

News and Views

Fall 2024



Photo: Harry Smith

The Season of Change

This fall, we are excited to share stories of transformation within our community!

Change can be joyful, as we see new growth and opportunities emerge. It can also be tinged with sadness as we bid farewell to the familiar. But through it all, we remain committed to preserving the natural and agricultural heritage of our region, ensuring that every season continues to bring promise and renewal.

As we journey through these changes together, we invite you to reflect on the beauty of this season and the opportunities it presents.

Let's celebrate the resilience and adaptability that both nature and our community demonstrate, embracing the transitions with hope and excitement for the future.

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Introducing TVC's New

Executive Director

I am delighted to introduce myself as the new Executive Director of Tri-Valley Conservancy (TVC)! Joining this dedicated team is an honor and a privilege, and I am eager to contribute to the important work we will do together to protect this beautiful region.

I want to express my gratitude to Mark Triska and the entire TVC board for selecting me for this important role, the TVC staff for their engagement throughout the process, and Potrero Group for facilitating the search. I'm thrilled to lead TVC into the next chapter and to build upon its strong foundation.

As a former farm owner and long-time environmental advocate, this position aligns perfectly with my passion for preserving agricultural land, promoting regional food and farming, and upholding environmental values.

I have spent over 25 years working on food and farming issues in California. I deeply understand the challenges of farmers and ranchers who lack access to land, capital, and equal opportunities, as well as the pressures of development on farmland. I am equally committed to the protection of wild and open spaces, for the habitat they offer wildlife and the beauty and joy they bring to our communities.

I look forward to fulfilling TVC's mission to preserve and promote agriculture and increase permanently protected, biologically diverse open spaces for all to enjoy. I am excited to collaborate with all of you to advance our shared vision and continue the remarkable work that TVC has accomplished over the years.

Thank you for this opportunity to serve the community. I am looking forward to the journey ahead and the chance to work alongside such a talented and committed group of individuals!

Warm regards,

Rebecca (Becki) Spector
Executive Director





Thank You for Supporting Youth in Nature!

Discovery: Youth in Nature (YIN) is designed for 4th-grade classes to inspire children to become stewards of the land and foster an appreciation for the natural space in our community. Students take part in three days of activities and adventure with an educator from Tri-Valley Conservancy, including a field trip to Holdener Park. The entire program is provided free of charge to students and schools to make the program accessible.

In nearly 10 years, we have reached:

5,575
students

202
classrooms

11
schools

Grants and donations make this program possible!

Rotarian Foundation of Livermore

The Foundation recently awarded 15 organizations grants of \$10,000 each to support programs that help our community grow in ways that reflect our shared values of service, compassion, and excellence.

TVC is proud to be one of those recipients. This additional funding will allow us to reach even more students and deepen their connection to nature.



Tri-Valley Nonprofit Alliance

TVNPA has awarded a \$3,000 grant to TVC through its Tri-Valley Nonprofit Fund! Established in 2020, this fund provides financial support to organizations working to improve the lives of Tri-Valley residents.

We are incredibly grateful to the TVNPA for recognizing the importance of our work. This funding will help us continue to make a positive impact on the lives of young learners in our community.



The Wine Quality Alliance



Julie Schreiber, Winemaking Consultant



Luca Brillante, Viticulture Consultant

Founded by Tri-Valley Conservancy (TVC) as part of our mission to preserve, protect, and promote the South Livermore Valley Agricultural Preserve, the Wine Quality Alliance (WQA) provides winemakers and growers with resources to elevate their craft.

Now, as planned, the program is entering an exciting new chapter as it transitions into the hands of the Livermore Valley Wine Community (LVWC).

The WQA was born out of TVC's strategic planning, as the board sought ways to preserve the Livermore Valley wine region's agricultural lands and promote world-class winemaking. "We wanted to partner with wine growers and learn their basic needs, providing support where we could," explained Lori Souza, a driving force behind the initiative.

"We knew smaller operations didn't have access to the same resources as larger wineries, so our goal was to create a program that would help everyone—essentially when the tide comes in all the boats rise."

The WQA has assisted winemakers in detecting and addressing quality issues in their wines through wine and sensory analysis.

The program also established a database of varietals, collecting and analyzing four years of data that winemakers could draw from to improve their craft.

"Julie Schreiber, our Winemaking Consultant, built trust within the community over the years," Lori continued. "It was challenging at first, but Julie's expertise and gentle guidance have earned their confidence."

Julie's work with local winemakers has gone beyond data analysis.

"We hold monthly comparative wine tastings where local winemakers come together to learn from each other in a supportive, constructive environment," said Julie. "It's a critical but kind process that has helped many improve their wine production techniques."

This collaboration has been a cornerstone of the WQA's efforts to foster a unified and thriving winemaking community.

Cynthia Ross, a board member for both TVC and the WQA, emphasized the importance of this collective growth.

"The WQA has strengthened the connections within our winemaking community," she said.

"With this transition to the Livermore Valley Wine Community, those connections will only grow stronger. The broad reach will allow the program to offer even more resources to our growers, helping the Livermore Valley continue to raise the bar on wine quality," Cynthia continued.

A critical milestone in this transition has been the hiring of Luca Brillante, a viticulturist who has made an immediate impact. "Luca is part scientist, part artist," Cynthia added. "He's built great relationships with grape growers, offering invaluable advice. His expertise helps farmers understand their vineyards better, whether they're replanting vines or troubleshooting issues."

Julie agreed: "Luca can walk into a vineyard and immediately diagnose what needs attention. His knowledge will be an incredible resource for the community as we continue improving the quality of our wines."

As the WQA moves under the umbrella of the LVWC, the program is well-positioned to evolve while maintaining its core mission.

"This is really a continuation of what we've been doing. It's a transition, yes, but in many ways, it's about expanding on the relationships and knowledge we've built over the years," continued Julie.

Lori is proud of the program's accomplishments and optimistic about the future. "From the start, TVC's goal was to get this off the ground and hand it off after a few years," she said. "It's gratifying to see how far we've come and to know that the LVWC will carry this work forward."

The WQA's transition to the LVWC marks a new chapter for the Livermore Valley's wine industry, which will continue to elevate the region's winemaking excellence while preserving its agricultural roots.

With the continued support of experts like Julie and Luca, the WQA will remain a vital resource for local winemakers as it enters its next phase.

The WQA is committed to continuing to provide educational seminars, personalized consultations, and access to lab equipment.

In doing so, the association will continue fostering a thriving, innovative wine community that celebrates tradition and forward-thinking techniques.

You can contact the WQA by emailing winemaker@trivalleyconservancy.org or visiting www.mdhwqa.org.

Join TVC for a Twilight Tasting at Page Mill Winery

Thursday, November 7th, 4:30 - 8pm
1960 S Livermore Ave, Livermore, CA 94550

Have fun, enjoy wine, and support a good cause!

Page Mill Winery will generously donate a portion of tasting fees and flights as well as 10% of proceeds from sales to TVC during this event.

Donated funds will go towards continuing TVC's mission of promoting economically sustainable vineyards and orchards, and increasing permanently protected, biologically diverse open spaces.

We protect over 5,000 acres of farms, ranches, orchards, wildlife, habitats, parks, trails, and other open spaces in the Tri-Valley area.

This is also a fantastic opportunity to meet and greet TVC staff and Board of Directors.

Page Mill Winery is dedicated to "Peace through wine, one glass at a time".

Over the years Page Mill has raised tens of thousands of dollars for local charities.



2024 Winners

Views in the Valley Photo Competition

We received nearly 100 submissions that beautifully capture the essence of the Tri-Valley. After collecting almost 300 votes for the Barry Zupan People's Choice Award, we are excited to share the winners!

Adult Winners



1st Place: Sunset in Springtown by Anna Rouse



2nd Place: Kite Hovers by Michael Hurder



3rd Place: Vanishing by Gary Oehrle

Youth Winners



1st Place:
Spectaculars of the Sky
Pravallika Pasupulati



2nd Place:
Tangerine Flowers
Nidhi Kota

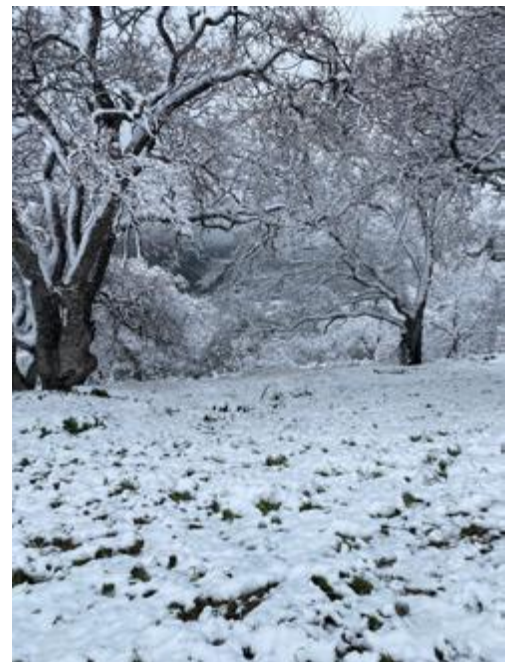


3rd Place:
Golden Hour
Pravallika Pasupulati

Barry Zupan "People's Choice" Winners



Adult Winner:
Lost Cow by Glenn Stewart



Youth Winner:
Untitled #8 by Reese Boswell

Ron Essex

Capturing the Essence of Livermore Wine Country

Ron Essex's life has been a journey of discovery, fueled by a willingness to embrace the new and seize opportunity.

Growing up in the fields of Ohio, Ron's story began far from the world of California's wine country. Leaving home at 18, he joined the Air Force at 20 and found his passion behind the camera as a military photographer.

This early experience sparked a love for capturing the world around him, a skill he would continue to hone over the years.

After four years in the Air Force, Ron moved to Minneapolis, where he spent a decade refining his craft in the world of commercial photography. His work for industry giants like General Mills and Pillsbury further developed his unique perspective.

Ron's love for the artistry of photography grew, and his work with food photography became an art form of its own. The opportunity to photograph diverse subjects, from hip-hop culture to skateboarding, only added to his rich tapestry of experience.

Ron's journey took a significant turn when he moved to California, where he met his wife and settled in Brentwood. As he explored the beautiful landscapes of his new home, the vineyards and wineries of California's wine country presented a fresh canvas for his photography.

Recognizing the unique potential of this region, Ron saw an opportunity to combine his skills in product photography with his love for food and wine.



In 2017, Ron took a leap of faith and started his own business. He quickly found that the wine industry was a natural fit for his talents. Approaching the Winegrowers Association in 2019 was a pivotal moment.

Their enthusiasm for his work led to a partnership that allowed Ron to bring the beauty and stories of the Livermore Valley to life through his lens.

Ron's black and white imagery for the Steven Kent Winery graced the cover of their Cab Franc book, setting the winery apart and showcasing his ability to create powerful visual narratives.

His work has become a cornerstone of marketing efforts for wineries like Cuda Ridge, Page Mill, and Fenestra, proving that strong imagery can indeed change perspectives and elevate brands.

But it's not just about the images for Ron; it's about the connections and community he's built. The welcoming embrace of Livermore Valley's wine community has been as enriching for him as his work has been for the wineries.





Vineyard at Murrieta's Well



Taste Our Terroir Event



Retzlaff Merlot Harvest

Through photography, Ron has found a way to tell the unique stories of the region's wineries, each with its own background and journey.

Ron Essex's journey from Ohio to the Livermore Valley is a testament to the power of being open to new opportunities.

His work continues to inspire and elevate the region, proving that with passion and perseverance, one can truly make a difference.

Ron's long-term project of capturing the winegrowing region is more than a job; it's a mission to use his gifts for good, helping wineries tell their stories and connect with their audiences in meaningful ways.

If you are interested in working with Ron, visit RonEssexPhotography.com for more information.



Cuda Ridge Petit Verdot Harvest

In Memoriam

Clifford Clay Widmayer

June 16, 1960 - June 26, 2024

Clay's legacy with TVC is one of passion and dedication. Serving on the TVC Board for many years, Clay played a pivotal role in shaping the organization.

Clay's journey with TVC began during his tenure at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL), where he worked closely with Jim Folta on the NIF laser project. Clay's influence inspired Jim to become actively involved with TVC,

"Clay was more than a colleague; he was an ambassador for the organization," Jim shared.

"He spoke eloquently about the importance of preserving open spaces, which deeply resonated with many of us."

Clay's retirement in 2020 marked the end of his formal involvement with TVC as he moved back to Walla Walla, WA to restore his childhood home. Despite the distance, his influence remained strong within the organization.

"Clay's spirit and dedication will always be a guiding light for us at TVC," Jim reflected. "I dearly miss him."

"When Clay joined the TVC Board of Directors as the City of Livermore's appointee in 2012 he was excited! One of his first projects was campaigning to stop development in Doolan Canyon and seeing the Dublin residents defeat Measure T. Clay saw this as an important success for preserving North Livermore Valley," commented former TVC Executive Director Laura Mercier.

Laura added, "One of his other favorite milestones with TVC was seeing the trail in Sycamore Grove Park linked to Mission Peak. He was proud of the work that TVC completed while he was on the Board, and left knowing he made a difference for the future generations."

Clay's passing is a significant loss to all who knew him. His commitment to conservation and open spaces will continue to inspire.



Pictured: Clay with his wife, Jo Dee Widmayer (Above)

Clay at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Edward R Cambell Bridge (Below)



Barbara Jean (Wilburn) Stear

March 8, 1932 - March 5, 2024

The South Livermore Valley's fertile vineyard lands occupied a special place in Barbara's heart.

A fiercely passionate believer in the tremendous potential of Livermore Valley Wine Country, over the years she would devote every measure of her remarkable energy to protecting this community treasure.

When Alameda County Supervisor Ed Campbell created a Citizens' Advisory Committee in 1987 to assist his South Livermore Valley Steering Committee in devising a plan for the preservation of vineyard lands,

The task was daunting: construct a plan to guide future land use decisions that would acknowledge and respect the competing interests of landowners, developers, and vineyard preservationists.

The work was arduous and frequently filled with conflict, yet this "blood, sweat, and tears" (from Barbara's diary) would produce the South Livermore Valley Area Plan.

Adopted by the Alameda County Board of Supervisors in 1993, the plan preserved 15,000 acres of prime vineyard land and established the South Livermore Valley Agricultural Land Trust (later to become the Tri-Valley Conservancy).



The plan also instituted requirements for new urban development that would promote and enhance recognition of the area as a wine country destination.

Barbara dedicated sixteen years, from 1981-1997, to active community service. Much of that time was spent serving as FOV president, while simultaneously serving on the Board of Directors for the Tri-Valley Conservancy. Her work and commitment earned Barbara numerous awards.

Barbara is much loved and deeply missed by many. Her love for this valley lives on through her children James Stear, Robert Stear, Suzanna Spring and Carol Brady, three of whom still reside in Livermore. We give a special thank you to Suzanna Spring and Carol Brady for collaborating with TVC on this piece in her memory.





1457 First Street
Livermore, CA 94550

Place
Stamp
Here

Tri-Valley Conservancy is an accredited land trust and tax-exempt nonprofit 501(c)3 organization working to preserve and advocate for agricultural and open space land in the California Bay Area.

Our mission is to promote economically sustainable vineyards and orchards, and increase permanently protected, biologically diverse open spaces.

**Protecting Open Space For You, Wildlife,
And Future Generations To Enjoy!**



Call: 925.449.8706 | Email: Info@trivalleyconservancy.org | Visit: TriValleyConservancy.org

Photo: Kathryn Hall