income and 221 for moderate incomes. The remaining 573 units are designated as above moderate income.

Under increasing pressure from state legislation to address the statewide housing crisis, Martinez's 2023-31 includes such incentives for developers as "overlay districts" guaranteeing the right to build housing as long as projects meet certain standards; new regulations

for Accessible Dwelling Units (ADUs), including a bonus program and pre-approved ADU plans all available on the city's website; a "housing concierge" program to help developers through the entitlement process; density bonus regulations that exceed state law; a fee-deferral process; updated parking regulations; and increased height for multi-family zoning districts.

Ultimately developers decide whether it makes financial sense to build in Martinez, regardless of city development incentives.

Martinez was arguably the most dismal of all in that regard, given its lack of any affordable housing growth at all during the 2015-23 Housing Element cycle.

Indeed, in its Aug. 25 letter to Martinez Planning Manager Michael Cass certifying Martinez's 2015-23 Housing Element, HCD wrote that the city should "continue rezoning additional sites as necessary to maintain adequate sites to accommodate the RHNA, and the city should closely monitor development and design standards including but not limited to lot coverage, heights and dwelling units per building, and make adjustments as appropriate to facilitate achieving maximum densities and address constraints to development."

To read the full article go to Martineznewsandviews.substack.com

NOV 21 5-9PM

DOWNTOWN MARTINEZ

SIP N SHOP

HOLIDAY MARKET

TOYS FOR TOTS

CANDY CANE LANE

PRESENTED BY TULLY & WEISS

TREE LIGHTING

PRESENTED BY MARTINEZ REFINING COMPANY

Pink FRIDAY

#SHOPSMALL First

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News Wrap

Stories of Local Interest

Veterans Day observances set for Alhambra Pioneer Cemetery, Plaza Ignacio

The City of Martinez Community & Recreation Services Division and the Veterans Commission invite the community to attend its Veterans Day Ceremony on Tuesday, Nov. 11 honoring all those who serve and have served in United States military.

The day begins at 10 a.m. at Alhambra Pioneer Cemetery, 3 Carquinez Scenic Dr., for a one-hour observance, followed by a gathering at Plaza Ignacio Park, at Alhambra Avenue and Henrietta Street, from 11 a.m. to noon. This is a meaningful opportunity to honor all veterans and help them connect with the community.

John Muir House, grounds shuttered due to government shutdown

Much of the John Muir National Historic Site is closed until further notice because of the federal government shutdown.

When Celebrating the Dead, Martinez Comes Alive

From the Martinez Zombie Crawl, Halloween Spooktacular, and Dia de los Muertos events, residents flock downtown en masse for what can be described as the Bay's largest costume party. Flaunting comical, friendly, often morbid but certainly imaginative costumes and makeup, the community

enthusiastically bonds together to share in the ritual. Thanks to Thomas Rimpel for the photos. They really capture the true spirit of Martinez. His Facebook page posts hundreds more.



WWII Veteran "Papa Jake" Larson to be immortalized in bronze outside Martinez City Hall

by David King

The City Council approved a public art project to install a full-figure bronze statue on a 3-foot base of decorated World War II veteran "Papa Jake" Larson in Plaza Ignacio in front of City Hall.

The statue by sculptor Paula B. Slater is planned to be unveiled on Veterans Day of 2026.

A private fundraising effort is planned to raise the estimated \$200,000 cost for the statue.

Larson, a longtime Martinez resident who received global attention for interviews he gave and stories he shared on social media as a veteran of D-Day and the Battle of the Bulge, died in July at the age of 102.

Slater, who has sculpted over four dozen bronze portraits, including the statue of Don Salvio Pacheco at Todos Santos Park in Concord, told the council, "This I feel will be one of my crowning achievements."

As for fundraising efforts, supporters can insert their own immortality into the monument by purchasing a brick engraved with their name. There are two sizes available on a first come first serve basis. Bricks come in two sizes, 4" x 8" for \$200, and the larger 12" x 12" for \$2500. Purchases are fully tax deductible. Go to papakelarsen.com to reserve your brick and to learn more about the accomplishments of Papa Jake Larson.

Military Service & WWII Heroism

Jake Larson was born on December 20, 1922, in Owatonna, Minnesota. He enlisted in the National Guard in 1938 at just 15 years old lying about his age to serve his country.

Served in the 34th Infantry Division and later in V Corps G3, where he earned "BIGOT" clearance, a classification even above Top Secret.

Played a crucial role in planning the D-Day landings at Omaha Beach.

Survived six major WWII battles unscathed:

Omaha Beach (D-Day), Saint-Lô, Falaise Gap, Paris liberation, Luxembourg, and Battle of the Bulge.

For his courage and service, he was awarded: The Bronze Star for his D-Day planning and France's Légion d'honneur, the country's highest honor.

Awards, Honors & Public Appearances

Papa Jake's life and service continued to be celebrated in his later years:

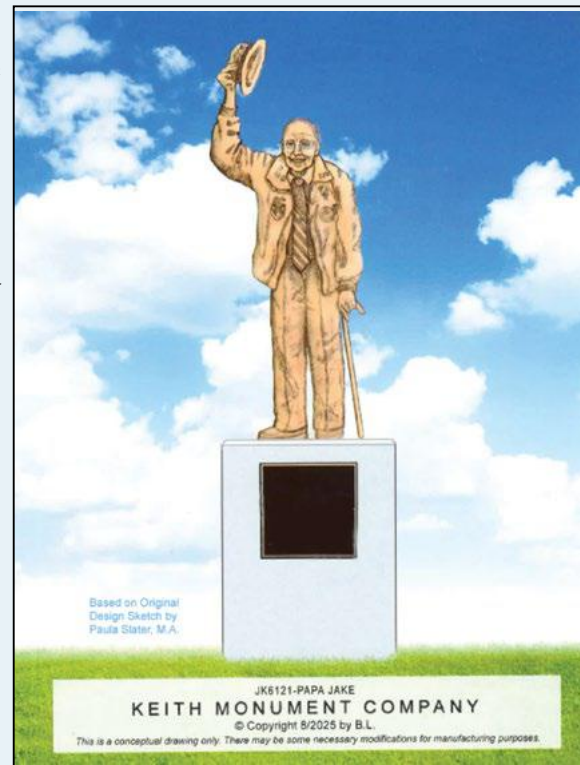


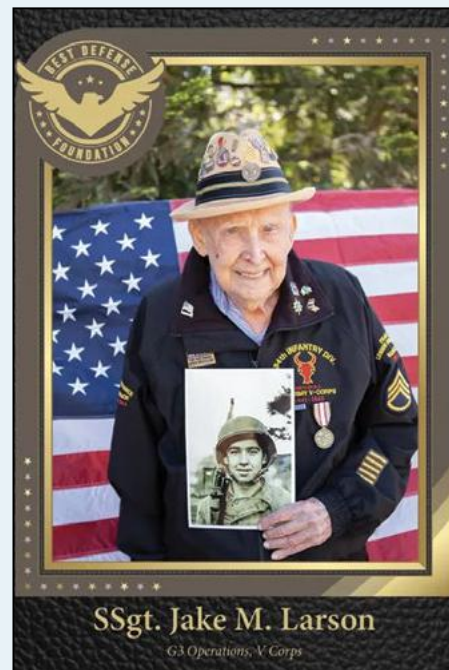
Image based on original design by its sculptor, Paula Slater, M.A.

June 2025: Won a News & Documentary Emmy Award for Outstanding Live Interview – Short Form for his heartfelt CNN interview with Christiane Amanpour.

On his 102nd birthday Disneyland named him an honorary citizen and granted a lifetime free pass and recognized him during a special celebration.

Since 2019, Best Defense Foundation in partnership with Delta Air Lines has flown him to Normandy each year for D Day ceremonies, treating him as the living hero he was.

The memorial for Papa Jake is in Partnership with the Best Defense Foundation; a nonprofit organization focused on helping our military veterans and their families.



SANTA BEER CRAWL



downtownmartinez.org/santa-beer-crawl

What's Poppin' on Pomona in Crockett

by Mariko Dibiase

Crockett's Pomona Street is buzzing with creativity, flavor, and charm.

New shops, studios, and longtime favorites are bringing fresh energy to town while beloved institutions continue to evolve and shine. From handcrafted art to good eats and good company, Pomona is the heart of Sugar Town.

Sugar City Tattoos, a longtime pillar of the community, is known for stunning, detailed work with a loyal local following. They are by appointment only. Treat yourself to true artistry or fix an old tattoo.

Epperson Gallery of Ceramic Arts is a Crockett treasure, the Epperson Gallery continues to impress with its always changing lineup of exhibits and opening night receptions. Each show brings something fresh, thoughtful, and beautifully curated.

Club Tac and Ruby Q BBQ The legendary Club Tac, known for great cocktails, good vibes, and now, mouthwatering food. Their partnership with Ruby Q BBQ has brought smoky perfection to Pomona Street, turning this local hangout into a destination for both food and fun.

Cose Belle Beautiful Things is one of the newest boutiques to grace Pomona. True to its name, this chic shop offers carefully chosen clothing, accessories, and gifts, every piece as beautiful as the next.

Luxe Body Image Luxe Body Image is bringing wellness innovation to Crockett. This is not your typical spa.

Their HIFEM (High-Intensity Focused Electromagnetic) chair delivers over 10,000 kegel in just 30 minutes, all while you relax fully clothed. It is a non-invasive, surgery-free way to strengthen the pelvic floor, improve bladder control, enhance core strength, and even address erectile dysfunction (ED) for men.

They also offer full body red and near infrared light therapy.

Luxe has one mission, to help you look and feel your best from the inside out.

The Passionate Feast Vintage and Books. Browse vintage china,



antique books, old world jewelry, and timeless treasures that make perfect gifts or statement pieces for your home.

Monarch is new to the scene. Monarch brings together industrial workwear, vintage couture, and effortless elegance. It is all curated by the visionary duo Sylvia and Davin Ché. Monarch is the perfect blend of edgy and refined.

Flowers Fresco and Fashion, led by florist extraordinaire, yours truly, Mariko. It is known for lush arrangements, indoor plants, and an ever-changing mix of preloved fashion and locally crafted gifts. This space embodies creativity, beauty, and heart.

JK Café Turn up 2nd Avenue and you will find JK Café serving donuts, boba, and delicious Vietnamese bánh mì sandwiches. It is a local favorite for a quick lunch, sweet treat, or cozy chat with friends.

2nd Ave Skate and Thrift spins the scene with live DJs, local pop-ups, and unique thrifted finds. It is part skate shop, part community hub, and always a good time.

The Cat Vintage is preparing a Cat Museum alongside a whimsical mix of vintage finds and curiosities. Meet the

sister duo behind the store for a dose of creativity and charm.

Sacral Arts and Healing is Crockett's newest art gallery and reiki space. It's open Wednesday through Saturdays from 12 noon to 5:00 p.m.

Bella Galleria di Valona showcases fine art, crafts, and apparel, and offers art classes for all levels.

Toot's Tavern is pure Crockett magic. This is where everyone knows your name. Locals, musicians, and newcomers gather for karaoke, jazz night, and live music that spans every genre imaginable.

Lucia's Craft Sandwiches and Olympia Market Recognized as one of East Bay's best sandwich shop, Lucia's Craft Sandwiches keeps Crockett delicious with its signature sandwiches and salads.

The new Olympia Market expands the vision with organic produce, artisan cheeses, global goods, and fresh baked bread.

Find a curated craft beer and wine selection, plus creamy gelato for the perfect afternoon treat.

Arizona Tattoo Upstairs from Lucia's, you will find Arizona Tattoo, a truly unique tattoo studio that

combines artistry, craftsmanship, and personal expression. The atmosphere is welcoming, the artists are exceptional, and the work speaks for itself.

Four Corners Pizza is Crockett's longest standing restaurant. A true neighborhood favorite. Four Corners has been serving up classic pizza, hearty pasta, and Italian comfort food for generations. Here, everyone feels like family.

The Crockett Cocina is a local restaurant known for its rotating specials, delicious tacos, and casual community atmosphere. It has become a go-to spot for lunch, dinner, and everything in between. The Cocina embodies the spirit of Crockett hospitality.

Calaca Coffee Need a pick me up, Head to Calaca Coffee, where Mexican flavors meet warm community spirit, and where every cup tells a story.

Revival Coffee lives up to its name, inviting locals to gather, unwind, and enjoy impromptu performances on piano or acoustic guitar. It is a true place to revive togetherness.

Crockett Museum preserves and shares the stories that shaped this sweet town.

Of course there's more, much more. Not bad for a town of roughly 3200 residents. Bereft of large chain retailers, this is a town of small businesses and friendly folks.

Make it a day trip and explore its history and unique shopping experiences.





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NOVEMBER 29TH

12:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Crockett, CA

Clothing Apparel, Vintage Collectibles, Jewelry, Books, Art, Dinnerware, Food, Beer and Wine!





Crockett Chamber to open Visitor Center

The Crockett Chamber of Commerce announced it will open a Visitors Center in December. The Chamber has partnered up with The Delta National Heritage Area, of which the Crockett Museum is also a partner. It will also be a part of the Delta Passport program.

The Delta Passport program encourages visitors to visit the many towns in the Delta and get their Delta passports stamped.

The Chamber will have "everything Crockett" at the Visitors Center and promote Crockett's downtown restaurants and businesses. Visitors can discover the wonderful history of Crockett and its many hiking trails and parks at the new center.

The Crockett Museum and the Chamber are designing a self-guided walking tour of Crockett and its historic Valona neighborhood.

The Visitor Center will be located inside the Emporium Building, on the corner of Ceres and 2nd Ave. operating Thursday - Sunday from 12:00 - 4:00 p.m.



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

Give thanks to our animal rescue heroes

Animal rescue heroes work tirelessly to provide essential care, love, and temporary homes for animals in need. Their work comes at a monetary and emotional cost.

The Bay Area is filled with wonderful animal rescue organizations. Here's a shout out to some lesser-known local services: Northern California Sled Dog Rescue (NorSled), Tales of Gray Senior Dog Rescue, Chillin' Cat Cafe, and Avian Rescue.

NorSled is dedicated to rescuing Northern breed dogs, which can make up to 20% of the dog breeds found in shelters. NorSled has been in business for about 28 years and has saved 3,000 huskies throughout California and the Bay Area. Gail de Rita is NorSled's adoption coordinator.

Twilight, a sweet Siberian Husky, required three days of emergency treatment and is ready for adoption. She is eighteen months old, crate-trained, potty-trained, and good with other dogs, but not with cats. Apply at www.norsled.org.

Tails of Gray, founded in 2014 by Stephane Meissner, offers a safe and loving sanctuary for senior dogs regardless of breed, health, or ease of placement. Tails of Gray provides older dogs with quality medical care until adopted. Since 2014, they have saved 259 dogs.

Chip, a ten-year-old, ten-pound chihuahua mix, is looking for his forever home. He gets along with other dogs and will thrive in a mellow, adult home. Visit www.tailsofgray.org/chip.html for more information.

Martinez-based **Cat Chillin' Zone** believes every cat deserves a good life and has placed 50 cats, mostly seniors, since it opened in 2024. This unique rescue offers cat lovers the opportunity to sit for an hour with its 25 resident felines to find their next pet, or for a kitty fix for those not ready or able to adopt or to find a new pet. Visit <https://catchillinzone.com>.

Concord-based **Avian Rescue Group** rescues macaws, cockatoos, Amazon, and African Grey parrots and cockatiels. They have an in-person adoption process and have placed about 70 birds, most of which came from neglectful or abusive situations.

Founder Ron Howard has recently rescued a male Blue and Gold McCaw

named Pepe with cataracts. He's 25-years young (macaws can live to be 100). Pepe is almost blind and needs a \$6,000 eye surgery. avianrescuecorp.com.

Give your thanks this Thanksgiving to these or other local animal rescues.

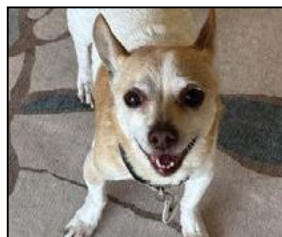


Before and after. Twilight when rescued, now ready for a new home.



Nearly blind, Pepe, a blue and gold McCaw needs eye surgery to remove cataracts.

Chip, 10, a friendly chihuahua mix, is ready for his new adult home.



Jill Hedgecock is an award-winning author of several books, including 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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Family Caregiver Burnout

by Francisco Sudiactal

Are you caring for an elderly family member? Perhaps a spouse or a parent? During this season of thanks, your tireless efforts to care for your loved one are recognized and applauded.

Thank you for your dedication.

Thank you for your personal sacrifices.

Thank you for the long hours serving your loved one, oftentimes without relief or appreciation.

However, those long hours may be contributing to caregiver burnout. Assisting a family member with a disabling chronic condition can generate mental and physical strain, and it is not uncommon to experience irritability, loneliness, fatigue, and depression.

How to alleviate the grinding stress of constant caregiving? Set aside time to take care of your own health. Keep in mind good nutrition, exercise and sleep. Ask for help so that you can have the time to attend to your self-care, especially since family and friends may be unaware of the extent of your caregiving struggles.

Speak to a healthcare professional. A healthcare provider, mental health professional, psychologist, or social

worker can provide counseling, guidance, and resources. Discuss your challenges and the impact caregiving has upon your health.

Seek local resources. The Alzheimer's Association, Family Caregiver Alliance, and Choice in Aging are organizations that provide support to you as a caregiver. The professionals and volunteers of these organizations are available to help manage the challenges you face. Assistance includes care management, caregiver training and activities, and crisis assistance. These organizations can help you connect to support groups consisting of people experiencing similar caregiving issues.

You are not alone, however, as over 50 million informal caregivers in the country share your struggles. Take advantage of community resources to benefit both yourself and the loved one that relies upon the care you provide.

Francisco writes about senior services as the Community Relations Manager for At Home Support Senior Care. Email your questions and comments to fsudiactal@hsseniorcare.com.



Neuroplasticity
by Jessica Raaum Foster,
NeurologyofPresence.com

If you've ever rolled your ankle and brushed it off as "just a minor injury," new research suggests it may be worth a second thought, not just for your mobility, but for your brain.

A recent brain imaging study published in Brain Imaging and Behavior (Hua et al., 2021) found that individuals with chronic lateral ankle instability, the kind that develops after repeated sprains, showed measurable changes in brain structure. Specifically, they had less gray matter in the cerebellum, the part of the brain responsible for movement coordination and balance.

But the cerebellum does more than help you stay upright. It also plays a role in attention, timing, and thought

processing. In other words: how well your ankle moves may influence how clearly you think.

This supports what many movement educators already teach: the body and brain are in constant conversation. There are 360 joints in the human body, and each one sends input to the brain. When that input is disrupted, whether from injury, aging or inactivity, the brain adapts. That adaptation can come at the cost of clarity, stability and energy.

That's why even simple joint mobility exercises can offer benefits far beyond physical balance. They may help support sharper thinking and steadier focus as well.

Ankle Circles

Try this gentle exercise right now and every day to improve ankle mobility and send clearer signals to your brain:

Rub your ankle. The better you can feel your ankle, the better you can move it.

Lift your foot slightly off the ground. (Propping the calf on a foot stool and letting the foot dangle can help to make sure only the ankle is moving.)

Slowly draw a huge circle with your toes, moving from the ankle. Think about pulling the foot as far in, up, out, down as possible to really work the connective tissues that are so important for stability.

About ten circles in each direction should do the trick.

Repeat on the other ankle.

Move slowly, with control. Think of it as "waking up" your joint's communication with your brain. This is not about stretching or straining; it's about precision and presence.

Do this daily, especially if you've had ankle injuries, balance issues, or brain fog. Small movements done with attention can create real change over time.

Sometimes the sharpest mind starts with the steadiest step.

Studies show ankle health equals brain health



Barriers limit many from serving in government

by Edi Birsan, Concordian edibirsan@gmail.com

Without question, there are barriers that prevent people from getting into or involved with local government. Some barriers are not as obvious, but all clearly result in excluding folks from participating.

A simple barrier would be age. You have to be 18 to legally be an adult to be elected to government office. About the only exception is appointments to ‘youth representatives’ in some school districts. This is clearly simple, equal and acceptable.

However, systemic barriers such as economic, social and/or political often result in segments of the population from obtaining or even attempting to obtain a position.

Does government provide compensation that is reasonable for the effort, time, responsibility and accountability of a position? Most local positions below the level of a Board of Supervisor have laughable compensation, if any, that is in no way commensurate with the position. This is a significant economic barrier.

For example, on the County Commissions a Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) commissioner gets \$150 each meeting. Whereas someone in Hazardous Waste or the Library Commission gets no compensation. Further, the 19 City Councils have traditionally low compensation and yet running for office is quite expensive. This is part of the reason that the majority of councilmembers are above average income.

A social systemic barrier can be a position that requires weekly daytime

meetings over say three days of the week totaling 15 to 30 hours. This will result in the positions being filled by retirees and, due to low or no compensation, mostly of a higher income bracket. It is an obvious barrier to full-time workers and those with young families.

Politically, when there are appointments to commissions by elected officials, there will often be accusations of the “old boys’ network,” especially when it comes to positions of power and influence.

First, a candidate has to be aware of the position being open. Those with political connections are much more likely to know what is available and have a greater understanding of their chances of appointment.

Second, due to the typical restrictions on interviews for city commissions, the candidates are asked the exact same six to 10 questions whether it’s to someone they have never met or to someone who they’ve known for 30 years. Clearly, the advantage favors the familiar.

For this reason, when I was on the Council, I had an open invitation to any applicant to sit down one on one with me over coffee/tea to overcome that system barrier.

We can and should all work to break these systemic barriers down so that through equality and equity, we can increase the reach and interest of those who can serve us in local government.

Views express above are by EdiBirsan@gmail.com and not part of a nefarious conspiracy to encourage the development of elite royalty.

Assemblymember Anamarie Ávila Fariás Secures \$2 Million for Don Fernando Pacheco Adobe Rehabilitation Project

Assemblymember Anamarie Ávila Fariás (D–Martinez), in partnership with Concord Councilmember Dominic Aliano, announced the successful allocation of \$2 million in state funding to support the rehabilitation and restoration of the historic Don Fernando Pacheco Adobe in Concord, California.

The project will transform the landmark adobe into a publicly accessible cultural and educational resource that highlights California’s early history and honors Indigenous communities.

“This investment ensures that the Don Fernando Pacheco Adobe is not only preserved, but reimaged as a space where families, students, and seniors can connect with our shared history,” said Assemblymember Ávila Fariás. “I am especially grateful for the leadership of Councilmember Aliano, and for the dedicated work of the Concord city staff on helping make this happen. Together, we share a commitment to the preservation of early California history, including the stories of Indigenous people and Mexican American heritage. This project honors that legacy while creating opportunities for future generations to learn and gather.”

Councilmember Dominic Aliano added: “The Adobe is one of Concord’s most significant historic sites, and thanks to this state funding, we will finally be able to restore it for public use. This project strengthens our community by providing families with greater access to cultural heritage and outdoor educational spaces.”

“We greatly appreciate the advocacy of State Senator Tim Grayson (D-Concord)



Assemblymember Anna Marie Farias and Concord Councilmember Dominic Aliano appear at Mayor’s Bowling fundraiser at Clayton Bowl in hopes to refurbish the Historic Don Fernando Pacheco Adobe in Concord.

with his colleagues in the Senate and applaud Concord Mayor Carlyn Obringer for her unwavering dedication to the preservation of the historical structure.”

The Don Fernando Pacheco Adobe, built in the mid-19th century, is one of the oldest standing structures in Contra Costa County and a vital link to California’s rancho era. His adobe connects directly to early California Mexican American heritage. His story, along with that of Indigenous communities in the region, reflects the diverse histories that shaped California before statehood.

Unrelentless, Mayor’s adobe project gets funding it needs

For the past three years, Concord Mayor Obringer has been traveling to Washington DC, as has councilmember Aliano to meet with US senators, their staff as well as our local congress representative. They arrive with a projects list. One of those projects for the past two years was to find funding for the refurbishment of the Don Fernando Pacheco Adobe in Concord. The historical building is in dire disrepair.

“We put out a request for proposal to see if we could find a nonprofit organization who would want to help us, raise the money to refurbish the Adobe and then operate some kind of business or nonprofit out of the property,”

Obringer explains. “Lindsay Wildlife at one point was interested, and then COVID hit. We’ve done this twice, and we haven’t had anybody come forward with money.”

Obringer and Aliano set up meetings in Washington DC to ask them to put the Adobe project into their queue for earmark funding. Those efforts were also fruitless. “We were told anything cultural, anything related to museum is probably not going to be of interest,” Obringer recalled.

Because Aliano’s good relationship with the Assemblymember Anna Marie Fariás, he invited her to come to Concord City Hall. They laid out all the

projects the city was looking for funding and gave her a tour of the adobe.

In the meantime, Obringer, a bowler herself, organized a Mayor’s Bowling Fundraiser in partnership with Concord Historical Society to raise awareness. Just two days before the event Anna Marie announced that she received the \$2,000,000 in Prop 4 funding earmarked for refurbishing the adobe. It’s a remarkable accomplishment for a freshman legislator.

“It’s amazing! We don’t know when we’re going to get it, but we will get it. And then through the bowling fundraiser plus the mayor’s golf tournament fundraiser, combined it



Bowling for dollars, L-R: Concord Vice Mayor Laura Nakamura, Assemblymember Anna Mare Farias, Mayor Carlyn Obringer, Councilmember Dominic Aliano, and Contra Costa County Supervisor Ken Carlson.

added an additional \$22,000 for the cause. “It’s been a multiple year journey, You try many things and then lightning finally strikes.”

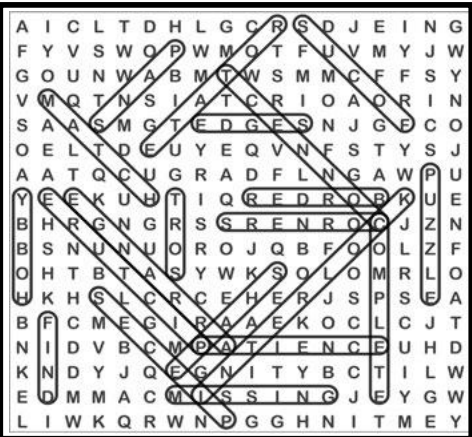
Puzzle Solutions

from page 8

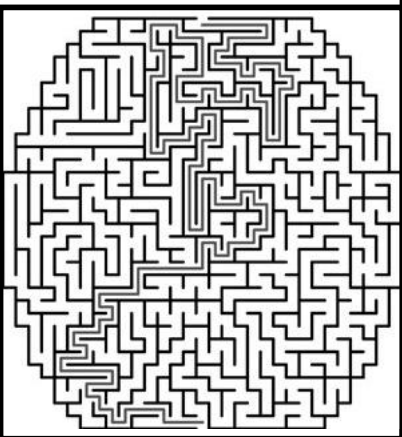
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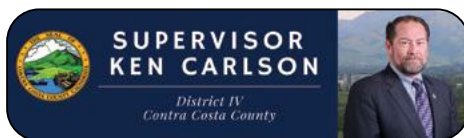


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District IV Community Impact Fund recipients announced

When I was elected to the Board of Supervisors in 2022, one of my goals was to ensure that our county's resources reach the people that need it most. In the last three years, I have funded the District IV Youth Center, allocated additional dollars for pet retention programs at Contra Costa Animal Services, secured funds for the Services and Access for Everyone (SAFE) center, and continued my support of the African American Holistic Wellness Resource Hub.

Now, the County's Community Impact Fund (CIF), a program that allocates one-time funds from the remaining FEMA COVID-19 reserves, provides an avenue to reach additional people and fund gaps in services and programs for our most vulnerable.

At my urging and with the support of my colleagues, the CIF allocated \$1 million to each supervisorial district for allocation. Each district faces unique challenges, so this approach is important. The Board has \$9.7 million left to consider at a future meeting.

Through my office, I am utilizing the \$1 million to create microgrants for non-profits. In total, I received over 100 applications totaling over \$6.5 million in requests. After careful review, I'm proud to announce the first round of awardees, totaling \$474,625 going to 13 local organizations serving residents across District IV in Concord, Pleasant Hill, Clayton, and nearby unincorporated areas.



Among them is Meals on Wheels Contra Costa (MOWCC), a nonprofit providing nutritious meals to homebound seniors. As threats to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and food assistance programs persist, MOWCC's work is crucial for seniors, and this funding ensures continued access.

Another awardee is Child Advocates of Contra Costa County, an organization supporting abused and neglected children in foster care. Through this funding, they will be able to expand services and reduce waitlists.

Other awardees include Choice in Aging, Clayton Pride, United Latino Voices of Contra Costa, First Tee Contra Costa, Mt. Diablo Education Foundation, GANAS Community Organization, CoCo Kids, Assistance League of Diablo Valley, Contra Costa Senior Legal Services, Joybound & Trinity Center, and Network of Care.

The final round of District IV CIF microgrants will be made at the November 5 Board of Supervisors meeting. These opportunities help make local government effective: where community ideas meet county action. As we discuss the remaining CIF dollars, I remain committed to transparency, collaboration, and listening to your voice.

To learn more or view the full list of awardees, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/mr2yus5d>.

County Board of Supervisors vote on \$20 million plan to assist SNAP recipients amid government shutdown.

A federal judge ruled Friday, Oct. 3, that the Trump administration cannot suspend Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits during the government shutdown, finding the move would likely violate federal law. However, it stopped short of issuing a full restraining order.

The ruling came after several states sued the federal government, arguing the Agriculture Department's decision to suspend all SNAP payments starting Nov. 1 would unlawfully cut off aid to millions of low-income families.

The department was to report back by Monday, Nov. 3, on whether it will issue at least reduced SNAP benefits for November and to outline whether it plans to use contingency funds alone or combine them with other available money to provide full benefits. Under the ruling, payments could still be temporarily reduced depending on available funds.

NBC Bay Area reported that the county and the food banks of Contra

Costa and Solano say they don't want people to panic because one way or another they will make sure everyone who needs food has access to it.

On Tuesday, Nov. 4, the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors met to vote on a plan to use \$20 million dollars in emergency funds to provide gift cards to snap beneficiaries which would be distributed at county social service offices.

An urgent town hall was held Thursday, Oct. 30, involving the leaders of the main food bank for Contra Costa and Solano counties to address a disaster. The dual county food bank says donations are coming in, just not in quantities large enough to meet the growing need.

More than 64,000 Contra Costa County households currently receive federal SNAP benefits, known as CalFresh in California.

They say they're optimistic they will be able to fill the gaps even if federal SNAP funding grinds to a halt.

Loss of MOW Breakfast Bags — extra nutrition that also brought a little joy

by David Scholz

Hardboiled eggs. String cheese. Yogurt. Fruit. Some Nutra Grain bars.

Such were some of the basic staples that comprised a Breakfast Bag that hundreds of vulnerable seniors, most homebound, looked forward to receiving as an extra offering that drivers with the Meals on Wheels Diablo Region (MOW) would bring with the regular frozen dinner entrée deliveries.

Hardly extravagant but now no longer affordable. The Breakfast Bag Program ceased Oct. 2 much to the dismay of those who relished a bit of joy in eagerly anticipating what the weekly bag might contain.

"Now that the breakfast bags are no longer available, those without other options are left trying to stretch a single home-delivered meal to last them all day," said Fern Fonseca, Meals on Wheels' Nutrition Program Senior Manager.

"The loss of this program has had a profound effect on their health and well-being," she added.

Contra Costa County removed the \$750,000 that funded the breakfast bag program, calling it a "supplemental program."

The breakfast bags were distributed across Martinez, Pacheco, Bay Point, Pittsburg, Antioch, Brentwood, Oakley, Bethel Island, Discovery Bay, Concord, and Clayton. At its peak, it served over 500 clients, many of whom were among the most food-insecure in the community.

"More than a quarter were undergoing chemotherapy or facing serious medical conditions that made it difficult to eat later in the day," said Fonseca. "For them, breakfast was often the only meal they could tolerate—and they had no other reliable sources of nutrition. The end of this program has left a painful void in their daily lives," Fonseca said.

For a pair of MOW meal recipients sitting in the small living rooms of their respective double-wide homes at the Ranch Diablo Mobile Home Park, the sadness in their eyes spoke to their lingering disappointment.

"I get two or three days' worth of fun things – good things," lamented Barbara Goldstein. "I don't get all that with the entrees."

Simply put, the breakfast bag in the morning "is the good way to start the day."

To the Board of Supervisors whose action prompted the program change,



Barbara Goldstein and Donald Bianucci lament over the discontinuing of the Meals on Wheels Breakfast Bags.

Goldstein said, "it made a difference to me pleasure wise; I always looked forward to digging in the bag and seeing what they are going to put in there."

Around the block in the mobile home park, Donald Bianucci, was also grateful to receive the Breakfast Bag.

"When we learned they were cutting out the breakfast bags, I told them, 'keep the frozen dinners and we will keep the breakfasts,'" he said, noting some entrees weren't his "cup of tea."

For Bianucci, it was a nice way to get these things that they otherwise can't get around to the shops to get themselves.

As for a solution, both residents suggested a work around where MOW cuts back on the frozen entrees in its delivery program as a means of having the funds to restore a mini breakfast bag.

Fonseca noted MOW staff is working with its caterer to develop a simplified version of the breakfast bag, which would include a basic selection of breakfast and snack items.

But this will come at another cost. Not everyone who has received the Breakfast Bag will again be entitled to this offering going forward.

"If we are fortunate enough to secure funding to bring the program back in any form, we will need to be very intentional about who we enroll ensuring that the limited resources are directed to those with the greatest need," Fonseca said.

Board of Supervisors District IV representative Ken Carlson noted that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the County received short-term funding that allowed contracted providers to pilot a Breakfast Bag Program, which is in addition to participants' regular weekly seven-meal plan.

"Now that this emergency funding has ended and overall allocations from the State of California are lower, the County remains focused on meeting the growing needs for home-delivered and congregate meals," he said.

USDA tells Grocery Outlet no discounts to help SNAP/EBT recipients

In response to the interruption in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program SNAP benefits, Grocery Outlet's two locations, Pleasant Hill (1671 Contra Costa Blvd.) and Concord (1840 Willow Pass Road) announced on Facebook that they would offer a special 10 percent discount Monday through Friday to those who would normally be purchasing groceries with their EBT cards at their store sites. The plan was for customers to show their EBT card and ID to receive the special discount.

However, in an updated post, owner Cara Leyva, said she received notice from the USDA that the store is not allowed to offer such a discount targeting EBT recipients. To do so, she would be in danger of losing her SNAP EBT Retailers license.

Still driven to assist EBT shoppers, Leyva has extended the 10% discount to all shoppers Monday through Friday, but she asks that shoppers not ask for it unless it is really needed.



Let's get together for some coffee

by Kevin Cabral, CEO, Concord Chamber of Commerce

In this age of social media, home offices, and endless screen time, I'll let you in on a little secret: staying isolated isn't good for you. Humans need real interaction; it's in our nature. That's why it has been so rewarding for us at the Chamber to see staff, board members, local business owners, and groups of students from Mt. Diablo Unified School District and Diablo Valley College join our First Friday Coffee events at Gratitude Coffee in Park 'n Shop.

It's refreshing to watch young people walk right up, ask questions about what you do, who you are, and show genuine curiosity about finding their place in the working world. Their drive, intelligence, and enthusiasm are inspiring, and they remind us just how valuable socializing and networking truly are.

Gathering, connecting, networking or just plain hanging out with people, is all the rage again...and I love it. A big part of what I do for a living is bringing people together so they can talk, network, learn about each other, and socialize. It's not always easy, but lately I've noticed something exciting: people are genuinely thrilled to be back in group settings. That energy is helping our businesses rebound and grow.

Those of us who've been around a while know the value of personal connections. We've been networking and socializing for years, and now is the



Many Concord Chamber of Commerce members meet, greet, and discuss business opportunities on the first Friday of each month for the coffee mixer at Gratitude Coffee Bar in on Willow Pass Rd.

perfect time to pass along that wisdom to the next generation, showing them the real benefits of connecting face-to-face.

If you have a free morning, come to First Friday Coffee at Gratitude Coffee, 8:30 a.m. on the first Friday of every month. Buy a cup, support a local business, meet new people, and enjoy the simple act of connecting. You might even meet the next generation of community leaders (and taxpayers!) to help shape Concord's future.

For more about the businesses and organizations that make Concord a vibrant place to live, and to learn about the benefits of membership, visit the Concord Chamber of Commerce at www.concordchamber.com.

Sentiments from a Homeless Man

Hi, my name is Charles Anderson and I'm living out, something I didn't think could happen to me.... I'm homeless.

Looking back, I thought I was a "good person"—like that might shield me, but I was too myopic to notice other people suffering. It's not a lesson in humility. It is dehumanizing when you have no home, and raindrops fall like rocks.

I was an artist, a choreographer caught in the rhythm of life not knowing I was a finger snap away from losing everything I'd ever cared for. It made no logical sense I would ever end up here. Now I'm caught up with survival tasks, learning lessons I never would have chosen.

I gave appropriately whenever I could.

Becoming homeless isn't just losing your domicile, it's losing a sense of belonging where people with less love, less opportunity to be heard, have less chance of being seen. What happens to people like that? And what happens when society stops listening altogether?

What happens when help and harm start wearing the same uniform? When institutions of help stop answering the phones and become one big referral service. The world has removed the human element from everyday life. Machines, rules, and algorithms make decisions with no discretion, no empathy, no nuance.

Freedom is only an illusion that can never become more tangible than the first day you find yourself shackled by homelessness.

Here's the raw fact. When you become homeless, you notice how ridiculous absurdities replace care: an [outdoor] water fountain but no bathroom, and yet complain about people peeing on the street. A crisis center that opens only three

days a week. A shelter will give you cans of food and never think you're homeless and have no can opener.

I hear numbers that report progress while people sleep in cars, parking lots, or under bridges. Political institutions and agencies feed you statistics because numbers feel neutral.

Mark Twain once said, "There are lies, damn lies, and statistics."

Our systems have not been built to restore people, but to contain them. Charity gets staged as theater—programs designed to make the comfortable feel moral while nothing changes for the people suffering... and dignity disappears. Care becomes performance.

Connection and love are not luxuries, they are survival. A person needs more than calories; they need a reason to wake up.

The antidote is simple. It's not sentiment that is needed. It's presence, patience, small interactions, and someone who listens even when it costs them time. These are the lifeblood of a society that still remembers its humanity.

Don't give him a bath or food. Give him a reason to wake up. Start with making people feel human again. Start by looking them in the eye.

The first step to being a useful person is being heard. To wake up with purpose that's what all people want. It's not about comfort.

No more answering machines. People, please, pick up the phone. No more referrals to referral services. What we really want is not just to sustain life, but to make it meaningful. Let's make meaningful the goal.

Lively local No Kings protests send clear messages

by David Scholz, freelance



Latino DVC student Raul Arana addresses a packed crowd in Walnut Creek on Oct. 18. Photo courtesy of Laura Nakamura

As a refrain from one of the songs that emanated from a makeshift stage near Pleasant Hill City Hall on Oct. 18 during the latest No Kings protests, "the times they are a-changin'" may be the course the country is headed as voices rose up in unison from large metropolises to small towns, and every in between, to express concerns of continuing actions by the Trump Administration.

Locally, the latest peaceful No Kings gatherings also were an opportunity to beat the drum of the Yes on Prop 50 effort that California lawmakers have put on the ballot of the upcoming Tuesday, Nov. 4, election to counteract redistricting moves occurring in Texas among other states.

"The No Kings Day protest, as well as all the other local protests I've attended since Trump was elected, are opportunities for our community to stand up against the unlawfulness and cruelty of the Trump Administration," said U.S. Representative Mark DeSaulnier of the 10th Congressional District.

The loud and proud gatherings in Walnut Creek and Pleasant Hill with their array of colorful and expressive signs and inflatable animals from pigs to unicorns and dinosaurs to eagles, mirrored the day's marches that flooded cities from coast to coast as well as recent protests in Portland, Ore.

"I have never been so proud to represent and call the East Bay home. Our community deeply loves our country and the values it was founded on — tolerance, equality, and freedom — and that's why we are fighting back against Trump's extreme agenda," DeSaulnier said who arrived to a lively gathering on the grounds of the Pleasant Hill City Hall in the closing minutes of that rally after starting the day in Walnut Creek.

City of Concord councilmember Laura Nakamura, who also addressed the Walnut Creek crowd, described it as "a beautiful display of solidarity" to show disapproval of the current administration's "authoritarian leadership."

"The crowd was fun and festive and seemed much bigger than the estimates — as I was trying to make my way from the stage to Liberty Bell Plaza, I was in awe with how thick the crowd was — so many beautiful people with creative signs and colorful outfits," Nakamura said.

A key moment for her was hearing thousands of people chanting "Yes on 50".

Also refreshing for her was hearing from a young Latino DVC student, Raul Arana, especially at a time when he mentioned so many are afraid to go to the grocery store in his remarks.

"Raul Arana is speaking up for his community — our neighbors," she said.



Protesters in Walnut Creek spared no creativity to send a message.

Fire-resistant landscapes use less plants, more hardscapes

By Anglea Dawne, landscape designer

With California's incidence of statewide fire, there has been an increasing emphasis on fire-resistant landscaping, which appears to be becoming a prevalent requirement for homeowners.

Many property owners are facing challenges with their insurance coverage due to substantial vegetation near their homes. This often presents a difficult and costly problem, especially when considering the expense of pruning or removing large, overgrown trees.

Consequently, landscape designers and installers are increasingly incorporating and implementing the new considerations, and in some locations in California, actual requirements.

This shift tends to pose less of a concern for those who prefer Zen, modern, or contemporary landscape designs, with minimal planting and more hardscape.

However, it presents a significant challenge for individuals who favor full, lush landscapes.

A primary difficulty lies in assisting homeowners to envision their outdoor spaces in a less traditional manner, which involves moving away from plants directly against the house foundation or large shade trees overhanging the home.

Instead, the focus is on maintaining a minimum five-foot clearance from the house and foundation, with spacious planting arrangements that allow ample room between individual plants.

Therefore, it could be advantageous for homeowners to consult with a professional landscape designer to effectively navigate the new suggestions and regulations to achieve a visually appealing, distinctive, and beautiful landscape around their property.



Fire-resistant landscaping includes less plants with increased spacing and attractive designs for hardscaping.

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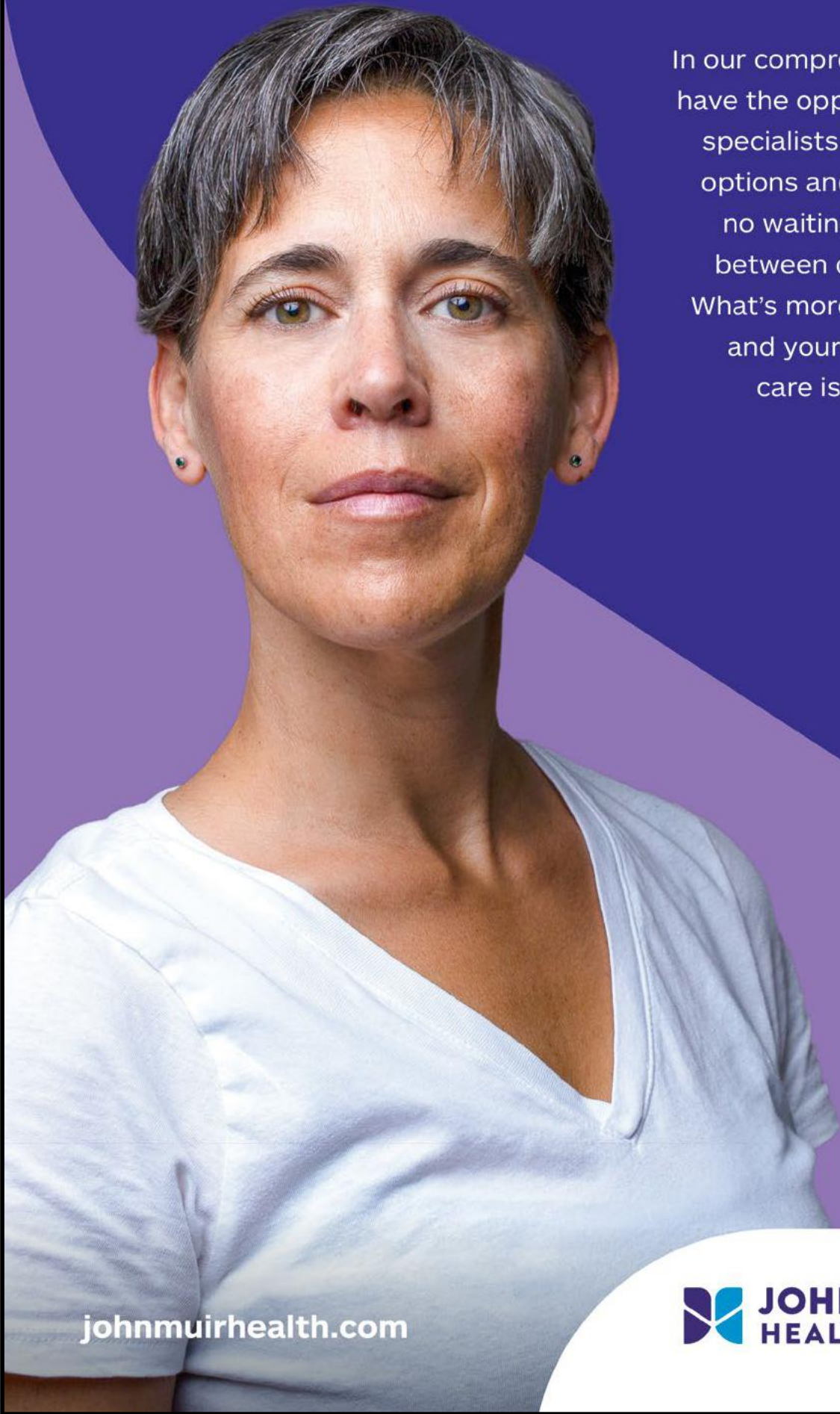
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