

Diablo Gazette™

September 2026

Sesquicentennial Fun pg22

Photo by Thomas Rimpel

Another CBCA Event Benefiting the Clayton Community

CBCA Clayton Oktoberfest™

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Publisher's Notes

by David King

Clayton is a fabulous town.

I don't live within the city limits, but I live close enough that heading into Clayton is often easier than going to downtown Concord or Walnut Creek.

When I moved to the area from Hayward in 2001, the developer for my neighborhood advertised the homes as being in Clayton. That tells you something about the reputation Clayton had then. And from where I sit, still deserves today.

The free Concerts in The Grove draw packed crowds. Local restaurants are busy. The Clayton Business & Community Association's bocce and cornhole leagues have waiting lists. The CBCA Art & Wine Festival and Oktoberfest are among the best community events anywhere in the East Bay.

Neighbors know neighbors. People volunteer. Families fill the parks. Residents turn out for festivals, fundraisers and community events. And Clayton enjoys remarkably little crime.

Is Clayton perfect? Of course not. No community is. People disagree over politics, personalities, development and City Hall. That is called democracy.

But the Clayton I see is peaceful, picturesque and about as friendly a community as you will find anywhere.

Which makes the portrait recently

painted by SFGATE especially puzzling.

In the past couple of months, SFGATE has published two articles involving Clayton that somehow wandered well beyond their original subjects and into a much broader narrative of a community consumed by political division and unhappiness.

One began with the closing of the historic Clayton Club Saloon, a legitimate and interesting local story. Yet somewhere along the way, the article veered into Clayton politics and painted a surprisingly bleak picture of life in town.

Then came another article, this time involving Clayton Watch, a political action committee that also publishes local information and commentary.

When I was contacted for that story, the question presented to me involved Clayton Watch describing itself as a news source. I said I didn't have a problem with that. Bias in media is hardly a new discovery, and Clayton Watch at least identifies itself as a PAC. Readers can decide for themselves how much weight to give its reporting and opinions.

Someone, or some small group of someones, apparently has SFGATE's ear and is portraying Clayton as a deeply fractured town teetering on the edge of civic dysfunction.

That simply does not resemble

the Clayton most people experience every day.

Every town has some disgruntled residents.. There are former officeholders, political combatants, people who have lost elections, people unhappy with decisions made at City Hall and people who simply don't like one another. Again, welcome to democracy.

But a handful of loud political voices should not be mistaken for the character of an entire community.

There was one other assertion in the SFGATE coverage that particularly caught my attention: the suggestion that Clayton has become a "news desert" since the Clayton Pioneer ceased publication about a year ago.

A news desert? Does the writer think Clayton has fallen off the grid?

Residents today have access to more sources of information than at virtually any time in history. In addition to the Diablo Gazette, there is the Mercury News, San Francisco Chronicle, East Bay Times, Claycord.com, Contra Costa News, Patch, Local News Matters, SFGATE itself, television news, Clayton Watch and an endless stream of community and government information through social media and online platforms.

A desert? Clayton doesn't have a news desert. It has a news prairie. And when one prickly weed dies, it's still a prairie.

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Serving on Clayton City Council for the last four years has been the honor of my life, the job is not yet finished.

- ★ **FINANCIAL REVIEW AND OVERSIGHT, BUDGET & AUDIT COMMITTEE**
- ★ **CITY SPONSORED SPECIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR**, selling sponsorships, oversight on finances, including revenue and costs
- ★ **CITY LIAISON TO CLAYTON COMMUNITY LIBRARY FOUNDATION** Board and Executive Committee, overseeing Library Refresh, which begins later this year
- ★ **SUPPORT FOR LEADERSHIP AT CITY HALL**
 - Hiring of new City Manager in 2024
 - Hiring new Police Chief and Public Works Director, Community Outreach Coordinator, Projects Manager and Community Development Specialist
- ★ **Continued Commitment to a Safe Environment, Strong Support for Public Safety, Beautification Projects and Support of our Local Nonprofit Community**

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

I am generally skeptical of proposals to raise taxes. Government should first examine its spending, improve efficiency, and make sure it is using existing revenue responsibly before asking residents for more.

That is why the City has spent considerable time reviewing its finances before placing this local tax measure before voters. Clayton has updated fees, improved investment returns, restructured staffing, combined positions, and reduced or consolidated contracts. We have looked closely at where the City can operate more efficiently and where it can increase revenue without raising taxes.

Clayton will retain 100% of the revenue generated by the measure, and the money will remain here to support local police, parks, streets, maintenance, resident services, and other basic City operations.

If Clayton’s local sales tax measure does not pass, the City will face difficult choices.

Based on current projections, the City’s budget deficit will continue and grow. The steps the City has already taken have helped, but they have not closed the structural budget gap.

The City does have healthy reserves, equal to roughly one year of General Fund spending. Those reserves provide an important safety net, but they are not a permanent solution to an ongoing deficit. Without new recurring revenue, the City will draw them down quickly.

What Happens if the Sales Tax Measure Does Not Pass?

Rather than wait for reserves to erode, the City will take earlier action to reduce spending and preserve its financial stability.

Public safety is the City’s largest expense, and Clayton’s Police Department already operates at the minimum staffing needed for 24-hour coverage and officer safety. So most future reductions will have to come from other City services.

The challenge is that there is very little “elsewhere” to cut. Clayton has only 26 employees, including six maintenance workers responsible for parks, streets, facilities, landscaping, and public spaces. Many other essential functions, including planning, code enforcement, finance, public works, records, permits, and compliance, rely on a single employee.

Without additional revenue, residents will see less maintenance, slower street and sidewalk repairs, longer permit and planning timelines, reduced public counter hours, delayed projects, less code enforcement, and slower responses to resident concerns. Community events and programs will also face reductions. The City will have to decide which current services to reduce or eliminate.

Public safety will remain the priority. That means services such as landscaping, beautification, and facility upkeep will be reduced or stopped. This is not work that can always be restarted later. If the City stops watering trees or maintaining landscaping, watering them years later will not bring dead trees or

damaged landscaping back.

Some residents have also asked whether sales tax revenue will support employee compensation. The answer is yes, of course a portion will. Compensation represents a significant part of the City’s budget. Money is fungible; revenue the City collects funds all operations including salaries.

Like any employer, the City must recruit and retain experienced people. If compensation falls significantly behind nearby agencies and other employers, vacancies will become harder to fill, and the City will lose institutional knowledge, reliability, and service capacity. Compensation decisions still require careful public review, but the City cannot provide dependable services without a qualified and stable workforce.

The underlying financial problem is that City expenses continue to rise while revenues do not grow at the same pace. Clayton relies heavily on property tax revenue, which grows slowly because Proposition 13 limits annual increases in assessed values.

The proposed sales tax is not about expanding government. It is about maintaining the services residents already expect, protecting the City’s financial stability, and preventing deeper cuts.

The question before the community is whether Clayton will have the resources needed to preserve the basic services that keep the City safe, maintained, and financially sustainable.

Clayton Club Saloon Announces New Ownership



Clayton Club Saloon, one of California’s oldest bars. Despite a few hiccups this 153 year old business is still serving as Clayton.

The Clayton Club Saloon, a fixture on Main Street for generations, has officially changed hands. Johnny Sandhu and Virsa Global Holdings, Inc. have completed the acquisition and are preparing to reopen the doors.

“The Clayton Club belongs to this community,” said Sandhu. “Our job is to be good stewards of it, keep what people love, and make it better where we can.”

The new ownership brings experienced hospitality management to the operation, with plans for improvements to the space, the service, and the guest experience rolling out over the coming months.

The Club will re-open soon once a few repairs have been completed. Locals and longtime regulars are invited to come on down, pull up a stool, and say hello to the new team inside.



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CLAYTON MARKET UPDATE

Address	Sales Price	SF	Bed/Bath	Sales Date
1731 Indian Wells Way	\$776,000	1235	2/2	7/10/2026
5 Pardi Ln	\$1,418,888	3011	5/3	7/27/2026
1829 Yolanda Cir	\$950,000	1880	4/2.5	7/27/2026
1016 Pine Hollow Ct	\$1,432,500	2848	4/3	7/28/2026
17 Eastbrook Ct	\$910,000	2068	5/3.5	7/30/2026
55 La Honda Ct	\$1,148,000	2390	4/2.5	8/12/2026
5027 Keller Ridge Dr	\$801,765	1343	3/2	8/17/2026

CONCORD MARKET UPDATE

Address	Sales Price	SF	Bed/Bath	Sales Date
1237 Lancashire Dr	\$1,640,000	2344	5/3	7/21/2026
1212 Mcewing Ct	\$835,000	1568	3/2	7/24/2026
5181 Greenmeadow Dr	\$950,000	1648	4/2	7/31/2026
1240 Sherlock Way	\$618,000	1370	3/2	8/4/2026
4718 Laura Dr	\$750,000	1081	3/2	8/7/2026
5491 Roundtree Dr #C	\$329,000	925	2/1	8/12/2026
5120 Brookside Ct	\$757,500	1468	3/2	8/13/2026

Based on information from CCR/Paragon MLS® as of 8/19/26. 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

Sell This Fall or Wait Until Spring?

For years, spring has had the reputation as the best time to sell a home. The weather is pleasant, yards look their best, families are thinking about moving before the next school year, and there are typically more buyers in the market.

But there are also more homes competing for those buyers.

In Clayton and Concord, fall can present a different kind of opportunity. As summer ends, fewer new listings typically come on the market. At the same time, buyers who have been searching all summer may still be looking, along with those who need to move because of a job change, growing family, downsizing or other life circumstances.

Buyers touring homes in September and October are often serious. A seller may see fewer people walking through the door than in April but may also face considerably less competition.

That matters in today's market. Higher mortgage rates have made

buyers more selective about price, condition and value. Homes that are prepared well and priced appropriately can attract attention, while properties that are overpriced or do not show well may sit.

For that reason, deciding when to sell is only part of the equation. How the home is presented when it hits the market can be just as important.

Tenant-occupied properties add another consideration. A rental can certainly be sold with tenants in place, but if the likely buyer is an owner-occupant, having the property vacant beforehand may offer advantages.

Vacancy gives a seller time to make repairs, paint, replace worn flooring, deep clean, improve landscaping and stage the home before photography and showings. It can also make scheduling showings much easier.

On the other hand, asking good tenants to leave means giving up rental income, and California and local tenant laws must be carefully

considered. There is no one-size-fits-all answer.

Some homeowners may decide to wait until next spring, hoping mortgage rates will be lower and more buyers will enter the market. That could happen, but there are no guarantees. Trying to perfectly time the real estate market is extremely difficult.

Instead, sellers should focus on what is happening in their particular neighborhood, price range and property type. Clayton and Concord demonstrate why broad market statistics do not always tell the whole story. The demand for a single-story home in Clayton, for example, may look very different from the demand for a larger two-story property only a few neighborhoods away. The same is true throughout Concord.

For homeowners considering selling this year, the window is relatively short. September and October can be strong selling months, but as

Thanksgiving and the December holidays approach, schedules become busier and many buyers and sellers put their plans on hold until January.

So, should you sell this fall or wait until spring? The answer is not automatically spring.

If you are ready to move, your home can be properly prepared and competing inventory is limited, fall may give your property a better opportunity to stand out. If the home needs significant work or waiting makes more sense for your family, spring may be the better choice.

The best time to sell is not determined by the month on the calendar. It is when your home, your circumstances and your local market line up.

Sometimes, the "perfect spring market" everyone is waiting for is not necessarily better than the opportunity already in front of them.

Clayton Council Candidates Campaign Statements

Kim Trupiano, incumbent



I ran for office in 2022 because we needed to examine our finances, assess our priorities and start addressing longstanding issues that had been deferred.

The result of this hard work led to a number of outstanding results over the last four years, including an in-depth scrutiny and review of the City's finances, contracts, vendor agreements, investment strategy, master fee schedule, budget review, GHAD assessment, infrastructure projects and years of planning the library refresh project.

We now have a deeper understanding of where the City stands financially and more importantly the direction it needs to go.

Because of the hard work of staff and the Budget & Audit committee, on which I have served since 2023, the City finally has an accurate picture of its finances and is able to forecast and budget accordingly.

I am running for re-election because I want to ensure that we continue to move forward, address our needs, and not fall into the old patterns of ignoring priorities and longstanding issues.

I plan on continuing to shine a light on the reality of our situation while keeping the City moving forward so that we do not lose sight of our potential and bright future ahead.

Kim and her husband Rich have resided in the City of Clayton since 2013.

kim4clayton

Maria Shulman, Healthcare



Maria Shulman for Clayton City Council Throughout my career, I've dedicated myself to caring for individuals and have spent my years in Clayton serving this community. As a nurse and healthcare leader, I have held management, supervisory, pediatric special-needs, and care-management positions, earning recognition from Today's Nurse for my advocacy and leadership in patient care.

These experiences have taught me to listen attentively, ask tough questions, and make complex decisions when the stakes are high. Currently, I serve on the Clayton Planning Commission, where I was Chair in 2025 and Vice Chair in 2024.

In these roles, I helped guide thoughtful growth that preserves our small-town character. Additionally, I serve on the Clayton Community Library Foundation Board and volunteer at events such as Clayton Cleans Up, the Art & Wine Festival, the Fourth of July parade, and Oktoberfest.

I bring extensive experience in managing budgets, ensuring regulatory compliance, and being accountable for my decisions. I am not a political insider; I am committed to working on behalf of all Clayton residents.

My decision to run for office is inspired by the need to address significant challenges facing Clayton, including a limited budget, state housing mandates, aging infrastructure, fire safety, and ensuring residents have a seat at the table. mariaforclayton.com.

Amy Callaghan, Real Estate Manager



I have been a proud Clayton resident and homeowner since 2002, raising two children here, alongside my husband, Chris.

With a degree in Business Management, I am a Senior Commercial Property Manager with 30 years' experience working with large property and facility budgets, project management, planning, and property development and redevelopment.

I have extensive experience working with city governments and local agencies throughout the Bay Area. I have held a real estate license since 1998 and am certified with the Building Owners and Managers Association as a Real Property Administrator. I write, review, and operate contracts every day while mentoring a large staff and many vendors. My work helps to grow companies and property portfolios.

My pledge is to bring civility, accountability, and accessibility to the Council and to use my work-life experience, together with my love of Clayton, to champion safety, education, and infrastructure enhancements throughout the city, and to build revenue to keep Clayton prosperous. I would be honored to have your vote.

**Charles "Charlie" Schmidt,
Retired Army Lieutenant Colonel**



I intend to serve the citizens of Clayton to maintain a fiscally responsible and careful balance between progress and keeping intact the charming character and landscape of the town that we all love.

As a retired Lieutenant Colonel, my 28 years in the U.S. Army Reserve in planning and operations gave me the leadership skills to serve the public with dedication.

For more than 10 years, I taught Chemistry at the University of Florida. I worked on food safety and environmental projects, and I currently sit on the Board of Directors of the North American Pesticide Residue Workshop.

I am a 24-year Clayton resident; married for 50+ years; have raised two children; and have two grandchildren.

My commitments to Clayton include an appointment to the Clayton Planning Commission, serving on the Trails and Landscape Committee, and continuing as a community volunteer and Senior Advisor to the CBCA Clayton Oktoberfest.

Dedicated service is a part of me, and I hope that you will consider my becoming a member of your Clayton City Council.

I would be honored to have your vote.

Prost! CBCA Clayton Oktoberfest Returns!

by David King

Breakout the lederhosen, grab a stein and get ready to polka. Downtown Clayton will turn Bavarian October 3 and 4 when the CBCA Clayton Oktoberfest returns with two days of music, food, beer, dancing and family fun.

Kids get a head start Friday evening, October 2, when the carnival opens early with rides and games. Tip: discounted advance carnival tickets go on sale September 3 at Skipolini's, Ed's and Sip and Sweet and will save a lot of money.

The weekend celebration will pack Main Street with thousands of residents and visitors alike, along with arts and crafts vendors, local businesses, German food, a lively biergarten and entertainment on two stages.

Each year, CBCA adds something new, and this year the Corral continues to grow as a festival destination of its own.

"We are now using the Corral, which has been underutilized in the past," said Oktoberfest organizer Marilyn Schmidt. "Now it has become an integral part of this event."

The Corral will feature live music, including the Grand Isle Fire Brigade on Saturday and Polkageist West on Sunday. Families can also visit a petting zoo, while adults can sample IPAs from local brewpubs. A smaller tent will also be added this year.

Under the main biergarten tent, The Internationals return with folk and dance music from around the world. Guests can settle into traditional



German beer hall tables and wooden benches imported from Munich while watching the Nature Friends German folk dancers perform.

The food court will be packed with Bavarian favorites, including pretzels, sausages and popular dishes from German Guys restaurant of Stockton.

Commemorative mugs and glasses will be available, or longtime festivalgoers can bring one from a previous year. Sixteen-ounce beer and hard cider pours will be \$12.

The festival officially opens at

noon Saturday with a procession from the Corral to the main stage, led by The Internationals and the Grand Isle Fire Brigade. Everyone is welcome to join.

"We march from the Corral to the stage, and we have a small keg that we tap in the main tent," Schmidt said. "And that opens the festival."

Behind all the fun is an important community cause. Oktoberfest is one of the Clayton Business and Community Association's major fundraisers. CBCA reports it has donated more than \$1.5 million back to the community since 2012.

Volunteers are still needed, and every extra helping hand can mean more money returned to Clayton.



So come hungry, come thirsty, come dressed, and come ready to dance. Clayton Oktoberfest is preparing to serve up another weekend of Bavarian-style bash.

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MY PRIORITIES FOR CLAYTON

- ◆ **Revitalize Downtown** — fill vacant storefronts and support local business.
- ◆ **Fiscal Responsibility** — smart spending, proactive maintenance, and efficient City government.
- ◆ **Protect Our Small-Town Character** — thoughtful growth that respects open space and quality of life.
- ◆ **Local, Responsible Housing** — options for seniors, families, teachers & first responders — not state mandates.
- ◆ **Wildfire & Public Safety** — continued investment in preparedness and vegetation management.

“A place where families can put down roots, build a future, and enjoy the quality of life that brought us here in the first place.”

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Paid for by Maria Shulman for Clayton City Council 2026 FPPC #1469741



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

U.S. News & World Report Ranks CVCHS in Top Rankings



Clayton Valley Charter High has been recognized in the U.S. News & World Report "Best High Schools" national rankings. This places the Charter in the top rankings nationwide for the second consecutive year. This honor reflects the strength of the school's academic programs, the rigor of our curriculum, and the sustained commitment to excellence that defines the CVCHS community as evidenced by the following metrics used by US News and World Report for ranking:

College Readiness : The proportion of 12th-grade students who passed at least one AP (Advanced Placement) or IB (International Baccalaureate) exam.

College Curriculum Breadth : The proportion of 12th-grade students who took and passed multiple AP or IB exams.

State Assessment Proficiency : Aggregated student performance on state math, reading, and science assessments compared to expectations.

State Assessment Performance : How well student scores on state tests performed relative to the U.S. News expectations and state benchmarks.

Underserved Student Performance : Student outcomes on state assessments specifically for Black, Hispanic, and low-income students.

Graduation Rate : The proportion of students who entered 9th grade and graduated on time four years later.

Clayton Valley Charter High School earned ranks among the top public high schools in the region, holding a 9/10 rating from GreatSchools and an overall score of 87.65 out of 100. Specific findings regarding the school's standing reflect the following:

National & State Ranking: Ranked #1,699 nationally and #275 within the state of California. It is the highest-rated public high school in Concord.

College Readiness: Driven by an Advanced Placement (AP) participation rate where 63% of 12th graders take at least one AP coursework exam.

Graduation Rate: Holds an exceptional, above-average graduation rate of 97%.

Reading & Language Arts Proficiency: Students perform exceptionally well in literacy, with 70% of students achieving proficiency, heavily outpacing the California state average of 47%.

Student Outcomes: The school earns its 9/10 GreatSchools badge due to its strong ability to support uniform academic outcomes across its student body, including its eco-

nomically disadvantaged enrollment baseline (which is 22%).

This achievement would not have been possible without the dedication of the Charter's exceptional teaching staff, whose commitment to student learning and success serves as the foundation of the school's academic mission.

The CVCHS community is equally grateful to the students, whose hard work and perseverance continue to elevate the school's standing, and to the CVCHS families, whose support

plays an integral role in Clayton Valley Charter High School's collective success.

As the school celebrates this milestone, it remains steadfast in building on this momentum and in continuing to provide students with the resources, guidance, and opportunities they need to thrive.

Clayton Theatre Company

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Directed by **Roxanne Pardi**
Choreographer **LaTonya Watts**
Musical Director **Jess Reyes**

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Box Office 1-hour before curtain.

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BY SETH RUDETSKY & JACK PLOTNICK

Clayton Residents Face Two Local Tax Measures in November

The voters in Clayton will have two tax measures in front of them this November. Measure M and Measure N. Measure N is a renewal of a 10-year tax approved in 2016 (as Measure H). To be better informed on what services these taxes will fund if passed, or be compromised if it fails, it is recommended that you review video attend upcoming townhalls on the subject to help with your decision.

MEASURE M Transaction and Use Tax

This measure requires a simple majority vote.

This is a 1% Sales Tax to provide local funding to maintain City of Clayton programs, services and facilities, including: police services, traffic enforcement and road safety, road and sidewalk improvements, enhance library and recreation opportunities, park maintenance, recruitment and retention of city employees and other city services.

The 1% sales tax is expected to generate approximately \$1,000,000 annually, subject to public review, the annual audit and all funds to benefit Clayton.

In June, City Council unanimously voted to put Tax Measure on the November ballot for the voters to decide.

If passes, the projected net impact of this tax is approximately \$20 per household per month, or \$250 per year.

MEASURE N City of Clayton Special Tax

2/3 Required to pass CITYWIDE LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE EXTENSION AND ALTERATION OF RATE OF EXISTING SPECIAL TAX

Voters must decide if the current special tax which is ending be renewed another 10 years.

The measure funds on-going trail system operations and maintenance, roadway landscaping, open space weed abatement, and related services of the Clayton Community Facility District No. 2007-1 (Citywide Landscape Maintenance) by extending the special tax for ten years and amending its rate and methodology to \$354.45/year per residential parcel and \$354.45/year per non-residential acre, including annual inflationary adjustments, subject to citizen's committee oversight.

This is a tax renewal and rate increase from the current rate of \$312.84. There is an annual 3% inflationary adjustment cap, meaning the tax rate can not increase more than 3% regardless of the CPI rate.

Because of the compounding nature of inflationary adjustments, the tax increased from \$240-\$250 per year per parcel in 2016 to the \$312.84 current rate in 2026.

The net impact of this tax renewal, landowners will see their tax increase \$42 over last year, a monthly average increase of \$3.50 per parcel.

ELECT

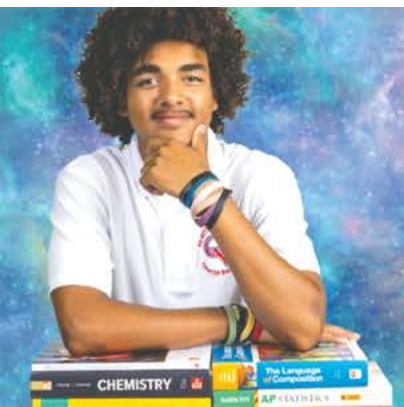
AMY CALLAGHAN

**Together,
let's build a safer,
cleaner, and a more
fiscally responsible
Clayton.**

AMY4CLAYTON.COM

CLAYTON CITY COUNCIL

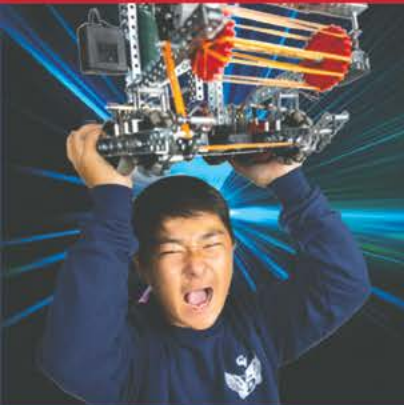
Paid for by the Committee to Elect Amy Callaghan to Clayton City Council 2026 | FPPC #1493145



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For the Love of Pets

by Jill Hedgecock, Jillhedgecock.com

Can Dogs “Speak” With Soundboards?

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices or “soundboards” for dogs are essentially a series of buttons with basic words such as “outside” or “play” or “eat”. One of the earliest dogs trained using this object was Stella, a Catahoula and blue heeler mix, who was taught by a speech pathologist, Christina Hunger.

Hunger wondered if the skills she taught nonverbal children could be used to train dogs to communicate their needs. Hunger’s early training included pressing the “outside” soundboard button to show Stella what to do, then she would take her outside. Stella’s training involved a lot of repetition, but she has since learned to put words together to make requests, such as “play” and “eat” when she wants her food puzzle.

Perhaps the most famous “talking” dog is Bunny the Sheepadoodle, whose videos using her soundboard have gone viral on TikTok. Bunny punches heart-melting buttons like “hi” and “mom” and “love you.”

But is it real? Science has determined that dogs understand the meaning of spoken words. But has Bunny learned that making the button results in a treat and she has no context as to what the words mean? Dr. Frederico Rossano, an associate professor of cognitive science at the University of California San Diego, was involved in a study that tested thirty pet dogs that had already been trained by their owners to use soundboards. His preliminary findings have confirmed that the dogs are not pushing the buttons at random.

So, should you get a soundboard for your dog? That depends. Are you willing to invest the time to train your dog to use it? It can take months, and consistency is key. Dr. Rossano noted a lot of variation in an individual dog’s ability to comprehend how to use the buttons, so patience may be needed.

Benefits to soundboard use such as dogs barking less at home and owners reporting enhanced bonding have been reported. The training process is bound to create better communication with your pup, too. However, some pampered pooches may become demanding by incessantly pushing the treat button. During training, it can be important to use praise and play to reward the dog’s correct behavior to minimize future “food” demands.

The potential exists for misinterpretation, too. How well can you read your dog and are you able to navigate the context within which they are pushing buttons? If your sole goal is to promote housebreaking so the dog has a way to alert you they need to go outside, a bell by the door that they can ring is much easier to teach. However, if you want to hear your dog say, “love you”, investing the time to train your dog to use a sound board may be worth every moment.

Jill Hedgecock is a retired environmental scientist and an award-winning author of several books, including the Doberman trilogy series: “Between Shadow’s Eyes,” “From Shadow’s Perspective,” and “In Shadow’s Reflection.” Her latest release, “Silence in the Orchard,” features a Doberman trained to detect diseased honeybee hives. Her books are available on amazon.com.



Stella and her soundboard. Scan the qr code to view Stella communicating with her soundboard.



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Solutions page 24

WORD SEARCH - JEWELRY

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

AMULET	CHAIN	GEMSTONE	PIERCING
ANKLET	CHARM	HOOP	RING
BANGLE	CHOKER	LOCKET	TIARA
BRACELET	CLIP	NECKLACE	TRINKET
BROOCH	CUFFLINK	PENDANT	WATCH

SUDOKU

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

WORD SCRAMBLE

Unscramble these five GEMSTONES:

QUTSUIROE	_____
MRALEED	_____
YTHSMATE	_____
PAHPIRES	_____
OMDADIN	_____

CRYPTOGRAM

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

ZAYLUNAO KVLZ UVA JVTL

MYVT DPUUPUN. FVBY

ZAYBNNSLZ KLCLSVW FVBY

ZAYLUNAOZ. DOLU FVB NV

AOYVBNO OHYKZOPWZ HUK

KLJPKL UVA AV ZBYYLUKLY,

AOHA PZ ZAYLUNAO.

—HYUVSK ZJODHYGLULNNLY

Puzzles column by Marc Rokoff
RokoPuzzles.com

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/

October 4 Autumn at the Adobe An afternoon of wine tasting. 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. \$50, (\$60 at the door) Proceeds benefit the Concord Historical Society. Don Salvio Pacheco Adobe, 1870 Adobe St. Concord. concordhistorical.org

Clayton

September 5-6 Clayton Pet Fair 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Pet adoption and vendors. Pet Food Express 5404 Ygnacio Valley Rd.

September 20 Hispanic Heritage Day 12:00 - 4:00 p.m. Mariachi Mexicanisimo, Ballet Folklorica, Soucan, a Latin rock and soul band, plus food, car show and more. At the Grove in Downtown Clayton.

October 3 & 4 CBCA Clayton Oktoberfest plus Kids Carnival Friday evening October 2. 5:00 - 10:00 p.m. Two full days of Live music on two stages, dancing, beer in the beergarten, food, pretzels, carnival. Saturday 12:00 - 10:00 p.m. Sunday 12:00 - 6:00 p.m..

>October 16-25 Clayton Community Theatre “Disaster”- A 70's disaster movie musical. Only 9 performances. \$32 Adults, \$28 Seniors, \$25 students with ID. Purchase online at claytontheatrecompany.com or at the box office. Endeavor Hall 6008 Center St. Clayton.

Concord

Concord Chamber First Fridays Coffee - 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.

September 03 Emergency Preparedness Fair 5:30-8:00 p.m. at Todos Santos Plaza. Learn how to prepare for earthquakes, wildfires, and disasters of all kinds. Learn how to use a fire extinguisher, or to become an amateur radio operator, or a 911 Dispatcher. For more info contact Trish Beirne, Concord PD, 925-671-3184.

September 14 Food Security Briefing Concord Volunteer Center 5:30 p.m. One year after historic cuts, hear what's next for hunger, health care, and our safety net. What's changed for our food and health care systems in the year since Congress passed historic cuts to SNAP and Medicare?

Our panel of local experts will share how these cuts to our safety net impacted our community – and how the Food Bank and our partners are responding to support the neighbors we serve. This event is free to attend, but space is limited, so reserve your seat today to join us! Panelists: Devorah Levine, Diane Burgis, Sharon Jenkins, Yolanda Baltazar, Caitlin Sly. 4010 Nelson Ave.

September 17 The 54th annual Contra Costa County Teachers of the Year Dinner & Celebration Honor 22 outstanding educators from across the county and conclude with two Teachers of the Year announcement. 5:00 - 9:00 p.m.. \$100, \$40 for youths. Hilton Concord. 1970 Diamond Blvd. <https://www.cccoe.k12.ca.us/>

September 20 FREE Yoga Class at Concord Historical Society, 1:00 p.m. in the Hall. Bring a mat. There will also be free tours of the Galindo Home and the Concord Museum. 1928 Clayton Rd. Park behind the building on Marina Court

September 20 World Doll Day Show & Sale 1:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Hilton Concord 1970 Diamond Blvd. Tickets \$10. Under age 13 Free. www.everythingdollsandtoys.co

September 26 Neighborhood Garage Sale Ygnacio Wood and The Palms neighborhoods. 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Organized by Veronica Hildago, Realtor®, of Dudum Real Estate Group. Enter neighborhood from Treat Blvd., Oak Grove Rd. or Citrus Avenue.

MUSIC AND MARKET

Todos Santos 6:00-8:00 p.m.

>September 03 Strange Days The Doors tribute

September 10 Steven Snyder's Big Band A tribute to Concord Jazz Festival

September 17 Sacred Fire Band Santana Tribute

September 25 House of Floyd Pink Floyd tribute.

Pleasant Hill

Sept. 04 & Sept 18 -Night Market 5:00 - 9:00 p.m. at Chilpancingo Park. Bring the family for an evening of food, live music, and fun. Includes artisan vendors, food trucks, desserts, beer and wine garden and activities for all ages. Face painting, petting zoo, bounce house and more.

First and third Friday of the month until Nov. 20.

September 19 Community Service Day 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. This annual tradition brings residents together to support neighbors, schools and community partners through projects that make a difference in Pleasant Hill. Choose from a variety of ways to give back, including creek cleanups, organizing books at the library, supporting our local schools and more. Projects are available for volunteers of all ages. phillca.gov/514/Community-Service-Day

Registration is now open

October 10 Pleasant Hill Harvest Festival 11:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Live music at the Back Forty Texas BBQ stage. Arts and crafts, pumpkin patch and pumpkin decorating contest, family activities, beer and wine. Free admission. Downtown Pleasant Hill.

Martinez

September 2-November 14. Fall CERT Basic Training Learn critical skills that aid in the event of disasters or an emergency. Take all classes, or just a few. FREE. Classes will be held at the Martinez Senior Center, 818d Green Street. in Martinez. 6:00 - 9:00 p.m. To register, email name and phone number to martinez.cert@gmail.com. For more details go to martinezcert.org.

September 10 Downtown Martinez Car Show 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. Main St.

September 12 Martini Shake-Off Who will win People's Choice for the best martini? This event is sold out.

September 18 Movies in the Park 5:30-10:00 p.m. at Hidden Valley Park. Movies in the Park is a free community event that brings together film enthusiasts of all ages for an outdoor cinematic experience. Family activities will begin at 5:30pm and movie will begin at dusk sometime around 7:45pm. Attendees often bring blankets, chairs, and picnic baskets to make themselves comfortable while watching the movie on a large screen.

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

At the Martinez Campbell Theater

636 Ward St.

> September 11-27 Strange

Ladies by Susan Sobeloff. As the U.S. enters World War I, a group of radical suffragists fight to win the right to vote. A diverse group of women struggles with managing personal and political challenges in creating social change. Period protest music weaves through the play, dramatizing the suffragists' political strategy. \$24 Thursdays 18.

>**September 13** Open 6:00 p.m. Mic \$3 cover

>**October 30-November 22 The Rocky Horror Show** “The Rocky Horror Show” is the story of two squeaky clean college kids, Brad and his fiancée, Janet, on their way to visit their former college professor when by a twist of fate, their car breaks down outside a mansion. They meet the charismatic Dr. Frank-n-Furter, Riff Raff, Columbia, Magenta, Eddie, and Rocky. It is an adventure they would remember, for a very long time. Reserved Tickets \$26



Walnut Creek

September 3-6 Aquanuts Fall Swim Show, at Clarke Memorial Swim Center. For more info go to: aquanuts.org

September 25 & 26 Walnut Creek Oktoberfest Friday 5:00 - 10:00 p.m., Saturday Noon - 9:00 p.m. New Chillgarten, Live German entertainment, Yodeling contests, costume contests, artisan vendors, Kid zone carnival, authentic food, beer and more. Civic Park East.

Merry Mixers Dances

7:30 to 10:00 p.m. Free coffee and water, no-host bar, \$20 corkage. Outside liquor prohibited. \$20, Walnut Creek Elks Lodge 1475 Creekside Drive. 925-969-9693 Membership dues \$25

>**September 4 Take 2** preceded by 7:00 p.m. Waltz lesson

>**September 18 100 PRUF** preceded by 6:30 Potluck

>**October 2 Natural Blend** merrymixers.life

Leshner Center

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

>**September 05 Best of San Francisco Stand-Up Comedy** 8:15 - 9:30 p.m. Recommended for ages 18 and over. \$18.75

>**September 6-27 The Glass Menagerie** by Tennessee Williams.

>**September 20 Disney's Moana Movie Sing-Along**

Other Areas

Crockett:

October 10 5th Annual Spooktacular by SugarCity

Halloween and oddities Market Shopping, food, music and Trick-or-Treat. 11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Scout Hall, 991 Loring Ave. More info, contact sugarcitymp@gmail.com.

Lafayette

>September 18 7:00 p.m. Mt. Diablo Amateur Radio Club. General meeting. 7:00 p.m. Learn about our upcoming elections for Board positions, and about public service opportunities. License testing (all levels) at 5:30 before meeting at Our Savior's Lutheran Church, 1035 Carol Lane. www.mdarc.org. Plan to attend our annual convention, Pacifcon, at the San Ramon Marriott, Oct. 16-18, 2026. www.pacifcon.com.

Pittsburg:

October 01 SIR Branch 19 Monthly Luncheon. 11 AM Social hour. Lunch at noon Pittsburg Elks' Lodge, 200 Marina Blvd., Guest speaker Ted Clement, Executive Director Save Mount Diablo. SIR is a social organization of men who get together and participate in fun activities, such as golf, bowling, hiking, bocce, fishing, dining out, wine tasting, day trips, etc.. All are welcome. Our motto is: "To make friends for life". www.sirinc2.org/branch19 or call: 925 338-1996 for more information.

Library Events

CLAYTON September 18 Spotting Scams and Fraud. 10:30 a.m. - Noon. Adult Program. Join a discussion on scams and fraud with retired Reserve Police Officer Russell Eddy. Learn what scams are, where and how they occur, how to spot them, how to report them, and what recovery options may be available. There will be time for questions and answers. No registration is required. 6125 Clayton Rd.

CONCORD - Mondays The Library Wellness Team 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Contra Costa County Health Services in partnership with Contra Costa County Library System are here to support library staff and patrons alike. The Library Wellness Team consists of a Community Support Worker and Mental Health Clinician

Clubs

Clayton Clubs

GFWC Clayton Valley Woman's Club 9:30 a.m. Serving the communities of Clayton and Concord, meets on the 2nd Tuesday of the month September - June. Clayton Community Church, 6055 Main St, Clayton. www.claytonvalleywomansclub.org

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

Clayton Valley Garden Club (CVGC) Serves the communities of Clayton and Concord. Meets the second Wednesday of the month February through November at Diamond Terrace. 6401 Center St. Clayton at 6:30 p.m. claytonvalleygardenclub.org 925-276-2299 July 8 program: Trees

Concord Clubs

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

Rotary Club of Concord. www.concordcarotary.org

Toastmasters leadership skills. Check out Word Weavers Toastmasters Club on the 1st, 3rd or 4th Monday of the month at 7:00 PM at John Muir Hospital in Concord, 2450 East Street, in the Kunkel conference room. <https://400.toastmastersclubs.org/>

Nar-Anon Family Group Meetings - If someone's addiction is affecting you, first you must help yourself. Nar-Anon is a twelve-step support group for families and friends of addicts.

>Concord -Tuesdays, 7 p.m., John Muir Hospital Concord, Kunkel room, 1st floor near cafeteria.

>Martinez-Thursdays, 7 p.m., 1st Baptist Church, 1802 Alhambra Ave., Library behind sanctuary

Information Line: 510-500-5251 email: info@naranonnorcal.org

Martinez Clubs

Kiwanis Club meetings. Thursdays 12-2, lunch is free to visitors. 750 Allen St. Martinez. www.martinezkiwanis.org

Walut Creek Clubs

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

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BBQ Pork

With Slightly Sweet Zinfandel, and Crunchy Coleslaw

My mom is the sweetest lady in the world, and she loves sweet wine. She is not alone: most of the country prefers wines that have a little residual sugar. That sweetness does more than please the palate; it softens acidity, tames spice in food, and helps make certain pairings especially satisfying.

In wine, if the wine does not taste sweet, we call it "dry." This makes sense when you think of sugar as fuel for fermentation. When all the sugar is converted into alcohol, the fuel is gone and fermentation stops. It is like a gas tank in a car: when it is dry, the engine stops.

If all the sugar is converted, the wine does not taste sweet. The winemaker gets to choose when fermentation is stopped, so wines can range from slightly sweet, or off-dry, to sweet, to very sweet. Generally, I like to serve off-dry wines at the start of a meal and save super sweet wines for after.

Sweet wines come in three colors: pink, white, and red. Both Lodi and Livermore Valley produce wonderful red Zinfandel, and some producers leave just a touch of residual sugar to enhance the fruit flavor. That touch of sweetness makes slightly sweet red Zinfandel a natural match for smoky, slightly sweet BBQ'd pork.

I like shredded BBQ pork in a soft roll, piled up with my favorite coleslaw. BBQ'd pork can take days to make, so in the interest of time, consider picking some up from a local BBQ joint or grocer.

Coleslaw, on the other hand, is easy, and it brings the bright crunch that balances the rich pork and fruity wine. Here is a delicious coleslaw recipe with lime juice and cilantro. You can make it with broccoli slaw or regular cabbage, whichever you prefer.

So, go on. Pair Up!

Maria Terry is a Certified Sommelier and Wine Educator in Northern California. www.LaSommelierre.com



Image courtesy of Breathingandcooking.com

Cilantro Broccoli Slaw

INGREDIENTS

- 1 (12 oz.) package broccoli slaw
- 1/4 cup diced cilantro
- 1/4 cup diced green onion

Dressing:

- 1/2 cup oil
- 1/3 cup lime juice
- 1 tbsp. vinegar
- 1 tbsp. sugar
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 tsp. salt and lemon pepper
- 1/2 tsp. crushed red pepper

DIRECTIONS

In a large bowl, mix slaw package, cilantro and onion. Mix dressing ingredients. Toss well.

Yield: about 6 cups



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by Terrylynn Fisher Broker Associate

buystagesell.com

Think Creative Finance Solutions

While economists say the economy is improving, some people don't feel that improvement if they still cannot afford a home. Redfin statistics says that there are 48.5% more sellers than buyers. WHAT?

Buyers who are waiting for a "good" time to buy—you can now negotiate, forego multiple offers (which generally increases the price), and negotiate compensation for their agent, credits and/or repairs and have more property choices. These are all tell-tale signs that now is a good time to buy.

Not everyone fits the mold for a 20% down payment, high credit rating and conventional loan. Many buyers don't actually. So, what are the options?

If you listen to Dave Ramsey Radio Show, his financial advice suggests there are many more people who can afford to buy than think they can.

Consumers are spending everything they earn on cars, coffee, clothing, social activities and vacations. He says, if a home is the goal, stop all of that (just for a time) and save, clean up credit, and pay off debt. Change whatever stops you from qualifying. Ramsey reminds us we used to drive a clunker and didn't go on vacations if that was what it took to save for that down payment.

Credit card debt and car payments are the worst offenders when trying to qualify for a loan.

Having credit debt cuts down on what you can afford substantially. When it's

time to secure a loan, having no to low credit debt is hugely beneficial to the loan terms one will get and help determine whether you can even qualify. (Ask your lender about your ratios—they will explain that part.)

Three financing options beyond the 20% down conventional loan

Government Assist or Subsidy. A buyer may purchase their first home with the help of a government grant (first time buyer) program that is based on affordable homes in particular zip codes.

The FHA (Federal Housing Administration) loan is not just for first time buyers. Recent interest rate quotes have been in the lower 5.5% to 5.75% range.

Interest Rate Buydown allows you to qualify at a lower start rate. In this program the Seller helps pay for up to the first two years of the loan's interest expense to reduce a buyer's monthly payment.

There is help on the horizon. Be sure to explore options with your Realtor and lender. Buyers should go through a planning-to-buy process ahead of time, so they are ready to place an offer when they find a place. As realtors, we have the contacts, experience and resources to show you how to get there.

You Don't Have To Be The Biggest To Be The BEST!

DUDUM

REAL ESTATE GROUP

Terrylynn Fisher
REAL ESTATE TEAM

Dudum Contra Costa County Market Position

Courted Market Share Report — data as of August 19, 2026

#4
of ~1,000

#1 Independent Brokerage in Contra Costa

Dudum ranks 4th county-wide by sales volume—behind only Compass, Coldwell Banker, and Keller Williams, three national franchise platforms. No other locally-owned independent brokerage comes close.

BY THE NUMBERS

Total sales volume \$753.6M ▲ +8.7% year over year	Market share (\$) 4.4% ▲ +0.2 pts year over year	Avg. days on market 23.4 days Fastest of any top-15 full-scale firm
Sold price vs. list price 101.5% Above Compass, Coldwell Banker, KW & RE/MAX	Volume per contributing agent \$8.19M Highest of any top-15 full-scale firm	Contributing agent rate 75% vs. 28–60% at major competitors

CALL OUR TEAM TO GET RESULTS\$!

Source: Courted Market Share Report, Contra Costa County — trailing 12 months, data as of Aug 19, 2026 (period as reported by Contributor). Rankings by total sales volume (CS).





Terrylynn Fisher

REAL ESTATE TEAM

Terrylynn Fisher, Broker Associate

CRS, Seniors Real Estate Specialist®, CSP Elite Agent

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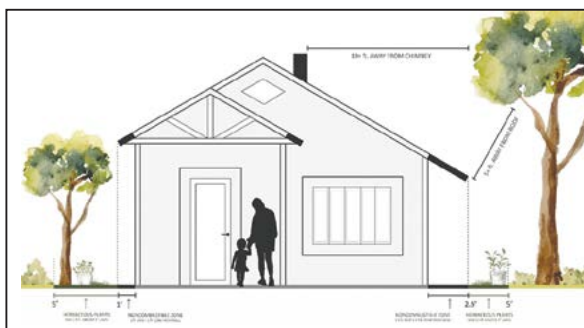
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The Naked Zone

Plant List for Zone-0 Home Fire Safety



Firesafe home Zone-0 Guidelines. Courtesy Calif. Forestry Division

The State of California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection recently adopted first in the nation “Zone-o” defensible space regulation for homes. They call it the non-combustible materials or plants zone, but I call it “The Naked Zone”. This first regulation applies only to homes located in either a State Responsibility Area (outside a city’s limits) or a “Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone” within a city’s limits. But these restrictions may apply to all homes in the future.

The newly adopted regulation splits Zone-o into two sections. The first is a Non-combustible (or Naked!) Zone. It extends outward from house walls underneath the width of your home’s eaves. No combustible materials like bark mulch, dead leaves, wood chips, or firewood are allowed within the Naked Zone. This section also does not allow living vegetation, a large conflict with existing landscapes. For homes without eaves, a 1-foot safety zone

is still required. Vegetation is not allowed within two feet of any windows, doors, vents, or decks.

The remaining distance outward from your walls to five feet is a Low-combustibility section. Well-maintained (living) herbaceous plants and flowers are allowed in this section of Zone-o. Allowed are non-woody plants to 18 inches tall, low ground covers, or easily moveable potted plants in non-combustible containers. Tree limbs are allowed within this low-combustibility zone if more than ten feet from chimneys, more than five feet higher than your roof, and not under eaves. For more information, visit the California Forestry board web site by searching, “California Forestry Board Zone o”.

Plants you can enjoy in Zone-o

Plants that do not have waxy leaves, natural oils, resins, or develop woody branches make good choices. Slow-growing plants are also a low-maintenance choice, and plants that do not drop leaves, needles, or bark are recommended. Let’s take a look at specific categories of good Zone-o choices.

Succulents are a great choice. Innumerable interesting and beautiful varieties exist, and they are full of water. Plus, succulents are easy to propagate. My favorites are Calandrinia, Jade plant, Aeoniums,

Alliums, and varieties of cacti. Try to group similar types then leave naked space between groups.

Bulb plants are also good choices for the low-combustibility section. Some popular examples are Lilies, Iris, Narcissus, Tulips, Daffodils, Dahlias, Peonies, Tuberous Begonias, Gladiolus, Alstroemeria (Peruvian lily), and Belladonna (Pink Ladies). They store up water and nutrients in their bulbs then use the water to grow during dry fire season. Again, try to group them and leave space between groups.

Low-growing Herbaceous Plants such as Poppies, Petunias, Herbs, Daisies, Geraniums (Pelargoniums), Coral Bells, Bellflowers, Yerba Buena, or Ginger make good choices and can be long-lived with good conditions and care.

Groundcover Plants like Lawn Grass, Beach Strawberries, Carpet Bugle, Creeping Thyme, Dianthus (Pinks), Lady’s Mantle, Japanese Ferns, Small-leaf Periwinkle, various Stonecrops, and Crane’s Bill can fit the bill for both coverage and fire safety.

Whether or not you live in a high fire zone, these plant selections will beautify the immediate exterior of your home and offer protection against wildfire ignition.

Seasonal Notes: Summer season fruits and vegetables are winding down, so enjoy the last bountiful harvests while you plan for your winter veggie garden.

Germinate winter veggie seedlings in cool shade and transplant them to your raised beds once daytime temperatures cool.

Fertilize your spring-blooming



Defensible space home zones, Courtesy Calif. Forestry Division



Succulents are 90% water and fire safe. Courtesy UCANR

landscape plantings such as azaleas, rhododendrons, flowering fruit trees, dogwoods, and redbuds to encourage bloom buds.

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

Seasonal Upgrades Can Extend Outdoors Enjoyment Well Into Autumn

by Angela Dawne, Landscape Designer

September in Contra Costa is often the beginning of our transition to cooler weather. It doesn’t feel quite official until after Halloween, of course, but the evenings finally offer some welcome, crisp relief.

This is a great time to extend your outdoor living well into autumn. Your patio can easily become a cozy, late-season retreat.

The key here in the East Bay is balancing daytime shade with evening warmth. Temperatures may still call for the cooling canopy of a pergola or sail shade, while the shorter days make good evening lighting increasingly important.

Start with a functional heat source. A well-placed fire table or modern steel wood-burning fire pit creates an instant focal point and gives family and friends a reason to linger outside after sunset. Pair it with strategic landscape lighting. Low-voltage path lights and uplighting in canopy trees can brighten the earlier darkness while keeping the landscape feeling warm and inviting.

This is also a good time to give your containers a seasonal refresh. Move tired summer annuals aside and bring in plants with interesting foliage, texture, and structure. Lomandra,



Aeonium, and colorful Heuchera can all add interest as temperatures begin to shift.

By layering rich textiles, ambient lighting, and inviting warmth, you can easily stretch your outdoor living season. With a few thoughtful changes, your garden doesn’t have to retire when summer does. There’s still plenty of good outdoor weather left to enjoy.

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"Silence in the Orchard" by Jill Hedgecock (2026, Goshawk Press, paperback, 312 pages, \$14.99). Hedgecock's new book about a young woman, her dog and the natural sciences is a smart, engaging mystery-thriller.

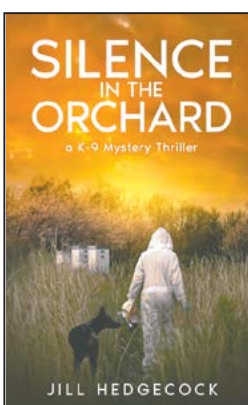
PhD candidate, Abigail Dabby, believes she is competing for a rare chance to participate in a special field internship to study honeybees with Professor Camden, a world-renowned expert in bee studies. Abigail has been training her Doberman, Sierra, to find diseased hives. If chosen for the project, she could show off the scent-detection skills of her sweet canine partner to her professor. Not only would she get credit, but more importantly, Sierra's detection abilities could become a model for locating hive-destroying disease early enough to save honeybees from extinction.

An urgent phone call to Professor Camden during the interview changes everything. The very next morning, Abigail finds herself and Sierra in the central valley of California where a mysterious new disease has been decimating beehives in a major almond producing region. A team of experts and students has been assembled by Professor Camden who is frantic to find a way to stop the destruction. Although it's only February, the region is experiencing a prolonged heat wave causing the normally mild winter temperatures to soar into the 90s. Bees behave differently in hot weather, but they don't typically abandon their hives or die off in huge numbers. What is causing the deaths that could lead to an unprecedented

ecological disaster?

Abigail quickly finds that nothing is as it seems in this farming region. It's not only the bees that are off kilter. Her professor and the other team members are acting odd, and local farmers are reluctant to help uncover clues, raising her suspicions about what's really going on. Abigail fears she may be in over her head, but saving the bees becomes paramount. She pushes herself and precious Sierra to ignore warning signs and keep moving forward to reveal the secrets almost everyone she meets seem to be harboring. All the while, she has her own secrets to guard. Is it her overactive imagination, or are she and Sierra in as much danger as the bees?

This is Hedgecock at her best. Her passion and experience as a professional environmentalist and award-winning scent-detection dog trainer brings this riveting page turner to life. Hedgecock's novels are always informative, and this is no exception with plenty of details about honeybee behavior, diseases, and the importance of bees to farmers and the food chain. As in her "Shadow" series about a ghost-seeing Doberman, Hedgecock faithfully advocates for the Doberman breed. Contact her at jillhedgecock.com.



Hope Solutions: Building Permanent Pathways Out of Homelessness

by Brandy L, Correspondent



An aerial view of Hope Village Walnut Creek courtesy Hope Solutions.

Every person deserves more than a temporary place to stay; they deserve the opportunity to rebuild their lives. That belief has guided Hope Solutions for nearly 30 years as the Contra Costa County nonprofit works to address homelessness through permanent housing, supportive services, and compassionate care.

Founded in 1997 by 15 local faith communities as Contra Costa Interfaith Transitional Housing, the organization has grown from a small grassroots effort into one of the county's leading providers of housing and supportive services. Today, Hope Solutions reaches more than 4,000 individuals annually, including families, seniors, transition-age youth, and people reentering the community after incarceration.



Chief Executive Officer, Deanne Pearn joined the organization nearly a decade ago after spending 18 years helping launch and grow First Place for Youth, a nationally recognized nonprofit serving former foster youth. She began her journey with Hope Solutions with a staff of 30, and to date they have a staff of more than 120.

While the organization has expanded dramatically, Pearn says its purpose has remained unchanged.

"Our mission is to heal the effects of poverty and homelessness by providing permanent housing solutions and services," she said.

That mission extends well beyond providing shelter. Hope Solutions focuses on helping individuals overcome the circumstances that led to homelessness by providing personalized support, trauma-informed care, and pathways toward long-term stability.

Building Small Housing Communities

For one of the nonprofit's newest initiatives, Hope Solutions has begun developing small-scale housing communities that remain permanent assets for the community.

Its recently completed Hope

Village Walnut Creek transformed an underutilized section of a church parking lot into six studio cottages for formerly homeless seniors. The project also includes an on-site support building and has become a natural extension of the church community, where residents are welcomed into holiday celebrations, barbecues, and everyday fellowship.

The organization is now developing Village of Hope Pittsburg, a 15-unit community for homeless young adults in partnership with the Pittsburg Church of the Nazarene. The development will include supportive services and on-site property management designed to help young adults successfully transition into independent living.

Pearn described the organization's vision, "We're trying to create this new way of adding some housing stock to our community's shortage and creating long-term capacity, preserving this housing for the long haul for our residents rather than doing these quick fixes."

She believes projects like these create lasting benefits by strengthening neighborhoods while making wise use of public resources.

Looking ahead, 2027 will mark Hope Solutions' 30th anniversary. The organization is planning a year-long celebration that will include community events, a gala, podcasts, and opportunities to recognize the many volunteers, staff members, donors, faith partners, and community leaders who have helped build the organization over the past three decades.

Although uncertainty surrounding federal funding remains a challenge for many nonprofits, Hope Solutions continues to stay focused on its mission while expanding innovative housing solutions throughout Contra Costa County.

For Pearn, the organization's greatest strength isn't its buildings or its growth, it's its people.

For more information about Hope Solutions, including volunteer opportunities, the 30th anniversary celebration, ways a company can get involved or make donations, or how to access services, please visit www.hopesolutions.org.



The End of Oak Street

If you started your summertime movie adventures with Anne Hathaway in "The Devil Wears Prada 2," you now have the chance to finish your summer movie season with Anne Hathaway in "The End of Oak Street."

It may be odd to describe this film as fun. While there are some terrifying moments and people get devoured, viewers will likely not feel this is more than just a movie.

The year is 1982, where we meet the Platt family at the neighborhood barbecue. Denise (Anne Hathaway) and Greg (Ewan McGregor) argue while keeping up appearances for any neighbors passing by. Daughter Audrey (Maisy Stella) talks about college aspirations with her friends, and son Brian (Christian Convery) keeps a tight leash on his beloved but rambunctious dog, Starbuck. They are a typical American family with typical middle-class problems.

Several odd light flares have recently occurred in the neighborhood. It is not clear if this is lightning or something else...but what? After the flares, a neighbor sees an unusual plant pop up in her yard. Then another neighbor finds something quite unpleasant in his.

After a particularly strong flare, the Platt family realizes their neighborhood and everyone in it has been transported



somewhere very dangerous. Did they time travel to the past? Are they on another planet? There is not much time to speculate because they are now prey.

As the neighborhood is thrown into chaos, the Platt family quickly learns they stand a better chance of survival if they stick together and rely on each other. This also extends to the larger neighborhood, with unexpected people showing strength and coming to each other's aid. While many scenes are intense, there are enough moments of humor and heartfelt emotion to keep viewers entertained and engaged.

In the end, there is an attempt to give resolution to the outlandish plot. Resist the temptation to poke holes in it or speculate on troubling alternative scenarios. Instead, do yourself a favor and do not read too much into it. This is a "popcorn movie." We jump out of our seats, yell at the screen, and laugh together in relief. For an hour and 40 minutes, we are transported, along with the actors, into an unusual situation. Once the lights come on, leave the heavy analysis behind and walk away simply being entertained.



Laura Nakamura
Concord Mayor
cityofconcord.org

Concord Pedal Fest Sept. 27

On Sunday, September 27, 2026, Baldwin Park at 2727 Parkside Circle will be filled with bikes, families, live music, food trucks, arts and crafts and a whole lot of pedal power for a first of its kind Concord Pedal Fest.

I am excited to present this event celebrating biking in our community. This event is a collaboration with the City of Concord, Bike Concord, the Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce, Bike East Bay, and Mechanics Bank.

From 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., folks will find a myriad of activities for all ages including: a bike rodeo, skills activities, arts and crafts, food trucks, and tables hosted by community organizations. There will be plenty of opportunities for kids and families to ride, learn, and play. Plus, pedaling will literally power the event making smoothies, spin art, and live bike-powered music.

Local eclectic world fusion band Quattro will be performing live, providing the soundtrack while families ride, create, eat, and explore.

Turn in an outgrown mike, leave with a right-sized ride

One of the exciting parts of Concord Pedal Fest is what we call our “UpCycle” Bike Program, a partnership with Bike Concord and Mount Diablo Resource Recovery (MDRR).

Every parent knows how quickly kids can outgrow their bikes; almost as fast as they outgrow their shoes. Replacing bikes every time a child hits a growth spurt can get expensive. “UpCycle” gives



Quattro will be performing live, at Pedal Fest

those bikes another life.

Mount Diablo Resource Recovery (MDRR) is helping us recover bicycles that can be put back into use rather than going to waste, while Bike Concord’s volunteer mechanics are working to get them tuned up and ready for new riders.

At Pedal Fest, families can bring a bike their child has outgrown, and we will help them find a properly sized bike to take its place, as inventory allows. It’s exciting to be able to help kids get on a bike that fits them comfortably and that they can ride safely. Families save money and we reduce waste at the same time.

Bike Concord will also be on hand to supply air for tires and perform minor tune-ups.

Families interested in taking a two-and-a-half-hour Family Cycling Workshop taught by Bike East Bay must register in advance. A link is provided on the Concord Pedal Fest website,

concordpedalfest.com.

Come for the bikes, stay for the tacos

September also marks the return of Visit Concord’s popular Taco Trail Challenge, which kicks off September 15, and runs for a month. One of the Taqueros participating in this year’s Taco Trail

Challenge will also be serving at Pedal Fest. You can make some progress on your Taco Trail Challenge while you’re at Baldwin Park. There will be other food trucks there as well.

Will we see you at Concord Pedal Fest?

There are many reasons to come to Concord Pedal Fest. You don’t have to consider yourself a “cyclist.” Come by to grab a taco, listen to Quattro, learn how to ride safely, check out the hands-on activities, or simply enjoy an afternoon in the park with friends and neighbors.

A complimentary bike valet will be on-site to park your bike while you enjoy the event.

I’ll see you at Concord Pedal Fest. ConcordPedalFest.com For more information, contact me at Laura. kamura@cityofconcord.org

Odessa Cafe Opens in Former Kasper’s Hot Dog Location



Kasper’s Hot Dogs was a beloved part of the Concord community, for families who visited the Clayton Road location. Generations of local residents have fond memories of stopping by for a classic Kasper’s Hot Dog, and many people were saddened when they heard this longtime tradition had disappeared.

Julia Moldavsky, owner of the new Odessa Café, has a special connection to Kasper’s Hot Dogs. She worked at Kasper’s for many years and learned the traditions, quality, and care that made these hot dogs such a nostalgic part of the Concord.

In addition to serving authentic Kasper’s Hot Dogs, Odessa Café has introduced fresh salads and baked treats to its menu..

“We hope Odessa Cafe can be a place where Concord’s past and future generations can come together honoring this beloved tradition.”

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The Arts Pages

Thais Helena Ouzounian

Where Art, Light and the Soul Meet

by Julia O'Reilly

What if a work of art could do more than catch your eye? What if it could make you stop, feel something unexpected and recognize a little piece of yourself?

That is the kind of connection Brazilian multidisciplinary artist Thais Helena Ouzounian hopes to create.

Her newest illuminated sculptures seem to glow from within. Feminine, graceful and expressive, they celebrate light, beauty and the quiet strength of the feminine spirit. But these sculptures are only the latest chapter in an artistic journey that has crossed countries, cultures and creative mediums.

Born and raised in Brazil, Ouzounian has a background in law and moved to the San Francisco Bay Area 27 years ago. She is married and the mother of two sons. Alongside family and professional life, there has always been another powerful current running through her world: the desire to create and connect.

From a young age, Ouzounian was fascinated by what exists beneath the surface of people—the feelings, thoughts and values we may not always reveal. She believed that expressing those deeper parts of ourselves could help overcome a sense of separation and create genuine moments of human connection.

Her creative journey began with words and photography before expanding into mixed media, where color, form and texture became part of her artistic language. Her work has been exhibited at O'Hanlon Center for the Arts in Mill Valley, Blackhawk Gallery in Danville, JOR Fine Art Gallery in Clayton and Pittsburg City Hall.

One accomplishment has carried her art far beyond the Bay Area. Her work "The Most Beautiful Children on Earth" is part of the United Nations Art Collection in New York City, a meaningful recognition for an artist whose work is so deeply connected to our shared humanity.

Today, Ouzounian's exploration has led her to sculpture. Her illuminated feminine figures are not simply decorative objects. Through light, shape and expression, they invite viewers to consider grace, inner strength and the beauty of the feminine spirit.

Her work also reflects the richness of two cultures. Her Brazilian roots



Thais Helena Ouzounian

bring warmth, passion and playfulness, while nearly three decades in the

Bay Area have added another dimension to her artistic identity. She allows these influences to come together naturally in her work.

For Ouzounian, however, the most important part of art is what happens

between the artwork and the person standing before it. She calls it a "magical moment", that unexpected instant when a piece resonates with something you are feeling or experiencing in your own life.

Brazilian poet Adélia Prado is another source of inspiration. Prado's wish to remain "always hungry for life" beautifully reflects Ouzounian's own creative philosophy. She continues to explore, moving from photography to mixed media and now sculpture, always searching for new ways to communicate emotion and wonder.

"If my art can stir your soul, foment reflection or connections, if it can open a smile in your heart, then my creativity succeeds," Ouzounian says.

For her, success is not simply having her work seen. It is having her work felt.

Perhaps that is an invitation for all of us. The next time you encounter a work of art, don't hurry past it. Look a little longer. Feel a little deeper. You never know when that "magical moment" might find you.



Martinez Arts Association's Annual Teacher Supply Grant Program

by Denise Hillman



With students back in the classroom, the Martinez Arts Association (MAA) is preparing to support art education in our local schools through its annual Teacher Art Supply Grant Program.

Each year, MAA invites teachers from elementary through high school to apply for grants to help purchase art supplies and materials for their classrooms. Over the years, these grants have helped make possible countless creative projects, giving students opportunities to explore art and creativity that might otherwise be limited by classroom budgets. Information about this year's grant applications will be shared with local teachers soon.

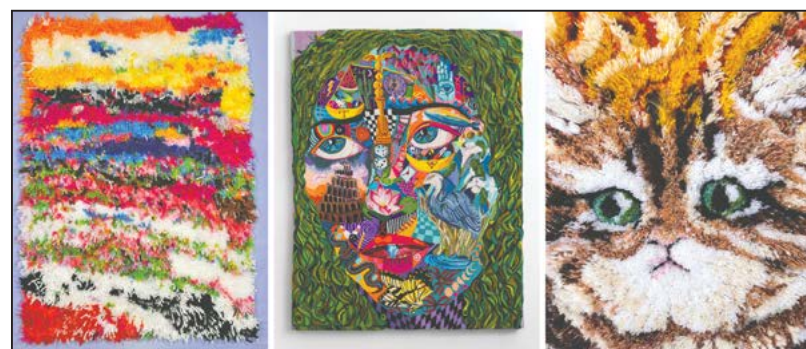
MAA also continues to bring local art into the community through its Rotating Art Exhibits Program. Artwork by area artists can currently be enjoyed at several Martinez locations, including Roxx on Main, Five Suns Brewing, the Martinez Library and the Campbell Theater. The exhibits change periodically, providing new opportunities for local artists to share their work and for the community to experience art in everyday settings.

The next Martinez Arts Association Board and Member Meeting will be held Monday, September 14 at 6:00 p.m. at Studio 55 in Martinez. Members and those interested in becoming involved with MAA are welcome. Visit the MAA website, rtinezarts.org.

Bedford Gallery

High Pile: Concepts in Tufting

September 26 – December 13, 2026



High Pile: Concepts in Tufting explores tufting beyond its traditional associations with domestic and commercial craft, highlighting the medium's role within contemporary fine art as a site of experimentation and conceptual inquiry. This exhibition examines tufting as a practice where color is built through fiber density, form emerges through pile structure, and materiality plays a central role in how the work is experienced.

High Pile brings together 20 artists whose work engages tufting as both a physical and expressive language. The works emphasize process while incorporating elements like abstraction and pattern to convey narratives and cultural meaning. Collectively, the exhibition positions tufting as a vital contemporary medium that is tactile, yet conceptually expansive.

Opening Party Saturday, September 26, 2026 5:00 – 7:00 pm

General admission \$5, 12 and under and BG Donors Free.

Wed.-Sun 12:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

Three Concord Art Association Exhibits

The Concord Art Association (CAA) currently has installations up at three locations around Concord.

"Reflections" at Visit Concord will be on exhibit through Feb. 12, 2027. A reception for this show is scheduled for Friday, November 13, 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Visit Concord is located at 2151 Salvio St. in Salvio Pacheco Square. Open Monday through Friday 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

At the Concord Library, paintings by Ona Canilao and Mary Yonekawa

are on display in the entryway display case (on the left as you enter the building) through September 30. The library is located 2900 Salvio St.

"Carpe Diem" exhibit at Centre Concord is up through October 16. Carpe Diem (Latin for "seize the day") celebrates the beauty, urgency, and wonder of the present moment: personal transformation, joy, nature, the passage of time. Located at 5298 Clayton Rd., Concord, is open Monday through Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.



"Reflection" Exhibit Reveals Artists' Soul.

From September through October the aRt Cottage will feature the Lamorinda Arts Alliance exhibit "Reflection. So named as an artist's painting reflects the artist mind and soul.

While enrolled in an advanced painting class, I once heard a teacher of mine say to the class, "Each painting you make is a self-portrait. You are putting yourself, your being, into it with each stroke."

As an artist, looking back at some of my beginning and earlier pieces I see a different me, perhaps struggling and finding my way.

We hope you will join us and meet the artists as they share their reflection at the open house reception on Saturday, September 12, from 2:00-4:00 p.m.. Refreshments will be served and all are welcome.

Lamorinda Arts Alliance consists of approximately 200 artists. They have the opportunity to exhibit their art in venues throughout the year. This year the venues included the aRt Cottage (Concord), Papillon Cafe (Lafayette), Benicia Library, San Ramon City Hall, and others. It's easy to join the group and participate in exhibits. Go to Laa4art.org and click on the appropriate page for any questions you may have.

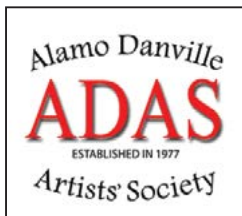
aRt Cottage is open 11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday at 2238 Mt. Diablo St. in downtown Concord.



Images: Above: "Cool Carquinez" by Nancy Roberts. Top down: "Yosemite Reflections" by Linda Curtis., "Pondering the Abstract" by Ruth Stanton, by "The West" Tom Quinlavin.



Retrospective



Open to the public though Sunday, October 18, 2026 Explore a stunning collection of original artwork by talented local artists. Blackhawk Gallery, 3416 Blackhawk Plaza Circle, Danville. Open Thursday-Sunday Noon -5:00 p.m.

The ADAS General Meeting with an Art Demo is scheduled for September 8 at 7:30 p.m. at the Blackhawk Plaza Circle in Danville.

Debbie Wardrobe is a Bay Area artist and Pleasanton resident known for her award-winning pastel, oil, and acrylic paintings. A graduate of the California College of the Arts, her work is featured in public, private, and corporate collections throughout California. She is an accomplished instructor, muralist, and signature member of the Pastel Society of the West Coast, celebrated for capturing the beauty of light in everyday scenes.



"Glowing Vines" by Debbie Wardrobe



"Lavender Fields Forever" by Debbie Wardrobe



by Samantha McNally

Main Street Arts Gallery welcomes award-winning painter Qian Gao as guest artist in September, with gallery member Dean Evans as the month's featured artist.

Gao has painted in watercolor and oils for more than 25 years, developing a style he describes as "controlled, loose painting"—fresh and spontaneous while maintaining a strong sense of structure. A self-taught artist influenced by John Singer Sargent, Edward Seago, John Yardley and Trevor Chamberlain, Gao has won awards in numerous national and international exhibitions.

He is a signature member of the American Watercolor Society, National Watercolor Society, Transparent Watercolor Society of America and California Watercolor Association.

Featured member artist Dean Evans paints the coastal areas and towns surrounding San Francisco Bay, where he grew up and has witnessed dramatic change. He seeks out places that still retain their distinctive character, using his paintings to capture a sense of the Bay Area's disappearing past.

The public is invited to meet the artists at a First Friday reception September 4 from 6:00–9:00 p.m. Visitors can also enter the gallery's September free drawing for a chance to win an original oil painting by Dean Evans called "New Grass".

Now in its tenth year, Main Street Arts Gallery continues to welcome art lovers and collectors alike. The cooperative gallery features the work of local and regional artists in a variety of media, including painting, sculpture, photography, ceramics, jewelry, and mixed media.

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

Qian Gao and Dean Evans Featured



"A Rainy Day Ride" by Qian Gao



"California Coast" by Qian Gao



Visitors to Main Street Arts during Martinez First Friday reception on September 4, can enter the drawing to win this oil painting by Dean Evans, "New Grass."



Summer Escape Exhibit Ends November 8

JOR Fine Art Gallery invites you to experience "Summer Escape", running through November 8, 2026.

As part of the exhibit, we are hosting a free colored pencil and pastel art demonstration by award-winning artist, Peggy Magovern. The demonstration will take place on Saturday October 10 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. This event is free and open to art lovers, students, and the community. Space is limited. Attendees must register in advance at jorfineartgallery.com



"Amsterdam" Oil on Canvas by Melissa Martin



"Colored Pencil" by Peggy Magovern



When Business and Education Converge, Concord Grows

The Concord Chamber of Commerce has been supporting the business community here in Concord since 1937. For a little context on just how long ago that was, 1937 was the year the Golden Gate Bridge opened as the longest suspension bridge in the world. It was also the year Disney's "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" premiered as the studio's first full-length animated feature, and Daffy Duck made his first appearance.

At the Chamber, like the Golden Gate Bridge, we are good at "bridging" relationships and strengthen community connections.

In 1991, the organization's leadership took on another important task: creating Community Alliance for the Future (CAF), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a mission centered on supporting education and educational opportunities in our community.

Since then, CAF has quietly been making a difference by providing scholarships and supporting educational programs and services throughout Concord. We are fortunate to receive generous donations from individuals and businesses that recognize the value of our mission.

This year, CAF has provided funding to the shop program at Concord High School and the culinary program at Mt. Diablo High School. Key Club students also volunteered at our annual Crab Feed, giving them an opportunity to

actively engage in their community.

We also worked with John Muir Health and the Mt. Diablo Unified School District on our annual Classroom to Commerce event where students showcase their talents and share what they have learned through internships with local businesses. It is a great example of what can happen when education and the business community work together.

We are working toward a partnership with Mechanics Bank to support Bike Concord and promote bicycle safety, as well as the Concord Pedal Fest on September 27, 2026, at Olympic High School. This community event will be supported by the City of Concord and open to the public.

Education is an important part of a healthy and vibrant local economy. When Concord's business community supports students and schools, it helps create opportunities for people to learn, work, build careers, and grow right here in our wonderful city.

Keep your eyes peeled for future CAF events and opportunities to get involved. When our business and education communities work together, all of Concord benefits.

To learn more about the businesses, organizations, programs, and people helping make Concord such a vibrant place to live, work, and grow, visit the Concord Chamber of Commerce at www.concordchamber.com.

CITY OF CONCORD'S HEALTH EXPO

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 9AM-12PM
Concord Senior Center, 2727 Parkside Circle
www.cityofconcord.org/SCevents

This **free** community event brings together a diverse array of resources and information for seniors, families, and caregivers.

Free haircuts will be provided by Urban Barber College by appointment only. Call 925-671-3318 to make your appointment.



Neuroplasticity by Jessica Raaum Foster NeurologyofPresence.com

"Susan" hadn't sat down on the ground in over five years. She couldn't get down, and if she did get down, she couldn't get back up.

Her doctors classified her as a "fall risk." She does have balance issues, but what a lot of people, including doctors, don't consider is that Susan's inability to safely get up and down off the ground isn't just a symptom of her balance problems; it may actually be causing them.

Let me explain with a little basic neuroscience.

Your brain's number one job is survival. It will do whatever it takes to keep you alive, including preventing you from moving. Without Susan consciously knowing it, her brain is constantly scanning her situation to judge how safe it is. In the background, her brain knows she hasn't sat on the ground in years. The ground has become unknown territory, and unknown territory reads as threatening.

In response to that threat, Susan's brain locks down her movement to prevent a fall. It makes her walk rigid and stiff. It sends pain signals the moment she tries to move outside a small "safe" range of motion. And over time, her brain loses the ability to adapt when an obstacle appears in her path, making her more likely to fall, the exact outcome her brain was trying to prevent in the first place.

So how do we fix this?

Balance exercises can help, but what really moves the needle is safe, pain-free ways to get her down to the floor such as

Does Your Brain Trust You?

doing her exercises there and focusing on whichever part of her body is most limiting in that moment. For example, knees. If they don't tolerate pressure well, use knee pads that let her practice moving without pain.

Susan also keeps her movements inside the range her brain feels safe in. It's remarkable to watch: The moment she pushes her past what her brain considers safe, her cognition shuts down, and she suddenly can't execute a movement she was doing easily just minutes before.

So instead, she works within what she can do on the ground, then gets back up safely. What's exciting is how much her balance improves from this practice alone. With every repetition, her brain starts to trust her a little more, and the brakes begin to come off. There's less rigidity, less bracing and as a result, less risk of falling.

This is the same principle behind nearly every limitation, whether it's fear is falling, public speaking, or trying something new later in life.

The brain isn't being difficult on purpose, it's protecting you from something specific.

The goal isn't to push through that fear or muscle past it. It's to get curious about what's underneath it, break it into its real, solvable parts, and build trust one safe repetition at a time.

Susan didn't need more balance exercises. She needed her brain to trust the ground again. Once it did, the bracing started to fall away, one safe rep at a time.

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In Case You Missed It...

Local news items from Claycord.com and other sources

Death Of Six Flags Dolphin Prompts Calls To Relocate Remaining Animals



Local News - A bottlenose dolphin that spent more than four decades at Six Flags Discovery Kingdom in Vallejo was euthanized last month after years in captivity, prompting an animal rights group to renew calls for the park's remaining dolphins to be moved to seaside sanctuaries.

Chelsea was a bottlenose dolphin that was part of Six Flags Discovery Kingdom's marine mammal program and was used in shows and visitor encounters. Chelsea's life ended July 14.

Her entry in the Marine Mammal Inventory Report, a federal record maintained by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service to track dolphins and other marine mammals held in captivity, lists her cause of death as euthanasia due to "multiple recurring chronic diseases" and a "declining quality of life."

This death has become the group's most recent focus in their longstanding criticism of dolphins being held in captivity for entertainment. On Monday, PETA sent a letter to Six Flags Entertainment Corp. CEO John Reilly asking the company to end its swim-with-dolphins en-counters and commit to moving the surviving dolphins at Discovery Kingdom to seaside sanctuaries. Such sanctuaries would allow the animals to live in larger, more natural environments while remaining under human care.

"For more than 40 years, Six Flags Discovery Kingdom sentenced Chelsea to a life of misery in a sad, shallow pool," PETA president Tracy Reiman said in a statement.

Some countries have restricted or banned dolphin captivity.

Concord OKs \$1.05 Million Security Deal for Former Naval Weapons Station

The Concord City Council on Aug. 25 approved a new \$1.05 million contract to provide security at the former Concord Naval Weapons Station as the massive property continues to await redevelopment.

The council approved a three-year contract with Concord-based Guardian Security Agency, which has provided security at the site for the past decade. The contract, which runs through June 2029, covers security at the Willow Pass and Bailey Road entrances. Guardian was se-lected from nine bidders.

GoMentum Station, an autonomous vehicle testing facility operated at the site by the Contra Costa Transportation Authority, will reimburse the city for the security costs, meaning Con-cord's General Fund will not be affected.

In May, the city approved an agreement with the U.S. Navy allowing developer Brookfield Properties to move forward with planning for a project that calls for 12,272 homes, including about 3,000 affordable units. City officials have said Brookfield's specific development plan could come before the council in summer 2029, with the full build-out expected to take about 30 years.

Indoor Shooting Range Proposed For North Main Street In Walnut Creek



A new indoor shooting range, firearms training facility and retail store is being proposed for North Main Street in Walnut Creek. Elite Armory is seeking city approval to open the facility at 2615 N. Main St., in a vacant commercial building formerly occupied by Lewis & Lewis Car-pets.

Plans call for expanding the existing 3,000-square-foot building by 1,280 square feet, bringing it to 4,280 square feet. The remodeled facility would include a nine-lane indoor shooting range, instructional classes, firearms training sessions and retail sales.

Elite Armory says the range would operate in a heavily reinforced indoor environment with ballistic-rated walls and ceilings, sound-absorbing materials and other safety features. Public hours are proposed from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. on weekends, with additional reservation-only hours proposed for law enforcement agencies and qualified trainers.

World Doll Day Show Comes to Concord on Sept. 20.

Doll Collecting remains in the top collecting interests today. They are still a "collecting passion" for many people young and old. Mary Senko, owner of World Doll Day Shows and Events says,, "People want to collect items that have meaning and history, represent a special place or time, remind them of a special person, or are just beautiful and artful." Dolls do a little of all of that and more. People enjoy the fun of a treasure hunt shopping for dolls from every era along with the toys and treasures that help bring doll displays to life in their own collections. Show 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Hilton Concord, a change in venue from previous years. 1970 Diamond Blvd. See ad thiss page.

Mary Senko Presents

World Doll Day Show & Sale

Concord CA Sunday Sept. 20th, 2026 10am-3pm

Tickets \$10.00

Children Under 13 Free

Hilton Concord 1970 Diamond Blvd. Concord, CA

BP www.everythingdollsandtoys.com

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Around Martinez



A Prudent Choice for Martinez

by Brianne Zorn, Mayor, City of Martinez

Many Americans feel that elections are expensive. When an election is uncontested, voters may feel that funds budgeted for elections could be better spent elsewhere. California Elections Code Section 10229 establishes a procedure for uncontested elections allowing for a Council to appoint a candidate in lieu of an election. That is exactly what Martinez has decided to do.

On August 19, the Martinez City Council voted to appoint Councilmember Debbie McKillop and Mayor Brianne Zorn (that's me!) to our respective seats rather than put our uncontested races on the November ballot.

Did you know that Contra Costa County Elections charges cities for each individual election based on the number of registered voters (i.e., ballots)? For Martinez, avoiding these two uncontested races is expected to save the City between \$60,000 to \$85,000. That is real money, especially for a city facing a structural deficit.

As a candidate, I would have preferred to see my name on the ballot and receive the majority support of Martinez voters. But there is another responsibility that comes with serving on City Council: being a good steward of public money.

If spending the money to have

an election has no impact on the outcome, then I argue it is not fiscally responsible to do so. And these savings aren't limited to just the City. Candidates also avoid the considerable costs of running campaigns:

printing mailers, signs, advertising, fundraising, event expenses, and the countless hours volunteers and candidates spend organizing an election campaign.

Voters deserve the opportunity to choose their representatives when there is a choice to be made. Martinez voters will still see other elections on the ballot, including the District 1 Council race that has two candidates who qualified for the election: Jay Howard and

Nakenya Allen. But when there isn't a choice to be made, spending tens of thousands of dollars to print ballots, administer races, and conduct an election with an outcome that is already determined deserves reconsideration.

This decision was not unique to Martinez. Oakley and Lafayette also chose to appoint

candidates in uncontested elections this year. Additionally, during the last Martinez election in 2024, the City Council opted to appoint the Treasurer who was running for reelection and was uncontested. I support the fiscally responsible decision these Councils have made, and I think our residents agree that saving taxpayer dollars is the prudent choice.



Dedication Sept. 17 for Martinez's Newest Mural

by David Scholz

Where once was a bland warehouse wall across from the Martinez Amtrak station, has for several months been awakened with a brilliant palette of fluorescent colors.

Visible uptown from the corner of Main and Estudillo Streets, a striking orange serves as the backdrop for "Martinez" that anchors the Illumanaries' playful creation spanning approximately 250 feet by 25 feet.

"We hope that we've created a lasting public asset that will educate, inspire and welcome visitors for many years to come," said former Martinez Councilmember Lara Delaney, who is currently treasurer of the Hometown Hero Project that raised \$89,000 to spearhead the mural initiative.

She cited, "Folks noting its colorfulness, vibrancy (blending historical references with a modern pop-art style), and story-telling appeal that captures the heart and history of Martinez."

"All anecdotal comments we've received have been overwhelmingly positive and indicate the mural has become a source of tremendous community pride."

For visitors, it offers an immediate sense of Martinez's rich history and unique identity, creating a memorable first impression and serving as an

enduring invitation to explore our community," Delaney added.

Hon, who led the four-member team with support of additional staff, recalled many morning walkers, kids and grandmas with strollers seeing the process unfold. Also train passengers would yell their appreciation for their efforts.

While overcoming challenges such as insane heat, a lack of shade, the wall's original peeling paint and scaffolding issues, his crew muddled through to achieve a professional piece. He hoped the takeaway of the mural would be a sense of pride and joy in the town.

"I love all the murals and realistic styles that we have currently in Martinez, and my goal was to add variety and artistic diversity to our landscape," Hon said.

Visitors to the train station and those heading to the Radke Martinez Regional Shoreline Park have marveled at the transformation since its completion back in the spring, but the mural's official dedication is slated for Thursday, Sept. 17, at 5:00 p.m. Representatives of the Hometown Hero Project and local dignitaries will gather across the way at the Hillside Tap Room, 400 Ferry St., to celebrate and toast its completion.



A Look Back at Martinez's First 150 Years

by Tony Hicks, Exerpts from Martinez News and Views

Those 150 years only mark the time Martinez has been officially incorporated. A quarter century before, Contra Costa County's future seat of government was named after Don Ygnacio Martinez, the early 19th century comandante of the Presidio of San Francisco.

The Mexican government, which lost California to the U.S. after the Mexican-American War ended in 1848, gave Martinez a 17,000-acre land grant in 1824, bringing the area's eventual namesake to the Alhambra Valley.

The land officially took his family name in 1849, when it became a major stop for those seeking fortune in the

Sierra foothills after gold was found at Sutter's Mill the previous year.

Today's Martinez was divided into two rancheros before statehood – Martinez, on the west side of Alhambra Creek, and Rancho Las Juntas on the east side, a 13,293-acre land grant given to Irish immigrant William Welch in 1832.

Martinez became the county seat in 1850 around the time the Welch family sold its land to the Martinez family.

The other golden California export that put Martinez on the economic map was wheat. In the early 1850s, Rittenhouse said, a grain shortage in Europe created a market for California wheat.

At various times in its history, Martinez was home to 15 wineries in Alhambra

Valley, Vine Hill and downtown, according to the book "The Winemakers of Martinez," by James G. Carroll.

In 1877, the Southern Pacific Railroad laid tracks through Martinez and built the city's first train station.

Martinez became known as an Italian and Portuguese fishing city in the 1880s and '90s, when there was an influx of European fisherman, who brought striped bass to the Carquinez Strait. Area salmon fishing was so good, two of the West Coast's 12 fish canneries operated in Martinez.

Shell Oil came in 1915, buying a smaller local refinery at the current site of Martinez Refining Co., expanding over the ensuing years, and transforming a big piece of the city as more workers

needed local housing.

The city's association with John Muir began in 1880 when the Scottish immigrant – who moved with his family to Wisconsin in 1849 when he was 11 – married Louisa Strentzel. Muir lived in the Alhambra Avenue house (now the national historic site) until his death in 1914.

According to a 2018 article in the Martinez News-Gazette, the DiMaggio family lived in a small house at the base of Island Hill at the foot of Grangers Wharf on Foster Street, near where Berrellesa Street crosses the railroad tracks.

cont'd next page.

Bring Papa Jake Larson's Legacy to Life in Martinez

By Brandy Leidgen, Larson statue Project Coordinator

The effort to honor beloved World War II veteran Jake "Papa Jake" Larson with a life-size bronze statue in downtown Martinez continues to move forward, and the project is reaching an exciting stage.

To date, the community has raised \$58,913.55 toward the cost of completing and installing the memorial. An additional \$91,086.45 is still needed to bring the project across the finish line. Every donation, personalized brick and corporate sponsorship moves us closer to creating a permanent tribute to a man whose courage, humility and remarkable storytelling inspired people around the world.

Papa Jake was a decorated World War II veteran who survived D-Day at Omaha Beach and fought in the Battle of the Bulge. Later in life, he became a social-media sensation, connecting younger generations with history through his humor, warmth and firsthand accounts of the war. The statue will ensure that his story and the sacrifices made by his generation will continue to educate and inspire visitors for generations.

The artistic process is already well underway.

Acclaimed sculptor Paula Slater completed an 18-inch clay maquette, or small-scale model, that was approved by Papa Jake's family and the City of Martinez. The maquette was then digitally enlarged to create a life-size form.

Slater is now carefully applying clay to the life-size form, building Papa Jake's likeness one section at a time.

Once the full-size clay sculpture is completed and approved, it will be taken to Artworks Foundry in Berkeley. There, molds will be created and the statue will begin the complex lost-wax bronze-casting process. Slater will make several trips to the foundry to work closely with its artisans as the bronze pieces are cast, assembled, refined and finished.

The entire process is so fascinating to me. The amount of detail and precision that goes into creating a statue is incredible. We all see statues in our communities but having the opportunity to watch this one take shape and to understand the craftsmanship behind

every step has been truly inspiring.

Community members can become a permanent part of the memorial by purchasing an engraved brick to be placed at the base of the statue.

The 4-by-8-inch bricks are available for \$200 and offer a meaningful way to honor a favorite veteran, recognize a graduate, remember a loved one, celebrate a family or represent a local sports team or community organization. Each inscription will become part of Martinez history.

For families, organizations and small businesses seeking greater visibility and impact, 12-by-12-inch bricks are available for \$2,500. These larger bricks provide additional space to memorialize a loved one, recognize an organization or prominently feature a local business. They are especially meaningful for real estate professionals, service clubs, contractors and legacy businesses that want to demonstrate their commitment to veterans and the Martinez community.

Corporate sponsorship opportunities are also available. Major sponsors will receive recognition during the fundraising campaign, throughout the development of the project and permanently as leading supporters of the memorial. This is a rare opportunity for a company to associate its name with a lasting tribute to courage, service and American history.

Supporters may also donate any amount that is comfortable for them. No contribution is too small, and every gift helps maintain the project's momentum. Donations are being accepted through the project's nonprofit partner and may be tax-deductible as permitted by law.

Please help us spread the word and complete this important memorial. To donate, purchase a brick or learn more, visit PapaJakeLarson.com. Corporate sponsorship information is available at PapaJakeLarson.com/sponsorships.

Together, we can ensure that Papa Jake's courage, smile and unforgettable spirit live on forever.

City of Martinez Approves Downtown Entertainment Zone

The Martinez City Council approved the creation of a Downtown Entertainment Zone, paving the way for new opportunities to activate downtown streets, support local businesses, and create more vibrant community experiences.

The Downtown Entertainment Zone will allow participating businesses to serve alcoholic beverages for consumption by those 21 years or older within designated outdoor areas during approved Entertainment Zone events. The program is designed to complement Martinez's existing restaurants, bars, shops, events, and pedestrian-friendly downtown environment while bringing additional energy and activity to the heart of the community.

"This is about creating more reasons for people to come downtown, stay a little longer, and enjoy everything Martinez has to offer," said Mayor Brianne Zorn. "Our downtown is already a special place, and the Downtown Entertainment Zone gives us another tool to create opportunities for residents and visitors to gather, celebrate, and experience Martinez together, while supporting our local businesses who are licensed to sell alcohol."

"Downtown Martinez has so much to offer, and this gives us another way to bring people together and showcase our local businesses," said Sarah



Dining in the street. Photo courtesy of Roxx on Main in Martinez.

Baird, Executive Director of Downtown Martinez & Co. "We see the Downtown Entertainment Zone as an opportunity to build on the momentum we already have downtown, and to encourage people to shop, dine, listen to music, attend events, and experience Martinez in a new way. We're excited to work with the City and our downtown businesses to make it successful."

The Downtown Entertainment Zone is part of the City's broader effort to strengthen downtown Martinez as a destination for residents and visitors while supporting local economic activity. Similar programs in other California cities have been used to Create new opportunities for outdoor dining, entertainment, and community events.

The City will announce additional information regarding the first Entertainment Zone activations, participating businesses, boundaries, and operating requirements as implementation moves forward.

HELP US BUILD PAPA JAKE'S Legacy

A STATUE. A STORY. A LEGACY THAT WILL LAST FOREVER.

We're honoring WWII Veteran Papa Jake Larson, a D-Day Omaha Beach survivor and proud union member for more than 30 years.

This statue in Ignacio Plaza, Martinez, CA will serve as a lasting tribute for generations to come.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| BUY A BRICK | SPONSOR | DONATE |
| Personalized bricks become a permanent part of the memorial. | Help bring this tribute to life with your generous support. | Every contribution helps us reach our goal and honor a hero. |



Anyone who buys a brick will receive a Papa Jake pin!

LEAVE A LEGACY. HONOR. REMEMBER. INSPIRE.

Your personalized brick will become a permanent part of the Papa Jake Larson Statue Memorial for generations to come.

4" X 8" BRICK EXAMPLES

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SMITH FAMILY ESTABLISHED 1946 MARTINEZ, CA	BULLDOG PRIDE TODAY, TOMORROW, FOREVER	HONORING ALL WHO SERVED THANK YOU

12" X 12" BRICK EXAMPLES

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PAPA JAKE LARSON

- ✓ WWII Veteran – D-Day Omaha Beach Survivor
- ✓ Battle of the Bulge Survivor
- ✓ Proud Union Member for 30+ Years
- ✓ Beloved Martinez Community Member

VISIT:
PAPAJAKELARSON.COM

★ Thank You ★★
FOR SUPPORTING THE PAPA JAKE LARSON STATUE MEMORIAL



This was the birthplace of Joe DiMaggio as it appeared in 1948, shortly before it was destroyed by fire. It was moved to this site, 237 Foster Street from a site near the Berrel-lease fisherman's pier by "Joltin' Joe's" friend and son Fran.

Bocce is big in Martinez: Founded in 1976, the Martinez Bocce Federation is the largest in the U.S., with more than 2,400 members playing across 15 courts. Martinez hosted the U.S. National Bocce Tournament in 1981 and 1996, the latter of which was covered by ESPN.

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Sesquicentennial Festival Wows!

by David King Photos by Thomas Rimpel

Martinez knows how to celebrate a birthday.

The city marked its 150th anniversary on Saturday, Aug. 29, with a waterfront celebration that drew thousands of residents and visitors for a full day of music, family activities, food, kites and hometown pride.

By the end of the day, social media was overflowing with photos, videos and praise, with some calling the Sesquicentennial Festival one of the best celebrations Martinez has ever hosted.

“Our incredible city has put together one seriously amazing celebration for the Sesquicentennial!” one attendee posted.

Estimates placed attendance near 5,000 throughout the day as the Martinez Waterfront became a giant playground for all ages.

One of the biggest crowd-pleasers was Kite Man of Martinez, Tony Jetland, whose spectacular collection of mega-kites filled the sky. His colorful airborne menagerie included a 60-foot whale and other enormous sea creatures. Jetland also gave away commemorative Martinez 150th anniversary kites to children.

Down on the ground, there was no shortage of action. Families enjoyed a climbing wall, water-tag arena, sprinkle playground, mini-train rides, face painting, craft zones, bubbles, live music and free treats. Visitors could even take kayak tours.

The celebration took place alongside the Bay Area Craft Beer Festival, presented by Downtown Martinez & Co., adding another festive element to an already packed waterfront.

Perhaps the best part was the price: Festival activities were free, making the milestone celebration accessible to the entire community.

But beyond the attractions, the day celebrated something even bigger — Martinez itself.

As one resident summed it up, “Seeing local organizations, businesses, volunteers and neighbors come together to celebrate 150 years showed exactly what makes Martinez such a special place to call home.”

Happy 150th, Martinez. You certainly know how to throw a party.



Martini Shake-Off Gala Inspired by Lore But Canceled

by David King



Who makes the best martini? We will not find out on September 12th in Martinez at the Annual Martini Shake-Off Gala. This classy, semi-formal, event honors the birthplace of the martini—because Martinez needed a reason to throw another party. Actually, this is the Martinez Chamber of Commerce’s signature event and fundraiser. Unfortunately it is canceled.

The Martini Shake-off is a party, dinner, and a contest. Several local mixologists will compete on making the best martini as determined by People’s Choice. Guests vote as the sample the different creative martinis

to make it. The bartender tried the drink himself and liked it. Over a period of years, the name Martinez became martini.

Popularized in Bond movies, the world-famous concoction has prolonged luncheons, launched endless jokes and superseded many dinners, but the community of Martinez is proud to be its birthplace and has engraved its claim in a monument.

However, this theory isn’t unanimously accepted: Barnaby Conrad III, author of a book on the Martini’s origin, claims that the drink was, in fact, invented in San Francisco, after a miner requested a pick-me-up in the city on his way to Martinez.

There are also assertions that it originated in New York’s Knickerbocker Hotel. Still others assert that the drink was named after “Martini & Rossi” vermouth, which was first created in the mid-1800s.

The popularity of the martini never seems to wane. Our societal stance on daytime drinking has changed since the 50s and 60s three-martini lunch days. Today a martini is more commonly enjoyed in the evening hours.

If you live in Martinez, the Martini Shake-off is one event you must experience -Except it is canceled for lack of sales, which I was notified at print deadline.

prepared throughout the evening.

While there is some dispute over the martini’s history, most references agree, the birthright belongs to Martinez. Surprisingly, I met a few guests at this event who did not know the lore that inspires this glamorous affair. So let’s review one version of the historic tale.

During the days of the “Gold Rush”, in 1849, a miner struck it rich and was returning to San Francisco. The miner, arriving in Martinez, the first large town he hit, wanted to celebrate. He walked into our leading bar and asked for a Champagne, a beverage which was not available. However, the bartender told the miner that he had something much better than Champagne and made a beverage from ingredients he had on hand: gin, vermouth, bitters, maraschino liqueur, and a slice of lemon and served that. The bartender called it a “Martinez Special”.

The miner liked the drink and proceeded on to San Francisco where he immediately went to a prominent bar and ordered a “Martinez Special”. The bartender of course had never heard of the drink. The miner instructed him how



Meet the Candidates for Martinez City Council District I

JAY HOWARD, Incumbent

Nakenya Allen, IHSS Care Provider



It has been an honor to serve the residents of Martinez on the City Council. Together, we've made meaningful progress while protecting the small-town character that makes our community special.

We've strengthened public safety, improved the City's long-term financial planning, invested in roads and infrastructure, advanced downtown revitalization, and taken significant steps toward revitalizing our marina and waterfront.

We've also supported local businesses, improved our parks, and adopted a long-term Strategic Plan to guide Martinez's future.

As a third-generation Martinez native who grew up in the Alhambra Valley, I remain committed to protecting our open spaces and preserving the unique character of our community.

I proudly supported Measure F and will continue advocating for responsible growth that balances environmental stewardship with economic opportunity.

Beyond City Hall, I've served our community through the Martinez Historical Society, Loaves and Fishes, and the Carpenters Who Care program, helping low-income homeowners and nonprofits complete critical repairs. As a construction superintendent, I bring practical experience managing budgets, solving problems, and building consensus.

I remain committed to enhancing public safety, completing the revitalization of our marina and waterfront, supporting local businesses, improving infrastructure, addressing homelessness through regional partnerships, and ensuring Martinez remains a safe, welcoming, and financially strong community.



I believe our city is full of promise and that with thoughtful leadership, and community-centered decision-making, we can see the progress we have been waiting for.

As a long-time resident and parent raising a child with special needs, I understand firsthand how city decisions affect families, neighborhoods, services, safety, accessibility, and quality of life.

My experience has taught me to analyze, advocate persistently, and work through challenges with patience, compassion, and determination. I have followed local decisions and engaged with the issues that shape our future. That involvement has strengthened my belief that effective governance must be transparent, accountable, inclusive, and responsive to the people it serves.

As your Councilmember, I will work to support responsible growth, strengthen public safety, improve accessibility for residents of all abilities, and ensure that major decisions are made with meaningful community input.

Our city deserves a foundation that is practical, fair, financially responsible, and focused on long-term results. Leadership is about showing up, listening, bringing people together, all while making decisions with integrity.

I will be a voice for families, working residents, seniors, small businesses, people with disabilities, and every neighbor who wants to see our city thrive.

District 1 needs leadership that is accessible, engaged, and committed to building a stronger future for all of us. I am ready to serve, and to help bring out the full potential of our city. I respectfully ask for your support.

Pleasant Hill Chamber Honors Angela Kalinowski as Businessperson of the Year

The Pleasant Hill Chamber of Commerce revived a valued community tradition on Aug. 20, honoring Angela Kalinowski as its 2026 Businessperson of the Year during a formal dinner and awards ceremony at Back Forty Texas BBQ in Pleasant Hill.

The award returned after a six-year hiatus following the disruption of the Chamber's annual events during the pandemic.

Kalinowski, owner of Back Forty Texas BBQ Roadhouse & Saloon and WiseGirl Restaurant, was recognized for both her business leadership and her longstanding commitment to the Pleasant Hill community.

"Angela's impact on Pleasant Hill goes far beyond her restaurants," Chamber President Jeremy Carlson said. "She continually supports local nonprofits, businesses, community events and fellow business owners. She is always willing to show up, lend a hand and give back to the community she calls home."

Kalinowski was selected from a strong group of nominees that also included Gerardo Wence of Wence's Restaurant and Karen Trish of Nurture Path Development Center.

The evening also marked the close of the Chamber's 2025-26 fiscal year and served as an opportunity to recognize those who have helped guide the organization. Outgoing board members were honored for their service, while three new members were formally installed to begin their terms: Michele Sears-Rose, Savannah Alkhoury and



Jeffrey Koch.

The ceremony brought together local business leaders and community members to celebrate service, leadership and the important role small businesses play in Pleasant Hill.

For Kalinowski, the honor reflected more than success in the restaurant industry. It recognized a reputation built on community involvement, generosity and a willingness to support others.

With the return of its Business Person of the Year award, the Chamber also restored a tradition dedicated to recognizing the people whose businesses and civic contributions help strengthen Pleasant Hill.



PLEASANT HILL HARVEST FESTIVAL

Saturday October 10th
Downtown Pleasant Hill

JOIN US FROM
11AM - 9PM



SCAN THE CODE TO LEARN MORE

PUMPKIN PATCH & PUMPKIN DECORATING CONTEST





LIVE MUSIC AT THE BACK FORTY STAGE





BEER AND WINE AT THE JACK'S BEER TRAILER AND NAVIGATOR LUXURY TRAVEL WINE

FREE ADMISSION! FOOD VENDORS, ARTISAN VENDORS, BUSINESS AND SPONSOR BOOTH, FAMILY ACTIVITIES & MORE!











PLEASANT HILL NIGHT MARKET

1ST AND 3RD FRIDAY OF THE MONTH
UNTIL NOV 20

PRESENTS

50+ VENDORS, KIDS ACTIVITIES
LIVE MUSIC, FOOD & BEVERAGES

SEPT. 4 & 18, OCT 2 & 16, NOV. 6 & 20

5 PM TO 9 PM
CHILPANCINGO PARK
PLEASANT HILL, CALIFORNIA

BOUNCE HOUSE
SHOPPING, BEER VENDOR, DESERT, DOG PARK

IG: @pleasanthillnightmarket
Additional event parking at DVC



Bay Area

Air Quality Management District Protects Bay Area Skies and Health

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District (Air District) is a public regional agency that protects public health and mitigates air pollution in the Bay Area through policies and regulations. As a locally elected official on its Board of Directors, I see firsthand how clean air shapes our county's health and future.

The Air District was created in 1955 by the California Legislature and is the first regional air pollution control agency in the country, regulating stationary sources of air pollution in the Bay Area's nine counties. Stationary sources of pollution are fixed, non-moving locations that release pollutants, including power plants, manufacturing facilities, refineries, boilers and heaters, dry cleaners, and gas stations.

With over 340 staff members, the Air District is governed by a 24-member Board of Directors, made up of locally elected officials from each of the nine Bay Area counties, with the number of board members for each county matching its population ratio.

In addition to serving as Chair of the Stationary Source Committee, I am also a member of the Policy, Grants, and Technology Committee, which recommends policies and funding to the Board of Directors related to sources and activities that affect air pollution and climate control.

In 2019, this committee launched a program titled Clean Cars for All that offers grants to income-qualified Bay Area residents who retire their older cars and replace them with an electric vehicle. Residents can also opt for a pre-paid card to use for public transit or to purchase an e-bike.

From banning open burning at dump sites to regulating emissions from refinery flares, the Air District is central to the health and wellbeing of residents in Contra Costa County and beyond. While it may be a little-known agency, its work is apparent around us.

To learn more about the Air District's policies, rule development, and available grants, visit baaqmd.gov



Contra Costa High School Students

Selected For Youth Journalism Program

Sixteen students from 12 high schools across Contra Costa County have been selected as reporters for the 2026-2027 Contra Costa Youth Journalism (CCYJ) program.

The students attended a three-day journalism training camp from July 20-22 at the Contra Costa County Office of Education (CCCOE) where they received instruction in the core principles of reporting and news writing, including researching reliable information, conducting interviews, verifying facts, and organizing clear, accurate stories. They also study the role of a free press and the First Amendment, journalism ethics, and the importance of producing fair, accurate, and inclusive news coverage. Students who successfully complete the program receive paid stipends.

Their work is supervised by professional journalists and journalism educators and will be published throughout the school year on CCSpin and Local News Matters, providing residents with relevant local news while giving students the opportunity to tell stories that matter to them and their peers.

The Contra Costa Youth Journalism program is a collaborative effort between educational institutions and professional news organizations dedicated to teaching journalism to Contra Costa County high school students.



Photo of students participating in the 2026-2027 Contra Costa Youth Journalism (CCYJ) program. Photo by Ray Saint Germain/Bay City News



A Busy September in Walnut Creek

by Kevin Wilk, Mayor, Walnut Creek WalnutCreekCA.gov

There's a lot happening in Walnut Creek from community events and important City projects to opportunities to help shape our community's future.

Ygnacio Library to Close

One change coming in September is the temporary closure of the Ygnacio Valley Library. Beginning September 9, the library will close for major improvements and is expected to reopen in May 2027. In the meantime, the Walnut Creek Library downtown remains open and ready to welcome you.

The closure also means a change for voters who typically use the ballot drop box at Ygnacio Valley Library. A new official ballot drop box has been installed at rear of the Shadelands Art Center, 111 N. Wiget Lane. Walnut Creek residents can also use any official ballot drop box throughout Contra Costa County once they open in October.

Civic Park Playground Renovation

You'll see another project getting underway at Civic Park, where renovation of the playground is scheduled to begin after Labor Day. The playground will be closed for a few months while the City makes these improvements, and we appreciate everyone's patience as this well-loved community space gets an update.

National Preparedness Month

September is also National

Preparedness Month, a good reminder that being ready for an emergency starts before one happens. Take a few minutes this month to review your household emergency plan, refresh your emergency supplies and make sure you're signed up to receive local emergency alerts.

Walnut Creek 2050 Workshop

On September 24, I hope you'll join us from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Civic Park Community Center for a community workshop on Walnut Creek 2050, our update to the City's General Plan. This plan will help guide how Walnut Creek grows and evolves over the next 25 years, and your ideas are an important part of that conversation. Food will be provided, and kids' activities will be available.

We also want to hear from you as the City Council begins looking ahead to its priorities for 2027 and 2028. Keep an eye on the City's website for an opportunity to share the topics and issues you think deserve the Council's attention.

Oktoberfest September 25

Celebrate what makes our community so special today. Oktoberfest returns to Civic Park September 25 and 26 with live music and dancing, great food, local vendors, a biergarten and family-friendly activities.

Yes September offers plenty of reasons to get out and enjoy our community. I hope you'll stay connected and involved.



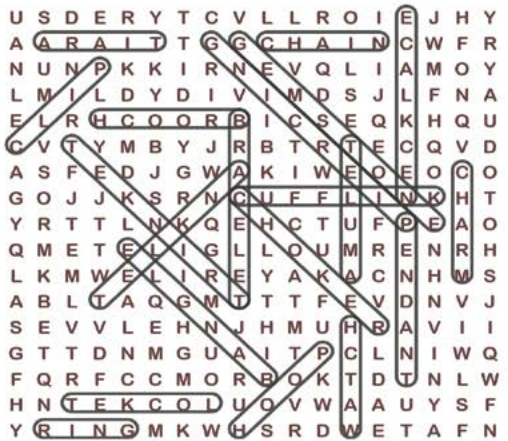
Reject New Taxes
Eliminate Gas Tax
Elect Fresh Ideas
Voter ID - Prop 39
Promote Housing
End Mandates

ArthurWebbAssembly.com

Paid for by Arthur Webb for Assembly 2026 FPPC; 1490039

Solutions from Puzzles page 9

Puzzles by Marc Rokoff RokoPuzzles.com



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

WORD SCRAMBLE

TURQUOISE
EMERALD
AMETHYST
SAPPHIRE
DIAMOND

CRYPTOGRAM

Strength does not come from winning. Your struggles develop your strengths. When you go through hardships and decide not to surrender, that is strength. —Arnold Schwarzenegger

JOURNEY-MAN'S JOURNAL

Jill Hedgecock, jillhedgecock.com

Photos by Jil Hedgecock

A WILD ALASKAN ADVENTURE WITHOUT A CRUISE SHIP

For many tourists, an Alaskan vacation involves going on a cruise. The size of Alaska coupled with remote tourist hot spots creates logistical challenges for planning a land-based tour, but some of the Alaskan highlights are best seen off a large ship. On our recent Alaskan adventure, we used various modes of transportation including rental cars, planes, water taxis, day cruise boats, and a seaplane. Our destinations were designed to hit major tourist highlights, such as glaciers, epic hikes through untamed wilderness, and seeing exotic wildlife, including grizzly bears, moose, and humpback whales. Our itinerary took us to Juneau, Gustavus to visit Glacier Bay National Park, Talkeetna and Denali National Park, Seaward, and finally Homer as our access point to Katmai National Park to see the coastal grizzlies.

There are many iconic glaciers to choose to visit, and each one is unique. Our most memorable ones were Mendenhall Glacier in Juneau and Exit Glacier near Seaward on foot, and Margerie Glacier in Glacier Bay and Aialik Glacier during the Kenai Fjords via boat tours.

At Exit Glacier, signage marked how the ice has receded over time. It has retreated about two miles since 1810 and continues to recede at an accelerated rate of about 125 feet each year, nearly twice the historical average.

But by far, our most breathtaking views were from our seaplane as we soared over massive glaciers and ice fields on our way to Katmai National Park. The massive boulders and crevices of ice created sculptures of unspeakable beauty that seemed to go on for miles.

We got even closer to glacier icebergs (defined as large chunks of detached glacier ice where 90% is under water), bergy bits (medium-to-large piece of floating glacier ice, roughly the size of a small house) and growlers (ice about the size of a piano) during a kayak paddle at Bear Glacier.

A water taxi from Seaward dropped us off inside a narrow channel. The silence of this isolated spot allowed us to listen to the trapped bubbles crackle as the ice melted, releasing 400-year-old air, an experience I will never forget.

The raw beauty of Alaska is not confined to ice formations. Hiking through temperate rainforests, meadows, and alpine forests, treks up mountains to scenic viewpoints, and walks along lake shore-lines gave us appreciation for the diverse habitats of Alaska.

Wildflowers were bountiful when we visited in July, creating grasslands peppered in reds, yellows, and white. Fireweed, chocolate lilies, and ground cones were a few examples of the flora of the Alaskan landscape.

Those melting glaciers have also created massive waterfalls, such as Nugget Falls near Mendenhall Glacier. Echo Lake in Denali National Park came with a bonus view of a moose foraging in the lake shallows. We kept a healthy distance (more people are killed by moose than bears in Alaska).

On a guided tour of a remote alpine rainforest, we found a spruce grouse. The trek took us high enough to get sweeping views of Kenai Fjords, where we learned about Fox Island. The island was so named when entrepreneurs tried and failed to establish a fox population there for the fur trade in response to the scarcity of otters that had been harvested to near extinction.

Alaska cruises are popular in part because some iconic wildlife live in, or depend on, the ocean. During our day cruises, we saw sea otters, harbor seals, Stellar sea lions, bald eagles, puffins, and, of course, whales. Our guide during our Glacier Bay cruise indicated that in 1995, an otter sighting was so rare, the naturalist had to prepare a written report. It was estimated there were only about five otters back then. Today, there are around 8,000.

The highlight of our aquatic wildlife viewing also occurred during our Kenai Fjords tour when we were lucky enough to witness humpback whales engaged in bubble net feeding, a behavior where a small pod dives deep, swims in a circle, and blows air from their blowholes. The wall of bubbles then traps fish or krill so that when the whales surface, their open mouths capture a large haul of prey. I was a little disappointed not to get a good photo due to rainy weather but watching them hunt as a unit was breathtaking.

Bears, bears and more bears!



There are three types of bears in the southern part of Alaska: black, inland grizzly and the relatively tame coastal brown bears that are technically the same species as grizzlies. Our encounters with black bears were from the safety of a bus in Gustavus. We always carried bear spray during unguided hikes in bear country.

In Denali, we had planned a river hike at the bus terminus. Fortunately, we stopped to chat with a park ranger and my husband's cousin's wife spotted a grizzly grubbing around in the brush across the river. There was no immediate danger and as we watched in wonder, the bear moved in a bee-line for the side of the river we occupied. To our delight, we snapped amazing pictures from the safety of an elevated bridge. But then the bear kept coming, and coming, and coming. The park has a 300-yard distance rule to keep visitors safe and the ranger soon ushered us into a hut. The bear climbed the slope right next to the stairs we would have taken to begin our hike.

What a thrill that was! Although this encounter was amazing, our coastal grizzly tour was the penultimate highlight of our Alaskan adventure. There is only a 50-yard distance rule at Katmai National Park due to the calm nature of these bears. Watching a female and her three juvenile cubs

walk down the beach was my favorite experience of our entire trip.

Some people head to the 49th state with the sole purpose of fishing. The closest my family and I got to salmon was a visit to Macaulay Hatchery in Juneau. It was fascinating watching thousands of salmon crowding the fish ladder and leaping up to three feet out of the water. Both harbor seals and bald eagles lingered in the area to catch an easy meal.

Other activity highlights included the totem pole walk in Juneau, the Alaskan Wildlife Conservation Center in Portage, and white-water rafting and a sled dog demonstration in Denali.

Alaska lived up to its reputation as the last frontier. Weather in Alaska is unpredictable which resulted in the cancellation of our flight out of Talkeetna over the Denali glaciers. We also never got a glimpse of Mount Denali (formerly Mount McKinley) by car. At over 20,000 feet, this mountain is the highest peak in North America and third most prominent peak on earth and it was a shame not to get a glimpse through the cloud cover.

Despite some minor setbacks, Alaska's craggy peaks, moody weather, untamed wildlife, and untethered wildness make it a must-see destination. The seemingly endless summer daylight (nightfall was around 11:30 p.m.) and plentiful wildlife gave Alaska the air of an untouchable land.

This place of bountiful natural wonders serves as a humble reminder that wilderness does not exist for the benefit of humans. Several people claimed that Alaska would forever change me. They were right.

Jill Hedgecock is a world traveler and author of several destination novels, including *Rhino in the Room* and *Pizco*.



Mendenhall Glacier and Nugget Falls



Glacier Kayaking



Coastal grizzlies



Yes, that is a moose.



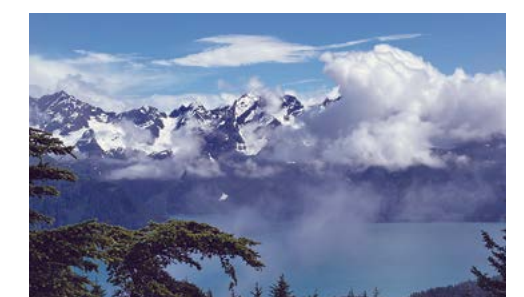
Bald Eagle



Reindeer



Chocolate Lily



Alpine Hike

German Occupation of the Netherlands May 1940 - May 1945

Part 8: Shortages of Most Essentials

by Nell Fleihmann - Van Altena

Nell Fleihmann from Oakland is 103 years old and is the mother of Jack Fleihmann who lives in Concord. She is among the very few individuals still living who can recount the experience of enduring the German occupation during World War II.

In 1933, Nell resided in Holland. At just 10 years old, she could not have realized that Hitler's ascent to power in Germany would soon dramatically alter her life. The change was abrupt.

On September 1, 1939, Hitler's armies invaded Poland starting World War II. She has documented her experiences living under the German occupation of the Netherlands in a 50-page booklet, which she has kindly shared with the Diablo Gazette.

This is the eighth part of her journal. The first seven parts are available at diablogazette.com and in earlier issues starting with the February 2026 edition.

Shortages of Most Essentials

On one of our trips, we found a source where we could get potatoes. But we had no way of transporting those. My father fashioned us a cart on two wheels that could be pulled by



a bicycle. We made that day trip and picked up a cartload of potatoes.

As we were bicycling along, we saw the ferry in the distance, blowing its horn before departure to cross the IJssel river. We sped up and to our dismay, the connection between my sister's bike and the cart broke. All the potatoes rolled into the street. We stopped and picked up the potatoes. At a bicycle shop nearby, the connection was fixed, and after a long delay we took a later ferry and continued home.

During the notorious winter of 1944/45 we had no gas, electricity or fuel to cook. Overnight, people began to saw down trees on vacant lots. Truus and I took the little cart, two saws and heavy work gloves, walked a few blocks to a wooded lot and picked out a tree to cut down. Many other people were doing the same thing.

It was hard and tiring work that we were not used to. We did this for hours and finally had one tree down, which we were going to cut into pieces, when all of a sudden someone yelled "police". Everyone scattered in different directions. When Truus and I returned after twenty minutes, all the trees were gone and a field with only tree stumps was left. Obviously other people had been ahead of us and



Selling vegetables. Photo courtesy commons.wikimedia.org

quickly taken off with the cut down trees. We went home exhausted and empty-handed. Perhaps we deserved that for trying to take someone else's property.

With a bunch of girlfriends Truus and I joined the Red Cross. We followed a course in first aid. Shortly thereafter, we saw from a great distance smoke billowing over a neighborhood in The Hague. Truus and I were ready for Red Cross duty but were told that they would only call on us if something serious happened in our own town.

It was at the height of the famine and the Germans allowed the Red Cross to open a food kitchen three times a week in a building that had previously been a restaurant; now it served undernourished children.

Truus and I and some others helped serve the children. At times the food was loaded with meat and smelled very good. We could not eat any of this food ourselves; but one day, by mistake, far too much food arrived and we Red Cross girls had a festive dinner and took some food home. We also invited more children in from the street.

One night my mother was trying to fix us a meal for us on a tiny camp stove on the rear patio. The wind blew smoke into her face, and because of her asthma this made her cough badly. The previous day she had had a bad fall, which gave her a black and blue eye and her body was bloated from hunger edema. Fixing her family a meal had become a true challenge for her. I was close to tears watching her. I felt so bad for her. This was the same woman who ten years previously had a cook and live-in household help when we lived in Indonesia.

One day we were in Amsterdam, Truus and me, walking with our sister-in-law Greet. A man bicycled past us when a German soldier hollered for him to stop. The man did not stop and the soldier lifted his

gun. The bicyclist doubled his speed and disappeared around the corner at the very time a shot rang through the air. The soldier most likely wanted to confiscate his bicycle.

German Soldiers and Restrictions

In addition to the Nazi's, we also had German army troops in the country. This late during the occupation, many of the soldiers were older men who were bicycling in the streets on stolen bikes, to save on gasoline.

These men mostly had families back home and were not as much feared as their younger compatriots. We had the impression many would just as soon have been home with their families. They were in Holland to keep the occupation going, while younger soldiers were at the front fighting and dying in this senseless war.

The Germans were forever thinking up new ideas to make life difficult for us. One day an order came that all retired men had to move to the center of Holland. Dad found himself a menial job, so he could stay at home. Or so he said, because I never learned what the job was, nor did I see him leave home daily to go to work.

The Germans also did not tolerate Free Masons. My father, who was a Free Mason, burned some Free Mason items so there would not be any evidence of his membership.

The people who lived near the sea in The Hague, in Scheveningen, a well-known sea resort by The Hague, and those in Wassenaar were ordered to move. They were given little time and for many, it was impossible to obtain any wagon or

cart for their belongings.

For defense purposes the Germans tore down hundreds of houses. It looked as if bombs had been dropped there. The same happened in many other towns situated along the coast.

All these thousands of people crowded in with friends and relatives, many families had to share their house with another family. We were lucky that we did not have to move because we lived in downtown Wassenaar, not close to the sea.

Increased Danger from the Air

Every day there were many Allied air attacks in small fighter planes.

When the heavy bombardments started, some families in our immediate area moved away because it had become a dangerous and very scary situation.

We followed suit. My parents moved and stayed with friends in The Hague. My sister and I were invited to stay with two nurses that Truus knew in that town. The nurses lived in a tiny house and we had to make do with some bedding on the floor.

During the day the nurses were gone and there was nothing to keep me occupied. I was most unhappy about living with almost strangers, being bored during the day, besides we did not want to eat their food. After one night I returned home.

And who should I find at home? My mother—she also preferred to take the risks over the inconvenience. So we all moved back to our home in Wassenaar. The streetcar was no longer running, but



Evacuation in Wassenaar, 1944

the four of us still had bicycles which we used sparingly.

Next month, the conclusion: Hidden Radios and "The Liberation of Holland"

All historical images are not of or by the author but added simply for visual support of the story. All images are in the public domain unless otherwise stated.

The Trip I Didn't Take

Memories of 9/11 that still haunt after 25 years

By Eric Hall



September 11 attacks Hijacked airliner approaching the south tower of the World Trade Center. Courtesy brittanica.com

Franklin Templeton Investments had just purchased Fiduciary Trust International, a New York firm that had managed money for about a thousand families across generations. I worked in a business consulting group inside Franklin, and my team was the first assigned to the integration. Three months before September 2001, five vice presidents at Fiduciary began reporting to me. It was the only direct reporting relationship between the two firms.

Fiduciary Trust International occupied floors 93 through 96 of the South Tower of the World Trade Center. That September I was scheduled to fly to New York to train them. I was to arrive September 10.

The other half of my job was keeping Franklin's four presidents current on every technology investment the firm had underway worldwide. That was normally a monthly meeting. This one was off cycle, which meant something was pressing. One of the presidents called me. "Sorry, Eric," he said. "I need you in the conference room with my co-presidents next week. Be prepared to discuss the pace of spend and the clearest forecast you can give us."

I was not willing to cancel the training. A coworker named John Hart volunteered to go in my place.

I was at my desk by 5:30 that Tuesday morning, the way I always was, before anyone else came in, radio on. A little after six the first report came out of New York that a plane had hit the North Tower. My people were in the other tower. I remember the relief. I remember how short it was.

I called my boss, Franklin's chief administrative officer, on his way to San Mateo. He swore. He asked whether our president knew yet. I told him he was my next call. Roughly 15 minutes later, a second plane crashed into Floors 77-85 of the South Tower. It was the first tower to collapse. Both buildings were soon gone.

John Hart was killed. He lived in Danville with his wife of 10 years and four children. All five of the vice

presidents who reported to me were also killed. In all we lost 88 people that day. I spent the next couple days on the phone from California trying to locate anyone else in that Tower who worked for me.

One man had walked out for coffee, just before the second plane had hit. But since all transportation was immediately locked down, it took him two days to walk to his New Jersey home before he contacted me to confirm he made it out alive.

In the immediate aftermath, the rest of Franklin Templeton was mobilizing. I was one of the few people inside Franklin who understood how Fiduciary actually ran, how data moved from investment management and the custodian departments to the back office and trading support. I flew to New York with a team. The people closer to the clients worked the phones for two or three days, calling families several times a day. Over time, office space at Rockefeller Center was located and secured, and we moved the businesses into it.

In those two to three days immediately after the attack, I swung emotionally from rage to telling myself to get focused and work. Everybody was doing that. It was a very raw and difficult period. The effects changed slightly as time passed but everybody directly involved is still carrying those effects in many forms today.

Twenty-five years later I am putting this down on paper, and the hair on my arms is standing up.

In remembrance, every September 11th, I wear a silver bracelet on my wrist. All eighty-eight names are inscribed on it.

Eric Hall is a native resident of the Bay Area; he currently resides in Pleasant Hill.

Observances Planned for 25th Anniversary of 9/11

by David Scholz

City of Martinez and the Contra Costa Fire Protection District will hold ceremonies to mark the 25th anniversary of September 11 attacks in New York and Washington D.C., and heroic downing of a jetliner in rural Pennsylvania, all of which forever altered the way Americans go about their daily lives.

Martinez's 9/11 observance will be held at the September 11 Monument that is located near the Amtrak Station at 603 Marina Vista Ave. The community's program will begin at 9:00 a.m.

The observance will include a few remarks from representatives of the City Council and Chief of Police Andrew White, a moment of silence, and the playing of bagpipes.

"We hope you can join us for this solemn remembrance of the lives lost and heroes who came to help, on the 25th Anniversary of September 11," said Mayor Brianne Zorn.



Shards obtained from the site of the former World Trade Center that was destroyed on Sept. 11, 2001 are part of a memorial by the Martinez Amtrak Station. Photo by David Scholz

In Clayton, Con Fire will continue its tradition of marking this tragic day in American history by hosting a ceremony at Fire Station 11, 6500 Center St., starting at 10:00 a.m.

Along with honoring and remembering the events of September 11, 2001, and the men and women who lost their lives that day, the Clayton ceremony will also honor Contra Costa Fire personnel who have lost their lives in the line of duty.



What Da' Flock

by Edi Birsan, Concordian edibirsan@gmail.com

Ten years ago, when License Plate Readers were first introduced in Concord, I strongly objected.

My objections were straightforward: unacceptable access to the data without prior verified cause; retention of access to the information; and the danger that the information could be used for purposes beyond investigating crimes. I even specifically mentioned the danger of using the system for ICE hunting.

Years later, the Flock system came in to replace what we already had. I was assured that my concerns had been addressed. For years, there was no abuse in Concord. So, I voted for expansion because I believed we had control over access.

Recently, community groups have raised legitimate concerns. The debate weighs the acknowledged benefits, particularly crime fighting and crime prevention, against privacy concerns and the possibility of individual or systemic abuse including political weaponization by federal agencies, or misuse by ICE.

License plates are placed on vehicles for the purpose of identification. Amber Alerts can be sent to millions of people asking them to look for a particular license plate, but Flock cameras simply have better "eyesight" than a person standing on the street.

The important question is what constitutes reasonable cause for a search and whether we can demonstrate that Concord's current contracts and policies actually require reasonable cause access to the information.

At a community roundtable, it was reported that approximately 65 police employees nationwide have been found abusing Flock systems. For example, checking on their children's latest romantic interest or monitoring someone of personal interest.

Such abuses are generally addressed through discipline or termination. While such conduct is unacceptable, its scale does not necessarily represent the

greatest threat to society.

Concerns over systemic abuse.

Can information collected for local crime investigation be accessed by other agencies, including ICE, and used to broadly pursue people for past immigration and misdemeanor violations.

Any agency with access could potentially abuse the system if it gets to define what constitutes "reasonable cause" rather than a more specific authorization protocol.

For example, according to my grandmother, the Birsan-Ersalesi-Zaferou family has included thieves wanted by the Byzantine Empire, looters with Alexander the Great in Persepolis, and a draft dodger from the Turkish army. With such a shady history, is it reasonable to ask where my foreign-built white Hyundai is at all times?

How serious is the problem?

Several years ago, Council discussed auditing access to the system to identify abuses.

We should determine whether there have been abuses in Concord, if any harm has occurred, and exactly who can access the information. We should also examine the contractual arrangements governing the flow and retention of the data and determine whether simple amendments could provide stronger protections should an audit identify such need.

Can we prove that Concord's system is not exposed to the abuses we fear? Is there a legal remedy to challenge searches that could be considered unreasonable?

Once we know the facts, we can have more productive discussion about what should be done. In the meantime, I want the criminals to get the Flock out of here.

Opinions above are those of Edi Birsan, reachable at EdiBirsan@gmail.com. If you're interested in my "Dirty Dove" car, it spends at least eight hours a day parked around Oak Grove and Chalamar. No need to Flock me up.

Blue Devils B Brings Home World Championship

Blue Devils B (BDB) has been crowned the 2026 Drum Corps International Open Class World Champion, earning the Concord-based program's first championship title in ten years.

BDB earned a winning score of 81.725 on August 4 at Welcome Stadium in Dayton, Ohio. The victory marked the program's sixth Open Class World Championship and its first since 2016.

The young performers entered Finals in third place, 0.600 points behind the leader. One night later, they returned to the field with renewed focus and delivered the championship-winning performance of their 2026 production, *Mise En Place*.

BDB earned the highest overall scores in Music and Visual, including championship-winning performances from its brass and percussion sections. The corps also became the first Open Class ensemble since 2008 to win the championship after trailing at Prelims.

"I couldn't be prouder of what Blue Devils B accomplished this season," said Blue Devils B Director Matt Sieve. "Winning a World Championship is an incredible achievement, but what makes me most proud is the way these performers represented themselves, our program, and the Blue Devils throughout the entire season. Their work ethic, resilience, and commitment to one another made this group truly



special, and they earned every bit of this success."

That commitment carried the corps through long rehearsals, miles of travel, and the pressure of championship competition.

The championship reflects the dedication of the performers, instructional and administrative teams, volunteers, and families who supported the corps throughout the season. It was also made possible by alumni, donors, community partners, and supporters whose generosity creates meaningful opportunities for young people through the performing arts.

Blue Devils B returned to Concord with a championship trophy and something even more lasting: greater confidence, lifelong friendships, and the knowledge that resilience and teamwork can change the outcome of a difficult moment.

Congratulations to Blue Devils B, the 2026 DCI Open Class World Champions.

**Less Politics. More Listening.
More Results.**



FOR CONCORD CITY COUNCIL

***Concord deserves
leadership that shows up,
listens, does the homework,
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