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SEASON'S D'LIGHTS

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25 Facts About Christmas Music

By Micah

The Holiday season would simply not be the same if it weren't for Christmas music. Those familiar carols we have sung and listened to many renditions of each throughout our lifetime. We know them by heart. So, here are a few facts about Christmas music you probably didn't know — fact #19 will definitely surprise you.



1. While we associate "Jingle Bells" with Christmas, the song was written by James Lord Pierpont to celebrate Thanksgiving.

2. "Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer," "Rockin' Around The Christmas Tree," and "Holly Jolly Christmas" were written by Jewish songwriter Johnny Marks.

3. The first Christmas song to mention Santa Claus was Benjamin Hanby's "Up On The Housetop." Written in 1864, Hanby was inspired by Clement Moore's 1823 poem "A Visit from Saint Nicholas."

4. "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" is one of the oldest Christmas hymns to still get airplay. Originally composed in Latin during the twelfth century, it was translated into English by John Mason Neale in 1851.

5. Thurl Ravenscroft, the singer responsible for "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" classic song "You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch," also famously voiced Tony the Tiger, the mascot for Kellogg's Frosted Flakes.

6. "White Christmas" was written by Jewish songwriter, Irving Berlin

7. Irving Berlin hated Elvis Presley's cover of "White Christmas" so much that he tried to prevent radio stations from playing it.

8. In April 1975, the American military played "White Christmas" over Armed Forces Radio as a covert signal instructing soldiers in Vietnam to evacuate Saigon.

9. Irving Berlin originally wrote "White Christmas" for a Broadway musical that was never produced. It was then picked up by Hollywood producers who used it in "Holiday Inn," a 1942 film starring Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire.

10. Bing Crosby's version of "White Christmas" is the highest-selling single of all time.

11. Written for the 1944 film "Meet Me in St. Louis", the original lyrics to "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" were deemed too sad by both the film's director Vincente Minnelli and its star Judy Garland. They asked songwriter Vincente Minnelli to rewrite sections of the song.

12. In 1906, a violin solo of "O Holy Night" was the second piece of music to ever be broadcast on radio.

13. "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" and "Joy to the World" are two of the oldest English language Christmas hymns, originating in the 1700s.

14. "Let It Snow" has made its way into the Christmas cannon despite the fact that it never once mentions the holiday and was written by Jewish songwriters, Jule Styne and Sammy Cahn.

15. Walter Afanasieff, Mariah Carey's co-writer on "All I Want For Christmas Is You," also wrote Celine Dion's "My Heart Will Go On."

16. Bing Crosby's version of "Silent Night" is the third highest-selling single of all time.

17. "Jingle Bells" was the first song performed in space.

18. Songwriter Gloria Shayne Baker wrote "Do You Hear What I Hear?" as a plea for peace during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962.

19. Jay Livingston and Ray Evans' holiday classic "Silver Bells" was originally titled "Tinkle Bells." They changed it when Livingston's wife explained that "tinkle" was often a synonym for urination.

20. Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer didn't originate in Johnny Marks' classic Christmas jingle. Instead, the character was created by Robert L. May, a staff copywriter for the Montgomery Ward department store as part of a series of holiday-themed coloring books sold by the retail giant.

21. "We Wish You A Merry Christmas" is one of the oldest secular Christmas songs, originating in 16th century England.

22. Mel Tormé's "The Christmas Song" (more commonly known as "Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire") was written during a summer heatwave in 1944.

23. For 28 years, Darlene Love sang her holiday hit "Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)" on David Letterman's late-night show.

24. Singer Brenda Lee recorded the original version of "Rockin' Around The Christmas Tree" when she was only 13 years old.

25. "Winter Wonderland" was written by Jewish songwriters, Felix Bernard and Richard B. Smith

Merry Christmas!

Primarily sourced through BuzzFeed...sometimes, it's just fun to surf the internet.

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Jim Diaz
Mayor, Clayton
jdiaz@claytonca.gov

Clayton Mayor

A Letter from the Mayor

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

On November 19, the City Council recognized students from the Mt. Diablo Elementary School and the Mt. Diablo Middle School for the “Do The Right Thing” Character Trait of “Respect.” Congratulations to all the Awarded students.

The City Council also recognized and proclaimed the following:

- November as Native American Heritage Month,
- Dutch American Heritage Day: November 13, 2024, and
- Homeless Awareness Week - November 11-23, 2024.

The following Action Items were discussed and actions taken:

Council approved the installation of a Bronze Plaque in Memory of Clayton’s first Mayor, Bob Hoyer. The Plaque will be placed near the flagpole in The Grove Park at the corner of Center Street and Marsh Creek Road. The installation date

is pending confirmation from the Hoyer Family.

The third-floor office space at Clayton City Hall is a step closer in getting much needed improvements. Council approved a Budget Amendment for the improvements that is not to exceed \$60,000.00.

City Staff presented recommendations to add five (5) various staff positions. This item received much discussion from the City Council and the Public. The item was referred back to the City Staff for further development.

As your mayor, I will continue to work hard to maintain Clayton’s small-town charm and character while running an open and transparent local government. You can reach out to me directly with any questions or concerns at 925-673-7316 or JimD@claytonca.gov.

Happy Holidays to All!

Sincerely,

Jim

OBITUARY

Duane Karl Carmignani
October 3, 1944 ~ September 23, 2024
Resident of Clayton

Duane Karl Carmignani, a 37-year resident of Clayton, passed away peacefully on Monday, September 23, 2024. Duane was a proud United States Veteran, an avid golfer, enthusiastic dancer, talented gardener, and loyal friend. Most important in his life was his family, and his big heart and optimistic spirit touched all who knew him. He was exceptionally dedicated to raising his children and grandchildren, and his beloved dogs, Tucker and Lucy.



After his military service, Duane followed in his father’s footsteps and became an iron worker, before eventually beginning his 40+ year career in the grocery industry.

Duane is survived by his wife of 44 years, Linda; his children Courtney, Todd, Loree, Aaron and Howard; eleven grandchildren and three great grandchildren. He is also survived by his brother Ronald

and Sister-In-Law, Elizabeth. He was preceded in death by his parents, Amato and Kathryn. He will be deeply missed by all who loved him.

In lieu of flowers, please make a gift in honor of Duane, to the Saint Mary’s College Veterans Garden in Memory of Duane Carmignani or any animal rescue organization of your choice.

Duane was a lifelong Bay Area resident, born in Berkeley and a graduate of Richmond High School. Following graduation, Duane joined the US Army where he served in the 1st Cavalry Division 19th Battalion in Korea. He also spent time stationed at both Fort Ord, and Fort Carson.



Edi Birsan
Concord Mayor
cityofconcord.org

It’s Elementary!

The most fun I have had on City Council is to conduct a city hall tour and kids’ council meeting for elementary school kids. Kids can be from Kindergarten to 5th or 6th Grade and they never fail to both amuse and astound me. It is also a blast to run into a teenager who remembers you from their class visit.

We start in the lobby and go down to the Mayor’s office where I talk about a few things there:

The photo of downtown from the 1920s. “Wow, a hundred years, that’s a long time.”

The guitar statues used to raise money for when Mayor Shinn gathered up thousands of them, called it Concordstock, to set a World Record of people playing a single song on a guitar.

Then we walk down the hall toward the legal offices’ wing, the Ansel Adams photos and the map of the city from 1911, stopping off at the councilmembers office where the four desks are that are used by the Councilmembers. The desks always display a great range of organization, from just piles of papers in disarray with boxes of files by the chair, to pristine clean desktops. I ask which desk looks like their room?

In the legal conference room, which is lined with law books, I talk about the Internet and the way people do research with actual books.

Back down the main hall we travel to the Garden Conference room where the collection of artifacts from our Sister City in

Japan: Kitikami. The Samurai Helmet and the masks that they wear in their world-famous sword dance is always a hit.

We finish off the Admin building with a visit to the clerk’s wing where they can see the Vault: a room where we keep original documents going back to 1905. Here, the peculiar rolling shelves are compacted on one side of the room but then can be rolled out to allow for one aisle in the room to get access to them.

Then off to the City Council Chambers we go where they do a council meeting. The scenario for the elementary kids is to pick a mascot for the city since we do not have one.

I ask the teacher to select five students to sit as council members on the Dias. One becomes the Mayor, another the Vice Mayor, and the other three are councilmembers. Their job is to listen to the suggestions of the kids and then the recommendations of the three kids picked to be the Staff.

The Treasurer explains which one costs the most and which cost the least. The Attorney comments on what the dangers are, legally or otherwise. And the City Manager states where they are going to keep it or display the image.

The other kids then take turns coming to the podium, giving their names and what they recommend and why. The actual city clerk keeps the record of the mascots suggested.

Some of the recent recommendations were:

“A shark, because it swims in water.”

“A monkey because they are funny.”

“A parrot, I have a parrot.”

“A dinosaur, because everyone likes dinosaurs.”

“An American Flag because it is our country.”

“A lion because that is the mascot of our school.”

Some fun comments from those playing the staff were:

“Parrots don’t eat much, but elephants do.”

“Lions eat people!”

“We could put the koala bear in the trees outside.”

The five-member council then has to pick one of the suggested mascots and say why they like it. Then comes a vote in which it takes three votes to pass. In all the years, only once did they pick one on the first try.

The city clerk narrows it down to two or three options and we go to the next round and finally a third round. It has never taken more than three rounds. The Mayor uses the gavel, (they all love banging it to start and stop) and the council members vote one



at a time from left to right, then the Vice Mayor and finally the Mayor.

There has never been a case in the last 12 years of the kids picking the same mascot, some of which were: Bunny Rabbit, Dog, Cat, Parrot, Giraffe, Unicorn, Dragon,

Panther, Cougar, Koala Bear, Lion and Eagle. This year, they picked the monkey.

I always end with a strong reminder that they are learning in school the most important basic skills of writing and speaking since “Government is either listening to you, or to someone else. So, speak up, write, act and vote.”

The views here are not related to any school curriculum, which is unfortunate since all schools should bring their kids to city hall. Suggestions on mascots can go to EdiBirsan@Gmail.com

Chief of Police Richard McEachin Resigns from City of Clayton

After two years of dedicated service, Chief of Police Richard McEachin announced his resignation from the City of Clayton Police Department.

Effective December 19, 2024, Chief McEachin will take on the role of Police Chief for the City of Atwater, California. During his tenure, Chief McEachin has led the Clayton Police Department with distinction. His new position will see him overseeing the Atwater Police Department, a larger force with 31 sworn officers and 13 non-sworn administrative personnel.

This transition marks a significant step forward in his law enforcement career as he returns to the California Central Valley, where he resides. The Clayton City Council, staff, and community extend their gratitude to Chief McEachin for his service and wish him continued success in his future role. To ensure a smooth transition, the City of Clayton will engage a reputable executive search firm to assist in recruiting both an interim and permanent replacement for Chief McEachin. For any inquiries, please contact the Office of the Clayton City Manager at (925) 673- 7300.





Neuroplasticity
by Jessica Raam Foster,
NeurologyofPresence.com

Feeling Overwhelmed?

If you are feeling overwhelmed, you are not alone. The world feels like a lot right now. Yes, it's the most wonderful time of the year, but the holidays can be overwhelming, overstimulating, and overindulging.

Prioritizing self-care is essential right now — good sleep, clean food, and adequate movement are key. But sometimes, even getting those basics in can feel overwhelming.

In a world that capitalizes on our stress, I suggest walking through the world with your head held high, as an "act of defiance," literally, against gravity, but also against the chronic drains on our energy that life continually deals us.

Finding your way back to center is hero's work, in no small part, because it takes work.

Self-care requires action. That is the awkward catch-22 here. How do I add in one more thing when I'm already overwhelmed?

Thankfully, as a Neuro Performance Coach, I have a plethora of simple tools to help make standing upright against the winds of life easier and more sustainable.

Here are five simple things you can try to pull yourself from feeling overwhelmed.

1. Stare at something far away. Looking at the bigger picture can literally help calm the brain down.
2. Stand in the sunshine. If you need help finding the light within, start with the big light in the sky.
3. Tap into your physical strength. Remind yourself how strong and capable you are. This can be as simple as doing some wall push-ups or getting up and down off of your couch a few times.
4. Change something up. Take a different way home, brush your teeth with the other hand, or perhaps walk backward. Firing up new neural pathways can help open up our thinking to new solutions.
5. Challenge your balance. This will literally help you find your center.

Try sprinkling these suggestions into your daily life and say goodbye to holiday overwhelm.



SCREEN TIME
by Colleen Gonzalez
colleengonzalez.substack.com

Wicked

Now that the highly-anticipated film "Wicked" has finally hit theaters, the big question is, "Does it live up to the hype?"

This film is everywhere. Cast members are popping up on talk shows, stores have merchandise galore and everyone is humming "Defying Gravity." Often, expectations are set too high for any movie to possibly deliver. Thankfully, this is not the case. Director Jon M. Chu gives devoted fans everything they could want, and the uninitiated will be drawn in by dazzling special effects and big-name stars. Anyone familiar with Chu's previous work in "Crazy Rich Asians," knows he is capable of creating a visual delight.

The appeal is taking a story we all know so well, "The Wizard of Oz," and turning it completely on its head. The story opens long before



the twister drops Dorothy in Oz. Instead, "Wicked" centers on Elphaba (Cynthia Erivo), otherwise known as The Wicked Witch of the West. We follow her origin story and meet some familiar characters along the way. During her time at school, Elphaba meets Glinda, a future Good Witch of Oz. The relationship is life altering for both young women, but not in the ways you may assume.


The casting choices are spot on. Jeff Goldblum relishes his slick character as The Wizard of Oz and Ariana Grande steals the show as the over-the-top Glinda. Although Cynthia Erivo may not be as familiar as some of the other cast members, she brings a depth and heart to Elphaba, and definitely has the vocal chops.

This is a film made for the big screen. The movie is an escape that allows you to be transported to a magical place. It is suitable for the whole family, but be warned, just like in "The Wizard of Oz," those flying monkeys may cause some shivers!

Audiences will question everything they believe they know about this classic tale. In doing so, viewers will be forced to take a step back and realize, before we pass judgment, we may not always know the whole story. This also serves as a great lesson for us to carry into real life.

It is important to note this movie is only part one in the tale. Part two is scheduled to be released in November 2025. It may be a test of your patience to wait that long, but if part one is any indication, it will be worth the wait.

Rated PG In Theaters



A Walk Through Time with Misty Bruns

New Church Building : The Ladies and Communities Come Together - 158 years ago



The Congressional Society at Clayton, some months since laid the foundation and raised the walls of a concrete building fifty-four feet by thirty-four feet, designed, when completed, for a House of public worship for the society. The walls are now nearly ready for the roof, and exertion will be made to finish the house before the close of the year; and if the society are able to carry out the design, the structure will not only be creditable to the enlightened liberality and Christian enterprise of the people but will give the pleasantly situated village of Clayton a handsome feature of improvement.

The means upon which the work has been carried to its present stage, have been contributed in money, labor and materials by those connected with the church and congregation, and from the proceeds of the Fairs held by ladies of the society at Pacheco and Somersville.

The estimated cost of the structure is something above twenty-five hundred and less than three thousand dollars, and of this amount, the Society expect five hundred dollars from the Congregational Church Building Fund,

which together with such further assistance as liberally disposed citizens may contribute, they hope will enable them to go into their new House of worship without the burden of an unpaid debt to cramp their future effort.

A CARD OF THANKS

The ladies of the Congregational Church and Society of Clayton take this method of expressing their thanks to the Sons of Temperance of Somersville, for the use of their Hall for the late Fair held at that place. Also, to the Good Templars for the courtesy of adjourning their regular meeting for their accommodation.

To the citizens of Somersville, they would return their grateful acknowledgements for their liberal patronage and general hospitality — to the band for their fine performance of several pieces of music - and especially to the ladies who assisted at the hall to whom great credit is due for rendering the Fair attractive, entertaining, and successful.

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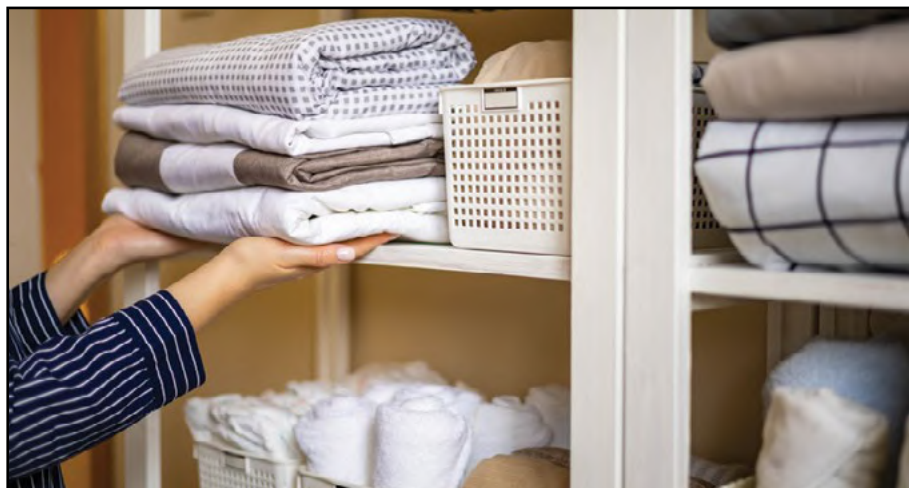
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NEURO PERFORMANCE COACH
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Decluttering: Extra Sheets and Bedding



Everyone can use some organizing... somewhere. You get a calmer, more organized space, get Holiday ready, or ready to tackle big projects such as a move.

It is common to be asked what things people can start to work on to get ready to make a move. By the way, this is also a good tip for staying in your home.

It's easier to take things into bite-sized pieces. Eventually, you will be at "mission accomplished!"

My challenge this month, we needed a new bed, which led to new sheets and pillows, bedroom furniture, and cleaning the closet, etc....you know how that goes, one thing leads to another.

If you are decluttering your home, here's something you can do today: take a look at your linen closet. Over the years, it's easy to accumulate numerous bedding sets, sheets, blankets and comforters. Do you still need them all?

Here's how to decide what to keep and what to let go of:

- Keep only 2-3 sets of sheets per

bed for easy rotation (one on the bed, one in the wash, and one as backup or seasonal option i.e., flannel).

- Assess the bedding: Are these sheets or blankets still comfortable, in good condition, and used regularly?
- Ask family members if they want any of the extra bedding or sheets.
- Donate gently used bedding to local shelters, thrift stores, or charities who like the extras to help someone in need. Pet rescue organizations have a huge need and are very appreciative of the extras.
- Lastly, repurpose some of them in the garden shed for frost evenings/days when you need something to cover the favorite plants or shrubs.

Decluttering now will free up space and make future moves more manageable.

Your comments and gentle ribbing encouraged. I would like to hear your tips for those areas where you have purged, decluttered etc.

Happy Holidays!



Five Steps to Eliminate Debt

Being in debt doesn't have to be a way of life. Through dedicated action and commitment, reaching true financial wellness and being financially independent is possible.

Here are five steps to help you effectively reduce or eliminate debt:

1) Organize your debt

Begin by assessing the total debt you need to pay off. List all your credit cards and loans with their outstanding balances and the interest rate associated with each. Remember, outstanding balance is the total amount you currently owe on a credit card or loan, including interest or fees. These numbers will be crucial for developing your debt repayment plan. Lastly, add the amounts owed on each account to determine your total outstanding debt.

2) Choose your debt-reducing method

Once you have all your card and loan amounts, there are two methods to begin paying off your debt.

The snowball method involves paying off your smallest debt first and then moving to the next smallest debt until all debts have been paid off.

The avalanche method involves getting rid of the debt that has the highest interest rate first and moving on to the debt with the next highest rate until all debts are paid off.

Each method has its advantages and disadvantages. The snowball method offers frequent motivation by quickly paying off debts, but it may result in paying more interest. On the other hand, the avalanche method usually saves more on interest, but it may take longer to see results. Choose the method that makes the most sense for your personal and financial situation.

3) Maximize your payments

After you've selected your debt-reduction strategy, focus on increasing your monthly

credit card payments. You can accomplish this by reducing expenses in a few areas of your budget and allocating those savings toward debt repayment. For instance, cut down costs on dining out. If you spend about \$200 a month at restaurants, aim to reduce it by half by cooking at home instead.

4) Negotiate with your creditors

Many credit card companies may lower your interest rate if you show commitment to paying down debt. Once you start your payment plan, consider contacting each credit card company to explore your options. Even if one or two agree, you've made progress toward lowering your rate.

5) Consider a debt consolidation loan

If the credit card companies won't lower your rate, consider a debt consolidation loan. For many, the hardest part of paying off debt is handling multiple payments across different credit card accounts. With several monthly payments, it's easy to lose track. Often, it can feel like you're only paying off interest and not making progress on paying down overall debt.

A debt consolidation loan can simplify this. By consolidating debts into one low-interest loan, monthly payments become easier to manage. Instead of making multiple payments to a series of loans and credit cards, you're making one payment with a fixed end date to pay off the total balance. Plus, you can potentially save on interest, especially if the loan has a lower average rate.

Regardless of the strategy or methods you choose to pay off your debt, ensure you avoid adding new charges to your card during the process. Eliminating significant debt demands time and determination, but achieving a debt-free life is key for maintaining good financial health.

If you're interested in a debt consolidation loan, call Pacific Service Credit Union at (888) 858-6878 to speak with a loan representative.

FAST FACTS ABOUT AGING IN PLACE

<p>The 85 and older population is projected to increase from 6.7 million in 2020 to 14.4 million in 2040.</p> <p><i>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 12/6/2023.</i></p> <p>92% of older adults prefer to live out their later years in their current home.</p> <p><i>Importance of Home Survey. American Advisors Group. 2023.</i></p>	<p>Only 10% of American homes are "aging ready."</p> <p><i>U.S. Census Bureau. 2020.</i></p> <p>39% of homes with two or more floors do not have an entry-level bathroom.</p> <p><i>U.S. Census Bureau. 12/7/2023.</i></p> <p>76% of remodelers say they've received more requests for aging-in-place-related features over the past five years.</p> <p><i>American Association of Home Builders. 12/7/2023.</i></p>	<p>Older adults report the most common accessibility features in their homes as the main floor bathroom & main floor bedroom at 88% and 78% respectively.</p> <p><i>University of Michigan Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation. 2022.</i></p> <p>52% of older adults who moved to a home found a home that was easier to get around in.</p> <p><i>University of Michigan Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation. 2022.</i></p>
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Terrylynn Fisher

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Holiday

calendar of events

Celebrating the Joys of the Season ~ Holiday Events to Enjoy!

Clayton

December 4, The North Pole Review, Fratello Marionettes, 2 - 3 PM. This music-based production showcases our graceful ice skater Crystal Chandelier, the high-kicking antics of the Russian Trepak Dancers, and a trio of dazzling acrobatic penguins. Puppeteers perform in full view of the audience. Perfect for family events, corporate parties, or any festive gathering. Clayton Library, 6125 Clayton Rd. Clayton

December 7, Holidays in The Grove

- Tree Lighting & Photos with Santa, 5 PM, The event will start with a performance by CVCHS Marching Band and Color Guard. The Mt. Diablo Elementary 2nd grade classes will perform some favorite holiday songs, before Santa and Mrs. Claus arrive to count down the annual tree lighting at the main gazebo. Following the tree lighting, The Clayton Community Church will be serving up hot cider and donut holes and Santa and Mrs. Claus will be available for pictures. The CBCA in partnership with the Clayton PD and Toys for Tots will be collecting new unwrapped toys during this event.



Concord

Thru Dec 24, PHOTOS WITH SANTA, 10:00 AM to 8:00 PM
Reservation Required: (925) 825-0400, Sunvalley Mall, 1 Sun Valley Mall, Concord

Thru Feb 14, ICE AT THE VERANDA, 2001-2003 Diamond Blvd. Concord

Thru Dec 22, MERRY MAKERS MARKET, 11:00 AM to 7:00 PM, Shop local handmade businesses and meet the makers behind the brands. The Veranda, 2001-2003 Diamond Blvd Concord

December 3, TREE OF LIGHTS - HOSPICE EAST BAY, 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM, John Muir Medical Center, 2540 East St Concord

December 6, 2024 HOLIDAY STROLL WITH A LITTLE SIP! 4:00 PM to 8:30 PM, Sip N' Stroll through Downtown Concord restaurants and establishments with treats and drinks! Enjoy the City of Concord's Annual singing Santa and his reindeer, horse & carriage rides, and other fun festivities. Admission: \$20, Todos Santos Plaza, 2151 Salvio St. Concord

December 6, CONCORD'S ANNUAL TREE LIGHTING & MAYOR'S SING - ALONG, 5:30 PM to 8:00 PM. Todos Santos Plaza, 2175 Willow Pass Rd. Concord

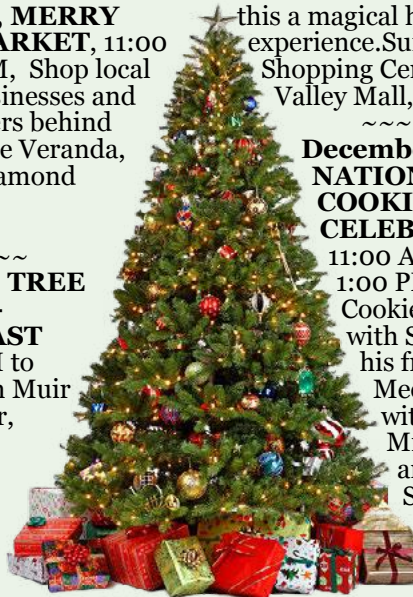
December 6, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1525 and Auxiliary will host Candy Cane Lane Craft & Gift Fair 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Concord Veterans Memorial Building, 2290 Willow Pass Road, Concord.

December 7, HOLIDAY GIFT AND CRAFT FAIR, 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM, We have about 70 vendors and over 300-400 people visit the fair each year. From jewelry to knitted goods to custom cups, and more! Concord Senior Center, 2727 Parkside Cir. Concord

December 8, SENSORY FRIENDLY SANTA, 9:00 AM to 10:30 AM. Individuals with all spectrums of special needs and their families are invited to a private photo session where extra care is taken to support the sensory, physical, and other developmental needs to make

this a magical holiday experience. Sunvalley Shopping Center, 1 Sun Valley Mall, Concord

December 8, NATIONAL COOKIE DAY CELEBRATION, 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Enjoy Cookies & Cocoa with Santa and his friends. Meet & Greet with Santa, Mrs. Claus, and his elves. Storytime, crafting, and more. Fountain Pavilion Park - The Veranda, 2001-2003 Diamond Blvd. Concord



December 8, 15th annual Super Holiday Boutique, 11 AM - 3 PM. Toys, clothing for babies, kids and adults, jewelry, purses, cosmetics, candles, soaps, candy, fashion accessories, home goods, bath and body, books, kitchenware and cooking products, baked goods and so much more will be available. Hilton Concord Hotel, 1970 Diamond Blvd. in Concord. www.superholidayboutique.com

December 13, Gingerbread Celebration-Concord, 2:00-3:30 PM, gather for Gingerbread House making, a photo booth, a magic performance, and all sorts of fun activities! Concord Library, 2900 Salvio St. Concord.

December 14, Kringle Mingle, 9:00am-11:00am, Experience the magic and wonder of the Christmas Season as we prepare for the birth of Jesus! This is a family event with awesome crafts and fun activities for the children. PLUS there is a special visit from Santa! \$10 pp. Tickets: 925-672-5800. St. Bonaventure Catholic Church, 5562 Clayton Road, Concord

December 16, The North Pole Review, Fratello Marionettes, 6 - 7 PM. This music-based production showcases our graceful ice skater Crystal Chandelier, the high-kicking antics of the Russian Trepak Dancers, and a trio of dazzling acrobatic penguins. Puppeteers perform in full view of the audience. Perfect for family events, corporate parties, or any festive gathering. Concord Library, 2900 Salvio

St. Concord.

December 24, Christmas Eve Pageant, 4PM & 6 PM. The story of the birth of Jesus will be re-enacted with participants having speaking and acting parts. St. Bonaventure Catholic Church, 5562 Clayton Road, Concord

December 28, Black & White, Black Tie Gala, 7 PM, celebrate with us the Holiday ending Black Tie Gala enjoy complementary champagne and hors d'oeuvres, while listening to live DJs play the latest R&B, Neo, Soul, and Hip Hop. Hilton Resorts Hotel, 1970 Diamond Blvd Concord. www.blacktieexcellence.com

Pleasant Hill

December 7, 15th annual Super Holiday Boutique, 10 AM - 2 PM. Toys, clothing for babies, kids and adults, jewelry, purses, cosmetics, candles, soaps, candy, fashion accessories, home goods, bath and body, books, kitchenware and cooking products, baked goods and so much more will be available. There will be holiday decorations, ornaments and books galore. Pleasant Hill Community Center, 320 Civic Dr. Pleasant Hill. www.superholidayboutique.com

December 15, Tapestry Ringers and Singers holiday Concert. At 4:00 PM, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. See December 4 and 6 Walnut Creek for details and ticket information.

December 31 Early New Year's, 11:00 am to 1:00 pm and is designed for those early birds who want to celebrate the new year in a family-friendly environment. The festivities will take place at the Plaza, in front of Jack's Restaurant & Bar, and will feature a noon juice toast, balloon drop, face painting, photo booth, and craft station.

January 25, Pleasant Hill Lions Club Annual Crab Feed, 6 PM -11 PM at the Pleasant Hill Senior Center. Tickets are \$70, send an email to lisacosso25@gmail.com or find our event on Eventbrite.

Martinez

December 6, Holiday Parade of Lights, 7 PM,

Downtown Main Street.

December 14, Santa Beer Crawl, 1 PM - 4 PM. Get ready to jingle all the way to Downtown Martinez for the most festive and hoppy event of the season! Downtown Martinez & Co. presents the annual Santa Beer Crawl, where Santa suits and ugly Christmas sweaters are not just encouraged - they're practically required! Immerse yourself in the world of craft breweries as you stroll along the charming streets of downtown. Participating small businesses along Main Street will transform into beer stations, offering a delightful selection of craft brews to tickle your taste buds. Downtown Martinez. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/santa-beer-crawl-2024-tickets-991484736537>

December 15, 3rd Annual Cocoa & Cookies with Black Santa, 12 - 4 PM. Folks of all ages are invited to meet Santa and take a photo with their own device. Crafts and holiday refreshments are provided, and this event is entirely free of charge. Allstate Insurance Office. 3237 Alhambra Avenue Martinez

December 31, "The Vaudeville Follies" 1:30 PM. "The Vaudeville Follies" is a marionette variety show presented in the spirit of the old-time music hall. Our puppeteers perform in full view of the audience. Each performance is designed to engage and enthrall: an opera singer, a trapeze artist, Pierrot and his balloon, a trained dog, and a ballet dancing chicken are just a few of the acts you might see.

Walnut Creek

December 4 and 6, Tapestry Ringers and Singers Sparkle! Concerts. 7:30 PM. New director Phil Johnson will conduct the popular bell ringers and women's chorus in a holiday program at Walnut Creek United Methodist Church. On Sunday, December 15, the group will perform at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Pleasant Hill, at 4:00 PM. Tickets are: \$20 Adults; \$5 Students; FREE for children 12 and under; Available through www.Purplepass.com/tapestryringersandsingers.org, or at the door.

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

December 2024

December 5, COMBO ICE SKATING AND TUBING, 1 PM - 8:30 PM. Have fun Ice Skating and Ice Tubing on the same session for the same price. Sessions 1pm, 3pm, 5pm, 7pm. Walnut Creek On Ice. 1365 Civic Dr., Walnut Creek

December 5, Holiday Parade of Lights & Tree Lighting, 6 PM - 8:30 PM. Join us for an unforgettable evening filled with music, entertainment, and holiday cheer. The highlight? A dazzling parade and a special Tree Lighting Ceremony led by Santa Claus himself! Broadway Plaza, 1275 Broadway Plaza, Walnut Creek

December 14, Diablo Symphony Orchestra 'Home for the Holidays,' 2:00 - 4:45PM, Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church, 1801 Lacassie Ave, Walnut Creek. www.diablosymphony.org

December 14, "The North Pole Review, Duke Ellington's Nutcracker Suite" 2 PM. This music-based production showcases our graceful ice skater Crystal Chandelier, the high-kicking antics of the Russian Trepak Dancers, and a trio of dazzling acrobatic penguins. Puppeteers perform in full view of the audience. Perfect for family events, corporate parties, or any festive gathering. Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church, 1801 Lacassie Ave, Walnut Creek.

Now through January 11, Garden of D'Lights at Ruth Bancroft Garden. A self-guided Holiday lights experience at Ruth Bancroft Garden. 1552 Bancroft Road, Walnut Creek <https://www.ruthbancroftgarden.org/>

December 22, "Upon a Midnight Clear," Sufism Reoriented holiday concert which is filled with stories and songs to celebrate the Light. 4:30-6:30 pm. This festive occasion will also include warm cider, treats, and a living nativity scene. Guests can come when they can and leave when they want. The Sanctuary of Sufism Reoriented, 11 White Horse Court (just off Boulevard Way) in Walnut Creek.

December 29, Grand Menorah Lighting, 4 PM - 6 PM, Join the Chabad of Contra Costa for a Chanukah Celebration featuring Live Music, Juggling Show, Crafts, Latkes, Donuts and more. Broadway Plaza, 1275 Broadway Plaza, Walnut

Creek
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**AT THE LESHER CENTER** December 6 & 7, Once Upon A Christmas, Presented by The Ballet School

**December 12- 22, A Christmas Carol,** The Bay Area's longest running Christmas Carol!

**December 14-22, Visit to the North Pole.**

**December 2-22, The Biggest Gift.** Did you send your letter to Santa?

Leshar Center for the Arts 1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek, <https://www.lesherartscenter.org> Tickets: (925)943-7469 Wed-Sun Noon to 6:00 p.m.

## Lafayette

December 13 (7PM) & 15 (3PM), The Diablo Women's Chorale, 2024 Winter Concert program "Feelin' Good," Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church 49 Knox Drive Lafayette.

## Other Events

**CLAYTON**  
**December 21, Winter Solstice Saunter,** 9:30 AM - 1:00 PM. Join Greenbelt Alliance for a moderate hike of 4-miles round trip with a slight elevation gain. \$6 per vehicle park entrance fee ( \$5 for seniors). Exact cash required; pay at the entrance gate.

**CONCORD: December 7, Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day Ceremony,** 3:45 PM, Beacon Lighting, 5 PM. Cal State University, 47100 IgnacioValley Road, Concord

**CONCORD: Bambino's Free Live Music -** Every Saturday 6:00 - 9:00 PM 1895 Farm Bureau Rd. Concord

**PLEASANT HILL:**  
**February 22, 2025, Blue Devils Crab Feed,** 5 PM. Funds raised benefit the community arts programs of the Blue Devils. [bluedevils.org](http://bluedevils.org)

## Clubs

**Clayton Clubs**  
**Concord NorCal Helping Hands Lion's Club.** <https://www.lionsclubs.org>

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

**Cars 2nd Chance, vehicle / car donation programs** turns donations into cash

for charities Clayton Valley Concord Sunrise Rotary Charitable Fund. <https://www.cars2ndchance.org/>

**Clayton Valley Concord Sunrise Rotary** meets weekly at 7am at the Clayton Valley Charter School Administration Building, 1300 Alberta Way, Concord [www.claytonvalleyrotary.org/CVCSRotary](http://www.claytonvalleyrotary.org/CVCSRotary)

### Concord Clubs

•**Concord NorCal Helping Hands Lion's Club.** [lionsclub.org](http://lionsclub.org)

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

### Martinez Clubs

•**Martinez Rotary Club** meets weekly, 5-6 PM on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month. Campbell Theatre, 636 Ward Street., Martinez [www.martinezrotary.org](http://www.martinezrotary.org)

### Pittsburg Clubs

**December 5, January 9, SIR Branch 19** will hold its Monthly Luncheon, 11 AM with a guest speaker. SIR is a social organization of men who get together and participate in fun activities. Pittsburg Elks' Lodge, 200 Marina Blvd., Pittsburg. [www.sirinc2.org/branch19](http://www.sirinc2.org/branch19) or call: 925 338-1996

### Walnut Creek Clubs

**Rotary Club of Walnut Creek** meets weekly 12:15 to 1:30 on Tuesdays at Assistance League Diablo Valley, 2711 Buena Vista

Ave, Walnut Creek. <https://rotarywc.org>

## Library Events

**Clayton**  
**December 5, Teen Bookscription Swag Bag** – All Day. Dive into a world of literary adventure with our Bookscription Swag Bags for tweens and teens. Your swag bag comes packed with delicious snacks to fuel your reading sessions, exclusive library merchandise to show off your book-lover status, and a fun craft project to spark your creativity. Registration required. <https://tinyurl.com/teenbookscla> or call 925-673-0659 if you have any questions. Clayton Library, 6125 Clayton Rd. For more information please call 925-673-0659. <https://ccclib.org>

**Concord**  
**November 15, Drop-In Tech**

Concord Library, 2900 Salvo St, Concord For more information please call (925) 646-5455. <https://ccclib.org>

### Martinez

**December 14, Martinez Library Storytime,** 10:00am-10:30am. Build early literacy skills with stories, songs, finger plays and fun. Stay after for playtime or a simple craft. Martinez Library, 740 Court

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

### Pleasant Hill

**Friends of the Pleasant Hill Library.** 1st & 3rd Tuesdays of the month. teens (6th grade+.)

**December 10, "Frozen" - Family Movie Night,** 6:00pm-7:30pm. A simple craft will also be available for busy hands. All ages and abilities welcome.

**December 31, New Year's Eve Stay & Play.** 11:00am-12:00pm. Play away on the last day of the year with a variety of toys, bubbles, and puzzles for babies and toddlers.

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

### Walnut Creek

**December 7, Friends of the Walnut Creek Library Book Sale,** 10:00am-4:00pm. Come browse through thousands of new and gently-used books in a wide range of topics.

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

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



**Mt. Diablo Resource Recovery**  
Trusted + Proven + Essential

## Holiday Collection Schedule

Christmas and New Year's Day fall on a Wednesday. There will be **no collection** on these holidays. As a result, all regularly scheduled Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday customers will occur one day later. Regular service will resume after two weeks.

| MON 12/23                    | TUE 12/24                     | WED 12/25                                           | THU 12/26                       | FRI 12/27                      | SAT 12/28                    |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Service for Monday Customers | Service for Tuesday Customers | <b>NO SERVICE</b><br>Christmas Day<br>OFFICE CLOSED | Service for Wednesday Customers | Service for Thursday Customers | Service for Friday Customers |

| MON 12/30                    | TUE 12/31                     | WED 1/1                                              | THU 1/2                         | FRI 1/3                        | SAT 1/4                      |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Service for Monday Customers | Service for Tuesday Customers | <b>NO SERVICE</b><br>New Year's Day<br>OFFICE CLOSED | Service for Wednesday Customers | Service for Thursday Customers | Service for Friday Customers |

# US News and World Report Ranks Local Schools

US News and World Report, “Rankings of Schools”, was recently released comparing all schools in the country. Rankings are based on student performance on state assessments for mathematics and reading/language arts. Half of the score considers proficiency rates, while the other half evaluates scores in the context of socioeconomic demographics.

It is quite a robust report. Here is a brief overview of the rankings of our local high schools within the distribution area of Diablo Gazette readers. To get a much more in depth understanding of each school’s performance, go to <https://www.usnews.com/education/rankings>.

## Northgate High School

Northgate High School is ranked 97th in California. Students have the opportunity to take Advanced Placement®

coursework and exams. The AP® participation rate at Northgate High School is 60%. The total minority enrollment is 55%, and 10% of students are economically disadvantaged. Northgate High School is 1 of 11 high schools in the Mt. Diablo Unified School District. Grades 9-12 Enrollment 1,507. Student-Teacher Ratio 24:1

## Ygnacio Valley High School

Ygnacio Valley High School is ranked 1,063rd in California. Students have the opportunity to take International Baccalaureate coursework and exams. The

IB participation rate at Ygnacio Valley High School is 25%. The total minority enrollment is 95%, and 81% of students are economically disadvantaged. Ygnacio Valley High School is 1 of 11 high schools in the Mt. Diablo Unified School District. Grades 9-12 Enrollment 1,172. Student-Teacher Ratio 19:1.

## College Park High School

College Park High School is ranked 337th in California. Students have the opportunity to take Advanced Placement® coursework and exams. The AP® participation rate at College Park High School is 48%. The total minority enrollment is 60%, and 17% of students are economically disadvantaged. College Park High School is 1 of 11 high schools in the Mt. Diablo Unified School District. Grades 9-12 Enrollment 1,956. Student-Teacher Ratio 25:1

## Concord High School

Concord High School is ranked 1,021st in California. Students have the opportunity to take Advanced

Placement® coursework and exams. The AP® participation rate at Concord High School is 33%. The total minority enrollment is 78%, and 38% of students are economically disadvantaged. Concord High School is 1 of 11 high schools in the Mt. Diablo Unified School District. Grades 9-12 Enrollment 1,167. Student-Teacher Ratio 19:1

## Mt. Diablo High School

Mt. Diablo High School is ranked 1,317-1,652nd within California. Students have the opportunity to take Advanced Placement® coursework and exams. The AP® participation rate at Mt. Diablo High School is 20%. The total minority enrollment is 96%, and 61% of students are economically disadvantaged. Mt. Diablo High School is 1 of 11 high schools in the Mt. Diablo Unified School District. Grades 9-12 Enrollment 1,498. Student-Teacher Ratio 19:1

## Clayton Valley Charter High School

Clayton Valley Charter High School is ranked 372nd within California. Students have the opportunity to take Advanced Placement® coursework and exams. The AP® participation rate at Clayton Valley Charter High School is 56%. The total minority enrollment is 66%, and 21% of students are economically disadvantaged.

Clayton Valley Charter High School is the only high school in the Clayton Valley Charter High District. Grades 9-12 Enrollment 2,381 Student-Teacher Ratio 25:1

## Alhambra Senior High School

Alhambra Senior High School is ranked 550th within California. Students have the opportunity to take Advanced Placement® coursework and exams. The AP® participation rate at Alhambra Senior High School is 45%. The total minority enrollment is 57%, and 38% of students are economically disadvantaged. Alhambra Senior High School is 1 of 3 high schools in the Martinez Unified School District. Grades 9-12 Enrollment 1,105. Student-Teacher Ratio 21:1

## Las Lomas High School

Las Lomas High School is ranked 205th within California. Students have the opportunity to take Advanced Placement® coursework and exams. The AP® participation rate at Las Lomas High School is 62%. The total minority enrollment is 45%, and 12% of students are economically disadvantaged. Las Lomas High School is 1 of 5 high schools in the Acalanes Union High. Grades 9-12 Enrollment 1,571 Student-Teacher Ratio 20:1



# Preparing CVCHS Seniors for Lifelong Success

November was a dynamic time for our Seniors at Clayton Valley Charter High School (CVCHS) filled with amazing opportunities for growth, and moments of celebration as our students took significant steps toward their futures. It’s also a reminder of the exceptional offerings afforded by a college preparatory education and our commitment to fostering a lifelong love of learning.

At CVCHS, we take pride in equipping our students for success, regardless of the paths they choose. While many of our graduates pursue four-year universities, we equally celebrate those who enter the military, attend community college, or pursue technical training. Each journey is unique, and we are proud to support our Seniors every step of the way.

November was particularly notable for the exceptional work of our Counseling department, which ensures that every student has the tools, guidance, and opportunities to achieve their academic and career aspirations. Thanks to the support of the CVCHS Governing Board, we offered all students this Fall the chance to take the SAT standardized test on campus for free. This initiative provides invaluable exposure to a key college admissions component and reduces barriers that many students might face otherwise.

Beyond testing, CVCHS organized enriching opportunities to inspire and inform students. Last month, students toured universities such as the University of the Pacific, University of San Francisco,

San Francisco State, and the University of Nevada, Reno. On-campus, we hosted workshops and partnered with Diablo Valley College to offer the Kick-Start program for students considering the community college route.

November also marked the end of the application season for the California State University and University of California systems. Our Seniors worked diligently to complete their applications, drafting essays and showcasing their achievements. These efforts reflect the determination and resilience of our students as they pursue their dream schools.

This month also brought moments of celebration. During National Signing Day, we honored three student-athletes who signed their National Letters of Intent. Congratulations to Elijah Perryman (Basketball, Utah State University), Molly Gray (Diving, Stanford University), and Fabian Gomez (Baseball, UC Santa Barbara). Their achievements, both academically and athletically, embody the spirit of Ugly Eagle excellence.

A special acknowledgment goes to our Counseling department, whose tireless dedication fuels our students’ success. We are especially grateful for Leah Cash, our outstanding College & Career counselor and NCAA specialist, who plays a pivotal role in guiding students through this critical phase.

Leah, now in her second year at CVCHS, previously served at San Juan High School in Sacramento. She holds a BA in

Psychology from San Jose State University, an MS in Educational Counseling from National University, and a PPS credential.

A former student-athlete herself, Leah played basketball in high school, ran track, and competed in intramural basketball at SJSU. Most notably, she played professionally this past summer for the Women’s Premier Basketball Association. Leah’s firsthand experience with the college recruitment process informs her deep understanding of NCAA requirements and the unique needs of our student-athletes.

As we move into the final stretch of the year, I encourage our Seniors to take pride in their accomplishments thus far and to stay motivated as they prepare for the next exciting chapter of their lives. At CVCHS, we are committed to ensuring that every student has the resources and support to achieve their dreams, and November stands as a testament to that mission.



National Signing Day honoring CVCHS student-athletes Elijah Perryman, Molly Gray, and Fabian Gomez.



Leah Cash, lead College & Career counselor, is making a tremendous impact with CVCHS students.



# The Arts Page

## LAMORINDA ARTS ALLIANCE



### Art Makes the World Go Round

by Paula Oesterling

### aRt Cottage

by FROgard www.artcottage.info

#### Crafty Gifts

#### at Art Cottage Holiday Boutique

Our 14th Annual Holiday Boutique is in full swing featuring many one-of-a-kind gifts. There are some great stocking stuffers and hostess gifts. The Holiday Boutique is open Wednesday through Saturday, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., until December 21. Come in and browse. The aRt Cottage is located at 2238 Mount Diablo Street in Concord near downtown.

I am especially proud of our youngest artist Athena Acevedo, age 10. She is becoming quite the entrepreneur. Her hand-crocheted Fluffies were a big hit at the opening reception.



Athena Acevedo



Crochet Fluffies by Athena Acevedo



Crochet items by Julie Van Wyk (scarf/hat)



Ceramics by Donna Arganbright

#### The Magic of Winter Featured at the Papillon Café & Gallery



There's a chill in the air, the warmth of getting together with family and friends. This is a great time to savor a hot chocolate, gourmet coffee or tea and enjoy the paintings of your artist neighbors and welcome a new season and a new year.

Lamorinda Arts Alliance is a diverse group of artists, each on a unique artistic journey, whose work reflects their experiences, dreams, passions and heritage. The "Winter" exhibit was curated by LAA member Karen Baden Thapa. The exhibit runs through January 14.

For more information on Lamorinda Arts Alliance and to see more work by the member artists, visit LAA4Art.org. Papillon Cafe Gallery is in La Fiesta Square, at 67 Lafayette Circle, Lafayette.

Main Street Arts proudly present "Art Makes the World Go Round!" This show, created by the gallery members, will showcase pieces that have a circular motif. Explore each artist's clever perspective on this theme. The show will run through December 29.

In addition to the new guest wall, each member of the gallery has revealed their new wall of art. Samples of this work can also be seen on the website, mainstreetarts.net.

Another featured display this month is the tree of hand-painted and hand-crafted ornaments. Each piece is a one-of-a-kind little art miniature made by a gallery member.

Visit on December 6 for First Friday from 6:00 – 9:00



December Prize by John Tullis



Main Street Arts Tree

p.m. to enjoy the artist reception.

On December 7, Main Street Arts will offer a free holiday craft hop for the kids. Bring the kids by from 12 noon-5:00 p.m. as they spend the afternoon making art.

Be sure to sign up for Main Street Arts' monthly art giveaway. This month you could win a piece by John Tullis.

GALLERY HOURS: 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Wednesday-Saturday, 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. Sunday, and 6:00 -9:00 p.m. on First Fridays.

Have the happiest of holidays, everyone!

## Diablo Women's Chorale Has Us "Feelin' Good!"

Diablo Women's Chorale's (DWC) presentation of "Feelin' Good!" is a musical celebration guaranteed to lift your spirits this holiday season. This performance blends jazzy vibes, seasonal cheer, and timeless hits from icons like Nina Simone, Spice Girls, and Elton John. Backed by a brass ensemble and live musicians, DWC's harmonies celebrate life's simple pleasures.

Founded in 1942 during World War II, the Diablo Women's Chorale has thrived for over eight decades as a vibrant secular choir in the San Francisco East Bay. Today, it unites sixty women across generations who share a passion for spreading joy through music and performing for ever-larger audiences.

DWC Board President, Sherry Dorfman offers, "The Diablo Women's Chorale has such a long history dating back to the wartime years of the 1940s. Many members have been with the DWC for decades, including Suzanne Salter, who joined in 1997: "DWC has become an integral part of my life. I love to sing, and I've enjoyed the variety of music over the years."

Barbara Burkhart, who joined in 1998, finds "...a great deal of joy in singing with the other members — so uplifting, with warm and cherished friendships gained over the years."

Kerri Dwyer, a member since 2003,



feels the DWC "offers a creative outlet in a supportive and nurturing environment. We sing, laugh, and enjoy one another. What more could you ask for?"

At the helm is Erin Fishler, whose dynamic direction reflects a career of rich performance and teaching experience. Accompanist pianist and composer Rebecca Hass adds her brilliance as an accomplished recording artist and educator.

Catch the energy and music on Friday, December 13, 2024, at 7:00 p.m., and Sunday, December 15, 2024, at 3:00 p.m., at Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church, 49 Knox Drive, Lafayette. Tickets are available at diablowomenschorale.org and on Facebook at Diablo Women's Chorale.

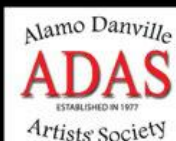
DWC welcomes new members in January and August and performs seasonal concerts in the spring and fall each year. DWC is a 501(c)(3).

### Blackhawk Gallery

Fall Reflections

October 25th - January 19, 2025

The holiday reception is on Saturday, December 7th from 5-7 pm



3416 Blackhawk Plaza Circle, Danville, CA www.adas4art.org

Join the Blackhawk Gallery in celebrating the holiday season at a special reception on Saturday, December 7th, from 5:00 –7:00 p.m. at 3416 Blackhawk Plaza Circle, Danville. This event is free and open to the public.

## Winter's Embrace: A Wonderland of Art at JOR Fine Art Gallery

JOR Fine Art Gallery is excited to present Winter's Embrace, an upcoming exhibit featuring stunning works by 34 talented gallery artists and two exceptional guest artists. This collection showcases the beauty, magic, and emotions of the winter season through a wide range of artistic styles and mediums.

From serene landscapes to bold, abstract interpretations, Winter's Embrace offers a unique exploration of winter's charm and mystery.

Whether you're a passionate art lover or just curious, this exhibit promises to inspire and captivate. Experience this remarkable showcase of creativity and talent, perfect for anyone looking to be moved by the wonders of winter. Thru February 2, 2025. 1026 Oak St. in Clayton.



## Pairing with Christmas Ales

I love traditions because taking part in them allows you to recall fond memories of years past. Traditions are worth preserving whether they are spending time with people you see only once a year or making recipes with seasonal foods. This year, my family will start a new tradition for our Christmas dinner. We will pair our meal with a Christmas ale, a beverage that is only available during the holiday season.

Christmas ales range in weight from medium to heavy and usually have classic Christmas spice flavors like ginger, clove and nutmeg. Start your meal with the creamy Butternut Squash Bisque below and choose a medium-weight Christmas ale to go with it. Look for those labeled red or brown ale, which have alcohol levels of five to seven percent. These pretty, red-colored beers will look beautiful with the orange color of the soup and echo the nutmeg flavors nicely.

When moving on to the main course, look for a beer that falls in the "imperial stout" category. Created in the 18th century, imperial stout beers are characterized by extra hops and made extra strong, so they kept well on the long voyage from England to Russia. Their higher alcohols are balanced by the rich complexity developed by longer roasting of the malt. They are usually a tad more bitter than lighter beers and often have flavors of coffee and chocolate.

Imperial stouts are the perfect partner to this Brown Sugar-Pineapple Ham recipe, as the sweetness in the glaze will offset the bitterness of the beer. Accompany the ham with Mashed Sweet Potatoes and Green Bean Casserole and you have a traditional holiday meal.

To end the meal on a warm note, choose a single malt Scotch whisky and pair with Coconut Fruit Cake. The nutty sweetness of the coconut and condensed milk provides a rich backdrop for the pungent liquor. Additionally, the fruits in the cake are echoed in the dried fruit and orange peel so often found in good quality Scotch.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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

### Butternut Squash Bisque

#### INGREDIENTS

- 2 tbsp. canola oil
- 2 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 cup diced onion
- 1-1/2 cups diced carrots
- 8 cups peeled and cubed butternut squash
- 6 cups vegetable stock
- salt and ground black pepper to taste
- ground nutmeg to taste
- 1 cup heavy cream (optional)

#### DIRECTIONS

Heat the oil and melt the butter in a large pot over medium heat. Cook and stir the onion in the butter and oil under tender.

Mix the carrots and squash into the pot. Pour in vegetable stock, and season with salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer until vegetables are tender.

In a blender or food processor, puree the soup mixture until smooth. Return to the pot and stir in the heavy cream. Heat through, but do not boil. Serve warm with a dash of nutmeg.

Yield: 8 servings

### Brown Sugar – Pineapple Ham

#### INGREDIENTS

- 7 - 9 pound fully cooked ham



Ham Image Alison Bickle

- 1/2 cup of brown sugar
- 1/2 cup maple syrup
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 4 canned pineapple rings, thinly sliced

#### DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 275°. Place the ham face down in a roasting pan. Cover tightly with foil and bake for 1 1/2 hours.

Meanwhile, in a medium saucepan, combine the brown sugar, maple syrup and mustard and bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring constantly. Cook until reduced slightly, about 2 minutes; set aside.

Brush the baked ham with the glaze, then top with the pineapple rings, securing them with toothpicks. Return the ham to the oven and bake uncovered until heated through, 25 to 30 minutes

Yield: 1 ham

### Coconut Fruit Cake

#### INGREDIENTS

- 14 ounces sweetened flaked coconut
- 8 ounces of chopped sugar rolled dates
- 16 ounces pecan pieces
- 8 ounces candied cherries
- 8 ounces diced candied pineapple
- 2 (14 ounce) cans of sweetened condensed milk

#### DIRECTIONS

Place coconut, dates, and pecan pieces in a very large (7-quart or larger) bowl. Mix well (hands work best). Add the cherries, pineapple, and sweetened condensed milk. Mix well, rest at room temp.

Spray two (2) - 9"x5" loaf pans and line with waxed (or parchment) paper so the paper comes up past the side of the pan. Spray the paper and fill with mixture. Wet hands to keep batter from sticking and pack mixture firmly into pan. Bake at 300° for 1 hour, or until lightly browned. Remove from oven and let cool for 10 minutes in pan.

Loosen the paper/cake from pan and turn pan upside down onto a paper-lined cookie sheet. Lift pan from the cake. Remove paper from bottom of cake right away. Cool completely and wrap in waxed (or parchment) paper, then in heavy duty aluminum foil. May be refrigerated up to three months or frozen up to one year.

Yield: 2 loaves



## The Advantages of Home Warranties

As a homeowner, ensuring that your property remains in top condition is a priority. One way to safeguard your investment and provide peace of mind is by purchasing a home warranty. While many homeowners may not fully understand what a home warranty is or its benefits, this financial tool can offer significant advantages that can help you protect your home and save money in the long run.

Homeownership comes with its share of surprises, and unexpected repairs can be financially burdensome. A home warranty is a service contract that covers the repair or replacement of major home systems and appliances that may break down due to normal wear and tear. Unlike homeowner's insurance, which typically covers damage from unforeseen events like natural disasters, a home warranty focuses on the functionality of systems and appliances such as HVAC units, plumbing, electrical systems, and kitchen appliances.

One of the primary benefits of a home warranty is the potential for significant cost savings. When a covered system or appliance breaks down, homeowners can avoid hefty repair bills. Instead of paying for repairs out of pocket, homeowners only need to pay a service fee when they request service from the warranty provider. This can be especially beneficial for those on a tight budget or for first-time homeowners who may not have set aside emergency funds for repairs.

With a home warranty, homeowners can enjoy the convenience of having

access to a network of pre-screened, qualified service technicians. When an appliance or system fails, homeowners can simply contact their warranty provider, who will handle the process of finding and scheduling a technician. This saves time and reduces the stress of searching for reliable repair services.

For homeowners considering selling their property, having a home warranty in place can make a home more appealing to potential buyers. A home warranty demonstrates that the seller is committed to maintaining the property and provides buyers with added security, knowing that they have coverage for unexpected repairs shortly after purchasing the home. This can result in a smoother sales process and potentially higher offers.

Many home warranty providers offer customizable plans, allowing homeowners to select coverage options that fit their specific needs. This flexibility enables homeowners to choose which appliances and systems they want to include, ensuring they have protection where it matters most. Whether it's a central air conditioning unit or a washer and dryer, homeowners can tailor their warranty to suit their lifestyle and home.

In today's real estate market, a home warranty can be a valuable asset for homeowners. It provides financial protection, convenience, and peace of mind, making it an investment worth considering.

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1119 Oakwood Cir, Clayton

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**\$1,050,000 PENDING MULTIPLE OFFERS**

3 Xavier Pl, Clayton

**Charming & Updated Single Story Rancher** tucked away on a large corner lot nestled in a serene neighborhood offering timeless style with modern comforts. 4 bedrooms, 2 baths, approx. 2060sf on an approx. .24 acre lot with an attached 2-car garage.

**\$1,325,000 SOLD**

56 La Honda Ct, Clayton

**Fantastic & Updated Two Story in Regency Meadows** at the end of a court situated on a generous approx. .28 acre lot featuring refreshing freeform in-ground pool & spa. 4 bedrooms, 2.5 baths, approx. 2390sf with an attached 3-car garage.

**\$1,750,000 SOLD OVER LIST MULTIPLE OFFERS**

50 Mountaire Pl, Clayton

**Sensational Remodeled Dana Hills Rancher** nestled at the end of a court on a premium view lot backing to Mt. Diablo State Park. 4 bedrooms, 3 baths, approx. 2637sf on an approx. .32 acre lot with an attached 3-car garage. Beach entry freeform in-ground pool w/ built in spa & cascading waterfall.

**Clayton Market Update**

| Address               | Sales Price | SF   | Bed/Bath | Sales Date |
|-----------------------|-------------|------|----------|------------|
| 1378 Yosemite Cir     | \$1,100,000 | 1592 | 3/2      | 10/3/2024  |
| 6028 Golden Eagle Way | \$1,050,000 | 2536 | 4/2.5    | 10/4/2024  |
| 8020 Kelok Way        | \$1,650,000 | 2542 | 3/2.5    | 10/11/2024 |
| 51 Mt Olympus Pl      | \$1,200,000 | 2152 | 4/2      | 10/11/2024 |
| 50 Mountaire Pl       | \$1,750,000 | 2637 | 4/3      | 10/22/2024 |
| 980 Oak St            | \$910,000   | 2583 | 4/2      | 11/4/2024  |
| 333 Saclan Ter        | \$880,000   | 1904 | 3/2.5    | 11/15/2024 |

**Concord Market Update**

| Address                | Sales Price | SF   | Bed/Bath | Sales Date |
|------------------------|-------------|------|----------|------------|
| 5721 Roanwood Way      | \$1,060,000 | 1919 | 4/2      | 10/25/2024 |
| 4413 Weeping Spruce Ct | \$1,210,000 | 2560 | 5/3      | 10/28/2024 |
| 1842 Landana Dr        | \$836,000   | 1716 | 3/2      | 10/28/2024 |
| 1160 Ironwood Way      | \$1,025,000 | 2142 | 4/2.5    | 10/29/2024 |
| 1823 Lynwood Dr        | \$789,000   | 1568 | 3/2      | 11/5/2024  |
| 2055 Sierra Rd #114    | \$390,000   | 962  | 2/1      | 11/5/2024  |
| 4273 Armand Dr         | \$775,000   | 1295 | 3/2      | 11/13/2024 |

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Based on information from CCRAR/Paragon MLS as of 11/20/24. All data, including all measurements and calculations of area, is obtained from various sources and has not been, and will not be, verified by broker or MLS. All information should be independently reviewed and verified for accuracy. Properties may or may not be listed by the office/agent presenting the information.

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- Choice of Entrées includes**
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## New Year Menu \$75 pp

- Asparagi • Starter Choice of
- Sweet Red Bell Pepper Soup or • Citrus Beet Salad
- Choice of Entrées includes**
- Scampi Risotto • Pork Ossobuco
- Lobster Ravioli • Moroccan Chicken
- Chicken Marsala • Pasta Carbonara • Short Ribs
- Dolci~Choice of Chocolate

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# Around Martinez



by Brianne Zorn, Mayor, City of Martinez

## In-Water Improvements of the Martinez Municipal Fishing Pier Completed

As we were gathering with friends and family to kick off the holiday season, the City of Martinez quietly reached a critical milestone in the revitalization of our waterfront: the completion of the in-water work phase of the Martinez Municipal Fishing Pier Renovation Project!

Our Fishing Pier was first built in 1934 and portions were rebuilt in 1976. It has been enjoyed by thousands of area visitors each year, as it is one of the only fishing piers in the State of California where you can fish without a license. However the pier was closed to the public after a safety assessment in 2019 concluded that decades of natural deterioration necessitated significant repairs and renovations.

The in-water improvements to the fishing pier include the installation of grout-filled fiberglass sleeves around approximately 40 damaged timber pilings, repairs to existing decking support system, and repairs to an existing breakwater aluminum sheet pile to block sedimentation into the marina. The next phase of the improvements will include the removal and replacement of damaged existing railings with wood railings and guardrails; the removal of damaged, weathered existing timber decking and replacement with new installation of ADA-compliant decking; installation of an aluminum gangway bridge to the pier's entrance; new lights and electrical fixtures; and new benches and picnic tables.

The total project budget is \$3.1 million, with the primary source of funding a \$2.5 million Community Project Funding federal earmark awarded to the City in March 2023, championed by Congressman Mike Thompson and supported by Congressman John



Martinez City Council, staff, and participants at the "ground" breaking ceremony on November 7.



The contractor removed the large tree from below the fishing pier as part of the in-water work.

Garamendi.

The renovation of the fishing pier is merely the first of many improvements at the Martinez Waterfront, expected in 2025. The fully completed pier is scheduled to reopen to the public in spring 2025.

The City Council has approved a contract with F3 Marinas for the management of our marina which will commence on January 1, 2025. Staff have been evaluating a potential partnership for the renovation and expansion of the bait shop. Additionally, City staff submitted a \$20 million grant application to the US EPA to restore the dredged material ponds, refurbish portions of the seawall, and build a community resilience education and events center at the marina. The recipients of the grant are anticipated to be notified in early 2025.

I wish you all the very happiest holiday season and look forward to seeing you at the Martinez Waterfront in the new year.



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

Explore Martinez  
www.martinezchamber.com

12/7  
12-5PM

## HOLIDAY CRAFT HOP

hosted by Busywork Craft Supply

Get in the holiday spirit with a day of cheerful crafting in Downtown Martinez! Free craft stations will be located at businesses throughout downtown. Pick up your crafting list at Busywork Craft Supply starting Dec 1st.

**free!** family friendly!

**Saturday, Dec 7**  
12-5pm  
Downtown Martinez

sponsored by  
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**DECEMBER 14 | 1-4PM**

downtownmartinez.org/santa-beer-crawl

## Community Events

- Dec 1-23 Santa House (hours vary)
- Dec 06 Holiday Frolic Light Parade
- Dec 07 Holiday Craft Hop
- Dec 11 City Council Farewells & Oaths of Office
- Dec 14 Santa Beer Crawl
- Dec 28 Hanukkah Celebration
- Sundays Farmers Market

Wishing everyone a happy and safe holiday season!

www.cityofmartinez.org/events



# Semi-Private Premier Introduces Hella Sushi to Market and Main

Photos by Thomas Rimpel

Hella Sushi is not your usual sushi restaurant.. It's a dining experience where they proclaim, "street art meets culinary craft."

This latest addition to Market and Main downtown Martinez features an Omakase dining experience, where Chef Benjamin "Tetsu" Stroughter curates the meal and the customer leaves all the details to the chef. Omakase is a Japanese phrase that means "I'll leave it up to you".

It has quietly been operating inside Market and Main since August and has already acquired a loyal following. It has recently moved from the back to its now street-front location, replacing Pizza Amore. On November 26, guests were invited to a special premier presentation of Hella Sushi with Chef Tetsu preparing customized sushi dishes.



Sushi has been a staple of Chef Tetsu's entire life. Growing up in Japan until his teen years before moving to the United States, he has worked in Japanese restaurants his entire adult life (for 26 years), including over 10 years at Mikuni in Sacramento.

"They had 3, 4 different locations. Each location had about 14 to 15 chefs. So, when I worked all those locations, I met over 100 chefs and picked up what's good and

what's not good."

And his last job was the Omakase, serving courses on a yacht in the South Beach Harbor in Alameda. "We also visited and served private home catering with the same Omakase setting, for five to six years."

In addition to private/custom dining experience, Chef Tetsu recently conducted a Sushi Class where patrons learned to prepare their own Sushi dish.

"I set up all the ingredients and the cutting boards, knife, and everything. I showed them how to make sushi rolls and some nigiri sushi. I served them a few different variations of sake pasting. People really enjoyed it." Due to its success, plans are to make that a monthly event.

Hella Sushi claims their menu is a fresh and respectful interpretation of traditional Japanese cuisine. From traditional sashimi to signature rolls, experience the freshest catch of the day sourced from local and international fish markets.

Located at 610 Main Street in Martinez. Open Wednesday through Sunday 12P - 8M.



## What Martinezians Have to Be Grateful For

by Craig Lazzeretti, Martinez News & Views

While there are plenty of challenges in our city, there are also plenty of reasons to be grateful this Thanksgiving. Here's a few from my list; what's on yours?

Without getting too political, I thought I'd share a quick list of things Martinezians may be grateful for this holiday season as it pertains to the state of our city and community. Of course, this is based on my own perspective, but feel free to add your own thoughts of gratitude.

While I don't always agree with the decisions and priorities out of City Hall, I find our city leadership team to be generally hard-working, ethical and committed to serving the public interest (and striving to learn and do better when they fall short). They've weathered a challenging budget environment, achieved greater stability in city staffing and resources, and shown a real desire to make meaningful progress on a range of issues, including the marina/waterfront, economic development and housing, which hopefully will lead to more tangible results in 2025. That's not something to be taken for granted at any level of politics or public service these days.

Similarly, I believe the Martinez Unified School District has made positive strides in recent years in prioritizing the academic and emotional welfare of all our students, regardless of background, and helping to put them on a more positive path after the chaos and trauma of the pandemic period.

In addition to prioritizing academic success, school board members and district leaders have also focused on addressing racial, gender and other inequities that exist in our education system in an effort to make every student feel valued and respected.

And voters just rewarded their efforts by passing a bond measure to complete the district's rebuilding and renovation of school sites — two years after rejecting such a measure — that will give every student from pre-K to adult education top-notch facilities in which to learn and grow.

I am thankful to live in a low-crime city, particularly in comparison to many neighboring jurisdictions, which reflects our city's commitment to public safety and our residents' general respect for laws, order, and treating their fellow Martinezians with integrity and kindness.

I am thankful for the activism that so many Martinezians show in making their voices heard not only on issues that affect them personally but that affect all our residents in some way, shape or form. We don't always agree (nor should we) on strategies or outcomes, but healthy dialogue, robust debate and, at times, political conflict are the heartbeat of democracy. Our democracy can't thrive without those things — and without the courage and commitment of people who expend the time and effort to engage publicly on issues that they care passionately about.

Of course, Martinez, like all communities, is far from perfect, and much work remains to make it a city that truly serves the interests and needs of all its residents — and is a welcoming place for new ones.

I am forever grateful on this day for your support (financial and otherwise), encouragement and feedback (positive and negative) to this experiment in local journalism that I launched two years ago. What about Martinez makes you grateful? Please feel free to shoot me an email and share your thoughts. craig.lazzerati@gmail.com.

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# Crockett: Women Ownership Behind the Businesses

by Norma Black, President, Crockett Chamber of Commerce and Rosemary Liden

Crockett a Bay Area hidden hamlet of 3,574 residents, more endearingly referred to as Sugartown, is home to the C&H sugar refinery and was founded by Italian and Portuguese immigrants.

C&H at one time employed most of the town's residents. Crockett's topography is similar to small villages in Italy and Greece. Boasting some of the most affordable commercial rents in the East Bay Area, Crockett is having a renaissance of businesses which 11 out of 15 retail stores are currently operated by women owners.

Miriam Cox, owner of Revival Coffee, moved here from the Pacific Northwest where coffee houses are practically on every corner. Miriam has a unique take on her coffee business. She serves out of a small travel trailer that is adjacent to a cozy and welcoming outdoor seating area with a bohemian community vibe. It is one of Crockett's great meeting places. Miriam creates her own syrups, sauces and handcrafted coffee drinks to satisfy all your cravings.

Crockett has two bars for tasty cocktails and brews, both co-owned by women, Christina Joan Nicora and her family own Club Tac, established in 1923 and is a hub for locals to gather after work and chat about their day. They serve up a killer Smashburger and great pub food. On weekends, you can find outstanding music with local and well-known talent.

Up on Second Avenue around the corner, Laura Esterling with her brother Matt, co-own Toot's Tavern. Known as one of the oldest bars in Contra Costa County, you will be welcomed by a stuffed grizzly bear and a curious moose head on the wall while listening to live music jams during the week and weekends.

Flowers Fresco, owner Mariko DiBiase, surrounds herself and the town with the sweet scent of a variety of beautiful flowers. For the holiday season, Mariko hosts Wednesday night workshops on flower arranging and floral gifts for the holidays. Mariko's second location is called The Jungalo, which is also on Second Avenue. It features indoor and outdoor plants, Macramé designs and gifts.

Subie Brown of Passionate Feast shares the space with Flowers Fresco. Subie is an avid collector of dinnerware, glassware and used books from the vintage era.

Her collection of vintage jewelry is magical. A visit to Passionate Feast will certainly bring you back to that special place and time.

Across the street you will find Funky Frog Gift Shop owned by Teresa Molinar. Teresa's gifts include handmade crocheted clothing and accessories, along with a classic and trendy hand-crafted jewelry collection. A perfect place for gifts for children and adults alike.

Next door is Sugar City Pet Store, owned by Lisa



Flowers Fresco, owner Mariko DiBiase, surrounds herself and the town with the sweet scent of a variety of beautiful flowers



Cose Belle offers trendy clothing & accessories. 628 2nd Avenue, Crockett

Robinson. Lisa designs and sews dog and cat collars in a variety of shapes and sizes. Her store is home to beautiful exotic birds, parrots and cockateels that are quite chatty. On a sunny day you might be able to catch Lisa outside with one of her gorgeous birds perched on her shoulder.

At 720 Second Avenue, two sisters, Samantha Bartlett and Jessie Ammons-Casswell, co-own the Cat Vintage & Antique Store. Their collections are some of the most unique vintage and retro treasures in the area. A perfect spot for that "hard to find" gift for someone. This store is truly the cat's meow.

Julia D'Alo, new to the Crockett scene owns Cose Belle Boutique, a soon-to-be favorite fashion stop. Julia's future plans include Brackish Men's Shoppe & Barber along with "The Sicilian" Restaurant on Second Ave. at Wanda Street. We hear she will be offering secret family recipes from Mama Rosa, the original Sicilian Chef. More to come.

Rosemary is located across from the Historical C&H factory, owned by Rosemary Liden, and hosts seasonal pop-ups and events, offering eclectic clothing, jewelry, and unique gifts, including her personal concierge services.

Be sure to visit these Crockett businesses during the holidays, we are expecting a fabulous holiday season. Make a day of it, shop and enjoy some of the best food stops around. Congratulations to all of our women-owned entrepreneurs!

## NuVisionCares Holiday Toy Drive to Brighten Holidays for Local Families

NuVision Credit Union has kicked-off its annual NuVisionCares Holiday Toy Drive, which runs through December 9. The toy drive will help bring a brighter Holiday Season to less fortunate children and families in the communities of Berkeley and Martinez.

During the event, NuVision will be collecting toy donations



at its two Bay Area branches, located in Berkeley and at 634 Ferry St.

in Martinez. All donations from the toy drive will go directly to local families in need during the Holiday Season.

To donate, bring new,



unwrapped gifts to either NuVision branch or donate online by ordering from our Amazon Kids Wish Lists for both communities. [nuvisionfederal.com/event/bay-area-toy-drive-2024](http://nuvisionfederal.com/event/bay-area-toy-drive-2024)

# Wood Duck Population Rebounding with Help of Nest Boxes Program

By Jill Hedgecock

In 1991, wood duck populations were in severe decline due to the lack of nesting habitat. To compensate for the lack of natural tree cavities, California Waterfowl launched the California Wood Duck Program to increase both nest boxes and citizen involvement in the fate of wood ducks. Since then, nearly 992,000 ducklings have hatched statewide.

Locally, the Mount Diablo Bird Alliance (MDBA) maintains and monitors wood duck nest boxes along both San Pablo and Upper San Leandro Reservoirs. The MDBA program has been in place for about thirty years. This year, biologists Julie Woodruff and Andrew Ford along with several volunteers, monitored sixteen nest boxes at the Upper San Leandro Reservoir and thirty-two at the San Pablo (SP) Reservoir.

“Wood duck nest box usage seems to be variable,” says Woodruff. “It was low a few years ago when California was experiencing drought conditions, but this last year there seemed to be a lot of nests and/or nesting attempts at the SP Reservoir. One wood duck female in particular that we had banded in 2020 returned this year to the same nest box and laid ten eggs.”

Jerry Britten, president of MDBA, volunteered to be part of the 2024 California Wood Duck Program. He has always wanted to witness “jump day,” when the ducklings launch themselves out of the nest box. His wish was granted this year when he observed a nest with both hatchlings and eggs.

“Knowing that the hatched chicks spend very little time in the nest boxes,” said Britten, “I hoped that the remaining eggs would hatch that day and that the next morning would be “jump day” when



Julie Woodruff checking a wood duck nest box.



the chicks leave the nest.”

The next morning, Britten’s three-hour wait was rewarded when the hen, after checking the area and deciding it was safe, hopped to the ground and waddled to the water, calling her chicks. After about five minutes, one chick launched itself out. Four more chicks followed within minutes, and soon the family joined the hen and swam off.

In addition to wood ducks, squirrels, mice, owls and bees invaded some boxes this year. This year, only two of the sixteen boxes hatched wood ducks at the Upper San Leandro Reservoir, and one

Western Screech Owl was found inside a box.

At SP Reservoir, seventy-three eggs hatched, and one adult and four nestling Western screech owls were found in the nest boxes thus far. In 2025, the program will be expanded to include nine nest boxes at Briones Reservoir.

Bird enthusiasts are invited to learn more about MDBA’s programs ([www.mtdiabloaudubon.org](http://www.mtdiabloaudubon.org)) and anyone wishing to learn more about the nest box program should email [President@mtdiablobirds.org](mailto:President@mtdiablobirds.org).

*Jill Hedgecock has a master’s degree in environmental management and a bachelor’s degree in biology. Her love of nature inspired her to write the award-winning novel, “Rhino in the Room” and the sequel, “Queen of the Rhino.”*

Photos by Jerry Britten



## Microgreens

### Deliver Major Benefits!

Many all-natural gardeners tend to their indoor veggies this time of year. The hottest trend in indoor food production is growing “Microgreens.” They only need water, indirect sun, a flat container, and 3-4 weeks of growing before harvest. You can grow microgreens year-round; they are nutritionally dense (500-700% more than full-grown plants) and contain more antioxidants per ounce. They are also inexpensive to grow and packed with flavor. So, why not give them a try?

Microgreens are young edible vegetable or herb seedlings. Stems are 2-3 inches tall and have fully formed starter leaves, called cotyledons. These seedlings are packed closely together on trays or in hydroponic containers. They are in their first several weeks of life when you harvest them for food or garnish and require only water and indirect sun at this stage. They add fun and deliciousness to any meal.

Seed packets can be purchased in garden centers or online. They should be fresh (not past their packet expiration date), and organic (untreated). Store them in a cool, dark, dry place until you are ready.

You will need one or more flat, shallow



Microgreen Growing is Easy- Courtesy Kathy Craig



Radish makes a tasty Microgreen in Salads- Courtesy Uof Florida Food&Agriculture

(about 1-inch) growing trays with bottom holes for water drainage and absorption. Or you can use hydroponic

**Naked Gardener continues...**

## Plan B is for Bambino’s, the Best Pizza in Town

By David King

When Henryk Glodek purchased Bambino’s in Concord in March of 2023, it was his life’s Plan B should his primary job end. He knew he would be tasked with carrying forward the popular legacy of serving the best pizza in town.

Originally from Poland, Glodek has lived in five different countries including in a refugee camp in Italy, briefly, before living in Canada for 17 years. He met his current wife in Russia who had family already living in the Seattle area. In 2012, they moved to the States.

Glodek worked in technology risk management for Bank of West until Bank of Montreal acquired it. He knew he would need a back up plan should the acquisition lead to a job loss. That’s when he searched the internet and discovered Bambino’s in Concord was for sale.

In March 2023, Bambino’s became his. Taking something successful and making it better is no easy task. But Glodek invested in some cosmetic and equipment upgrades including its new mural on the exterior entrance. With such success, there’s been minor changes to staff, and a gentleman’s agreement with the previous owners, who still run Bambino’s in Vallejo, to make virtually no changes to the menu or recipes.

Instead, Glodek has introduced entertainment. Saturdays are now accompanied with live music and dancing from 6:00 – 9:00 PM. Comedy night is always the last Tuesday of the month beginning at 7:30 PM. (but not this month due to it falling on New Year’s Eve.)

Also new, Bambino’s now serves a daily lunch buffet. The all-you-can-eat fare



includes, various pasta dishes, Italian chicken dishes such as Chicken Marsala, Chicken Piccata, Chicken Parmigiana, pizza, and salad bar. All at a modest \$18.95. Salad Bar Only is \$9.95 which also includes several toppings and fresh fruit. Bread sticks.

Daily specials are painted on the storefront windows and Happy hour is 3:00 – 6:00 PM daily, except on NFL Football nights. On those nights, Happy Hour continues until close.

“It’s been extremely rewarding to please people. I have many returning customers,” says Glodek.

While the food and service continue to bring customers back, and take-out and catering is still popular, Glodek desires to take Bambino’s to the next level to make this Italian casual dining experience a regular attraction for Concordians. Bambino’s is located at 1895 Farm Bureau Rd. at Willow Pass.

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## Naked Gardener continued

trays with a fine mesh separating the seeds on top from the water supply below. You will also need a spray bottle for tap water spritzes, sterilized scissors, a growing spot with 10+ hours per day of indoor light (or a grow lamp), and tray covering material in the form of a dome for the first week or so. Aluminum foil works well.

For trays, purchase a sterile growing medium such as coconut coir, recycled cardboard, or jute to maintain consistent moisture. For hydroponic containers, you will need a growing pad cut to size or paper towels (but they dry out quickly), a hydroponic base of fine mesh screen, and a sterilized container.

Soak larger seeds overnight. First, mist the tray base with water. Add a sterile growing medium such as coconut coir. (Do not use potting soil or other fertilizer mixes, as seeds do not need them and produce an unpleasant off-taste in sprouts.) Evenly scatter about 1 teaspoon of seeds per tray. Mist the seeds and growing material with water until they are the wetness of a wrung-out sponge. Cover the container and check each day until nearly all seeds have germinated. Then remove the cover and place them in bright indirect sun. Maintain consistent moisture by placing the tray in a larger watertight container that holds standing water for the growing tray to absorb through its bottom holes.

Harvest time varies by plant type but generally, it is about two weeks after germination when seedlings are 1-3" tall and starter leaves are fully formed and green. Use scissors to clip seedlings just above soil level and wrap them in paper towels (without washing them). They are ready to eat, but they can be refrigerated for up to a week. Compost the remaining plant material and throw out the old growing medium. Sanitize reusable trays in a dishwasher.

Slower growing (18-26 days) microgreen varieties include radishes, beets, arugula, cabbage, peas, spinach, parsley, or herbs. Faster growing (10-15 days) types include arugula, broccoli, cabbage, kale, kohlrabi, mustard, amaranth, and spinach.

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### Troubleshooting Grow Issues

Do seedlings look moldy? Those are their root hairs. Spray the seedlings with water, their roots will settle into the grow medium.

Are seedlings droopy? Add more water.

Are they looking leggy? Increase their light exposure or add a grow lamp.

Did they fail to germinate? Either the medium did not stay moist enough, air temperatures were too cold or hot (70 F. is ideal), seeds were low quality or expired, or the seeds were not stored properly before use. Try again!

Sprinkle on morning eggs, salads, pasta, taco salads, spring rolls, or use as a garnish on other entrees. Microgreens add nutrition, freshness, taste, and color to any meal. Grow your own all-natural microgreens for major benefits.

**Seasonal Notes:** Winter is a good time to trim out dead tree limbs and shape. Prune on dry days to allow the cut to heal properly.

Email your comments and questions to: [NakedGardener@diablogazette.com](mailto:NakedGardener@diablogazette.com).



## Bedlam Bewitched, by Cheryl Spanos

"Bedlam Bewitched" (Deadnettle Publishing, 2024, paperback, 335 pages, \$15.99) by Cheryl Spanos is the perfect light-hearted read for the holidays.

Seventeen-year-old Cory decides to leave boarding school after her Uncle Horace dies and wills her a share of his Berkeley-based magical bookstore. Cory is well aware that this is no ordinary bookstore.

Here, muscled men flex their pecs on romance novel covers, animated comic books perform laugh-out-loud antics, and ancient spell books reveal their secrets — but only when they feel like it.

Cory has her own special powers, but they are not fully under her control and the result threatens to be catastrophic.

Cory has fond childhood memories amidst the stacks of Bedlam Books with childhood friend, Jack.

But to her dismay, her Uncle Horace has willed the other half of the bookstore to Jack, who does not want to be business partners with her. Debonaire Jack wants to buy her out. But Cory is looking for a fresh start and refuses to sell. Little does she know that a financial disaster and her lingering feelings for Jack await.

As her innovative ideas to save the bookstore pan out, Cory's romantic life ignites with the appearance of a hot, motorcycle bad boy. To further Cory's problems, Jack's vengeful undead fiancé seems to have cast a spell on her future husband.

"Bedlam Bewitched" will cast a spell on readers as they enter a fun-filled bookstore and root for Cory as she discovers that all is not as it seems in this

delightful book repository.

Fans of Cassandra Clare's "City of Bones" and Stefano A. Giovannoni's "The Dark Secrets of Oliveto" will likely enjoy Spanos' debut novel.



"Bedlam Bewitched" is a mixture of magical rom-com, conniving swindlers, and an adorable ghostly dog made only of bones, all sprinkled with a zest of witchery. The twists and turns will keep readers' mortal fingers turning the pages long into the witching hour.

Cheryl Spanos writes short stories and fantasy novels for teens and adults.

Her children's fiction has appeared in "Hunger Mountain", "Beyond Centauri", and Stories for Children magazines. The short story, "Are We There Yet?", appeared in the 2014 "California Writers Club Literary Review", and won Honorable Mention for Mainstream/Literary fiction in the Writer's Digest 77th Annual Writing Competition.

Her middle-grade fantasy manuscript, "Tougher than Dragon Hide", won Runner-Up for Children's Fiction in the San Francisco Writers Conference Contest. Follow her at [www.cherylspanos.com](http://www.cherylspanos.com).

# "Eye of Diablo" Beacon Lighting Ceremony Highlights 61st Annual Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day

On December 7, Mount Diablo's Beacon will be relit by a survivor of Pearl Harbor supported by a Save Mount Diablo team.

The Sons and Daughters of Pearl Harbor Survivors, Chapter 5 will co-sponsor this 61st annual National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day Beacon lighting ceremony with Save Mount Diablo; California State Parks; and California State University, East Bay.

All are invited to attend the ceremony to pay tribute to the lives that were lost and honor our surviving veterans of Pearl Harbor. The ceremony will be held at the California State University, East Bay Concord Center at 4700 Ygnacio Valley Road in Concord.

Viewing of the USS Arizona exhibit at the CSUEB Concord Center will be available from 3:00 to 3:45 PM. The ceremony will commence at 3:45 PM in the Oak Room. Pearl Harbor Survivor Earl "Chuck" Kohler is expected to attend.

The program begins with the posting of colors and pledge of allegiance by the Historical Forces Association, and the national anthem, sung by Erin Hegarty.

Cathy Sandeen, President of California State University, East Bay will give a welcoming, followed by Ted Clement, Executive Director for Save Mount Diablo, who will give ceremonial remarks, and Clint Elsholz, Acting Diablo Range District Superintendent, who will

give district remarks.

Gary Moreland, the son of a Pearl Harbor survivor, will then speak, followed by remarks from the recipient of the Pearl Harbor Legacy scholarship, who will speak about the work supported by the award.

The Pearl Harbor Legacy Scholarship in history is a competitive scholarship that supports undergraduate and graduate history majors studying the World War II era, and with an interest in teaching at the K-12 or higher education levels.

Pearl Harbor Survivor Earl "Chuck" Kohler, who celebrated his 100th birthday this year, will speak about his experiences on December 7, 1941.

Afterwards, an Honorary Member of the Sons and Daughters of Pearl Harbor survivors, Wayne Korsinen, will speak and Frank Dorritie of Bugles across America will perform "Taps." At 5 PM, the Beacon will be lit.

"The Beacon lighting is a tribute to those individuals that lost their lives at Pearl Harbor," remarked Earl "Chuck" Kohler, Pearl Harbor Survivor. The ceremony is also an opportunity to honor the survivors.

The ceremony will also be broadcast on Contra Costa Television during the following dates and times:

Monday, December 16, at 9:00 PM

Thursday, December 19, at 11:00 AM

Saturday, December 21, at 1:00 PM

Monday, December 23, at 9:00 PM

Thursday, December 26, at 11:00 AM

Saturday, December 28, at 1:00 PM

Contra Costa TV is available to watch on Comcast channel 27, AT&T/U-verse channel 99, and Astound 32 and 1027, or online at [www.contracostatv.org](http://www.contracostatv.org).

The Beacon on Mount Diablo was originally installed and illuminated in 1928 to aid in transcontinental aviation. It is one of the four guiding beacons installed along the West Coast by Standard Oil of California and is the only one known to still be operational.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Beacon's light was extinguished during the West Coast blackout, for fear it could enable an attack on California.

It stayed dark until Pearl Harbor Day in 1964, when Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz, Commander in Chief of Pacific Forces during World War II, relit the Beacon in a commemorative ceremony and suggested it be illuminated every December 7, to honor those who served and sacrificed.

Since that day, Pearl Harbor veterans and their families have gathered every December 7 to see the Beacon light shine



once again.

The Beacon now shines brighter than ever since it underwent an extensive restoration process in 2013 (thanks to a campaign led by Save Mount Diablo) to ensure it continues to shine for many more years.

The Pearl Harbor Survivors now know that the Beacon will shine long after they are gone.

The Beacon is lit at sunset and shines all night on this evening each year. Beginning in 2022, it is also lit on Memorial Day and Veterans Day.

Save Mount Diablo has restored, maintained, and operated the Mount Diablo's Summit Beacon, the "Eye of Diablo" for many years, and the organization is grateful to provide this service to our communities despite the time and cost involved.

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

## Eight Good Reasons to Crate Train

There are many important reasons to crate train. In fact, it may be a critical first step to set boundaries when training a new puppy. Often the argument against crating a dog is the emotional distress a dog may experience when separated from its family. But, if done properly, it can actually reduce a dog's stress. Plus, there can be unfortunate consequences if this life skill isn't taught. Here are eight good reasons to crate train:



prevent a stressful experience for it.

7). As the owner, your anxiety is reduced when leaving the pet alone.

8) Crating mimics the dog's natural inclination to retreat to a den-like space to sleep and relax. This benefits their mental health.

Even older dogs that are beyond the destructive or housebreaking phase can benefit from adjusting to being inside a crate. Crate training is beneficial to the dog as long as the crate is a proper size, the dog is eased into the experience, isn't confined for too long of a time, or taught to equate the crate as a form of punishment. Remember to remove a collar with dangling tags if using a wire crate to prevent strangulation.

Crate training must be done properly. Once you purchase the appropriate crate size, start the introduction process by placing the crate in an area where the family is hanging out. Prop the door open so the dog can come and go. Some pups may naturally prefer to sleep in the crate. Make the crate experience positive by giving the dog treats when it enters. Playful dogs may enjoy a game of tug inside the crate or throw a ball inside to initiate a game of fetch. Then start shutting the door for short periods, and gradually lengthen the time. Remember to be patient and aim for the long game.

Happy Holidays, everyone!

Jill Hedgecock is a local author of a Doberman trilogy series: "Between Shadow's Eyes" (Book 1) and "From Shadow's Perspective" (Book 2) and "In Shadow's Reflection". (Book 3). Her books are available on amazon.com.

1). It will help minimize accidents during the house-breaking phase, particularly at night. Since dogs don't like soiling their bedding, they will learn to hold their body waste for longer periods, reducing the time it takes to housebreak them.

2). You could save from spending hundreds of dollars on new furniture, shoes, carpeting, and anything else the little darling sinks its teeth in when you are not at home to monitor.

3). You may avoid a tragedy if a crafty pup is drawn to eating dangerous items like cleaning fluid or even chocolate left accidentally within reach.

4). Your dog will have a safe space to escape from other pets or young children or in sparing allergic or fearful guests from discomfort.

5). Crate-trained pets travel well. Car travel is easier, and even possible for some modes of transportation such as planes or trains.

6). When the dog requires activity restrictions after veterinary care or when going to the groomers, a crate can help

# In Case You Missed It...

Local News Items from Claycord.com and Other Sources

## Concord Naval Weapons Station Base Developer To Host Dec. 12 Virtual Open House

Brookfield Properties, the master developer for the Concord Naval Weapons Station (CNWS) base reuse project, is hosting a virtual open house by Zoom for community members who are interested in learning more about the project and the development process, and those who want to share feedback with the development team.

Although this is not an official city event, Concord residents and community members who are interested in the project are encouraged to attend.

The virtual open house will be held on Thursday, Dec. 12, from 6:30 to 7:30 p.



bit.ly/CNWSVOH

## "Be A Santa To A Senior" Gift Program

The Commission on Aging, in partnership with the Concord Senior Center and Home Instead present "Be a Santa to a Senior" (BASTAS) program. a heartwarming initiative that brings holiday cheer to seniors who may be facing loneliness or financial hardships.

Visit any of the following locations, where you will find Christmas trees adorned with gift tags: City of Concord facilities (Civic Center, Concord Community Pool, Police Department, Senior Center), Concord Library, Pleasant Hill YMCA, Visit Concord, Concord Chamber of Commerce, Luna Restaurant, Fiore Restaurant, Min's Kitchen, and the Old Spaghetti Factory.

Select a gift tag (or multiple tags), which will feature the items a senior has requested.

Shop for the items listed on the tag, then return the unwrapped gifts to the same location no later than Monday, Dec. 9. Gifts can also be returned directly to the Concord Senior Center (2727 Parkside Circle) during business hours

## Mt. Diablo Resource Recovery Introduces Zero Emission Hydrogen Truck Pilot Program

Mt. Diablo Resource Recovery announced the launch of its



innovative Zero Emission Hydrogen Truck Pilot Program, a significant step towards revolutionizing sustainable transportation that furthers its commitment to modern technologies in the waste and recycling industry.

As part of Mt. Diablo Resource

Recovery's ongoing commitment to environmental stewardship, this pilot program aims to demonstrate the feasibility and efficiency of hydrogen as a viable alternative to conventional diesel fuel, providing a zero-emission solution for heavy-duty transportation.

This pilot program is made possible through strategic collaborations with Hyzon and New Way Trucks.

## The Claycord Online Museum - Regency Woods In Clayton - Homes For \$53K

Did anybody get in on this deal in 1975? Now you can't get one for under \$1M.

## Contra Costa County Library Launches Pilot Program For Self-Service Sundays

The Contra Costa County Library is piloting a new program designed to give patrons access to the Concord Library on Sundays when the branch is normally closed. Patrons who sign up for the service in advance will be able to enter the Concord Library between 12:00 and 4:00 p.m. on Sundays beginning December 1. There will not be any staff on site, but two security guards will be present to ensure that only patrons who have signed up for the service are entering the library.

Patrons can check out books, return items, pick up holds, connect to Wi-Fi, and use the space for studying or reading.

"We don't have the budget to staff the libraries on Sundays, but this pilot offers an alternative solution that, if successful, could expand to other branches in the future," said County Librarian Alison McKee.

To sign up for the service, patrons must have a library card in good standing, a valid ID, attend an in-person orientation, and sign the user agreement. Approved patrons will scan their library card at the door and use a unique PIN code to enter.

Services not available will include computers, printing, scanning, and photocopying, restrooms, LINK+ pickups, and returns, use of the community meeting room, and the Friends bookstore.

For more stories visit [Claycord.com](http://Claycord.com)



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