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FEBRUARY 2026

Yosemite National Park's FireFall

Photo by Charles Lindsey Photography

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Nature's Valentine:

The Firefall at Horsetail Falls

On the cover of this issue is one of nature's most captivating illusions: Yosemite National Park's glowing Firefall at Horsetail Falls. Captured by Concord photographer Charles Lindsay of Charles Lindsey Photography, the image freezes a fleeting moment when water, light, and timing align to create the appearance of molten fire cascading down granite. Beautiful, isn't it?

February is the only month this phenomenon can be witnessed, and even then, it is never guaranteed. For roughly two weeks each year, when conditions are just right, the setting sun ignites Horsetail Fall into a ribbon of glowing orange and gold. Each evening's show lasts a mere 5 to 15 minutes before sunset.

The National Park Service notes that the viewing window generally falls from mid- to late February, without specifying exact dates. However, AI was much more specific, February 10 and February 26, provided all conditions cooperate.

What are those conditions? The sun must align perfectly with Horsetail Fall, a precise interaction dictated by both the time of year and the exact few minutes before sunset. Second, there must be sufficient water flowing, the more water the more dramatic the effect. Finally, clear skies are essential; even thin clouds at sunset can dull or erase the effect entirely.



Hundreds of photographers flock to capture Firefall each year.

If weather conditions are favorable this year, February could be especially busy, as no park reservations will be required. Still, for those willing to brave the crowds and the uncertainty, the reward can be unforgettable.

Perhaps it's even worth adding to your Valentine's plans this year. It is perfect, isn't it?

Well, if Firefall is not in your plans, this edition has many Valentine suggestions from its supporting advertisers. Please patronize them whenever appropriate. Thank you for reading.

Detective Jesse Cerdas named Kiwanis Officer of the Year

Every year for the past 19 years the Concord Kiwanis Club hosts a special luncheon to honor Concord's men (and women) in blue.

On January 30, Detective Jesse Cerdas received the award in a ceremony at the old Spaghetti Factory in downtown Concord.

Cerdas has served with distinction as a member of the Concord Police Department since June 2018, consistently exemplifying professionalism, leadership, and dedication to the Department's mission. He is newly assigned to the Violence Suppression Unit, where he is expected to continue demonstrating a strong commitment to public safety and excellence in law enforcement.

Cerdas previously served on the Special Enforcement Team, where he also assisted as a provisional corporal, and in patrol assignments that established a solid foundation in field operations. He serves as a Field Training Officer, providing mentorship and guidance to new officers, and is a member of the SWAT Team, contributing his skills to specialized and high-risk operations.

In addition to his operational

responsibilities, Cerdas has made meaningful contributions to community engagement. In 2025, he assumed

leadership in the planning and coordination of the Stuff the Cruiser / Monumental Toy Drive, an initiative that brought holiday cheer to local families. He has also participated in Camp Concord, supporting positive interactions between youth and law enforcement.

Cerdas holds a bachelor's degree from California Lutheran University and has earned his Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced POST Certificates. His dedication, initiative, and positive impact have made him a valuable asset to the Concord



Police Department.

In addition to the Kiwanis award, Concord Mayor Laura Nakamura and Senator Tim Grayson also presented Cerdas certificates of recognition on behalf their offices.

"Detective Cerdas is a true example of service, leadership, and community care. He represents the value we work to uphold every day. Congratulations, Detective Cerdas, on this well-earned honor!" states a post on the Concord Police Department Facebook page.



Senator Tim Grayson honors Detective Cerdas with a Certificate from his office.



Concord Mayor Laura Nakamura presents a Proclamation to honored Detective Cerdas

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German occupation of the Netherlands May 1940 - May 1945

by Nell Fliemann

February 4, 1933: Hitler's cabinet issues the "Decree for the Protection of the German People," restricting press and political meetings to hinder opposition campaigning

February 20, 1939: A pro-Nazi rally organized by the German American Bund was held at Madison Square Garden in New York City, drawing over 20,000 attendees

February 21, 1933: Hermann Göring orders the Prussian police to use firearms against "enemies of the state".

February 27, 1933: The Reichstag building burns down, which the Nazis immediately use as a pretext to claim a Communist coup, leading to the suspension of civil liberties.

February 28, 1933: The "Reichstag Fire Decree" (Decree for the Protection of the People and State) is signed, abolishing constitutional protections and allowing for the imprisonment of political opponents, effectively enabling the Nazi dictatorship.

We all know how that story ends. But there are few left to tell it who lived it. Fortunately, Nell Fliemann, Oakland, is still here. She is 103 years old and is the mother of Jack Fliemann of Concord. In 1933, Nell lived in Holland. She was only 10 years old and would have no understanding that the developments in Germany would relatively soon change her life. It did and it was sudden.

She has written her experience of life under the German occupation of the Netherlands in a 50-page booklet that she and Jack has shared with the Diablo Gazette. We are going to share her story in a series of outtakes quoting her experiences from occupation to freedom. From this point, these are her words. Chapter 1.

On May 5, 1940, at daybreak, it was not quite light yet, I woke up when all hell seemed to have broken loose.

There was the sound of planes flying overhead at low altitude, wave after wave, and at the same time I heard artillery fire. I jumped out of bed and quickly threw on some clothes. My parents and sister had done the same and we ran outside to find our neighbors in the street looking up at the sky.

Invasion of Holland

The sky was full of small airplanes,

thousands of men were dangling from parachutes, descending slowly. They wore white jumpsuits and artillery fire from the ground hit many of them. Once these men landed, they unzipped their suits, stepped out and were wearing the uniform of Dutch soldiers, so that on the ground it became difficult to tell them apart from real Dutch soldiers.

At the time of the invasion, I was 17 years old and lived with my parents and sister in Wassenaar, a suburb of The Hague. My two brothers had left the nest, and both lived in Amsterdam.

The Dutch military had prepared for a German invasion and Dutch troops were stationed along the entire border with Germany. Our military never expected that German soldiers would be airlifted and dropped along our western seaboard, facing England. By invading the country from the air, the Germans had taken Holland by surprise.

The thought hit me like a brick, Holland was being attacked. Young as I was, I knew what that meant. War was going to be so terrible, causing nothing but death and destruction. How could this happen in our tranquil little country?

Many events in the last few years were leading up to war, but I had been in denial. Three other countries had already been invaded by the



The German army in Amsterdam, 1940. Image courtesy: German Federal Archives/Wikimedia Commons/CC3.0Onvo, vir averit caperop terfrit ala moris; eo, publis,

Germans and in Holland there was talk of an impending invasion. I kept putting these ominous signs out of my mind.

Invasion of Western European Countries

Germany had annexed Austria in 1938. The Austrian Government sympathized with the German regime and put up no resistance. A year later the Czech Republic was occupied and next came Poland. Germany had now broken the Treaty of Versailles causing England and France to declare war on Germany in 1939. The Treaty was the peace settlement signed after World War I ended in 1918. Many restrictions were then placed on the German Army. Germany was ignoring all the conditions of the Treaty and did not bother to declare war.

In 1940 German troops invaded Holland, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, part of France and had designs on conquering Great Britain.

The Dutch Government had hoped for neutrality, the same as we had during World War I. No such luck, however. Our army was powerless against the mighty German forces. We had been promised help by the British, but they had a small army and practically no Air Force.

During World War II, England served as a staging area for the Allied Forces. They enlarged their Army and had direct connections with the underground movement in Holland.

For the rest of my life, the trauma of what followed in the next five years has remained deeply embedded in my memory. For years the sound of firecrackers, and any loud explosion, would become a trigger that would take me back to the war years.

Bombing of Rotterdam

The day after dropping German parachutists along the coast, Rotterdam was bombed. Part of the harbor, one of Europe's largest and most important ports, was destroyed, as well as the center of the city and 800 civilians were killed, one of these was a young woman who had been a neighbor of ours.

After this happened, the Dutch Government was told to capitulate, because if they did not do this the Germans intended to bomb more large cities.

For four days our Army tried to defend itself against the enemy but then was forced to surrender.

Dutch soldiers threw away their guns in disgust and some cried.

German troops and transportation soon poured in over the eastern border and we were now occupied under the command of the dreaded SS troops.

They wore a "skull and cross bones" on their uniform, and years later at the Nuremberg trials, these Nazi's were condemned as war criminals.

The Belgians and Norwegians fell under command of the German Army, not the S.S. As such they suffered a less brutal occupation.

The day the Germans marched into The Hague, I took the streetcar and saw the hated troops enter that town.

Thousands of people with grim faces were watching along the road and many were overcome by emotion. In the afternoon, young Dutch men were forced into open trucks by armed German soldiers, to be transported to Rotterdam to help clear up the debris from the bombings. From now on things changed rapidly.

The Royal family fled to England, where Queen Wilhelmina set up an office. She remained there for the duration of the war. Her son in law, Prince Bernhard, joined the British Royal Air Force.

Later, in 1942, when the relentless bombing of London began, Queen Wilhelmina's daughter Princess Juliana and her three daughters, left for Ottawa, Canada. Ships pulled out of the harbors and planes left Holland in a hurry. Many of those who managed to flee were Jewish.

At this point, early during the occupation, it was still possible for people to leave the country. Needless to say the Germans quickly put an end to that.

Next month, "Persecution of Jewish Citizens"



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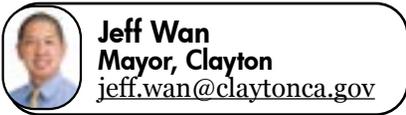
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Jeff Wan
Mayor, Clayton
jeff.wan@claytonca.gov

City business in full swing

At our January City Council meeting, the Council took a couple of routine actions that are preparing us for the year ahead. One of those actions was the adoption of updated committee assignments for 2026. Committees play an important role in policy development and focused oversight. The new assignments reflect a balance of experience and new perspective. I appreciate the willingness of my colleagues to serve and the time required for committee work.

The Council also approved the first reading of minor updates to City ordinances requested by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). These updates are technical in nature, but they are necessary in order to gain approval of the City's Housing Element. The second and final reading of this ordinance is expected in February. City staff have done a great deal of work with HCD in moving towards bringing this item to a close.

Looking ahead, I want to share an update on committee meeting schedules

beginning in 2026. In prior years, staff scheduled committee meetings based on the availability of all members. While intended to be flexible, this approach increased administrative workload and created frequent coordination challenges. It also made it harder for residents to anticipate meeting dates.

Starting this year, committees will follow fixed meeting schedules, similar to City Council meetings. Each committee will have a regular meeting cadence established in advance. This change provides greater predictability for councilmembers, staff, and the public. It also reduces the administrative burden tied to repeated scheduling efforts. Clear and consistent schedules support planning, participation, and public awareness.

Predictability and transparency remain essential to effective local government. These changes support those goals and provide a stronger framework for committee work in 2026.

Vinny's Grand Opening

More than 200 were present for the much anticipated Grand Opening and ribbon cutting of the new Vinny's Tacqueria in Clayton.

Vinny's is now fully operational with a full bar, trained staff, and delicious Mexican entrees. 6101 Center Street. vinnystacqueria.com.



Clayton Theatre Company's "The Sweet Delilah Swim Club"

Clayton Theatre Company presents "The Sweet Delilah Swim Club", the story of five southern women whose friendships began many years ago on their college swim team. They meet every August at the same beach cottage.

The play focuses on four of those weekends and spans a period of thirty-three years. This hilarious and touching comedy is about friendships that last forever.

The play is written by Jones Hope Wooten. Jamie Wooten wrote for "The Golden Girls". Directed by La Tonya Watts. Assistant Director-Roxanne Pardi Show dates-March 13-15, 19-22, 2026. vor Hall, 6008 Center St., Clayton. 925-334-0880. claytontheatrecompany.com



Photo credit-Robert Grosserode L-R (standing) actress/character Teddie Gilbert-Sheree Hollinger, Gwen Sampson Brown-Dinah Grayson, Megan Larsen-Vernadette Simms, Nathalie Archangel-Lexie Richards, (sitting) Teresa Grosserode-Jeri Neal McFeeley

Clayton Theatre Company

the Sweet Delilah Swim Club

a jones hope wooten comedy

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CLAYTON MARKET UPDATE

Address	Sales Price	SF	Bed/Bath	Sales Date
186 Mt Wilson Way	\$901,000	2325	4/2	12/2/2025
1040 Pebble Beach Dr	\$1,648,000	3911	6/3.5	12/5/2025
1221 Buckeye Ter	\$810,000	1639	3/2.5	12/8/2025
5872 Herriman Dr	\$875,000	1408	3/2	12/11/2025
7 Clark Creek Cir	\$520,000	1113	3/2	12/18/2025
814 Chert Pl	\$875,000	1904	3/2.5	12/26/2025
2 Rialto Dr	\$999,000	1648	3/2	1/12/2026

CONCORD MARKET UPDATE

Address	Sales Price	SF	Bed/Bath	Sales Date
1515 Schenone Ct Unit #F	\$585,000	1096	3/2	12/12/2025
1198 Quail Ct	\$900,000	1773	4/2	12/19/2025
4490 Backthorn Ct	\$940,000	1567	4/2	12/26/2025
1467 Cape Cod Way	\$685,000	1160	4/2	12/30/2025
1640 Apple Dr	\$790,000	1702	4/2	1/5/2026
1221 McEwing Ct	\$860,000	1568	3/2	1/12/2026
4004 Salem St	\$1,200,000	2036	4/2	1/14/2026

Based on information from CLAA/Paragon MLS as of 01/15/26. All data, including all measurements and calculations of area, is obtained from various sources and has not been, and will not be, verified by broker or MLS. All information should be independently reviewed and verified for accuracy. Properties may or may not be listed by the office/agent presenting the information.



Jennifer Stojanovich
Broker/Owner, Better Homes Realty

The Hidden Risk:

Why smart California buyers don't skip title insurance

Buying a home in Contra Costa County is one of the biggest financial decisions most people will ever make. By the time you reach closing, you've already paid for inspections, appraisals, and a down payment. So, it's natural to look at the final settlement statement and wonder if every fee is really necessary.

One charge that often gets questioned is owner's title insurance.

In California, your lender will require a title policy to protect their loan, but the owner's policy, which protects your equity, is technically optional. Because of that, some buyers consider skipping it. That's a risky move.

Owner's title insurance protects you from ownership problems that existed before you bought the home. Unlike homeowner's insurance, which covers future events, title insurance looks backward, covering hidden issues that don't always show up during escrow.

These can include forged documents, unknown heirs, unpaid liens from prior owners, or simple recording errors in public records. While these issues are uncommon, when they do happen, they can be expensive and stressful to resolve.

Cash buyers often think they are safer, but the opposite can be true. Without a lender requiring title protection, a cash buyer is fully exposed. If a problem arises and you don't have insurance, you are responsible for the legal costs and potential loss of ownership.

One of the biggest benefits of title insurance is that it's a one-time expense. You pay for it at closing, and the policy lasts as long as you or your heirs own the home with no annual premiums.

In California, who pays for the policy is usually based on local custom. In much of Northern California, including Contra Costa County, buyers often pay for the owner's policy. Regardless of who pays, having the coverage matters.

Think of owner's title insurance like a seat belt. You don't expect to need it, but if something goes wrong, you will be very glad it's there. The cost of a title dispute can easily far exceed the one-time premium.

Before you sign those closing documents, make sure you are protecting your investment for the long run.

Clayton Museum's new exhibit, "Joel Clayton and the Gold Rush" gives a peak at life in the 1850s

by Nancy Niemeyer photo by Nancy Niemeyer

The discovery of gold near Sacramento in 1848 started the biggest migration in U. S. history as around 300,000 people came to California. Among them was Joel Clayton, the founder of the town of Clayton and a successful Wisconsin businessman. In 1850, he, along with over 40,000 other Americans, came overland on the California Trail hoping to make their fortunes. The Clayton Museum's new exhibit, Joel Clayton and the Gold Rush, lets visitors discover through his eyes what it was like to live in 1850s California.

Although the new immigrants believed that gold was everywhere in California just waiting to be picked up, they soon learned that mining was backbreaking labor. Prospectors worked 10 to 14 hours a day, six days a week, digging, hauling rocks, wading in freezing streams, and suffering hunger, disease, malnutrition, violence, and deadly accidents. At the "gold diggings," miners lived in crude tents or log cabins, paid astronomical prices for supplies, and drank away their loneliness and desperation. In spite of all their efforts, most found only small amounts of gold.

Unlike most California immigrants, Joel Clayton didn't come to mine gold.

He knew that the best way to get rich was to sell supplies to the miners, so he traveled widely throughout California, trying his luck. As an ambitious man, Joel Clayton often wrote letters, advertisements, and articles for the local newspapers in order to further his own businesses and political career. These detailed accounts let us hear in Joel Clayton's own words his thoughts, opinions, and life experiences. Unlike most founding fathers, Joel Clayton is much more interesting to us today because although he was bold, persuasive, and smart, he was also a bit of a scoundrel.

The new Clayton Museum exhibit tells Joel Clayton's story as he made his way to: Santa Clara to manage an orchard; Stockton to start a store and ranch; Washington Territory to mine coal and fight in a war; Southern California to run an Overland Mail stage station; and then finally to Clayton where he settled in 1860. You can also learn about Joel Clayton's wife, Margaret; his younger brothers, Charles and James; 1850s Diablo Valley history; and life at the gold mines. The exhibit display case shows models of some of the simple tools the miners used such as a gold pan, horn spoon, miner's cradle, long tom, gold

Antioch students' field trip to Jor Gallery full of surprises

by David King

On a crisp December day, Clayton's Jor Gallery became something more than a place to view art, it became a classroom, a celebration, and a memory in the making for a small group of Antioch students.

The idea began months earlier, when gallery docent Julia O'Reilly received an unexpected phone call from Brooke, a teacher in Antioch. Brooke explained that her students had developed a growing interest in the arts and asked if she could hold a class inside the gallery. At first, Julia wasn't quite sure what she meant. Antioch, after all, is home to several art venues of its own.

"I asked her, 'What are you thinking—like a field trip to Clayton?'" Julia recalled.

But Brooke had something more personal in mind. Her students had been doing especially well, and she wanted to reward them with a meaningful experience that went beyond a typical classroom lesson. She envisioned a small, hands-on art class inside the gallery itself.

Julia didn't hesitate for long. She agreed not only to open the gallery doors, but also to teach a 45-minute class on abstract art and let the students create their own paintings. With limited budget, Brooke offered to cover the cost of supplies and even planned to bring pizza to make the day extra special.

"I told her, 'You get the pizzas and materials, and I'll direct the class,'" Julia said. "Abstract is actually the easiest thing to teach kids in forty-five minutes."

With a December date set, Brooke secured school and family permissions and recruited parent chaperones. Meanwhile, the Jor Gallery staff added



their own holiday magic. Because the visit would take place in December, they reached out to the Alamo Danville Artist Society to arrange a special appearance by Santa Claus—complete with small gifts for the children.

When the day arrived, the gallery was transformed. Eight students, their teacher, chaperones, and Santa gathered among the artwork. The students dove into their paintings with enthusiasm, pouring heart and soul onto canvas. Afterward, they toured the gallery, wide-eyed and inspired by the work of other artists.

There was pizza, cookies, laughter, and the joy of meeting Santa. Most importantly, each child went home with a painting they created themselves.

"It was short and simple," Julia said, "but it reached their hearts. They were happy."

Sometimes, that's what community is all about.



scale, miner's candlestick, prospector cooking gear, an ore-crushing arrastra, and more.

For a colorful look at 1850s California, come see the new Joel Clayton and the Gold Rush exhibit in the Clayton Historical Society's Museum at 6101 Main St. in Clayton. Visits to the Museum are free and it is

open on Wednesdays and Sundays from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. The new exhibit will run throughout the rest of 2026. For more information on the exhibit and the Clayton Historical Society, visit: <https://claytonhistory.org/>



Protesters use their phones to shoot video of local immigrants as federal agents escort them from their immigration hearing at the Concord Immigration Court at 1855 Gateway Blvd. in Concord, Calif., on Tuesday, June 10, 2025. (Tony Hicks/Bay City News)

Concord to house region's largest immigration court

by Peggy Spear

Concord will become home base to the region's immigration controversies when San Francisco's largest immigration court closes its doors in the next few months and moves to this East Bay city.

The San Francisco court has been hit especially hard by the Trump administration's push to fire judges. According to NPR, 12 judges and a court supervisor were terminated last year. Several others retired or left, leaving the court with just four judges and one supervisor to work through the backlog of more than 120,000 immigration cases across the Bay Area.

News of the court's closure, in late 2025, came as a surprise to many current and former employees at the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR), which is part of the Department of Justice. EOIR spokesperson Kathryn Mattingly said in a statement that the move would be "cost-effective."

The Concord immigration court currently has seven immigration judges, but when the facility opened in 2024 it was designed to house 21 judges. It is unclear whether more judges will be appointed.

Concord Mayor Laura Nakamura said the relocation of the San Francisco immigration court's functions to Concord marks a significant shift.

"This places Concord at the heart of a complex national conversation," Nakamura said. "For us, this isn't just about a change in federal office space; it is about the lives of thousands of people seeking their right to due process under the law."

Nakamura

said. "I share the growing concern regarding the recent escalation of aggressiveness by federal officers. It is vital that federal actions do not undermine the safety of our residents or the trust we have worked so hard to build between our local community and law enforcement."

Nakamura emphasized nonviolent protests and urged people who are concerned about immigration issues to get involved with organizations such as Monument Impact, Stand Together Contra Costa, United Latino Voices, and Contra Costa Immigrant Rights Alliance. "These groups are on the front lines, providing the essential resources and legal connections that families need during these uncertain times," she said.

More specifically, the Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity (IM4HI) offers Court Watcher Training, primarily through its Welcome Navigators program, focused on supporting immigrants at the Concord Immigration Court, training volunteers in accompaniment, legal support, and advocacy to ensure due process and humane treatment, with resources on their website, <https://www.im4humanintegrity.org/sf-bay-area-focus/>, Nakamura said.

Indivisible Resisters lead the charge in anti-ICE protests

by Peggy Spear

It's hard to keep up with Mark DeSaulnier – literally. Flanked by staffers, protesters, and well-wishers, the U.S. Congressman from Concord marched from Todos Santos Plaza to Galindo Street in the midst of hundreds of chanting people bearing signs, cars beeping horns in support, and even constituents eating lunch at sidewalk tables of restaurants.

"I wouldn't have missed this for anything," the Congressman said. "I flew in last night [from Washington D.C.] so I could be here."

"Here" was a rally organized by the Indivisible Resisters Jan. 10 to "educate and alert Contra Costa County residents about the signs of a fascist vs. democratic government" following the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) shooting death of Renee Nicole Good in Minneapolis, according to the Resisters.

Hundreds of people crowded Todos Santos Plaza to hear different speakers, which included Concord Mayor Laura Nakamura, State



Protesters crowded the sidewalks of Salvio Street on Jan. 10

Assemblymember Anamarie Avila Farias, and DeSaulnier decry the I.C.E. violence against a seemingly innocent woman and call for defunding the federal agency. The crowd was a mixture of seasoned protesters – one man wore a shirt proclaiming "This is not my first Rodeo" – to young families with children and even dogs in tow.

Anti-ICE protests have escalated, combining with other anti-Donald Trump policies, and the Contra Costa Indivisible Resisters are leading the way in the Diablo Valley.

According to the Indivisible Resisters, the aim of the rally was to educate and alert Contra Costa County residents about the signs of a "fascist vs. a democratic government, so they can evaluate for themselves how the current president and his administration are impacting the survival of our democracy."

It was also to give local residents a continued opportunity to "gather peacefully and voice their perspectives regarding apparent abuses of power within the Trump Administration."

In fact, the Resisters hold weekly rallies either in Walnut Creek, across from the Tesla store to protest Elon Musk's creation of the anti-illegal immigrant force, in Concord at various locations and in Pleasant Hill.

DeSaulnier said that people who disagree with the President's agenda or who are upset and angry about what was happening in Minnesota, to let their voices be heard.

"If we are silent, it will just get worse," he told the Gazette. "It's important to de-escalate what is happening in



Congressman Mark DeSaulnier (D-Concord, CA), flew in from Washington to attend the Jan. 10 anti-ICE rally in his hometown.

Minnesota and around the country, not escalate the problem."

Farias, also a Democrat, said she feels the same way. She said she is working on an Assembly Bill that would prevent former ICE employees from returning to law enforcement or education.

Nakamura said she was proud of the turnout from her

town.

But the real fighters seemed to be 200-plus protesters who came from all over Contra Costa to make their voices heard. Against a backdrop "a wall of posters" of the score of immigrants who died in ICE custody, the raucous group raised their signs, such as "Noem More for Me" (referring to Homeland Security chief Kristi Noem) and "No War in Venezuela," the chanting crowd cheered each speaker with the enthusiasm of fans of a Super Bowl-bound team.

Phyllis and Bruce Wecker of Orinda "have been protesting for years," Bruce said. "This gives me hope."

Karen Beck of Danville has also been protesting a long time. "We need our senators to step up in Congress," she said.

Not all protesters were seasoned. Concord resident Raul Arana, in his early 20s, has spoken at many of the Resisters' rallies and is becoming known for his story. The son of immigrant parents who have been deported, he is trying to navigate work and school on his own. He is also deeply involved in the United Latino Voices of Contra Costa and one of the cofounders of the Concord Immigration Network.

"I love Concord," he said. "When I saw the guns on ICE agents in town I couldn't help but take it personally." So personally, in fact, he wants to start his political career as a candidate for Concord City Council in District 3. "It's great to see young people get involved," he said. "It gives people a sense of hope."

It's important to note that The Gazette had hoped to speak with counter-protesters but did not see any.

calendar of events

Fundraisers

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

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

Clayton

February 15 - Clayton Historical Society's 49th Annual Silver Camellia Tea. 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. New Exhibit, Joel Clayton and the Gold rush. Free. Clayton Historical Society Museum, 60 Main St. Clayton. claytonhistory.org.

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

Concord

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

February 20 - Concord Chamber Annual Crab Feed and Auction. 5:00-10:00 p.m. Centre Concord, 5298 Clayton Rd. \$110, Table \$1000

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

Pleasant Hill

February 19 Mayor's State of the City. Mayor Zac Shess will his vision of the city economy, influencing policy, and enhancing life in Pleasant Hill. 5:30 -7:00 p.m.. Back forty Texas BBQ, 100 Coggins Dr. Pleasant Hill Chamber of Commerce hosts.

February 21 5:30 p.m. CTK Crab Feed 2026 Christ the King Church; 199 Brandon Rd. Pleasant Hill. \$100

February 28 Contra Costa County Office of Education Spring Job Fair at Pleasant Hill Middle School 9:00- 11:30 a.m. schools are seeking both experienced educators and new graduates to fill a range of teaching and administrator positions. More info, contact Morgan Broshar 925-942-3489.

February 28 Crab Feed Fund-raiser. Pleasant Hill Senior Center. 233 Gregory Lane. 6:00 -10:00 p.m. Hosted by Unity of Walnut Creek. \$103

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

Martinez

February 7 CERT Free disaster preparedness and emergency response classes for wildfires and earthquakes at the Martinez Senior Center. 9:00-11:00 a.m. Register at Martinez.cert@gmail.com. 818 Green St. Martinez.

February 14 Wine & Chocolate Stroll 1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m. Downtown Martinez. Grab your sweetie and indulge in the exquisite combination of 25+ wines and delectable chocolate treats from various businesses. Tickets \$40-\$50

February 12 & 15 - Community Sessions to kick off the year! Meet your District Representative and the Mayor and learn about key City initiatives planned or already underway. 6:00-8:00 p.m. Topics in each session include: City 4-Year Strategic Plan Sesquicentennial Celebration year Waterfront and Marina Revitalization Project Park Master plan update

>Feb. 12 at District 3 IBEW Local 302 Hall, 875 Arnold Way.
>Feb. 25, District 1, Alhambra High School, 150 E Street.

February 28 Bunco! hosted by Soroptimist International of Martinez. Doors open 1:30 p.m. Play ends 5:45 p.m or after 24 games have been played (whichever is first). Proceeds support Soroptimist Dream Programs and fund scholarships for local women and girls. Questions, Call jennifer. 925-494-2623. Tickets \$40 at zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/bunco-7

March 4 Basic Training CERT Free. eight consecutive weeks for 6:00-9:30 p.m. This 24 hours of instruction covers all aspect of preparedness and response to major emergencies and disasters. Completion of this course and a

disaster exercise will qualify students to become Martinez Volunteer Disaster Service Workers. Martinez Senior Center. Register at [Martinez.cert@gmail.com](mailto:cert@gmail.com). 818 Green St. Martinez.

At the Martinez Campbell Theater

>**February 13-22 The Color Purple** Pittsburg Theatre Company. Tix \$26-\$35.

>**February 27-29 The Rocky Horror Show Auditions.** Feb. 27 6:00-9:00 p.m. Feb. 28 Noon-4:00 p.m. 925-899-3548 campbelltheater.com.

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

Walnut Creek

February 25 State of the City Future of Walnut Creek 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

March 03 21st Annual East Bay Women's Conference \$340

Walnut Creek Merry Mixers Dances 7:30 to 10:00 p.m. \$20, \$15 members. Walnut Creek Elks Lodge 1475 Creekside Drive.

>**February 6 Take 2** preceded by Will's Waltz moves at center of floor at 7:00 p.m.

>**February 20 - Take 2**, preceded by 6:30 potluck

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

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

At the Leshner Center

1601 Civic Dr. Walnut Creek

>**February 6-7 Diablo Ballet presents “The Little Mermaid”.** Choreographed by Julia Adam and based on Hans Christian Andersen's beloved tale. Also on the program is the Diablo Ballet premiere of Paul Taylor's “Company B”, and an encore presentation of George Balanchine's cheerful “Donizetti Variations.” A pre-performance talk and meet and greet with the cast. Feb. 6 at 7:30 p.m., Feb. 7 two shows, 2:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Tickets \$30-\$59, Visit diabloballet.org.

>**February 13 Billy Nation, A tribute to Billy Joel.** 7:30 -9:30 p.m.

>**February 15 A Mariachi Valentine** 2:00-4:00 p.m.

March 01 The Amazing Bubble Man Greatest bubble show on Earth. All day.

Other Areas

Lafayette: March 01. East Bay Speed Dating. 30s/40s 3:00-5:00 p.m. Metro Lafayette. 3524 Mt.Diablo Blvd.

>

Pittsburg:

>

Library Events

Clayton

>**February 18 - Wonderful Wednesdays presents Drawing Tips and Techniques with Mr. Abe.** 2:00-2:45 p.m. Add to your drawing skills, with local artist/teacher Abe Rodriguez. This program is intended for elementary school-aged children, but all ages and abilities are welcome. Sponsored by the Clayton Community Library Foundation. 6125 Clayton Road, Clayton. 925-673-0659

>**Concord**

February 10 Lunar New Year Celebration 5:00-6:00 p.m. Tomizaki's Champion Kung Fu Lion Dance

>**Martinez**

740 Court St.

>**Pleasant Hill**

February 10 Perry Yan Magic Show 6:30-7:30 p.m. All ages welcome. Magician Perry Yan dazzles and delights with spellbinding magic tricks and his signature humor.

February 17 Lunar New Year Lion Dancers, 6:30=7:30 p.m. Celebrate the Year of the Horse with Tomizaki's Champions Kung Fu lion performance.n

March 03 Leprechaun Garden Trap 6:20-7:30 p.m. Craft a charming, tiny garden fit to catch a leprechaun. Take home and set just in time for St. Patrick's Day! Garden cuttings will be provided by the Ruth Bancroft Garden & Nursery. All ages and abilities welcome.

2 Monticello Ave

>**Walnut Creek**

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

1644 N. Broadway,

>**Walnut Creek Ygnacio Valley**

>**February 7 Lunar New Year Celebration** with performance by One Tribe Martial Arts Academy. 11⁰⁰ a.m.-12:30p.m.

March 02 Lego Club first and third Mondays. Lego's provided. age 6-9. 5:00-5:00p.m.

Clubs

Clayton Clubs

GFWC Clayton Valley Woman's Club 9:30 a.m. Serving

the communities of Clayton and Concord, meets on the 2nd Tuesday of the month September - June. Clayton Community Church, 6055 Main St, Clayton. www.claytonvalleywomansclub.org

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

Concord Clubs

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

Rotary Club of Concord. www.concordcarotary.org

Toastmasters Meeting

Do you want to improve your speaking skills and leadership skills? Come check out Word Weavers Toastmasters Club on the 1st, 3rd or 4th Monday of the month at 7:00 PM at John Muir Hospital in Concord, 2450 East Street, in the Kunkel conference room. More information at the link below: <https://400.toastmastersclubs.org/>

Martinez Clubs

Kiwanis Club meetings. Every

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

Walnut Creek Clubs

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

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

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



Sunday roast beef dinner

Roast Beef with Pan Gravy

INGREDIENTS

- 1 (3 to 3 1/2 - pound) bottom round rump roast, at room temperature
- 1 teaspoon seasoned salt
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 large yellow onion, sliced
- 3 sprigs fresh thyme
- 3 cups canned low-sodium beef broth
- 1/4 cup water

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 275°F. Season the meat on all sides with the seasoned salt, salt, and pepper. Heat the oil in a large Dutch oven and brown on all sides, about 4 minutes per side. Remove the roast from the pan and add the onion slices and thyme sprigs. Place the roast on top of the onions, fat side up. Add beef broth to the pan and place in the oven, uncovered. Roast until the beef is tender and registers an internal temperature of 130° to 135°F.

Transfer the roast to a platter or cutting board, cover and let rest for 15 minutes before carving.

Meanwhile, use a slotted spoon to discard the onions and thyme sprigs. Place the Dutch oven over medium-high heat to heat the beef drippings. Combine the cornstarch and water in a small bowl until dissolved. Add the cornstarch mixture to the beef drippings and bring to a boil. Cook, stirring constantly, until slightly thickened, 2 to 3 minutes. Adjust seasoning to taste.

Yield: 6-8 servings



Sunday dinners are more than just a meal; they are a cherished tradition that brings together family and close friends. These gatherings offer a chance to reflect on the past week and look ahead, all in a relaxed atmosphere that's a welcome change from the hustle and bustle of weekdays. Sometimes...

Roast beef with mashed potatoes and gravy is a classic choice for Sunday dinner. The beauty of this dish is its simplicity: with just a little prep, you can let the oven do most of the work.

Start about two hours before you plan to eat, and you'll have plenty of time to enjoy your company. For convenience, slice the onions in a food processor. Round out the meal with your favorite green vegetable. Roasted asparagus or sautéed green beans are excellent options.

Roast beef's straightforward flavors pair well with almost any dry red wine. For a budget-friendly option, look for rich reds from South America, such as a Chilean Cabernet or an Argentinian Malbec. These wines are widely available and offer great value, making them a perfect complement to your Sunday feast.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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

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

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Gored to death by bull - 110 years ago

Danville man lost his life Sunday afternoon

Cecil J. Booth, brother of Fred Booth of Danville, was knocked down and trampled to death by an infuriated bull some time Sunday afternoon. His body was found in the field by a Portuguese boy, who he had employed.

The bull had been dehorned and when it charged, knocked Booth unconscious. It then proceeded to trample and butt him. It is believed that death was almost instantaneous.

The deceased was a native of England and 52 years of age. He came to this country twelve or fourteen years ago and was unmarried. He leased the Reis ranch and had been successful in his farming.

Sunday morning, he went to the field to drive home some cattle. That was the last seen of him until late in the afternoon when the body was discovered horribly mutilated.

Besides his brother Fred of Danville, he leaves two brothers and a sister in England. They are Percy and Frank and Miss Gertrude Booth.

An examination of the body showed both shoulder blades and both ankles to be broken and that there were numerous bruises between the shoulders and knees.

The deceased was past master of Alamo lodge of Masons and past patron of Alamo chapter, Order of the Eastern Star. Rev. E. G. Davis, of the Episcopal church of Martinez, officiated with the Masons at the services which held at the Episcopal Church Wednesday forenoon.

GORED TO DEATH BY BULL

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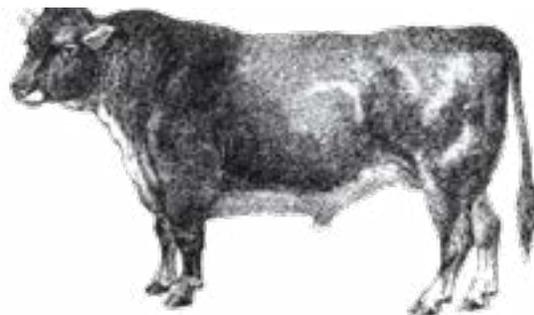
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—Martinez Standard.

Article from Pittsburg Post-December 4, 1915



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Solutions, puzzle page 18

WORD SEARCH - ASTRONOMY

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

- | | | | |
|---------------|--------------|--------|-----------|
| ASTEROID | ECLIPSE | MOON | SATELLITE |
| BLACK HOLE | GALAXY | NEBULA | SPACE |
| COMET | INTERSTELLAR | ORBIT | STAR |
| CONSTELLATION | LIGHT YEAR | PLANET | SUPERNOVA |
| DISTANCE | METEOR | QUASAR | TELESCOPE |

SUDOKU

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

WORD SCRAMBLE

Unscramble these five ASTRONOMERS:

LAGELIO _____
NCUCROPIES _____
BLEHBU _____
AGSNA _____
REKEPL _____

CRYPTOGRAM

In the quote below, each letter has been substituted for another letter. For example, if A = H, then A will always represent H in this puzzle.

*LT PGT YJHI PC PSKPCRTS
QGTT S DU BDCZTNH DC P
BXCDG EAPCTI DU P KTG N
PKTGPVT HIPG. QJI LT RPC
JCSTGHIPCS IWT JCXKTGHT.
IWPI BPZTH JH HDBTIWXCV
KTGN HETRXPA.
-HITEWTC WPLZXCV*

Puzzles column by Marc Rokoff
RokoPuzzles.com

JOURNEY-MAN'S JOURNAL

by Eric Hall

When you're in the mood for a Central American tropical paradise; Panama City

When it comes to enjoying extraordinary diversity, a clash of modern, even futuristic, cityscapes against an incredibly rich cultural legacy and architecture, Panama stands head and shoulders above any other destination.

When you're in the mood for a Central American tropical paradise, travel point: Panama City.

I did just that. With 10 days advance booking, I secured roundtrip airfare (to and from SFO) and six nights in a 14th floor suite on Avenida Balboa with floor to ceiling windows overlooking the financial district on the Pacific shore of Panama Bay for about \$1,200. That's what it costs to stay two nights anywhere in Napa Valley.

Panama City, A Birder's Haven

You've heard about Panama being an international trade hub, a critical commercial gateway between Asia, the Americas and Europe. You look forward to world class luxury shopping and gastronomic delights from every corner of the planet. But when you arrive in Panama for the first time, one thing strikes you above all else; you've just entered the world's largest tropical aviary.

Modern glass skyscrapers of Panama City's financial district, nestled between the vast Pacific Ocean and an encroaching rainforest, are wrapped in bird netting several floors off the ground protecting building infrastructure from swarms of golden-headed quetzals, thrushes, mot mot's, woodpeckers, from toucans, blue and gold macaws, Amazonian parrots and an endless variety of other birds. It is stunning.

There's nothing like sitting on the veranda with your morning coffee, listening to the din of bird calls above hustling commuters below.

Neighborhoods

The city's financial district looks and behaves a lot like Miami. Views from casinos and restaurants are incredible.

I took one of the best morning walks ever along the waterfront encountering vendors selling fruit from carts and families of crab-loving raccoons busy feasting along the breakwater.

Within a 10-minute walk is Casco Viejo, a UNESCO World Heritage site (one of seven in this tiny country).

Dripping in history and character, this charming, pedestrian-friendly neighborhood is mottled with rooftop bars that come alive in the evening, tons of hand-tiled craft shops that require all of your treasure-hunting skills, and wonderful museums around historical plazas. Of which, Casco is a favorite for tourists and locals alike.

At night the City is beaming with nightclubs. Three of my favorites: Tantaló Hotel, Casa Casco and Sama Skyounge.

In Casco, set aside time for Museo del Canal (\$15 USD). This fascinating 3-story exhibit showcased in incredible detail the history of the country, beginning with the geography of the isthmus itself rising out of the ocean three million years ago.

It will open a new understanding for you of what life was like for the thousands of people who worked, lived

and died in the jungles while cutting the canal. It's a must see.

Easy Access

Getting around Panama City is easy and cheap. A 15-minute drive cost me \$5-\$10 USD. Cabbies are easy to hail and Uber is everywhere. Most hotels also provide their own fleet of cars and drivers to get you to and from anywhere you want.

Excursions

For \$20, I climbed into the back of a 4X4 and rode 40 minutes to Gamboa early one morning for a day hike into the Soberania National Park. Gamboa is an eco-village and resort nestled in the middle of the rainforest.

The village houses about 2,000 canal workers and is the jumping off point for boat tours to Monkey Island and the rainforest itself.

It's the perfect place for a day hike or family safari. Bring binoculars, cameras, water and hats.

Miraflores Locks

You will pass the Miraflores Visitor Center on the road to Gamboa. I highly recommend a stop. Plan for two hours including the IMAX movie about the canal's history, narrated by Morgan Freeman.

Ask your hotel concierge about the best time to go the day you intend to go. The locals maintain the ship schedule and can guide you as to when ships will be coming through the locks.

Worthwhile Day Hikes

It took only an hour to climb Ancon Hill, the knob that separates the locks from downtown Panama City. The hill is the landmark you can see from anywhere and includes an enormous Panamanian flag on top.

Beautiful views of the city can be found and the paved hike up includes birds and other wildlife. I almost caught a green and black poison dart frog, thankfully, it escaped.

On another worthwhile hike (forgoing bike rentals), I chose the two-mile walk along the Amador Causeway.

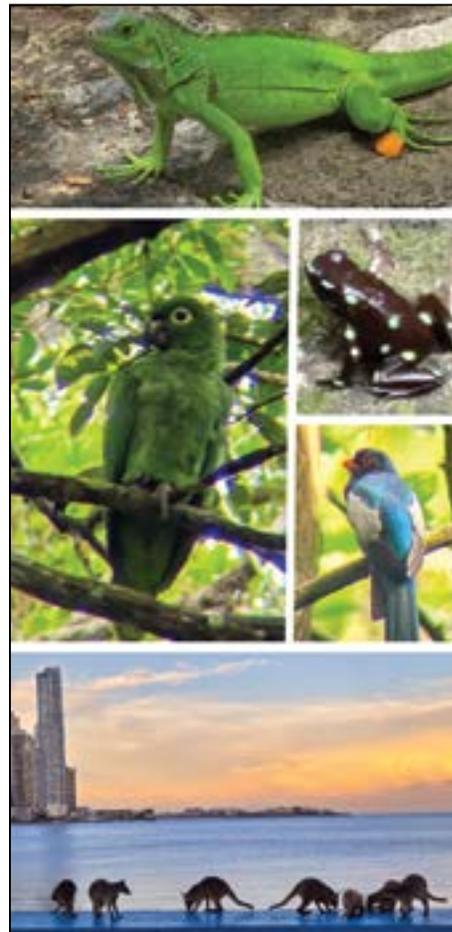
Built from excavated canal materials, the causeway links the mainland with two small islands in the bay. The end of the causeway is where cruise ships arrive, so naturally there's a plethora of restaurants, souvenirs shops, Panamanian hats, and a couple hotels at the far end of the causeway.

On the mainland end of the causeway, I ducked into the BioMuseo, built by famed architect Frank Gehry. This dazzling exhibit provides lessons on the isthmus's geography and Panamá's unique impact on the planet's biodiversity.

Gastronomy

The long, rich history of international influence in Panama means difficult to pin down what exactly is "Panamanian food." For a regular Joe like me, that's a blessing. It's all delicious, colorful, rich and exotic. From sea food, chicken, rice, plantains, tamales, shredded beef, roasted fruit and boiled saltfish, you name it, you'll find it.

Citywide, ice-cold local beers are fantastic and fresh, tangy ceviche is



The extraordinary Panama City sights; from the engineering marvel of the canal, its tropical hikes and wildlife, scenic coastline, diverse internationally influenced dining, and world class shopping. Photos courtesy Eric Hall.



everywhere. What else do you need?

What About Money?

Everything is cheaper there, lots cheaper. USD and credit cards are accepted everywhere. Some cash is always good to grease palms, of course.

It was such an adventurous, enlightening and enjoyable week; a tropical paradise yet bustling metropolitan of over one million including some 20,000 American expats. Someday, I would like to return, and who knows maybe even retire here.



Open houses serve buyers and sellers

With the change in the weather comes more opportunities for buyers to look at homes frequenting Open Houses.

A National Association of Realtors (NAR) survey says that 50% of buyers visit an open house at some point in their search. Do they purchase the exact home they view? No, not always. Sellers then ask “why do an open house?”

The advantages to sellers are as many as there are to buyers. After all the hype about SEO, the internet taking the place of Realtors® and touring homes, people still want to “feel” a home, and see if it feels right for them; “see” what they are buying and see that it matches the online version; “experience” the neighborhood, the backyard or deck or other promoted home feature or fantasy.

While a buyer’s Realtor® may be busy working an open house, they can visit many homes all in one afternoon and narrow down their search. During an Open House, with homeowners away, buyers can look at the things that matter to them, without a homeowner being disturbed. The awkwardness of opening a closet or cabinet with a homeowner present prevents some buyers from feeling comfortable doing so, thus their viewing experience can be limited and leave them unsure about the home.

Open houses allow buyers to determine what features they want by seeing them up close as they function. An open house can provide data that gives buyers a comparison to other

homes giving the buyer a feeling of what something is worth, and what amenities they are willing to pay for.

The experience of viewing a home, walking the hallways, standing in the bedroom where they plan to sleep, seeing the sunshine through the windows or the view from the window, all make a house a home if it’s the right one.

How does this benefit sellers? In the same way. There is a right buyer for every home. The more opportunities buyers have to view different properties, the easier and sooner they can narrow their search, ending in falling in love with a home.

As an experienced Realtor®, the first thing I say to buyers is that no Realtor® can make them buy something. THEY will choose the home, my job is to listen, explore the field, and expose them to the things they expressed that suit them or that they value.

An open house is more than a showing, it’s a chance to explore, ask questions, and learn more about the home. If you’re actively looking or just beginning your search come visit me at an open house and let’s continue the conversation.

In short, buyers pick their home, my job is to expose them to the options. It is actually true that buyers tell you when it’s “the one.”

MONTHLY MARKET REPORT

DECEMBER / 2025

CLAYTON		CONCORD	
Existing SFR Median Price \$901k	MARKET COMPETITION Median Days on Market 32	Existing SFR Median Price \$810k	MARKET COMPETITION Median Days on Market 18
% Change from Last Year -19.9%	Sales-to-List Price % 100.0%	% Change from Last Year -1.8%	Sales-to-List Price % 100.0%
	% of Active Listings Who Reduced Prices 33.3%		% of Active Listings Who Reduced Prices 21.3%
MARTINEZ		WALNUT CREEK	
Existing SFR Median Price \$835k	MARKET COMPETITION Median Days on Market 12	Existing SFR Median Price \$1.57M	MARKET COMPETITION Median Days on Market 18
% Change from Last Year -10.2%	Sales-to-List Price % 100.0%	% Change from Last Year +0.6%	Sales-to-List Price % 100.0%
	% of Active Listings Who Reduced Prices 41.0%		% of Active Listings Who Reduced Prices 33.3%

SOURCE: Car.org





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“The Profile of an Eagle”

Initiative is blueprint for student life after high school

At the start of the 2025–26 academic year, Clayton Valley Charter High School strengthened a transformative initiative that defines what it means to graduate prepared for college, career, and life: the Profile of an Eagle.

The Profile of an Eagle is a comprehensive blueprint for student growth, outlining the skills, habits, and experiences that define a well-rounded graduate. At its core is academic excellence, including eligibility for a four-year California public university, college-level reading, writing, and quantitative reasoning, and achievement of the California College/ Career Indicator “Prepared” status. Students are encouraged to earn college credit and complete a meaningful sequence of electives that deepen learning and broaden perspectives.

This framework is anchored by 16 commitments that guide every Eagle from freshman year through graduation. Together, they ensure that a CVCHS diploma represents more than academic achievement; it reflects readiness for life beyond high school. These commitments span academics, real-world experience, wellness, and citizenship and culminate in a student portfolio that showcases essays, projects, service, and reflections. The portfolio equips students to advocate for themselves as they pursue college,



The Profile of an Eagle comes to life in every classroom.

internships, and other post-secondary opportunities.

As we reach the midpoint of the academic year, I am incredibly proud of our students’ progress. The Profile of an Eagle sets CVCHS apart by aligning student success with the skills, values, and workforce readiness our colleges, employers, and community partners expect.

Beyond the classroom, Eagles participate in real-world learning, including at least two college visits, work-based learning experiences, and meaningful community service. Every student also engages in at least two extracurricular activities, developing leadership, teamwork, and personal interests.



Director of Curriculum and Instruction Kathleen Coakley

The Profile emphasizes personal responsibility, forward planning, and strong communication skills, while also fostering wellness, digital citizenship, fitness, resilience, and integrity, habits essential for lifelong success.

This work is made possible by the dedication of our teaching staff and the leadership of our Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Kathleen Coakley, whose vision ensures the Profile comes to life in every classroom. Together with our families, we have built a community where every Eagle can soar.

The Profile of an Eagle brings County- and State-aligned graduate expectations to life and will serve as a cornerstone of our upcoming charter renewal. It is a powerful reason families choose Clayton Valley Charter High School.

To our students: embrace the Profile with purpose. To our families: thank you for your partnership. To our staff: your commitment empowers our Eagles to thrive. The future is bright.

Nate Kenion to Lead Football Program at CVCHS

Clayton Valley Charter High School (CVCHS) hires Nate Kenion to lead the Ugly Eagles Football program.



Kenion brings nearly two decades of coaching experience at the high school, junior college, and collegiate levels, along with a deep commitment to student-athlete development.

Kenion spent 14 years on staff at De La Salle High School (2008–2022). During his tenure, De La Salle captured six state championships (2009 to 2015).

Most recently, Kenion served as the Defensive Safeties Coach at California State University, Sacramento, while also acting as the team’s lead defensive analyst. Previously, he was the Defensive Coordinator at Diablo Valley College where he led the Vikings to a victory in the Golden Valley Bowl in 2024.

Kenion is also the founder of KT Prep, a premier football development program that has trained hundreds of athletes across the Bay Area, Sacramento, and Central Valley. Through KT Prep, 18 athletes earned All-America honors, including a Gatorade National Defensive Player of the Year, and 12 went on to play in the NFL.

“We are excited,” said Bill Morones, Executive Director of CVCHS. “Nate brings an exceptional depth of high school coaching experience, proven leadership, and a genuine passion for developing young people.”



Selecting great bare-root trees

Late winter is an ideal time to plant new fruit trees and our local area offers an ideal climate for producing abundant, high-quality fruit.

One surefire option for starting off with great quality fruit trees is to buy bare root stock. There are many advantages of buying bare root trees: they are lighter and easier to handle, you can get a good look at their roots, they cost less than leafed-out trees in containers, and trees are dormant and resistant to stress from handling.

Selecting a healthy bare root tree is critical for early success. Buy your tree from a reputable local nursery that has a wide selection. Bare-root fruit tree selection involves choosing deciduous trees with healthy, moist, fibrous roots. Here are some important tips for selecting the best bare-root trees..

Climate: Choose a variety appropriate for our climate and chill hours. Local nurseries should only carry stock that complies with our local climate but check to make sure. The Concord/Clayton area averages about 930 chill hours per year. Tree labels should mention chill hour requirements.

Roots: Select trees with well-developed, healthy-colored root systems. Roots should be moist, firm, and flexible, not brittle or mushy. Color-wise, they should be whitish or yellowish, not brown or black. Avoid trees with roots that encircle (“girdle”) their root crowns as these

trees have been in their containers too long.

Stem/Trunk: Choose trees with straight undamaged trunks, ideally at least 1/2 inch in diameter just above its root crown, and with clean graft unions. Spindly trees are too young and should also be avoided.

Buds & Branches: Look for firm leaf buds on well-spaced branches. Trees with no branches are too young.

Packaging: If pre-packaged, roots should be packed in damp sawdust or moss, not light or dry material. Often, bare root trees are found in raised beds full of sandy soil. Make sure their roots are packaged properly for transporting home without drying out.

Condition: Avoid plants with signs of black mold, broken branches, gouges in their bark, or severely kinked roots (“root-bound”).

Timing: Buy early in the season (like right now) to get the best selection. Keep roots wrapped and moist and plant in your home garden within several days of purchase.

Other considerations are pollination requirements, the ultimate tree size (Hint: always select dwarf varieties), and disease susceptibility (if you live in a fog belt, choose fungus-immune trees).

Pollination is necessary for good fruit production. Some fruit trees self-pollinate, such as persimmons and Bartlett pears. Other trees require



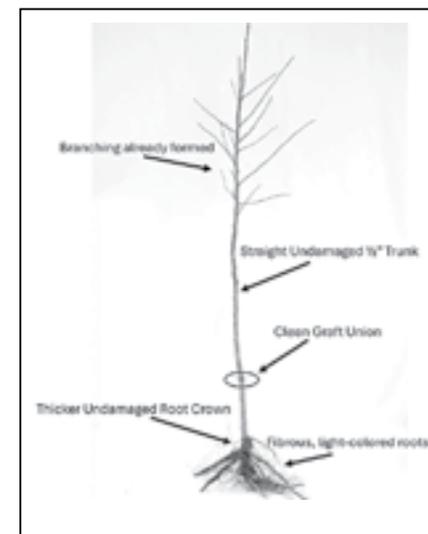
Above: Young fruit tree with girdled roots. Bare root fruit trees should have strong, light-colored roots. Photo courtesy UCANR. Qualities of a healthy bare root tree.

a second tree planted nearby for fruit production, such as many apple varieties and Asian pears.

UCANR websites provide guidance for your research, selection, and planting. Just search for “UCANR selecting planting bare root fruit trees”.

So, choose soon, choose well, and choose with confidence. You won't have another opportunity for purchasing again until next winter.

Seasonal Notes: Apply dormant spray now to fruit trees, berries, and roses before they break dormancy. Copper is a generally safe spray and does not kill beneficial bugs. This month, plant potatoes, garlic, asparagus, and rhubarb outdoors, and



lettuce, spinach, and Swiss chard in greenhouses or protected outdoor locations. Cut back ornamental grasses before new spring growth.

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

How does one find a reputable, capable landscape designer?

It happens every year. When the cherry blossoms pop open, the bulbs push up and out into the warm spring sun, and the birds seem to sing a little louder, homeowners take notice of what's not blooming and singing in their own gardens and call a professional.

However, while landscaping in Northern California offers a year-round window of opportunity, winter is the most strategic time to initiate a garden design.

Most reputable landscape design firms fill their spring schedules by February, so being the “early bird” can help you bypass the peak-season rush and increase the chance of having your project completed and ready for use as early as spring. Plus, contractors often have first pick of the season's materials before supplies are picked over.

Depending on your needs, you could start your search for a designer with The Association of Professional Landscape Designers, ask friends and family or a neighbor whose landscape you admire. You might also call or visit your local plant nursery, who often has relationships with designers and can provide a list of recommended professionals. And of course, check Online for customer reviews.

Before meeting with your chosen designer, take time to prepare a list of your goals and objectives, including any existing issues such as poor drainage, soil compaction, or slope instability and share your design preferences (Mediterranean, Native, Modern, Cottage, Zen, etc.) and your working budget. This will help the

designer prioritize effectively and avoid over- or under-designing.

It's also helpful to consider how you use your outdoor space. Do you entertain often? Do you have children or pets? Are you looking for low-maintenance solutions? These details can guide the design toward a space that's not only beautiful but also functional and livable.

Another important step is to research the designer's portfolio and experience. Look for projects similar to your vision, and don't hesitate to ask for references or examples of work completed in your area.

A good designer will listen to your needs, offer practical solutions, and provide clear timelines and cost estimates. They should also be familiar with local regulations, such as water conservation requirements and plant restrictions, especially in California.

Once the design is finalized, the real transformation begins. From clearing debris and grading the land to installing hardscaping and placing plants, the process is both exciting and rewarding.

Watch as your vision takes shape whether it's a tranquil Zen garden, a vibrant cottage-style bed, or a modern, low-water landscape that thrives in the California climate.

In the end, a well-designed garden isn't just a visual treat, it's a space that enhances your daily life, invites relaxation, and connects you with nature. With the right planning and a trusted designer, your outdoor space can become a true extension of your home.

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Concord streets

are getting safer and smarter

Well-maintained Concord roads are essential, and a priority for our community. Poor roads and streets lead to potholes, increased vehicle wear, uncomfortable commutes, and potential safety issues. The ability and ease for us to get from point A to point B has a direct impact on our quality of life.

The City of Concord has made significant investments in its transportation infrastructure over the past several years. In total, the City maintains approximately 310 miles of public roads.

Voter Approved Measure V

Based on community input, the Council has dedicated Measure V funds to roadways and infrastructure investment as well as preserving essential city services including public safety, parks maintenance, and recreation facilities and services.

Measure V has enabled the City to address the community's priorities including major roads maintenance, such as Treat Boulevard, Willow Pass Road, Oak Grove Road, Monument Boulevard, Bailey Road, and Port Chicago Highway. Major work on Clayton Road is currently underway and nearing completion.

Beyond these major corridors, you have likely noticed improvements in some of the residential neighborhoods such as new pavement, refreshed striping, lighted crosswalks, and other enhancements.

That's the thing about our roads; they are not a one-time investment. They are a shared community resource that we use every day. Much like a car or a home, they require ongoing care, maintenance, and periodic upgrades.

Modernizing Our Transportation System Technology

In parallel with neighborhood improvements, the City works diligently to plan and modernize Concord's transportation system.

Between 2018 and 2025, the City

secured \$42.6 million in transportation grant funding to improve traffic safety, mobility, and overall system performance citywide.

A major portion of this investment, \$18 million, has focused on traffic safety improvements, including upgraded traffic signals, enhanced signage, enhanced street lighting, school-zone safety measures, and bicycle and pedestrian enhancements. These improvements include pedestrian countdown signals, accessible push buttons, ADA curb ramps, high-visibility crosswalks, and rapid-flashing beacons, designed to reduce crashes and improve visibility for all road users.

The City has also invested \$12.1 million to modernize its traffic signal system, upgrading more than 110 signal controllers and 90 signal cabinets to support advanced signal timing, improved coordination, and real-time system monitoring. These improvements include new technologies that increase reliability and allow signals to respond more effectively to changing traffic conditions.

Building on this foundation, the City is working on further improving traffic conditions by using technology to reduce congestion and improve travel-time reliability. The upcoming Transportation Management Center (TMC) will take advantage of the modernized traffic signal system to enhance overall system performance.

Additionally, \$10.8 million has been awarded to bicycle and pedestrian corridor projects that improve connectivity across key areas of the city, providing safer, more convenient walking and biking options.

Together, these intentional investments are improving our quality of life and are making Concord's streets safer, smarter, and better connected than ever to make your daily drive or ride through Concord smoother and easier.

Women's Council of Realtors - Contra Costa installs new president and governing board

The Women's Council of Realtors - Contra Costa held its 2026 Governing Board Installation Gala on January 9, 2026, at the Lafayette Veterans Memorial Center in Lafayette.

The event, "Pearls Power and Possibilities", marked the installation of 2026 President QuyNitta McDade and the governing board. The event brought together real estate professionals, civic leaders, and community partners from across Contra Costa County. Attendees included Caroline Obringer-the then Mayor of Concord, Sara Baird-the Executive Director of Downtown Martinez & Co., and representatives from local government, business, and

real estate organizations.

The evening provided an opportunity for networking and recognition of leadership within the community and real estate industry, while highlighting the Council's ongoing commitment to professional development and community engagement.



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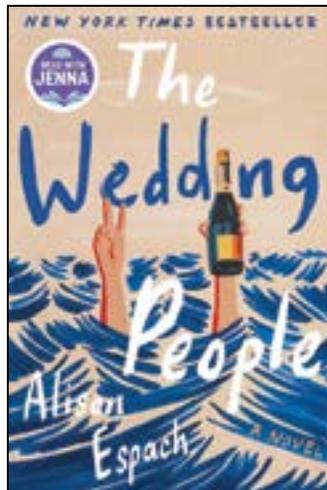
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The Wedding People

“The Wedding People” (Henry Holt and Company, 2024, hardcover, 384 pages, \$19.26) by Alison Espach is a perfect Valentine’s Day indulgence for those looking for a different sort of romance novel.

When Phoebe Stone arrives at the Cornwall Inn, she is unaware that she is the only hotel guest not part of a wedding party. By chance, she ends up in the elevator with the twenty-seven-year-old bride to be, Lila. Lila is determined to have the perfect wedding and has spared no expense to achieve her goal. She is floored when she learns Phoebe has come to The Cornwall Inn to end her life. Rather than alert the authorities, Lila includes Phoebe in the many extravagant pre-wedding activities she has planned.



Phoebe, a Victorian literature professor, is still reeling from depression over the ending of her twelve-year marriage a year ago. Her husband, Matt, had left her for Phoebe’s best friend, Mia. Matt and Mia have since had a child together, making Phoebe feel even more inadequate because her attempts to get pregnant using IVF failed during her marriage. To make matters worse, her cat died. Phoebe feels hopeless and decides to take her dream vacation and end her life by combining her cat’s painkiller medication with alcohol.

But like many parts of Phoebe’s life, things do not go as planned. Somehow, she becomes Lila’s confidant, somehow she has misidentified as

the Maid of Honor and in charge of the wedding excursions, and somehow Espach, makes the whole wild pre-wedding week hilariously funny, but also deeply emotional. There are moments of drama, like when Phoebe learns the handsome man she met in a hot tub and felt an instant attraction to turns out to be the groom. But there are also moments of joy, especially when Phoebe bonds with the groom’s teen daughter, Juice. Although I found parts of the novel predictable, the quirky characters, the bits of romance, the moments of angst with a laugh-out-loud chaser, make the book a fun read.

“The Wedding People” was a New York Times bestseller with over a million copies sold. The novel is also a Read with Jenna Book Club Pick. It was named a Best Book of the Year by “The Guardian”, “Time”, “The Chicago Tribune” and more. TriStar Pictures has acquired the film rights.

Fans of “The People We Meet on Vacation” by Emily Henry and “Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine” by Gail Honeyman will likely enjoy this novel.

Alison Espach is the author of two other novels, “Notes on Your Sudden Disappearance,” an Indie Next Pick and Amazon Editors’ Pick for 2022, and “The Adults”, a New York Times Editor’s Choice and Barnes and Noble Discover pick. She has written for “Vogue”, “Outside Magazine”, and other publications. She teaches creative writing at Providence College in Rhode Island. Follow her at www.alisonespach.com.

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Hamnet

Rated PG-13
In theaters

Grief is a very personal experience, one that can be difficult to capture on film. If you tell a sad story and show the characters in pain, an audience will react with shared human emotion. What director Chloé Zhao manages to do in the film “Hamnet,” however, is dive deeper into the lingering effects of death.

Based on the novel by Maggie O’Farrell, “Hamnet” is a mostly fictional story about playwright William Shakespeare (Paul Mescal), his wife Agnes (Jessie Buckley) and their children. Historically, we know little about Shakespeare’s wife, but here she is the main character.

As the townspeople refer to Agnes as the daughter of a forest witch, she spends her time alone in the forest, making natural medicine from herbs and passing time with her hawk. When William comes to town to give Latin lessons to some of the children, he is smitten with Agnes and her unusual personality.

Later, when the two marry and start a family, Agnes faces the challenge of raising the children alone while William spends most of his time in London, writing and producing his plays. Since the story focuses on Agnes, we do not witness William’s success as a playwright until the latter part of the film.

The movie rests on the audience liking



the fictionalized interpretation of Shakespeare’s wife, and actress Jessie Buckley delivers. The emotional range of her facial expressions resonates with viewers, who share in her joy and agony, even when she is not speaking. Buckley has already won the Golden Globe for her performance and is in high contention for the Oscar.

Do not feel this is a highbrow movie because it is about Shakespeare. Everyone can connect with the universal story of love, loss, and the pain of moving on after a tragedy. The film just happens to be about William Shakespeare, but here he is portrayed like any other husband and father. The film also captures how an artist’s life experiences influence their work. What an artist creates may not resemble a true event in their life, but the emotional core must always be authentic for it to connect with an audience.

Plan to have multiple tissues on hand when watching this movie but know that it is not a downer. While you will walk away with the confirmation regarding the fragility of life, you will also have a reaffirming elation of the power of love.

“Hamnet” has garnered six Golden Globe nominations, with wins for Best Drama and Best Actress, and eight Oscar nominations for the upcoming March 15 telecast. This has extended and expanded its theatrical release.

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COMPASS

Artist of the Month, Yi Ding

Where precision meets memory

by Julia O'Reilly

Yi Ding brings a distinctive voice to contemporary painting, one that is shaped by both science and emotion. Holding a Ph.D. in Mechanics and with more than two decades as an automotive designer and engineer, Ding approaches art through structure, balance, and light, transforming technical discipline into quiet poetic expression.



Working primarily in oil, Ding blends realism with semi-impressionism. Her compositions often begin with a carefully constructed framework before evolving into expressive forms guided by intuition. Layered textures, soft transitions, and atmospheric color create a sense of calm and mystery, inviting viewers to slow down and look more closely.

Her solo exhibition, "In Memory of Beijing – The Forbidden City", reflects this balance of order and feeling. Drawing inspiration from personal history and architectural memory, the work explores how place, geometry, and emotion intersect, revealing warmth within structure and movement within stillness.

"For me, painting is a continuation of engineering, a language where science breathes through color, and design finds its heartbeat." – Yi Ding

Yi Ding is an active member of Arts of Contra Costa County. Her work can be seen locally at JOR Fine Art Gallery in Clayton and as part of the "Visions of Winter" exhibit at Blackhawk Gallery in Danville.



Pekin Opera-Drunk Concubine

Solo Exhibit "IN MEMORY OF BEIJING - THE FORBIDDEN CITY" reception is on Saturday, February 7th, from 4-6 PM. <https://www.artaste.app/yi>

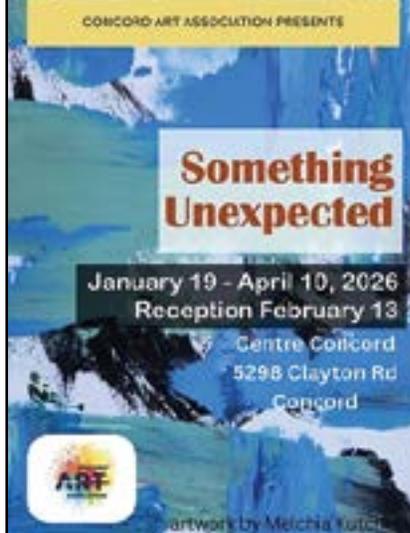


"Something Unexpected" exhibit is at Centre Concord, through April 10, 2026.

Centre Concord is located at 5298 Clayton Rd., Concord.

Hours: Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Reception: February 13.
Check website for times:
concordartassociatin.org/exhibits




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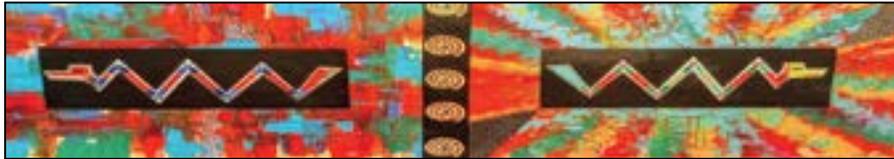
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The Arts Page



Four amazing artists!



Timothy Aguino

The Four Amazing Artists exhibit continues through February 20.

Two of the Four Amazing Artists are deceased. I had the opportunity to view their portfolios when each had loved ones come for a visit about a year ago. I was so impressed that I said, "Wow, we need to show this..." So, here we are a year or so later and the response has been fantastic.

Tim Aquino

Native American artist, Tim Aquino, has many of his colorful Native American pieces embellished with beads. Each piece has Native American symbols within the composition and Tim has provided the viewer with a printout that reveals what each symbol means.

Lori Larks

Curator, Lori Larks, has photography and landscapes on exhibit. She is a part of the Contra Costa County Plein Air Painters. Her paintings are oil and acrylic. Most of the scenes are in Contra Costa County and admirers will recognize many of the places depicted. These landscapes are smaller in size than most of the work in the gallery. They would make lovely Valentine's Day gifts for any art lover.

Thomas Freeman

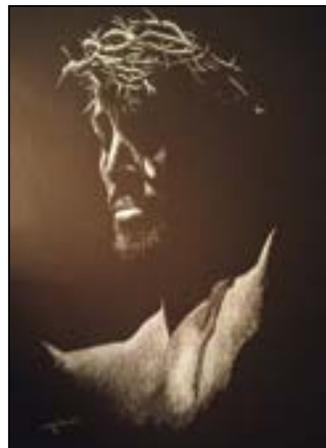
I never met the award-winning water colorist, Thomas Freeman, but I met his son David Freeman. When David showed me his father's portfolio, a year ago, I knew they were special.

Lee Von Rackel

The fourth amazing artist exhibiting is award-winning Lee Von Rackel. Her work is rendered in pen and ink. Lee worked for Disney at one time. If she was alive today she'd be 108. Don't miss this opportunity to view her original work and lithographs. Open 11:00 -5:00 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday. 2238 Mt. Diablo St., Concord.



Thomas Freeman



Lee Von Rackel "Jesus"



Lori Larks Diablo Foothills



February is "Love Local" month at Main Street Arts

As part of its February "Love Local" theme, Main Street Arts Gallery is highlighting the work of its 12 local artists, whose art includes paintings inspired by beloved Bay Area scenes and landmarks, while also celebrating a wide range of styles and media. On Martinez First Friday, February 6, the gallery will donate 10% of total sales that day to Contra Costa Animal Services in Martinez in support of our four-legged friends.

From 6:00 to 9:0 p.m. on February 6, the gallery will also host a reception for guest artist Lorraine Curtis, whose series "Beautiful People" is on display through the end of the month. Curtis, a portrait artist with more than 20 years of experience as a teaching artist, fine artist, graphic designer and illustrator, brings a deep passion for capturing the human spirit in her work. Her portraits incorporate hand-written lyrics inspired by each subject's favorite songs, blending music and art into evocative storytelling.

Visitors to the First Friday reception can meet Curtis and the gallery's resident artists, enjoy refreshments, and enter the monthly free art giveaway, featuring an original fused glass artwork by Jerry Hild.

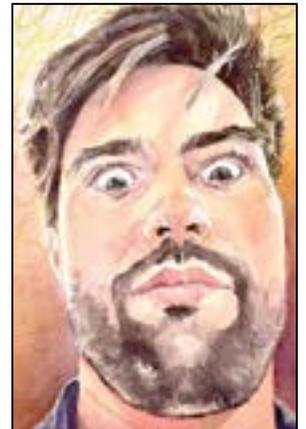
Now in its tenth year in downtown Martinez, Main Street Arts Gallery continues to be a welcoming destination for art lovers and collectors. The gallery is open Wednesday through Sunday and showcases a wide range of media, including painting, sculpture, ceramics, glass, jewelry, and mixed media. Located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



Fused Glass art by Jerry Hild. Drawing Prize for First Friday, Feb. 6. guests.



Free by Lorraine Curtis



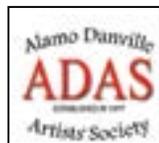
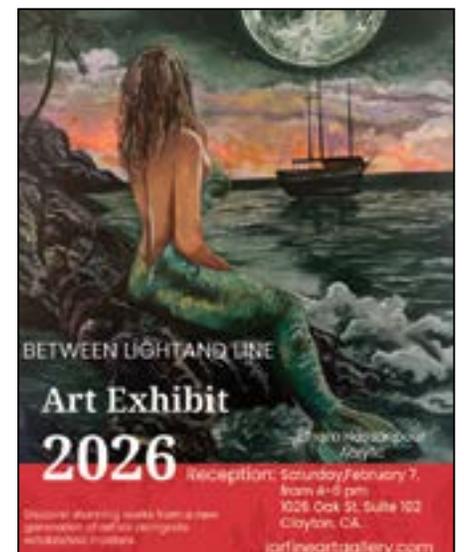
Who Me? by Lorraine Curtis



"Between Light & Line" exhibit opens Feb. 7

In Clayton, JOR Fine Art Gallery's new contemporary art exhibit, "Between Light & Line." opens to the public on Saturday, February 7, with an artist reception from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. The community is invited to attend and meet the artists and experience the work in person.

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



February general meeting with painter Dave Wagner

The ADAS General Meeting with Art Demo is scheduled to take place on

Tuesday February 10, at 7:30 p.m. at Black Hawk Gallery, 3416 Blackhawk Plaza Circle, Danville.

Dave Wagner studied at Cal Poly, California College of the Arts, and the New York Academy of Art. He now teaches at Las Positas College in Livermore and spend much of his time exploring Northern California's outdoors.

Oil Paintings

My recent work is inspired by time spent in nature, focusing on the pastoral and the energy of a moment beyond physical reality," states Wagner.

Formations

These paintings explore dualities such as beauty and tragedy, or chaos and order, reflecting impermanence, the sublime, and "my connection to mountains, stars, and time."



Guest Artist

The guest artist for this exhibit is acclaimed ceramic artist Joan Pinto whose expressive and refined ceramic pieces add depth and dimension to the show.

"Between Light & Line" is free making it a perfect opportunity for art lovers, collectors, and community members to enjoy an evening of art and connection.

Life as an emerging stand-up comedian is no joke

by Rich Eber



Patrons enjoy comedy night at Bambino's in Concord, always on the last Tuesday of the month.

On a cold, windy Tuesday evening in Concord, the restaurant trade is often lacking. The exception is Comedy Night at Bambino's Pizza.

On the last Tuesday of each month, Pat McCoy brings sound, lighting, and a stage there. Located at a strip mall at 1695 Farm Bureau Road, Bambino's has historically catered to local clientele, including softball teams playing at nearby Willow Pass Park.

On this evening, some five aspiring comedians plied their trade before an audience of approximately 50 onlookers seeking a laugh or two.

There is no cover charge, so the performers are paid by passing the hat following the show. Bambino's bestowed a beer and pizza to this motley group.

McCoy deftly acts as host, telling jokes and introducing individual stand-up comedians. He says, "I'm broke. It's an OK thing that Concord is not Danville. My 401K is the mileage on my truck."

There is some truth to this statement, as it is not possible to make a living performing at venues such as Bambino's. McCoy and his company, Pat Pending Productions, put on similar shows locally on a regular basis. This includes places such as The Greenery in Walnut Creek, Martinez's William Welsh Wines, and Clayton's Roadside 22.

As a retired heavy equipment operator who puts on approximately 10 performances a month, McCoy hopes to one day do a show seen on Netflix or one of the other or cable networks.

McCoy thinks perfecting one's delivery and trying out new material before a live audience is an important part of the learning process for those aspiring to be successful as stand-up comics.

After the host completed his bit, Livermore's Jacob Parnell took the stage. He explains his main employment being a church pastor in Livermore provides an excellent foundation to deliver humor to his audience. They seemed to enjoy Parnell's light banter.

Next came David Dominguez from San Jose. He said, being a "born-again Mexican, the closest I come to my heritage is working in a landscaping business." He went on to say, "My mom is Catholic, my dad a Moslem. Raised in California, I'm into astrology."

Conner Lonsdale from Oakland followed Dominguez. Having previously performed at Cobb's Comedy Club in San Francisco, he tried out bits dealing with sobriety and armed robbers hitting

a Pizza Hut in Florida.

The featured local stand-up comic was Linda Goodwin from Concord. In attendance at Bambino's were several friends, including her 89-year-old mother, Joyce. Linda told her repertoire of Johnny jokes to the appreciative audience. Her material was more risqué than her previous sets at the Concord Senior Center.

Also on the bill was Safia. She is a local who is presently living in Paris. Her humor dealt primarily with life in Berkeley, religion, and her mom. Safia's smooth delivery and pleasing personality were well received by the audience.

A week later Mc Coy took a different group of aspired comedians to Roadside 22 Bar & Grill in Clayton. The delicious "grill" portion of the festivities was provided by the Claytonville BBQ mobile truck. The venue provided an excellent environment for the performers to ply their trade.

In a similar manner to what transpired at Bambino's, this group received valuable stage time in front of a live audience. Someday they hope this experience will translate to better and more profitable gigs.

Despite the performers making no reference to anything that could be construed as current events, everyone seemed to be having a good time. After the show, McCoy split up the tip money among the aspiring comedians.

More than receiving a few bucks, a beer, and splitting a complimentary pizza, this group received valuable stage time in front of a live audience. Someday, they hope this experience will translate to ter and more profitable gigs.

This article was updated from its original at Bayareatelegraph.com.

In Case You Missed It..

Local News Items from Claycord.com and Other Sources

New Walnut Creek Chick-fil-A has opened



The new Chick-fil-A on Oak Grove Rd near Ygnacio in Walnut Creek officially opened on January 22. The restaurant does not have a drive-thru.

Contra Costa Supervisors move forward with plans for new sales tax on June ballot

The Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors has moved forward with plans to put a new sales tax on the ballot for voters in the upcoming June election.

The board directed county staff to create a measure that would propose a sales tax of five-eighths of a cent per dollar for five years in response to federal cuts passed by Congress last year.

Supervisors said the measure would return to the board at its Feb. 10 meeting to be ap-proved to go on the ballot ahead of a March deadline for the statewide June 2 primary elec-tion. If passed by a majority of the county's voters, it is estimated to generate \$151 million annually for the five years it is in effect.

Connect Bay Area Transit committee to place a citizen's initiative on the November 2026 ballot .

A Regional Transportation Ballot Measure proposes a 14- year half cent sales tax for Alameda, Contra Costa, San Mateo, and Santa Clara. San Francisco County will be assessed for one cent in San Francisco for 14-year duration.

Includes five Bay Area Counties: Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Clara.

Funds to support transit operations for four largest operators facing fiscal cliff: BART, Muni, Caltrain, AC Transit.

On January 31, State and local officials have agreed on a \$590 million bridge loan to prop up Bay Area transit agencies until voters decide on a sales tax increase to bolster the systems.

Espetus Churrascaria has opened in The Veranda.



Espetus Churrascaria has officially opened at The Veranda in Concord. The Brazilian steakhouse will offer endless, rodizio service; a gourmet salad bar, and fire-grilled meats including: lamb, chicken hearts, chicken legs, bacon-wrapped chicken breast, home-style chicken sausage, pork belly, pork loin pork sausage, beef ribs, flap steak, top sirloin, sirloin steak, filet mignon, and grilled shrimp. Mmmmmmm.

Stand Together Contra Costa launches mobile legal clinic to expand access to justice



The Mobile Legal Clinic is a program of Contra Costa Public Defender's Office, The initiative aims to reduce common barriers that prevent residents from accessing legal help, including transportation challenges, work schedules, childcare responsibilities, language access needs, and fear related to immigration enforcement.

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CRYPTOGRAM
 We are just an advanced breed of monkeys on a minor planet of a very average star. But we can understand the universe. That makes us something very special.
 -Stephen Hawking

WORD SCRAMBLE
 GALILEO
 COPERNICUS
 HUBBLE
 SAGAN
 KEPLER



For the Love of Pets

by Jill Hedgecock, Jillhedgecock.com

Betta fish are intelligent and low maintenance aquarium pets

Betta fish, also known as Siamese Fighting Fish, are intelligent and fun pets capable of recognizing their owners. They are generally low maintenance and are content to live without any fellow fish companions. They come in nearly every color combination imaginable, making them beautiful to watch.



tiny bowls or plastic cups they are often sold in at pet stores.

A five-gallon aquarium is ideal for bettas. You will need a heater to keep the water at the ideal 78 degrees Fahrenheit plus a filter or an air stone to help with gas exchange to mimic their natural conditions. In addition, bettas need a place to hide so include silk or live plants, caves, and hiding spots to provide enrichment and reduce stress.

Bettas are extremely territorial. Males and some females will fight to the death, so it is better to include other types of fish in a betta tank. Aquarium species compatible with male and female bettas include snails, tetras, Corydoras catfish, and mollies.



There are several types of bettas, but the most well-known is the halfmoon species, so named because of its large tail that spreads 180 degrees into the shape of a half circle. Also popular is the crowntail, a betta whose spiky fins resemble royal crowns.

Betta fish can live two to five years and are carnivorous, requiring a daily feeding of a protein-rich diet of commercial pellets or brine shrimp. Bettas can be trained and a real bond is created between the owner and the pet fish. During feeding, you can practice a few tricks such as swimming on your hand or targeted jumping out of the water.

The most important consideration when acquiring a betta is providing a proper habitat. While Betta fish can live in watery environments with low oxygen because their labyrinth organ allows them to gulp air from the water surface, these beautiful creatures can't swim properly in the

There are several Facebook groups that support first time betta owners. A good local one is California Betta Society Facebook Group which supports Northern California Betta hobbyists. They have meetings every fourth Saturday of each month.

Jill Hedgecock is a retired environmental scientist, an ecological risk assessor, and an award-winning author. Her books are available on amazon.com.

Water awareness youth art contest returns for 2027 calendar

Children ages 8 to 18 years of age, who have a knack for art should enter in the Contra Costa Water District (CCWD) "Water Awareness" art contest. Winning entries will be featured in the District's 2027 calendar.

The contest is designed to challenge local youths to think about the importance of clean, reliable tap water. Children are encouraged to illustrate the water cycle, ways they use water or ways to use water efficiently. Winning entries will be announced during National Drinking Water Week, May 6-12.

Now in its ninth year, the contest has grown each year.

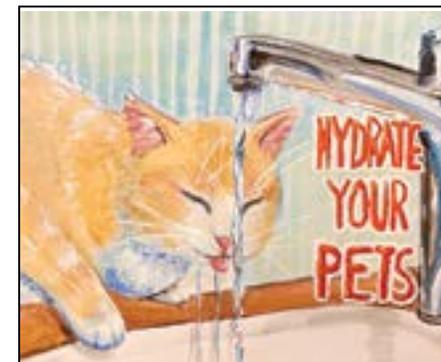
"Each year, the creativity in our Water Awareness Youth Art Contest is simply remarkable. These students capture the beauty and importance of water in ways that continue to amaze us," CCWD Board President Ernie Avila said. "At CCWD, we see water as a vital resource—and through this contest, we're reminded that our children are just as vital to our future. Their artwork reflects both inspiration and stewardship." CCWD Board President Ernie Avila

Entries will be screened by Contra Costa Water District staff and posted online for a public vote.

To participate in the contest, children must be between the ages of 8 and 18 years and reside or attend school in the Contra Costa Water District service area, which includes Antioch, Bay Point, Brentwood, Clayton, Clyde, Concord, Martinez, Oakley, Pacheco, Pittsburg, Pleasant Hill, Port Costa and Walnut Creek.

In addition to having their artwork featured in the 2027 Contra Costa Water District calendar, children who submit winning entries will receive \$75.

All submissions must be hand drawn original, unfolded artwork on a single



Above: Two of the winning entries of the 2026 calendar contest. Top, Gemma from Brentwood, bottom Ann from Walnut Creek.

horizontal 8.5-inch by 11-inch piece of paper. You may use pen, pencil, crayon, chalk, charcoal, marker, paint, or watercolor. Digital reproductions will not be accepted. All entries must include, on a separate piece of paper, the child's name, age, city of residence, school, a parent or guardian's name, email address and a phone number. Submissions can be mailed or hand-delivered to CCWD Calendar Contest, 1331 Concord Avenue, Concord, CA 95420.

For a contest overview and additional contest rules and requirements, visit www.ccwater.com/calendarcontest or contact osymonds@ccwater.com. Good Luck!

Contra Costa County Board of Education selects new board president

The Contra Costa County Board of Education selected Sarah Butler as its Board President for the 2026 calendar year during their annual reorganizational meeting on December 17, 2025. Butler, who represents Area 2, steps into the role with a strong commitment to championing high-quality, equitable education for students across Contra Costa County.

As Board President, Butler will guide the Board's work in policy development, budget approval, charter appeals and oversight, and interdistrict transfers. Her leadership will help support students enrolled in Contra Costa County Office of Education (CCCOE) schools, as well as the broader network of 18 school districts and 286 schools throughout the county.

Butler has served on the Board since her election in 2018 to Trustee Area 2, which includes Canyon, Concord, Lafayette, Moraga, Orinda, Walnut Creek, and portions of Alamo.

Board Member Yazmin Llamas, who represents Area 3, was selected as Vice



Sarah Butler, President and Yazmin Llamas Vice President of Contra Costa county Board of Education

President. Llamas was elected to the Board in 2024 and represents Bay Point, Clyde, Crockett, Hercules, Martinez, Pacheco, Pleasant Hill, Pittsburg, Port Costa, Rodeo, and parts of El Sobrante.

The County Board of Education approves policies, regulations, and curriculum for the schools and educational programs operated by the County Office of Education and works with County Superintendent of Schools Lynn Mackey to provide leadership, service, and support to the districts and students of Contra Costa County.

Dana Eaton announces candidacy for Contra Costa County Superintendent of Schools

Dana Eaton announced his candidacy for Contra Costa County Superintendent of Schools. This is an open seat.

"Students and learning are at the center of my work as superintendent of schools for the Brentwood Union School District and in my previous roles as a teacher and principal," said Eaton.

Dr. Eaton is serving his 13th year as superintendent of schools for the Brentwood Union School District and his 17th year as a superintendent overall. He has a nearly 30-year career in education including as a teacher and principal.

Current Contra Costa Superintendent of Schools, Lynn Mackey, is retiring and will not run for re-election. She has endorsed Eaton, stating "Dana is a highly experienced, well-respected superintendent here in Contra Costa County. He is deeply committed to

public education, understands the role of the County Office, and brings steady, student-centered leadership."

Eaton's was named ACSA Superintendent of the Year for Alameda and Contra Costa Counties in both 2016 and 2023. He was named Brentwood Citizen of the Year in 2019 by the Brentwood Chamber of Commerce.

Eaton comes from a long line of educators. His grandparents, mother, sister, and wife all served their communities as teachers. He lives in Brentwood with his family.

The primary election is in June. If no candidate receives 50% plus one of the vote, there will be a runoff election in November between the top two vote-getters.

For more information visit www.eatonforschools.com.

Around Martinez



Celebrating our past mayors

by Brianne Zorn, Mayor, City of Martinez



As Martinez marks 150 years since its incorporation as a city on April 1, 1876, we celebrate the tapestry of civic leadership that has guided the city from its early history to its thriving present.

Long before formal city leadership, Martinez's identity was rooted in the legacy of Don Ygnacio Martinez, whose 19th-century ranch and vision laid the foundation for the community that would bear his name. That early heritage continues to inspire civic pride as Martinez reflects on its long arc of history.

Over the decades, mayors and city leaders have woven a story of resilience and collaboration, from those early stewards who guided a boomtown in the wake of the Gold Rush, to today's Council with an aligned, ambitious vision of revitalization and economic development at our waterfront and marina.

For years, photos of our mayors graced the walls of our council chamber. During a refresh effort of the chamber last year, each photo was reprinted, re-framed, and rehung in the City Hall lobby. We also researched the years of service and history of each of the mayors of our city and created a page on the city website to host their unique stories.

Through these 150 years of leadership, our mayors have taken varying titles

and have been appointed by their peers or directly elected by the voters. The first mayor was actually selected as the President of the Board of Trustees, L. C. Wittenmyer, in 1876.

Our first directly elected mayor, John Sparacino, was voted into office over 100 years later in 1978 and was a beloved community champion.

Rob Schroder was our longest serving mayor who contributed to local policy and public life for 20 years from 2002 to 2022 and continues to do so today.

There have been only two women who have represented the interests of our city: Rosalie Benson, the first woman appointed mayor by her council colleagues in 1968, and me, the first woman mayor directly elected by our constituents in 2022.

As we honor Past, Present, Future, Together during the sesquicentennial, we recognize that these leaders, through vision, dedication, and service, have helped forge a city both proud of its heritage and eager for the chapters yet to come. Each mayor has left their imprint on the character of this city and made contributions to the strength and unity of the community we serve.

Learn more about the history of Martinez mayors at cityofmartinez.org/mayors.

Expansive track-side mural "an invitation to explore" Martinez

By David Scholz



Early rendering of proposed Mural on building across the tracks from the Amtrak station.

An expansive 270-foot wall that has long stood blank across from the Amtrak station is coming alive with color and imagery as the latest mural to grace Martinez.

Even before the goal of \$75,000 was surpassed at a January fundraiser hosted by Del Cielo Brewery, the site for the future mural was already prepped and primed for the project.

Weather permitting, lead artist Tim Hon of the Illuminaries anticipated the mural would take two to four weeks to complete, or by early March. The sketch of the mural's design on the building was done over a few days during the week of January 26.

A statement on Illuminaries website characterized the project this way: A thoughtfully designed mural on this highly visible surface would transform the space into a welcoming landmark, inviting Amtrak passengers to step off the train and discover the charm of our town."

Former Martinez Councilmember Lara Delaney, among the proponents of the mural initiative spearheaded by Hometown Hero Project, concurred.

"It will give a positive feel about the vibrant community of Martinez and encourage visitors to learn more about it," she said. "This is a way to open the conversation. It's an invitation to explore."

Other than contending with the weather, Hon acknowledged this project had its own unique challenges.

Along with moisture in the wall that had to be contended with, "the wall is hard to get to so getting lifts in there" may be needed to access the site," he said. "We might have some scaffolding. The painting is the least of our worries."

The mural, done with oil-based



Location of proposed mural is 270' x 20' wall.

paints that Hon noted allows them to continue working even through light rains, is done from the background to its foreground images, at which point they start adding all the small details.

Huge images of John Muir and Joe DiMaggio bookend either side of "Martinez" with the phrase "Welcome to Historic" centered along the top of mural.

To further involve the community, Hon is putting out a call for local school students to lend their artistic flare to the bottom portion of the mural which Hon described as using a street graffiti style.

The final step of the process will involve adding coatings to further protect the final piece should vandals try to harm it.

Hon is part of a team of four main artists who along with two and three helpers that make up the Illuminaries team. In addition, Hon noted that a handful of high school students are lending a hand to the mural that also may bend around the corner of the building.

Other murals produced by the Illuminaries that can be found around Martinez include the beaver on a wall near the Copper Skillet restaurant along Ferry Street, and the space along Alhambra Way below Highway 4.

For more information about the mural project, visit www.illuminaries.art/martinez

February 2026

COMMUNITY EVENTS

<p>Friday February 6th 6 - 9 PM</p> <p>FIRST FRIDAY DOWNTOWN</p>	<p>Saturday February 7th 9 - 11 AM</p> <p>CERT. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS CLASS</p>	<p>Friday February 13th 10 AM - 12 PM</p> <p>COMMUNITY HEALTH FAIR</p>	<p>Thursday February 12th 6 - 8 PM</p> <p>COMMUNITY SESSION DISTRICT 3</p>
<p>Saturday February 14th 1 - 4 PM</p> <p>DOWNTOWN WINE & CHOCOLATE STROLL</p>	<p>Saturday February 22nd 11 AM - 1 PM</p> <p>LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION</p>	<p>Wednesday February 25th 6 - 8 PM</p> <p>COMMUNITY SESSION DISTRICT 1</p>	<p>Anytime through February 28th ONLINE</p> <p>TAKE OUR MARTINEZ PARKS SURVEY!</p>

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

The City of Martinez turns 150! Celebration info at www.cityofmartinez.org/150

BUNCO!

Saturday, February 28

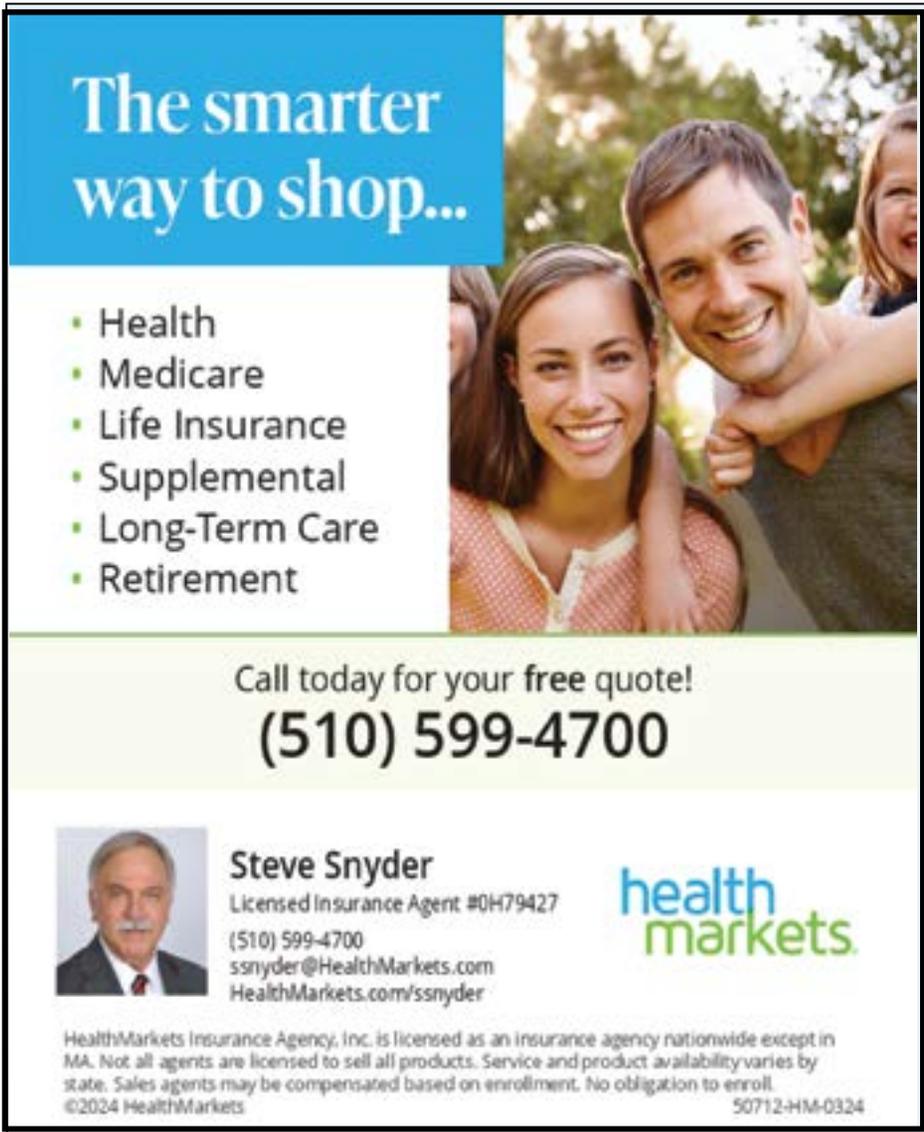
Doors open at 1:30 p.m., games begin at 2:00 p.m.
IBEW Local 302 Hall, 1875 Arnold Drive, Martinez

Cost: \$40 - Includes light snacks, water and an opportunity to win a Gift Card!

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Tickets

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Short Stories of Local Interest
by Craig Lazeretti, Martinez News and Views and Martinz Chamber

Council extends private security downtown
The council voted 4-0, with councilmember Debbie McKillop absent, to extend a contract with Los Angeles District Patrol to continue a downtown private security program through June 30.
The contract extension followed a short-term pilot launched in December that the city said was prompted by increased holiday foot traffic, merchant concerns, and “recent incidents, including an assault on a shop owner.” City staff reported that the pilot was funded through salary savings from vacant sworn police positions, and did not require additional appropriations.

Martinez School Board Considering \$2.9 Million in Budget Cuts
Three mental health counselor positions are on chopping block along with college and career specialist; deficit spending projected to continue even after cuts. The Martinez Unified School Board will once again consider a litany of painful budget cuts.
The board plans to formally approve the budget reduction proposal on Feb. 9, then approve a resolution on Feb. 23 for the potential layoff of certificated and classified staff.

Time to register for spring recreation programs
Registration for Martinez Recreation spring programs for kids, adults and seniors has begun. More information is available at www.cityofMartinez.org/activities

Grand Openings and ribbon cuttings
Feb 19 5:30 -7:00 p.m.
Halo Piercing Boutique
815 Main St, Martinez
Tue, Feb 10 • 5:30 – 7:00 p.m,
Ribbon Cutting/The Vignette Room
725 Ward St Ste H, Martinez



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

While science has not mastered traveling through time, family recipes have. Each recipe tells a story of the culture, economic conditions and traditions of early Martinez residents.

Take a peek into the culinary history of Martinez with this recipe that has been passed down through generations by word-of-mouth, apparently originating from a time when metrics were not yet invented.

Use your imagination and skill as a cook, taste as you go, and make the recipe your own.

Enjoy this family favorite from the Telfers.

TELFER FAMILY BAKED BEANS

Ingredients:
3 cans Bush Original baked beans
3/4 Tbsp. dark molasses (Brer Rabbit or similar)
1 Tbsp Worcestershire sauce
3 Tbsp. vinegar
2 large cloves garlic, crushed
Ketchup (add until beans are in a rich reddish brown color)

DIRECTIONS
Mix together in a large bowl and pour into a 9 x 13 inch glass dish
Cut four (4) pieces of lean bacon into thirds and lay in rows over top of bean mixture. Cut two (2) yellow onions into four wedges each and press into bean mixture.

Cook at 325° for 1½ hours, then start checking it every 15 minutes for thickness and doneness. If you jiggle the pan and the beans still seem fairly loose, remove from oven and let stand for 10 minutes before serving.

“My Dad, being a chemist and having a creative mind, concocted this baked bean recipe after watching cousins making a similar bean dish at the family cabin. He tweaked the ingredients until the beans were to his liking and, from then on, this dish was always served at family get-togethers.

One time, while the bean were being transported to a swim picnic, one of the barefoot grandkids stepped in the dish. We just stirred the beans, placed the bacon and onions in their proper positions and served it up! Everyone loved the beans as usual and no one ever knew they had the extra embellishment!” Patti Telfer Hector

GENERATIONS
Telfer Family Jack Telfer – Father
Patti Telfer Hector – Daughter
Wilma White Telfer – Daughter-in-law

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



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papajakelarson.com
Jake Larson bronze statue Plaza Ignacio Park, Martinez
*Available first come, first serve basis

New magician takes reins of California Magic Club

By Sam Richards, freelance, Martinez News and Views

Gerry Griffin had been operating a magic club and novelty store for over 25 years, the past 21 years in downtown Martinez. Then he decided to sell the club and retire. John Gardenier said he had been talking to his longtime friend and fellow magician Griffin about that.

“He said he wanted someone who would be in the business day to day, someone intimately involved,” said Gardenier, who has performed at the small Main Street space two or three times a year for several years. He said Griffin was considering closing the club if he couldn’t find that right buyer.

Gardenier, 57, who is a retired 20-year law enforcement officer also performed as a magician in his free time at private events and at clubs like Griffin’s California Magic Club. Based out of his Brentwood home working and out of his car trunk, packing and unpacking six or eight times a weekend, the idea of operating his own club became more appealing.

And so in November, Gardenier bought the California Magic Club,



John Gardenier stands in front of a poster of himself as a guest performer at the California Magic Club.

allowing Griffin to retire. There was no interruption in the longstanding Friday and Saturday night dinner-and-a-show performance schedule. “The transition was seamless,” Gardenier said.

Griffin, an Antioch native, had opened the California Magic Club in the old Post Office building on Castro Street on April Fool’s Day in 2004 and moved about a block to the club’s present Main Street location four years later.

He was honored as the Chamber of Commerce’s Business of the Month in November at the Martinez City

Council meeting.

“A special success is when a business is able to start, last for a really long time, and change hands without closing,” Aaron Alencastre, chamber president, said. “That’s a huge success story when a business can do that.”

He knows he will have Griffin to thank for at least part of the club’s ongoing success. His friend and predecessor built up a large reservoir of good will, and Gardenier knows he will be the beneficiary of much of that.

He admits to coming into owning and operating the magic club “with equal parts excitement and terror.”

“I have a lot of ideas,” he said. “The question is, can we make enough money to make all the improvements I want?”

Gardenier has made a few small changes upon taking over such as a new logo, some fresh paint and other modifications in and around the entrance and some work on the front counter. But he retained Griffin’s staff of four people, including the chef, and has introduced a Sunday matinee performance without dinner suitable



Gerry Griffin during a performance in July 2023.

for all ages. Tickets are \$60. The Friday and Saturday night Supper Club performances are \$115.25.

California Magic Club is located at 518 Main Street. For show information and to purchase tickets, go to <https://calmagicclub.com>.




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Get a second glass for One Cent!

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A look at Councilmember Pablo Benavente's first year

by David King

"This past year has been humbling," admitted first-year Concord Councilmember, Pablo Benavente. In last year's election for two seats on Concord City Council, it was District 4 that was the most competitive. The winner, newcomer Benavente, beat incumbent and Concord Mayor, Edi Birsan, and two additional candidates.

Benavente grew up off Alberta Way near Clayton Valley High School. His parents had moved to Concord for its affordability and its quality schools. His mother was a stay-at-home mom, and his stepfather was a manager for a company in Oakland. He and his brother attended Pine Hollow Middle School before going on to Clayton Valley High School.

His first job, while still in high school, was at Mavericks, (now, In Shape). He graduated from CSU East Bay before starting a family of his own.

When Benavente was elected in November 2024, he says he felt an overwhelming sense of both responsibility and humility. The community trusted him with their neighborhoods, their concerns, and their hopes for the future. The same community that raised him is now the community he serves.

"I have taken that responsibility seriously every single day," Benavente says. "I spent the year listening and showing up. I met families who care deeply about their blocks, small business owners working hard to stay afloat, and neighbors who want nothing more than a safe, thriving city they can be proud of."

In his first year, he attacked this new political endeavor by turning those conversations into action. The council successfully passed a balanced budget, invested in safer streets, paved long-neglected roads, planted new trees, modernized parks, and approved drone technology to help our police respond faster and keep neighborhoods safe, and



established a more equitable rent policy for all parties.

Indeed, his first motion as councilman was to amend the Concord Rent Control Ordinance, enacted just a few months before the election, to ease some of the terms placed upon landlords. This immediately put him in the "hot seat" among many who supported him. Welcome to politics.

Aside from that contentious beginning, he says, "We pushed forward on major improvements and beautification along Treat Boulevard, repaved or approved work on Clayton Road, Bancroft Road, Monument Boulevard, Saint Francis and Colony Park neighborhoods, and secured a new playground for Concord Community Park that will open in 2026. These are real changes families will feel every day."

Benavente acknowledges everything that was accomplished last year happened because of collaboration with residents, city staff, and his colleagues who care deeply about Concord's future.

"I am proud of what we achieved, but I am even more energized for what comes next," he says. "I will keep listening and I will keep being your voice at the dais, fighting for thoughtful improvements that strengthen our daily life."

District 4 constituents can sign up for his newsletter at pablobenavente.com.



Contra Costa Health's vaccine services



I want to talk directly with families about something that matters to all of us: keeping our children healthy through immunizations.

Lately, there's been some confusion after recent changes to federal vaccine guidance. Mixed messages can be unsettling for parents and guardians who just want to make the best choices for their kids. That's why I want to be clear: Contra Costa Health, along with the State of California and our partners across the West Coast, continue to follow the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Child and Adolescent Immunization Schedule.

This schedule has stood the test of time. It's built on decades of research, designed to protect children and trusted by pediatricians nationwide. Families deserve consistency, and the AAP schedule provides exactly that: safe, effective, and science-based guidance.

Here in Contra Costa County, we're proud to offer strong vaccine services through Contra Costa Health. Whether your child needs routine shots or adolescent immunizations, our clinics and partners are here to help. And importantly, all recommended vaccines remain covered under Medi-Cal. For

uninsured children, the cost is \$12 per visit per child, regardless of how many vaccines the child receives.

Families are navigating a lot of conflicting information. That's why it's important to emphasize that our guidance is rooted in science, not politics. Vaccines save lives. They protect your child, their classmates, and the most vulnerable members of our community.

I reaffirm our commitment to clear, consistent, and trusted vaccine recommendations. Together, we are making sure families have the information they need to feel confident in their decisions.

For more details, you can read Contra Costa Health's public statement at tinyurl.com/CoCoHealthStatement

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Want to make them listen? The civil grand jury story

by Edi Birsan, Concordian edibirsan@gmail.com

Government is either listening to you or to someone else. The Civil Grand Jury makes them not only listen, but they have to respond!

The story of the Grand Jury goes back to the first California Constitution in 1850. It requires that every county has a Civil Grand Jury to investigate county and local governments and be composed of citizens of the county.

They review complaints, concerns and issues, then select some and make inquiries that may lead to full blown investigations that result in a report to the public and the government entities with "Findings" (a combination of facts that lead to descriptions of conditions). Also included are "Recommendations" with details of who is required to respond to the Recommendations and response options from Yes, we will adhere to the recommendations" to "It is not warranted and the reason why."

While the Grand Jury cannot force their recommendations on the entities, their research and extensive investigation have resulted in impactful

changes. For example, the elimination of an elective hospital district that did not have a hospital, and the creation of a separate facility to handle minors with serious emergency mental health crisis.

The Grand Jury operates in secret and Jurors are sworn to keep all interviews and materials secret for life, unless ordered by a Judge. The interviewees, however, are free to discuss their involvement, but only after there has been a public report. Interviewees will not be identified in reports.

How to Become a Civil Grand Juror

It is a fascinating, important and fulfilling effort that I recommend to everyone over 18 who can comply with the rigorous restrictions and conditions some of which are detailed below.

The Civil Grand Jury serves for a year and in Contra Costa County they are recruiting now for 19 people to be on the next jury for the term July 1, 2026, to June 30, 2027. Persons interested in applying may contact the Office of the

Civil Grand Jury at (925) 608-2621, or visit the website at <https://contracosta.courts.ca.gov/divisions/civil/civil-grand-jury>.

Deadline for application receipt is March 13, 2026.

Things to take into account when applying:

The term is one year and attendance is critical.

The workload is expected to be about 30 hours a week, which includes at least four, two-hour meetings during the day, one of which is required to be in person in Martinez. (Thursdays from 10:00 a.m. to noon.) There are additional interviews held during the weekdays that add to your hours as well as research time at home.

Once selected, training requires eight hours per day for two weeks in June, which is unpaid. Full attendance is required every day.

The pay is \$15 per day, but if you have two or more quorum-sized

meetings in a day, then you can get \$30.

Travel is compensated by 72.5 cents a mile to and from meetings. There is no compensation for visits to facilities such as Detention Centers.

You will have to have a computer and have skills in writing, Microsoft Word, teamwork, good written and spoken English, pass a criminal background check including fingerprinting, a declaration of financial interests, be a US citizen and live in the county for at least one year.

Some exclusions, such as you may not be a current elected official, are specified in the application. Deadline again is March 13, 2026.

Above is only a partial view as seen through Birsan's tears and depression recovering from the 49ers' loss in Seattle. EdiBirsan@gmail.com

Pleasant Hill PD recovers funds stolen in investment scam



The Pleasant Hill Police Department announced that following a three-year long investigation, funds stolen from a senior resident of Pleasant Hill have been recovered.

In March of 2022, a 70-year-old resident reported that she had been the victim of a crypto investment scam, which resulted in her losing \$350,000. The scam had been perpetrated by an unknown individual posing as a male who approached the victim online. The suspect convinced the victim to invest her life savings in a cryptocurrency scheme.

Detective Stephen Vuong began tracking the cryptocurrency, and through extensive investigative efforts and with the assistance of the United States Secret Service, successfully located the majority of the victim's funds in an online digital wallet. Detective Vuong monitored the wallet, which remained inactive until September 2025, over three years after the initial theft occurred. Once the wallet became active,

Detective Vuong froze the funds and subsequently seized them.

The funds were transferred back to the victim and her family on 12/30/2025.

Police Chief Scott Vermillion said he was very happy with the outcome, and very proud of the efforts by Detective Vuong to recover the stolen funds.

"This is an excellent example of good police work yielding a very positive outcome," he said. "We are happy to be able to return these funds to the victim, and I congratulate Detective Vuong on the outstanding work he put into this case."

The Pleasant Hill Police Department reminds the community to be wary when approached online for services, and to always protect personal information. If you feel you have been the victim of a scam, contact the PHPD non-emergency line at (925) 288-4600.

CCCOE hosts job fair in collaboration with school districts across Contra Costa County

Contra Costa County Office of Education (CCCOE) will host its Spring Job Fair on Saturday, February 28, 2026, at Pleasant Hill Middle School from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. As schools continue to face a nationwide educator shortage, school districts and charter schools are seeking both experienced educators and new graduates to fill a range of teaching and administrator positions.

Job opportunities include full-time teaching roles, certificated support positions, higher education openings, Pre K roles, and substitute assignments. Districts, CCCOE, and charter schools are offering competitive compensation and benefits. Some districts are partnering with universities to help candidates with credential costs. Several hard-to-fill areas, including special education, math, science, and dual language, may offer bonus incentives. During this hiring season, some districts are also offering special bonuses to recruit alumni. Attendees are encouraged to bring printed resumes and dress professionally for onsite interviews.

"Our Spring Job Fair is an important opportunity to connect talented educators with the schools and students who need them most," Contra Costa County Superintendent of Schools Lynn Mackey said. "As districts continue to navigate staffing shortages, this event provides a welcoming, in-person setting for job seekers to explore multiple pathways into education and learn about the supports available to help

them succeed."

Representatives from 18 school districts and charter schools will conduct interviews for positions available now and for the 2026-27 school year. University and college representatives will also be on site to share information about credential programs for individuals interested in continuing their education.

Those interested in attending the Job Fair can fill out an interest form. For additional details about this free event, contact Morgan Broshar at (925) 942-3489.

School Districts Participating:

Acalanes Union, Antioch Unified, Brentwood Union, Byron Union, Contra Costa County Office of Education, John Swett Unified, Knightsen Elementary, Lafayette School District, Liberty Union, Martinez Unified, Mt. Diablo Unified, Oakley Union, Orinda Union, Pittsburg Unified, San Ramon Valley Unified, Walnut Creek School District, West Contra Costa Unified,

Charter Participants: Clayton Valley Charter High School,

College Participants (onsite to provide credential program information):

Grand Canyon University, National University, St. Mary's College, University of the Pacific



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