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GUNG HAY FAT CHOY

Tomizaki's Champions Kung Fu Lion Dancers perform at The Veranda in 2024, and again February 2, 2025.



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Publisher's Notes
by David King

The Year of the Snake!

Bring on the Lion Dance



Lion Dance rehearsal with Sifu Steffani and Master Tomizaki on drums

Concord's Tomizaki's Champions Kung Fu have been extremely busy performing the Lion Dance at several local venues with 22 performances scheduled through the celebration's final day, February 12. The 15th and final day is celebrated with the Lantern Festival.

Sifu Steffani Tomizaki has been sharing a brief history and mythology behind the Lunar New Year at their lion dance

The Chinese New Year is a celebration recognized by many Asian cultures, not just the Chinese. In China, it's referred to as the Spring Festival. Lunar New Year date changes every year but always begins on the second new moon after the first day of winter. The Chinese New Year follows a lunar calendar based on the moon's 12 phases. This year it started January 29.

The centerpiece performance of Lunar New Year celebrations is the Lion Dance. (Note the cover photo.)

Kung fu clubs have long been associated with lion dancing as the lion dance incorporates various kung fu derived stances, kicks and other footwork in its routines.

The kung fu practitioners from

performances.

"There are many stories," she states. "One of the stories I tell is the villagers went to the emperor and said, we don't know how to tell the passing of time. And the emperor thought and decided he would create 12 cycles, and each cycle would be represented by an animal.

"And he held a race, and there was this big river to cross." Tomizaki said there are different versions of how the race went, but it determined the order of the zodiac and the qualities of the animal bestowed upon those born under each's sign: Rat, Ox, Tiger Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat,

Continues on page 17



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Carlyn Obringer
Concord Mayor
cityofconcord.org

Syncing Traffic Lights To Be Completed by 2027

Since I first ran for Concord City Council in 2010, I have been asked, “When is the city going to sync the traffic lights?” The good news: much work has been done on the city’s adaptive signal system, fiber network, and signal upgrade projects over the past 15 years. The bad news: things will not drastically improve until the end of 2026/early 2027 as the adaptive signal system, fiber, and signal system upgrade are implemented and major roadway construction projects are completed. Unfortunately, due to the much-needed roadway currently happening throughout Concord, it is extremely difficult to capture correct traffic trends and retune signals correctly.



adaptive signal system on Willow Pass Road, which is not yet activated due to the sewer project currently underway. Post-construction, when all lanes are again open, transportation staff will evaluate the adaptive signal system’s performance and determine its efficacy. If the system performs well, immediate implementation will start on Treat Boulevard and Concord/Galindo/Monument, followed by Clayton Road.

Here is a summary of the status of each of the three projects that together will make our traffic flow smoother:

Signal System Upgrades - Our signal system upgrades, including cabinets, controllers, and video detection, will be 70% complete by March 2025, with all upgrades to be completed by early 2027.

Fiber Network - We have made significant progress connecting traffic signals to fiber, a requirement to implement an adaptive signal system. The traffic signals along East Street, Monument Boulevard, Treat Boulevard, and Willow Pass Road have been connected to fiber, with Port Chicago Highway traffic signals to be connected within the next 18 months.

Adaptive Signal System - We have completed the installation of an

To pull all this together, city transportation staff is developing a Transportation Management Center (TMC) at the City’s Corporation Yard, which is expected to be constructed by the end of 2025. While there is currently no funding for TMC equipment, city staff is actively pursuing opportunities, including a partnership with the Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA), on which I serve, to build the Concord TMC into a sub-regional TMC for Central Contra Costa County. That way, the City of Concord would share the cost with CCTA and other jurisdictions. This would also enable the City of Concord to be actively involved at a regional policy level as it relates to traffic operations on freeways and local arterials.

So, hang in there. There is a smoothly synced traffic light at the end of the tunnel!



Kim Trupiano
Mayor, Clayton
kimt@claytonca.gov

“Addressing the Needs of the City”

As we embark on a new year in the City of Clayton, one of my highest priorities was to ensure that our City Administrative Team has the support that they need to be successful now and in the future. Many residents may be surprised to know that our entire City staff is made up of just 26.6 employees, 13 of which are employees in the police department (11 sworn officers, two civilian). That leaves just 13.6 employees to manage the City’s other departments: HR, Finance, Maintenance and Community Development. We have often supplemented our staffing by the use of consulting firms, which has had a short-term benefit but is not the same as having consistent, year-round, full and part-time employees.

Back in July, our then Interim City Manager proposed a reorganization of the duties of the staff and the creation of new positions including a new Assistant City Manager/Administrative Services Director, who would oversee HR and Finance, elevating the positions of City Clerk to include Assistant to the City Manager and promoting our Accounting Technician to full time Accountant. The Council approved those changes, including the outsourcing of our Community Development Services until we could determine exactly what the needs of the department and community would be.

After an extensive review process

by the Budget & Audit committee and a number of City Council meetings and discussions, the Council unanimously approved the following changes to the city’s staffing line up on January 21, 2025:

- Fill the full-time Administrative Clerk and part-time/hourly Community Services Leader (formerly Facilities Attendant) positions, both of which are already budgeted in Fiscal Year 2024-2025
- Reclassify the Community Development Director and Assistant Planner positions with a Senior Planner
- Add a Management Analyst position to support the City Manager, Assistant City Manager, Accountant and City Clerk as needed
- Add a Community Development Technician to oversee complaint-based code enforcement issues, handle temporary use permits, special event permits, park and facility rental applications, and aid the Senior Planner.

Filling these positions will provide our City leadership team with the support that they need to be successful and to provide our residents and community with the services that they require. For a complete outline of the positions, job descriptions and salary schedules, please visit www.claytonca.gov/fc/agendas/council/2025/01212025. In addition, our staff has diligently

In Case You Missed It...

Local News Items from Claycord.com and Other Sources

Free Monthly Workshops On How To Get Hired At A California Community College

Claycord.com- Contra Costa Community College District (4CD) is conducting monthly workshops for anyone interested in learning more about job opportunities at a California Community College, as well as for those who are actively seeking work and want help navigating the process.

California Community Colleges are a major employer in nearly every county across the state. Jobs at California Community Colleges range from hourly part-time work to lifetime careers with terrific benefits and retirement plans.

For anyone seeking work at a California Community College in any area including classified positions such as business services, custodial, program coordinators, instructional assistants, athletic trainers; faculty positions including instructional, counselors, and librarians; and management positions, 4CD will be offering live, online workshops via Zoom on the first Monday of every month beginning February 3, 2025, from 7:00-8:00 p.m.

Contra Costa Civil Grand Jury accepting applications for 2025-26 term

The Contra Costa County Civil Grand Jury is accepting applications for the panel that will serve during the 2025-26 term.

A new grand jury of county residents is impaneled each year, and the members decide which agencies and topics they wish to investigate. Their reports are made public with key findings and recommendations, and the agencies investigated are required to file responses.

Unlike criminal grand juries that have the power to bring legal action for wrongdoing, civil grand juries primarily serve a watchdog, fact-finding function and make recommendations for improvement to ensure that the public interest is being served.

More information about the civil grand jury can be found at the following link: <https://www.cc-courts.org/civil/grand-jury.aspx>

worked on getting these positions posted and they can be found here: [Job Opportunities | Sorted by Job Title ascending | Clayton, City of \(CA\) Careers](#)

Officers Save Life

I would also like to recognize the outstanding work done by Officer Wiggins and Sergeant Enea of our Clayton Police Department. On January 25, they responded to a distress call by the husband of a woman who was in her car and had stopped breathing and had no pulse. They administered CPR until Con Fire arrived who resumed CPR until they could get a pulse. Because of their quick response and efforts, this woman is alive today. The City honored them with a Certification of Appreciation, for exceptional bravery, quick thinking and unwavering

Gift Card Program to Aid Los Angeles Fire Survivors

White Pony Express (WPE), a local nonprofit, has launched a campaign to collect and distribute gift cards to the survivors of the Los Angeles fires. Gift cards will offer recipients the flexibility to address unique needs and circumstances during this challenging time. Gift cards can be dropped off at WPE’s headquarters, 2470 Bates Ave., Suite D, Concord. <https://whiteponyexpress.org>

CCCOE Hosts Job Fair Featuring Education Careers at Dozens of School Districts

The Contra Costa County Office of Education (CCCOE) is hosting its annual countywide Spring Job Fair on Saturday, February 22, 2025, at Pleasant Hill Middle School from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Educators at all career stages are in demand to fill various positions throughout Contra Costa County. Job opportunities include full-time teaching positions, certificated support staff roles, higher education openings, Pre-K positions, and substitute roles with competitive benefits and compensation offerings. Applicants are encouraged to come prepared for onsite interviews and potential sign-on bonus offers for hard-to-fill positions.

To attend or need additional details about this free event, contact Morgan Broshar at (925) 942-3489.

Starbucks Looking To Open Their 10th Coffee Shop In Concord

Claycord.com - Starbucks is looking to open their 10th coffee shop in Concord, according to the City of Concord. They want to build at 1935 Diamond Blvd, near the corner of Willow Pass Rd., which is across from Denny’s and in the same parking lot as DaVita Kidney Care (formerly Elephant Bar restaurant). The proposed plan is to demolish the existing building and construct a 1,500-square-foot Starbucks with a drive-through facility with room for 16 vehicles. The parking area would have room for 11 vehicles.

For more stories visit Claycord.com



(L-R) Officer Wiggins, Interim Police Chief Don Mort, Sergeant Enea.

dedication to duty, exhibiting the highest standards of public service resulting in the saving of a life.

Remember, We are Stronger Together.

Please feel free to contact me at kimt@claytonca.gov or 925.673.7324.

calendar of events

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Clayton

February 8 - April 27, Exhibit: Infinite Affection. Guest artist, Terin Christensen. JOR Fine Art Gallery, 1026 Oak Street, Suite 102, Clayton. www.jorfineartgallery.com

February 16, Clayton Historical Society's 49th Annual Silver Camellia Tea, 1-4 PM. Honoring Those Who Worked on our First Annual Halloween Tour. 6101 Main Street, Clayton. www.claytonhistory.org

February 26, Secret Codes and Mysteries, with Penny Warner. Children's Program. 2-2:45 p.m. Penny Warner, shares mystery writing tips, and fun code breaking activities. Best For children ages 5 and up. Clayton Library, 6125 Clayton Road, Clayton.

March 14-23, Clayton Theatre Company presents "Noises Off" by Michael Frayn. only 9 shows! Endeavor Hall 6008 Center St., Clayton. claytontheatrecompany.com

Concord

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

Bambino's Free Live Music - Every Saturday 6:00 - 9:00 PM. Comedy Nights, last Tuesday each month. 1895 Farm Bureau Rd. Concord. www.bambinosconcord.com

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February 6, 40th Annual Mayor's State of the City Luncheon, 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM. Mayor Carlyn Obringer will reflect on our city's accomplishments and unveil the vision for our city's future. Hilton, 1970 Diamond Blvd, Concord. Tickets www.concordchamber.com

February 8, California Love: A Throwback Party For A Cause, 7:00 PM to 1:00 AM We're taking you back to the golden era of music that will have you dancing all night long. Admission: \$20 Gratitude Coffee Bar & Lounge, 1655 Willow Pass Rd Concord.

February 15, Harajuku Chocolate Fest! 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. The Bay's Cutest Marketplace is throwing the ultimate Valentine's Marketplace. Todos Santos Plaza, 2175 Willow Pass Rd. Concord.

February 22, Diablo Symphony Gala, 5:30 PM to 10:00 PM. Diablo Symphony Gala 'Masquerade & Melodie' Hilton Concord, 1970 Diamond Blvd. Concord.

March 29, Spring Brews Festival, 12:00 PM to 4:00 PM. The Brewing Network's Spring Brews Festival returns to Todos Santos Plaza in Concord to celebrate its 14th year as one of the best craft beer festivals in the Bay Area! Tickets \$65. Todos Santos Plaza, 2175 Willow Pass Rd, Concord.

Crockett

February 9, Galentine's Day Valentine Market, 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Shop Cose Belle Boutique, Flowers Fresco, Lola's Lounge, The Sicilian, Jamie's Quality Jewelry, Phoebe's Designs, Second Ave Skate, and so much more! Inside the Emporium building, 628 2nd Ave., Crockett.

Pleasant Hill

February 8, Film in a Day! Actors, Writers & Directors Challenge 9am - 7pm. Given to Fully Registered Participants ONLY. Film MADE ON THIS EVENT WILL BE Screened at a local Theater BASH Film Festival. And Voted on! Everyone attending this event will receive IMDB credits after it Screens in Festival. www.eventbrite.com

February 25, Traveling Reptile Show 2:45 PM. East Bay Vivarium will be visiting the library after school for a fun and interactive animal talk just for teens! No registration required. 2 Monticello Avenue Pleasant Hill.

Martinez

February 15, Downtown Martinez Wine & Chocolate Stroll, 1:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M.

Enjoy a fun afternoon strolling from business to business sampling 25+ wines and chocolate treats! www.DowntownMartinez.org

February 21, "Healthy Hearts, Healthy Lives" Community Resource Fair: Martinez Senior Center, 9:30am - 11:30am. 818 Green St. Martinez www.cityofmartinez.org

At the Martinez Campbell Theater

> **February 7-23, "Intimate Apparel"**
> **February 20, Improv for Good,** 7:30 PM.
> **March 9, Partners in Crime,** 2:30PM

Martinez Campbell Theater
636 Ward St, Martinez,
www.campbelltheater.com

Walnut Creek

Merry Mixers Events, 7:30-10 PM
February 7 & 21, March 7, 1475 Creekside Dr., Walnut Creek. www.merrymixers.life

February 8, Author Nina Schuler California Writers Club (CWC)—Mt. Diablo Branch. The CWC meeting will be held from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Zio Fraedo's Restaurant, 611 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill. Guests are welcome.

March 22, The Gardens at Heather Farm (GHF) Spring Plant Sale! A beautiful selection of ornamental, edible, and annual plants. 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek. gardenshf.org/

March 1, Headlands Brewing Grand Opening. See our newest location! Enjoy a full-fledged beer garden set amongst seven tall redwoods, with ample seating, fire pits, multiple TVs, a children's play area, and full menu including our famous smash burgers. Southern corner of Oak & Wayne, 2999 Oak Road, Suite A, Walnut Creek.

At the Leshner Center

> **February 4, Take It To The Limit -** A Tribute to the Eagles 7:30PM
> **February 7-8, Diablo Ballet's Cinderella's Wedding,** Based on the second act full-length fairytale ballet
> **February 14, Best of San Francisco Stand-Up Comedy,** 8:15PM
> **February 20, Mandy Patinkin in Concert: Being Alive with Adam Ben-David on Piano** 7:30PM
> **February 23, Simply Sinatra: 110 Years of Ol' Blue Eyes** 3 PM.
> **February 28, Ray Charles, Chuck Berry, Little Richard & Friends,** 7:30PM

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

Lafayette

February 7, February Coffee Talk 9AM - 10:30 AM. Think your child needs more support? Come share ideas, coffee and a few bites with other parents and caregivers of students receiving special education services. Lafayette Public House, 50 Lafayette Circle, Lafayette.

Other Areas

February 5 -8, 12-15, 17, and 20-22. Annual The White Elephant Sale. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. 96,000 Square feet warehouse. Admission is \$7, except free on March 1-2. All patrons must have reservations to enter all days—go to www.whiteelephantsale.org. Proceeds benefit for the Oakland Museum of California. 333 Lancaster St., Oakland.

Clubs

Clayton Clubs

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

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

Concord Clubs

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

Rotary Club of Concord. www.concordcarotary.org

Martinez Clubs

Kiwanis Club meetings. Every Thursday 12-2, lunch is free to visitors or potential members. 750 Allen St. Martinez. www.martinezkiwanis.org

Martinez Rotary Club meets weekly, 5-6 PM on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month. Campbell Theatre, 636 Ward Street., Martinez. www.martinezrotary.org

Walnut Creek Clubs

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

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

Pleasant Hill Clubs

Diablo Women's Chorale is holding audition for all female voice parts for its Spring 2025 season. 6-9:00 PM, by appointment. For more information contact Nancy Hickman. 925-899-5050 or hickmandg@gmail.com. www.diablowomenschorale.org

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



Is Your Garden Safe?

We have a new puppy in the family! Pup is exploring our garden and has found trouble at times. Gardens can be threats to the safety and health of our pets as well as young children. These tips will help you keep your garden, pets and kids safe.



Clean up toxic wisteria seed pods



Pets can enjoy your safe garden as much as you

Remember the Naked Gardener's Mantra.

"No insecticides, herbicides, fungicides or other chemical toxins in our gardens." Chemical poisons and sprays injure pets, kids, and grown-ups alike. Stick to all-natural alternatives such as water sprays, hand-picking pests, vinegar for weeds, and proper planting locations to avoid diseases.

Know which garden plants Are toxic.

Many common landscaping varieties can be harmful if ingested by pets or children. Plants such as daphne, wisteria (seed pods), oleander, foxglove, lantana, nettles, castor plants, rhubarb (leaves), daffodil (bulbs), hydrangeas, and many common lilies are beautiful but dangerous. Educate yourself about the plants in your garden and consider replacing these common toxic plants with safer alternatives.

Make water and hardscape features safe.

While water features and hardscape elements can add beauty to a garden, they can also pose threats. Ensure ponds or fountains have secure covers and borders to prevent accidental falls. Hardscape elements like flagstone steps and retaining walls should be stable and free of sharp edges that could cause injury.

Secure borders.

Fencing and borders are essential for keeping pets and children secure within your yard's boundaries. Ensure that fencing is high enough to prevent adventurous pets from jumping over and sturdy to resist attempts to break through or burrow underneath. Regularly inspect and repair any gaps that could provide an escape route and fix sharp edges or protruding nails.



Daphnes are fragrant and poisonous to pets

Protect plantings from pets and kids.

Dogs and cats can be curious and energetic, often leading them to dig up plants, chew on leaves, or trample delicate blooms. Install small fences or plant cages around vulnerable plants. Chicken wire or garden netting can be effective. Opt for plants that can withstand roughhousing. Hardy plants like lavender, rosemary, and marigolds can bounce back from a beating. Designate specific areas in your garden for pets and children to play. Provide toys and activities to keep them entertained and away from your fragile plantings.

By taking these precautions, you can create a safer, all-natural garden for your pets and children to enjoy without worry.

Seasonal Notes: Finish up with dormant season trimming as spring is about to pop. Spray pop up weeds and seasonal grasses while they are still small with a 15% vinegar solution and 4 oz. of Dawn dish soap in water. Fertilize fruit and citrus trees late in the month when overnight temperatures begin to moderate to avoid freezes killing new leaves and stems.

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

Can you Spare 3 Hours to Give Rides to Seniors and Veterans?



Mobility Matters is a nonprofit agency that serves homebound seniors and veterans.



Volunteer drivers (ages 25-75) are needed to escort members to medical appointments and grocery shopping. www.mobilitymatterscc.com



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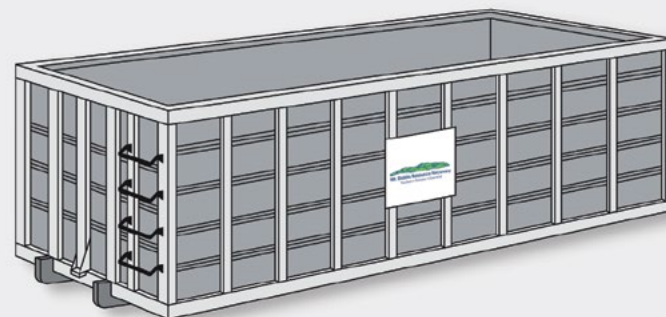


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Top Real Estate Marketing Tips for a Successful Home Sale

Selling a home successfully in today's competitive market requires more than simply listing it online or placing a sign in the yard. With the right marketing strategy, you can attract the right buyers and close the deal faster. Here's a guide to effective real estate marketing that can make a significant difference in your home sale.

Set the right price. Pricing is one of the most critical factors in attracting serious buyers. Overpricing can drive potential buyers away, while underpricing may leave money on the table. A local real estate agent can use comparable sales and current trends to determine the optimal price.

Stage your home. A well-staged home can create a warm and inviting atmosphere, allowing buyers to envision themselves in the space. Declutter, depersonalize, and arrange furniture to highlight your home's best features. Many real estate agents offer staging consultations as part of their services.

Leverage high-quality photography and videography. Making a strong first impression through images and videos online is essential. Invest in professional photography that captures your home's unique angles, lighting, and ambiance. Creating a virtual tour can give potential buyers an immersive experience.

Utilize social media platforms. Social media marketing is an effective way to reach a broader audience. Promote your listing on popular platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and X highlighting key features with eye-catching captions and images.

Create a compelling listing description. Write a captivating listing description that speaks to the lifestyle your home offers, not just the features. Make sure to mention

any recent upgrades, unique amenities, or location highlights that make your home stand out.

Consider drone photography for aerial shots. Drone photography is particularly appealing for homes with extensive landscapes, scenic surroundings, or unique architectural elements. Aerial images give potential buyers a comprehensive view of the property and its neighborhood.

Host an Open House or Virtual Tour. In-person open houses provide buyers with an opportunity to explore the home, while virtual tours allow out-of-town or busy buyers to view the property at their convenience.

Use targeted digital advertising. Digital ads on platforms like Google and Facebook allow you to target specific demographics and geographic locations. Retargeting ads will continue to show your home to people who have previously visited your listing.

Highlight the neighborhood and local amenities. A home's location is often just as important as the home itself. Provide details about nearby schools, parks, shopping centers, and community amenities in your listing description and marketing materials.

Working with a local and knowledgeable real estate agent can make all the difference in marketing your home effectively. They can also manage negotiations, paperwork, and offer strategies to navigate any challenges during the sale. Marketing a home effectively is about understanding what today's buyers are looking for and using the tools available to make your property stand out.

Compliments of VirtualResults.net

Announcements You Can Sink Your Teeth In

by David King

It is always enjoyable to try out a new eatery. Here are three worth checking out according to reviews and personal experience.

Headlands Brewing



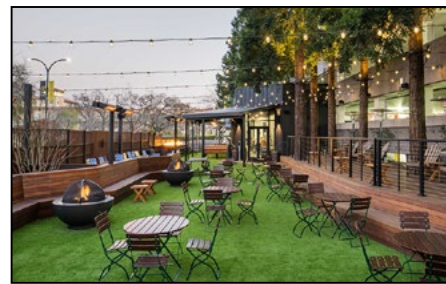
Photos by Nat and Cody Studio

Walnut Creek's newest beer garden opened on January 24, at 2999 Oak Road near the Pleasant Hill BART station.

This is Headlands Brewing Company's third location, joining Lafayette and Berkeley. It's Grand Opening will be on Saturday, March 1.

As a brewery, Headlands was founded more than 10 years ago.

"We have amazing beer," says CEO Austin Sharp. "We want be a family friendly, dog friendly, place where you can be a beer aficionado and geek out (on our rotating selection of beers) or just catch up with friends over a beer and a smashburger, and just enjoy your time almost exclusively outside in fresh air."



Indeed, it boasts a backyard, barbecue-like atmosphere in a most gorgeous setting.

The Walnut Creek location offers large outdoor space highlighted by a pristine deck built around seven redwood trees, heat lamps, string lights, and several firepits.

Its comfort food, beer-friendly menu is centered around their trademark smash

burgers, and other sandwiches and salads. "We are adding barbecue meats as well as tri-tip sandwiches to the menu.

Open Tuesday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.
www.headlandsbrewing.com/walnut-creek

Café Napolina

A new Italian restaurant has opened downtown across from Todos Santos Park in the former Kyoto Ramen location.

"We're going to focus on Italian pizza, pasta, salad, sandwiches, appetizers, and wings." Customers will be able to dine in and enjoy table service or pick up to-go orders. They've only been open a few weeks but are already getting strong Yelp reviews. 1950 Grant Street, Concord.
www.cafenapolina.com

Cocina Hijole Maria



This place just opened at the newly remodeled but closed La Fritanguera restaurant, next to Sugar Plum in concord. Now with more indoor and outdoor seating and a full bar. Cocina Hijole Maria has opened with a strong buzz radiating from its prior operation as a food vendor in the parking lot of Grocery Outlet on Willow Pass. There it had a loyal following and even caught the attention of SFGate.com.

Do not let the size of this new restaurant deter you. Their magic is in a kitchen that delivers the taste of Mexico.

Hijole Maria is your go-to spot for authentic Mexican taqueria food. Fresh, high-quality ingredients create delicious tacos, burritos, and more. 1819 Colfax Street, Concord. www.hijolemaria.com

Mobility Equals Independence: Give a Senior or Veteran a Ride

Mobility Matters, a 501(c)(3) organization, is looking for people that are willing and able to give a little time each month to a senior or a disabled veteran in their community and take them someplace they can't get to, like their doctor's appointment or the grocery store. They need rides.

Mobility Matters' mission is to provide free door-through-door transportation when faced with necessary appointments or errands. Volunteer drivers will escort them to their appointment and remain with them until the errand or appointment ends and bring them home.

Qualified Volunteers only need to be available and have the option to accept a specific transportation need if it fits their schedule. Once a week, volunteers will receive an email of a list of all the ride requests, times and destinations for the next week. Volunteers assign themselves a ride or two. Then a scheduler will make contact and give the volunteer driver the full information.

Run by CEO Elaine Welch, 75, Mobility Matters is the only countywide free door through door volunteer driver program in Contra Costa County.

"Mobility equals independence. We have to get out and get the things we need in our community or our society puts us away in an institution of some kind. We're trying to prevent that." She passionately states.

Mobility Matters needs more volunteer drivers in all communities in the county. Drivers must be between the ages of 25-75, have a valid driver's license with an excellent driving record, a crime-free background...and a safe vehicle.

"These are people who've given to us. They have such value, such wisdom, such love. We tend to isolate older people and expect them somehow fend for themselves, and it doesn't work that way. So, let's give them a little help."

To learn more call 925-284-2215 or visit www.mobilitymatterscc.com (see ad page 5).

Consider it SOLD!

\$1,085,000

26 El Molino Dr, Clayton

Delightful & Updated Single Story Rancher in Regency Woods with a refreshing in-ground pool, views of Mt. Diablo and owned solar. 3 bedrooms plus detached office, 2.5 baths, approx. 1781sf on an approx. .22 acre lot with an attached 2-car garage.

\$1,399,000

705 Acorn Dr, Clayton

Gorgeous Falcon Ridge Two Story on a private court setting on a premium lot with sweeping views. 4 bedrooms plus bonus room, 3 baths, approx. 3079sf on an approx. .21 acre lot with an attached 3-car garage.

\$925,000

1028 Bermuda Dr, Concord

Charming & Updated Single-Story Home in Colony Park situated on a private corner lot with a sparkling in-ground pool. 4 bedrooms, 2 baths, approx. 1563sf on an approx. .17 acre lot with an attached 2-car garage.

\$315,000

5425 Concord Blvd. #C1, Concord

Terrific First Floor Kirkwood Unit offering a spacious living area perfect for relaxing and entertaining. 1 bedroom, 1 bath, approx. 762sf with assigned carport. Great location tucked back in complex close to swimming pool.

Clayton Market Update

Address	Sales Price	SF	Bed/Bath	Sales Date
3 Xavier Pl	\$1,020,000	2060	4/2	11/26/2024
222 Mt. Wilson Pl	\$1,040,000	2692	5/2.5	12/2/2024
10 Mt. Eden Pl	\$1,265,000	2442	4/3	12/4/2024
1236 Easley Dr	\$1,074,900	2188	4/2.5	12/9/2024
907 Arrowhead Ter	\$940,000	1904	3/2.5	12/20/2024
1119 Oakwood Cir	\$1,300,000	3155	4/3	12/30/2024
1515 Tara Ct	\$893,000	1739	4/3	1/13/2025

Concord Market Update

Address	Sales Price	SF	Bed/Bath	Sales Date
4191 Cobblestone Dr	\$815,000	1659	3/2	12/20/2024
1848 Polk St	\$942,000	1941	4/2.5	12/23/2024
1098 Tilley Cir	\$801,000	1304	3/2	12/31/2024
5510 Langford Ct	\$950,000	2049	3/2.5	1/3/2025
1432 Whitman Rd	\$890,000	1387	3/2	1/6/2025
1537 Laverne Ct	\$1,018,000	1676	4/2	1/8/2025
3051 Treat Blvd #58	\$306,000	805	1/1	1/10/2025

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Based on information from CCRAR/Paragon MLS as of 1/17/25. 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.

The Arts Page

Adventure Awaits at Twain hARTE Cabin Workshop



"Napoleon" Watercolor by Carolyn Dreyer

aRt Cottage is planning a Vision Board Workshop February 23-26 at the Twain hARTE Cabin in the Sierras the last weekend of February. There are five available spots. This art adventure includes housing, transportation, and materials for the workshop. Interested participants should call for 925 956-3342 for more details.

Animal Adoptions

Animal adoptions are happening at the aRt Cottage as six paintings have been purchased from the "All Creatures Great and Small Exhibit".

Proud watercolor artist, Carolyn Dreyer sold her Peacock, Napoleon, which she painted as a student at the aRt Cottage. There are many left to choose from. Bonnie Fry's Girl and Zebra, Samantha McNally's Tiger, or Robert Anke's Labrador to name a few. This exhibit will be open through the month of February.



"Labrador" by Robert Anke



"Tiger" by Samantha McNally

Coming in March, aRt Cottage will be featuring Mark Jezierny and his adult education students.

aRt Cottage is located at 2238 Mt. Diablo St. Concord artcottage.info



"Girl and Zebra" by Bonnie Fry

Everything ART at Main Street Arts

Our Guest Artist, Nancy Roberts presents "Carquinez Color," a collection of acrylic landscapes celebrating the beauty of the Carquinez Strait region from Crockett and Martinez to Benicia and Vallejo.

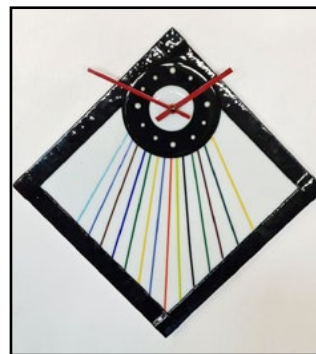


Support for Boys and Girls Club

Let Pam McCauley's Paint Brush Project inspire your creative side. One hundred and fifty (150) re-purposed brushes from 18 artists were used to create this tribute to painting. And once purchased, 80% of the sale price will be donated to the Boys and Girls Club of Contra Costa County.



Jerry Hild's Wall Clock will be given away to a lucky visitor to the gallery in our monthly free drawing in February. Visitors need only to sign up as you peruse the gallery to be entered to win.



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

Jor Fine Art Gallery's Exhibits "Infinite Affection"



Guest Artist Terin Christensen is an emerging abstract painter who explores emotions through texture and color. Her artistry will be on display at Jor Fine Art Gallery February 8 through April 27.

Raised in California's Bay Area, her artistic lineage traces back to her grandfather and mother. Surrounded by art and creativity from an early age, her formative years included visits to San Francisco's museums, with Monet and Wyeth as influences, which deeply impacted her.

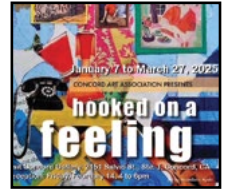
While initially pursuing art in college, she transitioned into a marketing degree. She worked in health-related non-profits in event management and fundraising. However, her connection to creativity remained throughout her life in varying degrees, from making stained glass windows to delving into photography, collage work, greeting cards, and other artistic endeavors.

It wasn't until 2019 that she discovered her voice in abstract and figurative acrylic painting to push creative boundaries in this medium. Terin continues to evolve and inspire through her expressive artistry.

Jor is open Wednesday through Sunday: 12 – 5 p.m. 1026 Oak St #102, Clayton. www.jorfineartgallery.com

"Hooked on a Feeling" Art Show At Visit Concord Center

The Concord Art Association (CAA) in partnership with the Concord Visitor Center is presenting a new collection of work from local artists at the Concord Visitor Center that you may peruse or purchase.

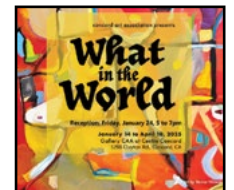


Local CAA artists are showing a variety of 2-D work including paintings and photographs. The theme of the current exhibit is "Hooked on a Feeling", with many different interpretations by the artists. This exhibit will continue until March 27.

The public is invited to an art reception on Friday, February 14, from 4:00 -6:00 p.m. at 2151 Salvio St, Suite T, Concord. Meet some of the artists, view their work and enjoy light refreshments. Regular hours for the Visitor Center are Monday-Friday 10:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.

For more details about the CAA, please visit www.concordartassociation.org.

What in the World is happening at Centre Concord Gallery



Centre Concord features a gallery where local CAA artists show a variety of 2-D work including paintings and photographs. The exhibits change quarterly and the art is available for purchase. The theme of the new exhibit is "What in the World". The show will be on view until April 10. For more details about the CAA, please visit www.concordartassociation.org





A Tasty Chinese New Year

The Chinese New Year began on January 29 in countries with significant Chinese populations, such as Thailand. Pork, a classic protein found in many holiday dishes, is a central theme of this menu and is a delicious and cost-effective way to kick-off your new year.

I found a recipe for Pork Lettuce Wraps that I consider one of the most delicious recipes I have ever made. The dipping sauce is a perfect balance of sweet, savory, sour and spicy. The flavor of the caramelized garlic is excellent. You can even double the recipe and serve it as an entrée.

Choose a wine that is fruit forward, like an off-dry White Zinfandel. The fruit flavors will be intensified by the umami flavors of the pork and fish sauce. The slight sweetness in the wine will create a nice cooling effect on the spice from the chilies.

Asian Pork Tenderloin is the star of your main course. It is very easy to make and you can add white or fried rice along with steamed sugar snap peas for a complete plate. This recipe can handle a wine with a bit of depth but would still benefit from lighter tannins due to the slight heat. Consider a Cru Beaujolais. Made from the Gamay grape, Cru Beaujolais is very different from the Nouveau Beaujolais that arrives once a year in November. These are serious wines with complexity and weight.

The Gamay grape is known for its bright raspberry and strawberry flavors, and when you combine this with the rustic leather and dark earthiness often found in French wine, you get a nice balance of fruit and earth that will harmonize and complement the soy and Worcestershire in the meat marinade. Each of the ten Cru Beaujolais (e.g., Fleurie, Morgon, etc.) has its own personality, but they should all work well. If you prefer your wines closer to home, a lighter style Zinfandel from Sonoma or Mendocino are good substitutes.

Celebrate the end of the meal with a Thai custard that has a delicate sweetness. You will need to seek out a sparkling wine with a touch of sweetness to match. Look for words like Demi-Sec, Doux or Dolce on the label. If you can find a Blanc de Blancs, that is great. Blanc de Blancs literally means White of Whites. It is made from 100% Chardonnay, which often has tropical flavors that pair well with the coconut.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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

THAI PORK LETTUCE WRAPS

INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon sugar
2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon Asian fish sauce
2 tablespoons fresh lime juice



3 Thai chilies, very thinly sliced with seeds
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
4 large garlic cloves, thinly sliced
1/2 pound ground or finely chopped pork
2 tablespoons soy sauce
Salt and pepper
1/4 small red onion, thinly sliced
1/4 cup torn Thai basil leaves
1/4 cup torn mint leaves
1/4 cup torn cilantro leaves
Boston lettuce leaves, for serving

DIRECTIONS

In a small bowl, combine lime juice with 2 tablespoons of the fish sauce, 1 tablespoon of the sugar, two-thirds of the chilies and 1 tablespoon of water. Stir to dissolve the sugar.

In the skillet, heat the oil. Add the garlic and cook over moderately low heat, stirring a few times until golden brown, about 1 minute. Add 1 teaspoon of the sugar and cook for about 20 seconds. Add the ground pork and cook over moderately high heat, breaking up the meat finely, until no pink remains, about 3 minutes. Add 1 teaspoon of the fish sauce and soy sauce and season with salt and pepper.

Just before serving, add onion, basil, mint, cilantro and the remaining chili. Serve in lettuce leaves and season with the dipping sauce.

Yield: 4 servings

ASIAN PORK TENDERLOIN

INGREDIENTS

1/3 cup soy sauce
1/4 cup sesame oil
2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
1/8 cup packed light brown sugar
3 green onions, chopped
4 cloves garlic, crushed



1 1/2 tablespoons Asian chili paste
1 1/2 teaspoons pepper
(1) 2-pound, fat-trimmed pork tenderloin

DIRECTIONS

Mix marinade ingredients. Place the tenderloin in a shallow dish. Pour marinade over tenderloin, turning the meat a few times to coat. Cover and refrigerate two to eight hours.

Preheat oven to 450°. Transfer pork with marinade into an aluminum foil-lined baking pan. Roast 25 to 30 minutes. Remove and let stand 5 to 10 minutes before carving.

Yield: 4 servings

JOR
FINE ART
GALLERY

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Open to the public Wednesday through Sunday 12-5 p.m.
Appointments are available.
Contact 925-768-5662

1026 Oak Street, Suite 102, Clayton
website: jorfineartgallery.com
email: joreillyfineartgallery@gmail.com

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THAI COCONUT CUSTARD

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 cups coconut milk
6 eggs, beaten
3/4 cup dark brown sugar
1/2 teaspoon salt

DIRECTIONS

Beat coconut milk, eggs, sugar and salt together. Cook in a double boiler, stirring constantly, until it resembles soft scrambled eggs. Pour into a small casserole dish. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes. Brown under a broiler.

Yield: 4 servings



What Makes It A Great Place

To Move To?

Did you know being closer to family and friends is the number one reason people move? In ranking order, other reasons are: their home is too small, too big, changing neighborhoods, and a change in life events such as marriage, birth, divorce, retirement.

Moving closer to the people who matter can truly change your life, whether that means closer to work, to play, to the city or in the country. Having loved ones nearby for when you need them could mean making memories with grandkids or enjoying weeknight dinners while being closer to family and friends.

Some want more space. Others may be tired of taking care of their yards and big homes. There are times when folks sell to move to a less expensive place and use the money out of their sale proceeds to live on or fund their kids' college education.

Have you heard of the Tiny House movement? A tiny home can free up money for the things you want and set you for the rest of your life. It can provide you with something that can grow in value and create security knowing you won't have to move or have your "rent" raised. Plus, you are free to change the décor or add a garden. No one is telling you what you can and can't do with your home. (condo living is another story.)



So, what makes a great place to move to? It is whatever satisfies your motivation to move in the first place.

Many young people look for long-term living opportunities. They know the longer they stay in their home, the more equity they build for themselves.

What Makes a Place Great for Seniors?

Not all cities are created equal when it comes to senior living. AARP's Livability Index ranks towns and cities based on seven key factors that help older adults thrive: affordable and accessible housing, walkable neighborhoods, reliable public transit, clean and healthy environments, nearby health care, social activities, and opportunities for growth.



Valentine's Day, a Day of Love or Hazards?

While Valentine's Day is a day humans express their love, be aware that some traditional human gifts for this holiday can pose special hazards to our pets. Here are a few things to watch out for:

Chocolates and alcohol are toxic to dogs and cats and may be dangerous to some rabbits.

If you don't catch your pet pilfering these foods but they develop symptoms like vomiting, diarrhea, tremors, lack of coordination, and difficulty breathing, assume the worst and contact your veterinarian immediately or take them to the nearest animal emergency hospital.

That beautiful bouquet or house plant gift may seem harmless but be aware that some flowers or parts of an arrangement can be dangerous, including roses which account for 70 to 80% of all flowers sold. Other flowers to keep away from pets include lilies, hyacinth, tulips, daffodils, impatiens, baby's breath, and hydrangea.

Rubber plants and ferns are potted plants to keep out of reach of pets. Keeping curious cats away from these tantalizing fresh scents requires extra vigilance. Consider hanging a plant or floral display from the ceiling or on a wall shelf where there are no launch

points. Glass cabinets or decorative wire cages are another way to ensure kitties are protected. Be sure to clean up fallen petals and leaves as time passes.

According to Petfoodindustry.com, people spend over \$2B on gifts for their pets for Valentine's day. But there is little need to spend money on gifts — what most pets want is for you to spend time with them. Take your dog on an extra-long walk, play games with your pets, sing or talk to them, or simply give your pet some extra love.

Most Valentine's pet gifts expenditures are food. Why not bake or prepare your dog that special treat? Try this three-ingredient recipe (combine 2 cups oats, 2 bananas, and 1/2 cup peanut butter, and bake at 300 degrees for 25 to 30 minutes). Rolling the dough thin and using a small heart-shaped cookie cutter will make this treat extra special. It makes about 40 treats.

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

The History Behind CHS Annual Camellia Tea

Clayton Historical Society's (CHS) 49th annual Camellia Tea will be held on February 16 from 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. at the Clayton Museum.

Each year the public is cordially invited to visit the museum for the Camellia Tea and enjoy the tea, coffee or punch and cookies. There is also a gift shop.

Camellia Tea began in 1977 when descendants of Clayton pioneer families, as well as many long-time residents, gathered at a residence on Morgan Territory Road to celebrate and have a happy reunion for both the descendants of the pioneer families and friends interested in the historical background of the Clayton area. The view of the North Peak was a beautiful backdrop along with the driveway that was filled with blooming camellias.

In 1979, two small Victorian homes that were built in 1869 and which formerly belonged to Joel Clayton (who founded the town in 1857) were joined and renovated to form the current Clayton Museum on Main Street in downtown Clayton. This is the year Clayton Historical Society held the (3rd) annual Camellia Tea for

the first time at the new museum.

The Clayton Museum is run by volunteers and members of the Clayton Historical Society on Wednesdays and Sundays from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. Clayton Museum is at 6101 Main Street, Clayton.

For more information, call 672-0240 or visit the website www.claytonhistory.org

The Clayton Historical Society's 49th Annual Silver Camellia Tea



Sunday, February 16, 2025
1:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m.

Clayton Historical Society Museum
 6101 Main Street, Clayton

claytonhistory.org 925-672-0240
 Free Event-Free Parking

Honoring Those Who Worked on our First Annual Halloween Tour

MONTHLY MARKET REPORT			
DECEMBER / 2024			
CLAYTON	MARKET COMPETITION	CONCORD	MARKET COMPETITION
Existing SFR Median Price \$1.12M	Median Days on Market 42	Existing SFR Median Price \$825K	Median Days on Market 21
Sales-to-List Price % 100.0%	Sales-to-List Price % 100.0%	Sales-to-List Price % 100.4%	Sales-to-List Price % 100.4%
% Change from Last Year -0.8%	% of Active Listings Who Reduced Prices 25.0%	% Change from Last Year +1.9%	% of Active Listings Who Reduced Prices 14.0%
MARTINEZ	MARKET COMPETITION	WALNUT CREEK	MARKET COMPETITION
Existing SFR Median Price \$930K	Median Days on Market 12	Existing SFR Median Price \$1.57M	Median Days on Market 14
Sales-to-List Price % 100.0%	Sales-to-List Price % 100.0%	Sales-to-List Price % 99.5%	Sales-to-List Price % 99.5%
% Change from Last Year +11.4%	% of Active Listings Who Reduced Prices 25.0%	% Change from Last Year +11.9%	% of Active Listings Who Reduced Prices 15.4%



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The 97th Annual Academy Awards, Delayed, But Must Go On

Awards, Delayed, But Must Go On

On Thursday, January 23, the nominations for the 2025 Oscars were announced. Due to the devastating fires in Los Angeles, the nominations were delayed by a week to allow academy members more time to vote. This year, the ten films in the Best Picture category are:

“A Complete Unknown”, “Anora”, “The Brutalist”, “Conclave”, “Dune: Part Two”, “Emilia Perez”, “I’m Still Here”, “Nickel Boys”, “The Substance”, and “Wicked”.

It can be easy to dismiss having a large celebration in the midst of so much loss. It is, however, important to remember how many jobs the yearly telecast brings. Many people have lost their homes — businesses are also gone and with them, jobs. The Oscars telecast provides employment to caterers, security guards, technical workers and musicians, to name just a few. Look to first-time Oscars host Conan O’Brien to set the right tone. He is a comedy veteran and knows how to strike the perfect balance of light and silly when needed.

There is no clear winner for the top prize. “Emilia Perez” garnered the most nominations at thirteen,



but “The Brutalist” and “Wicked” are close behind with ten each. It will be interesting to see if academy voters’ emotions regarding the real-life tragic events shape which film comes out on top.

Over on my Substack newsletter, “Colleenie Watches Movies,” I will be reviewing as many nominated films as I can before the telecast. In this issue of The Diablo Gazette, be sure to read my review of “A Complete Unknown.” In last month’s issue, you can catch my review of “Wicked.”

The 97th Annual Academy Awards will be broadcast on Sunday, March 2, from the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood. Start time is 4 p.m. PST on ABC and streaming on HULU.

A Complete Unknown

Bob Dylan has always been a mysterious figure. Because of this, he makes for fascinating storytelling. Although there have been other films about his life and work, “A Complete Unknown” is a traditional movie focusing on Dylan’s rise to fame once he arrives in New York, circa 1961. While the biopic contains many facts about this period in Dylan’s life, some situations and time frames are shifted around for the sake of delivering a dramatic tale.

Bob Dylan (Timothée Chalamet) arrives in New York City with a sack full of songs and all the confidence afforded to a nineteen-year-old. He knows he is talented and seeks an opportunity to showcase his skills. His fortunate meeting with Pete Seeger (Edward Norton) introduces him to some influential people in the exploding folk music scene. Seeger quickly sees that Dylan is a once-in-a-lifetime talent and he is betting that Dylan’s youth will give a surge to the folk movement.

At the same time, Dylan begins a romantic relationship with Sylvie Russo (Elle Fanning), a politically active young woman who encourages him to push his own songs and not simply rehash traditional folk favorites. Although she is influential, he is also drawn to Joan Baez (Monica Barbaro). As Baez climbs the charts and draws large crowds to her concerts, she is attracted to Dylan but wary of his cockiness.

As Dylan becomes more entrenched with his record company and new fan base, he becomes restless. Feeling pigeon-holed, his growing frustration creates tension



with Seeger and the producers of the 1965 Newport Folk Festival, where he is set to perform.

One of the most important factors in creating a good biopic is the right casting. Chalamet does an incredible job bringing young Bob Dylan to life without overstepping into a caricature. Actors always get extra points for doing their own singing, and although Dylan may not be known for having the most beautiful voice, it is certainly distinctive and believably captured by Chalamet. Edward Norton does the rare job of so completely transforming himself into Pete Seeger that you forget you are watching the actor. Props also go to Monica Barbaro, who had no prior singing experience before taking on the role of Joan Baez. While she may not exactly embody Baez’s distinctive sound, her singing is angelic.

This energetic film brings the 1960s folk scene to life for younger generations and serves as a trip down memory lane for those who lived through it. Look for this film to create a new crop of Bob Dylan fans who will find inspiration and connection in his powerful songs.

Rated R
In Theaters



‘The Dry,’ by Jane Harper

“The Dry” (Flatiron Books, 2018, paperback, 352 pages, \$10.69) by Jane Harper is an Australian-based mystery full of twists and turns. Federal Agent Aaron Falk has a decades-old secret, which is why the man is reluctant to return to the small town of his youth. But Falk is forced to face his past when he travels to Kiewarra and attends the funeral of his childhood best friend, Luke. Luke had lied to be Falk’s alibi to the murder of his Falk’s first love, and even though some townspeople never believed Falk’s story, Luke’s death should have ended the controversy. But now, it seems someone else in town knows Falk had lied about his whereabouts on the day of the girl’s drowning.

But that is not all that troubles Falk. He had planned to attend the funeral and make a hasty exit. Except Luke’s family asked Falk to investigate the circumstances of Luke’s murder/suicide. He reluctantly agrees because Aaron cannot understand why his former best friend would kill his wife and child then kill himself. The new local police officer also has his own suspicions that Luke did not commit suicide, and the two men join forces. Aaron’s firsthand knowledge of the small town turns out to be helpful in the quest for truth in the murder/suicide, but it also brings up haunting memories of the long-ago death of his childhood crush. All this drama takes place in a time of severe drought which creates added tension throughout the novel. Readers are bound to get hooked on this page-turn-

ing mystery as the secrets buried in this hot and arid ranching community unfold.

“The Dry” was an instant New York Times bestseller. Harper’s debut novel also received the CWA Gold Dagger for Best Crime Novel, the British Book Awards Crime and Thriller Book of the Year, the Australian Book Industry Awards Book of the Year and the Australian Indie Awards Book of the Year. Fans of Liane Moriarty’s novels, “A Flicker in the Dark” by Stacy Willingham, and Louise Penny’s detective novels will enjoy this book.

Jane Harper is the author of four other bestsellers: “Force of Nature”, “The Lost Man”, “The Survivors”, and “Exiles”. The Rights to “The Dry” have been sold in 27 territories worldwide and it was made into a film of the same name in 2020. Harper worked as a print journalist for thirteen years, both in Australia and the United Kingdom prior to becoming a novelist. She lives in Melbourne with her husband and two children.



CHS New Recorded Discoveries

The Concord Historical Society (CHS) is excited to share some newly discovered history. In the 1930s during the Depression, the Works Project Administration was formed to help put people to work. One such project was the WPA California Folk Music Project organized by Sidney Robertson Cowell, an ethnomusicologist, and supported by the Music Division of University of California at Berkeley. Ms. Cowell gathered folk songs from immigrants and migrants throughout Northern California including Concord, Pittsburg, and Richmond.

Concord local, Jessie de Soto, was one of the many singers recorded. These recordings inspired David Steinberg, faculty member of San Francisco Community Music Center, to create an event to bring these recordings to life through new performances by contemporary musical artists. Working with Mr. Steinberg, the Concord

Historical Society has arranged to bring this live performance to Concord on Sunday February 23 at 2:00 p.m. Tickets can be purchased through Eventbrite. Search Tunes From Our Back Yard.

Concord Museum and Event Center, 1928 Clayton Road, Concord. (Parking is on Marina Court, just off Amador



Clayton Theatre Company

NOISES OFF

march 14-23

by Michael Frayn

Directed by La Tonya Watts
Assistant Director Roxanne Pardi

CLAYTON THEATRE COMPANY / ENDEAVOR HALL / 6008 CENTER ST. / CLAYTON
\$32 ADULTS / \$28 SENIORS (62+) / \$25 STUDENTS
Tickets may be purchased online at www.ClaytonTheatreCompany.com
or by calling 925-334-0880 or at the Box Office 1-hour before curtain

Around Martinez



Increasing Transparency of Traffic Safety Efforts

by Brianne Zorn, Mayor, City of Martinez

When Martinez City Councilmembers ask our residents about their priority issues, we inevitably hear complaints about traffic safety, such as speeding, or requests for solutions, such as speed bumps and stop signs. And ultimately, their question becomes: how do I get my traffic safety issue addressed?

In Martinez, traffic safety requests are processed and approved or denied by the Traffic Safety Committee (TSC), which is made up of city staff from Engineering, Public Works, and the Police Department. When a member of the public submits a request or complaint to a Councilmember, staff member, or more recently via our online Service Request Portal, the request is routed to the TSC, who meet once a month. While the person who submitted the request is given an update by staff on the TSC's review and if any decision is made, there hasn't been any transparency to the rest of the Martinez community to find out what improvements are planned or implemented.

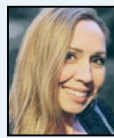
The TSC has made some great progress over the past several months towards sharing its progress and decisions with the community. The City of Martinez has just rolled out a new Traffic Safety webpage, www.cityofmartinez.org/trafficsafety, to provide information to the public about the status of TSC decisions and completed projects. The Service Portal has also been updated to include Traffic Safety requests such as speed bumps and stop signs. Service Portal requests are tracked by City staff and give a better line of sight in meeting the needs of our community rather than simply responding to individual emails.

In other strides towards traffic safety



and transparency on how decisions are made, the Neighborhood Traffic Management Plan was approved by the Council in 2024 to streamline the standard approach to traffic issues and solutions. The Local Roadway Safety Plan was also developed in 2024 to help us identify and prioritize key traffic locations for improvement. The new Traffic Safety webpage includes all this information, as well as links and reference information about laws or ordinances that impact traffic safety, such as speed limits, parking, crosswalks, and street trees.

This new website meets my goals of increased transparency and better adherence to fair processes. Getting a stop sign approved shouldn't be about who you know but what is best for public safety for that location. I hope that members of the Martinez community will use our Service Portal to alert us to traffic safety issues in your neighborhood and to request infrastructure improvements. It is my expectation that we at City Hall will do our part to respond to these requests in a timely manner and update the status of the requests regularly on the Traffic Safety webpage so all members of the community will have access to this information. I am confident that together, we can make major improvements to traffic safety in Martinez.



Exploring Mortgage Options Amid a Raised Interest Rate Market

by Bonita Vega, Marketing/Bus. Development Manager, Shell Western States FCU swsfcu.org

As the housing market evolves, potential homebuyers face various financing choices impacting their long-term financial health. With current interest rates around 7%, many are reassessing whether the traditional 30-year fixed mortgage remains the best option or if alternatives like adjustable-rate mortgages (ARMs) might be more suitable.

The 30-year fixed mortgage has long been a reliable choice for American home financing, offering stability and predictable payments that do not change over the loan's duration. This option has been especially favored during periods of lower interest rates. However, today's rising interest landscape raises important questions about the desirability of long-term fixed mortgages.

The Federal Reserve's efforts to combat inflation have resulted in significant interest rate hikes, pushing mortgage rates to uncomfortable levels. This shift prompts prospective buyers to consider whether a traditional fixed mortgage is the right fit, especially with rates expected to remain elevated for the foreseeable future.

One alternative gaining traction is the adjustable-rate mortgage (ARM). ARMs typically offer lower initial interest rates than fixed-rate mortgages, allowing buyers to save significantly in the early years. This can be particularly attractive for buyers who may not stay in their homes long-term. For example, an ARM

may feature a fixed rate for an initial period of five, seven, or even ten years, followed by periodic adjustments based on market conditions. This approach enables buyers to benefit from lower rates initially, potentially refinancing or selling before any upward adjustments take place.

However, ARMs come with risks. While the lower initial rates can be advantageous, eventual rate adjustments could lead to substantially higher mortgage payments. Buyers must carefully evaluate their long-term financial plans and budget accordingly before pursuing this option.

In addition to ARMs, prospective homebuyers should explore other mortgage products available in the market. Some lenders offer hybrid loans or temporary rate buy-downs, which can reduce monthly payments during the early phases of a mortgage.

Ultimately, while the 30-year fixed mortgage has historically been a stalwart in home financing, current interest rates and individual financial situations warrant careful consideration. With rates around 7% and little expectation for significant declines soon, ARMs could present a valuable alternative for those willing to accept their potential risks. As always, conducting thorough research and consulting financial advisors is essential for homebuyers making informed decisions about their housing investments.

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February Community Events

- Saturday, February 1, 2025**
10 AM - Alhambra Hills Open Space Grand Opening!
- Sunday, February 2, 2025**
11 AM - 12:30 PM - Lunar New Year Celebration
- Saturday, February 15, 2025**
1 - 4:30 PM - Downtown Wine & Chocolate Stroll
- Friday, February 21, 2025**
9:30-11:30 AM - Healthy Hearts, Healthy Lives Resource Fair
- Thursday, February 28, 2025**
4 PM - Hidden Valley Sportcourts / Pickleball Grand Opening!
- Every Sunday!**
9 AM - 1 PM - Downtown Farmers Market Downtown

Follow our Social Media for more!

As Wait Continues for Franklin Canyon Golf Course Closure, Alhambra High Prepares for What Could be Final Season at Longtime Home

by Tom Lochner, freelance reporter

Coach Steve Sloper and his Alhambra High School boys golf team are preparing for what could be their final season on their longtime home course at Franklin Canyon in Hercules. Or at least part of the season.

That's because the golf course will be open until March, according to the latest forecast by Tom Hix, managing member of owner Madison MRH-Franklin 1, LLC, which plans to turn it into a luxury RV resort. The public golf course was originally announced to close on May 30, 2024. That was followed by an announcement that it would stay open through that summer. Yet, the course still remains open today.

The Alhambra High girls team played at Buchanan Fields in Concord this past fall because Franklin Canyon was supposed to close, Sloper said.

The high school boys golf season runs from Feb. 10 to as late as mid-May, depending on how far teams advance in the playoffs, Sloper said. Alhambra High's Plan B, if the course were to close before the end of the

season, would be to move to Diablo Creek Golf Course in Concord.

Few people in the region know Franklin Canyon Golf Course as well as Sloper, who has golfed there throughout almost its entire existence. He was a freshman on the original Alhambra High golf team in 1969, and this will be his 32nd season as the Alhambra boys golf coach.

"It's a shame that Franklin Canyon is closing since it has been a great course for us and the public since 1967," he said.

The Franklin Canyon RV Resort Project envisions 158 RV spaces; 22 walk-in campsites with tent bungalows; a driving range; a practice putting green; a 10,500-square-foot clubhouse with dining and lounge facilities and a fitness and wellness center; an outdoor swimming pool with a poolside shower and changing room and grill/snack shop; a playground, dog park, pickleball courts and horseshoe pit; and covered storage for 24 recreational vehicles. About 70 acres that include the current back nine, which was

supposed to survive as a nine-hole golf course under Hix's original 2019 version of the plan, is slated to be donated to the Martinez-based John Muir Land Trust as open space.

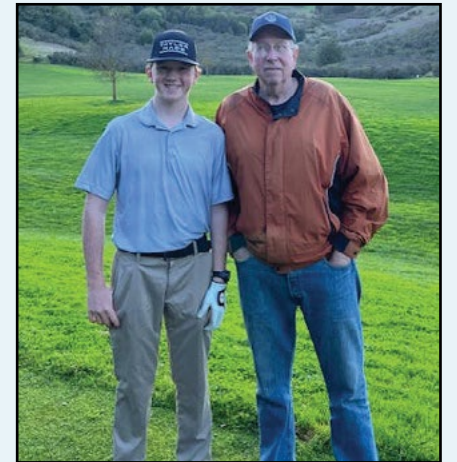
The plan to close the course and replace it with an RV resort has been beset with delays and questions.

The repeated postponement of the closing, coupled with what was a looming Feb. 8, 2025, expiration of the project entitlements unless site grading or relocation of on-site utilities commence by then, gave some of the region's golfers hope that the golf course might not close at all. The applicant has since filed applications for a grading permit and a demolition permit, according to Hercules Community Development Director Timothy Rood. Still outstanding as of Jan. 13 were a building permit application and final map.

Former Hercules Mayor and then-Councilman Dan Romero, who was the lone dissenter in the 4-1 City Council vote in February 2022 that approved the current RV resort plan, said last month that with current high commercial loan interest rates, developers are unlikely to want to spend a huge amount of money on developing the Franklin Canyon RV Resort.

But about four months ago, the Feb. 8, 2025, deadline was extended by 18 months, to Aug. 8, 2026, courtesy of a state Assembly bill focused on housing entitlements, sponsored by Assemblyman Joe Patterson of District 5, which includes parts of El Dorado and Placer counties. A.B. 2729 extends housing entitlements by 18 months if they were issued before Jan. 1, 2024, and were in effect on that date, and expire prior to Dec. 31, 2025.

"The entitlement extension became effective by operation of law when the governor signed AB 2729 on September 27, 2024," Rood, the Hercules community development director,



Coach Sloper and golfer

said in a Dec. 27 email. The 18-month extension passed largely under the radar.

"The city did not need to take any action, as the extension was automatically granted under state law," Rood said in a Jan. 2 email.

Other high schools would be affected by the closing of Franklin Canyon Golf Course. Hercules High School has been using it, as has De Anza High of Richmond, and Pinole Valley High used the driving range on Mondays, Sloper said.

"This place is an institution," De Anza coach Lawrence Smith said during a practice of the De Anza girls golf team at Franklin Canyon in October.

Edited from then original article originally posted on Martinez News and Views

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Onstage Repertory Theatre Presents "Intimate Apparel," February 7 thru 23

Onstage Repertory Theatre presents "Intimate Apparel" at the Martinez Campbell Theater February 7th-23rd.

Written by Lynn Nottage, the play is based on the life of Nottage's great-grandmother. It is one of her most widely produced plays and is listed among the 40 best plays ever written.

"Intimate Apparel" explores the desire for both independence and connection, the insidious effects of racism and classism, the social oppression of women, and the bravery, hard work, friendship, and love, of people who have been forgotten by history.

The time is 1905, the place New York City, where Esther, a Black seamstress, lives in a boarding house for women and sews intimate apparel for clients who range from wealthy white patrons to black prostitutes.

Her skills and discretion are much in demand, and she has managed to stuff a good sum of money into her

quilt over the years. Though leading a life that provides joy to many, she remains lonely and longing for a husband and a future. In the end Esther will be forced to face a future that she is truly unprepared for.

"...a near-perfect balance between content and execution..." -Associated Press

"...thoughtful, affecting ... The play offers poignant commentary on an era when the cut and color of one's dress-and of course, skin-determined whom one could and could not marry, sleep with, even talk to in public." -Variety

"a soft-focused glimpse into the beating hearts behind the archives of African American life a century ago." -The New York Times

Directed by Directed by Carlene Coury. Theater is located at 636 Ward S. Martinez.

For Ticket information go to: campbelltheater.com/intimate-apparel or call 925-350-9770.

Subscribe for Home Delivery of The Diablo Gazette (925) 298-9990



by Craig Lazeretti,
Martinez News and Views

MUSD Superintendent Helen Rossi to Retire at End of School Year

Martinez Unified School District Superintendent Helen Rossi will retire at the end of the 2024-25 school year. Rossi's career spanned more than 30 years through eight positions in MUSD, from eighth grade math teacher in 1994 to become the district's top administrator. She played a key role in navigating the district through the upheaval of the COVID-19 pandemic, first as interim superintendent at the start of the 2020-21 school year, when pandemic lockdowns ushered in remote learning.

When Superintendent Julie Synard abruptly resigned in February 2022, the school board tapped Rossi to become full-time superintendent.

"I want everyone to know this was not an easy decision for me to make," Rossi said, adding that she wanted to make the announcement now to give the board ample time to find a successor.

New Community Warning System Alerts

In a news release last week, Contra Costa Health announced that residents can now "opt in" to receive text alerts for Level 1 hazardous materials incidents at local industrial facilities, including PBF Energy's Martinez refinery. Previously, text alerts were only sent for more serious Level 2 and Level 3 incidents.

To receive the Level 1 alerts, residents can text CCHEALTH to 21423. Residents should also register for general Community Warning System alerts, if they haven't already, through <https://cwsalerts.com/>

Point Buckler Purchased by John Muir Land Trust

Martinez-based John Muir Land Trust (JMLT) announced its purchase of Point Buckler, a 29-acre island located in Suisun Marsh. JMLT called the purchase a milestone in its campaign "to conserve land in an ecosystem that protects clean water and preserves essential habitat for 700 species of California fish and wildlife."

According to the news release, JMLT purchased island with a credit bid of \$3.8 million at a public auction conducted by the Solano County Sheriff's Office, the result of an enforcement case from a decade

ago after the island's former owner constructed an unauthorized levee without permits or approvals from the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board and other agencies. JMLT plans to eventually remove the levee and restore the island's tidal marsh ecosystem.

MUSD School Board Looking to Cut \$1.8 Million From 2025-26 Budget

At the Monday, January 27 school board meeting, the school board received presentations on its special education services and proposed budget cuts for the 2025-26 school year, as it continues to grapple with a structural budget deficit. The district is currently anticipating budget reductions of roughly \$1.8 million for the 2024-25 school year, with plans to finalize the cuts by the end of February.

"Unfortunately, we're in this uncomfortable space, and we're not going to feel comfortable for a while," Chief Business Official Andy Cannon said during his budget update at the Jan. 13 school board meeting. "There are going to be a lot of hard decisions that take place."

The district also is in the latest negotiations over salary and other contract provisions with its employee unions. The teachers union, which has received raises of 10%, 9% and 6% the past three years, is requesting a 2% raise, with the district proposing 0.5%, according to the latest negotiations update on the district website. The same is true with the classified employees union.

Hidden Valley Sportscourts Project, Featuring 8 Pickleball Courts, Nears Completion

The much-anticipated sportscourts project at Hidden Valley Park, which will feature the city's first dedicated pickleball courts, is on track to be completed within the next few weeks, the city announced.

The project includes resurfacing two existing tennis courts to create eight pickleball courts and construction of one new tennis court at Hidden Valley. Other features include new court lighting; sound blankets to minimize noise; new benches, bike racks and trash cans; and planting (including a bioretention basin). The City Council awarded a \$1.47 million contract to Saboo, Inc. in May 2024, to complete the project.

Mayor Brianne Zorn said in an email to Martinez News and Views. "...I'm confident it will prove to be another fantastic amenity we can now celebrate in our extensive parks and recreation system."

These articles are edited from their original versions. To read the full articles go to martineznewsandviews.substack.com

Los Angeles Wildfires Begg the Question, "Are the nearly 1,000 fire hydrants in Martinez properly maintained and equipped?"

by Craig Lazeretti, Martinez News and Views

That's a question the city hopes to answer soon, given the heightened fire safety concerns that have achieved new resonance in the wake of Los Angeles wildfire disaster.

City Manager Michael Chandler told the City Council prefers the city hire an outside contractor to inspect and ensure functionality of the city's fire hydrants, as city staff — which run Martinez's water infrastructure — are ill-equipped to perform this service and the Contra Costa Fire Protection District (ConFire) no longer plays a role in addressing it.

While city public works and maintenance crews have always had primary responsibility for inspecting and maintaining hydrants within city limits, Chandler said, "Over the years, they have found it extremely challenging to manage these in-house."

In his remarks to the council, Chandler said, "As to not be penny wise and pound foolish, what we are going to do is contract out this service. We have multiple contractors that are capable of doing this."

Mayor Brianne Zorn applauded the plan, saying in response to Chandler's comments that "hiring a contractor to come out and do this will ensure that we have a full inventory of all our hydrants, and that if there is anything broken ... it will be identified and we'll be able to fix it. It's important that we do this now when we don't have any issues and we can fix (problems) before, like you said, we have any major catastrophes that would happen."

In contrast to Martinez, where the city serves as its own water utility, most cities rely on independent utilities to provide and maintain local water services. And a cursory internet search showed that those utilities profess to operate robust hydrant inspection and maintenance programs.

For instance, the East Bay Municipal Utility District says in a document on its website on wildfire preparedness that it "implements an inspection and maintenance program, conducting about 800 inspections annually and repairing or replacing hundreds of



hydrants each year.

EBMUD also collaborates with fire departments to ensure hydrants are operable, accessible, and meet the needs of the community, addressing issues reported during inspections or as part of upgrading portions of our 4,200 miles of pipeline." Similarly, the Contra Costa Water District said in a Jan. 10 news release, "CCWD inspects hydrants regularly and replaces them as necessary to ensure water is available when needed."

The city of Pittsburg, which, like Martinez, operates its own water system, says on its website that its Public Works Department maintains an annual flushing program for its hydrants. "Each hydrant is checked to verify that it is in good working order. Water is allowed to flow for a period of time with the hydrant fully open to clean out the main and to make sure fresh water is getting to all areas of the distribution system."

The question of whether Martinez's hydrants have been properly inspected and maintained came to the fore in the wake of a vegetation fire on Oct. 2, 2023, that came close to damaging homes in the Muir Oaks subdivision.

"When the fire trucks arrived, they didn't know that we don't have adequate water pressure in our fire hydrants," Muir Oaks resident Christine Friel told the City Council on Oct. 18, 2023. "They had to send water trucks up."

This article was edited from its original version. To read the full article "Are Martinez Fire Hydrants Up to Snuff in Case of Wildfire? City to Spend Money to Find Out" go to martineznewsandviews.substack.com

Martinez Police Officer Marc Kahue Dies Of Leukemia

The following is from the Martinez Police Department:

It is with deep sorrow that we share the passing of our beloved friend and colleague, Officer Marc Kahue. Marc fought a brave and inspiring battle against leukemia, and his loss is felt deeply by all who knew him. Marc joined the Martinez Police Department family in July 2021, bringing with him a commitment to service and a kind spirit that touched everyone around him.

Prior to his time with us, he served honorably with the Contra



Costa County Community College District Police Department.

Above all, Marc was a devoted father to his young daughter, Isabella, and a loving partner to his girlfriend, Leslie. Their strength and love meant everything to him.

We are grateful for the support and kindness of our community during this difficult time.

Please join us in keeping Marc's family in your thoughts and prayers as they navigate this heartbreaking loss. His memory will forever remain in our hearts.



Neuroplasticity

by Jessica Raaum Foster,
NeurologyofPresence.com

Be the Giraffe

We've all heard it before: "Stand up straight!" But did you know that maintaining a long spine is so much more than good posture? It is actually essential for a healthy nervous system, and by extension, your entire body.

Think of your spine as a garden hose or an electrical wire. If it's bent or kinked, the flow, whether it's water, electricity, or nerve signals, gets disrupted. A well-aligned spine ensures your nervous system can do its job efficiently, supporting everything from muscle strength to organ function.

Posture is meant to be reflexive, meaning standing up straight should be automatic, not something you have to think about.

But life happens. Stress, injury and poor habits often pull us into a slumped or arched posture making it harder to maintain this natural alignment. As a result, our health and wellness can decline further.

Can you feel the impact of different postures in your body?

First, note how your body is functioning with your current posture. Check your balance. Stand on one foot or stand with one foot directly in front of the other. (If you need more of a challenge, close your eyes.) Add some type of movement. It could be a

squat, or test how far above your head you can reach with your arm. Any movement will do.

Now slump the way you do when you are exhausted and recheck with the same movements and balance challenge. Notice a difference? Most people notice a decline in their balance or movement with exaggerated poor posture.

So, let's see if we can improve your posture. Many people will actually over-arch their neck or back when they are asked to stand up straight, but this is not optimal either. To truly lengthen our spine, imagine pressing a piece of paper into the ground with your feet while pushing a ball up toward the ceiling with the crown of your head. Avoid arching, just lengthen.

Now recheck with the same balance challenge and movements. Do you see a difference with the lengthened spine? For most people, this can be a game-changer for balance and movement.

Why is this? Nerve signals flow more efficiently, enhancing strength and reducing pain. Daily movements like bending, reaching or even sitting feel easier and more controlled. Plus, your brain builds specific movement maps. If you train with a long spine, your body learns to prioritize that posture reflexively, so it becomes second



nature.

Your challenge this month:

Maintain a long spine during daily activities like:

- Getting in and out of a car or chair.
- Emptying the dishwasher or making the bed.

This may actually be very challenging. Your brain may be habituated to collapsing the spine while you move, but a little awareness can go a long way in retraining this.

Know that every time you lengthen your spine, you are taking optimal care of your health and wellness. So be the giraffe!

Twelfth Year for Blossoms for Barbara to Deliver Valentine Love



Events founder, Linda Karp, and volunteers in front of John Muir Hospital in Walnut Creek.

Blossoms for Barbara founder, Linda Karp, and her Clayton Garden Club volunteers ride again as they prepare more than 1,400 flowering blossoms for those under hospice care, isolated elderly, veterans and shut-ins, including 500 to local healthcare heroes. Each filled with "love and appreciation" for Valentine's Day.

Since 2012, Linda continues to bring a little joy to those who were dying, and their families which were dealing with the horrible grief of losing someone they loved.

"This event makes such a wonderful impact throughout the community. The hope is to continue to touch even more hearts and gift even more flowering plants to those so much in need of a little love and kindness. It's hard to believe how much love and joy one little flowering plant can bring," Linda said. "I'm so grateful to the volunteers, CBCA and other donors who support this each year."

Donations toward this annual event can be mailed to Clayton Valley Garden Club, c/o Blossoms for Barbara, P.O. Box 633, Clayton, CA 94517.

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Local Student to Compete for \$250,000 as Finalist in Science Talent Search

Elisa Zhang, a senior at Dougherty Valley High School, has been named a top 40 finalist in the Regeneron Science Talent Search. Regarded as the nation's oldest and most prestigious Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) competition, the Regeneron Talent Search recognizes and celebrates the promising scientific talents of high school seniors. Zhang was selected from nearly 2,500 entrants.



Zhang's project, Patching Multi-Location Software Bugs: A Multi-Agent Large Language Model Framework for Automated Program Repair addresses a critical challenge in software engineering. Her innovative approach introduces a process that could outperform current industry baselines in efficiency and cost.

As a finalist, Zhang will move on to a week-long competition in Washington D.C this March that in addition to rigorous judging, will include interaction with leading scientists. She will also have an opportunity to share her project with the public on March 9. Each finalist will receive a \$25,000 award with a chance to compete for a top prize of \$250,000.

"It's exciting to see my research being recognized for its rigor and real-world impact, and I look forward to meeting and learning from all the other talented finalists in Washington DC!" shared Zhang.

In a press release earlier this month, San Ramon Valley School District (SRVUSD) celebrated the achievements of Elisa Zhang and her peer, Dougherty Valley student, Timothy Zhang, who were both named top 300 scholars in the Regeneron Science Talent Search. Timothy's project, Predicting Cognitive Progression and Quantifying Clinical Factor Effects: A Temporal Dual-Model Pipeline and Cluster-Based Analysis, was recognized for its impact in the field of medical research.

SRVUSD congratulates both students for their achievements and for representing its district on the national stage. Diablo Gazette wishes Elisa Zhang the best in the next level of competition.

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Concord Launches Accessory Dwelling Unit Rebate Program



Thanks to State funding to incentivize housing production, the City of Concord has launched a rebate program that will provide up to \$15,000 to property owners who apply to build an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) on their property. The rebates will be provided on a first-come, first-serve basis while funds last, and applications must be submitted prior to Sept. 30, 2026, to be considered for the program.

Concord's recently updated Housing Element identifies the need for the City to plan for the addition of 5,000 more housing units of all types by 2031.

City receives State funding to incentivize housing production

"We are grateful for these state funds to support our efforts to encourage the production of new housing," Mayor Carlyn Obringer said. "I urge our community to take advantage of this fantastic opportunity..."

REBATE AMOUNTS

Low-Income Restricted ADUs (20-year property deed restriction required):

- \$15,000 for units smaller than 500 square feet
- \$10,000 for units 501-750 square feet

- \$5,000 for units 751-1,000 square feet

Non-Restricted ADUs:

- \$7,500 for units smaller than 500 square feet
- \$5,000 for units 501-750 square feet
- \$2,500 for units 751-1,000 square feet

No rebates will be offered for units larger than 1,000 square feet.

If approved, the rebate will be reserved for the applicant, but it is not paid until the ADU is complete and the building permit is finalized. The building permit must be issued within six months from the rebate application date, and the ADU construction must be complete, and the building permit finalized within 18 months of the permit being issued; otherwise, the rebate will be forfeited.

In addition to the rebate program, the City of Concord has made it easier for property owners to launch their ADU project by offering free, pre-approved ADU plans, which are available on the City's website.

Learn more at: www.cityofconcord.org/ADU

Diablo Ballet's Fiona Hutchen's Near Deaf Experience

By David King

Meet Fiona Hutchens, 22, a ballerina with the Diablo Ballet and certified in American Ballet Theatre curriculum. She also teaches at Oakland Ballet School and at Diablo Ballet School. Her passion for dance and love of music is lifelong. But her dancing career was nearly cut short due to hearing loss. She suffers from bilateral progressive hearing loss, diagnosed at age 11, which is currently being managed through a cochlear implant.

"My mom was a professional ballet dancer. I was put into ballet pretty much as soon as I was able to skip. I always loved dancing, and I loved all sorts of music." Fiona explained.

In 7th grade, she noticed she was suddenly having trouble hearing people. She would ask people to repeat themselves and they would get annoyed. Sometimes, she couldn't hear her teacher.

"One of the pivotal moments, I gave a presentation in science class. When students asked questions, I was about to cry because I couldn't hear them. A girl who sat in front of the room understood this and repeated each person's question for me. That's when I realized I couldn't hear anything. At that age, I was really afraid and embarrassed. I felt isolated socially. I couldn't have friends."

She also struggled at ballet. She couldn't hear her instructor or the music. "I got hearing aids five days before my 12th birthday." When she first put them on, paper rustling, pen writing, keys clacking, air conditioning — "I didn't know any of these things made noise."

In two years, her left ear couldn't hear

even with the hearing aid. A cochlear specialist suggested she get a cochlear implant.

"I was like, 'absolutely not!' Invasive surgery was scary. I was preparing myself to become deaf and attend a deaf school. I started teaching myself sign language off the Internet."

Eventually, as a sophomore in high school, she agreed to have the surgery. When it was activated, she couldn't decipher anything. It sounded completely foreign. She couldn't distinguish a voice. "It took me probably two months to be able to understand what was going into my ear with the implant. It wasn't sound amplification." Her brain had to reinterpret signals and relearn how to hear.

"The music doesn't sound the same in the cochlear even today, so that's something that's a challenge."

Fiona is performing in all three Diablo Ballet dances coming up on February 7 and 8 at the Lescher Center.

"We're doing 'Donizetti Variations' by George Balanchine and 'Cinderella's Wedding' staged by Julia Adams, and then 'Doctor Magic', a piece that Penny Saunders created for us last season.

"I'm lucky I get to do all three of those. They are super fun and really challenging. Donizetti variations are one of my favorite ballets now."



Photo Credit: Jake Stangel

Celebrate the New Year with the Diablo Ballet

"Cinderella's Wedding", "Donizetti Variations", and "Dr. Magic"

Diablo Ballet rings in the New Year with "Cinderella's Wedding" performing February 7 – 8, 2025 at the Lesher Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek.

Choreographed by renowned storyteller, Julia Adam, Diablo Ballet premiered this whimsical ballet in February 2022. It is based on the full-length fairytale ballet and includes the infamous glass slipper, romantic pas de deux with Prince Charming, her Fairy Godmother, and the four seasons featuring the Autumn, Winter, Spring, and Summer fairies.

Also on the program is the Diablo Ballet premiere of legendary dance-maker George Balanchine's "Donizetti Variations" staged by Sandra Jennings.



This cheerful ballet was created for the "Salute to Italy," a 1960 New York City Ballet program celebrating the 100th anniversary of Italy's unification with music from the opera Don Sebastian.

Rounding out the program is an encore presentation of "Dr. Magic" by esteemed choreographer, Penny Saunders. Premiered in February 2024 this light-hearted, musical, and heartwarming

work showcases Diablo Ballet dancers' multifaceted artistry and contemporary technique.

Single tickets are on sale now (\$30 - \$58) with senior and youth pricing available. This magical program will enchant all audiences. For tickets, call 925-943-SHOW (7469) or visit www.lesherartscenter.org or www.diabloballet.org.

Lion Dance continued from page 2

Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Pig.

"We are now in the year 4,722, according to Sifu Steffanie. The Year of the Snake. The Snake is known as the most mysterious of all the animals of the zodiac. It's typically considered introverted but is always thinking."

Snakes in Chinese mythology are not seen as manifestations of wickedness as they are in Western culture.

But while people born in the year of the snake are seen as charismatic, intelligent and artistic, they are also often considered cunning and mysterious."

The lion dance is used at many multicultural celebrations because it is to bring good luck and chase away all the evil spirits and the negative energy.

"The lion dance is loud, and that goes back to a folktale where on New Year's Eve, a monster, Nian, would come out of the water and eat the children, but they found that the color red and loud noises would scare away the monster.

"The lion dance has some significant parts to it. You will always see a lion

do three bows, and that's representing heaven, earth, and man. There's a mirror on the lion's forehead, and that is so when an evil spirit sees its reflection, it scares itself away.

The drum of the lion represents the heartbeat of the lion. So, if the drum goes faster, the lion could be excited. And if the drum is softer, then maybe the lion's a little nervous or apprehensive. If a lion comes and touches you with his beard, it's giving you a blessing and good luck."

The Tomizaki Lions performances this year include appearances at Tomizaki Kung Fu parking lot, 4700 Clayton Road, nearby businesses, elementary schools, libraries, Los Medanos College, the Veranda, Martinez Farmers Market, and even a Danville block party celebrating the birth of twins.

"Above all and it's fun. Our practitioners all have a really good time. Last year, we rented the Brendan Theatre, and we took the lion dance team to see the premiere of Kung Fu Panda 4."

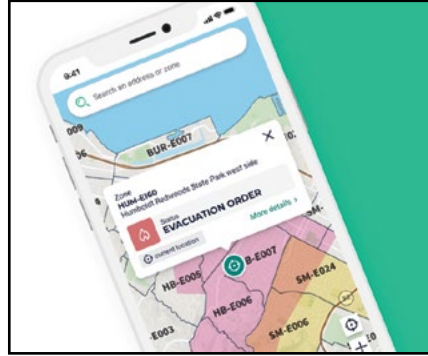


Three Lifesaving Preparations to Stay Safe During Disastrous Wildfires and Other Emergencies

Last month, the wildfires in Los Angeles County devastated several communities, claiming lives and forever altering the landscape. Many of us personally know someone who was directly affected by these disasters, which underscores the urgency of being prepared. As a retired police officer with experience in evacuations, I know firsthand how vital it is to equip our residents with the right tools to stay safe in emergencies.

Emergencies strike without warning and having the right information can make the difference between life and death. Here are three critical steps to stay prepared and act quickly:

1) Know your evacuation zone. Contra Costa County uses Genasys Protect, formerly known as Zonehaven Aware, to help residents stay informed. The platform allows users to save their location and receive real-time updates about their designated evacuation zone. It also provides the ability to track incidents, receive updates, and make informed decisions during emergencies such as



wildfires or chemical spills. To sign up, visit their website at <https://protect.genasys.com/search>.

2) Sign up for the Community Warning System (CWS) at <https://cwsalerts.com>. CWS is one of the nation's most advanced and effective all-hazard public warning systems. It alerts residents and businesses at risk of an emergency, providing timely updates via phone, text, email, sirens, and social media. These alerts include critical information, such as



evacuation instructions or shelter-in-place notices.

In the event of an evacuation, authorities usually issue a warning in advance. Those with mobility challenges should leave during the warning phase —waiting for law enforcement to knock on the door is risky. While cell phone warnings can be lifesaving, they are typically issued only when there is a high risk of significant loss of life, often after local warnings have already been made. This is why

planning is so important.

3) Create a detailed emergency plan. In times of crisis, chaos often makes it hard to stay organized, which is why it is essential to plan. Develop a family emergency plan that includes communication protocols, meeting points, evacuation routes, and a go-bag with essential items (e.g., water, medications, important documents). Being prepared helps ensure that everyone

knows exactly what to do.

Do not wait for the next disaster to act. By preparing now, families and communities will be better equipped to handle the unexpected. I encourage all Contra Costa County residents to sign up for both Genasys Protect and CWS alerts and share this vital information with friends and neighbors. The more people who prepare, the safer our community will be when disaster strikes.



Banner Presentation in Pacheco ~ 164 years ago

On Saturday afternoon last, the busy town of Pacheco presented an unusually lively appearance. At about 2 o'clock, Pacheco Engine Company NO. 1, with their new "machine" decorated in fine taste, made their appearance on the street. The company consists of about 40 members. They were all in attendance, dressed in uniform. Seated on the engine were three small boys dressed in the uniform of the company and waving American ensigns while the band discoursed beautifully several National and patriotic airs. After parading through the streets, the company halted before the engine house when Don Salvio Pacheco presented the company with a beautiful banner, richly trimmed with gold lace and surmounted with a golden eagle.

On one side were the words: "Presented by Salvio Pacheco to Pacheco Engine Company NO. 1". On the reverse side., "Pacheco NO. 1"

On presenting the banner, Don Salvio said, in Spanish:

"Gentlemen, I thank you much for the honor you have been so kind as to confer upon me by adopting my family name as the name of your company and as a slight token of my grateful sentiments towards you and of my sympathy with objects of your organization, please accept at my hands and from my heart this banner inscribed with that name. May the sight of its folds over inspire every member of the Pacheco Fire Company to harmony and duty."



The remarks of Don Salvio were interpreted by Don Thomas Pastor.

Foreman McDermott replied in the following happy strain.

"Don Salvio Pacheco, it becomes my pleasant duty, as foreman of Pacheco Engine Co. NO. 1, to express to you our heartfelt thanks for this liberal expression of kindness towards our company in thus presenting to us this beautiful banner, as well as other substantial tokens of



your benevolence. I am, like most of our members, a plain working man. Speechmaking is not my vocation, but I will venture to say, so long as this banner waves over our company, the kindness and name of Salvio Pacheco will not be forgotten; it will also remind us that we, too, have a duty to perform. I will here undertake to promise that the members of Pacheco. NO.1 will always do their duty.

"And now, Don Señor, may the remainder of your days be passed in peace and happiness, and may you always find the same spirit of liberality extended to you as you have this day so generously extended to us."

Captain McDermott was followed by C. E. Wetmore, Esq., also in behalf of the company, expressive of their feelings. His remarks were received with applause.

Dr. J. H. Carothers, one of the pioneers of the town, was called for. The doctor addressed the venerable Don Salvio in a short speech in behalf of the citizens of Pacheco, in which he eulogized in the highest terms the character of the venerable donor of the magnificent present. The doctor concluded his remarks as follows:

"And while Don Salvio Pacheco lives to enjoy the many blessings that surround him, may this beautiful banner he has this day presented to us, his kindness extended to us as citizens and firemen, and the many eminent qualities of his head and heart, inspire our hearts to the most pleasing recollection of him; and when the head of death removes him from our midst, may the permanent

Banner Presentation
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Contra Costa Gazette- February 23, 1861 Photos from: Contra Costa Historical Society

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CVCHS Special Education Department Honored for Second Year

As we welcome back our students from the winter holiday break, I hope everyone is refreshed and ready to take on the opportunities of 2025. A new year brings the promise of growth, achievement, and community—a perfect time to reflect on our shared accomplishments and aspirations.

First and foremost, I am thrilled to share that our Special Education Department has been honored once again by the California Department of Education. This recognition, awarded through the Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA), highlights the remarkable impact our school has on students with special needs and the broader community.

This marks the second consecutive year that CVCHS has received this prestigious honor, a testament to the commitment, innovation, and care that define our approach to education.

On February 13, 2025, state education leaders will formally celebrate CVCHS as a School Spotlight at their Inspiration to Action Symposium in San Diego—a proud moment for all of us.

I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Patrick Gaffney and his

outstanding team of teachers, para-educators, and support staff. Their tireless dedication ensures that every student is empowered to achieve their personal and academic goals. Together, we are building a future where every learner thrives, fostering independence, resilience, and success.

Beyond the classroom students volunteer to strengthen our community.

Our students also make tremendous contributions beyond the classroom. Through programs like our Public Service Academy and Key Club, they dedicate countless hours to volunteering with local nonprofit organizations and charities. Whether they're stocking shelves at food banks, assisting at animal shelters, mentoring at-risk children, or supporting our local library, CVCHS students exemplify the spirit of giving back.

If you represent a local organization in need of volunteers, I encourage you to contact our front office. Our students are eager to partner with you to strengthen our community.

These accomplishments, both within



Dr. Patrick Gaffney, Director of Student Services, will represent CVCHS next month at the Inspiration to Action Symposium.



CVCHS hosts events throughout the year serving the special needs community.

our school and beyond, remind us of the vital role CVCHS plays in shaping futures and creating a brighter tomorrow. I invite everyone in our community to celebrate our collective achievements and support the critical work happening here every day.

As we step into this new year, let's continue working together to foster

excellence, equity, and opportunity for all. Here's to a year filled with learning, service, and success.

Four Students Earn Eagle Scout Honors

A ceremony honoring four young men, who earned the rank of Eagle Scout in 2024, took place on January 12, 2025, at Northgate High School, Walnut Creek. Congratulations to:

William C. Grant, Maoren Shi, Greyson Farrar and Sutter O'Steen, all members of Boy Scout Troop 227 in Walnut Creek.

Eagle Scout is the highest rank that the Boy Scouts offers and only three to four percent of Boy Scout members ever attain this prestigious honor.

William Grant, 18, is a senior at College Park High School. He earned 27 merit badges including all 21 required to receive the Eagle Scout award with a Bronze Palm. His service project was a garden renovation and bench construction/installation at Faith Lutheran Church & Preschool in Pleasant Hill.

Maoren Shi, 18, a senior at Berean Christian High School, completed 23 merit badges including all 21 required to receive the Eagle Scout award. His Eagle project was to beautify the campus environment of Berean Christian High School including planting Cape Myrtles at the campus entrance and upgrading the landscaping.

Greyson Farrar, 18, a senior at Northgate High School, earned 24



Greyson Farrar



Maoren Shi (Benny)



Sutter O'Steen



William Grant

merit badges and completed all the skills and leadership requirements to receive the Eagle Scout rank. Greyson's Eagle project was the design, construction, and installation of custom instrument storage cabinets in the Northgate High School Band Room.

Sutter O'Steen, 18, also a senior at Northgate High School, completed 33 merit badges required to receive the Eagle Scout award with a Gold Palm. His Eagle project included design and fabrication of portable garden benches for the students in Valle Verde Elementary School "Growing Healthy Kids" garden education program.

Troop 227 was originally founded

Clayton Valley High School Athletic Hall of Fame Bocce Tournament, Saturday, April 12, 2025

Teams are wanted to enter the Clayton Valley High School Athletic Hall of Fame (HOF) Bocce Ball Tournament to be held Saturday, April 12, 2025, at the Ipsen Family Bocce Park in downtown Clayton (6000 Main St.)

The Bocce tournament will consist of 16 teams with four or more players each. Cash prizes will be awarded for first, second and third place. The tournament will start at 9:00 a.m. and end around 2:00 p.m. The cost of entry is \$400.00 per team. Team Mike's Auto Body is the reigning champion from the last HOF tournament in 2023.

This year's tournament, all proceeds will go to support the 8th Annual HOF Induction Ceremony being held at the Center Concord on the evening of Friday, May 2, 2025.

To register your bocce team, e-mail Here Pardi at: here_pardi@hotmail.com.



Hall of Fame Induction Banquet

During February the HOF Committee will be analyzing the class of outstanding athletes, coaches and community members to be inducted in May's Induction Ceremony.

Dinner tickets for the May 2 banquet can be purchased by check. Make check payable to CVHS HOF and mail to CVHS Hall of Fame, PO Box 314, Clayton, CA 94517. Adult tickets are \$60.00 each, Kids 12 and under \$30.00 each. Ticket(s) will be mailed to you.

Visit the Clayton Valley High School Athletic Hall Of Fame website anytime at: www.cvshhof.com

in 1956 by the Native Sons of the Golden West. It is the only Scouts BSA Troop authorized to display the California state flag on its neckerchief. Troop 227, led by Scoutmaster Tony Zavanelli, meets at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in Walnut Creek.

Scouts BSA is the traditional Scouting experience where boys and girls ages 11 to 17 can have their share of adventure in the great

outdoors, develop a love of service by volunteering in their community, boost their leadership skills through fun and exciting challenges, and create memories of a lifetime.

Do you have a story of interest to share with our readers? Submit them to DiabloGazette@gmail.com for consideration.

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