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Diablo Gazette

November 2026

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Publisher's Notes

by David King

My Big Mistake

I made a big mistake in last month's issue. Maybe you saw it. I know some of you did because I heard about it. And believe me, word travels fast.

The mistake appeared in "The Right Move," a real estate column written by TerryLynn Fisher, a broker associate at Dudum Real Estate. Unfortunately, what I published wasn't exactly what TerryLynn submitted. In fact, it wasn't her article at all.

Here's what happened.

TerryLynn had submitted a column that needed to be shortened by about a third to fit the available space. My challenge was to trim the copy without losing its important points, continuity, or her voice. So, as I often do, I enlisted ChatGPT to help with the editing process.

So far, so good.

Unfortunately, when it came time to put the paper together, I grabbed the wrong digital file. Instead of publishing the finished column, I published my working dialogue with ChatGPT about how to edit it.

Oops.

It wasn't terrible material. It just wasn't the article TerryLynn had written. Worse, it appeared under her byline.

Naturally, TerryLynn heard about it from colleagues, family, and clients. I heard about it from readers. And, of course, I heard from TerryLynn.

One reader offered this assessment:

"Some feedback for the October newsletter. Less AI slop for the ads and articles. (The ADU article was especially bad)..."

There was more, but you get the point. So did I.

I thanked the reader for taking the time to read the paper and share the feedback. And that brings me to the subject of artificial intelligence.

Yes, I use ChatGPT in producing Diablo Gazette. Guilty as charged. And I'm not particularly embarrassed about it.

AI has become a remarkably useful tool in publishing, especially when you're trying to assemble an entire newspaper each month. I use it to help proofread, tighten copy, improve sentence structure, check facts, identify potential bias, and occasionally rescue a photograph that arrives with fewer pixels than a postage stamp.

But it doesn't replace the people, stories, or editorial judgment behind this publication. The ideas, reporting, community connections, and final decisions remain human. AI is an assistant, not the publisher. And judging by last month's mishap, it apparently isn't qualified to be the production manager, either.

For that matter, I receive plenty of submitted articles, announcements, and advertisements that already bear the fingerprints of AI. It's becoming as commonplace as spell-check, although sometimes with a much larger vocabulary and a suspicious fondness for the word "vibrant."

Like any tool, it's only as good as the person using it. And in this case, the person using it selected the wrong file.

That one's on me.

As for TerryLynn, she deserved better. I apologize for the mix-up and for putting words under her name that she never intended to publish. To set things right, we're running her corrected column in this edition, appropriately titled, "To ADU or Not to ADU, That Is the Question."

What Should We Fight About Now?

by Eric Hall, erichallsubstack.com

My mailbox turned into a campaign office. So had my phone. Every evening brought another glossy card, another text from a number I don't know, another ad telling me the other side wants to ruin California.

I know you got them too.

Each year I try something different. Sort by size, by color, by initiative, by who paid. Sorting by party doesn't really work in this state. This year, I sorted by what the fight was actually about. And, it's the same as it always is: money.

Nine of the 14 statewide propositions on this ballot were about taxes, bonds or how the state may spend:

1. Prop 1: an $11.25 billion bond for veterans and affordable housing.
2. Prop 2: a bigger rainy-day fund.
3. Prop 3: making the 2012 high-income tax rates permanent.
4. Prop 37: $25 billion in revenue bonds for middle-income home loans.
5. Prop 38: an $8.4 billion research bond.
6. Prop 40: a one-time 5 percent tax on billionaires' net worth.
7. Prop 41: audits of special taxes and a change to the state spending limit.
8. Prop 42: a ban on new personal-property and retroactive taxes.
9. Prop 43: a two-thirds vote for voter-initiated local special taxes.

The money behind them is enormous. By late September, more than $187 million had gone into defeating Prop 40 and passing Props 41 and 42, according to CalMatters. The union behind Prop 40 had raised about $31 million. That's one fight, on one ballot, in one state.

When I served on the St. Helena City Council, the longest nights were usually about the same question in smaller dollars: how do we pay for everything we need (mostly failed infrastructure) without raising local taxes, and without changing the nature of our charming little town?

There is only so much tax revenue. More than two-thirds of the state's general fund comes from the personal income tax, which is to say from paychecks and investment gains. Every group wants its share protected or its burden lowered.

Now imagine the work is done by machines. When machines do the building, the cost of what we need could drop radically.

Here's the thought experiment: Suppose that within a generation, AI and robots do most of the work we now pay people to do.

In an AI-enabled society, much of the driving, the paperwork, the warehouse picking, even a large share of building things will be handled by thinking machines. That's not a certainty, and plenty of people doubt it. But it's worth thinking through, because the money is already moving. This world is on the way. A lot of this season's ballot noise will have nothing left to argue about.











Neuroplasticity
by Jessica Raaum Foster, NeurologyofPresence.com

Feeling Stressed?
Try These Drills to De-stress

Stress doesn't stay in our heads. Research shows that stress can amplify pain, so if the election or anything else has you on edge, there's a good chance your body will let you know.

For some people, that means more aches and pains. For others, it's a shorter fuse or feeling a little less steady on their feet. When the nervous system is overwhelmed, the brain will use whatever it can to get our attention.



One way to head that off is to give the brain something specific to do. Certain movements activate several areas of the brain at once, which can interrupt overthinking and runaway emotions. I call this a "neural stack": a few simple drills layered together so your brain works as a team, with you in the driver's seat.

A quick safety note before you begin: sit in a stable chair, and slow down or stop if you feel dizzy or lightheaded. We want to activate our brain, not overwhelm it.

Start with your breath. Breathe in through your nose for a count of two, then out for a count of four. Keep that going for one minute. The longer exhale slows your heart rate and tells your nervous system it's safe to settle down.

Vertical eye jumps. Next, rest your head against a wall or the back of a chair so it stays very still. Pick a target straight above you, then another straight below, lined up with the first. Without moving your head, jump your eyes from the high target to the low one and back again for one minute.

Your eyes are wired directly into your brain stem and the midline of your cerebellum, areas that help organize how your body responds to stress. Moving them deliberately sends a signal upstream: I am oriented, and I am in control.

Now put them together. Breathe in for two eye jumps, then out for four. This takes real coordination, so don't give up if it feels awkward at first. That's the point. Asking different parts of your brain to cooperate helps you feel present and focused, and it can soften the effects of stress on your body.







Laura Nakamura
Concord Mayor
cityofconcord.org

Volunteerism Makes a Difference in Concord

At the September 27 Concord Pedal Fest, 80 volunteers showed up to help create a wonderful day for our community. That's an impressive number, and an excellent example of volunteerism in action. These 80 individuals generously gave their time to support an event that was enjoyed by hundreds.

Volunteerism takes many forms in Concord, from helping a neighbor and supporting a local nonprofit to caring for our parks or serving the community through a City program. Every act of service is meaningful.

Concord is home to dozens of nonprofit organizations providing essential services. Monument Crisis Center and the Food Bank of Contra Costa & Solano help individuals and families facing food insecurity. Sustainable Contra Costa promotes environmental stewardship, while the Family Justice Center supports survivors of abuse and human trafficking. Volunteers help these organizations make a difference every day.

Service organizations like Rotary and Kiwanis, along with their student groups, Interact and Key Club, offer opportunities for people of all ages to give back. Veterans organizations such as VFW Post 1525 also serve our community, while groups like Friends of Concord Creeks, Friends of Lime Ridge, and Concord Friends of the Library bring people together around shared interests.

My own community involvement began with coaching youth soccer. Later, I became involved in bicycle advocacy, working alongside others to make our streets safer. I also became involved in community organizing and served on Concord's Community Services Commission, helping make grant recommendations to the City Council. I didn't begin volunteering with the intention of running for public office. I simply saw a need, cared about my community, and wanted to contribute. Over time, those experiences shaped my understanding of public service and eventually led me to the City Council.

I believe residents are more than recipients of City services. They are participants in building our community. Some of the most meaningful changes in Concord begin with residents who see an opportunity to make things better and decide to get involved.

Concord has nine boards and commissions that represent community interests and advise the City Council on important local issues. Members help shape recommendations on nonprofit grant funding, development projects, parks, recreation, and open space. Most appointments have two- or four-year terms.

There are also hands-on ways to serve through the City's Love Concord Program. Monthly Community Cleanups help keep shared spaces clean and welcoming. Through the Adopt-a-Spot program, individuals and organizations can commit to maintaining a designated area by organizing eight cleanups over two years.

Residents interested in supporting public safety can volunteer through the Concord Police Department's Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) program, which assists with community needs and non-criminal service requests. The City's Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program trains volunteers in disaster preparedness and basic emergency response skills. The next Concord CERT Academy is planned for spring 2027.







Roughly 80 volunteers (not all in photo) showed up to help at Concord Pedal Fest at Baldwin Park. Below, volunteer mechanics fixing a bike. Approx. 35 bikes were up-cycled and given away. Bottom, Volunteer Sam putting air in a child's tire.

As Mayor, I'm especially pleased that the Concord City Council will recognize and celebrate our community's volunteers at our November 10, 2026, meeting at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 1950 Parkside Drive. So many people give generously of their time without expecting recognition, but their contributions deserve our gratitude. All volunteers are warmly invited to attend.

To learn more about volunteer opportunities with the City:

- Board and Commission Announcements: www.cityofconcord.org
- Love Concord: www.cityofconcord.org/loveconcord
- VIPS: www.cityofconcord.org/VIPS
- CERT: www.cityofconcord.org/cert

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Gov. Newsom Clears Hurdles, Naval Weapons Station Future is Taking Shape

SB 328 streamlines approval process for thousands of homes, commercial development and more than 800 acres of parks and trails.



The long-awaited redevelopment of the former Concord Naval Weapons Station cleared another major hurdle September 29, when Gov. Gavin Newsom signed Senate Bill 328, legislation designed to remove regulatory obstacles and accelerate development of the sprawling former military base.

The legislation follows the September 24 approval of a financial agreement between the City of Concord and the U.S. Navy covering approximately 2,422 acres, marking two significant milestones in the decades-long redevelopment effort.

Authored by State Sen. Tim Grayson, with Assemblymembers Anamarie Ávila Farías and Buffy Wicks among its coauthors, SB 328 provides regulatory certainty for Concord and master developer Brookfield Properties as they advance the multibillion-dollar project.

"Passage of SB 328 gives the City of Concord, Brookfield, and Concord residents certainty to move from vision to reality," said Concord Mayor Laura Nakamura. "Coming on the heels of the landmark agreement with the U.S. Navy, the legislation keeps this project moving forward to produce thousands of well-paying construction jobs and add many homes to our community."

The proposed development envisions an entirely new community featuring:

- 12,272 new homes, with at least 25 percent designated as affordable housing for lower-income households.
- Approximately 6 million square feet of commercial space, potentially supporting up to 26,500 jobs.
- More than 800 acres of parks, trails and open space.

A central provision of SB 328 exempts qualifying property from certain Surplus Land Act requirements, simplifying the process for transferring and developing the former military land.

The law also streamlines environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), allowing qualifying development consistent with the city's adopted Area Plan to rely on previously certified environmental documents rather than duplicate reviews. These changes are intended to reduce delays while preserving applicable planning requirements.

What Happens Next?

Concord and Brookfield will now focus on preparing a Specific Plan, the detailed blueprint establishing neighborhood layouts, housing, roads, infrastructure, commercial areas, parks and design standards.

Planning work is expected to begin this winter, with additional community workshops and public engagement scheduled to start in early 2027. Further planning and environmental documents will be considered before construction can proceed.

Although construction remains ahead, the September agreements and new legislation represent significant progress toward transforming the long-idle naval base into Concord's newest community.

Sugar Plum Coffee Shop Celebrates 67 Sweet Years in Concord

by David King

Some things never age.

On November 29, Sugar Plum Coffee Shop will celebrate 67 years of serving up hearty breakfasts, hot coffee and friendly conversation. As Concord's second oldest continuously operating restaurant, behind Barney's Hickory Pit, this beloved 1950s-style diner is more than a place to grab a meal. It's a living piece of Concord history.

Since opening its doors on November 30, 1959, Sugar Plum has been a favorite gathering place for generations of Concord residents. Through changing times, changing ownership and the transformation of the city around it, the little diner has remained remarkably true to its roots.

Grab a stool at the counter and enjoy the show. From there, you can peer directly into the kitchen, where French toast sizzles, eggs dance across the griddle and the irresistible aroma of applewood-smoked bacon fills the air.

Much of that kitchen magic belongs to Jose Tapia and Esteban Chavez, the two longtime cooks who have been working the grill for an astonishing 27 years. And orchestrating it all is owner Claudia Lemus, whose connection to Sugar Plum goes back nearly a lifetime.

Lemus began working at the diner at just 15 years old and has spent much of her adult life there, on and off. She knows the restaurant, its customers and its traditions. So, when the opportunity came to purchase Sugar Plum in early 2020, she took it. But The timing couldn't have been worse.

Almost immediately, the COVID-19 pandemic shut down indoor dining and threatened restaurants throughout the community. For a new owner taking over a 60-year-old institution, it was a particularly daunting beginning.

But Lemus wasn't about to let Sugar Plum become another casualty of the pandemic. She improvised with curbside service, carhop-style dining, outdoor tables, take-out orders and promotions to keep the kitchen cooking and customers coming back.

Over the years, Lemus has also invested in updates and refurbishments, carefully preserving the diner's distinctive 1950s character, its charm remains reassuringly familiar.

Former owner Ray Rosenblat once told Diablo Gazette, "Claudia was the perfect person to pass the legacy on to. She has always understood its charm."

In 2009, Concord proclaimed July 2 as "Sugar Plum Coffee Shop Day," recognizing the restaurant's decades of community service. Lemus has happily kept the tradition alive, celebrating July 2 as Sugar Plum Day each year.

Concord has changed enormously since 1959. Restaurants have come and gone, neighborhoods have grown, and generations have passed. Yet Sugar Plum continues pouring coffee, flipping pancakes and offering that familiar sense of belonging while appealing



to a new generation of diners with convenient online ordering, take out and entertaining social media posts.

In a city constantly looking toward its future, there's something comforting about a little diner that keeps its past so wonderfully alive.

Stop by during November, wish Claudia and her crew a happy anniversary, and enjoy a meal or a cup of coffee.

On Sunday, November 29, from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m., Sugar Plum will roll back the clock with a 67th-anniversary party featuring classic cars, special discounts, a photo booth and plenty of good vibes. Burgers, fries, milkshakes and other lunch-menu favorites will set the mood for an evening of old-fashioned diner fun.

(See Sugar Plums anniversary event ad on the back page)

Local Student Launches International Suicide Prevention non-profit, is Finalist for Peace Prize



Akshat Agarwal founded Neorons, sets program direction, and builds school and corporate partner relationships. His background in AI and suicidology, including published research in machine learning and bioethics, guides Neorons' safety-first approach to technology in education.

Akshat Agarwal, 17, is a high school student at Emerald High School in Dubliin and founder of Neorons, an international, youth-led mental health initiative for suicide prevention.

Agarwal started the non-profit, Neorons, after losing his three best friends to suicide.

"After they died, it felt like the world was slowly forgetting who they were and the lives they had lived," he says. He witnessed his community actively wipe their identity simply because it was easy to forget the pain.

Agarwal couldn't let that happen. He began Neorons to break that silence, and to let every child know they are not alone in their battle.

Since then, Neorons has grown into something bigger than he ever imagined. Neorons has reached more than 500,000 people in over 80 countries, raised over $150,000 for suicide awareness, and actively works with over 70 nonprofits.

Neorons designed a suicide hotline service for the numerous countries that don't have one at all, which received support from companies like Google, Amazon, and Microsoft, as well as from humanitarian institutions like UNICEF.

Finalist for Children's Peace Prize

This work has led Agarwal to become a Finalist for the International Children's Peace Prize.

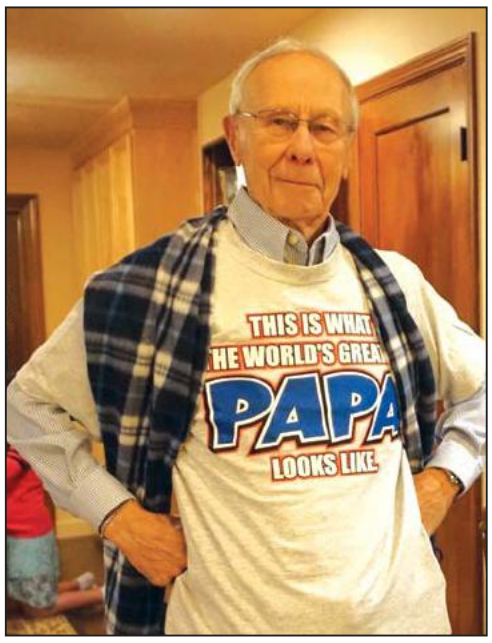
Every year, more than 720,000 people die by suicide, and it's the third leading cause of death worldwide for people aged 15 to 29. "Every one of them was someone's friend, someone's kid, someone's classmate.".

Young people are living through this crisis every day, yet he says he almost never sees it discussed from a student's perspective. That, he wants to change by talking openly about suicide, and by honoring his three friends and the hundreds of thousands of others we lose every year.What Agarwal has created here is nothing short of incredible. He is truly remarkable. Learn more at www.neorons.com.

Robert William Steiner II

Nov. 14. 1932 – Oct. 10, 2026

by Jay Bedecarre



Family time was always special for Bob Steiner, shown here displaying a whimsical shirt during a Christmas celebration.

Bob Steiner moved to Clayton in the mid-1960s and soon began designing a house on Morgan Territory Road that would become his home for 57 years, until his passing this month.

The long-time East Bay businessman and Clayton civic leader died less than a month from his 94th birthday.

Bob was born in 1932 in Oakland to Robert and Elizabeth Souza Steiner. Barely out of high school, Bob married Anna Garcia and the couple had four children before divorcing in 1974.

Carving out a distinguished career

At age 20, Bob started working as a field bill collector for Household Finance in his hometown of Oakland, chasing down customers who owed as little as a $2 payment. By 1966, he was executive vice president for future Congressman Pete Stark's Security National Bank in Walnut Creek.

Bob was president of First Enterprise Bank in Oakland, and Tamara Richardson was his secretary (remember that job title?) when they began dating. Such an office romance was more commonplace then, although Tamara left the bank once they began to get serious.

In true Clayton fashion, their 1976 wedding culminated with a reception at the landmark Pioneer Inn. Bob and Tamara celebrated their golden wedding anniversary last February.

Bob built his resume as the president of three banks, CEO, management specialist and capital formation expert, primarily working with independent banks and credit unions. Midcareer, not resting on all his experience and success, he enrolled at UCSF to study organizational behavior. He operated Steiner and Associates in the latter portion of his career.

Former banking colleague Angie Coffee said, "Bob was such a strong influence in the formation of independent banks 40 years ago. He was highly respected and his counsel was invaluable. I will never forget his brilliance, kindness and sense of humor."

Reinventing community news

In 2003, the Steiners purchased a small Clayton shopper newspaper and transformed the publication into The Pioneer, reporting local news, sports and community life in Clayton and later Concord and Pleasant Hill. For 23 years. Tamara was the front-facing editor of the paper. They closed the paper last year due to health issues the couple faced.

Young at Heart

The couple enjoyed hiking around their beloved Mount Diablo, traveling to Europe and exploring the California coast, as well as spending quality time with their large family.

Mitzi Richardson described her father-in-law: "He was playful and young at heart. The first time I met Bob was on Easter and he was in a bunny outfit. He picked me up and spun me around. I've loved him ever since."

From his high school years playing football and basketball at Hayward High, Bob loved sports and was an outstanding athlete.

He played competitive baseball into his 20s and then softball with a Walnut Creek traveling team into his 80s. He also loved racquetball and could be found on the Clayton bocce courts well after his 90th birthday.

Keeping Clayton first

Reading social media posts following Bob's passing, you get a glimpse of the impact he made on his adopted hometown. His deep involvement in Clayton dates to his participation with the original incorporation advisory committee when the town became a city in 1964.

He served two terms as president of the Clayton Business & Community Association and was active with the civic group for 26 years. The CBCA honored Bob and Tamara with a video tribute at last November's annual dinner.

Anthony (A.J.) Chippero posted: "Bob was a mentor and inspiration to me from the time I moved to Clayton. We need more Bobs in this world!"

Clayton City Councilmember and former vice-mayor Holly Tillman said, "Bob was CBCA president when I joined 10 years ago and his quick wit drew me in immediately. He was indeed a great asset to the community."

Former mayor Howard Geller echoed those feelings. "He was indeed a great asset to the community, and I will miss my friend dearly."

Other current and former politicians, government officials, and business and journalism leaders expressed similar sentiments online and in hundreds of personal messages to his widow.

Janet Easton, part of one of Clayton's original families, said, "Bob and I worked together at three different times at two banks. Bob was hired as a 'no nonsense, get it done' guy and he exceeded far beyond expectations. I love the fact that he got my sense of humor and I got his. This was a rarity in the stodgy banking business. Bob was one in a million."

Becoming 'a man among men'

Youngest son Don Richardson appreciated Bob's work ethic. "I think about lessons he taught me. The first was simple: Show up. Get up, go to work, do your job, be dependable. Whatever else happens, show up."

He discovered a different side of his father when his mom was sick. "She was his strength, the center of his world. For the first time, I saw the vulnerability underneath that tough exterior. It helped me understand him in a way I hadn't before. He taught me to show up for work, but in the end, he taught me something bigger: Show up for your people."

Charmaine Tijssen created Tamara's wedding dress, and they have been BFFs for more than five decades. "In my 50 years of knowing Bob, he always made me feel appreciated. He's been my advocate for decades," she said. "Bob was a man among men. He was strong and consistent in his approach to life."

When anyone was leaving the Steiner home, whether for a short ride to the store or a week-long trip, Bob's last words were always "drive carefully." His family and friends know Bob is now their angel as they drive through life.

He is survived by children Roberta Berry, Ward Steiner, Reed Steiner, Rebecca Graham, Jerry Richardson and Don Richardson. Bob and Tamara's children have given them 10 grandchildren, five great grandchildren (with another on the way) and one great-great-grandchild. He was predeceased by his parents and a younger sister, Jeri Mills.

There will be a Celebration of Life in the spring.

For now, his family will take comfort in the myriad of tributes from community members. Said granddaughter Jennifer Richardson: "I love how loved he was."



Morgan Territory Preserve hike was a favorite for Bob and Tamara Steiner, who say it's their top 5 local hikes.



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Trash Talking: 'De-litter Concord'

by Kevin Cabral , President/ CEO Concord Chamber of Commerce

I've always appreciated the pride people have in calling Concord home

I was having lunch recently with my friend Stephen Jones, owner of Butler Transportation, longtime Concord resident, Chamber Member and all-around great guy. During what started as a casual conversation, Steve said something that caught my attention, "I've been de-littering Concord for years."

I had to laugh. De-littering Concord? I liked the sound of that. Steve went on to explain that whenever he is out walking around town and sees a piece of trash, he simply picks it up and throws it away. Nothing complicated. No organized event, no special equipment, and certainly no recognition needed. Why, does he do it? Simple. He takes pride in Concord. He wants our community to look its best, and he wants others to see that the people who live here care about their city.

Now, some might say, "Isn't that why we pay taxes?" Others might suggest that the police should be writing tickets to people who litter. And what about those signs warning of a $325 fine for littering? Or the trashcan sitting just a few steps away from where someone decided to drop their garbage? These are all valid points. But clearly, none of those things alone is getting the job done.

I would venture to guess that most people reading this article have never intentionally littered. In fact, many of you probably already pick up a piece of trash when you see it. You get it. You understand that taking pride in our community means doing little things, even when nobody is watching, that we can all be part of the solution one piece of misplaced trash at a time.

We are fortunate to have some wonderful organizations and volunteers who already dedicate their time to keeping Concord clean. City Council members, Concord Ambassadors, Rotary Clubs, Kiwanis Clubs, neighborhood groups, and many other organizations regularly organize community cleanups. I've participated in some of these efforts myself, and let me tell you, it can be eye-opening to see what people leave behind near our parks, roadways, and highway off-ramps. You really do wonder what some people are thinking.

If you have the opportunity to participate in one of these organized cleanups, I encourage you to do so. It's a great way to meet people and see the immediate results of your efforts.

But the beauty of Steve's approach is you don't need to join a group or wait for an organized cleanup. Wherever you are, If you see a piece of trash that you can safely pick up and dispose of, why not do it?

If just a few more of us made that small effort every day, it could make a difference over time. Who knows? Someone might see you doing it and decide to do the same. Before long, we could have a whole movement of people de-littering Concord!

I know firsthand how much work and money goes into maintaining a clean and welcoming storefront. Between windblown trash, discarded cups, food wrappers, and everything else that seems to find its way onto sidewalks and parking lots, it can be a never-ending job. To those business owners and employees who make the effort every day, thank you. Your work doesn't go unnoticed, and it makes a difference in how our community looks and feels.

We have wonderful neighborhoods, parks, trails, and businesses. Keeping those places clean is one way we can demonstrate that pride. It doesn't take much, just a little effort and a willingness to leave things better than how we found them.

Of course, nobody should be picking up hazardous materials that could put them at risk.

I think Steve is onto something. Let's "De-Litter Concord."

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.





Watch Out! Wild Turkeys May Attack

by Ron Glas

Watch out for those turkeys, they can attack and it can be quite the ordeal.

A few years ago, I was walking with my wife and my two Chihuahuas along Lime Ridge open space and were heading up the hill towards the cul-de-sac at the end of Via Montanas. Having seen a number of coyotes in the area recently, we were cautiously anticipating seeing one cross our path. Sure enough, out of a grove of trees comes the charging nemesis. Wait, it was not a coyote, but a TURKEY! And it was mad as hell charging at us with wings flapping and squawking.



2016 photo courtesy AP Press. University of California, Davis grad student encounters a wild turkey who aggressively follows him.

Not knowing exactly what to do but having heard that it is best to stare down rather than run from an attacking critter, we bravely faced the turkey. But this turkey just kept coming. Our two dogs attempted a rescue straining at their leashes and barking. There was no deterring this bird.

I had no weapon, if only I had an umbrella.

Realizing I was holding a leash, I began twirling the end of the leash madly above my head, I was able to keep the turkey at bay, only to suddenly realize that I had also managed to pull the harness off my dog.

(This was actually fortunate, or this turkey would have received a beatdown by a twirling chihuahua.)

Now, I had to figure out how to keep my freed, brave little dog from going after the turkey. Fortunately, my wife was able to grab him, and still fending off the turkey, I managed to pick up the second dog.

With both dogs in our arms, we managed to back slowly away from the turkey and gave it as wide a berth as we possibly could.

After a while, it lost interest in us and slowly retreated into the trees most likely to its nest.

Dinner was particularly enjoyable that year. It's still one of our favorite Thanksgiving tales.

[Thanks Ron, it's also one of my favorite Thanksgiving tales to share as well A version of this tale was originally published November, 2018.]

Fending Off Wild Turkeys

Turkeys can become aggressive during the breeding season, occasionally charging, threatening, and acting aggressively toward people. You can most often shoo them away if you are aggressive about it.

Turkeys dislike water. If they refuse to budge, give them a good spraying.

If turkeys begin feeding under hanging bird feeders, remove the feeders until the turkeys leave the area.

Do not feed them or a few stray visitors will soon become a flock of permanent residents that have lost their natural fear of humans. A dog in your yard is an effective deterrent.

In 1959, and over a 40-year period, nearly 3,800 wild turkeys were released throughout the state. Now, wild turkey estimated population is reaching 240,000.

Permits are required to kill wild turkeys that are causing property damage. To get a depredation permit, contact the regional California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) office at (707) 428-2002.

In Case You Missed It...

Local news items from Claycord.com and other sources

Pittsburg City Council Approves Temporary Data Center Moratorium Amid Strong Opposition From Residents

The Pittsburg City Council voted 4-0 to approve a temporary 45-day moratorium on new data center construction following months of opposition from residents concerned about noise, pollution, energy and water use.

The decision comes as construction continues on the Avaio Perseus Data Center at the former Delta View Golf Course. The moratorium will prevent future phases of the project from moving forward but will not affect the first phase, which is already underway.

The meeting was briefly interrupted by residents chanting "no data centers." Mayor Dionne Adams recused herself due to a conflict of interest involving her positions with PG&E and the Pittsburg Power Company. The moratorium, which can be extended for up to two years, will allow the city to develop new zoning regulations specifically addressing AI data centers.

Martinez Marina To Close On Several Dates Due To Extreme High Tides



High Tide Alert: Temporary Marina Closures, 2026

The City of Martinez will temporarily close Marina parking areas and limit shoreline access on several upcoming days due to extreme high tides, driven by the combined effect of king tides and Kelvin wave–driven water elevation during an El Niño storm season.

☐ Do NOT visit the Marina/ Shoreline on the following high water dates: November 25, 2026, December 23 & 24, 2026, January 21, 2027.

During these events, parking lots and walkways may be flooded or inaccessible, and the Marina will not be safe for public use. Please avoid the area and plan for alternate parking if you are visiting the waterfront. These closures are part of the City's storm season safety preparations. Stay updated at: cityofmartinez.org/storm

Dunkin' Coming Soon To Pleasant Hill

Dunkin' Donuts will soon be moving into the building next to Nation's on Contra Costa Blvd. in Pleasant Hill (Safeway shopping center). It's currently under construction. No opening date has been announced.

Arbor Day Tree Planting Celebration November 7

Concord has been recognized as a Tree City, USA community by the Arbor Day Foundation for more than four decades, reflecting the City's ongoing commitment to a healthy urban forest. Volunteers are asked to participate on Saturday, November 7, 2026 to celebrate that commitment by planting trees and helping make Sun Terrace Park greener. Volunteers should wear closed-toe shoes and bring gardening gloves if available. The City will provide trees, tools, and rubber gloves.

Concord Repair Workshop November 14

Come check out Concord's Repair Workshop on Saturday, November 14 and fix your favorite things for free!. Bring clothing, appliances, jewelry, bikes, and more to be repaired by local mending professionals. Bagels and coffee will be provided.

The Repair Workshop will run between 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. at Willow Pass Community Center. Bring one item or a couple to reduce waste in our community. This event is a collaboration between the City of Concord, Sustainable Contra Costa, and sponsor Mount Diablo Resource Recovery.

Bucks Battle for Walnut Creek



Screen shot taken from a video Stephen Welch shared on social media. Two bucks in battle one October Monday morning near Northgate High School. Monday's can be difficult even for the them.







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

Eight Years of Service, and Looking Ahead

As my eight years on the Clayton City Council come to a close, I want to reflect on what we have accomplished, thank those who have supported me along the way, and share why I remain optimistic about Clayton's future.

When I first ran for City Council in 2018, part of my motivation was simple. I wanted to move beyond talking about things I thought could be better and start doing the work to improve them.

I also wanted to show my children that caring about a community means being willing to participate in it. Eight years later, I am proud of the progress we have made.

One of my highest priorities has been improving how the City operates. Much of this work happens behind the scenes, but it is essential to delivering services effectively and responsibly.

We have improved how the City manages its finances, organizes its staff, maintains its infrastructure, and plans for the future. More importantly, we have strengthened the institution itself.

We have put greater emphasis on documentation, clearer responsibilities, stronger internal controls, and more accountability.

These changes are particularly valuable in a small city, where limited staffing makes continuity difficult when employees change roles or leave.

Our goal has been to build systems that preserve institutional knowledge and support sound decisions, regardless of who holds a particular position. That foundation will serve Clayton well beyond any individual Council or City administration.

Financial discipline has been another consistent priority. During my service on the Budget and Audit Committee, we updated our fee schedules to better recover the cost of services, and changed our investment approach to earn higher returns on public funds.

We also restructured staffing, examined service contracts, combined responsibilities, and used technology to improve efficiency.

These efforts have not eliminated the City's financial challenges, but they have put us in a better position to address them. Before asking residents to consider new revenues, we examined our spending, operations, and available resources. That work has given the City a clearer picture of what it will take to maintain the services our community values.

We have made meaningful progress on infrastructure and public safety. The City invested in solar power, energy-efficient lighting, and water conservation improvements at City facilities, projects that will lower operating costs over time.

We secured federal funding for Cardinet Trail repairs and continued work on streets, sidewalks, and pedestrian safety. We also addressed long-standing neighborhood needs.

We established a sustainable funding source for the Oakhurst Geological Hazard Abatement District, allowing it to tackle deferred maintenance and monitoring.

We implemented a neighborhood parking program near Regency Gate, expanded school crossing guard coverage, and advanced pedestrian safety improvements near our schools.

Changes to Concerts in the Grove also helped sustain a community tradition while supporting local schools.

Throughout my time on the Council, transparency and public engagement have mattered to me. I have written regular updates about City decisions and the reasoning behind them because residents deserve to understand not just what their government does, but why. I have appreciated the questions, differing perspectives, and thoughtful discussions that have helped shape our work.

There is still much to do. Clayton faces financial pressures, infrastructure needs, and difficult decisions about sustaining City services. But I am optimistic. We have a better understanding of our finances, more durable operating practices, and a clearer view of our long-term needs.

Future Councils and staff can build on that work, and I am confident they will. I want to thank my fellow Councilmembers and the dedicated City employees who serve our community. Clayton has a small staff, and their work is not always visible. I appreciate their professionalism, flexibility, and commitment, especially through periods of change.

To the residents of Clayton, thank you for trusting me to represent you in 2018 and again in 2022. Thank you for attending meetings, sharing ideas, asking questions, and holding us accountable.

Public service is a responsibility, but that responsibility is shared not only by those who sit behind the dais, but also by the friends and family who support them. They give up time and attention and sometimes endure criticism they did not ask for. For that, I am deeply grateful to my family. Without their patience, support, and at times, grace, I could never have undertaken this role.

I leave office hopeful about Clayton's future. Our greatest strength has always been the people who care about this community and are willing to contribute to it.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve. It has been an honor.

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CLAYTON MARKET UPDATE

Address	Sales Price	SF	Bed/Bath	Sales Date
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
30 Mt Emory Ct	$997,000	2080	3/2	8/27/2026
8 Mirango Ct	$995,000	2420	4/2.5	8/31/2026
139 Mt Everest Ct	$1,430,000	2960	5/3	9/4/2026
978 Kenston Dr	$1,100,000	1571	3/2	9/10/2026
921 Arrowhead Ter	$818,000	1939	3/2.5	9/14/2026

CONCORD MARKET UPDATE

Address	Sales Price	SF	Bed/Bath	Sales Date
3998 Salem St	$1,200,000	1811	4/2	8/19/2026
1505 Kirker Pass Rd #101	$280,000	634	1/1	8/24/2026
3025 Justin Way	$710,000	1172	4/2	8/28/2026
1361 La Vista Ave	$835,000	2076	4/2.5	8/31/2026
1895 Renee Way	$1,400,000	2836	4/3	9/1/2026
1829 Elkwood Dr	$995,000	1806	4/2	9/3/2026
1224 Davis Ave	$1,150,000	2065	3/3	9/4/2026

Based on information from CCAR/Paragon MLS® as of 9/16/26. 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

AI Is Entering Real Estate, But Should It Replace Human Judgment?

Artificial intelligence is quickly becoming part of everyday life, and I'm seeing it show up more and more in real estate transactions, on both the buyer and seller side.

AI can be a great tool. It can help organize information, explain unfamiliar terminology and even help someone formulate questions to ask. But there is an important distinction between using AI as a resource and relying on it to make decisions in a real estate transaction.

One area where I have concerns is buyers using AI to review disclosure packages.

A disclosure package can contain hundreds of pages of information: seller disclosures, inspection reports, repair estimates, HOA documents, title information and more. AI may be able to summarize those documents, but it cannot physically walk through the property. It cannot see the crack in the foundation, smell moisture, hear an aging HVAC system or understand how one particular issue might affect you differently than another buyer.

Most importantly, AI doesn't know what matters most to you.

One buyer may be comfortable purchasing a home that needs a new roof but extremely concerned about drainage or foundation issues. Another buyer may feel completely differently. That is why buyers should personally review their disclosures and inspection reports and discuss their questions with the appropriate real estate, inspection, legal or other professionals.

For most people, purchasing a home is one of the largest financial decisions they will ever make. A quick AI summary should never replace understanding what you are buying.

I am also seeing AI used on the seller side.

Sellers may be tempted to use AI to help draft their property disclosures or explain defects and repairs. The problem is simple: AI has never lived in the house and cannot see it. It only knows the information it is given. That can result in answers that are incomplete, inaccurate or sometimes don't make sense in the context of the actual property.

Seller disclosures should come from the seller's own knowledge and experience with the home, not from a computer attempting to fill in the blanks.

The same caution applies to offers, counteroffers, requests for repairs and responses to repair requests. These are important transaction documents that can create contractual obligations and have financial consequences. AI doesn't understand the complete transaction, the negotiations that have taken place or the goals and priorities of the people involved.

For example, a buyer's repair request shouldn't simply be a list generated from an inspection report. A good buyer's agent should help the buyer identify the items that truly concern them, understand their options and prepare a request that reflects what the buyer actually wants to accomplish.

So where does AI belong in real estate?

Use it to educate yourself. Use it to help you understand terminology. Use it to generate questions you may want to ask. But don't let it replace your own review, professional inspections, appropriate expert advice or the guidance of an experienced real estate professional.

Technology will continue to change the way we buy and sell homes, and much of that change will be positive. But real estate is still very much a human business.

AI can process information. It can't walk through the house, understand what matters to you or protect your interests the way an experienced professional can.

Clayton Oktoberfest Lost & Found

We truly appreciate everyone that attended the Clayton Oktoberfest on October 3-4; however, some of you left items behind. If you possibly lost any of the following items, please reach out to Oktoberfest@claytoncbca.org and we will gladly return them to you.

BCBG bi-focals in a pink case

2 pairs of childrens shoes – black Velcro sneakers & small Velcro brown booths

One large water bottle with black insulation (very nice, had a paper tag with first name)

Blue key tag with two keys – "EVENT OUTFIT 5KR"

Clothing: Nike "Still Fresh" blue tee;

Champion pullover sweatshirt with neck zipper;

CALPOLY pullover sweatshirt;

"Traditional Work Wear" jacket (gray with maroon closure);

Ladies blue & white pullover top with paisley and other designs.

I will hold these items for 4 weeks after publication, then they will be donated.

Clayton Ranked Second Safest California City

by David King

Here's some comforting news for Clayton residents. Clayton ranked No. 2 among California's 25 safest cities according to a a recent California Halloween Safety Index report.

The new seasonal safety index report by Maison Law compared 336 cities using population-adjusted crash and crime data. Maison Law is an accident & injury law firm located in Glendale, Calif.

Clayton ranked as the No. 2 safest city statewide and earned the highest placement of any Bay Area city according to the pre-Halloween press release.

The report identified Clayton's danger index at 1.23 seasonal crash rate per 100,000 residents.

The index gives equal weight to seasonal crashes, alcohol-involved crashes, pedestrian-involved crashes, long-term crashes and October reported crime.

Clayton has had no fatal or injury crashes recorded in the UC Berkeley Transportation Injury Mapping System (TIMS) download for the three study windows. Clayton's score is still above zero because the index also includes long-term crashes and October crime.

An absence of crashes in this export does not establish that a city had no property-damage-only collisions or no unreported incidents.

How the Rankings Work

Five population-adjusted measures each carry 20% of the score:

- Seasonal fatal and injury crashes
- Alcohol-involved crashes
- Pedestrian-involved crashes
- Long-term annual crashes
- October reported violent and property crime

Sources include UC Berkeley's TIMS using CHP records, California DOJ OpenJustice, and California Department of Finance population estimates.

In the last three Halloween seasons, California cities recorded more than 37,000 fatal and injury crashes between October 1 and the first days of November.

The analysis draws on crash and crime records from the last three Halloween seasons and annual crash counts for 2021 through 2025. These rankings describe relative safety conditions during the broader Halloween season and year-round background conditions.

Maison Law scored incorporated California cities with populations of at least 10,000 in 2025 that had complete, internally consistent data for all five factors.

And to satisfy your curiosity, Canyon Lake ranked as the safest.

Clayton Valley Village Joins Diablo Valley Villages to Better Serve Clayton Seniors

Since launching as a nonprofit in 2017, Clayton Valley Village continues to grow its circle of support for local seniors.

In October, the nonprofit joined Diablo Valley Villages (DVV) as an affiliate to a broad network of 18 other local Bay Area Villages. This includes the Lamorinda Village, Mount Diablo Village, and San Ramon Village, all with the mission to helping older adults live active, independent, and more connected lives.

As a DVV affiliate, Clayton Valley Village leverages the organizational structure, shared resources, and collaborative strengths of the other local Village affiliates to better assist over 90 members. Its 75 volunteers provide rides to appointments, grocery assistance, technology help, social activities, and fun programs and, perhaps most importantly, friendship and connection.

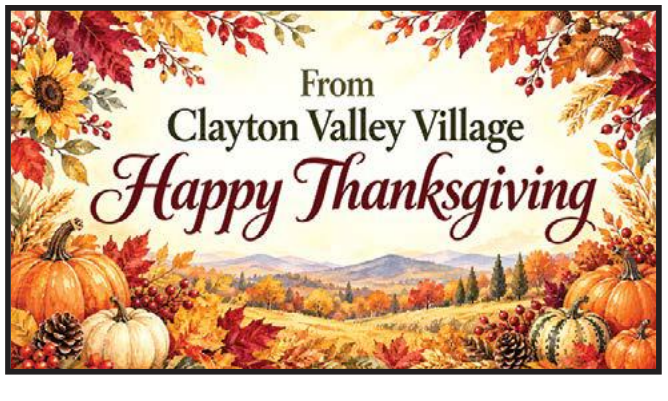
The affiliation will expand access to programs and create even greater opportunities for social connection among Clayton Valley Village members. Each Affiliate Village serves the unique needs of its local community.

"Clayton Valley Village is so much more than just providing services," said Marilyn Wollenweber, CVV's President. "It's about friendships, a sense of belonging, and helping our community seniors stay engaged and involved.

"Joining the Diablo Valley Villages network provides Clayton Valley Village an exciting chance to build on all we've accomplished over the past nine years, by creating further opportunities for both our members and volunteers."

Seniors who could use a helping hand, or those interested in volunteering to make a

difference in the lives of local seniors can learn more about Clayton Valley Village at: https://claytonvalleyvillage.org





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

CVCHS UGLY Robotics Hosts Its 3rd Annual VEX Robotics Tournament

More than 150 students from across the Bay Area and Sacramento packed the Clayton Valley gym for a day of cheering, problem-solving, and friendly rivalry.



Clayton Valley Charter High School opened its doors on October 17, 2026, to more than 150 high school and middle school students from the Bay Area and Sacramento.

The morning air was cold, but the excitement was high. Teams streamed into the school early Saturday to set up their pits and take their robots through inspection, and the hallways hummed with anticipation as teams pitched in to help one another get ready for the big day.

VEX Robotics is about a lot more than robots. Built for high school and middle school students, the VEX V5 Robotics Competition combines the excitement of a varsity sport with the real-world experience of building and coding a robot.

Teams design, machine, program, and market a robot built to win, all while working side by side with industry mentors. The result is hands-on experience and a set of skills that a traditional classroom rarely offers.

Tournament Results: Our Teams Crushed It!

Our UGLY Robotics teams kicked off the season with an outstanding showing across the board:

Team 94517A (Juniors): Leon Buerki, Ezana Daniel, Brayden Heller-Robbins, Diego Martinez, and Alex Rantala secured their very first award of the season, the prestigious Design Award!

Team 94517F (Seniors and Sophomores): Jacob Jeandheur, Emmett Fletcher, Hayden Wong, Cloud Nabus, Kristina Yakukhina, and Zara Hadi dominated the field by winning six of eight matches, ranking #2 overall, and fighting all the way to the Finals.

Team 94517W (Sophomores): Jonathan Keller, Gavin Stephens, Wyatt Cannon, Sethu Rami, and Garrett Zee delivered a stellar performance to reach the Quarterfinals, ranking #15 overall.

Team 94517T (Juniors): Jose Hernandez Piedras, Manish Khatiwada, Ranveer Sandhu, Vlad Klinov, Roman Pyke, and Marco Perez also powered through to the Quarterfinals, finishing right behind at #16.

Jacob Jeandheur, captain of team 94517F Flamingo Dynamics, called the day a great one for his team. “We made it to the elimination rounds, and we enjoyed getting to play with so many Bay Area teams that we have community connections with,” he said.

UGLY Robotics Coach and CVCHS Engineering Teacher Tyler Miller said it was a thrill to welcome so many people to campus.

“It was an amazing experience for Clayton Valley to host a Robotics Tournament with high school and middle school teams, coaches, mentors, families, and spectators filling the large gym,” he said. “Every match was intense. We cheered on our own teams and so many of our neighbors as they strategized, innovated, cooperated, and competed at the highest level. We were so proud of our UGLY Robotics teams for their competitive spirit.”

Miller also had an eye on what comes next. “With so many top-ranked teams in our area, I know we will be seeing many of these teams again at the State Championship in March.”

Dawn Fregosa, parent and coach of team 80001C Chain Reaction from Double Play San Leandro, said the weekend captured what makes VEX special. “I love the collaboration between teams as they support each other. They may be opponents one match and teammates the next, so everyone wants to lift each other up,” she said. “We helped one team fix wiring problems, and a little later another team needed help with replacement sensors.” She added that Clayton Valley was a great host, with “outstanding facilities in the competition area, pits, and interview rooms.”

The VEX Robotics Competition is the largest and fastest-growing middle and high school robotics program in the world, with more than 24,000 teams from over 60 countries. Students design, build, and program robots to take on themed games that put their problem-solving and teamwork to the test, building a love of STEM along the way.

To learn more about supporting the CVCHS UGLY Robotics Club, or to ask about sponsorship opportunities, contact JoAnna Castillo at joanna.castillo@claytonvalley.org.

Clayton Valley Charter High School Students To Learn Advanced Drone Technology



Clayton Valley Charter High School students in Concord will soon have the opportunity to gain hands-on experience with advanced drone technology through a new educational partnership involving Fly Point Partners, Stay Plugged In and the school’s Game Programming Academy.

The initiative will introduce students to professional drone flight software, 3D animation, aviation safety procedures and the technology used to coordinate large-scale drone light shows.

The program is designed to prepare students for potential careers in industries such as commercial aviation, precision agriculture, autonomous delivery, land surveying, digital animation and public safety operations.

As part of the training, students will learn how to operate professional drone command software, conduct pre-flight system checks, identify potential technical problems and develop flight paths.

Participants will also use industry-standard 3D animation tools to design aerial light displays, gaining experience with technology used in drone entertainment, robotics, digital media and visual effects. Additional instruction will focus on aviation safety, including the responsibilities of visual observers who help monitor drone operations and maintain safe flight conditions.

Students will have an opportunity to demonstrate their newly acquired skills during Tech in Action 2027, scheduled for Saturday, March 27, 2027, at the Hilton Concord. The regional technology showcase will bring together hundreds of students, educators and industry professionals to highlight developments in robotics, artificial intelligence, digital media and other emerging fields.

Participating students will present their drone designs, demonstrate their understanding of flight operations and explain the technology behind their projects. Organizers say the partnership is intended to connect classroom education with practical workforce experience, allowing students to develop technical skills while exploring potential career opportunities.

The program also introduces students to the planning, coordination and safety requirements involved in commercial drone operations, including procedures associated with Federal Aviation Administration regulations. The initiative is expected to serve as a foundation for additional STEM education programs and aviation-related activities throughout the East Bay. The curriculum focuses on three core competency areas:

- Flight Operations & Software Command: Students learn to use professional pilot command software to analyze drone health, resolve pre-flight system diagnostics, and upload complex flight paths.
- 3D Animation & Design: Participants utilize industry-standard 3D animation tools to design dynamic aerial light configurations, building transferable skills applicable across robotics, design, and digital media.
- Safety & Visual Observation: Ground safety modules training students in visual-observer responsibilities and aviation safety practices, identifying system desynchronizations and enforcing airspace safety protocols.

The educational program serves as the foundation for broader regional STEM initiatives and upcoming live aviation experiences across the East Bay community.

To learn more about Tech in Action 2027, visit techinaction.lovable.app.

For more information on Fly Point Partners, visit flypointpartners.com.

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YOUR NEIGHBOR'S SHOES
by Jill Hedgecock

Award-Winning Clayton Photographer Captures the Secret Lives of Area Wildlife

From elusive bobcats and playful foxes to wild horses and bears, award-winning photographer Sharon Anderson discovers extraordinary moments in nature, and sometimes danger, in pursuit of the perfect shot.

To say Sharon Anderson is brave is an understatement. Most people would think twice before spending the night alone in remote wilderness, listening to coyotes howl or watching wild horses thunder across the landscape. For Clayton wildlife photographer Sharon Anderson, those moments are among life's greatest rewards.

"You can hear the horses whinnying in the background, and their hooves pounding on the ground, as they run by," she says. "And, yeah, it's pretty amazing."

But the job has its hazards. A bear once jolted her awake at 12:30 a.m. when it attacked her vehicle. Yet sometimes, the animals are the least of her worries. Anderson has been robbed twice in broad daylight for her camera equipment. Who knew photography could be so risky?

From Horses to Wildlife

Anderson, an East Bay native who grew up in Walnut Creek, has lived in Clayton for about twenty-five years and has spent nine of them peeking at nature from behind her lens. Her passion began with horses. In the 1980s she ran a small business photographing them, and owners hired her because she understood that every breed must be shot differently. She also worked at Image West Photo Labs, where the foundation that managed Ansel Adams's work brought photographs in for printing and restoration.

That early training, combined with countless hours behind the camera, changed how she sees wildlife. When she is photographing an animal, she believes it looks at her and sees her soul. If she measures up, she earns its trust, and that acceptance lets her move alongside the animal and position herself to face it. It is how she gets award-winning shots.

An Enchanted World, Close to Home

Sometimes, the most remarkable encounters are waiting just beyond our back doors. Through her lens, Anderson has uncovered a hidden Bay Area.

On Marsh Creek Road, she photographed a coyote eating what she believed was a rattlesnake; later research confirmed that coyotes can safely eat rattlers because venom, unlike a bite, does not enter the bloodstream. At Heather Farms in Walnut Creek, she captured a river otter dining on a fish. She found a badger, a hard-to-spot nocturnal animal, sunning itself at Cal State East Bay in Concord.

She also loves the more familiar residents, such as American kestrels, the area's smallest bird of prey, and hummingbirds. From her own backyard, she once watched a mother white-tailed kite pass a rodent in midair to her fledgling.

And she has documented nature's oddities, including a leucistic acorn woodpecker, a bird that has lost its pigmentation and appears white. Her shot of that rare woodpecker in Sunol won Best in Show from the Contra Costa Camera Club. Her portrait of a black-crowned night heron having a "bad hair" day has also taken awards.

Time outdoors has sharpened her senses, too.

"You're sitting there, and it's all quiet, and the wind's just maybe blowing the grasses a little bit, and you're just looking around, and waiting for the whatever you're waiting for, and, like, oh, what's that smell? Is that jasmine?"

Patience, Persistence and a Little Magic

Wildlife rarely cooperates with a photographer's schedule. Finding the right animal, lighting and behavior can demand countless hours of waiting.

Anderson has learned that patience is often rewarded. In early October, she finally photographed a bobcat family near her Clayton home, fulfilling a long-held ambition.

Years of observation have taught Anderson that many animals are creatures of habit By carefully recording where and when they appear, she can sometimes arrange what she jokingly considers appointments with her subjects such as a 4:00 p.m. meeting with a bobcat or a 1:00 p.m. rendezvous with a fox.

Yet some of her favorite experiences have little to do with winning awards. One unforgettable encounter involved a family of red foxes. Anderson watched a mother and her playful youngsters as the father approached from a distance.

"Mama was there, and the little foxes were out playing, and from afar, here comes Pops," she recalls. The youngsters raced excitedly toward him. "It was just this magical Disney moment," she says, imagining the little foxes shouting, "Dad, Dad, you're back. You're back!"

"The love they were showing for each other. Oh, my goodness. I mean, this stuff melts your heart."

Heartbreak Behind the Lens

Anderson has also shouldered her share of sorrow. A red fox population at a San Jose golf course fell from roughly sixty animals to about ten survivors after mange swept through. A thriving heron and egret rookery at Dover Park in Fairfield, once a favorite destination, vanished when the tree the birds roosted in was cut down following neighborhood complaints.

Sometimes people are to blame. Anderson spent four years photographing a brown bear at Mammoth Lakes she called Victor, for the white V on his chest. In 2024, when Victor wandered into a campsite, a camper stood on a stump to film him instead of retreating to a vehicle. The bear swiped at the person's leg, and wildlife officials deemed him dangerous and killed him. Anderson still mourns him to this day.

Her travels have also opened her eyes to the plight of wild horses rounded up by the Bureau of Land Management. She has written letters and educated others about helicopter roundups that she says cause horses to break legs, foals to be trampled, and survivors to be shipped to holding facilities.

A Plea for Space

Anderson wishes local residents knew how intelligent their wild neighbors are. There is no need to panic and call Fish and Game over a bobcat in the yard, she says. Just go inside for a while. Wildlife simply needs space.

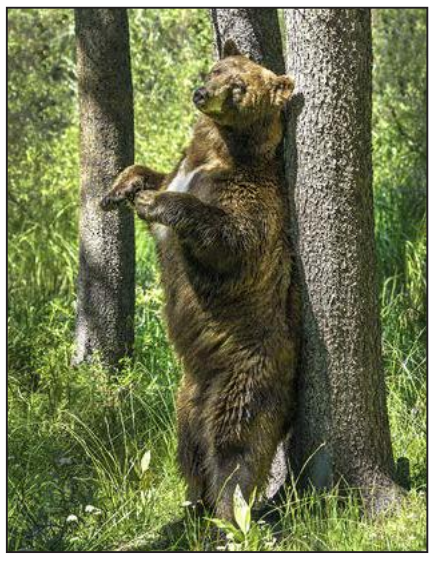

Wild stallions fighting, Mono County Calif.



We can all agree, her wildlife photos are indeed extraordinary, and she is your neighbor.

To see more of Anderson's photography, visit her Instagram page at @sharonandersonphotography.

Jill Hedgecock is a retired environmental scientist and author of seven novels, including her latest nature-based ecothriller, "Silence in the Orchard."


Victor, named for the white "V" on his chest, was a brown bear in Mammoth Lakes, was euthanized after having a dangerous encounter with careless campers. Below: Badger spotted at Pt. Reyes, and red fox at den in with pups in San Jose.






Coyote making a meal out of a rattlesnake.


Award-winning photo of a leucistic acorn woodpecker. Photo taken at BishopRanch Nature Preserve.


Adult Kite teaching and passing food to its chick. Photo taken in Clayton.

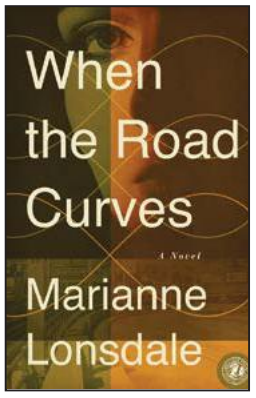





American kestrel spotted at Cal State East Bay campus in Concord. Black crowned night heron in Fairfield. Anna's hummingbird in Clayton..



Jill Hedgecock's **bookends**
Author "Between Shadow's Eyes" and "Silence in the Orchard"
www.jillhedgecock.com



"When the Road Curves" (Sibylline Digital First, 2026, paperback, 254 pages, $19.00) by Marianne Lonsdale takes place in Oakland and San Francisco in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The novel highlights the friendship between protagonist, Nora, who is a thirty-six-year-old career-oriented woman, and her co-worker and best friend, Linda, who becomes afflicted by Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome or AIDS. What makes this story particularly intriguing is how it reveals the extent to which the AIDS epidemic affected heterosexual women, when during the early days of the epidemic, it was thought to be only a disease that affected young, homosexual men. The novel reveals that, in fact, up to twenty percent of those afflicted by AIDS were women.

The book opens with Nora and Linda making plans to go to a dance club, living the carefree life of successful, professional single women. But Nora soon falls head over heels for Paul, a handsome and talented, yet troubled, singer-songwriter.

When Linda is diagnosed with AIDS, Nora becomes her primary caregiver. The time demands of the role create a rift in Nora's relationship with Paul. Over time, as Nora becomes more assertive and refuses to accommodate Paul's ultimatums, she sees a different side of the man she thought could be "the one".

Her father's phobia that Nora will contract AIDS while staying with Linda, drives a wedge deeper into their already fractured relationship. Torn between Linda's and Paul's needs, as well as her career, Nora must choose between her found family in Linda, her newfound love, and the challenges of a new promotion that she has worked hard to achieve. But as the demands of caring for Linda intensify, Nora questions all her life choices and what she wants her future to hold.

For long-term local East Bay residents, the novel is a trip down memory lane. Lonsdale captures the drama of the 1991 Oakland Hills firestorm, the flair of 1990 Chinatown, and the timeless charm of San Francisco. Other historical moments captured in the book include Magic Johnson's shocking announcement he had tested HIV positive, and Freddie Mercury's death related to complications from AIDS.

Get ready for a retro peek at the 1990s, and the dark days when a terrible disease took a horrific toll on the gay community. This book is both entertaining and informative. It also brings to light the toll AIDS had on women.

Marianne Lonsdale's personal essays and poetry have appeared in multiple print anthologies and various online journals. She has done readings at many events, including San Francisco's Litquake Festival. She is an alumna of the Community of Writers and The apa Valley Writers Conference and volunteers with the Oakland Literacy Coalition. Lonsdale lives in Oakland with her husband and beloved dog, Ricky Ricardo. Follow her at www.mariannelonsdale.com.



SCREEN TIME by Colleen Gonzalez
colleengonzalez.substack.com

Verity

Rated R In Theaters

"Verity" is the fourth novel by bestselling author Colleen Hoover to get the Hollywood treatment. While the first three adaptations focused on novels about love and relationships, "Verity" is the first thriller.



Lowen Ashleigh (Dakota Johnson) is a struggling author who is encouraged by her agent to take an unusual assignment. Unbeknownst to the public, bestselling author Verity Crawford (Anne Hathaway) recently suffered serious injuries in an automobile accident and cannot finish her current novel without help. Verity's husband, Jeremy (Josh Harnett), kindly offers to let Lowen stay at his and Verity's home, granting Lowen access to Verity and all of her notes.

Overwhelmed by the gorgeous remote home, Lowen envies the successful author's lifestyle, but things quickly change when Lowen confronts the reality of what is going on in the house. She starts to ask careful questions and explore the house for proof of her theories.

The plot becomes very dark and twisted. As the storyline from the past unfolds, Lowen develops opinions about Verity and Jeremy. The more she learns, the deeper she becomes entrenched in their lives and starts questioning her judgement and sanity.

While this film does not rise to the level of "The Housemaid," it is still over-the-top, soapy fun. Anne Hathaway has appeared in many films this year, but she has chosen well, showing a wide and varied range. It is also nice to see former teen heartthrob Josh Harnett taking on larger roles. Both performances are solid and keep the film from sinking into full-on camp.

The film gives some insight into authors who write troubling storylines and asks the question, "Are they simply creative or truly wicked people?" Moreover, some of the plot twists may surprise you. Just when you think you have everything figured out, a few more wrenches are thrown in. Try not to find out too much before going into the movie, so that you can sit back and enjoy the ride.

Diablo Gazette Goes to Washington DC to Lobby for Small Businesses

by David King

I never imagined that my first trip to Washington, D.C., would involve walking the halls of Congress, meeting with congressional staff, and discussing federal legislation that could have a direct impact on my business and the small businesses that support our local community. But sometimes, an opportunity comes along that makes you realize your voice deserves to be heard. In my case, it was a little like Mr. Smith Goes to Washington.

It started when a business associate approached me on behalf of the Small Business Payment Alliance (SBPA), an advocacy organization representing small business owners concerned about public policy. The organization was encouraging small business owners to share their experiences with members of Congress and explain the harm this bipartisan proposed Durbin-Marshall Credit Card Competition Act would have on small businesses. I was honorred ot be chosen for this effort.

The Durbin-Marshall Credit Card Competition Act is being promoted as a way to increase competition among credit card processing networks and lower transaction fees. The legislation would require large financial institutions to offer additional payment network options when processing credit card transactions.

While that might sound like a straightforward effort to reduce costs, a similar act in 2010 affecting debit cards caused banks to lose billions, and recapture those losses by stopping free checking, increase checking fees, and shutting down debit card rewards. The opposite of the Bill's goal.

For businesses like those advertising in the Diablo Gazette, credit cards are more than a convenient way to pay. They are an important financial tool. Credit cards allow business owners to manage cash flow, extend purchasing power, and take advantage of the security and consumer protections associated with electronic payments.

My concern is that this legislation could disrupt a system that millions of small businesses depend upon. Potential consequences include reduced access to credit, diminished credit card rewards and benefits, and increased exposure to fraud if transactions are routed through networks that may not offer the same levels of security. If paying by credit card becomes less attractive or less secure, small businesses and their customers could ultimately pay the price.

When those businesses struggle, publications like ours feel the impact, too. Taken together, these unintended consequences could further hollow out America's downtowns, leaving fewer independent businesses and more corporate megastores.

With that perspective in mind, I jumped at the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C. It would be my first visit to our nation's Capital, and I would have the opportunity to share my firsthand experiences with members of Congress and their senior staff. I was one of 10 small business representatives that came from what seemed like a random group of states: California, Wyoming, North Carolina, and Massachusetts

I wasn't quite sure what to expect. Having watched countless movies and television shows depicting Washington politics, I imagined grand congressional offices, impressive conference rooms, and perhaps a little Hollywood glamour.

The reality was somewhat different.

Walking through the Capitol complex and entering congressional office buildings was certainly surreal. There is an unmistakable feeling that you're somewhere important. But the actual meetings take place in relatively small, sometimes cramped offices. You sit around a conference table, introduce yourself, explain why you're there, and quickly realize that everyone has a very full schedule.

There is also a sense that the congressional staff is already thinking about the next meeting. And understandably so. Their responsibility is to meet with lobbyists, constituents, business owners, and advocacy organizations, ask relevant questions, take detailed notes, and communicate those perspectives to their bosses, the members of Congress.

It's a fascinating process and an eye-opening look at how our government actually works.

Throughout the day, I met with policy staff from several five different congressional offices, sharing my perspective alongside the other small business owners.

We weren't there to make complicated political arguments or deliver elaborate speeches. We had a simple message: Please understand how this legislation could affect the small businesses in your communities before moving forward.

What struck me most was the realization that I wasn't alone. Every year, thousands of Americans make similar trips to Washington. They are business owners, parents, educators, farmers, community leaders, and ordinary citizens who take time away from their jobs and families to make their voices heard.

They may not have political titles or Washington connections, but they have something equally important: firsthand experience with the policies Congress is considering.

While I was in DC, China President XI arrived, The security for that closes half the main streets in town. A four-minute Uber ride took 45 minutes. Because of traffic, before I returned to Concord, I took a walking tour to three Smithsonian Museums and over to the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial, Vietnam Memorial, and Arlington Cemetery all on foot in my one free day for the week.

I returned home with a greater appreciation for the legislative process and a renewed belief in the importance of citizen participation. You don't have to be a lobbyist, a politician, or a corporate executive to have a seat at the table. Sometimes, you just have to be willing to show up.

And if my first trip to Washington taught me anything, it's that the American political process still has room for a little bit of Mr. Smith.



For the Love of Pets

by Jill Hedgecock, Jillhedgecock.com

Oh, No! My Pet Has Been Skunked!



Every season is skunk season. Skunks are year-round residents in the Bay Area, and encounters between pets and these tuxedo-clad creatures are not uncommon during any season.

If a pet owner is unlucky enough to have a female birth her kits under a deck, the young will first venture out in April and June. The meandering coming-of-age ruffians do not necessarily spray more frequently than their adult compatriots, but their inclination to spray can be more reckless because they have not mastered how to use their defense mechanism.

Our curious canines are more at risk than cats to odiferous exchanges with skunks. Fortunately, being sprayed by a skunk is rarely lethal except in the rare situation where a heavy, direct spray to a pet's face can cause methemoglobinemia.

This condition is caused by the sulfur-based compounds in the skunk's spray, which damages the ability of red blood cells to properly distribute oxygen to tissues. Direct hits to the eyes can cause extreme discomfort, temporary blindness, and swelling.

Cats are more likely to lick their thiol-covered fur, resulting in vomiting and diarrhea. Mostly though, the biggest problem from a skunk-pet interaction is the smell, and measures are needed to eradicate the odor from the pet's fur.

First, check your pet for bites or scratches. If broken skin exists, take it immediately to the vet. Skunks carry rabies, and even if your pet's rabies vaccination is up to date, a booster is recommended. The wound may also be susceptible to infection and your vet may prescribe antibiotics.

To deal with the smell, the recommended odor-remover recipe is four cups of 3% hydrogen peroxide, 1/4 cup baking soda, and one teaspoon liquid dish soap. Double or triple the amounts for larger animals. Do not make the solution in advance or enclose it in a container (it will explode). Do not wet the pet before treatment as water can spread the oil deeper into the fur. Also, never pour the solution over the animal's face and keep the solution away from the pet's eyes and mouth as it will sting.

Flush irritated eyes with lukewarm water or sterile saline solution. Allow the mixture to treat the fur for no more than ten minutes. It will bleach or dry out fur if left on longer. Rinse thoroughly. Two or more treatments may be needed. Towels or clothing may require one or two hot water washes.

Knowing how to treat your pet for noxious skunk odors, and knowing when to call the vet, transforms an unpleasant ordeal into an annoying, yet manageable situation.

Jill Hedgecock is author of seven books. Her latest release, "Silence in the Orchard," features a Doberman trained to detect the scent of diseased honeybee hives. Available on amazon.com.

Concord Bowler Sets Bay Area Record With Near Perfect Night at Clayton Valley Bowl

by David King

Some bowlers spend a lifetime chasing a perfect 300 game. Daniel Cashman rolls two perfect in one night, and nearly a third, posting a remarkable 889 series at Clayton Valley Bowl.

On September 10, the 37-year-old from Benicia delivered a performance for the record books at Clayton Valley Bowl, rolling consecutive games of 289, 300 and 300 for an astonishing 889 series out of a possible 900 during league play.

The achievement shattered the Clayton Valley Bowl's previous series record of 869, set in 2008, and established a new high mark for Contra Costa County and the entire Bay Area. The previous county record of 882 set in Danville has held since 2017.

Cashman was nearly flawless. His only non-strike came in the final frame of the opening game, when he converted a nine-pin spare.

"He was in the zone," said his mother, Julie Cashman, who has worked much of her adult life at Clayton Valley Bowl.

For Daniel, bowling has been part of his life since childhood. He began at age five, often spending time at the bowling alley while his mother worked. He competed in junior leagues, earning All-Star honors three times before stepping away from the sport in 2005.

After a brief return in 2008, he put down his bowling ball for another 17 years.

"I just got burnt out," he explained.

Life moved along. Cashman married his wife, Bailey, and became the father of two daughters, Annabelle and Mila and is employed at PG &E.

Then, in September 2025, he returned to competitive bowling in an 800 scratch league at Clayton Valley Bowl.

What a comeback it has been.

In January 2026, Cashman bowled his first sanctioned perfect game. Two more followed on March 12 and March 19. His historic September performance added two more 300 games, and just two weeks later, he rolled his sixth of the year.



Daniel Cashman poses next to mom, Julie, after receiving his award for his record breaking bowling performance of 889 at Clayton Valley Bowl in Concord.

On October 15, family members and a KPIX-TV crew secretly gathered at Clayton Valley Bowl for a surprise ceremony honoring his achievement. Cashman received recognition from the Contra Costa County Chapter of the United States Bowling Congress, along with a commemorative record of his extraordinary series.

Despite his remarkable accomplishment, Cashman remains modest. Asked whether professional bowling might be next, he quickly dismissed the notion.

"No, that's a whole other level of bowling," he said. "I'm nowhere near that."

For Cashman, the most meaningful compliment came from someone who simply told him, "It couldn't happen to a better guy."

Solutions page 26

WORD SEARCH - THANKSGIVING

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

APPLE PIE	FAMILY	GRAVY	POTATOES
AUTUMN	FEAST	HARVEST	PUMPKIN
CASSEROLE	FOOTBALL	LEAVES	STUFFING
CORNUCOPIA	GATHERING	PARADE	TURKEY
CRANBERRY	GRATITUDE	PILGRIMS	WISHBONE

SUDOKU

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E		F		I	H			
				A			E	
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WORD SCRAMBLE

Unscramble these Thanksgiving words:

BREVONME _____

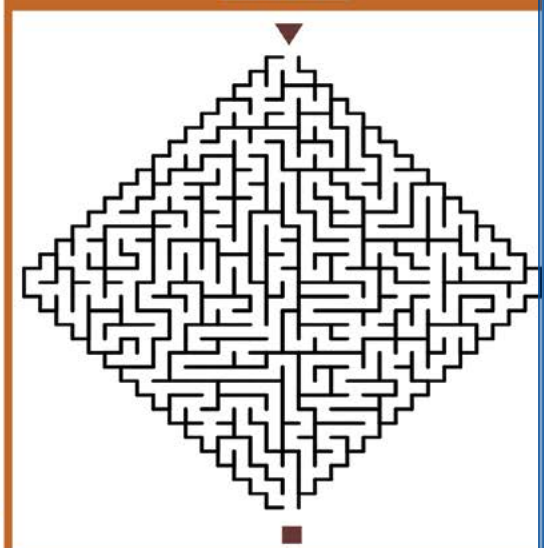
VETHRAS _____

RETECNPEEIC _____

RIMPGLI _____

SHYTRUDA _____

MAZE



Happy Thanksgiving

By Marc Rokoff ©2026
www.RokoPuzzles.com



Lina Shatara: The Art of Making Simplicity Extraordinary

by Julia O'Reilly

Some jewelry catches your eye. Other pieces capture your imagination. The creations of California jewelry designer Lina Shatara manage to do both. With an artistic approach that celebrates simplicity, individuality, and a touch of the unexpected, Lina transforms everyday jewelry into wearable works of art.


Lina Shatara

Behind her namesake brand, Lina Shatara Designs, is a woman whose creative journey has taken her from California to the vibrant fashion world of New York City, with inspiration gathered through travel, art, culture, and nature along the way.

What makes her jewelry so intriguing is the delicate balance between understated elegance and an unmistakable contemporary edge. Clean lines meet unexpected textures, organic shapes complement bold geometry, and subtle details turn seemingly simple designs into something extraordinary.

Lina's love affair with jewelry began when she was just thirteen years old, creating handmade pieces for family and friends. Little did she know that this early passion would eventually become her artistic calling.

After graduating from UC Berkeley, she began her professional career with renowned San Francisco brands Levi's and Gap. But an unexpected opportunity led her to New York City, opening the door to an entirely new creative world.

There, Lina pursued formal jewelry design training at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), where she also earned a certificate in Sustainable Design. Her experience extended beyond the classroom and into the exciting world of high fashion.

Working behind the scenes at New York Fashion Week, Fashion's Night Out, and runway shows for celebrated designers such as Oscar de la Renta, Jeremy Scott, and Cushnie et Ochs, Lina gained firsthand exposure to the creativity and craftsmanship of the fashion industry. She later joined the design department at House of Waris, further shaping her artistic perspective.



Yet some of her greatest inspirations came not from the runway, but from the world around her.

Travel became a powerful influence on Lina's creative identity. Architectural patterns, the graceful movement of calligraphy, cultural traditions, and the imperfect beauty of nature all found their way into her imagination.

These influences are reflected in her jewelry through sculptural silhouettes, oxidized metals, matte finishes, mixed materials, and unexpected geometric forms. Each design carries a sense of discovery, inviting the wearer to appreciate details that might otherwise go unnoticed.

There is something wonderfully refreshing about Lina's artistic philosophy. Her jewelry is not created simply to follow fashion trends or wait inside a jewelry box for a special occasion. It is designed to become part of someone's everyday.

Perhaps that is what makes her work so appealing. A piece of jewelry can be beautifully minimalist while still making a powerful statement. It can be contemporary without losing its timeless character, and elegant without being predictable.

For Lina, each new collection represents another opportunity to explore, experiment, and challenge her own creative boundaries. Her designs remind us that simplicity is not the absence of imagination, it is often where imagination shines brightest.

Art lovers and jewelry enthusiasts can discover Lina's distinctive handcrafted creations at JOR Fine Art Gallery, located in the heart of historic downtown Clayton.

For those who enjoy meeting the artist behind the work, Lina Shatara will be one of the featured artists at Clayton's first fine art gallery, JOR Fine Art Gallery, at Jor's Sip & See event on Saturday, November 7, from 2:00–4:00 p.m. The event is free and open to the public. JOR Fine Art Gallery is located at 1026 Oak Street in Clayton.

Sometimes the most extraordinary art is not something we hang on a wall. Sometimes, it is something we wear, treasure, and carry with us wherever life takes us.

The Muse Jazz Collective Celebrates Miles Davis and John Coltrane, 100 Years



Concord, Calif. — Born just months apart in 1926, Miles Davis and John Coltrane would become two of the most influential voices in Jazz. In the late 1950s, their paths converged at a pivotal moment in their own development, and in the evolution of the music itself.

Miles and Coltrane stood at the crossroads between the driving language of hard bop and the emerging freedom of modal Jazz. On recordings such as 'Milestones' and 'Kind of Blue,' dense chord changes increasingly gave way to open harmonic spaces, creating room for a new kind of improvisation.

Their convergence helped open a door. What began on a shared bandstand became two distinct journeys that would transform the course of modern Jazz.

Convergence: Two Jazz Concerts to Honor Davis and COLTRANE Nov. 8

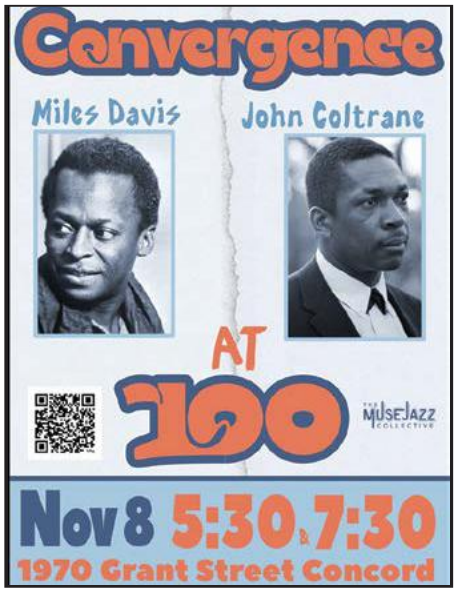
The first concert starts at 5:30 p.m. and the second concert starts at 7:30 p.m. Each concert will be at the Vineyard Church and will offer 90 minutes of iconic music. This concert venue is tied to the history of jazz through Dave Brubeck, who grew up on this site in Concord .

Doors open 15 minutes prior. You can enjoy dinner before or after the concert or you are free to bring your own food or drink from any of the amazing restaurants within one or two blocks of the venue. Plan to bring cups, wine cork, etc., as these items are not available on-site. Anyone drinking alcohol must be 21yrs or older.

"We're here to empower a new generation of Jazz lovers and musicians to awaken beauty, love, and justice through interactive Jazz experiences that train us to become better listeners, mentors, and advocates," states the Collective.

There will be a Q&A at the end of the performance, so as you listen think of some questions about the music, the musicians, the history, the songwriters, or anything else that comes to mind.

The Vineyard is downtown Concord at 1970 Grant Street, across from Todos Santos Park.



Diablo Women's Chorale Presents Dream Radio

Turn the dial and step into Dream Radio, the latest concert program by Diablo Women's Chorale, broadcasting live this November 20 and 22 in Lafayette.


Diablo Women's Chorale performing "Bon Voyage" at the Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian church in May 2026.

The program features music exploring different aspects of dreams, including love, hope, memory, strange and imagination.

The Diablo Women's Chorale (DWC) will present its fall concert, "Dream Radio" at Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church.

The repertoire spans choral lullabies, 1940s jazz standards, and modern rock and pop songs, with selections including "Round Midnight", "Dream On", "Golden Slumbers", and "California Dreamin". The concert will bring the theme to life with a live radio station format.

"We are transforming the concert stage into a live radio station, complete with a podcast-style DJ, custom jingles, and interactive calls," says Artistic Director Erin Fishler.

Founded in 1942 during World War II, Diablo Women's Chorale, the community choir brings together women of all ages who share a passion for singing and spreading joy through music.

Performances are scheduled for Friday, November 20 at 7:00 p.m. and Sunday, November 22 at 3:00 p.m. at Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, 49 Knox Drive, Lafayette. diablowomenschorale.org.

aRt Cottage by FROgard www.artcottage.info

Holiday Boutique

The doors will open for Concord's quaint aRt Cottage's annual Holiday Boutique on Saturday, November 7, at 11:00 a.m. Artists will be present from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m., at the reception. Refreshments will be served while visitors meet the artists and learn how their pieces are made.

Each year, Holiday Boutique visitors discover that one-of-a-kind item that they end up giving to a friend or family member. It could be something to wear, greeting cards, a painting, or even jewelry.

When you visit the aRt Cottage you are supporting your local small business and the participating artists from your community. aRt Cottage is open Wednesday - Saturday 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. This show runs through December 23. We look forward to seeing you. aRt Cottage is located at 2238 Mt. Diablo St in downtown Concord.





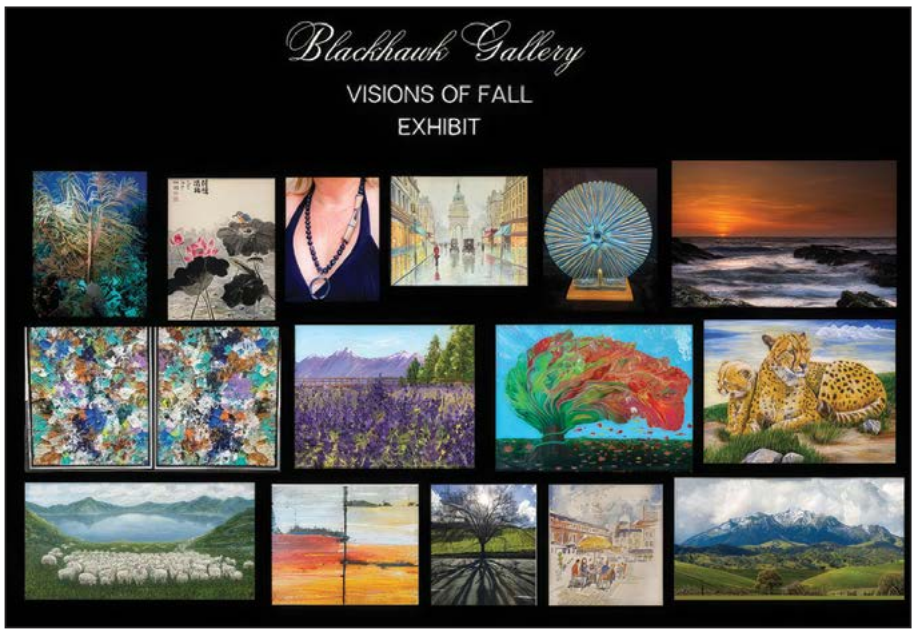
Santa Clau paintings by Samantha McNally,. Below: Painted christmas tree ornaments by Fiona Hughes. by Samantha McNally





Alamo Danville ADAS Established in 1977 Artists' Society

'Visions of Fall' Exhibit through January 17, 2027



Blackhawk Gallery's new exhibition, "Visions of Fall," is now open. The public is invite to explore the creativity of 18 talented artists. From stunning oil paintings and unique ceramic sculptures to handcrafted jewelry, fine art prints, and fascinating metal art, this exhibition offers something special for every art lover.

There's plenty to discover at Blackhawk Gallery. Celebrate the season through art and support our talented artists. Admission is free.

Blackhawk Gallery is located at 3416 Blackhawk Plaza Circle in Danville. Open Wednesday–Sunday, 12 noon–5 p.m.

Main Street Arts Gallery 613 Main Street, Martinez CA

Celebrate! A GROUP ART EXHIBITION TWELVE ARTISTS. TWELVE INTERPRETATIONS.

by Samantha McNally

Main Street Arts Gallery new member exhibition, "Celebrate!' opens in November and will continue through December.

The theme is intentionally wide open, inviting each artist to interpret the idea of celebration in their own way. Visitors can expect a varied collection of artwork in a range of sizes, styles and media, reflecting the diverse approaches of the gallery's member artists.

Denise Hillman is the gallery's featured member artist for November. A Martinez artist working primarily in oils, Hillman creates colorful, expressive paintings that range from abstraction to works with traces of recognizable places and forms. She describes her approach as "Experiential Abstraction," drawing on memories, places, transitions, and lived experiences while allowing color, gesture and texture to lead the painting in unexpected directions.

Hillman is a member artist at Main Street Arts Gallery and is also active in the local arts community, serving on the board of the Martinez Arts Association. More of her work can be seen at ArtbyDH.net.

The public is invited to meet the artists and enjoy the new exhibition during the First Friday reception on November 6, from 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. in downtown Martinez. The evening will also include the gallery's monthly artwork giveaway. Visitors can enter to win 'Sea Legs,' an original painting by Hillman.

'Celebrate!' offers plenty of opportunities to discover original art by local artists, and perhaps find a one-of-a-kind piece for holiday giving.

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. www.mainstreetarts.net

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



'Celebrate Martinez History' by Samantha McNally



'Celebration' by Pamela McCauley



'Sea Legs' by Denise Hillman

JOR FINE ART GALLERY

'Season of Light' Illuminates JOR Fine Art Gallery in Clayton

JOR Fine Art Gallery announces the opening of its brand-new exhibition, 'Season of Light'.

As the holiday season approaches, the extraordinary talents of 32 featured artists are on display, filling the space with creativity, color, and inspiration.

'Season of Light' celebrates artistic expression through a beautiful collection of original artwork, ranging from stunning oil paintings and contemporary abstracts to unique, handcrafted jewelry and more.

Each piece tells its own story, inviting visitors to discover the beauty, imagination, and individuality behind every artist's creation.

Meet the artists, explore their remarkable work, and experience the magic of art in the heart of historic downtown Clayton at the special artists' reception on Saturday, November 14, 2026, from 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. The opening reception is free and open to the public.

JOR Fine Art Gallery is located at 1026 Oak Street in Clayton. jorfineartgallery.





Above: 'Lake Herman Clouds', landscape by Annette Batchelor. Below: "Togetherness' Photography by Alex Ezersky

calendar of events

GREATER
CONCORD
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
concordchamber.com | (925) 685-1181
kcabral@concordchamber.com

Nov. 11 Veterans Day

Nov. 26 Thanksgiving

Dec. 7 Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day

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 hour 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/

November 14 VFW Post 1525 Auxiliary Craft and Gift Fair 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Two floors of vendors with handmade gifts, handy household items, delicious treats, and vintage/antique wares. Free admission. Free ornament for children under 12. Hot drinks and snacks. Bring your own phone/ camera and take a holiday photo with Santa Claus. Veterans Memorial Hall, 2290 Willow Pass Rd. Concord

Clayton

November 11 Annual Veterans Day Ceremony - 11:00 a.m. Join Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1525, its auxiliary, and the cities of Concord and Clayton in honoring the courage, service, and sacrifice of themen and women who served in times of peace and times of war. Todos Santos Plaza, , Downtown Concord.

December 5 CBCA Clayton Holidays in The Grove 5:00 p.m. Meet in The Grove for an evening filled with music, family fun, warm treats, and the magical lighting of the community holiday tree. Enjoy Merrie Olde Carolers, CVCHS Marching band,Mt. Diablo 2nd Grade students performance, refreshemnts, photos with Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus, and the official tree lighting.

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.

November 7 Arbor Day Tree Plaanting Celebration - Volunteers are needed to plant trees on this day to make Sun Terrace Park greener Bring closed-toe shoes and gardening gloves. The City will provide trees, tools, and rubber gloves. Register at cityofcocnoird.org/treevolunteer.

November 8 Convergence: Miles and Coltrane at 100 Join the Muse Jazz Collective and celebrate 1100 years of Miles Davis and John Coltrane. Two shows, 5:30 and 7:30 p.m. Tickets $25. The Vineyard, 1970 Grant Street, across from Todos Santos Park.

November 11 Annual Veterans Day Ceremony - 11:00 a.m. Join Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1525, its auxiliary, and the cities of Concord and Clayton in honoring the courage, service, and sacrifice of themen and women who served in times of peace and times of war. Todos Santos Plaza, , Downtown Concord.

November 14 Concord Repair Workshop. Get your things fixed for free. Clothing, small household items, bicycles, appliances, jewelry and more. 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.Willow Pass community Center, 2748 E. Olivera Road.

November 14 Candy Cane Lane Craft and Gift Fair - 10:0 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Explore two floors of handmade gifts, free ornaments for children under 12, hot drinks, photo with Santa Claus (bring your own camera). Hosted by Veterans of foreign Wars Post 1525 and its auxiliary. Concord Veterans Memorial Building, 2290 Willow Pass rd., near Todos Santos Plaza.

November 26 Concord Turkey Trot Thanksgiving morning at 8:00 a.m. at Newhall Community Park in Concord. Join the community for the annual Concord Turkey Trot, benefiting Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa and its work providing nutritious meals and groceries to neighbors experiencing food insecurity throughout Contra Costa County. Registration is available by scanning the QR code.

November 26 Free Thanksgiving Day Community Meal = 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Giving Thanks At Thanksgiving (GTAT) is hosting their 20th annual free Thanksgiving Day meal at First Lutheran Church, 4000 Concord Blvd, Concord.

The community is invited to enjoy a full traditional meal and receive fresh fruit and warm gifts to take home.

GTAT has served up to 300 free meals each year on Thanksgiving Day to encourage community togetherness and reduce food insecurity.

If you would like to attend, get involved, donate, or volunteer to serve your community, go to gtatconcord.org for more information. Your support is greatly appreciated!

November 29 Sugar Plum After Dark Help Concord's second oldest operating restaurant, celebrate it's 67th years in business. 5:00 - 8:00 p.m. Serving burgers, shakes, fries, and good vibes, just like in the old days. Plus a select lunch menu favorites. Photo booth, raffle, classic cars 1815 Colfax St. Concord.

December 4 Tree Lighting and Mayor's Sing-Along - Enjoy pictures with Santa, letters to Santa, real reindeer, carriage rides, crafts, and shopping at Santa's Village by the Makers Boulevard. Holiday Sip and Stroll. Todos Santos Plaza 5:30-8:00 p.m.

December 5 Gift and Craft Fair 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. More than 70 local artists and craftsmakers present items such asjewelry, knitted , goods, quilts, embroidered items, decorations and more. Concord Senior Center, 2727 Parkside Circle. Questions? Contact 925-671-3320 or email concordsc@cityofconcord.org. Website: cityofconcord.org/SCEvents

December 7 Pearl Harbor Remembrance Ceremony -3:45 p.m. at Cal State University East Bay, 4700 Ygnacio Valley Rd. Mount Diablo Beacon lighting at 5:00 p.m. Chuck Kohler, the only Pearl Harbor survivor remaining in California will be guest speaker.

Pleasant Hill

Night Market First and third Friday of the month until Nov. 20. Food trucks, desserts, beer and wine garden and activities for all ages. Face painting, petting zoo, bounce house and more.

November 21 AAUW From STEM to Service Walnut Creek City Councilmember Cindy Darling will be speaking to **AAUW Pleasant HIll- Martinez** about her STEM career and pathway to public service on the Walnut Creek City Council. 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at El Tapitio, 40 Golf Club Road, Pleasant Hill. Confirm reservations by Nov. 16. $30. Send check to AAUW Pleasant Hill-Martinez Branch, Attention Claudia Bass, 1706 Endriss Drive, Martinez, CA 94553.

Martinez

November 6 Dia de Muertos & Martinez First Fridays in the Plaza. 6:00 - 9:00 p.m. Storytime, Ballet Folklorico de Ricardo Valequez, Mariachi, Sugar Skull Face paint and more downtown altar walk.

November 11 Veterans Day Ceremony at Alhambra Pioneer Cemetery 10:00 a.m. and at Ignacio Plaza 11:00 a.m. honoring all those who serve and have served in United States Military.

November 14 Psychedelic Bingo. Doors open at 5:00 p.m. Games at 6:00 p.m. A Soroptimist International of Martinez fundraiser. Martinez Refining Company 1635 Pacheco Blvd. $60 for 10 cards, box meal, and raffle. Ticket sales end Nov. 12.

November 14 Sesquicentennial Hike 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. at Old Briones Trailhead. Noderate , dirt trail. A docent led hike.

November 21 Harvest Craft Fair at Martinez Senior Center, 818 Green St. 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Local vendors will be offering handcrafted goods, seasonal décor, and unique gifts. Sip complimentary hot chocolate while exploring autumn-inspired creations from artisans and crafters.

November 29 Festival of Lights at the Waterfront 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. at Martinez Marina. Santa, music and refreshments at 5:00, Lighted paddle boat parade at 5:30, Lighted power boat parade at 6:00.

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

At the Martinez Campbell Theater

636 Ward St.

>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

November 20_ January 18 Walnut Creek on Ice Opens Skating, 90-foot ice slide, lessons, fire pits and more at Civic Park. 1365 Civic Drive in dowtown Walnut Creek. For tickets, hours, reservations go to: Walnutcreekonice.com.

Merry Mixers



Social Dancing 7:30 to 10:00 p.m. Free coffee and water, no-host bar, $20 corkage. Outside liquor prohibited. $20 Guest, $15 member. Walnut Creek Elks Lodge 1475 Creekside Drive. 925-969-9693 Membership dues $25 merrymixers.life

>November 6 - Bob Gutierrez Trio, preceded by a 7:00 p.m. 2-step lesson**.**

>November 20 TAKE 2 preceded by 6:30 potluck

>December 4 100 PRUF preceded by 7:00 p.m. Waltz Across Texas lesson

> December 18 Nob Hill Sounds HOLIDAY BALL & potluck

Lesher Center

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

> November 13-14 Diablo Ballet's 'The Nutcracker Suite' Ticketholders are invited to a complementary post-performance event on November 14 after the 2 p.m. performance for children and parents at the Lesher Center lobby; a festive meet and greet with the cast, a ballet class demonstration, autograph signing, and more. Shows: Nov. 13 7:30 p.m., Nov. 14 at 2:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

>November 21 Charcuterie Workshop at the Bedfor Gallery 1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. Join Walnut Creek's Honey & Brie. Guests will learn the art of styling a beautiful charcuterie board just in time for holiday entertaining. Using a curated selection of delicious cheeses, cured meats, and accompaniments, each participant will create and take home a board to enjoy. Afterward, be sure to visit Craft Fest, the Bedford's annual holiday marketplace!

Crockett:

> November 7 Emporium first Saturday - 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p,m. Loards Ice Cream Pop Up at Visitors Center. Emprium lobby will have arts and crafts featuring Little Dolly Bakeshop.

Lafayette

>November 20 & 22. "Dream Radio" The Diablo Women's Chorale fall concert. Songs about dreams, love, hope,memory and imagination. Nov. 20 at 7:00 p.m. and Nov. 22 at 3:00 p.m. at Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, 49 Knox Drive,. diablowomenschorale.org.

Pittsburg:

>December 3 SIR Branch 19 Monthly luncheon. 11 AM Social hour. Lunch at noon Pittsburg Elks' Lodge, 200 Marina Blvd. This will be a Holiday Party including spouses and significant others. entertainment by Clayton Valley Charter High School Girls Choir. All are welcome. "Make friends for life." www.sirinc2.org/branch19 or call: 925 338-1996 for more information.

Library Events

CLAYTON
6125 Clayton Road, 925-673-0659.

November 19 Teen Thursday: Mario Kart 4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Teen Program (6th - 12th grade). Race to the Library to spend an hour competing with your friends in Mario Kart 8. Generously sponsored by the Clayton Community Library Foundation.

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*



Holiday Food & Wine Gifts

Edible gifts are especially welcome during the holidays. They are thoughtfully made, easy to enjoy, and free from the return concerns that often accompany more traditional presents. This Curried Cranberry Snack Mix is a festive, flavorful homemade offering that pairs beautifully with wine.

For an elegant presentation, spoon the finished mix into clear cellophane bags, glass jars, or decorative tins. Tie each package with ribbon, add an ingredient label, and tuck in a small serving suggestion.

Tart cranberries and warm Indian spices give the mix its seasonal character. Curry lends depth and warmth, cranberries contribute bright sweetness, and French-fried onions provide a savory counterpoint that naturally invites a wine pairing.

A fruit-forward red with moderate tannins is ideal. Grenache complements the spices while Pinot Noir mirrors the cranberry notes without overwhelming the mix. Although nearly any red wine will pair well, a slight chill makes this sweet-savory combination particularly refreshing.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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



Curried Cranberry Snack Mix

INGREDIENTS

6 cups Corn Chex
3 cups Rice Chex
1 can (6 ounces) French-fried onions
2 cups miniature pretzels
1-1/2 cups honey-roasted peanuts
1/3 cup butter, cubed
3 tablespoons honey
2 tablespoons honey mustard
1-1/2 teaspoons curry powder
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1-1/2 cups dried cranberries, divided

DIRECTIONS

In a large bowl, combine the first five ingredients.

In a small microwave-safe bowl, combine the butter, honey, honey mustard, curry powder, and garlic powder. Microwave, uncovered, on high for one to one and a half minutes, stirring every 30 seconds, until the mixture is smooth.

Pour over the cereal mixture and toss until evenly coated.

Transfer half of the mixture to a large microwave-safe bowl.

Microwave, uncovered, on high for two to three minutes, stirring after each minute.

Stir in 3/4 cup cranberries, then immediately spread the mixture onto waxed paper and allow it to cool completely. Repeat with the remaining cereal mixture and cranberries.

Store the cooled mix in an airtight container at room temperature to preserve its crunch or package for individual gift containers.

Yield: 4 quarts



SUBMIT YOUR CALENDAR ENTRIES

by the 20th of the month before Issue month. diablogazette@gmail.com







theRIGHT move
by Terrylynn Fisher Broker Associate
buystagesell.com

TO ADU or not to ADU? That is the question.

An ADU (Accessory Dwelling Unit) or JADU (Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit) used to be uncommon. For this article, ADU refers to both ADU and/or JADU. With home/rental prices rising and people preferring their own space to roommates, HGTV and Tiny House Nation influences have expanded our thinking about adding one or renting an ADU or JADU.

In fact, not long ago, it would be typical for folks to ask for a property with an ADU for elderly parents or grandparents or for a home office. Lately, we've seen 30 and 40 somethings buying their first home with an ADU for a younger sibling, best friend or relative to live in. They see the benefits:

1) the ADU dweller can help qualify (depending on your lender) for the loan, and/or the rent helps with the mortgage payments.

2) it reduces the uncertainty, for renters, as landlord circumstances dictate their rent or when they have to move. It seems our expanded thinking has created flexibility for long term life decisions about how we live in our home and/or our needs now and later.

A UC Berkeley study found properties in the Bay Area with permitted ADU's sold for an average of 25-35% more than those without an ADU. NAR (National Association of Realtors) survey found 60% of buyers would pay more for a home with an ADU. Studies show garage conversions have the best value to cost ratio because there is an existing structure when the city may have other lot restrictions.

Factors that determine value of the ADU would be whether permitted or unpermitted; quality of construction; separated utilities; rental income history; size and layout; architectural compatibility with the main home and neighborhood.

As with anything, most cities in Contra Costa County have free plans already approved for an ADU. The city can tell you what is possible on your lot. My guess is that in years to come there will be more sales with ADU or JADU as a factor than homes without them.

For those who work from home, home school, have live-in childcare, a nanny, parents, friends or relatives living with them, an ADU or JADU giving them private spaces can be a huge benefit and cost savings.

Due to publishing errors, this article has been edited and resubmitted from the previous month.



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

All-natural Composting Guide



Composting leaves and grass produces heat. Photo: Shutterstock

Do you maintain your own backyard composting bin or pile? You should.

Recycling your garden clippings and dead leaves through active composting in winter produces all-natural fertilizer to replenish organic nutrients for summer-depleted garden soils. Here is an easy guide to follow to produce rich compost amendment for your garden.

Home Composting Setup: First, find a sunny location in your backyard away from foot traffic. Sunshine promotes rapid breakdown of materials into nutrition-packed organic soil. For fast and controllable home composting, purchase an open-bottom home composting bin from your favorite online retailer (<$50). A slower method is to pile up yard waste and leaves on the ground. Avoid rotating compost drums. They don't connect with soil microbes and worms that help with the breakdown.

Add Green Material: Start filling your bin with four- to six- inch layer of green plant or lawn clippings. Cut the clippings to four inches or less. Exclude larger twigs and branches as they break down too slowly. Add vegetable food waste and table scraps to the green material but no animal products. Coffee grounds are rich in nitrogen and acids and are a great addition.

Add Brown Material: Brown material consists mostly of tree or deciduous bush fallen leaves. Don't throw excess leaves into your green waste container. Rake them into a storage pile next to your compost bin to save for later addition. Add a four- to six- inch layer of brown material to your bin or pile. The ideal composting mix is 50% green matter for nutrients and 50% brown material for bulk.

Mix and Add Water: You're "cooking" the material now until the lower layers turn into dense, rich organic amendment. With a stick or long implement, stir the green and brown material into a uniform mix. If lower layers are already cooking, mix those into the newer material. This transfers microbes and worms into fresh upper layers. Add a four to five minute stream of hose water to thoroughly soak bin material. Let it sit until next time.

Repeat and Harvest: Mix the material and add more water once a week during warm months, and every two weeks during cool months. Add more material over time but keep the mix about 50/50 green and brown. Most new composting bins have a bottom door to access and check low layers for completeness. Grab a handful of material, scrunch it in your hand then sniff it. If the brown material has no signs of green matter, holds together when you smush, and smells "earthy", it's ready to harvest and add to garden beds. Store compost in a container if you can't use it immediately. It will keep.

How Long to Harvest? It depends! In warm weather, Fresh material cooks in eight to 10 weeks but in winter months it may take three to four months. For quicker results, add a composting thermometer to the pile. Temperatures should be kept above 80 F. for slow composting, above 100 F. for active cooking, but not exceeding 135 F. which microbes and worms cannot tolerate. Sunshine and green material add heat and more brown material cools overheating bins.

Fall is a great time to start your all-natural composting, so that your home-grown amendment can be added to beds next spring.

Seasonal Notes: Trim back summer vegetable plants to ground level. Cut them to three to four inch lengths and add to your composting bin or pile. Do not trim spring-blooming plants or trees as you will remove their bloom buds. Clean up leaves and weeds from around your fruit trees to prep the area for winter dormant season, reducing overwintering pests and pathogens.

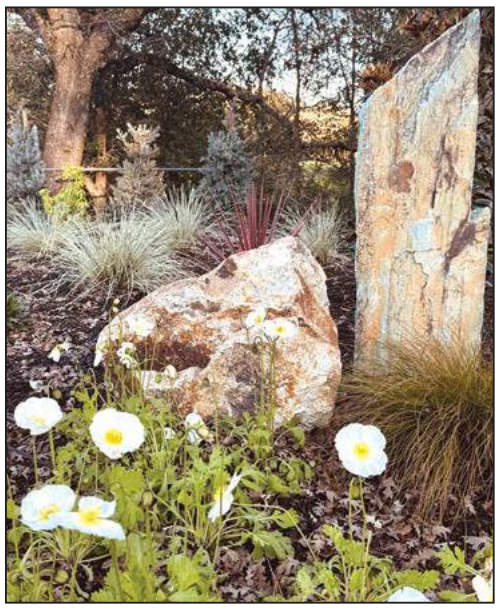
Email your comments and questions to: NakedGardener@diablogazette.com



Harvesting fresh compost. Putting my grandson to work.

The Art of Landscaping with Rocks and Boulders

by Angela Dawne, Landscape Designer



Landscaping with rocks and boulders offers a powerful way to transform a basic yard into a dynamic, textured environment.

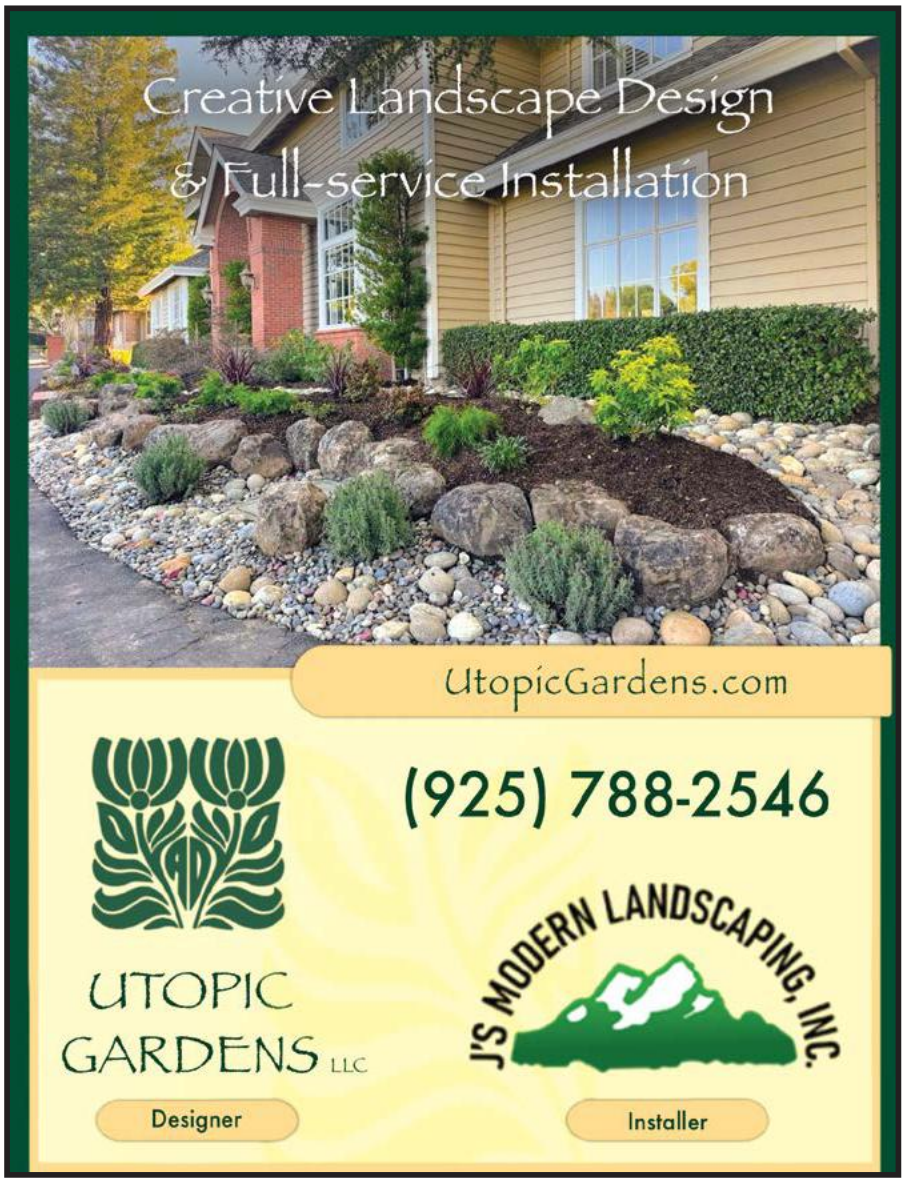
When strategically and artistically placed, large boulders introduce natural interest, unique focal points, and raw details that traditional plantings alone cannot achieve. They break up the monotony of flat lawns, acting as enduring anchor points that shift the visual scale of your outdoor space. Beyond pure aesthetics, larger stones serve a critical architectural purpose in modern sustainable design.

For homeowners implementing drought-resistant xeriscaping or fire-resistant landscaping, a massive boulder acts as a visual bridge. It gracefully ties together smaller stone elements, river cobble, and fine gravel, creating a cohesive, layered look that feels intentional rather than barren.

However, achieving this natural balance requires careful planning. If boulders are placed haphazardly without considering their orientation or depth, they can end up looking jumbled, artificial, and chaotic. Instead of enhancing the yard, they detract from the entire design.

Furthermore, surrounding gravel beds absorb and radiate intense ambient heat. This trapped heat can severely stress nearby vegetation. To counter this, you must choose heat-tolerant, resilient plants that actively thrive in rocky microclimates.

Ultimately, success lies in mimicking the world around us. To get the placement right, look to natural environments for inspiration. Take a hike through local trails, canyons, or riverbeds to closely observe how nature naturally nests, clusters, and embeds stones into the earth. By studying these organic patterns, you can confidently replicate nature's flawless design in your own backyard, creating a rugged, beautiful landscape built to last.



Around Martinez



Martinez is Taking Proactive Steps to Prepare for High Tides and Winter Storms

by Brianne Zorn, Mayor, City of Martinez



January 2026 flooding at the Martinez Marina from king tides.

As Martinez heads into the winter season, the City is taking proactive steps to prepare for potentially challenging weather conditions, including El Niño storms, king tides, and elevated sea levels associated with Kelvin waves.

At the October 21 City Council meeting, Council received an update on the City's storm preparations and the potential impacts of these combined conditions. While no one can predict exactly what this winter will bring, preparing early gives our community a better chance of reducing damage, protecting infrastructure, and keeping residents safe.

City crews are clearing creeks and drainage areas, have prepared sandbag distribution sites, and coordinated crews to respond to storm-related issues. The City has also been preparing marina infrastructure for elevated water levels, including reinforcing docks and assessing the potential impacts of flooding on marina parking areas and electrical systems. These efforts are intended to address foreseeable risks before storms arrive, rather than waiting to respond after damage occurs.

Martinez faces particular challenges because of its location along the water and its low-lying shoreline. We are one of many Bay Area communities vulnerable to sea level rise and coastal flooding. While seasonal extreme king tides are known to occur at our waterfront, expected Kelvin waves this winter may further increase tidal elevations by up to a foot. The risk of flooding is compounded when these conditions coincide with heavy rainfall and strong winter storms.

The City is also looking beyond this winter. City and county planners, along with state and regional regulators, are increasingly incorporating sea level rise projections into their review of development projects and infrastructure improvements. Planning for these risks now is essential to building a more resilient community for the future.

Residents can help by signing up for Martinez Alerts at martinezalerts.com, following the guidance to avoid the marina or the marina parking lots when the City alerts of flooding events, and utilizing the GoMartinez app to report drainage related issues to our Public Works department. For more information, visit: cityofmartinez.org/storm.

City to Remove Cardboard Disposal at the Marina Due to Projected Storms

From Jill Bergman, Community and Economic Development Director

The Marina will experience four significant high-tide and storm-related events over the next four months.

The first occurs on October 28, with tides expected to reach approximately seven feet. To prevent materials from entering the Bay during these events, and because of ongoing illegal dumping, the City will permanently be removing the Marina cardboard dumpster.

This dumpster has been provided as a courtesy for cardboard only. It was never intended to serve as a long-term or general trash solution, and increasing misuse has made the current setup unsustainable.

During the removal, businesses will need to make alternative arrangements for cardboard recycling. Recycling services for cardboard are free for all businesses, provided there is space to place a recycling bin. This is important when discussing shared options with neighboring businesses, as cardboard recycling does not increase anyone's service costs. Businesses are encouraged to coordinate and share recycling solutions whenever possible.

The City expects to restore access for cardboard disposal once the rebuilt Marina trash enclosure is completed and operational at the beginning of the new year. At that time, the enclosure will accommodate cardboard only.

The City will continue to monitor conditions and evaluate whether the new enclosure remains the appropriate long-term solution.

Businesses with questions are encouraged to reach out if they have questions or need help identifying recycling options. 925-372-3500.

Martinez Community Foundation Partners with City of Martinez To Support Local Non-Profit Organizations

For the second year, the Martinez Community Foundation and the City of Martinez have partnered to award monetary grants to Martinez non-profit organizations through the Martinez Community Foundation's grant program and the City's Community Groups Funding Program.

Marta Van Loan, Foundation President, expressed her pleasure and that of the review committee, in reviewing the grant applications and learning of all the good work being done by these groups across Martinez.

Recipient organizations represent a wide range of activities from the Martinez Sturgeon Boosters to support Martinez Sturgeon ballplayers and community outreach to Grace Episcopal Church and their Laundry Love program, which provides the dignity of having clean clothes to unhoused individuals in Martinez.

"This partnership demonstrates what can be done when the City and the Martinez Community Foundation work together to support our community. "

November 2026

COMMUNITY EVENTS

CITY OF MARTINEZ 150 YEARS 1876–2026

11/05	Bay Area SunShares Informational Webinar #3
11/06	First Fridays: Dia de Muertos, at Downtown Martinez
11/07	Volunteer Community Cleanup, at Morello Hills Park
11/07	Downtown D&D
11/11	Veterans Day Ceremony, at Alhambra Pioneer Cemetery
11/11	Veterans Day Ceremony, at Ignacio Plaza
11/14	Sesquicentennial Hike, at Old Briones Trailhead
11/21	Community Volunteer Cleanup, at Downtown Martinez
11/21	Harvest Craft Fair, at Martinez Senior Center, 818 Green Street
11/28	Santa House Visits Start, at Downtown Martinez
11/29	Lighted Boat Parade, at Martinez Marina
Sundays	Downtown Farmers Market

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

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

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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. PAPAJAKELARSON.COM



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Personalized bricks become a permanent part of the memorial.

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Help bring this tribute to life with your generous support.

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Every contribution helps us reach our goal and honor a hero.

DeSaulnier Town Hall Focuses on Refinery Safety, Air Quality and Public Accountability

Adapted from: Craig Lazeretti, https://martineznewsandviews.substack.com/



U.S. Rep. Mark DeSaulnier, flanked by City Council members Debbie McKillop, Jay Howard and Satinder S. Malhi, poses after the town hall with Marathon refinery steelworkers.

MARTINEZ — Refinery safety, air quality and public notification systems took center stage at a community town hall hosted by Congressman Mark DeSaulnier, who was joined by Contra Costa County and Bay Area Air District officials to discuss ongoing concerns surrounding local refinery operations.

The discussion came amid increased hazardous-material notifications associated with maintenance work at the Martinez Refining Company (MRC), lingering concerns following the refinery's February 2025 fire, and a labor dispute at the nearby Marathon Martinez Renewable Fuels facility.

Officials outlined efforts to strengthen refinery oversight, improve communication with residents and ensure that industrial operations comply with environmental and public safety regulations.

One improvement is Contra Costa County's upgraded Hazmat Notifications Dashboard, which provides residents with information about refinery incidents, hazardous-material notifications and corresponding alert levels.

Nicole Heath, assistant chief of Hazardous Materials Programs with the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, explained that many recent notifications from MRC involved flexigas associated with ongoing maintenance.

MRC previously described flexigas as treated, low-emission fuel gas routinely used in refinery furnaces and burned through a designated flare system.

Residents can access the dashboard at cccfpd.org/362/Hazmat-Notifications-Dashboard.

Refinery Safety and County Oversight

DeSaulnier emphasized the importance of balancing industrial operations and economic interests with the safety and health of surrounding communities.

Drawing on his experience as a Contra Costa County supervisor and Bay Area Air District board member, he recalled incidents that prompted the county to adopt its Industrial Safety Ordinance (ISO), a framework developed with participation from labor, industry and government.

"It's worked remarkably well, and I'm very, very proud of what it's resulted in," DeSaulnier said.

The congressman stressed that his goal is not to close refineries but to ensure they operate responsibly.

"I don't want to shut these plants down," he said, acknowledging the petroleum industry's substantial role in the national economy and the difficulty of transitioning away from fossil fuels overnight.

Three of Contra Costa County's four refineries operate in unincorporated areas, placing them under county jurisdiction for certain land-use, zoning, health and safety regulations. They include MRC, Marathon Martinez Renewable Fuels and the Phillips 66 Rodeo Renewable Energy Complex. Chevron's refinery operates within Richmond city limits.

February Refinery Fire Remains a Concern

The February 2025 fire at MRC also figured prominently in the discussion. The blaze occurred during a major maintenance shutdown, known as a turnaround, when contract workers opened an incorrect flange, allowing hydrocarbons to escape and ignite.

During a question-and-answer session, DeSaulnier defended SB 54, a California law requiring refinery contract workers to complete or enroll in approved apprenticeship programs.

A draft report by consulting firm JEM Advisors raised concerns that the apprenticeship requirements could exclude experienced turnaround specialists.

DeSaulnier, who chaired the state Senate Labor Committee when the legislation was considered, defended the importance of apprenticeship standards and properly trained, well-compensated refinery workers.

Community Funding and Future Improvements

Martinez Mayor Brianne Zorn reported that the Bay Area Air District recently approved more than $40 million in community benefit funding for Benicia and surrounding communities affected by refinery operations. Martinez's application for similar funding is expected to move forward in 2027.

Balancing Industry and Clean Energy

DeSaulnier also addressed California's transition toward cleaner energy, citing the growing popularity of electric vehicles and the conversion of petroleum refineries to renewable-fuel production.

He noted that battery-electric vehicles accounted for approximately 25% of new vehicle sales in the Bay Area over the past two years, according to state figures he cited.

He also discussed federal investments in electric vehicle charging infrastructure and the importance of maintaining energy production while developing cleaner alternatives.

The town hall underscored a continuing challenge for Contra Costa County: protecting refinery jobs and economic stability while demanding stronger safeguards for workers, nearby neighborhoods and the environment.

For Martinez residents, the immediate priorities remain clear: preventing another major refinery incident, receiving timely and accurate public warnings, and ensuring that refinery operators are held accountable for safety and environmental performance.

Air District Fines to Fund Community Improvements in Martinez

Adapted from: Craig Lazeretti, https://martineznewsandviews.substack.com/

Millions in refinery penalties will support local environmental projects, school air filtration systems and improved air quality.

Millions of dollars collected in penalties against the Martinez Refining Company (MRC) will be reinvested in projects benefiting Martinez and surrounding communities, according to Dr. Philip Fine, executive officer of the Bay Area Air District.

Speaking at a recent community town hall hosted by Congressman Mark DeSaulnier, Fine explained how the agency monitors refinery operations, enforces air quality regulations and holds polluters accountable.

The Air District recently reached an approximately $10 million settlement with MRC covering numerous violations over several years, including the 2022 spent catalyst release. More than $6 million of that settlement will go to the Air District, with most of those funds designated for community improvements.

Under a policy adopted two years ago, the district directs penalty revenues toward communities affected by violations rather than depositing the money into its general fund.

Fine said approximately $8 million from available penalties is being considered for a local grant program, with public input helping determine how the funds should be distributed.

The settlement also requires MRC to contribute $600,000 toward supplemental environmental projects including $450,000 to public schools for air filtration systems.



Beyond financial penalties, MRC must implement operational improvements, including enhanced emissions monitoring and maintaining pollution control equipment during maintenance, startups and shutdowns.

Fine explained that the Air District regulates pollution-emitting facilities through permits, monitoring, inspections and enforcement. Refineries undergo frequent inspections, including unannounced visits, to ensure compliance.

He also encouraged residents to participate in shaping how community benefit funds are spent and to report suspected air pollution violations.

"If you see or smell or experience an air pollution problem, whether it's from the refinery or something else, we want to know about it," Fine said.

Residents can report air quality concerns 24 hours a day at 1-800-334-ODOR or online through the Air District's complaint portal. Emergencies should be reported to 911.

Martinez Unified School Board Promotes Interim Superintendent to Permanent Role

By Craig Lazeretti, martineznewsandviews.substack.com/

Pleased with the job she has done running the school district on an interim basis, the Martinez Unified School District Board of Education unanimously named Janelle Eyet as its superintendent at Monday's meeting.

Eyet, who has spent the past 15 of her 25-plus years in education with MUSD, was given a three-year contract, effective from Oct. 1 through June 30, 2029, with a base annual salary of $270,000. Eyet took over as interim superintendent in late April following the school board's 3-2 vote to fire Gigi Patrick without cause. In appointing Eyet, the board opted to forgo a search process for a new superintendent.

"Janelle has demonstrated a deep understanding of our district, a strong commitment to our students and community, and a collaborative, thoughtful approach to leadership," school Board President Tania E. Brugger said following Eyet's appointment. "During the past six months as interim superintendent, she has provided strong leadership and demonstrated her commitment to building trust, supporting our staff, and keeping students at the center of our work."

Eyet's elevation to superintendent parallels that in 2022 of Helen Rossi, another longtime administrator who was selected to lead the district following the abrupt resignation of then-superintendent Julie Synyard. Synard, like Patrick, was hired from outside the district following an extensive search process. Rossi, who also had a previous stint as interim superintendent, led the district until her retirement at the end of the 2024-25 school year.

Eyet's previous administrative roles include program manager, principal, director and assistant superintendent.

"I am honored by this appointment, and I am grateful for the opportunity to continue to serve Martinez Unified School District as superintendent," Eyet told the board following her appointment. "Having spent the last 15 years in MUSD, I know firsthand what makes this district so special. I have had the privilege of working alongside dedicated educators, classified professionals, administrators, families and community partners who deeply care about our students.

"My commitment is to lead with integrity, to listen carefully, to communicate honestly, and to make thoughtful decisions that keep students at the center of our work."

Eyet is MUSD's fifth superintendent since 2020, following CJ Cammack, Synyard, Rossi and Patrick, who is suing the district in Contra Costa County Superior Court over allegations of breaching her contract and racial, age, sexual and gender discrimination. A week after being placed on paid administrative leave, Patrick, who is Black, was fired in a split school board vote April 27. No reasons were given for her termination.



MUSD Superintendent Janelle Eyet

Also at Monday's meeting, the board approved a contract with BHM Construction, LLC for the Alhambra High School Building F replacement and campus modernization project at a cost of $33,587,677, approximately $4.8 million above the original project allocation. BHM was the lowest of four bidders for the project, which in addition to replacing a 12-room classroom building with a 17-room one, was expanded to include campus security and fencing upgrades, cafeteria and commons improvements, library improvements, mechanical, electrical, plumbing and HVAC and other infrastructure upgrades. The construction bids ranged from $30.4 million to $37.1 million; other costs approved Monday for the project include the contracted amount for construction management, architect bridging documents, inspections, permitting, and a contingency amount.

Chief Business Official Andy Cannon explained to the board than the higher-than-allocated cost "is a culprit of a lot of the construction escalations that we're seeing, and it may continue."

The project, to be funded with voter-approved Measure O bond funds, still fell within the $5 million contingency that had been budgeted for potential cost over-runs.

Fortunately for the district, it has a secondary fund of roughly $17.6 million (projected to increase to $19.2 million by the end of the fiscal year), consisting of state funds from the Office of Public School Construction, that it can tap for construction projects as needed. That may be necessary, as the district has other projects in the pipeline as part of its Facilities Master Plan, including an Adult Education project for which it has reserved $16 million.

"I would say at this point in time, it's very likely that we're going to see cost overages, just by the nature of what these recent bids were that have come in," Cannon told the board. "Most likely, I will be asking the board for consideration to use more (of the state funds) to continue the projects we have, or we would possibly scale back those projects."

Former Martinez School Superintendent Sues District, Alleging Discrimination and Wrongful Termination

Adapted from Craig Lazeretti, martineznewsandviews.substack.com/

Former Martinez Unified School District Superintendent Gigi Patrick has filed a lawsuit against the district, alleging discrimination, harassment, breach of contract and unfair treatment leading to her termination last April.



Former MUSD Superintendent Gigi Patrick

Patrick, believed to be the district's first Black superintendent, was dismissed in a 3-2 school board vote after serving less than one year. Her lawsuit, filed September 24 in Contra Costa County Superior Court, seeks unspecified damages and a jury trial.

The complaint alleges that Patrick, 59 at the time of her dismissal, was subjected to heightened scrutiny and unfavorable treatment because of her race, age and gender.

According to the lawsuit, Patrick was "subjected to heightened, unequal, and shifting scrutiny not imposed upon similarly situated white executive employees and administrators."

Patrick was unanimously hired in 2025 following a consultant-led recruitment process and began serving July 1, replacing retiring Superintendent Helen Rossi. She previously spent 30 years in administrative positions with the Vallejo City School District.

Sudden Dismissal Raises Questions

Patrick's departure came after a series of closed-session board discussions in April.

According to the lawsuit, Patrick was notified April 8 that concerns regarding her performance would be discussed by the board, but she was not given sufficient details or an opportunity to respond.

On April 14, board President Tania Brugger and Trustee Logan Campbell reportedly informed Patrick that three of the five trustees no longer supported her continued employment and wanted to negotiate a mutual separation. Patrick declined to resign.

The board subsequently voted April 20 to place her on paid administrative leave. The lawsuit claims her computer access was immediately disabled, she was required to surrender district equipment and identification, and she was escorted from the workplace after being given only minutes to collect personal belongings.

Her termination was announced April 27.

Brugger, Campbell and Trustee Brenda Leal supported both actions. Trustees Courtney Masella-O'Brien and Anne Horack Martin opposed them.

Contract and Discrimination Allegations

Patrick's three-year employment agreement permitted the school board to terminate her employment without cause. However, the contract also outlined procedures for addressing unsatisfactory performance, including a six-month improvement period following an unfavorable evaluation.

Patrick alleges that she received no documented improvement plan, meaningful corrective counseling or fair opportunity to address performance concerns.

The district agreed to pay Patrick $282,344.02 in severance under her contract. Nevertheless, her lawsuit claims she was denied certain compensation, benefits and other contractual entitlements.

The complaint specifically names Leal, alleging that she repeatedly questioned Patrick's proposals and decisions beyond normal board oversight, interfering with her authority as superintendent.

Leal declined to comment.

Patrick further alleges that district officials failed to intervene despite knowing, or having reason to know, about the unequal treatment.

The lawsuit claims the alleged discrimination caused economic losses, emotional distress, humiliation and damage to Patrick's professional reputation.

These allegations have not been established in court.

Another Leadership Change

Patrick's dismissal continues a period of leadership turnover at Martinez Unified. The district has had five superintendents since 2020, including CJ Cammack, Julie Synyard, Helen Rossi, Patrick and longtime district administrator Eyet.

Synyard, another superintendent hired from outside the district, resigned in February 2022 following months of uncertainty surrounding her tenure. Rossi subsequently served until her retirement in 2025.

Eyet, who assumed the interim superintendent position following Patrick's departure, was subsequently considered for a three-year contract carrying a $270,000 annual base salary.

Patrick's lawsuit now places the circumstances surrounding her brief tenure and dismissal before the courts, raising questions about employment practices, board oversight and the district's handling of its top administrative position.

Hospice's Tree of Lights Ceremony Resumes in Pleasant Hill

by David Scholz

Pleasant Hill's holiday kicks off with the annual Hospice East Bay tree lighting ceremony on Wednesday, November 4, at 5:30 p.m., one year after the long-standing tree for this traditional event unexpectedly fell.

The new Tree of Lights in Pleasant Hill is located on the City Hall lawn at 100 Gregory Lane, adjacent to Trelany Road.

"The Tree of Lights has become a meaningful holiday tradition, offering families and community members an opportunity to gather, reflect, and celebrate the lives of those they wish to remember," Mats I. Wallin, Chief Development Officer with Hospice East Bay, said.

Approximately 1,000 warm white LED lights were installed by All That Glows, a lighting company that has handled Tree of Lights installations for many years on the prior tree.

The City of Pleasant Hill partnered with Hospice East Bay to establish the new location and support the continuation of this cherished community tradition. The Pleasant Hill Community Foundation also provided financial support for the cost of the lights and signage.

"We are very grateful to the City of Pleasant Hill, who will provide the tree and will pay for running electricity to the tree," said Wallin. "The Pleasant Hill Community Foundation will underwrite the cost of putting lights up and pay for the signage, which we anticipate costing around $5,000."

The search for a new tree began immediately after the original tree Valley oak, located along Gregory Lane just west of Cleaveland Road, at the entrance to Pleasant Hill Park and the Aquatic Center, topped on Tuesday, Oct. 21, 2025. Several options were explored with both the Pleasant Hill Recreation & Park District and City staff. The City Hall oak was suggested by Mayor Zac Shess as a preferred replacement early in those discussions.



Pleasant Hill's new tree for the annual Hospice tree lighitng ceremony is located at City Hall, 100 Gregory Lane.

The Pleasant Hill Tree of Lights Ceremony, a community gathering to honor and remember loved ones, features the reading of memorial names and music and poetry along with remarks from community and civic leaders.

While the organization eagerly looks forward to resuming the traditional lighting in Pleasant Hill, Martinez's event is still on hold as officials try to identify a suitable replacement tree in that community.

The Martinez tree along Morello Avenue unexpectedly came down on Oct. 26, shortly after the Pleasant Hill tree's demise.

The Martinez's ceremony will again be paired with the Concord and Clayton event on December 1 at the tree located in the John Muir Medical Center Parking Lot, at East Street and Almond Avenue. It is scheduled to begin at 5:00 p.m.



Former BART Director Exposes Major Error and Irregularities in Financial Review Used to Promote Measure RTM Accountability

(Clayton, Calif. Nov. 2, 2026) -Former BART Board Director Debora Allen has released a new analysis raising serious questions about the accuracy and independence of the financial oversight process promised to taxpayers by the initiative and its enabling legislation, Senate Bill 63 (2025) by Senators Wiener and Arreguin.

"The financial oversight promised to Bay Area voters by Measure RTM's architects has already failed a basic test" Allen said.

In her article, "Who's Watching the Watchdogs? Apparently, Nobody Checked the Numbers" Allen documents a significant discrepancy in the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's (MTC) Phase One Financial Efficiency Review, prepared by consulting firm Nelson\Nygaard and approved by the oversight committee, as required by SB 63.

The consultant's analysis portrayed BART's operating expense growth at approximately 15% between FY2020 and FY2025. BART's own financial reports, corroborated by federal National Transit Database trends, show approximately 35% growth, a 20-percentage-point discrepancy.

"That's not a rounding error. The discrepancy dramatically changes the picture of BART's spending record," Allen writes. "And this is the financial oversight process Bay Area voters have repeatedly been assured they can trust."

Her examination found that the consultant combined incompatible financial measures, mixing operating expenses with capital allocations and debt service in earlier years before switching to operating expenses alone in FY2025. The resulting analysis materially understated BART's spending growth from 2020 to 2025.

Allen also challenges the report's characterization of $516 million in BART "cost savings," including canceled service expansions, eliminated planned staffing increases, and deferral of payments of employee-benefit funding obligations.

"Those obligations didn't disappear. BART simply postponed funding them, leaving future taxpayers to shoulder the costs. Calling that financial efficiency turns the meaning of savings upside down" Allen said.

The Financial Efficiency Review is a centerpiece of the accountability framework promoted by Measure RTM supporters for a proposed regional sales tax projected to raise nearly $17 billion over 14 years. The findings raise questions about the effectiveness of the Financial Efficiency Review Oversight Committee, which approved the report on May 22, 2026.

Allen, who served eight years on BART's Board of Directors and has more than 30 years of private-sector financial management experience, concludes:



"But confidence is not earned by promising oversight. It is earned when the oversight catches discrepancies, demands accurate reporting and insists on answers."

A CALL FOR MEDIA SCRUTINY BEFORE ELECTION DAY

Allen's November 2 announcement came with less than 48 hours until Election Day. Her findings warranted immediate independent examination by Bay Area news organizations to alert Voters who were being asked to approve billions in new taxes based in part on assurances of rigorous financial oversight. The first major product of that oversight contains a material financial discrepancy that escaped the review and approval process.

Allen's findings raise questions that deserve answers from MTC, Nelson\Nygaard, and the Financial Efficiency Review Oversight Committee:

- Why did the consultant combine incompatible financial data in its operating-expense analysis?
- How did the oversight committee approve a report containing such a significant discrepancy?
- Will MTC correct the report and reassess its findings?
- Have similar problems gone undetected in the financial reviews of AC Transit, Caltrain, and Muni?

News editors, investigative reporters, and political journalists were encouraged to examine the supporting financial records, seek on-the-record responses from MTC and its consultant, and report these findings while voters still have an opportunity to consider them.

The full article includes a comparative chart documenting the discrepancy, with supporting figures drawn from BART's financial reports, the federal National Transit D the federal National Transit Database, and Nelson\Nygaard's own report.



Thanksgiving for Everyone

Thanksgiving is a time to gather with family and friends, but for many Contra Costa residents, putting food on the table is a daily struggle. Rising grocery costs have left more households, including seniors and working families, stretching their budgets or skipping meals. Along with our community partners, the county offers several ways to receive assistance this holiday season.

Residents needing help buying groceries can apply for CalFresh through the Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD). CalFresh provides monthly food benefits. Applications are accepted online at BenefitsCal.com or by phone at (866) 663-3225, Monday through Friday. In-person applications are accepted at the Pleasant Hill district office, 400 Ellinwood Way, with additional offices in Antioch, Brentwood, Richmond and Hercules. Applications can also be mailed or faxed, with details at ehsd.org.

For immediate food assistance, the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano can connect families to free groceries nearby at (855) 309-FOOD (3663) or through the "Find Food in My City" tool on its website. Seniors can call the Senior Food Program at (925) 676-7543, and anyone can dial 211 to locate local resources.

The County also supports local organizations that provide food directly. Through the Community Impact Fund, each supervisorial district invested $1 million in local nonprofits. In District IV, I funded 25 organizations, and several of them provide food directly to residents. Meals on Wheels delivers meals to homebound seniors, and in Central and East County, Meals on Wheels Diablo Region can be reached at (925) 937-8607. Trinity Center, a partner in a joint award with Joybound, serves neighbors experiencing homelessness. St. Vincent de Paul's St. Agnes conference provides emergency food assistance to families.

These organizations welcome donations and volunteers. Anyone who needs help should not hesitate to reach out.

From my office to your home, Happy Thanksgiving.

Walnut Creek Ice Rink and Ice Slide Returns for 21st Season



The Bay Area's only outdoor ice rink and ice slide returns to Downtown Walnut Creek this holiday season as Walnut Creek on Ice celebrates its 21st year.

Opening November 20 at Civic Park, the long-time holiday tradition will bring families and friends back for skating, a trip down the 90-foot Frosty's Summit Ice Slide, private fire pits and winter fun through January 18.

For those looking to build their skills on the ice, the rink will offer its Ice-Skating Academy and hockey classes throughout the season. For the youngest skaters, special Wednesday morning Littles Skate will be offered including a special morning visit from Santa.

"After 21 years, we've seen kids grow up on this ice and come back with families of their own," said Kathy Hemmenway, Executive Director of the Walnut Creek Business Association, a presenter of Walnut Creek on Ice. "That's what makes this rink so special. It's part of how Walnut Creek celebrates the holidays, and we can't wait to see everyone back on the ice."

The covered ice rink is located at Civic Park, 1365 Civic Drive in Downtown Walnut Creek, and will be open November 20, 2026, through January 18, 2027. Tickets, hours, class information, and reservations are available at WalnutCreekOnIce.com.



A Season to Celebrate, Prepare and Come Together

by Kevin Wilk, Mayor, Walnut Creek *WalnutCreekCA.gov*

As we move into November, Walnut Creek has plenty to celebrate, and a few ways we can look out for one another as winter approaches.

Veterans Day Ceremony

Our annual Veterans Day Ceremony will take place Wednesday, November 11, at 11 a.m. at the Lesher Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Drive. All are welcome to join us as we honor those who have served our country and recognize their continued contributions to our community.

This year's ceremony will include a presentation of colors, music honoring our armed forces, remarks from me, and a keynote address by Major Patrick Lieneweg of the U.S. Marine Corps. We'll reflect on service to something greater than ourselves, a community that includes everyone, and the pride that comes from serving and contributing. All are welcome.

Milestone Anniversaries

Broadway Plaza is celebrating its 75th anniversary, a milestone in a place that has been part of Walnut Creek's shopping, dining, and community life for generations. With more than 80 retailers and specialty shops, dining options, co-working space, and fitness offerings, there's plenty to discover. Broadway Plaza has also been recognized by Diablo Magazine as the "Best Shopping Center" in its annual "Best of the East Bay" issue.

That anniversary is a good reminder to shop locally as we look for holiday gifts. Local purchases help keep downtown vibrant and support local businesses and jobs. When you spend $100 at a small business, about $68 stays in the community. Retail and dining generate 28% of the City's general fund revenue, helping support parks, public safety, and services families use every day.

The Walnut Creek Chamber of Commerce is marking another major milestone: 100 years serving the business community. Since 1926, the Chamber has been part of Walnut Creek's thriving business community. Congratulations, and here's to the next century.

Getting Prepared for El Niño

With El Niño expected to influence the 2026–2027 winter, the City's Public Works team is preparing for storm season. Crews are inspecting about 4,000 storm drain inlets, cleaning roughly 500 trash-capture devices and clearing culverts, creeks, and open ditches. A third street sweeper is helping with heavy leaf fall, and the Urban Forest Team is inspecting trees along public rights-of-way. Sandbag stations are open to Walnut Creek residents, including those in unincorporated areas. The City has ordered 75,000 sandbags and has 200 yards of sand, with supplies replenished through the season.

Residents can help by cleaning gutters and drains, putting fallen leaves in green bins, moving vehicles on street-sweeping days, and preparing supplies for possible outages. Bring a shovel to fill sandbags. Find preparation information at WalnutCreekCA.gov.



Shadelands Fall Fest

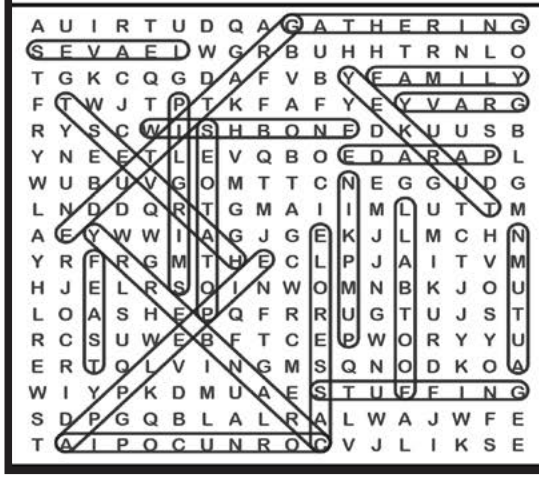
Families can also enjoy Shadelands FallFest on Sunday, November 15, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Shadelands SportsMall, 2640 Shadelands Drive. This free, family-friendly event features music, food trucks, ice cream, craft beer, exhibitors, giveaways, and free sports activities for all ages.

This is my final Diablo Gazette editorial for now, as my term as mayor comes to an end this month. I'm grateful to Councilmembers Silva and Francois for their service, and I welcome incoming Mayor Cindy Darling and new Councilmembers Cherise Khaund and Brendan Moran.

I look forward to continuing to serve on the Council. I hope you'll stay engaged and connected, and I hope to see you around Walnut Creek.

Solutions from Puzzles page 15

Puzzles by Marc Rokoff RokoPuzzles.com

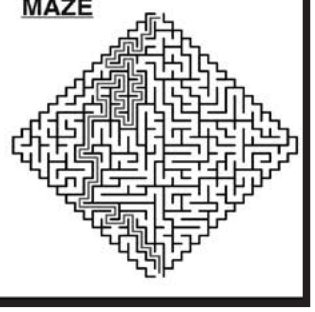


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WORD SCRAMBLE

NOVEMBER, HARVEST
CENTERPIECE, PILGRIM
THURSDAY

MAZE





A Walk Through Time with Misty Bruns

162 Years Ago

The Election of 1864: How Contra Costa County Voted for Lincoln and McClellan

From the pages of the Contra Costa Gazette, November 12 and November 19, 1864

On November 8, 1864, while the American Civil War continued, voters went to the polls to decide whether Abraham Lincoln would remain president or be replaced by Democratic candidate George B. McClellan. The election was a defining moment in the nation's history, and the results in Contra Costa County offer a glimpse into the political divisions that existed among its communities.

The Contra Costa Gazette reported the local returns in its November 12, 1864, edition under the heading "The Election in Contra Costa." The newspaper listed the votes cast in each precinct for Lincoln's Union ticket and McClellan's Democratic ticket.

The Precinct Returns

The newspaper printed countywide totals of 958 votes for Lincoln and 523 for McClellan, giving Lincoln a reported majority of 435 votes.

The precinct table contains the following figures.

	Union ticket	Democratic ticket
Precinct	**Lincoln**	**McClellan**
Martinez	89	24
Pacheco	150	48
Pinole	76	28
San Pablo 1	00	54
Lafayette	52	52
Clayton	76	25
Nortonville	67	4
Moraga	24	39
Alamo	50	17
Danville	76	91
(San Ramon Valley)		
Antioch	133	92
Somersville	65	49
County total	**958**	**523**

Source: Contra Costa Gazette, November 12, 1864

The Coal Fields and the Union Vote

The Gazette drew particular attention to the voting in the coal-mining communities. According to the newspaper, Lincoln's majority in Nortonville was more than sixteen to one. The result stands out in the county returns, especially when compared with precincts where McClellan received more votes.

In the precincts of Danville and Moraga, McClellan led Lincoln. Danville recorded 91 votes for McClellan against 76 for Lincoln, while Moraga recorded 39 for McClellan against 24 for Lincoln. In both precincts, the Democratic candidate's margin was 15 votes.

Elsewhere, the newspaper described strong Union majorities in communities including Pacheco, Pinole, Clayton, and Alamo. Its report demonstrates that political preferences varied considerably across Contra Costa County. Lincoln's countywide majority did not mean that every town or district supported his administration.

The returns are a valuable record of local political life during the Civil War. They establish the choices voters made, although the figures alone cannot tell us the personal reasons each voter supported one candidate over the other.

What did the election mean?

One week later, the November 19 edition of the Contra Costa Gazette returned to the election in an editorial titled "What Means the Election?"

The editorial interpreted Lincoln's reelection as a decision in favor of preserving the Union. It argued that the national government could not allow a minority of states to determine the fate of the entire country and defended the Union cause against the rebellion.

he editorial also reflected the newspaper's own political position. Its language was strongly supportive of the Union and critical of the idea that the war should end on terms that left the nation's future unsettled.

The election had taken place against the backdrop of a prolonged and costly war. Lincoln's administration had made preservation of the Union its central objective and had issued the Emancipation Proclamation. The Democratic campaign, meanwhile, drew support from voters dissatisfied with the administration's conduct of the war and called for efforts toward a negotiated settlement.

The Gazette's November 19 editorial made clear how its editor understood the result: Lincoln's reelection was a public rejection of the notion that the Union could be broken apart by secession.

A local record of a national struggle

The November 12 election report and the November 19 editorial preserve two complementary perspectives on the same event. The first records the votes cast in Contra Costa County's precincts; the second explains how the newspaper interpreted the national result.

For the coal fields, the Nortonville vote is especially noteworthy. The Gazette singled out the mining community's overwhelming support for Lincoln, placing the miners among the strongest Union supporters described in its report.

At the same time, the results in Danville and Moraga remind us that Contra Costa County was not politically uniform. Different communities returned different results, even as Lincoln carried the county according to the newspaper's published totals.

These pages offer a window into Contra Costa County during one of the most consequential elections in American history. They preserve the political opinions of a local newspaper, the recorded choices of voters, and evidence of how a national conflict reached into the towns, farming districts, and mining communities of the county.

In November 1864, the war was still being fought. The voters of Contra Costa County had made their choice, but the work of ending the conflict and determining the future of the nation remained ahead.



AND AFTER THE VOTE... WHAT NEXT?

by Edi Birsan, Concordian edibirsan@gmail.com

I'm Writing this 10 days before the election. The simple reality is that, typically, people vote and then forget about many of the things that was supposed to happen after the local elections. Let's review this by using the two main categories of sales/business tax or similar measures, and then the votes for candidates.

Dollar Issues, Measures and Props:

Most of these issues have an 'Oversight" commission that is supposed to investigate and report on whether the funds raised are used in the manner that was either promised or implied.

Often the money is going directly to the General Fund as is the case with Sales Tax and Business license taxes that are on the ballots in Central County. If you can handle basic arithmetic, (long division is optional) then get involved and apply to volunteer. If you do not make it, then go to the public meetings and participate in questioning and following what the commission does.

For example, if the money is implied to go to increase road repair, homeless services, senior services and 'safety', demand as a starting point, exactly how much is being spent on each of these big four vote attractions used to promote them.

Then demand a follow up on each of the categories to see if there was an increase in funding in the category. If there was not an implication that they would be increased, then compare the budgets. If it shows that nothing has changed and you see a category such as outside consultants, pensions etc. that was increased, make it known and then if it is acceptable, which it might be. Or, it might just be that the reality of the finance is that this is what was truly needed and the council was simply afraid to make it known.

Face reality, remember that transparency is not immune from redirection of focus and attention to shiny categories while others are not exactly highlighted.

Candidates

In some cases, we have a campaign record of what a candidate promises to do in the first 100 days in office. This was a popular question asked and answered in some of the Patch candidate interviews in Concord City Council District 3 (the Monument area). Make a list and see if it actually happens. Then make a list of the excuses when it does not happen and it could be that others are blocking it on the Dias. Decide how to bring it up again and again if it is important to you.

Watch for the Classic Double Cross. Suppose a candidate says "I want to review this based on data." And then within a week of being elected turns around and announces a specific major change when there was no data let alone new data review.

A tip off of this coming detraction will be that in the campaign they do not outline what sort of data metrics they are looking for or how such should be created. Also, look for the donations from the affected interest groups that may show up in the final financial reports that come after the election.

Voting is only the beginning of civic responsibility

As a resident, the election result is not the end of your responsibility to the community. Get involved, question, understand, learn and be prepared that your suspicions can be shot down. Always remember, local government is either listening to you or to someone else. Be involved, remember, and get involved.

Views expressed are by Edi Birsan who has a bunch of pebbles behind him where there had been stone walls he banged his head against and welcomes you to join in the pounding.EdiBirsan@Gmail.com


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